



THE LIVING TORRENTS

HOKUSAI'S JOURNEY AROUND THE WATERFALLS OF VARIOUS PROVINCES

T H E L I V I N G T O R R E N T S

HOKUSAI'S "JOURNEY AROUND THE WATERFALLS OF VARIOUS PROVINCES"

**LIVING TORRENTS: Hokusai's "Journey
around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces"**
represents the final project of the students in Elena
Varshavskaya's Japanese Prints course, during the
Wintersession 2014 term at the Rhode Island
School of Design. This catalog documents the work
on display as well as the research behind this
exhibition.

The exhibition includes ukiyo-e prints from the
masterpiece print series "A Journey around the
Waterfalls of Various Provinces" created by a
preeminent ukiyo-e artist Katsushika Hokusai and
some images of water from his Manga sketchbook
series; all works belong to the collection of the
RISD Museum.

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FOREWORD

This book invites its readers to join RISD WS 2014 Japanese Prints class for an edifying expedition to Japan's eight waterfalls portrayed by Katsushika Hokusai, an ukiyo-e preeminent artist, in his masterpiece print series "A Journey to the Waterfalls of Various Provinces." In fact, this expedition is an academic endeavor undertaken by a collective of students who tried their hand at curating a museum exhibition as their art history course project.

The RISD Museum generously accommodated the class, giving students an opportunity to explore firsthand the prints from its collection. Students literally plunged themselves into the work – with genuine enthusiasm and dedication. Curating an exhibition opens up numerous paths of inquiry. Students attempted authenticating the imprints by looking into the quality of paper, comparing lines to the established original versions, examining aspects of color – its alignment and saturation. The primary task in the preparation for the exhibition was each image's formal analysis based on direct observation and research of the historically specific details. Studies of individual works were accompanied by the investigation of larger pertinent issues, providing the necessary cultural and historic perspective.

Assignments were structured in such a way as to allow putting together an exhibition catalog according to the established format in which introductory articles precede discussions of individual pieces. However, unlike a real catalog with its uniform style and determined length of entries, student-authors were given here free scope in choosing the intonation of their narratives. To complete the work students wrote individual educational wall labels and created accompanying design products, including the exhibition poster and the invitation.

Let the exhibition's multiple curators become now the guides to the readers in their imaginary journey through time and space and take them to the mountains and valleys of Edo period Japan to experience the living torrents of Hokusai's waterfalls.

Elena Varshavskaya, Ph.D., Course Instructor, HAVC, RISD

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS

HOKUSAI'S JOURNEY AROUND THE WATERFALLS OF VARIOUS PROVINCES

Tess Spalty

During the 70 years of his artistic career, Katsushika Hokusai produced over 30,000 prints, drawings and paintings. His mastery inspired generations of audiences and artists, and his work can be seen throughout the world. Most well-known in his “Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji,” Hokusai's masterpiece introduction of landscape subject matter to ukiyo-e prints made him an instantly recognized and recognizable artist in Edo, Japan. While many prints created during Hokusai's lifetime capture human complexity through landscape, few series accomplish this as extraordinarily as “A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces.”

In 1833, at the peak of his career, Hokusai published a print set of eight waterfall views in which he remarkably captured “the living aspects of water.” Large-format vertical *ōban nishiki-e* – full-color brocade pictures, roughly 10 x 15 inches, were issued by the established Edo publishing house Eijūdo, a firm of the publisher Nishimura Yohachi who often worked with Hokusai. Each print has a double-line rectangular cartouche containing the name of the series and of the individual print; each sheet has a signature of the artist that reads Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu (by the brush of Iitsu, formerly Hokusai). Seven prints bear also two red seals, a square seal of the publisher and a round censorship seal as a sign of approval of the publication. The only exception is “The Amida Waterfall in the Depth of the Kisokaidō Road.” The reason for the absence of the publisher's and censor's seals on the print is not yet clear.

The magnificent waterfalls range in size from powerful cascades to muted, gliding streams. Miniature travelers traverse the tranquil, yet foreboding worlds of blues, greens, and yellows. Each print shows an array of rocks, trees and cliffs that block and define the wayfarer's path. Man-made structures, such as small shrines, houses and bridges, speckle the journey, while also assimilating into the nature. The light orange skin-tone of the travelers is the same as the rocks, and their blue and green clothes match the water and trees. The amount of detail Hokusai placed in the nature is paralleled by the amount found in the clothing and bodily characteristics of the figures. The prints do not represent the division of nature and man but rather the unity. The backs of the people are directed toward the viewer, inviting

the audience to become the traveler and catch a glimpse of the waterfall's heavenly power. The straight lines of the falling waters rupture into frothing chaotic waves, reminiscent of rippling fabric. The outlines are created with “bero” blue, an increasingly popular paint brought to Japan by Dutch traders at the time. Its shade makes the images deeply resonant with nature, while also contributing to the transcendental character of this series (Smith II, 235).

This sublimity is represented through Shinto and Buddhist references within the prints. Waterfalls in Shinto and Buddhism are considered sacred for their divine power and cleansing abilities. In Shinto, purification rituals, *misogi*, are practiced by standing under a cascading waterfall, while in Buddhism, waterfalls are seen as divine entrances to Buddha Amida's Pure Land Paradise, and sought out for meditation in *taki-shugyo* practice. Hokusai's waterfalls take the loose shape of godlike beings. The spirit of the waterfall feels heavy: a disguised form. This presence is most clearly seen in the print “The Amida Waterfall in the Depths of the Kisokaido Road.” Amida (Amitabha in Sanskrit), is the Buddha in Pure Land sect Buddhism and is often represented standing, right arm raised with a halo circling his head. Hokusai's depiction of this waterfall outlines an exact replica of this common statue, including water forming a halo halfway above his head. Although Amida is a Buddhist figure, he is identified here with the traditional holiness of waterfalls in Shinto. He has transformed into nature and lives as a pure spirit in the water to be worshiped and paid respect by travelers.

According to Japan's earliest historical and mythological accounts, *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* (both 8th century) eight metaphorically represents an infinite number. Hokusai's print series consists of just eight sheets, but he perhaps aspired to capture the phenomenon of the waterfall in its wholeness, representing all waterfalls. Hokusai's relentless exploration of the nature of the falling and flowing water is also evident in the many pages devoted to this theme in his sketchbooks, “the Manga”, a spread of which can be seen in the exhibition.

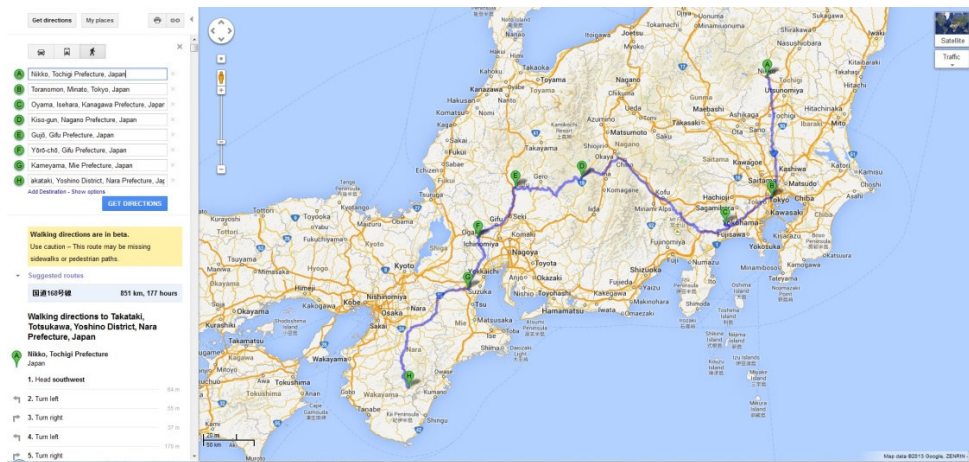
Hokusai's waterfall series features travelers in each print. Foreign travel during the Edo Period was strictly discouraged, and under pain of death, those who went abroad would not be allowed to return (Bolitho, 21). Although harsh in law, the Edo Period brought peace and prosperity to ordinary people who progressively gained previously unattainable, wealth. With new wealth and a developing appeal

for domestic travel, Japanese commoners found their way around severe highway regulations by embarking on pilgrimages, whether they were journeys to religious centers or to sacred mountains and waterfalls. The popularity of pilgrimage is clearly seen in Hokusai's prints, as well as in many other ukiyo-e artists' prints of the time. Judging by his mastery of movement within the waterfall series, Hokusai must have traveled, in a pilgrimage-style way, to witness the majesty of the waterfalls in person.

The initial order of the prints within the series is unknown, but it is noteworthy that all depicted waterfalls could be visited in a single, uninterrupted journey through eight adjacent provinces, from the east part of Japan to the Kyoto/Osaka region. The prints in the exhibition are arranged accordingly, inviting museum visitors to experience the uplifting and purifying powers of the roaring cascades.

The universal tenor of the prints arises also from the absence of seasonal references, a pervasive feature in Japanese art. Hokusai chose to refrain from including seasonal indications in this series. The lack of such seasonal iconography produces an impression of the transcendence of time. This further stimulates the holistic feel received from the prints of this set.

Hokusai's "Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces" is a masterpiece that could individually be meditated upon for hours. The artist's ability to quietly capture the grandeur and timelessness of the nature, its infinite variety of form and endless transformations expressed in the living torrents of the waterfalls, and man's deepest unity with the natural world defines the lines engraved on the blocks of these remarkable eight prints.



All eight waterfalls could be visited in a single uninterrupted journey.

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HOKUSAI'S PATH TO THE LIVING TORRENTS OF THE WATERFALLS

Anna Mouraleva, Christopher Lo

Hokusai's life and career reflect his work in many ways. Hokusai's waterfall series, "A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces" shows his deep fascination with cascading water. Influences for his work manifest in his earlier life included religious ideologies of Japan and early Chinese painters. Hokusai's training as an artisan geared his life towards artistic endeavors. Introduction of Dutch artwork into Japan further increased Hokusai's interest in landscape painting. These various inspirations set the way for Hokusai's distinctive style of his own in which Japanese landscape views were merged with the theme of Japanese daily life.

Hokusai was born in Edo, Japan in 1760. He was born to an artisan family and according to his own account, began painting as early as the age of six, perhaps practicing on the decorative borders of the mirrors that his foster father polished. At the age of 14, Hokusai became an apprentice to a wood-carver, where he worked for four years until he joined the studio of ukiyo-e artist Katsukawa Shunshō in 1779. In this studio, Hokusai was trained in ukiyo-e and focused kabuki actors, specialty of the school. For about fifteen years he continued designing prints as a member of the Katsukawa School, leaving it sometime around 1795 and changing his style substantially. He started painting *bijinga*, images of beautiful women, demonstrating preference for the slender and gentle type. He also created numerous *surimono*, privately commissioned prints, for *kyōka* poetry clubs, often including in those prints elements of nature. In 1798 Hokusai's style once again underwent significant changes as he turned to landscape, showing interest in European art available through Dutch traders and in the Chinese paintings available historically and through the trade with China. Hokusai is probably best known for his work on landscapes, the subject matter that gave him ample opportunity to explore the element of water, its power and endless transformations – the understanding that later found its expression in his masterpiece waterfall series created at the height of his career in 1833. This small eight-sheet waterfall set followed in the wake of Hokusai's break-through landscape print series "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji," published in 1829-1832. Both sets issued by the publishing house of Nishimura Yohachi share an important

feature – the key-block lines are printed in blue, underscoring the innate affinity of these prints with the life of nature.

Amalgamation of various religious beliefs of Edo period Japan had a strong influence on Hokusai's work. His spiritual quest affected his art, which over time became dominated by images of landscapes often inhabited by common people living their daily lives. While illustrating daily life, Hokusai depicted also the popular reverence for waterfalls as a manifestation of Shinto and Buddhist divine powers.

Hokusai's personal Buddhist beliefs found expression in his art. Hokusai was a follower of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism. Founded by priest Nichiren in the 13th century, this sect particularly worshiped bodhisattva Myōken regarded as manifestation of the North Star and the deity of great protective powers. The choice of the name Hokusai which means "North Star Studio" is usually interpreted as Hokusai's hope to ensure longevity through patronage of the deity. He sought longevity to achieve perfection as an artist.

