

The Empire of Things: Tokugawa Ieyasu's Material Legacy and Cultural Profile

MORGAN PITELKA, *Occidental College, USA*

This biographical sketch of Tokugawa Ieyasu aims to construct a cultural profile of the man primarily through a reading of a portrait of him done (after his death) by Kanō Tan'yū, 'Dream Portrait of the Tōshōgu Deity'. The depiction shows his grounding in classical Chinese texts, his collection of Chinese ceramics and other objects, his large collection of swords, and his enduring interest in falconry. Each of these is investigated as a means to illuminating the social networks of patronage and cultural practices through which he established and maintained the power of his clan. These perspectives reveal Ieyasu as a representative sixteenth-century warrior, a product of the particular social and political conditions of his time, whose eventual apotheosis was an ideal which shaped the educations and aspirations of millions of samurai throughout the ensuing Edo period.

Portrait of a Patriarch

A little known portrait in the collection of Rinnōji Temple shows Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, in the relaxed, seated position of a gentleman at rest, eyes wide and staring into the distance (Fig. 1).¹ He is elegantly if unceremoniously dressed in a *kosode* robe with a light-blue tortoiseshell pattern punctuated by the three-leafed crest of the Tokugawa house. His head is covered by a black hood (*kurozugin*), which was originally used as protection against the elements but increasingly worn as a leisure garment by warriors and commoners alike in the seventeenth century. He rests on a mat on a veranda overlooking a garden. He is framed by several objects. A lacquered stand holding a long and short sword sits immediately to Ieyasu's right. Two Chinese ceramic vessels – a grey flower vase (shaped like the bottom of a turnip or *shimo kabura*) and a plover-shaped incense burner, decorated with celadon glaze – can be seen on a lacquered stand in the decorative alcove (*tokonoma*) behind him. A painting of a white falcon perched on the uppermost branch of a pine tree occupies the wall of the alcove.

The pieces of material culture depicted around Ieyasu can function as a kind of table of contents to the cultural practices and products significant to the patriarch's life and career. Swords, Chinese ceramics, and falcons were among the most prized things in his life and they were indicative of his identity as an educated and cultured man of action. This portrait, however, is not a contemporaneous representation. The cursive inscription at the top, written by the Buddhist monk Tenkai (?–1643), reveals the

¹Reproduced in Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Dai Tokugawa ten*, 64.



FIGURE 1. Dream Portrait of the Tōshōgū Deity (Tokugawa Ieyasu). By Kanō Tan'yū, inscription by Tenkai. Edo Period, 17th-century hanging scroll, H. 64 cm, W. 46 cm. Nikkōzan Rinnō-ji Temple, Tochigi Prefecture, Japan.

painting instead to be a posthumous portrait commemorating Ieyasu's apotheosis as the deity Tōshō Daigongen, or 'The Light of the East, the Ultimate Made Manifest'. Closer examination reveals that the small garden below the veranda is Mount Penglai (J: Hōraisan), the holy mountain from Chinese mythology that was said to be the home of the immortals. This portrait is attributed to the official shogunal painter (*goyō eshi*) Kanō Tan'yū (1602–1674), and is just one example of many similar works by Tan'yū and other artists. The commissioners of such figurative representations – usually successive Tokugawa shoguns – accumulated merit through their creation, and perhaps also hoped to aid the journey of the late patriarch to the Buddhist paradise and/or to bring his

benevolent gaze to rest on their good works.² The portraits also had an ideological function, reminding their viewers of the position of the commissioners/owners as heirs to Ieyasu's authority.

This essay will use this posthumous portrait of Tōshō Daigongen as a doorway to the history of Tokugawa Ieyasu's life, both in terms of its content and the methodological implications of using art as historical evidence. Tan'yū's painting indexes swords, Chinese art, and falcons as key markers of Tokugawa status and authority, and each of these forms of material culture will be used to frame a different stage in Ieyasu's transition from boy hostage to ambitious warlord to elderly statesman. More broadly, the commission, preservation, and celebration of this portrait – or to put it another way, the combined facts of its creation, its protection from damage over time, and its modern display in exhibitions and art catalogues – remind us of the role of material culture in the production and reproduction of historical narrative. The following biographical sketch of the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate will therefore be attentive to Ieyasu's own attempts to communicate his past, present, and future through interaction with material culture.

