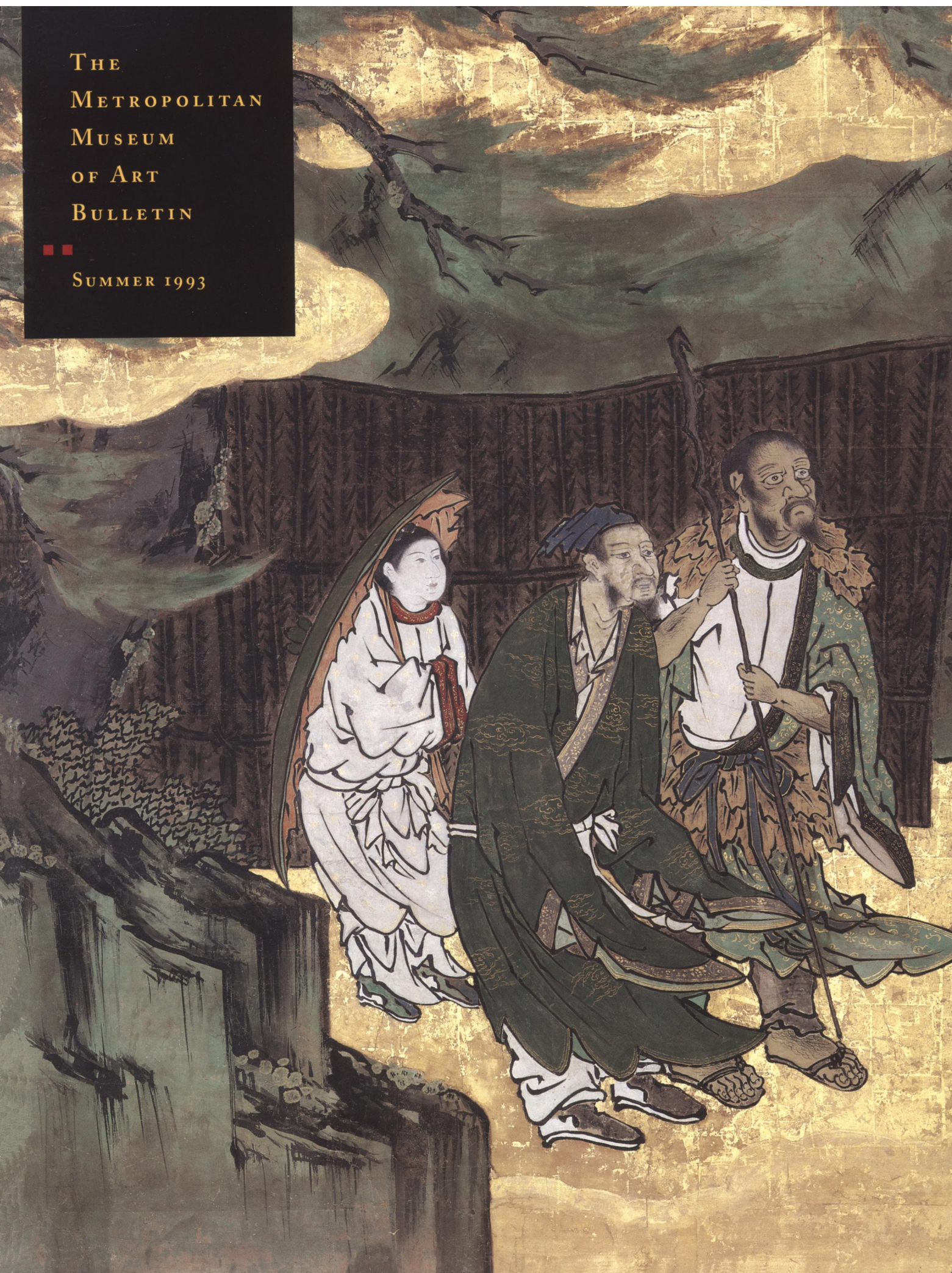


THE  
METROPOLITAN  
MUSEUM  
OF ART  
BULLETIN



SUMMER 1993









IMMORTALS AND SAGES:  
PAINTINGS FROM RYOANJI TEMPLE



*With articles by*

**Hiroshi Onishi**

*and Takemitsu Oba and Sondra Castile*

龍安寺

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Rarely does a work of art purchased for our collections surprise us and turn out to be more historically significant and valuable than we thought, because behind the decision to acquire any object is a careful process of research, rigorous connoisseurship, and an exchange of ideas among astute curators, skilled conservators, and colleagues from outside this Museum. It is a process that virtually guarantees the validity of a work of art, but it does not mean that we rest with these findings. We are constantly reviewing and renewing our judgments. How exciting it is then—after a work has been acquired—to turn up something wholly unanticipated that further validates and even elevates its standing. Such is the case with the Japanese painted panels that are the subject of this *Bulletin*. When Barbara Brennan Ford, Associate Curator of Asian Art, first saw them, she recognized that they were important examples of Momoyama figure painting and that their grand scale and gold backgrounds seemed appropriate to an imperial setting. But for what structure and where there was no certain information. The first real clue to their origin was literally uncovered during the course of repairs and remounting by our Asian-art conservators. From then on it took curatorial detective work and further research in Japan before these panels could be quite unexpectedly

### FRONT COVER:

Immortals watching Resshi fly away with the wind, from the Museum's *Chinese Immortals* panels (fig. 27).

### INSIDE FRONT COVER:

Flying Resshi, from the *Chinese Immortals*.

### BACK COVER:

Li Bo, Chinese poet and lover of wine, from the Museum's *Four Elegant Accomplishments* panels (fig. 28).

Title-page calligraphy of "Ryoanji" by Takahashi Shunkin.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY  
FOR THE MUSEUM BY  
BRUCE J. SCHWARZ OF THE  
PHOTOGRAPH STUDIO OF  
THE METROPOLITAN  
MUSEUM OF ART.

linked to the Zen temple of Ryoanji, in Kyoto, where they had once adorned a room facing its ascetic fifteenth-century rock garden. This was a tremendously important discovery. For not only does this locus give the paintings inestimable historical value but their date—established as 1606—their bold design, and their rich colors on gold make them unique among surviving monumental temple figure paintings from this period.

In October in the Arts of Japan Galleries we will open a special exhibition of our panels and paintings of similar subjects by Kano school artists, in an installation that provides a suitable setting for these Momoyama-period works. We are grateful to Sony Corporation of America for their generous support of this exhibition. We also wish to thank the Ladies Group of the Nippon Club for making possible the conservation of the Museum's panels.

In the articles on our four Ryoanji panels in this *Bulletin*, Hiroshi Onishi, Research Curator, details discoveries that placed them in their proper art-historical context, and Takemitsu Oba and Sondra Castile, C.V. Starr Conservator and Associate Conservator, respectively, share their findings and explain some of the techniques that now enable us to show the newly attributed Ryoanji panels to their best advantage.

Philippe de Montebello  
Director

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*  
Summer 1993  
Volume LI, Number 1

Published quarterly © 1993 by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10028-0198.

Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and Additional Mailing Offices. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* is provided as a benefit to Museum members and available by subscription. Subscriptions \$25.00 a year. Single copies \$6.95. Four weeks' notice required for change of address.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10028-0198. Back issues available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. Volumes 1-XXXVII (1905-1942) available as clothbound reprint set or as individual yearly volumes from Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 50 North-western Drive #10, Salem, N. H. 03079, or from the Museum, Box 700, Middle Village, N. Y. 11379.

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DISCOVERY OF A  
MISSING LINK

Mural paintings in public buildings, religious or secular, go beyond mere wall decoration or spatial embellishment. They act as a medium of visual communication in a more or less intensive social domain, whether for a didactic purpose, for use in ritual, or for the expression of a communal utopian vision. Thus they not only reflect the thoughts and emotions of their time but even more, they articulate historical, theological, or political ideas in a way that words cannot.

A set of four large Momoyama-period (ca. 1570-1610) *fusuma*, or sliding painted wall panels, recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, reveals telling facets of the social and political crises in Japan around the turn of the seventeenth century. Research conducted on these initially unidentified works has brought to light unexpected disclosures concerning a change of the paradigm for the interior image system in Zen monasteries under the patronage of the rising samurai elite. The panels give evidence of a combined yet competing effort by cultivated warriors, priest-intellectuals, and master painters to conceive a new constellation of ideals and symbols at a transitional moment: the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate as a unifying power after over a century of national turmoil.

The unusually grand scale of these *fusuma* at first suggested a connection with a warlord or, alternatively, the imperial court in Kyoto. Moreover, their totally secular Chinese themes and extravagant gold backgrounds strongly supported this initial hypothesis (figs. 27, 28). Painted on both sides, they were thought to have formed an imposing partition between two large rooms in the castle or palace of a man of worldly power. But, to widespread surprise, their origin was found to be a room of the Zen temple of Ryoanji, facing its now world-famous rock garden (figs. 1-6). And what is more, the striking contrast afforded by these sumptuous Momoyama paintings against that austere medieval garden does not merely confirm the great change in aesthetics that took place at the outset of Japan's early modern era: The *fusuma* also shed penetrating light on a singular, pivotal process that dramatically transformed the images and ideas underlying the pictorial program of Zen monasteries at a time when these communities were defining new relationships with their warlord patrons. The anomalous features of these paintings, seemingly contradictory to Zen aesthetics, point to this transformation.

The Metropolitan's panels, as will be seen, did indeed come from a momentous project carried out at a turning point in Japanese history. Research has revealed that





#### 1-6 ■ RYOANJI

Ryoanji ("Dragon Peace Temple") was founded in 1450 by Hosokawa Katsumoto, a general of the Muromachi shogunate. The temple, affiliated with the Myoshinji branch of the Zen sect, flourished particularly from the late 16th through the first half of the 17th century, under the patronage of the Hosokawa family. The rock garden is in a typical Zen style, the so-called *karensansui*, or "dry landscape," and has been traditionally considered to be the work of Soami (?-1525), a painter, poet, and garden artist. It consists of only fifteen rocks on a bed of white sand, which is raked every day. The panels presently installed in the interior of the *hojo*, the temple's main building (above and right), were painted in the 1950s. Photographs © Michael S. Yamashita.









Hosokawa Yusai (1534–1610) or his son, Sansai (1564–1645), both warriors, men of letters, and Momoyama political heroes, commissioned these works for Seigen'in, the most important subtemple of Ryoanji, in 1606, only three years after the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Pinpointed at this critical date, located in the cultural crucible of Ryoanji, and sponsored by a paragon of the ruling elite, the four *fusuma*, with their unique features of format and subject, constitute a crucial source for the retrieval of knowledge about a long-forgotten yet highly significant art-historical change.

The issues to be examined and expanded upon here are several: first, the increasing importance attached to the subjects derived from the Chinese classics as historical and ethical models for the samurai ruling class; second, the conflicting aesthetics of Zen monks and their samurai patrons, which eventually converged in a new, unified program for the overall image system in the monastery's *hojo*, or abbot's quarters; and finally, the painters' participation in that competitive interaction, which culminated in a shared canon of interior imagery in public buildings, whether religious or secular. The Metropolitan's paintings are all the more important because there are almost no other extant, datable screen paintings from the period in question. They thus provide a point of reference for all other works known to be historically close, and allow us to probe deeply into certain issues previously open only to speculation.

In addition, the revision of our historical overview triggered by these *fusuma* has been further stimulated by new finds following their discovery: four *fusuma* originally from the same room at Ryoanji, now in Beppu, Japan (fig. 31); four from another room of the same temple, remounted as a pair of

*byōbu*, or folding screens, now in the collection of the Seattle Art Museum (figs. 29, 30); and nine from yet another room of the temple, now in a private collection in London. But, before delving into a detailed discussion, the story of the initial detective work that revealed the essential facts about the Museum's *fusuma* should be told.

#### AN "ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG" IN THE CONSERVATION STUDIO



When the four *fusuma* first came to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1989, they were immediately recognized as a work of the circle of Kano Eitoku (1543–1590), the most prominent figure in Momoyama painting. But no one could have imagined that the panels had originally belonged to Ryoanji and had once faced its rock garden. Their sumptuous appearance and large size supported the previous owner's vague attestation that the imperial court in Kyoto was their provenance. The Confucian and Taoist themes portrayed against a background of gold leaf were typical of those often adopted by Eitoku and his followers for imperial and samurai projects. Despite their incomplete compositions and slightly disconcerting deviations in iconography, the subjects were very easily identifiable as Kano painters' favorites: *Flying Resshi*, on one side, and *Four Elegant Accomplishments*, on the other. The figures themselves were unmistakably of a type originated by Eitoku. The harsh, vigorous exaggeration of the master's style, however, argued for the hand of his son Kano Takanobu (1571–1618), whom documentary sources connected to the imperial court (figs. 7, 8). Thus, it was against the background of all these early speculations that the truth was unveiled through an unexpected discovery.



7, 8 ■ CHINESE IMMORTALS

Momoyama period, early 17th century. Attributed to Kano Takanobu (1571-1618). Colors on gold-leafed paper. Two *tsuitate*, or standing screens, each 22 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 23 in. (56.3 x 58.4 cm). Kodaïji, Kyoto. Photographs: Shueisha, Tokyo.



9 ■ SAGES VIEWING A SCROLL

Detail from the Metropolitan Museum's *Four Elegant Accomplishments* (fig. 28).



10 ■ SAGE AND ATTENDANT

Detail from panel 4 of the Metropolitan Museum's *Four Elegant Accomplishments* (fig. 28).





A trove of valuable information would soon come to light in a succession of finds led by the first windfall clue that related the panels to Ryoanji. In the end they turned out to be part of a large set of *fusuma* removed from Ryoanji in 1895, at a time when Buddhism had suffered persecution after the radical change to the new Meiji regime. Loss of prestige and wealth had forced many temples to resort to selling their treasures in order to survive. After traveling first to another temple and then falling into the hands of a certain financial conglomerate, the entire set was procured by a coal-mining magnate sometime early in this century. It was even discovered that part of the set had been exhibited publicly in Osaka in 1933. (However, none of this modern history would have been revealed without the initial find.) After the Osaka exhibition, the whole set mysteriously dropped out of sight and slipped from the memory of the art community, well before serious study of Momoyama painting began in the 1940s.

