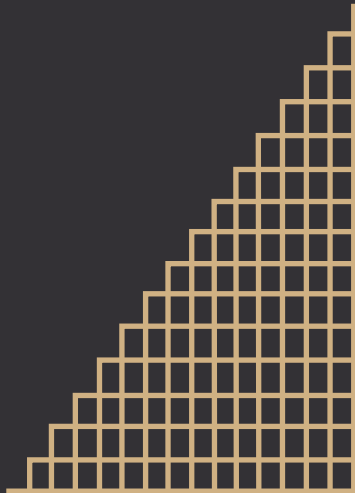
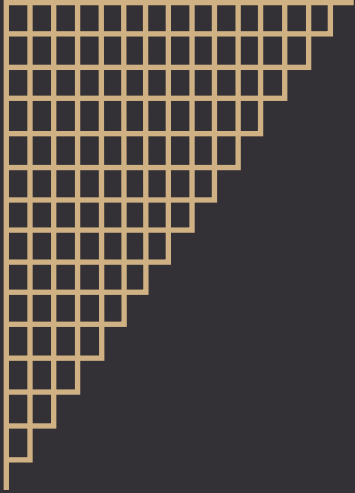




S U K I M A

VERTICAL
PRINTS
OF THE
FLOATING
WORLD



Sukima

VERTICAL PRINTS OF THE FLOATING WORLD

Rhode Island School of Design
Fall 2017
HAVC Japanese Ukiyo-e Prints
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Set in FreightText and Akkurat

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Sukima: Vertical Prints of the Floating World

Foreword *Dr. Elena Varshavskaya, course instructor*

Sukima is a Japanese word for a crack in a door, a narrow space that opens up when the panels of the sliding doors are pushed to the sides. You glance through the gap and discover that narrow as the opening is, you can catch a glimpse of the mesmerizing world beyond it, be it a slice of a figure of a parading courtesan or a pheasant in the pine-tree branches. You've seen enough to electrify your imagination and let it complete the picture. This is what happens when you look at a long and narrow ukiyo-e print in a pillar format – *hashira-e*. Or perhaps this partial sight only unleashes your curiosity and, craving a fuller view, you expand the narrow slit and can now enjoy broader vistas replete with details. For such cases ukiyo-e designers came up with upright diptychs and even triptychs.

Exploration of these two types of perception – we can describe them as an evocative one (in the case with the *hashira-e*) and an evidence-based (in the case of vertical polyp-tychs) – became a focus of an ukiyo-e prints exhibition curated by RISD students in the fall semester of 2017 as a part of their art history course. The project was based on the collection of the RISD Museum that has continuously supported students' aspirations to acquire real-life curatorial experience. The current exhibition is the fifth in succession.

Curating a temporary exhibition in an art museum within just three months is a daunting task, but by combining their efforts, students were able to succeed. Many decisions were made collectively by the entire class – this refers to choosing prints of vertical compositions as the topic of the exhibition, formulating its title and finalizing the display order. Working either individually or in small study groups, students undertook painstaking focused research digging for explanations for each and every detail of all seventeen prints selected. The results of their inquiry are reflected in the essays, containing thorough formal analysis and contextual commentaries and assembled in the current exhibition catalogue. Some students wrote additional introductory articles to provide the readers with the cultural background information. The catalogue is supplied with biographic details of the artists represented and completed with a glossary of terms. According to the present-day exhibition practices, students summarized their findings in concise educational wall labels and introduced the prints they have been studying at an opening symposium in the presence of the RISD Museum professionals.

Moreover, being rising art professionals, students have fulfilled a wide range of design tasks. Students created the exhibition poster and came up with the catalogue layout and the cover, suggested format of the wall labels, and tried their hand at souvenir design.

In-depth study of a random group of upright prints that happened to be in the collection of the RISD Museum allowed students to conclude that peculiarities of the format did not affect thematic choices of the artists. We encounter here all major ukiyo-e genres typical for the “mainstream” formats – the exhibition comprises examples of images of beautiful women (*bijinga*), actors (*yakusha-e*), warriors and heroes (*musha-e*), ghosts (*yureizu*), close-up views of nature in flower-and-bird prints (*kacho-ga*), and images reflecting popular beliefs of townsfolk of the Edo period. Vertical compositions have proven to be an integral part of ukiyo-e print tradition. The students now invite the catalogue readers and the exhibition visitors to look through the imaginary *sukima* offered by the evocative pillar prints and eloquent upright polyptychs and, with the help of students’ comprehensive research, indulge in scrutinizing the ever-intriguing visions of the floating world.

Ukiyo-e: Overview, Technical Matters, Genres, Stylistic Evolution

Chi Yang

Ukiyo-e means pictures of the floating world; the term defines an art movement from late 1700s to late 1900s.

The word ukiyo originates from the Buddhist term *uki* meaning “sad,” and the word *yo* meaning “world”; together the expression meant “sad world” because all things are transitory. During Edo period, the character for “sad” was replaced with character for “floating” with the same reading. The resulting expression sounded the same – ukiyo but its new meaning was “the floating world of pleasures”.

Ukiyo-e emerged against the background of self-imposed isolation of Japan, known as the “chained country.” In 1639, the Tokugawa government launched *sakoku* – “country in chains” foreign policy. Japan had largely cut connections with the outside world. Trade was permitted for the Protestant Dutch and for the Chinese and limited only to Nagasaki. Japanese citizens were barred from travelling overseas, or returning from abroad. During this period, Japan received minimal effects of culture influence from the west. However, urban culture became extremely rich, diverse, and original inside of the country, and ukiyo-e was intimately connection with this urban cultures and the pleasures it brought.

Many distinctive genres emerged in ukiyo-e: *bijinga*: the beautiful women genre, *yakusha-e*: actor prints, *musha-e*: warrior prints, and *kacho-ga*: flower-and-birds prints. There are also various formats that developed gradually: small prints *chuban* gave way to large prints of *oban* format; compositions could be printed on a single sheet, a diptych, or a triptych. Towards the end of the 18th century *hashira-e* – the pillar print – also gained popularity. The printing evolved from *sumizuri-e*, black ink print hand-coloring, to printing in just three to four colors, to *nishiki-e* – the full color “brocade” print.

This exhibition focuses on the tall upright format within ukiyo-e prints. Upright formats have existed throughout the entire history of ukiyo-e, but remained uncommon in ukiyo-e print design. Upright formats naturally focus on the main character or object portrayed on the narrow print surface. The thinness of the format also pushes the main character or object to the front and thus brings immediacy to the contact between the image and the audience. At the same time, the thinness crops a lot of background and other details, making the depiction more evocative. It is quite a challenge to put characters, objects and background in harmony inside the upright narrow “window”.

Through comparison of different prints, characteristic features of various formats are identified. As mentioned earlier, *hashira-e* means the “pillar prints”. This is a very

narrow print form that is used for decorating pillars supporting the ceiling. In general, the color scheme of pillar prints is not particularly vibrant. The color contrast is not strong and suggests they might have faded. Jacob Pins in his book *The Japanese Pillar Prints: Hashira-e*, writes that pillar prints, as a distinctive format, were under-evaluated in history. They are scorned by higher-classes as distasteful and suffered from exposure to the elements more than any other Japanese prints. Affected by smoke of the hearth, damped air and light in commoner houses, many pillar prints have lost the vibrancy of color. In other words, today, most surviving *hashira-e* prints are poor shadows of their former glory.¹

Compared to *hashira-e*, the other upright format, *kakemono-e*, is preserved better and had enjoyed a higher status in history. *Kakemono-e* means a “hanging picture.” The term originates from the word *kakemono* that refers to a Japanese scroll of a painting or calligraphy mounted on a flexible backing and bordered with silk edges. *Kakemono-e* became an expression for ukiyo-e vertical diptychs or triptychs comprised of two or three *oban* prints; thus *kakemono-e* were wider than *hashira-e*. *Kakemono-e* prints were displayed in the traditional Japanese house *tokonoma*, an alcove used to display a picture. The hanging scrolls were changed from time to time according to different seasons and occasions and the same is true about *kakemono-e*.

Nearly all ukiyo-e genres mentioned above appear in the prints designed in upright formats. *Bijinga* in tall upright prints from the RISD Museum share some characteristics. The pictures all have extremely fine lines. There is always one full-length image of a woman dominating the main part of the picture. The faces of women suggest all artists were following certain established conventions. Women are either walking with their backs straight or are looking back or stand or sit in the pronounced S-shape poses. Most of them are tall and slender. They are wearing Y-shape collar garments with gorgeous patterns. Some women are accompanied by a boy or girl assistants. In many cases the figures are cropped by the print frame. Interestingly, almost all *bijinga* prints here have no or little background. This is probably due to the tightness of the format that restrains complex details in depicting landscape or environment, which invites the audience to focus more on the women themselves. There might be just water at bottom or few small tree branches at the top of the composition to suggest the character’s environment. Upright format allows emphasizing long thin contour of the portrayed women extremely well and captures their delicacy and elegance with precision.

In comparison with *bijinga*, the *musha-e* and *yakusha-e* in the current selection of prints from the RISD Museum are all *kakemono-e* and all appear more detailed and vibrant in color use. The pictures suggest strong motion, power and tension between figures. The depiction of the characters is very vivid. The characters are mostly in highly geometricized suits of armor or clothes with rich patterns. Their facial expressions are very intense: they

¹ Pins, Jacob, and Roger Keyes. *The Japanese Pillar Print: Hashira-e*. Sawers, 1982.

have bulging eyes; their mouths are bending down while pressed tightly as if every person is ready for a big fight. Actors in *yakusha-e* are depicted in *mie*: grotesque pose with exaggerated facial expression to show the culmination of the scene. The backgrounds are depicted in great detail: whether the action is happening near a tall pagoda or on huge rocks in woods, the tiles and decoration of the rooftops and the roughness of the terrain and vegetation on the rock surfaces are shown with clarity. *Musha-e* and *yakusha-e* in the upright format from the collection of the RISD Museum come as *oban* diptychs or triptychs. In all our cases, one character or a group of characters are framed within one *oban* print. They are then joined together to form a balanced composition.

The *kacho-ga* prints, chosen for the exhibition from the collections of the RISD Museum, share many characteristics with tall upright prints of other genres. Compositions center on a big bird in a setting of pine trees. The birds' postures are always vivid and natural, suggesting strong sense of realism. The birds' eyes are depicted extremely intensely and a keen correlation of motion and tension is captured well, letting the bird appear more vibrant to the audience. The birds' feathers are rendered by detailed patterns and geometric shapes. The pine trees clustered needles are depicted clearly, too. The pine tree branches are growing dynamically and have rich textures. These pine trees are heirs to a long classical tradition in portrayal of conifers – from old Chinese philosophical landscape scrolls of Tang period to Japanese Kano school sliding doors of Azuchi-Momoyama and Edo periods. There is always a rising sun in the background, which is one of essential Japanese motifs of rich auspicious symbolism.

Altogether, the art of ukiyo-e successfully mirrors the life of Edo *chonin* – common townsmen who were the most active segment of Japanese society at the time. In prints, the Edo urban culture is reflected with all its great complexity and in a surprising fullness. Every aspect, every facet of townspeople lives finds its expression in these printed images, including the sphere of diversions (brothels and Kabuki theater), intellectual interests in Japanese (and also Chinese) history and literature, love and knowledge of the past, pursuits in arts and fine crafts. Prints also attest to the political acumen of townsmen and sophistication of their world outlook. The life of Edo dwellers was permeated by the witty and intelligent playfulness present in the prints. Every print boasts layers of meaning carrying nuanced cultural references. Some of this richness of ukiyo-e we tried to uncover through close consideration of the selected tall upright ukiyo-e prints from the collection of the RISD Museum.

Yoshiwara

The Urban Pleasure Quarter *Emi Chun*

Yoshiwara refers to the walled-in red-light district in central Edo (now Tokyo) that was established as a government-licensed institution of prostitutes for the Japanese public. In the early 1600s, Moto-Yoshiwara, or the original placement of the pleasure quarter, was located in central Edo through the authority of the shogun to consolidate the licensed brothels into a large castle. Then, in the mid-seventeenth century, there was a call for the fortress to be moved outside Edo to the north to allow the crowded space to further expand, which became enforced after the great Meireki Fire that destroyed most of Edo. Shin-Yoshiwara, or new Yoshiwara, was reconstructed far from the city and was much harder to reach.¹ Even so, for at least two hundred and fifty years during the Edo period up until the Meiji Restoration, it was the primary hub of entertainment and social activity as well as the center for inspired arts and culture, attracting both affluent members of society and cultural sophisticates to use Yoshiwara as material for popular literature and artwork.

An increase in wealth and economic prosperity in the trade market led to a specific lifestyle cultivated by wealthy merchants, *daimyo*, and *hatamoto*, samurai in direct service to the shogunate. The practice of participating in urban pleasures in the Yoshiwara quarter became part of the identity of the *tsu*. These men were the pinnacles of sophistication highly valued by the entire country, particularly Edo. The *tsu* was a man of knowledge and refined class that was recognizable in physical presence and behavior. To achieve this, one had to have method and execution in navigating the pleasure quarter. Books like the *sharebon*, were published by intellectuals that served as guides to how one should dress and act for courtesans, and they became one of the primary creative outlets for artists, writers, and poets to construct and appreciate the *tsu* and their activities in Yoshiwara.

Other forms of art, like ukiyo-e, was integral in visualizing and appreciating male fantasies and aspirations around courtesans. Wealthy members of society invested their time and money into supporting professional artists; *surimono*, or specially designed woodblock print calendars, were daily necessities that doubled as exchangeable collectibles between *hatamoto*. The work of renowned ukiyo-e artists such as Okumura Masanobu, Torii Kiyomitsu, and Suzuki Harunobu flourished under the influence of Yoshiwara, especially as the second half of the eighteenth century brought about more multicolored woodblock prints as opposed to black and white. The courtesans of Yoshiwara were most alluring for ukiyo-e artists particularly because of the commodified fantasy that could be captured in the depiction of a woman of beauty. *Bijinga*, or images of beautiful women, was primary subject matter from

¹ Newland, Amy Reigle. *The Hotei encyclopedia of Japanese woodblock prints*. Amsterdam: Hotei Publ.

courtesan culture, where the women are outside of the public realm of the everyday and part of a larger, institutionalized stage of the “floating world” that was physically attainable but aesthetically elusive. How women are posed and framed in *bijinga* prints is dictated by the awareness of the male gaze: one who is conscious of being seen can create a performative self outside of their own mundanity that is only dramatized by the artistry of ukiyo-e print-makers.

Within the houses of Yoshiwara, there is a distinct hierarchy between courtesans that were connected through *myoseki*, or a succession system. *Tayu* are highest class courtesans extensively trained for elite clientele, and the second after the *tayu* are the *koshi*. The standards for becoming a higher class of courtesan was based on a series of specific standards of physical beauty and proper behavior that defined how professionally they catered to important male clientele. According to the *saiken*, the directories of courtesan accomplishments and social demographics, the seventeenth century especially saw a significantly higher amount of *tayu* in proportion to other ranking courtesans compared to other centuries. Under the *tayu* and *koshi* were the *sancha*, teahouse waitresses/courtesans named after a kind of powdered tea, that were newly hired into Yoshiwara and were never selective of customers but instead accepted all clientele. Beneath these three classes were the *tsubone* and *hashi*, the second-lowest and lowest classes of prostitutes, respectively, who served mainly commoners who could afford their prices.

Yoshiwara employed young girls in debt to serve as prostitutes for a lengthy period of time in which they are cultivated to become captivating and work to gain their house profits. From ages 7 to 9 primarily, though sometimes younger, girls were recruited and sold from lower-class families or from debt-ridden parents as a form of absolute filial duty. Girls bore the responsibility providing for their families under the pretense of self-enhancement and a rise in social rank. The becoming of a Yoshiwara courtesan erases the stigma of poverty and lower class under strict training and social upbringing. Many of the larger houses in particular that have few or several high-ranking *tayu* that sire an apprentice or two called the *kamuro*. Young girls who are hired or adopted by the house are taught manners and etiquette while having limited exposure to the workings of the Yoshiwara, but especially high-achieving girls are appointed as child attendants that shadow their *tayu* and are taught their ways. As the *kamuro* accompanies her *tayu* on an everyday basis, completing light errands and attending to their needs, the mentor in turn is responsible for their charge’s performance in public and in profession. In many ways, the image of the *kamuro* and the image of their courtesan are reflective to one another as the mentee strives to mirror the mentor.²

Eventually, the reputation and glamour of Yoshiwara dwindled and became almost obsolete by the nineteenth century. The Tenpo Reforms (1841-43) enforced a series of binding censorship laws that limited the freedom of ukiyo-e artists and others to create imagery and

² Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan. Honolulu, HI: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1993.

literature of courtesan lifestyle. Individual *bijinga* prints and other luxury items were banned and artists were forced to improvise to maintain production. Soon ukiyo-e was mass-produced and further commodified to appeal to mass consumption, and so the floating world and the fantasy that it used depict was watered down and less vibrant. During this time, Yoshiwara lost its proliferating activity and many smaller brothels closed down as a result. After the pleasure quarter lost its exclusive license by the beginning of the Meiji era in 1872, the courtesans and geisha of Yoshiwara lost their popularity. Nonetheless, the illusion and allure of Yoshiwara as a historical cultural icon still persists in the imagery of ukiyo-e prints today.

Ukiyo-e – Upright Compositions: Chances & Challenges

Hashira-e: Its Accommodations and Restrictions Clara Creavin

Hashira-e or “pillar prints” are long vertical images hung as decoration for Japanese homes on square interior pillars or *hashira* 柱, measuring 69 to 75 by 12 to 13 cm respectively.¹ Due to the placement of these prints, they often collected a lot of dust and smoke hanging around the home, resulting in most of these images to fade and wither, which makes undamaged pillar prints that much more valuable today.² This peculiar format flourished during the Edo period, and was utilized most often by ukiyo-e artists in the mid-eighteenth century, giving way to various approaches to composition and form and ultimately having an impact on other print formats. The origin of *hashira-e* is unknown, and though Okumura Masanobu (1686-1764) was thought to have been the creator in the 1740’s, there isn’t sufficient evidence to support such claims; there are indications that a similar format was used in paintings far before the mid-1700’s.³ Nevertheless, production of *hashira-e* flourished during this era, largely due to single standing figures having a higher demand in the market; from there publishers began requesting thinner and thinner compositions, which piqued the public’s interest greatly. Roger Keyes writes about these prints, saying that “pillar prints are like a narrow opening in a sliding door through we catch a tantalising glimpse of a vast, rich, colourful and varied world... we are drawn to imagine the larger world outside the prints... what their world looks like to them.”⁴

The designers of these irregular prints must manage a composition that in many ways resist you, yet the images they create seem so naturally otherworldly and subdued that these restrictions end up being a means of artistic enhancement rather than hindrance. Around the beginning of the 1760’s, Ukiyo-e prints introduced more complex scene settings in comparison to the previously empty backgrounds and floating figures, in which scenic backgrounds with trees and houses paired with a figure became very popular. This applies especially to pillar prints, which adhered greatly to the conventions of *bijinga* 美人画 or “beautiful women” genre and the *kacho-ga* 花鳥画 or “birds and flowers” images.⁵ Rather than the beauties floating in blank space, they were moving around familiar landscapes, bending and twisting to accommodate the scenery, and becoming integrated into the thin composition, as if part of the scenery. As for the birds and flowers images, they are without human figures and instead focus on nature, namely birds, flowers or small animals, convincingly integrated into similarly subtle and beautiful nature scenes. Prints dedicated to the themes like these were bought by the public for their graceful forms and fascinating content, hung up on the pillars to become a significant aspect of the interior decor.

¹ Jacob Pins, *The Japanese pillar print Hashira-e* (London: Sawers, 1982), 19.

² “18th Century Pillar Prints: Hashira-E.” Ronin Gallery (February 02, 2015) <http://www.ronin-gallery.com>

³ Pins, *The Japanese pillar print Hashira-e* (London: Sawers, 1982), 29-30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ “18th Century Pillar Prints: Hashira-E.” Ronin Gallery (February 02, 2015) <http://www.ronin-gallery.com>

Other very common themes with *hashira-e* include *Shoki* 鍾馗 or the “Demon Queller,” the Seven Gods of Good Fortune often aboard the treasure boat *takarabune* 宝船, lucky dreams, and *mitate-e* 見立絵, or parodies that allude to all of these other themes.⁶ Because of these common themes, the use of the pillar print was most likely more than just for pleasure. The Demon Queller is a powerful defender against evil, and could have been hung up on pillars to do just that. The Seven Gods of Good Fortune in their *takarabune* ‘treasure boat’ contains many symbols of good luck and prosperity, and was distributed during New Year’s to wish such prosperity (see print No. 17 in the catalogue).⁷ All of these prints were most likely rotated throughout the year according to how the print fitted the season or special occasion, even in the case of *bijinga* and *kacho-ga* whereas seasons were often represented within the image.

Hashira-e was a composition that required extensive thought and preparation, resulting in print designers obtaining knowledge of vertical dynamism to great extent. Thus the pillar prints designers were introducing their knowledge of varying ways of mastering the vertical format, using negative space and graceful waving movements to make the elongated print shape help the image rather than fight against it.

After the 20th century rolled in, pillar prints were beat out of the market due to the quality of the prints declining considerably.⁸ The pillar prints that were being produced at the later period had not been the same dynamic and alluring images of the earlier times, and like much of the other print formats, they were decreasing in popularity and eventually died out entirely in the early 1900’s.

Nine original *hashira-e* of the eighteenth century were investigated closely for the current exhibition. This exploration allowed enriching glimpses of various facets of the floating world. Thematic preferences in early pillar prints seem to center on *bijinga*, *kacho-ga* and topics related to popular beliefs. Each print is filled with Japanese cultural references, and are presented with remarkable compositional ingenuity that distinguishes designs in *hashira-e* format.

⁶ Pins, *The Japanese pillar print Hashira-e* (London: Sawers, 1982), 24.

⁷ Pins, *The Japanese pillar print Hashira-e* (London: Sawers, 1982), 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

***Kacho-ga*: Birds and Flowers Pictures**

Zooming in on Nature *Tamao Kiser*

Kacho-ga, literally translated to flower and bird pictures, is a genre within ukiyo-e that focuses in on small moments within the natural world. Although they may be categorized broadly as landscape prints, there are marked compositional and thematic differences between a landscape and a *kacho-ga* print. Whereas most landscape prints are rooted in real locations throughout Japan (and often include the name of the location within the print), *kacho-ga* prints are more akin to haiku poems in that they pull different natural symbols together to create a pleasing composition that is completely constructed and frequently tied together by *yohaku* or ‘blank space.’

The tradition of bird-and-flower paintings flourished during the Song Dynasty in China and made its way to Japan during the fourteenth century. Appreciation for nature, especially flowers, is a consistent theme throughout the literary and artistic practices in both cultures. Flowers and animals have spiritual, intellectual, and symbolic values built upon centuries of art. For example, the cherry blossom stands for ephemeral beauty, whereas the morning glory is associated with illicit love. Cranes represent longevity and the falcon or hawk royalty and military strength. Although the words may literally mean “birds and flowers”, *kacho-ga* is broadly defined to include trees and animals. Among famous *kacho-ga* prints is *Cat and Begonia* attributed to Suzuki Harunobu, a prime example of how even cats and butterflies could be included within the definition of *kacho-ga*. Seasonality is very important within Japanese culture; even in the era of globalization, it is almost impossible to find fruits being sold in supermarkets outside of their seasonal peak. Within Japanese poetry arts, there is a rule which states that a *kigo* or a seasonal symbol must be included within the poem for it to be considered as a haiku. This tradition dates as far back as AD 759 when the Manyōshū, Japan’s earliest poetry anthology, compiled its poems by the seasons. The idea of seasonality is certainly carried through the ukiyo-e tradition as well.

Shen Quan, a Chinese court painter who came to Nagasaki in 1731, is often quoted as the father of the style in which birds-and-flower pictures are created in Japan. He fused detail and illusion by combining the ‘realistic’ courtly mode with ‘impressionistic’ conventions. As a result, his paintings stray away from the overall decorative effect found in many early court paintings and approach scientific nature illustrations in the way that anatomy is observed.

The birds and flower genre flourished relatively late within ukiyo-e history. The Tenpo Reforms of 1841–1843 cracked down on depictions of luxury, including courtesan and actor prints. Consequently, many ukiyo-e artists turned to depicting travel scenes and nature,

especially birds and flowers. It was not until late in the Edo period that landscape came into its own as a genre. This development was mostly due to the great contributions by landscape masters, Hokusai and Hiroshige. Despite the long history of ukiyo-e preceding these late-era masters, the landscape genre has come to dominate Western perceptions of ukiyo-e. Western artists, especially those related to the Impressionist movement, were most likely interested in how Japanese landscapes rely on imagination, mood and compositional fragmenting, and atmosphere more than the strict observance of nature.

A frequent ingredient in *kacho-ga* is *yohaku* or 'blank space.' To a Western audience, the emptiness of the composition may give the print a graphic or an unfinished quality. What many artists and scholars suggest, however, is that the blank space is the negative space and time to be filled by imagination. A similar use of empty space can be found within many aspects of Japanese culture including painting, tea ceremony, gardens, calligraphy, and even other genres of ukiyo-e. There is a belief that artists painting *kacho-ga* should not be painting in a purely observational mode but should be incorporating their own feelings and spirit into the work. *Yohaku* is especially important in *kacho-ga* because of their 'unrealistic' quality. Many *kacho-ga* are a collection of happy objects in culture, to wish good luck. This blank space serves the function of hinting at otherworldliness.

Poetry and Ukiyo-e

Janice Gan

In the early decades of the Edo period (1603–1868), the newly-established capital may have deserved its reputation as a “city of strangers.”¹ The Tokugawa shogunate’s alternate attendance system (*sankin kotai*), formalized in the 1630s, ensured that feudal lords (*daimyo*) and their entourages moved in and out of the city every other year, while their families remained essentially hostages there.² Censorship and sumptuary laws were the norm, as leaders struggled to maintain economic stability and control an increasingly affluent merchant class (traditionally the lowest in the samurai-farmer-artisan-merchant ranking system).³

However, a vibrant, irreverent, and pleasure-seeking culture bloomed in Edo over time, reaching its first peak between the strictures of the Kyoho (1716–1745) and Kansei Reforms (1787–1793).⁴ This is the culture that inspired the term *ukiyo*, or “floating world,” a reference to the stream of ephemeral pleasures that captured urban imaginations. Buoyed by relative peace and prosperity, and aided by periods of lax enforcement, Edo culture mixed high and low with dashes of parody and wit (oftentimes subtly concealed in a nod to censors). Commoners had unprecedented influence over the fashions of the time, as printing brought cultural production to the masses.⁵ This period witnessed the development of new forms of popular art and writing, particularly *ukiyo-e* prints and comic, “vulgar” poetry.

In the mid-1700s, “books of the floating world” (*ukiyo-zoshi*) were supplanted by playful vernacular writing (*gesaku*), which included humorous, accessible short poetry forms such as *senryu* and *kyōka*. These poetic forms thrived on *ugachi*, or “hole digging,” which playfully commented on societal flaws without having the bite or consequences of social criticism.⁶ *Ukiyo-e* prints occupied an overlapping role, celebrating “low” elements of culture such as kabuki and courtesans and using them in parody (*mitate*) to poke fun at historically venerated figures or traditions.

One particularity of Edo culture was that, especially through the 18th century, even lower classes had a nuanced understanding of symbolic norms.⁷ Plants, animals, and landscapes mapped onto human events and emotions with remarkable consistency; nature was in many ways a frame for interpreting the human world and reflecting cultural values of elegance and harmony.⁸ These associations date back to the court poetry (*waka*) that was most prominent during the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods.⁹ *Waka* consisted

¹ Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early modern Japanese literature: an anthology, 1600–1900* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 198.

² Andrew Gordon, *A modern history of Japan: from Tokugawa times to the present* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

⁴ Haruo Shirane, *Early modern Japanese literature*, 197.

⁵ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city 1615–1868* (HN Abrams, 1996), 11.

⁶ Haruo Shirane, *Early modern Japanese literature*, 198.

⁷ Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, et al., *The women of the pleasure quarter* (Hudson Hill Press, 1995), 113.

⁸ Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the culture of the four seasons: nature, literature, and the arts* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

of 31-syllable verses, structured and refined, with a heavy emphasis on seasonal associations.¹⁰ These ideals were mirrored in *yamato-e*, a classical form of painting that prefigured *ukiyo-e* with its striking compositions, vibrant flat colors, and references to nature.¹¹ Well-known *waka* came to be literally referenced on expensive garments of the Edo period, generally in “scattered writing” (*chirashi-gaki*) that included key words and allusions, speaking to the sophistication of the wearer.¹²

The Muromachi period (1336–1573) saw the development of *renga*, or collaborative linked poetry with alternating 5–7–5 and 7–7 verses.¹³ While *renga* retained the aristocratic sensibilities of *waka*, rising literacy rates in the late-16th and 17th century led to the development of *haikai*, a form of popular linked verse that included topics and language from daily life, and “earthy humor that was understood by everyone.”¹⁴ Themes and connotations from classical poetry also persisted in *haikai*, allowing poets to pack layers of meaning into short verses.¹⁵ This mixture of high and low was also seen in early *ukiyo-e* prints of the time, such as those by Moronobu, who complemented courtesan prints and erotica (*shunga*) with flora from classical seasonal associations.¹⁶ High-ranking courtesans themselves were often expected to have knowledge of classical poetry styles, and their work was sometimes published alongside their images in guides such as *A Compendium of the New Beauties of the Yoshiwara*, also by Moronobu. *Haikai* societies also commissioned and published visual calendars or print series, often accompanied by poetry or poetic allusions – print designer Suzuki Harunobu (1725–1770) was especially well known for his poetry prints and involvement in *haikai*.¹⁷

Haikai and *ukiyo-e* also shared historical touchpoints – one 1780 verse by Buson and Kito read, “The destined end of springtime / is sunset in the Buddha’s west / Noritsune’s fate / is lost in the hazed-over sound / of bowstrings far away,” referring to the historic defeat of a Taira general in the Genpei Wars.¹⁸ *Ichijo jiro tadayori notonokami noritsune*, a warrior print (*musha-e*) by Katsukawa Shuntei, provides a visual counterpart that treats the event as arresting moment rather than distant memory.¹⁹ In another verse from 1690, Boncho, Basho, and Kyorai write, “Now this and now that / governs the circumstances / when we are in love / and the amorous world’s end / is Komachi grown a hag.”²⁰ The poem refers to the famous poet and beauty Ono no Komachi, who was celebrated in *ukiyo-e* prints centuries after her death.

The heyday of *ukiyo-e* began in the mid-1700s with development of full-color prints (*nishiki-e*) that could compete with paintings in vibrancy and complexity.²¹ Common subject

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 57.

¹² Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the culture of the four seasons*, 61–63.

¹³ Makoto Ueda, *Light verse from the floating world: an anthology of premodern Japanese senryu* (Columbia University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ Koji Kawamoto, *The poetics of Japanese verse: imagery, structure, meter* (University of Tokyo, 2000), 2.

¹⁶ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 100.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸ Earl Miner, *Japanese linked poetry* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 349.

¹⁹ *Ichijo jiro tadayori notonokami noritsune*, *Prints & Photographs Online Catalog*, Library of Congress.

²⁰ Earl Miner, *Japanese linked poetry*, 313.

²¹ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 103.

matter included beauties (*bijinga*), actors (*yakusha-e*), warriors (*musha-e*), “birds and flowers” (*kacho-ga*), and landscapes, although some artists also created scenes from daily life or erotic prints. The Yoshiwara pleasure district and kabuki theatre were also frequent subjects in the *senryu* (5–7–5 comic verse) and *kyōka* (“mad poetry”) forms that rose to popularity in the 18th century.²² “Yoshiwara – / that’s where a man goes to dump / all his better judgment,” wrote one anonymous *senryu* poet.²³ Almost in response, another teases, “His wife worries / when the cherry blossoms bloom / when the moon shows off” – an acknowledgment of the potential for auspicious viewing holidays to serve as covers for visiting the brothels.²⁴ These poems often had a more satirical perspective on brothel or theatre life than *ukiyo-e* prints, which (perhaps due to their costs of production) often served as voyeuristic, idealized advertisements.²⁵

Kyōka, or humorous verses with a 5–7–5–7–7 pattern, can be traced to classical *tanka* (short poems).²⁶ “To dream of / Mount Fuji – / now that’s good luck! / It’s free, and you save / your feet,” writes Yuensai Nagata Teiryū in a late 17th century *kyōka*.²⁷ It was considered good luck to dream of Mt. Fuji, a hawk, or eggplants in first dream of new year (*hatsu-yume*), but poem twists that luck around – if you have already seen Fuji in a dream, why waste energy on a visit? *Hatsu-yume* was also a popular subject of *ukiyo-e* artists such as Isoda Koryūsai, who included it in multiple prints from the late 18th century (e.g. *Lucky First Dream*).²⁸ The parodic approach of *kyōka* was similar to *mitate* parody in *ukiyo-e*, which placed contemporary figures (commonly courtesans) in the place of venerable people from history, myth or religion.

