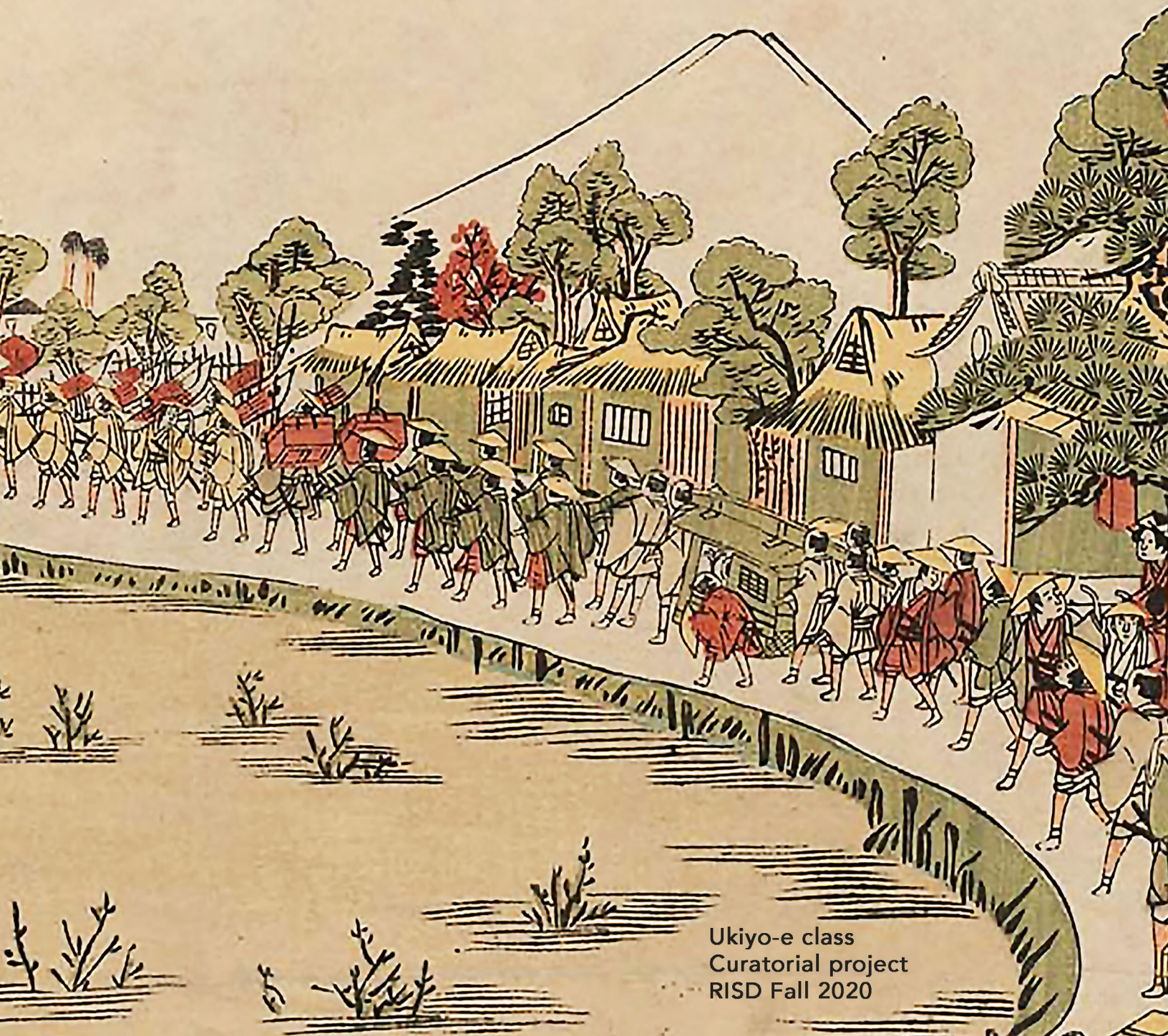


# MARCHING THROUGH THE FLOATING WORLD

PROCESSIONS IN UKIYO-E PRINTS



Ukiyo-e class  
Curatorial project  
RISD Fall 2020



Marching Through the Floating World:  
Processions in Ukiyo-e Prints

Rhode Island School of Design

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# FOREWORD

*Marching through the Floating World* is a book that accompanies a student-curated virtual exhibition of the same title. This exhibition is dedicated to images of processions in ukiyo-e woodblock prints.

Ukiyo-e or “pictures of the floating world” was a vibrant style of urban art that flourished in Japan in the 17th-19th century, predominantly in the form of mass-produced woodcuts. Steeped in everyday pleasurable pastimes of townspeople, ukiyo-e prints reflected contemporary culture to its fullest, whether fact or fiction, often the two amalgamated in a witty way.

Processions constituted a noticeable theme in ukiyo-e prints as they were an integral part of the commoners’ visual experience. Daimyo processions were traveling from the warlords’ domains to the shogunal capital of Edo (Tokyo) and back as demanded by the *sankin-kotai* or alternate attendance system. Community processions with exotic floats were essential for *matsuri*, Shinto and Buddhist festivals. Art, however, goes beyond reality, and in ukiyo-e prints one sees daimyo processions parodied by beautiful women or mimicked by boys. Parades by foreign embassies also appear in ukiyo-e prints, primarily parades of the Korean embassies, often fantasized. Depicted were also processions of supernatural beings or imaginary nostalgic processions in prints of the Meiji era.

Students’ research essays on prints like those mentioned above (and more!) were compiled into a book, which together with educational wall labels, programming brochures and souvenirs constitute an outcome of an art history course

taught at RISD in the fall of 2020. This is the eighth project of the kind. It aims at providing students with a hands-on curatorial experience. Having decided upon the exhibition topic, students selected fourteen representative prints – single sheets and polyptychs – from the collection of the RISD Museum and the online database [ukiyo-e.org](http://ukiyo-e.org). Relying on close looking and thorough investigation, students mapped out a meaningful display order to enhance understanding and hence enjoyment of ukiyo-e views of processions.

Students who authored this project are now inviting their exhibition visitors to march along and further explore the ever-changing terrain of the floating world.

—Elena Varshavskaya, course instructor



# INTRODUCTION

## Spectacle in Motion: Processions in Ukiyo-e Prints

Sofie Levin

This exhibition focuses on the representation of processions in ukiyo-e prints. What was the role of processions in the life of the Edo period Japan and how the popular urban art of ukiyo-e rendered them or re-interpreted them in its expressly modern and often lighthearted way? Sixteen prints were selected to reflect the variety of processions that played a prominent role in Japan's life during the Edo period. It may be said that their significance continues even today in the form of *matsuri*, Shinto/Buddhist folk festivals that are held regularly. The selected prints span most of ukiyo-e history, ranging from the hand-colored prints of the 1730s to full colored printed nishiki-e of the third quarter of the 18th century through the first half of the 19th century up to the style's closing years and the use of synthetic dyes in late 1880s and 1890s. The prints at the exhibition are done in various formats, although multipanel compositions predominate, which is not surprising bearing in mind the large numbers of people constituting a procession. These prints allow following stylistic evolution of ukiyo-e prints, appreciating peculiar creative manners of individual artists as well as the landmarks in the development of the woodcuts' production process.

Ukiyo-e was a popular style of art during the Edo period. It existed in painting but predominantly in woodblock printed form. Ukiyo-e art was created by commoners for commoners and is known for its focus on the fleeting pleasures of life. Ukiyo-e's vivid style readily treated everything

concerning modern living and approached all topics with sensitivity and wit. Popular genres within ukiyo-e prints were the beautiful women of the Yoshiwara, the prostitution quarter, referred to as *bijinga*, and images of Kabuki theater actors, *yakusha-e*. Both were inventively applied to the theme of processions.

The exhibition opens with the prints representing the daimyo processions that were traversing Japan along the five official highways and beyond. This marching of large armies of the regional warlords with their armies was happening due to alternate attendance, or *sankin kotai*, which was a system that required daimyos to leave their domains and travel to Edo to work directly under the shogun for a year and then to return to their domain for the following year. Thus, the daimyos were travelling from every direction to the capital of Edo and back for over two hundred years of the *sankin kotai* arrangement that lasted from 1635 and continued until 1862. In addition to being magnificent sights showing large numbers of uniformed participants marching in a strict order and carrying often spectacular implements, the display of processions became the measure of status. It is because the entire country was involved in the *sankin kotai* system that processions became a familiar sight to everyone living in the Edo period. Thus, it is only natural that the theme of processions got to play a big role in ukiyo-e prints. Seeking to symbolically reflect the central role of the city of Edo as the point of

destination and departure of the daimyo processions the exhibition opens with the prints representing such processions entering Edo (print by Nishimura Shigenaga, cat. No. 1) and leaving it (print by Katsushika Hokusai, cat. No. 2). In these portrayals of processions the artists captured, each in his unique way, the organizational aspect of such corteges, the ordering of the participating groups, their distinctive features such as attire and implements, peculiarities of transportation, interaction with the locals and natural environment and more.

While journeying over vast distances, processions inevitably had to make it through the rough terrain or cross water barriers - sea bays, broad overflowing rivers or dangerously swift streams. How was it possible to overcome natural obstacles in an organized fashion? A print by Utagawa Yoshitora (cat. No. 3, 1863) displaying the procession of the Shogun Tokugawa Iemochi traveling to the imperial court in Kyoto with a retinue of three thousand men gives an idea of how such large numbers of people could still maintain order in challenging circumstances. The artist uses a wide array of visual conventions to express shogunal authority in a persuasive way.

Since art goes beyond direct reflection of reality, and ukiyo-e particularly favored layering allusions to various aspects of culture, the exhibition includes more images of fantasized processions than the number of views of "real life" processions. Here belong nostalgic images created by Chikanobu (1838-1912). Chikanobu represented a daimyo procession in a print of 1889 (cat. No. 4) which was over twenty-five years after the abolition of the alternate attendance system. Another print by Chikanobu (cat. No. 5) represented an imaginary celebration of the Sannō Festival, one of Japan's three major *matsuri*. A float shaped like a white elephant is depicted accompanied by the imitation of a Korean embassy parade, all

imagined by the artist.

A large group of prints at the exhibition are parodies in which male participants of daimyo processions or processions of the nobility are substituted with fashionable female beauties akin to the Yoshiwara courtesans. This type of parodies can be seen as an extension of the *bijinga* genre. Two polyptychs from the RISD Museum collection, one by Utagawa Toyohiro (1773-1828), cat. No. 6 and the other by Kikukawa Eizan (1787-1867), cat. No. 7, serve as excellent examples of beautiful women parading as daimyo and their attendants. In the print by Kitagawa Utamaro (1752?-1806), cat. No. 8, beauties of Utamaro's age were depicted as stand-ins for the Heian period nobles and court ladies - participants of the imperial procession.

It was not only women that replaced men in ukiyo-e images of daimyo processions. Boys were often shown play-acting a procession of a daimyo as seen in the print by Utagawa Yoshifuji (1828-1887), cat. No. 9, which combines large-scale *bijinga* imagery on the foreground and boys imitating a daimyo procession in the background. Another example of this approach is shown in a pentptych by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), cat. No. 10. While the boys look similar to daimyo processions in their arrangement and the implements they hold, the imagery of boys also took inspiration from Chinese influence with their auspicious symbolism wishing the viewer to have an abundant male progeny. The boy's symbolism was also combined with other auspicious symbols such as a pine tree - a symbol of longevity, and views of Mt. Fuji and that of the sunrise, all of them being important good-wishing symbols.

The last category of processional prints that is addressed in this exhibit deals with mythical processions of animals. Imagery of fox weddings that mimic human wedding processions were the most

popular in this category. These prints invited exploration of fox mythology in Japan, association of foxes with the rice god Inari, connection of foxes with atmospheric phenomena, etc. Also, real wedding processions were investigated as a source of fox weddings' visualization. The three selected compositions depicting fox weddings, one by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), cat. No. 11, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, cat. No. 12, and by Utagawa Yoshitora (active ca. 1850-1880), cat. No. 13, reflect stylistic peculiarities of the three artists who designed them. Hiroshige paid particular attention to capturing the spring landscape in the twilight during the sun shower. Kuniyoshi focused on the rich and playful details of the event. Yoshitora made his image even more adventurous by including an unexpected witness of the event - a young woman who came to a shrine at night to cast a curse on her unfaithful lover. Lastly, one more animal lore appears in ukiyo-e prints in the form of wedding processions - this is the lore of mouse weddings. A print by Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825), cat. No. 4 depicts a New Year dream of a mouse wedding seen by a courtesan in a brothel interior. Along with an earlier print, this print combines the two genres - a *bijinga* and a fantasized wedding procession.

Japanese popular worldview. Individual papers looked into the meaning of the prints in the selection, offered interpretation of cultural and historical allusions where possible, and provided commentaries to period implements, clothing, textiles. A combination of close study, massive research and discussions contributed to a better understanding of the place held by these spectacles in motion in the popular art of ukiyo-e.

The exhibition "Marching through the Floating World: Processions in Ukiyo-e Prints" invites its visitors to explore processions as they existed or were imagined in Japanese culture of the Edo period. Envisioned by ukiyo-e artists, these processions are shown with a remarkable amount of precise historic details, whether from the life of the highest military officials at the top of Japan society at the time or from the habitual practices of the daimyo and their attendants. Equally veritable are images of courtesan-like women and children in terms of their appearance - garments and hairstyles, as well as mannerisms. Even fictitious processions of anthropomorphized animals elucidate many customs and habits that permeate

# PART I. DAIMYO & SHOGUN'S PROCESSIONS

## Approaching Edo: Procession of a Daimyo at Takanawa by Nishimura Shigenaga

Joshua Sun

From a high vantage point a view opens up on a long procession marching forward following the bend of a bay and entering a city street. This procession, clearly organized in a deliberate way, stretches across the entire image that was designed by Nishimura Shigenaga sometime during the decade of 1735-1745.

### PROCESSION

Benefiting from the opportunity of seeing the entire procession from above, it is possible to inspect its formation closely. In total, the procession is composed of 60 figures. The procession is led by two men, walking alongside each other, both carrying a *hasamibako* - big chests for the daimyo's official clothing. Such chests shouldered on a single pole were always carried at the head of the line, becoming a distinctive feature of daimyo processions. Both men with *hasamibako* are wearing short coats called *hanten* that are decorated with a ring patterned kimono. Following directly behind them is a lone man carrying a *naginata* halberd - a long-pole weapon with a slightly curved blade sheathed in a black case; this man is wearing an overcoat with stripes. Behind him is a unit marching by double file, led by two men wearing a diamond patterned *hanten*. Both are carrying *keyari* - a type of spear with fur or feather sheaths; here the sheaths are made of different materials. Following the spear-bearers are three

rows of samurai wearing orange striped overcoats. Directly after that are five men all dressed in orange coats adorned with the design shaped as *yuiwata* (結綿) - a tied bundle of silk thread. The *yuiwata* crest was used by the Ishiwatari, vassals of the Tokugawa<sup>1</sup>, and the family of Segawa Kikunojo, a famous Kabuki actor. They are assembled around a *norimono* - a palanquin, which they appear to be carrying. The *Norimono* was shaped as a little house with a beam attached to its roof. Palanquin bearers place this beam on their shoulder to carry the *norimono*. The number of palanquin bearers varied from two to eight. Here there seem to be four of them. Inside the *norimono* is a figure that can not be distinguished clearly although the person is fully visible through the open sliding door of the *norimono*. This must be the daimyo himself. One can see that the palanquin rider is leaning towards the open door next to which a person is walking. This person must be one of those valets designated to accompany the lord to offer him help if needed.<sup>2</sup> Following them is a row of three samurai wearing orange striped kimonos. There is a larger gap between the next row of two men, seemingly wearing the diamond patterned kimono. Both men are carrying

1 The East, Volumes 23-24, East Publications., 1987, the University of Virginia: p. 3.

2 Constantine N. Vaporis, Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority, Japan Review, 2005, 17: 28



Nishimura Shigenaga (1697–1756) *Procession of a Daimyo at Takanawa (Godaimyō gyōretsu Takanawa no fūkei 御大名行列高輪之風景)*. Signature cut off on this impression. Horizontal ōban, with hand-applied color (beni-e) Ca. 1735-1745  
Credit line: Denman Waldo Ross Collection. MFA accession number: 06.1137

cross-shaped spears called *jumonji-yari* which are covered in animal fur. Directly behind them is a row of two men wearing orange kimonos. Behind them is the first horseback samurai. The rider is dressed in a black kimono and is accompanied by one samurai on each side of him. Following is a single file line of four men in orange kimono. The latter three are all carrying *keyari*. The next samurai on horseback is riding on the left side of this line. After them is a horse guided by two men, one on both sides. Two men alongside each other carrying a *tate gasa* - a regular umbrella with a long handle, and a *daigasa* - a rain helmet mounted on a pole follow.<sup>3</sup> Concluding this unit is a single man directly behind. The next unit consists of eight men in a single file. The first five are dressed in orange and the latter three are dressed in gray. They are all carrying bows and muskets in club-looking cylindrical cases. There is a larger space before the next

samurai on horseback. He is followed by a single file line of five men. The procession ends with a pair of men alongside each other. It is important to note that almost all the participants have two swords at their side meaning they belong to the samurai military class.

## IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING

The procession is coming into town which appears to be a singular street completed with a row of shops on each side. There are various inscriptions and crests on curtains and plaques outside the shops. One crest appears to resemble a mountain inscribed in a circle. There is some traffic in the street. On the left hand side of the street next to the lead participants of the procession there is a *kago* - a palanquin of an open type - with a traveler fully visible. This *kago* is being carried in the opposite direction and the rider is watching the daimyo procession intently while the palanquin bearers don't seem interested at all. Crossing the road right in front

3 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review*, no. 17, 2005, 30.

of the procession and thus directly in its path is a group of people. It consists of two men wearing black kimonos. One is riding a horse which has an inscription on the belly side of the horse blanket. The other is following the horse. There are two attendants in this group, one of them is leading the horse and the other is conversing with the pedestrian. There are various figures placed along both sides of the procession. It is not abundantly clear if they are associated with it. The five figures near the front of the procession seem to be viewing it with vague interest. Two are women talking to each other. One is wearing a wide traveler's hat obscuring her appearance but the other is holding her hat in front of her and the viewer can appreciate her fashionable hairstyle and layered kimono. She is shown according to the conventions of the *bijinga* - the beautiful women genre in ukiyo-e. Behind them is a figure kneeling who appears to be wearing the same orange patterned

kimono as the samurai. Across the other side of the procession is a figure who appears to be caught by surprise by the procession. He is wearing a wide traveler's hat; on his back he is carrying a bundle with a folded straw cloak. In his extended right hand he is holding a ladle used by pilgrims to collect alms. The next two men walking towards the pilgrim pay no mind to the procession, looking at the fisherman instead. It is important to note that most of the figures not immediately in the procession are wearing or have hats in their possession as was common for wayfarers in Japan during the Edo period.

## NATURAL SETTING

The bay comprises a large area of the image and defines the overall structure of the composition. Its distinct crescent shape depicts the Takanawa inlet. Takanawa is the name of a region in the eastern part of present day Minato Ward centering on the Tokaido Highway, with Shiba to the north and west and Shinagawa to the south. A

layer of orange-colored rocks fortifies the shore and divides water and land. These orange rocks are used for a manmade fortification bringing protection from the waves. It raises the street above water level. There is a uniform turbulence in the water. Within the bay are three boats, two of which appear to carry a large load of bales and one to ferry a group of people. Where the street ends beyond the row of shops and back into the distance there are rolling hills, littered sparsely by trees. There is a stockade fence separating the road and the hills. In the upper left corner there seems to be a motif of clouds or mist traditionally rendered as horizontally arranged bands.<sup>4</sup>

## INTERPRETING OBSERVATIONS

### PREPARING THE LOCALITY FOR A DAIMYO VISIT AND IMPRESSION OF THE PROCESSION ON THE LOCALS

While processions were a demonstration of power, both by the shogunate's authority to mandate them and the military display by its participants, examining how locals received them reveals hidden social and political structures. It was common practice to sweep the roads clean and place water buckets, brooms, and piles of decorative sand (*morizuna*) outside households and along the edge of the road in preparation for the departure of a procession.<sup>5</sup> However this display of purification and hospitable treatment varied. Shigenaga's print shows obvious signs of a clean street and decorative curtains placed in front of the shops, however no indications of water buckets, brooms, or piles of *morizuna*. Since treatment depended on the relationship

<sup>4</sup> On conventional rendering of clouds or mist as horizontally placed bands see: <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/k/kasumi>

<sup>5</sup> Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review*, no. 17, 2005, 5.



and status of the procession participants and that of the local lord, it is safe to assume that the participants in this print are not *bakufu* members, which would receive the highest level of hospitality, but rather received the standard treatment from post station officials. This reveals that social status was quite nuanced, with each lord having a specific rank in the social hierarchy. Interestingly this was not only known by the local lords and *bakufu* and post station officials but also the townspeople. These residents were expected to show public signs of respect which were not limited to but included: kneeling when the procession passed, removing hats and other head coverings, and refraining from playing around or making loud noises.<sup>6</sup> Shigenaga's print deliberately shows a handful of townspeople seemingly leisurely walking about as the procession passes. Many are still wearing hats and all totally contrary to the proper etiquette besides one figure who is kneeling right before the *norimono*. Perhaps this is less of a comment on status but rather an issue of practicality. The lengthy procession made following etiquette an inconvenience for the entire duration. As such many townspeople chose to exclusively kneel during the passing of the unit housing the lord.<sup>7</sup>

### IMPRESSION OF THE NOVEL VISUAL EXPERIENCE ON THE MEMBERS OF THE PROCESSION

Further complicating the social order is economic wealth, which does not necessarily coincide with the class structure. As processions traveled from their hometowns to bigger and brighter cities, they were confronted by a difference of culture and prosperity.

6 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review*, no. 17, 2005, 8.

7 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review*, no. 17, 2005, 9.

Although samurai belonged to a much higher class compared to townspeople, often the economic disparity between the two was reversed and drastic.<sup>8</sup> Travelling through different towns offered novel sights as well as sounds and smells. This included different dialects in certain places. For the procession members who would purchase goods and perform activities within these towns this proved to be a special inconvenience. For a big city like Edo, dialect manuals were a popular solution.<sup>9</sup> However it was the responsibility of procession members to make the necessary accommodations to understand the local dialect.

### TRANSMISSION OF MATERIAL CULTURE

While alternative attendance was designed to keep the shogunate in control, it grew upon its original purpose, extensively impacting the cultural and economic landscape of Japan through extensive transmission of material culture. Traveling to Edo was both a novel and memorable experience for domainal retainers. One method of legitimizing their trip was to purchase local souvenirs and other commodities.<sup>10</sup> If large amounts of goods, too large to be carried, were bought, arrangements would be made to transport these items back home by boat.<sup>11</sup> Purchases within the grand city of Edo were undoubtedly the most extensive. As such Edo became the predominant station for purchase of foreign and domestic goods. Alternative Attendance served as the mechanism by

8 Vaporis, Constantine N. "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1997, 38.

9 Vaporis, Constantine N. "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1997, 39.

10 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 41.

11 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 42.

which these goods could circulate and be distributed throughout the country.<sup>12</sup> As a way to prove their journey, samurai would often buy gifts for friends and family back home.<sup>13</sup> However as mentioned before the disparity of wealth between samurai varied greatly. The economic luxury displayed by retainers during the trip was a direct indicator of their prosperity.

## INTERACTION WITH PEERS

Alternative Attendance impacted culture not only in material transmission but also intellectual exchange. It was customary for Daimyo to meet with educated elites along their route for Alternative Attendance.<sup>14</sup> Once in the *bakufu* city, elites would be able to interact with one another, often enjoying organized theater performances or tea ceremonies.<sup>15</sup> However, exchange of information was not limited to these elites. On the contrary artists and artisans of certain daimyo would be specifically ordered to travel to Edo to exchange knowledge in their craft.<sup>16</sup> In fact this was not only customary of artists and artisans but applied to practitioners of virtually every field of study. These trips would lead to extensive periods of study, in hopes of developing the ultimate level of expertise. Edo's cultural prowess offered new sources of knowledge, technology, and cultural experiences completely unknown to other domains. Additionally was the opportunity to study with masters of each craft who resided in Edo. This exchange resulted in a pyramid effect, influencing large numbers of people, far in excess of those who actually traveled

12 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 42.

13 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 43.

14 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 49.

15 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 49.

16 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 51.

to, and lived in, as information learned on the voyage was eventually brought back to their homes and spread there.<sup>17</sup>

## PUTTING TOGETHER A PROCESSION

With all its extending impacts on culture, it should be emphasized that the viewing experience of processions was also an awe inspiring spectacle. Processions achieved this by their sheer size, the largest of which were composed of 2,000 to 3,000 men.<sup>18</sup> The daimyo did not assemble this large amount of men simply for show. It was meant to be a practical demonstration of gathering his military forces. Another element of processions was the attire worn by its participants. Although they were dressed in uniform, specifically designed to communicate a sense of order, color and detail played an extravagant role, giving viewers great pleasure.<sup>19</sup> In Shigenaga's print close attention is placed in distinguishing the different garments worn, and although the colors are limited, specific placement communicates the variation in color and pattern of the uniforms. Just as important as the attire were the weapons and other items carried by participants. Much like the overall theme of the procession, they served the dual purpose of practicality to be used in combat but also demonstration as a spectacle to be witnessed.

## CONCLUSION

Although Alternative Attendance was simply founded for the Shogun to maintain his power, it had a tremendous impact on all of Japan, rapidly progressing its cultural development and exposing underlying problems within the current social and political structure. As Edo

17 Vaporis, "To Edo and Back: Alternate Attendance and Japanese Culture in the Early Modern Period." 54.

18 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." 12.

19 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." 17.

became an epicenter of material and intellectual culture, Alternative Attendance allowed for the dispersion of its goods and information throughout all of Japan. Nishimura Shigenaga portrays a procession in its entirety. His faithful representation reveals subtle differences in the treatment processions received, both by local townspeople and the post stations. These differences reveal that not only elites but all Japanese people were aware of and based their responses and interactions upon the social hierarchy set in place. However this framework would begin to be challenged as friction arose between samurai and the lower class *chonin* who were gradually growing economically. His print initiates this transition as an early example of Ukiyo-e, the movement which belongs to the *chonin* and acts as a catalyst for social change.

upward to fill the rest of the image. This unique perspective could be explained by the fact that *uki-e* (floating/perspective pictures), which borrowed from European one point perspective only started in Japan in 1739. Expertise of perspective would need to be further developed before a more realistic representation of perspective would emerge.

Where Shigenaga persuades the audience of the grandeur of the procession is in its length. As the procession moves back in space, it seems to carry on for eternity.

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

This print captures the procession in its entirety, by using the perspective of a distant bird's eye view. This creates an overall evenness as procession participants are portrayed with the same weight as townspeople. Assuming the procession was a display of authority and military power, this creates a dichotomy between its role and the portrayal in this print. While some townspeople seem to be performing according to the proper behavior requirements, others either seem to be caught in the mix or are simply overlooking the event with an indifferent attitude.

Arguably the biggest component of this print is the dominating sideways U shape. This movement is seen first in the shape of the overall procession and is repeated with the edge of the shoreline and row of shops on the right hand side.

The image appears to follow one point perspective, but rather than breaking at the horizon line, the ground plane continues

# Leaving Edo behind: Passing Shinagawa on the way to Kyoto

Rauf Syunyaev



Attributed to Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) *Procession of a Daimyo Passing Shinagawa on the Way to Kyoto* (Go-daimyō gosankin onobori). Shinagawa no zu (御大名御参勤御登り品川之図) From the series *Newly Published Perspective Pictures* (Shinpan uki-e - 新版浮画) Publisher: Iwatoya Kisaburō (Eirindō). Ca. 1798-1800

This print depicts the daimyo and his numerous retinue on their way from Edo to their home domain after completing their service for the alternate attendance cycle. The alternate attendance system, called *sankin kotai* was implemented through shogunate order mandating that daimyo spend time, often a year, in Edo at the Tokugawa Castle. Daimyo were stimulated to comply as their families had to remain in the capital at all times, practically held hostage. This system provided an opportunity for the highly valuable exchange of information between various parts of Japan, often separated from one another by vast distances. It also furnished many job opportunities and

facilitated wealth distribution through the necessities of travel. Looking at two prints discussed here (compare cat. No. 1) one can clearly make out the many shops lining the procession path. Along with wealth, manifestations of culture traveled as well.<sup>1</sup> The depicted people could be seen as loyal subjects fulfilling their duty, but they can also be perceived as taken advantage of.

## SETTING

The piece *Procession of a Daimyo Passing*

<sup>1</sup> Constantine N. Vapori, *Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority*, Japan Review, 2005, 17: 15

*Shinagawa on the Way to Kyoto*, unsigned but attributed to Katsushika Hokusai, depicts a long cortege of samurai. Similar cortege is marching near the area shown in Nishimura Shigenaga's print of a daimyo procession coming through the town of Takanawa (cat. No. 1). The distance between depicted geographic locations is approximately four kilometers, google maps estimates it at a forty-eight minute walk from Shinagawa to Takanawa.

The presently discussed print by Hokusai depicts fifty-eight male figures taking part in the procession, with twelve figures on boats nearby. It is known that they are all male because only men participated in processions. The view here is also from above, but at an angle. This angle allowed Hokusai to capture Mt. Fuji fully although it is over one hundred kilometers away. This is relevant in the context of Hokusai's practice as he famously depicted the mountain in his *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji* some thirty years later. The composition is dedicated to the procession itself with people moving in a 'U' shape around the bend of the bay, and the water with boats taking up the left vertical third of the image. The figures closest to the viewer are depicted in detail, their facial expressions can be easily made out, as can their relationships to those nearby. Some men participating in the journey can be seen turning and gesticulating to one another. Even the horses are dynamic, moving and responding to what's going on around them. The detail is lessened, and the forms get smaller as the viewer looks past the front planes - into the distance in accordance with perspective. The large, most contextually important form is that of Mt. Fuji.

Historically Mt. Fuji has always instilled the sense of religious awe. It was seen as a home of numerous Shinto and Buddhist deities and from the Heian period (8th - 12th cc) was also identified with the Shinto deity *Konohanasakuya-hime*.<sup>2</sup> The

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veneration of Mt. Fuji is rooted in tradition, incomparably older than the practice of processions.

Hokusai focused on the life surrounding the mountain - the vegetation, the fauna (here the birds), and the people. The mountain could be thought of as its own autonomous being as well as a part of the habitat. Mt. Fuji is meant to be the focus here as the entire procession is made to be going toward it, away from the shogun's castle. Perhaps Hokusai symbolically made a case for a journey to the essential spiritual traditions by having the procession be headed towards Mt. Fuji and away from the shogun.

The time must be around noon in this image, as the travelers are moving west, and the shadows on the water do not have a clear direction. It appears to be windy as the boats in the distance are taunt and full sail. It must be high tide as the bushes are half covered in the water, and the boats are able to be so close to shore. The shops lining the pathway are similar to *gassho* style houses, with thatched slanted roofs. The season is likely summer judging by the lush green tree crowns, one particularly prominent at the very bottom left and many more along the curve of the shore. The only tree with red foliage is next to a group of tall green-leaved trees suggesting it is a-year-around red-leaved species like the red maple.

## COMPOSITION

The first point that the viewer would likely notice is the tangle of contrasted muted red and green tones. Because the cluster is in the middle of the work, it draws attention to itself. Upon closer inspection it appears that the tangle is made up of the objects carried by members of the processions on their shoulders - sheathed guns, bows and boxes for the daimyo's official attire; all these objects are seen in direct proximity to the nearby green trees. At this point in their viewing the

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2 Timothy Clark, 100 Views of Mount Fuji. (Weatherhill, 2001), 9.

beholder might notice the less obvious parabolic swoop inscribed in the image. This partially implied line begins at the top of the fourth sailboat from the left — this is an important point to note. From this point the implied line moves down diagonally to the highest point on the sailboat immediately to the right. From there it jumps across the three far shore outcroppings before settling smoothly on the depicted line of the shore. The line ends at the figures cresting it. There are many smaller repetitions of this grander shape. The many small hills in the distance are this shape, the mountain itself is this shape, the birds' paths of flight are in this shape as well.

These repeated shapes are reminiscent of the fractilian nature of Hokusai's most famous piece, *The Great Wave of Kanagawa*, from the *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* series.<sup>3</sup> That work similarly has one main shape that is repeated throughout the piece. It also depicts Hokusai's beloved subject of Mt. Fuji from Kanagawa about thirty kilometers away from where the depicted procession took place in Shinegawa. The repetition of the wave shape is more obvious in *The Great Wave of Kanagawa* where the wave breaks down at its fringes into itself. In the *Procession of a Daimyo Passing Shinagawa on the Way to Kyoto* the main element of the composition, that 'U' shape, serves as the main shape, and then is repeated throughout the print. The eddy is found not in the water itself, but rather in the confines the shore imposes on the water. The current in Katsushika Hokusai's Prussian blue wave comes from the contents of the ocean gaining energy and reacting to one another by themselves. The composition of Hokusai's procession print accentuates the confines of still ocean water imposed by a shoreline of dirt and vegetation. Notably the 'C' shape repeated so often in the wave, is similar to the 'U' found in

the shoreline. This parabolic shape is set out in contrast to the triangle shape of Mt. Fujis, its sides curving towards its middle. There are further examples of this being the case within the *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji*, for example in the sixth print of the series *Cushion Pine at Aoyama* (fig. 2): in this work the bottom half of the image is taken up by a hill. The hill has a sort of sinusoidal curve to it, repeated in its treeline. Every ninety degree segment of a sine wave is a quarter circle. The curve from 270 degrees to 360 degrees immediately followed by the curve from 180 degrees to 270 degrees makes a shape that looks like Mt. Fuji (fig 1). There is a relationship between those two main bodies, primarily set up as a result of them dominating the image, everything else is mostly implied space. This wave-like curve is pushed down the z-axis and contorted in accordance with perspective in the *Procession of a Daimyo Passing Shinagawa on the Way to Kyoto*. The winding path would look sinusoidal if regarded from a birds eye view. This connection is not without precedent either, such a winding path is clearly depicted in the print *Ejiri in Suruga Province* (fig 4), from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. The secondary connection comes from the curves of the treeline matching up so clearly with the curves of the mountain. The negative space that both forms share is similar to the form of Mt. Fuji. Much like the effect in *Reflection in Lake at Misaka in Kai Province* (fig. 3), the shape of Mt. Fuji opposite its reflection becomes a four part inversion of a circle as defined by the print's corners. The print can be cut in four and reshuffled so that the negative space together creates a circle in the middle. The *Procession* is compositionally arranged as an exploration of a circle inscribed in a square broken up by four. The resulting lines make up larger versions of themselves resulting in a fractal pattern. At the center of the print there is an implied circle as well. The deepest indent of the shoreline outlines the depicted right half of the circle, while

3 "Disc and Sphere Tremas: Moon Craters and Galaxies." *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, by Benoit B. Mandelbrot, Freeman, 1983, pp. 305.

