A JAPANESE ECCENTRIC

THE THREE ARTS OF MURASE TAIITSU

A JAPANESE ECCENTRIC

THE THREE ARTS OF MURASE TAIITSU

BY STEPHEN ADDISS

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART

1979

Library of Congress Catalog Number 79-91682
ISBN 0-89494-008-2

2000 Copies of the catalog were printed for the exhibition
A Japanese Eccentric: The Three Arts of Murase Taiitsu.

Exhibition schedule:

New Orleans Museum of Art — December 1, 1979–February 3, 1980

Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art
The University of Kansas, Lawrence — February 19–March 26, 1980

Designed by Jerry Schuppert, Printing Production Service, Inc., New Orleans
Typography by Greater Typographic Service, Inc., New Orleans
Photography by: G. D. Hackett (No. 10), Otto E. Nelson (Nos. 6, 17, 23),
Roy Trahan (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 26)
Printed by Harvey Press Inc., New Orleans

Cover: Detail of Catalog No. 8

CONTENTS

This publication was made possible through a grant from the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities, a state-based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a special pleasure in presenting an artist not yet famous. Even in Japan, Taiitsu (usually pronounced Taiōtsu) is known only in his home province and to a handful of Nanga enthusiasts in the larger cities. It may seem surprising that his works are popular among American collectors, but Taiitsu's eccentric character and belief in personal freedom have a direct appeal that we can recognise today. The Japanese too are beginning to take more interest in his work; the days of plentiful examples at reasonable prices are now gone.

It is often assumed that fakes and forgeries are rare among works ascribed to little-known artists, but there are great problems of authenticity in the case of Taiitsu. His paintings became briefly popular in the mid-Meiji period, and at the turn of the century a number of Taiitsu's pupils produced copies of his works, perhaps more for enjoyment than for profit. Taiitsu's original seals were kept by his impoverished daughters, who would stamp them upon copies when asked. Therefore one good means of detection of fakes, seal study, is not always useful in this case. The works in this exhibition have all won general acceptance from those consulted, and all clearly rank among the finer works bearing Taiitsu's name. Nevertheless, aside from the rubbings, only catalog numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 24, 25, and 26 have gained absolutely unanimous approval as original works of the master. Number 5 is clearly a copy and has been included for comparison; its seal carving, seal ink, paper, and brushwork are all doubtful. Such an authenticity problem seems surprising at first, but it is often the case in Japanese painting. Taiitsu is an excellent example to study in this regard. The opportunity to see a number of works together offers us a chance to test our connoisseurship while becoming acquainted with an unusual and intriguing personality.

Another pleasure in writing about a multifaceted artist comes in being able to consult with expert friends, whose advice, comments and company are simultaneously helpful and delightful. In Japan, I was fortunate to be able to meet Yoshida Gyōichirō, the author of the only book on Taiitsu; he guided me around Inuyama on a kindly and most useful tour. The Nagoya calligrapher Nakano Ranchu was also of great assistance in helping me to understand Taiitsu's Japanese roots and in discussing his brushwork. The current abbot of Inuyama's Tokujuji, Sawada Hiroi, showed me the temple's fine Taiitsu scrolls and also allowed me to make rubbings of Taiitsu's gravestone. In Nagoya, the scholar and collector Yuasa Shirō was kindness itself, and Furukawa Seiroku allowed me to examine his collection of twenty Taiitsu scrolls. In Tokyo, Joseph Seubert helpfully searched out rare written materials relating to the artist. In the United States, the modern literatus Kwan S. Wong devoted much of his time to discussing poems, brushwork and seals, and brushed the calligraphy used in this catalog. Jonathan Chaves helped on translations and in examining Taiitsu's book on Chinese poetry, and Kenneth Dewoskin had very astute readings of difficult poems by Taiitsu. Pat Fister also helped on translations. Chang Tsenti advised me on seal readings; Elizabeth Broun added friendly suggestions on the essay; Tita M. Addiss added useful advice. The distinguished New Orleans collector Kurt Gitter encouraged the idea of this exhibition and contributed many helpful comments. I also must thank the entire staffs of the New Orleans and Spencer museums for their assistance.

MURASE TAIITSU

Murase Taiitsu, who was to become a notable eccentric as well as a master of painting, poetry, and calligraphy, received a classic Confucian education in his youth and considered himself primarily a Confucian scholar throughout his life. He was born on the seventh day of the seventh month of 1803 in the village of Kōzuchi (now Mino City), about twenty-five miles north of Nagoya. He was the second son of the farmer Murase Shusuke; the eldest son, Shōzō, died in 1807. As a youth, Taiitsu studied at the local temple, Zen'ōji, with the noted monk Kaigen, who had mastered literature as well as Buddhism and Confucianism. Taiitsu's first art name, Kaien, borrows the first character from the name of his earliest teacher.

More crucial to his future, however, was the influence of his three uncles, Murase Tōjō (1791–1853), Murase Ryūsai (1792/4–1851), and Murase Shusui (1795–1876). In the early winter of 1821 Taiitsu moved to Nagoya to live in the house of Ryūsai, a doctor who much loved poetry. His quick intelligence and enthusiastic attitude also impressed his elder uncle, Tōjō, who was already notable as a literatus and poet.

Tōjō also had begun his studies with Kaigen at Zen'ōji. In 1811, armed with introductions from his teacher, Tōjō had journeyed to Osaka to meet the scholar Shinozaki Kintō (1737–1813) and his adopted son, the poet and calligrapher Shinozaki Shochiku (1781–1851). Also visiting the house at the time was Shochiku's friend Rai San'yō (1780–1832), an outstanding young historian, philosopher and poet, who that year had opened his own school of Confucian studies in Kyoto. A friendship was born; two years later San'yō visited Tōjō in Kōzuchi, meeting with Kaigen, touring the local beauty spots, and exchanging poems. In 1818 Tōjō published a selection of Chinese Sung dynasty poems, reflecting the new Japanese literati interest in Sung (960–1279) rather than T'ang dynasty (613–906) literature. One year later the *Tōjō Shibunshu (Tōjō Poem Collection)* was published, with "headnotes" (comments above the text) by Shochiku and San'yō among others. Tōjō also wrote on Chinese calligraphy, at first preferring the work of Wang Hsi-chih and later investigating the later T'ang masters.

At some time in the 1820's Tōjō took Taiitsu to Kyoto to study with Rai San'yō. Most sources suggest the date was 1829, and that Taiitsu remained a pupil of San'yō until the latter's death in 1832. Taiitsu may have first met San'yō in Kozuchi in 1813, and his studies may have begun earlier in the 1820's, but this is not clear. What is certain is that the opportunity to learn from San'yō was the most important event in Taiitsu's younger days; he was deeply influenced by the character as well as the accomplishments of his teacher. Two amusing anecdotes remain from the days when Taiitsu studied in Kyoto. In *Nihon Nanga Shi* it is reported that the young scholar, studying to excess, went to sleep at his desk one day. San'yō came by and threw an inkstone on his back; Taiitsu was reinvigorated and became more diligent in his Confucian studies, singing out the Chinese compositions. One of the many benefits of study with San'yō was the fact that the great literatus was the center of an artistic group including many poets and painters. One day, according to the *Nagoya Shishi,* the poet Shochiku came to visit. San'yō invited his guest to a lovely landscape area outside Kyoto, bringing Taiitsu along. When the master asked him to cook up some codfish, Taiitsu willingly withdrew. Without cleaning off the scales, he chopped the fish into chunks and began to boil them. Upon tasting the results, San'yō knitted his brows and scolded his pupil. Taiitsu explained very politely that he had done his best to learn everything San'yō had taught him, but he had never heard a single word about how to cook. San'yō was left in a daze.

The year of Taiitsu's marriage is not certain, but as his first daughter was born in 1832, the marriage took place most probably in 1830 or 1831. His wife Yuki was the eldest daughter of Kawada Sōuemon, a farmer from Taiitsu's homeland. Yuki was born in 1814, so she was sixteen or seventeen (by Western count) at the time of her

marriage. She was to prove a loyal wife through the good times and hard times to come. Born eleven years after Taiitsu, Yuki also died eleven years after her husband in 1892. According to traditional Japanese count which considers a child one year old at birth, both reached the ripe old age of seventy-nine. Their eldest daughter is known only by her posthumous Buddhist name, Baishitsu Myōkun; she died in 1868.

It is possible that the marriage and birth of a daughter should indicate to us that Taiitsu completed his studies before the death of San'yō, but most sources print that it was at his teacher's demise that Taiitsu returned to his village of Kōzuchi. In 1837, however, he moved to Nagoya and opened his own Confucian school. His wife Yuki was pregnant, and that autumn gave birth to their second daughter, Shun. The earliest extant poem by Taiitsu dates from this time (see catalog No. 1). It is interesting that despite Taiitsu's Chinese-style education, this poem follows the poetic idea of the great Japanese haiku master Bashō.

During the seven years that Taiitsu operated his own school, a third daughter, Tomo, was born in 1843. By this time, however, changes were already in the offing. The Daimyō (feudal lord) of Inuyama (a town between Kōzuchi and Nagoya), who acted as chief retainer for the great lord ruling Owari Province, opened a Confucian school in Nagoya named the *Yōdōkan* (Essence of the Way Hall). Murase Tōjō was invited to give a lecture at the new school in 1842, and his talk on ethics and history was such a success that he was invited to remain and become the resident teacher. Tōjō, however, seems to have loved his home in Kōzuchi, and perhaps one of his nature poems reflects something of his personal character.

> *The dewy leaves and mist at my treetops, I close my gate even during the day,*
> *I bellow and chant, but with no guest, I accompany myself with the* ch'in
> *and a bottle of wine.*
> *I have passed the springtime sleeping to the sound of lonely rain,*
> *And I've learned how the bamboo shoots are growing by my cottage gate.*

This poem celebrates the simple life, although we may note that the *ch'in* is a highly refined Chinese zither much admired by the literati for its subtlety and antique elegance. It may be that Tōjō preferred to live close to nature rather than in the city of Nagoya; whatever his reasons, he declined the post and suggested his nephew Taiitsu. Thus the second great event in the life of the young scholar was again prompted by the kindness of his uncle. In 1844, Taiitsu formally became the Confucian scholar for the Nagoya mansion of the Naruse clan. He received an annual stipend of 73 yen, 9 sen and 6 rin. This proved less than a princely sum; as his daughters grew up he found himself a poor scholar (for his reaction, see catalog no. 7). Taiitsu continued to teach in Nagoya at the *Yōdōkan* until the school was closed at the beginning of the Meiji era in 1868.

What kind of a teacher was Taiitsu? We know that his teacher, Rai San'yō, had been a follower of the Chu Hsi school of Neo-Confucianism, the school approved by the government of the Tokugawa Shōgun, as it stressed the rational examination of things and emphasized loyalty and propriety. San'yō, however, had utilized his Chinese learning to deal with events and personages important in Japanese history, both in prose *(Nihon Gaishi)* and in poetry *(Nihon Gafu),* creating works that were relevant to his countrymen. Taiitsu continued this tradition of adapting Chinese models to Japanese use. It is stated in the *Shimpen Aichi Ken Ijinden* that Taiitsu's talent lay in opening the eyes of ordinary people to morality and justice, using local dialect and jokes when necessary so that his listeners could easily comprehend him. His pupils, however, had to learn to deal with his idiosyncracies. One of these was his love of tobacco. During his lectures, Taiitsu held his extra-large tobacco pouch on his lap, and he would puff away as he spoke. As the lectures continued, thick clouds of smoke would coil and swirl around the room and the students would begin to choke. It was not until they became used to the smell of tobacco that they could understand the books they were studying.

During his years at the *Yōdōkan*, Taiitsu became known for his literary attainments. One of his colleagues asked him to produce a compendium of Chinese poems to be used for study, and in 1849 he published the *Yōgaku Shisen (Youth Study Poem Collection)* with a postlude by his uncle Tōjō dated the previous year and an introduction of his own dated 1847. This two-volume work contains approximately 1,500 Chinese poems in seven-words-per-line regulated verse. This is the form of poem also chosen by Taiitsu for the great majority of his own poetry. According to Jonathan Chaves, who has kindly examined the *Yōgaku Shisen,* it follows the format of an influential Sung dynasty compendium, the *Ying-k'uei lü-sui (The Quintessence of Regulated Verse from the Coffers of Paradise)* by Fan Hui (1227–1306). A number of T'ang dynasty poets are included in Taiitsu's work, with an emphasis upon the late T'ang masters such as Tu Mu (803–852) who is singled out for great praise in Tōjō's colophon. Sung poets are exceptionally well represented, including some who are known only to the specialist; Taiitsu thus continues the interest in Sung verse that was notable among literati of his day. The selection of Ming dynasty and early Ch'ing dynasty poets is somewhat conservative, although a larger than ordinary number of women poets is included. If there is a general trend to be observed in this large anthology, it is toward poems on daily life and scenes of nature conveyed with clarity and wit. These are Sung dynasty virtues, rather than the grander visions of the T'ang poets. It is clear that Taiitsu was serious and knowledgeable about Chinese poetry, and extremely well-informed about seven-word regulated verse. The two volumes of the *Yōgaku Shisen* are divided into twenty-one sections, with categories including poems of farewell, of traveling, of sightseeing, of the seasons, on farming, on painting, on or by women, on Buddhist or Taoist subjects, on military affairs, and "poems of emotion."

Taiitsu's interest in Confucian prose writings is demonstrated by his "headnotes" to Murase Tōjō's book *Nika Taisaku (Counterpoint of Two Authors),* published in 1852. This volume consists of questions asked by Tōjō with answers by San'yō, as well as writings by Tōjō on Confucian and literary matters. Taiitsu's notes are extremely complimentary. He comments about San'yō, "What understanding of poetry! What strength of writing! He strikes the mark and cannot be equalled." Taiitsu remarks about his uncle, "Tōjō's writing is sharp and clear, like that of San'yō. Is this not because he was nurtured by San'yō?" These are examples of Taiitsu's devotion to his former teacher which continued until Taiitsu's death.

In 1853 Taiitsu published a selection of poems by Kan Sazan (1748–1827) entitled *Kan Sazan Shishō.* In his introduction Taiitsu suggests these poems are perfect for study by beginners, as they contain no "worldly music." He added that San'yō, who had served at Sazan's Confucian school for one year, claimed that he could not match Sazan's powers of insight and observation. We may note that Sazan had been one of the leaders of those seeking new poetic inspiration from Sung models, and that his poetry was characterized by honesty and realism, qualities that had at first won it derision from older poets preferring T'ang models. Taiitsu certainly must have been influenced in his own poetry by Sazan more than by any other model save San'yō. What Taiitsu wrote about Sazan is true for himself as well: the use of ordinary language in the four-line poem can be very moving.

Taiitsu's poems are seldom dated, but one quatrain that seems to have been written around 1854 suggests two themes that are major to his work: life in the city tempered by longing for nature, and painting as a release for his spirit.

Past fifty years old, my spirit is not yet at rest;
Still confused; my hair is mottled with white.
Living in the city for ten years as though in the countryside,
Daily I play with the brush to bring forth mountains.

If this poem was written just past the age of fifty, it suggests that Taiitsu began painting a good deal earlier than we know from dated examples. Almost all the works we can

assign to a specific year were executed in his final decade, but he no doubt had developed his style and technique well before that time.

In 1855 a fourth daughter, Mune, was born to Taiitsu and Yuki, and two years later a fifth and final daughter appeared. This girl lived only seven years, and we know only her posthumous Buddhist name, Chitō Dōjō. By this time Taiitsu's elder daughters were reaching the age of marriage. Taiitsu's free and unconventional behavior now came to the fore with tragic as well as happier results.