Hokusai's work with water was strongly influenced by the purifying aspects attributed to it by classic Shinto beliefs. Water as a purifying element has always been an integral part of Shintoism, especially given its mythological sources. According to the classic creation-story that is told in Japan's earliest writings the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*) and *Nihongi* (*Japanese Chronicles*), both dating to the 8th century, the world and most of its gods came from two main gods, Izanagi and Izanami. From their sexual relations, many of the gods were born until one, the god of fire, burned Izanami fatally on birth. Distraught, Izanagi went to the underworld (Yomi) to bring her back, but on lighting his comb, discovered that in the darkness she had turned into a rotting corpse. Izanagi quickly turned and fled, until he finally escaped Yomi and blocked the entrance with a large rock. In order to purify himself, he decided to undergo the ritual purification that is *misogi*—where he stripped off his clothing (creating gods in the process) and washed in the river at Ahakihara in Tachibana no Ono in Tsukushi. Through this process, even more gods are born—one of the most notable being Amaterasu the sun god, born from the wash of his left eye (Aston 24-28).

To the Japanese, then, water had incredible purification properties; the practices of *misogi* were replicated and are still practiced today. Modern *misogi* is a highly

regimented process, steeped in tradition and ritual. According to one rendition, there are four accompanying exercises mandated to occur before even entering the water to cultivate the appropriate awareness and unity, and condition of the body. As a final step, purifying salt is sprinkled on the body, and a mixture of sake and salt sprayed into the stream. The priest Guji Yukitaka Yamamoto summarizes the goal of this ritual being that “The connections of kami-human being and human being-human being become more effective and person in relation to person and person in relation to kami can begin to understand and become what destiny decreed at birth. This is the goal and ideal of *misogi* and ultimately of Shinto - to enable, as one scholar has put it, homo sapiens to rise to homo excellens” (Yamamoto).

Given its mythological links and regimented sanctity, enormous significance has been attributed to water as a symbol of cleanliness and purity. Modern-day pilgrimages are still made to waterfalls with historical and religious significance, while practices like *misogi* are still maintained and passed on as a ritual of importance. In Japanese art and mythology, the act of sitting under waterfalls is always used as a marker of cathartic purification or (in some cases) deep repentance. Hokusai’s portrayal of waterfalls, then, is not simply a symptom of formal interest, but a rather natural enshrining of what has always been a symbol of Japan, and its people’s link to the gods.

Hokusai’s work, however, did not only exhibit a strong influence from his culture—even in these works, Hokusai shared the inquisitive nature characteristic to many Japanese artists, freely borrowing from the art of China and the west.

China had always been a domineering force in the culture of Japan—many ideals of beauty, for example, can be seen manifesting simultaneously in China and Japan. For a very long period, Chinese landscapes with water were treated rather uniformly, the Sung critic Su Tun-p’o explains that “From ancient to modern times, water has usually been painted as flat and far-reaching (and finely rippled). Those who were good at the subject were only able to make waves [rise and] fall, causing people to feel them... [around AD 880] the retired scholar Sun Wei was the first to bring forth new ideas [in painting water, painting]... currents and great waves which wound in and out among mountains and rocks, following [the shape of] things by spreading out its [own] form” (Maeda 248-249). This idea of

painting “living water” of power and force such that it seemed to spray off the canvas itself was a Song Dynasty (960-1279) concept that starkly contrasted to the usually generic description of water in typical Chinese landscape painting of earlier times. A great Northern Song artist Kuo Hsi (Guo Xi, 1020-1090) says in his treatise “An Essay on Landscape Painting” (translated by Shio Sakanishi, 1936), “Water is a living thing, hence its form is deep and quiet, or soft and smooth, or broad and ocean-like or thick like flesh, or circling like wings, or jetting and slender, rapid and violent like an arrow, rich as a fountain upon the sky or running down into the earth where fishermen lie at ease.” The technique had a falling out soon after the death of what are typically referenced as their two masters of the variations of water (Sun Wei and Sun Chih-Wei of Tang and Sung periods respectively), but were revived in the early Ming Dynasty, carrying influence over even to Hokusai’s time. Hokusai’s attention to individual droplets and delicate sinews of waves clearly exhibits this influence.

Another factor that influenced Hokusai was the relatively new influence of the west. The influence of the west was questionable at times, especially given its separation from the rest of society, but Hokusai was known to do drawings for the Dutch traders and to have studied under masters with western art schooling. This influence begins to manifest itself sometimes in such things as Hokusai’s selection of point of view, or even in the rise of *uki-e*, a type of pictures drawn with the western linear perspective (which later greatly influenced development of *fukeiga*—landscape genre), focused on creating an illusion of depth. Hokusai’s use of perspective and scale in water, then, is a clear exhibitor of this influence, in addition to several other well-known factors like the introduction of the color of the Prussian blue. (Miki 156).

To traditional *ukiyo-e*, the predominant people-focused genres of *bijinga*, images of beautiful women, or *yakusha-e*, portraits of Kabuki theatre actors, were a stark contrast to the substantially more abstract landscape paintings of China. Hokusai, as one of the pioneers of the landscape genre, was one of the first to bridge this gap, marrying both Chinese classical landscape painting genre and the corresponding richly developed Chinese technique into the vernacular of *ukiyo-e*. Similarly, Hokusai has integrated western techniques and colors into his own practice,

developing himself into an undeniable force as nature master-artist in the history of ukiyo-e.

Hokusai – and especially his treatment of water, shows clear influences from three sources: his Japanese background along with the Chinese and West-European cultural inspirations – a momentous outcome of Japan's trade with the Dutch and the Chinese.

Hokusai's journey as a painter and print designer was an influential force on Japanese ukiyo-e art. He expanded the ukiyo-e art style to encompass scenes from common life and religious rituals in nature, which lead to the creation of some of the most captivating Japanese prints.

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Pilgrimage in the Waterfall Prints of Hokusai

Amy Chen, Nellie Robinson

The suggestion of pilgrimage in the series of prints reflects the historical background of Edo-period Japan, particularly the social and structural changes implemented by the Tokugawa shogunate. The driving force behind these changes was the introduction of the alternating-years policy (*sankin tokai*), which required daimyo and their samurai to spend every other year in Edo. As large groups of people were now travelling to or from Edo annually, the routes were further developed to better accommodate them. Japan's infrastructure underwent drastic improvement: Tokugawa Ieyasu, who became shogun in 1603, established a highway network consisting of five major highways (a system referred to as *gokaido*, or "five highways") starting in Edo, as well as other minor highways and post station towns along the way. The large number of customers travelling on the highways was profitable for the merchants, traders, and businesses that sprung up along the way. The towns even catered to multiple economic classes: post stations had more affordable inns for commoners in addition to the costly lodgings for daimyo. Shrines in particular often had nearby businesses where pilgrims could find places to stay. Travel was safer, and toll barriers (*sekisho*) were placed in areas where they would not interfere with pilgrims. Before 1600 it had been nearly unthinkable for commoners to take the time to journey to a holy spot; now it was within reach, due to the ease and safety of highways and the reduction in cost.

These changes were sufficient to shift pilgrimage from a rare occurrence to an activity popular with the commoner classes. Travel literature was widespread at the time, educating commoners about travel and social values in addition to encouraging them to pursue a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages were still very expensive journeys, but many commoners had a chance at one, thanks to pilgrimage-funding associations found in most villages and communities. Commoners who wished to embark on a pilgrimage would join one of these confraternities, pay yearly dues, and participate in a lottery to send a few lucky delegates on the journey in exchange for bringing back souvenirs and stories, further perpetuating the popularity of pilgrimages. Though pilgrim numbers varied year to year, in general they were quite high. Ise shrine, perhaps the most well-known Shinto shrine, often got around 200,000 to 400,000 pilgrims per year; in the 1830 mass pilgrimage it received five million pilgrims. Not everyone was lucky enough to go on a

pilgrimage, but the possibility was on everyone's minds.

Hokusai's "The Journey Around the Waterfalls of the Provinces" embodies this historical shift towards pilgrimage popularity. Created around 1833, these eight prints capture scenes of travelers, many of whom appear to be pilgrims, engaging with their surrounding natural scenery on the Hokusai-invented route from the east part of Japan to Kyoto-Osaka region known as *kamigata*. In the print "Ono waterfall on the Kisokaido Road," the pilgrims at the foot of the waterfall gazing up are carrying yokes, suggesting a cross-national traffic of goods. In "Kirifuri Waterfall at Kurokami Mountain in Shimotsuke Province," the travelers towards the top of the waterfall are depicted crouched at the ground, gripping the grass while admiring the majestic waterfall. In the print "Rōben Waterfall in Oyama in Sagami Province" men are illustrated cleansing themselves under the cascading waters, evidence of a Shinto rite that was practiced there together with Buddhist observances. Each man yielded a wooden sword, which would be regarded as a talisman after the rite was performed and the sword was sanctified in a Buddhist temple atop the mountain. In the scene "Ono waterfall on the Kisokaido Road," the technological advancements easing the way for waterfall-gazing pilgrimage journeys are indicated by the bridge on which the pilgrims stand, gazing in admiration of the formation. The pilgrims in "Kiyotaki Kannon Waterfall at Sakanoshita on the Tōkaidō Road" carry bundles on yokes in a fashion similar to those in "Ono Waterfall on the Kisokaidō Road."

As political and social changes swept Japan, pilgrimages to waterfalls became an integral part of the Japanese spiritual lifestyle. Hokusai captures the essence of these journeys through his collection of prints.

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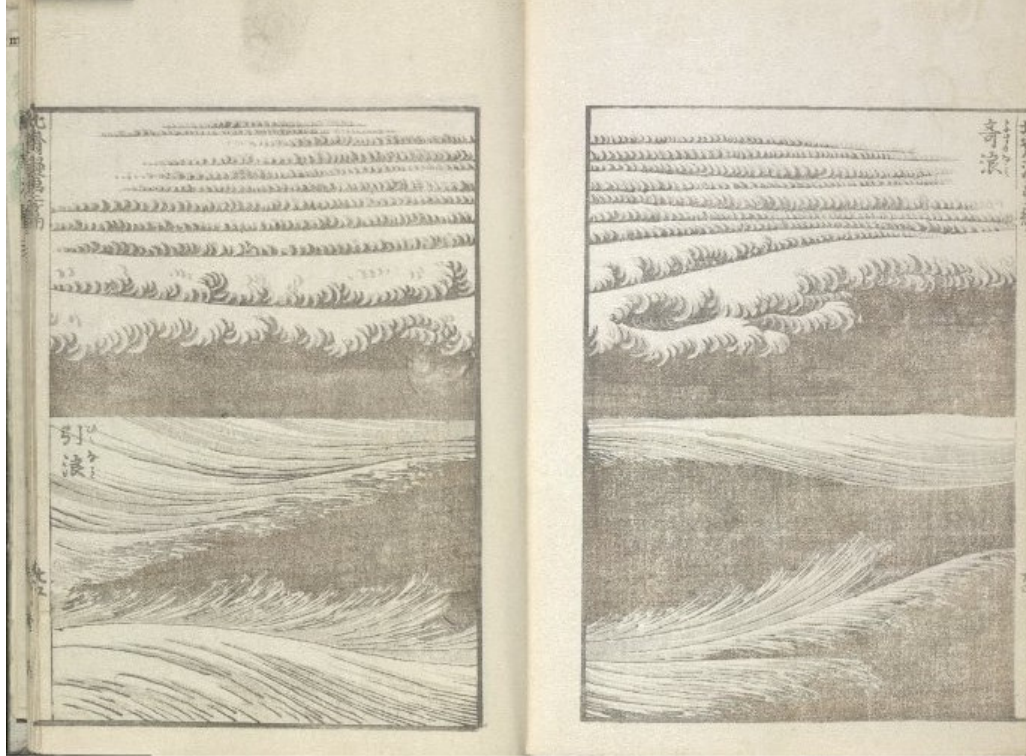
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Hokusai's Sketches of Water

Julie Chon

Hokusai Manga is a collection of sketches by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), an Edo ukiyo-e painter, book illustrator, print designer, and teacher. As a series of fifteen volumes (two posthumously published), in which the first one was published in 1814 and the last in 1878, *Hokusai Manga* includes an explorative and vast display of “random sketches” or “whimsically drawn pictures.” For the purpose of supplying his many eager pupils and followers with examples of which they could copy his style of drawing, Hokusai published an astounding variety of drawings totaling 970 pages with over 4,000 illustrations and displayed nothing other than his joy to study the life around him (Seigensha 1). Like many of the subjects in his Manga collection, the depiction of water in these sketches speaks to the idea that it is a living thing. Hokusai portrays water as an embodiment of nature through design and exploration of its spirit from one location to the next.

