Two Visions of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering:
A Reconsideration of the Socio-Political Significance of the Paintings
by Kanō Sansetsu and Ikeno Taiga in the Tokugawa Period (1615 - 1868)

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Abstract

This is a comparative study that focuses on two Tokugawa-era Japanese paintings by Kanō Sansetsu (1590-1651) and Ikeno Taiga (1723-1776), both of whom depicted the theme of Rantei (Lanting in Chinese, meaning the Orchid Pavilion Gathering), a popular subject based on the refined pastimes of Chinese literati. Although these paintings illustrate the same theme, they are clearly distinct: the work of Sansetsu exemplifies the orthodox Kanō School, while that of Taiga represents the heterodox Nanga School.

This paper uses an analysis of these paintings to investigate how the different visualizations of political identity were between the “ruling” samurai and the “ruled” commoners classes. The Kanō School, patronized by the Tokugawa regime, employed its heavily japanized kanga (Chinese painting) style as a perfect vehicle of the japanized Chinese Neo-Confucianism to propagate its authority of rulership. The Nanga School developed among the commoners while they were establishing their own cultural identity during a quest for a new social order. Based on the heterodoxical Confucian teaching, it manifested rebellion against the Tokugawa militarism. In doing so, Nanga artists deliberately avoided the Kanō style but directly pursued the artistic inspiration after the Chinese scholarly tradition.

This paper concludes that these two versions of the Rantei paintings reflect two social visions: a Kanō social order in which the samurai tradition justified the hereditary right to power, wealth, and their ruling status; and a Nanga society in which commoners --- through education --- could be part of the ruling class.
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Introduction: Visions of the “Ruling” and the “Ruled”

This is a comparative study focusing on two Tokugawa-era (1615-1868) paintings by Kanō Sansetsu (1590-1651) and Ikeno Taiga (1723-1776), both depicting the theme of Rantei (Lan Ting in Chinese, meaning the Orchid Pavilion Gathering), a popular subject based on an actual event of the refined pastimes of Chinese literati. Sansetsu painted his Rantei with ink and color on applied gold leaf on paper in the format of two pairs of eight-panel byōbu (folding screens) in the seventeenth century. The production of this work was commissioned by the Zuishin-In, a prominent Buddhist Temple in Kyoto, where it still remains. Taiga painted his version with ink and pale color on paper on a six-panel byōbu in 1763, as a commercial enterprise in the Nishijin district, in Kyoto. Taiga’s work was in a private collection until 1985 when it was purchased by the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art.

Indebted as I am to the many scholars who have previously contributed to studies in this field, in this thesis, I propose that these Rantei paintings are crucial for a study of the political

1 Some scholars think that the Tokugawa or Edo period began at 1600 when the first Tokugawa Shōgun Ieyasu (1542-1616) became the actual ruler of Japan by overcoming his opponents at the Sekigahara battle. However, I follow others, such as Sasaki Jōhei, who feel that the year 1615 (when Ieyasu destroyed Toyotomi Hideyori, the heir of the previous unifier Hideyoshi, in the Summer Battle of Osaka) more appropriate to mark the beginning of this period. This battle is significant, especially in an art historical perspective, because it saw the complete destruction of Toyotomi’s Osaka castle that was lavished with Momoyama paintings. Sasaki Jōhei, ed., Edo kaiga I Nihon no bijutsu (1987), 17.


conditions of Tokugawa society, which was stratified into four classes: samurai (military men), peasants, artisans, and merchants. Among these four classes, the main social division was between the “ruling” samurai and the “ruled” commoners that included everyone else. Although these Rantei paintings illustrate the same theme, they are clearly distinct from each other: the work of Sansetsu exemplifies the orthodox Kanō School; and that of Taiga represents the heterodox Nanga School. By analyzing these paintings, this thesis will attempt to unveil the different visualizations of the political identities of the “ruling” and the “ruled” classes within the Tokugawa social system.

**Significance of the Rantei Theme**

The historical Rantei (Orchid Pavilion Gathering) in China took place in the year 353, when Wang Xizhi (321-79), the great prose-writer and calligrapher of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-419), invited forty-one prominent scholars to take part in the annual Spring Purification Festival. According to tradition, scholars congregated in a natural setting to bathe, sing, and drink wine in observance of this holiday. Wang Xizhi’s famous retreat, Rantei, was located on the northern slope of the Kuai Ji Hill near Shanyin, Zhejiang Province. The scholars sat by a sparkling winding stream, floated wine cups on the water, and competed in composing poetry. If a scholar could not compose a poem before the passing of a wine cup, he had to empty the cup.

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At this event, Wang Xizhi improvised a passage of 324 words that is called *Rantei jo* (Lan Ting xu in Chinese), meaning the Preface of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering (fig. 3). This became the preface to the collection of poems composed by his guest-scholars on that commemorative day. In this preface, Wang Xizhi recorded not only the pleasures of the gathering, but also his speculations on the transience of life. His lyrical prose won tremendous fame for its literary merit as well as for the excellence of its calligraphy.

The creative spirit that blossomed with this work touched the visual arts of later generations, and a genre of illustrating the *Rantei* theme became extremely popular in East Asia. Numerous paintings depicting this genre in diverse forms exist not only in China, but also in Japan. Two titles — *Rantei Kyokusui zu* (literally, The Winding Water of the Orchid Pavilion) and *Rantei Shūkei zu* (The Orchid Pavilion Purification Gathering) — were invented to roughly categorize the *Rantei* genre into two different aspects. While the title *Rantei Kyokusui zu* indicates that the painting was produced for the purpose of entertaining its viewers, the other title, *Rantei Shūkei zu* implies a more scholarly perspective.

Preferred Visual Languages of Sansetsu and Taiga

Works of art are human productions that often reflect their maker’s historical environment. In this sense, an artist — consciously or sub-consciously — functions as a commentator, who speaks in a visual language to record what is around him. In the case of the *Rantei* paintings, through keen observation of the Tokugawa environment from distinct

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6 "Rantei jo: Five versions by the Eastern Jin Dynasty period Wang Xizhi." Chūgokuho shosen vol. 15. (Tokyo: Nigensha, 1988). 35. Robert L. Thorp and Richard E. Vinograd, *Chinese Art and Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001), 176. The original prose was considered such a fine work of calligraphy that the Tang dynasty Emperor Taizong (reigned 626-649) buried it with him in his tomb in the mid-seventh century. This incident elevated this prose/calligraphy, which was already highly respected to an even higher station. The works surviving today in the form of ink rubbings, such as the Dingwu Version, are copied from stone tablets engraved during the Song dynasty period (960-1279).
perspectives, each artist --- Kanō Sansetsu (a samurai painter) and Ikeno Taiga (a town painter) --- eloquently expressed his vision using a meticulously chosen “stylistic” and “symbolic” program.

In order to properly understand the visual language used by Sansetsu in his Rantei, which falls under the category of Kyokusui zu, in the first chapter of this thesis, I will begin a study of the Kanō School; I will follow the school’s history from its establishment in the Muromachi period (fifteenth century) up to the early Tokugawa period (1615-1688), the time of Sansetsu, (active in the first half of the seventeenth century) when the samurai elite were the major patrons and producers of arts. Then I will argue how this school as official shogunal painters, patronized by the Tokugawa regime, employed its heavily japanized kanga (Chinese painting) style as the perfect vehicle of the japanized Chinese Neo-Confucianism, in order to propagate the authority of the rulership. Since the Kanō painters strongly emphasized the samurai notion of hereditary rights, their kanga tradition was the exclusive property of their legitimate heirs, and was passed from one generation to the next through practicing the powder tracing technique.

In the second chapter, I will study the historical environment of Taiga who painted a version of Rantei Shūkei zu, when the Kanō style became an “effortless routine”. This study examines how the Nanga (Japanese version of Chinese literati painting) movement was developed among the commoners as they established their own cultural identity during their quest for a new social order based on heterodoxical Confucian teaching, which rebelled against Tokugawa militarism. In order to differentiate their sensibility from the main stream, Nanga artists deliberately avoided the Kanō style, directly drawing their artistic inspiration from the

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7 Penelope Mason, History of Japanese Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 205. “Kanga and kara-e both mean Chinese painting. The difference is the period for which they are used: kara-e is used for Chinese styles of the Heian and Kamakura periods, while kanga is used for Chinese-style art of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, particularly for work associated with Kanō school styles. The comparable term for earlier Japanese-style painting is yamato-e.”
Chinese scholarly tradition. In opposition to the Kanō’s emphasis on heredity, Nanga artists such as Taiga stressed “educability” (a term coined for human ability to be educated), the belief that through education everyone could climb up the social ladder. Pax-Tokugawa was a peace brought by military force. The ideal society perceived by the non-samurai Taiga was an egalitarian utopia where all people could live in peace and harmony. This was not enforced by militarism, but was achieved via Zen Buddhist and Confucian philosophy.

The third chapter compares the two different styles used in the Rantei paintings, both originally derived from Chinese painting styles. Since the pre-historic era, Japan has “borrowed” visual as well as literal languages from its chief cultural mentor, China. Under the sakoku (self-imposed seclusion) policy, Tokugawa Japan continued this practice of cultural “borrowing”, but in a multi-faceted and highly complex manner, in order to maintain its own agenda. Hence, the different styles chosen by Sansetsu and Taiga in the Rantei paintings --- directly and indirectly suggest their Chinese derivation. The static style of Kanō School is based on that of the Chinese Imperial Academy, represented, for example, in the handscroll painting Pure and Remote Views of Streams and Mountains (fig. 4) by Xia Gui (active early thirteenth century); and use of the dynamic Nanga style indicates the painter’s conscious effort to imitate the wenren (literati) style epitomized in another handscroll, Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains (fig. 5) by Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). I will organize the two Rantei paintings in the order of: 1). landscape; 2). architectural element; and 3). human figure, to reveal how Sansetsu and Taiga strove to demonstrate their understanding of Wang Xizhi’s prose, and how they ultimately visualized their political identities by choosing specific styles.

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8 Christine Guth, Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city 1615-1868. (New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 1996), 15. Sakoku (the self-imposed seclusion) policy was formally ordered by the third Tokugawa Shōgun Iemitsu (1604-51), in order to exclude the influence of Christianity, and to prevent the daimyō from making European alliances.
Chapter four compares the two sets of visual programs displayed in these Rantei paintings, and examines how Sansetsu and Taiga implied different meanings in each pictorial element. Since the author of the Rantei preface, Wang Xizhi, has a complex background, there are many possible ways to interpret his work. For instance, Sansetsu, a samurai artist who played the role of cultural aristocrat, interpreted the Rantei gathering as a noble scholar’s garden party held in an enclosed artificial environment. In contrast, Taiga, a celebrated local painter who had a close association with cultural and intellectual circles, especially gathered around the Ōbaku Zen temple which hosted Chinese refugee-scholars, understood the Rantei theme as a manifestation of the “uncontaminated” hermit-scholar’s communal society. Thus, this study attempts to analyze how Sansetsu presented the Rantei image to symbolize his and his patron’s prestigious status, while Taiga visualized his desire for a more egalitarian “brotherly” community of scholar-monks.

Finally, throughout this thesis, I attempt to address the theory that the two versions of Rantei paintings reflect distinct socio-political visions: in the case of Kanō, the samurai tradition strove to justify a hereditary right to power and wealth in order to monopolize their ruling status; and a Nanga School of thought in which cultured and intellectual commoners believed that, through education, everyone with ability could be a part of the ruling class regardless of family background.
Chapter 1: Painting as a Way of Propaganda

Kanō Sansetsu (1590-1651), the leading figure of the Kanō School’s Kyoto branch, painted a version of the Rantei Kyokusui zu, literally The Winding Water of the Orchid Pavilion (fig. 1a,b) in the seventeenth century. This work is painted with ink and color on applied gold leaf on paper in the format of two pairs of eight-panel byōbu (folding screens), commissioned by and housed in the Zuishin-In, a prominent Buddhist Temple in Kyoto. The size of each screen is 107.50 cm in height and 237.60 cm in width; the large size indicates that this was produced for public viewing. Reading the visual language chosen by Sansetsu in this work requires understanding of the Kanō School and its shogunal patronage; the Hayashi School (japanized Neo-Confucian orthodoxy); and the powder tracing technique.

The Official Shogunal Painters

The long history of the Kanō School began in the Muromachi period (1338-1573) when the founder, Kanō Masanobu (1434-1530), a samurai artist originally from Izu province (present day Shizuoka prefecture), was appointed as an official shōgunal painter, the so-called goyōeshi, to the Ashikaga Shōgunate in 1481. Masanobu pioneered the kanga (Chinese painting). Up to contemporary times, such Buddhist Temples in Japan have been considered a cultural aristocracy that enjoys wealth and power, while untouched by state rule. They are autonomous and exempt from taxation.

Matsuki Hiroshi, Goyō eshi Kanōke no chi to chikara, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994), 10-33. Tsuji Nobuo, Sengoku jidai Kanōha no kenkyū [Study on the Early Kanō School]: Kanō Motonobu o chūshin ni shite [Motonobu and his Family of Painters]. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1994), 1-26. Masanobu was appointed by the eighth Ashikaga Shōgun Yoshimasa (1436-90), who involved himself in the artistic and cultural activities. During a time of tremendous political instability, Yoshimasa established the Higashiyama (Eastern Hill) culture that stood against the pre-existing Kitayama (Northern Hill) culture, in order to display his power over cultural institutions. Just as Emperor Hui Zong (1082-1135, reigned 1101-25) in the end of Northern Song China (twelfth century) attempted to propagate his political message to wish for the long-lasting prosperity of his court society by institutionalizing the painting academy, Yoshimasa ordered the Kanō painters to produce works that conveyed the positive messages for the Ashikaga regime.
tradition, which later became the hallmark of the Kanō School, by alluding to the painting of Chinese Imperial Academy (shown in fig. 4) of the Song dynasty period (970-1279).  

