

Japanese Colour-Prints and Their Designers

Frederick W. Gookin

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HARUNOBU. Lovers walking in Snow.

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Japanese Colour-Prints and Their Designers

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By Frederick William Gookin

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JAPANESE COLOUR-PRINTS AND THEIR DESIGNERS

[pg 3]

In the annals of art production the colour-prints designed by the master artists of the Ukiyoé school occupy a unique place. They represent a plebeian art which was not a spontaneous upgrowth from the soil, but, so to speak, a down-growth or offshoot from an old and highly developed art of aristocratic lineage.

This elder art had its fountain-head in ancient China. That country, during the Tang and the Sung dynasties (618-905, 960-1280), was the seat of an aesthetic movement during which painting and other arts reached an extraordinarily high development. To the works produced during this great flowering-time of art the Japanese painters of the classical schools turned for inspiration and enlightenment. These works were distinguished by singleness of purpose, rhythmic vitality, and synthetic coherence, and by a clear conception of the essential that goes far beyond anything elsewhere attained, and which, when fully apprehended, must inevitably force a revision of Western ideas and criteria.

The art of ancient China and of the earlier Japanese schools is an art refined, poetic, and intensive to the last degree. It is based upon profound understanding of aesthetic laws. The artists were carefully grounded in the fundamental principles that govern all art, whether Oriental or Occidental. The result of this training is apparent in the homogeneity of their works. In Europe very confused notions have prevailed as to what should be done and what is permissible in art. Not even the great artists have always seen clearly; had they done so, it cannot

be doubted that Western achievement would have attained a much higher level than it has ever reached.

In the Japanese modifications of the ancient Chinese art its traditions [pg 4] and aesthetic ideals were sedulously preserved. With only rare exceptions, the artists—and under this head it is necessary to include potters, lacquerers, metal-workers, swordsmiths, and others—were drawn from the upper classes. Many of them were in the service of the daimyo, and did not sell their productions, but received from their noble patrons regular stipends in koku of rice. Seldom did any of their works find their way into the hands of the common people, who had little opportunity, therefore, to become familiar with them. Gradually, however, as the number of paintings, statues, and other art objects multiplied and the temples were filled with votive offerings, the classical art made its impress upon buildings, wearing apparel, and utensils of all sorts; its conventions and principles were laid hold of by all classes and became the heritage of the entire people.

MORONOBU. Nobleman and two Ladies at Seashore.

MORONOBU. Nobleman and two Ladies at Seashore.

The social fabric in old Japan was one of sharp distinctions. At the upper end of the scale were the Emperor; the kuge, or court nobles; the daimyo, or lords of the two hundred and fifty-one provinces; and the samurai, or hereditary military men, from whom were recruited the officials, priests, and scholars. Between these and the lower classes was an almost immeasurable gulf. Highest among the heimen, or commoners, were the farmers. Below them were the artisans, and still lower were the merchants, innkeepers, servants, and the like; while lowest of all were the eta, or outcasts, a class comprising scavengers, butchers, leather-workers, and others engaged in what were considered degrading occupations.

Under the peaceful regime of the Tokugawa shoguns there was a sociological change that in the cities almost amounted to a transformation. The most salient feature was the rise of the tradesmen and artisans to wealth and power. Many places of amusement sprang up, restaurants and tea-houses multiplied, jugglers, story-tellers, musicians, and other itinerant entertainers found audiences in every street, fêtes were frequently held in the temple compounds, the theatre rose to a position of prominence, and the yukwaku, or courtesan quarters, with their

medley of attractions, became established institutions.

The art of the Ukiyoé was a direct outcome of the gay life of this time. The inception of the school dates back to the closing years of the [pg 5] sixteenth century, when a reaction set in against the Chinese classicism of the Ashikaga period. This manifested itself in the choice of Japanese instead of Chinese subjects, and in novel treatment in which features of both the classic Kano and Tosa styles were combined, but which in many respects broke away from academic traditions. The reputed leader of the revolt was Iwasa Shoi, better known as Matahei, son of the Daimyo of Itami; but other distinguished artists, notably Kano Sanraku, also painted pictures in the new manner, which was not then held to constitute a distinct school. The subjects being drawn from the life of the people, these pictures were called Ukiyoé. É is the Japanese term for a picture or drawing.¹ Ukiyo, as originally written, had a Buddhistic signification and was applied to the secular as distinguished from the ecclesiastical world. Literally the word means “the miserable world,” but as now used it may be more accurately translated as “the passing (or floating) world of every-day life.”

Perhaps for the reason that Ukiyoé themes were not considered quite dignified, and because they did not express poetic ideas, the Ukiyo paintings of Matahei and his contemporaries and successors, though prized and much sought after, were seldom signed, and the identification of their authorship is a matter of extreme difficulty. For more than half a century works in this manner continued to be produced in considerable numbers, but the movement did not crystallize into a school until, in the person of Hishikawa Moronobu, a leader appeared to give it form and direction. Moronobu was an artist of rare distinction. His paintings were eagerly sought by the daimyos and the wealthier samurai. But Moronobu was a man of the people, and it was as a designer of book illustrations and later of ichimai-yé, or single-sheet prints, that he gave the impetus to Ukiyoé. For fifty years or more prior to his time books with engraved illustrations had been published in Japan, but they were comparatively few and the illustrations were poor and crudely executed. The twelve drawings Moronobu made for a book of instruction for women in etiquette and hygiene, published in 1659, marked a decided advance. This, so far as we know, [pg 6] was the first of a long series of books illustrated by him. Their popularity was deservedly great, and by them his fame became wide-spread. The illustrations were printed in black from blocks similar to those from which the text was printed, and were characterized by fine broad treatment and a rather wiry but strong and expressive outline.

About 1670 Moronobu began to issue large single-sheet prints which could be affixed to screens or mounted as kakemono. These prints, which were impressions in black from one block only, are known as sumi-yé—*sumi* being the Japanese name for Chinese—or, as we incorrectly call it, India—ink. They were designed to be coloured by hand, and apparently a part of the edition was so coloured before being placed on sale by the publishers. At first this colouring consisted of a few touches of yellow-green crudely laid on; later it became more elaborate, and occasionally we meet with prints that are very beautifully coloured, but in such cases it is impossible to tell when or by whom the colouring was done. The probability is that in some instances it was the work of purchasers of the prints.

Moronobu's pupils, of whom there were many, devoted themselves almost exclusively to painting. After his death in 1695, the production of prints fell chiefly into the hands of Torii Kiyonobu and his son Torii Kiyomasu, two artists who take rank among the most talented men of the Ukiyoé school. Moronobu had taken for the subjects of his prints historic incidents, the manners and customs of the people, and, in particular, women and their occupations and amusements. To these the Torii artists, seeing a new and fertile field for the print-designer in the rise of the theatre as a popular form of entertainment, added portraits of actors in the costumes of their most admired rôles. Especially esteemed were Kiyonobu's portraits of the first Danjûrô. During the Genroku period (1688-1704) the people developed a passion for the theatre that amounted to veritable madness. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century this reached a height that sorely troubled the Tokugawa rulers. To check it various expedients—among them the exclusion of women from the stage—were tried. They only added fuel to the flame. Certain gross practices were abolished. This helped to purify the theatre, but also to perpetuate it by removing the seeds [pg 7] of what must inevitably have meant its early decay. Actors of distinguished ability became popular idols. Their comings and goings were like royal progresses. Wherever they went, were it to view the cherry blossoms at Ueno, for a boating party on the river, or for a visit to the Yoshiwara, they moved in state. Yet their rank in the social scale was so low that they were looked upon as little better than eta. The earliest actors were contemptuously termed *kawara-mono* (river-bed folk), from the fact that the first theatrical performances in Japan were upon a stage erected in the dry bed of the Kamogawa at Kyoto. The stigma that attached to their origin and to the vulgarity of the early performances has never been entirely lifted. Many of the Ukiyoé artists felt it a degradation to make drawings of actors. Nevertheless the popular demand created a supply, and for

more than a century a large proportion of the enormous output of prints consisted of theatrical scenes and portraits of the performers.

