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Japan's Imperial Waka Poetry Anthology

Verey Gallery, Eton College

24th November 2022 - 16th April 2023

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The Nijūichidaishū *Japan's imperial waka poetry anthology*

Curated by Dr Monika Hinkel (SOAS, University of London)

The future Emperor Hirohito's visit to the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe in 1921 seems as distant now as the voyage of Odysseus. When the young Crown Prince sailed in the battleship Katori from Yokohama for Portsmouth, virtually every port he called at on the way, from Hong Kong to Gibraltar, flew the British imperial flag. Though in reality the First World War had fundamentally weakened the hegemony of the European great powers, it must have been difficult to believe at the time. Hirohito came as the representative of a closely allied power: the Anglo-Japanese treaty had been in place since 1902 (when British imperial strategy had been as nervous of Czarist Russia as it was of Germany, and Britain largely built the modern fleet with which the Japanese defeated Russia in 1905). In 1921 the alliance was still powerful and relevant, and the Crown Prince was a highly honoured guest. Indeed, it was unprecedented for a future emperor to make such a voyage abroad. So the fact that he came to Eton as well as visiting all the other landmarks expected on such a tour was a great honour for the College.

This exhibition (designed originally for the centenary of the visit) gives fascinating background as to how it came about, as well as a long overdue recognition of the importance of the gift with which the Crown Prince marked his visit. Nothing could have been more symbolic of the ancient roots of Japanese political power and of the high culture that went with it than the gift of the volumes of *waka* poetry in their beautiful case, as the exhibition shows. For too long, Eton has perhaps undervalued this historic gift – perhaps understandably putting it aside during the disastrous mid-20th-century bid of the Japanese to replace the British and Dutch empires with their own, while driving the United States out of the Pacific. But now British and Japanese relations are as warm as ever they were a century ago, and it is excellent that we are celebrating a gift of great intrinsic value and beauty, and also celebrating Anglo-Japanese friendship.

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, Provost

Introduction



Lacquer Wood Box, Eton College Fine & Decorative Art FDA-A.304-2013

This exhibition centres on a Japanese object from the Eton College Collections: a lacquer box containing *The Nijūichidaishū* ('Collections of 21 Reigns'). It is an anthology of a type of Japanese poetry called *waka*, which was commissioned by different emperors between the 10th and 15th centuries. This copy was donated to the College by the Japanese Crown Prince Hirohito (1901–89), later Emperor Shōwa, after his visit to Eton in May 1921. With objects from the College's Collections, and loans from the British Museum, Ashmolean Museum and the Ezen Foundation, the exhibition highlights the Crown Prince's visit to Eton College as part of his European tour, Japanese courtly culture and *waka*, as well as recurring poetic themes, particularly nature and the seasons.

Crown Prince Hirohito's Visit to Eton College



Photograph of the arrival of Crown Prince Hirohito outside School Hall, Eton Photographic Archive PA-A.6:19-2012

On 3 March 1921, Crown Prince Hirohito embarked on a six-month tour of Europe, the first time a member of the Japanese royal family had left the country. He celebrated his 21st birthday on board near Gibraltar and disembarked at Portsmouth on 9 May 1921, accompanied by his uncle Prince Kan'in and Count Chinda Sutemi, his political adviser. He was welcomed by King George V at Victoria Station and was then occupied with formal visits, sightseeing, and banquets in both England and Scotland, visiting Windsor, Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, amongst other places.

On 27 May 1921, Crown Prince Hirohito visited Eton College as a part of his tour. He was greeted by an assembly of pupils and teachers shouting '*Banzai!*', a Japanese greeting meaning 'ten thousand years of long life'. When he was shown the College Library, the librarian lamented the lack of Japanese books, which Hirohito promised to remedy. The prince later recalled 'pleasant memories' of his visit to Eton.



