

Author's note

For clarity regarding their source, the names of monks, monasteries, artists and artworks originating in China are given in their Chinese form, while those of Japanese origin are given in Japanese. The Chinese suffix meaning temple, *-si*, appears as *-ji* in Japanese, and its Japanese equivalent is *-tera* or *-dera*: hence such names as Tōdaiji, Hōryūji, Wakakusadera.

Chinese words for painting, *hui* and *hua*, become *e* and *ga* in Japanese. They occur frequently as suffixes in words referring to styles or techniques, and are hyphenated only in the *-e* form to avoid ambiguity in reading: *onna-e*, *tsukuri-e*, etc. Special terms are capitalized only when preceded by proper names (eg *Kara-e*, Chinese-style painting; *Nihonga*, *Yamato-e*, Japanese-style painting); proper names functioning as verbs, however (eg japanization), are not capitalized, following such precedents as romanization or pasteurization.

Introduction

This book addresses itself to those who come to Japanese art for the first time, and introduces some of the most significant artistic innovations made on Japanese soil. The aim has not been to be comprehensive; certain major aspects of art and their traditions are not covered, major traditions which can best be seen in a fuller social context, such as Nō and Kabuki theatre, dance (some deriving from ancient Polynesian origins), and the tremendous achievements of swordsmiths and makers of miniatures. Those aspects which have been selected are intended to demonstrate the breadth and resilience of Japan's artistic spirit, which has withstood successive cultural inundations from the continent and emerged highly selective, adaptable, and always fully able to rediscover its own artistic roots.

Another purpose of the book is to identify those aspects of the Japanese spirit which were developed in art forms. Artists, especially up to the Muromachi period, were often working with, and transforming, apparently incompatible foreign ideas. This seems to me a greater challenge than the unhindered development of indigenous artistic traditions. To have continually taken and transformed diverse influences (whether from Korea, China, the South Seas, Europe or America) is a unique achievement. Japanese culture in general may be likened to an oyster, opening itself up to repeated onslaughts from the ocean and transforming grains of continental grit into pearls. These transformations obviously reflect Japanese preferences; but, more importantly, they indicate a particular kind of perception: it is possible to identify the patterns of adaptation which appear when Japanese art ingests new stimuli. Because they reflect cultural or ethnic traits, these patterns remain constant despite changing period-styles.

At the same time, the swing of the Japanese psychological pendulum seems wider than that of other peoples, and this is reflected in opposing tendencies in the arts. One tendency is to mirror the external world as it is perceived (direct imitation). A mirror is held up to the world, so to speak, and keeps outsiders from penetrating the essential delicacy and emotional

vulnerability of Japanese sensibility. Seeing in Japan a mirror-likeness of himself, the outsider loses interest and ceases to threaten.

The second tendency is introspective and insular, and fosters a creative urge to unparalleled delicacy and poetic imagery. Innate potentials, fully realized, gave birth to art forms and expressions unique to Japan. One is even tempted to propose that the subtlety, poignancy and sense of vulnerability in Japanese culture in general are protected from external disturbance and survive precisely by means of the public arts.

Examples of the first, mirror-image tendency, are the Asuka-Nara periods (when whole communities of continental artisans were imported), the late Kamakura and Muromachi periods (when Japanese artists were commissioned to work in Chinese styles), the Meiji period (when vast numbers of foreign experts, this time from Europe and North America, were imported to found schools of art, and when Japanese students were sent abroad in hundreds), and finally post-second-world-war Japan, whose art tries to be indistinguishable from Western models, in spite of the cultural and social differences between Tokyo or Osaka and New York, London or Paris. It is, however, the more introspective tendencies which best reveal Japanese uniqueness and ingenuity; the range includes the arts of Jōmon man, those of the Heian, Momoyama and early Edo periods.

It could be argued that in the absence of indigenous traditions and without artistic importations from abroad, throughout Japanese history, there would have been no ideas to work on, and no Japanese art at all. There are nevertheless distinct ways in which the Japanese have reacted to foreign stimuli. These are, on the one hand, a spontaneous identification with and rapid absorption of those new ideas which struck a responsive chord in the Japanese artist, and on the other, when required by self-conscious patrons, the mastery of styles and processes which might at first seem unbridgeably alien or mysterious. Given that most artistic processes and styles had to be imported, it may be suggested that the phases of introspection, when native traditions flourished, were times when artists enjoyed greater freedom in their selection and handling of styles, while the more assertive, outward-directed phases were times when the patrons' choices were conditioned by the prestige they might gain from mirroring some external style.

Non-Japanese viewers tend to respond more readily to the introspective phases (where the art is more characteristically 'Japanese'); the assertive or public phases inevitably invite comparisons with the original models, when the Japanese version usually appears to fail. (In passing, it is interesting to note that the Emperors and the aristocracy in general have

consistently favoured indigenous and introspective tendencies in the arts.) For instance, Japanese examples of calligraphy in the regular Chinese script of *kaishu* or semi-cursive *xingshu* styles, by even the greatest monks who had lived and studied in China during the ninth and tenth centuries, cannot compare at first glance, in nobility, gravity or structural prowess, with corresponding examples by great Chinese masters. On the other hand, it is difficult for the non-Japanese to detect the 'japanization', the tendency towards a more sensuous line reflected in the Japanese hand. In Muromachi ink landscapes which reflect the Chinese Xia Gui style, connoisseurs of the Chinese prototypes lament the unhealthy appearance of the trees, the lack of solidity in the rocks and coherence in the pictorial structure, but do not see that in Japanese hands it is not the rocks and trees which represent early fifteenth-century ideals but the expansive, evocative space for which the trees and rocks serve merely as points of departure. In the same way, in the 'post-Impressionist' paintings of Sakamoto Hanjirō (1889–1956), it is not so much that his horses lack muscular structure or that his space lacks definition; what matters is the way in which his brush-strokes, oil-textures and choice of colours all help to convey a mood of autumnal gloom.

