

Concerning the Composition of *Kasuga Gongen Genki*

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Abstract. This study is to analyze the painted architecture of *Kasuga Gongen Genki*. A lot of picture scrolls were produced in the Kamakura era, and this is one of the most famous. The subject matter of these picture scrolls is the miraculous stories of the Kasuga Deity, and it is illustrated with the founding stories originating from local shrines and temples. One of the unique qualities of the pictorial buildings on these picture scrolls is that their expressive styles of architecture were created in the 8th century. Most of the pictorial buildings drawn on these picture scrolls are some particular buildings in the precinct of the Kasuga Shrine. The image of a building drawn on *Kasuga Gongen Genki* is said to be faithful to the structure of the real building. In order to get the features of the drawn buildings, we focused on the lines showing their depth and the composition of the drawings. In the following pictures, group scenes were painted with a similar composition and common ground was found. In conclusion, this study suggests that the traditional drawing technique called “*Suki-utushi*” (transcribing a picture underneath), a style of Japanese painting, has created the model for the stereotyped image of the building.

Key Words: geometry in arts, composition, picture scroll

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1. Introduction

In this research, we consider the feature of the composition of the depicted buildings on the *Kasuga* picture scrolls. At first glance, the buildings which provide similar impressions seemed to be drawn with the same composition, but the screen constitution was done in detail in order to avoid a monotonous impression for the viewer. There is a relationship in the style of the expression of a building and the eyes of the viewer appreciating it.

First, using a model of the depiction of buildings on the picture scrolls, we studied the characteristics of the representation method of a traditional building by the technique of

1. Keigamon
(gate)
2. Nanmon
(south gate)
3. Naoraiden
(building for feast the god)
4. Heiden•Buden
(hall of offerings•stage)
5. Chumon
(inner gate)
6. Honden
(main hall)

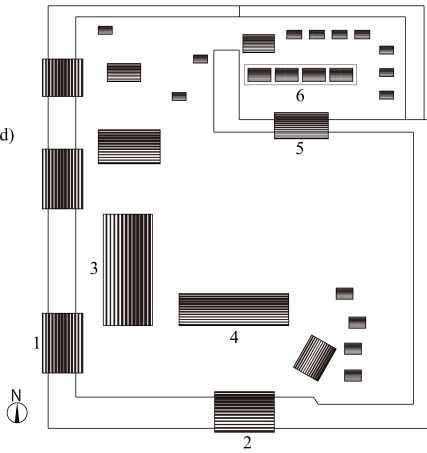
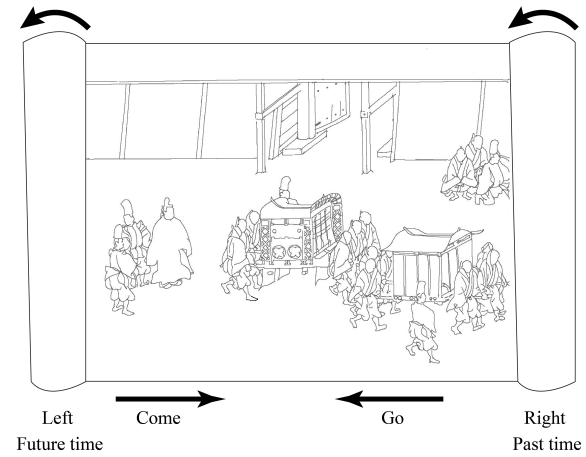
Figure 1: Map of the *Kasuga Shrine*

Figure 2: In a picture scross's time

graphic science. Furthermore, we describe the relation of the oblique directions of the drawn buildings and the trend of the look at the time of appreciation of *Kasuga Gongen Genki*¹ (below *Genki*, in brief). Secondly, we classify the sections of the depicted scenes in groups, such as the Main Shrine and the Temple, for each pictorial building in this picture scroll. Finally, we analyse the reasons why the stereotyped image was produced, by associating the composition of the scene and the drawing technique of the Japanese painting.

SAIONJI KINHIRA (1264–1315), who was the Minister of the Left, wished to keep the divine protection by the great gracious god of Kasuga, and was therefore determined to produce these picture scrolls around 1309 [1]. *Genki* shows Kasuga Deity's direct involvement in human affairs as a protector and guide to paradise and a savior from hell [2]. A picture scroll has text parts and drawing parts. These are one set and called a section; they change back and forth for each story. *Genki* has 94 sections in 20 volumes; only the depicted scenes were 93 screens.

Kasuga Taisha (Figure 1), *Kofuku-ji Temple*, etc. are drawn in connection with the Kasuga Deity in a scene expressing the situation of deployment of the story described in a portion of the text. These picture scrolls became a masterpiece of the Kamakura period; and the illustrations were drawn by the painter TAKASHINA NO TAKAKANE² (years of birth and death unknown).