Sanjūrokkasen ('Thirty-Six Immortal Poets') ©The Trustees of the British Museum licenced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Courtly Culture & Waka Poetry

The term *waka* (和歌, 'Japanese verse') generally refers to classical Japanese poetry. The term was coined during the Heian period (794 – 1185) to differentiate native poetry from *kanshi*, the Chinese poems with which educated Japanese would have been familiar. *Waka* has its origin in folk songs, and the oldest extant *waka* dates to the early 8th century. It became an important art form at the Japanese imperial court as early as the mid-8th century. The Heian period, when the first imperial *waka* collections were compiled, is considered the classical period in Japanese art and culture, and Heian poetry continued to provide inspiration to artists of later periods.

Waka consist of 31 syllables, with verses arranged in five lines in an alternating pattern of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. The term is occasionally also used as a synonym for *tanka* ('short poem'), the basic form of Japanese poetry. The calligraphy style of *waka* poetry is hand-written in Japanese *kana* script (phonetic syllable alphabet) that was developed during the Heian period, interspersed with Chinese characters (*kanji*). *Kana* paved the way for the development of purely Japanese literary styles, like *waka*, and encouraged literary production. The poems are written in flowing form, showing characters and syllables in a fast, abbreviated manner.

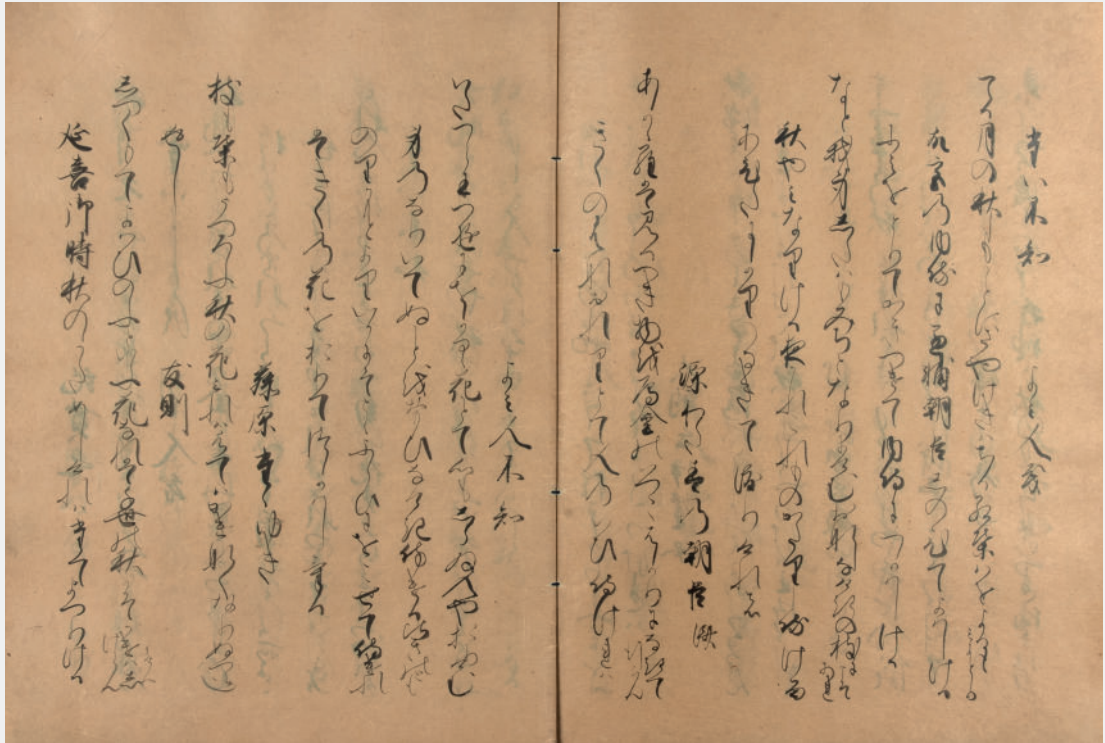


Poetry was an important means of communication at the imperial court, enabling members of the nobility to converse in a refined and indirect way. A person's skill in poetry was a major criterion in determining their standing in society, as *waka* became used in social circles which included warriors, priests and the rural elite. Reciting *waka* was therefore not just a cultural accomplishment but a profession, ranking alongside Chinese poetry and ancient court music. The families that took it on passed down this art form from one generation to the next.

