

淺草



ASAKUSA

~ GATEWAY TO THE FLOATING WORLD

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Instructed by Dr. Elena Varshavskaya
Book design by Jordan Weed & Ji Na Choi
Edited by Connor Gewritz and Anna Campbell
Cover design by Emily Mahar & Kalyani Kastor

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– *Elena Varshavskaya, course instructor*

Asakusa, a bustling district of Japan's capital, emerged as a heart of city life during the Edo period (1603-1868). Its popularity continued after Edo was renamed Tokyo in 1868 soon after the beginning of the Meiji era. In the 1800s, Asakusa's attractions were irresistible for all walks of Japanese society. People flocked to Asakusa Sensoji temple, the most venerable in the capital, to pray to the merciful Bodhisattva of Compassion – Kanzeon Bosatsu (or Kannon Bosatsu for short). Visit to the temple promised also indulging in many urban pleasures. Miscellaneous goods were available in the shops lining the temple's central alley and filling the inner precincts. Outdoor performances, shows, sumo matches were competing for public attention. Besides, simply walking in the crowd offered an opportunity to see others and be seen. Furthermore, over time the government moved two centers of popular culture to the areas adjacent to Asakusa Sensoji – the Yoshiwara brothel quarter was transferred in 1657 and the Kabuki theaters in early 1840s.

Thus, Asakusa came to function as a physical and metaphorical path to and site of *ukiyo* – 'the floating world,' an Edo period term, referring to the modern habits and aspirations of townspeople. The notion of *ukiyo* embraced the lifestyle of city dwellers, their pleasure-seeking, vanity and devotion, intellectual sophistication and playfulness. All this was captured with remarkable exactitude in the 'pictures of the floating world' – ukiyo-e, the style of visual art that started in painting but truly developed in the mass-produced medium of woodblock printing.

It was this big theme – Asakusa as the hub of popular culture – that became the focus of inquiry for RISD students of the art history curatorial course Ukiyo-e Prints (H 791) in the fall semester of 2019. Investigating the original ukiyo-e prints from the collection of the RISD Museum, students have selected Keisai Eisen's triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Thunder Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo*, 1828, as the nucleus of their exhibition project. Students

then singled out aspects of the culture of the ‘floating world’ that are present in this composition or resonate with it. Accordingly, nine additional prints were chosen for the exhibition project to illustrate the relevant topics.

A challenging task was to elaborate a meaningful layout of the exhibition in which the nucleus print had to hold the central position, while all other were envisioned as displayed radially.

Working in small study groups, students explored all prints in comprehensive essays, discussed their findings in class with their peers, and put together a scholarly catalog.

Students’ research subjects ranged from the inhabitants of Edo and their visual codes, to the East-Asian tradition of representing large gatherings of people, to matters of fashion in clothing and cosmetics. Considered were also ukiyo-e references to classical culture, types of advertisement, fusion of religious and commercial aspects of city life as well as persistence of traditional forms of Buddhist architecture and sculpture. Attention was given to the artful signage, ubiquitous in a city environment. Students explored Yoshiwara and courtesans’ role as trend-setters, sumo wrestling matches and Kabuki theater performances, actors and theater-goers. A glossary of terms and artists’ biographical guide were compiled to complete the catalog.

Multiple design tasks associated with the exhibition were fulfilled by the class. This refers to the catalog and the catalog cover, the poster for the exhibition, and the invitation. Additionally, an electronic model of the exhibition was designed as a virtual version of the project. For their mock exhibition in the print study room at the museum, students wrote wall labels and prepared talks based on their research.

The project was conceived and realized with the kind support of the RISD Museum. The students and their instructor extend their heartfelt thanks to Dr. Wai Yee Chiong, Assistant Curator of Asian Art at the Museum.

The RISD class that curated this exhibition invites the would-be visitors to enter Asakusa Sensoji temple, blend into the crowd and experience the floating world of Edo period Japan.

INTRODUCTION – ASAKUSA: GATEWAY TO THE FLOATING WORLD

– Violet Ren

The exhibition *Asakusa: Gateway to the Floating World* is an outcome of research efforts of our ukiyo-e print class this past fall semester of 2019.

The exhibition consists of a group of ten original ukiyo-e prints from the collection of the RISD Museum. Chronologically, prints belong to the heyday of this mass-produced form of Edo period Japanese popular art, covering over a century from 1740s to 1870s. Selected prints represent a variety of formats, ranging from medium-size prints called *chuban* to large-format *oban* to triptychs comprised by three panels of large format sheets. These prints were designed by seven prominent ukiyo-e artists – Okumura Masanobu, Katsukawa Shunzan, Torii Kiyonaga, Keisai Eisen, Utagawa Hiroshige, Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige) and Utagawa Kunitaru. Thus, they reflect stylistic evolution of the medium.

One of the selected prints is an anchor print – this is Keisai Eisen's triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo* (1827/28). This composition captures the letter and spirit of Japan's popular culture of the Edo period. All other prints were chosen to elaborate the topics contained in the anchor print but in brief.



Map of Asakusa with Asakusa Sensōji temple, Shin-Yoshiwara pleasure quarter and Saruwaka-cho Kabuki theater district marked. *Edo: Owariya Seishichi*: 1849-1862. NDL.¹

¹ National Diet Library, <https://www.ndl.go.jp/landmarks/e/edo/imado-minowa-asakusa-ezu.html>

The content of the exhibition can be introduced through the explanation of its title. Asakusa is a district of Edo (now Tokyo), the city that became Japan's capital from the onset of the Tokugawa rule in 1603. Asakusa was located in the Low City – *shitamachi*, in the northeastern part of the capital close to the Sumida River and waterfront areas. It was the district where the artisans and traders lived, and thus this district developed as a core of Edo popular culture.

There are many reasons for Asakusa to become the heart of Edo urban culture. First, it is an important religious center as a home to the Asakusa Sensoji temple dedicated to Bodhisattva of Mercy, Kannon Bosatsu.² A miniature gilt sculpture of Bodhisattva Kannon was drawn out of water in a fishing net by two fisherman brothers in the Sumida River in 628.³ The chief of their village understood the importance of this statue and then changed his own house into a small temple for worshipping in Asakusa.⁴ Eventually this statue became the temple's hidden image and is said to be kept in a special container in the major prayer hall – the *hondo*. Only occasionally it is displayed to the public in special events known as *kaicho* – “opening of the curtain.” The temple enjoyed patronage of the most influential political figures throughout its long history. Among the patrons one should mention Taira Kiyomori and Minamoto Yoritomo, Japan's first shogun who is said to have prayed there for his victory over the Taira. Tokugawa Ieyasu designated Asakusa Sensoji as his official prayer hall. This long-lasting political attention contributed to the fame and thriving of the Asakusa Sensoji temple as a prominent center of Buddhism.

During the Edo period, the temple became a favorite destination of worshippers of a large Kanto region surrounding Edo. Particularly exciting appeared to be occasions of *kaicho* – ‘opening of the curtain’, public demonstrations of the temple's hidden image of Bodhisattva Kannon. On such days the statue became the *yorishiro* – a temporary lodging place for the deity.⁵

² Hur, Nam-lin. "Buddhist Culture of Asakusa Kannon in Edo." *Asia Journal* 2, no. 1 (1995): 15-28. www.jstor.org/stable/43105704. P16.

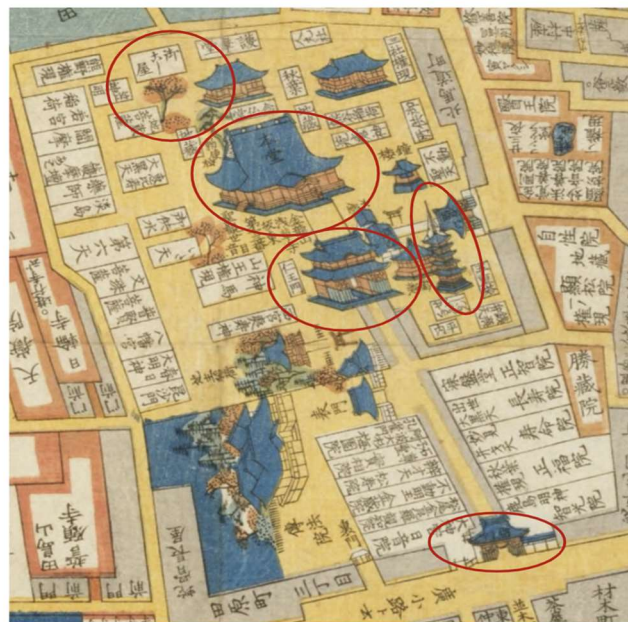
³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hur, Nam-lin. "Buddhist Culture of Asakusa Kannon in Edo," 17.

This was considered as allowing “manifestation of power from the deity”⁶ drawing vast crowds of visitors and pilgrims.

In the layout of the Sensoji Temple, we can see the outer Thunder Gate – Kaminarimon or Raijin-mon in the title of the print. From the Kaminari Gate a long alley leads to the second larger gate – the Nio-mon or the Two Kings Gate (now Hozomon, the Treasure Gate). Further down the main axis from the Nio Gate stands the main prayer hall – the Hondo. The five-story pagoda which is the reliquary is next to the right of the Two Kings Gate.



Map of Asakusa Sensoji temple, Edo: Owariya Seishichi:1849-1862. NDL.⁷

Asakusa Sensoji temple also enjoyed commercial prosperity. Trade thrived on the temple grounds. “Inner stores” *nakamise* lined both sides of the 130-meter-long lane between the outer Kaminari Gate and the Nio Gate.⁸ This lane has created a form of shopping mall which brought together Buddhism and the secular world.⁹ The shops specialized in different products such as bamboo, toys and umbrellas, etc. In the inner precincts of Sensoji Temple, there were

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ National Diet Library, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1286208>

⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁹ Ibid.

hundreds of tea houses of different kinds.¹⁰ Some were vegetable-rice places, some served dumplings. There were also liquor stores, cosmetic and toothpick shops and many archery booths.

Moreover, three spectacular fairs were held annually at the Asakusa Sensoji temple compound to attract visitors and shoppers.¹¹

In addition to all retail options mentioned above, Asakusa Sensoji grounds abounded in entertainment opportunities. Collectively called *misemono* – ‘display of things,’ they included any items, natural or artificial, and any activity that were wondrous.¹² One could listen to traditional storytelling or watch street arts – acrobatics or juggling or observe sumo wrestling matches. To the sumo theme a print by Utagawa Toyokuni II is dedicated. Various skills of these performers transformed Asakusa Sensoji into an “entertainment melting pot”.¹³

Environment of Asakusa Sensoji was considered inviting all year round. People were coming there to view cherry blossoms in the spring, to enjoy boating excursions in the summer, to view the river, considered beautiful even in the winter.¹⁴

Asakusa Sensoji’s popularity and its elated atmosphere stemmed also from the temple’s direct proximity to the city’s most alluring and vibrant entertainment spots, the Yoshiwara red-light district and the Kabuki theater street, Saruwaka-cho. The Yoshiwara pleasure quarter – the government-licensed prostitution district in Edo, was located in the neighborhood to the north of the Asakusa Sensoji area.¹⁵ It was moved there by the government in 1657 after the Great Fire and was given a name of New Yoshiwara – Shin Yoshiwara.¹⁶ Apart from the harsh reality of Yoshiwara, courtesans were known to everyone as icons of beauty and highly accomplished women. Yoshiwara was not just about the sex trade, it functioned also as a place of social life where the governmental social regulations

¹⁰ Hur, Nam-lin. *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensoji and Edo Society*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 47

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

didn't apply.¹⁷ In the strict conditions of social stratification and official control, Yoshiwara and the Sensoji space formed a sort of liberated zone.¹⁸ Yoshiwara and Sensoji were as close together culturally as they were geographically. Together, they produced one of the most popular *sakariba* – “bustling amusement place”.¹⁹ Courtesan culture as a vital aspect of ukiyo-e is reflected in the Keisai Eisen's triptych and is represented by Torii Kiyonaga's triptych *Mimeguri Shrine: Spring Promenade at Mukojima* (1787) and Utagawa Hiroshige's print *Dawn inside the Yoshiwara* (1857).

Kabuki theater is inherently connected with the Edo popular culture; it is present in our anchor print. Kabuki theaters were first located in the center of Edo and were forced to move to Asakusa in 1842 in the course of Tenpo Reforms undertaken by the government to suppress popular culture.²⁰ Various aspects of the Kabuki theater elaborate tradition are illustrated at the exhibition by prints by Okumura Masanobu *Scene from Momochidori musume Dojoji* (1744), Utagawa Toyokuni I *Sawamura Sojuro III as Ume no Yoshibei* (1796), and Kunitaru II *Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling opening of the three kabuki theaters in Saruwaka-cho* (1871).

From all of the above, Asakusa emerges as a vibrant scene of the dynamic, optimistic life of Edo townspeople, lighthearted, concerned with the desires of the moment, fashion and sensuality, all of which together became known as *ukiyo* – “the floating world.” This term was a contemporary playful re-interpretation of the old Buddhist concept with the opposite meaning that emphasized the transience, sorrowfulness and sufferings of ordinary existence.

This carefree and cheerful urban culture is reflected in ukiyo-e, pictures of the floating world. Such images flourished greatly in the printed medium of woodcuts. With the development of ukiyo-e prints the floating world culture grew, matured and spread around.

¹⁷ Nam-lin Hur. *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensoji and Edo Society*, 98.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Darkness and desire, 1804-1864*. (Honolulu, HI, University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 26

Like the residents of Edo, for our exhibition project we entered the floating world through the outer gate of the Asakusa Sensoji temple in Keisai Eisen's depiction of the place. Having scrutinized people in the crowd, their clothing, textile patterns, hairstyles and footwear, we looked at the temple setting, its architecture and sculpture and the written texts. From there we moved on to the advertisements and shops selling dental and hygiene products. Led further by visual analysis we were able to go beyond what we can see on the anchor print and consider the entertainment outside the Asakusa Sensoji temple. Authentic and precise documents of their epoch, ukiyo-e prints continue to provide valuable insights into the floating world culture of Edo period Japan.

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INHABITANTS OF THE FLOATING WORLD

Mary Iorio, Kalyani Kastor

Whether from Edo or from across the country, Japanese people of all backgrounds journey to Asakusa to experience the vibrant joy and religious givings of the iconic city

Keisai Eisen's triptych of the Thunder Gates, which separated the Kinryuzan Sensoji Buddhist Temple complex in Asakusa district of Edo from the secular world,²¹ captures the essence of joyous city life in 19th century Japan. The print meticulously depicts throngs of people who crowd around the temple grounds. While the mass of figures takes up the bottom third of the print, each character is so highly engaged with the setting or each other that their presence seems to fill the entire space. The energy the crowd brings to the outer temple gate doors symbolizes transition from the profane to the sacred.²² People are shopping, talking, smiling, looking around, and enjoying the day. Immense detail and color fill the print, leaving only small patches of sky to remain plain. The people are clothed in vivid colors and patterns. However, the gates are no less detailed with traditional vibrant orange-red washes, red paper lanterns with bold inscriptions, variously hued store curtains, etc. The social diversity of the crowd is communicated through the particulars of clothing and accessories as well as the facial expressions, movements, and postures. Regardless of the perceived rank, joy is being experienced by all. The atmosphere is emphasized by the expressive, brightly-colored effigies in the side compartments of the gate. These statues embody religious power and fearlessly protect the city.²³

²¹ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan. Asakusa Sensoji and Edo Society* (Cambridge / MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 48

²² Architectural setting of the scene depicted by Keisai Eisan in his triptych is discussed in paper *Asakusa Sensoji: Architectural Backdrop to Urban Pageant* by Jacqueline Qui and Ji Na Choi in this book.

²³ For discussion of sculptures of fierce protective deities, Fujin - God of Wind and Raijin - God of Thunder, displayed in the outer bays of the Thunder Gate – Kaminarimon, see paper *Divine Protectors of Asakusa Sensoji* by Kaanchi Chopra in this book.

Vitality of the scene is rendered also by the similarly thronged road leading from the Thunder Gate further into the temple towards the Nio Gate, the second temple gate guarded by huge sculptures of Two Benevolent Kings - Nio.

While the Sensoji Temple attracted many visitors for commercial and entertainment reasons, its primary function is linked to spirituality. Keisai Eisen depicts pilgrims, at the bottom of the central panel closest to the viewer, looking around in amazement. They are the only obvious religious-affiliated people, as temple servicemen workers and Buddhist monks do not appear to be present. Although, upon close examination, a mostly hidden figure is seen seated within the crowd, collecting alms in the middle of the left third of the print. He wears a woven hat made of split bamboo known as *takuhatsugasa* (托鉢笠), signifying a mendicant monk. He holds a hammer to create a sound loud enough to attract attention within the noisy crowd (figure 1).



Figure 1. Mendicant monk collecting alms. From left panel of Keisai Eisen's triptych.

The majority of the crowd are not specifically associated with the religiosity of the place nor an identifiable class. These townspeople are well-

groomed men and women who populate all sides of the Thunder Gate and create depth within the print, as only tops of heads are visible towards the back. Approximately forty individuals parade the scene with equal numbers of women and men. All hairstyles reflect the popular trends, and the women are wearing layered colorful kimonos with vivid *obi* sashes.²⁴ Many of the women look animated as they talk to their female companions. While their social status is not evident, the fashionable patterned kimonos suggest they belong to wealthy merchant or samurai families. All women, who could afford it, sought to emulate the fashions set by the courtesans known through the conventions of *bijinga*—the genre of depicting beautiful women in ukiyo-e. The *bijinga* genre developed in direct association with Yoshiwara, the licensed brothel quarter of Edo. In Eisen's print, one woman can perhaps be identified as a courtesan. She is in the far-right corner in a green kimono with her black *obi* tied in the front (figure 2). In 1780, the government required courtesans to tie the *obi* in front of the kimono.²⁵ However, by the 19th century, this ruling was relaxed and since courtesans were trend setters, it became commonplace for all women.²⁶ Several women carry parcels of paper *kaishi* (懷紙) tucked into the folds of their *obi*. This further portrays their elegance as *kaishi* were carried around for various personal uses—as handkerchiefs or to write a poem. In the context of ukiyo-e *bijinga*, depiction of a paper parcel sometimes bears suggestive connotations (figure 2).²⁷

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of the textile patterns see Tracy Shi and Emily Mahar, *Textiles in Edo Life: Perception and Meaning* in this book.

²⁵ For focused discussion of courtesan culture in ukiyo-e see essay by Jordan Weed in this book.

²⁶ Lisa Hix. Sex and Suffering: the Tragic Life of a Courtesan in the Floating World. <https://medium.com/lisa-hix/sex-and-suffering-the-tragic-life-of-the-courtesan-in-japan-s-floating-world-c509ff59ee12>

²⁷ Janice Katz, Mami Hatayama (eds). *Painting the Floating World: Ukiyo-E Masterpieces from the Weston Collection* (Art Institute of Chicago, 2018), 306



Figure 2. Presumably a courtesan and *furisode-shinzo*, courtesan in training. Close up of right panel Keisai Eisen triptych.

The men featured in Eisen's print are more socially diverse. There are two members of the samurai class who can be identified by their two swords, a privilege exclusive to samurai.²⁸ One samurai is shown towards the center of the triptych's right-hand panel—he is wearing a green short cloak (*haori*) over an orange undergarment with matching wide striped trousers (*hakama*) (figure 3).



Figure 3 (left): Samurai on foreground in Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 4 (right). Samurai at the cosmetic stall, Keisai Eisen's triptych

²⁸ Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Samurai: An Encyclopedia of Japan's Cultured Warriors* (Santa Barbara, California & Denver, Colorado: ABC-CLIO, 2019), XXIII

The other samurai on the far left in light blue, is shopping at a toothpick and cosmetic booth (figure 4).



Figure 5. Presumably a commoner with a permission to carry one sword
 Figure 6. Presumably a traveler – bare-legged and carries one sword.

The other men in Keisai Eisen's print who are wearing one sword are possibly commoners who received permission to carry one sword for travel or in association with an important event. Alternatively, there were also chivalrous commoners (*otokodate*) who were allowed to carry one sword used to protect those underprivileged (figure 5). Behind the samurai in figure 3, is a man wearing a blue *haori* and bare legs. His attire could identify him as a lower level samurai or merely a common traveler (figure 6).

Commercialism permeated life in Japanese cities during the Edo period. The print represents this fact with a book peddler. The man stands in the far left of the right panel next to the samurai carrying a large knapsack with a set of books in

his left hand. He is likely to be a peddler of a book-lending library *kashihon 'ya* (貸し本屋) (figure 7).²⁹



Figure 7. Presumably a peddler of a boo-lending library.

The temple itself was also involved in large-scale commercial activities. According to temple records from the time, there were approximately 250 commercial booths primarily surrounding the gates but extended out into the residential districts by the mid- 19th century.³⁰ In Keisai Eisen's triptych booths are pictured on either side of the composition; shop roofs are shown past through the gates along the main alley leading to the Nio Gate in the depth, although without their vendors visible.³¹ These businesses were made up of food booths and teahouses, beauty supplies stands with cosmetics and toothpicks, decor shops

²⁹ To prove this is not something exceptional, another peddler was depicted by the artist and can be discerned carrying a huge black box on his back.

³⁰ Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*, 47.

³¹ For further discussion of commercial and entertainment aspects of Asakusa Sensoji Temple complex see Val Zhao, Roger Li *Asakusa Spectacle: Ritual, Commerce and Entertainment* in this book. For discussion of a famous Asakusa Sensoji cosmetic shop run by a celebrated beauty O-Fuji see Barbara Bieniek, Olivia Dimond, *Assertion and representation of beauty in the Crowd of Edo Japan: Whitening Powder, Toothpicks and Tooth-blackening* in this book.

with prints and florists' goods. Available were also various forms of entertainment, including shows, street performances, sumo wrestling matches for watching or archery booths for shooting an arrow at a target to better one's fortune.³² To survive in this highly competitive environment, owners would hire attractive youthful salesgirls to attract customers.³³ These salesgirls often were also available for sexual services to their patrons.³⁴ In Japan prior to the 19th century, prostitution had long been interpreted as communion with deities and was associated with religious spaces. These women were categorized by rank with titles that had religious meaning connecting them to deities and Shinto priests.³⁵



Figure 8. Shops, close-up views from all three panels of Keisai Eisen's triptych.

Street performances happened regularly at temples, either for free with the intent to sell “magic medicinal elixirs” or for a small entrance fee.³⁶ Kabuki theater performances were also arranged by Asakusa Sensoji administration. In

³² Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*, 47, 65-66.

³³ Ibid 87-88.

³⁴ Ibid 88.

³⁵ Ibid 88-89.

³⁶ Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*, 64.

1842 the government moved Kabuki theaters next to the Sensoji temple, making association of the two even more pronounced. Kabuki theater actors were idolized by the Edo citizens, inspiring a genre of actor prints called *yakusha-e*. Keisai Eisen's print suggests an actor in the front of the crowd in the left third of the print. His expressive face and deliberate pose are what identify him as a Kabuki actor. His legs are straightened, and heels are placed together in a pose known as a *soku mie*. *Mie* is powerful pose struck by the actor at the pinnacle moment in the story (figure 9). Image of an unnamed person employing a Kabuki stage technique adds completion to Keisai Eisen's generalized picture of Edo populace.³⁷



Figure 9. Presumably a Kabuki theater actor. From left panel of Keisai Eisen's triptych.

The foreground center of the triptych is taken up by very different looking people, not sharing the fashions with the rest of the crowd. The viewers don't see much more than large white circles of traveling hats obscuring most of the

³⁷ For further discussion of performances see Connor Gewirtz *Kabuki Symbols*, Connor Nguyen *Kabuki Actors - Images of Likeness*, and Anna Campbell, *Sumo matches: between a Show and a Rite*, in this book.

individuals' faces and even their figures. Their hats with sparse inscriptions are the lightest areas in the print, quickly seizing the viewer's attention. One person has a roll of straw strapped to his back, another a cloth-wrapped bundle strapped to his. These men are pilgrims, carrying their first necessities with them, such as the straw raincoat *mino* (蓑).



Figure 10. Pilgrims approaching the Thunder Gate of Asakusa Sensoji.

The pilgrim is looking up at the temple in a nod of content and serenity. As the busy crowd is chatting and shopping around him, he looks to be having a serene moment in the hustle and bustle. His traveling companions are taking his lead. You can see a trail of three large white hats following close by. Though you can't see their faces, you can feel the quietness in their presence. Their robes are simple compared to the mass, and their hats are as graceful and white as everyone's skin. While the majority of the figures depicted in the scene are moving side-to-side, among the shops, or coming out from the temple, the pilgrims are clearly headed into the great Thunder Gate. But Keisai Eisen shows that pilgrims are open to joy and laughter, as the wide smile of a pilgrim on shines from under the hat at the right of figure 10.

Pilgrimages are a departure from daily routine. Christopher McKevitt says, "It is axiomatic that a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place which lies beyond the mundane realm of reality."³⁸ Shinno Toshikazu considers pilgrimages

³⁸ Editors' Introduction: Pilgrimage in the Japanese Religious Tradition. Ian Reader and Paul L. Swanson

as “one of the great pillars of Japanese religion.”³⁹ Pilgrimages can range from visiting cities to great religious journeys to sacred centers. Every single member and level in society participated. In world religions, the pilgrim’s experience during their voyage from their “home” culture is often the focus. Differences in cultures have created a life of constant movement. Pilgrimages can be defined as the process of people making a journey to or through a sacred place with certain processes of worship. Sacred places can range from temples and shrines to landscapes and mountaintops. The word ‘pilgrimage’ brings up thoughts of long-distance, but that isn’t necessarily the case in Japan. Pilgrims of Shikoku are usually island natives, so their journey may be considered short. This could simply mean large crowds moving to a local site, as seen in Asakusa.

Sensoji’s inside area, the center of the temple lands, was seen to have powerful preservation from harm. During extremely trying times, people would journey to the temple to seek help and hope from the Sensoji deities. Sensoji was even the final destination and rest stop for travelers on the brink of death, as well as suicide. The Asakusa Kannon were thought to carry the dead to the other world for a better life. A hired year-round doctor lived on site to take care of all the arriving sick.

During the Tokugawa period there were many white-robed pilgrims entering the city gates for it was a center point for the country’s most popular pilgrimage routes. The largest routes were the thirty-three sanctuaries of Bodhisattva Kannon, the Kumano pilgrimage courses, and the eighty-eight sanctuaries of Kukai (734-835), one of Japan’s most important Buddhist authorities. Sensoji was the thirteenth stop for the Kanto Kannon route of thirty-three shrines and the final destination of the one hundred Kannon Shrines.

Once pilgrims entered the gates their main goal was to make a connection with Asakusa Kannon by proving their pilgrimage through placing evidence of their travels, such as wood or paper with their place of birth, name, and reason for traveling. It was believed that the wrongdoings committed during your lifetime

³⁹ John Eade, Dionigi Albera (eds), *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles* (Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2015), 25

could be corrected through the merits gained on the pilgrimage. The more pilgrimages one completed, the more merits they gained, so during the late Tokugawa period there was a constant flow of pilgrims in Sensoji. Once accepted by Asakusa Kannon the pilgrims were free from all bonds and status, adorning white robes which symbolize death and freedom.

In 1730, new routes were added to the thirty-three Kannon and Asakusa trails with Sensoji as the first stop. They were called “localized amulet issuing circuits” and were nicely organized to fit within Edo. The routes made travel much easier and accessible, allowing people to complete journeys in weeks rather than months. Pilgrimage was now a great escape for citizens of Edo to leave their ordinary lives and boring routines. Whether the journey was a casual playful practice or deep spiritual acceptance, pilgrims traveled to Asakusa for its exciting exhibitions of life and spirit.

The crowd in Keisai Eisen’s triptych renders a robust Edo society in remarkable fullness. Commoners, samurai, elegantly dressed women, and modest pilgrims are all in attendance. They seek religious experience and worldly pleasures, all around the Thunder Gate of Asakusa Sensoji. The city’s energy is the essence of this piece while joy reflects the overall tenor of the Edo lifestyle.

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ASAKUSA SPECTACLE

– RITUAL, COMMERCE & ENTERTAINMENT

– Val Zhao, Roger Li

In this print, we see a scene of a large crowd gathered in front of the gates to a Buddhist temple. Two sculptures are standing in a dynamic pose across from each other at either side of the gates, one red and one green. A large lantern hangs in the middle of the gate, along with several small ones in front of the eave. A variety of people are shown, both male and female, all donning quite colorful garments and accessories, their facial expressions seem both excited and curious. There are shops on either side of the gate, with signs advertising their products and services.

The signboard rising from the ground on the right side of the print gives us some insight as to what is going on in this scene. From the sign, we can tell that this is Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple and that the crowd has gathered to celebrate the unveiling of the statue of Kannon Bosatsu (Kanzeon is a fuller version of the name) - the Bodhisattva of Mercy (Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara), the main deity of the temple. The legend tells that the sculpture was discovered a thousand and two hundred years earlier in the Sumida River by two fishermen on the 18th day of the 3rd month of 36th year of era of Empress Suiko (554-628), which corresponds to year 628 of the Gregorian calendar. In order to understand the nature of the event depicted by Keisai Eisen in his triptych, it is now necessary to review the history of the image as told in the temple's records. According to Sensoji chronicles, cited by Nam-lin Hur, the small gilt statue found by fishermen was quickly recognized as an incarnation of Avalokitesvara and became an object of worship. Soon after, the statue unhappy with one monk's stare, gave a sign that it must be sealed away from the public sight and thus it became a secret deity (*hi-Butsu*). Moreover, in the 9th century a wooden replica of the original statue was made by a prominent monk Ennin (794-864). This wooden replica was likewise put in a box and placed in front of the sealed original, thus acquiring equally miraculous powers. It was displayed only on occasion of *kaicho* - "the special, public

exhibition of a secret Buddhist deity.”⁴⁰ Such anniversary *kaicho* is the event depicted by Keisai Eisen in his triptych.

People in large numbers have already arrived at the first, outer gate of Sensoji Temple compound. Called the Kaminari Gate - Gate of Thunder, this gate houses two vigorous figures running on clouds within compartments at either side of the gate: they are Raijin and Fujin, the god of thunder and the god of wind respectively. From Kaminari Gate a road lined with shops leads further to the second inner gate that is a larger, two story building used for storing arts and artifacts. The Sensoji Temple compound also contains the main prayer hall, the pagoda, and sub-temples and Shinto shrines.

People commonly worshipped Kannon Sensoji due to their desire for good fortune and compassion. Through the popularization of Buddhism in Asia, in this case specifically in Japan, the religion became a large part of people’s lives and started to exceed the boundaries of just a religious practice and evolved more into a cultural lifestyle. People would often gather at temples and sites of worship to make donations to the temple and their respective deities. As time went on, traders and craftsmen gathered to sell goods, taking advantage of the large crowd that the temples attracted, and this repeated practice of exchanging goods there slowly warranted the development of markets and commercial areas around those temples. One such temple is the Sensoji in Edo.

As has been said, the particular event that is taking place on the print is called *kaicho*. *Kaicho*, as Nam-Lin Hur puts it, is a “purely religious event designed to provide an opportunity for lay Buddhists to appeal to the compassion of a secret deity through a face to face encounter”⁴¹. But one must note that these viewings were not free.⁴² The people who came to visit the temple were expected to give generous donations to the temple hosting the viewing, as well as paying an entrance fee just to step inside the gates. This tactic of making people pay for religious practices which were already ingrained in their lives was quite an

⁴⁰ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan. Asakusa Sensoji and Edo Society* (Cambridge, MA & London, Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 5-10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴² *Ibid.*

effective funding method for the temple. These funds would either be put to use for special projects or just some extra income for the temple. In short, these events were definitely more for fundraising and enjoyable opportunities than for religious worshipping purposes.

These events were incredibly successful during Edo Japan, not just due to the popularity of the deity that was being venerated, but also due to the fact that it evoked the power of “prayer and play” that was instilled in Japan folk piety and the desire to be entertained.⁴³ The unveiling of the Asakusa Kannon deity capitalized on this aspect of culture, and crowds would gather to see the deity and participate in the festivities. Preparations started immediately after a date for the viewing was set. There were many ways that word about the viewing of the Asakusa Kannon got around the city. First, abundant advertisements were posted throughout the temple grounds at the main entrance gate and the south side (fig. 1).

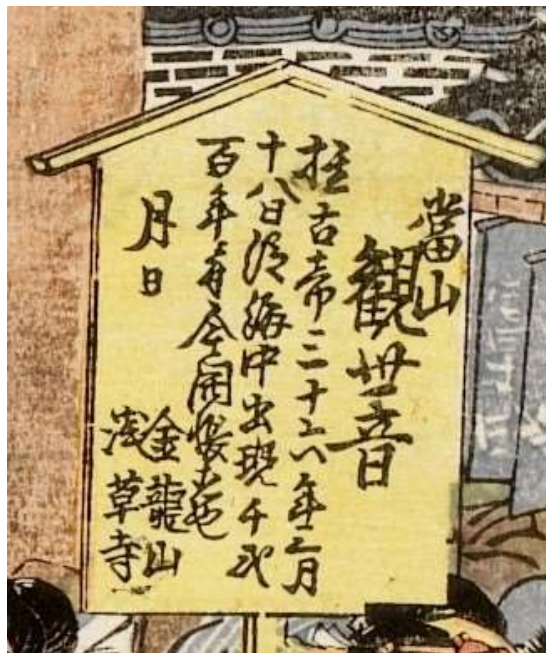


Figure 1. Announcement board with the information about holding the *kaicho* to mark 1200th anniversary since the sculpture of Bodhisattva Asakusa Kannon had been found.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 81.

Advertisements were also put up in the busiest spots in Edo, such as Itabashi, Yotsuya, Shibaguchi, Ryogoku, Senjiu, Kuromonae, and Nihonbashi. The unveiling was advertised as an “imminent manifestation” of the Asakusa Kannon.⁴⁴ These methods generated an overwhelming sense of excitement and anticipation for the event, garnering more and more people’s attention and eventually gathering incredibly large crowds to the temple on the day of the viewing.

