

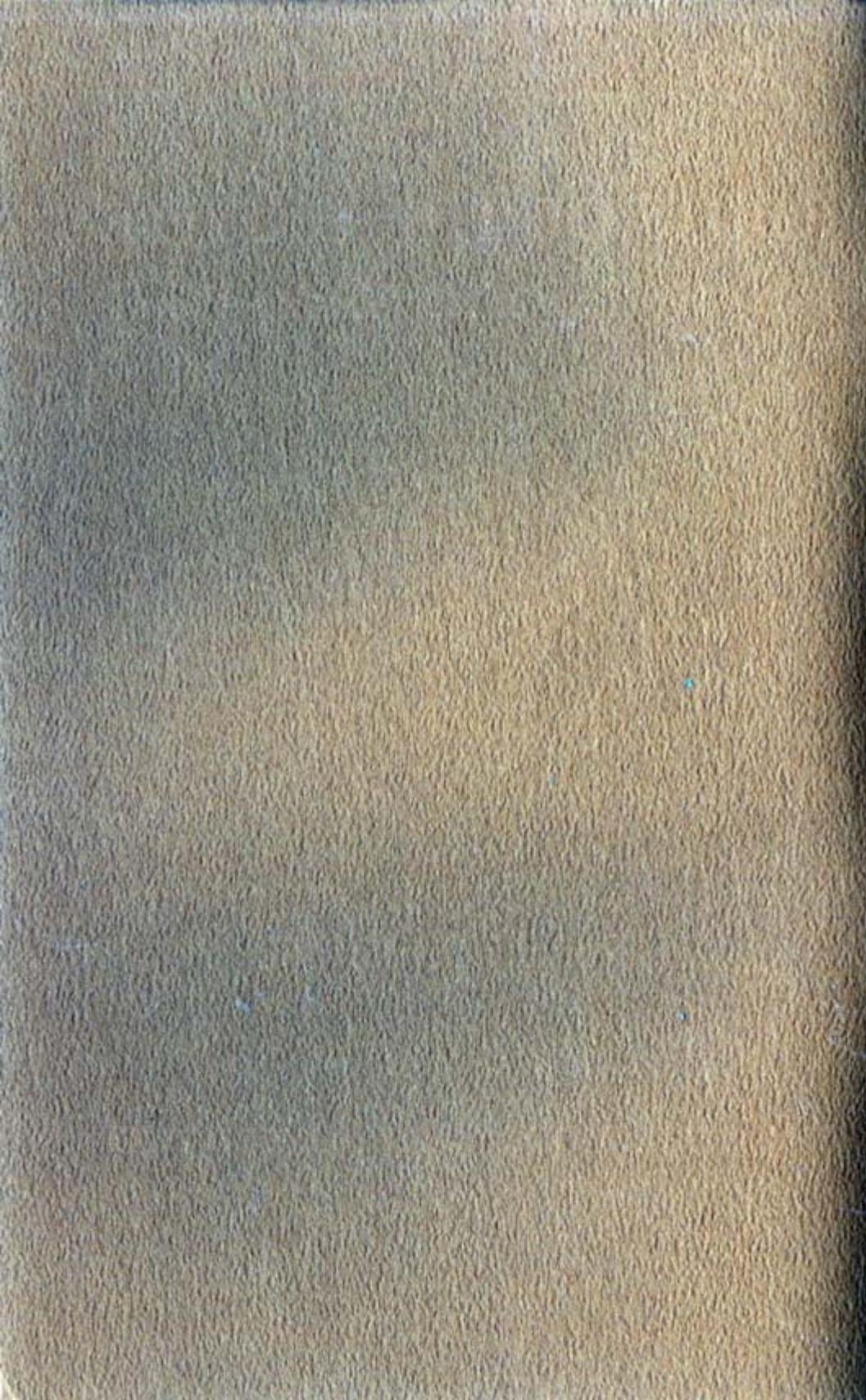
ROOTS OF THE UKIYO-E

Early Woodcuts of the Floating World



Ronald Penkoff

BALL STATE MONOGRAPH NUMBER TWO



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Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana
1964

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 64-23035

Preface

In the popular Japanese color print produced in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, it is not unusual to find a polychromatic color scheme, delicately graded tones, and subtle textures employed by an artist in command of a completely sophisticated style. The older seventeenth-century black and white prints look rather heavy-handed by comparison. Almost without exception, the black and white forerunners are uneven in style and appear very much as one might expect—a prototypic art in its most nascent stage of development. Nevertheless, these seemingly unresplendent early prints contained the basic ingredients that gave impetus to the development of the print in Japan.

One reason for the continued neglect of Moronobu, Sukenobu, Kaigetsudo, Masanobu, and their contemporaries is simply that popular taste has devastatingly condemned them as "primitives" who merely preceded the great flowering of Japanese prints. Yet it was the "primitives'" new use of line that initiated an idiom of expression culturally indigenous enough to endure until the "floating world" itself collapsed in the nineteenth century. So significant a style could not have been the result of mystical insight, serendipity, or the like, but must have occurred because of a conscious endeavor on the part of the "primitives."