KIYOMASU. Actors' Boating Party

KIYOMASU. Actors' Boating Party

Many of the prints produced during the early years of the eighteenth century were large single figures of actors, geishas, and women of the Yoshiwara. These were broadly treated, with strong, free brush-strokes based upon the technique of the Kano masters and quite different from Moronobu's style, which was more nearly like that of the Tosa painters. Each of the classical schools, I may explain, had its own peculiar methods, for which brushes of special shape were required. In their spontaneity, their freedom, their glorious sweep of line, these prints are among the finest works of the Ukiyoé school. Among them are many masterpieces of linear composition. Yet by the people of the upper classes they were regarded as hopelessly vulgar. Though the Kano painters used similar sweeping strokes, they laid great stress upon carefully modulated tone. The notan, or lightness and darkness of the ink in different parts of the drawing, was an essential quality. It should not be confused with chiaroscuro, the science of light and shade. Notan signifies merely difference in lightness and darkness of tone. In the early prints this did not appear. All the lines were uniformly black. And the addition of colouring which was looked upon as coarse and gaudy was a further offence to persons of refined taste.

[pg 8]

Our vision not being hampered by the canons of the Kano academy, we can appreciate the distinguished character of these compositions. Unquestionably the brush-work of a Sesshu, a Motonobu, or a Tanyu—to name a few only of the most eminent of the Japanese painters—has a precious quality not to be found in any printed line.² Nevertheless the primitive Ukiyoé prints have a freshness and vital force peculiarly their own. The word “primitive” as applied to these prints calls for a word of explanation. They are primitive, not in their art, which is highly developed, but merely as regards its application to wood-engraving.

The failure of Japanese connoisseurs to appreciate Ukiyoé art is not, however, entirely or even principally because of its technique. The art of the classical schools is deeply imbued with poetic feeling and usually is dignified in subject.

Ukiyoé art, on the contrary, is flippant, whimsical, comic. Except when it deals with portraits, landscapes, or birds and flowers—subjects that are not strictly Ukiyoé—it is seldom that the things depicted are intended to be taken quite seriously. In nearly every picture there is some joke, open or cleverly hidden, some amusing fantasy in the shape of a modern analogue or travesty of popular myth, well-known tale, or historical event. Sly hits at the vices or follies of the aristocrats are not uncommon. A very large proportion of the subjects deals with the theatre and the denizens of the Yoshiwara. To the Japanese of the upper classes Ukiyoé art was a synonym for the art of the underworld. It is not surprising that they failed to appreciate its merit. To give Ukiyoé paintings or prints an honourable place in one's house was a confession of lack of taste. Were there no other reason, the subjects for the most part rendered them unfit, if not impossible. The prints were indeed amusing, and therefore many of them were saved; but they were looked upon much as we regard the pictures in our comic periodicals. Even when the art in these is good, it is hard to disassociate it from the humour and to enjoy it for itself alone. More commonly we fail to appreciate it as art or even to think of it as such. So it was with the prints. To the Japanese they [pg 9] appeared little better than children's toys. In considering this we should not overlook the important circumstance that when first printed they were in general less charming than they are to-day. The wonderful colour that makes them so entrancing has come in large measure through the mellowing influence of time. Not infrequently this has wrought transformations that would seem incredible did not close study show clearly the changes that have taken place.

MASANOBU. Geisha playing Samisen.

MASANOBU. Geisha playing Samisen.

Even to-day inherited prejudice prevents wide-spread appreciation of the prints in the land of their origin. Our enthusiastic admiration is still more or less a mystery to our neighbours across the Pacific. Only now, when most of the fine prints have passed into the hands of European and American collectors, are the Japanese connoisseurs beginning to understand how it is that the Western art-lover, unfettered by any traditional point of view and not disturbed by any meanings the subject may hold or suggest, is able to perceive the glorious colour, the superb composition, the masterly treatment and rare beauty to which they have been blind.

The history of art is everywhere among civilized peoples a record of the influence of a succession of ideas, each in turn dominating for a longer or a shorter period the character of what is produced. When an idea has sufficient vitality to constitute the germ of a specific type of art, and artists of creative genius are inspired by it, the votaries working under the stimulus of a common ideal form what we designate as a school. "When left to pursue its course of development unchecked," each marked type of art, as John Addington Symonds pointed out in one of his essays, "passes through stages corresponding to the embryonic, the adolescent, the matured, the decadent, and the exhausted," This sequence, he showed, was clearly marked in the evolution of Italian painting, the Attic and the Elizabethan drama. Any of the classic schools of Japanese painting, the Kosé, the Yamato, the Sesshu, or the Kano, would furnish an excellent illustration, though in studying these movements it would be necessary to follow them back to their Chinese antecedents. The Ukiyoé school affords a particularly striking example. In the works of the earlier artists—Moronobu, Kiyonobu, Kiyomasu, and the Kwaigetsudoï group—we find [pg 10] superabundant vigour, swift inspiration, and splendid though sometimes brutal force. The note of prophecy that these works contain is found also in those of the next generation of artists, foremost among whom was Okumura Masanobu. The fire of enthusiasm still glows brightly, but more attention is paid to subtleties of style, to beauty of detail, and to the development of technical processes. Hand-coloured prints are superseded by those in which the colour as well as the black outline is printed. Ukiyoé has become an art of the printed pictures which in large measure have taken the place of paintings.

Then, after a brief interval of eager experiment and rapid changes, comes the flowering-time, when a group of great artists turn out by the thousand works in which spiritual intensity is combined with grace, beauty, refinement of composition, and technical perfection. This is the epoch of Harunobu, Shunshoï, Shigemasa, Koryusai, Kiyonaga, and Shunchoï.

The decline of the initial impetus that brought the school into being is plainly apparent in the works of the next generation. Utamaro was an artist of the very first rank, whose genius cannot be gainsaid; Eishi and Toyokuni were only a little less brilliant; but it was their misfortune to come upon the scene when the cycle of animating ideas had been exhausted. Too virile to be content merely to echo the performances of their predecessors, they spent their energy in inventing variations upon the perfected type. It was the only course open to them, but it led steadily and swiftly downward, though neither the artists nor the people who

gleefully applauded each successive innovation were conscious of the decadence.

With the appearance of still another generation of artists upon the scene, the degradation of the school was complete. Artistic feeling was obscured by blatant vulgarity and affectation. There was a steady letting down to the level of the popular taste, which was steadily lowered in consequence. The skill of the more able artists was expended in the production of works interesting chiefly as *tours de force*, more remarkable for technical than for artistic merit; the tendency toward exaggerated drawing became more pronounced; colouring grew more crude, raw, and over-vivid. Coincident with this decline in the art of [pg 11] the Popular School was a change for the worse in the fashions of the time. Loud patterns for brocades and other fabrics came into vogue; garments became showy and elaborate; coiffures, more especially those of the demi-monde, were often startling in their extravagance. As the prints were accurate mirrors of contemporary life, in these changed fashions may be found a partial explanation of the inferiority of the works of the later men. The Ukiyoé Ryūi was a school of design which laid its impress upon all of the arts. The prints were but one of its phases, though the principal and the most distinguished of them. The rise, culmination, and disintegration took place all along the line. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century the Ukiyoé school sank into the dotage of decrepitude, and then into the sleep from which there is no awakening. I choose this phrase deliberately. An art that is of the past can never be revived. We may strive to work in the style of Harunobu or of Kiyonaga. All we can do is to copy their forms and imitate their mannerisms. We cannot possibly get our inspiration from the same source as they; that dried up at the fountain-head long ago. The best work we can do in their style must necessarily lack creative force and be without a spark of real vitality.

Primarily the charm of the Ukiyoé colour-prints is due to the fact that the leading masters of the school were artists of exceptional power. It is also due to the fact that most of them³ made print-designing their chief occupation, to which they devoted their thought, time, and skill, and that with rare exceptions they were less distinguished as painters.

TOYONOBU. Actor reading Letter

TOYONOBU. Actor reading Letter

From about 1670, when Moronobu began to issue single-sheet prints, until about 1742, a period of at least seventy years, the prints were in black outline and were coloured by hand. They were, in fact, cheap paintings. Early in the eighteenth century the chief pigment used in colouring them was red lead. The Japanese name for this pigment is tan, and the prints upon which it appears are designated as tan-yé. About 1710 yellow and citrine were commonly used with the tan. Four or five years later a new style of hand-colouring, said to have been [pg 12] devised by Torii Kiyonobu, came into vogue and greatly modified the style in which the prints were designed. In place of tan he substituted beni, a very beautiful but fugitive red extracted from the saffron. This was used in combination with a greenish yellow (probably gamboge) and low-toned blues and purples. Finer details were introduced into the designs, and the colouring in general was more carefully done. In response to a growing demand for less expensive pieces smaller prints (hoso-yé) became common. To give brilliance to the pigments a little thin lacquer (urushi) was mixed with them, and, while wet, parts of the design were sprinkled with metallic powder, which was probably applied by blowing it through a small bamboo tube. These prints were known as urushi-yé, or lacquer prints. A little later the custom grew up of painting parts of the prints with black lacquer.