The administrators of Sensoji knew that the spirit of piety alone was not enough to gather the large crowds that they desired. They would have to use other methods of attraction to bring people to the temple and bring the money out of their pockets. A method of integrating play and worship that was already deeply imbedded into Japanese Buddhist traditions was implemented. The administrators arranged for plays to be put on, and many Kabuki actors were present at the temple. Aside from just plays, the festival also arranged for puppet dramas, noh plays, and Shinto dances.⁴⁵ The Sensoji administrators also employed the services of Kabuki actors in the commercial sector as well, extending their roles to selling medicine, cookies, bonsai, candies, and toys in the street stalls.⁴⁶

Asakusa became a locus of popular entertainments in Edo, especially after Asakusa became a popular way station on the road to Yoshiwara. Asakusa functioned as a “horse path” followed by travelers on their way to the pleasure quarter.⁴⁷ After Kabuki theaters were moved next to the temple in 1841, Asakusa was further enhanced as a center of popular entertainment. Asakusa functioned as a place where Edoites can vent their wild energy, as the Kabuki actors acted out their feelings of resistance, sorrow, anger, and resentment in a “bombastic and rebellious” manner. Edoites found an abreaction for their frustration from the society. In the words of Saida Masanori, “Asakusa was established by the people

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 82.

⁴⁷ Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. Chapter 3 “Mapping the Space of Mass Culture: Kawabata Yasunari’s Scarlet Gang of Asakusa,” (Columbia University Press New York, 2002), 141.

oppressed by caste discrimination.”⁴⁸ Closely associated with wild performances and unlicensed prostitution, Asakusa became a “licensed” space of what was perceived to be socially dangerous activities by the authorities, “safely confined to the margins of the city and social order”.⁴⁹

Asakusa authorities also arranged for *misemono*, literally “shows” or “exhibitions” - a variety of shows, sometimes crude and vulgar. These shows were integrated into the Japanese urban life, enjoying popularity throughout the society. They were to be found in busy spots of the city, including precincts of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, where they were happening for the financial benefit of those institutions. *Misemono* merchants were encouraged to participate and make the festival venues more attractive, through different types of shows and entertainment. This increase in services and attractions at the temple caused a business boom at Sensoji for the next three months and frequented for its famous amusement attractions.⁵⁰ *Misemono* performers insisted on using religious spaces to conduct business. This was partly due to a tradition of divine Shinto dances which were closely related to fundraising shows put on by religious institutions during the Sengoku period.⁵¹ Some Buddhist temples at this time had no steady source of income due to war, and therefore, hired professional performers and entertainers to stage shows for the public and raise money through admission fees to those events.⁵² These events provided funds which were essential in keeping the temple running and functioning. The events also provided a cheap source of entertainment for common folk.⁵³ Over time, organizers of these shows sought to make the performances more independent, existing also outside of the temples and on the streets. Due to their popularity and entertainment value, *misemono* became the dominant form of entertainment at the time. Although no longer

⁴⁸ Ibid, 141

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society*, 81.

⁵¹ Ibid, 86.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

providing money for the temples, these spectacles and shows retained their religious connotations and ties to the institutions they once helped promote.⁵⁴

One performance that was widely seen at *misemono* was sumo wrestling. In order to reflect this “spectacle” aspect of Asakusa temple complex, the exhibition includes a *sumo-e* - a ukiyo-e print of a sumo wrestler portrayed by Utagawa Toyokuni II. For detailed discussion of this print please see paper by Anna Campbell *Sumo: Between a Show and a Rite* in this book. Previously only held in private samurai residences, sumo wrestling now catered to the public and were a common spectacle to behold at *misemono*. Most shows, previously exclusive to fundraising events for temples and the enjoyment of the privileged, could now be found on the streets for commoners to enjoy and make a part of their world.⁵⁵

Some shops that were set up as a result of *kaicho* were quite popular among the temple goers and became a more permanent establishment in the area, such as toothpick shops, tea houses, whitening powder shops, and archery booths. The print of *Ten Scenes Around Kinryuzan Temple (Yanagiya Toothpick Shop)* depicts a scene at Yanagiya toothpick shop was located on the inner precincts of the Sensoji temple. The signboard *kanban* behind the left female figure says *Kanboku go-yojo tokoro*, which means “here is the place for brush-toothpicks.” As the print shows, the toothpick shop sold toothpicks, dentifrice, tea whisks, Chinese sumac for teeth blackening, and other products. Brushing with dentifrice or powdered gullets was very fashionable, even though their sanitary effects rested largely in the verbal promises of toothpick merchants.⁵⁶ In a society where people had very little medical knowledge, dental care was a universal problem. The number of the toothpick shops around Sensoji Temple soared to 220 in 1807, responding to the townspeople’s need for high quality dental hygiene utensils.⁵⁷

Among businesses run in the Sensoji, many shops were dependant on the role of women for commercial purposes. Torii Kiyonaga’s print depicts two

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

young and beautiful women in the shop. The woman on the right is making the toothpick, wearing rather plain clothes for working. Another woman, on the right of the image, wears a more elaborate outfit. The salesgirl is a famous beauty Ofuji (お藤). *Bijin* Ofuji was famous in her youth as the beautiful daughter of the owner of a tooth-brush store, the Moto-Yanagiya (本柳屋) in Asakusa and known by the nickname "Miss Ginkgo" (Icho Musume). She was the most famous beauty of the Meiwa era (1764-1772), frequently depicted in color prints by Suzuki Harunobu and others.⁵⁸ Hiring attractive salesgirls to lure male customers was a major way for the shop owners to succeed in the intense competition waged between numbers of similar shops. The owners of particularly popular toothpick shops might sometimes advertise that their wares were made from branches of Buddhist “teeth-cleaning trees” and would not only prevent cavities but also bring prosperity to one’s descendants⁵⁹. The customers were more likely to be attracted by the salesgirl’s physical beauty rather than the quality of the products.

The commercial role of women is also shown in the main print *Kanzeon Kaminari Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo*. On the far left of the print, there are a swarm of men surrounding the whitening powder shop with two sales girls outside of the stall. Although the print only shows a view of the salesgirls’ backs, the vivid facial expression of male customers arouses the viewers’ imagination. Knowing that attractive women were hired for commercial purposes, the viewers might associate the dramatic facial expression of male customers with the idea that they have fallen under the spell of the sales girl’s beauty. The smiling faces of the young sale girls enhanced the attractiveness of the commercial environment of Sensoji, which added an aspect of amusement to the austere place of religion.

Beautiful women and young sales girls were also employed at a variety of other shops and booths in order to attract customers. This is just one of the many

⁵⁸ “Ofuji (お藤) (Biographical details),” The British Museum, accessed October 3, 2019, https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=145225

⁵⁹ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensooji and Edo Society*, 85.

examples of the role of women during Edo Japan. They were oftentimes employed at a number of other establishments for their visual appeal and to the amusement of the men who frequented these places. Such tea houses evolved to prostitution parlors in their back rooms.⁶⁰ There was definitely no shortage of beautiful women and young sales girls at *kaicho*.

It was impossible for *kaicho* to exist without also a high amount of entertainment along with it. Individuals had their attention captured at *kaicho* through play and entertainment, also known as *asobi*. Fusing the element of play with already existing traditions of folk piety, *kaicho* was sure to succeed and draw in huge crowds and large sums of money for the temple. This success was especially apparent during the Tokugawa period, where prayer and play were already deeply rooted within the Japanese notion of *asobi*, which contained pre-existing religious undertones prior to these events. The notion was that in order to communicate with deities, one must be able to “play” with it, drawing out the spirit with entertainment. If spirits were amused or pleased, then people would be able to affiliate themselves with it. This notion really resonated with the events of the *kaicho* characterized by the coexistence of religious worship and the entertainment with the commercial aspect which developed as a result. Asakusa became a center for entertainment due to its closeness to Yoshiwara and the Kabuki scene, making it a gateway many had to pass through in order to enjoy the pleasures of the floating world.

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⁶⁰Ibid.



Katsukawa Shunzan, active ca. 1778-1790s

Visitors at a Temple Gate (Niomon), 1788

Publisher: Nishimuraya Yohachi

Polychrome woodblock print, 37.2 x 25.1 cm (14 5/8 x 9 7/8 inches)

RISD, Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1130

ASAKUSA SENSOJI

– ARCHITECTURAL BACKDROP TO URBAN PAGEANT

– Jacqueline Qiu, Ji Na Choi

A huge crowd of people has gathered in front of the temple gate. People of all backgrounds, samurai, merchants, pilgrims, Kabuki actors, and common people alike have assembled to pass under the beautiful architecture embellished with lucky charms and protective creatures and gods. The red wooden temple gate, called *Raijinmon* or *Kaminarimon* or Thunder Gate, serves as the outer gate of the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, the oldest and the most revered temple in Edo. Kinryuzan Sensoji temple was usually densely crowded for many reasons - as a religious center, as a center of commerce and a center of entertainment. This time, however, there is a special reason for such a big gathering: the temple is showing its usually hidden image of its main deity, Kannon Bosatsu (Sanskrit, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara), the embodiment of mercy.⁶¹ Even the space at the approaches to the temple is thronged, as Keisai Eisen's triptych shows. Situated at the focal point of the scene, this gate represents Buddhist temple architecture and decor typical for structures of this kind.

Buddhism originated from India and traveled to Japan through the Central Asian trading routes that brought it to China and then to the Korean peninsula. The religion was first introduced to Japan from Korea in the sixth century as part of a diplomatic journey that included Buddhist text and images of Shakyamuni Buddha as gifts. By the seventh century, Buddhism was firmly established within the Japanese culture and influenced much of the politics, architecture, art, and activities of worship. It is interesting to note how Buddhism assimilates into, rather than erases, Japan's traditional belief system, Shinto, in the everyday lives

⁶¹ For discussion of various aspects of the temple's role in Edo city life, current customs and traditions, see, for instance, *Asakusa Spectacle: Faith and Entertainment* by Val Zhao and Roger Li.

of the Edo people. Such religious syncretism is clearly reflected in the architecture and decor of Japanese temples.⁶²

There exist numerous types of Buddhist temple architecture in Japan. Regardless of their variations that will not be considered in this essay, the necessary elements included sets of temple gates, the main prayer hall, and a reliquary tower traditionally referred to as pagoda; other buildings vary in their purpose and number. These major components can be seen in the Keisai Eisen's composition. It is a close-up of the outer temple gates. The viewer of the print is right there among the crowd – so close to the gate that the roof appears to be outside the field of vision – the upper edge of the print cuts it off. However, through the central opening of the gate further into the depth from Kaminarimon one can see a straight street lined up with shops that leads to the second gate housing two Niō – two guardian kings. Niōmon will be also considered in this essay based on the print by Katsukawa Shunzan (act. c. 1778-1790s) dedicated to the representation of Niōmon at Kinryūzan Sensōji. Beyond the Niōmon, to the right, there is the pagoda. Several roofs of other temple structures are scattered in the tree-grown precinct. It is noteworthy that there are Shinto shrines within the precincts of Kinryūzan Sensōji, such as Nishinomiya Inari shrine and Shinto gateway *torii*. The most obvious manifestation of this merging of two religions in temple designs are the inclusions of large statues at the gates of the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple.

The Buddhist temple gate characteristically consists of three bays. The central bay serves as the entrance to the temple while both outer bays contain the sculptures of protective gods. This is exactly what the viewers of Keisai Eisen's triptych see when looking at the street side of the Kaminarimon at the Kinryūzan Sensōji temple.

Statues of protective gods are screened off by net-like curtains with green stakes forming fences at the lower level of the gate. These Shinto gods, Raijin and

⁶² Hammer, Elizabeth. "Buddhism in Japan." Asia Society.
<https://asiasociety.org/education/buddhism-japan>

Fujin, act as defenders of temples, watching over the temple grounds and with their fearsome gazes and powerful stances protecting the worshippers from any forces that may threaten the holy grounds. Raijin is the god of thunder, lightning and storms while his brother, Fujin is the god of wind. Together, they are the gods of storms and weather and thus the name for the gate⁶³. The red-colored Raijin on the left appears with a fierce and aggressive expression, muscular body and wind-blown hair. He is standing on top of a cloud, beating on a ring of *taiko* drums with mallets, to create sounds of thunder.

His powers over lightning allow worshippers to pray for agriculture and harvest as it was believed that rice that was struck by lightning would produce the best yield. Fujin is situated on the right side of the print. Colored in a terrifying green, he is also standing on a cloud with his wind-blown, messy appearance. On his shoulders he holds a large bag of winds, which create storms once the bag is opened and winds are set free. As brothers, Fujin is usually depicted alongside Raijin. They are believed to be rivals that cause great storms and wreak havoc on the Japanese islands. Thus, while they are feared by the evil spirits for their demon-like appearance and power, they are highly respected by worshippers. It is important to mention that both these gods, the God of Wind and the God of Thunder, are to be found in the pantheon of Hinduism from which they entered the pantheon of Buddhism, particularly as protectors of Kannon Bosatsu. Raijin, God of Thunder, corresponds to Hindu god Varuna and Fujin, God of Wind, corresponds to Hindu god Vayu.⁶⁴ Merging with their Shinto counterparts, they transformed into the deities we see here with their vivid and complex iconography.⁶⁵ Raijin and Fujin represented in the print are radiant in form and color, corresponding to the festive ambience of the depicted scene and its rich polychromy.

⁶³ JAANUS Dictionary - Entry for Fuujin/Raijin. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/f/fuujinraijin.htm>

⁶⁴ JAANUS Dictionary - Entry for Fuujin/Raijin. Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/f/fuujinraijin.htm>

⁶⁵ For further discussion of Raijin and Fujin see essay by Kaanchi Chopra in the current book.

The explicitly geometric framework of the gate provides a distinct linear setting for a dynamic moment in the city life. Full visibility of the gate's structure is an important feature of Japanese traditional architecture. Exposure of structural elements testifies to the appreciation of the architectonic clarity and logic of the construction. The mastery of woodworking is also evident here. The designer of the print spares no effort in rendering all the details of the gate's appearance.

The upper tier of the Kaminarimon is particularly ornate. As the glance goes up from the compartments with Raijin and Fujin, one sees carved wooden sculpture of white and yellow chrysanthemums that adorn the joints of the two central posts and the horizontal center bar. The central bar itself is painted with flower-and-leaf motifs rendered in black line (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Carvings and paintings around the central bay of the Thunder Gate. Keisai Eisen's triptych, detail.

Both plant motifs used here originate from China - the chrysanthemums on the pillars and the scrolling flower-and-tendril design on the bar. In the middle of the central bar a black-rimmed green board carries an inscription in gold that reads

“Kinryuzan,” literally meaning “the Mountain of the Golden Dragon” which was the official name of this temple.⁶⁶

Underneath the tablet bearing the inscription of the temple name there is an elaborately carved board representing a green dragon soaring among swirling colorful clouds (Fig. 2). Presence of the dragon in word and image is highly meaningful here. The very beginning of the temple’s history is associated with a legend in which a dragon with shining gold scales appeared from the water when fishermen fished out the statue of Kannon Bosatsu for which the temple was built. Dragons from the realm of water are believed to hold power over the clouds and rain, protecting against fires in Asakusa. Fittingly, the name of this temple, *Kinryuzan*, means *The Mountain of the Golden Dragon*.



Figure 2. Dragon in cloud, carved and colored wooden board above the gate entrance. Keisai Eisen’s triptych, detail.

A brief mention of the lanterns is due here. Although they are not a part of architecture on which this essay focuses, the *chochin* or collapsible paper lanterns attached to the architecture are perceived together and appear an inseparable part of the scene’s setting. The craft for making such lanterns was particularly flourishing in Asakusa district during the Edo period. It was also there that artisans specializing in writing on *chochin* lived in Edo, inscribing lanterns in the peculiar Edo style (discussed in detail elsewhere in this book). The enormous lantern in the central gateway was inscribed with the name of the neighboring district Shinbashi the residents of which donated the lantern to the temple.

Here only the second character of this place name is partially visible. Right below it a character “manji” or swastika is attached to the golden lower rim at the bottom of all the lanterns. A geometric symbol associated with Hinduism

⁶⁶ For discussion of the inscriptions, their content and style see essays *Written Texts in Life and Image at Asakusa* (parts I & II) by Yuki Xu, Xiaoben Wang, Yinan Yang, and Cain Cai and Owen Wang in this book.

and Buddhism, it is regarded as a lucky charm and has become a symbol for temples.

The golden dragon is engraved at the bottom of the lantern, and although it is hardly discernible here, the artist makes sure the area is visible.

The one point-perspective is purposely skewed to show off this element because it was an important symbol the artist wanted to include and communicate to the viewers. This representation of the dragon complements the two major references to the dragon discussed above – the inscription of the temple's name and a carved board with the dragon's representation.

Let's now regard four smaller *chochins*, hanging down from the eaves (Fig. 3). At the sides of the tablet with the temple name there are two cylindrical lanterns framed by two outer spherical ones, all of which have calligraphy and *mon* or crests, identity emblems. The two cylindrical *chochin* are decorated with stylized ginkgo leaves enclosed in the octagonal frame. It was a well-known emblem of Nakamura-za Kabuki theater. Significance of Kabuki theater for the culture of the floating world explains artist's decision to embed this reference in this view of the temple entrance gate. The outer two spherical *chochin* are inscribed with calligraphy from a religious association *hyakumanben* (million prayers) invoking fortunes in business.



Figure 3. Four smaller collapsible lanterns *chochin* attached to the eaves of the gate. Keisai Eisen's triptych, detail.

The strict geometry of wooden framework of the gate is emphasized by several sculptural adornments. Behind the lanterns at the intersections of the columns and the top-second horizontal beam there are carvings depicting elephant and lion heads (Fig. 4).

The lion has a more specific heritage in Asian cultures, known in Japan as *shishi*. These images of *shishi* were introduced to Japan from China where they

appeared from India. Then via Korean influence in the 7th or 8th century, roughly coinciding with the period when Buddhism came to Japan. The Japanese combined elements of the Korean *koma-inu* and Chinese *kara-shishi* interpretation of the “lion dog”. In Buddhist context a lion is sometimes represented with spots like those depicted here. Lions were considered magical and possessing the power to repel evil spirits, so they are often placed under the eaves of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines alike.⁶⁷ The image of elephant took the same path—from India to China and then together with the Buddhist teaching reached Japan via Korea. Both the lion and the elephant appear as transportation of Buddhist deities, most traditionally Monju Bosatsu (Manjurshri) rides a lion and Fugen Bosatsu (Samantabhadra) an elephant.⁶⁸ Similar to the lion, the elephant also symbolizes the powers to overcome obstacles. In Japan the elephant-like mythological creature, *baku*, is occasionally used in a similar manner in architecture. *Baku* is a composite creature with the trunk and tusks of an elephant, the eyes of a rhinoceros, the tail of a cow, and the paws of a tiger. They are known as eaters of nightmares in Chinese and Japanese mythology.⁶⁹ But in the current case the sculptures represent the lion and the elephant with the Buddhist symbolism implied.

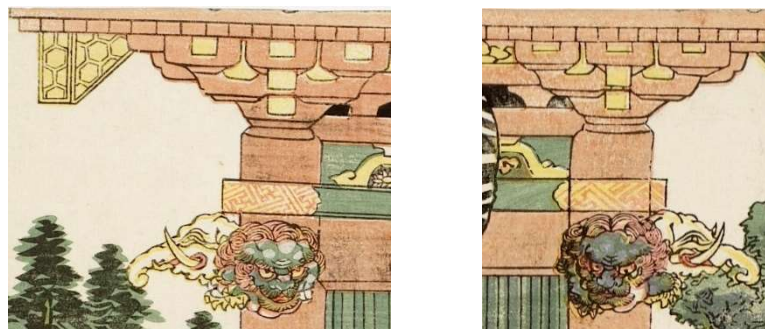


Figure 4. Asakusa Sensoji Thunder Gate, lion head and elephant head, carved adornments. Keisai Eisen's triptych, detail.

⁶⁷Mark Schumacher. “Shishi Lions Shrine & Temple Guardians with Magical Powers to Repel Evil” Japanese Buddhist Statuary. Online A to Z Photo Dictionary.
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⁶⁹ Mark Schumacher. “BAKU 獬 or 貘 Eater of Nightmares.”
<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/baku.html>

Looking further up where the upper edge of the print cuts the gate structure below roof, we see the most intricate part of Japanese wooden architecture – the complex bracketing system known as *tokyo*. The system consists of two basic elements, the bearing blocks *masu* and the bracket arm *hijiki*.⁷⁰ The type of bracketing here relies on usage of three bearing blocks *hira-mitsuko* (Fig. 5). Repetition of square bearing blocks of the bracketing along the upper edge of the print creates a distinct decorative rhythm. The artist didn't neglect small yet important elements of the structure, like the frog-leg struts *kaerumata*⁷¹; here of yellow color, they are attached to the green board behind the round lanterns and are almost concealed by them. Abundant structural and decorative elements of the upper tier of Kaminarimon combine visually into a fittingly ornate finale to the vivid scene.

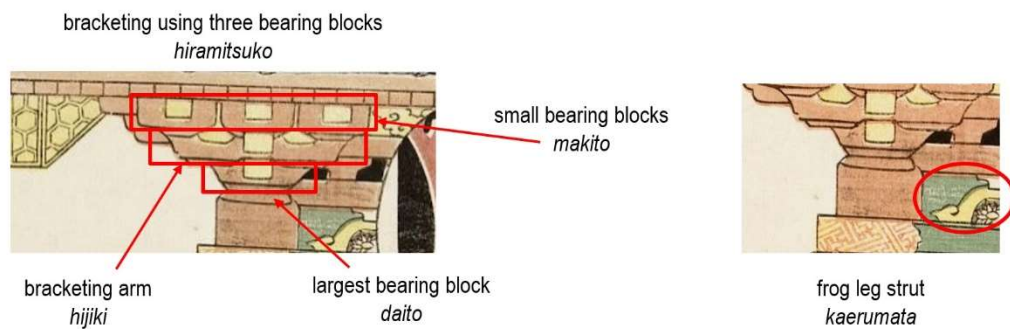


Figure 5. Bracketing system *hira-mitsuko* and frog leg strut *kaerumata*.
Keisai Eisen's triptych, details. .⁷²

The passage through the gates is flanked by heavy composite doors open for the day. These doors are made of solid wooden planks fortified by metal knobs; the hinges and additional decorative plates are also made of metal.

Depicted according to the laws of one-point geometric perspective, these doors direct the eye of the beholder through the gates where the crowd is heading. Having passed through the elaborate Kaminarimon the visitors found themselves

⁷⁰ JAANUS : Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History. "Tokyou とうきょう." <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/t/tokyou.htm>.

⁷¹ JAANUS : Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History. "Kaerumata 蟻股." <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>.

⁷² JAANUS : Terminology of Japanese Architecture & Art History. Horyuji, Nara. <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/h/hiramitsuto.htm>

in Nakamise-dori or the long passage lined with shops selling toys, sweets, snacks and souvenirs. This shopping street directly leads to the entrance of the Sensoji temple grounds. The precinct is guarded by the second, inner gate, Niomon. The name Niomon was given as the gate houses two Buddhist warrior statues called *NiO*, which translates to Two Kings and implies Two Benevolent Kings-Protectors (Fig. 6). In some legends, it is believed that they traveled with and protected the Buddha. Now the gate is rebuilt as Hozomon, the Treasure House Gate, as the gate holds Sensoji's treasures: safety equipment and various cultural artifacts.

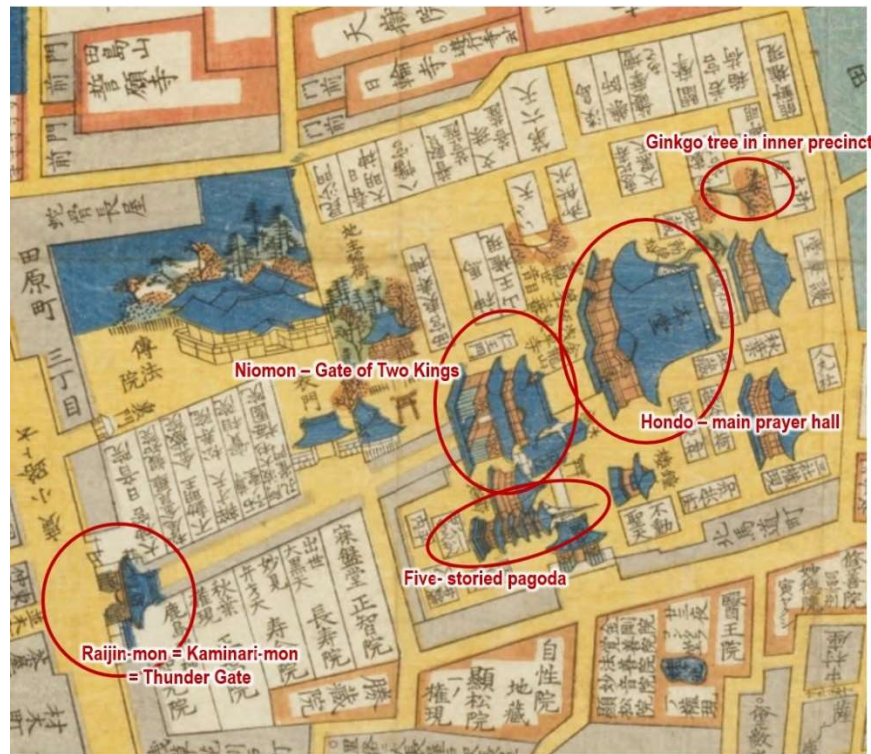


Figure 6. Layout of the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple. ⁷³

This gate further illuminates the references to Buddhism and the foreign influences on Japanese architecture and culture. Though far away in the distance, the structure of the Niomon can be distinguished fairly well in Eisen's triptych.

⁷³ From Edo Sectional Maps (Edo kiriezu 江戸切絵図). Kageyama Muneyasu,[et al.] (Edo: Owariya Seishichi, [1849-1862]). Imado Minowa Asakusa ezu (今戸箕輪浅草絵図). National Diet Library website, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1286208?tocOpened=1>

One can see a two-storied three-bay structure. The passage through the gate traditionally takes the central part of the structure and the images of protective deities are in the side compartments.



Figure 7. Katsukawa Shunzan. Visitors at a Temple Gate of Two Kings – Niomon. Ca. 1790. Left panel missing, central panel from the MFA,⁷⁴ right panel from the RISD Museum⁷⁵

A print by Katsukawa Shunzan in the collection of the RISD Museum is called *Visitors at Temple Gate* dated to ca. 1790. It is the right-hand sheet of the triptych. The MFA in Boston has the center sheet of the triptych. The leftmost print of the triptych is not known. These two prints together allow us to get a general idea of the Niomon at the Kinryuzan Temple in Asakusa (Fig. 7).

In the RISD print *Visitors at Temple Gate*, a dark wooden statue standing within the reddish walls of the gate looks out at the temple visitors with a fierce expression and a dynamic pose.

⁷⁴ Katsukawa Shunzan. *Visitors at Temple Gate*. 1788. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Accession number 56.75 <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/258247>

⁷⁵ Katsukawa Shunzan. *Figures at a Temple Gate (Niomon)*. ca. 1790. Publisher: Nishimuraya Yohachi. Polychrome woodblock print, 37.2 x 25.1 cm (14 5/8 x 9 7/8 inches) RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1130. <https://rismuseum.org/art-design/collection/figures-temple-gate-nio-mon-201130>



Figure 8. Agyo – one of Two Protective Kings.
Katsuakawa Shunzan's triptych of the Asakusa Niomon, right panel.

The figure has its mouth open, wide open eyes, flexed muscles, outstretched right arm while his long robes swirl around him. The sculpture is curtained off by a thin see-through net-like fence with hexagonal cells in the upper part of the compartment the lower part of which is formed by green rectangular stakes that create a wall at its feet. The statue represents one of the Two Kings, *Agyo*, who is situated at the right side of the gate (Fig. 8). As shown from his muscular build and aggressive posture, *Agyo* symbolizes strength and wards off evil spirits.

Agyo, although hard to see even in the close up on the right, stands with an opened mouth, baring teeth, and is handling a club, or *vajra* mallet. He is making the first syllable in Japanese and in Sanskrit, “a”, which represents the beginning and birth. *Agyo*'s open mouth is also believed to scare off sacrilegious entities while *Ungyo*'s closed mouth allows the benevolent ones to find shelter within the temple. *Ungyo*'s most prominent feature, his tightly closed mouth, illustrates the action of making the “n” sound, which is called “ungyo.” The sound is the the last syllable in Japanese and symbolizes the end or death in the Sanskrit Devanagari

language. Together, *Nio* represent the beginning and end, granting protection to the entire Buddhist realm⁷⁶

The atmosphere at the Niomon is lively. There are clusters of people around the statue on the right side of the gate. On closer inspection one can get a glimpse of the activity at the other side of the gate visible through the mesh surrounding the sculpture. Katsukawa Shunzan successfully captures the energy of the place by showing many groups of people partaking in activities of prayer and play.



Figure 8. Women in front of offertory box discarding *koyori* – paper cords for counting prayer circuits. Katsukawa Shunzan's triptych of the Asakusa Niomon, right panel.

Two women are directly in front of the offertory box labeled *saisen* preparing to make offerings of some objects. These objects are *koyori* – twisted paper cords that were used to count prayer circuits in a ritual of *hyakudo mairi* or “one hundred temple visits.” When a single prayer was found insufficient and believers resorted to a ritual of offering one hundred prayers in consecutive visits to a temple or a shrine for one hundred days. Gradually this practice morphed into doing one hundred prayer circuits in one day by walking between the temple or a shrine gate and one of the temple or shrine buildings. The people on the print that

⁷⁶ Mark Shumacher. “Nio Guardians (Benevolent Kings) Protect Entrance Gate at Temples.” Japanese Buddhist Statuary. Online A to Z Photo Dictionary.
<https://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/nio.shtml>

are carrying *koyori* are performing this private ritual. When the ritual was completed, the *koyori* were discarded into the offertory box.⁷⁷ One is kneeling in front of the box while the woman behind her waits for her turn.

Incense is burning on a shelf set up at the green railing in front of the statue. Next to the incense there are four small votive pictures *ema* - a kind of religious offering.



Figure 9. Owaraji – oversized straw sandals *waraji* donated to temples as a prayer for foot health. Katsuakawa Shunzan's triptych of the Asakusa Niomon, right panel.

Below that shelf-platform hangs straw sandals *waraji* (Fig. 9). China's woven straw shoes were introduced to Japan around the 8th century. These straw shoes turned into straw sandals known as *waraji*, straw *zori*. They were easier to slip on and off, in line with the custom of removing shoes before entering a home

⁷⁷ Suzuki Kintaro. Encyclopedia of Shinto.
<http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=765>

space.⁷⁸ *Waraji* were the common choice of footwear in the Edo period. Both samurai and commoners wore them. A long tradition of offering sandals to temples and shrines developed over the course of time when *waraji* were the main footwear (9th-20th century). People offered the gods *waraji* when praying for safe travel and lower body health, for strong legs and feet to travel and labor.⁷⁹ The sandals evolved to be known as *owaraji* in its decorative context, the added *o* in front of the word meaning “very big.”

There are spherical and cylindrical paper lanterns *chochin* hanging from the top of the gate. Some have calligraphy, symbols, and flower illustrations. Paper lanterns were traditionally associated with the temple gates and as mentioned above, their production particularly thrived in the Asakusa district.

Above the spherical lanterns one can see a rectangular frame - this is one of the larger votive pictures *ema* donated to temples and shrines and displayed under the eaves and in special halls called *ema-do* (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. Paper lanterns *chochin* and votive picture *ema* – traditional donations to temples. Katsuakawa Shunzan's triptych of the Asakusa Niomon, right panel.

Traditionally practiced in Shinto then assimilated into Buddhist worship, the *ema* are used as a medium to communicate with the gods where people write

⁷⁸ Nipponia, “No.21,” Nipponia, <https://web-japan.org/nipponia/nipponia21/en/topic/index02.html>

⁷⁹ Alice Gordenker, “Owaraji,” The Japan Times, June 16, 2005, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/06/16/reference/owaraji/#.XcVnDy2ZM00>

prayers or wishes. The *ema* are kept at temples or shrines until they are released to the spiritual realm through a ritual burning.

All people in the print are graceful, dignified, and elegant. They are all stylishly dressed and are shown wearing thonged footwear called *zori*. A man and a woman in the lower right-hand corner are chatting, and the woman appears to be pointing out something of interest in the distance to the man. A man and a woman to the left of the composition stand within the temple entrance and also look into the distance at something outside the picture plane.

The development of Buddhist architectural motifs directly supported the integration of the religion into Japanese culture and society. Adopting existing Buddhist motifs from India via China and Korea to merge with Japanese Shinto and secular traditions created a culturally diverse and unique interpretation of Buddhist tradition and iconography. These elements shown in the setting of the prints hold extraordinary historical and cultural richness and, despite their mixed origin, have become the very fabric of national life. The meanings imbued in the statues, decor, objects, and customs of worship constituted a vital part of the culture of the floating world and of the spiritual and earthly aspirations of the life-loving Edo dwellers.

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BUDDHIST ICONOGRAPHY OF DIVINE PROTECTORS

– Kaanchi Chopra

Assembled outside the auspicious and popular Sensoji Temple in Asakusa district of Edo is a large crowd of Japanese locals. The temple is dedicated to Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit), bodhisattva of mercy, whose name is rendered in Japanese as Kanzeon Bosatsu - bodhisattva watching the world and listening to the world, the shortened version - Kannon Bosatsu - Bodhisattva that is watching and listening. The Kanzeon Raijin Gate, the outer gate of Sensoji temple, is decorated with big lanterns, detailed inscriptions, and carvings of elephants, lion heads and dragons. Inside the outer bays of the gate there are Buddhist/Shinto deities: the God of Wind – Fujin – is at the left, the God of Thunder – Raijin – is at the right. According to Buddhist beliefs, wrathful divinities at the gate prevent evil forces from entering the temple. Inspired by Keisai Eisen's triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuan Sensoji Temple in Edo*, this paper aims to explore the development of iconography of these deities from both Shinto and Buddhist pantheons: tracking their historical evolution along the Silk Road and their symbolism today.