Perceiving China as the major cultural resource, it was natural for the pre-modern Japanese, Masanobu no exception, to selectively import the "large, philosophical, powerful, monumental, governmental, and permanent" aspects of the Chinese art in order to promote the long-lasting prosperity and power of the Ashikaga Shōgunal Court. This practice of Masanobu is well demonstrated in his hanging scroll, Sansui zu [Landscape] (fig. 6), whose painting theme and style were an attempt to be indistinguishable from its Chinese model. While the Kanō School continued to propagate the political messages of their patrons and to cater to their taste, a process of japanization of the kanga gradually took place through the hands of later generations.

Masanobu’s son Kanō Motonobu (1476-1559) firmly secured the Kanō’s leading position in the painting world during the political instability by taking advantage of the social situation. Motonobu popularized the kanga, which was seen as a sign of power, throughcombining it with the Zen Buddhist painting, already popular among the Muromachi-era audiences. Motonobu’s strategy is reflected in his hanging scroll, Soshi zu [Zen Patriarch Kyōgen Chikuan Sweeping with a Broom] (fig. 7). Motonobu’s style was further transformed by his grandson Kanō Eitoku (1543-90) into one more ostentatious and bold, which suited the prominent daimyō (provincial military lords), who wanted to display their wealth and power during the Momoyama period (1573-1615). Eitoku’s work is exemplified in his fusuma (sliding door) painting, titled

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11 Robert L. Thorp and Richard Ellis Vinograd, Chinese Art and Culture, 254-5. Prior to Emperor Huizong in the end of Northern Song dynasty period (twelfth century), there were court painters, but the Imperial Academy of Painting was not yet officially institutionalized. It was then he formalized his Academy in Kaifeng to produce suggestively political paintings, in order to propagate his rulership, in attempt to insure the prosperity of his court society. This emperor became extremely famous for his participation in the activities of Academy as taste maker, collector, painter, and calligrapher. At the same time, he established the court examination of painting to recruit painters based on stated, ranked criteria, which was called the “Training and Examination of Court Artists.”
Kinshōshoga zu [Four Noble Pastimes of Zither, Go Game, Calligraphy and Painting] (fig. 8). In the early Tokugawa period (1615-1688), the time of peace, when Sansetsu painted his Rantei, the Kanō style reached its full maturity. It was used for the national standard as a completely japonized kanga style that conveyed a “peaceful” samurai aesthetic characterized by orderly geometric designs and increasingly decorative patterns.

The Kanō School continued to function as goyōeshi (official shōgunal painters) for the newly established Tokugawa regime. They were appointed by the first Tokugawa Shōgun Ieyasu (1542-1616), to produce paintings propagating a message that legitimized the Tokugawa rulership. As the Tokugawa-goyōeshi, Kanō artists enjoyed samurai status; they received fixed annual stipends based on the rice harvest, as well as a variety of special privileges, including the right to wear swords and to cut down on the spot any commoners who offended them. Samurai status was exclusively inherited through patriarchal lines. If a family failed to designate a male successor, the Tokugawa system terminated the hereditary line and confiscated their estate. As a part of this system, the Kanō family maintained their institutional strength in the painting world for over two hundred-fifty years, and although artistic expression in the Kanō School became very restricted, they continued to obey this confined social system.

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12 Matsuki, Goyōeshi Kanōke no chi to chikara, 80-107. Eitoku received commissions from the two most powerful military personages, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He finalized the japonization of the kanga tradition that led to the establishment of the entire Momoyama painting style.

13 Matsuki, Goyōeshi Kanōke no chi to chikara, 144-188. Tsuji, Sengoku jidai Kanōha no kenkyū [Study on the Early Kanō School], 31-163. Among Kanō artists, Kanō Tanyū (1602-74), the strategist-painter, played the most significant role in obtaining this official position. The Kanō School was divided into three branches when they became the Tokugawa-goyōeshi. The three branches were: the Kajibashi Kanō lead by Tanyū; the Kibikicho Kanō lead by Naonobu; and the Nakabashi Kanō lead by Yasunobu. Adding the main Kanō branch, there were altogether four Kanō branches that moved from Kyoto to the Tokugawa headquarters at Edo. These Kanō branches were called "Edo-Kanō" as opposed to "Kyo-Kanō" who remained in Kyoto.

14 Varley, Japanese Culture, 149.

The Hayashi School (Japanized Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy)

The heavily japanized *kanga* (Chinese painting) of the Kanō School, epitomized by Sansetsu's *Rantei*, was the perfect vehicle to express the heavily japanized concept of Chinese philosophy. When establishing the Shōgunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu and his heirs attempted to justify their right-to-rule based on the Neo-Confucianism originally taught by the Chinese philosopher Chu Hsi (1130-1200), whose primary concern was a doctrine of reason or principle (*ri* in Japanese; *li* in Chinese). This teaching emphasized the conduct of proper human affairs manifested in a strict hierarchy of the classes, with an emphasis on loyalty to the lords. In this particular sense, it seemed to serve well the Japanese feudal rulers. However, the Chinese philosophy was not exactly workable in the Japanese socio-political system. The largest conflict in imposing Chinese philosophy on Japanese society laid in issues of militarism and heredity. In China, militarism was a subject of disdain, but in Japan, it ranked on the top of the social structure. Furthermore, China's governance was conducted by scholar-officials who were recruited by the examination system, but the Japanese *samurai* positions were strictly based on birthright, marriage or adoption into families.16

In order to solve these problems, the Tokugawa Shōgunate officially appointed philosopher Hayashi Razan (1583-1657), in his 1605 visit to their Nijō castle, to modify the Chinese teaching to fit the current socio-political setting.17 Razan justified the *samurai*’s ruling right by explaining that they were the military aristocracy who should cultivate the arts of peace

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17 Maeda Tamotsu, *Kinsei Nihon no Jugaku to Heigaku* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1996), 86. Wang Chia-hua, “Nicchū Jugaku no hikaku [A Comparative Study between Japanese and Chinese Confucianisms.]” *Higashi Ajia no nakano Nihon rekishi Vol. 5 [Japanese History in East Asia]* (Tokyo: Rikukyō shuppan, 1988), 144. Hayashi Razan was a student of Fujiwara Seika (1563-1619), who left Zen Buddhism and established a new Confucian sect in Tokugawa Japan. Prior to Razan’s visit to Ieyasu, Seika was invited to attend to court by Ieyasu in 1593, and wore his Confucian robe to make a public appearance at the castle of Ieyasu again in 1600. This event symbolized his departure from Buddhism and conversion into Confucianism.
in the same manner as Chinese bureaucrats.\textsuperscript{18} At the same time, he encouraged the maintenance of hereditary right by designating his own heirs as his successors in the Orthodox Shōgunate Confucian Academy for many generations.\textsuperscript{19}

This \textit{samurai} notion of “cultural aristocracy” and “hereditary right” was visually propagated by the Kanō painters. For instance, in 1632, Hayashi Razan personally asked Kanō Sansetsu to paint a series of hanging scrolls, \textit{Rekisei Daiju zō [Twenty-One Portraits of Chinese Confucian Masters]} (fig. 9). According to \textit{Kanō Einō kaden gajikujō (the Kanō family painting records)}, Razan had a close relationship with Sansetsu, since they were both Tokugawa employees.\textsuperscript{20} In this series, Sansetsu expressed the Hayashi teaching of “military aristocrats” playing the “Chinese bureaucrats’ role” in his orderly and schematic pictorial presentation, a typically Japanized \textit{kanga} style. Sansetsu repeated this style in his \textit{Rantei} painting to suggest the same \textit{samurai} political message. Sansetsu’s \textit{Rantei}, therefore, could be said to be a visual statement justifying Tokugawa rulership as explained by the Hayashi School, which highlighted the hierarchical social order inherited through family lines.

\textbf{Monopoly of the Copyright}

The \textit{samurai} notion of hierarchy and heredity is most evident in the way Kanō painters trained themselves to copy the works of their old masters, in order to receive the school’s prestigious diploma. The favorite painting method of the Kanō style, the so-called \textit{funpon} (powder tracing technique), in which the artist makes a copy of a previously painted work using

\textsuperscript{18} Tsunoda, \textit{Sources of Japanese Tradition Volume I}, 346.


powder and tracing paper, was exclusively passed down from generation to generation through the Kanō family line.

In 1680, Kanō Yasunobu, the head of Nakabashi Kanō branch (one of the four Edo-Kanō branches), recorded his opinion that reflected the Kanō attitude toward painting in his Gada yōketsu (the Significances in the way of painting). In it, he stated that "a painter should not rely on his personal artistic talent or intuition, since his brilliance lasts only for himself and is not transmittable to his successors. Copying the masters' works through funpon, in contrast, is the most important practice for a painter who wants his ability of painting to excel, since the technique attained from such a practice has been proven by prior generations before him and lasts for many generations after him".21 Most of the Kanō masters were their forefathers, and original copies of the masters were kept exclusively by the Kanō family. Consequently, only their legitimate heirs had exclusive access to the works of grand masters.22 Use of this technique gave the Kanō painters opportunity to learn the works of their masters, but at a same time, it largely constricted them from exploring individual creativity.

A Brief Biography of Kanō Sansetsu

In 1590 Sansetsu was born in Hizen (Saga prefecture on the island of Kyūshū), as a son of Chiga Dōgen (died in 1605), a middle-class samurai, who moved to Osaka near Kyoto as a sengoku (warring state) warrior. In 1605 when his father died in battle, Sansetsu entered the studio of Kano Sanraku (1559-1635), the founder of Kyo-Kanō (the Kyoto branch of the Kanō school). Sanraku favored Sansetsu, and in 1619 the young artist married Sanraku's daughter.

21 Matsuki, Goyōeshi Kanōke no chi to chikara, 183.

This marriage was a turning point in Sansetsu's life. It allied him to the Kanō hereditary line, and the prestigious samurai painter's family name, “Kanō”. After Sanraku died in 1635, Sansetsu held complete authority over the Kyo-Kanō as Sanraku’s official successor.24

Honchōgashi (the History of Japanese painting), compiled in 1693 by Kanō Einō (1631-97), a son of Sansetsu, claims that the Kyo-Kanō painters, among all the Kanō branches, were the most authentic and legitimate heirs of Kanō Eitoku (1543-90), the greatest Momoyama painter, because the Kyo-Kanō painters were the best copiers of Eitoku's style.25 The Rantei painting is an example of how Sansetsu displayed his access to the Kanō masters’ works when taking full advantage of the funpon technique. The forms and designs of the pictorial elements were copied from the works of Kanō masters, especially those of Eitoku and Sanraku, as well as his own earlier works. Hence, this painting functioned as a visual statement by Sansetsu, proving that he was the legitimate heir of the prestigious Kanō line, and further authenticated the hereditary right of power gained by succession within the samurai families.

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25 Kanō, Kobayashi, ed. Kanōha to Fūzokuga: Edo no kaiga I, 150. The writing of Honchōgashi was actually begun by Sansetsu. After his death, these writings were re-organized and edited by his son Einō who compiled them into this history of Kanō painting. According to this account, Sansetsu’s father-in-law, Sanraku was the most talented among Kanō painters after Eitoku passed away. Sanraku’s extraordinary painting ability was discovered by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98), who introduced him to Kanō Eitoku. Later, he was officially adopted by Eitoku, and inherited his master’s painting style and technique as well as the hereditary line, which was passed down to Sansetsu.
Chapter 2: Painting as Counter-Cultural Expression

Ikeno Taiga (1723-1776), the most important painter of the Nanga (Japanese version of Chinese literati painting) movement, produced the *Rantei Shūkei zu*, literally, *The Orchid Pavilion Purification Gathering* (fig. 2a,b) with ink and pale color on paper on a six-panel *byōbu* screen in 1763. The size of his screen is 158 cm in height and 358 cm in width. This work is paired with a screen depicting another Chinese literary theme, the so-called *Ryūzan Shōkai zu* [*Banquet at Longshan Mountains*], and is housed today in the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art. Although Taiga depicted the same *Rantei* theme as Sansetsu had about one hundred-twenty years earlier, Taiga’s choice of visual language is drastically different from that of Sansetsu. This change of “choice” suggests the different social context around the two artists. In this chapter, I attempt to reveal the social and artistic, as well as ideological situations that induced the birth of the Nanga movement, and ultimately caused Taiga to produce his version of *Rantei* painting.

The Birth of Nanga Movement

When the cultural heights of Genroku (1688-1709) has just passed, a number of heterodoxical art movements developed as a reaction against the socially dominant and artistically restricted Kanō School.26 It was a time when the newly emerging *chōnin* (townspeople) class --- merchants and artisans --- accumulated enough power and wealth to create a kind of counterculture.27

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26 Yoshizawa Chū, *Nihon Nanga Ronkō*. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 113. Such heterodoxical trends include: Rinpa (a revival of *yamato-e* tradition); Maruyama-Shijō (a Japanese realism); Nagasaki; ukiyo-e schools, and so forth.
As opposed to goyōeshi, chōnin painters, such as Taiga, were called machieshi (town painters) who made a living commercially by satisfying the large market for their paintings. Taiga’s Rantei was one of those works produced as commercial enterprise in the business district of Nishijin in Kyoto. Although Kyoto as well as Osaka, were directly governed by the Tokugawa regime, because of the more distant locations, censorship by shōgunal officials was much less frequently enforced there than Edo (present-day Tokyo), where Tokugawa Shōgun Ieyasu established his headquarters. Hence, in the ancient city of Kyoto, the machieshi enjoyed more freedom to explore diverse styles and techniques, and had more opportunity to apply their new fortunes for education than in Edo. Among such innovative painting movements, the Nanga (literally, Southern Painting) was developed among the cultured and educated machieshi, who pursued artistic inspiration from the Chinese wenrenhua (Literati Painting), which was interchangeably called nanshūga (Southern School painting).