The first hints as to the origin and identity of the paintings were literally uncovered in the Asian-art conservation studio of the Metropolitan Museum. During the restoration work, first a small clue and then a big one emerged. In the early phase of this work, the metal fittings, or “pulls,” were removed, and it was found that each of the eight paintings (on both sides of the four panels) was numbered, probably by a previous restorer who had wanted to retain their proper placement (fig. 11). The four paintings of Chinese immortals (*Flying Renshi*) were numbered consecutively from right to left, 13, 14, 15, and 16. The four on the other side, of Chinese sages (*Four Elegant Accomplishments*), were numbered from right to left, starting with the panel that had 16 on the reverse, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

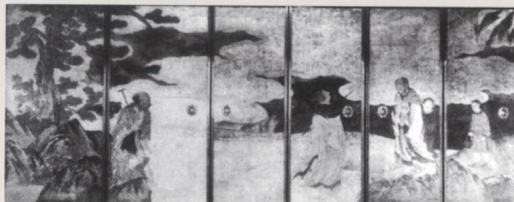


## 11 ■ THE FIRST CLUE

Numbers were discovered when the metal fittings were removed from the panels. Put there to indicate the placement of the paintings in the set, they also provided evidence that the panels belonged to a larger series. Shown is the number on panel 4.

The two sets of numbers led to some intriguing questions. Could not 16, written on the last of the immortals panels, mean something special? If 16 represented the original total of paintings for one room, it would point to an unexpected possibility: that the works came from a Zen monastery's *shicchu*, or the central room of a *hojo*, rather than from a secular setting. The number 16 is typical of the canonically determined arrangement of *fusuma* in the *shicchu*. The *shicchu*, according to strict convention, is enclosed by sixteen *fusuma* distributed around its west, north, and east sides, and opens onto a garden on the south. Judging from the finished composition at the extreme left of the immortals panels, it was highly likely that they concluded the pictorial scheme for one room, lending additional weight to the hypothesis that 16 indicated a room total.



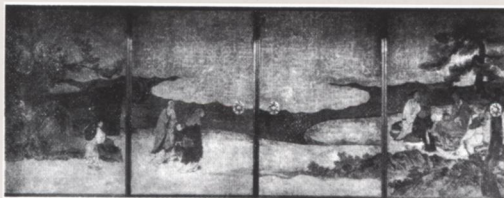


MISSING

BEPPU

#### B NORTH

Unidentified scene from the *Chinese Immortals*, reproduced with the other illustrations on this page in *Toyo Bijutsu*, 20, Kyoto, Japan, 1934. See fig. 31.



SEATTLE

#### A NORTH

A Game of Go, from the *Four Elegant Accomplishments*. See figs. 29, 30.



MISSING

#### B EAST

Unidentified scene from the *Chinese Immortals*.



MISSING

#### C WEST

Two of the *Tiger and Bamboo* panels reproduced in *Toyo Bijutsu*.



MMA

#### A EAST

Sages and Attendants from the *Four Elegant Accomplishments*. See fig. 28.

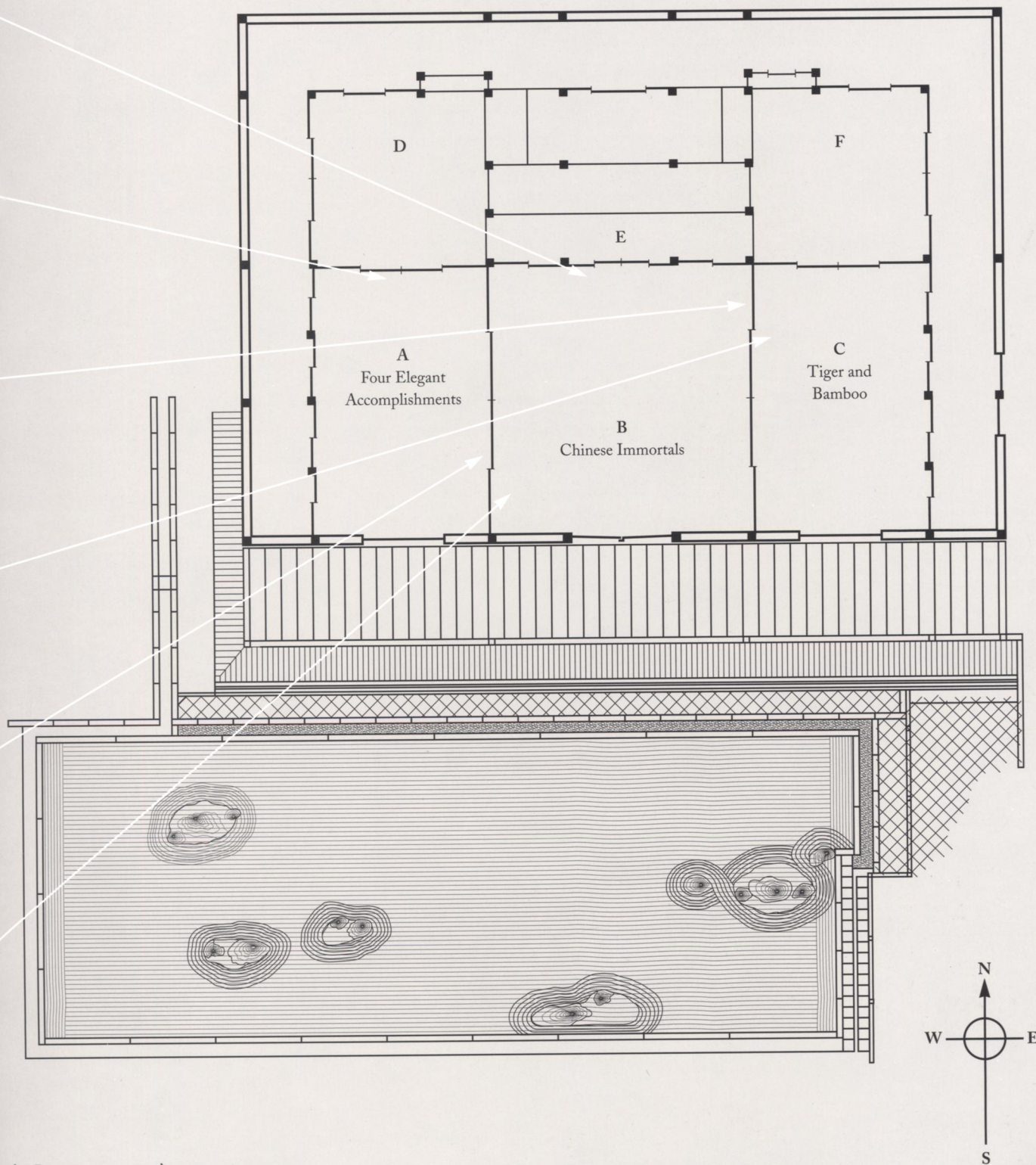


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#### B WEST

Flying Resshi, from the *Chinese Immortals*. See fig. 27.

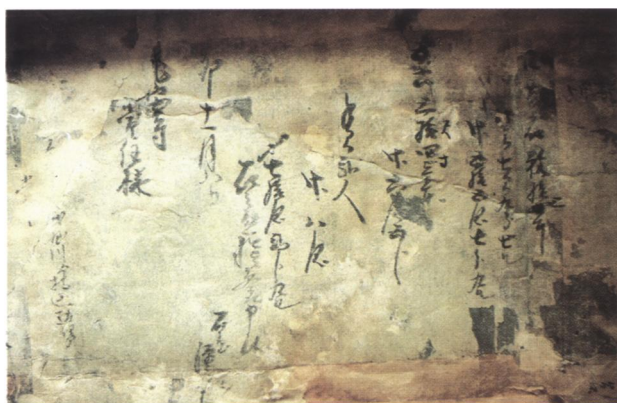




- A. *Dannanoma*, patron's room.
- B. *Schicchu*, room for ceremonies and rituals.
- C. *Reinoma*, entrance room for visitors.
- D. *Ehatsunoma*, monks' or disciples' room.
- E. *Butsuma*, area for Buddhist altar and images.
- F. *Shoin*, abbot's study and living quarters.



Correspondingly, the paintings on the reverse, numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, would have initiated a pictorial sequence for the adjacent room, which normally would have been decorated on its east and north sides, or in some cases, on its west side as well. In other words, if we reconstruct the probable original disposition of the paintings according to the standard plan of the *hojo*, the immortals would have concluded on the west side of the central room, and the sages (*Four Accomplishments*) would have begun the east side of the west room (figs. 12–18). However, by itself the numbering revealed nothing further about the site. If the *fusuma* really came from a Zen monastery’s *hojo*, then what monastery, in what location, and from what period? Was there a Zen temple in which the anomalous features of these *fusuma* made sense? At the very least, what accounted for their oversize dimensions?



#### 19 ■ ANOTHER IMPORTANT FIND

Among the backing papers of the panels were receipts from craftsmen made out to the temple (on this one “Ryoanji” is in partial shadow at upper left). These were the first clues to link the panels to Ryoanji.

The discovery of the numbering was just the first step. It was followed by another “archaeological dig.” Letters and documents were found among the backing papers of one painting (at the extreme right of the immortals set, number 13), eventually providing a major breakthrough in our investigation. In Edo times it was quite common to strengthen damaged paintings by pasting scrap paper from old letters, documents, and diaries to their backs. Thus preserved beneath the surface, these patches often reveal bits of information when uncovered, although truly important messages from the unknown past are rare finds. Yet among the thirty-one sheets, mainly in fragments and written in the most cursive of scripts, were three receipts made out to Ryoanji—two from Ya’emon, a carpenter, and one from Genza’emon, a mason (fig. 19). Other scraps bore names of persons affiliated with the temple. Another was inscribed with the date 1670, presumably some years prior to the first repair.

These scraps of paper gave very strong evidence that the panels belonged to Ryoanji, but alone they told nothing of the location and disposition of these paintings in the temple compound. Ryoanji was once a great Zen center, patronized by the Hosokawa family, one of the most resourceful and resilient samurai powers. By the late sixteenth century Ryoanji had become a huge monastic complex in which twenty-three subtemples surrounded the main temple (see fig. 20). Its heyday was the period of our panels, from the late Momoyama to the early Edo. Under the strong patronage of Hosokawa Yusai and his son, Sansai, both well-known samurai and accomplished intellectuals, it enjoyed a singular reputation, not only as a great religious institution but also as one of the most influential cultural centers of the time. With





20 ■ AERIAL VIEW OF DAITOKUJI  
COMPOUND, KYOTO

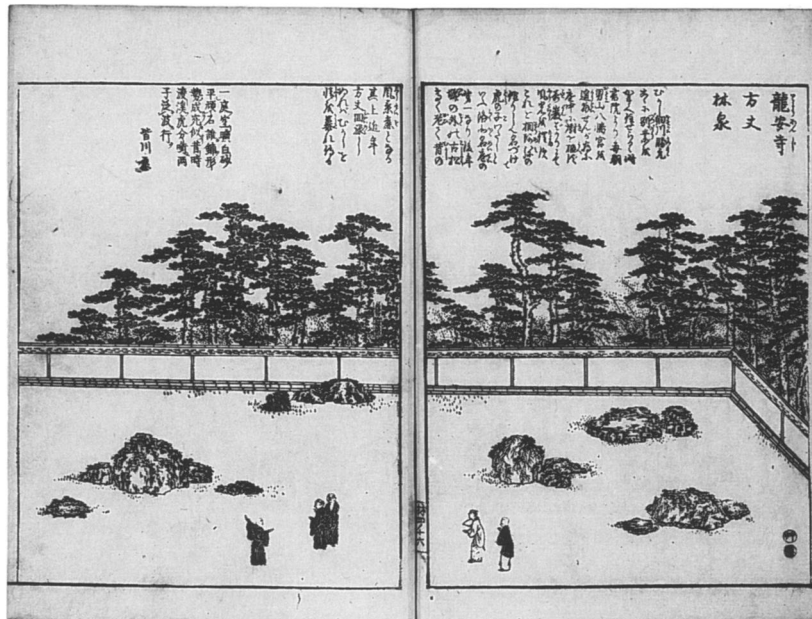
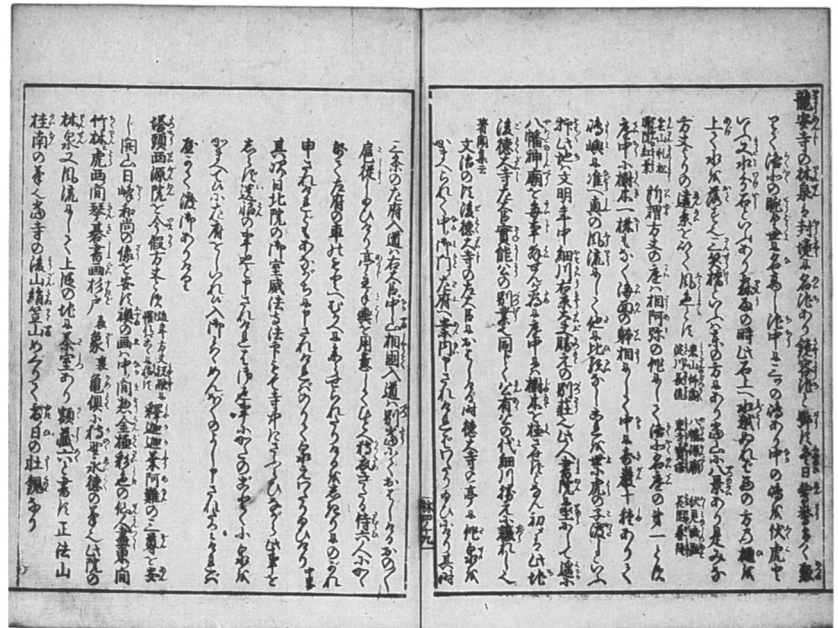
Daitokuji was founded in 1315, and the present buildings were constructed mostly during the 16th and 17th centuries. The main temple is surrounded by twenty-four subtemples (in the treed area of the photograph). Ryoanji must have looked much like this at its height during the Momoyama period. Photograph: Kodansha, Tokyo.

the temple's decline in the late Edo period (mid-1700s), only the serene, abstract rock garden remained as a unique artistic treasure reminiscent of its golden age. However, there is no doubt that Ryoanji and its subtemples originally possessed paintings from the late Muromachi (ended ca. 1570) and Momoyama periods that were destroyed or somehow disappeared over time. Indeed, several early Edo records make passing references to paintings at Ryoanji by Kano Eitoku and a few other artists. The Metropolitan's panels must have been among them. Although not precisely by Eitoku's hand, one of his senior followers doubtless produced them. Edo-period connoisseurs would generally classify any work of Eitoku's circle or his studio as by the master.



