A Case Study of Heian Japan Through Art: Japan's Four Great *Emaki*

by Jaye Zola, Retired Teacher and Librarian, Boulder Valley Schools

Introduction:

Teachers are encouraged to read "Heian Japan: An Introductory Essay," by historian Ethan Segal, prior to conducting this lesson. The introductory essay may also be assigned to students with advanced reading abilities (grades 11-12). The essay provides context for this lesson by describing key points of Japanese history during the Heian Period.

The Heian period is considered the peak of the Japanese aesthetic tradition. Art, poetry, and literature permeated court life. As Dr. Segal points out, during the Heian period the Japanese moved away from Chinese models in the arts, as well as in government. *Emakimono* or *emaki*, narrative picture scrolls, often called hand scrolls, provide an excellent case study of the period because they came to Japan via China but developed into a distinctly Japanese art form in the Heian period. In addition, analysis of the varied scrolls of the period can provide insights into the highly refined court culture, politics, and religion in the late Heian period.

This lesson uses four remarkable hand scrolls of the period that have survived to the present, each providing evidence on aspects of Heian life. The nobility appreciated and cultivated the culture of beauty, manners, and ritual as is reflected in the great *Genji Monogatori emaki (Illustrated Tale of Genji)*. Buddhist art was central to court life as the focus for prayers and ritual, and the *Shigisan engi emaki* (*Legends of Mt. Shigi* scroll) showed the respect for monks, myth, and magic. Changes in power and their impact on religious life are reflected in the satirical *Chōjū giga (Scroll of Frolicking Animals)*. Court intrigue and everyday life are portrayed in the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba (The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon)*. In this lesson, students observe, analyze, and interpret these four scrolls in order to learn about the different aspects of Heian life.

The lesson opens with a brief teacher-directed introduction to *emaki*. Students then individually analyze one of the four scrolls. They then form pairs to compare two scrolls and finally connect with another pair to create a foursome with a member "expert" on each of the scrolls. After students have shared their analyses of the four scrolls, they work in their foursomes to create a preview poster for a museum exhibit featuring the four *emaki.* The lesson ends with a class discussion of what can be learned from the scrolls about Heian Japan.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Describe how the *Genji Monogatari emaki* (*Illustrated Tale of Genji*), *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*), *Shigisan engi emaki (Legends of Mt. Shigi)*, and the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba (The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon*) represent *emaki* as an art genre.
2. Describe Japanese life during the Heian period.
3. Interpret a primary source document.
4. Use pictorial evidence to create and support a thesis.
5. Demonstrate visual literacy by analyzing a work of art within its original historical, political, economic, religious, or social contexts.

Vocabulary:

Ban Dainagon ekotoba: scroll called *The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon* in English
*Chōjū giga***:** scroll called *Scroll of Frolicking Animals* in English
emaki or *emakimono*: a hand scroll, usually with ink painting on paper; they are occasionally made of silk
engi: narrative about the origin of a place, usually a temple
Genji Monogatari emaki: illustrated hand scroll of *The Tale of Genji*
Heian period (794-1185): historic period when the Imperial court was located in Heian-kyō (modern Kyoto), known for its elegant court life and artistic contributions
Parody: (1) a literary work that mocks an idea, person, place, or thing by mimicking it in a humorous fashion; (2) the techniques used in a parody
Satire: (1) a literary or artistic work that uses irony, derision, and wit to ridicule human actions, beliefs, and customs to expose the foibles and follies of humans; (2) the techniques used in satire
Shigisan engi emaki: scroll called *Legends of Mt. Shigi* in English

Materials and Advance Preparation: Make enough copies of Handouts H1 through H4 for one-fourth of the class to have each. Make copies of Handouts H5 through H7 for all students. Handouts H8 and H9 are optional: Handout H8 provides background on the Heian period while Handout H9 is an art lesson. Gather poster paper and markers. Finally, print the scroll selections from the Internet sites listed below. You will need enough copies of the selections from each scroll for one-fourth of the class. Alternatively, if you have enough computers for every two students to have a computer, you could download the visuals and make them available at the classroom computers or allow students to access the visuals directly from the Internet; they can start from the Heian Japan Online Image List to find the appropriate images.

- *Chōjū giga (Scroll of Frolicking Animals)* http://www.kokingumi.com/ChojuGiga/index.html

- *Genji Monogatari emaki (The Illustrated Tale of Genji)*
  - *Suzumushi Chapter:* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Genji_emaki_SUZUMUSHI.J
  - *Scene by Kashiwagi III:* http://web-japan.org/museum/emaki/emaki02/emaki02.html

- *Shigisan engi emaki (Legends of Mt. Shigi)*
  - *Rice bowl taking storehouse:* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sigisanengi_tobikura.jpg

- Sending the rice back:
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myoren_sending_back_the_rice.JPG

- Ban Dainagon ekotoba (The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon)
- Fire at the second gate: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ban_dainagon_ekotoba.jpg
- Scenes from all three scrolls:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Bamse/Ban_Dainagon_Ekotoba#scene

Bibliographic information on the images:

- *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*)
  Detail from scroll 1, *Chōjū giga*, showing a religious service; mid-twelfth century; hand scroll, ink on paper, height 12½ in.; Kōzanji, Kyoto
- *Genji Monogatari emaki* (*The Illustrated Tale of Genji*)
  First image: Illustration 2 from the "*Suzumushi*" chapter of *Genji monogatari emaki*; first half of twelfth century; hand scroll, ink and color on paper; Gotoh Art Museum, Tokyo
  Second image: Illustration 3 from the "*Kashiwagi*" chapter of *Genji monogatari emaki*; first half of twelfth century; hand scroll, ink and color on paper; Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya
- *Shigisan engi emaki* (*Legends of Mt.* Shigi)
  First image: Illustration from *Shigisan engi emaki*, showing bales of rice sent to Myōren; second half of twelfth century; hand scroll; ink and color on paper; Chōgonsonshiji, Nara
  Second image: Illustration from *Shigisan engi emaki*, showing Myōren sending back the rice; second half of twelfth century; hand scroll, ink and color on paper; Chōgonsonshiji, Nara
- *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* (*The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon*)
  Details from scroll 1, *Ban Dainagon ekotoba*, attributed to Tokiwa Mitsunaga; second half of twelfth century; hand scroll, ink and color on paper, height 12-3/8 in.; Sakai Tadahiro Collection, Tokyo

Time Required: 2-3 class periods

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by explaining to students that they will be using art as a primary source document to learn about life in Japan during the late Heian period. The documents they will be using are *emaki* or hand scrolls that are from the late Heian period. (See TTT **Teacher Background Information** for more information about scrolls.) If students are not familiar with hand scrolls, make sure they understand how they were read and viewed. Explain that the students will use this pictorial evidence to develop their understanding about the historical, political, and religious life of the nobility and Buddhist clergy at this time. If students need background about the Heian period, Handout H8 provides such information.

2. Organize students into four groups. Using the jigsaw method, students will work individually, then form pairs to compare two scrolls, and finally connect with another pair to compare four scrolls. In the end, the foursome will have one student who is an expert on each scroll. In deciding who gets what scroll, note that the *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of*

Frolicking Animals) is probably the most difficult to analyze because of its use of parody and satire. Give each group one of the four scrolls and accompanying handout:

- *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*), Handout H1
- *Genji Monogatari emaki* (*The Illustrated Tale of Genji*), Handout H2
- *Shigisan engi emaki* (*Legends of Mt. Shigi*), Handout H3
- *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* (*The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon*), Handout H4

Give each student a copy of Handout H5, which provides instruction for analyzing the scrolls. Explain that the first step in the lesson will be individual examination of the scroll panels.