Differences between nanpei (Southern-Northern) Schools among Chinese paintings were chiefly theorized by the Ming (1368-1644) scholar-painter, Dong Qichang (1555-1636), who adopted the idea from Zen (Chan in Chinese) Buddhism to analyze the characteristics of painting. These two styles of painting embodied powerful contrasts of approaches and

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27 Prior to the Genroku era, a limited number of very wealthy merchants were involved in shaping the town’s culture by sponsoring movements such as the Rinpa. However, after the Genroku, a mass population of townspeople became involved in the various categories of cultural activities. The changing nature of the Japanese economy in this period was in the process of being transformed from a feudal and agrarian to an urban society. By the end of seventeenth century, the prosperity generated by the economic expansion possible in times of peace had resulted in a peculiar kind of imbalance, in which chōnin were becoming affluent while many samurai, forced to subsist on fixed incomes --- their rice stipend --- in the times of economic inflation, were on the verge of bankruptcy.

28 Guth, *Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city* 1615-1868, 51-84. “many of the artistic developments popularized in Edo had their beginnings in Kyoto”. Later, the Nanga became very popular in Edo, also.


implications. On the one hand, *hokushūga* (the Northern School painting) generally represented the Imperial Academic and professional painting whose style was tied to the gradual enlightenment of the Northern School in Zen Buddhist practice. This style of painting was considered to be skillful, polished, detailed and descriptively realistic, as shown in figure 4, and was often painted in a colorful and decorative manner. On the other hand, *nanshūga* or the Southern School painting represented the scholar-officials’ and amateur-artists’ painting style that was related to sudden enlightenment, and characterized as freer, less realistic, more spontaneous, intuitive and individualistic. The Southern School artists usually preferred ink monochrome and calligraphic brushwork, as well as the repetition and distortion of form that are conspicuous in figure 5.31

In 1799 in his *Kaiji Higen* (the Commentary on paintings), the Edo painter-theorist Kuwayama Gyokushū (1746-1799) wrote the Japanese version of nanpei theory by applying Dong Qichang’s idea. He aligned all of the Kanō painters as well as the Zen Buddhist painters such as Josetsu (active early fifteenth century), Shūbun (active 1423-58), and Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506) with *hokushūga*; while labeling all of the Nanga painters and other heterodoxical trends, including the Rinpa painters, Tawaraya Sōtatsu (died in 1643) and Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716), in his opinion, as the *nanshūga* of Japan.32 Unquestionably, the colorful and decorative design-like style of Rinpa does not fit into the *nanshūga* category, but obviously Gyokushū’s main concern in categorizing the paintings was placed on socio-political issues around a painting rather than style, in much the same way as Dong Qichang emphasized the social background of

artists and their paintings.

Anti-Kanō Sentiment

The most prominent pioneers of the Nanga movement, except Sakaki Hyakusen (1697-1752), were not among the chōnin, but among the samurai --- Gion Nankai (1676-1751) and Yanagisawa Kien (1704-1758). These two artists shared similar backgrounds and experiences. Nankai was born in Kishū province (Wakayama prefecture) and Kien in Yamato province (Nara prefecture). Both were men with many scholarly pursuits who were especially interested in Confucian philosophy. Both were employed by feudal lords, but were resentful towards the Tokugawa socio-political system. Each of them had been accused of some misdemeanor behavior, punished, and later pardoned, but their bitter feelings toward the Tokugawa system never disappeared. Early on, as samurai artists, they received Kanō School painting training, but later, due to their resentment, they deliberately avoided to use the Kanō style and began to seek different artistic possibilities among Chinese painting.

In 1725, at age twenty-one, Kien commented about Kanō’s superficiality in his essay, *Hitorine* (Sleeping alone). In it, Kien described how, when he turned twelve or thirteen, he suddenly realized that “the professional artists of the Kanō School never got below the ‘skin’ (or surface), and none of them reach the ‘bone’ (or essence of the subject)”. Since its establishment in the Muromachi period, the Kanō School had been the most prominent art institution at the center of the painting world. However, because of social restrictions and over-dependence on the funpon technique, its artistic creativity was spoiled. Kien also wrote that “one must study painting from Chinese paintings,” because “the best Japanese artists have always imitated

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Chinese paintings. Kien expressed his anti-Kanō/Tokugawa sentiment by demonstrating his knowledge of the Chinese nanshūga style (fig. 5) and subject matter in a pair of hanging scrolls, *Saiko zu [the Landscape of the West Lake at Hangchow]* (fig. 10).

**Inspiration from Chinese Painting**

On a theoretical level, the Nanga painters deliberately avoided the orthodox Kanō style, and attempted to imitate the nanshūga, in order to visually criticize the Tokugawa social system. Nevertheless, more than “style”, what they aspired to was the “attitude” of the Chinese scholar-artists who deliberately avoided using the hokushūga style, establishing their own style that separated them from the painters serving the corrupted government.

The painting style learned by the Japanese Nanga painters, however, was largely confused, because most of the Chinese painting imported under the Tokugawa sakoku (self-seclusion) policy came from non-literati sources. These sources included: Ōbaku Zen priest-painters who immigrated to Japan after the founding of the Qing dynasty in 1644; Chinese traders who were conducting business in the port city of Nagasaki; and a group of woodblock printed manuals illustrating models for depicting landscape, architecture, and figures in painting elements. Problems with these sources were plenty. Ōbaku priests were not interested in literati landscapes per se, but rather in favor of dōshakuga or Zen subjects such as bamboo and pine tree, and chinzō, portraits of Zen masters. As for the Nagasaki enclave, none of them were first-rate painters. Only Shen Nanpin (active 1725-80) was a trained professional, and he painted in a brilliantly colored, minutely detailed realistic (hokushūga) style of bird-and-flower painting popular in China in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Third, the manuals on painting were

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illustrated with woodblock prints, so that the ink tones of the original painting were configured in single lines and flat colors that stood out in sharp contrast to the white background paper. Such manuals were extremely confusing for the Nanga painters who sought to learn the brush strokes of literati artists.35

**Kogakuha (School of Ancient Study)**

The reaction of Nanga painters against the Kanō School parallels that of the heterodox Kogakuha (School of Ancient Study) Confucians against the orthodox Hayashi School.36 Among Kogakuha scholars, Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) particularly encouraged the Nanga artists to look back to original Chinese paintings, in order to learn the imbedded Chinese philosophy prior to japanization at the hands of the Kanō. Further, Sorai cited the Confucian principal of “educability” --- that is, the ability of humans to be educated, and that through education everyone has the opportunity to contribute, making a better society. Sorai thus, in his *Seidan (Discourse)*, criticized the Hayashi Academy whose heredity monopolized over state education.37 He also showed his disrespect for the militarism manifested by the *bushidō* (the way of *samurai*), and regarded cultural affairs prior to the rise of military rulership with great idealism.38

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38 Yoshikawa Kojiro, *Jinsai; Sorai; Norinaga* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 276. Sorai began his career as a Neo-Confucian scholar employed by Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658-1714) the favored principal retainer of the fifth Tokugawa Shogun Tunayoshi (1680-1709). While employed by Yoshiyasu, Sorai witnessed numerous cases of misconduct and failure of the Tokugawa political system. In 1709 Sorai quit his position at Yoshiyasu’s office and became *machijusha* (the town Confucian). He set himself free by not being employed by any ruling class *samurai*, opened his own private school called “Ken’en (reclusive garden)” in the downtown *Edo*, and thereafter was able to extend his scholarly pursuit in a very liberal manner. As a *machijusha*, Sorai taught his doctrines not only *samurai*, but to *chōnin* (townspeople) including *machīeshi* (the town painters). Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was a relative of Taiga’s mentor Kien, so that the teaching of Sorai was ultimately inherited by Taiga.
At Sorai's downtown school Ken’en, the students were encouraged to study the imported Chinese painting manuals. According to the *Sorai sensei shinrui yuisho sho* (*the Family Records of Master Sorai*) written by a disciple, in 1724 Sorai’s younger brother submitted the *Kaishien gaden* (*Muster Seed Garden Manual of Painting*) a Chinese woodblock printed painting manual to the eighth Tokugawa Shōgun Yoshimune (1716-1745). It was favored by Yoshimune, who ordered it reprinted in Japan. This manual was imported by the Ōbaku Zen priests, who had a close relationship with the Ken’en. Not only as a Chinese painting manual, but also as a painting critique and historiography, *Kaishien gaden* supplied the most important and direct influence of Chinese painting onto the Japanese Nanga movement.39

While Hayashi Razan, who was not able to pronounce the Chinese language properly, used the *kanbun* (Japanese language written in Chinese characters) texts in his school, Ogyū Sorai emphasized the importance of “rhythm” expressed in a “proper pronunciation” of the Chinese language, since this “rhythm” symbolizes the balance between *yin* and *yang*, from which the order of the entire universe originates and rejuvenates. Sorai attempted to articulate this “proper pronunciation” through the “proper brushstroke” of calligraphy.40 In this sense, Sorai encouraged his students to learn how to pronounce the Chinese language, which was necessary in executing the “proper brushstroke” of calligraphy, in order to convey such profound notion of the “rhythm” of the universe. This practice of the “proper brushstroke” was also expressed in painting, so that he further encouraged his students to study the *Kaishien gaden* to learn the “truthful” Chinese expression.

When Ikeno Taiga painted his *Rantei* in the Nanga style, he attempted to reflect the teaching of Sorai through his “proper calligraphic brushstroke” based on “proper pronunciation”  

of Chinese language. On top of the fifth and sixth panels (fig. 2a), Taiga inscribed the passage from *the Rantei jo* in his own calligraphic style using the running script, which is spontaneous and playful. In this way, he demonstrated his ability to harmoniously combine poetry, calligraphy and painting in a single work. This combination is called *sanjue*, the Three Perfections, and was particularly favored by Chinese scholar-artists. Taiga’s use of *sanjue* reflects the teaching of *Kogakuha* scholars who emphasized that the true ideals of Chinese Literati are manifested in the accomplishments of poetry, calligraphy and painting.

Taiga learned the teaching of *Kogakuha* from one of his mentors, Yanagisawa Kien, whose relative Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658-1714) was the ex-employer of Ogyū Sorai. Besides his relation with Kien, Taiga had a number of sources of access to the *Kogakuha* teachings. According to the *Taigadō Kafu (Family Record of Taiga)*, Taiga received one of his many studio names, “Taigadō” from the Confucian scholar, Akutagawa Yōken, who received the *Kogakuha* Confucian education from Hattori Nankaku, the best student of Ogyū Sorai. Taiga also had a close relationship with Emura Hokkai, another renowned *Kogakuha* Confucian scholar.

**A Brief Biography of Ikeno Taiga**

Taiga belonged to the bottom of the Tokugawa social structure. His father Kazaemon was a peasant who moved to Kyoto and became a *chōnin*, working as a money exchanger at the

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40 Yoshikawa, *Jinsai; Sorai; Norinaga*, 7-8, 209.


42 Yoshizawa Chū. *Ikeno Taiga*. (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1973), 132. Although Nankai was the Kogakuha scholar, he learned his painting from the Kanō school, so that he is not considered as a Nanga painter.

silver mint. At the age of three, Taiga already demonstrated his ability in calligraphy by writing the two characters “kin-zan” (fig. 11a). When he was four years old, his father died, leaving only his mother to care for him. Without paternal support, Taiga continued his education, studying with many famous teachers. In 1729, Taiga began to study Chinese Classics and then calligraphy with Monk Terauchi Issei (1673-1740) at Hörinji, a Buddhist temple. The inscription of two verses from the Kokinshū (fig. 11b) is an extant calligraphy executed by Taiga when he was eleven years old, under the instruction of Issei.

Because of his talents and intellectual curiosity, Taiga received support from the cultural and intellectual circles, gathered around the Ōbaku Zen Buddhist community, which hosted Chinese scholar-monks. In 1730, Taiga was introduced to the Ōbaku Zen temple of Manpukuji at Uji where the real Chinese culture was radiating outward. Taiga performed his calligraphy there, and was immediately recognized as a child prodigy by the two principal Chinese Ōbaku monks, the twelfth abbot, Kōdōgenchō Zenshi (1666-1753) and Jōsan Oshō. They composed poetry praising Taiga’s artistic ability, calling him “shindō (the divine child)” in their verse. This verse is recorded in the Taigadō kafu (Family Record of Taiga), which was written and collected by Taiga’s disciples. This adoration experience made Taiga always feel close to the

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44 Suganuma Teizō. Ikeno Taiga: hito to geijutsu. (Tokyo: Nigen sha, 1977), 4. Berry, Paul. Ikeno Taiga: A biographical study of a Japanese literati artist of the Edo period. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Master’s Thesis, 1977), 4-5. “Little is known concerning Taiga’s parents and their background. His father, Ikeno Kazaemon worked as a lower official of the Nakamura family who controlled the Kyoto silver mint. At one time he may have worked under Nakamura Kuranosuke who became infamous for his illegally garnered fortune until his expulsion from financial matters in 1714. Previously Kuranosuke was one of Ogata Korin’s patrons and it has been suggested that this indirect connection with Taiga’s family may be related to the Rinpa influence seen in his work. Taiga was born in 1723, perhaps in Kyoto, and he was given a name Matajirō.


Manpukuji, and his association with the Ōbaku community continued throughout his life. As a consequence, for Taiga, Chinese art and culture were never exotic, but rather a natural form of expression.\textsuperscript{47} Hence, later when he painted his \textit{Rantei}, he incorporated the Chinese painting style to visualize an ideal utopia where people could live in peace and harmony based on his experience in the Ōbaku Zen Buddhist monastery.