Figure. 2: Thunder God - Raijin



Figure. 3: Wind God - Fujin

The Wind God - Fujin is green in color; he is holding a large drawstring bag over his shoulder in which he collects winds. The Thunder God - Raijin is

red; he is encircled by a ring of drums and often is holding a small hammer to beat them to create the sound of thunder. They both are depicted with fierce facial expressions, distorted mouths, muscular builds, gravity-defying hair, and claw-like feet and hands.

Keisai Eisen made this print in the late 1820s, but the earliest Japanese depiction of the Wind and Thunder deities can be found in the 8th century. A later version of this representation dating to the 13th century contains illustrations to the Sutra of Past and Present Cause and Effect, *Kako genzai e-inga-kyo*, in which the Wind and Thunder Gods are included among demons attempting to frighten the historic Buddha.⁸⁰



Figure 4: Scene from The Illustrated Sutra of Past and Present Karma (*Kako genzai e-inga-kyo*; Matsunaga Version), late 13th century. The Met.⁸¹

Both Fujin and Raijin were based on Hindu deities (*Vayu* and *Varun*) and Chinese deities (*Fengshe* and *Leigong*) meaning their iconography seems to have originated during the cultural exchanges along the Silk Road. In the 1st century CE, the human iconography of Buddha became popular and it first occurred in Gandhara - a part of India's northwestern frontier. Artistic elements from Greek Hellenistic work were combined with Indian Buddhist symbolism, creating a

⁸⁰⁸⁰ Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System (JAANUS), "Fujin Raijin"
<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/f/fuujinraiin.htm>

⁸¹ See website of the Metropolitan Museum,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53178>)

unique style. Gandharan artists used stone and stucco to produce these works, which were then placed in nichelike shrines around the stupa of a monastery.⁸² Trade routes, both maritime and overland, were the primary means by which Buddhist thought and imagery traveled from India, the birthplace of Buddhism, to other countries on the Silk Road. These ancient connecting routes promoted religious, cultural, and artistic influences of Buddhism to reach the different corners of Asia and beyond.⁸³ Buddhism is assumed to have spread to China around the 2nd century BCE, and centers with foreign monks and translators were established in China by the 2nd century CE. Chinese and Korean influences extended to Japan during the country's first historical epoch—the Asuka period (552 to 710 CE) and Buddhist texts, iconography, and instruments of worship were introduced into the culture.⁸⁴



Figure 5: Kongō Rikishi, 8 c., Todaiji, Nara.



Fig. 6: Shukongojin, 8 c. Todaiji, Nara.

During the Nara period (710-794) that followed, Buddhist sculpture reached remarkable heights, inspired by Chinese art of the Tang period. Images of

⁸² Dehejia, Vidya. "Buddhism and Buddhist Art." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/budd/hd_budd.htm (February 2007)

⁸³ Asia Society Museum, "Buddhist Art and the Trade Routes"

⁸⁴ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Asuka and Nara Periods"

protective deities from this period are distinguished for their so-called “psychological realism” in the masterful characterization of these “divine warriors,” formidable, enraged, and ready to act.

The Heian period (794 – 1185) in Japan is said to have been a pious age when temple building flourished with new religious iconography. Multi-headed and multi-armed deities like Senju Kannon - a thousand armed Kannon, were created from Indian Tantric philosophies. They were transmitted to Japan from China as part of the esoteric Buddhist teaching that began to filter into Japan in the 8th century. Esoteric teachings are secret and mysterious, and the many hands of Senju Kannon symbolize the multitude of ways he could grant blessings and serve the mankind. The Heian Japanese seemed to have worshipped this deity for earthly gain.⁸⁵

In 1164, towards the end of the Heian period, Sanjusangendo temple was built in Kyoto. It was later damaged in civil disturbances and restored in 1246. This temple is dedicated to bodhisattva Senju Kannon. Inside 1001 images the bodhisattva are to be found. In front of these images of Senju Kannon lined up are twenty-eight attendants, traditionally associated with the deity. At either side of these attendants two demonic figures running on clouds are to be seen. These two figures are God of Wind, Fujin and God of Thunder, Raijin. The sculptures in this temple are attributed to Kei School of sculpture, the most prominent in the Kamakura period (1192-1333). Images of the Fujin and Raijin from Sanjusangendo temple are considered masterpieces for their striking expressive power. Although it's unclear why these two gods were added to the row of attendants of Senju Kannon in Sanjusangendo, there are many sources that include other divinities representing natural phenomena among such attendants. Iconography of the Thunder and Wind Gods has been derived from those sources. Thus they are in fact non-Buddhist demonic gods included in Buddhist pantheon as minor protective divinities.⁸⁶ Association of these weather-related deities with

⁸⁵ Emily J. Sano, Chapter 1, The Twenty-Eight Bushu of Sanjusangendo

⁸⁶ Ibid, 174-181

Senju Kannon and their placement at the outermost ends of the row of attendants in Sanjusangendo Temple might explain the choice of the same deities to guard the outer gates at the Kanzeon Sensoji Temple in Edo.



Figures 7 and 8: Raijin - God of Thunder (left), Fujin - God of Wind (right). Sanjusangendo Temple, Kyoto. 13 c. Kamakura period. Assembled wood technique, inlaid eyes, H. ~ 1 m. Attributed to Kei School of sculpture. Represent dramatic materialization of force.

Buddhist iconography in Central Asia developed in an interesting cross-fertilized way as it included the aesthetics and the emotions of respective populations. Instead of reproducing the existing stereotypical prototypes, artists along the Silk Road created new forms of art and altered existing features while consciously leaving traces of the original donor-traders so that viewers could understand the growth and spread of Buddhism. For example, in 623 CE, Tori Busshi casted the *Shaka Triad* out of bronze in the *kondo* - the prayer hall, in the temple of Horyū-ji in Japan which was highly influenced by Chinese art of the Northern Wei dynasty. Another example of the changes that took place during the journey is the god called Nanda - one of the Eight Dragon Kings; in India, these deities were called *nagas* - they were serpents or cobras. In their transmission to China, they became synonymous with dragons and were said to live in the sea. Nanda means "joy," or "happiness," a name he received because

by bringing rain, he made the people very happy. In stories he demands Buddhist treasures, especially relics, sometimes in exchange for quelling storms. In the kingdoms beneath the sea he guards treasures, such as jewels and Buddhist texts. He is commonly known as the leader of the Nagas, and he is frequently paired with a brother called Yuhanda. These two are also called Nanda-Bananda and treated as a unit.⁸⁷

Coming back to Thunder and Wind Gods, the oldest Chinese example is a ‘four-sided Buddhist stone stele’ that was produced in 501 CE. The bas-relief of the stone stele discovered in Xian depicts wind and thunder gods on either side of a strong man. It seems that the Chinese taste for symmetry led to the depiction of the wind and thunder gods as a pair. More specific examples are found in the images of wind and thunder gods placed on either side of the Asura at Dunhuang Mogao Grotto No. 249.



Figure. 9: Wind god and thunder god in Dunhuang Cave 249, mid-6th century.

⁸⁷ Emily J. Sano, Chapter 4, The Twenty-Eight Bushu of Sanjusangendo

In Japan, Tawarayara Sotatsu modified their horrifying facial expressions into rather pleasing countenances, adjusted their pose somewhat, and reduced the size of the linked drums.⁸⁸ Ogata Korin and some other painters later on made this same work also with ink on gold, slightly modifying the original by Tawarayara Sotatsu. Japanese artists hence played with artistic media, new color arrangement, and the addition of humor in their recreation of Buddhist iconography from China and applying it to Shinto deities, that seldom acquire anthropomorphic personification.



Figure 10: Wind and Thunder God screens by Tawarayara Sotatsu, mid-17th c. (Edo period). Two-folded screens, color and gold on paper, 170.5x154.5cm. Kyoto National Museum, National Treasure.⁸⁹

In 1788, Katsukawa Shunzan made a print of a lively scene of worshippers at the *Niomon* gate situated within the Sensoji precinct. The dark guardian statue oversees and protects the temple from evil spirits with his fierce eyes. Within the print, this statue stands out because of its bold color in contrast to the vibrant decorations and colorful textiles around it. Underneath the statue, worshippers are engaged in prayer and offerings to the gods.

⁸⁸ Han Junghee, "The Origin of Wind and Thunder God Iconography and Its Representation in Korean Painting," E-Korean Journal (Vol.40. No.4 Winter, 2000 pp.68~112) https://www.ekoreajournal.net/issue/view_pop.htm?Idx=3131

⁸⁹ (<https://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/syuzou/meihin/kinsei/item10.html>)



Figure. 12: Visitors at Temple Gate by Katsukawa Shunzan, ca. 1790.
RISD Museum, Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1130.⁹⁰

The figure has an open mouth, big shocking eyes, outstretched arm muscles and religious robes swirling around him from both sides. His muscular build and aggressive posture are meant to symbolize strength in order to scare away thieves and evil spirits.

Raijin and Fujin belong to the most important gods in Shintoism and the Japanese mythology. Fujin has four fingers on each hand, each representing a cardinal point. In most representations, Raijin is shown with three fingers on each hand which symbolize the past, present, and future respectively. Like many other Shinto gods, he is the son of Izanami and Izanagi, the two principal gods of Shinto. Despite their intimidating features, they are both feared and admired by their worshippers. In dry seasons, the most faithful Japanese farmers pray to

⁹⁰ <https://risdmuseum.org/art-design/collection/figures-temple-gate-nio-mon-201130>

Raijin for rain and thunder as these natural conditions have a reputation of fertilizing rice in Japan. The custom says that if field is struck by lightning, it would offer a good harvest.⁹¹ In 1274 and 1281, when the Mongols under Kublai Khan tried to invade Japan, both the times they were blown back by typhoons that. These miraculous storms have been credited to Fujin, the protector and guardian of the country. Superstitious mothers even warn their young children to cover their belly buttons or else Raijin may steal them away and eat their bellies. The funny part is that growing up in India, my mother used to say the same statement to me, except she mentioned Raijin's Hindu version - Indra. This means that apart from art, even stories and myths have traveled across time and countries and are still prevalent thousands of years down the lane.

These deities can even be spotted in pop culture today. Among the hundreds of Pokémon, there are two monsters that are inspired by Fujin and Raijin: Tornadus and Thundurus (seen at the left and right of figure 11). Hence, the iconography of these guardians is founded in every nook and corner - from temples to television - across the whole Asian continent.



Figure. 11: Pokemon based off Thunder and Wind Gods

⁹¹ <https://mythology.net/japanese/japanese-gods/raijin/>

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WRITTEN TEXTS IN LIFE AND IMAGE AT ASAKUSA

– CONTENT AND PLACEMENT

– Yuki Xu, Xiaoben Wang, Yinan Yang

There are always stories hidden behind ancient artworks. *The Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo* by Keisai Eisen is no exception. Keisai Eisen depicts elaborate details of Edo period architectural structures, exuberant crowds, patterned textiles, street entertainment, social dynamics, and multifarious merchandise. This print truly captures the soul of a lively and prosperous society gathering at the Sensoji Temple during the Edo period. The writings and inscriptions in the print are crucial in documenting all the bygone circumstances and occurrences that are present beyond the image on this ukiyo-e print. Providing the foundation of Japanese culture, these written messages are still relevant in the present day and are worth scrutinizing closely. The texts that will be examined in the following are: the title of the print, the location of the depicted scene, publisher and author, five lanterns inscribed with different contents, the gate name tablet, the temple official announcement board on bottom right, the sign board, and shop signs.



Traditionally writing in East Asia proceeds in vertical lines, top to bottom, right to left. Thus, documents are read from the upper right corner down in the leftward direction. This is where one of the most significant texts on the print is located. It reads [江戸金龍山浅草寺 観世音雷神門之圖], which refers to the Thunder Gate of the Kinryuzan Sensōji Temple dedicated to Kanzeon Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, embodiment of mercy). This inscription defines the location of the depicted scene. The last two characters [之圖] literally mean “the picture of.” This vertically oriented text serves as the title of the print. The rectangular box evidently sets this title text apart from the rest of the print, which is a common practice present in the majority of ukiyo-e prints. The last sign, circled and in a smaller font, is the censor’s seal. The circle contains

a single character [極] “kiwame” which stands for “excellent”. The sign means that this print passed official censorship examination and was approved to be sold publicly. Censorship was regulated by the government, and censor’s seal helps ascertain the rough date of the print publication, due changing of the seal’s form. This particular seal was used between 1790- 1842. Because of the nature of the censorship seal, it not only helps to determine the date of the print’s production, but also offers a peek into the governmental influence on and regulation of various art forms and art sale during the Edo period in Japan.

At the bottom left of the composition are two vertically oriented rectangular boxes generally referred to as cartouches. Inscriptions within the cartouches record the origin of the print. Inscription in the smaller cartouche to the right [溪斎英泉画] means “picture by Keisai Eisen.” He was one of the leading ukiyo-e artists of his time who worked in a variety of genres, including figurative images, nature motifs, panoramic views, and close-ups. He is primarily



known for his images of beautiful women referred to as, *bijinga*. He often worked in the extended format of polyptychs. This exhibition includes one more print by Keisai Eisen that offers a double-take by presenting the

Heian period poetess Ono no Komachi in modern guise.⁹² Back to Keisai Eisen’s Asakusa triptych, the leftmost cartouche contains two lines: the first one refers to a shop in Bakurocho, a district in Edo – the inscription runs [馬喰町看店]. It is the location of the publishing company. State control of the publishing industry required to indicate the address of the publishing house during most of the Edo period. The second line begins with the crest of the publishing house followed by its name. The name reads Ezakiya Kichibebei Publishing [江崎屋吉兵衛版]. It was a wholesale publishing company that published and distributed prints. According to the Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Prints, this firm published prints by



⁹² See paper *Edo Cosmetics for Heian Immortal Beauty* by Tracy Shi in this book.

many leading ukiyo-e artists such as Torii Kiyonaga, Keisai Eisen, and Utagawa Hiroshige, making it a highly successful publishing house at that time.⁹³

In this busy and exhilarating scene of people gathered around the Thunder Gate – Raijin-mon or Kaminari-mon of the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple, the three golden characters on the top plate of the gate immediately draw attention of the visitors, instilling in them an elevated and solemn feeling.



The characters [金龍山] are the name of the mountain Kinryuzan, where Sensoji is located. Kinryuzan stands for the “mountain of the Golden Dragon.” There are several legends that connect this place with the dragon. According to one of them, during Empress Suiko's reign (592-628) the land swelled up and the Golden Dragon, the guardian of the hill, ascended from the skies. Soon a sculpture of Bodhisattva Kannon was found nearby, and a temple was built on the hill.⁹⁴ Another legend says that three days after the statue appeared, a golden dragon was seen flying down from heaven to protect it. For this reason, the temple became known as “Kinryuzan.” To commemorate this event, a Golden Dragon Dance (called Kinryu-no-Mai) is held at the temple every year on March 18th.⁹⁵ Still another version of the legend tells that the dragon which inhabited the river, climbed up to the hill with a lantern to keep watch over the great temple of

⁹³ Amy Reigle Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints* (Hotei Publishing, 2005), v. 2, 431

⁹⁴ Mikhail Uspenskiĭ, *Hiroshige: A Hundred Views of Edo* (Parkstone International, 2008), 84
<https://books.google.com/books/about/Hiroshige.html?id=uiI4AQAAIAAJ>

⁹⁵ Official website of Asakusa Station <https://www.asakusastation.com/sensoji-temple-the-heart-of-asakusa/>

Kannon when it was already there.⁹⁶ Sensoji temple's deep connection with the golden dragon legend is reflected in the temple's name proudly written on the tablet above the Kaminari Gate. Endurance of the legend manifests itself in the golden dragon ceremonial dance regularly performed on the temple grounds.

Right underneath the plate, lurking behind the horizontal board of the gate entrance there is a giant lantern that has a huge character for *bashi* – “bridge” [橋] written in a much bolder and organic style. The lantern is a Japanese traditional

paper lantern called *chochin*.

Written on the lantern is actually [志ん橋] which refers to the district Shinbashi. It was a dedicated donation to the temple made by the Shinbashi residents.

Undeniably, the oversized *chochin* and the conspicuous



texts were among the most eye-catching features of the temple's overall appearance and remain visually striking to this day although slightly different after being restored. According to the official website of Asakusa Station, Sensoji was destroyed by fire and natural disaster several times and was rebuilt many times afterwards.⁹⁷ The current gate was rebuilt in 1960, but the current *shinbashi chochin* was produced in 2014 and now hangs in the Sensoji temple main hall. The *chochin* that hangs at the Thunder Gate was actually donated by the founder

⁹⁶ Basil Hall Chamberlain, W. B. Mason, *A Handbook for Travellers in Japan*. P. 136
https://www.si.edu/object/siris_sil_852677

⁹⁷ Official website of Asakusa Station, Kaminarimon Asakusa Thunder Gate
<https://www.asakusastation.com/kaminarimon-asakusa-thunder-gate/>

Panasonic, Konosuke Matsushita, in 1960 when he contributed to rebuild the Kaminarimon (Thunder Gate).

The present-day central lantern in the Kaminari Gate at Asakusa Sensoji, 2019



On the two sides of the central character on the lantern in the triptych, the artist cleverly put his name and the publishers' names. The inscriptions on the left side of the lantern reads [江崎屋吉兵衛]: Ezakiya Kichibei, indicating the publishing house for this print – the same as the one written in the cartouche at the bottom left of the composition. The middle inscription [豊屋伊三郎] may refer to Tatamiya Isaburo who might have very close relationship to the publishing house.

The left-most one says [溪斎英泉], which is our artist's name. The inscriptions on the right side of the lantern reads [川口正藏]: Kawaguchi Shozo, on the right-most side, and [山城屋佐兵衛]: Yamashiroya Sahei. Both of them are names of publishers that are not associated with this particular print made by Keisai Eisen.



On each side of the gate, there are two lanterns hanging in a symmetric formation, four in total. Closer to the gate tablet are the two in the shape of a cylinder. Although the texts on the lanterns can barely be seen, the leaf patterns could be easily detected – ginkgo leaves. The ginkgo tree was brought to Japan by Chinese monks, where it was widely planted in temple gardens. In various areas of Japanese decorative art, ginkgo leaf's distinctive fan shape carries prosperous symbolism along with its natural beauty: ginkgo has been “a symbol of longevity” and “a more profound endurance because the tree can live for thousands of years and bear severe weather.”⁹⁸ Ginkgo leaves have also been traditionally associated with Kabuki theater. According to the chronology of the *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Traditional Theater*, the ginkgo crest of Nakamura-za, one of three leading kabuki theaters in Edo, had been chosen instead of the theater's earlier crane-shaped crest when a daughter of Shogun Tsunayoshi was named Tsuruhime, Princess Crane (1677-1704).⁹⁹ This crest can also be seen on another print

⁹⁸ Smithsonian Institution website:
http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/professional_development/conference/2009/climate_change/ginkgo.html

⁹⁹ Samuel Leiter, *Historical dictionary of Japanese Traditional Theater*, Chronology, XXIV

in the exhibition, *Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling opening of the three kabuki theaters in Saruwaka-chō* by Utagawa Kunitaru II.

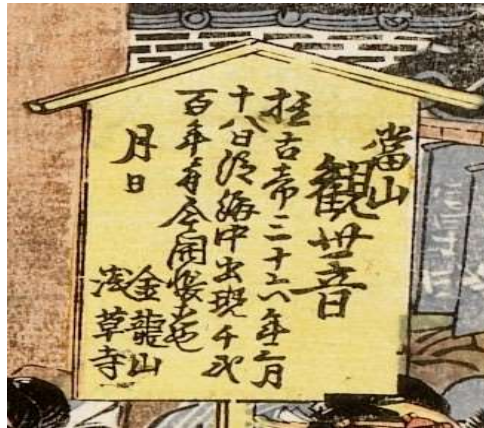


The two side lanterns or *chochins* are identical, each with two lines of texts. On the right is [諸商運中(商運 ⇒ しょううん)] which translates to “among various fortunes of business.” Its purpose is to wish good luck or fortune to the incoming merchants who came to pray. In addition, this blessing was placed visibly on the big *chochins* in order to attract more visitors to worship and give offerings, which accounted for the majority of the income for Sensoji. The “easy path” to reach the compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas includes “reciting the name of, meditating about, and making offerings to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva,” to whom Asakusa Sensoji temple was dedicated and who was one of the most popular Buddhist deities throughout Japanese history.¹⁰⁰ On the same lanterns the left vertical line reads [百万遍講中]: Hyakumanben – praying million times; million times, 講中 - こうじゅう – religious association. It was a religious association of giving one million prayers. Commoners believed that saying an incantation a million times was the shortcut to reincarnating into a Buddha and having unlimited life beyond death.

Pacing through dense gatherings of people in front of the gate, there is one more inscription that is essential for the understanding of the entire composition –

¹⁰⁰ Nam-lin Hur, “Buddhist Culture of Asakusa Kannon in Edo,” *Asia Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 1995): 15-28, www.jstor.org/stable/43105704

it is the wooden announcement board standing in the right part of this print. All the words on it can be translated to:



Announcement of *kaicho* - unveiling of the temple's "secret image" – is a usual donation hidden from the eyes of the believers in a special container. From Keisai Eisen's triptych of Asakusa Sensoji readings:

This temple's Kanzeon (Bodhisattva of Mercy, usually Kannon) appeared from the sea on the 18th day of the 3rd month of 36th year (628) of the era of Empress Suiko (554-628), and now its being a thousand and two hundred years (since then) - the figure is open and can be seen. Month, day Kinryuzan, Sensoji (Asakusa)

Kanzeon mentioned on the announcement board refers to the statue of Asakusa Kannon which is the origin of Sensoji Temple. The statue's legacy influenced and determined the proper growth of Sensoji and its surroundings. Kannon, derived from Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva in original Buddhism, is the god of compassion. In Chinese and Japanese translation, the name stands for "the one who perceives the sound of the world", making the Kanzeon the perfect god to pray to in Buddhism practice. However, what really kept drawing people to Sensoji was the historical background and accumulated cultural significance of the Asakusa Kannon statue. As the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo, "Senso-ji originated with a castaway statue netted by two fisherman brothers while fishing

in what is now called the Sumida River.”¹⁰¹ The statue showed miraculous power, so the brothers brought it to the head of the fishermen’s village, who recognized it as an image of Kannon, the Buddhist deity of compassion for human suffering, and enshrined it in his home. The village built a temple for it which later became the Sensoji temple. Later, it was hidden by a monk and kept hidden for over a thousand years. Taking the statue out of secrecy and showing it to the public prayers and temple visitors can be interpreted as a form of promotion to attract more visitors, prayers, merchants, and businesses. The *kaicho* advertised on this board is a momentous event in the life of the temple and essential for image we are looking at. The crowd depicted came to the Asakusa Sensoji temple and filled every inch of the temple grounds exactly because of the extraordinary date - 1200 years after the statue of Kannon had been found! It is indeed a remarkably long time for any tradition to continue but here it also was boosted by the temple authorities for commercial reasons.

With the fact that Sensoji relies mostly on donations, rents from the residents, and businesses around the temple grounds, it is fair to consider the announcement boards and the *chochins* as Sensoji’s effort to engage with the Asakusa community both socially and economically. In return, the temple provides means and places for people to entertain, consume, socialize, and not importantly, to pray.

Talking about commercial aspect in the life of a Buddhist temple, one should pay attention to the writings on shop walls located on the far left side of the print. The sign board says: [御かほの薬おしろい 美艶仙女香 一包價四十八銅 京橋南伝馬町三丁目稲荷新道 坂本氏製] – Great whitening product. *Bien Senjo Ko* – Radiant fragrance of female immortals. Price for one package – 48 bronze coins. Address: Kyobashi Minami Tenma, 3 chome, Inari Shindo; Product of Sakamoto. The Great Whitening powder was a popular cosmetic product at that

¹⁰¹ Sumiko Enbutsu, “Old Asakusa Lives On,” *The Japan Times*, published January 7, 2005, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2005/01/07/travel/old-asakusa-lives-on/#.XcT4B6fMw6U>

time that was promoted throughout different prints by different artists. The same product can be found on another print in this exhibition by the same artist, *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera*.¹⁰² The true-to-life portrayal of the product in prints shows the influence of merchants and commodity around Sensoji Temple ground. Furthermore, we see how the socio-economic aspect of the Edo society was seamlessly intertwined into art, religion, and entertainment.

The various texts, the cultural connotations behind them, and their social implications together wove the web of the splendid city life of Edo. Even though individual texts led to diversifying connotations and distinct stories in different eras, they all converge to a single commonality, that the city life of Edo could not exist without people's deep faith in religion. Furthermore, Buddhism has largely affected every aspect of the Edo society, including economy, belief system, culture, entertainment, and daily life. Despite the fact that it was built in the past, the story of Asakusa Kannon will never end and will keep affecting the Japanese society today and the entire Buddhist world at large.



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¹⁰² Keisai Eisen's print of Ono no Komachi at Sekidera is discussed by Tracy Shi elsewhere in this book.

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<https://books.google.com/books/about/Hiroshige.html?id=uiI4AQAAIAA>

WRITTEN TEXTS IN LIFE AND IMAGE AT ASAKUSA: WRITING STYLES

Cain Cai, Owen Wang

Coming to a bustling place in a city weaves you into a fabric of urban life. You are in the midst of other townsfolk who, like you, are dressed up for the outing. You are next to interesting, often ornate buildings. The space around you is punctuated with all kinds of writings, big and small, that kindle your curiosity. This is exactly what we see in the anchor piece of this exhibition, the three-panel polychrome woodblock print *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo*, by ukiyo-e artist Keisai Eisen. Also presented in other ukiyo-e prints in the exhibition, writing opens the door to various aspects of culture at Asakusa, the location of Edo's most venerable temple and a major entertainment site.

Inscriptions of various scales and styles vie for onlookers' attention, competing with every other visual element. Most obviously, all the writings are directly facing the viewers despite different perspectives implied by their placement. These inscriptions set up a stage that welcomes the viewers. Inscriptions can be divided into two groups: writings on physical objects and essential inscriptions on the print itself. The first group includes all the texts on the lanterns, three characters on the plaque at the central crossbar of the gate, words on the yellow announcement board at the bottom right, and the shop signs on both middle right and left. Essential inscriptions on the print itself are the title on the top right and Eisen's signature on the bottom left (Fig. 1).

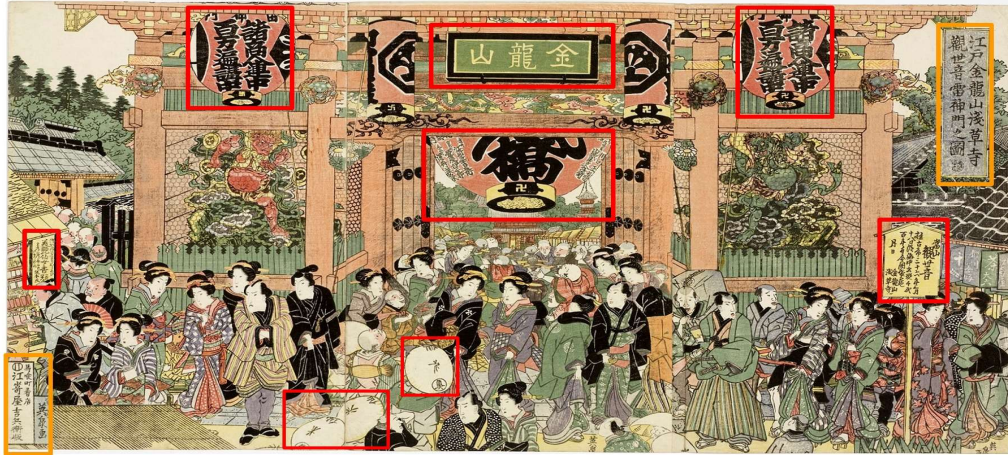


Figure 1. Keisai Eisen, *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo*, ca. 1828

Calligraphy is a powerful element in every ukiyo-e print. It gives viewers valuable information and adds to the linear richness of the image. By studying different styles of graphics and rules of calligraphy in prints, one can better understand the story represented in the image and grasp the intended interpretation of the layers of meaning. At first glance at the Eisen's triptych, the viewer appreciates the energetic movement of all the calligraphic lines, which adds another level of complexity to the already dense composition. Representation of the Edo crowd was one of the main themes in this print, and calligraphy plays an important role in it.

Different styles of the writings will be introduced and analyzed in the order of noticeability, which is *kaisho* (楷書) – regular, *edomoji* (江戸文字) – Edo-period writing used in advertising, *reisho* (隷書) – clerical, formal, *gyosho* (行書) – semi-cursive, *sosho* (草書) – cursive and *tensho* (篆書) – seal script, ancient script (Figs. 2, 3)



Figure 2. Examples of *sosho*, *gyosho*, *kaisho*, *reisho* (clerical) and *tensho* (seal) from left to right.¹⁰³



Fig. 3. Different types of *Edo-moji*¹⁰⁴

In the end, Keisai Eisen's other print in the exhibition, *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera*, will be considered. Consistently, various examples will be mentioned for comparison and further discussion on calligraphy. Japanese calligraphy originally derived from China. The term *shodo* (書道) – 'the way of writing'¹⁰⁵ was used in ancient China to describe the art of Chinese calligraphy.¹⁰⁶

Most small-sized writings in this print are in *kaisho*, also known as the block style or the regular style. Introduced from China, *kaisho*'s preciseness and rigidity makes it the most legible style of all (Fig. 4).

¹⁰³ Image source: Styles of Calligraphy, 2019, Photography.

<http://nanraestudio.com/calligraphyclass.html>

¹⁰⁴ Image source: Tideng, 2017, Photography.

¹⁰⁵ "Japanese Calligraphy: The Art of Shodo," Invaluable, November, Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/japanese-calligraphy/>

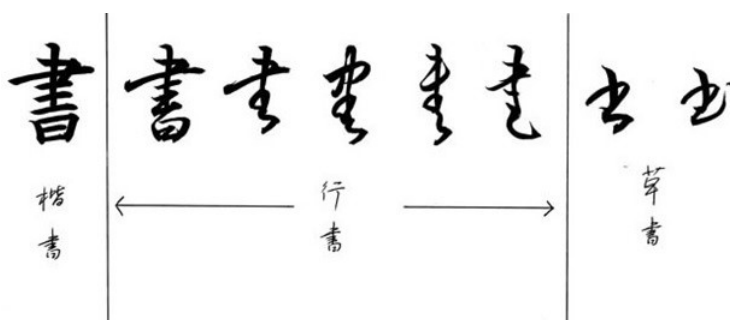
¹⁰⁶ "Shodo and Chinese Calligraphy." Vincent's Calligraphy. November. Accessed November 14, 2019. <http://www.vincentpoon.com/shodo-and-calligraphy.html>



Figure 4. *Kaisho* - regular script.¹⁰⁷

The following writings on Eisen's triptych are done in a similar *kaisho* style: inscriptions in rectangular cartouches communicating information about the print itself and two announcements pertinent to the content of the print.

Let's begin with rectangular frames containing the print's title on the top right of the triptych and the name and address of the publishing company at the bottom left. *Kaisho* script is also used for the yellow announcement board in the middle of the right panel and for the shop sign at the edge of the left panel. That is the basic *kaisho* with a little "embellishment" of *gyosho*, which is a style of calligraphy that is based on *kaisho* but has a sense of fluidity, and freedom shown by the connection between strokes.¹⁰⁸



¹⁰⁷ Jiaoyu Xiaowangzi. *Kaishu*, 2019, Photograph, Shangcheng Museum in Yanshi, Henan.

https://k.sina.com.cn/article_6813041014_19616c17600100pxtb.html?from=cul

¹⁰⁸ "Japanese Calligraphy: The Art of Shodo," Invaluable, November, Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/japanese-calligraphy/>

Figure 5. Transition from *kaisho* to *gyosho* and then to *sosho*, from left to right.¹⁰⁹

One example of the minimal presence of *gyosho* is the character “音” in the title at the top right. The finish of the left stroke is the starting of the stroke on its right. There are only a couple cases of this kind of “embellishment” in the print, and it adds a lot of movement while still keeping a high level of legibility (Figs. 6, 7).

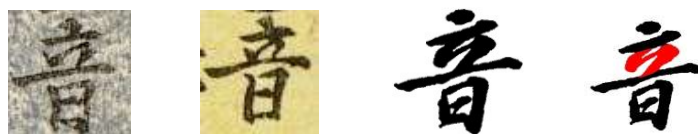


Figure 6. Character “音” from the print’s title and the announcement board.
Gyosho elements present in *kaisho* text.

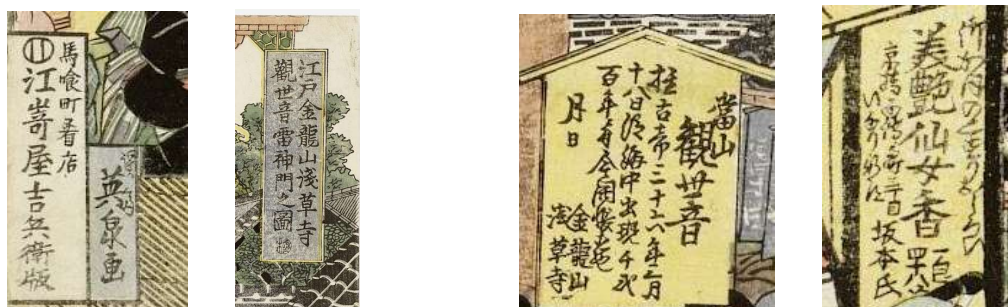


Figure 7. The *kaisho* style in the print The basic *kaisho* with a little “embellishment” of *gyosho* in the print

While every character in the print’s title is standing elegantly and aligns consistently within the box, there is one character that stylistically doesn’t align with the rest. This is the censorship seal derived from the oldest style of writing that was commonly used for seal script, *tensho*.¹¹⁰ (Fig. 8).

