

Serizawa
Keisuke's
*Ehon Don
Kihote*
(Don Quixote
Picture Book,
1937)
and his quest
of *mingei* art



芹沢銈介の
『繪本どんきほうて』
(1937年刊)
および民藝の探求

Kuniko Yamada McVey
Harvard-Yenching Library
September 16, 2023
EAJRS 2023 Leuven

Carl Keller's passion for *Don Quixote*, networking, *Mingei* movement, Serizawa's craftsmanship

- People: Karl Keller, Yanagi Muneyoshi, Jugaku Bunsho, Kawai Kanjiro, Serizawa Keisuke
- Time: 1920s-1950s
- *mingei* (Folk Craft) movement
- Serizawa Keisuke and *katazome* technique

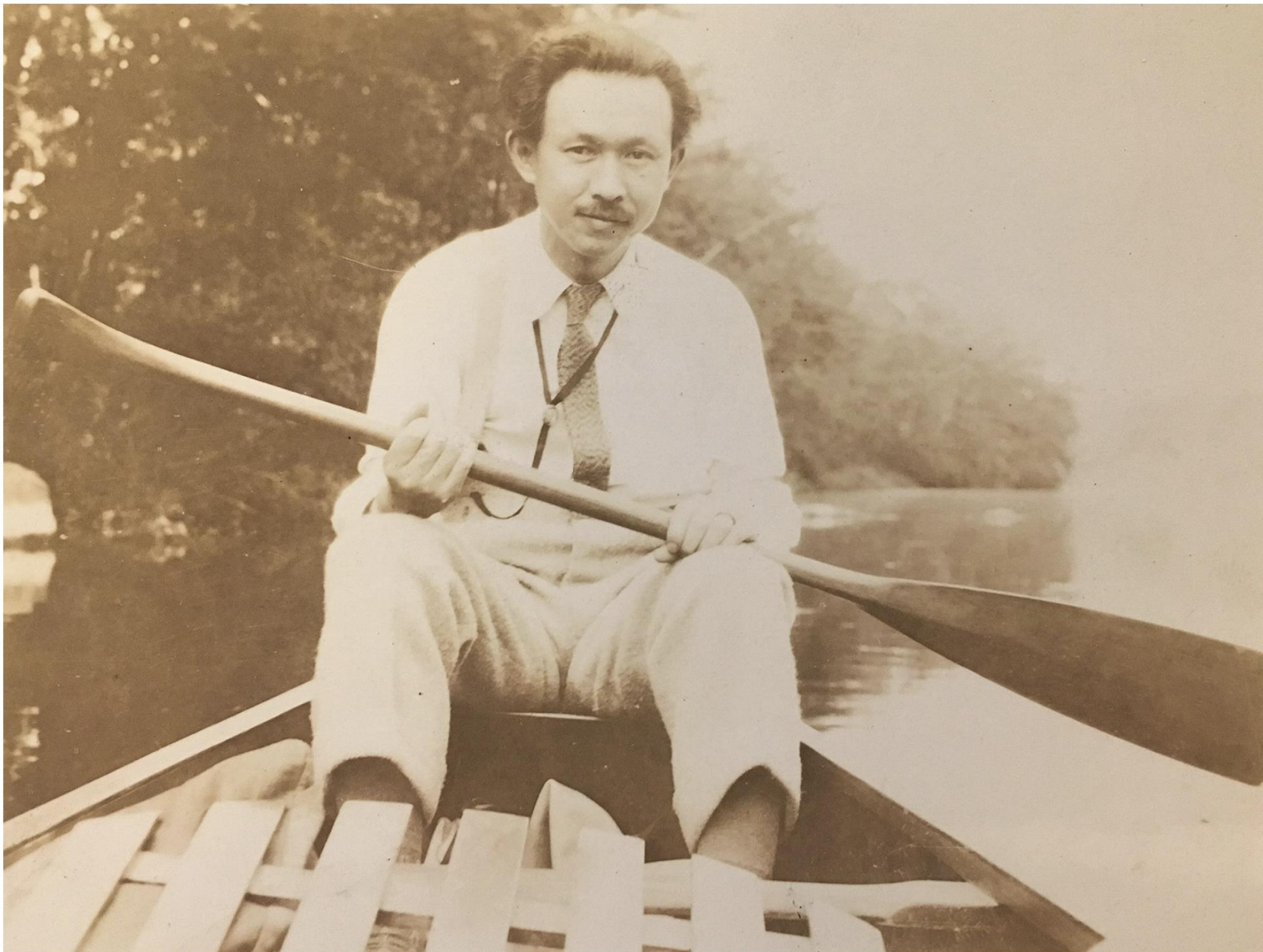
Carl Tilden Keller (1872-1955)



- Harvard graduate (1894), businessman in Boston
- Vice chairman and trustee of the Harvard-Yenching Institute (est. 1928)
- Book collector, interested in editions of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, of which he sought translations in all major languages of the world.
- Met Yanagi Muneyoshi (“Soetsu”) at Harvard in 1929; asked for help in obtaining Japanese editions of *Don Quixote*.
- Not satisfied with Japanese editions he received through Jugaku Bunsho, Keller wanted to commission a Japanese artist to make one. Jugaku asked Serizawa Keisuke to take this challenge in 1935.

Yanagi Muneyoshi 柳宗悦 (1889-1961)

- Japanese art critic and philosopher
- Founder of the Japanese folk crafts movement *mingei* 民藝. Yanagi “discovered, defined, and promoted previously overlooked categories of folk crafts in Japan, Korea, and Ryukyu islands.” Founded the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Nihon Mingeikan) in Tokyo in 1936.
- Spent one year (August 1929-July 1930) at Harvard
 - Lectured on Japanese Art
 - Curated two exhibitions in 1930
 1. “Modern Japanese and English handcrafts” at the Harvard Coop (January)
 2. “Japanese Peasant Paintings” at the Fogg Museum (May)
- Launched *Kōgei* 工藝 (Crafts), monthly journal of the Japan Folk Craft Association, 1931 - 1951



Yanagi Muneyoshi by the Charles River, 1930. Langdon Warner Papers, MS AM 3138, Box 2, Houghton Library, Harvard Library, Harvard University.

UNUSUAL DISPLAY WILL OPEN AT ART GALLERIES

Japanese Work Uninfluenced by Evils of Modern Commercial Methods Will be Exhibited

Harvard Crimson, January 10, 1930

PRIMITIVE JAPANESE ART PRINT



The dignified eagle, one of the Otsu-e prints from Japan, exhibited for the first time in the United States.

Interesting Japanese Prints Shown In Fogg Art Museum at Harvard

By F. W. COBURN

Primitive prints from Otsu, a village near Kyoto, Japan's older capital, loaned by Muneyoshi Yanagi, N. Miura and T. Yamamoto, have been placed on exhibition at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, to continue through commencement.

Here is something in Japanese prints on which neither Mr. Spaulding, Gilbert Fuller nor Mr. Rufwell has specialized. It is said to be the first exhibition of Otsu-e ever held in America. Ukiyo-e prints, of course, have made the names of Hokusai, Hiroshige, Buncho and Chiyaku familiar, even to Main Street. People who know nothing else about oriental art will confess to a liking of the pieces by Ukiyasa that depicts little ladies of the Yoshiwara at their domestic and other occupations. Nobody, however, has until now seen the primitive prints made at the hamlets of Otsu and Otsu-e, hard by Otsu and in the vicinity of the Pine-leaf 995 where

Nichiren, the Japanese messiah, was avenged from having his head by a terrific lightning flash.