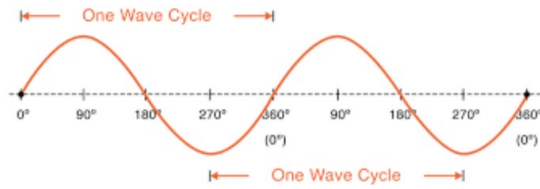


Fig. 1. Sinusoid.



Fig. 3. Katsushika Hokusai. *Reflection in Lake at Misaka in Kai Province*, from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. 1830-1832



Fig. 2. Katsushika Hokusai. *Cushion Pine at Aoyama*, from *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. 1830-1832



Fig. 4. *Ejiri in Suruga Province*, from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. 1830-1832

the two angled boats and shadows create an inferred left half.

This four part inversion can be seen in drawings likely studied by Hokusai.<sup>4</sup> These drawings done by Moriyama Churyo on the basis of Dutch art manuals have the same composition within themselves but on a micro scale. In the cited book, the drawn portraits are split up in this manner, rather than printed landscapes.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that with his art Hokusai was necessarily looking at the math being published a few years before he began working on these prints. This is rather to say that these geometric terms apply to his prints, and that his visual lexicon can be better understood through these terms. The assumption in outlining this

connection is that Hokusai came to these mathematical forms as an artistic device. He found a way to connect every part of his image, even inherent contradictions, by using this form.

## COLOR

In this print the figures can be clearly seen to be moving towards Mt. Fuji, which stands between Edo and Kyoto. The daimyo procession must be returning home to the clan's domain rather than moving towards the shogun's castle Edo. Notably, the color changes mostly in that it becomes more general, the boats in the distance are the whites of the sails contrasting the black birds above, and figures gradually become a monotone tan. The color change is consistent with atmospheric perspective, even though there is no blue. The trees remain mostly the same color while consistently smaller and less detailed. Mt. Fuji stands out as only linework floating above the horizon

4 Christine M. E. Guth, *Hokusai's Geometry*. Review of *Japanese Culture and Society*, DECEMBER 2008, Vol. 20. *The Culture of Translation in Modern Japan* (DECEMBER 2008), pp. 120-132

line, contained between two trees. There are four different hues used in this work, with consecutive colors being applied with different blocks.

## PROCESSION

The street in this image is completely clear even though it is apparently a dirt road. Everything else close to the viewer has some degree of texture on it. It could be that in addition to other considerations, the ground has no texture marks whatsoever because the roads had to be swept absolutely clean before the passing of the lord daimyo.<sup>6</sup> The villagers in the station-towns were to kneel and keep quiet while the procession passed. Otherwise they were not to show themselves in public. Curiously, there seems to be just one person kneeling — between the houses where the bay curves up although it is still not quite clear why the person is shown in a seated position. There are multiple people watching the ongoings. In his writing, Vaporis interprets the procession as a theatre, mentioning the inherent display of power and authority over the proceedings. In this particular print there does not appear to be any subtle hint at manifestation of this that could be concretely realized; rather this print increases the viability of the many men moving like a force of nature between water and mountain. The act of meticulously carving and printing this image repeatedly with great time and skill spent only highlights the power and authority of the shogun in Japan. One thing setting this piece apart is the movement away from the capital. It would be difficult to classify this decision as rebellion on the part of the artist, but it is a deliberate choice in procession prints. This work is not about men traveling to perform their duty to the shogunate but rather the odyssey back home, and in the same moment away from the family that

always remained in Edo, as mentioned above. In addition, there is perhaps a visual parallel for the castle in the Mountain itself as the procession's metaphorical aim; the procession is still moving towards a structure but it is a mountain rather than a man-made building.

The large number of men is important not only to show the power and authority of the state as a whole, but specifically to show the power of a particular region. The size of the procession “was a matter of local pride even in dire economic times.”<sup>7</sup> Every man in the procession represented not only himself, but a larger unit of wealth and manpower. This understanding changes the interpretation of the cluster of bodies in the center of the image. As the viewer looks into the picture, the individuals stop being apparent and the march begins to look like a single giant centipede beast snaking away into the landscape. To illustrate the scale and proportion of the size of a daimyo entourage, Vaporis used the case of Tosa domain which is useful to the same effect here:

*In the case of a large domain such as Tosa, with an assessed productive capacity (kokudaka) of about 200,000 koku (1.09 million bushels) of rice, more than 2,000 men often accompanied the Yamauchi lord on his biennial journeys to and from Edo during the late seventeenth century... The largest procession on record for Tosa involved some 2,775 persons (1690).<sup>8</sup>*

## BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Such a simile is fair when discussing Hokusai's work, as he often blurred the line between man and nature. In many of his pieces, the synthetic — man-made — was as monolithic as the natural. Occasionally, Hokusai went as far as to make the people populating his artwork as grand as the mountain. This decision

6 Constantine Vaporis, “Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority,” *Japan Review*, 2005, 17:5

7 Ibid., 15

8 Ibid., 14



makes sense as the mountain was often personified as an anthropomorphic deity. Everything in Hokusai's work is related back to basic geometric shapes. From the smallest element to the general layout of his images everything can be related back to a triangle, square, or circle. There is a similarity here both to Japanese elemental theory in the five great *godai* where everything on earth is made up of basic constituents. There is also a connection to other Buddhist principles of interconnection, such as unity of sutras and meditation (zen) in the *kyōzen-itchi* school that was so popular in post-warring states Japan. The connection extends too to Shinto and Confucianism ideology centered around the cohesion between *kami* and man. The nineteenth century Japanese audience would have been well aware of the importance of unity in life and artmaking. Hokusai specifically was a Nichiren Buddhist, and so would have thought deeply about *Gosho* (御書), Nichiren's important writing, specifically about his words on unity:

*If...the believers are united with the spirit of many in body, one in mind (itai dōshin), they will achieve everything, whereas, in the case of one in body, many in mind (dōtai ishin), they will not accomplish anything.*<sup>9</sup>

Many parts moving as one, as in a procession or in an artwork developed through basic geometry, must have been of spiritual interest to Hokusai based on his setting and on his personal belief system.

9 Nichiren. Essay. In Gosho, 1389–89. Kyōto: Heirakuji Murakami Kanbe, 1756. Found at : Takano, Rev Taishin. honseiji.org. 2020, honseiji.org/pdf/Unity-Based-on-Many-in-Body-One-in-Mind.pdf.

# Shogun's River Crossing

Helina He Yuheng

The time is dusk. As the sun begins to fall from the distant mountain peaks, the crisp clatter of wood against the ground can be heard in the distance of the river bank. Local officials have been kneeling for long to greet this honorable scene: hundreds of samurais dressed in purple, a river of uniform march striking against the oppressive landscape miles away. Gallant horses tower over them, manes rippling in the wind. Lofty banners and spears poised in the air. At the heart of the processional cortege, in the river, a wide platform of saturated red color seems to be floating on the shoulders of ferrymen, carrying presumably no other but the shogun himself.

Organized movement of large groups of people is a scene of many ukiyo-e prints of the Edo period. Processions of military men were not rare occurrences, due to the *sankin kotai* or “the alternate attendance” system that regulated life of the daimyo during the time. However, shogun processions as represented in the prints are much magnified and aggrandized, usually caring for important political messages. When published in the vivid style of ukiyo-e, the procession's lofty position and strength were broadcasted. Even in face of geographical challenges like rivers, warriors endeavored to maintain the shogun's glamor and grace, as a metaphor that the governor's power pervades every inch of the land.

In the following paragraphs, we will be analyzing the compositional features as well as historical facts associated with this print to demonstrate how *Abe River Crossing* itself stresses the authority of the shogun.

Traditional Japanese artworks often come

with inscriptions and seals for collection sake.<sup>1</sup> Two rectangles are displayed in the upper right corner. The red rectangle reads the series title: *Scenes of Famous Places along the Tōkaidō Road* (東海道名所之内 - *Tōkaidō meisho fūkei*). The smaller yellow rectangle follows, providing the print title: *Abe River* (阿べ川 - *Abekawa*), which is a shallow river in the Tokaido highway. In the bottom right corner, the artist's signature is enclosed by a red rectangle with a yellow border. It reads *Yoshitora ga* (芳虎画), meaning “picture by Yoshitora.” Above the artist's signature, in the circle frame, is a censor seal (*nanushi*) that says “<Year of> Boar, 5th <month>, *aratame* (approved). Shown in the white frames are the blockcutter's mark (Hori Ōta Tashichi 彫太田多七) and publisher's seal (Enshuya Hikobei 遠州屋彦兵衛) beginning with a cipher mark followed by the abbreviated name of the publishing house.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 1. Artist's signature (reads: *Yoshitora ga*)

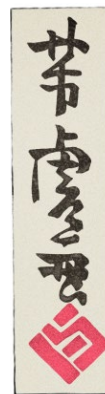


Fig. 2. Yoshitora's sample signature

As the inscription indicates, *Abe River Crossing* is designed by Yoshitora. The artist's full name is Utagawa Yoshitora (歌川)

1 MFA impressions: 11.16619, 11.16628, 11.44805, 11.44987, 2009.5009.63, Museum of Fine Arts Boston Collections. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/537566>

2 John Fiorillo. “FAQ: How do we interpret inscriptions and seals?”, *Viewing Japanese Prints*, 1999, [https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/topics\\_faq/faq\\_inscript\\_seals.html](https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/topics_faq/faq_inscript_seals.html).



Utagawa Yoshitora (active ca 1850-1880). *The Abe River*, from the series *Scenes of Famous Places along the Tōkaidō Road* (東海道名所之内 阿べ川 - Tōkaidō meisho fūkei Abekawa) Publisher: Enshūya Hikobei (遠州屋彦兵衛); Carver: Hori Ōta Tashichi (彫太田多七) 1863 (Bunkiyū 3), 5th month

芳虎) . Apprenticed under the preeminent ukiyo-e master Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川 國芳), Yoshitora gained his fame with a series of warrior prints depicting characters from the Chinese novel *The Water Margin*. He witnessed the very last peaceful period of the Edo period. Then, the forced opening of Japan in 1853 brought turbulence to Yoshitora and his peer ukiyo-e print designers. The artist switched from native topics to depiction of people and goods from foreign lands, the genre known as *yokohama-e*. In his later years, Yoshitora also produced war prints. Utagawa Yoshitora, we may say, is an artist who experienced the prosperity and the fall of ukiyo-e.

The series *Scenes of Famous Places along the Tōkaidō Road* (東海道名所之内), also known as *Gojo Raku Tokaido* (御上洛東海道) or the *Processional Tōkaidō*, recorded a historical travel of a shogun to the emperor. The print dates to 1863, when the Tokugawa shogunate was facing both domestic troubles and foreign pressures. In that year, the 14th shogun Tokugawa Iemochi 徳川 家茂 paid a visit to Kyoto to state the policy of “opening the country”. It was the first visit by a shogun to the imperial city of Kyoto in 230 years, historically known as the *shogun Tokugawa Iemochi historic travel or Kamiraku*. This big event attracted many Edo publishers and artists. They then published the *Processional Tokaido*, depicting a shogun’s procession from multiple perspectives. However, they replaced Iemochi with a Heian figure because of censorship laws. The artists who participated in this series were mostly from Utagawa School, which includes Utagawa Yoshitora.

The series title, *Tōkaidō Meisho Fūkei*, relates itself to *meisho-e* (名所絵) genre, direct translated as “pictures of famous places”. *Meisho-e* symbolizes the people’s pursuit of beautiful scenery, and more importantly, served as a tourism advertisement at that time. To give an example, the series by Katsushika Hokusai

entitled *Thirty-Six View of Mount Fuji* (early 1830s) features the iconic Mount Fuji, and helped promote leisure travel in Japan. *Meisho-e* was also used as many guidebooks, such as *Edo Meisho Zue* (1836) by Hasegawa Settan; Utagawa Hiroshige alone designed at least twenty series of prints with the views of the Tokaido Road stations, which were used as maps for some people traveling along Tokaido. But we believe *Processional Tokaido* is not just about landscape. Moreover, the series demonstrated how the military progressed on the landscape. The same group of shogun’s retinue strings the series together. *Processional Tokaido* stressed an interrelationship between the scenery and the people; to be more specific, prints from this series attest to the shogun’s pervasive power present in the beautiful scenery. Instead of landscape prints, we would rather consider *Processional Tokaido* as propaganda “posters” of a reportage nature, which is reflected in *Abe River Crossing* in every detail. Utagawa Yoshitora deliberately weaved a reportage tale of power and authority through multiple visual elements that we will discuss below.

## TIME & PLACE

Colors help demonstrate the time and the geography in *Abe River Crossing*. Blue takes over two thirds of the print’s surface; it sets the theme of river. A stripe of dark green was topped on the blue, signifying a large grassy area. Misty clouds afar are making the silhouette of the mountain that appears in grey. In the background, a slight gradient of orange rises from the bottom of the mountain, and the dark blue fades away on the very top of the print.

## EVENT

At this time, a troop of men in purple is crossing the river area. Bright yellow accents both ends of the procession as this is shown in the picture. And the



Fig. 43 Detail of *Abe River Crossing*: a warrior in blue

procession, depicted from large to small as it progresses away from the spectators, manifests an unusual angle. The cortege is arranged in a zig-zag shape so that more characters could be represented in the frame. Characters far away are shown as if lifted from the ground or vertically straightened.

At first glance, men in the procession look as if stamped one after the other as they create an impression of high uniformity. They look rather strengthless and delicate, represented by only a few lines. Yoshitora sacrificed details in order to represent the consistency of movement. Three river strands in the print mark the formation changes. Particularly, at the second strand, where the zig-zag procession turns its direction, the march switches to one column from two. This presumably signifies a division of the advance force and the main body (*hontai*, 本体), replicating the military composition of the retinue.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of uniform dominates *Abe River Crossing*. Coordinated costumes and weapons effaced individualism. In such numerous processions, members of the retinue are faceless, their expressions



Fig. 4. Detail of *Abe River Crossing*: the shogun

omitted. They perform similar actions. This is especially true about the porters in the water, whose upper torsos are completely pale so that they almost become a part of ripples on the water. If the members of the retinue have expressions, they are in mysterious smiles. Their concerted action has only one function: to serve and protect the paramount lord in the center. In such a procession, members of the retinue are not just themselves, but a physical extension of the shogun's power. Noticeably, in the pervasive sameness of the uniform a warrior in blue casts a slight change. He is looking towards the outer world outside the print. A big comic smile is clearly hanging over his face, which sets him apart from other dead faced members of the retinue. This figure may secretly carry Yoshitora's personal expressions. Is this the artist's self portrait?

Amidst the smooth and orderly movement, the shogun is well protected in the center of a litter, with twelve porters on each side carrying it. He is facing the direction of the mountain, shown as a grey silhouette. Yoshitora carefully placed the shogun in this position so that his full profile is legible. The shogun is sitting solemnly, with his upper body bending forward slightly. His eyes and nose are visible, which, together with his pose, resemble some characteristics of a Buddha statue.

3 Constantine N. Vaporis, "Lordly Pageantry : The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority", *Nichibunken Japan review : Journal of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies*.

## POLITICAL INFORMATION

### (1) THE SIZE OF THE SHOGUN'S ENTOURAGE

Through various means of showing the crowds, Yoshitora emphasized the size of the shogun's entourage. In *Abe River Crossing*, the procession is cut off in the middle, and the beginning of the parade vanishes in the distant crevices of the terrain, leaving the audience to imagine the actual size of the cortege. Furthermore, the zig-zag shape allows more people to be represented in the print. As Constantine Vaporis indicates, the size of the procession was the most immediate means to strike the imagination of citizens, demonstrating the lord's military power and wealth.<sup>4</sup> Research materials suggested that 3,000 retainers escorted shogun Iemochi in the procession in the real event.<sup>5</sup>

### (2) THE COLOR

Colors carried important political meanings as well. We consider two dimensions in relation to the color choices: (1) *Processional Tokaido* is a nishiki-e ("brocade prints" - full color prints). With the limited choice of 8-10 colors, in the print *Abe River Crossing* colors of the landscape are distributed in accordance with nature. (2) Colors in images of those in office have been associated with ranks since ancient times in Japan. *Abe River Crossing* applied those traditional symbolic color values to demonstrate status of the samurai in the shogun's retinue.

In *Abe River Crossing*, vermilion red, purple, yellow, black, and blue are main colors used to signify ranks.

In the center of this print, the top rank character, Shogun Iemochi, is highlighted by vermilion red of his immediate surroundings. Just as how the color

highlights the author's inscriptions at the side of the print, the red rectangle enframes the shogun. He wears a white slightly curved *jingasa* "camp hat" and is positioning himself gracefully on the platform. The litter (*rendai* 輦台) in the print is an extremely large wooden platform designed to transport travelers of high status.<sup>6</sup> It is used for occasions like crossing the water. A person behind the shogun is holding a ceremonial umbrella for him, also in vermilion. Despite their functional uses in the journey, both the *rendai* and the umbrella served ceremonial uses. Through implements that commoners are forbidden to use, the procession transforms the journey into a military spectacle, and the shogun is in the center of the display.

Purple is also a noble color employed to showcase status. In the closest foreground, crests are stressed on two purple banners as well. More details around the crest will be discussed below. Both the shogun and his escorts besides wear purple coats (*haori*). What differentiates the shogun's clothing is the white wavy patterns on his *haori* and his yellow collar. Interestingly, the author Yoshitora did not depict the crest on the shogun's attire according to the existing conventions. In *Abe River Crossing*, purple is only shown in the attires.

Yellow is not applied in large areas in the way comparable to the application of vermilion and purple, but it lights up some important zones and implements. On the bank, the two long banners held by samurais are in yellow. The banners are important military communication tools in any processions. They are symbols of shogunal processions. In the far end of the marching column, the carried items, roofs of the houses, and more banners are also shown in yellow. And the shogun is the only one who wears yellow collars. Although yellow is not used as frequently

4 Ibid.

5 "Utagawa Yoshitora", Token World, Token Corporation, Sword World Foundation, and Totsu Agency Co., Ltd, accessed November, 15, 202.

6 Andreas Marks, Andon 81, "When the Shogun Travels to Kyoto: The great Processional Tokaido series", 14. 30

1	大徳	Daitoku	Greater Virtue
2	小徳	Shōtoku	Lesser Virtue
3	大仁	Daijin	Greater Benevolence
4	小仁	Shōjin	Lesser Benevolence
5	大礼	Dairei	Greater Propriety
6	小礼	Shōrei	Lesser Propriety
7	大信	Daishin	Greater Sincerity
8	小信	Shōshin	Lesser Sincerity
9	大義	Daigi	Greater Justice
10	小義	Shōgi	Lesser Justice
11	大智	Daichi	Greater Knowledge
12	小智	Shōchi	Lesser Knowledge

Fig. 5. Colors used as symbols of rank in traditional Japanese society

as other colors, it plays an important role in marking the shogun, and starting up and ending of the procession in the print. Yellow is a transitional color from the noble procession to the earthly world.

The men who are closest to us, the spectators, are in black. They wear green trousers (*hakama*) and bear double swords (*daisho*) with green handle wraps. Two of those men took off their *jingasa* hats and placed them on the ground, while the other two are standing and holding tall yellow flags. These people are local official samurais who are there to greet the shogun procession. Their swords are thrust in their *obi* sashes, and their hairstyles reflect their status.

A little above them are two retainers in blue. They wear black cloth leggings (*kyahan*), black *jingasa* hats, and green *obi* sashes (belts). They do not have the same long sleeved black coat nor the loose trousers as the local officials do. This suggests that their ranks are lower than those of the samurai officials.

not colored. They form two lines on both sides of the procession and are deep in the water to ensure the crossing. Their upper torsos are naked, and the hair bands are their only accessories. With twelve persons on each side, a group of porters carries the shogun's *rendai*. While no porters are in front of the shogun, there are several porters behind him, forming a loose U shape. One of them is taking the crucial role of holding the vermilion ceremonial umbrella over the shogun; others are just guarding the shogun. German writer Engelbert Kaempfer noted that local dwellers were entrusted as river porters specifically because only locals were familiar with the typography.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, we doubt if those porters are all local commoners, because it seems impossible that commoners might be granted the honor of carrying shogun's umbrella. But whether the porters are local residents-commoners or warriors, they are for sure of the lowest social rank represented in the print.

In Edo Japan, colors denoted the social hierarchy. The policy was applied to *obi* (belts), and other garments and accessories. Ancient Japan introduced the *Twelve Level Cap and Rank System* based on the Confucian values, and assigned six colors as symbols corresponding to the ranking.<sup>8</sup> Among those, purple was deemed as the most noble color and was reserved for the top rank people. Even though the policy was dispelled in the Tokugawa period, people of different social classes

7 Engelbert Kaempfer, Chapter 1, Book 5, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed* (University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1999), 246

8 Sarah W and Fiona, "The Traditional Colors of Japan", TOKUFU(blog), September 12, 2013, <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/color-in-japan/>.



Fig. 6. Detail of *Abe River Crossing*.



Fig. 7. Sasarindō crest

still needed to follow Edo's strict dress code. This explains why the samurais wear uniformed purple as costumes. The reddish colors were also limited to the high ranks, as well as the yellow that resembles gold and the rising sun. Inherited from the color values in China, red and yellow carry auspicious meanings, and were associated with imperial powers as well. The use of red and yellow, in combination with the white, present the lord's procession as a festive occurrence. Adding on to Constantine Vaporis's discourses<sup>9</sup>, the lord sought to associate these auspicious values with his reign to promote a sense of religious blessings. The lord's reign has been sanctioned by the sun, so that he would bring happiness and good luck to the land he governs.

While purple, red, and yellow are associated with the highest status, blue hues were likened to common people since ancient times. In *Abe River Crossings*, the two guardians that are not on horseback wear blue *happi* (hip-length coats), which signals that they are of lower status than other samurais in purple *haori*.

### (3) THE CREST

Two purple banners bearing crests of three flowers and five leaves were stressed in *Abe River Crossing*. Although the procession carries banners and decorative weapons, these two marker banners are not represented as being carried by somebody. They seem to come from nowhere. In terms of the intentions, the banners are more likened to be the



Fig. 8. Kawamura Kiyoo 川村 清雄, Portrait of Tokugawa Iemochi 徳川家茂像, 1884, oil on canvas, Tokugawa Memorial Foundation, Tokyo



marks and inscriptions aside. These banners serve more informative needs than decorative.

The pattern on the banners is called *sasarindō*. Composed of three gentian flowers with five bamboo leaves underneath, the pattern is considered as one of the oldest crests in Japan. When used as a family crest, *sasarindō* is often associated with the Minamoto clan. In fact, *Processional Tokaido* equated Shogun Iemochi to the historic figure Minamoto no Yoritomo in the Heian period. Artists of the series replaced the shogun deliberately, because censorship laws strictly forbade direct portrayals of members of the Tokugawa. Depictions dealing with the contemporary events could be interpreted as political commentaries at that time. Therefore, the author Yoshitora chose to place the crest banners in a very noticeable position so as to meet the publication laws.

Scholar Andreas Marks states that it was not the shogun who commissioned the series of prints because no crests of the shogun were shown in this series.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the current author would stand with the ukiyo-e website Artelino<sup>11</sup> that Shogun Iemochi entrusted publication of the *Processional Tokaido* to reinstate his power and authority. According to Constantine Vaporis' article, processions projected lesser deterrent forces at the end of the Edo period. In 1836, the Tokugawa shogunate was close to dissolution. Events such as protests of the samurai and disobedience of commoners occurred at that period.<sup>12</sup> However, such chaotic scenes were excluded from the *Processional Tokaido*. The series rather depicts a harmonious, orderly, and solemn marching. The group is even shown as

maintaining a graceful pace when crossing the river, as manifested in the print discussed here. The *Processional Tokaido* strengthens the image of this cortege being a regular procession that represents the ultimate power of the military government, which is to a large extent unrealistic during Shogun Iemochi's reign. As has been said above, it is possible that the shogun himself demanded the series prints to reestablish the image of his administration.

Even though Iemochi's identity was fused with that of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the landscapes and the characters in *Abe River Crossing* remain contemporary. Scholar Noriko Yamamoto notes that the depictions of the shogun were recognized as images of Iemochi by the contemporaries at the first glance.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, *Processional Tokaido* served Shogun Iemochi's propaganda needs with a suggestion of his presence. By paralleling Tokugawa Iemochi with Minamoto no Yoritomo, who effectively controlled the whole country after the famous Genpei War (1180-1185), *Processional Tokaido* sold the information that shogun Iemochi possessed the same virtue and potentials to make the country prosper again.

To conclude, even though *Abe River Crossing* used Minamoto's crest, this composition serves as a conceit that linked Shogun Iemochi to the historical greatman, and therefore further served the shogun's propaganda needs.

10 Marks, 5.

11 Dieter Wanczura, "Tokaido meisho-no-uchi." Artelino, last modified December 20, 2018, <https://www.artelino.com/articles/tokaido-meisho-no-uchi.asp>.

33 12 Vaporis, 15.

13 Noriko Yamamoto 山本 野理子氏, "東海道中を描く錦絵の新展開 —「御上洛東海道」を中心に [New development of Nishiki-e depicting the middle of Tokaido-Focusing on Gojo Raku Tokaido]," PhD diss., (Kwansei Gakuin University 関西学院大学, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The so-called *Processional Tokaido*, the largest print series in the history of ukiyo-e, consisting of 162 designs commemorates perhaps the grandest procession of a high official from the military class - a procession of Shogun Iemochi to the emperor. The magnitude of the enterprise required collaboration of sixteen designers and twenty-four publishers.<sup>14</sup> *Abe River Crossing*, one of thirteen prints designed by Utagawa Yoshitora for this series, is indicative of many features deliberately applied to express the authority of the military government. In this print, the river has become a stylised formal theatrical stage in which the contrasting sharp shapes of the procession are displayed. One sense is that the artist has represented a formula rather than a likeness of the event as the characters are not portraits of specific warriors but rather ideal warriors that reflect the status and desires of the patron. By emphasizing the size of the procession, the colors of ranks, and the historical Minamoto clan crest in Iemochi's procession, *Abe River Crossing* served as an event reportage that exalts the Tokugawa's shogunate soon destined to wane.

# PART II. CHIKANOBU'S NOSTALGIC YEARNINGS: fantasy of the past

## So Long, Shogun

Kade Bryand

Hundreds of men in bright colors twist around the roads of Edo; around them, crowds gather to witness the procession's journey to the gateway of the Kan'ei-ji temple complex that with its eighty-six buildings once dominated Ueno. This tour was likely done on the behalf of the man seated in the huge palanquin being carried in the middle ground. The citizens of Edo were quite familiar with these Daimyo processions, due to the strict regulations imposed by the *Shogunate*. Under the *sankin kotai* system, all daimyo – the regional lords of Japan – had to alternate a year in Edo in the service of the shogun and a year in their own domain. Thus, all 250 daimyo had to pass through the city of Edo twice a year either entering the capital or departing from it.

Here, however, the procession is different as its goal was a visit to an important temple, and not to leave the city of Edo. Despite this difference in intent, the procession still shared many features with the traditional daimyo procession. It was a usual practice for such official processions of the military to have the porters of hasamibako chests in the front rows of the cortege. Recognizable is the standard set of conspicuous implements carried by the participants – the banners, the rounded rain helmet covered in cloth and tied with a purple cord, a halberd *naginata*, tall folded parasols, etc. These processions

were a sight to behold, though this crowd might find themselves disappointed, as the palanquin's roof obscures the official's figure and completely covers his head. Here, due to the way the structure blocks his face, the Tokugawa official looks less like a man of high status and more like a victim of decapitation. Was the artist just following the older Tokugawa regulations not to represent anyone from the Tokugawa household? Or was it a hint made on purpose? (Fig. 2).

With its western-style perspective, detailed figures, and lavish detail, *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno* seems like a quite objective account of processions and how they took place. This could be the case, but there are plenty of reasons to think that this piece holds a much deeper, and more personal connection to the artist Toyohara Chikanobu (1838–1912). To successfully interpret this triptych, a picture composed of three interconnected panels, the life of the artist too must be analyzed, which is done in a later section of this paper.

### A PROCESSION OF A FEUDAL LORD

*A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno* (fig. 1) was made nearly two decades after the practice of the alternate attendance processions had



Fig. 1. A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno. Toyohara Chikanobu [c1889]



Fig. 2

ended, yet it is filled with such detailed imagery that it seems almost like it was drawn from observation. Unlike many other ukiyo-e prints, the members of the procession are given a considerable amount of variety in regards to body type and faces, something that was likely inspired by the Western visual arts practice. The same can be said about the piece's perspective, which evokes an realistic space by making use of vanishing points. This idea of 'realistic' perspective was not found in older ukiyo-e prints, but rather was imported by European books and formed specific type of images known as uki-e, or "perspective pictures," which

were frequently practiced by the Utagawa school.<sup>1 2</sup>

Additionally, while the forms aren't rendered to the quasi 'photorealistic' level found in many Renaissance-era European paintings, the figures are more naturalistic in proportions, and the scene itself mostly follows Western perspective rules. These differences set it apart from many older

1 Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. "[Definition] Uki-e 浮絵." 渥美財団, [www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/u/ukie.htm](http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/u/ukie.htm).

2 "Perspective Picture (Uki-e): Theater District at Dawn on Opening Day of the Kabuki Season." Metmuseum.org, [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/36669](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/36669).

ukiyo-e prints, which tended to be flatter and more stylized. In general, the majority of Chikanobu's work, especially that found later in his career, followed the more Western tradition, moving away from the stylings of older Ukiyo-e prints. The intent here seems to make this piece approximate the manner similar to a photograph, taking the viewer to a richly detailed and seemingly real Edo of the past.

This of course would make sense given Chikanobu's deep regard for Edo period Japan and nostalgia for those bygone days of the traditional past. In such works he wanted to take viewers back to a time he greatly admired and the type of event he had participated in. It is quite possible that the rich observational aspects of the piece are re-created from Chikanobu's own memories and experiences, a feature that the majority of historical prints lack. There is certainly a uniqueness that comes from prints derived from events experienced first hand by the artist. The event's details and nuances which might otherwise be missed by a secondary source can be rendered, while the personal experience of the artist might allow for more impactful, albeit subjective, point of view.

What truly brings *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno* alive, though, is the rich specificity of the scene. As noted already, the figures are all granted a level of uniqueness and anatomical accuracy that adds an extra layer of realism, but it is the amount of subtle interactions and confrontations all occurring simultaneously that truly make the print seem like a photograph. Chikanobu is precise in details. During processions, onlookers were demanded to kneel. Should they fail to do it fast enough, they would risk punishment, such as being struck and hassled by the passing samurai.<sup>3</sup> In Chikanobu's print, a

confrontation akin to that appears to be taking place in the very foreground on the right-hand sheet of the composition. Two samurai wearing black are shown outside the parading column. One of these men is scowling down at a group of kneeling onlookers. The other seems to be signaling for them to stay down and potentially trying to defuse tension between people in the crowd and their detractor. As has been said, this interaction fills the bottom right corner of the image and demands attention, as it stands out as substantially more dynamic than anything else in the piece. Are these samurai being shown with admiration, for keeping order during such a crowded event? Or are they supposed to be oppressors, enforcing authority on the helpless onlookers watching? And does Chikanobu imply himself in those two men? –for he used to hold their job. For a piece coated in such nostalgia, it is absolutely riveting to see such a nuanced and well rendered display of history.

Chikanobu was by all accounts an expert on Daimyo Processions, and the attention to detail on display in regards to clothing and accessories is stunning. A wide range of traditional headgear is shown<sup>4</sup> along with details such as traditional *kamons*, or crests. For example, on the palanquin lies the distinctive family crests shaped as three hollyhock leaves *mitsuba-aoi* inscribed in a circle – the emblem of the Tokugawa clan. The same crest but on a larger scale is repeated on the *hasamibako*, or traveling chests that are carried by white-robed porters at the head of the procession. Additionally, several members of the procession are wearing other crests like that for the Tsuru-Kashiawa clan, which is composed of oak leaves with tendrils, or that for the Musubi-Karigane clan, which is made up of three geese with the heads knotted.

However, the thing that stands out the most might be the colorful stylings of the clothing. This is not a dramatization, but

3 Vaporis, Constantine N. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, ser. 54, 2005, pp. 3–54. 54.

4 "Crown and Eboshi." *Kariginu.jp*, Encyclopedia of Employed Costumes, [www.kariginu.jp/kikata/2-2.htm](http://www.kariginu.jp/kikata/2-2.htm).

rather an accurate depiction of Daimyo wear. Constantine Vaporis (2005) notes that one of the primary elements to the spectacle of Daimyo Processions was the “coordinated and colorful” nature of the men’s clothing, and they would make a particular note to change into their formal attire whenever entering or leaving Edo. This lavish clothing is clearly carried over into Chikanobu’s piece, as men can be found in outfits of various colors, including dark and light blue and green, pink, a variety of earth tones, along with black and white. These colors not only served to draw a crowd, but also served as a display of wealth and rank, as the style and color of clothing was dictated by bakufu regulations. Vaporis does not specifically note what these regulations were, though Donald H. Shively notes that Daimyo were instructed to not be too outrageous in their clothing as not to rival the shogun.<sup>5</sup>

Given the importance of color in daimyo clothing, it makes sense that the colors in the print would be of particular importance. There is without a doubt a more full range of colors in *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno* than in many of Chikanobu’s older work, such as *Reports of the Heroes of Kagoshima*, *Kirino Toshiaki*, *Maehara Ikkaku* (fig. 4) along with ukiyo-e prints from the early 18th and 19th centuries. A reason for this might be due to a change in the available forms of dye, as starting in 1869 new ones were imported from the West, allowing for more vibrant colors. However, many pieces of the late Edo period continued to use the traditional Japanese dye, so this vibrancy might be unrelated.<sup>6</sup>

The print discussed here belongs to the series of seven triptychs issued in 1888–

5 Shively, Donald H. “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 25, 1964, p. 151., doi:10.2307/2718340.

6 Cesaratto, Anna, et al. “A Timeline for the Introduction of Synthetic Dyestuffs in Japan during the Late Edo and Meiji Periods.” *Heritage Science*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2018, doi:10.1186/s40494-018-0187-0.

1889. The cartouche in the upper right corner of the right sheet of the triptych contains an inscription with the titles of the series and of the print. The series is called “Studying History: Flowers of the East” (温故東の花 - Onko Azuma no hana). “The East” is a standard reference to Edo, Japan’s “Eastern Capital.” Significant here are the opening words of the series title with which the artist invites the prints’ spectators to study historic moments of the shogunal capital’s glorious past.

### CHIKANOBU: STUDENT TO SAMURAI

Originally from the Niigata prefecture, Chikanobu was born with a direct connection to the shogunate. His father, Hashimoto Naohiro, served as a low-level retainer for the Sakakibara Daimyo and his family. Due to the opportunities this social status brought, Chikanobu started studying painting under the Kano school artist Keisai Eisen. When Chikanobu was around the age of 15, he switched to the school of Utagawa Kuniyoshi whose influence has been readily found in Chikanobu’s work. While “Eisen’s paint styles and those of his principal disciples are not particularly evident in Chikanobu’s work,” Kuniyoshi’s influence can be found in a multitude of ways in the work of Chikanobu, from the way both stylized the figure, to how both used variation in color to “suggest chiaroscuro and 3-dimensionality.”<sup>7</sup>

While Kuniyoshi’s influence, along with that of his later teachers, Utagawa Kunisada and Toyohara Kunichika, was essential, the experiences Chikanobu had after his formal education were potentially even more powerful. In 1867 when his father retired unexpectedly, Chikanobu inherited his responsibilities and served under the Sakakibara family. Much like the samurais confronting the crowd in *A procession*

7 Coats, Bruce Arthur. “Chikanobu, an Overview of His Life and Works.” *Chikanobu: Modernity and Nostalgia in Japanese Prints*, by Bruce Arthur. Coats et al., Hotei, 2006, pp. 12–16.