For our analysis, we used a restored copy of the work which faithfully represents the original [3]. It can be said that the expressive form of the drawings on the scrolls has the characteristics of inherited tradition. Therefore, it is thought that they reflect the aesthetic sense of the painters and the perspective of those days.

2. Appreciation of picture scrolls

In order to enjoy the picture scroll, it must be opened at least to the width of one's shoulders (50 to 60 cm) using both hands. While the scroll is rolled with the right hand, the viewer opens the picture scroll with the left hand (Figure 2). Usually, the picture scroll shows the

¹These picture scrolls, currently displayed in *Sannomaru Shozokan* (The Museum of the Imperial Collections) were produced by TAKASHINA NO TAKAKANE in the second half of the Kamakura period (1185–1338). There are twenty scrolls painted in ink and colored pigments on silk. As for the length of the reproduction, the size is unified to 418 mm.

²TAKAKANE was the head of the court's office for paintings.



Figure 3: 2-1 The retired Emperor SHIRAKAWA makes a pilgrimage to the Kasuga Shrine

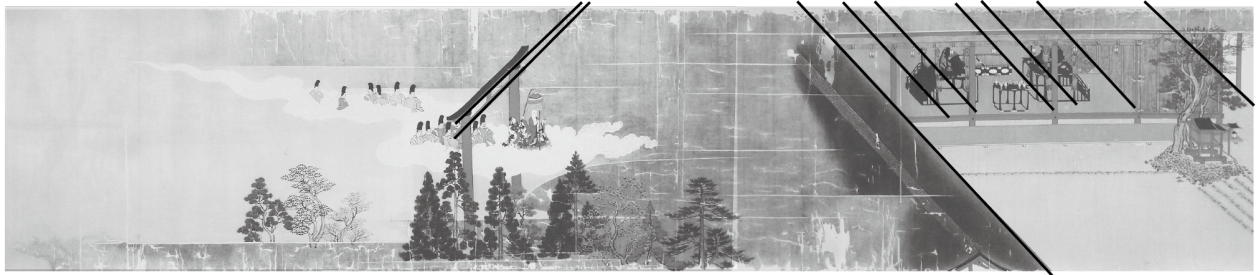


Figure 4: 11-4 The dream of the buddist priest *Inkei* of Bodaiin Temple

present scene in the currently opened section; the future scene is on the left-hand side and the past on the right-hand side.

For example, viewers think that the drawn image goes from the right to the left naturally. Therefore, a person drawn to the contrary, from the left to the right, shows another meaning. The depth direction of the buildings produces an action which leads the viewers' gaze. Most of the depth directions of the depicted architecture on the scroll express an oblique projection upward to the right or left. I judged this from the oblique directions of the depicted buildings, which are listed in Table 1. Since the viewer's gaze moves from the right to the left, a building drawn by oblique projection upward to the right brings about "an impression which gives the feeling of a visual flow" [4]. On the other hand, a building drawn by oblique projection upward to the left resists the motion of the "smooth" gaze. Such a composition has the effect to control the viewer's gaze.

In this way, the oblique direction of the depicted building plays a role which guides the view by being interlocked with the deployment of the story. The bigger the inclinations of the lines expressing the depth of the drawn buildings, the bigger the bird's-eye view angle, which the painter set up. Therefore, as these drawn lines tilt greatly in the vertical direction, viewers feel that they are overlooking the drawn building from a high place.

3. Constructions drawn on picture scrolls

Many scenes on these picture scrolls show the situation, where the Kasuga Deity carried out incarnation or appeared in front of people or carried out an oracle, and often the scenes of a dream can be seen [5]. In 90 sections the scene includes a geometric element. On the other side, in only 5 sections no such element is shown. Concerning the question whether the constructions drawn on the picture scroll were exact, they change with the kind of the buildings, even on the same picture scroll [6]. In *Genki*, the buildings seem to be expressed in detail. And it is said that especially the illustrations of several buildings in the Kasuga Shrine are "very exact" [1]. From the viewpoint of graphics, almost all buildings are depicted by oblique projection.

3.1. Oblique direction of the depicted building

In Table 1 the pictorial constructions of the oblique directions at every section is listed. In *Genki*, it turns out that the inclination of the line indicating the depth of the building tends to be drawn in a unified way in each scene. Figure 3 shows the scene 2-1 (Volume 2, Section 1, description of the picture scroll number, the same below). The inserted thick lines show the oblique direction of several buildings such as the second gate, the *heiden* and the *buden*. Three scenes are continuously drawn on this section. As for the first scene, the retired Emperor SHIRAKAWA arrives at the reception hall in Kasuga. Next, it is the scene where the spectators crowd round near the second gate. The last is the scene where Emperor SHIRAKAWA (1053–1129) arrives in front of the inner gate in the Kasuga Shrine. This section consists of 3 scenes, and the oblique directions of the pictorial buildings is controlled by an oblique projection upward to the left. Figure 4 shows 11-4. This building, called *naoraiden* drawn on the right side of the screen, is displayed by oblique projection upward to the left.

