

THE LIFE AND ART OF ŌTAGAKI RENGETSU

by

Lee Johnson
B.A., University of Delaware, 1981

Submitted to the Special Studies
Advisory Committee and the Faculty
of the Graduate School of the
University of Kansas in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
with a major in the History of Art.

Thesis
1988
J634
c. 2
(Art 1)

Redacted Signature
Professor in Charge
Redacted Signature
Redacted Signature
Redacted Signature

9-23-88
Date Thesis Accepted

R00194 04693

ABSTRACT

Ōtagaki Rengetsu's tragic early life prompted her to become a nun at age thirty-three. In her early forties the father she'd depended upon morally and financially died and she was forced to provide for herself. She began producing pottery and other artworks and became famous within her lifetime for her unique works. In the early 1860s, the growing conflict between the shogunate and loyalist forces produced violence which frightened her. She fled to a remote area of northwest Kyoto called Nishigamo. She lived in a small temple there for the last ten years of her life and devoted her time to painting, calligraphy and pottery.

The first section of this thesis describes the environment of the late Edo period, followed by her biography. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to her art. Her works show that despite the many difficulties she faced during her long life, she was able to maintain her sense of humor and her ability to see beauty in the smallest of objects in the natural world. The aim of this thesis is to describe the central themes within Rengetsu's art and to define her development as a calligrapher.

To Michiel Brusckhe

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rengetsu's works were included in a supplementary lecture about calligraphy by Patricia Fister during my first year of study at the University of Kansas. Although I had no other training in the history of calligraphy, Rengetsu's style of writing made a deep impression. A few months later I bought a Japanese magazine because one of the articles featured works that reminded me of her pieces, although I could not be sure because I was unable to read the language with any proficiency at that time. After a long course of intensive Japanese that summer, I turned to the magazine to test my knowledge and my newly acquired Nelson's Japanese dictionary. The article was still beyond my ability but from the title I knew that the subject was Rengetsu. Intrigued by my ability to recognize her style after such a short introduction, I began to delve into Rengetsu's story. I discovered that very little was written about her in English, and much of that contained serious conflicts in biographical information. I was also struck by the fact that many of the artists with whom she worked with seemed to have been involved in the movement to change the shogunate government. I decided to study her for a thesis, and began to apply for grants to study in Japan. At the time I had little concept of the enormity of the project. The illusion that I had chosen a narrow topic was destroyed by my advisor, Dr. Stephen Addiss who had been interested in Rengetsu for some time and had collected an extensive library about her. Already mentally committed to the project, I proceeded with the help of Dr. Hiroshi Nara and, particularly, Ms. Kyoko Anzai and through them came to understand the more recent texts about her in Japanese. Nara Sensei also wrote people's names in beautiful calligraphy which was originally meant to accompany this text. The list greatly expanded, and the purchase of a Japanese word processor has left them sadly and regretfully unused. My thanks and my apologies.

In addition to the free use of invaluable books and articles, Dr. Addiss's unquestioning support enabled me to experiment with different concepts during my study. Although this experimentation stretched out much longer than anyone expected, I hope it has led to a more developed thesis. Dr. Fister also lent her much needed expertise and help with source material.

I was able to study in Japan at Kyoto University due to a generous scholarship awarded by the Ministry of Education of Japan (Mombushō). My advisor there, Prof. Jōhei Sasaki provided introductions to the late Mr. Hideki Matsumoto of the Kyoto Prefectural Archives and to Mr. Masutarō Tomioka, the descendent of Tessai, both of whom taught me a great deal about Rengetsu. Mr. Seiji Ishizawa at the Archives was also helpful. Collections of her works were made available at the homes of the descendents of Rengetsu's colleagues Kuroda Kōryō, and Murakami Tadamasa. The descendents of these men, Mr. Masahisa Kajimura and Mr. Hitoshi Murakami and their families were very

enthusiastic about my project, and their generous hospitality has made these visits some of my most treasured memories of Japan. I also saw works at Nishigamo Jinkōin and I was able to meet authors of books and articles about Rengetsu such as Rev. Kōen Tokuda, Ms. Toshiko Maeda, and Mr. Mamoru Tsuchida. Several art gallery dealers thoughtfully showed me the Rengetsu works in their collections. Most prominent of these was Mr. Muro Manji of the Manichi gallery, who owns an large number of Rengetsu pieces.

I would also like to thank Dr. Chu-ting Li for kindly agreeing to fit reading this thesis into his busy schedule and Mr. Kenji Shimono of Kyoto University for generously giving his time and expert opinion about various aspects of Rengetsu's calligraphy.

Translation of the poems was a long process. Ms. Noriko Yamada helped me understand the basic vocabulary and grammar of classical poetry. My rough draft translations were then checked by Dr. Willem Jan Boot of Leiden University in the Netherlands. Ms. Masae Sugawara also helped me with poetry, and was able to clarify some of the innuendos and possible double meanings of certain poems. Finally, Dr. Fumiko Yamamoto, my onshi from the University of Kansas, read and added corrections to some poems. I take full responsibility for any errors that still remain.

I could not have done this thesis without the support of family and friends. My mother read and corrected the text. My friend Kristin Earnst has read so many letters about this project that I'm sure she knows quite as much as I do. My parents' and my sister Lane's admirable control in not asking about the paper has been appreciated. My fiancé Michiel has not been quite as restrained, but he has helped enormously in keeping my spirits up when things seemed impossible. I would also like to thank his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Albert Brusckke, for a lovely summer in the Netherlands which I was able to devote to the translation of Rengetsu's autobiography and analysis of the calligraphy which are the fundamental elements of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Scope and Purpose	
Historical Background and Definition of Terms	
Literature	
II. BIOGRAPHY	10
Early life (1791-1832)	
Okazaki years (1832-ca.1856)	
Moving years (ca.1856-1865)	
Jinkōin years (1865-1875)	
III. ARTWORKS I	31
Poetry	
Pottery	
Painting	
IV. ARTWORKS II	46
Calligraphy	
V. CONCLUSION	64
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	66
APPENDICES	69

LIST OF FIGURES

- Appendix 1 Timetable
- Appendix 2 Autobiography
- Appendix 3 Collaborative works list
- Appendix 4 Map of Shōgoin area
- Appendix 5 Signature table
- Appendix 6 Illustrations:
- Figure 1. Portrait of Rengetsu, with painting by Tomioka Tessai and inscription by Tani Tesshin. Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 2. Sake bottle with a wisteria maiden
 Kyoto Prefectural Archives.
- Figure 3. Brazier.
 Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 4. Flower vessel in the shape of a daikon.
 Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 5. Fresh water pot.
 Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 6. Waste water pot with small sculpted frog.
 Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 7. Fresh water pot with sculpted crab, by Ueda Akinari.
 Current location unknown.
- Figure 8. Incense burner by Kuroda Kōryō.
 Private collection.
- Figure 9. Sencha cup by Kuroda Kōryō.
 Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 10. Painting of a sencha teapot
 Location unknown.
- Figure 11. Painting of a wisteria maiden.
 Private collection.

- Figure 12. Page from Rengetsu's sketchbook.
Jōrakuji collection.
- Figure 13. Early tanzaku.
Private collection.
- Figure 14. Tanzaku.
Private collection.
- Figure 15. Painting of firewood with flowers.
Sakai Museum.
- Figure 16. Painting of Arashiyama by Reizei Tamechika with an inscription
by Rengetsu.
Private collection.
- Figure 17. Painting of a silk pounding stone.
Murakami Hitoshi collection.
- Figure 18. Painting of a courtier in the moonlight by Reizei Tamechika.
Current location unknown.
- Figure 19. Painting of a pine tree.
Murakami Hitoshi collection.
- Figure 20. Painting of a sencha teapot.
Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 21. Painting of hina festival dolls.
Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 22. Painting of hina festival dolls.
Private collection.
- Figure 23. Shikishi.
Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 24. Shikishi.
Jinkōin collection.
- Figure 25. Shikishi in Rengetsu's style.
Private collection.
- Figure 26. Shikishi.
Private collection.
- Figure 27. Comparison of center lines of Figures 25 and 26.
- Figure 28. Kaishi.
Murakami Hitoshi collection

Figure 29. Letter to Murakami Tadamasa.
Murakami Hitoshi collection.

Figure 30. Letter to Tessai.
Shōka collection.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Purpose

Ōtagaki Rengetsu was a poetess, potter, calligrapher and painter. The aim of this thesis is to describe the general characteristics of her style in each of these fields, particularly those which give some insight into her personality. Since Rengetsu's artistic development is most clearly defined in the area of calligraphy, analysis of her calligraphic style and its change through time plays a key role in this paper. Previous scholarship has examined the development of Rengetsu's calligraphic line,¹ but other elements such as composition of the lines and their placement have never been discussed in relation to her overall development. These elements reveal a distinct change between her works of her sixties and early seventies and those of the last ten years of her life. Another omission to scholarship has been in the area of signature analysis. Although charts have been published illustrating her signature at different ages,² there has been little discussion of the development displayed in the signature. This paper will discuss the development of Rengetsu's signature which, except for some minor variations, does follow a clear progression and can be used to define different periods within her art.

This thesis will be the first work in English to discuss Rengetsu's work as a whole. The vast number of works attributed to Rengetsu prohibits a complete catalogue so a few select of pieces have been chosen to illustrate the qualities which define Rengetsu's unique style. The changes in her works through time and the difference between her formal and her letter calligraphy will be illustrated by comparing similar works within her own repertoire.

Recurring themes and general characteristics of Rengetsu's poetry, painting and pottery styles will also be discussed. In addition to her artistic

works, an examination of Rengetsu's biography within the historical setting of the late Edo period is included since, as a politically volatile period, it influenced her life and those of the people she knew. In addition, the chaotic years of the 1860s may have affected Rengetsu's extensive production of works during the last ten years of her life.

Historical Background and Definition of Terms

Edo Period Art and Literature

The Edo, or Tokugawa period (1615-1868) was an era of tremendous literary and artistic growth within Japan. This was due, to a great extent, to the increase in wealth of the merchant class, who supported new forms of artistic endeavours. Before the Edo period, an artist's primary patrons were Buddhist temples, rulers and others of the social elite. Ordinary townspeople who were close to the bottom of the social hierarchy, could not afford artworks and often were illiterate. The unique situation during the Edo period led to educated merchants who were able to patronize the arts. Their taste for bright, innovative styles became a powerful stimulus for the arts. In visual arts, new schools such as the Rimpa 琳派 and Ukiyoe 浮世絵 evolved and even the traditional Kanō 狩野 school began catering to the popular taste of the merchants. In the middle Edo period, the Nanga 南画, Maruyama 円山 and Shijō 四條 schools dominated the world of art in Kyoto, Rengetsu's home. Unlike Edo, the shogunate capital (now Tokyo), Kyoto artists very infrequently produced wood block prints, probably because the more conservative Kyoto people preferred painting. Nanga, or "southern painting", artists drew inspiration from Chinese literati models. Many of them also studied Confucianism and Chinese-style poetry. An essential part of the literati lifestyle was the drinking of tea,

and the artists at this time in both Japan and China favored steeped tea, known in Japan as sencha 煎茶. By Rengetsu's time sencha's popularity had spread beyond the literati world and much of Rengetsu's pottery is made for sencha, although she did make pieces for traditional tea ceremony usage.

Contemporary with Nanga are the Maruyama and Shijō schools. Maruyama Ōkyo 円山応挙 (1733-1795), the founder of the Maruyama school, blended elements of classical Japanese art with aspects drawn from Chinese and Western painting. The Shijō school was begun by Matsumura Goshun 松村呉春 (1752-1811), who was himself influenced by Ōkyo but also added elements from his early training in Nanga. The two schools maintained close ties and gradually the differences between them diminished. Modern scholars refer to the artists of both schools under a single name: the Maruyama-Shijō school. Rengetsu was influenced by the Shijō tradition and many of her friends were artists of, or had connections with the Maruyama and Shijō schools.

Another trend among artists of this period was making collaborative works (in Japanese: gassaku 合作), creating visual records that give testimony to the close interaction of artists of different schools and even different artistic fields. Rengetsu inscribed a number of joint works with artist, poet and potter friends.³ Late in her life many of her collaborative works with close friends were made to increase the speed of her productivity, rather than to commemorate their friendship or as a memento of a certain occasion.⁴

Many of the innovators of the Nanga, Maruyama and Shijō schools were dead by the late 1850s when Rengetsu began to be active, and there were few truly original artists remaining. One exceptional artist was a brilliant young man named Tomioka Tessai 富岡鉄齋 (1836-1924), who was a member of the Nanga school. Tessai's career was promoted by and probably to some extent, financially supported by Rengetsu.⁵ Rengetsu's inscriptions on Tessai's youthful works

made them more valuable. In turn, Tessai took care of Rengetsu in her old age, behaving very much like a son, providing companionship and friendship during her last years.

Edo Period Waka and Kokugaku Studies

Waka 和歌, (also sometimes called tanka 短歌, or "short poems") became a fine art form during the Heian period (794-1184) when writing poetry was one of the main occupations of the aristocrats in the imperial court. Traditionally, waka consist of 31 syllables divided into five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables and have strict rules of content and form. Waka often described the scenery of a famous place. Some indication of the season and the mood evoked by an occasion was also essential.

By the early Edo period, waka poetry had fallen from favor among many poets because such aristocratic poems were considered too stringent and narrow. They were not suitable for the witty and vital lower class poets. Haiku became the preferred poetic form because its lack of both class restriction and formal rules. Its freedom of subject matter appealed to Edo period taste.

By the late Edo period waka poetry was revitalized and began addressing contemporary subject matter and placing more emphasis on everyday language of rather than utilizing outdated phrases and sophisticated but meaningless poetic devices which were common in traditional poems. In addition, waka began for the first time to be written extensively by people outside the court. The lingering association with the imperial court made it a popular medium for loyalist poets during the last years of the Edo period. Two pioneers of the new style in waka were Ozawa Roan 小沢芦庵 (1723-1801) and Kagawa Kageki 香川景樹 (1768-1843), both of whom influenced Rengetsu.

Partially responsible for the resurgence of waka's popularity was the extensive teaching of kokugaku 国学, "national learning". Kokugaku scholars promoted the study of such classics as the Man'yōshū 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, dating from the latter half of the eighth century). They felt that through ancient poetry they could understand Japanese qualities untainted by foreign influence. Important kokugaku scholars include Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), Kado no Azumamaro 荷田春滿 (1669-1736), Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801) and Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843). In addition to the renewal of interest in waka poetry, the study of kokugaku was influential because the emphasis on "pure" Japanese elements focused attention on the central figure of the emperor. The widespread study of kokugaku led to many nationalistic citizens' defense of their emperor and country against foreign and even shogunal, threat. Hirata Atsutane was particularly influential in the late Edo period. Rengetsu corresponded regularly with a disciple of Atsutane. ⁶

Social and Political Conditions of the Edo Period

The year Rengetsu was born the Tokugawa shogunate issued an order that any foreign ship drifting ashore in Japanese territory would be sent to the southern port of Nagasaki and the circumstances of its arrival would be investigated. It was the first substantial foreign policy decision since an edict made in 1639 expelled all unauthorized foreigners from Japanese soil. In the 152 year interum, power in the West had shifted from Portugal and Holland to Great Britian, France, and later to the United States. The Japanese did not acknowledge these changes. Their isolation resulted in a dangerously outdated

foreign policy and military force. This became apparent when they were forced to deal with the Western ships that came with increasing frequency to pressure for open ports in the early and mid-1800s. Numerous revisions of the 1791 order were issued but efforts to solve the problem of how to appease the foreigners were inhibited by disagreement within the shogunate combined with the inability to fully enforce the rules against more highly developed Western countries. Thus, the shogunate was essentially powerless when Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo Bay in 1853 and they could no longer withhold permission to use some of their ports.

Japan changed significantly during the years after Perry's arrival. The closing years of the Tokugawa period are known as the bakumatsu 幕末, literally "the end of the shogunate". The increasing lack in faith in the shogunate was compounded by serious problems such as plagues, drought and economic fluctuations. The bakumatsu was a period of conflict that affected everyone in Japan. The struggle between pro-imperial loyalists (shishi 志士) and the shogunate divided the country. The artistic world of Kyoto reflected the political unrest of bakumatsu society and many painters became deeply involved in loyalist activities. Tessai was a loyalist as were many of his and Rengetsu's friends and colleagues.⁷ Kyoto, as the historical capital of Japan and the home of the emperor and court, was a center for loyalist activity and many citizens living there were involved in the movement to overthrow the shogunate.

Although Rengetsu was successful in keeping Tessai from becoming involved to the point of personal danger, another young artist friend of Rengetsu's, Reizei Tamechika 冷泉為恭 (1823-64) was assassinated because of his political views. Tamechika was the epitome of the bakumatsu idealist, deeply involved in promoting the resurrection of Japan's classical past, its art, calligraphy, and

lifestyle. The bitter reality of his own era became abruptly apparent to him. After one of his friends was killed, Tamechika fled temporarily to Nishigamo Jinkōin, a temple in northern Kyoto where Rengetsu would spend the last years of her life. ⁸ From there he fled to the Nara area and spent two years in hiding before he was tricked into revealing himself, and decapitated.⁹

The extent of Rengetsu's own involvement in the loyalist movement, which was actually governed by more than one ideology, is difficult to estimate. She wrote poems promoting a non-violent solution, and some believe that she sent these waka to prominent figures involved in conflict. ¹⁰ Her poems indicate that she revered the emperor, and with the emergence of the Meiji era, felt that a better age had come. She patently did not, however, approve of some of the violent measures taken toward the restoration.

The shogunate surrendered to loyalist pressure, resulting in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Those loyalists who survived the turmoil of the 1850s and 1860s became members of the new Meiji government. Although the rationale behind the revolution leading to the Meiji Restoration was to regain the glory of Japan's imperial rule, the new era left the emperor relatively powerless and new leaders of the government soon pressured for modernization. The rapidity of the technological advancement is illustrated by the fact that even before Rengetsu's death in 1875, Japan's first rail line and telegraph were already established.

Literature

Two books of Rengetsu's poetry were published within her lifetime, Ama no karumo and Rengetsu-Shikibu ni jo wakashū (1870 and 1868 respectively). She was also mentioned in a list of notable Kyoto people (Heian jimbutsu shi) in 1838, 1852 and 1867, indicating her notoriety.

In addition, her life and art have been the object of interest among Japanese people with an interest in sencha, poetry, calligraphy, and women's studies since shortly after her death. One book, written by a group of Japanese women before World War II, holds Rengetsu exemplary of a woman who promoted peace and calm resolution of the nation's problems.¹¹ Admiration of Rengetsu's calligraphy and pottery, her strong spirit, independence, and ability to support herself, has led to her immense popularity as exhibited in the number of books and articles written about her.¹² Two large books published by Kodansha, a volume of Bunjin shofu, and a catalogue of a 1983 exhibit at the Kyoto Prefectural Archives illustrate large numbers of Rengetsu works.

Scholarship in the West has been significantly less extensive. Early texts on pottery mentioned Rengetsu, often including inaccurate biographical material. More recent catalogue entries describing individual works are helpful but inadequate for any deeper understanding of her work. The first extensive biography of Rengetsu in English is published in the catalogue for a 1988 exhibit at the Spencer Museum of Art entitled Japanese Women Artists 1600-1900 by Dr. Patricia Fister. John Stevens of Tohoku University in Japan has also been active recently in translating Rengetsu's poetry and has published an article about her work in the September-October, 1987 issue of Arts of Asia.

The current study will supplement this material and give a clearer view of the political situation of the period, as well as Rengetsu's personality and development as a calligrapher.

Endnotes: Introduction

¹ See Tokuda Koen, Ōtagaki Rengetsu. (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982) pp. 223-230.

² Ibid. p.237. See also Maeda Toshiko et al., "Rengetsu-ni," Sumi, 44 (September 1983), p.64. and Koresawa, et al., Rengetsu, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1971) pp. 218-219.

³ See Appendix 3 for Rengetsu collaborative works.

⁴ She wrote a letter, pictured in figure 30, asking Tessai for paintings of various subjects. Letters to Kuroda Kōryō often place orders for various types of pottery. In addition, her works with Tessai and Gesshin are too numerous for them all to have been done for special occasions.

⁵ In at least one letter Rengetsu mentions giving Tessai money. See Koresawa et al., Rengetsu, letter number 256.

⁶ Rengetsu corresponded with a student of Atsutane's, Mutobe Yoshika for fourteen years.

⁷ According to Murakami Sodō, in Rengetsu-ni zenshū (1927; reprint ed., Kyoto: Shibunkaku 1980), Rengetsu knew Umeda Umpin (1815-59) and Rai Mikisaburo (1825-59), both of whom were killed by the shogunate because of their loyalist beliefs. She wrote to Nakajima Masutane (1812-1905) who was involved in many anti-shogunate activities. She did collaborative works with Mori Kansai (1814-94), a known loyalist artist. Other loyalists friends mentioned within this text include: Yanagawa Seigan, Tenshō, Tachibana Akemi and Kido Kōin. For Tessai's friends see Tarō Odakane, Tessai, Master of the Literati Style, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1965) p.17.

⁸ See catalogue, Reizei Tametaka, (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1979) p. 143. Also, Murakami, vol. 3, p. 143.

⁹ See "Meiji isshin hyakunin," Taiyō magazine special edition 5 (winter, 1973): 54-5.

¹⁰ Rengetsu may have been friends with Saigō Takamori, one of the leaders of the revolution, according to Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 3 pp. 94-5.

¹¹ Michi Kawai and Ochimi Kubishiro, Japanese Women Speak (Boston: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1934), pp. 160-4.

¹² For a list of the primary sources in Japanese see Tokuda, Ōtagaki Rengetsu, pp. 289-292.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY

Early Life (1791-1832)

Ōtagaki Rengetsu was born in Kyoto on the eighth day of the first month in 1791.¹ Named Nobu 誠, she was born in a known pleasure district called Sanbongi 三本木, which has led scholars to assume that her mother was a courtesan. Her father was apparently an Ise nobleman of the Tōdō family, perhaps Tōdō Shinshichirō Yoshikiyo 藤堂新七郎良聖.² In her autobiography she writes nothing about her true parentage, beginning instead with her adoptive family.

My father was from Inaba, known as Ōtagaki Mitsuhsa. They lived in Higashiyama of the capital (Kyoto). In the third year of Kansei, I was born, and given the name Nobu. My mother died (when I was young) and I was brought up by my father.³

Rengetsu was adopted within a few days of her birth by Ōtagaki Joemon 大田垣常右衛門 (who was later known as Banzaemon Mitsuhsa 伴左衛門光古), a samurai who had come to Kyoto nine years earlier to work in the service of the Pure Land Buddhist head temple, the Chion'in 知恩院. Ōtagaki and his wife Nawa (なは) had already lost four of their five sons due to illness before they adopted Rengetsu. Their remaining son, Katahsa 賢古, was nine years old at the time of Rengetsu's adoption.