Social and economic forces shaped the thinking of these men as surely as they self-consciously sought a truly Japanese means of expression. An understanding of how these forces of heritage and desire are combined in the work of the "primitives" is the purpose of this monograph. Consequently, the following study covers just that story of the print in Japan as it relates to the early black and white ukiyo-e¹ prints. Much of my material derives from what can best be described as fragmentary sources, but not many works of the "primitives" remain today, and inclusive texts on the subject of ukiyo-e prints advisedly devote a great deal of space to the predominantly large number of color prints.

Two notable exceptions are the Hajek-Forman book, *Jap-*

¹ *Ukiyo-e* literally means "floating world." Ukiyo-e artists who chose to depict the life of the pleasure quarter or "floating world" in which they lived worked almost exclusively in the woodcut medium. The evolution of the word ukiyo-e is traced in the book: James A. Michener, *The Floating World* (New York: Random House, 1954), pp. 30-31.

anese Woodcuts: Early Periods, and Mrs. L. N. Brown's book, *Block Printing and Book Illustration in Japan*. Since these two books are not readily available, the general reader is referred to James Michener's two admirable books, *The Floating World* and *Japanese Prints*. In *The Floating World* most of the third chapter is devoted to Moronobu and what is rightfully referred to as his "sovereign line," while an enlightening discussion of the Otsu-e style is to be found in the first chapter.

Although my discussion is restricted to those works that are reproduced in this monograph, the splendid plates in Mr. Michener's *Japanese Prints* may be used to supplement my examples. Appendices follow the text for those who wish to familiarize themselves with the various crafts related to the Japanese woodblock print.

Special thanks are due Dr. Sidney Kaplan of Ohio State University for his patient advice when this study was first undertaken. The Faculty Publications Committee of Ball State Teachers College is due special acknowledgment for its aid in the final evolution of this study and for its acceptance of the hypothesis that the roots of the ukiyo-e style are to be found in the black and white prints produced before the advent of color.

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Introduction

Some fundamental differences in the printing methods in Europe and Japan¹ account in part for the comparatively subtle hand craftsmanship of the Japanese woodcut. As the print developed in Europe, it became more and more tied to the mechanical press. The stationary equipment utilized in turn imposed limitations upon the wood block. Usually block size was governed by the standard format of the press, and any tonal variations had to be effected within the restrictions of a pressure evenly applied by means of a lever. Various means of crosshatching, dotting, and other inventions were utilized to imply tonal change, but once the press was put into motion, its action was inevitably uniform.

The press in Japan was a small hand-pad (*baren*)² applied with whatever pressure the printer deemed necessary, and wood blocks were printed face up so that the image could be observed as it worked its way into the absorbent paper. Block size was somewhat determined by the various papers available, but sheet size varied from long thin sheets to more conventional shapes. Ink in Europe was usually oil base, while water base inks were used in Japan.

These diverse evolutions of the printing process apprise the reader of the extreme mobility inherent in Japanese print-making. A "print shop" consisted of separate individuals all of whom retained a kind of itinerant autonomy. Woodcutters could pack their gouges and knives in one box, just as the printers could cap their powdered pigments and brushes, and illustrators had practically no exigent pressures when they decided to move.

Lest the reader form a mental picture of woodcutters, printers, and painters forever parting company, it is a matter of record that lasting business arrangements did work out. Indeed, life-long association often developed when a painter managed to find a woodcutter and printer who were sympathetic to his style.

Although this mobility resulted in a relatively stable series of relationships among those who produced prints in Japan, it explains in some degree two unique factors related to the

¹ Today artists in Europe and the United States have incorporated some Japanese practices in their woodcuts.

² See Appendix IV.

ukiyo-e print. Western readers may be surprised at the rapid establishment of the print in the wild and rustic environment of Genroku Japan. In the disrupting confusion caused by the moving of people from various provinces to the outskirts of large towns, nothing was more natural than for persons of related trades to make arrangements to set up shop. The dwelling was often also a business place since no large machinery had to be assembled in order to turn out prints.

It becomes clear, almost redundantly so, that the Japanese artist was not tied down to the premises of a large publishing house as in Europe. The Japanese printmaker was free to work in a fluid society in the very act of defining new values. The society had in no way conceded what the limits of its new growth might be, either physically or aesthetically. The remarkable sketchbook style that evolved from this situation could have been matched in the West only if Toulouse-Lautrec had printed his lithographs in Nebraska during the era of the Everleigh sisters.³

Early Printmaking

2

It is certain that the woodcut medium was well known in 764 A.D., for at about that time the Empress Koken ordered the printing of one million images on paper for distribution among the Buddhist temples. Wooden toy pagodas known as *hayakuman-to* (million towers) housed these wood-block images, which had to be rolled before being placed in their receptacles. The little prints were *daharani*, or Buddhist charms, five examples of which are to be found in the Nara Museum.⁴

The development of the *daharani* was probably brought about by priests who wanted to supply the peasant population with an inexpensive substitute for religious paintings. These souvenirs were looked upon as objects of good health or luck by the pilgrims who in turn disseminated the Buddhist faith by carrying these little prints away from the shrines they visited. To what extent these prints were believed to represent

³ Entertainment of this kind was admittedly less polite in Omaha than in Edo, but Minna and Ada Everleigh may have had some measure of refinement. See Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg, *The American West* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1955), pp. 258-259.