The images of water in the manga are drawn in a variety of ways. The focus of some of the drawings is on the character of the water itself while other sketches display its role as a component of the entire design of the image. In other words, it has a significant voice in the landscape. Landscape prints by Hokusai are now the most widely known category of Japanese woodblock prints, despite the fact that ukiyo-e artists primarily focused on actors and beautiful women before the 1830s (Reigle 204). Without examining *aizuri-e* or the use of Berlin blue in individual landscape prints, there is a focus on the linear quality of design in these sketches (205). Hokusai's innovative style of Japanese landscape art can be seen in this collection of sketches. Images of water appear throughout the entire collection: studies of moving water in the first volume (1814), ocean scenes in the second volume (1815), nature studies and landscapes in volumes III, IV, VII, VIII, X, XIII, XIV, and XV (1815-78) (Michener 21-29). Hokusai progressed in his sketches of landscape by analyzing individual elements like snow, the motion of waves, storm, rain, and mist. The idea of drawing water, a state of matter that has a definite volume but does not have a definite shape, demonstrates a desire to study, particularize, and then imagine the form. Hokusai, therefore, personalizes his vision and articulates form through specific patterns of water. The manifestations of water in his manga are highly individualized and show a struggle to understand the forms through lines.



Hokusai Manga, v. 2, pp. 24-25 (above); v. 7, pp. 6-7 (below)

The water images in many of his sketches are all distinct and unique to their own individual patterns. In the seventh volume, there is a two-page image of a body of water that engulfs a rock. The waves are drawn in every direction, spiraling into each other and forming a sense of chaos. The finger-like tips of the waves as they crash onto the next form are a common occurrence in Hokusai's visual vocabulary. In other sketches, some waves are stylistically drawn in the pattern of a c-shape and others are jagged in a uniform manner. The focus on the design of the waves and the differences between them communicate the essence that is special about each body of water. In the sixth volume, a man on a horse is riding down a body of water in one of the pieces. The lines of the water are drawn in the same direction as the man and the horse, which heightens the energy of the action. Starting from the upper right hand corner and cascading down to the lower left, the direction of the foam accompanies the narrative figures. The water in *Hokusai Manga* is given a range of qualities from spontaneous to reckless to overflowing with power. In the fourteenth volume, water is shown interacting with animals. There is an image of a group of seals resting on a rock with the waves of the ocean crashing upon it. The waves in the foreground are rising upwards as they collide onto the rock while the waves in the back imitate the shape of the dominant seal. This is an example of how the water in Hokusai's manga, like every other person, tree, or animal, plays a role in the design of the page. The water in this piece illustrates what the environment in which the seals live in is like. In the preface of the first volume of the *Manga*, Hanshu Sanjin writes that "all things perish, and times change" and that painting is a way to preserve the "form of these enjoyable and pleasurable objects for all time and all lands." He says that painting is the instrument for transmitting the spirit (Michener 13). The water that is drawn within an environment reflects this nature; the waves in these sketches are drawn mid-crash before they tumble down and disappear.

On the other hand, water is also depicted as a placid entity in forms of rivers, oceans, creeks, and rain. In his miniature landscape sketches, Hokusai illustrates water as a blank space, or with minimal shapes. In these sketches, we are able to identify the body of water because of the context he provides. Placing boats in the area and establishing the space are ways that help characterize the spirit and life of

the body of water. Fluidity, scale, and passage are all characteristics that identify the depiction of water as a theme. In the fourteenth volume, there is a two-page image composed of a traveler in a boat on a river that runs between two mounds of land. The shape of the land mimics the visual vocabulary of a wave in its full height while the lines of the river are uniform sets of slight curves. The fluidity and subtle nature of the river are juxtaposed with the huge forms of land that cave in from both sides. The lines of the water are displayed in deep contrast to the depiction of the shapes of the land. For this image, the surrounding environment provides a narrative to the water. A group of people crosses a river in one of images in the last volume of the manga series. The people are carrying their belongings as they tread the water, which is portrayed with fragile and delicate lines. The sense of urgency is thus carried through the piece by the layout of the river and the one-way and ongoing direction of the lines in the river. The water is shallow, but it is moving and alive which creates tension. Another example of falling water is Hokusai's sketches of rain. The rain is drawn as a collection of single straight lines. The direction of them varies from falling straight downward to coming in from the side. The weight, length, and distance between the marks are the qualities that mark each moment.

The last category of water in which Hokusai studies in his manga collection is waterfalls. There is a series of eight images in the *Manga* that focus less on the nature of water in comparison to his well-known series known as "A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces". Although there are notes written on the edges of these sketches that describe how the water is flowing in each location, it lacks the weight of water as an independent role. The sketches show what the behavior of water is like in context to the environment. The previously detailed interpretation of moving water is not apparent in these sketches because the waterfalls are all drawn in a similar manner with minimal lines. Rather, these sketches appear to be landscape prints; the presence of people, architecture, and the trees help describe each site. The lack of lines in the depiction of the falling water, however, is a design choice that is a part of his visual vocabulary. The water in waterfalls is drawn differently than the oceans and flowing rivers of his other sketches. Here, they are illustrated with dark shades of black that block out and highlight the thick white linear shapes of the waterfalls. The height of the waterfall and scale in comparison to the surrounding people and elements are accentuated

with these bold and long cascading shapes. This is the same device that is used in some of the pieces in the set “A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces”. The ways in which Hokusai sketched water in his *Manga* series display how water can play a significant role in the individual encounters people, animals, and other elements of nature have with one another. In other words, water is part of a bigger picture; it accompanies both people and the land.



Hokusai Manga, v. 1, p. 26

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THE WORKS



Kirifuri Waterfall at Kurokami Mountain in Shimotsuke Province (Shimotsuke Kurokamiyama Kirifuri-no taki), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1216

Kirifuri Waterfall at Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province

Hugo Nakashima- Brown, Sofia Diaz de la Rocha, Tevin Jackson

Hokusai's ukiyo-e woodblock print of the Kirifuri waterfall at Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province (now Chigo Prefecture) is part of an eight-print series depicting waterfalls in various provinces of Japan. The series was published in 1833 by the publishing house Eijūdō by the publishing house of Nishimura Yohachi. The prints of the set demonstrate such deep penetration into the life of nature, the element of water in particular, that they cannot but instill a feeling of awe in the onlookers, bringing to mind a spiritual journey – a pilgrimage, an inseparable part of life in Edo Period Japan. Hokusai's contrived pilgrimage to famous sites in Japan is informed by a long tradition of Buddhist pilgrimages practiced in Buddhism from its very beginning. In the same way Hokusai's pilgrimage and the resulting artwork paid homage to the deeply imbedded in nature animistic beliefs of the Shinto religion.

The Shinto religion is indigenous to Japanese people and has been in existence almost as long as Japan itself. Shinto does not have a specific founder nor does it follow any sacred text. However, a written Shinto mythology appears in the early sections of the eighth-century books "Kojiki" ("Records of Ancients Matters," completed in 712 C.E.) in addition to "Nihon Shoki" ("Chronicles of Japan," completed in 720 C.E.), which detail the importance of Shinto gods in the creation of Japan and the Japanese imperial lineage.

Rituals and places are essential characteristics of Shinto religion. Shintoism combines the worship of ancestors, nature, and sacred spirits (*kami*). Kami can inhabit the form of many things in nature and important concepts to life such as wind, rain, mountains, trees, bodies of water, and fertility. One of the beliefs in Shinto religion is that when a human dies, they are cherished and immortalized by their families as ancestral *kami*. Shrines are often erected in reverence of extraordinary people in Japanese society who are deceased. These shrines can be found in groves of trees spread throughout Japan. Each shrine is protected by sacred gates called *torii* and necessarily contains a basin with water, a symbolic means of purification. The most well-known shrine is the Ise Shrine, dedicated to the most important kami in Shinto religion, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu.

At the core of Shintoism is a love for harmony between humans and nature, as reflected in all of the compositions in Hokusai's Waterfall print series. Hokusai portrayed each waterfall uniquely by emphasizing the features of the waterfall or surrounding area that distinguished each waterfall from the others. He was the first Japanese woodblock print artist to focus on water as a primary subject matter resulting in a series of waterfall views of remarkable profundity. These images of waterfalls show places of Shinto reverence, not exactly holy places like the European sense of a church, rather places that contain great power and natural spirits. The piece *Kirifuri Waterfall* is designed to show something that is of the physical, natural world, yet somehow greater. The real waterfall is a place of natural spirituality and worship. To those travelers who visited it, the waterfall seemed a place of natural and cosmic power. Therefore Hokusai wishes to show a place in balance, in harmony, between two contrasting elements. The Kirifuri waterfall is a place that hangs between the ethereal and the substantial. Hokusai, and the other artists involved in rendering the Kirifuri waterfall in ukiyo-e show this dualistic place through their choices in composition, mark making, color, and negative space. These properties of being at once ethereal and substantial are not conflicting ones but rather complementing each other, harmonized and equalized in the image.

The print shows a captivating image of the Kirifuri waterfall surrounded by rocks and visited by pilgrims. The colors of this print include: blue, green, yellow, white, and orange. The waterfall is the central image, taking up the bulk of the print. The water is root-like in appearance and carries a graphic quality. The contrast of white and blue in the waterfall is stark, giving the water a dramatic look. Mountains and trees surround the waterfall providing the waterfall context in nature. The pilgrims are seen on the side and bottom of the waterfall observing it closely, on the very edges of its banks. The rocks between the intertwining streams of the waterfall have a gradation of color from yellow to burnt orange.

Hokusai's depiction of this waterfall is not done in the naturalistic style that he used in his *Manga*—collection of sketches. It is an extremely stylized depiction of a waterfall, mainly based around negative & positive space—the two general colors being white and blue. However, subtlety is evident here upon close inspection. In every transition between the white and blue ink, there is a gradation between stark

white and very dark, almost black, navy blue. The water goes from its swift, smooth, broad, and current like lines in the upper part of the sheet to gaining a dynamic quality at the bottom of the piece, where the water makes contact with the ground. Hokusai even brings some of these dynamic marks into the same area as the marks that illustrate the current, furthering the illusion of splashing or foaming water.

Another interesting way in which Hokusai rendered the waterfall is his use of negative and positive space. The entire image has an overall lack of negative space. It is bustling with a variety of marks and colors: blue, orange, red, yellow, green, white, dots, lines, curves, etc. Even the areas that would normally be negative space, like the blue areas of the waterfall, have patterns contained within them. Though the waterfall at first seems to contain only two colors, white and a deep blue, it actually contains at least five in a gradation from white to navy. The only area that could truly be deemed negative space in the piece is a small patch of sky at the top of the image.

Yet even this area, though it lends necessary neutrality through simply being a flat color, is not uniformly dull. The color of this small patch of sky is unlike the color of any actual sky. Instead, it is a navy blue nearly as dark as the waterfall, giving the entire piece a sense of being enveloped by the water. Hokusai only gives the smallest amount, the necessary amount, of neutrality in his piece. Yet this small amount of neutrality lends a balancing quality that makes the entire piece more attractive overall. Many aspects of the piece give it a sense of depth, but this patch of sky is one of the most prominent. The piece, like many Japanese prints, has vertical composition, likely suggested to Hokusai by the verticality of the waterfall. For all of this emphasis on verticality, there are very few suggestions of depth. This patch of sky is one of the few. Yet this small illustration of depth through color and negative space too is half shrouded by the canopy of trees, letting the viewer see even less of it. Hokusai only gives the viewer the most minimal evidence of depth in the piece. This subtlety is one of the things that makes *Kirifuri Waterfall* as beautiful as it is. Certainly, depth is suggested in the piece through the use of color and the outlines of forms like rocks and hills, but without this one neutral area, the entire piece would seem quite flat. In a piece that is almost entirely pattern, one of the qualities that give depth is an amount of stillness.