Mr. Yanagi, who is present to explain the Otsu-e, says these rather primitive prints began to be made at the village named in the early 17th century. Only a few of the prints are preserved even in Japan, where they are recognized to be the forerunners of the brilliant 18th and 19th century schools of Tokyo, of which the Museum of Fine Arts has about 50,000 examples.

Each Otsu-e print is found to carry a single expressive idea. A scute eagle makes the thought of dignity. A solid Buddhist pagoda is declared to give the thought of an upright mind. A monkey trying to ride on the back of a slippery catfish is following a headless fool his own. So on, through a collection filled with the naive folk lore of medieval Japan, set forth in prints that are new even to most collectors of the arts of the far east.

Japanese Folk Painting at Fogg

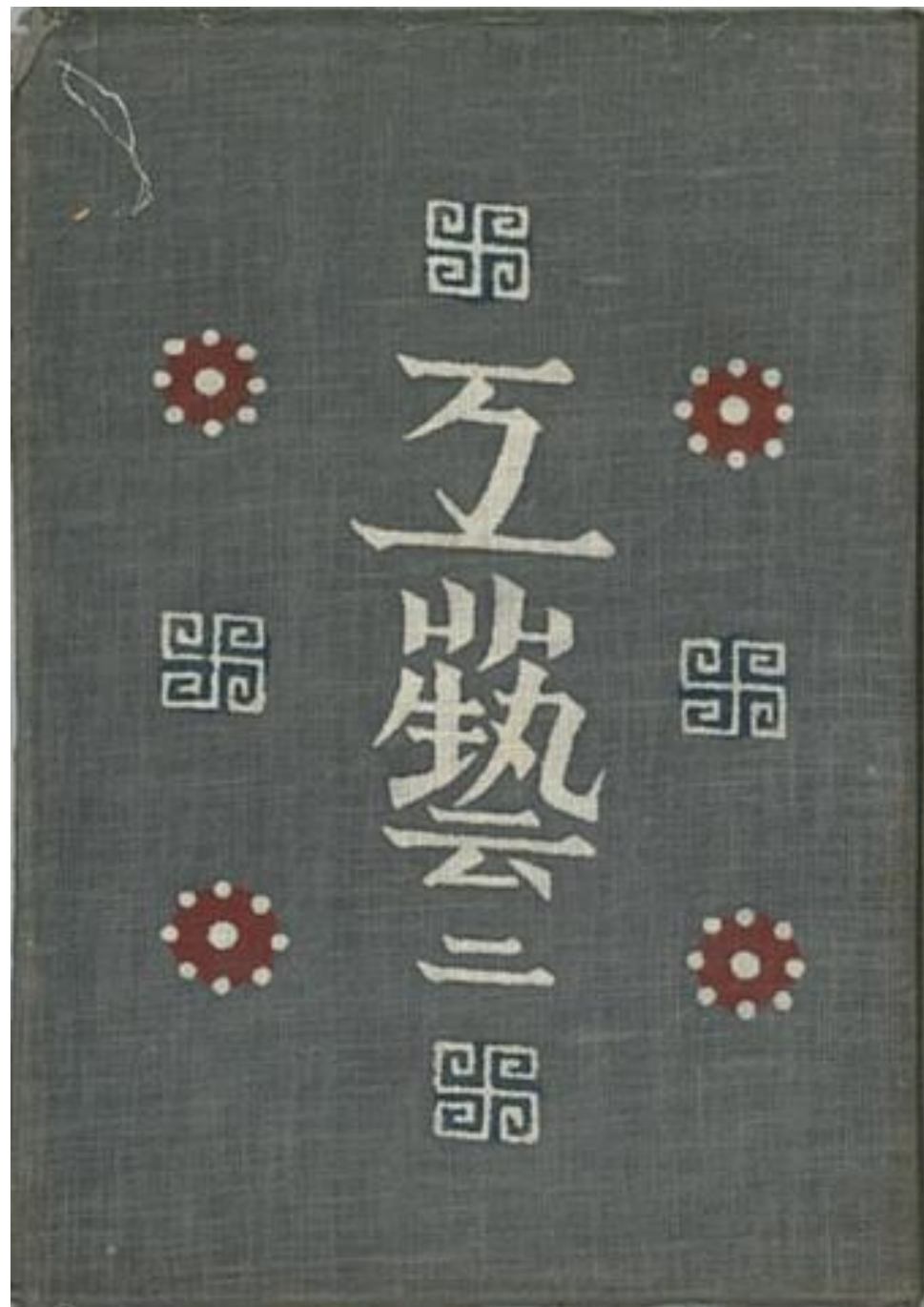


The broad, vigorous treatment of Japanese peasant paintings of the 17th century is admirably illustrated by this detail of an eagle from one of these folk paintings now on exhibition at the Fogg Art Museum, by whose courtesy, and that of the leader, Mr. Muneyoshi Yanagi, it is reproduced.

Examples of the early peasant paintings of Japan are very rare, a fact which lends added interest to the exhibition at the Fogg Art Museum of a loan collection of Otsu-e, that is, Japanese folk paintings made at the village of Otsu, near Kyoto. This type of painting, developed in the 17th century, is characterized by a broad, vigorous treatment, quite a contrast to the delicacy of the Ukiyo-e, also by its naive and sense of humor.

The Otsu-e were really the forerunners of the treasured Japanese print of the 18th century. The many fine examples assembled here offer an unusual opportunity to students of Oriental art. They are lent to the museum by Messrs. Muneyoshi Yanagi, N. Miura and T. Yamamoto.

Otsu-e exhibition at Fogg Museum, May 1930



Kōgei 工藝

vols 1 & 2 (Jan. &
Feb. 1931)





Kōgei 工藝
 (Crafts)
 journal of the
 Japan
 Folk Craft
 Association
 日本民藝協会
 1931-1951

民藝とは
 民衆的工藝
 “ordinary
 people’s crafts”

Jugaku Bunsho 寿岳文章 (1900-1992)

- Graduated from Kyoto imperial university in 1927, studying literature.
- Joined Yanagi's *mingei* movement while teaching English at the high school in Kyoto.
- Translated and privately published poems of William Blake in 1933-35.
- Was awarded PhD for "A bibliographical study of W. Blake's notebook."
- As a member of the Japanese handmade paper study group, he visited paper-making villages and privately published a travel journal of these visits 『紙漉村旅日記』 in 1943. This would eventually result in his seminal monograph on Japanese paper 『日本の紙』 in 1967.

人齋書と齋書

六川のそ



書庫の連続
 斋岳文章

私は別の上階建てかねはむおちつかぬ性格で、しかも、探ろうんな書庫をひらき出してこなければならぬので、私の書庫はむしる前の子供といいた方がよいかもしれない。その方が、いまも自分で書庫が太へんである。本は増える一方だ。このころでは多量の本がそろそろかたへてきた。階下と階上とは、やはりしりぞけておくべきものと決断した。『京都市の書庫の歴史』(向山房)にて、昭和三十二年。



カメラ 山上四太郎

Jugaku Bunsho, featured in 家 magazine, Feb. 1941

From Bunsho to Keller, January 12, 1930

Senkoan, Hizenji-Kitamori, ①
Higashiyama, Kyoto, Japan.
January 12, 1930.