Not until the year 1742 did the practice begin of applying colour by impressions from flat wood blocks. Why the invention should have been so long delayed, and why, after it was once made, nearly fourteen years more should have elapsed before the number of colour-blocks was increased beyond two, are questions to which no certain answer is yet forthcoming. It is incredible that during the forty years when innumerable hand-coloured prints were issued no one should have conceived the idea of printing the colour as well as the black outline. Without doubt some practical difficulty connected with the printing stood in the way. Possibly the thing that awaited discovery was the trick of mixing rice paste with the colour to keep it from running. Or, as is more likely, it took a long while to discover a practical method of securing accurate register in impressions made upon damp paper which was liable to stretch or shrink during the printing process. Whatever the problem may have been, the honour of the solution is due to Okumura Masanobu. Being a publisher as well as an artist, he was no doubt alive to the economic advantage of a cheaper process and to the attraction of novelty. Some years earlier he had invented the hashira-yé, or pillar-print, and had also put forth a series of prints that show a fair understanding of the laws of linear perspective to which he gave the name of Ukiyé. Being an artist as well as a publisher, Masanobu perceived that the change in process called for a change

in the [pg 13] style of the designs. The very first of the new prints, therefore, were characterized by finer and more exquisite detail than was suitable for the hand-coloured editions. The colours used were beni and a soft green; and the name beni-yé, which had been applied to the hand-coloured prints in which beni was used, was also given to them. A happier selection of colours could not have been made. By thinning the red and modifying the hue of the green a wide range of effects was secured. Almost every possible combination and variation was tried during the fourteen or fifteen years that the beni-yé were in vogue. The world is far richer because of this long period before the number of colour-blocks was increased, since time was afforded to work out the decorative possibilities resulting from the limitation to two colours and black and white. This limitation demanded fine skill and creative resource in the invention of pattern and the distribution of the colours employed.⁴ The results achieved were remarkable. Until one has seen them it is impossible to realize that so much life and vivacity of colouring could be given by impressions from two blocks charged with rose and green.

KIYOMITSU. Daimyo Procession Game.

KIYOMITSU. Daimyo Procession Game.

By many the beni-yé are regarded as the choicest products of the school. So charming were they when first printed that they speedily drove the urushi-yé prints out of the market, with the exception of the tall hashira-yé, or pillar prints, of which hand-coloured editions continued to be produced for a year or two, to satisfy those who still wished paintings rather than prints. Most of the beni-yé that have survived until our time are very much faded. The beni has quite generally turned into a soft yellow or disappeared altogether. The green is more stable, but that also has in many instances become a warm citrine or russet. Extremely rare are the specimens in which the original colour has not suffered material modification.

From the testimony of the prints themselves it appears probable that very soon after Okumura Masanobu issued the first prints in beni and green, similar prints were put forth by Nishimura Shigenaga, Ishikawa [pg 14] Toyonobu, Torii Shiro (otherwise Kiyonobu the second), and all the Yedo print-designers, among them the veteran Torii Kiyomasu. None of these men seems to have attempted any

marked departure from the type established by Okumura. About 1755, however, a group of young men appeared upon the scene, who were fired with zeal for further experiments. The leaders were Torii Kiyomitsu, Kitao Shigemasa, and Suzuki Harunobu. Kiyomitsu began by trying novel colour schemes such as two tones of beni instead of beni and green. Then he tried a third colour-block. After this new developments followed in rapid succession. The variety and range of the colour schemes broadened almost from day to day. At first the wider resources proved an embarrassment, but the mastery attained in dealing with the simpler means soon enabled the artists to take advantage of them. Invention was stimulated. In 1764 a printer named Kinroku discovered a method by which printing in colours from many blocks became possible. We can only guess at the nature of the difficulty that was surmounted; but as it is known that the printing was usually done upon dampened paper, it is evident that the stretching or shrinking of the sheets, to which I have already referred, must have proved extremely troublesome, and that every additional block must have multiplied the liability to defective register. It is reasonably safe to assume, therefore, that to find some means of overcoming this was the problem which remained unsolved for so many years.

HARUNOBU. Young Woman before Torii.

HARUNOBU. Young Woman before Torii.

The name of Suzuki Harunobu is familiar to every admirer of Japanese prints. It is in large measure to his genius that the development of full-colour printing is due. He was not only the first artist to make use of the new process, but he took advantage of it to bring out prints of a novel type. Very dainty and graceful these were, and in the poetic allusions or quiet humour with which they were charged, and in the quality of the brush-strokes with which the drawings were executed, they made a direct appeal to men of taste. Success was instantaneous. By the year 1765 Harunobu had come to the front and distanced all competitors for popular favour. The serenity and compelling charm of his compositions brought him wide fame. Realizing the possibilities that now lay before him, he proudly exclaimed, "Why should I degrade [pg 15] myself by the delineation of actors?" His ambition, he said, was to become "the true successor of the painters in the department of printing"; that is to say, to design prints that should be worthy substitutes for paintings. Instead of restricting himself to a few primary or

secondary hues and the variations resulting from their superposition, he mixed his colours to get the precise tint desired, and he used as many colour-blocks as were needed for the effects at which he aimed. The Yedo-yé, or Yedo pictures, as the prints had been called from the fact that they were produced only at the eastern capital, were now denominated nishiki-yé, or brocade pictures, from the number of colours woven together in them. To the printing itself, the charging of the blocks with colour, the character and quality of the pigments and of the paper used, Harunobu gave careful attention, and these things were greatly improved as a result of his experiments.

Under his leadership the art now entered upon the period of its greatest triumphs. In the eager search for novel subjects scarcely anything was left untouched. History, mythology, and romance, the numberless fêtes and merrymakings of the people and the daily routine of their lives, representations of celebrated poets and heroes, scenes from the drama, portraits of popular actors and courtesans, the revels of the Yoshiwara, animals and plants, familiar scenes and famous landscapes, furnished motives for almost endless broadsheets and book illustrations. No other art was ever more crowded with human interest.

The forward movement in print-designing at this epoch was helped on by a number of highly gifted artists who seem to have worked together to some extent. Katsukawa Shunshō, who took up the theatrical branch of print-designing that Harunobu scorned, is one of the most distinguished masters of the Ukiyoé school. He was a designer of marked power, a colourist of the first rank. His works are not yet appreciated as they should be, but the finest of them yield pure aesthetic delight of most exalted quality. Kitao Shigemasa, Ippitsusai Buncho, and Isoda Koryusai also rank among the first-rate men of this period. In the contest for popular favour during the ten years following the death of Harunobu, which took place in the summer of 1770, it has been said that the guerdon rested upon Koryusai, but that is a mistake, [pg 16] for both Shunshō and Shigemasa stood higher in the estimation of qualified judges. All, however, were surpassed a few years later by Kiyonaga, the last great artist of the Torii line and the culminating figure in the history of the Popular School. He conquered by the rugged strength and marvellous quality of his brush-strokes, by the richness of his colouring and the ripe mastery he displayed over all the resources of his craft. But also he created a new type of design—that which found expression in the great diptychs and triptychs that stand as the triumphs of colour-printing. At the height of his power his influence over his contemporaries was so great that, without exception, the younger men among them copied his

style as closely as they could.

When Kiyonaga, about 1793, stopped designing prints, the decadence had already set in. The decade that followed was a period of rapid deterioration, with Utamaro as its particular evil genius. Yet many of the most splendid of the prints were produced in that decade. Where shall we look for anything finer than Eishi's wonderful series with the chocolate background, or his triptychs of the Prince Genji series? Where shall we find anything to equal the brilliant characterization of Sharaku's actor portraits? Where else shall we turn for such marvellously facile rhythmic line, such swift, vital handling as that which made Utamaro's masterpieces the despair of his many imitators? Toyokuni also designed many fine prints; but as he was a man of less force than the others I have named, he fell faster and farther than they did, and fewer of his works command our admiration.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

I have left myself little time to speak of two eminent artists, both of them world-renowned, who by their genius made the latter years of the Ukiyoé school as notable in their way as any in its entire history. Either Hokusai or Hiroshige might well engage our attention for an entire evening. Both were extraordinarily prolific; Hokusai was the more versatile and has the wider reputation. Both are among the greatest landscape artists the world has ever known. Their numerous prints of landscapes are a revelation of the possibilities of originality in composition and variety of interest in this field. Unless one has studied these prints in fine examples, it is impossible to realize how great is their [pg 17] merit. This is true of all the prints, but particularly true of Hiroshige's. Between the best impressions and the very good ones the difference is really astonishing. But the best are so extremely rare as to make it probable that because of the difficulty and the cost of printing, very few of them were issued—the publishers finding cheaper editions more profitable.

