

BUSHIDO

WAY OF THE SAMURAI

Exhibition wall texts

Bushido: Way of the Samurai

The art and culture of the samurai embodies more than 800 years of Japan's history. From the twelfth century through to 1868, when Japan's long era of international isolation came to an end, shoguns, regional lords and their warrior retainers ruled and lived according to a rigorous code of ethics. This military aristocracy aspired to a life of spiritual harmony devoted equally to the art of war and the fine arts. *Bushido: Way of the Samurai* introduces the samurai as both warriors and men of refined culture. The exhibition showcases the armaments and attire, cultural pursuits and epic tales of the samurai through objects acquired by the NGV since the 1880s, alongside a selection of the leading samurai art in Australian public and private collections.

JAPANESE

Armour

Yoroi

よろい

鎧

Edo period 18th century, Japan
lacquer on metal (maki-e), wood, pigment,
silk, cotton, leather, metal (thread)

Gift of Mrs Henry Darlot, 1888

2066.a-k-D1A

The origins of samurai culture can be traced to ancient ceramic figures of warriors and suits of armour from the Kofun period (300–710). It was during the Heian period (794–1185), however, that warrior clans developed the characteristic style of Japanese armour that has come to universally represent samurai culture. This suit of armour, donated in 1888 by Mrs Henry Darlot, the widow of one of Victoria's first pastoralists, is in the *tosei gusoku* style of so-called 'modern' armour. Made from large iron, bulletproof plates it was developed during the sixteenth century in response to the introduction of firearms into Japanese warfare.

Hishin Gikaku

非心 義覚

Japanese active 18th century

**Nourishing the chicks makes
great cranes**

*Hinakara yashinai ōkina tsuruto
nasu*

養雛成大鶴

Edo period 18th century, Japan
ink on paper

Purchased, 1990

AS2-1990

Zen philosophy was closely associated with samurai spirituality and Bushido, the samurai code of behaviour. This powerful and unimpeded calligraphy by the 377th Abbot of the Japanese Zen temple Daitoku-ji, in Kyoto, encapsulates the samurai ethics of honesty, courage, benevolence, respect, self-sacrifice, self-control, duty and loyalty by which Japanese children were educated and Japanese society was based.

JAPANESE

Armour

Yoroi

よろい

鎧

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
lacquer, leather, metal, silk, cotton, hemp,
gold pigment, coloured dyes

Acquired, 1889

460.4-6, 9-12,15-19-D2

This suit of armour was purchased by the NGV in 1889 and is not recorded as being exhibited since that time. Made during the Edo period (1600-15–1868), it is a *tosei gusoku* suit of modern armour in the style of eleventh- or twelfth-century *kozan gusoku* cavalry armour, characterised by its many scale-like parts joined by silk cord and elaborate helmet featuring golden horns (*wakidate kuwagata*) and large turn-back deflectors (*fukigaishi*) on both sides. Such dramatic and visually foreboding attire, worn by a sword-wielding warrior thundering into battle on horseback, must have created an impression of heart-stopping ferocity for all those he opposed.

TAMURA Chokuo

Japanese 1688–1704

Hawks with pine tree and plum blossom

Ume matsu taka zu

うめまつたかす

梅松鷹図

Edo period late 17th century, Japan
pair of six panel folding screens: ink and pigments on gold leaf on paper, lacquer on wood, silk, paper, metal

Purchased, 1971

AS11.a-b-1971

Ruling lords and samurai decorated their villas and castles with folding screens that emphasised their military prowess and positions of social power. Birds of prey were considered suitable subjects for the screens due to their innately predatory nature and hunting skills, and because only the most senior samurai and daimyo were granted the right to practice falconry. At official gatherings, screens such as these were positioned to make guests feel vulnerable, under the watchful eye of their imposing leaders.

JAPANESE

Arrows and quiver

Ya to yaire

や や いれ
矢と矢入

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
wood, leather, feathers, bamboo, lacquer,
metal, copper, gilt, plant fibre, gold leaf,
paper

On loan from the Museum Victoria X092936, X092936.1 – X92936.8

JAPANESE

Bow

Yumi

ゆみ

弓

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
lacquer on wood, bamboo, rattan

Unaccessioned item

Before the development of high-quality Japanese swords, the chosen weapon of samurai was the bow and arrow. Shot from horseback or while standing, the bow and arrow was the first and often the foremost means of engaging opposing forces. Through the disciplines of *kyūdo* (way of the bow) and *kyūba no michi* (way of the horse and bow), samurai were as skilful with the bow and arrow as they were with the sword.

Saotome school

Japanese active 1680–1800

Helmet and mask

Kabuto to menpō

かぶと めんぼう

兜と面頬

early Edo period 1600–1700 Japan

iron, laquer, silk

JAPANESE

Armour

Yoroi

よろい

鎧

Edo period 1680–1800 Japan

metal, lacquer, leather, silk, cotton, hemp,
gold pigment, coloured dyes, (other materials)

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

This helmet and mask was produced by one of the best armour makers of the Edo period, the Saotome school. The *Daki Kashiwa mon* (double oak-leaf family crest) of the Hachisuka clan appears on the *kabuto* (helmet) and *yoroi-bitsu* (armour storage box). The Hachisuka clan were descendants of the ruling Kamakura-period Minamoto clan and was founded by Hachisuka Masakatsu (1526–1586) in the Owari region, near present-day Nagoya. Masakatsu served for two of Japan's great unifying military lords, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, during the sixteenth century, after which his descendants continued to live in the Tokushima region throughout the Edo period (1600-15–1868).

JAPANESE

Armour

Yoroi

よろい

鎧

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
metal, wood, pigment, lacquer, gold paint,
silk, cotton, leather, metal (thread)

On loan from the Museum Victoria

ST23978

This armour's side-hinged torso piece, allowing easy dressing, is characteristic of the 'modern'-style armour *tosei gusoku*. The Takada clan's family crest of four diamonds features on the shoulder straps, hand coverings and helmet's *fukigaishi* (turn-back deflectors). The Takeda clan was based in Kai province, present-day Yamanashi Prefecture, and was a powerful force until its defeat by Oda Nobunaga in 1572. During the Edo period, Takada clan members assumed prominent positions in the Tokugawa shogunate. The Museum of Victoria's records indicate that this armour was acquired in 1878 from Mr. L. H. Hart, a dealer of native curiosities based in Melbourne's Royal Arcade.

Sword guards

This collection of sword guards was acquired by the Felton Bequest between 1916 and 1924. Sword guards had the practical function of preventing the users' hand from slipping onto their blade, while also offering protection from the opponent's blade. Their weight brought the centre of gravity closer to the sword's handle, adding balance and force to the sword's blow while also reducing fatigue to the user's wrist. These beautifully cast, engraved and inlaid metal objects constitute an encyclopaedia of Japanese legends, folklore and nature observation, featuring landscapes, immortals and mythical beasts, as well as skilful compositions of flowers, insects and animals.

