

“Maple” by Hasegawa Tohaku (National Treasure, Chishakuin Temple. Height 180.0 cm, Width 563.0 cm)
Photo: Courtesy of Chishakuin Temple



The Japanese and Gold (Part I)



A display of Nishijin Kinran obi (kimono belt) fabrics
Photo: Courtesy of Nishijin Textile Industry Association



Tensho Naga Oban (approximately 17.5 cm x 10 cm)
Photo: Courtesy of Bank of Japan

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old has been a cherished aspect of Japanese culture since ancient times. Many historical examples of gold-covered structures and artifacts survive, such as the Konjikido (Golden Hall) (pp. 10-11) at Chuson-ji temple, Iwate Prefecture, and the Yomeimon Gate at the Nikko Toshogu Shrine (pp. 12-13), Tochigi Prefecture. For centuries, Japan was one of the world's largest producers of gold (pp. 7-9), with mines such as that preserved on Sado Island in Niigata Prefecture (pp. 16-17), and this is reflected in gold's lavish use in huge gold-leaf-backed screen paintings (pp. 20-21), luxurious fabrics (pp. 22-23), as well as in everyday objects. In Part I of a two-part Feature, we introduce some of the ways in which Japanese people have cherished gold.