Though classed as Ukiyoé artists, Hokusai and Hiroshige really represent a separate movement which undoubtedly would have crystallized into a distinct school had worthy followers arisen to carry it forward, had the times been different, and, last but not least, had the genius of the two masters been less

transcendent.

In this sketch of the history of the art of Ukiyoé colour-printing only the more salient features have been touched upon. Of the prints themselves it is not too much to say that the finest of them are the most beautiful specimens of printing that have been done in any land at any time.

Yet none but the most primitive methods—or what from our point of view may seem such—were employed. The most wonderful among all the prints is but a “rubbing” or impression taken by hand from wood blocks. The artist having drawn the design with the point of a brush in outline upon thin paper, it was handed over to the engraver, who began his part of the work by pasting the design face downward upon a flat block of wood, usually cherry, sawn plankwise as in the case of the blocks used by European wood-engravers in the time of Dürer. The paper was then scraped at the back until the design showed through distinctly in every part. Next, the wood was carefully cut away, leaving the lines in relief, care being taken to preserve faithfully every feature of the brush-strokes with which the drawing was executed. A number of impressions were then taken in Chinese ink from this “key block” and handed to the artist to fill in with colour. This ingenious plan, which is manifestly an outgrowth of the early custom of colouring the ink prints (*sumi-yé*) by hand, and which perhaps would never have been thought of had not the colour itself been an afterthought, enabled the artist to try many experiments in colour arrangement with a minimum amount of labour. The colour scheme and ornamentation of the surfaces having been determined, the [pg 18] engraver made as many subsidiary blocks⁵ as were required, the parts meant to take the colour being left raised and the rest cut away. Accurate register was secured by the simplest of devices. A right-angled mark engraved at the lower right-hand corner of the original block, and a straight mark in exact line with its lower arm at the left, were repeated upon each subsequent block, and, in printing, the sheets were laid down so that their lower and right-hand edges corresponded with the marks so made. The defective register which may be observed in many prints was sometimes caused by unequal shrinking or swelling of the blocks. In consequence of this, late impressions are often inferior to the early ones, even though printed with the same care, and from blocks that had worn very little. The alignment will usually be found to be exact upon one side of the print, but to get further out of register as the other side is approached.

The printing was done on moist paper with Chinese ink and colour applied to the

blocks with flat brushes. A little rice paste was usually mixed with the pigments to keep them from running and to increase their brightness. Sometimes dry rice flour was dusted over the blocks after they were charged. To this method of charging the blocks much of the beauty of the result may be attributed. The colour could be modified, graded, or changed at will, the blocks covered entirely or partially. Hard, mechanical accuracy was avoided. Impressions differed even when the printer's aim was uniformity. Sometimes, in inking the "key block," which was usually the last impressed, some of the lines would fail to receive the pigment, or would be overcharged. This was especially liable to happen when the blocks were worn and the edges of the lines became rounded. A little more or a little less pigment sometimes made a decided difference in the tone of the print, and, it may be noted, has not infrequently determined the nature and the extent of the discolouration wrought by time.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

In printing, a sheet of paper was laid upon the block and the printer rubbed off the impression, using for the purpose a kind of pad called [pg 19] a *baren*. This was applied to the back of the paper and manipulated with a circular movement of the hand. By varying the dampness of the paper and the degree of pressure the colour could be forced deep into the paper, or left upon the outer fibres only, so that the whiteness of those below the surface would shine through, giving the peculiar effect of light which is seen at its best in some of the surimono (prints designed for distribution at New Year's or other particular occasions) by Hokusai and his contemporaries. Uninked blocks were used for embossing portions of the designs. The skill of the printer was a large factor in producing the best results. Even the brilliancy of the colour resulted largely from his manipulation of the pigments and various little tricks in their application. The first impressions were not the best, some forty or fifty having to be pulled before the block would take the colour properly. Many kinds of paper were used. For the best of the old prints it was thick, spongy in texture, and of an almost ivory tone. The finest specimens were printed under the direct personal supervision of the artists who designed them. Every detail was looked after with the utmost care. No pains were spared in mixing the tints, in charging the blocks, in laying on the paper so as to get the best possible impressions. Experiments were often tried by varying

the colour schemes. Prints of important series, as, for example, Hokusai's famous "Thirty-six Views of Fuji," are met with in widely divergent colourings.

The pigments most frequently used were comparatively few, and different lots of the same pigment seem to have been far from uniform in hue. As to this and some other points upon which we should be glad to have light, no very certain information exists. We do not know how soon some of the colours began to fade. Internal evidence indicates that in some instances the change took place within a comparatively short time, as in the case of the lovely blue used by Harunobu and Shunsho chiefly as a colour for sky and water. It appears to have been a compound tint formed of blue mixed with some other colour to modify its intensity. In the change which followed—possibly a chemical one—the blue disappeared in whole or in part, leaving in its stead a buff hue having peculiar depth and a soft, velvety texture. To our [pg 20] eyes the modified colour is often far more beautiful than the original, but the variation, it may safely be asserted, was not desired by the artist.

The quality of the colour wrought by these changes explains why it is not possible to-day to reproduce the prints successfully. The printing process is still in use, and, as the plates in such publications as "Kokka" attest, very splendid results are still yielded by it. But some of the old pigments cannot now be obtained; and if they could be, we should still have to wait long years for time to mellow the prints made with them. Indigo can be had, but it is not the same indigo and its colour is not quite like the old, which was extracted from blue cloth imported from China. Beni can be made, but the secret of the blue added to it to produce the divine violet seen in many of the prints has been lost, as has that of the precious moss-green used by Utamaro. Many reproductions have been made during the last twenty-five years, and some of them are extremely clever; but the printing lacks depth, and when placed beside the old works they appear dull and lifeless.

Colour-prints were made for many purposes. To some extent they were used as advertisements. Incidentally they served as fashion plates. Some were regularly published and sold in shops. Others were designed expressly upon orders from patrons, to whom the entire edition—sometimes a very small one—was delivered. The number struck from any block, or set of blocks, varied widely. Of the more popular prints many editions were printed, each one, as might be expected, inferior to those that preceded it. Not infrequently the Yedo publishers removed from their out-of-date blocks the marks showing their imprint, and sold

them to publishers in Osaka and Nagoya, by whom poor and cheap editions were issued. Eiraku-ya of Nagoya, in particular, is said to have bought many old blocks, some of which were revamped in various ways before being reprinted.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

HARUNOBU. The Sleeping Elder Sister.

In a number of instances, when blocks had worn out or had been accidentally destroyed in the fires by which Yedo was ravaged, the artists were called upon to make new drawings of the same subjects. Usually, in such cases, the second design differed very little from the first, save in such details as the patterns upon the garments of the [pg 21] figures and the styles of hair arrangement, which invariably reflected the current mode. Kiyonaga's "Iris Garden" and his well-known triptych "Ushiwaka Serenading Jorurihime" are notable examples of this practice. Two designs of each of these were issued, the intervals between the appearance of the first and second being, in each instance, about three or four years. For the later editions of many of the prints designed by Harunobu changes were made in the blocks, and the number was sometimes increased and sometimes decreased. After his death re-engravings of a number of his prints appear to have been made, as well as forged works in imitation of his style to which his name was attached.

Most of the prints were sold at the time of publication for a few sen. The finer ones brought relatively higher prices, and such prints as the great triptychs and still larger compositions by Kiyonaga, Eishi, Toyokuni, Utamaro, and other leading artists could never have been very cheap. In general, however, the price was small and they were regarded as ephemeral things. Many were used to ornament the small screens that served to protect kitchen fires from the wind, and in this use were inevitably soiled and browned by smoke. Others, made into kakemono or mounted upon the sliding partitions of the houses, perished in the fires by which Japanese cities have been devastated; or, if in houses that chanced safely to run the gauntlet of fires, typhoons, cloudbursts, and other mishaps, their colours faded and their surfaces were rubbed until little more than dim outlines were left. These lost prints include a very large proportion of those that were most beautiful, and especially of those having inoffensive subjects.