In 1860 a wealthy farmer asked for the hand of his third daughter, Tomo, age seventeen, through a professional go-between. At first Taiitsu declined, claiming that he was only a poor scholar. According to the matchmaker, however, the farmer had money while Taiitsu had status, so it would be a good match. Taiitsu again declined, stating that an alliance with a well-to-do family was of no interest to him. He also stated that a girl dressed up in wedding finery was not the true meaning of marriage. Waking naked at dawn, yawning and sleepy, this was the real nature of a woman as a wife. These statements may have been taken to indicate that Taiitsu could not afford a dowry of elegant clothes for his daughter. The farmer answered through the go-between that Tomo without fancy clothes would suffice. Taiitsu then agreed that the young man should come and visit. The potential son-in-law arrived in Nagoya on the appointed day and Taiitsu greeted him politely and ushered him into the house. Then Taiitsu suddenly stripped the kimono from Tomo, holding her naked before the young man, saying that this was Tomo in her natural state, please note that she had no defects. The suitor was embarrassed and dropped his eyes, while Tomo burst into tears. She seems to have been severely traumatized by this incident, and not only refused to marry the young man, but declared that she would never marry at all, a promise she kept all her life despite the best efforts of her parents to overcome her fears.

The suitor, however, was not discouraged by this strange event, and continued his offer of marriage. Since Tomo would not agree, the second daughter Shun was consulted and as the household finances were weak, she decided to accept in Tomo's place. The families on both sides were satisfied, and the wedding was set. One of the few dowry items that Taiitsu could afford was a traditional new wooden *tansu* (chest of drawers). As the bridal day approached, Taiitsu suddenly decided to paint an ink bamboo upon the *tansu*. Now it was Shun's turn to burst into tears, and she tried to scrape the paint off the wood, which proved impossible. The groom, as fate would have it, greatly liked bamboo painting and so the occasion was saved. A few days before the ceremony, the groom's family held a banquet, and after a few drinks the *tansu* story was told by the groom to all the guests. A little later Taiitsu excused himself to go to the toilet. When he had not reappeared after some time, Shun went out to find what was delaying him. Taiitsu had stuck toilet paper all over the walls of the privy, using ink as glue, and had then painted large-scale ink bamboo, including his signature and the date. Shun told him to stop at once and rejoin the banquet, but when the guests heard, they filed up to the toilet one by one to see his painting. They exclaimed it had the freshness of a pure breeze and declared it a masterpiece.

The marriage soon took place and Shun went off to live with her husband in a farm household. They had two children, but Shun never became accustomed to the difficult and restricted life of a daughter-in-law on a farm, and after her children were past infancy she returned to Taiitsu's house. Her husband admitted one day to Taiitsu after drinking wine that he still preferred Tomo, and thus they all ended unhappy at the situation. When Shun returned, Taiitsu went to the bathroom to wash his face, but as no water was heard to be splashing, perhaps he had left the room to give way to tears.

Two other tragedies struck Taiitsu in his later Nagoya days. His final daughter Chitō Dōjō died in 1864, and four years later his eldest daughter Baishitsu Myokun passed away. We cannot be sure which of these girls had the familiar name of Momo, but whoever it was, Taiitsu write the following poem in her memory.

Weeping for my Daughter Momo

Hopelessly lamenting the dead girl in my vision,
My thoughts are driven to a study of Buddhism.
How could she depend upon her father, a worthless Confucian?
Better that she died young to ascend the Western Paradise.

Taiitsu did indeed have a high regard for Buddhism, as exemplified by several works in this exhibition (catalog nos. 6, 7, 8, and 9). Other poems by Taiitsu that show his interest in Buddhism exist among his published writings. In one, he calls himself a "fox-faker of Zen" suggesting that he pretended to an enlightenment he had not gained through meditation. This is in accord with the humble tone maintained throughout his poetry, in which he often calls himself a "worthless Confucian." Even more interesting is a poem evoking the feeling one finds in the interstice between sleeping and waking. Taiitsu compares his waking to the great classic of Buddhist understanding, the *Lotus Sutra,* in which the Buddha is described as always present in every sentient being.

Someone cries out at dawn and my dreaming soul awakes
As when a warbler kicks off a plum blossom and it becomes more fragrant,
Sitting up in bed, I consider the voice I heard at the edge of consciousness,
Just like the words of the great dharma, the Lotus Sutra

If the sorrows in his life led him to Buddhism, Taiitsu never abandoned his role as a Confucian scholar, and lived with the unhappiness that fell to his lot. One more quatrain expressing his pain is unclear as to the cause; it is a movingly personal poem.

Writing My Feelings

Deeply ashamed, my reading lamp reflects off the table;
Who could know that long meditation would bring forth this feeling?
I look back—thirty years have passed like the flowing water,
A voice crying for mother's milk has become a voice grieving.

As well as sorrows in his life, Taiitsu knew the joys of a free and unfettered existence. His eccentricities went well beyond the kinds of stories one hears of unusual personalities of the time. There are many tales of his idiosyncracies; one which surprises the Japanese is that he did not drink. In a poem written in the mid 1860's, Taiitsu is aware of his character and reputation.

Casually Written

My years pass sixty, but I have accomplished nothing,
I swallow my ambitions, give up all hopes.
I don't drink, yet seem crazy; how would I be if fond of wine?
Just an old man full of crisscross ideas.

Taiitsu, as well as being addicted to tobacco, also felt the need to eat *udon* (thick white noodles) every day. He was even more fond of *satsuma imo,* a kind of sweet potato, which caused him (as the Japanese term politely translates) to pass wind. He became very famous for this peculiarity, as he respected no occasion or personage. It is said that in his household as well as elsewhere he passed wind many times a day, without an evil smell, but noisily as a rhythmic acompaniment to his life. He would smile and a great noise "bootz bootz" would be heard. He would explain to his wife Yuki, "It's an imp." She would reply, "That's very rude you know!" He would roar with laughter, saying, "It's a fart!" He clearly enjoyed the situation. He did not refrain in front of samurai officials or at the feudal clan mansion, and eventually his farting became accepted as an eccentricity to be smiled at. He even had a seal inscribed *Hohi sensei* (fart master) which he occasionally stamped on his paintings (see Appendix,

No. 17). *Murase Taiitsu no Shōgai,* the greatest source of biographical information, reports that when an unrefined guest came and asked for a painting, Taiitsu would bring out his brush and execute a work on the spot, then place it in front of a plate of sweet potatoes and fart. "Well done, it can be considered a good work," he would say to his guest, who would then be allowed to leave with the painting.

Taiitsu was equally casual about money. At New Year's time, when all debts were to be paid, his creditors would gather together in his hallway. Taiitsu would fling them all the money he had, asking them to divide it among themselves. Usually there would not be enough, so they would take what they could, and wait for another chance to collect the balance. This free and easy lifestyle suited Taiitsu and his family, but it may have been the cause of his daughters' inability to marry and settle down with more conventional families.

1868 was a momentous year for Taiitsu. As noted before, his eldest daughter died that year; more generally, the collapse of the Tokugawa government and the Meiji restoration altered the balance of Japanese life in drastic ways. Taiitsu was aware of the significance of the changes; the entire Japanese modus vivendi was to be systematically remodeled. Characteristically, he took a humble position.

Casually Written

I studied literature a little, but returned empty,
Now I shamelessly wear a Confucian's robe.
Living in a small town, I cannot compete for leadership;
I yield to the young warriors.

As a follower of the loyalist Rai San'yō, Taiitsu doubtlessly welcomed the return to real power by the Japanese Emperor. In a poem of 1868, Taiitsu praised his former teacher; perhaps he felt that the intellectual climate fostered by this influential literatus had helped pave the way for the great change in Japanese government.

On the 37th Anniversary of Rai San'yō's Death

Through his lifelong study of history he illuminated his own times,
His writings have a spirit that still lives in this world.
Thirty-seven years ago today,
While leafing through government annals, he quietly passed away.

Much as Taiitsu may have approved of the Meiji restoration, it spelled the end to his way of life as a Confucian scholar for a feudal clan. The first direct effect was that the *Yōdōkan* was merged with the Inuyama school, the *Keidōkan.* This temporarily left Taiitsu without a position, but the *Keidōkan* instructor was in poor health, and in 1870 Taiitsu was asked to move to Inuyama and take over the teaching position. Although Taiitsu taught here for only one year, soon he became famous. Instead of following the usual *Keidōkan* rules, he taught brilliantly about personal freedom.

The town of Inuyama was (and still remains) dominated by its castle, which is small but handsomely placed atop a hill overlooking the town, the river and the distant mountains (Fig. 1). The *Keidōkan* was located a short block away, almost literally in the shadow of the castle. Feudal clans, however, were soon abolished by the Meiji government, and in 1871 the *Keidōkan* was closed. Losing his teaching position was the third great event in Taiitsu's life. He turned to giving private instruction in philosophy, poetry, and calligraphy to students under a large persimmon tree in his garden, and although he was very poor, he had time to devote himself to his own painting, calligraphy, and poetry. Almost all the surviving works of Taiitsu date from the last decade of his life, beginning with the loss of his teaching position. Although he occasionally received small sums of money for his brushwork, he continued to give his works away as well.

Fig. 1 Inuyama Castle

In 1873 Taiitsu's fourth daughter Mune got married. That same year, Taiitsu rented out part of his house as a salesroom, but his tenant seldom paid the small sum charged as rent. Taiitsu would brush a painting and take it to his tenant's house, where he would receive 20 sen (one fifth of a yen), a sum not likely to help the family finances very much. The family home became overgrown with reeds and grasses; Taiitsu claimed that they were also living things and should not be cut. His eccentricities made him even more famous in Inuyama, a small town, than they had in the larger city of Nagoya. He continued to smoke his pipe and break wind at any and all occasions. One day some young monks from a temple in Mino came to ask him for a painting. Thinking to surprise the abbot, Taiitsu painted a sleeping *Daruma* with his legs extended in the pose of a reclining Buddha. He added the inscription, "After facing the wall for nine years in meditation, stretching out his legs gives him great pleasure." The novice monks were puzzled at this strange iconography, but uttered a few words of thanks and respect. Suddenly they heard loud "bootz bootz" sounds. "Just my own amazing farts," said Taiitsu calmly.

Taiitsu often went to friends' houses to amuse himself, and on the way he occasionally stopped in front of a store. Drawing out his sword he would demand, "Can't you let me have some good painting paper? While you're at it, how about some good ink?" He would then smile and execute a painting upon the spot. "Well done, eh?" he would say to himself and break wind "bootz bootz" with a great laugh. It seems that Taiitsu made something of a performance of painting before guests or onlookers. If someone requested a calligraphy, he would ask for a saying or poem, fart several times and begin his brushwork. He liked to visit the temples of Inuyama. He would begin at an *udon* shop, then proceed along the streets, and when finding a watchman's lantern that was faded he would do a painting on the paper lantern then and there. At the temples he would read the printed notices, and was heard farting during memorial services that he intruded upon accidentally.

One of the most delightful stories about Taiitsu refers to the persimmon tree in his garden. The artist seems to have let the fruit pile up when it ripened, rather than constantly picking it and bringing it inside his house. Some young boys, in training to become monks, lived nearby and would come to steal the persimmons. One day Taiitsu, carrying his staff, caught them in the act. The boys broke into a cold sweat, and were told, "Since you are stealing the fruit, you must pay the penalty." Taiitsu pointed his staff around in a large circle, and within the area described he commanded the boys to do the weeding. The novice monks became used to this experience, and before being caught again they would ask, "Sensei, is it alright to do the weeding?" Before long, they would come to weed in order to eat persimmons. Taiitsu watched with a rueful smile.

In 1878 a collection of Taiitsu's poetry, the *Taiitsudō Shishō*, was published. In his introduction, the author wrote that his pupil the monk Soken had asked him for his verse to publish, and that he had agreed in order to benefit by others' criticism (a modest view for a poet age 75). The collection, which includes the great majority of the poems Taiitsu added to his paintings or wrote out as calligraphies, is made up of 185 quatrains. 170 are in Taiitsu's favorite form of seven-words-per-line regulated verse, while the remaining 15 have five words per line; all are in Chinese as was customary for Confucian scholars of the time. Taiitsu added a few comments between poems, including the following that shows his continued devotion to his teacher:

> Now that I have passed seventy years of age, I have begun to understand the twenty-eight word poem. My former teacher Rai San'yō understood this at the age of thirteen or fourteen, but small birds, although they cannot fly like the great phoenix, have small birds' pleasures. I have simply followed the style of San'yō, and have added sóme poems on history. I have followed the signal fire of my teacher, and I continue to walk upon his path.

Several poems from this collection have already been quoted, and many more are translated with the following catalog entries, so we may understand something of the

Fig. 2 Tokujuji Temple, Inuyama

range of Taiitsu's style. The poems tend to be personal, talking of his life as a Confucian, his humble opinion of his own merits, his feelings about Buddhism, and, in some cases, his interest in historical figures. One poem, however, shows his humor as he teases two of his pupils who have come to visit him and offered him a rhyme.

Teranishi and Torii Come to Visit: Following their Rhyme

With no Buddha in the village I call myself the guide,
Yet I laugh at you for bypassing the famous and visiting my modest home.
I can buy wine for you, but with no meat upon my plate
I just chew on vegetable roots and keep on boasting.

One of Taiitsu's favorite places in Inuyama was the Tokujuji temple (Fig. 2). In 1879 Taiitsu brushed a painting of the entrance (Fig. 3), dominated by a huge pine (no longer existent) and two stone lanterns. He told the abbot that when he died, he would like to be buried there. The following year he wrote an inscription that was engraved in stone (catalog no. 27) and placed near the entrance to another Inuyama temple, the Jōmanji. In 1881, there was an Imperial grant for an anniversary celebration to honor Rai San'yō fifty years after his death. Taiitsu planned to attend, but his health was failing and he could not travel. He died the seventh month, 27th day of that year. He was buried, as he had asked, in Tokujuji, and his pupils put up a large stone, with a commemorative text upon the back, in his honor (catalog no. 28). Another memorial stone exists in Mino City (Kōzuchi) in the temple of Entsūji.

Fig. 3 Taiitsu, Entrance to Tokujuji Temple, *1879, Tokujuji Collection*

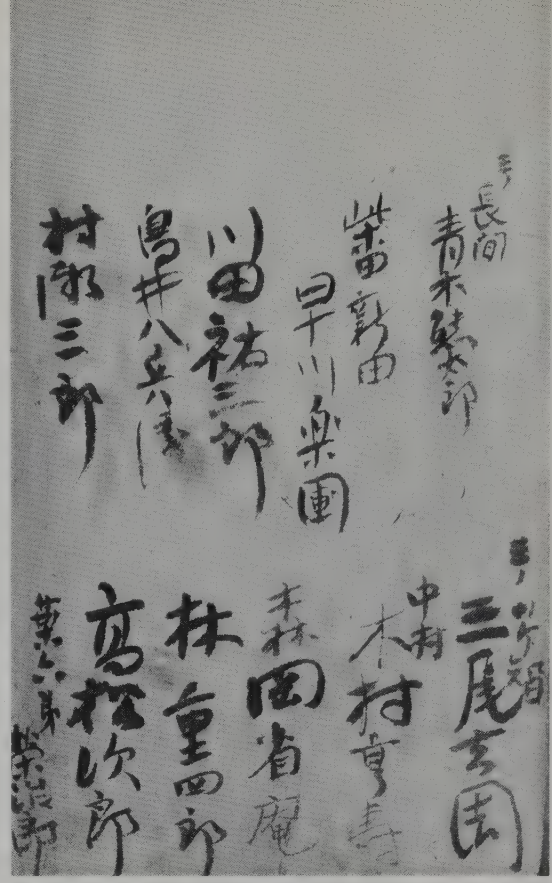


Fig. 4 Taiitsu, Notebook *(with names of his pupils), Inuyama Castle Collection*

Taiitsu was survived by his wife Yuki and three daughters, Shun, Tomo, and Mune. Shun, who was in poor health, went back to Mino to be near her children whom she had left with the farming family. Mune became head of her new family when her husband died, while Yuki and Tomo lived in great poverty in Inuyama. They were forced to sell the house with the persimmon tree and moved to a dilapidated cottage. In 1892, Yuki became ill and said she would like to die in Mino, so Tomo brought her to Mune's house where she died that same year. Shun, who had been unable to attend the funeral, died one year later. Mune then moved to Inuyama and lived with Tomo; the only income the two elderly ladies received was a small stipend from Mune's relatives in Mino. They seem to have existed upon vegetables (which were cheaper than rice) and food that had been unsold when fresh and was offered at bargain prices. They kept their father's paintings and memorabilia, and also retained Taiitsu's seals.

