

KATAGAMI

Japanese Dyed Paper Stencils



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Katagami



With its 10,000 items the MAK owns one of the largest collections of Japanese colour stencils anywhere in the world. Alone 8,000 of them were compiled by Heinrich Siebold and passed on to the Oriental Museum, as it was then known. Katagami / paper stencils were already in use in the seventh century, besides ones of leather and metal. The method of dyeing fabrics, leather, paper, etc. with stencils was widespread at this time, but in subsequent centuries was to develop autonomously in Japan.

By the beginning of the Tokugawa era (1603–1867), the work distribution system (manufacture system) was being promoted; furthermore, new transport and trading routes meant that production locations could be separate from each other.

The handcrafted production of katagami was concentrated in two locations on the Ise Peninsula (Mie Prefecture), south of Kyoto. Frequently, family operations specialised in only one type of pattern. Traders organised contacts to the dyers and kimono vendors as well as fashion salons in the big cities, first and foremost Edo, Kyoto, Osaka and Nagoya.

Katagami



This system was retained far into the Meiji era (1868–1911), until the over-powering influence of western fashion and neglect of its own tradition radically curtailed textile production. Many kimono shops had to close down, the extensive stencil collections were either thrown away or found their way west as opportune and favourably priced souvenirs.

Cutting and punching katagami requires much patience and high-level concentration.

Sheets of paper are impregnated with kaki juice (persimmon tannin) and—depending on the desired effect—patterns are cut into them, or they are punched with variously sized hollow punchers. Often a combination of both techniques can be found. A katagami cutter cuts eight bound layers of paper at once. The outer sheets cannot be used, the remaining six are glued together, two for each stencil, producing three identical stencils. When fine ornaments are required, a net of silk threads has to be glued between the two sheets for stability.

The width of a katagami corresponds exactly to the width of fabric, which is sometimes up to twelve metres long. Keeping strictly to the pattern's repeat, a spatula is used to apply rice paste to the fabric through the paper stencil, thus transferring the pattern. During the subsequent dyeing process, the rice paste prevents the fabric absorbing the dye (this is called “resist dyeing”).

Katagami

The katagami is then sent together with the dyed fabric to the tailor and vendor, who is also owner of the stencil. No more than ten fabric lengths can be dyed with one stencil; the katagami loses its precision and the repeat no longer matches up. Old stencils were kept in storage; they were pattern archives and also used as models for new orders. This also explains the large “katagami archives” that in time accumulated in the trading establishments.

The Meiji era when Japan opened up to western culture brought not only an abundance of technical innovations, but also new dyeing processes and new chemical dyestuffs, allowing a more miniature scale of decoration; above all, it brought about a profound change in clothing and thus the end of everyday traditional dress.

Gradually the traditional dyeing methods were superseded by mechanical processes. However, in order to preserve traditional handicrafts, in 1950 the “law to protect cultural property” (bunkazi hogo ho) was passed. Craftsmen and artists now received a state subsidy with the obligation to exercise and pass on their trade and skills. This gave the old methods a boost and new impetus. Nevertheless, we may not forget the great change since the nineteenth century: what was once widespread as a popular traditional art is today a “one-off”, an exquisite and unique product.



Katagami

Most of the preserved katagami derive from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Two approaches can help to date Japanese dyers' stencils, which when combined probably provide the best results. One method addresses the development of the production and dyeing technique; as time goes by we can observe that the "printed surface" (the repeat pattern) of the katagami constantly grows in size. In accordance with the motto "time is money", time could be therefore be saved when applying the rice paste onto the fabric.

The other method attempts to establish a history of ornament; kimono depictions in Japanese colour woodcuts (ukiyo-e) can be used to trace a history of fashion.

The stencils in this exhibition all originated in the nineteenth century until the time around 1880 and were donated by Heinrich Siebold to the k.k. Handelsmuseum in 1892. In 1907, its extensive collections then passed into the ownership of the Imperial and Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, today the MAK.



Heinrich von Siebold (1852-1908)

This year marks the centenary of the death of Heinrich von Siebold, one of the great patrons of the MAK. Among the events to honour this occasion is the MAK's presentation of the exhibition "Katagami", the most comprehensive group of objects within the collection.

Heinrich Siebold was the second son of the great Japan expert Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866). In 1869 Heinrich went to Tokyo to work as an interpreter for the Austrian-Hungarian legation. It was as a translator, too, that he accompanied the Japanese delegation to the Vienna World Fair in 1873; here he entered into initial contacts with museums in the German-speaking region and during the following years intensified his contacts to the Viennese collections.

By 1875 he was already consultant to the newly founded Oriental Museum, later Handelsmuseum (Museum of Trade), in 1883 he presented the first small exhibition of his rapidly growing Japanese collection in the Museum of Art and Industry – today the MAK.

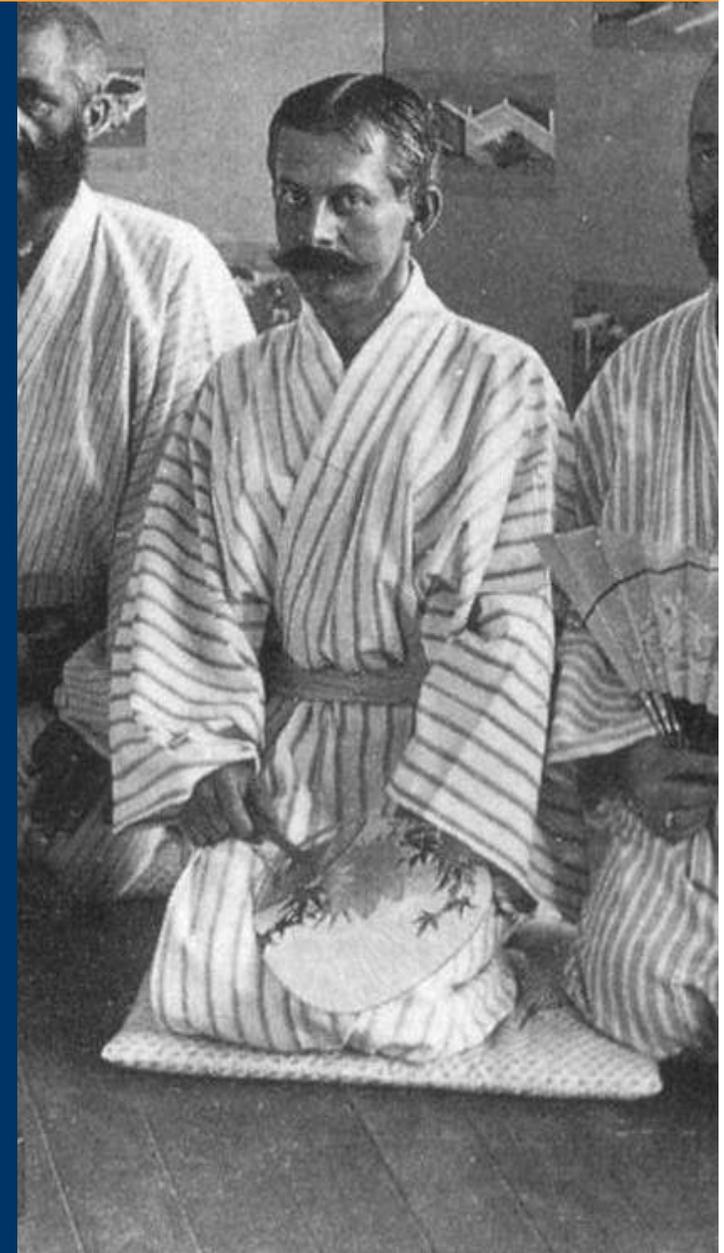
In 1888 he donated approximately 5,000 objects to the ethnographic Kabinett of the Natural History Museum, which formed the basis for the Japanese collection in the Museum of Ethnology, founded in 1928.

His most generous donation to the Handelsmuseum followed in 1892, its holdings taken over by the MAK in 1907.

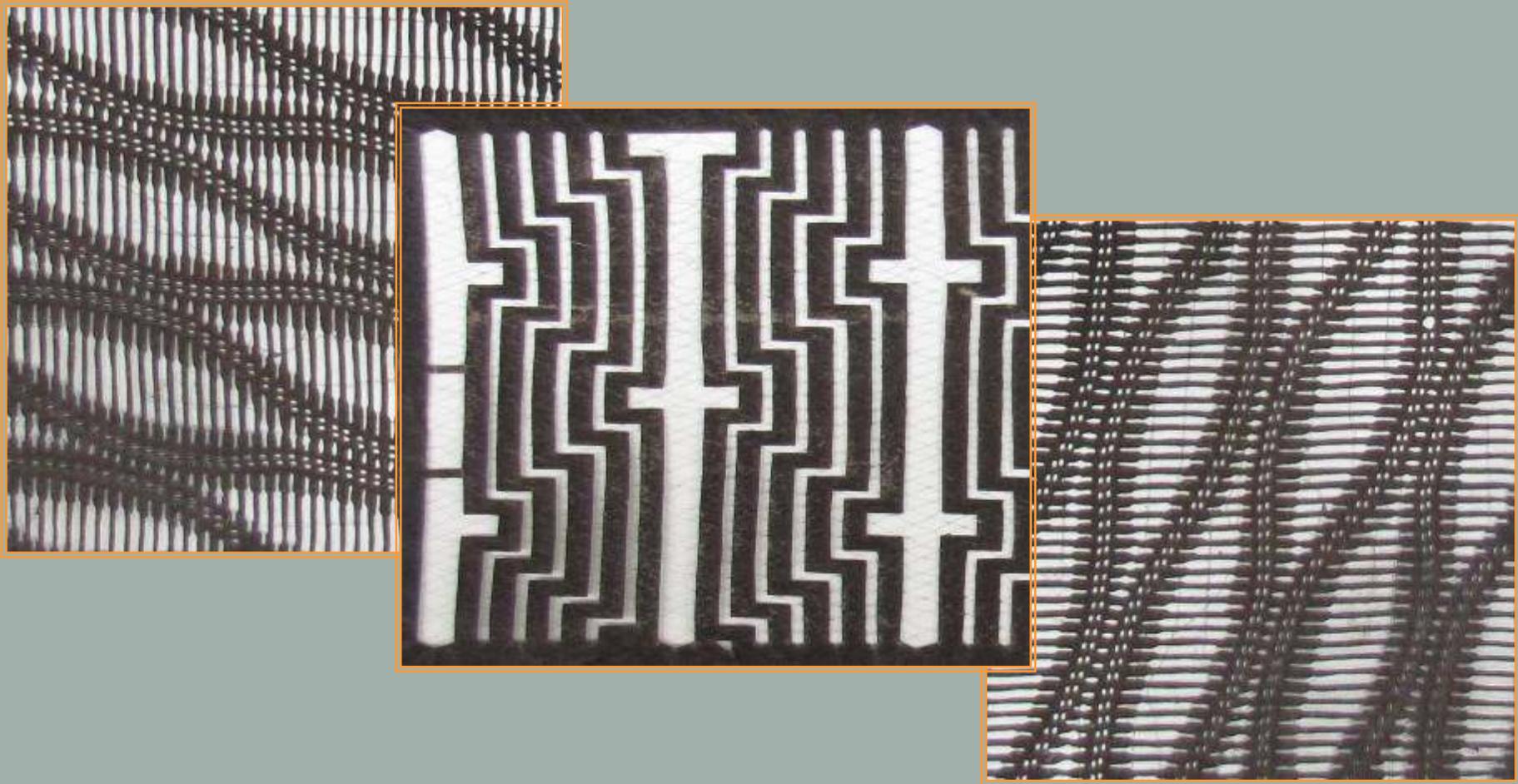
Heinrich Siebold was moreover advisor to Count Bourbon-Bardi, whose collection can now be seen in Venice at the Museo d'Arte Orientale, and to Archduke Franz Ferdinand – his collection is kept in the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna.

Heinrich Siebold planned further donations to German museums, but died on 11 August 1908 before these plans were carried out. His private collection was still very extensive and was sold at "Au Mikado" in Vienna in 1909.

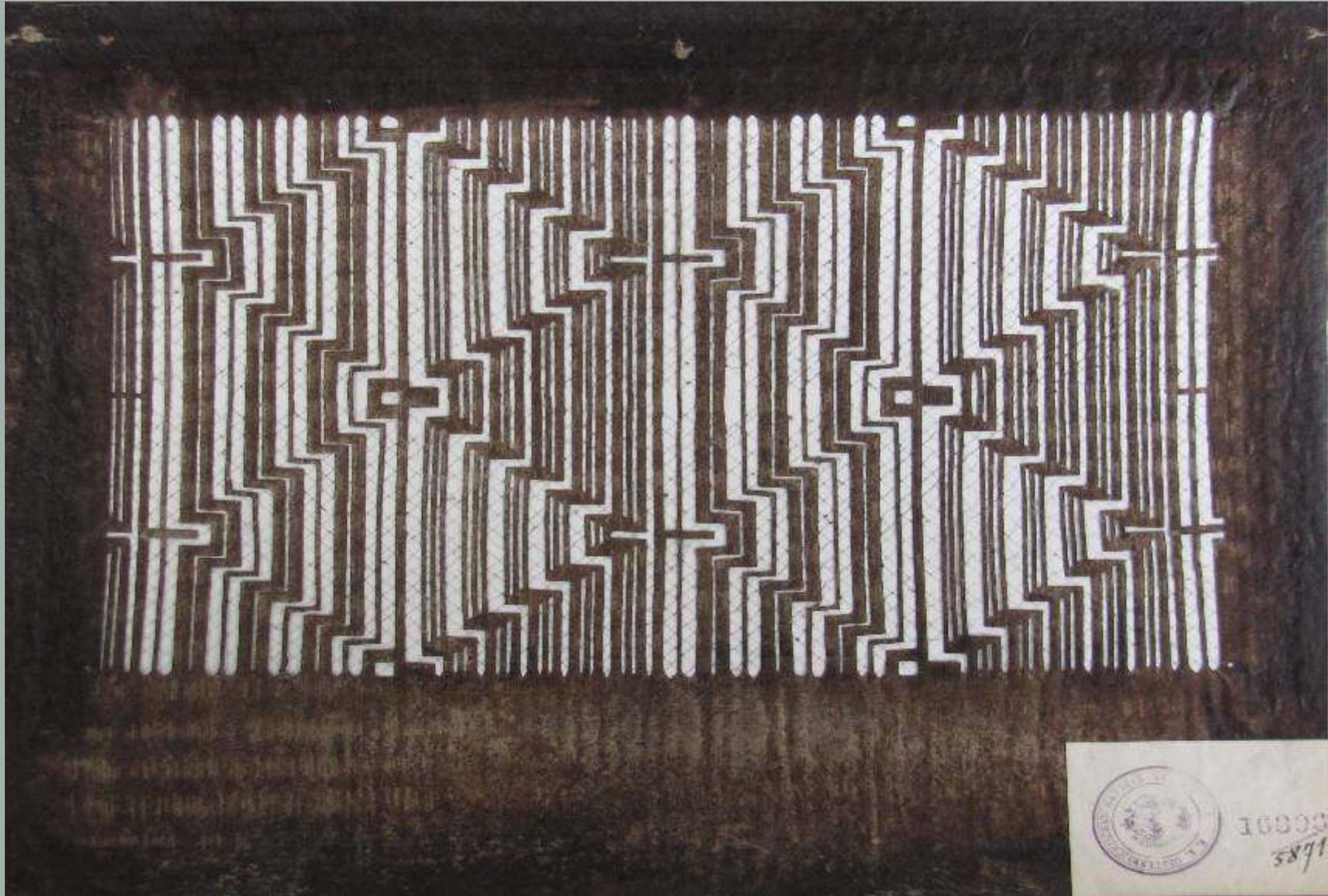
The collections of Heinrich Siebold are among the foremost collections established prior to 1900 in the whole of Europe and allow a superlative view into the cultural changes in Japan towards the end of the nineteenth century.



Chapter 1: Striped Patterns – Cutting technique

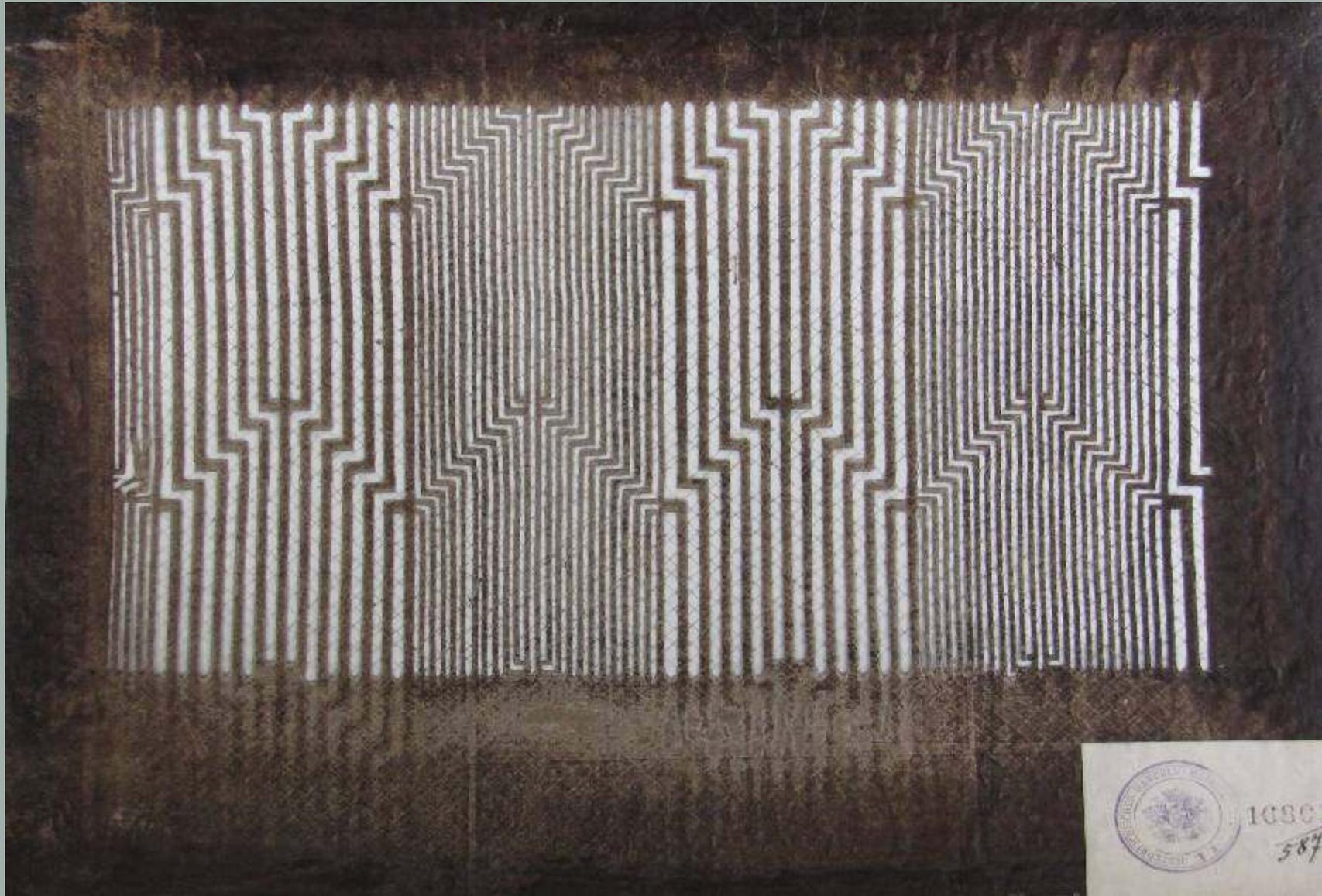


Even if the striped pattern seems to be one of the simplest forms of ornament in the cutting technique, it demands the ultimate in precision: each tiny divergence from the parallel arrangement of the lines could be detected immediately. The closer the lines are set, the more expensive the stencil.



5871

Striped and rhomboid pattern
Cutting technique



5872

Striped and zig-zag pattern
Cutting technique



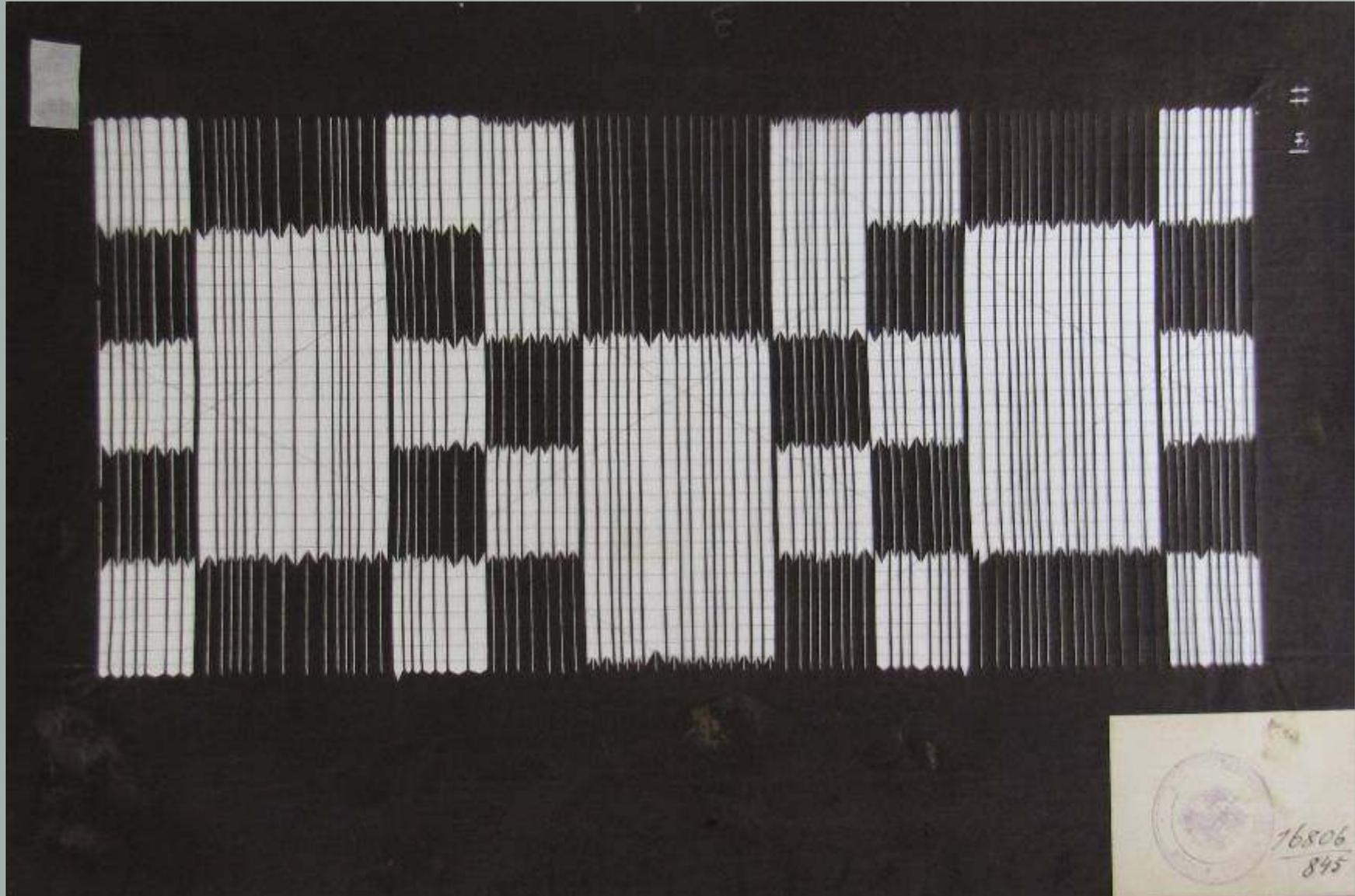
5873

Striped and rhomboid pattern
Cutting technique



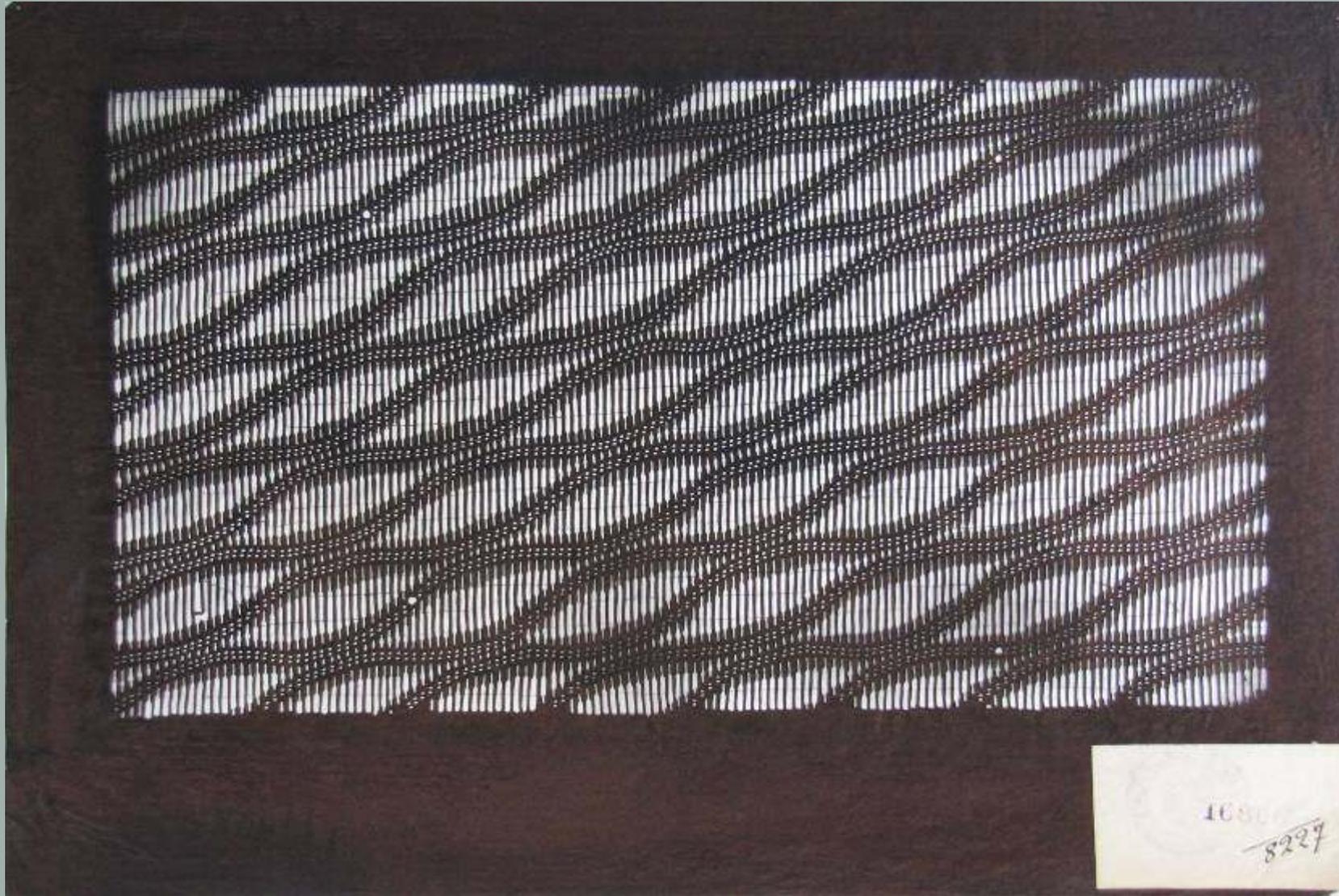
6022

Striped and stepped pattern
Cutting technique



0845

Linear pattern: squares and rectangles
Cutting technique

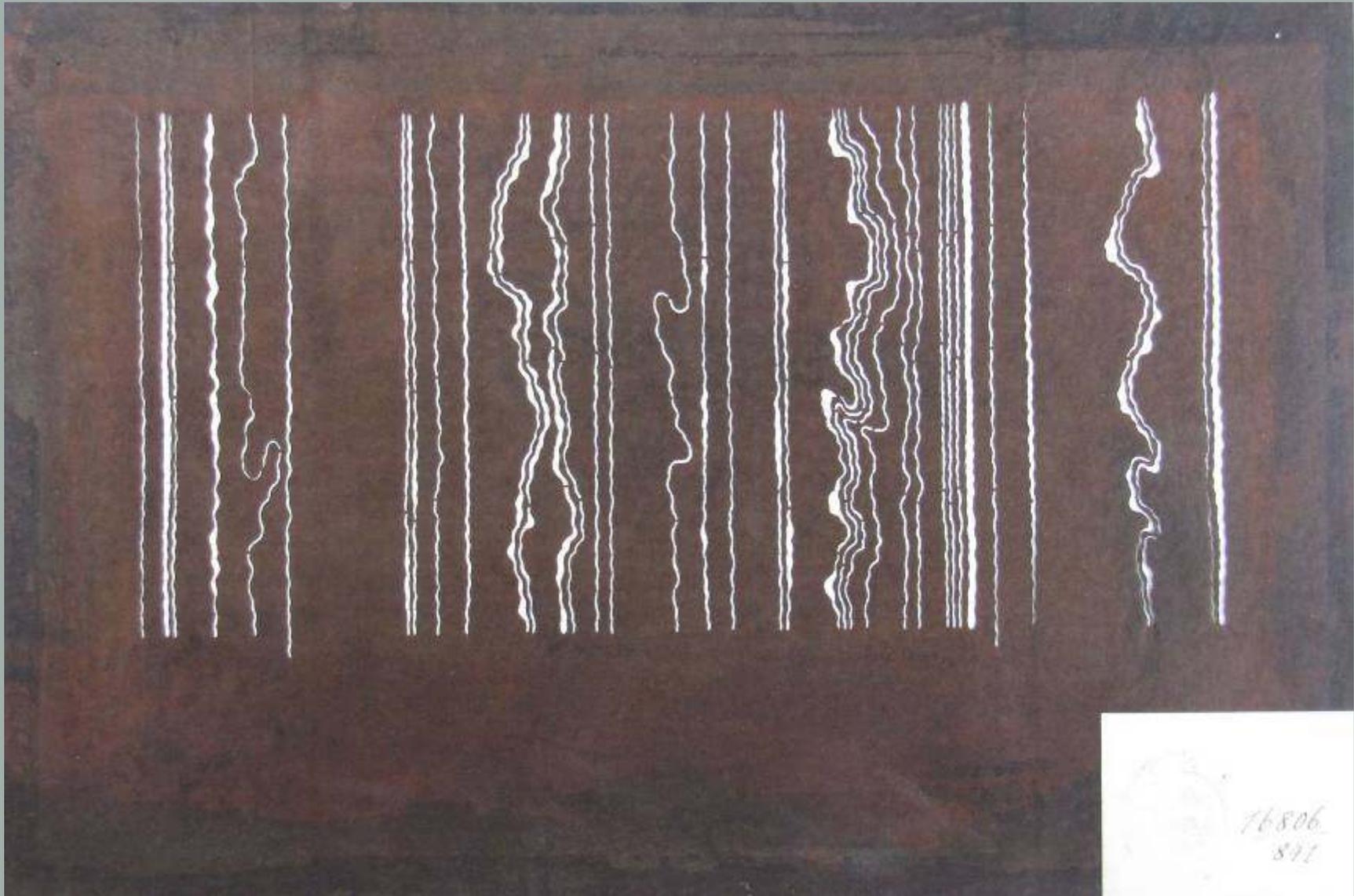


8227

Striped pattern

Ascending smoke

Cutting and punching technique



0841

Linear pattern: wood grain
Cutting technique



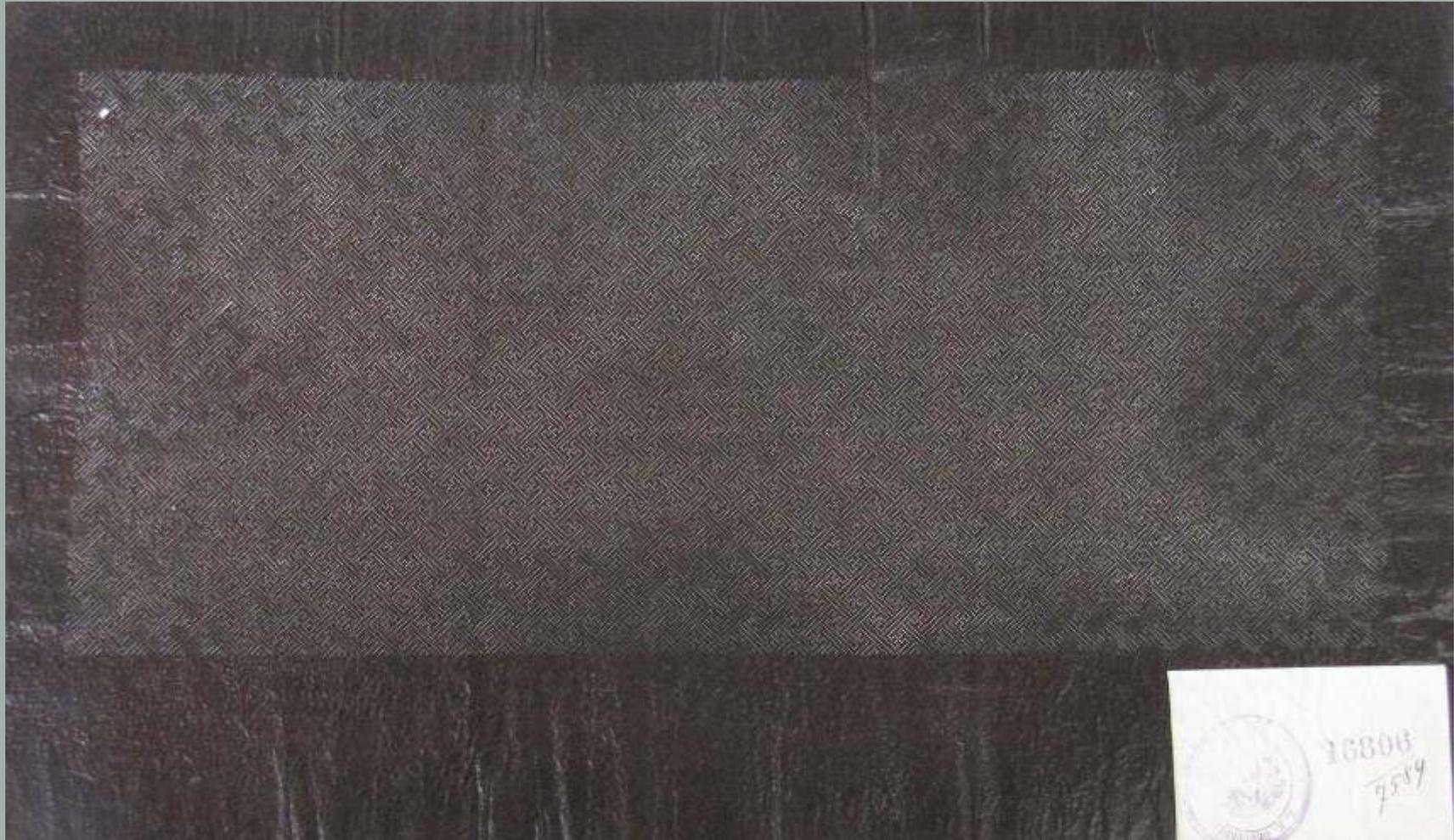
7703
Fern or waves
Cutting technique

Chapter 2: Small Dots – Punching Technique



Fabrics ornamented with komon (miniature pattern) were among the most expensive. Ultra-fine ornaments were reserved for members of the samurai estate. They were also used in official civil-service and court costumes.