The larger project of which this essay is a part aims to enrich our understanding of Ieyasu and his age by drawing on material culture to fill in the gaps in the voluminous but often opaque documentary record of his accomplishments, about which he wrote relatively little. This research also aspires to reconcile some of the contradictory representations of Ieyasu – as iconic founder, as lucky opportunist, as mechanical politician, as passionate warrior – using two strategies. First, examining the social networks and cultural practices that provided the context for his activities reveals that Ieyasu was both more and less involved in the 'unification' of Japan and the ostensible shift from a medieval to an early modern society than is usually credited. Second, the conflicting representations themselves can be historicized by tracking the diachronic movement of material culture associated with Ieyasu and exposing how his descendents and others in Japan deployed these materials, and constructed new images of Ieyasu at key historical moments. This particular essay explores Ieyasu's complex but largely unknown cultural profile. This aspect of his life is significant because it became a template for the Tokugawa rulers who followed him, for their relatives and vassals, and, as the mythology of his reign was reproduced over the course of the century following his death, for samurai all across Japan.

The Life of the Sword: Warfare and Gift Exchange

When Ieyasu died in 1616, he left behind a massive collection of objects that he had acquired, commissioned, or received over the course of his long career. One of the most important categories of objects, represented prominently in Tan'yū's portrait, was swords, of which he appears to have possessed more than a thousand. The first sword of historical significance that appears in records of Ieyasu's life possessed a double-edged meaning. It was a gift from the warlord who raised him to manhood, trained him, and yet held him hostage for most of his youth. This earliest reference is a good example of how these weapons were frequently more powerful in the symbolic realm than on the battlefield. Swords also present us with an interesting metaphor for the first stage of

²See Gerhart's discussion of Tan'yū's portraits of Ieyasu based on the dreams of his patron, Tokugawa Iemitsu, in 'Visions of the Dead'. On warrior portraits in general, see Miyajima, *Buke no shōzō*.

Ieyasu's career, a time of warfare and network-building in which controlled violence and gift exchange played vital roles.

Ieyasu was born in Okazaki Castle (present day Okazaki city, Aichi prefecture) in Mikawa province on 1543/12/26 as the first son of the 16-year-old Lord Matsudaira Hirotada (1526–1549) and his 14-year-old wife Odai no Kata (1528–1602), the daughter of a neighbouring warlord. That same year, his mother made a donation to a local temple requesting that prayers be offered for Ieyasu's long life. His father made a similar offering to a different temple a month later.³ Despite these signs of affection, Ieyasu's father took his son and left his young wife a year later when it became politically expedient to marry elsewhere. In 1547, when Ieyasu was just five years old and was still known by his childhood name of Takechiyo, his father dispatched him to the Imagawa clan as a hostage, a common practice among elite warriors of this period.⁴ Marriage politics and trafficking in family members were, in the mid-sixteenth century, common forms of political negotiation among warriors, acts aimed at suppressing aggression and ensuring alliances. We cannot know the exact toll this departure took on the young boy who was forced to board a boat outside of Okazaki, bound for a life separated from his father and home.⁵ On his way, Ieyasu was captured by vassals of another warlord, Oda Nobuhide (the father of Oda Nobunaga), a surprising development that must have inspired terror in the child. Ieyasu was minded during this period by a kindly master who distracted the young boy by teaching him to identify local birds.⁶ This surely was the beginning of Ieyasu's lifelong passion for falconry and love of romping through the forests and mountains of central Japan, pursuits that would prove important to him in his later years both personally and politically.

In early 1549, two years into life as a hostage, Ieyasu learned that his father had died. Okazaki Castle, the Matsudaira headquarters, reportedly descended into chaos, and the neighbouring lord Imagawa Yoshimoto summoned the Matsudaira elders and family members to his own headquarters at Sumpu with the hope of stabilizing the situation. Ieyasu was now technically the head of the Matsudaira family, though he was not yet old enough to take on official responsibilities. Later that year, the Oda clan passed Ieyasu to the Imagawa as part of a routine hostage exchange. He was seven years old. During his second stint as a hostage, Ieyasu was housed and schooled in the temple-based community (*monzen machi*) of Sumpu.⁷ According to the later *Tale of Mikawa*, 'These were fearful times for Ieyasu, more than can be expressed in words.'⁸

In 1555, Yoshimoto arranged for Ieyasu to undergo the ceremony of manhood at the age of 13.⁹ Two years later, Ieyasu married the daughter of Sekiguchi Yoshihiro, a vassal and relative by marriage of Lord Yoshimoto.¹⁰ Around this time, Ieyasu also began to assume more responsibility as an active warrior. In the second month of 1558, for example, Lord Yoshimoto ordered Ieyasu to accompany him and his troops in an attack on a neighbouring castle located on the perimeter of Oda Nobunaga's (1534–1582) growing domain. After burning the castle, they turned to attack other outposts in the region before returning to Sumpu. Nobunaga sent some forces in pursuit, but

³Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 58.

⁴Kamii, 'Sengoku jidai no jinshitsu'.

⁵Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 65.

⁶*Ibid.*, 66.

⁷Ōkubo, *Mikawa monogatari*, 72–73. Also Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 68–72.

⁸Ōkubo, *Mikawa monogatari*, 73.

⁹*Ibid.*, 76. Also, Kuroita, *Tokugawa jikki*, 29–30.

