

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

CONTACT: Ruth Kaplan  
Randall Kremer  
(202) 842-6353

HOLD FOR RELEASE: 6:30 PM, Oct. 5, 1987

## MAJOR EXHIBITION ON JAPANESE ART AND CULTURE TO OPEN AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART IN OCTOBER 1988

WASHINGTON, DC, Oct. 5, 1987 - In conjunction with the visit of Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan to the National Gallery of Art this evening, Gallery director J. Carter Brown announced a major exhibition of Japanese art and culture which will open at the National Gallery on October 30, 1988. It will be seen only in Washington.

Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1200-1800, will present in the United States over 450 works. Among them are an unprecedented number of registered cultural properties from Japan, including more than 160 works designated as: National Treasures, Important Cultural Properties and Important Art Objects. The exhibition is being organized by the National Gallery of Art in collaboration with Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and The Japan Foundation. Among the funders for the exhibition are The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., Nomura Securities Co. Ltd., and The Yomiuri Shimbun.

(more)



The word Daimyo (literally "great named landholdings") refers to the regional feudal lords of the medieval and early modern periods. The exhibition will feature works representing the great feudal families including the Hosokawa, Kuroda, Ii, Uesugi, Nabeshima, Maeda, Ashikaga, Honda, Tokugawa, Date, Sakakibara and Mori. The vast range of objects will include: portrait paintings and sculpture, armor, swords, saddles, hand scrolls, hanging scrolls, calligraphy, sliding doors, panels and screens, lacquer works, ceramics, domestic textiles, Noh masks, musical instruments, robes, and tea utensils.

The first exhibition devoted to exploring the contribution of these families to Japanese culture from the middle ages to 1800, it is intended to shed light on the values that have helped shape the fundamental aesthetic, psychological and social character of the nation.

Coinciding with the exhibition, there will be other educational presentations which will enhance the public's understanding of the Daimyo period. The first is a series of performances of Noh plays by Japanese master players, sponsored by The Yomiuri Shimbun.

There will also be a concurrent educational adjunct devoted to the tea ceremony. It will include the construction of a tea house such as the Daimyo would have built, as well as live presentations by Japanese tea masters and a display of some historic utensils. Members of the public will have an opportunity to participate in the tea ceremony. This aspect is made possible by The Asahi Shimbun, Nomura Securities Co. Ltd., and All Nippon Airways.



"It's a great pleasure to be able to announce this great Daimyo exhibition and other cultural presentations in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses," Mr. Brown said tonight. "The Daimyo exhibition truly is a joint achievement in that it marks the first time that collaboration in a special exhibition of this magnitude has taken place between the Americans and the Japanese. We are fortunate to be able to bring to the Gallery a vast range of remarkable objects, many of which have never been seen outside of Japan. This exhibition will show us not only Japan's extraordinary artistic heritage but will also help to make clear to the American public one of the most important periods of cultural flowering in Japan's history."

The announcement, made in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince Akihito and Crown Princess Michiko during their first official visit to the U.S. since 1960, was followed by a performance by Imperial court players of Gagaku, a classical Japanese dance and music which is rarely performed outside the Imperial Palace. One of Japan's most important historic art forms, Gagaku (literally "elegant music") has since the 9th century been traditionally performed at court banquets and sacred rites in shrines and temples. It is performed on traditional Japanese woodwind, string, and percussion instruments and emphasizes form and symmetry over the dramatic element, which distinguishes other forms of Japanese dance.



Among the "National Treasures" coming to Washington next year will be the extraordinary portrait of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), chieftain of the Minamoto clan and first Japanese Shogun. Attributed to the 12th-century poet and portrait painter Fujiwara Takanobu, in its cultural importance the painting has been likened to that of Mona Lisa by French art critic Andre Malraux.

An exhibition catalogue, fully illustrated in color, will be produced by the National Gallery with the collaboration of scholars from the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Guest curator for the National Gallery is Professor Yoshiaki Shimizu, of the Department of Art and Architecture at Princeton University.