¹⁰⁹ Jay, Good Calligraphy, September 15, 2018, Photograph.
<https://orientalsouls.com/blog/japanese-calligraphy/what-make-good-calligraphy-good-judging-the-beauty-of-shodo-japanese-calligraphy/>

¹¹⁰ “Japanese Calligraphy: The Art of Shodo,” Invaluable, November, Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/japanese-calligraphy/>

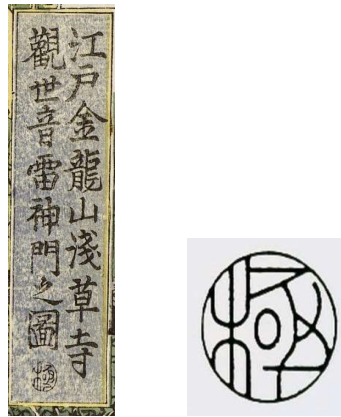


Figure 8. The seal script in *tensho*.

The writing on the red lanterns is probably the element that has the most energy. The contrast of black and red with a solid white stroke in-between and its enormous size scream for viewers' attention. Of course, none of these attention-drawing claims would be possible if not for the “crazy” calligraphy--*edomoji*, a style that developed for advertising in the Edo Period.¹¹¹ Advertising makes sense in this scenario because the Kinryuzan Sensoji temple was more a place of concourse, seeking to attract people rather than a purely Buddhist temple. There are several slightly different styles classified under *edomoji*. The style shown on the print is *chochinmoji*, a style that is designed for *chochin* (hanging paper lanterns).¹¹² (Fig. 9). On the real physical lantern though, the style looks a little like *higemoji* since there are “whiskers” that mimic dry brush strokes on the characters (Fig. 10). The tiny writings on the adjacent lanterns are in bold *kaisho*, which thickens the strokes and make them match the chunky *edomoji*.



¹¹¹ “History of Edo moji.” Edomoji. Accessed November 14, 2019.

<https://edomoji.com/history>

¹¹² Sljfaq. “What are the different styles of Japanese lettering?” Edomoji. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.sljfaq.org/afaq/edomoji.html>

Figure 9. *Edomoji* on *chochin* lanterns in Keisai Eisen's triptych



Figure 10. Edomoji of “whisker’s style” - *higemoji*, from the Treasure Gate, Hozomon, at present.

Although gigantic *edomoji* are eye-catching, they still cannot top the list of the most conspicuous written elements. The first thing viewers’ eyes will go to are three gold characters in the middle of the horizontal part of the gates. It says “Kinryuzan”. First of all, it is the only writing that is not black. Secondly, the overall composition of the print is smartly designed so that the *edomoji* that surround the gate can balance each other out. Thirdly, the perspective and the architecture create lines pointing to the plaque and creating concentric rectangles around it. Lastly, it has a unique style. The strokes and the main structure of the characters look like those of *kaisho*. However, none of the horizontal strokes are tilted like all *kaisho* characters. The uprightness plus the shape of the bottom horizontal stroke of the right character look like the clerical style *reisho*, which is an archaic style of Chinese calligraphy.¹¹³ This combination *kaisho* and clerical style has a sturdy and calm sensitivity which works perfectly well at the center the print (Fig. 11).

¹¹³ “Origin and Development of Categories of Calligraphy and Appreciation and Analysis of Calligraphy.” Ink and Brush in High Spirit: For the Soul and Script. Accessed November 14, 2019. https://www.cityu.edu.hk/lib/about/event/ch_calligraphy/clerical_eng.htm

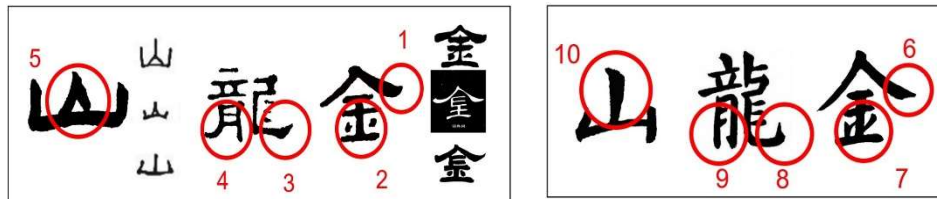


Figure 11. Compare pairs of *reisho* elements (left) and *kaisho* elements (right), Nos. 1 and 6, 2 and 7, 3 and 8, 4 and 9, 5 and 6.

Another style of calligraphy, *sosho*, exists in one place in the print. *Sosho* is the cursive style that seeks to express the movement of grass blown by the wind.¹¹⁴ The signboard for the whitening powder called “Bi-en Senjo Ko” - “radiant fragrance for female immortals” sold in a stall at the left edge of the scene is mostly written in *kaisho*. However, the smaller writings on the right side are done in *sosho* (Fig. 12). This part is almost illegible. In fact, only the people who practice *sosho* can read it. The point with *sosho* is never about legibility but about expressing feelings, which can be a clever approach to advertising.¹¹⁵

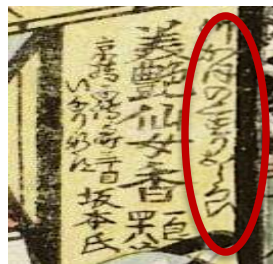


Figure 12. *Sosho* on the cosmetic shop sign.

¹¹⁴ “Japanese Calligraphy: The Art of Shodo,” Invaluable, November, Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/japanese-calligraphy/>

¹¹⁵ Martinez, Esteban. “Shodō Writing Styles.” Gohitsu Shodo Studio. July 21. Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.gohitsushodostudio.com/shodo-writing-styles/>

The same characters for the whitening powder “Bi-en Senjo Ko” are also shown in Keisai Eisen’s other print in the exhibition, *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* (Fig. 13). Consistently, the name of this product is written in *kaisho*. However, calligraphy, in general, plays a very different role in this print. While in Keisai Eisen’s triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo* discussed above various writing styles serve as a tool to communicate information besides their pure graphical function, in *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* the writings render sensitivity of the Heian period (8-12cc.) poetess and convey her emotions. The script of the title on the print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* resembles the *gyosho* style even more than in the title of the triptych. This can be proven by the increase in fluidity, sense of connection and contrast between thick and thin lines. Furthermore, the fact that this is white writing on a black background and that these writings look as if they were hewn in stone with a wedge-like quality suggest a reference to stone rubbings. Carving inscriptions on stone was a common way to preserve the history and culture in ancient China and Japan before the time when woodblock printing became widely used.¹¹⁶ Rubbing was the method of copying inscriptions from the stones. This adds an ancient and venerable feel to the script of the title. The same can be said about as the signature of Keisai Eisen in the middle left.

¹¹⁶ “What is a rubbing?” Berkeley. Accessed November 14, 2019.

<https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EAL/stone/rubbings.html>



Figure 13. Keisai Eisen. *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera*, ca. 1825.
RISD, Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1386

The poem in the blank background is in *soso* style. The poetic line “Years, please accumulate and pass me by, even if I cease someday”¹¹⁷ in the rhythmical floating of the calligraphy cooperates perfectly with the linework and echoes the leaves on the garment. It creates an air of ethereal sensitivity that sets off the modern version of Komachi’s beauty, quite corporeal and interested in age-defying cosmetic products.

There are many more well-planned details and thematic cross-references that slow the viewers’ eyes down and deepen the content of the image. One such case is related to calligraphy. In the small picture inset *koma-e* next to the print’s title there is a figure of aging poetess. Close to her, hidden among the chorographical lines of the grass, there is a character that looks like the character 寿 (longevity), but not exactly (Fig. 14).

¹¹⁷ Translated by Tracy Shi. For detailed discussion of Keisai Eisen’s print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* see the essay by Tracy Shi in this book.

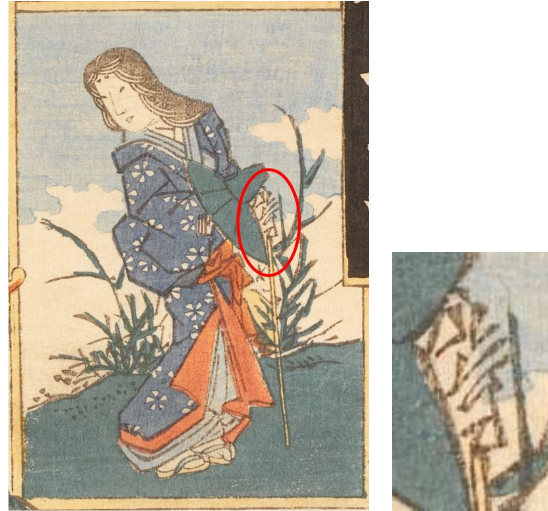


Figure 14. *Koma-e* – the inset in Keisai Eisen’s print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* with the hidden character marked.



Figure 15. *Gyosho* versions of character “寿.”

The bottom part of the character in the print resembles an abbreviated version on the chart (Fig. 15). The top half really does not look like that of the character 寿. Since all other characters in this print are written in such a clear manner regardless of the styles, one assumption is that this character is meant to not be easily recognized. This proposition is also proven by how the character is so close to both the hat of Ono no Komachi and the grass that it looks like a blade of grass or an insect.

Both of these works by Keisai Eisen stylishly weave writing into their compositions, creating a tapestry as vibrant as the crowd in front of Asakusa Sensoji temple.

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PART THREE: SECULAR SETTING AT THE TEMPLE



Katsukawa Shunzan, active ca. 1778-1790s

Visitors at a Temple Gate (Niomon), ca. 1790. Publisher: Nishimuraya Yohachi,

Polychrome woodblock print. 37.2 x 25.1 cm (14 5/8 x 9 7/8 inches).

RISD, Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1130

ASSERTION AND REPRESENTATION OF BEAUTY

IN THE CROWD OF EDO

– Barbara Bieniek, Olivia Diamond

In Keisai Eisen's woodcut triptych-- *At the Thunder Gate of Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa*, each component reveals intimate details into the culture and lives existing in Edo period Japan. This composition exposes the microeconomics and social structures that occurred within the daily lives of the people of Asakusa. Each component of the triptych engages with history and contemporaneous culture of the Edo period, informing a modern understanding of the styles and fashions of the time. In this triptych, the crowd of people represents a striking accumulation of textiles and white faces, men and women alike. All of these subjects are engaged in a variety of actions, yet their overall presentation only differs slightly. The crowd at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple are gathered for a religious occasion - opening for viewing of the temple's hidden Buddhist image of Kannon Bosatsu, Bodhisattva of Mercy. The life-like representation of the crowd is achieved by combining two aspects: some people are shown parallel to the picture plane and some appear perpendicular to it. Those individuals that are portrayed parallel to the picture plane have their features characterized in considerable detail. There are about thirty of them, both men and women, and the viewer can easily see their facial features, hairdos with adornments, and often complex attire. Specifically, at the center of the crowd in the central sheet of the print stand two women both draped in textiles, one black and one purple. Both of these women have whitened complexions and blackened teeth. Yet this aesthetic is not exclusively sported by these women and can be seen present on multiple figures throughout the crowd, men and women alike (Fig. 1). On the right sheet of the print, a samurai with two swords in the foreground of the picture plane is depicted with the same white complexion and blackened teeth such as the women in the center. Furthermore, the two women to the right of the samurai and a man carrying a box behind him all exemplify the same contrasted style. On the left sheet of the print stands presumably a Kabuki actor and three women to the left of him who are all additionally rendered with white faces and

black teeth. The presence of these people among the crowd is a commonality that suggests all of these people have applied cosmetics prior to going out.

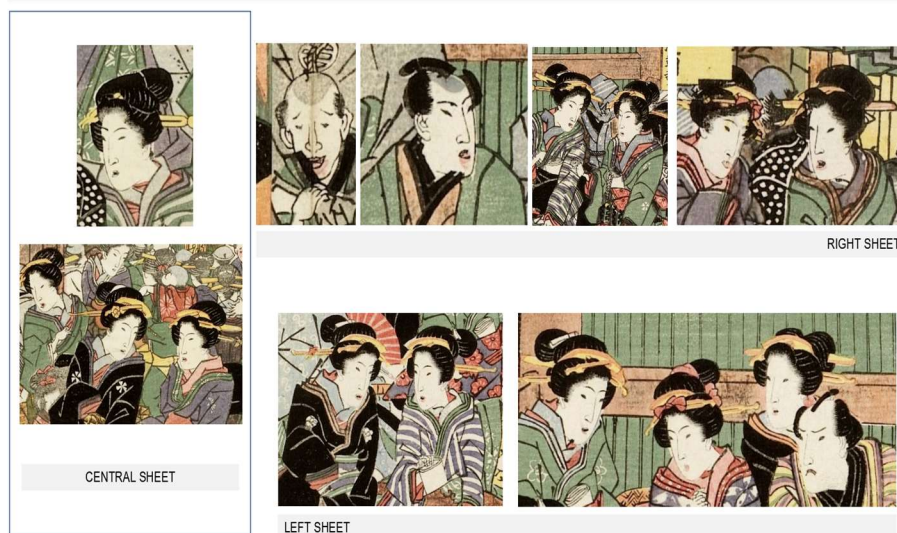


Figure 1. People with blackened teeth in Keisai Eisen's triptych *At the Thunder Gate of the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa*.

As can be seen in the print, some men have fully covered their faces in white powder while others still maintain rosy cheeks. These men with unequal complexion are seen amassed together on the left side of the print, shown bursting with energy and excitement. Their hasty excitement is directed towards a small kiosk on the left edge of the print where a vendor is selling the acclaimed face whitening powder and toothpicks (Fig. 2). Both of these commodities were highly sought after as a result of their symbol in society signifying keeping up with the trends of the time. The standards of beauty were represented in multiple forms during the Edo period and may be considered rooted in the Heian period (8th - 12th cc.).

The presence of a busy cosmetic stall in a panoramic view of the approaches to the temple grounds testifies to the importance of these products for the Edo period townsfolk and to the significance attached to the advertisement of such products by the print designer, Keisai Eisen. The advertisement board at the stall praises the merits of the particular whitening powder produced by Sakamoto

and sold there.¹¹⁸ Thus, the triptych allows us a glimpse not only of wearing cosmetics and dental products but of a preceding stage, acquisition of those products. As we will further see, Keisai Eisei included advertisement of this whitening powder in his other prints.



Figure 2. Keisai Eisen, *At the Kaminari Gate of Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa*, detail. Cosmetic stall advertising the whitening powder *Bien Senjo Ko* by Sakomoto.

An example of the popularity of the dental and small related products is included the print by Torii Kiyonaga, of the famous sales girl Ofuji, illustrated in a toothpick shop called *Yanagiya*, located in the inner precincts of the Sensoji Temple in the Okuyama (Fig.3). The print is derived from a series of *Ten Scenes around Kinryuzan Temple, Asakusa* ca. 1783. Kiyonaga dominated the ukiyo-e arts in the 1780's, as a print designer, painter and illustrator, creating up to a thousand works, in the *bijinga* genre. True introduction to the intimate aspects of female lifestyle, including practices of make-up, occurred in the art of Kitigawa

¹¹⁸ For discussion of inscriptions in the prints see papers *Written Texts in Life and Image at Asakusa* (1 and 2) by Yuki Xu, Xiaoben Wang, Yinan Yang and Cain Cai, Owen Wang

Utamaro, a culminating figure of *bijnga* genre in the last decade of the 18th century, who is described as one of the greatest masters of femininity. The artist started designing close-up headshots that comprised the head and the shoulders: *okubi-e*. *Okubi-e* allowed the portrayal and representation of beauty features, such as make-up, skin care and hair care, as details became more pronounced in a woodcut, due to the close-up format. The women represented by Utamaro, were described as the ideals, and all the characters he depicted were tall, slender and beautiful, which set the tone for women to aspire to achieve the existing standard of beauty.

Another example of the dedication to upkeep social beauty standards is the print by Keisai Eisen, titled: *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera*, ca. 1825 (Fig.4). The print illustrates a young fashionable contemporary beauty who is applying whitening powder to her neck. The composition contains visual reference to this product - in the ajar drawer of the woman's cosmetic stand there is a pile of envelopes, the upper one inscribed with the name of the powder of the leading brand, *Bien Senjo Ko*, which translates to: "radiant fragrance of female immortals."¹¹⁹

Above the woman's left shoulder there is a picture inset that represents the 10th century Heian period poet Ono no Komachi, famous both for her unparalleled beauty and equally remarkable lyrical gift. This inset refers to one of seven Noh Theater plays of the cycle dedicated to Ono no Komachi. These seven plays became known as *Nana Komachi*. This group of plays gained immense popularity and became a subject matter of countless images referring the story directly or indirectly. In the print by Keisai Eisen considered here a clue to understanding of the image is given in a poem inscribed on the blank background of the print. The poem contains Ono no Komachi's wish to defy aging and thus to avoid ruin of her beauty.¹²⁰ This message of the print suggests the miraculous

¹¹⁹ Ellis Tinios, "The Fragrance of Female Immortals: Celebrity Endorsement from the Afterlife," *Impressions*, No. 27 (2005-2006): 43

¹²⁰ For the detailed discussion of the imagery in this print see paper *Keisai Eisen's Ono no Komachi: Edo Cosmetics for Heian Unmatched Beauty* by Tracy Shi in the current book.

properties of the whitening powder that can preserve feminine beauty from fading away.



Figure 4. Keisai Eisen. Seven Stories of Poetess Ono no Komachi in Modern Style. Ono no Komachi at Temple Sekidera, ca. 1825. RISD.¹²¹

With the rise of commerce in Edo, the efficiency of sharing information through prints, encouraged the use of advertisement. Keisai Eisen, a prolific and versatile ukiyo-e print designer, book illustrator, and painter, made a significant contribution to the *bijinga* genre, particularly in 1820s and after. With equal skill and touch of irony he portrayed large groups of people and a solitary figure of a courtesan, readily bringing together multiple visual references as exemplified by both of his prints in the exhibition. For instance, in the case of fig.4, Keisai Eisen depicts a young girl, who he compares with the famous beauty Ono no Komachi (10th century), a figure synonymous with the idea of beauty and elegance. In this print a large-scale modern beauty is seated on the floor of a room, wearing an intricate hairstyle, and kimono constructed of exquisite textiles. The beauty is seated in front of the cosmetic stand, open to expose its contents to the viewer, and reveal hidden cosmetic packages that are made visible as an advertisement for

¹²¹ For detailed discussion see essay by Tracy Shi in this book.

the leading brand of whitening powder, Bien Senjo Ko. The advertisement is obviously encouraging viewers to purchase the famous whitening product: *oshiroi powder*, as in order to cultivate an image of oneself within the everyday perception, women conformed to select “mandatory” practices.

Face whitening powder, known as *oshiroi*, is seen being worn by almost by every character in the Keisei Eisen triptych, indicating that it was the most pronounced trend of the time. Due to its prevailing popularity within the affluent townspeople and the fact that it provided immediate and recognizable characteristics to the person wearing the powder, this practice reached masses. *Oshiroi* came in a variety of forms including cake, powder, liquid, and paste.¹²² A heavier form of liquid whitening, *oshiroi-bana*, made from the seeds of the jalap plant, and the most long lasting and most effective of the treatments contained white lead to preserve the whiteness. From the early beginnings of *oshiroi*, it had already become vastly popular among the dwellers of Edo period Japan (1603 – 1868), dating back to the Nara Period (710–94). The white coating neutralized shadows and flattened the face into which the features could be repainted on top to accentuate beauty. Beyond a public display of identity, face whitening served to distinguish faces often obscured by the dim light of Japanese homes. Though this practice was utilized by both genders, women were expected to wear makeup on their faces from morning to night. This custom was to be practiced in private which was considered good etiquette.¹²³ Not only were women expected to have their faces completely covered with *oshiroi*, but their ears, chest, and napes of their necks as well.¹²⁴

The nape of the neck was considered a highly erotic area beholding feminine charm that was just as important as a woman’s face.¹²⁵ The importance

¹²² Edna S. Levine and William Green, "The Cosmetic Mystique of Old Japan," Impressions, No. 4 (WINTER/SPRING 1980). Unpaginated [1-5]. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42597595>.

¹²³ The Fair Face of Japanese Beauty. Nippon.com, 2013

<https://www.nippon.com/en/views/b02602/the-fair-face-of-japanese-beauty.html>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ellis Tinios, "The Fragrance of Female Immortals: Celebrity Endorsement from the Afterlife," 46

attached to the areas on the backs of women's necks was exemplified by the ranging fashions in neck makeup. Many of the pronged designs were used to distinguish between different ranks of professional entertainers. The print shows a young woman applying *oshiroi* to the back of her neck, such was customary of women of Komachi's stature. Originally *oshiroi* symbolized an elevated class, representative of a person who did not have to work in the sun and lived in luxury, shielded from the harsher facts of life.¹²⁶ The usage of *oshiroi* is believed to have started among those who held an elevated social position, the tradition of teeth blackening, *ohaguro*, was known to have been a custom among common people before reaching court circles.¹²⁷ Yet, dating back to the 12th century *ohaguro* served as a sign of elegant refinement practiced by the upper classes who are said to have originally mocked it. Courtliness, however, was not the only interpretation of the meaning of *ohaguro*. There is also the opinion that loyalty was the utmost rationale behind many of those who practiced the custom. Among military classes, men who blackened their teeth provided utmost loyalty to their lords. Within the upper classes, boys blacken their teeth as signification of their transition to manhood. Among women in such social structures, *ohaguro* represented being faithful to her husband or fidelity to her deceased husband.¹²⁸ For girls, this also defined a coming of age. The most common purpose of this practice among women was to signify marriage. It is important to not overlook the aesthetic aspect of this custom - the stark contrast of the brightly whitened face and glistening freshly blackened teeth. Still another aspect of teeth-blackening practice in Japan is that it prevented tooth decay in a way similar to modern-day dental sealants.¹²⁹ Thus, this tradition had multiple dimensions: its primary purpose was cosmetics and beautification; but it acted as a social signifier of reaching adulthood or getting married; while also serving as a practical purpose of hygiene.

¹²⁶ Levine, Green, "The Cosmetic Mystique of Old Japan"

¹²⁷ Ibid., 3

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Nikhil Marwah, *Textbook of Pediatric Dentistry* (New Dehli: Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers, 2019), 1015

While *ohaguro* represented a woman getting married, the shaving of one's eyebrows signified the birth of a child. The fashion of the time was characterized by an excessively heavy brow arched over the eyes. This thickness was achieved by painting the brows a heavy black with a mixture of lampblack, sesame or rapeseed oil, and some glue. Over time this trend transitioned from heavy brows to delicately arched, very narrow brows that were introduced to people concerned with sophistication.¹³⁰ This represented a look of refinement that complemented the elegance of their stark white faces. Painted like small black bars high up on the forehead, this gave men and women an elevated, superior look such as they aspired. Some also preferred no replacement and left the brow area hairless, but ultimately the constructed and painted brow communicated that he or she belonged to the upper class and are abiding by the stringent beauty standards of the time.

In addition to white faces and black teeth and brows, women occasionally added red to their lips and cheeks to represent a fresh body pulsing with life. Red, white, and black were the main colors used in makeup and extended beyond women and court circles to Kabuki theatre actors. Both *ohaguro* and eyebrow removal became officially unfashionable in court circles in the early years of the Meiji era (1868-1912), around 1870, when the Empress at the time announced that she would leave her teeth and eyebrows "as nature intended" and so became the ensuing style. It was then that other hues were introduced into makeup trends by western cultural influence.

Moreover, attention to teeth became recognized with the spread of Buddhism in the Heian period. The trend of tooth care became popularized among the court aristocracy, military commanders and priests, with the use of toothpicks. This concept however did not become a familiar practice among common people until the middle of the Edo period. Such toothpicks were called *fusayouji* and appeared on the market along with tooth powder. *Fusayouji* picks were carved

¹³⁰ Levine, Green, "The Cosmetic Mystique of Old Japan"

from willow or spicebush, and later one end of the pick was compressed with hammer, and sliced with several needles to create threads, to optimize cleaning.¹³¹

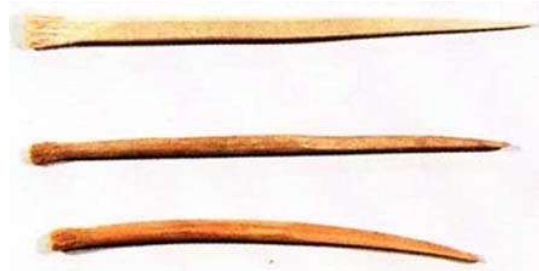


Figure 5. Torii Kiyonaga, Yanagia cosmetic shop, detail. Tufted toothpicks *fusayoji*¹³²

The preliminary form of tooth powder consisted of baked salt or rice bran, until the merchant Cyojiya Kizaemon followed a Korean recipe to prepare the later leading powder of Edo period. The high-end version of the powder was flavored and included a rouge tint, which became the specialty of Edo.¹³³



Figures 6 & 7. Utagawa Kunisada. *The Capable Type* (Seji ga yosasō), from the series *Thirty-two Physiognomic Types in the Modern World* (Tōsei sanjūni sō).¹ Woman applying a tufted toothpick



Totoya Hokkei (1780–1850) *The Willow Shop* (Yanagiya), from the series *A Series of Willows* (Yanagiban tsuzuki) Ca. 1828 (Bunsei11)¹. Woman working in willow shop, in process of making tweezers (?).

¹³¹ <https://www.dent-kng.or.jp/museum/en/hanohaku02/>

¹³² <https://edo-g.com/blog/2016/01/tooth.html>

¹³³ <https://www.dent-kng.or.jp/museum/en/hanohaku12/>

The beauty standards of Edo Japan were continuously promoted through ukiyo-e prints, as those reflected the daily culture of Edo. When Suzuki Harunobu created the first multicolored prints that served as *e-goyomi*, picture calendars, the prospect of the print potential became apparent. Due to the nature of ukiyo-e woodblock prints and the mass production capability of the prints, they could circulate widely among the population. Thus, the concept of advertisement arose and found its way into ukiyo-e prints, openly and clandestinely. Since then, ukiyo-e prints reflected the mainstream culture of Edo. Maintaining beauty standards became so deeply embedded in the everyday culture, that artists such as Torii Kiyonaga and Keisai Eisen, both leading representatives of ukiyo-e, chose to document the phenomenon in their prints.

Based on the prints presented, it can be observed that assertion of beauty was integral to social customs of Edo period, these standards included whitening of faces, application of rouge, drawing eyebrows and blackening teeth. As presented in Keisai Eisens's triptych *At the Raijin Gate of the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa*, cosmetic use was deeply embedded into the societal norms, and upheld by both men and women, who wanted to be perceived in a certain way, asserting class within social structure. Furthermore, the prevalence of painted complexions within the triptych is an observation which corresponds to the need of people in the crowd to present themselves in the best possible way. This was a way to conform to the occasion, such as visiting the most esteemed Edo temple, Asakusa Sensoji, whether on a regular basis or for the temporary demonstration of the hidden treasure; Asakusa Kannon, Bodhisattva of Mercy. Considered as special occasion, this was a spiritual opportunity to address the deity with prayers. In addition, the triptych documents the presence of advertisement and vendor stalls, further emphasizing the prevalence of such products in commonplaces, due to the fact of the conscious choice of artist to depict it in the mass-produced medium of a woodcut.

As can be seen in the print depicting the famous sales girl Ofuji by Torii Kiyonaga, not only the use of products was documented, but the sale and

manufacturing of products was just as meaningful. Creating and acquiring these products was an inseparable part of usage of those beauty tools. The interpretation of beauty standards within Edo period and investigation of relevant prints for the exhibition lead us to discover the immense impact of these products upon the subject matter of ukiyo-e and how popular the theme of hygiene and cosmetics was in woodblock, spanning multiple artists and styles.

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Keisai Eisen, 1790-1848

Poetess Ono no Komachi at Sekidera, ca. 1825

Print series: *Seven stories of Poetess Ono no Komachi in Modern Style*
(Imayo nana Komachi). Publisher: Sanoya Kihei

Polychrome woodblock print, 36.8 x 25.2 cm (14 1/2 x 9 7/8 inches)

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1386

KEISAI EISEN'S ONO NO KOMACHI –

EDO COSMETICS FOR HEIAN UNMATCHED BEAUTY

– Tracy Shi

Poetess Komachi at Sekidera Temple – *Nana Komachi, Sekidera Gomachi*

This gorgeous print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera*, created by Keisai Eisen, is one of the few that survived from Keisai Eisen's series of Stories of the Seven Komachi in Modern Style (*Imayo nana Komachi*).

A young beauty is shown seated in front of her black lacquer dressing cabinet, gently applying whitening powder on to her neck with a piece of fabric or tissue. As titled, this young beauty would most likely be the famous early Heian period poetess, Ono no Komachi. From the opened drawer, the brand name of the whitening powder is slightly revealed as “Bien Senjoko,” which was one of the most famous make-up brands in Edo Period Japan. This youthful beauty is dressed in a grayish cobalt blue kimono with supple sepia bamboo patterns and scattered white dandelion flower patterns. Her inner garment is a pastel blue dyed with angular pattern of *sayagata* (紗綾形) or *manji-kuzushi* (卍崩). Around her sleeve openings *sodeguchi* (袖口), the collar *eri* (襟) and kimono hem *fuki* (裾) is a teal green colored fabric with camellia flowers *tsubaki* (椿) flowers. Her ornate sash *obi* (帯) is decorated with wave pattern *hamon* (波紋) and birds of paradise *kalavinka* - *karyoubinga* in Japanese (迦陵頻伽) on fabric of vivid teal and cherry color. The enlarged size of her obi, the stretched length of the bodice *migoro* (身頃) and below the arm-hole sleeve *furi* (振り) are all typical of mid- and late-Edo period tastes that highlight luxuriousness and elegance. In the background is an inscription of a Japanese poem *waka* (和歌) by Ono no Komachi and an inset picture *koma-e* (コマ絵), which is usually a tiny explanatory illustration, providing a reference to the actual story of Poetess Komachi at Sekidera Temple and titled in Japanese *Sekidera Komachi* (関寺小町).

The name of the series *Stories of the Seven Komachi in Modern Style* (*Imayo nana Komachi*) is taken from a series of Noh theater plays *Nana Komachi* (七小

町)by a famous writer Zeami (1363-1443). *Nana Komachi* simply means “seven occasions of life of Ono no Komachi” since Zeami was inspired by the legendary life story and tales of Komachi, the legendary Heian period poetess known also for her remarkable beauty. “Imayo” means in Japanese “contemporary,” “popular,” or “fashionable.” By combining “Imayo” with “Nana Komachi,” Keisai Eisen attempts to portray Ono no Komachi in the fashionable style of the Edo period as if Komachi lives in Edo times.

The tiny illustration, *koma-e*, portraying the story of *Sekidera Komachi*, tells the story of a monk from temple Seki (which is “Sekidera” in Japanese) coming to visit the secluded hut *iori* (庵) of an old lady who is said to be proficient at Noh. Later, as the story goes, the monk realizes that the old lady is the famous poetess Ono no Komachi. In this story, Komachi as an old lady tells her own legendary life story and compares it with her decline in old age. As she recounts her life, Komachi becomes emotional and is moved by a young child’s ritual dance celebrating the Tanabata festival dedicated to the meeting of two loving stars. Komachi dances as well in poignant reminiscence.

The inscribed poem by Ono no Komachi is relevant to the story of Sekidera Komachi. However, the poem comes directly from another story, also from the series *Nana Komachi* -- from the story named *The Visited Komachi - Kayoi Komachi* (通小町). Keisai Eisen mixes together different elements from *Nana Komachi*, expressing Komachi’s sad old age.

「おもかげの変らで年のつもれかし

よしや命にかぎりありとも」

Omokage no kawara de toshi no tsumore kashi

yoshiya inochi ni kagiri aritomo

—和歌(waka) by Ono Komachi.

The poem could be translated as: “Wish my beauty would never change [or fade, would last still forever], and would stay forever young and elegant. Months,

years please accumulate and pass me by, even if I cease someday” (or “even if there is a limit to my life”).

All people age as they live year after year. However, Ono no Komachi expresses her little willfulness through her poem: “I don’t need to be aged, and never want to be aged-looking and ugly,” “Even my life comes to an end, I would die with my face still youthful and beautiful.”

Komachi’s word choice of “つもれ(tsumore)” is very special. Using the original verb “つもり(tsumori, “to accumulate” in English)” in this very specific tense form —“tsumore” — adds a tough and rather commanding tone. She is commanding to time here: “do fly by fast and I would not be affected.”

As has been said above, the story and Noh play created by Zeami on the basis of this poem also belongs to *Nana Komachi* series. The story is called *A Hundred of Night Visits* (*Momoya gayoi*, 百夜通い) or *Kayoi Komachi* (*The Visited Komachi*, 通小町). There was a major-general called Fukakusa Shousho (深草少将) who was said to be living in Gonjouji Temple (欣浄寺) in Kyoto during the Edo period. Fukakusa Shousho fell in love with Ono Komachi’s beauty, so he showed his love to Ono Komachi continuously. Ono Komachi felt disturbed and troubled by Fukakusa major-general’s pursuing, so she lied trying to send him away — Ono Komachi told him: “If you come to my place for each of one hundred nights, everything will go as you wish” 「私のもとへ百夜通ったなら、あなたの意のままになりましょう」. Even though Ono Komachi was obviously showing a respectful refusal and telling Fukakusa to give up, the infatuated major-general did what Ono Komachi told him to do. At last, unfortunately, he froze to death on the one hundredth night in cold winter. It was said that Ono Komachi sang this beautiful poem in pity for Fukakusa in front of the pond Sugatami no Ike or “Pond for Watching Reflection of Figures or Appearances” (姿見の池) — next to prayer hall - *hondou* (本堂), and her pretty appearance was seen in reflection on the water surface.