By the turn of the century, Taiitsu's brushwork became sought after by Inuyama and Nagoya residents who had cared little for it while the author was alive. One of Taiitsu's former pupils recalled that as a child he would do errands for his teacher, and be rewarded with an ink painting. He would run down the street to his home, dropping the painting at some house along the way without a care. Taiitsu reproved him, saying that someday his paintings would be worth a tidy sum. Twenty years after the painter's death, this became, to some extent, true. Some of his former students began to paint imitations, perhaps for fun as much as for profit. They would go to the two daughters and for a small sum have their imitations stamped with genuine Taiitsu seals. As many of these pupils were quite talented and had absorbed some of the feeling as well as technique of the master, their copies often are very difficult to recognize.

The forgers' names and histories are known today, as they were well-known Inuyama residents, but they left few works of their own to compare with their imitations of Taiitsu. Kajikawa Gentarō began as a fire warden, served in the Inuyama post office, and ended as a storekeeper for kitchen wares. Andō Saisan was abbot of the temple

Enmyōji; Taiitsu had visited him and interested him in poetry and calligraphy. Iwata Enzan ran a wine shop and was a *haiku* poet who liked Nanga landscapes. Ota Kandō was a successful drygoods merchant with a taste for literature. Mita Kindō was a druggist who was skilled in calligraphy. These former Taiitsu pupils, among others, are known to have made copies of Taiitsu's paintings and calligraphy. It became fashionable to have been a student of the literati artist, and in 1897 a memorial exhibition was held of Taiitsu's work in the Tokujuji and Enmyōji temples. Forty-five former pupils signed their names to the handbill that advertised the exhibition. Whether they were all serious followers of the master is open to question. In a memo book now preserved in the Inuyama Castle (Fig. 4), more than 200 names are listed by Taiitsu as his pupils. If one adds to this list all the students who had studied at the *Yōdōkan* in Inuyama, the list of Taiitsu students approaches 1,000. Only a few of these, however, can be counted as artistic followers of their teacher, as most merely received beginning studies in Confucianism. Of the Taiitsu followers who signed their own names to their works, the most well-known is Teranishi Kanzan, who executed the calligraphy on the reverse of Taiitsu's gravestone (catalog no. 28). The other followers contributed mainly imitations of their teacher's work to later collections, where they usually pass undetected. One may more kindly treat these works as school pieces rather than outright forgeries, and they often display interesting variations of Taiitsu's style. What they usually lack is Taiitsu's characteristic energy, with the brush-tip kicking up off one line to form another. The imitations occasionally show a sloppy quality that Taiitsu, no matter how freely he painted, never displayed.

Taiitsu's daughters Tomo and Mune died in 1924 and 1927; their cottage had become uncared for, and neighbors who had never been welcome in the house nevertheless took care of the old ladies in their final days. The memorabilia kept by the daughters is now displayed in cases on an upper floor of Inuyama Castle, an interesting addition to an attractive tourist site. One may find a suit of old armor that Taiitsu had been given, his old-fashioned folding spectacles and their case, his inkstone (Fig. 5) and other evidences of his life and studies, including many of his reference volumes. Also on display are two small teabowls with painting and calligraphy by Taiitsu (Fig. 6) and copies of the books that Taiitsu published including his poem collection.

Since the burst of local enthusiasm for Taiitsu's works at the turn of the century, there has been a lull in Japanese interest in all Chinese-style scholar artists until recently. American interest in the Nanga School has helped rekindle Japanese enthusiasm for literati paintings, but Taiitsu has remained relatively unknown. The local Inuyama historian Yoshida Gyōichirō gathered together a good deal of material and published the biography *Murase Taiitsu no Shogai* in 1964. The Nagoya calligrapher Nakano Ranchū, who was born in Mino near Taiitsu's birthplace, is making a study of Taiitsu's brushwork. The current abbot of Tokujuji, Sawada Hiroi, also maintains an interest in the artist. Taiitsu's seals are now in the possession of one of his descendants, Kawamura Kiyoshi, in Nagoya. Nakano Ranchū was kind enough to visit him and make a set of seal impressions for this author (see Appendix for seal reproductions and information).

Fig. 5 Taiitsu's inkstone, Inuyama Castle Collection

Fig. 6 Teabowls with decoration by Taiitsu, Inuyama Castle Collection

TAIITSU'S PAINTINGS

As mentioned before, Taiitsu's dated paintings fall almost entirely into his Inuyama period (1870–1881). Losing his position as a Confucian scholar certainly freed Taiitsu for his practice in the arts, and his brushwork flourished in his final decade. It was not unusual for literati artists to blossom in their sixties and seventies, when a certain release from the cares of life gave them the time and the inner freedom to express their visions of nature directly with brush and ink. Taiitsu characteristically displayed a humble attitude on this point.

Clouds and mist have been in my breast all my life,
And the methods of paintings have never been unclear.
Yet who knows what unexpected results appear?
I painfully brush mountains, but only vagrant shapes appear.

Taiitsu, in his later years, turned his brush to several purposes. He wrote out signboards for both local merchants and temples when requested, he decorated a few teabowls, he wrote on lanterns, *tansu* and toilet paper when inspired, but his works are almost entirely in ink, and almost always on paper. His only known work in color is of a funeral procession. It seems that a girl who lived nearby and played with Taiitsu's daughters died suddenly. Tomo was especially unhappy, but Taiitsu also was greatly saddened. His painting of the funeral, with a poem he added, has touches of color, perhaps to try to cheer up his daughters.

One unusual characteristic of Taiitsu's brushwork was his reliance upon thin grey ink. Most painters and calligraphers preferred a rich black *sumi* for their works, but Taiitsu seldom utilized the deepest ink-tones. A widow in Inuyama told Yoshida Gyōichirō that her grandfather had ground the inkstick with water for Taiitsu, and had been told by the artist, "Don't grind it thick, make it thin." Some think that Taiitsu was such a spontaneous artist that he couldn't be bothered to grind the ink for long, but it was his conscious wish to have grey ink. One explanation is that he received a special inkstick from the Daimyō as a gift, and he wanted it to last a long time. Beyond this, however, must have been his own taste. He avoided, in good literati fashion, the eye-catching effects of the professional painter, and was content with the simplest of means. His poems reflected his point of view very clearly (see also catalog nos. 22 and 23).

Directly copying clouds and mist from within my breast,
I have no desire to climb the hills and peaks of professional artists.
I can sense the ocean in a scoop of water,
What you see as a wrinkled stone is enough for my mountains.

Taiitsu was a scholar first and foremost. His poetry, painting, and calligraphy were the natural outpouring of his personal feelings. A sense of natural life is what he wished to create in his brushwork, which has the same honest simplicity as his poetry.

Mist and clouds appear and disappear,
Through their thickening and thinning we can search out near and far images.
Tall trees framing a river seem to come alive—
I'm proud that my scholarship comes first and the landscapes follow.

The poems translated here, all from a group entitled "Inscribed on My Landscape Paintings," indicate Taiitsu's views on his art. His landscape paintings, eschewing professionalism, sprang from his love of the mountains of Mino where he grew up.

Wet ink-tones thicken the clouds and trees.
These are hills and streams I have met before.
Artists paint without a care, but my feelings are intense
As I regard the twelve peaks of my homeland.

Taiitsu painted, in part, to bring the vast distances of his home province within reach, to the size, perhaps two by five feet, of his painting paper. His brushwork was spontaneous and honest, his feelings direct and his vision clear, so that he could capture what was in his heart.

100 li *can be reduced, but still have green mountains to climb,*
These hills, that stream have touched this old face.
Flourishing the brush, I want to catch them before they escape:
Last night I dreamed of my old homeland.

Compared with his strong feeling for nature, Taiitsu wrote that his life as a Confucian was meaningless. He dreamed of returning home which he could do only in his imagination and through his art.

Still just a worthless scholar,
I've passed ten years by the castle uselessly.
Returning to my village? My heart leaps, I fear men may smile—
With what thoughts do I grind the ink to paint the mountains of my home.

Taiitsu was unconcerned with the effect his works would have on others. As a scholar-artist he did not depend on his paintings for his living, such as it was, and he expressed his feelings directly without self-consciousness. The act of painting gave him pleasure, it was a release for his spirit, personal and yet meaningful to others who shared his understanding.

Living by the castle for many years, my hair is turning white;
When I play with brush and ink it makes me smile.
Stroke after stroke from the heart—who can understand?
No need to explain, these are the mountains of my home.

Even more plentiful than landscapes among Taiitsu's surviving works are figure paintings. These fit a number of different categories. Some are light-hearted expressions of customs and behaviors that he saw around him (catalog nos. 3, 4, and 5). In such works he displayed an acute eye and dextrous brush in presenting moods and expressions with a minimum of lines. Other paintings are of Japanese literary or cultural figures, such as Bashō, the great *haiku* poet (catalog no. 1) and Sen no Rikyu, the master of the tea ceremony (catalog no. 16). It is interesting in this regard that the depictions are of Japanese rather than Chinese personages. A third kind of figure painting often brushed by Taiitsu is historical, centering upon heroes, often tragic, from the Japanese past. Taiitsu was interested in the 14th century Emperor Go-Daigo, who attempted to seize power from the warriors and rule himself, (catalog nos. 10, 11, and 12) an interesting parallel with the Meiji era of Taiitsu's final years. Taiitsu also depicted heroes of the Momoyama era (catalog no. 13) and of the early Edo period, with an evident fascination for *Chushingura,* the romantic story of the 47 *rōnin* who avenged their master's death (catalog nos. 14 and 15). Other figure paintings by Taiitsu depict strictly Confucian themes, as one might expect from a scholar (catalog nos. 2 and 17). More, however, have Buddhist motifs, which is somewhat surprising as such themes were rarely attempted by literati artists. Taiitsu's view towards Buddhism, as has been suggested, was complex. He compared Buddhists with Confucians (catalog nos. 7 and 8), not always to the advantage of the latter, and otherwise suggested the importance of Buddhism in the fabric of human existence (catalog nos. 6 and 9). Taiitsu was more than tolerant of differing views; he recognized that the scholar's road he followed was merely one among many that had merit. Although he never so stated, perhaps he believed in Lao Tzu's words that, "The way that can be called The Way is not the way."

Taiitsu occasionally brushed subjects other than landscapes or figures; one of the most amusing is the *White Heron* (catalog no. 26), with which the artist identifies in his

accompanying poem. Calligraphy without painting is sometimes to be seen (catalog no. 12), while painting without an added poem is rare among his works (catalog no. 3). Whatever the subject or medium, there are certain characteristics of Taiitsu's artistry that remain constant. He utilized a long brush about as wide as an index finger, and his line has a bony quality quite different from the more varied and rich line used by Rai San'yo. One feature of Taiitsu's brushwork is his intrinsic energy, with lines that often hook back vigorously. This is apparent in both painting and calligraphy, and it distinguishes his work from that of his followers. Yoshida Gyōichirō wrote that Taiitsu's brushwork, "gives the feeling of a stream in the deep mountains, flowing silent and chilly...with elegant simplicity and refinement" (*Murase Taiitsu no Shōgai*, page 72). Other writers comment on the "buoyancy" of Taiitsu's work, and this seems an excellent term to describe his spirit as revealed in his painting and calligraphy.

Although Taiitsu's art has never been widely popular, it inspired the plaudits of the Meiji Nanga master Hashimoto Kansetsu, (who was also one of the first to appreciate the individualistic landscapes of Uragami Gyokudō) and of the recently deceased woodblock artist Munakata Shiko. The latter wrote that he liked to hang scrolls by the "Inuyama Confucian Murase Taiitsu, who was good both in painting and calligraphy." Munakata admired the free spirit of the paintings and the "measuring worm line" of the calligraphy, which he described as "creeping tenaciously." The spirit, he explained, is akin to that of Ni Tsan (see catalog no. 20), and the paintings and poems "relate well to each other" (*Mainichi Shosa*, quoted by Yoshida).

Taiitsu had confidence in his brushwork, commenting that people would someday appreciate his works the way they appreciate those of Ike Taiga (1722–1776), one of the greatest Nanga painters. Perhaps this exhibition will be the opportunity for a new evaluation of Taiitsu's accomplishments, one hundred years and half the world away from the elderly eccentric scholar in his small Japanese feudal town. Taiitsu's achievements in the three arts of painting, poetry and calligraphy produced a unified expression of his spirit. Through the traces of his energized, almost ecstatic brushwork, we can share something of that spirit today.

CATALOG

1. *Portrait of Bashō*

Sumi on paper, *28.4 x 43.5 cm*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 1 and 2.
Private Collection

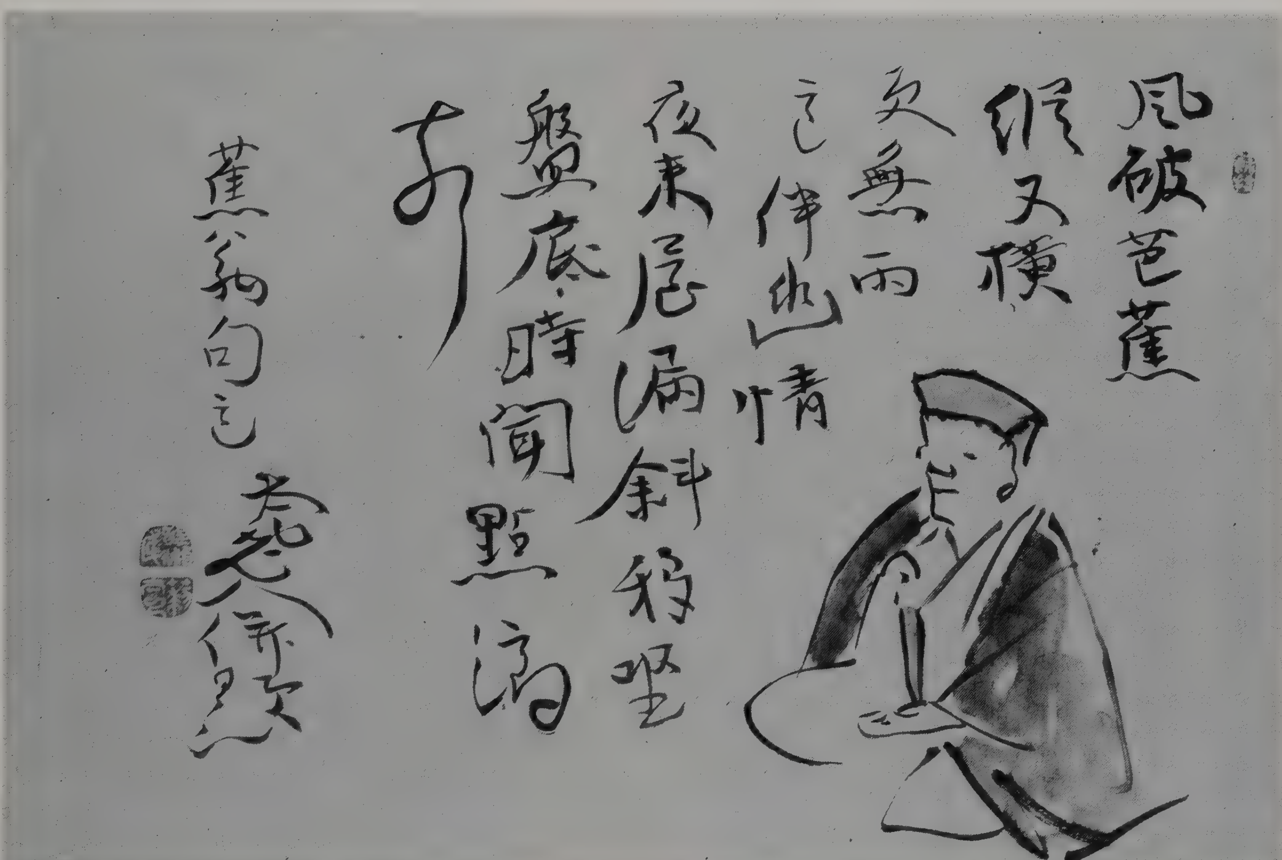
Portraits of the great haiku poet Bashō became popular in the Edo period, being executed by the Nanga artist Buson and his followers Baitei, Goshun, and Kinkoku, as well as artists of other schools such as Hoitsu. In contrast to the ancient tradition of formal portraits of classical poets, paintings depicting Basho and other haiku masters were usually rendered in simple and informal brushwork, with no attempt to idealize the subject. Here a few simple lines are enough to suggest the beloved poet, with his characteristic pilgrim hat.