¹⁰Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 91–92.

Yoshimoto's men defeated them and arrived home safely. Soon after this, several warriors who had previously served Ieyasu's father at Okazaki Castle petitioned Lord Yoshimoto, arguing that in light of Ieyasu's maturity and his successful participation in the raid against Oda lands, he should be allowed to return to Okazaki as lord of the castle. Yoshimoto refused, instead gifting a large sword to Ieyasu in recognition of his accomplishment.¹¹ This gift at this particular moment seems like a rather ironic reward that implies independence while in fact enforcing continued service and subservience. It may have been intended to appease the young man's frustration, but as was often true of the gifts that warriors exchanged in the course of their ubiquitous and elaborate social rituals, it surely also reminded Ieyasu of his feudal bond; in this case, his utter subservience to the Imagawa cause, despite his hope to reestablish his own family rule and independent domain.

Swords appear regularly in the records of Ieyasu's life for the next several decades, as he gradually reclaimed his birthright as head of the Matsudaira family, aligned himself with Oda Nobunaga and expanded his domain, and ultimately emerged as the strongest warlord in Japan after the death of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598). Again and again, he and his peers sealed alliances, demanded cooperation, or offered thanks through gifts of swords. At the same time, these warriors wore two swords (of the sort seen in Tan'yū's portrait of Ieyasu) as marks of their status, and the men under their command – when not using arrows, spears, or arquebuses – relied on their swords to accomplish their objectives in battle. Large-scale warfare came to an end with Ieyasu's victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. This substantiation of his military supremacy, validated politically by the Kyoto court with his promotion to the post of shogun in 1603, justified his creation of a legitimate military regime, one that would use the cultural structures of warrior precedent and Chinese civilization to legitimize a rigid new social and political order. With just a few exceptions, contests over status would now occur in the fields of cultural practice and patronage, rather than on the battlefield.

The Cultured Life: Patronage and the Idealization of Precedent

Returning to Tan'yū's portrait of Ieyasu, we see a grey, turnip-shaped flower vase and a celadon, plover-shaped incense burner on a lacquered stand, both sitting on the wooden floor of the alcove at the back of the room. These works of Chinese origin point to another category of objects owned by Ieyasu, namely the various pieces of Chinese material culture that he seems to have become particularly interested in around the time that he became shogun. Ieyasu was what we might think of as a pragmatic Sinophile, attracted to Chinese thought as a tool for the construction of good government and to Chinese art as a means of drawing connections to the legitimizing power of Chinese civilization as well as to the institutional authority of previous collectors of China such as the Ashikaga shoguns. Although often erroneously described by later observers and modern historians as a Confucianist, Ieyasu appreciated and promoted a range of Chinese intellectual traditions, including the writings of military strategists and historians; he also relied upon experts in written Chinese to act in a diplomatic capacity

¹¹Swords appear in the earliest records of Japan. Archaeologists have unearthed ceremonial swords from ancient tumuli, probably symbols of authority rather than actual tools of war. Swords also play a key role in the early myths of Japan, particularly as one of the three sacred regalia of the imperial family. Sword exchanges and sword gifts are recorded as early as the *Kojiki* [Records of Ancient Matters], but seem to have become particularly common during the late medieval period.

and to draft legislation of various sorts. Likewise, in the world of tea he employed the services of tea masters as go-betweens in negotiations among warlords and also in the connoisseurship and acquisition of Chinese art.¹² These actions and objects were central to Ieyasu's conception of the administration that would, in 1603, become the Tokugawa military government.

Traces of Ieyasu's emerging interest in Chinese culture begin to appear in the historical record after 1590, when Hideyoshi transferred the Tokugawa lord from the provinces around Mikawa in central Japan, which had been his home for his entire life, to the eastern provinces, significantly further removed from the capital at Kyoto. Ieyasu set up his headquarters in the small town of Edo and began the arduous process of resettling his vassals, winning the loyalty of local warriors, and building up an administration that could function even when he was absent in service to Hideyoshi. In 1592, for example, Ieyasu was required to travel to Kyushu to support Hideyoshi's first invasion of Korea, the opening act of the disastrous Imjin War (1592–1598). In Kyushu, Ieyasu was one of the officials in charge of the castle from which troops were launched, a position that he held for a year and a half. In fact, Ieyasu had relatively little to do during this period, and seems to have occupied himself, at least in part, by writing letters of enfeoffment and commendation to warriors, temples, and shrines in his new provinces.¹³ He also led a rich cultural life during this period, with tea gatherings and other social events punctuating his time. He may have been directly exposed to new types of Korean and Chinese material culture in this period as well, as warriors returned from the continent with various kinds of booty and numerous ambassadors moved in and out of the castle. A letter written later in the year, for example, thanks one warrior acquaintance for gifts that he had brought to Ieyasu from his time in Korea.¹⁴

