

Part I
Depicting Wars of Medieval Times
<Old Main Building Exhibition Rooms>

Chapter 1
The Origins and Evolution of Battle Scene Paintings

The very earliest of the extant battle scene paintings are illustrated handscrolls based on war chronicles such as the *Tale of the Hōgen War*, or the *Tale of the Heike Clan*. Although these paintings depict battles among warriors of the samurai class, they were primarily enjoyed and passed down within the upper-class culture of the imperial family, the court nobility, and Buddhist temples. At length, with the establishment of the warrior-class political administration headed by the Kamakura shogunate, these war chronicles and illustrated handscrolls depicting battle scenes projecting an ideal model for the samurai class also came to be utilized for cautionary and educational purposes and were enjoyed by a further expanded sector of society.

Battle scenes were also painted outside the context of historical war chronicle narratives. Samurai warriors offered prayers to the various Buddhist and Shinto deities before entering the battlefield and sometimes temples and shrines became entangled in the ravages of war. As a result, illustrated scenes of battles also appeared in tales of the miracles performed by certain gods or Buddhas as well as legends tracing out the specific histories of individual temples or shrines. Furthermore, even *otogizōshi* "fairy tales," which were less grounded in historical fact, still featured scenes of samurai warriors confronting demons or embroiled in battles of revenge or retaliation.

Chapter 2
Edo-Period Painting of Medieval Battle Scenes

In the Edo period, medieval war chronicle literature became firmly rooted in the hearts of the warrior class. Chanting of the *Tales of the Heike Clan* to *biwa* lute accompaniment was patronized by the shogunate and Noh theater, which became the official ceremonial music of the warrior class, featured tales of battles from the Heian-era Genpei War between the Genji (Minamoto) and Heike (Taira) clans. In these ways, medieval war chronicle literature became firmly rooted in the hearts of the warrior class. From the Muromachi period onward, ever more diverse types of battle scene painting came to be produced under the influence of such literature and performing arts.

In the 17th century, works such as *The Tales of the Heike Clan* and the *Genpei Jōisuiiki* (Rise and Fall of the Genji and Heike Clans) were made into voluminous illustrated scrolls and illustrated books that were appreciated by the upper classes, while at the same time illustrated war chronicle narratives were also published in printed books that served to spread visualized depictions of such scenes to the general populace.

From around the end of the Muromachi period, images of military battles took on a new larger format of expression in the medium of folding screens and in the Edo period a wide variety of such "battle screens" were produced. Utilizing this large format, the battlefields were broadly captured, populated by countless warrior figures in action and allowing for a type of battle scene that was able to convey a sense of the feverish energy and the overwhelming realism of battle that had not existed in battle paintings up until that time. Furthermore, Genpei battle screens depicting isolated scenes of famous episodes such as the "death of Atsumori" or "Nasu no Yoichi" also began to appear. Such scenes were also highlighted in performing arts, such as *Kōwakamai* recitative dance and Noh theater. By capturing human figures in large format on such folding screens, it was perhaps expected that the viewer would be able to feel more empathy for the state of the mind of the figures, ultimately resulting in the viewer being better able to share the viewpoint of the narrative world with the characters in these stories.

Part II
Depicting the Great Wars and the Warring States Period
<Hōsa Library Exhibition Rooms>

The countless wartime conflicts that have marked our history time and time again have been preserved and passed down to the present in a wide variety of forms. Literary war chronicles, such as the *Tale of the Heike*, serve as records of the activities of the many samurai warriors who bravely charged across battlefields, risking their lives in the ultimate show of loyalty, and many paintings of battle scenes based on these stories were produced since before the Edo period.

Amidst this long history of battle paintings, the works that have drawn particular attention in recent years have been the images depicting the battles among the various warring states that broke out throughout Japan following the decline of the Muromachi shogunate and the ensuing civil wars. The battle scenes first produced in medieval times were painted in the illustrated handscroll format, which allowed for the story to unfold from right to left as the story advanced, but most Warring States battle scenes were painted on folding screens. Instead of prioritizing the details of the narrative, this format was better suited to getting an overall view of the whole picture on a large canvas, emphasizing the ability to recreate the geographic space of the actual battlefields, such as Nagashino and Sekigahara, by marking out the mountains and rivers and positioning among them the allied and enemy forces, the cavalry and armies with their flags and banners, and other physical details.

