

STRIKING CHORDS II

Music in Ukiyo-e Prints

Rhode Island School of Design Spring 2022 THAD-H791-01

STRIKING CHORDS II: Music in Ukiyo-e Prints Rhode Island School of Design Spring 2022 THAD-H791-Ukiyo-e Prints Instructed by Dr. Elena Varshavskaya Cover design by Alex Zhu

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STRIKING CHORDS II: MUSIC IN UKIYO-E PRINTS

Ukiyo-e or "pictures of the floating world" is a name of urban art style that initially focused on pleasurable pastimes of townspeople in Japan of the Edo period (1615-1868). At first, ukiyo-e topics were predominantly associated with beautiful courtesans of Yoshiwara, the red-light district of in Edo (Tokyo), and with the kabuki theater. Gradually thematic range widened to embrace seasonal customs and traditions, views of nature, and national historical and mythological lore. But regardless of the theme illustrated by ukiyo-e artists, music remained essential whether for scenes from life and legend.

The theme of music in ukiyo-e prints has been explored by the RISD art history students for two semesters (fall 2021 and spring 2022) in a hands-on curatorial format. The resulting exhibition *Striking Chords: Music in Ukiyo-e Prints*, is on view at the RISD Museum from February through July 2022.

The spring semester project is virtual. However, the approach is similar – to comprehensively study music-related prints in the collection of the RISD Museum and to share the findings with interested audiences, albeit in digital format.

Nineteen prints have been selected. In the exhibition's virtual space, they are displayed according to thematic areas. Those display areas include prints illustrating music played for leisure – sometimes solely for pleasure but occasionally for celebratory occurrences or for moral instruction. Another area shows prints associated with professional performers – actors of the kabuki theater, chanters of the puppet theater, or street entertainers. There are also sections dedicated to prints that depict music performed within mythical lore, or ceremonial music as well as martial music.

It is no wonder that ukiyo-e artists illustrated musical themes in multifarious types of print production. The exhibition covers the century of ukiyo-e prints at their prime – from 1770s through 1860s. The types of prints on display include polychrome prints *nishiki-e* or "brocade pictures" as single-sheet compositions or as triptychs. Represented are commercially produced prints as well as luxuriously published squarish prints known as *surimono* with embossing and metallic pigments. More than a third of the exhibits are almost monochromatic book illustrations. Many come from *Hokusai Manga*, "random sketches" by ukiyo-e foremost artist Katsushika Hokusai and from

books for artisans by one of his students. Altogether, the selection is tremendously rich in subject matter and gives a good idea of the variety of ukiyo-e styles and their evolution.

By close visual exploration of this selection of prints, by investigating circumstances of the scenes represented and peculiarities of the objects depicted, by striving to uncover cultural references imbedded in these images, by listening to music played on the instruments depicted students who curated this exhibition sought to come closer to the beautiful and intriguing world of ukiyo-e prints.

The sound continues for but a moment, ukiyo-e prints were designed as ephemera, but their resonance appears timeless. We hope that this exhibition's virtual visitors will echo these sentiments.

Elena Varshavskaya, course instructor RISD, Spring Semester 2022

Part I. MUSIC & SOCIETY: UNIVERSAL HARMONY & ENJOYMENT FOR ALL



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). Random Sketches by Hokusai - Transmitting the Spirit, Revealing the Form of Things (Denshin kaishu: Hokusai manga), volume 9, pp. 9-10. 1819. Private Collection.

MUSIC, COSMIC HARMONY & SOCIAL ORDER –

Ancient Chinese Philosophical Concept and Japan: Hokusai's Vision Cyra Cupid

On this double-leaf spread from volume No. 9 of Hokusai Manga, three figures take up the stage, two women and a man. Two of the three figures are women musicians sitting on a rock that is irregular in shape. This rock seems the only indication of the scene's setting. Besides this rock the background of the image is blank, showing a single wash of gray color. The rightmost woman of the two happens to be in the center of the composition. She is playing a zither – a horizontal stringed instrument known as a *koto* in Japanese. To the left of her, another woman is playing a fiddle called $koky\bar{u}$ in Japanese. Lastly, at the very right, a young man is standing solemnly, holding a folded fan, and equipped with a sword. As has been mentioned, this image is part of a Manga book, by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. The word "manga" is translated from Japanese as "whimsical" or "random" pictures.

The woman centered in the composition is seated at a narrow table playing a zither that has seven strings. A zither is defined as a "horizontal plucked chordophone" by William Malm, a leading authority on Japanese music. There are various types of zithers. Among zithers that came from China to Japan there are the seven-string zither and the thirteen-string zither. These two types of zithers are quite different in their shape and in how they were played. The seven-stringed zither came down from China to Japan during the Heian period (8-12 cc.) but was later discontinued in Japan. Much later, already in the Edo period (17-19 cc.), it was revived again. It is difficult to say what historic period Hokusai references here, although the entire image abounds in detail, including representation of the zither.

Among multiple types of zithers, two that are most important to this print are the seven-string *koto* and the thirteen-string *koto*. These two zither types are quite different in

¹ William Malm, Japanese Music and Musical Instruments, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, VT, Tokyo, Japan, 1959, p. 165.

² Genshoku Ukiyoe Daihyakka Jiten, Tokyo: Taishukan Shoten, 1998. v. 5, p. 58

shape and how they are played. However, in Hokusai's depiction, the print shows a hybrid of the two instruments.

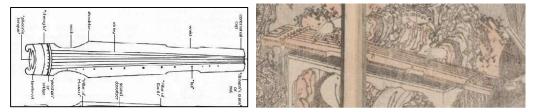


Fig. A. Seven-string zither "neck" and "waist." Chart from Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/b/b1/Qin_part_names.png **Fig. B.** Hokusai Manga, v. 10. Musicians and a page, zither detail.

Traditionally, the seven-string zither had two indentations along its body – the so-called "neck" and "waist" as this is shown on the chart on the right (**Fig. A**). The zither depicted by Hokusai also has both – the neck and the waist.

However, it is noteworthy that the zither in Hokusai's picture has movable bridges *kotoji* (琴柱) typically used for playing the thirteen-stringed zither, not the seven-stringed one played without the bridges. Technically, the strings on the thirteen-string zither are stretched over movable bridges that are adjusted in advance to achieve the desired series of tones. To play when the bridges are used, the musician uses plectra or picks. These picks look like reinforced nails. They are attached to the thumb, index, and middle finger of the right hand. Fingers on the left hand press down the strings thus creating varying tension to achieve the desirable sound. Thus, Hokusai depicts the seven-string zither complete with the characteristic indentations on its body. Yet, it is visibly clear that in this print this instrument used bridges and picks, exactly like those used on the thirteen-string zither.

Additionally, in Japan the seven-string *koto* was commonly placed on the knees of the player who was sitting on the floor while the thirteen-string was placed on a stand and the musician sat in a chair. As seen in Hokusai's sketch, the woman musician is sitting high on a rock shaped like a chair, which is similar to those who play a thirteen-stringed zither. It is unclear why Hokusai changed how the traditional seven-string zither was played in this image. It is difficult to imagine that he made a mistake or disregarded the existing practice, so perhaps he was depicting here something very specific. Let's leave these observations for now and move on with examining the picture.





Fig. C. Left: Kitao Shigemasa, 1739-1820. *Girl as Goddess of Good Fortune, Benzaiten*. 1780s RISD, Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1368

Fig. D. Scroll painting by Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty, "Listening to the zither *qin*" (Ting qin tu), detail. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. Wikimedia commons.

The other woman musician on the far left is playing a $koky\bar{u}$, the only Japanese traditional instrument that is played with a bow. This instrument is a small, spiked fiddle. Its resonator is described as a bloated square in shape. It is usually covered in animal skin. It is built with a two-piece neck, having four frictions, hexagonal-shaped pegs made of wood, and a long spike at the bottom of the body. Additionally, it is a string with four silk strings attached to a tailpiece made of silk rope, and a bamboo bridge and nut.³ According to William Malm, when well played, the $koky\bar{u}$ sounds similar to the violin. When playing, the hairs of the bow are pulled tight by grasping them with the ring and pinky finger of the right hand. Malm then points out that an interesting aspect of the $koky\bar{u}$ is its high bridge. Because of this arch, one must turn the instrument to play on different strings. To facilitate this, the instrument is set on a peg which is placed between the knees. 4 Similar instruments are played in many Asian countries, but at the moment we are concerned with China. In China, there is a comparable instrument called the *hugin*, but its soundbox is shaped differently, and more importantly, it doesn't have a peg at the bottom. In Hokusai's depiction, the instrument has more features in common with the Japanese *kokyū* mentioned above. However, the shape of the soundbox in Hokusai's design here is different from Japanese traditional kokyū. Here, it seems uniquely shaped

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³ Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum. https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/09102/_MINIM_UK_43569

⁴ William Malm. Japanese Music & Musical Instruments, 1959. p. 179-180

as an elongated trapezoid that is curved inward on each side. Yet, the presence of the peg indicates that it is definitely a kind of $koky\bar{u}$.





Fig. E. Hokusai Manga, v. 9. Musicians and a page, $koky\bar{u}$ player, detail.

Fig. F. Keisai Eisen (1790-1848). Beauties of the Floating World as Three Instruments, 1820s. RISD, Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1393

The two traditional instruments that are depicted in Hokusai's design in question each possesses several atypical features either in its appearance or in the way in which the instrument is played. In the top left area of the print, Hokusai includes a short inscription saying "seichō reika" (盛龍/令可) that was speculated by someone to be proper names either of the instruments or significant individuals. They could, however, characterize the entire scene referring to prosperity being rooted in the appropriate civil code. This aspect of the composition will be discussed further.

It is now time to look closely at the musicians depicted. Judging by their appearance, their quite specific elaborate hairdos, and garments, both musicians are beautiful women from China.

The hair of the musician playing the zither is pulled back at the front with the hair mass divided into strands and raised in complex construction. Her sumptuous crownlike decorations are of exquisite metalwork with a variety of flowers, beads, bell-shaped dangles, and a magnificent phoenix bird attached at the very center. The phoenix bird is a symbol of the empress in Chinese tradition. So, this woman might have a close association with the empress if not the empress herself.

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⁵ https://blog.goo.ne.jp/caneteregardepas/e/6442a4760effd9c20a832d3a4b90f4bf

The $koky\bar{u}$ player is also lushly coiffured, although with less splendor. Her hair is softly combed toward the back and is formed into a lavish form of thick upswept strands. The top construction of her hair is set off by a gorgeous hair ornament shaped by abundant flower petals, predominantly those of peonies symbolizing prosperity. Her sidelocks are softly wrapped around her ears in a wing-like fashion. Dangling earrings seem to reach down almost to her shoulders.





Fig. G. Left: Hokusai Manga, v. 9. Musicians and a page, *kokyū* player's hairdo. Detail. **Fig. H**. Right: Hokusai Manga, v. 9. Musicians and a page, zither player's hairdo. Detail.

The women's garments are correspondingly luxurious, abundant, and layered. They are patterned with complex geometric elements. The zither player is wearing at least two layers of clothing. The inner lining is printed in a pinkish tone that is visible around the collar area. The neckline of this layer flows in ripples, creating a soft oval shape that is cut rather low. The pink garment is visible also at the sleeve openings. The main layer is a wide dress patterned on the shoulders with dotted areas centered on a *shippo* element of interlocking circles. This dress has patterned trim around the collar and the cuffs. The cut of the dress includes rather a high yoke at the front that seems to be embroidered in the center. The garment is tied with a belt made of soft fabric. The yoke itself and the dress below the yoke is white. It is cascading down to the ground. The lower part of it seems to be decorated with rings with long fringes attached. Garments reach to the ground, fully concealing the woman's feet. Below the shoulders, the woman is wearing a light net-like or net patterned mantle that is also cascading to the ground and partially lies on the ground as a somewhat angular flap. Altogether the impression is of lushness, exceeding abundance, and thus of splendor.

The $koky\bar{u}$ player is also resplendent albeit a little bit less lavish. She also is wearing three layers of clothing. Her main dress is dark, almost black, yet patterned. It is

patterned with white lines that are discernable all over it. The dress is rather deeply cut as well and is accompanied by a necklace that has a pendant. The pendants are reminiscent of the pendant of the central musician's crown. Over this dress two loose garments are freely draping. They are differently patterned but both with geometric designs. The woman's main dress of patterned black reaches to the mid-calf, leaving her beautiful well shaped feet visible. The position of her feet suggests that she is tapping to the rhythm of the music. Both loosely shaped outer pieces of her attire look animated as if they are flowing down, swinging, and fluttering. The overflowing hem fragments that fall on the ground create lively patterned shapes, resonating with the one formed by the garment of the zither musician. It is not quite clear as to what makes the garments so agitated. One could imagine it being the energy of the music or maybe the movement of the air as the musicians are out in the elements. In sum, the physical beauty of the participants in this event as well as the extraordinary visual complexity of their attire and adornments, in form and pattern, match the refinement of this string musical duo.



Fig. I. Left: Hokusai Manga, v. 9. Musicians and a page, *kokyū* player's attire. Detail. **Fig. J**. Right: Hokusai Manga, v. 9. Musicians and a page, zither player's attire. Detail.

Both women stand out for their conformity with the voluptuous ideal of beauty prevalent in China from the Tang period (618-907) on and remaining relevant in Japanese traditional culture of the Edo period. Now as for the young official on the right and the only male in this image, this gentle youth is in attendance as a representative of the

authorities. As this will be discussed below, his presence demonstrates dedication of the authorities to grasping the cosmic order via music to make it a foundation of their rule. His youthfulness is clearly shown in his hairdo typical for the young males, *wakashu*. The front strand of his hair is raised. The middle top portion of the head is shaved, while the remaining hair on the sides is softly looping down covering half of the ear. The hair at the back of the head is tied up by a cord that holds the topknot folded forward. The clear, soft oval of the face appears expressly youthful. The young administrator is wearing a widewinged Japanese official outfit known as *kamishimo*, literal translation of the term being "the upper and lower." *Kamishimo* was an official costume for the warrior class starting in the 15th century. This outfit consists of a *kataginu*, the upper part – a robe without sleeves with exaggerated shoulders, and of a *hakama*, wide trousers that look like a divided skirt. Additionally, he is holding a ceremonial fan. This is an attribute of high office in East Asia. Presence of an official imparts this music performance with a lofty ceremonial

Fig. K. Right: Hokusai Manga, v. 9. A page who officiates the music performance. Detail.



character of a government-endorsed event. The implication is that the authorities recognize the extraordinary significance of music as an art form that transmits the universal order to the society, the concept that dates in China at least 6th- 5th cc. BCE and is a part of Confucius teachings.

The deep universal meaning of music is rendered here also by the scene's wonderous mountainous setting. The scene includes just one natural entity – a craggy rock but how remarkably it is aligned to the world of humans. The rock is an irregular formation yet perfectly solid with its peak rising approximately in the middle of the composition next to the figure in the center. The rock's shape appears indefinitely varied with its multiple facets, protrusions and depressions, ledges, and furrows. All peculiarities of form are rendered with a tremendous calligraphic vibrancy, expertise of brushwork although achieved in printing. Moreover, the rock is indeed an integral constituent of the event. It is integrated into the story because it serves as the seat for both beautiful musicians. The rock and the musicians emerge as equivalents.

Thus, the composition altogether is in full agreement with the ancient Chinese philosophic concept according to which cosmos, music, and political order are inherently interconnected. By showing side by side Chinese semi-celestial musicians and a Japanese official in the lofty nature setting, Hokusai affirms relevance of these ideas for the Japanese culture. The ultimate unity of the cultivated society with nature is revealed. Hokusai expresses his deep understanding of and veneration for Chinese fundamental philosophical ideas about the harmony of the universe, music that transmits it, and societal accord.

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⁶ This important theme is a focus of attention of many scholars. One of the major publications is by Erica Fox Brindley *Music*, *Cosmology*, *and the Politics of Harmony in Early China*. State University of New York Press, 2012.



Keisai Eisen, 1790-1848 From triptych *Beauties of the Floating World Likened to Three Instruments*, right sheet. 1820s. Publisher: Moritaya Honzo. Polychrome woodblock print. RISD. Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1393

Musical Bonds of the Edo Society:

Beauties of Different Classes as the Floating World Trio

Jessica Lin

Three stylishly dressed and coiffured women sitting on the ground under the flowering cherry branches are playing different musical instruments. Moving right to left, which is the direction of reading in Japan, the rightmost woman is playing a *shamisen*, a three-stringed lute-like instrument. The woman in the center is playing a *koto*, which is a Japanese name for a zither. The leftmost woman is playing a *kokyū*, or a Japanese fiddle. These women are depicted by a ukiyo-e artist Keisai Eisen (1790-1848) in his triptych *Beauties of the Floating World Likened to Three Musical Instruments (Ukiyo bijin mitate sankyoku)*, published in around 1820. Each panel depicts one woman, but some visual elements overflow from one panel to the next such as, for example, the middle figure's garment. Thus, all three musicians together clearly form a coherent composition. The three panels show the same setting marked by cherry blossoms. The coherence of the composition is defined first and foremost by the fact that these three performers form a three-instrument ensemble *sankyoku* that Japan of the Edo period was famous for.



Fig. A. Keisai Eisen (1790-1848), *Beauties of the Floating World as an Ensemble of Three Instruments* (浮世美人見立三曲 Ukiyo bijin mitate sankyoku), 1820s. Keio University. https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/ukiyoe/0980

Sankyoku or "music for three" started as a two-instrument ensemble played on koto and the shamisen, and at the end of the 17^{th} century the third instrument was added, either a biwa lute or a $koky\bar{u}$, Japan's only bowed instrument. This tripartite composition illustrates such a trio. In it, the players of the shamisen and of the $koky\bar{u}$ are placed symmetrically at the sides of the koto player, the black lacquer instrument boxes are flanking the side figures.

Most ukiyo-e prints depict music players as courtesans. Courtesans were professional entertainers employed by the red-like district of Yoshiwara to entertain wealthy clients. As such, they were trained to be musicians and dancers, also skillful in writing poetry and leading pleasant communications. Their services potentially included sexual relationships. Thus, it is correct to expect any courtesan to know how to play music. And as several could be invited to a party, courtesans could perform ensemble music. Here, however, according to the Digital Collections of the Keio University Libraries⁸, the artist presented not a likely real life ensemble performance but a fantasy performance that allowed the artist to compare and contrast women of different social categories and thus to present different customs and fashions. Exploration of every facet of femininity is one of the distinguishing features of ukiyo-e style. This triptych by Keisai Eisen, one of the leading designers of the *bijinga* or images of beautiful women, is believed to portray musicians that were a courtesan, a geisha, and a townswoman.

The woman on the right panel is the most modest one but still is very elegant. She is nicely dressed and has a beautiful fashionable hairdo. She is a townswoman. She is wearing two or three layers of kimono and a broad double-sided obi sash. One side of it is decorated with flowers while the other shows birds spreading their wings in such a way as to form a circle.





Fig. B. Patterns on the townswoman's *obi* sash. **Left**: plum blossoms, **right**: bird that sread its wings in a circular manner.

⁷ William Malm. Japanese Music and Musical Instruments, Charles E. Tuttle, Rutland, VT & Tokyo, 1959, p. 45, 55.

⁸ Digital Collections of Keio University Libraries, https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/ukiyoe/0980

She is playing the shamisen. It was common for townswomen to be trained in playing shamisen. Education started early with an idea that a well-rounded townswoman would more likely find a reliable spouse or just good employment in a samurai household. *Shamisen* is used as entertainment typically at parties and performances.⁹

The middle figure is an *oiran* (花魁) which was a general term for a high-ranking courtesan. The term was used after the mid-18th century. She looks exuberant. Her lavish and boldly patterned garments are billowing high as they overflow onto the other two prints of the triptych. Decorative motifs include large-scale peonies in full bloom, imaginary "Chinese flowers" *karahana*, and crashing waves adding dynamism to her figure as she is about to play the *koto* placed in front of her.

Next to the zither is a tiny black container filled with elongated and pointed small gold-color objects. This is a box for the picks that a *koto* player is using. Called *tsume* or fingernails, they indeed have the shape of long nails. They are fixed to tiny bands and are placed on the thumb, index finger and the middle finger on the player's right hand. Fingers of the musician's left hand press strings down varying the tension and hence modifying the pitch by depressing the strings to the left of the movable bridges. A small black lacquer box rests on a purple fabric. All objects used by musicians are beautifully decorated and most elegant. Three books in different colors scattered on the floor are perhaps song books.







Fig. C. Box for the *koto* picks – shaped as fingernails they are called *tsume* (\mathbb{N}).

The *oiran* has an expressly elaborate hairdo. Her hair is parted in the front. Between the front part of the hairdo and the bun you see two combs *kushi* (櫛). Her harpins are not less than spectacular. She is wearing six two-pronged hairpins

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⁹ Tanimura Reiko, *Practical Frivolities: Hie Study of Shamisen among Girls of the Late Edo Townsman Class.* Japan Review 23 (2011): 73-96

in the front part of her hairdo and six more heavily adorned with flowers in the further part of her hairdo. These hairpins are called kanzashi (簪). A flat implement called $k\bar{o}gai$ (笄) is placed within the bun to keep it up¹⁰.

The left panel shows a young woman playing her fiddle *kokyū*. She is a geisha, a professional entertainer who attend to guests during banquets and other occasions. They are trained in various traditional Japanese arts, such as dance and music, as well as in the art of communication. A geisha wore her hair in the Shimada style, simpler than that of a courtesan, and adorned with one or two hairpins. A geisha is said to be wearing white collar undergarment and a monochrome kimono with crests, sometimes with elegant patterns on the front panel of the skirt. Although here her outfit is not exactly as described, the collar of her inner garment is lightly colored, her kimono is monochromatic, it shows crests at the chest level and on the sleeves. The patterning is present only at the hem of the kimono and of the long sleeves of the specific youthful type of the kimono known as *furisode* or swinging sleeves.

The $koky\bar{u}$ that the geisha is playing is a smaller Japanese spike fiddle. It constructed similarly to the shamisen, with a bloated-square-shaped resonator the front and back of which is covered with animal skin. The $koky\bar{u}$ may have three or four strings, as here. To play this four-stringed instrument, the musician uses a bow of significant length. The bow is built with a two-piece neck. There is a long spike at the bottom of the body. The strings attached to a tailpiece are made of silk rope, and a bamboo bridge and nut. In order to play the $koky\bar{u}$, the performer tightly grasps the bow's hairs with a ring and a little finger of the right hand. The performer must set up the instrument by placing it on a peg, positioned between the knees of the player. Kokyu's body must be turned to play the different strings.

In spite of the difference in the level of decorativeness of the three women, their represent the same type of beauty. The same website of the Digital Collections of the Keio University mentions that the beauties' slanted eyes and

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¹⁰ Otakinen Museum, https://otakinen-museum.note.jp/n/neae8607b2f17

¹¹ Cecilia Segawa Siegle, Yoshiwara: the Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p. 170.

the stooping of the figures was characteristic for the style of the late Edo period, known as the Bakumatsu (1853-1868).

As has been mentioned earlier, all women are shown under the flowering cherry blossom branches indicating the season is spring. The artist glorifies the season of spring. By showing women under the blooming branches makes a reference to the traditional spring celebration known as a *hanami* or cherry blossom viewing. The tradition of *hanami* consisted of partying with friends in nature combining observation of the fleeting beauty of the cherry blossoms, listening to the sounds of nature, playing music and feasting. Though the situation here is invented by the artist, he is making a reference to the well-established practice. With a most fine color sensitivity, the artist includes the cherry blossoms' light pink color in the ornate robes of the beautiful women. The rightmost woman has her outer kimono predominantly of this light pink, and there are inclusions of pinkish fabric patches in the robes of both other women.

According to the artist's decision, the printer used seven blocks since there are seven colors: black, muted purple, muted yellow, muted green, brown, light pink, and light blue.

Coherent as the composition is, each panel of the triptych can be appreciated independently. This is achieved through the portrayal of each of the musicians on one panel so that every panel appears as a self-standing portrait. Moreover, each woman is amply present on her panel, emphasizing her individual significance. It is also noteworthy that all inscriptions are repeated on each of the prints. Each print is signed by the name of the artist, Keisai Eisen. Each print has a seal of censorship approval (kiwame 極), and a seal of the publishing house Moritaya Honzo (森田屋半蔵).

Additionally, the title of the composition is repeated three times – once on every panel. In this way, formally every musician's portrait can function as a self-sufficient artwork. The inscription done mostly in Chinese characters looks as if scratched out on the light-purple background of the square cartouches. Such white writings on color background brings to mind ancient Chinese traditional art form stone rubbings. The Chinese tradition of cutting in stone records of the events of

the past has an extremely long history. Often in such inscriptions the written signs were carved in intaglio. To create a rubbing, a sheet of thin paper is placed upon the carved surface of the carved stone. The paper is then slightly wetted and pressed nicely with a brush so that every detail of the inscription is filled with the paper. After that the paper's surface is tapped with ink in such a way that all raised surfaces become black while all depressed surfaces stay white. The result is very similar to what we see in Keisai Eisen's triptych. Using this type of script for the print titles here perhaps meant to create an association with Chinese cultural legacy that was highly venerated in Japan during the Edo period. ¹² Additionally, one should remember that in China music was considered one of the essential means in improving morals in the society. Using a Chinese-style title cartouche in the image of a music performance points out that music is valued not only because of its entertaining capacity but also because of its importance for the society at large.

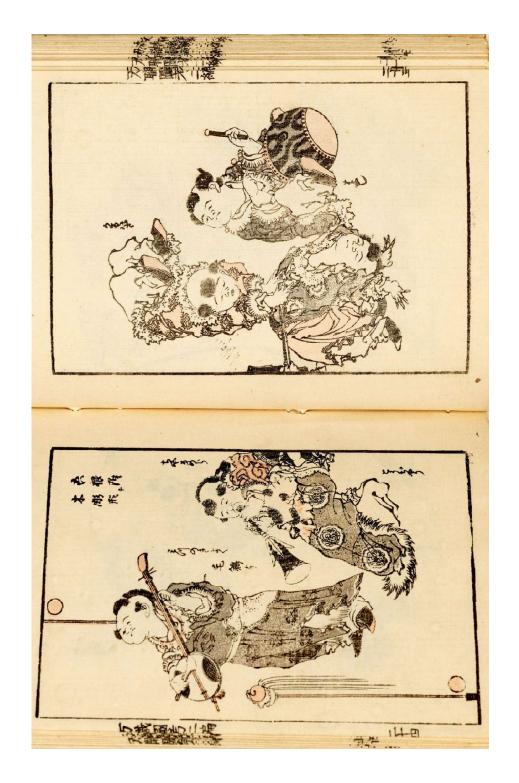
Keisai Eisen's imaginary instrumental ensemble of three beauties captures multiple facets of the Edo period urban culture with remarkable richness. The triptych introduces ukiyo-e fascination with fashion and allure. The triptych acknowledges an exceedingly high level of handicrafts, whether in textiles, apparel, hair accessories, musical instruments and their accessories, book design and binding, etc. By including cherry blossom branches the triptych reflects alignment of human life with the seasons, a crucial aspect of Japanese culture. The triptych pays tribute to the Chinese tradition of stone rubbings as seen in the inscriptions' style in the title cartouches. And finally, by showing women across the Edo society joining their skills and talents in musical performance, the triptych proves the centrality of music in Edo period Japan.

¹² Nishiyama Matsunosuke. Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in urban Japan, 1600-1868. Ed. Gerald Groemer. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997. Pp. 13-14.

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Part II. MUSIC AS A CATALYST FOR THEATER & STREET PERFORMANCES



Katsushika Taito II, active 1810-1853.

Designs for All Artisans (Banshoku zukō): Volume. II, ca. 1827 (1880). Pp. 23-24. Children's Daikagura. **RISD**. Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.398.5

Children's Daikagura:

Designs for Netsuke by Katsushika Taito II Jiyeon Park

Six children are playing music or dancing in acrobatic postures. The scene is naturally humorous in that the dynamic movements of figures contrasts with serious and subtle facial expressions. The image is depicted in a spread from the second volume of a five-volume publication *Pictorial Studies for Various Crafts - Banshoku zukō*, which was designed by Katsushika Taito II (active 1810-1853), a student of Katsuhika Hokusai (1760-1849), and was strongly influenced by Hokusai's fifteen-volume collection of sketches known as Hokusai Manga. The series of illustrated books was published for artisans so that they could refer to the designs in this publication. Music and performing arts were so much a part of life in Edo period Japan that the theme was included into the book for artisans to be used for decoration of practical objects. And this particular page depicts a scene performing Edo *daikagura* for *netsuke* designs.

In this spread of the page 23 - 24, shows cute boys still possessing the charming plumpness of the young age. All boys are portrayed with a characteristic hairstyle with their head shaved and only several tufts are left in place - one on the top of the head, two - at the sides, and a ridge at the back. The boys are elaborately dressed in what purportedly is Chinese traditional clothing for the young. They are wearing gown-like outfits with long trousers and angular soft shoes. The gowns of patterned fabric have ruffled collars and cuffs that are often trimmed. Although the boys are young, they are involved in activities that require advanced skills.

On the spread, six boys are depicted, three on each page. Each is accompanied by a brief inscription defining activity the characters are involved in. The inscription in the upper part of the left page comments on the purpose of the current design as a whole. Let's now consider images of the boys and the writings, moving from right to left and thus following the order of reading in East Asia. The rightmost boy is a drummer. He is seated holding a drum between his legs and beating out the rhythm with soft-knobbed drumsticks. In the inscription at his foot, he is characterized as a musician (はやし/囃子

/hayashi). It is obvious for the onlookers that he is skillful with drumming since he is playing without looking at his drum, giving all his attention to the acrobatic stunt performed by two boys to his right.