Neither Ieyasu nor his troops participated in the destructive war in Korea, and as soon as he was able, in the eighth month of 1593, he headed home to Edo. Once there, he had the chance to meet with the Buddhist monk and budding China scholar Fujiwara Seika, whom he must have met while both men were working in Kyushu. Seika presented a lecture on the Chinese text *Essentials of Good Government* (Ch: *Zhenguan zhengyao*; J: *Jōgan seiyō*; Tang Dynasty, seventh century).¹⁵ This text, which had been useful to warrior leaders in the past, was by no means Ieyasu's first encounter with Chinese meditations on governance. He had been well educated, even while a hostage, and was familiar with many of the Confucian classics. This particular primer, however, must have been extremely helpful as he contemplated the rule of his domain and the possible expansion of his authority in the future. He would later mention this text explicitly in the prescriptive regulations of 1615, *Code for the Imperial Court and Court Nobility*.¹⁶

Ieyasu continued to patronize Seika, who left the Buddhist priesthood in 1598 and devoted himself fulltime to Chinese studies. After Ieyasu was appointed to the post of shogun, Seika refused to be employed by the new regime, so the Tokugawa lord instead hired Seika's student Hayashi Razan in 1606 as an expert in all things Chinese. Razan

¹²Imai Sōkun, for example, was instrumental in mediating the important relationship between Ieyasu and Date Masamune: Takahashi, 'Imai Sōkun to Date Masamune', 294–323.

¹³Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu monjo no kenkyū*, vol. 2, 209–224.

¹⁴See *ibid.*, 238–239.

¹⁵Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, 112. In note 3 on the same page, Ooms notes that emperors and shoguns had heard such lectures on this text on many occasions in the past. See also *Seika monjo*, Bunroku 2/12, cited in Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 286, and his 'Tokugawa Ieyasu kō shōsai nempu', in the same volume but numbered separately, 82.

¹⁶De Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 14–15.

lectured to Ieyasu and his son (the second shogun) Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632) on various Chinese classics; he was instructed to write diplomatic correspondence and to mind the growing Tokugawa library; and he was used, along with a range of Buddhist priests, as a kind of policy expert who drafted documents that would eventually be issued as key pieces of shogunal law.¹⁷ Though Seika and Razan were long credited with introducing Ieyasu to Neo-Confucianism, and establishing this branch of East Asian thought as the ideological foundation of the Tokugawa regime, recent research demonstrates that Ieyasu valued these men and their expertise not because of any particular interest in Confucianism, but rather because the institutional authority of Chinese civilization itself was efficacious in his attempts to establish political legitimacy.¹⁸ It was Razan's knowledge of classical Chinese, his expertise in Chinese thought and law, and his general skills as a writer that brought him the patronage of the Tokugawa.

Ieyasu's interactions with men of learning such as Seika, Razan, and others is matched by his personal devotion to reading and printing a range of books. The physician Otasaka Bokusai (1578–1655) recorded that Ieyasu's nine favourite books consisted of two Chinese Confucian works (the *Analects* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*), two Chinese historical works (*Records of the Grand Historian* and the *Book of Han*), two Chinese military guides (*The Six Secret Teachings* and *The Three Strategies*), the aforementioned Chinese text, *Essentials of Good Government*, and just two Japanese texts, both focusing on governance: *Legal Codes of the Engi Era* (*Engishiki*) and *Mirror of the East* (*Azuma Kagami*).¹⁹ In 1599, Ieyasu ordered the printing of six books, five of them Chinese, by the Zen monk Kanshitsu Genkitsu at Fushimi. Again in the 1610s, Ieyasu ordered underlings to print two different Chinese texts, one a compilation of canonical Buddhist extracts and the other a collection of gems from the Chinese classics.²⁰ Ieyasu was clearly devoted to reading and reproducing texts, but he was also a discriminating booklover who was overwhelmingly devoted to writings from China.

Acquiring pieces of Chinese material culture such as paintings, lacquer ware, and ceramics was another means by which Ieyasu could exercise his interest in shogunal and continental precedents. It is important to remember here that the acquisition of objects in Japan in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was not equivalent to the bourgeois culture of collecting that we find in Japan today, or even the limited consumerism that would become common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Edo. Like the historical sites that Matthew Stavros discusses in his essay in this issue, objects in medieval Japan were understood to possess a certain kind of power, not only as symbols but as ritual vessels or as potential vehicles for communication with people past and present.²¹ In tea, for example, art works associated with particular temples, particular warrior leaders, or particular tea teachers were thought to invoke the spirit and authority of those men. Though Ieyasu was hardly an enthusiastic patron of the tea world, he recognized the utility of its networks and dealers and as a result, his collection

¹⁷See Boot's useful summary of Razan's services to the bakufu, in 'The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan', 184–186.

