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Visions of the 'Other' in Seventeenth Century Japanese *Fuzoku-ga*

Nicole Coolidge ROUSMANIERE*

Colorful screens that were painted with scenes of the 'other', that beyond the everyday realm, gained great currency in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Subjects included not only depictions of foreigners (*namban* screens), but also good and bad deeds of past Chinese rulers, tales of the supernatural, and depictions of pleasure mansions full of foreign delights.

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Representation of the 'other', that which is considered 'foreign' to a specific culture, has been a consistent theme in artistic representations of many cultures. Depictions of the 'other' are important to any given society as they often serve didactic functions such as reinforcing a certain prescribed social order, or in a similar vein, as a visual 'liminal' depiction of what a society does and does not sanction. In the case of the latter, the pictorial intent could be simply a momentary release from societal pressures, or even just a comic relief from everyday life. It is in the extraordinary that the 'other' gains its expression, thus in almost all cases which involve depictions of the 'other', fantasy appears to be an important underlying element. It is in that societal crystallized fantasy that, indeed, while representing the 'other' or what is not sanctioned by a society, gives us a privileged view into the very structure of that society.

Screens, with their natural ability to control an entire environment through their large size and three-dimensionality, could create anything from an outdoor blossom viewing scene in the mountains of Takao to a sprawling urban scene of downtown Kyoto. It is through the media of screens that scenes of the 'other', that beyond the everyday realm, gained great currency in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The 'other' was multifarious in content, including not only generalized depictions of foreigners, such as *namban* screens (Southern Barbarian screens) or Chinese paragons, and tales of the supernatural (*setsuwa*), but was also imbedded in non-figural decoration (*kazari*) within a given composition.

To help understand this phenomena, I propose a tentative breakdown of early Edo period *fuzokuga* screens into four overall categories. This grouping does not form inclusive categories, but is more a functional ordering to stimulate further analysis. There are screens that fit into more than one category, as also their must have also been more than one use for a screen and more than one

reading of it.

The first category is screens created to perform a symbolic or didactic function. This grouping includes martial scenes, battle scenes, horse-stable scenes, and Confucian, Taoist and Zen parable scenes. The second category comprises screens that depict public spectacles. This group also includes what would be the 'carnivalesque' (*matsuri* and *saireizu*). Screens in this group include scenes in and out of Kyoto (*rakuchu-rakugaizu*), religious pilgrimage screens (*saireizu*), famous places and events (*meishozu*), depictions of the various crafts (*shokuninezu*), sideshows (*misemono*), kabuki and dance (*odori* and *mai*), and merry-making screens (*yagai-yurakuzu*).

The third group of screens represents private spectacles. Private spectacles encompass scenes of the Yoshiwara and other entertainment districts, merry making in the mansion screens (*teinai-yurakuzu*), screens of *kosode* hanging on racks (*tagasode*), and *bijinga*. The fourth category relates depictions of the 'other' (*ikai* or *ikoku*). This category includes depictions of that which is not Japanese, such as *namban* screens, scenes of China and Chinese, and other foreign lands. *Setsuma* (folk tales, supernatural tales) and that which is beyond the realm of ordinary daily existence in Japan can also be included under the category of the 'other'. The 'other' category can also be expanded to include certain scenes that can be listed under private spectacles, such as fantasy depictions of *teinai yurukuzu* and the much more palpable reality of the Yoshiwara and other entertainment areas which were considered to be on the margins of Tokugawa society. Through a reading of several different screens from this fourth category we can begin to understand more about how the early modern period visualized the 'other' and thus themselves.

The first screens discussed here are usually categorized as *namban* or 'Southern Barbarian' screens. These screens depict foreigners (usually Portuguese) coming to or leaving Japan on ships, landing

in Kyushu, foreigners in their own country, or customs and manners of foreigners. The screens analyzed here depict foreigners arriving on the shores of Japan, either at Hirado or Nagasaki (*nambanjin koekizu*; see Figure 1). The method, style, and decoration in which the foreigner (and their objects) and the Japanese are depicted in opposition provides a working model of how the 'other' and the 'self' was envisioned during this type of screen's period of production, basically in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

When we limit the analysis to screens showing foreigners landing in Kyushu, the extant compositions are all remarkable similar in format. There are still a large number of these screens remaining which reveals just how many of these type of screens must have been made during the 17th century. Most of the screens are the work of anonymous *machi-eshi*, or town painters, but the Kano School is also responsible for a number of them. For example, the pair of screens shown in Figure 1, housed in the Suntory Museum are attributed to Kano Sanraku. These type of screens originally formed a pair with one screen depicting a boat landing in Japan, and the other screen depicting the foreigners' boat at sea, or the foreigners arriving at a foreign port (Figure 1), or a map of areas non-Japanese.