# # #





# National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

[Oct 1987]

## THE ART OF THE TEA CEREMONY Backgrounder

In Japan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, members of the feudal military hierarchy, including the daimyo and their samurai retainers, regularly took part in a formal tea gathering (chaji). The event was held in a small and unpretentious thatched tea house adorned with a sprig of flowers and a hanging scroll that were changed according to the season. Approaching the place, they left their swords on a rack for that purpose and crawled through the diminutive door, entering a scene where their worldly status was forgotten. The host, a master of the tea ceremony and perhaps a daimyo himself, performed the humble task of serving his guests, having thoughtfully selected the tea bowls that would please them most. His careful movements and attention to every detail contributed to an atmosphere that fostered a reverence for all things, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. Because proper understanding of its etiquette was an essential badge of cultivation, the tea ceremony was one of the central social rituals of warrior society.

Zen Buddhist monks in China first began the ritual drinking of tea as a medicine and as a stimulant that helped them stay alert during long sessions of meditation. They introduced tea drinking along with other tenets of the practice of Buddhism to Japan's imperial court in the eighth or ninth century. Zen's upsurge in popularity in Japan during the twelfth century and the widespread contact of the daimyo with monks led to the adoption of tea drinking by the warrior class.

(more)



As the tea ceremony developed, emphasis was placed on much more than the act of drinking tea and the eating of confections. The ritual provided a setting for spiritual meditation and social communion. The simple act of giving and receiving tea - an ordinary experience - was made extraordinary through the effort of the tea master and his guests to make the ritual the most important thing in the world. In the cult of tea, the view of life as art extended to its every aspect. No meeting between guest and host could ever be repeated the same way, and for this reason the tea ceremony demanded careful attention to every detail, from the scroll and flowers in the alcove, to the incense being burnt, to the bowls from which the tea was drunk.

For the daimyo and their samurai retainers, the tea ceremony was an enlivening psychological foil to the main activity of their lives. The practice of meditation, cultivated through the tea ceremony, was recognized as actually improving their concentration on bu, or the martial arts.

Among the first daimyo to devote himself to tea was Sasaki Dōyo (1306-1373), a poet and patron of Nō theatre. Dōyo frequently organized tea tournaments (tocha) at which the shogun, monks and warriors mingled to identify rare types of tea or incense while appreciating poetry recitations, imported Chinese utensils, and paintings. Gradually, tea gatherings for daimyo were transplanted from the monastic setting to specially built large halls in shogunal and daimyo residences.

Murata Shuko (1423-1502), Takeno Jōō (1502-1555), Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591), and Kobori Enshu (1579-1647) were the leading exponents of the tea ceremony from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. These great masters developed a tea ceremony that stressed simplicity in its creation of a self-contained world free from any social hierarchy or mundane concerns. Their style of serving tea was characterized by cultivated restraint,



quasi-rusticity, and assumed poverty, known as wabi. The simplicity, precision, and tranquility of wabi style tea remained lasting features of the tea ceremony, although later masters returned to a more elegant aesthetic.

#### THE YABUNOUCHI SCHOOL OF TEA

The hereditary Grand Tea Master of the Yabunouchi School, Kenchu Jochi studied with Rikyū under the master Takeno Jōō. In 1581, he was authorized to serve tea in the most formal style, a method which differed considerably from the wabi style practiced by Rikyū. The military hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) was an enthusiastic patron and participant in the tea ceremony and Rikyū enjoyed a close relationship with him. In time, though, Hideyoshi became disenchanted with Rikyū's growing influence and ordered him to commit ritual suicide. Following Rikyū's death, Kenchu was summoned to Hideyoshi's castle-palace as head tea master.

In 1640, the services of the second generation tea master of the Yabunouchi school, Shinno Jochi (1580-1665) were engaged by abbot Ryonyo of the Nishi Hongwanji, head temple of the True Teaching of the Pure Land denomination of Buddhism. From that time, the Yabunouchi family have been head tea masters to the Nishi Honganji temple.

#### THE TEA CEREMONY IN MODERN JAPAN

Though still very important in Japanese culture, the tea ceremony in modern Japan occupies a different plane of existence than it did in the medieval and early modern periods. Students learn the art of tea and affiliated skills, such as the art of flower arranging, as preparation for a domestic life of keeping a



tea backgrounder . . . page four

home and entertaining. The tea ceremony is performed in some homes in Japan daily, and in others only rarely.

#

#

#