¹⁸See, for example, Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, and Bodart-Bailey, *The Dog Shogun*.

¹⁹Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 332.

²⁰Ieyasu was also active as a collector of books, a founder of libraries, and as a supporter of publishing and circulation of books. See Kornicki's recent article, 'Books in the Service of Politics', for more information.

²¹See, for example, Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*.

of tea art and utensils, particularly the kinds of imported Chinese objects prized by the Ashikaga shoguns, was unparalleled.²²

Ieyasu appears to have owned many works of Chinese manufacture at the time of his death in 1616, and a small sampling will demonstrate the quality and symbolic capital of these objects. Several of his paintings and examples of black ink-brush writing (*bokuseki*) had previously been in the collection of the Ashikaga shoguns, as well as prominent warlords of the late sixteenth century. The painting 'Budai', for example, attributed to the Southern Song dynasty painter Hu Zhifu, shows the Chan Buddhist sage Hotei seeming to pull away a sack from a child who is just starting to fall asleep on it, a clear metaphor for the abandonment of attachments leading to sudden enlightenment. This painting was previously owned by both Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408) and Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435–1490), the two most famous and influential Ashikaga shoguns. Another important work, the landscape painting 'Returning Sailboat from a Distant Shore' from the series 'Eight Views of the Xiao Xiang Region' by the Southern Song dynasty painter Yujian, was owned by both Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and Yoshimasa, and later by Imagawa Yoshimoto, the very warlord who had held Ieyasu as hostage and given him the sword mentioned above; Toyotomi Hideyoshi had owned the painting before Ieyasu. Yet another well-known Southern Song work, the diptych 'Dragon' and 'Tiger', has a similar pedigree. 'Dragon' is by Chen Rong and 'Tiger' is attributed to Muqi, both highly prized in Japan. The diptych was previously owned by the Ashikaga shoguns, Oda Nobunaga, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Tea practitioners often used such paintings as wall hangings in the decorative alcove of a purpose-built tea room (*chashitsu*) during a tea gathering. Likewise, many of the Chinese lacquer and ceramic pieces owned by Ieyasu would have been used in the course of tea practice. A carved red lacquer incense container, for example, dated to the Ming Dynasty (fifteenth century), was mentioned in the contemporaneous text, *Record of Yamanoe Sōji*, as having been owned by Ashikaga Yoshimasa before entering the collection of the warrior tea master Furuta Oribe (1545–1615), who gifted it to Ieyasu for use in his tea gatherings. Another example is the tea caddy named 'Nitta', a Southern Song period piece mentioned in the same text as one of the three great masterpieces of the realm. It was reportedly so valuable that it was sought after by all the major warlords of the late sixteenth century. The first known owner was Murata Shukō, considered by many to be one of the key figures in the development of rustic tea (*wabicha*). Later owners included Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Ieyasu acquired this treasure when he burned Osaka Castle to the ground in 1615, the final destruction of the Toyotomi lineage and the beginning, many historians have argued, of Tokugawa hegemony. He sent two of his vassals into the ashes to retrieve this and other priceless pieces that had been kept in the possession of the Toyotomi to the very end. Perhaps acquisition of these treasures from China brought Ieyasu a kind of symbolic possession of their previous owners, both an administration that Ieyasu hoped to emulate and, in the case of the Toyotomi, a family that he had successfully supplanted.²³

²²This is not to suggest that old or imported things were inviolate. Japanese collectors often cut down Chinese paintings or used Chinese, Korean, and Southeast Asian ceramics in contexts for which they had not originally been intended. See Watsky, 'Locating "China" in the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan', for a compelling analysis of the process of renaming and thereby relocating Chinese things that occurred in the community of tea practitioners during Ieyasu's lifetime.

²³Several theorists of collecting have posited that acquisition and ownership of fetishized objects can function as a kind of psychological dominance. See for example, Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting', and Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*. Photographs of the objects

The Life of the Hunt: Falconry and Paramilitary Pleasure

Returning a final time to Tan'yū's portrait of Ieyasu, we see the inclusion of a white falcon on a pine tree branch at the back of the room.²⁴ Pine trees are a common motif in painting from this period, bringing associations with sacred sites and also signifying longevity and even immortality.²⁵ Falcons, too, were seen as signs of strength and, due to their prowess as hunters, perhaps also as a metaphor for the dignified ruthlessness of the warrior. The falcon also indicates an entire set of cultural practices that obsessed the subject of the portrait. Falconry or hawking – the practice of using birds of prey (raptors, or *taka* in Japanese,) to hunt – originated in Central Asia and spread from there to China and later Korea and Japan, and also to the Middle East and eventually Europe. In Japan falconry had been a right of power-holders since the legal origins of the imperial state in the seventh century.²⁶ Over the course of the sixteenth century the acquisition of the proper birds, access to and control of appropriate hunting land, and the arrangement of specialized training and care for the animals (by falcon experts or *taka yakumin*) became closely intertwined with the growing authority of warlords like Ieyasu. According to contemporaneous documents that probably only capture a fragment of the total, Ieyasu appears to have gone on well more than a thousand hawking expeditions during his lifetime, prompting one scholar to refer to him as the most active falconer in Japanese history.²⁷ This was a lifelong passion, but one that came to be more and more prominent in his final decade.

