Section 6
Genji as a Design Source

Not only did the *Tale of Genji* inspire illustrated works, it was also a favorite source for imagery and motifs that were used in the designs adorning interior furnishings, metalwork objects, textiles, and other decorative art objects from the medieval period onward.

In order to represent a scene from this tale that was woven together by a wide range of characters, these designs singled out distinctive poems or symbolic motifs to indicate particular scenes and thus further expanded the breadth of Genji imagery. For example, in a famous scene from the “Evening Faces” chapter, Genji requests a single moonflower that blooms at the residence next door to the home of his wetnurse whom he has come to visit. Just at that moment, a young woman extends her hand to offer a fan for the flower to be placed on. In illustrations, these two images of moonflower and fan were repeatedly selected as iconic symbols of that scene. In another technique, known as *rusu-moyō* (absent motifs), scenes from the tale were illustrated without any human figures in them and viewers were able to identify the different parts of the story through associations suggested by certain fixed imagery.



National Treasure
Ryōshibako Stationery Box
Hatsune motif derived from The *Tale of Genji*
Edo period, 1639
Owned by Reisen-in Chiyo-hime, wife of the 2nd Owari Tokugawa Mitsutomo
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Section 7
Various Tales of Genji – the Spread to the Common Classes –

Starting in 1650 (Keichō 3), when the poet and *maki-e* lacquer artist Yamamoto Shunshō (1610–1682) published an edition of the *Tale of Genji* with humorous illustrations, the readership of the *Tale of Genji* began to expand.

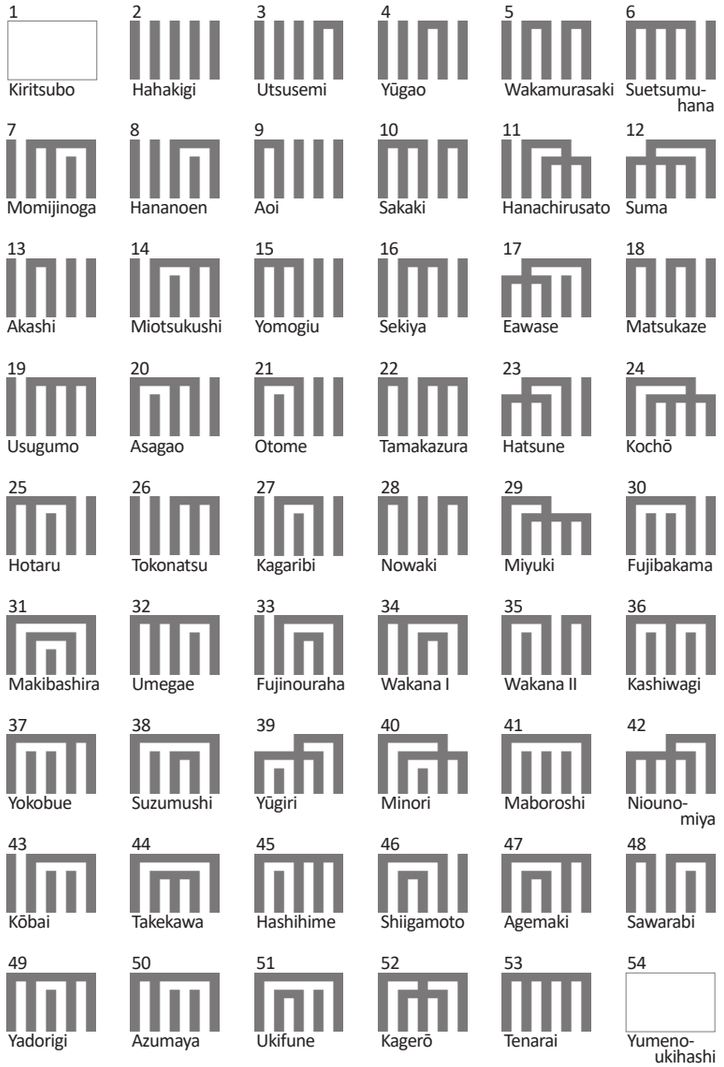
Following this trend, numerous *ukiyo*-e woodblock prints were produced taking subjects from the *Tale of Genji* and reimagining them in the context of the customs of their own times. This kind of parody was called *mitate* or *yatsushi* and incorporated wit and satire, while at the same time serving the purpose of helping the general public to more easily understand the classical content. *Ukiyo-e* prints based on the *Tale of Genji* gained popularity after the vogue of Ryūtei Tanehiko’s (1783–1842) *Nise Murasaki, Inaka Genji* (Fake Murasaki and Country Genji) in particular.