Many rituals and events surrounded the composition, presentation, and judgement of *waka*. For instance, there were two types of *waka* parties: *utakai* and *utaawase*. At *utakai*, all participants wrote *waka* verses and recited them, while at *utaawase* two teams would compete against each other. The first recorded *utaawase* was held in around 885 and, at first, it was simply a playful form of entertainment. As the poetic tradition deepened and developed, it turned into a serious aesthetic contest, with considerable formality. The winning poems from the competitions were preserved in imperial poetry anthologies. Today, the imperial family still holds *utakai*: the one held on New Year's Day was established by Emperor Kameyama in 1267. The emperor himself releases his own poem for the public to read and announces a theme for an annual *waka* writing contest that is open to all.



In the 11th century, Fujiwara Kintō (996–1075), a Japanese nobleman, scholar, and poet, selected 36 *waka* by celebrated authors of the past. They would be known as the *Sanjūrokkasen*, or Thirty-six Immortal Poets. In the early 13th century, retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) designated another group of poets, 100 in all, as Immortal Poets. Throughout medieval and pre-modern times, paintings and prints featuring depictions of the immortal poets were created and cherished. Combinations of poet portraits and representative poems (*kasen-e*), emerged in the 13th century, produced on horizontal scrolls representing the poets in competition (*utaawase*).



The Nijūchidaishū, Japan, late 19th-early 20th century. Eton College Library, MS 236

The Nijūchidaishū

Crown Prince Hirohito kept his promise to support Eton College Library, and in August 1925 he gifted Eton a lacquer box containing handwritten books of *The Nijūchidaishū*, an anthology of *waka* compiled by imperial command. Imperially commissioned *waka* collections are also called *chokusen wakashū* (or *chokusenshū*) in Japanese, meaning they were compiled by order of a reigning or retired emperor. *Chokusenshū* were legitimised as authoritative compilations through their imperial commission. Therefore, these anthologies have an important socio-political function, to demonstrate the prestige of the emperor, while affirming the social order propagated by his rule. This copy of *The Nijūchidaishū* was created sometime between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

二十一代集

The Nijūichidaishū (*nijūichi* meaning ‘21’ and *daishū* standing for ‘collection of poetry’) contains 21 distinct compilations, totalling more than 33,000 individual *waka*. The poems were composed and compiled from the early 10th century to the mid-15th century. These 21 imperial collections are usually divided according to the time when they were compiled (it is common to omit the term ‘*waka*’ in the names):

Sandaishū (Collections of Three Eras): *Kokinshū*, *Gosenshū*, *Shuishū*. The *sandaishū* set the standard for later poetic diction, language, poetic topics, and for the organisational principles of the collections.

Hachidaishū (Collections of Eight Eras): *Kokinshū*, *Gosenshū*, *Shuishū*, *Goshuishū*, *Kinyoshū*, *Shikashū*, *Senzaishū*, and *Shin Kokinshū*.

Jusandaishū (Collections of Thirteen Eras), from the *Shinchokusenshū* to the *Shinshokukokinshū*, but these are less often read today, except for the *Shinchokusenshū*, *Gyokuyoshū*, and *Fugashū*.

The *Kokinshū*, the first compilation, engages with two main topics: the seasons and love. The poems progress through the sequence of seasons, and similarly, the love poems are ordered according to the presumed process of a courtly love affair. The compilers of the anthology often added a headnote identifying the author, specifying the topic, and describing the circumstances that prompted the poem. The *Kokinshū* includes poems from 130 named poets, while around 450 poems are recorded as anonymous. The poetry in the *Kokinshū* contains refined and elegant language, which is often witty through the use of intricate wordplay and literary puns. Thanks to its diction and intertextual poetics, the *Kokinshū* served as a model for all later imperially commissioned anthologies: it was considered the apex of the poetic canon, becoming the major source of inspiration for later poets. Commentaries and rituals connected to the *Kokinshū* therefore developed and were passed down to later generations of poets.