Fig. A. Katsushika Taito. *Designs for All Artisans: Vol. II*, ca. 1880. P. 23. Children's Daikagura. Detail. RISD. Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.398.5

Taiko (太鼓) is the Japanese name for drums, but in other languages, it specifically refers to Japanese traditional drums. They come in various forms and sizes and are played in various genres of music including *Noh* and kabuki theater, religious music, *gagaku* imperial court music, festival music, and folk music. The drum that the boy is playing is a small size *chu-daiko*, or *nagado daiko*. As seen from the print, it is made out of a single tree trunk hollowed to form the drum body and heads tacked to both ends of the drum shell. This way of attaching heads to the drum is called *hyou*, in which the tension of heads is not adjustable and therefore pitch of the sound is static. Another way of fastening heads to drum is by using rope, so that the player could adjust the tension. This method is called *shime*. ¹³

The acrobatic stunt left to the boy playing *taiko* is complex and beautiful, representing a kind of human pyramid. The boy at the lower tier is holding a full

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¹³ Gould, Michael (June 1998). "Taiko Classification and Manufacturing" (PDF). *Percussive Notes*. 36 (3): 12–20

The acrobats are being watched by still another boy from the other side. On the left page of the spread a boy seated sideways is extending a fan-like object across the margin gap between the picture frames. Inscription located next to the boy's leg describes him as a narrator (こうじゃう/口上/ $k\bar{o}j\bar{o}$). The object in his hand seems to be a special attribute of a narrator - the so-called a *harisen* or hariōgi (張り扇) that is used by various reciters to highlight the rhythm of their speech (compare with Hokusai Manga, volume 12, showing $J\bar{o}ruri$ musician and chanter, current exhibition project). The fan makes noise by slapping something and was used during Nohgaku (Japanese traditional performing art including Noh theater, $Shiki\ Sanban$, and Kyogen), kodan storytelling (military epic or seidan, story of the law or politics were told) and rakugo (traditional comic storytelling). Since the term $hari\bar{o}gi$ was mostly used in Nohgaku, harisen seems to better describe the object in the print. It is made by wrapping a divided part of a fan with paper, then sticking leather or paper on the wrapped fan, and finally attaching a handle to it.



Figs. B and C. Katsushika Taito II. *Designs for all artisans*: Vol. II . Pp. 23-24. Detail, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.398.5

Percussion instruments fully held with hands like *harisen* were important components in Japanese traditional music. *Shaku byoshi*, for instance, is two long flat wooden plates that were used for keeping the beat in ancient gagaku. This method of rhythming is called *ogi byoshi*, and was also used in *jōruri*. *Jōruri* is the collective name of the traditional Japanese narrative musical performances. ¹⁴ The narrators would use percussion instruments for the effective delivery. In *kōdan* storytelling, *harisen* is used to signal a change in the scene or to augment a highlight. There were times that this kind of percussion was substituted by hand drums along with the development of the instruments. However, there were occasions that these percussion instruments were used instead of drums, too. ¹⁵

Behind the narrator is a boy playing trumpet. He is also sitting sideways, but looking in the opposite direction, to the right. His mouth is at the mouthpiece

¹⁴ "Jōruri - Japanese Wiki Corpus." Joruri - Japanese Wiki Corpus. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/culture/Joruri.html.

¹⁵ "Hari-ogi - Japanese Wiki Corpus." Joruri - Japanese Wiki Corpus. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/culture/Hari-ogi.html.

to blow, both hands are at the upper tube to hold, and fingers are bent to cover tone holes. He is gazing at the direction of his instrument, concentrating on playing music. Next to the figure on the right is written *charumera* (ちゃるめら), which is name of the instrument [fig. 4]. It is a woodwind instrument with double reed on the thin top part. The bottom part where the wind flows out is wide like that of oboe. Yamaha Musical Instrument Guide explains that both *charumera* and oboe are adaptations of zurna, a double reed wind instrument played in central Eurasia and Western Asia. ¹⁶ In modern times, *charumera* is strongly associated with the street culture of ramen vendors, who pulled food carts and attracted customers by playing the instrument.

Katsushika Taito's design of children playing music and involved in various entertainments includes a scene of a boy performing mizu no kyoku (みづ のきよ) as it is written in [Figure 5]. Right next to the text, there is a figure of a standing boy who is balancing a long rod on his forehead while simultaneously playing a long-necked round lute, an instrument of Chinese origin. It was a widely loved instrument played in kabuki theater, puppet plays, and other such theater music, accompaniment to singing, and folk songs from many regions. The type of instrument is called *sanxian* in Chinese, which means 'three strings' of the lute. The Japanese version is called *shamisen*, which also indicates three strings in the name. Unlike sanxian, shamisen was played by using bachi, a plectrum-like tool the boy is holding in his right hand. Shamisen came in various forms and details such as the thickness of the neck, type of bachi, and koma (bridges). Shamisen is tuned in several ways for different music and can be configured to suit a singer or other instrument.¹⁷ The body of shamisen was first made with snakeskin when it first arrived in Okinawa, like sanxian did. But in mainland Japan, cat and dog skin is used. What kind of skin the boy's shamisen is made of is unclear, but its

¹⁶"Trivia the Charumera Was the Oboe's Cousin," Trivia: The charumera was the oboe's cousin-Musical Instrument Guide-Yamaha Corporation, accessed May 10, 2022, https://www.yamaha.com/en/musical_instrument_guide/oboe/trivia/trivia005.html#:~:text=The%20charumera%20was%20a%20woodwind,mouth%20is%20a%20double%20reed

¹⁷ "Shamisen." SHAMISEN | Traditional Music Degital Library. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://senzoku-online.jp/TMDL/e/02-shamisen.html.

circular shape is a common feature of Chinese *sanxian*. Katsushika Taito may have designed the form of shamisen to match the Chinese fashion of boys.

Next to the rod that the boy is balancing on his forehead at the very top of the picture frame there is a ball floating in mid-air. It is not hard to define the object as a prop for *daikagura* as the text interprets as acrobatics of water (水の 曲). *Kyoku*, or *kyokuge* (曲芸) is Japanese word for acrobatics which explains the context of figures' postures. Further referring to the text, the boy is most likely doing *mizukumoi-no-kyoku* among various kinds of *daikagura* performances. In this acrobatic, the performer uses a long rod, a water-filled cup, and a piece of string to balance out while moving dynamically.





Fig. 4 and fig. 5. Katsushika Taito. Designs for all artisans: Vol. II, ca. 1880 – p. 26 – children playing music Detail, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.398.5

Daikagura is a type of satokagura, that are kagura performances done and viewed by ordinary people. Kagura of the royal court was called mikagura. These two kinds are distinct musical performances, but they are both chanting and dancing performances dedicated to gods in Shinto ritual. It is indicated in the name kagura (神樂), which means the music about gods. Ancient Japanese documents suggest that the ritual started from the myth of the oracular Ame no

Uzume (goddess of the dawn and revelry, see No. 9 in this book) who had performed a dance in a chapter of *Ama no iwato* (cave of heaven). ¹⁸

Since *satokagura* was a ritual of ordinary people, it is diverse in forms. Daikagura traces its roots to the Heian period (794-1185), but it first achieved wide popularity in the Edo period (1600-1868). It is composed of shishimai, Japanese lion dance, and kyokugei, the acrobatics. Shishimai is believed to have originated from China and was performed alongside Shinto rituals at special occasions such as New Year's celebration or wedding ceremonies. ¹⁹ Similarly, kyokygei was performed at festivals and celebrations to bring good fortune to participants. One well known acrobatics that is still practiced by modern performers include "gokai jawan" (five-story bowl), in which the performer balances a wooden drumstick called a "daijawan" on his chin and then places boards, bowls, and an object called a *keshofusa* on top, one after another, while continuing to keep everything balanced."²⁰ Bangas, a performance using an umbrella and *hitotsumari*, a performance with a large ball of string are also common images of daikagura. During the performance, interacting with the audience was important and music and speech was an important part to achieve so. Therefore, complete mastery of all of their arts requires proficiency in dancing, playing instruments, and juggling, all of which entails rigorous daily practice [Fig. 6].

From the text on the top right corner of the left page, which is read *migi netsuke/mokuchō katachi* (右根付/木彫形手), it could be assumed that the spread is designed for wooden *netsuke* since *mokuchō katachi* means a 'wooden form' [Fig. 7]. Another text that supports the assumption is *kebori nari* (毛彫ナリ) written next to the figure in the far left, which means a carving of a design.

¹⁸ "Kagura - Japanese Wiki Corpus." Joruri - Japanese Wiki Corpus. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/culture/Kagura.html

¹⁹ "Daikagura!" Metropolis Japan, October 7, 2010. https://metropolisjapan.com/daikagura/.

²⁰ "LICENSED TO ENTERTAIN: New Scheme Gives Tokyo Street Performers Green Light." Trends in Japan. https://web-japan.org/trends01/article/021025fas index.html.



Fig. 6 Kitagawa Utamaro. "Daikagura" ca. 1789 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. LC-DIG-jpd-00628



Fig. 7 and **fig. 8.** Katsushika Taito. Designs for all artisans: Vol. II, ca. 1880 – p. 26 – children playing music. Detail. RISD, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.398.5

Netsuke is an ornament that is attached to a tobacco pouch or a wallet with a cord so that it could be hung from an obi sash. It is an item that reflects Japanese traditional clothing kimono, a robe tailored in a minimal way and fixed on the body with an obi around one's waist. Similar to châtelaine in western culture, Japanese called the hanging pockets and objects sagemono. The wearer would dangle netsuke from the top of the obi and let sagemono be placed between one's waist and hip. Functionally, netsuke is a unit that prevents sagemono slip down, but as an adornment, social and cultural contexts underlie each object. Although netsuke was originally worn by a male warrior class, it later became widely worn

with the gaining popularity of tobacco culture [Fig. 9]. By the mid-eighteenth century, almost every single man of all social tiers (warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants) carried at least one *sagemono* that required *netsuke*.²¹ Merchants who gained economic success were likely to reflect their wealth through *netsuke* crafted with valuable materials. However, the most common materials were wood and ivory. ²²



Fig. 9. Kubo Shunman (1757–1820) "Tobacco Pouch and Pipe" Woodblock print (surimono); H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929. JP1954

Netsuke was small and easy to conceal, and considered unimportant in the eyes of the government, so there was no attempt of regulation. Netsuke carvers and wearers of Edo period enjoyed this freedom, and varied themes from nature, myths, historical figures, masks used in theatrical performances, to gods and demons were depicted on netsuke. Erotica, the grotesque, parodies, and satirical depictions of elite culture, or even the religious thought and feeling could be a subject. By the 19th century, artisans formed schools, passing techniques to apprentices. Design books from skilled carvers were published, and more subjects

²¹ Okada, Barbara Teri. *Netsuke: Masterpieces from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1982.

²² Milhaupt, Terry Satsuki. "Netsuke: From Fashion Fobs to Coveted Collectibles." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2022. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nets/hd nets.htm (November 2009)

were drawn by printed sources. In this trend, refined and sophisticated technique became an important feature to make artisans' work distinctive, rather than the originality of design. Naturally, *netsuke* was carved in a much more complex depiction. Sometimes, a group of figures were portrayed, and each of them became naturalistic and realistic.

The reason the designer chose to represent figures with playful Chinese boys for *netsuke* can be explained with the cultural context. According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *One Hundred Children*, a Chinese motif became one of the most popular themes among the kano painters, the official artists who worked for the shoguns and their vassals during the Edo period. ²³ *Karako*, the image of Tang-dynasty children, became a popular symbol for longevity and health for offspring according to the trend. ²⁴ It is of commonly found motifs from Edo ceramics and other crafted objects.

Every single detail in the print is evidence of life in Edo Japan. This single spread from *Pictorial Studies for Various Crafts - Banshoku zukō* is an integration of various fields of art, from music and performance to design and crafts. The print collection is a cultural portrait of Edo Japan, that reenacts the life of the ordinary people through their artistic culture.

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²³ "One Hundred Chinese Boys." Metmuseum.org. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/72600.

²⁴ "Seven Gods of Good Fortune and Chinese Children." Metmuseum.org. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45217.

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Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 1786-1865

The Double Grave of Lovers in the Village of Odori in Meguro, for Jōruri – Puppet Theater, from an untitled series of jōruri libretti. Publisher: Iseya Rihei. Ca. 1832

RISD. Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, accession number 13.1385

The Double Grave of Lovers: Jōruri Drama

Beautiful Woman's Puppet, Libretto, & Music in print by Utagawa Kunisada Connie Cheng, Meicheng Chi, Jingjing Yang

A stunning beauty is standing against pages filled with equally compelling powerful and fluid writing of rather large black script. In his print "The Double Grave of Lovers in the Village of Odori in Meguro," a preeminent ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865) depicted a high-ranking courtesan *oiran* as a character from a puppet play. Her being an *oiran* became immediately clear for the contemporary viewer because of how her luxurious *obi* sash is tied at the front, the style reserved for courtesans only. Her connection to the puppet theater is revealed in the energetic writing style characteristic for the texts used by chanters in the puppet theater performances. Details of text and image provide further information about the story implied.

The largest characters of the inscription in the upper right part of the print inform the viewer that the scene illustrated here relates to the double grave of lovers and that this grave is located in the area called Meguro. The rightmost inscription that is slightly smaller specifies the place as Odori village. This was a widely known story about the events that allegedly happened around 1679, that is about a century and a half before the print was designed. In the most well-known version of the legend, Hirai Gonpachi, a masterless samurai famous for his swordsmanship and good looks once committed a murder in western Japan and then fled to Edo (Tokyo). In Edo, he fell in love with a Yoshiwara courtesan called Komurasaki of Tamaya. When Gonpachi was later captured and sentenced to death, his desperate lover Komurasaki took her life at his grave. This story was probably fiction based on fact. People liked the tragic legend, and soon every form of popular culture adopted the story. To honor sincere affection of Gonpachi and Komurasaki, people touched by their story, built a tomb known as "double grave of

²⁵ Algernon Bertram Mitford, "The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki," in Tales of Old Japan /by A.B. Mitford: In Two Volumes. with Illustrations, Drawn and Cut on Wood by Japanese Artists (London: Macmillan and Co, 1871).

²⁶ Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1993, p. 88-89.

lovers who died together" – *hiyoku-zuka* (比翼塚) at Ryusenji Temple in Meguro. The abbot of Ryusenji Temple specially carved a picture of a *Hiyoku no tori* (比翼鳥), a symbol of love and fidelity between the couple, to commemorate this love story. Samuel Leiter, a specialist in Japanese theater of the Edo period, explains, "the ill-fated lovers appealed to the imagination of Edoites," and being buried together promised reunification in the next rebirth. The legend of Hiyoku-zuka was often performed in the *jōruri* puppet theater.

Jōruri is a form of a puppet theater that came into being around mid-16th century, having developed from narrative-musical performances. It bears the name of Princess Joruri, a character from an exceedingly popular romantic story about her and the young Minamoto Yoshitsune (12 c.), one of Japan's most loved historic figures. Jōruri puppet performances are often called ningyō jōruri, or "puppet jōruri." A similar theatrical form is known as Bunraku after the name of the person who lent it its distinctive form in the 18th century. During jōruri performances, the drama and tragedy of the story were heightened by the emotive puppet acting, chanting, and shamisen music. In this print, combining the depiction of the protagonist and emphasizing the musicality and performance of the story creates an untraditional and immersive composition, an ode to the inseparability of music and visual representation in Japanese theater and ukiyo-e prints.

The sacrifice for love, or loyalty, is a premier theme in puppet and kabuki performances and holds the central place in all plays. Consequently, it is quite predictable that many ukiyo-e artists have created prints to illustrate different moments of this play. The artist, Utagawa Kunisada, visualizes the high-ranking courtesan Komurasaki's attractiveness in his print. As has been mentioned, she is presented like an *oiran*, with a resplendent hairdo and dressed in magnificent clothing. The courtesan wears fourteen gold-color *kanzashi* hair pins in her *date-hyōgo*. ²⁹ hairstyle brushed back into a high ponytail with stylish bangs and prominent baby hairs framing her face. Six of the *kanzashi* hairpins feature circular disks framed by tortoise and crane motifs, symbolizing

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²⁷ Andreas Marks, *Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers, and Masterworks, 1680-1900* (Tokyo: Tuttle Pub., 2010), p. 236-237.

²⁸ Samuel Leiter. New Kabuki Encyclopedia, Greenwood Press. Westwood, CT & London. 1997, p. 240
²⁹ Kimononagoya. "Kimono Nagoya, August 4, 2017.
https://kimononagoya.tumblr.com/post/163775327732.

longevity, and prosperity.³⁰ The courtesan wears a five-layered kimono, with her *obi* tied in the front, once again denoting her as a courtesan of high rank as mentioned above.³¹

Her outermost kimono has purple and blue vertical stripes with yellow birds flying between them as if in the rain.³² These birds are geese in the upper part of her kimono and swallows (*tsubome*) in its lower part. The swallow in Japanese culture symbolizes elegance and also the home, serves a good omen for travelers. The geese represent a return to home and loyalty. The kimono layer directly under the outer one features a blue and white superimposed geometric circle pattern (*shippō*), which represent the seven Buddhist treasures, and is frequently seen on women's kimonos.³³ The *shippō* pattern is layered underneath a yellow design of spiraling tendrils emanating from a central four-petal white flower with a circular center on an orange rounded flower shape. This pattern may be a version of the "Chinese flower" *karahana* or an abstraction of the chrysanthemum, an auspicious symbol.³⁴ Her *obi* belt is bright red, with curling flower and phoenix feather motifs in white and yellow, with blue interior details. The interior layers of the garment alternate between red and blue, but the innermost layer is pale gray with a white trim, both decorated with the *sayagata* geometric pattern of interlocking swastikas.



³⁰ "Turtles." Traditional Kyoto. https://traditionalkyoto.com/culture/figures/turtle/.

^{31 &}quot;Najimu-Japan." NajimuJapan. http://najimu-japan.com/obi-traditional-japanese-clothing/#:~:text=However%2C%20another%20exception%20besides%20oiran,and%20fashionable%20for%20everyone%20else.

³² "The Hidden Language of Japanese Embroidery." Japan Craft, March 27, 2017. https://japancraft.co.uk/blog/hidden-language-japanese-embroidery/.

³³ Olaf Olsson. "Japanese Patterns & Designs." https://olafolsson.com/blogs/blog-1/wagara-traditional-japanese-patterns-and-

designs#:~:text=The%20Shippo%20pattern%20has%20come,never%2Dending%20harmony%20and%20pea ce.&text=In%20Japan%2C%20the%20crane%2C%20or,tortoise%2C%20or%20Kame%20in%20Japanese.

34 "The Chrysanthemum: A Flower Packed with Symbolism."

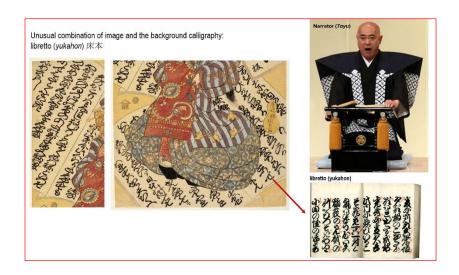
https://www.funnyhowflowersdothat.co.uk/chrysanthemum-flower-packed-symbolism.

The courtesan stands on tall, black *geta* platform sandals which slant inwards, and have a red and white toe strap.³⁵ She is barefoot, which is considered part of the erotic allure of a courtesan.³⁶

Overall, there is much color contrast in her heavy attire, with the yellow details contrasting with the purple stripes in the outer layer of her garment, and also in the gold-color hairpins and the abundant purple hair tie. The green-blue of her garments' underlayers contrasts with the alternating red layers, and the yellow details in every piece of clothing unify it and make her outfit cohesive. Consistently, the motifs of birds and flowers appear across her outfit, symbolizing femininity, youth, and beauty, as well as peace and harmony, although her famous story is tragic.

Besides the figure itself, the rest of the image is filled with a very specific calligraphy that is typically used to write down the text for *jōruri* puppet theater. Texts intended for theater music performances are called "libretto," or "booklet". In Japanese, the libretto for puppet theater is called "yukahon." The term yukahon (床本) means "floor book." This is because the books for the narrator were placed on the floor. Thus, the characters had to be large and distinct. The artist, Utagawa Kunisada, made the best of the heavy elasticity of the style characteristic for yukahon. He varied the thickness of lines imitating brush strokes with not just their width but also with contrasting strengths. The calligraphy that appears in this print covers pages of three open books scattered over the surface of the print. These pages overlap on the image. The upper right page is obviously the opening booklet. It is clearly written for the print viewers. Moreover, it is the title page, so it has the most prominent notation in kanji - Chinese characters, with their readings added in hiragana. Diverse means are used to create a hierarchy of the inscriptions. Written signs differ in sizes, heaviness of the line, intensity of black color, usage of a frame. The page on the left, on the other hand, is the last page of a Japanese binding book. The bottom page looks like a book that has just been opened not long ago. The courtesan is standing on this page. Three yukahon booklets scattered around nearly fill the surface of the print and provide a vivid and dynamic background for the figure. The calligraphy in the background makes this ukiyo-e print notably different. The colors of the figure look more vibrant against the black and white pages of powerful calligraphy.

³⁵ "Geta." Japanese Traditional Clothing. https://japanesetraditionalclothingwafuku.wordpress.com/geta/. ³⁶ "Japan: Memoirs of a Secret Empire. Courtesan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service. Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.pbs.org/empires/japan/enteredo 3.html.



The libretto in the form of *yukahon* is used in *jōruri*, a traditional Japanese performing art where a storyteller called a *tayū* tells stories accompanied by a shamisen. The puppet theater synchronizes narrative recitation, shamisen music and puppetry in the performance.³⁷ The words of the script are written in large black signs in distinctive calligraphic style, five lines to a page. These scripts usually encompass a single scene and are marked with the performance notations of the narrator. They are used both as scores and as props by narrators in Bunraku and *jōruri* when they perform on stage.³⁸ Before reciting, the narrator first raises the libretto to eye level, and bows slightly before putting it on the kendai, a low rostrum. This small gesture of respect for the text belies its importance to the performance as a whole.³⁹ According to the official website of the Bunraku theater, "this is a way of showing profound respect to the lines and narration techniques which have been passed down from his predecessors."40 In this print by Kunisada, the exaggerated depiction and enlarged proportion of the text of the play, the yukahon shows its importance.

As this is explained on the official website of the Bunraku theater, the narrator moves the story along by skillfully changing his voice, while the sound of the shamisen reverberates next to him. 41 The narrators and musicians for joruri are expressing the

⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁷ Yasuko Senda, "Bunraku – intangible cultural heritage," MÓIN-MÓIN, p.210

^{38 &}quot;Yukahon." Japanese Performing Arts Resource Center. http://www.glopad.org/jparc/?q=en/node/22819.

³⁹ Brownstein, Michael. "The Texts of Bunraku." The Barbara Curtis Adachi Bunraku Collection. https://bunraku.library.columbia.edu/texts-of-bunraku/.

⁴⁰ Bunraku Kyokai Japan Arts Council, Invitation to bunraku, accessed May 10, 2022, https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/index.html.

emotions of the vivid narratives of the play. The narrator talks using different voices for each character, crying, laughing, and suffering with his whole body. He invites the



audience into the world of *ningyo jōruri* with abundant emotions and expressions.

Katsushika Hokusai, ukiyo-e foremost artist, captured the intensity of the *jōruri* performance in his collection of sketches, Hokusai Manga, v. 12. With poignancy, Hokusai rendered the performers' complete immersion in the story they presented. Without hesitation, Hokusai distorts the narrator's and the musician's faces, emphasizing their perfect coordination in projecting the emotional content of the puppets' actions onstage.⁴²

The shamisen has only three strings but creates a very heavy sound. It demonstrates the depth of feeling of the characters, as well as the atmosphere of the rain, the wind, and the whole universe. The narrator recites continuously for as long as one and a half hours. The narrator pushes his voice out from the bottom of his abdomen, so that his voice reaches to all corners of the theater, and the story is communicated to everyone. Furthermore, the narrator must recite in such a way that the numerous characters can be distinguished. The narrators have carefully crafted vocal technique for expressing the emotions of the characters, which takes decades of training to master. The puppeteer (puppet actor), the very inspirational narrator (*tayu*), and the shamisen players

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⁴² Laurence R. Kominz, "Puppets of Nostalgia: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Japanese Awaji Ningyo Tradition by Jane Marie Law: Women's Gidayu and the Japanese Theatre Tradition by A. Kimi Coaldrake", The Journal of Japanese Studies, Summer, 1998, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 406-415

⁴³ "Performers." Invitation to Bunraku., 2017.

https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/performer1.html.

were the leading performers of puppet theater. When audiences watch puppet theater performances, they are drawn partly by the story or partly by the performance of the puppets.



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). Manga, v. 12. Jōruri musician and narrator onstage (Jōruri degatari), detail showing emotional intensity of the performance.

The audiences weren't only fascinated by watching the puppets but came also to listen to the explanations of the famous, talented narrators or to the shamisen music performers. One can note that the same situation happened to the opera lovers in the West, who often went to the theater to hear particular singers, not only to watch the story being performed on stage.⁴⁴

This ukiyo-e print's unique composition sets this print apart from other puppet theater and Gonpachi-Komurasaki themed prints. Kunisada depicts both the *jōruri* performance stage details – fragments of the libretto, the main character's costumes, as well as the famous love story of Meguro Hiyoku-Zuka, visually intertwining the experience of the performance and depiction of the tale. Through lush detail and symbolism, Utagawa Kunisada conveys the poetic and tragic beauty of Komurasaki, her love story, and how it endlessly lives on through the *jōruri* stage while proving the audience continues to be drawn to the theatrical magic of puppet performances of the Edo age.

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⁴⁴ Stanleigh H. Jones, Hanji Chikamatsu, and Chikamatsu Tokuzō, The Bunraku Puppet Theatre of Japan: Honor, Vengeance, and Love in Four Plays of the 18th and 19th Centuries (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), p. 1-10.

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Asaka no Katsumi, early 19th c.

Portrait of Kyōka poet Tsurunoya as a Papier-mâché Doll of a Gidayu Chanter. 1823

Carver and printer: Chiyo no Matsuhiko.

Verses by Asaka no Katsumi, Chiyo no Matsuhiko, and Tsurunoya

RISD. Gift of George Pierce Metcalf, 56.039.73

Jōruri Theater, Poetry, and De-luxe Ukiyo-e Prints

Poet Tsurunoya no Osamaru as Gidayu Narrator by Asaka no Katsumi Jae Nam

When observing the *Portrait of Tsurunoya as a Papier-Mache Doll of a Gidayu Chanter* by Asaka no Katsumi, we can recognize a characteristic figure of a theater narrator in the center of the print. There is an oversimplification to how the figure and the hands are rendered. Simplified also is the color scheme. Only four colors are used for the representation of the famous poet. Red hues of high value are used on the upper garment, lips, and in part of the eyes. Blue hue of high value is used on the lower garment, the stubble of his shaved beard, mustache, and the crown of the poet's head. Black is used for the jacket, the eyes, eyebrows while a yellow hue of high value is used for the badge and the handheld object of the figure.

There is a sense of humor which derives from the horizontal elongation of the neck. The grim facial expression, and the simple choice of colors spark curiosity about the character in the print. Texts take the upper part of the print above the figure. Two red seals can be observed: the artist's seal below his signature to the right of the figure and a small gourd-shaped seal of the print's producer, Chiyo no Matsuhiko, in the low left-hand corner of the print. Comprehensive historical information on the personalities involved in production of this small yet refined print is provided in the profound research article by a leading ukiyo-e scholar, Roger Keyes.⁴⁵

The highly simplified aspects of the hands, and the unrealistic posture of the figure contrasts this work by Asaka Katsumi to all other ukiyo-e prints at the exhibition.

⁴⁵ Roger S. Keyes. 'This is What We Accomplished': An Osaka Print Collector and His Circle. In Amy Reigle Newland (Ed.). The Commercial and Cultural Climate of Japanese Printmaking. Hotei Publishing. Amsterdam. 2004. 128-128-134

Simplification in the overall form of the chanter's figure is explained by the fact that he is depicted as a folk-art figurine made of papier-mache and provided with a swinging head, the so-called kubifuri hariko (首ふり張子).





Fig. A. Asaka no Katsumi. Portrait of Kyōka poet Tsurunoya as a Papier-mâché Doll of a Gidayū Chanter. 1823. RISD. Gift of George Pierce Metcalf, 56.039.73. Detail.

Fig. B. Folk-art mingei, papier-mache dall of Fukusuke, Good Luck deity, with swinging head. From Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. 46

A highly specific, somewhat unnatural pose of the portrayed poet is explained by the fact that he is shown as a joruri chanter. Joruri is a narrative-musical form that combines recitation by a chanter and accompaniment by shamisen, a three-string lute-like instrument. Jōruri as a name for a type of theatrical performance comes from the title of a highly popular ballad that described the romance between Ushiwakamaru (young Minamoto Yoshitsune, 12th century) and a noble lady, Princess Jōruri - Jōrurihime. This title was later incorporated in the art of puppeteering and received the name of ningyo jōruri or "puppet jōruri." Gradually, the jōruri developed into a dramatic theatrical form dealing with a wide variety of themes. The role of a chanter was of great significance.

The chanter is holding a special fan-like object called *harisen* or *hariogi*. It is used by the narrator to slap the lectern to highlight the rhythm during his recitation. This object is used in traditional storytelling known as kodan which refers to war chronicles and revenge tales delivered in a highly dramatic fashion. The same practice was applied to the above-mentioned ballad recitations *joruri*. This practice is termed *shaku-byoshi*, which means "keeping the beat." In old times slapping a handheld instrument was the easiest and most widely used way to keep rhythm in Japanese court dance and music and other performing arts.

⁴⁶ https://blog.goo.ne.jp/sumikoaizu/e/3d2b4ee6005259a6983ca63d06a462ef







Fig. C. Hokusai Manga, v. 12. 1834. Joruri chanter. Private collection.

Fig. D. Takemoto Gidayū (1651-1714), lifetime portrait in the collection of the Komaba Library, the University of Tokyo.⁴⁷

Fig. E. Asaka no Katsumi. *Portrait of Kyōka poet Tsurunoya as a Papier-mâché Doll of a Gidayū Chanter*. 1823. RISD. Gift of George Pierce Metcalf, 56.039.73. Detail.

As seen in the illustrations above (Figs. C, D, E), recitation in the joruri pupppet performances was accompanied by striking a fan rhythmically on a block.

It is noteworthy, that simplified as the figure portrayed here is, the person represented belongs to the most cultured circles of Japan's society at the time as is revealed in the above-mentioned article by Roger Keyes.

Obviously, the poet represented in this print and of the artist who portrayed the poet were well acquainted as suggested by the playful and highly individualized image of the poet. It is important note that the type of the print under consideration is a *surimono*, or a privately commissioned print. Unlike commercial prints, *surimono* were limited editions designed for and circulated within highly cultivated groups of print-loving public. Because of this, typically the subject matter of *surimono* was more specific reflecting particular circumstances that could have triggered // inspired creation of the print. There existed several formats of *surimono*, but the given surimono is of the most widespread type. It is a *shikishiban*, a small print of a near-square shape of 20.8 x 18.4 cm.