⁴ Ernest Satow, "On the Early History of Printing in Japan," *Asiatic Society of Japan Transactions* (1881-82), X, 48-83. No two images are alike. This variation is easily understood when one remembers that the relief work would wear past recognition long before the one million printings were achieved.

a religious power was indicated by the fact that these prints were stuffed inside Buddhist statues for the purposes of spiritual strength.⁵

The contemporary Japanese printmaker, Un'ichi Hiratsuka, believes that these early *daharani* prints were made by the sculptors of the period, thus accounting for the vigor of expression.⁶ A lack of the customary stylized trappings of painting in these prints lends support to his view.

The first known use of color in printing is also of Buddhist origin.

A set of beautifully written Buddhist texts from the *Kokke-kyo* Sutra was made early in the twelfth century. The chirography is upon fan shaped sheets of paper, decorated with charming Tosa paintings of different subjects; the outlines of some of them are *printed*. The use of *shikishi*, or decorated writing paper, goes back many centuries, and the first colour printing in both Japan and China was probably for this purpose, being quite incidental to the written text which over-laid the printed design and having no connection, as far as subject was concerned with it.⁷

Keicho Era, 1595-1615

In 1605 Ieyasu abdicated as Shogen to devote his entire time to the encouragement of the renaissance in Japanese art and literature. One of his last official acts was to present a large tract of land to Honmami Koyetsu (1568-1637). This land was to be used to establish a center of the arts. An annual grant of rice was issued to the inhabitants so that they might devote all their time to their interests.

The created village of Takamine grew to number more than fifty houses, most of which were used by artists and their families. There were paper-makers, brush-makers, paint mixers, printers, and workers in wood, lacquer, and ivory. Some small shops sprang up to supply food, fuel, and other necessities. As might be expected, much of the population was itinerant in nature. Many students came to be pupils of Koyetsu, whose wide

⁵ Mrs. L. N. Brown, *Block Printing and Book Illustration in Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1924), p. 4. Mrs. Brown has found that some of the clearest printings of the *daharani* are to be discovered in Buddhist statues. This practice of filling deity statues with reproductions of themselves was done to propagate the god quickly. A certain number was assigned for this propagation, usually five hundred or one thousand. The images were small (approximately 1 3/4"), and as many as possible were crowded on the slips of paper.

⁶ Oliver Statler, *Modern Japanese Prints* (Rutland, Vermont; Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956), p. 38.

⁷ Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

interests and skills made him the perfect man to master such a village.

Koyetsu's multiple activities could have had no better culture to grow in than Takamine. Here he could inspire other people with his teaching and work in painting, wood, ivory, metals, lacquer, and printing. He is thought of as one of Japan's greatest chirographers. Koyetsu also introduced a form of movable wooden type, and this, together with many embossed papers designed by him, was often used at the *Saga* Press.

Suminokura Soan established the *Saga* Press in cooperation with his teacher Koyetsu. It was Koyetsu's movable type that first printed the famous *Ise Monogatari*, and it is probable that Koyetsu painted its illustrations. Among those books definitely credited to Koyetsu is the noted *Waka Sanju-rok-kasen*, a large folio of drawings of the Thirty-Six Poets.

Koyetsu's centralization of the various forms of art made possible such things as the excellent publications of the *Saga* Press. The same integration of media takes place when the ukiyo-e painter works with the woodcutter and printer. As in Utamaro's triptych, which pictures these three with their tools, they become a unit.

Genroku Era, 1688-1703

Preceding the Genroku era the structure of city life underwent a great change, especially in the larger cities. Edo, the new capital under the Tokugawa government, grew from a population of 1,800 to one that exceeded one million in the time of Hiroshige. This new capital's court was now in session most of the year, primarily as a safeguard against recurrence of the fifty years of civil wars. The resulting centralization of barons and nobles also brought about the existence of a greater number of unproductive people since vassals, servants, and soldiers formed an entourage of even the smallest fief. And besides the noble's servants, there were the relatives and the relatives' servants who were usually drawn from their agricultural pursuits when they moved to the region of the capital.

To meet the needs of such a class, a new community of merchants, artisans, and laborers grew up. Osaka, Saki, and Nagasaki were already trade cities, and under the jurisdiction of

the new government grew to be almost exclusively industrial or commercial.

One of the first effects was an increase in the wealth of the town's people (Yedo), gained at the expense of the samurai, and also of the peasants, if anything more could be extorted from that down-trodden class. The daimyo and their relations spent their money on luxuries produced by the artisans and sold by the tradesmen, so that by the year 1700, it is said, nearly all their gold and silver had passed into the hands of the townspeople. They then began to buy goods on credit. Before long they were deeply indebted to the merchant class, and were obliged to pledge or make forced sales of their tax rice.⁸

Merchants began rice-broking and speculating, so that the governmental foundation of the monetary system became of questionable value. Periodic attempts at stabilization were made by officials, but to no avail. Devices such as recoinage and new laws were employed to stay the increasing flow of money to the merchants, but economic exploitation of this kind was without precedent, and no government official seemed to understand inflation so well as the burgher. Continuing prosperity of the townspeople caused official alarm that resulted in edicts that were directed to the burghers only. "Townsmen should not wear silk" and "Townsmen should not give lavish entertainment" were typical official statements.⁹ But this class of people could not be prevented from forming their own social system. A pleasure quarter grew up that was an integral part of a new upstart social order.