21, 22 ■ A CRUCIAL DOCUMENT

Pages from *Miyako Rinsen Meisho Zue*, or *Illustrated Guide to Famous Gardens in Kyoto*, written by Akisato Rito and published in 1799. Below is the rock garden in Edo times. Above is part of the text describing the Ryoanji *fusuma*. National Diet Library, Tokyo.



“DIORAMA” FANTASY IN  
THE ZEN MONASTERY

The final piece of evidence again came from an unexpected, even ironic, source. Because of a disaster at Ryoanji, its *fusuma* were recorded with special attention in a late eighteenth-century guidebook, *Miyako Rinsen Meisho Zue*, or *Illustrated Guide to Famous Gardens in Kyoto* (figs. 21, 22). In 1797 a fire swept through Ryoanji, destroying almost everything. Published two years later,



the guidebook gave exclusive treatment to the paintings of the *hojo* and to the rock garden, as nothing else had survived the conflagration. The exceptionally detailed description of the *fusuma*, which might not otherwise have been undertaken, matches perfectly all the features of the Metropolitan's works.

The guidebook provided three essential points of information. First came the revelation that the *hojo* structure and its paintings once belonged to the Seigen'in subtemple. After Ryoanji's main *hojo* burned down, Seigen'in's *hojo* and panels were moved to its location, thus forming a new architectural composition with the rock garden. Second, confirming our expectations, it states that Kano Eitoku had painted these panels when Seigen'in's *hojo* had originally been built. Finally, and most importantly, it describes the subject matter, format, mode, and arrangement of the paintings within the building.

The correspondences between the Metropolitan's *fusuma* and the guidebook description were further substantiated by checking research carried out on Ryoanji in 1967 by the Bunkacho, the Japanese government's Cultural Affairs Office. This project, which confirmed that the present *hojo* and the one to which the guidebook refers are the same building, also verified that it was initially constructed as Seigen'in's *hojo* in 1606, under the supervision of the Hosokawa family. The Bunkacho report also emphasized that the building's extraordinarily large dimensions were a great departure from tradition. Checked against the Bunkacho data, the original height and width of the Metropolitan's *fusuma* corresponded exactly to the measurements of the partition between the central room and west room of the *hojo*. That the *fusuma* would have been the partition between those two rooms had already been implied by the numbering found beneath the metal fittings, but this



23 ■ ROCK GARDEN OF RYOANJI, SPRING 1993

Photograph © Michael S. Yamashita.



placement was finally corroborated by the guidebook's description of the paintings themselves.

The plan for the abbot's quarters in Zen temples consisted of six rooms, of which five were decorated with paintings. For Ryoanji, the guidebook details the subjects and locations of the paintings in the three major rooms, which face the rock garden, commenting that each has a gold-leaf background. Moving from right to left, that is from east to west, the subjects listed are: *Tiger and Bamboo*, *Chinese Immortals*, and *Four Elegant Accomplishments* (see p. 11). The *Resshi* in the Metropolitan's *fusuma* is obviously one of the Chinese immortals described in the guidebook as depicted in the scenes concluding on the west side of the *shicchu*. "Resshi" is the Japanese pronunciation for Liezi, the Chinese immortal who rejected all worldly ties and flew away with the wind. Needless to say, the reverse of these panels was the beginning of the *Four*



24, 25 ■ BIRDS AND FLOWERS IN THE  
FOUR SEASONS

Muromachi period, 1491. By Soga Jasoku (active late 15th century). Ink on paper. Two of 16 *fusuma* in the *shicchu* of Shinjuan, Kyoto. Each 70  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 55  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (178 x 141.5 cm). Shinjuan, Kyoto. Photographs: Shueisha, Tokyo.





26 ■ INTERIOR OF THE *Hojo* OF  
SHINJUAN, KYOTO

Founded in 1491, Shinjuan is a subtemple of Daitokuji.  
This building is the earliest extant Zen monastery *hojo*.  
Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.

*Elegant Accomplishments* on the east side of the west room, precisely as recorded by the guidebook. Thus once the panels are located in the scheme of the *hojo*, everything falls perfectly into place.

However, even more surprising than the discovery that the *fusuma* had belonged at Ryoanji was the realization that in this setting they represented an astonishing shift from the traditional, almost canonical scheme of a medieval monastery's interior imagery. The new configuration revealed does not resemble any of its precedents—there were no landscapes, no bird-and-flower motifs, and no monochrome ink paintings in the three front rooms. What is significant is not simply the surprising appearance of gold-leafed paintings in a Zen milieu but that monochrome ink paintings

disappeared completely, in an absolute alteration of the front scheme of the *hojo*: from all-in-ink to all-in-colors-and-gold—from meditative quietude to festive conviviality. The theme of the paintings and its treatment in the Ryoanji *shicchu* typify this transformation away from traditional metaphor. The descriptive title in the guidebook—*Sen'nin zukushi*—can be translated only loosely into English as “Chinese immortals.” But the term *zukushi*, which literally means “exhaustive,” strongly suggests a representative or even encyclopedic display. It seems unimaginable, but in Ryoanji, the *shicchu*, the core of the Zen monastery, was transformed into a golden stage for a fabulous, bravura exposition of ancient, foreign immortals.



27 • FLYING RESSHI

Momoyama period, 1606. Four of the set of 16 *fusuma* depicting *Chinese Immortals* from the *shicchu*, the central room, of the Ryoanji *hojo*. Ink and mineral pigments on gold-leafed paper. Each 6 ½ x 6 ft. (198.2 x 182.9 cm). Purchase, Anonymous Gift, in honor of Ambassador and Mrs. Michael Mansfield, 1989 (1989.139.1).



16



15





14



13





4



3

28 ■ FOUR ELEGANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Momoyama period, 1606. Four of the set of 12 *fusuma* from the *dannanoma*, or patron's room, of the Ryoanji *bojo*. Ink and mineral pigments on gold-leafed paper. Each 6 1/2 x 6 ft. (198.2 x 182.9 cm). Purchase, Anonymous Gift, in honor of Ambassador and Mrs. Michael Mansfield, 1989 (1989.139.2).



2

1



29, 30 • A GAME OF GO

Momoyama period, 1606. Originally 4 *fusuma* of the set of 12 of the *Four Elegant Accomplishments* from the *dannanoma* of the Ryoanji *hojo*. Remounted as a pair of 2-panel screens (*byōbu*). Ink and mineral pigments on gold-leafed paper. Each approx. 68  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 90  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (174.6 x 229.9 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Carmen M. Christensen (92.33.1,2). Photographs: Paul Macapia.



31 • CHINESE IMMORTALS

Momoyama period, 1606. Four of the set of 16 *fusuma* from the *shicchu* of the Ryoanji *hojo*. Ink and mineral pigments on gold-leafed paper. Each 77  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (197.5 x 50.5 cm). Suginoi Collection, Beppu, Japan.



The Metropolitan's immortals panels evoke the dynamic spirit of *zūkushi* that must have dominated all three walls of the *shicchu*. Here, Renshi, the protagonist of the narrative, has just flown off, his lower body covered by a cloud (fig. 27). Other immortals and boy attendants regard him with great surprise. The animated forms of the trees and the folds of the robes convey the impression of the strong wind miraculously carrying Renshi away. The emphatically placed rock on the right implies a clear demarcation in the narrative between the story of Renshi and the adjacent subject to the right (on the north side of the room). Yet, as described in the guidebook, all the sides of the room must have comprised a composition of representative scenes from various narratives of Chinese immortals.

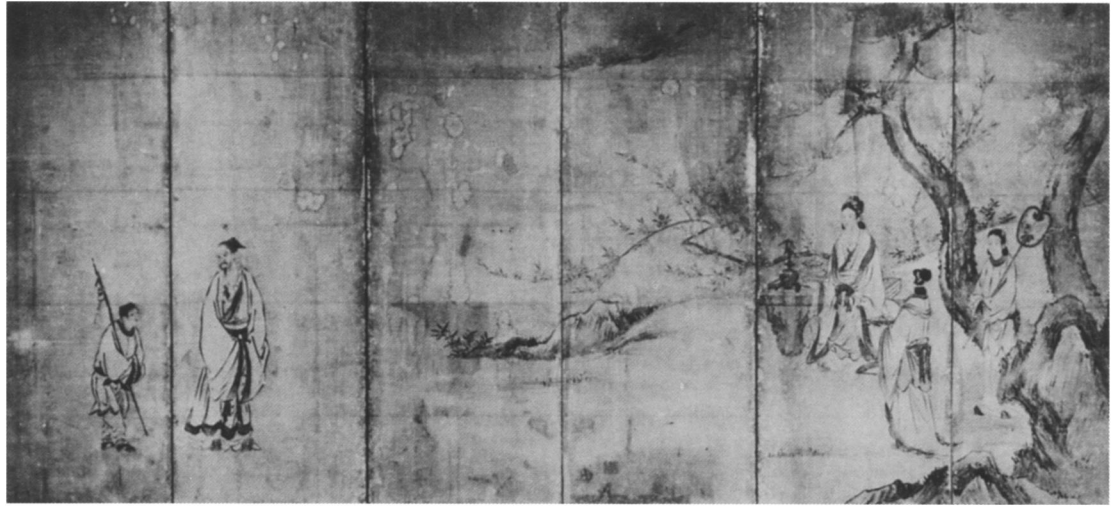
The accuracy of this description was borne out by the discovery of the four *fusuma* in Beppu (fig. 31). They depict Chinese immortals and are obviously done by the same hand as the Metropolitan's set. Their dimensions (they are narrower) indicate that they must have constituted the central four of the eight panels forming the

north side of the Ryoanji *shicchu*. Unfortunately, the scene is unidentifiable because it is incomplete, but the subject is obviously different from that of the segment on the west side, and it has a distinct compositional identity. This suggests that each side of the *shicchu* was allocated one or two representative narrative units, or "samples," of the feats of immortals. It is not fully clear how these separate narratives interacted with each other compositionally, but there is no doubt that the entire room presented a fantastic "parade" of miracles unfolding from panel to panel. Seated in that room, one would have been surrounded by a huge panorama—or, rather, a "diorama"—of Chinese immortals set against a background of flamboyant gold.

The *Four Elegant Accomplishments* on the reverse of the *Renshi* panels also corresponds faithfully to the description of the west room provided by the guidebook (fig. 28). Again, quite fortunately, some of the missing *fusuma* from the same room have resurfaced, those in the Seattle Art Museum (figs. 29, 30). Although remounted as folding screens, their composition and iconography clearly indicate that they originally constituted the four panels on the north side, a continuation of the theme begun with the Metropolitan's *fusuma* on the east. Thus with these two sets, two-thirds of the paintings of the west room have been recovered. A third set of painted *fusuma* on the west side would have completed the missing components of the *Four Elegant Accomplishments* theme. In the original setting, spread out across three walls of golden space, here, again, a gathering of ancient Chinese sages must have put on a magnificent show.

As the title suggests, *Four Elegant Accomplishments* is a pictorialization of Confucian ideals represented by the scholarly arts of music, painting, calligraphy, and chess (*go* in Japanese, *qi* in Chinese). The





### 32, 33 ■ CHINESE IMMORTALS

Momoyama period. Possibly painted by Kano Kotonobu (active early 17th century). This pair of 6-fold screens (*byōbu*) includes the immortal Kinko flying away on a carp, a very auspicious fish. Ink on paper. Each  $61\frac{1}{4} \times 142\frac{3}{8}$  in. (155.5 x 361.5 cm). Eisei Library (Hosokawa Collection), Tokyo.

concept of *zukushi*, or “encyclopedic” display, characterizes this subject as well. The Metropolitan’s panels, in which sages enjoy a picture on a hanging scroll they are holding, show the cultivation of painting. In the Seattle screens, sages and boy attendants are depicted playing or watching a game of *go*. Thus typified and compiled, the images of the *Four Accomplishments* would have been scattered across the three sides of the room. One apparently odd feature in the Metropolitan’s set is a drunken old man, who,

assisted by two boys, approaches the group viewing the picture (see back cover). This old man is most likely Li Bo, the great Tang-dynasty Chinese poet, famous for his love of wine. Although rarely seen in extant works, the drunken Li Bo was one of the most popular subjects in Momoyama Japan, repeatedly cited in the literature as exemplifying an untrammelled soul, an abiding model for those who wish to live freely. With such entertaining anomalous additions as this figure in the spirit of *zukushi*, the

connotations of the *Four Elegant Accomplishments* theme have been broadened. The entire “diorama” would have created a sense of what might be called the “Paradise of the Sacred Past.”

The discoveries made at the conservation studio, which first whetted our connoisseurs’ appetites, now lead us to consider larger and more complicated historical and art-historical issues. To sum up the facts at this stage: the Metropolitan’s *fusuma* were painted in 1606 by a member of the Kano school for Seigen’in, a subtemple of Ryoanji, when it was founded in honor of the head of the Hosokawa family, the chief patron of the temple. It is unclear which Hosokawa, Yusai or his son, Sansai, was more involved in the project, but doubtless this was one of the most important commissions for a Zen monastery carried out under the auspices of a Momoyama samurai elite. Who, then, painted the Museum’s panels? In 1606 Kano Eitoku was already dead. Our first guess was Kano Takanobu, Eitoku’s second son, but with the evidence of the Hosokawa connection, Kano Kotonobu (active during the early seventeenth century), Eitoku’s third son, emerges as a stronger candidate. Working with almost exclusive privilege under Hosokawa patronage, Kotonobu first served the family in Kyoto and then moved to their fief, Kumamoto, where he later died. Although no works can be assigned to him with certainty, it might now be possible to reconsider him as the artist of a set of *byōbu* in the collection of the present Hosokawa family, an ink monochrome depiction of Chinese immortals, and, by extension, as the creator of the Metropolitan’s *fusuma* (figs. 32, 33).

All in all, the most important and intriguing issue that now confronts us is what caused such a radical shift in the constellation of Zen monastic interior

imagery. Why and how did such a fabulous golden “diorama” of Chinese lore suddenly appear in a Zen Buddhist context? Had the *fusuma* belonged in the grand spaces of the samurai castles or the imperial court, they would not have been so surprising. Although it is well known from records and documents that by 1579 Confucian and Taoist figures on opulent gold backgrounds abounded in Azuchi Castle, the great monument constructed by Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), never before 1606 had such paintings appeared in a Zen monastery. What changed the image system of the *hojo*? Was it an intrusion from the outside? Or was it, rather, a development from within?



