

The *Tale of Genji* attracted many readers, irrespective of gender, through the beauty of the text and its thorough depictions of every aspect of classical court culture, its skillful psychological portrayals of the characters, and its diverse world view based on Japanese

and Chinese literature, various arts, and Buddhism. Not only did it have a significant impact on later literary works, but its influence can also be seen in Japanese performing arts, such as Noh

theater, and cultural arts, such as incense ceremony (*kôdô*), and tea ceremony (*sadô*), as well as the arts and crafts that accompany them.

At the same time, as a narrative that features numerous distinctive female characters, *Genji* became a model book of proper behavior and lifestyle for women and themes from the story were also adopted into designs for wedding and dowry furnishings.

In the late Edo period, when *The Tale of Genji* had reached an even wider public, a parody entitled *The False Murasaki's Rustic Genji* ("Nise Murasaki Inaka Genji") by Ryûtei Tanehiko (1783–1842) gained great popularity and was even taken up as a subject in *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Such secondary works of fiction based on the tale still flourish even today, and there continue to be many opportunities to experience the world of Murasaki's tale without reading the original. *The Tale of Genji* has coursed through the veins of Japanese culture for more than a millennium and is a rare classic of classics surviving to the present day.

Awasegai, Shells for *Kai-awase* shell-matching game. Part of 375 pairs.
[The Tokugawa Art Museum] <Exhibit No.29>

National Treasure The *Hatsune* (First Warbler) Trousseau

Princess Chiyo (1637–1698), the eldest daughter of the 3rd Tokugawa shogun Iemitsu, received this bridal trousseau in 1639, when she married Mitsutomo, the 2nd lord of the Owari clan. The motif on the matching ensemble comes from a poem in "The First Warbler," chapter 23 of *The Tale of Genji*, which reads: "The old one's gaze rests long on the seedling pine, waiting to hear the song of the first warbler, in a village where it does not sing." The poetic design is elegantly embedded in the lacquered furnishings with scattered letters and pictorial motifs. Designated a National Treasure, the *Hatsune* Trousseau represents the finest example of the decorative lacquer technique of *maki-e* (sprinkled metal decoration) in Japan as well as the power of the Tokugawa shogunate.

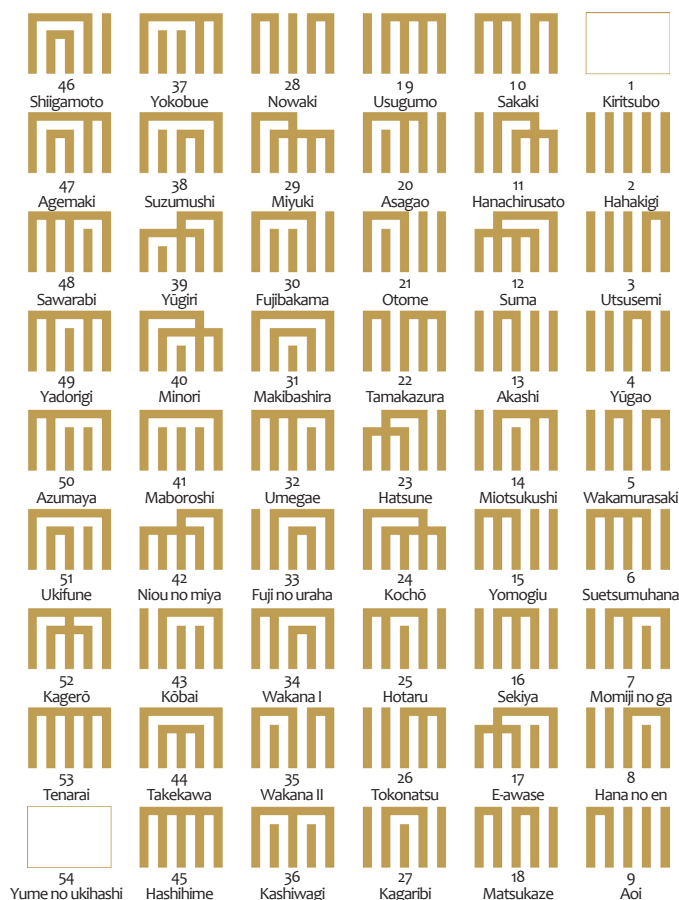
<National Treasure>

Jûni-tebako, Covered Box with accessories.
"Hatsune" motif derived from *The Tale of Genji*.
[The Tokugawa Art Museum] <Exhibit No.30>



Symbols of each chapters of *The Tale of Genji* from the *Genji-kô* Incense Game

"Genji-kô" is a name of the *kumikô* incense game which is tasting different fragrances and guessing the name, developed in Edo period. Participants would taste 5 different fragrances and draw a horizontal line to connect the same fragrance. Thus drawn, figures appear in 52 different shapes, matching the number of chapters of *The Tale of Genji* except the first and the last ones, and they are called "Genji-kô" design. The "Genji-kô" design often appears in various traditional craft works as well as design of Japanese confectionery associated with the story of *The Tale of Genji*.