Yoshiwara (Reedy Plain) was an early pleasure haunt where citizens gathered to see plays and dancing. There was a periodic suppression of the Yoshiwara by the Bakufu (military), but the pleasure quarter would spring into action again, once under a new name Happy Fields (1617). By this time, moreover, these licensed bath-house resorts had become very popular. The samurai and townsmen alike frequented these institutions that were in the cities themselves. This self-contained portion of the city, which began to draw higher officers of the Shogun as well as vassals and samurai in disguise, had its own customs and standards of behavior: ". . . everything seems to have been done to make the patrons feel that they were sojourning among

⁸ G. B. Sansom, *Japan—A Short Cultural History* (New York: Appleton-Century Company, 1938), p. 460.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 465.

people of discreet and delicate sentiments."¹⁰ Needless to say, Osaka and Edo were not under the strictest military rule at all times.

The populace of the pleasure quarter soon began enriching their dwellings with works of art. The financial barrier to owning works of art was less formidable, and aesthetic pursuits became part of the social order. Korin (1653-1716) was at the height of his popularity and productivity at this time. His school of painting was a popular one, and much of the work he did was carried on by his pupils after his death. Primarily a designer rather than a painter, he excelled in the decorating of screens. He painted *kakemonos*, designed fans, and worked a great deal in lacquer. Korin and his followers appealed to the tastes of samurai and merchant alike. As the purchasing power of the pleasure quarter grew, the artist sold more of his work to the merchant class. Soon the pleasure quarter was socially and economically able to support almost everything an artist might care to produce.

6

Work produced solely for the merchant class began to be centered around a new aesthetic dominated by the activities of the courtesan. A general preoccupation with the beauty of women dominated the work of artists and novelists. In his story, "What the Seasons Brought the Almanac Maker" from his novel *Five Women Who Loved Love* (1686), Saikaku creates a typical scene of the "floating world":

After the theater one evening they were lounging around a tea-house called the Matsu-ya and one of them remarked: "I have never seen so many good-looking local girls as I did today. Do you suppose we could find others who would seem just as beautiful now?"¹¹

There follows a well-organized beauty contest with a worldly actor as chief judge. The contest takes place where the men can view women as they walk about looking at the wisteria blossoms of late spring. Each passer-by has her pleasing or disappointing features measured against standards that are reflected by the works of the ukiyo-e masters.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

¹¹ Saikaku Ihara, *Five Women Who Loved Love*, translated by Wm. Theodore De Bary (Rutland, Vermont; Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956), pp. 118-119.

Another great attraction was the theatre. The *Kabuki* had its inception at this time, and was more realistic than the *No* (from which it descended), owing mostly to the comparatively enlivened taste of the pleasure quarter. Farces and puppet theatres were also very popular; and tales that were told were many times linked with contemporary society. The influence of the theatre is not easily understood today, but G. B. Sansom makes it abundantly clear that the actor, along with the courtesan, became one of the major figures of the pleasure quarter.

Often the tales used for plays as in *Post Haste to Hell* were merely idealized versions of contemporary incidents, and topics of current gossip. Conversely they acted so powerfully upon the minds of the suggestable public that the number of love suicides, embezzlements, and elopements grew at an alarming rate.¹²

The fact that dress and conduct were followed with great interest is evident in the wood-block prints. Many of them have been dated solely through identifying the kind of coiffure arrangement or costume depicted. Public taste seems to have been fickle, and collective in nature. When a famous frequenter of the quarter would appear with a differently designed fabric, cloak, or hat style, he was soon imitated.

Not even a condensed study of the Genroku era would be complete without a consideration of the Otsu-e painter. Example 1 is an Otsu-e painting. Although it was probably produced after 1780,¹³ it still retains the strength and spontaneity that characterize most of the Otsu-e work. To illuminate the appeal this kind of subject had for the people of Japan, it is important to consider the episode in Benkei's life that is illustrated.

No subject for an Otsu-e could be more appropriate, for it shows the wandering priest Benkei, possibly a real man, but also a legend, who plays Little John to Yoshitsune's Robin Hood. Eight feet tall, strong as a hundred men and accustomed to ten gallons of soup, he became a wandering priest and from Kyoto sneaked over the hills to Otsu, where he stole the bell of the Mii Temple near Mount Hira. He lugged it back to his own gang of warrior monks, where the bell refused to sound, whimpering only, "Take me back to Miidera." Enraged, Benkei kicked it all the way back, scratching it deeply. In 1954 this giant bell of Miidera was exhibited in Tokyo, weighing nearly a ton and showing deep scratches which

¹² Sansom, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

¹³ James A. Michener, *The Floating World* (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 292.

have never been explained but which Japanese like to believe were the result of Benkei's rage.¹⁴

These paintings are possibly counterparts to Zen Buddhist paintings, for they were done very rapidly and with the same religious fervor when they began to appear early in the fifteenth century in the village of Otsu. These folk paintings were valued for their inspired creation that apparently invested them with strong superstitious-religious overtones.