In 1737, at the age of fourteen, Taiga opened his painted-fan shop, called Shuki-dō, in Kyoto’s Nishijin district, to earn a living for his mother and himself. A common design format for fans painted during the Tokugawa period was \textit{yamato-e} (Japanese style painting) or Kanō style painting. Taiga, however, employed Chinese styles drawn from the \textit{Hasshu gafu (Eight Kinds of Painting Manual)} a Ming painting manual compiled in c. 1621-1627.\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Kinsei kijinden (Records of Eccentrics)}, which was published in Kyoto in 1790, records that Taiga received his early training at the Tosa \textit{yamato-e} school, so that he was capable of producing painting in a more popular style and theme on his fans if he wanted.\textsuperscript{49} According to \textit{Kinsei kijinden}, Taiga traveled throughout Ōmi (present-day Shiga), Mino (Gifu), and Owari (Aichi prefectures) provinces to sell these fans as a peddler. Chinese painting, nonetheless, was still unfamiliar to the mass-population of that time, and it was difficult for them to accept it. On his way back to Kyoto, this young peddler threw his unsold fans into the immense water of Biwa Lake. This incident suggests that the Taiga’s purpose in painting was not simply commercial, but to convey


his socio-political and ideological comments through his choice of visual language like a scholar, even though he was a machieshi.

In the following year, 1738, Taiga made the acquaintance of Yanagisawa Kien, a first generation Nanga painter, who had heard of Taiga’s talent and visited his fan shop. Soon Kien recognized Taiga’s ability of painting and invited him to move into Kien’s estate in Yamato Kōriyama, in Nara, for three years to pursue further education. From Kien, Taiga learned the technique of Chinese painting called shibokuga, or fingertip painting, which Taiga frequently used in his twenties. In 1750, Kien introduced Taiga to another Nanga pioneer and Confucian scholar, Gion Nankai, who truly admired Taiga’s shibokuga. Nankai discussed the theory of Chinese painting with Taiga and bestowed on him an antique Chinese ink stick and an illustrated Chinese woodblock book called Gansanken hassan zu (Pictures of the eight mountains of Han shan county) by the anonymous Mr. Chen. This book is lost today, but Taiga must have learned a great deal about a “truthful” Chinese landscape painting from it. Nankai died a year after Taiga’s visit, but he obviously exerted a tremendous influence over Taiga.
Chapter 3: Styles of the Rantei Paintings

Although Kanō Sansetsu and Ikeno Taiga depicted the same Rantei theme, the painting styles are clearly distinct; the style of Sansetsu (fig. 1a,b) epitomizes the Kanō School’s standard in the early Tokugawa period (seventeenth century), while that of Taiga (fig. 2a,b) represents the Nanga movement, which occurred approximately one hundred and twenty years later. The Rantei paintings under study consist of three pictorial components: 1). landscape; 2). architectural elements; and 3). figural elements.

Dynamic vs. Static Expressions

Different styles preferred by Sansetsu and Taiga in the Rantei paintings suggest their Chinese derivation. The Kanō style (fig. 1a,b) is related to hokushūga (Northern School painting) and has the following characteristics: linear shapes drawn with solid outlines; space defined by a sequence of planes; a multiplicity of pictorial elements; and an absolute clarity of forms. Altogether, these characteristics convey a confined and static appearance. By using this style, Kano artists such as Sansetsu attempted to project a wish for the continuation of stable and immobile social structure that secured the ruling position of the Kanō School. In contrast, the Nanga style (fig. 2a,b) alludes to the nanshūga (Southern School painting), and is conceived with: painterly brush strokes; a deeper spatial recession; a unity of pictorial elements that are meant to be observed as a whole; and unclear configuration of forms, altogether generating a more dynamic demeanor. Through the execution of this dynamic style, Taiga expressed his desire for a new social order.
Landscape Described in the Prose

In the prose *Rantei jo*, Wang Xizhi described the gathering scene as follows:

"--- On the occasion all the worthies are gathered and the young as well as the old are assembled. Here are lofty mountains and majestic peaks, with luxuriant woods and bamboo groves. Here are also clear streams and rushing currents, reflecting what is on the right and the left. We pass wine cups on trays floating down the curving stream, and then take our seats in order. Although there is no music from stringed and bamboo instrument, yet with alternate singing and drinking we are well disposed to express our hidden sentiments. Today the sky is clear, the air is fresh, and the kind breeze is mild."\(^{50}\)

This passage involves mainly three elements of landscape: 1). lofty mountains and majestic peaks; 2). luxuriant woods and bamboo groves; and 3). clear streams and rushing currents.

Through depicting these elements, each artist strove to demonstrate his understanding and interpretation of this theme.

Sansetsu’s Color Application

In his *Rantei* painting, Sansetsu utilized opaque colors that meticulously fill the outlines of every pictorial element. This method of color application is reminiscent of the *tsukuri-e* (constructing pictures) technique found in the *yamato-e* (native Japanese painting) tradition.\(^{51}\)

*Tsukuri-e* is a time consuming and labor intensive technique. First, the figures and objects are outlined with black ink directly onto the paper. Then a thick pigment is added in patches of colors. The type of pigment used was called *iwa-enogu* and was made from finely ground oyster shells and minerals. Lastly, the outline is adjusted and reinforced in black ink. In addition, in Sansetsu’s *Rantei*, thin gold leaf luxuriously applied on the background of the screen makes the

\(^{50}\) English translation of a part of *Lan Ting Xu* taken from Chu Chai and Winberg Chai, *A Treasury of Chinese Literature: A New Prose Anthology Including Fiction and Drama*, 30.

\(^{51}\) *Yamato-e* was a genre popularized in the Fujiwara or late Heian period (897-1185), in order to differentiate the native sensibility as seen in art from the *kara-e* or *kanga* (Chinese painting) style.
outlines even sharper and more striking, since this material completely prevents the saturation of paper from ink. When viewed, this type of outline creates a cold and rigid mood, as if time is frozen in the picture.

Linear Expression in the "Kanō Rocks"

Sansetsu depicted every landscape detail of his Rantei in strictly controlled, crisp outlines, so that his style is extremely linear and thus static. This characteristic is most apparent in his depiction of rocks that are schematically arranged along the stream. The surface of the rocks is configured with a combination of thin solid lines and angular textured brushstroke, in order to increase the decorative quality. Since the edges are defined by bold outlines, the rocks are separated from other forms and completely independent from the background. These distinctive, giant rocks are called the "Kanō rocks", and are part of the kanga tradition as explored by Kanō founder Masanobu (1434-1530) and Japanized by his son Motonobu (1476-1559) during the Muromachi period (1338-1573).

Kanō forefathers alluded to the styles of Chinese hokushūga painting, but altered them into a more angular and dominant style to cater to the samurai taste of the Ashikaga Shōguns. The distinct textured brushwork of the "Kanō rocks" was ultimately derived from the fu-pi tsun (axe cut texture stroke) used by the Southern Song (1127-1279) Imperial Academy, especially by the Ma-Xia (Ma Yuan, active before 1189-after 1225, and Xia Gui, active early thirteenth century) Schools, whose style explicitly emphasized solid outlines and angular texture strokes as

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52 It was Motonobu who combined the Chinese court academic and the Japanese Zen Buddhist styles to formulate the early Kanō style. Japanese Zen Buddhists, such as Josetsu, Shūbun and Sesshū in the Muromachi period also used the Chinese Northern School painting (hokushūga) style (mainly the Ma-Xia school and Mu Qi) in Japanized manner.
shown in figure 4. The early development of the Kanō rocks could be seen in the Zen Patriarch Kyōgen Chikuan Sweeping with a Broom (fig. 7) painted by Motonobu in 1513. In a reflection of the peaceful time during which he lived, Sansetsu increasingly depicted his rocks in a more elaborate and gentler style, but he retained the general characteristics of the “Kanō rocks”, inherited from Motonobu.

In Motonobu’s painting, the Zen patriarch is sweeping the front of a cottage built on the horizontally cut rock table. The shape and textural treatment of this rock corresponds to the triangular-like geometric rock located in the third and fourth panels in the third screen of the Rantei (fig. 1b). Using Motonobu’s rock as a point of departure, Sansetsu developed a very complicated and rather peculiar shape of rock as his own signature, which he duplicated this in his later paintings, such as Kannon tenryūyasha zu [Goddess of Mercy in the Realm of Heavenly Dragon] (fig.12). The white-robed Kannon is seated on an identical rock, in this image.

Prior to the research done by Doi Tsuguyoshi, Sansetsu’s Rantei byōbu was thought to have been painted by Sansetsu’s father-in-law and the founder of Kyo-Kanō, Sanraku, since a document owned by the Zuishin-In Temple points to Sanraku as the artist. However, there is no extant work painted by Sanraku that includes this particular geometric type of rock, while there are other examples of Sansetsu’s, including the ink sketch version of Rantei zu (fig. 13) that do

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53 Three Thousand Years of Chinese painting (New Haven: Yale University press, 1997), 133. In the Southern Song dynasty period (1127-1279), Xia Gui and Ma Yuan were the leaders of tai-chao, the members of the Imperial Academy of Painting at Hangzhou which was re-established by the refugee court led by Emperor Gaozong (reigned 1127-1162), while his elder brother’s son, who also claimed legitimacy, was still alive. Hence, the political agenda of Gaozong’s Imperial Academy was to encourage the themes of retrospection, legitimization, and restoration of the Southern Song ruling position through culturally legitimating that they are the successors of the Northern Song court. For this reason. Xia Gui’s painting (fig. 4) employs the formal characteristics of Song landscape painting, with its clear structure of fore-, middle-, and background, which suggest the macro-cosmic order of the universe to justify the rulership of emperor and ruled position of his subjects. Also, he incorporated the traditional depiction of rocks and foliage, in order to speak of the cultural continuation of Northern Song taste. Xia Gui uses the final form of Northern Song artist Li Tang’s ax-cut brush stroke, now icy, wet chips of the brush sculpting mountains.
depict it.54 Thus, the style of this rock played a very important role in discovering and re­
determining who actually painted this Zuishin-In Rantei byōbu. Sansetsu’s rock style also
demonstrates how Kanō artists repeatedly employed the same motif in different paintings by
using the funpon technique.

Painterly Expression in Taiga’s Rocks

Compared to Sansetsu’s skillful outline rendering, the landscape elements in Taiga’s
Rantei painting (fig. 2a) are conceived in a more painterly and freer manner. For instance, his
rocks are executed without a solid outline to enclose their forms. Instead, the inky areas and
broken lines are organically constructed to suggest the shape of the rocks, and the placement of
rocks suggests the shape of the “shapeless-stream”.

Taiga was inspired to abandon the “tangible design” by the nanshūga style, which
depends on calligraphic brush strokes to evoke the feeling of an object or to capture its spirit,
rather than to describe the physical reality of the object. Such calligraphic expression, called po­
mo (broken ink) in Chinese, was started by the Northern Song scholar-poet-artist Su Shi (1036­
1101). Taiga was a renowned calligrapher, even before he began his career as a painter, so that
he was capable of utilizing a calligraphic technique to execute all kinds of brush strokes. Hence,
Taiga created a great sense of movement in his treatment of mountains and rocks, which is the
opposite of Sansetsu’s style.

The painterly style of Taiga was also largely influenced by two important aforementioned
woodblock printed painting manuals. One of these is Hasshu gafu (Eight Kinds of Painting
Manual), originally published in China in 1620, and then later in Japan in 1710. Taiga used this

manual to paint fans in his shop when he was fourteen. The other manual is *Kaishien gaden* (Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting), published in China in 1679 and then later in Japan in 1748.\(^{55}\)

Melinda Takeuchi indicates that these manuals motivated Taiga to reduce his brush strokes, as well as to develop his distinctive variety of pointillism that consisted of a mix of ink dots and brilliant color dots.\(^{56}\) The influence of these manuals on his painting style is clearly evident in Taiga’s earlier work, such as *Daibutsukaku [The Great Buddha Hall], from Six Sights in Kyoto modeled after Mi Fu* (fig. 14). In this work, a series of dark and pale ink dots represent rock and mountain surfaces. Taiga attempted to allude to the Northern Song scholar-painter Mi Fu’s (1051-1110) style by applying what he learned about Mi Fu in the *Kaishien gaden*’s woodblock-printed model (fig. 15a,b) executed by Wang Kai (active 1670-1700). Although meant to copy the styles of famous artists, in fact, Wang Kai’s representation of Mi Fu does not remotely resemble actual Mi Fu’s or his son Mi Youren’s style (fig. 16). In particular, saturated atmospheric Mi dots, that are supposed to be the Mi family’s hallmark, are depicted as a pattern of solid dots, whether Wang Kai depicted tree leaves or a mountain surface.\(^{57}\) Taiga had to comprehend how to execute the Mi dots using his very own interpretation after observing the woodblock print painting manual such as this one.

In his *Rantei*, Taiga uses dots in quite a liberal and unique manner. He applied his most intense dark ink dots on the surface of massive rocks that are already defined by a series of short lines in a variety of ink tonalities, as well as a wash of pale colors. The dots that decorate the


surface of the rocks have an organic quality. Although they have design-like quality and are not depicted realistically, yet the spirit and energy of the rocks are captured successfully.

**Multiplicity of Woods and Bamboo Groves**

Sansetsu painted his tremendously colorful and ornamental plants by applying the *iwa-enogu* (mineral) pigment against a gold-leaf background. He separated the forms of these plants from each other as well as from their background. Moreover, he enclosed every single shape of the tree leaves with a thin, solid black ink line that is filled in with green pigment. Sansetsu also outlined his tree branches and trunk in ink and evenly filled them in with opaque brown pigment. As a result, the types of trees including bamboo and pine could be easily identified.

The designs of the plants depicted in Sansetsu's *Rantei* are copied from multiple sources using the *funpon* technique. For instance, the pattern of the bamboo grove depicted in the third screen (fig. 1b) is copied from Motonobu's *Zen Patriarch* painting (fig. 7). In order to achieve an accurate imitation, he abandoned the described method of filling them in with opaque color. In this example, the bamboo leaves are executed evenly and schematically with a series of brush strokes in green color.