Fig. 3. *The First Three Generations of Tokugawa Shogun*. Toyohara Chikanobu [c1885]. From the Ronin Gallery.

of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno, Chikanobu would regularly join the Sakakibara Daimyo during their yearly processions to and from Edo, gaining a first-hand experience of those processions.

His obituary, published by the Japanese newspaper *Miyako Shinbun*, described Chikanobu as a fierce loyalist of the Tokugawa Shogunate.<sup>8</sup> This fact was undoubtedly massively influential to the development of Chikanobu as an artist and informed much of his prints, such as the one below, depicting the first three Tokugawa Shoguns (fig. 3) with their wives and attendants.

When the Boshin War broke out in 1868, Chikanobu helped form a resistance group known as the Shimbokutai, which became part of the larger Shōgitai resistance.<sup>9</sup> During this time he was ordered to the Buddhist temple Kan'ei-ji in Edo to protect the Tokugawa family mausoleum inside the Ueno shrine, the setting of this paper's case study and many other prints by Chikanobu. According to historian Watanabe Keiichi, Chikanobu directly guarded the gates, took fire from enemy



Fig. 4. *Reports of the Heroes of Kagoshima, Kirino Toshiaki, Maehara Ikkaku*. Toyohara Chikanobu [c.1878]. From Japanese Finearts.com

8 Kyoko Iriye Selden, translator. "Yōshū Chikanobu [Obituary]." *Miyako Shinbun*, 12 Oct. 1912.

9 Coats, Bruce Arthur. "Chikanobu, an Overview of His Life and Works." pp. 17



Fig. 5. *A Mirror of Japan's Nobility: The Emperor Meiji, His Wife, and Prince Haru*. Toyohara Chikanobu [c1887]. From The Metropolitan Museum Online Gallery.

troops, and was captured, prepared and willing to die for the cause. After persistent questioning, he finally revealed to his captors that he was the artist Chikanobu, and additionally pleaded for them to kill him. Ironically, this confession saved his life, as the leader Kirino Toshiaki recognized him and his work. Even more ironically this same commander was the subject of Chikanobu's 1878 print *Reports of the Heroes of Kagoshima, Kirino Toshiaki, Maehara Ikkaku* (Fig. 4).

Despite his capture and release, Chikanobu continued to fight for the Shōgitai, as the forces retreated north to the island of Hokkaido where he fought in the Battle of Hakodate. He was captured at that battle in 1869 and sent to Takada, the prefectural government that had replaced the former Sakaibara clan.<sup>10</sup> The political reality of Japan had fundamentally changed, and effectively a new nation was born under the Meiji leadership. Chikanobu too had to reinvent himself, and at some point between 1871–1875 he moved to Edo, now Tokyo, and resumed his career as a print artist. As said before, the past deeply

affected Chikanobu and his work. When he moved to Edo, he took up residence near the only part of Kan'ei-ji temple that had survived, the Ueno temple that he had sworn to protect.<sup>11</sup>

## MAJOR TRENDS IN CHIKANOBU'S CAREER

The greatest irony of Chikanobu's life was that a large part of his career as a print designer was spent creating propaganda pieces for the Meiji government. *Meiji Emperor and the New Constitution, Imperial Procession throughout the Streets after the Ceremony of the Promulgation of the Constitution; Toyohara Chikanobu: Meiji Emperor and Empress Watching Sumida River Boat Race and Artillery Demonstration; and the Emperor's portrait* (Fig. 5), *A Mirror of Japan's Nobility: The Emperor Meiji, His Wife, and Prince Haru*, were just some of many pieces Chikanobu did on behest of both his publishers and the government itself. While there are plenty of reasons Chikanobu decided to participate in bolstering the new government, it is highly

<sup>10</sup> Kyoko Iriye Selden, translator. "Yōshū Chikanobu [Obituary]." *Miyako Shinbun*, 12 Oct. 1912.

<sup>11</sup> Coats, Bruce Arthur. "Chikanobu, an Overview of His Life and Works." pp.16-19





Fig 6. *Illustration of Flowering Cherry Blossoms at Ueno Park*. Toyohara Chikanobu [c1888]. From Ukyo-e.org.



Fig 6. *Customs and Manners of Edo 12 Months: July*. Toyohara Chikanobu [c1889]. From Ukyo-e.org.

unlikely that he had turned a completely new leaf, rejecting his past loyalty to the Shogunate.

During the same period when he was producing work for the Emperor, Chikanobu would also produce triptychs that showed the popular sights of Tokyo. One of the sights he frequently showed was the newly established Ueno Park, a popular spot for families to stroll and view the blossoming cherry trees (fig. 6). Maybe it was because of this, or the

fact that he was producing prints for the Imperial government, but in the late 1880s, Chikanobu started creating prints rife with nostalgia for the Edo of the past.

Chikanobu created a number of series that depicted this nostalgic view of Edo. One triptych entitled *Edo of the 12 Months* depicted scenes of traditional celebrations for each of the months of the year. A number of these celebrations took place at sites that had since been dramatically changed or even destroyed.

In the July print, people mingle as a Daimyo Procession occurs at the Sujiaki Crossroads, a neighborhood that had recently been replaced by European-designed buildings (fig 7).<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting to note that the majority of people in this print seem to be paying no mind to the procession that is occurring behind them, with just two of them casually watching it. This goes against both the accounts depicted by Vaporis and how Chikanobu depicted himself in *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno*. Maybe Chikanobu hoped to have the piece carry a more calm air than the aforementioned one, or maybe the public's response to processions was more casual and nuanced than we had been led to believe. Either way it is quite surprising to see such a divergence in the depiction of processions in two pieces created in the same year.

## CONCLUSION

Despite that final, and somewhat surprising depiction, the artistic intent and meanings in *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno* are now much clearer than they once were. The artist, Toyohara Chikanobu, was remarkably familiar and knowledgeable in regards to Daimyo processions, the intricacies of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the Ueno Temple, meaning that while it is not drawn from observation, it is likely a highly accurate and nuanced depiction of processions. It is also an incredibly personal piece, and not 'just' a cheap triptych to be sold to tourists, as Chikanobu also held a deep personal connection to what's depicted. It is a piece rife with nostalgia and love for a place that not only doesn't exist anymore, but a place that was destroyed before Chikanobu's eyes. Yet, in spite of all of this, Chikanobu seemed not to be resentful of the new Japan, making art honoring contemporary

Tokyo and the new Imperial Government, while also working on these nostalgic depictions on the side.

Photography was not introduced to Japan until it opened its ports in 1854<sup>13</sup>, meaning that for nearly the entire Edo period, Japanese traditions had to be depicted through paint or print. Chikanobu got to watch the new world of Japan with all its details and nuance get captured through the objective lens of a camera. With its quasi voyeuristic view, and highly articulated sense of space, maybe the intent of *A procession of a feudal lord visiting the temple at Ueno*, and Chikanobu's other nostalgic prints was to honor Edo by creating snapshots of the city as if they were taken by a camera.

12 Coats, Bruce Arthur. "Chikanobu, an Overview of His Life and Works." pp.39-41

13 Lowndes, Coleman. How Colorized Photos Helped Introduce Japan to the World, Vox Video Lab, 5 Oct. 2020, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kBQ0qIH8M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kBQ0qIH8M).

# Elephants, Exoticism, and the Diplomatic Performance of Japanese Prosperity

Holly Gaboriault, Wei Zhang

Close your eyes. What do you hear? The collective hum of anticipating spectators, the flapping of silk banners, garments rustling, gravel crunching beneath advancing feet, ringing bells, chanting, float-bearers calling out to one another, the alternating rhythms of bamboo flutes and beating drums. Yōshū Chikanobu's *Viewing the Sannō Festival* depicts a procession occurring both within and on the periphery of time, shrouded in political performance and cultural significance, critical to understanding the implications of historical memory and foreign exoticism of the Korean embassy and elephants (Figure 1).

Clouds roll into the panel, dispersing a mist to reveal an aerial view of a tremendous white elephant led by processional musicians playing flutes and drums, and by flag bearers. Participants of the parade are walking alongside, smiling, and conversing wearing the kamishimo ensemble, a sleeveless jacket, *kataginu* and *hakama* trousers, usually worn by high-class samurai in the Edo period when calling at a castle. The stenciled symbols on the chest of their jackets are the *kamon* - the family crests. It was a traditional symbol to identify warrior families, which in Tokugawa peacetime becomes a symbol of authority. The parade hats are elaborately decorated with flowers, swords at their sides, and one is waving a fan.

Flag bearers and musicians wear Korean-styled facial hair and traditional Korean men's dress ensembles, hanbok and a type of wide-brimmed black horsehair hats characteristic of the Joseon period, a gat. Underneath waving vibrant green and

purple flags, the all-male procession passes a crowd of spectators in the background in front of the palace entrance, said to include the shogun, his attendants, and several priests. People gathered together to celebrate the Sannō festival, one of three most significant Shinto festivals in Edo. The clouds drift into the left panel, simultaneously concealing and revealing the scene creating a dreamlike quality, hinting at the nostalgic and historical context. The floating world operates as historical and emotional collective memory folding into these fleeting moments to avoid being forgotten or erased. The clouds also function as a pictorial reminder of the rainy season preceding the Sannō Festival, reiterating prayers for a good harvest. Behind the clouds loom pine trees, known as *matsu*. Strongly associated with Shintoism, they were considered as *yorishiro*, objects possessing the divine power to attract the gods kami to inhabit these objects during the festivals. This amalgamation of cultural signifiers for a religious festival<sup>1</sup> at first appears confusing along with contradictory references and titles for this scene.<sup>2</sup> And yet, the answer lies within the white elephant.

1 Kami: The Evolution of Japan's Native Gods." nippon.com, May 30, 2020. <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a02902/>.

2 Several collections and databases attribute different titles to this work, including Elephant Parade, A Gift from the Emperor of China, Events by Prince Tokugawa Outside the Chiyoda Castle, and Royal Visit at the Sannō sairei Festivities; some include slightly differing description including: "a replaying of the Korean delegation visiting Japan in the 18th century", and "Korean Ambassador's grand procession with a white elephant at the Sannō Festival while the spectators look on". Walker, Dr. Ross. "Comparing Item Details for Yōshū Chikanobu." Japanese Art Open Database. Accessed November 16, 2020.



Figure 1: *Viewing the Sannō Festival*, Yōshū Chikanobu, 1895

## FESTIVALS, FLOATS AND THE WHITE ELEPHANT

For centuries *matsuri*, the Japanese festival, have connected communities by celebrating, strengthening, and preserving tradition. During the Edo period, the Sannō Festival became a government endorsed spectacle occurring annually in mid-June. The parade consisted of sacred palanquins, portable shrines (*mikoshi*) and 45 festival floats (*dashi* and *yatai*) accompanied by singers and dancers traveling through the grounds of the Chiyoda Castle.<sup>3</sup> The Sannō festival was associated with the Hie Shrine and its major collective deity, the Mountain King – Sannō, that was believed to possess powers to protect the nation. The deity was conceived in the Shinto religion in reverence to the ancient undying sense of the beauty and the mysteries of Nature. Founded in the early days of Japan's history at Mt. Hieizan - now the Shiga Province to the east of what would become Kyoto, the Hie shrine merged in the 8th century with the preeminent temple complex of Tendai Buddhism, which made the Hie shrine all the more important. The Hie shrines were built in various parts

of Japan. In the 15th century Hie Shrine was constructed next to the Edo Castle.<sup>4</sup> The first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu (1543-1616), became a patron of the Hie Shrine and decreed the gods as protectors of Edo and of the country, prompting the Sannō Festival to become one of three great Shinto celebrations of Japan.<sup>5</sup> Extending an invitation to the deities to symbolically interact with the human realm and bestow blessings for a good harvest, parishioners of local shrines called *ujiko*, sought to invoke that shrine's *kami* — the spirits or otherworldly powers venerated in the religion of Shinto. The festival procession passed through various neighborhoods outside the shuganal Edo castle and entered the castle premises through the Hanzo gate to be viewed by the shogun and his entourage within the castle's gardens.

To get a better understanding of how the Sannō festival looked like is seen in a triptych by the same artist Yōshū Chikanobu, *Sixth Month: Sannō Festival* from the 1897 series "Twelve Months of Customs and Manners in Edo" illustrating

3 Arts Chiyoda 3331 Special Exhibition "Tenka Matsuri and Sanno-San-Edokko Is a Picture Scroll

on a Mountain Car, a Woodworking Song-." 3331 Arts Chiyoda, May 25, 2014. <https://sanno.3331.jp/2014/exhibition/02.html>.

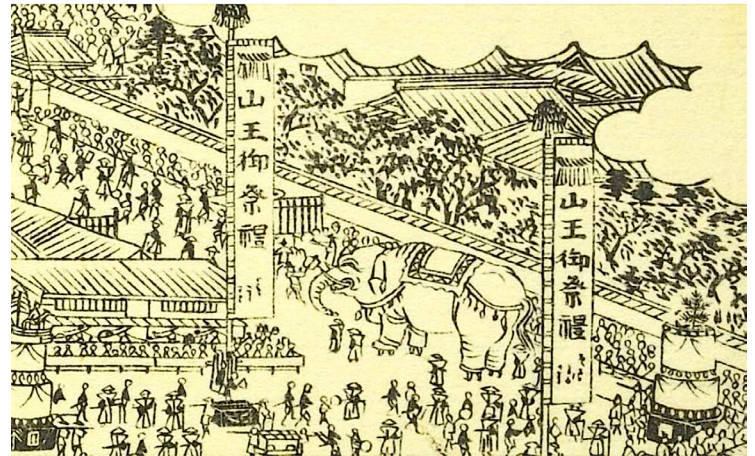
4 John Breen, Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 74-97. Accessed on Google books.

5 "Hie Jinja." English | Hie Jinja in Tokyo, Japan. Accessed November 13, 2020. <https://www.hiejinja.net/english/>.



Figure 2: Sixth Month: Sannō Festival, Yōshū Chikanobu, 1897

Figure 3. Hasegawa Settan (長谷川雪旦), *Illustrations of Famous Places in Edo*, topographic representation of Edo, Detail. 1834. Woodblock printed book. Vol. 2 of twenty volumes, no pagination, p. 20. The British Museum.



the parade maneuvering down a shop lined street (Figure 2). The large float in the foreground is topped with a robed monkey figure, messenger of the already mentioned Mountain God, the Sannō of the Hie Shrine. This “monkey float” is followed by a group of performers wearing Korean costumes. The parade is moving from Kojimachi, an old samurai residential area within the district in Chiyoda where the Edo castle of the Tokugawa shoguns was located. Behind them looms the highlight of the procession, a massive white elephant made of cloth over a wooden frame and operated by men walking inside each of the animal’s legs. The elephant float was considered such a spectacular sight that it was shown more prominently than the palanquin of the ambassador. Moreover,

the scene of the elephant float passing through the streets of Edo during the Sannō *matsuri* was included among the famous views of Edo in one of the most famous Edo guidebooks of the day, *Edo Meisho Zue* (1834) by Hasegawa Settan (Figure 3).<sup>6</sup>

Dating back to the 17th century, the festivals were famous for large ornate floats, or *yatai*. The floats were lit by lanterns and escorted on a tour of the city by float-bearers either underneath or pushed on wheeled carts. Decorated with intricate wood carvings, lacquering, and detailed metal-work both inside and

6 Ronald P. Toby, “Carnival of the Aliens. Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter, 1986): 449-451.

outside of the floats, their craftsmanship was similar in style to art from Kyoto during the Momoyama period (1573-1603) blending elements of the early Edo period. The rich brocades and tapestries seen in this print intended to display the wealth of shrine patrons who supported each float. Men and women, young and elderly, shared collaborative responsibility involved in festival organization and production; float design and construction reflected the aesthetic diversity of the local community's culture<sup>7</sup>. Float-makers constructed in similar ways to theatrical prop-construction known as *tsukurimono*, or 'built things', bamboo frames wrapped in white cloth and brocade made for Noh stage performance, making the white elephant float popular.<sup>8</sup>

From prehistoric cave paintings in North Africa to the carved rock reliefs of ancient India, white elephants have embodied qualities of sanctity, good fortune, and wisdom transferred through mediums and festivities for centuries. In Buddhism, the story of Buddha's miraculous conception to Queen Maya occurs in a dream when the future Buddha takes on the form of a white elephant and enters from her right side into her womb; affixing the white giant with connotations of power for the greater good and of Buddha himself.<sup>9</sup> Samantabhadra is a Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism associated with Buddhist practice and meditation, known in name as Fugen. To symbolize the great power of Buddhist practice in overcoming all obstacles, Fugen is portrayed seated atop or holding a lotus flower while riding a white elephant and reading a sutra. Fugen encourages people to diligently practice the Buddhist precepts of charity,

moral conduct, patience, and devotion and manifests the active aspects of the Buddha's life, and is the protector of all those who teach Dharma, or Buddhist Law.<sup>10</sup> These century-old depictions unifying the image of Buddha and the white elephant range from sculptures, hanging scrolls, and ukiyo-e prints; some playing on literary thematics and popular poetry of the times (Figure 4).

In the Edo period, exotic imported animals, including leopards, tigers, camels, donkeys, peacocks, porcupines, and elephants were highly popular attractions in carnival-like shows and became an elite practice of royal gift-giving. Symbolizing luxury and loyalty, a white elephant signified that the monarch reigned with a justice and power that bestowed the kingdom with blessings of peace and prosperity. The most famous pair of elephants arrived in Japan in 1728, at the request of Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune brought from Quang Nam by the Chinese merchant, Zhèng Dàwēi.<sup>11</sup> The female died in Nagasaki about three months later, but the male was sent to Edo. A sight never before seen, spectators were allowed to gather only at intersections, not along the streets; they could follow the procession, but not get in front of it. The elephants had incited curiosity for the spectacle they provided, and imitations of them created a cultural lore for centuries thereafter.

Even before the arrival of foreign elephants, those exotic elephants are a phenomenon for the audience to view and illustrate in stories, portrayed in every medium and on any scale. The so-called "Kakiemon elephants" were decorated porcelain elephant figurines made in 1660-1690 produced near Arita, Saga on the Japanese island of Kyūshū at a time when elephants

7 "Yama, Hoko, Yatai, Float Festivals in Japan." 2020. UNESCO. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/yama-hoko-yatai-float-festivals-in-japan-01059>.

8 Noh Terminology-Tsukurimono." the Noh, 2011. <https://db2.the-noh.com/edic/2011/10/tsukurimono.html>.

9 Page, Jake, Leeming, David Adams. "The sublimation of the archetype: Goddess Disguised", Goddess: Myths of the Female Divine. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press,1994: 156.

10 Schumacher, Mark. "Fugen Bosatsu | Fugen Bodhisattva." Buddhism & Shintōism In Japan A-to-Z Photo Dictionary Of Japanese Religious Sculpture & Art. <https://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/fugen.shtml>.

11 "Elephants." Samurai Archives Wiki Project. July 17, 2017. <https://wiki.samurai-archives.com/index.php?title=Elephants>.



Figure 4: (left) Detail of *The Bodhisattva Fugen (Fugen Bosatsu)*, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Collection at Smithsonian Institution, unknown artist, Heian Period (794 - 1185), ink, color, gold, and silver on silk; (center) *Fugen (Samantabhadra) Bodhisattva*, unknown artist, Heian Period (794 - 1185), Tokyo National Museum; (right) *Saigyō Hōshi Praying To A Bijin on a White Elephant*, Suzuki Harunobu (1725 - 1770), Publisher unknown, c.1766, Woodblock print, Honolulu Museum of Art.



Figure 5: *Procession of Koreans*, 1764, Suzuki Harunobu, Woodblock print. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Accession no. 11.30408

would not have been seen in Japan.<sup>12</sup> These stories of large elephants cruised through the Japan archipelago during the Edo period producing impressions at once majestic and mythical. During the travels, local daimyo contributed resources and people to the transportation team of the elephant to ensure safety. At the same time, support of the elephant journeys attested to the high status of the ruler

given that elephants manifested the peace and purity from their Buddhist origins. Unfortunately, those elephants consumed a significant amount of resources at the same time being sensitive to the surrounding environment and the elephants were put to use for their value other than viewing purposes. The elephant came to be used as a source of medicine made from the elephant dung called “zō-hora”. Those involved hoped to distribute this medicine so that “everyone throughout the land, even those of lowest

12 “Kakiemon Elephants - Porcelain from Japan.” 100 Objects British Museum, n.d. <https://sites.google.com/site/100objectsbritishmuseum/home/kakiemon-elephants--porcelain-from-japan>.

degree,” could enjoy its benefits.<sup>13</sup> Through the accumulation of sites associated with elephants, constructed narratives about them and their imagery in various mediums, artifacts, and advertising of elephant-related medications proliferated, the elevated effect of this majestic animal was praised by the Japanese. This is where we can see certain parallels with the Korean envoys who traveled to Japan during the Edo period. Closely associated with the shogun and local daimyo rulers, their exotic characteristics inspired a wide spread of stories and particular imagery used on artistic artifacts. Therefore, it was no coincidence that they were represented and portrayed in the events of the Sannō festival.

## KOREAN EMBASSIES IN EDO AND FESTIVAL REENACTMENTS

After centuries of confrontation between Korea and Japan, during the peaceful Tokugawa era (1603-1868) in Japan frictions subsided and the Korean Joseon dynasty (1392-1897) dispatched a series of diplomatic missions to Japan intended to reestablish amicable international relations between the two countries. In this way they sought to establish peace, and serve as an example of refined cultural exchange. Rare events during the rule of the Tokugawa *bakufu* - military government, just twelve Korean embassies visited Edo period Japan between 1607 to 1811. Each embassy mission was led by a civil official; the mission consisted of approximately 350-500 Koreans, including document officials, translators, soldiers, horsemen, court painters, writing officials, doctors, musicians, and gift guardians.<sup>14</sup> Some 1500 of Japanese escorts from the Tsushima han, the domain which managed

Japan-Korea relations, accompanied the visitors along highways enroute to Edo.

Perceived as celebratory missions to congratulate a new shogun on his inauguration, the act displayed the privilege and status maintained by shogunal tribute. Envoys similar to the Korean missions to China, intended to seek knowledge and conduct diplomacy and trade. Trade, in particular, was an important aspect of all the missions. Thousands of spectators would line the highways to view the ‘aliens’, in their exotic performance of pageantry, costumes, and music, while artists would record the event in woodblock prints and paintings, as these embassy depictions were a popular theme anticipating commercial profit (Figure 5). Korean embassies became a common pictorial subject of Edo-period art, popular in the historical memory and replicated often as a recurrent theme in which foreign embassies legitimized the authority of the bakufu.<sup>15</sup>

From this depiction it is clear that the Korean procession was being treated according to the ceremonial rules involved in organizing a “reception.” Those participants who were watching the film were acting with etiquette. Assuring that this procession traveled back and forth safely was of utmost importance to the Tsushima domain. Being seen by many along the route increased the prestige of the domain since it was being entrusted with foreign diplomacy. Therefore many scrolls of the procession were made by the domain featuring the embassy’s arrival in Edo, their arrival at the castle, leaving the castle, the trip to Nikkō where the mausoleum of the first Tokugawa shogun is located, and the travel of the procession by boat. It is highly likely that some were later copied by other people. At the same time, the Tsushima domain produced guidebooks,

13 “Elephants.” Samurai Archives Wiki Project, July 17, 2017. <https://wiki.samurai-archives.com/index.php?title=Elephants>.

14 Jungmann, Burglind. 2004. *Painters as Envoys: Korean Inspiration in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Nanga*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 28

15 Toby, Ronald P. 2019. “Parades of Difference | Parades of Power.” Essay. In *Engaging the Other: Japan’ and Its Alter Egos, 1550-1850, 142-89*. Leiden: Brill.



broadsheets and detailed accounts of the arrival of Korean envoys in Japan.<sup>16</sup> Given that the Korean envoy's visit was something that could only be seen once every few decades, many people from the surrounding regions came to view the processions leaving lasting impressions of the rare event on the memories of local people. The theatrical parade with its unique formalities and distinctive musical instruments left a strong impression on people who witnessed the processions or saw the publications, often introducing elements of those customs into their own religious festivals.

The late-Meiji period embraced thematic modernization in ukiyo-e printmaking and celebrated contemporary topics. However, it also saw a surge of interest in 'old' Japan amongst the Japanese to preserve and call upon traditions. Awakening nostalgia for the past was a reaction to the drastic social and political changes that were happening in Japan after 215 years of the country's isolation. Historic scenes often contain critical political undertones, especially for the artist who is politically attached to the Tokugawa Shogunate. This series included *Viewing the Sannō Festival*, amongst scenes of visiting daimyo, a formal audience with the shogun, and the practice of samurai traditions. Building upon the yamato-e genre of painting that initially developed from the cultural exchange from China and later proliferated throughout Japan's Heian period (794–1185) to create a native Japanese style; the principles of design and proportion are close companions of ukiyo-e. As a successor of the *yamato-e* style, Chikanobu incorporates stylistic features associated with *yamato-e*, including the use of bright pigments, large bands of clouds rolling in that divide space, and a technique known as *fukinuki yatai*, literally translated as

"blown off roof", showing interiors seen from above.<sup>17</sup> The pine trees are drawn using stork-leg shapes for the pine branches with the needles painted in a fish-scale arrangement. Chikanobu's use of spatiality and perspective applies with the innovative techniques of Westernized theory of atmospheric perspective, objects fading into the distance, and softened naturalistic facial features. The elephant enters into the right frame of the triptych with a graphic sculpted quality, amongst the naturalistic treatment of its surroundings, implying that the elephant is indeed a large sculpture wearing an expression of frozen revelry.

In ancient Japan, purple became the official colour of the royal family and government; purple was used in *bijin-ga* and *yakusha-e* to emphasize a character's elegance and wealth, also the color of warriors and symbolizes nobility and strength.<sup>18</sup> Shinto priests wore red and the color covered shrines and temples during Shinto festivals, a symbol of peace, prosperity, and justice.<sup>19</sup> Colorants and dyes imported during the Meiji period from foreign merchants provided ukiyo-e artists of the late-Edo period and early-Meiji period drastic changes in pigments, such as the bright reds and purples. In order to print from the wood blocks to handmade paper, colours need to be brighter and last longer.<sup>20</sup> Chikanobu adapted ukiyo-e stylistically in response to the contemporary encounters with the West, given that political elites encouraged modernism in a variety of art forms. In 1897, publisher Fukuda

17 Willmann, Anna. "Yamato-e Painting." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yama/hd\\_yama.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yama/hd_yama.htm) (original published October 2003; last revised April 2013)

18 Hibi, Sadao., Fukuda, Kunio., Bester, John. *The Colors of Japan*. Japan: Kodansha International, 2000.

19 Ibid.

20 Cesaratto, A., Luo, YB., Smith, H.D. et al. A timeline for the introduction of synthetic dyestuffs in Japan during the late Edo and Meiji periods. *Herit Sci* 6, 22 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-018-0187-0>

16 "Sannō Goshinzen (Sannō Shrine) (Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo) (Opaque)." Sannō goshinzen (Sannō Shrine) (Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo) (opaque) - David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~315409~90083707>.

Hatsujirō suggested Chikanobu shift focus from the interior views seen in his 1895 series “Chiyoda Castle (Album of Women)” commissioning him to illustrate “Chiyoda Castle (Album of Men)”.

In the Edo period of Japanese history, diplomatic missions were construed as benefiting the Japanese. They were seen as legitimizing propaganda and as a key element in an emerging manifestation of Japan’s ideal vision of the structure of an international order with Edo as its center. Whereupon the Korean embassy has folded into the Sannō Festival, as seen in Chikanobu’s print. Such an image becomes a combinatorial representation of the exotic and a symbol of the parade as a vehicle itself. By adopting the identity of ‘aliens’ representing a foreign monarch purposely presented to past shoguns, the townsfolk and parishioners of Kojimachi, a district in Chiyoda, were allowed to take their festival parade into the grounds of the castle. There, the Shogun witnessed the parade of the Hie shrine. Through an inversion of roles created in the camouflaging behavior of the festival, the *ujiko* chose to play-act as a Korean mission, which united simultaneously the push and pull between past and present. In masquerading as Korean embassy envoys to Edo, they successfully asserted the unique privilege of being viewed by the shogun and his harem, which for many of the samurai elite may never be permitted in their own lifetime. And in turn, by inviting it into the castle grounds during the Sannō Festival, the shogun repeatedly reasserts his ability to command offshore monarchies, even in the long interludes between the embassy missions, to present themselves to him in ceremony and celebration of his authority.<sup>21</sup>

The Kojimachi *ujiko* did a “credible job of duplicating not only the clothes, but the pennants and insignia of the actual

Korean embassies... although no records suggest that elephants were part of any Korean embassy”.<sup>22</sup> Two green and purple pennants are adorned with double-sided tigers wearing wings, preceded by a large yellow dragon banner. The pennants portray a yellow Chinese style dragon with red fringe. The other displays a tiger, who often paired with the dragon as in the paintings of the Muromachi Period, said to symbolize the warrior class and the “forces that caused clouds and winds to rise”.<sup>23</sup> In folktales, tigers are a symbol of protection, taking care of the good and killing the evil spirits; their images painted on the walls of houses and temples to keep danger away. Buddhism’s use of animals were seen as divinational vehicles, representations of political or social ideas, and metaphors for interpreting characteristics of the human body and mind furthering a belief in the universal life force.<sup>24</sup> Such duality, tantamount to the principles of yin and yang, serve a cosmic partnership where animals represent ancient symbols in Chinese cosmology, the dragon being the ruler of the sky located in the East and the tiger being the ruler of the earth located in the West.<sup>25</sup> However, although elephants did not accompany the Korean embassies, Kojimachi’s inclusion of the grand elephant float became famous throughout the land. In fact, so popular were the sights of the Sannō Festivals, that guidebooks printed by ukiyo-e workshops provided descriptions of procession paraphernalia and the processional personnel, a ‘must-see’ event of Edo for the conscientious tourist.<sup>26</sup>

22 Ibid.

23 Shimizu, Yoshiaki. 1989. Japan: the Shaping of Daimyo Culture, 1185-1868: London: Thames and Hudson. 204.

24 Sørensen, Henrik H. 2016. “The Didactic Use of Animal Images in Southern Song Buddhism.” Essay. In *The Zoomorphic Imagination in Chinese Art and Culture*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press. 137-138.

25 Munsterberg, Hugo. *Dragons in Chinese Art: An Exhibition March 23 Through May 28, 1972*. United States: China House Gallery, 1971. 10-15.

26 Jungmann, Burglind. 2004. *Painters as Envoys: Korean Inspiration in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Nanga*.

21 Toby, Ronald P. “Carnival of the Aliens. Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture.” *Monumenta Nipponica* 41, no. 4 (1986). doi:10.2307/2384862.

*Viewing the Sannō Festival* is a cultural anecdote, a transferable narrative using extreme theater at its core. The Korean embassies departed long ago, and so have the elephants; their existence functioned on the margins of unfamiliar splendor and exoticized Other. Mobilizing the occasion of the Sannō Festival, a historical political gesture converged into a ceremonial tradition. The parishioners' reenactment of the Korean embassy exemplifies the universal cultural exploration through the performative art of masquerade and parade. A distinctive representative of the ukiyo-e artists promoting traditional values and highlighting aspects of Japanese culture that were being forgotten, Chikanobu produced diptychs and triptychs reenacting neighborhood festivals and parades featuring traditions. Thirty years after the end of the Edo period, Chikanobu's prints promoted aspects of Japanese culture that were being forgotten as an alternative to what many saw as the deterioration of Japanese society caused by imported ideas and modern methods. Chikanobu occupies a unique in-between space where the Edo period evaporates into the approaching future of rapid modernization seen by the Meiji Period; bridging the old and new to examine traditions, class, disguise, and concepts of spectatorship.

# PART III. PARODY

## PROCESSIONS: women and children as high officials

### Women Proceeding Through a Dream: Daimyo Procession Parody

Julie Alter, Catherine Hackl

#### THE PENTAPTYCH BY UTAGAWA TOYOHIRO: WHAT DO WE SEE?

Directly before our eyes, a long line of people is parading right to left in a quiet, measured manner. Far away, at the horizon an ideal cone of Mt. Fuji rises high into the sky beyond the vast, dense, untransparent accumulation of mist.

In his polyptych *Procession Parodied by Women* (1810s), ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Toyohiro unfolds the action close to the bottom line of the composition. By pushing his characters towards the lower edge of the image, Toyohiro creates an impression that the viewer is right next to people portrayed and is, in fact, an eyewitness of the event. The majority of the characters in the cortege are women; still it becomes apparent at once that implied is an all-men procession of a regional lord, a daimyo. This follows from the organization of the cortege and from the set of implements the participants are carrying. The view of daimyo processions was well familiar to the population of Japan due to the official practice of *sankin kotai* or alternate attendance. *Sankin Kotai* was the process where the shogun in Edo required the daimyo to leave their domains to come and wait on him for often a year at a time. To encourage good behavior from the daimyo, the shogun

also required that their families reside in Edo to serve as hostages.<sup>1</sup>

Leading the procession are two women wearing coral orange - they are holding a *tategasa*, an umbrella with a long handle and a *daigasa*, a type of rain helmet mounted on a pole.<sup>2</sup> Although these women are leading the procession, their focus appears to be upon each other rather than the path before them. The woman in beige walking directly behind the leading women is holding a halberd *naginata*; she seems to be focused on the path ahead. Following her are four women, also in beige garments, although of a lighter shade, bearing a palanquin with a very young male figure inside. Palanquins of this sort made for the travels of a feudal lord are called *norimono* or a “thing to ride in.” The details in the image that identify it as a Norimon include the large, curved pole and the intricate design of the compartment. The formality of the dress of the occupant in the compartment further confirms that this is a Norimono as opposed to at Kago, a palanquin used for common people. Norimono consisted of a roofed box-like structure attached to

1 Constantine Vaporis reading Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority, *Japan Review*, 2005, 17: 3-4

2 Vaporis, Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority, 30-31



Procession Parodied by Women, 1810s. Pentaptych, Utagawa Toyohiro, 1773-1828  
RISD: Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1159

the curved pole by which it was carried by an even number of porters.<sup>3</sup> The women who are carrying the norimono here have placed its long pole over their right shoulders while outstretching their left arms to balance the weight of their heavy burden, which they handle with a remarkable ease. The gesture of their left arms is graceful and almost uniform as if in a dance.