Nature & Seasons in Waka Poetry



Trembleuse saucer with flowering plants and woman in Heian robes, Japan ©Ashmolean Museum

Waka often relates to the four seasons and nature. In the preface of the *Kokinshū*, the poet stresses the importance of the seasons and nature in Japanese poetry:

“The poetry of Japan has its roots in the human heart and flourishes in the countless leaves of words. Because human beings possess interests of so many kinds it is in poetry that they give expression to the meditations of their hearts in terms of the sights appearing before their eyes and the sounds coming to their ears. Hearing the warbler sing among the blossoms and the frog in his fresh waters — is there any living being not given to song!”

和歌

To this day, the Japanese celebrate the beauty of the seasons and the poignancy of their evanescence through festivals and rituals every year. This sensitivity to seasonal change is an important part of *Shintō*, Japan's native belief system, which focuses on natural cycles of life, death, and renewal. Similarly, *waka* celebrate the sensual appeal of elements of the natural world, imbuing the seasons with human emotions. Furthermore, poems are expressed visually through elegant calligraphies, imaginary portraits of poets and depictions of nature. These works also convey an artist's respect for the great poets of the past and the desire to emulate their accomplishments. High-ranking members of court society would copy poems on elegantly decorated papers, transforming manuscripts into luxury objects.

During the Heian period, before the birth of *kimono*, a beautiful garment culture blossomed. By the 11th century the Chinese-style costumes (*karafu*) that had been prevalent earlier in the imperial court evolved into uniquely Japanese garments, such as the women's layered *jūnihitoe*, and inner pleated trousers (*keiko*). Even among the wide variety of traditional robes, these stood out for the quality of their silks, their combinations and layering of colours, and their voluminous, sumptuous fabrics. The colours and colour co-ordinations created by the layering of garments had poetic names evocative of the seasons. The arrangement of these colours was important for conveying a sense of refinement and good taste. Too pale or too bright colours could become a point of criticism or wearing colours that clashed or were inappropriate for the season could ruin a person's reputation.

Four poems from *The Nijūichidaishū*, one for each season, have been selected and can be seen on the banners in the gallery and in this catalogue.

The Nijūichidaishū Explained

The 21 compilations that make up *The Nijūichidaishū* are as follows:

1 KOKIN WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Japanese Poems*)

Envisioned by Emperor Uda (r. 887–97) and ordered by Emperor Daigo (r. 897–930) around 905, it includes 1,111 poems, compiled by Ki no Tsurayuki, Ki no Tomonori (who had died before completion), Oshikochi Mitsune and Mibu no Tadamine; completed around 920

2 GOSEN WAKASHŪ (*Later Collection of Japanese Poetry*)

Ordered by Murakami (r. 946–67), includes 1,426 poems, compiled by the so-called ‘Five Men of the Pear Jar Room’: Onakatomi Yoshinobu, Kiyowara Motosuke, Minamoto Shitago, Ki no Tokibumi and Sakano Mochiki; completed 951

3 SHUI WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered by Kazan (r. 984–86), includes 1,351 poems, compiled by Kazan and Fujiwara Kinto; completed by 1005–11

4 GOSHUI WAKASHŪ (*Later Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poetry*)

Ordered by Shirakawa (r. 1072–86) in 1078, includes 1,200 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Michitoshi; completed 1086

5 KINYO WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Golden Leaves of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered by Shirakawa (r. 1072–86), includes 715 poems, compiled by Minamoto Shunrai; completed in 1127

6 SHIKA WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Verbal Flowers of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered in 1144 by Sutoku (r. 1123–41), includes 411 poems by 23 named poets, compiled by Fujiwara Akisuke; completed in 1151

7 SENZAI WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Japanese Poems of a Thousand Years*)

Ordered in 1183 by Goshirakawa (r. 1155–58), includes 1,287 poems by 235 poets, compiled by Fujiwara Shunzei; completed in 1188