Fortunately, though the upper classes did not consider the prints as works of art,

that did not prevent them from buying them for the entertainment they afforded. The samurai, though they considered it degrading to take part in the amusements of the lower classes and affected to despise the vulgarity of the theatre, sometimes attended the performances in disguise. And when they returned to their home provinces with their feudal lords after the six months of every year spent in the capital, they usually carried with them large quantities of prints. Country people visiting Yedo rarely returned without taking [pg 22] many of these cheap souvenirs of the city to distribute among their neighbours. Of course many were destroyed, but the Japanese have always been accustomed to take care of their possessions, and so many thousands of prints were neatly packed away in boxes and placed in the kuras, or fireproof storehouses. There they were often spoiled by mildew, the dread foe of the Japanese housewife, and eaten by insects. Those pasted in albums, as were many of the noted series by Hokusai and Hiroshige, fared better than the loose ones.

HARUNOBU. Woman reading Letter.

HARUNOBU. Woman reading Letter.

Thus it has come about that in spite of the enormous number printed, really choice specimens are very rare. Of many of the most important only two or three copies in good condition are known. Even at the time of their issue the number of those in what may be called the “proof” state could not have been large. The best printing, as has already been pointed out, was not only difficult and relatively expensive—perhaps prohibitively expensive in many instances except for a small number of impressions—but when the blocks had worn so that the edges of the finest lines had lost their sharpness, it was quite impossible. Collections of prints were rarely made. Literary men often saved such as were inscribed with odes of especial merit, or had recondite meanings that appealed to them, and to their care we are indebted for the preservation of the majority of those that have survived in perfect or nearly perfect condition.

For those who have learned the elements of their language the charm of the prints is very great. I should perhaps say the charm of some of the prints is very great; for, as we learn what we ought to admire, we learn to discriminate, at first between the works of the different artists, then between different works by the same artist, and finally between different copies of the same work. The truth is

that the prints are only in a remote sense to be spoken of as reproductions. Each impression is more or less an individual work of art; the difference in quality between one and another is often astonishingly wide.

In conclusion it may be well to specify briefly some of the qualities in the prints that appeal to people of taste. In the first place, there is the compelling charm of colour. Equally notable are excellence of composition, grace, beauty, and sweep of line, distinctive character, [pg 23] daringness of conception, and perfect balance of both line and mass. Collectively the prints furnish the clearest exemplification of the basic principles of design that the world has to offer. Nowhere else can we find so much accomplished with simple means. Technically, also, they fulfil every requirement. Considered merely as wood-engravings, they are of the first order of excellence. Though the drawing is seldom scientifically accurate, it is, nevertheless, of exquisite refinement and subtlety. In short, the best prints are creative works of very high order which amply justify our admiration because of their intrinsic merit.

[pg 24]

KORYUSAI. Musume leaping from Temple Balcony.

KORYUSAI. Musume leaping from Temple Balcony.

[pg 25]

CATALOGUE OF A LOAN COLLECTION OF
JAPANESE COLOUR-PRINTS

THE JAPAN SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

FIFTH AVENUE BUILDING. APRIL 19 TO
MAY 19, 1911

[pg 26] [pg 27]

INTRODUCTION

The leading masters of the Ukiyoé school were a group of very great artists. The names of Kiyonaga, Harunobu, Okumura Masanobu, Utamaro, Hokusai, and Hiroshige belong in the category of those whose fame is world-wide.

SHUNSHO. Woman in Red.

SHUNSHO. Woman in Red.

The finest of the colour-prints designed by these men and their fellow-artists are masterpieces of rare distinction. This does not mean that all of their works should be so classed. The method by which the prints were produced enabled the artists to turn them out rapidly, and many were made that were trivial in character. They served almost as many purposes in their time as engravings, etchings, lithographs, and the photographic process reproductions do with us to-day. Naturally they varied widely in merit and in quality. Many have been preserved, but the important prints by the greater artists are unfortunately very rare; few of them have survived the vicissitudes of time, and fewer still in good condition.

The inception of the Ukiyoé school dates back to the early years of the seventeenth century, when a painter named Iwasa Matahei, departing from the traditional subjects of the painters of the classic schools, made pictures of dancing-girls and scenes of every-day life. The first prints were made about 1660 by Hishikawa Moronobu and were in simple black outline. They were sometimes coloured by hand with a few touches of colour roughly laid on, probably by the publisher's assistants.

In the early years of the seventeenth century a style of colouring known as *tan-yé*

(from the predominant use of a red-lead pigment known as *tan*) came into vogue. A little later prints were sold with more elaborate hand-colouring. Lacquer was mixed with the pigments to give them brilliancy, and the prints were known as *urushi-yé*, or lacquer prints. In or about the year 1742 Okumura Masanobu began [pg 28] to make the first true colour-prints. For these he used only two colours, green and a soft red called *beni*, and the prints were known as *beni-yé*. For some years difficulties connected with the printing prevented the use of more than two colour-blocks, and not until 1764 was a method discovered which made it possible to use as many blocks as might be required. Suzuki Harunobu was the first artist to take advantage of the discovery. The prints designed by him during the next six years are among the finest works of the school. Under his guidance and that of Katsukawa Shunsho, the art of colour-printing was brought to perfection. Then followed a period when many prints of precious quality were produced. The culmination was reached during the seventeen hundred and eighties, when Torii Kiyonaga turned out his marvellous single sheets, diptychs, and triptychs.

Many splendid prints were designed in the next decade. It was then that Eishi made his delightful triptychs, that Sharaku stirred the people of Yedo with his wonderful caricature portraits of popular actors, and that Utamaro gained wide fame by the products of his facile brush. It was, however, a period of decadence, and by the end of the century a considerable distance had been travelled upon the downward path.

The prints made in the nineteenth century were, for the most part, coarse and gaudy, the chief exceptions being those designed by Hokusai and Hiroshige. These men, though classed as of the Ukiyoé school, in reality represent what may more properly be termed another “movement” growing out of, but distinct from, the Ukiyoé art that reached its apogee under Kiyonaga.

While the present exhibition includes specimens of most of the different kinds of prints—some of them, more especially the earlier ones, of extreme rarity—historical completeness has not been attempted. The aim has been rather to show such prints of exceptional quality and beauty as are available in New York.

FREDERICK W. GOOKIN

[pg 29] [pg 30] [pg 31]



CATALOGUE

HISHIKAWA MORONOBU

Moronobu, who was born probably in 1625 and died in 1695, was the first important Japanese artist to design prints. As a painter he is highly renowned. He illustrated many books and made a considerable number of single-sheet prints, which were all either in plain black or coloured by hand. His works are now very rare.⁶

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

- 1 *Large sumi-yé (ink print)*. Matsukaze-Murasame; a nobleman and two ladies at the seashore watching two women dipping salt water in buckets.
- 2 *Sumi-yé*. A man and a woman seated on the floor of a room.
- 3 *Sumi-yé*. Woman reading from a book to a man reclining on the floor by her side. Near them a maid-servant and utensils containing refreshments.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

- 4 *Sumi-yé*. Scene in the Yoshiwara.

TORII KIYONOBU

Founder of the Torii line and one of the leading artists of the Ukiyoé school.

Inventor of the *tan-yé*, or prints coloured by hand with red lead (Japanese *tan*). He was born in 1664 and died on August 22, 1729. His style of drawing was characterized by great boldness and vigour.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

5 *Large tan-yé*. The actor Dekijima Hanya as a woman seated upon a sakura tree in bloom.

6 *Small tan-yé*. The actor Ikushima Daikichi as a woman holding two small dogs.

7 *Small tan-yé*. The actor Kamimura Kichisaburo as a dancing-girl.

8 *Large hand-coloured print*. The actor Ikushima Daikichi as an oiran on parade, followed by Ôtani Hiroji as a servant holding an umbrella over her.

9 *Tall hand-coloured print*. The actor Bando Hikosaburo.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

10 *Urushi-yé*. Ichikawa Monnosuke as a strolling player carrying a monkey on his back.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

11 *Urushi-yé*. The elopement of Yaoya Hanbei and O-Chiya.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

12 *Urushi-yé*. A dancing-girl.

TORII KIYOMASU

Eldest son of Kiyonobu, whom he succeeded as the head of the Torii line. His work closely resembles that of his father. He was born about 1685 and died on January 2, 1764.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

KIYONAGA. Holiday Group at Gotenyama.