34 ■ DETAIL FROM THE MUSEUM'S  
*Flying Resshi* PANELS



Edo period, 1647. By Kano Sansetsu (1590–1651). These panels are typical of the classicized Momoyama style. Four *fusuma* of a set of 8 or 12 from the *hojo* of Tenshoin, a subtemple of Myoshinji, Kyoto. Ink and colors on gold-leafed paper. 68 3/4 x 191 1/8 in. (174.5 x 485.5 cm). The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and The Annenberg Fund, Inc. Gift, 1975 (1975.268.48).



### A SHADOW OF AZUCHI CASTLE?



Our understanding of Momoyama screen paintings has long been distorted by the nature and number of extant works. The increasing importance in the latter half of the period of figure painting, especially that based on the Chinese classics, has been largely overlooked because bird-and-flower themes survive in greater numbers (fig. 35). This imbalance, which places such a strong emphasis on the nonanthropomorphic, has also led to the facile characterization of Momoyama painting as a uniformly decorative art. Out of this characterization has come the unfortunate tendency to give short shrift to the diversity and function of Momoyama painting in its original architectural settings. The *hojo* of a Zen monastery,

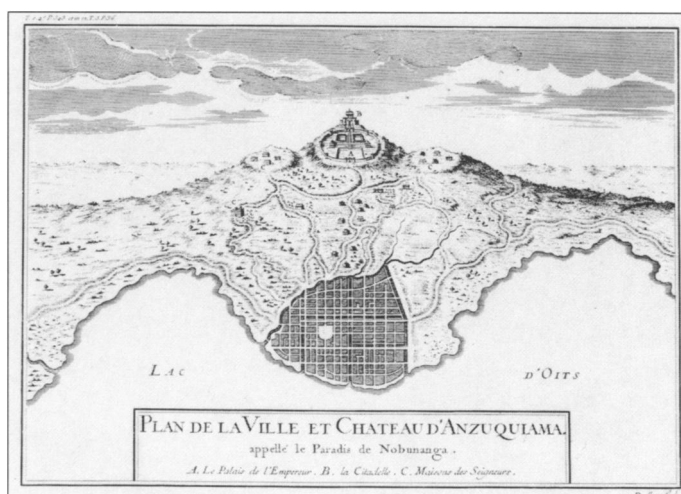
for example, typically bound together a wide variety of subjects into an ensemble that, in turn, became a complex vehicle for conscious and unconscious messages. If we are to go beyond the description “decorative,” individual works must be understood as elements within an original, overall system of symbols—a larger constellation of meaning evolving and changing over time.

What is so important about the discovery of the Ryoanji panels is that through them we can glimpse a great shift in the program of the Zen monastery’s interior imagery precisely at a key moment of transition in Japanese society. These paintings, so surprising for their sumptuous gold leaf and flamboyant depiction of Confucian and Taoist themes, do not in fact fit our conventional perceptions of Zen imagery (figs. 37, 38). But what we have to consider is an era



when virtually everything in Japanese life was plunged into structural change as a new overarching form of political power established itself. We have to look carefully at the interaction between the sweeping movements of the time and what was taking place in one corner of society. How were images and ideas created in the microcosm of the *hojo* in response to external influences? How were they exchanged between the *hojo* and the outside world?

Inevitably, our analysis has to span two extremes: Oda Nobunaga's now-lost grand Azuchi Castle cycle and Ryoanji's only partly revived *hojo* paintings. Our aim here is not merely to confirm the influence of the former on the latter but, rather, to examine their common roots and how these images appeared in response to similar historical problems. In 1579 Nobunaga, the first and



### 36 ■ AZUCHI CASTLE

Published in Charlevoix's *Histoire du Japon*, Paris, 1736. The castle was built by Oda Nobunaga, the military hegemon, on Mount Azuchi, bordering Lake Biwa, northeast of Kyoto. Construction was completed in 1579. The building, with its renowned paintings of Chinese immortals on gold backgrounds, supposedly burned down after Nobunaga's death in 1582.





### 37 ■ PRIEST KENSU (SHRIMP)

Momoyama period, ca. 1600. Kensu (Xianzi, in Chinese), a Tang-dynasty Zen monk, was known for his eccentricity. He lived only on shrimp or other shellfish and is depicted here eating shrimp. From a set of 4 *fusuma* at Shinjuan, Kyoto. Ink on paper. 70 1/8 x 36 3/4 in. (178 x 93.5 cm). Photograph: Kodansha, Tokyo.

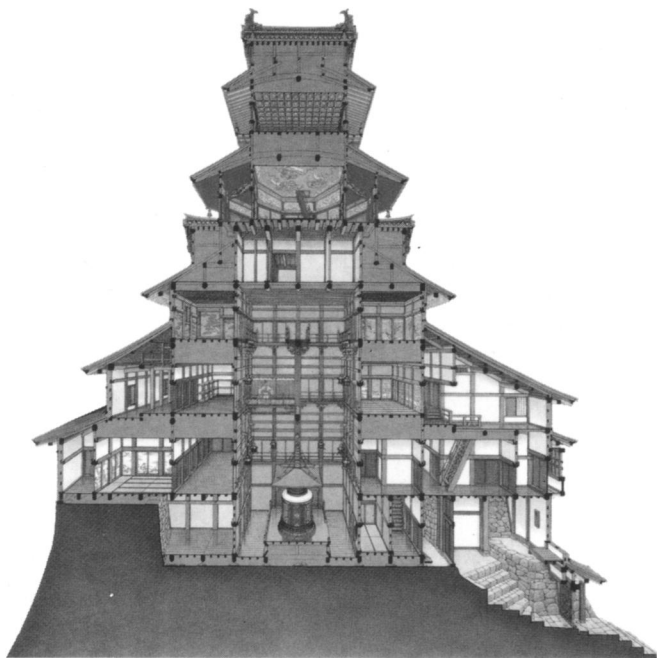
### 38 ■ PRIEST CHOTO (BOAR HEAD)

Momoyama period, ca. 1600. Choto (Zhutou, in Chinese), Kensu's disciple, was famous for his bohemianism and eccentricity, which included his habit of eating boars' heads. He is often shown as a pair with Kensu. From a set of 4 *fusuma* at Shinjuan, Kyoto. Ink on paper. 70 1/8 x 36 3/4 in. (178 x 93.5 cm). Photograph: Kodansha, Tokyo.



most daring, if short-lived, unifier of Japan, constructed Azuchi Castle as his new political center, on a hill above Lake Biwa (figs. 36, 39). There he forcibly declared his aspirations and ideals as a ruler by appropriating for himself an all-embracing pantheon of architectural and pictorial symbols that would legitimize and glorify his power. Everything from top to bottom of this seven-story building was carefully orchestrated to create a magnificent setting for the political rituals over which Nobunaga regularly presided, with daimyo and court nobles paying tribute to him. The castle's structural scheme and interior image system, particularly the grand cycle of *fusuma* paintings, embodied a cosmos of far-reaching power and overwhelming dominance. Done mostly on gold-leafed backgrounds, under Kano Eitoku's supervision, they comprised all kinds of subjects that projected Nobunaga's godlike authority: Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist icons and lore; Shinto and traditional imperial representations; symbolic landscapes, bird-and-flower paintings, and even auspicious folkloric imagery.

Mystery surrounds the sudden emergence of this gigantic project. Totally unprecedented in Japan in its attempt to embody powerful political statements within an architectural monument, it set such a compelling model for the following generation of major warlords that a boom in the construction of castles and palaces and in commissions for temples ensued. The result was an unparalleled surge of enthusiasm among political, religious, and cultural leaders for exploring with painters new iconographical idioms through which to express their thoughts and desires. At the core of this search for new images and ideas was a category that might be termed "Chinese lore." Chinese antiquity for East Asian posterity, just like Greek and Roman



39 ■ THEORETICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF  
AZUCHI CASTLE

Drawing by Professor Naito Akira in *Maboroshi no Azuchi Jo Tenshu Fukugen*, published by Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha in conjunction with the exhibition of a small-scale model at the World's Fair, Seville, 1992.





40 ■ SU DONGPO'S VISIT TO LI JIEQIAO  
AT THE WIND AND WATER CAVE

41 ■ FOUR GRAY-HAIRED HERMITS AT  
MOUNT SHANGSHAN

Momoyama period, early 17th century. Attributed to Kano Mitsunobu (?–1608). Pair of 6-fold screens (*byōbu*). Colors on gold-leafed paper. Each 68 ¾ x 149 in. (174.6 x 378.5 cm). The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest and The Annenberg Fund, Inc. Gift 1975 (1975.268.46,47).

antiquity for the Western world, was repeatedly looked to as a mytho-historical model—the “sacred past” when sages ruled. Toward that ideal did Momoyama rulers and intellectuals direct their zeal, buoyed by fresh motivations of their own. For ambitious samurai chieftains like Nobunaga, who entertained grand designs on the whole country, the enshrined images of the “sacred past” provided the symbolic power to facilitate their domination over struggling rivals. For others, on the other hand, the sanctified narratives of ancient foreign sages and immortals embodied the exalted norms and exempla painters often used to transcend the anarchic and turbulent reality of pre-unified Japan.

This heightened status of Chinese lore in the late Momoyama period raises diverse historical and art-historical problems. If the castles and palaces built in rapid succession



over the thirty years following the construction of Azuchi Castle were still extant, they would constitute a highly significant statement about the political imaginations of the men of power at this historical turning point. Some scholars, in fact, argue that the paintings at Azuchi Castle visually anticipated the neo-Confucian doctrine later to be adopted officially as a national teaching by the Tokugawa shogunate. If we accept this argument, then, the problem is how did the painters in the Momoyama period develop and formulate such a new body of iconography for the projects of Oda Nobunaga and other powerful lords? Here, the paradox is that what we term “Chinese lore” displayed virtually nothing of direct, contemporary Chinese influence. All the surviving works, which are small in number and mostly *byōbu*, attest to this (figs. 40, 41). In China the tradition of decorating palace

walls with Confucian and Taoist didactic narrative subjects had long been abandoned, having died out after the fall of the Tang dynasty in the early tenth century.

This new vision, a totally fictive sanctification of Chinese antiquity in Momoyama painting, was a result both of the continuing process of the assimilation of Chinese culture since ancient times and of freshly motivated explorations from within domestic traditions. It is at this point that we must go back to the microcosm of the *hojo* in the period leading up to Ryoanji and examine the unique role the *hojo* played in “incubating” Chinese themes for a samurai culture. In fact, as will be seen below, nothing illuminates more penetratingly this complex process of interaction and evolution than an examination of both radical change and persistent continuity in *hojo* imagery from the late Muromachi period up to the time of

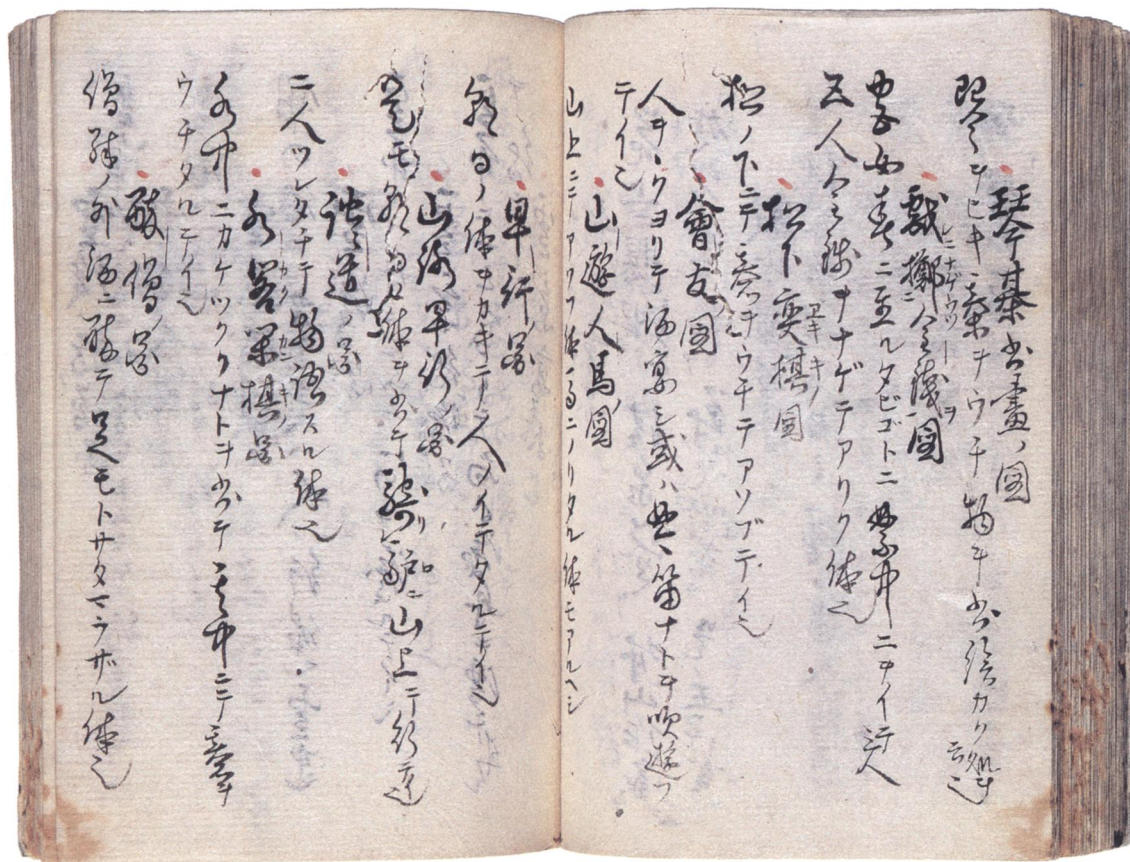


our Ryoanji *fusuma*. There is no doubt that gold-leafed *fusuma* depicting Chinese lore first appeared in warlords' castles and palaces to proclaim the ideals of a new ruling elite. But their historical roots lie in the much wider context of the cultivation and propagation of Chinese thought and images, which had been promoted mainly by Zen temples.

