

Coats, Bruce A. 2006. *Chikanobu: Modernity and Nostalgia in Japanese Prints*. Scripps College, Claremont, CA, USA, in association with Hotei Publishing, Leiden, an imprint of Brill. 208 pages, 280 colour illus., ISBN 9 074 822 886

Keyes, Roger S. 2006. *Ehon: The Artist and the Book in Japan*. The New York Public Library, New York, in association with the University of Washington Press, Seattle and London. 320 pages, 250 colour illus., ISBN 0 295 986 247

The sophisticated aesthetics of Ehon and Ukiyo-e of a Meiji period master

Two new publications on Japanese prints and picture books highlight formerly underappreciated aspects of these traditions

PATRICIA J. GRAHAM

The great appreciation for Japanese woodblock prints of the Ukiyo-e tradition by collectors and artists in the West is evident in their profusion in Western language publications about Japanese art beginning in the 19th century. Yet only during the past twenty five years have Western (and for that matter, Japanese) scholars and collectors begun to appreciate Ukiyo-e prints created by artists other than those included in the core group of canonical masters (Hishikawa Moronobu, Suzuki Harunobu, Kitagawa Utamaro, Katsushika Hokusai, and Andō Hiroshige being the most well known) active in the city of Edo (Tokyo) between the late 17th and mid-19th century. These newly appreciated artists, most active during the late Edo (circa 1800-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) periods, had been formerly denigrated or simply ignored. Concurrently, scholars and collectors have also turned their attention to the related field of Japanese ehon (alternately translated as 'art' or 'picture' book) production, both woodblock printed and hand-painted manuscripts, only some of which were designed by Ukiyo-e artists. The two books under review reflect these new collecting and scholarly interests, and significantly contribute to enriching Western readers' knowledge of the astounding creativity of these closely related traditions, which are among the most sophisticated and innovative in the world, and the evolving culture that produced them.

Both of these scholarly yet accessible books serve as catalogues of exhibitions of the holdings of single institutions. *Chikanobu: Modernity and Nostalgia in Japanese Prints*, focuses on prints by the Meiji period artist Yōshū Chikanobu (1838-

1912) in the collection of Scripps College, largely assembled under the direction of that college's Japanese art history professor, Bruce Coats, beginning in the 1990s. *Ehon: The Artist and the Book in Japan*, features a selection of Japanese manuscripts and printed art books in the New York Public Library (NYPL), whose special collection curators began systematically acquiring these materials in the mid-20th century. However, the authors of the two books (and their institutions) took very different approaches to their volumes' contents and organisation.

Chikanobu: From disenfranchised samurai to nostalgic nationalist

While Bruce Coats aims to promote appreciation of Chikanobu's art, his book's essays and plate commentary reveal his broader intent: to use this artist's prints, created over a thirty year period, as a window through which to view the culture of the artist's day. Coats remarks that "Chikanobu's prints document a significant shift from advocating modernization in the 1880's to nostalgically promoting traditional values and celebrating Japanese historical figures in the 1890's" (p 6).

Following his introduction, a long essay - 'Chikanobu, An Overview of his Life and Works' - Coats guides readers towards deeper understanding of this enigmatic, little-studied, and prolific artist who was a member of the samurai class loyal to the deposed Tokugawa shoguns. Coats' essay surveys the types of prints that comprise his oeuvre - contemporary military conflicts, warrior heroes, beautiful women, children, geisha, women's life in the old Tokugawa Castle complex, famous sites of Japan, and Kabuki actors - and their sophisticated, restrained aesthetic sensibility. He informs readers about the state of the printmaking business in the Meiji era and argues convincingly for positive reappraisal of Chikanobu in relation to

his more well known peers, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi and Kobayashi Kiyochika. Coats points out that many of Chikanobu's prints contain lengthy texts, which appealed to well educated viewers, and that his subject matter "helped create a sense of nationhood, a shared past that could consolidate the community of Japanese citizens at a time when nationalism was proliferating worldwide and Asian cultures were being threatened by European colonial imperialism" (p. 62). Following this essay are sumptuous illustrations of Chikanobu's early prints, accompanied by extensive explanatory captions (as are most of the illustrations in this volume).