Not only does the contrast between the contemporary beauty on the print and an old poetess on the *koma-e* inset work well with illustrating the story itself, this

print also serves as a piece of advertisement. It successfully advertises Sakamoto's make-up shop selling whitening powder "Fragrance of Female Immortals" -- "Bien Senjoko" (美艶仙女香). By comparing the youthful beauty who applies their product and stays young with aged Ono no Komachi, the print persuades the eager customer with the promise of youth. This poem also literally plays the role of advertisement here: "You will likely be unaffected by time and stay beautiful if you use our product."

This sentimental, romantic, and delicate story adds more meaning to this print in combination with the *koma-e*. The vivid youthfulness, healthy and smooth flesh of this young lady (who is supposed to be Ono no Komachi) powerfully contrasts the sorrowful downfall of Ono no Komachi in the legend about the end of her life. Keisai Eisen's subtle manipulations of meanings add emotional delicacy and subtlety to Ono no Komachi's lonely silhouette and her beautiful posture as she puts on white powder make-up.

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CULTURE OF DISPLAY

– FASHION IN DRESS, HAIRSTYLE, FOOTWEAR, AND ACCESSORIES

– Cam Unruh

Keisai Eisen's triptych *Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple in Edo* takes us right to the center of city life - to the Asakusa Sensoji temple complex in Edo (now Tokyo). We, the print viewers, probably also would be there if we lived in Edo (now Tokyo) back then in the first half of the 19th century. And in 1827 we certainly would have found a moment to attend the major event known as *kaichō* - demonstration of the temple's main relic, the hidden image of Bodhisattva Kannon, revealed temporarily to celebrate the 1200-year anniversary of its discovery.¹³⁴

The entire area within the scope of vision - all space in front of the outer Kaminari Gate, zones to the gate's right and left as well as the long road from the gate further into the temple grounds – every bit of it is thronged by a lively, colorful crowd comprised by thoughtfully attired and coiffured townspeople. Promenading in the city provided an opportunity for everyone to display their status, trend awareness, sophistication, taste and wealth.

Fashion thrived in the streets of Edo, determining at once the overall similarity of garments and hairdos within the gender groups and uniqueness in choices of color and color combinations, patterns and their distribution, types of hair accessories, etc. Fashion is characterized by two essential features - it is at once group based and individual. Humans have a need to be both a member of a group and to distinguish themselves from the group and assert their individuality via personal choices made.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ For a detailed discussion of the *kaicho* please see paper by Val Zhao and Roger Li *Asakusa Spectacle: Ritual, Commerce and Entertainment*, in this book.

¹³⁵ Sheila Cliffe, *The Social Life of Kimono: Japanese Fashion Past and Present* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 9

In the front line of the crowd in Keisai Eisen's print, men and women move with natural ease in different directions along the picture plane. These people are distributed almost evenly across each panel of the triptych, ensuring steady presence of similar clothing types and coiffeurs throughout the composition.

Women are wearing garments called kimono. Kimono is a T-shaped garment, front-closed, left over right, which is held together with a fabric belt *obi*. Kimono developed by the Edo period from a form of an undergarment, *kosode*. The changes to kimono during the Edo period concerned the type of fabric used, technique of decoration, the dyes, and distribution of patterns, but not the cut of the garment itself.

Garments were worn in layers, and layers were made visible at the neck area, the sleeve opening, and at the bottom where the sides of a kimono parted as the person was walking. Though all cases in Keisai Eisen's triptych are different, we see the preference given to contrasting colors between the outer kimono and undergarments. Most often orange hues are peeking from under predominantly green or purple outerwear (Fig. 1). In fabric decoration nature motifs prevail, reflecting Japanese deeply felt connection to nature and seasonal changes. But the particular motifs, their scale and placement reflect individual taste. It is noteworthy that floral designs in most cases are concentrated in the hem area towards the bottom of the kimono (Fig. 2) – perhaps, this fashion developed together with the growing significance of the sash *obi* that was covering the central part of the wearer's figure.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Ibid, 21



Figure 1. Examples of orange hues peeking out from under the green or purple outerwear.



Figure 2. Floral designs concentrated towards the bottom of the kimono.

There are also geometricized patterns of dove-tailing arrows (right panel) and interlocking circles (left panel) covering the entire surface of the kimono – probably this pattern was accomplished by weaving, not printing (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. All-surface covering designs perhaps done by weaving, not printing.



Figure 4. Striped fabric is worn by both men and women.

Fashion for stripes is said to have developed in response to the sumptuary laws introduced by the Tokugawa military government that banned commoners

from the usage of silk and certain types of decoration. Thus, stripes became vogueish as a kind of appreciation for things simple and understated (Fig. 4). More sober and simple designs became considered as the new standard of beauty.¹³⁷ This understated chic is called *iki*, the knowledge of which was highly appreciated in the culture of the floating world.

The printing boom that marks the Edo period is closely related to the matters of fashion. Information about new fabrics and designs was spread through the printed medium. Pattern books, or *hinagatabon*, became highly popular and thus facilitated the development of fashion (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. *Hinagatabon* - a pattern book, Genroku era (1688-1704), the Met.¹³⁸

One specific feature in the kimono cut indicated the age of the wearer – young unmarried women between ages 13 and 18 wore long-sleeved kimono that extended down to the ankle level. Such robes are called *furisode* – “swinging

¹³⁷ Ibid., 35

¹³⁸ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/74132>

sleeve” – and are said to heighten a sense of youthfulness (Fig. 6). *Furisode* usually were ornate and in this print, it is brighter than all other textiles around it, decorated with red maple leaves over a purple ground. The girl wearing a *furisode* is perhaps a *shinzo*, a young apprentice to a courtesan. She is shown accompanying a woman whose *obi* is tied at the front in the manner of a courtesan. A *furisode*-wearing assistant to a courtesan was called *furisode-shinzo*.¹³⁹



Figure 6. The girl wearing a *furisode* – “swinging sleeve” kimono.

Sashes, or *obi*, constitute a conspicuous part of the attire of all women in the print. As scholar Sheila Cliffe observes, the kimono was simplifying over time, whereas the *obi* moved from function toward form, becoming ever more complex in the process. *Obi* started as a narrow, hidden tie of about 160 cm long and gradually became a broad band of over 30 cm width, with a length of at least 360 cm. Thus, it no longer functioned as a simple tie to keep the kimono closed; distinctive types of *obi* emerged with the corresponding accessories to keep them in place and tie them properly.¹⁴⁰ *Obi* sashes worn by women on Keisai Eisen’s print are brightly colored and adorned with different noticeable designs, many of

¹³⁹ *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Prints*, Amy Riegler Newland, ed. (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005), v. 2, 487.

¹⁴⁰ Sheila Cliffe, *The Social Life of Kimono*, 21

historic inspiration. These features indicate that there existed fashion for this part of the attire as well.

Needless to say, male garments were also affected by the fashion of the day. There are two men with two swords that identify these men as samurai; four men bear just one sword - they must be representatives of a commoner class who obtained permission to carry a sword. There are about four men without any sword visible. In some cases their status is unidentifiable because they are only partially visible, but among those without a sword there is a peddler, pilgrims and presumably an actor, since he is standing in a typical Kabuki stage pose, *mie*.

Let's begin with the samurai who is given a prominent position in the crowd's front line about one third from the right edge of the triptych. He stands out from the crowd as a dignified figure in a bulky green long-sleeved half-coat *haori* over black and orange undergarments, the lapels of the *haori* being held together by quite notable black strings, or *himo*. The most distinct element of the samurai's outfit is his green and yellow striped *hakama*, formal trousers. During the Edo period, Japan was ruled by the Tokugawa shogunate or military government. The Tokugawa was the third shogunal dynasty to govern Japan; the previous two included the Minamoto (1192-1333) and the Ashikaga (1336-1573). Within the shogunal system, the samurai class held the highest position in the society. In the Edo period, the society was divided into four classes, excluding nobles who were above this system. These four classes were the samurai at the top, followed by the farmers who produced food, then the craftsmen who made objects for living, and then the merchants who supplied the population with the products. Since samurai were the only class in government service, their garments tended to be more solemn. However, the samurai not only acted as symbols of power, but they also could express themselves in a distinct fashion style. Fashion for vertical stripes was shared in the first half of the 19th century across the classes, as is evident from Keisai Eisen's triptych.

One-sworded men in Keisai Eisen's triptych are also sporting half-coats, *haori*, over long kimono that are often colorful and patterned.

The *haori* vary from black color to colored ones with geometric patterns.

Hairstyles for men and women

Hairstyles and accessories for the hair are also affected by fashion. This is true about both men and women. However, in Keisai Eisen's print almost all men are wearing the so-called *chonmage* that was mid- to late-Edo period style. The *chonmage* is characterized by a very large shaved area on the top of the head and a relatively small and short length of the hair tied back (the *mage*). The style's name derives from the *mage*'s resemblance to the Japanese punctuation mark, the *chon*. In English, *chonmage* styles are sometimes referred to as "topknots". The samurai's topknot is longer and thicker than topknots of commoners. There is one other type of men's hairstyle present in the print - a man in black kimono is wearing his topknot without shaving the pate of his head - such hairdo is known as *sōhatsu* and was typical for doctors or scholars.

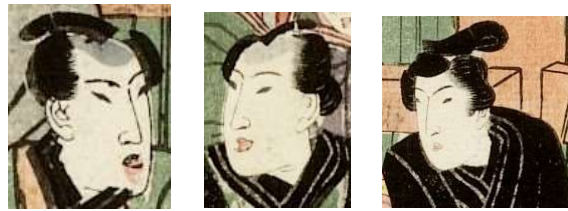


Figure 7. Chonmage of samurai (left), commoner (center) and doctor or scholar (right).

Women's hairdos are predominantly of the *shimada-mage* type. It is an elaborate upswept hairdo with a high back bun that developed during the Edo period. The origin of the name is unclear but perhaps this hairdo first emerged among the courtesans of the Shimada station on the Tokaido Road and then became popular with the commoners at large. Women on Keisai Eisen's triptych are wearing an elevated version of this hairdo known as *taka-shimada*.



Figure 8. *Taka-shimada* hairstyle for adult women (left) and *yuiwata-shamada* (right) with a red ribbon for the young.

The hair in *taka-shimada* hairdo is held up with with a comb, called *kushi*, and hairpins, either single-rod type called *kogai* or two-pronged *kanzashi*, often adorned with other precious materials. Along with multiple examples of *taka-shimada* hairdos, very similar to each other with only slight variations in the adornments, there are three women with a red ribbon running through the front of the hair strand right above the forehead. This hairstyle is called *yuiwata*, meaning “tied with cotton,” and was worn by young unmarried women.

Footwear

There are three types of footwear worn by people in the crowd in Keisai Eisen’s triptych (Fig. 9). One person is wearing the sandals of braided straw – they are called *waraji*. They are said to be used primarily by peasants, travelers, and soldiers. In the crowd on the print, the person wearing *waraji* is depicted as a traveler – in a coat *haori*, equipped with one sword, and bare-legged.



Figure 9. Footwear: braided straw sandals *waraji* (top left), *zori* – thonged sandals worn by men and women (top right, bottom left), and *geta* - wooden clogs (bottom right).

The strap on his *waraji* has a distinctly braided appearance. The decisive majority of people in the crowd are wearing *zori* - thonged sandals with no braiding of the strap. *Zori* are worn over the split-toe socks. Two stylish ladies to the left of the announcement board are walking in *geta* - thonged wooden clogs that consisted of a wooden sole supported by two wooden blocks underneath. In

the past, *geta* had the practical use of keeping your garment off the ground and away from puddles, snow or dirt. *Geta* at first were used by peasants to walk in the rice fields but later became popular throughout the Japanese society, particularly with entertainers like geisha and courtesans and with stylish women like those depicted here. There are tens of different types of *geta*, among them the noise-making *pokkuri geta* with a small bell placed in the hollow inside. It is impossible to tell, however, what kind of *geta* are worn by the women in the print.

Fashionable pastime - smoking and paraphernalia

On careful observation of the agitation at the cosmetic stall at the left-hand edge of Keisai Eisen's triptych, one can discern a samurai customer who is being offered a smoking pipe extended towards him by an unseen salesgirl. Tobacco was first imported to Japan by the Portuguese and the Spanish in the 16th century but smoking became an exceedingly popular pastime during the Edo period. Smoking pipes were rather long and made of bamboo, with a small bowl or *gankubi* and a metal mouthpiece, *suikochi*, that is well visible on the image.

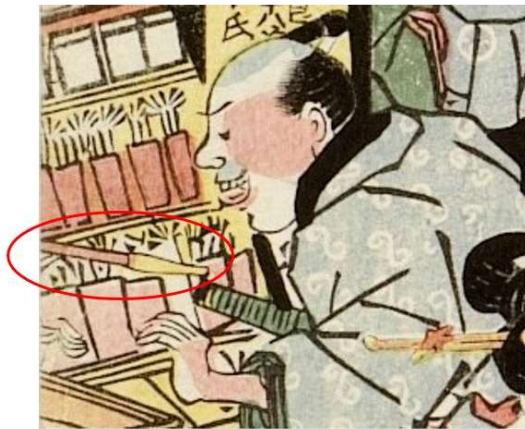


Figure 10. Samurai customer being offered a smoking pipe *kiseru* - we see its bamboo stem and the metal mouthpiece *suikochi*.

The growing popularity of smoking in Edo Japan led to the formation of fashion for smoking accessories. Some insight into this fashion accessories can be provided by a print by Toyokuni I showing actor Sawamura Sojuro III. The print is also a part of the current exhibition. For detailed discussion please see paper *Utagawa Toyokuni's Actor/Role Fusion* by Connor Nguyen in this book . A famous Kabuki actor in a role is shown on a large-format print. He is standing full length, slightly bending forward as he is unsheathing his sword. Being a close-up image, it represents many details, including smoke accessories at his side. The actor has a full tobacco smoking set. It consists of the tobacco pouch called *tabako-ire* and tobacco pipe-case *kiseru-zutsu*, helped by chains, or *kusari*, to be held in place at the *obi* with the help of a netsuke of a specific type. Called *kagamibuta*, it consists of a round carved ivory case with a metal element inside. It is quite remarkable how true to life and exact is representation of the set in the print by Utagawa Toyokuni I. This accessory is associated with the character that the actor portrays. The character, Ume no Yoshibei, was based off a real person. He was known as an *otokodate*, a chivalrous commoner, brave protector of the underprivileged, rough and cool. His accessories are to be understood as his personality statements.

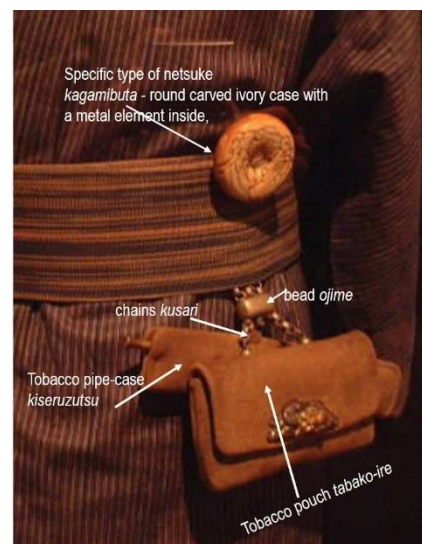


Figure 11. Utagawa Toyokuni I, actor Sawamura Sojuro III as Ume no Yoshibei, 1796 (left); smoking accessories held by netsuke *kagamibuta* (right).

The discussion above proves beyond doubt that fashion played a crucial role in the urban society in the Edo period Japan. Fashion impacted every aspect of personal appearance, including clothing, hairstyle and accessories, footwear, and a broad variety of paraphernalia associated with pleasurable pastimes. This all was meticulously and lovingly captured by Keisai Eisen in his image of Edo crowd at the Asakusa Sensoji temple gate and other prints at the exhibition.

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<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/74132>



Torii Kiyonaga, 1752-1815

Mimeguri Shrine: Spring Promenade at Mukojima (Mukojima haru no yuho)

Ca. 1787. Publisher: Takatsuya Isuke

Three-panel polychrome woodblock print, 38.4 x 74.6 cm (15 1/8 x 29 3/8 inches)

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1121

TEXTILES IN EDO LIFE: PERCEPTION AND MEANING

– Emily Mahar and Tracy Shi

What a crowd! The vibrant colors and beautiful patterns decorate virtually every person in a large gathering at the Kaminari Gate at the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple in Edo. This is how Keisai Eisen presents the elated assembly of people in his triptych *Edo Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple, Kanzeon Kaminari Gates*, the centerpiece at the exhibition.

In Japanese culture, patterns and symbols were integral to people's appearances. Altering the perception of an individual, such decorative elements were signifiers of class, occupation, and religion. In order to better understand what these patterns and symbols on fabrics and garments mean, we must first identify what these designs are.

Since many patterns are seen worn by more than one figure, and some are limited to just one individual in the print, the question arises if there is a reason explaining each case. Do patterns indicate a specific social role of a person? Are some patterns more luxurious or exclusive than others? Does pattern or symbol specify occupation (such as with the actor)? How does clothing affect perception of a person's status in the world? Are specific patterns worn for certain occasions, and if so then why? These questions will steer the analysis of fabric and patterning represented in Keisai Eisen's triptych.



Figure 1. The crowd in Keisai Eisen's triptych.

In the left sheet of the triptych (Fig. 1), stands a male figure, likely to be a Kabuki theater actor due to his specific stance, called *soku mie*, as he rises full

height with heels touching. He wears a garment with a vertical striped pattern of greens and purples, trimmed in black and lined with what appears to be red fabric. A geometric line pattern runs horizontally across his midsection and at the bottom trim of his top garment.

A woman to the man's right is wearing layered kimonos with many complex patterns and colors (Fig. 2). Her outer kimono with light purple background bears a pattern that consists of white pointed ovals, with one triangular cutout at each of the pointed ends. There are also thinner white markings around these larger shapes. At the collar area, the outer edge of the sleeves and where the hems part, one can see the inner kimono of red fabric that has polka-dot like pattern.



Figure 2 (left). Close-up of layered kimonos from Keisai Eisen's triptych. Figures 3 & 4 (center and left). Samples of *shippō tsunagi* / *shippō* - interlocking pattern of seven treasures¹⁴¹

The pattern on the woman's outer kimono is known as *shippō tsunagi* (七宝つなぎ紋) or "interlocking pattern of seven treasures." This geometric design pattern may be described alternatively as four spindles arranged in a circle with ends touching, or as overlapping circles.¹⁴² Originating from the Buddhist tradition and coming to the country via China, this pattern developed into Japan's own version of the design during the Heian period (8th-12th c.) when Japan

¹⁴¹ Fig. 3: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sippou_tunagi.png, Fig. 4: <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/shippoumon.htm>

¹⁴² JAANUS, 2001 Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/shippoumon.htm>

stopped sending envoys for learning from China. The seven treasures were symbolic of good fortune and auspicious wishes: gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, rock crystal, pearls, and coral. The *shippō tsunagi* pattern was popular among the upper classes and was often worn by high level poets and magistrates in the palace.¹⁴³ During the Edo period, however, this pattern became a favorite among townspeople.

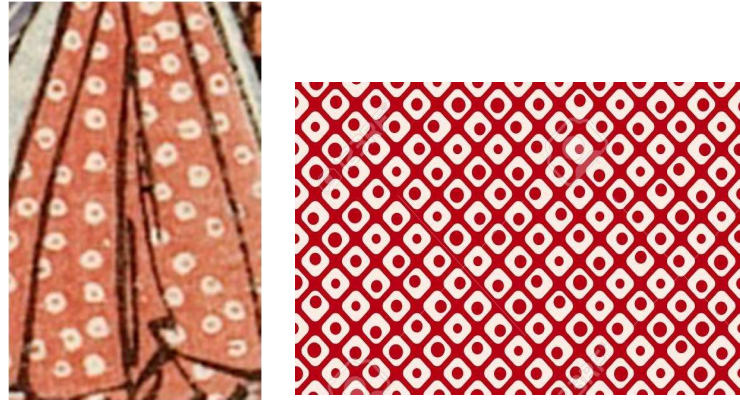


Figure 5: Close-up of pattern from Keisai Eisen's triptych
Figure 6. Sample of *kanoko-mon* – deer dots.¹⁴⁴

The inner garment showcasing a red dot pattern (Fig. 5), is called *kanoko-mon* (鹿の小紋) or “deer dots,” due to its similar appearance to the spots on a chital's back.¹⁴⁵ It was developed during the Momoyama Period (1573-1603) but became especially popular during the Edo Period.

Slightly behind these figures to the left a woman is standing, wearing an outer kimono of green color with white floral markings near the shoulders. Called *suisen-mon* (水仙紋) or “daffodil patterns,” these flowers come to full bloom during the lunar new year season and are symbolically an omen for a good year and freshness. At the same time, the character for “sen” (仙 - immortal beauties, celestial female) in the word “suisen” (水仙 - spirit of water) is also related to

¹⁴³*Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 141.

¹⁴⁴Fig. 6: https://www.123rf.com/photo_85393713_stock-vector-kanoko-japanese-traditional-pattern.html

¹⁴⁵Shikaku Dezain Kenkyūjo, *Nihon chūgoku No Mon yō Jiten*. (Japan, 2004), 24.

good fortune and blessings from heaven beings.¹⁴⁶ There is a clear connection between nature, worship, and good fortune, as expressed through patternings on garments and their seasonal references. Fig. 7: Close-up of kimono from Keisai Eisen's triptych.



Figure 7. Daffodil design as a family crest on the shoulders.

Figure 8. Sample of *suisen* - daffodil pattern.¹⁴⁷

The same kimono in its lower part is decorated with stencil-like white floral designs, becoming denser towards the bottom.



Figure 9 (left). Full view of kimono from Keisai Eisen's triptych.

Figure 10 (right). Sample of *kozakura* – tiny cherry blossom pattern.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 55.

¹⁴⁷ Fig. 8: https://kamon-db.net/portfolio_tag/suisenmon

¹⁴⁸ Fig. 10: <http://shitoya.com/?pid=5906510>

This pattern is inspired by cherry blossoms, this specific one being called *kozakura* (小桜) or “tiny cherry blossoms.” Cherry blossoms are one of the most ancient and beloved patterns of Japanese people. We will now trace development of cherry blossom symbolism through the periods of Japanese history. In old times, farmers would observe the blossoms and make predictions of the year’s harvest. Cherry blossoms were related to feasts, poems, and songs of the Heian period. Representative of authority, power, and the samurai spirit in the Kamakura period, the design was made popular as a painting theme and as sword decorations in the Muromachi period. Cherry blossoms became the standard for flowers, replacing plum flowers. Spiritually and empirically it is the most holy flower.¹⁴⁹ Japanese aesthetics favor the beauty of something that is non-perpetual and short-lived. When cherry blossoms wither and petals are gone with the wind, it contains a special sense of romanticism in appreciation of beautiful things dying and fading away. When cherry blossom petals drop and float away with water, it also points to the Japanese belief in fate—float with the water and following the float of the world.¹⁵⁰ In medieval times, the cherry blossoms were a pattern only for people of high social status. It was a pattern design worn for leisurely activity during the summer months by women, highlighting their class. During the Edo period, it was first made available to commoners. The popularity of such a pattern can be seen through the many sprinklings of this pattern on garments throughout the print.

The same woman’s *obi* sash is the brightest of all the dresses considered so far, with a plain purple background, and what appears to be a repeat pattern of outlined red flowers with yellow accents.

¹⁴⁹ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 10.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 10.



Figure 11. Examples of the tiny cherry blossom pattern (*kozakura*) repeated throughout Keisai Eisen's triptych.



Figure 12 (left). Close-up of sash *obi* in Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 13 (right). Sample of *tsubaki-mon* - camellia flower pattern¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Fig. 13: <https://pixta.jp/illustration/2308950>

This pattern, *tsubaki-mon* (椿紋) or “camellia flowers,” is based on the blossoms of an evergreen shrub of the same name. Because of such a life cycle, camellia flowers were believed to be flowers of gods and were regarded as magical and holy, blooming in the harshest winter conditions. Stems and leaves of camellia flowers were burnt into ashes and used in ritual practices for warding off bad luck and evil spirits.¹⁵² Camellia flowers are also often seen on Buddhism related objects, like paraphernalia of pilgrims.

A similar combination of a green outer kimono with *kozakura* cherry blossom pattern and a reddish *obi* sash with larger flowers can be found in the right panel of the triptych, roughly balancing the woman just discussed. On her *obi* one can see the so-called *karahana* or “Chinese flowers” (唐花紋).



Figure 14 (left). Close-up of kimono in Keisai Eisen’s triptych.
Figure 15 (right). Sample *karahana* - Chinese flower motif.¹⁵³

This pattern illustrates yet another influence of the Chinese culture on Japan. Originating in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the design was brought to Japan during Japan’s Nara period along with Buddhism.¹⁵⁴ Although a seemingly natural reference, the flower actually does not exist.

¹⁵² *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 54.

¹⁵³ Fig. 15: <https://kotobank.jp/word/%E5%94%90%E8%8A%B1-467590>

¹⁵⁴ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 54.



Figure 16. Keisai Eisen's triptych, right panel, bottom

We will now focus on the garments of the two leftmost women on the left panel of the triptych (Fig. 17 & 18). One of them is wearing a mostly black over-kimono, with two white flower-like adornments on her sleeves near the shoulders. Like with the woman above in a green kimono who was discussed earlier, these flower shapes are placed where family crests would traditionally go on an official kimono, or *montsuki* (one on the back, two on the arms and two on the shoulders). Here perhaps they are placed so for decorative purposes. The woman's *obi* sash is an indecipherable pattern using the colors purple, green, and white.



Figures 17 (left) and 18 (right). Close-ups from Keisai Eisen's triptych.

Standing directly to the right of the black-attired woman there is another woman, wearing much livelier dress: a purple and white vertical striped kimono with a green under-garment and a sash of a complex pattern in red and green. The green configurations on the *obi* resemble how clouds are traditionally depicted in Japanese art, and there are additional white line markings within those shapes. This green cloud-inspired pattern design is called *kumo-mon* - “cloud pattern” (雲紋).¹⁵⁵ These cloud patterns showcase the widest variety of all Japanese textile patterns. Known from the Nara period and continuously used onwards, *kumo-mon* was considered an auspicious symbol and was most commonly applied by courtly officials in the Nara Period.



Figures 19 (left) and 20 (top right). Close-ups of kimono from Keisai Eisen’s triptych.
Figure 21. Sample of *kumo-mon* - cloud pattern.¹⁵⁶

The orange-red background also has a subtle pattern of hexagonal-shaped line drawings. This pattern is called *kikkō-mon*, “tortoiseshell hexagon pattern,” (亀甲紋).¹⁵⁷ In the current case, it is the more specific *hana-kikkō-mon* - “floral tortoiseshell” (花亀甲).¹⁵⁸ The name directly comes from the visual similarity that the pattern shares to tortoiseshell. This pattern was also named *Bishamon kikkō-mon* (毘沙門 -- one of the guards in Buddhist beliefs) because three linked

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 90.

¹⁵⁶ Fig. 21: <https://cucu-ru.com/news/363/>

¹⁵⁷ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 152.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 152.

hexagon shapes is similar to the armor worn by Bishamon, the protective god. The floral diamond shape *hanabishi* (花菱) has been inserted here inside the hexagons. *Hanabishi* is a type of pattern that came from Chinese culture as a symbol of good luck. This pattern has a long history that can be traced back to as early as the Asuka Period (538-710 CE).¹⁵⁹



Figure 22 (left). Close- up of pattern motif from Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 23 (right). Sample of *kikkō-mon* - tortoiseshell hexagon pattern.¹⁶⁰

Behind these two women and further to the left at the cosmetic stall there is a man wearing a light blue and white garment. The light blue serves as a background for the white pattern, which is an “s”-like swirling shape. These shapes, referred to as *hamon* - “wave pattern” (波紋) - are representative of a simplified dynamic drawing of the changing waves.¹⁶¹



Figure 24 (left). Close- up of pattern motif from Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 25 (right). Sample of *hamon* - wave pattern.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 152.

¹⁶⁰ Fig. 23: <https://pixta.jp/illustration/25600631>

¹⁶¹ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 99.

¹⁶² Mori Yuzan, *Hamonshu*, 1903.

Similar patterns to those already been described are seen throughout the print on other figures as well, sometimes with slight variations or on differently colored backgrounds. Among further patterns that are seen in repeat there is one that features a motif of nesting circles, one seemingly more abstracted and painterly pattern of shapes and lines, and a larger cascading floral design. There are several instances of white polka-dot-like patterning on a black background.

Moving forward, patterns that are distinctly different will be now discussed. One such noteworthy pattern that looks particularly painterly with white, green and purple color patches decorates the kimono on a beautiful woman in the first line of the crowd. Talking to her female companion, she is moving right to left, heading towards the passage through the gate - the two have just passed the announcement board.



Figure 26 (left). Close- up of figure from Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 27 (right). Sample of *yagasuri* - arrow pattern.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Fig. 27: <https://www.ac-illustr.com/main/detail.php?id=1043345&word=%E7%9F%A2%E7%B5%A3%E6%A8%A1%E6%A7%98%E3%80%8002>

The pattern of this woman's kimono is often referred to as an “arrow” pattern or *yagasuri* (矢絰).¹⁶⁴ This is a pattern created through the process of tie-dye *kasuri*, a type of ikat or resist-dyeing technique. The process creates a visual quality similar to that of an arrow. This motif is often related to samurai families. Its meaning is associated with the destruction of evil. A saying in Edo period suggests that “the wife will not return to her original family quickly (because of divorcing or husband dying)”.¹⁶⁵ This comes from the belief that an arrow flies and never returns. In the Edo period, this pattern also symbolizes good luck and propitiousness. Since then, *kasuri* patterns were used more on daily garments. With this knowledge, it can be inferred that this woman is a relative of a samurai, or possibly a newly married wife.



Figure 28. Keisai Eisen's triptych, right panel, detail.

In the same area of the print, also in the first line of the crowd on the right-hand panel of the triptych, there is a woman whose kimono is adorned by a large, red cascading botanical pattern referred to as “maple leaves pattern” *kaede* (楓) or *momiji* (紅葉).¹⁶⁶ A seasonal pattern, in this print it showcases the season of autumn. Because of the culture's acute awareness of seasons, this pattern would

¹⁶⁴ Shikaku Dezain Kenkyūjo, *Nihon Chugoku no Mon'yo Jiten*. (Japan, 2004), 179.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 179.

¹⁶⁶ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 42.

have been worn by those trying to demonstrate their sophistication through knowledge of what garments to wear during what time of the year. Kanji that reads as “kaede” (楓) comes from “kaerude” (蛙 𧸁) which means “frog’s claw” since the maple leaf has a shape similar to a frog’s claw.¹⁶⁷ The other way of naming is *momiji* (紅葉) which simply means “red leaves.” The maple leaf motif can be seen in many different interpretations throughout Edo period artworks, as it was used in lots of alternate combinations and variations.

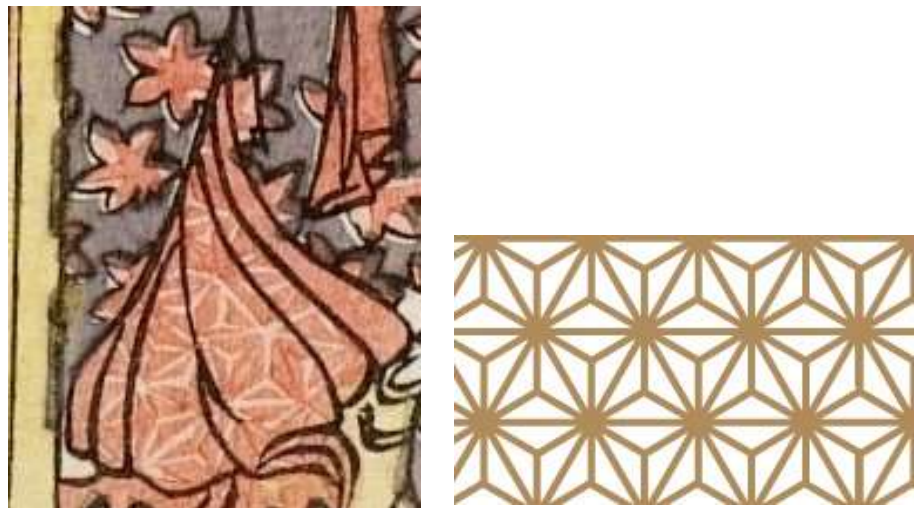


Figure 29 (left). Detail of motif in Keisai Eisen’s triptych.
Figure 30. Sample of *asa-no ha* - hemp leaf pattern.¹⁶⁸

Worn in combination with this maple leaf pattern is a contrasting geometric line pattern, also seen elsewhere in the print. Referred to as *asa-no ha* (麻の葉紋) or “hemp leaves,” this design is inspired by the plant of the same name.¹⁶⁹ During the period of 1804-1818, famous Kabuki actor Iwai Hanshiro V, who acts as a female role in the play “Yaoya Oshichi,” was wearing a paler blue fabric with tie-dyed dots (*kanoko* 鹿の子紋, see above) with a hemp leaf patterned garment.¹⁷⁰ Iwai Hanshiro V’s performance during which he was

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 42.

¹⁶⁸ Fig. 30: <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/a/asanoha.htm>

¹⁶⁹ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 139.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 139, 162.

wearing the *furisode*, a long-sleeved garment for the youth, with this pattern brought the pattern to extreme popularity in the period of time. Hemp-patterned clothing was worn by women during pregnancy to wish for a smooth birth as the plant's properties were such that it could be torn and return to its original state without wrinkling. It was also often seen on the inner layers of garments.