The palanquin door is completely ajar, both revealing the boy's figure inside and making him more accessible to the woman whose council he seems to be soliciting. The young man inside must be of great importance - someone equivalent to a daimyo for him to be carried in a palanquin by members of his retinue. The boy-daimyo inside the palanquin is in Edo-period traditional samurai garb, a *kamishimo* ensemble that consists of a wide-shouldered vest *kataginu* and trousers *hakama* that can be described as a divided skirt. The light-orange vest *kataginu* is donned here over his black kimono. The top of the boy's head is shaved in a fashion known as *nakazori* (literally, "shaving the middle"): this was a feature of a boy's appearance when entering the age of young manhood.<sup>4</sup> The ceremony of assuming manhood is known as *genpuku* (元服); the age for this

ceremony varied in different eras and on a case by case basis from early teens to up to twenty.

Next to the boy in the palanquin there is a woman who seems to be someone of higher appointment than other participants of the procession. As discussed above, the boy appears to be seeking her counsel. According to C. Vaporis, the palanquin with the daimyo was accompanied on each side by two or three valets to hand the lord whatever he desired and to assist him in getting in and out of the palanquin.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, the woman next to the palanquin in Utagawa Toyohiro's composition is shown as a stand-in for this role and acts as a person designated to offer help to a palanquin rider as needed. Their conversation appears to be of importance because the boy in the palanquin inclines his entire body toward the woman and the woman bends down in order to make eye contact with the boy. Not only is she bending her knees and is leaning forward, but her gesture of putting her hands together at the knee level is that of humility. By extending the door fully open, rather than conversing through the screened window, the boy in the palanquin is making himself fully visible and thus somewhat vulnerable; the emphasis is on the importance he attaches to the counsel he is receiving from the woman. It is also worth noting that both the boy in the palanquin and the woman talking to him are dressed in black

3 Kempfer, Engelbert, and Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey. *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. 246

4 Edward Norbeck, *Age-grading in Japan*, *American Anthropologist*, Aug., 1953, New Series, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Aug., 1953): 378

5 Vaporis, *Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority*, 28-29.

garments. The woman counseling the boy is wearing a vibrant orange obi, much brighter than the color of the clothes worn by the boy in the palanquin. However, the boy's *kamishimo* is also of an orange hue and thus matches the color-scheme of his interlocutor. Additionally, in its subdued tone, the boy's *kamishimo* resonates with the color of the garments of the women who are carrying the palanquin.

The final woman in the procession is comparable to the woman carrying the *naginata* halberd before the palanquin. These two women that are flanking the palanquin at the front and rear are both dressed in *furisode* - a kimono with expressly long sleeves reaching to the heels of the wearers. *Furisode* were worn by unmarried women and became a sign of youthfulness. It is worthwhile mentioning that in the context of *bijinga*, the courtesans who were the focus of the genre were often depicted together with their teenage apprentices *shinzo* wearing long-sleeved *furisode* of the type shown here. It is possible that such *furisode*-wearing *shinzo* (*furi-shin*) are implied here since images of women parodying daimyo processions may be regarded as an extension of the *bijinga* genre.<sup>6</sup>

One could imagine that this woman in the rear of the female part of the procession in some ways is bridging two worlds. She is dressed in the same muted colors as

6 Celia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*, University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1993. 176-179



Figure 2

the rest of the attendants. The gaze of this figure, however, is averted from the other attendants and is instead directed toward the slightly arched object she is holding in her right hand. It became possible to identify this object thanks to the existence of another copy of the same print in the Harvard Museums collection available online. In a Harvard six-panel composition, the following sheet shows a rider mounted on a dappled horse which is being led by the reins by a plump-cheeked woman. The woman's rounded cheeks identify her immediately as Otafuku, the Shinto goddess of mirth. To support this iconography-based identification, the horse-rider's sleeve is marked with the character "fuku" (福) for happiness, attesting him as Fukusuke, Otafuku's husband. The couple are considered to be gods of good fortune. It is the other rein strap of Fukusuke's horse that our young lady in *furisode* is holding while looking at it attentively.



Figure 3 54

Two young men-samurai are trailing last in the procession. They both are equipped with two swords, a privilege limited to samurai during the Edo period. The men are tall and slender, and both are distinguished by their youthful hairstyle *wakashu-wage* (若衆鬘) in which the forelock *maegami* (前髪) hasn't been shaved off yet. This was a unique hairstyle for a *wakashu* (若衆), an adolescent male before he had undergone the coming of age ceremony (Fig. 1). With its double fold, this hairdo was considered to be particularly splendid. Youthful characters *wakashu* were rather often depicted in *ukiyo-e* along with the beautiful women of the *bijinga* genre for their recognized sexual appeal.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to speculate about certain resemblance between the two young men depicted here and the images of falconers in *ukiyo-e* prints. Commonly, falconers appear in prints as *wakashu* with their distinctive hairstyle similar to the one the young men are sporting here. For example, one can consider images by Suzuki Harunobu, Kitagawa Utamaro, Kikukawa Eizan, Utagawa Kunisada. It is also noteworthy that falcons and Mt. Fuji were paired as lucky symbols for the New Year in Japanese lore. Mt. Fuji and the falcon were components of a tripartite formula, "one - Fuji, two - falcon, three - eggplant" (*ichi Fuji, ni taka, san nasubi*). These three objects were regarded as good luck symbols if seen in a dream on the first night of the year, *hatsuyume*. However, occasionally, references to just Mt. Fuji and a falcon would appear on a *ukiyo-e* print. For example, the cover of the famous illustrated book by Hokusai "One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji" bears the title slip shaped as a falcon feather. Here no falcons are shown, but the overall falconer-like appearance of the youths and the presence of mountain-like white pattern decorating the lower segment of their black kimonos might be considered

a veiled allusion to Mt. Fuji's auspicious imagery. Usage of such mountain-like triangular patterns can be illustrated by a print of "A Young Couple with Falcons" by artist Bunro (fl. 1801-1804), in the collection of the MFA, Boston.

## PARTICIPANTS' APPEARANCE & BEHAVIOR

In regard to the composition, there is a particular emptiness in Toyohiro's pentptych. With just about a dozen subjects, this depiction of a procession is stripped down to the essence and is more symbolic representation of an event taking place than a detailed portrayal. The middle-ground landscape is made up of a white cloud, with Mt. Fuji far in the distance. The comparatively low density of characters along with the plain landscape, forces our eyes to focus on the individual women and their positions.

Everyone in the print appears to be content and adhering to traditional expectations of Japanese beauty comprehensively developed in the *bijinga* genre of *ukiyo-e* paintings and prints. As was typical for *bijinga*, all women are shown with elaborate hairdos. Here the majority of the lantern shimada type - *torobin shimada*, adorned with a comb and multiple hairpins. Their kimonos are all layered, many are patterned. Their elaborate appearance is further accentuated by their massive *obi*-sashes, likewise patterned. The colors and patterns of the woman's attire are coordinated throughout the group. Most of the figures in the piece wear clothing in muted colors with the exception of the two women leading the procession and the woman wearing the large *obi* over her black kimono. It is not clear if this subdued color scheme was the original intention of the artist or the result of fading that often occurs with late 18th - early 19th century plant-based dyes widely used in *ukiyo-e* prints at that time.

All characters portrayed maintain a

7 Nick J. Ota-Wang, *Wakashu - A Third Gender*. University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, student research.



Figure 3. *Procession of Women Carrying Palanquin* Utagawa Toyohiro. Six-panel (possibly of eight) print; Harvard Art Museums.



Figure 4. *Women Imitating a Daimyo Procession Passing Mount Fuji* 見立女行列 Utagawa Toyohiro. Ten-panel print; MFA Boston.



Figure 5. *Procession of beautiful women*. Kikugawa Eizan. Set of 12 woodblock prints; British Museum.

graceful gate. The two women at the head of the assembly, as previously observed, appear to be deep in conversation. Their posture suggests familiarity and a relatively informal gathering. The entire composition reflects a setting in which the characters are comfortable and where they are portrayed in familiar roles. This print is intended to be a parody of a traditional daimyo procession. A parody, however, often makes light of the figures included within the image. In this print there seems to be no such mockery other than the fact that the procession predominantly consists of women. In this procession, the women are portrayed in expressly feminine postures and attire. Although they are performing roles traditionally done by men, they are treated with respect and portrayed in an elegant

manner. It is worth noting that the final figures in the print are male, assuming the last and thus perhaps the least favored position. Moreover, the interaction between the final two figures mirrors that of the two women leading the procession, with the forward most male turning to talk to his companion. Unlike the women, however, the men appear to exert no effort related to their roles. In fact, their swords are carried effortlessly stuck into the obi around their waists as the two progress in a relaxed manner, conversing with each other. Consequently, the youths give an impression of being not too focused on their task. As has been mentioned before, the women carrying the palanquin do not appear to be straining at all.

Even though the print focuses on women 56





Figure 6. *Otafuku Leading Fukusuke's Horse* 馬乗りの福助  
と馬方のお多福 Utagawa Toyohiro. MFA Boston.

parodying a daimyo procession, Utagawa Toyohiro originally included four men as a part of this procession: the boy, presumably the daimyo, the two youthful samurai and Fukusuke - a divinity. It is of note that none of these men is an adult male in his prime and is an expression of masculinity. On the contrary, *wakashu*, for example, could rival courtesans in their sexual appeal in popular opinion of the time.

### OTHER VERSIONS OF THE COMPOSITION

Interestingly enough, this polyptych by Utagawa Toyohiro happened to exist in several versions. An alternate print from the Harvard Art Museum (Fig. 4) with only a single frame added: a plump woman leading a man and his horse has been already mentioned. As noted, Toyohiro's six-panel print still retains the same density and from Harvard is identical to Toyohiro's pentptych at the RISD

Museum but is a fuller set complete with a missing sheet between the two most right panels. However, another version of the print from MFA Boston includes double the number of panels as compared to the RISD five-panel design, with double the number of women in the procession while the number of men remains the same. Additionally, this alternate print features Mt. Fuji much more prominently, now framing the daimyo's palanquin. This version includes more detail in every aspect. The women have more patterns on their clothing, and the newly added women are performing more roles like carrying *keyari* or spears in fur or feather sheaths, and *kappa-kago* - big baskets for rain gear. The background has far more details, including trees juxtaposed to Mt. Fuji. Furthermore, the 10-panel print divides the women into more concise, purposeful, and narrow frames, whereas, the five-panel original print from the RISD Museum has wider frames in which the women are more spaced apart from each other and not always centered. Moreover, a very similar twelve-sheet composition was designed by another artist, Kikukawa Eizan - this composition is in the collection of the British Museum (Fig. 5). Being much more extended in length, Kikukawa Eizan's composition depicts nineteen women versus nine in Utagawa Toyohiro's print. The two differ in many details; however, a similar boy-daimyo is traveling in the *norimono*, and at the end of the entourage there are two youths nearly identical to those in Toyohiro's pentptych discussed. In this twelve-sheet composition by Eizan, the procession is moving in a similar fashion right to left against the landscape with Mt. Fuji.

The framing and background motifs in the scene change with each iteration of the print, hence we must first find criteria for the assessment of how our four alternate versions of the composition compare to one another. As with every additional sheet, there is more painstaking detail introduced by the artist and printers.

Thus, one may wonder if the larger number of panels and complexities identified a set of prints as being of higher quality and cost. From our simplest and main print, the five-panel RISD Museum print, to the ten-panel MFA Boston print (Fig. 3) to the twelve-sheet composition by Kikukawa Eizan, the scene grows much more detailed, yet the overall atmosphere is the same. Meanwhile, as has been said above, the six-panel print from Harvard (Fig. 4) adds a single yet unique panel, the plump woman leading a man's horse (Fig. 6). To reiterate, they are the mythical couple Otafuku, goddess of mirth, and her husband Fukusuke, a god of luck. Their addition to this print brings an element of fantasy even greater than that of women's parody. Representation of this "lucky" couple walking along with the procession may be interpreted as an addition confirming the intended delightful and auspicious mood that the print projects. Insertion of Otafuku and Fukusuke is done with the purpose to bring joy and good fortune to whoever sees or displays this work.

On the whole, not only the women's lighthearted demeanor enhanced by their stylish, luxurious garments implies a comedy - a multilayered playful handling of a serious matter. The same might be suggested by the presence of the seductive young men *wakashu*, their youthfulness clearly expressed in their hairstyle. Still another rich symbol is Mt. Fuji.

### THE ENVIRONMENT: MT. FUJI & THE MIST

All four versions of this composition include Mt. Fuji as the backdrop. In "Mount Fuji in the Landscape of Japanese Art", Timothy Clark notes that Mt. Fuji was often identified with

the Shinto goddess *Konohanasakuya-hime* from the fourteenth century and through the Edo Period. "That Fuji should be seen as a female deity is somewhat ironic, given that mortal females- regarded as ritually impure by the Shinto religion- were not allowed to climb right to the top until 1872".<sup>8</sup> While Clark does write that Fuji is unparalleled in religious significance, during the alternate attendance practices of the Edo Period, Fuji began to represent a landmark of travel along the Tokaido highway, as if another station along the grand journey of the processions. In Toyohiro's print, Fuji is highlighted as both a cultural landmark and as a religious metaphor. Additionally, the cultural context of Fuji being associated with a female deity only adds to the feminine energy present throughout.

The other significant background element is the *kasumi*, or mist. This negative space that was noted earlier, is not empty but rather filled with mist that serves to easily divide panels into foreground and background and to keep the focus on the figures in the foreground while pushing Fuji into the distance. The clouds that fill the scene represent a metaphorical dimension, furthering Fuji's role as an auspicious symbol. Auspiciousness of Mt. Fuji in association of the first dream of the year and possible allusion to youthful falconers has been already discussed above. This possible allusion would also emphasize the auspicious nature of the scene that Utagawa Toyohiro depicted.

### CONCLUSION

The polyptych *Procession Parodied by Women*, by Utagawa Toyohiro, uses familiar settings, customs, and attire to parody traditional gender expectations in Japanese society. One of the most obvious details seen in this print is that it follows the form of a traditional daimyo procession, but instead uses

women in prominent roles, this can be described as *bijinga mitate*. In traditional daimyo processions, women were not even represented. Utagawa Toyohiro's composition offers the juxtaposition of formality and informality in its many features and portrays the characters interacting with each other. It also might be humorous that the men, albeit the youths *wakashu*, are shown following behind the women, which is a stark contrast to the inferior position of women in the traditional Confucian societies. After a thorough exploration of the piece and its intriguing alternate versions, we can see that the figures portrayed in the print are shown in a much more dignified and elegant manner, in contrast, to the name of the print. The purposefulness of the sparse setting, ease and naturalness in the portrayals of the figures and subtly nuanced color harmonies combine to suggest that the women would not only be equally comfortable and competent in roles traditionally assumed by men, but would bring in a new grace into the parade practices based on strict regimentation. Using a setting traditionally associated with a procession of a ceremonial nature further reinforces this conclusion. It is also possible to infer that this scene by Utagawa Toyohiro has a dream-like, metaphorical quality. The unreal impassive beauty of the modish inhabitants of the fictitious yet native locale, auspicious symbols found in Mt. Fuji, the *kasumi*, the possible reference to the falconers, and of course the mythical couple Otafuku and Fukusuke suggest that this world is not quite our own, but one of elegant fantasy that lies at the very heart of ukiyo-e.

# Procession Parodied By Women: Layered Allusions

Yuanqing (Echo) Yao, Yue Xu



*Procession Parodied by Women*, 1820. Pentptych. Kikukawa Eizan (1787-1867) Signature: Kikugawa Eizan hitsu

A grand procession of women in elegant clothes and modishly coiffured is moving right to left across five consecutive prints that form a pentptych composition. The artist Kikukawa Eizan captures the subtle demeanors of every woman in the procession with his particular pictorial technique and distinct personal style, creating a pleasant visual experience for viewers. Eizan vividly delineates the interactions among different groups of women in the procession to enrich the narrative. Modeled on all-male processions of the daimyo, regional feudal lords of Japan, this all-female procession was a fantasy, a conceit characteristic for ukiyo-e art largely focused on *bijinga* - images of fashionable and alluring beauties, particularly courtesans. Besides the print's references from daimyo procession and courtesan processions, it also associates with the Japanese fantasized wedding processions and carries the auspicious representation of Mt. Fuji.

The print's title "Elegant and Modern Procession in the Guise of Women" (*Fūryū onna gyoretsu*) incorporates multiple feminine characteristics, promising

insights into women's traditional life and culture, their social status and hierarchy during the Edo period. The first word of the title "Fūryū" is often understood as being elegant and fashionable, but sometimes it also implies eroticism.<sup>1</sup> As one of the typical titles of parody prints, "Fūryū" also suggests that the print falls into the category of Mitate-e. Mitate-e is often understood as parody paintings or prints. Unlike the western concept of parody which might be critical and satirical, "mitate" in the Edo context has "wit and playfulness at its core".<sup>2</sup> Mitate-e draws contrasting allegories through reworking a classic solemn subject with secular and entertaining aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> There's always great humor in a mitate-e piece and it creates puzzles for the viewers.<sup>4</sup> Well-educated Edo viewers have to use their

1 Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History," accessed October 23, 2020, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>.

2 Timothy T. Clark, "Mitate-e: Some Thoughts, and a Summary of Recent Writings," *Impressions*, no. 19 (1997): 21.

3 Clark, "Mitate-e," 22.

4 "Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History."

knowledge to decipher the allegory and its meanings. In the print, the political performative act of male Daimyos is dissolved by the fashionable and charming female courtesans, who come from the Yoshiwara and are indispensable in Edo's urban cultures.

Sixteen stylish women are moving down a broad passage at the foot of Mount Fuji. Dressed up tastefully, fourteen of the women progress in a loose double line-up along the foreground, while one is carried in a palanquin *norimono*, being attended by an equally elegant girl. The women all conform to the ideal beauty of the Edo Period, with short crescent eyebrows, slanted narrow eyes, long nose, and a delicate mouth on the chubby oval face. Their hair is delicately set in shimada-style with fabric and flower-embellished hairpins. Despite the women's unified appearances, their lively personalities are revealed by their unassuming poses and gestures and almost imperceptible facial expressions -- their mouths slightly open and eyes gaze at each other. While there are little differences in their kimono and hair accessories, all the figures are very thoroughly coordinated with numerous subtle details echoing each other. The whole procession seems to be maintaining a tacit conversation within its participants as if they commune and understand each other without talking out loud. Women's demeanor, too, unveils the underlying interrelationships throughout the procession. The middle woman in a light chestnut color kimono on the second left sheet turns her head around and slightly leans towards her companion behind wearing a kimono of the same kind, as if they are in the midst of a discussion. At the same time, another woman in a white kimono right in front of the two remains upright and shows her indifference to their conversation by the aloof expression on her face; she is only extending her left arm back and is waving at them with an alerting gesture to indicate her stance.

61 Her expressions and gestures make

it reasonable to infer that she has no interest in their conversation and would like it to discontinue. All these interactions are captured by the curious eyes of a woman ahead of them with a huge yellow obi-sash. She is turning her head somewhat backward while continuing to walk ahead with the procession (Fig.1). A slight disturbance, like a narrow stream of imaginary clouds, is drifting along the procession, diminishing the orderliness, and delivering a relaxing ambiance among the women in line. These vivid interactions created by artist Eizen in great detail add a wide appeal to viewers.

The women wear kimono of generally muted earth colors that bear resemblance to diluted coral *sango*, chestnut *kuricha*, pale orange *hadairo*, and greenish brown *uguisu*. These kimonos seem to heavily wrap around the women's bodies but are lithely lifted as they walk. Diverse motifs of flowers and plants are printed. For example, the last two women on the second piece of the print wear a delicate outer dress with Paulownia (*kiri* in Japanese) pattern, symbolized by stems of small flowers growing above the tripartite broad leaves. Different combinations of colors and patterns in the women's kimono divide women in the procession into several groups, which reflects their different social hierarchical status within the procession. Just as in a daimyo procession, the line is headed by the servants who carry the crested chests *hasami-bako*. They are always identified by a square crest *kuginuki-mon*, known as the "nail-puller crest" (Fig.2).<sup>5</sup> Here too one can see such square crests paired on the sleeves of *hasami-bako* carriers. This is a Japanese traditional pattern used by yakko, the servants of samurai, which indicates the status of the two women walking in the front line.

The women's appearance, posture, and

5 Café Kamon, "kuginuki mon," accessed November 6, 2020, <https://kamoncafe.livejournal.com/682.html>.



Figure 1. *Procession Parodied by Women*, detail



Figure 2. *Procession Parodied by Women*, detail

clothing are not the unique creation of Eizan but are in fact following a unified aesthetic of idealized Edo beauty, which is also shared by most other *bijinga* prints. In an earlier print by Harunobu (Fig.3), the artist also depicts the interaction of one woman leaning back and talking to her companion behind. Their subtle postures highly resemble the ones in Eizan's print. More similarities also lie in their facial appearances, the slight curve of their bodies, or how the kimonos wrap around their bodies. More importantly, in both prints, the women are largely performative instead of being natural, as if they were aware of the gaze of the audience. These prints unveil the idealized image of an Edo woman in *bijinga*, which is defined by her ethereal demeanor, delicate garments, and charming performance.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the procession group's idealized and similarized characteristics, one woman still stands out among all her companions because of her gorgeous kimono with long sleeves, strong red cinnabar color (*shuiro* in Japanese), and prominent patterns (Fig.5). Kimono in such loose shape with long sleeves that drape from the arms to the ground is called Furisode. Furisode is worn on the most precious ceremonies in a female's



Figure 3. *Courtesans and Attendants on Parade*, Suzuki Harunobu, 1766

life, such as coming-of-age ceremony, graduation ceremony, and wedding of oneself or family members.<sup>7</sup> The largest patterns on her dress delineate clusters of chrysanthemums growing along a winding stream, whereas the patterns on her obi are in a geometric form that resembles layered bricks. She is also holding up an important object wrapped in a piece of beautiful brocade fabric. Also, she is the only one whose kimono is marked by the same crest around the shoulders as the crest on the roof of the palanquin and on the *hasamibako*

6 Amy Reigle Newland, ed., *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, Slp Edition (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2006), 83.

7 "What Is Furisode? It's the Best Kimono for Girls," Japanese Kimono Online Shop From Kyoto Japan (blog), June 21, 2017, <http://japanese-kimono.net/furisode-kimono/>.



Figure 4. *Procession Parodied by Women*, detail



Figure 5. *Procession Parodied by Women*, detail



Figure 6. Hosogane Kashiwa crest

chests(Fig.6). This crest consists of three TSURU-KASHIWA-oak leaves with tendrils growing in between(Fig.7). A crest is the symbolization of the last name of a big family, representing the status and spirit of the family. A daimyo family that used exactly the same crest hasn't been identified, but the triple oak-leaf crest *mitsu-kashiwa* was used by the Kasai daimyo clan of Mutsu province.<sup>8</sup> The family might be the descendants of priests since the kashiwa crest was first used by them.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, she belongs to the same household as the rider in the palanquin, and she probably is an influential figure inside the family. Another girl, standing next to the palanquin, captures the viewers' attention because of her much shorter height. Based on her position and height, it is reasonable to assume that she is a kamuro who is a young assistant to the rider sitting quietly in the palanquin. The kamuro is holding a cylindrical object next to the bride. It is hard to tell what

exactly is in that box, but a rational inference can be made that it contains a set of *kai-awase*(Fig.8), a shell-matching game firmly associated with the marriage ceremony and a necessary part of a trousseau(dowry).<sup>10</sup> The same beautifully decorated cylindrical object also appears in Hiroshige's fox wedding print(Fig.9).The rider herself seems not to be the highlight of this scenario, with her body blocked by her assistant. However, her palanquin has such delicacy with *makie* lacquer surface embellished by sprinkled patterns. The palanquin is the main vehicle of the Edo Period, and their surface decoration indicates the social status of the rider. The lavishly decorated lacquer palanquin with gold paint in the print is called an *onna norimono*(Fig.10), which always carries high-ranking women, probably a bride, from an honorable daimyo family.<sup>11</sup> The use of lacquer objects at weddings actually comes from the elegant court life depicted in the Tale of Genji, written in the Heian Period by Murasaki Shikibu.

8 "Kasai Clan - SamuraiWiki," accessed October 23, 2020, [https://wiki.samurai-archives.com/index.php?title=Kasai\\_clan](https://wiki.samurai-archives.com/index.php?title=Kasai_clan).

9 "細蔓柏の家紋情報," 家紋検索No.1/家紋ドットネット | 日本最大 家紋7,000種以上を掲載!!, accessed October 23, 2020,

10 John Carpenter and Melissa McCormick, *The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019), 262.

11 "TOKYO DIGITAL MUSEUM," accessed October 25, 2020



Figure 8. *Matching Shells (Kai-awase)*, "Kisen Hōshi," from the series *Modern Parodies of the Six Poetic Immortals (Yatsushi rokkasen: Kisen Hōshi)*



Figure 9. Fox wedding on the road of Oji, Utagawa Hiroshige, 1840-1842



Figure 10. Palanquin (norimono) with Tokugawa and Ichijo Crests, late 1700s- 1850s, RISD Museum Collection



Figure 11. *Daimyo's Procession Passing Mount Fuji*, 1791-92 (Kansei 3-4); Kitagawa Utamaro



The reference to the Tale of Genji not only represents auspiciousness but also alludes to Murasaki Shikibu and her characters as feminine role models that become elegant and cultivated wife and women.<sup>12</sup> The luxurious palanquin, the presence of family crests, the prominent furisode, and the young attendant all suggest that the women are in a wedding procession of an eminent and affluent family, with the bride inside the palanquin.

The intriguing colors and patterns overflow from the clothing to the objects which the women are carrying. These objects replicate exactly the ones that always appear in all-male daimyo processions (Fig. 11). Such objects include *keyari* - the feather-topped sheaths of spears on long poles, *ootorike* - pyramidal long-haired battlefield standards *umajirushi* or sheaths of spears often of two colors, like here. The two-level feather sheath of the spear is made to look like Mt. Fuji in the background, with snow covering its top and grassland along the mountainside. They include also the sheathed halberd *naginata*, the above-mentioned chests for daimyo official clothing *hasami-bako*, a tall folded umbrella *tategasa* and a rounded rain-helmet *daigasa*, as well as a huge parasol usually of bright red cinnabar color - the *shunuri daigasa*. Although all objects are typical for a daimyo procession, here they are marked by a feminine touch as they are decorated with soft colors and organic patterns. The *shunuri daigasa* in the print, however, has a special feature: attached below its canopy there is a scroll.

Looking ahead in the distance, one can see Mount Fuji emerging from the cloud, with its peak covered with snow. Around the mountain, the landscape is depicted with green clusters of trees that float scattered along the horizon line. Partially covered by clouds (kasumi), the trees seem to appear from the blank space.

The kasumi is depicted by thin winding lines spreading horizontally in bands with black sumi ink. They have been appearing in various prints and narrative scrolls, where they make an ambiguous border between different spaces or times.<sup>13</sup> Here in the print, the kasumi suggests that Mt. Fuji is not a real occurrence in space but a metaphorical representation. In addition, the representation of Mt. Fuji adds auspiciousness to the composition of the wedding procession print since, in Japanese culture, Mt. Fuji is a symbol of good luck. Mt. Fuji is also regarded as a female deity in Japanese culture which corresponds to the female parodying procession in the foreground.<sup>14</sup> Eizan's delineation of landscape blurred the physical reality of time and space, therefore turning the procession into an event that took place beyond real life in imaginative and metaphorical dimensions.

All the aforementioned figures, objects, and scenarios are depicted with only lines and thin layers of paint of Japanese woodblock print. No light or shadow is present, which makes the time and space ambiguous. Faces of women are only depicted in a simplified and generalized manner. The artist only draws the indispensable features of the face, such as eyes, nose, mouth, without further depiction. Despite the simplicity, the lines, colors, and patterns of the print are applied with such accuracy and coherence that this multi-figure composition acquires remarkable unity and grace and the demeanor and personalities of the women are vividly captured. All the women have quite similar facial characteristics which make it hard to recognize them as specific figures in history. Those figures are thoughtfully coordinated with numerous subtle details echoing each other such as the motifs on their kimono, their hairstyles, and hair accessories. The

13 "Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History."

14 Timothy Clark, 100 Views Of Mount Fuji, Reprint Edition (Trumbull: Weatherhill, 2001), 9.

overall tone of the print is very warm. And the colors applied are all desaturated and harmonious with graceful outlines, which is a unique style of artist Kikukawa Eizan. The grey and light tone of the print is probably also due to the fact that the print has faded over the years, as during the Edo period long-preservative and highly saturated pigments were not yet available. Blank space is also an important part of the composition. A large space in the background is left blank without lines or colors, but the presence of clouds is easily sensed due to the landscapes that emerge from the blankness.

The fantasized femininity in Eizan's print comes from the Yoshiwara, the licensed brothel district in Edo. Inside Yoshiwara, the beautifully dressed courtesans were watched and visited by male spectators and patrons, such as samurai and merchants. The courtesans dress, talk, and act in such performative, unique, and charming manners that the Yoshiwara turn itself into a fantasized "insular world" of pleasures inside the secular floating world of Edo city.<sup>15</sup> Woodblock prints, as imagery that were massly disseminated, added to the charm of Yoshiwara that aroused the longing and imagination of men from various social statuses. Despite the actual toilsome and pressured work of the courtesans, in the prints they were always acting blithely, free from all the secular worries, with flawless dressing and makeup.<sup>16</sup>

The culture of ukiyo-e prints during the Edo Period was so prosperous, with hundreds of artists and craftsmans working painstakingly to produce tons of excellent works that become well-received by the public. Among his contemporaries working with *bijinga*, Eizen has developed his iconic portrayal of "charming, slender, and elegantly-proportioned women with

beguiling large dark eyes" coherently through all his work.<sup>17</sup> What makes this print stand out is its multiple layers of references taken by the artist. Having a good knowledge of ukiyo-e prints and Edo culture, one could clearly see the interconnection between the parody of daimyo procession, wedding procession, and courtesan portrayal in this single work. The interest in deciphering the meanings behind these references has lasted from the print's creation till now. The forms, colors, and composition in this print also convey an ambience of delight, humor, and easiness, which at its core resonates with the spirit of ukiyo-e--enjoying the pleasures of life in the floating world.

15 Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 119.

16 Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 120.

17 "Kikukawa Eizan | 太田記念美術館 Ota Memorial Museum of Art," accessed November 6, 2020, <http://www.ukiyoe-ota-muse.jp/exhibition-eng/kikukawa-eizan>.

# A Playful March: The Splendors of Spring and Japanese Beauties

Sofie Levin, Nate Epstein-Toney

Looking at the print, the viewer can immediately visualize the scene that is captured within the moment as if experiencing the moment with the people represented in the print. Three beautiful women are walking in the foreground, displaying their elegant and sophisticated kimonos. The floral motifs of their kimonos compliment the blooming cherry blossoms in the background. Not to be noticing the procession behind them, they look at each other with enjoyment as the blooming cherry blossoms surround them. They flaunt their headpieces and beautiful three-layered kimonos.

The woman in the middle wears a floral-patterned decorated with sakura blossoms and branches; her kimono being blue fading up to a light purple.

The woman on the right is also dawning a delicate *sakura* patterned kimono; butterflies at the hem of the fabric stand out with their thin black-outlined yellow, blue and white wings against the dark purple kimono base. The figure on the left wears a *haori* (羽織) that suggests that it is still early spring; the weather being still cool enough to be wearing an extra layer. Her kimono bears vertical stripes, with no floral pattern, unlike her two other companions. The *kanzashi* (簪) in all the women's hair dawn small *sakura* (桜) motifs with soft pink accents, holding up the women's hairstyle with its golden *kanzashi* base.

All three women wear their *obi* (帯) tied from behind, each of different colors and designed with a different floral pattern from their kimonos. They wear their *geta* (下駄) without *tabi* (足袋). Each woman

heights. The right and left figure hold the front of their kimonos as they briskly walk, revealing the rich blue inner kimonos floral-patterned. Complimenting her cool-toned kimono, the woman in the middle wears an orange inner kimono with a floral pattern. She holds her right arm to her face, her hand covered by her kimono sleeve. Her left hand is seen partially reaching into her obi.

Hiding behind the woman in the middle is a little girl with a blue umbrella in hand. The girl's kimono matches the one that the woman with the *haori* (羽織), seen in the leftmost panel, is wearing, vertical stripes of grey, black, and various blue tones. Two pairs of animals appear playing with each other behind the women's feet. The animal pair on the right chew on *dango* (団子).

Behind the women there is an open road, cherry blossoms can be seen next to the road, blooming refreshing pink blossoms at the top of the composition. The footsteps of a procession can be heard. A band of clouds roll into the scene, dividing the women in the front from the marching sounds coming from behind them. Peeking from the end of the road, a group of boys can be seen marching into the scene. Their garments are vibrant and coordinated, the blues, reds, and blacks of their clothes stand out against the clear blue sky. The muted pink cherry blossoms blooming around them create a light and airy atmosphere around the procession.

The procession is accurately displaying the daimyo's personal escort and the footmen called *yakko* (奴). It is led by two boys dressed in purple holding



*Procession Under the Blooming Cherry Trees (Hanazakari hiru no gyoretsu)*, 1847-1852. Utagawa Yoshifuji (歌川芳藤), 1828-1887 Soshuya Yohei, Publisher RISD, Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1313

*hasamibako* (挟箱), a chest for official daimyo garments. They are followed by four other boys dressed in blue, each holding pikes (*yari* 槍). In the middle, four boys are carrying a palanquin (*norimono* 乗り物), which is open and another person can be seen inside of it likely the daimyo himself. The palanquin also has a white symbol on the top, which is a *hoshi-shippo* (星七宝), a circle divided into four segments by a diamond shape with four smaller circles on the outside, while this does not indicate any specific daimyo family, but it is likely used to indicate the boy's imagined daimyo status. Behind the palanquin, there is a horse attended by two other boys, this horse seems to be covered with the black velvet and noritake that was commonly placed on the lord's horses *omeshi uma* (御召し馬). At the very end of the procession, five more boys were carrying very large baskets each. Vaporis notes that these baskets usually did not serve any practical purpose and were generally meant for show.<sup>1</sup>

The print itself was Created by Utagawa Yoshifuji who worked as a pupil in Utagawa Kuniyoshi's workshop.

## THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN: TRENDING FASHION AND SEASONAL DRESS

This piece could be categorized as a *bijin-ga* (美人画) print, with the women being the main center point to the composition. *Bijin-ga* prints elevated the statues of entertainers and courtesans, the marketing of *bijin-ga* prints seen as a way to promote the status of these women. These idealized women with their beautifully patterned kimonos and happy smiles representing the luxuries that these women were supplied with by their status.

*Bijin-ga* prints (translated as "beautiful person picture"), while most popular for depicting women associated with the pleasure quarters, portrayed elegant women representing upper-class ladies and even merchant class. These prints included both portraits of real individuals and imaginary illustrations of idealized beauties of the time. The reliance on contoured lines in the face of the women grew to become a consistent feature within these prints. Kitagawa Utamaro, considered one of the most highly regarded designers of *ukiyo-e*, exemplifies the beginning of this trend, best seen through his *bijin ōkubi-e* (大 68

1 Vaporis, 29

首絵), “large-head pictures of beautiful women” (this means that only a head or head and shoulders are shown close up). This genre of *ukiyo-e* reflected the changing standards of beauty throughout the Edo period as well as the development and evolution of the artist’s sensibility.