Early in 1605, Ieyasu began preparations to step down from the position of shogun despite being in good health at the age of 63. The fact that Ieyasu was able and willing to give up power while still in his prime, something neither Nobunaga nor Hideyoshi had felt able to attempt, was in part a result of his success as a patriarch. He was unmatched in his production of sons and daughters who could succeed him, support him, or be sent out to seal alliances.²⁸ Likewise, he had, over the course of his long career, developed a large and reliable network of vassals who sustained him and his children before, during, and after he became shogun. His retirement was also, of course, a result of his success in establishing the new administration in Edo based on shogunal and continental precedents. In the second month of 1605, Ieyasu therefore arrived at Fushimi Castle south of Kyoto and spent most of the third month entertaining various guests and laying the groundwork for a major announcement. His son Hidetada arrived at the end of the month and the two began receiving visitors at Fushimi Castle on the first day of the fourth month. They then travelled to Nijō Castle and visited the Imperial Court. Finally, on 4/12 Ieyasu assembled the nobles of the court, major warlords, and the heads of

mentioned in the text are reproduced in the following catalogue issued by Tokugawa Bijutsukan and Tokugawa Hakubutsukan, *Ieyasu no isan*.

²⁴Precedents exist for the inclusion of falcons in portraits of warriors. See the portrait of the warrior Makabe Hisamoto (1522–1589) sitting under a pine tree with a falcon on its branch (Miyajima, *Buke no shōzō*, Figure 47) and the portrait of an unknown subject (sometimes said to be the Kamakura-period warrior Oda Haruhisa, 1283–1353, though the connection is weak) who sits on a bench and holds a falcon in his left hand (Miyajima, *Buke no shōzō*, Figure 48).

²⁵See Gerhart's discussion of pine trees in Tokugawa painting in *The Eyes of Power*, 25–31.

²⁶Falconry (*takagari*) has not received much treatment in English. See Jameson, *The Hawking of Japan*, and Saunders, 'Pursuits of Power', for a more recent summary. Nesaki, *Shōgun no takagari*, offers a useful summary in Japanese of the history of *takagari* in the first chapter.

²⁷See, for example, Nesaki, 'Takagari', in *Tokugawa Ieyasu jiten*, 274.

²⁸Ieyasu had 11 sons and five daughters.

temples and shrines, and with a huge army at his back,²⁹ announced that he was stepping down and passing on the post of shogun to Hidetada. The appointment was officially declared by the emperor on 4/16, and Hidetada visited the court again on the 26th to convey his gratitude.³⁰

Two years later, Ieyasu retired to a new palatial residence at Sumpu (contemporary Shizuoka city), the castle town in which he had spent much of his youth. He was at this point referred to as Cloistered Shogun (Ōgosho) and, though still active in politics, was able to spend more time pursuing his own interests. Chief among those was falconry, a practice that was absolutely central to elite warrior life in this period – perhaps what golf is to political power in more recent times. Unfortunately, and in marked contrast to Ieyasu's acquisition of swords and Chinese things, not many items survive from this most beloved of Ieyasu's hobbies because the centre of the practice, after all, was a living creature.

The documents that record Ieyasu's career make it clear that he loved both the birds and the practice of falconry; in the museums devoted to the history of the Tokugawa family and the early modern period, however, material culture from falconry is rarely displayed. The lack of such evidence is in and of itself meaningful. It reminds us that much of a historical actor's interaction with the material world and immediate physical environment is impermanent. In the case of rare individuals who experienced apotheosis such as Ieyasu, the lack of a lasting material record of this particular aspect of his life opens a gaping hole in his biographical profile.

As mentioned above, Ieyasu began to learn about birds while a hostage of Oda Nobuhide, and went on occasional hawking trips when a hostage of Imagawa Yoshimoto.³¹ His serious interest in falconry seems to have begun around 1577, when he was allied with Nobunaga and increasing his territory in central Japan. In this year he sought out a falconry teacher and worked to acquire a collection of falcons.³² From this date forward, contemporaneous records and his own letters indicate that he practiced falconry, usually in the company of a vassal or ally, at least every year if not several times per year. The documents are not particularly enlightening in terms of the details of these events, recording, for example, only that Ieyasu visited a certain spot in the countryside to go hawking. What is startling is the regularity of such passages compared to any other particular cultural practice.