Swords

Nihontō (Japanese swords) are revered as gifts from the gods, and throughout Japanese history have been presented to temples and shrines as votive offerings. The first swords produced in Japan were straight with double-edged blades; however, during the eleventh century innovative techniques led to the development of a distinctive Japanese style of curved, single-bladed swords that are recognised as the sharpest swords in the history of armaments.

Japanese swords are celebrated not only for their use as weapons, but also as refined works of art, and are appreciated for their unsurpassed craftsmanship and beauty. During the swordsmithing process the bladed edge is cooled quickly in water, which allows an ultimate cutting edge when sharpened, while the non-bladed side is coated in clay, slowing its cooling when submerged in water and giving the sword its consummate strength. This dual cooling technique instils each sword with individual forged patterns (*hamon* or tempering lines) that enhances its overall beauty are highly appreciated by connoisseurs.

Suo MORITOSHI

Japanese 1778–1857

Long sword

Katana

かたな

刀

Edo Period 1849 Japan
metal

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Moritoshi worked in Iwakuni domain for Lord Kitsukuni and studied in Edo (Tokyo) at the formal school of Chōnsai Tsunatoshi. Most of his swords are in the Bizen style and are known for their powerful shapes and graceful lines. The *hamon* (forging patterns) of this blade feature stringed bead-like markings in regular and irregular wavy arrangements.

TAIKEI Naotane

Japanese 1778–1857

Small sword

Ko wakizashi

こ わきざし

小脇差

Edo Period 1845 Komoro, Aichi, Japan
metal

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Naotane was born in the Yamagata region of northern Japan. He excelled as a student at the Suishinshi Masahide school and became one of the best swordsmiths of the *Shintō* (new sword) era. He successfully worked in all the five main styles of sword making (Yamato, Yamashiro, Mino, Bizen and Soshu), and is recognised as the supreme exponent of the Bizen style.

KUNIYASU Horikawa

Japanese active 1580–1610

Long sword

Katana

かたな

刀

late Momoyama – early Edo Period 1596–
1615, Japan

metal

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

The late sixteenth century is considered as a time of fundamental change in Japanese sword-making history, and a turning point between the *Kotō* (old sword) and *Shintō* (new sword) eras. The first Japanese curved sword, known as *tachi*, was worn slung from the waist by cords, with its sharp edge facing downwards. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards another type of sword, known as *katana*, was worn through the samurai's waist sash, with its edge facing upwards to allow an immediate strike when taken from its sheath. This *katana*, produced by the renowned *Shintō*-era swordsmith Kuniyasu, is a rare Keicho-period sword.

SOJI Naohide

Japanese 1778–1857

Short blade

Tantō

たんとう

短刀

Edo Period 1861 Nagoya, Japan

metal, copper and silver alloy, lacquer, gold, silver

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Tanto are short blades that were used for combat at close quarters. Before the classical *katana* (long sword) and *wakizashi* (short sword) combination was introduced during the sixteenth century, *tantō* were often paired with old-style, long *tachi* swords. Soji Naohide is from a renowned family of sword makers. A special feature of this blade is the *hamon* (forging patterns) that appear as irregular, drifting lines of sand and thick misty formations, characteristic of the Soshu style.

Yamato-Mino SENCHUIN

Japanese active 1331–40

Long sword

Katana

かたな

刀

Muromachi Period 1331–40 Japan
metal, copper and silver alloy, gold, lacquer,
snake skin, silk (cord)

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Senchuin, along with other swordsmiths, transmitted the old traditions of sword making from the ancient region of Yamato (present-day Nara Prefecture) to the Mino area (present-day Gifu Prefecture), establishing the Mino school. This early *katana*-style sword displays the ancient Yamato characteristic, known as *yakizumi-boshi*, where the *hamon* continue to the tip of the sword rather than turning back, in the normal style of *katana*. Other features include a sword guard with pine tree design, sword accessories in copper and silver alloy and gold, and a scabbard covered with snakeskin and clear lacquer.

Echizan KANENAKA

Japanese active 1675–86

Long sword

Katana

かたな

刀

Edo Period 1681 Echizen, Japan
metal, enamel, silver

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Kanenaka worked in both Echizen and Musashi provinces. This *katana* is mounted as an old-style *tachi* sword, and is displayed as it would have been worn – with the cutting edge facing downwards. The *hamon* features *chōji-midare* (clover or mushroom-like) patterns with *togari-ba* (thorn-like markings). Its mount features *dei-shippo* (opaque cloisonné), *kodōgu* (silver accessories) and *kikumon* (imperial crests).

Tegai KANENAGA

Japanese active 1350–90

Short blade

Tantō

たんとう

短刀

Muromachi Period 1387 Echizen, Japan
metal, enamel

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Kanenaga is a second-generation swordsmith, after Taira Saburo who founded the Yamato Tegai school at the western gate of Todai-ji temple in Nara. The *hamon* display narrow straight lines with frayed edges, and the mount features a dragon with a magical jewel, made in cloisonné.

Ichijosai HIROTOSHI

Japanese active c. 1820

Sword guard with samurai in a tree design

Ki no naka no bushi zu tsuba

き なか ぶ し ず つば
木の中の武士図鍔

late Edo period 1820 Japan
metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Hirotooshi's original name was Konishi Bunshichi, and he later became known as Uchikoshi Tanzo. He studied in Uchikoshi school – known for its refined techniques and delicate, detailed work – under the second Tamagawa master, Yoshinaga.

TAKAOKI Suruga

Japanese active 1837–56

Sword guard with goose in tall grass design

Kari ni kusa zu tsuba

かり くさ ず つば

雁に草図鍔

late Edo period 1837–56 Japan

iron, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Takaoki was the the ninth hereditary master of the Suruga school in Inaba province (present-day Tottori Prefecture). The Suruga School is known for using iron of the highest quality, and for its cleanly modelled designs. The goose in tall grass was created using an open-work design that leaves a strong positive silhouette.

Hizen School

Japanese active 1650–1700

Large and small sword guard with dragon and magical jewel design

Sōryū hōju zu daishō tsuba

そうりゅうほうじゅず だいしょうつば

双龍宝珠図大小鐔

early Edo Period 1650–1700 Northern
Kyushu, Japan

iron, gold, silver

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

This pair of sword guards is made for use on a *daishō* (a matching pair of large and small swords). Its classical samurai motif (in excellent condition) of dragons with magical jewels among clouds and waves was created with a technique known as *iroe nunome-zogan*, in which an overlay of gold and silver sheeting is hammered into the textured iron surface.