3. Let students work individually for 5 to 10 minutes, completing the questions on Handout H5. Explain that they will have a chance to explore more with their group.

4. Have students discuss their answers in the group that shares the same scroll. Encourage students to clarify their responses and answer questions before they meet with students from another group. Provide 10 minutes to talk with each other.

5 Regroup students into pairs. Put one *Genji Monogatari* student with one *Shigisan engi* student until everyone has a partner. Pair one *Ban Dainagon* student with one *Chōjū giga* student. Pass out Handout H6 to each student; this handout calls for students to create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between the two scrolls. Have the pairs use Handout H5 and each other's scroll panels in completing this diagram. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for students to analyze and complete the handout.

6. For the final regrouping, put student pairs together to form groups of four representing the four scrolls. Give students 20 minutes to look at the four scrolls and share their observations from Handout H6.

7. After students have shared, explain that each group is going to create a preview poster for a museum exhibit featuring the four *emaki*. They are to create a poster "teaser" that will get people interested in the exhibit. Distribute poster paper and markers, along with Handout H7, which provides instructions for this activity. Allow 30 minutes for the groups to create their posters. Post the posters around the room and let students examine them.

8. Debrief the activity by discussing the question from Handout H7: What can we learn about Japan in the late Heian period from the scrolls?

Assessment:

Handouts H5 and H6 can be used for assessment, as can the posters created in Step 7. Students should use examples from the social, religious, and political issues of the late Heian period. Some of those themes might include a satirical look at the changes in power from aristocratic families to ex-emperors, increasing wealth and competition between different sects of Buddhism, wealth and opulence of the court, political quarrels, and the influence of myth and miracles.

Extension/Enrichment:

If you would like to incorporate more art analysis into the lesson, have students use Handout H9, which requires them to look at the artistic characteristics of the scrolls.

Students could create their own scrolls centered around a fable, story, or battle or making a social commentary. The teacher might want to make a copy of a scroll as an example for students to see. It could be posted in the room so students could view the entire work. The complete *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*) is available at http://www.kokingumi.com/ChojuGiga/index.html.

Teacher Background Information on *Emaki*:

The *emakimono* or *emaki* is a horizontal illustrated narrative scroll that is distinctly Japanese. Its predecessors originated in India and, along with Buddhism, came to Japan through China. Scrolls were used to depict stories of historical events, provide religious commentary, illustrate works of fiction and poetry, or serve as a form of creative expression for the artist.

Scrolls were most often made of paper or occasionally from silk. They were attached to a wooden dowel at the left end and then rolled up for storage on shelves or in boxes. The story or narrative was read by unrolling the scroll a little at a time, from right to left, like Japanese is written. Japanese is traditionally written in vertical lines from right to left so the format of scrolls, with the text alternating with pictures, was a format compatible with Japanese writing conventions. The scenes developed in movie-like fashion, unrolling the narrative for the viewer. After the scroll was viewed, it was rolled up.

Pictures were drawn with ink, painted, or stamped. The ink or water-soluble colors were applied with animal-hair brushes. There was no way to correct a mistake or to repaint, as can be done with oil or acrylic paint. Planning ahead was important; because painting was done on the spot, the result was a spontaneity and freshness to the work. Work was intense because a single brush stroke could ruin a scroll.

Scrolls were generally 8 to 20 inches in height and could reach up to 60 feet in length. A story could take from one to as many as ten scrolls. Scrolls were enjoyed as they were unrolled with one or two feet viewed at a time. The gradual revealing of the story was what gave the scroll its life; the effect is lost when the whole length is spread out. Some of the scenes were independent, and some were pictures that evolved from the right to the left within one "frame." The artist illustrated time and place as the scroll was unrolled.

A feature of note is the absence of definite borders for the scenes. In European, Indian, and Persian art, most pictures are carefully framed. Frequently in Japanese *emaki*, diagonal lines of buildings and slanting spaces are used to restrict the focus of attention and to highlight certain features. A diagonal structure that runs down the right will point to a certain event or object at the left side of a scene. Figures leaving always face left and those arriving always face right.

The Japanese were the first to develop this genre, which is thought to have influenced the later development of woodblock prints. (Some scholars even claim a link between *emaki* and *manga* and *anime*, but others refute the claim.) The typically Japanese form of painting seen in

the *emaki*, depicting local life and landscape, is known as *yamato-e,* signifying a native Japanese subject matter. The *yamato-e* developed during the Heian period. Previously, Chinese scenery and styles dominated Japanese art.

The most famous Japanese narrative hand scroll that was created during the late Heian period is the *Genji Monogatari emaki*. It depicts important scenes from *The Tale of Genji*, Japan's first and perhaps most important novel. The *Shigisan engi emaki* (*Legends of Mt. Shigi*) illustrates a folktale about the miracles associated with the founding of a temple. The *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* (*The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon*) is an historical account about court intrigue, concerning events of the Ōtemmon Conspiracy. The *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*) is a humorous caricature of animals acting like humans.

It is unclear who created most of these scrolls. Only the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* can be confidently attributed to the court painter Tokiwa Mitsunaga. Some scholars attribute the *Chōjū giga* and the *Shigisan engi* scrolls to the Buddhist clergyman Toba Sōjō. The *Genji Monogatari emaki* is believed to date from the first half of the twelfth century, as is the *Chōjū giga*. The *Shigisan engi emaki* dates from after 1150, and the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* was created between 1157 and 1180.

Teacher Resources:

Addiss, Stephen, and Audrey Yoshiko Seo, *How to Look at Japanese Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996).

Hall, John Whitney, et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 2: Heian Japan*, Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough, eds. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Mason, Penelope, *History of Japanese Art*, rev. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005).

Heian Japan: An Introductory Essay

by Ethan Segal, Michigan State University

Japan has a long history. Archaeological evidence shows that people have lived in the Japanese islands since prehistoric times, and written records from almost 1,700 years ago describe primitive societies in the archipelago. To make this long history more manageable, historians break it up into periods. Periods range in length from decades to centuries. The Heian (pronounced "Hey ahn") period, from 794 to 1185 C.E., is one such period.

During the Heian period, an imperial court based in the capital of Heian-kyō (modern Kyoto) wielded the highest political authority in the land. The city's name means "Capital of Peace and Tranquility," and the Heian period is usually remembered as having been an age of art, literature, and culture. During these years, Japanese developed a strong sense of native aesthetics. Female authors serving at court, women including Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, created splendid literary works such as *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book.* Not everything was peaceful, however. Warriors also started to become important political figures in the Heian period. In fact, these four centuries contain a tremendous amount of change. Over the course of the Heian period, society moved from an interest in foreign things to native ones, from elite Buddhism to religion for the common people, and from rule exclusively by those at court to power shared with the newly rising samurai. The ways these political, social, religious, and economic developments interacted with and transformed each other are what make the Heian period so fascinating and important.

