

Treasures of the Maeda Family: The Sonkeikaku Bunko

This gallery displays items from the Sonkeikaku Bunko—a repository of classical texts, historical documents, ornamental armor, paintings, and other treasures owned and collected by the Maeda family during the Edo period (1603–1867). The displays are rotated monthly and may include sets of armor made for the Maeda lords, luxurious campaign jackets, stirrups adorned with Kaga metal inlay, tea utensils, landscape paintings, calligraphy, and occasionally, the Hyakkō Hishō—a collection of samples and objects illustrating decorative craft techniques.

In its entirety, the Sonkeikaku Bunko collection contains 22 National Treasures and 77 Important Cultural Properties—a remarkable number for a single family to have amassed. Most of the objects are ancient texts that remain at a facility in Tokyo, but the Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art is permitted to hold and display approximately 400 of the repository's artifacts and works of fine art.

By the start of the Edo period, the Maedas were one of the wealthiest families in the country, and the annual income of Kaga domain was second only to that of the shogunate. The Maedas' resources enabled them to invest heavily in promoting the arts and collecting many fine pieces. Significant portions of the Sonkeikaku Bunko collection were amassed by the third lord of Kaga, Maeda Toshitsune (1594–1658), and by his grandson Maeda Tsunanori (1643–1724), the domain's fifth lord.

Historically, part of the Maedas' collection was kept at their residence in Edo (now Tokyo). During the Edo period, domain lords had two main residences: one in their own domain and one in Edo. Under the shogunate policy of “alternate attendance” (*sankin kōtai*), lords had to alternate between these two residences every year. Domain lords' wives and principal heirs were required to live in Edo full-time, so some of the family's personal effects were kept in the Maedas' Edo residence. For this reason, part of the collection was in Tokyo when the shogunate fell in 1867. The rest was transferred from Kanazawa to Tokyo when the family moved there permanently during the Meiji era (1868–1912). In 1926, Maeda Toshinari (1885–1942), the sixteenth head of the Maeda family, established the Maeda Ikutokukai Foundation in Tokyo to organize and preserve the family's collection.

Only researchers with prior permission are allowed into the Tokyo repository. Consequently, the Maeda Ikutokukai Gallery is the only place where the general public can view these treasures, which were the pride of one of Japan's wealthiest samurai families.