Goto ICHJO

Japanese active 1824–62

Small knife handle with plum blossom design

Ume zu kozuka

うめずこづか
梅図小柄

late Edo Period 1824–62 Japan
metal, copper and silver alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Kozuka are decorative handle fittings for *kogatana* (small utility knives) that slid into a pocket in the sword's sheath. Goto Ichijo's skills as a painter and poet are displayed in his beautifully composed metal works. He was the sixth hereditary master in the Goto Hachirobei line of the Goto family, which served the Muromachi Shogunate (1337–1568) and continued to be active throughout the Edo period.

Old Goto School

Japanese active 1600–20

Hair dressing tool with dragon design

Ryū zu kōgai

りゅうずこうがい

龍図筭

early Edo period 1600–20 Japan
metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Kōgai are long pins used in personal grooming and for arranging hair into the traditional topknot that was a part of the samurai's dress code. At the handle-end of these pins there is a small scoop for ear cleaning. *Kōgai* were fitted to one of the holes in the sword guard, and slid into a pocket in the sword's sheath. The Goto school of sword accessory artisans, who produced wear for the Tokugawa shogunate, are renowned for animal and figure designs encrusted with gold and gilt metals.

TERUAKI Ishiguro

Japanese active 1850–80

Sword guard with vine design

Tsuta zu tsuba

つた ず つば
蔦図鍔

late Edo period – early Meiji period 1850–80 Japan

metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Teruaki was from Mutsu province in the north of Japan and studied under Ishigoro Masaaki in Edo (Tokyo), where he developed an individual style of his own. This sword guard features a large gold rim that is seen to represent a *namako* (sea cucumber).

ICHIJU Ishigoro

Japanese active c. 1820

Sword pommel and hilt collar with family crests

Kamon iri fuchi-gashira

かもんいりふちがしら
家紋入縁頭

late Edo period 1820 Japan

metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

The Ishigoro school is renowned for its lively and vibrant sword accessories. The elegant design of this set of *fuchi-gashira* expresses the formal and refined taste of high-ranking samurai. Ishigoro school sword fittings were in demand throughout the Edo period.

Ishiguro MASATSUNE III

Japanese active 1820–68

**Sword pommel and hilt collar
with plum blossom design.**

Ume zu fuchi-gashira

Fuchi-gashira

うめ ず ふち がしら

梅図縁頭

late Edo period 1820–68 Japan
metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Fuchi and *kashira* are two sword accessories that were skilfully decorated with nature designs or subjects from samurai mythology. The *fuchi* is a hilt collar that adds strength to the handle and fits between the handle and the sword guard. The *kashira* is a pommel, or cap, that fits to the end of the sword's handle. Masatsune was the third generation of renowned *fuchi* and *kashira* craftsmen of the Ishiguro school.

HEDETOSHI Mito

Japanese active c. 1840

Sword pommel and hilt collar with cockeral and chick design

Ondori Fuchi-gashira

おんどり ず ふちがしら

雄鶏囟縁頭

late Edo period 1840 Japan

metal, copper and gold alloy

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

Hedetoshi studied under Oyama Motozane, who established a distinct Mito-Sekijoken school style of metalsmithing. Motozane and his followers became renowned for colourful and animated designs, such as the glistening feathers of the cockerel on this *fuchi-gashira*.

Takahashi School

Japanese active 1820–50

Sword pommel and hilt collar with spiral designs

Guri fuchi-gashira

ぐり ぶちがしら
屈輪縁頭

late Edo period 1830 Japan
copper and gold alloy, copper

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

The Takahashi family of Edo (Tokyo) were skilled in the technique of *guri*, in which two kinds of metal are superimposed in alternating layers, with the design created by engraving through these layers, leaving a striped three-dimensional effect. This same technique can also be used in lacquer ware.

HARUTOSHI

Japanese active late 19th century

Two matching sword mounts

Daishō-Goshirae

だいしょうごしらえ

大小拵

late Edo period – Meiji period late 19th century, Japan

copper and silver alloy, copper and gold alloy, lacquer, metal

Collection of Peter and Julie Baker, Melbourne

Daishō (literally 'large and small') refers to the matching pair of swords – a *katana* (long sword) and *wakizashi* (short sword) – which were the standard equipment for samurai from the sixteenth century to the end of the samurai era, in the late nineteenth century. Typically, *katana* were used for battles and *wakizashi* for self-defence. When a warrior entered a building he left his *katana* on a rack in the vestibule, carrying only his *wakizashi* indoors.

Lacquer sword case with pampas grass design *Susuki zu tachi zutsu*

すすきず た ち づつ

芒図太刀筒

Edo period 18th century, Japan
lacquer, gold, silver

On loan from the Pauline Gandel Collection

While travelling in a palanquin (covered litter), daimyo, provincial governors and other high-ranking samurai were unable to wear their swords. The weapons were instead stored in travelling cases and carried by attendants. As sword cases were functional carrying containers, not many of them survive to this day. This rare example is decorated in the sprinkled lacquer relief technique (*taka maki-e*), with an elegant autumn design of *susuki* (pampus grass) sweeping its length.

Kabuto and JIngasa

On the battlefield, samurai of rank wore elaborate helmets (*kabuto*) while those of lower standing, such as ordinary soldiers and footmen, wore mass-produced *jingasa* hats made of hardened paper, leather or iron. During the peaceful Edo period (1600-15–1868) the function of *jingasa* changed and they became large, slightly conical shaped flat hats worn by samurai for protection against the sun and rain during travel and outdoor ceremonies. *Kabuto* and *jingasa* often featured eccentric decoration that represented the wearer's personality, and some were re-lacquered with elaborate designs during the late nineteenth century as mementos of samurai culture.

JAPANESE

Ceremonial helmet with lion dog and peony design

Shishi botan jingasa

し し ぼ たんじんがさ

獅子牡丹陣笠

Edo period 19th century, Japan
lacquer on (leather) (*maki-e*), metal, silk,
mother-of-pearl,
(other materials)

Gift of Joan Gunn, 2011

2011.340

JAPANESE

**Ceremonial helmet with
octopus and Genji cart
wheel crest**

***Tako nanawari genji guruma
mon iri jingasa***

たこななわりげん じぐるまもんいりじんがさ

蛸七割源氏車紋入陣笠

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
lacquer on (leather) (*maki-e*), wood, gold,
pigment, glass, metal (nails), silk and cotton
(thread), (other materials)

Felton Bequest, 1927

2900-D3

JAPANESE

Helmet with lion dog and peony design

Shishi botan kabuto

し し ぼ たん かぶと

獅子牡丹兜

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
lacquer on (leather) (*maki-e*), metal, silk,
mother-of-pearl,
(other materials)

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

Firearms

Matchlock guns, or arquebus, were introduced to Japan in 1543 by Portuguese traders who made unexpected landfall on the small southern island of Tanegashima after being blown off course. News and examples of this new wondrous technology were quick to circulate, with regional lords adapting Japan's long tradition of metalsmithing to reproduce these new weapons of war. Within a few decades their use on battlefield had irrevocably changed warfare and the ethics of samurai in battle.