Such a quality is evident in the *daharani* print, Example 2. This wood block was cut by the priest Nichiren (1222-1282). It was thought that a print taken from this block protected its possessor in times of danger. Such a clearly printed example is very rare, for impressions were usually taken from blocks until the image was worn beyond recognition. Example 2 furnishes a valuable link to the Otsu-e endeavor. The energy and spontaneity of both works gives an insight into the artists' common intention of producing a direct emotive statement.

Otsu-e shops were prevalent in Osaka and Edo. These were usually family establishments that divided the work on a mass-production basis. Young children and elder members prepared the paper by pasting sheets together and surfacing them with a wash of clay. The gifted members quickly rendered human figures and/or colored areas. Some Otsu-e shops used one head cut in a wood block for all the characters depicted, either singly or in groups. Again, the very young or old would paste sticks on either end of the product. The over-all plan thus simulated the religious painting that the poorer classes could not afford.

It is hard to say how influences crossed from Otsu-e to ukiyo-e painters, but it remains important that they had much subject matter in common. The rendition of the Otsu painter at work, Example 3, by Ichiyusai Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) is enlightening from the standpoint of the ukiyo-e painter's awareness of Otsu-e subject matter. The Otsu-e painter is represented with the visions of his heroes before him; his brush is ready, and his paper is before him. The painter pictured is the popular founder of the Otsu-e painting, Matahei. No one knows if such an individual existed, but he was the foremost symbol of this type of painting.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The Primitives, 1625-1779

In the seventeenth century painters became interested in the printing medium. Until the Genroku era the wood-block medium had been left mostly to the book illustrator and the fan-maker. Almost always these craftsmen were entirely responsible for both the painting and cutting of the block.¹⁵ In other words, the book illustrators and fan-makers had been following their trade without aid or counsel from trained painters. This separation is not difficult to understand when one realizes that in our own culture there are still those who make a distinction between the crafts and the so-called finer arts. But in this era the painter united with the illustrator in an effort to supply inexpensive prints of actors and courtesans who were part of the "floating world" of the pleasure quarter.

This integration of artist and artisan was an answer to the needs of the townspeople who desired reproductions of their notorious or famous contemporaries. However, the final evolution of the ukiyo-e print seems to have come about naturally rather than as a self-conscious answer to the people's needs. The painter was geographically and socially closer to the book
9
illustrator, so that convenient partnerships and interrelationships grew from the compact life of the pleasure quarter.

The presence of the Otsu-e painter probably had a little to do with this integration. He at least served as an example of rapid production for the purpose of an extensive distribution. He did not sell a de luxe product. Without doubt an Otsu-e shop's renditions of a specific hero, such as *Benkei with the Bell*, were very similar owing to the necessities of fast production. These energetic statements could not have escaped the eyes of the "primitives," particularly the eyes of Moronobu (1638-1714), who called himself "The Sparrow"—hopping about Genroku life, inspecting and observing.

Moronobu and his contemporaries provide an interesting problem. Because painting had reached a highly sophisticated and complex level, it would be only reasonable to suppose that some painters would continue to work in this medium, even if their interests did lie in the pleasure quarter. The painter Matabei (1578-1650) had apparently admitted to such an interest in some of his work, and Moronobu acknowledged Matabei as

¹⁵ See Appendix III.

his forerunner. Also, the "primitives" were not a group of men who were unaware of their heritage as painters. As A. D. Ficke has pointed out:

The commonly accepted name of "the Primitives" requires some explanation when applied to these artists lest it create the impression that we are dealing with designers in whose works are to be found the naive efforts of unsophisticated and groping minds. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Thousands of years of artistic experience and tradition lay back of these productions; and the level of aesthetic sophistication implied in them was high. The word Primitive applies to these men only in so far as they were workers in the technique of wood-engraving. As producers of prints they were indeed pioneers and experimenters; but as designers they were part of a long succession that had reached full maturity centuries earlier.¹⁶

10 However unfamiliar the technique of woodcutting was to the great majority of the "primitives," this medium had been ably executed by the cutter of the *Ise Monogatari* illustrations, one of which is shown in Example 4. The skill of the woodcutter is evident after a consideration of the complicated procedure required for reproducing such a painting. The work is just as accomplished from the standpoint of craftsmanship as it is from the standpoint of design. To be able to produce such a wood block, a person needs to be more than dedicated to the reproduction of the painter's work. He has to be versed in the use of his tools and aware of his medium in order to utilize its particular properties. Can anyone looking at Example 4 doubt the training and heritage of craftsmanship underlying such a work?

It is probable that Koyetsu did the painting from which this block was produced. His style is strongly derivative from Chinese painting. A prototype of the pine tree seen in the *Ise Monogatari* is to be found in the well-known Chinese schools of painting.¹⁷ Example 5 shows an illustration from such a school, the Ten Bamboo Studios.¹⁸ A casual comparison will

¹⁶ A. D. Ficke, *Chats on Japanese Prints* (Rutland, Vermont; Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1958), pp. 65-64.