After the disastrous Onin War of the 1460s and 70s led to the decline of the aristocratized Ashikaga shogunate, some Zen temples, especially Daitokuji, Myoshinji, Ryoanji, and others that had formed the independent *rinka* group outside of the government-supported *gozan* system, began markedly to assume the role of cultural catalysts under the growing patronage of samurai leaders, now free from the yoke of the old regime. The following century, ending with Oda Nobunaga's unification of Japan, was a period of social and political turmoil, which those Zen monasteries countered in a positive way. The Zen milieu in these *rinka* temples was one of ever-innovative culture and conviviality, a fresh, welcoming world in which class barriers and hierarchies were ignored and a strong sense of community and shared experience prevailed. The *hojo* was not only a place for Zen practice and thought but it was also the nucleus of an open cultural forum embodied by the Zen monastic community. In the uniquely unfet-

tered atmosphere of the *hojo*, monks and laymen, warriors, court nobles and wealthy merchants, and artists, men of letters, and tea masters—all gathered together to participate in a variety of activities.

Of these shared activities the tea ceremony and the poetry gathering were the most important. An integral component of both was the appreciation of Chinese themes in literature or in art. Poems were often inspired by paintings, and, in both the poetry gathering and the tea ceremony, the appreciation and discussion of paintings were essential arenas for participants to interact. It was through these activities that Chinese themes became intertwined with elite samurai culture. And it was in this tradition that over one hundred years later Hosokawa Yusai became a distinguished man of letters and his son, Sansai, achieved renown as a favorite disciple of the great tea master Sen no Rikyu. In this developmental context, the era of Ryoanji saw "the climactic shaping of history," in keeping with the establishment of the Tokugawa regime. It was also in this advanced climate of samurai culture that, as if concluding the search for new images and ideas, encyclopedic compilations of Chinese themes in literature and painting were undertaken by monks and painters during the 1610s, only a short time after the Ryoanji project (fig. 42).



42 ■ PAGES FROM *Koso Shu* (PAINTER'S  
DICTIONARY OF CHINESE THEMES)

Published in 1619. Compiled by Kano Ikkei, a third-generation member of the Kano school. These pages include entries on the Chinese immortals and on the iconography of the Four Elegant Accomplishments. Late 18th-century manuscript in the Thomas J. Watson Library.

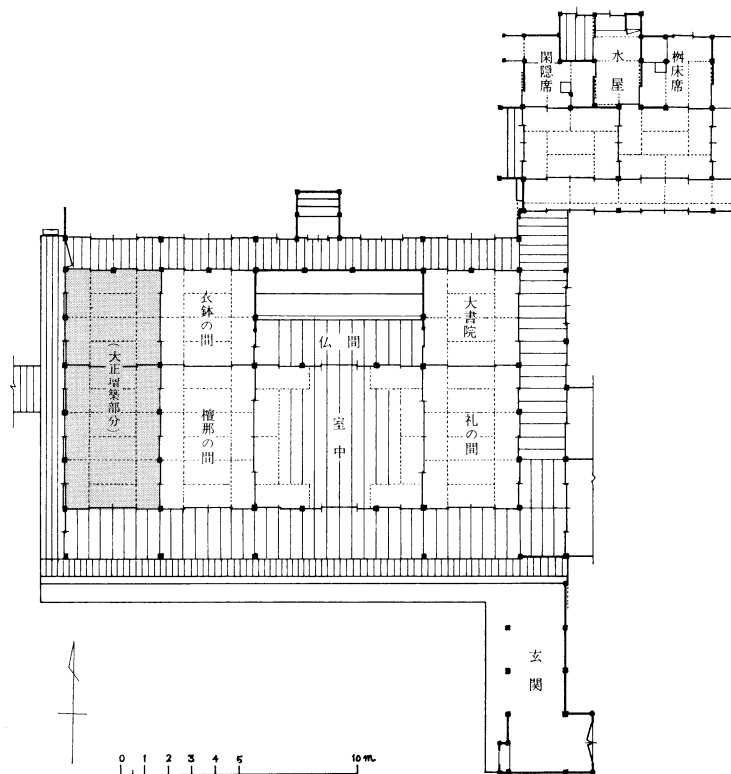
It would not be an exaggeration to say that, within this unsurpassed dynamism of artistic creation in the Zen milieu during the period leading up to Ryoanji, the *hojo* served as the crucible for forging the imagery of the new samurai culture, as the warlords, in turn, molded the imagery of the *hojo* in their role as patrons. But, then, what was the painter's role? We know that groups of painters, such as members of the Kano school, were often involved in projects at Zen monasteries. Their connoisseurship of Chinese and Japanese painting was increasingly respected and sought after. For poetry gatherings they were often asked to create paintings to serve as inspiration for verse.

More important and decisive for our context, they were creators of the mural paintings that adorned the entire monastic complex, in particular the *hojo*. Since monks, patrons, and artists shared ideas concerning the themes and iconography for these paintings, they became in many ways a true collaboration of a variety of talents, voices, and points of view. At the heart of such a collaboration in any of the *hojo* projects at *rinka* temples, like Daitokuji and Myoshinji, there were always Kano masters. Above all these artists stood Kano Eitoku. His earliest works at Jukoin, a subtemple of Daitokuji, provide a key monument for our comparative examination with the Ryoanji *fusuma*.



43 ■ INTERIOR OF THE *Hojo* OF  
JUKOIN, KYOTO

A subtemple of Daitokuji, Jukoin was founded in 1566. The present building is original except for the modern additions indicated in gray on the plan below. Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.



44 ■ PLAN OF THE JUKOIN *Hojo*

Reproduced in *Shinjuan and Jukoin of Daitokuji Temple*, by Tanaka Ichimatsu and others, Tokyo, 1971.

THE DYNAMICS  
OF IMAGE-MAKING  
IN THE *Hojo*



Few buildings, religious or secular, survived the constant, bloody battles that marked the three decades before the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603. Jukoin and its screen paintings, done in 1566, are among the most memorable monuments representing the years prior to that great change (figs. 43, 44). If we examine the *hojo* of Jukoin alongside that of Ryoanji, it is immediately apparent that the architectural layout of the three front rooms is the same, and yet the ensemble of images at Ryoanji displays a dramatic shift. The voice of the samurai patron grew much stronger in Ryoanji, echoing first through the choice of themes and then through the treatment of them.

Nothing is more interesting and critical in the image system of the *hojo* than the organic balance between the functional division of its rooms and the pictorial themes chosen for them. As mentioned above, the *hojo* functioned as the center for the transmission of Buddhist teachings among monks as well as the point of exchange between the Zen temples and the outside world. Since the fourteenth century the *hojo* had gradually developed its unique configuration, in which the religious and public

roles were structurally embedded in the layout of the building. The heart of the *hojo* was the *butsuma*, the area that contained the Buddhist altar and images, but this room was not part of daily activities. Surrounding this unchanging, secret core, various levels of functional interaction took place: public with private, host with guests, monks with laymen, abbot with disciples, patrons with monks, and so on. Thus, the *hojo* as a self-contained system, including a garden and an adjacent attached tea house, formed a kind of microcosm of society (figs. 45, 46).

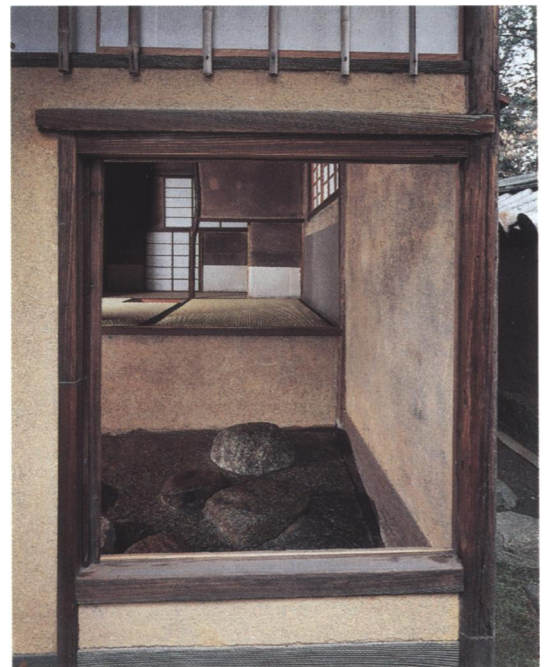
Visitors entered the *hojo* through the *reinoma*, a kind of “drawing room,” designed to “draw one” physically into the *shicchu* and psychologically into a religious realm. The *shicchu*, in front of the *butsuma* and opening to the garden, was the location of ceremonies and rituals attended by patrons, lay supporters, and men of arts and letters. The next room, the *dannanoma*, was designed for the use of the temple’s patron—perhaps for meeting with the abbot or holding gatherings for cultural figures prominent in the arts. Thus the front three rooms, *reinoma*, *shicchu*, and *dannanoma*—facing the garden—emphatically delineated the areas of interaction between the temple and the secular world. The other two rooms, on either side of the *butsuma*, were more private. The *shoin*, at the rear of *reinoma*, was the abbot’s personal study and living quarters. The *ebat-*





45 ■ GARDEN OF SHINJUAN, KYOTO

Unlike the rock garden at Ryoanji, this setting is meant for strolling and meditating. Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.



46 ■ TEA HOUSE OF SHINJUAN

Built in 1638. This photograph shows an approach to the *nijiriguchi*, or “crawl-in entrance,” a special guest entry to a *soan-shiki* (hermitage-style) tearoom. Sen no Rikyu, the great Momoyama tea master, is said to have invented the *nijiriguchi*, based on the entrance to a fishermen’s inn. Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.



Originally constructed in 1606 as the *hojo* of Seigen'in, a subtemple of Ryoanji, this building was moved to the site after Ryoanji's *hojo* burned down in 1797. This is a view from west to east. Photograph © Michael S. Yamashita.



*sunoma*, at the rear of *dannanoma*, was used by the monks who attended the patron during a visit.

In the radical transition from Jukoin to Ryoanji, the tone altered in the very first room—the *reinoma*. Jukoin “draws” in visitors with images of the *Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang*, a fantastically stylized ink monochrome depiction of an idealized Chinese landscape in a variety of seasonal and topographical settings. Extremely popular in medieval Japan for its pleasurable connotations of a dream journey to an unknown world, the image would have been recognized and loved by any layman, whether a student of Zen or not. *Reinoma* screens in other cases often had monochrome ink paintings of *Landscape in the Four Seasons* or, occasionally, of *Birds and*

*Flowers in the Four Seasons*. The underlying psychological aim of such subjects was to lead one away from the mundane, to a calm, ideal world within an eternal seasonal cycle—to create a meditative spirit.

In stunning contrast, the Ryoanji *hojo* greeted visitors with the aggressive theme of *Tiger and Bamboo* done in gold leaf (see p. 10). Expressing power, courage, and spirit, the tiger, along with the dragon, formed a body of imagery associated with the warrior class during this age of turmoil. They were depicted on *fusuma* and *byobu*, sometimes locked in vicious combat, and were also used as ornamental designs on seals. What is more important, *Tiger and Bamboo* became the standard theme for the entrance halls of samurai castles and palaces. In addition to proclaiming the power of the resident, the





48, 49 • TIGER AND BAMBOO

Momoyama period, 1566. By Kano Shoei (1519–1592).  
Monochrome ink painting pasted to the wall of the  
*ehatsunoma*, disciples' room, of Jukoin.  $70\frac{5}{8} \times 72\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
(179.5 x 185 cm). Photographs: Bijutsu Shuppansha, Tokyo.

image seems to have had the magical function of driving away evil spirits and influences, a usage clearly derived from popular imagination, reflecting the samurai class's deepest roots. It was no doubt because of samurai taste and custom that a gold *Tiger and Bamboo* suddenly appeared in the *reinoma*, the “drawing” room of the Zen monastery's *hojo*.

Interestingly enough, however, *Tiger and Bamboo* also appears at Jukoin, although not in any of the three most public rooms, but well back in the *ehatsunoma*, the disciples' room, and not in gold leaf but in monochrome ink (figs. 48, 49). Although by the Momoyama period dragons and tigers became almost emblematic of the warrior class, the images had origins in Zen as well. For example, in venerating the famous triptych of *Kannon, Monkey, and Crane* by Mu Qi, the Southern Song-dynasty Zen painter, monks at Daitokuji created a broader

cosmology by adding separate images of a tiger and a dragon on either side. They were thought to enhance a mysterious presence that imposed order, much like the guardians of the four directions in ancient Chinese mythology.

Given the function of the *ehatsunoma* as the antechamber to the patron's room, Jukoin's *Tiger and Bamboo* might already have been reflecting something of the samurai aesthetics, but the influence was still indirect. In a process of gradual evolution, and while maintaining a deeper layer of meaning—that of a mysterious protective power—the image of the tiger came to express, through the samurai's immersion in the world of Zen, the dignity of those who lived for battle. Thus, in Ryoanji, it was no doubt the growing dominance of the patron's influence that forced *Tiger and Bamboo* to appear—in gold—in the room that first presented the face of the monastery to the secular world.

The voice of the samurai echoed in the subject matter of the *shicchu* as well. Here, again at Ryoanji, as with the *Tiger and Bamboo*, an image with deep roots in the Zen milieu was not only taken up but given a fresh interpretation and made to appear in the forefront, thereby renewing the pictorial scheme of the *hojo*.

At Jukoin and elsewhere it was *Birds and Flowers in the Four Seasons*, depicted in ink monochrome, that had traditionally characterized the *shicchu*, the space for rituals of veneration and celebration (figs. 50, 51). Originally, this theme had nothing to do with Zen aesthetics. Instead, it belonged to a time-honored tradition in Japanese society of popular imagery for expressing admiration for and consecration of things supernatural. Thus the *Birds and Flowers in*

*the Four Seasons* theme, one shared with medieval society at large, successfully defined the *shicchu* as a place for exchange between the Zen monasteries and the outside world. As seen in the *shicchu* of the oldest surviving *hojo*, that at Shinjuan, another subtemple of Daitokuji, this theme had long formed the nucleus of the entire program of images in the *hojo*. Occasionally, a *Landscape in the Four Seasons* replaced the *Birds and Flowers* theme, yet the implications of these subjects—admiration for natural beauty and affinity with the supernatural—are the same. But at Ryoanji's *shicchu*, such themes were dramatically replaced with a bravura rendition of human drama enacted against a gold-leaf background. What was the psychology behind such a bold new scheme?