KIYONAGA. Holiday Group at Gotenyama.

- 13*Large sumi-yé.* An actors' boating party on the Sumidagawa.
- 14*Large tan-yé.* The actors Yoshizawa Ayame and Kanto Koroku.
- 15*Large tan-yé.* The actors Kanto Koroku and Ikushima Daikichi.
- 16*Large beni-yé.* Ichikawa Danjuro as an enraged warrior.
- 17*Beni-yé.* Onoe Kikugoro in a female rôle.
- 18*Beni-yé.* Scene from a drama. The actors Tomazawa Saijiro (on horseback), Oitani Hiroji, and Segawa Kikunojo. The beni has turned to a low-toned yellow.
- 19*Urushi-yé.* Scene from a drama. Oitani Oniji (on horseback) threatening Sannogawa Ichimatsu in the rôle of a woman who has seized his bridle rein.
- 20*Beni-yé.* Scene from a drama. Sawamura Sojuro as Sasaki no Saburo and Nakamura Tomijuro as Mago no Koroku.

FURUYAMA MOROMASA

Pupil, and perhaps the son, of Moronobu. He devoted himself chiefly to painting, but designed a few prints, most of which are ukiyé, or perspective pictures, in the style of Okumura Masanobu.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

- 21*Large hand-coloured ukiyé, or perspective print.* A game of ken in a

room in a nobleman's house.

OKUMURA MASANOBU

One of the most eminent of the Ukiyoé artists. His drawings were greatly admired for their rare combination of force and refinement, and he exercised wide influence over his contemporaries and successors to the end of the eighteenth century. He was the first artist to use blocks from which prints were coloured in flat tints. These were printed in the red known as beni, green, and black, and were known as beni-yé. He was also the first artist to make the tall, narrow pillar prints (ha-shira-yé), and was the inventor of the perspective prints which he called *ukiyé*. His true name was Okumura Genpachi, and he was commonly known as honya (bookseller) Genpachi, from the fact that he was the proprietor of a wholesale and retail book and print shop at the sign of the “red gourd” in Tori-shio choi, Yedo.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

22*Large sumi-yé.* Woman seated by a writing-table, reading a book.

23*Urushi-yé.* Bando Hikosaburo as a warrior resisting the opening of a castle door.

24*Tall beni-yé.* A geisha playing upon a samisen.

25*Large sumi-yé.* A woman with a pet cat watching a man dip water from a chozubachi.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

26*Large beni-yé.* Segawa Kikunojo as an oiran lighting her pipe at a hibachi in the hands of her kamuro, and Sannogawa Ichimatsu as a man holding an umbrella over her.

27*Undivided beni-yé triptych.* Street scene. A boy kneeling to put on a woman's geta; a man playing upon a shakuhachi; and another man carrying an umbrella.

28 *Undivided triptych*. Three women carrying umbrellas.

OKUMURA TOSHINOBU

Toshinobu, the son of Masanobu, was an artist of decided talent who died young. His known works, which resemble those of his father, are all *urushi-yé*, and were designed about 1730-1736.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

29 Ichimura Uzaemon as a dancing-girl.

30 Woman dressing.

31 Sanjo KentaroÏ in a female rôle.

TSUNEKAWA SHIGENOBU

An early Ukiyoé artist of whom little is known. His prints are extremely rare.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

32 *Urushi-yé*. Arashi Wakano in the rôle of Shida no KotaroÏ.

NISHIMURA SHIGENAGA

Son of Shigenobu. Born in 1697 and died in 1756. An artist of ability who exercised marked influence upon the development of the school. His prints are very uneven in quality.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

33 *Tall hand-coloured print.* The actor Sannogawa Ichimatsu as a woman holding a folded letter.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

34 *Urushi-yé.* Segawa Kikunojo as a woman holding a warrior's helmet.
35 *Beni-yé.* Procession of the Korean ambassadors.

ISHIKAWA TOYONOBU

One of the most important of the Ukiyoé masters. Born in 1711, died in 1785. Pupil of Shigenaga, and probably of Masanobu whose style he closely assimilated.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

36 *Large beni-yé.* The actors Segawa Kikunojo and Sannogawa Ichimatsu.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

37 *Wide print from three colour-blocks.* Women and children at the seashore.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

38 *Tall hand-coloured print.* Segawa Kikunojo as a woman reading a letter.
39 *Two sheets from a beni-yé triptych.* Musume carrying umbrellas.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

40*Beni-yé*. Mother and son.

41*Print from three colour-blocks*. Boys rolling a large snowball.

42*Print from three colour-blocks*. Man struggling with a refractory umbrella; a woman looking on.

[pg 36]

TORII KIYOHIRO

KIYONAGA. Picnic Party.

KIYONAGA. Picnic Party.

Pupil of Kiyomasu. His known works are exclusively *beni-yé*, executed from about 1745 to about 1755.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

43*Beni-yé*. Nakamura Hatsugoro as Sakura no Suké.

TORII SHIRO

Known as Kiyonobu the second, all of his prints being signed Torii Kiyonobu. He was the eldest son of Kiyomasu. Worked from about 1740 to about 1755, when it is probable that his death occurred. Some of the most charming of the *beni-yé* prints are from his hand.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

44*Beni-yé*. Yamamoto Iwanojo^l as a woman dancing by a fox-trap in a rice field under a blossoming cherry tree.

TORII KIYOMITSU

Second son of Kiyomasu, whom he succeeded as the head of the Torii line. An artist of distinction. Was the first to add a third colour-block to the original two. He was born in 1735 and died in 1785. After 1765 he designed only a few prints, and appears to have designed none later than about 1768.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

45*Wide print from three colour-blocks*. The No^l performance of “Musume Do^ljo^lji.”

46*Wide print from three colour-blocks*. Daimyo procession game by women and children.

47*Print from three colour-blocks*. Iwai Hanshiro^l as a woman reading a letter while seated upon a carabao.

48*Beni-yé*. Scene from a drama. Ichimura Kamezo^l (standing) as Wakemi Goro^l and Nakamura Tomiju^lro^l as Akoya.

SUZUKI HARUNOBU

The central figure in Ukiyo^e and the eminent master under whose hand the art of colour-printing was brought to perfection in the sixties of the eighteenth century. He was a draughtsman of extreme elegance and power, and his works have a charm that is peculiarly their own. He died on July 7, 1770, when, says Shiba Kokan in his book “Kokan Kokai-ki,” he “had hardly passed his fortieth year.”

LENT BY SAMUAL ISHAM.

- 49 Girl attendant in an archery gallery gathering up arrows. One sheet of a diptych.
- 50 A young woman showing a caged bird to a young man seated before her, and surreptitiously taking a love letter from him.
- 51 A vendor of fan mounts stopping to talk to a young woman standing in front of a shop.
- 52 *Hashira-yé*. Woman writing a love letter.
- 53 *Hashira-yé*. Woman holding a pet dog.
- 54 Burlesque scene. Girls carrying Daikoku (the genius of wealth—one of the “Seven Fortune-beings”).

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

- 55 Girls carrying Daikoku. A later impression with different colouring.
- 56 An archer and two girls near a screen. Calendar for 1765.
- 57 Young woman before a torii, carrying a hammer and nails with which to perform an incantation.
- 58 Two young women on their way to the public bath-house through a storm of snow and rain.
- 59 Two girls on a terrace near a torii, in the time of the cherry-blossoming.
- 60 Two girls gathering mume flowers from a tree overhanging a wall.
- 61 Woman reading a letter by the light of an andon (portable lamp with wind screen) which another woman is trimming.
- 62 Geisha and a young girl standing on the bank near the rapids of the Tamagawa.
- 63 Young woman seated in a window, conversing with another young woman seated on the floor and holding a picture-book.
- 64 Young man removing snow from the geta of a young woman.
- 65 Woman lying upon the floor of a room, reading a book, and another woman standing beside her, holding a pipe.
- 66 Young woman seated on a veranda after her bath, having her back massaged by her maid.
- 67 Young man talking to a girl through the bars of a window.
- 68 A burlesque apparition of Fugen. Instead of the Buddhist divinity, a

young woman seated on an elephant appears on a cloud before a priest kneeling in prayer.

69Lovers walking in the snow under an umbrella. One of Harunobu's most distinguished prints.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

70The Sleeping Elder Sister. First state. Early impression signed by the printer, Kyosen.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

71The Sleeping Elder Sister. Second state. Changes made in the blocks and colouring.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

72The Sleeping Elder Sister. Still later impression. Colouring changed again, and the number of blocks increased from ten to thirteen.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

73The Hole in the Wall.

