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# The Samurai and Genji monogatari (The Tale of Genji)

Seven centuries of military rule in Japan, from 1185 to 1868, began when the Kamakura shogunate replaced the imperial government, and a new literary genre of martial epics emerged along with it. Three stories—*Heike monogatari* (The tale of the Heike), *Hōgen monogatari* (The tale of the Hōgen), and *Heiji monogatari* (The tale of the Heiji)—describe the withering of Heian courtly power; the emergence of strong yet transitory Heike military rulers; and the final, radical shift from imperial rule in Kyoto to the military rule of the first shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), in Kamakura. Two monumental works—*Heike*, and the fourteenth-century *Taiheiki* (The chronicle of great peace) about the civil war between the northern and southern courts—were particularly favored by samurai and became popular subjects for narrative illustration.

The military government was fraught with constant power struggles as it tried to control the imperial and aristocratic communities. Throughout the four centuries of the Heian period, emperors and the imperial regime had established a strong tradition of courtly politics and culture in Kyoto. To escape this influence, Minamoto (Genji) no Yoritomo based the new capital in Kamakura, an unsophisticated location far to the east of Kyoto. Yoritomo's sons, however, favored Kyoto, and his son Sanetomo (1192–1219) learned *waka* poems through letters from Kyoto's prolific aristocratic poet, Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241). Despite both the move to Kamakura and the machinations of the military Hōjō family, who wanted to establish a samurai regime strictly separate from Kyoto, court culture nonetheless permeated the samurai community. It also played an important role for samurai rulers, who, through the practice of aristocratic arts, authenticated their families as descendants of prestigious aristocratic ancestors and established political stability.

The polarized concepts of court culture and military culture have led to the mistaken belief that the samurai community favored only heroic tales and illustrations of war. In fact, the samurai cleverly manipulated court culture to confirm their rule. This essay will elucidate how the shogun and the samurai exploited aristocratic culture through the centuries, with particular focus on a classical work of literature, *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*).

## Genji monogatari (The Tale of Genji)

The most representative example of courtly romantic literature is *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*),<sup>1</sup> the world's first novel, written by Lady Murasaki in the early eleventh century. Even as she was writing it, the work received attention from the aristocratic community. *Genji* was more than a popular and entertaining work of literature: from its encyclopedic descriptions of court behavior, elite men and women learned ceremonial activities, cultural aesthetics and taste, and even moral lessons, all based on the idealized lives of the characters, it was considered essential reading. The intricate narrative reflects the tangled psychological situations of the characters and invites readers to interpret their thoughts and emotions.

*The Tale of Genji*, consisting of fifty-four chapters, describes the amorous life of Hikaru Genji (the Shining Genji), a man of physical beauty and cultivated taste. His father was the emperor and his mother was the emperor's favorite concubine, who died when he was a child. After learning from a Korean physiognomist that his son would have a more successful life as a high-ranking commoner than as an imperial prince, the emperor changed the boy's surname to Genji and he was no longer considered a member of the imperial family. The narrative presents Genji's rich relationships with women as well as his political rivals, and it extends to the romantic lives of his son Kaoru (actually the child of Genji's wife and Kashiwagi, a young courtier) and his grandson, Prince Niou. He also had another son from his secret affair with Lady Fujitsubo, a concubine of his emperor father. This son eventually became the emperor Reizei, and he later bestowed on Genji the same rank as an abdicated emperor, confirming the physiognomist's prediction that he would attain more power as a commoner.

Historical documentation clearly indicates that samurai rulers were enthusiastic about *The Tale of Genji* and patronized the production of illustrations based on its scenes.<sup>2</sup> Originally, the Minamoto and Hōjō military government in Kamakura tried to avoid the court culture of the former capital Kyoto. After Prince Munetaka (1242–1274) was appointed from Kyoto to be the Kamakura shogun, however, a cultural group formed, centered around the novel and Prince Munetaka, the new shogun. In current scholarship, that circle is referred to as the Kamakura *Genji*. Munetaka commissioned an ambitious series of paintings of *Genji* scenes that were pasted to folding

screens.<sup>3</sup> The Kamakura *Genji* circle also produced a commentary on the tale entitled *Suigenshō*. At that time, even though the powerful Hōjō Sanetoki of the Kamakura regime was against the trappings of court culture like the Tale of Genji, because of the formation of the circle, he could not avoid ordering a copy of the most authoritative *Genji* text, the Kawachi version.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that there were frequent cultural activities planned around the novel in the Kamakura capital.

Numerous commentaries on *Genji* were written during the Nanbokuchō period (the fourteenth century). These advocated various interpretations of the text, and they were used to justify the establishment of the Ashikaga military regime, which would rule through the late sixteenth century by successfully unifying imperial and military powers. The most notable of these commentaries was *Hokaiishō*, a compilation by Yotsutsuji Yoshinari that was produced for the second shogun, Ashikaga Yoshiakira.

The Ashikaga military rulers clearly manipulated the interpretations and commentaries to identify themselves with the Genji family. In an ambitious plan, the third shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408), promoted his wife to be the mother of the emperor and forced the emperor to adopt his second son, Yoshitsugu, as prince. To re-create the imagined world of *Genji* during the emperor's visit to his palace, Yoshimitsu hosted a ceremony in which Yoshitsugu performed the *seigaiha* (dance of the blue waves); this was the same dance that Hikaru Genji had performed for his father. Like Hikaru Genji, Yoshitsugu was a handsome and cultivated man, and Yoshimitsu hoped that his son would become the next emperor. However, Yoshimitsu suddenly died in 1408, preventing the plan from coming to fruition. Much later, around 1665, the Edo-period shogun also had the *seigaiha* performed with a similar purpose: to demonstrate the shogun's power and suppress the power of the court.