We may well guess that this is one of Taiitsu's earlier paintings, perhaps dating to his Nagoya period before he moved to Inuyama in 1870. The poem Taiitsu has inscribed on this painting is the first in his published poetry collection. Preceeding the poem is an introduction explaining that he wrote it around the age of 35. However, the painting was unlikely to have been executed early, as it is signed "Taiitsu Rōjin heidai" (the old man Taiitsu's painting and poem). Exactly when he started calling himself "the old man Taiitsu" is not clear, but it would probably be well after age 35.

Taiitsu's poem is entitled "After a Verse by Bashō" and it suggests the poet living harmoniously with nature in his hut surrounded by banana trees.

> *The wind rips the banana leaves up, down and sideways,*
> *But as yet no rain accompanies this lonely feeling.*
> *Then, as evening deepens, I move my seat to avoid leaks from the roof,*
> *In the bottom of the bowl, from time to time I hear the sound of raindrops.*

Although this painting with calligraphy lacks the decisively hooked lines and trencpant humor of his later works, it well reflects the unpretentious nature of Taiitsu's art. The composition is nicely arranged, with the poet resting at an angle under the calligraphy, balanced by the signature and closing seal of the artist. It is significant that Taiitsu's painting and first published poem celebrate a Japanese haiku master, despite the artist's Confucian training and Chinese expertise. Haiku are quintessentially Japanese, making use of the native phonetic symbols as well as Chinese-derived characters, and being composed asymmetrically in three lines of five, seven and five syllables. In contrast, Taiitsu's poems are in Chinese regulated verse, eschewing the Japanese syllabary entirely, with four even lines of seven or five characters each. Many Edo period Confucians ignored Japanese literature in favor of Chinese models, but here Taiitsu is affirming his devotion to a Japanese master. At the same time he is transforming one of Basho's poetic ideas into a Chinese-style poem of his own. Taiitsu has truly understood the modest nature of the great Japanese master of haiku.



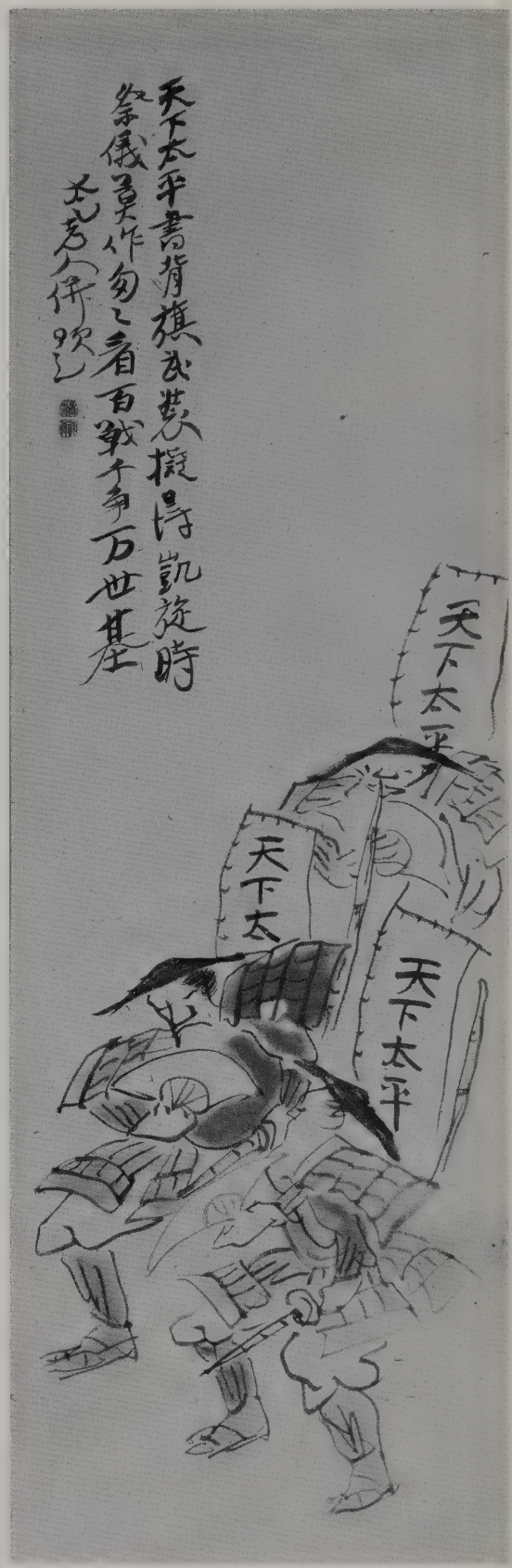
2.

Great Peace Under Heaven

Sumi on paper, *99.3 x 31.8 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seal: 3.

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Braden



Although Taiitsu's poem proclaims orthodox Confucian sentiments, the painting itself displays the humor that is a feature of many of his works. We are shown a parade of warriors in ancient-style armor, carrying fans and swords; one is playing a flute, and all are holding banners saying "Great Peace Under Heaven." This seemingly serious subject is treated with a spirit of caricature; the bodies are bent at less than noble angles, and the faces seem to display varying degrees of intensity, self-satisfaction, or grumpy sorrow. The incisive use of line to convey mood is a feature of Taiitsu's figure paintings, and it here seen within a well-organized composition. The parade of figures approaches the viewer at a diagonal, while the placement of the poem echoes the tall narrow format.

As the style of calligraphy is similar to that just seen in the *Portrait of Bashō,* it would seem that they both date relatively early among Taiitsu's works. Since most of his paintings were executed in his final ten years, and as this is also signed "the old man Taiitsu's painting and poem," we may speculate that *Great Peace Under Heaven* was brushed when Taiitsu was in his sixties. The poem itself suggests that it may have been written at the time of the Meiji restoration, and that Taiitsu is suggesting that Confucian rites and ceremonies are still necessary to Japan even though the country is now turning to the West for inspiration. The poem has been translated by Jonathan Chaves:

"Great Peace Under Heaven" is written
on the banners,
Armaments are proposed at the hour of victory.
Do not make rites and ceremonies perfunctory,
Or there will be a hundred wars, a thousand
skirmishes for myriad generations.

3.

Six Oppositions Newly Painted **1871**

Sumi on paper, *121.25 x 53.45 cm.*

Signature: 1871 Taiitsu Rōjin giboku. Seals: 4, 5 and 6.

Collection of the New Orleans Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift 78.150

Dated paintings by Taiitsu are unusual and paintings without poems even more rare. Here we have one of Taiitsu's most fascinating works, part of the interest deriving from the attempt to discover exactly what the "Six Oppositions" mentioned in the title are. Some are easy to identify, such as the cat and mice above the signature, or the wife beating the husband. Beneath this is a fox riding a horse, suggesting the age-old Japanese folktales of the fox-spirit with magical powers, who often took possession of a human body. In the center of the painting we can see a samurai warrior buying from a fish-monger, and this may represent the opposition between classes, or between buying and selling. In the upper left, we see a man and his dog; we may not always think of this relationship as an opposition, but it is here so considered. Most enigmatic of all is the solitary figure in the upper right; his opposition seems to be to himself, a most interesting idea: the final opposition becomes internalized.

There seems to be no precedent for this painting in Japanese art or legend, and unless new evidence is found, we may consider this a unique painting by Taiitsu. It displays his wit, his ability to convey a mood or action in a minimum of lines, and his individualistic view of humanity. Once again this casually brushed work displays a fine composition, with the elements of the painting circling around the fish-monger, who is given the heaviest use of wash. Taiitsu's skill is precisely in hiding his skill, so that the effect is informal and spontaneous.

4.

New Year's Day

Sumi on paper, *92.5 x 30.0 cm.*

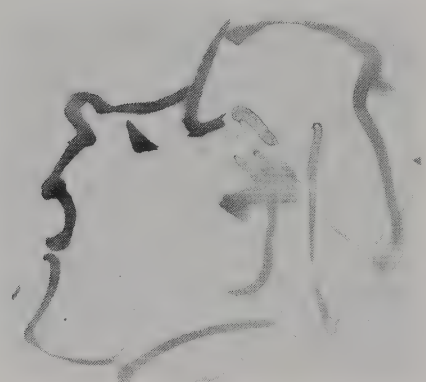
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8

Private Collection

The New Year is a time of celebration in Japan, the most important festivity of the year, signifying a fresh beginning. In No. 4, Taiitsu has painted a New Year's dance accompanied by drumming, and the poem captures the flavor of the optimism felt in the early Meiji period.

Who is this, wearing the green cloak
and hermit's hat?
Bom, bom, with the sound of a drum
the colors begin anew.
Children in a group happily shout "Banzai!"
For our Emperor in this new year of peace.

Considering the problems of authenticity in dealing with Taiitsu's works, it is most helpful that we have another version of the same painting (No. 5) to compare. Although the figures, calligraphy and seals seem very similar, they are not the same. A close study reveals differences and infelicitudes that may assist our judgement not only of Taiitsu paintings, but of all Oriental brushwork. First we may note the lesser quality of the paper itself; artists were careful to obtain the finest materials they could afford, while copyists were not so particular. Next, the seals themselves are variants, not so well cut, in No. 5, and the seal ink is of a lesser quality and different color. Next, we may note the composition of the works. In No. 4, the calligraphy nestles over the figures, imparting a favorable sense of design; in No. 5, it is merely a block without meaningful shape. The figures themselves exhibit wide variations. In the original, they are well-balanced, in the copy they seem to lean too far over, lacking a sense of natural movement in equilibrium. Note the different faces: in which version can one sense character and energy, in which stolidity and lack of true expression?



No. 4 Detail

5.

New Year's Day

By a follower of Taiitsu

Sumi on paper, *162.5 x 46.25 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7? and 8?

Private Collection

In judging brushwork, the most important factor is the line itself. Here some telling comparisons can be made. We may note such areas as the right hand of the drummer, in one case gesturing and in the other drooping. The sash of the same figure also shows the difference between energized line and meaningless squiggles. Other places where the comparison is significant include the trouser line above the drummer's left foot, the shoulder line of the figure holding the fan, and the drummer's hat.

The calligraphy shows the same differences in line quality, as well as in the balance of the characters individually and collectively. We may note in particular the final line of the poem, to the right of the signature and seal. In No. 5, the column itself bends awkwardly, and several characters seem to tip or slant. In the original, there is a great sense of movement in the characters, while each also displays an internal logic and order. A happy variety of inktones and of line width imparts a sense of dance entirely appropriate to the painting and poem subject. In No. 5, flourishes of the brush are not enough to cover weaknesses in character composition and lineament.

Taiitsu problems are not always so easily solved, as some copies are more deceiving and have genuine seals stamped upon them. For study purposes, however, this example should be useful to those interested in the connoisseurship of brushwork.

No. 5 Detail

No. 4

No. 5

6. *One Hundred Flavors*

Sumi on paper, *107.5 x 30.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection

Taiitsu's range as a Confucian scholar included an interest in Buddhism, which he also could smile at in his paintings and poetry. Here he portrays three Buddhist figures, Yakusha (a female demon), Emma (a king of hell) and a Bodhisattva (a being who has achieved enlightenment but remains on earth to help others). Taiitsu still retains his Confucian moral, that all the different types of beings are harmonized by the ruler, so that they may work together for the common good. This moral could be dangerously dull if not treated with spirit. By making the Buddhist figures humorous, Taiitsu gives us a rueful smile rather than a lecture.

The female demon's pounding song is answered by a king of hell,
The Bodhisattva's round pills are piled up like a pagoda.
Governing a country is like having a medicine bag of one hundred flavors:
The sweet face and the bitter must become united.

Perhaps the old connection between Buddhism and medicine is referred to here; when Chinese culture and Buddhism entered Japan there were great advances in medicine as well. In any event this work may be considered a pharmacist's delight.

The use of line in this work is characteristic of Taiitsu. Seemingly loose and wavering, the line is actually trenchant. The foot of the female demon, the head of the Bodhisattva, and the eyes of the king of hell show the variety of touch that enable Taiitsu to add character to every being he depicts. A strong composition and fine range of inktones add to the totality of understated mastery.

7. *Begging Monks*

Sumi on paper, *93.5 x 32.8 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Shōka Collection

Since Buddhism first came to East Asia, there has been some sense of rivalry between monks and Confucian scholars. Taiitsu here reproves Confucians for bemoaning their lot, although they often lived close to the bounds of poverty, by suggesting that monks accepted a more difficult life. Taiitsu's approach to Buddhism shows an appreciation that does not preclude a gentle mockery; the monks certainly are not complaining, but are rather filled with intensity, self-satisfaction, and a marvelous joy.

With only their begging bowls they travel to the far horizon,
When do they ever sigh or complain?
It's absurd for a Confucian to gnash his teeth;
Who eats to the full, who goes cold and hungry?

In his use of a minimum of lines to convey a wide range of meaning, Taiitsu seems close to Zen painting. Although as a pupil of Rai San'yō he would be considered among the Nanga (Southern School) masters, Taiitsu is actually an individualist with his own style. We can begin to imagine why he had so many copiers, however, if we consider how simple his paintings appear, how seemingly easy to copy. The temptation must have been too great to resist, especially among his pupils. The sheer fun of painting in Taiitsu's style overcame any hesitations that his followers may have felt. Yet no copyist was ever able to capture Taiitsu's combination of mastery of line and spontaneity of feeling.

The composition here is similar to that of *Great Peace Under Heaven* (no. 2); the figures move in a diagonal, with the calligraphy filling the upper left corner. Both the lines of the figures and of the calligraphy exhibit complete control in the service of spontaneous informality. The use of tonally varied greys within the robes of the monks adds some sense of weight to the composition without detracting from the lively postures of the figures. In Western arts we are unaccustomed to seeing humor mixed with a deeply serious purpose, and we associate caricature with cartooning. In Japan, from early handscrolls such as the *Shigisan Engi* to the paintings of later Zen masters such as Hakuin and Sengai, humor has been an integral part of painting. Taiitsu well understood that a smile is a quicker way to the heart than a sermon or an intellectual puzzle. In his painting of begging monks, Taiitsu conveyed several levels of meaning with a sense of delight.

8.

A Devil of a Monk

Sumi on paper, *107.5 x 27.5 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 1 and 9

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Sanford Tailet

Taiitsu's comparison between Buddhists and Confucians is further adumbrated in this painting. In his poem he enjoins us to tolerance.

Human feelings are unstable, shifting
this way and that,
So do not laugh at those who say one thing
and do another.
Day after day the teacher explains the
Confucian Analects
While you call upon the Buddha's name;
which one is the hero?

In this case the teacher is certainly Taiitsu himself, whose position included teaching Confucian classics such as the *Analects.* From his poem one might expect a depiction of a Buddhist monk. Instead we find a devil *(oni no nembutsu)* in the guise of a monk with Buddhist beads and a gong, collecting offerings. Thus there are two levels to the comparison, the first between Buddhists and Confucians, the second between Buddhist monks and a devil. This adds spice to the poem, and shows that Taiitsu did not merely illustrate his verse, or poetically describe his paintings, but rather combined the two arts together so that each contributes to the totality.

The idea of a devil out begging in the guise of a monk came from a kind of folk painting from the town of Otsu; the subject was one of the most popular in the Otsu-e tradition. In the original folk-paintings, flat areas of color would be contained within hard outlines. Taiitsu's relaxed brushwork in *sumi* adds a new touch to the familiar subject. We may especially note the marvelous hooked line that delineates the devil's mouth and chin, and the simple but well-described feet and toes. Perhaps the ultimate joke in this painting is that Taiitsu may be suggesting that he is to Confucian teachers as a devil is to Buddhists: a wolf in sheep's clothing. If this interpretation is true, we may conclude that Taiitsu was a devil of a teacher.

9.