50, 51 ■ BIRDS AND FLOWERS IN THE FOUR SEASONS

Momoyama period, 1566. By Kano Eitoku (1543–1590).  
From of a set of 16 *fusuma* in the *shicchu* at Jukoin. Ink on paper. Each 69 x 56 1/8 in. (175.5 x 142.5 cm). Photographs: Shogakukan, Tokyo.



According to documentary sources, by the mid-sixteenth century (well before the Ryōanji panels) narrative or figure paintings, although still in monochrome ink, began to redefine the *shicchu* to reflect the taste of warrior politicians in their depictions of Confucian and Taoist themes, especially those of hermits and immortals (figs. 53, 54). Samurai patrons saw in ancient hermits and immortals something more than the wisdom

and peace attained after surviving the buffeting of life. What they found, or at least thought they found, was an expression of their own longing to drop the trappings of power and enter a utopian realm of the spirit. Paintings of those subjects evoked the magnanimity of a man with the highest worldly power who could all the more appreciate those who had thrown the world away. They emphasized a sophisticated ideal of power that stemmed not from brute force, but from a leader's enlightened use of culture.

What is most intriguing, however, is that this new imagery for the *shicchu* was also transposed from the most private area of the *hojo*, the abbot's personal study, or *shoin*—as evidenced by the existence of early sixteenth-century monochrome paintings of Chinese hermits and immortals in the *shoin* of Daisen'in, yet another subtemple of



#### 52 ■ FLYING RESSH I

Momoyama period, late 16th century. Attributed to Kano Shōei (1519–1592). Fan painting mounted on a screen. Colors and gold on paper. Honnoji, Kyoto. Photograph: Tokyo National Museum.

#### 53 ■ FLYING RESSH I

Late Muromachi period, early 16th century. By Kano Yukinobu (active 1st half of the 16th century). Fan painting mounted on scroll. Ink on paper. L. 20 3/4 in. (52.7 cm). Charles Stewart Smith Collection, Gift of Mrs. Charles Stewart Smith, Charles Stewart Smith, Jr., and Howard Caswell Smith, in memory of Charles Stewart Smith, 1914 (14.76.10).

Muromachi period, 1st half of the 16th century. School of Kei Shoki. Six-panel folding screen (*byōbu*). Ink and color on paper. 58 ¼ x 130 ¾ in. (148 x 330.8 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Margaret E. Fuller Purchase Fund (74.18). Photograph: Paul Macapia.



Daitokuji. Along with the physical shift is a transformation of meaning created, again, by the interaction of Zen monks and their samurai patrons. The use of images of Chinese hermits and immortals in the context of the abbot's private study reveals, ironically, a close relationship between Zen monks and their samurai patrons. Zen monks had never left the world of power. They had long received financial support and physical protection from the ruling samurai; and, in return, monks had supported the samurai's political authority by serving in various capacities, including those of diplomat and spiritual or cultural adviser. Here was the basis on which Zen monks shared with warrior politicians their ambivalent feelings about "being in the world"—their wish to retreat from the world countered by the necessity of embracing political realities.

However, when the imagery appeared in the public center of the *hojo*, all sense of the

Zen monk's personal ambivalence was concealed by the new symbolism. On the surface was a daring statement of the ideals of the samurai leaders, a proclamation of benevolence and power. Based on the transformation of the *shicchu* in the mid-sixteenth century, warriors developed those Chinese themes far more assertively for their castles and palaces in gaudy, flamboyant gold leaf. Thus, Ryoanji's *shicchu*—very likely the first to have Chinese narrative themes in gold leaf—marks the culmination of a dialectical exchange between Zen monks and samurai patrons. The samurai leaders took over and remade images already prominent in Zen culture, while the Zen monks transformed their religious space as samurai influence flowed back into the Zen milieu.



55, 56 ■ FOUR ELEGANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Momoyama period, 1566. By Kano Eitoku (1543-1590). From a set of 8 *fusuma* in the *dannanoma*, patron's room, at Jukoin. Ink and slight colors on paper. Each 69 x 56 1/8 in. (175.5 x 142.5 cm). Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.





Every *hojo* is a microcosm; each of its rooms has a definite function, with a unique “tone” or “voice,” which is reflected in and created by images. These images are part of the greater structure and find their set place in the scheme. What we witness at Ryoanji is not a mere aggregation of apparently surprising details—the unusually large panels, the use of gold leaf, and the expressive, flamboyant treatment of Chinese figural subjects—but features that underlie a general shift in the organic balance between functions and images.

As we have seen, the voice of the samurai patron grew stronger in the first two rooms of the Ryoanji *hojo*, as compared to those at Jukoin. But what happened in the third room, the *dannanoma*? The third room—the patron’s room—was naturally kept closely in tune with samurai ideals, tastes, and psychology. Tellingly, the subject matter in the *dannanoma* at Jukoin—the *Four Elegant Accomplishments*—was unchanged at Ryoanji. In fact, in no temple does the *Four Elegant Accomplishments* appear in any room other than the patron’s room, signaling the sharp divisions of tone in the *hojo* image system. This theme, expressing the ideals of Confucian intellectuals in China, also took root in Japan through the world of Zen and was assimilated into the world of the warrior. To the power holders who sought to be the new leaders of a unified Japan, the *Four Elegant Accomplishments* served to instruct and even to proclaim that their legitimacy was not obtained by force. Cultural accomplishments—in painting, music, and literature—made the leader.

However, if the subject matter of the *dannanoma* did not change from Jukoin to

Ryoanji, the style did, and consequently the message it conveyed. The contrast is stunning; it is almost a change of genre.

Although ostensibly a figure painting, Jukoin’s *Four Elegant Accomplishments* might be better thought of as a landscape (figs. 55, 56). The figures are enveloped in nature, practicing their arts amid the progression of the four seasons. In the Ryoanji version, however, there are no seasons; the landscape has become merely a stage setting for a parade of figures symbolizing the four accomplishments. The Jukoin work—depicting nature that contains but does not overwhelm human activity—creates a meditative mood. The same calm, reflective spirit, in fact, unifies all the three front rooms of Jukoin, even though the division of subject matter is quite clear. The overall pattern at Jukoin is one of harmony; all the works in the three rooms are in ink monochrome, and all are linked in the eternal cycle of the four seasons.

In the *hojo* of Ryoanji the situation is far more complex, and to gain a better understanding of it, we must finally look closely at the role of the artist. The imagery of the Ryoanji *fusuma* should be interpreted as a conflation of two fundamentally different sets of issues that the artist had to address. One set was artistic and inherent in the medium and format, whereby the physical characteristics of the *fusuma* itself and those of the materials used necessarily influenced the final appearance of imagery. The second set was more psychological or sociological, involving the political, diplomatic, and even personal “agenda” of the samurai patron. These sets of issues both underlay the function and design of a new architectural space often defined as the *shoin* style, which had developed to provide a monumental setting for political ritual in samurai castles and palaces. And the *shoin* style itself, as is





57 ■ FLYING OSHIKYO

Momoyama period. Attributed to Kano Eitoku (1543–1590).  
Three *fusuma* from a set of 8 depicting *Chinese Immortals* at  
Nanzenji, Kyoto. Ink and colors on gold-leafed paper. Each  
approx.  $72 \frac{3}{8} \times 38 \frac{5}{8}$  in. (183.8 x 98.1 cm). Photograph:  
Bunyusha, Kyoto.

evidenced by the fact that it was called by the name of the abbot's study, relied heavily upon formal precedents set by the Zen monastery's *hojo*, the structural scheme of which had grown out of its own socio-cultural function.

In this intricate exchange between the secular and religious worlds, the artist merged the essential nature of the *hojo* with the “messages” from samurai castles and palaces, which had evolved into settings for political gatherings and centers for diplomacy and affairs of state. Inevitably, the treatment of pictorial space changed. This change was partly conscious, the product of decisions made by the artist in order to create dynamic compositional and figural treatments to enhance the monumentality of images in samurai structures. But it was also partly an unplanned pictorial consequence of

the samurai predilection for gold leaf, which by its very nature tends to flatten space and sharpen contours—forcing a simplification of forms. The successful solution to these challenges, which resulted in the production of a golden stage for a parade of figures against a reduced number of proplike landscape elements, became itself a new convention. This style, although never named, was shared and handed down over generations for various projects of the same kind.

Painters almost unconsciously found this new schema very convenient as a set pictorial environment within which a variety of “sample” themes could be placed and replaced in the manner of a *zūkushi* compilation. Such is the case with a set of early *fusuma* attributed to Kano Eitoku, now at the Zen temple of Nanzenji in Kyoto (fig. 57). Depicting the flying immortal Oshikyo, or

Wang Ziqiao in Chinese, who departed the world on the back of his friend the crane, the action takes place in a stage setting essentially the same as that of Ryoanji's *Flying Resshi*: against a backdrop of glowing gold in a parklike scene of trees, ornamental rocks, and flowing water. The small gatherings of people and even the primary subjects who dominate the scene are "samples" of specific categories of immortals. Both *Flying Resshi* at Ryoanji and *Flying Oshikyo* at Nanzenji are not single, discrete themes, but, rather, by their interchangeability, they stand for all the conceivable flying immortals of the pantheon. Significantly, the Nanzenji *fusuma* were originally commissioned for the imperial court and only later moved to the temple in 1611. Such a move, we can now safely say, was quite natural in the climate of the time. Not only does it reflect the fluidity of the relationship between religious and secular domains but it also demonstrates that the imperial court, samurai elite, and Zen establishment all shared this generalized view and characteristic treatment of Chinese themes.

Most important, however, is that although overtly this presentation was simply a stage setting for a *zūkushi* parade of Chinese figures, covertly it was more than a convenient set of devices. Rather, it functioned more unconsciously by transforming nature into a new environment, to which the inhabitants of these spaces inevitably responded: an intimate, well-controlled, parklike or gardenlike space, in which the participants in the elegant gathering at the *hojō* were invited to join with the Chinese sages and immortals in the paintings. Among extant works, if only from a much later date, the most refined example of this transformed environment is a set of *fusuma* formerly at Tenshoin, a subtemple of Myōshinji, and now in the Minneapolis

Institute of Arts (fig. 59). Painted in 1642 by Kano Sansetsu (1590–1651) in a typical *zūkushi* display, it depicts immortals, all originating from a variety of textual sources, enjoying a pleasant party. The environment of unearthly yet benign beauty is an idealized garden, the rocks, trees, and ponds of which epitomize the best of nature under man's control.

The pivotal figure in this change had undoubtedly been Kano Eitoku. He successfully solved the problem of combining formal-aesthetic and sociopolitical concerns, and transformed the pictorial scheme of imagery for public spaces in this new era. The transformation is discernible



58 • DETAIL FROM THE MUSEUM'S FLYING  
RESSHI PANELS



Early Edo period, 1642. Attributed to Kano Sansetsu (1590–1651). From a set of 16 *fusuma* from Tenshoin, a subtemple of Myoshinji, Kyoto. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Each 65¼ x 45½ in. (165.7 x 115.6 cm). Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Putnam Dana McMillan Fund (63.37.1–4).



in both his religious and secular projects, from his 1566 paintings at Jukoin, undertaken at twenty-three years of age, to those for Azuchi Castle, done in 1579, when he was thirty-six, to the imperial court-Nanzenji *fusuma* of about 1590, and finally to the Eitoku-inspired treatment of the Ryoanji *fusuma* in 1606. In sum, the comparison with Jukoin provides the key to understanding the fundamental change that took place at Ryoanji. Jukoin still sits placidly in the medieval world. Ink painting there reveals a cosmology defined by the myth of a continuous regeneration of the four seasons and man's subordinate place within that cycle. Ryoanji broke with this cosmology. In casting aside the world of monochrome ink and nature in the four seasons, the artists sought to define a new cosmos. Ryoanji shifted from the retiring, meditative mood of the medieval monastic world to one based on positive, dominating human action and optimistic worldly desire. The meaning revealed in the Ryoanji *fusuma*, whether the monks and samurai patrons were aware of it or not,

concerns a vision of what might be called the utopia of the ruling elite.

Significantly, this new utopia did not replace the old one, but coexisted with it within the *hojo* in a demarcation of public and private spaces. Judging from the documentary evidence, the back rooms of the *hojo* retained their private character. What we have seen at Ryoanji in the front rooms—the use of gold and Chinese subjects—are details carried over into a general change in Zen *fusuma* paintings after Ryoanji. We now recognize this change as an alteration in the relationship of the images within the overall pictorial scheme of the *hojo*. Unfortunately, no original *fusuma* are known to have survived from the back rooms at Ryoanji. But a suggestions of what might have once existed there can be derived by comparison with surviving much later examples from temples with similar overall schemes of decoration that have until now been regarded only as anomalous. Although in general gold-leaf paintings dominated, ink monochrome did not disappear

completely, often being retained for back rooms that had no public function. The most intact extant example is at Tenkyuin, a subtemple of Myoshinji, completed twenty-five years after the Ryoanji *hojo*. In contrast to the sumptuous gold leaf in the front three rooms (fig. 60), those in the back contain ink landscapes. Scholars have been unsure how to assess this arrangement, but now, considered in tandem with the far earlier Ryoanji, it demonstrates clearly that

the entire pictorial ensemble was reconceived; the *hojo fusuma* did not simply shift from ink monochrome to colors and gold but, rather, ink and gold took on specific associations and were deliberately separated in the overall scheme. The eighteenth-century guidebook does not describe the back rooms of the Ryoanji *hojo*, but the probability is high that they, too, contained ink landscapes—like relics of the medieval world—hidden, as it were, from public view.



60 ■ INTERIOR OF THE *Hojo* OF  
TENKYUIN, KYOTO

Tenkyuin is a subtemple of Myoshinji, Kyoto. The paintings, attributed to Kano Sansetsu, date to 1631. Photograph: Shogakukan, Tokyo.



CONSERVATION AND REMOUNTING OF THE  
RYOANJI TEMPLE *Fusuma*

by Takemitsu Oba and Sondra Castile

*Fusuma* are architectural elements that define space. When closed, these sliding panels act as a boundary between spaces, and when open, as a passageway. They may separate two interior spaces or serve as a border between the inside and the outside. Perhaps modified from a single stationary panel, *fusuma* became widely used in temples and castles during the thirteenth century.