For Ashikaga warriors, *Genji* was not only an ideal model of political achievement but also an encyclopedia of history, culture, and customs. Shiba Yoshimasa (1350–1410), an important retainer of Yoshimitsu's, considered the novel to be a kind of textbook for family behavior. In 1383, he wrote *Chikumashō* (Bamboo stilt anthology), in which he instructed his family and descendants to memorize both *Genji* and *Makura no sōshi* (The pillow book), an eleventh-century work of classical literature by Lady Sei Shōnagon.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the imperial family always admired the world of *Genji*. In the fifteenth century, Prince Fushimi Sadafusa tried to re-create the idealized world of *Genji* at the Muromachi court in Kyoto in an attempt to reestablish imperial power. Sadafusa's son, who was adopted by Emperor Go-Komatsu, later became Emperor Go-Hanazono. As father of the emperor, Sadafusa saw his power and influence increase, similar to Hikaru Genji's increase in rank after his son became Emperor Reizei. Sadafusa, for example, often requested permission to view and sometimes borrow treasured artworks, such as narrative scrolls, from the imperial depository at Rengeōin temple.<sup>6</sup> According to Sadafusa's diary, *Kanmon gyōki*, Sadafusa borrowed a pair of folding screens from the emperor and displayed them during Tanabata, an annual event celebrating the meeting of two celestial deities, the cowherd and the weaver girl. The diary states that the background of the screens was painted to resemble flowing water. Fans illustrated with scenes from *Genji* were then mounted on the screens, making it appear as if they were floating on water.<sup>7</sup>

Harvard Art Museums<sup>8</sup> owns one of the earliest complete sets, albums of illustrations and calligraphic excerpts of *The Tale of Genji*. Originally, these illustrations might have been pasted onto folding screens, similar to the fans mentioned above and the series of *Genji* illustrations commissioned by Prince Munetaka in Kamakura. The set now in the Harvard collection was originally commissioned in 1510 by Sue Saburō, a samurai and principal retainer of Lord Ōuchi of Suō (presently in Yamaguchi Prefecture), a prosperous daimyo. Sue commissioned the work from Tosa Mitsunobu, the head of the Tosa painting school, and he asked Sanjōnishi Sanetaka, a courtier and the most prolific *Genji* scholar of that time in Kyoto, to coordinate the production with Mitsunobu. According to scholar Melissa McCormick, Sue commissioned the set because he wanted to possess an imagined courtly world of the capital's culture, and he specifically chose episodes that depicted "scenes in and around the capital."<sup>9</sup>

In *Sanetaka kō-ki* (Diary of Sanjōnishi Sanetaka), McCormick found evidence that Sue frequently visited Sanetaka, and that he asked the scholar to find calligraphers in the court to work on the *Genji* set.<sup>10</sup> During a recent restoration of the Harvard albums, important documentation was discovered on the set itself that corresponded with McCormick's findings in the diary. On the back of

each album is a list of the calligraphers who produced the work: six courtiers were involved, including the prince Fushimi Kunitaka. The album leaf shown here is from chapter 7, "Beneath the Autumn Leaves" (Momoji no Ga), in which Genji and his best friend Tō no Chūjō perform the *seigaiba* (fig. 1). The calligrapher, Prince Fushimi, orchestrated the flowing and elegant strokes of the characters so that they are aesthetically pleasing diagonally as well as vertically. In the illustration, the two young gentlemen dance while four musicians play in the foreground and three courtiers watch from the veranda. The splendor of the scene is enhanced by the motifs in the middle ground: a colorful ceremonial curtain and red autumn trees.

An Edo-period album of *The Tale of Genji* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, though incomplete, also reveals the long tradition of an elegant, courtly aesthetic. An episode from chapter 20, "Morning Glories" (Asagao), is depicted with exquisite calligraphy, on elegant gold and silver decorated paper, gracefully arranged in unusual diagonal bands (fig. 2). In the painting, the characters are sweetly rendered as paper doll-like figures in rich colors. The text, an excerpt from the novel, reads:

Genji had the page girls go down and roll a snowball. Their charming figures and hair gleamed in the moonlight, while the bigger, more knowing ones were lovely in their varied, loosely worn gowns and their night service wear with the sashes half undone; meanwhile their hair, far longer than their gowns, stood out strikingly against the white of the snow.<sup>11</sup>

This scene illustrates an unhappy moment. Murasaki has just discovered that Genji had approached Asagao, a princess and former love interest who had rejected him, and the two are having a melancholy evening while the maidservants enthusiastically make a snowball. The pair of mandarin ducks on the pond, a symbol of romantic fidelity, contrasts with the couple's state of mind. Clouds and bands of mist rendered in gold leaf cover portions of the illustration and focus attention on the narrative scene in the center.

Sanjōnishi Sanetaka's diary provides additional evidence of samurai sponsorship of works involving *The Tale of Genji* during the sixteenth century. According to an entry from 1509, Asakura Sadakage, a provincial lord of Echizen (present-day



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

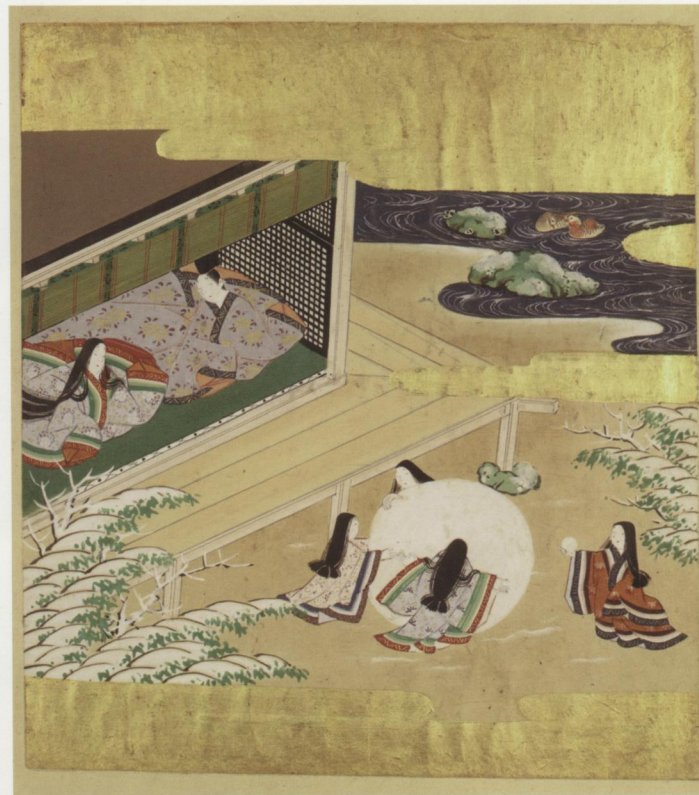


Fig. 1  
Tosa Mitsunobu (Japanese, 1434–1525), calligraphy by Prince Fushimi Kunitaka, *Beneath the Autumn Leaves (Momoji no Ga)*, illustration from chapter 7 of *The Tale of Genji* Album, Muromachi period, 1509–1510