Senryū descended from *haikai* in a roundabout way. *Haikai* teachers attracted students from the commoner populace by engaging in a “conversational” poetry game, providing a short opening verse (*maeku*) that students could respond to in diverse and often humorous ways (17-syllable *tsukeku*).²⁹ This tradition was formalized as *maekuzuke*, or poetry contests that could receive as many as 10,000 entrees per round.³⁰ Winning *tsukeku* were published in extremely popular anthologies such as *Yanagidaru* (*The Willow Barrel*), which allowed *tsukeku* to stand alone by dropping the prompting *maeku* verse. This form later became known as *senryū*, after Edo *maekuzuke* master Karai *Senryū* (1718–1790).³¹ These poems spanned commoner life and pop culture, and made fun of historical heroes and events; they were “poetry for the millions.”³²

The printing industry was significant in the distribution and influence of both *senryū* and *ukiyo-e*, allowing lower classes to participate in cultural creation (often under pseud-

²² Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 9.

²³ Makoto Ueda, 190.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁵ British Museum and Ellis Tinios, *Japanese prints* (British Museum Press, 2010), 57.

²⁶ Haruo Shirane, *Early modern Japanese literature*, 199.

²⁷ Makoto Ooka, *A poet’s anthology* (Katydid Books, 1994), 105.

²⁸ Collection online, British Museum.

²⁹ Makoto Ueda, *Light verse from the floating world*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

onyms). However, participation in senryu writing had a much lower bar than ukiyo-e, since no apprenticeship period was needed to write verse or gain recognition through contests. This is reflected in the prevalence of humorous scenes from daily life, which are less well-represented in ukiyo-e: “The mother-in-law / slips back into her usual face / when the guest leaves” (unknown author).³³

Senryu and kyoka often subverted the myth of the unattainable or desirable rather than feeding it, as bijinga and other ukiyo-e genres frequently did, but popular poetry and prints both represented the rich tapestry of Edo life. These art forms were not silos, but instead referenced each other and responded collectively to changes in social conditions by creating new cultural touchpoints. Poetry and ukiyo-e echoed each other in their humor, parody, and cross-class mixing, although different barriers to entry and forms of consumption influenced their respective roles as participatory and voyeuristic mass entertainment.

³¹ Ibid., 9-10.

³² Ibid., 19.

³³ Ibid., 181.

About this Book

Through the Narrow Space: A Glimpse of Edo *Anna Xuan*

As the screen doors slide open, we peer through the gap, or *sukima*, created into the kaleidoscopic culture of Edo period Japan. *Sukima: Vertical Prints of the Floating World* is an exhibition of solely vertical ukiyo-e woodblock prints encompassing the pillar print, *hashira-e*, and vertical diptych and triptych formats. Through this curated selection of prints from the collection of the RISD Museum we explore the unique role vertical composition plays in the overarching artistic style of ukiyo-e prints. Far from being limiting, the constraints of verticality seem to lead these artists to further and further innovation in the manners in which they depict their subject matter. Dynamic diagonals, dramatically cut off figures, and innovative uses of *yohaku*, “blank space,” are abundant in these prints, enticing viewers and drawing them further into the multicolored splendor of Edo society.

The extreme vertical composition has always been a mainstay in Japanese artistic tradition. Perhaps starting from the traditions of mounting hanging scrolls or decorating the pillars, *hashira*, of buildings, the vertical composition in ukiyo-e seemed to be inevitable. Despite being discovered by accident due to the size limitations of woodblocks, the *hashira-e* format led the pack for extreme vertical compositions in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and then evolved into vertical diptychs and triptychs by the nineteenth century.

With the urbanization during the Edo period, ukiyo-e was propelled to the forefront of Japanese culture and became the perfect witness for the complex world that unfolded. Spanning almost all significant types of ukiyo-e, these vertical prints cover intimately the popular culture of Edo, from the courtesans of the famed Yoshiwara district to the rich symbolism that permeated folk beliefs. We start with the first category titled “Beautiful Women” covering *bijinga* prints by artists ranging from Suzuki Harunobu to Keisai Eisen. *Bijinga* in the vertical format is the perfect showcase for the elegant incomplete figure. Whether it is Suzuki Harunobu’s flowing, graceful beauties, or Torii Kiyonaga’s regal, statuesque women, or Keisai Eisen’s dramatic and decadent courtesans, the artists’ ingenuity in restriction is what draws us in and leads us to imagine the larger world these beautiful women might inhabit.

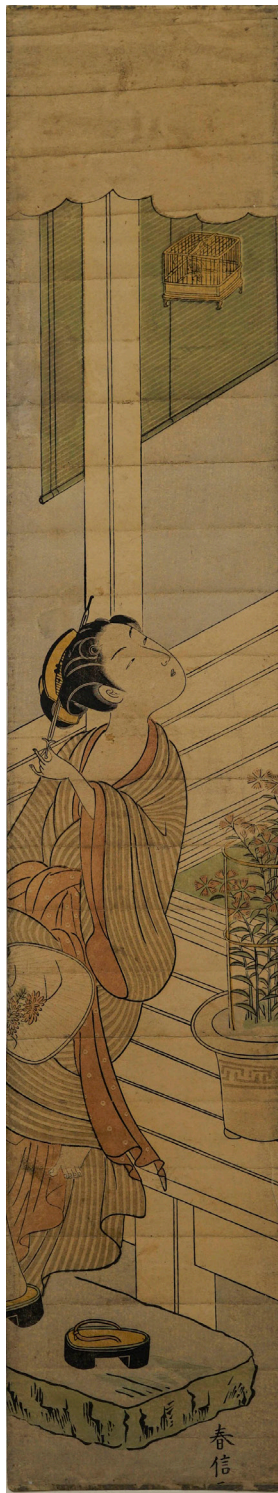
We then move from idealizations of femininity to ferocious masculinity in the second category “Heroes, Actors, and Ghosts.” The two diptychs and one triptych in this category span from the warriors of *musha-e* to the actors of *yakusha-e* and the ghosts of *yureizu*. Although *musha-e*, warrior prints, and *yakusha-e*, actor prints, and other prints about Kabuki theater are separate, these prints blur the line between these genres by being grounded in

history yet influenced by fiction and theater aesthetics. The diptychs showing two warriors battling have the background of real historical conflicts between the Minamoto and Taira clans, but are shown in fictitious settings with the artist being heavily inspired by Kabuki depictions of specific characters. The one print, depicting a Kabuki play ventures further into fiction with imagery of the popular female apparition, *Okiku*, thus leading into a sub-genre depicting supernatural beings, *yureizu*. Both Katsukawa Shuntei and Utagawa Kunisada play with diagonal symmetries when showing warriors' battles in a dramatic vertical, while Toyohara Kunichika goes further into abstractions through *yohaku* to show a supernatural realm.

In the third category, we proceed into the world of "Birds, Flowers, and Beyond" with *kacho-ga*. Elegant cranes, imposing hawks, and fantastical pheasants populate this category in the tradition of "bird-and-flower" paintings inherited from Song China. Pines and cranes for longevity and hawks for military strength, these prints show a deeper language of symbols and a more nuanced way in which the audience of the time engaged with popular media. The innovative ways in which the artists in this category play with diagonals and *yohaku* through the branches of pine trees and placement of birds show how *kacho-ga* flourished in the vertical composition; and although many artists depicted similar subject matter, the difference between Utagawa Hiroshige's quiet poetry and Utagawa Kuniyoshi's powerful drama in this exhibit show the true range and potential of the bird and flower genre.

With the fourth and final category of this exhibit, we enter into the popular beliefs of the Edo period. Rife with subject matter rooted in folklore, mythology, and religion, this section explores the philosophical concepts of *yin* and *yang* through imagery of the tiger and dragon as well as the complex cultural mixture in Edo Japan that resulted in the rise of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, *Shichifukujin*. Representing subject matter as grand as the tiger and dragon, and as rich as the *Shichifukujin* in the impossible dimensions of the pillar print shows how thoroughly print artists and designers thrived when working in the vertical format.

Throughout all four categories of this exhibit, the vertical format limits the prints to a narrow field of vision, as if we are looking through slightly open screen doors. Dazzling courtesans, powerful warriors, majestic birds, and otherworldly deities dance through this *sukima*, offering us mere glimpses into a full picture. Yet because the doors never fully slide open, the prints seem to transcend the limitations of the physical as the viewers imagine the larger world which these figures inhabit.



Beauty and Insect Cage (Bijin to mushikago)
Suzuki Harunobu, ca. 1770
67 x 12.2 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1086

1. Beauty and Insect Cage by Suzuki Harunobu

Wistful Projections Janice Gan

In this print, a courtesan sits on an elevated wooden veranda while tilting her head toward a caged cricket hanging above. She appears to be adjusting a hair ornament with one hand, and holds a fan with flowers in the other. Her hair is elegantly styled with a comb and long hairpin, and she wears loose, flowing robes striped with warm gray and lined in pink. Her *obi* is tied in front and printed with small white dots. One of her shoes (*geta*) is off, and rests on a mossy stone slab. There is a potted dianthus (*nadeshiko*, or wild carnation) next to her on the veranda. There is a pillar behind her, near the insect cage, and blinds hang down from an unseen support structure. The top of the image is obscured by clouds, and the left side of her body is cut off by the narrow format of the print.

The woman in the print appears to be a courtesan, as suggested by the sensuous posture and *obi* sash tied in front. The leisurely setting, complete with caged cricket, suggest that she may be of middle or high rank. These courtesans were expected to be more like refined entertainers than straightforward prostitutes.¹ Since the attention of expensive courtesans was out of reach for all but the wealthiest, this depiction of a courtesan's private moment would have been appealing to the masses.²

The print combines undertones of eroticism and longing with a simple, private setting. The courtesan's clothes and accessories are elegant but not overly showy, suggesting that she is resting or grooming. The open sleeve and bare foot contribute to the sensuality of the moment, while her delicacy and curving pose are both stylistic trademarks of Suzuki Harunobu. She turns her head toward the cricket in a variation of *mikaeri-bijin*, a "beautiful woman looking back over her shoulder," a common posture in ukiyo-e that suggests activity "off-screen."³ The courtesan is also lost in a moment of her own obliviousness to the viewer's gaze.

The location appears to be an elevated veranda that opens onto a garden, since the cricket cage is hanging from a support but the courtesan's foot rests on a mossy stone slab on the ground. Covered verandas (*engawa*) were first constructed to enhance intimacy with gardens in the *shinden* (palace-style) complexes of the Heian period, and continued to be common features of the *shoin* (parlor-style) residences used by samurai elite in the following centuries.⁴ It is likely that they came into wider use among commoners during the Edo period, a time of merchant wealth. *Engawa* were places to socialize and enjoy the seasons, and often included movable features such as sliding screens or blinds to enhance the

¹ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan* (New York: HN Abrams, 1996), 29.

² Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, et al., *The women of the pleasure quarter* (Hudson Hill Press, 1995), 31.

³ Akiko Fukai, "Japonism in Fashion," (1996), 9.

⁴ Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the culture of the four seasons* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 90-92.

indoor-outdoor continuum.⁵ The courtesan's position on the veranda and the ambiguity of her intentions – is she removing both shoes, or putting one on? – mirror the transitional nature of the space. The bamboo blinds (*misu*) contribute to the sense of intimacy by obscuring any landscape beyond.

It appears to be early autumn (the seventh month in the Edo luni-solar calendar), as suggested by the seasonal symbolism of the dianthus (*nadeshiko*) and cricket (*korogi* or *matsumushi*).⁶ The woman is holding a fan and wearing loose robes, most likely due to the lingering heat of summer (*zansho*).⁷ The movement of her *obi* may represent a breeze, another phenomenon associated with the arrival of autumn.⁸ This time of the year carried associations with love, longing, and loneliness – the sound of the crickets, especially, was thought to be a thin, lonely cry.⁹ The pine cricket (*matsumushi*), which was a common household pet, was also homophonically known as the “waiting insect,” its song associated with that of a woman awaiting a man.¹⁰ This would have been especially significant in context of a courtesan print. The thought of an unattainable woman pining after her own unattainability may have been a very appealing one.

The stiff, Chinese-style fan (*uchiwa*) in the image bears a painting of chrysanthemums (*kiku*). While also a symbol of fall, chrysanthemums were traditionally associated with the ninth month, with auspiciousness, scholarly masculinity, and longevity.¹¹ It is possible that the fan is a token or reminder of her lover in his absence.

Symbols of femininity also abound in the print, including the *nadeshiko* and the moisture suggested by the clouds and moss.¹² The *nadeshiko* especially was a symbol of an idealized woman, used in the phrase *yamato nadeshiko* to describe “a woman who embodies the best and most refined traits” of traditional Japanese culture.¹³

The courtesan's attire, hairstyle, and ornaments are simple but refined. The hairstyle, with its combs, hairpins (*kanzashi*), and ornate updo (*mage*), was characteristic of courtesans of Harunobu's time – the combs and pins multiplied toward the end of the 18th century, but the hairstyle in this print is very similar to those in other Harunobu courtesan prints, including images of high-ranking courtesans.¹⁴ The irregular black dots on the comb may be a representation of tortoiseshell, a rare and expensive imported material at the time.¹⁵ The kimono's sleeve has a longer opening than the *kosode* (small-sleeve) of married women, and in this context may have had erotic associations. The small, open white circles on the *obi* were simple in appearance but labor intensive to produce.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Merrily C. Baird, *Symbols of Japan* (Rizzoli International Publications, 2001), 99 and 106.

⁷ Shirane, 178.

⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 102 and Merrily C. Baird, *Symbols of Japan* (Rizzoli International Publications, 2001), 75.

¹² Timon Screech, *Sex and the Floating World* (University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 140.

¹³ Shirane, 99.

¹⁴ Marianne Hulsbosch, et al., *Asian material culture* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 44-45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 51.

This print uses heavy repetition of parallel line work at different scales, from the subtle slats of the *misu* and tiny bars of the insect cage, to the wide wooden planks and thick stone slab. Vertical stripes on the courtesan's kimono highlight her willowy frame and echo the sweep of her hair. This sharp contrast between rectilinear architecture and flowing curves was one of Harunobu's stylistic motifs, used effectively here to focus attention back to the central figure of the courtesan and emphasize her femininity. The restrained usage of color echoes the intimacy of the scene, while the pops of pink from the *nadeshiko* and the courtesan's garments reinforce the relationship between flower and woman.

Harunobu's use of the pillar format appears successful in provoking curiosity and imagination, as the narrow format invites the viewer to scan up and down for new details and layers of meaning. Since the courtesan's face and hair has the highest contrast within the composition, the tilt of her head is a starting place for following her gaze up to the insect cage and back down to her bare foot. Questions follow – what does the rest of her figure look like? Where is the veranda, and where is she in her day? Who might she be thinking about? These unanswered, hinted dimensions are effective in generating a conversation of sorts between the print and the viewer.

Ukiyo means “floating world,” a term that came to represent the pleasures of living in the moment. For Edo Japan, *ukiyo* was associated with the fashionable and the sensual, and its art was highly popular with the masses but often frowned upon by the shogunate authorities.¹⁶ Its culture was an unprecedented mix of the aristocratic and the popular; many of its forms and motifs arose in Japanese court traditions, especially poetry, calligraphy, and painting.¹⁷ After the Edo period was established in 1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu, the *haikai* poetic tradition that combined both aristocratic references and commoners' experiences quickly became “emblematic of Edo culture as a whole.”¹⁸ The growth of urban centers and an affluent merchant class meant that for the first time, lower classes (*chonin*, with merchants being the lowest in the traditional class order) had both access to and influence over artistic production.¹⁹

This intermingling was present in visual culture as well. Ukiyo-e prints often depicted “low-culture” activities or themes, but included a rich set of seasonal and literary references that date to the court culture of the Heian period.²⁰ Harunobu was no exception, having “close ties to one of the leading *haikai* clubs in Edo.” During his active period in the 1760s, his audience would have had a sophisticated understanding of visual references, which often

¹⁶ Guth, 29.

¹⁷ De Sabato Swinton, 27.

¹⁸ Shirane, 176.

¹⁹ Guth, 11.

²⁰ Baird, 10.

became so standardized that a single type of plant could represent a specific location, emotion, or activity.²²

It is also no accident that courtesans were one of his most common subjects. The Yoshiwara pleasure quarters in Edo, although moved to the outskirts of the city in 1657 in an effort to discourage patrons, instead became idealized and practically mythologized.²³ Courtesans, especially high-ranking ones, were sophisticated entertainers and accomplished practitioners of music, poetry, calligraphy, and other arts. Their exchanges with the wealthy were ritualized and elaborate, often involving significant investments in food, drink, clothing, and letter-writing.²⁴ The newly influential merchant class took full advantage of pleasure quarters with their wealth, as did samurai and others who could afford it. The rest of the populace had to be contented with courtesan guides (*yoshiwara saiken*) and ukiyo-e prints like Harunobu's.²⁵ This demand helped feed Harunobu's popularity from the 1760s through 1780s, when his willowy style of *bijinga* (beautiful woman) prints gained a following among consumers and fellow artists of the Harunobu school.²⁶ It is in part through these prints that courtesan fashions and activities became aspirational and influential cultural trends.

Harunobu was also a pioneer of *nishiki-e*, or polychrome woodblock prints. Wealthy patrons and a relaxed administration enabled him to experiment with using more dyes and printing blocks, resulting in opulently colorful images that required five to eight printing blocks.²⁷ The relative lenience of the government under Tanuma Okitsugu, a powerful politician of his time, meant that artists were free to develop complex techniques that may otherwise have been regulated with Confucian-influenced sumptuary laws.²⁸ Although erotica had been banned in 1722, both blatantly sexual and understatedly suggestive prints continued to be produced (with the former likely being possible due to lax enforcement and anonymous production).²⁹ *Beauty and Insect Cage* is an example of the more restrained style, but it is no less rich in its hints.

Most pillar prints (*hashira-e*) of the 1740s and 1750s had little or no background, and Harunobu was one of the first to introduce significant landscape and architectural elements.³⁰ The visual line created in his pillar prints was often still sinuous, but more complex than the "s" shape common in earlier decades.³¹ While various pillar (*hashira*) coverings were popular in Japan long before *hashira-e* were developed in the first half of the 18th century, it appears that pillar prints themselves arose from printers sawing apart cracked wood blocks that had been pieced together from two planks. It is likely that the prints subsequent-

²¹ Guth, 106.

²² De Sabato Swinton, 113 and Baird, 10.

²³ Amy Reigel Newland, *The Hotei encyclopedia of Japanese woodblock prints* (Hotei publ., 2005), 30.

²⁴ De Sabato Swinton, 31.

²⁵ Newland, 56.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 319 and De Sabato Swinton, 112.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Jacob Pins and Roger Keyes, "The Japanese Pillar Print: Hashira-e" (Sawers, 1982), 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*

ly became popular as pillar decorations.³²

The RISD museum print appears to be more faded than the Boston MFA's, and marks from the sizing liquid (used to prevent ink from bleeding) are more visible.³³ There are some blotches of discoloration visible at the top and along the left side of the print, including a particularly noticeable spot on the courtesan's neck. The top and bottom of the RISD print also appear to have been trimmed, removing part of the artist's signature, and there is a slight mis-registration of the green blinds against its outline. The relatively poor condition may reflect ukiyo-e's popularity with commoners, who may not have had the resources to safeguard the conditions of the prints. Since the *tokonoma* alcove for *kakemono* hanging scrolls was prohibited from lower-class households, the *hashira* would have been valuable but exposed real estate for ukiyo-e.³⁴

This print, both stylistically and in content, represents a fairly narrow but significant period of time. Harunobu designed it during the short period in the mid-eighteenth century when his willowy style was most popular and the techniques of *nishiki-e* were still new. It was a time that saw a two-way conversation between the high and the low, when the aristocracy understood popular themes and vice versa; it was also a time of lenient oversight and artistic flourishing. Harunobu's prints may not have had so immediate an evocative effect in the later 19th century, when the influence of court culture and poetry was no longer so pervasive. Courtesan culture was also thriving during Harunobu's time, and conditions in Yoshiwara were not as crowded as they would become in later decades. It was an ideal time to create an idealized representation of the floating world.

³² Ibid., 30-31.

³³ British Museum and Ellis Tinios, *Japanese Prints* (British Museum Press, 2010), 33.

³⁴ Newland, 68.



Parody of the Immortal Kinko
Suzuki Harunobu, ca. 1768
69.2 x 11.9 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1050

2. Parody of the Immortal Kinko by Suzuki Harunobu

Mitate Wit Meredith Barone, Anna Rose Chi & Lara Torrance

The viewer is witnessing something never-yet-seen. Upon the swift rolling waves taking the lower part of the long and narrow pillar print, a giant carp is entering the space. Moving left to right, the fish is carrying a graceful, fairy-like beautiful woman poised on its back. In spite of the highly unusual circumstances, the woman seems quite comfortable. Her posture is graceful and natural while she is doing something quite mundane. She is immersed in reading an inscription on a long unfurled scroll she is holding. Her presence is elegant and dreamlike as she floats through the swift waters with complete serenity. This fantasy scene was depicted by Suzuki Harunobu, the pioneer of full-color printing in ukiyo-e, on a long and narrow pillar print very soon after the new polychrome woodcuts *nishiki-e* were introduced.

The elegant woman riding a carp is the focus of attention. The woman's face is delicate with fine and miniscule features typical to Harunobu's ideal of beauty. Her face is angled downwards with her gaze focused on reading the scroll in her hands. The soft contour of her face is framed by waves of hair embellished with a wide comb and several long pins. Through the woman's overall highly groomed appearance, her complex hairdo with numerous ornaments, her layered robes and particularly the front placement of her *obi* bow, one can identify her as a courtesan—a high-ranking prostitute in Yoshiwara, the brothel district in Edo (Tokyo) in the Edo period of Japan. As a courtesan, “this gorgeously attired, worldly woman of the pleasure quarter became a cultural icon” in ukiyo-e prints.¹ There is a glimpse of her petite left hand, visible as she is supporting the unfolding scroll. Her right hand remains hidden amongst the garments enveloping her slight figure. There is an overall delicateness, grace and elegance of the woman: “Some women had so much poise and dignity that men were intimidated at first”.² She wears layers of softly undulating robes. Her outermost robe is decorated with a pattern of vertical stripes and leaves, a stylized representation of the clusters of bamboo leaves in snow. It is a traditional Japanese decorative motif called *yuki-mochi-take mon'yo*, which means “the design of bamboo covered in snow” and is used across various art forms and mediums such as lacquerware and ceramics. All elements of the woman's appearance bespeak who she is: “richly embroidered and dyed kimono and obi (sash) tied in front, and carefully coiffed and decorated hair marked the Yoshiwara *oiran*,” or highest-ranking courtesan”.³

The giant carp that carries the woman is swimming at high speed, as the water around it is characterized by patterns of lines and waves repeating across the background. The line-work becomes increasingly intricate around the fish's head.

¹ Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, et al., *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter* (Hudson Hill Press, 1995), 13

² *Ibid.*, 37.

³ *Ibid.*, 38.

The courtesan peers down at a long, narrow piece of paper covered with vertical lines of writings inscribed in cursive script. This writing reveals that this paper is a letter from a lover. “The exchange of love letters has a long tradition in Japanese culture, dating back to the ‘next-morning letter’ (*kinuginu no fumi*) the Heian-period (794–1185) courtier was expected to send to a lady upon returning home after spending the night with her”.⁴

The title of the print, *Parody of the Immortal Kinko*, references the work’s connection to the classical Chinese tale of Qin Gao, known in Japan as Kinko. Qin Gao was an imperial advisor said to have lived during the Chinese Warring States period (475–221 BC). The legend tells that Qin Gao had mastered Taoist magic. This is a term from Taoist religious philosophy – it refers to a belief in the possibility to acquire supernatural powers through developing profound and ultimate inner connection with nature. Qin Gao became immortal, and traveled throughout the Jizhou region for two hundred years until eventually riding a dragon into a magical lake. One day, in order to keep an appointment with a disciple of his, Qin Gao reemerged from the water atop a carp. Qin Gao had a supposed strong affinity to fish, and is said to have urged humankind to abstain from harming them through a Buddhist scroll. Harunobu did at least four prints of Kinko, of which the earliest is a calendar design for 1765, and the latest a pillar print datable 1769–70.⁵

By replacing the immortal Kinko with a courtesan, Suzuki Harunobu employs a metaphorical visual device known as *mitate*. *Mitate* is an artistic convention that transposes classical tradition into a reflection of contemporary popular culture at the time of the artist. The term *mitate* literally translates to “witnessing with one’s own eyes”.⁶ A possible source of this technique is Japanese literature, specifically the form of Japanese poetry called *haikai*, which rose to popularity during the sixteenth century.⁷ *Haikai* exploits the disparities between the elegance and aristocracy of the upper classes and the banality of everyday life among commoners. Similar to how the literary and poetic counterparts of *mitate* were used, Harunobu uses the qualities of ukiyo-e printing as an urban art form to parody the classical yet widespread tale of Qin Gao and its Taoist themes. *Mitate-e*, which can be translated as “parody pictures,” are a visual expression of such humor that was widely popular within ukiyo-e.⁸

In the case of *Parody of the Immortal Kinko*, the use of *mitate* intimates that alluring courtesans such as the subject in this print “possess and can confer on others the secret of immortality.”⁹ Certain dimensions of the courtesan culture during Edo period justified, if not invited this kind of parallelism. As Swinton writes, “in the eyes of the patrons, the public,

⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁵ Waterhouse, David (1997). “Some Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist Mitate-e by Harunobu”. Impressions. The Japanese Art Society of America (19), 40

⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷ Shirane, Haruo. Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts. New York: Columbia University Press. 2012. eBook, 122

⁸ Clark, Timothy T. (1997). “Mitate-e: Some Thoughts, and a Summary of Recent Writings”. Impressions. The Japanese Art Society of America (19), 7

⁹ Waterhouse, 41.

and the women themselves, this Yoshiwara system guaranteed a certain level of craft and confirmed that the women were not just selling sex. They also were skilled entertainers whose secrets were passed along in an apprentice system from one generation to another”.¹⁰ The substitution of a prostitute for courtier was most likely a source of entertainment for townspeople through gentle mockery and a smug comparison of a beautiful prostitute to immortal magic. The urban dwelling audience of ukiyo-e prints such as this one were socially disadvantaged, but they were well-read in classical literature and were educated enough to operate in creative, original and witty manner with the classical heritage enabling them to understand wit often layered into ukiyo-e prints.

As ukiyo-e printing was an accessible medium, its subject matter was appropriately appealing to a wide audience. While preserving classical narratives, Harunobu adapted his illustrations to reflect the contemporary beauty ideals, garments, and humor of the time. The piece of paper carried by the original Taoist immortal with his writings opposing fishing and intended for spreading among the fishermen Harunobu replaced with a “morning after” letter from a lover that says, “how tender was our meeting yester-night.” The skillful execution of the *mitate* technique requires a sense of nuance that reveals congruence between things that are seemingly in contrast with one another due to the subtle yet sharp wit of the artist and “an appropriately refined mode of expression,” which Harunobu tactfully delivers.¹¹

The background of the upper half of the print appears empty with only a faint tint of blue to indicate the expanse of the sky. One of the things Harunobu is known for, enabled by the advent of the full color print historically credited to him, was the use of block colored backgrounds. However, it is likely that the original colors of the print have faded substantially over time, due to exposure to light and the elements. In the center of the right-hand edge of the composition is an extremely faded seal which was probably bright red at the initial time of printing. This can serve as a reference for how much the rest of the colors on the print must have faded. The black still remains very saturated, however, and therefore is the most visually impactful color. The background of the print shows the lines in the paper where the pulp built up on a bamboo screen inside the wooden frame; this reveals the technique behind Japanese traditional paper making.

The shape of this long, narrow and upright pillar print format is repeated through the shape of the scroll in the image. The courtesan is reading the inscription on a long, narrow piece of paper which is of the same shape as the composition we are engaged in looking at.

¹⁰ de Sabato, Swinton, 37.

¹¹ Clark, 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38.

This is a formal mirroring, which perhaps Harunobu did intentionally. The composition also lends itself well to a vertical format. The woman's head is bent down which leads the eye of the beholder down to the letter, which then leads the viewer's glance further down to the fish and eventually the water. It has a clear vertical composition. "When the painters' designs were transferred to carved wooden blocks and printed, the printmaking process strengthened the painter's line, and the limitations of paper sizes inspired new ways of composing pictures".¹²

To conclude, this one pillar print by Harunobu abundantly captures the remarkable cultural and visual richness of ukiyo-e tradition. The multifarious connections with Japanese classical legacy, itself deeply rooted in Chinese culture, were essential for the vigorous and vivid urban art of Edo period Japan. Within the new social context, however, the inherited cultural baggage gained a witty and playful contemporary edge. With ease and humor, typical for ukiyo-e in addressing serious philosophical matters, Harunobu represents an infinitely old man, a Taoist immortal, as an emphatically young and stylish courtesan from Yoshiwara, the pleasure quarter of Edo. Harunobu, who stood at the origins of *nishiki-e*, created an image based on subtle color harmonies, faded as the hues are in the RISD Museum copy. The delicate color coordination complements extremely complex interplay of line-work and areas of black ink throughout the image. Furthermore, Harunobu makes the most of the then particularly popular expressly narrow pillar print format. He concentrates visual weight on the print's left-hand side, boldly cropping the figure that seems to be just entering the space visible for the audience and thus affording a glimpse into the enchanted realm of the ukiyo-e *bijinga*.

¹² de Sabato Swinton, 107.



Courtesan and Kamuro
Suzuki Harunobu, ca. 1770
68.6 x 11.9 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1087

3. Courtesan and Kamuro by Suzuki Harunobu

The Becoming of Female Beauty Pooja Cavale, Emi Chun, Cindy Del Rio & Zak Nguyen

A young woman and girl, both stylishly coiffured and attired to match, are passing gracefully, moving from left to right. The figures seem to accord in their overall willowy build, the linearity of their flowing layered kimonos, the color and design of apparel, and even their headpieces. The stylishness and thoroughly thought-out coordination of their appearance suggest that the figure to the right is a *yujo*, or courtesan – a high-ranking entertainer-prostitute, and her young assistant to the left is a *kamuro* from Yoshiwara, the licensed pleasure quarter in Edo (Tokyo). This status is suggested by the elaborate bow of the courtesan's *obi* sash that fastens her kimono at the waist in front—a common custom amongst courtesans of the Edo Period.

Moving from the head of the courtesan downwards, it can be observed that the backwards tilt of her pose makes her reminiscent of the so-called *mikaeri bijin*, or “beauty looking back.” This specific type of depicting women was introduced by Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694). It is defined by the streamlined shape created by the silhouette of the body and kimono. *Mikaeri* posture creates a graceful, beautiful curvature in the courtesan's body that the viewer's eye follows in making its way throughout the rest of the composition.

In understanding the need for the movement of the viewer's eye in this way, one must realize how it is directly representative of the relationship between *kamuro* and their courtesan mentors. Young girls who are hired or adopted by brothels from ages six to eight (or younger) are taught manners and etiquette while having limited exposure to the workings of Yoshiwara, but especially high-achieving girls are appointed as child attendants that shadow their *tayu*, or high-ranking courtesan who served as a mentor to *kamuro*, and taught their ways. As the *kamuro* accompanies her *tayu* on an everyday basis, completing light errands and attending to the courtesan's needs, the mentor in turn is responsible for their charge's performance in public and in profession. In many ways, the image of the *kamuro* in this print and the image of her courtesan instructor makes the two figures reflective of one another as the mentee strives to mirror the mentor. The ubiquitous ideal image of the slender, tall courtesan is posed delicately towards the smaller and stiller, shy doppelganger that is almost attached to its larger half. The flow of the courtesan's dress and the smoothness of line are blended into the micro-version. The same can be said about their even similarly shaped facial appearance, though the older is more expressive than the younger. The print emphasizes the dependence of the *kamuro* on their mentors and the subsequent mirroring effect that predicts a kind of future for the characters Harunobu constructs. Perhaps, at the same time,

the backward direction of the courtesan's glance and pose allude to looking back in time to learning as child, giving the viewer a sense of timelessness, which suggests the idea the courtesan is drawing from her own experiences in training the young *kamuro* and helping her to prepare for her career. This idea of timelessness, utilizing the gazes and expressions of both figures to look to the past and to the future, is reinforced in the fact that the composition works in coordination with the *mikaeri bijin* pose by creating a circular, clockwise movement for the viewer's gaze as if it is a cycle.

Suzuki Harunobu was known for his inventive and clever compositions in his prints, and how he molded the shape of the women to fit the dimensions of the paper in a way that was visually compelling. In this print specifically, the composition established by the depiction of the courtesan and her *kamuro* is designed to move the eye in a clockwise circling motion that conveniently works to help guide the viewer's direction of gaze into the arc of the linework of the figures. These two figures seem to emulate each other through the color of their clothing and headpieces, but the differences between how the two are portrayed have a much more striking visual effect on the composition.