JAPANESE

Matchlock hand cannon with dragon and cloud design

Unryū zu ōzutsu

うんりゅう ず おおづつ
雲龍図大筒

Momoyama period 1573 Japan
metal, wood, brass, silver

Felton Bequest, 1927

2892-D3

This imposing *ozutsu* (hand cannon) is decorated along the length of its barrel with engraved dragons and swirling clouds. It features the inscriptions *Tenshō Gannen* (1573), *Protector of the Matsudaira clan* and the three-hollyhock leaf crest of the Tokugawa clan (formerly Matsudaira clan) who became allied with Oda Nobunaga in 1560. A heavy and brutal weapon on the battlefield that fired combinations of shot, and in some cases custom-made arrows, *ozutsu* were fired from the hip, as dramatically illustrated by the adjoining woodblock print by Utagawa Yoshiiku.

JAPANESE

Matchlock gun with irises, sparrow and butterfly design *Shōbu chō suzume zu teppō*

しょうぶ ちょうすずめず てっぽう

菖蒲蝶雀図鉄砲

Momoyama period 1568–1600–15 Japan
metal, wood, brass, silver

Felton Bequest, 1927

2890-D3

By the second half of the sixteenth century arquebus with little or no decoration were produced in great numbers for use by ordinary soldiers. However, due to the exquisite inlaid, engraved and applied decoration found on these three magnificent matchlock guns, it is evident they were not only produced as armaments for the battlefield, but also as flamboyant items for high-ranking samurai. On this gun we see a delicate design of irises among flowing water, with flying sparrows and butterflies produced with the same exquisite craftsmanship as would be found on a refined laquer writing box.

JAPANESE

Matchlock gun with lion dog
and peony design

Shishi botan zu teppō

し し ぼ たん ず てっぽう

獅子牡丹図鉄砲

Momoyama period 1568–1600–15 Japan
metal, wood, brass, silver

Felton Bequest, 1927

2895-D3

Utagawa YOSHIKU

歌川 芳幾

Japanese 1833–1904

**Fukushima Masanori, from
the Heroic stories of the
Taiheiki**

***Taiheikieiyūden Fukushima
Masanori***

たいへい き えいゆう でん ふくしままさ のり

太平記英勇傳 福島正則

Edo period 1867 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

Utagawa YOSHIKU

歌川 芳幾

Japanese 1833–1904

**Shinro Musashinokami, from
the Heroic Stories of the
Taiheiki**

Taiheikieiyūden Shinro

Musashinokami

たいへい き えいゆうでん しんろ む さしのかみ

太平記英勇傳 新侶武蔵守

Edo period 1867 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

Utagawa YOSHIKU

歌川 芳幾

Japanese 1833–1904

**Akechi Samanosuke, from
the Heroic stories of the
Taiheiki**

Taiheikieiyūden Akechi

Samanosuke

たいへい き えいゆう でん あけ ち さ まの すけ
太平記英勇傳 明智左馬助

Edo period 1867 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

Utagawa YOSHIKU

歌川 芳幾

Japanese 1833–1904

**Gamō Ujisato, from the
Heroic stories of the Taiheiki
*Taiheikieiyūden Gamō Ujisato***

たいへい き えいゆう でん が もう うじさと
太平記英勇傳 蒲生氏郷

Edo period 1867 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

Felice BEATO (attributed to)

Italian/English 1832–1909, worked
throughout Asia and Europe 1853–90

No title (Samurai warrior)

Bushi

ぶし
武士

1860s –70s Japan

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Thomas Dixon, Member, 2001
2001.193

Baron Raimund von **STILLFRIED**

Austrian 1839–1911, worked throughout
Europe and Asia 1871–1910

No title (Samurai in armour)

Bushi ni yoroi

ぶし よろい
武士に鎧

c. 1875, printed c. 1877–80 Japan
albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of
The Herald & Weekly Times Limited, Fellow, 2001

2001.9

JAPANESE

Helmet with facemask and dragonfly ornament

Kabuto menpō to tombo maedate

かぶとめんぼう とんぼまえて

兜面頬と蜻蛉前立

early – mid Edo period 1600–1700 (helmet and ornament), late Momoyama – mid Edo period 1570–1700 (face mask)

iron, lacquer, copper and zinc alloy, silk

Collection of Colin McDonald, Melbourne

This style of *kabuto* (helmet), popular during the Momoyama and early Edo period, is known as *kawari kabuto* (an unconventional helmet) due to its unusual shape. The *nagaeboshi* (tall lacquered section) and distinctive dragonfly ornament represented the wearer's personality and distinguished his identity on the battlefield. The *tombo* (dragonfly) was regarded as a noble and invincible creature; the ornament's hinged wings became animated as the wearer rode on horseback.

Myochin YOSHIHISA

Japanese active 1530–50

Helmet and mask

Kabuto to menpō

かぶと めんぼう

兜と面頬

late Muromachi period 1530–50 Japan
iron, lacquer, silk

Collection of Peter and Julie Baker, Melbourne

This *kabuto* (helmet) is an exemplary example of late Muromachi-period armature, with its bowl consisting of sixty-two overlapping iron plates, and swollen back section. A total of 1953 *hoshi* bullet-shaped rivets are precisely arranged, decreasing in size as they approach the *tehen* hole in the top of the helmet bowl. The *menpo* mask and laced neck guard are lacquered in an imitation rust finish that was popular for armour.

Samurai in battle

One of the great war epics in Japanese history is *The Tale of Heike*, which narrates the monumental struggle between two warrior clans, the Minamoto (Genji) and Taira (Heike), culminating in the Genpei War from 1180 to 1185. Originally transmitted by travelling storytellers and singers, *The Tale of Heike* gained universal popularity throughout Japan and captured the imagination of artists for centuries thereafter. This pair of screens illustrates the dramatic events that took place at the battle of Ichi-no-tani (near present-day Kobe). Viewed from a bird's-eye perspective through golden clouds, the screens depict in a dramatic narrative the various events that took place on the seventh day of the second lunar month of 1184.