Western Journey

Sumi on paper, *132.5 x 70.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8
Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection

There are a number of levels of meaning in this painting and poem, so that it becomes difficult to untangle them all. In Taiitsu's collected poems, this quatrain is entitled "Western Journey" and the subject matter may reflect a trip that Taiitsu took westerward to Kyoto, the site of the Imperial Palace. As Edo (Tokyo) became more and more the center of Japanese power, many samurai left the ancient capital, even leaving their families behind as they searched for positions. The new Meiji era had the effect of making the position of samurai obsolete. Many, resting upon their former privileged status, could not adjust, and it was a time of great flux.

It's sad to see the Imperial Palace
daily more desolate,
Each dawn sees more samurai moving
to the north.
Leaving one's wife and children is truly
a hardship.
Since that time there is nothing but
this silver cat.

The final line of Taiitsu's poem adds another dimension. There is a famous story about the Chinese Zen master Nan-ch'uan (748-834, Japanese: Nanzen) who, hearing an argument about a cat, held it aloft and asked if any of his disciples could say the right words to stop him from killing it. No one could. Here it is children gazing up at the cat, and there is no sword in the monk's hand. What the relationship is between the samurai leaving the palace and the silver cat is not clear. Perhaps Taiitsu is suggesting that power and glory are perishable and that enlightenment, symbolized by the Zen story, is all that will remain. Perhaps he is also hinting that the simple pleasure of playing with children is more important than life in a palace.

The painting itself is one of Taiitsu's strongest. Large in size, it conveys strength and liveliness. The angle of the shoulder, head and hand of the monk is nicely echoed by the calligraphy of the poem. The lower diagonal of the monk's body is balanced by the two children. The poses of the three figures bend in active gestures; the lines of the feet are particularly apt. The foot of the monk has Taiitsu's characteristic hooking line, also seen in the monk's chin. Wet and dry lines help define the monk's head and shoulder; in the latter, a split brush effect is seen upon the absorbent paper. Although the meanings of this work are complex, it is surely one of Taiitsu's most dynamic paintings.

10. *Nawa Nagatoshi*

Sumi on paper

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Myron S. Falk, Jr.

This painting begins a series on historical subjects, the first three of which center upon Go-Daigo, the 96th Emperor of Japan, who attempted to rule personally in an age dominated by military leaders. His career was dramatic and his followers heroic, a situation that must have greatly appealed to Taiitsu as it had to Rai San'yō.* There was also the interesting parallel of the new Meiji Emperor once again ruling Japan without a military Shogunate.

In 1331 Go-Daigo was banished to the island of Oki, but after a few months he escaped in a fishing boat. His faithful followers, the Daimyō Nawa Nagatoshi and his brothers, took him through the mountains of Hoki province. They assembled troops, and led Go-Daigo back to the capital of Kyoto in triumph. However, his position remained dangerous, as he had no broadly based support with which to rule Japan.

> *In a ship, in the mountain peaks the Emperor sits precariously;*
> *Things have been peaceful, but we must ask on what basis?*
> *For Lord Nagatoshi and his three brothers, it's do or die—*
> *This is the beginning of a frantic period.*

Taiitsu has chosen to depict the moment when Nawa Nagatoshi is leading his brothers and other followers through the mountains. The figures march across the picture plane, encouraged by their Daimyō. As a whole the group forms a diagonal, a compositional device that imparts a sense of movement to a painting. Once again we can admire the unobtrusive skill with which Taiitsu delineates faces, arms, feet, and vigorous postures of the bodies. One may particularly note the eyes of the various figures, each simply drawn with a dot, yet each expressive. The calligraphy is as active as the figures, and was brushed with the same speed upon the absorbent paper. This is one of Taiitsu's largest and most impressive works.

*San'yō wrote about Go-Daigo in both prose and poetry; see Burton Watson, *Japanese Literature in Chinese,* Volume 2 (NYC, 1976), page 133.

11.

Sakurai Station

Sumi on paper, *117.5 x 32.5 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8

Lent by Dorothy Harman

This painting continues the story of the Emperor Go-Daigo, with his defenders Kusunoki Masashige and his son Masatsura. The Emperor had returned in triumph to Kyoto in 1333, but was able to rule there for only three years. Ashikaga Takauji rallied forces against him, and Go-Daigo fled to the fortress-monastery Enryakuji on Mount Hiei, where his son was abbot. Meanwhile, forces loyal to the Emperor, led by Masashige, faced impossible odds with great bravery and tactical skill. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that the loyalists could not defeat the Ashikaga forces. In 1336 Masashige departed from his son at the post town of Sakurai, enjoining him to continue to defend the Emperor. Masashige then went on to a final hopeless battle, after which he committed suicide. The scene of the nobleman parting with his son, although doubted by many modern historians, has lived on in Japanese folklore, and it is this fateful moment that Taiitsu has chosen to depict.

Entrusted by the Emperor with a mission
that would cost him his life,
He was not like other men who steal away
when favors have ceased.
His great action, rare at any time,
makes men weep.
He has put on his armor, and now he must
part with his son.

It is interesting to note that the son Masatsura led an equally heroic life, defeating Ashikaga forces greater than his own several times before being wounded in 1349 and committing suicide as his father had done.

In Taiitsu's favorite diagonal composition we can see Masashige and his eleven-year-old son at the moment of parting. Taiitsu seems to have brushed this scene a number of times, as it was no doubt very appealing to his romantic nature. Lines are simple and succinct, and the poses of the two figures convey their deep but restrained emotions.

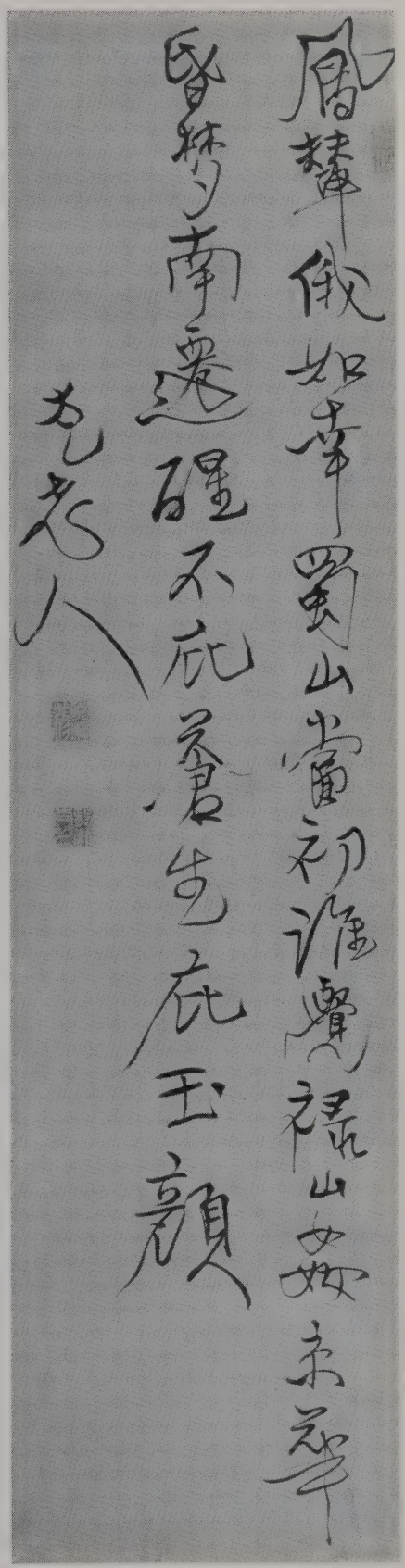
12.

The Temporary Palace at Yoshino

Sumi on paper, *112.0 x 29.0 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin. Seals: 4, 5 and 6.

Private Collection



This calligraphy concludes the story of Emperor Go-Daigo. Forced to leave his temporary refuge on Mount Hiei, he fled south to Yoshino, where he attempted to set up a new capital. He died in 1339, but he and his successors carried on a second dynasty for 56 years. His story, although containing many moments of nobility, was ultimately a tragic one. During the few years he ruled Japan he entrusted too much of his power to favorites. His ineffective administration was a major factor in his downfall. Taiitsu compares him to the T'ang dynasty Emperor Ming-huang, who loved his consort Yang Kuei-fei so much that he misruled China and was forced to flee to Shu (Szechwan) when An Lu-shan rebelled against him.

The Imperial carriage travels like Ming-huang's
flight to Shu.
At first, who could have known the treachery
of Lu-shan?
Life in the capital was like a dream, moving south
like waking;
He had not protected the people,
but only his lover.

Taiitsu was a master of the three arts (sometimes called the "three treasures") of painting, poetry, and calligraphy. Paintings without poems are rare (No. 3), while pure calligraphies are occasionally to be seen. Here the character of Taiitsu is revealed in his brushwork, in true literati fashion. We can see that trained control of the brush has been put to use in conveying freedom and spirited liveliness. Brush-lines, such as on the top right, bend and hook with a snap. The characters seem to crackle with internal vigor. There are no overtly notable effects, but rather a flowing energy and life in each stroke of the brush.

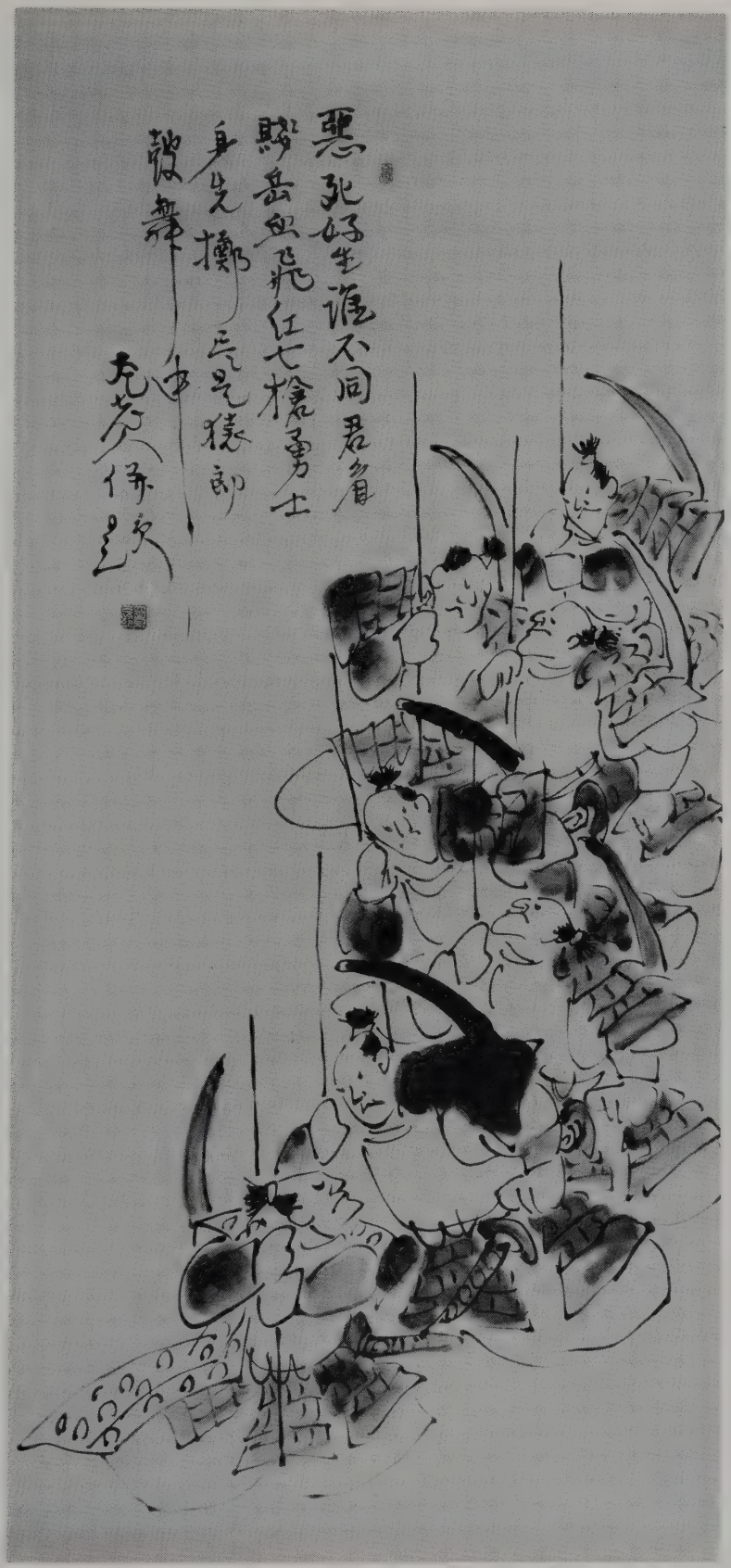
13. *Seven Warriors*

Sumi on paper, *145.0 x 57.5 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Lent by Herbert Burstein

Taiitsu here depicts another heroic and tragic moment in the history of Japan. After the Ashikaga Shogunate's rule had degenerated into decade after decade of civil war, devastating much of Japan, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi determined to reunite the country by any means at his disposal. In 1583 at the battle of Shizugatake he defeated the great general Shibata, who retired to his fortress in Echizen. After a great banquet with music and ritual dancing, Shibata and his followers committed suicide.

Hating death, loving life, who is not like this?
But at Shizugatake, the blood spurted out red.
Seven brave warriors were the first to give up their lives,
Accompanied by drumming and dancing.

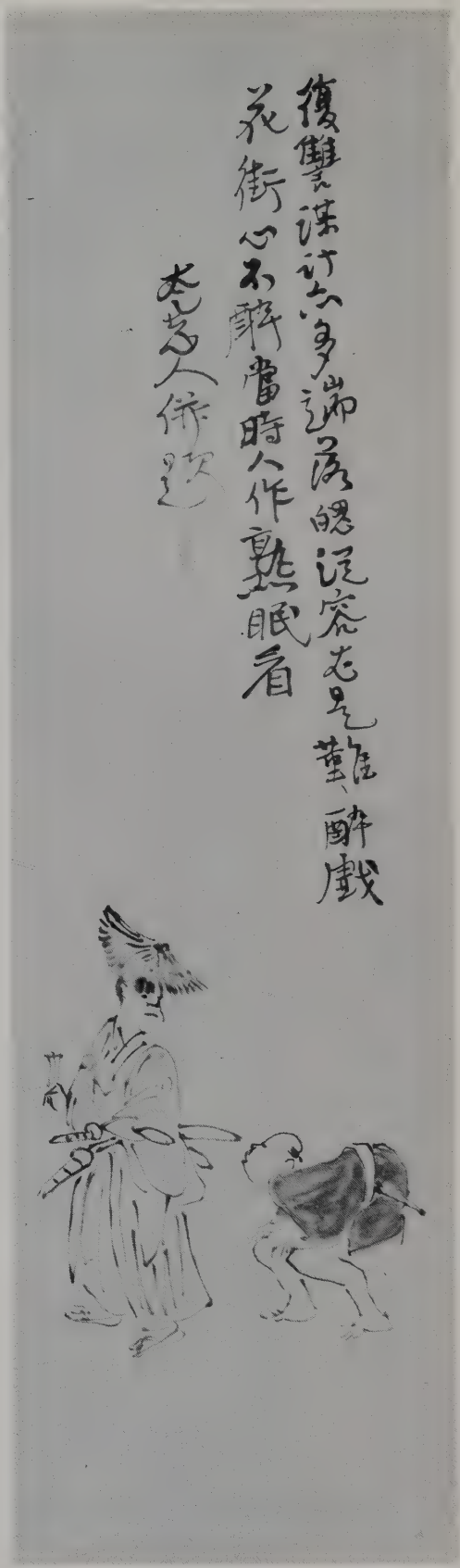
Taiitsu again organizes his composition in a diagonal, with the first warrior, presumably Shibata himself, turning back to face his followers. Each face conveys a different variant of the emotions of the scene; swords and scabbards provide a curved semi-halo for the faces, giving each figure a sense of having his own space-cell. Sticks or staffs held by the figures add a vertical emphasis and are echoed by two long verticals in the final line of the calligraphy before the signature and seals. The paper is very absorbent, and Taiitsu's lines scarcely hesitate in their movement, slowing only to change direction or to hook back for added energy. The heroic nature of the occasion is well conveyed by the understated dynamism of Taiitsu's brushwork.



14.