In the last twelve hundred years or so, when most imported cultural stimuli reached Japan from China, what was the response of the Japanese artist? How did he select and transform his models? These questions are some of the great fascinations of Japanese art, and the solutions found are an index to its supreme vitality and durability. For no two peoples could be more disparate. The ancestor-worshipping Chinese, for example, developed a sinewy, three-dimensional ideographic script for their monosyllabic language, and constructed a moral philosophy based on a profound respect for man and the brotherhood of all mankind. A great deal of Chinese imports to Japan thus reflect concern with continuation of lineages and permanence. The polysyllabic Japanese, on the other hand, communicates with whimsical deities through songs and dances, and his poetry is permitted the minutest emotive indulgences. With no eye on eternity, he quickens at the sight of unexpected beauty and cherishes its impermanence.

In the Heian period, aristocratic Japanese courtiers personally directed the development of indigenous art-forms and revealed their natural preference for the motifs (subdued colours, rolling contours, seasonal flowers) natural to the Yamato plains where they lived. Since these were totally unlike the 'monumental' vistas of granite peaks and vast distances characteristic of Chinese landscape-painting, the result was a transformation of Chinese source-material so profound that its Chinese origins

became irrelevant. (By contrast with this delicate art, intended for private enjoyment, public images in Heian halls of state, like the outsize murals of Chinese-style worthies ranged in strict vertical parallel, reflect the protective mirror of image-makers seeking parity with the outside world.)



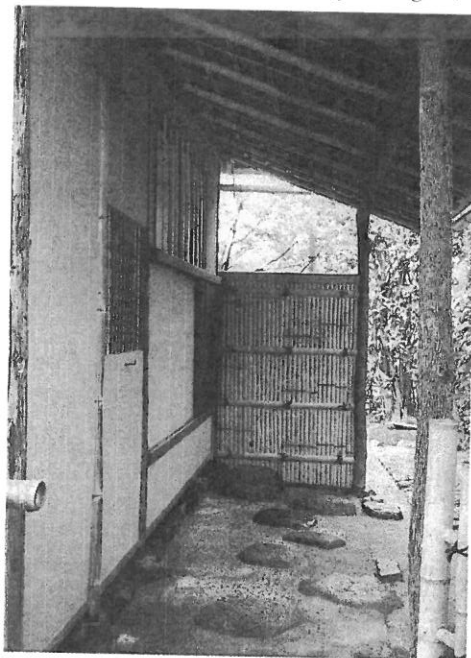
In view of their relationship, it is worth discussing in general the differences between Chinese and Japanese art. Chinese forms tend to be self-contained and relaxed, while Japanese forms are affected by the overall composition of a picture, and emotional tension charges both motifs and the space around and between them. The inward-directed motifs of Chinese paintings tend to stress solidity and depth (an effect often achieved by the complex interweaving of brushstrokes), whereas the motifs in Japanese painting, each conceived as part of a larger emotional whole, tend to reach laterally across the picture-plane in a 'layered' technique, and to be drawn together by the treatment of the intervening space. The ease and grandeur of Chinese art generate forms which are malleable: each can be slightly changed in space without disturbing the overall visual harmony. Japanese art, by contrast, is often focussed on nuances of emotion, and works tend to be so charged with tension that altering the position of any part would drastically change the overall effect.

More "classical" vs. more "natural"

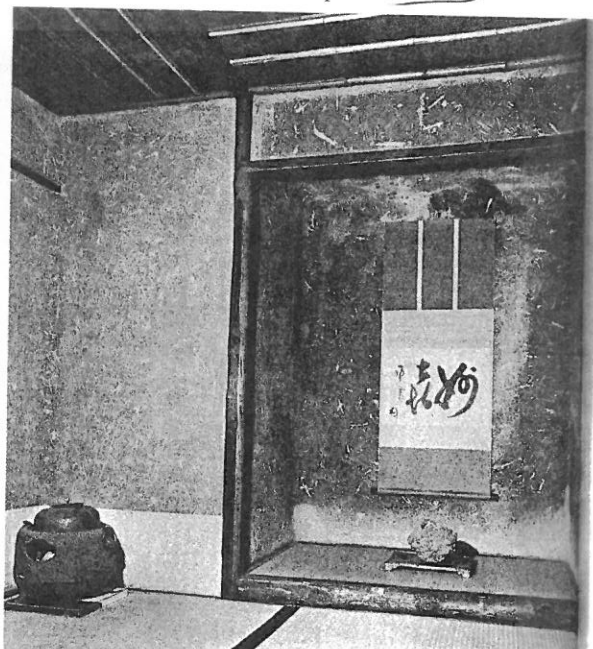
This intense feeling for texture, colour, form and space is intended to satisfy the spectator's need for emotional assurance and calm. Stepping-stones leading to a gate, for example, slow the visitor's pace. In a tea-

house interior, a feeling of calm is generated by the asymmetry of the space and the warm hues and 'woolly' textures of the surfaces. The Way of Tea in particular highlights this aspect of Japanese sensibility, where environment is structured to induce contemplation and calm, to promote a sense of social equality and brotherhood lacking in the rigid social hierarchies of the real world. Japanese critics express their preference for Korean peasant ware over the cool perfection of Chinese celadons by saying that 'the imperfect Korean bowl waits for me even when I am not at home, whereas the Chinese bowl waits for no one.' This statement reflects that perception of the inter-relationship of human beings and objects which permeates Japanese life, and which causes their 'worship of the imperfect' (i.e. the natural). A smooth celadon bowl, like the majestic Chinese landscape, is too perfect, too awesome: to the Japanese eye it seems severe, it 'waits for no one', and does not need human sympathy, 'audience participation', to visualize its innate perfection.

From the first moment we look at Japanese art, we are invited to relate in a personal way to the human qualities of imperfection built into the artwork, to the beauty of rooms with unadorned walls and textured surfaces, to artefacts like unglazed Bizen pottery, where straw wrappings have been fired to leave uneven markings on the body; we are invited to discover the strong emotive qualities of an anonymous water-jar or dish, the wit of an incense-box shaped like an actress, or the deliberate formality of a dinner-service created for a noble patron. In each case the artist gives himself wholly to the work, and reveals an unparalleled



111 Myōkian, tea house by Sen no Rikyū, 1582. Embedded stones lead to the entrance and the windows are framed by bamboo and wisteria.



