

Folding Screens of the Ritual Celebration Memorializing Toyotomi Hideyoshi

(Hokoku sairei zu byobu)

A pair of six-panel folding screens depict the extraordinary events that took place at the memorial for Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) held in 1604 on the seventh anniversary of his death. The event was planned by his son and heir Hideyori (1593–1615) with the support of powerful lords including the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) and was attended by court aristocrats as well as many thousands of townspeople.

At the upper center of the right screen are the imposing main shrine buildings on the hillside of Mt. Amidagamine. These magnificent structures no longer exist, but at the lower right is the hall of Sanjūsangendō, which still stands on its original site. Members of the Toyotomi clan, feudal lords, and aristocrats are shown watching a performance of noh theater in front of the main gate of the shrine. Forming a procession, shrine officials mounted on horses parade through the foreground.

The left screen depicts the second day of the celebration. Townspeople dressed in up in special costumes are shown dancing in circles before the Hall of the Great Buddha at Hōkōji Temple. Some are dressed as exotic “Southern Barbarians,” as Europeans were then known, while one of the dancers appears to be dressed as one of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune. Perhaps the most amusing of the flamboyantly costumed celebrants is a man dressed as a giant bamboo sprout.

The famed painter Kano Naizen (1570–1616) produced these screens over a two-year period, completing them in 1606. The nearly one thousand figures portrayed on the

screens are executed with a deft touch and incorporate a wealth of detail. A high-density digital reproduction of the images was donated to the shrine in 2004, and another version of these screen paintings, attributed to Iwasa Matabei (1578–1650), is owned by the Tokugawa Art Museum. The screens have been designated an Important Cultural Property.