Despite all of these vertical aspects that Hokusai uses, the long lines of the waterfall that almost seem to be sliding down the page and the circular marks of the splashing that move vertically upwards, there is yet another area of water at the bottom that has lines that suggest a horizontal directionality, distinguishing it from the rest of the falls. Hokusai suggests this horizontal directionality by simply using lines that are mimetic of what the direction of this water would be. Like the current at the bottom of this falls, these lines move from the top right to the bottom left, with an s-curve in between. These splashes, and their movement, are further separated from the rest of the falls by leaving a small amount of the white of the paper in between the two. This small amount of negative space gives a slight illusion of depth like the negative space at the top of the page.

Hokusai also uses color as a tool to allow the viewer to perceive depth. Color balances the piece. It is the aspect that gives the most depth to a piece that is, overall, quite flat. The saturation of colors is a distinguishing feature of Hokusai's work. The ink used in the *Kirifuri Waterfall* print, and in almost all of his prints, was not made from indigo but instead was made of synthetic blue dye known as "Prussian Blue" or "Berlin Blue" which was recently introduced to Japan at the time. The yellow, rust, and white serve as highlights in their warmth, while the navy (Berlin blue) recedes, as its coolness signifies depth. Overall, all of the colors of the piece seem to be in a sort of triangular composition—green, yellow, red, blue, all being prominent in about three complimentary places. For example, green can be seen in the top center, the left, and at the bottom of the piece. This same technique is used with many of the marks. The balance of color makes the piece harmonious. Like in nature, Hokusai's use of color seems to make the whole page resonate in unison. He illustrates how even the smallest aspect is tied together, transcendent of human comprehension.

For the most part, the use of color in this piece is rather simple and efficient. Light green is used for grass, blue and white for water, dark green for trees, etc. The illusion of depth is also given by the impressions of the key block, which appears to be a dark navy in this piece. However, Hokusai has taken some liberty with color. This liberty is seen in the rocks at the top and center of the piece, whose colors are a bright saturated yellow and a vibrant red, rust color. This, combined with the beauty of the Berlin blue color, is maybe what makes the piece so strong. Surreal,

ethereal, transcendent sentiment is evoked, but only in moderation. Here, as Hokusai intends, there is that balance between surreal and mundane that can be found in a place that seems holy. That surreal quality is seen even in that small place that illustrates depth, the small patch of navy sky at the top of the print. An unusual, beautiful, and impossible color has been used for that sky, a dark navy blue. Certainly, we all know that during daylight, the sky would never appear as navy, as a blue as dark and opaque as the bottom of a river. Therefore, this color makes the piece be beyond the mundane world. And yet this area of ethereal color, like those yellow and rust colors, is so small as to be almost hidden. Once more, the piece seems half-real.

Beyond even the sophistication of the use of color, perhaps the most effective and striking feature of Hokusai's piece is in the excellence of the composition. This includes not only the positions of figures and objects, but also his careful balance of marks and colors. Every mark in this piece is balanced by using a similar, complementary mark elsewhere on the page. This can most notably be seen in the figures. The middle person of the group of figures at the bottom has a very similar pattern and the same color to his clothes as the figure at the top right. Also, both have the same color of satchels, one's belt matches the other's hat, all the figures have the same colors of hair and boots, etc.

Although nature is organic and grows asymmetrically, Hokusai is able to create a sense of balance by blocking off sections of color that match both the people and their surroundings. He balances the scene by making the people the same color as the landscape: green, yellow, and white. Not only does this balance the print but it also blends the people into their environment. The men are shown wearing traditional Japanese robes and carrying backpacks for travel. Their comfortable clothing and bags highlights their nomadic nature and movement. Their presence seems temporary, like a reflective stop before their long journey ahead.

The composition is also balanced by a sense of conversation within the entire piece. The figures at the bottom of the waterfall stand in awe of the falls plummeting from above them. The dialogue between these figures and the waterfall alludes to the Shinto principle that nature rules over mankind. The figure at the top right seems to converse with the figures at the bottom by reaching out a stylized, pointed hand. Both sets of figures seem to be looking in the general

direction of each other; those figures at the bottom look up and to the right, while the figures above look downwards towards the left of the canvas. Certainly, these figures could be intended by the artists to simply be admiring the waterfall. They could be one group traveling together, or two entirely separate groups of travelers. Either way, it does not really matter what the artist intended, for the effect remains the same. There is a sense of conversation between the two groups, and by connecting two separate areas of the piece, all the area between the two groups is connected, enlivened by the conversation as well.

Though the other aspects of the piece may not be having a literal conversation, they still seem to resonate. The supreme balance makes many of the print's aspects to be almost literally chattering. Like in nature, they seem to call and respond to each other in a way beyond mankind's understanding. Their entire environment seems to be linked together—the calls of birds, the "babbling" of a stream, even the waving contours of eroded rocks. Like that ethereal aspect of nature, even the trees are reminiscent of the waterfall in the way that Hokusai has illustrated them. The trees move upwards, and to the left of the composition, while the waterfall descends towards the right. Both the trees and the waterfalls are composed of two general colors, blue and white in one case, while yellow and green in the trees. The marks used in the waves at the bottom of the piece are just larger versions of the pointed, longer marks seen in the grass and some of the rocks in the upper right and left of the piece. The hilly contours at the top right of the piece, behind the trees and near the figures, are nearly the same as the contours of those same waves. The water splashing at the bottom of the waterfalls uses the same circular marks as the rocks and grass above. These marks have an upward directionality, moving upwards like the trees instead of downwards like the waterfall. By using those same marks above, that upwards motion is further emphasized.

Overall, the piece has a balance of broad, gestural marks and slight, subtle ones. These subtle marks can be seen on the figures—small dots, patterned textiles, kanji that indicate the name of the publisher Nishimura Yohachi, and even in the marks that make up their hair. They can also be seen throughout the piece in some subtle key block lines, small lines in the grass, etc. These contrasting elements further give that sense of call and response, the idea that the whole piece is in great harmony with itself.

In Hokusai's *Kirifuri Waterfall*, the artist presents a place that others, and perhaps even he, have seen and have deemed a place of wonder. It is a place that seems to float as an island of its own, touched by both man and heaven. His marks, his color, and the design in general present a place that resonates with something that the general public appreciates—something divine and heavenly, but also human, something that they can relate to. The artist's piece is powerful not solely because of his aesthetically pleasing technique. Certainly Hokusai's style that can be admired, analyzed, dissected, and be said to be beautiful and aesthetically pleasing for such and such reason. However, what is truly great about the piece is where it brings the viewer. The piece brings the viewer back to a wonderful place, a moment that all have experienced in life. In the wonder of nature, and in certain very special, powerful places, like Kirifuri, there is a moment when one can feel peace through a unity with nature. The place may be beautiful, like Kirifuri certainly is, but that is only a small aspect of that power. The true power lies in wonder, wonder at a realization of something that seems spiritual and beyond science, reason, etc. The public may not be able to travel to the Kirifuri waterfall for themselves, but they can experience a part of it by contemplating the *Kirifuri Waterfall* print.

Yes, likely this feeling is only a projection of something else, perhaps a part of our primeval brain that speaks with those natural surroundings in a way beyond our comprehension. All that one can do is enjoy its effect for that brief, nirvana-like second, and remember something buried within. And Hokusai brings this memory back to us and to the people who bought his print at the time it was created.

Ultimately, Hokusai creates a complex image of the Kirifuri waterfall. Even as an image of nature grown organically, he masterfully creates balance and harmony through his line quality, colors, and shapes. He captures the grandness of the waterfall in a narrative fashion. When taking in one of Hokusai's prints, all that one can do is marvel at the transcendent image.

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Aoigaoka Waterfall in the Eastern Capital (Edo) (Tōto Aoi-ga-oka-no taki), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1223

Aoigaoka Waterfall in the Eastern Capital

Erin Terui, Lydia Kim, Jennifer Park

The title of this distinctive print by Hokusai is *Tōtō Aoigaoka-no taki*, which means *Aoigaoka Waterfall in the Eastern Capital* – a common reference to Edo (present-day Tokyo) where the waterfall was located. The depicted landscape illustrates a street juxtaposed to a body of water. The hill, centered between the street and the waterfall, has a curving road that is adjacent to a dam wall constructed of hexagon stones organized in a repetitive, pattern-like arrangement. The massive wall upholds a still pond that is accented with simply illustrated rocks. This peaceful pond drops into an impressive waterfall-spillway that gushes into a pool. At the base of the pool, there are two figures and six others are seen along the curving hill – these townspeople are depicted in their usual daily lives. The upward movement of the figures on the hill is accentuated with the shapes of the plants and trees. Amid the vegetation is urban architecture that reinforces the human presence in this print. *Tōtō Aoigaoka-no taki* is a captivating print that formally and conceptually creates a marriage between urban life and nature in Edo (located in the former province of Musashi which is Tokyo Prefecture today).

Separated by a massive stone wall, the composition of the print seems to be focused not on the waterfall itself, but rather on the curved shape of the hill - mimicking the flow and direction of the waterfall. The type of the stone wall illustrated here was often used in the Edo period castle architecture – it belongs to the *kikkōzumi* variety of the *kirikomahagi* which means that the wall was made of hexagonally cut stones in imitation to the carapace of the tortoise shell (*kikkō*) and then tightly fitted together. The stone wall is covered by green grassy mounds, which in comparison to the man-made stone blocks, offers an interesting contrast of organic shapes with systematic, geometric shapes. Through the puffy grassy blanketing viewers can observe how old the stone wall is. Along the greenery the Aoizaka or Aoi Slope is rising, creating a directional movement to the top of the hill where the *enoki* trees burst. The trees also display an organic visual contrast to the architectural lines of the buildings. This is a captivating play between segmented geometric lines and irregular natural lines. These buildings in the lower left corner and at the top of the hill appear to be guard posts or checkpoints. The architecture in the distance seems to reiterate the idea of humans coexisting with

nature. The vegetation in *Tōtō Aoigaoka-no taki* print still maintains a good proportion of the composition, even with the invasion of an urban setting.

The overall environment of the scene seems to represent a part of daily rituals or routine. The two closest figures appear to be resting by the shore, possibly from fishing, as there are buckets of shellfish or seafood of some other kind attached to a pole-balanced yoke propped by the standing man. Both fishermen in the front are equipped with a *tenugui* – a traditional cotton hand towel used for a variety of purposes. The squatting man wears it as a headband *hachimaki*, which can be considered as a symbol of determination and effort, in this case, of workers who take pride in their work. The man standing to the right uses his *tenugui* to wipe the sweat off his forehead, presumably from fishing for a long time. The six other figures show multiple activities, such as carrying goods and sweeping. Judging by the way they are dressed, they appear to be townspeople who live in the area. It can be observed that a man with a yoke walking up the street is wearing a *momohiki* – a workman's close-fitting trousers. Others can be seen with their legs bare, their kimonos tucked up as they are completing manual labor tasks. In contrast, a figure of samurai stands out amongst other men at the bend of the road; with his face towards the viewer, he is shown wearing a typical samurai garment *kamishimo* (upper and lower) that consisted of sleeveless waistcoat and *hakama* – long broad trousers similar to a divided skirt. Caught in action, these townspeople seem to be accustomed to their surroundings and create a sense of harmony between life by the water and that of the town.

The falls next to urban life is depicted through the broad, yet abrupt drop of water. At the top half of the print is the calm Tameike pond that is released through the vast waterfall. The froth depicted in the waterfall is distinguished from the gradation of the placid pond above. The stippling dots of the waterfall move the eye towards the pool below – this pool is portrayed with painterly lines that vary in thickness. The repetitive yet varying line weights help visualize the rapid currents that are splashing against the heavy stone wall. These uniform wall hexagons echo the measured rhythm of the waves, undulating as they are, the two together creating a fascinating visual pleasure.

Hokusai uses different kinds of woodblock printing techniques to focus on the details of natural scenery as well as the urban landscape. Stippling techniques can

be seen on the waterfall, stones, and the trees. The dots and slight variation of shades help create shadows and thus render volume to the surfaces that would have looked rather flat without it. As for the architecture included in the print, the roofs of the buildings have straight lines that are angled uniformly. There are no shadows on the buildings, but because of the perspective in which Hokusai successfully places them, the buildings create a sense of distance between each other. Hokusai does not include drastic shading or harsh contours throughout the print, but viewers can appreciate subtle elements of depth achieved by the slight gradation of whites and blues of the sky and water. This gradation technique known as *bokashi* is a popular way Japanese printmakers made variations in color value of paint which were hand applied to the block. While other prints of the series contain a similar color scheme of blues, greens, yellows, and orange browns, this specific print is predominantly of blue and green tones. The shared color scheme of the series represents a connection between all eight of the prints. If seen carefully, the print viewers can notice that Hokusai makes the artistic decision to replace the black color of the key-block with the Prussian blue throughout the entire series. The dark outlines and shadows are purely a dark navy blue color. In this way the print is more fluid in connection to the scenery, instead of having prominent black outlines. This approach plays down the contrasts by keeping a uniform color scheme. The blues and greens from the waterfall and the undulating shape of the hill contrast greatly between the pale yellow shade of the street and buildings. Hokusai makes it clear that there is a division between the natural landscape versus the man-made landscape in this print. With buildings on the top and bottom of the print, Hokusai captures a balanced composition of both nature and the civilization that is built within it.

