



6749 □ A two-fold paper screen painted in ink and colour on a buff and gold ground with a pair of yamadori (copper pheasants) and their young on a riverbank beneath a rocky outcrop.

Japan 17th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 71½" x W. 81¼" (181cm x 206cm)

The lacquer frame has gilt metal mounts in the form of the Matsudaira mon (family crest). The Matsudaira were a Japanese samurai clan who claimed descent from the Minamoto clan. The Matsudaira originated in and took their name from Matsudaira village in Mikawa Province (modern-day Aichi Prefecture). Over the course of its history, the clan produced many branches, most of which also centred around Mikawa Province. In the 16th century, the main Matsudaira line experienced a meteoric rise to success during the leadership of Matsudaira Motoyasu, who later took the name Tokugawa Ieyasu and became the first Tokugawa shogun. Ieyasu's line formed what became the Tokugawa shogunate; however, the branches retained the Matsudaira surname. Other branches were formed in the decades after Ieyasu, which bore the Matsudaira surname. Some of those branches were also of daimyō status.

After the Meiji Restoration and the abolition of the han system, the Tokugawa and Matsudaira clans became part of the new nobility.

A native species to Japan, the yamadori (copper pheasant) is often depicted in art. Early Japanese history credits the bird as being an official messenger during the so called “Age of the Gods”, the period prior to recorded history accounted for by myths of the country's divine creation. This early appearance of the bird may reflect its imperial associations in China, kinkei (golden pheasants) also became symbols of imperial authority in Japan.

The pheasant is mentioned in the Man'yōshū (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), Japan's first poetry anthology compiled in the eighth century and to this day remains a poetic symbol of spring when its distinctive mating call can be heard.

For a set of four fusuma with similar subject matter see: The 100th Anniversary of the Kyoto National Museum Special Exhibition. The Age of Gold, Days of Dreams, In Praise of the Paintings of the Momoyama Period, pp. 310-311, pl 70.