Four shorter essays, on Chikanobu's most representative subjects placed within a historical context, round out the volume. Each section is accompanied by illustrations. The first, by Joshua S. Mostow, "Setsugekka: Snow, Moon, and Flowers," (FIG 1) explores the historical and cultural meaning of this phrase, which Chikanobu took as the name of several large series of his prints of beautiful women (paired with snow, moon, or flower imagery). One such series, comprising fifty sheets, is considered among his finest works and is illustrated in its entirety. The next essay, by Allen Hockley, "New Age Warriors: Redeploying the Heroic Ethos in the Late Meiji Period," delves into the history of warrior prints within the Ukiyo-e tradition and Chikanobu's reinterpretation of it. Hockley remarks that in Chikanobu's day, these images carried a new meaning, in which "the past, especially one associated with Japan's warrior traditions, emerged as a potent ideological force with far reaching implications" (p 109). Kyoko Kurita's essay, "Picturing Women's Spirit: Chikanobu's Prints and Meiji Literature," follows. She explores Chikanobu's portrayal of women from a literary perspective. Some of Chikanobu's prints of women (for example his "Magic Lantern Comparisons" series evoke a new phenomenon seen in



Fig 1 'Setsugekka: Snow, Moon and Flowers', Joshua S. Mostow

Meiji literature, a portrayal of 'interiority', in which the artist attempts to capture both women's appearance and inner thoughts. Unfortunately, some of the author's points are obscured by a lack of illustrations to prints or book illustrations she discusses. The book's last essay, again by Coats, "Chiyoda Inner and Outer Palace Scenes," describes Chikanobu's sympathetic portrayal of "the elegance and quiet sophistication of the shogun's private world" (p 171) with his complementary images of the inside of the women's quarters (the Inner Palace) and the activities of the samurai elite outside the castle walls (the Outer Palace Scenes).

While the content of this book is exemplary, editorial and design decisions somewhat mar its use as a scholarly reference. The essays contain both plates (prints by Chikanobu included in the exhibition) and figures (comparative material by other artists), making individual essays easy to read but difficult to navigate, since authors of multiple essays refer to the same materials, which are referenced only by number and not page location. Further, details from the prints, used as frontispieces to each chapter, are nowhere identified; some of the plate numbers within the essays are erroneous; and, overall, the book includes a surprising number of typographical errors. Given Bruce Coats' extensive research on this artist, an appen-

dix listing all of Chikanobu's known print series and illustrated books would have made an invaluable resource for future studies. Instead, only a list of images from Chikanobu print sets illustrated in the catalogue appear in the first part of the index. The second section, an overly abbreviated 'subject index', lacks citations to most of the general historical and cultural information found in the essays and catalogue entries but includes references to other artists whose works are mentioned and illustrated in the volume. I also found the select bibliography, which includes mainly references to English language publications on print artists, Kabuki theatre, and Meiji culture, too condensed. Providing Japanese characters for titles and names would also have made the book more useful as a reference.

Still, the book's many merits surpass its production shortcomings. The exquisite photographs reproduce many of Chikanobu's prints together for the first time and many captions for illustrations contain text summaries and thoughtful remarks about the subjects, their historical context, and the prints' aesthetics. This commentary skillfully connects the personal viewpoint of the artist to the culture of his time and his place within it, first as a disenfranchised samurai, later in his life as a nos-

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Fig 2 People of Yamato 1800, Yamaguchi Soken



talistic nationalist. Bruce Coats ably argues for better appreciation both of this artist and of Ukiyo-e print production during the middle and late Meiji era, a period not usually associated with the production of fine quality traditional-style prints.

Ehon: microscopic worlds in convergence

In contrast to Coats' emphasis on exploring Chikanobu's art within its historical framework, Roger Keyes eloquently implores his readers to better appreciate the aesthetics of the books themselves, as well as the artistic sensibility of their makers. The remarkable collection about which he writes, containing three hundred manuscripts and fifteen hundred printed books, has long been known by scholars, but this publication marks its first broad introduction to the general public, through a selection of seventy works. Books and manuscripts in the NYPL catalogue span the entire history of book production in Japan, from the 8th century to the present. Keyes approaches his topic as a historical survey, and therefore chooses to include in his catalogue two rare books not owned by the NYPL (cat. 23, Yoshiwara Courtesans, illustrated by Kitao Masanobu, and cat. 48, by Satō Suiseki). The last five books included, from the post World War II era, reveal the modernisation and globalisation of this living tradition, featuring two books by Japanese artists, who used Western printing processes and created books in non-traditional formats, and three by Western artists influenced by Japanese print and bookmaking traditions. Keyes describes *The Map* (cat. 66), as "a profound, heartbreaking meditation on nuclear destruction....the most brilliantly designed Japanese book of its century" (p 256).

