

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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MAJOR EXHIBITION OF JAPANESE ART AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART Exhibition To Appear Only In Washington

WASHINGTON, August 25, 1988- The art of the daimyo, feudal lords who ruled the provinces of Japan for nearly 700 years, will be the focus of a new exhibition, Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185 - 1868, opening this fall at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition will bring together more than 450 Japanese-owned works of art that express the values that helped shape the aesthetic ideals and social character of the Japanese nation in its feudal age. An unprecedented number of objects officially designated by the Japanese government as National Treasures, Important Cultural Properties and Important Art Objects will be on view in what will be the largest exhibition of its kind ever presented in the West, or even in Japan. This exhibition will appear only in Washington.

Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185 - 1868 will be in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, Oct. 30, 1988 through Jan. 23, 1989. The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, and The Japan Foundation. The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, The Yomiuri Shimbun and The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd. made the exhibition possible. Japan Air Lines provided transport. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

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Among the eight "National Treasures" coming to Washington will be an 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, it is one of the most famous paintings in Japan. Also included in the exhibition will be other examples of portrait painting, sculpture, armor, swords, saddles, painted and calligraphed scrolls, screens, sliding door panels, lacquer, ceramics, robes, Nō masks, and tea utensils.

Coinciding with the exhibition will be educational presentations designed to enhance the understanding of the culture of the daimyo. There will be a series of performances of Nō plays by Japanese master players featuring two of Japan's most distinguished performers, Mssrs. Otoshige Sakai and Shigeyoshi Mori, members of the Kanze School of Nō who will be appearing in the United States for the first time. A traditional Nō stage, with peaked roof, will be built on the East Building's mezzanine. The galleries of the Daimyo exhibition near the stage will contain a display of historic Nō costumes and masks. Among the Nō performances to be held will be an outdoor performance on the Mall on Saturday, October 29. Wood-burning torches will provide the lighting for this Takigi Nō, or traditional open air presentation, harking back to the days when the drama was performed near Shinto shrines. Indoor public performances will take place November 1, 3, and 5. The Nō plays and stage are made possible at the National Gallery by The Yomiuri Shimbun.

A recreation of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony will include the construction in the East Building of a tea house and garden, as well as demonstrations by Japanese tea masters and students and a display of historic tea utensils. A limited number of opportunities will be available daily for visitors to the exhibition to participate in the tea ceremony. This component has been made possible by The Asahi Shimbun, the Yabunouchi School of Tea, The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd., and All Nippon Airways.

"Because Japan is such an important player on the world stage today, Americans are showing increased interest in understanding its culture, which in spite of many similarities, differs markedly from our own," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art. "We are fortunate to be able to present this opportunity to explore, through a vast range of remarkable objects (many of which have never been seen outside of Japan), a thesis central to the development of Japanese visual arts and one that has not previously been the subject of an exhibition."

The word daimyo refers to the regional feudal lords who effectively controlled the provinces of Japan under the shoguns during the medieval and early modern eras (1185 - 1868). A large portion of this exhibition is devoted to works representing the great daimyo families, including the Hosokawa, Kuroda, Ii, Nabeshima, Maeda, Honda, Tokugawa, Date, Sakakibara, Toki and Mori families.

The daimyo ruled in an age of martial values, when skill as a warrior was vital to one's ability to hold power. Yet these rulers also nurtured sophisticated art forms of all kinds: visual, dramatic, and ceremonial, and in some cases such as painting, poetry, and calligraphy, they created works of art of high standard themselves. This exhibition presents the dual aspects of daimyo culture, exploring the interaction of its two primary elements, bu, the martial tradition, and bun, the civilizing arts of peace. The ideal warrior was the embodiment of both bu and bun.

The integration of the martial arts and the civilian arts is intrinsically linked to the art in this exhibition. Armor, saddles, swords, and sword mountings, however resplendent in appearance, were by their very nature a part of bu. Conversely, the tea ceremony and such objects as ceramics, examples of calligraphy, and paintings are in the realm of bun.

Guest curator for the exhibition is Professor Yoshiaki Shimizu, of the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. An exhibition catalogue, fully illustrated in color, will be produced by the National Gallery with the collaboration of scholars from Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs. It will feature essays by Professor Martin Collcutt of Princeton University and Professor Shimizu.