112 Tai-an tea room of Myōkian tea house. (Notice recessed tokonoma alcove and two-level, cedar-board ceiling.)





awareness of his medium, to the peculiarities of which he responds in a symbiotic way. There is no boundary between planes, between art and man.

Nothing expresses a people's spirit more than its folk crafts, and Japan's mingei have dazzled art-lovers around the world. Here generosity of spirit, love of simplicity, and perception of beauty in all natural things is manifest. The simple Japanese farm-house, for example, with its rough-hewn wooden beams, unpainted walls and thatched roof, inspired the highly sophisticated, tea-house oriented sukiya architecture so influential today. In simple lacquers such as the horned wine-bucket, exactly the same kind of peasant strength and forthrightness are expressed. There is no nervousness here about symmetry or glossy surfaces; indeed, there is a relaxed sophistication often lacking in the arts of the ruling classes.

In every facet of life, the Japanese have always devoted themselves to bringing about that sense of peace and harmony, of warmth and comfort, which they feel to be an essential part of beauty. In a Japanese meal, for example, quantities which would seem alarmingly frugal to a Chinese gourmet are attractively arranged in a variety of vessels, and are served in slow and graceful sequence on lacquered trays. Quantity is not a concern.

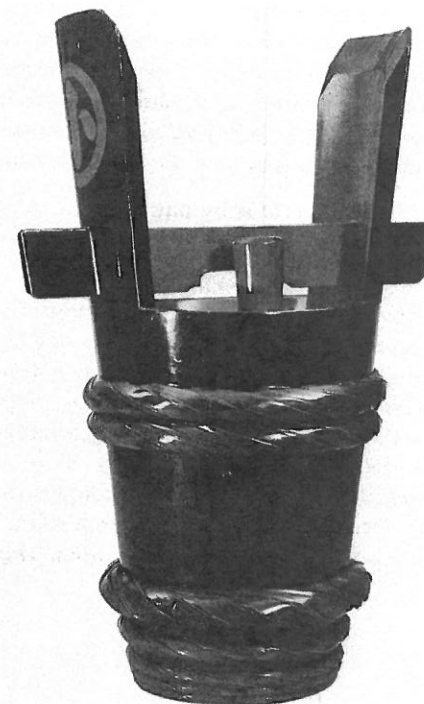
food

Instead, Japanese consciousness works through an aesthetic appreciation of the entire physical and psychological context of the meal. This includes seasonal as well as social considerations, but above all it satisfies the diner's senses. The timing of the dishes, and their appearance in bowls of varied shape, decoration and materials, are beautifully harmonized. The hungry Chinese would perhaps be astonished to realize that the feeling of satisfaction arises not from gorging oneself, but from savouring the carefully timed harmony of the food and its service (even down to matters like the waitresses' walk and gesture). Appreciation of such subtleties is essential to the enjoyment of Japanese culture in general, and of its arts in particular.

In the same way, the key to understanding the relationship of the Japanese artist or craftsman to his work lies in one word: union. Whether it be the chopstick-rest one finds in a fish restaurant, or a signed painting, one sees a particularly developed artistic sensibility at work. Painters of old caught exactly this quality of creative absorption in their depictions of carpenters, tatami floor-mat and bamboo-blind makers and mounters of paintings. In literature, the perfection of renga or linked verse is believed to come only through repeated group practice among the poets. More than in any other culture, Japanese poets incorporate each other's essence; potters incorporate the essence of the potting process (including finger-

4 *Minka*, farm-house, of the Tsubokawa family. Late 17th century.

5 Horned sake cask. Black lacquer. H. 57 cm. 19th century.



prints and kiln accidents); woodworkers or print-makers incorporate woodgrain and chisel marks as an integral and essential part of the finished work.

The artist and his materials, clay, wood or ink-brush and paper, together create the work. This factor is of paramount importance. Considerations basic to other cultures, such as personal uniqueness, the obliteration of all traces of the creative process (such as rough edges, fingerprints or chisel marks), as well as preconceived margins or the distinction of planes, are often of no importance. A six-sided Japanese box may be decorated in one continuous design which surrounds the form and unifies the planes. The common – and curious – practice in other cultures of decorating ceramic vessels in arbitrary horizontal strata is joyfully absent from Japanese ceramics, where decoration and form are aspects of a single whole.

When patrons demanded imported qualities unpalatable to Japanese taste (such as unequivocal statement, regularity, repetition, hard or shiny surfaces, equilateral symmetry, monumentality, rigid spaces in roads or rooms – in short, any qualities which stress self-sufficiency), the artist's response was usually to adjust and transform in accordance with his own feeling and personal taste. Philosophy, interest in building up in depth (whether in architectural space or dense brushstrokes on a painting surface), concepts of permanence and immutability are to a large extent alien. But these qualities are often precisely those which generated the Chinese forms which later entered Japan, and it is with this basic incompatibility in mind that we must watch Japan's genius unfold, untiringly transforming the continental model to suit its own expression. The poet Shinkei (1406–75) describes the way to artistic maturity thus (the italics are mine):

Unless a verse is by one whose very being has been transfixed
by the truth of the impermanence and change of this world,
so that he is never forgetful of it in any circumstance,
it cannot truly hold deep feeling.

Asuka and Nara (552–794)

Shintō shrines

The religious practice of the early Japanese was based on a profound sense of awe for natural manifestations such as sun, water, trees, rocks, sound and silence. Man's response to these phenomena was to purify himself and to identify sacred precincts. Much later this practice was named Shintō (Way of the Gods), to distinguish it from Buddhism which had entered Japan in the sixth century, bringing with it a full panoply of architecture, doctrine and indoor ceremonies. Although later Shintō developed its own architecture, art, clergy and forms of ritual, it is essentially an indigenous religion with neither dogma, scriptures nor form.