Motifs for fashionable fabrics in this technique were spacious and rich in variation, thus were not so labour-intensive.



7589

Sayagata

Sayagata means "fine fabric pattern." This interlaced pattern forms small manji (swastika), which are signs of good luck in the Asian tradition. This pattern first became popular in Japan in the late sixteenth century, owing to increased textile imports from China.

Punching technique



7585

Sparrow and fresh bamboo leaves

Spring motif

Punching technique

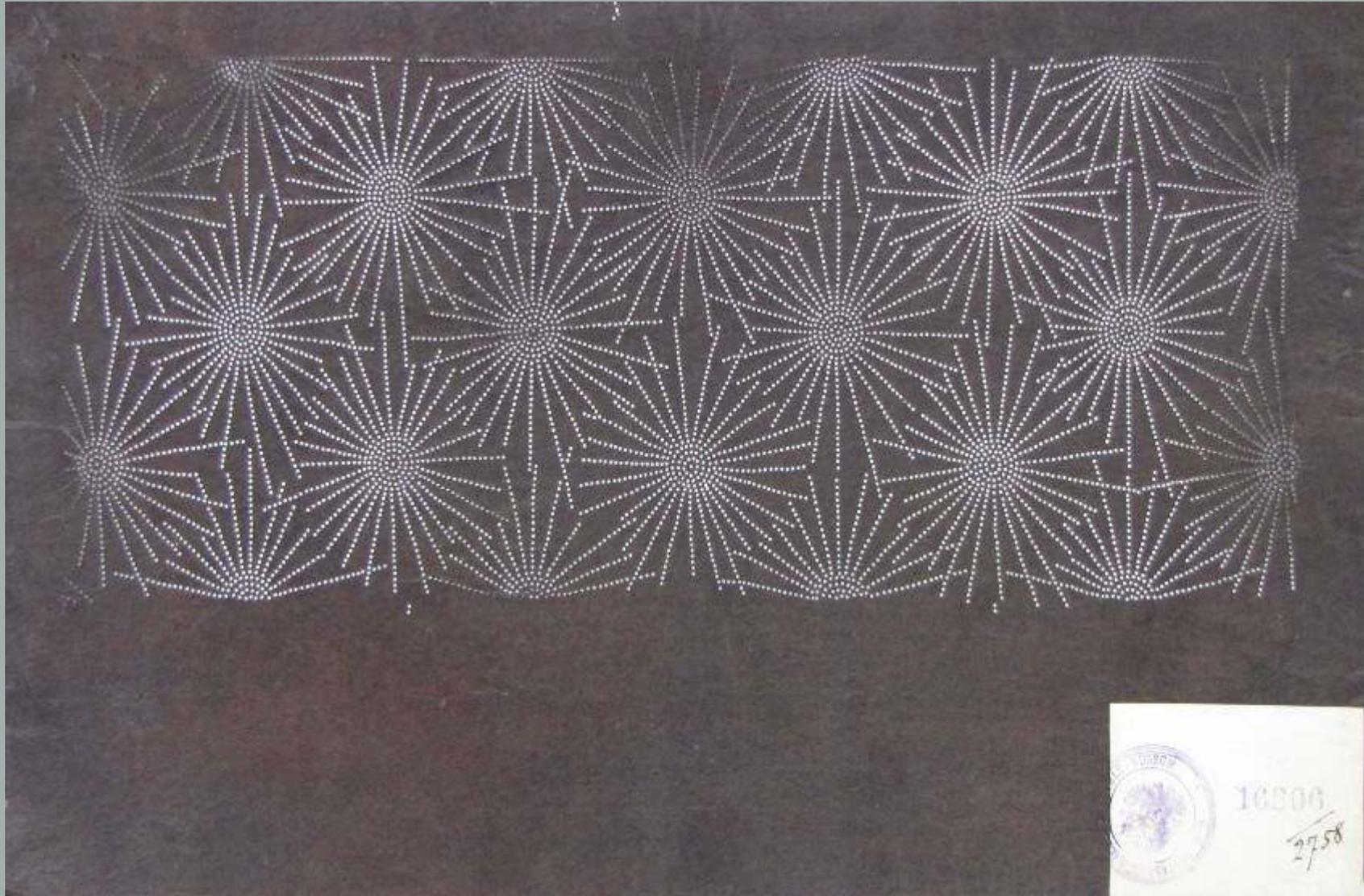


7560

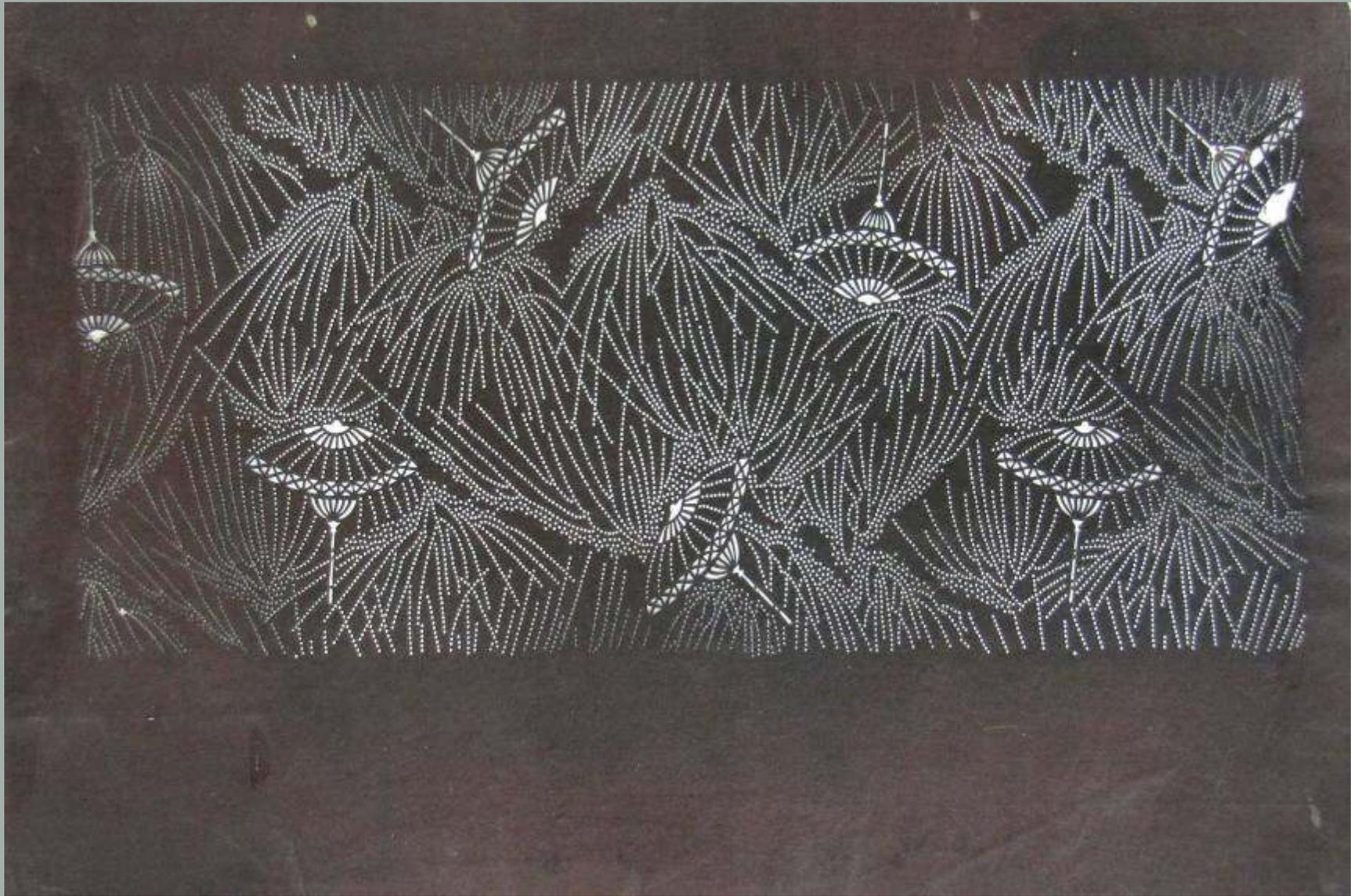
Butterflies with cherry blossoms

**Some butterflies are additionally embellished with stylised wave, bishamon
and sayagata patterns.**

Punching technique



2758
Star pattern
Punching technique



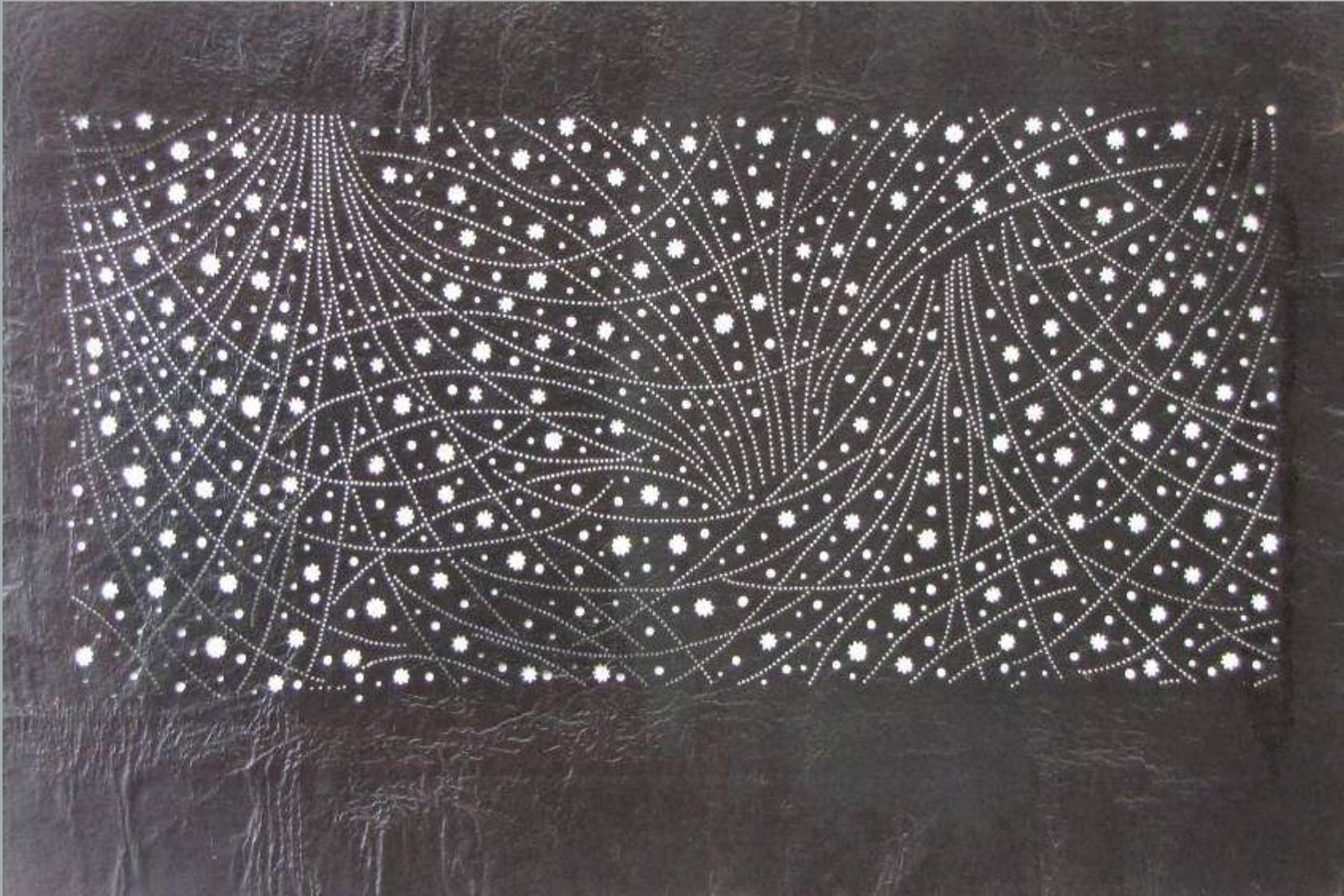
4937

Umbrellas

Cutting and punching technique



4821
Spirals
Punching technique



4885
Fireworks
Punching technique

Chapter 3: Chinese Patterns



From the very beginnings of Japanese history onwards, the cultural influence of China on its neighbour was palpable, though during the course of time it could be accepted or rejected. The first great wave hit Japan during the Tang era, when the civilisation of the Silk Road reached Japan; another came at the end of the Ming period, when not only trade between the two countries became gradually freer, but Japan also gave refuge to many intellectual Chinese.

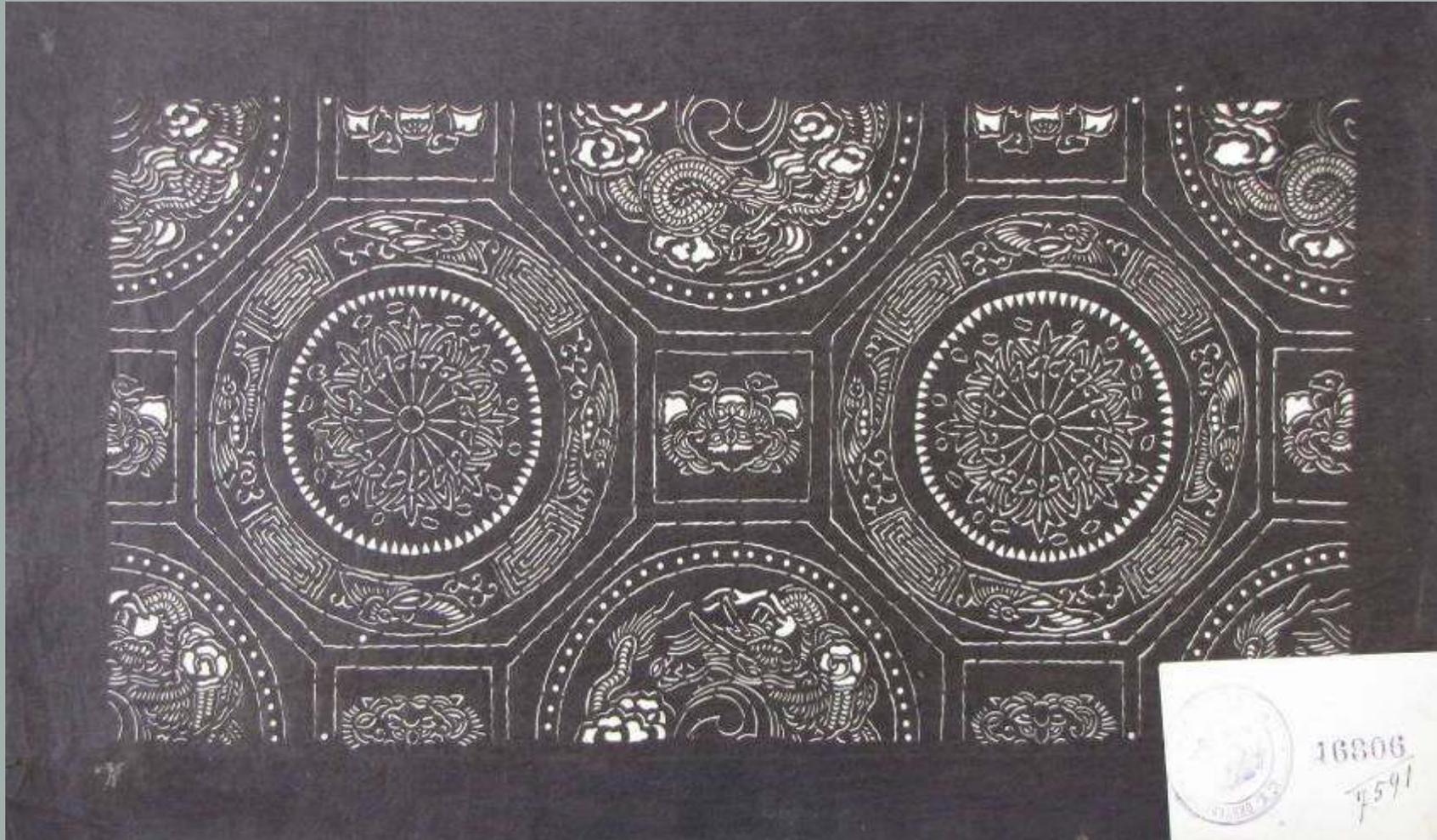


7537

Circular pattern with floral decoration

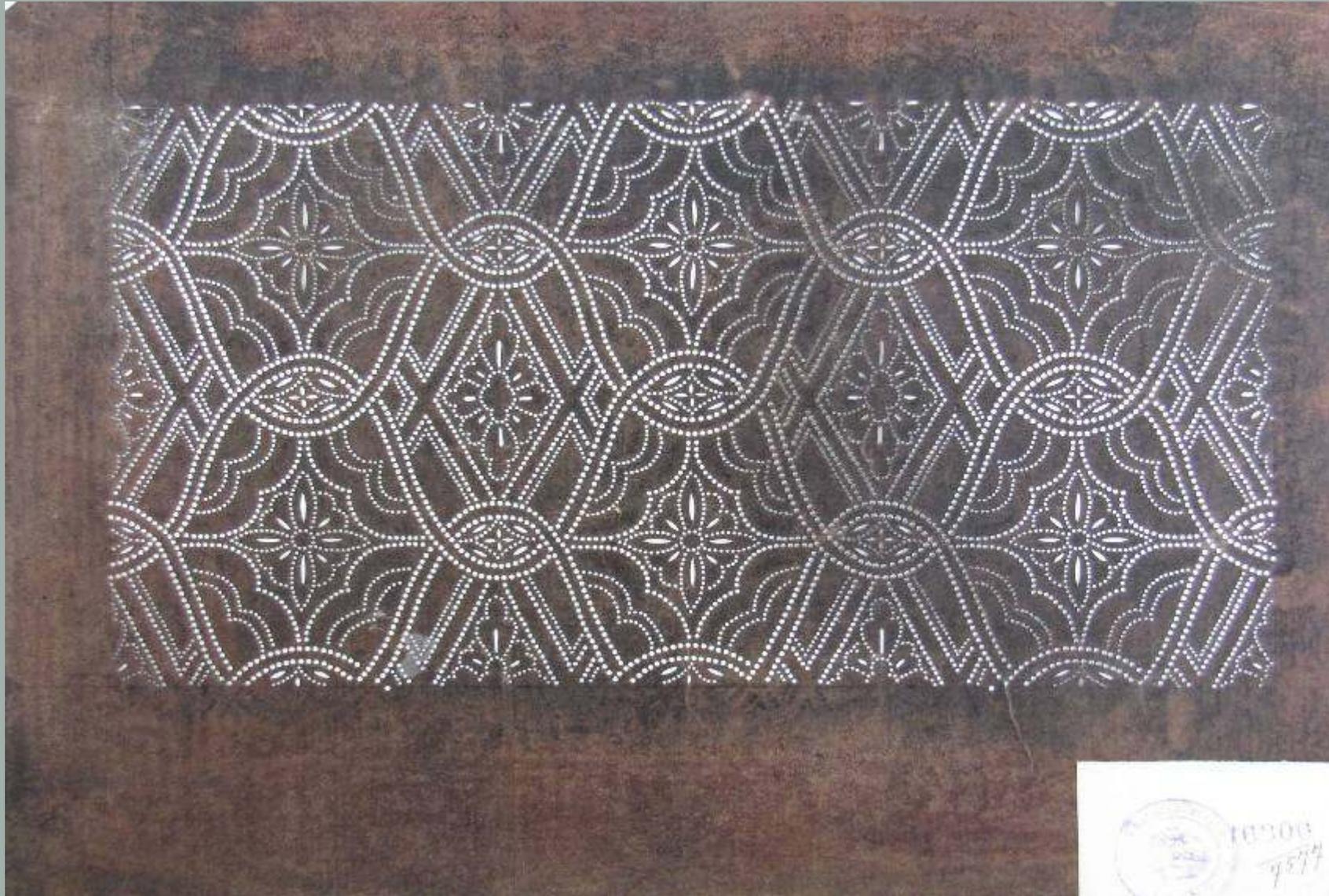
This and similar ornaments are examples of very old patterns that came to Japan via China during the era of the Silk Road. The Buddhist content can be seen in the stylised flower, symbolising the "Wheel of teaching / the eightfold way".

Cutting technique



7591

Octagonal pattern with inscribed decoration from ancient bronze mirrors
Cutting and punching technique



7577

Overlapping rhomboid and wave pattern
Punching technique

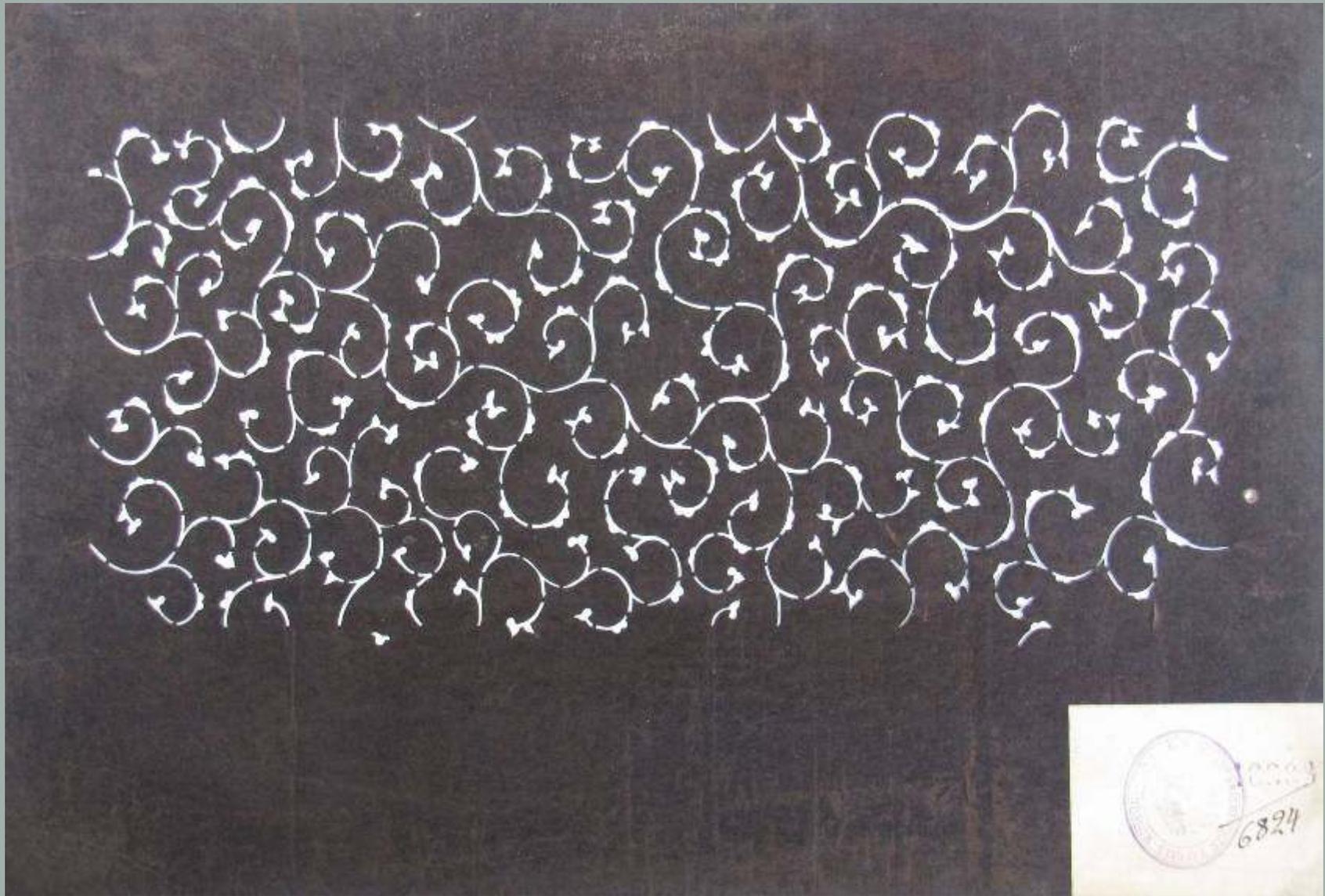


5838

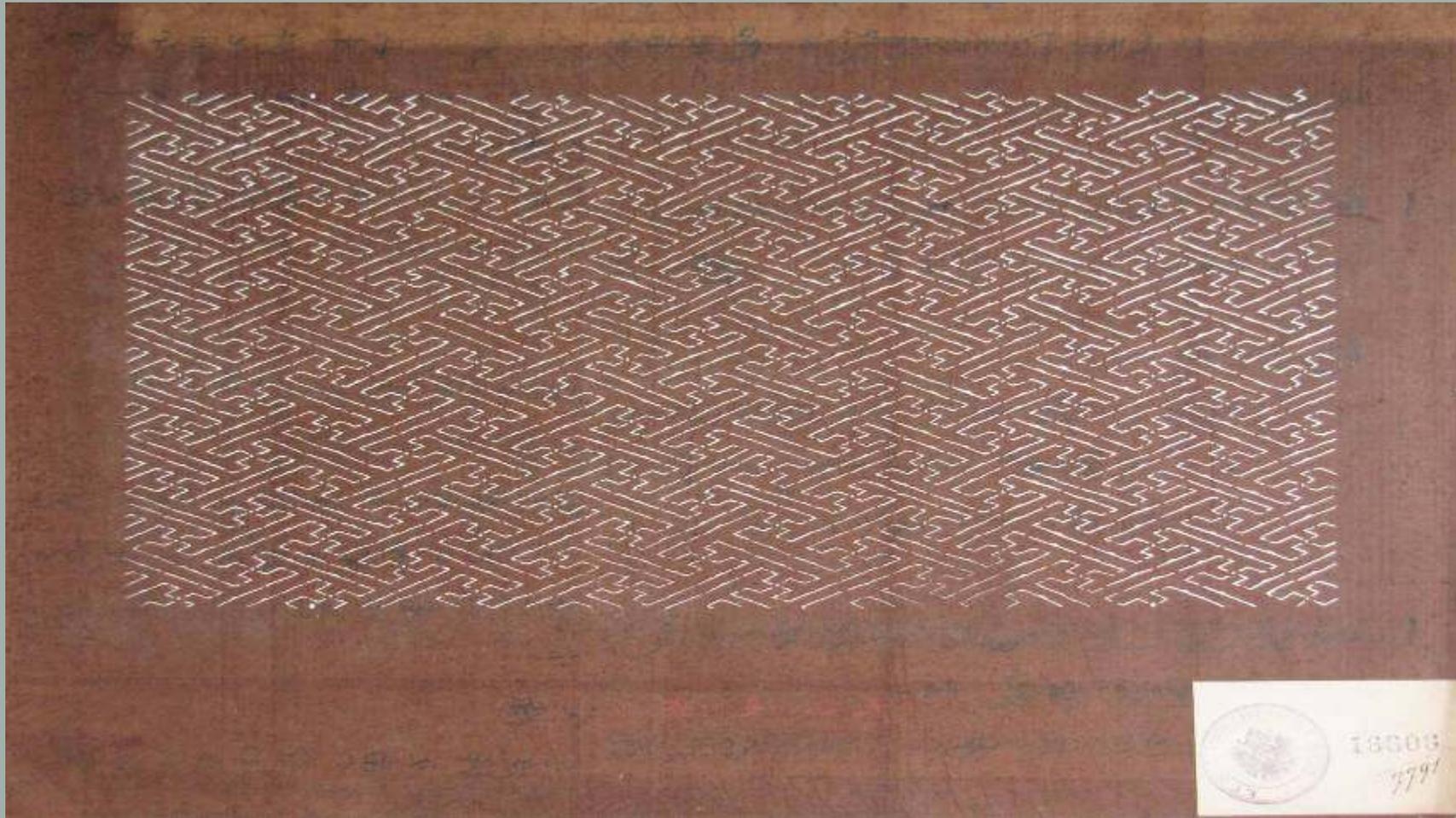
Chrysanthemum and vine scrolls

The chrysanthemum has been regarded since ancient times as a flower that portends favour and good luck. In Japan it was symbol of the imperial house from the Heian era onwards (794 to 1192).