According to Roger Keyes, depicted here is a poet Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751–ca. 1839) whom the scholar characterizes as "the presiding genius of the Crane

⁴⁷ https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/history/history2.html

Group" of poets. Roger Keyes then tells that Tsurunoya Osamaru was an Osaka merchant who lived in Edo for a long time and then, on retiring, returned to his native place. During his stay in Edo, he became a poetry judge and eventually a head of a poetry group. On his return to Osaka, he took the name of Tsurunoya, or "the crane's dwelling," perhaps implying symbolic associations of the crane with old age and long life. For the emblem Tsurunoya Osamaru chose an abbreviated line-description of a nesting crane. One can see this bird's contour on the poet's shoulder on the *surimono* under discussion. Like members of many poetic groups, Tsurunoya was interested in *surimono*, an artform that happened to be closely associated with witty poetry *kyōka* – numerous *surimono* served for poetic exchange among the poetry group members.

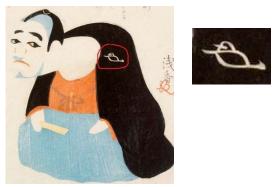


Fig. G. Asaka no Katsumi. *Portrait of Kyōka poet Tsurunoya as a Papier-mâché Doll of a Gidayū Chanter*. 1823. RISD. Gift of George Pierce Metcalf, 56.039.73. Outline of the nested crane – the emblem of the Crane poetry group. The same line-figure of a nested crane reproduced on the right.

As we learn from the same article by Roger Keyes, Asaka no Katsumi who portrayed the Tsurunoya Osamaru on this *surimono* was rather a poet than an artist. Roger Keyes introduces him as a young man, a son of a prominent poet, himself a dealer of antiques, a publisher, and an amateur artist. Asaka no Katsumi was a member of the Crane Group and as such designed "the charmingly awkward *surimono* of an amateur chanter," citing the words by Roger Keyes. It has been already mentioned that the awkwardness of the figure is explained by the deliberate modeling it on a folk-art papier-mache doll. Roger Keyes concludes that this must be an affectionate portrait of the man playing an enthusiastic amateur chanter.

Production of *surimono* is this artform's very special aspect – it was an artistic venture of great sophistication. Since *surimono* were privately commissioned and

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⁴⁸ Ibid., 129

produced, they welcomed usage of all kinds of luxurious materials and techniques along with cleverness of the subject matter and artistic approaches. An extraordinarily gifted producer of *surimono* associated with the Crane Group was Tani Seikō (active in early 19th century). Tani Seikō marked the prints he produced with an elegant small gourd-shaped seal. The seal in the lower left corner of Asaka no Katsumi's print is modeled on Tani Seikō's gourd, but it is framed with pine needles. This is because it is an imitation of Tani Seiko's seal done by his protégé, the poet Chiyo no Matsuhiko. "Matsu" of his name means "pine," hence the pine needles in the design of the seal. Additionally, he included the characters of his name Matsuhiko inside the gourd shape. It was this very person, Chiyo no Matsuhiko who cut the blocks for the figure and printed the image, using the beautiful colors discussed in the beginning of this essay, also adding delicate shiny dust either metallic or fine mica.



Fig. E. Signatures by the authors of three poems reproduced on the *surimono*.

Right: Asaka Katsumi (朝香勝躬), designer of the image/ author of the rightmost poem

Center: Chiyo Matsuhiko (千代松彦), a poet/ this print's producer.

Left: Tsurunoya Osamaru (鶴廼屋乎佐丸), head of the Crane poetry group portrayed here/ author of the leftmost poem.

The poems that appear in this *surimono* are by all three individuals involved in print's production as is seen from the signatures that accompany the texts. The rightmost poem is by the designer of this image, Asaka no Katsumi. The poem in the middle is by the craftsman who carved the blocks and printed them - by Chiyo no Matsuhiko. The

leftmost poem is by Tsurunoya Osamaru, the leader of the poetic group who is portrayed here.

To conclude, this charming and exquisite print introduces us to the high poetic and artistic urban culture of Edo period Japan. The distinctive culture of $ky\bar{o}ka$ (cominc, literally "crazy") poetry found its remarkably developed manifestation in the art of *surimono*, of which this one from the RISD collection is an outstanding example. Thanks to the all-encompassing study by Roger Keyes, we could better appreciate the immense artistic richness of ukiyo-e culture that brought together poetic practice, refined artistic creativity, extraordinary technical skill in print production, and the music culture in the reference to obviously much-appreciated art of a *jōruri* chanter.

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Katsukawa Shunkō (1743-1812) Actors Ichikawa Komazō II and Segawa Kikunojō III, by a stream – onstage, 1780s RISD. Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1111

Music and Magic in Kabuki Theater:

Segawa Kikunojō III Dancing by a Stream, and Ichikawa Komazō III (?)

Alisa Boardman

There is something weird and intriguing about the scene that is happening between two characters out in nature on a riverbank. One of the characters seems to be a graceful and elegant woman caught in the middle of a dance movement. There are some alerting features in her appearance – in her hairstyle, dress, and movements, to be discussed later. The other person is a man seated on the ground next to her. The two characters are exchanging glances quite intently. On a closer inspection it becomes clear – for many reasons – that these characters are Kabuki theater actors performing a play on stage. They are portrayed by an ukiyo-e artist, Katsukawa Shunko (1743-1812) who specialized on images of the Kabuki theater actors. This artist belonged to the Katsukawa School that dominated the actor print genre in the end of the 18th century, having pioneered a new level of realism in rendering the characters and the setting of theatrical scenes.

Let's first look at the dancer that appears to be an elegant woman. The dancer's hair is fashionably styled as a high chignon and the wide sidelocks of the so-called lantern-type known as $t\bar{o}r\bar{o}bin$. The character's hairdo is decorated with fashionable accessories, including a comb kushi, a pair of two-pronged hairpins kanzashi, and barshaped hairpin $k\bar{o}gai$. Two elements of the dancer's hairstyle are unusual – a piece of cloth covering the front part of the dancer's head and the length of her hair trailing down her back. Both are telling, one revealing the person to be an actor, the other shedding some light on the role.

The piece of fabric on the character's scalp is a unique object used by kabuki theater actors only. Tradition to wear such headpieces is associated with the fact that historically from the mid-17th century all kabuki theater actors were men. Thus, all female roles were impersonated by male actors. They were known as *onnagata* – "woman-

person."⁴⁹ During the Edo period it was mandated by the government that men shaved hair on top of their heads. To make female impersonators look more feminine there developed a tradition to cover the actor's shaved pate with a silk band of purple color. Hence such pieces of cloth became known as *murasaki-bōshi* or "purple headgear," although later silk of various colors became used. According to the New Kabuki Encyclopedia by Samuel Leiter, *murasaki-bōshi* "offered a touch of feminine gentleness and sensuality"⁵⁰ by softening the contrast between the face and stark black hair. Presence of this headcloth immediately signaled who were kabuki actors and who were courtesans when depicted in ukiyo-e.



Fig. A. Katsukawa Shunko, Segawa Kikunojō III, detail. Note the headgear murasaki-bōhi.

Another noteworthy aspect of the actor's hairstyle is that the length of the hair is not swept up into the bun completely but is left out. This hair is flowing down the character's back freely, animated by the dance step and hinting on the not entirely human nature of the being.

The character's costume likewise carries information on both, the personality of the actor and the role. The layered garments are decorated in the most thoughtful and refined manner. The outer kimono is worn by the dancer only from waist down. It is kept in place by the wide *obi* sash, while the unused sleeves of that kimono are hanging down. The fabric of this outer kimono is decorated with a combination of floral designs and geometric maze-like patterns of interlocking swastikas, *manji*. This geometric pattern is known known as *sayagata* and has roots in Buddhism. When combined with flowers, *sayagata* pattern would be often accompanied by chrysanthemums, ⁵¹ which is the case here.

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⁴⁹ Samuel Leiter. New Kabuki Encyclopedia. Greenwood Press. Westport, CT & London. 1979. P. 498 ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 423

⁵¹ (C)2001 Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users: https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/sayagata.htm



Details. 1. Sayagata pattern in white above the chrysanthemum flowers kiku that allude the actor's name Kukunojo. 2 Pattern of $h\bar{o}ju$, a wish-granting jewel associated with fox's shapeshifting abilities. 3 Skein of fibers - family crest of the Segawa Kikunojo lineage. 4 Three concentric squares - family crest of Ichikawa lineage. 5 Chrysanthemums - perhaps reference to actor Kikunojo. Stage setting is not an actual depiction of the natural world

Eight-petal chrysanthemum flowers with distinctive angular three-pointed leaves are placed near the edges of the fabric towards the bottom. The same patterns continue on the loosely hanging empty sleeve mentioned above. Additionally, the sleeve bears a sign shaped as a black circle with a white bundle of cotton or silk floss tied across — the pattern known as *yuiwata* (結綿). This is an extremely important element of the costume since this is a family crest of Segawa Kikunojō, one of the most prominent lineages of kabuki theater actors, particularly famous for their skill as *onnagata*. Thanks to this sign and the date of the print's publication it became possible to identify the actor depicted here as an extremely talented Segawa Kikunojō III.

Back to the costume, the lavish *obi* sash is made of fabric decorated with the traditional hexagon patterns. Within larger hexagons against the black background depicted are orange chrysanthemum-like flowers. It should be emphasized that chrysanthemums are used twice on the costume of the dancer – along the edges of the outer kimono (accompanied with leaves) and on the *obi* (flat-petaled). In fact, behind the figures there is the third representation of chrysanthemums in this composition: there is a bush with "Korin-style" rounded chrysanthemums blooming profusely. One can imagine

that such proliferation of chrysanthemums here hints on the actor's name Kikunojō where "kiku" (菊) means "chrysanthemum."

Meaningful also is the pattern on the upper part of the dancer's kimono. This pattern consists of scattered teardrop/round shapes representing a wish-granting jewel $h\bar{o}ju$ (宝珠). A symbol of Buddhist origin, 52 in folklore this wish-granting jewel is strongly associated with the fox spirit kitsune. The jewel is believed to be what allows the kitsune to transform into different forms. 53 The presence of the wish-granting jewel motif on the actor's costume suggests the role performed is that of the fox spirit. This agrees with somewhat beast-like floating long hair of the character. Here also fit the unusual stance and movements of the character. With both her hands held up and closed, almost as if mimicking an animal's paws, the figure appears poised in a foxlike pose almost as if leaping in the air referencing fox $y\bar{o}kai$ — a supernatural being, and its magic. Furthermore, the importance of dance is clearly revealed here as with the distinct kitsunete fox-hands motions and the energetically raised feet, representing the kitsune-ashi. They are key in identifying the character's role in the play.

All the above discussed features suggest that Segawa Kikunojō III is playing here the *onnagata* role of a *kitsune* fox spirit. Perhaps this is the role of Kojorō-gitsune (female *kitsune*) as one can hypothesize on the basis of a similar print from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.⁵⁴ Segawa Kikunojō III has been portrayed in this role numerous times by many ukiyo-e artists, including Katsukawa Shunkō's contemporary and fellow-artist, Katsukawa Shun'ei (1762-1819). In his print the actor is wearing the same kind of costume – the outer kimono decorated with chrysanthemums, and circular motifs are visible at the top part of the garment.⁵⁵

The second character sitting on the ground next to the dancer also boasts quite a distinctive appearance. He has small eyes that are highlighted with light orange eyelines slightly rising at the outer corners. New Kabuki Encyclopedia states that "makeup is one of the vital ingredients contributing the kabuki's reputation for gorgeous visual style."⁵⁶ The character's eyebrows are turned upward, giving him a worried or scared expression.

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⁵² JAANUS, (C)2001 Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users: https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/hOri/houju.htm

⁵³ Karen Smyers. *The Fox and the Jewel*. University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

⁵⁴ For instance, print by Katsukawa Shunsho, MFA, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/320846/actor-segawa-kikunojo-iii-as-fox-kojoro

⁵⁵ Katsukawa Shun'ei, Art Institute of Chicago https://api.artic.edu/api/v1/artworks/32576/manifest.json

⁵⁶ Samuel Leiter, New Kabuki Encyclopedia, 318

Particularly conspicuous is his really large nose to be further discussed below. The nose and bushy sideburns emphasize that he is a male character. On top of his head, he is wearing a *tenugui* (headwrap). His kimono of a sage green color is adorned with repeated stylized representation of *torii* gates printed in orange with their curved roofs rendered in black. These *torii* gates are implied to be set in nature and thus seem to be surrounded with foliage. While the same sage green is used for the entire kimono background, the impression of foliage is achieved by a specific printing technique of the disperse dye printing. Over the kimono the character is wearing a loosely fitted sleeveless jacket *haori* that features motifs of bouquets of flowers in circular frames. Although this person lacks swords, his outfit may indicate he is a samurai or some high official.

As with Segawa Kikunojo III, the actor's sleeve here bears his family crest. This crest features three concentric squares that represent the so-called mimasu (三升) or the "triple rice measure" – as if three nested boxes are seen from above. Mimasu is a wellknown crest of the illustrious Ichikawa lineage of Kabuki theater actors to which the portrayed actor temporarily belonged. Inside the concentric squares one can see the kanji taka (高), which means "tall," but also "talented." This together with most specific facial features of the actor allows to suggest that he is Ichikawa Komazō III (1764-1838) – although he is identified as Ichikawa Komazō II (1737-1802) – the question remains open. The suggested identification of the actor as Ichikawa Komazō III (later Matsumoto Kōshirō V) is based on this actor's legendary big nose. In the words of Samuel Leiter, "he was widely known as "High Nose" or "Hanataka Kōshirō" because of his most prominent feature."57 Leiter also mentions his small eyes "that gave him a fearful look when opened wide," helping him to dominate the field of villain acting. The actor's huge nose and small eyes are faithfully depicted here by the artist. The Katsukawa School of ukiyo-e artists is particularly famous for capturing actors' likeness, the approach introduced by the founder of the lineage, Katsukawa Shunshō (1726-1793).

This new sense of realism referred primarily to rendering of the appearance of actors, their movements, and gestures but was applied also to all other elements of theatrical compositions, which is proven by every detail in the print discussed here. Lifelike details distinguish representation of the landscape background although many elements are simplified. The ripples of the rapid stream are rendered with minimal lines. The chrysanthemums on the bush are abbreviated into round shapes as mentioned above.

⁵⁷ Samuel Leiter, New Kabuki Encyclopedia. Pp. 390-391.

The magnolia tree that arches over the two figures is depicted in a rough textured painterly style reminiscent of Chinese ink painting aesthetics. Below the tree is a greenish mound of grassy earth or moss. Beneath the mound is the ground the characters are placed upon – it looks to be some sort of sandy shore of a stream. These recognizable features of the setting increase believability of the fantasy scene performed on stage.

Kabuki theater was of tremendous importance for the urban culture in Edo period Japan providing entertainment for the general public. As a result, countless ukiyo-e prints depicting aspects of the Kabuki theater were published. Images of actors proper constitute a category known as *yakusha-e* or "actor images."

The theater operated on a yearly cycle, starting in November, in which a multitude of ukiyo-e posters and woodcuts advertising the upcoming actor casts and plays were produced. It is not clear if this print is related to the so-called "kaomise" or "face-showing performance" – the first performance given in the season that lasted from November of one year through December of the following. Maybe this print just represents a scene from a performance. Such prints could be bought by Edo public as a memory of a theater visit or as a substitute of such. There are two major contrasting types of plays performed in Kabuki theater. One of them is the *sewamono* usually translated as "domestic plays." *Sewamono*" relies on the contemporary events in the lives of *chōnin*, or commoners from among the townspeople. The other type is known as *jidaimono* or "period plays" and refers to history plays. Many of those historic plays referenced heroic sagas with supernatural elements as here.

Invented relatively recently, around 1603, compared to other forms of traditional Japanese theater, kabuki underwent many changes before it developed into a full-fledged theatrical form. Kabuki actors came from long lineages of prestigious families, their names being passed on from generation to generation to maintain their fame. The Ichikawa lineage, to which the actor Ichikawa Komazo III (?) depicted here belonged, was considered one of the most outstanding lineages in Edo. The Ichikawa family was most well-known for inventing the *aragoto* kabuki style of acting that utilized dramatic makeup, costumes, wigs, props, vocals, and movements to portray otherworldly powerful samurai heroes. This flair for dramatic and supernatural themes is clearly prevalent in this ukiyo-e print, with the actors wearing elaborate costumes, dramatic expressions, and the allusions to supernatural entities such as, perhaps, *kitsune* (Japanese for foxes). These supernatural characters helped enhance the heroic nature of the samurai, and thus further dramatized and edified these characters and actors.

As has been said, Segawa Kikunojo III was a prominent Kabuki actor who played both male and female roles but was most well-known for female roles and the *henge mono*, or "transformation pieces." This is demonstrated in Katsukawa Shunkō's print in which Segawa Kikunojō plays a fox spirit transformed into a human woman. By having the female character appear as a *kitsune*, it can depict some of the more subversive female archetypes that are portrayed in kabuki as not being wholly human which allows such female characters to break out of societal expectations.

To reiterate, the Katsukawa School of ukiyo-e theatrical print designers was most active during the second half of the 18th century. They primarily focused on producing *yakusha-e* and were most well known for their ability to capture the actor's physical likeness, as well as illustrating the daily lives of actors, outside of the theater. Some actors had easily recognizable physical characteristics. For example, Ichikawa Komazō III had a noticeably high nose, as can be seen in many ukiyo-e prints. These distinct portraits of actors not only heightened the individual fame of the actors, but further embedded their personalities within the minds of the people. Allowing people to recognize these actors from their portraits emphasized their celebrity status within Edo culture and inevitably strengthens their influence on the society and culture.

As represented in this print, the supernatural is a key element in the kabuki theater and in ukiyo-e. Not only does it reveal the complexities inherent in the Japanese culture and tradition, but it also truly informs the musical and visual characteristics of art. The *kitsune yōkai* is an important entity within Japanese culture and represents many ideas ranging from the spiritual realm to the practicing of transformation and trickery. These ideas of transformation are critical, especially in the framework of the *yakusha-e* and the context of kabuki.

While this print probably is directly referencing a play involving magic and fox spirits, it also prompts us to look deeper. From the beautiful *onnagata* actor, captured in a spirited dance and pose to the suggestive natural background despite the indoor theater setting, to the elaborate facial expression of the male actor at the bottom of the scene, all of these components suggest something beyond what is on the surface. There is transformation and illusion that are being utilized to create this otherworldly beauty, and entertainment that has ensnared the minds of the Edo people. Furthermore, this transformative layered aspect of Japanese supernatural culture is also reflected through the music. Through the dance and illusionary atmosphere, the transformative musical

nature of the Kabuki play is successfully conveyed and portrayed by this piece. In this way the music itself becomes a supernatural and transformative force without having to be physically heard by the print observers.

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https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/sayagata.htm

 $\underline{https://www.aisf.or.jp/\sim jaanus/deta/hOri/houju.htm}$

¹ Karen Smyers. *The Fox and the Jewel*. University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

Part III. MUSIC IN THE SUPERNATURAL REALM



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849).

Random Sketches by Hokusai - Transmitting the Spirit, Revealing the Form of Things (Denshin kaishu: Hokusai manga), volume 12.

RISD. Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.394.12

Kindred Spirits?

A Monk's Music Amusement for *Yōkai*, in Hokusai Manga, volume 12 Kevin Wu

A busy and bizarre composition is printed in black over off-white pages of a book-spread with each side framed in a slightly thicker line frame. Within these frames are numerous mysterious and mythical figures called *yōkai* represented by Katsushika Hokusai, ukiyo-e preeminent artist, in his Random Sketches or The Hokusai Manga, volume No. 12 The rightmost figure appears to be a young, good looking, and nicely coiffured woman, lounging on her back. Her body begins at the very bottom of the page while her head reaches to the very top of the page carried by an extremely long and thin

neck that swirls and loops like the smoke coming from her tobacco pipe that she is smoking. She is a rokurokubi (轆轤首), a kind of yōkai that looks like normal humans by day, but at night they gain the ability to stretch their necks to great lengths.⁵⁸ The face of this *yōkai* is very young and good-looking. Her head is topped with a two-pronged hairpin kanzashi, a comb kushi and a bar-shaped hairpin kōgai keeping her bun up. Her inner rustled kimono, featuring kasuri weaving patterns, is loosely tied leaving parts of her body bare. The viewers see her breast and portions of her shoulder and belly. She is using her striped outer *kimono* as a throw. Her left arm is outstretched, and her hand is visible. Right next to the base of her neck one sees a hako-makura, decorated with a floral pattern on lacquered black



background, a roll of padding and a parcel of tissue papers on top.

⁵⁸ Jisho, English Japanese online dictionary, word "*rokurokubi*": https://jisho.org/word/%E3%82%8D%E3%81%8F%E3%82%8D%E9%A6%96



Detail: Monk playing the shamisen while interacting with *yōkai* old woman.

Next to her is another *rokurokubi* representing the same species and boasting an incredibly long neck that spans across both pages of the book spread. This figure appears to be a much older disheveled woman. This body part of the character is unwinding intertwined threads next to a low cylindrical toolbox with some fan-like patterns. Next to this box there are a couple of single thread coils she has just completed. This *rokurokubi* hag is visiting her neighbor playing shamisen making the best of her unusual anatomy. She has three hands: two are involved in work and the third – in smoking. The wrinkles follow along her neck. She too is seen smoking, with an incredibly lively and joyous expression. Her hair is drawn with wild loose lines, accentuating the wild and tossed together nature of her hair.



Detail: *Yōkai* old woman unwinding the intertwined threads

Following the old woman's neck, leads you to another figure – to that a man playing a traditional Japanese instrument, the *shamisen*. The man is looking back at the long-necked woman ghoul, and you can only see his profile. He has no hair, and the top of his head has a somewhat conical shape. The man's shaven head suggests the man is a Buddhist monk. The figure also appears to be in mid-performance, with his left hand pressing down on the strings of the *shamisen* and the right, strumming the strings with the plectrum. The musician is leaning slightly back as he is peering at the hand of the long-necked ghoul hovering over him. He is staring at her in a quite focused manner observing the creature's smoking pipe held by the hand. The soundbox of his *shamisen* is shaped like a curved rectangle with convex edges. The neck of the *shamisen* is quite thin and rests on his left bicep and in between his index finger and thumb of his left hand. There is black, soft padding at the top of the soundbox for the comfort of the hand and to protect the instrument.



Detail: huge three-eyed *yōkai* in spiderweb-patterned kimono at the optometrist.

Below the musician, in the center of the composition is an almost bald giant man, with bushy hair behind the ears, bushy mustache and sideburns, and with three eyes. He appears to be sitting cross legged in front of a basin with handlebars. Inside the basin are perhaps burnt ashes. The basin may be a large incense burner. Compared to the other figures, this figure has the most eccentric kimono motifs, being black with accents of spiderwebs throughout it. Based on the patterns on his garments and considering his facial expression he may be a reference to *Tsuchigumo* featured in the scroll of *yōkai*:

Bakemono no e^{59} a spider-inspired $y\bar{o}kai$ with three eyes. This three-eyed giant is sitting and interacting with the last figure in the composition, a man that appears to be holding three-lensed glasses for a three eyed individual. In front of this man, is a box filled with objects that resemble incense or folded up pieces of fabric or cases for eyewear.





Left: *Tsuchigumo*, literally "earth spider," a type of $y\bar{o}kai$. From book *Bakemono no e*, here – with three eyes.⁶⁰

Right: Katsushika, Hokusai, 1760-1849. **Seller of eye-glasses** – *magana-ya*. UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print Collection⁶¹

While these figures are so colorful in personality, and fun to look at, these exaggerations allow Hokusai to reveal and express ideas about Japanese life and culture that otherwise would not have been possible. In this way, we feel that $y\bar{o}kai$ art and stories give a glimpse into the internal psychologies and ideas of life that the Japanese people of the time may have experienced, making them endlessly fascinating.

To recap, from the right, the *rokurokubi* young lady with the chignon-style hairdo and its adornments - a two-pronged hairpin kanzashi, a simple slender implement $k\bar{o}gai$, and a comb kushi together with her being smoking attests to her being up to the latest fashion. This outer kimono is made of striped fabric that was one of the Edo chic designs associated with the concept of iki^{62} This striped pattern on her outer kimono further characterizes this unusual being as being most up to date. With her exposed breast and unkempt clothing indicates that she may be a courtesan or member of the pleasure quarters.

⁵⁹ Bakemono no e (化物之繪, "Illustrations of Supernatural Creatures"), Edo Period. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakemono_no_e#/media/File:35.Tsuchigumo.jpg ⁶⁰ Ibid.

 ⁶¹ Megana-ya – seller of glasses. Print by Katsushika Hokusai. UC San Francisco, Special Collection: https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb3p30074f/?layout=metadata&brand=woodblock
 62 Rebecca Salter, Japanese Popular Prints: from Votive Slips to Playing Cards. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu. 2006. P. 30 Also, https://edostripe.com/edo-stripe

Over to the left of the piece, is the man playing a shamisen. His bald head and large earlobes suggest he may be a musical Buddhist monk. His thinly drawn, closed eyes may also imply he is akin to a biwa hōshi, a blind traveling performer. Biwa hōshi were believed to originate from China or India and became famous for storytelling and entertainment. Besides being popular for narrating tales about the Genpei Wars, they also were important entertainers and ritual performers who took on a broad range of roles, including poetry and song, plague prevention, and spiritual purification. This character is important to the overall mood of the piece because he is the one providing musical entertainment to the other four characters. Such roles of reciting verbal histories made them a cultural keystone of the time. The playing of shamisen music allows for the leisurely attitude of the other characters and allows the other human-appearing character in the piece to gleefully sell eyewear to the three-eyed *yōkai*. This interaction may be a reference to Megana-ya (1811-1814), a piece also by Hokusai from his collection of prints related to health. 63 All the other characters pay no mind to the shamisen player except the rokurokubi with three arms and unkempt hair. This old hag rokurokubi seems really pleased by the music and smiles open mouthed showing off her set of black rotten teeth. The shamisen player seems to be mid-pause and making direct eye contact with the rokurokubi, suggesting they may have been having a conversation or were friends of some sort.

All in all, this scene depicted by Hokusai is a scene of idyllic pleasures and a peaceful meeting between the $y\bar{o}kai$ and humans or the intersection between the supernatural world and the real world. Such social activities are made possible through the leisurely effects of the shamisen music.

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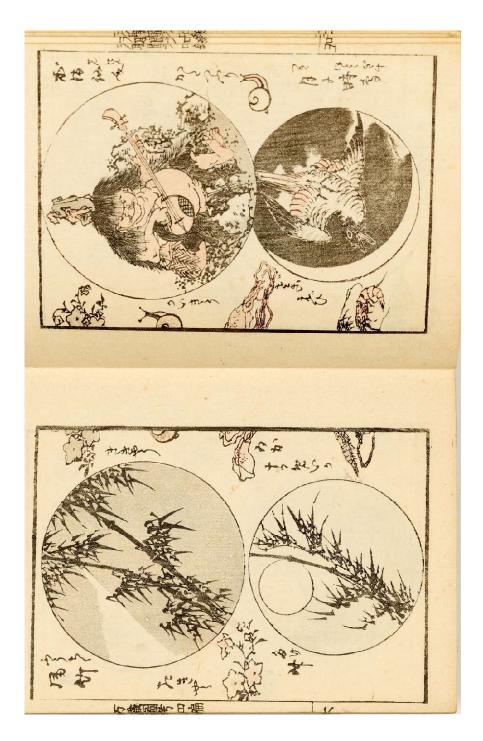
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⁶³ UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print Collection



Katsushika Taito II (葛飾戴斗), active 1810-1853. *Designs for All Artisans (Banshoku zukō*) Volume 4. Osaka publishing house Kawachiya Mohei. 1827. **RISD.** Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.398.5

Music of the Immortals:

Gama-sennin and the Lore of the Moon Timothy Li

Music and art belong to crucial cultural identifiers of people throughout the history of human civilizations. This analysis seeks to deeper evaluate features of an ukiyo-e print to further understand the importance of music for characterization of an immortal's personality and trace aspects of interconnectedness of nature, lore, music, and visual arts Edo Japan.

"Designs for All Artisans" (*Banshoku zukō*) is a collection of designs by Katsushika Taito II (c.1810-1853), a pupil of Katsushika Hokusai (c.1760-1849). A total of five of these books were produced by Katsushika Taito II, all named "Designs for All Artisans" (c.1827-1850). The books were published by the Osaka publishing house Kawachiya Mohei (河内屋茂兵). The books were designed in the late Edo era to serve as an aesthetic and compositional guide for other artisans' crafts. The double page-spread in question comes from volume 4 of this book series.

The double-page spread of the book shows four larger circular insets containing cultural and nature images while six more images are organized outside of these circular insets. The large rectangular frames that surround all images on each page represent the borders of the printing blocks used during this process. Overall, the print has two colors: black and pink.⁶⁴ The color pink can be seen primarily on the bodies of living beings on both pages. Because these books were cheap, the colors in the print sometimes exhibit uneven distribution as a result of poor-quality printing. Occasionally, some elements are misaligned.

At first sight, the circular frames may seem randomly arranged. However, on closer investigation, there is distinct logic and structure in their distribution. The position

⁶⁴ There is another edition of the same book in which three colors are used, black, pink, and blue. See Smithsonian Institution, https://pulverer.si.edu/node/781/title/4/6

of the stacked circular frames follows vertical symmetrical order in which the scale and the location of the images mirror each other across the middle binding split of the two pages. As to the smaller images, two of them are positioned also symmetrically at the outer edges of both pages – at the very right and the very left, at the height of about one third of the page from the bottom. Four other smaller images are centered across the split between the two pages.



Katsushika Taito II, Designs for All Artisans, v. 4. Gama Sennin – Immortal with a Toad. Detail.

When looking at the print from right to left, top to bottom, following the general direction of East Asian writing, the first image to notice is that of a mysterious person playing a unique musical instrument. Next to this person is an inscription that identifies him as Gama Sennin or "the immortal with the toad." Gama Sennin originally was one of many Chinese Daoist saints who were assimilated into Japanese culture. He is also known as Ryū Kaisen (劉海蟾; in Chinese 蝦蟇仙人). 65 In this frame, he is seen sitting on a rock which seems to be next to the water. As an immortal, he is obviously of indefinite age. But within this ukiyo-e design, he also looks quite robust: he is wearing pants and a short-sleeved shirt that is completely open at the front, revealing his enormous belly, a sign that his life is quite abundant. Gama Sennin appears to be content while wearing a cat-like mustache on his broad face. His unkempt hair 66 is also remarkably long, covering his shoulders and running down his back.