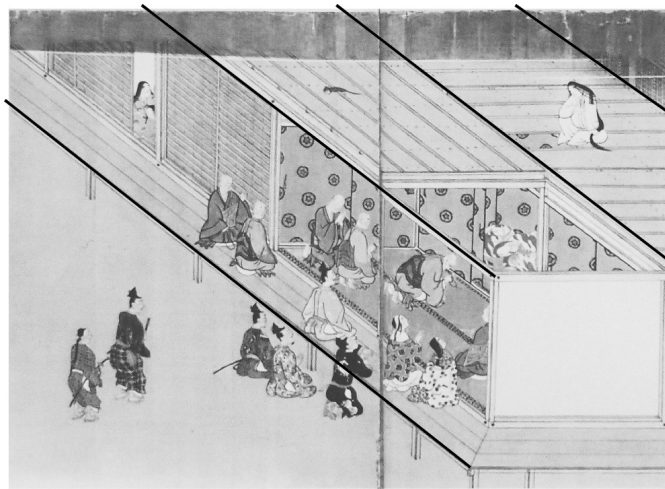


Figure 5: 17-2 The woman was possessed with the Kasuga Deity and described an oracle from the ceiling

The observer's gaze will arrive at the roof of a building called *heiden·buden*, that was drawn as if it divided the screen perpendicularly, if the viewer looks at it from the right to the left. The viewer discovers the gate drawn by oblique projection upward to the right. The position of *Kasuga San no Miya*, one of the Kasuga Deities, on the screen was designed to meet the viewer's gaze from the right.

There were 19 sections with representations of buildings, where the "*Fukinuki-yatai*" method (a building without a roof and ceiling so that the viewer looks inside from above) is used. Since the roof is removed, when a building is expressed by this method, the viewer can see in more detail to the inner part of a building. Such a way of drawing is used when a residence of the Fujiwara clan, a lecture-hall of a temple, and a town house are depicted. As the section shown in 17-2 of Figure 5 showing a part of the woman's house, is drawn in "*Fukinuki-yatai*". Here, along with a story, a part of the ceiling is released, and it is visualized that a woman is moving vertically to the ceiling. In addition, this is also considered to be a device for the viewer to find a woman easily, without wandering through other rooms. Thus, it seems that the story is expressed more impressively by guiding the gaze of the viewer.

Table 1: Depth directions and names of the buildings drawn on *Genki*

Volume and length of scrolls (mm)	Vol.1 9134mm				Vol.2 9303mm			Vol.3 9915mm	
	sections	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1
oblique direction of the pictorial buildings * 7	◎	* 1	●→◎	●→●	●→●→●	* 2	◎	◎	◎
name of drawn buildings or places	Chūmon of Kasuga of Kasuga	Bamboo grove (a holy place of Yamato Providence)	A construction site of the bamboo grove holl, Fujiwara no Yoshikane's residence	Kimpusen's guesthouse, retired emperor's residence	Kyakuden, Second gate of Kasuga, Chūmon of Kasuga, Heiden and Buden	Mt. Kurikomayama	Fujiwara no Moromichi's residence	Minamoto no Toshifusa's residence	Fujiwara no Tadazane's residence
depiction without a roof				○			○	○	○
(Vol.3)				Vol.4 9870mm					
3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	
◎	◎	◎	◎	●	* 3	* 4	●	◎	
Fujiwara no Tadazane's residence	Fujiwara no Tadazane's residence	Fujiwara no Tadazane's residence	Fujiwara no Tadazane's residence	Chūmon of Kasuga, Heiden and Buden	A road led to a south	A road along Hozugawa River	Wakamiya Shrine	Fujiwara no Sanesada's residence	
	○		○						
Vol.5 10075mm				Vol.6 10713mm			Vol.7 8540mm		
1	2	3	4	5	1	1	2	1	2
◎→◎	◎→◎	◎	◎	◎	◎→◎→◎	◎	◎	◎	◎
Fujiwara no Toshimori's residence, First gate of Kasuga	Fujiwara no Toshimori's residence, A room in the residence, A fountain and garden	Chūmon of Kasuga of Kasuga	A roof of Fujiwara no Toshimori's residence	Fujiwara no Sueyoshi's residence	Chūmon of Kasuga, The palace of Enma (the King of Hell), Hell	Taira no Chikamune's residence	Rokudotuji street, Some boy's house	Chūmon of Kasuga	Kairen-bō's hermitage
	○								
(Vol.7)			Vol.8 9105mm						
3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
◎	●	◎	●	◎	◎	●	●	◎	●
Chūmon of Kasuga	Chūmon of Kasuga, Heiden and Buden	Fujiwara no Takasue's residence	Seiryōji Temple	A humble cottage, Nyūdō's house	Training holl	Chūmon of Kasuga	Atuta Jingū	Lecture hall in Kōfukuji Temple	A priest's house
					○			○	
Vol.9 10000mm			Vol.10 9720mm						
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
●→●→●	●→●	●→◎→◎→◎	●	●	◎	●	◎	●	●→◎
Higashiyama Temple, Road to somewhere, Kitain Temple	Rented house, Kitain Temple	Rented house, The palace of Enma, Rented house, A Priest's House	Wakamiya Shrine	Honden of Kasuga Shrine	Nishimuro in The Kōfukuji Temple (A Priest's House)	Houjyouji Temple	Honden of Kasuga Shrine	The head buddhist priest of tendai sect Kyoen's house	Kyokai Syoumin's hermit's cell, Yuihan Ajyari's hermit's cell
					○	○			