Mr. Carl T. Keller,
80 Federal Street
Boston, U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Beyond expression was my joy when I received your present, a beautiful copy of Blake's Illustrations of Young's Night Thoughts published by the Harvard University Press, for it was the very thing which my means prohibited me from obtaining though I longed so much to get it. You know what it means for a bibliophile to secure a promised land of many years. Accept my heart-felt thanks for your courtesy.

Simultaneously with this letter, I am sending you two Japanese Don Quixotes, with my brief explanation in English. One is a translation; the other contains in it a translation of Turgenev's famous lecture on Hamlet and Don Quixote. Probably the latter may be an

②
useless collection, but anyhow I am sending. You kindly insist on your paying for Japanese Don Quixotes I secure for you. The price of your present may fully cover all the Don Quixotes in our country, but — may I have the audacity? — if I am permitted to appreciate it as a present, and ask you a further favour, would you send me beforehand some 25 dollars which can probably buy all the Don Quixote literature in Japanese? Bibliomaniac as I am, by profession I am nothing but a poor teacher who sometimes find it difficult to make economy and bibliophilism meet. I hope my audacity does not offend you and you understand my situation.

With my very best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Bunsho Jugaku

Selected correspondence

- Bunsho, Oct 3, 1935

“I have discussed the matter very earnestly with my best friends with artistic line, such as Yanagi and Kawai. They are all deeply interested in this and have suggested a publication for your sake of a beautifully colored illustration book of Don Quixote (with some explanatory notes in Japanese character but no text) purely in the tradition of Japanese illuminated book production. If this be realized, we shall probably have one of the very best homages to your poor “Don” ever paid both in the West and in the East, for it will turn out to be the excellent example of Japanese art both in drawing and in book-production.”

- Keller, Nov. 9, 1935

“I had no idea when I tossed that little pebble of a suggestion into the lake of thought that the ripples of action would so soon dash upon the shores of accomplishment.”

- Keller, Nov 25, 1935

“What I am going to tell you will, I suppose be to your mind and that of Mr. Yanagi entirely superfluous, but I would feel very much disappointed if any of your artists made any of the proposed illustrations on the basis of anything European. All the possible aspects of illustrations for the “Don” from the European point of view have been done over and over again. But after all, the “Don” is a human being and he is no more a Spaniard than he is a Japanese, or an Englishman or an Indian; and to each nation or person who reads, he is what they create him in their own minds. Certainly the Japanese have been one of the most loyal and comprehending of all Cervantes’ followers.”

Bunsho, Feb 9, 1936

“I have much to say concerning the very abnormal situation of Japan against the world. I am afraid she is rapidly drawing back haughty, self-conceited, but isolated nationality she enjoyed anterior to the Meiji era, whereas she is pushing the elbow everywhere as far as militaristic power is concerned..... Whenever I read your letters, I can not but feel strongly that the misunderstanding between your land and ours will remarkably decrease if ten per cent. of the people of both lands were of the same mind as your and mine. In the militaristic Japan such cultural works as I am doing are generally disregarded, but I firmly believe some day my humble work will bear fruit. Without this faith and hope I am too lonely. Ah, what an endless time of earnest and enthusiastic talking on such matters we shall have if you should have come over to Japan, not in my dream, but in person! My heart is always pining for the realization of this dream.”

Mukō-machi, near Kyoto, Japan.
September 22, 1936.

Mr. Carl T. Keller,
80 Federal Street,
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

My dear very very yearned-for friend:-

When the land that produced your poor Don is weltering in bloodthirsty throat-cutting with each other, I believe you will be somewhat glad to hear from me that your Japanese Don is about to appear on the stage entirely in pure Japanese attire and spirit. I am sorry it has been so tardy, but the artist Serizawa has literally devoted himself to the work for the past six months, and he has produced about 40 pieces (or scenes) instead of the expected 15 or 20! I can vividly picture to myself the great pleasure you will experience when you touch a copy of the beautifully bound "E-hon Don-Kihōte" (Illustrations to Don Quixote). Herewith I enclose a proof, though in this there do not appear your poor Don and his Sancho. I think Serizawa's Don is not only unique in its style of expression but is second to none in its intrinsic value as explanations and illustrations to the story. It will decidedly cut a very striking figure above others among your rich Don collection.

Such being the case, you will excuse me for being unable to send the work so early as promised. But it will be finished by the end of October at the latest (probably much earlier). The original plan of producing it in wood-engraving was thrown away and the method of stencil oil-paper prints has been adopted because the latter is more Japanese (peculiar to Japan I believe) and has something indescribably relishable in it (aji ga aru in Japanese). I hope you will fully appreciate the enormous self-sacrificing pains taken by us for the birth of this Japanese Don who has grown so big in spite of himself.

My small spouse joins me in sending our cordial greetings to you and Mrs. Keller who I hope is enjoying her good health.

Very affectionately,

Bunsho Jyaku

HOW DON QUIXOTE À LA JAPONAIS CAME
INTO BEING

Mr. Yanagi leaves Boston before long, but the friendship between Mr. Keller and I goes on thicker even without Mr. Yanagi in Boston. Scores of letters from Mr Keller during the seven years since then have probably no equals in the history of letter-writing in their exceptional frankness and unreservedness, considering the correspondents are different from each other in language, race, political form and religion. And I must say also that Mr. Keller is a man of touching heart. I shall not forget how I wept from gratitude for his kind-heartedness when he sent me a considerable sum of money in token of his sympathy for our having suffered from typhoid fever. Every letter of his rocks me sweetly in the cradle of recollections, but I will not indulge in them as this is not the place for it. I cannot, however, help from touching his second letter dated Feb. 4th, 1930, for he says in it lamentably: "The only thing that is wrong about it (i. e. Don Quixote in Japanese) is that it should have been illustrated throughout by Japanese artists in Japanese manner. That was the first thing I looked for, because I feel that the Japanese interpretation of such ideas would be sympathetic, interesting and novel. I should

Mr Serizawa, however, had never idled his time away. I say here with sympathy that it must have been a great burden for him to read through the voluminous Don Quixote. He told me afterwards that he had never read such a long story in his life, and that it was always the case with him that he had completely ~~forgotten/the/last~~ lost the thread of the preceding story whenever he resumed reading. Be it what it may, he had almost all scenes mapped out early in the summer. He tackled at it vehemently; he even left home and retired among the mountains like an ancient monk or our poor Don himself. A charming piece of work, "Wazomé Egatari" (Japanese Dying explained in Pictures), was his by-product during his wrestling with the Knight of the Mournful Countenance, yes, as a distraction from the tremendous struggle. "The maker of Don Quixote à la Japonaise has ~~did~~ hid himself among the clouds," so wrote Mr Yanagi, on whose advice Mr Serizawa left wood-engraving and returned to his skilful craft of paper-stencilling, though considerably advanced in the work. I do not remember the correct date, but early in September he sent two proofs, scenes from the story, stencilled and coloured by his hand. I can even now picture vividly to myself the pleasure and laughing with which I looked at these proofs; so splendid it was. "You would probably find it difficult to imagine how impatiently interested I am to get the Japanese interpretations, freed entirely from all European influence, if that is possible, and I hope it is. The "Don" means something different to most everybody who reads him, and therefore, he must mean something entirely different to an Oriental from what he means to us of the West." This is Mr Keller's demand: to what an extent will it be realized by Mr Serizawa? The story is not our own, very foreign; so I was not without a little uneasiness from the very beginning. But lo and behold! Don Quixote trotting his horse among a gang of convicts, his eyes shining bright; curate and maid firing volumes of romances; these are too badly rendered into figures of Old Japan when chivalry flourished. The proofs set my mind at ease.