Wakamurasaki Scene from The *Tale of Genji*, remade in the style of Edo period
By Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni the 3rd)
Edo period, 1854
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

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

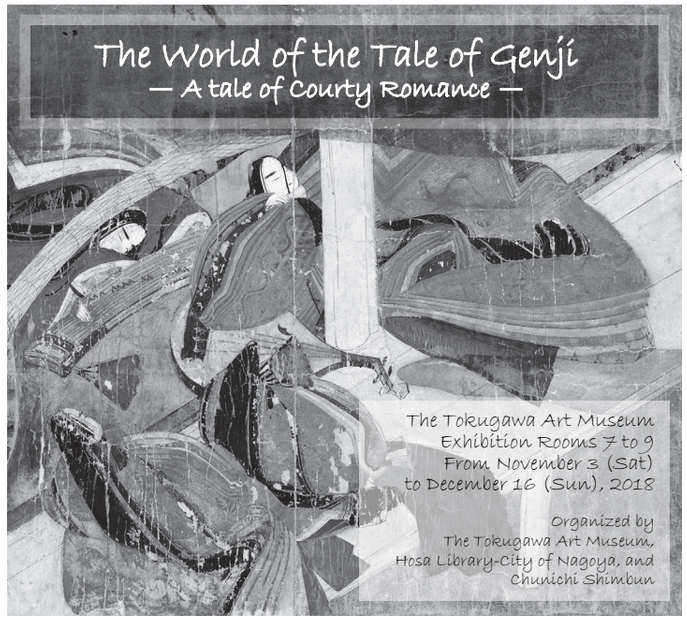
"Genji-kō" is a name of the *kumikō* incense game which is tasting different fragrances and guessing the name, developed in Edo period. Participants would taste 5 different fragrances and draw a horizontal line to connect the same fragrance. Thus drawn, figures appear in 52 different shapes, matching the number of chapters of the *Tale of Genji* except the first and the last ones, and they are called "Genji-kō" design. The "Genji-kō" 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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＊ English text is translated by Maiko Behr and the curatorial staff of the Tokugawa Art Museum.

Special Exhibition



Written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu in the latter half of the Heian period in an age before the advent of printing technology, the *Tale of Genji* was disseminated via hand transcription and read avidly by many people. The *Tale of Genji* was also illustrated shortly after its completion and numerous pictorial versions of the story continued to be produced through the medieval and early modern eras. The National Treasure *Tale of Genji Illustrated Scrolls* are not only the oldest surviving text version, they are also the oldest surviving illustrated edition of the tale and are an extremely important work. This exhibition brings together the National Treasure *Tale of Genji Illustrated Scrolls* along with various manuscripts and annotated editions and commentaries, as well as illustrated versions from the Heian period through the Edo period, offering a look back at the history of the Japanese love for the *Tale of Genji*.

The photograph above is:
Chapter *Hashihime*, The Maiden of the Bridge,
from the National Treasure *Tale of Genji* Illustrated Scrolls.
Heian period, 12th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Section 1

Tale of Genji, a Story for Readers of All Eras

Set against the backdrop of the Heian imperial court, the *Tale of Genji* is a full-length novel revolving around the romance-filled life of its protagonist, the Shining Prince Genji, and continuing through his son's and his grandson's generations. The joys and sorrows of their lives are recounted with rich sentiment through colorful accounts of their encounters and involvements with various ladies, giving the work a timeless appeal that has pulled at the heartstrings of readers throughout the centuries.

From the Meiji period onward, reception of the *Tale of Genji* expanded beyond the direct transmission of the original text to include great numbers of translations into modern languages as well as adaptations as *manga* comics. Here we start with a peek into the world of the *Tale of Genji*, which has been beloved from ancient times all the way to the present day.

< Modern Japanese Translations >

Of all the numerous translations of the *Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese that have been produced from the Meiji period to the present, the earliest of note were by the poet Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) and the novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965). Both were produced in several installments, with repeated revisions, and the former includes free translations as well as abridgements, making it simple and easily appreciated, while the latter is praised for remaining relatively faithful to the original. After these, authors and scholars of Japanese literature produced a diverse array of translations into modern Japanese.

< Foreign Language Translations >

The *Tale of Genji* was translated into English for the first time in 1882 (Meiji 15) by Suematsu Kenchō (1855–1920), while he was studying abroad in England, but its true introduction overseas came in 1925 (Taishō 14), with the translation by the British scholar of Oriental Studies, Arthur Waley (1889–1966). After that came new English translations by the American Japanologist Edward Seidensticker and British scholar of Japanese literature Ivan Morris, as well as translations in various other languages that were either based on the original Japanese or on the Waley translation.

< *Manga* Comics >

The *Tale of Genji* has been adapted into the *manga* comic format by many artists, most notably starting with the series *Asaki-yume mishi* by Yamato Waki (1943–). Like illustrated handscrolls, since *manga* can convey the impression of a story visually, through pictures, they can be quite easily enjoyed. Also, by utilizing free translation and adaptation, the genre can more easily demonstrate its creative nature. Through the transformation of *Tale of Genji* into *manga* form, the appeal of the story has been extended to a wide range of generations.

Section 2

Manuscript Transmissions of Tale of Genji

Before the existence of printing technology, the *Tale of Genji* was copied by hand and passed down to new readers.

At the beginning of the Kamakura period, about two hundred years after its creation, there was a movement to clean up and edit the text in light of the variant versions that had evolved as a result of the hand-copying process. One such revised edition was known as the *aobyōshi-bon*, or "Blue-cover books," edition by Fujiwara no Sadaie (1162–1241), and another was the *Kawachi-bon* edition, which was edited by Minamoto no Mitsuyuki (1163–1244) and his son Chikayuki (1188?–1272). We call the manuscripts that follow in the tradition of these two revisions the *aobyōshi-bon* type and *Kawachi-bon* type, respectively.