Mitsuhsa's connection with Rengetsu's biological parents is unclear. He received the powerful title of fudai 譜代 a few months after her adoption, which may have been the result of an effort made by Rengetsu's natural father to secure her future. This title assured the family a steady income and, as a

hereditary position, the title of fudai also gave Rengetsu far more leverage as far as marriage was concerned.

Rengetsu lived with her adoptive family until she was eight or nine, when she began serving as a lady-in-waiting at a castle in Kameoka (now called Kameyama). Rengetsu's assumption of this position may have been arranged by her natural mother, who, according to a biography of Rengetsu written by her disciple, married a samurai of Kameoka after Rengetsu's birth. ⁴

In Kameoka, Rengetsu received a thorough training in poetry, calligraphy, and other traditional arts. She became accomplished in the martial arts and use of weapons as well, ⁵ abilities which were traditionally part of the training of a woman of samurai rank.

In 1803, when Rengetsu was still serving at Kameoka Castle, Katahisa died. Three months later, Nawa died. At age thirteen, these were Rengetsu's first personal tragedies. As the only surviving heir to the Otagaki name, Rengetsu became responsible for the continuance of the family's fudai position.

When Rengetsu was sixteen or seventeen, she finished her service at Kameoka and returned to Mitsuhsa. At this time she may have studied for a short while with Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809), who was famous for his stories of the supernatural but also was active in waka, kokugaku and sencha circles. ⁶

Soon after her return to Kyoto, she married Oka Tenzō,⁷ 岡天造, the relative of a family friend. Mitsuhsa adopted Tenzō, whose name was changed to Naoichi Mochihisa 直市望古. Mochihisa began working with Mitsuhsa at Chion'in but Mitsuhsa continued to work as fudai rather than turning the title over to his son-in-law.

At seventeen, soon after her marriage, Rengetsu gave birth to her first child, a son. Tragically, the baby died twenty days after birth. Mochihisa and Rengetsu had two other children, both daughters. The first died soon after reaching the age of two, the second died within months after birth. ⁸

Scholars have long speculated on the relationship between Rengetsu and Mochihisa. By most accounts, Mochihisa mistreated Rengetsu and their relationship was a very unhappy one.⁹ In 1815, shortly after the death of their third child, Mochihisa and Rengetsu were divorced. Divorce was uncommon in the Edo period, so the circumstances leading to this must have been extreme. Unfortunately, too many details remain unclear for a true understanding of the events which led to this divorce. It does seem significant, however, that Mitsuhsa never gave the fudai title to Mochihisa, although he was married to Rengetsu for eight years. Perhaps Mitsuhsa was not ready to retire during his late 50s and early 60s, but it seems more probable that he did not like or trust Mochihisa. About two months after their separation, Mochihisa died in the house of his brother, a physician named Tajima Temmin(但馬天民). Rengetsu corresponded with Temmin often in her seventies and early eighties, and he seems to have provided her with some money for support, indicating that there were no bad feelings between Mochihisa's family and Rengetsu.

Rengetsu was twenty-five when Mochihisa died. Four years later, in early 1819, she remarried Ishikawa Jūjirō (石川重二郎).¹⁰ Once adopted into the Otagaki family, Jūjirō changed his name to Hisatoshi (古肥) and started working at Chion'in with Mitsuhsa. In 1820, Mitsuhsa turned the family title over to Hisatoshi and retired. Three years later Hisatoshi died of tuberculosis. The evening before his death, Rengetsu cut off her hair, indicating that she would never marry again. Shortly after his death in 1823 she became a nun, taking the Buddhist name Rengetsu 蓮月, ("Lotus Moon"); Mitsuhsa turned the family title over to Kazami Tamirō 風見太三郎 (later known as Banzaemon Hisaatsu 伴左衛門光敦) and became a Buddhist monk.¹¹

At thirty-three and twice a widow, Rengetsu cloistered herself with Mitsuhsa in a subtemple of Chion'in called Makuzuan 真葛庵. Rengetsu and Hisatoshi had had a daughter shortly after their marriage and the child lived at Makuzuan until her death at age seven.¹¹

The last of Rengetsu's children gone, a poem in her autobiography expresses her feelings at this time:

I was only in my thirties when I lost my husband and children.

つねたらぬ	One person of three
世はうきものと	remains alone
みつぐりの	and ponders
ひとりのこりて	this always changing
ものをこそおもえ	(wretched) floating world

Rengetsu lived together with her adoptive father until he too died in 1832. Her pain at his death is evident in a poem in her autobiography:

Having been with him for forty-two years, my father died.

たらちねの	Father:
おやのこひしき	as I miss him
あまりには	so much
はかにねをのみ	the only sounds at the grave
なきくらしつつ	are the sobs of my sorrowful days

Okazaki Years (1832-ca. 1856)

Although I wanted to live close (to my father's grave), it is at the top of the mountain, and not a place for a human to live. So, with regret, I had to move to Kagura Okazaki.¹² Since I was poor and there was nothing I could do, I dabbled with clay, making kibisho (sencha teapots).

Rengetsu moved to Okazaki, a rural area east of Kyoto proper, in 1832. Her autobiography suggests that she began making pottery during her years in Okazaki, although she does not specify a date. However, since the autobiography follows chronological order, she may have meant that she began making pottery when she was in her late forties or fifties.¹³

The active literati environment in Okazaki undoubtedly fueled Rengetsu's literary and artistic ambitions. A map (Appendix 4), drawn by Tessai shows one of Rengetsu's residences in Okazaki, at a place called Shōgoin-mura,¹⁴ and shows the location of several artists and poets who lived in the area.¹⁵ Rengetsu occupied herself with her poetry studies from her late forties to her sixties. While she lived in Okazaki Rengetsu studied waka with Kagawa Kageki who was the most influential poet of this time.¹⁶

The anti-shogunate (loyalist) movement began to be a serious threat to the shogunate during the 1830s and 1840s. A movement which at first aimed merely to make needed changes in governmental policy, gradually changed as more and more people became convinced that the shogunate was too weak to adequately protect the country, and needed to be replaced. These fears were substantiated by the inequity of the treaties negotiated by the Japanese government in 1854 with Perry and in 1857 with Townsend Harris.

When Rengetsu was forty-seven she wrote a poem denouncing the violent actions of Ōshio Heihachirō.¹⁷ This is the first known example of her use of poetry to express her opinion about a political occurrence. The second, and most famous poem about the situation around her was one she wrote to express her feelings about the West as early as the 1840s or 1850s, when American ships began to pressure for open ports.¹⁸ The poem, which contains the word "America" in the second line, shows that Rengetsu's feelings during the early years were optimistic, and she felt that the far-reaching benefits of "springs abundant rain" (haru no amerika) outweighed its temporary discomfort.

ふりくとも
はるのあめりか
のどかにて
世のうるおいに
ならんとすらん

Even if it drops down on you
spring's abundant rain
falls calmly
and tries to be
the enrichment of the world

It is apparent from this poem that Rengetsu had a positive attitude about the relations with the West, as did many loyalists during the early years before the economic condition of the country worsened as a result of the treaties. One noteworthy proponent of an "open country" stance was Rengetsu's friend, the Chinese-style painter and poet Yanagawa Seigan 梁川星巖 (1784-1858).¹⁹

Moving years (ca. 1856-1875)

Rengetsu spent the years of the 1850s and 1860s moving often, sometimes many times in same year. This tendency earned her the nickname "Yagoshi no Rengetsu" 屋越蓮月 or, "house-changing Rengetsu", and she was often teased about her lack of roots.²⁰ She seems to have moved so frequently because her reputation for charity grew and people began coming to ask her for works or money. Rengetsu did not like such disturbances and became increasingly reclusive, choosing quiet areas in the country in which to live. Even after moving, she seems to have returned often to the Okazaki area. In addition to visiting her friends there, Rengetsu also used the high-quality pottery clay and kilns available in nearby Awata. Although she became less available to the public Rengetsu continued to maintain a large group of acquaintances ranging from aristocrats to courtesans.²¹ She does not seem to have had formal poetry lessons at this time, but she studied the poetry of Ozawa Roan,²² and she corresponded with Mutobe Yoshika 六人部是香 (1806-63), Murakami Tadamasa 村上忠順 (1826-84) and Tachibana Akemi 橘曙覧 (1812-68), all of whom were known and respected for their waka and kokugaku studies.²³

The years of Rengetsu's frequent moves correspond generally to some of the most volatile years preceding the revolution. Some scholars have theorized that she moved to avoid the shogunate, but it has never been proven

and most writers deny this claim. ²⁴ Rengetsu's unsettled lifestyle may have added to her feelings of disquiet at this time, as evidenced in her autobiography:

My life went on and on, and as I got older, the world became more agitated and uproarious

夢の世と
おもひすてても
むねに手を
おきてねしよの
心ちこそすれ

Even though I decided it
was only a dream
I have a feeling
I woke up
to a nightmare

It is obvious that she was affected by the situation around her, particularly in the image of her waking up with her hand clutched to her bosom indicating her extreme surprise or fear, as though she had just woken from a bad dream. Historians often comment about how remarkably few lives were lost during the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate. Perhaps it is true that the loss due to battle was minimal but a close study of the situation uncovers the hardship of this era and its effect on everyone, including Rengetsu.

Revere the Emperor, Expell the Barbarians (sonnō-jōi)

Although positive attitude towards the West was held by many loyalists another faction supported the idea of sonnō-jōi 尊王攘夷 which focused on loyalty to the emperor combined with maintaining a closed door policy. Although the originator of the idea, Yoshida Shoin 吉田松蔭 (1830-1859), was one of many executed in the Ansei Purge 安政の大獄 of 1858-59, many of his followers, particularly those from his native Chōshū (now Yamaguchi Prefecture), were the most radical and often violent loyalists involved in the dispute with the shogunate.

The Ansei Purge was an action taken by the shogunate under the legislation of Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 (1815-1860). A number of loyalists, probably including some of Rengetsu's friends, ²⁵ were persecuted for plotting against the shogunate. The Purge ended abruptly with Naosuke's assassination by a group of angry loyalists. The success of this mission boosted the loyalists' self confidence and their use of violence escalated, as evidenced by the sharp increase in murders, particularly in Kyoto in 1862 and 1863. Many of those who participated in the Ansei Purge arrests were threatened by the Chōshū loyalists, who had teamed up with a group of low-ranking court nobles to persecute those involved in kobugattai 公武合体, a movement which promoted the union of the court and the shogunate. Kobugattai resulted in the marriage of Princess Kazu 和宮 (1846-77) to Shogun Tokugawa Iemochi 徳川家茂 (1846-66) in spring, 1862. The radical loyalists felt the movement provided few benefits to the court, and, contrary to the negative image of the shogun they were trying to promote, gave the appearance that the shogunate was trying to cooperate with the emperor. They were angered because many moderate loyalists supported the idea. In addition, lower level aristocrats like Sanjō Sanetomi 三条実美 (1837-1891) wished to weaken the shogun's power in order to push for stronger imperial rule to improve their own positions. The Chōshū radicals collaborated with these aristocrats, gained influence with the emperor and then pressured the moderates for support. Among those threatened for his active role in kobugattai was Reizei Tamechika.

Tamechika, who was so deeply involved in studies of the Heian period that he would even wear Heian-period aristocratic costumes at times, was given the title shikibu shōjō 式部少丞 by the court and put in charge of their painting bureau after his adoption by a high ranked family named Okada. He also had connections with the aristocratic Kujō family, at whose bidding he helped to prepare for Princess Kazu's marriage. ²⁶ This, combined with other factors,

led the Chōshū radicals to plot against Tamechika.²⁷ He left Kyoto in late summer, 1862, after his friend, Shimada Sakon 島田左近 (1829-1862), a retainer to the Kujō family, was killed. Sakon's head was displayed at the popular thoroughfare of Shijō Kawaramachi as a grizzly warning to those who passed.²⁸

In a letter to the kokugaku scholar Murakami Tadamasa (number 26 in Rengetsu-ni zenshū), Rengetsu writes about the situation at this time and mentions that Tamechika has left Kyoto.²⁹ She names people like Chigusa Aribumi 千種有文 (1815-1869) and others who were pressured out of Kyoto during these years.³⁰ Tamechika was assassinated by a lordless samurai, or ronin, from Chōshū two years after Rengetsu wrote the letter, perhaps because he refused to change his political views. His head was placed in a stone lantern of a temple in Osaka.³¹ Rengetsu, who admired Tamechika for his knowledge of the classics and for his painting ability, must have been deeply moved at the news of his death. They had collaborated on at least one work, and there is some indication that Rengetsu may have been influenced by Tamechika's calligraphy.³²

It is unclear whether she addressed Tamechika's death in her letters or poems, but her letters do show that she was clearly unhappy during this time. A group of three poems indicating her disapproval of the loyalist actions at the time of the Coup d'etat of September 29, 1863 (八月十八日の政変).³³ The coup occurred when Emperor Komei 孝明天皇 (1831-66; regent 1846-66) became worried about having given the Chōshū and aristocratic radical loyalists too much power, enlisted the aide of moderate loyalist territories of Satsuma (now Kagoshima Prefecture) and Aizu (now part of Fukushima Prefecture) to keep the Chōshū and aristocratic loyalists out of the palace area.

In these poems, Rengetsu uses the imagery of a type of Japanese pampas grass known as ito-susuki 糸すすき to symbolize the loyalists, perhaps because she associated pampas grass with the battlefields on which they fought. The "east wind" probably indicates the shogunate.

One poem is entitled "the day I heard about, when silence never came".

いとすすき
ひきていにしと
きくからに
東風のつよさ
思ひこそやれ

since I heard that
it had (uprooted and) blown away
the pampas grass
imagine
the strength of the east wind

The other two poems also contain notes of sad admonishment. Rengetsu seems to be telling the loyalists that they should have been more flexible, and, since they were not, they lost the support of the emperor.

一かたに
なびきもあへず
糸すすき
乱れゆく世の
秋ぞかなしき

the pampas grass
cannot bend
in one direction
the sadness of the autumn
of a world thrown into disorder

さりとも
たのみもきれて
糸すすき
乱れゆく世の
秋ぞかなしき

Pampas grass
you've lost the
support you expected (and so have we)
the sadness of autumn
of a world thrown into disorder

Unable to gain entry into the palace, the aristocrats and the Choshu radicals gathered at Myōhōin temple before fleeing to Chōshū. Rengetsu is rumored to have gone to see them off. ³⁴

In 1864, pardon was requested for the aristocrats. Its denial led to an attack on the palace in Kyoto which took place on the 19th and 20th of August, 1864, called the Hamaguri Gomon Incident (Hamaguri Gomon no Hen 蛤御門の変).³⁵ The Choshu forces failed miserably in this attempt and it resulted in the death of several of the most influential loyalists. Nearly thirty thousand buildings were destroyed in Kyoto as a result of fires set during the course of battle. ³⁶ Rengetsu together with another person, possibly Tessai, fled the city before the incident, but she described her fright at the sight of the black smoke rising over Kyoto and the sounds of guns in a letter. ³⁷

One loyalist from Chōshū who was involved in the attack on the palace, although he thought it was premature, was Kido Kōin (also called Kido Takayoshi) 木戸孝吉允 (1833-1877). Kido was one of the primary initiators of the Meiji Restoration. He spent time in Kyoto from 1862-63 and may have met Rengetsu at this time. Kōin mentions receiving pottery from Rengetsu in his diary in 1869 when he was an officer in the new government.³⁸ This may indicate that there is some substance to rumors that Rengetsu sent poetry to loyalists to promote nonviolence. In Rengetsu-ni zenshū, Murakami Sodō wrote that Rengetsu may have sent poems to Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1827-77),³⁹ the leader of the Satsuma troops that had kept Chōshū forces out of the palace in 1864. Saigō later joined forces with Kido Kōin to form an alliance between the Satsuma and Chōshū, which paved the road toward the end of the shogunate by draining power from their military forces. The end of the Edo period came less than three years after the formation of the Chōshū-Satsuma Alliance.

Although it is tempting to make a connection between Rengetsu and this alliance, there is too little data to determine whether Rengetsu was involved or not. One thing that is clear is that Rengetsu, as a woman who had felt the pain of the loss of children, saw each death as the loss of someones beloved child. These feelings are expressed in the following poem:

聞ままに
 そでこそぬるれ
 みちのべに
 さらすかばね
 だれのこならん

Just by listening to the story
 my sleeves are wet
 the corpse exposed
 by the roadside
 whose child could it be? ⁴⁰

Nishigamo Years (1865-1875)

The letter about the Hamaguri Gomon Incident was written after Rengetsu moved from central Kyoto to the Nishigamo area, northwest of the city in about

1868. It seems to indicate that she fled to avoid the coming Chōshū troops.

In her autobiography, she writes the following about her move:

I had too much fear, so I fled to Nishigamo near Kitayama

露のみを	To shelter myself
ただがりそめに	from the dew
おかんとて	for only a short while
草ひきむすぶ	I gathered grass (to make a hut)
山の下かげ	in the shadow at the foot of the mountain

Rengetsu's calm lifestyle in Nishigamo contrasted dramatically with the years preceding her move. She moved to Jinkōin temple in 1865 and devoted the last ten years of her life to her artworks there, concentrating on painting and calligraphy. During these years Tessai, and the artist-monk named Wada Gesshin 和田月心 (also known as Gozan 呉山; 1800-70) played key roles in her life.

It is not known when Rengetsu first met Gesshin. Their first known collaborative works date from 1865, the year Rengetsu moved to the Jinkōin temple where Gesshin was head priest. Gesshin knew Rengetsu's brother-in-law Temmin and they also apparently had mutual friends.⁴¹ Gesshin had begun his career painting with Mori Tetsuzan 森鉄山 (1775 -1841), who was a student of Maruyama Ōkyo, so he naturally knew many Maruyama school artists. In addition, both knew Tamechika, who had fled to the Jinkōin in 1862 and was provided sanctuary there for a short time.

Rengetsu and Gesshin's friendship developed quickly, perhaps because both had turned to Buddhism because of personal tragedy,⁴² and they seem to have found in each other a faith that tied their lives and their art. During their six years together before Gesshin's death in 1870, and Gesshin apparently taught Rengetsu some painting techniques and they produced many collaborative works together.⁴³ After his death, Rengetsu painted a very imaginative portrait of

Gesshin sitting on a crescent moon. This excerpt from the inscription on the painting expresses her pain at his death:

...ever looking at the rosary
he left behind as a memento
becoming sad at this
and finding it impossible to conceal (my sorrow)
while handling the beads that have become
accustomed to the frequent repetitions of his hands
my thoughts stretch out in many directions... ⁴⁴

Letters that Rengetsu wrote make it evident that she wrote inscriptions for paintings and pottery to fill orders, indicating the high demand for her works. Since Rengetsu herself lived very frugally, the reasons why she felt compelled to execute so many works are unclear. As is discussed in the chapter on calligraphy, many of the works of this time are not as carefully rendered as those from her sixties and early seventies. Rengetsu may have engulfed herself in her work as a way to forget the hardship of the early 1860s. Gesshin also seems to have had an effect on the large number of works that she produced during her late seventies and early eighties since her output decreased dramatically after his death. A portion of the profits from the sale of these works went to charity. ⁴⁵ Since shinto became the state religion with the beginning of the Meiji period, leaving Buddhist temples with little resources, some of the money they raised may have been used to maintain temples, possibly even Jinkōin. In any case, Rengetsu was very satisfied to spend these years involved with her art and her religion, as evident in her autobiography:

I've lived even longer, and now am in my eighties

あけたてば	The day begins
はにもてすさび	I'm busy with my crafts
くれゆけば	the day ends
ほとけおろがみ	I pray to Buddha
おもふことなし	and I have nothing to worry about

Fortunately, Rengetsu had her relationship with Tessai to comfort her during the last years of her life. Rengetsu treated Tessai like the son she never raised to adulthood, including, at times, a kind of loving manipulation. This is particularly apparent in a letters she wrote to him. In one, written to him when he was in his late twenties or early thirties, she outlined her arguments for the benefits of marriage in a very direct manner, and leaving little room for dispute of her opinion.⁴⁶ In another, written when he was starting on a journey to Nagasaki, she encouraged him to learn as much as possible about art there but made it very obvious that she wished him to return quickly.⁴⁷ Another sign of Rengetsu's motherly affection for Tessai is that when his first son was born in 1873, Rengetsu gave him a sleeve of her adoptive mother's robe to use as a diaper.

Tessai's appreciation for Rengetsu is evident in a portrait (Figure 1) that he painted of her years after her death. The painting depicts Rengetsu kneeling on a mat, with her hand poised to write something. Behind her is a small wooden potters wheel and a lump of clay. Although her shorn head may at first be disquieting to western viewers unfamiliar with Japanese nuns, the delicacy with which Tessai has rendered her fragile body and the slight smile on her face make this his most appealing portrait of her.⁴⁸

By the end of her life, Rengetsu seems to have lost some of her will to live and the last passage of her autobiography suggests a calm acceptance of death:

Evening descends around me, seeing the sky

ちりばかり	Without a speck
心にかかる	of clouds
くももなし	in my heart
いつの夕や	which evening will be
かぎりなるらん	the last?

A phrase which Rengetsu writes at the beginning of her autobiography also defines her feelings as she looked back on her long life, with some regrets but with the knowledge that her faults were not unique.

性にて今猶 I was born with many faults to my nature, and I
still have them;
同性あまた侍 The same faults occur...(throughout the ages of
the world)

The Buddhist concept of the cyclical nature of life is suggested in these words. By the end of her life, Rengetsu had confronted and accepted whatever fate the future held for her without fear.

When Rengetsu died in her tea room at Jinkōin in 1875, she requested that only her beloved Tessai be contacted. Her tombstone is at Saihōji, a temple close to Jinkōin and the calligraphy on it was designed by Tessai.

Endnotes: Biography

¹According to Japanese tradition, a baby is considered one year old at birth. This thesis maintains this method of calculating age; thus, any time her age is mentioned, Rengetsu would be one year younger in western terms. For an overview of Rengetsu's life see the timetable (Appendix 1).

²A biography written by Rengetsu's follower Kuroda Kōryō says that her father was from the Ise Tōdō family. Murakami Sodo wrote in Rengetsu-ni Zenshū (pp. 17-9 of the last section) that her real father was Tōdō Kinshichirō 金七郎. According to Sugimoto Hidetarō in his book Ōtagaki Rengetsu (Kyoto: Tankosha, 1976) pp.31-4, Sodo made an error in the name, and the name should be Fujido Shinshichirō. Although Mr. Sugimoto has done much research on the subject, including some evidence that Rengetsu visited the grave of Shinshichirō, many subsequent scholars maintain that the name is Kinshichirō.