The artist set up a dualism in the composition of these screens; Japan was depicted with plain white-walled, undecorated, dark-roofed, asymmetrical houses with green *tatami* matted floors surrounded by Japanese pines or merchant shops, and the foreign (that which was not Japan) was depicted with sumptuous, symmetrical, and highly ornate luxurious palaces resplendent in bright colors, people with rich textiles, sitting on Chinese Ming period chairs on a tiled patio with exotic animals and different colored flowering plants. The difference in the two styles of architecture is perhaps the most striking. Japanese houses are rendered as relatively

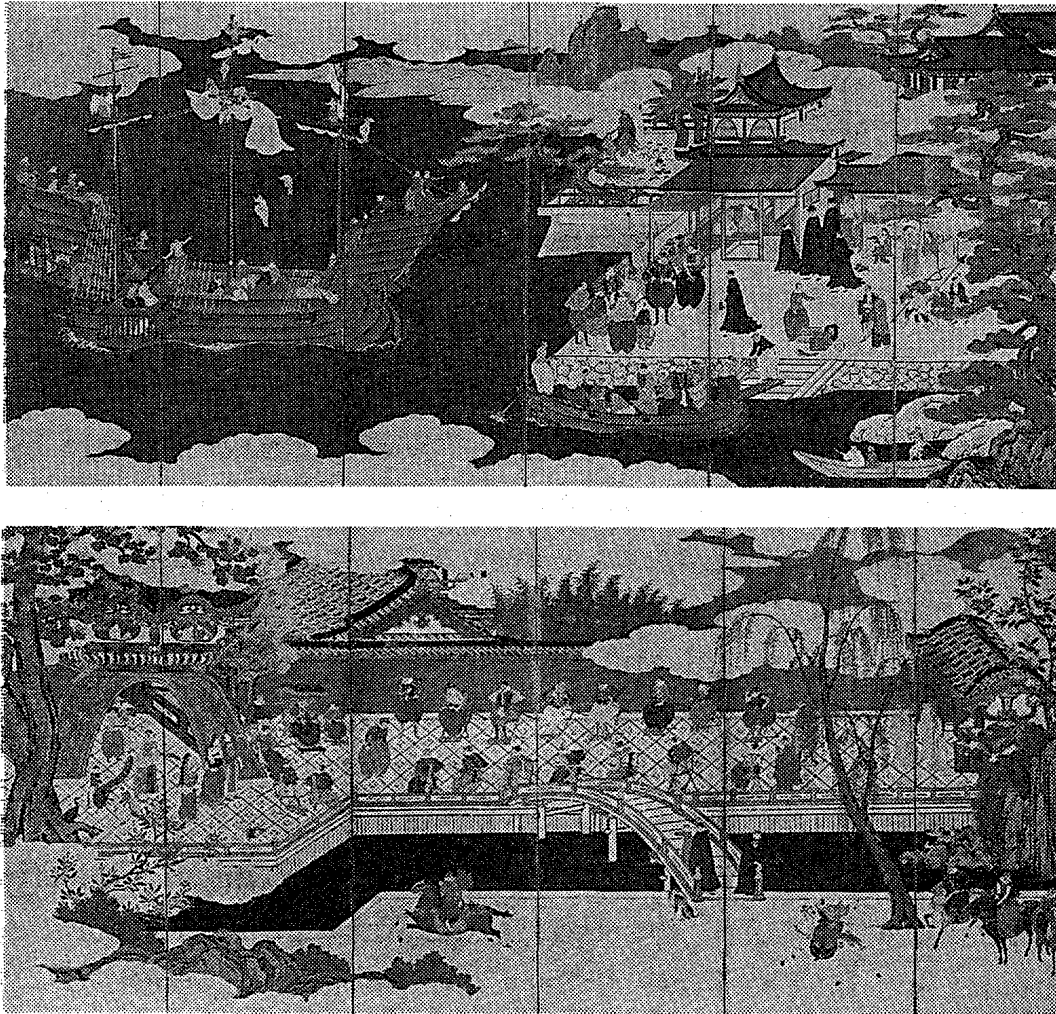


Figure 1. *Nambanjin Koekizu* (Southern Barbarian Port and Japanese Port Screens), a pair of six-panelled screens attributed to Kano Sanraku at the Suntory Museum, Tokyo.

simple open wooden structures with goods being sold in the front, while the foreign residence has a entrance gate, a moat, a bridge, fancy Chinese-style elements (such as a *karahafu* or “Chinese eaves”), and separate structures combining into one grand mansion.