Volume and length of scrolls (mm)	Vol.11 10122mm				Vol.12 7855mm					
	sections	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5
oblique direction of the pictorial buildings * 7	●	● → ◎	◎	● → ◎	◎	◎	◎	●	●	
name of drawn buildings or places	Buddhist priest Ekyo's house	Engyoji Temple, Kōfukuji Temple	First gate of Kasuga	Naoraiden, Heiden and Buden, First gate of Kasuga	East Gate of Kōfukuji Temple	Lecture hall in Kōfukuji Temple	First gate of Kasuga	Chief buddhist priest's house of Iwashimizu Hachimangū Shrine	Honden of Iwashimizu Hachimangū Shrine	
depiction without a roof	○	○				○				

Vol.13 8588mm					Vol.14 8612mm				
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4
●	◎	●	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	●	◎
First gate of Kasuga	Kajyūji no Harutoyo's house	Wakamiya Shrine	Nishimuro in Kōfukuji Temple (A buddhist priest's house)	Priest Zōkei's house	Priest Zōkei's house	A house of buddhist priest who trained at Mt. Hiei	Wakamiya Shrine	First gate of Kasuga, Buddhist priest Ryūkaku's house	Chūmon of Kasuga
			○						

(Vol.14)		Vol.15 9157mm						Vol.16 11590mm	
5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2
●	◎	◎	◎	◎ → ◎	●	◎ → ◎	●	◎	◎ → ◎
Chūmon of Kasuga, Honden of Kasuga	Machiya (town houses)	East corridor of Kasuga	House of buddhist priest Tokugyō who lived in Touin Temple	Saigū's residence, Buddhist priest Kyoei Tokugyou's house	Buddhist Priest Jisson's house	Small castle of head priest of Kii Temple, Buddhist priest Housen's house	Buddhist priest Kiyomasu's house	Gedatu Syōnin's hermit's Cell	Wakamiya shrine, Kagura den, Miwa shrine
		○		○					

(Vol.16)		Vol.17 7700mm			Vol.18 6665mm				
3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
●	●	◎	●	●	◎	◎	●	●	◎
Gedatu Syōnin's hatched hut	A woman's house	House of a woman of Tachibana Clans	House of a woman of Tachibana Clans	House of a woman of Tachibana Clans	Nakamikado in Toudaiji Temple	Buddhist priest Meikei Syounin's house	Chūmon of Kasuga, Honden of Kasuga	Buddhist Priest Gedatu Syounin's House	Chūmon of Kasuga, Honden of Kasuga
		○	○						

Vol.19 12350mm					Vol.20 7045mm	
1	2	3	4	5	1	
◎	◎	* 5	◎	* 6	◎	
Keigamon of Kasuga (West corridor), Naoraiden, Heiden and Buden, Mt.Mikasayama, A religion institution performed in Mt.Takaosan which departed headquarters	A small pagoda in Tokiwa, Road lead to Kinsyōji Temple	In Mt.Takao	A religion institution performed in Mt.Takao which departed headquarters	Mountaintop of Mt.Fuse	Bridge of Ichii, Second gate of Kasuga, Bridge of Nii, South Gate of Kasuga	

*1 to *6. The buildings were not drawn on the scenes.

*7. The drawn buildings depicted of oblique projection upward to the right (◎) or left (●).