JAPANESE

Saddle and stirrups with dragon and lightning design *Ryūrai zu kura to abumi*

りゅうらい ず くら あぶみ
龍雷図鞍と鐙

Edo period 1670 Japan

lacquer on wood (*maki-e*), gold foil, silver,
pigment, plant fibre (cord), dyes, metal,
leather, (other materials)

Purchased, 1888

2025M.a-c-D1A

This set of saddle and stirrups, purchased by the NGV in 1888, displays a relief lacquer (*taka maki-e*) design of a thunderous dragon amidst lightning, clutching the magical medicine or wish-granting jewel in its claws. On the matching stirrups are samurai battlefield signalling fans with dragons, and on the upper section, under the buckles, are mandarin orange designs (*tachibana*) in open-work and three-tiered water chestnut (*matsukawabishi*) crests. Inscribed on the underside with the year *Kambun 10* (1670), these ornate pieces may have been re-lacquered in the late Edo period (early to mid nineteenth century).

JAPANESE

Battle scenes from The tale of Heike

Heike Monogatari Ichi-no-tani no tatakai zu

へい け ものがたり いち たに たたかいず
平家物語 一の谷の戦図

Edo period early 17th century, Japan
pair of six panel folding screens: ink and pigments on gold leaf on paper, lacquer on wood, silk, paper, metal

Art Gallery of South Australia

Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

20038A51.a-b

This pair of folding screens is a visual narration of the famous battle of Ichi-no-tani from the twelfth-century war epic *The Tale of Heike*. Viewed from right to left the right screen depicts the attack by the Minamoto clan on the Taira clan stronghold, the Fukuhara mansion, and on the left screen the retreat of the Taira samurai with Minamoto warriors in pursuit.

The death of Taira Atsumori

The left screen illustrates the Minamoto warriors, with white flags, attacking from right to left, and the bewildered Taira warriors, with red flags, in retreat, fleeing into the sea. Featured in the near-centre of the screen is the young Taira samurai Atsumori, escaping to waiting boats on his gray and white horse. His nemesis, Kumagai Naozane, has sighted him from the shoreline and with raised fan taunts Atsumori to return to battle. The scene depicts the fateful moment the sixteen-year-old Atsumori reconciles with his samurai traditions and returns to face inevitable defeat and death, the ultimate sacrifice.

The attack on Fukuhara mansion

The right screen illustrates the Minamoto's surprise attack on the Taira's fortified Fukuhara mansion. In the top-left we see the famed Minamoto general Yoshitsune leading his cavalry down the perilous Hirodori Pass cliff face. In the bottom-right the Minamoto brothers Kawara Taro and Kawara Jiro make a double charge across branch barricades (both died in the battle). In the centre-top Kajiwara Kagesue and two retainers are backed against a cliff by five opposing samurai as his father, on horseback, comes to the rescue. In the centre of the chaotic battle is the Fukuhara mansion, with the ill-fated child emperor Antoku, dressed in red, seated beside his mother and grandmother.

JAPANESE

Boy's Day Festival Armour

Tango no sekku yoroi

たんご せつ くよるい

端午の節句鎧

Taisho-Showa period early 20th century,
Japan

metal, lacquer, silk, gilt, wood, cotton, fur,
(other materials)

On loan from the Pauline Gandel Collection

The traditional festival of *Tango-no-sekku* (Boy's Day) is held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (5 May in the modern era). On this day each family with boys would hang carp wind-socket flags at the entrance to their house and decorate their home's *tokonoma* (special display alcove) with a miniature toy suit of samurai armour. The festival celebrated the samurai virtues of honesty, courage, benevolence, respect, self-control, duty and loyalty that all boys were expected to aspire to during their passage to adulthood.

JAPANESE

Saddle and stirrups with crane and turtle design

Tsuru kame zu kura to abumi

つるかめ ず くら あぶみ

鶴亀図鞍と鐙

Edo period 1665 Japan

lacquer on wood (*maki-e*), gold foil, silver, pigment, plant fibre (cord), dyes, metal, leather, (other materials)

Acquired, 1889

460.1-3-D2

This set of saddle and stirrups, purchased by the NGV in 1889, features a relief lacquer (*taka maki-e*) design of red-crowned cranes and turtles, the symbols of good fortune and longevity, and plum blossoms over a cascading waterfall, indicating spring and reincarnation. The upper part of the stirrups display open-work water-plantain (*omodaka*) and three-tiered water chestnut (*matsukawabishi*) crests. Inscribed on the underside with the year *Kambun 5* (1665), these ornate pieces may have been re-lacquered in the late Edo period (early to mid nineteenth century).

JAPANESE

Saddle and stirrups with vine design

Tsuta zu kura to abumi

つた ず くら あぶみ
蔦匁鞍と鐙

Edo period 1642 Japan

lacquer on wood (*maki-e*), gold foil, silver foil, pigment, plant fibre (cord), dyes, metal, leather, (other materials)

Purchased, 1888

2025E-G-D1A

This set of saddle and stirrups, purchased by the NGV in 1888, features a relief lacquer (*taka maki-e*) motif of twisting vines with berries and, on the upper part of the stirrups, open-work European-style umbrellas (*nanban kasa*). Inscribed with the year *Kan'ei 19* (1642) this set may have been re-lacquered in the late Edo period (early to mid nineteenth century).

JAPANESE

Campaign jacket with oxalis crest

Katabami mon iri jinbaori

かたばみもんいりじんばおり
片喰紋入陣羽織

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
wool, cotton, silk, gold (thread)

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

2014.27

JAPANESE

**Box for horse trappings with
chrysanthemum crest**

Kikumon iri umakazari bako

きくもんいりうまかざりばこ
菊紋入馬飾箱

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan

lacquer and gold leaf on wood and leather,
paper, metal,
(other materials)

Accessioned, 1888

2025K.a-c-D1A

JAPANESE

Horse trappings

Umakazari

うまかざり
馬飾

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
leather, boar hair, silk, lacquer, metal, wood,
wool, cotton, hemp, copper alloy, metal
(thread), gold (thread), paper

Acquired, 1889

460.13-14, 25-27, 30, 32-D2

JAPANESE

Horse blanket with bell
flower wheel crest

Rindōguruma mon iri

umagimu

りんどうぐるまもんいり うまぎぬ

竜胆車紋入馬衣

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
wool, cotton, gold pigment on leather,
leather, silk and metal (thread), (other
materials)

Unaccessioned item

JAPANESE

Horse stable

Umagoya-zu

うまごやず
馬小屋図

Edo period early 17th century, Japan
six panel screen: ink, pigment and gold
paint on paper, lacquer on wood, silk, paper,
metal

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2008

2008.4

Horses have been regarded as auspicious symbols since ancient times, when actual horses, or votive paintings of horses, were offered to shrines by those who believed in their protective power. Horses were of prime importance to the samurai in military engagement, travel and ceremonial parades. In this folding screen we see noble horses striking energetic poses in spacious and spotlessly clean stables set against a background of bamboo and golden clouds. The group of immaculately groomed horses display powerful physiques, beautiful markings and pedigree patterns that symbolise their great prestige, as well as the social status of their owners.