⁶⁵ Wikipedia. "Liu Haichan," March 1, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liu_Haichan.

⁶⁶ Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. "Gama Sennin (Chinese Hou Xiansheng) and His Three-Legged Toad." Accessed May 4, 2022. https://asia.si.edu/object/F1904.192/.

Against his huge round belly, he holds a similarly round three-string instrument akin to the shamisen. He plays it using a typical large ivory plectrum *bachi* to strum the strings and comes across as absorbed in his own music. This is demonstrated by, once again, his content facial expression and the position of his left leg that seemingly is moving to the rhythm.

At the head of the immortal, a toad is present. As Gama Sennin's usual companion, the toad is also making a headstand. The toad appears to be comfortable keeping up its balance and also seems to be relaxing at the sounds of Gama Sennin's music. Next to the immortal's right elbow there is a woven straw basket that is maybe a container for his scarce possessions.

In the early 8th century BCE, humanity's collective desire to attain old age led to the advancement of Taoism within the community of immortality seekers⁶⁷. Since the forms of nature appeared to charm Taoist believers, many of the immortals were represented by their own forms of nature: the mountain spirits were attracted to the forms of mountains, and the water spirits were attracted to the forms of water. Taoist Immortals were also known to love leisurely activities such as playing music and never pursued any profits. Music and nature were often depicted in harmony with one another as nature was a strong influential factor to music. The figure of Gama Sennin, one of these immortals, has rough edges; additionally, his hair bristles. These features show him closely linked to the natural habitat of toads. The instrument he is playing represent his close relationship with nature.

Gama Sennin had been believed to possess great magical knowledge in regard to medicine.⁶⁸ Always carrying a toad on him, he was thought to be able to change his appearance into a younger person as well as take on the form of a toad as well. Gama Sennin is said to have been capable of releasing his spirit from his body, and then fly with his three-legged toad companion.⁶⁹ Within Japanese culture, frogs have long meant a sign of good fortune and fertility. As the word 'frog' directly can be interpreted as 'return' (\hbar λ λ), many people throughout history within Japan have carried and gifted frog or toad items to others in order to wish them safe return on long journeys⁷⁰.

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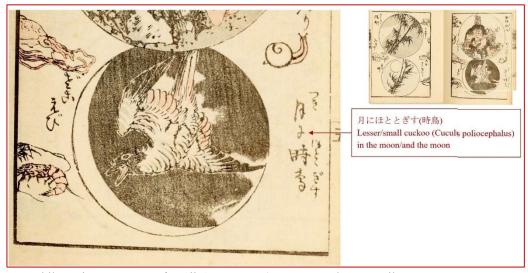
⁶⁷ Silbergeld, Jerome. "Chinese Concepts of Old Age and Their Role in Chinese Painting, Painting Theory, and Criticism." JSTOR, 1987.

⁶⁸ www.slatermuseum.org. "11. Gama Sennin." https://www.slatermuseum.org/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/the-plaster-cast-collection/online-cast-exhibition/p/~board/online-galleries/post/11-gama-sennin.

⁶⁹ Greve, Gabi. "Gokuraku - Jigoku : Gama Sennin Toad." https://gokurakuparadies.blogspot.com/2018/02/gama-sennintoad.html.

⁷⁰ Mingei Arts. "Kaeru / Japanese Creation of Myth." https://mingeiarts.com/blogs/celebration-of-mingei-journey-through-japan/kaeru-japanese-creation-of-myth#:~:text=In%20Japan%2C%20the%20frog%2C%20(.

The lower-right circular frame contains another unique and significant image: a bird soaring in the sky. On the right side of the inset, the text (月にほととぎす(時鳥)) states that the image is of a *cuculus poliocephalus* (*lesser cuckoo*) in front of the moon. The *cuculus poliocephalus*, also known as the *hototogisu*, has several symbolic meanings in Japanese folklore, hence they often appear as a popular subject in Japanese literature, ⁷¹ song, and woodblock prints. The cuckoo has long been associated with the coming of summer months in Japan. However, in literature and media, it is also often associated with the longing for the return of those who have died. ⁷²



Katsushika Taito II, Designs for All Artisans, v. 4. Lesser Cuckoo. Detail.

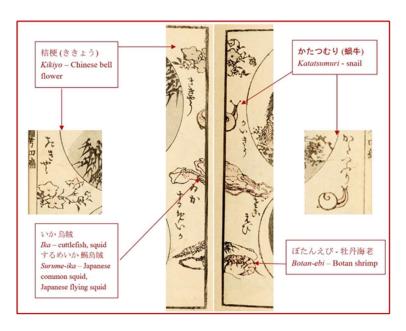
It seems relevant to think here about Chang'e, a Chinese moon goddess whose loveliness has often been celebrated throughout poems and novels. Her story revolves around her stealing the drug of immortality given to her consort, Hou Yi, by the gods. Because of that she was seeking refuge on the moon. Chinese people now celebrate the memory of Chang'e every year with mooncakes during the "Mid-Autumn Festival" and many of them go outside in hopes to see a supposed outline of a toad on the surface of the moon who, according to a legend, is now Chang'e. 73 It is possible that the story of Chang'e becoming a toad and the symbolism of the *cuculus poliocephalus* are both intended to imply bonds between Gama Sennin and Chang'e. Katsushika Taito II placed

⁷¹ The Hyakunin Isshu. "Summer Is Back: Poem Number 81," May 17, 2012. https://100poets.wordpress.com/2012/05/17/summer-is-back-poem-number-81/.

⁷² Toshidama. "The Enigmatic Japanese Cuckoo." Toshidama Japanese Prints. Toshidama Japanese Prints, https://toshidama.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/the-enigmatic-japanese-cuckoo/.

⁷³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Chang'e | Chinese Deity." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, February 21, 2012. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Change-Chinese-deity.

the bird and the moon beneath Gama Sennin in circular full moon-like insets to convey a story of Gama Sennin celebrating Chang'e and his longing for her return. Perhaps this is expressed through music he is playing Also, there could be a reference to the coming of a new summer season close to the next mid-autumn festival.



Katsushika Taito II, Designs for All Artisans, v. 4. Small creatures and bell flowers. Detail.

The six smaller images scattered around the circular frames are predominantly images of sea creatures. These sea creatures include: two snails, a cuttlefish, two shrimps; there are also two Chinese bellflowers (*platycodon*). All of these creatures and objects are labeled by the text next to them. These free-floating images are shown to further enrich the surrounding visual and symbolic ecosystem within the framed pages. Chinese bellflowers were considered to symbolize endless love and honesty⁷⁴ while snails were considered to represent tolerance and perseverance.⁷⁵ The shrimp and cuttlefish bring forth a sign of longevity and knowledgeable mystery.⁷⁶

The text next to each of the frames and images is a clear indication of how these documents were guides for other artisans. Each label was made specifically for the clarification of the images. The aim of those inscriptions was to allow people to understand what objects looked like through drawing without having to witness them

⁷⁴ A to Z Flowers. "Platycodon (Balloon Flower; Chinese Bellflower; Japanese Bellflower)." https://www.atozflowers.com/flower/platycodon/#:~:text=Platycodon%20is%20a%20symbol%20of.

⁷⁵ Facts About Snails. "Snails in Human Culture," https://factsaboutsnails.com/snails-in-human-culture/#:~:text=In%20ancient%20Japanese%20times%2C%20snails.

⁷⁶ Masumizu, Haruka. "Osechi Ryori: The Hidden Meanings behind Japanese New Year Food - Savvy Tokyohttps://savvytokyo.com/osechi-ryori-hidden-meanings-behind-japanese-new-year-food/.

themselves. On the outside of the two large rectangular frames that contain all print content, there is smaller labeling text imprinted on both the left and right outer margins of the pages. This text is the book's title and the page numbers. These labels are also clear usage of signs as they function as guides to help customers navigate through the book.

The works created by Katsushika Taito II greatly resemble those by Hokusai. Much of his style is so similar, that many named him "Dog Hokusai" for his willingness to slavishly copy every style of Hokusai's, even that of Hokusai's signature. That being said, as Hokusai's apprentice, Katsushika Taito II has created many successful works replicating Hokusai. These works confuse many historians even to this very day. Katsushika Taito II's original style, Hokusai's style, had eventually influenced other prints, paintings, and pottery images across the world, some including the renowned Impressionists: Monet, Manet, Renoir, and Van Gogh⁷⁸. Now, the world admires the striking touch of nature, culture, and the style of expression that can be found in ukiyo-e prints of Edo Japan. Katsushika Taito II prints enhanced the historical importance of Katsushika Hokusai and helped to expand the cultural identity of modern-day Japan.

There is no doubt that music played a significant role in the tradition of Japan and was in harmony with the common aesthetic of nature reflected in the prints. It appears as though there is a deeper narrative displayed within Katsushika Taito II's page-spread: one that depicts the immortal Gama Sennin playing music in association with the ancient Chinese moon goddess Chang'e. In addition, the narrative of the spread's composition was displayed rather intelligently and secretly behind the face of what originally appeared to have just been simple representational prints.

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Part IV. MUSIC IN JAPANESE MYTHS, CEREMONIES, & HISTORY



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849).

Random Sketches by Hokusai - Transmitting the Spirit, Revealing the Form of Things (Denshin kaishu: Hokusai manga). Volume. 5. Sarudahiko and Ame no Uzume.

RISD, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.394.5

Music in Shinto Beliefs: Sarudahiko and Ame no Uzume

in Hokusai Manga, Volume 5

Monet Fukawa, Rose Kim

Two intriguing full-length figures of very particular appearance and holding highly specific attributes are shown against the blank background of a double-leaf book spread. Moving right to left according to the traditional order of reading in Japan, we see a tall man of mature age. With a long nose and piercing eyes, mustache, and long hair, he is standing on high wooden clogs slightly bending forward. He is holding up an object consisting of a stick with pieces of folded paper attached to it – this is a *gohei* used in many Shinto rituals. In the upper part of the page to the right of the figure an inscription says that the person is Sarudahiko Okami or god Sarudahiko.⁷⁹ Sarudahiko is slightly bending towards a plumpish woman who is shown at the left-hand spread of the print. The inscription next to her identifies her as Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, or goddess Ame no Uzume. She is pushing her torso forward so that her head as well as her trailing garments are somewhat behind making her arc-shaped stance. The arc of her posture matches that of Sarudahiko uniting the figures almost as two halves of a circle. Thus, the composition of this book-spread reveals the inherent connection between these two divinities that will be discussed further.



Hokusai's print, 'Sarudahiko and Ame no Uzume' illustrates the theme of Japanese traditional myths through visual qualities and storytelling. The book's spread depicts two notable figures of the Shinto religion who play significant roles in Japanese

⁷⁹ Hokusai indicates that the name of the male deity is to be pronounced as voiced "Saru<u>d</u>ahiko" while usually it is pronounced as voiceless "Saru<u>t</u>ahiko." In this essay Hokusai's spelling will be used.

mythology. Hokusai suggests their opposing yet playful dynamic and character by emphasizing the gestures and the poses of the deities. Although they are both facing each other, Ame no Uzume appears as though she is leaning backward or in the midst of turning around while Sarudahiko is bending towards her and has his full gaze on Uzume. Sarudahiko is attempting to fulfill his duty of leading the way, but Ame no Uzume seems quite open and free. Uzume's gestures also feel looser, and performative compared to Sarudahiko's firm movements. Through portraying Sarudahiko as a guardian, Hokusai addresses him as a symbol of courage and justice as well as referencing his role as the leader of the earthly Kami. On the other hand, Uzume is illustrated with more spontaneous movements to acknowledge her as the inventor of performance and the Goddess of Dawn.

Sarudahiko, the god of crossroads, the guardian deity of the border, or the god of michibiki (god of directions) is depicted on the right side of the spread. He symbolizes guidance and strength as his role is to guide routes for gods while keeping them safe. 80 It is reasonable that he is the one who opens the composition. Sarudahiko often appears in traditional texts on history and mythology such as in The Nihon Shoki, "The Chronicles of Japan." The Nihon Shoki contains a compilation of myths and legends concerning the Shinto gods and the reigns of the early emperors. In the story, he goes to pick up Ninigi No Mikoto (天孫ニニギ尊), the divine grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu, from Tamagahara at Ama no Yachimata. Ninigi was sent to go to the Land of the Central Reed Plains by the orders of Amaterasu. However, Ninigi no Mikoto is suspicious of Sarudahiko's strange appearance. Ame no Uzume, goddess who danced to entice the sun goddess Amaterasu from the cave where she secluded herself, is accompanying Ninigi and is ordered to question Sarudahiko's identity. When Ame no Uzume asks for his name, Sarudahiko responds with "it's the Kunizu God who came to guide the heavenly grandson." After this exchange of utterances, he was allowed to take the lead, and it is said that he led Ninigi no Mikoto and his party to Takachiho in Hinata. From that story, he became known as one of the gods. After Ninigi's journey, Sarudahiko and Ame-no-Uzume married. In the selected print, Sarudahiko looks like a man with some features of a monkey and a long-nosed tengu, a supernatural creature found in Japanese folk religion. Sarudahiko has a "back extending seven fathoms, a nose the size of seven hand lengths

⁸⁰ Matsumae Takeshi. "Origin and Growth of the Worship of Amaterasu." *Asian Folklore Studies* 37, no. 1 (1978): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.2307/1177580.

(120cm), a colossal mouth, and eyes glowing like fire"⁸¹ with a height of 200 cm. He is holding upwards a *gohei* wand with attached papers to possibly guide the way and point directions for Ame no Uzume. His *gohei* is raised so high that it breaks the frame of the image on the page underscoring his legendary big size mentioned above. He is also wearing a *geta*, traditional wooden clogs with particularly high teeth that give him more height. Sarudahiko is facing forward while the position of his feet is angled like a 'v.' His eyes are focused on Ame no Uzume, and according to legend, light shines from his eyes and mouth. Sarudahiko's long nose represents a distinctive feature of a *tengu*, which is thought to frighten bad spirits and bring good luck.⁸²



Sarudahiko and his attributes.

Sarudahiko is wearing a patterned kimono and another layer of white clothing on top of his kimono. The sleeves of his kimono are rolled up leaving his arms visible up to the elbows. The kimono appears pulled up so that his legs are bare almost to the knees. There is a certain sagginess of his muscles, attesting to him not being youthful. The

⁸¹ Joseph Zieher. "Ame-No-Uzume No Mikoto." Shimbutsudo: A web page for the study of Japanese religions, November 16, 2008.

https://web.archive.org/web/20120716205457/http:/www.uwec.edu/philrel/shimbutsudo/uzume.html. ⁸² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "tengu." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 4, 2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/tengu.

pattern on his kimono formed by three joined hexagonal shapes is called *bishamon kikkō* (毘沙門亀甲).⁸³ Interestingly, the name for this design decorating a Shinto deity has a Buddhist origin: it was named after one of the Four Guardian gods (*shitennō* 四天王) of Buddhism, Bishamonten (毘沙門天). Bishamonten typically wore armor decorated with the repeated pattern of three hexagons that form a Y-shape. The white clothing looks like it was made of separate square fragments of fabric sewn together. These square fragments of fabric are described by a jagged line. Sarudahiko's hair is also worthy of attention. The crown of his head is free of hair which looks like receding of the hairline due to his advanced age but maybe is shaved. The hair growing at the sides and the back of his head is long, falling over his shoulders and his back. It goes down in patches and is rendered by hatching. There is difference in line quality of his hair compared to Ame no Uzume's solid black hair at the other side of the book's spread. Sarudahiko's hair seems lighter which perhaps implies that his hair is gray.

Although in this print, Sarudahiko's height appears similar to that of Ame no Uzume, in other prints portraying these characters, Sarudahiko's largeness and muscularity seem distinctive features of him, so they are highlighted with color. Furthermore, his armor varies amongst the prints that treat this topic. In Hokusai's toy print "Dance of the Gods at the Heavenly Cave," Sarudahiko is holding a large tree with many strips of paper hanging from the leaves.



Hokusai's toy print "Dance of the Gods at the Heavenly Cave," MFA 84

⁸³ Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. "Kikkoumon." 渥美財団. Accessed May 5, 2022. https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/k/kikkoumon.htm.

⁸⁴ MFA, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/212826 https://collections.mfa.org/objects/212825

While in Totoya Hokkei's five-part surimono series "The Cave Door of Spring" (Haru no iwato)," print No. 2 shows Sarudahiko holding a front and back spiked spear with a peculiar decoration that looks like leaves. He also looks more aggressive and in action. There is also a depiction of a rooster that has not appeared in other prints but is a part of the myth of luring Amaterasu from her cave as his crowing signaled the beginning of the day in spite of her absence.



Totoya Hokkei, Sarudahiko, from a set of five surimono The Cave Door of Spring. 1820s. MFA. 85

One of the common aspects of all the prints is that Sarudahiko tends to be bending forward, to have his heels joined, and to be wearing the triangular-shaped pattern on the kimono. Every feature of this Hokusai's image of Sarudahiko emphasizes his significant characteristics: his unique and recognizable face and body, his garments and footwear, his *gohei* attribute, his particular stance, and very particular linework. All this comes together to portray Sarudahiko's role and power.

On the left side of the page spread, there is a voluptuous young woman wearing multiple layers of loose traditional clothing that flow down to capture the fluent

MFA, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/212437

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⁸⁵ No. 2 Sarutahiko, from the series The Cave Door of Spring (Haru no iwato) 「春磐戸 其二」1820s Totoya Hokkei (1780–1850): SIGNED: Hokkei 北渓. Surimono. Shikishiban; 21.3 x 18.4 cm. CREDIT LINE: William Sturgis Bigelow Collection: ACCESSION NUMBER: 11.19809 INSCRIPTIONS: Poem by Saiseitei Nanao: Hanamushiro/ mazu shikishima no/ michi hiraki/ isamashiki ka ya/ ume no shitakaze.// Poem by Sekigentei Namio: Chihayaburu/ kamiyo o ima mo/ monogatari/ tari fusoku naki/ tori no ganjitsu 花_ まつしきしまの みちひらき いさましき香や 梅の下風 祭星亭七

雄 千早振 神代を今も 物かたり たりふそくなき 鳥の元日 石原亭濤雄

movements of the woman. She is depicted like an Okame (おかめ) due to her characteristic face with broad teardrop-shaped cheeks. She also has applied a makeup technique called *hikimayu* (引眉) that consists of using ink to draw the oval-shaped brows after shaving or pulling out her natural eyebrows. Initially, *hikimayu* was adopted for coming-of-age ceremonies during the mid-Heian period. It later became incorporated into Noh masks and from the Edo period. Most married women applied *hikimayu*. Ame no Uzume's *hikimayu* could possibly indicate her marital status to Sarudahiko Ōkami, the figure depicted on the right page.



Hikimayu - drawn oval-shaped brows after shaving or pulling out the natural ones.

Ame no Uzume is wearing at least three layers of garments that can be counted at the collar opening. Her outer kimono is lavish and is trailing beyond her feet. The sleeves of her outer kimono are long and fluid with shorter sleeves visible above. She is wearing a sash with an elegant bow tied over it. Over her kimono she is wearing another light clothing, sleeveless, somewhat ragged, and densely patterned. The design combines herringbone hatching and flower- or butterfly-filled roundels. In color distribution she is a reverse match to Sarudahiko: he is wearing a white robe over his patterned garments while Ame no Uzume is wearing a patterned robe over her un-patterned kimono. Her hair is lustrous black, long, and thick and is contrasted to grayish and thinnish hair of Sarudahiko. Her waist is slightly pushed forward while her head is leaning towards the back and her torso is twisting as she turns to look at Sarudahiko towards the left. She is holding an implement in each of her hands. In her right hand she is holding suzu—a Japanese traditional bell tree used in Shinto ceremonies. The bells comprising such bell trees are said to be hollow containing pellets that produce sounds when moved. Furthermore, Ame no Uzume is closely connected to the dances and music in Shinto

ceremonies such as *kagura* ("神楽"), which translates to "entertainment for the kami." It is a type of dance dedicated to deities. In Japanese mythology, Ame no Uzume performs this dance to welcome and worship the gods. Music in kagura involves drums, flutes, cymbals and kami songs, and there are two distinct types of dancing. *Mai* ("舞") emphasizes slow circular movements while the other dance, the *odori* ("踊") is a dance of jumping. *Mai* is closely related to the Miko ("巫女") dance performed by shrine maidens. Ame no Uzume's performance is known as the origin of the *kagura* and the role of *miko*. As a result, her influence on music-and-dance Shinto ceremonies is essential.

Ame no Uzume's graceful movement as it appears on Hokusai's print perhaps is defined by the rhythm of the suzu bell tree. She is pointing her suzu to the right and up, as if she is about to strike it down to create music. Her *gohei*—a wooden wand with two sides of zig-zag strips of paper used to bless or purify a person or object in Shinto ritual—is resting on her left shoulder. This is the side she is somewhat turning towards. As written on the right corner of the page is "天臼女の命," which means "The Life of a Heavenly Woman," or the goddess depicted in the print, Ame no Uzume no Mikoto. Often shortened to Uzume, the meaning of the word Ame can be rendered as light. She is a kami, a Shinto divinity, the goddess of dawn serving Amaterasu. In the Tale of the Missing Sun Deity from the Kojiki, Japan's most ancient chronicle, Ame no Uzume performs her first kagura dance when Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, hid herself in the rock-cave.⁸⁷ The well-known Shinto story begins after Amaterasu becomes upset with her aggressive brother, Susanoo, the storm god, causing the world to go into darkness. Susanoo destroys the rice fields, throws a peeled off horse on Amaterasu's loom, and kills one of her maids due to an argument. While the other gods try to trick Amaterasu into coming out, Uzume, one of Amaterasu's trusted servants, stamped on a wooden tub and exposed her breasts and pushed down her skirt. 88 As the other gods laughed and applauded, Amaterasu heard the sound of Uzume also singing and dancing. She finally steps out of the cave, and the other gods quickly lead her out while closing the door. The world becomes bright again. From this myth, Ame no Uzume became known for inventing performances through humor and exposing herself in vulnerable ways. She also

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⁸⁶ Averbuch, Irit. "Shamanic Dance in Japan: The Choreography of Possession in Kagura Performance." *Asian Folklore Studies* 57, no. 2 (1998): 293–329. https://doi.org/10.2307/1178756.

⁸⁷ Sadler, A. W. "O-Kagura'. Field Notes on the Festival Drama in Modern Tokyo." *Asian Folklore Studies* 29 (1970): 275–300. https://doi.org/10.2307/1177614.

⁸⁸ Malm, Joyce Rutherford. "The Legacy to Nihon Buyō." *Dance Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1977): 12–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/1478063.

served as patron of dancing, theater, and music. Ame no Uzume created *kagura*, storytelling dance, and two theaters: *kyōgen* and Noh. She is also considered a master of humor, and her skills of ingenuity brought back Amaterasu. She often uses humor to solve challenging situations. In some stories, she is described as wearing loose or revealing clothing to portray her open and joyful character, while other kami find this quality of Uzume comical. ⁸⁹ She is also associated with both dance and drumming, as her feet drummed to create a rhythm for her dance.



As has been mentioned, these two images - one of Sarudahiko and the other of Ame no Uzume, independent yet cleverly unified in one composition, were designed by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), a Japanese artist, ukiyo-e painter, and print designer of the Edo period. These images come from the fifth volume of a fifteen-volume collection of random sketches known as the *Hokusai Manga*. Most manga today are associated with graphic novels of various genres that contain quick and dramatic storytelling, similar to a comic-book format. However, the word manga itself is composed of two characters, *man* (漫) meaning "whimsical" and *ga* (画) meaning "pictures." Katsushika Hokusai became well known as the father of manga. The idea of whimsical pictures was the 19th-century understanding of manga as Hokusai valued drawing in freely associative matters, as ideas came to his head. A lot of his sketches were sources of information and drawing references for his students. The above-mentioned *surimono* by Totoya Hokkei, who was Hokusai's student, shows how Hokusai's design informed the work of his followers. The idea for a manga volume arose in 1812 when Hokusai visited Nagoya during a trip to western Japan. His pupils collected a variety of his drawings and published the first

⁸⁹ Kárpáti, János. "Music of Female Shamans in Japan." *Studia Musicologica* 54, no. 3 (2013): 225–56. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43290138.

volume as a drawing manual in 1814. Additional fourteen books were printed until 1878. Although there was no particular order or system to his drawings, the variety of topics illustrated by Hokusai is astounding, and it is only natural that a lot of Hokusai's manga pictures feature music played in nature, occasionally in association with religion and rituals, and folktales.

The exhibition also includes an image that can be in various ways associated with Ame no Uzume as an elated mythological character - a creator of an ecstatic dance that laid foundation to sacred musical ceremonies at Shinto shrines.

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Yanagawa Shigenobu (1787-1832). *Shirabyoshi Dancer. Surimono.* 1823/1 Carved and printed by Tani Seikō (谷清好, seal in gourd shape). RISD. Gift of George Pierce Metcalf, 56.039.1

Music in Shinto Ceremonies: *Shirabyosh*i Dancer in *surimono* by Yanagawa Shigenobu

Junyi Cao

Against the paper-color background of an almost square print, an elegant dancer dressed as a courtier is making a graceful move. The dancer is wearing a tall black hat tied with tan color chords under the chin. Patterns of flowers and geometric shapes adorn the dancer's outer kimono donned over the left shoulder of the main garment of white color. A long slightly curved sword is attached at the dancer's waist on the left. A ceremonial wand *gohei* that consists of a stick with paper streamers affixed to it is rising above the dancer's shoulder. A folding fan in the dancer's right hand is almost fully open.

Although this type of headgear and the attire, as well as the presence of the sword, may seem to indicate the dancer is a male, in fact all these attributes together show that this is a female dancer of a very special type – this is a *shirabyōshi*, or a woman performing a ritual dance in the guise of a man.

The *shirabyōshi* dance performed by shrine maidens developed between the late Heian (794-1185) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods. The origin of this performance might be associated with the significance attached in Japanese mythology to Ame no Uzume's entranced dance that helped return the sun goddess, Amaterasu no Omikami, out of the cave she had hidden. Shrine maidens are said to have granted Ame no Uzume a large place – sometimes an ancestral role.⁹⁰

It is interesting to compare the stance of the *shirabyōshi* on the *surimono* to the Ame no Uzume's posture in the Hokusai Manga doubleleaf, v. 9, where she is juxtaposed with her husband Sarudahiko. Remarkably, the curvature of Ame no Uzume's bend in Hokusai's design almost coincides with the curvature created by the leaning of the *shirabyōshi* dancer. This is true about the position of the dancers' heads, the flow of their hair that is parting slightly to let the ear be visible, the tilt of their *gohei* wands that

⁹⁰ Allan G. Grapard, "Of Emperors and Foxy Ladies," Buddhist Priests, Kings and Marginals: Studies on Medieval Japanese Buddhism (2002-2003): 128

parallel the angle of the of their bent heads, the curves of the abundant fabric of their dresses that elongates both figures on their left.





The bend of the figure of Yanagawa Shigenobu's *shirabyōshi* dancer (left) is similar to that of Ame no Uzume in *Hokusai Manga*, Volume 5 (right).

Let's now return to the matter of *shirabyōshi* dancers wearing male-oriented outfits as this is depicted on the *surimono*. It would be useful to review what such outfits commonly consisted of. *Shirabyōshi* performers wore a *tate-eboshi* cap which is a kind of black-lacquered tall court cap used during the Heian period (8th – 12th cc). *Tate-eboshi* cap was previously only worn by men of a particular social status. Later they began to be worn in certain Shinto ceremonies. As to the attire, traditionally, the *shirabyōshi* dancers wore white *suikan*, a garment made of simple fabric stretched without starch. Together with a *suikan*, a *shirabyōshi* would usually wear red *hakama* which is a name for broad skirt-like trousers, although the *shirabyōshi* depicted here is dressed differently.

Typically, a *shirabyōshi* dance is performed with a sword hung at the waist. It is said that usually the swords were in white sheaths although this is not the case here. In the *surimono* in question, the sheath seems to be made of red lacquer with a deeply carved spiral-type pattern of the *karakusa* or the Chinese grass type. During the dance, the *shirabyōshi* performers are holding a *gohei* that has been mentioned above. *Gohei*, also known as an *onbe* or *heisoku*, is a wooden wand with two zigzagging paper streamers on either side. A *gohei* wand is a hand-held sign of gods used in many Shinto ceremonies. They are held by shrine maidens performing as *shirabyōshi* dancers and act as the *torimono* or the "hand-held symbols" representing the gods. Both the sword and

the *gohei* belong to such *torimono*. ⁹¹ There exists an opinion that the tradition of shrine performances in which women dress as males could be rooted in old shamanistic practices. In the history of *shirabyōshi* offered in the WikiCorpus article, it is said that when people who sing and dance to summon the gods (they are called *kannagi* or *kannabi* 巫) get possessed by the god, their genders are briefly switched. ⁹²

The name of the performance is explained as a blend of "imayo-uta" (a modern and easy song) and "so-byōshi" (simple rhythm). Gradually these musical terms became synonymous with the name of performers. Women and children, regardless of gender, were the ones who performed it the most. In the Kamakura period, shirabyōshi gradually became "an important class of courtesans as they were supported by the upper class, underwent professional training, and developed into excellent, cultured shirabyōshi performers." Female dancers and students were well trained in school and became professional performers. Through school, they were connected to the imperial court, and in that case they held rather a high social standings.

Historically, *shirabyōshi* dances will be performed on Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine Festivals on January 4. A more complete series took place on April 3 saluting the consecration of pine trees. The performance included a solo dance and 2-4-8 female dancers. The music was provided by a small instrumental group and one or two male singers. It was different from how the *shirabyōshi* dances were performed in *Kasuga Taisha* temple in Nara, Japan, where the instrumental group played a flute (*fue*), a zither (*wagon*), a drum (*kotsuzumi*), and clappers (*shakubyōshi*). In *Sumiyoshi Taisha*, however, only a solo flute accompanied the singer. Specifically, in *shirabyōshi*, it was accompanied by the singing of *waka*, a 31-syllable Japanese poem.