In the textiles and in the garments that the two figures wear, there seems to be more significance placed on portrayals of beauty in addition to the portrayal of the relationship between the courtesan and her *kamuro*. The courtesan is wearing a *kosode*, a short-sleeved kimono. According to Noma Seiroku, this type of robe came into use in the Kamakura period (1185-1336), when the robe that had been worn by nobles of the Heian period (794-1185) as an under-kimono began to be worn as an outer garment because it permitted greater freedom of movement (Noma 13). The form of the *kosode* seems to suggest movement as a form of beauty, taking advantage of the ability to exaggerate flowing shapes, especially towards the bottom where the foot of the courtesan is exposed in a sexual manner. "The thin *kosode* showed the soft lines of the body and directed attention to a woman's physical beauty. If we examine early genre paintings and ukiyo-e prints, we will immediately notice just how painstakingly the artists endeavored to depict the beauty of the female body by means of clothing" (Noma 27). However, despite this, there is a particular area of interest that defies the idea of *kosode*, which is the sleeves of the courtesan. *Kosode* are typically defined by their shortened sleeves, but in this image, the courtesan appears to have her hands and arms hidden from sight, which intentionally disobeys the purpose of short sleeves to provide freedom of movement. Like *furisode*, they expand to the whole length of the arm, except the *furisode* extends all the way down to the ankle and *kosode* is cut shorter in this vertical direction. Her hands and arms are hidden behind her magnificent *obi*, implying that the sash tied around the front of her body, the very symbol that denotes her status as a well reputed courtesan, further elevates her as a refined, high-ranking *tayū*. In addition, Harunobu decided to include a depiction of the *kamuro*'s incredibly small left hand, curling a finger to point at her chest.

The significance here is that, unlike the courtesan, the *kamuro* is actually wearing a *furisode*, a children's robe similar to the *kosode* but with long, swinging sleeves instead of shortened sleeves, which naturally implies a greater restriction of movement. The decision to include the *kamuro*'s hand gives her a sense of more freedom of movement here rather than less, heightening her own sexualization to a point where she is even more desirable than the courtesan; it is a strategically sexual decision on the Harunobu's part, almost as if he is telling the *kamuro* to tease his audience.

Additionally, the forms that are shaped by the dress are highly representative of movement and place the most emphasis on physical beauty. The way that the fabric flows and curves to form those shapes not only implies movement but also enhances the imagery that appears in the textiles of the garments. There are key details on the textiles of the figures, such as the imagery of fish, which can be identified as carp, or *koi*. The carp appear to be swimming upstream on the *kamuro*, while a similar pattern of carp swimming can be seen on the courtesan's clothing. This seems to symbolize a transfer of knowledge, experience, accomplishment, etc. from mentor to mentee.

The carp imagery that appears in the textile of the courtesan's *kosode* and the *kamuro*'s *furisode* has important symbolic meaning in Japanese cultural tradition.

“The carp (koi) is a symbol of perseverance, is said by the Chinese to leap the rapids at the ‘Dragon Gate’ of the Yellow River and to become thereafter a dragon. The fish is also emblematic of faithfulness in marriage and general good fortune . . . its allegorical heritage has led to a design convention of the fish arching upward, cresting sprays of white water or mounting waterfalls. This motif is associated with the virtues of the determined warrior, and in modern times it has been a metaphor for the qualities one seeks in a young male” (Baird 126).

Interestingly enough, the carp that are portrayed in the courtesan's *kosode* seem to be swimming around naturally, as if they are in a pond; however, the carp that is depicted as closest to the viewer in the courtesan's *kosode* also seems to be swimming downward, as if it is swimming away from the courtesan and upward into the *kamuro*. In the *kamuro*'s *furisode* textile pattern, there is also a carp swimming upward. The textiles here are implying that the *yujo* and her *kamuro* are like two separate ponds, and that the carp are in the process of swimming from the old pond to the new one. This makes sense, knowing that Harunobu also intentionally placed a greater sense of sexualization on the *kamuro* rather than the courtesan in how their garments are portrayed and how the two are posed. Given the history of the symbolism, Harunobu is juxtaposing the great warrior-esque story of a carp's journey to become a dragon to the *kamuro*'s journey and training in becoming a courtesan. It is especially interesting seeing this and realizing that the courtesan's gaze is fixed on that of the *kamuro*, but the *kamuro* seems to be calm and steady, teasing the viewer with her one curled



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1
Courtesan and Kamuro
Suzuki Harunobu, ca. 1770
71.6 x 12.8 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
21.4551, MFA, Boston

finger and her gaze focused on her personal evolution and the development of her career. It is as if the courtesan is feeding her *kamuro* her knowledge, experience, and achievements.

To support this, the textile pattern of the courtesan's *obi* contains imagery of a repeating phoenix motif. "In Japan, the phoenix came to be a symbol of imperial authority, frequently combined with other motifs, especially the paulownia, that enjoyed similar status . . . As the decorative arts of that period became increasingly ornate, the combination [of motifs] also appeared on wedding robes, long outer robes, and kimono sashes" (Baird 116-117). While the focus may be on the courtesan's *kamuro*, the use of the phoenix in this print perhaps reinforces the power that the courtesan holds over the *kamuro*'s future and career.

It is important to consider that there is more than one version of this print that exists; particularly, two versions of this print that are interesting to compare are the ones owned by the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston (see Figure 1 above) and the RISD Museum (see Figure 2 above), and the differences in their backgrounds. One of the most significant differences is that the MFA's version includes subtle lines that indicate Harunobu's decision to include clouds towards the upper part of the print and a shoreline towards the bottom. On the other hand, the RISD Museum print is cropped in a way that lacks the subtle perspective that these lines create. The single plane of the empty background in the RISD Museum version instead utilizes the natural color and the texture of the paper as an intentional visual element that works with the imagery Harunobu depicted. A theme that arises in the use of the subtle, plain colors of the paper in the background is an attempt to emphasize the print's characters as being graceful and delicate, almost as if recognizing that the two subjects have limited space within the dimensions of the paper. It removes any perception of depth in the background, which directs the viewer's attention to the two figures and any specific relationships between them, such as composition and the differing details like patterns on the clothing and facial features.

Additionally, the difference in color between the two versions at the MFA and the RISD Museum places further emphasis on the viewer's perception of the composition. In the version at the MFA, some of the colors are much more vibrant, clearly giving a sense of warmth because of the bright orange colors. In particular, it is the solid-colored textiles that have the most saturation in color here, making them the most visually spectacular and conspicuous detail within how the women are portrayed. On the contrary, the RISD Museum print is composed of muted, mostly monotone colors of a single shade; while the lack of diversity in colors gives this print less discernible differences in the relationships between the two figures, it establishes a sense of unity between all visual elements of the piece that ties all of the intricacies together, such as line, form, pattern, etc., existing under an overarching umbrella that is the monotonous, rather neutral color palette. This contrasts the color in the MFA print, in which vibrant colors function to emphasize how the textiles of the women's

garments differ from other visual elements such as the black, thin lines and the patterned textiles, which suggest a different overall theme due to difference in color. The difference in how color is used in these two prints largely affects the hierarchy and order in which the viewer analyzes information; in the RISD Museum print, the faded and neutral colors of also encourage the viewer to observe how the composition of the women, such as in how they are posed and the directions of their gazes, are more visually acute than color.

In all, the Edo period of Japan is indicative to how women are perceived in the context of ukiyo-e prints. Suzuki Harunobu's distinctive style shapes the women as young, willowy, thin figures idealized to be what Harunobu identifies as natural and perfect. The beautiful women he crafts are engaging yet passive, and exist in a small social sphere, but only express stagnant emotions, all the while remaining perfectly integrated in the narrow dimensions of the paper due to their flowing, continuous line work and curved figures. Their bodies are molded to contrast the sharp lines that define the space around them and are in motion with an everyday activity or event in the life of a courtesan. Like many ukiyo-e artists, Harunobu was largely uninterested in the sordid realities of urban prostitution, seeking to instead to construct a "floating world" inhabited by figures of dignity and flair. As a result, the class of these courtesans are elevated; their daily actions and activities in Yoshiwara as subject to idolatry and adorned with a veil of fantasy and mystery. In portraying this, Harunobu subscribed to a particular stance of hedonism that idealized the relationship between the courtesan and her *kamuro*. The intelligent, cultured courtesan was a symbol of both pleasure and mastery in a profession that is dictated and consumed by the wants of men. The social expectations that govern the behavior of women from a young age are exemplified in the *kamuro*, and in turn, the courtesan, whose public performances are reflective in each other through the systematic hierarchies of power. Perhaps the upbringing of a young pupil by a watchful, motherly figure is what is directly illustrated in *Yujo to Kamuro*, but the underlying social implications of their relationship redefine the glamour that is the glittery floating world of Yoshiwara.



*Beauty Holding a Parasol &
Walking under a Willow*
Torii Kiyonaga, ca. 1780
67.6 x 11.6 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1120

4. Beauty Holding a Parasol & Walking under a Willow by Torii Kiyonaga

Torii Kiyonaga's Symbolic Ideals of Beauty for Women

Pooja Cavale, Emi Chun, Cindy Del Rio & Zak Nguyen

A tall and well-proportioned young woman of fashion wearing an ornate hairdo and dressed in elegance is walking under a willow tree while carrying an open umbrella above her head. Hardly any emotion is showing on her impassive face with well-articulated regular features on the smooth, off-white full-bodied oval shape. On the print, the woman is walking in a straightforward fashion to give the eye a linear motion from the willow leaves above down along the outline of her body. The woman's pose is contrasted with the free flowing of feathery willow branches softly swinging above her. The leaves give the courtesan a sense of grace and beauty alluding to sensuality and desire. The willow branches with their elongated narrow swaying leaves give the composition a nature setting and provide the courtesan a direction of her placid movement, further defining the space she is in.

As the woman walks forward in right to left direction, she is gracefully holding up her dress with her tiny hand in order to keep the hems of her kimonos together. But the movement demands an expanse of space that has been trimmed to frame only her figure, made dramatic by the partition of hems that reveal a portion of the woman's leg. This seems to be the only moment of action in an otherwise stagnant, pensive state in which the woman is represented as she is moving ahead with a straightforward gaze. In fact, the dress seems to defy physics as the leg reveal contrasts how the fabric seems to foam around the woman's feet. And of course, the reveal of the leg and the feet is very intentional, it is an abruptly loud and suggestive aspect of the image in a rather ramrod, yet restrained picture of elegance and upright stature. With this vague background, it seems that the viewer can assume she is walking on a road, in a rather public setting.

To have a fashionable woman represented as a serene beauty yet hinting exposure in a public space, it is clear that Torii Kiyonaga is trying to appreciate the standard convention of ukiyo-e printmaking of *bijinga*, or pictures of beautiful women, but perhaps in a less fantasized reality. If one is to imagine a traditional figurative ukiyo-e print – *bijinga* or *yakusha-e*, one can imagine a graceful courtesan or kabuki actor in a pose of action and/or elegance. *Bijinga* was meant to depict a sense of an idealized, symbolic beauty that was highlighted mainly by a sole figure's costume/patterning, makeup, and pose in a strongly aestheticized and provoking image. They were extremely popular and commercialized in Edo culture: thousands of images were printed cumulatively among the most prominent artists from the 18th century until even the early 20th century. Marked from then, it is clear to see a progression of changing ideals of beauty for women in their body type, attire, and behavior. For

instance, Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) was known for his thin, willowy figures that suggested youth and innocence by the way he gracefully curved and shaped women's bodies like he would vines and branches. Torii Kiyonaga, however saw beauty in a more mature form of grace that was passively dignified. His women were drawn fuller, taking up more space in the sheet and commanding a more central gaze of the viewer. The print *Beauty under a Willow*, for instance, is filled with the tall, straight figure of a solitary woman. While the costuming of the figure is certainly adorned and intentional, there is barely a hint of makeup in the figure's visage and there is a minor presence of performativity or public engagement. Instead, we see a passing snapshot of an everyday pastime. There is less an awareness of a specifically entertained gaze by the viewer and more a narrative gaze by Kiyonaga and his vision for existential beauty.

Part of his vision is exemplified in Kiyonaga's specified manner of depicting the dress. The woman is highlighted through her ornate colored apparel and headpiece which are both of orange/salmon hues, giving the viewer a sense of warmth and placidity. She is wearing three layers of robes, the collars of which overlap and remain visible; another glimpse is provided in the open hems of the kimonos as the woman is walking. Except for her outer kimono's collar and cuffs that bear *asa-no-ha* hemp-leaf pattern dyed in *shibori* bound-resist technique, the upper portion of the garment remains unadorned from shoulders down to her legs. The orange expanse of this unpatterned kimono shows areas of slight overprinting in a darker tone to suggest folds of fabric – rather a rare device for the 18th century ukiyo-e. The lower third of the kimono carries a distinct design of five-petal flowers scattered among small horizontally hatched zones. The petals are heart-shaped with a chip at the top which was a typical way to depict cherry blossoms. The hatching is either rendering of the mist or of the ripples of water. Since in Japan, seasonal signifiers were of ultimate significance, one can assume that the season is spring, and most likely the fifth month, or the time of blooming cherry trees.

The decorative focus on the woman's attire is her broad *obi* sash. It belongs to the same range of oranges but displays a bold, conspicuous design of a scrolling vine motif called *karakusa* – Chinese grass, combined with large stylized blossoms similar to peonies. The leaves on the vine and the space within the flower petals are printed with a greater variety of colors, including a dark green and light blue.

The woman is wearing a *furisode*, which is a type of robe that has distinct long, swinging sleeves. While more restricting of movement than the *kosode*, a similar robe defined by its short sleeves, the length of *furisode* sleeves gives a heightened sense of youth, since *furisode* are traditionally only worn by young people--regardless of gender. Knowing this, a sense of newness and innocence that is associated with youth arises to define the image. However, youth is not the only thing that the artist has chosen to imply by what this woman wears. Her

personality, her experiences, and even details about her environment, like the season, can be read through other ways that she presents herself, and in ways that her clothing is presenting her.

Going off from the sense of innocence and implications about youth in the woman's garment choice, the textiles that make up her *furisode* and the umbrella that she holds for shade play a significant role in suggestion season and the mood of the environment. The colors used in the textiles are rather warm, suggesting a warmer season. Spread across the midsection of the woman's body is a tall *obi* sash, decorated with a pattern depicting a *hosoge* motif. This is an incredibly intriguing placement for the *hosoge* flower, considering the centrality of the woman's stomach that the *obi* is covering, and the fact that *hosoge* is a flower that does not actually exist, although it is unknown whether or not *hosoge* were originally based on an actually existing flower. *Hosoge* is a pattern that is an "early floral motif imported from China . . . That their popularity endured for centuries more is probably due to the versatility of these elegant motifs, which serve equally well as primary or subsidiary designs . . . *Hosoge* (literally: flowers of precious appearance) have Silk Road forerunners in Persia and Central Asia . . . it was employed by early Japanese artisans on textiles, lacquerware, and Buddhist art and ritual objects (Baird 87)." Looking at the primary usage of *hosoge* in artisan crafts and the fact that it was something acquired from a different culture and held no poetic or symbolic significance to the Japanese people, it becomes quite clear that the only thing that *hosoge* is doing for the woman in this print is objectifying her existence, and placing emphasis on the state of being mundane. It is the artist's intention to use the insignificance and beauty of the *hosoge* pattern, placing it at the center of her body, to turn the woman into a mere object, almost as if she is nothing more than a doll.

The messages conveyed in other textiles that the woman is wearing offer an additional perspective to the artist's vision for who the woman is and what her experiences are; near the bottom of the woman's dress is a randomly arranged cherry blossom pattern. While the placement of individual blossoms may seem insignificant, it is important to note that the blossoms as a collective pattern were designed to reside on the lower part of the woman's *furisode*, near her feet. Cherry blossom motifs, in Japanese culture, became incredibly important and revered for their metaphorical beauty, because of their short blooming period:

"Heian-period trendsetters focused on the flower's brief blooming time and the fragility of its blossoms. These features meshed well with their preoccupation, strengthened by Buddhism, with the transience of life. Meanwhile, the resemblance of the cherry's massed blossoms to clouds and its fallen blossoms to snow captivated the artistic sensibilities of the Japanese and played into their love of visual metaphors . . . falling cherry blossoms became a metaphor for a warrior killed early in life" (Baird 48).

The placement of the cherry blossoms at the bottom of the *furisode* is an incredibly

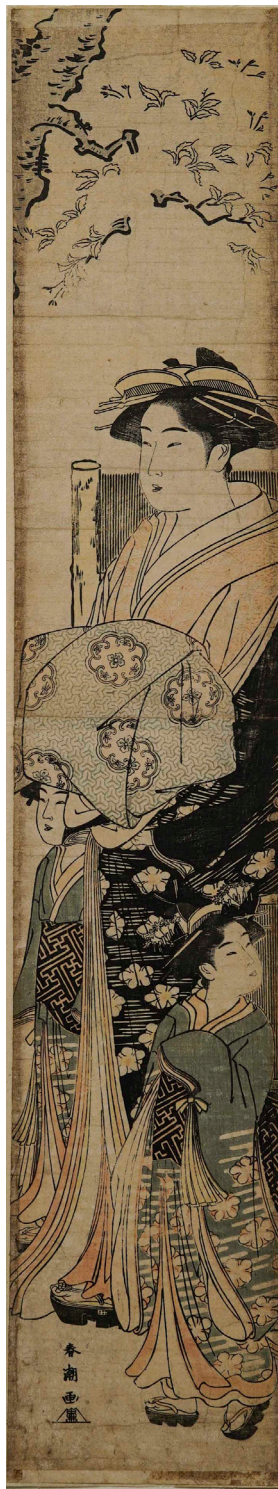
curious decision because of the symbolism that is typically associated with fallen cherry blossoms, since it could be poetically comparing this image of the woman to either snow, something that is pure and soft, or to a fallen young warrior, something that could be considered as beautifully destructive or melancholy. A third possibility would be a comparison to both of these things simultaneously: a conflicting yet beautiful juxtaposition that would speak volumes about who the woman is and her experiences. No matter what the artist's intention was, however, it can be assumed that there is an aspect of the woman's persona or experiences that is short lived, due to the brief time during which these flowers are in bloom.

Additionally, the cherry blossom works in combination with the form of the *furisode* and how it seems to be briefly exposing the woman's foot. It can be stated that the part going down the middle of the front of the *furisode* is a reference to the flow of water, given that "designs that combine the [cherry blossom] flower with running water, including waterfalls, or with man-made objects such as rafts and gabions that allude to running water . . . were especially popular in the late Edo period, when they were used on *furisode*" (Baird 49). Given that the exposure of the woman's foot is likely a brief moment in the motion of her stride, and given the popular association of cherry blossoms with references to water, it is likely that the flow of the dress is being compared to the flow of water, and that the exposure of the woman's foot is a sexual moment that is just like an irregularity in the flow of water. Because of the rather shocking yet sexual qualities of the exposed foot, the artist could be sexualizing the water-like movement of the woman and her *furisode*, and also the short lived fragility and/or toughness that is implied in the use of the fallen cherry blossom motif.

The umbrella/parasol that the woman holds obviously implies that there is some sort of sunlight that she is shading from her face. This goes back to suggest information about the spring/summer season and the environment that she exists in. It is, however, also important to note that umbrellas were a sign of power in Japan, as they emulated the sun. "Graphically signifying a meeting and binding together of the heavenly and earthly realms, they are still widely used in Japan in religious and imperial contexts. A canopy decorated with a sun symbol covers the throne at the enthronement ceremonies of new emperors" (Baird 276). In combination with the rest of the woman's appearance, the umbrella could add an extra layer of elegance and power to her persona and experiences; however, the breadth of area that the parasol encompasses is cut off by the sides of the *hashira-e* format of the print, and must be imagined by the viewer. Whatever elegance and power that the parasol could have added to the image was avoided by this crop. While this does not necessarily take away from the rest of the image, it certainly is an unsuccessful representation of the symbolic power of the parasol, signifying either a lack of acknowledgement of the *hashira-e* format on the artist's part or a very intentional decision to include the parasol in this manner. If the artist was aware of the effect that the crop has on the symbolic meaning of the umbrella, the crop would then act

as a way for the artist to allow the woman a sense of power, only to take it away immediately. There are a number of reasons why the artist could have chosen to do this, whether it be a statement that the woman is of lower class, a reinforcement of her youth and innocence, or it could even be working in combination with the *hosoge* pattern of her *obi* sash to objectify the woman to a doll-like existence.

In all, Torii Kiyonaga's presence and influence of the Edo period of Japan is indicative to how women were perceived in the context of ukiyo-e prints. For Torii Kiyonaga, the use of symbols and framing are only attributes of his personal image of a perfect woman, an ideal that is projected onto the bodies of women and perpetuated by the popularization and circulation of imagery in urban Edo. His symbolic use of patterning is emblematic of a rich cultural history of nature's effect onto the public perception of beauty, perpetuated and repeated time after time, although contrasting the ever-changing flux of female beauty. What is considered an ideal shape, body type, or behavior of a woman is constantly changing and evolving according to the visions of ukiyo-e artists in Japan. Perhaps Torii Kiyonaga's work is evidence of Japan's slow shift of appreciating female beauty in fantasy to reality, though it is still under the primarily male paradigm of thought.



Courtesan and Two Kamuro
Katsukawa Shuncho
ca. early 1790s
61.9 x 11.6 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1127

5. Courtesan and Two Kamuro by Katsukawa Shuncho

A Glimpse into Yoshiwara Lifestyle Clarke Waskowitz & Sophi Miyoko Gullbrants

A woman flanked by two girls at each side is walking outside from right to left. The group takes most of the space of the tall and narrow *hashira-e* – a pillar print by Katsukawa Shuncho. There is no depicted background, with line and color used only to articulate the figures, the fence, and the branch of a cherry tree. The print uses four colors of inks: black, green, pink, and yellow. The black is used both in the linework and in larger areas of color while the green, pink, and yellow are only used as fills. The negative space has no applied color, the aging yellow tone of the paper being the only fill.

The group of three figures consists of one courtesan, identifiable from her stylish look, her lavish hairstyle with ornaments, her layered kimonos, padded and conspicuously adorned *obi*, and of course, because she is accompanied by two young girls – her assistants, the *kamuro*. The *kamuro* are much shorter than the courtesan, their height being only little over half of the courtesan's. Perspective is subtly utilized to show depth with the courtesan and two *kamuro* standing next to each other on a diagonal plane that extends from the bottom right corner of the print to the left side of the print. While the perspective is not dramatic, it is pronounced enough to warrant a change in height of the figures; distinct placement of figures is utilized to suggest a three-dimensional space. The *kamuro* on the right is slightly lower than the courtesan to indicate that she is the closest to the viewer, while the leftmost *kamuro* stands above and to the left of the courtesan to indicate that she is the farthest from the viewer. The courtesan also blocks most of the left half of the furthest *kamuro*, adding to the sense of realistic perspective. That being said, none of the figures are shown in full, some parts of the print cutting off at least some portion of their form or clothing while the figures partially obstruct the view of each other.

The center figure is a tall courtesan, defined by her overall elegance, lavish hairstyle, and an *obi* tied in the front. The courtesan's hair ornaments, *kanzashi*, are yellow, implying that they are made of tortoise shell.¹ There are three simple curved combs, *kushi*, surrounded with eight hairpins, *kogai*. Her dress is typical of eighteenth century courtesan couture- stylish, with many layers and vivid textiles. Her *obi* consists of layered fabric and drapes over her hands. It is a white fabric with an all-over green pattern, likely a diluted version of the ink used in the *kamuro*'s outer robes. The green pattern is a geometric triangular pattern that is interspersed with large circular elements. This specific pattern is called *bishamon kekko*, which means "tortoise shell design of Bishamon style".² Bishamon is one of the protective deities in Buddhism whose armor is typically decorated with this pattern.³ This pattern was

¹ "Kanzashi," Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/k/kanzashi.htm>.

² JAANUS, "Kikkouon."

³ Ibid.

often paired with other designs, including the roundels that appear on the courtesan's *obi*. These roundels are quite interesting because from the eighth century to the seventeenth century this pattern was reserved for aristocracy only, but in the world of Yoshiwara we see it used for a high-ranking courtesan. The elements resemble an eight-petal black and white flower, but could also be an insignia or crest. There is a smaller flower at the center and on every other petal.

The courtesan wears five-layered robes tied with her *obi*. Her garment touches the ground while her sleeves are shorter. Her innermost robe is white and extends beyond and above the back of the neck. The second robe is either off white or faded white, an indication given by its slight difference in color to the innermost white robe. The third robe is yellow and the fourth is pink, which is shown more because the outermost robe is draped around the courtesan's shoulders. The outermost robe is black and entirely patterned with thin horizontal white stripes that are interspersed with white five petal flowers with a yellow center and white circles behind them. Additionally, there is a pink undergarment visible near her feet, potentially the fourth robe that covers most of the feet from view.

Geta are the wooden clogs shown on the woman and girls' feet.⁴ *Geta* were made of paulownia or cryptomeria wood with oak or magnolia supports and cloth or leather thong straps. These shoes came into popularity in the Edo period.⁵ The straps are made up of three individual cords that tie in an intricate knot at their meeting place. Only the courtesan's left foot is visible, and it is mostly obscured by the hem of her robes, with only the toes and front portion of her bare foot in the *geta* showing. Going barefoot was an expression of *iki*, "symbolization of coquetry," a masterful and subtle exposure of just the foot as opposed to revealing other parts of the body.⁶

The courtesan is tall and her gait is somewhat stiff. She faces towards the left side of the print, viewed at three quarters, engaged in a very slow walk. Her entire height is visible, but the right portion of her body is slightly cut off by the print's boundary. Of course, this is done on purpose – to create an impression she has just appeared in the narrow frame of the *hashira-e* as she is passing by us. It fosters the viewers' impression that they are watching this entire splendor firsthand.

The closest *kamuro* is dressed in fashion corresponding to the elegance of the courtesan. Her hair is worn in an elaborate style, divided into thirds and pinned on top of her head. The outer portions of hair extend out from her head at relatively sharp angles, and the middle portion is piled on top of her head and fastened with yellow and white hair combs. The center yellow hair comb is yellow and curved and without decoration. Her two white hair combs are placed on either side of the yellow comb and are decorated with long stemmed flowers. *Bira bira kanzashi* is the name of the dangling hair pieces of the *kamuro*, which are used because they make a subtle and beautiful sound when the girl walks.

⁴ Jerry Vegder, "Ukiyo-e Prints: A Million Questions Two Million Mysteries," accessed October 2, 2017, www.printsofjapan.com.

⁵ Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 185-186.

⁶ Hiroshi Nara, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shuzo*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), Fleet Library At RISD & Providence Athenaeum: Library Catalogue, 39.

She wears layered robes with an *obi* tied in the back. All of the robes are of a similar cut with overlapping v-necks and long sleeves that descend past the knee and cover the hands. Such long-sleeved kimonos are called *furisode* or “swinging sleeves”.⁷ Her outermost robe is green with a pattern on the bottom half featuring an arrangement of white, lateral, rounded rectangles beneath white flowers with five petals and a pink center and background. This pattern shows cherry blossoms in mist, a typical spring motif. Underneath her outer robe are two robes colored white and pink, respectively. Her sleeves are knotted with yellow ribbons tied in a bow with approximately twelve tassels. The *obi* is of a back fabric with geometric pink lines at right angles and with equal space between lines, a pattern called *sayagata*.⁸

The tops of her feet are somewhat covered by the hem of her kimono. On her feet, she wears platform sandals. The soles feature two square cutouts that extrude throughout the lateral entirety of the shoe. They appear to be made of painted black wood and are about twice the height of the foot. Two yellow straps meet in-between the *kamuro*’s big toe and second toe without decoration. The *kamuro*’s right foot is facing forward and is resting entirely on the ground while her left foot only touches the ground at the shoe’s toe, slightly behind the right foot, indicating movement. There are no lines distinguishing individual toes on the right foot, so the *kamuro* might be wearing *tabi* socks with a separation between the big toe and other toes.

The closest *kamuro* is significant in that her posture is remarkably different than that of the other two figures. The *kamuro*’s head is craning over her left shoulder so that she is looking backward. The turn of the girl’s head makes the entire scene livelier, adding certain immediacy to it as a natural manifestation of a young person’s curiosity. The artist presents a visually coherent group but still endows the characters with relative individuality by changing the position of the girl’s head. The girl has soft facial contours with a rounded jaw, a small closed mouth, and a slender neck. It is worth noting that she is the only figure with a closed mouth. She has a long, slightly hooked round nose and elliptical eyes angled towards her small ears (only the right ear is visible). Her pupils are pointing upward and right, apparently she is looking at something beyond the limits of the print. One might speculate that, if she were a part of a courtesan’s procession, the young girl may be looking back at other members of the courtesan’s entourage parading behind.⁹

The farthest *kamuro* is identical to the closest *kamuro* in her clothing, facial features, and hairstyle. However, her static posture is more similar to the courtesan’s, as she is facing the same direction and shows little hints of movement. She is mostly obscured by the courtesan, with only the left half of her body shown in a three-quarter view. Additionally, most of her hair is obscured by the courtesan’s *obi*.

Outside of the three figures, there are only two other elements in the print: the fence and the tree. The fence is yellow and black, with one large post followed by many vertical

⁷ Seigle, Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan.

⁸ JAANUS, “Sayagata.”

⁹ Seigle, Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan, 225-6.”

black lines that seem to reference an arrangement of reeds or thin branches. The thick post has visible bark patterns and knots. Only a relatively small portion of this post is visible, the rest being cut off by the figures. The visible portion protrudes behind the courtesan's *obi* and ends on the same horizontal as the base of the courtesan's earlobe. An ellipse is visible at the top of the post, indicating that it is cylindrical. The thin lines are visible again to the right of the closest *kamuro*'s face. There is a horizontal bar that is slightly visible before it is cut off by the courtesan's sleeve, just above the closest *kamuro*'s hair.

The tree is visible in the top left corner of the page. Its trunk is grey with black outlines. The lines used for the tree are overall much thicker and more expressive than those used in the rest of the print, which allow the tree to express a great deal of volume and dimension. Images of nature are rendered in a more direct manner expressing Japanese fabled sensitivity to nature. There is one branch protruding from the tree and extending to the right almost throughout the entire width of the print. This branch is broken momentarily by negative space in the center of the page and reappears at a slightly lower horizontal, indicating that it is the same branch, just curving down. It tapers off with one secondary branch forking off near the center of the omission. There are sparse leaves drawn on the top fifth of the page, indicating foliage. These leaves are printed with thin delicate lines and are relatively small with one center line and serrated edges. They appear in clusters of twos and threes and are all roughly the same size, with several towards the right edge of the page that are thinner. There are also flowers on the tree, which are very pale, very faded cloud-like formations next to which the leaves are depicted – these flowers are clusters of *sakura*, or cherry blossoms.

Bijinga is this type of print that specifically depicts a “beautiful person,” the meaning of *bijin*, though almost exclusively women and often prostitutes were depicted because of the lavish garb.¹⁰ While there is little action, the amount of detail of the *bijin* depicted is very revealing of lives of these characters in this particular time and place, the Edo period, in Yoshiwara, a district in which brothels were recognized as legitimate. For instance, the mere distinction of the woman being a courtesan is told through the tying of the *obi* in the front, the elaborate fashion, and the accompaniment of two young girls dressed in similar garb. The elaborate nature of the fashion, textile patterns, hair style, and being flanked by two young children, also adds this notion. *Kamuro* is the name of the type of children depicted, who were “assistant trainees to a courtesan”.¹¹ While modern sensibilities and morals look down on prostitution, not to mention introducing girls to the practice at such a young age, this introduction was seen as beneficial to the girls who could be trained and educated to a great extent, an escape of any lower socioeconomic status. The idea of prostitution was merely an aspect of the occupation of being a beautiful, well-rounded, and educated woman. Courtesans were sold to brothels for ten years, though occasionally bought out early by a client. Girls to become *kamuro* were sold to a brothel at five or six. They were also dressed in

¹⁰ Vegder, “Ukiyo-e Prints: A Million Questions Two Million Mysteries.”

¹¹ Ibid.

fashionable clothes with loud prints and given lavish ornaments.

So much of the Edo period culture is captured in this one narrow strip of paper in a mass-produced medium. In this particular piece, the format of *hashira-e*, pillar print, is successfully used to maximize the artistic effect providing a quick glimpse of the fleeting fantasy of the dazzling imaginary world of Yoshiwara. This print shows how ukiyo-e print designers capitalized on the trend of the Edo period, an obsession with fashion which was the most recognizable feature in the culture of the women of Yoshiwara. The artist, Katsukawa Shuncho, specifically depicted women in a trendy, yet original way. The standard became images of bold, ample, beautiful women with delicate features crafted by simple line. Though best known for his *yakusha-e* prints, or Kabuki actor prints, Katsukawa Shuncho's *bijinga* prints became well known for their intricacies and beauty, collaging images of women in various periods. This *bijinga* print of Katsukawa Shuncho encapsulates many features of ukiyo-e, including the popular romanticizing of life in Yoshiwara as contrasted to the ordinary life of townspeople.



Courtesan and Servant Boy
Katsukawa Shuncho
ca. early 1790s
66 x 16.2 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1129

6. Courtesan and a Servant Boy by Katsukawa Shuncho

Partner Dynamics that Accentuates Beauty *Qianyi Zhang*

A stylishly attired beautiful woman with an elaborate hairdo is walking outdoors accompanied by a young boy. The two are walking from right to left, having just passed by a pine tree with a wisteria vine hanging down from its branches. Leaving a shrub behind them, the company seems to linger for a moment as the woman turns her head slightly backwards, interested in something outside of the viewers' field of vision. The woman's ornate hairstyle, embellished layered *kimonos*, and big *obi* sash tied in the front indicate that the woman must be a courtesan, a high-ranking entertainer and prostitute from Yoshiwara, the brothel district in Edo (Tokyo).

