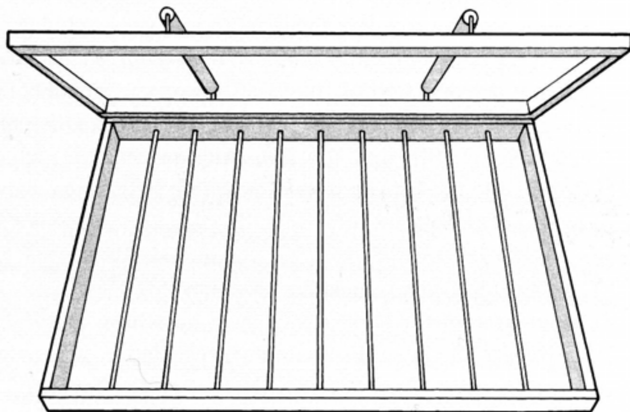
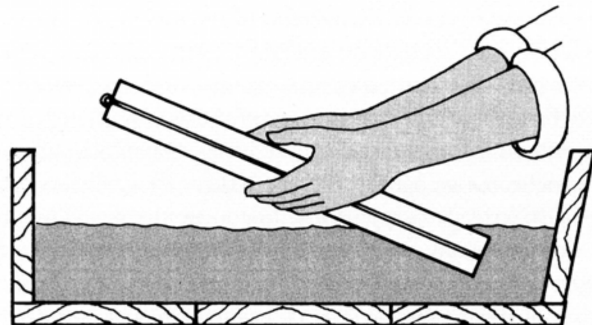
Emakimono and Papermaking

Emakimono (literally, "pictures rolled") are hand scrolls presenting a narrative in both words and pictures. Sheets of paper or, occasionally, silk are joined horizontally; the left end is attached to a dowel around which the scroll is rolled for storage. The other end of the *emaki*, to the right of the first passage of text, bears a frontispiece, usually decorated paper, backed with a fragment of silk which protects the scroll when it is not in use. For viewing the *emaki*, a braided silk cord holding the roll together is untied; the right hand holds the opening section while the left unrolls the scroll, exposing a portion of text and pictures, usually about 12 inches (30 cm) at a time before the right hand rolls up the section and the left hand reveals the next.

An *emakimono* usually begins with a passage of text followed by a picture which may be either relatively short, depicting only a single scene, or as long as the artist wishes. Illustration programmes dealing with love stories are usually less extensive than those of folktales or battle stories, which may involve the repetition of major characters to suggest a more complex sequence of events and the passage of time. However, whether the illustrations are long or short, they all have one element in common: a leftward momentum established by the direction in which the scroll is unrolled. Japanese artists were particularly successful at realizing the possibilities of the *emakimono* for depicting moments of deep emotion and fast-flowing dramatic action, and the *emakimono* of the Late Heian and Kamakura periods represent the complete Japanization of both religious and secular painting.

Emaki are around 8–20 inches (20–50 cm) high and may be up to 66 feet (20 m) long. The individual sheets of paper vary in width from one scroll to another and are joined by a narrow overlap. *Emaki* papers were usually made either from *kōzo*, the bark of the paper-mulberry tree, or *ganpi*, thin rice paper from the *Wickstroemia canescens*. The raw material was broken down into fiber, refined into pulp, and then suspended in water in a large vat. The main papermaking device, still used today, consists of two frames: the *su* with a bamboo screen and a second frame of identical size but without the screen. With the second frame resting on top of the *su*, the two are dipped into the vat to scoop up pulp. While the screen allows the water to drain off, the upper frame holds the pulp within the rectangle. The pulp is then allowed to meld and dry to form paper. Sheets for a particular *emaki* were all the same size. Careful checking of the horizontal dimensions of the sheets of paper in a scroll provides clues to the history of its preservation. If a sheet differs from the norm, the scroll's intactness should be questioned.





140 Illustration 3 from the Kashiwagi chapter of the *Genji monogatari emaki*. 1st half of the 12th century. Ink and color on paper; 8 ⅝ x 18 ⅞ in. (21.9 x 48.1 cm). Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya.

trees in spring blossom. To the left of the hut is a multi-faceted rock, the sort much prized in China. In the upper half of the screen an inlet can be seen, its surface ruffled by a breeze, and on either side gentle green hills are dotted with dark-green pine trees. The core of the painting, Bo Juyi outside his hut, is inserted into the Japanese context of these flowering spring trees and low hills, a *kara-e* gem in a *yamato-e* setting.

