



7714            A small furosaki paper screen (for tea ceremony use) with six types of Camellias (tsubaki)  
Japan 19th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 36cm x W. 178.5cm (14¼" x 70½")

The furosaki byobu (screen) is specifically designed for use in chanoyu (tea ceremony). Placed in the corner of the tea house it denotes the season or whatever theme the host has chosen to portray. It works as a backdrop for the kama (kettle) and also for the various precious objects such as the koro (incense burner) and chawan (tea bowl) used during the performance of this ancient ritual.

Japanese interest in tsubaki (camellia) dates to early historical times, songs recounting events of the fourth and fifth centuries referred to the plant as sacred, celebrating the brilliance of its flowers and the sturdiness of its leaves. From the Muromachi period (15th century) onwards, camellia often appear as a design motif for works of art symbolising the samurai spirit and the transience of life. One of the oldest camellia trees in Japan dates is from the 16th century and can be found in the garden of Ryoanji-temple, Kyoto.

In the Momoyama period (16th-17th century), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), a preeminent daimyo who unified Japan in 1590, favoured the display of camellia at the tea ceremony and since then this flower became one of the most popular blooms appreciated by tea masters. Even a single spray of camellia has a dignified presence and can represent a season, camellia dominate tea houses in winter and are known as the queen of flowers. Camellias were long favoured by the aristocracy, nobles and daimyo and gained further popularity during the Edo period when members of the lower echelons of society began to practice chanoyu. The camellia blooms in winter to early spring in Japan's temperate zones and represents November or December in traditional floral calendars.