In comparison to the other prints in his series, Hokusai includes the clouds in the lower left corner that are partially obscuring the building. This is not only an aesthetic choice, but also has a purpose – it gives information about Nishimura Yohachi, the publisher, whose seal together with the censorship seal appear against the cloud's light background. Although not integrated in the design, writing can be seen in the upper left corner. It is enclosed in a rectangular cartouche, announcing the title of the series and the name of the location depicted – it states *Shokoku taki meguri* (the series) and *Tōtō Aoigaoka-no taki* (the print).

Small parts of the print can vary between different copies. Only a few differences exist between the established original print and the RISD Museum sheet that were noticed in the process of close observation. The RISD Museum version overall seems to have a darker color scheme than the original, mainly around the trees. Other differences are minor and were difficult to discover. For example, the shape of leaves at the very top of the sheet slightly differs from the original version of the print, and the colors are faded. In the original print, the stooping figure in front of the waterfall raises his shoulder slightly more than the same figure in the observed copy. Compared to other Hokusai waterfall prints, the Aoigaoka waterfall appears more delicate and calm.

Hokusai's *Tōtō Aoigaoka-no taki* brings together the urban and natural realms into a vivid depiction of Edo life. Uniquely from other prints in *The Journey to the Waterfalls of all the Provinces* set, this print displays the dominance humans have over nature through the choice of the waterfall – it was created as a part of the moat and bridge system at the Toramon – the Tiger Gate of the Edo Castle and thus was the result of urban presence; this waterfall does not exist anymore as the pond was filled in the end of the 19th century. Through the variety of formal techniques and intriguing composition, the nature in this controlled urban landscape appears manifold and full of life of its own; humans coexist with it in deep harmony – the features invariably found in Hokusai's prints.

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Rōben Waterfall at Oyama in Sagami Province (Sōshū Ōyama Rōben-no taki), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1220

Rōben Waterfall in Ōyama in Sagami Province

Jane Bak

The Rōben Waterfall at Ōyama in Sagami Province (now Kanagawa Province) is one print from eight forming series “A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces” by Hokusai. It shows a powerful waterfall cascading from the unseen mountain heights onto a group of men performing ritual bathing with wooden swords in the billowing waves of its basin. It demonstrates Hokusai's skill as an artist and an interpreter of nature and man in the natural surroundings of the waterfall. Although the landscape is rendered with stylization, it combines veracity and playfulness that are highly characteristic for Hokusai's style.

A compact near-vertical powerful torrent of the waterfall dissects the landscape into two almost equal parts, creating a perfectly balanced composition and thus suggesting the orderly nature of the universe. The eye follows the plummet right into the reservoir formed by the falling streams. The reservoir is teeming with naked men wearing only their loin-cloth *fundoshi* and headbands made from hand-towels, *tenugui*. Some men are getting outside of the pool while others are fully dressed, perhaps having just arrived at the place. All men are distinguished by the buff-orange skin tone which matches exactly the color of several cliffs throughout the composition and is picked up by the tree trunks. Two outcrops are seen directly next to the bathers, incorporated into the stone-wall cladding of the pool. Same-colored cliffs run along the right and top edges of the mountain ridge; the tone continues in thick tree trunks in the opposite part of the composition. Strategic distribution of this color, affinity in configuration of the color spots, similarity in their linear description and texturing whether in rocks, trees or men makes humans seamlessly and completely integrated into the natural world. Likewise, garments of men who are dressed are of the same green and blue tones as those appearing in the landscape part of the print. The concept of unity of man and nature is one of the major constituents of Japanese traditional world view, deeply imbedded in both Shinto and Buddhism. This theme is particularly important in Hokusai's waterfall prints. The mighty waterfalls do not overpower humans – the two entities coexist in natural and full unity.

Moreover, men in the print climbed the mountain and plunged themselves in the waterfall because they were seeking spiritual cleansing through the direct immersive

contact with nature. Men in the water are pilgrims – travelers to a holy place with a spiritual quest; they are performing ablutions before entering the sacred area on the top of Ōyama Mountain mentioned in the title of the print. It is believed that monk Rōben (8th century), one of the most important figures in institutionalization of early Buddhism in Japan, founded there a vast complex of Buddhist and Shinto sanctuaries that were highly venerated during Edo Period. In commemoration of Rōben the waterfall received his name. The main cult at the place was that of Fudō Myōō, a deity of great importance in esoteric Buddhism; his name means “The Immovable King of Light.” He is regarded as a wrathful protective divinity with a sword as his major attribute. It is said that General Minamoto Yoritomo (12th century), the founder of the first shogunate in Japan, practiced consecration of his sword in the shrines atop Ōyama Mountain to ensure good luck. (Ōyama website). During Edo period there developed a tradition among men of commoner class to take wooden swords to the same sanctuaries after purifying themselves and the swords in the basin of the waterfall. This practice took an organized form – pilgrims wearing special white clothing met in Edo and proceeded to the site. Three men from among those performing purification in the waterfall pool are holding their ritual swords. Upon been taken to the sanctuaries they would be considered talismans. The shape of the waterfall resembles a slightly curved blade of a Japanese sword. Did Hokusai invite this comparison to the swords in the hands of pilgrims intentionally? This would only further strengthen the print’s message of nature-and-man unity. It is interesting to note that on today’s photograph the waterfall is not a long and powerful current but a single stream of water over approximately four meters above a small pool of water. However, it does not diminish the importance of the falls, as it is still a marker point before the Ōyama Shrine.

The human world in the print includes also men-made structures. Not only is the reservoir faced with dressed stone on the left, partially fenced off by wooden planks towards the front and is provided steps for convenience of entering and leaving the pool, there are several buildings next to it. The buildings are associated with the ritual practices occurring at that place. The structure on the left is screened off and obviously is not for use by the pilgrims unlike the structure on the right. This building is a place where travelers leave their clothes and round traveling hats before getting into the waters of the basin. Perhaps they also could also rent there towels and hand-towels *tenugui* mentioned above. All bathers are equipped with such those,

either using them as headbands, or for mopping their wet brow or body. The front of the little shop is open and we see a traveler talking to a friendly person who runs the place. The pile of round pilgrims' hats rests on a stack of white boxes leaned against a deep-blue bundle. Obviously, this was a standard set of things to be carried by the pilgrims. There is a similar arrangement of objects right next to the basin edge between the steps and the fence. The name of the business is Fuji-no Saka as this follows from the inscription on the paper lantern attached to a pole extending above the roof. This must have been a thriving business during the pilgrimage season that lasted for three weeks from 27th day of the sixth month to the 17th of the seventh.

Nature in the print is treated with the same level of thoroughness and attention to detail. Mountains are rendered as abstracted patches of color. The shapes of the patches, their colors, application of color gradations, descriptive lines and texturing markings and dots are all faultlessly and sensitively balanced. The organic forms of vegetation contrast the directness of the waterfall and the geometry of mountain facets. Free-growing trees are extending their branches with copious wave-like foliage in every direction.

Horizontality of the blue and white water body in the basin at the bottom of the print is matched by the levelness of the cloud formations at the top of the composition. The separated shades of navy blue, light blue and the white of the water are echoed in blue-to-white color gradation *bokashi* that defines the cloud. Stylized and peculiar in shape, the cloud appears to be the flattest area in the composition. Thus it provides an excellent surface for the inscriptions. The title of the print series and of the print are placed there in a rectangular cartouche. Underneath there is the artist's signature with the red censorship seal and the publisher's seal to the right. There are more writings scattered throughout the composition. In addition to the name of pilgrim-serving shop inscribed on the lantern, the characters of the publisher's company name appear on a pilgrim's hat leaned against the fence and on the blue cloak of a standing man. The cloak and the round hat in the shop bear the publisher's logo of a triple comma design under a mountain shape.

The delicate blue of the clouds, the light and strong blues of the cascade and of the waters in the basin determine the structure of the print. Moreover, they find support

in the blue outlines of the print. For the color blue Hokusai uses the so-called Prussian blue that fascinated ukiyo-e artists at the time. Adoption of blue outlines led Hokusai to achieve unparalleled grasp of naturalness in both series he designed this way – his Waterfall print set of 1833 and his masterpiece set “The Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji” published two years earlier.

Hokusai in his Rōben waterfall – just as in all other prints from the series – captures unity of nature and man, presenting both with extraordinary deep understanding and complexity. The two coexist in full harmony and are inseparable. Tiny humans feel completely at ease next to the nature’s mightiest manifestation, the waterfall. This unity is shown here through the sensitive balance of forms and color, through the pervasive usage of blue outlines – the arteries of nature. The two are also connected through the spiritual quest of the portrayed men that seek spiritual purification through the direct immersive experience of nature’s forces.

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Ono Waterfall at the Kisokaidō Road (Kisokaidō Ono-no bakufu), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1222

Ono Waterfall on the Kisokaidō Road

Adele Helmers, Blaine Harvey, Maggie Finaly

Part of “A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces” print series by Hokusai (1760-1849), the woodcut “Ono Waterfall on the Kisokaidō Road” is well known for its powerful image of one of the most recognized nature sights of Japan, as well as for its bright color and high level of detail. The print is an ōban-sized composition, signed by the artist Hokusai who uses his signature Zen Hokusai Iitsu Hitsu; the seal of the publisher Nishimuraya Yohachi is printed on the right side along with the censor’s seal of approval, *kiwame*. The waterfall inspired many travelers during the Edo Period as it appeared in many ukiyo-e woodcuts. Within the print there is a mountain waterfall of enormous height rushing great volumes of water over a precipice amidst the mountain outcrops. It seems literally to connect heaven and earth; five travelers are watching it, standing on the bridge over the vigorous stream formed by the waters of the same fall at its bottom.

Considering the general style of the print, Hokusai made use of meticulous line work, choosing blue as the outlines of each shape. This decision reflects the then current fascination of ukiyo-e artists with the remarkable tonal depth and richness of the newly imported paint known as Prussian blue. Obviously, Hokusai regarded usage of blue outlines to be of great significance for his waterfall print set devoted to the most comprehensive exploration of the element of water. Hokusai made a conscious effort to give the print elaborate and varied texture. Talking about waterfalls generally, it is a common thought that their height and physical water power can be emotionally conquering, almost frightening, but for the Ono waterfall, there is a sense of tranquility and inner peace. There are a multitude of dots spraying from the falls indicating many layers of the print, especially seen by how many variants of blue and white are used. Something that was immediately noticed was the shift in the registers that showed an overlap; this initially seemed careless for a master like Hokusai, but from Hokusai letters it is known that on several occasions he asked the publisher to employ a particular block cutter. Realization of his artistic ideas was of great significance for him. In ukiyo-e, publishers hired print designers, and block carvers and printers. (Kobayashi Tadashi, 75-81)

There are five male figures on the bridge, four together in a cluster and one on the side, pointing to the waterfall. Four of the men are seen to be either wearing or

carrying a traveler's round hat. The figure in the middle closest to the viewer is carrying a pole with a load on either side. Three of the men closest to the viewer are directly looking at the falls, whereas the other two men are craning their necks backwards to look. All of the men are wearing a variation of green and blue colored garments. Looking at the print in terms of detail and what elements make up the print, there is a waterfall beginning at the top left and falling at the bottom left. The water falls straight, then makes rough waves, and streams in less explosive manner underneath the light construction of the green bridge. It is important to note that the blue color of the falls is highly saturated, drawing even more attention to the waterfall. There is a yellow structure at the bottom left corner of the print that the figures are walking away from. The roof of the structure has rocks on top, where the registers can be seen overlapping. The architecture of both the yellow and orange structures is very simple. Looking at the two structures in relation to one another, it can be noted that the one on top of the cliff appears to be a Shinto shrine of the *nagare-zukuri* type, in which one side of the roof is extended. The shrine on the cliff would make sense being there rather than away from the falls (in the bottom left corner) because in the Shinto religion spirits called *kami* dwell in all things in nature, such as waterfalls and rocks. (Kalman, 14-15).