3.2. Classification of compositions

For every section drawn in a similar composition, the same depicted building is selected and classified into 8 groups (Table 2). There are many buildings drawn repeatedly in the order Kasuga Shrine, *ji-bo temple* (sometimes used as the priest's living quarters), the residence of the Fujiwara clan, *machi-ya* (the town house), *Wakamiya Shrine*, and *Kofukuji Temple* as the homes of the guardian gods of the Fujiwara clan. Furthermore, there is the building of the *Yama's court* in hell and people, who receive the miracle, visit it in the dream.

In the whole of volume 20, the Kasuga Shrine is drawn in 21 sections. The building of the inner gate in Kasuga was divided and drawn from every direction. The buildings drawn in a similar composition were classified into 8 groups. In group H, different buildings were drawn in the scene, and this group is expressed in a similar composition. Except for group H, the drawn buildings are depicted 3 times in the same composition in different sections or volumes.

Table 2: List of groups and corresponding depth directions

Group A:	near Chūmon	right oblique direction
Group B:	near Chūmon	vertical direction
Group C:	Chūmon	left oblique direction
Group D:	Main Shrine	right oblique direction
Group E:	Main Shrine	left oblique direction
Group F:	Wakamiya Shrine	left oblique direction
Group G:	Kofukuji temple	right oblique direction
Group H:	Wall	right oblique direction

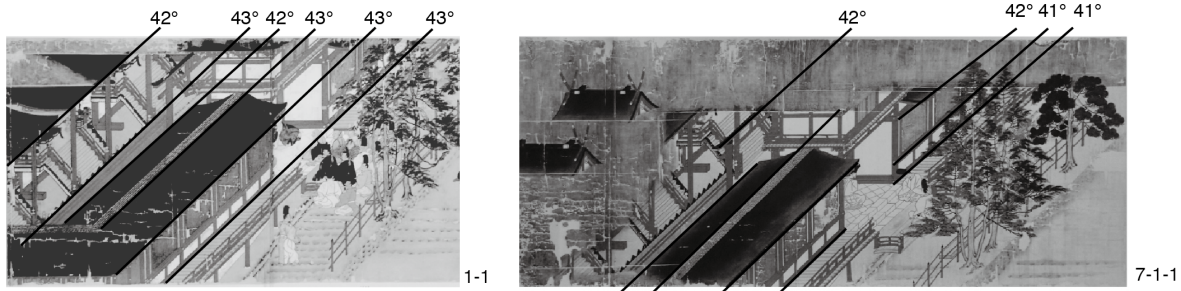
3.3. Composition of the buildings in a scene

Figure 6 shows, as results, for every group the angles of the oblique lines of depth direction. As for group A, the neighborhood of the *Kasuga Chūmon Gate* is drawn in oblique projection. Though the two scenes 1-1 and 7-1-1 are in different sections and have different stories, the composition of these pictures on the screen looks exactly the same. This holds also for the position of the *Chūmon Gate*. However, if we look in detail, the ranges of the trimming of this gate are different. The two sections are not compositions from the same viewpoint at all.

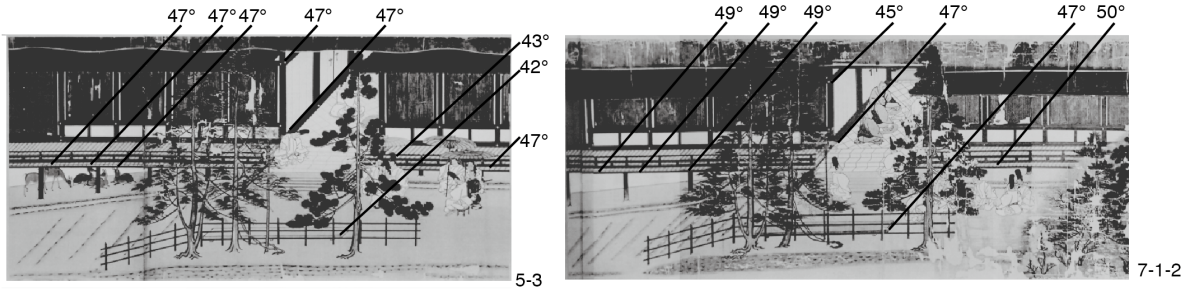
Group B is capturing and drawing the neighborhood of the *Kasuga Chūmon Gate* as seen from the front. Here, it depicts the building from the same bird's-eye view angle, and its position on the scene, where the entrance is depicted, is also almost at the same place. In the scene of 7-1-2 we can see many walls and a wider precinct than in the same part of 5-3.

As for group C, the *Kasuga Nanmon (south) Gate* shows the back side of the place painted in group A, and that is the depiction of the situation in the *heiden* and the *buden*. When 4-2 is compared with 7-4, paying attention to the position where the line of L1 and L2 are parallel to the scene, the roof of the Chūmon Gate and the *orou* (corridor) are located at the same position. However, on the scene the drawing positions for the highest section of the roofs differ for the *heiden* and the *buden*.