Emakimono

The horizontal illustrated narrative scroll, the *emakimono*, is a uniquely East Asian picture format, and, although such illustrated scrolls were produced in China, it was in Japan that the narrative potential of the horizontal scroll was carried to its highest levels of expression. Both the Chinese and Japanese languages have traditionally been written in vertical lines from right to left, so the horizontal format of the *emakimono*, laid out and unrolled from right to left, provided a natural way to relate text to image. These scrolls come generally in two distinct painting styles often referred to as ***otoko-e***, men's pictures, and ***onna-e***, or women's pictures. Originally, these terms evolved out of picture-painting parties and competitions, where the quickly sketched subjects of the *otoko-e* often proved to be quite rude in nature. However, *otoko-e* later came to refer to monochrome or lightly colored pictures that relied on the Chinese style of calligraphic line to convey the visual image, and is used in such *emakimono* as the *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* and *Shigisan engi*. *Onna-e* was a reaction to this genre and is exemplified by a more *yamato-e* style of painting, in which ***tsukuri-e*** —images of built-up color dominate, such as in the illustrations to the *Genji monogatari* and similar pieces of fiction.

Four precious *emakimono* fragments have survived from the Late Heian or Insei period: an illustrated version of the *Genji monogatari*; an ink-drawn caricature of animals behaving like people, the *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*; a folktale relating miracles associated with the founding of a temple, the *Shigisan engi*; and an historical account of intrigue at court, the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* (*ekotoba* being an alternate term for *emakimono*). Little is known about the production of these scrolls, and in only one case, the *Ban Dainagon*, is the artist identified by a believable attribution. Lacking specific documentary evidence, art historians have been hard put to establish the approximate dates of the scrolls. One approach has been to evaluate the internal evidence: the styles of garments, and the architectural details of the imperial palace and well-known Buddhist temples. The style of calligraphy used to copy the texts is also a reliable index for dating the scrolls. Finally, it is not uncommon for an artist to "quote" or "rephrase" passages of images from an earlier scroll; once this before-and-after type of relationship is established, any documentary information available for the later scroll can establish the last possible date for the creation of the earlier scroll. Using various combinations of the above methodologies, scholars have tentatively concluded that the *Genji monogatari emaki* was produced in the first half of the twelfth century, probably before 1140; the *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* before 1150; the *Shigisan engi emaki* after 1150; and the *Ban Dainagon ekotoba*, which is attributed to the court painter Tokiwa no Mitsunaga, between 1157 and 1180.

The *Genji Monogatari emaki*

The creation of the *Genji* scrolls must have been a monumental project. The novel in its English translation is nearly one thousand pages long. Today only twenty *Genji* pictures survive, but it is assumed that originally all fifty-four chapters were illustrated, with between one and three paintings per

The ceremony of acknowledgment is depicted in the third illustration from Kashiwagi, the fourth volume's eighth chapter (Fig. 140). As the scroll is unrolled and the illustration comes into view, the first thing to appear is the brown surface of a courtyard—originally painted silver, now tarnished—and a veranda placed at such a sharp angle that it has nearly the force of a vertical line hindering the eye's movement leftward. Next the wall of the building appears. The lattice panels enclosing the interior space have been removed and their function taken on by thin slatted bamboo blinds and by curtains of state, the black tie-ribbons of which hang loosely. The next clues to the scene are the bottom of a twelve-layered robe, and, above, red and black lacquered plates heaped with food. The colors in the robe and the use and careful placement of the lacquered dishes indicate that a ceremony is in progress. Finally, nearly two-thirds of the way across the illustration, figures appear, Genji at the top holding the baby in his arms, ladies-in-waiting below, and in the extreme upper-left corner, the baby's mother, her presence indicated by a mound of fabric.

The text accompanying this illustration consists of Genji's thoughts as he goes through the painful ritual. He knows that his wife's attendants are well aware that he is not the child's father. His emotional discomfiture is suggested by the physical awkwardness of his placement at the top of the very sharply slanting floor. Further, the space he occupies is so constricted that should he wish to raise his head from the baby in his arms, he could not do so. In this scene the architecture plays a key role. At first, interrupting the leftward momentum of the illustration and at the same time shielding the figures from view, it suggests the guilty knowledge that reverberates throughout the room during the ceremony, not only of the wife's adultery but also of Genji's cuckolding of his father many years before. Next, as it forces Genji into a cramped position, it suggests the pressure of society coercing him to put a good face on a bad situation.

An illustration that brilliantly evokes the sometimes conflicting facets of grief appears in Minori (The Rites), the fourth volume's eleventh chapter (Fig. 141). The true love of Genji's life, Lady Murasaki, is dying. A young woman she raised as her own, who is actually Genji's daughter by another wife, has come back from the imperial palace to be with her. One stormy evening Genji visits Murasaki, and the three sit together, watching as the wind makes whips of the shrubs and grasses in her garden. When Genji first built his mansion, he planned this garden to be beautiful the year round, reaching its peak in springtime, Murasaki's favorite season. Now, as they gaze at it, it seems to be nothing but a tangled mass of vines.