Figure 31 (left). Kabuki theater actor close-up from Keisai Eisen's triptych.
Figure 32 (right). Sample of *mizutama-moyo* -- water droplet or sharkskin pattern.¹⁷¹

The last pattern to consider here is the graphic polka-dot like pattern seen on a man in the center panel of the triptych by the lower edge of the composition - the closest figure to viewers of the print. This pattern is also derived from a natural inspiration. Referred to as “water droplets” -- *mizutama-moyo* (水玉模様) or “sharkskin” -- *same-komon* (鮫小紋), the white dots on the black contrasting surface represent a spreading of water drops or the textured skin of a shark, both of which were extremely popular and widespread during the Edo period.¹⁷²

The variety and meaning of the textile patterns can be further explored by examination of other ukiyo-e prints of this period - those *bijinga* prints that show their subjects on a large scale and allow the viewer to zoom into the images of individual women. The second work which will be discussed is “Bush-clover garden, Ryoganji, Mimeguri Shrine” by the artist Torii Kiyonaga, featuring eight *bijin* - beautiful women - and one boy-assistant, with the Kinryuzan Sensoji

¹⁷¹ Fig. 32: <https://hakka-online.jp/brand/madu/item/MAU0116A0038>

¹⁷² *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 147.

Temple discussed in this essay earlier seen in the distance. The print invites a more detailed consideration of textile patterns and highlights the fashionable garments of the *bijin* - beauties of Edo, the courtesans who were the trend-setters of the day. It is important to emphasize that similar textile patterns are illustrated here attesting to their overall popularity at that time. Torii Kiyonaga, a leading figure in the *bijinga* genre, lines up his regal beauties along the picture plane and shows them dressed lavishly to impress, wearing beautiful and bold patterns that draw attention in their own right.

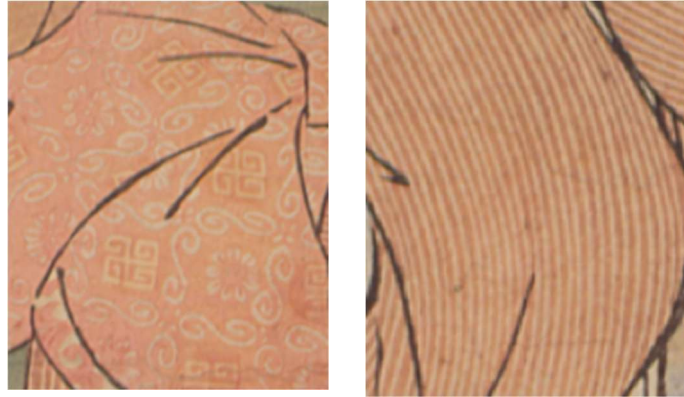


Figure 33. Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815). Mimeguri Shrine: Spring Promenade at Mukojima, ca. 1787. Publisher: Takatsuya Isuke. Three-panel polychrome woodblock print, 38.4 x 74.6 cm (15 1/8 x 29 3/8 inches).
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1121

Beginning at the right panel of the triptych, we see a woman crouching to pick first herbs of the year. The tie of her garment around her backside immediately catches the eye of the viewer.

It is decorated in a monochromatic line-based pattern of symbols: what appears to be a Chinese thunder theme, with Chinese floral imagery and repeated “s”-like flourishes (Fig. 34). The Chinese thunder whirls are usually used to fill up thin bands of negative space and originate from a simplified Chinese Dragon pattern from Shang-Yin Dynasty (16th c. BCE). The woman’s main dress is much

more subtle, merely a pinstripe fabric (Fig. 35). Perhaps this pattern choice was made to draw attention to her more “admirable assets.” The patterns of this set are a clear representation of culture inputs from the continent by way of China.



Figures 34 (left) and 35 (right). In combination with her massive *obi*, the kimono is patterned with a thin, delicate and subtle paler stripe on peach base.

A general name for a pattern of stripes is *shima* (縞紋), a term meaning “stripes.”¹⁷³ During the late Edo period, vertical stripes were incredibly fashionable in both woven and dyed textiles, and the chic small-scale repeating patterns were known as “fine pattern” - *komon* (小紋), referring to tiny stripes as the woman’s kimono shows.

The standing woman to the left of the one just discussed is turning her head towards the first one and is peering at her, as if in conversation or acknowledgement. Her dress has a cascading floral pattern to the floor, while the *obi* sash is decorated in layered, complex flowers forming a pattern that is much bolder and more intricate than the cherry blossoms on her kimono. Both these women wear fabrics of a similar salmon color palette which prevails in the garments across the triptych.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 130.

In the middle panel, the leftmost lady depicted in soft and brisk posture is wearing a black kimono with tiny, pale botanical patterns of *kashiwa-mon* (柏紋) – a crest of oak leaves - on it (Fig. 36).¹⁷⁴ The oak leaf pattern was popularly used in crests of shrines and temples; it developed to be used as a ritual object. The specific pattern shown here is called *mitsu-kashiwa* (みつ柏) -- triple oak leaves.¹⁷⁵ Such a triple oak leaf pattern is very specific to one of the seven Gods of Good Fortune - God Ebisu. Thus, it is widely used in rituals and shrines associated with God Ebisu. The placement of patterns suggests they are family crests that traditionally were worn one on each shoulder, one on each sleeve and one on the back, five altogether. Here visible are two crests on the shoulders and one on the sleeve, the others not seen because of how the woman is turned.



Figure 36. *Mitsu-kashiwa* – triple oak-leave pattern.



Figure 37. Patterns similar to those in Keisai Eisen's triptych – hemp leaves *asanoha*, Chinese flowers and grasses *karakusa*, interlocking circles *shippo-mon* and deer dopts *kanoko-mon*.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 21.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The center panel of the triptych highlights the boldest set of women in the piece. These women show the most color and pattern variations. Interestingly enough, they coincide with the pattern types in the Keisai Eisen's triptych discussed earlier. This refers to the Chinese flower pattern *karahana*, here coupled with “Chinese grass” *karakusa*, and also to the deer dot pattern, a pattern of interlocking circles/seven treasures, and to the hemp leaf design.

Several new patterns also make an appearance in this panel as well. A diamond-shaped green and cream-colored design can be seen on the *obi* sash worn by one of the women under the umbrella. The diamond shapes are formed by the weights/counterweights called *bundo* (分銅) that belong to the group of *takarazukushi* (宝尽くし), symbols of riches and good fortune (Fig. 38).¹⁷⁶

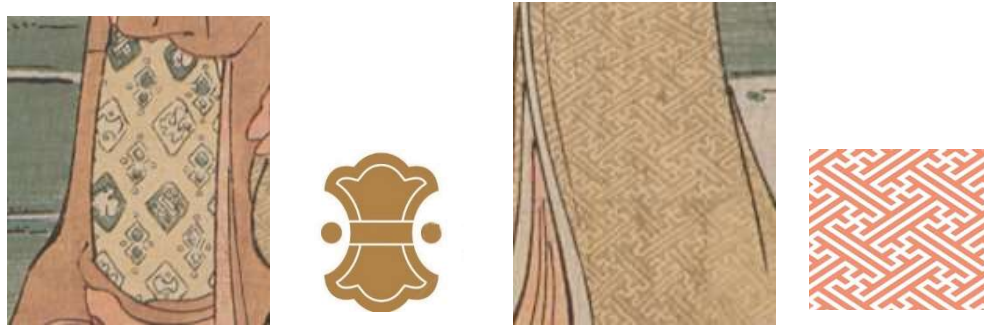


Figure 38 (left and center). Pattern of weights/counterweights *bundo*¹⁷⁷.

Figure 39. Pattern of interlocking swastikas *sayagata*¹⁷⁸.

The lady next to her wears a dusky colored kimono with graphical patterns on it. This very intricate graphical pattern is called *manji-mon* (卍文) which means “patterns based on the kanji ‘man.’” Another name of the same pattern is *sayagata* (紗綾形) meaning “gossamer figured-cloth pattern.” It is a design of interlocking swastikas.¹⁷⁹ The tangled curls were originally the curly hair of this Indian God Vishnu and symbolized lucky powers. This pattern is used in Japanese shrines and Buddhism temples for a meaning of “accepting and including

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 176.

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.photolibary.jp/mhd4/img484/450-20160901174847114816.jpg>

¹⁷⁸ <http://bcome.jp/sayagata-bcomes-the-pattern-of-the-month/>

¹⁷⁹ *Traditional Japanese Patterns and Motifs*. (Japan, PIE, 2014), 159.

everything and all universes.” It is also sometimes used as a crest or insignia. According to Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System (JAANUS), this pattern first entered Japan during the Tenshō era (天正, 1573-92), when Chinese fabrics bearing the pattern were first imported in large quantity. In the Edo period, it was commonly used on figured satin and combined with designs that featured chrysanthemums, plum blossoms, bamboo, or orchids.¹⁸⁰

The left panel of the print also highlights one new, stand-out pattern, depicted on the black dress of the woman all the way to the left of the print. The lower part of her mostly black kimono is broken up by solid floating shapes grounded at her hem. These shapes are yet another rendition of clouds, which are often illustrated in ukiyo-e prints as well. The Japanese named this type of patterns the *kasumi-mon* (霞紋) meaning “the haze.” Even though the haze is represented as solid shapes which contrast its unstable and light-weight nature, the fluidity in shapes captures the floating airy quality well. Haze represents progression of time as well as sense of distance, just as clouds do. This pattern is usually used to present shifting of scene sets and depth of space.

While the patterns that adorn the *kimonos* of each of the figures in both prints were fashionable statements, they oftentimes were more strategically designed that just for visual beauty. The way in which the dress was worn, but most importantly in this context, the patterns it displayed, were symbolic of class distinctions and boundaries. Certain patterns designated family name, while others were only appropriate for specific seasons, classes, or families. Family crest symbols were developed into patterns (shown in patterns described in the anchor piece as being more geometric and subtle), and seasonal patterns are shown as different floral prints.

Not only were patterns a signifier of societal standards, but colors, and even the processes that went into creating the fabrics were limiting and telling of what occupation or class a person was a part of. For example, specific colors were only allowed to be worn in certain seasons, while some pigments were meant to

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/sayagata.htm>

be exclusive to elite society. Yet there were ways around such societal restrictions -- many women would have the inner kimono dyed a restricted color. This trend appears to be the case in both prints, where women are wearing black or more muted kimonos, with pops of a brighter red shade peeking out at the collar and sleeves.

The late Edo period epitomized all of the cultural developments that happened throughout the entire era. Due to the lasting policy of “locking off the country,” (鎖国, *sakoku*), Edo era was a period of decadence and lethargy behind its grandiose facade. As a result, popular culture was partially soaked in obscene, brutal, and shameless reading matters and theater productions. Impact from the spiritual voidness and powerlessness was reflected on fashion styles. Light make-up in dapper, rakish, and urbane style was preferred. In the early Edo times, the prosperous Yoshiwara area was once the origin of fashion of female outfits; however, in the late Edo period, popular fashions came more and more from illegal private brothels in *mizuchaya* -- tea houses in Kyoto or Fukawa, Tokyo. The fashion in hairstyle also changed. Hairstyles became more restrained as the chignon was bound lower and looked smaller.

The most distinct feature of late Edo period would probably be “black collar” (黒襟) in reference to the black collar of the kimono. At first the black collar was just to fulfill frugal purposes, but later on it was added for the aesthetics of the beauty of decadence. Intentionally combining close-fitted black collar with the ornate kimono was perceived of having sense of “street art.” Dark-colored or black *kosode*, *obi*, collar, and kimono itself were all perceived as “without distinction of age and sex.” As a reaction to the black collar, wearing a red silk undershirt became popular among common women. Maybe this is what we see here in the images of two women wearing black kimonos.

In the late Edo period, spanning the peaceful 300 years, female dress developed in a more masculine way, as male dress changed in a more feminine and delicate way.

Textiles and patterns have their own meanings and sources. Meanings reveal aspects of everyday life - people’s thoughts, wishes, and religious beliefs,

both of Buddhism and Shintoism. Patterns acquired their configurations through a history of evolution and cultural transformation, and by means of mutual influences between individuals and traditions. Textiles as religious objects present the question of class and accessibility to worship and display the connection between consumerism and religion. People's looks reflect the essence of a time period, and textiles show how people decide to present and project themselves into the floating world.

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ENTERTAINMENT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE TEMPLE GROUNDS



Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797-1858

Dawn inside the Yoshiwara, 1857. 4

Print series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (Edo meisho zue)

Publisher: Uoya Eikichi. Polychrome woodblock print.

34 x 22.5 cm (13 3/8 x 8 7/8 inches). Gift of Marshall H. Gould 46.295.7

ROMANCE AND GLAMOUR: COURTESANS IN THE CROWDS OF EDO

— *Jordan Weed*

While people remain undeniably fascinated by the bustling streets of New York today, these crowds are hardly a match for the thriving streets of Edo in 19th century Japan. The first city to reach one million inhabitants, Edo developed a distinctive, vast and vibrant culture of its own. This culture not only encompassed a vigorous official segment as the shogunal capital, but also became a destination for temples and shrines of Buddhist and Shinto religions.¹⁸¹ However, perhaps the most unique aspect of Edo culture was the entertainment district. Commerce of all kinds was booming in Edo, as were the entertainment enterprises. Popular culture flourished in every sphere - in literature, theater, music and visual art in the form of mass-produced ukiyo-e woodblock prints.

With the growth of the urban population came the growth of a larger middle class, who were the creators and the consumers of these new art forms.¹⁸² The ukiyo-e prints which were marketed to this newly-established audience focused primarily on pleasurable aspects of city life, which often drew large crowds. Such crowds can be seen in the triptych by Keisai Eisan, the centerpiece at the exhibition. These travelers, townspeople, and salesmen gather near Sensoji, a magnificent Buddhist temple in the center of the bustling city of Edo, Japan. One could argue that which is equally as magnificent as the temple itself is the range of people gathered within the crowd. Particularly interesting is the proximity of people coming from differing social classes and occupations. Within the bottom right and center of the print, the viewer can distinguish one such category of professionals: two courtesans, identified through the tying of their *obi* sash in the front of their kimono. The artist's decision to include such women was not uncommon for the era; in fact, such images comprised a leading ukiyo-e genre of *bijinga*, "pictures of beautiful women," considered below. In popular opinion courtesans were the very symbols of beauty and elegance, regarded as trend-

¹⁸¹ Keisuke Matsui. *Discussions on the Religious Space of Edo City*, 451-471.

¹⁸² Amy Riegle Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 55-57.

setters and celebrities in Edo period Japan. Because of this, it is equally possible that these women may not be courtesans at all, but instead women dressed in the same fashion as courtesans to achieve their associative glamour. Whichever the case, the cultural significance of courtesans in Edo society is undeniable. Therefore, within the length of this essay we will explore the depiction, importance, and broader cultural context of Edo period courtesans among this print and the greater ukiyo-e medium.

Along with the symbolic glamour women possess, the location and position of the women suggest their status and importance to Edo society as well. As mentioned above, the courtesans within this print can be found both at the center and the periphery of the composition (Figs. 1 and 2). The viewer can note the similarities between both women. Broader similarities include their upright standing posture, turned heads, and female companions. Due to the courtesans' central position within the print, they may be some of the first people the viewer notices.



Figure 1. Keisai Eisen, triptych. Central panel, detail.
Figure 2. Keisai Eisen, triptych. Right panel, detail.

This implies the importance of courtesans as a central and necessary part of Edo culture. Each identified woman is also accompanied by a younger woman shown beside them. These companions cannot be identified as courtesans but instead their younger assistants, or courtesans in training. This companionship also signifies their availability and initiates intrigue to prospective customers. For instance, men can be seen adjacent to both women, gazing after their magnificent beauty. Furthermore, the positioning of both women in a standing position suggest the pride and status both women possess. Not only are both women physically taller than the other townspeople to the front and left of them in the composition, but also their active stance represents these women as active, engaged contributors in society. Taking a closer look, the viewer can observe that neither women's feet are shown, and both hands of the women are busied with their kimonos. In fact, the majority of women on this print are holding the hems of their kimonos in a similar way - this gesture is reminiscent of the one used by high-ranking courtesans of Yoshiwara during their daily fabled processions. Perhaps the artist purposefully makes this reference here or is once again signifying the impact the fashions of courtesans hold to the greater population of women of Edo.

Perhaps the most immediately notable feature of the women is how they are dressed. Both women wear several layers of fabric, boasting various brightly colored textiles with bold prints. Among the popular patterns in which kimonos were printed, floral patterns were the most innovative of the era; thus, the ability of courtesans within the print to flaunt such fashionable patterns suggests their stylishness. In addition to the fashionable textiles they wear, these women have also tied their kimonos with virtuosity, a skill essential for their occupation. Their clothing is not draping over their shoulders or exposing their bodies in any way, suggesting the orderliness of the courtesans as well. Consistent with the luxurious fabrics the women wear, the styling of their hair is equally impressive. Both women wear their hair in a neat tight updo, adorned with several golden pins. This *shimada* style was one of particular excellence at this time.

Developed within the Edo period, the style arose due to the preference for long, flowing hair, which eventually gave rise to elaborate, upswept styles with buns at the base of the neck. Much like the tying of the *obi*, this trend began among courtesans and Kabuki actors but soon spread to fashionable merchants' wives, becoming a widespread trend.¹⁸³ Thus, the women's styling of fashionable garments as well as intricate hair represents the ideals of beauty, high class, and orderly composure that became synonymous with the courtesans in a broader realm of work.

However, within the prints, the simplicity with which the courtesans are portrayed is deceiving. Realistically, the profession is one with complex history and tradition in Japan. From the beginnings of Japanese society, women and men were open to the exchange of love. This is exemplified in the connection of sex with fertility in agriculture, as well as frequent artistic depiction of openly fluid couples. However, as the economy changed in response to the growth of the merchant class, so did the social climate. Women who were not originally paid for these services were eventually forced into the business due to a more demanding economic climate. In many cases the profession of a courtesan became the only financial opportunity of income for women.¹⁸⁴

One such result of the shift in economic climate was the establishment of the Yoshiwara district in Edo. This district was formally requested from the government of the Edo period in an attempt to stop unlicensed prostitution in the city. As a result, a complex enclosed by walls was built at first within the city of Edo in 1617 but later moved to the outskirts of the city close to Asakusa. Because this complex was enclosed, the government was much more easily able to regulate the business of the brothels. Very specific rules were set in place by officials, in order to guarantee the safety of all participating parties. Such rules include: "No establishment shall be permitted to operate outside the licensed quarter. Regardless of the origin of requests, courtesans shall not be sent out for

¹⁸³ Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 222.

¹⁸⁴ Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara, the Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 23.

prostitution beyond the walls of the quarter. No bordello client shall be permitted to stay longer than a day and a night,” among others. However, despite the many laws regulating the quarter, patrons viewed Yoshiwara as a place of mystery and imagined pleasures.¹⁸⁵ A depiction of this remarkable and mysterious institution can be seen in the print *Dawn Inside the Yoshiwara*, by Utagawa Hiroshige. The print captures the departure of a guest from the previous night, who is being escorted out by courtesans eager to return to bed before another day starts.¹⁸⁶

All associations viewers held to Yoshiwara became encompassed with the motif of the courtesan. The women were valued for their illusion of beautiful perfection, making them not only an intriguing subject matter, but also endlessly glamorous. Courtesans of the highest rank received the most luxurious and fashionable garments from their clients and were able to achieve the most intricate hairstyles. Furthermore, the highest-ranking courtesans would wear layer upon layer of fabric, a long tradition in Japanese culture, in order to promote the sexual desire of her hidden body. In parade processions these high-ranking women would visit the front gates in their most luxurious garments, exciting the imagination of their potential clients. Apart from their observable beauty, the women were often also accomplished poets and calligraphers who knew how to play music and dance, thereby entertaining a sophisticated client. Additionally, women were expected to send sophisticated and poetic notes to their clients encouraging them to visit again in established, ritual-like procedures.¹⁸⁷ All of these visual cues became popularized within the depiction of courtesans in ukiyo-e prints, helping viewers identify and connect with the emotions and procedures that the prints portrayed.

From the depiction of these women in the print referenced along with the details regarding the life of women in Yoshiwara, the courtesans can undoubtedly be seen as a significant part of daily life in Edo. From the intriguing and mysterious everyday occurrences of the courtesans, to their beautiful clothing and

¹⁸⁵ Seigle, *Yoshiwara*, 35.

¹⁸⁶ Henry Smith II, *Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (George Braziller, 1986), 38.

¹⁸⁷ Seigle, *Yoshiwara*, 123-125.

fashionable hairstyles, the women became desirable not only for men but for women throughout the city. As such, in many ways this print becomes a microcosm for idealized life in Edo period Japan. Realistically, this print was in fact not an observed scene, but instead a representation of all integral aspects of Edo society. Within the portrayal of courtesans, merchants, missionaries, actors, and townspeople Keisai Eisen is able to conjure the essence of life in the city, and therefore the very essence of ukiyo-e.

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Utagawa Toyokuni II (Utagawa Toyoshige), 1786-1865
Sumo Wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya II (1799-1836), mid-1830s
 Publisher: Yamamotoya Heikichi. Polychrome woodblock print.
 40 x 26.7 cm (15 ¾ x 10 ½ inches). Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund

SUMO – BETWEEN A SHOW AND A RITE

– Anna Campbell

Sumo wrestling matches were an integral part of entertainment offered to the visitors to the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Asakusa. A mighty, heavy sumo wrestler wearing just his ceremonial apron, or *kesho-mawashi*, is rising full-height on the print signed with the name of ukiyo-e artist Toyokuni. To make the wrestler look particularly strong and big, the artist depicts him so that he takes most of the surface of the print with his feet astride, oversized arms along his body, and massive hands ready to act. The inscription in the cartouche in the upper right-hand corner of the print announces the name of the wrestler - he is Hiodoshi Rikiya (1799-1836).

Though the artist has created a simple composition with limited space, this print clearly describes many of the key trappings of sumo. Hiodoshi Rikiya is depicted standing inside the wrestling ring, or *dohyo*, evident from the border of rice-straw bales shown behind him. The ground is made of hard-packed clay, mixed with sand.¹⁸⁸ The rice-straw bales are imbedded into the clay so that they protrude just a few inches above the surface. The clean blue background of the print is also a common feature of *sumo-e* portraits.

His hair is long and worn in *chonmage*, a hairstyle similar to that an Edo samurai would wear, tied in a topknot which is pulled toward the front of the head. As Ann Fischer describes it, at its end, the tail is stiffened into a small fan-shaped arrangement. The higher-ranking wrestler's hair drops down slightly on the neck and fans out before the topknot is tied and placed on the head, while low-ranking wrestlers pull the tail taut above the neck. There are some who say that this hairstyle prevents injury to the head; but perhaps, as most believe, its main function is its value as a trademark. Even during the Meiji reform, when other

¹⁸⁸ Greve, Gabi. "Wrestling (Sumo)." Wrestling (sumo), July 14, 2006.
<https://worldkigo2005.blogspot.com/2007/09/wrestling-sumo.html>.

Japanese were forced to cut their hair, sumo wrestlers were allowed the privilege of keeping theirs long.¹⁸⁹

His *kesho-mawashi*, the fringed decorative apron made of silk, would be worn both before and during the fight. During the Edo period, *mawashi* often had the crest of the wrestler's *daimyo* sponsor, so the black and white stripes here indicate the sponsor of Hiodoshi Rikiya's stable. While in the 1770s the aprons reached only to the knees, a decade later, they reached almost to the ankle, giving *daimyo* the opportunity to attempt to outdo each other in the splendor of their champion's ornamental finery. This led to an increase in the artistic appeal of the sport.¹⁹⁰

When looking at the shrine as a gateway to the world of entertainment in Edo, it is impossible to ignore sumo. Sumo's origins are very much tied to Shintoism; originally, it was performed as an agrarian ritual in the Yayoi period to beseech gods for fruitful harvest, later evolving in the Heian period as part of the military arts. There, it links in with the tale of the Soga brothers, celebrated heroes of the Heian era who had avenged the death of their father by killing his assassin and became exceedingly popular figures in the culture of the Edo period.¹⁹¹ However, its ties to Shintoism persist - even today, ritual dances are performed at shrines where a human ceremonially wrestles with a kami. The ring is seen as a sacred battlefield, and rituals for spiritually preparing and purifying both the ring and the wrestlers are key to the sport. Among these rituals are use of salt thrown onto the ring and dabbed onto the tongue for purification and driving away of evil spirits, as well as the ring-entering ceremony, involving Shinto rituals of clapping hands to attract the deities' attention and foot-stamping to drive away evil spirits. This latter ritual also provided spectators a chance to view the wrestlers' strength prior to the match, and became a popular moment to depict within *sumo-e*.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Ann Fischer, "Flexibility in an Expressive Institution: Sumo," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 1966): 33

¹⁹⁰ Bickford, Lawrence. *Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994.

¹⁹¹ Newland, Amy Reigle. *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*. Vol. 2. Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2006.

¹⁹² Bickford, *Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters*

Interestingly, though the sport has roots in Shintoism, the elements of Shintoism incorporated into its performance today are a result of a 1684 edict limiting sumo to performances on shrine precincts, after which *kanjin sumo* - professional subscription/benefit sumo tournaments, or those performed to raise funds for the temples at which they were performed - re-adopted the Shinto purification rituals used in the ceremonies of god-service sumo. Directly prior to *kanjin sumo*'s dominance, the primary form of sumo was *tsuji zumo*, or street-corner sumo.¹⁹³ These wrestlers were predominantly samurai, often *ronin*, who needed to find an alternative form of income. The rowdiness of the informal sport was considered too disruptive and was banned in Edo by shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu in 1648; when it was permitted again, it was only in the shrine.¹⁹⁴ In that way, sumo is a performative art intrinsically tied to the shrine, both as a location for spectatorship but also in its Shinto origins. Its specific seasonal matches are tied to the lunar calendar as well. Though matches were generally performed at all of the largest shrines in Edo, most tournaments were held at the Eko-in temple in Ryogoku district, which came to be known as the home of sumo.¹⁹⁵

When *kanjin sumo* developed in the 17th century in the Osaka/Kyoto region, it was the first formalized version of the sport that was accessible to ordinary citizens. It was used as a means of raising money for charitable purposes via an entrance fee. At this time, wrestlers sponsored by *daimyo* were given samurai status. Only in the mid-18th century did sumo truly develop in Edo, which soon became the center of the sport, giving the sport its first golden era from 1781-1794. At this time, sumo rivaled Kabuki's commercial success and created a demand for *sumo-e* as pictorial souvenirs.¹⁹⁶

Early *sumo-e*, during sumo's golden era, often was characterized by exciting fight scenes, and was dominated by print designers of the Katsukawa

¹⁹³ Tierney, R. Kenji. "From Popular Performance to National Sport: The Nationalization of Sumo." *This Sporting Life: Sports and Body Culture in Modern Japan* 1 (2007).

¹⁹⁴ Cuyler, *Sumo: From Rite to Sport*

¹⁹⁵ Cuyler, Patricia Lee. *Sumo: From Rite to Sport*. New York, Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1979.

¹⁹⁶ Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*. Vol. 2.

school, primarily Katsukawa Shunsho, Katsukawa Shunko, and Katsukawa Shun'ei. Most of *sumo-e*'s leading artists were best known for *yakusha-e*, and with sumo's popularity rising to rival Kabuki, it made perfect commercial sense for artists to begin to produce sumo prints. Relative to *yakusha-e*, *sumo-e* was characterized by more realistic treatment of subjects. Whereas *yakusha-e* could rely upon costume, makeup, and facial expression to signify its subjects' identities, the depiction of sumo wrestlers, who wore no makeup, little clothing, and had similar hairstyles, necessitated more developed facial features in order to convey identity. Other challenges the genre presented included keeping the depiction of a match neutral, as well as showing the faces of both competitors, in order to not represent a wrestler losing and therefore to create a print that would be enjoyed and purchased by fans of either competitor. Only in portrayals of anonymous wrestlers, such as in Hokusai's *Manga*, are clear representations of winning and losing competitors permitted.¹⁹⁷

Later in his life, Katsukawa Shun'ei also began producing prints of sumo wrestlers going about life outside of the stadium. This included depictions of wrestlers alongside courtesans, both erotic and not, which were a popular addition to the genre. *Bijin sumotori* was the term used to describe prints that put *bijin* and sumo wrestlers in the same design. Another factor that contributed to the genre's rise was the appearance of Daidozan, by far the most popular of the *senmon*, non-wrestlers with unusual physical attributes who were displayed as attractions in the sumo ring. Daidozan was the first boy *senmon*, an astoundingly massive six-year-old whose presence led to a flurry of creative output by a range of ukiyo-e artists, including those who did not regularly produce *sumo-e*.¹⁹⁸

The sport and its depiction declined in about 1810, along with Shun'ei's death, and was revitalized in 1828 with the appearance of a new pair of grand champion wrestlers and when Utagawa Kunisada, an artist known for his actor prints, began making *sumo-e*. With this, public interest was re-piqued and the Utagawa school displaced the Katsukawa school. However, many of Kunisada's

¹⁹⁷ Bickford, *Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters*.

¹⁹⁸ Bickford, Lawrence. "Daidozan." *Impressions*, no. 15 (1989).

sumo prints, possibly including this print of wrestler Rikiya, were standard portraits, stadium views, and fight scenes, and lacked some of the same dynamism and excitement present in Katsukawa *sumo-e*. Most wrestler prints of this time, such as this print of Hiodoshi Rikiya, were full-figure portraits of individual wrestlers, probably serving a similar purpose to baseball cards. Utagawa Kuniyasu, Utagawa Toyoshige and Utagawa Kunisada collaborated in 1830s on a series of ring portraits of wrestlers quite similar to this one. The Utagawa school did produce some less-conventional sumo portraits, however. For example, Hiodoshi Rikiya, the wrestler depicted, was a very successful athlete, and in an 1832 Kunisada triptych titled *Heroes of the Three Kingdoms*, Hiodoshi Rikiya is seen enjoying the cherry blossoms alongside Onomatsu and Inazuma, the two reigning *yokozuna*, or the highest ranked wrestlers. His face is clearly recognizable on the far left as the same individual in the exhibition print, demonstrating the detailed portraiture *sumo-e* is known for.¹⁹⁹



Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III)

*Parody of Heroes of the Three Kingdoms. Sumo Wrestlers Inazuma Raigoro (R), Ōnomatsu Midorinosuke (C), and Hiodoshi Rikiya (L), 1830s.*²⁰⁰

Looking at the original print highlights a dilemma present in looking at work signed by Utagawa Toyokuni. The actual artist's identity is unclear, because

¹⁹⁹ Bickford, *Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters*

²⁰⁰ MFA, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, ACCESSION NUMBER: 11.39545a-c.
<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/464874>

after Utagawa Toyokuni I's death in 1825, both Utagawa Toyoshige (1777-1835, also known as Utagawa Toyokuni II) and Utagawa Kunisada (also known as Utagawa Toyokuni III, Gototei, Kochoro, and Ichiyosai being his artistic appellations) took on his name. Toyoshige was Toyokuni I's adoptive son, but Kunisada, the more recognized artist, believed himself the better pupil and therefore more appropriate successor as head of the Utagawa school.²⁰¹ As a result, it is sometimes difficult to discern the actual designer of prints signed as "Toyokuni" that was made after Toyokuni I's death.

A censor seal in the lower right dates this print as made sometime between 1815-1842. Sumo wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya I was born in 1772 and died 1830. His successor within the lineage, Hiodoshi Rikiya II, was born in 1799 and died in 1836. Kunisada designed a portrait of a sumo wrestler under the name of Hiodoshi Rikiya showing him defeating the King of Hell and two demons.



Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III)

Thirty-seven-year-old sumo wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya of Western League defeating King of Hell and two demons. Signed Kochoro Kunisada.

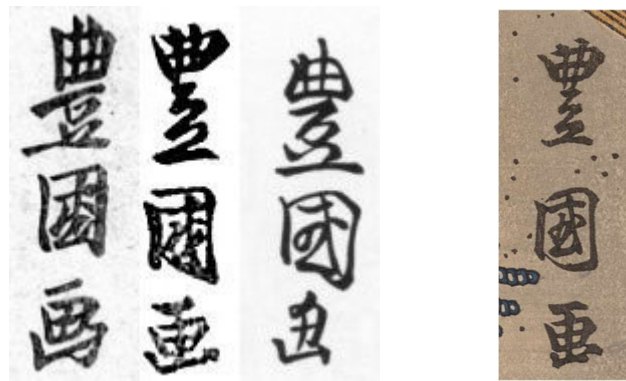
Ca. 1837.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Newland, *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints*. Vol. 2.

²⁰² Source of image: Ronin Gallery, <https://www.roningallery.com/working-7762>

The portrait includes the date - the 7th year of the Tenpo period (1830-1844) and indicates that the wrestler was 37 years old. The wrestler in the print is wearing the same apron mawashi as in the RISD print at the exhibition. Thus, it seems safe to assume that the wrestler represented in our print is Hiodoshi Rikiya II, who died at the age of 37 and was and was the third-highest ranked wrestler during his time, commemorated as being so strong as defeat the King of Hell. The memorial portrait is clearly signed by Kochoro Kunisada and thus securely is a work by Toyokuni III.

Meanwhile, the portrait print of Hiodoshi Rikiya that is in our show was signed “Utagawa Toyokuni,” and therefore the designer cannot be assumed. There are two clues, however, that point to Utagawa Toyoshige, or Toyokuni II, as the artist. Firstly, Kunisada did not consistently sign his work as Toyokuni until 1844, reducing the likelihood that he produced this print. The second and most valuable clue is in looking at the variation between the signatures of the three artists known to have signed as Utagawa Toyokuni.



Signatures of artists left to right: Toyokuni I, Toyokuni II (Toyoshige) and Toyokuni III (Kunisada)²⁰³; right-most signature is taken from the print considered here.

Here is a comparison of the three - on the left is Toyokuni I, in the middle is Toyokuni II, and on the right is Toyokuni III. An identifying feature of Toyokuni II's signature is the chalice-like shape of the first character - a feature that is evident in the signature on our show's print. Though not a total confirmation, this

²⁰³ Comparative signatures images source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utagawa_Toyokuni_II

makes it incredibly likely that Toyokuni II, or Toyoshige, is the designer of the print.