The courtesan has a placid facial expression typical to women depicted in ukiyo-e prints, with elaborate *shimada* hairstyle to emphasize her identity. Her facial features are near-identical to many other courtesans depicted in ukiyo-e prints with emotionless expression. Her hair ornaments, *kanzashi*, are widely used by courtesans to decorate their hair. These hair pins are likely made from tortoise shell and have a yellow tone. Her wide, semicircular comb sits on top of her hair, and the other six hairpins extend outwards with bead-shaped decorations. The outer ends of the hairpins terminate with a rounded element, which can be used as ear picks. This beautiful hairstyle is one of the titular indicators for courtesans.

The woman's attire with layered *kimonos* and the *obi* sash tied at the front is unique to the courtesan. The courtesan wears three layers of robes: white inner layer followed by a robe of white color adorned with patches of red composed of red-line hatching. Similar red-line patches decorate the dark grey outer kimono. This dark outer kimono has additional white print of leaves – perhaps, the courtesan's crest.

The red *obi* with the floral pattern is tied in front of her body with a knot. The function of the *obi* is to keep the kimono in place. During Edo period, *obi* became more and more important in dress style. In contrast to the narrow band in earlier centuries, *obi* in this period became wide and prominent. The width and length both increased to twelve feet long and six to eight inches broad. While most women tie the elaborate knot on the back, courtesans are required to fasten the *obi* in the front. The *obi* has a yellow floral pattern on the muted red fabric for decorating purposes since it was an essential ornamental accent in the courtesan's outfit. Beneath the *obi* below her waist, the courtesan also wears a green belt with a delicate square pattern. In her left hand, she is holding a closed umbrella, which is used against rain or sunshine, or just as a fashionable accessory.

The courtesan wears sandals that feature a thick, four-layered sole. While stepping forward, the courtesan unintentionally shows some of her leg that becomes visible in between the hems of her garment. This detail adds an air of mild eroticism to the courtesan's image.

The boy closely follows the courtesan and almost echoes her posture. He is much shorter than the courtesan and his head is clean-shaven. The garment he wears is of indigo-dyed fabric with light white pattern. His *obi* tied at the back is not patterned. Its abbreviated profile reminds the shape of the ties of the courtesan's narrow belt, emphasizing the unity of the two persons portrayed. The accord of the figures is further expressed by the parallelism of the folds of their *kimonos* as the two are walking in step and by the boy's sandals that are of the same type as those of the courtesan but on a flat, one-layer sole. He follows the courtesan so closely that only a half of his body is showing. Although his movements largely replicate those of the courtesan, instead of looking up, he focuses on something on the ground but also behind the group.

This boy is most likely a *wakaimono*, or a male servant in brothels.¹ At Yoshiwara, the *wakaimono*'s duties included remedial chores, preparing baths, and accompanying the courtesans on their outings. The boy in the print seems to be at a young age. However, since the term *wakaimono* refers to all the male servants, some can even be middle aged or old men. The wages of the *wakaimono* ranges from 75 sen to 1 yen per month, which is very low and not enough to meet the basic living expenses. Therefore, they have other sources of income, including the "extortion" of change that is due to guests. When a guest pays the courtesan for the service, the courtesan can urge the guest to give the change to the servant. The guest usually agrees for the fear of being considered unrefined. In this situation, the dependent relationship between the courtesan and the boy is extremely important for *wakaimono* to earn extra money.²

The print successfully articulates the amicable relationship between the courtesan and her companion through the treatment of the subject matter and by the composition. Although the two are gazing at different directions, they are remarkably united through their tight proximity, parallel silhouettes, and mirrored resemblance of their faces that are light in tone and oval-shaped.

The figures are not the only subject in the print that give the viewer a sense of direction and pace. In fact, the pine branches, umbrella, and vines also point towards the direction they are going in. The bent of the bush's branch coincides with the bent of both figures, making it more definitive. The choice of these particular subjects, endowing them with their specific features and arranging them in a distinct composition adds a sense of immediacy to the print.

The background is simple but illustrates the important elements of the environment.

¹ Seigle, 40

² De Becker, 64-65

The branch of the pine tree and vines extends over the main subjects' heads to fill the empty upper space of the print. The clusters of the needles on the pine tree appear in fan shapes, with black lines depicting the needles. The branch has a dark outline with light yellow color within; the branch changes thickness as it extends to the left. The vine is right beneath the pine tree branch, and the leaves on it are of multiple sizes and orientations.

The ground on which the courtesan and the boy are walking is lightly printed with a green color, with its border demarcated with a thin line behind them and some bamboo shoots. Unlike the bright red color used on the courtesan's garments and saturated hues on those of the boy, the background of muted blue and green creates a color contrast that allows the figures to stand out.

The long and narrow *hashira-e* format emphasizes the slenderness of the courtesan. The narrowness seems to push the two figures closer together. However, it only allows the viewers to see a limited amount of space, with the tip of the umbrella already exiting the view. Such bold cropping adds the urgent feeling to the subjects. It makes the image to have a more life-like quality, introducing a sliver of a dimension of time.

Bijinga genre focuses on representation of fashionable beautiful women as it responds to the public's shifting perceptions of beauty through emotion. In fact, many *bijinga* prints intend to hint at nearly unnoticeable moods in these women through the means of composition and subject choice. Many of Katsukawa Shuncho's prints are created in this genre. Edo prints emphasize the rich culture, religion and history of Japan during that time, but it is also safe to say that these prints are designed to suit the aesthetics and likings of the people, in simple words, it is a very early version of consumerism. During the Edo period, artists had used attractive images of courtesans to inspire interests of the general public. The attempt had captivated many viewers and increased the usage of prints. It is also important that in Japan that it is almost impossible to separate visual art from interior design, as Japanese visual images tend to function as a decorative element of the structure of the room itself.

This print of a courtesan and a boy portrays a dynamic scene of the two walking by. The beauty of the courtesan is emphasized through her hairdo, clothing and the slenderness of her body accentuated through the format of *hashira-e*. Through this glimpse across time, the viewers are able to observe the world of femininity, fashion and fantasy that dominated the Edo period culture of the floating world.



Courtesan on Parade
Kikukawa Eizan
1830's
75.3 x 24.9 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
upright oban diptych
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1167

7. Courtesan on Parade by Kikukawa Eizan

Celebrating the Grand Oiran Janice Kim & Katherine Yoon

A dazzling beauty is meticulously groomed with her well-adorned high hairdo as layers of gorgeous fabric sway to her complex deliberate steps, right to left, on the forbiddingly high-soled shoes. A close-up of this spectacle is afforded by a large-scale ukiyo-e woodblock print in the vertical *oban* diptych format designed by the artist Kikukawa Eizan in ca. 1830.

The print focuses on the appearance of the woman, perhaps a recognized beauty from among the high-ranking courtesans of Yoshiwara, or the “pleasure quarter” in Edo (now Tokyo) licensed by the Tokugawa government. The image captures her posture, makeup, hairstyle, and costume in the style that is at once strikingly lifelike. She is poised in a flirtatious manner with her head slightly tilted down and her hips projected forward, emphasizing the curvature of her body. The elegance and coquetry of the figure is further highlighted by the smooth perfection of her makeup and the splendor of her hairdo. The woman has a long, slim face. Her skin is extremely pale and fair, which stands as a symbol of beauty. During the Edo Period, beauty was often associated with a light skin tone that was translucent and polished.¹ Thus, it was common for women to paint their face and neck with white powder called *oshiroi* to achieve the pale look.² *Oshiroi* was derived from a mixture of rice flour, white soil and a liquid extracted from the seeds of the jalap plant. The woman has elongated slanted eyes, while her natural eyebrows are thick and filled in. In the 17th century, Japanese aristocratic women often had eyebrows that were plucked and repainted above their original positions.³ It is not the case here, however. Her nose is sharp and well defined. Her mouth is expressly small and the lips are accentuated with red rouge made from the juice of the safflower.⁴ An interesting detail is that the woman’s bottom lip appears to be green, which is a cosmetic feature favored at the time by many courtesans: they painted the lower lips with iridescent green rouge known as *sasabeni*, it is made of the beni red derived from safflower but with an admixture of green from bamboo grass.⁵ The courtesan’s facial characteristics and cosmetic practices attest to the beauty ideals of women, particularly courtesans during the Edo Period.

The courtesan’s complex hairdo on the print is adorned by sumptuous gold-hued tortoise shell hairpins and combs, which are called *kanzashi*. The placement, type, and number of *kanzashi* in the hair immediately indicate her status. An average courtesan would insert

¹ “The Fair Face of Japanese Beauty.” Nippon.com. <http://www.nippon.com/en/views/bo2602/>.

² “The Fair Face of Japanese Beauty.” Nippon.com. <http://www.nippon.com/en/views/bo2602/>.

³ Miller, Laura. “Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics”. University of California Press. 2006; 21

⁴ Mansfield, Stephen. “Tokyo: A Cultural and Literary History”. Oxford University Press. 2009.

⁵ Mansfield, Stephen. “Tokyo: A Cultural and Literary History”. Oxford University Press. 2009.

six pieces of *kanzashi* usually made of coral or tortoise shell.⁶ However, the figure in the print displays thirteen yellow-colored tortoise shell *kanzashi*, representing a higher class courtesan, an *oiran*, the most refined and cultured in the hierarchy of Yoshiwara.

Even more significant than the striking hair accessories is the diversity and richness of the garments on the figure. The courtesan is depicted in layers of boldly patterned yet exquisite robes. Eizan describes at least four layers of the woman's robes in the print. Her innermost garment is made of white fabric, which is then followed by a red layer of cherry-blossom patterned kimono. Then a layer of brown-and-white checkered robe comes – it is discussed in larger detail later. Over this brown-and-white checkered garment the courtesan is wearing a light-red robe with *asa-no-ha* or hemp-leaf design. One can discern large hexagonal stars composed of small white circles – this is rendering of the specific tie-dye technique called *shiborizome*. Over the kimono decorated with *asa-no-ha* pattern there is, perhaps, another layer of checkered green-and-white robe. Another possibility is that checkered textile is a lining for the black outer garment. The outer garment is the *uchikake* with bamboo designs boldly silhouetted in white over its entire surface. All her garments, except for the *uchikake* are kept in place by the front-tied obi sash. Both the *uchikake* and strikingly-patterned front-tied obi sash are indications of her status of high-ranking courtesan. The print also emphasizes specific features attesting the courtesan as the embodiment of the very height of fashion. This refers to the intricate details and designs of the woman's exquisite garments. Her robes are traditionally somewhat lowered down her back allowing the viewers' appreciation of the thought-out rhythm of colors and designs of her layered robes. Undulating bands of fabric at the collar line highlight alternation of flower-patterned reds and checkered-patterned brown-and-white and green-and-white stripes. This pattern is known as *ichimatsu mon'yo*, named after the kabuki actor, Sanogawa Ichimatsu I (1722-1762), who utilized the design on his trousers and pioneered the use of this design. The black color of her outer garment is a unique attribute of this print. Black is an important signifier when expressing splendor, wisdom, and beauty.⁷ Though her other kimonos appear colorful, the black dominates the outer garment and creates a negative space as the field for the bamboo design. Bamboo is a symbol of perseverance in traditional Japanese customs, so it often figures in fashion, art, and literature.⁸

Another prominent feature of her apparel is the splendid bow of her obi, the highlight of the courtesan's costume. The obi is decorated with a *hana-tatewaku* pattern. It is formed by parallel wavy lines that define oval lozenges filled in with floral shapes. The *tatewaku* pattern has ancient origins and up to Edo period was reserved for usage among court nobility and military elite. Its presence here not only attests to this courtesan's high status but speaks about cultural complexity of the Edo period courtesan culture on the whole. Color-wise, the green, brown, yellow and purple of the obi fabric is echoed by the hexagon-adorned hem area

⁶ Newland, Amy Reigle. "The Hotei encyclopedia of Japanese woodblock prints". Amsterdam: Hotei Pub., 2005.

⁷ "The Fair Face of Japanese Beauty." Nippon.com. <http://www.nippon.com/en/views/bo2602/>.

⁸ Abe, Namiko. "The Role of Bamboo in Japanese Culture." ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/bamboo-in-japanese-culture-2028043>.

at the bottom of her garments. Hexagon design known as *kikkomon* or tortoise shell pattern likewise originally was used by higher classes of the society only.⁹

Below the exquisite garments, one can see the courtesan's black *geta*, high wooden footwear that can be measured to around 15cm tall. *Oiran* (high class courtesans) would wear the *geta* during the *Oiran Dochu* - Procession of Courtesans. It was one of those flamboyant, entertaining, and attractive events in which courtesans offered all manner of entertainment including fine dining, ceremonial performances, and parades. The *Oiran Dochu* was a ceremonial procession imitating those made by "the shogun officials between the cities of Kyoto and Edo".¹⁰ As there were few courtesans of high rank, each procession was thoroughly enjoyed by spectators and visitors. The owners of brothel establishments were very aware of the mass appeal of *Oiran Dochu* and made the "most of the processions to advertise their courtesan".¹¹ High class courtesans escorted their guests during the *Oiran Dochu* in elaborate garments, flamboyant accessories, thick makeup, and *geta* footwear as illustrated in the print. The courtesan in procession had to maintain her stoic figure and composure throughout the ceremonial parade. She could not respond to anyone and had to keep her eyes forward. The courtesan was walking in a particular gait called *hachimonji* – character "eight" because the feet had to be slightly turned inward in imitation of the shape of this kanji. Slow, smooth and curving movement of the extraordinary high clogs caused the swaying of the figure and added to the courtesan's overall allure. This is not to mention that a glimpse of bare feet under the line of the courtesan's undergarment as featured in the print was considered electrifying and erotic adding to the sensuality of the image on the print.¹²

Through examining the *bijinga* prints, various social and cultural aspects can be observed. In Kikukawa Eizan's print details of fashion and makeup are used to deliberately illustrate the woman's status as a high rank courtesan, and supposedly her performance of the courtesan parade. Although the print does not include any depiction of the background, by solely focusing on the woman and her resplendent appearance, it suggests that she is situated in the middle of the parade in external setting. This print of just one courtesan who takes most of the space of a large vertical *oban* size diptych (75.3 x 24.9 cm) creates a powerful and evocative close-up image allowing viewers to imagine witnessing the spectacle of courtesans parading in Yoshiwara.

Ukiyo-e print artist Kikukawa Eizan (1787-1867) used to be viewed by many as an imitator of the great ukiyo-e beauty print master, Utamaro. However, in fact Eizan had developed quite an independent style of his own. His *bijinga* prints manifest coherence in imagery, harmonious colors, graceful lines and overall elegance. Furthermore, his distinctive style is known for illustrating "facial features, such as long, slanting eyes, contracting eyebrows and half opened lips touched with green contribute to a strong-minded vivacious female image".¹³ Eizan readily worked in the extended vertical format of an upright diptych,

⁹Mizoguchi, Saburo. "Design Motifs", New York – Tokyo, Wetherhill / Shibundo, 1973; 127-128

¹⁰Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. "Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan". Honolulu, HI: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1993; 225

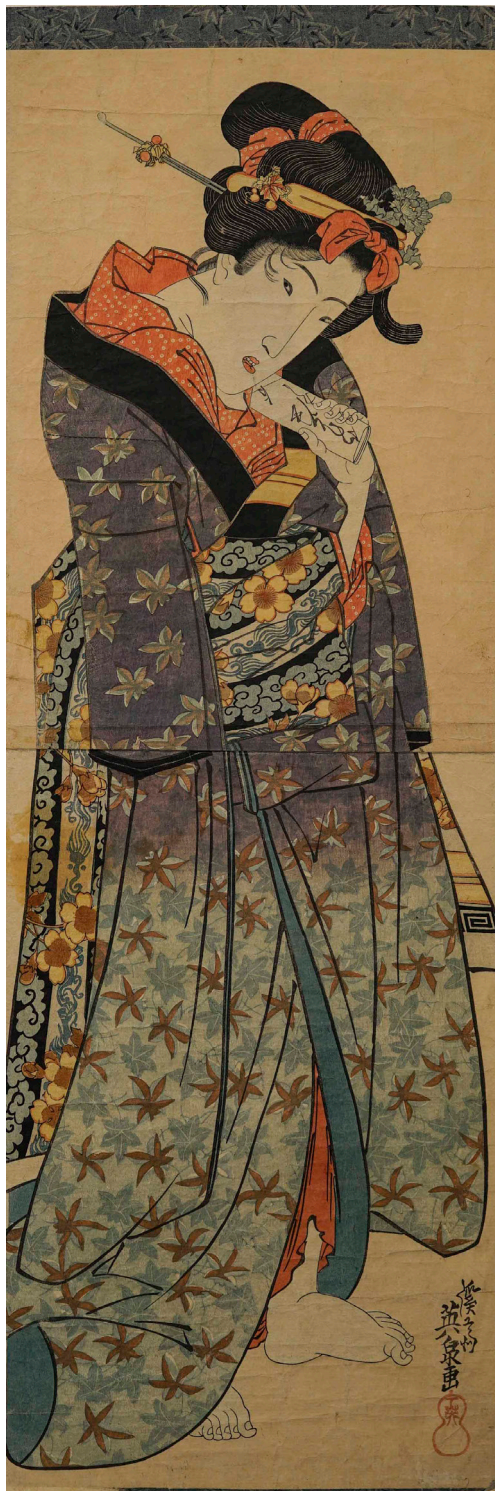
¹¹Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. "Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan". Honolulu, HI: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1993; 225

¹²Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. "Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan". Honolulu, HI: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1993.

¹³Jordan, Brenda G. "Ikeda Eisen." Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T039930>.

designing compositions similar to hanging scrolls and achieving greater presence of his subjects. Thus, his print *Courtesan on Parade* which was created during late-mid part of Kikukawa Eizan's career, exemplifies his distinct artistic voice to its best.

To conclude, Kikukawa Eizan's print of a parading courtesan from the RISD Museum collection can be appreciated on different levels. It may appeal to the viewers just aesthetically, pulling them into the aura of subtle beauty through the artist's careful gesture. But the print also unravels specific history of a courtesan parade at Yoshiwara, which adds historical and cultural dimension to the comprehension of the print. Hence, the type of the courtesan's beauty, her specific make-up and majestic hairdo with the tortoise shell ornate hairpieces, the number and the types of kimono she is wearing, patterns on her garments and their peculiar details altogether offer new depths of meaning in perception of the print. Contemplation of this large-scale compelling close-up of a high-ranking Yoshiwara courtesan evokes audience's illusion of real-life experiencing the intriguing and engaging culture of the floating world.



Courtesan with a Letter
Keisai Eisen
1830s
73.7 x 24.9 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
upright ōban diptych
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1169

8. Courtesan with a Letter by Keisai Eisen

Refocusing the Dual Identity of Courtesan Bijin *Jungeun Han & YuJin Kim*

In this print, Keisai Eisen portrays a graceful feminine beauty, seductive and appealing, dressed in bright costumes according to the latest fashion. In her right hand, she is holding a letter up to her face. This beautiful young woman has slightly tucked up her skirt under a sash in order to avoid tripping. Lavishly dressed in an extravagant kimono and with her hair held up with ribbons and costly ornaments, she is walking by slowly, immersed in deep thoughts. Bosch claims that it was inevitable that Eisen's prints show a stereotypical images of beauties as all other ukiyo-e artists did as they specialized in a single sub-genre of the floating world. *Courtesan with Letter* is an example of his shifting focus to a more detailed rendering of hairstyles and kimono in Edo period.¹

The details of the woman's hair suggest how the Edo period introduced Japanese women to much more elaborate hairstyle in fashion. The styles differed depending on "a woman's age, occupation, regional background and social or marital status".² The hair style depicted in this print is called the *shimada-mage* wherein the long hair is looped in the back, its front and back slicked with wax and ornamented with a comb or hairpins on the top as a finishing touch.³ This style was commonly worn by young women to indicate that they were still unmarried.⁴ For special occasions, late Edo-period courtesans would take all the trouble to style their hair up and embellish with all types of ornamentation such as buns, combs, hair sticks, ribbons and even flowers. With the woman's hair styled in an elaborate coiffure, the print conveys a message that she was a courtesan who was attending a very important engagement or that she returned from a special event with a letter that she's holding in her right hand.

In the context of ukiyo-e with the conventions of the beautiful women genre *bijin-ga*, one can assume that she is a courtesan who has received a love letter. Perhaps it is exactly this letter that causes her pensive state. Even though it is hard to detect the exact author of the letter by just observing the print, this assumption of the letter being an intimate communication can be made, because such letters were commonly used by courtesans to manage their guests. According to Swinton, courtesans and their customers exchanged these letters to promise dating back after spending the night together – the letter was an important part of business for courtesans to maintain customers.⁵ These love letters called *kinuginu no fumi*, which translates to the "next-morning letter," often appear in printings of beauties as a prop to hint courtesan life.⁶

¹ Glen Van Den Bosch, *The Woodblock Prints Series of Keisai Eisen*. Andon, no. 103 (2017): 98.

² Murata Takako, "the Beauty and Charm of Japanese Traditional Hairstyles," *Japan Spotlight*, (March/April, 2010): 3, accessed November 1, 2017, https://www.jef.or.jp/journal/pdf/J.Mind%20Pola_0603.pdf

³ Kallie Szczepanski, "10 Japanese Women's Hairstyles," *ThoughtCo.*, accessed November 2, 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/japanese-womens-hairstyles-through-the-ages-195583>.

⁴ Takako, 3.

⁵ Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter* (New York, NY: Worcester Art Museum, 1995), 141

⁶ *Ibid.*

Artfully employing negative space and vertical dynamism, Eisen successfully uses this vertical oban format. The upright format of the print, its extended length together with the fact that the woman's image takes most of the print's surface immediately establishes close contact between her and the viewer. Guided from the top of the print to the bottom, looking at the depiction of a courtesan walking barefooted gives the viewer a voyeuristic sense of peeking in on a private scene.

Unaccompanied either by architecture or landscape, the print shows depiction of an ideal beauty that was pursued during the Edo period: "eyes with dominant black pupils; eyebrows close together on the smoky side; face in the shape of a melon seed; fingers and toes with delicate nails along with tapered and supple fingers".⁷ Following this idealized image of beauty, Eisen's *bijinga*, however, shows a slightly different style approach than those variations that can be seen in the beauties of the 18th century—by Harunobu and Utamaro. This print reflects an influence of the style that was mainly practiced by Utagawa school artists in their images of beauties: face features appear much sharper.

The facial expression does not indicate sudden emotions; it is more like a reflection of quiet atmosphere characterizing the whole appearance. Eisen effectively used this theme of the intimate mood as an excuse to create a glorious portrait of a sensual woman with her lips parted and teeth slightly exposed. Her hair, as it flows through the hairpins, is beautifully rendered in white lines. The extremely fine lines of her hair bordering her forehead and the sides of her face indicate the print carver's masterful craftsmanship. The soft texture could be sensed by the very fine outline as it contrasts with the bolder lines forming the kimono.

Overall, the print depicts the courtesan in the essence of popular Edo-style aesthetic, *iki*, which suggests high connoisseurship and indirect cool chic that was highly valued after the end of lavish era of Genroku style.⁸ It was an ideal aesthetic to combine material sensuality and elegant sophistication, which was expressed in the culture of Edo pleasure, as a thematic spirit of *bijinga*. Reflecting aspects of later Edo society and its contemporary standard of beauty, *iki* reveals how the society was swinging away from the obvious and ostentatious to the subtle and luxurious underground. The essence of this was to be aware of quick fads and sensual pleasures but not to be overexposing or being a slave to them.⁹ *Courtesan with Letter* is an example of print that shows the *iki* aesthetic. Instead of explicitly exposing the female beauty, the print illustrates a contemplative posture with slanted head, nonchalant but self-assured gaze of *hari* (independent spirit) of the courtesan, implying all-pervasive attitude.¹⁰

Breathtaking details of the layered kimonos on the figure stand out by virtue of their vibrant colors, making her even more noticeable with beautiful gradation and diversity of patterns scattered throughout the garment. She has loosely put on an over-kimono with color gradation, sliding down from her shoulder and trailing along the floor as she walks, with her obi going over it. This fashion of trailing kimono prospered during the Edo period

⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸ Liza Crihfield Dalby, *Kimono: fashioning culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 52.

⁹ Mary Neighbour Parent, "Iki," *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>.

¹⁰ Timothy Clark, Anne Nishimura Morse, Louise E. Virgin, and Allen Hockley, *The Dawn of the Floating World, 1650-1765: early ukiyo-e treasures from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001), 193.

among aristocratic ladies and courtesans.¹¹ Lavender-purple color embellishes the upper part of her kimono and a hint of faded light blue-green gradient color is represented on the lower part of the robe. This vertical gradation of color is printed with a traditional technique called *bokashi*, which means a tonal gradation. *Ika-bokashi*, a block or plank *bokashi*, specifically is a common skill seen in the shaded areas of women's kimono in woodblock printing that achieves a variation in lightness and darkness of colors with a form of gentle slope.¹² On top of gradational background is a repeated pattern of red maple leaves; it expresses seasonality, enabling the viewers to identify print's seasonal background as autumn.

Faded cool-toned colors of gradation printed throughout the largest area of robe creates a significant coloristic contrast along with red undergarment with *asa-no-ha* pattern dyed in technique called *shiborizome*, which means tie-dye.¹³ The pattern consists of repeating six-sided geometric design that resembles the leaves of the hemp plant, *asa*, and was most popular during the Edo period when it was promoted by a famous kabuki performer Iwai Hanshiro.¹⁴ Moreover, opaque black color of a neckband of kimono called *eri* highlights chromatic contrast between purple and red even more, as a significant division that invites viewer's attention. The collar, far and loosely set back, is another key aspect of the garment that reveals the figure's social standing – the exposed nape of the neck changes the ultimate nuance of outfit as it gives an erotic focus of the female body, a common feature that can be found in many courtesan printings.¹⁵

Another significant part of the garment is long obi sash, which represents late Edo period style, tied at the back and trailing almost to the ground. In the Edo period, obi gradually grew both in size and importance to the focal point of kimono, as a byproduct of the vogue for fluttering sleeves and aesthetic desire to maintain a sense of right proportion of garments.¹⁶ Type of obi that wraps around the woman's body on the print seems to be a foot-wide *fukuro* (*pocket*) obi, which is the most practical type that covers woman's torso from pubis to sternum. Linear repeat-motif patterns of cherry blossom and *unmon* (cloud design) on sash line up within alternating strips of black and white background. The cloud pattern which originated from the imagery of Western Paradise or the Pure Land of Buddha Amida, was often arranged upon a larger picture or used for dyed fabrics in the Edo period.¹⁷ While cloud-shaped areas fully line up along the long sash, warm yellow flower motifs are scattered above to enhance the young woman's blossoming beauty. The extent of pattern coverage on the kimono is another signal of the wearer's age; the younger the wearer, the higher the hem of pattern reaches toward the waist. As a woman ages, patterns on the kimono became subtle and color become more subdued as well.¹⁸ Lush colors and flamboyant patterns including floral motifs on outfits represent youth, femininity and beauty, which were crucial elements

¹¹ Dalby, *Kimono: fashioning culture*, 92.

¹² Amy Reigle Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*. (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing; 2008), 341.

¹³ Mary Neighbour Parent, "Shiborizome," *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>

¹⁴ Mary Neighbour Parent, "Asa-no-ha," *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>

¹⁵ Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁷ Mary Neighbour Parent, "Unmon," *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>

¹⁸ Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 165.

to depict female figures in idealistic manner.¹⁹

As a piece of art reflects the hallmarks of its time, Keisai Eisen's *Courtesan with a Letter* delineates not only a beautiful woman dressed in splendid attire and adorned with fashionable accessories but also represents popular culture and lifestyle which flourished during the late Edo period. Distinct features of garments such as dimensions, patterns and colors on textile indicate the social status and specifications of the figure. In this print, expression of lavishly decorated kimono and a sensual facial description serves as a manifesto for historical background of courtesan life and idealized image of young beauty. Although the female figure is the only subject and the focal point of the print, filling up almost entire vertical space, it has a potential to evoke thorough discussion ranging from courtesan culture to vogue and spirit pertaining the period capturing the zest of the floating world.

¹⁹ Dora Amsden, Woldemar von Seidlitz, *Impressions of Ukiyo-e* (New York: Parkstone Press International), 2007, 125.



*The Warriors Sato Tadanobu
and Yokawa Kakuhan*
Katsukawa Shuntei, ca. 1800
Polychrome woodblock print
Upright oban diptych
Image: 73 x 25.2 cm
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke
20.1158

9. The Warriors Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan by Katsukawa Shuntei

The Ideal Japanese Warrior *Mim Tejapaibul, Na Snidvongs & Kirthank Manivannan*

A warrior is leaping down from a high roof of a tall many-storied pagoda of a Buddhist temple to attack a warrior on the ground. The warrior jumping down has a stance that looks as if he was originally in the temple and is now attacking an intruder. His face is long and pale, his eyes are bulging, and his mouth is set in a snarl. His mustache is divided on either side of his mouth, and seems kept. He has a rising sun emblem on his armor. On the warrior's person are two swords, the longer one called a *tachi* and the smaller one called a *koshigatana*. The scabbard seems to be made of fur, possibly from a tiger, called a *shirizaya*. The warrior is also carrying a bow and arrows. The arrows have black shafts and white feathers. The warrior on top has an armor that is covered in more golden-colored alloy decorations and embellishments than the warrior on the bottom. His armor also has numerous yellow metal fittings attached and spread all over his outfit, and has a striped pattern. On the *haidate* (cuisse) of the armor is a red circle, similar to the red sun emblazoned on the Japanese flag. The clothing he is wearing also contains more patterns, possibly crests. He is wearing a decorative helmet adorned with yellow metal, and a dragon-shaped *maedate* (the frontal decoration of *kabuto* helmets). He is also wearing shoes that seem to be made of black hair, possibly horsehair.

The warrior on the bottom, standing on the grass, despite approaching the temple, seems to have a defensive stance in the way he is holding his glaive and looking up, with a stance of lower center of gravity. The man has the appearance of a *sohei*, or warrior monk. The monk is also carrying two swords, the *tachi* and *koshigatana*. One has a black hilt and sheath with gold details, and the other is white and gold. The monk is also carrying a large glaive, with a wooden handle, and a blade with a wave-like pattern (known as *hamon*). He is wearing a darker garb, with more black clothing emblazoned with nature motifs. Finally, the monk is also wearing a white cowl that is wrapped around his head. His black garments fan out like fins as does the bottom of his white cowl, almost in a way that looks like it is moving in the wind. The line movement and motion of the clothing are giving off a bristling energy, complementing the monk's stance. He is wearing a pair of rope sandals known as *waraji*, contrasting to footwear of the leaping warrior. The monk has tanned skin and a rounder face, and sports a messy beard and mustache. His facial expression shows determination, with his mouth set thin, his eyes bulging as well and interlocking in gaze with the warrior above.

The temple building that the warrior is approaching is multistoried, and made of wood painted a pinkish-red with orange for the gallery railing, with a figured black metal trim. It is on a ground covered in either moss or grass. The temple's wooden pillars colored in a

pink hue rest on stone bases. The color is the same on the clouds that surround the temple in a smoke-like fashion. The sky remains a neutral white depicting daylight; in the backdrop lie several mountains and trees, colored in different shades of green and brown. Nestled in between is a river flowing through. The roof tiles of the temple are grey; from the top roof hangs a green lantern. Also located on the roof is a monster's face protruding from the edge in a form of decoration, known as *onigawara*. Shuntei's line work in this print seems very fine and thin, to accentuate details. However, when the element is bigger and less complex, such as clouds, the line weight seems to get bolder.

This dynamic fight between two dissimilar yet comparably powerful warriors, captured with remarkable amount of details, is the subject matter of the vertical *oban* diptych by Katsukawa Shuntei, a pioneer of *musha-e* – the warrior genre in the print art of ukiyo-e. The story behind the print details is from the *Gikeiki*, a war chronicle centered on the legend of Yoshitsune, Japan's most famous military hero. Minamoto Yoshitsune joined the Minamoto military house, led by his elder half-brother, Yoritomo, the Minamoto chieftain. During this era of the Minamoto-Taira war, the Minamoto clan had great disputes with the Taira clan, who supported opposing factions at the imperial court. Taira Kiyomori, the most powerful man in Japan from 1160, founded the Taira military house based on his land holdings in Japan and trade with China. However, his unwise policies weakened the Taira, who were eventually overthrown by the Minamoto.¹

Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159-1189) was entrusted by Yoritomo with partial command of the campaign against the Taira. He is credited with leading the Minamoto clan to victory; his brilliantly executed engagements defeated the Taira. After the Minamoto clan's victory, the Taira searched to hunt down all nine of the Minamoto brothers. During Yoshitsune's escape, he hid from the Taira in Hiraizumi for several years with the help of Hidehira. Once Yoshitsune heard of Yoritomo's uprising, he rushed to join him. As a farewell present, Hidehira sent two of his own warriors with him, the Sato brothers, Tsuginobu and Tadanobu. The Sato brothers became close associates and loyal warriors to Yoshitsune, and became part of the Yoshitsune legend by sacrificing their lives for their master. However, after the final victory of the Minamoto clan, Yoshitsune's brother Yoritomo turned against him, perhaps because of jealousy of Yoshitsune's achievements. Yoritomo sent his soldiers to hunt down Yoshitsune, and after a long pursuit where Yoshitsune made several narrow escapes, forced him to commit suicide.²

The print illustrates a battle between Sato Shirobyoe Fujiwara Tadanobu, Minamoto Yoshitsune's faithful retainer, and the monk Yokawa-no-zenji Kakuhan at Yoshino, Yoshitsune's pursuer. This battle takes place during Yoritomo's pursuit of Yoshitsune where Yoritomo's men, monks of Zao Gongen Temple, were closing in upon Yoshitsune at Yoshi-

¹ McCullough, Helen C. "Introduction/Chapter 5." In *Yoshitsune: A 15th Century Japanese Chronicle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 3-10, 166-198.