The primary purpose of Warring States battle paintings was for families to honor the deeds of their own ancestors who were active in the Warring States period, but gradually, they came to be enjoyed more as illustrations of literary narratives of wartime and moved further away from strict historical fact. This section delves into battle paintings of the Warring States era, from their origins through their multifaceted evolution.

Must-see items

- National Treasure
- Important Cultural Properties
- *Period on exhibit: A; 7/27-8/18, B; 8/20-9/8

Main Building Exhibition Room

- No.1 *Tales of the Heiji Civil War* Illustrated Scroll
Volume of the Escape of the Imperial Family to Rokuhara (A)
- No.2 *Tales of the Heiji Civil War* Illustrated Scroll
Volume of Lady Tokiwa (8/27-9/8)
- No.4 *The Later Three Years' War* Illustrated Scroll (AB)
- No.9 The Legends and Miracles of Kangiten Illustrated Scroll (A)
- No.11 *The Tale of Defeating the Ogre on Mt. Ōe* Illustrated Scroll (A)
- No.12 *Love Story of a Priest and a Page* Illustrated Scroll (B)
- No.27 *The Legends of Ishiyama-dera Temple* Illustrated Scroll (B)
- No.34 Belly Armor (AB)
- No.35 Armor with Light Blue Lacing,
Helmet, and Wide Arm Protectors (AB)
- Referential Work: *Tachi* Long Sword, inscription "Masatsune" (AB)

Hōsa Library Exhibition Room

- No.1 The Battle of Sekigahara (AB)
- No.4 *Legends of the Tōshō-sha Shrine* Illustrated Scroll (AB)

Special Exhibit:

Digital High-Resolution Reproduction of
The Winter Siege of Osaka Illustrated Screens (AB)

Summer Special Exhibition

合戦図

Scenes of Battle

Depictions of Brave Warriors of the Past

July 27 (Saturday) - September 8 (Sunday), 2019

Gallery Information

- <Main Building Exhibition Rooms>
Part I: Depicting Wars of Medieval Times
- <Hōsa Library Exhibition Rooms>
Part II: Depicting the Great Wars and the Warring States Period
- <Masterpieces Collection Room 1>
- Related Exhibits -
The Battle of Nagashino (an eight-folding screen),
Matchlocks, and other artworks themed in arms and armor
as symbols of the warrior

Foreword

Since time immemorial, the story of Japan's history has been woven from multiple wars and a repeating cycle of upheaval and stability. The circumstances of these battles were preserved in painted records for various different purposes since the medieval period. This exhibition will present various images of these battles, ranging from illustrated handscrolls of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods to Warring States battle paintings depicting the unrest of the 15th-16th centuries. While demonstrating the diverse variety of paintings depicting wartime conflicts, it will also reconsider the significance of the role played by artwork featuring such scenes.

Battle paintings were not merely documentary records; they also served the purpose of educating the warrior classes or honoring their personal family lines. At the same time, battles such as the Genpei War between the Minamoto and Taira clans became narrativized and were broadly disseminated even throughout the commoner classes. In terms of format, these pictures of battle scenes took the shape not only of illustrated handscrolls, but were also painted onto folding screens, on hanging scrolls, and in painted albums and bound booklets, where they could be enjoyed in a wide variety of forms.

A vast array of battle scene images appears over time, including Warring States-era battle scenes that were produced for the purpose of lauding the deeds of one's own family and ancestors that were reconsidered and revived during the late Edo period. This exhibition reveals the genealogy of battle scene illustrations that were produced continuously from medieval times through the Warring States period.

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* English text is translated by Maiko Behr and the curatorial staff of the Tokugawa Art Museum.