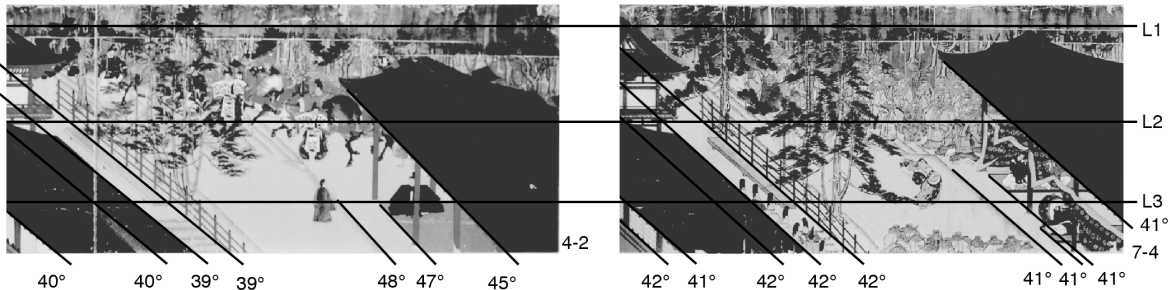
The same tendency was shown by the groups D, E, and F, and the positions match where the roof is drawn on the certain positions in the scene. By comparing scenes for similar compositions, it was shown that the location of the depicted buildings are not exactly the



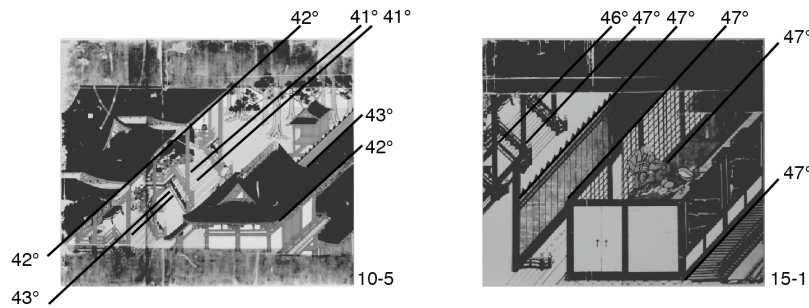
Group A : The beginning of Kasuga Shrine.
 Group A : Lord Tunemichi prayed in Kasuga Shrine and succeeded in life.



Group B : Lord Toshimori make pilgrimage to Kasuga Shrine.
 Group B : Lord Tunemichi prayed in Kasuga Shrine and succeeded in life.

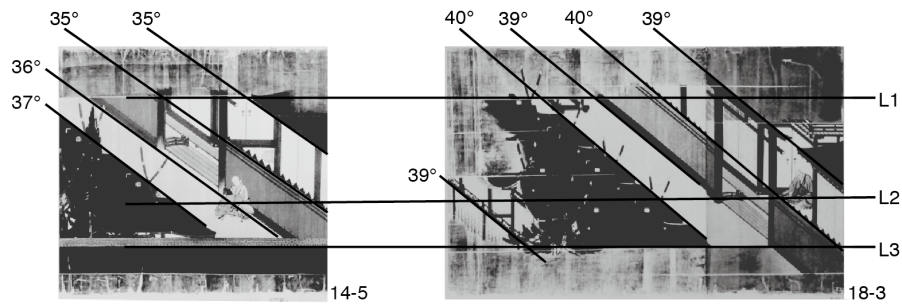


Group C : Lord Tadazane make pilgrimage to Kasuga Shrine.
 Group C : The Kasuga Deity tells buddist priest Noriaki in a dream to have dancer Chikazane do Ryōō for him.



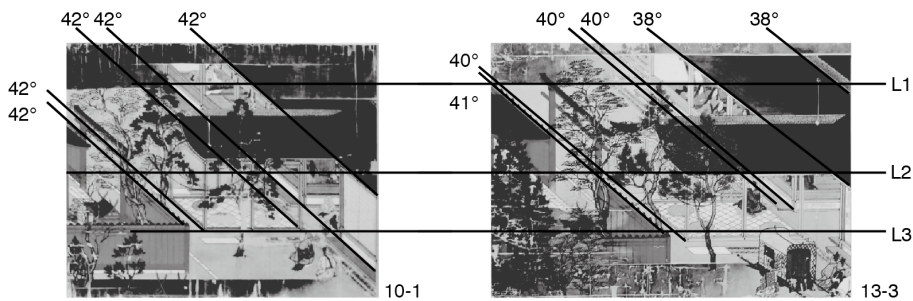
Group D : Buddhist priest Eikō sees the Kasuga Deity from behind and to worship.
 Group D : Buddhist priest Tokugyō kicks a student Priest in the gallery of Kasuga Shrine.