The print depicting the *shirabyōshi* dancer here is of a specific type. This is a *surimono*.

Surimono were prints produced on individual commissions to be presented as private gifts. In this, *surimono* were different from commercially published and marketed prints. Surimono were limited editions and were not placed on public sale. ⁹⁴ Being

https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/topics faq/surimono poems.html

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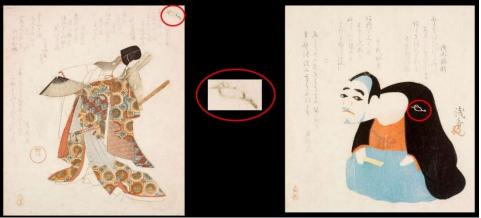
⁹¹ János Kárpáti, "Music of Female Shamans in Japan," Studia Musicologica , Vol. 54, No. 3 (September 2013): 235, 245.

⁹² WikiCorpus. © A. C. Yu https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/culture/shirabyoshi%20(literally,%20White%20rhythm).html

 ⁹³ Hardacre, Helen. "Shirabyoshi (literally, White rhythm)." n.d. Japanese Wiki Corpus. Accessed May 5,
 2022. https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/culture/shirabyoshi%20(literally,%20White%20rhyhm).html.
 ⁹⁴ John Fiorillo. Viewing Japanese Prints, Website.

privately commissioned, they differed from their commercial counterparts by their specific subject matter closely connected to the personalities or circumstances of such prints' production. *Surimono* was frequently published as announcements, commemorations, or, most commonly, new year's greetings. *Surimono* had their own formats with a small squarish form known as *shikishiban* predominating. All three examples of *surimono* at the current exhibition are of this *shikishiban* format. *Surimono* decidedly stood out for the refinement of their production. They were printed on a thicker and softer paper with extraordinary attention to detail in just everything. This referred to the perfection in carving and printing and the usage of the most luxurious pigments. Parts of the image could be printed with different saturation of pigments, "blind" relief printing *karazuri* (空摺), application of metallic dusts, etc. Very often *surimono* were inscribed by poems since prints of this type often were commissioned by poetic groups most popular in Japan during the Edo period.

It is because of their association with poetry groups that *surimono* particularly often incorporate inscriptions of one or more poems.⁹⁵ The *surimono* discussed here is an example of a poetic group commission. The nesting crane on the upright corner is a symbol for the Crane Poetry Group (*Tsuru-gawa*). One of the leaders of this group was Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751 – ca. 1839). The last poem on this *surimono*, the one at the left edge of the print, is signed by Tsurunoya.



The **nesting crane** symbol of the Crane Poetry Group. **Left**: *Shirabyōshi* dancer, by Yanagawa Yoshinobu. **Right**: Portrait of Tsurunoya Osamaru, the head of the Crane Poetry Group, by Asaka no Kasumi (current exhibition, No. 5).

In this example, understanding the relationship between the text and the image is critical because both convey a wealth of information. The visual image and the

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⁹⁵ Asano Shūgō, and Timothy T. Clark. "An Overview of Surimono." *Impressions*, no. 20 (1998): 16–37. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42598038.

accompanying poetry, known as *kyōka* ("crazy verse") witty 31-syllable waka, was conceived together. This combination of fine delicate calligraphy of multiple poems with the image is now considered the classic *surimono* style that took its shape by the early 19th century.

The print also has a round seal of the designer Yanagawa (柳川) which means "Willow Stream." A small gourd-shaped seal in the bottom left corner of the print indicates that the print was carved by an outstanding block cutter and printer Tani Seikō (谷清好). A leading ukiyo-e scholar, Roger Keyes, characterizes him as "an astonishingly gifted print maker, one of the few craftsmen who were equally adept at cutting blocks and printing them". ⁹⁶

Indeed, *surimono*, considered here, stands out for its artistic finesse. The figure of the dancer is at once ample – it takes most of the print's surface – and most subtle and graceful. The gentle bent of the head and the upper part of the body is echoed by the angle of the *gohei* wand and the curve of the sword. The gesture of the right hand raising the open fan is strong yet soft. The garments are flowing down fluently but this fluidity is balanced by the angularity of the outer colorful kimono – in both, its shapes, and its pattern. Long hair of the dancer is obviously black but is printed in lighter shade and in this it matches extraordinarily fine printing of the paper streamers of the *gohei*.



Traditional patterns used by Yanagawa Shigenobu in the Shirabyōshi surimono.

Remarkably sophisticated is the printing of all color parts of the composition.

This is true about the hues of the tan color palette used on the outer garment, the sash, the

⁹⁶ Roger S. Keyes, "Tani Seikō and his circle," Andon 72/73, 2002: 12

lining visible at the right sleeve edge, at the hem and turned over fragments as well as at the wave pattern *seigaiha* that echoes the same pattern in gray. The tan also is used for the chords of the hat and for the sword – both for chord winding over its hilt and for the carved red-lacquer scabbard. Slight modulations of the ink saturation in the poems make those printed lines rival those written by brush.

This exquisite *surimono* was designed by Yanagawa Shigenobu (1787-1832), a print designer known particularly for his *surimono*, but also as a book illustrator and painter. He was quite a prolific artist who worked in a variety of genres, including *yakusha-e* – kabuki actor images, and *bijinga* – images of beauties. Yanagawa Shigenobu was a pupil, a son-in-law, and an adopted son of Hokusai. Perhaps Shigenobu's knowledge of his teacher's artistic style affected the subtle features of the *surimono* considered here. Yanagawa Shigenobu has designed many exceptional *surimono* prints for the Crane poetic group, and many of them are at the RISD Museum.⁹⁷

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⁹⁷ RISD Publication. Surimono from Osaka and Edo: The Pumpelly Album, the RISD Museum surimono exhibition of 2008. https://risdmuseum.org/exhibitions-events/exhibitions/surimono-osaka-and-edo



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). *Random Sketches by Hokusai - Transmitting the Spirit, Revealing the Form of Things (Denshin kaishu: Hokusai manga*), Two Types of Walls. Hakuga no Sanmi at Suzaku Gate. volume 5. RISD. Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.394.5

Courtier Hakuga no Sanmi & the Mysterious Stranger: The Uncanny Flute Duet Maxton O'Connor

In this single page from Hokusai's Manga book, Volume 5% created during the Edo period, a single frame of the story of Hakuga no Sammi, or the Chinese reading of the name of Minamoto no Hiromasa, and a mystery character is presented harmoniously playing flutes in front of the Shujaku gate in the moonlight. Although printed with only black ink, this print uses lines to eloquently describe the event in great detail. From the intricate patterns of the mystery character's ropes to the perfectly presented perspective of the gate itself, it shows a great deal of the skill Hokusai used to describe gravely important detail. Line weight, stroke marks, and form all work together in simplified tandem to express this moment in Japanese historical storytelling in vivid living light. One of the main foci in this print is music, as music is an integral part of the story itself. I would firstly like to break the print down to its most fundamental portions, presenting details that are gravely important in explaining the purposes behind such detail. I will then interpret such details in an informative analysis. Lastly, I will contextualize the print and all of its components to bring the essay to its conclusion.

This double-page spread comes from the fifth volume of Hokusai Manga, or Collection of Random Sketches. Although playing music occurs on the lefthand page only, when a book is open, both pages are seen at the same time. Both illustrations are equal in size and hence in importance. Moreover, both pages of the spread share a topic since both are dominated by the most careful representation of walls. Hokusai did so deliberately and put in an inscription saying, "two types of walls." It is inscribed at the top of the righthand illustration. Since the reading standard in East Asian countries goes from right to left, one would naturally start with the illustration on the right. The wall here appears a partition on Zen Buddhist temple grounds. This is suggested by some architectural details such as the bell-shaped latticed windows and a stone platform that supports the wall but also by the figure of a cleanshaven monk. He is sweeping the premises to remove all of the recently fallen brush and debris that perhaps had fallen down from a tall tree growing behind the wall. This tree goes beyond the upper edge of the frame to suggest the image would continue if not for the size of the paper it was printed on. Receding into the

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⁹⁸ Katsushika Hokusai, "Random Sketches by Hokusai (Hokusai Manga): Vol. 5, 1812-1849," RISD Museum (Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke), https://risdmuseum.org/art-design/collection/random-sketches-hokusai-hokusai-manga-vol-5-313945

background is a true space without end. Similarly at the bottom there is a fragment of the tiled roof, and a curved-up ridgepole of a structure, laying claim that what we see is only a small portion of an ever-expanding story. Roughly above the main wall, but not extruding beyond the frame is a sculpture of a lion perched upon the roof hovering above the entire scene. This scene so eloquently expresses the vastness of the everyday. It becomes apparent that this scene is just the focus of the artist, that there is an entire world beyond the gaze of the artist. This depiction explains that real life is not a single frame or idea, but rather everywhere and always. This notion is starkly different from that of the image on the left with the space delimited by the architectural component. Regardless, the two illustrations work harmoniously together. Both depict humans within architectural settings. Moreover, both represent those humans in front of architecture, and both comment on how architecture exists as a background of human life.

The scene on the left focuses on music – the point of our interest. However, the intricate wall with the gate is also present prominently in the composition taking almost a half of the picture area and will be commented upon below.

In this image on the left attention of the viewer is commanded by two middle-aged or even elderly men, rather tall and corpulent. They are facing one another while each is playing the horizontal flute *yokobue*. The musician on the left is facing away from the print viewers and towards the other musician who thus is facing the onlookers. Both men are fully absorbed in playing music – there is an air of inspirational concentration around both.

The person with his back towards the viewers is wearing a voluminous long outer garment. It is not ornamented in any way but the fabric it is made of seems thick and stiff so that it holds well the garment's distinct and almost architectural form. The architectural quality of his garment is further expressed by the presence of the belt and the visible seams introducing the sense of geometry and reflecting its construction. The man's hair is neatly upswept, and a tall hat of a courtier is placed on top of his head. Although we don't see his face, his full dedication to playing the flute is obvious. His fingers move with ease over the instrument's holes, his cheek is rounded full of air as he is blowing, his eyes seem closed in rejection of the outer world.

The other musician has a broad face and rather a broad nose. His eyes perhaps are also closed as he is fully absorbed in playing his flute. But many features in his appearance made him contrast the musician on the left. He has quite distinguished bushy hair that merges with his full beard and similarly bushy mustache. The hat on top of his

head is unlike the one worn by the first musician – maybe it is of Chinese style. His dress is vastly different from that of the player turned away from us. It is a loose voluminous robe with no belt. Unlike the first musician's garment, its shape is much less pronounced as it is falling softly down. It is also different in that it is decorated with lines of stacked double spirals that look either embroidered or sewn over. There is an outlandish air about his appearance and his outfit that makes it difficult to categorize his origin. It is noteworthy that he is barefoot, a feature of being otherworldly.

So, who are the flutists? The one with his back to us is identified by the inscription at the bottom of the composition. He is announced as Hakuga no Sanmi (博雅 三位). His name is written in kanji (Chinese characters). The first two characters can be read either in Chinese – Hakuga, or in Japanese, 'Hiromasa;' the other two characters stand for 'third rank' and define the man's position at the imperial court. This is a well-known historical character, Minamoto no Hiromasa ((源 博雅, 918 – 980), a grandson of Emperor Daigo (885-930), and a prominent musician of Gagaku – classical Japanese music played at the imperial court. Since he wasn't designated as a successor to the throne, he was given the surname according to the established practice. Thus, he became Minamoto Hiromasa. He excelled in playing a variety of instruments, including the zither *koto*, the lute *biwa*, the flute, etc. He is credited with compiling a famous music anthology called "Hakuga no Fue-fu" (Hakuga's Flute Score); the system of music notation he elaborated continues to be used to this day. 99

⁹⁹ Minamoto no Hiromasa, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minamoto_no_Hiromasa ¹⁰⁰ Ota Memorial Museum, webpage dedicated to legend about Minamoto no Hiromasa and the demon's flute: https://otakinen-museum.note.jp/n/n6e63aa3fe315. Provided by the instructor.

Hakuga no Sanmi became known as "the demon's flute" (*oni-no fue*). The alternative story tells of Hakuga no Sanmi longing to receive instruction in lute playing from an exceedingly famous blind musician and poet, a nobleman Semimaru. He finally received this instruction after coming to the musician's hut for three consecutive nights. Here, however, obviously the story of enigmatic stranger is referred to here.

It is noteworthy that Hokusai was neither the first nor last artist to depict this scene. In the collection of the British Museum there is Tachibana Morikuni's illustrated book *Pictures of Noted Poets, also Birds & Flowers* (Ehon Oshukubai 絵本鴬宿梅), Fig. A. ¹⁰¹ It dates to 1740 and presents the same story in a similar composition, with Minamoto no Hiromasa **not** facing the viewer. Preceding Hokusai's depiction by roughly three quarters of a century, it is safe to assume that Hokusai was familiar with the Tachibana Morikuni's image. Hokusai resorts to Morikuni's image structure for his own depiction of this story. And for a good reason since putting both characters front-facing the viewer would only lessen the intensity of the two characters' interaction crucial for the story. This is all the more remarkable if one thinks about the ability of ukiyo-e artists to capture individuality of faces and of facial expressions in the kabuki theater context. As said above, here this decision certainly was deliberate.



Fig. A. Tachibana Morikuni (1670-1748). *Pictures of Noted Poets, also Birds & Flowers*. P. 26. British Museum number: 1915,0823,0.26. ¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Tachibana Morikuni 橘守国. "Ehon Oshukubai 絵本鴬宿梅.", 1740. The British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. <u>https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A 1915-0823-0-26-</u>
¹⁰² Ibid.

Interestingly, another artist that succeeded Hokusai in illustrating the same story believed this approach to be true as well. A later ukiyo-e artist, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892) included in his series "One Hundred Aspects of the Moon" a print titled *Suzaku Gate Moon: Hakuga Sanmi* (朱雀門の月博雅三位)¹⁰³ dated 1886 (Fig. B). In this design, Hakuga no Sanmi is also presented with his back to the viewer. The artist makes the story identifiable through the characters' stature as well as the garment, and more specifically, by the gate and the ambience of the surroundings. Utilizing the same compositional formula, each artist was able to render closeness between the characters without having to directly express the individual's identity visually. Such visual definition would be excessive since all three illustrations of the story concerned here have the name of the main character clearly expressed in writing.



Fig. B. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (月岡芳年, 1839 - 1892). Suzaku Gate Moon: Hakuga Sanmi. Series: One Hundred Aspects of the Moon (Tsuki no hyakushi 月百姿). No. 19 in the series. 1886. British Museum number: 1906,1220,0.1450. 104

Though the main characters present the key modes of telling the story, it is necessary to consider the architecture in which the story itself is grounded. In Hokusai Manga oftentimes the environment seems left out for the purpose of letting the main

¹⁰³ Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (月岡芳年, 1839 - 1892). Suzaku Gate Moon: Hakuga Sanmi. (Suzakumon no tsuki 朱雀門の月). Series: 100 Aspects of the Moon (Tsuki no hyakushi 月百姿). No. 19 in the series. 1886. British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A 1906-1220-0-1450 lod.

subject express its environment through its physical qualities. Because this piece is expressing a historically relevant story, the environment becomes almost as important as the characters themselves in presenting the story to the full. Because these are single prints, all the viewer has to understand from the piece must be in the piece. Being that this story takes place in front of the Suzakumon Gate, it is an integral piece of the story that can visually aid the viewer with such information as to deduce the story through detail. Suzakumon Gates were built at the southern end of imperial palaces in ancient cities in Japan. The cities in which these palaces were built were set up within grid systems in accordance with the cardinal directions, having the southernmost gate be the most important and the most fortuitous. According to geomancy at the time, the north was seen as the most dangerous, so the palace was almost always positioned in the north of the city as a protective force. The story itself is woven into this practice, and the viewer may see this through the illustration.

The gate is comprised mainly of straight lines creating some form of orthographic perspective that pushes the figures forward. But just this contrast between straight lines and curved lines isn't enough to describe the gate. It includes vastly different patterns that add to the recognizable factors of the gate. Inlets of fine patterns of interlocking circles unfold from posts and wall dividers right behind the figures. The gridded walls fall back behind, suggesting the entrance that is the true component of the gate falls slightly behind the characters.

This print uses imagery decisively to lend the viewer the most accurate understanding of the story. Previously we discussed the architecture as not only a call towards the actual historical significance of its presence in the story but a mode in which it places the characters in a moment of solitude as well. In saying all of this, I am trying to point out the selective nature of Hokusai's work, that great detail is used only when necessary.

Beyond this though, the architecture of the gate serves as a stark and rigid contrast to the characters that operate in front. It expresses form through perspective, through a rigid system of the grid and wood-carved patterning that pushes the characters vastly to the front.

Another peculiar detail is the way how the architecture is presented in its total break in the middle of the page – how it fades out to nothing. This detail serves as another note towards Hokusai's selective use of detail. There is no question whether or

not the background is a gate, as what is shown eloquently brings that point across. What Hokusai has chosen to do is to end it there. What has been accomplished served its purpose. To continue the scene further would only add unnecessary detail considering the fateful encounter of the two musicians occurred on the full moon night and the soft moonlight is perhaps shown dissolving the details. Hokusai's choice to fade the gate into the rest of the background serves to bring the two characters closer in importance to each other through their collective solitude. The void of the piece brings their relationship within the story to the forefront of the viewer's understanding. There is no need to point the attention elsewhere, as the story is wholly expressing the importance of the two characters enacting the music.

What is most beautiful is that the multitude of details accentuates that music is this image's main purpose. All points of reference and detail meet to contextualize the presence of music.

This print is incredibly rich in its deliberate touch. Hokusai took a enthralling legend of ample historical significance with previous depictions in mind and created an even more deliberate and fascinating scene. By calling towards only what is necessary while also nodding towards what had already been completed in previous depictions, Hokusai was able to refine and redefine the story to such a distinguished form.

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Part V. MARTIAL MUSIC: THE CONCH SHELL & MILITARY DRUMS



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). Random Sketches by Hokusai - Transmitting the Spirit, Revealing the Form of Things (Denshin kaishu: Hokusai manga). Display of Courage and Vigor. Vol. 9.

RISD Museum, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 31.394.9

MARTIAL MUSIC & DISPLAY OF COURAGE AND VIGOR IN HOKUSAI MANGA

Yuhi Chang

Eleven rather stout figures of military men, neither young nor athletic, are depicted by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1840), one of Japan's greatest ukiyo-e artists. This very detailed, precise, and humorous depiction appears on a double-leaf spread from volume No. 9 of his fifteen-volume encyclopedic collection of random sketches known as *Hokusai Manga*.

In the image all men except for two fully clad warriors in the low half of the left-hand page are putting on their samurai armor. ¹⁰⁵ Some are struggling harder than others. Obviously, putting on an armor of many parts is a long and multistep process. The artist's choice of moments of this process makes it almost like a step-by-step instruction of how to put on the armor. The artist starts with the undergarments at the top left of the right page, then slowly depicts each step of putting on elements of the armor until the viewer reaches to the bottom of the left page. There two men have decided to play the drum and a conch shell. The drum and conch shell are played in the military as signals. The interesting part is how the conch shell is called a *horagai* (aka *jinkai*) and is often used to signal an impending battle. This makes the print into what looks like a manga in the present day meaning of the term as it is almost like a story.

The drum in the print with the wood like patterns on it makes it look like it is created from wood, not being painted over with woodgrain pattern. The stand being made from posts of wood and woven cord infers the drum is used more for practical military purposes rather than the more elaborately decorated ceremonial drums. Drums in the war are usually used to help with marching but in this case the drum posts being embedded into the ground would say otherwise. With that in mind the drums are probably used to call the attention of the troops which fits better especially since it is depicted alongside the conch shell. The text in the top translates to "we are about to go to war" which ties all of this together almost like a title of an image that depicts this scene.

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¹⁰⁵ Maybe all characters in this composition represent the same person at the consecutive stages of action, however it has been decided to discuss the figures here as a group of individuals.

GETTING READY FOR THE BATTLE

The narrative of the book spread, if there is one, starts at the top of the right page. Of the three corpulent figures the one on the left is shown putting on a *fundoshi*. Fundoshi are the equivalent of what we would consider underwear, and a version of it is worn today by sumo wrestlers. The figure in the middle is shown donning a pair of suneate. Suneate are Japanese greaves (shin guards) which usually consisted of vertical armor plates made out of iron or leather. Those plates were connected using either hinges or kusari (mail armor). The figure on the right is depicted putting on a manchira (満智 羅). Manchira is a ko-gusoku (small armor) made for guarding the area around the shoulders. It is typically made out of iron, cloth, and chains. The two figures below them are similarly representing the next few steps in putting on the armor. The figure on the left is depicted with his back facing us and it is hard to tell what he is doing as it is hidden from our view but the fact that they are in a sitting position indicates a high likelihood of him putting on a piece of armor that has to do with his lower body. Another explanation that can also fit is his posture makes it look like he is crossing his arms and might indicate him taking a break as putting on armor was a rather demanding task and him being on the corpulent side may have struggled a bit harder with it. The figure on the right is putting on a pair of kote, which are armored sleeves. These are usually created with cylindrical shaped fabric with mail and pieces of steel plates attached to it. At the bottom right of the right page is a figure putting on his left waraji (sandals). His posture indicates the difficulty of sitting bending down when almost fully dressed and shows him using a tawara (rice bale) as a stool to help him put on his waraji.



Right: Step-by-step instruction on how to put the samurai armor. Edo period book.

The figure to his left is depicted putting on a *haidate* which is armor in the shape of an apron created to protect the thighs. Moving on to the left page, at the top there is some text.

Below that are two figures. The figure to the right is shown putting on the $d\bar{o}$ (breastplate) while the figure to the left is shown sitting on a *tawara* while putting on a kote which indicates that there are at least two separate figures depicted as the *kote* was already seen being put on. As has been already mentioned, at the bottom of the left page, the two figures are shown playing a *taiko* (drum) and a *horagai* (conch-shell trumpet).

Not only the accuracy but the human nature of how the military men are depicted shows Hokusai's expert knowledge of samurai armor and testifies to his deep understanding of the pain points associated with the process. It is also interesting as it can potentially be used to pinpoint which clan in particular Hokusai is referring to in his illustration. There existed an official way of putting on the armor, but it differed slightly from clan to clan with many of the details considered to be a secret.

MUSIC IN MILITARY CONTEXT

Illustration of the music topic takes about two thirds of the left-hand page underscoring its significance in the military context. The figures being depicted as rather corpulent reflects upon their status as musicians. Both the roundness of the barrel drum and the fact that wind instruments such as *horagai* takes a lot of breath. This paired with the roundness that the musicians are depicted in, reflects the role that musicians play in war where the sound they produce must bellow and pierce the other ongoing sounds on the battlefield. In the case of the print, the musicians are playing their instruments to signal the start of the operation as communicated also by the already mentioned text at the top of the page stating that they were about to go to war.

Horagai and taiko are essential instruments used by Japan during conflict. They are not only used to set rhythm for marching and to signal strategies but also to boost morale. To accomplish this, these instruments must have the capability to be both heard over the battlefield and create distinct rhythm or tones. These instruments are seen in other ukiyo-e prints such as *Great Battle in Outer Hyōgo*. The Battle of Minatogawa (1336) by Utagawa Kuniyoshi where it depicts the taiko drum and the conch shell along with a bell being used in the middle of the battlefield.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861). Great Battle in Outer Hyōgo (Hyōgo no omote ōgassen no zu): The Battle of Minatogawa (兵庫表大合戦之図). MFA, 11.41071a-c. 106

Another print depicts the story of Sakai Tadatsugu (1527-1596) illustrated by Migita Toshihide (1863-1925), a later ukiyo-e artist, a student of famous Tsukioka Yoshitoshi to be discussed below. Legend places the taiko drum in the center of the events. The story goes that Sakai Tadatsugu had come to Tokugawa Ieyasu's aid when his army had suffered a defeat at the hands of Takeda Shingen by beating a taiko in the Hamamatsu Castle. In doing so, he made Shingen think the drums were there to welcome



Migita Toshihide (1863-1925). Sakai Tadatsugu 酒井忠嗣. Series: Eighteen Acts of Glory (Meiyo juhachi ban). The British Museum. 107

MFA, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/472054/great-battle-in-outer-hyogo-hyogo-no-omote-ogassen-no-zu
 British Museum, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/472054/great-battle-in-outer-hyogo-hyogo-no-omote-ogassen-no-zu
 British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1906-1220-0-1532

home the vast army of Ieyasu. As curator's comments of the British Museum explain, Takeda Shingen unsure of the strengths of Ieyasu's remaining army didn't attack the castle but camp for the night near it where Ieyasu's forces ambushed Takeda's army and defeated it.108

The horagai conch shells were often used to signal strategies during combat and are depicted in some ukiyo-e prints. Examples include a triptych by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Kusunoki Masashige and His Men Making Straw Dummies to Trick the Enemy into Exhausting Their Arrows. As the title suggests, there was a strategy used by Kusunoki Masashige (1294-1336) in which stray dummies were made and place in the middle of the battlefield during combat to cause the enemy to waste their arrows on them. This strategy was employed upon the sounding of the horagai which is depicted at the front and near the center of the print of the busy panoramic battlefield composition.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861). Kusunoki Masashige and His Men Making Straw Dummies to Trick the Enemy into Exhausting Their Arrows (楠正成藁人形造敵箭奪図 Kusunoki Masashige wara no ningyô no tsukuri). 1857. Robinson: T341. Private collection.

The *horagai* can be used to signify the start of a battle like the print by Hokusai depicts but it is often also used to signify the end or closure of a battle. This is shown in a print called *The Moon at the Shizugatake* by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi.

¹⁰⁸ British Museum, curator's comments, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A 1906-1220-0-<u>1532</u>



Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892). *The Moon at the Shizugadake* (Shizugatake tsuki). Series: One Hundred Aspects of the Moon (Tsuki no hyakushi). Number 67 in the set. 1888. British Museum. ¹⁰⁹

In this print, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) is shown blowing a horn to signify the victory against Shibata Katsuie in the historic battle at Shizugatake (1583). These among many other prints depicting the *takio* and *horagai* have propelled these instruments into a legendary status amidst the battlefields of Japan.

IN CONCLUSION

Music was omnipresent in Edo period Japan – we see an almost infinite variety of situations where music is being played in ukiyo-e prints studied for our virtual exhibition or displayed at the RISD Museum in the exhibition "Striking Chords."

Martial music discussed in this essay is highly specific. Hokusai shows this by portraying his military musicians in the action of playing but providing no context. Thus, the artist makes the viewer focus on musical properties of the instruments as such. As always, Hokusai's images appear at once visually keen and playful – the effect achieved here by how he makes the shapes of the battlefield musical instruments and of the warriors "resonate" with each other.

¹⁰⁹ British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A 1906-1220-0-1462

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After Totoya Hokkei, 1780-1850. *Cockerel on Drum Grown with Ivy,* 1890's Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic pigments *Shikishiban*: 21 x 18.1 cm (8 5/16 x 7 1/8 inches) RISD. Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.367

THE CALENDAR DRUM, ROOSTER, & GOOD FORTUNE

Milo Tomizawa and Zhiying Shi

This small print has almost a square shape (7"x8") known as *shikishiban*, a format predominantly used for privately commissioned prints, the surimono, as is the case here. Almost the entire space is taken by a white silhouette of a big and somewhat disheveled rooster perched on a red barrel drum, *o-daiko* (大太鼓). Around the drum and the rooster, darker and lighter green ivy leaves on a vine are climbing. Obviously, the scene is happening outside, but where exactly is not clear. The background is that of scratched gold over the dull green. In the top left area, there is a poem inscribed in black ink. The name of the poem's author is written along the left edge of the print. Below it, also along the print's left edge there is a small white frame with red borders. Inside the frame the name of the print's designer is printed in two vertical lines - Aoigaoka Hokkei (葵岡北溪), one of the artistic names of Totoya Hokkei (1790-1850).

The composition is an extreme close-up. Thus, the shapes appear as intriguing abstract configurations in addition to being representational. This lends this image quite a compelling visual power. The rooster seen from above with its feathers bristling and the tail bending to a side looks like a huge, inverted comma with jagged contours. Delicate lines are embossed all over the rooster's body rendering a characteristic wavy pattern of feather distribution. No tonal variances are present in the white. The rooster perches on a red drum. Its scaly and thin feet splay out from underneath, countering the weight of its tilted head. The bird's legs are spread wide, and the talons are slightly hooked in order for it to balance on the round and smooth body of the drum. The bird's head is cocked to the side, while it is making eye contact with the viewer. The tilt of the rooster's head results in its comb and wattle lying flat with both also forming spiky outlines. Two hues of red color were used to print the comb and the wattle here. In this manner its grainy texture is believably captured. Both, the embossing of the bird's feathers and the choice of two hues of red for the caruncula - the comb and the wattles - are done with an expert knowledge of the bird's anatomy and other physical features.

In size, the drum is commensurate with the bird. This is a big drum of the type known as *o-daiko*. The *o-daiko* has a convex wooden body and two tacked heads. It is usually set on a crate and although we don't see it here, the drum is in a horizontal

position as if on a crate. Such drums are played on either the skins or the rim with two blunt sticks. ¹¹⁰ The barrel part of the drum is red with a wavy pattern that imitates woodgrain and seems to be a common design to be used on drums. Another print on the current exhibition – a double-leaf from volume 9 of Hokusai Manga - shows a warrior beating an *o-daiko* drum with two blunt sticks, as described above. The body of the *o-daiko* in Hokusai's print is also decorated with a wood-grain pattern.

The skin of the drum looks to be attached with metal rivets, which border the circumference and encircle two navy blue reptiles. It is not clear what these reptiles are. Only one reptile is fully visible. It is covered with golden lines rendering its scale. Its body, legs, and tail look very powerful and evoke an image of a dragon, but the head is small and of a simple oval shape. Centered on the skin of the drum is a crenellation-type design with consecutive inner circles of red, white, blue, green, and red colors. In the very center, a circle of desaturated olive-green marks the background for a "sacred gem" or a "flaming jewel" — Chintamani in Sanskrit and $h\bar{o}ju$ (宝珠) in Japanese. It is described as "a tapering, ringed pearl surmounted by flames. In a non-religious context, it appears as an auspicious symbol." Its shape invited comparison with an eye, its red iris peering up and observing the rooster. A heavy under-eye bag of navy punctuates the bottom lid.



Center of drum skin – flaming jewel in the center, calendrical marks on crenelations.