Curators' Pick

The Battle of Nagashino

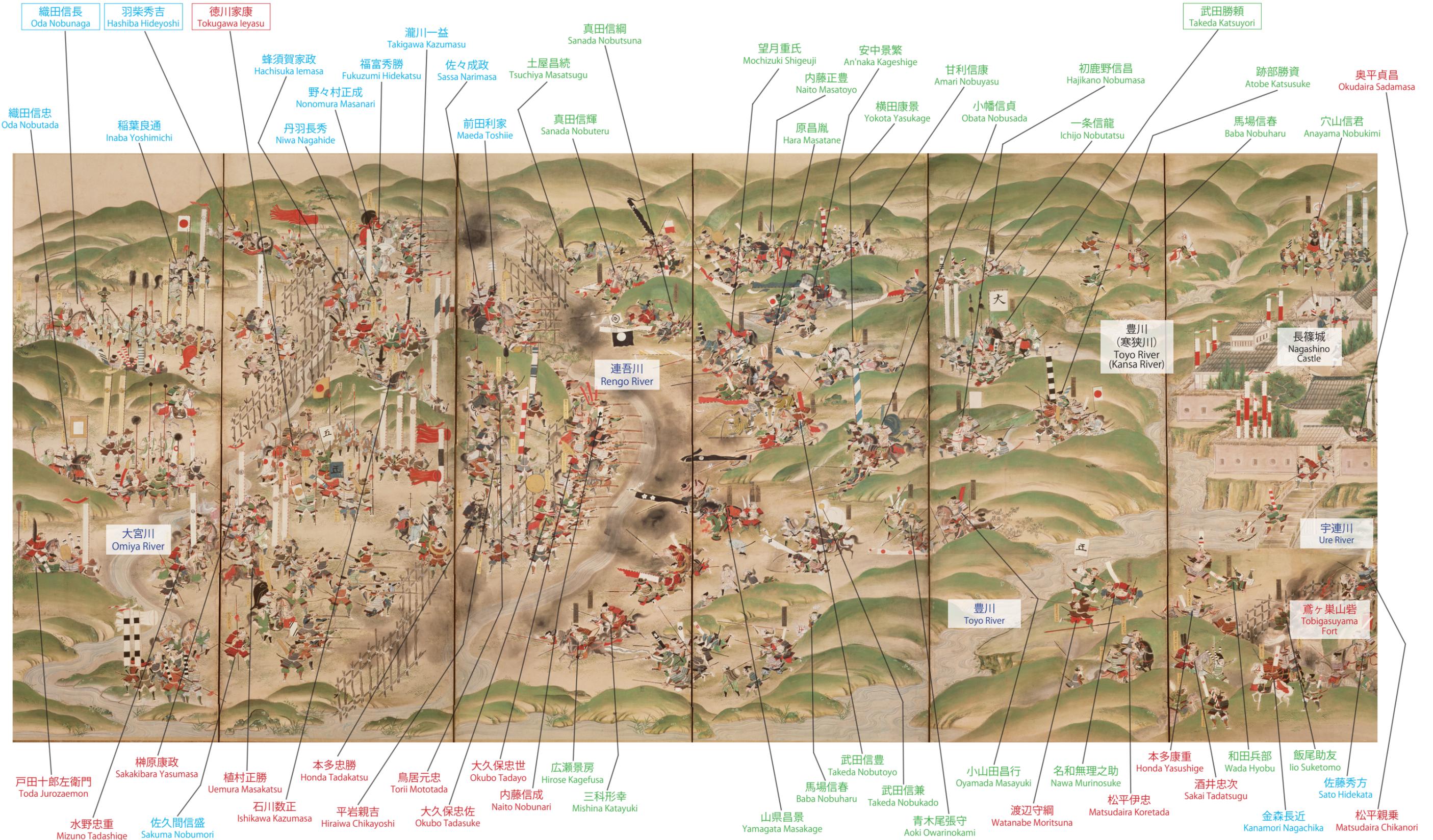
One of a pair of six-fold screens "The Battle of Nagashino and Nagakute"
Edo period, 18th-19th c.
The Tokugawa Art Museum

織田方
Oda Force

徳川方
Tokugawa Force

武田方
Takeda Force

This screen painting depicts the confrontation that took place at Nagashino (in present-day Aichi Prefecture) on the twenty-first day of the Fifth Month of 1575. To the left, the allied armies of Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu have taken up their positions. Musketeers are shown firing their matchlock weapons in volleys, protected by a series of wooden palisades erected along the banks of the river. On the opposing side, to the right, is arrayed the cavalry of Takeda Katsuyori's army, which was reputed to be invincible. The Battle of Nagashino was a pivotal event in Japanese history: it proved the military superiority of firearms—only recently introduced to Japan from Europe—in an actual large-scale battle.



*The original artwork screen is on exhibit from July 27 through August 18 at the Hōsa Library Exhibition Room (exhibit No.7). A replica is displayed at the entrance hall of the Tokugawa Art Museum from August 10 through September 8.