Indeed, when closely examined, the depictions of foreign residences appear to be loosely based on contemporary Japanese *daimyo* castle architecture⁽¹⁾. This style of depiction can be viewed as a model, one that became the standard for structures or residences that were viewed as foreign, or the ‘other’, well into the seventeenth century.

There is another series of screens that depict foreigners landing on Japanese soil, combining onto one screen both the foreign and the native. Many of these screens survive singly making it difficult to accurately judge what would have appeared on the accompanying screen. The native Japanese houses and shops line the bottom of the screen normally in a horizontal row with the foreign residence, mostly a church, placed in the upper half of the screen, surrounded by water and clouds or a wall, physically cut off from the Japanese shops and houses connected only by a gate and a bridge. It is important to note here that most Japanese screens were designed to be viewed from a kneeling position, so in this case the Japanese shops would be at eye-level, and the foreigner's world would appear up above, enforcing a feeling of separation from daily reality. Many of these screens appear to be almost identical and might have been copied from a standard prototype.

Examples of this type of screen are in the Idemitsu Collection, in the Kobe City Art Museum, in the Kanagawa Prefectural Art Museum and in The Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. The Kanagawa Prefectural Art Museum example is shown in Figure 2. As is standard, the bottom half of the composition shows a parade of fantastically dressed foreigners walking with their Western dogs. Foreign women dressed in Chinese garb are standing to the right of the procession. Japanese men, women and children stare from behind curtains, inside shops, or along the road adding to the 'spectacle' nature of this screen.

Above the line of Japanese shops there is a moat which separates the realm of the Japanese from that of the foreigner. The moat is shown in the second panel with a bridge spanning it. Beyond the bridge is a small, but elaborate, Chinese-style gate where a priest is standing. Through this gate one can enter into the upper half of the composition. The second panel also depicts a