The soft mist that weaves throughout the composition is an element of the print that sets it apart from the rest of the prints in "A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces" series. The soft light blue-grey mist spreads from behind the structure in the middle and winds around the cliffs of the mountain, letting the mountain top emerge above the mist spread below. The soft mist used throughout the composition gives the print a serene tone, whereas in other prints in the series the clouds play a less substantial role, only occupying one corner of the composition and made up of an oblong shapes rather than being added scattered throughout the print with a more detailed and realistic form. In the "Rōben Waterfall," the clouds are printed with a gradient starting with a deep blue that fades to white, but in the Ono waterfall it is made of light blue-gray color rather than a deep gradient.

Overprinted from several blocks the artist uses multiple layers of blue that are on top of each other creating a transparency effect within the layers of the print, especially within the base of the waterfall. In total the print holds nine different colors: orange, yellow, three different greens, three different blue tones, and black. The most

contrast within the print is at the top of the waterfall where its white crest meets with the black sky. The clouds and the dark sky blocks obstruct a lot of the mountainside view, which creates an abstract and flattened perspective of the space, directing the viewer's attention to specific areas. Within these flat colors of the clouds, one can barely make out the wood grain from the block that was used to get an impression of this light blue color. Also at the base of the waterfall there is a group of five travelers passing over the bridge with a great amount of detail discernable on their clothes. In the studied copy from the collection of the RISD Museum, it becomes easy to see the imperfect registration in this small, highly detailed space. The line work and quality of carving becomes quite delicate with the shrubbery on the hillside and the thin line surrounding the waterfall; however, the line quality in the representation of the shrubbery and of the waterfall contrasts each other. The quick, sweeping movements of the shrubbery seem exceedingly natural. The use of perspective is also incorporated into the print of both atmospheric and linear views, coming into use with both the house and the shrine that flank the waterfall. Perspective comes into play when looking at the surroundings: the scale, the color shifts, the small people, and the grandeur of the space.

Elaborating on various elements in the previous paragraph, the rocks on top of the yellow structure in the bottom left corner have no religious or connotative significance, only maybe utilitarian – to hold the shingles on the roof. Looking at the light blue fog that surrounds the waterfall and the cliffs, it can be seen that Hokusai has made a conscious decision to focus the viewer's eye-line on specific areas of the print - on the waterfall itself, the foliage, the travelers, and the water pattern.

The Ono waterfall is located on the Kisokaidō Road (officially known as Nakasendō) in the Agematsu village in the Nagano Prefecture (former Shinano Province) in Japan. Many Nakasendō travelers passed by this waterfall during the Edo Period. The water is both cool and refreshing for any passing traveler that caught the eye of many artists (Agematsu town homepage). Looking at the print in the spirit of contemplation and reflection in relation to Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, the grand size of the waterfall gives the viewer the feeling of being minuscule, reminding them of their nanoscale size in terms of the rest of the universe. The way Hokusai treats the elements of the print does justice to the belief that there is a

tranquil spirit to the waterfall; the viewer does not feel overwhelmed or emotionally dominated by its inherent power. The elements can be both healing and destroying to an environment, as well as to the spiritual individual.

The series "A Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces" has a number of powerful prints of varying compositions capturing the grandeur of waterfalls. The *Ono Waterfall on the Kisokaidō Road* was one of the most powerful prints in the set because of its uses of color, composition, varying line weight, and contrasting elements; Hokusai's high level of attention to detail is revealed, expressing to the viewer the spirituality of the Ono Waterfall.

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The Amida Waterfall in the Depths of the Kisokaidō Road (Kisoji-no oku Amida-ga-taki), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1221

The Amida Waterfall in the Depths of the Kisokaido Road

Sarah Haenn, Stephanie Wang

Katsushika Hokusai was a great artist, born at Edo, in the Honjo quarter, in 1760, and is said to have created over 30,000 designs of prints, paintings, and drawings, during the Edo period. He was a large part of the ukiyo-e style (lit. “Pictures of the Floating World”), which flourished in Japan from the 17th to 19th centuries. He became apprenticed to a woodblock-cutter in 1775; his artistic career proper began when in 1779 he entered the studio of a prominent ukiyo-e designer Katsukawa Shunsho which he left some fifteen years later to become an independent artist. He treated a variety of subject matter, consistently showing interest in representing landscape. In 1820’s, he embarked on his series of *ōban* landscapes, which are prints relatively sized 390 x 265 mm. In early 1830s the major masterpieces by Hokusai were created, including his celebrated print series “Thirty-six Views of Mountain Fuji.” Soon after, circa 1833, his series of eight upright prints, “Shokoku taki meguri” – “A Journey around Waterfalls in Various Provinces” was published by Nishimura Yohachi. This was the first time that waterfalls had been chosen as the subject of a titled series of prints – thus, Hokusai’s unique choice of subject was not dictated by tradition.

“The Amida Waterfall in the Depths of the Kisokaidō Road” (Kisoji-no oku Amida ga taki, 木曾路ノ奥阿弥陀ヶ瀧), was Hokusai’s realistic yet imaginative woodcut depiction of a waterfall in Shiratori-cho, (白鳥町前谷), Gujo city 郡上市. Although waterfalls as nature sights had not been subject matter in ukiyo-e before, the print can be regarded as a part of the genre referred to as *sansuiga* (山水), derived from the Chinese culture, which means pictures of mountains and waters. The print shows and exemplifies Hokusai’s interest in the *sansuiga*, a beautiful waterfall cascading strong yet delicate throughout the print, surrounded by very detailed cliffs.

The title of the print refers to Amida Buddha, “Buddha of Limitless/Infinite Light,” (Buddha Amitabha in Sanskrit). The hollow circle, a main focal point in the print, is the root of the waterfall, which is created by the surrounding shape of the cliffs. Interesting is the perfection of the roundness of the circle; although it does not fully connect at the top, the viewers are able to subconsciously finish the circle in their minds with the curvature of lines at the top of the waterfall. Hokusai pioneered in exploring the inventive and creative ways to depict cascading water; here he creates a

waterfall branch-like, such that the water flows out like arteries and continues to break up into very thin and delicate lines.

Although the water lines become rather straight, the overall flow within the print is completed by the flow and curvature of the cliffs and bushes that frame the waterfall. The shapes of the cliffs are mainly round in most areas, however there are hard jagged edges on the right side. The layers of cliffs also give the scene a great sense of depth, as your eyes travel from the top to the bottom of the landscape. There is a large presence of vegetation in the print. Bushes on the left play a dual role of dividing the layers of cliffs while simultaneously helping the viewer understand the level and direction of the ground plane; for example, the bushes are standing upright on the flat ground upon which the figures sit. When viewed close, the detail in bushes is extreme tone on tone in which little dark green dots on top of larger splotches of green create the bush. The contour of the foliage, the line work Hokusai uses for the bushes, resembles his famous print of the wave – “The Great Wave off Kanagawa.” Comparing the two prints, one can appreciate the Hokusai’s personal style, but used to portray very different images. Hokusai added the classic Japanese trees as well, on the left near the figures, which project outward into the waterfall on the right. The detail of the tree is done similar to the bushes, where very detailed small dots create the leaves. The dashes on the grass are very necessary as well, as they create interest and show the direction of the cliffs.

The imprint at the RISD museum demonstrates many conspicuous flaws in comparison to the original. One important aspect is the crispness of the lines: in the original Hokusai print, the accuracy and consistency of the line quality is vital – it is the basis of the print. The RISD print, however, contains many line work deviations in important sections of the print. The outline of the waterfall does not have very crisp lines – the areas where the blue meets the white are rough and the texture of the material (of both the paper and the paint) shows. The line work of the subtle fog on the left is entirely removed; instead, the fog is only defined by the shape of the color by itself. Due to the intricacy of the human figures in the original print, the RISD copy struggles with accuracy of the careful line work. The face of the man on the very left is considerably less refined than the original, presenting a more general depiction. The lines of the picnic blanket that the two figures are sitting on

noticeably converge and overlap, a certainly fatal mistake that possibly indicates that the print is a reproduction.

The other important aspects of prints are the colors and the application of colors. While the RISD copy displays a delicate vibrancy it also suffers a grave misalignment issue. Much of the green of the bushes and shrubs and the blue of the water fail to precisely meet the lines of the cliffs and a noticeable empty space fills the gap. Hokusai's original print explored the usage of Berlin blue; he utilizes a range of hues with the blue in comparison to the other colors in the print. Despite using Berlin blue as well, the RISD print lacks the precision and perfection of registration of the original.

Although can be overlooked at first, general truth said is that Hokusai never left a landscape uninhabited without fellow commoners, not focusing on nature exclusively, but considering people an integral part of the natural scenery. Figure-in-landscape was a standard format in the Japanese artistic tradition. It is an example of the Shinto and Buddhist view of the indivisibility of the world implying that humans should live in harmony with nature, rather than to be elite to nature.

The two figures on the right are possibly samurai, based on the exposed hilts from their obi as well as their top knot (*chonmage*). However, it is difficult to distinguish the length of the swords to determine that they are *katana* (as *katana* were only used by the samurai class only). However it can be concluded that the swords are not *wakizashi*, for the *wakizashi* is a short sword worn at the left side of the body – ruling out the possibility of the figures as merchants (who often carried *wakizashi* for self-defense). The two are enjoying a picnic while one of the men is possibly pointing to the waterfall. The third man is boiling a teapot over a fire; however he does not have a visible sword tucked into his obi. The fact that the man lacks a sword, sits on a different and smaller blanket, and is cooking while the others are idly conversing indicates that the man is a servant. The peaceful lighthearted scene reflects the time period – when during the times of the Tokugawa shogunate, war was nearly nonexistent in Japan, providing a time of peace as well as a social privilege to the samurai class. During this tranquil time period, samurai became bureaucratic and partook in leisure activities – such as this print's picnic outing.

Despite the signs of the men being samurai, one can wonder if they could possibly be *ronin* (samurai without a master for whom to serve) instead. Many daimyo lost

their domains during the beginning of the Tokugawa period, resulting in around 150,000 samurai (one-fifth of all samurai in Japan) becoming *ronin*. Some *ronin* would travel throughout Japan to practice and teach martial arts or find work in general. Regardless, the *ronin* had the leisure of a freedom that was not possible with the responsibility and loyalty of being a samurai. Including *ronin* into the composition provides imagery pun since *ronin*'s kanji characters are 浪人, which literally means a 'wave person'. Thus the inclusion of *ronin* as 'wave' could tie into the water imagery (the river and the waterfall) of the location. 4

The Amida Falls, located in present day Gifu Prefecture, is currently in the list of Japan's Top 100 Waterfalls and is recorded as 60 meters high and 7 meters wide. It was first discovered by Priest Taichō, a mountain ascetic monk, in 723 CE who subsequently named the waterfall Long Falls (Nagataki). Long Falls eventually became a place for Buddhist monks to practice their faith and meditation. During the mid-15th century (the Sengoku period), Priest Michimasa had been practicing in a cave nearby when he reached enlightenment. He claimed that Amitabha had appeared before him and thus he renamed the Long Falls as the Amida Falls. 1

The river in the oculus resembles the stylized representation of water in a masterpiece of the then-popular artist Ogata Korin, "Red and White Plum Blossoms" (created 120 years prior to Hokusai's print). Hokusai had studied under an artist from the Rinpa (School of Korin) so it could possibly have been an influence.

At a first glance, "The Amida Waterfall on the Kiso Road" appears to be a relatively flat image due to its direct point of view and generally flat colors (as opposed to the more illusionistic representation predominant in Western art). However, upon closer inspection, it is obvious that the image is composed of various spatial and dimensional elements as well.

Hokusai initially draws the viewer's eyes onto the waterfall and the human figures through opposite methods. The strong graphical shape of the oculus is offset by the illustrative river lines and connects to the strongly vertical waterfall. The verticality of the waterfall forces the viewer's eyes downward to the rest of the composition. Hokusai uses Berlin blue, the darkest tone on the print, to make the white, the lightest tone of waterfall, stand out. Then he almost inverts all these techniques in his depiction of the human figures. In contrast, the human figures are miniscule yet

detailed enough for the human eye to focus on them. The color of the human figures and their objects also use Berlin blue and white in a much more discreet way, yet still standing out against the yellow and green hues of the landscape. The figures have the same illustrative and gestural lines as the watercourse. These delicate lines extend to the cliffs as well. The curvature of the cliffs resembles movements of water and waves but the cliffs are also filled with many small textural marks.

