

Landscapes of power, recreation and convenience



The political unification of Japan during the Edo period (1615–1868) profoundly impacted the conceptualization of space and borders. During this period, Japan transformed from a collection of regional fiefdoms into a network of provinces centrally administered by the shogun at the capital city, Edo (modern-day Tokyo). With control of most of what is now modern-day Japan, the ruling Tokugawa shogunate sought more complete geographic data of the country. This information was then made available to popular artists who reimagined it for various clients. *Mapping Edo: The Social and Political Geography of Early Modern Japan* at the Cantor Arts Center examines the shift in how Edo-period Japan was visualized by the ruling shogunate, commercial interests, art makers, and its citizens.

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Mapping Edo: The Social and Political Geography of Early Modern Japan
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TO ILLUSTRATE THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENTS of Edo-period Japan, this exhibition is predominantly comprised of maps paired with selections of *ukiyo-e* landscape prints and paintings. All works on view are from the collection of the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, and, in fact, many are being put on display for the first time in the institution's history. Perhaps part of the reason for this is that maps have traditionally been treated as archival documents and not as artistic works. However, maps are as much constructed images as any work of art—they do not simply reflect the world, but rather shape an understanding of it. These maps and other geographic representations on view at the Cantor reveal much about the landscape of politics, tourism, and commerce in early modern Japan.

Among the exhibited works, one image that especially dramatizes the Edo-period shift in spatial awareness is *A Picture of the Famous Places of Japan* (c. 1805) by the artist Kitao Masayoshi (1764–1824). Offering a bird's-eye view of the entirety of early modern Japan, this print (fig. 1) shows the full expanse of the country from a northeastern viewpoint with the white peak of Mount Fuji visible toward the bottom of the image and Korea (Chōsen) on the horizon. Within Japan, all 68 of the Edo-period provinces are identified in rectangular cartouches while smaller features such as castles and geographic landmarks are labeled in katakana. Masayoshi's print straddles the categories of informative map and augmented artwork (the artist enlarged Tsuyama castle where he was appointed the official painter). This visualization of national space was clearly impacted by political realities, commercial demands, and personal interests.

The new locus of government, Edo, and the former capital, Kyoto, were two locations where the shift in geography was particularly evident. In Kyoto, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598)

and later the Tokugawa shogunate made substantial physical changes to the urban landscape. In the *1862 Map of Kyoto* by Takehara Kōbē, a seemingly straightforward depiction of the city is actually laden with cultural and historical significance. Kyoto is orientated from east (at the top) to west (at the bottom), a division that resulted from Hideyoshi's physical reorientation of the city. This map would have been used by pilgrims and other visitors to the city, and as such cultural landmarks, especially temples, are emphasized in the composition.

Of the *ukiyo-e* prints on view, many depict Edo-period landmarks and attractions by famous artists such as Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) and Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865). The work of these artists provides insight into both the transformation of place during the Edo period as well as the accompanying interest in national spaces. People were more aware of the character of remote places during the Edo period than at any other time in Japan's previous history. Maps contributed to this awareness but so too did the development of inter-provincial travel (which was in turn facilitated by the abundance of maps and other printed materials). The unification of Japan allowed for the construction of inter-provincial highways such as the Tōkaidō road that connected Edo with Kyoto. While these networks were necessary for governing and official traffic, the roads were also widely used by pilgrims and other lay travelers.

One image of travel along the Tōkaidō is Hiroshige's *View of the Ōi River from the Hill at Kanaya* (1855) from his *Famous Sights of the Fifty-three Stations* series. As part of a larger series depicting iconic vistas of the 53 stations along the Tōkaidō, this work shows Kanaya with pilgrims and other travelers crossing the Ōi River (fig. 2). In the distance, the peak of Mount Fuji is visible over the mountain range. As the Ōi River was notorious for flooding its banks, it employed many porters such as the figure in the foreground to ferry travelers across the river. This print would have made a fine souvenir or record of one's journey, or might have even inspired someone to travel along Tōkaidō themselves. Also on view at the Cantor are other works by Hiroshige of places of renowned beauty

and historical interest from across the Edo Japan landscape, such as selections from his *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* series (1856–1857).

The research for this exhibition led to the discovery of an 18th-century set of 147 castle maps detailing the provincial domains of daimyo. With the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate at the start of Edo period, daimyo were forced to relinquish autonomous control of their respective fiefdoms and serve the ruling shogun. Daimyo were regularly ordered to make maps and records of the land under their control so that the shogun could assemble comprehensive spatial information about the country. This gesture of submission led to the development of the genre of castle maps, or *shiro-ezu*. Two examples of *shiro-ezu* on display include a map of Tsuwano Castle in Iwami province (Shimane Prefecture) and Oshi Castle in Musashi province (Saitama Prefecture) (figs. 3a&b). As this group of images was made by multiple artists, the styles of these two maps are quite distinct. The *map of Oshi Castle* is almost abstract with only the blue moat pathways, yellow road networks, and black castle walls suggesting space as compared to the *map of Tsuwano Castle*, where elevation and other area features are carefully rendered. While the maps in this set include relevant military information such as the location of the inner enclosure (honmaru) and even compound dimensions, they were most likely produced out of formality as they are somewhat simplified compared to other examples of the genre.

All the maps, landscapes, and cityscapes on view at the Cantor were created for distinct yet interrelated purposes. After viewing the diverse grouping of prints, maps, and paintings included in *Mapping Edo*, one should walk away with a sense that the various locations depicted in these works were not, in fact, isolated destinations, but rather part of a larger nexus of Edo-period social and political place-making.

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1: Kitao Masayoshi (1764–1824), *A Picture of the Famous Places of Japan*, c. 1805. Woodblock print. Stanford Museum Collections, 2013.13.

2: Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), *View of the Ōi River from the Hill at Kanaya*, 1855. From *Famous Sights of the Fifty-three Stations* (Gojūsan tsugi meisho zue) series. Woodblock print. Gift of Bliss and Brigitte Carnochan, 1997.1.

3a&b: Artist unknown (Edo period, 1615–1868). 3a: *Map of Oshi Castle, Musashi Province* (detail) 3b: *Map of Tsuwano Castle, Iwami Province* (detail). Late 18th century. Ink and watercolor on paper. Gift of Lester L. Goodman, 1963.66.5.9 and 1963.66.1.7.