¹⁷ Counterparts to the surroundings of Example 4 may be seen in Raphael Petrucci, *Encyclopedie de la Peinture Chinoise* (Paris: Librairie-Renouard, 1918), *passim*, Henri Laurens, editor. This is an encyclopedia of painting—or a "how to do it" manual. All subject matter is covered. As an example, on page 165 starts a discussion of how cascades of different types are painted. Plate LXXXI—"An example of a cascade of two planes" (levels). Plate LXXXII—"An example of a cascade of three planes." Plate LXXXIV—"An example of a painting of a level and calm cascade." The discussion of cascades continues for many pages.

¹⁸ *Chinese Flower and Fruit Prints from the Mustard Seed Garden and the Ten Bamboo Studios* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).



Example 1. *Benkei with the Bell*, artist unknown. Michener, James A., *The Floating World*. New York: Random House, 1954, facing p. 292.



Example 2. Nichiren (1222-1282). Brown, Mrs. L. N., *Block Printing and Book Illustration in Japan*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924, facing p. 8.



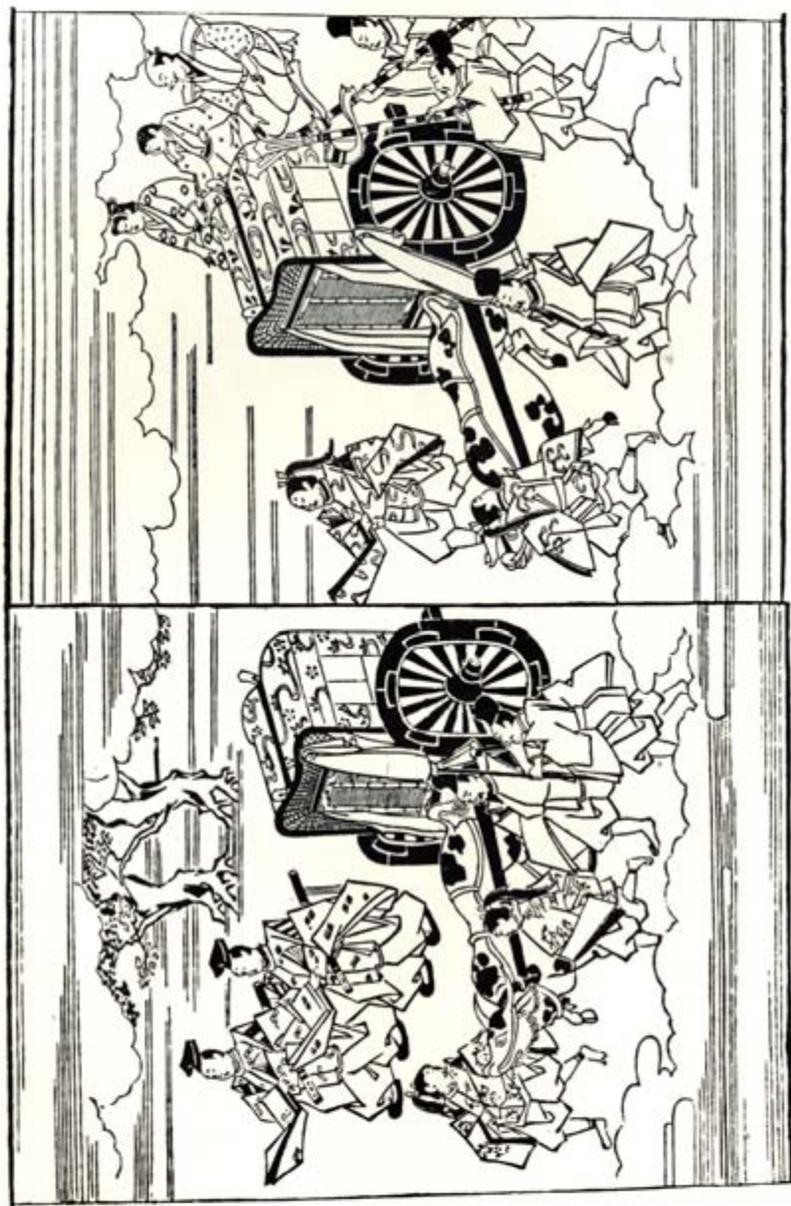
Example 3. *Matabei, Ichiyusai Kuniyoshi (1798-1861). Kurth, Dr. Julius, Geschichte des Japan-ischen Holzschnitts. Leipzig, Germany: Ersterband, 1925, facing p. 116.*



Example 4. *Ise Monogatari*, Honmami Koyetsu ? (1568-1637). Kurth, Dr. Julius, *Geschichte des Japanischen Holzschnitts*. Leipzig, Germany: Ersterband, 1925, facing p. 125.



Example 5. *Chinese Flower and Fruit Prints from the Mustard Seed Garden and the Ten Bamboo Studios*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Example 6. *Soga Monogatari*, Moronobu (1638-1714). Brown, Mrs. L. N., *Block Printing and Book Illustration in Japan*, New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924, p. 44.



Example 7. *Lovers*, Moronobu (1638-1714). Ledoux, E., *Japanese Prints of the Ledoux Collection*
—*The Primitives*. New York: E. Weyhe, 1942, plate 4.