The programmed scenes were ~~dupli~~ doubled, pictures developed into thirty-one, and before long all the proofs except two were sent to me. As Mr Serizawa demanded a severe and very frank criticism of the proofs from Mr Kawai and me, we did so; and Mr Serizawa accepted our emendation in tone and colour very gentlemanly. "Great and fine is Mr Serizawa who listened to our reckless and amateurish criticism (without getting angry), which was poured over to a great ~~master/of~~ colourist." This is what Mr Kawai says

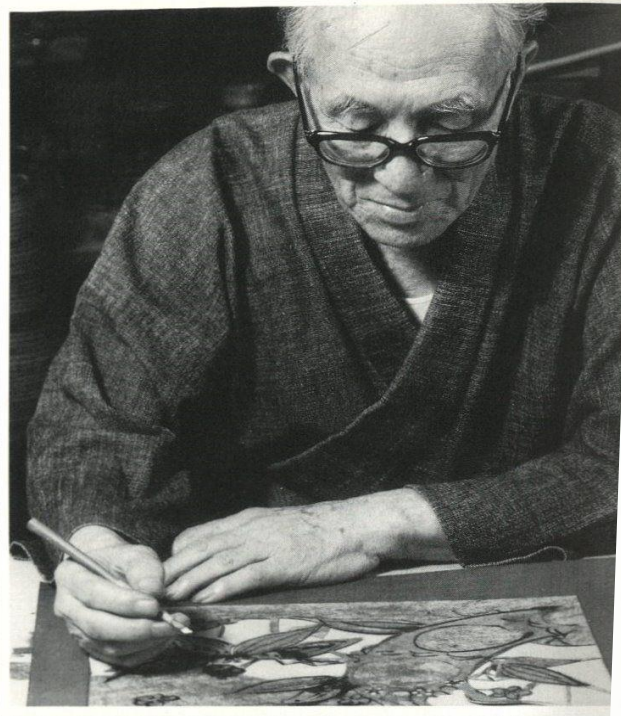
芹澤銑介 Serizawa Keisuke (1895-1984)



At Nihon Mingeikan in 1941

- Graduated from Industrial high school in Tokyo in 1921.
- As a student, he read *Shirakaba* earnestly.
- During his trip to Korea in 1927, he read Yanagi's essay "Kogei no michi" (The way of Craft) which confirmed and guided his commitment to his craft of *katazome*.
- Encountered Okinawan textile dyed with *bingata* technique at the exhibition in 1928 which gave him a strong impression.
- Designated the possessor of an "Important Intangible Cultural Asset" (*juyo mukei bunkazai*) in 1956.

The process of stencil works 型染の工程



1. Shita-e (under drawing) 2. Katahori (cutting the design) 3. Kataoki (placing the design) 4. Irosashi (coloring)

型ほり

「はぐくんで来た模様が形をとり、それを下絵として型ほりに専念する時、工程中最も集中巻を味わう。家の建前にも似た欣び。地紙は美濃紙（手漉純楮紙）を柿渋ではりあわせたもの。」

“Actually, the essential element of his work is the cutting of stencil designs on paper. In creating his dyed works, the stencil designs are the fundamental element.” Sori Yanagi



“For Serizawa, cutting the stencil is the peak of creation in his art. It involves his feelings and some unknown that resides in him.” Sori Yanagi