Another example of plants lifted from other paintings is a tall, tropical-type tree identified as *shuro* (hemp palm), standing vertically by the bridge in the fourth screen (fig. 1b). The form of this plant corresponds to one found in the *Four Noble Pastimes of zither, go game, calligraphy and painting* (fig. 8) painted on fusuma (sliding door) by Kanō Eitoku (1543-90). It was Eitoku who further transformed the Kanō style into a more decorative style, in order to display the power and wealth of the prominent *daimyo* (provincial military lords), in Momoyama period (1573-1615). As part of the japanization process of Chinese painting, Eitoku re-worked the Southern Song Chan (Zen) style of Mu Qi, and synthesized it with the Kanō style. He
transformed Mu Qi's soft and gentle dots into bristling, angular configurations of rocky shores and plants that dominate the space.

Sansetsu's father-in-law, Sanraku, also duplicated Eitoku's style. One example may be seen in this particular form of the plant in the far right panel of his six-panel byōbu painting, titled Shōsan shikō zu [Wen-wang and Lu-shang, and the four hermits at Shang-shan.] (fig. 17). Sansetsu must have been quite familiar with the shape shuro, since Kanō artists had appropriated the exact form of this plant repeatedly through the funpon to create an atmosphere of a foreign land. Each section of the long leaves and trunks is meticulously outlined and filled with opaque green and brown colors. This plant is not indigenous to Japan, but common to Southern China.

Unity Achieved by Woods and Bamboo Groves

Unlike Sansetsu's work consisting of separated forms taken from multiple sources, all of the pictorial elements in Taiga's Rantei seem to be unified. There is no single element existing by itself, but a variety of forms that interact with each other, and are not separated from the background. This tendency is conspicuous in his depiction of woods and bamboo. In contrast to Sansetsu, who depicted his plants as separate pictorial elements taken from various sources, Taiga executed his tree leaves as if they are all connected as a single entity, using the various shapes of dots and different ink tonalities. This variety of ink dots is also placed around tree trunks, which are painted with a pale wash of ink without outline. Taiga's execution of dots obviously indicates the influence of the woodblock print painting manuals such as Kaishien gaden (fig. 15b), the same as already shown on the rock surfaces, however, he used much gentler and softer brush strokes on his plants than on his rocks.

Unlike Sansetsu, who did not include any flowers, Taiga depicted blossoming peach trees that are placed around the Rantei pavilion in the first and second panels (fig. 2b), as well as,
amidst other trees and rocks in the third panel and by the bridge in the last panel (fig. 2a,b). He treated his peach trees differently from other trees, representing them without using any black ink to limit their shapes, but employing numerous small color dots. He applied brilliant pink dots for their flower petals and shining green dots for their leaves. These dots unify to create an organic appearance, and they are not separated from their background. Also there is no ink line drawn to configure the peach tree trunks, instead, light brown washes are placed among the color dots to suggest the shape of trunks. The color dots emit the energy of spring, while working as a charming visual accent. Taiga had great skill and sense in handling his colors. Chinese *nanshuga* artists usually despised colorful representation in painting, but Taiga effectively used these color dots, applied on the peach flowers, to communicate the human sincerity or child-like sensibility that was an important characteristic sought by scholar-artists.

Yoshikawa Kojiro points out that the date of the gathering, which took place on the third day of the third month based on the lunar calendar, fell on the twenty-second day of April in the solar calendar in the year 353 (the ninth year of the Reign Yong He). Taiga’s depiction of the peach flower that blossoms in mid-Spring indicates his accurate understanding of the season of this gathering.

**Horizontal Composition set by the Stream**

Both artists used the shape of the stream as the most pronounced element to determine a distinctive composition in the *Rantei* paintings. Sansetsu used the extremely long stream to establish his horizontal composition, which is re-emphasized by a long format. The size of each screen is 107.50 cm in height and 237.60 cm in width, so that the total length of four screens,

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assembled together, is 950.40 cm. It is a re-working of the handscroll format in a monumental scale, with the eye of the viewer set to move from right to left along the stream. The narrow band of stream sluggishly begins from the left half of the first screen (fig. 1a), and continues to flow without changing its direction, width or speed, ending at the massive rock in the sixth panel of the last screen (fig. 1b).

The stream in Sansetsu’s work was copied from one found in the Kanō collection: a stone rubbing of the  Rantei zu  handscroll (fig. 18) imported from China. This scroll is attributed to the Northern Song literati painter Li Gonglin (c.1049-1106). Many pictorial elements in the Sansetsu's  Rantei  seems to be traced from those in this stone rubbing, starting with the pavilion where Wang Xizhi stays, and the cave containing the scholars’ attendants preparing heated wine. Then, followed by the guest-scholars seated along the long stream, these elements ended with a bridge. The differences between the Sansetsu’s version and the rubbing are: Li provided an identification cartouche for each scholar, but Sansetsu did not; Li depicts the scholarly gathering in nature in a way that is sincere to the description from the prose, but Sansetsu re-interpreted the setting of gathering into a fully cultivated palace garden.59

Except for the waterfall behind the rock next to the pavilion, all the pictorial elements are placed in the fore- and middle ground, which is divided by this stream. This layout is reminiscent of Xia Gui’s landscape (fig. 4). However, unlike Xia’s painting, spatial recession in Sansetsu’s  Rantei  is not considered, so that the pictorial elements located on the either side of the river are depicted as the same size. They are placed in a vertical and systematic manner, so that his space seems to be defined section-by-section, creating a series of individual pictorial planes.

59 This re-interpretation may suggest Sansetsu’s habit of attending the poetry competition parties among the upper-class people of Kyoto. Since the tenth century Heian period until today, the Japanese have continued to imitate Wang Xizhi’s gathering, and organizing Spring bi-annual poetry competitions in the places such as the Kamigamo Shintō Shrine, where the placid stream flows in an artificial environment.
Angled Composition Established by the Stream

While Sansetsu emphasized its horizontality, Taiga took liberty to transform his stream into a dynamically angled configuration in order to create spatial recession. The shape of his stream suggests how Taiga attempted to accommodate the standard composition of the sansui (landscape painting) hanging scroll that is vertically conceived. Taiga used only one screen measuring 158 cm x 358 cm, instead of Sansetsu’s four screens. Hence, the width of his image is drastically reduced when it is compared to Sansetsu’s. As a result of superimposing the composition of vertical hanging scroll format onto the horizontal byōbu, the shape of the river is set in diagonal motion. Because his stream spatially recedes, it does not emphasize the sequence of pictorial plane at all (as Sansetsu did), but moves diagonally from the top right to the bottom left.

Unlike Sansetsu’s stream, which begins with a gentle span of water that is completely unrelated to the waterfall, Taiga’s stream is actually generated by the force of a waterfall located in the upper right corner of the first panel (fig. 2a). In the second panel, the active movement of water is most conspicuously depicted by the sharp zigzag form of the stream. A gush of water runs down from the upper right to the left of the pavilion. After shifting its current once from left to right, it rushes back diagonally from the right edge of the panel to the third panel. The high speed of the water is made more tangible by wine cups on their platforms sliding down on the surface of the water in a diagonal direction. In the third panel, as soon as the stream’s current reaches the bottom of the whole image, it shifts upwards to the middle of the fourth and fifth panels. Then the water finally flows down to the bottom left of the last panel. Sansetsu’s stream has an artificial quality, but Taiga’s stream (with rapidly running water) evokes a sense of nature’s force.
In contrast to Sansetsu’s strongly emphasized bold and sharp edged stream, Taiga’s stream is depicted with a pale wash of ink and color. Its shape is only recognizable by the placement of the rocks. The viewer, however, feels the great energy of the stream, which is captured by fast-moving brush strokes applied on the surface. It is impossible to float cups of wine on this kind of stream, so Taiga was obviously not attempting to depict reality of the situation, but favoring a lively evocation of the movement of the stream. Compared to Sansetsu, who followed the Li Gonglin’s version which used the leaves to float the wine cups, Taiga’s floatation device is more faithful to prose description, which states that “we pass wine cups on ‘trays’ floating down the curving stream ---.”

Taiga conceived the artistic goal of creating a dynamic composition of Rantei painting earlier in his career. His earliest known Rantei byōbu is a draft (fig. 19) of the altarpiece dedicated to the Yasaka Shintō Shrine in Kyoto. Taiga painted this draft that reflects the characteristics of his works during his twenties, in 1754 when he was thirty-two years old. Out of the six panels, two outer panels are used for calligraphy, so that the painting occupies the remaining four panels. Reduction of the number of panels adds to the verticality of the composition. Further, the angle of the river is transformed into much steeper diagonal, and the sense of movement is increased. Yabumoto Kōzō suggests that Taiga truly appreciated the Rantei theme because he was fascinated by the depiction of the powerful force of water running through the wildly winding stream.

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Taiga’s energetic stream, in this altarpiece, is even more clearly recorded in a woodblock printed painting manual, called the *Hengaku Kihan Shukubaku zu [Miniaturized Model of Altarpiece Painting]* (fig. 20). Taiga’s disciples published this manual, which specifically instructs how to paint the Yasaka Shintō Shrine’s altarpiece version of *Rantei zu*, in 1819 in Kyoto.

The composition of this altarpiece, shown in the draft and manual, played an important role in establishing the composition of Taiga’s later works. During his forties, Taiga produced several different six-panel *byōbu* depicting the *Rantei* theme, in addition to the work in the Shizuoka Museum (fig. 2a). One such work is the *Rantei Shūkei zu* (fig. 21) that paired with *Saion Gashū zu [The Literary Gathering at the Western Garden]*, housed in the Kōsetsu Museum of Art in Hyogo Prefecture. In this work, the gigantic rocks cover the water around the pavilion in the right half of the screen, but the wild stream that diagonally runs through the entire image is suggested by an extremely steep curving current, which is revealed in the left half.

Another example of *Rantei Shūkei zu* (fig. 22) that represents Taiga’s typical composition of *Rantei zu* *byōbu* is the work paired with *Shūsha Suisō zu [Harvest Festival in Autumn]*, housed in the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection in New York. This *byōbu* shows a wider stream that flows from the pavilion, reaches the bottom of screen in the second and third panels, and goes back up to reach its peak in the fourth panel. After the slight flowing down in the fifth panel, the stream gushes up even higher than the height where the water originally began by the pavilion. Similarity among these *Rantei zu* *byōbu* not only suggests popularity of this theme, but also indicates that Taiga, in fact, was a *machieshi*, who received multiple commissions from his clients.63

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A source of inspiration for Taiga's dynamic composition could have been the Ming landscape painting style visible in the example of the *Dwelling in the Qing Bian Mountains* (fig. 23) painted in 1617 by Dong Qichang, who stressed strong verticality. Also the painting style of Taiga, who attempted to create a sense of depth by using a variety of ink tonalities, is strikingly similar to that of Dong, who used the combination of thin, saturated ink washes to depict distant mountains, and dense ink to capture the essence of closer rocks. Taiga perhaps never had an opportunity to observe the actual painting of Dong, since most of the paintings imported from China were rather second-rate quality. Nevertheless, he might have had an access to paintings related to Dong's painting style or even woodblock print manuals, which instructed how to paint in that style.

While Sansetsu copied his forefather's style using the *funpon* technique, Taiga alluded to the style of Chinese *nanshuga* painters who also had a tradition of copying the works of their masters, by using calligraphic brushstrokes. Dong's *Qing Bian Mountains* is actually one of such examples copied after the style and theme of a hanging scroll painting also entitled *Dwelling in the Qing Bian Mountains* (fig. 24) by the Yuan Master, Wang Meng (1287-1359).64 In 1765 Taiga painted a hanging scroll version of the *Rantei zu* (fig. 25) whose composition resembles that of *Qing Bian Mountains* by Dong and Wang. Taiga completed this hanging scroll version two years after the completion of the *byōbu* version under investigation (fig. 2a) from 1763 when he was forty-one years old. In this painting, a great sense of dynamism is his main visual accomplishment.

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64 *Three Thousand Years of Chinese painting*, 176. In this masterwork, Wang drew from his own life. He painted this for Zhao Menfu’s grandson, Zhao Lin, who happened to be Wang’s cousin. The Zhao family had a villa in the Qing Bian Mountains. Dong Qichang owned this Wang Meng’s version, when he copied the work. One characteristic of literati art was displaying the knowledge of history. Dong painted this work to express his knowledge of the Yuan Master’s history.
Collision of the Nanpei Styles

Japanese theorists and artists were quite confused about the difference between the paintings of the Chinese Southern and Northern schools. As a consequence of this confusion, Nanga painters embraced every visual possibility imported from China, and Taiga's style often reflects an interesting mixture of the Southern and Northern Schools, which are supposed to be antagonistic to each other according to the Dong Qichang's nanpei painting theory. For instance, the hemp-fiber line texture stroke (shown in fig. 5), the signature of Huang Gongwang (1269-1354), one of the Four Literati Masters of the Yuan Dynasty period (1260-1368), is employed on the surface of the four massive rocks located in zigzag placement from the upper right, center, and bottom left of the Taiga's Rantei byōbu (fig. 2a). These texture strokes are patterns of thin, dry lines, which convey a soft, gentle, poetic mood, and thus communicate sensibility of the Southern School painting. Taiga, interestingly, was fond of juxtaposing these sorts of strokes with the more angular, powerful axe-cut texture strokes (fig. 4) of the Ma-Xia Northern School painting on the same rocks. In his painting, these strokes, which seem antagonistic, are aesthetically complimenting each other, and thus, contribute creating his own style.

Taiga's composition and brushwork might have been influenced by another Rantei zu handscroll (fig. 26) painted by the Ming professional painter Sheng Mao-yeh (active 1594-1640) from Zhang zhou in Jiangsu province. Although Sheng was a professional painter who supposedly painted in the Northern School painting style, his work possesses an elegance and spontaneity that evidences a direct relationship with the scholarly Wu School among Southern School paintings. In his handscroll, Sheng combined standard imagery with his own

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65 Marshall P. S. Wu, The Orchid Pavilion Gathering: Chinese Painting from the University of Michigan Museum of Art. (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 2000), 102-109. Jiangsu province was an incorporated town of Suzhou, the most cosmopolitan and vibrant artistic center of the time (Ming dynasty, 1368 - 1644).

