

Events

Japanese *Go*—a board game of white and black stones: From the small digital exhibition "Kaleidoscope of Books (No.22)"

*This is a partial translation of the small digital exhibition
"Japanese Go—a board game of white and black stones" in Japanese of the same title*

In a small digital exhibition entitled "[Japanese Go—a board game of white and black stones](#)," (in Japanese) we deal with material related to the game of *go* which has been popular in Japan since ancient times.

The game of *go* is well known in Japan and appears in classic Japanese literature. Some legendary stories about a master of *go* appear in *Konjaku Monogatari*

Shu (今昔物語集, Tale of Times Now Past). There are also scenes in both *Genji Monogatari* (源氏物語, The Tale of Genji) and *Makura no Soshi* (枕草子, The Pillow Book) in which the characters are depicted enjoying a game of *go*. Also, records of *go* games can be found in ancient documents, such as diaries of noblemen.



Kanren (a master of *go*, right) and Cloistered Emperor Uda (center)
Yamato Monogatari. 1 [NDL call no.: WB36-1]

* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)



A sketch of Emperor and Chunagon Minamoto Kaoru playing *go*
 Sesonji Korefusa (text) Takayoshi Fujiwara (Illustrator)
Genji Monogatari Emaki [NDL call no.: 10-98]

* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

There are also records of professionals who made a living by playing *go*. In the Edo period, there were four schools, one of which was the Hon'inbo school, that were considered authoritative schools of *go*, and the heads of these schools competed fiercely with one another. The collapse of the Edo Shogunate also brought about radical

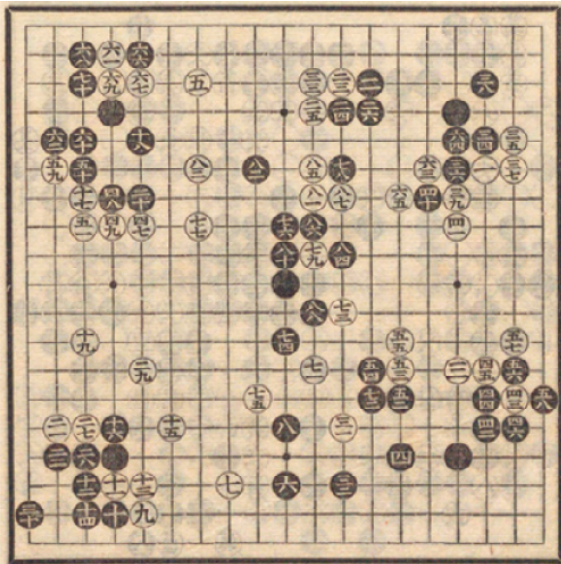
changes in many of Japan's traditions, and professional *go* was no exception. In this exhibition, we also present some of the history of the world of *go* after the Meiji Restoration.



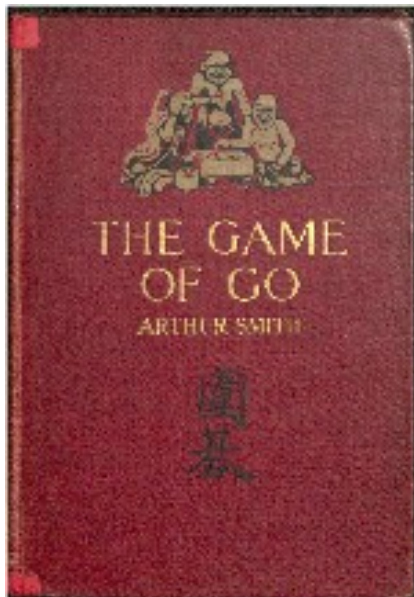
A portrait of Hon'inbo Sansa (the first head of Hon'inbo school)
 Kurihara Nobumitsu (Illustrator) Shozoshu [late Edo Period] [NDL call no.: 寄別 4-1-3-1]

* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Transcriptions of games of *go* or *shogi*, which is another popular board game in Japan, are known as *kifu* (棋譜). Many historical figures were fond of playing *go*, and there are *kifu* extant of games played by both Iemitsu Tokugawa, the third shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and Yoshinobu Tokugawa, the last shogun. Here are some transcriptions of well-known matches as well as commentaries on games of *go* that have been published in Japan or overseas.



Transcriptions of games of *go* of Yoshinobu Tokugawa
Taisaku Takasaki Toyoji Ando ed.
Taisakushu Kansaiigokai, 1926 [NDL call no.: 795-Ta381t]



A cover of *The game of go*, the national game of Japan.
This book introduced Japanese *go* in English for the first time.
Arthur Smith, *The game of go*, the national game of Japan,
Moffat, Yard & company, 1908. [NDL call no.: Ba-239]

We will also present some items from the library of Kensaku Segoe (瀬越憲作), a professional *go* player who greatly contributed to the popularization of the game as well as transcriptions made by Minoru Kitani, who was the opponent of the Hon'inbo Shusai (本因坊秀哉) in his final game, played to commemorate his retirement. This match was elegized by Yasunari Kawabata in his novel *The Master of Go*. Get a feel for the history of *go* through these historical collections acquired by the NDL.

Related articles from the NDL Newsletter:

- [Soy beans— bits of bean knowledge: From the small digital exhibition "Kaleidoscope of Books \(No.21\)"](#) (No.205, April 2016)
- [The Rimpa School and Its Influence as Seen in Books: From the small digital exhibition "Kaleidoscope of Books \(No. 20\)"](#) (No.204, February 2016)