³Rengetsu's autobiography is illustrated on pp. 56-7 of Matsumoto Hideki, Ōtagaki Rengetsu; bakumatsu joryu kajin no shoga to tōgei (Kyoto: Kyoto Prefectural Archives, 1984). It is translated in its entirety in Appendix 2. This translation, and other poems and letters translated in this thesis, unless otherwise noted, are those of the author.

⁴This information about Rengetsu's mother is reported in the biography by Kōryō. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū pp. 15-6 of section three for a complete discussion.

⁵Ibid. Section three, pp. 26-29.

⁶Ibid. Section three, p. 31

⁷Tenzō's family name is confusing since at the time the name the family used was Oka 岡, but the family also used the names Tajima 但馬 and Tainoshō 田結莊, and both of these names were used by his brother Temmin.

⁸According to some sources, Rengetsu and Mochihisa (Tenzō) had another child, Saiji, who was brought up by Temmin. Rengetsu's letters to Temmin often inquired about Saiji, and she wrote to Saiji after Temmin's death. Saiji also visited Rengetsu a few times at Jinkōin. However, it seems unlikely that Rengetsu would have had so many children in such a short time (she had one girl child the year that Saiji was born. In addition, it seems doubtful that Rengetsu and Mitsuhiisa would allow someone else bring up an Ōtagaki child and then maintain good relations with them.

⁹This opinion is disputed by Tsuchida Mamoru, who contends that Rengetsu's letters to Temmin show that she held no grudge against Mochihisa since, among other things, she wrote about having a ceremony at Mt. Koya on the 50th anniversary of Mochihisa's death. However, it is possible that after fifty years Rengetsu had forgiven Mochihisa. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, fourth section, p. 77.

¹⁰According to Iwahashi Kunie in Edo jiki no bi to gei (Jimbutsu Nihon no joseishi vol. 7), Mitsuhsa and Jūjirō's father shared an interest in tea ceremony. Jūjirō, like Rengetsu, studied with Ueda Akinari when he was young. Rengetsu and Jūjirō had a simple tea ceremony at their marriage and one of the pieces in this ceremony was by Akinari.

¹¹ According to Tsuchida Mamoru in Rengetsu-ni shosoku no shinshiryō no.2, Rengetsu may have had one more son who died in 1827. It is difficult, however, to know exactly how many children Rengetsu had. Many sources, including Tessai, have said that she had six, while the family tree says that she had four children, and the death record says five. This is further complicated by a letter which Rengetsu wrote to a friend which mentioned that she had had three children, two girls and a boy, which is peculiar since all other evidence indicates that she had at least four children. One possible explanation for this might be that she counted only those children who lived longer than a few months, which might indicate that there another son since her first son died shortly after birth. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section three, pp. 37-9.

¹² Kaguraoka is a part of Okazaki which is located near Yoshida Shrine.

¹³ It is my opinion that she probably began making pottery in her fifties, after first trying to make a living teaching poetry. Many other sources also mention that she considered teaching the game go, but she felt that men would not want to learn from and be beaten by a woman. See Murakami, third section, pp. 57-8.

¹⁴ The house on the map appears to have been on the current grounds of the medical faculty of Kyoto University where some of her pottery was found in 1983.

¹⁵ Waka poetesses in the area included Saisho Atsuko 税所敦子 (1825-1900) and Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部 (1785-1881). In addition, the Chinese-style poet Nakajima Sōin 中島棕隠 (1780-1856) is also listed on the map. Painters living there included Oda Kaisen 小田海仙 (1785-1862), Nukina Kaioku 貫名海屋 (1778-1863) of the Nanga school and Nakajima Kayo 中島華陽 (1813-77) of the Maruyama school, whose daughter Tatsu 多津 (1855-69) was Tessai's first wife. Other people who lived nearby during the 1840s and 50s include Yanagawa Seigan 梁川星巖 (1789-1858) and his wife Kōran 紅蘭 (1804-1879), both of whom were Chinese-style poets and artists.

¹⁶Kageki's followers are known as the Keian line 桂園派 of waka poets. His school, known as Tutei, was located at Higashi Fuku-no-kawa cho in Okazaki. Rengetsu studied there for a short time beginning around 1839. Eleven of her poems were included in a book published by the school in 1840. She may have been introduced to Kageki by her friend Tomita Yasukuni 富田泰州 (1790-1840) who was a member of his school. There is some confusion over Rengetsu's relationship with Yasukuni. In 1838 she is listed in the Heian jimbutsushi 平安人物史, a list of notable people living in Kyoto, as living with a Tomita

family. Later, in 1860, she was listed in a list of poets as being Yasukuni's wife or consort. It is probable that she lived for a while with the family of Yasukuni and perhaps the compiler of the list jumped to conclusions. In any case, there is no conclusive evidence of a more intimate relationship between Rengetsu and Yasukuni than friendship. They were the same age, and they shared an interest in *waka* poetry.

¹⁷See Koresawa, et al., *Rengetsu* p. 200 for the text of this poem. Scholars believe that Rengetsu was negative about Heihachirō's action because her brother-in-law Temmin's adopted son Saiji (see note #8) was a member of the group involved in the uprising. Saiji was ill at the time and was unable to participate.

¹⁸It is difficult to know the exact date of the America poem. Many sources say 1853, the year that Perry first came. It is also possible that it was written in 1854, when Perry returned to Japan, which was in spring. Murakami Sodō, author of *Rengetsu-ni zenshū* (p.78), said that it was written when an American ship came to Japan in 1845. This date seems rather early, but it is possible. A picture of a *tanzaku* with this poem can be seen in Murakami's book, in third page of the plates at the beginning of the second section, on the far right. The signature on this piece is in accordance with an earlier date.

¹⁹Seigan is known for his position as a pro-Western loyalist. He and another loyalist, a high-ranking monk of Kenninji named Tenshō, wrote a poem comparing Rengetsu to a Chinese heroine who sacrificed herself for her father. This poem, discussed in *Rengetsu-ni zenshū*, the third section, pp. 98-9, was much admired for its clever play on words, and the two great men's admiration for Rengetsu's poetry and personality undoubtedly added to her reputation.

²⁰ Ibid. Third section, p.183.

²¹ Rengetsu mentions members of the court in such letters as number 44 in the second section (p. 62) of *Rengetsu-ni zenshū*, pictured in this thesis, Figure 28. In this letter she seems to be sending Murakami Tadamasu some food that Lady Daisuke gave to her, but that the court woman had originally made for the emperor to eat. Rengetsu also knew the courtesans Sakuraki and Chikako, and may have taught them poetry.

²² Rengetsu was apparently attracted to Roan's work following the 1849 publication of a collection of his poems called *Roku-jō eisō* 六帖詠草. She moved for a short time to Hokōji temple, near Myōhōin, where Roan's works were stored, and there she was able to study Roan's diaries. She also lived for a short time in a temple named Shinshōji, where Roan's grave is located. Roan's poetry was more emotional than Kageki's and it appealed more to Rengetsu.

²³ Mutobe Yoshika was the head priest of Muko Shrine in southern Kyoto prefecture. He and his father studied with Hirata Atsutane, one of the most influential kokugaku scholars of this time. Atsutane emphasized the role of traditional folk religion and particularly focussed on the divine role of the emperor. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, third section, pp. 120-122. Murakami Tadamasu (or ChuJun) was a doctor in Mikawa (now Aichi prefecture). He worked in the service of Prince Arisugawa Taruhito 有栖川宮熾仁 (1835-1895), who commanded the Imperial army in the Boshin Civil war (1868-9). Although Tadamasu does not seem to have fought himself, his son Tadaaki 村上忠明 (1844-1865) died at 22 from disease, presumably as a result of battle in Totsugawa in 1863. Rengetsu and Murakami corresponded beginning about 1852, when Rengetsu was in her early sixties. She sent Murakami many paintings, tanzaku and pieces of pottery, which are still owned by his descendents in Aichi prefecture. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, third section, pp. 110-118. Tachibana (also known by the penname Ide 井手 Akemi) was a very well-known and respected loyalist poet who became a hermit at age thirty-five and devoted himself to literature. Rengetsu apparently sent him some pottery and when he came to Kyoto in 1861 he visited her. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, third section pp.105-110.

²⁴ Most scholars deny that Rengetsu believed in any strong political doctrine. She apparently gave a relatively cool reception to Nomura Botō-ni, 野村望東尼 (1806-1867), who was a radical loyalist poetess who eventually died for her cause, when Botō-ni visited in 1861. For more information, see Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 3, pp.103-105. Rengetsu also wrote letters to a man named Nishimura Aritoshi 西村有年 who was a soldier in the bakufu army. She wrote to him in 1866 to congratulate him for their defeat over the loyalists in Yamato in 1863, and even thanked him because Kyoto had become quiet since the shogunate forces won in the Hamaguri conflict in 1864, which a true loyalist probably would not have done. However, it is important to remember that she obviously thought that the loyalist actions like the Yamato and Hamaguri incidents were ill-advised, and that the loyalists had lost their direction in their defense of the emperor. These letters are pictured on pp. 104-107 of Rengetsu-ni zenshū, second section, letters 82 and 83.

²⁵Amongst those killed in the Ansei Purge were Umeda Umpin and Rai Mikisaburo. Yanagawa Seigan died of disease before he could be arrested, causing people to joke that he was "clever at dying". His wife Koran was placed under house arrest. See Ikki Tsukuda, Sencha no tabi (Osaka: Osaka Shoseki, 1985) p. 228,

²⁶Thomas M. Huber, "Men of High Purpose and the Politics of Direct Action, 1862-1864" Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition ed. Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982) pp. 107-127.

²⁷"Meiji isshin hyakunin" p. 55.

²⁸Huber, "Men of High Purpose and the Politics of Direct Action, 1862-1864", pp. 112-113.

²⁹"Meiji isshin hyakunin" p. 99.

³⁰This letter was sent to Murakami Tadamasa, who apparently knew Tamechika. See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 2, pp. 44-45. Tamechika was a fukkō-yamatoe painter, a school which tried to reestablish the artistic styles of the Heian and Kamakura periods so perhaps as scholars of Japan's own cultural heritage, Tamechika and Tadamasa met through common interests.

³¹For more information on Rengetsu and Tamechika, see Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 3, pp. 142-144.

³²See Chapter 4.

³³These poems are dated by Rengetsu and seen in Zenshū, section 1, p. 34. Susuki plants flower from late summer to fall. Their flowers resemble animal tails, so they are also often referred to as obana "tail flowers". Rengetsu wrote several poems about these plants, always associating them with battle fields and dying. Another example is:

人はかる	People die
嗟峨野の原の	at twilight
夕まぐれ	on the field of Sagano
おのが尾花や	my flowering pampas grass field
そでとみすらん	soaks up my tears (lit: looks like my sleeve)

³⁴Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section three, pp. 88-91.

³⁵This is also known as kimmon no hen 禁門の変.

³⁷Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan, vol. 3, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983) p. 90.

³⁸Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, fourth section, pp. 96-97.

³⁹Takayoshi Kido, The Diary of Kido Takayoshi, trans. Sidney Devere Brown and Akiko Hirota (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983) p. 226.

⁴⁰See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, third section, pp. 91-96.

⁴¹Kawai and Kubushiro, Japanese Women Speak, p. 162.

⁴²Gesshin's wife and his teacher Mori Tetsuzan died within months of each other. He became a Buddhist monk, joined by his two sons, Chimam and Omaru. Chimam, in particular, appears to have been friends with Rengetsu and Tamechika.

⁴³Rengetsu and Gesshin made a huge number of collaborative works during their time together at the Jinkōin, examples of which can be seen in every major book containing her works.

⁴⁴This can be seen in Matsumura, Rengetsu, pl. 47. My thanks to Andrew Markus who helped me translate this poem several years ago.

⁴⁵See Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 3, p. 130.

⁴⁶Koresawa et al. Rengetsu, p. 276, letter number 254.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 277, letter number 256.

⁴⁸There is another portrait of Rengetsu by Tessai in the Tomioka family collection which is pictured in the second section of Rengetsu-ni zenshū.

CHAPTER III
RENGETSU'S POETRY, POTTERY AND PAINTING

This section will discuss the main characteristics of Rengetsu's poetry, pottery and painting. In her autobiography Rengetsu mentions poetry and pottery, the arts in which she was most famous. Even in these areas the text abounds with well-bred modesty, making it difficult to tell Rengetsu's true feelings about her works.

...I dabbled with clay, making kibishō (sencha teapots). One at a time, they were very humble and the shapes were unrefined. The poems I carved on them I wrote when I had a moment. I never had much free time. I was of low birth and didn't have an opportunity to learn from an elder so my poetry is an imitation of other people's. Its mere unpolished babble.

Handmade,
humble things
brought to sell
the market opens
how miserable

てすさびの
はかなきものを
もちいでて
うるまいのいち
たつぞわびしき¹

Rengetsu probably did not have a great deal of formal training, but she did have a number of friends in the arts and they undoubtedly shared ideas and influenced each other. Rengetsu's strength as an artist was her ability to create a style of her own in each of the artistic fields she attempted. Her works are not sophisticated or professional in many ways, but they do express her sensitivity to nature and her taste for delicate, subtle beauty. Her works are not bold or dramatic; they do not make an aggressive statement. They do, however, manage to command attention in an unassuming way which has made her works popular since her own time.

Poetry

Rengetsu's personality is perhaps most clearly understood through her written works, particularly her poetry. Most of her poems fall into the

category of jōkeika 情景歌, or poems which describe scenery. Although charming in their imagery, they have been criticized for being too standard and not revealing a her personality. ² The tradition of painting scenery was a strong one, and poems about the cherry blossoms and maple leaves of Arashiyama had been written for centuries, making very difficult for poets to write sparkling, original poems about the scenes within the limitations of the waka poem format. However, Rengetsu did write some beautiful and popular poems of this type, including the following:

やどかさぬ
人のつらさ
なさけにて
おぼろ月よの
花の下ぶし

A night under the cherry blossoms
with a hazy moon;
I forgave the man
who would not lend me
a room ³

山里は
松の声のみ
聞きなれて
風ふかぬ日は
さびしかりけり

I've grown accustomed
to hearing the voices of the pines
in this mountain village
I feel so lonely
on days when there is no wind ⁴

ちどり鳴
かもかはつつみ
月更て
そでにおぼゆる
よはの初しも

On the bank of the Kamo River
I heard a plover sing
as the night deepened
I felt the first frost
on my sleeve

Some of Rengetsu's poems have an element of animism. In particular, she seems to have felt a special predilection towards the uguisu, or Japanese bush warbler, which is often combined with plum blossoms as a symbol of spring.

Rengetsu's treatment of these birds as if they were human makes the poems more immediate and personal.

鶯の
つまやこもるど
ゆかしきは
梅かきかこむい
ほのやへ垣

How lovely
the uguisu's wife, who stays home
inside the blooming plum
of the hedge that
surrounds my cottage

鶯の
みやこにいでん
中やどに
かさばやと思ふ
梅咲にけり

I think I'll offer
my flowering plum tree
as a halfway house
for uguisu on their way
to the capital ⁵

Other poems describe Rengetsu's belief in a future which was cleansed of the objectionable qualities of her time, most of which contain a strong current of Buddhist philosophy.

万世も
たえぬながれと
しえめつらん
そのかめの尾の
やまの下水

The mountain spring
of Kame-no-o
won't stop flowing,
and nourishing (the world)
even for ten thousand years ⁶

世のちりを
よそにはらへて
ゆく末の
ちよをしめたる
やどの松風

The impurity of the world
will be blown somewhere else
in the future by the pine wind
of the cottage which will
continue for 1000 generations to come

In these poems there is also sometimes a note of loyalism, as they suggest that the emperor is the key to the world's improvement.

ひなつるの
ゆく末とほき
声きけば
みよをちとせと
うたふなりけり

When I listen to the voice
of the baby crane
echoing in the far distance
it sings that the reign of the emperor
will continue a thousand years

Some verses are categorized as jojōka 叙情歌, or poems which express the poet's own emotions and personality. They show Rengetsu as a woman who knew how to laugh at herself and at the world. She also able to look at the small things in life and to describe their beauty with her poetry.

Perhaps the most attractive of Rengetsu's poems are those which are like haiku; slightly irreverent and often with an ironical twist. An example of this type is the following poem which expresses her lack of awe for pompous, fine gentry. The imagery of undistinguished subjects such as vegetables does not often appear in traditional waka poetry.

岡崎の
月みにきませ
みやこ人
かどのはたいも
にてまつらん

Lords and ladies of Kyoto
please come to enjoy the moon
in Okazaki; we'll celebrate
with potatoes from
the field at the corner (near my house)

Another poem from her Okazaki period describes the pleasure on going out of her house on a winter morning. Despite her dislike for the cold, the sight of the daikon (a large white Japanese radish) with its stem glistening white with frost delighted and encouraged her to face other mornings with more enthusiasm.

冬ばたの
大根のくきに
霜さえて
朝戸出さむし
岡崎の里

Opening my door this morning
in the frigid village of Okazaki
I discovered the stem
of the daikon in the winter field
frosted pure white

The following poem is notable for its communication of the extreme cold she felt one evening. The poem lacks reference to objects like a fire place or warm blankets which would indicate some comfort on the part of the writer. Rather, she looks at her old sudare (a bamboo blind used in the

summer to keep out the sunlight and usually removed during the winter) which is a remembrance of a long past warm time and seems to make the cold reality even more bitter.

北まどの
風にやれたる
古すだれ
めもあはぬまで
寒きよはかな

My old sudare
torn by the attack of
the wind from my north window
a night cold enough
to keep my eyes pried open as well

A painting which she dedicated to her landlord showing figures dressed in brightly patterned festival costumes has an inscription with a rare example of choka 長歌 (long poem).

うちつれて
をどりにゆかん
君がやの
ねてのひとつを
われにかしてよ
わがこしに
へえたゆひつけて
をどりなば
昔わすれぬ
すすめとやいはん

Lets go together
to dance;
will you call me
a sparrow
who can't forget the old days
if I dance with
the bell you lent me
from your house
tied tightly around
my hips? ⁷

From these poems we can see Rengetsu's gratitude to and affection for her landlord who was kind in inviting her to the dance and lending her the bell. Also evident is her youthful spirit, for although she feels herself too old for dancing, the bell and the celebration make her want to dance.

As she neared the end of her life, Rengetsu wrote some verses about getting old. One utilizes a play on words to create a double image in which her aged body is likened to a gourd. Gourds are symbols of longevity in Japan.

ありありて
八十にちかく
なりひさご
みのつずましく
おいにけるかな

Living, living
close to 80 years
(the seed inside)
the gourd has aged
and shrinks (and dries)

Pottery

Pottery is the art in which Rengetsu is most famous and it is probably the field in which she was most original. Her incised works are particularly popular. Although works had been incised before, usually with Chinese poems, Rengetsu was one of the first potters to put her own waka poetry on hand-made wares. The style she created became known as Rengetsu-yaki or "Rengetsu ware". The textures of the clay, the glaze and the rough quality of the incised calligraphy of Rengetsu's pottery appeal to the tactile senses. Pottery was also the art form that Rengetsu liked the most, according to one source,⁸ although it was the medium in which she felt she was least proficient.

Rengetsu made two types of pottery, those with inscriptions which were brush-painted on the surface of the vessel and those in which they were incised into the clay with a sharp object. Painted pottery works were made of light clay and had clear glaze over calligraphy and (usually) a small design painted with iron slip. These wares can be compared with a very popular tradition of Kyoto painted pottery begun by Ogata Kenzan, 尾形乾山 (1663-1743) and his brother Kōrin 尾形光琳 (1658-1716). Kenzan made ceramics which were decorated by poems and paintings by Kōrin.⁹ Rengetsu also combined the arts of painting, calligraphy, poetry and pottery. The resulting wares, however, were quite different in the style of the calligraphy and the shape of the vessels. Kōrin's calligraphy was bold and often made use of Chinese characters which tend to be square in shape, Rengetsu used Japanese characters which are much more simplified, rounder and her calligraphy style is very light and graceful. Also, most of Kenzan-Kōrin style wares are flat rectangular or square trays with the design on the front and the edges of the piece are painted to create a decorative frame for the picture. Rengetsu's painted pottery works are most

frequently sake bottles, tea pots and other rounded objects, and the calligraphy goes around the piece rather than painted on the front or back of a flat surface. The subjects painted are similar; plants and flowers, trees, birds, and simple landscapes or views of rustic huts. Rengetsu also added to her repertoire some figural themes borrowed from folk art such as the wisteria maiden which can be seen in the sake bottle illustrated in Figure 2.

Incised Pottery

Rengetsu was influenced by pottery made in Shigaraki, a town in Shiga prefecture known for its rough, rustic ceramics which appealed to the Japanese tea enthusiasts' taste for somber, quiet, unassuming beauty and unpolished form (qualities known as wabi 詫び, and sabi 寂び).¹⁰ Rengetsu was probably influenced first by Kyoto imitations of Shigaraki wares, but she also went to Shigaraki and knew some potters there.¹¹ She seems to have used Shigaraki clay in some of her works, since it was brought to Kyoto by this time, but she also used clay from Kaguraoka, near Okazaki.¹² Her pottery most closely resembles Shigaraki ware when clay with feldspar imbedded in it was used to make the rough textural effects that were the hallmark of traditional Shigaraki pottery. An example of this type of clay in Rengetsu's work is seen in Figure 3, a charcoal brazier for sencha tea (ryōro 涼炉). The particles of sand have been emphasized by the addition of a thin, transparent glaze. This piece has a very coarse, primitive appearance due to the contrast of the white particles against the brown clay and the stocky, angular shape of the vessel.

The clay she used varied from pale grey to various shades of brown, including some with a slightly reddish tinge. She carved her poems into the pieces before the glaze was added, so that the glaze slightly filled the crevices left behind by a sharp instrument.

Since much of Rengetsu's pottery, particularly early works, is not dated, it is difficult to determine which works are done at what period. However, unglazed pieces using light grey clay, such as Figure 4, may be considered early because of their the lack of technical refinement, awkward shapes and the use of more complicated Chinese characters.

Rengetsu's used several types of glaze, both transparent and opaque, and also made many unglazed works. The glazes of her carved pottery were usually earthy tones of brown, tan and mossy green. Occasionally she would also use greyish blue and creamy white.¹³ One glazing technique that resulted in very beautiful works is the application of a semi-transparent glaze very thinly in some areas so that the color of the body of the vessel showed through these portions, which contrasted with areas in which the glaze covered the clay as illustrated in Figure 5.