Japan before Heian and the Moving of the Capital

For more than a century prior to the Heian period, Japan obsessed over things Chinese. Japanese envoys who visited Tang China found a magnificent civilization far more advanced than their own. Starting in the seventh century, Japanese began trying to refashion their own country along Chinese lines. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the design of the largest pre-Heian capital, a city called Heijō-kyō. Modeled on the Tang capital of Chang'an, Heijō-kyō was laid out in a grid-like pattern, with streets running north-south and east-west. The imperial palace was built in the north so that the Japanese emperor could face south and look out over his people, in keeping with Chinese ideas of geomancy. Because the capital was primarily located in Heijō (modern Nara) between 710 and 784 C.E., these years are referred to as the Nara period.

The Japanese also adopted other aspects of Chinese society. During the seventh century, the court followed Chinese example by declaring all land to be the property of the state and attempting to distribute it to the people on the basis of a national census conducted every six years. They also devised and implemented law codes that drew upon—in some places, actually copied—Tang legal codes. In the early eighth century, the discovery of new sources of copper enabled the court to begin minting copper coins. These coins were almost identical in shape and design to Chinese cash. Officials also reorganized government and created eight bureaucratic ministries that paralleled those in China. Finally, Japanese learned about Buddhism by reading

Chinese texts and built major temples throughout the city of Nara. Emperor Shōmu, who ruled during the middle of the Nara period, was a devoutly religious man. He constructed the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji Temple, still a popular tourist site today. Even the term we translate as "emperor"—in Japanese, *tennō*—was probably first used in the seventh century by Japanese who wanted to assert the equality of their ruler with the emperor of China. Of course, these changes were not motivated solely by admiration for Tang society. Japanese elites used Chinese ideas about government to strengthen their own hold on power. They thereby created in the eighth century the most powerful state that had existed to date in the Japanese islands.

Emperor Kammu, who took the throne in 781, decided to abandon Nara for a new capital. After a failed attempt to establish a new city at Nagaoka, he moved the imperial court to Heian in 794. Scholars have debated why Kammu moved the capital. Some have suggested that he sought to escape the strong Buddhist influence in Nara. One of his predecessors, Empress Shōtoku, had given a great deal of power to a Buddhist advisor named Dōkyō. Dōkyō had ambitions on the throne itself. Although Dōkyō was deposed and exiled after Shōtoku's death, some believe Kammu moved the capital to avoid the Buddhist monks and temples already well established in Nara. But Kammu later became an important sponsor of Buddhist institutions himself, so this explanation is problematic. A more convincing theory is that Kammu relocated the capital to an area where his maternal family was strong. There, he could rely on his relatives for support. Regardless of the reason, the court would remain in Heian/Kyoto for more than 1,000 years.

Turning Away from Chinese Models

The city of Heian, like its predecessor Nara, reflected Chinese influence in its design. Much larger than Nara, the new capital encompassed approximately ten square miles. It had broad avenues and streets running parallel and perpendicular to each other. The layout was orderly and regular. Although the city has changed over the centuries, even today visitors to Kyoto find it much easier to navigate than most other Japanese cities. Other Chinese-inspired practices continued into the Heian period as well. For example, the imperial court continued to mint copper coins until the mid-tenth century. But beginning in the late eighth century, and especially in the ninth, Japanese began to move away from Tang models. They started modifying aspects of government and society in their own original ways.

One reason for the move away from Chinese models was the decline of the Tang dynasty. Following the internal rebellions in the mid-eighth century, the Tang began a downward trend from which it never recovered. Japanese were not as impressed on their visits to China. They may even have begun to fear traveling in a country where conditions were unstable. In 894 the Japanese suspended official missions to the Tang. Although Buddhist scholars and merchants continued to move back and forth between China and Japan, no official government missions would occur for 500 years.

Other reasons for the move away from things Chinese sprang from changing conditions in Japan. Kammu, for example, was a particularly active emperor. Among his many innovations, he devised two new offices—the Bureau of Archivists (Kurōdo-dokoro) and the Imperial Police (Kebiishi-chō). These offices were not called for in the earlier Chinese-inspired legal codes. Also during his administration, government officials gradually stopped conducting the census and redistributing land. Perhaps most dramatically, Kammu changed the structure of the military. In the seventh century, Japanese leaders created a conscript army as one of their steps to strengthen

central government. That army was primarily an infantry of peasants designed to suppress domestic rebellion and defend against possible invasion from the Asian mainland (an expanding Tang dynasty and wars on the Korean peninsula had the Japanese fearful). By the late eighth century, however, an army of peasant foot soldiers was proving impractical. Japan no longer feared foreign invasion. Instead, it was trying to expand northward. Local peoples, whom the Japanese called Emishi, used guerilla war tactics to resist. The Japanese found that soldiers on horseback were more mobile and therefore more effective in these northern campaigns. Peasants, who usually had little or no experience with horses, did not make good cavalry. As a result, in 792 Kammu abolished conscription. He turned to the sons of elites and local militias to provide horses and soldiers for his wars. This was an important step in the eventual rise of the samurai.

Although the Heian period is known as a particularly "Japanese" age, the Japanese still maintained contact with the outside world. Asian kingdoms including Silla and Wu Yue sent diplomats to Japan, and Parhae (located in modern north Korea and Manchuria) regularly sent tribute missions. The court had an official reception center for foreign visitors at Dazaifu, near modern Fukuoka on the southern island of Kyushu. Its officials adhered to detailed protocol when deciding whether to receive foreigners. As Chinese medicines, perfumes, books, and works of art were highly valued by the nobility, merchants from the mainland were generally welcomed. Not all interactions were peaceful, however. Because relaying information to Kyoto took weeks, Dazaifu officials had to make their own decisions in emergencies such as pirate attacks or the brief Toi invasion of 1019. In many ways, Dazaifu became in practical terms the capital of southwestern Japan in the Heian period.

Heian Governance and the Fujiwara

Kammu's successors were not as capable as he had been. By the end of the ninth century, the most powerful figures at court were members of a noble family known as the Fujiwara. Sometimes compared to the Frankish mayors of the palace in European history, the Fujiwara never replaced the imperial family. Rather, they monopolized key ministerial positions and wielded enough power to control the emperors. To understand how the Fujiwara became so influential, we need to look at marriage, child-rearing, and the role of women in Heian society.

Much of our knowledge of Heian marriage comes from literary works. These works reveal something quite interesting: married couples usually lived at the wife's family residence. Sometimes they lived separately, and on a few occasions they lived in a new home built for them by the wife's family. Moving into the husband's family residence was almost unheard of. As a result, children were most often reared by their mother's family. That family—especially the maternal grandfather—had great influence over the children. The Fujiwara took advantage of this system to gain influence over the imperial family. They used their political connections to have Fujiwara girls appointed as consorts and empresses. When those girls gave birth to imperial heirs, the Fujiwara grandfathers took charge of raising the children. The Fujiwara came to value daughters more than sons, for only daughters could be married into the imperial house and thereby produce imperial grandsons with Fujiwara blood.

Starting in the mid-ninth century, the Fujiwara men were able to have themselves appointed as regents, making them the most powerful figures at court. The most famous and successful was Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027), who became father-in-law to four emperors and grandfather to three more. Michinaga was a masterful politician who engineered everything

from appointments to governorships to the retirement of emperors. His most famous poem, composed when one of his daughters was made an imperial consort in 1018, reflects his success:

> This world, I think,
> Is indeed my world,
> Like the full moon
> I shine,
> Uncovered by any cloud!

Yet the Fujiwara hold on power was not to last forever. In the latter half of the eleventh century, the absence of Fujiwara grandsons allowed the imperial house to regain control of its affairs.