繪本どんきほうて

Height: 28.7 cm

Width: 20.9 cm

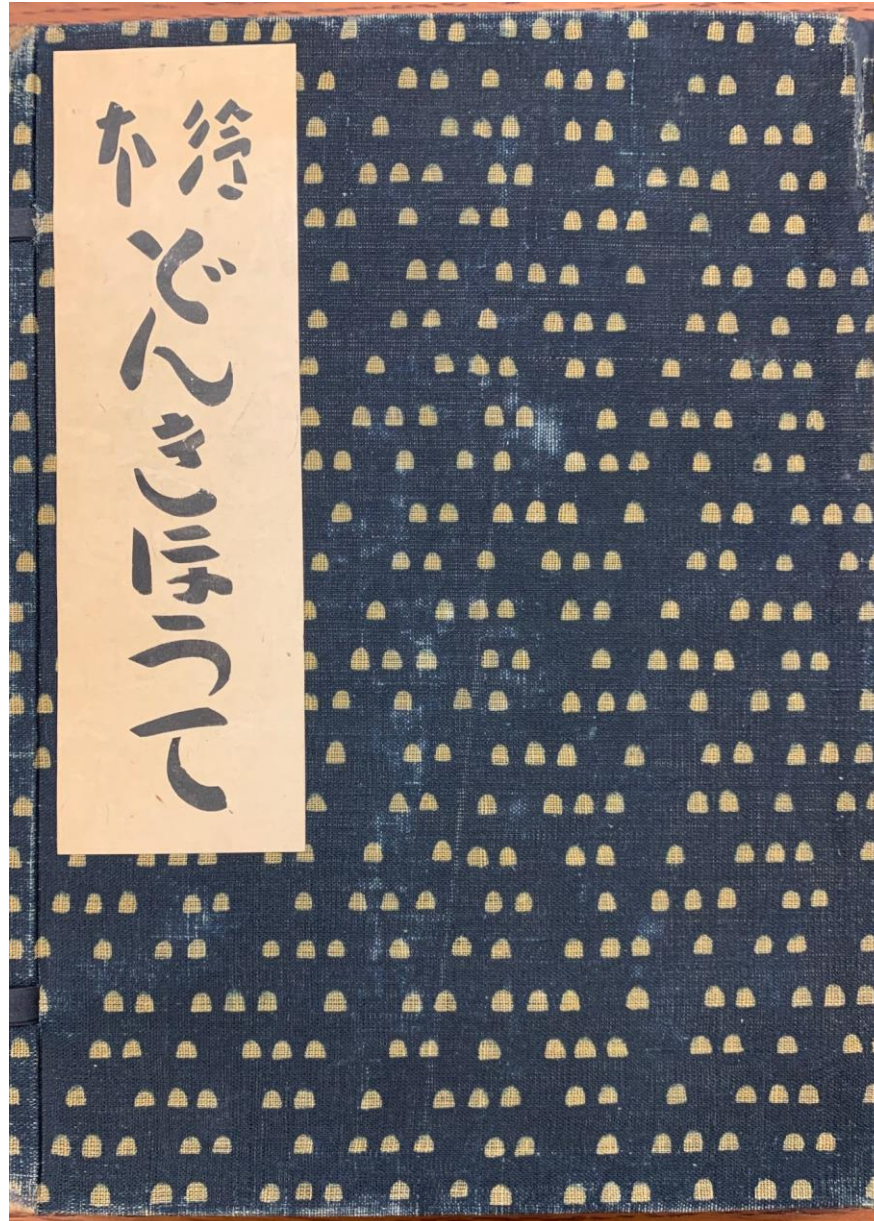
Fukuro-toji 袋綴じ

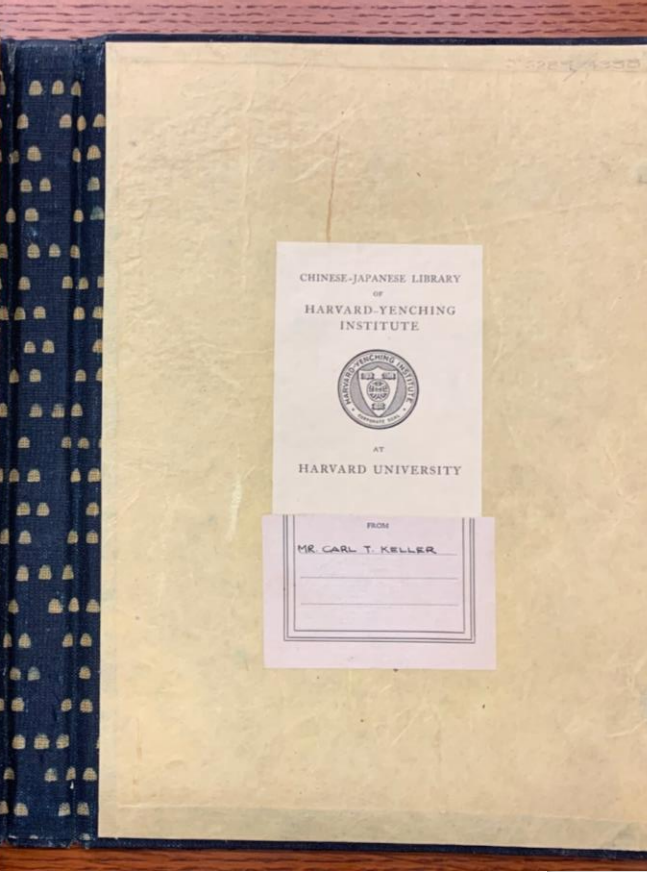
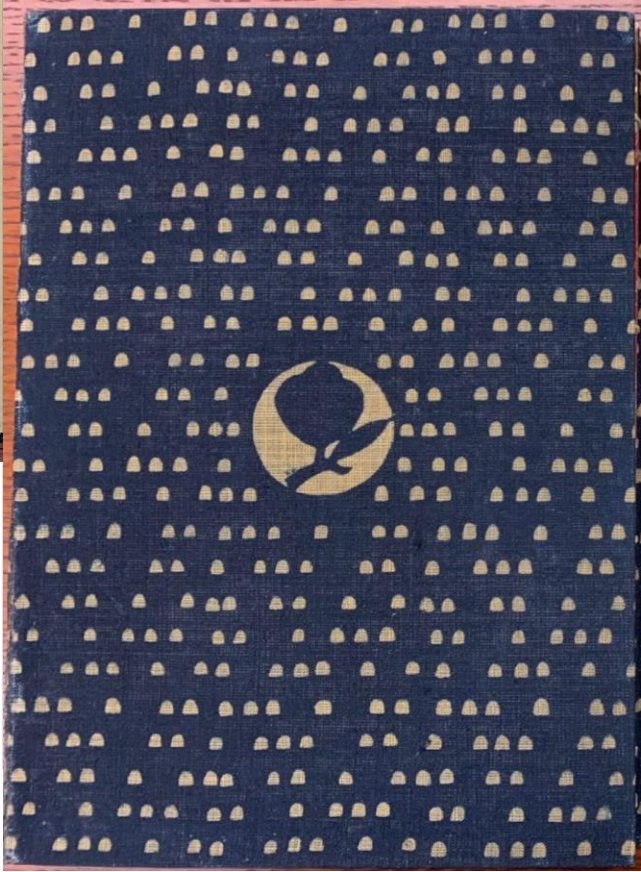
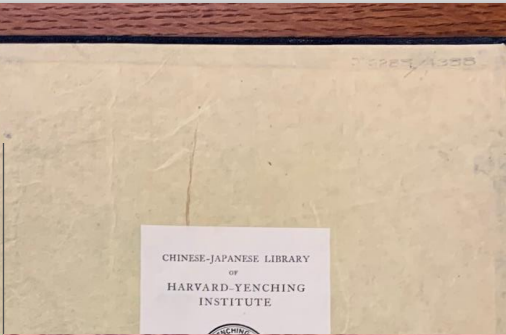
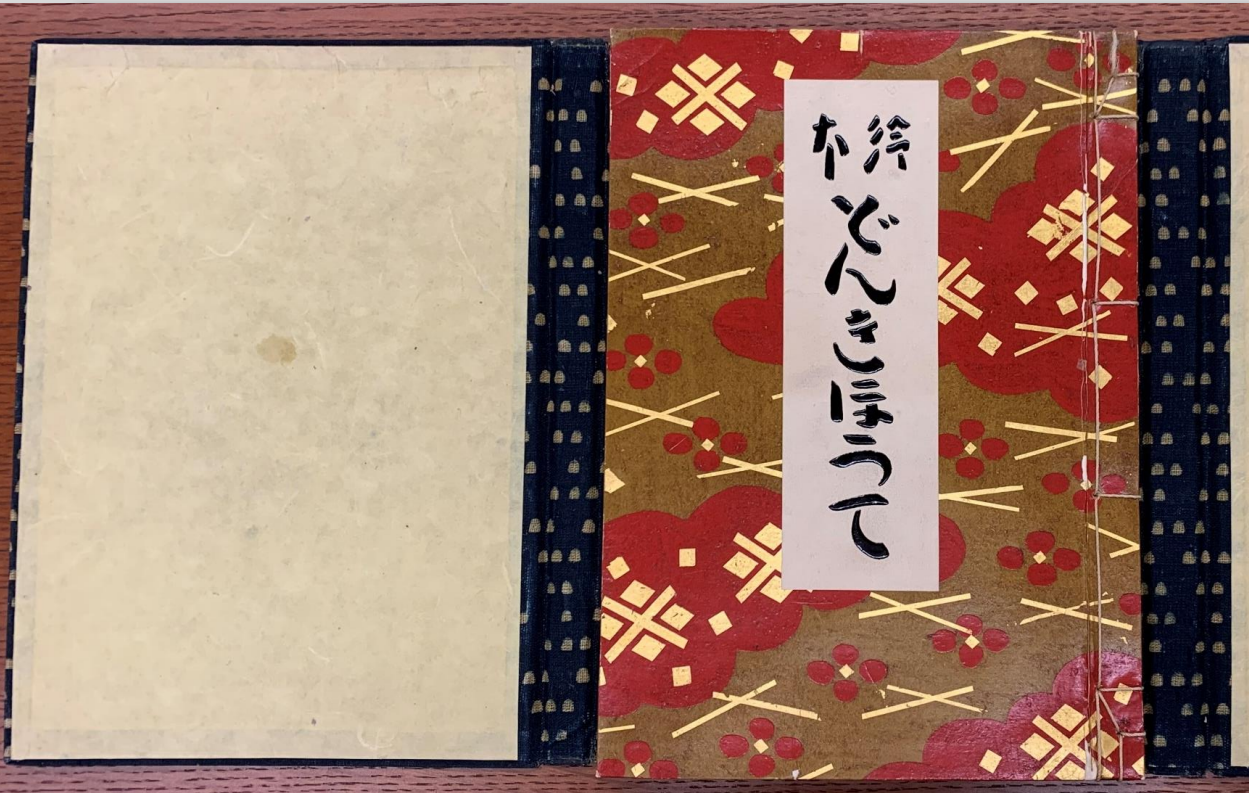
Asada Kihachiro helped binding.