Each of the thirteen visible crenelations of the outer rim are lined with a white border. Every alternating scallop contains numerical kanji – starting from the right and moving counterclockwise they read " \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} , \mathbb{E} .". They are counting off alternating "long" months – 1 (January), 3 (March), 5 (May), 7 (July), 10 (October), 12 (December).

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¹¹⁰ William Malm. Japanese Music and Musical Instruments. Charles E. Tuttle Company. Rutland, Vermont, Tokyo, Japan. 1959, 48.

¹¹¹ Merrily Baird. Symbols of Japan. Rizzoli International Publications, NYC, NY, 2001. P. 225.

Such clandestine inclusion of month numbers in ukiyo-e print design was a measure to go around the governmental restrictions on annual lunar calendar publications, the right that was granted to only certain publishing houses. In the early 18th century, there started to appear prints with hidden signs for long months of 30 days (dai) and short months of 29 days $(sh\bar{o})$ as well as the signs for the intercalary month once in three years.

Surrounding the two forms – that of the rooster and the drum – is an arrangement of seventeen ivy leaves (*tsuta*) in varying shades of green. They transition from dark green to very light green to almost grayish green with some leaves combining different shades in most subtly printed gradation. It is an important printing technique known as *bokashi*. Ivy is a winding plant and as its vine is climbing, the leaves readily turn with their glossy deep green side or a much lighter and dull reverse. The artist rendered this feature of the ivy plant with sensitivity.

References to the ivy have a long history in Japanese literature and the arts. In the *Tales of Ise* there is a hero who finds a narrow passage nearly impenetrable because of the ivy growing there. Thus, representation of ivy can symbolize decay, a remote loneliness, and the peace of solitude.¹¹²

This symbolism of the ivy takes us closer to the symbolism of the entire scene. Depiction of a rooster on a drum is an allegory of peace of ancient Chinese origin. If the drums placed outside the cities for complaints of the citizens or the military drums calling the army to battle are silent, the country enjoys peace and prosperity. This traditional combination of the images of a rooster nesting on a drum is defined by the term *kankodori*. Thus, the scene carries auspicious meaning. Auspiciousness of this composition has one additional aspect. Since the rooster is one of the Zodiac symbols, representation of roosters can be used as a greeting for the New Year of the Cock or could be presented to the individuals born in the year of the cock.

According to the same book "Symbols in Japan," the cock is the tenth of the twelve zodiac animals of the Far East and is regarded by the Chinese as an embodiment of the Five Virtues. In Japan, the rooster has been associated with courage and a martial spirit, reflecting its use in cock fights. The rooster also has religious significance for the Japanese. *Kojiki*, one of Japan's earliest chronicles of myths and history, tells that a rooster was brought to the cave where the sun goddess, Amaterasu no O-mikami, had

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¹¹² Ibid., p. 85

hidden herself, and the rooster's crowing tricked the goddess into believing the day could have started without her. This was one of the steps that helped to lure the sun goddess out and restore light to the earth. Rooster is a sacred bird in Shintoism and can be seen in Shinto main shrines, for example, in Ise Jingu in Mie Prefecture or Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture.

It is now important to remember that the print under consideration is a *surimono*. As privately commissioned prints, *surimono* usually were designed and published as a limited edition for an occasion – in a way comparable to a greeting card. The majority of *surimono* bear poetic inscriptions. Sometimes *surimono* prints were commissioned by poetic groups - such are two other *surimono* in our exhibition [Nos. 5 and 10]. This print doesn't seem to be associated with a poetic group but there is a poem in the upper left quarter of the print. It is transcribed on the Ukiyo-e Database Portal of Ritsumeikan University¹¹³ and was tentatively translated by a classmate, RISD Graphic Design student, Monet Fukawa. Monet suggested that the poem could mean the following:



Detail of the *surimono* with the text of the poem.

From afar, they [the roosters] sing together the first chorus at dawn or
Echoing from afar, I hear the roosters syncing together

Monet also noted that the author of the poem's name, 瑞堂暁鴉, translates to the "morning crow."¹¹⁴

Monet's casting light on the meaning of the poem underscores the significance of

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¹¹³ The poem is transcribed as: 「千さとまてうたひあはせつ初八声 瑞堂暁鴉」「正三五七十十二」https://www.dh-jac.net/db/nishikie/results-big.php?f1[]=MET-

DP123625&f9[]=%2A&f11[]=1&&enter=portal&lang=en&skip=0&singleskip=0

¹¹⁴ Monet Fukawa. Private correspondence.

the interaction between text and image on *surimono*, triggering additional associations.

Another distinctive feature of the *surimono* prints is the extraordinary luxury and refinement that can be seen in its each and every feature. *Surimono* were printed on thicker and softer paper with the best pigments, often with metallic dusts, and with the application of a wide range of advanced and sophisticated techniques. In the present case all these traits are present. The blind printing or *gaurfage* is known as *karazuri* or "empty printing" in Japanese. Here it is applied on the rooster's body with remarkable artistry. Golden dust is used to mark the background around all the objects – is this a hint on the sunlight at dawn? This certainly is the time when the rooster crows. This time is also mentioned in the poem and is present in the poet's name, not to mention its relevance to the myth of Amaterasu no O-mikami.

It is also worth mentioning that specific as the *kankodori* composition is, it belongs to one of the major ukiyo-e genres - the *kachō-ga* (花鳥画) or "pictures of flowers and birds." In the *kachoga* genre representation of a small fragment of nature was appreciated for how it conveyed the spirit of nature in addition to the motif's decorativeness and symbolic meanings. This *surimono* combines all these features with remarkable mastery.

Totoya Hokkei who designed this surimono was a print designer, book illustrator and painter from Edo. His biographical notes tell us that he was a fishmonger, that he studied painting with an artist from the Kanō School, an official painting school for the military class. Totoya Hokkei later became a student of Katsushika Hokusai. He worked in various genres and formats but *surimono* was his forte. He produced more *surimono* than other Hokusai's students. It is said that the rough estimate of his *surimono* production is about eight hundred prints. His works enjoyed the high esteem of ukiyo-e lovers. In the beginning of the 20th century some of his designs were reprinted. Is this the case with the current imprint as the label says "after Totoya Hokkei"? If this is indeed the case, it only attests to the unfading glory of this artist.

This *surimono* print, with its rich pigments and balanced composition, its rich with symbolism and history serves as a perfect example of how music can bring together deep and significant cultural layers. The calendar drum, once used to announce grievances, has long since been used for its intended purpose, and now resonates only to the steps of a rooster, the embodiment of virtue and courage.

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¹¹⁵ The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Prints. Ed. Amy Riegle Newland. Amsterdam, 2004.V. 2, p. 497

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DP123625&f9[]=%2A&f11[]=1&&enter=portal&lang=en&skip=0&singleskip=0

Part VI. MUSIC IN ANNUAL OBSERVANCES & SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS



Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 1786-1865

The First Month: First Dance of the New Year. Series: During the Twelve Months.

Publisher: Tsutaya Kichizo. 1854.

RISD. Gift of Marshall H. Gould, 30.039.12

STAGE, DANCE, & GOOD LUCK INVOCATIONS IN EDO JAPAN

as seen in ukiyo-e triptych by Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III)

Hanna Suros, Yisheng Yuan, Jiayun "Carina" Zhang, Zizheng "Roye" Zhang

I. QUICK OBSERVATIONS: THE FIRST DANCE OF THE YEAR

Hanna Suros

In a large room two young and beautiful women are dancing to live string music played by the similarly good-looking female musician. This event is represented on an ukiyo-e woodblock printed triptych designed by Utagawa Toyokuni III or Kunisada (1786-1865), one of the leading ukiyo-e artists of his time. The image is so full of details that it is necessary to look closely and analyze those.

Observation will unfold from right to left, the direction of writing in East Asia. The woman on the right is playing shamisen whilst sitting on a platform stage. A large bookrest is placed in front of her. Behind her is a large painted panel featuring a blossoming plum tree. The shamisen player is dressed in a blue kimono patterned with white, pink, and yellow peonies. The blue of the kimono creates a tonal gradient, the top being much darker than the very light blue bottom reminiscent of the sky transitioning from night to day. On the side of the kimono, we see a fragment of a bamboo flower cart also holding a bouquet of peonies. The musician wears a plain red layer underneath her ornate outer garment. The red of this inner kimono pools onto the floor behind her camouflaging with the carpet of the same color. The front board of the stage is also light blue that is patterned with roundels shaped by peonies and karakusa, the Chinese grass vine. The bookrest of black lacquer is likewise adorned with peonies applied in the sprinkled-picture technique maki-e. Two tassels are hanging down from it attached with metal rings. Even though we do see this bright yellow color throughout the panel with the kimono and even the detailing of the plum tree in the back it is the most striking on the book rest because of the color combination.

The figure in the middle panel is one of the two performing the "spring horse" or "harugoma" dance. She is standing tall with her arms extended upward, holding a horse puppet on her left hand and the cloth reigns in her right. She dances in front of the painted sliding walls, *fusuma*, decorated with small pine trees. The dancer wears a kimono with a white and purple striped pattern. In the white of the pattern there are

plover birds flying diagonally. This dancer also wears a black sash with bright yellow swirls which is the same color combination as the bookrest in the shamisen player's panel. This black-and-yellow color arrangement moves the viewer's eye through the print. The red layer underneath the dancer's outer garment is patterned with the *asa-no-ha* design of connected hemp leaves. The same pattern is seen on the handkerchief underneath the puppet. On the dancer's head a purple cloth is tied in a bow under her chin. Clusters of blue cherry blossoms embellishing her hairdo are sticking out from underneath the headscarf.

On the sliding walls behind her there are hanging tassels similar to those on the bookrest. Here the tassels are attached to an orange and yellow shape which are the finger-catch *hikite* $(\beta \mid)$ that serve as the handles to open the screen.

The dancer of the leftmost panel wears the same costume and dances in front of the same pine tree lined screen as the above-discussed dancer from the central panel. The key difference with this dancer is that she is crouched down and holds her hobby horse's reins more tightly than the other. Both dancers' robes billow with their movements suggesting that the performers are in motion.

There are repeating cartouches on each panel as well as the markings related to the print's production, such as the seal of the carver, the publisher, the censorship seal, and the seal of the year. The left panel is the only one that holds a circular *toshidama* cartouche with the title of the series and of this triptych. It is conspicuously located in the upper left corner of the composition.

Meanings of the observed elements and aspects of this triptych are discussed in the following chapters of this essay.

II. SPACE: ZASHIKI & THE PONY DANCE IN LATE EDO PERIOD JAPAN

Yisheng Yuan

The depiction of the interior is very profound in this print since it serves as a scene of action. The floor the two performers are dancing on is laid with planks in front of a fusuma painted with small evergreen pines. The shamisen player sits on a raised platform shown on the rightmost panel. The platform is upholstered with a scarlet carpet. Behind the shamisen player, there placed a *tsuitate*, a single-panel portable partitioning screen. A plum tree in full blossom is portrayed against a light, off-white, creamish background. It is decorated with small square pieces of golden foils called *kirihaku*. The sprinkled lacquer bookrest for the text in a *joruri* performance and the platform side

below the carpet have peonies with *karakusa* in style associated with the Ichikawa lineage¹¹⁶ of Kabuki actors. Every element, including the shamisen player's surroundings, composes a part of a micro theater scene that one might suggest this event was planned toward in the first place.

The pronounced rectangularity found in this print is the entrance for viewers' eyes. The sliding doors, the planks of the floor, the podium, and the viewport of the print all take shape in rectangles. Normally, rectangles afford strong implications for symmetry. But if we look at this print's composition macroscopically, the placement of the shamisen player and of the podium, as well as the inclusion of the tsuitate screen instead of having the entire wall of fusuma sliding doors, and the slant arrangement of floor planks -- all these elements break the symmetry that this composition could possibly offer. This arrangement is perhaps rooted in that the Japanese believe in the beauty of nature, which is the core of their architectural culture. They always contrive to create architecture as a painting of nature. 117 Nature is predictable yet unsystematic. Japanese recognize beauty as multifaceted, so is nature. Natural configuration proceeds in their growing and living pattern that can be analyzed and studied, and relevant scrutiny is nothing rare to be found in Japanese art and philosophy. It is comprehensible how nature performs certain routines, such as falling and withering, though, to the Japanese, comprehension is a manifestation of nature's inevitable limits. ¹¹⁸ It is proposed in this essay that limitations as such are hosted in rectangles and wood construction. Even though nature sometimes exposes clues to its configurations, it can never be defined. The individuality and accident that take over the aesthetics of nature are what is truly vital to the Japanese. ¹¹⁹ For instance, the plum trees and peonies represented in this print are independently symbolic and important. They hold asymmetrical meanings that are not fathomed by the expected measure of patterns or rules. In Japanese architectural philosophy, the symmetrical arrangement is considered an intellectual intrusion and artificial correction of nature, corresponding to humans' comprehension of nature, which is regarded as the limits of nature. The human interruption is rude and even profane, breaking the balance between humans, nature, and the gods. ¹²⁰ Human reasoning, in this case is not accepted by the Japanese. However, it is not implying that there should be no

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¹¹⁶ Cleveland Museum of Art, https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1943.5

¹¹⁷ Ramberg, Walter Dodd. "Some Aspects Of Japanese Architecture," p34-47. The MIT Press on behalf of Perspecta, 1960. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566890

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

order in Japanese architecture, just like there is also order in nature that humans cannot deny. We are still seeing elements of symmetry scaffolding the architecture and the triptych, which can already be read as an epitome of Japanese architecture. We notice the symmetry is revealed by the rectangle motifs and the identical depiction of the two dancers' appearances, but its power has no extension more than that. In the rightmost panel, with the shamisen player, the stand, podium, and the plum-tree *tsuitate* — these properties of accident strive to stop the symmetrical invasion and resume the picture into a more irregular and asymmetric presentation.

The asymmetry, however, has taken further roles here than its function in aesthetics and philosophy. Wood is the primary material used in Japanese architecture in accordance with their pursuit of realizing nature in architecture, but the materiality bounds the span. As a result, the idea of illusionary space and extension is crucial. To bring this effect, emptiness is one of the main strategies used in Japanese architecture. 121 First of all, by identifying the sliding doors, the floor planks, and the podium, which present a rectangular containment that upholds the entire scene, one might recognize that this event is perhaps taking place in a private zashiki, a room style popular in the Edo period. Zashiki is one unit of the parlor that composes the entire complex of a traditional Japanese house. In the room, the furnishing is eliminated to the minimalism. 122 As one could already see from the print, the impression of room's vastness is created — the first signal of the resemblance to a stage setting — broadness and absence of objects that are not relevant to the performance. Moreover, asymmetry also offers a notion that what is in front is beyond one's vision because one cannot foresee the patterns; one cannot see an end to the configuration. As nature is not defined, there is no sense of completion and definition of the room. The design of Japanese architecture suggests "more out of the scene."123 The print here also indicates an incompleteness, or rather, inability to finish. At both ends of the print, we can perceive an abrupt cut. The spaciousness renders it impossible to include every aspect into the triptych. The cropping sliding doors, the unfinished lines of the floors, and the cut-off of the tsuitate and the podium all have directed viewers' eyes out of the print to an imaginary space. It renders a vibe that the dance is taking place in an enclosed section, but the asymmetry breaks the left and right, suggesting an illusionary expansion of the space. The print is like the eye of the audience

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¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

back then – it is only able to capture a snapshot, a finite view of a stage in the theatre. The usual lack of furnishing here is compensated for by having the sliding doors *fusuma* decoration, floor planks, a podium set, and a *tsuitate* at the back. These injections of standardized shapes and sizes introduce the order that was previously mentioned to hold the otherwise infinite asymmetry, ¹²⁴ dedicated to nature's inherent order.

The *fusuma* and *tsuitate* both offer a direct depiction of nature, following the Japanese regular intention to emulate natural scenes in architecture, and this intention is even more explicit here. On the *fusuma* are pine trees on mountains. Dusk is strengthened by the *bokashi* gradient, on top where the slight dark blue infiltrates downwards as night falls. This natural design is something that would be applied in an actual theater setup to recreate a dramatic scene on stage as if the dancers and audience are in the midst of the pine trees, adding to space extension and also immersing them in the performance. However, the sliding doors in themselves are partitions between spaces. They are an opening to continue the space. That being said, the sliding doors not only hold the natural background in order to echo the essence of the architectural philosophy but also hold the dance performance: the doors are closed to seclude a space for the performance, in other words, a theater stage.

Sometimes, sliding doors in a dwelling might be open to a garden, where now — in this print — is a painting of pine trees. Including the plum tree on the *tsuitate* and peonies on the side of the podium and over the bookstand, these plants are felicitous symbols for different annual observances in Japan. Pine and plum trees are for the first month of the new year. A Heian-period ritual, pulling up the roots of small pines (*komatsu*) was an auspicious gesture to pray for long life, lengthening the year. Originally a routine of the royalty gradually applied among the common people and ended a New Year practice of all, placing a pair of small pines at the gate of the house (*kadomatsu*). The gate pine practice is somehow reproduced in this print by having pine trees on the sliding "doors," reflecting this private event of *harugoma* performance is indeed a celebration of good fortune for the New Year following the observance, which is also connected to the theater.

Kao-mise, the annual face-showing performance for Kabuki theater's new cast of actors, incorporated special New Year observances. On the first day of the New Year, there would be an opening ceremony that featured New Year dances. *Harugoma* was on

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¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Haruo Shirane. Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons, Columbia University Press, p153-174, p.242.

the list, performed by young actors and accompanied by musicians. We almost see a small-scale model of such a celebratory event in the triptych. After the theater performance, actors would continue to make New Year calls at the teahouses, considered a crucial component of Kabuki culture. These calls brought potential new economies to the theater, but there was a factor of family tradition beyond generating economic benefits. 126 Kabuki actors behaved as a family, and as a unit, they shall make New Year visits. It was the Confucian ideology of a society established around family relationships manifested by the Kabuki world that every ceremonial observance was undertaken not only in the usual sense of family but also in society as a whole. 127 If we see that as an upward transformation from family into society, then for this print, we can acknowledge a harugoma dance performance in a zashiki, within a household, as an opposite yet bearing the same essence. A theater in society is a theater to a family and vice versa. Harugoma itself is indisputably an essential part of the Kabuki theater custom. Even though the characters in the print are exclusively young women, it is the ukiyo-e convention that any event might be portrayed as conducted by women, contributing to the bijinga genre. If we continue to argue that the zashiki-stage is still too far away from that of a theater, the teahouse calls will help justify the case. It is reasonable to assume that the Kabuki actors would perform those merry dances when they paid visits. As a piece of removable furniture in a zashiki, the podium could also be a temporary raised platform, nothing challenging to set up in the teahouses for the visits of Kabuki actors. One more detail in the print that can't be missed is the lacquered stand on the podium that is used to hold the joruri script. The joruri of harugoma is nothing new. There were theatrical puppet plays in which *harugoma* was an event of the narrative. In 1782, at the *kao*mise¹²⁸ play of a Tomimoto-style joruri — narrative singing with shamisen accompaniment— the actors chanted a *joruri* piece called "Cheating in Love in January," subtitled Two Manzai Seduce with Erotic Words: The Flowery Phrases of a Pair of Harugoma Performers." ¹²⁹ In this dance drama, harugoma performers used the props in the shape of horseheads that we spot in the print. Evidently, in a zashiki, as

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¹²⁶ Barbara E. Thornbury, THE CALENDAR OF KABUKI' in 'Sukeroku's Double Identity: The Dramatic Structure of Edo Kabuki,' "p 3–16. University of Michigan Press, 1982. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.18683.5.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Kao-mise or "face-showing performance" was an annual event to introduce a new cast of actors.

¹²⁹ Gerald Groemer. "Portraits of Edo and Early Modern Japan: The Shogun's Capital in Zuihitsu Writings, 1657–1855," p. 282. Springer Singapore, 2019.

displayed in the print, we find almost the same crew of performers one would meet for such a *joruri* play in a theater.

Zashiki itself, both physically and philosophically, is unto its one entirety, separated from other adjacent neighboring rooms. The ceiling, hung wall, floor curves, bottom rails of sliding partitions, and binding pattern of floor planks are independent, even isolated, and exclusive to the zashiki they are located in. ¹³⁰ It is a physical sense of containment. It adds to the creation of a micro stage, which is independent on its own, offering the audience everything solely about the performance. The fusuma, a portal to views hidden behind it, is also like the wings of a theater stage. They conceal the boundaries, which are the limits to the containment of a zashiki, like a theatre stage. ¹³¹ Furthering the idea of extending the space, exactly like how the pine trees on the fusuma function visually, they hide corners and borders of the stage to present the audience with the best condition to imagine and be drawn into the show, to a world the performance wants to construct. Therefore, it comes back to the primary Japanese philosophy of rejecting the limits of the architectural space, which are initially produced by symmetry but later resolved by asymmetry, in its greater representation, nature, and embracing the infinite possibilities of it.

We should admit that carefully articulated asymmetry is expressed in the form of architecture. And it is an image, a composition, an ukiyo-e print that Kunisada presents us with. Looking into the interior of the print is looking into the interior of real architecture. In the most Japanese sense, the works of architecture are determined to be a creation on a two-dimensional surface. By obscuring the line between the dimensions, Japanese artists and architects tend to cling to the visual and eyes rather than to the tactile and body. When we see substantial architecture being transferred into a painterly image, we can feast on all the senses with one glance. Then we could also let a grand theater dwell in a private *zashiki*. It is nothing different than a group of people gathered together to chant their praise of life and the New Year at any period of history.

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¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ramberg, Walter Dodd. "Some Aspects Of Japanese Architecture," p34-47. The MIT Press on behalf of Perspecta, 1960. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566890

III. VISUAL CODES OF THE AUSPICIOUS SPRING

Carina Zhang

This triptych by Utagawa Kinusada from the series "During the Twelve Months" is dedicated to the first month of the year and depicts the first dance of the New Year (mōshun 孟春). The triptych consists of three vertical large format ōban prints are joined together in one composition so that in the resulting image the width is larger than the height. Thus, the triptych captures a wide interior space with three dominating figures inside, one on each print. This essay explores the print by analyzing its depiction of beauty, the decorative and symbolic function of patterning in dressing and staging, and the relationship between the print's formal aspects and Japanese music culture that combines art, nature, and customs.

Reviewing the Details

On the very right panel, on a raised platform upholstered in scarlet carpet a musician is playing shamisen and chanting as she sits on her knees in a position known as *seiza* (正座) in front of the lectern. The side of the platform is adorned with roundels formed by peonies and the *karakusa* – the so-called Chinese grass vine. Dressed in a flower-patterned *furisode*, she is playing a shamisen and chanting. A *makie* bookrest is placed in front of her, and behind her is a single panel screen *tsuitate* with the depiction of blossoming plum trees. On the corner of the stage, a lidded ceramic cup marked by the *toshidama* sign is placed.

Two beauties on the left, dressed in plover bird patterned *furisode*, ¹³³ are performing a hobby horse dance on the wooden plank platform in front of the *fusuma* (sliding doors) decorated with images of rolling hills grown with young pine trees. Both dancers control the horse-head shaped puppet-like props by putting the left hand into the horse head's opening and using the right hand to grab a scarf-like rein attached to the bridle on the horse-head puppet. ¹³⁴ The dancer on the right lifts her puppet high above her

¹³² "Twelve Months Series. The First Month: First Dance of the New Year." National Diet Library Digital Collection, 2021.

 $[\]label{lem:https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1310170?tocOpened=1&itemId=info\%3Andljp\%2Fpid\%2F1310170\&_lang=en.$

g=en.

133 Library of Congress, Utagawa Toyokuni III, *First Dancing Practice of the New Year*. Japan, 1854. https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_07357/?st=gallery.

134 Ibid.

head, tilting the puppet and swinging the rein-scarf to her right. The dancer on the left squats on one knee and moves the horse's head face down.

Pattern as a Music-like Visual Element

A prominent feature of the print is its lush patterning based on natural elements. The dressing presented in this performance is cohesive to the central theme of auspicious beginning of the year. The female figures wear furisode, a long-sleeved kimono donned on special events by children and unmarried young women. 135 The square-cut design is an essential feature of the kimono that makes it significantly different from the western dress. While western apparel includes lines that follow the contour of the body, the kimono's rectangular format emphasizes the surface of the dress instead of the shape of the body beneath. As a result, the dress becomes a canvas for placing decorative patterns. 136

Cultural and Symbolic Significance Behind the Patterns

The function of the patterns is far more profound than merely decorative: the visual rendering of the performance is a symphony of auspicious symbolism. Most of the designs are abstract representations of nature and carry symbolic meanings connected to the New Year and thus inviting good luck or, in other words, being auspicious. It is noticeable that the symbolic messages come from people's careful observation of nature: plants' growth patterns, water movement, and the seasonal behavior of creatures.

While *chidori* (plover bird) on the white stripes of the dancers' garments represents winter, ¹³⁷ it is shown next to the spirals on the dancers' *obi* sashes that represent the flowing water. ¹³⁸ Chidori (plover or (rarely) sanderlings) are small birds that live in flocks near water. Since the bird cry "chivo" is a homonym for chivo 千代' meaning "1000 generations," it has become an auspicious symbol associated with longevity. Such association of *chidori* with long life can be found in the Japanese classical poetry anthology Kokinwakashū 古今和歌集 (early 10c) and was particularly well-known in waka 和歌 poems written during the Heian and Kamakura periods. The

¹³⁵ "Furisode." The Art Institute of Chicago, 2022. https://www.artic.edu/artworks/150739/furisode.

¹³⁶ Nomura, Shojiro, Tsutomu Ema. *Japanese Kimono Designs*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006, 1-2

^{137 &}quot;National Diet Library Digital Collection, 2021.

https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1310170?tocOpened=1&itemId=info%3Andljp%2Fpid%2F1310170& lan g=en.
¹³⁸ Ibid.

chidori motif can be found in varied media such as textiles, lacquer, metalwork, and paper design, from the 10th century onward. It was often transformed into an almost abstract pictorial figure during the Momoyama and early Edo periods. The combination of the plover bird's motif and the waves or sand beaches (*suhama* 州浜) is popular: the water where birds live is flowing, conveying spring's coming.¹³⁹

The red undergarments are not left blank: they have a repeating six-sided geometric design asa-no-ha (hemp-leaf) pattern. This design has six identical diamonds arranged around a central point. Although used throughout ancient Asia, its resemblance to the hemp plant is only recognized in Japan. The asa-no-ha is found on the clothing of Buddhist statuary of the Heian through Muromachi periods. This design was particularly popular during the Edo period, when it was promoted by a Kabuki Theater actor, Iwai Hanshirō 岩井半四郎 (1776-1847). Since the hemp plant grows vigorously, fast, and straight, it often was used in children's garments to encourage their healthy growth. Asa-no-ha design's simplicity enables various interpretations, making it continuously popular. In the applied arts it was used in woodworking, weaving, papermaking, and dyeing. 140

On the right panel, the beauty's sleeves have a pattern of tree peonies that is known as the "King of Flowers," symbolizing good fortune, courage, and glory. ¹⁴¹ Such a motif also appears on the *makie* bookrest and the side of the stage. What's different is that the peonies are now interlocked with *karakusa*. The combination of peonies and *karakusa* is called *botan karakusa* 牡丹唐草. It appears on stone sculpture and crafts of Chinese Tang dynasty, and lacquerware, textiles, and ceramics of Song dynasty. Before coming to Japan, the peony pattern was popular for it carries prosperous meaning. The motif quickly spread in popularity and generated various transforms during the Heian and Kamakura periods after its introduction to Japan. ¹⁴²

As a species with a strong life force, the evergreen pine trees in the background are symbols of prosperity and longevity.¹⁴³

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^{139 &}quot;Chidori 千鳥." 渥美財団. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. Accessed April 23, 2022. http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/c/chidori.htm.

^{140 &}quot;Asa-No-Ha 麻の葉." 渥美財団. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. Accessed April 23, 2022. https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/a/asanoha.htm.

¹⁴¹ Jez. "Flower Symbolism in Japanese Culture: Japanese Flowers." The Japanese Shop, March 16, 2022. https://www.thejapaneseshop.co.uk/blog/flower-symbolism-japanese-culture/.

^{142 &}quot;Botan Karakusa 牡丹唐草." 渥美財団. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. Accessed April 23, 2022. https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/b/botankarakusa.htm.

¹⁴³ "Hanging Scroll; Painting: British Museum." The British Museum. Accessed April 2, 2022. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A 1913-0501-0-315.

Another cold-resistant plant, *ume* (Japanese plum), is represented in full blossom on the single panel partition behind the musician – to the right of the fusuma sliding walls. People in Japan celebrate the New Year with *ume* as it is the flower blossoms in the coldest season. It is symbolic meaning derives from Chinese culture, in which the plum has long been a symbol of ideal Confucian values. The knobby trunk and delicate flowers that bloom during the coldest time of the year carry meanings of longevity and renewal amid transience for Chinese and Japanese literati. As a result, the plum is included among the *saikan sanyuu* 歳寒三友 – three friends of wintry seasons, and the *shikunshi* 四君子 - four gentlemen. It is

On the musician's kimono there is also a flower cart known in Japanese as hanaguruma (花車文). The cart laden with bouquets of flowers symbolizes abundance, and happiness. 146

Other less apparent symbols unfold as we gradually decode the print in a larger social and cultural context. The concentric circles and semicircles of golden-yellow against the black of the dancers' obi sashes are known as *kanze-mizu* water pattern associated with the Kanze School of Noh performers.¹⁴⁷

Additionally, perhaps the lucky number "3" in Japanese culture is hidden in the placement of visual elements in this print. The image consists of three panels and three figures from a general view. The background door shows three handles in minor details, and the musical instrument *shamisen* consists of three strings. Number "3" represents creation, different time stages (past, present, and future), and the tertiary relationship between body, mind, and spirit. In verbal counting, the number "3" is pronounced as "*mitsu*", which sounds similar to the word "奎" (honey), a metaphor for prosperity. ¹⁴⁸

While each pattern is made of identifiable icons such as birds and flowers, when condensed together, they create a visual effect quite similar to that present in western arts.

The variety of hues and values also create different textures on the surface. While some patterns are purposefully repetitive, there are variations in the color and direction of

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¹⁴⁴ Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl 07357/?st=gallery.

¹⁴⁵ "Bokubai 墨梅." 渥美財団. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. Accessed April 23, 2022. https://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/b/bokubai.htm.