Oishi Kuranosuke

Sumi on paper, *105.0 x 30.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seal: 3.
Private Collection



In this and the following painting Taiitsu has turned his attention to one of the most celebrated tales of nobility and sacrifice in Japan's history, the story of *Chushingura,* also called the *47 Rōnin.* A young Daimyō was so grossly insulted by a feudal lord that he committed the unpardonable sin of drawing his sword in the palace. He was forced to commit suicide in that year of 1701, and his followers resolved to avenge his honor. Led by Oishi Kuranosuke, the *rōnin* (masterless samurai) went through a series of adventures as they planned their revenge. Oishi himself, in order to lull the suspicions of his enemy, pretended to give way to dissipation, frequenting the red light district and seeming to care nothing for more serious matters.

He has many plans to gain his just revenge,
In difficult times his natural spirit is very rare.
Although he drinks in brothels, in his heart
he is never drunk,
Everyone looks at him as though
he were a coward!

The painting is one of Taiitsu's most simple. The figures, although on the same plane, seem to create a diagonal as the servant is bent over so low. This diagonal is retained in the placement of the calligraphy. The empty spaces are, as so often in Japanese painting, significant. The two figures, for example, are separated by a small space that is broken only by the sword of Oishi, which almost touches the nose of the servant. The space between figures and calligraphy is also nicely balanced. The composition is saved from excessive symmetry by the two figures balanced by three columns of writing. Although the painting is simple, it effectively conveys the tension that is hidden in the apparent indifference of Oishi Kuranosuke.

15.

The Loyal Retainers of Ako

Sumi on paper. *118.13 x 45.63 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 8 and 8

Private Collection

The previous painting dealt with the leader of the *47 Rōnin*, and this work celebrates his followers, comparing them to the great Chinese hero Ching Ho. After many travails and preparations, the *rōnin* attacked the castle of their enemy in the winter of 1706. They succeeded in slaying the perfidious lord, and proudly accepted the command to commit ritual suicide after their victory.

There is not only one Ching Ho,
There were 46 such heroes in this world.
Everyday they inscribed in their hearts
That their swords would glint in the snow.

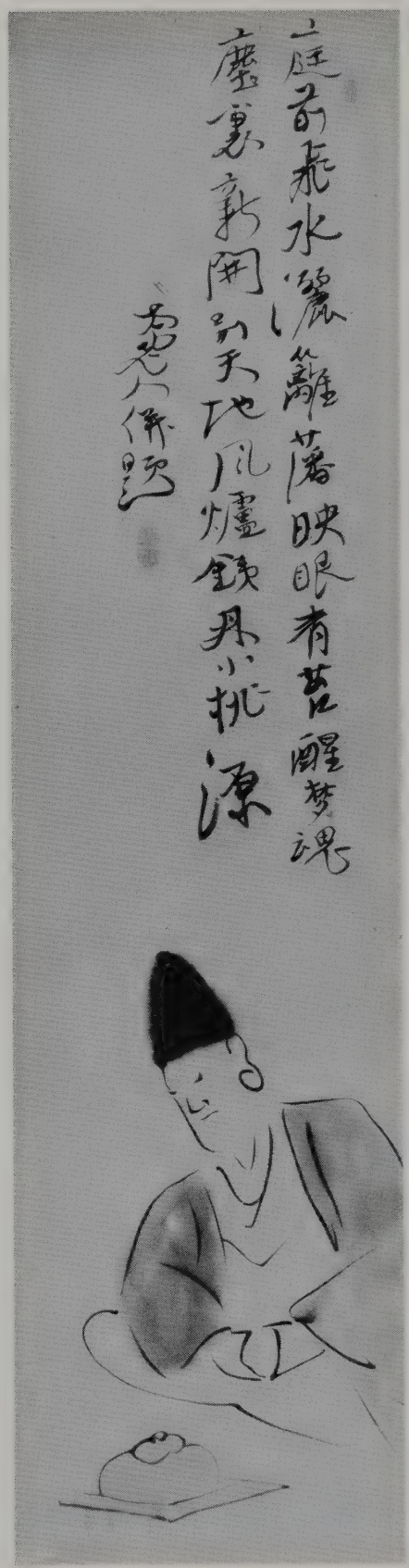
The *Chushingura* story has become one of the great historical romances in Japanese history. Countless poems, essays, and studies of this tale have been written; a marvelous four-hour movie and several shorter films have been produced. The story has had its most magnificant recreation, however, upon the *kabuki* stage, where it is an all-time favorite. In the visual arts, one may find several series of woodblock prints that recount this great story, but it is nonetheless unexpected in the work of a Confucian scholar. Taiitsu's fascination with heroism in Japanese history naturally led him to this saga. Unlike many of his fellow Confucians he was not adverse to utilizing Japanese themes for his literati brushwork.

The composition is much like that of *Seven Warriors* (No. 13); the figures are arranged in a diagonal with their leader turned to face them. Again a lively sense of action is imparted by the use of crisp and rapid line, with broader ink washes helping to define areas of visual stability, notably in the lowest figure who acts as a fulcrum to the composition. Staffs are held by the figures at various angles echoing the verticals of the calligraphy and the diagonals of the series of bodies. As noted in previous works, the calligraphy fills in the space of an upper corner. Each figure holds a different expression and each contributes to the total feeling of pell-mell action in the moment before the final attack.

16.

Sen no Rikyu

Sumi on paper, *122.0 x 30.5 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 1 and 9
Private Collection



Sen no Rikyu (1521-1591) was a great master of the tea ceremony, serving both the Momoyama warlords Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. He rose so high in the latter's service that ultimately he seems to have achieved too much power or hauteur and was ordered to commit suicide. Rikyu added a great deal to the lore of the tea ceremony, primarily in the direction of simplicity, naturalness, and informality. He encouraged the development of *raku,* low-fired Kyoto pottery for teabowls, rather than utilizing only Chinese and Korean bowls, and pioneered in the use of simple household objects such as bamboo flower vases to decorate the tearoom. He also advocated that all ranks be abolished during the ceremony, opening the way to the participation of all walks of life. In this way he created moments of serenity during the turmoil of his age. Taiitsu compares Rikyu's practice of the tea ceremony with the famous Chinese legend of Peach-Blossom Spring, where a fisherman finds a village lost in time, in which all people live in harmony.

In front of the garden, the waterfall
splashes the bamboo fence.
The dazzling green of the moss wakens
the dreaming soul.
In this world of dust he has opened
a new paradise,
With outdoor stove and iron kettle
producing a Peach-Blossom Village.

The painting is one of Taiitsu's simplest and most effective. Rikyū sits with hands folded in a posture of meditation in front of his tea kettle. The mudra (position of the hands) is that of Amida Buddha, who presides over the Western Paradise. Rikyu's body is bent, producing a diagonal with his head countered by the opposing diagonal of his shoulders. His eyes almost closed, he seems to be looking down at the kettle in a deeply peaceful manner. His hat, rendered with a fully charged brush, fuzzes outwards, while the lines that define his face are taut and resilient. Each stroke of the brush is meaningful and adds to the total; one more would be excess, one less would be insufficient. Japanese tea masters were not normally the subject of literati painters, but Taiitsu has evocatively presented his own view of a cultural and artistic hero.

17.

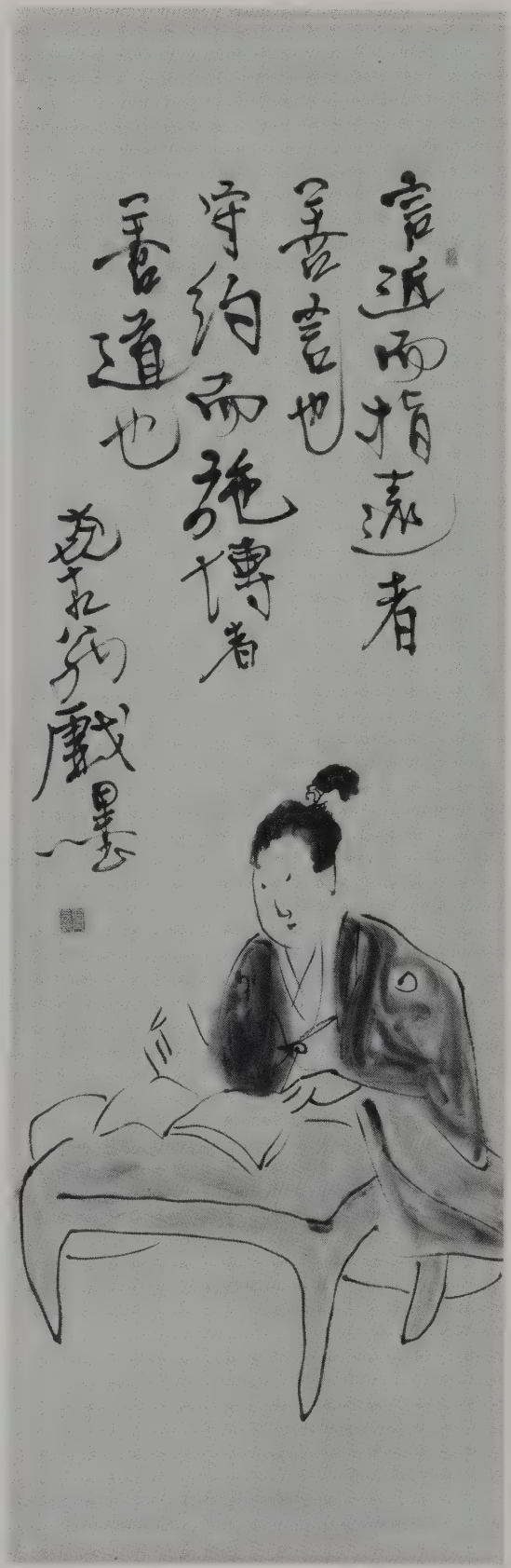
Good Words and Good Speech

Sumi on paper, *138.5 x 44.5 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin 79 ō giboku. Seals: 7 and 8

Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection

Published: Stephen Addiss, *Zenga and Nanga* (New Orleans, 1976)



In contrast to the paintings on historical subjects, this work, painted in Taiitsu's final year, has a strictly Confucian theme. A samurai-official, identified by the top-knot, sits at a table with a book. The calligraphy nestles above him, displaying an attractive use of negative space. All is quiet, impersonal, almost abstract.

Words which speak of things near at hand and yet have far-reaching implications are good words;
Speech which is pithy and yet has broad application is good speech.
(translated by Jonathan Chaves)

Nothing could be more overtly Confucian than this. Gone are the heroic figures, the romantic suicides, and in their place is this simple message. Yet Taiitsu adds "giboku" (playful ink) to his signature, and his painting, outwardly unexceptional, conveys a sense of restrained strength. Where is the "playful ink"? In the firm but never hard or geometric outlines? In the merging light greys on the table and heavier greys in the robe? In the dots and hook that define eyes, nose and mouth? Surely in the calligraphy, where each pair of columns ends with a sweeping stroke that flies upwards. We may also note that in the final word of the signature, "ink" (墨), usually written in a square and compact form. Taiitsu has moved the character to the right, and allowed the four dots (here combined into a wave-like pattern) to spread out horizontally. This is certainly playful, without detracting from the quiescent mood of the painting. We are reminded that Taiitsu remained a Confucian to the end. No matter how eccentric and far-ranging his interests and character, he never lost his adherence to the well-ordered world of good books, good words and good speech.

18. *The Hunter*

Sumi on paper, *130.0 x 57.5 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8
Private Collection

The last in the group of Taiitsu figure paintings harkens to his interest in nature, to be explored further in a series of landscapes. This painting of a hunter and his dog is one of Taiitsu's finest works, conveying a great sense of movement and character in a relatively simple composition. The hunter, his face tilting upwards, is preceded by his dog, marvelously defined in a few outline strokes.

After the wind has quieted in the dawn sky,
All villages are white in the mountains and valleys.
*A hunter takes along his yellow-eared dog,**
Flying deer have left tracks in the snow.

Taiitsu has suggested a true sense of bulk in the hunter by his use of wet mottled grey ink on his coat. Yet a lightness has also been achieved by the lively definition of the feet, a Taiitsu specialty (most artists have found feet to be extremely difficult to render convincingly). We can sense the movement of the hunter upwards on a path. The space between the figure and the dog is effective in establishing their psychological relationship.

When Taiitsu establishes a primary diagonal in his paintings, the calligraphy usually echoes this diagonal. Here, the bottom of the columns of text instead forms a countering diagonal, making a sideways V of space. In the large format of this painting, the empty space is a notable element of the design. The hunter's face tilts into this space, making the emptiness active rather than inert. The implied diagonal of the hunter's gaze reinforces the diagonal of the calligraphy, which itself contains strong diagonals within the individual characters. Thus, the diagonals and countering diagonals function like arrows to lead our eyes actively over the painting. The weapons of the hunter form another of these arrow-like shapes, appropriate to the subject of the brushwork. Taiitsu's forms, however, are never strictly geometric. Rounded lines and shapes balance the sharper angles of his compositions. Above all, the directness of his style gives his works an immediate impact. We are shown, simply and directly, a hunter and his dog out at dawn in the snow.

**An ancient Chinese tale tells of a yellow-eared dog who followed his master hundreds of miles before finding him again. Since that time "yellow ear" has become a name for all dogs.*

19. ***Casually Created on a Spring Day***

Sumi on paper, *135.0 x 31.25 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Jack Dodick

Taiitsu, like so many great Chinese and Japanese literati, felt more affinity with nature than with the world of men. Confined to cities by bureaucratic or teaching positions, poets and painters longed for the mountains, forests, rivers and oceans. There, a kind of serenity was to be found, a release from tension and aggravation. Poets such as Han-shan of the T'ang dynasty had compared living on mountains with entering cities of "red dust," and opted for the simple life. Scholars such as Taiitsu could not live entirely secluded in nature, but they could write and paint of their longings for a more idyllic existence. The scene of a scholar out walking, perhaps visiting a hermit friend, or seeking out a country tavern (enticingly suggested by a small white flag on a pole) was often painted by *bunjin* artists.

My heart does not reside in this world of ebb and flow,
Turbulent and agitated like a fish in a cauldron.
As red flowers and green willows make a spring like those of old,
I walk through the forest to visit the wine hermitage.

The figure, presumably Taiitsu himself, is nicely framed in a space cell created by land masses and a leaning tree. Directly above his gaze is the white flag of the wineshop, the tavern itself hidden behind a grove of trees. Clusters of dots help suggest vegetation on the horizontal lower land area and the diagonal mountainside. Lighter dotting is utilized for the foliage of the larger tree, while short horizontal dashes define the distant trees. Taiitsu's technique in landscape painting is not elaborate. As in his figure painting, he brings forth the essentials of the scene he wishes to depict. This painting is distinguished by the relatively large size of the figure, rare in Taiitsu's landscapes. As such, this painting represents a transition to the more purely landscape works that follow.

20. *Boating on Lake Biwa*

Sumi on paper, *30.63 x 53.45 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 3, 27 and 28.
Lent by E. John Bullard

There are no figures to be seen in this small landscape; only an empty pavilion and a distant sailboat suggest human existence. Unlike most literati landscapes, however, this painting depicts a specific place, Lake Biwa (named after its lute-like shape) which is separated from Kyoto by Mount Hiei (Hieizan). The poem recounts a journey made by Taiitsu, a physical journey that became a release for his spirit in nature.

From afar it is Hieizan, from up close what mountain?
I can count on my fingers how often I've travelled to Lake Biwa.
Who has hoisted a spring sail, chasing the clear sunlight?
Amidst the vast waters, my soul flies off with the quiet voice of the oars.

The poem, like the painting, is outwardly very simple, but suggests more than it defines. Is the mountain he sees not Hieizan? Is it not the poet himself or his friend who has hoisted the sail? Taiitsu is suggesting the particular in the universal, and the universal in the particular, as in the inscription to *Good Words and Good Speech* (No. 17), but here more subtly. The poet finds his soul has flown off, he is no longer boating, the mountain is no longer the mountain. Taiitsu is commenting on the nature of reality while suggesting the experience, common to us all, of losing himself in the gentle rocking of a boat on a spring day.