Cutting technique



6824
Vine scrolls
Cutting technique

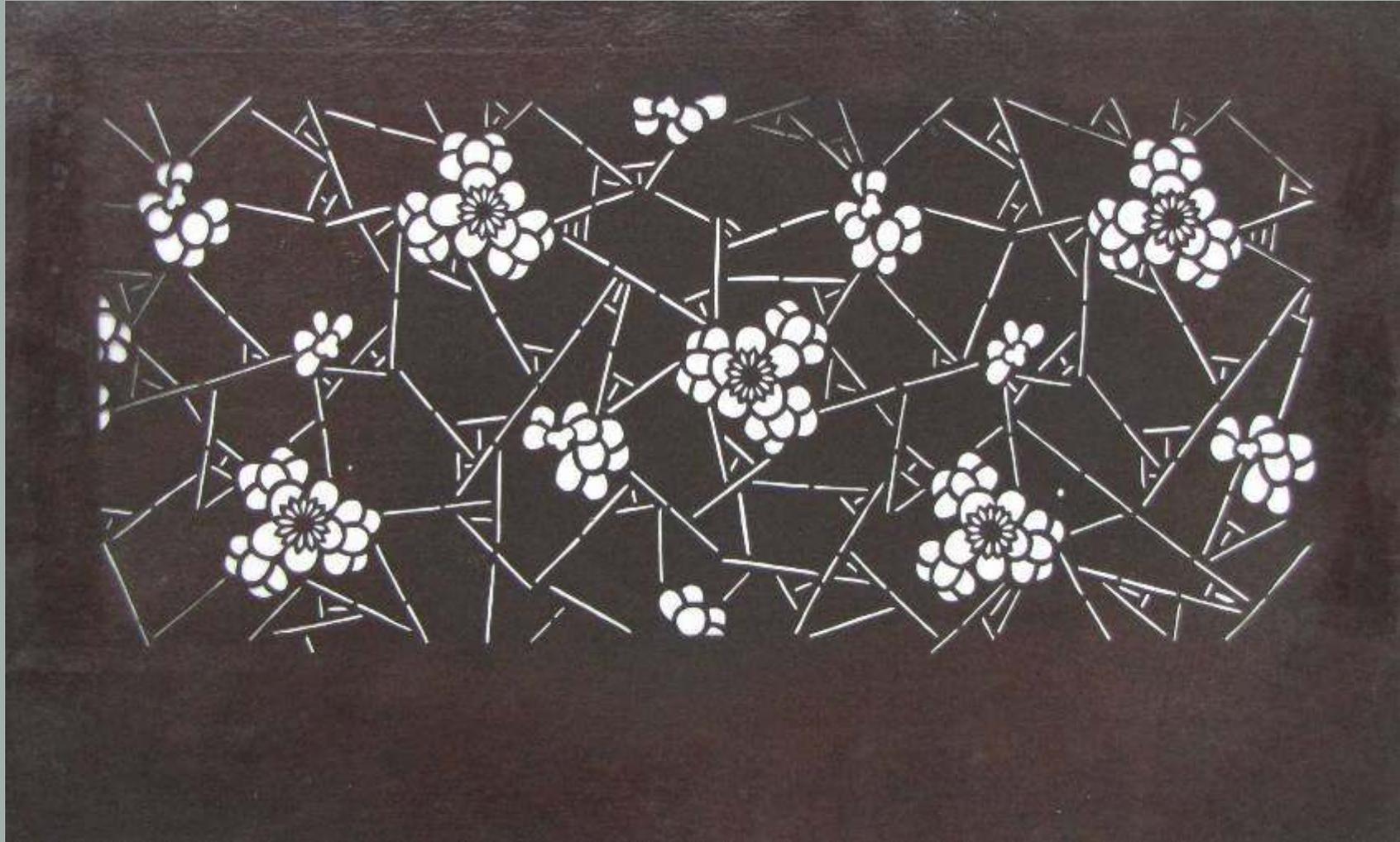


7791

Sayagata

Sayagata means "fine fabric pattern". This interlaced pattern forms small manji (swastika), which are signs of good luck in the Asian tradition. This pattern first became popular in Japan in the late sixteenth century, owing to increased textile imports from China.

**One stencil of two
Cutting technique**

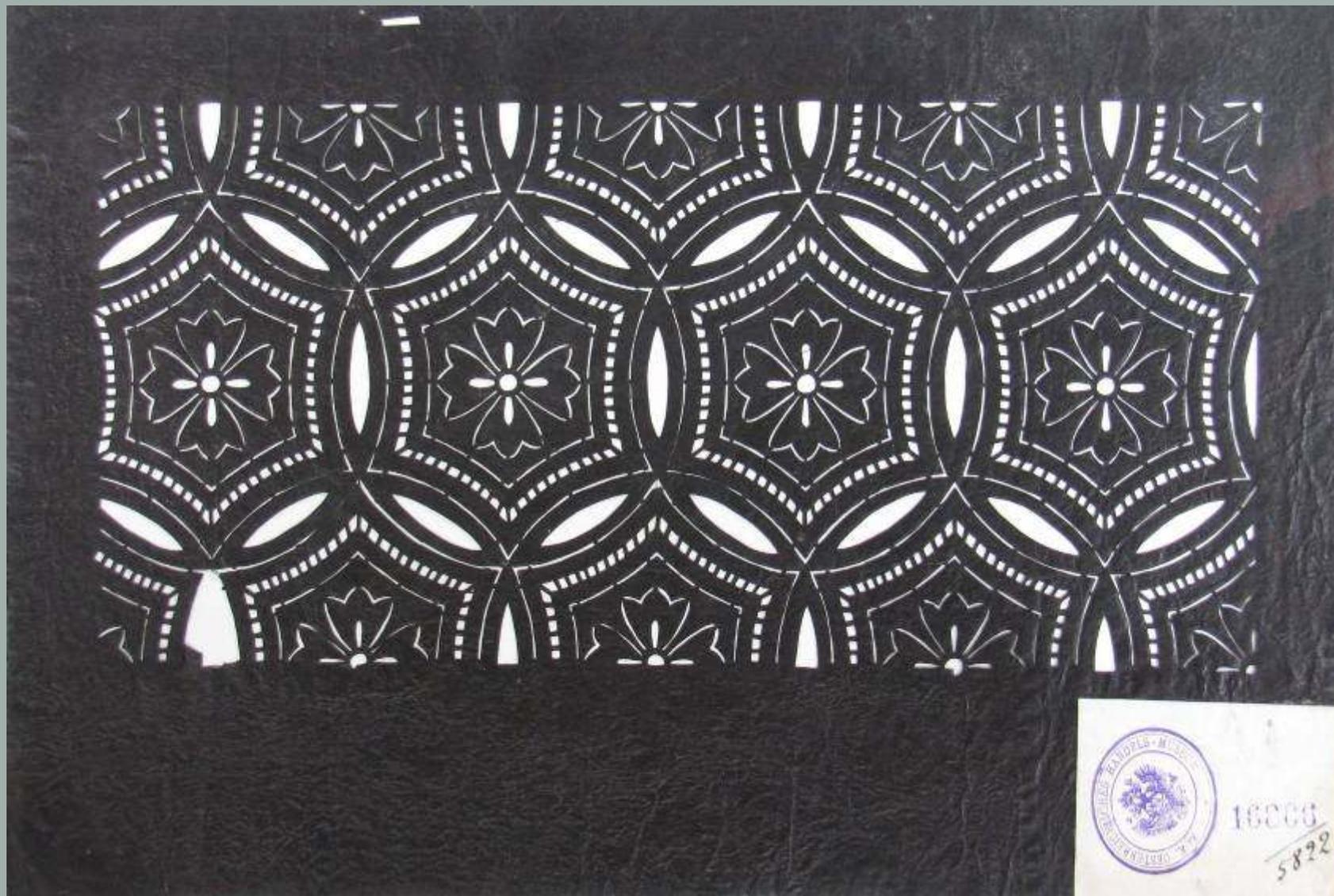


4963

Bursting ice and plum blossoms

This ornament has been a popular spring motif in East Asia since the late seventeenth century.

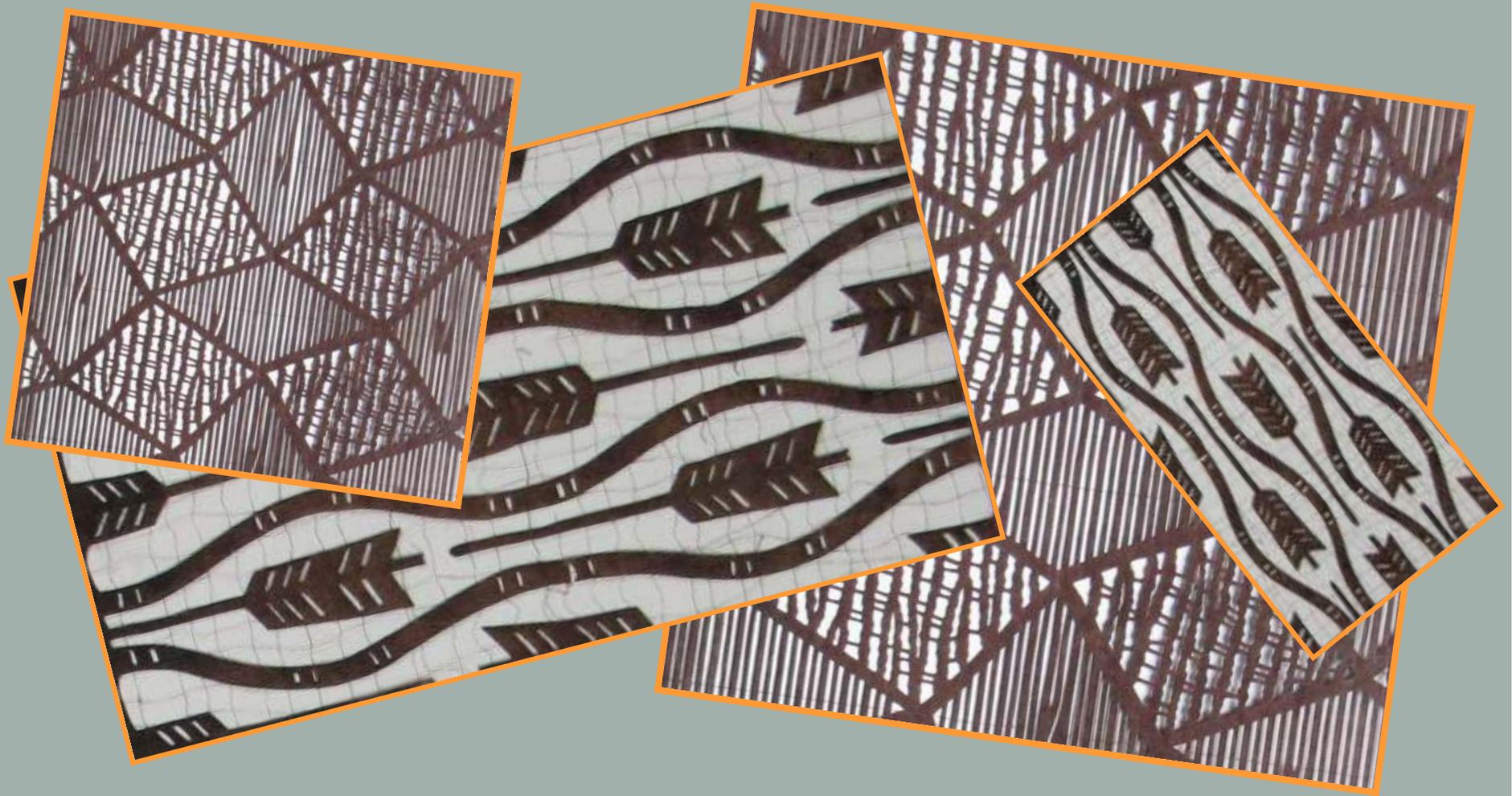
Cutting technique



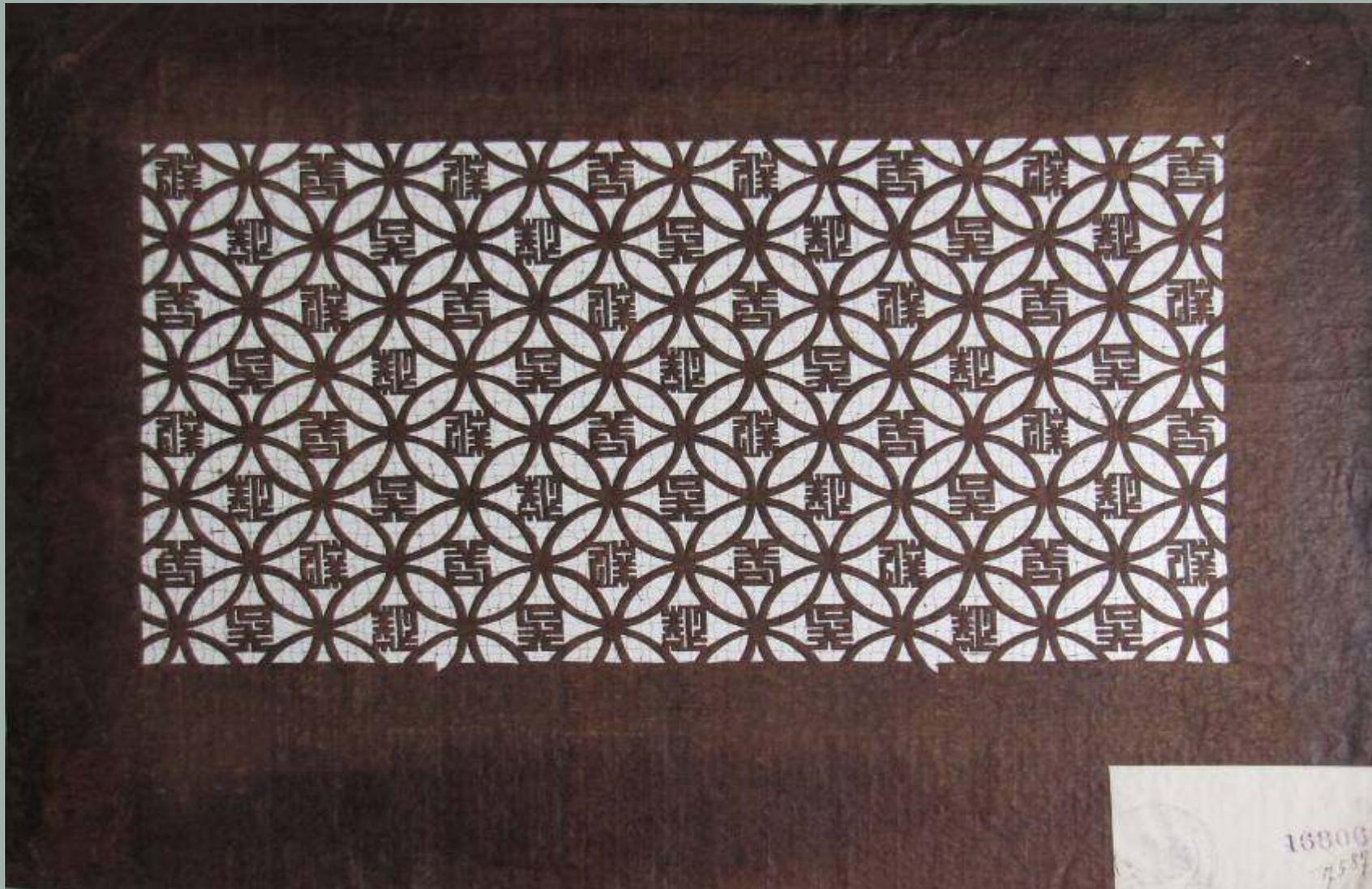
5822

Overlapping circular pattern with blossoms
Cutting and punching technique

Chapter 4: Planar Patterns / Mosaic Patterns



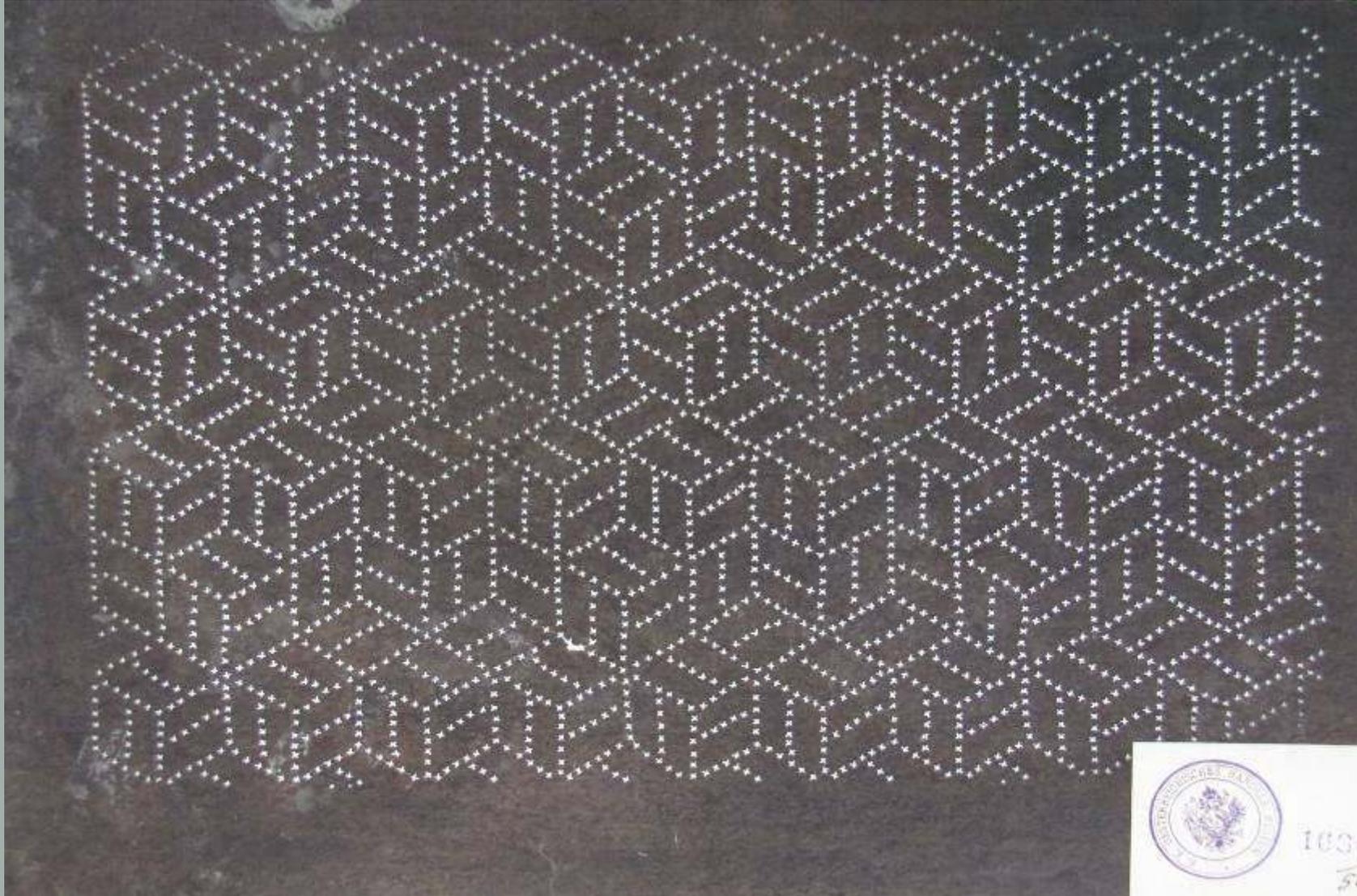
Planar patterns with interlacing forms are familiar from Greco-Roman floor mosaics and Islamic tiles. They made their way into Asian regions firstly with the spreading of Hellenistic art, and secondly, these pattern systems had been blended with Asiatic decorative motifs since the age of the Silk Road.



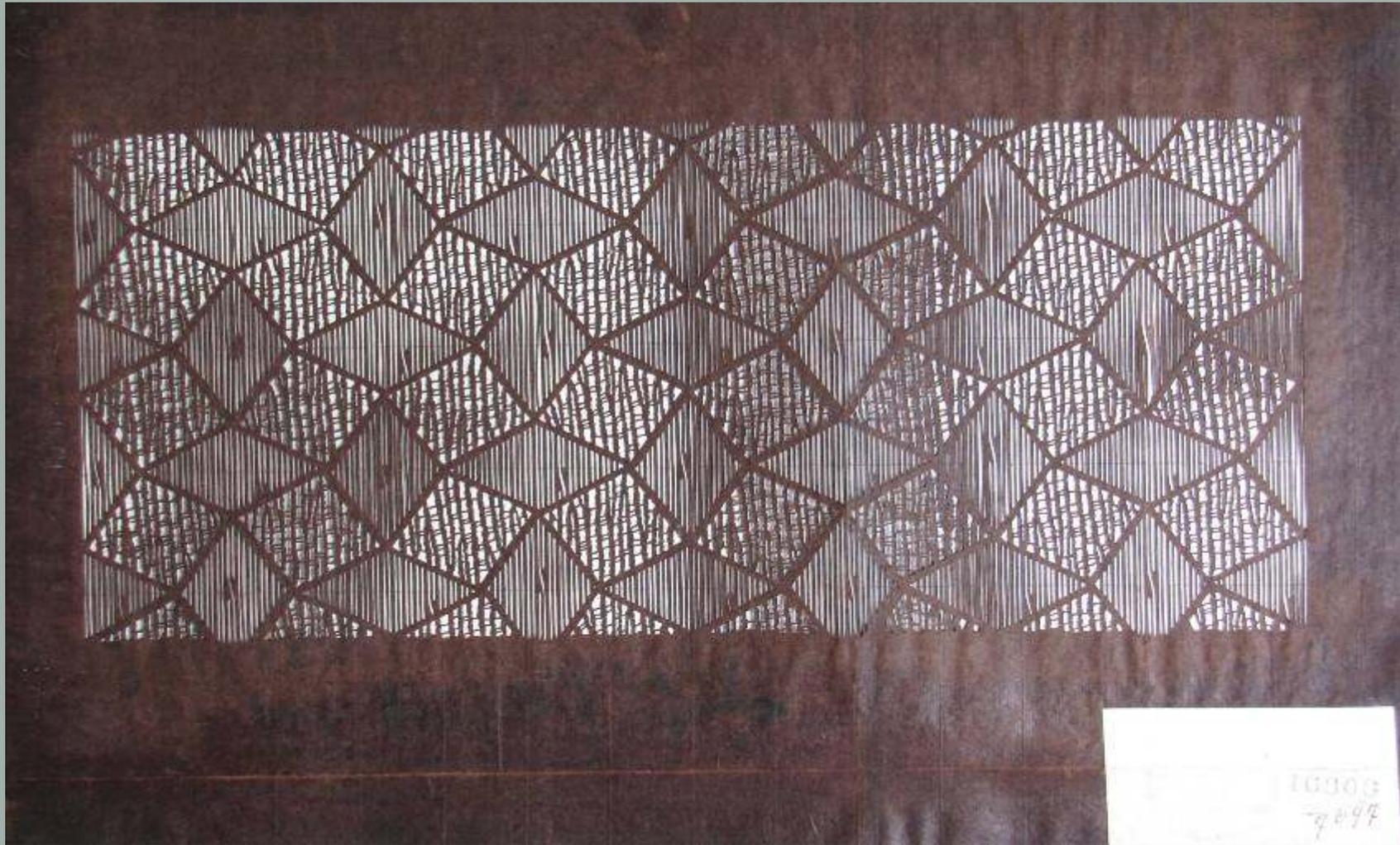
7587

Interlacing circles (shippo-tsunagi) with seal script characters
shippo-tsunagi means "bound fourfold"

Cutting technique



5842
Cube pattern
One stencil of two
Punching technique

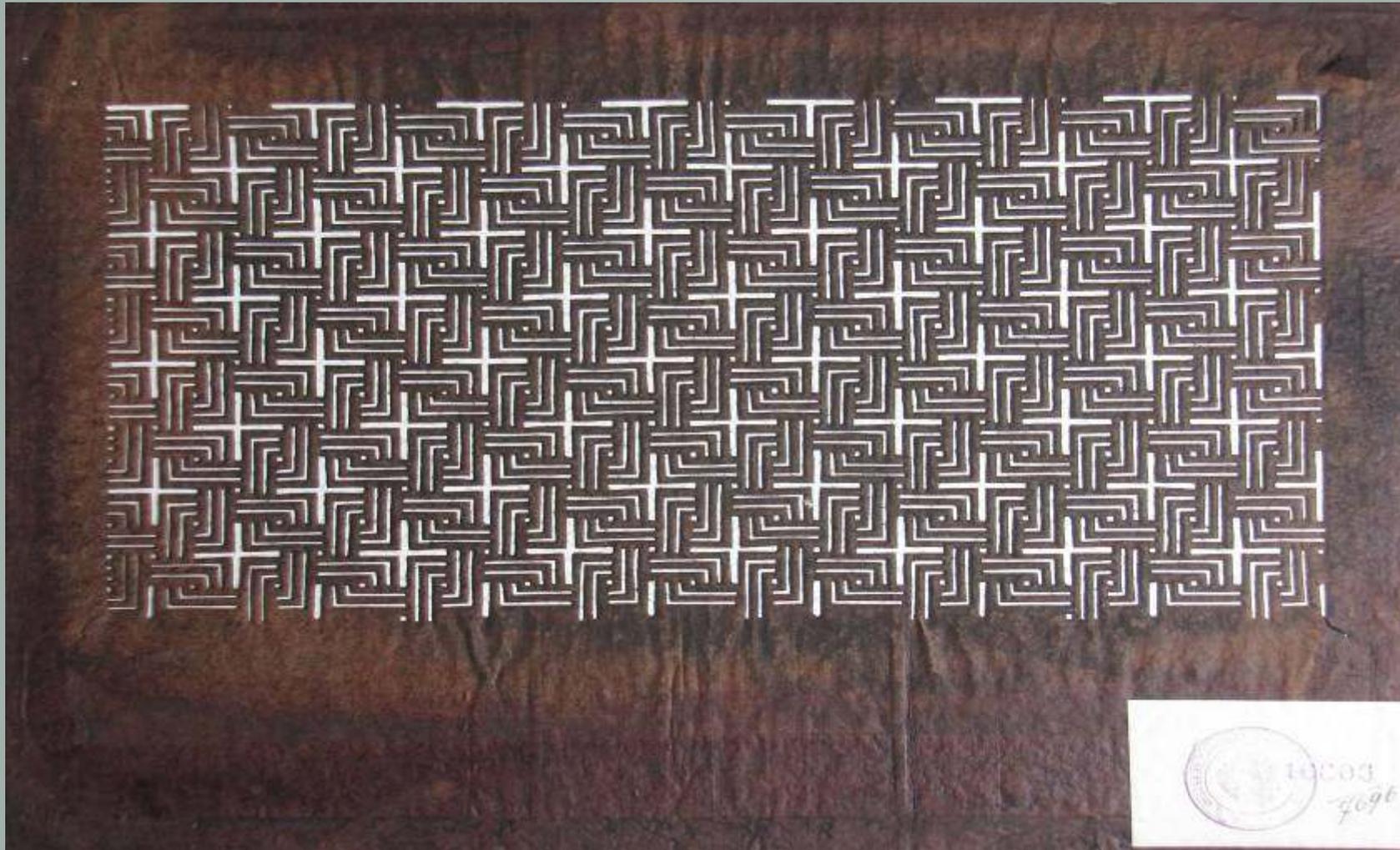


7697

Rhombuses and squares

This pattern is already evident on Greco-Roman mosaics and Islamic tiles; it belongs to the group of ornaments that wandered east along the Silk Road.

Cutting technique

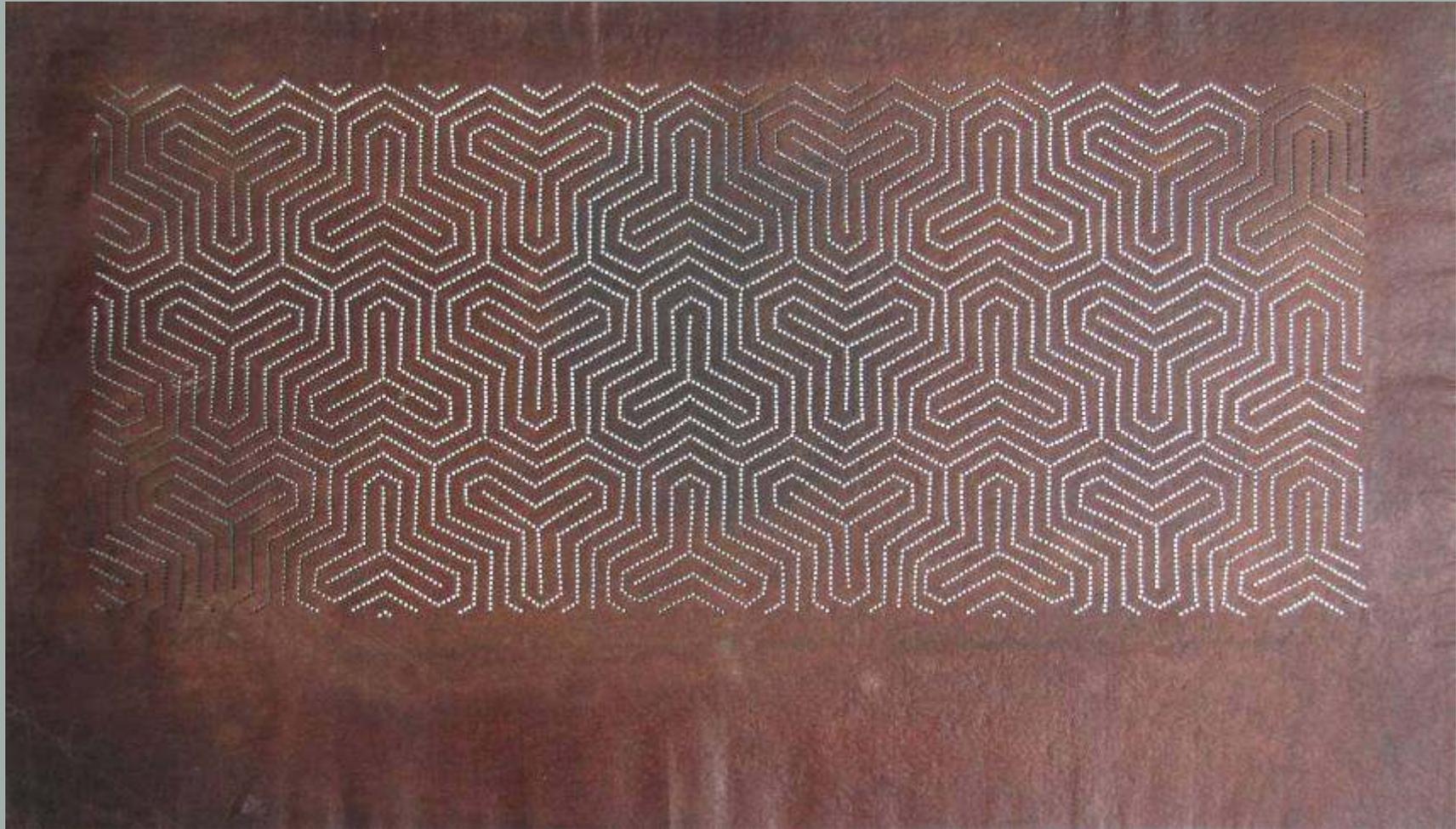


7696

Diaper of interlocked concentric squares

This pattern is already evident on Greco-Roman mosaics; thus it belongs to the group of ornaments that wandered east along the Silk Road

Cutting and punching technique



4830

Interlacing pattern

This pattern is very popular in East Asia and is called "bishamon kikko". Bishamon-ten is not only one of the lucky deities, he is above all one of the four heavenly kings, who wears armour. This pattern imitates the interlacing of a leather-thong breastplate.