Rengetsu combined certain aesthetics drawn from traditional tea ceramics with the freedom and forms of sencha tea ceremony. The quiet, subtle beauty of her works contrasts dramatically with the Ming and Ching influenced overglaze enameled porcelain and pottery which constituted the most popular form of sencha ceramic.¹⁴ Since the sencha tea ceremony was more casual, and emphasized the congenial atmosphere of the group, she also apparently felt free to experiment and her pottery shows her sense of humor and taste for sculptural form. She often added small sculpted forms to her pottery, for example, a flower or nut shape on the top of a teapot lid or the side of a bowl. Figure 6 shows a waste water pot with a small frog on the bottom, which added a humorous touch for anyone using it. Ueda Akinari, with whom Rengetsu probably studied and whose pottery she was familiar with,¹⁵ may have been inspirational to Rengetsu in making this type of work. Figure 7 shows a fresh water pot

(mizusashi) by Akinari with the form of a crab on the side. In addition, Akinari's role as an amateur potter and the handcrafted appearance of his pottery may have influenced Rengetsu's decision to become a potter.

Rengetsu seems to have learned pottery techniques largely by trial and error, but she did know several professional potters in Kyoto, as evidenced by her collaborative works, which are listed in Appendix 1. She used the kilns of the famous Awata area to fire her ceramics.¹⁶ Attribution problems are complicated because some pots may have been designed and made by other potters and inscribed by Rengetsu and still others are complete forgeries.

Rengetsu II

In her seventies, Rengetsu seems to have decided that making pottery took too much of her strength since she began looking for someone to help her. She worked for a short while with a farmer's wife, named Yasuda An, but then decided to name Kuroda Kōryō as Rengetsu II. Koryo and Rengetsu had a business relationship and she wrote him several letters requesting various types of works.¹⁷ Some of their pieces are collaborative ones, with Rengetsu inscribing the poems, but Kōryō also wrote some inscriptions having become adept at Rengetsu-style calligraphy.¹⁸ Some of Kōryō's works include his signature or seal, but others do not. A more obvious sign of a Kōryō piece is that he often used a lotus leaf or petal shaped mold. Also, in comparison with Rengetsu's works, Kōryō's pottery often has thicker glaze which resulted in incised calligraphy that was almost fully filled in by glaze, as in Figure 8. In other works he emphasized the calligraphy by adding some kind of dark paint or stain to it, which can be seen in Figure 9. Although Rengetsu did sometimes fashion works into lotus shapes,¹⁹ there is no indication that she ever used a mold, nor that these other characteristics exist in her works.

Painting

Rengetsu's painting is considered Shijō style, and many artists of this school were rumored to have been her teacher, including Matsumura Keibun 松村景文 (1779-1843), who is purported to have been her lover. Keibun died when Rengetsu was fifty-three and although she may have known him, there is little data indicating a close relationship.²⁰ Other Shijō artists considered to possibly have taught Rengetsu include Nakajima Raishō 中島来章 (1796-1871) and Shiokawa Bunrin 塩川文麟 (1808-77). There is no substantial proof that she studied with any of them although she did inscribe several of Raishō's paintings. The Shijō school was very popular during the late Edo period and it is natural that Rengetsu, who was very familiar with the vogues that determined what would sell best, would choose this style.

It should be noted that most of Rengetsu's paintings owe more to Shijō school sketchlike ink paintings than to their finished, professional works, which were usually done in full color, and often with attention to precise brush stroke, particularly when painted on silk. Rengetsu painted on silk infrequently and seldom painted subjects requiring fine technical detail.²¹ Instead, there is a kind of unsophisticated quality in many of Rengetsu's paintings which probably stems from the popular art form of haiga 俳画. Paintings paired with haiku poetry, haiga are light, sketchy, often amusing paintings which accompany these equally brief poems, were particularly favored by artists of the Shijō and Nanga schools. Shijō school haiga tend to be more lyrical than those of Nanga artists, which tend to be more robust. At times elements of both can be seen in Rengetsu's works.

Subject matter

Many of Rengetsu's nature paintings illustrate her more famous poems, and it should be remembered that although she favored certain painting themes the popularity of a poem may have dictated the subject of the painting, since it can be assumed that people requested works with their favorite poem of a particular season or occasion. Subjects which are related to her nature poems include cherry and plum blossoms, weeping willow, pine trees, birds (particularly hototogisu, uguisu, cranes and plovers). She also sometimes painted simple landscapes of famous places such as Mt. Fuji, Awaji Island and Arashiyama. These themes were not unique to Rengetsu, but were often painted, particularly by poet-painters.

Other recurring themes in Rengetsu's paintings are persimmons, firewood butterflies, silk pounding stones and sencha pots. Rengetsu was successful in depicting these small objects using wash and emphasizing the three dimensionality of the forms. Sometimes, as in the sencha pot in figure 10, the forms are depicted in stark simplicity and no serious attempts are made to achieve realistic shape or volumetric form. However, in these cases, she usually took care to integrate the painting with the calligraphy by means of arranging the lines around the picture.

Rengetsu's figural paintings often have subjects which are related to Ōtsu-e, a type of folk painting which was in vogue during the late Edo period. Rengetsu's Ōtsu-e themes include bannermen, Oni nembutsu (a demon in Buddhist monk clothes) and wisteria maidens. ²² An example of this type of work is seen in Figure 11, a work that demonstrates more grace and delicacy in its rendering than the bold and colorful folk paintings from which the subjects were derived. This may be due to its having been based on Shijō school figure paintings rather than on original Ōtsu-e paintings. Shijō artists are known for

their extensive use of gradations of ink and color wash with which they emphasized the three dimensionality of subjects. The soft appearance of the washed forms and the delicate color of Shijō paintings complemented Rengetsu's calligraphy, whereas the harsh color and flat pattern that characterize Ōtsu-e would be likely to overwhelm the fine line of her writing style.

In addition to Ōtsu-e themes, Rengetsu used other figural subjects in her painting which are also seen in Shijō painting. Examples of this are Kamo horse race depictions, foxes in priest's clothing, and hina dolls.²³ Since these, and Ōtsu-e subjects are derived from a popular painting tradition, many of the poems on these works may have been written to suit the illustrations.

Her favorite scene in her mid to late seventies and eighties is that of a small hut, a theme popular amongst Shijō school artists. Her renderings of houses, show her debt to the Shijō style since she also often emphasized modeling and shading.

Rengetsu's painting technique can be seen best in the sketchbook that she gave to Kuroda Kōryō. Most sketches are nature subjects rendered in shades of ink, with occasional touches of light, subtle color. Her brushwork is delicate, but sure and unwavering. An illustration from this sketchbook (Figure 12) demonstrates her ability to depict three dimensional form by using tones of ink which is most evident in the conical shape of Mt. Fuji. By adding mist on the side of Fuji, Rengetsu has added realism and also kept the picture from becoming too geometric. In contrast, on the adjacent picture, the hat on the scarecrow becomes a simple shape somewhat akin to the base of the mountain, which is made visually appealing by her use of a variety of tones and different types of brush strokes. The top of the hat is painted with a relatively full, wet brush, applied more heavily on the left side, the same side that is shaded on Fuji. The brim of the hat is rendered with a single sweep of a nearly dry brush. These lines are then filled with lighter colored

ink saturated with water, quickly applied in a downward motion. This ink is left undistributed and the natural traces of the brush creates sections of more intense ink fanning out like spokes from the crown of the hat. Two more lines are added to curve around the hat, accentuating its rounded form. The scarecrow's raincoat is painted in quick strokes with a brush that becomes drier towards the bottom which gives it volume and adds to the shaggy appearance of the straw. A few more strokes are added to create the post of the scarecrow (the only sign that this is not a picture of a peasant) and his bow, arrow and walking stick.

Many of the techniques described here are typical of the Shijō school and Rengetsu's grasp of them indicates that she probably did have some direct training from one or more members of the school. Some of the sketches may be actual copies of another artist or artists' works.²⁴ Curiously, Rengetsu's finished works lack some of the proficiency displayed in the sketches, perhaps because she never completely mastered the techniques, or she may have simply preferred more simple, uncomplicated images to accompany her poems.

Endnotes: Artworks I

¹See Toshiko Maeda, Bunjin shofu vol 11, Rengetsu, (Kyoto: Tankosha, 1979) p. 105 for further explanation of this poem.

²A number of people have criticized Rengetsu's most famous poem about her night under the cherry blossoms, including Miyamori Asatarō in his book Masterpieces of Japanese Poetry, Ancient and Modern (Tokyo: Taiseido, 1936) p. 588. Mr. Miyamori says that the poem is too artificial.

³For more information about this poem, see Maeda, Bunjin shofu vol.11, p. 128.

⁴This poem was apparently Nukina Kaioku's 貫名海屋 (1778-1863) favorite poem by Rengetsu. He is reported to have given her a large piece of calligraphy with the words "pine-wind Rengetsu" (Matsukaze Rengetsu). He also asked her to teach him waka poetry. For more information, see Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, pp.79-81.

⁵People often offered their homes as shelter to travellers along the road. Rengetsu is imagining the birds as her guests on their way to Kyoto.

⁶Kame-no-o can be translated to mean a turtle's tail (a turtle is a symbol of longevity since they are said to have lived ten thousand years) or it can mean a place in Kyoto, near Sagano.

⁷This poem can be seen on a picture of festival dancers, plate 10 in the Kyoto Prefectural Archives catalogue.

⁸Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, section 3, p. 61.

⁹Many Kenzan-Kōrin works, and those of their followers are illustrated in Rimpa sakuhinten, a catalogue of a show at the Idemitsu Museum in Tokyo. These works are considered part of the kyō-yaki 京焼 (Kyoto ceramic) tradition, as are numerous similar works by Kenzan's followers. Although by Rengetsu's time the kyō-yaki kilns were used primarily for porcelain and Chinese-style pottery, it is probable that some potters continued to work in the Kenzan-Kōrin style. Oribe folk pottery wares occasionally have waka poetry painted on, and Rengetsu may have been influenced by both this tradition and Shino painted pottery.

¹⁰ For more information about Shigaraki pottery, see Louise Cort, Shigaraki, Potter's Valley (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1979).

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 244-5. Rengetsu knew Shigaraki potters Naokata 直方, (or Tanii Rijurō 谷井利十郎 (1806-91)) and Fujita Takayuki 藤田たかゆき (1812-91).

¹² See Maeda, Bunjin shofu vol. 11, p. 94. A biography of Rengetsu written

by her follower Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良 (1822-94) says that her pottery is "Shigaraki style".

¹³ For color plates of Rengetsu's pottery, see Sumi, pp. 50-51 and 54-55.

¹⁴ A notable leader of the Chinese-style *sencha* movement of Rengetsu's time was Yamamoto Baiitsu 山本梅逸 (1783-1856). For information on Baiitsu and the central *sencha* group of this time see Patricia Graham, Yamamoto Baiitsu: His Life, Literati Pursuits and Related Paintings (Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1983). The most famous potter of Baiitsu's group was Aoki Mokubei 青木木米 (1767-1844). For more information and examples of Mokubei's pottery, see Soame Jenyns, Japanese Porcelain (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

¹⁵ See Edo-ki jōsei no bi to gei p. 114. For more information about Rengetsu and Akinari, see Sugimoto Hidetarō, Ōtagaki Rengetsu, pp. 109-121.

¹⁶ Maeda, Bunjin shofu vol. 11, p. 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 94-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 96.

¹⁹ There is a mizusashi in the Murakami collection that is crafted in a lotus leaf form. This piece was sent by Rengetsu to Murakami Tadamasa.

²⁰ See Maeda, Bunjin shofu, vol. 11, p.102.

²¹ One painting in the Murakami collection is painted on silk, although this is not common. A painting of a crane, given to Tessai by Rengetsu, is a much more finished painting. Pictured in the Kyoto Prefectural Archives catalogue, pl. 38, Rengetsu may have given this work to Tessai to celebrate the emperor's restoration to power since it was signed in 1868.

²² For pictures of Ōtsu-e see Victor and Takako Hauge, Folk Traditions of Japan, (New York: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1978).

²³ For Shijō school pictures of these subjects, see Jack Ronald Hillier, Japanese Art in the Shijō School: The Uninhibited Brush (London: M. Moss Ltd., 1974). For more formal works of this school, see Jōhei Sasaki, Maruyama and Shijō School from the Collection of the Itsuō Museum (Kyoto: Kyoto Shokan, 1984)

²⁴ Some of these sketches, particularly those of the figures, appear to be based on Tessai's paintings of these subjects.

CHAPTER IV
CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy background: Wayō calligraphy

Rengetsu was heir to a tradition known as Japanese-style calligraphy (wayō shodō 和様書道), which developed when the Japanese began to change the calligraphic forms they adopted from China. Although a rather vague term, wayō designates calligraphy which has traits unique to Japan. This type of calligraphy was written since its development in the Heian period (794-1185) and used extensively in writing letters and waka poetry. The history of wayō calligraphy is somewhat analogous to the development of hiragana script

Chinese characters were introduced into Japan as early as the third century and were adopted by the Japanese, who did not have a writing system of their own. However, the differences between the Japanese and Chinese languages were too great, and the Japanese developed a repertoire of symbols to represent the phonetic elements of their own language. Japanese syllabary, known as kana, was developed out of Chinese characters in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. At first, Chinese characters were used for their phonetic similarity to Japanese, without regard to their actual meaning. This type of usage is called man'yōgana 万葉仮名 since it was used in the eighth-century poetry classic, the Man'yōshū. Further simplification and standardization led to the development of two different forms of kana, hiragana 平仮名, with smooth, rounded characters and katakana 片仮名, with more angular, square shapes. While katakana was used extensively for notations in sutras, it had little significance in aesthetic calligraphy. By the eleventh century, hiragana calligraphy had become an important art form. Hiragana developed stylistically

from Chinese cursive or "grass" script in which the characters were executed in a fluid style and many characters were connected with a single line. This continuous line script is called renmentai 連綿体 in Japanese and is considered an important characteristic of Japanese-style calligraphy. Unlike Chinese script, where the character must represent an object or an idea, and thus must maintain some complexity in order to differentiate a multitude of symbols, the phonetic function of hiragana allowed extreme simplification of the characters. This combined with the curvilinear forms of hiragana made the calligraphy particularly suited to the fluid connection of renmentai since many characters could be written with a single flowing line without any loss of meaning.

The golden age of hiragana calligraphy came during the late Heian period, when the court aristocracy devoted itself to the pursuit of elegance. Refined handwriting was a social and political necessity in the sophisticated society of the era. Hiragana calligraphy of this period was greatly admired by succeeding generations of calligraphers, and is now called jōdaiyō 上代様. This kind of calligraphy is the epitome of wayō calligraphy, since the fine taste of the Heian courtiers was much further removed from Chinese aesthetics than in other hiragana calligraphy. The perfection of this style of script is attributed to Fujiwara no Kōzei (also referred to as Fujiwara no Yukinari) 藤原行成 (972-1027); another major master is Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (ca. 868-945). A noteworthy feature of jōdaiyō calligraphy is the use of a smooth, wiry line which varies little in width, seen in the earliest surviving work representative of the jōdaiyō style, the kōya-gire 高野切 . ¹ Another characteristic of jōdaiyō which later became associated with Japanese style calligraphy in general is an emphasis on diagonal composition created by placing the lines unevenly, a technique called chirashigaki 散し書, ("scattered writing").

Kozei's descendents carried on the wayō tradition and although they did not necessarily remain faithful to the jōdaiyō style, they are considered the main line of wayō calligraphy during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). This school is known as the Seisonji 世尊寺. Wayō calligraphy was revitalized by Prince Son'en 尊円法親王 (1265-1317) who was influenced by Sung Chinese calligraphy styles but also studied the calligraphy of Heian period masters.² He promoted the study of jōdaiyō calligraphy within the school he founded, known as the Shoren'in school 青蓮院流. Calligraphy of this school was greatly admired by the Tokugawa shoguns and this style became the official calligraphy style in the early Edo period. Named O'ie-ryū 御家流, this style was taught at local schools throughout Japan during the Edo period.³

By the seventeenth century, the wayō style had undergone great stylistic changes, and even within O'ie-ryū there are many stylistic variants. Rengetsu probably learned O'ie-ryū in her youth, but may have been further influenced by jōdaiyō calligraphy.

Overview of Rengetsu's Stylistic Development

Rengetsu's earliest works are characterized by calligraphy having a line which is heavier and more fluid than her mature style. Early periods works are almost exclusively tanzaku 短冊 (long thin poem sheets).⁴ The middle period works date approximately from Rengetsu's fifties until she was seventy-five. At this time Rengetsu developed her mature calligraphic style and she began producing more paintings with added inscriptions of her own poetry. On these works she preferred short formats (with sheets measuring approximately 30cm. by 40 to 50 cm.) during most of the middle period, although during her seventies she appears to have begun making more works on long sheets (measuring about 100 to 120 cm. by 30 cm.)

The late period, which coincides with the Jinkōin years, includes the last ten years of Rengetsu's life. At this time, she produced large numbers of inscribed paintings, added poems to other people's works and began making more works with calligraphy alone. Her calligraphy style became more angular and less careful in execution during this period as she allowed her natural creativity and sense of balance free reign. She preferred long formats for her works with paintings during her late years.

Signature

Although it is difficult to date Rengetsu's early works with any accuracy, scholars estimate that she began signing works in her forties.⁵ She usually signed on a lower corner of the back of tanzaku in these early works, and often included a seal on the work, typically placing it above the signature. These signatures are characterized by a long, thin hour-glass shape.⁶ The length, and the relatively thick line used for these signatures make them much larger than those on her later works. In Appendix 5, the first example is given as typical of her early style, which can be identified by the clarity of the grass radical on the top of the lotus character, and the elongated shape of the moon character. There is often a loop in the center of the lotus character.

This characteristic was carried over to the middle period, but other aspects of her signature changed rather dramatically. In particular, the lotus character took on a new and unusual form, which was perhaps Rengetsu's own invention. Rengetsu changed the grass radical of this character, from the standard type which she used in her early period to a new form characterized by a short horizontal stroke with a dot above and a line which proceeds

vertically through the center of the character, and stops three quarters of the way through it. The line in her middle period signature, like that of her calligraphy in general at this time, becomes lighter and more even in width.

The shape of the signature gradually became shorter and broader during the middle period. Although she occasionally signed early works on the front, it was not common until the middle period. There are three types of middle period signatures, which will be discussed in the section about these works. In the late signature, the core line usually goes all the way through to the bottom of the lotus character. The last section the lotus character develops from a loop in the middle period to a sharp angle in the later phase. Examples of signatures from the different periods illustrating the points listed above are outlined in Appendix 5.

The change between the middle and late signatures occurs during her seventy-fifth year, the same year she began adding her age after her name on the majority of her works. Rengetsu's signature does not show any major developments in the last ten years of her life but when she reached the illustrious age of eighty-one, she began placing her age before the signature on most if not all of her works. In some years, such as when she was seventy-six, and in her later eighties, she was probably in ill health and the forms have less strength as a result.

Early Works

To illustrate the Rengetsu's early calligraphy style, a *tanzaku* (fig.13) dating from about Rengetsu's forties is compared to one with the same poem from the last few years of her life (fig.14). The early piece shows some

evidence of Rengetsu's youthful study of O'ie-ryū, a style which emphasizes the fluctuation of line width used to emphasize patterns of light and dark. In comparison, the mature piece is written with a line which is thinner and varies less in width. The earlier piece displays a great deal of diagonal movement, which is emphasized by the irregular width of the line. This is particularly apparent in the lines connecting characters and in the more complicated Chinese characters. Another early characteristic is the connection of many characters with a single line. By comparison, in later works these remmentai "strings" of characters are usually limited to successions of two or three characters. In the earlier tanzaku, the hiragana "a" (あ) is done with a single stroke which is stopped and curled around. In the mature work, this character is executed in three crisp and clear strokes which makes the characters more clearly defined. These two characters are enlarged beside the plates. In earlier works Rengetsu used a larger number of more complicated Chinese characters. The complexity of the earlier piece makes it appear more crowded. This effect lessened with time as she developed her mature style.

In early works, however, one can already see elements of her fully developed style. One example of this is the shape of her characters, which are round and relatively wide. Japanese historians have described their appearance as "melon shape" 瓜形 (urigata). Some evidence of this shape is already apparent in early tanzaku. This can be seen in the "no" (の), "fu" (ふ) and "a" (あ) characters in the first line of this piece.

Middle Period Works: Theories on Rengetsu's style

The change in Rengetsu's style towards a thinner line and less complicated characters occurred during her mid- to late fifties and early sixties.⁷ At

some point, probably in her sixties, Rengetsu began using a brush called a mensōfude 面相筆. The same type of brush was used by the Heian courtiers, and the fine tip and unbending quality of this brush enabled her to further refine the line of her calligraphy, giving it a lightly brushed, wiry appearance very much like that used in classical jōdaiyō works.

There are various opinions about the origin of this change. Tokuda Koen, the current head priest of Jinkōin temple who has written a great deal about Rengetsu and her calligraphy, ascribes this change to the fact that she wrote on ceramics with a nail or other pointed object.⁸ Thus she became accustomed to a line even in width which she transferred to her brush calligraphy. Others have ascribed her stylistic change to her exposure to jōdaiyō calligraphy.

Rev. Tokuda claims that Rengetsu would not have had an opportunity to see Heian period calligraphy. Yet, although classical pieces were not easily available for the general public, Rengetsu knew many high ranking priests of temples who might have had such works in their collections.⁹ In addition, another possible source of information about Heian period calligraphy is her friend Reizei Tamechika, who had been deeply involved in the study of the Heian period from his youth, knew a great deal about the aristocratic scripts of the classical era and even owned a letter which is attributed to Kōzei.¹⁰

Scholars tend to discount Tamechika's influence on Rengetsu since he was 32 years younger than she was. However, this argument is rather weak she had great respect for Tamechika and she did not let age become a barrier in her relationships. According to Komatsu Shigemi, a leading authority on calligraphy in Japan, Tamechika's calligraphy shows a marked development towards a more classical jōdaiyō style in the late 1840s and early 1850s, about the same time that we see the change in Rengetsu's calligraphy.¹¹ This alone is not proof that Rengetsu was influenced by Tamechika (or vice versa). Unlike Tamechika, however, there is little evidence that Rengetsu copied Heian period styles. She

created a style of her own, which is sometimes called Rengetsu-ryū, or "Rengetsu school". Except for the obvious similarity in line quality, there are many differences between Rengetsu's calligraphy and jōdaiyō works. Rengetsu used a smaller repertoire of hiragana than was common in the Heian period, due to standardization which occurred through time. In addition, Rengetsu's characters are larger, wider and often more rounded than those in Heian period hiragana works. Another difference is the relative lack of continuous line remmentai technique in Rengetsu's mature style, which makes the individual characters stand out more clearly than in Heian period pieces. Classical works also have more space between the lines than is seen in Rengetsu's works.