The relationship between the shogunate and printers was always tense, many artists were trying to challenge and push the boundaries of what they could be allowed to do within their prints and subject matter. There were many instances where censorship and the suppression of prints and printed books were applied during the Edo period, the punishment for violating these rules depending on the severity of the crime. Restrictions within *ukiyo-e* became more strict during the 19th century due to the Tenpo Reform, one of three major reforms to take place during this time, banning individual portraits of *yujo* (遊女), common courtesans, and *geisha* (芸者). Artists of the time found ways to maneuver around these bans by integrating the figures of *yujo* and *geisha* into landscape designs. Many artists were always trying to challenge and push the boundaries of what they could be allowed to do within their prints and subject matter.

The social status of the women that appear in *bijin-ga* prints could be determined, to an extent, by their costumes. The kimono patterning and the position of her *obi* would indicate whether the figure was a woman of pleasure or a *geisha*. Although the artist got little recognition at the beginning, depictions of fashion trends were advertised freely by artists, popularizing women’s style of the time. The women’s occupation can be distinguished by their *obi* being tied in the back, an indication of their status as *geisha* or *maiko* (舞妓). *Geisha* are female entertainers who perform traditional Japanese art forms. The occupation of a *geisha* did not include prostitution, the confusion between *geisha* and *yujo* being that they

both wear layered kimonos despite the distinct appearance and occupation. Women who work as a *yujo* would be depicted wearing their *obi* tied in the front and wearing heavily decorated kimonos with an *uchikake* (打ち掛け), a heavily formal kimono that is heavily decorated and padded. The exposure of their bare feet was seen as a way of expressing a sense of eroticism in combination with their lacquered wood shoes. The overlap of appearance between *geisha* and *yujo* has been challenging when *observing bijin-ga* prints, in early prints, *geisha* can be seen with their feet exposed and wearing elaborate pattern kimono. The way the women’s *obis* are tied clarifies the confusion between the distinction of the women’s status, however, an argument can be made that the women were in fact part of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters.

The left figure’s kimono bears a striped pattern on her kimono, typical of the *iki* (粋) style of Edo. With this, one can determine the location of the scene to be taking place in the city of Edo or having the women being affiliated with the Edo district. *Iki* was an aesthetical concept within Japan originating from the merchant class of the Edo period. *Iki* can be seen more as a behavioural aesthetic, having the style being more subjective, making the term difficult to define. In short, the *iki* style could be described as dressing down, streamlining or simplifying what was meant to be attractive. The believed simplification of fashion was seen as more stylish and fashionable to the Edo people, creating a market for more simplified patterned kimonos. The subdued displays of tastes and wealth through style and fashion were ways to show an *Edokko*’s (inhabitant of Edo) deep understandings of beauty, and an appetite for the sensual. Within woodblock prints, kabuki actors, policemen, firefighters, and high level prostitutes were the main ones to lead the *iki* style. Female prostitutes and entertainers were considered fashion icons of the time, displaying the latest

fashion trends of the time. Striped kimonos was one way of promoting this aesthetic concept which defined the latter half of the Edo culture.

The right figure has *sakura* (桜) patterning with butterflies at the bottom of her kimono. *Sakura*, translated to cherry blossoms in combination with butterflies, are usually paired together to create a sense of movement. The middle figure's kimono has an intricate floral pattern with the hem of her kimono being blue fading up to a light purple. The representation of flowers and the reference to a specific season within the composition is common within the Japanese art style dating back to the Heian Period. *Sakura* were a common motif within kimonos signifying the beginning of spring. The referencing of the spring season can also be seen with the trees in the background and within the women's kimonos. The lifespan of cherry blossoms blooming was short, around two weeks, making the viewing of them a very special event that the Japanese attended. Among other festivals throughout the year, during the third month, the Cherry Festival was a popular one for everyone. In the present day, there are still festivals and events based around the blooming of cherry blossoms known as *hanami* (花見, "flower viewing"). It is during these festivals that courtesans were able to go out and enjoy themselves; some events surrounding the highest courtesan, the *oiran*, and celebrating her and other courtesan's beauty and fashion.

In the back of the middle figure, there is a girl peeking from behind wearing a similar striped kimono as the woman on the left. The girl must be *kamuro*, a young female attendant between the age of 8 and 13 years of age. They were usually a trainee of a high-ranking courtesan, the garments for a *kamuro* were supplied by the courtesan they were training under. It could be assumed that the girl is a *kamuro* for the woman on the left, however, her kimono patterning might've been an



Figure 1. *Yatsushi hakkei Seta no sekishō*  
Kitao Shigemasa

artistic choice and serve more as a visual than a connection between the two.

## JAPAN'S CHILDREN'S CULTURE: BOY PROCESSIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The boys marching through in the print are elements that were a usual part of the lord and his personal escort, which had an important role in the identities of the daimyo's processions. There is another print that displays the theatrical nature of the daimyo processions, Kitao Shigemasa's (北尾重政) print "Yatsushi hakkei Seta no sekishō" (やつし八景勢多夕照) (Figure 1). Three boys are imitating a daimyo procession crossing the Seta bridge (Ōmi province), recognizing the procession as a site of power and status.<sup>2</sup>

The attire that the boys are wearing represents the colorfully coordinated clothing that many of the lord's processions would wear as part of the spectacle. The samurai believed that colorful displays of



Figure 2. *One Hundred boys*, 17th century. Kano Einō, 1631–1697 Met Museum 2009.260.1, 2

clothing and decorated weaponry had a definite military function. In this print, every boy is fitted with a blue piece of *hachimaki* (鉢巻), a piece of headgear in intended to imbue its wearer with courage. The *hasimbako* carriers both wear a grey *haori* (羽織) with a blue undercoat, The boys carrying the *yakko* and baskets are fitted with a blue *haori* that have white patterns, each having some diamond shape on their left side which is a *kuginuki* or nail-puller crest used by *yakko*, servants to a military commander, which indicates some type of insignia or abstract symbol. The standouts are palanquin bearers dressed in a black *haori* with a yellow sash.

Considering how within the print, the boys are taking up the roles that men would traditionally have, it definitely suggests that children had some importance within Japanese art. Throughout much of early history, children played a fairly negligible role in Chinese art, from which much of Japanese culture derives. In early Chinese art during the Han period, children did not hold the same virtues and responsibilities that adults did at the time, additionally traditional values such as Confucianism placed a greater importance on respect for elders and their ideas rather than those of the newer generations. This however began to change around the third century as children began to be depicted more and more in paintings and reliefs as new ideas about childhood and

childlike nature began to flourish. It is suggested that “both Buddhism and Neo- Daoism contributed positive ideas about child-hood and childlike attributes that were missing in the Han period”<sup>3</sup> which happened around the third century and continued into the song period.

Depictions of children at play began to flourish around the time of the Ming period. As the strong desire for male offspring was strong, the Ming period brought with it many court paintings in which noble class boys were seen frolicking in gardens of the upper class (16). A new important theme, the “*baizi*” (百子), or hundred-boys theme, as a popular symbol for male progeny that was used to decorate any object bearing a wish for numerous offspring. While this imagery was flourishing in the Ming era, Japanese artists took notice and began creating their own paintings using the hundred boys theme as well. An example of this can be seen in the six paneled screen *One Hundred Boys* by *Kano Einō* (狩野 永納) (Figure 2) whose house is regarded as the most important family of painters in Japanese history, and was heavily influenced by Chinese history. In this painting many boys can be seen frolicking in the garden carrying various objects which is thematically very similar to the Chinese paintings of the subject.

In addition to the frolicking boys and the *Baizi*, children were frequently depicted alone with their own mothers. As women in the Ming period took on the significant role of child bearers and early childhood educators. Ming period women were also confined to their own spaces, shown in an enclosed garden or indoors with no company other than her son.

What is significant about this portrayal is that in Chinese art, imagery of boys playing outdoors was strongly linked to male progeny and the need for boys in the family, while women took on the role of isolated caregivers to those boys. The art of Ming period China and Edo period Japan have a clear link in their themes and imagery, especially in that of boys and family. In Yoshifuji's print, the boys are depicted similarly to how they were in Chinese art, the main difference being they are dressed up like and partaking in the activities of adults. But the influence of the *baizi* and the importance of family paintings resonate quite strongly in the way the boys are depicted in the procession, especially when looked at with other paintings of the same theme.

## EVOLUTION OF YAMATO-E WITHIN UKIYO-E

Behind the women, a band of clouds can be seen dividing the foreground and background of the composition. This stylistic feature can be dated back to the Heian period within *yamato-e* paintings. Flourishing during the Heian period (794–1185), *yamato-e* was a term coined to differentiate its composition and style from the featured themes that were imported from China. The subjects of these paintings included Japanese literature, history, as well as motifs associated with the four seasons. From the Heian period onwards, *yamato-e* was incorporated into other art styles of the changing Japanese landscape. The term evolved to not just indicate the content or setting of the composition, but also include paintings that employ particular form conventions.

The concept of depicting both the landscape and figures within a specific place can be found in other Japanese prints such as Hiroshige and Kunisada's series, *Along The Tokaido Road with Two Brushes* (Figure 3). These series of prints combine both artist's work, but are distinct and separated from each other with the use of framing of the landscape in the



Figure 3. Three prints from *Two Brushes Tokaido* (*Sōhitsu gojūsan tsugi* 双筆五十三次), 1854-55 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858) and Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864) Maruya Kyūshirō, Publisher 72





Figure 4. *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Humans, Chōjū jinbutsu giga* (鳥獣人物戯画)  
12th and 13th century Tokyo National museum

background; the figures placed on top of the landscape that is framed behind them. Within Yoshifuji's print, the magnification of the background in relation to the figures in the foreground allow the focus to be better balanced; relating to the space more than connecting the events of the foreground and background.

Other features of *yamato-e* included highly stylized figures with abbreviated features. The bands of clouds were usually used as a means to divide up space within the composition. During the Edo period, *yamato-e* reached an expanded audience as new developments in the social structure emerged. The wealthy merchant class were eager to take on the trappings of nobility, as *yamato-e* pertained mostly to the noble and elite classes of Japan previously. *Yamato-e* paintings also referenced the seasons through the representation of seasonal flowers and trees, this element evolving and integrated its way into ukiyo-e woodblock prints.

### MAN'S BEST FRIEND: THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMALS IN UKIYO-E

On the right and left panels of the image behind each woman, there can be seen two different animals: three cats and a dog. On the left side, the cats seem to be play-fighting with each other, and on the right, a dog seems to be chewing dango, a sweet treat made from rice flour. The three cats have rather short tails, making them similar to the bobtail cat native to mostly Japan and Southeast Asia, which have been a very popular housecat. The presence of these animals reflected the playfulness that runs through the Japanese

arts. Japanese artists and painters have used the concepts of play for satire and parody. One particularly fitting example is in the *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* (鳥獣人物戯画) or *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Humans* (Figure 4), which features animals playing the role of humans in a religious service. The practise of using animals carries on in art to this day within Japanese manga and animation, where animals continue to be used in this manner. It is very common for artists to use animals to satirize an element of contemporary society, particularly the hidden meanings and references in these works create a type of game in which viewers and artists both participate. Part of understanding this particular print is to find these hidden meanings.

In Japanese culture, animals are associated with Shinto divinities and serve a symbolic purpose in Buddhist Shinto religions. In Shintoism, animals serve as messengers to the *kami* (神), as well as their companions. Animals in all forms serve a core component in Japanese art, mainly as part of a story. Japanese art presents the flora and fauna within nature usually in its relationship to humans and this relationship between humans, animals, and plants is a mutually beneficial symbiosis. Each animal has its own unique symbolism in art, since they represent different aspects of life and culture. Dogs, cats, foxes, deer, wolves etc. each have their own stories and symbolism in relation to those stories. This is also exemplified in the 12 Chinese zodiacs, which the Japanese have also adapted into their culture as part of this symbolism. To understand an animal's role in art it is important to understand the cultural significance that they play.

Dogs play a very prominent role in Japanese art. Dogs were domesticated in ancient Japan and have been discovered by archeologists in two types of burials, solitary burials, and group burials, which suggests that people regarded dogs in very high esteem, likely for their loyalty and helpfulness. Dogs in premodern Japan appear to have been primarily outdoor animals, either as pets or as hunting partners. There have been famous dogs in Japanese culture, one such is *Hachiko* (ハチ公) at Shibuya station. Cats by contrast were not regarded in the same way, as they were domesticated later than dogs and mainly served as a barnyard animal. This is not to say that cats are culturally insignificant, as they still play important roles in their stories. One such cat features prominently in the *Tale of Genji*, who plays the role of an untamed housecat who pulled down the curtains to reveal the princess to Genji's son. Additionally, the cat has many forms within Japanese culture, as shapeshifters, signs of good luck, and even corpse eaters (*kasha*). Lastly, cats played the practical role of pest control in Japanese homes, particularly to control rats from eating their rice. Both cats and dogs have their own unique and equally prominent role in Japanese art and literature. Their inclusion in this print is likely to impart their nature into the piece giving it a stronger overall feel of playfulness. Cats also feature prominently in ukiyo-e art, and were seen in many other of Yoshifujis fronts such as the head of the cat witch.

as celebratory of its themes as it is playful with them, and its purpose is to entertain the viewer with the joys of its characters. The element of the blossoming cherry trees, falling petals across the print imbue it with the warm feeling of springtime, which further gives it a sensation of joy and ease. This print carries with it the history and attitudes present in Tokugawa Japan making it a great exemplar of that time period. An essential piece of Japanese art history that helps give an beautiful, in depth understanding of the Edo period history and its art.

## CONCLUSION

*The Procession Under the Blooming Cherry Trees* has a lot of elements. It features both bijin-ga and Boy's procession, the band of clouds seen in *Yamato-e* prints, and animals playing alongside everyone. All of these elements seen separately throughout Japanese art all come together in this one Triptych, making it undeniably unique while still being familiar to the prints of the Tokugawa period. The print is

# Utamaro's Anachronistic Reality: An In-Depth Analysis of "Women Imitating an Imperial Procession"

Emma Fujita, Tiffany Weng



Fig. 1. "Women Imitating an Imperial Procession" by Kitagawa Utamaro

Ten women, elegantly dressed and sporting high elaborate hairdos, are walking in a double file along an imperial cart, known as a *goshoguruma* (fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>. The procession moved languidly right to left. In the lead are women equipped with hunting implements. They are followed by a young woman who is the main person in the procession - her coiffure and dress are unique from those of the women around her and a big red parasol, a *shunuri daigasa*, is being held above her by the woman following behind her. Other women follow as attendants carrying various ornate implements.

Kitagawa Utamaro I, an ukiyo-e artist who was a preeminent master of femininity depicted this stylized procession of beauties on a three-partite composition - a triptych called "Women Imitating an Imperial Procession." The woodblock

print was completed by Utamaro in 1906 and published in the same year by Wakasaya Yoichi. Existing within an empty and nondescript void, Utamaro's procession of women exhibits various visual signifiers referencing the imperial culture of the Heian period (794-1185CE). The aesthetics of the Heian period, characterized by the flourishing and development of cultural refinement, pairs harmoniously with Utamaro's specialty interest in the depiction of beauty through his romanticized image of an imperial procession. This paper aims to investigate the triadic relationship between the three elements of his print: references of the Edo period to the long gone Heian period, prioritization of beauty, and the structure of the imperial procession the women are parodying.

The print is a triptych and consists of three parts, coming together to form

1 "Goshoguruma," JAANUS, 2001, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/g/goshoguruma.htm>

one cohesive image. At first glance, the three-paneled print may seem visually overwhelming with the multitude of overlapping patterns and colors, but deciphering the visual details within the image can help to elucidate structure within the procession itself. The women are shown in a linear fashion with a noticeable “pairing” system, introducing bilateral symmetry to the structure of the procession. Distinct elements that act as cultural cues to the audience aid in differentiating the women by roles and statuses, as well as indicating placement within the procession through pairs of matching dresses between the adjacent women. The procession is stretched across these three panels: the first panel featuring the first three women in the procession, the second featuring the next four women, and the third featuring the last three women at the back of the procession. It is significant that Utamaro substitutes men, who typically partake in processions, with women in this print. Thus, this print belongs to a distinct group of prints of the time that are parodying various processions.



Fig. 2. *Kammuri oikake*



Fig. 3. *Ka-ni-arare* and *shidatami* patterning

3). An interesting detail to note is that the *shidatami* is a reference linking the Heian period to the Edo period. The *shidatami* decorated the attire of Heian imperial court officials as an indicator of their statuses. It is, however, also known as the *ichimatsu moyou*, named after the Edo period Kabuki actor Sanogawa Ichimatsu who wore the checker-pattern onstage, thus reintroducing the pattern to Edo fashion, turning it into a fashion trend that was worn by the general public.<sup>3</sup> Thus, much of the urban population of Edo that Utamaro’s print was made to be sold to would have been wearing garments with the very checkered pattern featured in the first panel.

Starting with the first panel on the left, the outfits of the first two women mimic those of military court officials, or *zuijin*.<sup>2</sup> They both carry Heian period hunter’s hats, known as *kammuri oikake*, which were worn by the bodyguards of nobles (fig. 2). The headgears are identifiable by their fan-shaped blinkers, known as *oikake*, attached to the tying-strings of the caps. The two women are also shown carrying bows, known as *shigedo*, and a quiver of arrows, which were also carried by *zuijin* to protect the nobleman, who in this case is mimicked by the woman behind the two others. The patterning of the two women’s *obi* is another reference to the distant Heian period - both the melon flower motifs (*ka-ni-arare*) and the checkered pattern (*shidatami*) were frequently featured in Heian period garments (fig.

Moving further right of the triptych, the third woman is the central figure of the procession. The large red ceremonial *shunuri daigasa*, held over a person of high status for symbolic and practical protection is held over her. Much of her attire distinguishes her as being of the highest status in comparison to the other women in the procession. Her dress resembles a *junihitoe* worn by the empress and the court ladies of higher ranks, with its numerous layers of robes and extended length.<sup>4</sup> The patterning of her outer robe is another indication of her high status - undulating lines repeating to create an hourglass shape with cloud motifs within the gaps between the curving lines is known

3 Anita Y. Tsuchiya, “Japanese Design: Stone Tile Patterns,” January 1, 2016, <https://sabakuink.net/japanese-design-stone-tile-patterns/#page-content>

2 Albert J. Koop, *Guide to the Japanese Textiles* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), 44.

4 Koop, 48.



Fig. 4. *Akome-ogi* (left) and *kumo-tatewaku* (right)



Fig. 7. *Torobin shimada* hairstyle



Fig. 5. *Kiku ni ryusui monyo* and golden shutters



Fig. 6. Visible part of *shiji* and yoke

as *kumo-tatewaku* (fig. 4).<sup>5</sup> *Tatewaku* patterns were only worn by high courtiers in the Heian period. Her hairstyle is distinct from those of the other women, featuring a big off-centered loop at the back of her head. This is known as *katahazushi* - worn only by women of the inner quarters of the palace or by samurai wives. She holds an *akome-ogi* as well, a ceremonial fan often carried by noblewomen (fig. 4).<sup>6</sup>

The second panel features the next four women of the procession and the front left-half of the *goshō guruma*. *Goshō guruma* were two-wheeled carriages pulled by oxen, and it was the main means of transportation for the nobility of the Heian period - another cultural reference to Heian imperial culture and aesthetics. The wheels and spokes of the *guruma* are black, and the wooden structure making up the walls of the carriage are ornamental, covered in a white and light violet traditional patterning known as

*kiku ni ryusui monyo* (chrysanthemums in a stream), and accented with golden shutters (fig. 5). Although in a typical moving procession the carriage would be in motion, the print, Utamaro's *guruma* is stationary, causing the procession to become stagnant while continuing to show the women in motion. The yoke of the carriage is not fastened to the necks of oxen but is instead resting on top of a *shiji*, a special bench used to support the yoke when not in use. Part of the black *shiji* and *kubiki* (the yoke) can be seen in the first panel behind the two women leading the procession (fig. 6).

In front of the imperial carriage is the fourth woman who, as mentioned previously, is holding the vermilion *shunuri daigasa* above the woman of the highest status. Though much of the umbrella-holding fourth woman is covered by the fifth woman in front of her, enough can be seen to note her simpler attire in comparison to the woman she is holding the umbrella over, once again cementing the hierarchy within the procession. She, along with the other attendants of the procession,

dons the *torobin shimada* hairstyle, recognizable by its wide wing shapes on the sides of the head (fig. 7). It was highly fashionable during the mid-Edo period among young women and courtesans. This distinguishes the nine women from the central character, the noblewoman, who wears the easily recognizable Heian period court hairstyle known as the *katahazushi*, which further emphasizes the status

5 "Tatewaku," JAANUS, 2001, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/t/tatewaku.htm>

hierarchy among the women as well as highlighting the duality of the past and the present.<sup>7</sup> All ten of the women's hairstyles are shown to be set in place with metal disks (*shashi*) and hairpins (*kanzashi*).<sup>8</sup> Though the amount of ornamentation differs slightly from woman to woman, the central figure is shown with the most elaborate hair accessories, once again an indicator of high status.

As mentioned, the other three women of the second panel are of similar social status to the woman holding the *shunuri daigasa*, indicated by their similar hairstyles and simpler attire. The fifth woman, wearing a garment patterned with *take-monyo* (bamboo), holds in her right hand a halberd or *naginata*. The sixth and seventh women, unlike the fifth, are unusually not holding objects for the noblewoman. Both are making the same gesture of raising their right arms, the sleeves of their kimonos appearing right next to each other in the print.

The third and final panel features the last

7 Janice Katz, *Painting the Floating World: Ukiyo-e Masterpieces from the Weston Collection* (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, December 11, 2018), 242.

8 Koop, 51.

three women of the procession and the back right-half of the imperial carriage. The women appear to be gossiping amongst each other - the seventh and tenth women leaning their heads towards the ninth woman who is seemingly whispering to the two. Each woman is carrying with her an object. The eighth woman, dressed in a *momiji* (maple leaf) patterned outfit, is carrying a decorated golden crown with dangling ornamentation. The ninth woman is dressed in a *ya-e-ume* (plum blossom) patterned outfit and holding a white folding umbrella (which visually resembles a *tategasa* which translates literally to "tall umbrella"). The tenth woman dons a pale colored *tsuta* (ivy) patterned garment while carrying a black folding chair in her right hand.

To the right of the tenth woman is Utamaro's signature, which is repeated in the second panel (to the left of the fourth woman) and first panel (to the left of the first woman) (fig. 8). Along with Utamaro's signature, each panel also features the publisher seal and censorship seal (fig. 9). The publisher seal, done by Wakasaya Yoichi, is printed on the bottom corners of each panel (right corner of first panel, left corner of second and third panels). The censorship seal, known as *kiwame*, was a requirement during the late 18th century and early-mid 19th century; here, it is printed on the bottom right corner of the first and second panels, and bottom left corner of the third panel. Under each censorship seal is a printed marking indicating the month of publication.

A compositional element consistent throughout the three panels is the lack of an illustrated background. This was a distinctive feature of ukiyo-e - the "floating world" aesthetic was popularized in the pleasure district of Yoshiwara and interested Japanese artists, Utamaro being one of them. He opted to neglect the backdrop of the prints so as to not distract from the women, putting feminine beauty at the forefront of his



Fig. 8. Utamaro's signature



Fig. 9. Censorship (left) and publisher seal (right)



Fig. 10. Last six women of second and third panels, all with nearly identical facial shape/features

prints' design. Despite lacking a fully-realized background, his skillful inclusion of iconic Heian period props within the procession, most notably the immediately recognizable *gosho guruma*, sufficiently characterizes the scene of the action, effectively conveying to the viewer both the setting and context of the situation depicted. He achieves a perfect balance between positive and negative space, making the lack of a background not feel like a loss.

Alongside his interest in ukiyo-e stylizations was his interest and engagement with the *bijin-ga* genre. Through a hyper focused lens, Utamaro based his prints on the portrayal of the beauty of women, chiefly specializing in portraying the physical beauty of women. This genre style would have women substitute for various characters in real or imagined narratives, as well as display the highly dramatized court life of the Heian period. Utamaro's extensive history of practicing this genre (or this theme) has led to very specific stylistic choices in how he chooses to portray beauty.

The women are all depicted in a very similar fashion, with a uniform type of clothing and similar facial expressions. In many of his works, Utamaro has a specific style for depicting the features of women, with elongated faces and minimalistic marks to indicate facial features and expressions. The depictions of the women's faces within the triptych are almost identical to one another (fig. 10). His simplification of facial features aligns with the traditional way of representing faces in *yamato-e*, a Japanese native pictorial style that developed during the

Heian period. The style highly abbreviated depictions of the human face through a technique called *hikime kagibana*.<sup>9</sup> Translated as "slit eyes, hooked nose", it was utilized to draw faces of the nobility. While *yamato-e* faces were full-cheeked, Utamaro deviates from the Heian style by choosing to smoothen the contour of the face into an ovoid shape. The face shape, specifically the jawline, was a main focus of Utamaro's work as he erased a woman's cheekbone structure to achieve a smooth, overall elongated face shape. This beauty ideal of fluid soft-contoured oval-shaped faces is rooted in *meirenhua*, or Chinese Tang period "beautiful woman" genre.<sup>10</sup> Utamaro relinquishes anatomical accuracy in depicting the faces of women in order to portray women with the utmost beauty and grace.

The hairstyles of the women, however, are highly detailed - excluding the hairstyle of the main character- they all belong to variations of the "lantern hairstyle" *torobin* with the extended semi-transparent sidelocks resembling a lantern. In all cases, the hair is carved and printed with a painstaking method called *kewari*. This technique uses an extremely fine tipped tool to repeatedly create hair lines as thin as a single millimeter. It is important to note here that Utamaro did not carve out the lines into the printing blocks himself: ukiyo-e designers such as Utamaro outlined the overall drawing which was then carved into the printing blocks by

9 "Hikime Kagihana," JAANUS, 2001, <http://www.aistf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/h/hikimekagihana.htm>

10 Wen-Chien Cheng, "Idealized Portraits of Women from the Qing Imperial Court," *Orientations: The Magazine for Collectors and Connoisseurs of Asian Art*, May 2014, 91.

other artisans. Though this division of labor removes Utamaro from the physical making of the print, it is nevertheless accurate to state that the decision to meticulously detail the hairstyles was his, as he was the one to oversee the design and have the final say in the making of the key blocks. This close attention to detail demonstrates that Utamaro's idea of beauty is not solely rooted in simplicity; as he seemingly does rely on abbreviations when depicting women's faces, he contrastingly puts immense amounts of detail when depicting women's hairstyles and attires. It also highlights the nuances of Utamaro's style. It is a faulty assumption that Utamaro's depiction of women is reductive when his rendering is in fact remarkably sophisticated.

In designing his triptych print, Utamaro skillfully succeeded in producing a compelling composition through his inclusion of various complex elements and content. The viewer's expectations for nobility and elitism, stemming from the recognizable structure of the royal procession and the inclusion of references to the highly romanticized Heian period court culture, is subverted through the replacement of men with Edo period women, and more specifically courtesans. These ten lower class women are publicly partaking in an activity reserved for the elite, resulting in the creation of an entertaining anachronistic reality within the three panels. These creative decisions not only indicate the taste and sense of humor of Utamaro but also of the urban population of Edo, the people engaging with his prints.



# Kodomo in Kuniyoshi's Floating World: Joy & Auspiciousness Conveyed through Sankin-Kotai Parody

Julian E. Linares



Fig. 1. *Boys Play-acting a Daimyo Procession*. Utagawa Kuniyoshi [c. 1831-1842]

Shuffling near the shore of an expansive lake whilst shaded by a wide-branched pine tree, a procession composed of young boys marches from right to left. The procession has numerous features indicative of a daimyo's cortege, with feathered sheaths resting on tall spears, intentionally closed parasols, and proudly displayed banners. These are overseen by a palanquin and its rider, a seemingly pious and dutiful boy, emulating a stern daimyo peering out towards their destination. The calm water is inhabited by a plethora of sailboats, with nearby ones showing intent to shore, alongside faraway ones being depicted through the economical geometric representation of their sails. Fuji-san rises from the horizon, distinctive from its neighboring hills by way of its perfect slope and relative elevation. The time is sunrise, as the rays of the sun ascend from the water, with the sun rendering the horizon with a gentle pinkish-orange mist. Utagawa Kuniyoshi, a preeminent ukiyo-e print designer of his day, resorted to an extended format of a pentptych - a five-sheet composition - to unfold an idealized yet playful panorama of Japan, filling the view with auspicious symbolism.

## CHILDREN PLAY ACTING A PROCESSION

The boys in the print progress from right to left, emulating not only garb and uniform, but also the distinct mannerisms of each individual in the encompassing ritual. Many of the children with more subservient roles wear robes with a diamond-shaped crest on it. Known as a *kuginuki-mon*, the symbol connotes the *yakko*, or the servants of higher-ranking landed samurai or daimyo under the *bakufu* ruling system. The *yakko* stand-in boys are seen mostly in the near-front of the procession, where they are carrying some of the weapons indicative of a daimyo's procession, such as large chests *hasamibako* used to transport official attire of the daimyo, or feathered spears. The boys are caught in mid-dance, as they would go to the front of the procession to clear the path ahead. The *kuginuki* is also seen on the porters of the daimyo's *norimono*, or his palanquin. The symbol further appears on the shoulders of the right-most children, which seem to be in charge of maintaining and storing bulk cargo. The bottom half of the print is dominated by the lively movements of the boys, which is in sharp contrast to the calm and peaceful nature



Fig. 2. Detail of encased firearms and clubs emblazoned with a Toshidama.

of the composition's upper half.

Many of the boys appear to be caught in the middle of motion, suggesting the lively, performative nature of the daimyo procession. The procession that consists of sixty four children is sectioned into arrays of duty, both by the nature of the procession as well as the limits of sheets. The boys constitute a total of nine children in the first print on the left. This is equalled by nine children in the second, with the number growing to thirteen for the third, where the procession becomes more populated, with further indications of a daimyo procession with closed parasols and the *norimono* appearing. The two children at the vanguard hold their traveling hats, and not much else. They are backed by another two holding longbows, which are comically large in relation to them, as implied and exaggerated by scale and the background. They also hold quivers known as *utsubo*, which are cylindrical closed cases for arrows made of wood or papier mache. They were often covered with black lacquer and decorated with red lacquer patterns as depicted here by Kuniyoshi.<sup>1</sup> Encased firearms appear to be held by the following children, an important weapon of notice in feudal Japan widely used since the end of the

16th century. These firearms are covered in a red cloth, and both the guns and *utsubo* are decorated with a *Toshidama* seal. *Toshidama*, literally "a year jewel" is a symbol of good luck. It is composed of a circle with a winding component on its upper right quadrant.

The *Toshidama* implies a good luck wish for the New Year, and was utilized as the trademark of the Utagawa school of ukiyo-e, which Kuniyoshi was a part of and recognized as one of its greatest masters. Kuniyoshi himself preferred to distance himself from the pomp and circumstance of the title and did not like to be treated as a sensei. A sense of this can be felt by his inclusion of the *Toshidama* on these instruments of war, from which his vantage point in the *bakufu* system he had no part of due to his denomination as an artisan.

The depiction of boys in ukiyo-e has roots in the Confucian set of values where boys only could continue the family line, could have a career and thus add to the family glory. Considered felicitous, the motif of one hundred boys became popular in visual art of China in remote times<sup>2</sup>, and

1 For a similar type of the *utsubo* quiver see website of the Royal Armouries in Leeds, UK: <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/object/rac-object-1862.html>

2 According to the Metropolitan Museum website, the theme of one hundred boys first appeared in Chinese art during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). See caption to Kano Eino's pair of folding screens "One Hundred Boys," <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/75372> The boys, however, are known as "Tang



became one of many Japanese cultural borrowings from the continent. In Japan such portrayals of boys inspired by the Chinese tradition became known as *karako*, which translates to Tang children but was understood broadly as “Chinese children.”

The depiction of these auspicious children was used in various areas of art, for example, on differing forms of *ware*, or ceramics<sup>3</sup> but also on folding screens<sup>4</sup> and in ukiyo-e. They are used to exude the joyfulness of childhood in addition to carrying the above-mentioned auspicious wish for career advancement reserved to boys alone in societies based on the Confucian ideology. Daimyo processions have a long and rich history during the Tokugawa Shogunate, which imposed a system of *sankin-kotai*, or alternate attendance, in which daimyo from all domains were forced to stay in Edo every other year, with their families staying there at all times and virtually held hostage. Representation of boys in ukiyo-e is a part of a sub-genre known as *kodomo-e* or “images of children.” Children were

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boys” - *karako*. Although the Tang Dynasty (618-907) preceded that of Song, the term “Tang” often stood for “Chinese” in general.

3 Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*. (NY, Columbia University Press, 2013). 141

depicted in a variety of situations - both boys and girls could be shown together, sometimes playing, sometimes studying. But when the subject matter focused on military topics, depicted were boys alone. This was so not only because it was common for boys to play adult men but primarily due to the association of boys with good luck manifested in male progeny and thus success in office, which was a desired element in feudal Japan.

## THE EVOLUTION OF LANDSCAPE

The procession is flanked by a large shore followed by a wide expanse of water, upon which multiple sailboats can be seen and across which are mountains, including mount Fuji. The sailboats work to provide a sense of perspective, as some can be seen approaching nearby, whilst others are barely visible in the distance. The calmness of the sea and the presence of boats coming and going has also symbolism of peace and prosperity, another felicitous metaphor present in this composition. The same can be said of the mountains, where the overarching Fuji-san triumphs over the lesser hills that resemble earthy waves, both in scale and its stately stroke. Mt. Fuji and the surrounding mountains are complimented and mirrored by the rising sun to the left, whose magnificent rays are clearly visible to the viewer, yet unnoticed by the

boys themselves. As remarked by Haruo Shirane in his book *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*, the rising sun (*hinode*), now used on the national flag, was considered an auspicious sight, particularly at the beginning of the year. Because of the location of the rising sun on the print, one can assume that the artist situates the scene during the New Year. The sun then is further utilized as a good luck charm, and perhaps alludes to the print's selling factor besides aesthetics. Furthermore, framing Mt. Fuji and the procession itself is a pine (*matsu*) tree, which is considered to be yet another beneficial symbol. In the same book by Haruo Shirane the importance of the pine tree is explained:

*The most important and by far the most popular of the trans-seasonal trees is the pine (matsu) an evergreen with needle-shaped leaves. Of the many types of pine native to Japan, the red pine (akamatsu) and the black pine (kuromatsu) are the best known. The red pine grows in mountains and fields, where it was cultivated, and the black pine flourishes on the seacoast. ... Culturally, it was known for its long life and unchanging green color and consequently became a sacred tree associated with longevity.*

The wide reach of the pine tree is almost indicative of its longevity, spanning out to reach these other symbols of good fortune and success. By being in close proximity to the boys and Mount Fuji, it is almost engaging in conversation with them and their beneficial traits.

