



6907 Katsuyama Takugan (1747-1824)

A two-fold paper screen painted in ink and colour on a gold ground with a taiko (drum), aki-no-nanakusa (the seven flowers of autumn) and butterflies

Signed: Hōgen Takugan kore wo zusu (this was painted by Hōgen Takugan)

Seal: Yōko\*

Japan 18th/19th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 143cm x W. 174cm (56½" x 68¾")

Katsuyama Takugan was born Katsuyama Chūki. Gō (art names): Kakureishi; Takugan.

Takugan was a Kanō School painter, born in Kyoto. He was the son and pupil of Katsuyama Takushū.

Before 1801, he received the honorary title of hōgen, demonstrating that he was regarded by his contemporaries as an artist of considerable ability. Takugan also studied waka poetry with Ozawa Roan (1723-1801), the doyen of waka poetry in late-eighteenth century Kyoto and leading kokugaku (the study of ancient Japanese literature and culture) scholar.

Takugan, like his father, belonged to Kasuga Edokoro, which was the atelier attached to the Kasuga Shrine in Nara, and produced paintings for the court and nobility. His father and the following three

generations are known as the Katsuyama School, and belonged to the tradition of the Kyō-Kanō School (The Kanō School in Kyoto).

Takugan worked predominantly in Nara and Kyoto, but occasionally also worked in Edo. Most of his existing works can be found in temples in Kyoto and Nara, and he was also involved in decorating the Imperial Palace in Kyoto in the Kansei era (Jan, 1789-Feb, 1801). Takugan excelled at Buddhist painting, and was also known to have painted portraits, and paintings for book illustrations.

The thunderous, rumbling sound of the taiko, lit. 'big drum' has been a part of the culture and tradition of Japan for centuries. The origin of taiko harks back to the time of the gods and the legend of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess:

Once, at a time more distant than human memory, the storm god Susanowo-no-Mikoto left his home on the seas and began to ravage the land. His wild rages so upset his sister Ameterasu Ohmikami that she fled to a cave and, rolling a boulder over its entrance, vowed never to show herself again.

The world fell into darkness and devils sprang from their hiding places to roam freely across the earth in its endless night. Knowing that all life was doomed without Ameterasu Ohmikami, the gods of heaven and earth gathered at the cave's mouth. They reasoned. They begged. They threatened. At last, they tried to force the rock from the cave's entrance but Ameterasu Ohmikami would not budge from her refuge. All creation seemed doomed.

Until, Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto, a small goddess with a face creased by age and laughter, made her way into the midst of the other gods and declared that she would coax Ameterasu from the cave. The mightier gods looked at the old woman and sneered. Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto smiled back at them, poured out a huge sake barrel, jumped on its head, and began a wild dance.

The loud, hard, frenetic pounding of her feet made a sound unlike any ever heard before. The rhythm was so lively, so infectious that soon the other gods, caught in Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto's revelry, began to dance and sing as well. Music filled the earth and the celebration became so raucous that Ameterasu Ohmikami peeked out from her cave and, seeing the joyful faces, brought her light to the earth again. Thus, Ameterasu Ohmikami's light returned to earth, Susanowo-no-Mikoto was banished, and taiko music was born.

The aki no nanakusa (Seven Flowers of Autumn) theme dates to the eight century Man'yōshū (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) collection of waka poems and has continued to be a favourite theme in Japanese painting, poetry, and literature ever since. As established in the Man'yōshū, they consist of hagi (bushclover), susuki (Japanese pampas grass), kuzu (arrowroot), nadeshiko (fringed pink), onimaeshi (golden lace), fujibakama (thoroughwort) and kikyō (bellflower).

The seventh flower of the aki-no-nanakusa in the Man'yōshū is asagao. Asagao is now the name given to morning glory, although the flower that appears in earlier paintings to represent the asagao is what is now called the kikyō (bellflower).

A notable absence in the traditional seven flowers of autumn is kiku (chrysanthemum), which is not native to Japan and was only introduced from China after the time that the Man'yōshū was written. This flower is, however, celebrated in its own right at the festival of the ninth day of the ninth month, the chōyō festival. In the Edo period (1615-1868), the chōyō festival was made one of the officially recognised seasonal Five Festivals. Because this autumn festival is held in the season in which the kiku flourishes, it is also called the Chrysanthemum Festival. During the Edo period, beginning with each daimyō, people gathered at Edo Castle, held a chōyō ceremony and celebrated it with kiku sake: wine in which kiku petals had been steeped. Court nobles also rubbed their bodies with the night dew of kiku as it was believed to deter evil spirits and to prolong life.

Kiku viewing was also a pastime for people living in Edo. The Edo period was a time when gardening boomed and from the early Edo period, as enthusiasm for gardening grew, different types of various species were produced and flower shows for new types of kiku called kikuawase (chrysanthemum matching) were also held amongst the people.

Japanese interest in the kiku as a theme for poetry also developed during the Heian period. At that time, with the evolution of a native artistic sensibility heavily influenced by the passing seasons, the flower gained its place as one of the premier symbols of autumn. In many instances, the kiku appears in ensemble motifs with all or some of the Seven Grasses of Autumn, and it is sometimes included in enumerations of this group.

Flowers blossoming

in autumn fields -

when I count them on my fingers

they then number seven

The flowers of bush clover, eulalia, arrowroot,  
pink, patrinia, also, mistflower, and morning faces flower.

Yamanoue Okura (c. 660 - 733)

Works by the artist can be found in: The Honen-In Temple, Kyoto (painting of a dragon); The Tokuyuji Temple, Nara (fifty fusuma paintings by Takugan and Kanō Eisho); Zurinji Temple, Tokyo (Nehan-zu - Nirvana painting); Tsuruga City Municipal History Museum, Fukui Prefecture (portrait of Ichinomiya Chozo, decorative-sword maker); National Diet Library, Tokyo (ougi no ki - Illustration of Fans, a collaborative work of book illustrations with Nishimura Yoshitada 1728-1794).

nb: \*The characters used in the word 'Yōko' of the seal are translated literally as 'Important' and 'Storage'. This may refer to the fact that Takugan was granted privileged access to the paintings and archives stored at the Kasuga Shrine, and other important temples.



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