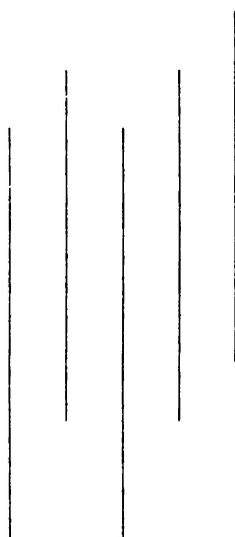
Middle Period Works: Calligraphy With Paintings

Rengetsu's works of her middle period can be divided into three groups, an example of the first and seemingly earliest type is seen in Figure 15. The signature on this work is somewhat similar to those on works dated to her fifties.¹³ In addition, she wrote a number of characters with a single line, which is uncommon in works of the succeeding periods. The line has a somewhat drier appearance than in later works. She often used a five line diagonal composition for her works of this period, with the poem divided in according to the waka poetry line division, i.e., 5-7-5-7-7 syllables per line.¹⁴ The characters in these works vary more in both length and width than in later pieces. Although few long works are known from this period, her inscription on Tamechika's Arashiyama picture (Fig. 16) probably dates to this period due to its relatively dry line and less regular character size.

The next group, which dates approximately to her sixties,¹⁵ may represent an era in which she received some training. On the short works of this

period, the signature is placed on the right, separated from the body of the inscription by the painting, which is evident in Figure 17. A similar arrangement is seen in Tamechika's "poet" (Fig. 18). Although this alone is not enough evidence to prove that Rengetsu studied with Tamechika, it may indicate some influence. The signatures on these works are more elaborate than those on pieces of other periods, particularly seen in the moon character, which is curled gracefully. The calligraphy on these works is more carefully schooled than in the previous group, and the character size more regulated. There is less diagonal connection of characters than in the earlier piece; instead, most of the lines between characters descend vertically.

These works usually have a split diagonal composition of the lines, as defined by overall pattern created by the first characters each line, which is a type of chirashi 散らし, or scattered line composition, illustrated here:



As in the previous type of work, in split diagonal works Rengetsu commonly divides the poems into five lines which correspond to the composition of the poem. Sometimes the last few characters of a line will be placed to the side and lower than the rest of line, creating more "scattered" feeling about the work.

The third group, which seem to date to her late sixties to early seventies, has a less elaborate signature, and the moon character is shorter and the bow-shaped curve of the previous type is less pronounced. ¹⁶ In these works she experimented with composition, sometimes using a five line diagonal or split diagonal, and sometimes using something new, for example the four line split horizontal of Figure 19. The signature, especially on the long works of this period, is often rather small in comparison with the other characters and is usually placed on the left, after the inscription. Some works of this period have a seal placed after the signature.

Late Period

During the last ten years of Rengetsu's life she produced many inscribed painting and also wrote poems on large numbers of Tessai's and Gesshin's works. The quantity of works produced sometimes reduced their quality. Inscriptions on paintings of her late period do not have the careful quality of her middle period calligraphy, at times being too small for the overall effect of a work, and occasionally, especially in two line diagonal formats, the inscription is not straight. There is a smaller percentage of works with short format in the late period, and they usually have three, three and a half or four line horizontal formats such as seen in Figure 20. The lines are not divided with any regard to the poems, which may indicate that she was less interested in the poetry, and more involved with writing. However, it also appears that sometimes she was more concerned with producing large quantities of works than with aesthetic considerations.

Long formats prevail during the last ten years of Rengetsu's life. She favored a three line diagonal arrangement for the majority of her long works

of this period. Other compositions also do occur, but, in general, she experimented much less with different concepts than she did in her middle period.¹⁶ Pieces with three line inscriptions are usually divided into 12-9-10 or 12-10-9 syllables. Four line diagonal compositions are perhaps the second most numerous in her seventies, pieces with lines of 8-9-7-7 or 9-8-7-7 syllable arrangements. In her eighties she frequently used a two line diagonal composition, with division of calligraphy similar to that on tanzaku, the first three lines of the poem (5-7-5 syllables) making up the first line of calligraphy and the last two (7-7) making up the second.

The vast majority of Rengetsu's inscriptions on long works are placed on the top half of the work, particularly in the upper right quadrant, using this placement approximately twice as often as those placed to the left. A typical example of this type of work is seen in Figure 20. When compared with Figure 21, a painting of the same subject, with the same poem, from her middle period, the changes are apparent. The inscription takes up much less space in late period works, and the calligraphy is more casual, less schooled. The signature on the later work is smaller, but has added length due to the addition of her age. The signature is placed near the right margin of the work, to the right of, and slightly lower than the inscription. Certain characters, for example, "mo" (朧) and the old-fashioned style of "no" (朧) are a great deal larger and rounder in the later work.

In addition to full-scale painted works, Rengetsu also added inscriptions to a other objects with painted images. Many tanzaku were painted by Gozan and have inscriptions by Rengetsu.¹⁷ Rengetsu and Tessai collaborated on a few illustrated books, and a series of fans.¹⁸ She wrote on wooden objects such as a small platform, boxes for tea scoops or pottery and also did some works on hemp.¹⁹

Calligraphy Without Paintings

During her mid to late seventies and eighties, in addition to writing large numbers of tanzaku, Rengetsu began to work in other formats including kaishi 懐紙, works on rectangular paper similar to that used for her "short" painted works, square shikishi sheets 色紙, fans, handscrolls and others. This expansion of her repertoire may indicate greater self-confidence in her calligraphy, or it may have been the result of an arrangement with a paper dealer.¹⁸ She seems to have taken more care with purely calligraphic works. As a result, some of the best works of her late seventies and eighties can be seen in these purely calligraphic pieces. One set of shikishi written when Rengetsu was seventy-nine demonstrates this, two examples of which are pictured in Figures 23 and 24.¹⁹ Each piece has a horizontal composition, and a title is added on the far right. The pieces each show slight compositional variation generally seen in the length and placement of the title and of the last line. Her sure control of the brush resulted in fine, unwavering line and characters that vary little in size. The elephant-like, or "gourd-like" shape of the characters is also a quality particular to Rengetsu's style. These pieces show Rengetsu's technical ability in the balance of the calligraphy within the square format, by placing the inscriptions in the upper right of the square, leaving space on the left side and bottom that is transgressed only by the signature.

Forgeries

Forged works of both pottery and calligraphy in Rengetsu's style were being produced even during her lifetime. The popularity of her works has grown particularly during the last ten years, and fakes are undoubtedly still being produced as the price of her works continues to escalate. This complicates the study of her works enormously. Interestingly, some of her imitators were even

more skillful calligraphers, painters and potters than she was and works can be dismissed on the grounds that they are too professional. Some works, such as the shikishi illustrated in Figure 25, appear to be genuine until they are compared with real Rengetsu pieces such as Figure 26. Both works share a common poem, but their appearance is quite different. Suspicious points of Figure 25 include paper used, line quality and syllable division. The paper used in the forgery has a strong design on it, which distracts the eye from the calligraphy. Rengetsu seldom chose paper with bold decorative effects.²⁰ Rather, her shikishi usually have a subtle sprinkling of gold or silver on them, often with a gold edge, which can be seen in Figure 25. The line in Figure 26 varies too much in width and the calligrapher stopped the brush in places uncommon in Rengetsu's own works. This becomes apparent when the two center lines of these works are compared (Fig. 27). The forger often stops the brush and then moves the brush up slightly on the bottom of certain characters which creates a heel-shaped point rarely seen in Rengetsu's works. The authentic work shows her smooth, unfaltering writing of these characters, an aspect which is apparent in other reliable works. Both works have a split diagonal composition but the lines in Figure 25 are not divided according to the poetic division, which, as previously mentioned, Rengetsu maintained in this kind of arrangement. The writer of the fake has emphasized the "gourd" shape of the characters and fine line of Rengetsu's calligraphy, and has been successful enough for this piece to be illustrated as a Rengetsu work.

Other suspicious points about a work may include: a choppy, dotted appearance which occurs from an overemphasis on the individual character; extensive use of strong diagonal lines between characters; extremely light characters due to too little ink and uneven pressure on the brush.

It is, however, at times very difficult to determine Rengetsu fakes from real works since, as mentioned before, particularly during her later years her own work was sometimes rather uneven. Her age, health and mood all affected her calligraphy, so care must be taken not to dismiss works without a great deal of consideration.

Letters

Rengetsu often wrote letters to her friends, and it appears that she enjoyed maintaining regular correspondences with her friends and acquaintances. The sheer number and visual variety of extant letters preclude an in depth study of them here. Instead, this section will focus on the outstanding characteristics of Rengetsu's mature letter-writing style and a comparison of letter calligraphy with her formal writing style used for poems.

Although in some letters Rengetsu used the same thin, wiry line of her formal works, most have a thicker line that is less fluid. Rengetsu reportedly wrote her letters with her old calligraphy brushes, which resulted in a broader line and scratchy appearance.²¹ In Japan, as in China, letters are considered just as indicative of a person's personality as poetry. In Rengetsu's case, the letters seem much more forceful than her works made for public purposes. One interesting facet of Rengetsu's letter calligraphy is that it appears to have changed according to her mood, and the formality of the occasion for which she was writing, more than it was affected by the individual who received the letter. Scrolls of letters that she sent to a single individual show great variety in appearance. Other variations in certain letters seem to be attributable to the materials she used, for example, whether the paper had a smooth surface or not and the age and condition of the brush.

A comparison of a letter (Figure 28) and a kaishi (Figure 29), which date to approximately the same time and were sent to the same person,²² may be used to illustrate the major differences between Rengetsu's letter and formal works. This letter was a note to accompany a gift, and as such, was a relatively formal work which can be seen in the uneven arrangement of the lines on the paper which is uncommon in Rengetsu's letters. However, the difference in line quality between the two works is quite striking. The lines in the note are much less standardized, thicker, and more varied in width. The width of the individual characters is not as great and thus they do not have the same feeling of horizontal tension. These qualities combine to make Rengetsu's letters seem more casual, natural and less precise although they are certainly not lacking in technique.

Most of Rengetsu's letters are written in hiragana, interspersed with a few highly abbreviated Chinese characters.²³ The lines are usually eight to ten characters long and they begin at the top of the paper, although she often created visual interest by placing a word or phrase between lines on the lower half. This can be seen between the third, fourth and fifth lines of Figure 30, a letter which Rengetsu sent to Tessai. This letter also illustrates Rengetsu's periodic use of an almost dry brush, which she drags across the paper. This is particularly evident in one horizontal line in the upper part of the center section of the letter where the paper beneath the line shows through clearly. The strong horizontal line created is complemented by the several lines sweeping downward in the subsequent few lines, creating a lovely contrast.

Rengetsu's letters are often very long, some measuring two meters or more in length. As is common in Japanese letters, sometimes forgotten messages

were often added at the beginning, end, or squeezed between lines of the letter usually in much smaller script. She sometimes used decorated paper with subtle printed designs or a sprinkling of gold.

In general, Rengetsu's letters have a more bold visual impact than her formal works since the line is heavier and there is greater variety in line play. The difference between her letter and formal calligraphy gives an added dimension to Rengetsu's calligraphy. If one judged Rengetsu solely on her formal calligraphy, one might be tempted to feel that she was a woman of delicate sensibilities, but with strong control over her feelings and emotions. Rengetsu's letters are less regulated, more blatantly powerful, giving an outlet to her personal idiosyncracies. The strength behind this seemingly fragile flower is more evident. These qualities also make Rengetsu's letters more individual, and therefore, much more difficult, if not impossible, to fake.

Endnotes: Chapter 4

¹ For illustrations of kōya-gire, see Tokyo National Museum, Nihon no sho (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1978) pl. 76-84.

² For more information about Son'en see Masters of Japanese Calligraphy pp. 80-81, 88, 126 and Special Exhibition of Calligraphy by Medieval Japanese Emperors and Abbots of Shoren'in Temple (Nagoya: Tokugawa Art Museum, 1982)

³ For more information about O'ie-ryū, see Hirayama Kangetsu, Shin Nihon shodo shi, (Tokyo: Aritomodo, 1961) pp.256-258.

⁴ One early painting is seen in Patricia Fister, Japanese Women Artists 1600-1900 (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1988) pl.69.

⁵ Although no works are attributed to Rengetsu's thirties, there is no reason to assume that some of the works with the very heavy line could not date to that time. The dating of Rengetsu's works during the years before she added her name to pieces has been slightly arbitrary, and divided into decades that are convenient but might not be totally accurate. However, it is difficult if not impossible to verify these dates since there is little written on the pieces themselves to indicate their age.

⁶ She continued using this signature on letters until her early to mid-sixties. Her earliest letters to Murakami Tadamasu, written in her sixties, have this type of signature.

⁷ Rengetsu's works during her fifties are executed with a relatively fine line but one which has a more scratchy appearance, due to the brush that she used (at that time she used a brush known as Ryūyōhitsu 柳葉筆, or, "willow leaf brush") there are more renmentai strings of the characters and the characters are not as broad. These characteristics indicate that these works are earlier than those of her sixties, because although the line width changed, technically they are similar to her those of her early period.

⁸ Tokuda Koen Ōtagaki Rengetsu pp. 222-223.

⁹ There is a takuhon 拓本, or folio of rubbings of the classic jōdaiyō work, the kōya-gire (the original is attributed to Ki no Tsurayuki) at Myōhōin, a collection which Rengetsu knew well according to her letters to Murakami Tadamasu. This copy contains an afterword by Kato Chikage 加藤千蔭 (1735-1808), a friend of Ozawa Roan and famous calligrapher of this time. Rengetsu knew many prominent priests, and had other connections that might have made jodaiyo works available to her.

¹⁰ Tamechika discovered a letter which is still attributed to Fujiwara no Kōzei on the back side of a scroll in Eikyūji, a temple in Yamato province. The letter was given to him in 1851. He gave part of the letter to Wada Chiman,

Gesshin's son, before fleeing Kyoto. After Tamechika's death it was given to his sister. For more information about this letter, see Reizei Tametaka, pp. 113, 76-7. Tamechika also studied works traditionally attributed to Kodai no Gimi 小大君 (976-1017), particularly Okura-gire. Some sources say that Rengetsu may have studied this work with him.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 113.

¹² Rengetsu used relatively few hiragana that are not in current use. Interestingly, she used more old fashioned kana in her shikishi and kaishi, perhaps because these formats have a strong association with classical texts. For an illustration of Rengetsu's hiragana use, see Maeda, Bunjin shofu vol.11 p. 152-3.

¹³The earliest known source for the dating of this type of work is Rengetsu-ni zenshū. Murakami Sodō knew Rengetsu and he owned some of the early pieces illustrated in Rengetsu-ni zenshū so perhaps it can be assumed that the dating of these pieces is accurate. See the illustrations in the second section of Rengetsu-ni zenshū. For other examples of paintings of this period, see John Stevens, Arts of Asia, "Lotus Moon: The Art of the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu" Figure 7 and Sumi page 32.

¹⁴There are a few examples where the poem itself had too few syllables, but in general, the lines of the poem and the calligraphy follow the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern during this period.

¹⁵Although it is difficult to determine exactly when Rengetsu began making this type of work, the earliest works she sent to Murakami Tadamasu appear to be early examples of this style, and her relationship with him began in her early sixties. Other examples of this type of work are seen in the Kyoto Prefectural Archives catalogue, plates 2, 3,10, and in Bunjin Shofu plate 24. One early example of this type of work that is a gassaku with Tessai, perhaps one of her first with him, can be seen in Tokuda Koen Bi to koge number 57, p. 21. There are a few examples of this type of work that have signatures on the left, after the poem such as is typical of her short works of all other periods.

¹⁶The dating of this piece is due to its similarity to those of her dated works in her seventies.

¹⁷Many examples of Gozan-Rengetsu tanzaku can be seen in Tokuda, Ōtagaki Rengetsu plates 95-101.

¹⁸For more information about Rengetsu's dealings with Kyukyodo, a prominent paper dealer in Kyoto, see Fister, Japanese Women Artists p. 158. For the names of other dealers that she dealt with, see Tokuda, Ōtagaki Rengetsu, p. 197.

¹⁹Other examples of this set can be seen in Tokuda, Bi to kogei number 57, p. 36, and Tokuda, Ōtagaki Rengetsu pl. 250.

²⁰In her forties and fifties Rengetsu sometimes used tanzaku with relatively prominent designs, but in her later years she rarely used paper with bold decoration, and to the knowledge of the author, no reliable works are on paper that dominates the calligraphy.

²¹ For more about Rengetsu's letters, see Tokuda Koen Ōtagaki Rengetsu pp. 203-10 and Koresawa Kyozo et al. Rengetsu, pp. 176-98.

²²Both of these works were sent to Murakami Tadamasa.

²³One letter which contains an exceptional amount of Chinese characters is seen in Murakami, Rengetsu-ni zenshū, p. 143 letter number 25. She sent this letter to Tajima Temmin, and it is the earliest known surviving letter by Rengetsu and may be one of the earliest examples of her calligraphy.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Ōtagaki Rengetsu was a remarkable woman who experienced a great deal of personal pain and she witnessed the political upheaval which began the modern era in Japan. Her determination and promotion of non-violence was a model of strength to the new generations of Japanese women who tried, valiantly if unsuccessfully, to maintain peace between the United States and Japan before World War II.

She was one of the first Japanese women to be a successful career artist. The works she created are a reflection of her personality, delicate without being weak. The poetry she wrote shows her appreciation and respect for nature, her faith and her sense of irony. Her poetry was greatly appreciated during her time. She was included as a poetess in lists of notable Kyoto people as early as 1840 and scholars wrote poetry to praise her skill and generosity.

Rengetsu's paintings and pottery have an immediacy; calm and comfortable, not aiming to be impressive or to stand out boldly. Hand-formed pottery, with the imprints of her fingerprints still visible, evoke images of her sitting in her small hut or tea room, kneading clay, and trying to shut out the secular world. The colors are subdued. The forms are often irregular and unsophisticated. They are also unique.

Her calligraphy is considered a school in itself, called Rengetsu-ryū. Works of this school are easily discerned, even for the novice or from a distance. Rengetsu-ryū, ironically, is made up of Rengetsu, her pottery follower Kuroda Koryo and her imitators, rather than of artists who studied with her. The number of forgeries of her works is a tribute to her artistry, particularly since many were made within her lifetime.

✓ i.e.,
commercial
success

Future study should clarify the influences on Rengetsu's calligraphy, including the possible effects Tamechika had on Rengetsu. Scholars must be careful not to accept all artworks published as those by Rengetsu herself. Hopefully this study of her calligraphy will lead to the definition of a clear progression of her pottery and a more complete description of unreliable works will help the connoisseur and the collector of her works. In addition, future studies should see if there is any concrete evidence of correspondence between Rengetsu and Saigo Takamori, or any other leaders of the loyalist movement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References to Rengetsu in Western Languages

- Addiss, Stephen and Li, Chu-ting, eds. Catalogue of the Oriental Collection. Lawrence, Kansas: Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, 1980, p. 47.
- Brasch, Heinz. Japanische Tuschnalerei: Nanga und Haiga. Zurich: Zurich Kunstgewesse Museum, 1962, pp. 18-19.
- Brinkley, Frank. Japan, Its History, Arts and Literature, volume VIII. Boston: J.B. Millet & Company, 1902, pp. 230-231.
- Cort, Louise. Shigaraki, Potter's Valley, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1979, pp.244-245.
- Fister, Patricia. Japanese Women Artists. Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1988, pp. 144-159.
- _____ "Ōtagaki Rengetsu." Calligraphy Idea Exchange, vol. 4, no. 4 (Summer 1987): 15-21.
- Hisamatsu, Senichi. Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976, pp. 223-4.
- Jenyns, Soame. Japanese Pottery. London: Faber and Faber, 1971, pp. 249.
- Kawai, Michi and Kubushiro, Ochimi. Japanese Women Speak. Boston: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1934, pp. 160-164.
- Miyamori, Asatarō. Masterpieces of Japanese Poetry, Ancient and Modern. Tokyo: Taiseido, 1936, pp. 587-9.
- Morse, Edward S. Boston Museum of Fine Arts: Morse Collection of Japanese Pottery. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1901, p. 281.
- Roberts, Lawrence P. A Dictionary of Japanese Artists. New York: Weatherhill, p. 129.
- Rosenfield, John M. The Courtly Tradition in Japanese Art and Literature. Cambridge: Massachusetts: Fogg Art Museum, 1973, pp. 125, 307.

Stevens, John. "Fifty-Two Poem Cards by Otagaki Rengetsu." Tohoku Fukushi University Bulletin, January, 1987, pp. 147-172.

_____. "Lotus Moon; The Art of the the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu." Arts of Asia.

Takeuchi, Melinda. Poem Paintings: A Catalogue of an Exhibition. London. Barling of Mount Street, Ltd. 1977. pp. 22-23.

Selected

Books and Articles about Rengetsu in Japanese

Iwahashi, Kunie. "Ōtagaki Rengetsu" In Zusetsu jinbutsu Nihon no josei shi, edited by Soga Tetsufu. Vol. 7, Edoki josei no bi to gei, pp.109-124. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1980.

Koresawa, Kyoza; Tanaka, Junji; Tokuda, Koen; Mitsuoka, Tadanari and Murai, Yasuhiko. Rengetsu. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1971.

Matsumoto, Hideki. Ōtagaki Rengetsu; Bakumatsu joryu kajin no shoga to togei, Kyoto: Kyoto Prefectural Archives, 1984.

Maeda, Toshiko. Bunjin shofu. Vol. 11. Rengetsu. Kyoto: Tankosha.

_____. "Rengetsu-ni." In Nyonin no sho. pp.190-196.

Maeda, Toshiko; Sasaki, Yukitsuna ; Tokuda, Koen; Kodakane, Taro; Ayamura, Tanen, Ogawa, Koraku. "Rengetsu-ni," Sumi, vol. 44 (September 1983). Tokyo: Geijutsu shinbunsha.

Sugimoto, Hidetaro. Ōtagaki Rengetsu. Kyoto; Tankosha, 1976.⁹

Taiyo, special edition no. 5, "Meiji isshin hyakunin" (Winter, 1973) p. 59-60.

Tokuda, Koen. "Rengetsu-ni sakuhiin," Bi to kogei no. 57 (Kyoto: Kyoto Shoin, 1961) pp. 20-48.

_____. "Tokushu Rengetsu," Bi to kogei no. 160 (Kyoto: Kyoto Shoin, 1970).

_____. Rengetsu-ni no shin kenkyu. Kyoto: Sanmitsudo Shoten, 1958.

_____. Ōtagaki Rengetsu. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982.

Tsuchida, Mamoru. "Rengetsu-ni shōsoku no shinshiryō", no. 1. Ehime University Bulletin. December, 1961.