² *Ibid.*, 166-198.

no. Tadanobu is one of Yoshitsune's closest associates who volunteered to stay behind so Yoshitsune could escape from the monks. Yokawa-no-zenji Kakuhan is a monk at Yoshino Zao Gongen Temple, who is attacking Yoshitsune and his warriors.³

The monks of Zao Gongen Temple want to capture Yoshitsune and turn him over to Yorimoto. They are scared that Yorimoto will destroy their temples if he finds out that they have offered help and sanctuary to Yoshitsune's wife who is on the run together with him. The monks are also afraid that because Yoshitsune is on the same mountain as their temple, by proximity, their temple will be destroyed. Their reasoning for this stems from an event that occurred in the Jisho era (1177-81), in which the Miidera monks joined Prince Mochihito's revolt, while the monks of the famous temples on Mount Hiei took the other side. The younger monks are afraid that if the Kanto, the eastern part of Japan where Yorimoto resides, finds out that Yoshitsune is in these mountains, the eastern warriors will attack them and burn their temples to ashes. The monks decide to assemble and prepare to attack Yoshitsune and his warriors.⁴

Benkei, one of Yoshitsune's warriors, sees what is happening at the temple and reports back that the monks are preparing for attack. Yoshitsune's group of sixteen men prepares to escape. Sato Tadanobu offers to delay the monks with arrows while Yoshitsune escapes. In exchanging Sato Tadanobu's life for his, Yoshitsune gifts him his weapon. Sato Tadanobu insists on impersonating Yoshitsune because he is afraid that the Yoshino monks will refuse to fight a common warrior, and it would be a disgrace he could never live down. Yoshitsune gives him his own scarlet armor and silver-studded helmet, and puts on Sato Tadanobu's armor instead. Six other men stay behind with Sato Tadanobu while Yoshitsune and the rest of the men escape.⁵

As the monks are approaching Sato Tadanobu, they announce "We don't bear Yoshitsune any personal grudge. Kindly tell him that he can either run away or stay and be killed, just as he pleases". Sato Tadanobu announces his own name and yells the names of Yoshitsune's fiercest retainers, tricking the monks into thinking Yoshitsune and his men are still there fighting. The author doesn't explain why the monks first accept his identification of himself and later mistake him for Yoshitsune. Perhaps the monks are too far away to see him clearly, or he is concealing his distinctive armor in some way.⁶

In the fight, Sato Tadanobu's entire team is killed by the monks' arrows except him. Yokawa Kakuhan, a captain of the monks, declares that the monks have fought poorly and calls for a match between him and Sato Tadanobu. Sato Tadanobu responds by shooting an arrow at Yokawa Kakuhan, so accurate that it cut off the top half of Yokawa Kakuhan's bow, which is why he is not holding a bow in the print. They then fight with swords to determine who the best is. Sato Tadanobu wins, killing Yokawa Kakuhan.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Sato Tadanobu hides from the monks in a large house in the temple. The monks surround the house and threaten to burn the house down to force Sato Tadanobu out and shoot him. Sato Tadanobu escapes through the balcony and declares himself as Sato Shirobyoe Fujiwara Tadanobu, and not Yoshitsune. He pretends to stab himself and quickly jumps from the roof, safely to the hill behind the house. The monks discover they mistook Yoshitsune for Sato Tadanobu and decide to let him burn in the fire. After the flames die down, the monks look for Sato Tadanobu's body but they can't find it and decide he has perished in flames. This is because they don't know that Sato Tadanobu had escaped.⁸

The actions of individual warriors of the Minamoto-Taira war assumed great importance in national folklore, through tales of the heroes' struggles and achievements. The retelling and embellishing of these tales shaped the image of the ideal Japanese warrior. The ideal Japanese warrior is described as a man of imposing appearance who wears sumptuous armor. The man is someone who values family pride and personal honor, is ready to sacrifice his life for his lord and to risk death or kill himself to protect his good name. Ideal warriors like this were revered and emulated throughout history. Many of them were Minamoto retainers. One of the greatest examples of the ideal warrior was Minamoto Yoshitsune, known as the greatest hero in Japanese history. It is clear that Yoshitsune's warriors would also assume the qualities of an ideal warrior, as depicted in this print. Both Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan possess the physical qualities that make up the ideal Japanese warrior, as seen in the print. Sato Tadanobu is described in the *Gikeiki* to also possess the psychological qualities of pride and honor, in his readiness to sacrifice himself for Yoshitsune. Yokawa Kakuhan also possesses similar qualities by the way he attacks first and his willingness to risk death in battle.⁹

The print belongs to the *musha-e*, the warrior genre in ukiyo-e visual arts which was highly popular among the people of Edo era (1603 – 1868). *Musha-e* is about tales of honor and heroism. It emphasizes the enormous physical power and the visual strength of the military. This print depicts the warriors in armor in a dynamic battle scene. The composition is subtly balanced by the near-symmetrical placement of one warrior on the top right of the print and another warrior on the bottom left on the ground. The printed lines vary in width; for the rendering of fur and hair, the lines are skinny while for the garments, they are very thick. From the proportions of the warriors, it can be seen that the artist is blending fact and fiction in print by exaggerating the warrior figures and making them much larger compared to their surroundings. Moreover, their facial features can be likened to the warring deity statues as their expressions were derived from them. This can be indicated by psychological realism, how dynamic they are, and the anger and the intense emotions that are shown through their bulging eyes and the snarling mouths.

Sato Tadanobu is the warrior on the top right corner. It is easy to mistake him here for

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

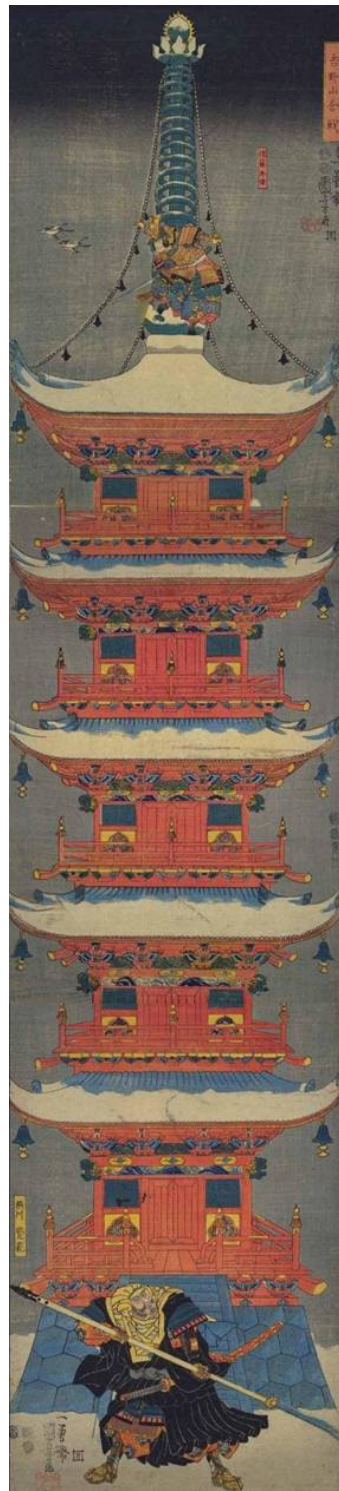
⁹ Ibid.

Minamoto Yoshitsune, whom he impersonates. Sato Tadanobu is demonstrated in mid-air performing Yoshitsune's famous eight-boat leap (*hassotobi*), a superhuman ability he had learned as a boy from forest spirits, the *tengu*. Yoshitsune's leap is often depicted in visual art, making his pose immediately recognizable by the audience. By showing Sato Tadanobu in this unique characteristic of Yoshitsune, the artist is implying to the audience that they are looking at Sato Tadanobu pretending to be Yoshitsune. Sato Tadanobu is wearing Yoshitsune's clothes to allow Yoshitsune to escape from the temple. Also, it can be seen that his clothing is very luxurious; Sato Tadanobu is shown wearing his armor with numerous yellow metal fittings attached and spread all over his outfit. He is wearing a decorative helmet adorned with yellow metal, and a dragon at the crest. The richness and complexity of Sato Tadanobu's armor emphasizes that in fact it belongs to Yoshitsune and indicates Yoshitsune's high power and status. Moreover, Sato Tadanobu has two swords typical for the Heian era. A long sword attached with little chains to his belt is *tachi* used for slashing; his other smaller sword, *koshigatana*, was intended for stabbing, is stuck into his belt. Sato Tadanobu's scabbard is made of tiger's fur – these types of scabbards, called *shirizaya*, were used by the warriors of the highest status. The presence of *shirizaya* adds credibility of the warrior's claim to be Minamoto Yoshitsune.

Yokawa Kakuhan is the warrior at the bottom left. He is a warrior monk *sohei*, hence his peculiar look. His garments are pleated out like a fan. His white cowl and black outfit are all bristling with energy. He is wearing a darker garb, with black clothing emblazoned with nature motifs. A white hood is wrapped around his head; the hood is called *kato* and indicates that he is a monk. The pair of rope sandals is known as *waraji*; they are contrasted to the footwear of the leaping warrior. For his swords, he is also using the *tachi* and *koshigatana* which are common to carry during the 12th century.

In the setting, the clouds extend over the Yoshino Zao Gongen Temple, indicating how tall the pagoda of the temple is. It also suggests heavenly aspect and personifying the warriors as gods. The pink temple is also a reference to the traditional coloring of the pagodas in vermilion hues.

The biggest difference between the *Gikeiki* and the print is the setting. In the chronicle of the battle, Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan's battle takes place on the snowy mountainside. The scene is described as rough terrain with lots of trees, almost forest-like. The monks charge across a valley to get to Sato Tadanobu. At one point, Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan fall off a cliff. The cliff is where Sato Tadanobu defeats Yokawa Kakuhan. On the contrary, the print shows the setting of the battle as a pagoda, with the mountains in the background. There are many possible reasons for this discrepancy between the chronicle and the print. In the chronicle, after slaying Yokawa Kakuhan, Sato Tadanobu hides from the rest of the monks in the temple. He escapes into "a large house, the cloister of a monk called



Battle of the Mt. Yoshino
Utagawa Kuniyoshi
1851
Polychrome woodblock print
nishiki-e, upright oban triptych
Private collection

Yamashina Hogen”.¹⁰ The chronicle does not specify the type of house, but it is likely to have been a pagoda, as pagodas are built as Buddhist reliquaries and are necessarily present on the temple grounds. Another source describes the house as a “five-storied pagoda”.¹¹

In the *Gikeiki*, Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan’s battle ends over a steep cliff known as Dragon’s Return. In this scene, Sato Tadanobu jumps off the cliff, intending to commit suicide rather than be killed by Kakuhan. He jumps off the 400ft edge but gets caught in a crevice. Yokawa Kakuhan leaps down after him but unluckily makes a bad landing and is then fatally struck by Sato Tadanobu’s sword.¹² Parallels can be drawn between this scene from the *Gikeiki* and the print. In the print, Sato Tadanobu jumps down from the roof of the pagoda, a similar image to his leap down the cliff. The verticality of the setting and the leaping movement of the warriors are comparable. Perhaps the scene of Yokawa Kakuhan’s defeat inspired Shuntei’s use of the dynamic motion depicted in the print.

Shuntei could have combined multiple scenes of the *Gikeiki* in order to portray as much of the story as possible in one static image. Chronologically, the battle scene occurs first on the mountainside, followed by Sato Tadanobu’s escape in the pagoda. In the print, the settings of these two events are intertwined into one frame. After the publication of Shuntei’s print of this scene in the pagoda, the inclusion of the pagoda became an established convention in other artists’ representation of this scene, including prints by the pre-eminent master of *musha-e*, Utagawa Kuniyoshi (see page 84).¹³

Other differences of the *Gikeiki* text and the image concern the weaponry. In the print, Yokawa Kakuhan is wielding a glaive. However, the glaive is never mentioned in the chronicle. He is also not wearing an askew horned helmet like the chronicle mentions. There are also multiple descriptions in the chronicle that match the print. In the print, only Sato Tadanobu is carrying a bow. This is accurate to the chronicle because Sato Tadanobu cut Yokawa Kakuhan’s bow in half with his arrow. In both the story and the picture Yokawa Kakuhan is described as wearing black robes.

Let’s now compare the RISD Museum copy of the diptych with the one from the Otani Museum, Japan (see page 86). In the two prints, the colors are incredibly different. Is this due to various publishers issuing the print or maybe due to aging? The differences between the two editions suggest that the print from the RISD Museum is older than the Otani Museum edition; this perhaps explains why the latter print is in a better condition. The edition published in the Otani Museum is more saturated, giving the viewer a better idea of what the setting is. It is clear that the grass and mountains are green, clouds and pagoda are light-orange, pagoda’s roof is dark blue, and the sky is blue. As for the RISD Museum edition, the colors are less saturated; the grass is grey, clouds are pink, the roof is grey-blue, and the sky is white-grey. However, the colors of the warrior’s garments are entirely different; the colors in

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Iwakiri, Yuriko, King, James. “Katsukawa Shuntei and the Later Members of the Katsukawa School.” In *Japanese Warrior Prints (1646 - 1905)*, edited by Amy R. Newland (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2007), 144-169.

¹² McCullough, Helen C. “Introduction/Chapter 5.” In *Yoshitsune: A 15th Century Japanese Chronicle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 166-198.

¹³ Robinson, Basil W. “Yoshino-yama kassen.” In *Kuniyoshi: The Warrior-Prints* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 257.



*The Warriors Sato Tadanobu
and Yokawa Kakuhan*
Katsukawa Shuntei, ca. 1800
73 x 25.2 cm
Polychrome woodblock print
nishiki-e, upright oban diptych
Otani Museum

the edition from the RISD museum are green, gold and black, while the other edition appears to be more brown and red, along with black and gold. On the RISD Museum edition, there are more inscriptions compared to the edition in the Otani Museum. On closer inspection it became clear that both prints were issued by the same publishing house – the name of the publisher is Otoyō Sakichi; the seal of this publisher is a triangular “roof” underneath which there is the character 𛄱 – *katakana* “sa” from the publisher’s name. Perhaps the removal of artist’s signature and the publisher’s seal was suggested by artistic considerations: though the print is a diptych and technically consists of two prints joined vertically together, the resulting composition is so fluid and coherent that repeating the same technical information twice was deemed unjustified. These markings were left at the bottom where their place is logical and were taken away from the upper print. The fact that these editions exist and were issued by the same publisher implies that Shuntei’s prints were popular enough to undertake a second edition.

Katsukawa Shuntei’s print-work draws clear influence from the Torii school Kabuki prints’ hallmarks, such as the bulging eyes and dynamic form. Yet the Katsukawa school expands and refines the earlier tradition in terms of greater subtlety in details and psychological characteristics of the individuals portrayed in the prints. This interest in *nigao-e* or “likeness pictures” first took its shape in Kabuki actor prints of *yakusha-e* genre and later influenced the manner of representation of warriors in *musha-e*. In a sense, this was a stylistic evolution leading into the next generation of ukiyo-e artists.

Musha-e held great significance in the Edo era because the genre portrayed the ideal Japanese warrior as a role model for all Japanese people during a time when the *sakoku* policy was still in effect, and outside presence was barred. The ideal Japanese warrior upheld the ideal morals of pride and honor. Ukiyo-e artists knew the subject of what they were printing in a truly comprehensive way, referring to architectural details, thoroughness in characterizing representations of the arms and armor, and psychological realism and movement of the people. This knowledge was shared and appreciated by both the artists and the viewers. This particular print being of the category of *musha-e* and by an artist of the Katsukawa school, was firmly rooted in its time period as an Edo era print. The dynamism shown in the print is just as expressive and emotive as the atmosphere in other prints from categories such as *bijinga*. The verticality of the print enhances the drama of the events transpiring, and implies a more drastic movement in a static medium. In specific, it allows for greater use of the setting, such as portraying the architecture, along with a greater artistic interpretation of movement and gravity. The small details from prints, originating in Edo era, come together to tell a greater narrative about daily life of townsmen and events of the past, showing different facets of the same era.

The artist, Katsukawa Shuntei, was among the earliest ukiyo-e masters to design war-

rior ukiyo-e prints *musha-e*, for which there was a high demand. His prints would be reissued multiple times, resulting in changing colors and variations in placement of the artist's signature. He influenced artists such as Toyokuni and Kuniyoshi, especially stylistically. This style remained popular till mid-1820's. Shuntei's *musha-e* prints show warriors in battle scenes, with an emphasis on the warrior being an honorable paragon of the community, embodied by certain traits and emotions. The prints showcase the warrior as an individual endowed with these traits. The warrior's individuality is shown through grotesque stylization and exaggeration of expression and emotion. Some examples of warrior's emotions include vehemence, bravery, determination, and anger, all of which translate into a single-minded expression, with warriors aiming for their own goal, as befitting them. Katsukawa Shuntei also uses diptychs and triptychs to unfold the display of the battles and dramatize them, allowing him to create compositions that account for a full range representation of action and rendering balance of human expression and scenery.

Warrior prints were popular from the 18th century because historical subject matter post-1592 was forbidden by the Shogunate in the course of repressive political reforms of the Kyoho era (1721-1722) and later of the Kansai era (1789-1801). The Shogunate also significantly limited genres of *bijin-ga* and *yakusha-e*. Artists had no fresh subject matter to work with, and so they went back to historical war tales to avoid censure. *Musha-e* prints presented themes of revenge, honor, envy and rage, usually through the depiction of the ideal Japanese warrior. Often, the stories depicted kept close to the original chronicles, focusing on the roles of the historical figures or illustrated their Kabuki theater re-workings (see No. 10 in the current catalogue). The warrior prints gained even more popularity in 1842 during the Tenpo Reforms that were the third set of sumptuary laws issued by the government in the attempt to control the contents of ukiyo-e production. The warrior prints held great importance by encouraging strength and courage of the urban intellectuals among the print buying public through legendary figures during a time where the country was in transition. *Musha-e* continued to be produced up to times when the shogunate crumbled and foreign influences entered Japan. Shuntei's vertical diptych print, *The Warriors Sato Tadanobu and Yokawa Kakuhan* (ca. 1800) is an early example of *musha-e* that captures the subject matter effectively.



The warrior Matano Goro Kagehisa dropping a rock on the youth Sanada Yoichi Yoshisada
Utagawa Kunisada, 1810s
73.7 x 25.1 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
upright oban diptych
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1299

10. The Warrior Matano Goro Kagehisa Dropping a Rock on the Youth Sanada Yoichi Yoshisada by Utagawa Kunisada

Musha-e and Kabuki Theater *Osub Lee and Jaeyong Sung*

At the edge of a cliff, there is a muscular, dark-skinned samurai with a mendacious, eye-bulging frown, who is strenuously carrying a huge boulder. Underneath the cliff, about to have the giant rock thrown at him, stands another samurai. This other samurai is younger, appears to be more noble, and is an opponent to the samurai above in what seems to be a battle. Highly expressive, both warriors are portrayed by Utagawa Kunisada on an upright *oban* diptych, their names given in the cartouches next to their figures.

For contemporary viewers, however, the personalities of the warriors were obvious even without their names. The two represent an established pair of enemies from the Genpei Wars (1180-1185) fought between two powerful military clans of Japan, the Minamoto and the Taira. Let's look into the history. The herculean warrior atop the bluff is defined on the print as Matano Goro Kagehisa. He is a historic figure, whose true name is Oba Kagechika (d. 1180). His name on the print is a Kabuki theater convention and this is how this historic person was referred to in Japanese popular culture. In historic plays on the Kabuki stage, real names of individuals were often slightly changed to keep them recognizable for the public but to stay away from critiquing the past. In the Genpei wars this warrior had started as a supporter of the Minamoto clan but later on he became one of the most faithful followers of the Taira. He was appointed to lead the Taira forces during one of the earliest engagements of the Genpei conflict, the battle of Ishibashiyama. The battle of Ishibashiyama (1180) was initiated by Minamoto Yoritomo, the leader of the Minamoto clan to become the first shogun of Japan. The small forces of Minamoto Yoritomo, however, were heavily outnumbered by the Taira army led by Matano Goro; thus Minamoto Yoritomo had to retreat. Yet, within months, the Minamoto forces, having received reinforcements, resumed the offensive with success. During this second engagement Matano Goro had to surrender and was killed in battle.¹ It was exactly the younger warrior portrayed here under the cliff who had defeated Matano Goro and took his head. This young warrior is identified on the print as Sanada no Yoichi Yoshihisa. In this case again the print gives a Kabuki version of the real name of Sanada Yoshitada (1155-1180). Sanada Yoshitada, a staunch associate of the Minamoto clan, was known for his military skills, which were extraordinary for such a young warrior. He was also famous for his good looks. In the context of Kabuki theater and Kabuki-related ukiyo-e prints, Sanada no Yoichi became regarded as an exemplary handsome youth, and the current print is no exception. Though the two warriors represented in the print are real historical enemies, the incident depicted is not a historical one. It is not mentioned in any of the military chronicles describing the events of the

¹ George Sansom. *A History of Japan*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1958), 289-291

Genpei wars. Rather, this incident comes from the Kabuki illustrated books to which the artist, Utagawa Kunisada, is responding.² But the artist renders the battle as if it is happening not on a theater stage but in real life on a rough terrain. This adds veracity to the struggle of superheroes that are rendered with a remarkable number of authentic details and with persuasive psychological realism. Let's look closely at how the two adversaries are represented.

Matano Goro Kagehisa's frown makes his eyes open as if they have no eyelids and creates wrinkles on his nose while he is biting his lower lip with his top six teeth. His grimace expresses vividly the enormous physical strain as he carries a giant rock comparable in size with his upper body. This all-muscled, bearded samurai seems to be much more mature than the noble-looking Sanada Yoichi Yoshitada underneath the cliff. Kagehisa has a *chonmage* hairstyle – a common hairstyle amongst Japanese samurai with a clean shaven top and the remaining hair at the back of the head tied in a knot. Kagehisa's hairdo, different from the traditional tidy and clean style of *chonmage*, is messy and untreated. One can notice the white hair present within his disheveled side-hair and his bristling beard. In Kabuki theater, villains are usually shown with their hair unkempt. His mature age is also shown through his muscular hairy torso that is clearly visible. Though Kagehisa's muscles do seem very rigorously developed, it is not difficult to notice the drooping wrinkles on his dark-skinned muscle curves.

Kagehisa struggles, yet manages to hold up the enormous rock. With his left arm he is embracing the rock from the front while his chin is keeping the balance as he supports the weight with his right arm in the back of the boulder. Both of his legs, although they are covered all the way down to his feet with black long baggy *nagabakama* style pants, are spread wide to give more balance and strength to his position while he is carrying the overwhelmingly heavy object.

Kagehisa's effort to carry this giant rock and to throw it at the opponent is shown with his patterned upper robe taken off and tied at his waist. This bright orange robe, although not completely visible, seems to contain images of dragons on both left and right sides. In addition, there is a yellow or possibly gold circular and spiral decorative pattern with natural qualities – perhaps, symbols of fire or wind.

Right under the rock, at the spot where Kagehisa's left hand is supporting it, there are two pieces of green fabric peeking out. This fabric seems to be a waist belt used in the samurai formal robe-and-trousers *hitatare* attire, holding up his baggy *hakama*-styled black trousers. There is also a possibility that the two green pieces of fabric are not separate strips used to hold up trousers, but instead, are a part of the upper garment that is used to tighten the waistline. Whatever the belt might be attached to or used for, it is not quite clear because the belt is hidden. Despite the uncertainty, however, one can notice that the green patch has two identical white Chinese characters, or Japanese *kanji*, written on both halves of the patch. Although the Chinese characters / Japanese *kanji* are partially covered by Kagehisa's hand and the rock, the

²The Samurai World in Ukiyo-e / Ukiyo-e dai musha-e ten/, ed. Iwakiri, Yuriko. (Machida City Museum of Graphic Arts, 2003), 141.

visible parts of those identical characters hold the meaning of the “capital” of a country or state, which seems fitting because Kagehisa was a part of the Taira clan that held power in Japan during the end of Heian period illustrated here. Maybe, however, these *kanji* are but fragments of the characters that are identical to the huge white signs on Kagehisa’s black pants – which will be discussed below.

There is still another *kanji* character that is peeking out from behind the sword, at the side of the warrior’s left leg, but it is hard to identify which *kanji* it is because it is hidden by the fold of the trousers and obscured by the sword handle. While Kagehisa’s trousers are so long that they cover his feet and so wide-fitted that all of the drastic folds and creases are depicted with heavy line-weighted details, the overall shape of two same Chinese characters are not disturbed by any of those details other than the sign on his left leg side being partially covered by the huge rock he is holding. This is a character “kage” (景) from the warrior’s name Kagehisa (景久). Therefore, it is quite likely that the fragments of smaller characters visible at the warrior’s waist are the same signs of his name.

Matano Goro Kagehisa’s enormously long sword is mostly hidden behind his clothing and his large muscular body, but one can notice that the sword is not an ordinary sword but a very decorative one. The handle at the warrior’s left side and the sword’s scabbard at his right are adorned with gilt metal fittings. The scabbard, as well as the handle, are made of green color material.

In the bottom half of this composition, the young warrior Sanada Yoichi Yoshisada is in the focus of attention. This charming man is standing at the bottom of the cliff, his arms wide open, fully prepared to catch the huge drop from a vigorous, albeit elderly warrior Matano Goro Kagehisa. In order to fully absorb the shock from the dropped rock, the young warrior has his torso tilted back, as he is facing his opponent. Sanada Yoshisada’s legs are also wide to ensure stability of his figure and preparedness for the enormous rock to be thrown down at him. Along with his alert posture, his eagle eyes are following the movements of his enemy as he is trying to sense the moment when Matano Goro Kagehisa’s hands drop the rock down the cliff. Sanada Yoichi Yoshisada’s white face is frowning, which reflects that he is angry and annoyed by this perilous situation.

His pale face, which is almost as white as the print’s paper, is covered with the traditional Kabuki theater makeup. The pink is used for the makeup around his eyes and on his chin. This application of the makeup amplifies his fierceness as if a stream of fire is coming out of his two eyes.

However, it is strange to see Kabuki theater makeup on a samurai’s face because it is usually seen on the faces of the Kabuki theater actors. The reasoning for this is because Utagawa Kunisada had chosen to illustrate a scene from the Genpei Wars while mimicking Kabuki-related illustrations³. In fact, warriors in *musha-e* often were represented according to the aesthetic

³ *ibid.*, 141.

conventions of the Kabuki theater. This is because the visual stereotype of a warrior developed within Kabuki theater historical plays *jidaimono*. Warriors in *jidaimono* were performed in an expressly bombastic style known as *aragoto* – “rough stuff.” The exaggerated images of warriors on the Kabuki theater stage greatly influenced development of the stylistics of *musha-e* – heroic genre in ukiyo-e.

At the back of his head, the neatly combed dark hair around Sanada Yoichi’s pale face is all tied together in a traditional samurai hairstyle *chonmage*. In this he differs greatly from Matano Goro Kagehisa with his ruffled whiskers. Sanada Yoichi does not have any white hair either, and it is portrayed as curvy and oily as well.

All the elements of Sanada Yoichi’s garments attest to his refinement and repeatedly reflect his youthfulness. In contrast to Matano Goro Kagehisa, Yoichi is wearing very colorful and voluminous shirt. If looked carefully into the print, two layers of same colored shirts are discernable, one atop the other. Sanada Yoichi’s orange colored left sleeve of the shirt bears two symbols: a phoenix and yellow flames, which celebrate Sanada’s youthfulness. The garment on his right side is ornamented with wave-like shapes within irregular and curved edges and rendered in gradation of the shades of grey and green and yellow color. It is unclear if the shape can be interpreted as just waves or fins of a dragon. Overall, the combination of these two different garments amplifies Yoichi’s characteristic as a sophisticated personality with artistic sensibilities.

His *haidate* (cuisse) which protects the thighs of the warrior is completed with shimmering black fur. Choosing fur as a material works from the functional point of view but when applied to warrior apparel, it shows also one’s power and rank. The lining of Yoichi’s glittering fur *haidate* is, once again, made of beautiful fabric embellished with circular flower patterns. A different flower pattern is also shown in the warrior’s baggy *kobakama* trousers and gaiters *kyahan*. Over the geometric pattern of concentric squares large yellow and green colored flowers are scattered; these flowers are described by wavy lines. Lastly, on his feet, Sanada Yoichi is wearing black-colored tabi (socks) and a pair of sandals *zori*.

In comparison with Matano Kagehisa, Sanada Yoichi is equipped with fancy and fashionable accessories. On his back, he is wearing a cylinder shaped rattan quiver *ebira* of the *utsubo* style. This quiver is attached with the help of brown colored ropes that work as a shoulder strap. Beside the quiver, at his waist Yoichi is also carrying a small yellow sack attached to his belt with neatly tied red rope knot – perhaps, a tissue bag *maebukuro*. The colors of the top and bottom parts of Yoichi’s attire are well coordinated with the orange, yellow, green and the tones of grey used in a variety of patterns and combinations.

Sanada Yoichi’s two extended arms reveal the black and red colored *kote*, which is the chainmail gauntlets for the wrist protection. Moreover, in contrast to Matano Goro Kagehisa’s wrinkled and suntanned hand, Yoichi’s hands are covered with flower patterned *yugake* gloves.

Such gloves are worn along with the *kote*. These ornate details of his equipment match his other vivid accessories and also reflect his boyhood.

At the left side of Yoichi's waist there are two swords, a short one *koshigatana* used for stabbing and the long one for cutting called *tachi*. *Koshigatana* is stuck in the warrior's belt. His *tachi* is slung from the cord, run through the fixtures of rings and loops on the sword's scabbard – Kunisada meticulously renders these details on the print. The handle of his short sword *koshigatana* is covered with white ray skin; *koshigatana* was used without any braid to facilitate the grip. *Koshigatana* does not have a guard in-between the blade and the handle. The long sword *tachi* is covered with dark ray skin. It traditionally has a braid on the handle for a better grip, and the guard plate – the *tsuba* – is clearly depicted.

The landscape setting of this clash of mighty men is not particularly visible due to the fact that two warriors take up most of the space within this vertically constructed diptych. Although this composition is coherent and tells one story with a unifying background and intensive interaction of the two main characters, the print in fact is made up of two different independent prints joined together: the upper one and the lower one with the main character dominating respectively each *oban* sheet.

In the upper print, Matano Goro Kagehisa's giant figure in his oversized clothing and with the huge rock that he is about to hurl occupies most of the space. Thus there is no much negative space left for the surrounding detail to fit in. In the lower print, however, Yoichi Sanada Yoshisada appears as a younger man of thinner frame. Therefore he takes up less space of the composition, leaving more room to his left and right and even above where he looks up at his older and bigger enemy. Close comparison of the figures next to each other, however, reveals that there is not much difference in their size or height of these two warriors. That said, it is interesting to see that a younger warrior who is about to be attacked, is located strategically in the disadvantageous lower position and is depicted as somewhat smaller figure. He is represented this way in spite of the fact that he is the victor in this conflict – he easily manages to throw back the huge rock that was initially thrown at him, even overcoming the natural force of gravity. Thus the physical might of Sanada Yoichi is further emphasized through a compositional device.

Matano Goro Kagehisa is on a hill, where the ground is more rugged and steep. Behind his right shoulder there are tree trunks, most likely pine trees, the branches and needles of which are reaching to the other side of the print's upper corner. The ground level where Sanada Yoichi Yoshisada is standing is more plain and flat. It is covered with grass where only few clumps are described with rough and short black lines of moderate weight. The viewer is made aware that both surfaces the ground one and the one on the hill are not a bare earth but are covered with grass depicted with the light green color. Other than these details of the landscape not much of nature is depicted. Viewers are overwhelmed by the dramatic positions of the two

figures as soon as they confront the print. It is for this reason that the surrounding details are not as pronounced as they are within the figures.

In conclusion, this print conveys a very complicated artistic message. Confrontation between the two well-known historical figures who participated in an actual historical conflict is presented in natural outdoor setting but the incident itself is fictional. The print pays homage to the Kabuki theater story which pits well-known superheroes against each other in a fictitious battle – in a tale that perhaps had never been told before. Kabuki theater historic plays often took liberties with the facts in the plays dedicated to the popular themes and characters from the past. Here, the dramatic fictional situation is rendered in an intense and engaging composition by Utagawa Kunisada, a great ukiyo-e master of figurative images who worked in the first half of the 19th century. Kunisada used the large-scale upright format of the *oban* diptych to its best by the vertical orientation of the implied action. Anticipating the sequence of events, the viewer's eye travels from top to bottom and up again, scanning the entire composition and appreciating it in its totality. Through the depiction of specific physical traits of the bitter enemies, Kunisada created two distinct personalities. Representing the characters' attire and military accoutrements with true expertise and in great detail, Kunisada endowed the image with a period feel and made it a thrilling and entertaining journey into Japan's past.