## KUNIYOSHI DURING TENPO REFORMS

Published by the publishing house of Izumiya Ichibei during the tumultuous Tenpo period, it may have been produced right before the Tenpo reforms or in the course of those reforms, in the course of which ukiyo-e artists and their works were constrained in many ways. Decreed by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1841 as advised by Mizuno Tadakuni, a chief senior councillor to the shogun, the

Tenpo Reforms affected ukiyo-e prints specifically. Those reforms led to the restrictions of color and subject matter, as well as the amount of blocks permitted per print and the price of each print to 16 *mon*. It also restricted the amount of panels to three. This was during the time that Kuniyoshi was utilizing his pseudonym Ichiyusai, which was during the decade from 1831 to 1842. The inclusion of a censorship seal known as *kiwame* is present in each print. This particular seal was used from 1812 to 1842. Using these two dating points places the print right before the Tenpo reforms or their very beginning. Another time datum is the heavy utilization of *bero-bi*, known in western countries as Berlin (or Prussian) Blue. A synthetic blue pigment which lends itself to woodblock printing, offered a lightfast and somewhat more affordable alternative to existing blue pigments. Kuniyoshi used it liberally in this print, leading to interesting affordances such as the close cropped hair of the children being rendered in a light blue, appearing almost as head coverings. The use of Berlin blue in ukiyo-e was especially prominent in landscapes, and led to their development and focus. Its chemically manufactured origin contrasts that of Japan's own blue of choice, indigo (*tade-ai*). Indigo dye requires a strenuous mechanical process to extract and utilize, and its sequence of access led to an economy of its use in ukiyo-e. Interestingly enough, it was confused to be of Japanese origin by western collectors, and termed "Hiroshige Blue." This is described as,

"Western collectors were highly sensitive to the qualities of this blue, which they came to know as 'Hiroshige Blue,' but they assumed it to be of something uniquely, even mysteriously, Japanese. When Edward Strange, a pioneer British scholar of Hiroshige, gave a talk to the Japan Society of London in the spring of 1910, for example, a member of the audience queried him about the colors of Hiroshige's prints, in particular the 'indigo' 84

that was 'quite different from that used by our own painters, and a color possessing much beauty.'<sup>5</sup>

The good nature of Kuniyoshi points to this print being truly about good luck and bound to its more traditional aspects, rather than his boundlessly inventive images of historic heroes, or his guising kabuki and other unapproved scenes through allegory. What can be seen as a result of its era is the prevalence of blue used by Kuniyoshi, primarily a figurative artist, with remarkable sensitivity in his subtle choices of hues and application of delicate gradations on rendering of the land, the water and the mountain. This masterfully handled blue is dominating the landscape as well as the uniforms with red and shades of tan performing far and few in between.

as being real and tangible, rather than completely fantasized. The pentptych also characterizes the general nationalistic mood spread among the intellectuals at the time, when under the pressure of the west Japan gradually began to change along the Western cultural lines.

## CONCLUSION

In its entirety, Kuniyoshi's pentptych is an auspicious composition associated with good wishes for the New Year - it wishes abundant male progeny (boys - hence, career success and social status), longevity (pine tree) and generally good luck for the time to come (Mt. Fuji and the sunrise). It is also imbued with nationalistic connotations, through its inclusion of known good luck tokens through the form of Fuji - Japan's symbol - as the encompassing landscape. The combination of said symbols is traditionally Japanese, despite some being of Chinese origin such as the bountiful amount of boys and the overarching pine tree. In addition to these symbols squarely placing the print in the duty of a good luck token itself, the print also depicts and represents the realities and phenomena of the time it was created. Actual daimyo processions still were a part of the daily visual experience (until 1862) realizing the whimsical boys' procession

5 Henri Smith II. Hokusai and the Blue Revolution in Edo Prints. in John T. Carpenter, ed., Hokusai and His Age: Ukiyo-e Painting, Printmaking, and Book Illustration in Late Edo Japan, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, 2005:

# PART IV. OTHERWORLDLY PROCESSIONS: fox weddings and a wedding of mice

## The Fox Wedding on the Road to Oji, by Hiroshige

Young Ju, Manni Yu



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) *Fox wedding on the road of Oji* (王子道狐のよめ入り/狐のよめ入 / - *ojimichi kitsune no yomeiri*.) Pictured at Asuka-yama in Eastern Capital (東都飛鳥山の圖 *Tôto Asukayama no zu*) Publisher: Tsutaya Kichizô Vertical ôban triptych. Ca. 1840-1842 (Tenpo era, 11-13)

A procession of unusual creatures that combine human bodies and heads of foxes is moving gracefully right to left, taking the entire length of the visible space. Judging from the peculiar appearance of the creatures, they are shape-shifting foxes that are assuming such anthropomorphized appearance for a special event of a fox wedding. This is also suggested by the fact that there are two groups of foxes in their natural animal state - they are far away, close to the horizon line and on the horizon line. Ukiyo-e print artist Utagawa Hiroshige illustrates this popular folklore motif in his triptych - a three sheet unified composition. In this triptych, the artist is reflecting many

features of the story while depicting it in his distinctive style.

As usual for representations of fox weddings, the procession is led by foxes that carry collapsible paper lanterns *chochin* (提灯), but the number of paper lanterns call for attention as they are limited to two here (fig. 1). In fact, unlike any other fox weddings happening at night they only require two foxes to hold paper lanterns because the procession is shown before the darkness. The lanterns are adorned with a symbolic pattern drawn in reddish color on the white background. The reddish form depicted here can be referred to by many names: *kaen-dama* 86



Fig. 1. Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Fox Wedding on the Road of Oji*, detail. Foxes carrying lanterns *chochin* with wish-fulfilling blazing jewel depicted on them.

*mon* (火焰玉文), flaming jewel, blazing jewel; *hoju-no dama* (宝珠の玉) - wish-fulfilling jewel, cintamani. These jewels exist in the religious beliefs of Shinto and Buddhism, symbolising the power of purification and are believed to have the ability to fulfill wishes.

Right behind the white foxes carrying lanterns, two foxes are holding a roofed litter with a tall cylindrical object inside. Two foxes are escorting the litter as if they are securing its precious content. The object attracting attention is *kai-awase* or *kai-oke-awase* (shell-matching game) that is being carried in an extremely respectful way. *Kai-awase* is a type of shell-matching game firmly associated with the marriage ceremony and a necessary part of a trousseau (dowry). This cylinder shaped object appears often in ukiyo-e prints. *Procession Parodied by Women* by Kikukawa Eizan (cat. No. 7) is another example showing *kai-awase*. In that print, a young attendant standing next to the palanquin seems to be holding the wrapped *kai-awase* box instead of having it under the roofed litter.

Behind the bearers of the *kai-awase* sets two foxes are carrying boxes on long poles over their shoulders (fig. 2).

Those boxes perhaps can be identified as *hasami-bako*. The function of *hasami-bako* was to transport clothes - they were a type of storage, travelling chests. Two more chests are being carried by the foxes closing the procession on the right-most panel. They are carrying long trunks *nagamochi* (長持) that are supplied with legs - they are also referred to as *karabitsu* (唐櫃) because of the Chinese-style shape of the legs. All chests are red with the jewel-like motif decorating them.

Behind the first three rows of foxes that are arranged in threes and twos - those that have been just discussed there is a single fox that is carrying a halberd. This fox is opening the central panel of the triptych. The halberd seems outstanding in how tall it is - its length is almost equal to the size of a fox holding it. This exceptionally long halberd could be the *naginata* which used to be the effective pole weapon of samurai. However, its role shifted to the representation of social class among women in the Edo period.

The following group of foxes is carrying the bridal palanquin also known as *onna norimono*. It is a wedding day transportational ride for a high social class woman mostly made out of lacquered wood. The black roof underneath the red upper layer was possibly decorated in two different ways: one directly drawn with color powder of gilt and silvered copper - *hiramaki-e*, or it could be the scattering adhesive metal attached to the wood



Fig. 2. Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Fox Wedding on the Road of Oji*, detail. Foxes carrying a roofed litter with cylindrical containers for *kai-awase*, shell matching game are followed by foxes with chests on their shoulders.

lacquered surface, *maki-e*. Although there are numerous sophisticated pinkish-red split bamboo-curtained windows, none of them allows taking a glance at the bride. Unlike the daimyo procession that reveals the daimyo himself sitting in the palanquin, here the palanquin is fully closed. The absolute invisibility of the bride inside of *onna norimono* remains intriguing and provokes curiosity of the audience along with the large dowry apparently forbidding the opening until it reaches its final destination. Taking a closer look at the clothing of foxes, the majority are wearing blue, with a couple of foxes dressed in neutral brown. Only one fox is wearing black; this fox could be the one in a leading position with higher responsibility among all other foxes. Kimonos of foxes that carry the palanquin are patterned with flaming jewels and bundles of ribbons, *noshi*. Their obi-sashes are black and the yellow collars of their inner kimonos are visible. The edible shellfish are depicted on their black obi-sashes supposedly as a means to represent the food of gods.

It is noteworthy that the artist's decisions to unfold the procession along the horizontal landscape during the sunset hour. Of particular significance it is that the procession is shown at the time of the sunshower that is believed to have a distinctive association to the white fox wedding. Two thirds of the print's surface are given entirely to the representation of nature. Behind the line of foxes there is a hill with silhouetted pine trees and deciduous trees at the hilltop. The surface of the grassy hill is colored in a blue-green gradient. These bluish hues of the hill look alike to the foxes' clothing. Nearly the entire upper part of the print is given to the skies. Thus, horizontally, the print is divided into three sections. The big, old cherry blossom tree is placed almost at the very center of the composition. In fact, cherry blossoms bloom in the month of April; the beauty of the blossoms stays at peak for only two weeks. Branches of the big cherry tree are reaching towards the

sky, and the flowers are surprisingly fully in bloom even on a rainy day. Blooming cherry blossoms here provoke a sense of magical world found in the uncommon scenery which is that none of the flowers are being piled up on the ground as if the tree stands strong enough to win the rain. Looking at the widely outstretched branches, the dominant placement of grand cherry blossom tree at the center is not only fascinating, but also majestic. Unlike this big cherry tree in bloom, the artist's instinct to draw the shadowy silhouettes of the trees in the background emphasises the difference in the conditions of the trees. Those faraway trees are lifeless or leafless as if they are in a different season different from the spring. The extended length of what can be interpreted as the tree's shadow suggests another important clue in prompting the approximate time of the wedding. It seems around 6pm to 7pm in Japan during the springtime. The darkness of the night is not there yet, but the pinkish evening glow can be seen in the sky. While observing evening glow there in the distance, it is noteworthy that the specific fox-related phenomenon of sunshower is drawn lightly at an angle. Thus, a certain rhythm comes in to open up a new angle of the piece.

Considering the sunshower in relation to the Japanese myth, it is known as one of fox's tricks to forbid people from coming into the forest during the wedding ceremony. Meiji period *tanka* poet Masaoka Shiki wrote: "When rain falls from a blue sky, in the Hour of the Horse, the Great Fox King takes his bride."<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, the mention of foxes' wedding on sunshower day is not only limited to Japan folklore. Many different versions of fox stories were handed down also in other ancient countries. Versions include a male tiger that is marrying a fox, a fox that is marrying a hunter and in the end the hunter is leaving the female fox

1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitsune\\_no\\_yomeiri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitsune_no_yomeiri)



alone; there is a story about the cloud who loves the fox and cries because the fox bride leaves the cloud to get married.

The mythological foxes are still maintaining their popularity. Dramatization of the fox stories resulted from the deification of the characters, and this is a necessary element in the storyline of Korean fox drama.

Returning back to the print by Hiroshige, there are two disparate groups of foxes. Foxes far behind the cherry blossom tree are gathered as two groups of three animals remind of normal wild foxes. In contrast, the foxes in the procession are human-like and are portrayed as fox-headed *bijin-ga* - images of beautiful women in ukiyo-e art (美人画 *bijin-ga*, lit. "beautiful person picture"). This comparison suggests the supernatural power that the foxes in the procession might possess that allows their transformation from fox form to human figure. A slow gait of the foxes resembles gentlemanly behavior of human procession.

Hiroshige is a preeminent master of lyrical landscape in the art of ukiyo-e. He depicts nature with great sensitivity, always paying close attention to the particular time and location. He often portrays nature in the state of transition, and here the season is spring with its gentle but short-lived blossoms; the time is dusk, and the air seems filled with the soft color of the setting sun. Hiroshige's art pleases the audience by creating a poetic picture of the foxes' procession. The elegance of the procession and the gentleness of this spring landscape establish harmonical relations between the white foxes and the grand nature. Clothing of foxes, glowing pink sky, fully blooming cherry blossoms on a rainy day, sunshower, etc. play a trick - rooted in the myth, every little detail captured in the prints are elements that contribute to the speciality of Hiroshige's poetic style.

# The Fox Wedding under the Full Moon

DaRong Lang, Kaori Yasunagi, Benjamin Lamacchia

This print titled 'Kitsune no Yomeiri' was created by Utagawa Kuniyoshi during 1839-1840. It comprises three sheets joined together. As rather a common topic in ukiyo-e, the story of a fox wedding is usually illustrated in a mysterious, majestic, bizarre and even thrilling manner. After all, it is a 'ghost story' describing a supernatural world fraught with magic and wonders beyond human comprehension. However, in comparison with other prints, this piece by Kuniyoshi adapts a comical form that plays between uncanniness and humor. It is a print of noise, laughter, movements, transformation, and harmless jokes.

The procession follows a zigzagging route around a lake during nighttime. It first begins from a red torii on the far right, passing through woods and gradually moving closer towards the right of center, where the palanquin and the major players of the procession are at. It then passes by from behind a big cryptomeria tree with *shimenawa* straw rope on it, and continues to the left of the print, indicating there are even more ahead. These environmental elements thus act as frames that divide space and also categorize foxes into different groups, revealing different stages of foxes' transformation.

Around torii - at the initial point of the procession - on the far right, viewers can see small groups of foxes standing up. They seem to be quarreling or maybe disputing about roles to be played. One of them carries a *hasamibako* (box for clothing - in this case dowry). Bearers of *hasamibako* should be at the front of the procession according to tradition and therefore here it breaks the rigidity of the procession.

Moving closer to the center, some foxes are seen to be wearing *kamishimo* (official garment for samurai) yet still maintain the original form of foxes. After a tree, viewers can see a group of foxes more successfully disguised as humans. These foxes disguise themselves as women wearing *ageboshi* (揚帽子). At this time they are portrayed with more human faces despite some of them still have whiskers remaining.

Next we see a fox disguised as a servant holding a *shunuri daigasa* - a big red ceremonial umbrella. He is walking behind the palanquin and is lifting the umbrella above the palanquin with the bride inside. Although these foxes have a more complete transformation into humans, the head piece they are wearing still reminds viewers of their true identity. The triangular headgear is called *hitai-eboshi* (額帽子), and is usually associated with funerary ceremonies and realm of yokai. It is possible that these are just foxes senselessly imitating human behavior and ritual without understanding the real meaning behind them just like parrots imitating the sound of people speaking without understanding that language. However it might also be interesting to think about the possibility that, just like how humans need accessories as identification of social roles, these supernatural beings also adapt by wearing these identity signifiers, for pure fun or other reasons. Around the palanquin there are also foxes transformed to women with *kazuki* veils worn over their heads. They are the ones who have had the most successful transformations into humans in the entire procession. Not only are their veils extremely delicate with seasonal elements depicted on them, such as lotus flower, 90



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) *The Fox Wedding* (狐の嫁入図 *Kitsune no yomeiri no zu*). Signed: Ichiyusai Kuniyoshi (right and left sheets), Kochoro Kuniyoshi (center sheet). Publisher: Eshima (エシマ) Vertical oban triptych. Ca. 1839-1842. The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Inventory number: A. 3925-3927.

plum flower and maple leaves, their postures are also less animalistic, but just as elegant as real human females.

As it gets closer to the front of the line, foxes start to look like foxes again. Although they still have human clothes on, their teeth sharpened, ears are standing up, whiskers grown. They are laughing and conversing with each other, enjoying this pleasant moment.

On the far left behind them are standing foxes without any camouflage on. Curiously instead of directly breathing out fox fire, they are seen holding sticks that carry their fox fires.

In the print, there are numerous items that have distinct purposes and hold cultural significance. In the foreground to the right, we see a *daigasa* (noted upon earlier). This is an umbrella made from oil-paper, specially treated with pigments and oil to resist water; this oil-paper is stretched over the bamboo ribbing. Its function during a wedding procession is to symbolically protect the matron of honor. The white motif seen on the umbrella and in other places in the print is representative of a blazing jewel. In folk Shinto beliefs foxes are associated

with *Inari*, Shinto rice deity. The jewel was strongly associated with *Inari* and hence with foxes. The jewels in flames represent spiritual and material wealth, fertility.<sup>1</sup>

1 Karen A. Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 146



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The Fox Wedding*. Detail. Vermillion ceremonial umbrella and palanquin roof with a blazing jewel, foxes' attribute.



Palanquin (norimono) with Tokugawa and Ichijo Crests, late 1700s- 1850s. The RISD Museum.

Under the umbrella, we see one of the largest items in the procession, the bridal palanquin (*onna norimono* - "ride for a woman"). This is used for the transport of a bride of a high social class. The palanquin is constructed out of wood and finished in black lacquer with ornamental gold-powdered embellishment. The bride enters the box-like structure of the palanquin through sliding doors on either side. On the doors we can see bamboo blinds covering the window openings. The interior of the palanquins would traditionally be decorated with representations of lavish wares, to resemble the inside of an aristocratic mansion. The palanquin is carried by a central pole attached to the roof via metal braces - sometimes above it (as in the current case) and sometimes below. The palanquin is carried by four to six men, or in the case of this print, foxmen.

Poking out from behind the tree bound by the *shimenawa*, the slightly arched red case of a *naginata* halberd can be seen. Originally used by samurai and foot soldiers, the *naginata* also functions as a symbol of status for a woman of a high social class, commonly included into the dowry.

Moving left in the foreground, there is a tasseled straw rope tied around the trunk of a tree. This is the already mentioned *shimenawa*, a rice straw or hemp rope used in the Shinto religion to purify a space. Places bound by *shimenawa* are regarded as sacred.

Seen in the bottom left corner of our print are the paper lanterns *chochin* always present in the depictions of fox wedding processions which is discussed in larger detail below. *Chochin* lanterns were introduced to Japan from China during the 14th century.<sup>2</sup> *Chochin* lanterns are

constructed by artisans in three stages. A frame structure made of various wooden fins is assembled. Around this frame structure, a bamboo rib is spiraled around to create the cylindrical shape. Paper is then brushed with adhesive, applied to the bamboo frame, set to dry, and the frame is removed from the bottom of the lantern. These lanterns were used as light sources and as ceremonial objects, as seen in the print.

The organization of the print creates a little mystery by suggesting a bit of twist within the explicit. Different from other prints on the same topic, here viewers are not observing the procession from a distant lookout location. Rather, viewers are almost at the same level as the procession, and our position is so close that trees in-between are the only indication signaling the division of two worlds. It is also not impossible that the implied voyeur is under some special disguise and therefore has no worry of being discovered, enjoying the spectacle as a satisfaction of one's voyeurism. There seems to be no secret foxes can hide.

However, the twist is displayed by playing with audiences' viewing order and layers of observation. The spectacle of the procession is overwhelmed with trees and swirl of noisy movements; it is almost hard for viewers to see it in a linear and orderly way. Naturally, viewers are immediately attracted to the scene of a decorated palanquin and *shunuri daigasa* on the right of the center framed in-between the gap of two groups of trees. It is a space filled with details. An exquisite palanquin is accompanied by a few elegant women dressed in kimonos indicating seasons; they are followed by members of the retinue carrying *shunuri daigasa* and some more women behind. However, as viewers observe more closely, something appears to be off. Except the two elegant women on the left side of the palanquin, other people around it all have faces of foxes! Moreover, as has been mentioned above, 92

<sup>2</sup> Kimberly Nichols, Jacki Elgar and Karen Gausch "Illuminating the Way: Conservation of Two Japanese Paper Lanterns," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Summer, 2007, Vol. 46, No. 2, 126.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The Fox Wedding*. Detail. *Chochin* lanterns with a blazing jewel, foxes' attribute.



(Left) Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The Fox Wedding*. Cartouche with the print title in the key-shaped frame.



(Right) Sculpture of fox at Oji Shrine (Edo/Tokyo), holding a granary key in the mouth.



Photograph by Isamu Noguchi of lantern being made using the traditional construction method, 1978

some men in the line are wearing funerary accessories on their heads, which seems to be contradictory to a wedding.

This scene might remind a modern audience of how horror movies are obsessed with creation of alternative reality and uncanny valley effect. It is undoubtedly horrifying to see things altered and incomprehensible actions being played out under the familiar veneer. However, when viewers move away from this major scene, the tone of the print is shifted again to a light-hearted silliness. The trees are not divisions of space in a static printed image, but more like frames in animation that dictates time, rhythm and plot. By structuring his print in this way, Kuniyoshi managed to make everything vivid and alive. In the print, there is tension, surprise, energy, spirits and more importantly, frankness that are

endeavoring to reveal what is shrouded and what is to be told.

In the belief of Shinto religion, “gods” 神 reside in all things, animate and inanimate. Yama-no-Kami (山神) is god of the mountains, which is worshipped by hunters as well as farmers. Kitsune, or foxes, are part of mountains like trees and stones, and thus they are also considered to be gods. Rice farming often suffers damages caused by rats that eat the crops or dig holes on the banks of rice fields, causing water leakage. Farmers found out that foxes are natural enemies of rats, and that stones with fox urine on them had a repellent effect on rats. So they built miniature shrines (祠 *hokora*) near rice fields and attracted foxes with fried-tofu (油揚げ *abura-age*). Thus, foxes are considered to be the messengers of *Inari*, the god of rice and agriculture.<sup>3</sup>

In Kuniyoshi's print, the cartouche with the title at the upper right corner is framed with the design of a key, which statues of foxes at *Inari* Shrines usually hold in their mouths. This is a key to granaries where rice is stored. This detail also signifies the belief of foxes as messengers of *Inari*, god of rice, agriculture.

3 Koji Naoe, *Cult of Inari*. 3. Vol. 3. History of Popular Religion (Tokyo: Yuzankaku, 1983), 119-122.

On the other hand, foxes are also considered to be cunning tricksters that have the ability to disguise as humans. The image of foxes as tricksters spread as the faith for the god of agriculture gradually became obsolete. The foxes are often believed to disguise as women and approach men.

The tales of the wedding parade of foxes (狐の嫁入り *Kitsune no Yome Iri*) exist in Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu regions of Japan, and they are closely related to the shared belief that foxes have spiritual and magical powers. The term mainly refers to two different things. One refers to sun shower (天気雨 *tenki-ame*) as it is a peculiar thing to have rain under the clear sky, so people believed that they are being tricked by foxes. Another explanation is that foxes that live in the mountains make the rain fall in order to hide their wedding parade from the eyes of humans, as it often rains on the top of the mountain but not at the foot of the mountain.

Another origin of the term refers to ghost lights (怪火 *kaibi*). In Japan until the late 1950s, wedding ceremonies of common people took place in their houses, and at dusk, a bride was welcomed by a line of people holding lanterns on the way proceeding to the house of the husband. Strange events are told throughout Japan, of people witnessing lights lining in the forest or mountains at night, but the lights somehow disappear once one approaches them. They were often believed to be foxes' doings. In some regions such as Nigata or Nara, the lights of foxes' wedding procession are tied to agricultural beliefs, that witness of the wedding procession of foxes signifies the succession of good harvest.<sup>4</sup>

Different from most of other fox procession prints, this piece doesn't put focus on

the ritualistic solemnity of fox wedding procession but rather, illustrates an urban imagination of carnival experience that breaks social constraint with farce, transformation and most importantly laughter - *warai* (笑い). Japanese society during the Edo period is highly structured around class and social roles. Adapted from China, the social status can be generally divided into four categories: samurai, peasant, craftsman, and tradesman (士農工商). It was expected for people of each social class to perform differently, and to arrange their lives around what is assigned to them. As a result of this rigid social structure, the natural instinct of laughter is also socialized and categorized as appropriate and inappropriate ones. Only within appropriate time and place, are people allowed to openly indulge themselves within laughs and complete relaxation. For example, in his essay 'Laughter and the Traditional Japanese Smile', Shookichi Oda indicates that "it is considered a virtue among upper-class men to refrain from laughing"<sup>5</sup> and uses the term *warai no ba* (笑いの場) to describe "places where laughing is socially permissible".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, expression of laughter in Edo Japan is highly associated with class, and possibly considered a less virtuous behavior that will need a specific field which contains it from orderly public life. Furthermore, far away from Edo, according to the research by Goh Abe in the "Ritual Performance of Laughter in Southern Japan", people have not only attributed places for laughter but also festivals and large scale gatherings for people to perform pleasure. The origins of these festivals are usually closely related to folk religions and Shinto beliefs (therefore most of the time such festivals are held by a Shinto shrine), and in these stories laughter is considered "symbolic

4 Moriyama, Hiroshi. "When Gon-Gitsune Was There." In *Education of Food and Agriculture*. 80-84. Tokyo: Association of Mountains and Fishing Villages, 2007: 82

5 Shookichi Oda. "Laughter and Traditional Japanese Smile" in *Understanding Humor in Japan*, ed. Jessica Milner Davis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 16

6 Oda, "Laughter and Traditional Japanese Smile", 18 94

expression of the gods' pleasure".<sup>7</sup> In the case study of 1998, Warai-Ko (笑い講) held in Yamaguchi prefecture, it is shown how members of the organization help each other out through fun activities and a special laugh ritual. During the ritual, each member will take turns to laugh and one of the members who acts like a judge will evaluate if the laughters are "satisfactorily joyful and loud, coming from the bottom of the members' hearts".<sup>8</sup> All members will laugh loudly together to end the festival. Therefore, it is evident that these laughing festivals become an amalgamation of group therapy, ritual performance and carnival. It almost seems as if only with certain conduct and facilitation, are a lot of Japanese people able to laugh. And noteworthy it is by no means a simple expression of pleasure and happiness, but a sublimated and symbolic one that requires more than one person's effort to pull out.

This need for carnival experience is also explored in Reider's essay *The Appeal of 'Kaidan'*. *Kaidan* generally means grotesque stories that are either humorous, frightening or strange. In the paper, by arguing that "ideas outside the norm had appeal for those who felt trapped in the [class] system"<sup>9</sup>, she quoted Mikhail Bakhtin's theory on carnival and grotesque realism to theorize Japanese people's need for certain narrative and depiction. According to Bakhtin, carnival experience is what "demanded ever changing, playful, underfired forms... it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a 'world inside out'" (As cited in Reider, 2000, p. 269).<sup>10</sup> In other words, carnival experience is a collective trans-subjectivity through a joyful transformative process of daily

7 Goh Abe. "A Ritual Performance of Laughter in Southern Japan" in *Understanding Humor in Japan*, ed. Jessica Milner Davis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 42

8 Ibid 46

9 Noriko T. Reider. "The Appeal of 'Kaidan', Tales of the Strange" *Asian Folklore Studies* 59, no.2 (2000), 270

10 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, 5-11



*Hundred Expressions of Cats 1842*

reality. Tying it back to the *warai* festival described by Abe, it is clearly evident that people participating in the festival are enjoying a carnival experience in which laughter becomes the transformative agent that heightens the happy moments in real life.

How does the viewing of a print on a fox wedding procession bring pleasure to the audience? There are two ways to approach the question: 1) the symbolic meaning of foxes in Japanese culture, and 2) the artist's maneuver of formal elements that invites a carnivalistic experience from urban audiences. Firstly, in Japanese folktales, along with racoons, dogs, snakes, and cats, foxes are considered a representation of disorientation or disorder. Not only do they appear in conflicting weather situations, they also are assigned the role of tricksters in stories and rumors as mentioned. Whenever any unfortunate event happens, it is very possible that

people would habitually attribute it to farces by foxes. For instance, in an anecdote, in order to enjoy their favorite food - red beans in steamed rice and fried bean curd - everyday, foxes camouflage themselves as officers and threaten an old woman with revealing her secret. In the end of the story foxes are spotted dancing and singing out loud their tricks by the neighbor of the old woman and therefore ends up being killed by a big dog. According to Mayer's analysis, these kinds of fox stories were invented "to give an outlet of their resentment"<sup>11</sup> towards inspectors and spies, which plagued commoners' lives. Therefore, although in this story foxes are seemingly the symbol of authority rather than rebellions against authority, the humorous and satirical nature of the analogy reveals the true intention of the storyteller that implies a hidden dissident towards brutal control from the ruling class. In a way, whether

11 Fanny Hagin Mayer. "Japanese Folk Humor" *Asian Folklore Studies* 41, no.2 (1982), 192



foxes are good or evil is not important, their figures have granted storytellers the freedom and power of imagination as a tool that can surpass political censorship, and voice the cry of the oppressed. Therefore, no matter if it was Kuniyoshi's intention, foxes in this print are not merely symbols for disorder, but moreover that of freedom that gives the viewer a pleasant relief, a space for breathing. Within this space, viewers blend in with nature, and there are no more secrets hidden by life: all the tricks of transformation are honestly revealed by Kuniyoshi in front of viewers' eyes. What are people afraid of so much that limits their vision of freedom? From foxes to humans to foxes; from 'our world' to 'their world', Kuniyoshi questions what humans posit as the fearful Other in our society. Perhaps the supernatural ghosts and spirits, or people of other classes. But ultimately these fears are all activated by the anxiety towards the almost inconceivable death, the end of mortal life. Wedding therefore seems to be metaphorical here: the start of a new yet ephemeral cycle of existence that 'fleeting beings' lived in an uncertain world. However, the moment when the serious wedding ritual is disrupted by the gesture of satirical imitation and unregulated joy that echoes human nature, viewers realize the comforting message from Kuniyoshi, that humanity belongs to a bigger cycle of life and death unchained by discipline and punishment of any specific time. Let noise be noise, let laughter be laughter, let vulgarness be vulgarness and this is the secular experience of common happiness. A floating world is in transformation, and why not just hold to a single smile of relief? Restrictions are temporary and illusional, and yet real life is honest, there's no need to worry.

The creator of this ukiyo-e print, Kuniyoshi Utagawa (歌川国芳) was born in 1797 in Nihonbashi, Edo, into a dyehouse. At the age of fifteen, he became an apprentice of Toyokuni Utagawa but he was in his thirties when he finally became known to

the public. He is known for his dynamic prints of warriors, landscapes, beautiful women, cats, and mythical creatures. His personality was that of a *Edokko* (江戸っ子) cheerful, openhearted, and bellicose. He did not like to be treated as Sensei (先生 meaning teacher or master) and loved festivals, fire and was a friend of firefighters of Edo. Edo was a city bound with fire, as overcrowded population lived in wooden houses (長屋) built densely one next to another. As commonly said, "fires and fights are flowers of Edo." It is said that whenever there's a fire, Kuniyoshi went there running, and helped extinguish the fire.<sup>12</sup>

In 1841-1843, Tenpo Reforms (天保の改革) were issued by the Tokugawa Shogunate. It consisted of strict economical and cultural restriction policies that intended to force people to live austere, frugal life. In ukiyo-e prints, depiction of Kabuki actors, prostitutes, geishas, and sexual intercourses were banned. Kuniyoshi countered this with his famous animal caricatures (鳥獣戯画) in which he humorously personified animals, such as cats, sparrows, and fish to represent prostitutes and Kabuki actors and thus passed the strict censorship.<sup>13</sup> As the

12 Naito, Masato. *Popular Ukiyo-e Printers of Edo: 15 Printers Who Mastered the Art of Secular World*. (Tokyo: Gento-Sha, 2012), 239.

13 Inagaki, Shinichi, and Toshihiko Isao. *Kuniyoshi Utagawa, Animals and Monsters*. (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2018), 7.

# Two Secret Events of the Ox Hour: Processions and Curses

Deirdre Rouse, Victoria Khrobostova

Watching an Unexpected Fox Wedding at the Time of Pilgrimage, or *toki mairi hakarazumo kitsune no yomeiri-o miru-zu*, is a triptych woodblock print created by Utagawa Yoshitora, and published by Enshūya Hikobei in 1860. The image draws the viewer into an ironic scene caught between the human world and a world of *yokai* - supernatural beings, as dozens of fox- or *kitsune*-spirits gather in a wedding procession, and move through the night in celebration. Three separate prints bring this image into a cohesive story. The viewers start with the woman peeking through a gap between cedar trees near a small shrine and follow her gaze of sight onto the fox wedding procession, as foxes travel through a large *torii* gate on the left, heading toward a home building at the Shinto shrine premises on the top of the left print. The viewers find themselves in the same position as the woman. She does not belong in the world of these *kitsune* spirits, yet is given the rare opportunity to witness this otherworldly event.

In Japanese folklore, it is often said that encountering a *kitsune* wedding is an omen of death.<sup>1</sup> This may signal this seemingly innocent, celebratory piece to have a much darker meaning than originally perceived by those who are not familiar with Japanese lore. Yoshitora skillfully weaves together this narrative through color and detail, creating consistency within the gray of different shades, black, white, red, and orange tones used to accompany the black woodcut linework. These lines vary in weight, from the thin outlines around the foxes to thick lines signifying the crevices in the old tree trunks or shadows

left by the rocky landscape and forest leaves around the characters.

As has been mentioned above, in the foreground to the right, in a pure white kimono tied by a dark obi, stands a woman onlooker. Right behind her is *hokora*, a small stone shrine, taking a noticeable portion of the right-most print. The woman's proximity to the *hokora* shrine shows her importance in this scene - this becomes clear through Yoshitora's compositional and color choices. Many features in the appearance of the woman as well as specific objects at the shrine *hokora* indicate that there is a reason for a young woman to be at the shrine during night time. The woman came to the shrine to perform *ushi no toki mairi* - a pilgrimage at the ox hour (around 2 am), which is associated with the darkest curse ritual in Japan. This ritual is performed by women to curse their unfaithful husbands.<sup>2</sup>

The woman is prepared for the ritual, for this ceremony requires her to dress as if she is a *yokai*. She also needs to have a certain set of objects for the curse - these objects will be discussed further. The woman's face is pale, maybe because of face powder or perhaps she is nervous. The ritual usually involves the women making their face white to look like a ghost.<sup>3</sup> Her hair is unkempt, her mouth slightly open as if her lower lip dropped

2 Davisson, Zack. "Ushi No Koku Mairi - Shrine Visit at the Hour of the Ox." 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, January 4, 2013. <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/01/03/ushi-no-koku-mairi-shrine-visit-at-the-hour-of-the-ox/>.