- _____. "Rengetsu-ni shōsoku no shinshiryō", no. 2. Ehime University Bulletin. February, 1962.
- Tsukuda Ikki. Sencha no tabi. Osaka: Osaka Shoseki, 1985. pp. 240-263.
- Other sources used (in addition to those above, which often had useful information in the sections which did not specifically discuss Rengetsu)
- Graham, Patricia. Yamamoto Baiitsu: His Life, Literati Pursuits and Related Paintings. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1983.
- Hauge, Victor and Takako. Folk Traditions of Japan. New York: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1978.
- Hillier, Jack Ronald. Japanese Art in the Shijō School: The Uninhibited Brush. London: M. Moss Ltd., 1974.
- Huber, Thomas M. "Men of High Purpose and the Politics of Direct Action, 1863-1864" Conflict in Modern Japanese History; The Neglected Tradition ed. Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Kido, Takayoshi. The Diary of Kido Takayoshi, trans. Sidney Devere Brown and Akiko Hirota. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983.
- Odakane, Tarō. Tessai, Master of the Literati Style, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1965.
- Sasaki, Jōhei. Maruyama and Shijō School Works from the Collection of the Itsuō Museum. Kyoto: Kyoto Shokan, 1984.
- Shimizu, Yoshiaki and Rosenfield, John. Masters of Japanese Calligraphy 8th-19th Century. New York: Asia Society/ Japan House Galleries, 1984.
- Tokugawa Art Museum. Special Exhibition of Calligraphy by Medieval Japanese Emperors and Abbots of Shoren'in Temple. Nagoya: Tokugawa Art Museum, 1982.
- Tokyo National Museum. Nihon no sho, Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1978.
- _____. Reizei Tametaka, Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1979.

Appendix 1
TIMETABLE

寛政三年

1791 Rengetsu born; adopted by Ōtagaki Banzaemon.

(1) Order from shogunate: if foreign ship drifted ashore, the circumstances would be investigated, ship and crew detained and sent to Nagasaki.

1792 Banzaemon becomes fudai at Chion'in. Ueda Akinari moves to Chion'in area.

(2)

1795 Art/Maruyama Okyo dies.

(5)

1797 Older brother comes of age, named Katahisa.

(7) American ship allowed to trade.

1798 Rengetsu starts service in Kameoka Castle. Tōdō Shinshichirō Yoshikiyo,

(8) who may have been Rengetsu's real father, dies. Katahisa begins working at Chion'in.

享和元

1800 Wada Gesshin born.

(10)

1801 Literature/ Ozawa Roan dies. Motoori Norinaga dies.

(11)

1803 Katahisa dies. Nawa (adoptive mother) dies.

(13) American ship refused trade.

文化元

1804 Russian envoy Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov came to Japan. His crew would

(14) abuse Japanese residents in Northern territories in 1807, 1808.

1807 Rengetsu returns from Kameoka, marries Oka Tenzo, who changes his name to

(17) Mochihisa.

1808 First son born, 10th month, 22nd day, dies twenty days later.

(18) Literature/ Katō Chikage dies.

Phaeton incident occurred when a British frigate entered Nagasaki harbor by flying a Dutch flag (to attack the Dutch colony there since the British were at war with Holland's ally France at the time).

1809 Ueda Akinari dies.

(19)

1810 First daughter born (Some sources say she was born in 1812, and died

(20) soon after birth).

1811 Art/ Matsumura Goshun dies. Rai San'yō moves to Kyoto.

(21)

1812 Rengetsu's daughter dies, 12th month.
(22)

1815 Second daughter born, dies within days. Rengetsu and husband separate.
(25) Two months later, husband dies in his brother, Temmin's, house. Saiji born, lives with Temmin.

文政二

1819 Rengetsu remarries Ishikawa Jujiro, spring. He is adopted into the Otagaki
(29) family and given the name Hisatoshi. He begins working at the Chion'in in the 9th month. Daughter born, end of the year.

1820 Father turns the family name over to Hisatoshi, retires (66).
(30) Art/ Uragami Gyokudo dies.

1823 Hisatoshi dies. Rengetsu enters Buddhist orders with Mitsuhsa, takes
(33) the Buddhist name Rengetsu. They live, together with Hisatoshi's daughter, in a mountainous section of Chion'in, the Makuzuan.

1824 Incident of violence with a British whaling ship in Satsuma.

1825 Rengetsu and Hisatoshi's daughter dies (age 7)
(35) Uchiharai rei issued, stating that all foreign ships were to be immediately repelled upon entering Japanese waters.

1826 Murakami Tadamasa born.
(36)

1828 Art/Sakai Hoitsu dies.
(38)

Okazaki years. 1832-1856

天保三

1832 Mitsuhsa dies. Rengetsu moves from Makuzuan to Okazaki.
(42) Art/Rai San'yo dies. Yokoi Kinkoku dies.

1833 Tempo famine starts, resulting in high prices and peasants flocked to
(43) the cities. Many died of starvation and disease.
Art/Aoki Mokubei dies.

1835 Art/Tanomura Chikuden dies.
(45)

1836 Tomioka Tessai born.
(46)

1837 Oshio Heihachiro, a Confucianist and former police official, became
(47) upset by the sight of so many starving people in Osaka and instigated an

uprising. Rengetsu's poem disparaging it dates from this period?

Morrison incident, when an American ship came to Japan to return shipwrecked Japanese and were turned back, caused a great deal of furor, particularly amongst scholars of Western studies like the artist Watanabe Kazan.

1838 Rengetsu started studying with Kagawa Kageki and stays with Tomita family (48) (probably Tomita Yasukuni of Kageki's school?) according to Heian jimbutsushi.

Watanabe Kazan's cohort, Takano Choei wrote Bojutsu yume monogatari, a book which criticized the shogunate.

1839 Rengetsu's poems appear in Kagawa Kageki's school book 東塙亭月並兼題和歌.

(49) Watanabe Kazan arrested in raid on "Barbarian sympathizers" (Bansha no goku)

1840 Tomita Yasukuni dies. Tani Bunchō dies.

(50) Opium wars between Britian and China begin.

1841 Wada Gesshin's wife and his teacher Mori Tetsuzan both die.

(51) He enters Buddhist orders with his two sons.

1842 China's defeat in the Opium War. Japan revoked 1825 order forbidding the

(52) entrance of any Western ships.

1843 Art/Matsumura Keibun dies. Literature/Kagawa Kageki dies.

(53) Takabatake Shikibu starts studying with Chigusa Arikoto. Rengetsu may have as well.

弘化元

1844 British ship came to Nagasaki.

(54)

1845 According to Murakami Sodō, Rengetsu wrote the America poem this year

(55) when an American ship came to Uraga. Tamechika (22 years old) began copying Chion'in's Hōnen Shōnin scroll.

1846 Tachibana Akemi turns to life of seclusion. Yanagawa Seigan, Kōran move to

(56) Kyoto.

Emperor Komei sends a letter to shogunate about trade. This is the first expression of the court's opinion on political matters.

1847 Rengetsu lives in Kami-Okazaki.

(57) Art/ Nagasawa Rosetsu dies.

嘉永二

1849 Rengetsu begins study with Mutobe Yoshika. Roan's book Rokujō eisō

(59) published.

1850 Nukina Kaioku asked Rengetsu to instruct him in waka poetry? Tamechika
(60) adopted by the Okada family (officials at the imperial palace). Tessai
starts living with Rengetsu? Rengetsu donates 30 ryō to famine victims.

1851 Rengetsu moves to Hokōji to read Ozawa Roan's original manuscript of
(61) Rokujō eisō (kept at Myōhōin, allowed to read it by Rakei Jihon)
Friendship with Murakami from this period?
Perry authorized by Millard Filmore to lead an expedition to open
diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan

1852 Rengetsu starts writing to Murakami Tadamasa.
(62)

1853 Moved from Hokoji to Okazaki Shiba-no-zu (now, Minami Goshō-cho, near
(63) Heian shrine). Art/ Nakabayashi Chikutō dies.
Commodore Matthew Perry arrives.

安政元

1854 Literature/Chigusa Arikoto dies.

(64) Perry returns to Japan from Hong Kong and Macao and demands an official
answer. March 31, Kanagawa treaty concluded in the name of the shogun
not the emperor. Later in the same year, Britain, Russia, and Holland
followed suit. Opened the ports of Shimoda, and Hakodate in Hokkaido
in addition to Nagasaki to foreign trade.

1855 Tamechika, Yokoyama Seiki, Kishi Chikudō and Nakajima Raishō paint
(65) fusuma for Imperial palace. Seigan (70) writes poems praising Rengetsu.

Moving years (ca. 1856-1865)

1856 Rengetsu moves to Shinshōji, the temple which is the site of Ozawa Roan's
(66) grave. Tessai also lives there, helping Rengetsu with her pottery.
Tessai attends lectures by loyalist Umeda Umpin.
Art/ Yamamoto Baiitsu, dies. Literature/Nakajima Soin dies.
Yoshida Shoin, radical Chōshū loyalist, opens a school known as Shokamura.
Townsend Harris arrives in Japan.

1857 Harris-Shimoda treaty
(67)

1858 Art/Yanagawa Seigan dies. Suzuki Kiitsu dies.
(68) Ansei treaties, signed by the shogunate without the approval of emperor,
strong stand for free foreign trade. Many loyalists died in the Ansei
Purge (Ansei no taigoku), including Umeda Umpin

1859 Rai Mikisaburō dies, beheaded due to activist activities.
(69)

万延元

1860 Rengetsu helps poor people of Shogoin mura. Rengetsu pottery fakes begin (70) to appear about this time.

Assasination of II Naosuke. (Sakuradamon-gai no hen)

文久元

1861 Tachibana Akemi and Nomura Botoni visit Rengetsu.

(71) Tessai went to Nagasaki. Art/ Ema Saiko dies.

1862 Tessai establishes his own school in Rengetsu's Shogoin-mura house.

(72) Rengetstu moves from Shinshoji. Tamachika flees Kyoto.

Marriage of Princess Kazu to Shogun Iemochi.

1863 Rengetsu moves to Nishigamo, lives at the Yoshida residence. Nukina

(73) Kaioku dies. Mutobei Yoshika dies.

As a sign to the shogunate, statues of Ashikaga shoguns taken from Toji-in and their head placed on a stand by the Kamo river. Nine people arrested. More assasinations in Kyoto. The emperor became worried, and had Satsuma and Aizu keep Choshu forces and loyalist aristocrats from entering the palace (Coup d'etat of Sept. 1863) the loyalists met at Myohoin before fleeing to Choshu (Shichikyō-ochi). Choshu forces attack Western ships in the Shimonoseki strait.

元治元

1864 Rengetsu Visits Jinkōin. Tamechika dies, assasinated by rōnin in Nara.

(74) Rengetsu sick this summer?

Loyalists gamble and lose when they try to take over in Kyoto.

(Kimono no Hen) Assasinations decrease after this incident.

Jinkoin years (865-1875)

慶応元

1865 Rengetsu probably moves to Jinkoin this year. She begins putting her age on many of her works.

(75) Satsuma buys western arms from Britian.

1866 Rengetsu gives potter Kuroda Kōryō "second Rengetsu" title.

(76) Chōshū-Satsuma alliance forms, provides Chōshū with arms

Chōshū expedition: victory against shogunate.

1867 Tessai marries Nakajima Tatsu. Rengetsu's brother-in-law Temmin dies.

(77) Emperor Komei dies. Armed conflict between shogunate troops and loyalists. Tokugawa Yoshinobu becomes the last shogun.

明治元

1868 Rengetsu-Shikibu ni jo waka-shū published. Tachibana Akemi dies.

(78) Battle of Toba Fushimi. Emperor kidnapped, restored to power (ōsei fukkō) and moves to Tokyo. (name Edo changes to Tokyo).

- 1869 Kido Takayoshi mentions Rengetsu in his diary. Tessai's wife dies.
 (79) **Tokyo-Yokoyama telegraph service.**
- 1870 Gesshin dies. Ama no karumo published, early summer.
 (80) **Common people allowed to take surnames.**
- 1871 Art/ Nakajima Raishō dies.
 (81) **Centralized prefectural system adopted.**
- 1872 Tessai remarries Sasaki Haruko.
 (82) **Declaration of class equality: no more samurai class. New educational system adopted. Railway between Shinbashi and Yokohama.**
- 1874 Tessai paints Rengetsu's portrait.
 (84)
- 1875 End of tenth month, Rengetsu sick and dies in teahouse.
 (85)

Legend: () indicates Rengetsu's age (in Japanese terms).
Bold type indicates historically important events.
 Art/ indicates art historically important dates.
 Literature/ indicates literary event.

Appendix 2: Rengetsu's Autobiography

百性にて今猶 I born with many faults to my nature, and I still
have them;
同性あまた侍 The same faults occur...(throughout the ages of the
of the world)

My father was from Inaba, known as Ōtagaki Mitsuhsa. They lived in Higashiyama of the capital (Kyoto). In the third year of Kansei, I was born, and given the name Nobu. My mother died (when I was young) and I was brought up by my father. I was only in my thirties when I lost my husband and children.

つねならぬ	One person of three
世はうきものと	remains alone
みつぐりの	and ponders
ひとりのこりて	this always changing
ものをこそおもえ	(wretched) floating world

Having been with him for more than forty years, my father died.

たらちねの	Father:
おやのほひしき	as I miss him
あまりには	so much
はかにねをのみ	the only sounds at the grave
なきくらしつつ	are the sobs of my sorrowful days

Although I wanted to live close (to my father's grave), it is at the top of a mountain, and is not a place for a human to live. So, with regret, I had to move to Kagura Okazaki. Since I was poor, and there was nothing I could do, I dabbled with clay, making kibisho (sencha teapots). One at a time, they were very humble and the shapes were unrefined. The poems I carved on them I wrote when I had a moment free. I never had much free time. I was of low birth and didn't have an opportunity to learn from an elder, so the shape of my poetry is an imitation of other peoples, its mere unpolished babble.

てすさびの	Handmade,
はかなきものを	humble things
もちいでて	brought to sell
うるまいのいち	the market opens
たつぞわびしき	how miserable

My life kept going on and on, and as I got older, the world became more agitated, uproarious

夢の世と	Even though I decided it
おもひすてても	was only a dream,
むねに手を	I have a feeling
おきてねしよの	I woke up
心ちこそすれ	to a nightmare

I had too much fear, so I fled to Nishigamo near Kitayama

露のみを	To shelter myself
ただがりそめに	from the dew
おかんとて	for only a short while
草ひきむすぶ	I gathered grass (to make a hut)
山の下かげ	in the shadow at the foot of the mountain

I've lived even longer, and now have am in my eighties

あけたてば	The day begins
はにもてすさび	I'm busy with my crafts
くれゆけば	the day ends
ほとけおろがみ	I pray to Buddha
おもふことなし	and I have nothing to worry about.

Evening descends around me, seeing the sky

ちりばかり	Without a speck
心にかかる	of clouds
くもなし	in my heart
いつの夕や	which evening will be
かぎりなるらん	the last?

Appendix 3

Artists, excluding Tessai and Gesshin, with whom Rengetsu collaborated on works (sources where examples can be seen given in parenthesis)

Hasegawa Shinryū 長谷川玉峰 (1804-56)

One painting: Arashiyama. Rengetsu signed this work but it appears to have been done in her eighties, after Shinryū's death. (Tokuda)

Ueda Kōkei (?-1860) 上田公圭

Portrait of Rengetsu. She added an inscription when she was 81, when he had already died. (Matsumoto)

Reizei Tamechika 冷泉為恭 (1823-64) Also called Tametaka, Tameyasu.

One painting currently known, others mentioned in Rengetsu-ni zenshū, p. 143. (Matsumoto)

Nakajima Raishō 中島来章 (1796-1871)

Several examples of collaborative works known, most popular of which is a depiction of Uji Bridge. (Matsumoto) Photographs of other collaborative works available at Kyoto Prefectural Archives.

Okajima Seiko 岡島清曠 (1827-77) some scholars claim that Rengetsu may have studied with him, or with his teacher, Yokoyama Seiki 横山清暉 (1793-1865).

One work painted in 1872. (Matsumoto)

Mori Kansai 森寛齋 (1814-94)

At least three collaborative works known (when Rengetsu was 76, 79, and 83). Possibly some forgeries.

Kishi Chikudō 岸竹堂 (1826-97)

One tanzaku (unpublished, seen by the author in the Tessaido gallery, Kyoto.)

Baisaō Tōgyū 売茶翁凍牛 (1791-1879) Third generation Baisaō (a famous sencha master). One painting. (Matsumoto)

Takabatake Shikibu 高畑式部 (1785-1881) Poetess.

Several collaborative works during the last ten years of Rengetsu's life.

Pottery collaborative works

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良 (1822-1895) Rengetsu II.

Number of true collaborative works unclear.

Kinkozan IV. Kobayashi Sōbei 錦光山宗兵衛. fl. mid 19th century.

One set of five covered bowls, one small sencha teapot. (Matsumoto)

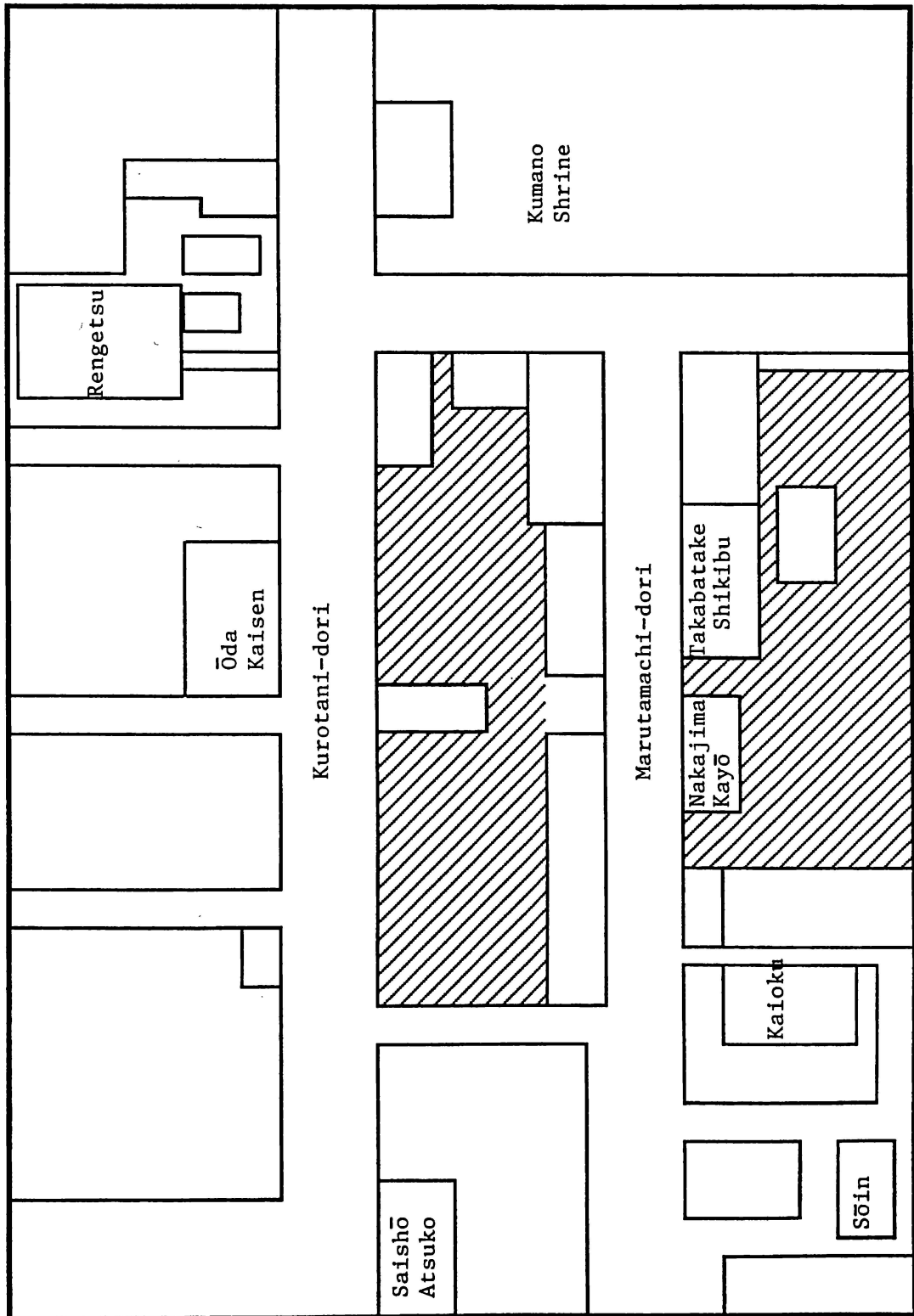
Raku Keinyū 楽慶入 (1817-1902)

One "red raku" tea bowl (Matsumoto) made when Rengetsu was 83.

Kiyomizu Rokubei III 清水六兵衛 (ca. 1822-1883).

One "warrior" teacup with lid made when Rengetsu was 75 (Matsumoto). Probably more collaborative works.

Appendix 4: Tessai's map of Shogōin



Sources: Original map pictured in Maeda, *Bunjin shofu* vol. 11, p. 67
 Printed version of the contents of the map in *Sumi* no. 44, p. 65

Appendix 5



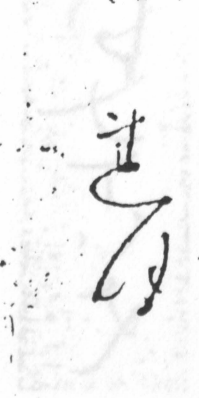
Early signatures: When Rengetsu was in her forties, early fifties, and in letters into her sixties, she used a signature with a clear grass radical, and the moon character is elongated.



In her fifties, the top of the lotus character is more cursively rendered, and the moon character becomes more squat and square. The line is still relatively thick.



In her sixties, Rengetsu began using a much more stylized signature, and the line is substantially thinner since she used a different brush, and gained more precision in her writing. Her signature on her tanzaku and letters at this time are not as elaborate.

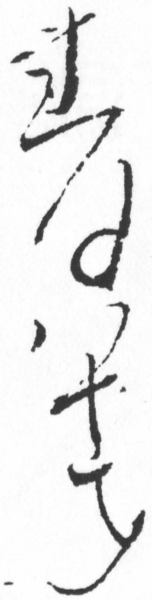


In her late sixties, early seventies she sometimes used a signature which has a shorter moon character.



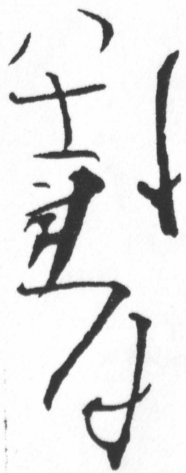
In her seventy-fifth year Rengetsu changed the bottom part of the lotus character from a curvilinear shape to a sharp angle, which she used for most signatures until the end of her life. The core line of this character, which previously stopped before the curve of the last stroke, now stretches through the entire character.





蓮八十

Rengetsu began putting her age before her signature at age eighty-one, the opposite of her previous practice. The forms of her signature, particularly the lotus character are much less defined during the last five years of her life.