The painting is also deceptively simple. Wet ink, in tones of grey, defines a few landscape elements. The foreground trees, empty pavilion and distant mountains suggest the compositional formula of the great Yüan dynasty literatus Ni Tsan (1301–1374) who was the epitome of lofty refinement. The wet-ink brushwork, however, suggests the style associated with Mi Fu (1051–1107), the great Sung dynasty artist. It was of course common for later literati masters to echo traits of earlier painters that they admired. What is unusual is the simplicity and directness with which Taiitsu absorbed these influences and created a style of his own. The diagonal of the mountainside and the distant mountain's tilt are countered by the angle of the trees. The simple dash-like line of the boat creates a subtle angle. The brushwork is extremely relaxed and informal, elements being suggested rather than rigidly defined. Both poem and painting take us, as the experience took Taiitsu, beyond the specific into a world of the spirit.

21. *Boiling Water for Tea in the Green Shade*

Sumi on paper, *120.0 x 23.75 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Private Collection

Japan absorbed three different manners of preparing tea from China. From the T'ang dynasty came a form of boiled tea with added ingredients. From the Sung dynasty came powdered green tea, which was whisked in large teabowls and became the basis of the Japanese tea ceremony. From the Ming dynasty came steeped tea, a manner of preparation close to that of the western world, but utilizing extremely small teapots and cups. This final method evolved into a ceremony called *sencha,* much enjoyed by literati of the Edo period. Poets and scholars would take a small outdoor stove and other implements out to favored places in nature. A servant or one of the scholars would heat up charcoal, encouraging it with a fan; the pure and newly boiled water would be allowed to cool just a moment and then was poured over tea leaves of the highest quality. It is such a scene that Taiitsu depicts in this landscape. We may note that the poem also suggests the diagonals of the painting's composition.

> *Walking by the crossroads, we can hear the babbling brook,*
> *As we enter the forest, the stream also slants inward.*
> *Below the rocks, the water is so pure we can count the fish;*
> *In the green shade, we spread out mats to taste the new tea.*

An interesting feature of this painting is the added signature "Shokyu Dōjin" in the lower left. This suggests that one section part of the work, perhaps the figures, was painted by another artist. The style is so close to that of Taiitsu that we may imagine that it was one of his friends or students, but as yet the painter remains unidentified. The name does not appear among the lists of students of Taiitsu, although it may have been the artistic name (literally meaning "Pine Hill Taoist") of one of his followers.

The brushwork of the landscape is typically that of Taiitsu. Trees are defined by uneven outlines and circles, with wet dots and horizontal dashes for foliage. Mountains are delineated by outlines and simple parallel *ts'un* (inner strokes), with clusters of freely applied dots. Most of the forms move diagonally across the surface, and the calligraphy at the top is an integral feature of the work, as is the space between painting and poem. The painting shows how tea can be an adjunct to the appreciation of nature, a moment of pleasure in the universal rhythm of rivers, trees and mountains.

22. *My Natural Place*

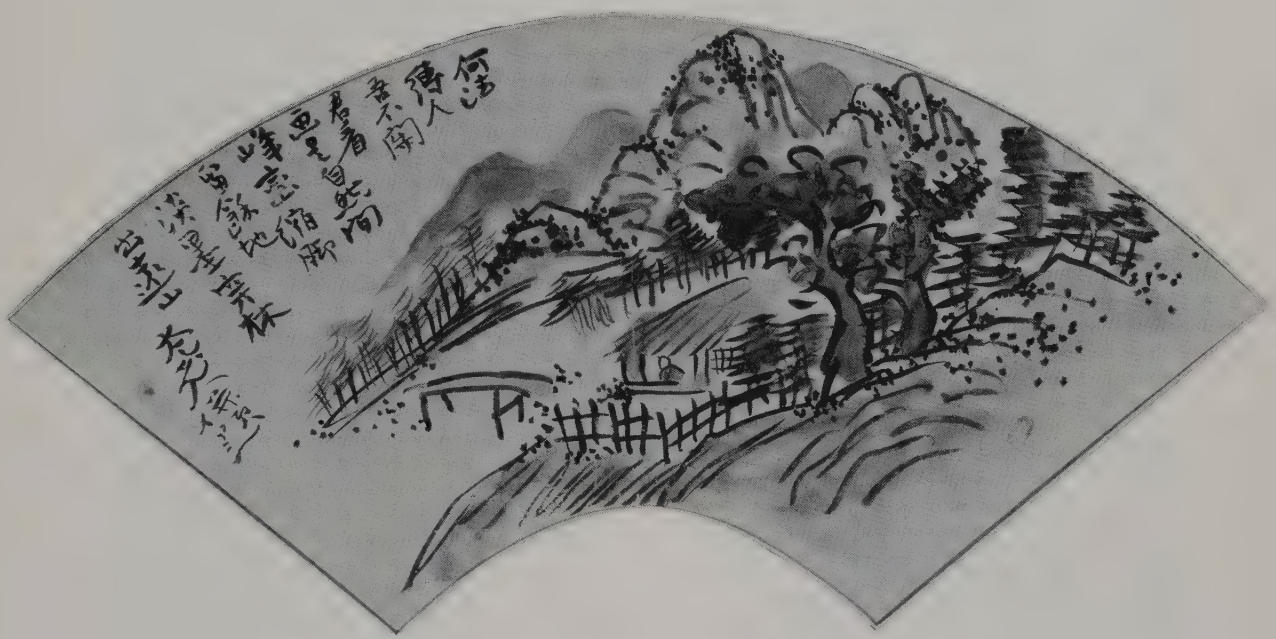
Sumi on treated paper, *25.0 x 52.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 2? and ?
Private Collection
Published: *Nanga Fan Painting* (London, 1975)

Fan paintings by Taiitsu are quite rare; this example was never folded to be used as a fan, but was from the beginning a painting to be enjoyed in its intimate format. The unusual shape of a fan has long challenged artists compositionally. In a landscape, for example, should the horizon line bend with the shape or maintain a horizontal? Taiitsu solves this problem with his usual reliance upon diagonals, so the horizon slants on the left but is not seen on the right. The heavier textures on the right are balanced by the calligraphy on the left. The focus remains upon the scholar in his riverside dwelling, enjoying the fullness of nature.

Taiitsu's poem, as in other cases when inscribed upon his landscapes, is notable as it describes his feelings about himself and his art.

> *All the methods that restrict man don't apply to me,*
> *What you see in this painting is my natural place.*
> *Where peaks and ridges pull back, there is some elbow room;*
> *Pale ink penetrates the forest, and distant mountains emerge.*

The methods of delineating the landscape are characteristic of the artist: circles or dashes for foliage, clusters of dots on the mountains, relaxed but firm outlines, light grey washes. The added poignancy in this work is in its intense focus on the artist himself as suggested in his inscription. Taiitsu, although a scholar in the cities of Kyoto, Nagoya, and finally Inuyama, felt his natural place to be among the mountains. In this small work, he has richly described his home.



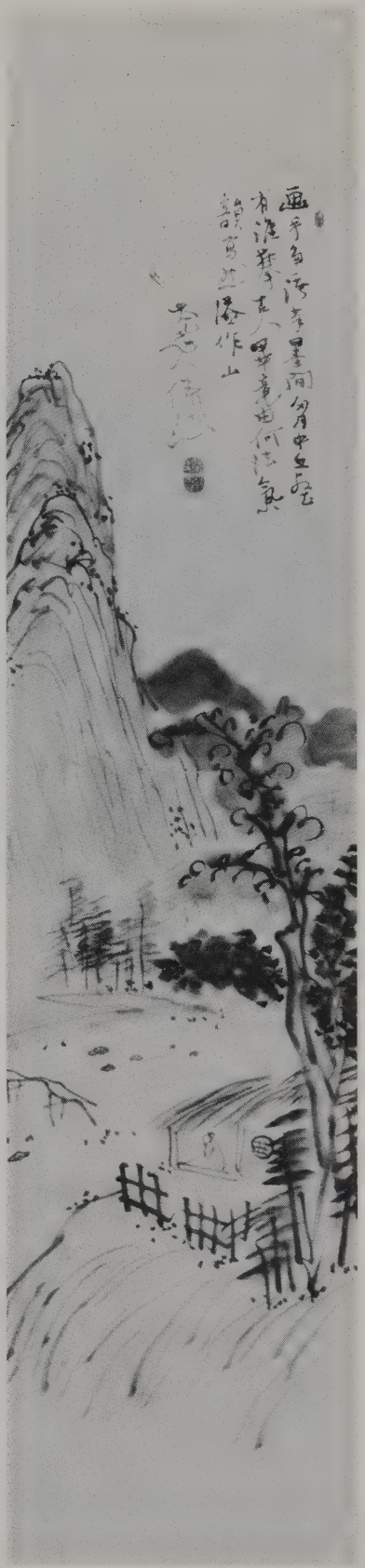
23.

Painters Brag and Contend

Sumi on paper, *132.5 x 30.0 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 1 and 2

Private Collection



The visual elements of this painting are almost exactly the same as those in the preceeding fan, and we can note how Taiitsu has rearranged them to fit the tall thin format of the hanging scroll. The foreground landmass now covers the entire bottom of the painting. The hut with the scholar nestles above, with trees leaning over it. The bridge is once again to the left of the hut, above which are trees with dashes for foliage suggesting middle distance. The principal mountain is vertically extended, rising high above the distant wash mountains. The calligraphy fills part of the void created by the position of the lower wash mountains. The entire composition including the poem suggests an S-curve made up of stated or implied bending diagonals. As in the fan painting, the mood is serene, and once again Taiitsu's poem deals with the act of painting. He harkens back to the ancient "Six Laws" of Hsieh Ho, of the fifth century, who stated that the first law of brushwork, before all technical considerations, was to achieve "spirit resonance" or vitality. 1,400 years later Taiitsu felt the same principle to be essential.

Painters brag and contend over brush and ink,
But who can climb the hills and peaks within?
If you ask what method was utilized by men of old,
The spirit resonance rose up, and its overflow
created mountains.

The comparison of this painting with the fan shows that Taiitsu has his own methodology for the various constituents of a landscape. He realized, however, that the creative flow of nature itself was beyond any questions of style or technique. As he stated in his poem quoted in the introduction, his painting followed his scholarship as the natural overflow of his feelings. Living and teaching in a city and longing for the mountains of his home, he climbed the hills and peaks within.

24.

***Painters Brag and Contend* (version 2)**

Sumi on paper, *115.0 x 32.5 cm.*

Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8

Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection

Published: Carolyn H. Wood, *Art of China and Japan* (Huntsville, 1977)

Taiitsu, no doubt fond of his poem about painting, inscribed it again upon this landscape. This work, however, is different in mood from the previous example. The elements of the composition have been somewhat simplified and brought closer to the viewer. Instead of space at the bottom of the painting, we have an active landmass covered with rapidly brushed trees and bushes. There is a rounded plateau with two sages enjoying the *sencha* tea ceremony previously described (no. 21). Above them is a clump of bamboo leaning out over a lake, just under the wash mountains. The principal peak resembles that in the previous landscape, but is more dramatically delineated, with fuzzing wet ink at the peak. Both this mountain and the landmass at the bottom of the painting are made up of black dry-brush *ts'un* (texturing strokes) with clusters of heavy black dots. Wash is sparingly utilized so the dots stand out as powerful accents. The calligraphy fills in the blank area, establishing a balanced negative space. The serenity of the previous painting has been replaced with dynamism in both composition and brushwork. Even the calligraphy is more freely and loosely brushed. We can feel that the spirit resonance was exceptionally high in Taiitsu's heart the day he created this work, and it remains one of his most dramatic and powerful paintings.

25. *Orchid*

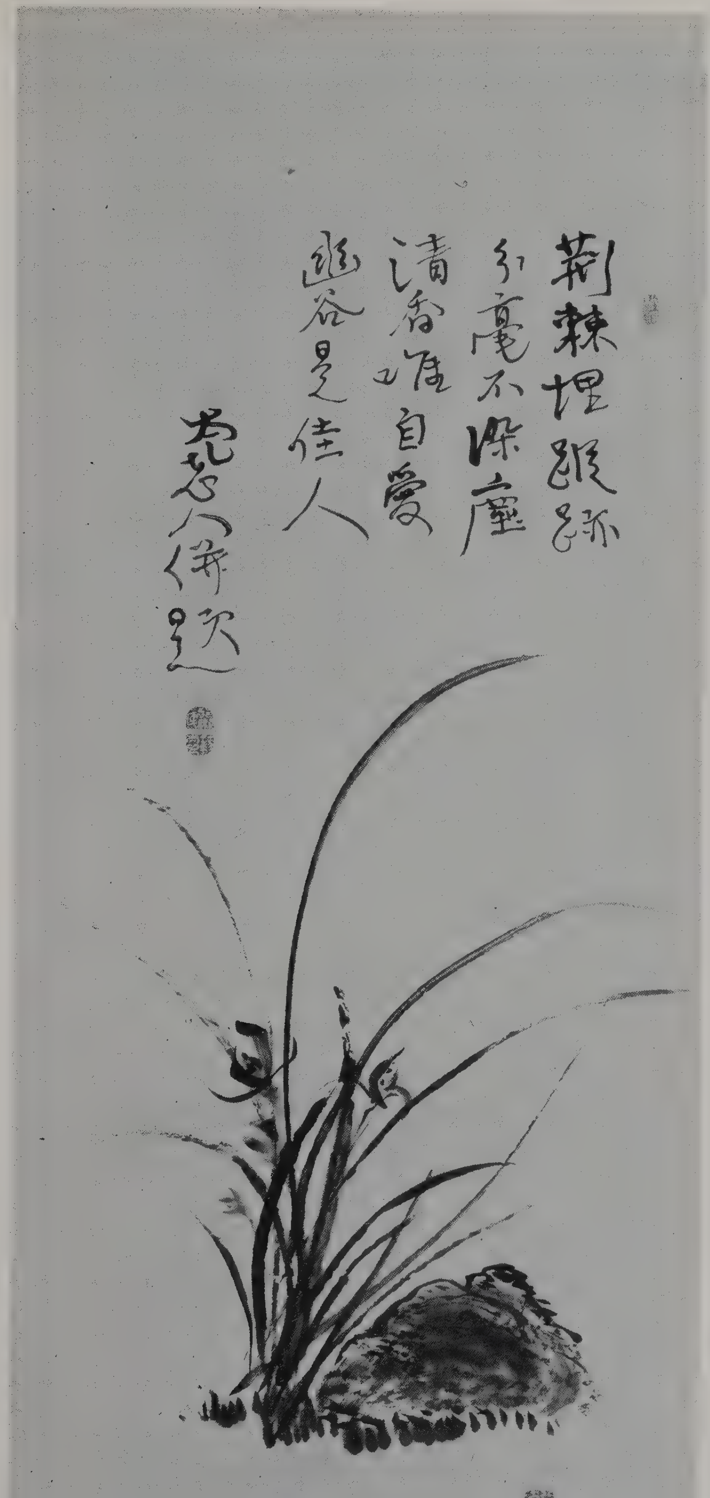
Sumi on paper, *103.5 x 43.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 1, 6 and 9.
Private Collection

Orchid, bamboo, plum blossoms and chrysanthemums are known as the "four gentlemen" as each has attributes that can be identified with the scholar. The orchid, for example, is quite unlike the showy plants we associate with that name. In China, it is modestly beautiful in color and scent. It cannot compete with larger and grander flowers in catching the eye, but in its quiet nature the orchid has a special and subtle beauty greatly prized by literati.

Imbedded in thorns and brambles
Yet in no way stained with dust,
Its pure fragrance known only to itself,
In the secluded valley it is like a beautiful woman.

The "four gentlemen" were brushed by scholar-artists who enjoyed not only the allusions to literati values but also the opportunities for pure "ink-play" afforded by these plants. The orchid, for example, allows long sweeping lines of varying thickness. The swelling and thinning line of the great T'ang dynasty figure painter WuTao-tzu (active 720–760) was in fact called an "orchid line." Artists who enjoyed brushwork for its own sake, brushwork that was close to calligraphy in spirit, frequently painted the "four gentlemen." Although there are stories of Taiitsu painting bamboo in unlikely places at unlikely times (see the Introduction), he brushed the "four gentlemen" subjects surprisingly seldom.