The seventh of a series of 54 painted album leaves mounted in an album with calligraphic excerpts; ink, color, and gold on paper; 9 1/2 x 7 1/8 in. (24.1 x 18.1 cm). Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of the Hofer Collection of the Arts of Asia, 1985.352.7



Fig. 2  
Attributed to Tosa school painter, calligraphy attributed to Shōren-in Sonjun Shinnō (Japanese, 1581–1653), *Morning Glories (Asagao)*, chapter 20 of *The Tale of Genji* Album, Edo period, 17th century. One of a set of twenty-four album leaves, ink, gold and

color on paper; 10 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. (26.3 x 23.5 cm). Gift of Mary L. Cassilly, 1894, ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art 94.18.1a–xx

Fukui prefecture) who had spent most of his time in battle as a military general, promoted culture and literature in the regional capital of Ichijōdani, and it became a frequent destination for cultural elites from Kyoto. The leading *renga* (linked poem) poet Sōgi visited Ichijōdani nine times, and Sōgi's disciple Gensei also went there in 1511. During his visit, a retainer of the Asakura clan approached Gensei with a request for Sanetaka to inscribe *Genji* text on album leaves.<sup>12</sup> Another entry from 1509 recorded that Emperor Go-Kashiwabara wrote two scrolls of *The Tale of Genji*; he gave one to the wife of Asakura Sadakage and the other to Lord Imagawa.<sup>13</sup>

Toward the end of the Warring States period, the most powerful leader, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), was close to achieving the unification of Japan. In 1574 Nobunaga sent precious gifts to Uesugi Kenshin (1530–1578), an equally powerful provincial lord from Echigo (present-day Niigata prefecture) who was his rival. Nobunaga wanted this alliance to lessen the power of another military clan, the Takeda of Kai province, who were led by Takeda Shingen (1521–1573). Nobunaga's strategy was to demonstrate his friendship by giving Kenshin a pair of folding screens representing *rakuchū rakugai zu* (scenes in and around the capital).<sup>14</sup> Extant screens with this theme depict lively annual activities and famous places in Kyoto. According to two Edo-period documents—*Uesugi nenpu* (Chronology of the Uesugi clan) and *Hokuetsu gunki* (Military records of northern Echigo)—it is possible that Nobunaga also gave Kenshin a pair of *Genji* screens:

In the spring of the second year of Tenshō (1574) Nobunaga sent two messengers bearing two pairs of folding screens with rich colors on gilt paper as a gift to Kenshin: one pair illustrated famous places in the capital Kyoto and the other illustrated *The Tale of Genji*. Both screens were painted by Kanō Eitoku excellently executed in skillful brushwork. All who saw them were very surprised by the splendid gifts, and Kenshin was deeply impressed by this evidence of Nobunaga's strong friendship.

Although this gift isn't noted in *Kenshinkō goshoshū*, the primary source of information about the daimyo, the existence of a gift is demonstrated by a recently introduced historical document that mentions a letter of thanks from Kenshin to Nobunaga.<sup>15</sup> In addition, as Matsushima Jin has pointed out,<sup>16</sup>

the inclusion of the *Genji* screens in documents from the Edo period indicates that they were believed to possess a level of political power. With the gift of the Kyoto screens, Nobunaga wanted to reinforce the message that he controlled the capital: whenever Kenshin viewed them, he would see Kyoto presented as Nobunaga's political realm. The *Genji* screens, however, demonstrated the highly sophisticated and refined courtly culture represented by Kyoto, a contrast to the relatively rustic surroundings of Echigo. The paintings on both pairs of screens played a critical role in creating an actual Kyoto court culture from an imagined Kyoto court culture.

The *Genji* screens that Nobunaga gave to Kenshin were formerly believed to have been in the collection of the Imperial Household (fig. 3), but recent scholarship has cast doubt on both the attribution to artist Kanō Eitoku (1543–1590) and on Kenshin's ownership. They are nonetheless considered to be among the earliest *Genji* screens by a major Kanō school painter close to Eitoku. More importantly, because they illustrate only selected episodes from the novel, they reveal a new model for its representation on folding screens. Traditionally, small album leaves and fans illustrating all fifty-four chapters were mounted on screens.

After Nobunaga was killed, Toyotomi Hideyoshi came to power. During his rule, Hideyoshi became interested in cultural activities such as literature (including *The Tale of Genji*), tea ceremony, and noh theater. In his later life, he also copied *Genji monogatari no okori* (The Origin of *The Tale of Genji*), a short text by Keifukuin Gyokuei, a nun and the daughter of a courtier.<sup>17</sup> Even though Hideyoshi had to stop studying the novel during battles in the Bunroku and Keichō eras, he never lost interest in it. He also performed in the noh play *Genji kuyō* (Buddhist ceremonies for Murasaki Shikibu's soul).

In addition, a diary by Yoshida Kanemi, a priest at Yoshida shrine, mentions that Hideyoshi ordered one of his retainers to copy the text of *The Tale of Genji*. Hideyoshi and his adopted son, Hidetsugu, also led a group, which included family members and close retainers, that read the novel together. Hideyoshi grew close to members of the aristocracy, particularly to the Kujō family, who owned the authoritative *Genji* text.<sup>18</sup> The calligraphy on an illustrated *Genji* hand scroll (now in the collection of Kōshien Gakuen) is attributed to a military general, Kobayakawa Hideaki, with paintings attributed to Kanō Mitsunobu (1561/1565–1608),

who was the son of Eitoku and the head of the Kanō school around 1600.<sup>19</sup> Mitsunobu also painted Genji screens for Usa Hachiman shrine (a shrine for a warrior god) and for Tokugawa Ieyasu's daughter, Ichihime.<sup>20</sup> If the calligraphy is indeed by Hideaki, it is extremely rare that a warrior rather than an aristocrat would be asked to write the text in the hand-scroll format.

### Tokugawa Ieyasu and *The Tale of Genji*

Immediately after Hideyoshi's death in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu began to strip the Toyotomi family of its power. Concurrent with his campaigns to attack the Toyotomi clan in Osaka Castle, Ieyasu's interest in *The Tale of Genji* increased dramatically.<sup>21</sup> He invited aristocratic scholars to lecture on the tale, and he gathered various texts and commentaries that had been copied through the centuries. The surname Minamoto (Genji) was only given to those who, like Hikaru Genji, had renounced imperial privileges. Warrior regimes—including the Minamoto (Genji) of the Kamakura period and the Ashikaga of the Muromachi period—had legitimized their rule through ties to the Genji lineage, and Ieyasu desperately needed to authenticate his "pedigree" through the proper line of the Minamoto clan. Around the same time, Ieyasu issued the Code for Military Households and the Code for the Emperor and Court Nobles in 1615. Both acts, the cultural involving *The Tale of Genji* and the political involving the two codes for behavior, were undertaken by Ieyasu in order to reinforce the authority of the Tokugawa shogun's regime.