Kabuki actors in the play The Mansion of Plates and the Cursed Makeup Mirror
Toyohara Kunichika, 1892.10
108.6 x 25.4 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
upright oban triptych
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.39.5

11. Scene from the Kabuki Play *The Mansion of Plates and the Cursed Makeup Mirror* by Toyohara Kunichika

Chi Yang

A samurai in his prime, wearing a chic white fuzzy overcoat is holding up his umbrella that happens to be inverted. He is flanked by two retainers that seem to be kneeling – their heads are at the level of the samurai’s waist. All three men recoil in horror, their upward glances fixed at a female ghost descending from the dark heavens and grasping at the rim of the samurai’s umbrella.

All this is represented by an ukiyo-e artist, Toyohara Kunichika, in early 1890s on his emphatically long scroll-like composition of a vertical *oban* triptych. The scene is from a Kabuki theater performance; all characters are shown with their eyes crossed and their movements exaggerated and abrupt in the manner typical for the Kabuki theater performing stylistics. The same is indicated by the inscriptions in the five vertical cartouches in the upper part of the print.

The typeface for the inscriptions within the cartouches is distinct, and immediately indicates to an informed viewer that the image is Kabuki-related. The writing is dense, smooth and powerful at the same time, reminding brush-handwritten characters. The word space is tight – there is hardly any space between the kanji characters – perhaps, this served as a metaphor for filling up the theatre. This writing style called *kanteiryū* was used exclusively in Kabuki theater context for writing on billboards and announcing the play title, the role and an actor’s name.

The right-most rectangle, the largest since it is the first to be read in the traditional East Asian right-to-left writing order, gives the title of the play: *The Mansion of Plates and the Cursed Makeup Mirror* (Sarayashiki Kesho no Sugatami 皿屋鋪化粧姿見), the following cartouches bear the names of roles and of the actors impersonating them. Originally a folklore story, it tells about a beautiful maid Okiku employed in the household of samurai Aoyama. Once she broke a valuable plate out of a set of ten and, fearful of the consequences, she drowned herself in a well. The story places real guilt on the samurai who sought to seduce the young girl. After death, she turned into a vengeful spirit who would continuously haunt the samurai. The topic became one of the favorites for urban theaters both the *bunraku* puppet theater and for the Kabuki theater. Many prominent ukiyo-e artists referred to the story or its stage productions, including Hokusai. The current image is one of the latest ukiyo-e visual interpretations of the thrilling encounter with the supernatural represented by Toyohara Kunichika.

The three parts of the print together form a whole picture, in which we can see a long-

haired female ghost coming down and grasping a samurai's inverted umbrella.

This print continues the tradition introduced more than a century earlier, in the 1770s by Katsukawa Shunsho, who was the first among ukiyo-e print designers to focus on depicting the individuality of actors instead of just the roles in play. In Kunichika's print, the faces of the four actors in roles do not look the same. The individuality of acting style of different actors is captured with great mastery, and the entire piece suggests strong sense of realism.

The upper half of the picture carries a vivid depiction of a female apparition. The ghost has a long pale face, she wears blue makeup that covers the skin around the eyes, and her downturned lips are similarly blue. These details make the face of the ghost look even more horrifying and ghastly. Her eyes are staring angrily at the samurai and her mouth is distorted as if she is murmuring something, and her long trailing hair is slightly disheveled and is flowing along her smoke-like body; the shape of the ghost is fluid and organic. Her hands are also distorted into a tense strange form as if ready to stretch out towards the samurai to grasp him. The ghost is wearing tatty grey clothes, and her lower body turns into a tapered shape curving into the sky. All details in the appearance of the ghost give viewers a feeling that she is coming out of some dark places. The ghost is descending from pitch black skies that gradually lighten up closer to the realm of humans; however, subtly rendered darker tones of black surround the ghostly figure. This creates a feeling that the ghost is coming down with a dark energy, and makes the ghost appear more powerful and dreaded. Paintings or woodblock prints that include representation of a ghost, like this one, are often referred to as *yurei-zu*. The apparitions in *yurei-zu* typically correspond to a specific set of physical characteristics; the ghost's long black hair is always unkempt, the frame is thin and fragile and the outstretched arms are sometimes waving or beckoning.

This ghost was played by a famous actor at that time: Onoe Kuguro V. He was a famous female impersonator *onnagata*, which is an important element in all-men Kabuki theatre. Since 1629, women on stage in Kabuki theatres were officially banned and all the roles were played by men.

To the right of the ghost, there is a flying fire, *onibi*. According to Japanese folk beliefs, the floating of *onibi* indicates supernatural presence. Here, the small upright airborne flame looks life-like with its wavy outline, rising tongues of fire and dark red to white color gradient *bokashi*. It echoes the gradient of the blackened background and suggests a sense of hell, anger and revenge.

The middle part of the composition shows the ghost pulling up the samurai's umbrella and reversing it. This creates a feeling that the ghost is the magnet of attention, and the energy of the picture inclines to the upper parts of the print. The brown umbrella with a broad yellow strip has numerous bamboo ribs flaring out within the inverted conic shape.

These ribs create a distinct linear rhythm that separates the real human realm below and human-like ghost realm above. The umbrella is called *wagasa*, the traditional Japanese oil paper umbrella. The oil paper umbrella is an important element in Japanese culture, a widely used accessory of a stylish urban dweller. Many woodblock prints capture *wagasa*. Two examples are found in the current exhibition – one is the pillar prints of courtesans by Torii Kiyonaga (No. 4) and the other is a print by Katsukawa Shuncho (No. 6). Interestingly enough, in recent years, Japan is still developing unique umbrellas, such as this kind of reversible umbrella designed by Hiroshi Kajimoto in 2014. The inside will open to become outside, keeping the user dry when it is being closed.

The bottom section of the print focuses on the depiction of samurai and his companions. The samurai's face has an almost rectangular shape, and there is a slight touch of red makeup around his eyes. His eyes are bulging as compared to those of the ghost, who looks at the samurai with anger, while the samurai's eyes show more shock and fear. His mouth is bending down, which expresses his anxiety and panic. The samurai's hairstyle is noteworthy; the top and side parts are all combed back and those at back are tied by strings neatly with the front part bumping like a flower. There are also two strings sticking out at each side. It reflects a topknot style called *ebi-chasen-mage* (海老茶筌髷) – a hairstyle imitating a lobster's tail or tea ceremony whisk; this style was fashionable in Edo since 1850s.¹ The samurai is also wearing a white fur coat with a highly geometrical and abstract shape; the geometrical outline captures the style of *yamato-e* portrait. In the earliest *yamato-e* portrait dating back to the 12th century, attributed to Fujiwara Takanobu and representing Minamoto Yoritomo, the first shogun of Japan, his formal court costume also received a highly abstract treatment. The samurai's white coat in this print is depicted with short irregular lines, which suggest soft texture, perhaps a luxury feature at the time.

The samurai's inner shirt is gorgeous. It is worn over two layers of inner robes as can be judged by the Y shape grey collar and two parallel light blue stripes. The background of the main part is printed in purple with a synthetic dye that was one of western imports to Japan in late Edo and Meiji periods. There is gold cloud-and-flower pattern flown on it, with three light blue petals forming the center part with six leaves in dark green and grey surrounding it evenly. The knots of the samurai's shirt at the chest are made with dark green hemp ropes, and the gold cloud pattern here is reminiscent of the gold cloud elements used in Japanese Momoyama period folding screens like *In and around the Capital*. The flowers here might originate from the patterns on Japanese brocade *nishiki* – the round floral like pattern from old Japan.

The two swords of the samurai are also beautiful; the scabbard of his long sword looks gilded and the hilts of his both swords are decorated with plain dot design, which suggests *samegawa* – ray or shark skin, often used for this purpose. According to “Kabuki encyclope-

¹ Honolulu Museum of Art, online collection overview. Accessed 11/16/2017 http://honoluluuseum.org/art/10202-chapter-33-back-of-wisteria-leavesa_z

dia,” in English this material is called *shagreen*, a type of rawhide consisting of rough untanned skin of Southeast Asian stingrays.²

The lower part of the samurai’s costume is printed in pattern formed by the repetition of three concentric squares, which is the crest of the Ichikawa lineage of Kabuki theater actors. According to the inscriptions on the print, the samurai is played by the actor Ichikawa Danjuro IX. He and Onoe Kuguro V, who is playing the role of the ghost, were known as the two biggest Kabuki stars of the time. This play was celebrated for the duo of top stars performing together.

The samurai’s retainers are shown in a state of extreme fear; their faces are distorted, eyes bulging, brows knitted, mouths half-open. Both men stretch out their hands to repel the ghost. These actors are depicted in a *mie*: the grotesque pose, with cross-eyed facial expressions, in which the actor freezes to mark the scene’s culmination. The pose of these two people resembles Japanese medieval sculpture by the Kei School masters, particularly the guardian figures of Ungyo and Agyo at Todaiji, Nara, from the Kamakura period. The Kei School sculpture style was famous for its realism. The faces of the guardians are indeed realistic, their poses are very dynamic and powerful, the cloth wrapped around them flows fluidly. The dynamic gesture of the guardian figures and the outstretched arms of both retainers in the print with their palms open look similar. This pose expresses the characters’ extreme intensity of emotions incredibly accurately.

The artist’s signature is located within the white rectangular cartouche placed above the samurai’s right hand. It says “by the brush of Toyohara Kunichika” with a red circle at the end. This circle is a *toshidama* seal that Kunichika had adapted from the Utagawa School of *ukiyo-e* print designers. Kunichika’s teacher, Utagawa Kunisada (print No. 10 in this catalogue) was one of the leading masters of the Utagawa School.

The composition of this piece is also successful, and seems to be of a very modern style. The ghost at the top and the samurai at the bottom balance the picture; the samurai’s umbrella becomes the connecting point and creates the rigid junction between the samurai and the ghost. Within this composition, the ghost’s evil and the samurai’s panic echo one another perfectly. As mentioned before, since the umbrella is inverted and widens up towards its top, the focus of the picture leans slightly to the ghost. In other words, this composition, despite being balanced, successfully leads the viewer’s gaze towards the ghost, who is intentionally the more prominent figure in the revenge story.

The print also utilizes fine linework. The rendering of the hair of each of the actors, their face outlines, details of the clothes are all delicate and clean. The colors are mostly of neutral earthy tones, apart from the samurai’s shirt. The background is washed into gradient from black to plain grey. Although the samurai’s shirt is lavish, the whole picture does not read very vibrant. Instead, it has a dusty feeling. In other Toyohara Kunichika’s works, strong

² Samuel Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: a revised adaptation of Kabuki jiten* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997)

bold colors like red, blue, green are often combined. Compared to other Toyohara prints, this piece's color scheme does not rely on sharp contrasts. On the contrary, it creates a rather gloomy atmosphere.

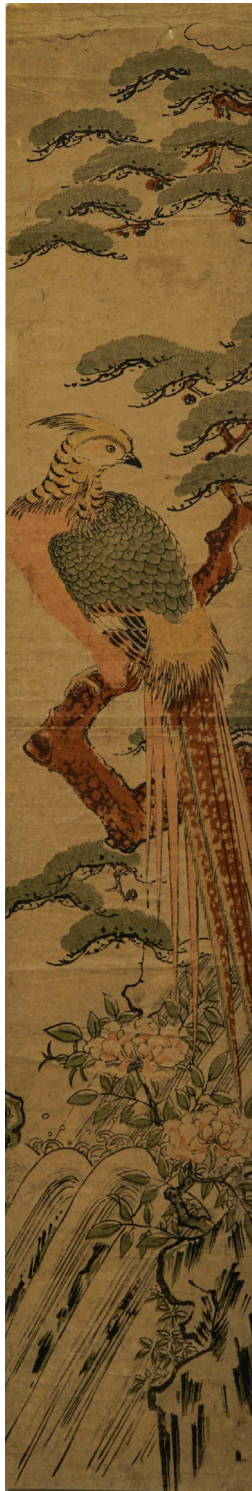
The upright format of the *oban* triptych has been used here with ingenuity. Vertical triptychs are particularly suited to the illustration of supernatural beings. The ghost's long fluid shape can be stretched to the maximum extent in this format. Additionally, the vertical triptych compositional limitations eliminates all unnecessary details. The minimalist background lets the audience focus on the intense relationship between the ghost and samurai, and the upright format allows all the figures come to the edge and often be cropped by it. This arrangement brings a feeling of immediacy of contact with the viewer. It seems that the figures have just appeared in the space of the print to disappear the next moment as they are moving forward.

Vertical triptychs are not a typical format used by Toyohara Kunichika. The majority of his works comprise *okubi-e*, the large head pictures that are one-sheet vertical *oban* compositions. Occasionally, Kunichika would create horizontal diptychs and triptychs, sometimes with sweeping compositions running across three *oban* sheets joined horizontally. But the vertical triptychs are indeed quite a rare occurrence in *ukiyo-e*. They are more suited for "narrative genres" such as the warrior genre *musha-e* (see essay to print No. 9 in this catalogue) and the Kabuki theater rooted genre, *yakusha-e*. Kunichika's style is firmly grounded in the essential features of the Utagawa School actor images: overall certain sharpness and angularity in description of forms, elongated faces, bold facial expressions and elaborate costumes.

With the advent of Meiji period after the country was reopened, rapid westernization started in Japan. Woodblock prints had to compete with the new technology: lithography and photography. Meanwhile, according to "Hotei encyclopedia of *Ukiyo-e*," as population grew fast, more publishers of *ukiyo-e* prints decided to lower expenses to increase production. Because of this, they were inclined to publish prints with fewer details, and to use cheaper red and blue aniline dye. Confronted by these challenges, Kunichika remained firmly dedicated to the artistic and theatrical stylistics of *ukiyo-e* actor prints and continued producing masterful works of distinctive technical excellence.³

To draw a conclusion, this spectacular triptych follows the traditional style of *yakusha-e* that had developed during Edo period. It also excels in creating a ghost image, a subgenre that gained popularity towards the end of the Edo period and continued to flourish in Meiji years, and was significantly developed by Toyohara Kunichika. The image stands out for its fine lines and details in the depiction. The actors' poses and facial expressions, the otherworldly bearing of the ghost are all rendered vividly. Toyohara Kunichika's vertical triptych represents the high artistic merits of *ukiyo-e* prints at their best at the time when the style was about to fade.

³ Amy Reigel Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints* (Hotei publ., 2005)



*Golden Pheasant, Peony
and Pine*
Isoda Koryusai, ca. 1780
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e
Pillar print hashira-e
Image: 63.7 x 10.3 cm
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1090

12. Golden Pheasant, Peony and Pine by Isoda Koryusai

An Auspicious Symbol of Elegance Quincy Kuang

A pheasant, elegant and intricate in form, color and texture, is poised with dignity on an angled branch of a pine tree. The bird dominates and animates an incredibly full close-up view of nature, taking most of the long and narrow space of a pillar print designed by an early ukiyo-e master, Isoda Koryusai, in 1780s. The rich assortment of nature elements appearing at once within a tight range of vision is quite remarkable. Throughout the upper two thirds of the composition, a tall pine tree twists its branches up to the clouds at the top edge of the print. The lower part of the print is given to lush peonies, growing above a rough outcropping and a powerful two-step waterfall behind it.

The golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*) depicted here is easy to recognize by its distinctive “golden” crest. The bird sits comfortably on top of a pine tree branch with its head tilted to the side opposite to the position of its body. It is looking back over its shoulder in the manner similar to *mikaeri bijin* – beautiful women of the *bijinga* genre in ukiyo-e that are often shown looking back as they are walking. Compare with prints No. 2 and No. 6 in the current catalogue. Native to China, the golden pheasant is a big bird, reaching about one meter in length (around forty inches). The viewer is afforded a rare opportunity to see the pheasant in a great detail, which rarely happens in wildlife. The bird’s face looks somewhat anthropomorphic – it is of yellow color, and a long arched line of darker feathers is reminiscent of nicely-shaped eyebrows, an important feature of human facial expression. A stream of curly, black patterns runs down along the pheasant’s neck, terminating in a fringe and forming a well-defined collar. The bird’s body is beige-red, smooth and soft-looking. The plumage on its back, however, is rather thick, varied, and ornate. The succession of beautiful green spade-shaped feathers constitutes the bird’s mantle. At its side, the wing is visible with black and white stripes. From below the mantle, a beige patch of soft feathers emerges that again terminates in the fringe and serves as a transition into the pheasant’s tail. The tail is as long as the bird itself, made up of white-spotted dark-beige pointy feathers angling down.

Another principal subject of this print is the pine tree. At the very top of the print, there are eight arch-shaped patches of pine needles that create a roof-like canopy across the width of the print. As one proceeds downward, the pine tree extruded outside the print then comes back towards the center, where the pheasant sits. It is at this point that another group of six patches of pine needles extend over the pheasant, creating a shelter-like setting that the creature sits under with tranquility. Although the presence of the pine tree in the print is fragmentary, it is characterized rather comprehensively. Its bare trunk bends and twists,

covered with rough and textured bark; the pine needles appear in clusters, and even occasional pinecones are depicted.

The descending rhythm of the crescent-like clusters of pine needles leads the eye to other roundish forms, this time of the peony flowers. The peony is also a very important subject of the print. The peonies are growing on a firm tree-like stem with many leafy branches extending to its sides. This is a tree peony that has been cultivated in China for millennia and regarded as “the king of flowers”.¹ The blossoms themselves are lush, comprised of numerous petals that are printed with pink to white color gradation, *bokashi*. The flower is growing behind the rock, which is an irregularly shaped bluff depicted in quick, bold, calligraphic lines at the lower right edge of the composition. The rock visually unites the image of the flower and the torrents of the waterfall gushing behind it.

The roaring waterfall, which carries a huge mass of water, is so fast and striking that it distinguishes itself despite being at the bottom of the print. Each torrent of the waterfall is composed of one white round curve on top bound by a strong black outline and is supported by several streams of lines at its bottom. The water is falling in two powerful leaps. Within each of the leaps the gushes of water are flowing in a rhythmically organized sequence. Between the two levels of the waterfall there are a few curly splashes and droplets of water. They seem to be emerging due to the mechanics of the falling water streams. Additionally, these splashes and droplets introduce a variety of motion modes that distinguishes the very element of water apparent in the cascading fall.

The print *Golden Pheasant, Peony, and Pine* has an interesting composition that highlights the negative space. The most eye-catching section of the print is the triangular gap created by the overlap of the pheasant and the tree branch, near the center of the print. This space gives depth and dimensionality to the print by providing the viewer’s eye a spot to rest as the remaining area is densely filled with information and detail. The spatial element in this print does not seem to represent logical space. The upper half of the image is rendered as soft and tranquil whereas the bottom half of the composition gives the viewer a sense of energy and hardness with a craggy rock at the foreground partially obstructing the view of the waterfall. The transition between these two visual impacts happens subtly within the composition, the turning point being the tail of the pheasant. With its sharp geometry and angles, the bird contrasts itself against the round and fluffy clusters of the pine-tree needles and clouds above the tree. More acutely, the hardness of the rock is further reinforced by the fast stream of the waterfall. These two elements made the bottom half of the composition seem more fast-paced and solid.

For printing, mainly the most common, saturated colors were chosen, a combination of ambiance setting and eye-catching details. The use of color set a cozy mood for the image; even the cold colors, such as green, contain warmth in it. With a combination of six differ-

¹ Shi-Liang Zhou et al. Multiple species of wild tree peonies gave rise to the ‘king of flowers’, *Paeonia suffruticosa* Andrews. Proceedings of the Royal Society, Biological Sciences.

ent colors and great details rendered by line, the pheasant is the most carefully illustrated subject in the print. However, despite the colorful palette of the bird, most of the colors surrounding it are also quite saturated, and thus, the pheasant seems less overpowering. The format of this print commonly known as *hashira-e* or the pillar print² is one of standardly used format for ukiyo-e prints, particularly towards the end of the 18th century. The pheasant is framed in a long vertical paper with its surrounding environment. This form of the composition – long and narrow – serves the subject of this print well, giving the viewer a sense of elevation and height.

Isoda Koryusai's *Golden Pheasant, Peony, and Pine* is a pillar print produced in 1780. The print pictures a natural scene with a pheasant as the main subject, which categorizes this composition as *kachoga*³, or, flowers-and-birds print. Isoda Koryusai had designed many *kachoga*, including numerous versions of this “Golden Pheasant on Pine Tree”, all around the same period. Despite being most influential for designing female figure prints in the *bijinga* genre, Koryusai maintained his style and incorporated his iconic summer serenity⁴ mood for this *kachoga* piece. *Kachoga* of the Edo period illustrates nature beauty along with placing a heavy emphasis on culture and beliefs⁵. Nature elements have a long tradition of symbolism in East Asian cultures. Birds as a species symbolize good fortune and prosperity⁶, especially a Golden Pheasant. In China, from where auspicious symbolism had originated, the pheasant was regarded as an emblem of beauty and sometimes was used in place of phoenix, the most honorable of all birds, commonly associated with the imperial house.⁷ The golden pheasant was formerly embroidered on the court robes of civil officers of the second grade.⁸

Each bird in Chinese lore is associated with a particular flower. The long-tailed birds, including pheasant, were accompanied by a peony.⁹ The tree peony, depicted here, has been already mentioned above as the King of Flowers; it was regarded also as the Flower of Riches and Honor. When full of beautiful flowers and green leaves, as it is on the print, it is considered as an omen of good fortune.¹⁰ Peony also brought the tradition of twelve months to the print, in which it represents the sixth month, *natsu* (summer).¹¹

The pine tree that is evergreen and can grow on rough terrain and withstand the hardships of cold weather is regarded as an emblem of longevity. Waterfalls likewise have auspicious symbolism since water is the first of five elements of Chinese cosmology. The phoenix, of which the golden pheasant is a mythological substitution, is said to be the essence of water as the emblem of purity.¹²

It would be incorrect to say that this print was created solely to please the eye with a

² Jacob Pins and Roger Keyes, *The Japanese Pillar Print: Hashira-e* (Sawers, 1982).

³ Bogel, Cynthia J. and Israel Goldman, *Hiroshige: birds and flowers* (New York, New York: George Braziller, Inc. 1988), Introductory article.

⁴ Pins and Keyes, 41.

⁵ Merrily C. Baird, *Symbols of Japan* (Rizzoli International Publications, 2001).

⁶ Bogel, Cynthia J. and Israel Goldman, *Hiroshige: birds and flowers* (New York, New York: George Braziller, Inc. 1988), Introductory article.

⁷ Williams, C.A.S. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, (Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), 325.

⁸ *Ibid.* 192.

⁹ *Ibid.* 193.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 320-321.

¹¹ Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 66-67.

¹² *Ibid.* 421.

close view of nature. It represents the culture of the time, reflects the people's beliefs and traditions. Through the many intentional details captured by the woodblock artist Isoda Koryusai, *Golden Pheasant, Peony, and Pine* brought to the viewer's eye as much beauty as meaning. Though the piece is a collection of natural motifs with auspicious meaning, this pillar print is filled with contrasts one finds in real nature. Koryusai juxtaposes soft to hard, round to sharp, cold to warm and fast to calm, all of which does not cause calamity but instead introduces variety. The composition of this specific print is the epitome of ukiyo-e woodblock prints as an art form since all the subjects and the overall depiction in the print would receive a dynamic transformation if it is reprinted again with a different color combination. Woodblock prints were meant to be mass-produced; this indicates that there is a degree of early commercialization with the production of these prints. The peculiar features of this particular *kachoga* by Isoda Koryusai add to a viewer's understanding of the total design of the piece. It also illustrates common for Edo popular culture appreciation for nature, the elements of which were at the same time traditionally linked with good luck symbolism.



Crane's Nest and Rising Sun
Utagawa Hiroshige, ca. 1845.3
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e
Upright oban diptych
70.6 x 24.3 cm
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
20.1090

13. Crane's Nest and Rising Sun by Utagawa Hiroshige

The Culture of *Medetai* Tamao Kiser & Indy Dang

Utagawa Hiroshige's "Crane's Nest and Rising Sun" is a *kachoga* of a red crowned crane and its nest on a pine tree at sunrise. The crane is leaning its neck towards a nest of three baby cranes. Directly behind the crane's elegantly curved body, a red sun rises in the otherwise sparse background. The print captures the left side of a pine tree just as it curves off page to the right.

While the theme of cranes and pine trees has been treated many times, Hiroshige's print brings a heartwarming touch to this concept by making the gaze between the parent crane and its chicks the central focus of the composition. Both the branch that the nest rests on and the body of the parent crane curve in a way that directs the eye towards the space created by the beaks facing one another. In fact, the entire composition is drawn in such a way that the eye naturally moves in a zigzag pattern up and down the page. The elements of the composition are balanced in an asymmetrical yet very natural way.

The good luck combination of crane and pine tree dates back to the 17th century; Shen Quan (1682–1760) was a Chinese "bird-and-flower" painter who popularized the style often seen in ukiyo-e. The introductory essay in the *Hiroshige: Birds and Flowers* describes Shen Quan's piece:

"The composition of *Two Cranes in a Pine Tree* is standard for both Shen and his generation of academic painters: the tree twists in and out of the picture plane, creating a brief passage of spatial depth into which the birds are neatly placed."¹

This account can easily be used to describe Hiroshige's composition here as well. Hiroshige too uses the tree to define spatial depth. In fact, the tree branches and the sun are the only signifiers of depth as there is no other background. The tree gives the crane a platform to perch upon and the sun activates the negative space so that the image does not flatten. He is very efficient in his choices of what to depict in his print.

Hiroshige's efficiency in the composition is due to the nature of this print being a collection of symbols rather than a truthful documentation of nature, combined with the veracity in rendering objects.

Despite the immediacy with which this moment is captured, there is something oddly unnatural about the print. One may begin to question, "Have I ever seen a crane nesting in a tree?" The answer is no, cranes do not nest in trees. They are found in marshes or other low land areas near water. Funnily enough, during this time period, there was no distinction between cranes and storks, which inhabit forest areas. Indeed, when comparing images of

¹ Bogel, Cynthia J. *Hiroshige: birds and flowers*. (New York, NY: George Braziller, 1988.)



baby red crowned cranes versus baby storks, one can clearly see the similarities between a baby stork and the young birds depicted in this print. Whereas baby storks are white and have black tipped wings and beaks, baby cranes are closer to baby ducks and are fluffy and completely yellow-brown in color. Interestingly, in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's copy of this print and copies at the MFA in Boston, the baby birds are drastically more yellow compared to RISD's birds who are so pale that they blend into the tree.

Thus, ironically, the iconic image of the crane in a pine tree was made of a mistaken observation. Or was it really a mistake? One would need to take a closer look at the symbolism behind each of the elements in this piece.

Cranes are traditionally the symbol of good luck and longevity. Since ancient times in China, cranes were regarded as the foremost birds. Cranes are known to mate with one partner for life and therefore represent long lasting relationships. When cranes cry, the sounds are said to resonate to the heavens so they are also known as the birds which reach the heavens. In Taoist ritual art, cranes are the primary image found on priest's robes due to their relationship with transcendence. The Taoist immortal, Wang Ziqiao is said to have flown to heaven on the back of a white crane while playing a reed flute, which would date these legends as far back as the Zhou Dynasty (1050–256 B.C.) and probably even further back.² Red crowned cranes prefer cold habitats, and in modern times, they are found in Hokkaido region of Japan where there is no need to migrate.

Pine trees are a beloved evergreen in Japan. They are known as the trees that wait for the gods. Japanese gardens are not complete without planting at least one pine tree. They are planted there to ask the gods, "please come rest here and watch over us." These trees are very practical as well. Due to their flammability, pine trees are the ideal firewood for heating baths and ceramic kilns. In World War II, pine oil was used as additional fuel for planes. They are also important as a food product; drinks, candy, confectioneries, health products and wine/teas have been made from pine leaves. During the Warring States Period (second half of the sixteenth century), pine trees would be planted in gardens to prepare food for overcoming enemy sieges. The love for pine trees is well reflected within the names of various locations around Japan. Chances are if one stays at a Japanese inn, at least one of the rooms will be named after the pine tree.

In many crane-pine images, the sun is represented with the color red. It is very rare for the sun to be depicted in red in many cultures because most would opt for brighter colors like yellow, gold, or white. In fact, even in Japan, the sun was depicted in more golden colors before the Heian Period. According to popular theory, the red color comes from the Genpei War (源平合戦, 1180–1185). The sun was revered as a universal symbol in Japan since the times of Amaterasu. Therefore, the national government used sun imagery for the national flag, a red flag with a golden sun. During the Genpei War, the Taira army used this existing

² Little, Stephen, Shawn Eichman, and Patricia Buckley Ebrey. *Taoism and the arts of China*. (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000) 195.

flag design to represent their forces. In opposition to this, the Genji warriors created a white flag with a red sun. After the Genji warriors won the battle using the white flag with a red sun mark, the word spread that a red sunrise (日の出, *hinode* of the print title) was good luck. Additionally, this is where the culture of *kohaku* (紅白), literally written as red-white, began. In any contest style events involving two sides, the two teams would be split into red and white, for example, sports festivals and the New Year's Singing Contest. Red and white would also be used for ribbons on gift money bags and is usually the colors of flags decorating weddings and graduation ceremonies.

Essentially, this elegant, endearing scene is a composite of various symbols of mixed origin that denotes good fortune in Japan. In Japanese design, creating these kinds of composite images is a very common practice. Other common composites include a single crane standing on a rock amid dramatic ocean waves or a hawk flying over Mount Fuji. In Japan, there are motifs that are unrealistic but exist to be used during *medetai* events. *Medetai* means happy, joyous events that are cause for communal celebration. Wolfram Manzenreiter puts it in this way:

“The folklorist concepts of *medetai* is an adjective associated with auspiciousness and its outcome for individual as well as social happiness. Within the ritual context, *medetai* refers to the prospect of a positive future development in response to the proper ritual practice, posture and display of objects enriching the happiness of the community.”³

In a country like Japan that does not have an overarching religion, one of the biggest events of the year is the arrival of the New Year because it is a joyous time that is shared universally. Many designs come out of celebration of the New Year every year, from postcards to envelopes to food packaging. All these designs follow the same general vein of combining auspicious symbols so the gift recipients will be blessed with all the good luck they could possibly fit onto a small package. Perhaps even this print was created with the intention of being hung during New Year's celebrations. The pine tree and the red crowned crane both make wonderful symbols for the winter. The rising sun also connects to the culture of watching the first sunrise of the year in January. The young birds are confusing because they denote spring. However, the crane chicks can also be thought as an auspicious symbol wishing abundant posterity for the year.

The artist, Utagawa Hiroshige would be the first to know about what these symbols mean. Although he worked in every aspect of ukiyo-e, he is remembered primarily for his huge legacy on landscape prints. To him, *kachoga* was a way to zoom into the details of nature that get lost in his more epic landscapes. Although they are completely constructed, like this print, they have a poetic “naturalness.”⁴

The vertical composition of this print allows the eye to flow from one auspicious symbol to the next: pine, crane, sun, chicks. A print like this would be appreciated more for

³ Manzenreiter, Wolfram, and Barbara G. Holthus. *Happiness and the good life in Japan*. (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017) 13.

⁴ Hiroshige: *Shaping the Image of Japan*, Chris Uhlenbeck, Hotei Publishing, 2008.

what it represents rather than its inventiveness. Therefore, the more space-effective it is, the better. The slenderness of this print is very reminiscent of a hanging scroll and would allow it to be hung virtually anywhere. In “Crane’s Nest and Rising Sun”, Hiroshige designs just enough space to let the important elements have some breathing space but no spatial surplus for the lack of background to be questioned.

The Hawk, The Pine Tree and The Sun

Common Motifs in *Oban* Vertical Diptychs by Utagawa Hiroshige and Utagawa Kuniyoshi

Jay Park

Two prints at the exhibition share many features. Both were created at approximately the same time – in 1830s. Artists who designed those images were the foremost figures in the Utagawa School, the leading lineage in ukiyo-e print designers. Both prints depict the same motifs – a hawk on a branch of a pine tree against the red sun disk. Each of the prints, however, is a distinctive work of art in its own right, characterizing unique artistic style and vision of its creator. The prints are discussed in separate essays further in this catalogue. Nonetheless, it was decided to precede those individual discussions by short remarks, introducing the theme of *matsutaka-zu* (松鷹図) – images of hawks in pine trees, tradition for Japanese arts.

Hawks play an important role in Japanese history, culture and lore and constitute an important theme in Japanese visual arts. These birds are naturally endowed with exceptionally sharp vision, can achieve extraordinarily high speeds in air diving, are violent, and can be trained for hunting.

Hawks have been used for hunting in Japan throughout the country's history. There is evidence that Japanese hawking dates back to Kofun period (3–6 cc.). It never disappeared since then; hawking was practiced by aristocracy during Nara period (8th c.) and Heian period (8c.–12c.), and became popular with the military since Kamakura period (12c.–14 c.); it retained popularity in subsequent eras. In Edo period hunting with hawks was widely practiced as sport. Historically, hawks were regarded as a symbol of noble status and warrior spirit. Due to their predatory nature and their boldness they became an emblem of Japanese warrior class and an embodiment of military prowess.¹ For centuries hawks belonged to a favorite subject in the art commissioned by the military elite.