Working closely with the Japanese partners, the exhibition has been coordinated at the Gallery by the department of exhibition programs headed by D. Dodge Thompson. The exhibition space was designed by Gaillard Ravenel, chief, and Mark Leithauser, deputy chief of design and installation at the National Gallery.

The National Gallery of Art will present a film produced by John Nathan in association with the National Gallery that will focus on many aspects of daimyo culture. The film will be broadcast nationally, and distributed on video cassette to schools and the general public. The film will also be shown at the National Gallery while the exhibition is there.

Owing to their fragile nature, paintings, calligraphy, textiles, and lacquer objects will be displayed in three different rotations of four weeks each. Armor will be rotated twice. As objects from a rotation are withdrawn, similar works of the same type, style, and period will replace them. The exhibition will be closed to the public on Monday, Nov. 28, for the installation of new objects. Sculpture, swords and sword guards will not be rotated and will be on view during the entire exhibition.

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The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185-1868

National Gallery of Art
Washington
October 30, 1988-
January 23, 1989

MAJOR EXHIBITION OF JAPANESE ART AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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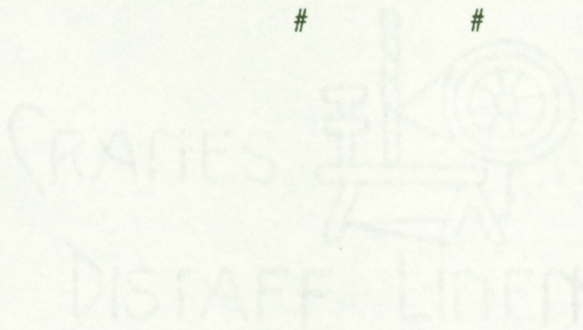
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Please contact Ruth Kaplan or Katie Ziglar, National Gallery of Art (202) 842-6353.

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JAPAN

The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185-1868

The Art of the Tea Ceremony

National Gallery of Art
Washington
October 30, 1988-
January 23, 1989

JAPAN: THE SHAPING OF DAIMYO CULTURE 1185-1868
Exhibition Backgrounder

Certain terms and concepts from medieval Japan have made their way into Western consciousness, while others have not. For example, the words shogun and samurai have become familiar to the West through popular novels and movies. The term daimyo, however closely related in the feudal structure to the shogun and samurai, is almost unknown.

The daimyo (literally translated, dai for "great," myo for myoden or "named lands"; i.e., holder of the great named lands) ranked just beneath the shogun (military ruler), and above the samurai (warrior vassals) in the medieval Japanese military hierarchy. The feudal military system in which the daimyo came to function as a linchpin replaced imperial rule -- rooted in the emperor and his court -- as the governing force in the country from roughly 1185 to 1868. The daimyo were regional warrior-rulers, numbering at various times between 50 and 250, who governed the roughly two-thirds of Japan not directly administered by the shogun. The daimyo answered to the shogun, who received his appointment as a virtual pseudo-monarch from the emperor. The daimyo attained their power through military might, and maintained it through the allegiance of their vassals. This required strength, and no less important, skill in the arts of governing and administration.

The Art of the Tea Ceremony
is made possible by
The Asahi Shimbun,
The Yabunouchi School of Tea,
The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd.,
and All Nippon Airways.

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During the nearly 700-year period that the feudal military structure existed in Japan¹, the daimyo were a critical force whose ideas and tastes had tremendous cultural and political implications. The role of the daimyo, with its complex blending of martial interests, bu, and the peaceful or governing arts, bun, evolved over the course of several centuries and their powerful legacy helped to shape many characteristics of the modern nation. The daimyo contribution to Japan's art and culture, a direct reflection of their beliefs and lifestyle, is the focus of this exhibition.

JAPAN: THE SHAPING OF DAIMYO CULTURE 1185-1868 marks an extraordinary willingness on the part of many museums and private collectors in Japan to share with the American people the works of art and cultural artifacts that best illustrate the culture of Japan's warrior age. A number of works in the exhibition have been designated National Treasures, Important Cultural Properties, or Important Art Objects by the Japanese government because of their artistic quality, historic value, and rarity.

JAPAN BEFORE THE DAIMYO

During the seventh century, a centralized imperial government arose in Japan around the figure of an emperor claiming direct descent from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. The emperor ruled with complete authority, employing advice and assistance from philosophers and men of letters who made up his court, a system which was modeled on the governmental structure of Sui and Tang China.