Ieyasu also began to give and receive falcons on a regular basis in a process that seems to resemble the exchange of swords. One early reference is from 1583, when he received a falcon from no less an influential personage than Hideyoshi, who was also a falconry fan.³³ The two in fact practiced falconry together on several occasions, including an outing on the outskirts of Kyoto in the spring of 1588.³⁴ Later the same year, when Ieyasu was planning a falconry expedition in Mikawa, Hideyoshi sent him the gift of a falcon to take on his journey. One 1585 missive records his thanks to the steward of Enryakuji Temple who had sent him some large falconry cords and straps as gifts.³⁵ Another 1588 letter records his gift of a falcon to Mogami Yoshiaki (1546–1614), lord of Yamagata domain in Dewa Province, at a time when Yoshiaki was beginning to align himself with

²⁹Irimoto, among other historians, estimates this army to have numbered around 100,000 men. See *Tokugawa sandai to bakufu seiritsu*.

³⁰These events are recorded in entries for the third and fourth months of Keichō 10 in the noble Yamashina Tokitsune's diary, *Tokitsune kyōki*, 136–174.

³¹See Ōkubo, *Mikawa monogatari*, 73, for an early reference.

³²Nakamura, 'Tokugawa Ieyasu kō shōsai nempu', separately numbered in *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 29.

³³Kimura, *Butoku hennen shūsei*, entry for Tenshō 11/10/25.

³⁴Matsudaira Ietada, *Ietada nikki*, vol. 2, 66.

³⁵Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu monjo no kenkyū*, vol. 1, 673–674.

Hideyoshi.³⁶ Another letter from two years later records Ieyasu's thanks to Mogami for a falcon received as a gift, and then asks the warlord to meet Hideyoshi's army as it travelled through Mogami's domain.³⁷ These were no idle interactions; Yoshiaki would later develop a grudge against the Toyotomi family and fight for Ieyasu at Sekigahara, surely not because of the interest he shared with Ieyasu in falcons, but as part of a relationship that was nurtured by exchanges of these and other items of cultural significance.

References to falcons and falconry are particularly frequent after Ieyasu's retirement in 1605, becoming also increasingly complicated and indicating not short falconry trips punctuating a busy life of politics, but a life organized around falconry in which explicit affairs of state appear almost to be an afterthought. Movements from Sumpu to Edo or from Edo to visit various vassals were almost always framed by falconry expeditions, and even meetings with the shogun seem secondary to the pursuit of birds. Take an entry from *Record of Sumpu*, a register of his activities in the latter half of his retirement, for the eleventh month of 1611.

On the first day, Ieyasu leisurely engaged in falconry, stopping at a few temples and having a meal. On the second day, he went hawking. On the third day, the same. On the fourth day, he caught an unprecedented bird. . . . On the sixth day, Hidetada [the shogun] sent a special goose to the falconry fields, which brought great pleasure to Ieyasu. He went hawking after the goose with six retainers and the shogun came to watch.³⁸

It continues in this fashion, page after page.

It is worth asking what benefits Ieyasu reaped from these regular outings. Certainly he enjoyed the birds themselves, but his dedication to pursuing falconry at every opportune moment implies an interest that goes beyond a mere obsession with raptors. It seems instead to link his ambition as a warlord with his rather austere sense of personal fulfilment, in which he could only enjoy himself if he was also executing his duties as the patriarch of a warrior family at the helm of a military regime. He once said of the practice, 'Falconry is not just for pleasure. It goes without saying that you can go out to distant villages and sympathize with the suffering of the common people and the conditions of local soldiers. Physical labour lets your limbs become nimble. One does not grow weary of the cold and the heat; rather illnesses and such naturally do not occur.'³⁹ Even more vigorous is another passage attributed to him and with clear repercussions for his successors, who were, after all, military rather than civilian leaders:

Do not see falconry as merely the practice of catching as many birds as possible. In times of peace, when both low and high laze about, the limbs go slack and people naturally become unable to rise up and fulfil their duties. If this happens, both low and high can exercise their bodies through activities such as deer hunting and falconry. Toss aside your palanquins and go on foot. Overcome the mountain slope, ford the river's current. Engage in various forms of labour and make your body strong. Through such activity, vassals have the opportunity to see the conditions of the strong and the weak on the

³⁶Ibid., 720.

³⁷Ibid., 768.

³⁸See the document 'Sumpuki', entry for Keichō 16/11/1-6, in Ono, *Ieyasu shiryō shū*, 25-26.

³⁹Nesaki, *Shōgun no takagari*, 36-37.

outskirts [of the castle town]. Vassals will also exert themselves, turning them into healthy walkers and preparing them for any kind of service. Therefore, falconry for the warlord is a form of military strategizing and training.⁴⁰

Falconry emerges from these passages as a kind of paramilitary exercise, which ensures readiness and improves the body of the participant, but is not part of the formal military and occupational repertoire of the early seventeenth century.