8 SHINKOKIN WAKASHŪ (*New Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times*)

Ordered in 1201 by Gotoba (r. 1183–98), includes 1,978 poems and compiled by Fujiwara Teika, Fujiwara Ariie, Fujiwara Ietaka, Jaturen, Minamoto Michitomo and Fujiwara Masatsune; completed in 1216

9 SHINCHOKUSEN WAKASHŪ (*A New Royally Ordered Collection of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered in 1232 by Gohorikawa (r. 1221–32), includes 1,374 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Teika; completed in 1235

10 SHOKUGOSEN WAKASHŪ (*Later Collection of Japanese Poems Continued*)

Ordered in 1248 by Gosaga (r. 1242–46), includes 1,368 poems by 101 poets, compiled by Fujiwara Tameie; completed in 1251

11 SHOKUKOKIN WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times Cont.*)

Ordered by Gosaga (r. 1242–146) in 1259, includes 1,925 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameie, with Fujiwara Motoie, Fujiwara Ieyoshi, Fujiwara Yukie and Fujiwara Mitsutoshi; completed in 1265

12 SHOKUSHUI WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems Continued*)

Ordered, probably in 1276, by Kameyama (r. 1259–74), includes 1,461 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameuji; completed in 1279

13 SHINGOSEN WAKASHŪ (*New Later Collection of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered in 1301 by Gouda (r. 1259–74), includes 1,606 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameyo; completed in 1303

14 GYOKUYO WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Jewelled Leaves of Japanese Poetry*)

Ordered by Fushimi (r. 1287–98) in 1312, includes 2,796 poems, compiled by Kyogoku Tamekane; completed in 1313

15 SHOKUSENZAI WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Japanese Poems of a Thousand Years Continued*)

Ordered in 1318 by Gouda (r. 1274–87), includes 2,159 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameyo; completed in 1320

16 SHOKUGOSHUI WAKASHŪ (*Later Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems Continued*)

Ordered in 1323 by Godaigo (r. 1318–39), includes 1,347 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tamefuji and Fujiwara Tamesada; completed in 1325

17 FUGA WAKASHŪ (*Collection of Japanese Poetry of Elegance*)

Compiled 1343–49 by Kogon (r. 1332–1333) with the active participation of Hanazono (r. 1308–18), includes 2,211 poems; completed in 1349

18 SHINSENZAI WAKASHŪ (*New Collection of Japanese Poems of a Thousand Years*)

Ordered by Gokogon (r. 1352–71), at the request of the shōgun Ashikaga Takauji, includes 2,364 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tamesada; completed in 1359.

19 SHINSHUI WAKASHŪ (*New Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered in 1363, by Gokogon (r. 1352–71), at the request of the shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshiakira, includes 1,920 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameaki and Ton'a; completed in 1364

20 SHINGOSHUI WAKASHŪ (*New Later Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems*)

Ordered by Goen'yu (r. 1374–182), at the request of the shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, includes 1,554 poems, compiled by Fujiwara Tameto and Fujiwara Tameshige; completed in 1383, revised in 1384

21 SHINSHOKUKOKIN WAKASHŪ (*New Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times Cont.*)

Ordered by Gohanazono (r. 1429–64) in 1433, includes 2,144 poems, compiled by Asukai Masayo; completed in 1439

Selected Poems

Based on transcriptions and translations by Dr Thomas McAuley (University of Sheffield) on www.wakapoetry.net

春

春のくるあしたの原を見渡せば霞も今日ぞ立ち始めける

Senzai wakashū (千載和歌集, 7th anthology): book I, poem 1

Composed on the first day of Spring.

Spring Poem

haru no kuru	Spring has come
ashita no hara o	This morning to the fields in Ashita
miwataseba	Gazing across,
kasumi mo kyō zo	The haze, today,
tachihajimekeru	Has begun to rise.

Minamoto no Toshiyori (源俊頼)

夏

うの花のむらむらさけるかきねをば雲まの月のかけかとぞみる

Shinkokin wakashū (新古今和歌集, 8th anthology): book III, poem 180

Composed when feeling that it was the end of the Fourth Month.