JAPANESE

Armour undergarment with oxalis crests

Katabami mon iri yoroi-shita

かたばみもんいりよろいした

片喰紋入鎧下

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
cotton

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

2014.28

JAPANESE

Stirrups with triangular scale design

Uroko mon abumi

うろこもんあぶみ

鱗紋鐙

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
iron alloy, silver, lacquer, metal

Unaccessioned item

JAPANESE

Saddle with hollyhock, and plum blossom design

Kiri ume zu kura

きりうめ ず くら

桐梅図鞍

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
lacquer on wood (*maki-e*), gold foil, silver foil, gilt-leather, copper alloy, silver, (other materials)

Gift of Mr Keith Murdoch, 1926

2810-D3

JAPANESE

Fudō Myōō

ふ どうみょう おう
不動明王

Muromachi period 14th century –15th century, Japan
wood, pigment, gilt

Collection of Raphy Star, Melbourne

The fierce Buddhist deity Fudō Myōō is recognised as the protector of Buddhism and of all those who practise Buddhist teachings. He is portrayed standing upon a rock, to symbolise his immovability, and holding a sword and coil of rope. With his sword of wisdom, Fudō Myōō cuts through deluded and ignorant minds; and with his rope binds those who are ruled by violent passions and emotions. Many samurai revered Fudō Myōō as a symbol and role model for their own lives, and some were known to carry miniature representations of Fudō Myōō on their person in battle.

Cultural pursuits

Dedicated warriors who risked their lives in battle cultivated a consciousness for living life as richly as possible, and hence a deep reverence for the arts and literature. Not only were the samurai skilled swordsmen and archers, they were also great patrons of Noh theatre and famous for their practice of Zen philosophy, calligraphy and the tea ceremony. They were renowned as custodians of classical literature, such as the eleventh-century novel *Tale of Genji* and the anthology of ancient poems *Hyakunin Isshu*. The samurai took great pleasure in the sophisticated noble pastimes of falconry, incense games and poetry games, and many were accomplished poets in their own right.

JAPANESE

Fireman's cape

Ondori taiko hikeshi zukin

おんどりたいこ ひけ ずきん
雄鶏太鼓 火消し頭巾

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
wool, silk (lining, thread, braid), copper alloy
(eyelets, thread, buttons), cotton (thread),
glass, (other materials)

Gift of Mrs M.Stewart Webb, 1952

1256B-D4

During the Edo period the Tokugawa shogunate established a government fire defence system led by samurai. This decorative helmet and cape that clip together, leaving a narrow section to allow vision, would have been worn by a samurai fire brigade leader. Roosters were believed to dispel evil spirits (because the morning light dispels darkness) and, when seated on war drums, were a favoured symbol of samurai. The Edo period was a 260-year era of peace during which the samurai were unable to pursue their true vocation as warriors; hence it is interesting to note that these war drums are entwined by growing vines.

JAPANESE

**Fireman's helmet
with hollyhock and
chrysanthemum crests**
*Kiku to kiri mon iri hikeshi
kabuto*

きく きりもん いり ひ け かぶと
菊と 桐紋入火消し兜

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
copper alloy, lacquer, silk (lining, thread,
braid), metal (thread, braid), leather, cotton
(lining)

Gift of Mrs M.Stewart Webb, 1952

1256A-D4

The tea ceremony

The tea ceremony became a fundamental part of political negotiations, and often functioned as a peaceful method of soothing confrontations between samurai clans or rival factions. During the Muromachi period (1333–1568) a formal style of tea was practised that used fine green celadon and dark *tenmoku*-style hare's fur and oil spot glazed tea bowls that preserved ties to Chinese tea culture.

During the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1615) innovative tea masters, such as Sen no Rikyu and his disciple Furuta Oribe (a high-ranking samurai), established a new and uniquely Japanese style of tea known as *Wabi-cha* that used rustic and irregularly shaped *Raku* tea bowls created by Rikyu and the potter Chōjirō, and tea bowls decorated with whimsical and often abstracted nature designs in the taste of Furuta Oribe.

CHINESE

Tea bowl

Seiji chawan

せいじ ちゃわん

青磁茶碗

Southern Song dynasty 1127–1279

Longquan, Zhejiang province, South-east

China, China

stoneware (*Longquan* ware)

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3699-D3

CHINESE

Tea bowl

Tenmoku chawan

てんもくちやわん

天目茶碗

Southern Song dynasty 1127–1279

Jiayang, Fujian province, South-east China,
China

stoneware (*Jian* ware)

Bequest of Leonard B. Cox, 1976

AS77-1976

JAPANESE

Tea bowl

Chawan

ちやわん
茶碗

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
earthenware (Raku ware 楽焼)

Felton Bequest, 1927

2860A-D3

JAPANESE

Tea caddy and bags

Chaire shifuku

ちゃいれ し ふく

茶入仕覆

Edo period 17th century, Japan
stoneware, silk, silk (cord)

Felton Bequest, 1932

3334.a-c-D3

JAPANESE

Tea scoop

Chashaku

ちゃしゃく

茶杓

Edo period 20th century, Japan
bamboo

Gift of Mr W. P. Wilkinson, 1926

2779-D3

JAPANESE

Tea bowl

Chawan

ちやわん

茶碗

Momoyama period 桃山時代 1568–1600–
15 Japan

stoneware (Narumi Oribe ware 鳴海織部焼)

Purchased with funds donated by Mitsubishi Corporation, 2012 2012.218

Noh theatre

Noh is a masked dance-drama that developed in the Muromachi period (1392–1568) under the patronage of the Ashikaga shogunate. While kabuki was popular with the merchant classes it was considered a vulgar form of entertainment by the upper classes, who found the more elegant and subtle style of Noh philosophical and inspirational. Not only did Noh hold an official ceremonial function at formal receptions, but ranking samurai were also expected to be able to chant Noh verses by heart at any given time. Wearing masks and ornate silk robes, Noh actors chant in poetic rhythms moral accounts of ancient stories that mediate between the real world and supernatural occurrences. Many rulers, including Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and samurai generals were known to perform Noh enthusiastically.