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Reading and Re-envisioning *The Tale of Genji* through the Ages



"The Tale of Genji," written by Murasaki Shikibu, is a masterpiece of classical literature that has been read

and retold for over a thousand years. While there are many old tales written by unknown authors, this work is noteworthy even for the simple fact its author is clearly known. The tale has been continuously read mostly among upper class readers ever since its first appearance. During the Edo period, however, due to the spread of publishing culture, it acquired a broader readership even beyond just the upper classes, bringing about a wave of interest that could even be called a "Tale of Genji boom." Many commentaries and summary digest versions have also been published and illustrated version in a variety of formats, including folding screens, handscrolls and printed booklets were produced. The tale also had a great influence on various traditional cultural practices such as tea ceremony, Noh theater and *kôdô* (the art of appreciating incense).

This exhibition will include the special featured loan of the National Treasure *Diary of Murasaki Shikibu Illustrated Handscroll* from the collection of the Gotoh Museum, Tokyo, and masterpieces of *Genji* Paintings from the collection of the Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shôzôkan as well as from private collections. This exhibition will thus throw light on the charm of Japan's world-famous *Tale of Genji* by tracing the course of the cultural history pertaining to the tale.

(upper left)

<Important Cultural Property>

The Tale of Genji, known as *Kawachi-bon* edition.
[Hôsa Library, City of Nagoya] <Exhibit No.5>

I

Murasaki Shikibu and *The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu Illustrated Handscroll*

Murasaki Shikibu (ca. 973–1014), the author of the courtly narrative *The Tale of Genji*, served as lady-in-waiting to Fujiwara no Shōshi, the empress consort of Emperor Ichijō (980–1011). Shōshi was also the daughter of Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1027), one of the most powerful aristocrats of the time. *The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu* is a memoir of Murasaki's days in service at the imperial court. It vividly depicts details such as the happy events surrounding the birth of Shōshi's son with a keenly observant eye. Indeed, without this diary, it is possible that we might never have known that Murasaki Shikibu was the author of *The Tale of Genji*. In her diary, Murasaki references the tale by the same name by which we know it several times and mentions that Michinaga, the famous poet-bureaucrat Fujiwara no Kintō, and even Emperor Ichijō were familiar with the story.

The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu Illustrated Handscroll (designated National Treasure) is a pictorial work based on Murasaki's diary that is thought to have been created in the first half of the 13th century. It is an important piece demonstrating that the golden age of classical court culture centered on Fujiwara no Michinaga and Shōshi had already become the object of much admiration by that time. It is invaluable that both *The Tale of Genji* and *The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu* have survived to the present day, and they have had a significant impact on deepening the understanding of classical court culture among later generations.

II

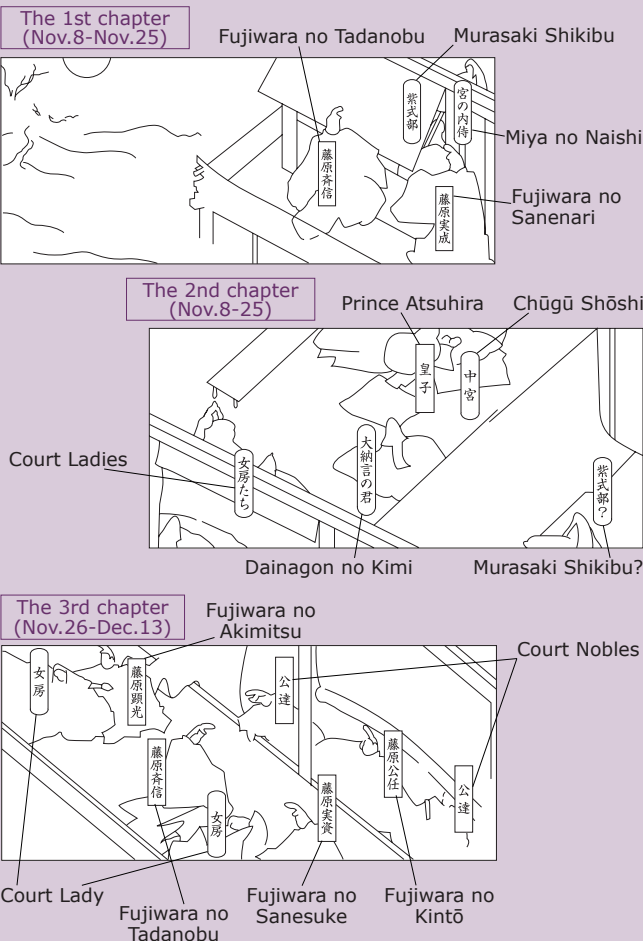
Reading and Re-envisioning *The Tale of Genji*: Research and Manuscript Copies