Summer Poem

u no hana no	The deutzia
muramura sakeru	Blooming in profusion
kakine o ba	Along the brushwood fence
kumo ma no tsuki no	Through the cloud-breaks moon
kage ka to zo miru	Light do appear to be.

Emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129, r. 1072–1086)

秋

Autumn Poem

よそに見る峰の紅葉や散りくるとふもとの里は嵐をぞまつ

Kin'yo wakashū (金葉和歌集, 4th anthology): book III, poem 250

Composed on Autumn leaves.

yoso ni miru	Seen afar
mine no momiji ya	Upon the peaks, are the scarlet leaves
chirikuru to	Scattering down –
fumoto no sato wa	The houses at the mountain's foot
arashi o zo matsu	Await the wild storm winds.

Director of the Department of Shrines [Minamoto no] Akinaka

冬

Winter Poem

山里は冬ぞさびしさまさりける人ぬも草もかれぬと思へば

Kokinwakashū (古今和歌集, 1st anthology): book VI, poem 315

Composed as a Winter poem.

yamazato wa	In a mountain home
fuyu zo sabishisa	Winter is when loneliness
masarikeru	Overwhelms me,
hitome mo kusa mo	The bustle of folk and the grasses, too,
karenu to omoeba	Have withered away, I feel.

Minamoto no Muneyuki (d.939)

A Very Brief History of Japan

JŌMON PERIOD (12,500–300 BC)

The Jōmon period is named after the pottery of this era, the earliest known pottery in the world, that is decorated with impressed “cord patterns”. The Jōmon people lived by hunting, gathering and fishing. The large number of clay figurines and elaborate ritual vessels excavated from all over the Japanese archipelago suggest a strong sense of spirituality invested in these objects by early society.

YAYOI PERIOD (300 BC–300 AD)

During the Yayoi period, wet-rice cultivation was introduced by immigrants from the continent as well as advanced bronze and iron technology. They lived in small agricultural communities, and the concept of a class society with local chieftains developed.

KOFUN PERIOD (300–538)

Huge *kofun* (tumuli) burial sites were constructed by rulers during this period, and *haniwa* (pottery tomb guardian figures) and high-fired stoneware vessels were made. The present-day Japanese imperial family emerged as the most influential clan, and the foundation for a unified state was established.

ASUKA & HAKUHŌ PERIOD (552–710)

Buddhism was officially introduced to Japan in 552 when the king of Paekche (Korea) sent an envoy to the Emperor of Japan with gifts of Buddhist scriptures and a gilt bronze image of Buddha. The adoption of Buddhism by the imperial family and other noble clans encouraged the influx of continental culture. Art and architecture of this period display a strong influence of Chinese style.

NARA PERIOD (710–794)

The capital city of Nara was established, modelled after the Chinese capital Chang’an. Buddhism became the state religion, thanks to promotion by the Emperor who aimed to extend the imperial authority throughout the country through a network of state-sponsored temples and monasteries. Close contact with Tang Dynasty China is evident in the style of artefacts from this period.

HEIAN PERIOD (794–1185)

The move of the capital to *Heian-kyō* (present day Kyoto) in 794 marked the separation of Buddhism and political power. State Buddhism was replaced by a more personal devotion, and new sects of Buddhism promoted the salvation of the individual. After the collapse of China’s Tang dynasty in 907, official contact with China was terminated, and Japan turned inward. The development of Japanese *kana* script and a boom in literature encouraged the formation of a purely national literary and artistic style. Art from the second half of the Heian period reflects the elegant aristocratic taste of the Fujiwara family who acted as imperial regents. The Heian period is considered the classical period in Japanese art and culture, and Heian poetry and literature continued to provide inspiration to artists of later periods.

KAMAKURA PERIOD (1185–1333)

Towards the end of the Heian period, the political power of aristocrats declined, and two warrior families, Taira and Minamoto, fought for control of the country. In 1185, Minamoto defeated Taira in an epic battle, and a warrior government was established in Kamakura by Shōgun Minamoto no Yoritomo. Zen Buddhism arrived from China, and the austere simplicity of Zen philosophy was favoured by warriors.