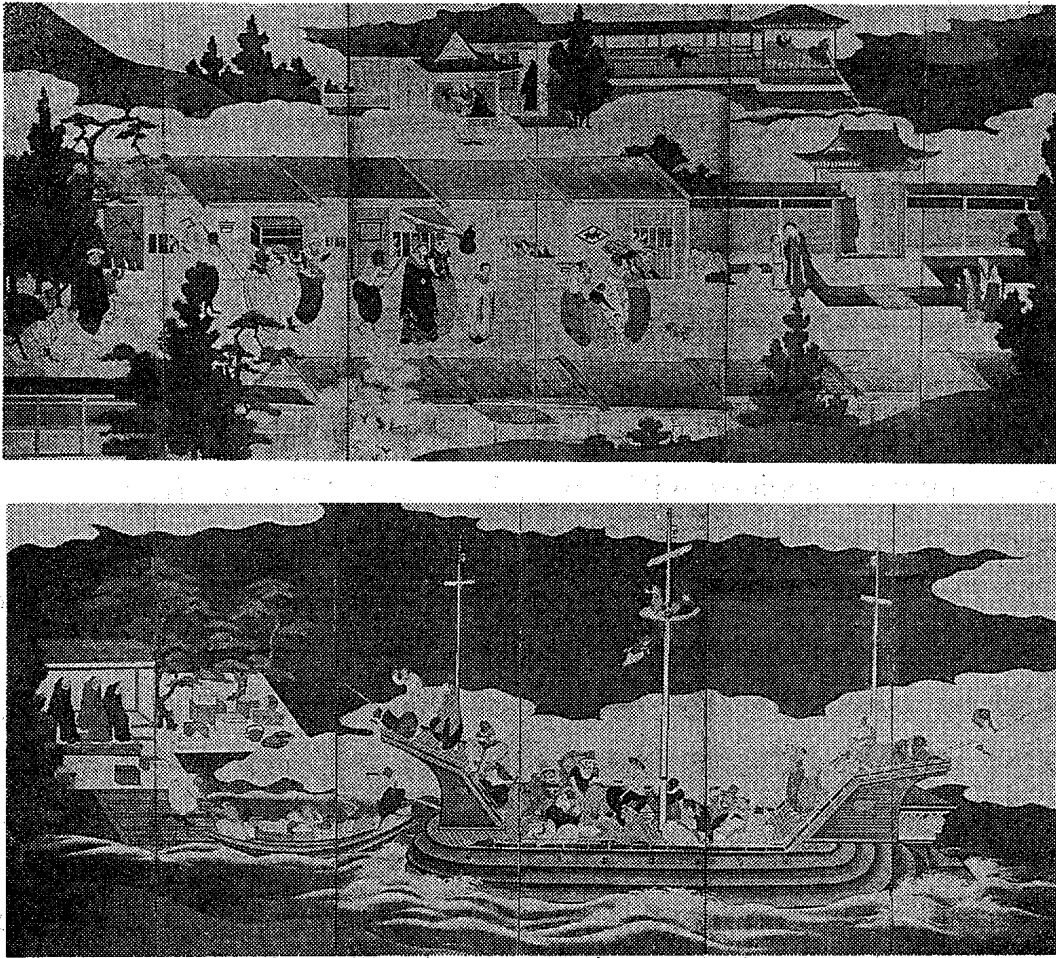


Figure 2. *Namban Byobu* (Southern Barbarian Screen), a pair of six-panelled screens in the Kanagawa Prefectural Art Museum, Japan.

church with priests praying. The ornate stone foundation architecture, especially when compared to the Japanese-style merchant architecture below, appears fantastic, as it opens up into various scenes of priests going about their daily activities. There is a long passageway that leads to a covered bridge out over the water and eventually to a small separate building called a *hanare*. The upper half of the fifth and sixth panels depict deep blue water, and golden clouds, which combine to enhance the feeling of separation between the upper half of the screen, the realm of the exotic, with that of the lower half of the screen, the realm of everyday life.

Five elements can be discerned in this type of composition de-

picting the foreign, and indeed in most compositions that represent that which is beyond the realm of everyday life. The five compositional devices are combined and repeated in various scenes, enabling the viewer to begin to read these symbols as denoting a separate realm, a world of the 'other'. When these elements are combined with symmetrical, non-figurative decoration filling up all available architectural space and clothing, they signify to the audience that the scene being viewed is not Japan but of some different world, one that they were given a momentary glimpse into, a separate society with an order very different from that of everyday life in Tokugawa Japan⁽²⁾.

The five elements listed below relate to actual castle construction in the Azuchi-Momoyama period as mentioned earlier. But it should be noted that the origins of these elements probably go further back in Japanese history, perhaps to Heian period esoteric Buddhist renditions of the Western paradise⁽³⁾. What is important is that these elements were not new to the Japanese consciousness, but they had become readable symbols that in these screens they were recombined and thus reinterpreted. The first component is that of the presence of water. As mentioned before, water and clouds combine to effectively separate the world of the foreign from the world of the everyday. Water formed a fluid boundary that both linked and separated the two existences. Japanese have actually utilized this type of water moat construction in order to set apart specific types of structures from the profane world, such as castle architecture, and religious monuments such as Usa Jingu in Kyushu, and the foreign Dutch settlement at Deshima.

The second element involved in helping to define a world of the other is a bridge and/or gate or wall that separates, as well as links, the two worlds. A confined entryway was important as this made access controlled and often temporary. The actual entrance to the man-made island of Deshima in Nagasaki Harbor had a bridge and

a gate that restricted access to the Dutch. The gate and bridge structure crossing over the water or through a wall formed a liminal boundary that helped to define the space between the two worlds. Without this element of physical separation and controlled access, the 'other' would lose its power as a symbol of that which is outside of and not sanctioned by society, a symbol that by its very existence helps to reinforce what is acceptable by that society by defining what is not acceptable. Without controlled access the symbolism is reduced to the merely exotic (*ikoku shumi*).

The third element is the use of a generalized Chinese architectural style, for example, Chinese gables (*karahafu*), Chinese windows (*karamado*) and glazed tiled roofs. China, or more correctly the Continent as China and Korea were merged in the general consciousness of the period, had long represented not only an ideal for Japan, but also an antithesis. Although many structures were borrowed from China, such as writing, legal and intellectual systems, there was also a distinctly native Japanese equivalent that was created, or took a distinct form when contrasted to that of foreign Chinese origin. The use of Chinese architectural ornaments created a feeling that the structure was Continental or, in other words, not Japanese.