The regent did not run the country alone, of course. Heian aristocrats lived in a very hierarchical society in which they were assigned rank. The highest rank (senior first) was reserved for the emperor. Members of the highest nobility who served as ministers of state might hold second or third ranks. Younger up-and-coming nobles and some members of the provincial governing class might hold fourth or fifth rank. The lower ranks were generally given to bureaucratic experts, clerks, and skilled technicians. Possessing a rank made one eligible for appointment to office. As there were more ranked candidates than open offices, however, individuals used gifts (i.e., bribes), political connections, or other means to try to win appointments. Securing office was very important to these men, as it furthered their political careers and guaranteed them income. Sei Shōnagon, a caustic commentator on Heian society, described in her *Pillow Book* how pathetically the candidates for open offices beseeched their superiors and how depressing were the households of those who failed to win positions. Women received rank but were not eligible for offices such as minister or governor. However, powerful women at court were important political figures and often influenced decisions on who received appointments. Even so powerful a figure as Michinaga, for example, owed much of his success to the support of his elder sister Senshi, who had already married into the imperial family.

Although governors were not highly regarded by capital nobility, in the provinces they were important men. The country was divided into 68 provinces. Each had a governor whose duties included collecting and delivering taxes to the capital. At the beginning of the Heian period, these governors were carefully regulated. Starting in the tenth century, however, there was a gradual shift to less central government involvement in provincial affairs. Governors essentially signed contracts to deliver a certain amount of tax income to the government. In exchange, they were allowed to administer their provinces as they pleased. This system invited abuse, and governors earned reputations for their greed. In a few extreme cases, rural elites petitioned the imperial court to have their governor removed. Rarely were such appeals heeded.

Elite Society

Michinaga presided over the high point of elite Heian culture, during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Eager to make sure that his daughters received imperial favor, he surrounded them with talented female writers—we might call them “ladies in waiting.” These women served his daughters and authored remarkable works of poetry, fiction, and memoirs that remain among the great works of pre-modern world literature. Today, the best known is Murasaki Shikibu, author of *The Tale of Genji* as well as of a diary that provides wonderfully detailed descriptions of life at court. *The Tale of Genji* is often hailed as the world’s first novel.

Composed over many years and consisting of more than 50 chapters, it tells the story of the romantic relationships and political intrigues surrounding a handsome imperial prince and his descendants. Although fictional, *The Tale of Genji* has been widely used as a historical source for understanding the Heian period. Not only does it draw upon Murasaki's experiences as a lady at court, some of the characters may have been based on real individuals. Even more important, the psychological sophistication of Murasaki's characters and the beauty of the tale's poetry helped make it the most influential Japanese literary work of the pre-modern era.

The Tale of Genji and other works such as Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*, the Mother of Michitsuna's *Kagerō Diary*, and *The Sarashina Diary* offer valuable insight into life among the Heian elites. Women were literate and enjoyed a considerable number of rights, such as the ability to own and pass on property and to choose their own heirs. Their skill in composing elegant poems in a graceful hand and their taste in clothing were considered important assets in attracting men. As for appearance, women took great pride in their long hair but wore elaborate, colorful, many-layered kimono that hid their figures. Social expectations and clothing that limited movement meant women did not travel easily. As they were not given bureaucratic positions in government, they had little need to journey on a daily basis. When they did travel—perhaps to visit a relative or a temple—it was often by ox-drawn cart. This slow means of transportation made a trip of even a few miles seem quite long. Men were more mobile and traveled regularly between their homes and the court, where they served in office. More importantly, for Heian elites, the city of Kyoto was the center of the social, cultural, and political world. The elites seemed to have no desire to live anywhere else. Men being sent to the provinces on official business lamented that they had to leave Kyoto behind.

The high culture that developed in the capital is remembered today as quintessentially Japanese. Like the trends noted above in government, culture moved away from Chinese models. In writing, the Japanese developed their own phonetic script better suited to represent their language than Chinese characters. This script was used by women and for writing Japanese poetry. Official government documents (usually prepared by men) were still recorded in Chinese. The Japanese also refined their own poetic forms and started compiling imperial anthologies of the greatest poems, beginning with the early tenth-century *Kokinshū*. The poems in the *Kokinshū* were *waka* (the name literally means "Japanese poem") and quite distinct from Chinese-style poems. The most common form (also called *tanka*) had lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. Note that *waka* formed the basis for *haiku*, which did not emerge until centuries later.

In painting, artists turned to bright, opaque colors to illustrate native Japanese themes in a style that Heian people labeled *yamato-e* (Japanese pictures). The term implied a clear distinction between Japanese and Chinese art (which was labeled *kara-e* and showed images associated with China), even though *yamato-e* techniques were inspired by Chinese paintings of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. Buddhism provided another important inspiration for art, as temple architecture and sculpture achieved new heights of grandeur. Heian Japanese also developed the *emaki*, the subject of this unit's lesson. *Emaki* are long illustrated scrolls combining text with painting to tell a story. Some had religious themes, such as those illustrating the founding of a major temple (like the *Shigi-san engi emaki*) or the actions of a vengeful deity (like the *Tenjin engi emaki*). Others illustrated great literary works such as *The Tale of Genji* and Murasaki's diary. The *Frolicking Animals Scroll* was somewhat unique in that it used no color and was accompanied by no text.

Heian Buddhism

Religion, like many other aspects of society, changed in important ways during the Heian period. Earlier Nara Buddhism drew directly upon Chinese traditions and catered to elites. These elites underwrote the cost of temples and turned to religion for protection of the state. The Nara capital contained numerous temples, and each province had a national monastery and nunnery. Rather than proselytize or serve the religious needs of the common people, these religious institutions primarily catered to aristocrats and the government.

When two Japanese monks, Saichō (767-822) and Kūkai (774-835), returned from study in China in the early ninth century, they brought new texts and practices with them. They each went on to found a new Japanese Buddhist sect, Tendai and Shingon, respectively. With Emperor Kammu's support, each established a major religious temple. Tendai's principal temple was (and still is) Enryakuji, located on Mt. Hiei, northeast of Kyoto. Saichō emphasized the importance of the Lotus Sutra as the most important vehicle for advancing on the spiritual path. He was rather dogmatic, insisting on the inferiority of Buddhist traditions that did not recognize the preeminence of the Lotus Sutra. Yet Tendai accepted anyone, regardless of background, who was prepared to study and follow its teachings. In 827, Enryakuji was granted its own ordination platform, meaning individuals could officially be made monks there. This had previously only been possible in Nara. Enryakuji became an important force in political, economic, and religious affairs. In later centuries, monks who trained there went on to found their own Buddhist sects including Pure Land and Japanese Zen Buddhism.

In contrast with Saichō, Kūkai taught that anyone could achieve enlightenment if they studied with him. He emphasized the importance of esoteric rituals and the direct transmission of secret teachings from master to disciple rather than any particular text. Those rituals included special meditative hand positions (*mudras*), paintings (*mandalas*), and mantras (chants). Unlike Saichō, Kūkai enjoyed good relations with the Nara sects, for he held that all of the Buddhist traditions in Japan had something good to offer. Kūkai also believed in helping people and was skilled at many things, including engineering. He is credited with helping to design and build public works projects such as bridges all over the country.