Considering these records, it is perhaps no surprise that Ieyasu's last pleasurable act was a hawking trip. On 1616/1/21, Ieyasu went hawking in Tanaka near Sumpu Castle. In light of his belief that vigorous activity prevented disease, it is ironic that Ieyasu was struck by illness precisely that same evening. When his condition worsened, the shogun, Hidetada, rushed to Sumpu, followed by messengers bearing concerned enquiries from every major temple and shrine, all the daimyo, and the court. Ieyasu did not improve, so the court sent word that the emperor would offer prayers and perform rare supplications to the gods for Ieyasu's improvement. Temple and shrine heads were called in to perform every known ritual service and the emperor even awarded him the rank of Grand Chancellor (*dajō daijin*), and he did seem to get better for a time. But two more months of illness, marked by planning for the division of his estate after his death and the placement of his remains on Mt Kuno, ended on 4/17. He died that morning at the age of 75.⁴¹

Conclusion: The Tokugawa Empire of Things

Tokugawa Ieyasu's death does not mark the end of the story of his material legacy, of course, but rather its beginning. In 1616 his enormous collection of received, bought, and confiscated objects was divided, according to his prior instructions, among the three extended branches of the Tokugawa lineage, who ruled substantial domains at Owari, Mito, and Kii.⁴² (Falcons, as would be expected, were not included, being too ephemeral.) Each branch also received a share of the enormous wealth, in the form of gold and silver coins, that Ieyasu had acquired over his 75 years. These forms of symbolic and literal capital elevated the Tokugawa house to the loftiest of heights in terms of prestige and economic means. The inheritance also allowed Tokugawa shoguns and branch family heads to control the display and preservation of material culture associated with the founder of the regime.

Ieyasu's grandson Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), the third shogun, played a particularly significant role in establishing a network of objects and images associated with Ieyasu, a kind of empire of things that reinforced Tokugawa authority. He was, for example, responsible for the construction of the magisterial Tōshōgū at Nikkō, an enormous shrine complex that honoured Ieyasu as a deity and to which political luminaries and other elites of the Tokugawa age thereafter made pilgrimages. Tōshōgū was imitated on a smaller scale in domains around Japan, and these sites collectively created a complex of ritual and worship in which Ieyasu became both a protector of the Tokugawa state and a reminder of its legitimacy, prompting the historian Herman Ooms to refer to the worship of Ieyasu as Tōshō Daigongen as 'a political cult for the warrior class'.⁴³ The production, reproduction, and exchange of art were central to this ideology. Commissioned paintings and portraits of the sort mentioned at the beginning

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Nakamura, *Tokugawa Ieyasu kō den*, 673–682.

⁴²Recorded in 'Sumpu owakemono odōgu chō', 653–739 and 756–865.

⁴³Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, 60.

of this essay are prime examples of how Ieyasu's legacy was represented and reproduced in private and public contexts.⁴⁴

This biographical sketch represents only a preliminary attempt to frame the life of Tokugawa Ieyasu in terms of his material legacy, and many details of his career and his engagement with the arts have not been touched upon. There is much more to be said about Ieyasu's social networks and cultural pursuits, and the way these interconnected relationships informed his political and military activities. Studying these activities and experiences is also useful in our attempt to paint a more textured picture of Ieyasu's career and particularly what we might call his interiority, which is otherwise so hard to access because of his unwillingness to record personal thoughts and emotions in written form. At the same time, however, it should be explicitly noted that Ieyasu's cultural profile was not unique. Many sixteenth-century samurai spent part of their childhood as hostages, owned and exchanged swords, received extensive educations in the Chinese classics and the martial arts, and became enamoured with such paramilitary outdoor pursuits as falconry and horseback riding. In this sense, examining the trajectory of Ieyasu's childhood, rise to power as a warlord, success in national politics, establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate, and deification by his successors is not significant because it reveals a man who was entirely exceptional, but rather because it shows the degree to which he and his peers were products of the particular social and political conditions of Japan's long sixteenth century, a period of civil war, cultural experimentation, and new social forms that began around the time of the Ōnin War (1467–1477). Ieyasu's apotheosis in 1616 set a standard of warrior accomplishment and cultural engagement that would shape the educations and aspirations of millions of samurai during the Tokugawa period, not to mention the understanding of 'the way of the warrior' in modern attempts to define Japanese tradition. His long life and complex career, which do not fit into the tidy boxes of medieval or early modern, challenge some of the fundamental assumptions about periodization that have guided the study of Japanese history for generations. Rather than seeing Ieyasu as the atypical individual who founded the early modern system, he should be understood as a representative sixteenth century warrior whose cultural profile was reproduced and idealized in the seventeenth century and beyond.

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⁴⁴On this topic, see Gerhart, 'Visions of the Dead' and *The Eyes of Power*.

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