A fourth element is the use of a separated structure, or *hanare* in Japanese. This structure is often entirely surrounded by water and linked to the main structure by a walkway. Resembling a kind of viewing pavilion, this structure helped to enhance the idea not only of pleasure and voyeurism (observing, and yet being observed), but also that of leisure, adding to the opulence of this world of the 'other'. This type of structure originated in China and is sometimes found in Buddhist temples and *daimyo* architecture.

The fifth element also represents an ultimate luxury, available only to the wealthiest temples, shrines and *daimyo* of the period, that of magnificent stone foundations. Stone foundations were an

immediate sign of wealth to the viewer. But beyond luxury, the stone represented a kind of permanence and imperviousness to the fleeting existence of the everyday world with its fire, pestilence and death.

When these elements are combined they reveal the foreigners' abode to be that of a fanciful villa, one both separated but partially accessible, both permanent and at the same time not of this everyday world. This model of the 'other' with its five elements was not only used for actual depictions of foreign residences, but for residences of supernatural demons as well. In the Price collection there is a pair of screens illustrating the Shutendoji Ogre tale (Figure 3). The tale is a medieval *setsuwa* relating the story of the discovery, trickery and eventual killing of a terrible ogre, who was terrorizing and eating the women of Kyoto.

The Price screens relate the entire narrative of the Shutendoji Ogre tale, juxtaposing images of the ogre's fantasy world with that of the everyday realm of existence. The extreme upper section of the screens relates the world of Japan, its people, nature and Shinto structures as well an imperial residence, while the rest of the composition reveals a Sinofied palace and luxurious lifestyle in the mythical world of the ogre. The five elements are all present in the ogre's realm; water and mist separating the two worlds, a Chinese-style gate that joins them, Chinese-style fanciful architecture with every available surface covered with floral *karakusa* or *tsunagi shippo* designs, a *hanare* connected by corridors, and impressive castle-like stone foundations. The screens is said to have been possibly done by Kano Sansetsu (1589-1651), and clearly portrays the ogre's realm as an abode of the 'other' using the same *namban* vocabulary.

Similar Chinese palaces can be seen in the various depictions of *teikanzu*, or 'paragons of dynasties', that became popular with the solidification of Tokugawa rule. One such pair of screens thought