3 Meyer, Matthew. "Ushi No Koku Mairi." *Yokai*. com. Accessed November 20, 2020. <http://yokai.com/ushinokokumairi/>.

1 Nozaki, Kiyoshi. *Kitsuné: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance & Humor*. Hokuseido Press, 1961.



Utagawa Yoshitora (active ca 1850-1880). *Watching an Unexpected Fox Wedding at the Time of Pilgrimage.* (時参不斗狐嫁入見図 - *toki mairi hakarazumo kitsune no yomeiri-o miru-zu*) Publisher: Enshūya Hikobei (遠州屋彦兵衛); Carver: Hori Cho (彫長) (Katata Horinaga)

with surprise at the unexpected sight of the fox wedding. As she leans to take a closer look at the wedding, one hand on a tree, another near her mouth, the viewers can see tall *geta* on her foot under her ceremonial white kimono. From her right sleeve, a black object, most likely a small sword or dagger hilt, is observed (see fig. 1). With her right hand she is grasping the trunk of a cryptomeria tree - she is supporting herself with this gesture as she is overwhelmed by the unexpected view she happens to be witnessing. Behind the woman is another cryptomeria tree and right behind it is the *hokora*, a small stone shrine (see fig. 2). Inside of it there is a set of very specific objects. There is *gohei*, a wooden wand decorated with two zigzagging paper streamers. There is a *wara ningyō*, a straw effigy of her unfaithful spouse. A round blue object with a handle wound in yellowish corde is a mirror. Particularly interesting an upturned trivet with three burning candles. Leaned against the pedestal of the shrine is a hammer or an axe, with either a spiky-shaped shadow or maybe a long nail next to it. All of the objects are part of the ritual. The hammer was used to pierce the long nail(s) into *wara ningyō* onto the *shinboku*, the sacred tree of the shrine, which can be seen in this print next to the

shrine, with the *shimenawa* or a sacred rice straw rope tied around it.<sup>4</sup> At the time of performing the ritual, the woman would be putting a mirror around her neck like a neckles. On her head she would be wearing a trivet-like crown with three candles.<sup>5</sup> For comparison see Utagawa Kuniyoshi's print "*Poems by Shikiken Mon'in no Mikushige and Gosaga-in no Tenji*," from the series "*Fashionable Six Female Poetic Immortals*". Here an actor in a role is performing this ritual with all the necessary equipment in place. The fox wedding, however, is not part of the ritual. Obviously, it came as a complete surprise to the woman who was already tense and scared because of a gloomy task that brought her to the shrine in the dead of the night. She was further intimidated by the bad omen of encountering the fox wedding.

With an expression of bewilderment on her face, the woman looks onwards to the procession. Orange fox heads with human

4 Hildburgh, W. L. "65. Notes on Some Japanese Magical Methods for Injuring Persons." *Man* 15 (1915): 116-21. Accessed November 20, 2020. doi:10.2307/2787870.

5 Davisson, Zack. "Ushi No Koku Mairi - Shrine Visit at the Hour of the Ox." 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, January 4, 2013. <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/01/03/ushi-no-koku-mairi-shrine-visit-at-the-hour-of-the-ox/>.

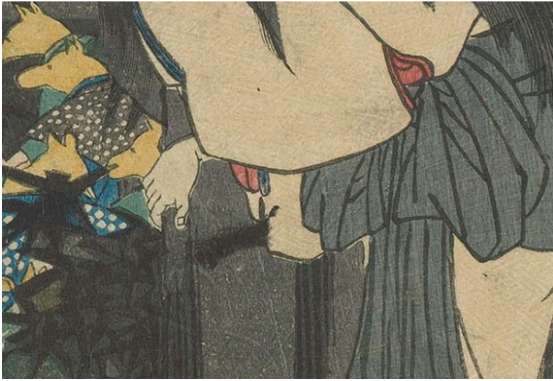


Fig. 1

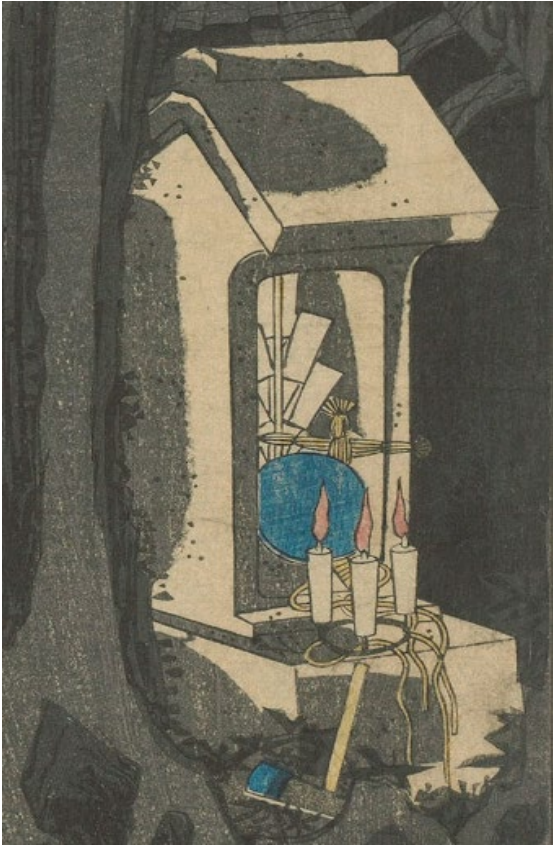


Fig. 2

torsos line the path from the *torii* on the closest foreground on the left-hand sheet to the buildings behind the second *torii* in the distance. The foxes are wearing varying colored outfits of blue and green, with only four wearing distinct, flowing red gowns, perhaps showing the foxes aligned with gendered Edo period fashion (see fig. 3). These gowns are kimono-shaped veils called *kazuki*. They were worn by women of status beginning from the Heian period (8-12c.) to conceal their faces and became a fashion statement in the Edo period. One can speculate that *kazuki* were worn



Fig. 3

by members of the wedding processions since there is still another print of a fox wedding showing anthropomorphized foxes dressed in suchlike veils, Utagawa Kuniyoshi's "The Foxes' Wedding", as seen below. The *kitsune* women featured in the print all don *kazuki*, which also help them blend into the crowd to avoid others from seeing their distinct feline facial features.

Reds and whites are used as the main highlights in the *kazuki* in Yoshitora's piece, as they also are used for the labels on the *torii* gate and trees, bringing the viewer's eye to these additional details. The foxes are only shown through their profiles or back views, with their body language signaling their expressions. They are well organized and of a higher social class, wearing uniforms with matching patterns across the crowd. Some of the garments have the *hōju* jewel symbol emblazoned on the backs and sleeves. This symbol is associated with Buddhism, the Rice God Inari, and *kitsune*.<sup>6</sup> Others appear to be wearing kamishimo, garment for samurai, and carry a pair of swords *daisho* (a long one *katana* and a short one, *wakizashi*) or a halberd *naginata*. Upon some of the foxes' backs rest sacks and boxes - they are *hasami bako*, feasibly carrying dowry goods, while three

6 "The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel." JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY & FOLKLORE, February 20, 2014. <https://japanese-mythology.wordpress.com/the-wish-fulfilling-jewel/>.



(Left) Casting a Curse at the Hour of the Ox, Attributed to Tachibana Minko (active 1764–1772). Date: 1765, MFA.  
 (Right) Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Poems by Shikiken Mon'in no Mikushige and Gosaga-in no Tenji, from the series Fashionable Six Female Poetic Immortals Date: 1853, MFA.

groups carry palanquins, the one with the red roof and most adorned escort is with the bride inside. Many of the foxes hold *chochin*, collapsible lanterns. Lanterns are an important aspect to pre-Meiji weddings since they are held by the procession participants to guide the bride to her new husband's home.<sup>7</sup> There are keys of the rice granary printed on those lanterns, another prominent symbol of Inari in this triptych.<sup>8</sup>

There are four groups of foxes that are not part of the walking procession. Two of them can be seen at both sides of the procession at the level of the red-roofed palanquin accompanied by the *kazuki*-clad

7 Davisson, Zack. "Kitsune No Yomeiri – The Fox Wedding." 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, June 5, 2014. <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/07/19/kitsune-no-yomeiri-the-fox-wedding/>.

8 Trenson, Steven. "Rice, Relics, and Jewels: The Network and Agency of Rice Grains in Medieval Japanese Esoteric Buddhism." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 45, no. 2 (2018): 269-308. Accessed November 20, 2020. doi:10.2307/26854486.

foxes. One other is right before the fence in the far background, and the last one even further within the shrine territory beyond the second *torii* gate before the entrance to the buildings. Foxes in these four groups bow deeply, all on their knees, welcoming the bride.

Knowing this piece focuses on a wedding procession, as clarified through the title, one can begin to look closely at the different Edo period traditions reflected in this scene. The time period is very important, as between the Edo and the Meiji periods, wedding procession traditions changed drastically. Prior to the Meiji period, wedding events were very focused on household affairs, with family acting as both participants and leaders in marriage rituals.<sup>9</sup> They were also commonly taking place at night, with the light of the lanterns guiding the bride

9 Lindsey, William R. *Fertility and Pleasure: Ritual and Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2007.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳). The Foxes' Wedding (Kitsune no yomeiri no zu 狐の嫁入図), 1839-1842. The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.

to her new home. It is assumed that this piece takes note of these traditions, as the *kitsune* bride seems to be traveling to the groom's home for the ceremony rather than a shrine. Although there is a *torii* gate on the left, which symbolizes a nearby shrine, within the Edo period shrine weddings were not popularized yet, as "... Scholars attribute the initial movement of wedding ceremonies from the home into Shinto shrines to the Taisho Emperor who invented the tradition in 1900 in reaction to a half-century of foreign influx...".<sup>10</sup> As this piece was created in 1860, we cannot assume Yoshitora is showing the *kitsune* traveling to a shrine due to the 40 year difference between this print and the popularization of shrine weddings. Instead, this gate detail could perhaps be a symbolic way to show a crossing from the world of *yokai* into that of humans by the fox.

10 Heiner, Teresa A. "Shinto Weddings, Samurai Bride: Inventing Tradition and Fashioning Identity in the Rituals of Bridal Dress in Japan." Doctoral dissertation, Pittsburgh University, 1997.

Yoshitora shows the ritual of a wedding procession beyond simply the act of this parade and the setting it is within. Some of the most important aspects of this piece are the smaller details within the fox crowd that reference wedding ceremony traditions. Among the traditional objects used in this piece of primary significance are the three palanquins - or *norimono* - being carried through the woods in the latter half of the procession. They are highlighted, and can be identified by the straight wooden poles that allow the foxes to transport the rider within, yet also carry the viewer's eye across the image zigzagging from left to right and then to the left and to the right again - in the same direction the *kitsune* are moving.

Yoshitora continues to reflect traditional Edo period wedding culture through additional objects, such as the dowry boxes the foxes are transporting across the image. One should look at the red boxes on the top of the left piece of this triptych, small in size due to perspective,



All four groups bowing, from left to right in the triptych.

the color still pushes the box to interest the viewer. While it is impossible to know what exactly lies within, it can be surmised that dowry objects, perhaps official clothing for instance, are being taken to the home of the groom. These objects included often refined household items, furniture and kimono, and since these ceremonies were still quite simple during the Edo period, only a few chests were typically needed for these trousseau.<sup>11</sup>

The environment of the procession is very telling, from the depiction of the night time to rendering of nature to the smaller details in the area surrounding the woman and the *kitsune* wedding procession she watches.

One particular detail are the *senjafuda*, or shrine tags. Those printed paper slips reveal the Edo tradition of pasting a small paper with one's name and place of origin, along with the date, onto Shrine gates or pillars.<sup>12</sup> These small slips of paper usually represented sacred pilgrimages made by Shinto followers. While this tradition began in the Muromachi period, as Japan went into the Edo Period, society embraced *senjafuda*, making it into a fad of that time. Due to this popularity, many of these labels began to show up more in shrine areas. Having started as handwritten shrine offerings, they would eventually become woodblock impressions, allowing for faster production. In Yoshitora's piece, one can see these labels scattered throughout the image. On the left sheet multiple red, black and white printed slips are pasted on the *torii* gate; on the center sheet they are adorning the wide tree almost in the middle; the labels are also seen on the tree trunk above the figure of the human girl on the right panel. Many of these votive slips are translated to have Yoshitora's signature, as well as the seal of

his publisher's, Enshūya Hikobei, and the name of the carver, Hori Cho. Interestingly, the round censorship seals with the word of approval - *aratame*, and the date of the print's production are mixed in on the central sheet and the left sheet of the triptych among the *senjafuda* as well. By combining these signatures and stamps with the tradition of *senjafuda*, Yoshitora signals the print's production team's



The foreground torii gate detail, left sheet of the triptych.

11 Bincsik, Monika. "Japanese Weddings in the Edo Period." metmuseum.org, March 2009.

12 Hiroshi, Iwai. "*Senjafuda*." eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp, June 2005. <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=334>.



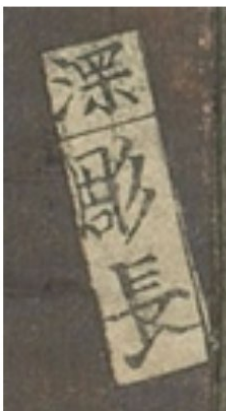
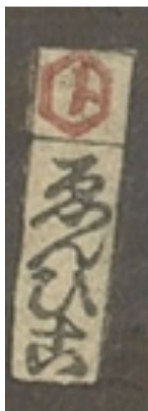
Palanquin (*norimono*) with Tokugawa and Ichijo Crests, late 1700s- 1850s. The RISD Museum, accession number 2004.113.



Detail of Norimono (left), and Dowry boxes (right)



Details of Senjafuda



Votive signatures, From left to right - Enshūya Hikobei, Hori Cho, Utagawa Yoshitora



respect for Shinto culture and tradition while also acting as advertising.

The time of day is essential to both of the worlds that are seen to combine in this print. Traditionally, fox and human weddings took place during the night. The double aspect of that can be noted by both lanterns and *kitsunebi*, fox fires, being present in this piece.<sup>13</sup> *Kitsunebi* or mysterious lights that can be seen at night are said to be produced by foxes, and always present at fox weddings, while lanterns were an integral part of traditional wedding ceremonies.<sup>14</sup>

Returning to the human woman that is shown as an eyewitness of the fox wedding procession, the curse ritual for the sake of which she came to the shrine in the night time, can only be performed at ox hour, between 1 and 3 o'clock at night. This specific time is when the world of the *yokai* is closest to the human world, when both humans and spirits can see each other's worlds.

The irony is great in this piece by Yoshitora. Both ceremonies are meant to be private, to be secret. If anyone was to interrupt either events, there would be grave consequences. Usually, if a human stumbles upon a fox wedding, it is a sign of death to come. If someone sees a woman perform the ox hour cursing ritual, she must either kill the onlookers with the dagger, or have the curse be reversed onto her.<sup>15</sup> In this scene however, all the characters present are not quite human. The woman, who must don a disguise of a spirit or ghost, is contrasted to the *kitsune*

who are, in all but their heads, in human form. Are both events still private, then? If the onlooker at the wedding procession is arguably not a human in this moment, then she does not receive the omen. Similarly, since the *kitsune* are not human either, she would neither have to kill them all nor have to suffer the consequences of the curse reversal. However, the opposite could be true instead, which brings the woman to a tragic end. Either way, Yoshitora plays with the fluidity of human and spirits, engaging the viewer further in this piece. The night and thin line between the world of humans and *yokai* brings many possibilities of various creative explorations.

13 Nozaki, Kiyoshi. *Kitsuné: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance & Humor*. Hokuseido Press, 1961.

14 Davisson, Zack. "*Kitsune* No Yomeiri – The Fox Wedding." 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, June 5, 2014. <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/07/19/kitsune-no-yomeiri-the-fox-wedding/>.

15 Davisson, Zack. "Ushi No Koku Mairi – Shrine Visit at the Hour of the Ox." 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, January 4, 2013. <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/01/03/ushi-no-koku-mairi-shrine-visit-at-the-hour-of-the-ox/>.

# A Lucky New Year Dream of a Mouse Wedding

Cecilia Cao, Summer Zheng

The viewers of the print *A Lucky New Year Dream of a Mouse Wedding* by Utagawa Toyokuni are right there - next to a group of eleven beautiful women spending their leisure in an exquisitely appointed interior of a large room - one of many in this big establishment. The sliding doors in the back of the room are open, leading the eye to a succession of spaces that seem to continue endlessly. The young women are all engaged in meaningful and pleasurable pastimes. Just from a quick glance, several elements of the piece grab the viewer's attention—the unique textile patterns, the scratches and natural grain of the wood in the rear of the scene, the paintings within the print such as the illustrations on the room dividers, the lavish furnishings, and even the tiny mice characters in the woman's dream. This artist's dedication to these minute details not only infused a soul into this print, but also made it feel especially immersive and engaging. Unlike many other ukiyo-e paintings and prints that depict courtesans as poised, this print depicts their private lives. These were real women, whose lives and bodies were as real as our own. Deeper immersion in the piece evokes curiosity and questions in the viewer—what were the hardships they had to go through, what elements in their lives made them feel happy, what was the journey these young women had to take to get to where they wanted to be, or to simply survive?

This essay will provide a brief overview and analysis of the print's many facets, beginning with the history of the *Yoshiwara* pleasure district, which is the setting and subject matter of this print. The essay continues with an exploration of courtesan culture, featuring their education, dress

code, and hierarchy. The dream of the mouse wedding and its depiction in other Japanese paintings is also explored. The subtle use of Western perspective and the influence of Dutch traders is mentioned, along with the genre of ukiyo-e pictures that specifically focused on recreating Western perspective in a Japanese aesthetic. Lastly, the essay highlights the pieces of Edo material culture scattered throughout the piece, from cabinets to handwarmers.

Prior to a discussion on the print, it is important to note the influence of censorship on ukiyo-e. It was the medium's greatest barrier and greatest motivator for innovation. Under the rule of the Tokugawa clan, artists were forbidden to depict several themes—most importantly—the family itself, whether flatteringly or satirically. Other banned topics included erotica, Christian images, portraits of courtesans and actors, scenes of contemporary events, and certain calendars.<sup>1</sup> Before 1790, the restrictions on book and print publishing were enforced by magistrates and governors known as *machi-buygo* (administrators of the town).<sup>2</sup> Every print bore a censorship stamp, along with an artist signature and publication date, as indicated by twelve animals of the zodiac and a specific month for that seal.<sup>3</sup> Despite the censorship restrictions, however, ukiyo-e still featured

1 Kimmelman, Michael. "Review/Art; Japanese Prints Made Under a Censor's Gaze." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, October 25, 1991. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/25/arts/review-art-japanese-prints-made-under-a-censor-s-gaze.html>.

2 McGregor, Mark, and Mariko Ishida. *Ukiyo-e: Secrets of the Floating World*. Vyiha Publishing, 2016.

3 Ibid.



a wide variety of genres that included erotica and kabuki actor portraits. One of the most popular themes is the infamous red-light district, *Yoshiwara*.

Established in 1617, the *Yoshiwara* District (吉原) or 'Fortune Meadow' was famous for its prostitution. Areas like *Yoshiwara* were designed for the enjoyment and sexual pleasure of anyone with money to spare. The *Yoshiwara* district was enclosed by a moat. Due to this unique feature, the district was also known as "the floating world," and it represented an escape from the troubles of daily life. Thousands of women resided in the *Yoshiwara* District, and many of them were sold by their financially struggling parents to the brothel at as early as the age of seven. As she gained popularity, her education, expensive clothing and maids were debts to her owners; usually more than she could ever repay in a lifetime. To escape the courtesan life, she must catch the eye of a wealthy patron who can purchase her hefty contract, or buy her own way out.<sup>4</sup> But these are rare cases, and their contracts often bound the women to the brothel for five to ten years regardless of success. Debt often incarcerated them for life. It was common

for these women to die young due to failed abortions or contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. As many of their families could not afford proper burials, their bodies were brought to *Jokan-Ji* Temple and anonymously claimed by the women's families. Aside from the unfortunate majority, the ones who made it to the top were able to learn reading, writing, and the arts, and could become not only physically desirable but also well-educated women. The courtesan's education was designed around the needs of her clientele. However, her education was not received for the betterment of her person, but to make herself 'more attractive to men'.

Toyokuni's print features an *oiran*—one of the most expensive courtesans—and several of her assistants, known as *furisode-shinzo*. An *oiran*, or "花魁" is a term for a high-ranking courtesan after the mid 18th century (figure 1). Unlike common street prostitutes, they were comparable to a modern day celebrity, cultivated in the traditional Japanese arts of calligraphy, tea ceremonies, and literature.<sup>5</sup> At the time, the cost of spending one night with an *oiran* was

4 Hix, Lisa. "Sex and Suffering: The Tragic Life of the Courtesan in Japan's Floating World." *Collectors Weekly*, March 23, 2015.

5 Kakiuchi, Maria, and Akane Ogawa. "*Oiran*." The Kyoto Project, February 17, 2014. <http://thekyotoproject.org/english/oiran/>.



Fig. 1



Fig. 3



Fig. 2



Fig. 4

equivalent to the common man's entire year's worth of salary. *Oirans* also had the special right to reject a customer. Fashion in Edo Japan was bolstered by the *oiran*, her beauty was a top-priority.<sup>3</sup> Their high-end, extravagant *kimonos* were "made anew for each season" (Ota Memorial Museum of Art) out of the purest silk. Their outfits consisted of several layers that could cumulate to a whopping twenty kilograms. Their extravagant fashion frequently established trends that spread across Japan.

Aside from the *oiran*, the young women playing the card game of *uta garuta* in the print are known as *shinzo* (新造), or "newly made" (Figure 2). They appear to be wearing *furisode*—a long-sleeved *kimono*. Combining those titles, the girls are

addressed as '*furisode-shinzo*.' Generally, they were between the age of thirteen to twenty three, and their primary job was attending to the needs of high-ranking courtesans. Like an *oiran*, these girls engaged in prostitution.<sup>6</sup> The long-sleeved *kimono* and the fact they are smaller in size are signs that these girls are probably younger *shinzos*. Once a *shinzo* gains enough popularity with clients, she would instead be wearing *tomesode*, which has short sleeves. Aside from the *furisode-shinzo* and the *oiran*, there are six older *shinzos*. It is likely that these women had a

6 Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. *Yoshiwara: the Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*. Honolulu (T.H.): University of Hawaii Press, 1993. 571.

small amount of popularity.<sup>7</sup>

This print is thoroughly yet elegantly infused with symbolic metaphors, and one of the ways this is achieved is through the unique and detailed textile patterns on each of these women's *kimonos*. The word *kimono* directly translates to "something to wear". A *kimono* is T-shaped, usually highly decorated, and has wide sleeves. The *kimono* consists of a thick belt called *obi* that can be tied at the back or the front. An *oiran's obi* is usually tied at the front. An *oiran* usually wears a heavy outer layer called *uchikake*, which is not belted under the *obi*. The *kimono* that the *oiran* is wearing, as aforementioned, is the most eye-catching amongst that of others in the print. The pattern on the *oiran's uchikake* is that of *oshidori*, a type of mandarin duck, surrounded by a popular pattern of ocean waves, *seigaiha* (青海波), or 'blue ocean waves.' The *oshidori* carries the symbol of eternal love in China, because this type of duck is known to be particularly affectionate and loyal towards their mating partner. This becomes especially meaningful in juxtaposition to the scene inside the *oiran's* daydream, which is of a wedding. The *seigaiha* pattern of ocean waves is made up of concentric circles that generate arches at their convergence. These waves represent good luck, and were originally used in Chinese ancient maps to depict the ocean. The yellow *obi* she is wearing has the pattern of *sayagata* (紗綾形). This is a pattern made up of interlocked swastikas, or *manji* (万字), which traditionally symbolize prosperity or Buddhism in Japan.<sup>8</sup> (Figure 3)

The four *shinzo* girls gathered around the *uta-garuta* card game bear cherry-blossoms on their *kimonos*. "The beauty and ephemerality of cherry blossoms, which blossoms at the beginning of spring (thus symbolising the season), is also a metaphor for a human's short life well



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

lived." A folkloric legend concerning the fairy *Ko-no-hana-sakuya-hime* offers an explanation for the flowers' blossoming. The fairy "awakens the sleeping trees with her delicate breath."<sup>9</sup> On the *obi* of two of the *furisode-shinzos*, there is a spiral pattern, which is called *uzumakimon* (渦巻). This pattern was commonly used on prehistoric ceramic ware as well. (Figure 4)

7 "Courtesans" The Samurai Archives. 13 Dec. 2012

8 Parent, Mary Neighbour. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System

9 Ann McClellan, The Cherry Blossom Festival: Sakura Celebration (Piermont, NH: Bunker Hill Publishing in association with the National Cherry Blossom Festival, 2013), 9.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9 & 10



Fig. 11

The designs on the *kimonos* of the six other *shinzo* girls are each unique and heavily symbolic. Starting from the tea-bearing girl to the right of the print, her *kimono* feature plover birds, or *chidori* (千鳥). It was a popular design that symbolizes longevity in Japan, as the bird's chirp resembled the word "*chiyo*" (千代) or 'a thousand generations'. (Figure 5) The girl kneeling on her left-hand side is wearing two patterns—the first is the *sayagata* (swastika) pattern on her *obi*, and a '*shippo*' (seven-treasures) *kimono* pattern. The seven treasures were gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, red coral, and carnelian, according to Buddhist scriptures. This pattern is made up of circles overlapping each other, and can symbolize familial happiness or financial success. The earliest appearance of this pattern was actually from ancient Egypt (Tanihata). (Figure 6) The girl beside the lamp has hexagonal patterns on her

*kimono*, which is called *kikko-mon* (亀甲文), or tortoise shell pattern. Originally a Chinese symbol, it represents longevity, mainly because of tortoises' long lifespan. This particular *kikko-mon* seems to be a variation called *hanairi kikkou*, which has floral decorations inside of each hexagonal unit. (Figure 7) The two *shinzos* on the very left of the print are wearing simple grid patterns, *uzumaki-mon*, and what appear to be butterflies.<sup>10</sup> (Figure 8)

Aside from the women's lavish textiles, it is important to distinguish their hairstyles. Out of the other courtesans, an *oiran's* hair accessories are the most complex. An *oiran's* hairstyle is called *date-hyogo*. There are three big knots in the middle, with six to eight ornamental hairpins called *kanzashi* placed on both sides. (Figure 9) The other women in the print have similar

10 Parent, Mary Neighbour. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System

hairstyles known as the *torobin shimada* hair. It originated in the Gion quarter of Kyoto in the 1750s, and became popular in the 1760s-1790s. The 'lantern' shape is attributed to the hairstyle's half-moon shaped strut made from tortoise-shell, placed laterally across the head. The side *hari* was then arranged and fixed over it to form wide "lantern sidelocks."<sup>11</sup> (Figure 10)

Another prominent theme in this print is the *oiran's* dream of a mouse wedding. In the little dream-space, enclosed in a modern thought / speech bubble, a mouse bride is being carried in an elaborate wedding palanquin. For this joyous occasion, the procession attendees are elaborately dressed, bearing gifts and carrying lanterns that light the path. This section of the print reveals crucial traditions in Japanese visual culture. (Figure 11)

The mice's procession originated from a popular folktale called "*Nezumi no Yemiri*," or 'the mouse's wedding'. In the tale, a mouse family tries to find a suitor for their daughter. They first ask the sun, then the clouds, wind and a wall. Finally, they marry the rodent living in the wall. There is a long tradition of illustrating this folklore in Japan. Famous examples include "The Mouse Story," painted during the Momoyama period, "Rat's Wedding Procession" by Sawaki Susetsu, and "Rat's Wedding" by Ito Jakuchu." The depiction of the mouse wedding parallels an alternative print media named kusazoshi, a commercially printed picture book. The most popular topics were centered on mice—*Nezumi Nenjū gyōji* (Mouse Celebrations Throughout the Year," 1681), *Nezumi no Hanami* ("The Flower-Viewing of the Mice," 1716), and a string of books *Nezumi no Yomeiri* ("The Wedding of the Mice").<sup>12</sup>

11 Hotei Encyclopedia, v2, P 496

12 "Red Book: The Mouse's Wedding," Red Book: The Mouse's Wedding (International Library of Children's Literature), accessed October 29, 2020, [https://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/edoehon/Nezumi/index\\_e.html](https://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/edoehon/Nezumi/index_e.html).

111 [kodomo.go.jp/gallery/edoehon/Nezumi/index\\_e.html](https://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/edoehon/Nezumi/index_e.html).

Due to the animal's auspicious symbolism, *Nezumi no Yomeiri* has an enduring popularity in Japanese art. Mice represent prosperity and wealth, and are considered cute, not filthy, animals.<sup>13</sup> In the Chinese and Japanese zodiac, the mouse is also the first animal of the cycle, bringing change and good luck to the new year. They are believed to bring good luck and numerous offspring—an appropriate story for a young woman waiting for marriage.

In the print, the dream depicts the wedding procession. The bride, hidden from the viewer, sits in a lavish palanquin with four bearers supporting the vehicle. Beside her stands a line of anthropomorphised animals dressed in Edo-style clothing. Some characters are more ornately dressed than others. The mice in the forefront of the procession carry lanterns to light the night path—traditionally, weddings were hosted at night, based on Muromachi period traditions.<sup>14</sup>

The bride's palanquin, or *norimono*, is filled with cultural symbols. The tradition of riding a *norimono* is reserved for women with higher social status. Often, the wealth of her family is reflected on the palanquin itself. In the print, the *norimono* appears to be coated with black lacquer and embellished with gold or metal strips. Traditionally, *norimonos* have screened doors. The technique of painting gold on palanquin is known as "maki-e" (sprinkled picture), where gold is sprinkled onto wet lacquer to create a pattern.<sup>15</sup> There is a faint indication of a golden crest on the *norimono* window—traditionally, the bride and groom's family crests would be

13 Harkins, William E. "Japanese Animal Prints." Japanese Art Society of America, no. 15 (1989).

14 Zack Davisson, "Kitsune No Yomeiri - The Fox Wedding," 百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai, June 5, 2014, <https://hyakumonogatari.com/2013/07/19/kitsune-no-yomeiri-the-fox-wedding/>.

15 Dana Melchor, "V&A · Conservation of a Japanese Palanquin," Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed October 29, 2020, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/conservation-of-a-japanese-palanquin,0:24>.



Fig. 12

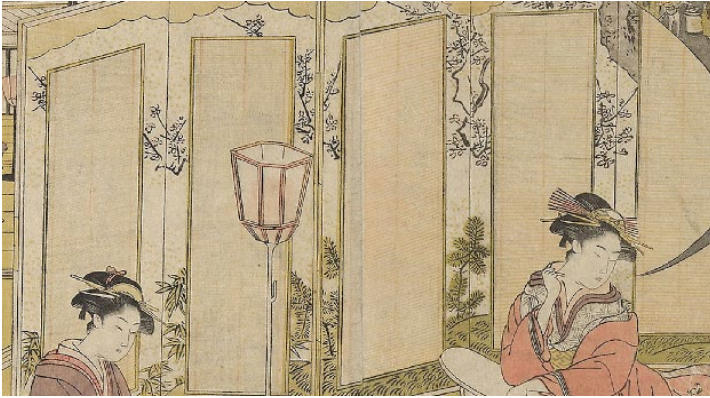


Fig. 15

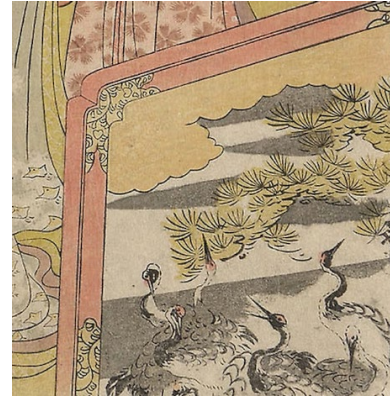


Fig. 14

painted onto the palanquin.<sup>16</sup>

There is a visual tradition of depicting women dreaming about themselves in classic love stories and romantic adventures.<sup>17</sup> Edo ideals on femininity were heavily influenced by Confucian values, teaching filial piety, kindness, faithfulness, education, tolerance, the three obediences, arts, music, calligraphy, painting and poetry.<sup>18</sup> 'Pillow Books' for women combined a wide range of literary genres, including diary, essay, lists, anecdotes and poetry. Interestingly, the issue of women reading classics such as *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* caused significant debate; there were those who argued that such texts encouraged lewd behaviour,

16 "Courtesans of the Floating World," Courtesans of the Floating World | RISD Museum (RISD Museum), accessed October 29, 2020, <https://risdmuseum.org/exhibitions-events/exhibitions/courtesans-floating-world>.

17 Hamon, Julie. "Dreaming in Prints: A Visual Analysis." Japanese Visual Culture. Accessed October 28, 2020. [japanesevisualculture.ace.fordham.edu/exhibits/show/dreams-and-dreamin-g-in-ukiyo-e/gallery](http://japanesevisualculture.ace.fordham.edu/exhibits/show/dreams-and-dreamin-g-in-ukiyo-e/gallery).

18 Ivanova, Gergana. "Re-Gendering a Classic: 'The Pillow Book' for Early Modern Female Readers." Japanese Language and Literature, no. 1 (April 2016): 105–54. 111.



“tinged with frivolity.”<sup>19</sup> Others defended it, emphasising its “waka composition and righteous moral teachings.”<sup>20</sup>

The *oiran's* dream is contained in a modern-day ‘speech bubble’ found in Japanese manga and comics. But the ‘bubble’ actually references a tradition of illustration dreams in Japanese visual art; a couple examples include Isoda Koryusai, “Courtesan Dreaming of Elopement” and Chobunsai Eishi, “Painting / Hanging Scroll.” The dream vignette also bears resemblance to *kibyoshi*, adult comic books with large pictures and descriptive prose filling the blank spaces in the image. By slightly cutting off the top of the ‘dream bubble,’ viewers are left to imagine the *oiran's* lofty dreams of marriage as something far removed from the reality of a courtesan’s life.

Some of the hidden gems of this print are the traditional Japanese furniture and equipment tucked in corners and scattered around the ladies. One of the narrative centerpieces is the card game that the *furisode-shinzo* are playing. The game is known as *uta garuta*—a matching game where portraits of famous poets are matched with their poetry and verses. There are usually 200 cards in a deck. “Of the many ways of playing *uta garuta*, *chirashi*, “spread out,” is the most exciting. The cards bearing the last part of the poems are laid face up on the floor. Those inscribed with the first lines are held by the “reader,” who reads them aloud one by one. The other players strive to pick up the corresponding card and he who at the last holds the most is declared winner.”<sup>21</sup> In Japanese tradition, matching

19 Peter F. (Peter Francis) Kornicki, “Unsuitable Books for Women?: *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* in Late Seventeenth-Century Japan,”

Monumenta Nipponica 60, no. 2 (2005): pp. 147-193, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mni.2005.0021>, 158.