Taiitsu's orchid painting seems simply composed, but he has handled the arrangement of the fourteen leaves with unerring judgement. The heaviest leaves are centered, creating a structural column from which other leaves and flowers extend. Those leaning to the left are thinner and rendered with dry-brush, giving them a light and airy feeling. The flowers themselves are, unlike the leaves, stronger on the left side. Lines ending the second and fourth column of calligraphy, plus the last character in the signature, extend in orchid-like fashion, connecting the poem and the painting visually as well as in meaning. It is a matter of regret that Taiitsu did not turn his hand more often to this kind of subject, as he brushed it with true literati flavor.


荊棘埋蹤跡
分毫不染塵
清香唯自愛
幽谷是佳人

26. *White Heron*

Sumi on paper, *117.5 x 40.0 cm.*
Signature: Taiitsu Rōjin heidai. Seals: 7 and 8.
Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection

One unusual subject occasionally brushed by Taiitsu is the white heron, a bird he renders with marvelous simplicity and humor. This subject also has literati overtones, as the T'ang dynasty poet and painter Wang Wei (698–759) wrote a famous line "over vast fields flies the white heron." Taiitsu goes further, identifying with the white heron's lack of ambition. Unlike other large birds who seek large prey, the white heron can be seen in East Asian countries in fields, finding small insects or tiny fish for its food.

> *Flying by, flying back, traveling freely*
> *Over vast and boundless fields after the rain,*
> *How wonderful! The white heron understands my nature,*
> *With no desire to search the rivers for big fish.*

If Taiitsu indeed identified with this heron, it adds spice and honor to the painting. The bird wears an expression of almost insufferable self-satisfaction, quite the opposite of what one might expect from the poem.

The lines utilized to define the bird are thin and attenuated, like many of the lines in the calligraphy. Only the beak and the horizontal strokes describing the land are thick and grey. Reeds at the bottom of the painting are depicted by the same brush-strokes as the heron, although they show more speedy execution, ending with "flying white" where the paper shows through the rapid brushwork. The total composition shows Taiitsu's skill in dividing the empty paper into interesting areas of negative space. Despite some roughing up of the surface of this painting over the years, it is one of Taiitsu's most lively and eccentric works.

27. *Rubbing of Inscription on Stone* 1880

Sumi on paper, *92.5 x 45.0 cm.*
Signature: Meiji 13, 1880, Taiitsu 79 ō kaita
Shōka Collection

There is a large stone, with an inscription written by Taiitsu the year before he died, on the grounds of the Jōmanji Temple in Inuyama. This author was taken there by Yoshida Gyōichirō, the local historian in Inuyama, and allowed to make a rubbing of the inscription. The calligraphy is characteristic of Taiitsu in his final years. The lines are free-flowing, the characters loosely but not inelegantly constructed. The impression is one of movement, almost of dance. Diagonals, as in the first and last characters, are extended, and a long bending horizontal in the third character is also notable. Despite the formal nature of a stone inscription, Taiitsu's characters have a great deal of lively spirit.

The text of the inscription is unusual, as it does not celebrate a notable personality, but rather the burying on this spot of Buddhist sutras (sacred writings). These sutras were gathered from sacred places around Japan and the text written by Taiitsu translates: "Memorial stone for sutras gathered by a pilgrim during this dynasty." As well as representing a fine example of the calligraphy Taiitsu brushed with great freedom in his penultimate year, this rubbing denotes the Buddhist interests of the elderly Confucian scholar.

Photo of stone


明治十三庚辰

28. ***Rubbing of Taiitsu's Grave Inscriptions*** **1881**

Sumi on paper, two scrolls, each *103.5 x 42.5 cm.*

Shōka Collection

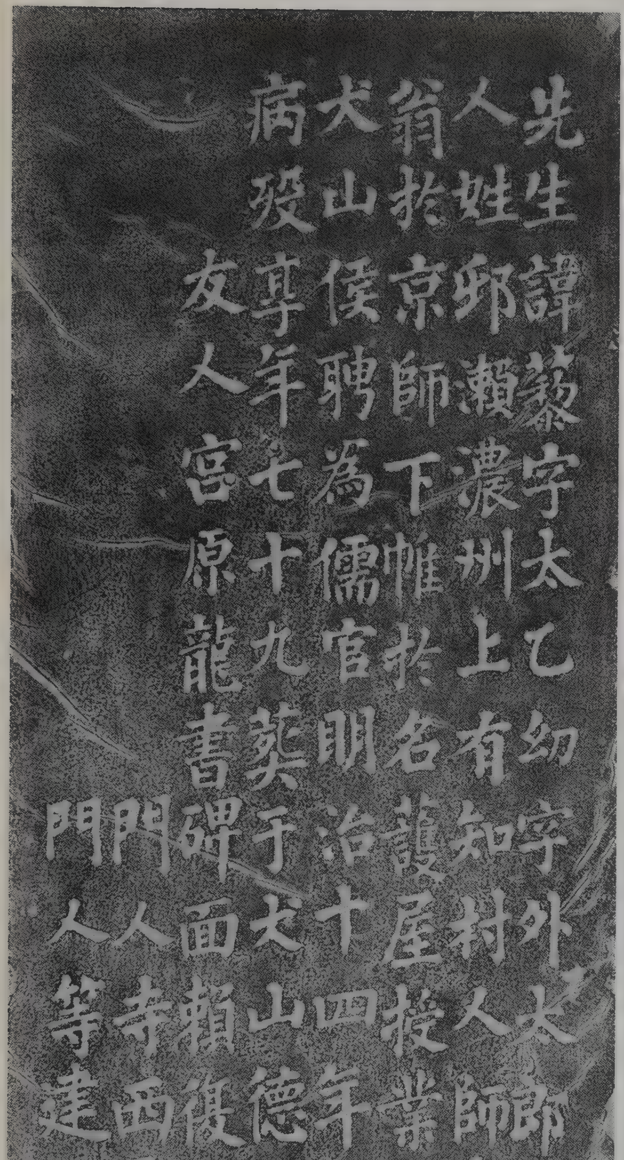
After Taiitsu's death in 1881, his followers banded together to erect a gravestone with a commemorative inscription. The stone stands in Tokujuji, the temple of Inuyama that Taiitsu often visited. The current abbot of Tokujuji, Sawada Hiroi, kindly allowed this author to make rubbings of the front and back of the stone.

On the front face of the stone is carved "Taiitsu Murase Sensei no haka" (the gravestone of the teacher Murase Taiitsu). The calligraphy is by Miyahara Setsuan (also known as Miyahara Ryū). Although the writing does not have the freedom of the master, we may see some trace of Taiitsu's influence in the calligraphic structure; the first two characters proclaiming the teacher's name have a bold elegance. The reverse side of the stone displays an inscription authored by Rai Shiho (Rai Fukusen) with calligraphy by Teranishi Ekidō (also known as Teranishi Ken and Teranishi Kanzan). In strong regular script a short biography of the master is given, including the various names utilized by Taiitsu, his studies with Rai San'yō, his move to Inuyama and finally his sickness and death.

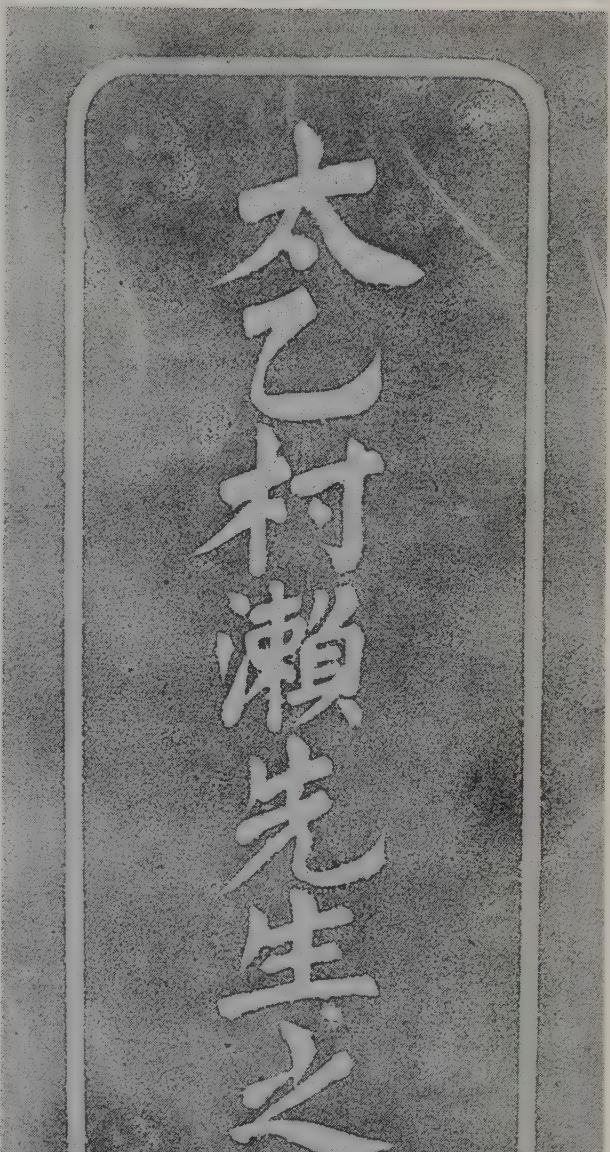
Curiously enough, there appear to be two mistakes in the inscription. The first has Taiitsu's youthful name as *Sototarō,* when it should have *Sotojirō* as Taiitsu was a second son. The second mistake lies in giving the 3rd day of the 7th month of 1881 as Taiitsu's death date; it appears from old temple records that he died on the 27th day of that month and year. The inscription ends with the names of the author and calligrapher, and a note that the stone was erected by Taiitsu's pupils.

Taiitsu remains a local hero in Inuyama. The castle, a tourist attraction, contains several cases of his memorabilia, and the gravestone at the temple is well tended. It was regularly visited by his daughters Tomo and Mune until their deaths in 1924 and 1927. Now the visitors are those who have enjoyed Taiitsu's poetry, painting, and calligraphy. By Japanese count, 1980 is the one hundredth anniversary of Taiitsu's death; this catalogue is dedicated to the memory of the free spirit that produced the art we can still respond to today.

Photo of grave



No. 28 (left)



No. 28 (right)

APPENDIX TAIITSU'S SEALS

Note: It is extremely difficult to date Taiitsu's works by his use of seals. We know that seal number 3 was in use by 1847, as it is reproduced in the *'Yogaku Shisen.'* Seals 11, 12, and 27 were in use by 1853 as they are reproduced in the *'Kan Sazan Shishu.'* In general, it would seem that the oval seals 1, 2, 3, and 9 often appear on works that date to Taiitsu's Nagoya years, while seals 4, 5, 6, and 7 appear on many works of Taiitsu's final decade in Inuyama.

1. Murase Shi Rei Taiitsu
村瀬氏蔡太乙

2. 'Hobby'
餘技

3. Rei Taiitsu
蔡太一

4. Murase Rei
村瀬蔡

5. Murase Taiitsu

村瀬太乙

6. 'Floating Clouds, Flowing Waters'

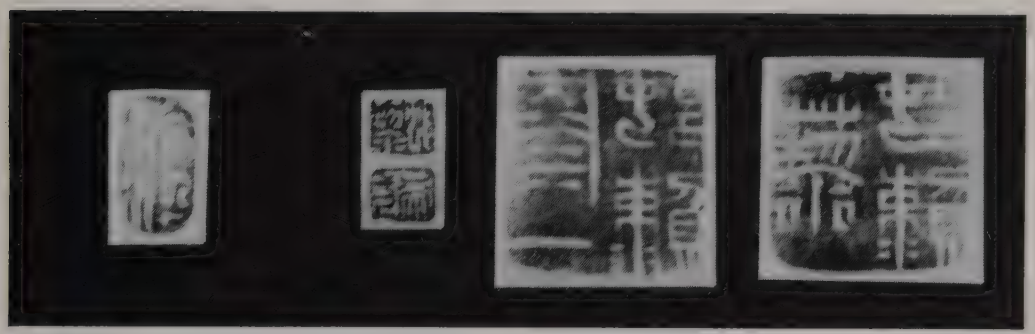
行雲流水

7. Taiitsu Old Man's Three Talents

太一老人三絶

8. 'White Snow'

白雪



9. 'Floating Clouds, Flowing Waters'

行雲流水

10. Mura Rei Taiitsu

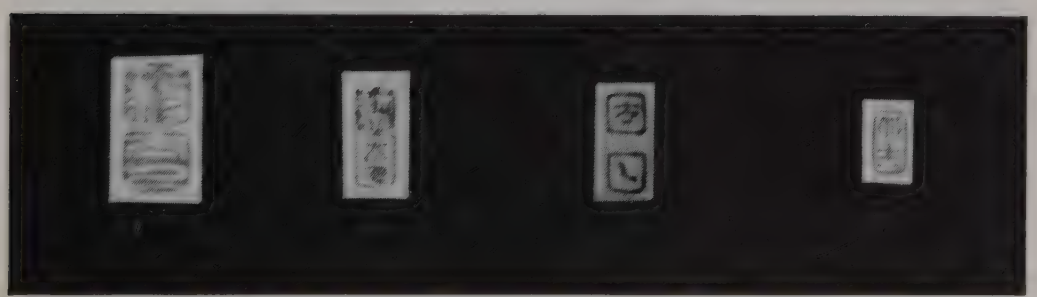
村黎泰一

11. Murase Taiitsu

村瀬泰一

12. Murase Rei

村瀬黎



13. Rei Taiitsu

黎太乙

14. Rei Taiitsu

黎太乙

15. Taiitsu

太乙

16. Half Immortal

半仙

17. Fart Master

放屁先生

18. Taiitsu

泰乙

19. Taiitsu Old Man

太乙老人

20. 'Wherever I Go, My Fate Is Poverty'

安往而不得貧賤哉

21. Taiitsu

太乙

22. Murase Rei's Seal

村瀬藜印

23. Rei Taiitsu

藜太乙

24. ?

25. Farm Mountain's Useless Tree

濃山散木

26. Rei?

藜?

PART TWO: OTHER SEALS APPEARING ON WORKS SIGNED 'TAIITSU'

27. ?

28. 'Floating Clouds, Flowing Waters'

行雲流水

29. Murase Taiitsu

村瀬泰乙

30. Murase Rei

村瀬蔡

31. ?

泰一父?

32. Chinryū

陳留

33. The Seal of the Copier of Unshō

雲章摸寫之印

Note: 'Unshō' may refer to Shiokawa Bunrin (1808-1877), a painter of the Shijo School who was popular in Kyoto during the early Meiji period.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Addiss, Stephen, *Zenga and Nanga: Paintings by Japanese Monks and Scholars* (New Orleans, 1976).

Ito, Akira (Editor), *Nōbi Bunkyōshi (History of Nōbi Literature)* (Nagoya, 1936).

Nagoya Board of Education (Editors) *Meiji no Nagoyajin (Biographies of Nagoya Personages in the Meiji Era)* (Nagoya, 1969).

Nagoya City Office (Editors) *Nagoya Shishi, Gakubei ben (Nagoya City History, Arts and Science Edition)* (Tokyo, 1915).

Nagoya City Office (Editors) *Nagoya Shishi, Jimbutsu ben (Nagoya City History, Biography Edition)* (Nagoya, 1934).

Shih, Hsio-yen, *Nanga and Zenga* (Windsor, Ontario, 1973).

Shinpen Aichi Ken Ijinden (New Edition of Reports on Famous Personages of Aichi Prefecture) (Nagoya, 1972)

Taiitsu Murase, *Taiitsudō Shishō (Taiitsu Hall Poem Record)* (Nagoya, 1972).

Taiitsu Murase (Editor), *Kan Sazan Shisho (Kan Sazan Poem Selection)* (Nagoya, 1853).

Taiitsu Murase, (Editor), *Yōgaku Shisen (Youth Study Poem Collection)* (Nagoya, 1852).

Tojo Murase, *Nika Taisaku (Counterpoint of Two Authors)* (Nagoya, 1852).

Yoshida, Gyōichirō, *Murase Taiitsu no Shōgai (The Life of Murase Taiitsu)* (Inuyama, 1964).

Yoshizawa, Chu, "Murase Taiitsu Hitsu Sansui Gasatsu" *(A Landscape Album by Murase Taiitsu), Kokka* No. 928 (1970).

Umezawa, Seiichi, *Nihon Nanga Shi (Japanese Nanga History)* (Tokyo, 1919).

百年老友