The ninth-century emperor Seiwa had moved several princes into the Genji clan. The descendants of his son (Prince) Minamoto Sadazumi (873–916) were known as the Seiwa Genji, and they included heroic military leaders such as Hachiman Tarō Yoshiie and Minamoto no Raikō. Even from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, to qualify to be the ruler of Japan, it was imperative for a warrior leader to be seen as a descendant of the Seiwa Genji. Eventually, Ieyasu was regarded as the head of the Minamoto (Genji) in the lineage of Seiwa Genji, giving him a place in the imagined world of *The Tale of Genji*.

Ieyasu's descendants also patronized works of art illustrating *Genji*, such as the albums now in the collection of the Tokugawa Art Museum (fig. 4).<sup>22</sup> Either Ieyasu or his son Hidetada (1579–1632), the second shogun in 1605, gave the

album leaves of *Genji*, originally mounted on folding screens, to Ieyasu's adopted daughter when she married the daimyo Tanaka Tadamasu around 1600. Hidetada himself wrote the text. A highly cultivated and scholarly man, Hidetada was an excellent calligrapher, an enthusiastic student of tea ceremony who studied under Furuta Oribe, and an admirer of *waka* poems. After the adopted daughter's death in 1638, the screens were passed down to her brother, Yasuhisa, who remounted the *Genji* images and text in book format. When he retired in 1675, the set of albums was given to the Tokugawa family and has been kept at the Tokugawa Art Museum. These albums were always transferred exclusively among the families and retainers of the Tokugawa shogun, as if to prove the authenticity of their descent from the heroic Seiwa Genji. Even though the Seiwa Genji and Hikaru Genji were not the same, the fact that both had moved from the imperial family to the Genji clan created a bond between them, and the Tokugawa's link to Hikaru Genji through art strengthened this association.

Another example of Tokugawa family patronage is *Kaguyahime* (The tale of the shining princess), a beautifully illustrated three-volume set in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 5). Also known as *Taketori monogatari* (The tale of the bamboo cutter), it is Japan's earliest courtly tale.<sup>23</sup> The lacquer box for the three volumes has a Tokugawa crest design, an *aoi* plant (fig. 6). Each of the four Tokugawa families used a variety of *aoi* designs; however, the design on the box is also found in the *Nanki Tokugawa shi*, which is the history of the Kishū Tokugawa family of Wakayama prefecture. Stylistic features indicate that the books could possibly be dated to the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> According to the wedding history of the Kishū Tokugawa family, these volumes might have been commissioned for the wedding trousseau of the princess Tsuruhime, daughter of the shogun Tsunayoshi, who married Tsunanori, of the third generation of the Kishū Tokugawa, in 1685.<sup>25</sup>

### Folding Screens of *The Tale of Genji* and the Kano School

The Kanō painting school continued to receive strong support from warrior rulers such as Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and the Tokugawa shogunates until the end of the Edo period. Generally, warrior rulers commissioned works from





Fig. 3

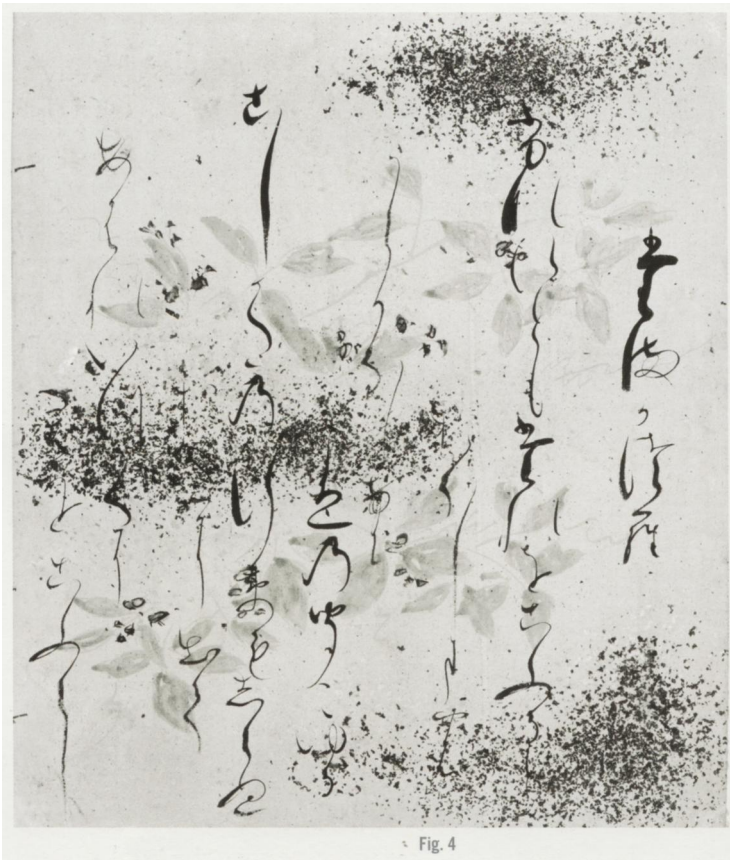


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

**Fig. 3**  
Attributed to Kanō Eitoku (Japanese, 1543–1590), *The Tale of Genji*, Muromachi period, 16th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens, ink and color on gilt paper; 66 x 142 1/2 in. (167.5 x 361.7 cm), each. Imperial Household Agency, Tokyo Japan

**Fig. 4**  
Tokugawa Hidetada (Japanese, 1605–1623), *Genji gajō*, text from chapter 22, “Tamakazura” (Tendrils Wreath), in *The Tale of Genji*. Edo period, 17th century. Album leaf, ink on decorated paper; 9 1/2 x 8 in. (24.1 x 20.3 cm). The Tokugawa Art Museum © The Tokugawa Art Museum Image Archives / DNPpartcom