Punching technique

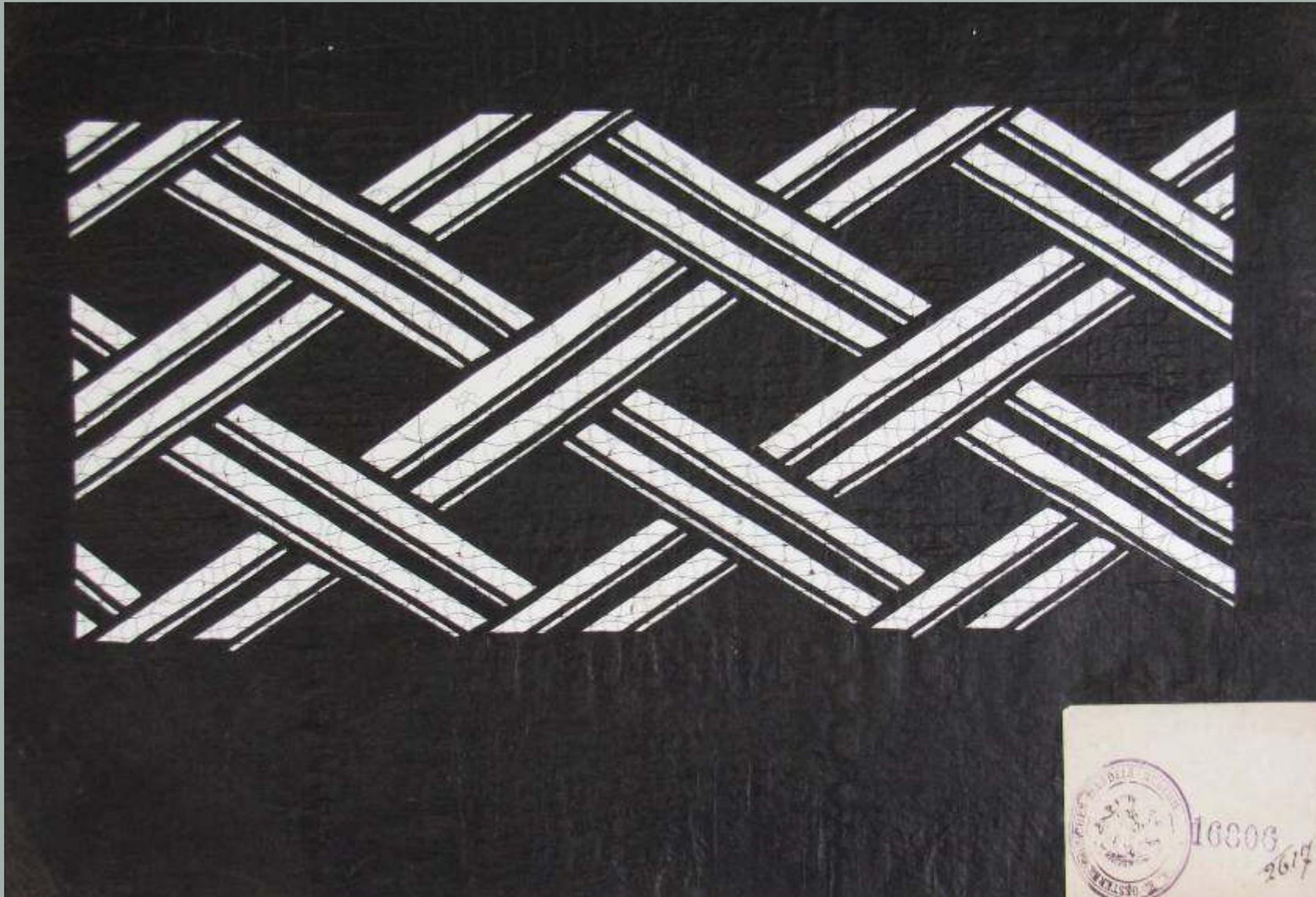


4999

Bow and arrow

The bows form serpentine lines

Cutting technique

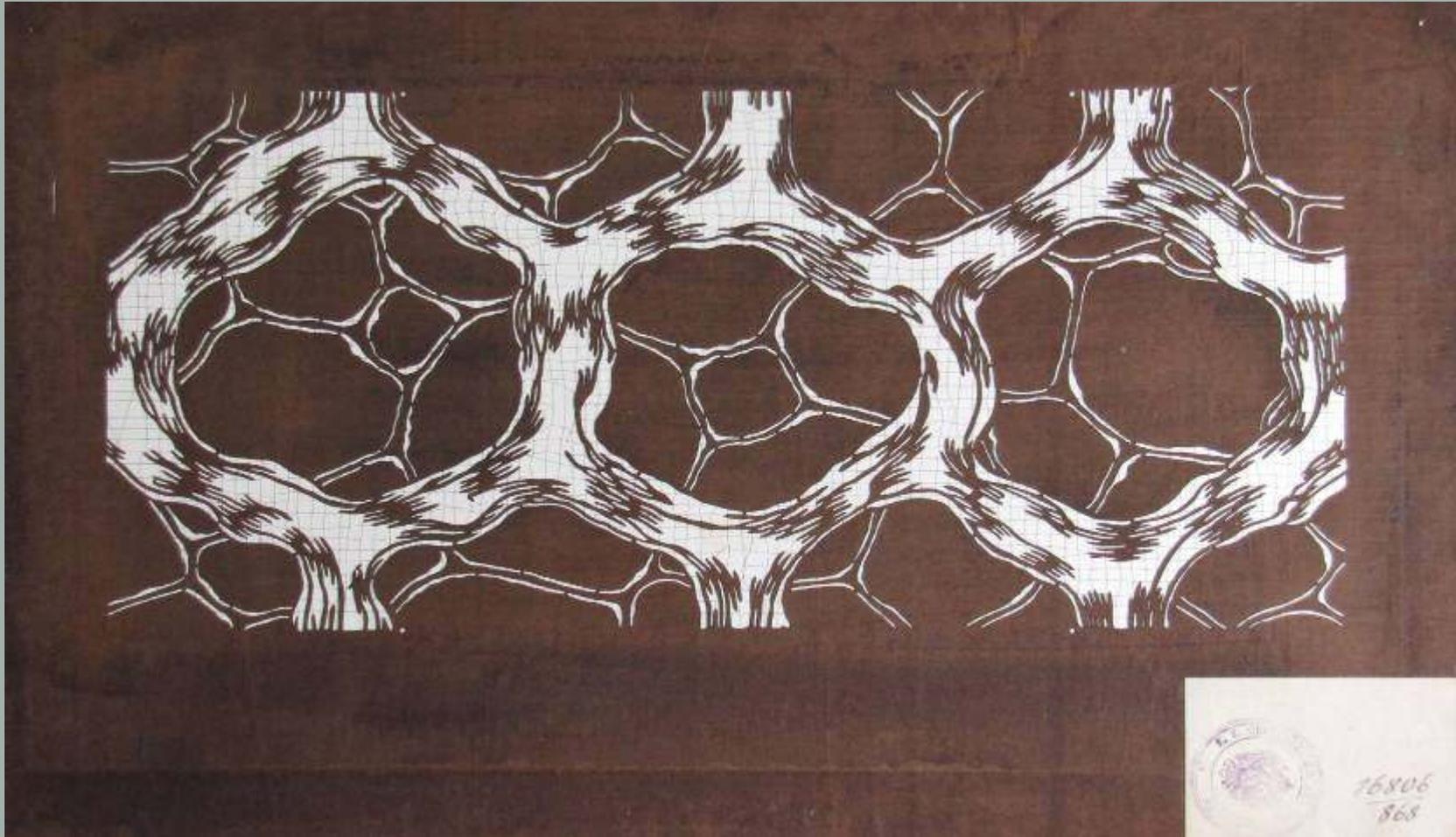


2617
Interlaced pattern
Cutting technique

Chapter 5: Water / Rivers / Waves



One of the central themes in East Asian art is water and thus the representation of natural forces – friendly or inimical. It is especially in the turbulent sea and high waves that we find allusions to the separation of our world from the "Island of the Immortals".



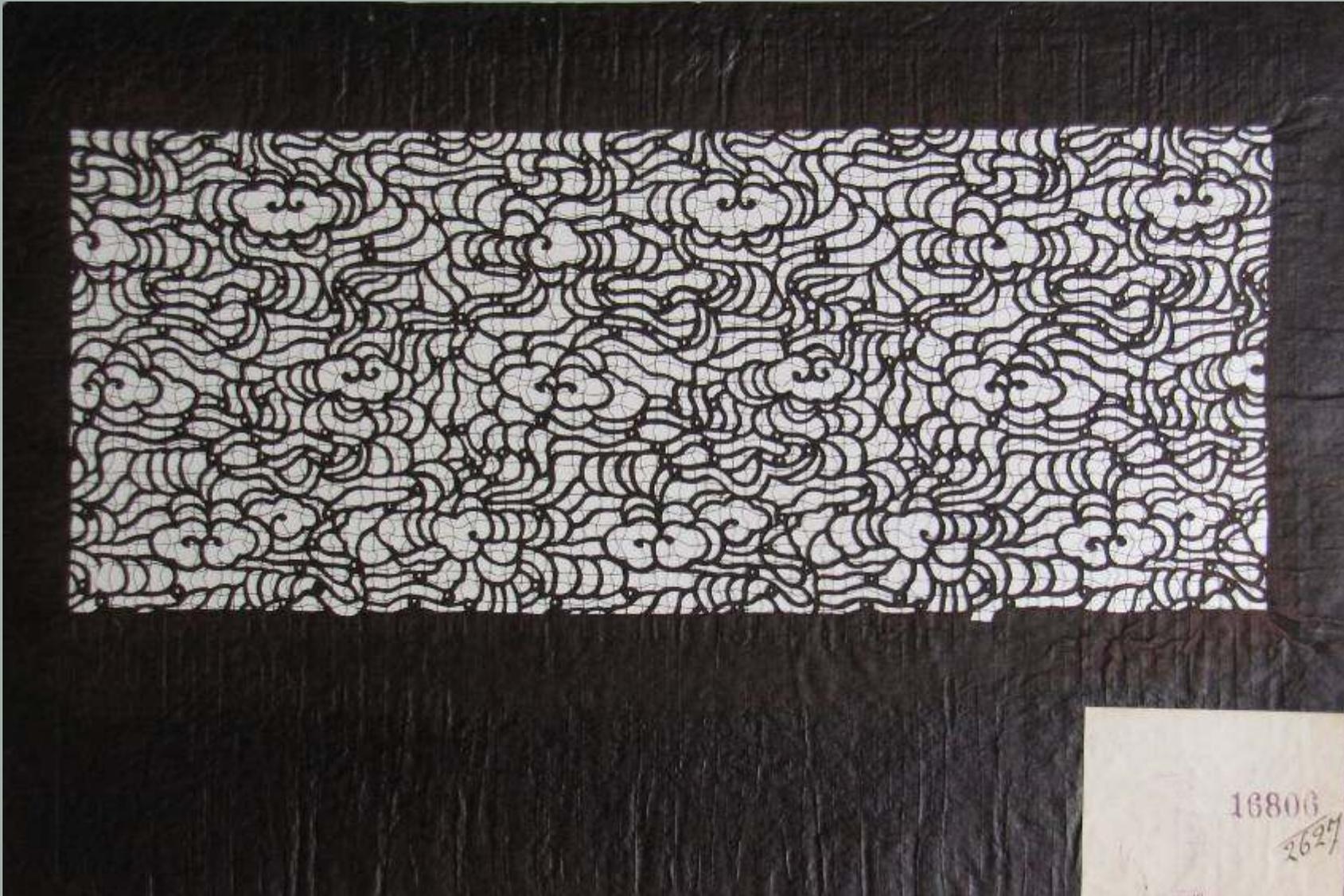
0868

Rivers

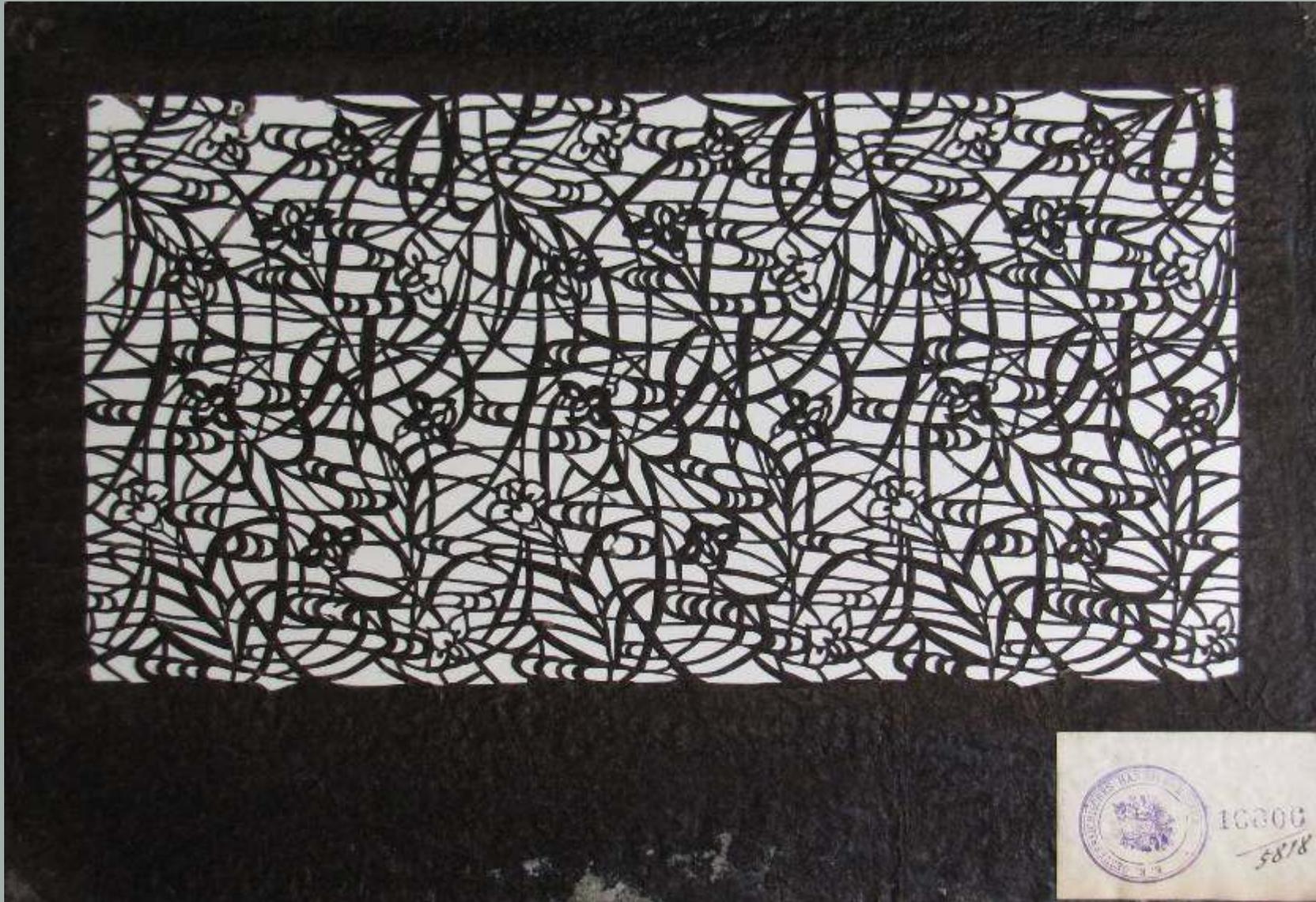
after a motif by Ogata Korin (1658-1716)

This might be a stylised rendering of river courses, though more likely a
bird's eye view onto artificial irrigation waters of flower gardens

Cutting technique



2627
Clouds motif
Cutting technique



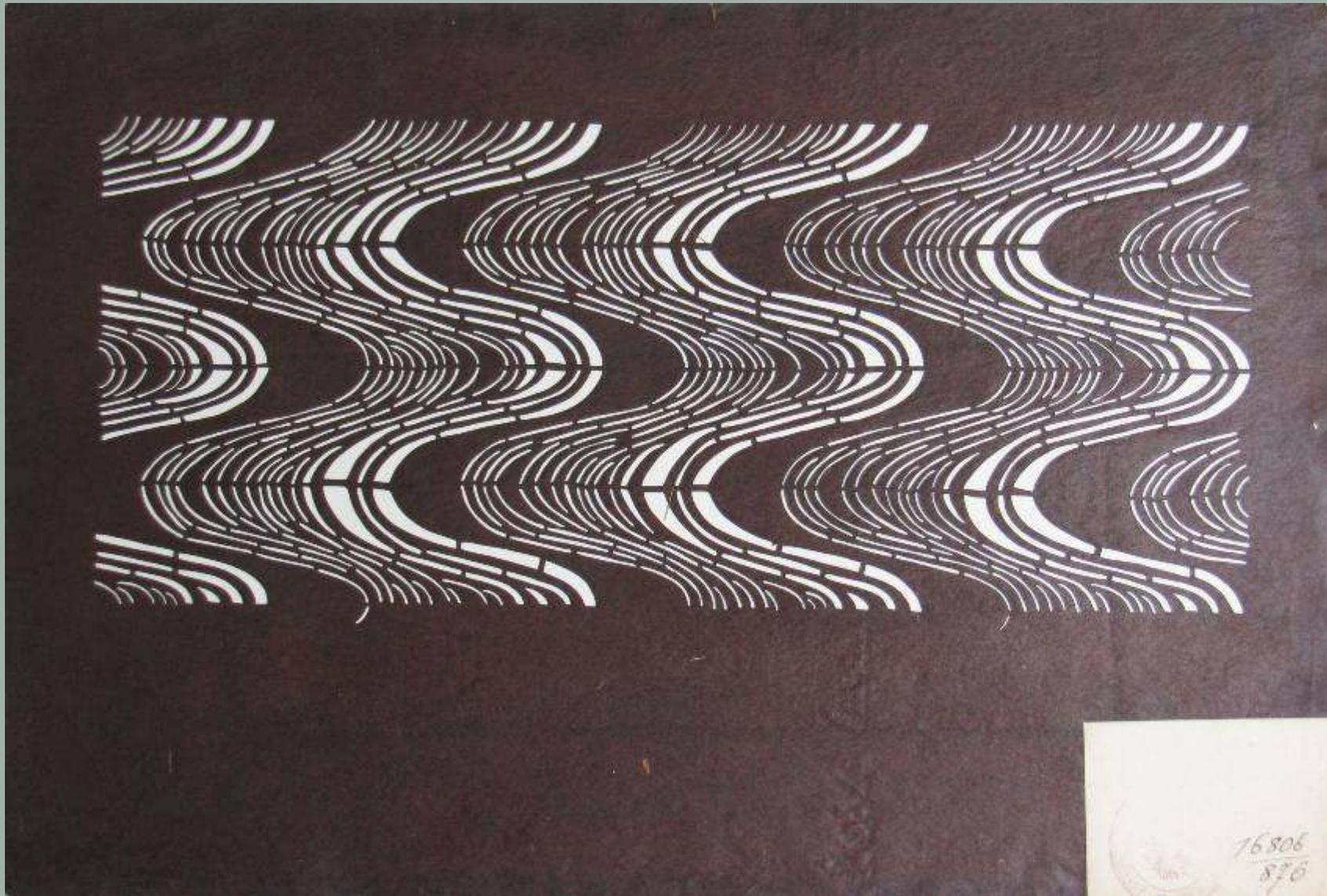
5818
Iris and running water
Cutting technique



5255

Wave pattern

This imitates the tie-dyeing technique of shibori
Punching technique



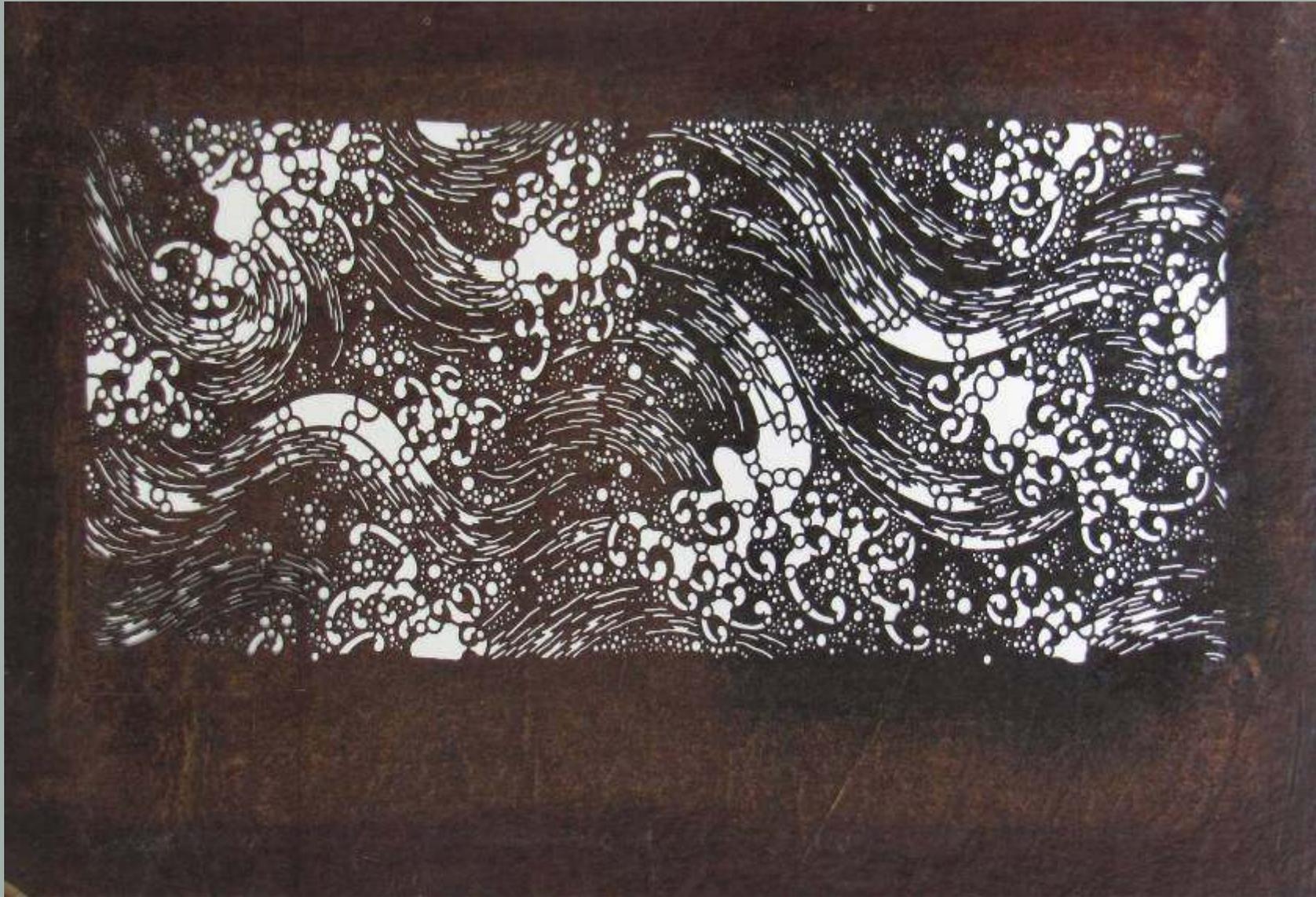
0876
Wave motifs
Cutting technique



5817
Wave pattern
Cutting technique



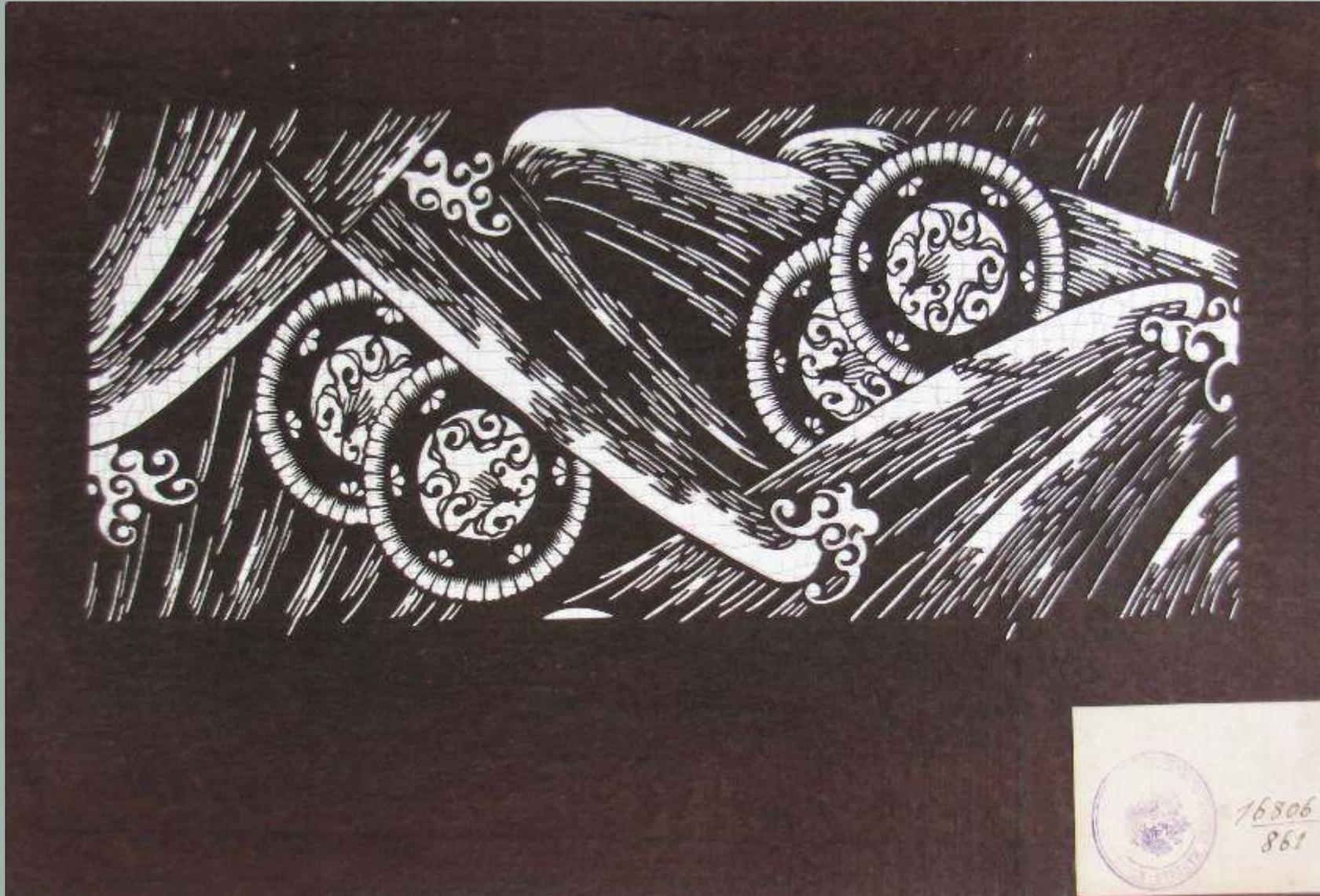
7789
Birds above waves
Cutting technique



4892

Waves

Cutting and punching technique



0861

Waves and medallions with dragon motifs
Cutting and punching technique



5899
Waterfall and wave
Cutting technique



8641

Waterfall

Cutting and punching technique



0867

Waves, crayfish and flowers

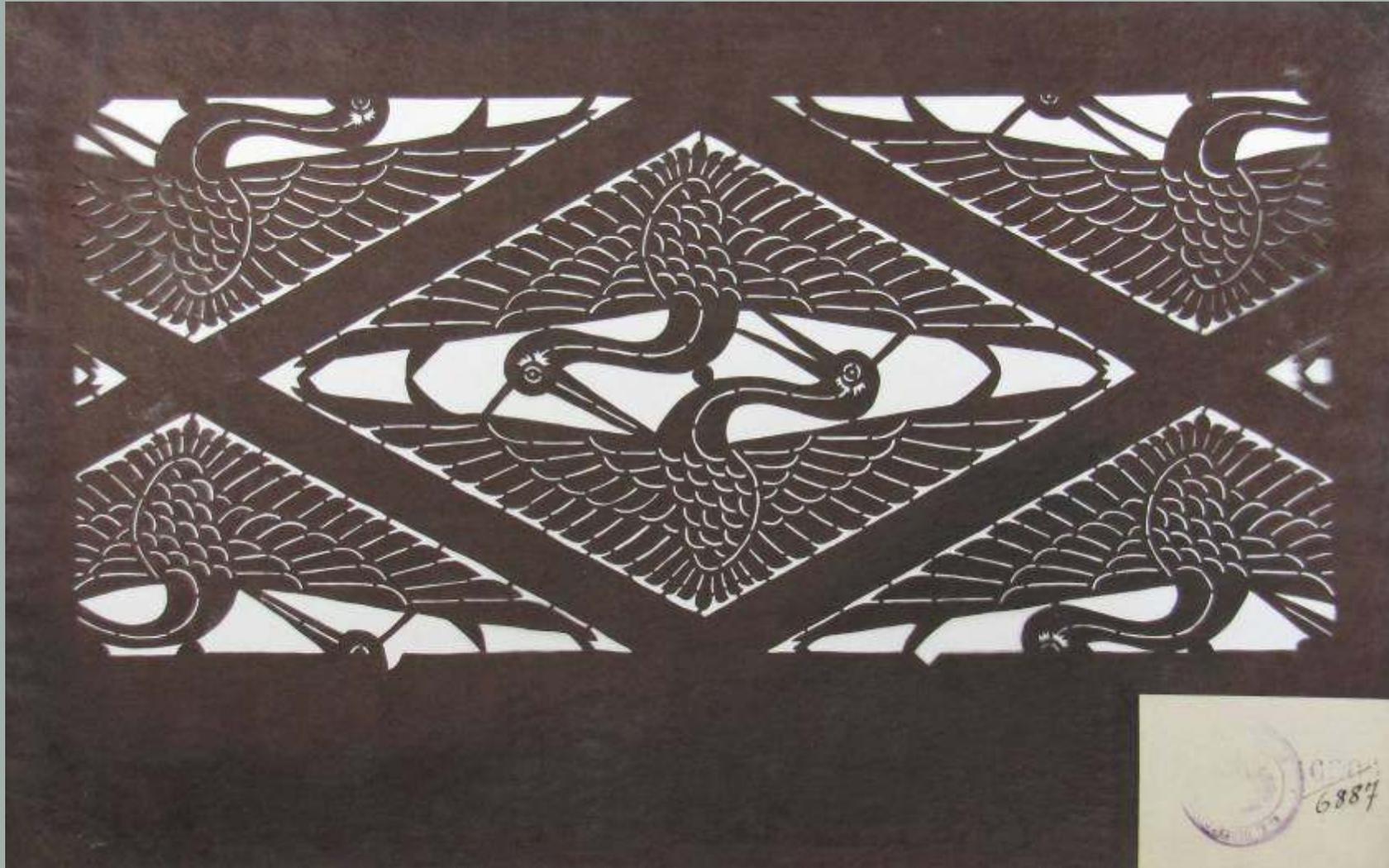
Cutting and technique

Wave pattern

Chapter 6: Animals



Representations of animals can be interpreted as symbols of good luck if they are associated in traditional folk beliefs with the lucky deities. But they can also stand for certain seasons, or simply stylised and applied as ornaments, without any great significance.