Tendai and Shingon differed from earlier forms of Buddhism in that they granted lay ordinations. People not prepared to devote themselves completely to religious life could study for shorter periods of time at Tendai and Shingon temples. They also offered benefits such as blessings, prayers, and other services to common people (willing to pay, of course). Records show that commoners utilized these services, suggesting that Tendai and Shingon reached at least some people beyond the aristocrats. Popular religious belief may have benefited even more from the efforts of holy men and ascetics who did not join any established Buddhist sect. Instead, they wandered the country, teaching people about Buddhism and offering services for the dead. The widespread production of wooden figures of Kannon, the Buddhist deity of mercy and compassion, suggests that people in the provinces may have followed their own forms of Buddhism independent of the elites' religious traditions.

By the middle of the Heian period, belief in Amida's Pure Land had also become widespread. Heian aristocrats came to see themselves as living in *mappō*—the final days of the law, a degenerate age when the teachings of the original Buddha were so distant people were no longer able to comprehend them and achieve enlightenment. Instead, they had to rely on the

compassion of Amida Buddha, who had promised to bring all those who had true faith to the Western Paradise upon their death. There, they too could become buddhas. Those who believed in this would, on their deathbeds, hold a silk cord attached to a figure of Amida (Michinaga reportedly held nine such cords!), in hopes that this would aid their speedy journey to the Western Paradise. We can see such images reflected in Heian art such as the *raigō-zu* paintings of Amida descending to guide a dying soul into paradise.

Finally, we should note that Shinto played an important part in Heian religious life as well. Unlike Buddhism, Shinto was not an organized religion with major texts. Rather, it was a set of native animistic beliefs centered on such natural geographic features as mountains, waterfalls, and trees. The emperor, who was supposed to be a descendant of the Shinto Sun Goddess Amaterasu, was the highest Shinto priest in the land. He spent much of his time conducting religious rituals for the state. A female member of the imperial family usually served as the high priestess at Ise, the most important Shinto shrine. Unlike Western traditions, in which religion is exclusive (you can only belong to one), the Japanese were much more flexible in their beliefs. Shinto and Buddhism coexisted peacefully. During the Heian period, Shinto shrines were often built close to or on the grounds of Buddhist temples, and Japanese devised a system for equating Buddhist deities with Shinto gods.

Commoners, Estates, and Warriors

The Heian aristocracy could never have enjoyed lives filled with romance, poetry, art, and religious devotion without considerable wealth. The two principal sources of income were public (i.e., government-controlled) lands and private estates. As noted above, the government abandoned the periodic census and land redistribution early in the Heian period. Instead, for ease of taxation, land was grouped into small units called *myō*. A responsible local person was chosen to make sure that tax was collected from each *myō*. Unfortunately for the peasants who worked the land, governors became increasingly free to tax them at rates much higher than what was originally called for in the legal codes. In addition, frequent summer droughts and poor farming techniques meant that inadequate harvests and famine were common. Malnutrition and diseases such as small pox made life quite difficult for members of the lower classes. When things grew extremely bad, peasants sometimes abandoned their lands in hopes of finding better living conditions elsewhere.

Some lands came to be held as private estates. These lands were exempt from government taxation. In many cases, they were also closed to entry by government officials. A few estates first appeared in the eighth century, when lands given to major temples and shrines were declared exempt. The practice became much more widespread in the Heian period. Along with religious houses, nobles were granted lands for their services to the state. In addition, government initiatives to encourage the opening of new farmlands meant that ambitious men could claim undeveloped land, commend it to a Heian noble or temple, and have it converted into a private estate. These private estates paid no tax to the central government. Instead, they paid tribute to elite proprietors—usually major temples, high nobles like the Fujiwara, or members of the imperial family. These influential people ensured that the estates kept their exempt status. Thus, the private estate system reflected the conflict of interest inherent in Heian governance: the nobles enriched themselves with income from private estates while simultaneously depriving the central government (which they ran) of tax income.

Unfortunately, we know little about the daily lives of those who worked the estates and public lands because they left behind few written records. The elite residents of the city of Heian, who wrote so prolifically, were only a tiny fraction of the total population. They shared the city with many whom they considered beneath them—servants, merchants, suppliers, etc. In addition, of course, the vast majority of the population lived in the countryside. Many were peasants who grew rice and other grains. Others engaged in fishing, mining, the production of salt, paper, or silk, and other industries. Government tax collectors and private estate proprietors taxed them for all of these goods, thereby underwriting the expense of the luxurious lifestyles of the capital.

Also among Japan's rural residents were hereditary warrior families. Some came from elite provincial families that had exerted regional influence for centuries. Others came from the capital. They used their impressive pedigrees and connections to secure important positions for themselves in the countryside. Among those were the great clans of Taira and Minamoto. Each clan could claim emperors as distant ancestors. Some lesser members of the Fujiwara also achieved prominence outside of the capital. There was no samurai class or samurai code at this time, but members of these families competed for provincial government offices and gained experience fighting against bandits, pirates, government officials who got out of line, and rebellious northerners. They primarily fought from horseback and relied upon the bow and arrow as their most important weapons. Battles might be better labeled skirmishes, for they rarely involved more than a few hundred men and rarely lasted more than a few days.

Two notable exceptions were the uprisings of Taira no Masakado in the tenth century and Taira no Tadatsune in the eleventh century. Masakado captured eight eastern provinces before he was finally crushed. Tadatsune fought off opponents for almost three years before finally surrendering to government forces. Some historians have interpreted the seeming independence of these warriors, and the difficulties that the government had in stopping them, as evidence that the imperial court was losing control of the countryside. In each case, however, the court was able to successfully deputize other warriors to suppress the rebels, rewarding them with appointments to office. It might appear that the capital, with no standing army of its own, was vulnerable to attack from the provinces. In fact, the court's monopoly on legal appointment to office enabled it to play warriors off against each other and manage the countryside effectively.

The Final Years of the Heian Period

In the mid-eleventh century, Fujiwara girls who had married into the imperial line failed to produce a male heir. Thus, an emperor without Fujiwara relatives came to power. He was able to take steps—such as establishing an office to reclaim estate lands for the throne—to weaken the Fujiwara hold on power. His son, Emperor Shirakawa, went even further by abdicating his official position to his own young son but retaining power as a retired emperor and head of the imperial clan. From 1087 until the end of the Heian period, three such retired emperors kept power out of the hands of the Fujiwara.

But not all was peaceful within the imperial family. In 1156, a succession dispute between the emperor and retired emperor led each to call upon warriors to settle their conflict. For the first time, there was fighting in the streets of the capital. Following another such dispute in 1159, Taira no Kiyomori emerged as the pre-eminent warrior leader. He eliminated the adult leaders of the other rival warrior clan, the Minamoto, and sent the young boys of the family into exile. Kiyomori received the rights to estates and titles to government positions in reward for his

services to the retired emperor. Over the course of the 1160s and 70s, Kiyomori gradually began to raise his status in the capital. In 1167 he was appointed to the position of Grand Minister. In 1171 he arranged for one of his daughters to marry an imperial prince. Like the Fujiwara before him, Kiyomori was able to eventually get the child of that union—his grandson—made emperor, seeming to secure his hold on power.