It seems safe to say that the earliest sacred precincts were places of particular beauty, demarcated by rudimentary stone boundaries and by simple, pre-architectural monuments (such as rock piles surmounted by stones) indicating the places where sacred presences were first sensed. Monuments of this kind still survive in the precincts of the Ise Jingū. Here worship took its purest form, in total silence with no ritual. (Construction of the earliest Shintō shrines seems related to palace architecture of the Tumulus period, and is characterized by simplicity of both form and material.) In the Ise Jingū precinct, a raised-floor building with a giant thatched gable supported by nine huge pillars is reached by an outside ladder, set at a steep angle. (Reconstructions of another ancient site, Izumo Taisha, in western Japan, facing Korea, suggest a particular sense of mystery and also the intimacy, darkness and warmth associated with the sacred domain of the spirit or *kami*. The worshipper climbs a long flight of steps and, once inside the hall, proceeds beyond the central pillar and turns right to the innermost quadrant before reaching the *sanctum sanctorum*. All this is in marked contrast to the foursquare centrality of Buddhist architecture, where icon images dominated huge open spaces in stone-paved, ground level monastic halls.)

The Ise Jingū, on the eastern coast, is both the ancestral shrine of the imperial family and the national shrine. It has been rebuilt every twenty years since the reign of Emperor Temmu (reigned 672–686), fifty-nine



15 Izumo Taisha Shintō shrine (rebuilt 1744), showing covered stairway (and Main Sanctuary with deep thatch).

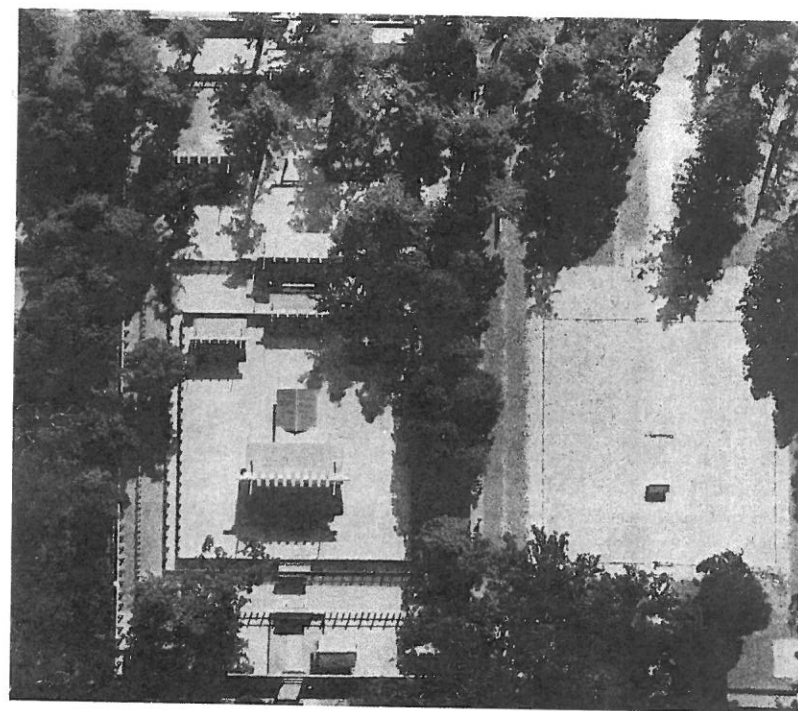
16 (opposite) Aerial view of Ise Jingū showing Naikū's two sectors. Site dates from the 4th century.

times altogether by 1973. The space is dominated by two compounds, the western Naikū and the eastern Gekū, thought to have been first built in the fourth and late fifth centuries respectively. They are dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami (Heaven-illuminating Great Spirit, the daughter of Izanagi no Mikoto), traditional ancestor of the imperial house, and to Toyoukeno Ōkami (Great Spirit of Food Abundance and grandson of Izanagi no Mikoto, provider of the Five Grains). The site is among tall evergreens near the Isuzu River; its cool stillness is broken only by the clatter of cleanwashed pebbles underfoot, and it is said to have been chosen by Amaterasu herself, in an apparition to Princess Yamato early in the first century AD.

Each compound is divided into an eastern and western sector; when one sector is in use, the other is kept empty, white and still, with its ground-covering of pebbles. Each compound is rectilinear, enclosed by four layered wooden fences. The buildings are aligned along the central north-south axis, beginning with thatched and gabled gates set into the southern fences. The main sanctuary (or *shōden*), three bays wide and two bays deep, is poised aloft on a structure of pillars and surrounded by a covered veranda. The approach is by a stairway leading to the central bay. Some

elements, such as alignment, the layered enclosure and the metal decorative accents may be later features incorporated from continental architecture, but distinguishing native characteristics remain: the roof with its forked finials pointing skywards at either end, the heavy ridge course topped by cylindrical, tapered billets laid crosswise along the ridge, and the main pillars which are embedded directly in the ground, not set in foundations. The general impression is of abstract design, of planes, angles, circles in simple but dynamic interaction. The natural colours and textures of the wood and pebbles are not sullied; the effect is warm; the atmosphere is one of intimacy and awe.

In spite of the arrival and dominance of Buddhism, Shintō shrines continued to be built in serene woods and beside quiet shores, and were later often incorporated into Buddhist compounds, representing as they did local manifestations of universal Buddhist values. Shintō silence, its simplicity and its direct yet undefined interaction between man and nature or spirits are characteristic Japanese additions to, or modifications of, imported religion, just as the same qualities modify imported art.



The scene is packed with multiple actions some of which are simultaneous, some sequential. It is a far more complex conception than the crowd scenes in *Ban Dainagon* or *Shigisan Engi*, where focus tended to be on a single action. The pace is more urgent and the action moves purposefully from right to left, in spite of vignettes (like film 'freeze frames'), which face right. The figures are grouped in triangles or in lozenges which culminate in a point; single figures lead from each group to the next. This spatial organization allows swift visual comprehension and thus quickens the pace. Unlike the caricatures of twelfth-century scrolls which often resort to exaggeration and caricature, thirteenth-century narratives stress physical realism. Like its literature, Kamakura painting was action-packed and spirited, dealing with real moments, with no allusions to other times or themes. The fire, for example, is seen in several time-lapses, from its explosive outburst to the tongues of flame licking the adjoining roofs and then to the smoke-filled, red clouds rising heavenwards, bringing a fall-out of burning cinders. (These last were made by flicking a paint-charged brush across the wrist, covering the paper with red dots.) At the centre of the fire the heat is most intense and the flames are painted sharp and straight, devouring the charred beams. Patronage has changed from the courtly Fujiwara to the martial Minamoto, and the arts sensitively reflect the shift in aesthetics.

