**Kamakura Art**

In 1180 a civil war broke out between two military clans, the Taira and the Minamoto; five years later the Minamoto emerged victorious and established a de facto seat of government at the seaside village of Kamakura, where it remained until 1333. With the of power from the nobility to the warrior class, the arts had to satisfy a new audience: soldiers, men devoted to the skills of warfare; priests committed to making Buddhism available to illiterate commoners; and conservatives, the nobility and some members of the priesthood who regretted the declining power of the court. Thus, realism, a popularizing trend, and a classical revival characterize the art of the Kamakura period.

**Sculpture**

The Kei school of sculptors, particularly Unkei, created a new, more realistic style of sculpture. The two Nio guardian images (1203) in the Great South Gate of the Todai-ji in Nara illustrate Unkei's dynamic suprarealistic style. The images, about 8 m (about 26 ft) tall, were carved of multiple blocks in a period of about three months, a feat indicative of a developed studio system of artisans working under the direction of a master sculptor. Unkei's polychromed wood sculptures (1208, Kofuku-ji Temple, Nara) of two Indian sages, Muchaku and Seshin, the legendary founders of the Hosso sect, are among the most accomplished realistic works of the period; as rendered by Unkei, they are remarkably individualized and believable images.

**Calligraphy and Painting**

The Kegon Engi Emaki, the illustrated history of the founding of the Kegon sect, is an excellent example of the popularizing trend in Kamakura painting. The Kegon sect, one of the most important in the Nara period, fell on hard times during the ascendancy of the Pure Land sects. After the Gempei civil war (1180-85), Priest Myo-e of the Kozanji Temple sought to revive the sect and also to provide a refuge for women widowed by the war. The wives of samurai, even noblewomen, were discouraged from learning more than a syllabary system for transcribing sounds and ideas, and most were incapable of reading texts that employed Chinese ideographs. Thus, the Kegon Engi Emaki combines passages of text, written with a maximum of easily readable syllables, and illustrations that have the dialogue between characters written next to the speakers, a technique comparable to contemporary comic strips. The plot of the emaki, the lives of the two Korean priests who founded the Kegon sect, is swiftly paced and filled with fantastic feats such as a journey to the palace of the Ocean King, and a poignant love story. A work in a more conservative vein is the illustrated version of Murasaki Shikibu's diary. Emaki versions of her novel continued to be produced, but the nobility, attuned to the new interest in realism yet nostalgic for past days of wealth and power, revived and illustrated the diary in order to recapture the splendor of the author's times. One of the most beautiful passages illustrates the episode in which Murasaki Shikibu is playfully held prisoner in her room by two young courtiers, while, just outside, moonlight gleams on the mossy banks of a rivulet in the imperial garden.