Chitsu case 帙, covered by indigo dyed textile with stylized 菖蒲模様 (Iris pattern)

Title was hand written with black lacquer ink by **Suzuki Shigeo** on washi paper which is pasted in the center of the front cover.

The cover was made of vermillion lacquer decorated with a gold pattern





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Gift of Mr. Carl T. Keller



昭和十三年十一月完成



東洋書院
新編
和歌山
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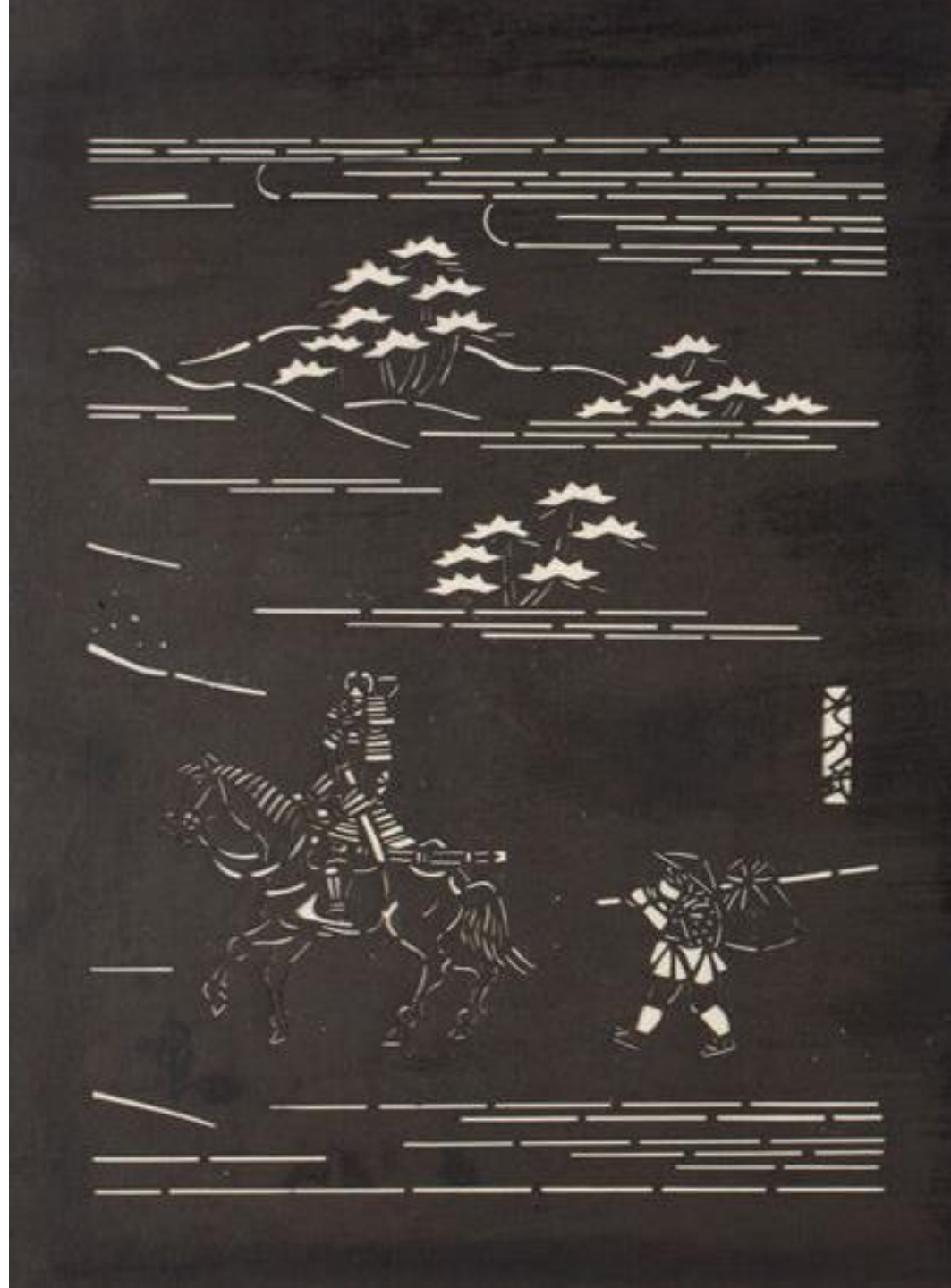
き 西宮にまかこ
き 作男さんち
き 在に名も二前
マ 禊し者推糸
ひ 三の三三残で
欠 命からぐ旅
七 飯もりの戸

信本どんきぼうて次三

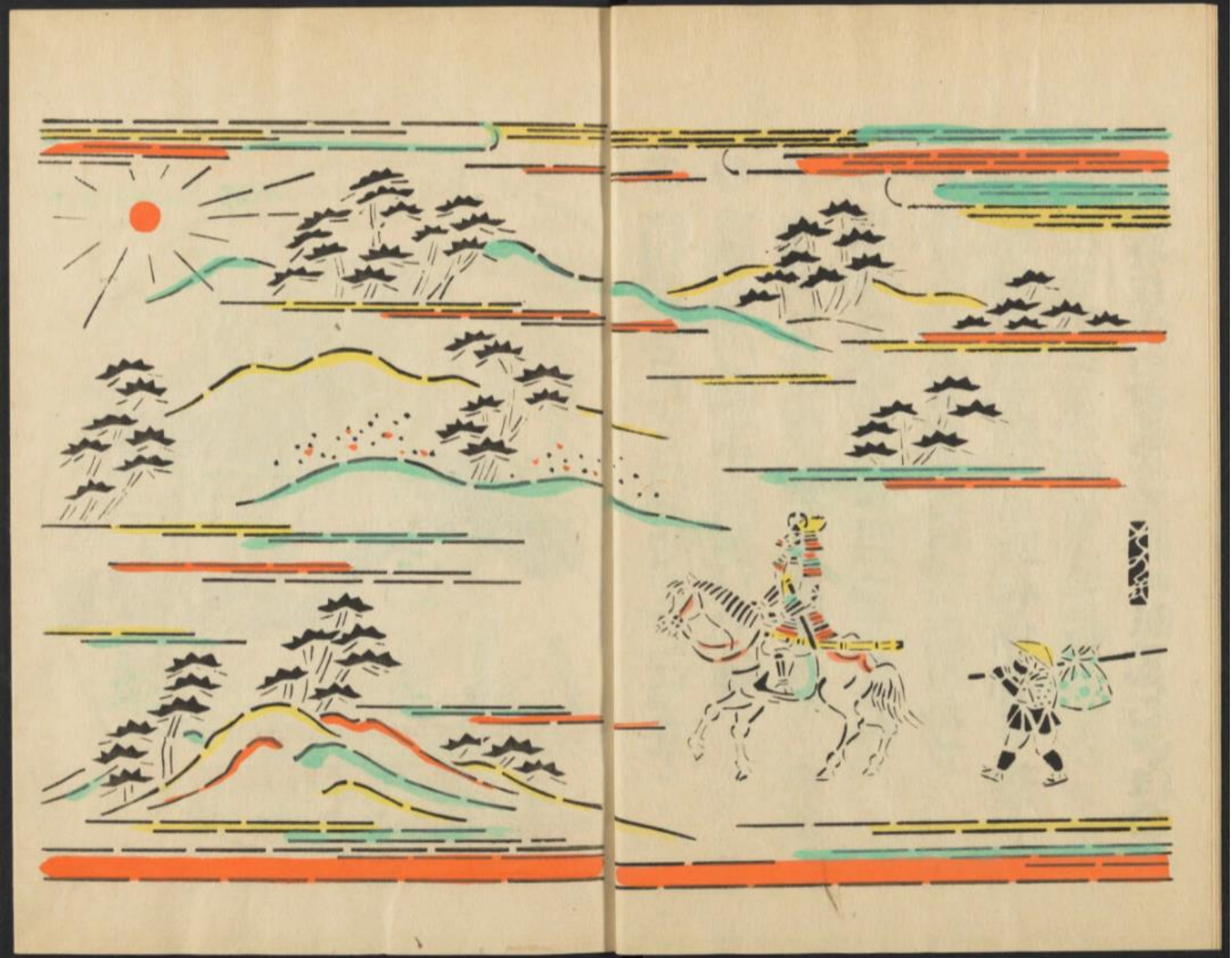
き 西宮らまんちののどんきぼうて
き 作男さんちへ行廻るの門出
き 在に名も二前き初の寺合はせ
ひ 禊し者推糸とかご物へ物付る
ひ 三の三三残で一羽の不覚
欠 命からぐ旅籠へ廻りつゝ
七 飯もりの戸迷ひが寝きの因