Kana calligraphy: onnade

The Japanese regard the development and perfection of their indigenous calligraphy style as the quintessence of the Heian contribution to art. This achievement is all the more remarkable because of the unbridgeable differences between Chinese and Japanese speech, poetry and attitudes towards written script. Between the ninth and eleventh centuries an ingenious system of adapting Chinese characters was evolved, and in the hands of courtiers developed into an expression of the highest order.

Since prehistoric times, the Chinese had shown a need and respect for the art of writing. Ideographic units, either pictographs or ideographs, evolved, each representing a specific idea. They are monosyllabic and were first used only by diviner-scribes of the priestly shaman kings such as the Shang kings (fourteenth century BC) to communicate with ancestral spirits. Later, the deeds of Zhou nobles were recorded and writing was widely adopted as a means of recording such things as military orders, history and poetry. Chinese verse uses couplets or quatrains of four, five or seven syllables; symmetry is bilateral: that is, nouns, verbs or adjectives, contrasting or paired, appear in comparable positions in the

respective phrases and thus, when inscribed, occur side by side in vertical columns, written from top to bottom and ranging from right to left. By the time Chinese script appeared in Japan in the fifth century AD, by way of Korea, it was twenty centuries old and standardized.

The Japanese, on the other hand, throughout their millennia of ceramic history, had been content with an oral transmission of poetry and legends in songs and dances. The need for written documents was felt only with the advent of a centralized government and its diplomacy. In the fifth century, Chinese books on Confucian classics, the histories and literary selections began to enter Japan and from the sixth century onwards, Buddhist sutras, written in Chinese, also became known. In the late sixth century, Prince Shōtoku had the articles of state of his newly constructed government written down in Chinese, which was learned by the ruling classes. China had come to be regarded as the source of all civilization.

Chinese is linguistically alien to the Japanese speaker and its mastery by an adult required then, as it does now, prodigious effort. To use the Chinese writing system to transcribe the Japanese language was an even more formidable task. Chinese is monosyllabic and non-inflected while Altaic-Tungusic Japanese is polysyllabic and agglutinative with a great variety of suffixes for verbs and adjectives. In the first written history of Japan, Chinese syntax prevailed. In the histories compiled in 712 and 720, Japanese names were transcribed syllable for syllable, using Chinese characters of approximately equivalent sound value, just as the Chinese themselves had once transcribed the Indian names of Buddhist deities. But whereas the Chinese remained faithful to their original transcription of Sanskrit or other alien sounds, the Japanese delighted in the myriad visual puns made possible by substituting one of several (visual) Chinese characters for the same (aural) syllable. At first they resolutely refused to relate the fifty-one syllable sounds of the Japanese language to fifty-one standard Chinese characters.

This method of transcription was based on what has come to be called the *on-yomi* or phonographic system of sound value. Here the Chinese pictograph for fish would be read *wu* (the contemporary reading along the South China coast) and was used as a phonetic element of a polysyllabic word. The ideographic system was called *kun-yomi*, and here the pictograph for fish would be given its Japanese sound value, *sakana*, and would mean fish. Early Japanese writing used both systems, as seen in the first poetry anthology, the *Manyōshū*, which contains 4,500 poems written prior to 760 AD. But due to the complex and deliberately irregular method of transcription, some of the poems remain unsolved textual puzzles to this day.

64 Suzumushi II, detail from *The Tale of Genji* scrolls. Ink, colours on paper. Early 12th century. (See p. 82)

65 Yakuō Bosatsu Honjibon, detail from *Heike Nōgyō* handscrolls. Ink, colours on paper, with kirigane decoration. c. 1164. (See p. 85)

From the ninth century, Japanese writers began to replace this cumbersome method with a syllabic system in which various preferred Chinese characters were reduced to a few strokes each and read only for sound values. Its angular *katakana* form was derived from the formal Chinese *kaishu* script and was used in Japan for official documents, Buddhist sutras and printing; its cursive, *hiragana* form, came from the informal Chinese draft script, *caoshu*. This was a tremendous step forward. The Japanese language with its polysyllabic cadences and long vowel stresses, so conducive to recitation and singing, was at last provided with a written equivalent based on sounds and not concepts.

The *katakana* syllabary was used for phonetic glosses to Chinese texts and for Japanese written in the Chinese *kun* system but needing suffixes, while the *hiragana* system was developed for use in transcribing Japanese poetry (*waka*), for the writing of personal letters and for new literary forms such as romances and diaries. Men thought it was unbecoming for women to struggle with Chinese learning and it became a tacit social taboo for women to be seen holding a book in Chinese. Thus men engaged in Chinese studies and used Chinese script for their Chinese and Japanese poetry, whereas women wrote only in Japanese. Their *hiragana* style of calligraphy came to be called *onnade* (feminine hand). By the late eleventh century, as Fujiwara culture was reaching its peak, *onnade* achieved unsurpassed internal balance and grace. The example shown here is the so-called *masu-shikishi* calligraphy, and recalls the pristine purity of the sculpture and murals of the Phoenix Hall. There is no trace of Chinese origin or of the extravagant flourishes to come. The writing was inscribed with a finely pointed brush usually held upright. The diagonal swings do not detract attention from a steady vertical axis which is never actually touched. Balance and dynamic energy are maintained in elements of different sizes, in the contrast between light and dark, in column alignment and in the density and openness of the internal spirals. Furthermore, the work shows creative originality and expressiveness which are never allowed to interfere with legibility.