The text presents Genji's thoughts: his knowledge that Murasaki is gravely ill, his dread that she will die, his sense that his grief will be nearly too much to bear. Again architecture plays an important role, with the angles nearly as steep as those of the scene described above. Here, however, the figures appear almost immediately as the scroll is unrolled, Murasaki near the top leaning on an armrest, her adopted daughter just below in the angle formed by the upper beam of the wall and a cloth curtain of state. Genji appears at the bottom of the incline, nearest to the veranda. Lastly, as the architecture disappears at the bottom of the picture, we see the wind-ravaged garden. The anguish Genji feels about Murasaki as she drifts toward death is suggested by the position he occupies at the bottom of the diagonal, her disappearance from his world by the treatment of the architecture, his fear of being overwhelmed by his own grief by the tangled shrubbery.

The *Chōjū jinbutsu*

The first two scrolls of the four-roll set known as the *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* (*Scroll of Frolicking Animas and Humans*) provide a striking contrast to the *Genji monogatari emaki*. First of all, the illustrations are presented as a continuous narrative. There is neither an opening text nor passages inserted between the illustrations, the figural motifs flowing to the left without interruption. Secondly, the scrolls have no color, but are drawn with black ink on paper. Finally, they are satirical throughout and at times bitingly so.

The first two scrolls of the *giga* depict animals disporting themselves as human beings: a rabbit holding his nose does a back flip into a lake; two frogs dance to a beat marked by the split-bamboo twangers they both hold (Fig. 142); frogs and rabbits compete in an archery tournament, while a shy bystander, a fox, gets so excited that his tail seems to burst into flames (Fig. 143). The final scene of the first scroll depicts what seems to be a memorial service (Fig. 144), with an animal congregation arranged in a semicircle behind a monkey clad in monk's robes, who is chanting in front of an altar on which a frog has been enshrined. The scene continues to the left, past a tree in which an owl is perched looking directly out at the viewer. In the next section is another monkey in ecclesiastical garb, sitting with a supercilious smile on his face as presents are brought to him in payment for the ritual he has just performed. Can this scene be anything other than a

142 Detail from scroll 1, *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*, showing dancing frogs. Mid-12th century. Ink on paper; height 12 ½ in. (31.8 cm). Kōzanji, Kyoto.

141 Illustration from the Minori chapter of *Genji monogatari emaki*. 1st half of the 12th century. Ink and color on paper; 8 ⅝ x 19 in. (21.9 x 48.3 cm). Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya.

chapter, and that the total number of scrolls in the set was about ten. Scholars trying to determine how the scrolls were made have come to the conclusion that five teams worked on the project, each team consisting of an aristocrat noted for his calligraphy as well as his cultural sophistication, and a group of painters, including the principal artist (the *sumigaki* or painter who draws in black ink) and specialists in the application of traditional pigments.

Once a particular episode was chosen, the *sumigaki* would plan the composition and sketch it on paper in fine black-ink lines. At the same time he would make notes on the sheet about the colors he wanted used. Then the pigment specialists would go to work, applying layer upon layer of paint within, but obscuring, the *sumigaki*'s original outlines. In the final stage the *sumigaki* would look once again at the illustration, perhaps changing a few details—the expanse of a court robe, the incline of someone's head—and would then paint in the details of the faces. These so-called details are minimal—to say the least—tiny red mouths, slit-like eyes, and noses indicated by a single bent line. The men usually had thin mustaches and sometimes short beards as well. This abbreviated treatment is called "a line for the eye, a hook for the nose," or *hikime kagibana*. The painting technique used in the *Genji* pictures, that is, the application of layers of paint over an underdrawing, is called *tsukuri-e*, a word mostly translated as "made-up." However, the Chinese character usually used to write this term is better translated as "construction," something built up. This painting technique was used with great success in the Heian and Kamakura periods for illustrating romantic tales.

The most important theme of the *Genji monogatari*—the concept of *mono no aware*, best translated as "the pathos of things" or "the moving quality of experience"—is not an easy idea to convey visually. The five *sumigaki* who planned the compositions used pictorial conventions—possibly invented by them, but probably not—that were particularly effective in illustrating moments of high emotional intensity. The blown-off roof, or *fukinuki yatai*, was used not just to depict an indoor activity in an outdoor setting; the odd angles created by the walls, sliding doors, and folding screens when seen from above were also metaphors for the emotions felt by the characters in the illustrations. The relative absence or presence of space in which the figures could move also contributes insight into their feelings. Finally, colors and patterns heighten the mood of the scene. All of these elements taken together create for the viewer a strong impression of *mono no aware*—whether it be the pleasure one experiences looking at a garden bathed in moonlight and hearing the sound of someone playing the flute, or the pain one feels at the thought of losing a loved one.

A second major theme in the tale is the chain of karmic consequences Genji generated when he committed one great sin against his father. In his youth Genji fell in love with his father's youngest wife, a woman he was encouraged to see because she looked so much like his mother, who had died while he was still an infant. A child was born out of Genji's liaison, a beautiful baby boy who was passed off as the emperor's own son and who eventually succeeded to the throne. The full force of Genji's karma hits him in middle age. His youngest wife, a woman he was cajoled into marrying but in whom he has no interest at all, has an extramarital affair that results in a son Genji decides he must publicly accept as his own, even as the old emperor had done with Genji's son.