Hokusai primarily used yellow, green, blue for this print. Most notably are the hues of the Berlin blue in comparison to the other colors. Hokusai extended the versatility of blue by using it in different methods to show depth: he uses a gradient of white to blue on the left cliff and a much more subtle transition towards the end of the waterfall; on the left he has a much starker contrast under the top of the cliffs. These techniques allow the underside of the cliffs to recede into space and shadow. There is a level of hierarchy in the way the cliffs are placed compositionally as well as spatially. The extrusion of the cliffs go along a zigzag pattern up to the two leveled cliffs at the oculus; and the gradual usage of blue in the cliffs serve to push the waterfall back in the space.

Hokusai was an avid traveler himself, which is apparent in his series of “A Journey around Waterfalls in Various Provinces.” The Amida Waterfall on the Kiso Road is simultaneously a realistic representation of a *meisho*, a famous place, as well as a rendering of the basic forms underlying Hokusai’s vision of the waterfall. Although theoretically it is possible that on his journey from Edo to Osaka the artist stopped at Amida Falls, the accuracy is not definite or precise. Hokusai added his own creative flare to produce a beautiful, interesting landscape. In conclusion, it is still not known if Hokusai did stop at Amida Falls.

Interesting as well is that Amida Buddha was a celestial Buddha rather than a human Buddha. He was known to have created a paradise called the “Pure Land”. Amida values positive/enlightened thought and happiness towards the world and towards others as the most important technique of enlightenment. Perhaps, Hokusai deliberately chose to depict a happy occasion of the travelers in leisure discussion in the closest proximity to the Amida Falls.

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Yōrō Waterfall in Mino Province (Mino-no kuni Yōrō-no taki), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1219

Yōrō Waterfall in Mino Province

Rosrena Wong, Weiwei Zhou

“Yōrō Waterfall in Mino Province” is a ukiyo-e print from the “Shokoku taki meguri” set of eight prints made by Katsushika Hokusai in 1833. The print illustrates the Yōrō Waterfall, one of the most known waterfalls of Japan. The Yōrō Waterfall is a thirty meters high and four meters wide waterfall located deep within the forest of the now-day town of Yōrō-Cho, in Gifu Prefecture (formerly Mino Province), Japan.

At the heart of the image is the astonishingly straight waterfall descending from an opening atop the mountain. The waterfall is placed slightly off center to the left. By doing this, the artist breaks the symmetry of the image while stressing the dominance of the waterfall. The waterfall takes up about three quarters of the print’s vertical height and dissects the mountain in half. The top of the waterfall leaves a smaller space for the cloudless sky. The mountains above appear to be smaller than the rocks at the lower portion of the foreground. Such proportion allows the mountains to be pushed back into the distance, creating layers of depth for the viewers’ eyes to rest upon. The foggy grey color on two sides of the waterfall has a height difference that breaks the vertical symmetry. In addition, the rocks on the top left are also lower than the rocks on the top right. This subtle touch of asymmetry relieves the rigidity of the dominant waterfall in the middle and reveals Hokusai’s great control of compositional balance in his landscape prints. All proportions of elements in this print are carefully considered.

Hokusai also carefully represented the realistic features of the Yoro Waterfall. As seen in the print, the cliffs on two sides of the waterfall are filled with ferns. These ferns are characteristics of the actual location. (Chamberlain, 241).

Five travelers are shown at the foot of the Yoro waterfall. Figures in this print are dwarfed by the enormity of the cascading waterfall. This relationship between man and nature is likely influenced by the principles of traditional Chinese *shanshui* art – art of philosophical landscape painting. In this tradition, landscape is depicted as a grand universe, of which people, as essential as they are, are merely small parts.

Of the five travelers, three are located at the very bottom right corner of the print, underneath a roof. The reed frame of the roof is placed directly onto the ground and covered with hay. Some of the hay is missing, maybe due to the harsh atmospheric

conditions in the close proximity of the waterfall. As simple as the hut is, inside there are two sitting areas overgrown with long soft grass granting some comfort for the weary climbers. Two men are sitting with both of their legs curled up. From their relaxed facial expressions and gestures, one may assume that these travelers are resting underneath the roof after their arduous journey. Perhaps the shelter was built by some earlier travelers with plain and natural materials at hand in order to protect themselves from the dense water spray and strong wind created by the falling torrent.

The three resting travelers are juxtaposed with the two other travelers that are placed directly in front of the waterfall, with their backs towards the viewer. The man on the left is sitting on the ledge with his legs hanging down from the rock over the waters rushing down in a wavy fashion. The man on the right is standing with one hand guarding his traveler's hat against the wind. These two travelers are obviously so mesmerized by the power and beauty of the Yoro Waterfall that they are brave enough to stay in front the waterfall despite the harsh water splashes and wind. The variety of the animated poses of the travelers makes them appear natural and lifelike. Thus, they are believable and are more identifiable for the viewers. Moreover, positioning of the figures with their backs towards the audience is a visual device for the viewers to connect with them. Viewers are directed to look up at the waterfall as if they are standing right behind the central figures.

In the Edo period, travel was popularized as a recreation available to the masses – adults, children, men and women alike. The Yoro waterfall is long known from legends praising it for the quality of water, making it a *meisho* (famous destination) for visiting. With this notion in mind, it is highly likely that the figures in “Yoro Waterfall in Mino Province” are commoners on pilgrimage, as “travel was closely related to the religious act of pilgrimage and the two were almost synonymous terms” (Machotka, p201).

In the prints of his “Shokoku taki meguri” waterfall series, Hokusai had the outlines printed in the pigment known as “Berlin Blue” that only at about that time gained popularity in the world of ukiyo-e woodcuts. It was the only other case that Hokusai resorted to this technique just as he had done in his masterpiece print set “Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji” two years earlier. Such technique “lightens” the overall feel of the scenery as opposed to the effect of stark black outlines. In Japanese landscape art, the

color blue is considered as the color of nature – sky and water – so perhaps Hokusai’s use of blue outline in his landscapes prints is meant to replicate the way of nature.

Hokusai’s sensitive use of the color contrast and color gradient is apparent in “Yoro Waterfall in Mino Province.” The palette of the print consists of mainly three colors: blue, green and golden hued yellow. Blue, green and gold was an established color combination that defined a form of landscape painting known as the *ginglu* (blue-and-green) or *jinbi* (gold and green) style in China beginning in the Tang Period (618-907). This style not only continued to exist in Chinese art through the history, but also made its appearance in Japan and became the leading style in paintings on sliding doors and folding screens during the Momoyama Period (1573-1603).

Hokusai was deeply influenced by traditional Chinese paintings, and it is of interest that Hokusai continued to utilize such color scheme in his naturalistic prints. The intense blue of the waterfall in this print contrasts strongly with the lighter tones of its surroundings. Such contrast focuses the viewers’ eyes on the grandness of the waterfall. The white splashes at the feet of the waterfall suggest the great plummeting effect of the cataract and make it stand out forcefully against the dark gray background. The gray then gradates upward into a whiteness that indicates the fog in the forest. This notion of fog helps to elicit a sense of mystery for the scenery, causing the waterfall to appear as a sacred place. Hokusai’s use of color transitions allows the forms of his landscape to lead into each other smoothly.

As a master of geometry, Hokusai instills a very strong sense of directional force in “Yoro Waterfall in Mino Province.” Hokusai has seemingly divided the whole picture into three levels. The rocky road and travelers is the first level. The second level is the vertical waterfall and grey fog around it. The third level is the forest and the sky. Hokusai guides his viewers’ eyes to look from the yellow rock at the bottom, follow the transition of yellow to green into the blue waterfall, then travel up the waterfall into the mountains and beyond. Subsequently, Hokusai leaves the upper right part of the forest to go beyond the edge of the image, hinting that the forest extends further, creating a sense of endlessness in the landscape.

Hokusai’s print “Yoro Waterfall in Mino Province” owned by the Rhode Island School of Design Museum is likely a later impression of an original print as suggested by the low saturation of colors. Looking at the uppermost right corner, one may notice that the color blocks for the tree branch and the top of the waterfall

are slightly out of line. Such mismatch of color shows the slight imperfections of the later original impressions. Though the title block (諸国瀧廻り美濃ノ国養老の瀧) on the top left corner of the print is still fairly visible, the artist's signature on the right has obviously faded. The edge of the publisher's seal is also very faint. This overall fading of color may also be due to natural wear down of prints. However, the muteness of the hue does contribute to the sense of delicateness that prevails in most Japanese art. The overall texture of the paper also endows a historical feeling to depicted scenery.

The Japanese name of this print, *Yōrō-no taki*, may be translated as “The Cascade of Filial Piety.” There are several legends that tradition associates with this name. Japanese Emperor Gensho (8th c.) is said to have traveled to this waterfall and, impressed by the cleanness of the powerful cascade, pronounced its waters to bring health to the elderly. (White, Brandon, Woodson, 103). According to a local legend, the waterfall consisted of nothing else but pure sake. The story tells that a dutiful son back in the 8th century gave his aging father the water from the waterfall, and his father was instantly energized and rejuvenated upon drinking it (Chamberlain, 241). The legend forms an excellent subject of Japanese art as it echoes the Confucian values of “filial piety”. Confucianism started in China; in Confucian philosophy, filial piety is one of the key virtues that means being good to one's parents and ancestors. As various types of Confucianism were spread in Japan, in the Edo Period it became one of the most influential philosophic and religious teachings and legends of filial children were particularly widely known. With their philosophic notions, these legends contributed to the sacredness of the waterfall, making it a famous location for people on pilgrimage. It is likely that Hokusai has chosen to represent the Yōrō Waterfall in his waterfall series not only due to its magnificence but also because it was a widely known pilgrimage destination among Japanese commoners.

Hokusai is universally recognized as one of the greatest ukiyo-e masters of all times. With the brilliant use of lines, balanced composition, and carefully chosen colors to represent nature, the print discussed here creates a fascinating image of the Yōrō Waterfall in Gifu Prefecture, Japan, within the “Shokoku taki meguri” set of prints. It invites viewers to relish the strong and subtle Japanese aesthetics conveyed by the ukiyo-e treatment of the traditional theme of *meisho-e* (pictures of famous places).

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Kiyotaki Kannon Waterfall at Sakanoshita on the Tōkaidō Road (Tōkaidō Sakanoshita Kiyotaki Kannon), 1833

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1217

Kiyotaki Kannon Waterfall at Sakanoshita on the Tōkaidō Road

Graham C. Bessellieu, Luis Gonzales

This print depicts a humble waterfall located in the former town of Sakanoshita, station No. 49 on the Tokaido road, the major Edo – Kyoto governmental highway. Now the place is a part of Kameyama City, Mie Prefecture. Around this waterfall there is a temple dedicated to Bodhisattva Kannon. This Buddhist deity, highly revered as the embodiment of compassion, is associated with pure water as her chief attribute.

The print virtually brings the onlooker onto the mountain path at a considerable height above the clouds on the uphill road running along the gliding strip-like streams of the waterfall. The steep path with steps cut into the bedrock goes up from several thatched houses shown close-up at the bottom of the depicted view. The houses could have served as a rest-stop for the travelers to a rock-temple above.

This print differs significantly from all other works in the series. Unlike the other waterfalls that carry large volumes of water, here the flow of water is very small. There are also several stylistic decisions that make this print stand out from the rest. The main, perhaps, is the absence of the sky. In all other prints in the series one can see the sky, whether represented as a black to light gray gradient or in traditional tones of blue. Another notable distinction is the intensity of the gradients. A specific feature of Hokusai's waterfall series is the use of strong color gradients; examples include the sky in the print "Tōto Aoi-ga-oka-no taki" near the top edge of the print, or the vivid mountains in the print "Kisokaido Ono-no bakufu" that go from rich rust-orange to quieter shades of yellow. In the Kiyotaki Kannon Waterfall the gradients are a lot less contrasting, bringing in complex spatial relationships to the elements in the picture. For instance, in the area at the top of the waterfall the dark blues make it seem as if the water is coming from a plane receding back in space. Another example is given by the gradient on the mountain in the left side of the composition that makes the mountain come towards us before dropping into a flat gray body. Along with these characteristic features, this print shares a lot of traits with its siblings, such as the color palette or the sweeping composition.