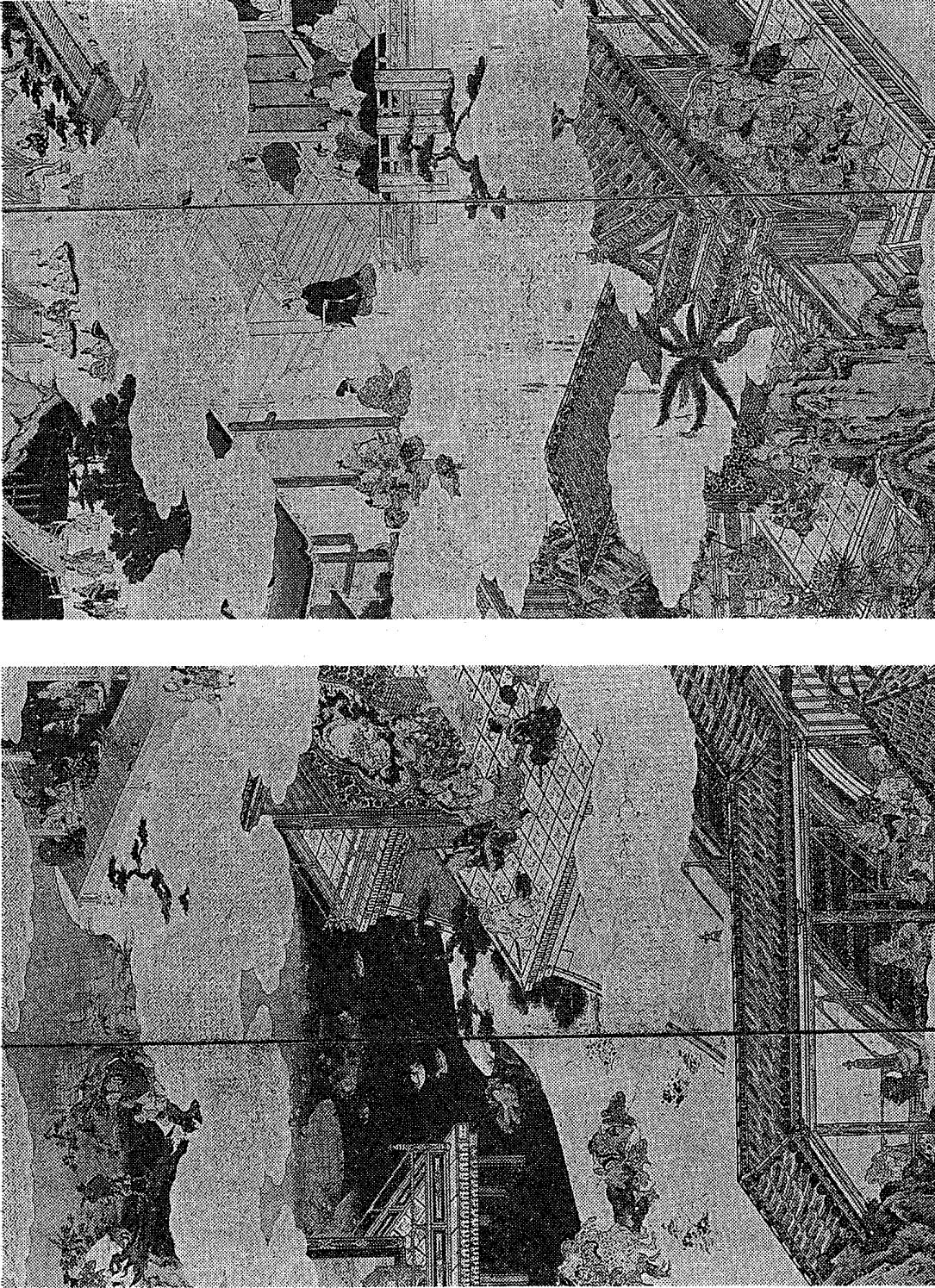


Figure 3. Details from the Shutendoji Ogre Screens, a pair of six-panelled screens in the Mr. and Mrs. Joe D. Price Collection, California.

to be executed by Kano Mitsunobu (1565–1608) is in the Wittelsbacher Ausgleichfonds collection in Munich⁽⁴⁾. The screens relate the good and bad deeds of Chinese kings and their effects. The scene takes place in an imagined Chinese palace resplendent with ornamentation. The portrayal of the palace is very similar to the Price Shutendoji screens and the five elements discussed above are all present. This similarity can be traced through a tradition that originated and developed among the Kano school painters and their followers, but in fact, the tradition is far too wide spread to be only contained within the Kano school. It could be that the Kano developed a specific style for rendering depictions of the 'other', and that this style was soon adapted by other workshops as well.

Another adaptation of the depiction of the 'other' was developed in the Kan'ei era (1624–1643) and took the format of *teinai yurakuzu*, or 'merry-making in and around the mansion' screens⁽⁵⁾. The Kan'ei era witnessed the first manifestations of what could truly be called an early Edo period style. The Edo period came into being culturally in 1615 with the destruction of Osaka Castle which solidified the Tokugawa rule, and the issuing of the *buke shohatto*, or laws for the conduct of the *daimyo*. These laws were created to enforce a rigid hierarchical structure based on an idealized four class system that placed *samurai* at the top, peasants in the second rank, with artisans third and merchants last. The first *buke shohatto* stated; "there should be no confusion in the types of clothing of superiors and inferiors. There should be distinctions between lord and vassal, between superior and inferior." Another section of the 1615 law states; "do not have a liking for useless articles, and do not indulge in personal extravagance."⁽⁶⁾ Along with these new laws, sumptuary regulations (*ken'yakurei*) were also issued with greater frequency as the Edo period progressed. It is in the early years of this milieu, in what has been termed the 'Kan'ei culture' that the *teinai yurakuzu* screens were produced.⁽⁷⁾

Their production ended around the middle of the seventeenth century, replaced by screens showing the more palpable delights of Japan's entertainment districts and Kabuki shows.

There are two compositional types of *yurakuzu* (merry-making) screens; *teinai*, or in the mansion, and *yagai*, or outside the Mansion. Here I briefly discuss the *teinai* variety, though it should be noted that occasionally the two types appear, or are paired together. Extant screens representing *teinai yurakuzu* are in the double digits with the most famous example being the Sooji screens in the Reimei-kai in Nagoya.⁽⁸⁾ The compositional format is standardized, with scenes of people playing various games both whimsical and academic in a fantasized extravagant Chinese-styled mansion.

Everyone in and around the mansion is in pursuit of some sort of pleasure, with everyone is placed on an equal level (with the exception of a few serving girls and *cha-bozu*). In the Sooji Screens about 400 people are depicted, 100 of whom are women. Each figure is so exactly painted that studies have been completed on the textiles portrayed to reconstruct clothing tastes during the Kan'ei period. The *teinai yurakuzu* half of the Sooji screens reveals a large mansion that has been bisected in order to let the viewer gaze inside and almost participate in the many festivities taking place inside.