Another imperial prince, however, upset that he had been passed over, issued a call-to-arms. He asked all loyal warriors to rise up and overthrow Kiyomori. Using this call-to-arms as a pretext to mobilize, one of the exiled Minamoto boys (now an adult) named Yoritomo raised an army in eastern Japan. Taira and Minamoto forces fought the length of the country in a series of battles known as the Genpei War (1180-85). Yoritomo stayed in the east during these campaigns, securing his power base and letting his brothers lead armies in pursuit of the Taira. Kiyomori died in 1181, and subsequent Taira leadership proved inept. The Taira armies gradually retreated to the west and were finally eliminated in a naval battle at Dan-no-Ura in 1185. But violence persisted, as many warriors took advantage of the chaos that followed the Genpei War to attack neighbors and encroach upon civilian land rights. The imperial court turned to Yoritomo to quell such violence. He eventually transformed his power into an independent warrior government known as the *bakufu*. Yoritomo became its leader, taking the title shogun in 1192. This marked the beginning of dual government in Japan. The imperial court in Kyoto retained authority over civilian affairs but shared power with a new military government based in the eastern city of Kamakura. This transition from imperial to dual government rule also marked the end of the Heian period.

Chōjū Giga (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*)

Chōjū giga is an unusual scroll because of the use of animals and the lack of text or writing. Most scrolls have a narrative in calligraphy that accompanies the paintings. Because there is no narrative in the *Chōjū giga*, its purpose or intent is unclear.

The *Chōjū giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animals*) is attributed to the monk Toba Sōjō and is at the Kōzan-ji temple in Kyoto. There are four scrolls in all. The scenes on the *Scroll of Frolicking Animals* can be divided into five different scenes. The scroll begins with rabbits and monkeys swimming and playing in water. Then the action switches to rabbits and frogs in an archery tournament. Next is a festival scene, followed by frogs and rabbits wrestling. The final scene shows a monkey as a priest giving an offering to a fat frog seated on a lotus leaf throne, an image that mirrors representations of the Buddha. He sits next to a leafless tree with an owl. Three clerics represented by two foxes and a monkey seem to be reacting to the ceremony. A fox and a rabbit hold Buddhist rosaries and seem to be praying at this Buddhist ceremony.

This scroll has been named a National Treasure in Japan. Art critics highlight the remarkable composition and masterful use of ink and brush. The brush strokes have been described as delicate and bold with simple lines. The effect is light and lively, which creates the humor in the panels. The scroll features lots of curves, and angular brushstrokes and lines are varied in width to show motion and action. Empty space and action are balanced in the scroll. Notice how the composition is asymmetrical. The mood, tone, or emotion suggests humor and playfulness in a fantasy world.

Many theories exist to explain why this scroll was painted. It may have been created simply for entertainment, as a commentary on Buddhist rituals, or as a satire on court and religious life. Some think the scroll is commenting on the changes in the late Heian period. The exquisite high culture of the nobility was losing control of the government as the warrior class was gaining power. Competition between different Buddhist sects had seen warring monks competing for power. During this time, there was an increase in Buddhist ceremonies and rituals to honor the imperial family and to protect its well-being. These rituals were performed to insure the power and interests of imperial control. The ceremonial rituals were possibly the target for parody and satire in the *Chōjū giga*. The changes from imperial authority to rule by an aristocracy and then back to control by ex-emperors created conflict and insecurity.

In many periods of history, humor, satire, and parody have been used to express concern about political, social, economic, and cultural changes. Some art historians think the *emaki* is the beginning of a cartoon tradition, with the *Scroll of Frolicking Animals* being one of the first examples. Later, this tradition would influence woodblock prints. Some scholars even claim that the *emaki* influenced *manga* and eventually *anime*, but others refute this claim.

Genji Monogatari Emaki (*The Illustrated Tale of Genji*)

Genji Monogatari emaki reflects a connection between *emaki* and literature. The *monogatari* or romantic tales were a natural way to read and enjoy a famous tale in convenient scroll form. An illustrated narration of *The Tale of Genji,* the *Genji Monogatari emaki,* depicts important scenes from Japan's first and perhaps most important novel. Combining painting, calligraphy, literature, and papercraft, the *Genji Monogatari emaki* has been studied for clues to aristocratic life and culture in the world of Heian Japan. The tale, which relates the life and loves of the emperor's son Genji, provides a fictional description of court life. Genji is a romantic, handsome, cultured man who has many loves. Heartbreak, death, ghosts, flirtations, and court intrigue are explored in the novel. Scholars have used the novel and the *emaki* as sources for learning about court life in Heian Japan. At court, demonstrating the ability to compose poetry, draw calligraphy, dress luxuriously, and outwit your companions was important. How you acted, who you knew, and where you came from were also of utmost importance. The *Genji Monogatari emaki* illustrates the artistic and complicated relationships of the times.

Only a few scenes of the scroll now exist due to frequent fires and the effects of time on these works on paper. Scholars believe that originally all 54 chapters were illustrated, with one to three paintings per chapter. Scholars believe that teams of artists and noblemen worked on the project. First a scene was sketched with fine black lines in ink. Then layers of opaque paint were applied—a technique called *tsukuri-e* or "makeup." Last, the details of the faces were added. The formula for this was "a line for the eyes, a hook for the nose," or *hiki-me kagi-bana*.

Court life was ruled by a strict etiquette. Dignity and manners were very important. People's emotions were controlled and not expressed. People did have feelings, of course, and the *Genji Monogatari emaki* brilliantly tackles these emotional experiences. Mood is shown not with facial expressions, which would go against the highly refined court manners, but with formally posed figures placed in strategic architectural locations. Through the composition of space and the arrangement of walls, screens, and doors, the moving experiences are expressed. The figure in the space acts as a metaphor for the emotions felt in the narrative, capturing the moment in quiet and emotional intensity. The colors and patterns were carefully chosen to create mood as well. Each scene stands alone with beautiful calligraphy.

Notice that the inside of the house is shown by the removal of the ceiling to show the interior on different planes in slanting arrangements. The figures are big masses and are organized on planes one in front of another.

One theme in *The Tale of Genji* is that all acts have consequences, a central Buddhist belief. People are rewarded with good fortune if they do good works; sins bring misfortune. In the picture from the chapter called "*Suzumushi*" ("The Bell Cricket"), Genji is visiting Reizei, the emperor. The nobility and imperial court think that Reizei is Genji's half-brother, but he is actually Genji's son from an affair with his father's wife (Genji's stepmother). The composition of the picture creates physical and emotional distance between the two men. Facing each other at the left, they seem not to be talking. At the right, the figures are in different colors and seem to be part of a different world than Genji and Reizei.

In the second panel selection, Genji faces another emotional challenge. In this illustration from the "*Kashiwagi*" ("The Oak Tree") chapter, Genji is in the upper left, holding a son Genji must say is his own; the child is really his youngest wife's from an extramarital affair. This scene is of a ceremony honoring the newborn. As the viewer reads from right to left, first there is the bottom of a twelve-layered robe, the clothing of a lady-in-waiting. Next is a curtain; above it are plates with food for the ceremony. The child's mother is the pile of clothing at the bottom left. Genji sits cramped in the upper left corner stuffed into the sharply slanting floor where he can barely raise his head. Does he look like he has been punished for something he has done? This is a good example of how emotions were expressed in the composition of the panel.

Ban Dainagon Ekotoba (The Tale of the Courtier Ban Dainagon)

Ban Dainagon ekotoba (*The Tale of The Courtier Ban Dainagaon*) is an *emakimono* (hand scroll painting) depicting the events of the Ōtemmon Conspiracy, an event of Japan's early Heian period. The painting is attributed to Tokiwa Mitsunaga, who is believed to have painted it during the late Heian period.