66 The Wu school was lead by Shen Zhou (1427 - 1509) who initiated the practice of employing the brushwork and
interpretations to depict Rantei theme. For instance, the stream, twisting between the foreground and background of the painting, is based on his observation of the actual meandering waterways and hilly terrain located in the regions surrounding Suzhou.

Sheng’s work was imported to Japan around the seventeenth or eighteenth century and stayed there until 1974. A descendant of the original Japanese collector sold it to an American dealer, James Freeman, who then sold it to Professor Richard Edwards of the University of Michigan. It is possible that Taiga studied this work and incorporated its features into his depictions of rocks, trees and streams. Hence, Taiga’s Rantei landscape reflects the nature of the Suzhou region along with the style of the Wu School, in some degree. The most striking similarity between the works of Sheng and Taiga is their ability to achieve the spontaneity of the literati Wu School while at the same time maintaining the decorative and exquisite composition found in the professional paintings. The successful balance of both literary and professional concerns is a rare accomplishment.

Sansetsu’s Decorative Palace

Sansetsu’s linear quality is most apparent in the articulation of the architectural elements of his Rantei, such as the pavilion, bridge, fences, and gate. The technique of jiehua (architectural painting often done with a ruler) is used to meticulously draw the precise lines, in order to maintain an even width. All the lines and angles (horizontal, vertical, and diagonal) are carefully calculated to create a crisp and geometrical appearance.

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modeling of the Four Great Masters of Yuan painting, as well as those of Mi Fu and his son Mi Youren, Dong Yuan, and Juran, to express the artists’s sentiment in inscriptions on the paintings. Wen Zhengming was Shen Zhou’s most distinguished student. Together with Tang Yin and Qiu Ying, they were the Four Great Masters of Wu School that was well established in Suzhou during the Ming dynasty period. The Rantei was certainly a popular theme among the Wu school painters. Wen Zhengming and Qiu Ying, each produced a number of works on this theme extant today.
The large *Rantei* pavilion aggressively occupies the right half of the first screen (fig. 1a). The details of the structure are painstakingly depicted as a gabled, hipped and tiled roof; multiple bracketing system under the eaves; a floor covered with a checker pattern; a horizontal fence surrounding the balcony; and a zigzag shaped of the raised stone foundation. Patches of brilliant red, green, light-green, yellow, and brown are applied in the outlines to create a radiant gem-house-like quality. Strong emphasis is placed on its accurately drawn outline, which makes this structure completely separate from the background. Such a definite, solid, enduring outline also creates the effect of stability. The bridge and the gate located in the fourth screen (fig. 1b) are depicted in a similar manner as the pavilion. They are conceived as symmetrical and orderly structures.

Architectural form contributes to the suggestion of multiplicity in this *Rantei* painting. Here, elements from numerous works of previous masters were assembled by the *funpon* practice. Sansetsu studied the forms of Chinese architecture, using these paintings especially examples found in the Momoyama *byōbu*. One of the Momoyama paintings that Sansetsu studied is the *Teikan zu* [*Illustration of the didactic story for emperors]* *byōbu* (fig. 27) painted by Sanraku. This is a pair of six-panel *byōbu* depicting the examples of (six good and six bad) ancient Chinese emperors who are seated in their palaces. This *byōbu* served as a visual dictionary for Sansetsu, which he consulted regarding all of the details of Chinese buildings. In it, strong emphasis is placed on its angularity, which is depicted by its extremely bold outlines.

*Nanban* [*Arrival of Westerners in Japan]* *byōbu* (fig. 28) is another work by Sanraku depicting the scenes of exotic places, people and culture, through the Japanese point of view. This genre was formulated during the Momoyama period, as a result of contact with Westerners. Hence, the motifs of *Nanban byōbu* convey a dream-like foreign mood to which the Japanese aspired. Sansetsu wanted to increase the perception of China as a dream-like foreign land in his
Rantei painting, so he incorporated some of the pictorial elements of Nanban byōbu. The design and green color of the arched foundation of Nanban building correspond to the sides of the bridge in the Rantei fourth screen. Both are decorated with ascending, twisted dragon motifs that are highly stylized. The dragon is a very popular motif used to elaborate the details of architectural forms. Another dragon, more realistically depicted in this time, framed in the pointed-arched panel behind the seated sage in the Shōsan shikō zu (fig. 17), is duplicated exactly in the two panels of foundation of Sansetsu’s Rantei pavilion.

The fence is another extremely important architectural element in Sansetsu’s Rantei image. Placed parallel to the slow flowing stream, it reinforces the horizontal composition. In the first screen, this long fence begins from the massive rock by the pavilion, extends thru the second and third screens, and then ends by the gate in the fourth screen. Each section of green fence is elaborated with the jūmonji pattern, which is a twisted cross-like design that increases the linear quality. A small pillar is placed at every corner of the fence adding a visual accent. Sansetsu’s whole pictorial scheme is laid out within the space confined by the fence enclosing the scene. In addition, the form and color of this fence are duplicated from another work of Sanraku, Genshiryō zu [The Sage Yan Ziling Advising an Eastern Han Emperor] (fig. 29) using the funpon technique.

Taiga’s Mountain Retreat

Taiga took a completely different approach in depicting his architectural forms (fig. 2b). He did not use any straight lines to enclose the forms of the pavilion or bridge. Instead, all the details are suggested by economically drawn broken lines. For instance, a triangular shape drawn by five short lines represents the roof of the pavilion. The gabled and hipped roofline is implied with a curvilinear brush stroke. Pale, blue color wash is applied within the broken lines
that do not enclose the color completely. The pavilion balcony also consists of only a few horizontal and vertical lines. Unlike Sansetsu, Taiga did not conceive his architecture in geometrical forms. For this reason, Taiga’s architecture seems to be light and airy.

This calligraphic representation of architectural form makes the pavilion look like a part of nature. In opposition to Sansetsu’s Rantei, which seems to be situated in an artificial environment, Taiga’s gathering of Wang Xizhi takes place among the mountains, in the middle of the wilderness. Taiga did not include a fence or any architectural forms to enclose the space. His space is open, and has ample room for the viewer to move around visually. Thus, Taiga created a free and dynamic atmosphere without constriction.

Unlike Sansetsu, who studied the Japanized Chinese architecture depicted by Momoyama painters, Taiga learned about the actual Chinese architectural form by directly observing album leaves such as the Shukuju gasatsu [the Cerebration album leaves] depicting Suiötei zu (A View of Zui Weng Ting Pavilion) (fig. 30a) and Hyöyö Rö zu [A view of Yue Yang Lou Tower] (fig. 30b), painted by a scholar-painter, Shao Zhenxian in the early Qing dynasty period (1644-1911). Taiga owned these small paintings by Shao and reproduced his versions of the same theme, Suiötei zu (fig. 31a) and Hyöyö daikan zu (fig. 31b) in the monumental byöbu format. These two byöbu are paired and called Rokaku Sansui zu (Paintings of Monumental Architecture in the Landscape), located in the Tokyo National Museum of Art. Taiga produced this pair of byöbu at almost the same time when he painted his Rantei zu byöbu (fig. 2a,b).

During his forties, Taiga experimented with how to paint architectural forms, and this process of experimentation could be traced among the pavilions of his other Rantei zu byöbu.

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Taiga used Shao’s architectural form, which is conceived with a series of calligraphic lines, in his depiction of the pavilion in one of his *Rantei zu byōbu* (fig. 21), housed in the Kōsetsu Museum. The rendering of the pavilion in the Kōsetsu Museum version seems to be a transition from what Taiga learned from Shao’s painting into his own style, which is increasingly painterly and inky. Taiga’s final architectural stage is clearly shown in his pavilion of another *Rantei zu byōbu* (fig. 22), housed in the Mary and Jackson Burke Collections, which appears almost identical to the one (fig. 2b) collected in the Shizuoka Museum.

Another possible source of inspiration for Taiga’s architectural form is the Ōbaku Zen temple, Manpukuji (fig. 32). Since Manpukuji received a unique privilege of shōgunal support, the Ōbaku monks were officially permitted to import all the necessary items for maintaining the monastery from China. Hence, the buildings of Manpukuji, such as Soshi-Dō in 1669, were constructed using real Chinese materials directly imported from China, and therefore, became the perfect model for studying the Chinese architectural form for Taiga, who spent time there. He observed the authentic shapes of the buildings in the Manpukuji courtyard, and incorporated them into his *Rantei* painting.

**Aristocratic Garden Party**

Contour lines emphasize the depiction of Sansetsu’s figures, which are completely separated from the background setting. The figures are executed as a series of individual portraiture of Confucian scholars. Each figure exists in his own right, and they do not seem to interact. A great sense of formality is expressed in the static treatment of facial features, postures and garments. Each face is drawn in a realistic yet idealized manner. The drapery is angularly outlined, and filled in with opaque colors. The faces of figures are depicted in three-quarter profile, which is another characteristic of formal portraiture. Such a formal representation of
portrait painting relates to the Sansetsu’s earlier work, *Seireki daiju zu* (fig. 9), which is a series of portraits of twenty-one Confucian scholars. As discussed earlier, this work was commissioned by Hayashi Razan of the Hayashi Neo-Confucian School.

The standards of such formal portraiture were already established during the Tang dynasty period (618-907) by such court painters as Yan Liben (died in 673). The handscroll titled *Thirteen Emperors*, (fig. 33) a series of portraits of ancient Chinese emperors, is attributed to the style of Yan. In this scroll, all the human figures are standing, while in the *Rantei*, they are seated.68 Nevertheless, the representation of figures in two works is very similar in the way they are grouped together. The rendering employs a hieratic scale that diminishes the less important figures in order to reinforce the importance of hierarchical social order.

The activities of the figures in Sansetsu’s work are depicted with absolute clarity. Some scholars are composing poetry, while others are picking up wine cups from the winding stream. On this day, sixteen scholars have failed to win the literary game, and had to drink the wine. All are rigidly seated on their individual mats spread out by the stream. Attendants of the scholars, however, are represented in a slightly different nature. They are portrayed in a less formal manner, but their actions are depicted in a clear fashion. Some of them are standing and preparing the wine, some are carrying it to the stream, and others are assisting their masters. By engaging in laboring action, the lesser social status of attendants is reflected, in order to clearly contrast with the higher status of their masters. This was another way for Sansetsu to propagate a stable and stratified social system in his painting.

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Gathering of Hermit-Scholars

Compared to Sansetsu’s rigid figures, Taiga captured a great sense of movement with his animated calligraphic lines. Scholars are presented in an informal manner; they are clad in casual garments and seem to enjoy this spring purification party in the countryside. These figures are not idealized. Most have round cheek lines, small eyes, a large nose, and for some, thin facial hairs are suggested. Although there is a consistency to the figures, individuality is indicated in their expressions. Some of them are smiling, while others are serious. This depiction of individual qualities indicates that Taiga’s concern for “human value” is not found in his or her social position, but should be sought through his or her individual capability.

Unlike Sansetsu’s scholars (are all seated), almost every figure in Taiga’s painting is standing. Except for the static representation of Wang Xizhi and his attendant inside the pavilion, all the figures are grouped in an overlapping arrangement to create a sense of recession. Some engage in conversation, and some play musical instruments. All interact with one another; they almost seem to embrace each other. However, because of this intensive overlapping arrangement and calligraphic rendering, the activities of the figures are not as easy to read as Sansetsu’s figures, and are in fact, rather difficult to recognize. This obscurity makes a viewer more interested in observing the image.

Taiga was influenced by the informal figure paintings practiced among the Ōbaku Zen monks. *Five Hundred Arhats* (fig. 34), painted by Taiga in 1765, is a picture of a harmonious Zen Buddhist community. He was inspired by another version of the same theme attributed to Wang Zhenpeng (fourteenth century), a Yuan-style work among the Manpukuji collections. Compared to the Wang’s original smaller figures amidst large wave pattern, Taiga executed in a more dynamic approach by adding many larger figures.
Taiga's figural style is also closely related to that of Sakaki Hyakusen (1697-1752), who was a crucial artist in setting an important direction for later Nanga generation.\textsuperscript{69} James Cahill points out that Hyakusen did not, like other Nanga leaders, depend on primarily on woodblock printed manuals, but imitated many actual Chinese paintings.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, Hyakusen was able to transmit animated and lively brushwork, which was impossible to learn from the woodblocks. Most intriguingly, for instance, in his hanging scroll titled River Landscape with Willows (fig. 35), Hyakusen depicted a scholar leaning over the railing of a riverside pavilion. The calligraphic rendering, as well as, the feeling and posture of this scholar are copied from a similar image (of a scholar leaning over a pavilion railing) in the Rantei handscroll (fig. 26) by Sheng Mao-yeh, a professional late Ming painter. This was repeated by Taiga who also painted a scholar leaning over the railing in his Rantei zu byōbu (fig. 2b). Although Taiga's scholar is facing left, the opposite of Sheng's and Hyakusen's scholars, the brushwork and mood of his predecessors has been thoroughly transmitted.

Conclusive Thought on the Styles

This study has used a variety of sources to conduct this comparison of the static/Kanō and the dynamic/Nanga styles. The Kanō style became fully developed in the time of Sansetsu (seventeenth century Early Tokugawa period). His Rantei painting reflects the matured Kanō sensibility in its linear and edge-defined expression. By Taiga' time (eighteenth century Middle

\textsuperscript{69} "Sakaki Hyakusen was born in Nagoya, the son of a druggist, possibly of Chinese ancestry." He took advantages of his ambivalent background. He was educated in Japan, but had access to many actual Chinese paintings imported through the Nagasaki Port City. Cahill, Scholar Painters of Japan: The Nanga School, 22. James Cahill, "Sakaki Hyakusen no kaiga yōshiki: Chūgoku kaiga tono kanren to Nihon Nanga eno eikō (The Style of Sakaki Hyakusen: Their Chinese Sources and Their Effect on Nanga)“, Bijutsushi Vol. 24, Nos. 1-4, Kyoto: The Japan Art History Society; March (1976), 3.