Example 8. *Courtesan Arranging Her Coiffure*, Kwaigetsudo (18th Century). Ficke, A. D., *Chats on Japanese Prints*. London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1908, p. 81.

show the similarity in the treatment of the bark of the trees, the pine needles, and rocks. It is apparent that the style of representation was not experimental, but based upon Chinese principles. A steady growth toward a more Japanese genre style marks book illustration from this period onward. Hajek-Forman point out that fan-makers adopted a yamato-e (Japanese) style in their wood-block prints that paralleled the gradual shedding of the Chinese manner by book illustrators.¹⁹ While these fans probably were not known to the "primitives," the parallel development is worthy of note. One positive assumption we can make about the "primitives" is that they were the first artists who preferred the woodcut medium, and any examples of the wood-block print must have interested them.

How the preference for the wood block came about is more easily understood after a close examination of Moronobu's life and work. It is known that he went to Kyoto where he studied under a Tosa painter. It might be well to remember that Tosa artists did represent a group devoted to the growth of a nationalistic style, even if no great achievement in that direction is noted at the time of Moronobu's study. At this time he illustrated books, and the *Busho-no-Zoshi*²⁰ is his earliest known work. Books had become very popular, and novelettes began to appear and were in great demand. At about this time the first illustrated books for girls began to appear. These small volumes contained maxims, instructions in etiquette, the care of clothing, and other information useful to women. Some of the "primitives'" work showed courtesans at daily tasks that were probably very similar to the illustrations of such books. The first of these books, which appeared in 1629, was called *Tokyo Hiden*.

An example of Moronobu's book illustration is seen in his renditions for *Soga Monogatari*, Example 6, presumably done while he was in Kyoto. There is a stylistic link between this work of Moronobu's and the first edition of the *Ise Monogatari*. The long straight lines are still utilized, and the foliage still

¹⁹ Hajek-Forman, *Japanese Woodcuts, Early Periods*, translated by Ilse Gottheiner (London: Spring Books), pp. 20-26.

²⁰ Most of the Western authorities claim that Moronobu's earliest book was *Kamo no Comei Hōjōki no Chōmei*, or "Notes from a Ten-foot Square Hut" by a Buddhist recluse of the 12th century. It was published in Edo, therefore later than Mrs. Brown's example of Moronobu's first book illustrating in Kyoto.

speaks of the Chinese schools of painting. It is evident that Moronobu used a very competent book illustrator who worked in the tradition of his medium.

Later Moronobu went to Edo to study under Tanyu (1602-1674) of the Kano school. The Kano school of painting represents the official Chinese derivated style of the period and may account for the uneven style found in most of Moronobu's work to be described later. Moronobu's first contact with genre painting may have resulted from his contact with artists of the Kano school who may have broken with tradition in order to portray the activities of common people. Mrs. Brown writes of the subsequent modifications in Moronobu's scale and subjects:

There is a generally accepted idea that a change came over Moronobu's style after he left Kyoto, to be attributed to his admiration for Iwasa Matabei's (1578-1650) pictures. Whatever change took place, however, was probably chiefly due to the greater freedom of thought and life in Yedo, and in any case it was a change in choice of subject rather than style, for although, as has been said, in his early illustrations of classical subjects, the figures were small and the whole effect of a Tosa-ish character, his drawings in the *Touri-bon* even as early as 1657-1660, were as big and commanding and as robust in technique as any of his Genroku work. The difference was chiefly that in the *Touri-bon* the subjects were heroic and demanded scenes of conflict and action, while in the Genroku books they were largely of beautiful women and their surroundings.

It was the tendency to use fewer and larger figures in his later work, and these chiefly of women and their lovers, that has given the impression that his technique itself underwent a radical change after he went to Yedo, but in reality the difference was in scale and subject, his style remaining about the same.²¹

A fairly late print of two lovers, Example 7, by Moronobu seems to substantiate the change noted by Mrs. Brown. The style used to depict the figures differs greatly from the handling of the tree and flowers. The treatment of the tree is reminiscent of the Chinese tradition that book illustrators used. The tree and the rock together give an important hint of Moronobu's training even if we did not have the benefit of seeing his earlier works. Although there is no evidence of Moronobu's awareness of the school of Korin, there is a striking resemblance in the rendition of the flowers.

It is the figures, however, that are most interesting. There

²¹ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 44

is little doubt that the subject matter and the story portrayed arise from the environment of the pleasure quarter and its bath girls. Perhaps it is important to remember that the "primitives" were mostly interested in portraying single figures, thus allowing all their attention to be centered on the courtesan, frequenter, or actor as an individual. This concentration may have resulted in the mixture of styles and in the stylistic advancement of the human figure. One obvious reason for the break in style originating in the figures is simply that the very existence of the courtesan symbolized a break with tradition. Thus the figures indicate a stylistic force that will dominate ukiyo-e prints—a new awareness of the woodcut medium. In this print the clear-cut blacks and general flatness of the figures indicate more honestly the properties of a woodcut than either the tree or flowers. And the line employed in the figures dominates as a unique factor identifiable with the nascent ukiyo-e spirit. The line performs an integrating quality that allows the woodcutter neither to be restricted to one thickness, as in the flowers, nor to render line shapes in forms that appear completely brushlike, as in the tree. In the representation of the figures there is a true marriage between the brush of the artist and the knife of the cutter.