Narrow double tracks between pillars hold the panels in place at top and bottom. If there are four panels, the center two are set on the inside track and abut when closed. The leading edge of the exterior frame of the right of these two panels has a decorative flange that covers the join, giving a finished appearance. This feature establishes a room for the use of the most important guests or ritual. The two panels on the rear track overlap the center ones by the width of the exterior frame, leaving no visible gap between them. There is a slight tolerance in the upper track so that the panels may be easily removed or exchanged.

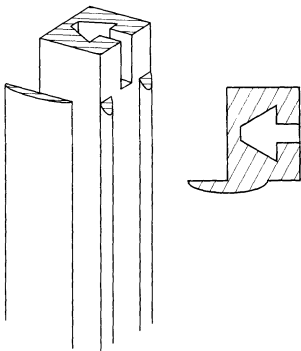
Each panel has an interior lattice-work of standing and cross pieces carefully fitted and set in an outside frame, which may be joined at the corners in a number of ways. The construction of this inner core is extremely important to



1 • Asian-art conservation staff working on a *fusuma*.

the preservation of what will be mounted on the surface. Both sides of the core are prepared with many layers of papers in a variety of methods before the painting, textile, or decorative paper is applied. If the *fusuma* are to survive a long time, great attention to every detail of construction is required.

Since *fusuma* are prepared for an architectural setting with predetermined dimensions, the measurements of the entire panel, including its frame, are evidence of the structure for which it was made. The work mounted on the frame cannot by itself provide this information. What was immediately striking about the Ryoanji *fusuma* was their large size and the fact that the four



3 • Leading edge of exterior frame, showing flange. See also fig. 5.



2 • Arrangement of set of four *fusuma*. The center panels face into the more important room.

panels formed a continuous unit without interruption of pillars. These *fusuma* therefore must have been in a room of a minimum size of twenty tatami mats (approximately 500 square feet), and probably much larger. The two panels that close with the decorative flange were the center of the group, the midpoint along one wall between pillars. The paintings on either side of the four panels were from two sets, which faced into adjacent rooms. The image of the *Chinese Immortals* was on the side with the decorative closure. The reverse, with a more discreet element where the panels meet, enabling the central ones to pass on the track, depicted the *Four Elegant Accomplishments*.

### *Planning for Conservation*

■ ■ In order to exhibit all of the panels simultaneously and better to assure their long-term preservation, the decision was made to separate them and remount them as two four-panel sets.

A thorough examination and photographic record of each panel was made. This included extensive notes on the location of tears, condition of pigments, previous repairs, and inpainting. It was determined that some panels would require extensive pigment stabilization. When initial condition assessments are made on a set of paintings, it is common to find that deterioration is similar throughout. However, the conditions of these panels differed greatly. The many processes of prior restoration, the repairs made through the years, and perhaps even the location of the panels had produced this uneven deterioration.

### *Removal of Metalwork and Exterior Frames*

■ ■ First, the metal fittings used to slide the panels manually were dismantled. Each set includes a decorative plate,

which prevents wear and surrounds the hole cut in the panel to receive the “well”-shaped piece for the hand. The well, or recess, had a large peony flower design, and the surrounding plate bore the trunk and leaves of a tree peony. It was clear that these could not have been the original fittings; they were in no way representative of the taste and style of the Momoyama period. Exactly when these fittings were replaced was not then determined, but the installation of more appropriate ones would be an additional factor in the remounting of the panels.

When the metalwork was removed, the first of several discoveries was made. The position of this hardware had been changed at some time to a location about ½ inch farther into the painting from the adjacent exterior frame to maintain visual balance and leave space for the installation of traditional locks. The new position left a crescent-shaped area—later covered by the metalwork—a convenient spot for the carpenter to number each panel according to its placement in a room: 13, 14, 15, 16 on one side; and 1, 2, 3, 4 on the other. From this information we learned that the room into which the *Immortals* faced had at least sixteen panels and that on the reverse were the first four in the set of the *Four Elegant Accomplishments*.

Next, the exterior lacquered frames were removed. These were joined at the corners and secured to the interior frame. Their removal, depending on the type of joinery and method of attachment to the inner core, could cause severe shock to the paintings’ surfaces. Therefore, before this work could begin, all the areas that were particularly unstable or susceptible to pigment loss were covered with rayon paper cut to the shape of the fragile area and adhered with a very dilute seaweed paste. These papers held the pigments in place and prevented further loss during removal of the frames.



4 ■ *Fusuma* with metal fitting removed. Position and size of previous fitting and a number written in black ink have been revealed.



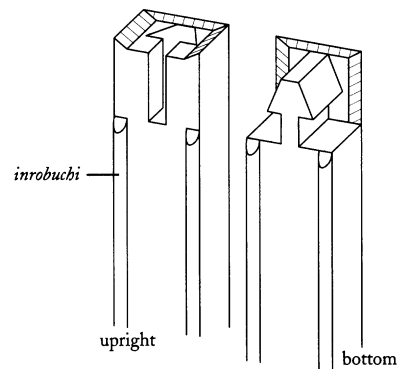
Proceeding slowly, we carefully separated the exterior frames from the inner core. The exterior frame was attached to the core by a technique called *inrobuchi*, a term derived from the way the cover of an *inro*, or accessory case, forms a “pocket” to receive the edges of the container. The exterior frame was not fitted flush to the edges of the interior core, as in another common method of attachment, but had flanges that tightly grasped the front and back edges of the core. Paste had been used to bond the top edges of the core to the lacquered pieces. The *fusuma* had been repaired at various times, but the carpentry techniques employed in fitting the exterior frames were not those common to the Kyoto area, and this relatively recent method was not in use when the *fusuma* were built. We therefore assumed the exterior frames were replaced within the last one hundred years.

## Pigment Consolidation

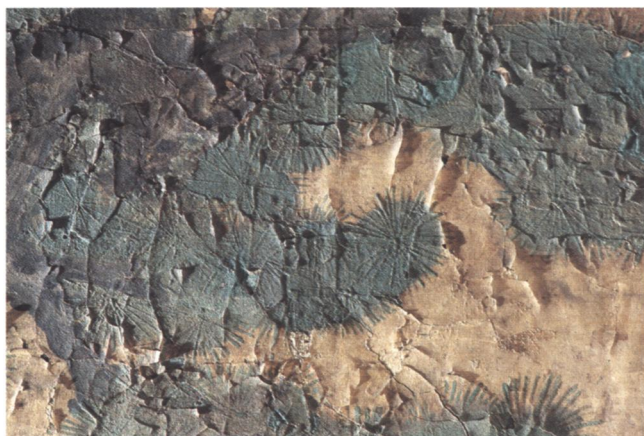


Animal glue was the binder for the pigments used. Over time this medium loses some of its adhesive properties; the bond between individual pigment granules or between the support and painting may degrade, with the result that the slightest change in tension on the painting surface may unsettle the pigment. Such was the observable condition of many of the pigment surfaces on the eight paintings. The loss of pigment adhesion had also been hastened by other factors in the existing composition of the whole. The imbalance created by the many layers applied in patchwork fashion aggravated the uneven tension on the surface. The painting also consisted of uneven layers of pigment from past restoration efforts and inpainting.

In order to improve adhesion, a 1.5-2



5 ■ Kamahozo join of upright to bottom horizontal piece of exterior frame. The raised edges are part of the *inrobuchi* technique.



6 ■ Detail of pine tree on panel 13, showing the condition of the surface before conservation.



7 ■ Same section as figure 6 after conservation.

percent solution of animal glue was applied with a small brush to the individual pigments. This time-consuming process was carefully monitored to see that each application was perfectly absorbed. Any residue remains as gloss and can cause the surface to draw and flake. Absorption by each pigment depends upon granule size and how much of the former binder remains. Therefore pigments have different rates of absorption and must be treated one by one. Animal glue was applied numerous times until each pigment ceased to absorb it. Further consolidation was periodically repeated in some areas even through the last phases of conservation.

### *Removal of the Paintings from the Panels*

■ ■ When the exterior frames were removed, the existing edges of the paintings were revealed to be folded over and pasted along the outside edges of the inner frame. The paintings' edges were dampened and lifted up after the paste softened. Using a bamboo spatula-shaped tool just beneath the "floating" layer—the last applied in the preparation of the panel—the paintings with their backings were slowly freed from the panel. (The traditional method of applying the paper layers over the latticework frame, when skillfully executed, makes it possible to remove the paintings for conservation or for remounting without great difficulty or stress to them.) We began the removal process with panel 14, as it had the least amount of pigmented area and would provide the best opportunity for assessing difficulties that might arise as we progressed.

Because the repair problems on panel 16 had been addressed in many ways, separation of this painting from the inner frame was very slow and complicated. It had many uneven layers of

backing, a large tear, splits, and other damage. The previous work had been accomplished by applying a number of overlapping, uneven layers, and the various methods employed had rendered the whole stiff and thick.

### *Removal of the Backings*

■ ■ The surface of each painting was dampened evenly with a fine mist of water. Rayon paper in 12-inch squares was applied with a soft brush over the entire painting. So that no gaps remained and to aid in removal, the pieces overlapped by about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. The painting was then turned face down on the worktable, and the reverse was dampened with a brush. Moisture slowly penetrated through the many layers of backing, and the painting was then brushed out flat. When the paste had softened, the backing paper was carefully peeled away in small pieces. It became apparent that the painting had been treated about four times, and some repairs from each of these occasions still remained on the reverse. A very mottled composite of as many as eight layers, thick and thin pieces applied in every conceivable manner and direction, was the product of prior mending and backing. This resulted in extremely uneven tension throughout the surface. Repairs to correct tears left bits and pieces of paper, as old mends were not completely removed and new ones were often added on top of or partially overlapped them. As a result, some areas were prone to stretch and some to shrink; some were taut and some buckled. In order to avoid further complication from this stress during the removal of backings, the thickest pieces were taken off first to try to establish a better balance. Then all backing layers were gradually removed down to the first backing, that which is adhered directly to the paper support of the painting. Before this backing could



8 ■ Figures on panel 16 before conservation. For condition after conservation, see front cover.





9, 10 ▪ Detail of figures on panel 13 before and after conservation.



11-13 ▪ Figure on panel 3 with stains on face (left). Same figure from reverse, showing the pigmented or dyed papers that caused the staining (bottom). Figure after conservation (right).



be safely taken off, the pigments were carefully examined again and further stabilized where necessary.

During this conservation process, a very important discovery was made on *fusuma* 13. Beneath many layers were found notes, bills, and receipts for work done—papers recycled for repair. It was clear that most of these could not be removed intact or saved, and as we had to proceed, photography provided the only permanent record of most of them. The curators were alerted before the papers were removed, as it was hoped that these papers might provide important historical information about the *fusuma*. Subsequent research revealed that the sliding panels had belonged to Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto. The numbers that were previously uncovered were therefore an aid in determining their precise location within the temple.

It is fortunate that the last conservation was not more thorough, as all of the remnants of the earlier backing would have been replaced. Perhaps technical impediments deterred the mounters. As it was, this panel was the only one to contain information about the temple.

The removal of the first backing on *fusuma* 13 was a very slow process, and necessitated thinning some remnants that could not be taken off. Efforts during this phase of work were directed to making as even a layer as possible of the painting and whatever backing or repairs had to remain in place.

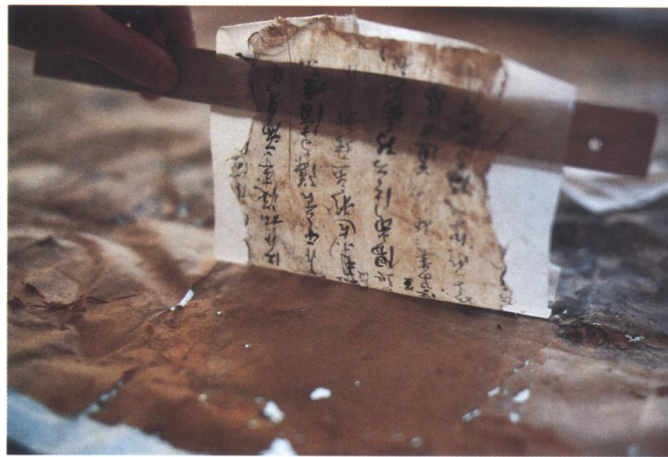
Paper with pigments or ink on it had been used in places on the reverse to mend tears, and this had sometimes bled through to the surface of the painting, causing staining. Fortunately, most of these stains were later quite successfully eliminated, sometimes by using a suction table. Found under the detritus of former backings were portions of the original first backing, which consisted of natural, undyed and unbleached paper made from *kozo* (paper mulberry).

Some previous restoration had been

done with relative care, but some work seemed to lack any particular thought or planning. Paste was often very unevenly applied. Weakened areas, tears, and other losses were treated by different methods. Various skills and techniques were used by the mounters, who had treated these paintings perhaps once every one hundred years. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish between original and later inpainting, much of it completed long ago. Moreover, the extreme lack of conformity in the use of materials and techniques caused many difficulties with both the pigmented and gold-leafed surfaces. Removal of most of the earlier repairs was essential in restoring consistency throughout and to prevent continuing loss. Tears were drawn together and reinforced; losses were compensated. Painted lines that did not meet properly were realigned. When all repairs had been made on the reverse, a 2.5 percent solution of animal glue was brushed over that whole surface to aid the adhesion of pigments to the support. Then the first new backing of *kozo* paper was applied.



14 ■ Various papers applied in haphazard fashion on reverse of panel 13.



15 ■ Removing a document from reverse of a panel.



## *Treatment of Previous Inpainting*



During the remounting many areas that had been overpainted or inpainted had to be evaluated and decisions made. Our conservation must preserve where it exists, and establish where it does not, a visual balance of old and new repairs and inpainting. The difficulty of making these decisions rests in the process of selection: which details from previous restoration should remain because, in general, they enhance the readability of the painting and which should be replaced because they detract from the effect of the painting as a whole. Inpainting done long ago, although providing some linear details, which we would rather not include, had acquired a patina that now blended well with the original pigment, and it would not be possible to replace some of these areas more effectively. Replacement was confined to deteriorated or obtrusive repairs. Inpainting made during this conservation would blend in new repairs but would add no line or detail.

## *Making the New Panels*



Since the paintings were to be mounted as eight panels, four new interior core frames were needed. Carpentry was done on the four existing frames to



strengthen any weakness and stabilize the joinery. Careful consideration was given to the selection of the raw wood materials and the type of joinery. Final measurements must be exact. Miscalculation on any work on the interior frame can result in serious compromise of the paintings' condition in the future. Lacquered exterior frames and channeled tracks would also have to be made. These three elements constitute one architectural unit.