20 Ibid., 164.

21 Gunsaulus, Helen Cowen. “The Japanese New Year’s Festival, Games and Pastimes / by Helen C.

113 Gunsaulus, Assistant Curator of Japanese Ethnology.”



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

games can symbolize wishes for a happy marriage, which deepens the meaning of this print, alongside the various other similar symbols. (Figure 12)

The large ornate room dividers are another main source of attention in this piece. The ones found in this room are the older version of folding screens, called a *byobu*, which directly translates into wall wind, originating from China. It functions both as a spatial division in a room, and as an extraordinary ornamental art piece. Many famous Japanese artists have worked on these folding screens. Some

Field Museum of Natural History, 1923. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.3550>. 34



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

common themes found on *byobus* are mostly nature related such as landscapes, plants, or animals. On the largest *byobu* that is in the back of the room, there are paintings of bamboo and what appears to be plum blossoms. Bamboo is a symbol of a new year and good fortune, and plum blossoms are the harbinger of a new warm beginning, and the end of a cold winter. (Figure 13) On the *byobu* in the foreground in the bottom right corner, a scene with beautiful cranes and pine is depicted. In Japanese tradition, cranes are auspicious and can symbolize longevity

because of their reputation of being able to live up to a thousand years in fables. Similarly, the pine next to the cranes also symbolizes longevity and good fortune. Pine is simultaneously an icon for the Japanese New Year, as it can stand for a new beginning, and hopes for the future.<sup>22</sup> (Figure 14)

The recessed space on the right side of

<sup>22</sup> "Byobu: The Grandeur of Japanese Screens" Yale University Art Gallery, 7 Feb 2014. <https://artgallery.yale.edu/exhibitions/exhibition/byobu-grandeur-japanese-screens>

the print is called a *tokonoma*, which is commonly built into traditional Japanese houses, and is the focal point inside a room. This space is usually for the display of artistic objects, such as calligraphy, traditional painting, sculptures, arranged flowers, etc. One is not allowed to stand inside this space, and there is also the tradition of seating guests facing away from the *tokonoma*, so as to not seem like the owner is showing off the art inside the alcove. This could be a reason that no one in the print is seated directly facing towards the *tokonoma*. In the *tokonoma* of the print, there is a magical lion's statue called *shishi* on the pedestal. It is supposed to serve the function of repelling evil spirits, and functions as a guard for the household. *Shishi's* can be found in places such as outside the gates of temples and shrines. Usually there would be a pair of *shishi's*, but in this print there is only one. The *shishi* actually originates from Chinese culture, and could have found its way to Japan through the transmission of Buddhism.<sup>23</sup> (Figure 15)

The object on the floor in front of the *oiran* is called a *hibachi*, which can be directly translated to fire bowl/pot. It is a heat-proof container that could be either round, cylindrical, or box shaped. It is used to hold burning charcoal, while a grill would sit on top of it to cook, or heat a room on cold days. Considering that the scene is the first day of the New Year, the *hibachi* is probably in the room to warm everyone up.<sup>24</sup> (Figure 16)

The smaller object in front of the *oiran* is called a *te-aburi*, or a hand-warmer. It is a small portable heater, which can be moved around the household. They could be made from bronze, iron, porcelain, earthenware, etc. Some women would also place fragrant wood on the charcoal inside,

and let their clothes catch the pleasant scent before going out, like perfume in another form.<sup>25</sup> (Figure 17)

The object found on top of the ornate cabinet in the back is most likely a *chaire*, a tea caddy that is usually ceramic and contains tea. It is normally used to make strong tea called *Koicha* for guests. The *chaire* is stored in a little pouch called *shifuku*. The *shifuku* is often made of expensive materials such as high-end silk. The beautiful appearance of the *shifuku* also serves as a pleasant visual element at a tea ceremony.<sup>26</sup> (Figure 18)

The second *shinzo* to the right is holding a *chawan* (茶碗), or directly translated to tea bowl. This piece of ceramic has more than 400 years of history, and is a traditional bowl used for the preparation and whisking of matcha, or tea powder. Aside from its function as a tea equipment, it is also greatly appreciated as a very spiritual art form in pottery. Because it is hand-held, the texture, curve, weight, and heat resistance are all factors that the potter would consider to make a harmonious, well-balanced *chawan*. It is said that a truly good *chawan* will become more and more beautiful through use and time. The saucer that the *chawan* is sitting on is called a *chataku* (茶托), or directly translated to tea holder or tray. The *chawan* in this print is put on top of a *te-aburi*, which would keep the cup of tea warm when it is served.<sup>27</sup> (Figure 19)

Aside from all the visual details mentioned, the print also succeeds in the way it leads the viewer's eyes from point to point, in and out of the print. The *shinzos* on the right side of the triptych are looking towards something that is obviously

25 Greve, Gabi. "*Te-aburi*", Daruma Museum, 9 Feb. 2010.

26 "Japanese Tea Ceremony Utensils" The Japanese Tea Ceremony. <http://japanese-tea-ceremony.net/utensils.html>

27 "*Chawan*. An Intro to the Gracefully Simplistic Japanese Tea Bowl." Art of Japanese Tea,

23 Matsuyama, Hiroko. "*Tokonoma*. Japanese Alcove Design, Styles, and Scrolls", Patternz, 25 Aug 2017.

24 "*Hibachi*", Japanese Wiki Corpus. <https://japanese-wiki-corpus.github.io/culture/Hibachi.html>

outside of the print. This simple detail subtly yet effectively informs the viewers that there is more story outside of the frame, and that the characters' lives are not bound only to what's happening within this print. On the far left of the triptych, there is a doorway revealing the interior of the pleasure quarter, which strategically extends the visual depth and perspective. The opened doors not only add more context to the scene, but also provide an area for the viewer's eyes to wander off to. (Figure 20) This section of the print is the most jarring—why did the artist use Western perspective in a predominantly flat space?

By the Edo period, Japan engaged in rigorous trade with Dutch merchants, who brought books, prints, and written essays on Renaissance one-point perspective. Perspective in western art is seen as too calculating and rigid; it is an invention and not a discovery, and not integral to the success of a piece. Tani Buncho, attendant to the Chief minister of State Matsudaira Sandanobu, argued that the Dutch prints “short on meal meaning...when you try to appreciate a western picture on a profound level you always feel there is something lacking.”<sup>28</sup> However, there were artists keen on learning this new form of perception. The study of Dutch prints and art was known as *rangaku*, or western learning. A popular handbook on the subject was Gerard de Lairesse's *Groot Schilderboek*, first published in Amsterdam. The book's illustrated manuals on painting and Western perspective were highly influential in Japan, especially amongst artists such as Okumura Masanobu and Utagawa Toyoharu. Masanobu is commonly credited with studying European engravings to learn the principles of perspective, while Toyoharu is known for further developing the form. Their discoveries and hard work resulted in the creation of a new type of

compositions—*uki-e*—translated as ‘floating’ or ‘perspective picture.’

At the height of its popularity, *uki-e* frequently depicted interior spaces in the *Yoshiwara* pleasure quarters. This focus could have risen from the design of Japanese architecture, which was “radically different from European architectural conventions and ideally suited to perspective.” Japanese 18th century buildings were constructed from posts and lintels, affording plentiful obliques and parallels that could be taken as ready guidelines, woven tatami mats (usual floor covering) provided straight markers down which recessions could be easily plotted.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, Utagawa Toyokuni's *A Lucky New Year Dream of a Mouse Wedding* is a highly complex and sophisticated piece. It blends documentary and narrative storytelling. Within the setting of an elaborate *Yoshiwara* pleasure house, the artist carefully documents Edo Japan's cultural artifacts—from humble everyday objects to iconic decorative pieces and intricate textile patterns. Through the dream of the mouse wedding, the artist evokes the *oiran's* yearning for freedom and marriage. The procession embodies two cultural traditions—the ancient Japanese folktale of *Nezumi no Yomeiri*, and the popular theme of processions. The print enriches the *ukiyo-e* tradition of depicting processions, whether for celebratory or satirical purposes. The depiction reflects the structure of Edo wedding processions, with a bride riding in an elaborate *norimono*. The mouse, an auspicious symbol, further enriches the procession's meaning. By offering an intimate glimpse into their private lives, the artist captures a tender side of the courtesan that is rarely seen.

28 Screech, Timon. “The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture.” *Archives of Asian Art* 47 (1994): 58–69. 60.

29 *Ibid.*, 59

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

***Akome-ogi*** Ceremonial fan, often carried by noblewomen.

***Baizi*** Chinese term meaning 'one hundred children'.

***Bakufu*** The military government of Japan headed by the shogun from 1192 to 1868.

***Bijin-ga*** 'Pictures of beautiful women'. Pictures depicting the beauty of the appearance, manners, and customs of women.

***Byobu*** 'Wall wind'. A traditional room divider that is often intricately painted.

***Chaire*** Tea caddy containing tea. It is often ceramic.

***Chataku*** Tea tray that holds chawan.

***Chawan*** Tei bowl used for the preparation of whisking matcha.

***Chirashi*** A "spread out" play style for uta garuta.

***Chidori*** Plover birds.

***Chochin*** A traditional Japanese paper lamp.

***Chonin*** Social class comprised of townspeople (merchants and artisans).

***Daigasa*** Rounded rain helmet.

***Daisho*** 'Big-little'. A pair of long and short swords worn by samurai warriors in Edo Japan.

***Dango*** Japanese dumpling and sweet made from rice flour.

***Date-hyougo*** Oiran's hairstyle consisting of three big knots in the middle, with six to eight ornamental kanzashi placed on both sides.

***Edokko*** 'Child of Edo'. Someone born and raised in Edo.

***Furisode*** Long-sleeved kimonos, worn by women on important events such as coming of age ceremonies and weddings.

***Furisode shimzo*** Young shinzo wearing a long-sleeved kimono.

***Fūryū*** 'Refined taste'. An aesthetic ideal implying traditional elegance, chic stylishness, creative ingenuity, and sometimes, eroticism. The term is derived from the equally broad Chinese, fengliu, which originally meant good etiquette, but eventually came to signify the opposite, and later referred to various types of beauty.

***Gat*** Korean hat from the Joseon period.

***Geisha*** A class of female Japanese entertainers trained in traditional styles of performing arts such as dance and singing.

***Genpuku*** Ceremony of assuming manhood.

***Geta*** Japanese sandals with flat wooden bases elevated with up to three prongs, held onto the foot with a felt thong.

***Gohei*** A wooden wand decorated with two zigzagging paper streamers to be used in Shinto rituals.

***Gosho guruma*** Two wheeled imperial carriages pulled by oxen. Also referred to as genji guruma, because they are

typically depicted in pictures of The Tale of Genji.

**Hachimaki** A Japanese headband worn as a symbol of effort and courage, especially by those in the military.

**Hakama** A type of traditional Japanese trousers, or men's formal divided skirt. They are tied at the waist over a kimono.

**Hanami** 'Flower viewing'. A Japanese traditional custom of enjoying the beauty of flowers, more specifically referring to the cherry blossoms at the beginning of spring.

**Hanbok** Korean men's ensemble.

**Hanten** Short coats.

**Haori** Traditional Japanese hip or thigh length jacket worn over a kimono.

**Happi** A traditional Japanese hip-length coat. Originally, they displayed family crests and typically came in blue.

**Hasami-bako** A travelling chest meant for carrying clothing.

**Hatsuyume** The first dream one has in the new year. The contents of the dream foretell the luck of the dreamer in the next upcoming year.

**Hibachi** 'Fire bowl'. A heat-proof container that holds burning charcoal.

**Hikime kagibana** 'Slit eyes, hooked nose'. A technique used to draw faces of the nobility in yamato-e in which faces were full-cheeked, eyes were straight lines, noses were hooked lines, and mouths were small and dot-like.

**Hitai-eboshi** Headpiece worn by ghosts, and is also related to funerary rituals.

**Hokora** A miniature Shinto shrine.

**Hontai** The main body of military

forces, also referred to as the "inner procession", comprised most importantly of a group of retainers whose duty was to protect the lord.

**Hoshi-shippo** A shape that consists of a circle divided by a four-pointed star.

**Hōju** The wish-fulfilling jewel of Buddhist law.

**Iki** 'Chic, stylish'. A Japanese aesthetical concept thought to have originated amongst the merchants of the Edo period.

**Inari** The Japanese deity of rice, agriculture, fertility, and prosperity. Foxes are the deity's messengers and symbols.

**Jingasa** 'Camp hat'. A type of hat worn by Japanese warriors when traveling or encamped. They carried symbolic, ceremonial, and political purposes. In the Edo period, the policy of sankin kotai led them to be more decorative.

**Jumonji-yari** Cross-shaped spears.

**Junihitoe** Formal court dress worn by Heian period noblewoman.

**Kago** A palanquin used by commoners.

**Kai-awase** A shell-matching game played during the Heian period.

**Kaidan** Grotesque stories that usually include spirits, ghosts, unusual encounters, and mysteries in daily life.

**Kami** 'God'. Refers particularly to the spirits, phenomena, or holy powers that are venerated in the religion of Shinto.

**Kamishimo** Traditional samurai ensemble consisting of a sleeveless, wide-shouldered vest or jacket (kataginu) and short trousers (hakama)

**Kammuri oikake** Heian period hunter's 118

hats.

***Kamon*** Stenciled crest.

***Kamuro*** Girls who attended the great courtesans of the Yoshiwara. They were brought into the service at the age of five to nine.

***Ka-ni-arare*** Melon flower motif patterning.

***Kanzashi*** Hair ornaments used to set women's hairstyles in place as well as for decoration. Involved a variety of types including long or rigid hairpins, barrettes, fabric flowers, and hair ties.

***Kappa-kago*** Big baskets for rain gear.

***Kasumi*** 'Mist'.

***Kataginu*** A form of kamishimo.

***Katakazushi*** A hairstyle worn by women of the inner quarters of the imperial palace or by samurai wives in which a big off-centered loop is featured at the back of the head.

***Kewari*** A woodblock carving technique of creating extremely fine lines with a tipped tool.

***Keyari*** A type of spear with fur or feather sheaths.

***Kibyoshi*** Adult comic books with large pictures and descriptive prose filling the blank spaces in the images.

***Kitsune*** 'Fox'. A Japanese fox spirit has powers of shape shifting and can have up to nine tails, symbolizing power through the number of tails it has. Depending on the type of kitsune spirit, it can have either good or sinister intentions.

***Kitsunebi*** 'Fox fire'. Created by a  
119 kitsune, these atmospheric orbs of light

appear at night and are typically colored red, orange, or blue-green. They are a sign that a large number of kitsune are nearby.

***Kiki ni ryusi monyo*** Chrysanthemums in a stream patterning.

***Kikko-mon*** 'Tortoise shell patterning'. A pattern that looks like the shell of a tortoise.

***Kiwame*** Censorship seals found on Japanese prints.

***Kubiki*** The yoke of a gosho guruma.

***Kuginuki-mon*** Nail-puller crest.

***Kumo-tatewaku*** Patterning with undulating lines repeating to create hourglass shapes with cloud motifs within the gaps between the curving lines.

***Kyahan*** Traditional shin wraps or cloth leggings worn by the samurai class and their retainers.

***Maegami*** 'Bangs'.

***Manji*** Swastika symbol, traditionally symbolized prosperity or Buddhism.

***Matsu*** Pine tree.

***Matsuri*** 'Festival'.

***Maki-e*** 'Sprinkled picture'. A technique that originated in the Heian period for lacquerware decoration in which designs are made by scattering adhesive metal or color powder in soft lacquer or directly onto the wood.

***Meirenhua*** Chinese Tang period "beautiful woman" genre.

***Meisho-e*** 'Pictures of famous places'. Paintings of famous locations around the Japanese capital of Kyoto at certain characteristic seasons, often showing

aristocrats or local people engaged in seasonal or everyday activities. Meisho-e served as travel advertisements or guidebooks in Edo Japan.

**Mikoshi** Portable shrines.

**Mitate-e** Parody pictures. Analogues of Japanese and Chinese classical paintings or literature, historical facts, or legendary events which are used by ukiyo-e artists to illustrate contemporary events or figures, serving as a pictorial simile.

**Momiji** Maple leaf patterning.

**Morizuna** Piles of decorative sand placed along the streets in preparation for a procession.

**Nagagi** General soft and thin cloth. The style of a general kimono.

**Naginata Halberd.** A long pole weapon with a slightly curved blade sheathed in a black case.

**Nakazori** 'Shaving the middle'. The middle of the top of a boy's head is shaved off, which was a feature of a boy's appearance when entering the age of young manhood.

**Nanushi** 'Name owner, mayor (of a village or town)'. The name for a group of censors who examined woodblock prints from 1842 to 1853.

**Nezumi no yomeiri** 'The mouse's wedding'.

**Nishiki-e** 'Brocade pictures'. Chromatic woodblock prints with effects comparable to brocade. They are produced by taking impressions off a set of woodblocks. Usually, the colors are limited from eight to ten.

**Norimono** Lavishly decorated palanquins used by members from a daimyo house as vehicles.

**Obi** A broad sash worn around the waist of a kimono.

**Oikake** Fan-shaped blinkers attached to the typing strings of kammuri oikake.

**Oiran** Term for a specific category of high-ranking courtesans in Japanese history.

**Okubi-e** Japanese print in the ukiyo-e genre showing only the head or head and upper torso.

**Omeshi uma** A daimyo's primary horse.

**Onna norimono** Women's palanquins.

**Oo-torike** Pyramidal long-haired battlefield standards or sheaths of spears often of two colors.

**Oshidori** A kind of mandarin duck known for their affection towards their mates.

**Rangaku** Western learning.

**Rendai** A stand for passengers crossing the river during the Edo period. Usually, it was a board with two carrying rods attached. The type of rendai carried by high ranking officials is known as dai koran.

**Sakura** 'Cherry blossom trees/ blossoms'.

**Sankin-kotai** 'Alternative attendance'. A policy of the Tokugawa shogunate (from 1603 to 1868) requiring the daimyo's alternative-year residence in Edo.

**Sanno** A reference to the Sannō Hie Shrine in Akasaka-Mitsuke.

**Sasarindō** The bamboo leaves and gentian flowers crest. It is the family crest for the Minamoto clan.

**Sayagata** A pattern made up of



interlocking manji.

**Seigaiha** 'Blue ocean waves'. A pattern made up of ocean waves.

**Senjafuda** 'Thousand-shrine tags'. Votive slips posted on the gates or buildings of shrines and Buddhist temples, bearing the name of the pilgrim. Shashi Metal disks used to set women's hairstyles in place.

**Shidatami** Checkered patterning, also known as ichimatsu moyou due to it being made famous by Kabuki actor Sanogawa Ichimatsu.

**Shifuku** A little pouch that a chaire is stored in.

**Shigedo** Bows.

**Shiji** A special bench used to support the kubiki.

**Shimenawa** Rope made of rice straw or hemp used as a talisman against evil in Shinto.

**Shinboku** The sacred tree of a Shinto shrine encircled by shimenawa.

**Shinzo** Apprentice courtesan.

**Shippo** 'Seven treasures'. A pattern made up of circles overlapping each other.

**Shishi** 'Stone lion'. Traditionally has functioned as a repellent against evil spirits.

**Shunuri daigasa** A big red parasol held over a person of high status for both practical and symbolic protection.

**Tabi** Traditional Japanese socks that are toe-divided so they can be worn with geta easier.

121 **Take-monyo** Bamboo motif patterning.

**Tatami mat** Traditional Japanese floor covering.

**Tategasa** 'Tall umbrella'.

**Tatewaku** Patterning with undulating lines repeating to create hourglass shapes.

**Te-aburi** A portable hand warmer.

**Tokonoma** Recessed space in a traditional Japanese house that usually displays art.

**Torii** The red gateway of a Shinto shrine, with two uprights and two cross pieces.

**Torobin shimada** A hairstyle characterized by its wide wing shapes on the sides of the head, known as the "lantern hairstyle". It is often worn by geishas during performances. The hairstyle originates from the Gion quarters of Kyoto.

**Tsukurimono** Stage props built individually for Noh performances.

**Tsunokakushi** Hat that protects hair from dust during travel, later worn by brides.

**Tsuta** Ivy motif patterning.

**Uchikake** A highly formal kimono worn that is heavily decorated and padded.

**Ujiko** The people who lived in the areas surrounding an ujigami and participated in its festivals.

**Uki-e** 'Floating pictures'.

**Umajirushi** Battle standard raised next to the horse of a commander.

**Ushi no toki mairi** 'Ox hour pilgrimage'. A ceremony of cursing an unfaithful spouse.

**Uta garuta** A Japanese matching card game where portraits of famous poets are matched with their poetry and verses.

**Uzumaki-mon** A spiral pattern.

**Wakashu** A boy after early childhood but before his coming-of-age ceremony.

**Wakashu-wage** Youthful hairstyle in which the maegami has not been shaved off yet.

**Warai** 'Laugh, smile'.

**Warai no ba** 'Place for laughter'.

**Wara ningyō** A straw effigy in the shape of a person.

**Ya-e-ume** Plum blossom motif patterning.

**Yakko** Footmen in a procession. Originally referred to slaves in a household, later referring to male servants or attendants of samurais.

**Yamato-e** A style of Japanese painting inspired by the Tang dynasty paintings and fully developed in the Heian period. Considered to be the classical Japanese style.

**Yari** A traditional Japanese blade in the form of a straight-headed spear.

**Yatai** Japanese festival floats.

**Yōkai** Supernatural creatures and spirits of Japanese folklore, who's intentions range from bringing good fortune and luck to misfortune and harm.

**Yokohama-e** 'Yokohama pictures'. A subset of ukiyo-e prints that expressed a general curiosity for foreigners and foreign goods during the opening of Japan. The port of Yokohama was opened to foreigners in 1859.

**Yorishiro** Shinto term for an object capable of attracting spirits called kami, giving them a physical space to occupy during religious ceremonies and festivals.

**Yoshiwara District** Fortune Meadow District for prostitution.

**Yuiwata** A tied bundle of silk threads. The yuiwata crest was used by the Ihiwatari, vassals of the Tokugawa, and the family of Segawa Kikunojo, a famous Kabuki actor.

**Yujo** 'Women of pleasure'. A common prostitute below an oiran.

**Zō-hora** Medicine made from an elephant's dung.

**Zuijin** Military court officials.

# ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

## KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI 1760 – 1849

A celebrated *ukiyo-e* artist and an extremely prolific print designer, Hokusai created around 30,000 works during his lifetime and used about 30 aliases to present his work under. His vast legacy testifies to Hokusai's remarkable versatility of themes and artistic styles, mastery of drawing, keenness of observation, insight and wit. Hokusai had a penchant for incorporating Western techniques and Chinese elements into his work, and he was particularly interested in universal concepts. He is recognized as a great innovator of the landscape genre in *ukiyo-e*. Hokusai is renowned for his depiction of humans in the natural world. Most glorious of Hokusai's print series to feature landscape as their subject matter appeared in early-1830s. Here belong prints from *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* (forty-six altogether), *The Journey to the Waterfalls of All the Provinces*, *The Great Flower Set*, and the *Wondrous Views of the Bridges of All Provinces*. Hokusai excelled in book illustration, in creating teaching books, and in public painting demonstrations. His mounting achievement is the publication of a fifteen-volume collection of sketches called *Hokusai Manga* (1814-1849) with every aspect of Japanese life represented. Hokusai's other landmark in book illustration is the publication of three volumes of *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji* (1834-1847). Hokusai's fascination with the "peerless mountain" runs throughout his career with one of the earliest such like examples included in the current exhibition (bird's eye *View of a Daimyo Procession Passing through Shinagawa*). In his print designs Hokusai captures the grandeur and timelessness of nature, infinite variety of its forms, its endless transformations and human's deepest unity with the natural world. (Written by student Sonya

Wang, project of 2018, with reference to essay by student Tess Spalty, 2014).

## KIKUKAWA EIZAN 1787-1867

An influential *ukiyo-e* artist, Kikukawa Eizan plays a vital role in the prominent development of *bijinga* prints, especially in the Bunka era (1804-1818.) His first teacher was his father, Eiji, who was a painter of the Kano school. Then he studied with Suzuki Nanrei of the Shijo school. Eizan started his art career by imitating the style of Kitagawa Utamaro and won a great reputation at a young age. In his mid-twenties, he gradually developed his own style of *bijinga*, finally reaching artistic maturity in his career. His work retains the sensitivity and lyricism of the Utamaro style, however, bringing the beautiful women in his images into everyday life. In his works, the charming, slender, and elegantly-proportioned women are more approachable to viewers, which makes his new *bijinga* style quite popular in the city of Edo. Eizan's remarkable and numerous *bijinga* prints are regarded as a turning point of the *ukiyo-e* style in the *bijin* genre, with harmonious colors, graceful lines and elegant subjects. *Ukiyo-e* artists after him began to explore a different aesthetic, with harsher colors, angular lines, focusing more on the material weight of earthly life.

## KITAGAWA UTAMARO 1753?-1806

A leading artist in the *bijin* genre, Kitagawa Utamaro was born in early 1750s in Edo. In *ukiyo-e* tradition Utamaro stands out as a preeminent master of images of women. He studied under the painter Toriyama Sekien, and has published artwork under the name Kitagawa Utamaro as well as Kitagawa Toyoaki. Utamaro's talent achieved full efflorescence in cooperation with a recognized master-

publisher Tsutaya Juzaburo who is known for perfection of printing, introduction of mica backgrounds. Among Utamaro's innovations were designs of *okubi-e* (large heads) or close-up images that further advanced subtle emotionality that distinguished his images of women. In his rich legacy he explored every facet of femininity and female life, including courtesans of Yoshiwara, the prostitute district in Edo, but also commoner women, women from myths, literature and history. It is due to the violation of censorship restrictions on historic topics in the arts that Utamaro was punished by the law, and this led him to fall into depression. Two years after his punishment, he died in 1806.

### NISHIMURA SHIGENAGA 1697-1756

A self taught *ukiyo-e* artist, Nishimura Shigenaga is considered to be a major artist of the time that immediately preceded the introduction of the full-color print. He excelled in *beni-e* hand-colored prints using the red or pinkish-red organic pigment derived from safflower (*benibana*). At the exhibition he is represented with suchlike print. He also produced *benizuri-e* or prints printed in two colors, primarily pink and green. His thematic range was broad. He was making prints of Kabuki theater actors and beautiful women, designed landscapes, historical scenes, referred to classical themes, created parodies, was interested in perspective prints *uki-e*. This latter interest of Nishimara Shigenaga is obvious in the print at the exhibition.

### TOYOHARA CHIKANOBU 1838-1912

Better known to his contemporaries as Yōshū Chikanobu, Toyohara Chikanobu is a woodblock artist in the late-Edo to early-Meiji Period. Born as Hashimoto Tadayoshi into a samurai family in Echigo, Niigata prefecture, his father served as a low-level retainer for the Sakakibara daimyo. As a boy Chikanobu received martial arts training and served in the military under

the Tokugawa Shogunate; upon its fall he joined an elite samurai infantry formation of the shogunate military and fought in the battles of Battle of Hakodate and Ueno. After the dissolution of samurai authority, his career path shifted to become a woodblock artist. Having formerly studied the Kanō school of painting his interest in *ukiyo-e* led him to study in multiple studios, joining the school of Ichiyūsai Kuniyoshi; studying actor portraiture under Toyohara Kunichika (1835-1900), whose surname he took and later adopted the artistic surname 'Yōshū'. One of the last great *ukiyo-e* artists known for his meticulous eye for detail, he worked for about seventy publishers and produced almost sixty series of prints. Images of *bijin-ga*, beautiful women, and the kabuki stage garnered him a reputation as a reporter of evolving Japanese fashion, pastimes, and customs. In 1884, Chikanobu created triptychs on the attempted assassination of Japan's representative in Korea, Hababusa Yoshitada and the burning of the Japanese legation bringing him great popularity. By the late 1880s, responding to the public dismay caused by rapid changes taking place in Tokyo from Westernized ideology, Chikanobu's work showed the lost world of the shogun and traditional values of old Japan. Throughout the 1890s, Chikanobu's artistic duality ranges from historical events, festivals, and *sensō-e*, war pictures to the modernized recording and cultural transitions brought by the Meiji era. At the turn of the 20th century, Chikanobu's last works featured brave samurai and pious women of Japan's past, models of appropriate behavior for the future. By 1905, his print production had dwindled and he died at seventy-five from stomach cancer in 1912.

### UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE 1797-1858

Print designer, book illustrator, and painter, Hiroshige is primarily known for his landscape work executed in the *ukiyo-e* style. Hiroshige was born in Edo (Tokyo) into a minor samurai family - his 124

father was a fire warden in the service of the Tokugawa shogun. From the age of 14 he apprenticed in the Utagawa Toyohiro's studio and started to use Utagawa Hiroshige as his artist name. Under the influence of Kanō school related to the Chinese tradition of landscape painting and the Shijō school of naturalistic painting, Hiroshige published his first work in 1818. He supplemented his income as an official in the fire department with *ukiyo-e* prints of popular genres such as Kabuki theater actor portraits *yakusha-e*, images of beautiful women *bijinga*, images of heroes and warriors *musha-e*. Around 1830, Hiroshige began working on landscapes. In his breakthrough series *Famous Views of the Eastern Capital* (Tōto meisho, c. 1833-35) and *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi no uchi, c. 1833-34), Hiroshige established his unique style that combined topographic precision with rendering of the state of nature - the weather, time of the day, and the season. Hiroshige comprehensively captured Japan's landscape in his more than twenty print series dedicated to the Tokaido Road, numerous series of views along other highways of the country as well as images of the traditional and novel "famous places" - the meisho. Even working in other genres, Hiroshige used sensitive nature views to provide the setting as, for example, in the *Fox Wedding Procession in Oji* at the current exhibition. One of Hiroshige's most innovative achievements is the vast print series *One Hundred Famous Views* (1856-1858) created in the last three years of the artist's life is known for the powerful close-ups of the foreground elements. Hiroshige also excelled in birds-and-flowers genre - *kachoga*, imbuing such prints with his characteristic poetic mood. Hiroshige's influence on the development of French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists was most significant. Although Hiroshige produced prints on many subjects, he is best remembered as the "master of the Japanese landscape print" with his

references, and subtle colors.

## UTAGAWA KUNIYOSHI 1798-1861

Utagawa Kuniyoshi was an Edo period print designer and painter, known for his masterful woodblock compositions, as well as the humor and wit he imbued within them. He joined the Utagawa school of *ukiyo-e* in 1811, when he became a student of Utagawa Tokoyuni at the young age of 12, soon proving to be one of his most gifted followers. Having been trained in traditional genres of beauties and kabuki actors, he received the name Kuniyoshi in 1814 and set out as an independent artist. Kuniyoshi was prolific in book illustrations during his early years, as well as standalone prints in traditional genres but was particularly successful in images of heroic warriors (*musha-e*). The latter theme led to his highly successful series *The popular edition of Suikoden: one of 108 brave warriors* in 1827, which resulted with a popularity boom for heroic prints. Kuniyoshi designed numerous prints dealing with tales of fantasy, often representing otherworldly themes such as ghostly apparitions and supernatural beings engaged in battle or ceremony. A cheerful person, Kuniyoshi included his youthful vigor into his work alongside his technical mastery, rendering humorous scenes of cats and other creatures engaged in human procedures and traditions. He also professed in the genre of landscape (*fukei-ga*) often enmeshed with his other genres of choice. Aside from his thematic adaptability, he was versatile in format as well, working with various polyptychs and vertical diptychs, as well as western forms of representation (*uki-e*). His creative affluence, unbound imagination and daring attracted many students and being an excellent teacher, his studio was a starting point for famous *ukiyo-e* artists such as Yoshitoshi and Yoshitora. An avid lover of cats, he managed to house a great number of them in his studio as company and inspiration. He died at the age of 63 in 1861.

## UTAGAWA TOYOHIRO 1773–1828

A Japanese *ukiyo-e* artist and painter, Utagawa Toyohiro studied under Utagawa Toyoharu, the founder of the highly influential Utagawa School. Many of his works included interpretations of daily life in Yoshiwara - the prostitution district, and series of detailed *ukiyo-e* landscapes. His stylistic influence is seen in other prominent artists' works such as Hiroshige and Hokusai.

## UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI 1769-1825

A prolific *ukiyo-e* artist, Utagawa Toyokuni is best known for his contributions to the *bijinga* (beautiful women) and *yakusha-e* (kabuki actor portrait) genres. His famous prints of courtesans, actors, and book illustrations<sup>1</sup> transformed the Utagawa School into a prestigious academy, especially at a time when the industry was dominated by artists such as Katsushika Hokusai and his students.<sup>2</sup> His illustrated book, *Oyogari no Koe*, demonstrates his creativity that challenged the popular notions of art. Author and artist collaborated to produce illustrated sequences—a rarity at the time.<sup>3</sup> His early work focused on courtesans. His beauties bear an elegance and idealism indicative of the period. Eventually, they would set the standard for *bijinga*. Many of his prints feature graceful, tall, and slender women. In the 1790s to 1800s, Toyokuni worked extensively in *yakusha-e*, capturing the actor's theatrical roles and their lives offstage.<sup>4</sup> In his later periods, his *bijinga* prints took a turn towards heavier and more rigid faces and bodies.<sup>5</sup> Toyokuni

1 "Utagawa Toyokuni I." 11 Artworks, Bio & Shows on Artsy. Accessed November 5, 2020. <https://www.artsy.net/artist/utagawa-toyokuni-i>.

2 Higuchi, Kazutaka, and Alfred Haft. *Japan Review, Shunga: Sex and Humor in Japanese Art and Literature*, no. 26 (2013): 239–55. 245.

3 Ibid., 245

4 "Toyokuni I." Ronin Gallery. Accessed November 5, 2020. <https://www.ronin.gallery.com/artists/toyokuni-i>.

5 "Utagawa Toyokuni I (歌川豊國) 1769-1825." Viewing

continued to produce large quantities of prints, but the quality never matched that of his earlier days.<sup>6</sup> The artist died in 1825.

## UTAGAWA YOSHIFUJI 1828-1887

A major pupil of Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Utagawa Yoshifuji spanned two eras: the traditional Edo period and the Meiji era (1868-1912) with its radical westernization and sweeping innovations. In the exhibition he is represented by the long-established *ukiyo-e* genres of *bijinga* (beautiful women), *kodomo-e* (images of children), maybe *musha-e* (images of heroes), and a landscape. But he was a prolific designer of highly innovative genres such as *kaika-e* (enlightenment pictures - images of Japan's modernization), *hashika-e* (pictures that believed to protect from measles during the epidemics of 1862), *yokohama-e* (images of foreigners at the international port of Yokohama after the Japan was forced-open to the trade with the West in 1853), and *omocha-e* (toy pictures). The "Yoshi" character in his name indicates that he was a student of Utagawa Kuniyoshi school. His most well-known work is the full-color print *nishiki-e* "From the Fifty-three Stations: The Cat Monster", which is a *giga* (comical picture) depicting a cat's head made from other cat's bodies.

## UTAGAWA YOSHITORA 1836-1882

Born in Edo, Utagawa Yoshitora was a prolific *ukiyo-e* print designer who received his training in the studio of Utagawa Kuniyoshi. He excelled in the style of his teacher and was a master of elaborate densely populated figurative images. He was a successful designer of *musha-e* (images of heroes) and often illustrated folk and mythical stories with

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Japanese Prints: Utagawa Toyokuni I (一代目 歌川豊國). Accessed November 5, 2020. <https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/ukiyo/toyokuni.html>.

6 Waterhouse, David. *Images of Eighteenth Century Japan: Ukiyo-e Prints from the Sir Edmund Walker Collection*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1975

historical details and lively imagination. He got into trouble in 1849 when he broke the *bakufu* censorship laws by creating the popular satirical print "Funny Warriors-Our Ruler's New Year's Rice Cakes" referring to the Tokugawa having benefited from the achievements of their predecessors, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Like other artists from Kuniyoshi's studio, he worked successfully in the novel genres that came into being with the advent of the Meiji era (1868-1912). One should mention his *kaika-e* (enlightenment pictures - images of Japan's modernization), *yokohama-e* (images of foreigners at the international port of Yokohama), and comic pictures *giga*.

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