MUROMACHI PERIOD (1333–1573)

The Kamakura government was replaced by another warrior family, the Ashikaga, in 1333 and the seat of government was moved to the Muromachi district of Kyoto in 1392. Trade with Ming dynasty China encouraged a renewed interest in Chinese culture during this period, and all things Chinese became fashionable. Under the patronage of the Ashikaga Shōguns, many of the art forms still practised in Japan today were developed, such as Noh drama, ink painting, dry landscape gardens, and flower arranging. Zen Buddhism was the driving force behind the development of the aesthetic that is deeply associated with Japanese art and culture today. In the 16th century civil strife and fighting between warlords weakened the Ashikaga government, and the country was plunged into disorder.

MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1573–1615)

The country was gradually unified again by the three successive military leaders, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, and trade and industry once again flourished. Magnificent castles were built by military leaders to show off their power, authority, and wealth. The interior of these castles was lavishly decorated with paintings on gold background. Christianity was introduced by Portuguese missionaries during this period.

EDO PERIOD (1615–1868)

In 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu established his government in Edo (present day Tokyo). Japan enjoyed 250 years of relative peace under 15 generations of Shōguns from the Tokugawa family who controlled the country through strict rules and social order. The rapid spread of Christianity was seen as a threat to Japanese autonomy and was banned in 1617. In the 1630s, all Europeans were expelled, and the Tokugawa government enforced the official policy of national seclusion. Only Dutch and Chinese merchants were allowed to trade at the port

of Nagasaki. Peace and economic prosperity encouraged the development of secular art, and *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the Floating World) became the most popular art form enjoyed by the merchant class.

MEIJI PERIOD (1868–1912)

The Meiji government was established in 1868 with a 16-year-old Emperor as the head of state. The imperial family moved from Kyoto (where they had resided since 794) to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo. The Meiji era was shaped by the rapid modernisation of the country under the slogan '*Bunmei kaika*' (Civilisation and Enlightenment). Western technology, customs and fashion were enthusiastically adopted. From the end of 19th century, Japanese woodblock prints were avidly collected in Europe where the interest in Japanese art resulted in the *Japonisme* movement. With the founding of the western-oriented Technological Art School, Japanese painting developed out of a dualism of western and eastern styles, featuring *Yōga* (Western-style painting) and *Nihonga* (Japanese painting).

TAISHŌ PERIOD (1912–1926)

Japan underwent further industrialisation and modernisation of cities, particularly after the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. The poor health of the emperor brought a shift in power to the Diet of Japan and the nation's democratic parties. The era is known as the Taisho democracy, when democratic and liberal movements gained strength and people placed more emphasis on individuality. The *Nihonga* painter Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958) resurrected the *Nihon Bijutsuin* (Japan Art Institute). Other art associations were established, like the *Fusankai* (Sketch Society) and the *Nikakai* (Second Division Society), to rebel against the Ministry of Education's Fine Arts Exhibition. A group of avant-garde artists known as *Mavo*, led by the artist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–77), was guided by Murayama's theory of 'conscious constructivism'. The print artist Onchi Koshirō (1891–1955) led the formation of the Sosaku Hanga Kyōkai (Japan Creative Print Society) and the publisher Watanabe Shosaburō (1885–1962) established and led the New Print (*shin hanga*) movement.



SHŌWA PERIOD (1926–1989)

The Shōwa period began when Hirohito became emperor, going on to be the longest reigning emperor in the history of Japan until his death in 1989. He led Japan into war with China and World War II and through the aftermath of the nuclear aggression of the United States. Post-war Japan experienced a period of reconstruction as well as tremendous economic recovery and growth. Japan became one of the world's leading economies and a world power in the 20th century. The beginning of the Shōwa period marked the emergence of the Folk Craft Movement (*mingei undō*), centred around the production of traditional folk crafts. Japanese art flourished, with artists working in a variety of styles and media. Among the most prominent movements were *Art Informel* and Abstract Expressionism. Avant-garde art societies focused on the styles and ideologies associated with Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism. The avant-garde group of artists known as *Gutai* (Concrete Form) had a strong impact on the post-war art scene.