The vertical format of the print greatly emphasizes the grandeur of nature in relation to man. Human figures take a small percentage of space in the overall composition compared to the base landscape elements of rock, vegetation, and water. This

resonates with the Shinto perception of nature as sacred and with Buddhism, in many schools of which enlightenment was sought through the experience of unity with nature; similar concepts underlie the “*sansuiga*,” Chinese and Japanese philosophical landscape-painting tradition familiar to Hokusai.

The work is observant, not dramatic. This further expresses the artlessness in the relationship of man and nature. The work is not filled with unnecessary detail – each element describes just what it needs to, stated plainly but richly expressed. The viewer is guided through the landscape – the eye starts at the base of the composition, climbing upward alongside the travelers to reach the temple.

There are two groups of travelers in the landscape. A group of seven figures is compressed in the small space amongst closely standing thatched buildings at the bottom of the print. Bustling atmosphere is felt as people stop by at tea-houses, getting ready for the final stretch of the road, leading to the cave temple above. Interior of one of the buildings is open to the viewer and one sees a woman, perhaps a waitress, at once catering to the weary traveler mopping his sweaty brow and talking to the people outside. This is the only female representation in the entire series; she is portrayed in the traditional ukiyo-e style of feminine beauty.

Apart from this group of people, three travelers appear on the uphill path. A different mood reigns here, getting quieter and more contemplative the closer to the temple one gets. Two figures at the beginning of the path are perhaps a samurai (he has a long sword at his left side) accompanied by a servant carrying a load typical for those on a pilgrimage: a similar set of stacked boxes can be seen in two other prints of the series – *The Rōben Waterfall* and *The Ono Waterfall*. Well in front of them is a kneeling traveler – he has reached the destination and is now in deep prayer in front of the temple. The detail of the people’s clothing is precise, and the color relationships harmonize, blend together to show the totality of the scene.

The temple is peculiar – it is in a cave under an overhanging cliff that is supported by a plank fence. It is of interest that all structures in this composition further attest to the unity of man and nature, whether this is the usage of a natural space for a temple complete with a man-made wooden screen of perfect geometry or the tea-houses in which man-made geometrical construction is topped with the soft-edged heaps of hay thatching.

The color palette of the work includes yellow, encompassing the mountain and architecture, green, encompassing the vegetation, and blue encompassing the water, clouds, clothes of the pilgrims and the outlines. Berlin blue paint that not long before the set's production became available for ukiyo-e artists allowed the artist achieve the unprecedented depth and variation of tone through an assortment of printing techniques.

The line-work describing the mountains is calligraphic while the flat area of clouds at the bottom is described by a sweeping line; the detail of the vegetation is textured with spots.

At the top right the title is present in a rectangular cartouche, and the bottom left the signature of Hokusai, the printmaker's seal and the censorship seal.

Meticulously thought through color and form distribution create a perfectly balanced composition with subtle equalizing of the left / right and top / bottom sections of the print.

All in all, the print is inspiring, almost electrically charged in its overall composition and way it brings the viewer back in time to this historic moment of pilgrimage against the sublime grandeurs of nature.



**The Waterfall at Yoshino in Yamato Province where Yoshitsune Washed his Horse
(Washū Yoshino Yoshitsune uma arai no taki), 1833**

Series: A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849

Artist's signature: Saki no Hokusai Iitsu hitsu

Publisher's seal: Eijūdō (Nishimuraya Yohachi)

Censorship seal: kiwame (approved)

Polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e*, vertical ōban

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1218

Sacred Waters: Hokusai's Transcendent Yoshino Falls

Arielle Haut, Sixiao Tang

In 1833, Japanese printmaker Katsushika Hokusai created a series of eight prints titled "A Journey around Waterfalls of Various Provinces ". One of these prints, titled "Washū Yoshino Yoshitsune uma arai-no taki," which translates to "The Waterfall at Yoshino in Yamato Province where Yoshitsune Washed his Horse," is often referred to as simply "Horse Washing Falls." It depicts a waterfall near the town of Yoshino, which was located in Yamato Province, now called Nara Prefecture. The signature on the upper left indicates its designer as "Saki no Hokusai iitsu Hitsu", or "From the brush of Iitsu, Formerly Hokusai"; under the round censorship seal is the square seal in red that names Nishimura Yohachi as the publisher.

The "Horse Washing Falls" print found in the RISD museum is part of an original edition, but it appears to have been made with worn blocks, as evidenced by the off-register overprinting and the unclear, though still legible, cartouche. The most notable difference between an original and a copy of this print is the short vertical line extending from the lower line of a rock in the lower right corner, which appears only in copies. Because the RISD museum's version of the print does not have this deviation, it is safe to categorize it as an original. The colors of the print in the museum are also quite faded.

Framed by yellow and red mountains, the deep Berlin blue waterfall descends jaggedly from the upper left corner, splitting the piece into four major parts with each section pulling in a different direction. The waterfall meets the left side of the print once, travels near the right side twice, and finally flows down through the middle, leaning left. Green bushes interrupt the mountain and further frame the waterfall. On the top section of the print, an unidentified gray area indicates an unhindered sky as well as the top of the mountain, an assumption further supported by the presence of a single pale blue cloud floating on the right side. A turbulent patch in the middle left of the piece shows a small, flat area where two unidentified men are washing a horse. Their positions are exaggerated, following trends of the time, though not so much so as the *mie* positions of figures in *yakusha-e* – Kabuki Theater actor portraits in *ukiyo-e*. The man on the left faces the viewer, his concentration visible as he holds the horse's reins. The man on the right bends

sideways and scrubs the side of the horse's body. Forceful spray envelopes them as they stand in the turbulent water. Red appears in four large sections of the piece, three times as directional signals and once as a center of focus. The diagonal gradation of red to yellow in the mountain travels from top middle to middle left. A sharp, dark red rock shoots up on their right, separating the piece almost in half and leading down to another red rock jutting down from right to left in the middle of the piece. Amidst all the colors, Berlin blue has the most variation in hues, from the dark gushing water, the light blue shadows of the waves, and the range from white to middle blue in the tiny dots of the sprays. The entire print is outlined in blue and then in many areas overprinted with yellow to appear green. The use of this blue outline that infiltrates every aspect of the piece is undoubtedly a choice that takes into account the color's association with the deeply symbolic and sacred nature of water.

Waterfalls near the tops of mountains, as depicted throughout this print set, have symbolic meaning in the Shinto religion. Meditating under a waterfall is an act of ritualistic cleansing, as flowing water represents redemption and purity. Mountains are also regarded as sacred sites - and mountaintops were seen as especially so. Therefore, a waterfall near the top of a mountain, as depicted in this print, becomes doubly sacred as a religious symbol as well as a physical location of cleansing. Hokusai further develops this theme of cleansing not only by emphasizing the spiritual aspect, but also compounding it with the physical act of washing. Here, the cleansing becomes a complete act involving both the spirit as well as the body.

As with other *ukiyo-e* prints, formal elements play an important role in the analysis and viewing of the piece. The intense diagonal elements of the rocks and waterfall lead the viewers' eyes directly to the two men and the horse. There is no question that Hokusai meant for the whole piece to anchor around these three figures. They stand in the only "flat" area of the water, where the waterfall stays in a level area before continuing to gush downwards. The movement of the horse's neck and the posture of the man on the left mimic the left-to-right curve of the waterfall behind them. The horse's tail and the man bent over scrubbing the horse simulates the curving motion of the waterfall underneath them. Surrounding them, criss-crossing white outlines of the rapids form a complex picture that keeps the attention of the viewer. Thus the eye is somewhat "trapped" in the flow of the waterfall, due to the

dynamic motion of the water itself as well as the framing of the surrounding mountain. The gradation of color of the jutting red rock in the middle leaves the brightest red around the center, at the same level of the standing figures. The inclusion of this element also divides the piece into halves, and relegates the right half to a background position. The appearance of a formless and flat cloud further pushes the viewer's eye to the more detailed and dynamic center left half, where the men are washing the horse. Thus the mundane act of two anonymous men washing a horse becomes the central focus of the entire piece, as well as the recipient of a wealth of sacred and religious meaning. This meaning implied by a mundane act can be identified as *yūgen*, an aesthetic term described by Kamo no Chomei, the author of *Hojoki*, as "lingering emotion not apparent in the diction, a mood not visible in the configuration of the verse...the limitless vista created in imagination [that] far surpasses anything one can see more clearly" (Hume 254-255). The idea of *yūgen*, as well as the equalization of high and low - here as the overflowing spiritual connotation juxtaposed with the harsh and physical act of washing - are major themes of the Zen Buddhism that had previously embedded itself into the Japanese mindset.

A particular historical nationalistic fervor also contributed to the creation of the print. During this time in Japan's history, a school of thought called the Kokugaku School had emerged and taken power. The term "kokugaku" translates to "the study of our country", which may have been responsible for the creation of this piece as a *mitate-e*, a historical parody print, of General Yoshitsune's legend. The Kokugaku School was a movement to spur a renewed interest in and research of native Japanese classics instead to the previously popular Chinese, Confucian, and Buddhist texts (Burns). The movement grew in conjunction with Japan's "sakoku" policy of isolation at that time, thereby creating an insular environment that focused on what was purely Japanese. The tale of Yoshitsune is chronicled in the *Tale of Heike*, a collection of texts created and compiled near the late Heian period ("Heike Monogatari"). The work's status as a Heian period classic is fitting as a source of inspiration for Hokusai's print created in such a time of nationalistic thought.

Though the backdrop and title categorizes this as a *mitate-e* of General Yoshitsune's story, instead of placing the General himself in the waterfall, two anonymous elderly men replace him, underscoring a particular universality. Minamoto no Yoshitsune's

reputation as a beloved tragic hero and virtuous warrior provides an additional political layer to the spiritual and religious meaning. It associates his greatness, as well as the most erudite of his country's native literary classics, with the *chōnin*, or common, uneducated “townspeople”. Thus, through his design, Hokusai paves a way for people of all classes to share the ideas of the Kokugaku School.

Hokusai may have chosen to allude to this particular story in order to include a horse within the waterfall series. His love for depicting them is seen in many of other works such as the *Hokusai Manga* and as well as a number of his Chinese style *sumi-e* ink-wash paintings. The horse is the print's focal point, and here he has expressed a dynamic and vivacious caricature of the animal.

The waterfall Hokusai depicts is also an exaggerated version of its true appearance. The Nara Prefecture waterfall has many of the same elements as Hokusai's depiction of it – one large half flowing downwards, a largely level middle plain, and a continuing descent in the lower section – however, it lacks the dynamic diagonal motion of Hokusai's print. The depiction is highly exaggerated, a feature that plays one of the most important roles in the piece's interpretation. Hokusai's vision in transforming a mostly vertical descent into an active, jagged waterfall full of turbulence and motion is an indication of how his own philosophical views as well as Japan's contemporary culture translated into his designs.

The forceful and active waterfall filled and layered with references to sacred rituals, historical implications, and religious connotations is only one of the few of the interesting elements present. The central visual focus on the men, who in turn are imitating the motions of nature around them, also presents a connection between the existence of humanity and the all-inclusive spirit of nature. In accordance with the nationalistic thought of the time, Hokusai references a beloved legendary general and a famous classical text in this print, but at the same time, transcends the boundaries of class and history by replacing his noble characters with anonymous men perceived to be part of a lower class. Thus, “Horse Washing Falls” becomes a work that provides insight not only into Katsushika Hokusai's personal philosophy and religious beliefs, but also into his reaction towards the dominant political and ideological atmosphere of his time as well as his ability to transcend it.

Furthermore, the print appears as a highly meaningful finale of the series, tying together human's pursuance of transcendental knowledge through direct experience

of waterfalls in all their infinite variety of form and movement with the most cherished moments of the national past.

The Yoshino waterfall is the last destination in our hypothetical route reconstruction of Hokusai's "Journey around the Waterfalls of Various Provinces." Reference to Minamoto Yoshitsune as the national cultural icon so unassumingly incorporated by Hokusai into this print anchors the entire set deep in Japan's historical memory, proving with high probability that the order of prints within the series suggested at this display is correct.

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