蓮八十

心
難
る

心
難
る



以大田徑蓮月光居之真影富岡狹高翁之所寫也予嘗訪老差於西賀茂却
老居眼光炯炯射人而應接恭儉如村婆子可謂女中英傑矣及觀此圖
殊有所感焉敬題一言丁酉七月 谷鐵臣

Figure 1

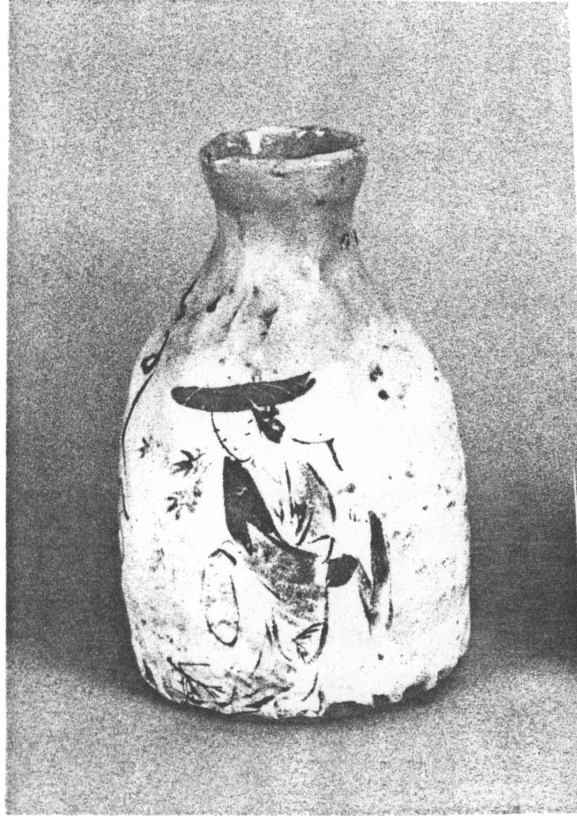


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

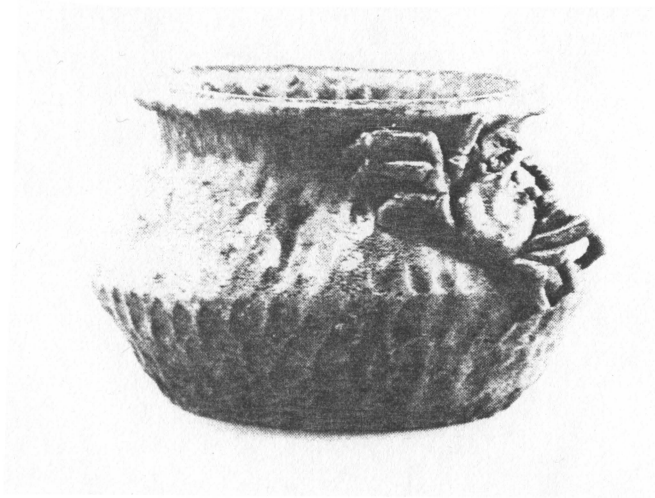


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

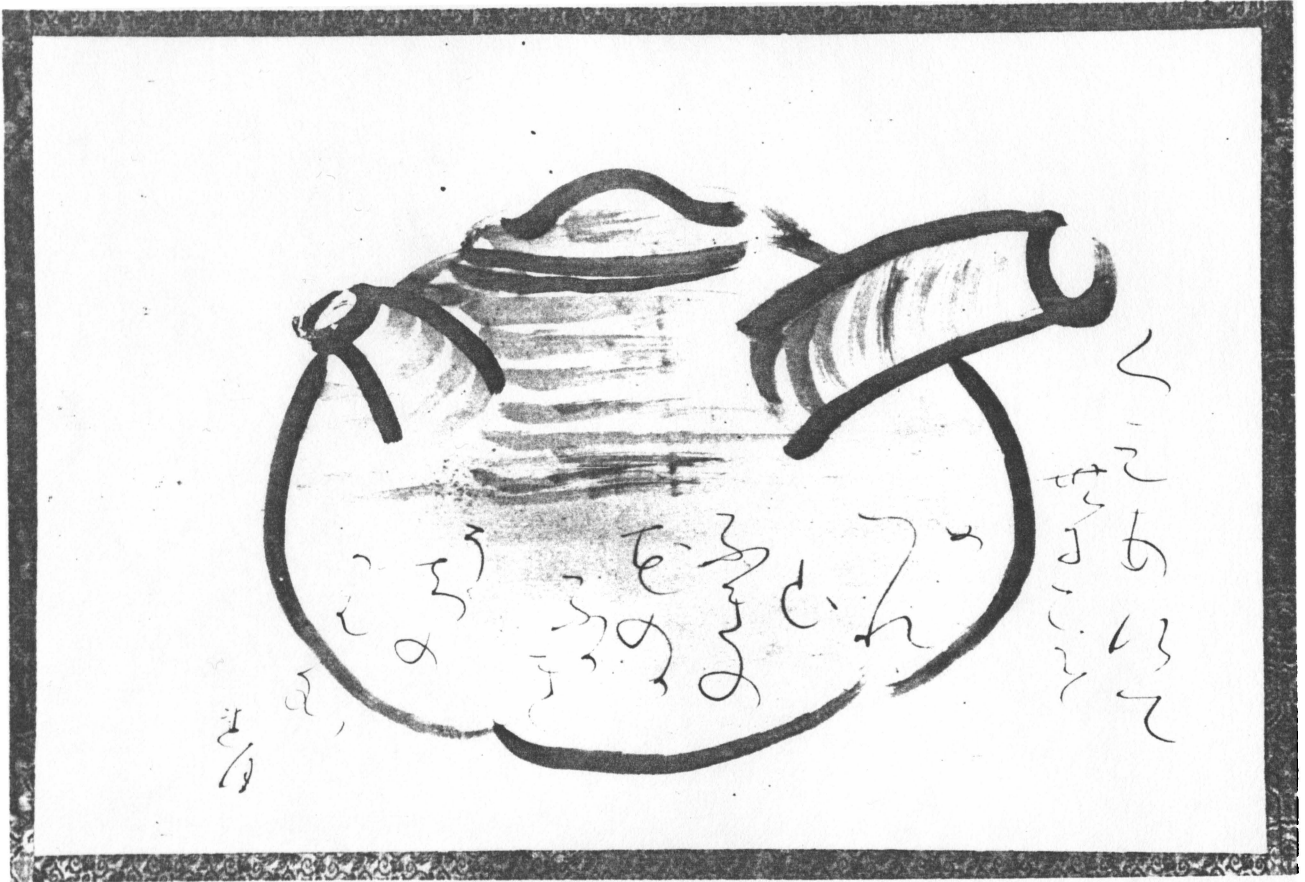


Figure 10

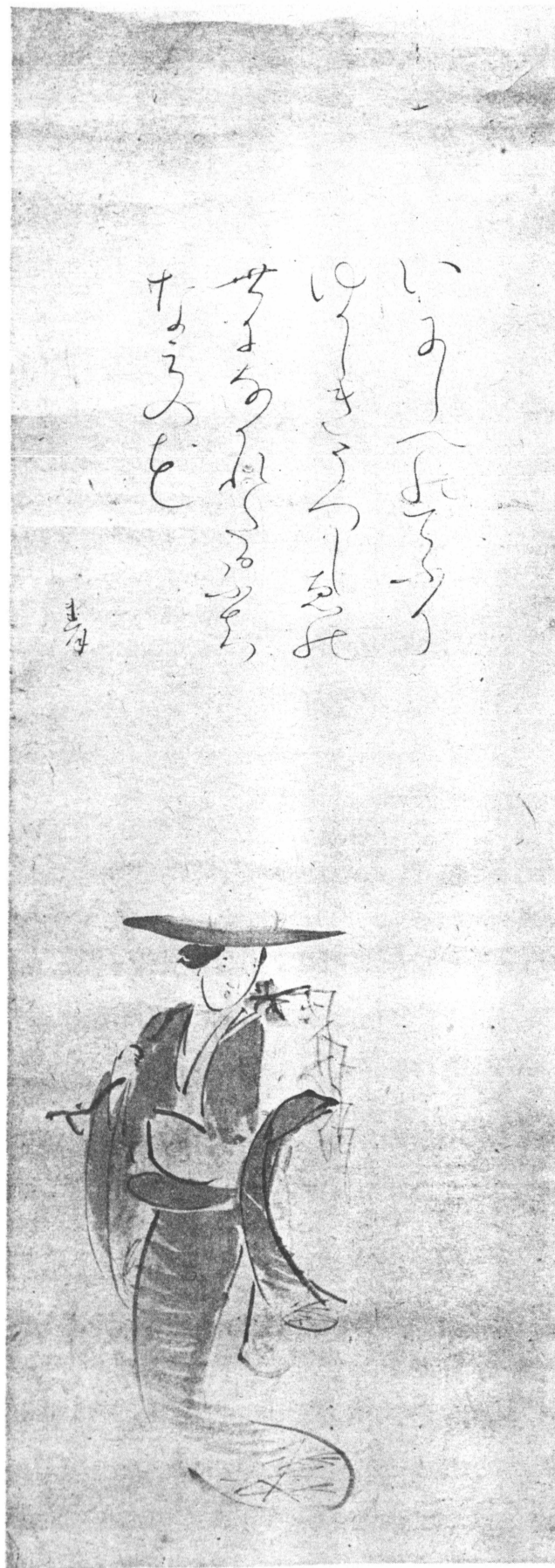


Figure 11

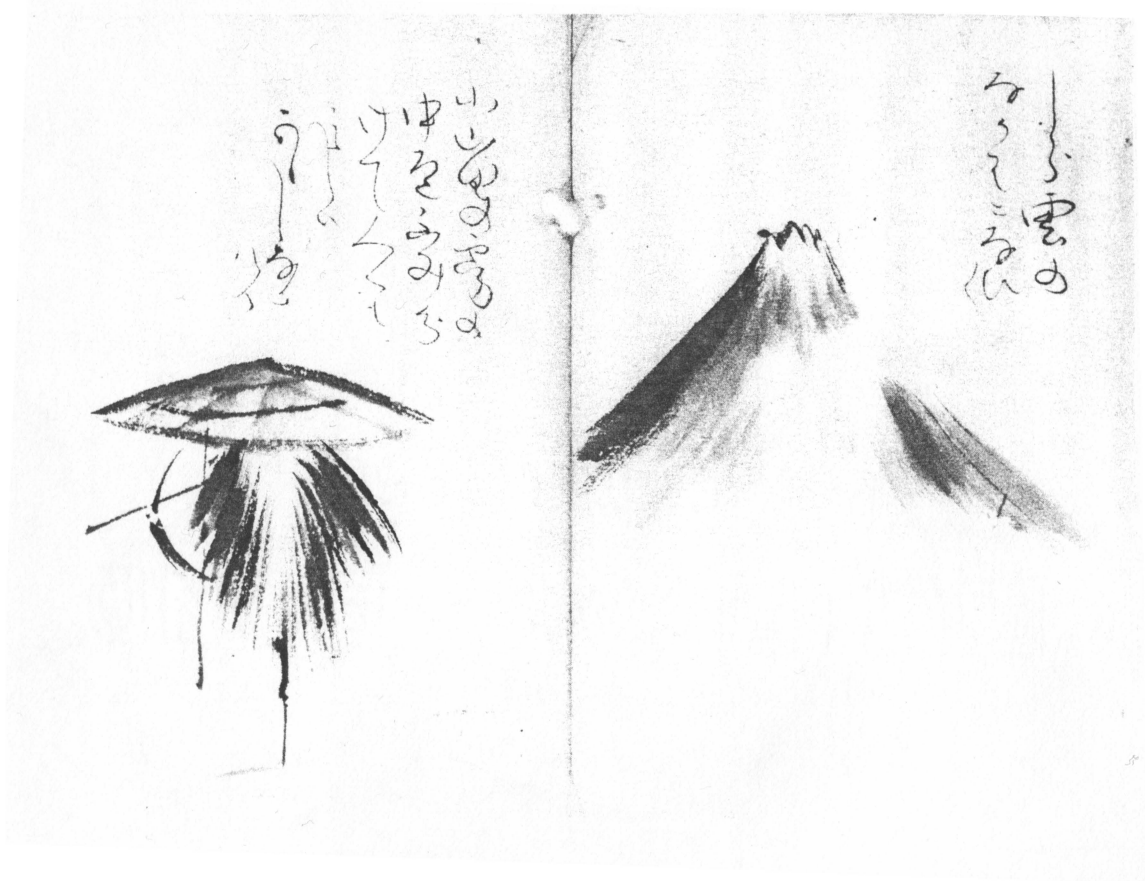


Figure 12

草月 五 何の 草月 五 何の

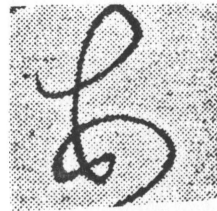


Figure 13

春
月

あつめあふふ
まはるは
あつめあふふ
まはるは

春
月

あ

Figure 14

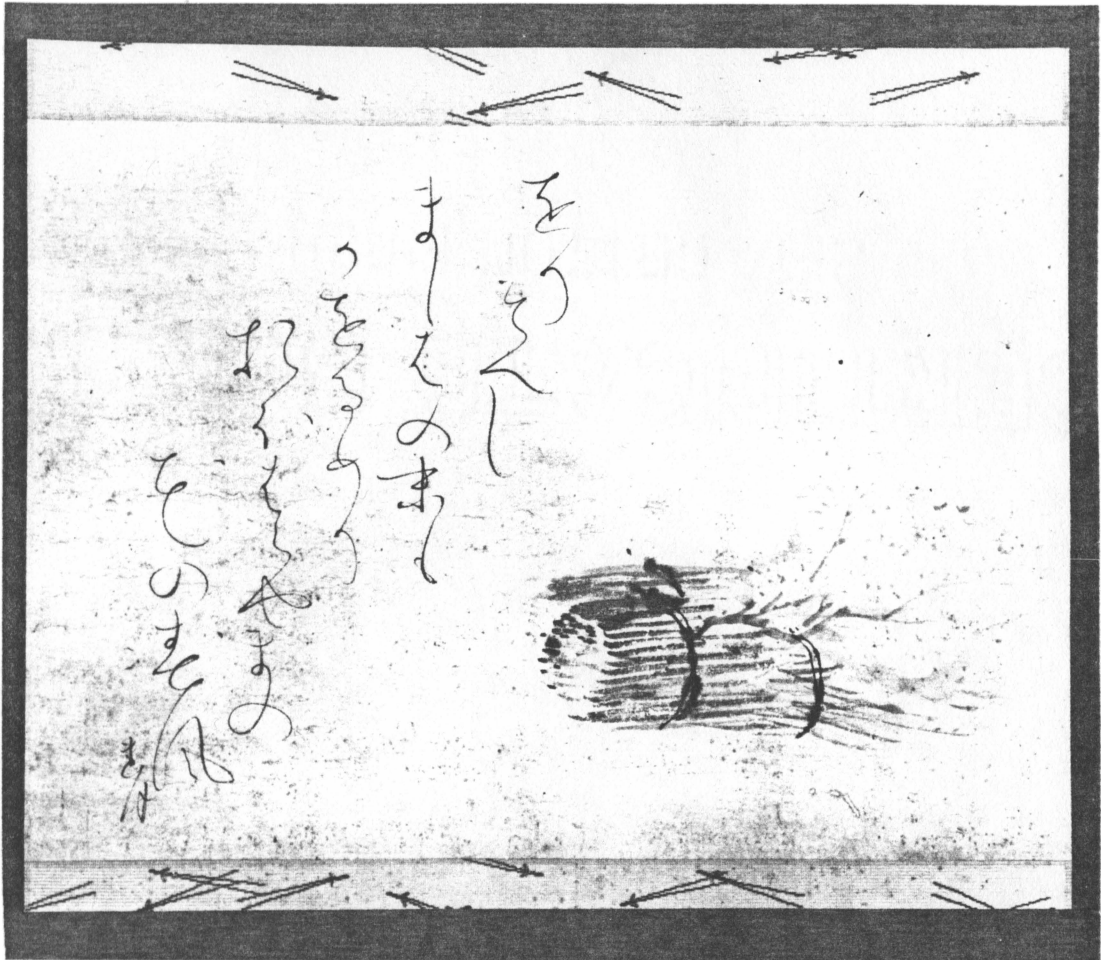


Figure 15

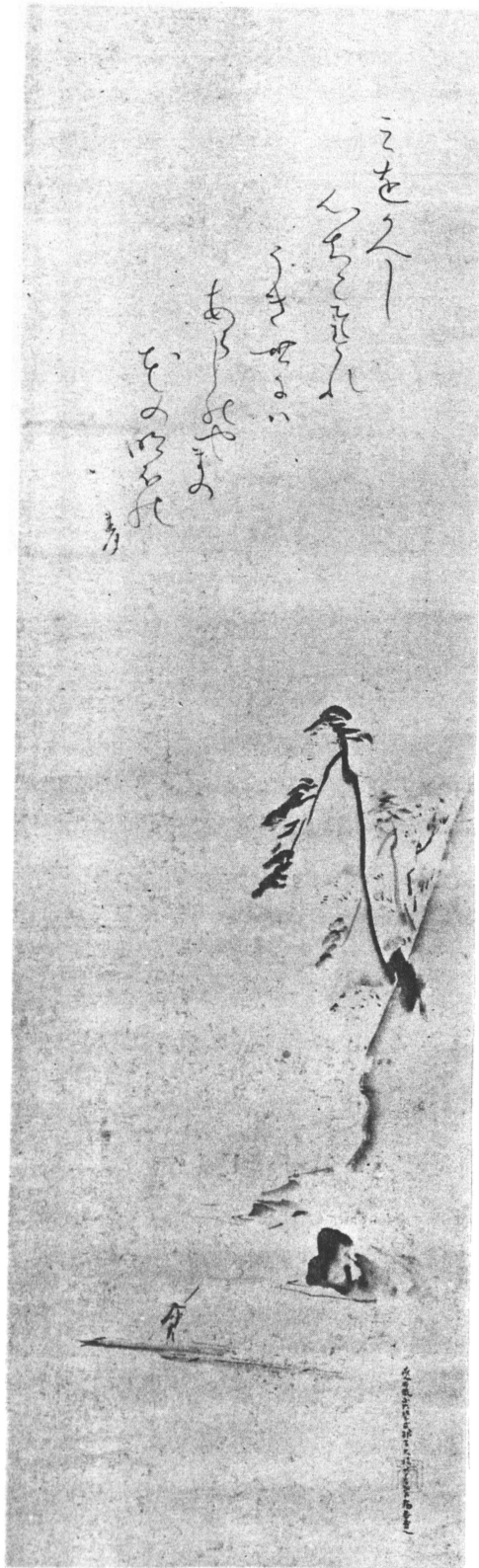