The thirty-one syllable poem by Kiyohara no Fukayabu is transcribed below, line by line, as it appears in the calligraphy:

natsu no yo wa mada yoi na-	summer night still dusky and
gara akenuru wo kumo	yet day breaks: oh! clouds
no izukoni	somewhere among them
tsuki kakuru	the moon is hiding
ra-n	perhaps

The thin night air of summer is expressed in the fine lines of the first column. The artist breaks the word *nagara* (and yet) to gain power and momentum in the second column, where his brush tip is freshly charged with more ink and applied with firmer pressure. The letters *a-ke-nu* of the word *akenuru* (daybreak) literally expand, breaking apart, the *ke* occupying about four times the width of the preceding *nagara*. 'Daybreak' thus actually overlaps the *no izuko* (somewhere) of the next column, recreating the clouds which cover the moon at dawn.

This poem demonstrates simultaneous confidence in verbal and visual imagery. Not only are the phonetic elements, the *kana*, in a non-uniform size, but the inscription does not even conform to the internal metre of the poem. An oral recitation of it would produce the following linear arrangement:

natsu no yo wa	summer night
mada yoi nagara	still dusky but already
akenuru wo	dawn breaks. Oh!
kumono izukoni	somewhere amidst the clouds
tsuki kakuru ra-n	surely the moon hides

However, the calligrapher has treated his task in visual, not aural terms. This freedom from extraneous considerations is an essentially Japanese quality. In Chinese calligraphy, the column length, once established, must be maintained. If a Chinese poet had written out the above poem in Japanese *kana* script, he would have either used lines of equal length and broken the metre or he would have reproduced the recitation pattern shown above. The Japanese poet has broken the lines for visual effect. The V-shaped silhouette with serrated edges represents the clouds parting, with the short, lowest (third) column emerging in a moon-like circle.

This poem was one of a pair written in an album format and later mounted separately on cards (*shikishi*). Such creative inscriptions of poetry took various forms. These included *tsugi-shikishi* where two contrasting sheets of paper provided the background for two poems and large or small *shikishi*, boards mounted with plain or decorated paper, which by the early twelfth century had to rival *tsukuri-e* painting itself in sumptuousness, as may be seen in the narrative sections of the *Genji* scrolls.

Eleventh century calligraphy paper was usually white or light blue; sutras, exceptionally, were done in Chinese block script, in gold paste on an indigo ground. Japanese paper designs, for poetry or prose, became ever more complicated. The material could be dyed before manufacture; the paper itself could be dyed or painted with colour and then sprinkled with cloudy, misty shapes. Other methods involved the imprinting of ink figures, gold or silver patterns, *kirigane* metal flakes, hair-fine metal slivers (*noge*) and metal dust (*sunago*). Colours included various hues of red, violet, indigo, blue, white, yellow, brown and green. Heian paper often imitated Chinese Tang and Song patterns and used the same woodblock printing techniques.

The high, bird's-eye-view perspective of vast expanses with low-lying hillocks and meandering streams, often associated with Heian landscape painting and paper decoration, had been long considered a Japanese contribution. However, Egami Yasushi has recently pointed out that such perspective is rare in Japanese works prior to the importation in 1073 of a set of Buddhist commentaries written out by the Chinese Emperor Song Taizong (he reigned 976–997) and illustrated by fifty Northern Song artists, and then made into woodblock printed editions. The imported book is a Korean copy but faithfully preserves the Song perspective and marked diagonality. While these characteristics were abandoned in China in succeeding ages, they took root in Heian Japan and contributed features to the *Yamato-e* tradition which persevere to this day.

Chinese motifs on calligraphy paper included the so-called 'Chinese grasses', bamboos, sparrows and lions, but Japanese motifs soon appeared, many of which are still favoured today. They include rabbits in autumn grasses, deer, flowing water (a motif traceable to Yayoi times), cherry blossoms, peaches, wild chrysanthemum and waves. Collage, where sheets torn or cut on the diagonal formed colourful designs, also became fashionable. Some papers were further decorated by painting: this provided underdrawing for the calligraphy.

Almost all Heian secular arts, picture scrolls, screens or lacquer decoration and fan paintings contain direct or indirect literary references. Calligraphy is naturally the most literature-based form of all. The *Sanjūrokunin ka shū* (Anthology of the Thirty-Six Poets) was produced in the early twelfth century and marks the highest achievement in the crafts of paper making and decoration. It is thought that this collection of hundreds of poems, inscribed by twenty calligraphers, was intended as a tribute to the retired Emperor Shirakawa on his sixtieth birthday in 1112. The following example is by Minamoto no Shigeyuki (died 1000):

eda wakanu

haru ni a(h)edomo

mumore

gi wa

Moemo masarade

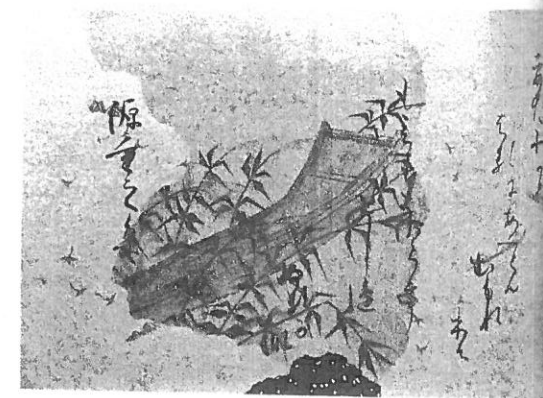
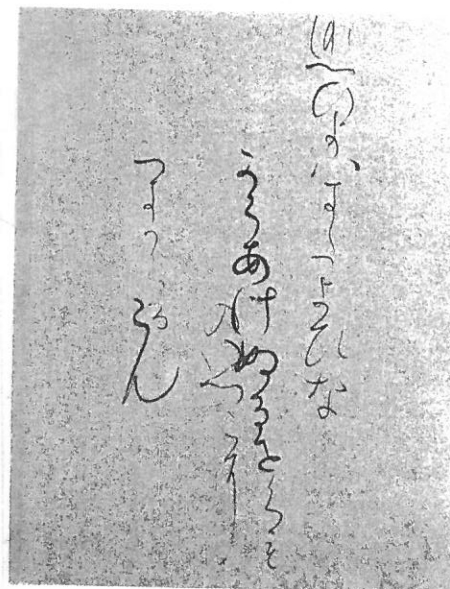
toshi he-

nuruka-

na

Although the buried log
encounters Spring, when
branches emerge undivided
How many years has it
passed without greening!