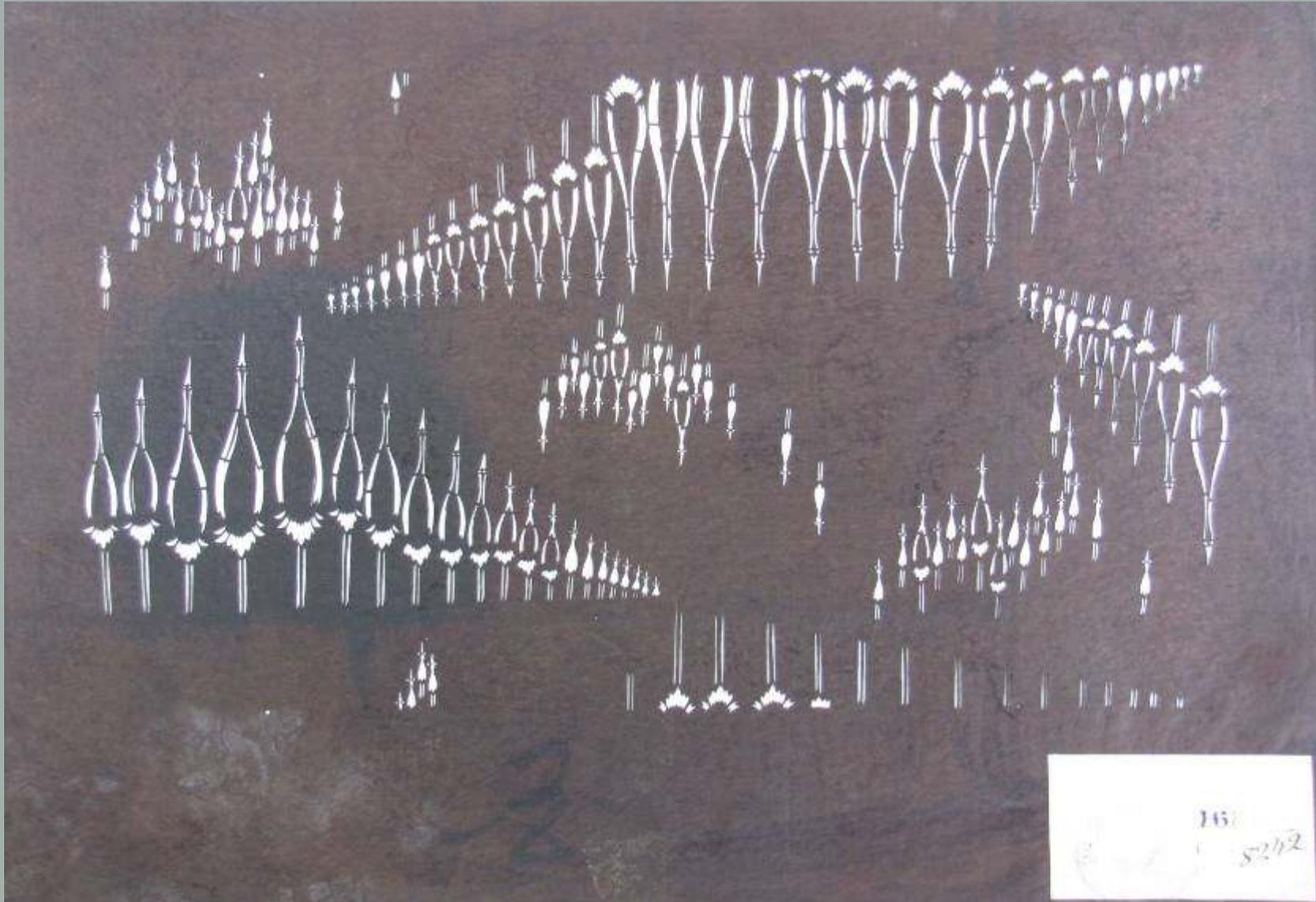


6887

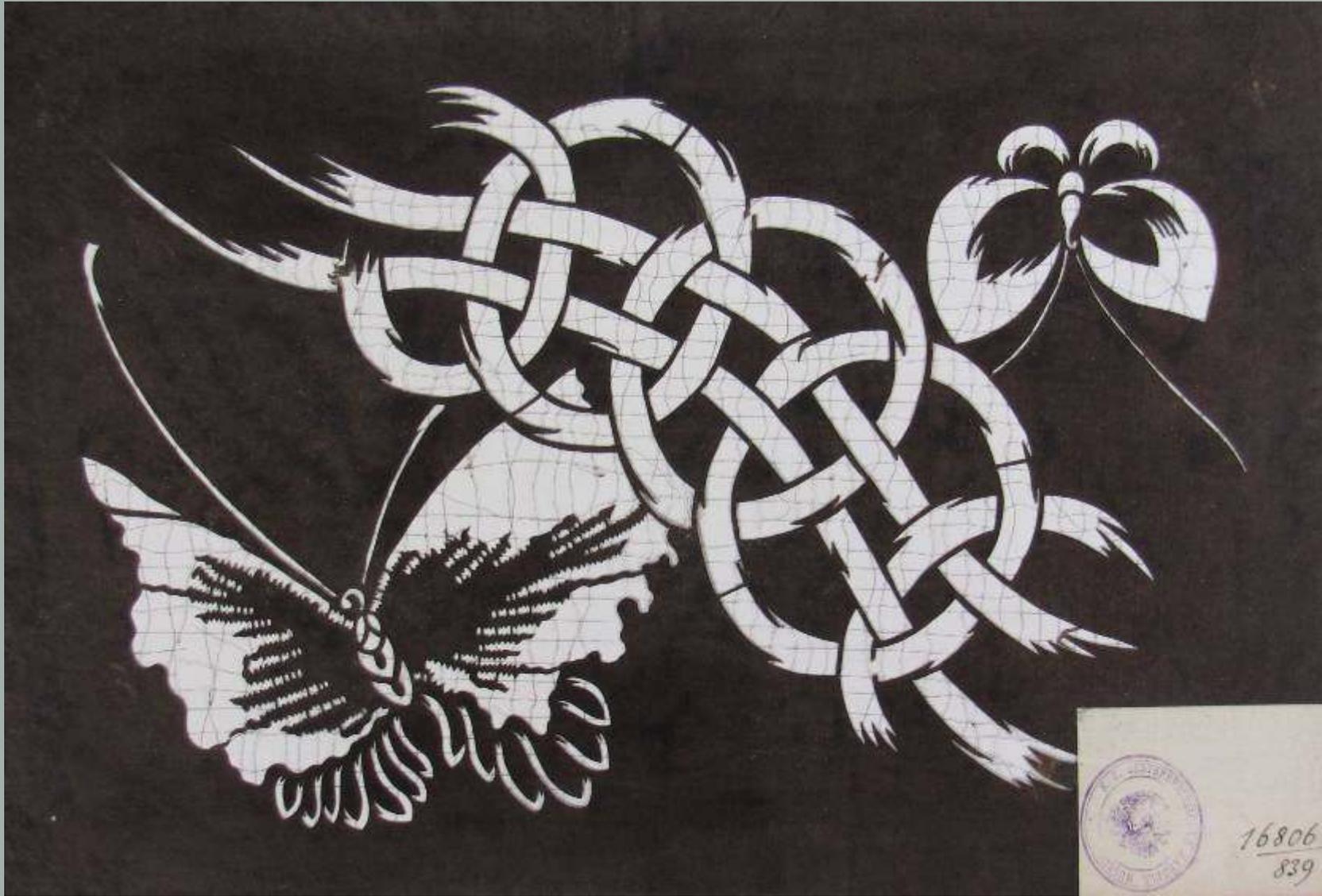
Two cranes in rhombuses

"Double crane" means "double luck" or "lucky togetherness", which is wished for lovers and married couples.

Cutting technique



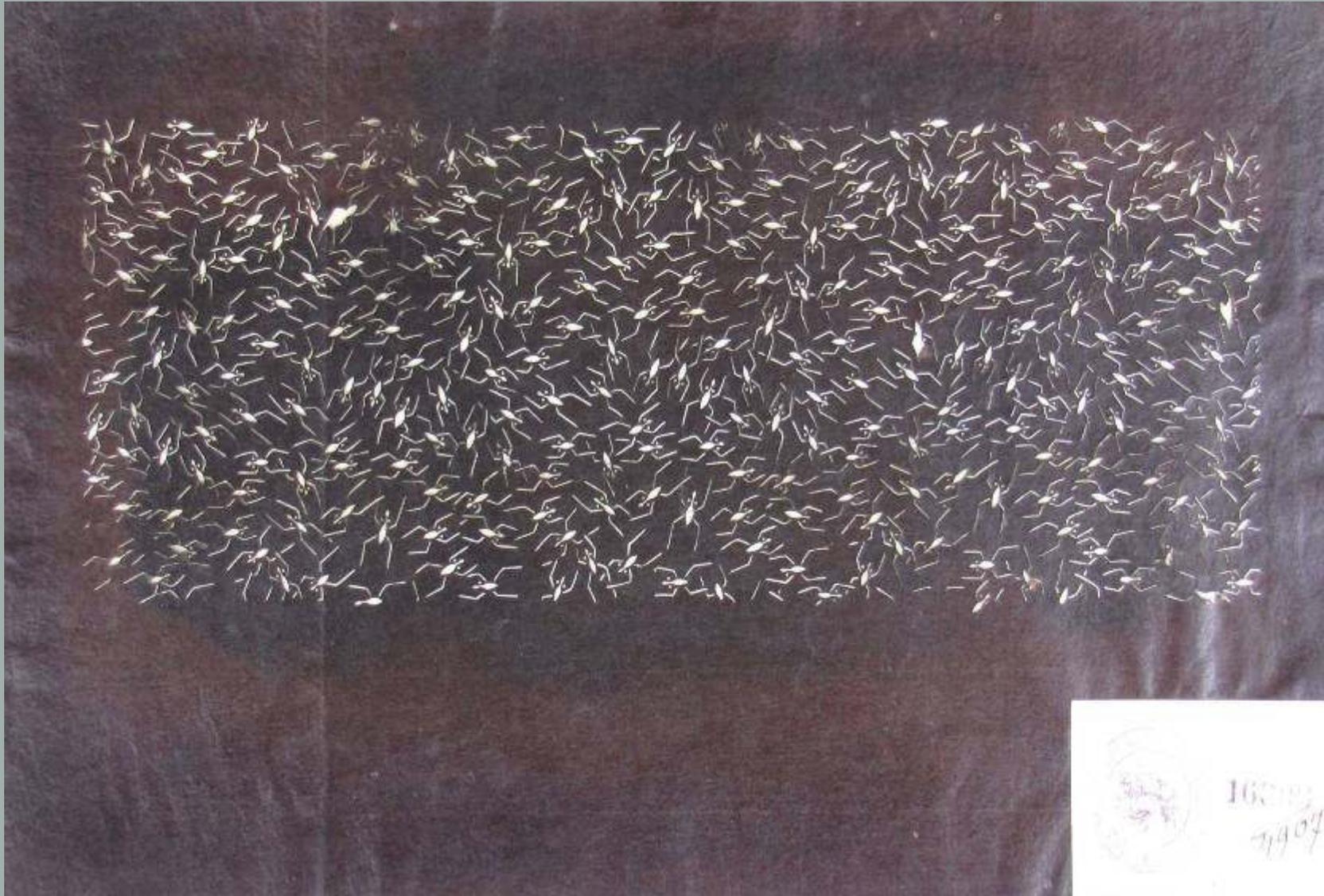
8242
Flying cranes
Cutting technique



0839

Butterflies and ring bands

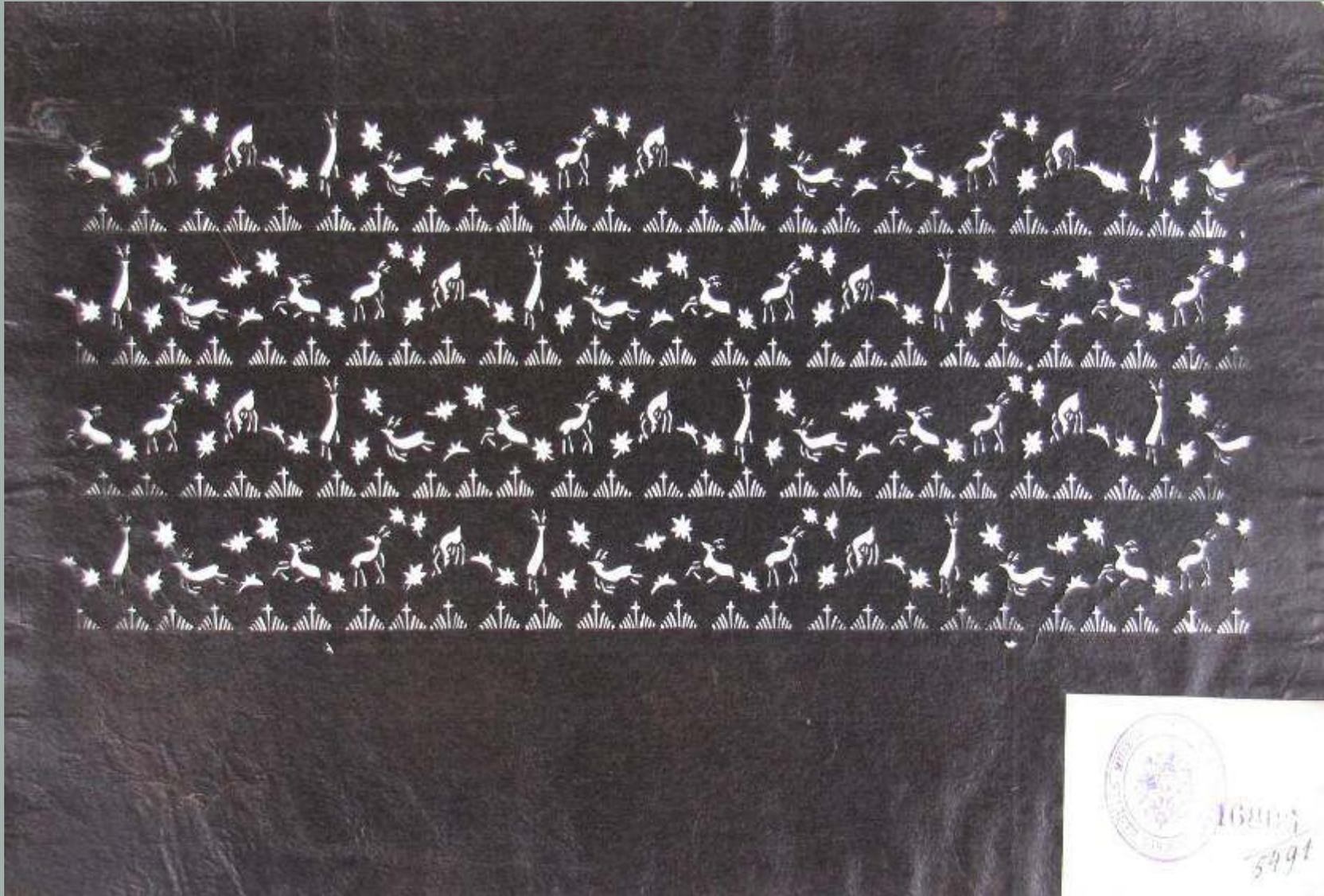
Cutting technique



4907

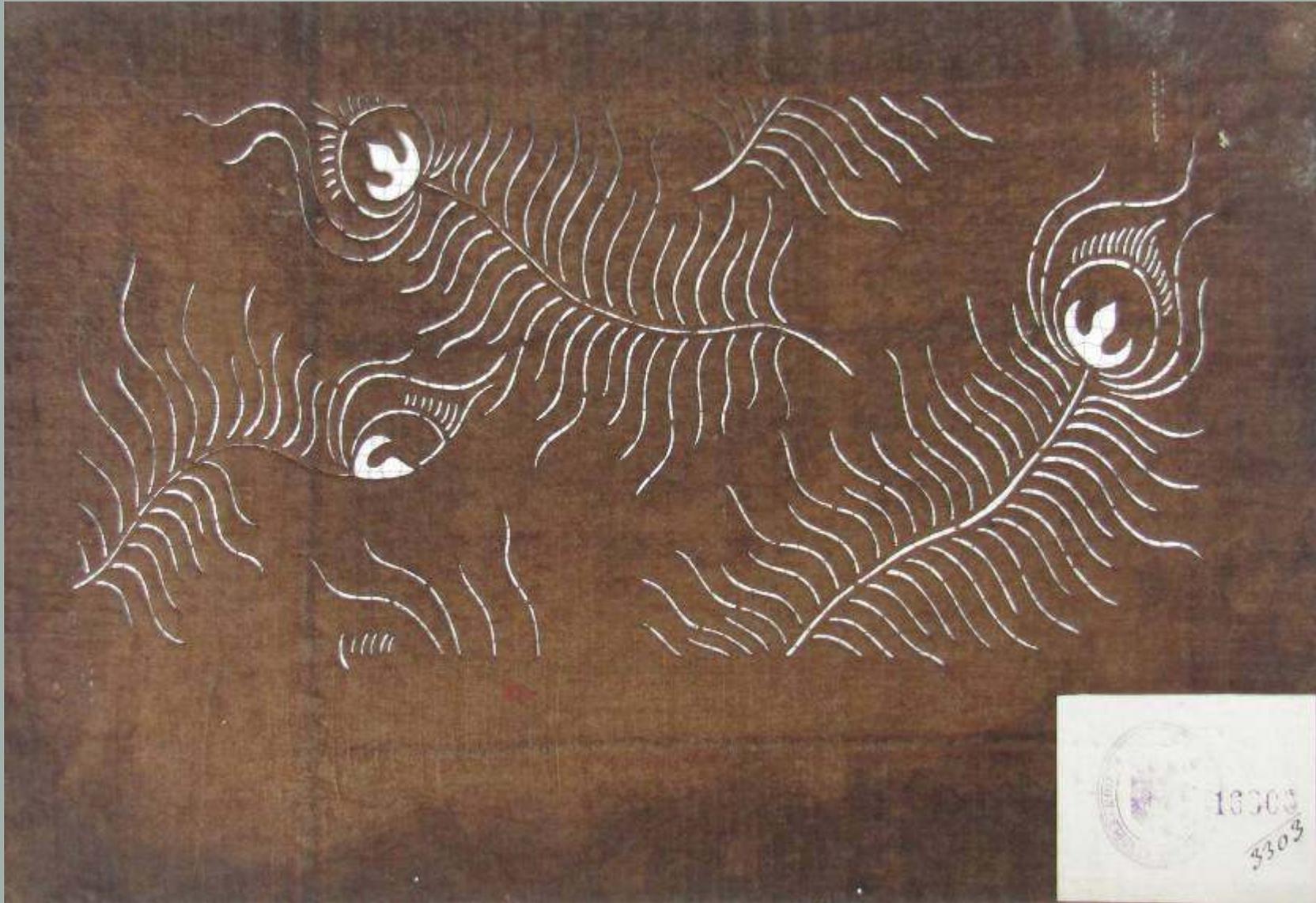
Beetles

Cutting and punching technique



5491

Stags and stylised iris
Cutting and punching technique



3303

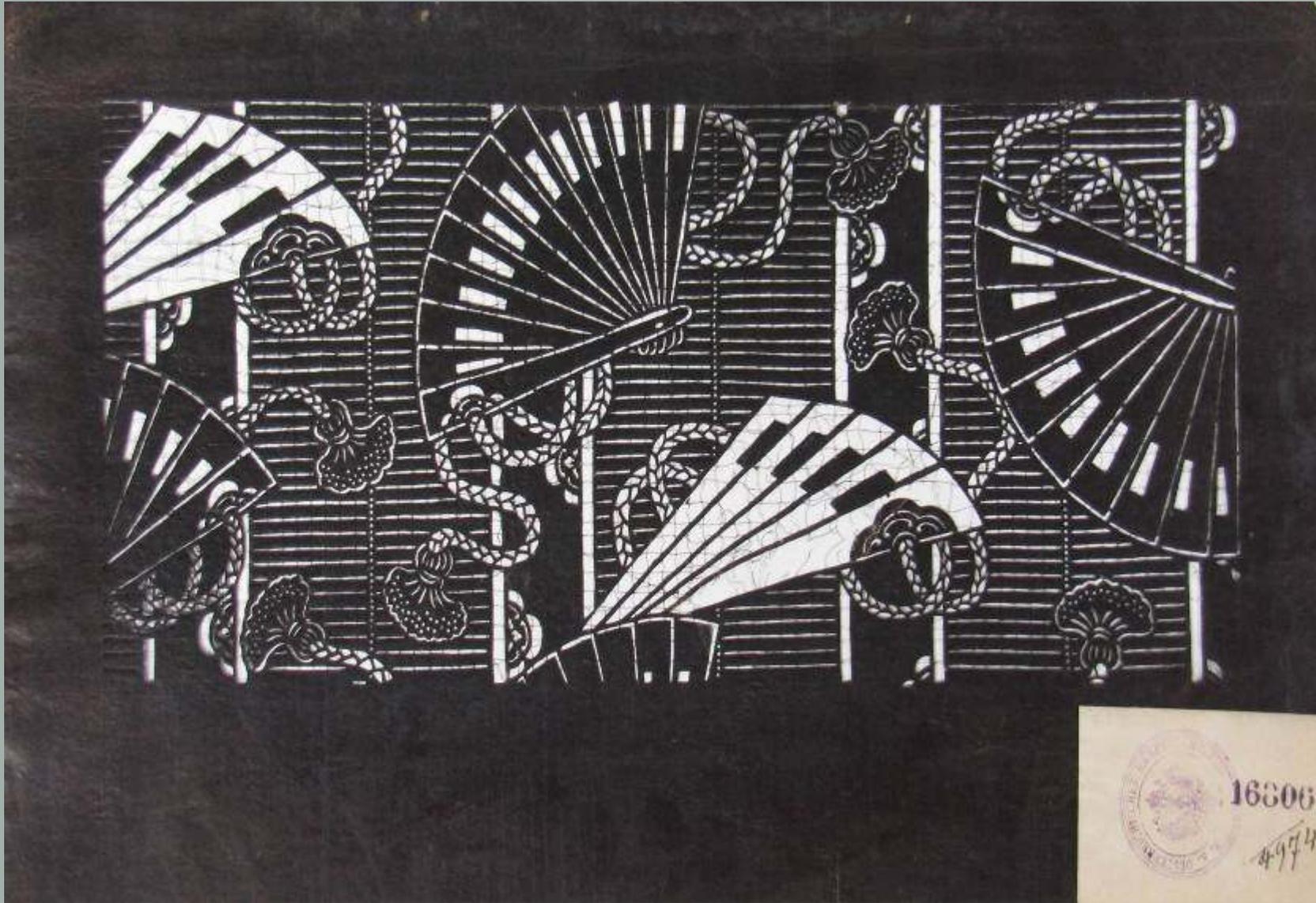
Peacock feathers

Cutting and punching technique

Chapter 7: Daily Life and Stories

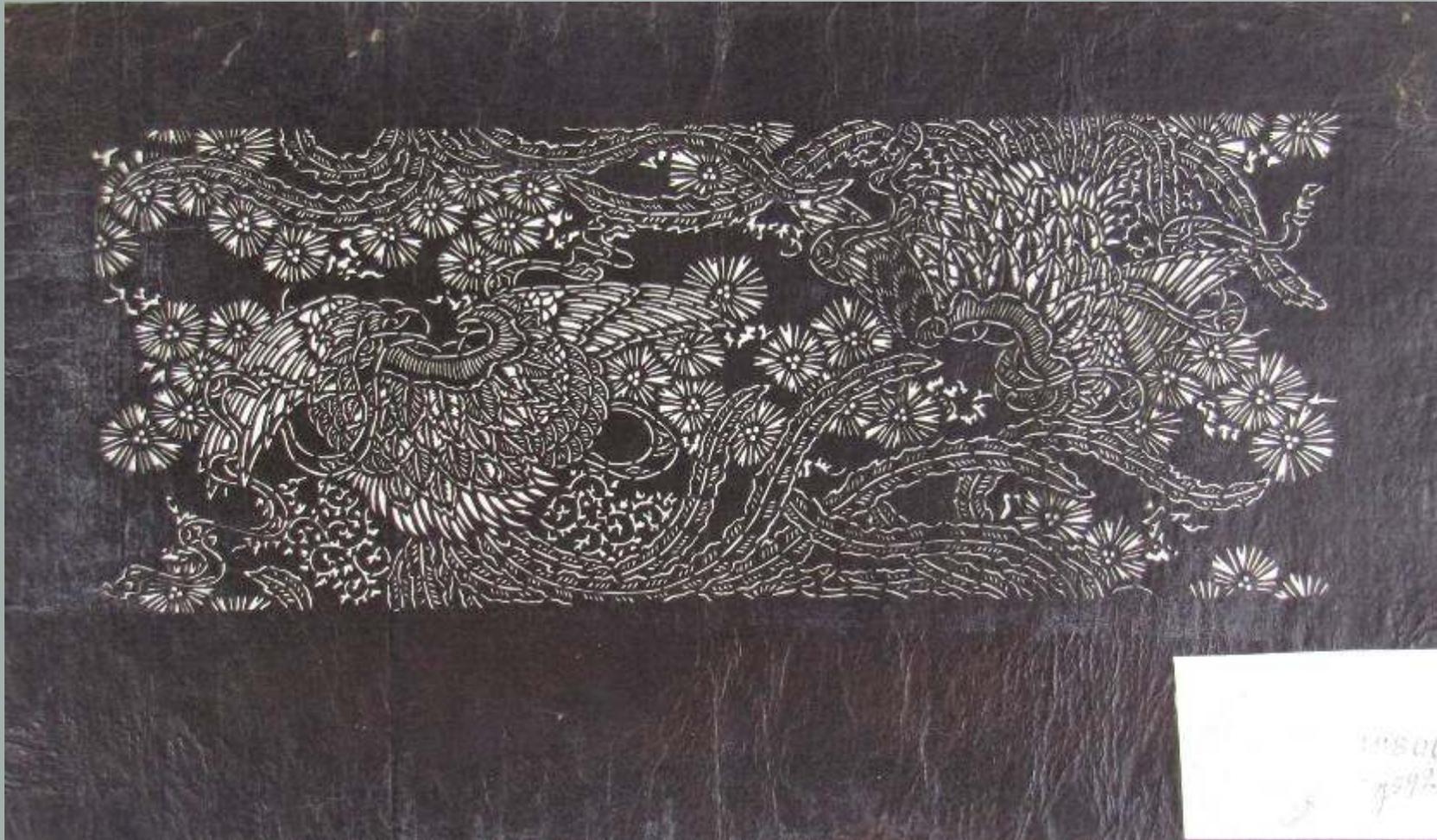


Everyday objects and allusions to well-known stories are frequently encountered as fabric decoration. They do indeed refer to events, but are not bound to specified feasts or seasons.



4974

Fans before a bamboo curtain
Cutting technique



7592

Flowers and feather-mantle (hagoromo)

"Hagoromo" is a popular folk tale telling of a fisher who finds this wondrous garment on the shore, which actually belongs to an angel. He gives the feathered-mantle in return for a "heavenly dance" and the angel flies away again into the sky.

Cutting and punching technique



5285

Dragons claws with pearls in clouds

The dragon hides in the clouds, holding so-called "wish pearls" in his claws.

A dragon's quest for the pearl also stands for the attainment of contentment. This pattern can be seen in connection with a Buddhist feast and shows that ornaments, too, can have the character of an amulet.