During Heian times, there was competition for power. The limited number of positions in the court resulted in struggles within families and between families. Many different ways were used to get ahead. A family could gain power by marriage, by doing brave deeds, by writing or painting great works of art, or in some cases by murder, warfare, and deceit. This *emaki* tells of this kind of historical intrigue.

The full-color scroll depicts the events of March 866, in which Ban Dainagon, a local government minister, set fire to the Ōtemmon gate of Kyoto. He blamed one of his political rivals, Minister Minamoto no Makoto, for the fire. The *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* narrates the incidents surrounding the fire. The first scroll of the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* centers on the fire and the excited crowds. The second scroll highlights a fight between two boys. This fight resulted in the true story of who set the fire being told. The third scroll shows the trial of Ban Dainagon and the tragic effects of his banishment on his family.

The panel you are examining dramatizes the fire at the main gate of the palace. Two different methods create the action and movement. The first technique, where pigment is built up on the surface, is called *tsukuri-e* or "makeup." The heavy black smoke is a good example of use of this technique. The second technique is the lively and free flowing lines of the figures. These lines emphasize the movement away from the dark massive fire. What will happen to the people as they run away? The contrast of color between the lighter hues of the crowd and fiery red flames creates movement and emotion. The individual expressions on the common people show shock and amazement as they run away. The scene is so vivid, the viewer feels the crowd's fear and the heat of the fire.

The scroll uses an ingenious plan to tell its story. The story continues from the edge of each picture to create successive scenes showing the passing of time. One scene moves into another in a movie-like fashion. This effect was entirely new for its time.

Shigisan Engi Emaki (*Legends of Mt. Shigi*)

Some e*maki* were connected to literature, and *engi* tales were a natural way to read and enjoy a famous story in convenient hand scroll form. The *Shigisan engi emaki* (*Legends of Mt. Shigi*) draws on folklore to tell of miracles attributed to the monk Myōren, who founded the temple of Chōgosonshi-ji near Nara in the latter part of the ninth century. One scroll is the story of Myōren and his relationship with the rich man, Yamazaki. The second is Engi Kanji, the story about Myōren curing the emperor, and the third is Ama-gimi, the search of Myōren's sister, a nun, to find Myōren.

Buddhism was central to life in Heian Japan and affected how people lived their daily lives. Prayers, rituals, and Buddhist ways of thinking influenced literature, government, architecture, life, and death. Monks and priests were important people who taught the Buddhist way of life. There were many stories about monks because of their role as influential teachers. The wealthy nobility, people in government, and the everyday folk relied on monks and priests for advice in their spiritual and daily lives. The *Shigisan engi emaki* shows different aspects of the role of religion in Heian daily life.

In the panel from the first scroll, Myōren makes a magic rice bowl fly into the air, taking the rich man's rice storehouse to the top of a mountain. In another scene, bags of rice fly out of the storehouse when the rich man does not provide a bowl of rice to Myōren.

The freely drawn action and movement are painted by lively and varied brush strokes. The line work is done in light ink with solid black used occasionally for hair. Sometimes there is no color at all. Strong colors are used in some parts to highlight items, like the gold bowl. In general, thin pigments were used in order to avoid hiding the outlines of the figures. The main color scheme is light gray, blue, and yellow.

The rice bowl is carrying away the storehouse because the rich man, who usually provided Myōren with food whenever the magic rice bowl appeared, was busy. When the bowl arrived to be filled, he became annoyed because he always had to fill the bowl with food. He threw the bowl into the storehouse and locked it in. But the magic bowl slipped out, and the storehouse started to fly away with all the rice bales in it. One of the selected pictures from the scroll illustrates this event. There is great excitement as the rice bowl lifts the storehouse. The figures in the scroll panel include three travelers, servants with the rich man, and priests—all of whom seem to be running after the building. The action seems to happen right in front of the viewer's eyes as the travelers run through the gate and the rich man prepares to get on his horse. The composition is one of action and movement. The diagonal lines of the fence add to this movement to the left with the corner of the storehouse just out of view.

The scroll uses this ingenious method to unfold the events in the story. The story continues from the edge of each picture to create successive scenes showing the passing of time. One scene moves into another in a movie-like fashion. This effect was entirely new for its time.

The story continues with the rich man coming to Myōren to get his warehouse back. Myōren plans to keep the warehouse; however, he will send the rice bales back. So he puts one

rice bale in the magic bowl and then, like a flock of geese, all the rice bales leave the storehouse and follow the magic bowl back to the home of the rich man. In the selection depicting this scene, the movement again carries to the left. Light calligraphic lines draw the mountain and deer. The bales become smaller and smaller as they fly off the page.

There is a great emphasis on the humor of the moment in the drawing of common people and this folktale. This style and technique make this *emaki* one of the examples of the beginning of a cartoon tradition in Japan. Later this will influence woodblock prints. Some scholars even claim that this style influenced *manga* and eventually *anime*, but others disagree.

Scroll Analysis

1. Observe

Make a check mark by the characteristics that describe the mood, tone, or emotion of the scroll. If more than one applies, check those that best describe what you see.

__Quiet
__Humorous
__Noble, aristocratic
__Common, mundane
__Active
__Energetic
__Dynamic
__Emotionally intense

Would the nobility, everyday people, Buddhists, and/or government officials enjoy looking at this *emaki*? Explain your answer.

2. Analyze

Study the panels from the scroll for a couple of minutes. Form an overall impression of the pictures and then look at the details. Divide the pictures into quadrants and study each section to see what you observe.

What is the subject(s) of the scroll? Look at the objects, people and/or animals, activities, and location in the scroll panels. Describe what you see.

List three things that you think are important in the scroll.