Interior framework must be light and stable. If it is too heavy, the panel will wear excessively and erode the subtly rendered track. As noted above, instability of the frame can cause premature deterioration of the paintings, and since these panels are particularly large, finding a high-quality low-resin wood was a priority. It was determined that a well-seasoned variety of Japanese cedar would be used. This cedar has very little resin compared with varieties



16, 17 ■ Details of figure at left of panel 2, showing misalignment of folds on sleeve of robe and folds after conservation.



18, 19 ■ Tape attached to face of figure on panel 1 and face after conservation.

found in America, and the cut of the wood necessary for this work is more readily available in Japan.

The inner core frame consists of horizontal and vertical laths joined to four pieces, which form the outside edges. All pieces were precisely cut and joined to make a stable support for the many layers of paper applied before the painting and decorative paper were pasted on either side. Unlike *shoji*, which have only one layer of paper on one side of a very light frame, *fusuma* frames have to bear a great deal of tension from the paste and papers covering them. The frames must bear this stress evenly without developing torsion.

The cedar selected was cut from the least resinous part of the tree and dressed before joining. *Hozo* joins (see fig. 5) were used to attach horizontal and vertical pieces and for setting in the outer frame of the core. No bamboo pegs were used. The corners of the outer frame were joined and set with a modern wood glue that is of no interest to insects.

#### *Paper Layers on the Interior Frame*



Before beginning the layering of paper, paste was applied to both sides of the framework core to aid in sealing the wood and to make the adhesion of the next layer easier. All processes were followed precisely on both sides so that tension and balance of the materials remained constant. Paper was pasted on the framework in this sequence:

A. A thick *kozo* paper.

B. *Maniae* paper. The type used here was a combination of *gampi* (*Wikstroemia*) fibers and recycled *kozo* with considerable clay content. This paper is soft and will hold a lot of paste, adding strength. It is also effective as a resin barrier.

C. *Kozo* in three overlapping layers.

D. A covering layer of thick *kozo*.

E. Two “floating” layers, in which only the sides are pasted, leaving the center of the sheet unattached to the layers beneath.

F. Covering layer of mid-weight *kozo*.



20 • Detail of design of printed paper for reverse of remounted *fusuma*.

#### *Covering Material for the Reverse of the Panels*



Since each panel would have a painting only on one side, it was decided that paper would be used as a material for the reverse. First, a number of patterns appropriate to the period and subject of the paintings were chosen. Many of the patterns under consideration are known through their appearance in painted handscrolls or as surviving fragments of *karakami*, colored or figured paper originally brought from China.

Kenkichi Senda of Kyoto, whose family maintains a very important collection of early woodblocks used for the printing of these papers and has a long history of printing them, was asked to make several samples using different motifs, tones, and materials.

After considering these and making a few adjustments, a pattern of paulownia and chrysanthemum emblems with surrounding interlocking key-fret lozenges (*sayagata*) was chosen. The whole design was printed in mica on a light ochre ground, on Echizen

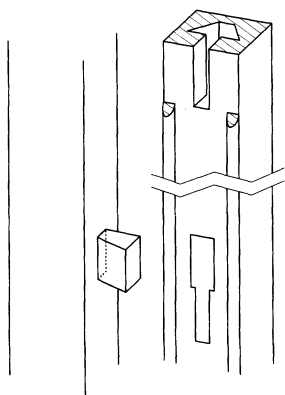


*torinoko*, a strong, heavy, large sheet with a smooth lustrous surface. Two widths of this paper were required to cover the panel. The woodblock is small, approximately 11 1/4 by 18 1/2 inches, and had to be impressed twice across the width of each sheet and seven times from top to bottom. Great precision was required in registration to match the pattern, including an overlap of about 1/8 inch, where later the two sheets would be joined.

The block was made from a variety of magnolia that produces a softer line than the wood generally used for ukiyoe prints, in which a crisper, finer line is desired. The print is issued by rubbing the block only with the hands. No rubbing pad is used. *Gofun*, or shell-white pigment, was mixed with ochre ground color and brushed on the *torinoko* paper; on this ground the woodblock pattern was impressed in mica.

### Exterior Frames

The new lacquered exterior frames must match the existing ones as closely as possible. They were made with many layers of black lacquer applied over gauze on cypress wood and finished in a very subtle semigloss. Then they were attached to the interior frame by the *inrobuchi* method and a simple slot join that does not require hammering to set. If these *fusuma* were actually to function, the pieces would have to be set as



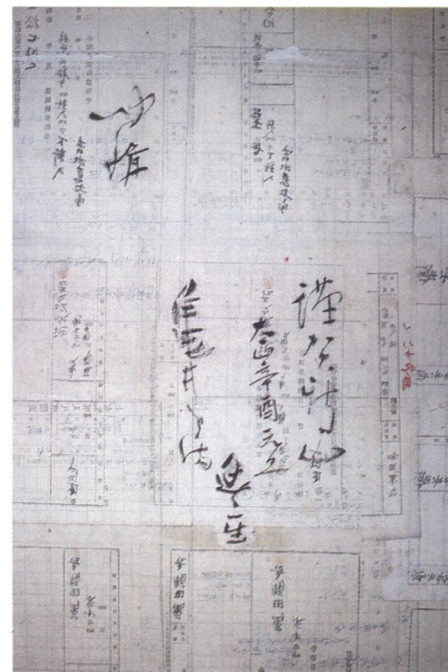
21 ■ Hikidokko join of interior frame to exterior frame.

before and hammered into place to be strong enough to slide frequently. For exhibition the *fusuma* will be lifted in and out of the tracks. The slot join allows fitting and removal of the frames when necessary, without causing shock to the paintings.

### Some Further Discoveries

In addition to the numbers written under the metalwork fittings and vestigial papers on *fusuma* 13, a military conscription notice from the thirty-seventh year of the Meiji period (1904) was found. Also uncovered, embedded in the paper layers, was the previous mounter's name, date, and the place where the mounting was done: Kamei, the year of the cock, in the Showa period (1921), Fukuoka. From this inscription we learned that the work was completed about seventy years ago. It was then that the *fusuma* were altered to fit the smaller space requirements of Ito Denuemon, who had acquired them. The metal fittings were changed at this time, as were the exterior lacquered frames. The carpentry was of a style then used in Fukuoka.

In the early 1930s the scholar Tsuchida Kyoson investigated these panels thoroughly, talking with many people who were in some way related to their history. He interviewed Ito Denuemon, who was then the owner. Tsuchida spoke also with Ito's wife and with many others who had trained at Ryōanji Temple or who had some other association with it. His findings were published in a book in 1934, following the exhibition of seventy-one *fusuma* at Osaka Castle. Research continues in order to confirm how the eight paintings now in the Metropolitan's collection first left Ryōanji Temple. Tsuchida must certainly have learned this, as most people who would have been involved were still alive at the time. But about this matter he kept silent.



22 ■ Sheet uncovered on panel 13, giving information about previous mounter.

## NOTES

### 1 (p. 6) Zen monastery *fusuma* around 1600.

*Fusuma* in gold leaf are known mainly through documents. Some survive but their original architectural settings are lost. The exception is Zuiganji in Matsushima. According to one theory, the *fusuma* there were done shortly after the temple's construction in 1609.

2 (p. 6) *Fusuma* in the *hojo*. Tsuneo Takeda has discussed the shift in the image system of the *hojo* around the turn of the 17th century. The Metropolitan's *fusuma* substantiate his theory. Tsuneo Takeda, *Kinsei Shohokiga no Kenkyu* (Studies in Japanese Screen Paintings in the 16th and 17th Centuries), Tokyo, 1983, pp. 195-200.

3 (p. 6) *Beppu and Seattle fusuma*. The Metropolitan was notified about these works by their owners, who had learned of the Museum's discovery through *The New York Times* article of December 20, 1990.

4 (p. 6) *Kano Takanobu*. Takanobu's projects for the imperial court are recorded in Kano Eino's history of Japanese paintings, *Honcho Gashi* (ca.1678), and other contemporary documents. See also Michio Fujioka, *Kyoto Gosho* (Imperial Court in Kyoto), Tokyo, 1956; and Yoshimichi Ozaki, "Kano Takanobu no Sakufu ni tsuite" (On Takanobu's Style), *Bijutsusshi*, 128, Tokyo, 1990, pp. 136-151.

5 (p. 9) *The fusuma after Ryoanji*. Investigations at Ryoanji after the Metropolitan's discovery revealed that the *fusuma* had been sold to another temple, Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, in 1895. (*Jiseki Chosa Hyo*, the Ryoanji registration report written by the abbot Usaki Ryoen in 1918.) In the meantime the scholar Hiroko McDermott found an account (dated November 3, 1895) in the diary of Mitsui Takaakira recording his interest in, but not confirming his purchase of, Kano Eitoku's *fusuma* at Ryoanji. The owner of the Beppu *fusuma* informed us that his father had bought these paintings from Ito Denuemon, the coal magnate, who was well known to have had close ties to the Mitsui conglomerate. It is highly likely that the *fusuma* went to Ito Denuemon through the intermediation of Mitsui. The Beppu owner also provided the information about the exhibition at Osaka in 1933. Its catalogue and an article on the exhibition (*Toyo Bijutsu*, 20, 1934), written by the poet and art lover Tsuchida Kyoson, had come to him along with the *fusuma* from Ito Denuemon.

6 (pp. 10-11) *Reconstruction of arrangement of Ryoanji fusuma*. The 1933 Osaka exhibition included several other panels from the Ryoanji *hojo* that are lost. The catalogue and the article in

*Toyo Bijutsu* reproduced some of them and provided a more complete reconstruction of the original arrangement. The London panels, exhibited as a complete set from a back room, postdate the other paintings by a century.

7 (p. 12) *Backing papers of fusuma*. Tarashima Tetsu, "Fusuma Byoubu no Shitabari Monjo" (Backing Papers as Historical Documents), *Museum*, 474, Tokyo, 1990, pp.25-34.

8 (p. 12) *Ryoanji in the 16th and 17th centuries*. Gensho Chugan, *Daiunsan Shiko* (History of Ryoanji), Kyoto, 1830.

9 (p. 15) *Ryoanji architecture*. Bunkacho, *Bunkazai Hogo Inkai Hokoku* (Report of the Research on Cultural Properties), no. 34, Tokyo, 1967. Bunkacho, *Shinshitei Juyo Bunkazai* (Newly Registered Important Cultural Properties), Tokyo, 1982, p. 59.

10 (p. 25) *Kano Kotonobu*. Kotonobu was recorded in the now-lost *Sho'un Hikki* (the 17th-century artist Kano Sho'un's chronicle of painters), which is listed by Asaoka Kotei in his *Koga Biko* (Tokyo, 1904, p. 1585). Aside from two other names used by Kotonobu and the fact that he died at 37, nothing else is known.

11 (pp. 27, 29) *Azuchi Castle*. Akira Naito, "Azuchi no Kenkyu" (A Study of Azuchi Castle), *Kokka*, no. 987 (Tokyo, 1976), pp.7-117; no. 988 (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 7-63.

12 (pp. 27, 29) *Thematic program of Azuchi Castle fusuma*. Ota Gyuichi, *Nobunaga-ko Ki* (Chronicle of Oda Nobunaga), ca. 1600. Republished 1969, Tokyo.

13 (p. 29) *Boom in construction of castles and palaces*. A detailed report is found in the 16th-century Jesuit missionary Luis Frois's *Historia de Japam* (unpublished manuscript; later partly published in Japanese, Tokyo, 1980).

14 (p. 31) *Neo-Confucian ideas in Azuchi Castle imagery*. Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1689*, Princeton, 1985, pp. 35-41.

15 (p. 32) *Gozan and rinka*. Takeji Tamamura, *Gozan Bungaku* (Literature of Gozan Zen Monks), Tokyo, 1955. Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: the Rinzaï Zen Monastic Institutions in Medieval Japan*, Princeton, 1981.

16 (p. 32) *Tea ceremonies and poetry gatherings at Ryoanji*. Among many elegant gatherings held at Ryoanji, the one presided over by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the second unifier of Japan, in 1588 is the most famous. Gensho Chugan, *ibid*.

17 (p. 32) *Compilations of Chinese themes*. The Nanzenji Zen monk Ishin Suden edited a thematically arranged compilation of *Gozan* monks' poems, *Kanrin Goho Shu* (ca. 1610). For the *Koso Shu*, 1619, see fig. 42.

18 (p. 35) *Design and function of Zen monastery hojo*. Mitsugu Kawakami, *Zen'in no Kenchiku* (Architecture of the Zen Monastery), Kyoto, 1968.

19 (p. 37) *Painter of Jukoin reinoma*. The paintings of the *shicchū* and *dannnanoma* are confirmed works by Kano Eitoku. All the others, including those of the *reinoma*, are traditionally attributed to his father, Kano Shōei (1519-1592).

20 (p. 40) *Eremitism in Zen monastic life*. Hiroshi Onishi, "Keiin Shochiku Zu (Cottage by a Mountain Stream)," Yoshitaka Iriya and Shujiro Shimada ed., *Zenrin Gasan*, Tokyo, 1987, pp. 216-223.

21 (p. 43) *Shoin-style architecture*. Hakutaro Ota, *Shoin Zukuri* (Shoin-style Architecture), Tokyo, 1966. Tetsuo Tamai, "Kinsei ni okeru Jukyo to Shakai" (Architecture and Society in Early Modern Japan), *Social History of Japan*, vol. 8, Tokyo, 1987.

22 (p. 44) *New canon of interior imagery in samurai castles and palaces*. Subject, format, media, and arrangement of screen paintings in public building were codified about the early 17th century and officially recorded by Kano Eino in his late 17th-century *Honcho Gashi*, which emphasizes the combination of Chinese figures, polychrome, and gold leaf for the most formal rooms.

23 (p. 46) *Back rooms at Ryoanji*. Although the 1933 Osaka exhibition included the London *fusuma* as belonging to a back room of the *hojo*, they are obviously much later.

## CHRONOLOGY

Muromachi Period:	ca. 1330-ca.1570
Momoyama Period:	ca. 1570-1610
Edo Period:	ca. 1610-1867



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Summer 1993–Spring 1994 New Series, Volume LI

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