Cutting technique



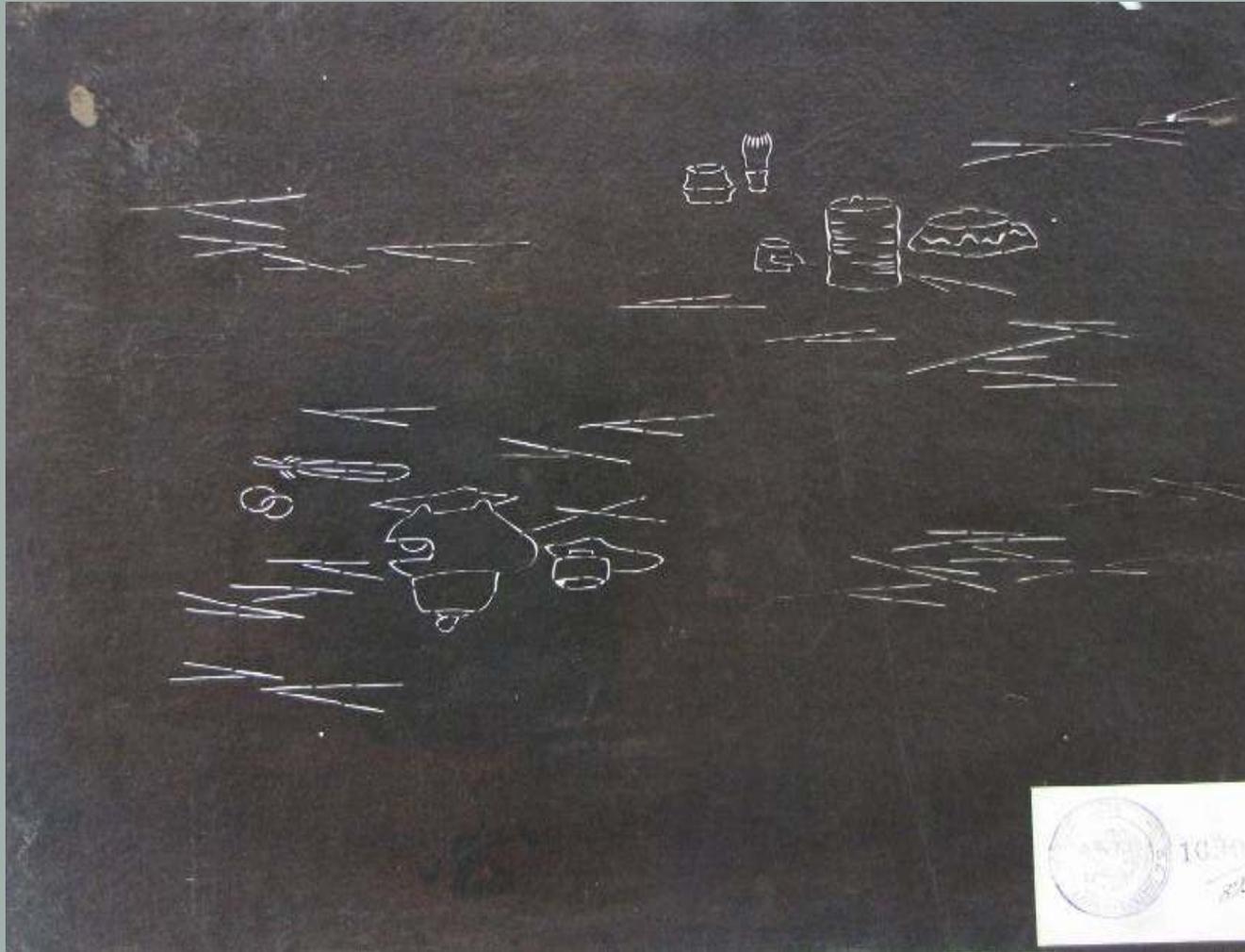
7586

Gift decoration

made of paper strips (noshi) and burning lucky pearls (hoju no tama) over
volutes

Both are symbols of good luck; this motif might have been designed for a gift
wrapping

Cutting technique



8217

Utensils for tea ceremony

Tee bowl (chawan), rings (kan), pen (haboki), stove and kettle (furo and kama), tea whisk (chasen), charcoal basket (sumigago), fresh water container (mizusashi), tea ladle (hishaku), support for ladle (futaoki)

Cutting technique



5876

Utensils for tea ceremony

Tea whisk (chasen), caddy (chaire), charcoal basket (sumikago), mat for kettle (futaoki), pen holder (haboki)

Punching technique

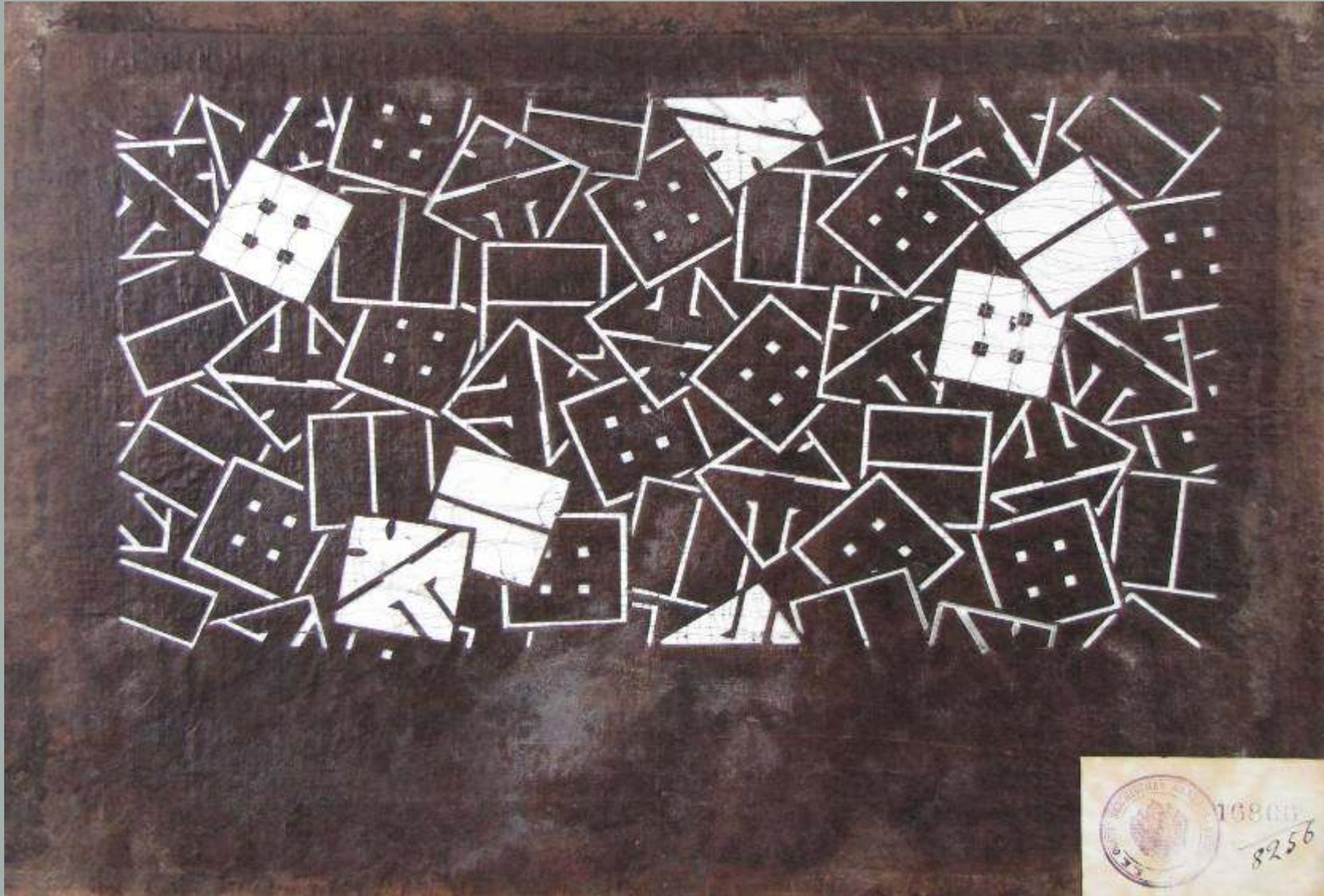


4986
Toy bird
Cutting technique

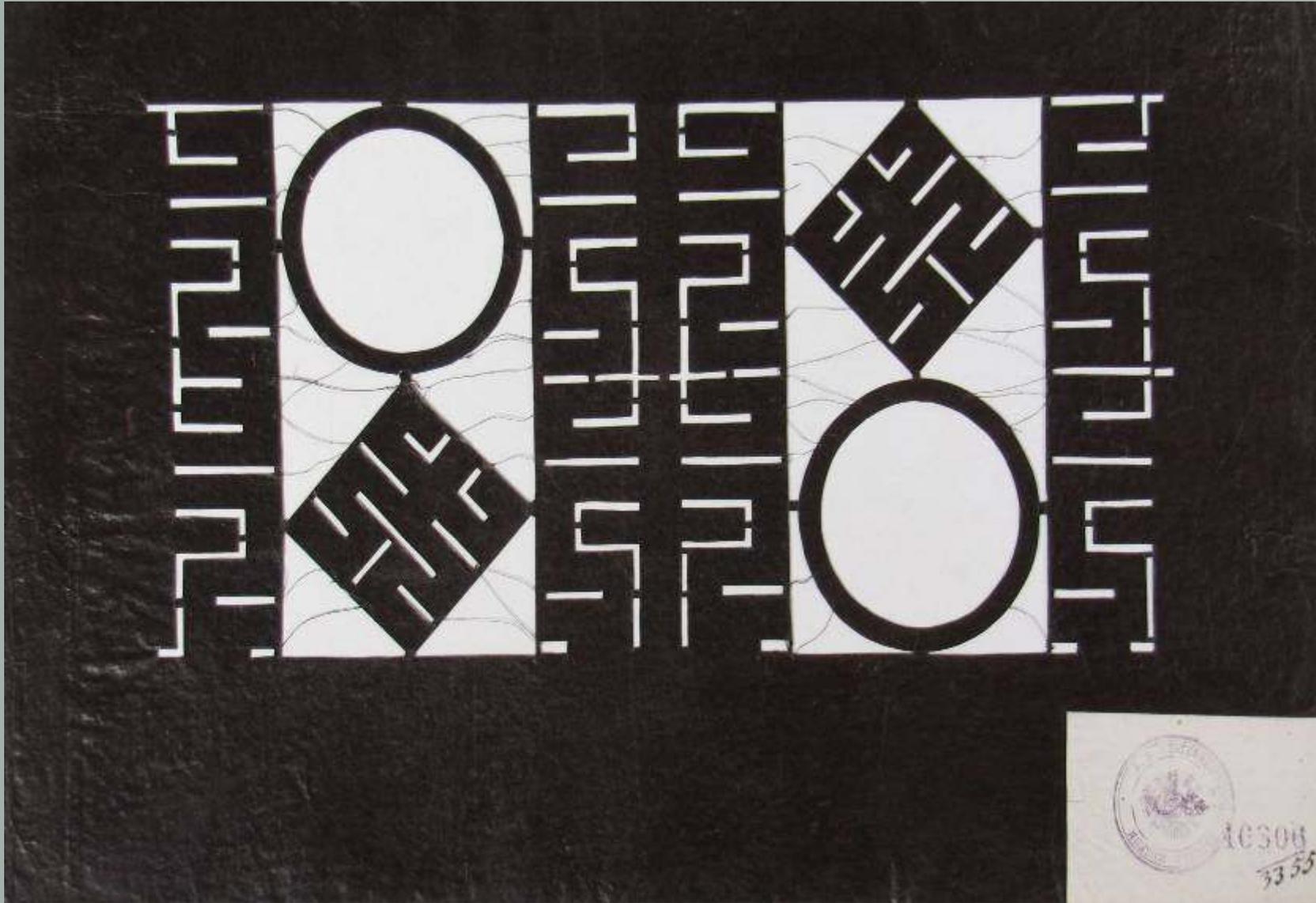
Chapter 8: Writing Characters



Ornaments formed of script characters might – but not necessarily – have a meaning. Individual characters are frequently used like a company logo, however, they might be quotations taken out of context. Western letters are embellished without sense and content.



8256
Script characters
Cutting technique



3355
Seal script
Cutting technique



6089

Part of a poem above a linear pattern
Cutting technique

3360

Poem

The five characters form the second line of
one of the best known poems by Li Bai
(701-762)

"Night Thoughts"

The individual characters signify:

bed – before – bright – moon – beam

doubt – is – earth – on – frost

raise – head – look – bright – moon

sink – head – think – old - home

Before my bed, the moon is shining bright,

I think that it is frost upon the ground.

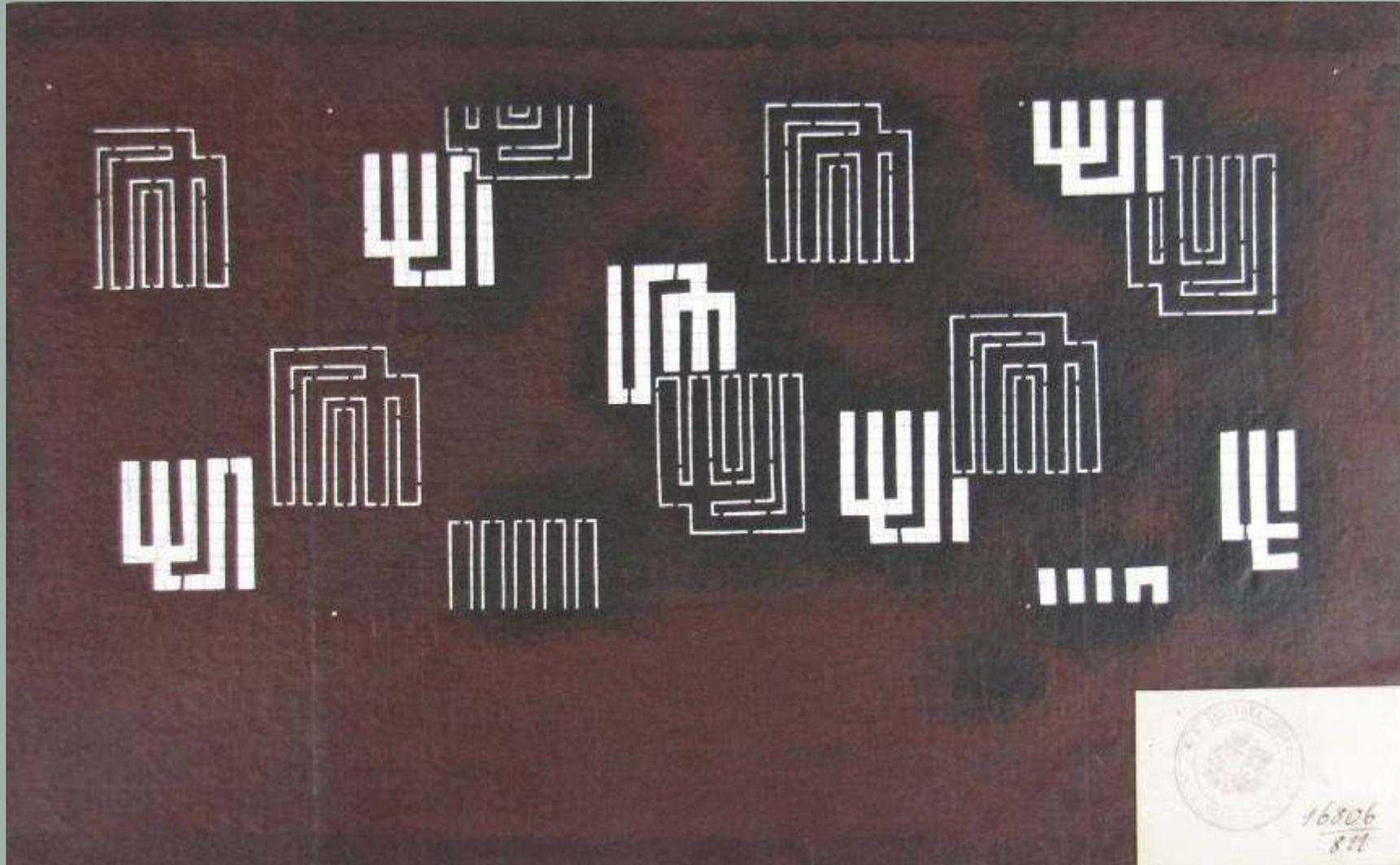
I raise my head and look at the bright moon,

I lower my head and think of home.

(interpretation by Arthur David Waley 1889 –
1966)

Cutting technique





0811

Genji-ko

chapter symbol of the Genji Monogatari for the 11th chapter ("Wilting Flowers") and 40th chapter ("Law")

Cutting technique



0898
Western letters
Cutting technique

Chapter 9: The Seasons



The life and structure of the annual cycle is closely linked to the course of the seasons. It was a popular custom to keep the feasts according to the blossoming or fading of plants, which is why flowers might symbolise feasts and seasons.



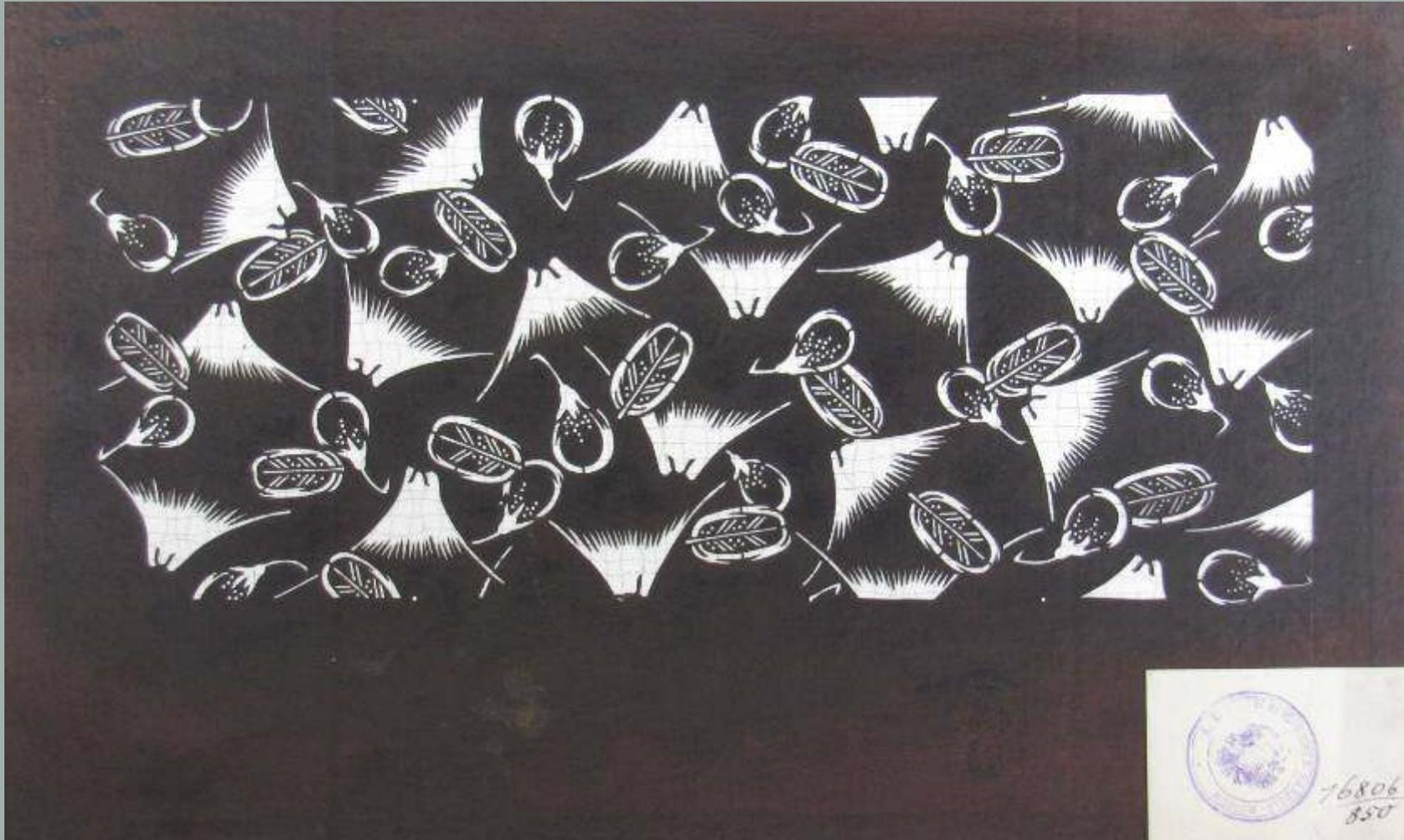
7508

Lion dance and tumbler

This stencil shows an individual motif, not a pattern with repeat.

The lion dance is performed during the New Year feast.

Cutting technique



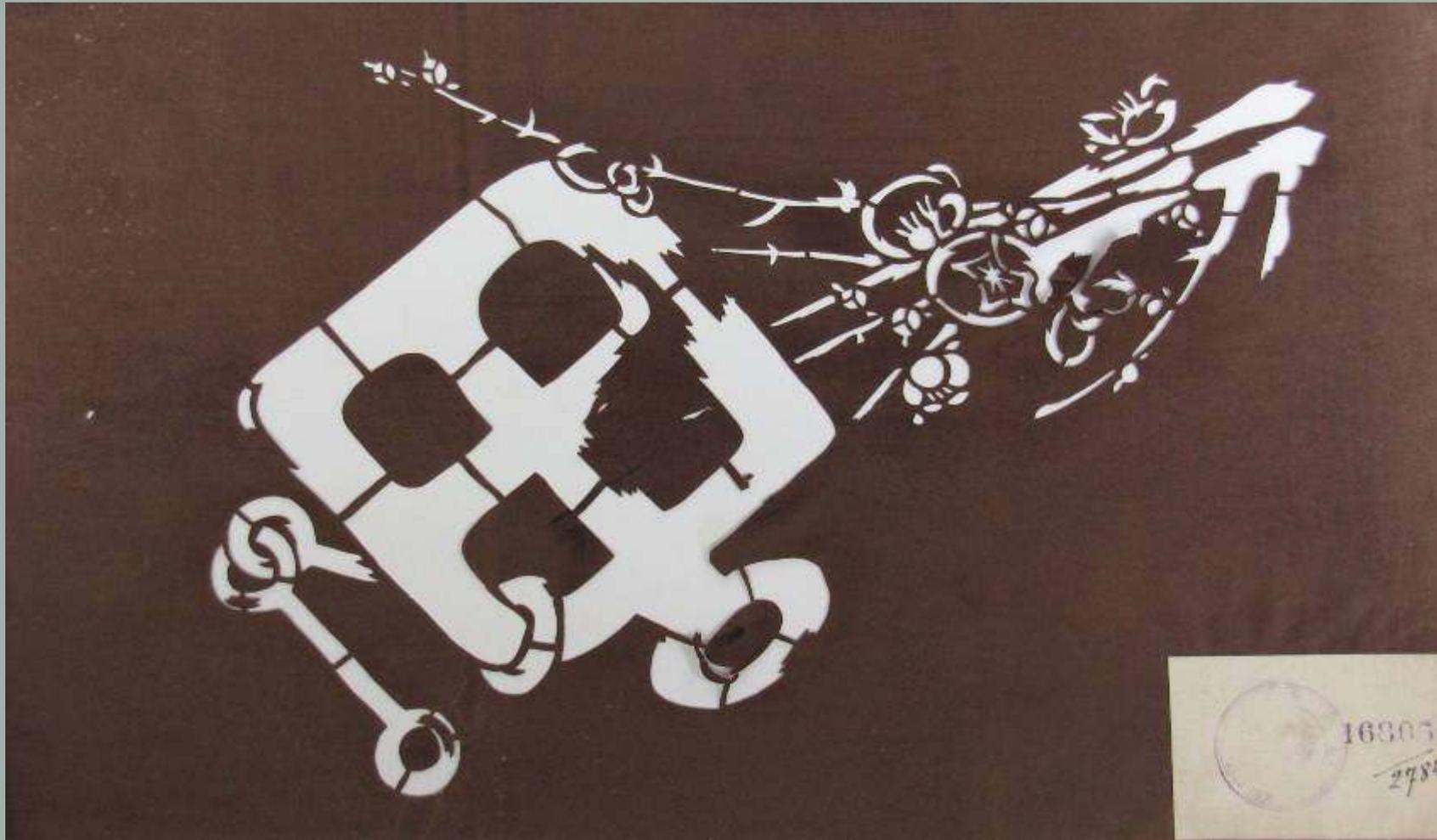
0850

Fuji, aubergine and falcon feather

Dreaming of Fuji, falcon and aubergine during New Year's night is a sign of good luck in Japan.

Probably one of two stencils

Cutting and punching technique



2784

Plum and bridle bit

Plum blossoms herald the beginning of spring. The meaning of the bridle is not quite clear; it is one of the gifts of the lucky gods, but may also refer to "Genji monogatari"

Cutting technique



4934

Willow branches
symbol of spring
Cutting technique



5219

Iris garden

During the Edo era there were several iris / lily gardens in Edo (today Tokyo), which had been used as motifs in art ever since the seventeenth century. The most famous are garden pictures by Ogata Korin and other artists of the so-called Rimpa School. The lily blooms in June, light kimonos with this pattern were also designed for the summer.

Cutting technique

5851

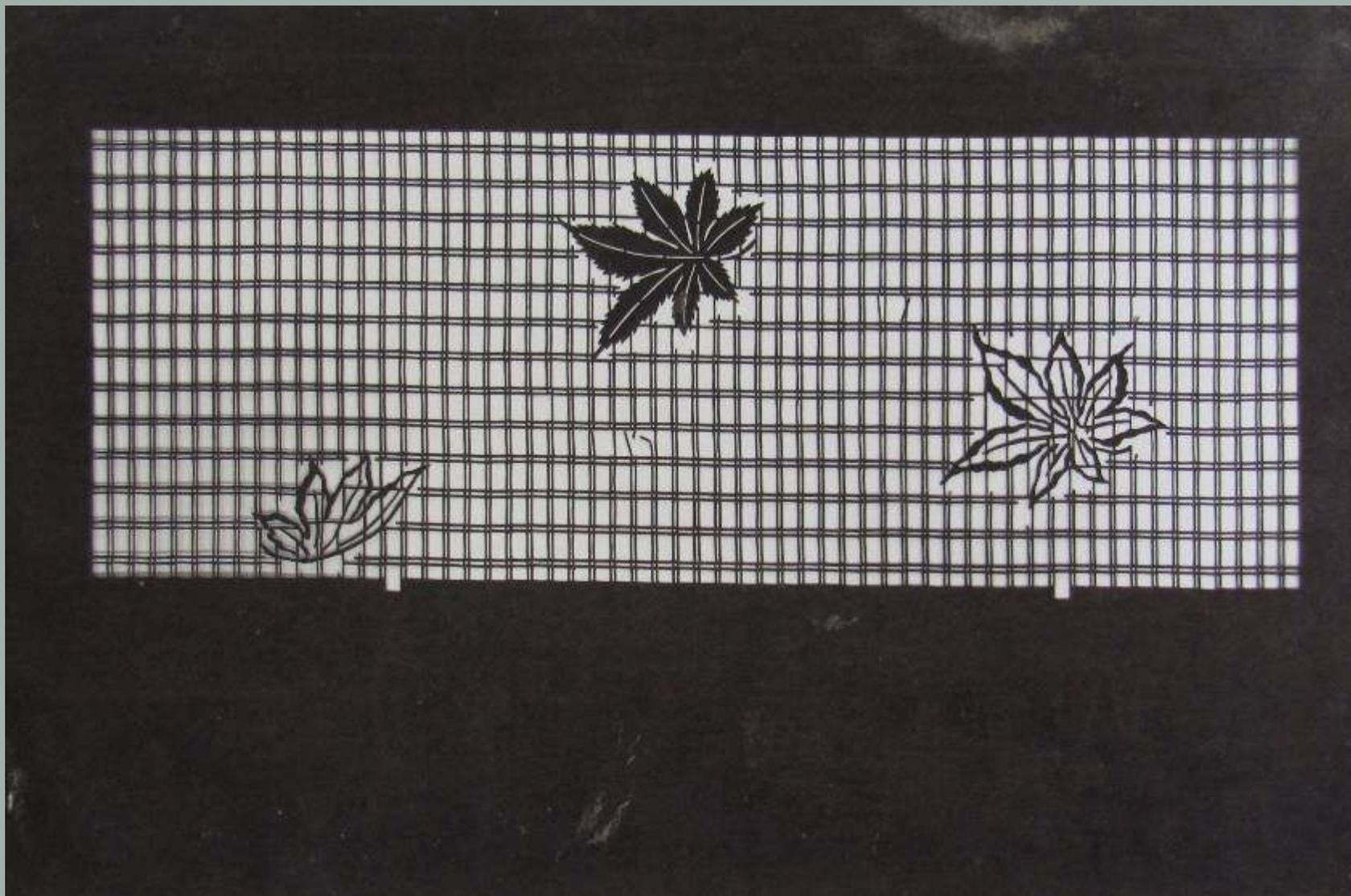
Iris garden with wooden bridges

This pattern repeats Ogata Korin's (1658-1716) composition of the "Eight Board Bridge", which goes back to a poem in the Ise Monogatari from the tenth century. As he looks at an iris garden, a courtier thinks longingly of his young wife in Kyoto:

"I have a beloved wife,
Familiar as the skirt
Of a well-worn robe,
And so this distant journeying
Fills my heart with grief."

This pattern was probably reserved for
young lovers
Cutting technique





7172

Falling maple leaves

A typical autumnal motif

Cutting technique



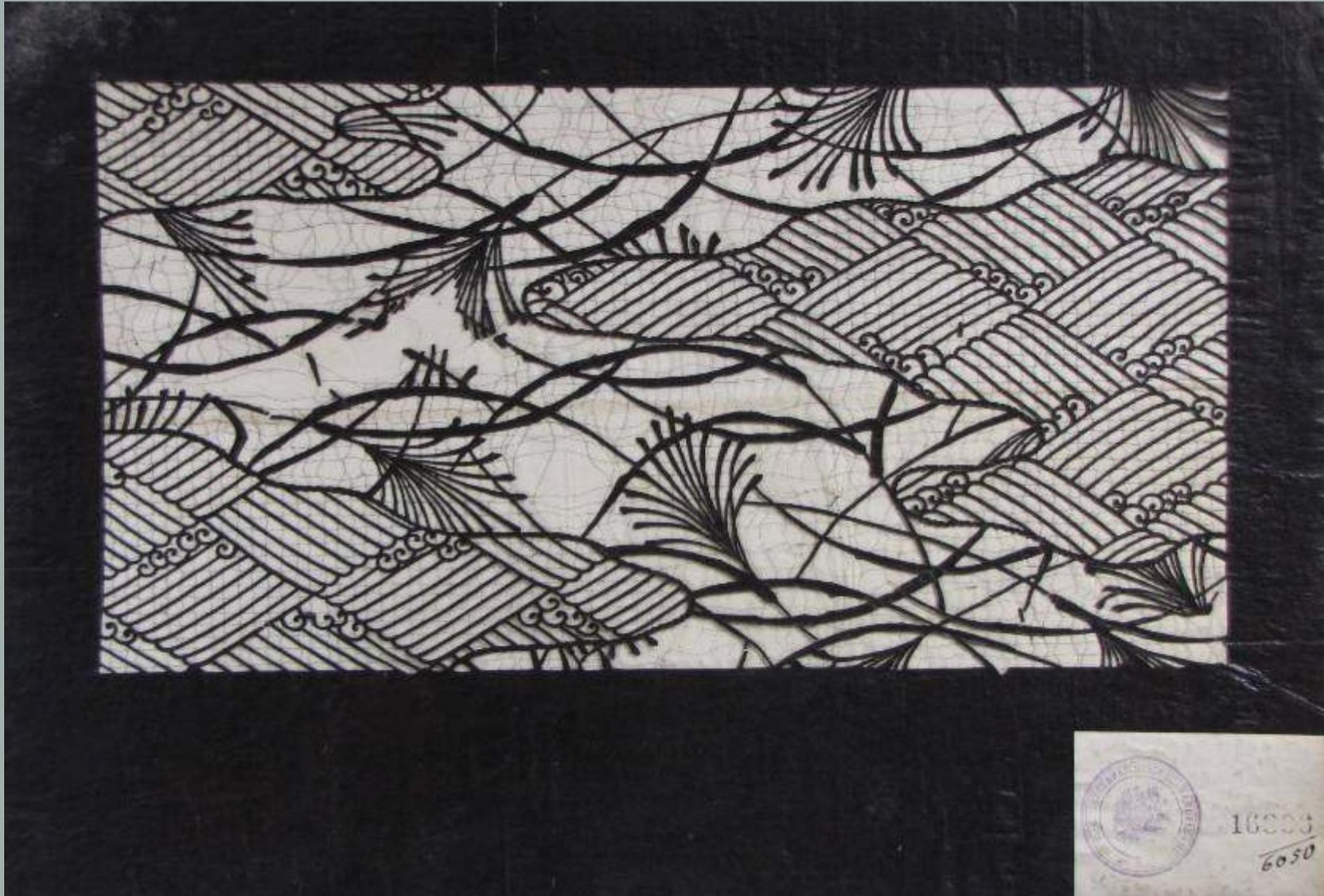
6028

Pampas grass

Like bamboo and grain crops, pampas grass belongs to the family of Poaceae.

