

金鼎生烟 地爐蒸茶煙
 小坡老士 古石基前
 橋中之樂 軌坤久困
 深根信茶年

亥曆甲申年夏 劉慈生老人畫



Ike Taiga (1723-1776)

池大雅

"Pleasure within an Orange" 1764

橘中之樂

Hanging scroll, ink on paper
108 x 29.3 cm. (42 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.)

Inscription:

"Painted spontaneously by the Pilgrim of Three Peaks (Taiga)."

Artist's seals:

Mumei; Kasei

Colophon by Ekai Daisōzu (1701-1765):

"In cups of gold the spring brew is hot,
from the earthen brazier comes the scent of tea;
White-bearded old Taoists
face each other over the stones for *go*.
'Pleasure within an orange'
for long the firm foundation of Heaven and Earth,
deeply rooted for numberless years.

During the first month of spring of the year 1764 within the Hōreki era, inscribed by Ekai Daisōzu."

Published:

Taiga Kazan MeisakuTen ("Exhibition of Famous Paintings by Taiga and Kazan"), (Yamagata: Yamagata Newspaper, 1952), pl. 42;

Ike Taiga Sakuhinshū ("The Complete Works of Ike Taiga"), (Tokyo: Chuōkōronsha, 1960), pl. 178.

Recent provenance:

Kōnoike collection, Osaka

Within a sphere defined simply but quite effectively as a three-dimensional container are three old men playing *go* chess while two servants to one side brew and serve wine and tea.¹ The dress and activity of the three sages suggests that they are transcendents, immortals far removed from the haunts of ordinary men. Their unique environment, within the embrace of an orange, the leaves of which were quickly sketched at the base of the fruit, is explained by a story emanating from China.

According to the *Yu-kuai Lu*, "Record of Uncanny Things," "A man in Pa-ch'iung (Szechuan) had an orchard of orange trees. After a frost the oranges were all harvested. Some were as large as a three-peck basin. The man regarded these with great wonder and then cut them open; within each were two old men, their hair and eyebrows white and their bodies a luminous red. Each was playing chess with another, and they went on talking and laughing as before. One of the old men said: 'Pleasure within an orange is not less than that on Shang Mountain; however, not having deep roots and a firm foundation, (the orange) can be plucked by

any fool."² The story became so wide-spread that the expression "pleasure within an orange" came to have a very specific meaning: "When asking a person to play *wei-ch'i*, one says: 'do you want to enjoy pleasure within an orange with me?'"³ The painting thus illustrates the story with great inventiveness and humor and would have been an ideal gift for any friend of the artist who shared his pleasure in that captivating game. The recipient may in fact have been Ekai Daisōzu (1701-1765), who in 1764 inscribed the painting with a poem that describes the scene and suggests that, while orange trees lack deep roots and a firm foundation, *wei-ch'i* or *gō* itself was eternal.

The early 1760s mark an important period of transition in Taiga's life. In 1761, on the death of her mother, Taiga's wife Gyokuran inherited both a flourishing tea-house and her mother's house in Kyoto, and from that time onward the financial situation of Taiga and Gyokuran appears to have improved greatly, allowing him the peace of mind to concentrate more fully on his art. In 1760 Taiga, in company with his close friends Kan Tenju and

Kō Fuyō, climbed the sacred peaks of Fuji, Hakusan, and Tateyama, hence his signature on the present painting: the "Pilgrim of Three Peaks." Concerned on the one hand with verisimilitude—best seen in the sketches he made during his three-month journey—he also tried to imbue his paintings with a poetic or emotional sensibility, quoting Wang Wei's (699-759) concept of painting as poetry without sound and poetry as embodying visual concepts. "Pleasure within an Orange" makes a strong appeal to our imaginations and emotions, conjuring thoughts and feelings that go beyond the objective matter of the painting, and in that sense the work is a perfect manifestation of Wang Wei's

ideal. The literati arts had long been identified with the lute, chess, calligraphy, and painting, and Taiga's painting here brings together three of them in his poem without sound.

1. Gō, the Chinese *wei-ch'i*, is played with black and white chips on a board of 361 squares; one of the two players wins by surrounding the pieces of his opponent in such a way that he cannot move further.
2. Morohashi: *Kanwa Jiten*, p. 6265.
3. *Shu-yen Ku-shih*, section on *po-i*, "playing *wei-ch'i*," quoted in *ibid*.