The poem may refer to a mature woman, symbolized by the buried log, who has seen yet another spring come and go, bringing a loveless summer. It is painted in mica and ink upon collage-decorated paper. In the centre, an abandoned boat (a standard summer subject) is half hidden by reeds. It is painted on a torn fragment of paper inserted between two lighter coloured pieces, as if it were not of the same world. Above turbulent mica waves, tiny ink birds scatter and a small boat carrying two figures heads toward a minuscule island. The calligraphic alignment of the

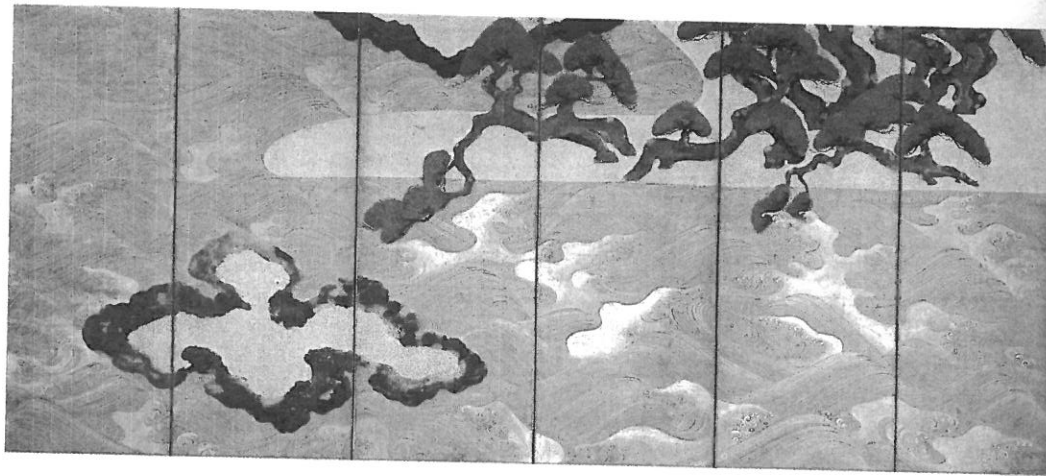


68 (left) *Onnade* calligraphy from one of the *Masu-shikushi* set of calligraphies. *Shikishi* album leaf. Late 11th century. (See p. 99)

69 (above) Calligraphy fragment from the *Shigeyukishū* collection from the *Sanjūrokunin ka shū*. c. 1112.

poem follows the speech cadences, and complex Chinese characters are used to end the piece with a firm masculine flourish. In weighted and measured wrist pressure the calligrapher seems to have inscribed the secret agonies of the *waka* poem as if writing an official edict.

The calligraphy here differs in several respects from that of the previous example. It is not in the *onnade* or *hiragana* form of phonetic symbols, but in the more Chinese-oriented *sōgana* form, where syllables are mostly made of cursive forms of fuller Chinese characters. Secondly, the calligrapher pressed down more on his brush and slanted it from time to time to change the width of the strokes. There is no longer the continuity and flow of the late eleventh century nor the internal balance. The writing reveals self-conscious linkages between words and tight turns around the loops. The calligraphy occupies slightly more than half the double album-leaf format, with the literary source written out completely in Chinese in the last column. However, the Chinese characters are written with the same flowing quality and emphasis on lateral movement along the writing surface as Japanese Kana syllabary. The extensive decoration of the paper restricts the calligrapher's freedom in applying his script. There is a link with the heightened, indirectly expressed emotion of *onna-e* painting. At first glance, the calligraphy is stately and calm but the agitation betrayed in the second line, *haru ni aedomo* (though encountering Spring), shows that it is not a straightforward summer boating song but is resonant with unfulfilled emotions. The harsh breaks within *eda - wa - kanu* in the first column and in *haru - ni - a(h)edomo* in the second are stark and sudden like deals of thunder on a rainless summer day.

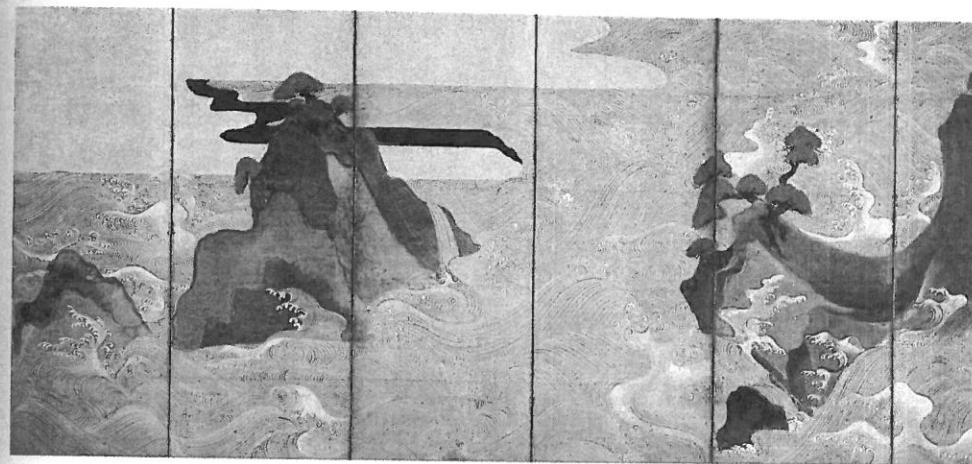


108, 109 *Matsushima (Pine Island)* by Tawaraya Sōtatsu. Double six-panel screen; ink and colours on gold paper. Early 17th century.

The Way of Tea

Perhaps to counter his tendency to extravagance, Hideyoshi engaged as his mentor the most distinguished tea-master of the wealthy Sakai merchant class, Sen no Rikyū (1521–91). Rikyū's spartan views on the Way of Tea have since had a profound influence on both 'tea architecture' and on Japanese aesthetics as a whole.