- ① 人々遊漁の身帯の火夜叉
- ② 妖怪を装ひてまじほうを討つ
- ③ 故御に侍る牛丁
- ④ 所となる数々の武勇伝
- ⑤ 弁琴の企らみ素師の里赤
- ⑥ さんちをのむけ子刈女を非と強辯
- ⑦ 恐れを知らぬごんきほう
- ⑧ 洞穴に入りて不里儀をたす

- ⑨ 弱きをたすけ強きをこらす
- ⑩ 流氷に泛る魔の小舟
- ⑪ 貴人とたへて客となる
- ⑫ 三従の物語に興す貴人
- ⑬ 貴人怪言をめぐりてかぞへ
- ⑭ 銀月の精立まがひに於れ侍御を推す
- ⑮ 道すがら三従の妖怪
- ⑯ 功名争場のまがひと静に眠るまがひ

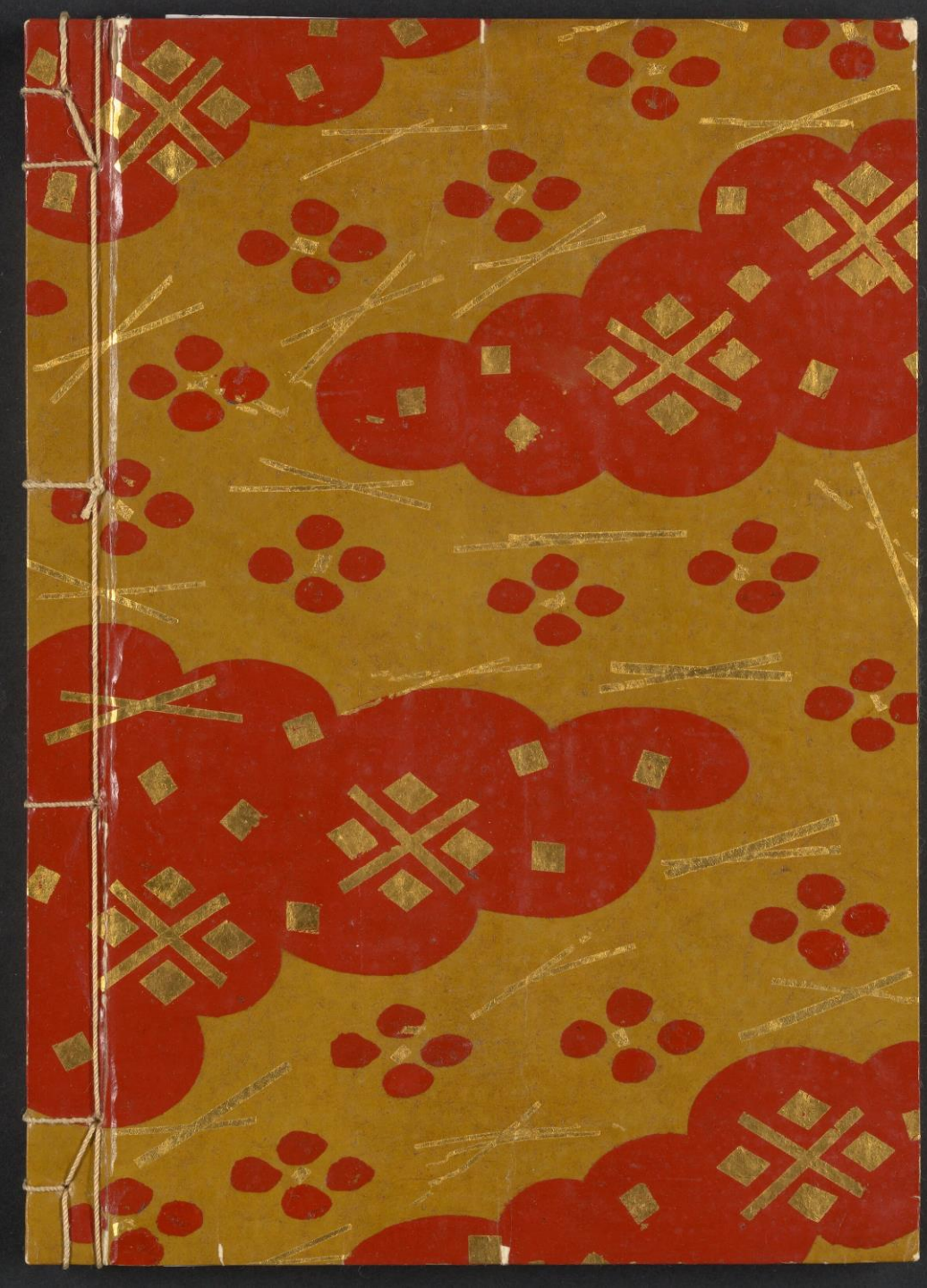


31 scenes
from
Ehon Donkihote





この後印はごんきんほうての
友集未かぬなるを栄(栄)守(守)人
市のかあるをけらあ(あ)の(あ)にそ
の友(友)集(集)未(未)か(か)ぬ(ぬ)る(る)
限(限)定(定)し(し)て(て)接(接)ぎ(ぎ)あ(あ)る(る)式(式)
核(核)を(を)あ(あ)ま(ま)で(で)扱(扱)き(き)あ(あ)る(る)
ゆ(ゆ)り(り)と(と)接(接)ぎ(ぎ)あ(あ)る(る)式(式)
印(印)冊(冊)は(は)そ(そ)の(の)六(六)核(核)を(を)あ(あ)る(る)ゆ(ゆ)り(り)



