



Misty Rain in Valleys and Mountains 霧雨の谷と山

Ike Taiga

On display

Title/Description: Misty Rain in Valleys and Mountains 霧雨の谷と山

Artist/Maker: Ike Taiga (Artist)

Born: 1770 c.

Object Type: Scroll painting

Materials: Fibre, Ink, Paper, Silk, Watercolour

Technique: Painting

Measurements: h. 1343 x w. 279 mm

Accession Number: 647a

Historic Period: Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

School/Style: Bunjinga, Nanga

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

This is a late work by Ike Taiga (1723-1776) depicting a rustic hut situated beside a tree on a rocky slope. The title appears in the top-left corner of the painting, brushed in clerical script: 'Misty Rain in Valleys and Mountains' (*Taniyama nuka'ame* 霧雨の谷と山). The work is signed 'Painted by Kashō' (*Kashō sha* 雲草) and has three seals, which have not yet been deciphered. [1]

Taiga has used washes of sage green, pale grey and pink for the foliage of the trees, and pale blue to suggest fine rain. The scene is peaceful and idyllic, without becoming static. In fact, the composition is extremely dynamic. The stillness of the trees and hut is contrasted with the knotted formations of the churning landscape.

Rather than presenting the viewer with a depopulated landscape, Taiga has included two figures within the composition. They can be seen within the humble dwelling, framed by the window of the hermit's retreat. One figure appears to be bringing his companion refreshments on a small tray. The side of this building juts out of the rock to the right. The negative space around the hut could suggest that this rural dwelling is suspended above a valley shrouded in mist, or it may indicate the

presence of a wide river or lake.

The eye follows the course of a river, which begins as a waterfall in the top right section of the painting, perhaps broadening in the middle section of the composition, and continuing its course toward the bottom right corner. The widening river or lake, possibly represented by the central blank unpainted area, divides the composition horizontally into two sections. Taiga has created a sense of spatial recession by using this device to delineate foreground from middle ground.

Taiga was a second-generation Nanga literatus, who worked as a professional artist. Departing from the 'scholar-amateur' ideal, Taiga lived by fulfilling commissions and selling his paintings and calligraphy. Taiga formed friendships with the Chinese painters affiliated with Ōbaku Zen, who practiced at Manpuku Temple in Kyoto, and also with monk-artists of the Rinzaï Zen sect. In addition to being influenced by Chinese paintings, Taiga's style incorporated Rinpa techniques, such as *tarashikomi* 'dripping in', which involved laying fresh ink on top of a still-wet ink ground to produce a blurred effect.

Vanessa Tothill, February 2023

[1] Lawrence Smith and Yutaka Mino in Steven Hooper, ed., *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection: Catalogue* (Newhaven; Norwich: Yale University Press in association with University of East Anglia, 1997) vol. 3, cat. no. 125, p. 173.

Further Reading

Useful sources for identification of Taiga's seals are:

Ike no Taiga gafu (Compendium of Paintings by Ike Taiga), 5 vols (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan 1958) with supplementary volume of seal charts and chronology - based on an 1803 catalogue of Taiga's works compiled by Nakagawa Tenju; and Kurimoto Kazuo Ike no Taiga sakuhinshū (Collection of Works by Ike Taiga), 2 vols (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1960)

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Addiss, Stephen, *Zenga and Nanga: Paintings by Japanese Monks and Scholars. Selections from the Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection* (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1976)

Cahill, James, *Scholar Painters of Japan: the Nanga School* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1972)

Hooper, Steven, ed., *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection: Catalogue*, 3 vols (Newhaven; Norwich: Yale University Press in association with University of East Anglia, 1997)

Mason, Penelope, *History of Japanese Art*, 2nd edn (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005),

Murase, Miyeko, *Japanese Art: Selections from the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975)

Rosenfield, John M. 'Biographies' in *Extraordinary Persons: Works by Eccentric, Non-conformist Japanese Artists of the Early Modern Era (1580-1868) in the Collection of Kimiko and John Powers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Art Museums, 1999)

Rosenfield, John M. and Miyeko Murase, *Unrivalled Splendour: The Kimiko and John Powers Collection of Japanese Art* (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2012)

Takeuchi, Melinda, 'Ike Taiga: A biographical Study' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (June 1983), pp. 141-86

Takeuchi, Melinda, "True" Views: Taiga's Shinkeizu and the Evolution of Literati Painting Theory in Japan', *Association for Asian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1 (February 1989), pp. 3-26

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Watson, William, ed., *The Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period 1600-1868* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson in association with Royal Academy of Arts, 1981)