JAPANESE

Noh theatre robe, Atsuita

Nōshōzoku Atsuita

のうしょうぞく あついた

能装束厚板

Edo period late 18th century – early 19th century, Japan

silk, gilt-paper, silk (thread)

Felton Bequest in honour of Allan Myers AO President of
the Council of Trustees of the NGV, 2012

2012.262

The striking alternating block design of this atsuita costume, worn mainly for male roles, displays auspicious symbols of bamboo grass leaves (*sasa*), cloud shaped gongs (*kumochoban*), stylised flowers (*karabana*) and interlocking deer horns.

DEME Hidemitsu (attributed to)

伝 出 目 栄 満

Japanese 17th century –18th century

Noh mask, Ōbeshimi *Nōmen Ōbeshimi*

のうめん おおべし み
能面 大癩見

early Edo period 17th century, Japan
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on
Cypress (*Hinoki*), silk (thread, cord)

Purchased with funds donated by
Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011

2011.352

Ōbeshimi is a *tengu*, a mythical goblin that lives deep in the mountains and possesses supernatural powers. The best-known *tengu* play is *Kurama Tengu*, where the goblin of Mt Kurama trains the young samurai prince in exile Minamoto Yoshitsune, imparting to him secrets of military strategy.

JAPANESE

Noh mask, Chūjō

Nōmen Chūjō

のうめん ちゅうじょう

能面 中将

early Edo period 17th century –18th century, Japan

pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (*Hinoki*), silk (thread, cord)

Purchased with funds donated by
Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011

2011.351

The character of Chūjō is based on the ninth-century poet and romantic Ariwara no Narihira. Narihira was a warrior of imperial lineage who became known as an ideal man, and was the inspiration for roles of gallant samurai generals and noblemen and, it is believed, the lead character of Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*.

DEME Mitsunaga

出目 満永

Japanese active 17th century

Noh mask, Shakumi

Nōmen Shakumi

のうめん しゃくみ

能面 曲見

early Edo period 17th century, Japan
pigments, ground shell and animal glue on
Cypress (*Hinoki*)

Purchased with funds donated by
Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2011

2011.350

Shakumi is a middle-aged woman with worldly experience. The loose strands of hair give her the careworn air of one who has lived and survived through trials and tribulations, and for this reason she often appears in the role of a mother.

JAPANESE

Noh theatre robe, Karaori

Nōshōzoku Karaori

のうしょうぞく からおり

能装束唐織

late Edo period 1913–35 Japan

silk

Felton Bequest in honour of Allan Myers AO President of
the Council of Trustees of the NGV, 2012

2012.264

The delicate design of this karaori costume, worn mainly for female or spirit roles, displays autumn flowers that include chrysanthemums (*kiku*), bell flowers (*kikyō*) and bush clover (*hagi*).

Riusai

Japanese active 19th century

Inrō with one thousand crane design

Senbazuru inrō

せんばづるいんろう

千羽鶴印籠

Edo period 19th century, Japan
ivory, silk

JAPANESE

Netsuke of immortal

Sennin netsuke

せんじんねつけ

仙人根付

Edo period 19th century, Japan
ivory

Gift of Mr Geoffrey Innes in memory of Mr Guy Innes, 1960

133-D5

Kakōsai Shinryosai

Japanese active 19th century

Inrō with pilgrim and shrine gate

Henro torii zu inrō

へん る とり い ず いんろ

遍路鳥居図印籠

Edo period 19th century, Japan

lacquer on paper (*maki-e*), gold, mother-of-pearl, coral, ivory, stoneware, metal, silk, (other materials)

JAPANESE

Netsuke with two chinese boys

Karako zu netsuke

から こ ず ね つけ

唐子図根付

Edo period 19th century, Japan

lacquer

Gift of Mr Geoffrey Innes in memory of Mr Guy Innes, 1960

137-D5

JAPANESE

Inro with ancient pine tree

Oimatsu zu inrō

おいまつ ず いんろう

老松図印籠

Edo period 19th century, Japan
lacquer on wood, gold, gold alloy, copper
alloy, ivory, silk

JAPANESE

Netsuke of chrysanthemum

Kikuka netsuke

きく か ね つけ

菊花根付

Edo period 19th century, Japan
ivory

Felton Bequest, 1921

2292-D3

YAMADA Jōkasai

Japanese active 19th century

Inrō with carp climbing a waterfall

Koi ni taki zu inrō

こい たき ず いんろう

鯉に滝図印籠

Edo period 19th century, Japan

lacquer, gold alloy, gold, silver, metal, ivory, silk (cord)

JAPANESE

Netsuke of boy with drum

Danji ni taiko netsuke

だんじ たいこ ねつけ

男児に太鼓根付

Edo period 19th century, Japan

ivory

Felton Bequest, 1921

2291-D3

KORYŪSAI

Japanese active 19th century

Inrō with mountain and village landscape

Bōkyō zu inrō

ぼうきょうず いんろう

望郷図印籠

Edo period 19th century, Japan

lacquer on paper (maki-e), mother-of-pearl, gold, agate, silk, (other materials)

JAPANESE

Netsuke of puppy dog

Kuji netsuke

くじねつけ

狗児根付

Edo period 19th century, Japan
ivory

Felton Bequest, 1921

2290-D3

Samurai in times of leisure

In their leisure time, leading samurai held authoritative and educated social positions, wore luxuriant robes, commissioned beautifully crafted and painted works of art and employed man servants to assist with daily requirements. *Inrō* – compartmentalised boxes attached by a cord and toggle (*netsuke*) to the waist sash of a male kimono – became essential accessories and were a further expression of the samurai's cultivated tastes. Various motifs appear on *inrō*: one hundred cranes represent longevity; the ancient pine tree symbolises wisdom and resilience; the carp swimming up a waterfall symbolises strength and determination; pilgrims represent religious piety; and a traditional mountain and village landscape symbolises nostalgia for a simple and contemplative life close to nature.

Felice BEATO

Italian/English 1832–1909, worked
throughout Asia and Europe 1853–90

Samurai doctor and patient

Ishi to kanja

い し かんじゃ
医師と患者

1866–68 Japan

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of
The Herald & Weekly Times Limited, Fellow, 2001

2001.4

Felice BEATO

Italian/English 1832–1909, worked
throughout Asia and Europe 1853–90

No title (Samurai with pistol and sword)

Bushi ni kenjū to katana

ぶし けんじゅう かな

武士に拳銃と刀

1860s –70s Japan

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Gerstl Bequest, 2000

2000.233

JAPANESE

High ranking formal jacket and trousers

Hitatare

ひた たれ

直垂

Edo period 1600–15–1868 Japan
silk

Acquired, 1889

460.7-8-D2

Images of bravery, blood and bravado

During the closing decades of Japan's feudal era, artists working in the popular and greatly loved art form of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints produced some of the most visually imaginative and dramatic images in the history of Japanese art. Popular subjects included stories of legendary samurai and their superhuman feats of bravery, as well as action-packed images of current-day traumatic events in which samurai sacrificed their lives for the emperor and for the preservation of a nation guided by the ideals of Bushido.