Tokugawa), Japanese artists, among the cultured and educated, were no longer satisfied with the expression of absolute clarity presented by the Kanō School and began to embrace the relative clarity found in the Nanga style. Thus, in Taiga’s Rantei, all pictorial elements — natural, architectural, and figural — are arbitrarily placed, and there is no definite sense of order in their placement. They are overlapped to create a sense of depth, and it is often difficult to read their activities. There is no clear borderline to define each element of the painting. This loose and abstract rendering of landscape, architectural, and figural elements all interact as a part of the whole image. Moreover, the most conspicuous difference between the styles of Sansetsu and Taiga are their executions of lines and brush strokes. The linear vision of Sansetsu sharply distinguishes form from form, while the painterly eye of Taiga, aims at movement, which flows through the whole work.
Chapter 4: Visual Programs of the Rantei Paintings

In this chapter, I will analyze the visual programs to investigate how the two versions of Rantei painting express distinct messages. Under the self-imposed seclusion policy, members of Tokugawa society in Japan shared its experiences and understood its cultural traditions more than ever. Hence, common sentiments about those experiences and traditions induced Tokugawa society to establish symbolic designs and patterns that implicitly spoke of specific meanings. During this period, Rantei jo (The Preface of Rantei Gathering), a popular literary theme, invited Tokugawa-era artists to interpret its context for their own purposes, with the use of canonized symbols.

Two Faces of Wang Xizhi

The author of the original Rantei jo (The Preface of Rantei Gathering), Wang Xizhi (307-365), was born into an aristocratic family prominent in the Eastern Jin Dynasty court of China.\(^7^1\) He lost his parents early on and was raised by his relatives. It was a time of tremendous political instability. When he was merely sixteen years old, one of his uncles, Wang Dun, led a rebellious movement against the court. The head of the Wang family, Wang Dao, who was the prime minister at the court, commanded his troops to quell this movement and took Wang Dun’s life on the battlefield two years later.\(^7^2\) As a result of witnessing this tragedy, Wang Xizhi wished to stay away from politics. Eventually, he accepted the title of Right General, but requested to be transferred to a provincial territory. In so doing, he could fulfill the duty of a Wang family member by conducting political affairs, and at a same time, pursue his cultural and intellectual

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activities in the remote province. Thus, the image of Wang Xizhi could be interpreted as having two contrasting faces: as a manifestation of the courtly gentleman, and as a symbol of the hermit-scholar.

The multiple interpretations of the *Rantei* images clearly reflect the social backgrounds of each artist and their patronage. Sansetsu was a member of the samurai (military) oriented Kano School, which received patronage from wealthy and powerful Buddhist temples as well as from upper-class military clans. In contrast, Taiga was a celebrated local painter who had a close association with cultural and intellectual circles, especially those gathered around the Ōbaku Zen temple, which hosted Chinese refugee-scholars. This comparative study is an attempt to identify how Sansetsu presented the *Rantei* image to symbolize his and his patron's prestigious status, while Taiga painted his version to visualize his desire for a more egalitarian community of hermit-scholars.

**Styles as Expression of Meaning**

Sansetsu furnished his *Rantei* image with symbolism to emphasize the aristocratic nature of Wang Xizhi and his gathering. Sansetsu's flamboyant and rigid painting style, in which every pictorial element was defined by crisp outlines, itself signified the authoritarian power of the Kanō school that dominated the Tokugawa painting world. He applied rich colors of mineral pigment (*iwa-enogu*) over the thin gold leaf covering the surface of the screen.

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Momoyama period, Japanese artists have often employed these materials to symbolize power and wealth.\textsuperscript{76}

Compared to Sansetsu’s use of ostentatious materials, Taiga emphasized the use of ink and brush, which were symbols of the scholar in the Chinese tradition. He attempted to create a mood of simplicity, a quality for which Chinese scholars used the term \textit{pingdan}, literally “blandness”. This simplicity and blandness were considered desirable qualities in a scholar’s personality, writing, and painting, \textit{per se}.\textsuperscript{77} Taiga achieved this mood by calligraphic brush strokes that constructed the pictorial forms in his \textit{Rantei} painting. On top of the fifth and sixth panels, Taiga inscribed the passage of \textit{Rantei jo} (fig. 2c) in his own calligraphic style, which is spontaneous and playful. Calligraphy was the most important form of the visual arts practiced among the Chinese scholars. This art involves the form of writing, which has been understood, since early times, as a form of communication with higher spiritual powers based on the religious tradition of Daoism.\textsuperscript{78} By adding this inscription, Taiga also demonstrated his ability to harmoniously combine the painting, poetry, and calligraphy in a single work. This combination was called \textit{sanjue}, the Three Perfections, which was particularly favored by the scholar-artists.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{Residence of the Ruler}

In his depiction of architectural elements (fig. 1a), Sansetsu most conspicuously expressed the notion of power. The gem-like \textit{Rantei} pavilion located on the right half of the first

\textsuperscript{76} Most of the ostentatious Momoyama paintings were commissioned and used by \textit{daimyō} (provincial military lords), who intended to display their power and wealth to impress others. Penelope Mason. \textit{History of Japanese Art}. (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1993), 217.


\textsuperscript{78} Claug Clunas, \textit{Art in China}. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 123.
screen is decorated with five brilliant colors, which are in accordance with the auspicious Five Colors (goshiki or goshoku) established by Chinese tradition: red, yellow, blue, white, and black. According to ancient notions of how the universe is structured, each color has a special meaning. Red is associated with the active yō (yang in Chinese) principle in the in-yō (yin-yang) system, the sun, the southern quadrant of the universe, summer, and the Vermilion bird (a type of reddish sparrow). Yellow is associated with the passive in (yin) principle, the earth element, and the center. Blue (sometimes represented as green as in this case) corresponds to the eastern quadrant and to spring and is associated with the dragon. White represents the west and autumn and is associated with the tiger, and black represents the northern quadrant and is associated with the winter and the tortoise and snake. When the Five Colors appear together, they are a sign of divinity or imperial rule. In Japanese art, these colors are most often used in association with Buddhist art or with the imperial institution, and employed in certain design motifs that are considered auspicious. Thus, Sansetsu elevated the status of the pavilion by using these five colors.

A pair of Momoyama paintings, Furyujin zu (fig. 36), for example, depicted the imperial palace of the Tang Emperor in the far right of the right screen, and that of the Empress in the far left of the left screen. Each screen is lavished with the urban fantasy of courtly life centered around these palaces with goshiki. The display of goshiki with exotic buildings in this painting was a powerful sign of authority in another Momoyama work, Nanban byōbu (fig. 28) by Sanraku. Sansetsu projected these ideas of power and wealth in his Rantei pavilion.

On the foundation of the pavilion, Sansetsu depicted two dragons Framed by the pointed, arched panels emerging in the water. For the ancient Chinese, the dragon was linked with water

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(ocean, rivers, mist, rain, thunder, and clouds), symbolizing the dark, wet, and nurturing feminine qualities. By the second century B.C.E., dragons with different numbers of claws identified rank within the Chinese imperial household. With the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, the dragon also assumed the powerful roles played by Indian serpent naga deities, which were viewed as protectors of the Buddhist faith. China influenced Japan in the association of the dragon (ryūnatsu) with the imperial institution, Buddhism, and the virtue of vigilance. In the late seventh century, the Nihongi (Records of Japan) indicates that the dragon was a popular painted image to express the power of Buddhist temples. 81 Such a dragon is also seen on top of Sansetsu’s gate and the side panel of the bridge in the last screen.

The fence in the Sansetsu’s painting is decorated with a manji (wantzu in Chinese), the swastika, which originally referred to directional and cosmic significance in the Indic tradition. 82 In East Asia, this design symbolizes the first of the sixty-five auspicious signs on the footprint of Buddha. The term “manji” means the “ten thousand character sign”, and is said to have come from Heaven. It is described as “the accumulation of lucky signs possessing ten thousand efficacies.” It is also regarded as the symbol or seal of Buddha’s heart, and is usually placed on the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha, in which his whole mind is said to be contained. 83 Buddha was considered the “universal spiritual ruler”, so that Sansetsu incorporated this design to emphasize the auspiciousness and the ruling status of himself and his patron.

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81 Merrily C. Baird, Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design, 132.
82 C. A. S. Williams, Chinese symbolism and art motifs: An alphabetical compendium of antique legends and beliefs, as reflected in the manners and customs of the Chinese. (Redlined, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan, Charles E. Tuttle Company 1974), 381.
83 Williams, Chinese symbolism and art motifs, 381.
Mountain Monastery

Unlike Sansetsu, who employed brilliant opaque colors for his extravagant architecture, Taiga applied pale colors in a subtle manner to depict his pavilion, which is a humble hut in the mountain. This hut implies Taiga’s aspiration towards Chinese scholarly pursuits. In the Yuan dynasty period (1279-1368), Chinese scholars often refused to serve whomever they regarded as illegitimate rulers. As a consequence, the most valued painters often adopted the role of the hermit living in seclusion. Such a notion is most effectively suggested in the landscape painting entitled *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* (fig. 5) by Huang Gongwang (1269-1354), a scholar-painter who rejected political involvement. This scroll contains allusions to a specific hermit of the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), so that the true theme of the picture is not the landscape but the recluses who inhabited it, although they do not appear in the picture. Taiga was an outsider of politics but a leader of the locally prominent figures. He alluded to himself and his friends --- like Huang Gongwang and his followers, as well as the noble recluses of antiquity who lived in the mountains --- by depicting Wang Xizhi and his guests in the humble hut in the remote mountains.

A description of Taiga’s pavilion also reflects his close association with the Obaku Zen community. After the fall of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), China became a difficult place for scholars to continue their cultural and intellectual pursuits, due to cultural persecution by the Manchu (semi-nomads from the northern area who established the Qing dynasty that replaced Ming). In the beginning of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), many Chinese scholars followed the

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84 Claiq Clunas, *Art in China*, 150.

85 The actual Fuchun mountains are located in the Zhejiang Province where Rantei was originally built. Clunas, *Art in China*, 151.

models of the Yuan hermits who had refused to serve a foreign court, and removed themselves to the mountain monasteries where they became monks or hermits. A number of Chinese monks actually fled to Japan. In 1661 the Ōbaku-san Manpukuji (a branch of the mother temple in Fuzhou) was established by the Chinese priest Ingen (Yin-yuan in Chinese) in Uji, Kyoto. The Ōbaku community was more egalitarian than other Zen sects since it embraced the worship of the Amida Buddha, a belief that appealed to all types of people regardless of their classes. By modeling the Ōbaku community, Taiga created an image of a harmonious society of scholars enjoying the pleasure of cultivating themselves in a remote hermitage that is not affected by oppressive rulers.

The Eminent Status of Courtly Officials

Sansetsu incorporated furniture in the interior of the pavilion to express the high status of Wang Xizhi, who is seated on the raised dais. Behind him there is a screen called tsuitate, and a flat fan called uchiwa. The tsuitate is a freestanding, single-panel screen enclosed in a footed wooden frame. The uchiwa, which has a long stem, is formal in style. The tsuitate and uchiwa were originally imported from China and signified the high social position of the bearer. The Ming Chinese painting, Spring Morning in the Han Palace (fig. 37) by Qiu Ying (c. 1495-1552), a Suzhou professional painter, presents a tsuitate and uchiwa to establish the royal status

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87 Baroni, Ōbaku Zen: the emergence of the third sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan, 35. Ōbaku is the third sect of Zen Buddhism in Japan. Prior to the development of Ōbaku, there were two sects, Rinzai and Sōtō, which were imported during the Muromachi period in Japan. Although Ōbaku is related to the Rinzai sect and they both believe in sudden enlightenment, they are fundamentally different. While the Rinzai focuses on meditation alone to attain enlightenment as the style developed in the Song dynasty period, the Ōbaku combines to recite nenbutsu (chanting the name of Amida) with meditation, so it is called nenbutsu Zen, which is the Ming dynasty style Zen sect. Nenbutsu Zen seeks to incorporate the Pure Land practices and beliefs, as was the norm in Ming China. Its belief in Pure Land (= idyllic paradise) appeals to Taiga, who seeks the social harmony.

88 Baird, Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design, 271.

89 Baird, Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design, 250.
of an empress.90

Wang Xizhi is surrounded by many attendants who serve him. A standing attendant holds an *uchiwa* with a long stem. Three attendants are located at the corner of the balcony, four at the entrance, and many more are working at the corridor to prepare wine for this event. The great number of attendants signifies Wang’s lofty position and majestic power.

The formal costumes that are called *jūnishō* (*shi’erzhang* in Chinese meaning the twelve emblems), worn by Wang Xizhi and the forty-one scholars by the riverbank, suggest that they are officials who hold specific ranks at court. The Emperor’s *jūnishō* conveyed all of the twelve symbolic designs: sun, moon, stars, dragon, mountain, pheasant, fire, ritual vessel, water plant, rice powder, axe, and archery. His officials wore the same costume, with fewer symbols shown. This type of costume with symbols was established around the Warring States period (c.450-221 B.C.E.).91 *The Portrait of Confucius* (fig. 9) painted by Sansetsu registers a number of these symbols, which signify Confucius’s status as an emperor-like figure. By having the costume of Wang Xizhi and his guests resemble that of Confucius, Sansetsu communicated the high-ranking official status held by the gathering.

Egalitarian Monk Society

On the contrary, Taiga depicted Wang Xizhi and his guests in an egalitarian fashion with an emphasis on their religious devotion. They are clad in casual monk’s robes in a similar manner as figures in his other work, the *Five Hundred Rakan* (fig. 34). A *rakan* (*lohan* in Chinese; *arhat* in Sanskrit) is a Buddhist disciple that has conquered all his or her passions and

90 Thorp and Vinograd, *Chinese Art and Culture*, 313.
91 *Asia rekishi jiten* (Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1959), 679.
has been liberated from the burden of rebirth. While the *rakan* are said to have originally numbered twelve hundred, Japanese temples dedicated to them focus on a smaller group of five hundred. In Taiga’s work, all the figures wear the same costume, which implies that there is no conspicuous class designation among them. Wang Xizhi, seated in the pavilion, is surrounded by other figures dressed in the same manner, and depicted in the same size as him. Thus, they are considered of the same social status or, as further, friends. Unlike Sansetsu, who depicted many attendants around Wang Xizhi, Taiga included only one.