**Fig. 5**  
*Tale of the Shining Princess (Kaguyahime)* (Japan), end of the 17th century. Hand-illustrated book, set of three, ink, color, gold, and silver on paper; 9 1/8 x 6 9/16 in. (23.2 x 16.7 cm). Rogers Fund, 1921, ©Metropolitan Museum of Art 21.174.1a–c

**Fig. 6**  
*Lacquer box for set of three books of Tale of the Shining Princess (Kaguyahime)*, with designs of the Tokugawa family crest of aoi plant, bamboo, and sparrow, Edo period, 17th century. Lacquer and *maki-e* (sprinkled gold powder) on wood; 9 1/8 x 6 1/2 in. (23.2 x 16.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1921, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 21.174.1a–c



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Kanō painters and from secondary schools influenced by these artists, such as the Kaihō, Hasegawa, and Unkoku schools. The Kanō school's style derived from Chinese models, and they focused primarily on Chinese themes and large formats, such as sliding panels and screens for rulers' castles and temples.<sup>26</sup> The traditional Tosa painting school, however, focused on Japanese themes depicted in Japanese style, and these were mainly commissioned by the imperial court and aristocrats in Kyoto.<sup>27</sup> Kanō painters were nonetheless commissioned to paint Japanese themes, including *Genji*, until the early Meiji era of the nineteenth century. Many *Genji* screens by Kanō artists have survived from the Momoyama and early Edo periods, most of which were commissioned by shogun and daimyo military families.

Sometimes only a single episode from the novel is illustrated on each screen in a pair (fig. 7). In an example in Indiana University Art Museum, for example, the right screen depicts a springtime scene from chapter 5, in which Genji first glimpses Murasaki, the girl who will become the great love of his life. On the left screen is an episode from chapter 51, in which Prince Niou, Genji's grandson, peeks through a gap as Ukifune and her ladies-in-waiting sew clothes in spring. It is very rare for the scenes on both screens to illustrate spring.

Many pairs of *Genji* screens depict selective episodes, with several scenes arranged on each screen, and they usually appear in seasonal order (not in narrative sequence) from right to left. Beautifully illustrated in bright colors and gold leaf, they embellish an interior space on a celebratory occasion. A typical example of this type is in the collection of Osaka Aoyama History and Literature Museum (fig. 8).<sup>28</sup> The screens bear a seal reading "Kuninobu," which is usually attributed to Kanō Eitoku; however, they were actually executed by an unnamed Kanō school painter in the Momoyama or early Edo period. Beginning with the right side of the right screen, spring is represented by three episodes: chapter 23, lower right corner; chapter 19, upper right; and chapter 5, top center. Two episodes represent summer: chapter 3, left lower corner; and chapter 52, upper left. Seasonal flora (plum and cherry blossoms, summer pinks, and willow trees) are arranged within and around the scenes.

Autumn is represented by four episodes on the left screen: chapter 10, upper right corner; chapter 27, lower right corner; chapter 31, center left

in the middle ground; and chapter 28, lower left. Two episodes represent winter: chapter 6, top center; and chapter 22, upper left. Seasonal motifs (such as autumn grasses, red maple trees, and snow) and winter activities are depicted within the scenes. The trees, fences, architecture, and thick golden clouds both separate and link the episodes.

It is evident that Kanō artists created a pictorial code for depicting *The Tale of Genji* on pairs of folding screens. Temporal (seasonal) sequence was given priority over narrative sequence, architectural motifs anchor the ends of screens, and the figures are arranged inside the buildings as well as in gardens. In pairs of screens like these, Kanō painters appear to have adopted a pictorial tactic that combined landscape composition with the theme of "birds and flowers of the four seasons." The progression of seasons from right to left and the anchoring motifs had been typical painting idioms for pairs of folding screens since the Muromachi period.<sup>29</sup>

A more sophisticated arrangement of *Genji* scenes can be found in screens by Kanō Sōshū (1551–1601; fig. 9).<sup>30</sup> As in the previous example, episodes on the right screen represent spring and summer, while those on the left represent autumn and winter. What makes this pair of screens unique is the orchestration of three generations of characters within four seasons. Genji is depicted in spring and summer; Yūgiri, his son, appears in an autumn scene; and Prince Niou, his grandson, is shown in the winter scene.

On the right side of the right screen, we see Genji visiting his greatest love, Murasaki, in her quarters on New Year's Day, and Lady Akashi sends baskets of delicacies to her daughter, the Akashi princess, who lives with Murasaki. The princess and her attendants walk among seedling pines in an exquisite garden, and warblers sing their first song of the year in the blossoming plum trees. This scene was one of the most frequently illustrated among Kanō screens. Chapter 8, on the top right of the right screen, and chapter 3, illustrate Genji's love affairs in spring and summer.

At top right of the left screen, we see Genji's son visiting his friend's widow, Lady Ochiba, to express his sympathies, pausing to take in the desolate beauty. In the lower right, Yūgiri goes to Lady Akikonomu's residence and he sees her attendants setting out insect cages in the garden. At the lower left is a winter scene from chapter 46, in which two sisters in Uji prepare a brazier to heat a