The type of perspective used in the Sooji screens and in other *teinai yurakuzu* screens is remarkably consistent in and of itself, and is slightly different from perspective systems used in other styles of *fuzokuga*. We are not peering into this exotic world as voyeurs through a blown-away roof (*fukinuki yatai*) or through extreme bird's eye perspective with scenes revealed to the viewer through holes in the clouds, doorways, or windows, as in scenes of the Yoshiwara (see Figure 4) or in *rakuchu rakugaizu* screens. Rather, in *teinai yurakuzu* style screens (see Figure 5) we are almost invited to participate in the action. Nothing is

kept from the viewer, even a young woman pinching a priest's ear is suggestively portrayed. There are no curtains, walls or clouds to obscure our view, even the *fusuma* (sliding panels) are removed or opened so that the viewer can look in through the

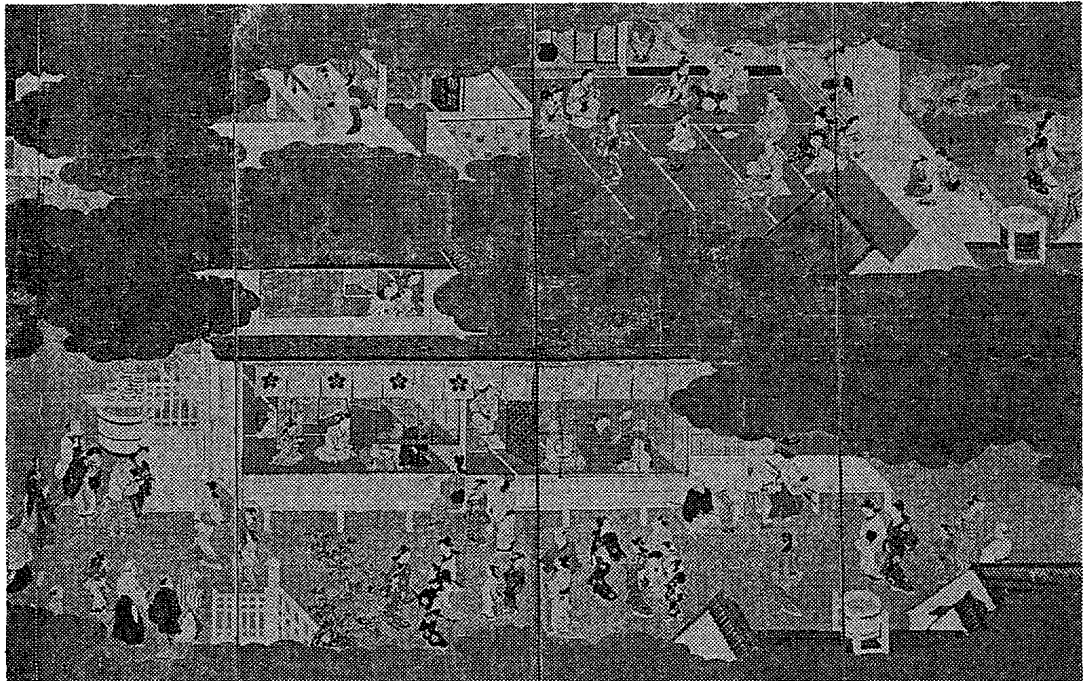


Figure 4. Detail from the Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarter Screen, part of a pair of six-panelled screens in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