The pine tree as a theme in the arts was often paired with that of a hawk. Together they constitute an established art motif *matsutaka-zu*. Auspicious symbolism of the pine tree has its roots in China where it is regarded as an emblem of longevity because it is evergreen.² A pine tree does not need a lot of earth to grow; it can survive on rough terrain at the forbidding heights. It can withstand the vicissitudes of nature, and thus represents endurance and fortitude. In Japan, the circle of ideas associated with an old pine tree was enriched by the Shinto understanding of a tree as an abode of kami.

Due to the above-delineated metaphorical significance of the pine tree, it was included in various good-luck groupings such as Chinese “three friends of winter,” where it was combined with a bamboo and a plum-tree – three trees capable of surviving during the cold season.³ In Japanese tradition, the pine tree is related to the symbolism of the first dream of

¹ Baird, Merrily. *Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design*. Rizzoli Press. 2001. p. 108.

² Williams, C.A.S. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs* (Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company: 1974), 327.

³ *Ibid*, 192.

the year – in this context it figures together with Mt. Fuji and an eggplant. When depicted together with a hawk, the symbolism of both constituents of the image would combine, embodying both steadfastness and military spirit.

Images of hawks in pine trees were often commissioned by powerful warlords. They could be painted on hanging scrolls or single standing screens. But during the Warring States period (15th–16th cc.) and Edo period, they were particularly often depicted on a grand scale – on sliding doors or folding screens. Such images of powerful hawks on imposing pine branches would then serve as a backdrop in magnificent reception rooms of the prominent military commanders.

The sun is often represented in the prints of *kachoga* genre – images of flowers and birds of the genre title and, additionally, of trees, small animals, etc. The infatuation with the sun, one of Japan’s essential symbols, has to do with its light, its central role in Japanese mythology, its symbolism pertaining to the military, as well as its being a sign of good luck. The sun’s presence in *kachoga* can be justified also by the fact that the birds’ activities are aligned with the cycle of day and night. The birds’ day starts at dawn and thus it is more than natural to expect the image of a bird to be associated with that of the sun. Large-scale sun discs appear as a background for the figures of the hawks on both “hawk prints” at the exhibition. The presence of the sun lends a more natural feel to the boldly cropped landscape fragments. At the same time, the sun disc underscores artificiality of the compositions, indicating that the images are “standard” auspicious constructions that rely on the established good luck formulas.



Hawk and Pine
Utagawa Hiroshige, ca. 1852.4
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e
Upright oban diptych
73.8 x 24.8 cm
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
34.640

14. Hawk and Pine Tree by Utagawa Hiroshige

Contemplative Type: Raptor's Vigilant Composure Jay Park

Hiroshige's *Bird and Pine Tree* is a *kacho-ga* depicting a hawk looking back over its shoulder as it stands on a high pine branch on its right foot, its left talon poised in a state of awareness. The bird looks solemn and dignified. Its head merges the broad neck that sits firmly on the solid body. Dark, nearly black feathers outline the bird's head and neck; the same dark feathers surround the bright-yellow ring of its brown eye, making it look even brighter. The front part of the bird's neck and body are patterned with a distinct arrangement of crescents and lines imitating bars and spots of the bird's coloring. The hawk's back is dark grey and slate grey. Each feather is printed in two colors with black dots peppering the lighter grey areas. The hawk's long tail feathers display typical black and grey stripe pattern. The bird looks in control yet alert, turning its head to check the situation behind it.

The bird can perhaps be identified as a peregrine falcon by its distinctive traits such as the patterns on its wings, the short beak, presumed wide wingspan and, essentially, the hawk being a native bird of Japan.

A narrow branch of the pine tree enters the print at the bottom center, and goes up, zigzagging across the space with a lively curvature. The substantial presence of the pine tree branch with abundant tufts of dark green long needles provides an appropriate setting for the noble bird. The spiky character of needle tufts is expressed by thin black lines radiating from their centers. One more important detail should be mentioned – in the centers of these needle clusters there are triplets of beige ovoid shapes. These are pine-tree catkins that produce pollen. Thus the season here is spring because this is the only time of the year when the tree pollinates.

Right behind the hawk's head, there is a huge red sun disc with gradient towards the middle. It can be observed to have a lavish printing. Blind printing and subtle gradation *bo-kashi* are used extensively in order to attain a painterly feeling. This painterly feeling, in turn, makes the overall impression more lifelike.

Hiroshige's deep knowledge of nature is well-known. In his art, he focused primarily on Japanese scenery and nature works for which he had an extraordinary liking. The landscape genre *fukeiga* was preeminently developed by Hiroshige in his countless images of the views of Japan. Hiroshige had shown Japan's nature and everyday life from far and near, in every seasons, every time of the day and every weather condition. His views of famous sites went hand in hand with his close-up fragments of nature. Throughout his career, he made a large number of depictions of birds, trees, and blossoms.

This print offers quite a magnificent yet pleasant image of a nature segment. All three motifs that are represented here are powerful – the tall pine tree, the majestic bird of prey and the huge sun, but their powers are contained. The pine tree is tall, yet fluffy. The hawk's plumage is kept down and long feathers of the tail are kept together. The sun disc moderates its heat being lighter in the center. Harmony reigns in this scene. Hiroshige made it look poetic. Hiroshige's visual language in this piece and throughout other *kacho-ga* prints is much more lyrical than, for example, the style of Kuniyoshi, his contemporary ukiyo-e artist of the same Utagawa school. Kuniyoshi's print, treating the same subject in the same format, is discussed in the following essay (No. 15). Hiroshige's composition is more reflective, while Kuniyoshi's is more active, associated with the military spirit.

Hiroshige's composition looks completely natural but one shouldn't forget that this combination of motifs was appreciated also for its good fortune symbolism. This *kakemono-e* was enjoyed at once as an artwork with a view of nature and as an enabler of wellbeing.

Japanese prints were regularly kept in collections to be seen at their owner's recreation. *Kakemono-e* – upright *oban* diptychs or triptychs, were as often as possible shown in the Japanese home as affordable substitutes for painted scrolls commissioned by upper classes. Due to their massive exposure to the elements, *kakemono-e* are generally discovered blurred and harmed. This Hiroshige's upright diptych from the RISD Museum, however, is found unblemished as perhaps it was kept securely way.



Hawk on a Pine Tree
Utagawa Kuniyoshi, ca. 1830s
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e
Upright oban diptych
70.6 x 24.3 cm
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
34.642

15. Hawk on a Pine Tree by Utagawa Kuniyoshi

Active Stance: Predatory Bird's Parental Love Jay Park

A majestic hawk is about to feed a large, full insect to its chicks in a nest secured on a high branch of a pine tree. Utagawa Kuniyoshi, one of the leading masters of the Utagawa lineage of ukiyo-e designers of his time, represented the scene on a vertical *oban* diptych with lifelike strength and directness. The proximity of a powerful bird of prey is a rare spectacle in nature, and its representation in this print is meant to thrill viewers. Moreover, the mighty bird is shown in an intimate moment of caring for its offspring. Such a close sight of wildlife can hardly be available in reality. Here, however, it appears possible due to the large format of the scroll-like composition and the foreground placement of the subjects shown in great detail.

It seems plausible that this particular hawk is the goshawk, a common species in Japan and characterized by the striped feather patterns on its wings and the tail. The hawk is in a dynamic stance with both wings raised up while firmly standing on one leg. Its four chicks in the nest look very hungry; they have their beaks open, ready to be fed, implying that their parent has just come back from hunting. This makes one wonder if this is a female hawk feeding the nestlings while the male hawk is away providing for its family. Typically, a mother hawk will feed the juvenile birds with the prey caught by the father of the family.

Kuniyoshi created this print during the 1830s. At that time, the art of ukiyo-e was developing rapidly. New outstanding talents were working in the field, including Hokusai, Hiroshige, Kunisada and Kuniyoshi. The landscape genre *fukei-ga* and the heroic genre *musha-e* took their shape and were flourishing along with the traditional ukiyo-e topics. Scenic views of Japan were produced in larger quantities covering a subset of themes such as birds and flowers, and other snippets of nature, of which the current print is an example.

Kuniyoshi is primarily known as an artist whose work showcased the warrior print genre *musha-e* as it reached maturity. He developed an elaborate visual language to characterize military properties of the warriors, their physical might, combative spirit, bravery in action, and pride for military achievement. And although Kuniyoshi is not represented in this exhibition by his *musha-e*, his distinctive artistic style and vision found their expression in his prints of the seemingly peaceful genre of *kachoga*. One can speculate if Kuniyoshi's interest in the intensity of military action was the reason for his focusing on a raptor as a theme of his *kachoga* and for showing his hawk in such an active, dynamic stance. Kuniyoshi masterfully renders the tense bend of the bird's back, the forceful glance of its yellow eyes at the younglings, its wings still open in mid-action, its claws sinking in the old wood of the dead pine branch. The hawk's aggressive demeanor catches attention of the viewer at the

first glance at the print.

But Kuniyoshi not only captures the militant spirit of the bird: he constructs the entire nature fragment with expertise and sensitivity.

The pine tree on which the action is unfolding occupies most of the lower half of the diptych. However, it is a tall tree, a branch of which reemerges at the right edge of the diptych's upper half. The pine looks very aged with its twisted, contorted branches, gnarls, roughened bark, occasional hollows, and tufts of lichen. The line-work describing the pine tree is much more energetic and is livelier with more variation in its width than the line used for the hawk. This greater irregularity in the representation of an old tree is emphasized also by overprinting of darker brown color over lighter brown. The freer manner in depicting the tree contrasts with the remarkable precision in the portrayal of the bird for which a finer line and more methodical coloring are more suitable.

The scene is happening at an impressive height. Behind the bird, there is just a horizontal broad strip of the pink cloud and the red sun disc above it. The hawk's wings obscure one half of the sun that is silhouetted against the infinite clear color-less skies. Kuniyoshi is using here the color gradation printing technique *bokashi* for rendering a slight desaturation of the sun disk from its borders to the center; *bokashi* is used also on the cloud. By accentuating irregularities in the forms of nature whether in line or color Kuniyoshi creates the feeling of veracity in his image, which is, in fact, artificially constructed.

The extended vertical composition of the print invites the viewers to appreciate the scene as if they were reading it in actuality, in real setting, scanning the image in the natural up-and-down manner instead of the more common for the West left-to-right direction. This also adds to a greater sense of believability.

In this print, Kuniyoshi is true to his particular artistic style with *musha-e* overtones as he always looks for and finds opportunities to include action. Additionally, the image balances observational precision in rendering of the details with the deliberate artificiality in the choice of the motifs and in their arrangement. The resulting representation is satisfying both for its life-like qualities, and for its good fortune symbolism.



Dragon and Tiger
Kitao Shigemasa
1770s
70.5 x 12.1 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1093

16. Dragon and Tiger by Kitao Shigemasa

Nature's Balance of the Opposites *Indy Dang & Tamao Kiser*

In the mighty swirls of heavenly matter, starting in white and grey but quickly turning into pitch-black space, an awesome dragon is coiling its springy body, echoing the spiraling ethereal element. Right beneath him, on a patch of land surrounded by raging waves, a robust tiger, its powers contained, is lifting the upper part of its body while eyeing the surrounding with a penetrating glance of its huge green eyes. This is what the viewer sees in the *Dragon and Tiger* pillar print – long and narrow *hashira-e* designed by artist Kitao Shigemasa approximately in 1770s. It is named after the two entities that symbolize “yin” and “yang,” an ancient idea that has its roots in 3rd century BCE Chinese philosophy and Taoist teachings.¹ Influenced by ancient Chinese art dating back almost two thousand years, Shigemasa chose the *Dragon and Tiger* to represent two opposing but equally powerful forces. He then further enhanced the cultural significance of the creatures through the manner in which he chose to depict them, the composition, and several visual techniques.

The association of the tiger and the dragon with “yin” and “yang” originated in Chinese art. The dragon is said to represent “yang,” with traits that are considered to be “masculine.” It is considered to be adventurous, active and on the offense. Other attributes associated with dragons are light, fire, heavens, and the season of spring. The tiger represents “yin,” with traits such as calm power, passiveness and defense. Attributes associated with tigers are darkness, water, wind and earth. In this particular print, the fact that the dragon is colored green bears a symbolic significance. The blue-green dragon is known as *Seiryu* in Japan and is considered to be one of the four dragon kings of the four seas in Chinese culture.² It is said to be a protector of Kyoto, and represents the east and the coming of spring. Though the tiger is usually white in Chinese astrology, Shigemasa decided to color the tiger orange, perhaps to avert its mythological portrayal in favor of a more realistic one. Both the tiger and the dragon came to be associated with Buddhism and are considered celestial companions that balance each other out with their opposite natures.

To emphasize the idea of complimentary opposites, Shigemasa has posed the tiger and the dragon in drastically different ways. In the top half of the composition, the dragon has an aggressive demeanor. It travels downward, piercing the clouds with its claws outstretched. The dragon is surrounded with dark clouds that shroud its body, giving one a sense of unpredictability and activity. Its open mouth suggests the ravenousness and the violence that need to be satiated. On the other hand, the tiger below looks far more peaceful. Grounded steadfastly amidst the chaos of the crashing waves, it crosses his two front paws as a peaceful ges-

¹ “Object In Focus: Japanese Tiger and Dragon.” Minneapolis Institute of Art, new.artsmia.org/teaching-the-arts/japanese-tiger-and-dragon/the-tiger-and-dragon-are-ancient-symbols-of-yin-and-yang-forces-that-combine-to-make-up-the-universe/.

² Williams, Charles A. S. *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives: an Alphabetical Compendium of Antique Legends and Beliefs, as Reflected in the Manners and Customs of the Chinese*. Dunhang Shuju, 1983.



Dragon and Storm
Isoda Koryūsei
Woodblock print
Private collection

ture. His expression is one of calm, with his tongue sticking out from his closed mouth grin. The tiger is in complete view, representing the Yin qualities of transparency and serenity.

Shigemasa has carefully composed the frame to fully suggest the idea of “yin” and “yang.” The dragon dominates the top half of the artwork, and the tiger the bottom. Each of them have been placed in opposing environments; the dragon rules the sky, represented by thick, dark clouds, while the tiger rules the sea, which is represented by whitewater splashing below. The space has been divided in such a way that one could cut it horizontally in half and be left with two separate compositions. The effect of the creatures’ poses on the composition was also taken into consideration. While the dragon’s head is pointed toward the left side of the frame, the tiger’s head points toward the right. The arches of their backs mirror each other, a subtle visual reference to the design of the “yin” and “yang” symbol.

There are several small decisions within the illustration that raise the feeling of conflict between the two halves of the composition. A total of seven colors were used in the print. Shigemasa has printed the space around the dragon in the darkest black in order to generate a visual contrast with the light grey used for the tiger’s background. Furthermore, the creatures themselves are depicted using two different kinds of mark making techniques. The soft fur of a tiger is imitated using very fine, short lines, conveying a sense of order. On the other hand, the scales of the dragon are created using bold, active outlines that vary in point size, giving it a sense of constant movement.

Shigemasa is often regarded as “the great chameleon of the ukiyo-e school” due to his ever changing style throughout the years.³ During the 1770s, he was inspired particularly by a print designer named Isoda Koryusai (fl. 1764-1788) and began to create pillar prints. One can see several visual similarities between Shigemasa’s *Dragon and Tiger* and Koryusai’s *Dragon and Storm*. The dragons in both pieces are portrayed in the same very distinct pose, with one clawed arm stretched out and the other bent in towards its body. It bears many of the same physical traits, from the flame s around its arms to the long whiskers on its snout. Furthermore, the mark making is very similar in both pieces, with the dragon being printed with a constantly changing line width and the ocean waves being composed using the same spiral motif.

Though the long format of *hashira-e* can make creating a balanced composition difficult, Shigemasa has used the uncommon shape to his advantage. By dividing the tall frame horizontally into two compositions, he was able to emphasize a dichotomy between the dragon and the tiger. The length of the paper allows for the creation of two distinct areas, land and sky, to exist within one frame, between which the eye is able to freely move. One may view the top and bottom half of the composition as powerful pieces on their own. But much like “yin” and “yang,” these two forces cannot be whole without one another.

³ Ficke, Arthur Davison. *Chats on Japanese Prints*. Frederick A Stokes Company, 1958.



*The Seven Gods of Good Fortune
in their Treasure Ship*
Utagawa Toyoharu, 1770s
70.3 x 12.1 cm
Polychrome woodblock print nishiki-e,
pillar print hashira-e
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1095

17. The Seven Gods of Fortune in their Treasure Ship by Utagawa Toyoharu

Auspicious Symbols of Japan Clara Creavin & Anna Xuan

Seven odd looking individuals are crowded in a boat gliding upon tumultuous waves. Specific features of these individuals, their peculiar garb and attributes allow us to identify them as the Seven Gods of Good Fortune. They often are shown traveling on a boat under a full sail, hurrying to bring their gifts to those who are waiting for them. The boat that carries the gods is a treasure boat, *takarabune*. Its sail, partially visible above the deities, bears a Traditional Chinese character *kotobuki* 壽 -- long life and congratulations.¹ The uppermost god depicted right under the sail is Bishamonten. Bishamonten is portrayed as a fierce warrior in full armor of what seems to be a more traditionally Chinese style. He is holding a tall spear in his right hand and is looking ferociously straight ahead. Below him to his right is the lone female goddess of the grouping, Benzaiten. She is also shown in a Chinese style dress. Her head is slightly inclined as she is looking down at the strings of the lute that she is playing. This is a traditional Chinese musical instrument, also known as a *biwa* or *pipa*, that she is holding across her body. With her left hand, she is pressing the strings to the bridge while plucking them with her right hand, obstructed by the figure in front of her. Benzaiten's face is serene and contemplative. Next to Benzaiten, to her left, Fukurokuju is standing. Fukurokuju is depicted as a smiling old man with an elongated forehead and a long white beard. A cloth covering his tall skull extends to his left shoulder. Fukurokuju is also holding a scroll that reaches to his lower left to the next god below him, Jurojin. Jurojin, likewise, is a smiling old man sporting a long white beard. He is wearing a translucent rectangular hat of a Chinese official; the hat is translucent due to being made of heavily starched silk. His left hand is holding the scroll that that he is unfolding. The god to the left of Jurojin is Hotei. Hotei appears as a very large and chubby smiling man with robes open at the front showing his bare belly. His earlobes are extremely large. He is holding a tea bowl in his left hand as he is scratching his bald head with his right. Below Hotei, is Ebisu. Ebisu is depicted in a very active position, smiling, as he raises his right arm with a fishing rod in it and lowers his left arm to hold onto the fishing line as the fish splashes at its end. Ebisu is shown in Japanese court garments with a very bold and graphic pattern of oak leaves. Out of all the gods, Ebisu holds the most prominent position due to his role in fishing and the gaze of all the gods being directed at him. Finally, the last god to Ebisu's lower left is Daikokuten. Daikokuten is also shown as a smiling man wearing a black rectangular hat. His gaze is fixed on the fish that Ebisu is in the process of bringing up. Daikokuten appears to be holding a round object in his left hand -- this is his mallet with which he produces coins. Below the gods, the print depicts the side of the ship

¹ "Children Playing the Seven Gods of Good Fortune in a New Year Play" Ashmolean Eastern Art Online, Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EAX.4125>.

that transports them all and the fish that has just been dragged out of water. The ship moves at full sail over stylized rough waves known as *araumi*, an artistic tradition inherited from Tang China – these rough waters form the bottom of the entire composition.

While the print has yellowed, the overall image remains clear. The print appears to be a five color separation. Green, what appears to be a grey blue, and black, and two types of reds that are most likely vermillion and *tan* red. However, the grey blue color and the *tan* red has faded almost beyond recognition, leaving only prominent vermillion reds and greens. There are also minor stains marring the print on the top and the middle, on the face of the depicted Fukurokuju.

The composition of the print is very full and active due to the necessity of including each of the seven different gods within it. The vertical nature of this pillar print leads it to rely heavily on zig-zagging diagonals to bring the viewer's eyes from top to bottom. First the straight diagonal of the top of the sail brings the viewers eyes down to its lower edge. Most of the visible portion of the sail is filled with the character for longevity, the very structure of which offers multiple parallels to the zigzag paths created by the edges of the sail. The broad and bright horizontals of the character's elements correspond to the angle of the sail's upper edge. At the same time, the character's verticals, visually fortified by the rope line affixing a wish-granting jewel at the sail's top, match the direction of the sail's lower edge. It is now this fringed lower border of the sail that leads the viewer's eye down to the assembly of the deities abroad. The glance thus moves naturally to the heads of Bishamonten and Benzaiten. From Benzaiten, the diagonal created by her *biwa* lute then leads the eye to the head of Fukurokuju. Fukurokuju is then connected diagonally to his lower right through his long scroll to Jurojin. Below Jurojin, the print is then cut across by Ebisu's raised arm and fishing rod to lead to Hotei and then to Ebisu himself. Finally the diagonals created by Ebisu's folded hat pointing down and the edge of the boat's side lead towards Daikokuten and the fish that all the gods are gazing towards. The composition appears to have been closely planned to meet the challenge of the lack of space typical in a pillar print. Rather than attempting to render depth in space, the print artist resorted to a flat composition that can allow the image to hold a bigger amount of information in the restricted fashion on the long, scroll-like print.

The format of pillar prints, *hashira-e*, occasionally used in the art of ukiyo-e, had its heyday in the late eighteenth century when its output dramatically increased. Pillar prints served the role of hanging scrolls for the masses who could not afford them.² *Hashira-e* were mounted on patterned paper that imitated the silk borders of scrolls. In those years, artists experimented dramatically with ever narrower *hashira-e* and finding inspiration in the elongated picture field.³

This print, titled The Seven Gods of Fortune in their Treasure Ship, was produced in the aforementioned heyday of *hashira-e* by the artist Utagawa Toyoharu in the 1770's. The

³ Jacob Pins, *The Japanese Pillar Print Hashira-e* (London: Robert G Sawers Publishing, 1982), 10.

⁴ Mark Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan," Onmarkproductions, accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/seven.shtml>.

⁵ C. Puini, "The Seven Gods of Happiness," Translated by F. V. Dickens, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 8 (1880): 431.

signature of the artist appears on the lower left corner of the print atop depicted waves. The print does not belong to a set or series, nor does it have any publisher or censorship seals. A highly original artist, Utagawa Toyoharu worked soon after full-color printing was introduced. That time coincided with the popularity of the *hashira-e* format, and the artist with his characteristic inventiveness.

The subject of this print is the group of the Seven Gods of Fortune, *Shichifukujin*, of Japan. While this grouping of gods and goddesses became the most relevant in the Edo period, each member of this assembly of deities has a long and multifaceted history. To begin a discussion of these deities, one must start with their origins and the variety of religions and traditions that have influenced Japan from its early history up till the Edo period. One of the most notable influencers on Japanese society is unquestionably Chinese culture. Starting most prominently in the Nara period, China has influenced Japanese societal structure, writing system and literature, dress -- in fact, every other perceivable aspect of Japanese culture. Thus it undoubtedly affected the array of the deities worshipped in Japan and a variety of symbols that appear in Japanese culture. With Chinese culture also comes the influence of Taoism. While, as a religion, Taoism never gained a strong foothold in Japan, in the case of the Seven Gods of Fortune it has most definitely left a strong impact via the introduction of new deities, their attributes, and even numerology.⁴ The other important reason of cultural multiplicity in Japan is rooted in the country's two principal religions. One is Japan's native Shinto, and the other is Buddhism, which was imported to Japan from India via China and Korea. Buddhism brought along not only Chinese traditions but also a multitude of Indian Buddhist traditions and even older Vedic traditions.⁵ In the Edo period, this wide array of religious and cultural traditions came together in the images of divinities of varying origins. This diverse background contributed to the development of a mixed but standardized symbol and design lexicon, resulting in the way the Seven Gods are commonly depicted in various art forms, including ukiyo-e woodcuts, as exemplified by this print.

This mix of religions and cultures in Japan is what sets the background for discussion of the Seven Gods of Fortune. At the most basic level, the reason for there being seven gods in the grouping has roots deep in Japanese culture. The number seven can be seen throughout folklore and religion. For example, in folklore there is said to be seven Buddhist treasures, Japanese Buddhists believe people are reincarnated only seven times, seven weeks of mourning are required after a death, and much more. It is hypothesized that this tradition of the number seven may originate in Chinese culture, where it also has significance within Taoist numerology. In Chinese cosmological tradition, odd numbers are considered auspicious and more specifically Taoist numerology further dictates odd numbers as favoring ki vitality and energy flows.⁶ As such, it can be seen that the number seven only augments the influence of the gods of good fortune. On the next level, the multiplicity of cultural sources

⁴ "18th Century Prints: Hashira e," Ronin Gallery, last modified February 2, 2015, <http://www.ronin-gallery.com/education/18th-century-pillar-prints-hashira-e/>.

embraced in Japan is reflected in the origins of each god of the Seven Gods assembly. Of the group, Benzaiten, Bishamonten, and Daikokuten mainly originate from Buddhism. Fukurokuju and Jurojin have their origins in a mixture of Taoist mythology, and Chinese history and folklore. Hotei originates from a mixture of Taoist, and Chinese folkloric and Buddhist mythologies. Finally, the only member of the grouping to have solely Japanese origin is Ebisu, coming from Shinto traditions.⁷ Each deity has a much more multifaceted and complex history of development resulting in their Edo period depictions that will be elaborated upon in later sections.

The final level on which one must understand the Seven Gods of Fortune is its development in and relationship to Edo culture. While this religious and cultural multiplicity resulted in the Seven Gods coming together in the Edo period, further traditions and folklore are specific to the way Edo interacted with this group of divinities. The oldest records of the *Shichifukujin* date back to the Muromachi period (1338 - 1573); however, at that time the composition of the group was not concretely established.⁸ In older versions of folklore, the goddess Kichijoten was a member of the Seven Gods pantheon, furthermore, there was also another pantheon of three gods of fortune, consisting of Ebisu, Daikokuten, and the goddess Marishiten.⁹ The presences of Kichijoten and Marishiten were both largely supplanted by Benzaiten as she rose in popularity and became cemented as a member of the Seven Gods in the Edo period.¹⁰ More importantly to the Edo period, the Seven Gods became closely associated with New Year's celebrations and traditions concerning their treasure ship, *takarabune*, and their treasures, *takaramono*, both of which will also be further elaborated upon.

Each of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune has a specific iconography, a standardized way of depiction. In the case of Bishamonten, the deity is depicted as a ferocious warrior. The spear in his right hand and a miniature pagoda in his left are clear identifiers of the warrior god. The deity's dignified appearance, expressed in everything -- from the intensely hard expression on his face to the armor he dons -- is indicative of his purpose as a god-protector, as well as his virtuousness.¹¹ The pattern on Bishamonten's armor depict a stacked tortoise-shell motif jointed in threes called *bishamon kikkou* 毘沙門亀甲, which was a popular motif in Japan that carried connotations of longevity, and was named after Bishamonten as it was known to be affiliated with the deity's armor.¹² The deity Bishamonten has his origins in Buddhism, initially as a Vedic deity that was incorporated into said religion in India.¹³ He was then integrated into Japanese buddhism as a part of the *Shitenno*, Four Heavenly Kings Protecting the Four Directions, where he was known by the name Tamonten and guardian of the north.¹⁴ This deity was the only warrior of the *Shitenno* that had been worshipped inde-

⁶ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

⁷ Puini, "Seven Gods of Happiness," 431. ⁸ Collection online, British Museum.

⁸ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

⁹ Merrily Baird, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), 210.

¹⁰ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

¹¹ Earl Miner, *Japanese linked poetry*, 313.

¹² Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 103.

¹³ Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: the glittering world of the Japanese courtesan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 9.

pendently. During the Muromachi period in Japan, Bishamonten started to become affiliated with bringing material wealth as a god of treasure along with his role as a fierce warrior and commander of the *Shitenno*.¹⁵ Other functions of Bishamonten that were introduced to Japanese depictions of the deity include the scourge of evil doers, and the healing of illnesses.¹⁶

The second figure, Benzaiten, like Bishamonten, also has her origins in India as the Hindu river goddess Sarasvati.¹⁷ She was introduced to Japan via China first in her eight-armed form carrying weapons, and was favored by samurai and warriors. However later in the thirteenth century she was “reconnected” with the idea of water in the Japanese pantheon, becoming the goddess of all things that “flow” -- music, art, literature, poetry -- and her most popular image became the one we see in the print, plump in appearance and with two arms playing her *biwa* lute.¹⁸ Benzaiten became grouped with the Seven Gods of Good Fortune during the Muromachi period and happened to be the only female deity of the seven gods. This transition also led her to growing more well known to larger segments of the population, particularly causing her to become much more popular with the urban classes during the Edo period. Benzaiten is the only woman of the Seven Gods, recognizable by her *biwa* and her pleasant and amiable manner.

Fukurokuju the third deity depicted in the print, has origins in Chinese Taoism. In accordance with the most influential aspects of Taoism on Japan, Fukurokuju is a god of wealth, happiness and longevity, with the three characters representing his name directly being defined as those three aspects in succession (福 Fuku - Wealth, 禄 Roku - Happiness, and 寿 Ju - Longevity).¹⁹ Fukurokuju is typically depicted as an old bearded man, bald, and with an incredibly elongated head, sometimes bare, sometimes covered in a towel-like hat. In some instances, he is depicted as a dwarf “five feet in height...and with a head forming half his entire person.”²⁰ Although not depicted in this print, Fukurokuju’s animal companions are interchangeably, the crane, deer, tortoise, and stork, all symbols of longevity in Taoist tradition.²¹ Emblematic of his calligraphic skill, he is also sometimes depicted with a brush tied to his forehead, or examining a scroll of text.²² Although most definitely originating from China, there are multiple versions of Fukurokuju’s specific history. He is separately regarded as an advisor to an emperor of the Liang dynasty, a Taoist hermit sage of the Northern Song dynasty, and a personification of the Southern Star of Long Life. As an advisor to Emperor Wu, or Butai, in the Liang dynasty, he reportedly convinced the emperor to end slavery in a certain province and earned his reputation as a god of happiness in that province.²³ As a Taoist hermit sage, or *sennin*, Fukurokuju appears before the Emperor and after drinking a quart of wine, and reveals that he is the embodiment of the Southern polar star with the

¹⁴ Makoto Ueda, 190.

¹⁵ Ibid., 195.

¹⁶ British Museum and Ellis Tinios, *Japanese prints* (British Museum Press, 2010), 57.

¹⁷ Haruo Shirane, *Early modern Japanese literature*, 199.

¹⁸ Makoto Ooka, *A poet’s anthology* (Katydid Books, 1994), 105.

¹⁹ Henri L. Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968), 153

²⁰ Puini, “The Seven Gods of Happiness,” 449.

²¹ Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art*, 154.

²² Ibid., 157.

²³ Schumacher, “Seven Lucky Gods of Japan.”

ability to prolong the lives of people. In many sources, this origin story as the Southern polar star is shared with Jurojin.²⁴

Jurojin, the god depicted below Fukurokuju, also originates from Chinese Taoism. As the god of wisdom and patron of learning, he is usually depicted in the dress of a scholar, most times with a cane and sometimes in the accompaniment of a deer.²⁵ The deer, like the symbol for Fukurokuju, implies longevity, which is stated in Jurojin's name, literally meaning "old man of longevity" (u 寿 - Longevity, Ro 老 - Old, Jin 人 - Person).²⁶ In different sources, he is described as either a tall old man or identical to Fukurokuju, as an old man three feet high, with an elongated head.²⁷ Different from Fukurokuju, Jurojin is commonly depicted in Japanese art with an angular hat.²⁸ As the god of wisdom, Jurojin is also associated with scrolls and is sometimes shown holding a staff with a scroll hanging down from it.²⁹ With Jurojin's shared origins as the Southern polar star, and in another story, where he is based on a historical personality from the Northern Song dynasty, he, like Fukurokuju, has multiple roots within Chinese traditions. In the sources where Jurojin is described as a tall man, he is supposedly based on a historical personality who lived during the Northern Song dynasty and stood nearly six feet tall and had an elongated head.³⁰ Other sources cite his origin story as the same to that of Fukurokuju. According to that story, he appeared before an emperor as the embodiment of the Southern polar star and revealed that he had the power to prolong people's lives.³¹ It is this overlap in origin stories that lead people to hypothesize that Fukurokuju and Jurojin were initially the same deity.

After Fukurokuju and Jurojin comes Hotei. Hotei has his origins with a Chinese Buddhist monk said to be called Qici 布袋 or 'cloth bag', who lived on Mt. Siming 四明 in Mingzhou 明州, Fenghua 奉化, who earned his title by strolling through a nearby town carrying said cloth bag.³² The deity is commonly depicted with a large belly, chubby elongated earlobes, and a cheerful face, and is largely recognized outside of Japan as the fat, laughing Buddha or Bodhisattva Maitreya. His bulging cloth bag of treasure and magnanimity earned him a spot as one of the Seven Gods in Japanese culture. Commonly known to function as the god of contentment and happiness, Hotei is the most well-known of the Seven Gods and largely adored. In sculptural depictions of Hotei, it is said that rubbing the belly of the jolly deity would bring good luck. In Uttagawa Toyoharu's print, Hotei is likely holding a drinking bowl, which brings to light Hotei's jovial personality, and his love for having fun and making life a happy place. It is apparent in Toyoharu's print that the artist sought to fully describe Hotei through his appearance, in which he seems to be exposing his bulbous stomach as a

²⁴ Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art*, 157.