In addition, there are various works that differ in the format of the main text, known as *beppon*. These *beppon* can be divided between the lineage of "old transmissions" that retain the format of the text as it was before the rise of the *aobyōshi-bon* and *Kawachi-bon* versions and the "mixed text" and "altered text" lineages that arose after these two versions appeared.

From the Kamakura period to the early Muromachi period, the *Kawachi-bon* and *beppon* lineages were predominant and after that the *aobyōshi-bon* became the dominant lineage. Here we present various editions representing the *aobyōshi-bon* type, *Kawachi-bon* type, and *beppon* type.



Important Cultural Property
A set of The *Tale of Genji*,
known as "Kawachi-bon" edition
Kamakura period, 1258
Owned by Ashikaga Shogun Family, Toyotomi Hidetsugu, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and the 1st Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao
<Hōsa Library, City of Nagoya>

Section 3

Commentaries on the Tale of Genji

In order to better understand the voluminous text that constitutes the *Tale of Genji*, numerous commentaries have been produced throughout the centuries, beginning with the *Genji-yaku* (Genji Commentary) authored by Fujiwara no Koreyuki (dates unknown) in around the mid-12th century.

From the *Genchū saihishō* (Most Secret Teachings of the Genji) compiled in 1364 (Teiji 3) by the editor of the *Kawachi-bon*, Minamoto no Chikayuki, based on the earlier commentary *Suigenshō*, and the *Kakaishō* by Yotsutsuji Yoshinari (1326–1402), to Edo-period commentaries such as the *Kogetsushō*, authored by Kitamura Kigin (1625–1705) in 1673 (Enpō 1), and *Genji monogatari tama no ogushi* (The Jeweled Comb of the *Tale of Genji*) by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) published in 1799 (Kansei 11), such works were compiled throughout history without interruption. Their content consisted of explanations of the various poetic references found in the *waka* poetry found in the tale, the relationships among the various characters in the tale, interpretations of the meaning of sections of text and explications of the wording, among other wide-ranging types of commentary.

Section 4

Various Other Courtly Tales

From the Heian to the Kamakura period, there were numerous narrative tales, including works preceding the *Tale of Genji*—such as the *Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* and the *Tale of Utsuho*—as well as numerous works that were written after the *Tale of Genji* and were influenced by it.

Based on texts such as the *Monogatari hyaku-ban uta-awase* (Poem Contest of Two Hundred Tales) by Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241) and the *Fūyō wakashū*, which was completed in the latter half of the 13th century, we know that more than two hundred narrative tales existed in those times. Quite a few of these have since been lost.

Section 5

Lineages of Genji Pictures

It is believed that Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* was being illustrated not long after the original text was completed. The National Treasure *Tale of Genji Illustrated Scrolls* are believed to have been produced in the first half of the 12th century at the imperial court. As the oldest surviving manuscripts of the text, they are famous for accurately conveying the mood of a historical period close in time to the original work.

After this, from the medieval period to the early modern period, and then into the modern era, the tale was illustrated frequently throughout the ages, giving rise to an important genre in the history of Japanese painting known as *Genji-e* or "Genji pictures." The formats of these *Genji-e* were highly diverse, ranging from illustrations in handscrolls and booklets to small-format images on the surface of fans or *shikishi* poem cards, hanging scrolls, screen and sliding door panel paintings and many other wide-ranging types. In terms of their mode of expression, some illustrated the entire fifty-four chapters of the *Tale of Genji* as a set; others selected specific scenes and motifs and depicted them in close-up; still others approached the subject in the context of traditions of seasonal paintings or poem-paintings.

National Treasure
Tale of Genji
Illustrated Scrolls

Conservation,
Restoration,
and Remounting

The National Treasure *Tale of Genji Illustrated Scrolls* were transmitted to the Owari Tokugawa family in the form of three scrolls in the Edo period. However since the condition of the paper, flaking of the pigments, and other damage were critical, the handscroll mounting was undone by separating the individual sheets of paper where they had been pasted together and these sheets were framed for the purpose of preserving the work in 1932 (Shōwa 7).

However, mounting in a framed format resulted in constant exposure of the paper to the air as well as contact with cardboard mats and warping frames, so it was determined that the stress caused by this mounting to the painting itself made it unsuited to long-term preservation. Based on this, here at the Tokugawa Art Museum, we have been engaged in conservation and repairs utilizing the latest conservation technology with the support of subvention grants from the National Treasury since 2012 (Heisei 24).

The current restoration project has returned the framed segments to handscroll format, remounting them as handscrolls such that each illustration appears together with the section of text that describes the scene. In this way, the work has been returned to a form that ensures its preservation as well as regaining its intended function as a continuous narrative in which the text and image work hand-in-hand. We hope that you enjoy the work restored to its original appearance.



National Treasure
Chapter *Takekawa*: The Bamboo River
from The *Tale of Genji* Illustrated Scrolls
Heian period, 12th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>