

Spring 2025 Arts of Asia Lecture Series  
Visualizing the Divine  
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## Visualizing the Divine Hands: Sutra Fragments and Imagining Deified Individuals in Japan's Early Modern Period

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Relevant era names:

- Japan: Asuka (552-710); Heian (794-1185); Edo (1603-1868)
- Korea: Goryeo dynasty (936-1392)

People mentioned:

- Prince Shōtoku (historically, Umayado no Toyotomimi; 574-621 or 622)
- Fujiwara no Kamatari (also Nakatomi no Kamatari or "Taishokan"; 614-699)
- Fujiwara no Fuhito (659-720). Fujiwara no Kamatari's younger son.
- Zhang Jizhi (China; 1186-1266). Calligrapher from Southern Song, China, whose works were especially popular among Japanese monks who traveled to China.

Key terms:

- **Hōryūji**: A Buddhist monastic complex in present-day Nara prefecture. Originally built by Prince Shōtoku (historically, Umayado no Toyotomimi). The East Precinct (Tōin) of this monastery stands on the former site of the prince's residence and served as the center for Prince Shōtoku devotion since the eighth century.
- **kohitsugire**: "Cut antique calligraphy." Collectable calligraphy fragments often appreciated mounted as hanging scrolls or folding screens and pasted in an album.
- **shakyōgire**: "Cut sutras." Fragments of calligraphy cut from scrolls or accordion-style booklets of hand-copied Buddhist scriptures.
- **tekagami**: "Mirror of handwriting." An accordion-style album with fragments of handwritten texts taken from variety of sources, including poetry anthologies, narrative handscrolls and codices, letters, diaries, and Buddhist scriptures.
- **Togakushi-gire**: Fragments of twelfth-century sutra scrolls originally owned by a former Buddhist temple on Mt. Togakushi in present-day Nagano prefecture. Calligraphy attributed to Prince Shōtoku.
- **Tōnomine-gire**: Fragments of Goryeo-dynasty hand-copied sutra originally belonged to a temple on Mt. Tōnomine, Nara, dedicated to Fujiwara no Kamatari. Calligraphy attributed to Kamatari.
- **Uzumasa-gire**: Fragments of twelfth-century sutra scrolls believed to have originally been owned by a Buddhist temple, Uzumasadera in Kyoto (also known as Kōryūji), which was a hub for Prince Shōtoku devotion. Calligraphy attributed to Prince Shōtoku.

Primary sources:

- ***Ansai zuihitsu* (Ansai's Miscellany)**: A 30-volume miscellany compiled by an Edo-period warrior official, Ise Sadatake (also known as Ansai; 1717-1784). Completed circa 1783.
- ***Kohitsu meiyōshū* (Collection of Famous Leaves of Antique Calligraphy)**: A bestselling reference book on *kohitsugire*. First published in 1808. This book was so popular that it was revised, expanded, and reissued multiple times during the Edo period. The most notably updated edition was the *Expanded Collection of Famous Leaves of Antique Calligraphy* (*Zōho kohitsu meiyōshū*), published in 1858. Last influential *meiyōshū* was *Shōwa Edition, Collection of Famous Leaves of Antique Calligraphy* (*Shōwa kohitsu meiyōshū*), which was compiled by an influential modern scholar of calligraphy, Tanaka Kaidō, and published in 1947.
- ***Mokagami***: “A Mirror of Gathered Seaweed.” A name given to the *tekagami* album in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/65085>
- ***Otekagami***: A woodblock-printed *tekagami* first published in 1651. Compiled by Shō Kenshi. This *tekagami* was so popular that it was reprinted repeatedly throughout the Edo period.
- ***Tekagami-jō***: “Album of Mirror of Handwriting.” A nickname given to the *tekagami* album in the collection of the Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.  
<https://tenthousandrooms.yale.edu/node/2666/mirador?canvas=63461>

Further readings:

- Kamens, Edward. “Sutra-copy Fragments in Calligraphy Albums: Desecration, Preservation, and Ontological Shift.” *Buddhist Studies Review* vol. 39.2 (2023): 171-188. <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/BSR/issue/view/2177>.
- Kamens, Edward, and Funami Kazuya. *The Tekagami-jō Project* (<https://tenthousandrooms.yale.edu/project/tekagami-jo-shou-jian-tie-project>). A comprehensive online database introducing the *tekagami* album in the collection of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- Walley, Akiko
  - *Tekagami & Kyōgire: The University of Oregon Japanese Calligraphy Collection* (<https://glam.uoregon.edu/s/tekagami-kyogire/page/welcome>). A digital exhibition and database featuring the *tekagami* and sutra fragments in the collection of the University of Oregon.
  - “The Vogue for *Tekagami*: Calligraphy Collectors and Appraisers of the Edo Period,” *Impressions* 44 (2023): 80-103.
  - “Burning Still: Calligraphy Collecting and Nigatsudō ‘Burned Sūtra’ (*Yakegyō*),” *Buddhist Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (2023): 189-208.  
<https://journal.equinoxpub.com/BSR/issue/view/2177>.