¹[The age of the daimyo divides into the following sub-periods of Japanese history: Kamakura Period (1185-1333), Muromachi/Ashikaga Period (1333-1573), Momoyama Period (1573-1615), Edo Period (1615-1868)]

In fact, all the strongest influences on imperial Japan came from China even if they originated elsewhere, as in the case of Buddhism, a religion that began in India and came to Japan through intermediaries of China and Korea.

The Japanese court consisted of courtiers and scholars of Buddhism, Confucianism, Chinese language and literature, and other Chinese disciplines. Imperial pastimes, like those in China, included poetry contests, banquets, ceremonies, religious observances, pilgrimages to Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines and excursions at various times of the year to see "flowers and the moon." An emperor who wished could relinquish the throne in order to pursue religious studies, as was often the case when the emperor wearied of his duties or felt that his strength was waning.

TRANSITION TO WARRIOR DOMINANCE

In the tenth century, the Heian imperial court, which had been established at Kyoto since 794, began to lose political control over the Japanese provinces. This situation resulted from the increasing power of local warrior bands and the relative isolation of the court from everyday affairs. The emperor was forced to call upon the local warrior chieftains to keep order and protect the capital. Given the opportunity, the landholders, predecessors of the daimyo, used their own private armies of samurai to establish effective control of much of the country. The culmination of this transition occurred in 1192 when the warrior chieftain Minamoto Yoritomo accepted from the imperial court the title Seiitaishogun, "Great General Who Quells the Barbarians." This marked the imperial court's recognition of the warrior order as holding legitimate political authority.

In the seven centuries that followed, the emperor and the court in Kyoto continued to claim sacerdotal sovereignty while the shogun, directing his own

bakufu, or garrison government, was delegated the authority to rule the warrior order, and by extension, the entire country. A delicate balance was struck between the old aristocratic order and the new military elite. The warrior class assumed political, economic, and cultural leadership of Japan while paying token respect to the emperor and the court.

Naturally, the co-existence of these very different forces was not entirely harmonious, and there were several unsuccessful attempts to re-establish imperial rule. For the most part, however, the two parties engaged in an uneasy alliance based on their mutually reinforced needs.

DAIMYO CULTURE

Daimyo culture was rooted in a martial tradition cultivated by provincial chieftains who rose to power and maintained their positions through force of arms. Aptitude and discipline were required to learn the arts of combat -- archery, swordsmanship, horsemanship, hunting, and falconry -- or arts of bu. On the battlefield and in times of peace, the warriors aspired to practice these arts in accordance with a strict ethical code. Eventually known as bushi do, this code demanded that the warrior renounce all personal needs and desires, espousing instead those of his lord. The warrior ethic extolled the virtues of a spartan lifestyle, physical endurance, and the willingness to die for one's lord if necessary. This responsibility superseded even family obligations. Although absolute loyalty sometimes rose out of political or economic necessity, selfless devotion to duty remained the warrior ideal of the age.

Until the peaceful period of the Tokugawa shogunate (1615-1868), the warrior clans fought among themselves, particularly during the sixteenth century, called the "Age of the Wars." Leadership passed through

successive generations of daimyo, though the future was never certain. A daimyo could always be toppled by rivals. A few forceful or ruthless samurai were able to rise to the level of daimyo, and some daimyo, like Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), aspired to the title shogun. The crucial factor was that success in bu, particularly skill in combat on horseback with a sword, was essential to survival.

The paramount symbol of the warrior's code and status was the sword. More than a weapon, the Japanese sword was an object of spiritual significance and, with its elegant lines and subtle variations in texture and color, of artistic expression. The finest swords were made of steel with an inner core and outer skin that were each repeatedly folded, heated, and hammered into a weapon of extraordinary strength with a cutting edge of unsurpassed sharpness. Swordmaking reached its height during the thirteenth century, and swords from that era were prized and passed down through generations of daimyo families. Later swords were renowned for the beauty and costliness of their ornamentation, an indication of their more ceremonial use.

The importance of the sword was such that warriors who lost a battle were known to pray at the temple for knowledge of why their sword had failed in its power. Swordmakers routinely prayed and abstained from worldly habits for a week before setting out to forge a blade.