HEISEI PERIOD (1989–2019)

The Heisei period was characterised by an economic recession and recovery, and by Japan's rethinking of social and political issues, such as the role of the country's self-defence forces, privatisation of governmental organisations and problems of an ageing society. Japan's contribution to 20th-century art is mainly seen in the world-wide influence of Japanese popular culture, especially in the form of manga and anime, as well as video game graphics and concept art.

REIWA PERIOD (2019–PRESENT)

Emperor Akihito abdicated (first Emperor since 1817) in favour of his son, Crown Prince Naruhito. His succession marked the start of the Reiwa Period.

Object list: Crown Prince Hirohito's Visit to Eton College

Map of Japan, Philippe Briet (1601-1688), France, 17th century. Eton College Library, Se.2.03, map no. 64
The Chronicle issue no. 1772, England, 1921. Eton College Archives, SCH/P/17
Photograph of the visit of the Crown Prince of Japan to Eton College. Eton Photographic Archive, A.161:20-2014
Photograph of the arrival of Crown Prince Hirohito outside School Hall, Eton College, England 1921. Eton Photographic Archive PA-A.6:19-2012
Letter from Patrick Halsey, England, 1921. Eton College Archives, ED/11/05
Photograph of Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, Japan, 1913. Eton College Library, MS 677/04/01/05
Scrapbook compiled by Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, England 1921. Eton College Library, MS 677/03/06

Object list: Courtly Culture & Waka Poetry

Sanjūrokkasen ('Thirty-Six Immortal Poets'), Anonymous [formerly attributed to Kanō Sanraku (1559–1635)], Japan, late 16th – early 17th century. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, 1957,0413,0.20
Poetess Ono no Komachi, Suzuki Harunobu (1724–70) after Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671–1750), Japan, 18th century. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, 1906,1220,0.62
Poet Otomo no Kuronushi with one of his poems, Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), Japan, late 18th–early 19th century. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, 1906,1220,0.517

Object list: The Nijūchidaishū

Lacquer Wood Box, Japan, 19th Century. Eton College Fine & Decorative Art, FDA-A.304-2013
The Nijūchidaishū, Japan, late 19th–early 20th century. Eton College Library, MS 236
Letter from the Imperial Household, Japan, 1925. Eton College Archives
Silver Cigarette box, Japan, 20th century. Eton College Fine & Decorative Art, ECS-S.143-2015
Imperial Award Honouring Frank-Ashton Gwatkin, Japan, 1921. Eton College Library, MS 677/03/06

Object list: Nature & Seasons in Waka Poetry

Tachibina dolls in the dress of Heian courtiers, Shibata Gitō (1780–1819). The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Purchased with the assistance of the Friends of the Ashmolean, and Mr and Mrs J. Hillier, 1973, EA1973.171
Hina asobi ('Playing with dolls'), Hayashi Unpo (1899–1989), Japan, 20th century. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, 1979,0723,0.7, donated by Hayashi Unpo
Trembleuse saucer with flowering plants and woman in Heian robes, Japan, early 18th century. The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Gift of Gerald Reitlinger, 1978, EA1978.595
Silk Kimono, Japan, c. 1920. On loan from the Ezen Foundation
Dai Nihon Bussan Zue ('Pictorial Record of Products from Greater Japan'), illustrated by Ando Tokubei (Utagawa Hiroshige III, 1842-94), Japan, 19th century. Eton College Library, Idd8.3.01 – Idd8.3.02
Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-Physico-Medicarum, Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), Germany, 18th century. Eton College Library, Bg.5.29
Duck netsuke, Hirata Suketomo (1809-1847), Japan, early-mid 19th century. Eton Natural History Museum, NHM-CL.38-2015
Ehon Taka Kagami ('An Illustrated Mirror of Falconry'), illustrated by Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), Japan, 19th century. Eton College Library, Id7.3.14

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