工藝 Kogei #76, June 1937



繪本どん・きほうて

十景

内 原色版 四葉

單色版 六葉

挿繪目次

用表紙	野州烏山
表紙	雲州岩坂
扉及小間繪	芹澤銈介
描漆	鈴木繁男
裝禎	芹澤銈介

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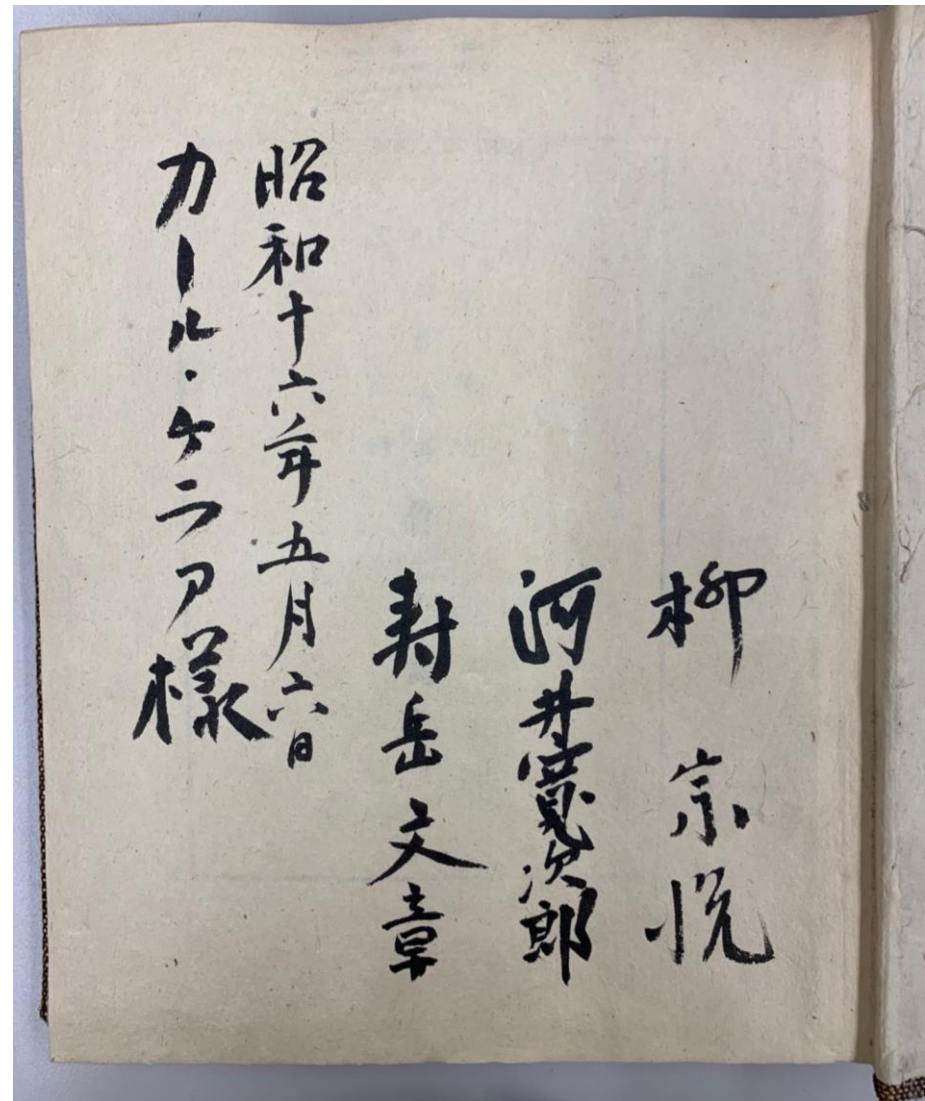
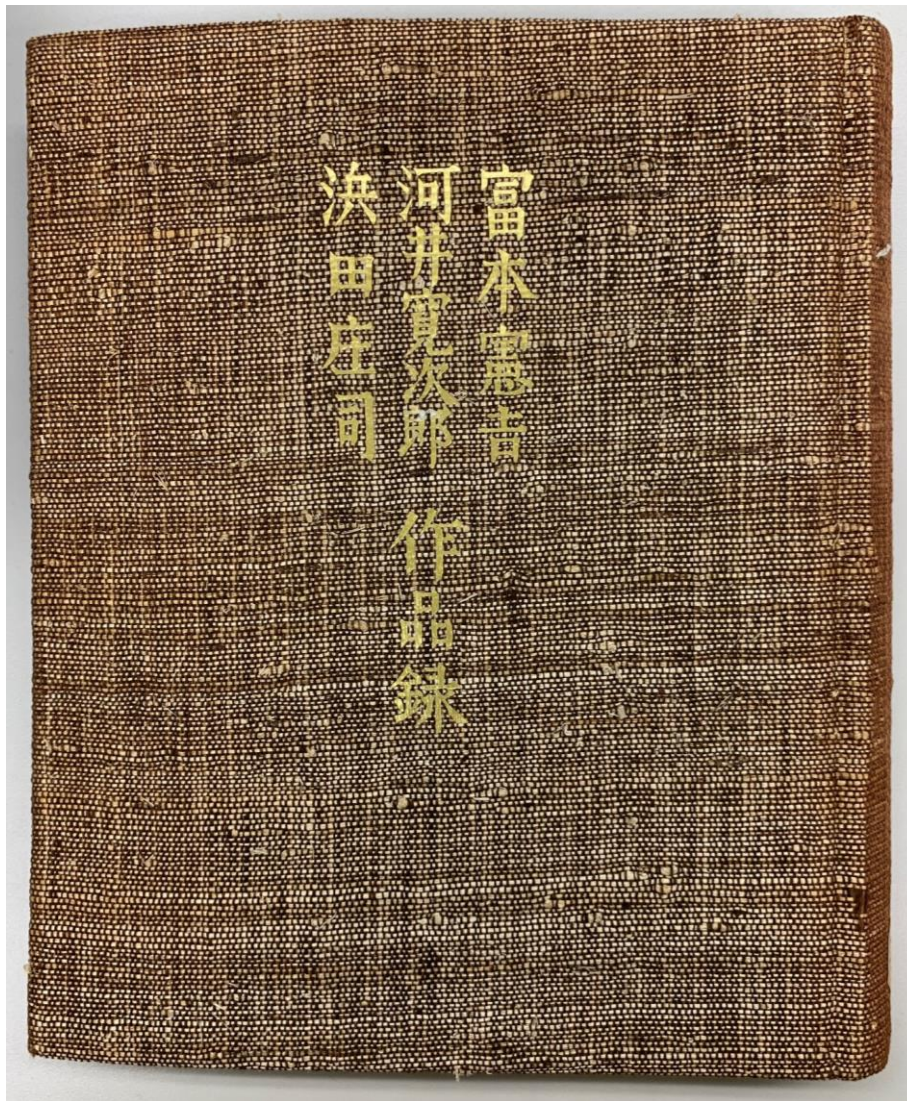


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工藝 76



Reference:

Fraleigh, M. (2006). El ingenioso samurai Don Kihōte del Japón: Serizawa Keisuke's "A Don Quixote Picture Book" *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, 18, 87–120.