Lovers was printed on a single piece of paper. There was no accompanying story, and it did not form part of a book. Although Moronobu is generally credited with the introduction of the single print, there are not many examples extant. Many were unsigned, and it is probable that they were never very numerous. We do know that Moronobu's illustrations began to dominate in the books, commanding more attention, many times, than the text. The single print was a very late development that probably evolved from the shop-owner's practice of separating the large folios from their stitching in order to sell their sheets separately and thus more readily. This commercial enterprise on the part of some dealer probably led Moronobu to conceive of prints that needed no accompanying text in the first place.²²

This discussion of Moronobu is not intended to make him less a genius than people claim him to be. But too many surveys and writings covering ukiyo-e printing start by simply stating

²² Michener, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.

that with the advent of Moronobu, the Genroku era was artistically translated to the print medium. Many people intimate that Moronobu, by intuition, was able to see the best medium for interpreting the "floating world" about him. Such an idea gives Moronobu less credit than he deserves. As an illustrator of books, he had intimate contact with the printing process. As a man, he was interested in many aspects of Genroku life. As an artist, he was able to bring these interests together in a single statement.

Mrs. Brown states that Ishikawa Ryusen, one of Moronobu's best pupils, became not only an illustrator and painter, but was also well known for his fine typographical work. Could it be that Moronobu was not simply intuitive, but a man genuinely sensitive to the inclusiveness of the arts? As a master who gave pointed meaning to the wide scope of his interests, he could inspire others to forsake conventional attitudes regarding the supposed status of the artist.

With his signature, Moronobu would often write *Nihon-eshi*,²³ which means "Japanese Artist." This epithet leaves the impression that he thought of "Japanese Artists" as being different from other artists. It has been pointed out that any departure from tradition was not abrupt, but the gradual change may have been a conscious endeavor. Nishikawa Sukenobu, a painter and book illustrator of Kyoto and Osaka, seemed aware of this change also. There is no evidence that he was one of Moronobu's pupils, but his painting shows a definite link to Moronobu's work.²⁴ He was also conscious of the "Japanese Artist." Mrs. Brown writes of Sukenobu's desire for endemic art:

It was Sukenobu's ambition to found a school of purely Japanese art, and the great popularity of the Chinese painting was always a source of the keenest dissatisfaction to him. He speaks of this in the preface to one of his books, calling it a shame that people should laud the work of another country and despise that of their own.²⁵

Most of the prints credited to Kiyonobu (1664-1729)²⁶ show evidence of earlier traditions in the surroundings depicted with

²³ Various translated *yamato-eshi*.

²⁴ Sukenobu was born in 1671, when *Moronobu's* style was mature and known, so it is possible he came in contact with it.

²⁵ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁶ E. Ledoux, *Japanese Prints of the Ledoux Collection—The Primitives* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1942), plates 6, 7, and 8.

his subject matter. His subject usually concerned the theatre and was usually incorporated in posters. The work of Kiyonobu marks the first of a Torii line of painters who devoted most of their time to the production of advertisements, and the beginning of a continued exploitation of subject matter that concerned the theatre, and particularly popular actors.²⁷

In its initial phase, the actor print was not different from the large prints depicting courtesans. The "woman" was the most important subject. All the prints are correctly referred to as "actor" prints since female roles were usually played by men. (Conduct in the early theatre was such as to bar women from the stage.) These men became perfect female impersonators who studied the habits of women in every aspect and rarely appeared out of character. All evidence leads one to believe that to appear in male dress would have opposed the very nature of these actors.

Although many of the earlier broadsheets of courtesans and actors are undated, their approximate date is not hard to determine.²⁸ Comparative ease of chronological placement is mainly due to the rapidity of change in dress of the populace that readily imitated any innovations introduced by the popular frequenters of the quarter, innovations in turn reflected in the works of the early printmakers.

This brings us to a central controversy concerning Moronobu and his contemporaries. Some authorities feel that the label ukiyo-e is inadvisable when referring to these artists. Their argument is based upon the sound logic that the term ukiyo-e simply did not exist while these men were working.²⁹ The major point to be considered, however, is whether or not the *style* existed. The practice of recording the ever-changing "floating world" was initiated by the early "primitives" whose topical style simply preceded the invention of the word that was to describe it. It is true that Moronobu could never have described himself as an ukiyo-e artist. But then Picasso didn't know that he was the first Cubist—someone had to tell him.

Little doubt remains as to the "primitives'" awareness of

²⁷ There are unique examples of artists' preparatory sketches for theatre reproductions in Willy Boller, *Masterpieces of the Japanese Color Wood Cut* (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, n.d.).

²⁸ Laurance Binyon, *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Woodcuts in the British Museum* (London: William Clowes, 1916), p. xxix.

²⁹ Hajek-Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19.

the excellent application of the word once it was available to them as the following excerpt from the preface Okumura Masanobu wrote to his *Ukiyo-yenon Nukume-Dori* attests:

Every year the customs change a little. The way of dressing the hair, the taste in dress, changes from time to time. Those paintings which represent such changes are called *Ukiyo-ye*.³⁰

Masanobu and Color

Okumura Masanobu (1691-1768) was probably the man responsible for the advent of color in ukiyo-e prints. