

# Modest Archival Book Beautifully Illustrates Japanese Painted Fans

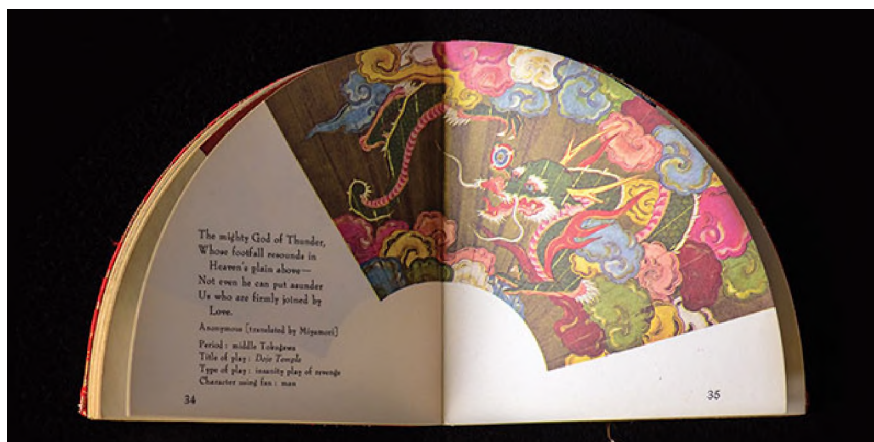
[alumnae.mtholyoke.edu/blog/modest-archival-book-beautifully-illustrates-japanese-painted-fans](http://alumnae.mtholyoke.edu/blog/modest-archival-book-beautifully-illustrates-japanese-painted-fans)



## Japanese Fan Book

Bequeathed to Mount Holyoke by **Josephine Purtscher Fellows, class of 1924**, when she died in 1986, *Painted Fans of Japan: 15 Noh Drama Masterpieces* is covered in brilliant red and gold fabric and takes the shape of a quarter of a circle.

The book opens to the shape of a fan, the subject it was designed to illustrate. Pages of sturdy paper stock introduce the history of "the glorious paintings found on fans used in the traditional Japanese Noh drama" and feature small, painted reproductions of fifteen fans.



When opened, this book measures just 10 inches across.

The book's editor, Reiko Chiba, describes Noh dramas as Japanese performances conducted almost exclusively for nobles. The artists who painted the fans in the book are unknown, and time periods for their creations are estimated to range from 1600 to 1867.

This unique book, copyright 1962, is part of the Archives and Special Collections rare book collection. A number of other items from Fellows, including Chinese snuff bottles and silver pieces from the 1500s, are held at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

**—By Anne Pinkerton**

**—Photos by Deirdre Haber Malfatto**

*This article appeared as "A 'Modest Little Book'" in the spring 2018 issue of the Alumnae Quarterly.*

April 18, 2018

Tags: [archives](#), [quarterly](#), [spring 2018](#)