Regardless of who truly created this portrait of Hiotoshi Rikiya, it is impossible to look at it and not imagine the spectacle and excitement of the match; the slow circling of wrestlers followed by a display of strength and control captivating enough to bring in viewers of all classes from far and wide. Together, they would root for their favorite champion, and after the match completed, walk through the shrine – possibly Asakusa – enjoying more of the many wonders the life of Edo had to offer.

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Okumura Masanobu, 1686-1764

Scene from the *joruri* play *Momochidori musume Dojoji*

(*A Myriad of Birds: The Maiden of Dojoji Temple*), at Nakamura-za theater, ca. 1744

Actor Ichikawa Ebizo II as a priest; Otani Hiroji as a priest; Segawa Kikunojo as a dancer

Publisher: Okumura Genroku. Polychrome woodblock print, hand applied color,

29.5 x 41.8 cm (11 5/8 x 16 3/8 inches). Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 20.1056



Figure 1. Keisai Eisen's triptych, detail of the Thunder Gate.

Gathered around the Thunder Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple is a thronging crowd aspiring to pray for their wellbeing and engaging in the leisure of the marketplace. Keisai Eisen depicts the proclivities of Edo culture through the bubble of the Thunder Gate – the Kaminari-mon – and its nearby market stalls. But unlike the shops at street level, one major symbol of commerce is seen hanging on the temple gate: a pair of cylindrical paper lanterns (Figure 1) with black ginkgo leaf designs on them. These lanterns aren't just decorative – their ginkgo crests are a stylish advertisement for the Nakamura-za theater. Their inclusion on the gate shows how escapist activities like theater were deeply embedded into the Edo culture. Interestingly, Keisai Eisen's depiction of the crests of the Nakamura theater at the gate to the Asakusa Sensoji temple in the late 1820s prefigured the decision of Japan's shogunal government to relocate all three licensed Kabuki theaters to Saruwaka-cho street, in close proximity to the Asakusa Sensoji temple grounds. The popularity of the Nakamura-za theater is reflected in a very early ukiyo-e print, *Scene from Momochidori musume Dojoji*, by a pioneering ukiyo-e artist, Okumura Masanobu (1686-1764).

At the cutting edge of his time, Okumura Masanobu depicts the entire interior of the Nakamura-za theater using the newly disseminated idea of European linear perspective.

This style, called *uki-e*, is unlike traditional Japanese depictions of space. Rather than showing parallel lines and no change in scale as objects become further away, space is implied by the convergence of lines. In Figure 2, showing the upper left corner of the print, the screens above the highest balcony appear to diminish in size. While the perspective convergence is imperfect, the illusion of a three-dimensional space is still created.

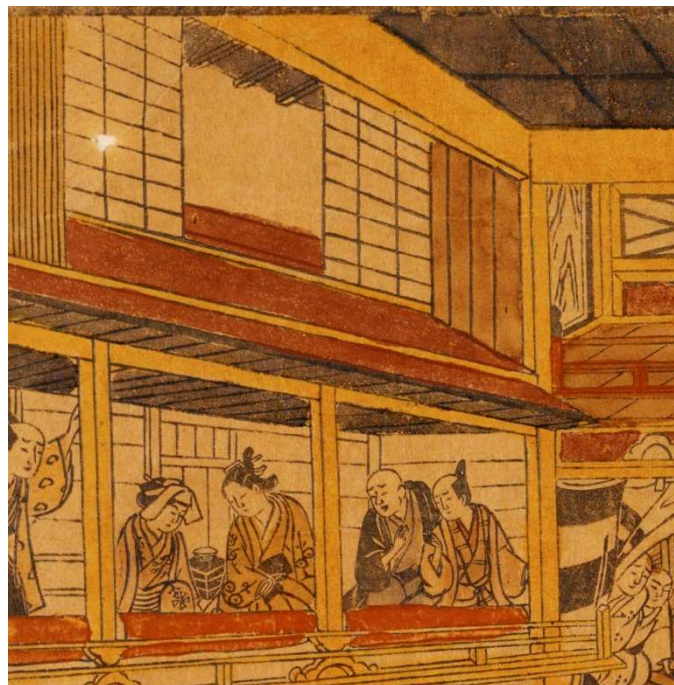


Figure 2. Okumura Masanobu, *Momochidori musume Dojoji*, RISD, 20.1050, detail.

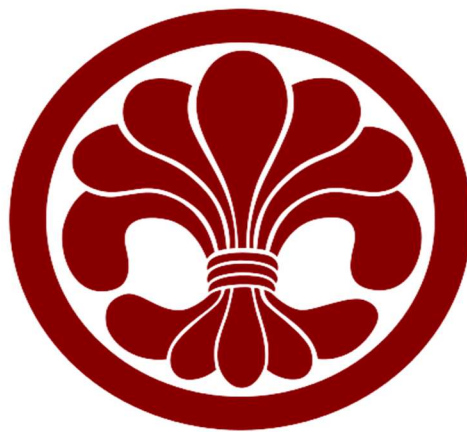
Three-dimensional space is very important for this print design. The perspective creates a direction for the composition: entering from the bottom left is the actor Segawa Kikunojo I, acting as a woman in a Kabuki convention called *onnagata*. A path towards center stage is created thanks to the floor planks converging to a point between the two priests, and spectators in the crowd gesture and direct their gazes to the maiden on the left, furthering the viewers' attention to

that area of the piece. Even without the context of the story, a narrative is created showing the viewer where the woman will go.

This maiden appears as one of the principal characters in the piece's titular play, *Musume Dojoji*. She becomes infatuated with one of the young priests of the Dojoji temple. As a priest of the temple, her love interest is discouraged from romance and rebuffs her multiple times. The Kabuki version of the play pulls heavily from the original Noh theater play telling by incorporating dance and transformation from supernatural beings into human characters through emotion – “[Noh] portrays one all-encompassing emotion dominating the main character, the *shite*.”²⁰⁴ Feeling spurned by the priest, the maiden's love turns to hatred and she transforms into a flaming serpent. In this case, the maiden is defined by her hatred. The priest flees, hiding beneath the temple's large new bell, which can be seen in the center right of the stage. The serpent coils around the bell, melting it and killing the young priest. Visually, a number of these story beats are symbolized in the dress and staging of the print.



A.



B.



C.

Figure 3

The maiden, Kiyohime's triangle-patterned dress is used in this narrative to convey her true nature as supernatural being (seen in Figure 3a). Called *uroko*,

²⁰⁴ http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_noh.htm

the repetition of triangles suggests the scales of her serpent form. However, there are various different costumes for the role of the maiden, each with its own significance. In this particular version of the play, *Momochidori Musume Dojoji*, (Myriad of birds, maiden of Dojoji Temple) the maiden's sleeves also sport small birds. This can be seen in the portrayal by Torii Kiyomasu II of this same production (Figure 3c)²⁰⁵ from the same year in 1744 but cannot be seen in Okumura Masanobu's version for whatever reason. Perhaps the costumes were altered between each of the artist's viewings, or articles of clothing were changed from a previous scene. Despite the change in clothing, the crest of the Segawa Kikunojo actor line can be seen on both kimonos. The *yui wata* (Figure 3b) or "spray of tied cotton" symbolized this acting lineage, all of which were distinguished *onnagata* Kabuki actors.

Following the government ban of women actors in Kabuki theater in 1629,²⁰⁶ only men were allowed on the stage. This led to a theater culture where women were replaced by feminine actors in women's costume - *onnagata*, or "female form." Eventually these *onnagata* actors were mythologized to where they were viewed as an archetypal feminine ideal, even above women themselves. It was supposed by the *onnagata* actor, Yoshizawa Ayame (1673-1729), that "if an actress were to appear on the stage, she could not express ideal feminine beauty, for she would rely only on the exploitation of her physical characteristics and therefore not express the synthetic ideal. The ideal woman can be expressed only by an actor."²⁰⁷ This idea persisted outside of theatrical life, as *onnagata* actors were expected to behave and dress as women off the stage, as pillars of female expression.

²⁰⁵ Torii Kiyomasu II, *Musume Dojoji*, 1744, image source: <http://www.wikipedia.de/062.php>

²⁰⁶ Isaka, Maki. *Onnagata: a labyrinth of gendering in kabuki theater*. University of Washington Press, 2017.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=eERkCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA183&dq=Kikunoj%C5%8D&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiLsdmJufkAhWuhOAKHVE1D4sQ6AEwAHoECAQQAg#v=onepage&q=Kikunoj%C5%8D&f=false>

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 7.



Figure 4. Okumura Masanobu, *Momochidori musume Dojoji*, RISD, 20.1050, detail.

Color is a very important aspect to any piece. This theater scene stands as an early example of colored woodblock called *benizuri-e*.²⁰⁸ Literally “red-colored printed image,” *benizuri-e* was the addition of reds, ochres, indigos, and brown to the white of the page and black line print. These colors were added both by hand or through additional blocks. In this particular print, there is grey, red, and several different ochres. Because of the irregularity of color and their application, it seems like this print is hand-colored. Look at the theater crests above the priests in center stage pictured in Figure 4: red is layered on top of the black lines in an irregular, watercolor-like application. Had multiple blocks been used, the printer would have applied the red before the black in order to clearly delineate the color from the lines. Another area that shows the possibility of hand-coloring is in Figure 5. Spots and dashes of ink overlap the black linework of the block, but especially in the red blotches near Segawa Kikunojo I’s head. This uneven spot of ink results from the ink becoming concentrated in a brush tip.

²⁰⁸ <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/b/benizurie.htm>



Figure 5. Okumura Masanobu, *Momochidori musume Dojoji*, RISD, 20.1050, detail.

Formally, this print features all male actors acting in a play written for the *Joruri* puppet theater – a format of musical theater that originated from *Jorurihime monogatari*, a 15th-century romantic tale. This format would later be enveloped into *bunraku* theater (a type of puppet shows), but during the Genroku period (1688-1704), repertoires of Kabuki and Joruri were closely intertwined. In the moment of 1744, Kabuki theater served as a full-body form of escapism for the Edo viewers. Okumura Masanobu chooses to show not just the world of the stage, but the masses of the crowd and the architecture of the theater. With over seventy individuals spectating, it is clear that viewership is far more important than the actors on their own. By engaging in a collective daydream of narrative, Kabuki patrons had the opportunity to disengage from their mundane worries, instead believing in the supernatural and dramatic. While spectating might serve as a way to depersonalize, Okumura Masanobu renders each theatergoer with their own personality: tea is served, worried glances pointed, and side conversations are held, all while a tense moment builds onstage. Through hand-painted color, *uki-e* perspective, and a vivid look into Kabuki spectatorship, Okumura Masanobu offers the viewer an early look into the spirit of Edo period Japan. These print techniques and look into Edo period life can be seen further developed in other prints of the exhibition.

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Black and three colors (white in dress pattern applied by hand): scene from the play of Dojoji, in which figure a young monk and a princess. In a former birth the law of Karma decreed that the toad should be eaten by the snake, but accident prevented this consummation until the following human birth, when the princess, foiled in her attempts to secure the young monk as a lover, became through her fury a dragon. In this form she coiled herself about the great temple bell under which the young monk had sought refuge and melting it by the heat of her wrathful passion, consumed her victim as preordained. A suggestion of the dragon's scales may be seen in the silvery diamond-shaped pattern of the princess's garment.

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<http://www.ukipedia.de/062.php> (same production, same actor, same artist, different costume).

<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/b/benizurie.htm> (hand colored black line prints)

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1000ce_noh.htm (on Noh theater)



Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769-1825.

Kabuki theater actor Sawamura Sojuro III as Ume no Yoshibei, ca. 1796

Publisher: Izumiya Ichibei. Polychrome woodblock print.

37.1 x 25.4 cm (14 5/8 x 10 inches)

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates, 13.1404

UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI'S ACTOR/ROLE FUSION:

YAKUSHA-E, NIGAO-E, & THE UTAGAWA SCHOOL

– *Connor Nguyen*

The figure of a man emerges from the darkness, slightly bending forward while he unsheathes his sword. He is wearing persimmon-color kimono with beige lining over a lighter undergarment of peach tone. His kimono is tied up with a sash *obi* to which his smoking set is attached with the help of netsuke, a counterweight. A hand-towel, or *tenugui*, is loosely tied around his neck. On his bare feet he is wearing *zori*, thonged sandals. His exaggerated pose and intense facial expression suggest he is a Kabuki actor. Indeed, depicted here is one of the leading Kabuki theater actors of his time, Sawamura Sojuro III (1753-1801), in the role of Ume no Yoshibei, discussed below. The actor is depicted by Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769-1825), a prominent ukiyo-e print designer and an outstanding master of the *yakusha-e* (actor prints) genre. *Yakusha-e* developed as a distinct genre in Edo period popular art of ukiyo-e and became of great importance to the maturation of the woodblock print industry at that time.



Utagawa Toyoharu (1735-1813)

View of a Kabuki Theater (*Kabuki shibai no zu*)

Series: *Perspective Pictures* (Uki-e). 1770. Publisher: Matsumura Yahei

Bequest of John H. Van Vleck, 1980.3086²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Image source: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/utagawa>

This actor print is shown together with our anchor piece, Keisai Eisen's triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo*, due to the great importance of actor prints and Kabuki theater as part of the common culture of the Edo period. Ume no Yoshibei, portrayed on stage by Sawamura Sojuro III, was an *otokodate*: a courageous man but also a commoner who protected the weak from lawless samurai. *Otokodate* were the heroes of the commoners and this role was integral to societal life.²¹⁰ The heroic protagonist Ume no Yoshibei was based on a real man from the Genroku period, making the production he appeared in, *Suda no Haru Geisha Katagi*, a *sewamono*, or societal drama.²¹¹ *Sewamono* were dramatic plays which followed the lives of commoners and realistically depicted their circumstances.²¹² In *Suda no Haru Geisha Katagi*, Yoshibei is enlisted to recover a stolen gift from an evil warrior, Sone Bangoro. The play includes murder, affairs, and large amounts of money, concluding with Yoshibe killing Bangoro.²¹³ While dramatized, *sewamono* did deal with issues of Edo life that were relatable and accessible to the masses. As a form of entertainment, Kabuki had a large impact on many aspects and industries related to everyday life.

The Kabuki theater and the practice of ukiyo-e were closely related, with both practices progressing in proximity during the latter half of the Edo period. From the onset of ukiyo-e prints as a distinct art form onward, the Kabuki theater and its actors has always been an important subject. Actor prints were vital in cultivating a large fanbase for the Kabuki theater, thus generating revenue and support for the industry while also facilitating the construction of Kabuki theater actors as celebrities. As the Kabuki theater thrived, it ensured the print industry did as well.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Shoriya Aragoto "Kabuki Glossary." Kabuki 21, https://www.kabuki21.com/glossaire_6.php#otokodate

²¹¹ Shoriya Aragoto "Ume No Yoshibe." Kabuki 21, https://www.kabuki21.com/ume_no_yoshibei.php

²¹² Shoriya Aragoto "Kabuki Glossary." Kabuki 21, https://www.kabuki21.com/glossaire_7.php#sewamono

²¹³ Shoriya Aragoto "Ume No Yoshibe." Kabuki 21, https://www.kabuki21.com/ume_no_yoshibei.php

²¹⁴ Fujisawa Akane, "The Mutual Flowering of the Utagawa School and Kabuki," *Competition and Collaboration: Japanese Prints of the Utagawa School* (2007), 29

In the early eighteenth century, before the advent of *nigao-e* - ‘likeness pictures,’ artists made little effort to differentiate faces between individual actors in actor prints. If the name of the actor and his role were not included in an actor print, fans would only be able to recognize the role portrayed from the figure’s pose, costume, and hairstyle, while actors could be identified by any personal crests that appeared on their costumes.²¹⁵ Due to the innovations made most notably by the Katsukawa and Utagawa schools, a new kind of actor print was created, with an emphasis on anatomical accuracy that brought fans of the Kabuki theater closer to their favorite actors.

Kabuki actor prints are distinguishable from other types of prints depicting figures due to three key components: a highly individualized and stylized rendering of the face, portrayal of intense emotion, and rendering of a figure in a momentous pose.²¹⁶ The aforementioned conventions in this genre were codified by Toyokuni I and were upheld and expanded by other Utagawa school artists. While Katsukawa Shunsho was the original innovator to depict actors with an individualized likeness, referred to as *nigao-e*, it was Utagawa Toyokuni I who further developed and standardized the *nigao-e* mode of representation and thereby revitalized actor prints to extreme effect. During this time period, print designers of the Utagawa school became the preeminent producers of actor prints, eclipsing even the Katsukawa school. The style employed by the artists of the Utagawa school was so successful that it became standardized and often emulated by other schools involved in producing actor prints.²¹⁷

Toyokuni I’s seminal work *Yakusha nigao hayageiko* (*Quick Instruction in Actor Likenesses*), illustrated in 1817, is a great example of how Toyokuni I codified the depiction of Kabuki actors. This book was made as an instructional guide for fans who wished to see their favorite actors identifiable when illustrated in the contemporary *nigao-e* style. The creation of this book emphasizes the great

²¹⁵ Ellis Tinios, *Japanese Prints: Ukiyo-e in Edo, 1700-1900* (British Museum, 2010), 51

²¹⁶ Ibid., 46

²¹⁷ Ibid., 53-55

interest of the populace in actor prints and the Kabuki theater. The content of the book also echoed the actual practices by artists of the Utagawa school.²¹⁸

Yakusha nigao hayageiko was filled with small diagrams which detailed how to draw the distinct likenesses of nineteen Kabuki stars. It included every aspect of actor rendering, from the treatment of faces to the posing of feet.²¹⁹ In his book, Toyokuni I describes how careful delineation and stylization of facial features had to be considered by the artist for the purpose of creating a recognizable portrait of a specific actor. Artists were able to create likenesses of individual actors by exaggerating those features of actors that diverged from Japanese conventions of male beauty at the time. Therefore, actors depicted in this style could appear with larger or protruding eyes, noses, chins, or have elongated or rounded faces.²²⁰



Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825). Two single-page illustrations from *Yakusha nigao hayageiko* (Quick Instruction in the Drawing of Actor Likenesses). 1817.
Right: actor Sawamura Tanosuke as onnagata. Tanosuke I was Sawamura Sojuro III.²²¹

²¹⁸ Ibid.,

²¹⁹ Laura J. Mueller, "Creative Specialization and Collaborative Projects," *Competition and Collaboration: Japanese Prints of the Utagawa School* (2007), 47

²²⁰ Ellis Tinios, "Diversification and Further Popularization of the Full-colour Woodblock Print c. 1804-68," *The Hotei Encyclopedia of Japanese Woodblock Prints* (2005), 198

²²¹ Image source: Open Dataset of National Institute of Japanese Literature.
https://www2.dhii.jp/nijl_opendata/searchlist.php?md=thumbs&bib=200011906

The stylization that occurred in actor prints also mirrored the appearance of the facial features of actors as they appeared on the Kabuki stage. Kabuki theater makeup of the time used a white base which made the nose, eyes, and mouth more prominent, while touches of color were also added in lines around the eyes and mouth of the actor.²²² These conventions made the actors in these prints easily identifiable as specific persons. Actors' faces were most commonly depicted in a three-quarter view because it allowed for a clear depiction and placement of all facial features. Likenesses in *nigao-e* were much harder to read in a profile or frontal view, so only actors known for their prominent noses were occasionally depicted in profile.²²³

Toyokuni also delineates a specific order in which the facial features of actors should be drawn: starting with the nose, which was the center of the face, then moving on to the mouth, eyes, and eyebrows, and finishing with the contour of the face itself. He was very particular about these conventions and aware of the relationships between the facial features of the actors, such as how the depiction of eyebrows on an actor is always determined by the actor's eyes and should follow the emotion depicted in them.

In this print specifically, Sawamura Sojuro III is depicted with a large nose of specific shape, thin and unwaveringly horizontal eyebrows, and intense and glaring eyes; these features captured his likeness and appeared in other prints even outside those done by Toyokuni I. The actor's facial expression shows an intense gaze with nearly crossed eyes, which would be seldom found in a portrait unrelated to the Kabuki theater.

²²² Ellis Tinios, *Japanese Prints: Ukiyo-e in Edo, 1700-1900* (2010), 46

²²³ *Ibid.*, 55



Utagawa Toyokuni, Kabuki actor Sawamura Sojuro III, RISD, 13.1404 (left)
 Utagawa Toyokuni *Yakusha nigao hayageiko* (Quick Instruction in the Drawing of Actor Likenesses). 1817. Spread 12, right side, (center)
 Keisai Eisen, triptych of Asakusa Sensoji Thunder Gate, RISD, 2006.1. Detail. (right).

His pose is very deliberate and is uniquely recognizable as related to the Kabuki theater. Sawamura Sojuro III is depicted with his heels touching and toes pointing in divergent directions. These dramatic, dance-like poses are a convention found in Kabuki theater and are a part of the stage technique called *mie*, with the pose depicted here specifically being called *soku no mie* (standing like a sheaf). These poses are assumed by Kabuki actors in moments of critical importance to a play, in order to emphasize a character's emotional reaction. The poses and facial expressions of actors in *mie* are highly specific, allowing a viewer insight into the position and emotional state of the portrayed character. Actors like Sawamura Sojuro III, who came from a long line of *tachiyaku* (actors specialized in depicting leading male characters), would often have particularly expressive grimaces, including crossed eyes, in their *mie*. The poses and expressions are then held in the moments of heightened intensity.²²⁴ The freezing of the scene was used to maximize the excitement in this critical moment. It is all these elements by which the print viewers are able to determine that Toyokuni I's print is related to the Kabuki theater.

²²⁴ Samuel L. Leiter *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Traditional Theatre* (2014), 344

Considering the great importance of Kabuki theater in Edo society, within which popular actors were idolized, it is no wonder that a fictional Kabuki actor is included in Keisai Eisen's triptych, which appears as a summation of the bustling city life of the Edo period. We can see this actor-like figure in the bottom left area of the triptych, unmistakably standing in *soku no mie*, similar to Sawamura Sojuro III in Toyokuni I's print. The inclusion of this character proves not only the importance of the Kabuki theater to the ukiyo-e practice, but also the interconnectedness of the entire ukiyo-e world.

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https://www.kabuki21.com/glossaire_6.php#otokodate

Image source: Open Dataset of National Institute of Japanese Literature.
https://www2.dhii.jp/nijl_opendata/searchlist.php?md=thumbs&bib=200011906

Image source: Open Dataset of National Institute of Japanese Literature.
https://www2.dhii.jp/nijl_opendata/searchlist.php?md=thumbs&bib=200011906



Utagawa Kunitoku II, 1830-1874

Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling Opening of the Three Kabuki Theaters in Saruwaka-cho
 (Tokyo hana saruwaka sanro hanei kaikan zu), 1871.11. Nakamura-za Theater.

Publisher: Daikokuya Kinosuke. Three-panel polychrome woodblock print, 35.4 x 73 cm
 (13 7/8 x 28 13/16 inches). Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs, 1997.90.12

APPROACHES TO EDO SANZA

– THE THREE KABUKI THEATERS OF EDO

– Violet Ren, Qingyi Yang, Peiqing Jiang

Look at the dense and festive crowd in front of the Sensoji temple in Asakusa in the print *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple in Edo!* People gathered in front of the temple situated in an established center of popular pleasure. They came here to take part in an important celebratory event - public demonstration of the secret image of Kannon Bosatsu - Bodhisattva of Mercy, the temple's main deity. The event marked the 1200-year anniversary of the first appearance of this statue to two local fishermen in 628. But, as has been said, Asakusa district of Edo had various kinds of entertainment to offer. In the area just outside the temple grounds the government established the Kabuki theater district, Saruwaka-machi. In spite of various limitations imposed by the government on the Kabuki theater culture in the course of the Tenpo Reforms (天保の改革) (1841-1843), the art of Kabuki theater enjoyed tremendous popularity and at all times drew large crowds. So, let's step outside the Sensoji area and move fifty years forward and let's explore the sight of a thronged space in that other location.

The triptych of large format *oban nishiki-e Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling Opening of the Three Kabuki Theaters in Saruwaka-chō* designed by ukiyo-e print artist Utagawa Kunitaru II (1830-1874) takes us right into the heart of the theater district in Edo (now Tokyo). We are standing at one side of the street with a broad view of its opposite side with a long row of buildings with no beginning or end. It is the street in Saruwaka-cho where the three officially allowed Kabuki theaters were situated next to each other. The name of this district, Saruwaka, is linked to the name of Saruwaka (Nakamura) Kanzaburo who founded the first Kabuki theater with office license in Edo in 1624.²²⁵

²²⁵ “Saruwaka-Cho.” 国立国会図書館—National Diet Library. Accessed October 25, 2019. <https://www.ndl.go.jp/landmarks/e/sights/saruwakacho/>.

These theaters can be identified by the cube-shaped roof structures called *yagura* (やぐら 櫓).²²⁶ On the roof of the leftmost theater, the *yagura* (fig.1) is painted black with a silhouette of ginkgo leaf appearing in white color on the side facing the street. This is a crest of the Nakamura-za theater. On the other side of *yagura* a text is written. It announces that one can see there performances in the style of *kyogen* (originally comic skits between the acts in Noh theater plays but later adapted to Kabuki by *kyogen* professionals) played by a celebrity Nakamura Kanzaburo (なかむら きやうげんづくし 勘三郎).²²⁷



Figure 1. *Yagura*.

Next to Nakamura-za (なかむらざ 中村座) to the right there are two other licensed Kabuki theaters of Edo, namely Ichimura-za (いちむらざ 市村座)²²⁸ and Morita-za (もりたざ 森田座/守田座)²²⁹ but the inscriptions on the *yagura* of these theaters are hard to discern.

The street is joyful and dynamic with the bright colors of the advertising boards attached to the architecture, colorful tall banners, and the vivid crowd, all shown against the flaming evening sunset.

²²⁶ “櫓.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 10, 2017. <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/櫓>.

²²⁷ “WikiVisually.com.” WikiVisually. Accessed October 25, 2019. https://wikivisually.com/wiki/Kabuki#1842–1868:_Saruwaka-chō_kabuki.

²²⁸ “江戸三座.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, September 15, 2019. <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/江戸三座>.

²²⁹ Ibid.

The traditionally tall and narrow banners (fg. 2) are placed here along the buildings, taking almost two-thirds of the print's height. These banners are grouped in the area adjacent to the *yagura* towers and may be considered as signs of direction for helping people to find their way into theater. All the writings are done in thick lines in thick-lined convoluted script *kanteiryu* (かんていりゅう 勘亭流)²³⁰, traditionally used for Kabuki theater. According to author Rebecca Salter, *kanteiryu* script produced an impression of being squeezed in a tight space and thus refers to a packed theater, and by implication a more successful business.²³¹ These banners announce names of actors currently performing at the theaters.



Figure 2. Narrow banners with names of actors.

Strings of red lanterns (fg. 3-5) hanging along the length of the buildings and outlining the first and the second levels serve as signs of celebration of the opening of the theater season, as red color symbolizes good fortune in East Asian cultures. The improbable saturated red of the

²³⁰ Salter, Rebecca. Japanese Popular Prints: from Votive Slips to Playing Cards. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.P53.

²³¹ Ibid.

sky that covers the top part of the print adds to the celebratory spirit of the scene.



Figure 3 Red lanterns (first shop, bottom).

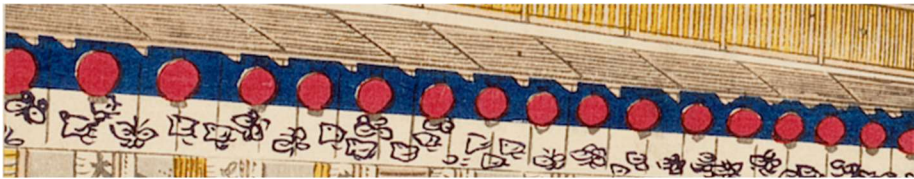


Figure 4 Red lanterns (second shop, bottom).

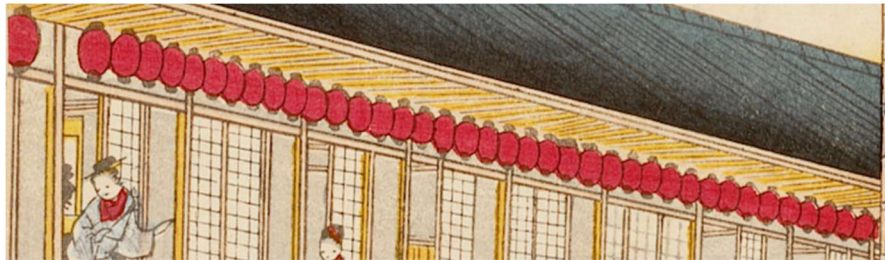


Figure 5 Red lanterns (second level).

Judging by the extended length of the street and the depth of the street space we can probably make a rough estimate of the real-life scale of the scene. This allows us to have a general idea of the actual volume of crowds at the opening of the theater season. The viewers of the print learn about the occasion of such large gathering from the print's title that reads "Bustling Opening of the Three Kabuki Theaters in Saruwaka-cho." Although during that period Asakusa was the suburb of Edo, it is not hard to see the popularity of Kabuki theater amongst Japanese society.

The crowd of people looks vibrant, matching the bright colors of the theater billboards. This colorfulness contributes to bustling atmosphere

of the street. The foreground is filled with people traveling in different directions. There are at least nine *jin-rikisha*, or rickshaw (fg. 6-13), which refers to a two-wheeled cart driven by one person.²³² *Jin-rikisha* (じんりきしゃ 人力車) was invented in Japan in 1869,²³³ about two years prior to the design of the print. It was a popular form of transportation within Asian cities and provided more opportunities for male laborers.²³⁴ At that time man-power was much cheaper than horse-power and horses were only used by the military.²³⁵ It is fascinating how a ukiyo-e print portrays fashionable and newly-invented objects like the rickshaw. The English language name of the cart is of Japanese origin; *jin-rikisha*, literally meaning ‘car pulled by human’, is generally pulled by one person carrying



one passenger.²³⁶

Figures 6, 7 8 – various types of rickshaw carts.
Figures 9, 10, 11 – various types of rickshaw carts.

²³² “Rickshaw.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 7, 2019.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rickshaw>.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.



Figures 12 and 13. More types of rickshaw.

There were two main types of rickshaw, both represented here in the print. The third rickshaw (fg. 8) from the right is a box-like object with decorated curtains along the four sides to protect the privacy of the passenger and a seat inside. All the other rickshaws in the print are of the type of a seat with collapsable top. The seats are artistically adorned, mostly with paintings with a nature motif. As shown in the print, the right-most rickshaw (fg. 6) and the left-most one (fg. 13) are both painted with a powerful wave motif and gold-colored birds. The second one from the right (fg. 7) has a red floral print on it, and the seat of the fourth rickshaw from the right (fg.9) is even decorated with gold-colored geometric shapes.

Physical strength was necessary for the men who pulled the *jin-rikisha*, and in this print the image of the rickshaw runners is cool. The two runners in the left sheet (fg. 14) have their torsos covered in tattoos. Tattooing rose in the Edo period in cities such as Edo. With the rise in popularity of tattooing, the government outlawed the art on the grounds that it was “deleterious to public morals.”²³⁷ Even with laws prohibiting

²³⁷ Bodylore. Accessed October 25, 2019. <https://sites.wp.odu.edu/bodylore/2018/02/28/inked-and-exiled-a-history-of-tattooing-in-japan/>.

tattoos, common folk such as firemen and laborers continued to tattoo. The two other shirtless runners in the print are also portrayed as strong, as the muscles on arms are emphasized.



Figure 14. Rickshaw runners.

As the rickshaw is designated as a form of transportation, there is no restriction on the gender of the passengers of rickshaws. We can see both female passengers and male passengers in the print. Besides the puller, there would also be a cart-pusher in the Edo period, as we can see a man who is pushing the rickshaw (fg. 15) towards the left-hand edge of the central sheet of the print.



Figure 15. Rickshaw pusher.

There are also other indications that the scene is happening in early Meiji period. People in the street are dressed in Japanese traditional clothing with one exception - there is a man (fig. 16) in a Western black bowler hat and a black Western coat worn with a red scarf. The appearance of Westerners in the print is possible to explain through the use of aniline dyes.²³⁸ Aniline dyes were very popular in Japan during the Meiji Period, and were “first synthesized in England during the 1850s.”²³⁹ This was the Japanese approach: to “modernize and assimilate the most progressive aspects of western culture during the Meiji period.”²⁴⁰ According to this information, our pigment here is eosin, which made its appearance in 1871,²⁴¹ right at the time when “our” triptych appeared!



This color was a technical novelty, a mark of being up on the latest fashion in print production.

Figure 16. Man in Western clothing style.

²³⁸ “Aniline Dyes in Meiji Nishiki-e Toyohara Kunichika (豊原國周).” Viewing Japanese Prints: Aniline Dyes (Toyohara Kunichika). Accessed October 25, 2019. https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/topics_faq/anilinedyes.html.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

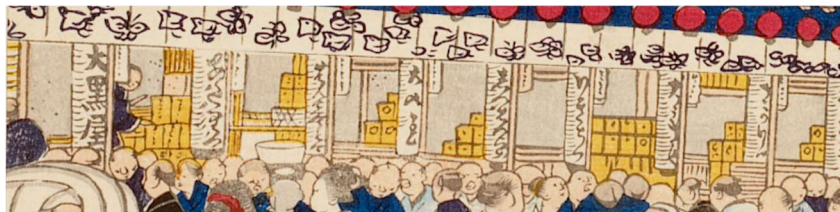
²⁴¹ “Aniline Dyes in Meiji Nishiki-e Toyohara Kunichika (豊原國周).” Viewing Japanese Prints: Aniline Dyes (Toyohara Kunichika). Accessed October 25, 2019. https://www.viewingjapaneseprints.net/texts/topics_faq/anilinedyes.html.

All this creates a vivid picture of an early Meiji period Edo street; precision in details makes the image authentic and recognizable.