74Mother holding her infant son.

75At the entrance gate.

76Mother taking her infant son from another woman and handing her a letter.

77Lovers in a palace.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

78Musume walking up a flight of steps leading to a temple.

79Lovers playing battledore and shuttlecock; the young man climbing a ladder to disengage the shuttlecock caught upon the branch of a mume tree.

80Hashira-yé. Woman in night attire standing by her bedside reading a letter.

SHIBA KOKAN

An artist who is best known as a clever imitator of his master, Harunobu, whose signature he forged upon a number of prints. He also used the “goi,” or studio name, Harushige in signing prints in the Harunobu manner. In later years he painted pictures in semi-European style, and made copper-plate engravings which were coloured by hand. He was born in 1747 and died in 1818.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

81The courtyard of a house in the Yoshiwara. A woman reading a letter and a girl attendant standing beside her holding a tray. Signed Harunobu.

SHOSHOKEN

This is the pseudonym of an artist of distinction whose identity has not been determined. His known works are calendar prints for 1765.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

82Stout lady crossing a room in a palace supported by two attendants. The use of gold leaf is notable.

KITAO SHIGEMASA

One of the noted artists of the school. Was famous for his skill as a calligrapher, being reputed to have no superior in his day in either of the “three capitals,” Yedo, Kyoto, or Osaka. His prints, which are rare, are generally of much distinction. He was born in 1740, and died in the second month of Bunsei 3 (February or March, 1820).

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

83Children's puppet show.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

84*Beni-yé*. Segawa Kikunojo and Ichimura Uzaemon as Izumo no Okuni and Nagoya Sanza, two komuso, playing upon shaku-hachi.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

85Two geishas.

ISODA KORYUSAI

The most important pupil of Harunobu, whose style he followed closely in his early works. Later he developed a manner of his own. As a designer of pillar prints and of prints of birds, he was especially successful. He was a samurai and associated with samurai of the superior class. The director of the mint was one of his most intimate friends and patrons. About 1781 he gave up print-designing,

devoted himself to painting, and was given the honorary title of Hokyo. The dates of his birth and death are not known.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

86*Hashira-yé*. Musume leaping from the balcony of Kiyomidzu temple with an umbrella as a parachute.

87Woman standing on the engawa of a house, admiring snow-laden bamboo branches; back of her, a girl and a young boy looking through a window.

88A Yoshiwara beauty arranging flowers; two girl attendants looking on.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

89*Hashira-yé*. Musume carrying her infant brother.

90*Hashira-yé*. Young woman poling a boat in a lily-pond.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

91A Yoshiwara beauty on parade, attended by a girl and a boy.

92*Hashira-yé*. The bijin Juroïjin. A young woman is represented in place of the long-life being whose attributes are a crane and a tortoise.

KATSUKAWA SHUNSHO

A contemporary of Harunobu and one of the greatest of the Ukiyoé artists. He was highly renowned in his day and had many pupils who became famous. Most of his prints were portraits of actors in character. He was born in 1726 and died on January 22, 1793.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

93Segawa Kikunojo as a woman holding a red fan.

94Two actors in character. The seated figure is Danjūro, the leading “star” of the Yedo stage.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

95Actor in a female rôle.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

96Iwai Hanshiro as a woman standing and holding a fan behind her.

97Yamashita Kinsaku in a female rôle.

98Actor of the Ichikawa line in the rôle of Shibaraku at the Ichimura theatre.

99Oitani Hiroji as an Amazake vendor.

100*Hashira-yé*. Nobleman carrying a court lady on his back. Probably a parody upon the suicide of Ohan and Choyaemon.

101*Wide hashira-yé*. The Woman in Red.

IPPITSUSAI BUNCHO

An artist of samurai rank who, for a few years, designed actor prints in the manner of Shunsho, which have great distinction of style and colour. He was celebrated also as a writer of comic odes. He died on May 18, 1796.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

BUNCHO. Actor as Woman talking to Men.

BUNCHO. Actor as Woman talking to Men.

102Bando Hikosaburo as a woman of the Yoshiwara talking to a group of men through the misé.

103Nakamura Tomijūro as Josan no Miya.

KIYONAGA. Man and two Women approaching Temple.

KIYONAGA. Man and two Women approaching Temple.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

104A Yoshiwara beauty accompanied by her kamuro (girl attendant) bearing a cage of fireflies.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

105Ichikawa Korazō as a man carrying an actor's dressing-case.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

106Scene from a drama. Yamashita Kinsaku as a woman holding a roll of paper, conversing with Ichikawa Komazō, who holds a letter in his hand.

KATSUKAWA SHUNKO

Pupil of Shunsho and generally regarded as his most talented follower. His career as a print-designer was cut short by a stroke of paralysis when he was in his forty-fifth or forty-sixth year, but he lived for about [pg 43] forty years thereafter as a recluse at Zenfukuji temple, Azabu, Yedo, where he died in 1827.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

- 107Iwai Hanshiro in a female rôle.
108The actor Ichikawa Monnosuke.
109Nakamura Tomijūro as a tsuzumi player.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

- 110Arashi Tatsuzo as a woman flower-vendor.

KATSUKAWA SHUNYEI

Pupil of Shunshō and an artist of ability. At first, for a short time, he called himself Shunjō. He was born in 1767, and died on December 13, 1819.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

- 111A bijin.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

- 112Ichikawa Monnosuke in a female rôle.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

- 113Scene from the tenth act of “Chushingura.”
114Ichikawa Komazō.

UTAGAWA TOYOHARU

Pupil of Toyonobu. As a painter his reputation is justly high. He did not design many prints. He was born in 1735 and died on March 3, 1814.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

114Cock, hen and chickens.

[pg 44]

TORII KIYONAGA

Everything considered, the greatest artist of the Ukiyoé school and the culminating figure in its forward movement. He was born in 1742 and died in 1815. His finest prints were designed between 1780 and 1790.

LENT BY SAMUEL ISHAM.

116The Writing-lesson.

117Fair travellers resting on a bench by the roadside.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

118Two geishas entertaining a young man.

119Court ladies on the engawa of a palace.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

120Three girls going to the baths at the hot springs near Miyanoshita.

121Man and two women masquerading in komuso's attire.

- 122Group of three women and a boy.
123Two women standing beside a seated geisha who is playing on a samisen.
124Yoshiwara beauty attended by two women (shinzo) and two girls (kamuro).
125Two young women and a servant on the balcony of an inn.
126Family group on their way to a temple for the naming ceremony of the boy who is carried on the shoulders of an attendant.
127An actor and two women examining utensils for the tea ceremony.
128Women and children promenading in summer costume.
129Scene from a drama. Two actors playing the game of “go” with mume blossoms, and a third actor as a woman in the rôle of an umpire standing between them.
130Two young women walking under an umbrella and followed by a servant.
131Man in a black haori approaching a temple through the snow, accompanied by two women.
132*Diptych*. Group of women under a cherry tree.
133*Diptych*. Holiday group under the cherry trees at Gotenyama. One of a series of twelve diptychs that are among Kiyonaga's finest works.
134Boating party under Ryogoku bridge. Two sheets of a triptych.
135*Triptych*. The Peony (botan) Show.
136*Triptych*. Women landing from a pleasure boat.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

- 137*Hashira-yé*. Woman in winter costume.
138*Triptych*. A picnic party under the cherry trees.
139Group of women on the bank of the Sumida river.
140Group of women near a temple.
141Three women at a public bath-house.

KATSUKAWA SHUNCHO

Pupil of Shunshō. Followed the style of Torii Kiyonaga. His works closely resemble those of the Torii master, but have less force. Worked from about 1775

to about 1795. In some of his later prints he imitated Eishi's prints in the Utamaro manner. The dates of his birth and death are not known.

LENT BY SAMUAL ISHAM.

142 One sheet of a triptych showing a nobleman's mansion from the garden,
with the people engaged in various occupations.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

143 Women watching girls bouncing balls.

144 *Diptych*. Group at the entrance to a temple.

145 Three women in a temple compound.

SHUNCHO. Women watching Girls bouncing Balls.

SHUNCHO. Women watching Girls bouncing Balls.