It originally comes from South America, but from the sixteenth century on world trade traffic caused it became native in East Asia as well. The silvery tufts create far-flung fields of white in autumn.

Cutting technique



6050

Pampas grass and waves in Rimpa style
Cutting technique



2993

Chrysanthemums

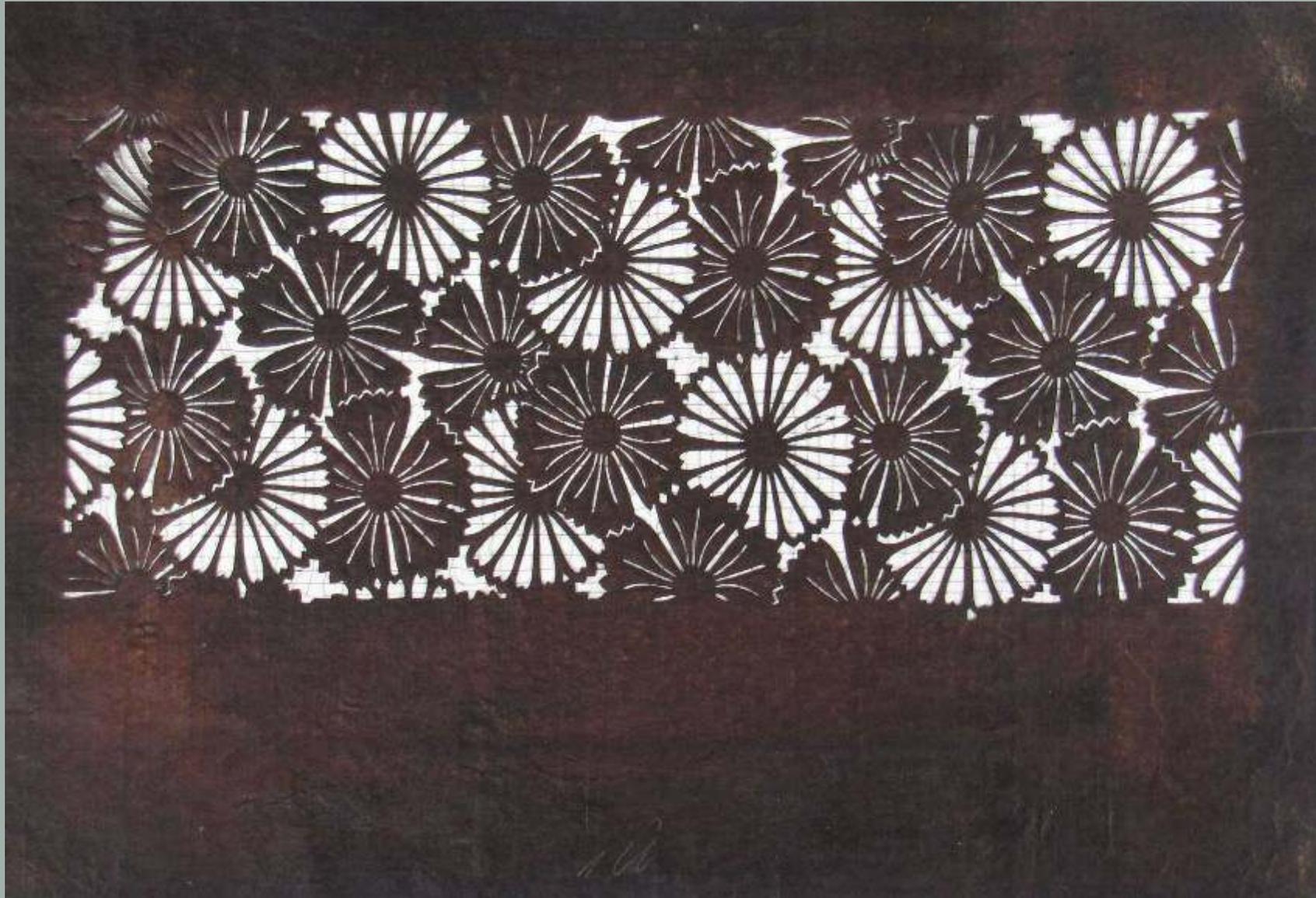
Cutting and punching technique

The chrysanthemum has been regarded since ancient times as a flower that portends favour and good luck. In Japan it was symbol of the imperial house from the Heian era onwards (794 to 1192).

The traditional Chrysanthemum feast is held on 9 September, while the chrysanthemum show is in November.

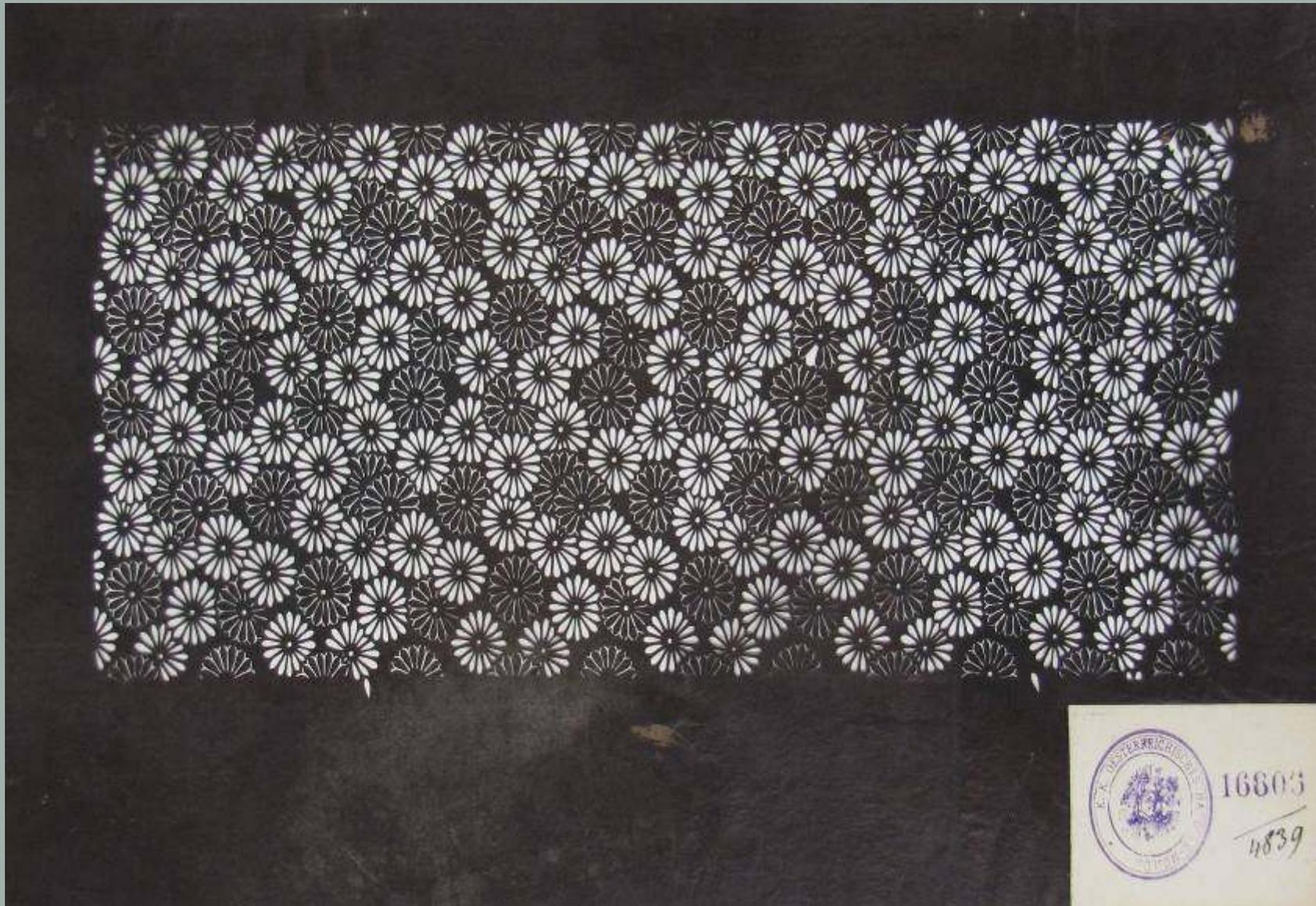


3398
Chrysanthemums
Cutting technique



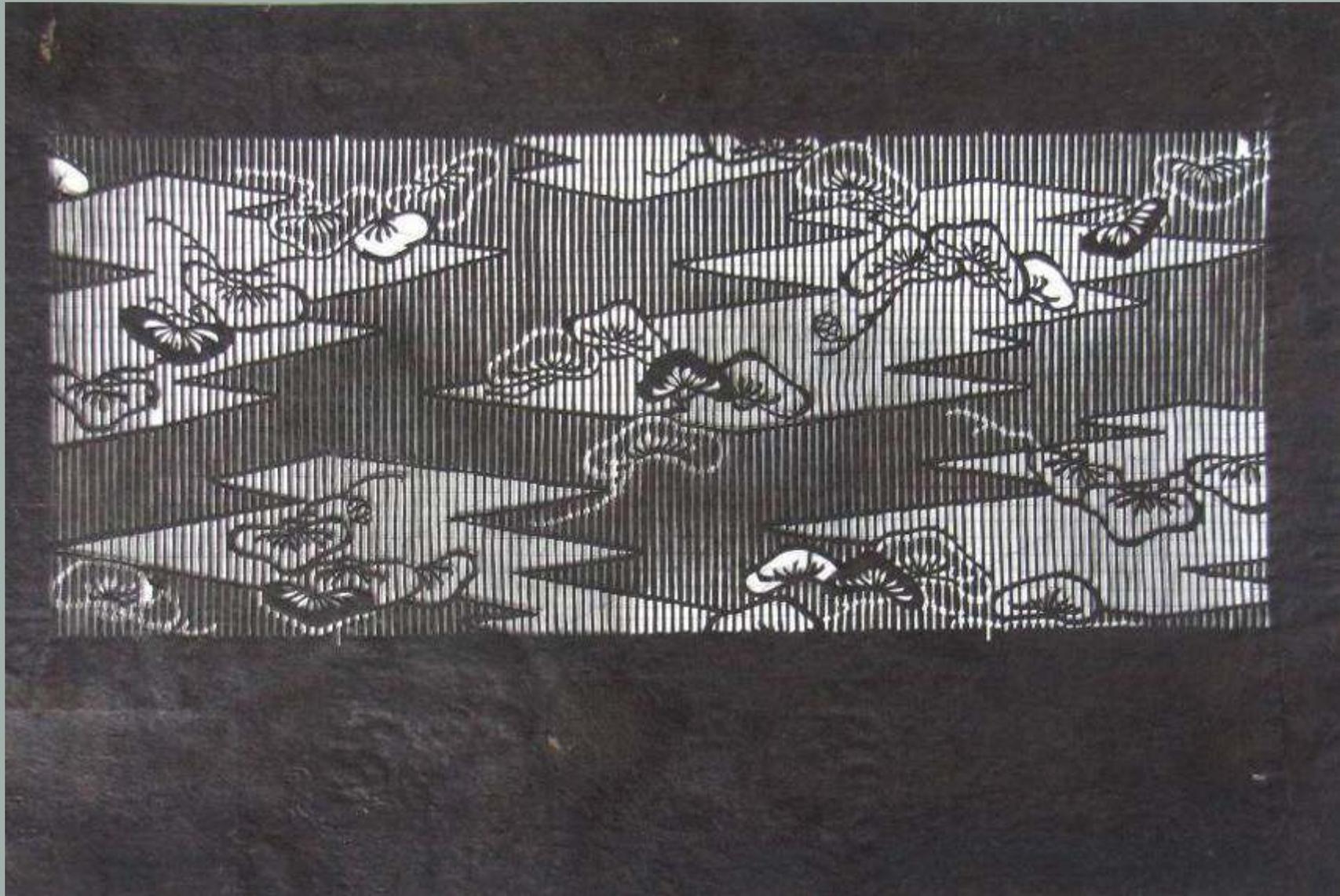
0883

Chrysanthemums
Cutting technique



4839

Chrysanthemums
Cutting technique

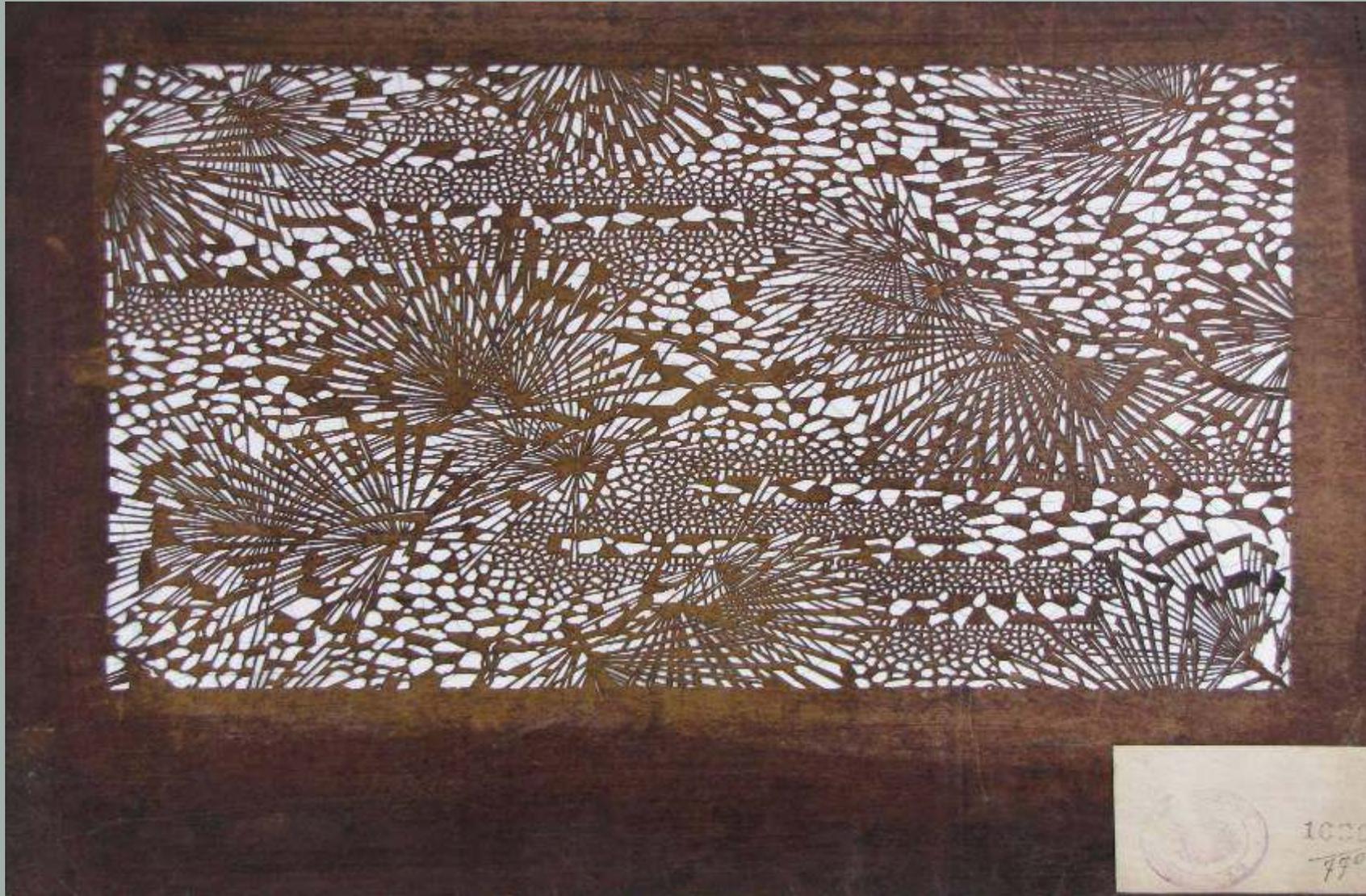


0842

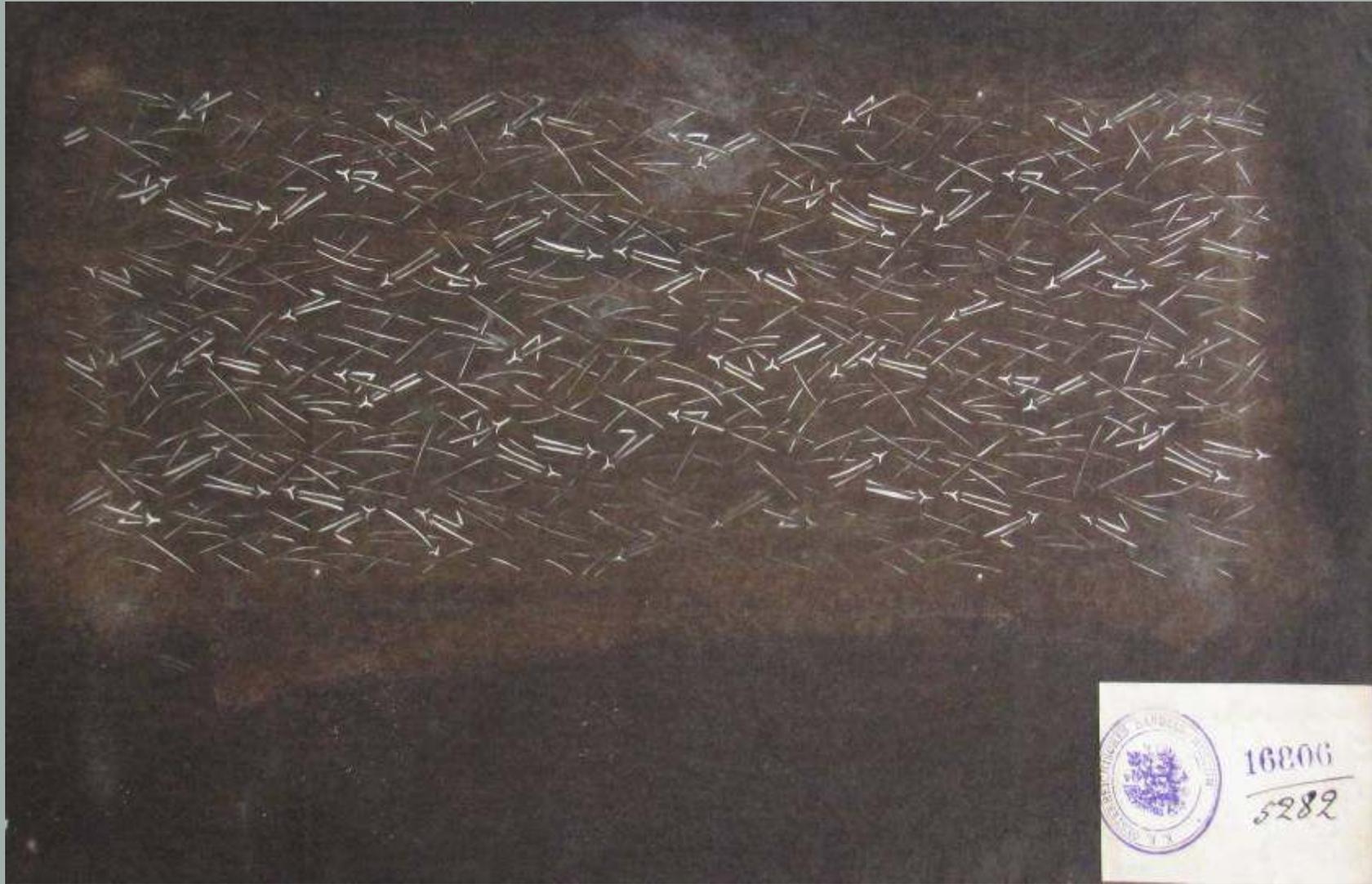
Linear pattern

stylised pine trees in front of pine-bark pattern

Cutting technique



7701
Pine needles
One stencil of two
Cutting technique

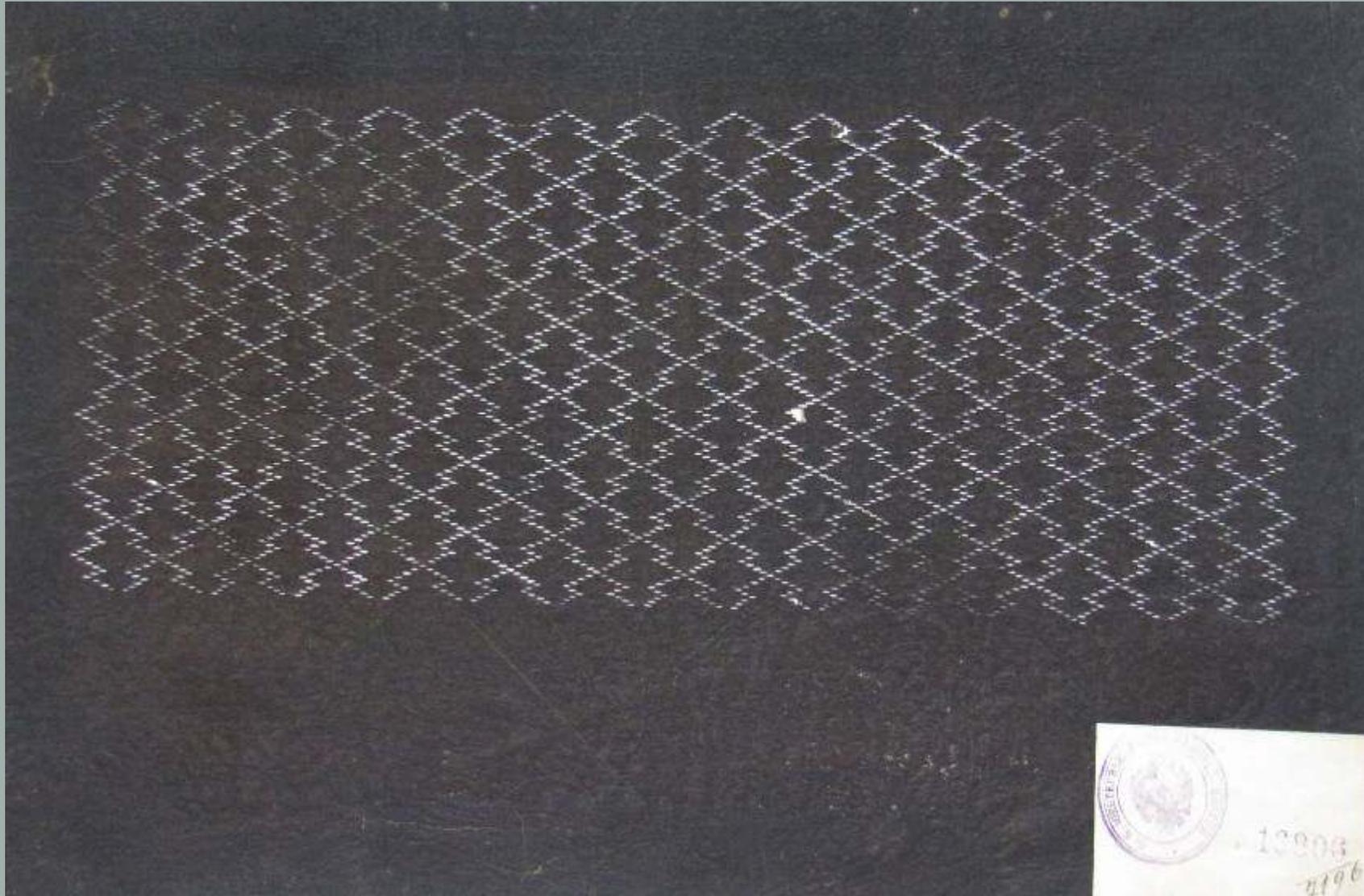


5282

Pine needles

The Japanese red pine is not only symbol of a long life, it also stands for the cold season.

Cutting technique



7196

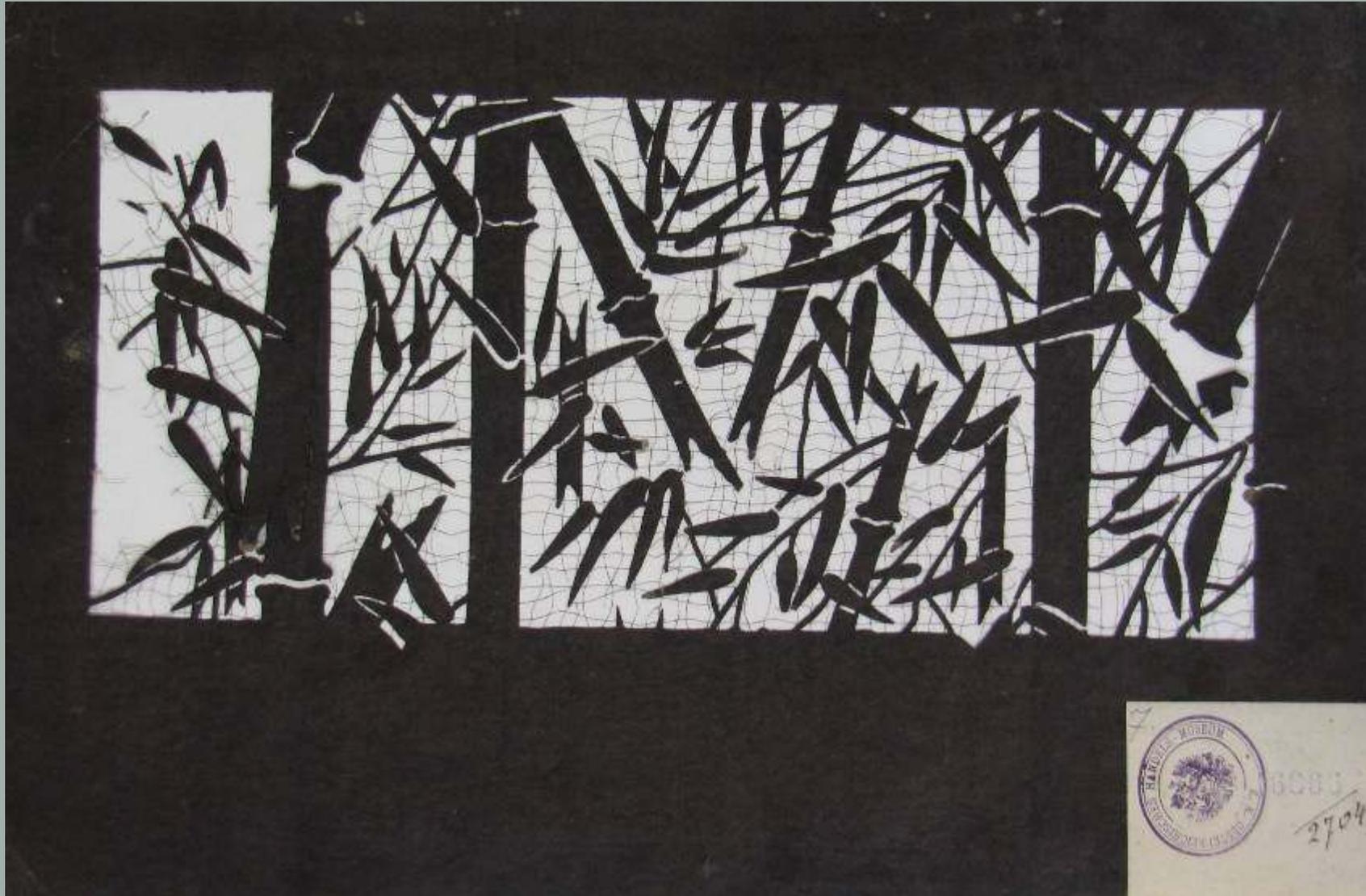
Stylised pattern of pine bark (Matsukawa- bishi)

One stencil of two

Punching technique

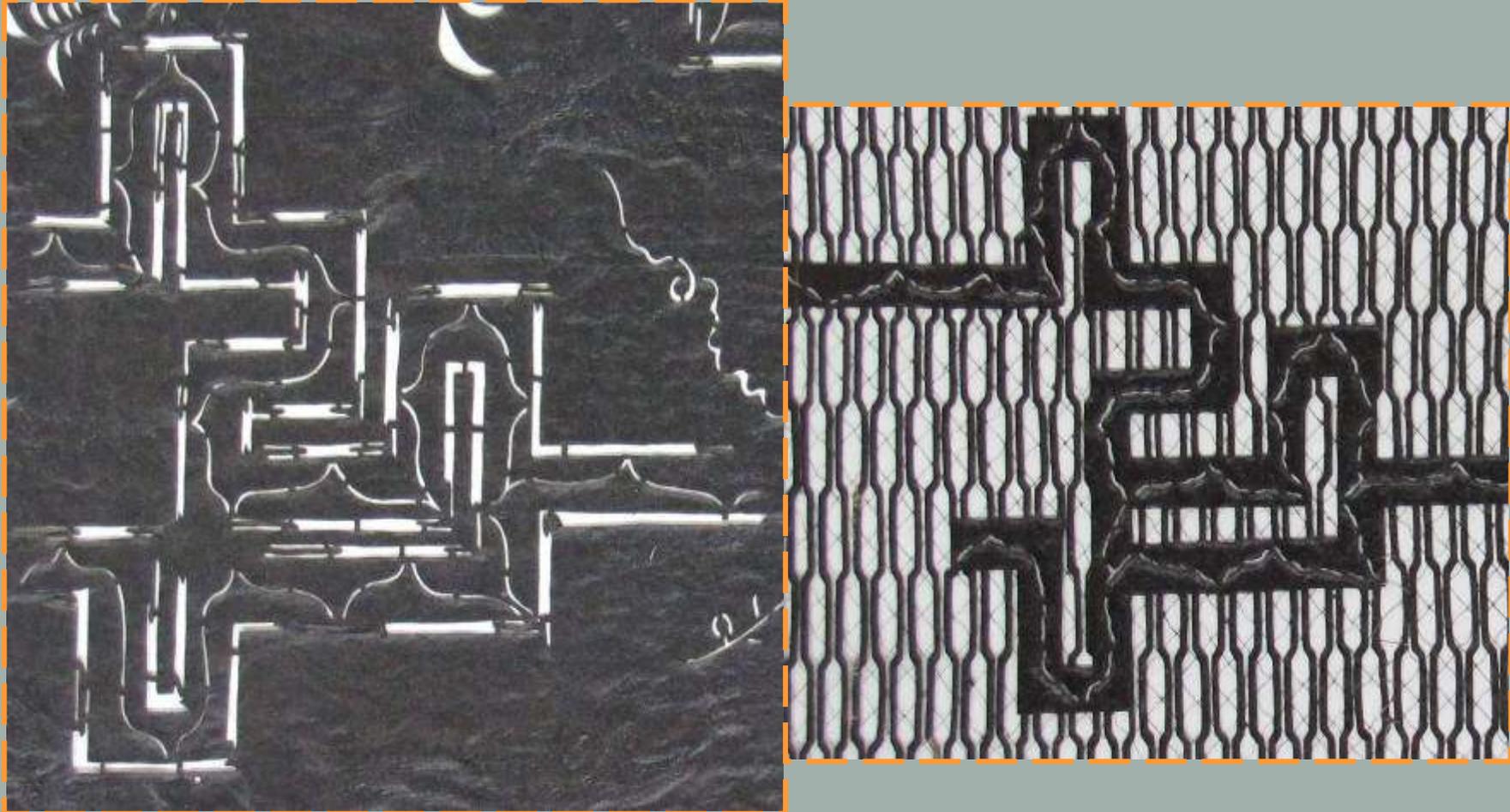


6214
Bamboo
symbol of long life and purity
One stencil of two
Cutting technique

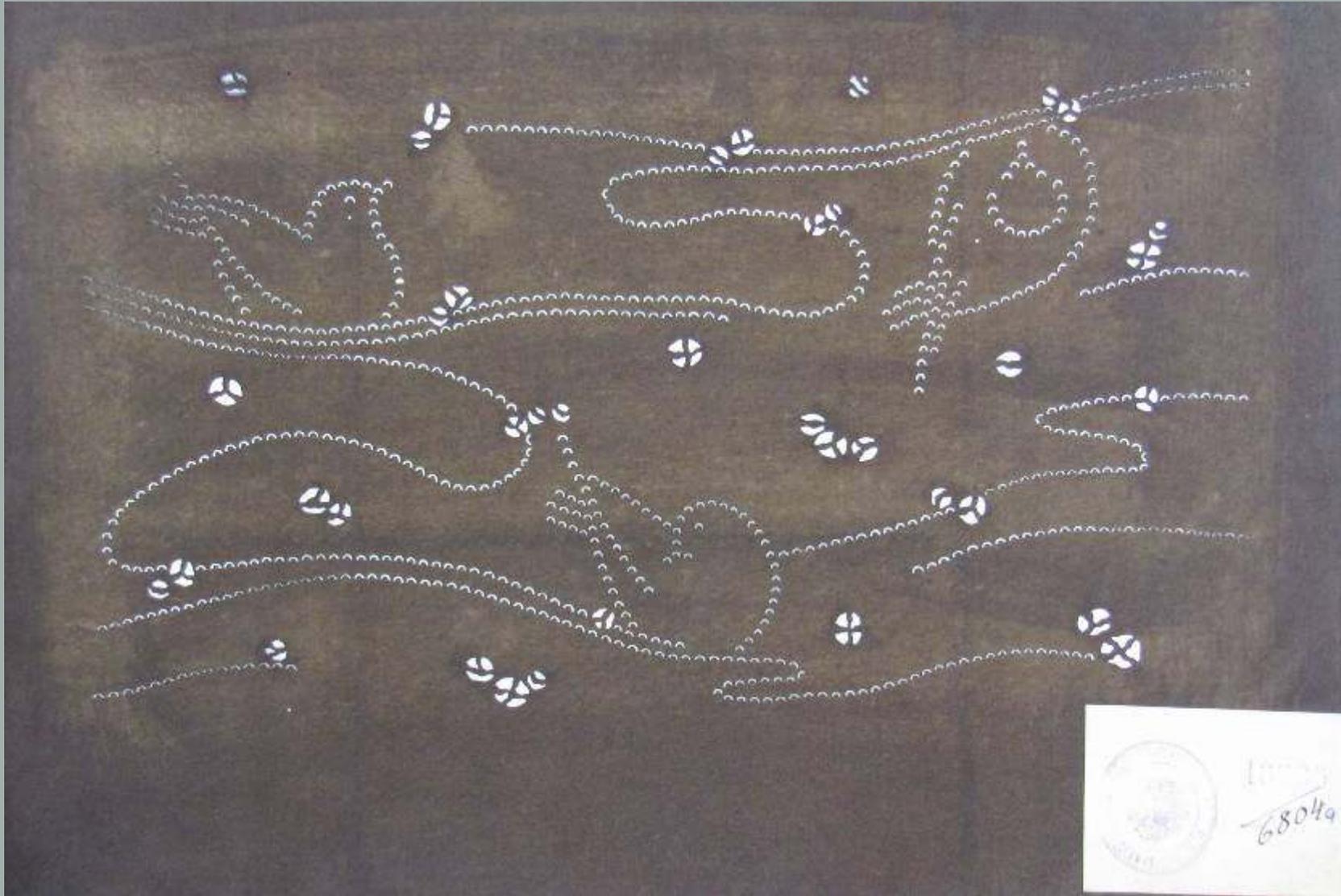


2704
Bamboo
symbol of long life and purity
Cutting technique

Chapter 10: Multiple Katagami



If the pattern is to be multi-coloured, a separate stencil has to be made for each colour – as for the colour woodcut. A pattern can be divided up to such an extent that cannot be recognised in the individual katagamis. This technique is also very practical for imitating other decorative techniques.