There are some small groups of people in front of the rickshaws. They seemed to have just arrived and are finding their way into the building. Some of them are taking bento boxes (fg. 17) with them. These bento boxes might suggest that they are having meals while watching. And indeed, it has been a long-established tradition to eat between acts during Kabuki performances.²⁴² The first floor of the theater has is a gathering of different kinds of shops as well as galleries (fg. 18), continuing to the end of the row of buildings. We can see that larger crowds of people gathered in the space beyond the rickshaws and waiting in front of shops. Shop assistants seemed to be looking for customers. There are many performers (fg. 19) playing in the open galleries and talking about things to attract passersby into theater.²⁴³ According to Hickman's article, these performers include sellers and barkers, who would speak about the day program to people passing by to lure them into the theaters.²⁴⁴



Figure 17. Bento boxes



²⁴²Kabuki. Accessed October 25, 2019. <https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2090.html>.

²⁴³Hickman, Money L. "Views of the Floating World." *MFA Bulletin* 76 (1978): 4-33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4171617>.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Figure 18. Shops outside Kabuki theaters



Figure 19. Performers outside Kabuki theater

Besides all of these people, some of the spectators are already inside the theater and are looking out from the second floor gallery, like the woman in white (fg. 20) located on the second floor of the theater.



Figure 20. Woman in white on the second floor of the theater.

Artist Kunitaru II masterfully captures in this composition the immensely large group of people out for a pleasurable pastime in the theaters. The figures in the nearest foreground, right above the bottom line of the triptych, are so close to the viewer that they can be seen as half-figures only. Then comes the central plan with rickshaws and pedestrians, shown full size with numerous details - the most visible segment of the crowd. The figures further away can again be seen only partially, and those in the farthest plane appear as just a multitude of heads. This skill of

showing huge groups of people has a long tradition in Japanese art, and within East Asian art in general.

There are also other prints that contain large crowds, with a variety of interesting details. The crowds in ukiyo-e prints help us learn about the culture and history in premodern and modern Japan. Edo: Asakusa Fair (fg. 21) is a woodblock print produced in 1853 during the Edo period, by Utagawa Hiroshige.²⁴⁵ The print captures crowds gathering in front of the Sensoji Temple for the Asakusa fair.²⁴⁶ Unlike other woodblock prints, this print captures the night view of Asakusa. By using the dazzling night sky, it creates a joyful atmosphere with the crowds of people and allows us to immerse into the environment. *Scenes in and Around the Capital* (fg. 22) is a six-panel folding screen produced in the 17th century during the Edo period as well. The folding screen didn't focus as much on Kabuki culture as our triptych does. It uses a map-like composition to show us ordinary and festive scenes in Kyoto.²⁴⁷ We can see that the crowd is separated in different locations. Especially, in the center of the right screen, people are gathered in crowds across streets for the summer *Gion Matsuri* (まつり 祭り)²⁴⁸ (fg. 23). Similar to the Edo period folding screen, *View from Inside and Outside the Capital* (fg. 24) is also a six-panel folding screen, capturing the seasonal events in Kyoto through a bird's-eye perspective. This folding screen actually dates back to Japan's Muromachi period, having been produced around 1561.²⁴⁹ These folding screens from both periods belong to the genre *Rakuchu-Rakugai zu* (洛中

²⁴⁵ “Utagawa Hiroshige: Edo: Asakusa Fair (Edo, Asakusa No Ichi), from the Series Famous Places in the Sixty-Odd Provinces [of Japan] ([Dai Nihon] Rokujūyoshū Meisho Zue) - Museum of Fine Arts.” Ukiyo. Accessed December 1, 2019. <https://ukiyo-e.org/image/mfa/sc208595>.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53428). Accessed October 25, 2019. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53428>.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/momo/hd_momo.htm). Accessed October 25, 2019. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/momo/hd_momo.htm.

洛外図),²⁵⁰ which transforms “yamato-e to genre painting *fuzokuga* (ふうぞくが 風俗画).”²⁵¹ *Fuzokuga* is heavily focused on portraying contemporary life and daily activities.²⁵² *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (fg. 25) is a handscroll painting produced during the Song dynasty in China by Zhang Zeduan (1085-1145).²⁵³ Similar to these *Rakuchu-Rakugai zu*, the painting captures the daily life of people in the capital of Northern Song using a similarly map-like composition of the city.²⁵⁴ Unlike the ‘*Flowers of Tokyo*’ triptych only captured the event of opening kabuki theaters, this painting focuses on the event of Qingming Festival but developed further to look at the daily life happening at that time. For example, we can see people sitting in the tea house making conversations. We can see people trying to sell products on the street. Instead of being condensed as our triptych, the crowds are more spread out in different places to show as many details as possible in the painting. Also, similar to our snapshot of this chinese painting (fg. 25), we find similar style of capturing people crossing bridge in *Watching Fireworks on a Cool Summer Evening at Ryogoku Bridge*(fg. 26) by Katsushika Hokusai. For Zhang Zeduan, it is necessary to capture the bridge in order to portray the life along the river. For Hokusai, the Ryōgoku bridge on the print captured popular Japanese culture of seeking evening cool away from the summer heat.²⁵⁵ It usually happens during the *kawa-biraki* ceremony which opens the Sumida river for the season and involves observances for the river deity and a displays of fireworks.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System. 渥美財団. Accessed October 25, 2019. <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/r/rakuchuurakugaizu.htm>.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ “Along the River During the Qingming Festival.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 11, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ “An Eternal Summer Scene: ‘Fireworks at Ryōgoku.’” nippon.com, March 6, 2019. <https://www.nippon.com/en/guide-to-japan/gu004011/an-eternal-summer-scene-fireworks-at-ryogoku.html>.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

From Sensoji Temple in Asakusa to the capital of Northern Song, we are looking at different prints and painted folding screens that use crowds of people as their subject matter in both Japan and China. The crowds of people are captured in various forms depending on the content. By doing so, these works depicting crowds allow viewers to have a more comprehensive insight into the culture and history portrayed.

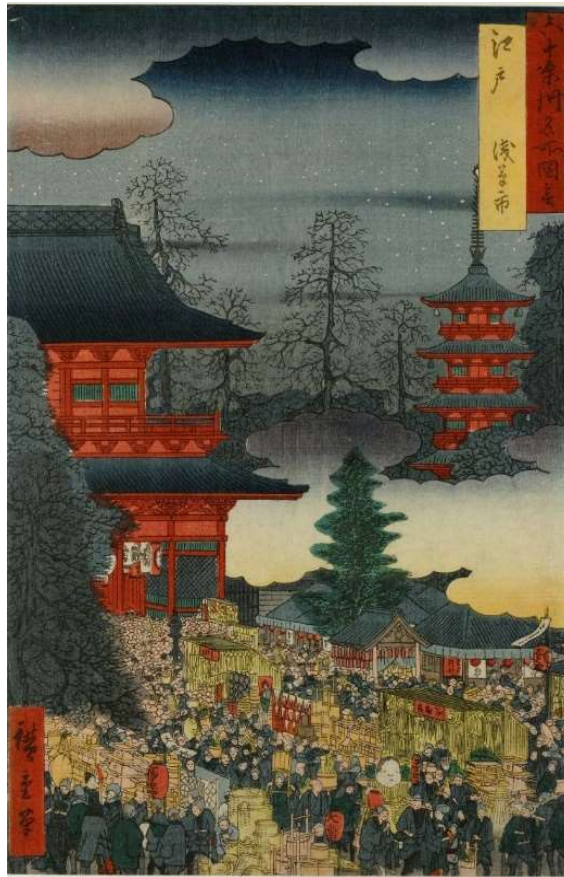


Figure 21. Utagawa Hiroshige. *Edo: Asakusa Fair*, from the series *Famous Places in the Sixty-odd Provinces [of Japan]* (1853)²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Image source: Gift of James A. Michener, 1991. HONOLULU Art Museum, Object Number: 23029



Figure 22. *Scenes in and Around the Capital*, Right Screen. 17th c.
Ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper, ca. 156 × 352 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁵⁸



Figure 23. Summer Gion Matsuri, Detail of the preceding.



Figure 24. *View from Inside and Outside the Capital*, folding screen. ca. 1561.
Shimane Art Museum.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Image source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53428>

²⁵⁹ Image source: <https://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/dictio/kaiga/46rakuchu.html>



Figure 25 Zhang Zeduan. *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*. 12th c.²⁶⁰



Figure 26. Katsushika Hokusai. *Watching Fireworks on a Cool Summer Evening at Ryogoku Bridge*, from the series *New Perspective Pictures*. 1780-1790.

²⁶⁰ Image source: Palace Museum, Beijing.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E6%B8%85%E6%98%8E%E4%B8%8A%E6%B2%B3%E5%9B%BE.jpg>

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BIOGRAPHIES OF ARTISTS

UKIYO-E ARTISTS REPRESENTED IN THIS BOOK (in alphabetical order)

– Songyaqi Tan

Katsukawa Shunzan (勝川春山), act. c. 1778-1790s

Edo print designer and book illustrator, he began his career designing actor prints in the style of his teacher Katsukawa Shunsho, a great innovator in the field. In the early 1780s he switched to the genre of *bijinga*, images of beautiful women. At that time his work reflected the influence of Torii Kiyonaga (q.v.) with his preference for tall, elegant, placid women and rather detailed rendering of the outdoor environment. All these features characterize Katsukawa Shunzan's print *Visitors at a Temple Gate* (1788), included in the exhibition. By the 1790s, his *bijinga* shifted towards Kitagawa Utamaro's manner of more subtle emotional characterization of the depicted women. In the 1790s Katsukawa Shunzan became also well known for his illustrated books of various types. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Keisai Eisen (溪斎英泉), 1790-1848

Edo print designer, book illustrator and painter, Keisai Eisen was born to a samurai who was a noted calligrapher. From his early age, Keisai Eisen studied painting with Kano Hakkeisai from whom he is said to get his name of Keisai. After the death of his parents, he became a masterless samurai *ronin*. He worked at various times as a Kabuki playwright, brothel owner, seller of face powder and author of popular fiction. He is said to have been influenced, either as a student or an acquaintance, by Kikukawa Eizan (1787-1867), one of the most significant followers of Utagawa Utamaro. He is also said to have been influenced by Katsushika Hokusai and involved in intellectual circles. Keisai Eisen was a writer and illustrator of popular literature and edited and expanded a very important publication on biographies of ukiyo-e artists, *Ukiyo-e Ruiko (Various Thoughts on Ukiyo-e)*. He was exceedingly prolific as designer of *bijinga*, erotic prints *shunga* and privately commissioned prints *surimono* as well as landscape prints *fukeiga*. Keisai Eisen's broad mastery of ukiyo-e conventions is testified by his two prints at the exhibition. His triptych *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the*

Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo expertly combines elements of *bijinga*, *yakusha-e*, and *fukeiga*, while also incorporating advertisement and showing skill in linear perspective. His single sheet print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* exemplifies layering of meanings in the ukiyo-e technique of *mitate-e* as he likens Japan's classical poetess to a contemporary beauty by means of commercial advertising. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Okumura Masanobu (奥村政信), 1686-1764

Edo painter, print designer, book illustrator, publisher and author, he was a leading figure in the early period of ukiyo-e history prior to the development of full-color prints *nishiki-e* – “brocade pictures.” Incredibly versatile and creative, he pioneered new formats such as, for example, tall and narrow pillar prints *hashira-e*. Okumura Masanobu introduced techniques of perspective pictures *uki-e*, represented at the exhibition by the print *Momochidori musume Dojoji*, a scene from a Kabuki theater performance. Okumura Masanobu developed conventions of *mitate-e* based on superimposition of classical and contemporary topics. Fundamental for ukiyo-e, *mitate-e* continued to thrive throughout its history, as attested by Keisai Eisen's print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* included in the exhibition. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Torii Kiyonaga (鳥居清長), 1752-1815

Edo print designer and book illustrator, Torii Kiyonaga belongs to preeminent masters of the *bijinga* – images of beautiful women. Born into the family of a bookseller, as a youth he was adopted into the Torii household famous for *yakusha-e* – images of Kabuki theater actors, and initially worked in this genre. Torii Kiyonaga studied with Torii Kiyomitsu I, the third-generation head of the Torii lineage and a versatile ukiyo-e artist. Later, Torii Kiyonaga became the fourth-generation head of the Torii school. He developed a distinctive style of female beauty of tall stature, serene and dignified that got to dominate the ukiyo-e standard of fairness. Torii Kiyonaga often depicted more than one woman in a composition, eventually showing preference for extended formats of polyptychs.

Within such multi-panel compositions, he used to represent women in frieze-like arrangements parallel to the picture plane. He tended to depict a variety of women engaged in activities corresponding to their social status, not only the Yoshiwara courtesans. Torii Kiyonaga started including nature settings into the scenes he portrayed, and thus perhaps had influenced the development of landscape genre. All these features are present in both prints by Torii Kiyonaga displayed at the exhibition, *Mimeguri Shrine: Spring Promenade at Mukojima* (triptych) and *Ten scenes around Kinryuzan Temple - Yanagiya Cosmetic Shop*. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川広重), 1797-1858

Edo celebrated painter, print designer, and book illustrator, Utagawa Hiroshige was particularly renowned for his *fukeiga* (landscape pictures), that influenced many western artists such as Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh. Born the son of a lower-ranking samurai and fireman in the service of Tokugawa shogun, he could supplement his income as an artist with the official stipend. Pupil of Utagawa Toyohiro, Hiroshige's artistic life may be characterized in several stages. Early in his career that began roughly in 1818, he produced prints in the popular genres of *yakusha-e*, *bijinga* and *musha-e*. Then around 1830, he came up with his own poetic style of *kachoga* (flower-and-bird pictures) and most notably, of *fukeiga* (landscape pictures). With his famous series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido* he established his unparalleled lyrical manner that was sensitive, precise and often with warm humor. Utagawa Hiroshige continued to excel in creating images of famous places, his vision culminating in his final large series of prints *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (*Meisho Edo Hyakkei*, 1856-1858). Utagawa Hiroshige's print *Dawn inside the Yoshiwara* used in the exhibition comes from that series. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Utagawa Kunitaru II (歌川国輝), 1830-1874

Print designer and painter, Utagawa Kunitaru II worked in the times of Japan's changeover from feudalism of the Edo period to modernization of the Meiji era. A pupil of Utagawa Kunisada, Kunitaru II produced prints in a variety of genres,

including *yakusha-e*, *bijinga*, *fuzokuga* – ‘pictures of manners and customs,’ *meisho-e* – ‘views of famous places,’ and *sumo-e*, largely following the late Utagawa-school manner. At the same time, Kunitaru II responded with sensitivity to the novelties of his days. This can be seen in his keen rendering of modernizing urban landscape and the usage of vibrant red color, conveying the dynamism of the era. Both these features are evident in his triptych *Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling opening of the three kabuki theaters in Saruwaka-cho*, a part of the exhibition. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Utagawa Toyokuni I (歌川豊国), 1769-1825

Edo print designer and book illustrator, Utagawa Toyokuni I was a pupil of Utagawa Toyoharu, the founder of Utagawa School. Later Utagawa Toyokuni I became the second-generation head of the Utagawa School. He rose to fame in the 1790s with his *yakusha-e* – “actor pictures” distinguished for boldness of designs and realistic manner of face rendering known as “likeness pictures” – *nigao-e*, initiated earlier by Katsukawa Shunsho. Utagawa Toyokuni I codified the standardized appearances of leading Kabuki actors in his highly influential book *Quick Instructions in the Drawing of Edo Likenesses* (1817). His style became enormously popular and was adopted by his numerous students, including Utagawa Kunisada, Utagawa Toyokuni II, Utagawa Kuniyoshi and others. Designed by Utagawa Toyokuni I in his heyday, print *Kabuki Actor Sawamura Sojuro III as Ume no Yoshibei* included in the exhibition is representative of the artist’s elegant and vivid depictions of Kabuki actors on stage. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

Utagawa Toyokuni II (歌川豊国), the same as Utagawa Toyoshige (歌川豊重), 1777-1835

Edo print designer and book illustrator, Utagawa Toyokuni II was a student and adopted son of Utagawa Toyokuni I. He used the name Utagawa Toyoshige until 1826, the year after his master’s death, when he began signing his work ‘Toyokuni.’ He and Utagawa Kunisada were both claiming to be ‘Utagawa Toyokuni II’, but formally the name belongs to Toyoshige since he became the

head of the Utagawa School after the death of Utagawa Toyokuni I. There is notable stylistic similarity in the works by Utagawa Toyokuni I, Utagawa Toyokuni II (Toyoshige) and Utagawa Toyokuni III (Kunisada). This is an example of how the style of the school overpowers individual features of artistic expression. A good example of abiding by the manner of the school is the print *Sumo Wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya* by Utagawa Toyokuni II that one can see among the exhibition works. (HEJP, BM, VJP)

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

– Songyaqi Tan

Asobi: *Asobi* means “play” in Japanese, which contains multiple meanings including “theater play”, “to have fun”, “entertainment” and so on. It’s a particularly important term to our exhibition because our prints in the exhibition are all related to the concept of *Asobi*. Edo period is marked for its long-lasting peace, which prospers a variety of entertainments. For example, people would go to the performances in the kabuki theaters, hang around the Asakusa area and its commercial streets, and visit Yoshiwara nearby to enjoy great time with courtesans. The anchor piece at the exhibition, *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryuzan Sensoji Temple in Edo* by Keisai Eisen, will provide us with a panoramic view of the joyous city life, while other prints may offer specific aspects of the city joy.

Bijinga: ‘Beautiful(*bi*) person (*jin*) picture(s) (*ga*)’. Prints and paintings of beautiful women; it was initially gender neutral, referring to both men and women as objects of appreciation, but by the second half of the 18th c. it was mainly used for women. *Bijinga* was one of the most popular genres of ukiyo-e in the Edo period. At the current exhibition, prints designed by Katsukawa Shunzan, Torii Kiyonaga and Keisen Eisen are examples of *bijinga*.

Bakufu (Shogunate): ‘Tent (*baku*) government (*fu*)’. A term derived from shogun governance administered from camps during military campaigns.

Chochin: The *chochin* is a lighting equipment, mainly made of bamboo and washi, Japanese paper, and it is used by putting a candle on it and lighting it. Due to its unique shape and the degree of freedom in its design, it is also used in various applications including decorative purposes. In our anchor print, *Picture of the Kanzeon Raijin Gate at the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple in Edo* by Keisai Eisen, there are several inscribed red *chochin* hanging on the Kanzeon Raijin Gate of the Kinryūzan Sensōji Temple.

Chon-mage: The **chonmage** is a form of Japanese traditional topknot haircut worn by men. It is most commonly associated with the Edo period and samurai, and in recent times with sumo wrestlers (see prints *Sumo wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya II* and samurai’s hairstyle in the anchor piece). It was originally a method of using hair to hold a samurai helmet steady atop the head in battle and became a status symbol among Japanese society. A traditional Edo-era *chonmage* featured a

shaved pate. The remaining hair, which was long, was oiled and tied into a small queue which was folded onto the top of the head in the characteristic topknot.

Daimyo: ‘Large (*dai*) private land (*myō*, for *myōden*, or “name-land.” Any of the largest and most powerful landholding magnates in Japan from about the 10th century until the latter half of the 19th century.

Furisode: A *furisode* ("swinging sleeves") is a style of *kimono* distinguishable by its long sleeves. Initially *furisode* had relatively short sleeves and was used as everyday wear; over time as the sleeves became more exaggerated it became an elegant form of dress worn by women mainly on special occasions. During the Edo period, influenced by courtesans who would dress in *furisode* to display their beauty and elegance, *furisode* of various patterns also became a trend of fashion.

Geta: Geta are a form of traditional Japanese footwear that resemble clogs and flip-flops. They are a kind of sandal with an elevated wooden base held onto the foot with a fabric thong to keep the foot well above the ground.

Gyōsho (semi-cursive script): Semi-cursive script is a cursive style of Chinese characters and the style was adopted in Japanese character writing. Because it is not as abbreviated as cursive, most people who can read regular script can read semi-cursive. It is highly useful and also artistic.

Hakama: *Hakama* are a type of traditional Japanese clothing. Trousers were used by the Chinese imperial court in the Sui and Tang dynasties, and this style was adopted by the Japanese in the form of *hakama* beginning in the sixth century. *Hakama* are tied at the waist and fall approximately to the ankles. They are worn over a kimono (*hakamashita*). In Keisai Eisen’s triptych, there was a samurai standing on the right panel who’s wearing the then stylish strip-pattern *Hakama*.

Haori: The *Haori* is a traditional Japanese hip- or thigh-length kimono-style jacket, worn over a *kosode* (basic Japanese robe). It is worn open or kept closed by a string that connects the lapels. During the Sengoku period, sleeveless *haori* were worn over the armour, like the tabard was in Europe. During the Edo period, economic growth allowed the middle class to afford the *haori*, yielding laws against ostentatious display of wealth by all but the warrior caste; this in turn gave birth to discreet *haori* designs with lavishly decorated lining. Different color and pattern of *haori* can be seen worn by affluent men in the crowd depicted in the prints exhibited.

Himo: *Himo* are woven cords that can be attached to the little loops and found on either inside seam of a haori collar. *Himo* are sold separately and are an optional accessory for the haori.

Hinagatabon: *Hinagatabon* are woodblock-printed textile pattern books of *kimono* designs.

Iki: The aesthetic ideal of the Edo merchant class during the late 18c and 19c, combining material sensuality and elegant sophistication. *Iki* means "spirit" or "life" but came to mean spirited or lively way in which someone lived, as well as the styles of fashion and art that expressed this lifestyle.

Joruri, in Japanese literature and music, a type of chanted recitative that came to be used as a script in bunraku puppet drama. Its name derives from the Jōrurihime monogatari, a 15th-century romantic tale, the leading character of which is Lady Jōruri. At first it was chanted to the accompaniment of the four-string biwa (Japanese lute); with the introduction of the three-stringed, plucked shamisen (or shamisen) from the Ryūkyū Islands in the 16th century, both the music and the scripts became more complex. When puppets were added at the end of the 16th century, the jōruri expanded to add a dramatic quality not present in the first simple recitatives. (<https://www.britannica.com/art/joruri> – contributed by Connor Gewirtz).

Kabuki: The premier popular art form of the Edo period. It had a profound influence on other art forms, both literary and visual, while its great stars occupied a prominent place in the popular consciousness. The origins of Kabuki can be traced to early 17th c. performances in Kyoto by a troupe of women (*onna kabuki*) led by the female shrine dancer Okuni. These were often vulgar performances; in 1629 the government responded by banning women from the stage. New troupes, made up entirely of boys and young men (*wakashu kabuki*), quickly emerged to take their place. Further legislation in 1652 removed these youths from the stage since they provoked as much lewdness as the female performers they had replaced. Thereafter, it was decreed that female roles could only be taken by mature men who had to rely on acting skills rather than physical beauty to captivate their audiences. The Kabuki performance shows stylized movements, grand poses, larger-than-life stage techniques in combination with usage of expressive costumes, facial expressions and movements. Its repertoire included contemporary plays from the life of commoners (*sewamaono*) and historical or period plays (*jidaimono*); both types are reflected in the exhibition. Later, Governmental restricted Kabuki and its popularity by moving all licensed

Kabuki theater in Edo to relocate to *Saruwaka-cho* district in Asakusa. See the print *Flowers of Tokyo: Bustling opening of the three kabuki theaters in Saruwaka-cho* by Utagawa Kunitaru II. Major actor prints genre (yakusha-e) includes *mie* and its version *soku-mie*.

Kabuki-e (歌舞伎絵), paintings or prints related to the kabuki 歌舞伎 theater. Kabuki prints produced after the 17c can be divided into two categories: actor prints; and theater prints (<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/k/kabukie.htm> - contributed by Connor Gewirtz)

Kaicho ("to open a curtain") was an event of exhibiting the hidden Buddhist statue to the public for a certain period of time, usually 60 to 90 days. *Kaicho* was a unique Japanese phenomenon, possibly evolved from the Shinto idea of secrecy of *shintai*, the body of a deity. The crowd in front of the Thunder Gate at Asakusa Sensoji in Keisai Eisen's triptych at the exhibition gathered there for a very important kaicho. According to the announcement board, this *kaicho* was organized to celebrate 1200th anniversary from the alleged finding of the sculpture of Bodhisattva Kannon, the temple's main deity. (NLH, 80, 219)

Kaisho: *Kaisho* is "regular script" in Japanese. It is the newest of the Chinese script styles (appearing by the Cao Wei dynasty ca. 200 CE and maturing stylistically around the 7th century) and it was adopted to Japan along with Chinese character was adopted to Japan. Writings in Keisai Eisen's triptych are written in *kaisho*.

Kami: A *Shinto* deity. Although the word deity may imply a singular definite presence, *kami* have no fixed number, form or gender. All humans are considered to become *kami* after death, and historically when a particularly important *kami* results from death.

Kannon Bosatsu or Kanzeon Bosatsu: The bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Sanskrit) who personifies compassion. The meaning of the name can be rendered as "the one who watches and listens to the sounds of the world." One of the most popular buddhist deities, according to Mahayana scriptures, Kannon bosatsu can appear in thirty-three forms, which became a basis for pilgrimage circuits. Asakusa Sensoji temple which is the subject matter of Keisai Eisen's triptych at the exhibition belongs to one of such circuits.

Kanzashi: *Kanzashi* are hair ornaments used in traditional Japanese hairstyles. Some models may have been modified for self-defense.

Kiseru: *Kiseru* is a Japanese smoking pipe traditionally used for smoking a small serving (about 25 mg) of *kizami*, a finely shredded tobacco product resembling hair.

Kiwame-in: “Examined seal” or “seal of examination”. A small round censorship seal containing the character '*kiwame* 極' (examined) which was supposed to appear on all *ukiyo-e* issued during the period 1791-1842, to indicate that they had passed inspection by particular officials.

Kogai: *Kogai* is a spike for hair arranging carried sometimes as part of *katana-koshirae* in another pocket.

Kushi: *Kushi* means “skewer” in Japanese.

Mie: Defiant, exaggerated stance or pose struck by a *kabuki* actor at a climactic moment during a performance: it can represent an emotional, dramatic climax in a play or a pose introduced for purely visual effect. *Mie* can be done by a single actor or by several simultaneously, but in any case it is a measure of an actor's skill. It is depicted frequently in *yakusha-e*.

Misemono: *Misemono* means "shows" or “exhibitions" in Japanese. The term *misemono* dates from the Edo period, although plausible forerunners of the performances appear earlier. Among the likely antecedents of Edo-period shows were benefit performances undertaken to raise funds for shrines or temples. They were an important part of Japanese urban culture during the Edo period. Many of the shows were put on hurriedly and were characterized by their crudeness. The shows were unhampered by attempts to conform to a particular artistic tradition and thus provide a valuable index to evolving popular taste.

No (Noh): An intensely poetic dramatic performing art developed out of song and dance routines interspersed with pantomimes and comic interludes known as *sarugaku* (‘monkey music’). A limited number of character types appear in the plays; all are played by men. For each major character type there is a particular mask that is a work of art itself. In addition to a mask, the actors wear sumptuous costumes and perform according to an established repertoire of gestures and movements. The acting area remains the same for all plays. There are no sets - only a stylized pine tree painted as a backdrop. The setting is evoked through words and music. Musicians and chanters perform from the side of the stage in full view of the audience.

Nigao-e: ‘Likeness (*nigao*) picture (*e*)’. A type of ‘portraiture’ that conveys the appearance or ‘likeness’, thereby capturing the characteristics of the subject. The principle aim was to transmit the beauty of the costumes and the sense of lively motion during a stage performance.

Nishiki-e: ‘Brocade (*nishiki*) picture (*e*)’. A term used for color prints produced after 1765. Although the technology to print in several colors existed prior to that date, it was not widely employed nor was it exploited to its fullest potential until *Suzuki Harunobu* pushed to its further development.

Onnagata: ‘Women person’. A term in *Kabuki* designating actors who play female roles or the roles themselves.

Reisho: The clerical script, also formerly chancery script, is an archaic style of Chinese calligraphy which evolved from the Warring States period to the Qin dynasty, was dominant in the Han dynasty, and remained in use through the Wei-Jin periods. Due to its high legibility to modern readers, it is still used for artistic flavor in a variety of functional applications such as headlines, signboards, and advertisements.

Sakariba: (literally, “thriving place”) a Japanese term for parts of the city where people customarily gather for entertainment and shopping. Asakusa district to which the prints of the exhibition are devoted is an example of *sakariba*. (NLH, 98)

Samurai: Member of the Japanese warrior caste. The term *samurai* was originally used to denote the aristocratic warriors (*bushi*), but it came to apply to all the members of the warrior class that rose to power in the 12th century and dominated the Japanese government until the *Meiji* Restoration in 1868.

Shimada-mage: The *shimada* (島田) is a women's hairstyle in Japan, similar to a chignon. During the Edo period it was also worn by ordinary women, and especially by girls in their late teens. Generally, the hair is gathered together at the crown of the head and a small portion of the bun is sectioned off to point outward.

Shinto: Indigenous religious beliefs and practices of Japan. The word *Shinto*, which literally means “the way of *kami*” (generally sacred or divine power, specifically the various gods or deities), came into use in order to distinguish

indigenous Japanese beliefs from Buddhism, which had been introduced into Japan in the 6th century CE.

Shodo: Japanese calligraphy, also called *shuji*, is a form of calligraphy, or artistic writing, of the Japanese language. For a long time, the most esteemed calligrapher in Japan had been Wang Xizhi, a Chinese calligrapher from the 4th century, but after the invention of Hiragana and Katakana, the Japanese unique syllabaries, the distinctive Japanese writing system developed, and calligraphers produced styles intrinsic to Japan. Writings appearing on the prints in our exhibition show different styles of *shodo*.

Shogun: (Japanese: ‘barbarian-quelling generalissimo’) in Japanese history, a military ruler. The title was first used during the *Heian* period, when it was occasionally bestowed on a general after a successful campaign.

Sōsho: Cursive script, often mistranslated as grass script, is a script style used in Chinese and East Asian calligraphy. Cursive script is faster to write than other styles, but difficult to read for those unfamiliar with it. It functions primarily as a kind of shorthand script or calligraphic style. See the poem in the blank background of the print *Ono no Komachi at Sekidera* at the exhibition.

Sumo: A style of Japanese wrestling in which weight, size, and strength are of the greatest importance, though speed and suddenness of attack are also useful. Refer to the print, *Sumo wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya II* by Utagawa Kunisada, that depicts a star sumo wrestler in Edo period.

Sumo-e: ‘Sumo (*sumo*) picture (*e*)’. Woodblock-printed pictures of *sumo*. See print *Sumo wrestler Hiodoshi Rikiya II* at the current exhibition.

Tenpo Reforms: The third of the three *Edo*-period political reform movements that included censorship of popular publishing and suppression of popular culture in general.

Tensho: Seal script is an ancient style of writing Chinese characters that was common throughout the latter half of the 1st millennium BCE. It evolved organically out of the Zhou dynasty script. The Qin variant of seal script eventually became the standard and was adopted to Japan. In ukiyo-e prints, each censorship seal that has the character ‘*kiwame* 極’ (examined) scripted is done in *tensho*.

Torii School: The dominant school of *ukiyo-e* printmaking during the first half of the 18th c. A new approach to *yakusha-e* was initiated by the founder of the school, *Torii Kiyomoto* (1645-1702), featuring a more ‘heroic’ portrayal of actors.

Uki-e: ‘Floating (*uki*) picture (*e*)’. More commonly, ‘perspective picture’, *uki-e* were modelled after European one-point vanishing perspective, the term becoming popular because the foreground ‘floated’ before the receding space. In *uki-e* the three-dimensionality of a scene is emphasized by using one-point perspective. Floating picture may refer to the raised or floating appearance of the foreground in these pictures. Also sometimes referred to as *kubomi-e* 窪み絵 (hollow concave picture), because of the impression of recession in space. The knowledge of perspective necessary for three-dimensional depictions was probably gained through Chinese translations of European books on perspective, one such book is known to have arrived in Japan by 1739. (<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/u/ukie.htm>; contributed by Connor Gewirtz). See print by Okumura Masanobu at the current exhibition.

Utagawa School: *Edo/Tokyo* school of print designers, book illustrators and painters founded by *Utagawa Toyoharu*. Different from some schools, *Utagawa* artists did not necessarily specialize in one genre; they were diverse, working in genres such as *Bijinga*, *yakusha-e*, *Fukeiga* and *musha-e*, etc.

Waraji: *Waraji* are basically a form of *zori*, so they are worn very similarly. The main difference (in wear) between *zori* and *waraji* is that one's toes traditionally protrude slightly over the edge of the *waraji*. This does not happen with *zori*. The other difference is that one normally doesn't wear *tabi* (traditional Japanese socks) with *waraji*, as opposed to *zori*. Nowadays, it is mainly Buddhist monks who wear *waraji*. Most Japanese wear *zori* or *geta*.

Yakusha-e (Kabuki-e): ‘Actor (*yakusha*) picture(s) (*e*)’. A term referring to illustrations of kabuki actors. The majority are images of the actor onstage, but the genre also includes actors backstage or engaged in daily activities. See print by *Utagawa Toyokuni I* at the current exhibition.

Yoshiwara: The only licensed pleasure quarter in *Edo*, it was founded in 1617 in *Nihonbashi* as a part of the *Tokugawa shogun*’s policy of regulating prostitution. The government reclaimed the area in 1656 and the quarter was moved to the northern outskirts of the city close to the *Asakusa* Temple, occupying an area 50%

larger than previously. After this time the district was referred to as the *Shin-Yoshiwara* ('New Yoshiwara'), in distinction to the older *Moto-Yoshiwara* ('Original Yoshiwara').

Zori: (草履) are flat and thonged Japanese sandals made of rice straw or cloth, lacquered wood, leather, rubber, or, most commonly, synthetic materials.

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