BUN: THE ARTS OF GOVERNING AND OF PEACE

As the daimyo sought and achieved military and political power, they found that while they might conquer territory on horseback, they could not rule it from horseback. The daimyo needed the administrative and literary skills necessary to govern their regional domains and to participate in the shogunal

governments, as well as the ability to consort more or less equally with the cultured, courtly elite they were displacing. Bun encompassed these arts, and the daimyo looked to the most likely sources to acquire them: the Kyoto court, Buddhist monasteries, and Chinese culture. Many daimyo became learned and discerning patrons, and even practitioners, of literature, ink painting, No theater, and the tea ceremony.

GROWTH OF BUDDHISM IN JAPAN UNDER DAIMYO RULE

Buddhism, which had been embraced by emperors, court nobles, and holy men in the imperial period from the late sixth century on, had remained an elite interest in ancient Japan. Fundamentally a classless religion, Buddhism, especially two schools, The Pure Land Belief and Zen, spread rapidly in the Kamakura period. One reason was that the warriors enjoyed its contemplative philosophy as a foil to the martial arts. Also, the idea of rebirth in the paradise of Amida promised to those who followed the Pure Land sect undoubtedly appealed to warriors facing the prospect of sudden death. An entirely different rationale reflects the fact that the warrior class could accrue prestige for patronizing monasteries and other good works. Ample opportunity was present, for example, for rebuilding monasteries damaged during battles. Benefactors' portraits were hung in monasteries, memorializing their subjects for posterity.

CULTURAL FRINGE BENEFITS

The tea ceremony came into more widespread practice along with the growth of Buddhism. The ritual of drinking tea had existed for several centuries in Japan, arriving with Buddhist monks from China. Yet, until the initiation of

the feudal military system, the tea ceremony was not popular. This changed because the warrior class discovered a powerful link between the ideals of bun and the discipline and beauty of the tea ceremony. Further, the practice of meditation, cultivated in the tea ceremony, was recognized as actually improving concentration on the arts of bu.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the tea masters Murata Juko and Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591) stressed the spiritual potential of the tea ceremony even more. Their wabi style of tea ceremony was characterized by cultivated restraint, quasi-rusticity, and assumed poverty. Among the warrior class, the wabi style of tea was gradually modified to include elements of a more elegant aesthetic. This trend can be traced in the types of ceramics used in the tea ceremony at various times. Imperfectly shaped Raku pottery was seen as ideal for the wabi practice of the tea ceremony while elegant Chinese glazed porcelains were in favor before, and again after, the wabi style was in vogue.

It was acceptable for daimyo to retire after the height of their military career to pursue the contemplative disciplines. Some actually became monks and lived a quasi-monastic life; others simply gave up the sword to enjoy their leisure and favorite pastimes. This custom echoed that of the imperial court.

TENSION BETWEEN BU AND BUN

For the majority who did not retire from the warrior life to pursue bun exclusively, there was always the risk that excessive devotion to cultural pursuits could undermine the essential martial spirit and waste resources better spent on weapons or defense. Daimyo were warned of the danger through such works as the lengthy illustrated narrative Obusuma Saburo scroll. Made around

1300, this narrative contrasts the lives of two samurai brothers: Saburo, whose single-minded dedication to the martial arts caused him to forsake family honor; and Jiro, whose excessive interest in courtly, literary arts led to his death and the loss of his land.

The ideal was to keep bu and bun in balance, but a natural tension always existed between them, and during the intermittent warfare of the late Kamakura and Muromachi periods (ending about 1573), the arts of bu were dominant, though bun was never far behind. The Muromachi period saw the formalization of tea drinking, for example, and a number of contemplative pursuits including flower arranging and games. In fact, games became a regular part of the daimyo bride's trousseau. The Edo period "shell matching" games involved 360 shells, each one-half of a pair with matching design from the classic Tale of Genji or floral or bird decoration. Another game called monko, or "Listening to the Incense" required players to identify types of wood that produced fragrant aromas.

In the Edo period, the Tokugawa shoguns encouraged the cultivation of martial arts, but actually required daimyo and samurai to become administrators and men of culture.

THE DAIMYO PORTRAYED IN ART

The great portraits of the daimyo, composed with ink and color on scrolls accompanied by calligraphed inscriptions, offer a wealth of insight into both their lifestyle and outlook on their roles. A minority of the paintings, and the most instructive from the standpoint of understanding bu and bun, portray the warriors in battle readiness. One notable example shows its subject, a high ranking warrior, mounted with his tachi sword on his shoulder. There is a broken arrow in his quiver, indicating that he has just come from battle.