Figure 6: Preliminary design configurations are similar in layout with the drawn constructions



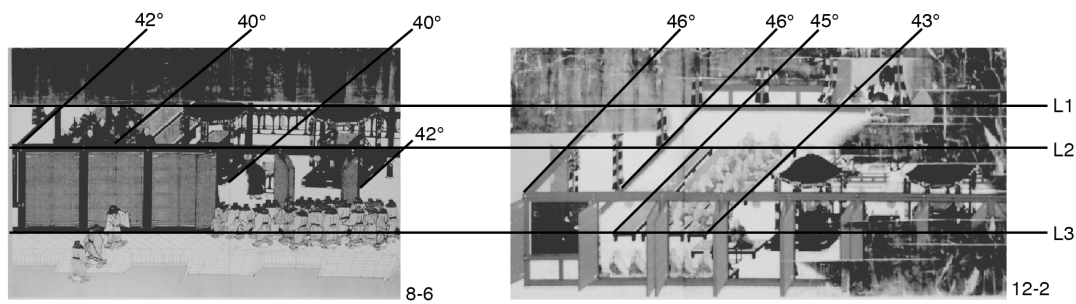
Group E : The Kasuga Deity which made incarnation to the figure of the young prince appears in the presence of buddeist priest Tonkakubō.

Group E : Buddhist priest Myoue confined himself in Kasuga Shrine.



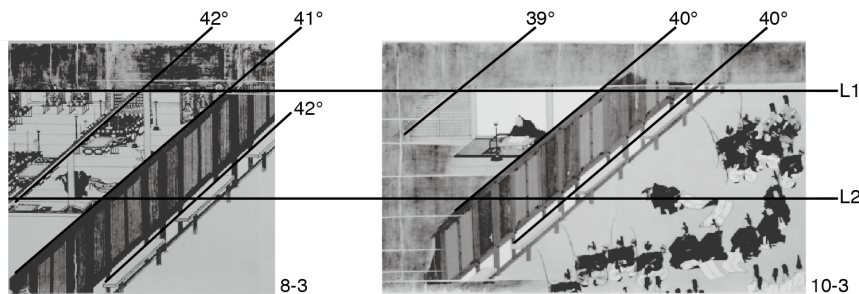
Group F : Buddhist priest Rine, praying at Kasuga Shrine, is disturbed by bells and drums.

Group F : The boy called harumasa with his mother who song at treasure hall in Kasuga Shrine.



Group G : Buddhist priest Hōzō hold an oral examination of a buddhist service in Kōfukuji temple.

Group G : The deer comed and heard a lecture at an expanding lecture in Kōfukuji temple.



Group H : Buddhist priest Zōri of Koufukuji temple was praying for the coming of the Kasuga Deity.

Group H : Imperial envoy Fujiwara no Sukenaka saw the senior regent Fujiwara no Yorimiti worshipping toward a buddist priest's residential in his Dream.

same as on the screen. Group G is the drawing of the *kō-dō* (lecture hall) in Kofuku-ji. There is a door in 8-6 and a chair in the *kō-dō* in 12-2, which is drawn between the lines L2 and L3. Thus, in the scene the consistency of the different geometric motifs has not happened by chance, and it is considered that the painter intentionally determined their position at a good size of the settlement. The line L1 shows the position of the depicted mist. In 12-2, the mist is expressed by various positions, and some parts are at the same position of L1 as in 8-6. The composition of group H is drawn by “*Fukinuki-yatai*”, and the depicted space is divided by one wall into the outside and inner side. Although the bird’s-eye view angle of the wall differs in every section, the position of the mist overlaps with L1. Moreover, the people who worship Gods are similar in direction and figure appearance, and they are drawn on the height of the scene in L2. The resemblance of people’s expressions can be seen in group E (Figure 6) as well.