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

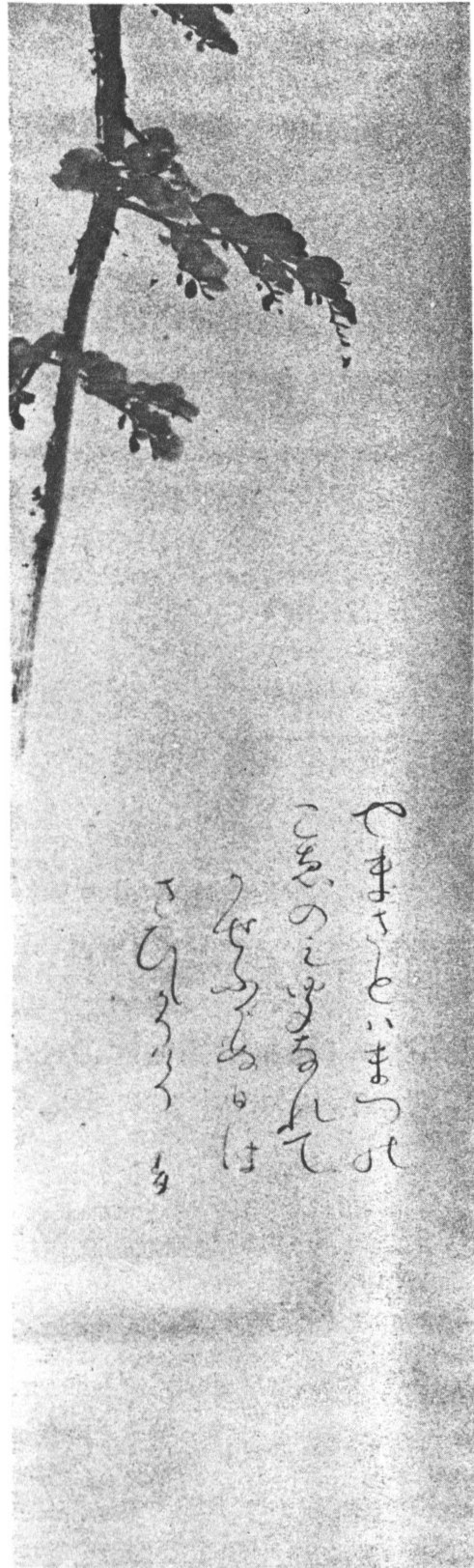


Figure 19

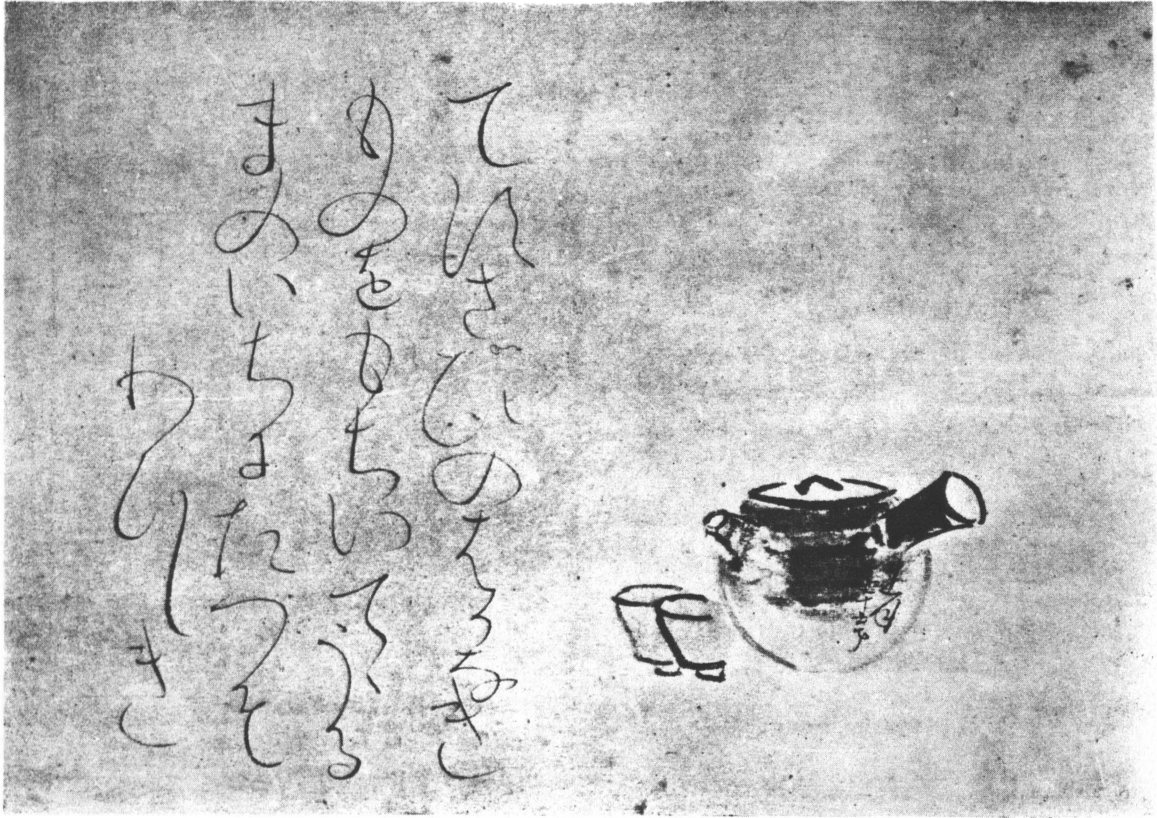


Figure 20

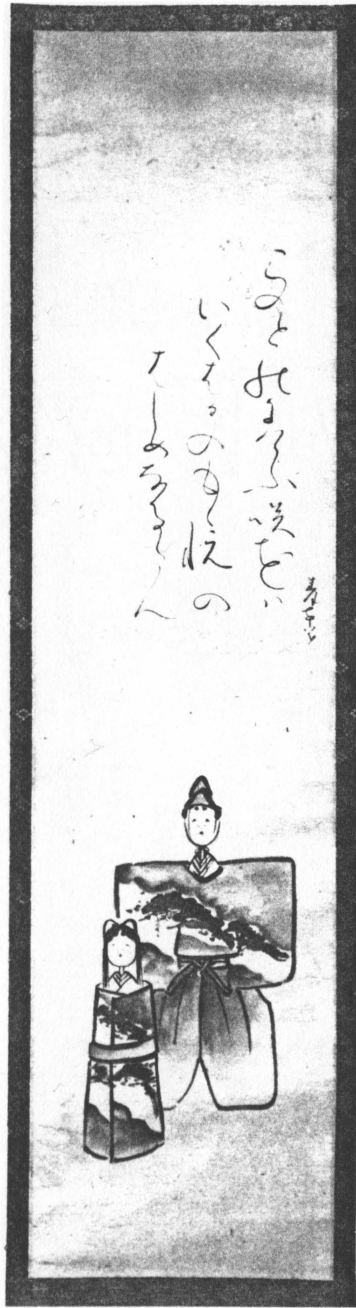


Figure 21

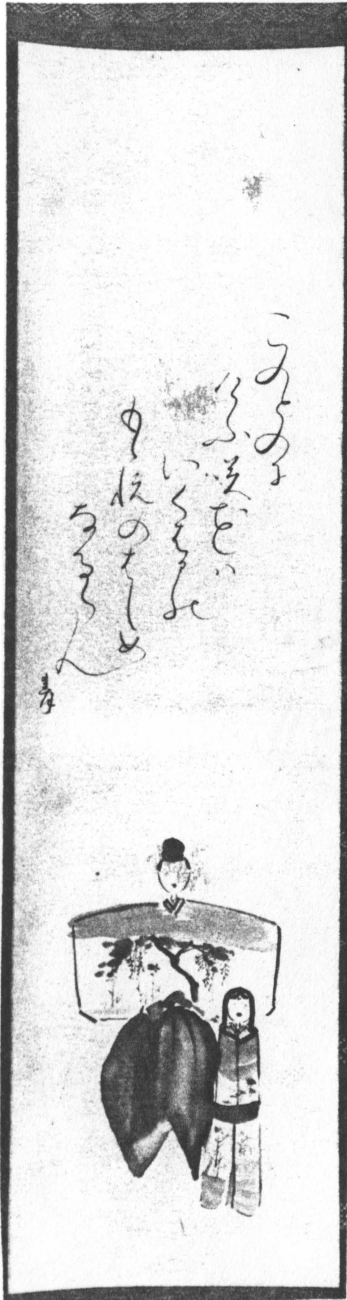


Figure 22

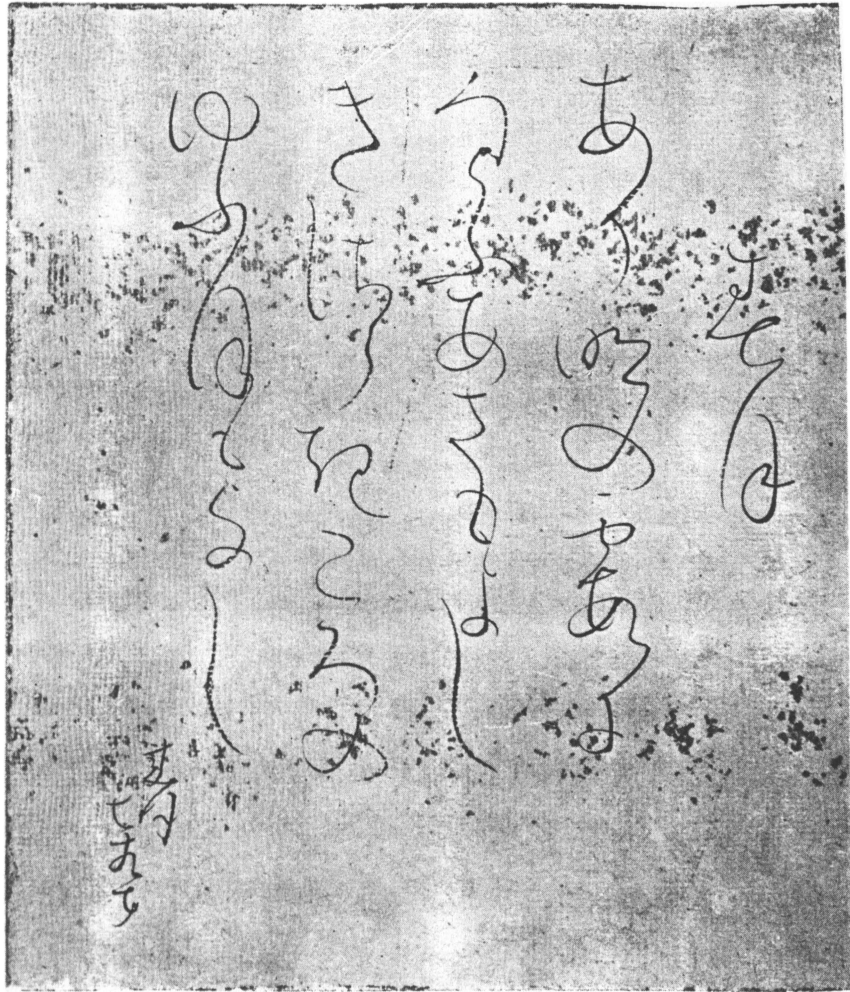


Figure 23

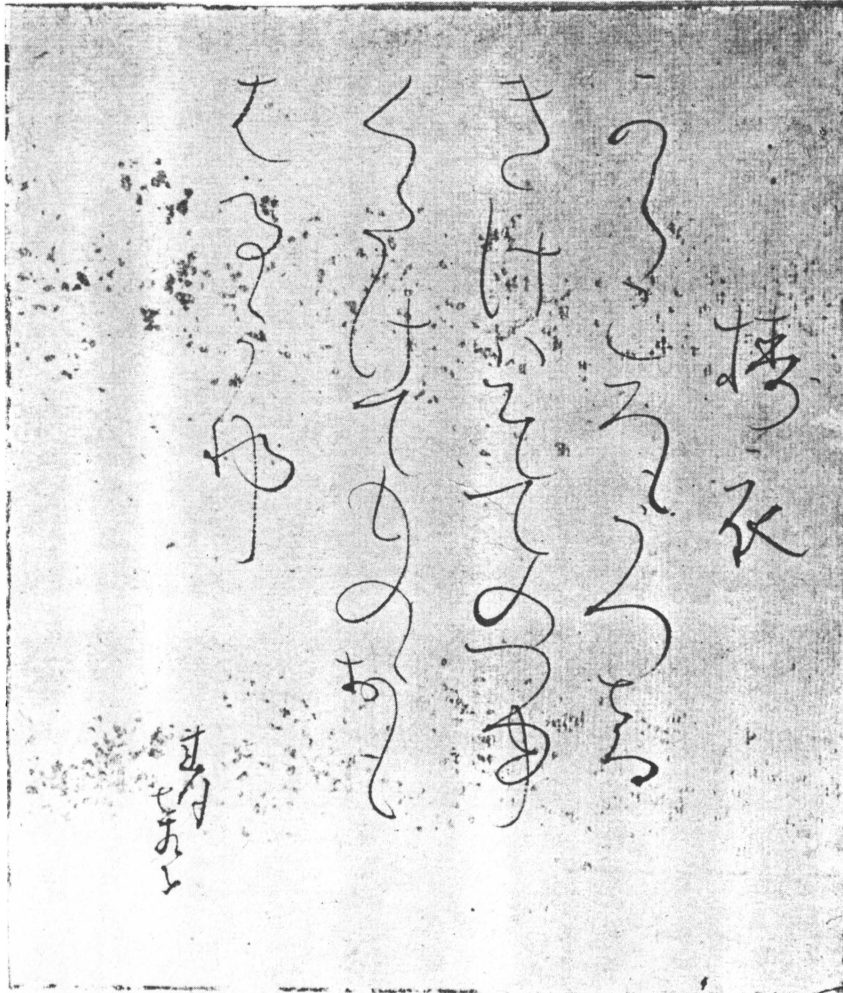


Figure 24

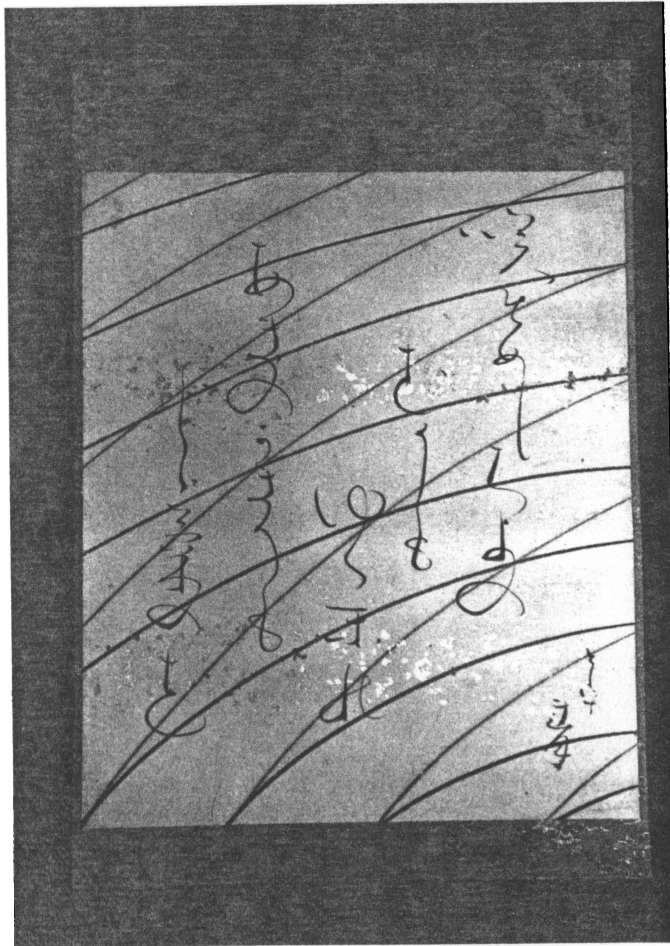


Figure 25

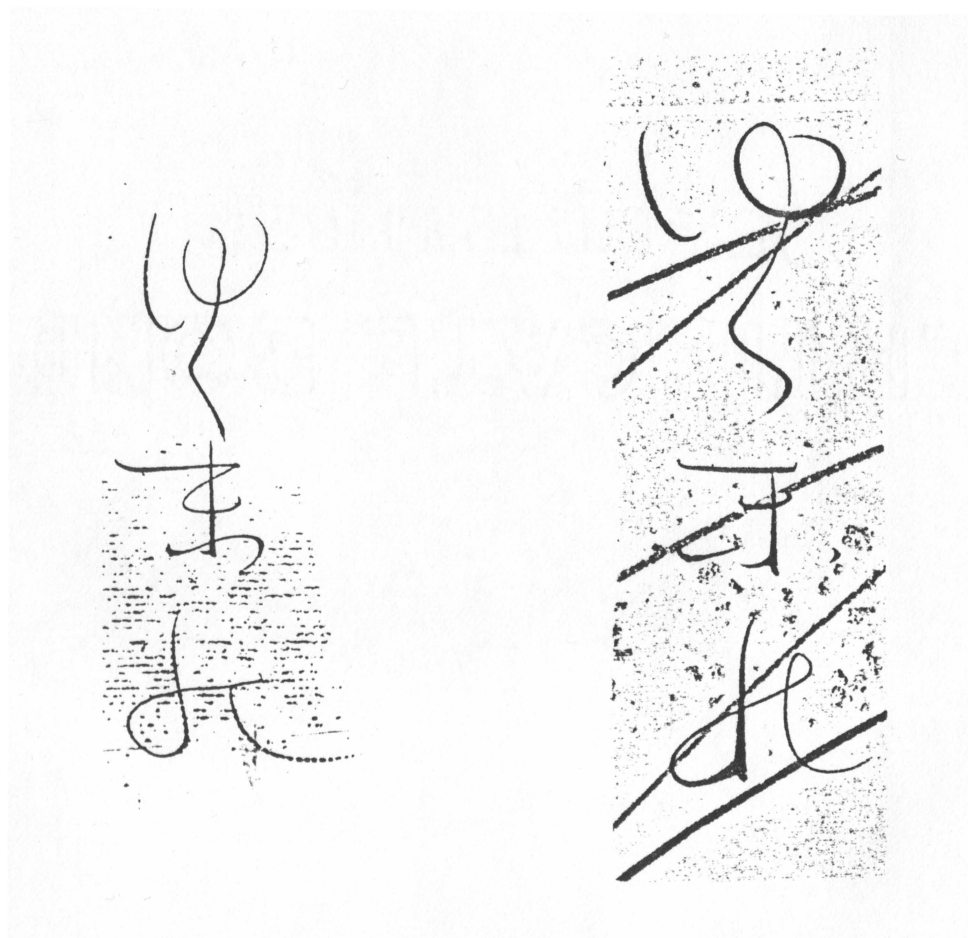


Figure 27

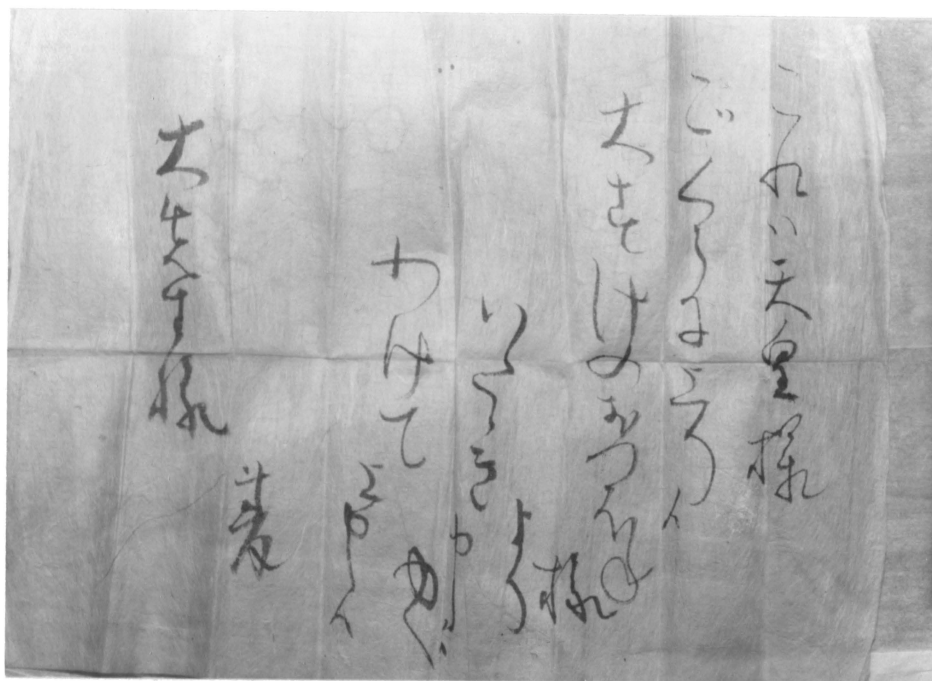


Figure 28

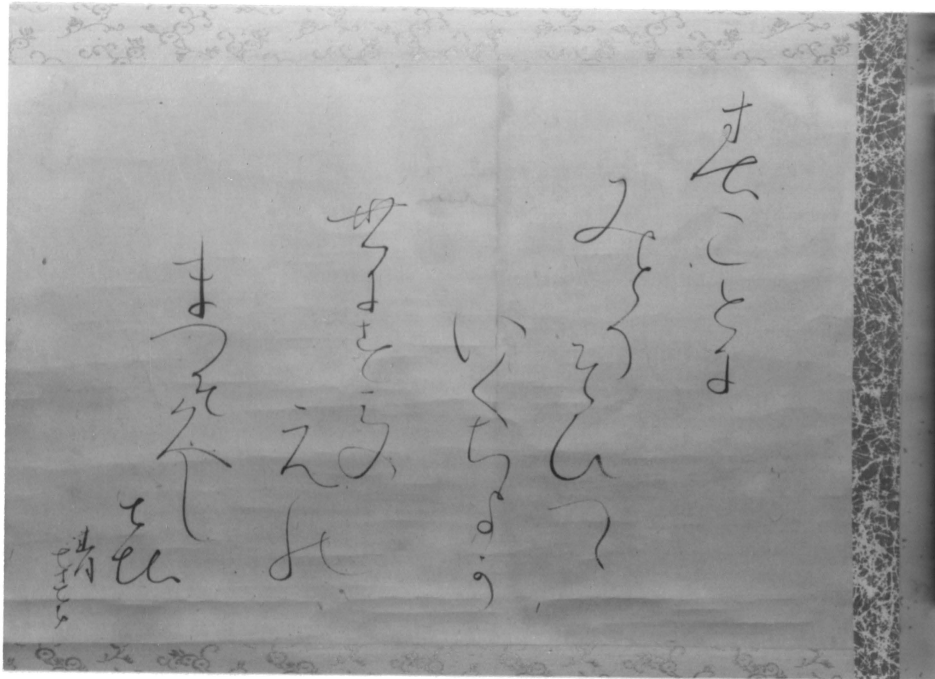


Figure 29

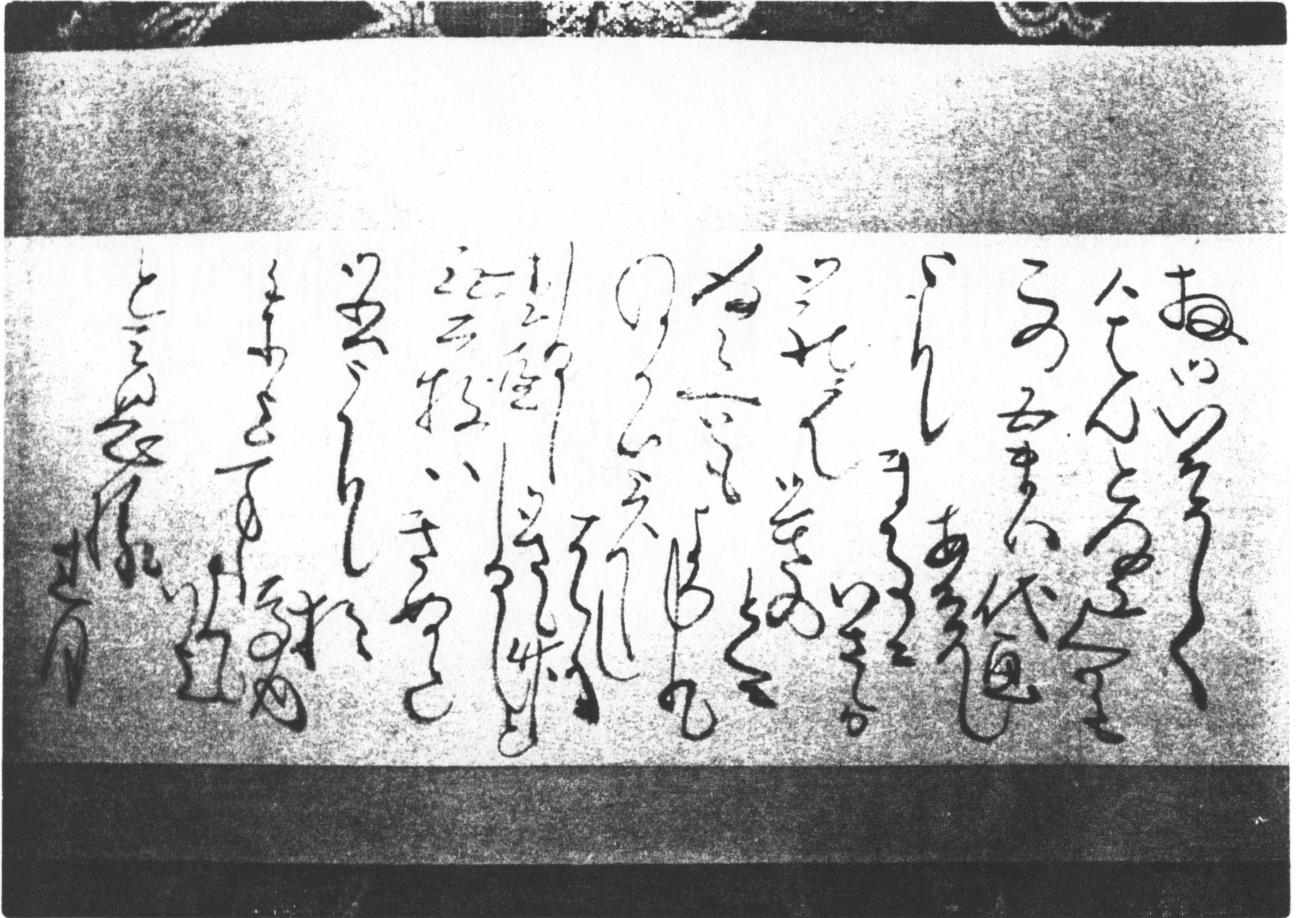


Figure 30