[pg 46]

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

146 Group of girls at a tea booth by the seashore.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

147 A picnic party. Two sheets of a triptych.

148 Women picking wild flowers under a cherry tree in bloom.

HOSODA EISHI

One of the foremost artists of the school. He was a samurai of high rank, and a pupil of Kano Eisen. For three years before he took to Ukiyoé he held an official post in the household of the shogun Iyeharu. Eishi was a master of all the resources of the art of colour-printing and his prints are characterized by great elegance and refinement. He worked from about 1782 to 1800, when he gave up print-designing. He died in 1829.

LENT BY SAMUAL ISHAM.

149*Triptych*. Eight women and a man playing the game of “Catch the fox.”

150Group of Yoshiwara women and attendants.

151Someyama and her kamuro playing with a pet dog.

152Yoshiwara women admiring a branch of mume tree with unopened flower buds.

153*Triptych*. Fête in a nobleman's palace. Ladies composing poems.

EISHI. Fête in a nobleman's palace.

EISHI. Fête in a nobleman's palace.

LENT BY MRS. WILLIAM BENJAMIN WOOD.

154Another copy of the foregoing triptych. Shows how beautifully the purple changes by chemical decomposition.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

155Oiran and attendants on parade.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

156A Yoshiwara beauty. Ink proof of the key block.

157Two women entering a room in the palace of Prince Genji, where a young girl is seated playing with a kitten.

YEISHOSAI CHOKI

An artist of ability, though not quite of the first rank. His prints are rare. He worked at first in the style of Kiyonaga. Later he imitated Utamaro, and changed his “goi,” or studio name, to Momokawa Shiko.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR.

158Woman and child catching fireflies.

TOSHUSAI SHARAKU

This artist was by profession a performer of the stately and aristocratic No dramas in the service of Hachisuka, Daimyo of Awa. During the period from about 1790 to 1795 he designed a small number of caricature portraits of actors, which have great force and distinguished character.

LENT BY YAMANAKA & COMPANY.

159The actor⁷ Tanimura Torazo in the rôle of Kakogawa Honzo.

160Ichikawa Ebizo in the rôle of Ko no Moronao. This print bears an inscription, probably contemporary, giving the date 1794.

161Onoe Matsusuke as one of the Loyal Ronin.

162Rando Hikosaburo in the rôle of Yuranosuke.

163Iwai Hanshiro in the rôle of Oishi, wife of Yuranosuke.

164Ichikawa Monnosuke as one of the Loyal Ronin.

165Morita Kanya as one of the Loyal Ronin.

166Segawa Tominojo in the rôle of Kaoyo Gozen, wife of Yenya.

- 167Sawamura Sojuro in the rôle of Yenya Hanguwan.
168Arashi Tatsuzo in the rôle of Yoichibei.
169Sakata Hangoro as Ten-ichi-bo Hotaku.
170Segawa Tominojo and Nakamura Manjuro in female rôles.
171Nakajima Utaemon and Nakamura Konozo.
172Ichikawa Omezo in the rôle of Sukeroku.
173Matsumoto Koshiro in the rôle of the otokadaté Banzuin Chobei. This print is commonly known as “The man with the pipe.”
174Matsumoto Yonesaburo in the rôle of Okaru, wife of Kampei.
175Ichikawa Yazo in the rôle of Hayano Kampei.
176Kosagawa Tsuneyo in the rôle of Tonasé, wife of Kakogawa Honzo.
177Oitani Oniji in the rôle of Sadakuro.
178Sannogawa Ichimatsu in a female rôle.
178aNakayama Tomisaburo in the rôle of Komurasaki, and Ichikawa Komazo as her lover, Shirai Gompachi, walking with her under a huge umbrella.

SHARAKU. Two Actors.

SHARAKU. Two Actors.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED.

179Segawa Tominojo.

KITAGAWA UTAMARO

One of the most gifted and most widely known of the Ukiyoé masters. Extraordinarily facile and brilliant. Born in 1753 and died in 1806.

LENT BY SAMUAL ISHAM.

180*Triptych*. Imaginative view of a fête in a Chinese palace. It is a medley of

Chinese and Japanese details intended as a take-off upon the treatment of Chinese subjects by the painters of the classic schools.

181The hour of the Boar (9 to 12 P.M.). One of a set illustrating the twelve hours into which the Japanese day is divided.

182*Diptych*. Women in a nobleman's palace, painting kakemono.

183Yoshiwara beauties on parade.

183aA sheet from the "Washing day" triptych.

184Woman helping a man attire himself in ceremonial dress.

185Woman bending over to see a baby which another woman is nursing while seated before a mirror, arranging her hair.

186Woman talking to a fan-mount vendor.

187*Triptych*. The persimmon-gatherers.

188*Triptych*. Procession of a noble lady and women attendants on their way to a temple, bearing offerings.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

189*Triptych*. Shadows on the shoji. Illustrations of three effects of sake (rice wine).

190Woman arranging flowers.

191The kitchen. One sheet of a diptych.

192A night excursion. One of Utamaro's most famous prints.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

193Hairdresser combing a girl's hair.

194Woman with a young boy on her back, watching three puppies at play.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

195Kitao Masanobu drunk with sake at a fête in a daimyo's palace. Part of a triptych.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

- 196Woman wearing a black zukiin, and a maid bearing a lantern.
197Woman standing on a pier, holding an umbrella, and conversing with a man seated under the canopy of a boat.
198Woman bearing a teacup on a lacquer stand.
199Woman raising the mosquito netting over her bed to read a letter by the light of an andon.
200Three performers in a niwaka, or burlesque theatrical procession, in the streets of the Yoshiwara.
201Woman holding in her mouth a “pokan-pokan”—a musical toy of thin glass which makes a peculiar sound when air is blown through it.
202*Triptych*. Boating party.
203*Triptych*. The awabé divers of Isé.
204*Triptych*. Women and children on a bridge.

UTAMARO. Woman with a Musical Toy.

UTAMARO. Woman with a Musical Toy.

UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI

A brilliant artist of high repute in his day. Some of his prints, especially the earlier ones, are of distinguished quality. He was born in 1769 and died on February 24, 1825.

LENT BY A HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

- 205*Triptych*. Street scene in the Yoshiwara.
206Large head of an actor.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

207The actor Koraiya.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

208Musume raising a large umbrella.

209*Triptych*. Women in a public bath-house.

LENT BY THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS LATHROP, DECEASED

210*Triptych*. The Six Tamagawa, represented by six women washing strips of cloth in a rapid-flowing stream.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

211Woman accompanied by a maid carrying a lantern.

212*Triptych*. Lady emerging from a kago; her attendants grouped about her.

TOYOKUNI. Women in Bath House.

TOYOKUNI. Women in Bath House.

KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI

A master of extraordinary versatility and power. Perhaps the most widely known of all the Japanese artists. He was born in 1760 and died in the spring of 1849.

[pg 51]

213Winter landscape.

214Cranes on a snow-laden pine tree.

215Iris.

216Turtles swimming.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

217Fuji san seen beneath a wave of the sea at Kanazawa. Hokusai's famous
“wave.”

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

218View of Fuji from Ushibori; a large boat moored in the foreground.

HOKUSAI. Fuji from Ushibori.

HOKUSAI. Fuji from Ushibori.

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

219Winter landscape.

ANDO HIROSHIGE

The last great artist of the Ukiyoé school, and a consummate master of landscape art. Born in 1797 and died on October 12, 1858.

LENT BY HAMILTON EASTER FIELD.

220A cold morning at Shono, on the Toikaido.

221View of Fuji san from Goyo.

222Pine trees on the shore at Hamamatsu.

223Flying kites at Fukuroi.

224The “fox fires” at Oji.

225Kinryusan, Asakusa, in snow.

226The fields back of Asakusa seen from a window through which a white cat is looking out.

227Travellers in snow at Ishiyakushi.

HIROSHIGE. Pines at Hamamatsu.

HIROSHIGE. Pines at Hamamatsu.

LENT BY ALBERT GALLATIN.

228Evening rain at Azumasa.

[pg 52]

LENT BY A COLLECTOR

229Autumn moon over the river Tama.

230The evening glow at Setta.

231The crowd in Ni Choï (Second Street) at night. At the right is the
Ichimura theatre, upon which and upon the tea-house across the way are
tall signs advertising plays and actors.

232Aowi and bird.

233Pheasant and young pine trees upon a steep hillside.

234Raftsman on the Sumida river in a snow storm.

LENT BY HOWARD MANSFIELD.

235Shower at Shoïno.

236Gyoïtoku; boats returning.

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