^{146 &}quot;Passing Rose & Hanaguruma." https://www.lawa.org/art-program/past-exhibits/2019/passing-rose#:~:text=Hanaguruma%20is%20a%20Japanese%20word,emblem%20in%20bridal%20kimono%20patterns.

¹⁴⁷ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/65617.

¹⁴⁸ Tanuki. "Unlucky and Lucky Numbers in Japan." https://wanderingtanuki.com/unlucky-and-lucky-numbers-in-japan/.

the single component of patterns. The circular flower arrangements that decorate the side of the musician's stage rhythmically vary in color temperatures. Altogether, the repetition and variation of patterns are strategically used to enhance the musical quality of visual elements.

The triptych conveys the integration of listening and seeing: Japanese music reaches perfection when complete with visual aspects. ¹⁴⁹ The coherent theme of the dress, interior, and dance show the performers' careful consideration of the visual companion of the music. Correspondingly, music functions as an essential accompaniment or endorsement of beauty in Japanese visual culture. ¹⁵⁰

Both the formal and symbolic aspects of the triptych show another critical characteristic of Japanese culture: the harmonious connection between humans and nature. For example, the distinction between interior and exterior is eliminated by presenting natural motifs in the room. People's experience of nature also inspires the pattern designs on costumes and the auspicious meanings attached to them. ¹⁵¹ From the cultural symbols, we see people's desire to bring certain perspicuous spring features, such as newness, strength, and flourishing, to their lives. Just as Toyokuni III valued the imperfections of the beauty' manner and put them into the print's design, musicians in the Edo period added natural sounds to their musical compositions. The *shamisen* presented in this print is a perfect example of an instrument that produces sound. There's no strict difference between natural and musical sounds in the Japanese music sense. ¹⁵² The wooden floor in the print also triggers the viewer's imagination of hearing the dancers' feet stepping, producing musical sounds through dancing.

In a nutshell, this triptych's visual and musical aspect is complementary. The fondness for nature is shown in the design and the lively depiction of the figures according to their individual characteristics. Patterns, as visual codes, carry both decorative values and the optimistic hopes of people. Nature, visual elements, music, and people are aesthetically and culturally interconnected. The print celebrates the idea of integrating art, nature, and life.

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¹⁴⁹ Tsuge, Gen'ichi. "Raiment of Traditional Japanese Musicians – Its Social and Musical Significance." The World of Music 25, no. 1 (1983): 55–69. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43560877.

¹⁵⁰ Shephard, Tim, and Anne Leonard. The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture. Routledge. Accessed April 2, 2022, 124.

¹⁵¹ Yuriko Saito "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature", The British Journal of Aesthetics, Volume 25, Issue 3, SUMMER 1985, 239, https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/25.3.239.

¹⁵² Kikkawa Eishi (1987) The musical sense of the Japanese, Contemporary Music Review, 1:2, 85-94, DOI:10.1080/07494468400640271

IV. CONTEXT/CONTENT: HARUGOMA DANCE & NEW YEAR OBSERVANCES

Hanna Suros; Roye Zhang

The Pony Dance and its Seasonal Significance

Hanna Suros

The "harugoma" (spring pony) dance depicted in the print is one performed for the New Year which coincides with spring according to the lunisolar calendar. 153 The puppets that are used refer to young horses who have been in shelter for the winter and are free for the first time in their life when spring comes around. White horses specifically were thought to get rid of bad spirits through an observance on the seventh day of the first month where the emperor would be presented with a white horse. 154 Traditionally, *harugoma* performers would go door to door during the New Year season with horse props either placed on their hands or around their waist, offering a ceremonial performance to invoke good fortune for the rest of the year. This dance became very popular and well known. It even featured in a kabuki play which tells the tale of the Soga Brothers where they disguise themselves as *harugoma* performers to be able to carry out the revenge. 155 This performance at the beginning of the play serves as a prayer for the brothers' success in their mission. In the kabuki calendar during the opening of the new season as well as the spring opening which begins the first month of the New Year the kao-mise program (meaning "face-showing" and serving for introduction of a new cast of actors for the season), includes dance-dramas which show a more elevated and narrative version of the street performance. 156 Kabuki actors would celebrate the new year with observances and traditions as a group and would perform harugoma as well as other New Year dances with a musical accompaniment. They would also perform these ceremonies in tea houses after their own celebrations, which may be where the action portrayed on this print takes place as this might be suggested due to the makeshift stage and screens with seasonal decor. Usually, these performers would not be women, however it is common for ukiyo-e to represent these roles taken by beautiful women thus categorizing such depictions as works of the bijinga genre.

¹⁵³ Shirane, Haruo. *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*. Columbia University Press, 2012, p153-174. ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.242.

¹⁵⁵ Thornbury, Barbara E. "THE CALENDAR OF KABUKI" in *Sukeroku's Double Identity: The Dramatic Structure of Edo Kabuki*, p 3–16. University of Michigan Press, 1982.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

The Pines and the New Year

Hanna Suros

During the Edo Period it became a custom for wealthier and upper-class families to hang scrolls according to the month and the season. For the first month it was common to include pine trees, plum trees, and bamboo, which are all included in the print. The plum tree is one that celebrates the end of winter, the waiting of spring, and hope for what is to come. It blossoms slowly instead of all at once. The plum tree behind the shamisen player is shown fully in bloom therefore it is clear that spring has arrived. During the Heian period (8th – 12th cc.) it became a ritual to pull up small pines and collect seeds during the Day of the Rat, which would be the seventh day in the first month of the year. Though at first this ritual was practiced only within the imperial court it eventually spread to commoners which began the New Year Observance by placing two pines at the entrance of one's house known as the gate pines (*kadomatsu*). Pine was not only associated with luck but also immortality and endurance because of how the plant thrives during the harsh month of winter. Though these plants are usually depicted in winter scenes in Japanese art, there are no signs of snow which signifies the end of this season and the start of a new one.

Toyokuni iii's *Harugoma* **Triptych** – **Further Comments on Details** Roye Zhang

Utagawa Kunisada's "First Dance of the New Year" is a triptych from the series "During the Twelve Months." The name of the series is written in the cartouche on the top left corner of the print. The shape of this cartouche is called *toshidama*. It consists of a hollow circle with abstract and solidly colored element on the top right. Derived from the cursive form of the character for the "year" and meaning "year's jewel," this round shape with a distinctive thickening of the frame on one side was considered an auspicious symbol and became an emblem of the Utagawa School of ukiyo-e artists. Here the red field with the text is surrounded with the black frame.

The texts inside of the cartouche provide context of the image portrayed by this print. Along with the title of the series in the center of the cartouche, on the right it says

¹⁵⁷ Shirane, Haruo. *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*. Annual Observances, Famous Places, and Entertainment," p153-174.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 156

¹⁵⁹ Graebner, Horst. "Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III) Signatures and Seals." The Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III) - Project, 2021.

mōshun which translates to the *beginning of spring/the first month*; on the left the inscription reads *odorizome* meaning *the first dance*.

The triptych includes illustrations of three beauties participating in the scene. Each figure occupies a panel of the triptych. Therefore, every panel is a complete image with a main figure in the center of the corresponding panel. The image reads from right to left according to the Japanese writing system. The leftmost panel presents a woman playing a *shamisen*, a traditional Japanese string instrument. The *shamisen* player sits on the top of a raised platform. The front side of the platform is printed with circular flower motifs. The platform is framed with black-lacquer edges, and its top is upholstered with scarlet carpet creating a strong contrast between cold and warm tones. Each print has a group of five seals at the bottom. On the top of the platform, a music stand, and a lidded cup are placed in front of the *shamisen* performer. The music stand is lacquered in black with bright golden floral motifs along with two brown tassels hanging from its back. A small cup printed with a blue circular toshidama sign is placed next to the stand. The main figure of the rightmost panel gracefully sits behind the music stand holding her shamisen. The fingers of her left hand elegantly press the strings on the shamisen's neck. The performer slightly turns her face to the left of the print, and her eyes look down, aiming at the sheets placed on the top of the bookstand. A one-panel partitioning screen tsuitate decorated with a depiction of bokumai, an ink plum tree, surrounded by small cut golden squares is placed behind the *shamisen* performer.

Moving on to the middle and rightmost panels, two beauties are dancing to the melody of *shamisen*. The dancer in the middle panel stands on the stage with one foot off the ground lifting the bottom of her garment. Both of her hands are up in the air. Meanwhile, the dancer in the right panel is in a half-kneeling position that juxtaposes with the other dancer to create a dynamic composition. The dancers are attired in the same garments. The outer garment of each dancer consists of purple and white stripes with bird motifs printed diagonally. This bird pattern appearing against the organic shape of the garment adds visual tension. Under the outer swinging-sleeved kimono called *furisode* worn by the young, the lining reveals its red and white geometric motifs of stylized hemp leaves. Tightening the garment altogether, a black waistband with golden circular motifs of whirlpools along with a red rope and yellow textile wraps around dancers' waist. The dancers wear headscarves that match the color of their robes, and their hair is embellished with blue artificial hydrangeas, pink paper, and what appears to be a rolled straw mat to support the bun. Both of the dancers' left hands are dressed in a

horse-head puppet. The puppets present the head of a black and white horse; its black mane is tied into small "ponytails" straight from the top of its head down to the neck. Each horse puppet wears a yellow and red harness with a gilt plate near its mouth. A piece of flowy brown textile with white stripes on one end is connected to the harness of each horse puppet. The brown fabric pieces are held in the right hands of the dancers. The horse puppet also wears a piece of cloth around the neck trimmed with small gold jingle bells. The color and the motif of the cloth on the puppet matches the lining of the *furisode* of the dancers.

This scene depicted by Utagawa Kunisada is an artistic representation of the traditional Japanese New Year amusement called, harugoma, which literally translates to "spring pony." *Harugoma* is celebrated on January 14th of each year, ¹⁶⁰ and the spirit of harugoma is to wish for health and prosperity in the following year. 161 In the print, the harugoma performers are dancing on a light-yellow stage in front of the fusuma sliding door. According to paper Sukeroku's Double Deity by Dr. Barbara Tornbury, a researcher in Japanese language and studies, harugoma is a part of the New Year observances hosted by theaters to kick off the spring season as the theater production opens the day after the harugoma ceremony, 15th day of the first month. 162 Harugoma dances are performed by young actors and musicians wearing formal dresses for the ceremonial event¹⁶³. Therefore, the setting for the print designed by Kunisada is perhaps a depiction of harugoma staged in a theater for entertainment purposes. The most playful element of the image is the horse puppet worn by the dancers. The figures of horses displayed in the print have significant meaning in Japanese religion and traditional culture. The horses in harugoma dances represent the horses that are ridden by Japanese deities, kami. 164 The horse puppets consist of two baskets: the head and the tail. 165 The head basket as well as the horse mane of the puppet are made of Japanese paper, and the facial features of the horse, such as eyes and nose, are painted onto the paper. 166 A rein made of a scarf is attached to the head basket of the horse puppet and held by the dancer in Kunisada's print.

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¹⁶⁰ Moriarty, Elizabeth. "The Communitarian Aspect of Shinto Matsuri." *Asian Folklore Studies* 31, no. 2 (1972): 107. https://doi.org/10.2307/1177490.

¹⁶¹ The Library of Congress. "Twelve Months by Toyokuni: First Dancing Practice of the New Year." https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668771/.

¹⁶² Thornbury, Barbara E. "THE CALENDAR OF KABUKI." In *Sukeroku's Double Identity: The Dramatic Structure of Edo Kabuki*, 8. University of Michigan Press, 1982.

¹⁶³ Thornbury, "THE CALENDAR OF KABUKI", 8.

¹⁶⁴ Moriarty, "The Communitarian Aspect of Shinto Matsuri", 107.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 109.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

V. CLOSING REMARKS

Yisheng Yuan, Roye Zhang

Lastly, in each panel, five seal prints reveal administrative details. The seal that says "寅四" shows the time of the print production. The character "寅" indicates the year of the tiger and "四," the fourth month. The circular seal with the character "改," "aratame," or "examined" is the censorship seal indicating that this is an officially examined print. The line shape of an ivy leaf under a triple-peaked mountain and a black solid dot under the central peak is the seal of the publisher Tsutaya Kichizō. Lastly, the yellow rectangle that says "彫工庄治" (horikō Shōji) means "carver Shōji," a credit to the block carver. Another smaller toshidama cartouche of elongated shape filled with light red color and placed among the technical seals bears the inscription "Toyokuni-ga" (豊国画), picture by Toyokuni. One could think that implied is artist Toyokuni I. Still, it was clear to his contemporaries that it was a work by Toyokuni III, one of Toyokuni I's most talented students. Extended three-panel compositions, visual complexity, and intensity of color scheme were features characteristic of Toyokuni III. Additionally, unlike Toyokuni I or Toyokuni II, Toyokuni III often enclosed his signature in the toshidama cartouche.

Ultimately, in this triptych, Kunisada depicts a lively scene of the new year celebration with three elegant beauties. Paying full attention to the details, Kunisada not only portrayed three vivid and graceful performers but also introduced the Edo culture to the modern viewers through the presentation of interior design, fashion, and ceremonial rituals. This print is both an artistic expression of the traditional culture and custom and also an appreciation of the material world where common people are able to enjoy art and music.

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Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige), 1777-1835. Signed: Gosotei Toyokuni (後素亭豊国画) Inset: (koma-e コマ絵) by Utagawa Kunihiro 国弘, student of Utagawa Toyokuni II. Elegant Figures of the East < Aligned with > Twelve Signs of Zodiac: Snake (Tsuchinoto). 1845 – Year of the Snake RISD. Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1409

On Culture Codes of Toyokuni II's

Elegant Figures of the East, Twelve Signs of Zodiac: Snake Alex (Jihao) Zhu

Elegant Figures of the East <a ligned with > Twelve Signs of Zodiac: Snake is one of the ukiyo-e prints from the series Elegant Figures of the East <a ligned with > Twelve Signs of Zodiac designed by Utagawa Toyokuni II (1777–1835), an ukiyo-e painter and print artist. He was a pupil of Toyokuni I and his adopted son. After the latter's death in 1826, Toyoshige formally became the head of the school and started signing his work as Toyokuni II. Toyokuni II is known for prints of actors and beautiful women - bijin (美人) 167 .

Produced around 1843-1847, *Elegant figures of the East, twelve signs of zodiac:*Snake is a 15 by 10 inches print that depicts a beautiful young lady and contains a separate frame with the illustration of a snake in wisteria branches. The half-length portrait of a beautiful young lady takes most of the lower-left part of the print. She is dressed in three layers of kimono (着物). The outside kimono is adorned with a pattern of multiple blue clematis flowers, tessenka (鉄線花)¹⁶⁹ in Japanese, a symbol of sweet bondage and integrity.







Tessenka (鉄線花) – clematis flower, common decorative motif in Japanese art.

This flower pattern is placed against the background of the purple and light orange arare-ko-mon (霰小紋)¹⁷⁰ or the hail pattern, which is the design of irregular small and large dots as if in a shower of hail. The middle blue layer visible at the collar opening is adorned with the pattern of white $k\bar{o}mori$ (蝙蝠) – a bat that is a widespread symbol of auspiciousness and prosperity. The innermost layer of clothes bears the pattern of sakuragawa (桜川)¹⁷¹; this pattern consists of yellow sakura flowers, symbolizing spring,

¹⁶⁷ A Japanese term which literally means "a beautiful person"

¹⁶⁸ A traditional Japanese garment and the national dress of Japan.

¹⁶⁹ Stands for Clematis florida (Asian Virginsbower). They have broad leaves and achene.

¹⁷⁰ The design of irregular small and large dots as if in a shower of hail.

¹⁷¹ The pattern of sakura (cherry blossoms) floating in running water.

softness, kindness, and acceptance of the transience of beauty. Shown floating on top of the blue-dyed fabric with the white whirls of the pattern of *kawa* (river, stream), it appears as symbol of continuity and future.









Left. Arare-komon (霰小紋) – the hail pattern. **Center**: kōmori (蝙蝠) – a bat **Right**: sakura flowers in water.

In addition to the exquisite and elegant clothing, the hairdo of the lady in the print is in beautiful traditional Japanese *nihongami style* (日本髪). Specifically, her hairdo here is yuiwata (結綿)¹⁷² style with silk crepe fabric wrapped around the chignon. This was a popular hairstyle for single females in the Edo-era.

The beautiful lady is looking down in the lower-right direction, adjusting — with left hand — the nail-shaped picks tsume (爪)¹⁷³ on her right hand. The players of koto (箏), the horizontal harp, played with tsume picks that they attached to the thumb, the index finger, and the middle finger — this is what the beautiful musician is shown doing on the print considered. Economic as the image is, there is still another detail indicating that the woman is a koto player. With the visual hint on the bottom right corner—a large black rectangular area which is a representation of a typical black lacquer koto case, it can be inferred that the young female is a koto player. Most likely, she is sitting and preparing for the performance.

Above the beautiful musician, at the top-right corner, in the blue frame with white whirlpool design of *uzumaki-mon* (渦巻文)¹⁷⁴, is an inset, also known as *koma-e* (コマ絵). Within this inset, a yellow snake climbing over the vines and among the clusters of blue-and-green *fuji* (藤)—Japanese wisteria, a seasonal plant that is associated with the spring. This inset is created by Utagawa Kunihiro (1816-1835), student of Utagawa Toyokuni II. Kunihiro's signature can be found at the right edge of the inset within the frame.

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¹⁷² A hairstyle from the latter half of the Edo period; in it, the hair is wrapped around with a cloth made of *chirimen* (縮緬) silk crepe fabric.

¹⁷³ The nail-shaped picks for playing the *Koto*–Japanese zither.

¹⁷⁴ Whirlpool pattern, symbol of life and energy.

Besides the two dominant visual components, there are many other visual elements that introduce important information. Right above the black shape of the *koto* case are various markings associated with the print's production. There is the artist's signature: Gosotei Toyokuni (後素亭豊国画). There is also a round censorship seal *kiwame* (極) and the publisher seal *Sen'ichi* (泉市) in an elongated rectangle.

On the top left corner of the print next to the abovementioned inset with the snake is the title of the print. It consists of three inscriptions, seven characters altogether. Each inscription is surrounded by the decorative frame of *toshidama* (年玉)¹⁷⁵ cartouche. From right to left, these three cartouches read "Elegance," "Eastern figure" (meaning, chic of the capital city which was called "Eastern Capital"), and "Twelve Signs of Zodiac".

This incredibly delicate print not only vividly depicted a graceful female musician, but also transmitted crucial cultural references. Originating from China, the twelve signs of zodiac represent a traditional classification scheme based on the lunar calendar that assigns an animal and its reputed attributes to each year in a repeating twelve-year cycle. The zodiac traditionally begins with the sign of the Rat, followed by Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. As the Chinese zodiac is derived according to the ancient Wuxing (五行) theory, ¹⁷⁶ every sign is associated with five elements with relations, among those elements. These relations are that of interpolation, interaction, over-action, and counteraction. They are believed to be the common law of motions and changes of creatures in the universe. Different people born under each animal sign supposedly have different personalities, and practitioners of Chinese astrology consult such traditional details and compatibilities to offer putative guidance in life or for love and marriage. Specifically, snake worship in China has a long history and rich connotations. In Chinese mythology, the creator of humans – Nü Wa (女 娲) and the creator of the heaven and earth – Pan Gu (盘古) all have the body in the shape of snake. The dragon, which is the Chinese nation's sacred symbol, is formed by the sanctification of the snake in Xia Dynasty (ca. 2070-1600 BCE), the first dynasty in the entire Chinese history. ¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, in ancient Japan, as in most primitive

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¹⁷⁵ The trademark of Utagawa school. This is a symbol of a New Year gift, and its shape is derived from the cursive form of the character for "year" - *toshi*.

¹⁷⁶ Usually translated as Five Phases, is a fivefold conceptual scheme that many traditional Chinese fields used to explain a wide array of phenomena, from cosmic cycles to the interaction between internal organs, and from the succession of political regimes to the properties of medicinal drugs.

¹⁷⁷ Liu, Jixing. "The Cultural Code of the Snake Zodiac Sign." Shanghai Enterprise, no. 3 (March 2013): 91.

societies, beliefs regarding the potencies of the snake (*hebi*) evolved indigenously. Then, with the influx of Chinese culture, more complex views of the snake were adopted, and the Japanese elaborated on these, further enriching their storehouse of beliefs concerning the serpent. ¹⁷⁸ In Japan, snakes have been revered as a god, a messenger of a god, or a creature that brings a divine curse when a snake is harmed, or a particular natural site is disturbed. These strong beliefs have discouraged people from harming snakes and disturbing certain habitats associated with a snake god. It is noteworthy that this print was published in the Year of the Snake, 1845.

The Chinese and Japanese cultural associations with the snake were further enriched with development during the Edo period of the cult of Seven Gods of Good Fortune (Shichifukujin), one of whom was a modification of the Indian Goddess Sarasvati, Benzaiten. Benzaiten was revered as a deity of "everything that flows," first of all music and water, knowledge, and good luck. Her association with water accounts for her being paired in Japanese mythology with a snake-bodied Shinto deity. Benzaiten was extremely popular in Japan. Numerous temples were dedicated to her, and she was often depicted as a beautiful woman playing a string instrument and an implication of a snake's presence. In the spirit of pleasure-loving Edo period culture, Utagawa Toyokuni II depicted this young lady as a personification of Benzaiten. Shown as a musician, she is divinely beautiful, and the snake is included in the composition in a smart way. What's noteworthy is that instead of representing a timeless deity, the artist shows the goddess as an icon of contemporary fashions, including the skill of the *koto* playing. Music skills were paramount in the art loving Edo society

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¹⁷⁸ Merrily Baird, Symbols of Japan, Rizzoli International Publications, New York, NY, 2001, p.161



Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige), 1777-1835.

Benzaiten of the Shinobazu pond, first Day of the Serpent.

Publisher: Nishimura Yohachi. 1820s.

RISD. Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1162.

Benzaiten of the Shinobazu Pond, the First day of the Serpent

Nina Hong

Two beautiful and stylish women, with complex hairdos and wearing ornate garments. appear to be at a party at a restaurant. They are on the second-floor gallery overlooking a pond with a bridge and mountains in the distance. One woman is standing while the other is sitting on the floor and holding a shamisen – three-stringed lute-like instrument. These women are depicted on a polychrome woodblock print *nishiki-e* by an ukiyo-e print artist Toyokuni II. His signature together with the censorship seal and the mark of the publishing house are seen in the right lower corner of the composition. This artist will be briefly introduced below. In the upper right part of the print there is a title cartouche that says: *Benzaiten of the Shinobazu Pond, the First day of the Serpent*. The title defines the occasion for celebration and the place of the event. Celebrated is the first day of the serpent which is closely related to Benzaiten, goddess of music and knowledge, water, and fortune – of all that flows.¹⁷⁹ The print from the collection of the RISD Museum is only a righthand panel of a triptych, but it served as a gateway for an in-depth discussion of a very important seasonal event in Edo period Japan. The essay will consider the entire tripartite composition.



Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige, 1777-1835). *Picture of Benzaiten of the Shinobazu Pond, First Day of the Serpent* (Shinobazu Benzaiten Hatsu-mi no zu). Gallery Ōno, blog. ¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Further discussed in Baidurjya Madhav's paper Exploring Benzaiten, in this volume

¹⁸⁰ For the image see Gallery Ono, blog: https://www.galleryonoblog.com/2018/08/blog-post_56.html

Observing the triptych right to left, there are a total of six women, two in each panel. The right panel depicts one woman standing and one woman sitting. With closer inspection, you will notice a toothpick in her mouth as she leans towards the women in the middle of the whole piece. The woman who is sitting has a variety of objects surrounding her. She has an elongated teapot most likely for sake or another alcoholic beverage, a parcel of tissue paper, a shamisen and plectrum, and an amulet. All of these items contribute to the atmosphere of celebration. The instrument suggests that this woman has advanced music skills.

The panel in the middle seems to be the central focus as women of both sides lean towards the middle panel. The middle panel is the densest in the number of objects depicted. It includes figures of two more women, a table filled/topped with many dishes, and rather a packed landscape. Let's first look at the table. Based on famous celebratory foods, it can be speculated that one dish is *chirashi-zushi* and another whole cooked red sea bream. *Chirashi-zushi* or "scattered sushi" in English is a common dish served on the Doll's Festival. *Chirashi-zushi* include purposeful ingredients such as: shrimp, lotus root, and beans. The shape of the shrimp symbolizes longevity and good health while the red is meant to ward off evil. The holes of the lotus root are said to have a 'good outlook' and good foresight of the future. Beans are called '*mame*' which can also mean "considerate". By eating the beans, girls are supposed to grow up with a good personality. ¹⁸¹ As for the *tai*, the red sea bream, its name rhymes with the expression *medetai*, meaning "happy." The vivid red color of the fish and its beautiful shape are meant to bring good luck to the participants of the celebration. ¹⁸²

Next to the table, on the left, is a small bowl with three floating cups. This basin is called a *haisen*. The insufficiency of cups is purposeful as they are meant for sharing. Drinking from the same cup was common as it was believed to create unity, mutual understanding, and closeness among members. The exchange of sake cups was called $kensh\bar{u}$. The presence of sake plays an important role in the celebration as it contributes to the joyous atmosphere at the event.

The left panel represents two waitresses. They are wearing matching aprons with either a cherry blossom or some sort of five petaled flower. One is bringing in more food as she enters carrying the tray with dishes, the other is kneeling as she offers smoking

¹⁸¹ Omura, Yuto. "Chirashizushi (Scattered Sushi Bowl) - Sudachi Recipes". Sudachi Recipes.

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¹⁸² "Red Sea Bream | Highlighted Japanese Ingredients - Japanese Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Food - Japan External Trade Organization". 2022.

accessories. This smoking set is called a *tabakobon*. It traditionally features a *hi-ire*, a small vessel to hold charcoal for lighting the pipe, and a *haifuki*, an ashtray that is usually tubular and made out of bamboo. These women are going to smoke *kiseru* pipes. The stem of the *kiseru* smoking pipes were made of bamboo while for the mouthpiece and the tobacco cup metals were used, such as brass or silver. Kiseru's length measured around 8 to 10 inches. This scene depicts the moment that can be described with the term *ippuku-suru* meaning relax and "have a puff." Guests would be offered the *tabakobon* before tea, becoming a custom and connecting to Japanese culture. Smoking among women during the Edo period was quite common and fashionable for social events. 184

All women sport hairstyles of the chignon type and are wearing layered patterned kimonos with large and ornate obi sashes. The woman on the right wears a *yoko-hyogo* hairstyle or a "sideways- hyogo", where the hair is split into two buns that represent the wings of a butterfly. The musician is wearing a *kirimaemage*. This print shows traditional Edo period hair decorations – *kanzashi*, or an ornate two prong hairpin, $k\bar{o}gai$ or a solid bar-type piece that holds the hair up, and *kushi*, a comb.

All women are fashionably dressed. Many are wearing textiles in checks and stripes which was a sign of urban chic – quite expected for women partying in Edo, Japan's then capital.

As we know from the title cartouche mentioned above, his shrine that the restaurant is overlooking is located in Shinobazu Pond in the heart of Edo (now Tokyo). The lanterns attached to the eaves of the gallery where women have gathered say the restaurant name, Tochigi. The location of the restaurant is excellent as it shows the waterfront and the expansive landscape. Particularly important is the temple at the left end of the island – this temple is dedicated to Benzaiten.

In 1625, the Edo shogunate had the Kan'ei-ji temple built here as a counterpart to the most important Heian period Enryakuji temple located on the summit of Hieizan Mountain to the north of Kyoto and overlooking the Biwa Lake. In Biwa Lake, a famous Chikubushima Island is dedicated to Benzaiten. The founder of this Kan'ei-ji temple, Jigen Daishi, thought that Shinobazu Pond in Edo could be considered a counterpart to Lake Biwa. Thus, the island in Shinobazu Pond could be interpreted as an equivalent to Chikubushima Island in Lake Biwa. Hence, it would be a perfect location for a temple of

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 $^{{\}small 183\ The\ Kyoto\ Museum\ of\ Traditional\ Crafts,\ \underline{https://artsandculture.google.com/story/kiseru-pipe-the-kyoto-museum-of-traditional-crafts/EQXB-U7lkMqkLQ?hl=en}$

¹⁸⁴ Shoten, Tanigawa Seijiro. "Kiseru Pipe - Google Arts & Culture". Google Arts & Culture.

Benzaiten. So, the temple was built. ¹⁸⁵ It is usually called Bentendō, or a "the hall of Benten," which is a shortened version of Benzaiten's name. In the beginning, the island in Shinobazu pond was accessible only by boat, but later a stone bridge was added on the east, making it possible to walk to it. Shinobazu Pond became a popular attraction both because of its natural beauty and as a center of worship of Benzaiten, goddess of music and good fortune. ¹⁸⁶ Popularity of this scenic and sacred spot is rendered in the print – it can be inferred from the bridge filled with travelers and multiple buildings hiding in the groves. With further inspection, the elegant cranes will be noticed. Not only do they contribute to the environment but symbolize longevity that people are wishing for.

The location is not only beautiful but essential to the celebration of Benzaiten and the first day of the Serpent. As the goddess of all things flowing, Benzaiten is often celebrated near a body of water in the presence of music as people wish for fortune. The first day of the serpent, which is on the third day of the third month, was traditionally known as the Peach festival. The name of the festival has evolved into the Dolls Festival, dralso known as Hinamatsuri. People would participate in *Nagashi-bina*, the floating of paper or straw dolls in boats as a representation of casting away one's impurities and sins. The presence of the shamisen at the party is significant as it contributes to the atmosphere of the celebration while referring to Benzaiten, the goddess of music, and offers a tribute of music to the goddess of music. ¹⁸⁷

This print is full of many details that bring viewers into the celebration of seasonal observances during the Edo period. There are also Chinese roots in the customs of celebration of the first day of the serpent, wishing for good luck. In ancient China, this celebration used to take place at the edge of the water to drive away evil influences. This was called the *Meandering Stream Banquet*, or *Kyokusui no en* (曲水の宴). Eventually, this was celebrated on the third day of the third month, also known as Peach Day (momonohi), and became one of Japan's sacred festivals. In the Heian period, this observance consisted of transferring pollution (kegare) of one's body into a doll, which got thrown into water. This ritual led to the emergence of embellished dolls and later evolved into the Doll's Festival (Hinamatsuri). Today's dolls are dressed as the Emperor,

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¹⁸⁵ For details on Kin'ei-ji Temple in Edo see, for example, National Diet Library's website: https://www.ndl.go.jp/landmarks/e/sights/kaneiji/

¹⁸⁶ Benzaiten as a goddess is discussed in the following essay *Exploring Benzaiten*, by Baidurjya Madhav.

¹⁸⁷ "Hinamatsuri - Wikipedia". En. Wikipedia. Org.

Empress, attendants, and musicians in the court during the Heian period. Today dolls are not set to drift away and instead to decorate homes. ¹⁸⁸

As has been mentioned, each ukiyo-e print has markings with the information about their production. There are three stamps in the bottom part of each of the panels. The circle is the censor's seal. It contains the character *kiwame*, meaning "excellent," implying the print was examined/approved. The seal below with a circle under the roof is the seal of the publishing house, Nishimura Yohachi. The last stamp states Toykuni-ga, the signature that this artist used from 1826. Toyoshige who designed this print was a student and an adopted son of Toyoshige and after his teacher's death was entitled to sign his work as Toyokuni II, although this right wasn't recognized by all his peers. Whatever complex relationships existed between the ukiyo-e artists within a certain lineage, Toyokuni II was a successful, inspirational, and prolific artist who contributed greatly to the flourishing of figurative ukiyo-e genres, first of all the *bijinga* genre, of which this print is an example.

Artistic and cultural richness of Utagawa Toyokuni II's prints discussed here is noteworthy. Let's reiterate. The artist depicts here most fashionable young women and spares no detail to illustrate this by portraying their complex hairstyles and accessories, their layered kimonos and lavish obi sashes, all made of thoughtfully patterned textiles. Additionally, these women care to celebrate seasonal festivals in the most sophisticated way. They decided to go to a stylish restaurant where they are about to enjoy a variety of gourmet dishes, accompanied with some alcoholic beverages and smoking. Furthermore, the location they chose for this observance belonged to Edo's best! Their restaurant's gallery overlooks one of the capital's major sanctuaries of Benzaiten, the goddess of music who is inherently connected with the Day of the Snake they are celebrating. And most fittingly, the depicted women are skillful in playing music and obviously appreciate it. Moreover, they can venerate Benzaiten at the water edge, essential for this goddess, and in close proximity to the temple dedicated to Benzaiten. Moreover, this temple was founded to emulate a much more ancient sanctuary associated with Benzaiten, and thus brings in historical allusions. All in all, this print by Utagawa Toyoshige provides a true window into the cultural polyphony and refinement of Edo period Japan and its fundamental connection to music.

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¹⁸⁸ Shirane, Haruo. 2012. *Japan and The Culture of The Four Seasons*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige), 1777-1835

Above: Benzaiten of the Shinobazu pond, first Day of the Serpent. RISD Museum, 20.116 Below: Elegant Figures of the East. Twelve Signs of Zodiac: Snake. RISD Museum 13.1409 For details in both see individual essays in this volume.

Exploring Benzaiten

Baidurjya Madhav

Among the prints chosen for this exhibition two designs by Utagawa Tokoyuni II (Toyoshige) – Day of the Serpent and Snake (Zodiac) and *Elegant Figures of the East*, *Twelve Signs of Zodiac: The Snake* – have a common topic. They are concerned with goddess Benzaiten and her association with both music and the snake. Both prints are a celebration of the year and day of the snake. On this occasion, music is played not only for the enjoyment of the participants but also as a form of veneration of Benzaiten (Benten for short), the goddess of music and good fortune.

Location: Benten-do and Shinobazu Pond

The print Picture of Benzaiten of the Shinobazu Pond, first Day of the Serpent has a rectangular cartouche on top right in which the title of the print is written as quoted above. The background of the print depicts the Shinobazu Pond which is located in the southern part of Ueno Park which was in Edo. 189 The island has a Buddhist temple known as Benten-dō (弁天堂) or "Hall of Benten," dedicated to the goddess Benzaiten (Benten in short), one of the Seven Gods of good fortune. Originally this Benten-dō was part of the larger Kan'ei-ji Temple complex which was built in 1625 by the Buddhist monk Tenkai to protect the Edo Castle from northeast. Monk Tenkai conceived Kan'ei-je temple as an emulation of the powerful Tendai center Enryakuji on Mount Hiei. Enryakuji Temple is overlooking Kyoto in the east and Lake Biwa in the west. A few years later, Tenkai constructed an island in the middle of Shinobazu Pond and built the Benten-do there. The island, called Bentenjima, was designed to imitate the island of Chikubushima which stands in Lake Biwa on the eastern side of Mount Hiei. 190 This has become one of the most famous places in Edo (now Tokyo). Its representation was a combination of good-luck wishes and an opportunity to depict beautiful womenmusicians feasting – like our prints. Initially, the island was accessible only by boat, but later a stone bridge was added on the eastern side in 1672, making it possible to walk to

¹⁸⁹ Shinobazu-no-ike Bentendo – An Island Temple in Ueno Park. Ueno Transportation Guide. 2022.

¹⁹⁰ Shinobazu Pond – Shinobazu no ike, Vegder's Blog:

https://printsofjapan.wordpress.com/2016/12/20/shinobazu-pond-shinobazu-no-

ike-%E4%B8%8D%E5%BF%8D%E6%B1%A0-a-favorite-place-for-artists-and-others/.

it. Unfortunately, the original 17th-century Benten-dō, save the statue of Benzaiten, was destroyed during a bombing raid in World War II. The statue, currently, is enshrined in the new Main Hall of the temple which was reconstructed in 1958.

The popularity of this scenic and sacred spot is rendered in the print with the gathered mass of people seen on the bridge visiting the temple in the RISD print. In addition to the scenic beauty the location provides, it is also essential to the celebration of Benzaiten and the first day of the Serpent. As sacred places dedicated to the goddess of all things flowing, most Benten Halls are located near water edges. Buddhist ceremonies of compassion are also held at the pond, in which water birds, turtles, and fish were set free, and the pond was then known as the "Pond of Release." On further inspection, elegant cranes can be noticed flying, probably after such a ceremony. In addition, white cranes also symbolize longevity, similar to what people wish for.

Benzaiten is enshrined in numerous locations throughout Japan. Japan's most famous are "Three Great Benzaiten Shrines" – *Sandai Benten*: the Enoshima Island in Sagami Bay, the Chikubu Island in Lake Biwa, and the Itsukushima Island in the Seto Inland Sea. Adding on to these to form the Five Great Benten – *Godai Benten*: Tenkawa near the river Tenkawa in southern Nara Prefecture and Kinkazan on an island near Sendai. ¹⁹¹ All of these clearly shows her connection with water. At present, the goddess is worshipped all over Japan in numerous small shrines located on artificial ponds and lakes, often called *Benten-ike* (Benten Pond). A new sect called the Benten-shū (辯天宗), centering on the goddess, has also taken form. ¹⁹²

Origin and Evolution

Benzaiten has roots in India as a derivation from the Indian goddess Sarasvati. Goddess Sarasvati was described under four distinct aspects: as the river goddess, as the goddess of knowledge, as the goddess of music, and as a daughter/consort of Brahma – to locate her in a broader mythological context. The Sanskrit term Sarasvatī refers to both a goddess and an ancient sacred river in India's Vedic mythology. As the personification of this sacred river and of water in general, Sarasvatī came to represent everything that flows. In the Rig Veda (a monumental Hindu text composed centuries before Buddhism's emergence in India in the 5th century BCE), she is described as the best of goddesses, the

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¹⁹¹ Japanese Buddhist Statuary. A to Z Dictionary: https://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/benzaiten-sanctuaries.html

¹⁹² Green Shinto, blog: https://www.greenshinto.com/2020/03/14/benten-sect/

¹⁹³ Catherine Ludvik. From Sarasvati to Benzaiten. PhD Dissertation. 2001

"inciter of all pleasant songs, inspirer of all gracious thought." ¹⁹⁴ In India, she was invoked in Vedic rites as the deity of music and poetry well before her introduction to China around the 4th century CE. She is usually seen carrying a lotus and a veena, a plucked string classical Indian musical instrument. It is interesting to note that the Lotus plants, a Buddhist symbol of purity, were planted in Shinobazu Pond around Bentenjima and still cover its southern part. As mentioned in the Rig Veda, Sarasvati is strongly identified with fertility and cleansing as well. Through Buddhist influence and spread, Sarasvati was introduced in the early 5th century in China and the 7th-8th century in Japan via the esoteric Womb World Mandala. Two forms of the goddess became popular: first was the eight-armed weapon-wielding defender of the nation owing to her martial description in the Sutra of Golden Light, which has a resemblance to the Indian goddess Durga and not Sarasvati, and the second was the two-armed biwa playing deity which reconnected back with the original goddess Sarasvati. Goddess Sarasvati does not have an independent existence here, instead different places across Japan have adopted and acquired independent existences. Appropriated by Japan's indigenous island cults and kami cults to become, essentially, a native Shintō deity as the goddess Benzaiten who has been worshipped from the late Heian to Kamakura period onwards.

God of Good Fortune

Benzaiten is the only female deity among the Seven Gods of Good Fortune. Benzaiten's popularity skyrocketed in the Edo period (1603-1868), when she gained a large following among the merchant and urban classes, among the geisha and artisans, and even among gamblers, in her old role as the water goddess and artistic muse and her new role as one of the wealth-bringing Seven Lucky Gods. Buring the Edo period, to emphasize her good fortune in the form of wealth, the writing of her name changed from 并才天 to 弁財天; the middle character of her name written as 才—"talent" became written with the character 財—"wealth". Her connection with money is particularly evident at the Zeniarai Benten (養洗弁天 Money-washing Benten) shrine of Kamakura where people wash their money in a stream running through a cave in hopes of making it multifold. People thronged the approach to the Benzaiten Temple in the Shinobazu Pond

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¹⁹⁴ Rig Veda, Griffith translation: http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0039/ P3.HTM

¹⁹⁵ Seven Lucky Gods of Japan. Japanese Buddhist Statuary. A to Z Photo Dictionary. 2022.

¹⁹⁶ The 7 Propitious Gods: The Evolution of a Goddess – Benzaiten 弁財天. 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Goddess Benzaiten - Japanese Buddhist Statuary. A to Z Photo Dictionary. 2022.

on a special day when her sculpture kept in the temple is taken out to be viewed as a special form of veneration. The temple also gave away charms to worshippers on that day which were believed to magically bring wealth to their owners.

It is noteworthy that the obi of the musician in the print that is a part of a triptych is decorated with good-luck symbols, known as TAKARAZUKUSHI ($\Xi \not\subset C$) translating to "all sorts of treasures" (or myriads of treasures). They are associated with the Seven Gods of Good Luck and Benzaiten is one of them. The treasures that promised prosperity, long life, and general good fortune included those depicted in the center of the flowers that decorate the courtesan's elaborate ohi sash.

Benzaiten's association with Music

Benzaiten like Sarasvati has come to be associated with everything that flows – thus, with music, water, time, words, speech, eloquence, and by extension knowledge. The two-armed form is closely associated with music. Due to her immense popularity, she was often represented in ukiyo-e. Although she is mostly seen carrying a lute biwa, in ukiyo-e she is shown occasionally with a zither (*koto*). The presence of the shamisen at the party is significant as it contributes to the atmosphere of the celebration while referring to Benzaiten and offers a tribute of music to the goddess of music.

Benzaiten's association with the Snake

Due to the association of Benzaiten with water, she has also come to be associated with water creatures like snakes and dragons as her messengers. Benzaiten is hence closely associated with ancient *kami* Ugaijin, a Japanese folk god of harvests, fertility, and wealth due to his snake-like body. This kind of Ugaijin's representation is often seen decorating Benzaiten's hairdo or placed at the entrance of a Benzaiten Halls. According to Mock Joya, Benten's statue often has coils of snakes representing jealousy. ¹⁹⁸ Hence to date, couples avoid going together as they may be separated owing to Benten's jealousy. Annual and seasonal celebrations in Japan have been associated with animals and plants having talismanic significance. One such occasion is Benten's day – the Day of the Snake which occurs on the third day of the third month of the East Asian calendar. This is indicated as an occasion for the banquet the ladies on the RISD print are taking part in. On this day, ritual purification called *Joshi-No Sekku* takes place

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¹⁹⁸ J. Vegder, Prints of Japan, Blog. Not quite the Zodiac – Part Five: The Snake – hebi – 蛇. 2013, https://printsofjapan.wordpress.com/2013/01/08/5220/

along with outdoor drinking and poetry parties. The hour of the Snake is the best time to appeal as according to legend, Benten appeared in the form of a two-hundred feet snake when Hōjō Tokimasa (1138-1215) prayed to her. In mythology, snakes are regarded as intelligent, with a tendency to lack scruples.

First Day of the Serpent and Chinese Mythology

Celebration of the First Day of Serpent also has Chinese roots. In ancient China, the celebration, called the Winding Stream Banquet (*Kyokusui no en*), used to take place at the edge of the water to drive away evil influences. Eventually, this was celebrated on the third day of the third month, also known as Peach Day (*momo no hi*), ¹⁹⁹ and became one of Japan's sacred festivals. In the Heian period, this observance consisted of transferring pollution (*kegare*) of one's body into a doll, which got thrown into the water. This ritual led to the emergence of embellished dolls and what is known as today's Doll's Festival or Hinamatsuri. People would participate in *Nagashi-bina*, the floating of paper or straw dolls in boats as a representation of casting away one's impurities and sins.

Comparison with the Second Print

While the first print is more evident in depicting the celebration of Benzaiten on the Day of the Serpent by setting it against the backdrop of the shrine filled with music and recitals, in the second print reference to Benzaiten is less direct. A framed inset with a picture of a snake in wisteria branches accompanies a full-scale close-up of a beautiful koto-player. The blue frame contains curved S-shaped lines representing the waves of water which is surrounding the snake. The presence of the snake immediately establishes a clear association between the musician and Benzaiten.

Benzaiten and the Two Prints Again

All the above discussed details along with the presence of musical instruments and women musicians bind the two prints into the same category of celebrating the Benzaiten Day – Day of the Serpent through music. Both these prints by Utagawa Toyoshige provide a glimpse into the elaborate culture of the Edo era with its core connection to music.

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¹⁹⁹ Shirane, Haruo. 2012. *Japan and The Culture of The Four Seasons*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797-1858 Famous Views of Edo. Asukayama (Edo meisho zue. Asukayama). Ōban triptych. Publisher: Fujiokaya Hikotarō. Date: 1844-1848. Private collection

Sakura Viewing Pleasures:

A close observation of Utagawa Hiroshige's Famous Places in Edo: Asukayama

Leslie Berumen Flores, Ryan Brandon Hsiao

Four townswomen are sitting outside on a blanket spread on the slopes of Asukayama and are enjoying the seasonal event called *hanami*²⁰⁰, or cherry blossom viewing.²⁰¹ For this special event, the ladies have dressed up, wearing kimonos with different patterns, with their ornate obi²⁰² tied on the back. From right to left, their outfits include a kimono with an intricate pattern in white on red for the top section and dark brown on white for the bottom section; The next one is wearing a light green kimono with a dark green gridded pattern. The most distant one wears a kimono with gray cherry blossoms over the brown background. The last one is wearing a black kimono with blue obi patterned in red. In the same order, one woman prepares food, the next plays a musical instrument called the *shamisen*, and the other two play a hand game called *ken* (拳), which is similar to "rock, paper, scissors." The women are surrounded by several items, including bento²⁰³ boxes, a sake²⁰⁴ kettle, and a smoking set. Overall, the atmosphere is nice and lively. 205 They seem to be addressing someone off the frame since they are not looking towards one another, but to the left of the triptych. Each figure is frozen in time as if the viewer is right there with them, and as if they could start moving any second.



²⁰⁰ Cherry blossom viewing

²⁰¹"【飛鳥山】江戸名所図会 飛鳥山," Kita City Asukayama Museum 北区飛鳥山博物館, February 16, 2016.

²⁰² a broad sash worn with a Japanese kimono

²⁰³ A multicompartment box used for containing the different courses of a usually Japanese lunch

²⁰⁴ Japanese alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice

²⁰⁵ Kita City Asukayama Museum 北区飛鳥山博物館, 2016.

Written Text

As is usual with ukiyo-e prints, the image includes writings. Those writings provide context for the viewers about what the print is about and who it was created by. At the top left corner there is the title cartouche shaped as a rounded rectangle. It encases the largest signs on the print – they appear in black against grass-green background. The title says *Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama* (江戸名所図会 飛鳥山).

Adjacent to the title cartouche is rather a large lightly colored panel with scattered cherry blossoms and a dense text. The text talks about Asukayama becoming the center of cherry-blossom viewing, and thus enriches perception of the image.



The text in the cartouche reads:

In the Genkō era (1321-1324) a person named Toyoshima Saeimon (豊島左衛門) transferred to these lands the shrine of Asuka Jinja [from Wakayama Prefecture, Kumano region]. For this reason, the name of Asukayama was taken. After that, this shrine was made into a main building known as Oji Gongen and became a subordinate of the Kumano shrine. In the Genbun era (1736-1741), a thousand cherry trees were planted at Asukayama. Years passed, and these cherry trees turned into a blooming grove. It became a scenic spot for admiring flowers in the spring, grasses in the autumn, cool in the summer and snow in the winter. Above all, in the third month, everyone—the refined and the vulgar—gather there for pleasurable pastimes: drinking, feasting, having all kinds of poetic gatherings for Japanese and Chinese verse, for the linked verse renga (連歌)²⁰⁶ and 31-syllable haiku (伊句)²⁰⁷, staying there for long days, saddened by the coming of darkness, - indeed, this magnificent sight was out of the ordinary."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Linked poems, often done collaboratively among a group. Participants would trade lines with one another. ²⁰⁷ *Haiku* is a popular form of poetry in Japan, and is usually short. 31-syllable poems are named *tanka*.

²⁰⁸ For transcription see website on Japanese culture of food: https://www.syokubunka.or.jp/gallery/nishikie/ Translation provided by the instructor.

The poetic and descriptive tone of the cartouche's text matches perfectly with the rest of the imagery, which captures a relaxed atmosphere, offering not only a detailed viewing of a few women in the foreground, but also dozens of other groups, going about their own celebrations in the background. As what was written in the cartouche suggests, Asukayama is known for its cherry trees. These same cherry blossoms show up behind the cartouche, acting as a decoration and an intentional reference to the subject matter at hand.

In the lower part of the compositions – over the grassy surface of the lawn, there are more written markings. Located next to each other, they are: (a) the signature of the artist "Hiroshige-ga (廣重画) – picture by Hiroshige." (b). The seal of the publisher consists of the sign for "ya" under the triangular "roof" – this seal belonged to Fujiokaya Hikotarō (藤岡屋彦太郎), publishing house (Shōgendō 松原堂). (c) The round seal with characters inside is a seal of the censor. It reads "Watari," and stands for Watanabe Jiemon.

Details in the Background and Foreground

It is important that details like these are not overlooked as they can provide further context for the viewer and add to the printer's ability to depict realistic scenes. In the background elements of nature appear throughout the hills such as pine trees, sakura trees, different groups of people having their own picnics, and kids running around playing with each other. Towards the bottom of the print there also appears to be a golden, flat-like shape that depicts mist. Moving from the background to a closer observation of details in the foreground the viewers will be able to inspect the objects which sit on the red rug that serves as figures' picnic blanket. Let's look at the objects right to left. At the right edge of print there is a green piece of cloth wrapping over rather a large object what might be a multi-tiered food box called $j\bar{u}bako^{209}$ (重箱). Next to that is a wooden bucket meant for containing liquids (in this case, perhaps water) called the oke^{210} (桶). At the foreground behind the woman to the left there is another food box $j\bar{u}bako$. Next to the food box $orizume^{212}$ (折詰), there is equipment to warm up sake called kan^{213} (燗). On the blanket there are also tea bowls and a small teapot $ky\bar{u}su$ (急須).

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²⁰⁹ A multi-tiered food box.

²¹⁰ Wooden bucket

²¹¹ Gabi Greve, "Okeya Bucket Maker," okeya bucket maker, March 11, 2019.

²¹² Sectioned box for various delicacies.

²¹³ warming up sake

Utagawa Hiroshige

Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama (江戸名所図会 飛鳥山) is a triptych designed by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) and published between 1844 & 1848. Utagawa Hiroshige—also known as Ichiyūsai Hiroshige and originally named Andō Tokutarō—received the name Utagawa by entering the school of the *ukiyo-e* master Utagawa Toyohiro around 1811. Recognized as one of "three great Utagawas," he was a highly influential print designer, painter, and illustrator. Hiroshige was particularly prominent and innovative in *meisho-e* (名所絵), the landscape genre, but also excelled in *bijinga* genre and beyond.

During Hiroshige's time studying under Utagawa Toyohiro, he was exposed to an array of painting styles from the Kanō school, Shijō school, as well as Nanga painting and western art. However, after attempting (and excelling at) other *ukiyo-e* genres—such as *musha-e*²¹⁴ (武者絵), *yakusha-e*²¹⁵ (役者絵), and the *bijinga*²¹⁶ (美人が) genre—Hiroshige spent the majority of his later life making landscape designs, or more specifically, *meisho-e*, which translates directly to "pictures of famous places." The landscape genre eventually results as Hiroshige's signature, having been deemed the "master of the Japanese landscape print." Among these images representing the Japanese landscape, Asukayama is one of the locations that Hiroshige explored on several occasions.



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858). *Cherry-blossom Viewing at Asuka Hill* (Asukayama hanami no zu). Series *Famous Places in Edo, Newly Selected* (Shinsen Edo meisho), ca. 1843–47, MFA.²¹⁸

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²¹⁴ An *ukiyo-e* woodblock print genre that depicts traditional Japanese warriors, "warrior pictures."

²¹⁵ Actor prints, often depicting Kabuki theater actors.

²¹⁶ Beautiful women pictures, although not limited to, are most seen represented with *ukiyo-e* prints.

²¹⁷ Newland, et al. *The Hotei Encyclopedia*, 504.

²¹⁸ MFA, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/237683

The Hanami Tradition

Cherry blossoms, also known as *sakura*, are one of the most significant parts of Japanese culture; it is the national flower of Japan as well. Seen as a symbol of "renewal," cherry blossoms bloom every year around springtime. Horeover, the *sakura* often stays alive for no more than a short two weeks, which the Japanese see as a poetic representation for "the fleeting nature of life." Henceforth, people in the nation take time each year to celebrate the short-living cherry blossoms and participate in the national activity known as *hanami*. *Hanami*, or 花見, stands directly for flower "*hana* (花)," and view, or viewing "*mi* (見)." Since the Momoyama period (1573-1603), *hanami* has been a tradition in Japan. The first cherry blossom viewing event, or party, was "organized by Toyotomi Hideyoshi—also known as 'the Great Unifier'— (1537-1598) at Yoshino." There have also been other instances of organized events as such, but it is during the Edo period when the *hanami* culture became "an indispensable part of the life of commoners."

Bento culture

Hanami is often conducted with food consumption. Since people travel to different locations for hanami, in this case Asukayama, bento boxes are the most common way to hold and transport food items. Bento boxes often include a single meal, prepared for either a single person or a group. These boxes commonly contain glutinous rice balls, dried rice, steamed and seasoned fish paste, pickled vegetables, dumplings, and many other types of food. On Hiroshige's print, shallow black boxes can be seen with an array of different foods. Due to the fact that much of the only revealing bento box is greatly obscured by the obi of the lady sitting in front, it is difficult to make out what





²¹⁹ Takeda Erina, "Significance of Sakura: Cherry Blossom Traditions in Japan," Smithsonian Folklife Festival (Smithsonian Institute, April 9, 2014)

²²⁰ Cherry blossoms.

²²¹ Takeda Erina. Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2014.

²²² Sachiko Matsushita. 江戸食文化紀行, 2002.

²²³ Sachiko Matsushita. 江戸食文化紀行, 2002.

each food item is. However, since the item in rows at the forefront is white and round, it is possible that it is *kamaboko*, or seasoned steamed fish paste.²²⁴ Another possibility is *sashimi*, or raw fish, is also enjoyed by viewers of cherry blossoms during *sakura* season. Although usually paired with *nigiri* and *sushi*, which is not present in this print, it could be seen in other prints that feature food as more of the focal point, such as the *Genji Mitate Cherry Blossom Banquet* by Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865) in 1855.²²⁵ The specific origin of bento boxes is unknown.





Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865) *Genji Mitate Cherry Blossom Banquet*, 1855, Google Arts & Culture, Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture.

Three of the more likely historical uses of bento are: "soldiers carrying them to the battlefields; theater-goers eating conveniently out of them as they saw or sprawled in their tatami-matted spaces at interminable performances of Noh or Kabuki plays; and sumo wrestling fans eating them during the show." ²²⁶ On rare occasions, *jūbako*, or multi-layered food boxes, would have "landscapes of food in the sections of the box." Nonetheless, in the Asukayama print, the boxes are minimally decorated, with just a black exterior, a red interior, and a light-brown lining in-between. On the bottom right corner of Hiroshige's design is a box wrapped around with a dark navy fabric. That item likely contains more food in bento boxes; this is because of a common way of wrapping bento boxes, which is to wrap them in dark cloth. Doing so brings into consideration the experience of accessing the food inside. The darkness and coolness of the colors essentially and psychologically lowers the expectations of those who would like to enjoy

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²²⁴ "Kamaboko: Artisanal Samurai Seafood," Suzuhiro Kamaboko, 2022.

²²⁵ Hayashi Ayano, "Food in Ukiyo-e: Feasting Under the Cherry Blossoms," Google Arts & Culture (Google), accessed May 11, 2022.

²²⁶ Merry White. About Japan, accessed May 11, 2022.

²²⁷ Merry White. About Japan, accessed May 11, 2022.

the food, and consequently makes the revealing of the food inside more awe-inducing and the colors of the food appear more vibrant and delectable.

Shamisen & Music

At a festive event that is the annual *hanami*, music is essential to not only Japanese culture, but the specific occasion too. A *shamisen* (三味線) is held by the woman in the gridded kimono on Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama. It is a "lute instrument with three strings."²²⁸ Although the *shamisen* is known as an instrument of Japanese tradition, it originated from the Chinese instrument named sanxian.²²⁹ As with other forms of art, the shamisen became popular around the Edo period, where the "citydwelling affluent commoners, and [those who live in] rural areas" were able to access the artform.²³⁰ Hanami is often accompanied by music played on the shamisen and koto.²³¹ Often Japanese folk songs related to cherry blossoms are performed. One of these songs is called "Hana," which means "flower" in Japanese. 232 Another one is named "Sakura, Sakura."²³³ These songs originally come with lyrics, which poetically speak about the beauty of cherry blossoms, and call to view the sakura, as part of hanami. Excerpts of the songs are as follows: "Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms / Blanketing the countryside / As far as you can see / Is it a mist, or clouds? / Fragrant in the morning sun / Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms / Flowers in full bloom"234 and "Lo, see the cherry trees that stand in the morning mist / I hear them speak to me in a tender tone / On the eve I love to see the waving willows / They stretch their hands to me strolling alone."235 The tonality of the shamisen can be adjusted to mimic singing voices, therefore these folk songs are usually interchangeable. Even today, *hanami* events would feature a lady playing the shamisen or koto as part of the tradition of cherry blossom viewing.

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²²⁸ Dieter Wanczura, "Shamisen," artelino, October 26, 2020.

²²⁹ San means three, and xian means string, which translates directly to "three strings."

²³⁰ Wilhelmina Bogoian-Mullen, "The History of the Shamisen," Shamiko Guitars, February 27, 2020.

²³¹ A 13-string zither-like instrument that lays flat. It is the national instrument of Japan.

²³² Lisa Yannucci, "Cherry Blossom Parties in Japan and a Japanese Folk Song Called 'Hana' ('Sakura')," Mama Lisa's World of Children and International Culture, March 25, 2006.

²³³ Lisa Yannucci, "'Sakura, Sakura' Another Japanese Cherry Blossom Song," Mama Lisa's World of Children and International Culture, March 25, 2006.

²³⁴ Lisa Yannucci. Mama Lisa's World of Children and International Culture, 2006.

²³⁵ Lisa Yannucci. Mama Lisa's World of Children and International Culture, 2006.

Part of a Triptych

As has been mentioned before, *Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama* is a triptych. Here mostly its rightmost panel depicting the four women having a picnic has been discussed. To the left, towards the foreground there is a big pine tree that takes up the major part of the middle panel.²³⁶ Further away, in the middle panel, the outlined silhouette of Mt. Fuji²³⁷ can be seen behind the tree, symbolizing nature's grandeur and adding to the beautiful scene of the Asukayama slopes.²³⁸ Many people are depicted over the vast space of the slopes, They are enjoying the *hanami* in a variety of ways, conveying how popular this particular location and time of day it is to celebrate



hanami²³⁹.

The scene to the left of the pine tree (see above) is that of women chasing each other, laughing as they play around the beautiful hills and being heard by the women on the right.²⁴⁰ In the triptych there are mostly women depicted in the foreground and with high details, thus conveying that it was common for women of those times to have regularly visited Asukayama for the *hanami*.

By Way of Conclusion

Utagawa Hiroshige's Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama captures the atmosphere and joyous feelings of the hanami celebrations depicting various groups of people with

²³⁶ Kita City Asukayama Museum, 北区飛鳥山博物館, 2016.

²³⁷ The highest mountain in Japan, referred to by locals as "Fuji-san" is an important symbol in Japanese culture

²³⁸ Kita City Asukayama Museum, 北区飛鳥山博物館, 2016.

²³⁹ Cherry blossom viewing.

²⁴⁰ Kita City Asukayama Museum, 北区飛鳥山博物館, 2016.

different levels of detail. The print exemplifies the many aspects of leisurely activity in the Edo period, including the fronting cherry blossom viewing tradition, the culture behind portable foodstuff that is *bento* boxes, and enjoyment of *shamisen* music. Not only that. Hiroshige's previous experience as ukiyo-e designer shows through in this print, as it nicely merges different genres of ukiyo-e art such as depictions of famous places – *meisho*-e and of beautiful women, the *bijinga*. Thus, the artist could utilize his skills in showing leisurely activities as well as flora and nature. With great detail and skill, Hiroshige's *Famous Views of Edo: Asukayama* sends the contemporary viewer back in time and allows an earnest experience of peaceful festivities to shine through one of Japan's most popular and iconic art forms—*ukiyo-e* woodblock prints.

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