Fig. 11



Fig. 12a

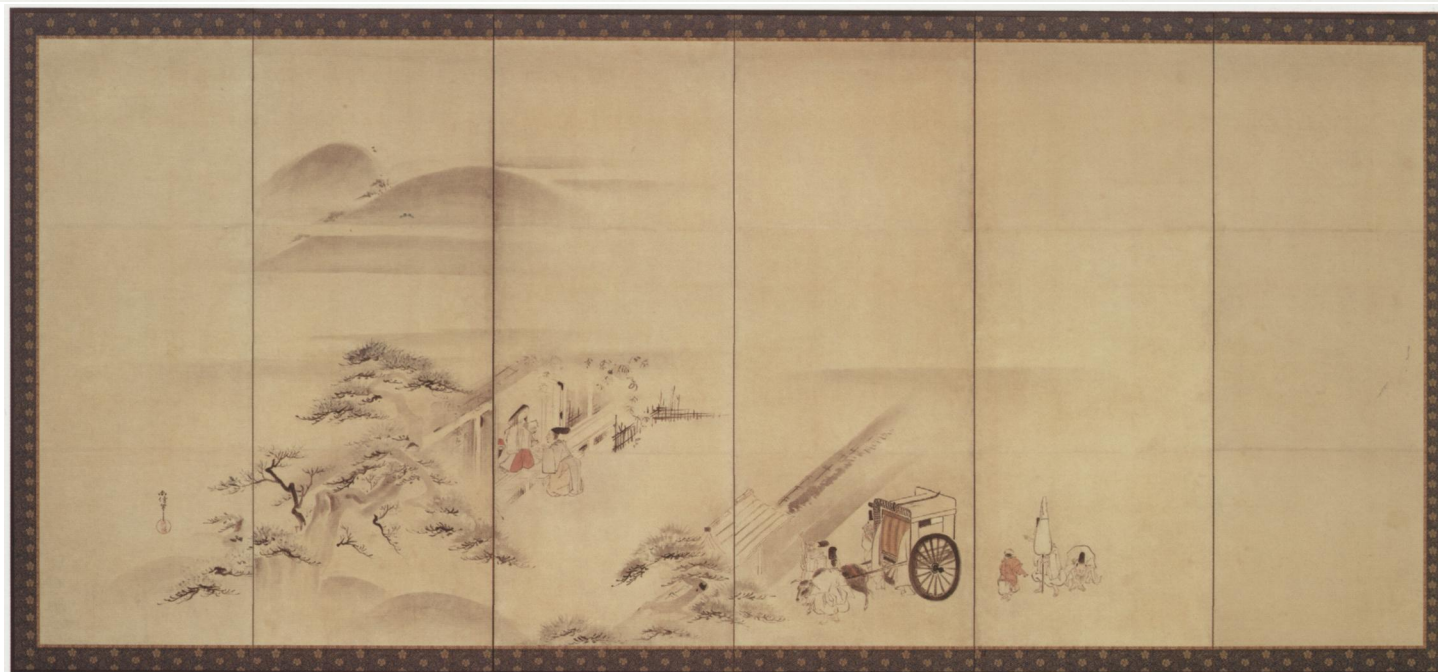


Fig. 12b

room for Genji's son, Kaoru. At the top is a scene in which Prince Niou tries to woo Ukifune by taking her on a boat ride down the Uji river, its banks blanketed with snow.

Sōshū's screens demonstrate the Kanō school's characteristic manipulation of space. He employed an organic arrangement of fences, trees, gold clouds, and rocks to indicate a rational recession from the foreground into the distance. In particular, the central space is filled with elegant trees, suggesting a progression into depth. Compositionally, the center also separates the right and left sides of the screen into two narrative sections. Architectural elements at both sides of the screens act as anchoring motifs. These indicate that the Kanō painters executed dynamic, large-scale illustrations on screens, reaching a peak in the Momoyama and early Edo periods.

The Detroit Institute of Arts also has a *Genji* screen (fig. 10), and it is distinctive because it does not illustrate traditional seasonal episodes from the story.<sup>31</sup> Instead, it illustrates Genji's Rokujō estate as it is described in chapter 21, in which he built four seasonal gardens for each of his ladies. Brilliantly decorative, the DIA screen features an abundance of gold. Charming women are depicted at both sides, but the viewer's eye is drawn to the garden in the center that is the artwork's principal subject. Clearly this was one of a pair, and the accompanying screen likely depicted Rokujō's autumn garden of Lady Akikonomu and winter garden of Lady Akashi. The painting's schematic, almost graphically designed flowers are typical of the extremely stylized manner of the Kanō school, and this rather unnaturalistic treatment also focuses attention on the garden.

Fig. 7  
*The Tale of Genji* (Japan), Edo period, 17th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens, ink and color on gilt paper; 58 1/2 x 139 in. (148.5 x 353 cm), each. Indiana University Museum 66.11–12

Fig. 8  
Kanō school painter, *The Tale of Genji with seals of Kuninobu* (Kanō Eitoku), Momoyama period, 17th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens, ink and color on gilt paper; 63 7/8 x 152 in. (162 x 360.5 cm). Osaka Aoyama History and Literature Museum

Fig. 9  
Kanō Sōshū (Japanese, 1551–1601), *The Tale of Genji*, Momoyama period, 1573–1615. Pair of six-panel folding screens, ink, color, and gold and silver leaf on paper; 64 1/8 x 140 1/2 in. (163 x 357 cm), each. Private collection

Fig. 10  
*Spring in the Palace* (Japan), early Edo, 17th century. Ink, colors, and gold on paper; 67 x 141 in. (170.2 x 358.1 cm). City of Detroit Purchase (27.541)

Fig. 11  
Kanō Mitsunobu (Japanese, 1561/1565–1608), *Scenes from the Life of the Ming Huang Emperor and His Favorite Concubine, Yang Guifei*, Momoyama period, late 16th–early 17th century. Ink, color, and gold on paper; 68 3/8 x 150 1/2 in. (173.6 x 381.8 cm). Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, F1901.20–21

Fig. 12a–b  
Kanō Naonobu (Japanese, 1607–1650), *Twilight Beauty (Yūgao)*, chapter 4 of *The Tale of Genji*, Edo period, early 17th century. Pair of screens, ink and color on paper; 60 1/2 x 138 7/8 in. (153.7 x 352.6 cm), each. Purchase, Freer/Sackler, Smithsonian Institution F1965.5–6

Another typical Kanō compositional idiom is revealed in the spatial treatment of depth in the garden's central section, which is comparable to the Sōshū screens. The DIA example, however, demonstrates a more radical treatment of this compositional scheme.

The text of that chapter describes the estates of Wakamurasaki in spring and Hanachirusato in summer:

The southeast quarter boasted high hills, every tree that blossoms in spring, and a particularly lovely lake; and in the near garden, before the house, he took care to plant not only five-needled pines, red plums, cherry trees, wisteria, kerria roses, and rock azaleas, all of which are at their best in spring, but also, here and there, discreet touches of autumn.... The northeast quarter, with its cool spring, favored summer shade. Chinese bamboo grew in the near garden, to freshen the breeze; tall groves offered welcoming depths of shade, as in a mountain village; the hedge was of flowering deutzia; and among the plantings of orange, fragrant with the past, of pinks and roses and peonies, there also grew spring and autumn flowers. The east edge of this quarter was divided off into a riding ground with a pavilion and surrounded by a woven fence. Sweet flag had been induced to grow thickly beside the water, for the games of the fifth month, and the nearby stables housed the most superb horses.<sup>32</sup>

On the right, Genji and Lady Murasaki sit together on tatami mats looking at the garden. Two ladies on the veranda carry an incense burner and a set of utensils for the incense game. The central garden, which includes a pond and a flower-filled island, is marvelously represented; it includes pine trees, flowering wisteria, highly stylized azaleas, violets, dandelions, irises, mountain roses, nandina-like plants, loquats, water plants, white pear flowers, a blossoming plum tree, cherry blossoms, and birds. The sides of the screen are dominated by two buildings: the favorite, Lady Murasaki, lives in the spring quarters on the right, and the warm and maternal Lady Hanachirusato lives in the summer quarters on the left. A stable can be seen at lower left. Rokujō and its gorgeous seasonal gardens represent the highest point in Genji's life, and this painting of his estate and grounds makes it seem like a paradise.