Although the prose *Rantei jo* stated that there is "--- no music from stringed and bamboo instruments ---," Taiga included a stringed instrument in his *Rantei*. In the fourth panel (fig. 2c), under the large rock, a scholar is playing the musical instrument called the *shamisen*, surrounded by the listeners. The *shamisen* is a long-necked lute-like instrument, which was very popular during the Taiga’s time among Tokugawa people including the commoners. Taiga perhaps attempted to convey the message of how a harmonious relationship among people could be achieved through the harmony of music.

Another interpretation of the presence of this musical instrument could be Taiga’s vision for an egalitarian community, which is manifested in his marriage to Tokuyama Machi (c. 1727-1784), whose artistic name was Gyokuran. She was a student of Yanagisawa Kien, and an accomplished Nanga painter herself. Taiga and Gyokuran were commonly regarded as a happy couple. Rai Sanyō (1780-1832) wrote in his *Yuri den (Record of Yuri)*, that they as a couple engaged in all kinds of cultural pursuits, such as painting, playing music, composing poetry and drinking wine together. According to *Kinsei kijinden*, Taiga often played the *shamisen* (a string instrument) to accompany Gyokuran on another traditional instrument, the *tsukushi goto* (fig. 92).

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Taiga and Gyokuran have often been compared to the Chinese Yuan scholar-artist Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) and his wife Guan Daosheng (1262-1319) by the Japanese critics. Another instance of a married-painter couple in the Nanga painting circle was Taiga’s close friend Kō Fuyō (1722-1784) and his wife Raikin (died c. 1830-1844). Both Fuyō and Raikin were prominent Nanga painters of that time. This phenomenon indicates how the Nanga painters’ circle was open and receptive to every sort of human being regardless of his or her class or even gender.

**Natural Phenomena as Signs of Status**

In Japanese art, almost every natural element has the capability of implying some kind of meaning. For example, clouds (kumo) are extensively used in Sansetsu’s *Rantei*. Although they fill the entire background, they rarely convey a sense of weather or atmosphere. Instead, they were employed as pictorial dividers, such as the cloud motif inspired by *emaki* (the handscroll paintings) of *The Tale of Genji* (fig. 39) which itself is a symbol of the aristocratic classical culture of twelfth century Japan. A six-paneled *byobu* version of *The Tale of Genji* (fig. 40) in the Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts has been recently recognized as a Kano painting. This work, painted in the end of the Momoyama or in the early Tokugawa period, may have played a transitional role to link the classical *emaki* and Sansetsu’s *Rantei byōbu*, in transmitting the aristocratic elegance. Especially, noteworthy are similarities between the two screens in the treatment of the golden clouds and the shapes of the river banks. Stylized clouds were also signs of divine authority, as when clouds of the auspicious Five Colors decorated the pavilion in Kyoto.

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used to enthrone the new emperor. This same treatment is applied on Sansetsu’s *Rantei* where a golden cloud hangs over the Five Colored structure, which has already been discussed.

Sansetsu also included a number of unnaturally shaped rocks in his *Rantei* painting. Each screen depicts rocks of diverse shapes. The Japanese have long believed that rocks (*iwa, ishi*), especially those of an unusual shape, embody sacred powers and serve as temporary residences for deities. This belief is evident in the building of Shintō shrines in the vicinity of many exceptionally shaped rocks. Sansetsu used these rocks to increase the sense of sacred power in his painting.

Legend states that Wang Xizhi was inspired by the shape of geese swimming in a pond while standardizing his calligraphic style. Sansetsu depicted these birds to visualize the canonized *Rantei* episode, and simultaneously to imply their agricultural significance. The southward migration of wild geese (*kari*) in autumn was celebrated in traditional Japan with the eighth lunar month known as *kanraigetsu*, the month of the geese’s return. Subsequently, the returning of the geese suggests the arrival of the harvest’s economic prosperity.

Sansetsu depicts tropical plants, such as the sago palm tree, that are not native to Japan. During the seclusion policy of the Tokugawa period, the right to conduct foreign trade was monopolized by the Tokugawa Shōgunate, so that the display of exotic plants was an obvious expression of the monopoly of power and wealth. Only the shōgunate, a few prominent daimyō, and religious institutions could afford to possess such a symbol of foreign lands. In addition, the palm’s Japanese name “*sotetsu*” means “iron”, which represented the strength of the *samurai* sword, thus reinforcing Sansetsu’s powerful social position.

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95 Baird, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design*, 111.

Taiga’s Search for a Social Utopia in Nature

While Sansetsu’s Rantei gathering takes place in a cultivated human space, which is surrounded by architectural and botanical elements, Taiga’s Rantei gathering is held deep in the mountains. Mountains (yama) most decidedly hold a special place in Japanese cultural and religious beliefs. The country’s earliest myths routinely pointed to mountain peaks as those places where gods descended from the heavens above. With the later development of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan, the more general sense of sacredness is now associated with mountains’ gathered strength. Ascetic priests (yamabushi) of the Shūgendō sect, which harmoniously blends Buddhist, Shintō, and Taoist practices, lived in mountain settings to obtain special powers for mediation between the earthly and divine worlds. The interest of the lay population in Japan’s mountains, epitomized by undertaking pilgrimages to sacred peaks, dates primarily to the Tokugawa period.

Mountain climbing excursions were common throughout Taiga’s life and it is likely that these trips played a role in his feelings towards mountains scenery that he depicted in his numerous landscape paintings. Taiga’s exact association with the Shūgendō sect is unknown but it seems likely that he may have in some way been affiliated with it. This sacred notion of mountains works perfectly for Taiga’s ideal place to contain a hermit-scholars’ community.

Taiga’s Rantei screen begins with the waterfalls in the top of the first screen. The waterfall is a prominent natural feature in a country as mountainous as Japan, and thereby has enjoyed a reputation as a sacred place. From the post-Heian period to the present, waterfalls

97 Baird, Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design, 35.

98 Berry, Ikken Taiga: A biographical study of a Japanese literati artist of the Edo period, 18-19. About the third month of 1749 Taiga and Kō Fuyō another Nanga painter, left on a trip to the Hokuriku district in northern Japan that was to last for five months before they returned to Kyoto. During their travels they climbed the Ecchū area’s Tateyama and the Hakusan of Kaga. While on this journey, Taiga painted two significant handscrolls: the “Fragrant Orchids”; and the “Scenery of Matsushima”, which are based on his travels.
have been a destination of ascetic priests, who have sat beneath waterfalls, especially in the extremely cold weather, just before the New Year. The Japanese believe that the practitioner gains access to the spirit world and the power to mediate the activities of divine spirits in the temporal world.  

As mentioned previously, Taiga depicted the blossoming peach trees surrounding his Rantei pavilion. In China, peaches are, above all, a symbol of longevity and are associated with Xiwangmu (the Queen Mother of the West), who reigns in the mythical Daoist paradise of Kunlun Mountains. She was said to dwell in a palace, surrounded by fairy peach trees, which ripen once in every three thousand years and conferred immortality upon those who eat them. This connection of the peach to longevity reflected ancient beliefs that the peach and objects made of its wood could ward off evil and disease. It also symbolized the third lunar month and by extension, spring. In Japan, reverence for the peach (momo) dates back at least to the Asuka and Nara eras, by which time the fruit had a reputation for its protective powers. More importantly, the peach symbolizes a Daoist utopia where people enjoy harmonious social pursuits. Taiga superimposed the notion of utopia onto the ideal egalitarian social order accomplished by the uncontaminated monk-scholars’ community in the remote mountains.

99 Baird, Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design, 43.

100 C. A. S. Williams, Chinese symbolism and art motifs, 227.

101 Its blossoms came to be so closely associated with the Doll’s Festival, held on the third day of the third month, that the festival has been alternatively known as momo no sekku, “the peach observance.” In Japan, this festival is celebrated by girls, who display their dolls to ensure their welfare. Thus, the peach blossom symbolizes the third day of the third month. Taiga perhaps was well aware that the Rantei gathering took place on the very same day as this festival. C. A. S. Williams, Chinese symbolism and art motifs, 59.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

I have been attempted, so far, to determine that the two distinct Rantei paintings --- by Kanō Sansetsu and Ikeno Taiga --- are significant works for understanding the complexity of the changing socio-political conditions of the Tokugawa period. This study has identified the artists' choice of visual languages: in the Rantei Kyokusui zu, Sansetsu exemplified the orthodox Kanō School to highlight their status as a ruling class; and in the Rantei Shūkei zu, Taiga represented the heterodox Nanga School which visualized his ideal of a new social order.

During the Tokugawa period, Japan enjoyed national peace and economic prosperity for a longer duration than previously known. Under such circumstances, the ruling-class --- the shogunate and the religious institutions --- supported the official painters in order to display the power and wealth that they had inherited. At the same time, the newly emerging class --- merchants, artisans, and farmers --- promoted a kind of counterculture, in this case Nanga painting, based on the Chinese scholarly tradition, which suggested that they also had access to power and wealth through educating themselves.

As it has been discussed, two Tokugawa artists, Kanō Sansetsu and Ikeno Taiga, interpreted the popular literature, Rantei jo (The Preface of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering of Wang Xizhi) in distinctive manners. Sansetsu portrayed Wang Xizhi as an aristocrat enjoying a flamboyant garden party, while Taiga expressed his aspiration for an egalitarian communal society. In doing so, both artists have incorporated particular styles that were derived from Chinese paintings, and used established symbolism to implicitly address socio-political messages. In the secluded and traditional society of Japan under the Tokugawa isolationism, such styles and symbols were prominent conveyers of multiple meanings. Sansetsu and Taiga successfully combined multiple threads of meaning to form their visual discourse.
1a. Two pairs of eight-panel byobu by Kano Sansetsu, Rantei Kyokusui zu, in Zuishin-In, Kyoto, Early Tokugawa period (the seventeenth century), ink, color, and gold leaf on paper.
1b. Two pairs of eight-panel byobu by Kano Sansetsu, Rantei Kyokusui zu, in Zuishin-In, Kyoto, Early Tokugawa period (the seventeenth century), ink, color, and gold leaf on paper.
2a. A six-panel byobu by Ikeno Taiga, *Rantei Shukei zu*, paired with *Ryuzan Shokai zu*, Middle Tokugawa period, 1763CE, ink and color on paper.
4 Sections of a handscroll by Xia Gui, *Pure and Remote Views of Streams and Mountains*, ink on paper, Southern Song period, ca. 1200 CE.

5 A Section of a handscroll by Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, ink on paper, Yuan period, ca. 1348-50 CE.
6 A hanging scroll by Kano Masanobu, Sansui zu (Landscape), ink on paper.
7 Hanging scroll by Kano Motonobu, Soshi zu (Patriarch Xiangyen Zhixian [Kyogen Chikuan])
Sweeping with a Broom. Muromachi period, 1513CE. Ink and color on paper.
Fusuma Painting by Kano Eitoku, *Kinshoshoga zu (Four Noble Pastimes of zither, go game, calligraphy, and painting)*, Momoyama period, 1566CE, ink and gold on paper.
10 A pair of hanging scroll, Yanagisawa Kien, *Landscape of the West Lake at Hangchow.*
11a Calligraphy by Ikeno Taiga when he was three years old, inscribing the two characters “kin zan” [Golden Mountain].

11b Two verses *Kokinshu*, calligraphy by Ikeno Taiga when he was eleven years old.
12 A hanging scroll by Kano Sansetsu, *Kannon tenryuyasha zu*, ink and color on silk, Tokuku ji, Kyoto, paired with *Kannon tendaishogunshin zu*. 
13 The ink sketch version of *Rantei* in Zuishin-In by Kano Sansetsu.
14 Daibutsukaku (The Great Buddha Hall)
15a Wang Kai, Woodblock print manual, Instruction to paint mountain surface.

15b Wang Kai, Woodblock print manual, Instruction to paint trees.

17 Kano Sanraku, *Shosan shiko zu*, ink, color and gold leaf on paper, a six-panel *byobu*. Myoshin-ji, Kyoto.
18 Rantei. Attributed to Li Gonglin, stone Rubbing.

20 Kihan shukubaku zu version of *Rantei zu*. 
23 A hanging scroll by Dong Qichang, *Dwelling in the Qing Bian Mountain*, Ming dynasty period, 1617 CE.

24 A hanging scroll by Wang Meng, *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*. 1366 CE.
25 A hanging scroll by Ikeono Taiga, *Rantei zu*, 1765CE.
26 A handscroll by Sheng Mao-yeh, Rantei zu, Ming dynasty period.
27 Kano Sanraku, _Teikan zu_. Ink on paper, a pair of six-panel _byobu_. Late Momoyama/Early Edo. Private collection.
31a (above) *Suiotei zu* by Taiga.

31b (below) *Hyoyo daikan zu* by Taiga.
32 Soshi-Do, 1669CE, Manpukuji, Kyoto
33 Attributed to Yan Liben, *Thirteen Emperors*. Tang, 7th century (11th century copy). Handscroll, ink and pigment on silk.
34 Hanging scrolls by Ikeno Taiga, *Gohyaku rakan zu* [Five Hundred Arhats], Tokugawa period.
35 Sakaki Hyakusen, *River Landscape with Willows*, 1745CE. Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper.
37 Qiu Ying, *Spring Morning in the Han Palace*. Ming dynasty, c. 1540 CE. Detail of handscroll, ink and colors on silk.
38 Taiga and Gyokuran playing music
39 Hashihime section of handscroll *Genji monogatari emaki*, Fujiwara period, c. 1120-30 CE.

40 A six-panel *byobu* version of *Genji monogatari* by anonymous Kano painter, Early Tokugawa period.
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