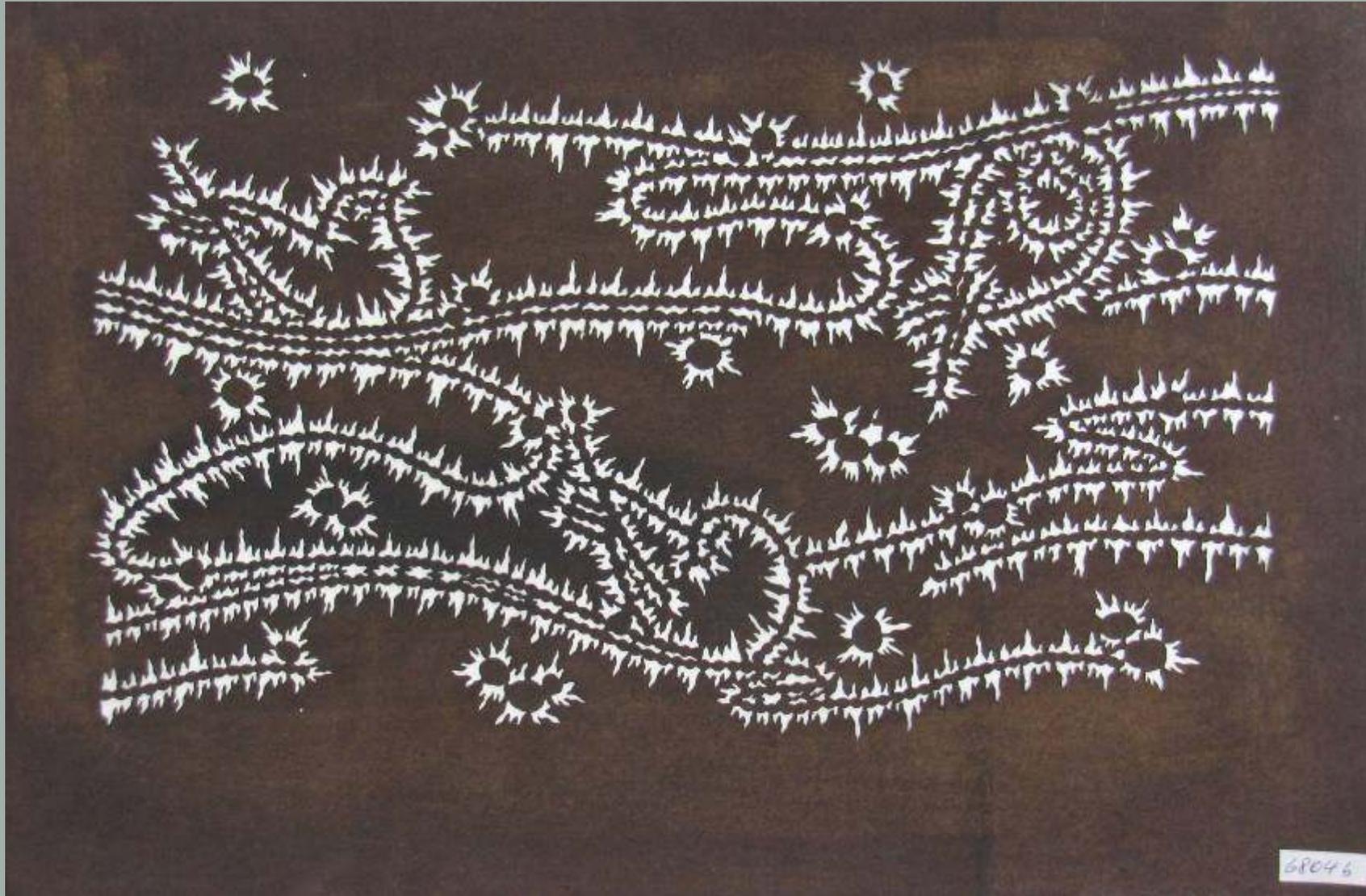


6804a

Bird on water

Cutting technique

One of three stencils for a three-coloured pattern



6804b

Bird on water

Cutting technique

One of three stencils for a three-coloured pattern

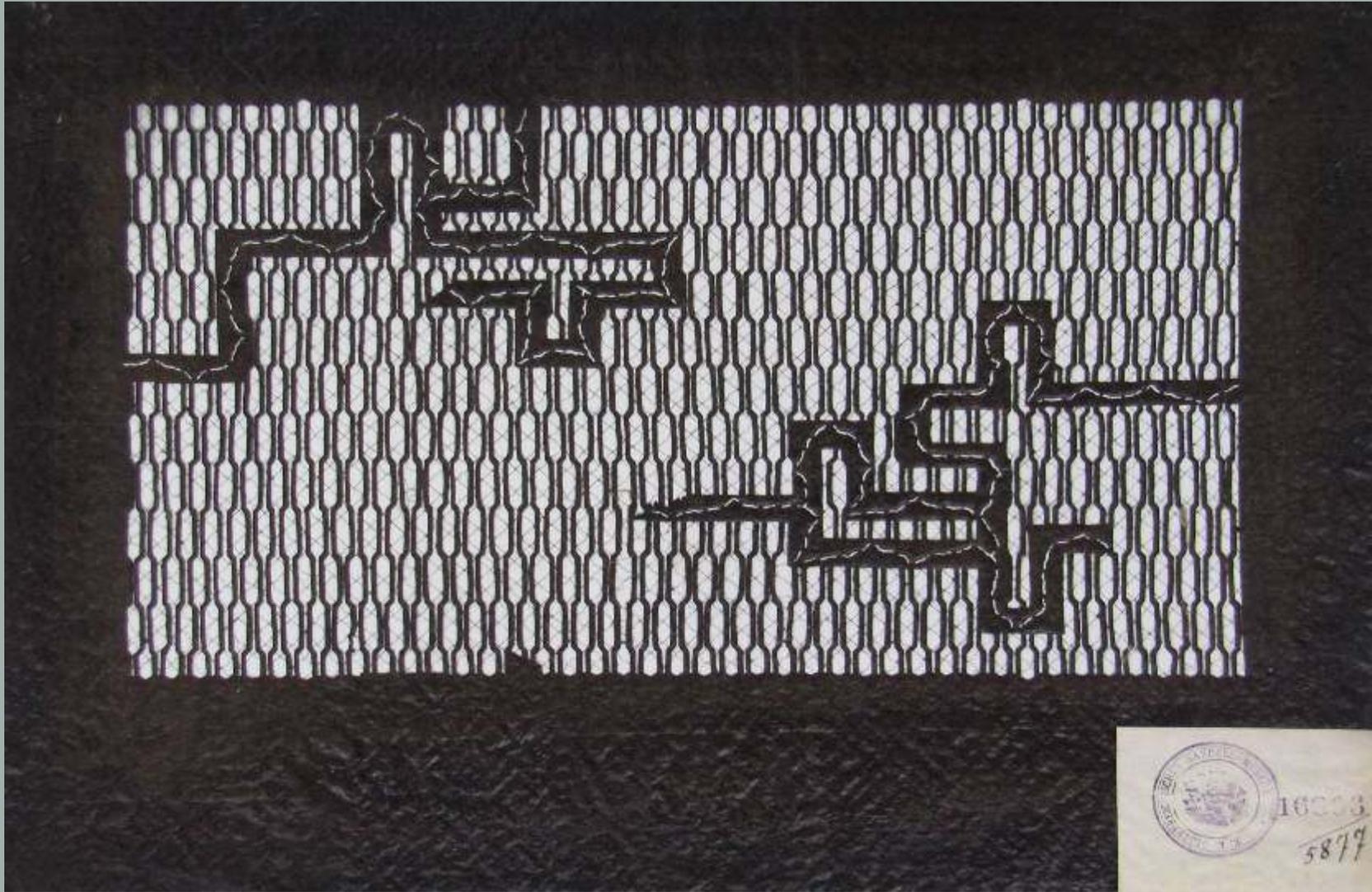


6804c

Bird on water

Cutting technique

One of three stencils for a three-coloured pattern



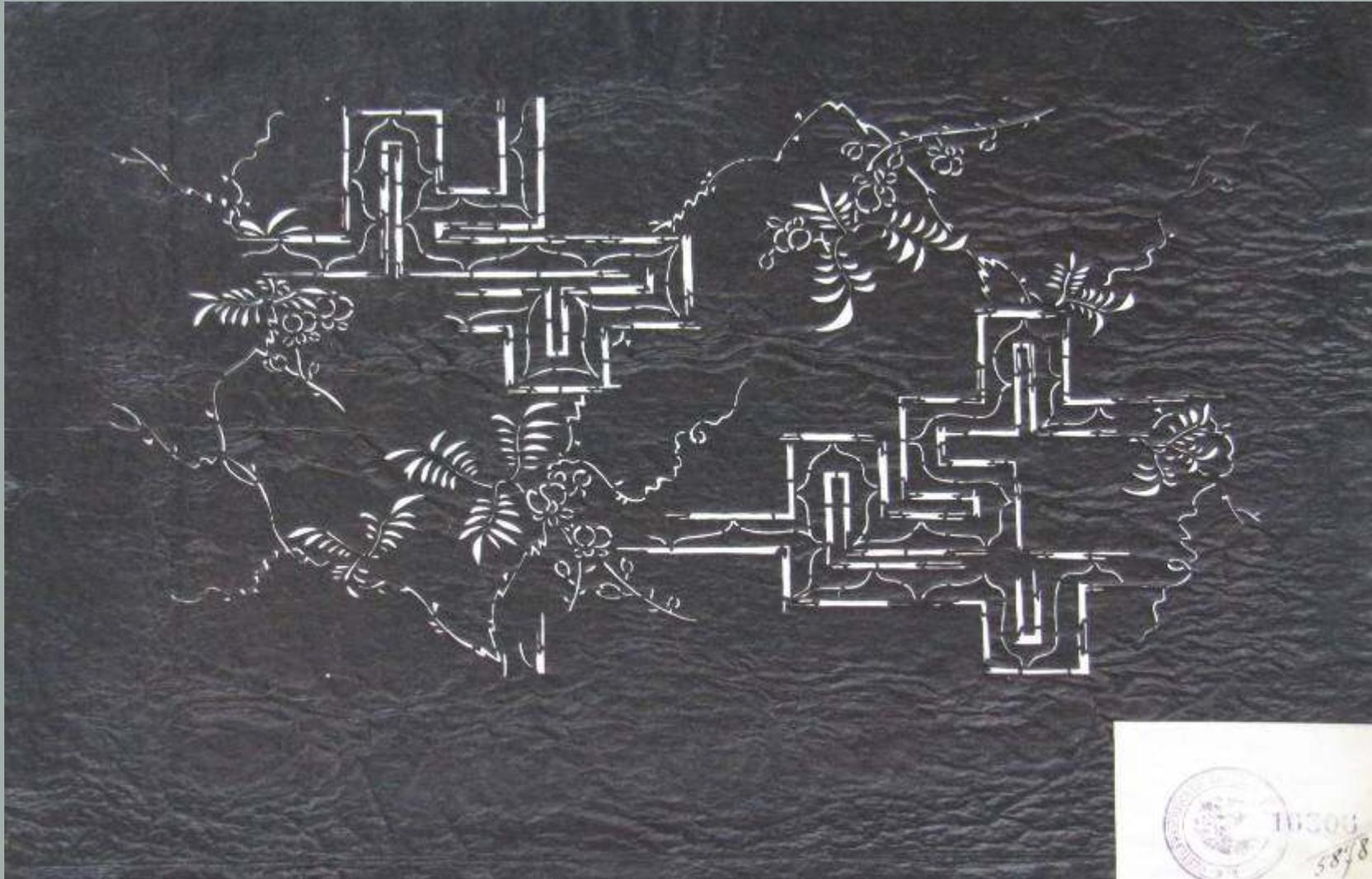
5877

Striped pattern

with eye symbol (shikunoka) of the Ainu (Japanese aboriginal people)

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting technique



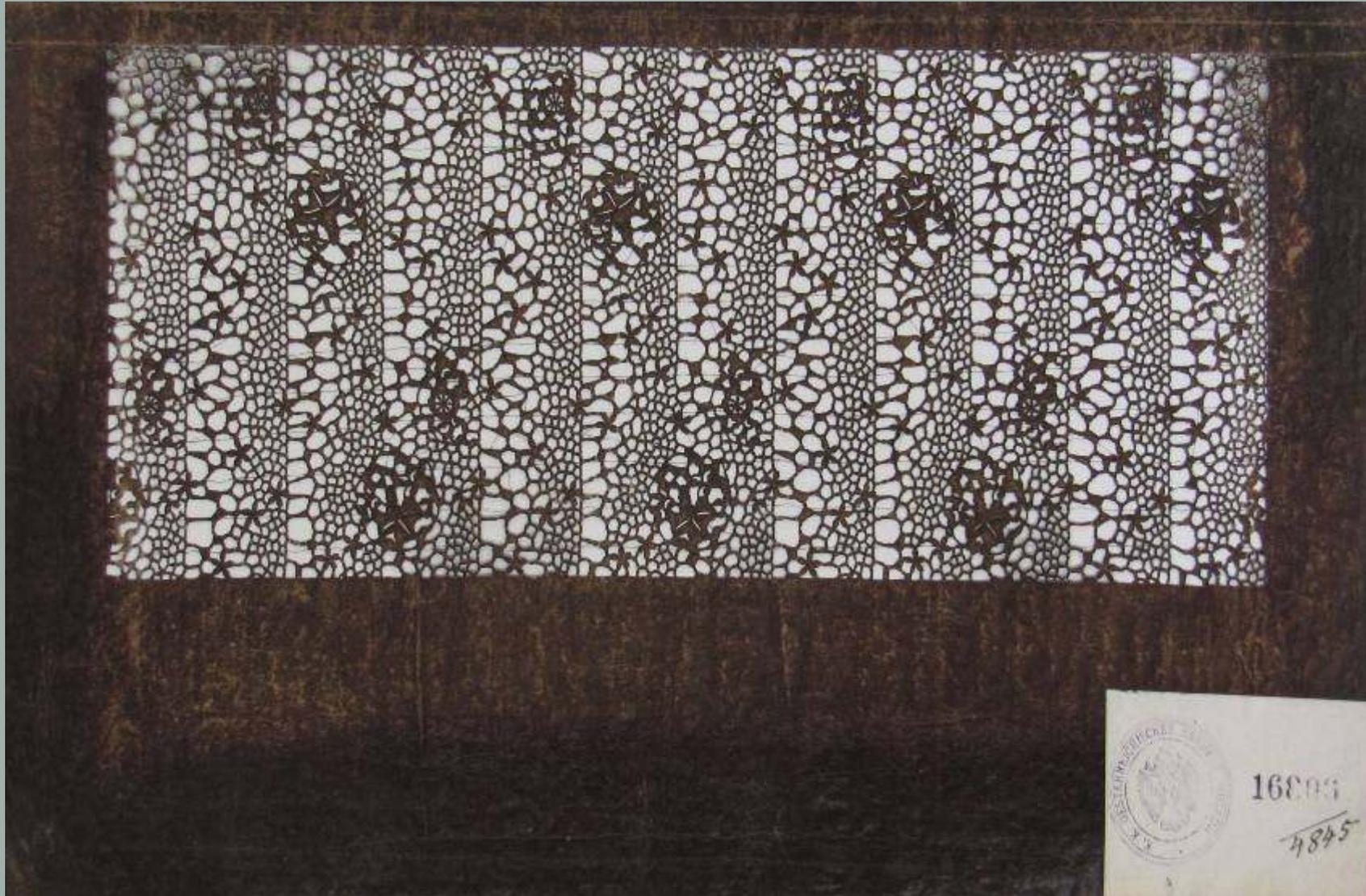
5878

Striped pattern

with eye symbol (shikunoka) of the Ainu (Japanese aboriginal people)

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting technique

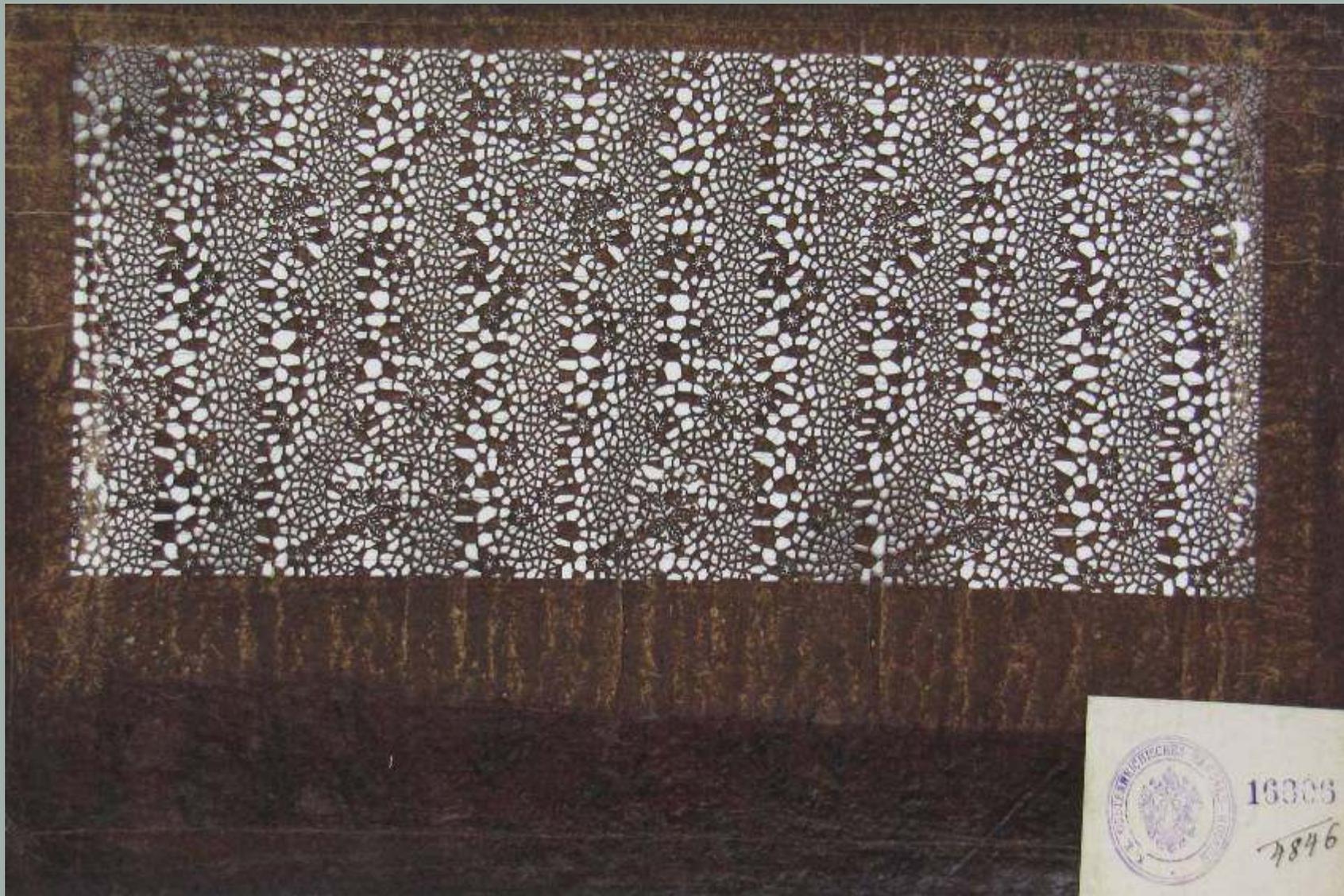


4845

Striped pattern with flowers

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting and punching technique

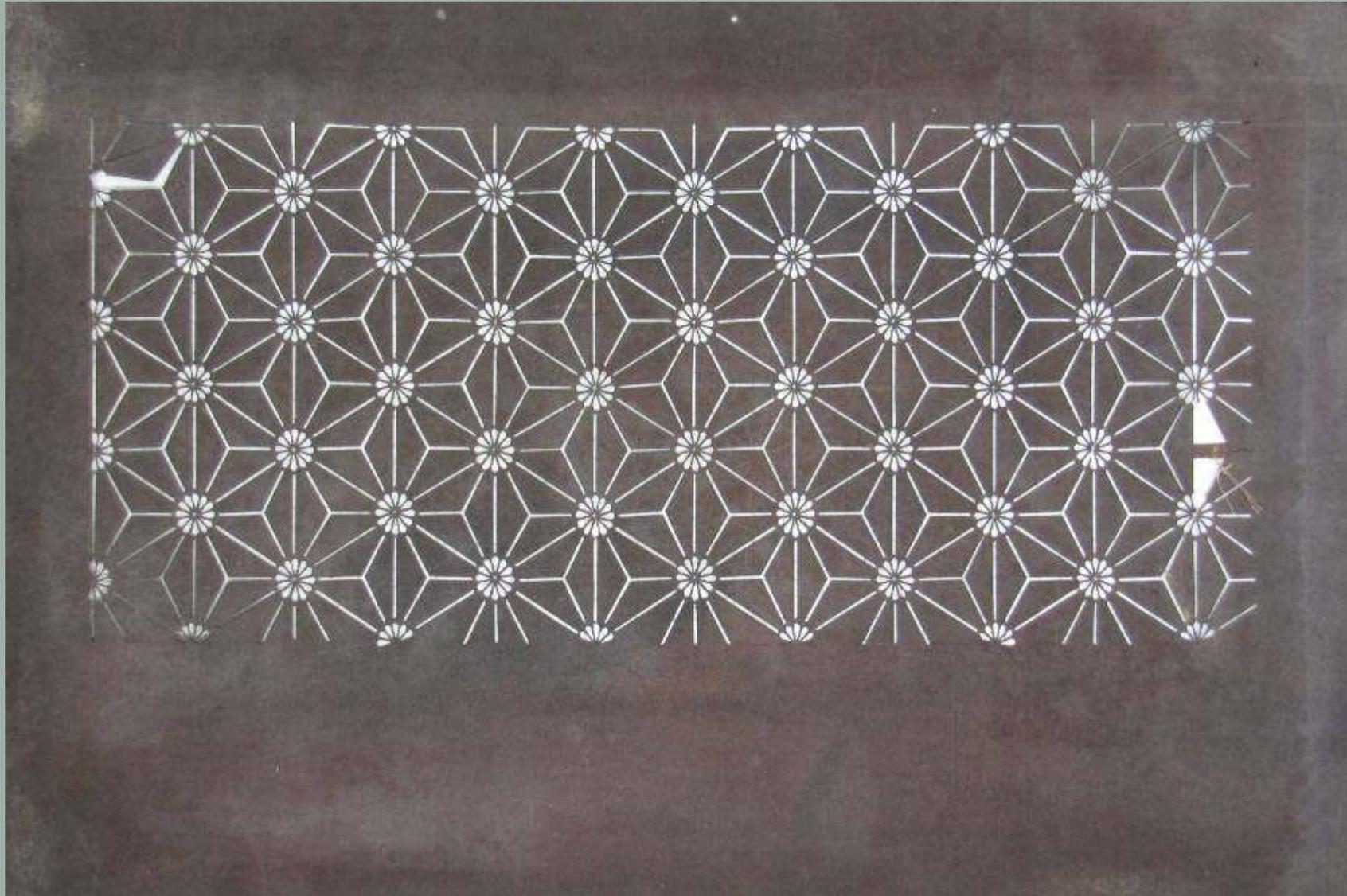


4846

Striped pattern with flowers

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting and punching technique

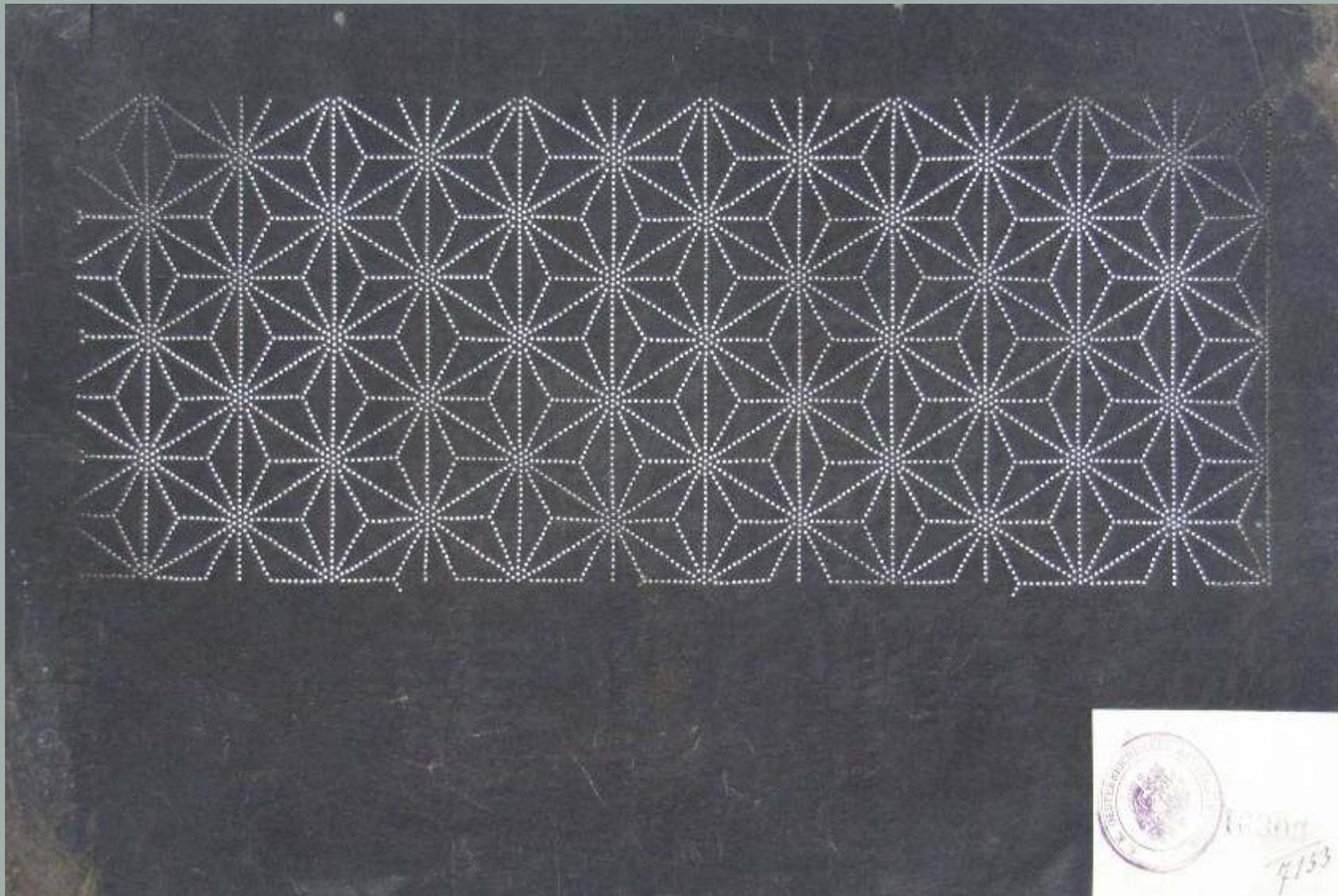


7152

Hemp leaves

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting and punching technique



7153

Hemp leaves

One of two stencils for two-coloured pattern

Cutting and punching technique