²⁵ Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art*, 242.

²⁶ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

²⁷ Puini, "The Seven Gods of Happiness," 447.

²⁸ Baird, *Symbols of Japan*, 199.

²⁹ Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art*, 242.

³⁰ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

³¹ Puini, "The Seven Gods of Happiness," 448.

³² Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, JAANUS, Hotei 布袋.

possible attempt at deterring the heat and unwinding, creating the image of him being as comfortable as he can be. Other depictions of Hotei would also have him holding a wooden staff, or joyfully playing with groups of children.³³

The next god, Ebisu, is the only member of the seven that originated in Japan Shinto traditions. Like in the print, he is commonly shown in formal Japanese court garments, *kariginu*, with a grinning face, holding fish that is most likely a red sea bream. His distinctive headdress, a pointed black hat folded in the middle, is a *kazaori eboshi* -- 風折烏帽子 -- a “wind-folded” special hat worn by the Japanese courtiers of old.³⁴ Ebisu is traditionally depicted as a portly fisherman, holding a fishing rod the way Utagawa Toyoharu depicts him in the print. Ebisu is regarded as the patron of fisherman and laborers.³⁵ He is also the god of honest and fair dealing, and is worshipped in particular in the Osaka region.³⁶ The sea bream as a symbol for Ebisu is especially associated with celebratory occasions, especially New Year’s, when this fish is consumed. This is also due to the Japanese predilection for homonyms, red sea bream being *tai* in Japanese, sounding the same as the Japanese term for congratulations, *omede-tai*.³⁷ In this print’s image of Ebisu a repeat pattern is shown on his clothing made of oak leaves, a symbol connected to Shinto gods in their usage as food receptacles for offerings.³⁸ Although Ebisu clearly originates from the Shinto religion, he is still associated with more than one deity in the Shinto tradition. Ebisu is also commonly called the *Hiruko no mikoto*, which identifies him as a son of Japan’s founding gods, Izanagi and Izanami. However, Ebisu is also sometimes identified as the Koto Shiro Nushi no kami, and thus, being a son of Daikokuten. As the Koto Shiro Nushi no kami, Ebisu’s name literally means the Settler of Prices, leading to his worship by traders.³⁹

The final figure is the god Daikokuten, who originated in India as a Hindu warrior deity Mahakala.⁴⁰ Japan adopted Daikokuten into its art during the late Heian period, in which the deity came to be a protector of food supply due to many representations of him being placed in monastery kitchens in India and in China.⁴¹ Earlier depictions of Daikokuten in Japanese art maintain his original appearance as a war god, dressed in armor and with a fierce expression on his face like that you would find in a depiction of Bishamonten. However, Japan later associated him moreso with food and good fortune. Daikokuten specifically functions in Japanese culture as the god of five cereals, earth, agriculture, farmers, prosperity, flood control, and the kitchen.⁴² Unsurprisingly, common depictions of the deity supply him with rice bales, or even a rat found around food.⁴³ In the print, Daikokuten is holding the Magic Mallet or *Uchide no Kozuchi* 打出の小槌, which is a symbol representing sexual energy as well as a

³³ Mark Schumacher, “Seven Lucky Gods of Japan”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Joly, *Legend in Japan*, 131.

³⁶ Baird, *Symbols of Japan*, 200.

³⁷ Schumacher, “Seven Lucky Gods of Japan.”

³⁸ Baird, *Symbols of Japan*, 55-56.

³⁹ Puini, “The Seven Gods of Happiness,” 431, 437.

⁴⁰ Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, JAANUS, Daikokuten 大黒天.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Schumacher, “Seven Lucky Gods of Japan.”

⁴³ Schumacher, “Seven Lucky Gods of Japan.”

tool used to provide money when shaken or struck against something, a symbol representing his unlimited fortune.⁴⁴

Within the assembly of the Seven Gods, there are special connections and relationships between certain deities. Utagawa Toyoharu, through the placement of certain gods and connections he establishes between them, implies in this print those special relationships for an Edo audience that was becoming more and more interested in rich symbols. One of the most prominent connections is the relationship between Fukurokuju and Jurojin. Due to the aforementioned potential for a shared origin, Fukurokuju and Jurojin are closely connected and often confused with each other. Another reason for this is the similarity in their animal companions, both gods often depicted with deer; additionally both are closely associated with scrolls. In the print, Utagawa Toyoharu connects them by putting them next to each other and having a scroll stretch from Fukurokuju's hands down to Jurojin's. This scroll may also potentially be a part of the *hokan*, pair of crossed scrolls, that are commonly included in the myriad of treasures, *takaramono*, belonging to the Seven Gods.⁴⁵ The second special relationship is established between Ebisu and Daikokuten. Their connection has two aspects, one being that of a father son relationship in Shinto mythology, and the other is that of the shared roles as gods of food, fishing for Ebisu and agriculture and rice for Daikokuten, worshipped in the kitchen. Ebisu, as his *Kotoshironushi no kami* identity is the son of *Okuninushi no kami*. Okuni -- 大國 -- in Japanese means "great realm;" this coincides with the same meaning of Daikoku -- 大國 -- in Daikokuten's name in Chinese, thus resulting in him being identified with *Okuninushi no kami* on top of his original Mahakala identity.⁴⁶ As gods of food, Ebisu and Daikoku were commonly enshrined in kitchens, especially those of farming communities. This relationship between Ebisu and Daikokuten is often reflected in Japanese art, and as thus, appears in the print, where Utagawa Toyoharu shows this through the deities' positions next to each other.⁴⁷

The subject matter of this print is very closely tied with Japanese mythology and customs and as such, contains a large number of objects and symbols commonly used in Japanese art and culture. The boat in this print is called a treasure boat, or *takarabune*, and traditionally the Seven Gods of Good Fortune are depicted aboard this boat laden with treasures.⁴⁸ The cut off Chinese character on the sail of this boat is "*kotobuki* 寿," meaning congratulations and longevity. Sometimes the *kotobuki* sign appears on the sail of the seven gods' boat in accordance with the gods' association to celebration and happiness, especially during the New Year.⁴⁹ Additional symbols associated with the treasure boat include cranes and tortoises depicted in the sky and sea, though not applicable to all depictions and they are absent here.⁵⁰ The origins of the treasure-boat imagery are uncertain. One source dating

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Baird, *Symbols of Japan*, 295.

⁴⁶ Puini, "The Seven Gods of Happiness," 436-437.

⁴⁷ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Children Playing the Seven Gods of Good Fortune in a New Year Play" Ashmolean Eastern Art Online, Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art.

⁵⁰ Schumacher, "Seven Lucky Gods of Japan."

to the Edo period claimed that the image of the treasure boat appeared during the Muro-machi period, another source claims that images of the treasure boats were initially gifts to upper-class elites, perhaps courtiers in celebration of the New Year.⁵¹ Whatever the origin, *takarabune* is a very popular image for the New Year's events. One custom is for common people in the Edo period to place the treasure boat picture under their pillow on the second night of the New Year for good fortune and happy dreams. If a bad dream occurs, people would send the treasure boat painting down a river or into the sea to prevent bad luck.⁵² Treasure boat imagery was introduced in woodblock prints during the mid-Edo period in the early eighteenth century, and increased in popularity as the century progressed.

In the introduction given above to the context of the Seven Gods of Fortune, it was mentioned that certain aspects of the history of the Seven Gods must be understood against the background of the development of Edo culture. The meteoric rise in popularity of this group of deities was intimately related with the rapid change in Japanese culture that happened in the Edo period. The Edo period is set apart from any other time in Japanese history before it due to the long lasting peace that the Tokugawa shogunate was able to maintain.⁵³ This extended period of peace is what made possible the enormous cultural developments and shifts in priorities to occur; from this new setting came ukiyo-e and the popularity of the Seven Gods. The Tokugawa shogunate, with policies such as the *sankin kotai* system, the moving of samurai from the countryside to castle towns, and the structural development of these castle towns, increased Japanese travel to the capital city of Edo and back. This together with commercialization and development of interregional trade, was well as the rise in population in castle towns, result in a rapid urbanization during the Edo period.⁵⁴ Moreover, the peace also offered stability not only for the urbanization, but also for the people to be freed from being concerned with survival, leading them to seek prosperity. Culture shifted in such a manner where the people of the Edo period began to desire more success in trade and farming not for subsistence, but for more money, and the most prosperous people in the Edo period became businessmen and merchants.⁵⁵ Thus, figures such as the Seven Gods of Fortune with direct ties to material wealth, success in trading, prosperity, good luck, and longevity, were the perfect deities for a culture that was now so commercial. Furthermore, this rise in the standard of living for the people of Edo also brought about further developments in the enjoyment of culture. Prior to the Edo period, the prevalent culture was a "high culture" reserved for aristocracy and military elite, requiring a high amount of literacy to understand and enjoy. Prosperity led to a more democratic popular culture in Edo that was "defiantly unrefined." This was the consequence from a rise in folk culture and a rise in the general literacy levels of the masses.⁵⁶ The Seven Gods, a result of this new culture could

⁵¹ Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, JAANUS, Takarabune 宝船.

⁵² Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, JAANUS, Takarabune 宝船.

⁵³ Harold Bolitho, "The Edo Period," in *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005), 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁵ Bolitho, "The Edo Period," 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

then appeal to everyone, both high and low, through lowest common desires.

This print is also closely connected with the Edo specific pastimes through the depiction of the treasure boat. In this print, the treasure boat is depicted specifically as a *yanebune*, a roofed pleasure boat.⁵⁷ Due to the aforementioned developments in Edo commerce and culture, pastimes and interests became an important part of Edo life leading to cultural developments like Yoshiwara, a greater interest in classical literature and symbols, *rangaku* or “Dutch studies,” and much more.⁵⁸ One pastime that was characteristically popular in the Edo period was that of boat-partying, specifically partying in pleasure boats such as the *yanebune*.⁵⁹ Toyoharu, in creating this version of the Seven Gods atop the *takarabune*, shows the present-day print’s viewers now how important modern and fashionable life was to the Edo audience of that period.

Utagawa Toyoharu’s polychrome pillar print of the popular Seven Gods of Good Fortune proves to have utilized this confining composition using multiple diagonals leading you down and throughout the print, like a zig zag starting from top to bottom. The print itself is also a perfect example of Japan’s rich history with religion. The image reflects how many Buddhist gods were adapted from distant and older cultures like India or China, and incorporated into Japanese culture, attests to the introduction of new functions and images for gods and demonstrates how these figures were effectively personalized for a Japanese audience, especially in the case of the treasure boat. Like most other ukiyo-e prints, The Seven Gods subject is filled with subtle hints and imagery indicating the story of the piece, who the figures are, and what their function is, amongst other meanings. The Seven Gods of Good Fortune carry many different messages, ranging from the more commercialized purpose of symbolizing good fortune and New Year celebrations, to the deeper intrinsic meaning of the display of the various virtues in the Seven Gods. Bishamonten displays dignity, Benzaiten displays amiability, both Fukurokuju and Jurojin display longevity, Hotei is generosity, Ebisu is the promise of nature’s bounty, and Daikokuten’s virtue is wealth. These virtues aren’t lost in the casual themes of this Utagawa Toyoharu’s treasure boat print, and in fact play into the lightheartedness of ukiyo-e as a whole.

⁵⁷ Gabi Greve, “fune boat ship,” Edo - the Edopedia - a Project of Daruma Museum, last modified July 24, 2014, <https://edoflourishing.blogspot.com/2014/07/fune-boat-ship.html>.

⁵⁸ Bolitho, “The Edo Period,” 28.

⁵⁹ Greve, “fune boat ship.”

Ukiyo-e Artists Represented in this Volume

Indy Dang

Suzuki Harunobu (鈴木春信), 1724–1770

Suzuki Harunobu was a prominent ukiyo-e print artist and is lauded as the major early master of full-color prints *nishiki-e*, or brocade pictures. Harunobu perhaps first studied with Nishikawa Sukenobu and is said to have been influenced by his mentor's delicate, balletic style that became prevailing in the depiction of courtesans. He is known to be a great producer of *bijinga*, images of beautiful women. Harunobu's ideal of graceful, willowy young women dominated the genre in his time and inspired many followers. He was closely involved with poetry groups, and this association contributed to the development of full-color printing in mid-1760s. He worked mostly in the small *chuban* format but is also known for designing pillar prints *hashira-e*, in which he was the first to include backgrounds. (No. 1, 2, 3)

Utagawa Toyoharu (歌川豊春), 1735–1814

Utagawa Toyoharu was a print designer born perhaps in the Tajima Province. He studied with Toriyama Sekien, an artist of the Kano school of painting. His training as a landscape painter was evident throughout his work, where he perfected the “western study” of using one-point perspective in scenes containing buildings and streets. With these he had contributed to the development of landscape genre. He later focused on images of women. He worked in pillar print format and is said to have been influenced by Isoda Koryusai (q.v.). He is known as a founder of the Utagawa school, which became a dominant presence in ukiyo-e, producing popular artists such as Toyokuni, Hiroshige, Kunisada, and Kuniyoshi. (No. 17)

Kitao Shigemasa (北尾重政), 1739–1820

Kitao Shigemasa was a printmaker, illustrator, and poet; perhaps studied with Nishimura Shigenaga. His art focused primarily on book illustrations before he started designing wood-block prints. He first worked in the genres of *yakusha-e* (or actor prints) and *bijinga* (prints of beautiful women). He is said to have been influenced by many of his contemporaries, such as Torii Kiyomitsu, Isoda Koryusai and Katsukawa Shunsho. He is particularly famous for his prints designed in 1770s. Though he stopped working in the 1780's, and his work is rare today, Shigemasa was known for his expert draftsmanship. (No. 16)

Isoda Koryusai (磯田湖龍齋), 1735–1790

Isoda Koryusai was a printmaker whose career began at the age of 35 while he was still serving

as a feudal retainer for his master, Tsuchiya, in Ogawa-machi, Edo. He is said to first have studied with Nishimura Shigenaga, then Suzuki Harunobu. After the death of Harunobu, he became the major designer of *bijinga* prints. He was also highly accomplished in *kacho-ga* genre – “flower-and-bird” prints. He was considered the “supreme master” of pillar prints having designed some of the best examples to exist in this format. (No. 12)

Katsukawa Shuncho (勝川春潮), *fl.* 1780–1795

Katsukawa Shuncho was a painter and print artist who studied with Katsukawa Shunsho. He started his career with images of Kabuki actors and beauties, originally inspired by the style of his teacher’s work. His images of beautiful women then became closer to the style of Torii Kiyonaga (q.v.). He often included nature details to suggest outdoor setting for his tall serene beauties. Shuncho gave up printmaking around 1790 to become a writer. (Nos. 5, 6)

Katsukawa Shuntei (勝川春亭), *fl.* 1800–1820, *d.* 1824

Katsukawa Shuntei was a pupil of Katsukawa Shun’ei who, in his turn, was an important master *yakusha-e* and an early designer of warrior prints *musha-e*, influencing his student’s thematic choices. Shuntei made significant contribution to the same genres but also designed prints of beautiful women, of famous views and worked in illustration of popular literature. Particularly noteworthy were Shuntei’s warrior prints often done in the extended formats of diptychs and triptychs. In this, he served an inspiration to Kuniyoshi (q.v.), maestro of *musha-e* genre. He depicted warriors in battle scenes with an emphasis on individuality and honor. He is said to have enjoyed little recognition during his lifetime. (No. 9)

Torii Kiyonaga (鳥居清長), 1752–1815

Torii Kiyonaga, one of the most influential designers of prints of beautiful women – *bijinga*, comes from a family of a bookseller. Kiyonaga studied with Torii Kiyomitsu, a prominent print designer with whom the Torii school, of which he had been the third-generation head, embraced a larger variety of *ukiyo-e* styles. Later, Kiyonaga inherited the role of the head of the Torii school. Part of the reason for this was the school’s recognition of Kiyonaga’s unique visual lens and innovative talent that helped him change the then current perceptions of beauty and methods of image making. He is known for large format *oban* prints, often united in diptychs and triptychs and featuring regal-looking tall elegant women sometimes accompanied by their male consorts. He often depicted groups of beauties on a walk or festive occasions, arranging the figures in a procession and forming frieze-like compositions. Kiyonaga pioneered detailed elaboration of nature settings of the scenes he portrayed, and thus had influenced development of landscape genre. Kiyonaga’s manifold innovations sparked evolution of the *ukiyo-e* print. (No. 4)

Kikugawa Eizan (菊川英山), 1787–1867

Kikugawa Eizan was born to Kikugawa Eiji, a painter of the Kano School. Eizan first studied with his father and later with Suzuki Nanrei, an artist of the Shijo School, known for its interest in observation-based realism. Most of Eizan's work was *bijinga*. He is said to have been influenced by the style of Utamaro, a preeminent artist of female images in ukiyo-e. However, Kikugawa Eizan is considered to be a master of the genre in his own right, building upon Utamaro's strengths and creating sophisticated and sensitive images of women. He later abandoned printmaking in favor of painting. (No. 7)

Keisai Eisen (溪斎英泉), 1790–1848

Keisai Eisen was born to a samurai father, a calligrapher of note. He began an apprenticeship in art at a young age, studying under a Kano painter. After his father's death, he studied with Kikugawa Eizan's father, Eiji, and then with Kikugawa Eizan (q.v.), a master of the *bijinga* genre. Like Kikugawa Eizan before him, Eisen specialized in *bijinga* prints that mainly featured courtesans and geisha in daily life, but also printed erotic scenes and landscapes. His best works included *okubi-e* – literally, “large heads,” close-up head portraits; he created considerable number of scroll format images of beautiful women in painting and printed medium. Some of them belong to masterpieces of the third decade of the 19th century. His style is characterized as lush and seductive. Eisen was also known for popularizing *aizuri-e*, which were ukiyo-e prints that predominantly used shades of blue for color. (No. 8)

Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞, *the same as Toyokuni III*), 1786–1865

Utagawa Kunisada is one of the most influential ukiyo-e printmakers of the 19th century. He was born into a family that owned a ferry boat service, a secure financial support at the onset of his career. A student of the Utagawa school, he was apprenticed under Utagawa Toyokuni, particularly renowned for his actor portraits *yakusha-e*. Kunisada's first prints, mostly *bijinga* (beautiful women), date to 1802. Around 1809, he was praised as the brightest student of the Utagawa school and as his master's equal. A year later in 1810, Kunisada changed his artist's name to Gototei. After his teacher's death he claimed a right to become the head of the school against the legal claimant, Utagawa Toyoshige. Later, Kunisada became the head of the school under the name of Toyokuni III. An extremely versatile print designer, Kunisada dominated figurative genres of ukiyo-e, such as *bijinga*, *yakusha-e* and occasionally *musha-e*. His style is a fusion of many earlier styles with new complexity of design, intensity of color, inventiveness in composition. His output was colossal, amounting to some 35,000 of prints. (No. 10)

Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川広重), 1797–1858

Hiroshige was the son of an official of the fire department. A celebrated painter and print designer, he is famous for his lasting contribution to the landscape genre *fu-keiga* and flower-and-bird genre *kacho-ga*, as an affiliated theme. He is best known for his travel series, *The Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*, of which he had created at least twenty sets, *The Sixty-nine Stations of the Kisokaido*, (created in collaboration with Eisen), and many other sets with famous views throughout Japan. His work is admired for its realism, sensitivity to the life of nature, subtle coloring, and atmospheric quality. Nature and the seasons were key elements of his nature views as he often incorporated mist, rain, snow, and moonlight within his compositions. Hiroshige's work had a marked influence on Western art towards the close of the 19th century. Van Gogh is among the artists known to have closely studied and copied Hiroshige's compositions. (No. 14)

Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳), 1797–1861

Utagawa Kuniyoshi was born to a silk dyer. At the age of 15 he became a pupil of Toyokuni, the head of the Utagawa school. Before his success as ukiyo-e print designer, he worked part time fixing floor mats. Of the many prints he designed, he is mostly associated with his vigorous, dynamic warrior and hero prints. Kuniyoshi's prints in extended formats stood out for epic power of sweeping compositions. He gave Japanese history its distinct vivid visual expression. His success in *musha-e* genre earned him the nickname "Kuniyoshi of Warrior Prints." He designed also images of beautiful women and landscapes as well as birds-and-flowers. His unbound imagination, inventiveness, bold spirit and playfulness make him one of the most interesting masters of late ukiyo-e. (No. 15)

Toyohara Kunichika (豊原国周), 1835–1900

Toyohara Kunichika, was a printmaker during the Meiji period. In his childhood, he was said to be a grumpy child who would frequently get into fights. He attempted an apprenticeship at a local thread shop at the age of 10, but was fired for neglecting work in favor of art. At 13 years old, he worked at a shop that produced *hagoita*, or rackets with portraits of famous Kabuki actors painted on them. One year later he started his ukiyo-e training under Toyhara Chikanobu, himself a student of Kunisada and Kuniyoshi. Kunichika became best known for his work in the *yakusha-e* – actor portraits, and *shibai-e* – theatre performance scenes. Kunichika remained true to the best traditions of the Kubuki theater genres in ukiyo-e. His spectacular actor images stand out for their expressive power, boldly cropped compositions, often dazzling colors, including new synthetic dyes imported from the West. (No. 11)

Glossary of Terms

Meredith Barone & Anna Rose Chi

Araumi: Literally “rough seas;” traditional art motif of rolling waves and foam that came to Japan from China during Tang period.

Bijinga: Derived from *bijin* (beautiful person) and *ga* (picture); a generic term that has come to refer to prints and paintings of women. Changes in women’s fashions, the general societal conception of femininity and the specific vision of several pivotal artists were the primary forces that affected the development of the *bijinga* tradition during its long history.

Bira-bira kanzashi: Ornate hair ornaments; *bira-bira* (“fluttering” or “dangling style”) are composed of metal strips attached by rings to the body of the ornament to move independently, making a delicate noise while walking.

Bishamon kikko: Traditional Japanese pattern with three hexagons arranged so that their negative space forms a ‘Y’ shape, “tortoise shell design of Bishamon style.” It is named after a Buddhist guardian deity, Bishamonten, who often wore armor decorated with this pattern.

Biwa: Necked-bowl lute (usually with 4 strings, sometimes 5) played with plectrum. Originated in China; imported to Japan as apart of court music (*gagaku*) ensemble. The chosen instrument of Benten, the Japanese goddess of music.

6. Bokashi: Various block carving and printing techniques used to create gradated tones (shading) on woodblock prints, particularly 19th century ukiyo-e landscape prints.

Dochu: Ceremonial procession (“travel”) made by the shogun’s officials between the cities of Kyoto and Edo. Since the Yoshiwara had streets named Edo and Kyoto, a courtesan’s procession to a teahouse to meet with a client was likened to that of a grand daimyo. (Cecilia Seigle)

Engawa: The area beside or surrounding the straw matted *tatami* (floor of a room or veranda in Japanese dwellings); a veranda either partly inside the building with sliding doors to protect from rain, or a completely exposed veranda.

Furisode: Long-sleeved (“swinging sleeve”) kimono worn by unmarried women between the ages of 13 and 18.

Geta: A form of traditional footwear that resemble both clogs and flip-flops. A sandal with an elevated wooden base held to the foot with a fabric thong to keep the foot above the ground. Geta were invented by the Chinese and then introduced to Japan.

Gikeiki: Muromachi-period chronicle *Gikeiki* or *Yoshitsune ki* (“Chronicles of Yoshitsune”),

Haidate: Armored thigh-guards worn by samurai.

Hamon: “Blade pattern,” a visual effect created on the blade during the hardening process of forging. The hamon is the outline of the hardened zone (*yakiba*) which contains the cutting edge (*ha*).

Hashira-e: Pillar (*hashira*) picture(s) (*e*); derived from the intention to be displayed on wooden pillars around the house. Thin, vertical compositions displaying artists’ great ingenuity in designing dramatically cropped figures to fit the narrow, elongated picture field.

Hassotobi: An abbreviation for *Yoshitsune hassoutobi* (“Yoshitsune’s Leap over Eight Boats”); one of the many legends surrounding the tragic warrior Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-89) and a popular pictorial theme.

Ichimatsu: A geometric pattern of repeated alternating dark and light squares or rectangles. It was named after the mid-18th century kabuki actor, Sanokawa Ichimatsu (1722-62), who used the design on his trousers and pioneered its use during the Japanese Edo Period.

Iki: The aesthetic ideal of the Edo merchant class during the late 18th-19th century, combining material sensuality and elegant sophistication. *Iki* means “spirit” or “life” but came to mean the spirited or lively way in which someone lived, as well as the styles of fashion and art that expressed this lifestyle. In the context of *bijinga*, it is often applied physically, such as the partial showing of a bare foot.

Inward-eight Style: The style of the Shimabara quarter of Kyoto, adopted by the Yoshiwara. An ornate pattern of walking during a *dochu* that traditionally only displayed one foot at a time. As kimonos grew in weight and ornament, the style decreased in complexity. (Cecilia Seigle)

Kabuki: The premier popular theater art form of the Edo period; the term originates from the verb *kabuku*, meaning “to be out of the ordinary” and refers to highly exaggerated playing style and lavishness; now is written as “song (*ka*), dance (*bu*) skill (*ki*).”

Kabuto: Samurai helmet, usually made of iron.

Kacho-ga: “Flower (*ka*) and bird (*cho*) picture(s) (*ga*).” Formerly more commonly, “bird-and-flower picture(s),” depictions of the natural world; birds, flowers, trees, plants, grasses, insects, fishes, and animals.

Kakemono-e: “Scroll (*kakemono*), picture (*e*),” refers to two or three *oban* size prints (q.v.) joined vertically and mounted as a hanging scroll; were used to decorate the houses of townspeople.

Kamuro: Female attendant or ‘apprentice’ to high-class courtesan, who was generally sold to a brothel around the age of seven or eight.

Kanzashi: A single stick or fork-shaped stick hair ornament made of metal. The hairpins could be embellished tortoise shell or lacquered wood, with a decorative knob, bead or tassel on the end.

Kariginu: Hunting silk garment often translated as “hunting robe.” The *kariginu* is made of a single width of cloth for the body, and double width for the sleeves. A string runs through the edge of a sleeve so that it may be tied or gathered during lively movements.

Katakana: “Non-cursive style;” originally a mnemonic device to pronounce Buddhist texts in Chinese, today primarily used to write foreign names, words, and onomatopoeia.

Kazaori eboshi: Originating from the Japanese Heian period, the *kazaori eboshi* was worn by aristocrats to indicate rank. Still worn today for ceremonial purposes, this black linen hat was used during a samurai’s ceremony in attaining manhood.

Koshigatana: Short, “waist-sword.”

Kosode: “Small sleeves;” kimono worn by married women. The name refers to the small size of the wrist openings.

Kushi: Combs, rounded, sometimes square were usually made of tortoise shell, boxwood or sandalwood and ornamented. *Kushi* were an essential decorative accessory for women’s elaborate, upswept coiffure of Shimada style (q.v.), common in Edo period Japan.

Maedate: An upstanding decoration found on the front of a soldier’s helmet. Shapes of *maedate* included the kuwagata (hoe-shape), hangetsu (half-moon), various animals, especially dragons and lion-heads, antlers of deer or buffalo, round forms representing the sun, mirrors, swords, fans, plants, shells, musical instruments, and various other emblems.

Mikaeri: “Looking (*mi*) back (*kaeri*);” the pose of a woman looking over her shoulder frequently appearing in handscrolls by the artist, Hishikawa Moronobu. *Mikaeri* was used as a compositional device, enabling the portrayal of a woman’s robes while showcasing the beauty of the standing figure.

Musha-e: “Warrior (*musha*) picture(s) (*e*).” A genre of Ukiyo-e prints which includes the depiction of historical heroes and battles, scenes from warrior tales and traditions.

Nadeshiko: Pinks or wild carnations; one of the seven plants of autumn, and a common design motif in decorative arts and painting.

Nishiki-e: “Brocade (*nishiki*) picture(s) (*e*);” a term used for color prints produced after 1765. A print created by carving a separate woodblock for every color, using them in a stepwise fashion.

Oban: “Large (*o*) size (*ban*);” the most common print size in ukiyo-e, ca. 10x15 inches. Vertically, it provided ample field for half and full-length figure designs. Horizontally, it was ideal for landscape prints, but in the 1850s Hiroshige demonstrated the potential of vertical *oban* for landscapes.

Obi: A broad kimono “sash” formally tied at the back, though more commonly tied in a bow at the front by courtesans.

Oiran: A term referring to high-ranking courtesans of the Yoshiwara brothel district.

Omedetai: The word for greeting or congratulation.

Onigawara: Decorative roof tiles found at the ends of a main ridge oomune, or descending ridge *kudarimune*. In the Nara and Heian periods they were usually decorated with flower or animal designs, and in the Kamakura period with a goblin *oni* mask. Usually made of tile, occasionally stone or wood.

Oshiroi: A mixture of rice flour, white soil, and a liquid extracted from the seeds of the jalap plant. *Oiran* applied *oshiroi* to their face, nape of the neck, throat, chest, hands, and feet.

Roundel pattern: A circular pattern often featured on aristocratic textiles from the 8-17th century, when it began appearing among high ranking Yoshiwara courtesans.

Sakoku: “Chained (*sa*) country (*koku*),” frequently translated as “closed country.” A reference to the closing of the country as the result of a series of edicts (*sakoku-rei*) issued by shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu from 1633 to 1639 that were designed to control contact with the outside world.

Sankin kotai: a governmental system that required daimyo to split their time between Edo and their own homes

Shichifukujin: “Seven Lucky Gods.” Also “Seven Gods of Good Fortune.” They include Benzaiten, Bishamonten, Daikoku, Ebisu, Fukurokuju, Hotei, and Jurojin. They were a popular subject for print series, especially in the mid-18th century; single-sheet prints depicting all seven gods in a treasure boat (*takarabune*) were equally popular. Their origins vary from Buddhism, to Shinto, and Chinese backgrounds.

Shimada-mage: “Shimada chignon.” There are several accounts regarding the origins of this hairstyle: 1) From the Kyoto entertainer named Shimada Jinsuke of the Kan’ei era (1624–44); and 2) From prostitutes operating at Shimada station along the Tokaido. The style became widespread by the 1680s and remained popular throughout the rest of the

Edo period, including with prostitutes. Early forms entailed bending the hair towards the back and securing it with paper tapes, etc.

Shirizaya: Sword holder or scabbard covered with animal fur.

Shitenno: The Four Heavenly Kings; protector figures in Buddhism.

Sohei: Buddhist warrior monks dating from medieval to feudal times.

Sumi: “Lampblack,” which produces permanent inorganic black pigment; it includes pine soot and oil soot.

Takarabune: “Treasure ship.” According to folk belief, the Seven Gods of Good Fortune (Shichifukujin) sail into port on New Year’s Day on a ship laden with treasures (*takara*), and it is said to appear as an auspicious omen in dreams on New Year’s Eve.

Takaramono: Legendary treasures carried by the treasure boat *takarabune* (q.v.). *Takaramono* included rolls of silk brocade, keys to the storehouse, a magic cape of invisibility, a merchant’s weight, scholar’s scroll, an anchor, cloves, purse, coins, etc.

Tan: “Red lead.” An inorganic orange pigment; used for hand-coloring of ukiyo-e prints before introduction of full-color printing in 1765.

Tate hyogo: “Standing hyogo;” a variation of the Hyogo chignon (*hyogo-mage*) hairstyle in which hair is swept up and knotted to form a loop. There are several theories regarding origins of the term: 1) That it was first worn by prostitutes of the Hyogo district in Settsu Province; 2) That it was a style worn by courtesans of the Hyogoya brothel in Yoshiwara; and 3) That it was adopted by courtesans from imported Chinese styles. It is seen from the Kan’ei era (1624–44) onwards, enjoying widespread popularity in the Kanbun and Enpo (1661–81) eras and appearing in prints from Kan’ei to Genroku (1624–1704) eras. Its use declined after the introduction of the *shimada-mage* (q.v.) and *katsuyama-mage*.

Tayu: the highest rank of courtesans who did not sit on display behind the latticed facades of brothels. They performed ritual exchanges, had the power to reject clients, required an application process, and only saw clients by appointment.

Tokonoma: display alcove in a Japanese home

Tsu: witty urban sophisticates (Cecilia Seigle)

Uchide no kozuchi: a legendary hammer or mallet that is said to be able to tap out anything the user wishes; an attribute of Daikoku, one of Seven Gods of Good Fortune, Shichifukujin (q.v.)

Uchikake: an additional outer layer of robe that is draped loosely over the kimono; worn without an obi.

Uchiwa: Fans of rigid oval or “bean-shaped” form; became also an ukiyo-e print format.

Wakaimono: Broad term for all male servants who acted as attendants and overseers of prostitutes in Yoshiwara.

Waraji: Sandals constructed of straw rope. Common footwear of lower class people.

Yakusha-e: “Actor pictures;” a term referring to illustrations of Kabuki theater actors.

Yanebune: Roofed pleasure boats in Edo.

Yurei-zu (also yurei-ga): “Apparition (*yurei*), drawing (*zu*)”; a popular sub-genre in ukiyo-e prints devoted to the images of ghosts/phantoms/apparitions. Were popular in Edo and Meiji periods and were produced in large numbers.

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