Similarly, a pair of six-panel screens from the Freer Gallery depicts the Chinese Tang-dynasty emperor Ming Huang (Xuanzong) (Japanese: Gensō Kōtei) and his favorite concubine, Yang Guifei (Japanese: Yōkihi), enjoying their pleasurable yet ephemeral life (fig. 11). Representations of this couple were popular in Edo-period Japan, and the DIA screen appears to reference this subject.

Dazzling screens of *The Tale of Genji* were typically commissioned by wealthy members of the samurai class for auspicious occasions and lavish events (such as weddings), because the large format allowed the artwork to be appreciated by several viewers at once. Filled with bright colors over shimmering gilt paper, the screens must have been installed specifically to create a celebratory, ceremonial space. The large scale, abundance of gold, and rich colors indicated the owners' social, political, and economic status and power, or at least their aspirations toward such status. Contemporaneous with the battles among military lords during the late Muromachi and Momoyama periods, which culminated in the unification of Japan, the Kanō school increasingly dominated the world of painting for the elite until the Tokugawa regime achieved political stability in the early seventeenth century. *Genji* screens from the early seventeenth century, such as the DIA example by a major but unknown Kanō painter, must have been commissioned by a powerful samurai and served as a means of claiming leadership in both the cultural and political arenas.

The resplendent Kanō painting style seen in the DIA screen shifted to a new and different style under the influence of artist Kanō Tan'yū (1602–1674) and his brothers, who moved to the new capital of Edo, the seat of the Tokugawa government. There, Tan'yū, his brother, and other relatives divided the original Kanō school into four schools. Although the style changed, Kanō school artists continued to support Tokugawa ideology, and Tan'yū was an influential proponent of both. His set of five hand scrolls, *Origin of the Tōshōgū Shrine*, was created in honor of the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, who was enshrined at Tōshōgū as a Shinto deity.<sup>33</sup> Tan'yū also painted all fifty-four chapters of *Genji* on a pair of screens (collection of the Imperial Household), demonstrating not only the stable political climate of the Tokugawa regime in the late seventeenth century but also his new aesthetics.<sup>34</sup> Tan'yū re-created the Japanese traditional painting style in which motifs are accentuated by atmospheric effect; this aesthetic is clearly demonstrated in the Freer Gallery's *Genji* screens (fig. 12), which were painted by Tan'yū's younger brother, Kanō Naonobu (1607–1650). Until the end of the Edo period, the Tokugawa military families and daimyo continued to produce paintings and objects with the theme of *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>35</sup>