Although *The Tale of Genji* was quite long, it was highly acclaimed and became popular from the time of its writing, so many copies of the book were made. However, over the course of repeated transcriptions, certain parts became so far altered from the original that they no longer made sense. Scholar poets Fujiwara no Sadaie (1162–1241) and father and son Minamoto no Mitsuyuki and Chikayuki edited and revised these confusing sections of the text in the early Kamakura period (1185–1333). Numerous commentaries were produced, and the tale came to be regarded as an essential reference for composing *waka* poetry in the Kamakura period, elevating the authority of *The Tale of Genji* as a classic.

Initially limited to the upper classes, readership quickly spread thanks to advances in printing technology in the Edo period (17th century), spurred by Yamamoto Shunshō's *E-iri Genji Monogatari* ("Tale of Genji with Pictures," 1650). Excellent commentaries, such as the *Kogetsushō* (1673) by Kitamura Kigin and *Genji Monogatari Tama no Ogushi* (1796) by Motoori Norinaga, were also produced during this period.

The research of our predecessors that has been handed down to us continues to have significant influence on our modern reading of *The Tale of Genji*.

Characters (by plain sketch) in *The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu Illustrated Handscrolls* (National Treasure) [The Gotoh Museum] <Exhibit No.3>



National Treasure *The Tale of Genji Illustrated Scrolls*

A precious jewel of the Tokugawa Art Museum collection in particular and one of the great masterpieces of Japanese art in general, the National Treasure *Tale of Genji Scrolls* are also the oldest surviving illustrated narrative scrolls in Japan and thoroughly convey to us the elegant way of life of Japan's classical age. Originally passed down in handscroll format, sections of the work were framed for preservation in 1932 (Shōwa 7). In recent years, they were once again returned to the handscroll format to reduce the stress on the paper of the primary support and can now once again be appreciated in their original format. The work is currently divided into multiple scrolls, each featuring image and text from a single scene.

III

Pictorialization of *The Tale of Genji* and the Blossoming of *Genji* Painting in the Edo Period

One section of *The Tale of Genji* (the "E-awase/Picture Contest" chapter) details a competition debating the relative merits of illustrated versions of stories such as *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* ("Taketori Monogatari") and *The Tale of the Hollow Tree* ("Utsuho Monogatari"). Similarly, it is believed that *Genji* itself was also illustrated soon after the story was written. The *Tale of Genji Illustrated Handscroll* (designated National Treasure) is the oldest example of the many *Genji* paintings that survive today.

Already in the Muromachi period (14th–16th century), the scenes that were selected for illustration had become standardized to a certain extent, with a preference for celebratory scenes with rich seasonal associations, but as new interpretations of the story multiplied, the selection of scenes and their expression also diversified.

During the Edo period (1603–1868) especially, the number of paintings taking the *Tale of Genji* as their subject increased dramatically. The Tosa school specialized in *Genji* pictures, but many other schools, such as the esteemed Kanō school, also took up the subject, and the tale was pictorialized in a wide variety of formats, including illustrated scrolls, folding screen paintings, picture books, *shikishi* square papers, fan-shaped paintings, and woodblock-printed books, creating a diverse and colorful world of *Genji* pictures.



The Tale of Genji Illustrated Album.
Calligraphy by court nobles.
Picture by Tosa Mitsunori.
[The Tokugawa Art Museum]
<Exhibit No.22>



The Tale of Genji,
known as *Sanjōnishike-bon* edition,
aobiyōshi-bon (blue cover book) line.
[Hōsa Library, City of Nagoya]
<Exhibit No.10>

Characters (by plain sketch) in *The Tale of Genji Illustrated Scroll, Hashihime chapter* (National Treasure) [The Tokugawa Art Museum] <Exhibit No.18> (Nov.26–Dec.13)