The warrior was once thought to be Takauji Ashikaga, founder of the Muromachi shogunate. Takauji was also a poet; one of his wakagaishi (a poem on folded paper) is included in the exhibition. A portrait of Hosokawa Sumimoto shows the military hero in full armor, including a formidable helmet with a kuwagata, a hornlike projection. An excerpt from the inscription reads, "Hosokawa Sumimoto, a great archer and horseman, is far above other humans. He is also versed in waka (Japanese poetry) and appreciates the moon and the wind ...". Clearly he embodied both bu and bun. The oyoroi, "great armor" was devised for mounted warriors, constructed of hundreds of small iron and leather strips coated with lacquer for greater strength and tied together with leather laces and silk cords.

Secular portraits of warriors were commemorative in function, modeled on an older tradition of Japanese Buddhist portraiture. These images are monumental, with the figure situated in a non-specific setting. A typical composition consists of the subject seated on a tatami mat in formal robes and headgear. He holds a folding fan in his right hand and makes a fist with the left. It is clear from the inscriptions that a good number of the portraits are posthumous. The likenesses, destined to hang in a Buddhist temple or monastery patronized by the subject in life, would serve to memorialize him in death.

The inscriptions attached to the paintings are by and large more formulaic than specific. Consider this description from one example, "An accomplished man who responds to this world, a golden phoenix, a jade dragon; Neither common nor saintly; at once a man of the world and a man of the spirit."

Another form of portraiture for the warriors was sculpture. By the late Kamakura period, the skill of the Japanese sculptor in wood was unmatched, due in part to the yosegi technique of assembling a sculpture from separately carved wood blocks. The advantage of this technique was that it avoided cracking of

the wood, usually Japanese cypress. Color was added to heighten the effect. The poses of the sculpted figures were similar to those of painted images, usually with the subject seated cross-legged. A particularly good example from the show is the portrait sculpture reputed to be of Minamoto Yoritomo, who sits cross-legged.

THE DAIMYO CASTLE

The great castles built by warrior-rulers from the sixteenth century had a powerful impact on Japanese architecture and decorative arts. Early fortifications were built on high ground for use only for the limited time of a campaign. But the principal expression of military fortification eventually developed as the castle at the center of a wide plain to serve a dual function as palatial residence and seat of military power. The castles were large compounds. Their central feature was a tower, called a donjon, which originated as a watchtower in earlier fortifications.

The building of castles by the daimyo created space for large works of art to decorate the vast interiors, which were otherwise furnished with low, unobtrusive furniture and mats. Large paintings, painted folding screens, and decorated sliding doors enlivened the interior chambers and asserted the political and cultural authority of the castellans.

EPILOGUE: THE WARRIOR CLASS AFTER THE MEIJI RESTORATION

The stability of the Tokugawa shogunate was in part due to its policy of semi-isolation. European influences brought by merchants and missionaries had been known in the country since the sixteenth century, but came to be regarded

as detrimental to the social fabric. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu outlawed Catholic missionary efforts and permitted only limited contact with the Chinese and Dutch who were allowed to operate out of the single port of Nagasaki. For the next two and a half centuries, Japan remained isolated from the West. The seclusion ended in 1853 with the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and a squadron of ships from the United States, which the shogunate was unsuccessful in expelling. This led to widespread disillusion inside and outside the warrior class.

In 1868, the Tokugawa shogun was overthrown by myriad forces bent on restoring the emperor to power, and the Meiji period of imperial rule began. To meet the threat posed by the West, the Meiji leadership embarked on a program that eventually involved a total dismantling of the old military elite. In the race to modernize and strengthen Japan, the daimyo and the domains they controlled were seen as divisive, backward, and too closely associated with the discredited shogunate. The new government abolished daimyo domains and, in the interests of building a modern army, rescinded the samurai's right to bear arms. Within a decade of the Meiji Restoration, the samurai class had been dissolved, and the political and military power of the daimyo passed into history.

Many of the works of art formerly held by the daimyo were acquired by the new powerful elite of Meiji Japan, the industrialists. Some daimyo descendants, among them the Hosokawa family, retained substantial collections and added to them during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The artistic legacy of the daimyo has since been accorded the recognition befitting these great patrons and practioners of bun.