Keyes' lengthy introductory essays convey the special characteristics of ehon. He notes that the books "spring to life for their readers because their artists carefully create rituals of engagement to attract, absorb, and hold their readers' attention" (p 15), and that they are "sensuous, beautiful, and intelligent. Different as they are among themselves to look at, they share many qualities: stillness, space, wonder, love, delight, play" (p 16). A separate essay explains the components of books: paper, ink, colours, binding, book covers, contents, language, calligraphy, and pictures.

The bulk of the volume is devoted to discussion of each ehon in chronological order, in discrete catalogue entries of several pages in length, most accompanied by two or three illustrations. This order, by the way, does not follow that of the exhibition, which was thematic. But it makes for a well organised reference and aids in appreciation of the books themselves, which as Keyes notes, were "conceived, designed, published, manufactured, and distributed by representatives of many different trades and professions working in collaboration,"

each of which offer a glimpse into "microcosms of individual, social and occupational worlds in convergence" (p 12). As he describes each book, Keyes engages the reader with evocative introductory sentences, then points out their distinctive qualities, including visual differences among editions. We learn, for example, that some artists intentionally linked pictures on adjacent pages, making use of the book paper's semi-transparency (cat. 27, by Chō Gesshō and 30, by Yamaguchi Soken (FIG 2) or visual content (cat. 53, by Ōnishi Chinnen), that rare early editions capture painterly qualities lacking in more hastily produced later ones (cat. 18, after Hanabusa Itchō, and fig. 32.3, by Nakamura Hōchū), and that the NYPL possesses some sole existing copies of printed books (cat. 10, by Hishikawa Moronobu), rare first editions (cat. 16, *The Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual*), or exemplary and rare examples of second editions of celebrated printed books (cat. 25, Kitagawa Utamaro's *Gift of the Ebb Tide*, illustrated on the volume's cover and in its entirety in the book). He also includes summaries of textual sections and translations of selected poems to illuminate the context of each ehon's production.

The volume concludes with extensive, invaluable reference material. A long section, 'Bibliographic Descriptions and References', reflects Keyes' years of research on each ehon in the catalogue, providing publication references, detailed descriptions of their contents, known editions and their locations, citations to reproductions in modern editions, provenance, and, occasionally, their purchase price. The next section is an alphabetical inventory of all the NYPL printed books. A comprehensive bibliography and detailed index conclude the volume. Invaluable to scholars, all sections (except for the index) contain characters adjacent to names and book titles.

While very different in scope and intended for different groups of readers (Coats' book will be a boon to educators, students, and collectors, and Keyes' book will be useful for those groups as well as to scholars), unquestionably these two books will help to advance Western readers' interest in underappreciated areas of Japanese prints and picture books. Fittingly, they are both intellectually stimulating and beautiful examples of the art of modern bookmaking themselves. ■

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The return of Dr Strangelove or: should we really stop worrying and learn to love India's bomb?

NADJA-CHRISTINA SCHNEIDER

'I have a brief announcement to make. Today at 1545 hours (1015 GMT), India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range. The tests conducted today were with a fission device, a low-yield device and a thermonuclear device. The measured yields are in line with expected values. Measurements have confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere. These were contained explosions like in the experiment conducted in May 1974. I warmly congratulate the scientists and engineers who have carried out these successful tests.'

So announced Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 11 May 1998. Brief, indeed, but with far-reaching consequences, it is this announcement that most vividly recalls Vajpayee's 1998-2004 premiership. In Ashok Kapur's book the nuclear tests that shocked the world and boosted India's position as a regional and international power seem to be nothing less than the *telos* of postcolonial Indian polity. Throughout the book's fourteen chapters, the bomb, or rather the accomplishment of India's present strategic, scientific and military power that it represents, serves as the sole measuring stick of India's post-1947 diplomatic and foreign policy.

Following the neo-realist school of thought in international relations, Kapur makes no effort to disassemble his wholehearted support for the 'coercive diplomacy' behind India's 1998 nuclear tests. Nor does he conceal his admiration for the ideological and political agenda driving that strategy when he concludes, 'Significantly, "soft fundamentalists" with political and military power, not secularists who have slogans and no constituents, have emerged as negotiating partners in Indian foreign affairs' (p 204).

