



7772 A six-fold screen depicting Tartars hunting in a mountain landscape amongst golden clouds

Ink, colour and gold leaf on paper

Kano School, Japan 17th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 166cm x W. 374cm (65½" x 147¼")

This screen depicts Tartars (Tatars), or specifically Mongols, hunting wild animals in a mountainous landscape with snow-capped peaks and a waterfall in the distance. The hunters full of character dynamically enjoying their activities. The hunting scene of Tartars was a popular subject for paintings in the Momoyama and early Edo period. It was especially in a favoured by the Kano School, the official painters for the Shogun and the elite military class.

During the Momoyama (1568-1603) and early Edo (1603-1868) many castles were built in Japan. To decorate these majestic buildings, artists produced large-scale paintings with various subjects for interior walls, screens and fusuma (sliding doors), often embellished with dazzling gold leaf. Hunting was regarded as the art of archery and horsemanship as well as associated with brave spirit – it was certainly an appealing subject for the samurai who commissioned the paintings.

From the mid-16th to early 17th century, since the first arrival of Europeans to Japan in 1543, the cultural exchanges between Japanese and Portuguese as well as Chinese were active through the Nanban trade ("Southern barbarian trade"). The so-called Nanban screens depicting the arrival scenes of the Europeans became very popular in Japan as the abundance of luxury goods brought from abroad

was seen as prosperity and happiness. It is no wonder that the subject of Tartars was welcomed at a time when people were fascinated by the exotic subjects.

The Kano School was the largest and most influential painting school in Japanese history and it dominated the centre of the Japanese art scene from the middle of the Muromachi period to the end of Edo period. The school worked closely with the ruling classes and the elite of Japanese society receiving countless commissions to paint the walls, sliding doors and screens of the palaces, castles and temples as well as smaller paintings such as hanging scrolls and fans.

The school was founded in the middle of the 15th century by Kano Masanobu (1434-1530) an artist who excelled in the fashionable Chinese-style suiboku-ga (ink painting) of the Muromachi period (1392-1573). Having inherited the tradition of ink painting from his father, Kano Motonobu (1477?-1559) began to introduce the sentiment of the classical Japanese-style Tosa School, establishing a new painting style and the basis of a hereditary family tradition of painting which flourished for over 400 years.

During the Edo period (1603-1867) the Kano School was patronised by the Shogun and became the official painters working for the newly established leaders making it the most powerful painting school Japan has ever known.

There are a number of surviving examples of the similar subjects housed in the museums worldwide including:

A six-fold screen, Edo period, Kyoto National Museum

A pair of six-fold screens, Kano School, 16th-17th century, Edo period, Kyushu National Museum
(accession no. A69)

A two-fold screen, Kano School, 16th-17th century, Momoyama period, Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

A pair of six-fold screens, Kano School, 17th century, Momoyama/Edo period, Musee Guimet, Paris
(accession no. MA6750.1)

A six-fold screen, School of Hasegawa Tōhaku (Japanese, 1539-1610), 17th century, Edo period,
Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN (accession no. 2000.8) (<http://collection.imamuseum.org/artwork/50299/>)

A six-fold screen, first half of 1600s, Edo period, The Cleveland Museum of Art, OH (accession no.

2015.504)

A pair of six-fold screens, Kano Soshu (Japanese, 1551-1601), Momoyama period, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (accession no. B69D18.a and B69D18.b)

A two-fold screen, Attribute to Kano Eitoku, latter half of 1500s, Momoyama period, Museum of Fine Arts Boston (accession no. 11.4450)

A six-fold screen, Kano School, 17th century, Edo period, Museum of Fine Arts Boston (accession no. 11.4167)

A six-fold screen, Kano School, 17th century, Edo period, Museum of Fine Arts Boston (accession no. 11.6367)





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