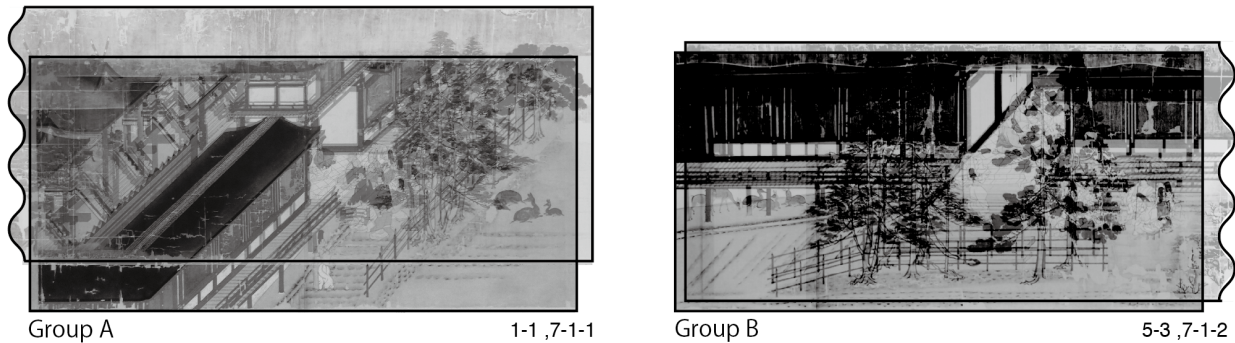


Figure 7: Chūmon entrance parts were piled up

The analysis result shows that the size and the position are not in agreement with the scene of the same building drawn in a similar composition. Then it turns out that the same part of the similarly painted building might be piled up, and we compared the drawn size. Figure 7, left, (Group A, 1-1 and 7-1-1) and Figure 7, right, (Group B, 5-3 and 7-1-2) fix the size of the length of the sections, and coincide with the painted Chūmon Gate. Group A has a similarity in the depiction of the angle of the depth direction and the width of the roof of this building. We can see the screens of the same composition which has been transmitted and superposed in Figure 7. From the results of the analysis, we find that *Honden* (Main Hall) at the back of the gate is drawn in quite different sizes. Group B is the representation of the *Kasuga Shrine* from the front, and the depiction of the width of the entrance and the height of the wall have a similarity. On the other hand, some differences can be seen at the stairs or at the interval of the pillars, etc. In this way, pictures in the same group give the same impression like the copy, but the pictures were drawn individually.

4. Making of picture scrolls

In the case of *Genki*, it has been described in literature that the *nakagaki*³ was already made before a fair copy was created [7]. The retired emperor GOSUKOUIN said “*it is praiseworthy*” [7] after seeing the *nakagaki* and having given admiration to it, and it is surmised that the degree of perfection of the draft was high. Although the possibility remains that a correction was performed on the pattern of the picture scroll from a historical fact, until the picture

³It is an interposed draft of a full picture scroll, using a first draft and the fair copy.

scroll was completed, it is thought that it had been copied three times for a fair copy. Such copying was performed by the technique of the facsimile which is called “*Suki-utushi*” method or “*Age-utushi*” method⁴ This method makes it possible to draw the scene on a new scroll just like the pattern set under the base material, such as silk. In other words, if the painter used such a technique, when expressing the same buildings in the same composition after transferring the position used as the key point of the buildings, it becomes easy to draw and change the remaining details for every scene.

5. Consideration

There are many sections which occupy half or more of the scroll on which many different kinds of buildings are drawn. Therefore, those constructions influence the impression of the picture scrolls because the space rate of the depicted buildings in the scene is high. The *Kasuga Shrine*, with the setting of the story having been repeated, and being surrounded by the buildings expressed by slanting projection, gives a blockaded impression to the viewer. In this picture’s space, the many faces of the walls control the motion of the viewer’s gaze, and this gaze is guided naturally to the entrance with the unique spatial spread. The painter used two drawing methods: one is the viewer’s free gaze like “*Fukinuki-yatai*” method, and the other is like a drawing of the *Kasuga Shrine*. In the image of the Main Shrine in Kasuga in vicinity of the inner gate, the space itself which encloses the buildings was a sacred domain. So it is probable that there would be a hesitation in using the “*Fukinuki-yatai*” method for depicting the buildings. In addition to this, since it is not a place where people go in and out easily, it is difficult to draw a scene which depicts people in the room of the residence. It is thought that the viewer deepens their faith by taking in the solemn atmosphere of the *Kasuga Shrine* as the viewer sees the pious figures and sacred buildings drawn in similar composition every time.

6. Conclusion

As a result, on the *Genki* picture scrolls the depicted buildings are similar. But the viewer does not appreciate this picture scroll only by a “smooth” gaze; therefore the bird’s-eye view angle of the buildings was changed delicately so that the motion of various gazes may happen. Nevertheless, it became clear that the main persons, the mist, fittings, etc. were regularly arranged on the scroll. It can be said that there is also no deviation in the expression of the depth direction to the scene, and the painter considered the balance of strictness and dynamism of the viewers’ gaze within the pictures’ space.

After analyzing in our research the image composition of TAKAKANE, the painter who left no name in the art history of the picture scroll in the Kamakura period, we are aware of his detailed depictions and image constructions. From the comparative analysis of the picture scroll work by TAKAKANE, readers will have developed a deepened awareness of the stereotypical expression of the space represented on the picture scrolls.

⁴One of the techniques is used for copying and restoration. A thin sheet of paper is placed over the work to be used as a model.

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