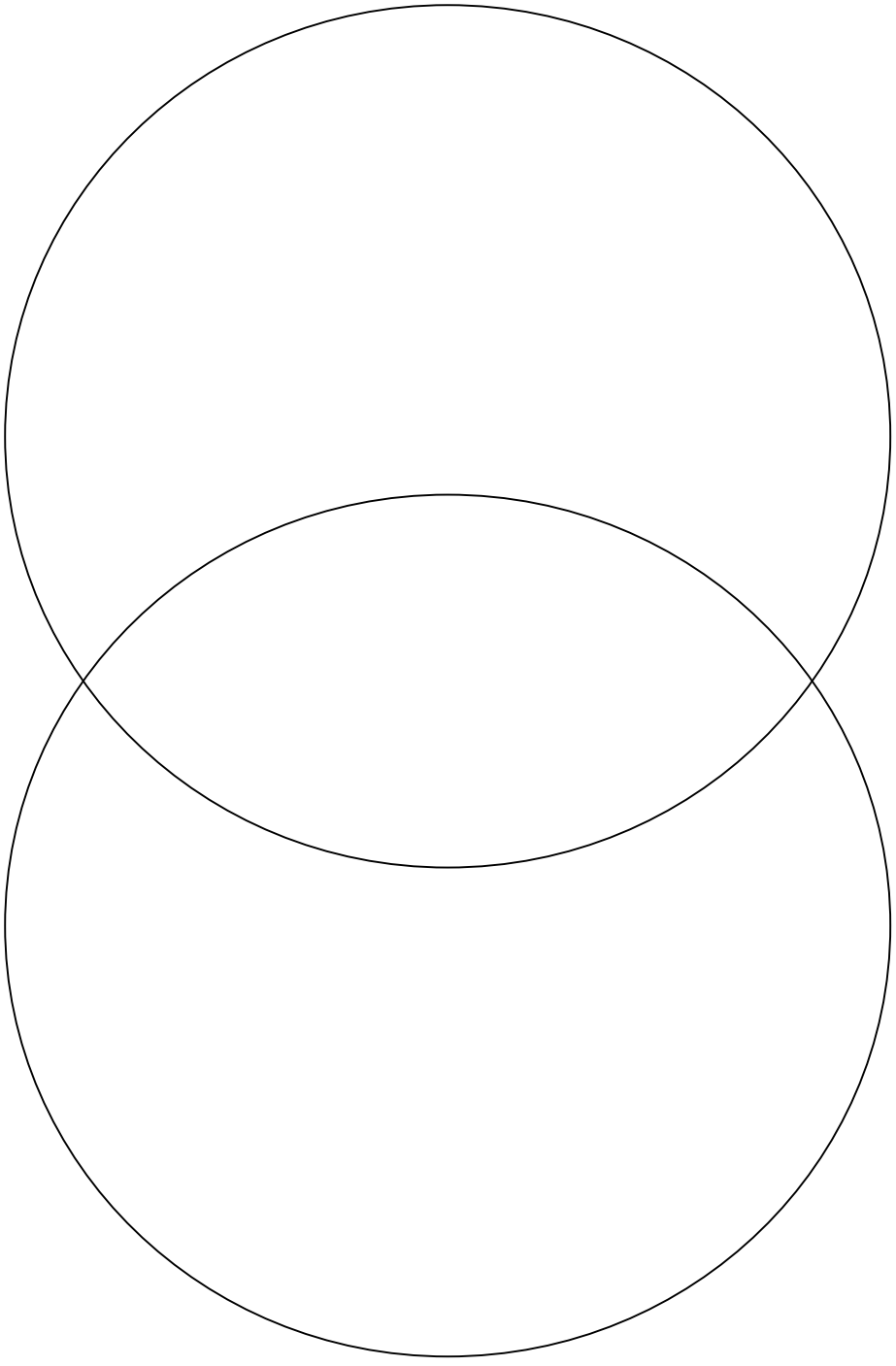
3. Infer

What might the painter have been trying to communicate? What evidence supports your answer?

Based on the *emaki* you examined and the information on the handout, list three things you might infer about religion or court life or life in Japan in the Heian period.

Scroll Comparison Diagram

Put the name of one scroll above the top circle. Put the name of the other scroll below the bottom circle. With your partner, identify the similarities between your scrolls, looking at art characteristics, content, and purpose. List this information in the space where the circles overlap. Identify differences by listing each scroll's unique features in the circle representing that scroll.



Creating a Poster for a Heian *Emaki* Exhibit

Your group is going to create a poster for a museum exhibit of the four hand scrolls studied in this lesson. The scrolls are being exhibited to teach the public about Japan in the late Heian period. It is your task to create something that will draw people to the exhibit. Decide what would be interesting and help give the public an overview of how Japan in the late Heian period is represented by these scrolls.

The poster your group creates should:

- Be presented **in color** on a standard piece of posting paper.
- Include **two to four illustrations** that highlight or feature parts of the scrolls (your art talent is not what's important here!).
- Highlight two to four **characteristics of Japan** in the late Heian period that museum-goers will learn from the exhibit.
- List **significant dates** for Heian Japan.
- Include a paragraph that clearly presents **your interpretation** of Japan in the late Heian period. How does your group summarize what took place, why it occurred, and why it is important or distinctive?
- Give the title, location, and dates of the exhibit.
- Be neat, easily readable, and understandable on its own.

The finished posters will be hung around the room. The class will "read the walls" in preparation for a discussion of the question: What can we learn about Japan in the late Heian period from the scrolls?

A Brief History of Heian Japan

The Heian period is remembered for the classic culture of the aristocracy and the imperial court. The emperor was sovereign but the nobility held power for most of the Heian period until the end of the Heian when ex-emperors controlled the government. Large military families formed around members of the court aristocracy. These families, mainly the Fujiwara family, gained prestige.

Court life in Heian Japan was sophisticated, full of intrigue and a level of refinement that has never been equaled. The highly developed cultural and artistic court life was characterized by a preoccupation with beauty. Dress, manners, daily pastimes, and etiquette were all guided by aesthetics and rituals. A life of pleasure involved court festivals, attention to beauty, love affairs, and skill in poetry, painting, calligraphy, and music. The poetry, literature, and art from this period were inspirations for future generations. The development of two new forms of Japanese writing created a unique Japanese vernacular literature, much of it written by women from the court. *The Tale of Genji*, written by Lady Murasaki c. 1000 C.E., is still considered by some as the greatest piece of Japanese literature. The illustrated hand scroll from the first half of the twelfth century is a National Treasure. Much of what we know about court life comes from these sources. The Heian period produced paintings of court life reflecting the aristocratic culture, religious art that influenced the growth in Buddhism, and secular art that honored the Japanese landscape, subjects, and taste.

Buddhism spread throughout Japan. Two major sects, Tendai and Shingon Buddhism, competed for followers, prestige, and patronage from the royal family and nobility. Pure Land Buddhism, based on personal salvation, emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Religion and government depended on each other, and the Heian culture in general reflected the secular and religious role of Buddhism in daily life. The secular power of the clergy grew. As their wealth increased, so did the competition for patronage from the nobility and imperial family. Monks participated in the secular and religious affairs of the state. The monasteries, the imperial court, and the aristocracy thus had close ties. The imperial court and the aristocracy depended on monks for Buddhist rituals for health, wealth, good weather, and protection for the state, to name a few. Rivalry between the sects led to the growth of temples and shrines, intimidation of officials, and violent protests outside Fujiwara and other noble families' homes. There was no separation of church and state.

Late in the Heian period, imperial authority reemerged, with ex-emperors being influential over the affairs of the day.

Art Characteristics

Make a check by the characteristics that describe your scroll selection. If more than one applies, check those that best describe what you see.

1. Look at the scroll panel's characteristics. Notice how the painting is done with brush using ink on paper. What do you notice about the brush technique? Which of the following describes the brush strokes?

__Delicate lines
__Bold lines
__Simple lines
__Complex lines
__Tight lines, constrained
__Lines vary in width to show motion and action
__Few brushstrokes, mainly shapes and textures
__Mainly outlines with some filling in of detail
__Colorful
__Free, flowing, lively
__Mainly straight lines
__Mainly curving and angular lines

2. How would you describe the use of color?

__Dark colors that are opaque and intense
__Light colors
__Patterns and textures
__Colorful
__No or little color with everything expressed by the line

3. What do you notice about the use of space and composition?

__Some empty spaces give room for movement and change.
__Composition is asymmetrical.
__Sometimes feels cramped and tight.
__Image and action go to the left.
__Feels movie-like.

4. What do you notice about the faces?

__Emotions are conveyed.
__Everyone is different.
__One stroke depicts eyes and nose.

5. What mood, tone, or emotion does the scroll create?

__Quiet
__Humorous
__Noble, aristocratic
__Emotionally intense
__Active
__Energetic
__Common, mundane
__Dynamic and active

6. What can you learn about Japan in the late Heian period from this piece of art?

7. What do you like about the scroll*?*

8. Which scroll would you like to own and why?

9. Why do you think scrolls are not part of Western art tradition?