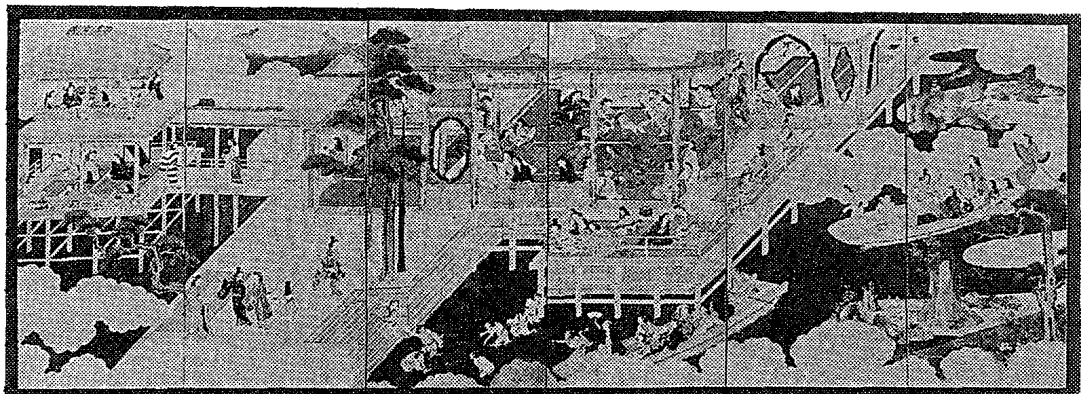


Figure 5. *Teinai Yurakuzu Byobu* (Merry Making in the Mansion Screen), a single six-panelled screen from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, housed in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

walls on an equal spatial level with those depicted.

A number of compositionally similar *teinai yurakuzu* are housed in North American collections; for example, at the Freer Gallery, Harvard University Art Museums, the Ontario Heritage Foundation, and the Price Collection, with most appearing to be the work of *machi-eshi* workshops. The Ontario Heritage Foundation screen shown in Figure 5, survives singly and exhibits, as do the other screens, the five elements described above of the 'other' in fantasy mansion settings. In Figure 5, water cuts off and separates the mansion (1), which is attached only by a stone bridge (2), and though the entire building is based on a Japanese standard, the entrance in panel five is topped with a *karahafu* (a Chinese-styled gable), and the building is peppered with Chinese-styled windows (*karamado*) as well as partially sporting a Chinese roof, giving the structure a Chinese, or exotic, feel (3). The sixth panel depicts a *hanare*, a two storied villa with a native Japanese thatched roof built on stilts over that water and attached to the main structure by a roofed corridor (4). The main structure is entirely built upon stone foundations, with stone steps leading down to the water (5). The stone foundation adds not only a sense of enormous luxury, but also a feeling of permanence which could be contrasted to the fragile nature of the *hanare*.

The figures play both inside the mansion and in the water and on boats outside the mansion. Entertainments range from the traditional Chinese four scholarly pursuits of music, *go*, writing and painting (*kinkishokaku*) to more currently trendy pastimes such as listening to the *shamisen*, playing *karuta* (Western cards introduced by Chinese merchants in the late 1500's), smoking a pipe or tweaking a priest. Red carpets and luxurious gold screens abound in this pleasure scene. And although *kai*, or social gatherings were popular in the Kan'ei period, this scene could never actually exist. It was in the realm of fantasy, and in the realm

of the 'other', that these utopian scenes came to life.

This type of screen represented a particular Kan'ei period vision of society. When we compare screens of a similar nature, particularly those of entertainment districts, that were made in the post-Kan'ei period like the Boston Museum of Fine Arts screen in Figure 4, created sometime between the late 1670's and 1680's, we see a change in perspective. We are separated from the inhabitants of the houses (courtesans) not only by vertical bars on the windows (*koshi*) but also by the composition. We are always reminded that we are voyeurs that have to peak at the figures from behind clouds, screens of bamboo slats and curtains. We are still in a separate world where the laws of the *bakufu* hold little sway, but the rules and times have changed bringing with them a more seasoned and less naive view of pleasure, fantasy and the 'other'.

NOTES

- (1) There was a spat of castle building in Japan that lasted approximately 50 years, starting with Oda Nobunaga's Azuchi Castle on Lake Biwa and ending with the Tokugawa restrictions on the building of castles.
- (2) A large scale exhibit in Japan recently explored the phenomena of the 'other' showing that interest in this phenomena is still strong. See *Another World*, Mito Annual '93, Art Tower Mito, Japan, November 21, 1992 to March 7, 1993.
- (3) An excellent exhibition and catalog was done of this type of painting in the Nezu Art Museum, Tokyo in December, 1991.
- (4) See *Nihon Byobu-e Shusei* vol. 14, Kodansha, Tokyo, 1979.
- (5) See *Kinsei Fuzokuzuron* vol. 2 (Tokyo, Shogakkan, 1983).
- (6) Taken from Donald H. Shively, "Sumptuary Regulations and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* vol. 25, 1965, p. 144.
- (7) Hayashiya Tatsuraburo "*Kan'ei Bunkaron*" (Kan'ei Culture), *Chusei Bunka no Kicho* (The Underlying Currents in Medieval Culture), Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1953.
- (8) See *Nihon Byobu-e Shusei* vol. 14, Kodansha, Tokyo 1977, Plates 13 and 14.