A relentless critique of Nehru's foreign policy record

In his introductory chapter, the author analyses the scope of India's repositioning at three levels of contemporary strategic activity: the international level, where India has significantly increased its presence in the economic and strategic mainstream; on the Asian continent, which in Kapur's words represents 'the centre of gravity of countervailing impulses in the modern world'; and India's 'immediate neighbourhood', that is, the SAARC countries plus Myanmar, Afghanistan and China.

What really follows in the six subsequent chapters is first and foremost a relentless critique of the 'Nehruvian record' of diplomatic and foreign policy, which Kapur later subsumes as Nehru's 'failures'. The only 'innovation' for which he lauds Nehru is the pursuit of India's nuclear option, which in the late 1990s became the main symbol of India's scientific power. While publicly emphasising peaceful uses of nuclear energy, Nehru and his advisers managed to establish links with Canada that 'led to a transfer of critical bomb making technology under a peaceful guise' (p 116.).

Kapur presents Nehru above all as a product of foreign intellectual traditions and ideas (communism, the Soviet model of economic planning, British Fabian ideas and the world peace movement); as a prime minister under whose reign the 'new Indian state disconnected Indian nationalism from traditional Indian philosophy' (p 18); and as the 'shadowy British and Soviet collaborator' (p 37). To a certain extent, this characterisation serves to externalise Nehru from Indian traditions and history, and to associate him more closely with a colonial past and postcolonial situation in which India had not yet been 'emancipated' from foreign domination.

Post-independence India - passive victim of the America-Pakistan-China triangle?

In an equally reductive perspective on Indian history, Kapur maintains that an 'organic link' between Muslim and British power had emerged in the colonial situation, as 'both shared a negative attitude about the potential role of "political Hinduism"' (p 17). After 1947, this 'became an organic link between Muslim Pakistan and Anglo-American policy' (p 22). How and why this alleged 'organic link' came into being and seamlessly took its postcolonial shape is an important question that remains unanswered. Nevertheless, in Kapur's account, the asserted symbiosis of anti-Indian powers and Nehru's inability to overcome it is blamed for the prolonged containment of India's geopolitical and strategic potential. Pakistan, America and China led an 'anti-India coalition' later joined by Saudi Arabia, which introduced 'Wahhabism' and an 'Arabised militancy' into the region and politics of Afghanistan and Kashmir, respectively. More than once, Kapur

depicts India under the 'Nehruvians' as a 'victim' of this American-Chinese-Pakistani policy.

He does give some credit to Indira Gandhi for showing her willingness in the 1971 Bangladesh campaign to use India's military strength to solve conflicts, and for conducting the 1974 nuclear test, but criticises her for ultimately remaining within her father's fundamental parameters. Similarly, Kapur argues that her successors Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao, V.P. Singh, Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral all remained 'mired' in the Nehru paradigm. Even after the 1971 break-up, Pakistan remained determined 'to balkanise India by supporting insurgency in Indian provinces including areas that were not in dispute as a result of Partition' (p 11). While remaining silent on the interior causes of civil conflicts and separatist tendencies in the 1980s, Kapur portrays not only the escalations in Kashmir but also in Punjab and the north-eastern areas as 'Pakistani-sponsored insurgency' tolerated by the 'UK-US-China' coalition.

'Of course, the whole point of a Domsday Machine is lost if you keep it a secret!'

In sum, Kapur argues that "'India" or "Hindu India" had been the object or victim of strategic triangles' (p 203). In his view the 1998 nuclear tests were not only a turning point; they were a true liberation from the stalemated situation, creating completely new conditions for Indo-Pakistani, Indo-American and Indo-Chinese relations and helped to finally overcome Nehruvian paradigms of postcolonial Indian policy. What Kapur calls a 'soft type of Hinduism', which he rather questionably dissociates from 'hardcore Hindutva', formed the ideological basis for the new coercive diplomacy and military strategy. In his eyes it was exactly this 'authentic' Hindu/Indian nationalism that finally enabled India to overcome the continued reactive passivity of the Nehruvian era.

But why doesn't Kapur illuminate the whole spectrum of historical causes that brought Hindu nationalism into existence and reinforced it in the 1980s and 1990s? He inconsistently reduces the growth of Hindu nationalism to a mere 'reaction' to the spread of 'Islamic terror' and 'Nehru's policies'. Through his account's incomprehensible selectivity, Kapur reinforces the 'reactive character' of Indian diplomatic and foreign policy, an irony that seems lost on him. ■

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