Drinking tea in quiet surroundings had been instituted by the fifteenth-century tea-master Shukō in the time of the aesthete Shōgun Yoshimasa. He invented the ceremony of tea as an art form to be enjoyed in a small room specially designed for it, containing selected 'tea' paintings, calligraphy scrolls or Chinese celadons. Sen no Rikyū eschewed the jade-like perfection of celadons and favoured rough-textured and irregular peasant ware. He promoted spiritual ideals of 'harmony, respect, purity and tranquillity' and in 1582 built his tea room, the Tai-an, in a hut in his native Yamazaki. This small cedar structure is simple and rustic, based on asymmetric and irregular forms, with rough-textured earthen walls, unpolished, exposed beams, a cedar-board covered ceiling of two levels and papered windows of different shapes set at different heights above the seated guests' heads. The guest was invited to leave his worldly concerns outside with his sword, to crawl into the teahouse by the waist-high wriggling-in-opening (*nigiri guchi*), and to enter the warm, dark and



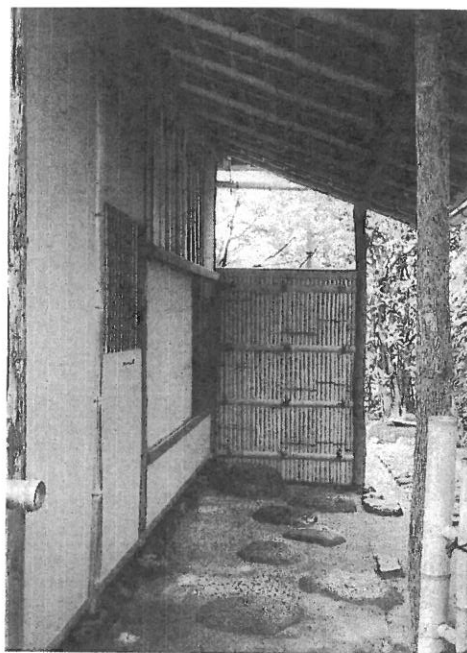
intimate atmosphere. In this timeless world, friends commune, collected, at ease and in close proximity where the tea master's every move becomes one's own. In a recessed alcove, the host might choose to focus attention on a specially treasured art work or on an allusive floral arrangement which may induce 'spiritual one-pointedness'. To this day tea men maintain that it is a unique aesthetic experience which integrates the spirit of Zen, the beauty of art and of mundane things.

For his tea bowls, Rikyū commissioned the tile maker Chōjirō (1516–92) to produce *raku* ware. His rejection of Song celadons in favour of simple peasant ware produced the aesthetic which Okakura Tenshin has termed 'Japan's worship of the imperfect'. The irregular glaze, shape and decoration of *raku* was intended to echo the asymmetry of the teahouse as a whole; it was also felt that dazzling decoration on pottery would break the contemplative mood. Chōjirō's celebrated tea bowl *Katsujishi* is typical. It has a straight edge but an irregular mouth and foot, tapers slightly at the sides and rises upwards from the base to allow a clear view

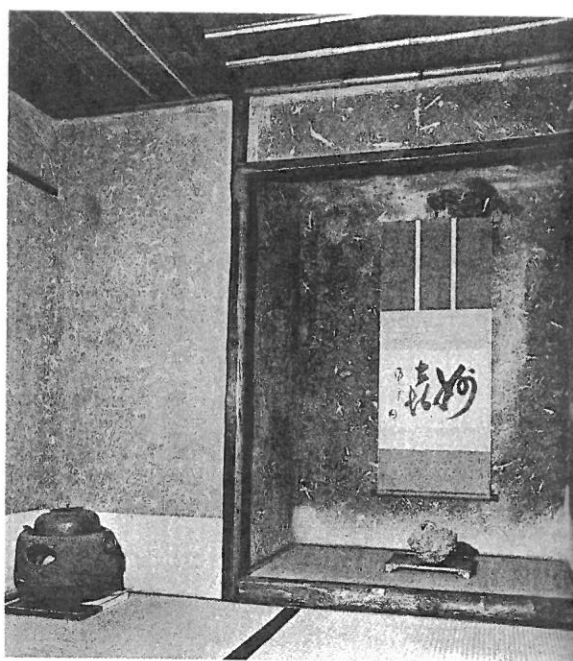
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110 *Katsujishi*, *raku* ware tea-bowl by Tanaka Chōjirō. Black slip glaze. H. 8.8, diam. 10.9 cm. 16th century.





111 *Myōkian*, tea house by Sen no Rikyū, 1582. Embedded stones lead to the entrance and the windows are framed by bamboo and wisteria.



112 *Tai-an* tea room of *Myōkian* tea house. (Notice recessed *tokonoma* alcove and two-level, cedar-board ceiling.)

of the foot-rim. The entire bowl is glazed in a dull matt black slip of irregular density, permitting the body's buff colour to lighten the tone in certain areas and to highlight its rough, pitted quality.

Although the smallness of Rikyū's *Tai-an* tea room did not have lasting influence, the *sukiya* style of architecture based on its aesthetic developed into a major tradition which eventually extended to domestic architecture, with or without a teahouse. Like *onna-e* painting, *onnade* calligraphy and *waka* poetry, the teahouse was a personal art form, catering to the intense Japanese need for the preservation of the private self as distinct from the public face. Both demand expression in art forms as in life styles. (Hideyoshi himself reflects the extremes. At one moment he would indulge in public displays of wealth and in the next he would crawl humbly into the darkness and intimacy of Rikyū's teahouse.)

The contrast between public and private architecture is nowhere better seen than in the ostentatious vulgarity of the shōgunal Nikkō Tōshōgū on the one hand and the pure taste of the detached imperial villa Katsura on the other. Both date from the early seventeenth century. The first



113 *Yōmei-mon* (Sunlight Gate), Nikkō Tōshōgū in Nikkō. Early 17th century.

114 *Katsura*, villa and garden of Prince Hachijō Toshihito. 1642.