1. *Genji monogatari* has been translated into English three times: Royall Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (New York, 2001); Edward G. Seidensticker, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (New York, 1976); and Arthur Waley, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (London, 1926–33).
2. In this section I relied on the following articles: Yoshikawa Miho, “Edo jidai ni okeru Genji-no kyōju ni tsuite: konrei chōdo o chūshin ni,” in *Kaiga de tsuzuru Genji monogatari: egakare tsugareta Genji monogatari no keifu* (Nagoya, 2005), 119–28; Yoshikawa Miho, “Kinsei buke josei no Genji monogatari-e kyōju: Tokugawake shūhen o chūshin ni shite,” in *Buke no bunbutsu to Genji monogatari-e* (Tokyo, 2012), 51–71; Mitamura Masako and Mitani Kuniaki, *Genji monogatari emaki no nazo o yomitoku* (Tokyo, 1998); Mitamura Masako, “Genji monogatari-e no shinwagaku: kenryokushatachi no Genji monogatari,” *Genji kenkyū* 3 (1998): 137–44; Mitamura Masako, *Kioku no naka no Genji monogatari* (Tokyo, 2008); and Matsushima Jin, Tokugawa shogun kenryoku to Kanō-ha kaiga: *Tokugawa ōken no juritsu to Ōchō kaiga no Sōsei* (Tokyo, 2011).
3. Documentation of album paintings mounted on screens has been discussed by scholars including Teramoto Naohiko, “Genji monogatari chinjōkō,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku* (1964), 41–9, pp. 26–44; 41–11, pp. 24–39; and Mitamura Masako and Mitani Kuniaki, *Genji monogatari emaki no nazo o yomitoku*, 176–273.
4. Matsushima Jin, *Tokugawa shogun kenryoku to Kanō-ha kaiga*, 143–44.
5. Imai Gen’e, “Joshi kyōkunsho oyobi ensho bungaku to Genji monogatari,” in *Genji monogatari no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1974); Joshua Mostow, “Genji monogatari to jokunsho,” in *The Tale of Genji and Edo Culture*, ed. Kojima Naoko, Komine Kazuaki, and Watanabe Kenji (Tokyo, 2008), 337–46.
6. Rengeōin was built by Go-Shirakawa, a flamboyant emperor of the twelfth century, to store imperial treasures.
7. Ōta Tōshirō, ed., *Kan’mon gyōki* (Tokyo, 1930), 230; Mitamura Masako, *Genji monogatari-e no shinwagaku*, 148–49.
8. Melissa McCormick, “Genji Goes West: The 1510 Genji Album and the Visualization of Court and Capital,” *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 1 (March 2003): 54–85; Melissa McCormick, *Tosa Mitsunobu and the Small Scroll in Medieval Japan* (Seattle, 2009); Melissa McCormick, “Hābādo daigaku bijutsukan shozō *Genji monogatari gajō* to *Sanetaka kō-ki* shozai no Genji-e shikishi,” *Kokka* 1241 (1999), 27–28; Anne Rose Kitagawa, “Behind the Scenes: Harvard’s *Tale of Genji* Album,” *Apollo* 154, no. 477 (2001): 28–35; Chino Kaori et al., “Hābādo daigaku bijutsukan zō *Genji monogatari gajō*,” *Kokka* 1222 (1999); Yonekura Masayoshi, *Sengoku bushi to bungei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1976).
9. McCormick, “Genji Goes West,” 54.
10. McCormick, “Hābādo daigaku bijutsukan shozō *Genji monogatari gajō*.”
11. Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, 373.
12. Yonemura Masayoshi, *Sengoku bushi to bungei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1976), 215–354; Fukuiken, ed. *Fukuikenshi tsūshi 2 chūsei* (Fukui, 1994), 1056–83.
13. *Sanetaka kōki* 5 (Tokyo), 159–60.
14. Ōta Tōshirō, annotated. *Sanetaka kōki* 5, 570; Matthew McKelway, *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu, 2006), 99.
15. Mitamura Masako, *Kioku no naka no Genji monogatari*, 332.
16. Matsushima Jin, *Tokugawa shogun kenryoku to Kanō-ha kaiga*, 158.
17. In 1587, Keifukuin gave *Genji monogatari no okori* to Lady Chaa, who might be identifiable as a member of Osaka Castle’s Genji circle.
18. Kawamoto Keiko, Kujōke denrai no kuruma arasoī-zu o megutte: sono seisaku jijō to kashaku o chūshin ni,” *Nihon kaigasbi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1989).
19. Miyake Hidekazu, “Kanō-ha, byōbu ni egakareta *Genji monogatari-e*,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 53, no. 1 (2008), 62–75; Miyake Hidekazu, “Kanō Mitsunobu yōshiki no tenkai to rekishiteki ichizuke ni kansuru kenkyū: kōshien gakuin shozō,” *Kashima bijutsu kenkyū nenpō bessatsu* 26 (2009), 597–605.
20. Miyake Hidekazu, “Kanō-ha, byōbu ni egakareta *Genji monogatari-e*,” 72–73; Miyake Hidekazu, “Kanō Mitsunobu yōshiki no tenkai...,” 62–75; Ōkura Ryūji, “Ōita-shi Rekishi Shiryōkan zō *Genji monogatari* zu byōbu zanketsu nit suite,” *Kumamoto Museum Journal* 3 (1989): 9–28.
21. Here is an itemized list of Ieyasu’s activities with *The Tale of Genji* in 1614–15: 1614  
6.17: A copy version of *Rōkashō*, an essay on *ku* by Botanka Shōhaku and Sanjō Sanetaka of the sixteenth century, owned by Ieyasu, was proofread by the aristocrat Reizei Tamemitsu (1559–1619) and then returned to Ieyasu.  
7.21: Ieyasu listened to a lecture on *The Tale of Genji* given by the aristocrat Asukai Masatsune (1569–1616) in Sunpu (Ieyasu’s hometown, Shizuoka).  
8.22: Ieyasu heard a lecture about the three secrets of *The Tale of Genji* (“Genji sankā no daijī”) from Asukai Masatsune.  
8.10: Ieyasu displayed two scrolls of the illustrated lineage of *The Tale of Genji* to the Zen monk and close political adviser Konchiin Sūden. Ieyasu took a break between the two sieges of Osaka Castle (the winter siege of the eleventh month of 1614 through the first month of 1615, and the summer siege from the fifth month through the sixth month of 1615). The second siege completely defeated the Toyotomi warlord.  
1615  
seventh month: Ieyasu received an intensive lecture series on *The Tale of Genji* at Nijō Castle in Kyoto.  
7.5: Ieyasu asked aristocrats to add kana readings to the text of “Genji monogatari shō” (a commentary on *The Tale of Genji*).  
7.9: Ieyasu read Reizei Tamemitsu’s copy of the *Genji* annotations, entitled *Genji monogatari okuiri*, which were inscribed by the author Fujiwara no Teika himself.  
7.20, 7.29, 8.23: Ieyasu was given three lectures on the chapters “Hatsune” and “Fahakigi” by the prominent scholar and aristocrat, Nakanoin Michimura at Nijō Castle.  
22. Yotsutsuji Hidenori, “Tokugawa Hidetada kotobagaki hitsu *Genji monogatari gajō* ni tsuite,” text by the second Tokugawa shogun Hidetada, *Kinko sōsho* 18 (1991): 341–81; *Kaiga de tsuzuru Genji monogatari: egaki tsugareta Genji no keifu* (Nagoya, 2005). Yotsutsuji suggested that the leaves of text and illustrations might not originally have been paired together because, overall, the illustrations and text frequently do not correspond to one another (348).  
23. Masako Watanabe, “*Taketori monogatari* ehon: Metropolitan bijutsukan o chūshinshite,” *Chūko bungaku* 86 (2011): 1–14.  
24. The Metropolitan Museum of Art volume is stylistically datable to the second half of the seventeenth century. The brushstrokes used for the rocks reveal the more decorative outlines of narrative illustrations after Tan’yū’s time, and the sense of movement in the postures of the children also suggests a style of figure painting from the second half of the seventeenth century.  
25. Horiuchi Shin, ed., *Nanki Tokugawa shi* (Wakayama, 1932); Muroduki Keigo et al., *Keizu sanyō* 9 (Tokyo, 1975).  
26. The Kanō artists’ most important work, which gave legitimacy to the rulers’ governmental power, was the painting of Chinese-themed artworks to decorate the interiors of rulers’ residences. Ōta Shōko and Ōnishi Hiroshi, “Shuppan to girei: *Teikanzusetsu* o megutte,” *Bungaku* 13 (2012), 156–86; Ōta Shōko and Ōnishi Hiroshi, “Azuchijō no naka no ‘tenka’: fusuma-e o yomu,” *Asabi byakka nibon no rekishi bessatsu: rekishi o yominaosu* 15 (1995).  
27. The Tosa school produced many *Genji* paintings. The most significant example in relation to the samurai is an album set of *The Tale of Genji* by Tosa Mitsuyoshi (1539–1613) in the collection of the Kubosō Museum, dating to 1612. It was commissioned by the military lord Ishikawa Tadafusa (1582–1651) in Ōgaki, Gifu prefecture.  
28. *Byōbue shūsei* 5 (Tokyo, 1978–79), plates 47–48, 85–86; Shiokawa Toshisada, ed., Osaka *Aoyama tanki daigaku shozōhin zuroku* (Kyoto, 1999), plate 98.  
29. For example, a pair of six-panel screens, *Landscape in Four Seasons*, attributed to Kanō Motonobu; see Barbara Brennan Ford and Oliver R. Impey, *Japanese Art from the Gerry Collection* (New York, 1989).