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI

歌川 国芳

Japanese 1797–1861

Ushiwaka overcoming

Benkei at Gojō Bridge

Yoshitsune Ichidai-ki Gojō no

hashi no zu

よしつねいちだい き ごじょうのはしのず

義経一代記五条ノ橋之図

Edo period c. 1839 Japan

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1909

432.a-c-2

This print illustrates the famous first encounter between the young samurai Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159–1189), also known as Ushiwaka-maru, and the warrior monk Benkei at Kyoto's Gojō Bridge. Benkei was informed by a swordsmith that upon collecting 1000 swords a magical blade could be forged for his personal use. Benkei had successfully challenged all those who crossed Gojō Bridge and amassed 999 swords when the twelve-year-old Yoshitsune approached as his 1000th challenger. Benkei was confident of an easy victory; however, the young warrior's superior acrobatic skills and lightning-quick sword were too much for Benkei who, defeated, pledged to become Yoshitsune's dedicated follower.

Utagawa YOSHITORA

歌川 芳虎

Japanese active 1850s –80s

The Night Attack of Kumasaka at Akasaka Station in Mino province *Mino no kuni Akasaka shuku Kumasaka yoiuchi no zu*

みののくにあかさかしゅくくまさかよいうちのず
美濃国赤坂宿熊坂夜討之図

Edo period 1860 Japan
colour woodblock

Purchased, 1992

AS12.a-c-1992

This is another print illustrating an episode in the life of the popular young samurai hero Yoshitsune. In 1174 Yoshitsune joined the travelling group of a wealthy gold merchant, Kaneuri Kichiji. When they stopped for the night at Akasaka in Mino province, Kinbai and his group was attacked by the notorious bandit Kumasaka Chōhan and his gang of outlaws. Caught in a dramatic beam of light shone from a Japanese torch-lantern, here we see Yoshitsune fighting two opponents simultaneously – striking one on the shoulder with his sword as he extends his fan to block a blow from the giant outlaw chieftain Kumasaka.

Utagawa YOSHITSUYA

歌川 芳艶

Japanese 1822–66

The death of Kusunoki

Masatsura

Kusunoki Masatsura uchijini

no zu

くすのきまさつらうちじに の ず

楠正行討死之図

Edo period 1862 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1993

AS9.a-c-1993

In this adrenaline-filled print we see the famous fourteenth-century general Kusunoki and two fellow warriors battling through a storm of arrows at the battle of Sakainoura in 1348. In the poetic tradition of many samurai, before his final battle Kusunoki composed the following death poem, brought to life in this melodramatic woodblock print:

I have a feeling

I will not be returning,

so among the names

of those who died by the bow

I inscribe my own.

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI

歌川 国芳

Japanese 1797–1861

Kataoka Dengoemon

**Takafusa, No. 15 from the
Stories of the true loyalty of
the faithful samurai**

Seichū gishi den Kataoka

Dengoemon Takafusa jūgo

せいちゅうぎ し でん かたおか でん ご え もん たか

誠忠義士傳 片岡傳五石衛門高

ふさ じゅうご
房 十五

Edo period 1847 Japan
colour woodblock

Gift of Joanna King, 2013

2013.1032

These two prints are from Kuniyoshi's famous series featuring each of the forty-seven *rōnin* (masterless samurai) from one of the most famous stories in Japanese history, the *Chūshingura* (*Tale of the Loyal Retainers*). The story concerns a group of loyal samurai whose leader was compelled to perform ritual suicide after assaulting a villainous court official. After patiently waiting and planning for more than a year, the group avenges their master's death in a dramatic assassination attack. Although committing murder, the *rōnin* had fulfilled their duty and loyalty to their deceased lord. In turn, they could die honourable deaths by performing their own ritual suicide.

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI

歌川 国芳

Japanese 1797–1861

**Yata Gorōemon Suketake,
No. 36 from the Stories of
the true loyalty of the faithful
samurai**

*Seichū gishi den Yata
Gorōemon Suketake*

sanjūroku

せいちゆうぎ し でん や た ご ろ う え もん す け
誠忠義士傳 矢多五郎右衛門祐
たけ さんじゅうろく
武 三十六

Edo period 1847 Japan
colour woodblock

Gift of Joanna King, 2013

2013.1031

The revenge attack of the forty-seven *rōnin* (masterless samurai) took place on a snowy winter night in 1703. Each of the *rōnin* makes his way through the streets of Edo disguised in black-and-white zigzag firemen's coats. After scaling the walls of their antagonist's compound, a frantic battle took place. This print features the samurai Yata Goroemon Suketake running among pieces of broken paper screens (*shoji*) and scattered flowers, his sword raised with both hands. To this day the forty-seven *rōnin* are regarded as cultural heroes and are honoured with traditional holidays, as well as in countless kabuki plays, movies, novels and manga.

Tsukioka YOSHITOSHI

月岡 芳年

Japanese 1839–92

**The death of the rebel
leaders of the Kumamoto
uprising**

***Kumamoto bōdōzokkai
uchijini no zu Meiji shōshi
nenkankiji***

くまもと ぼうどう ぞっかいうちじに の ず
熊本暴動賊魁討死之図

めい じしょうし ねんかん き じ
明治小史年間記事

from the A short history of the Meiji Period:

A record of events series

Edo period 1876 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1992

AS16.a-c-1992

The Kumamoto uprising, also known as the Shinpūren Rebellion, was one of a number of uprisings that took place in the early Meiji period in reaction to the new government's policy of modernisation (Westernisation) that was bringing change to traditional Japanese cultural values, dress and society. This print was published in the same year as the event, as a special edition with narrative description included in the upper right. The dramatic and blood-drenched scene can be interpreted as a romantic and somewhat melancholic view of the final futile attempts by the samurai to preserve the traditions of Bushido.

Tsukioka YOSHITOSHI

月岡 芳年

Japanese 1839–92

The suicide of Saigō Takamori

Saigō Takamori seppuku no zu

さいごう たか もり せつ ぶく の ず

西郷隆盛切腹図

Edo period 1877 Japan

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1993

AS4.a-c-1993

Saigō Takamori was one of the most influential samurai in Japanese history and is often referred to as ‘the last true samurai’. Saigō was instrumental in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate and establishing the new Meiji government, but his own conservative attitudes soon clashed with the new government’s policy of modernisation and reform. He returned to his native Satsuma province and in 1877 led a rebellion against the new government. After seven months of intense fighting, the revolt was put down. The exact manner of Saigō’s death is unknown. One popular initial account was that he performed ritual suicide after trying to escape by sea.

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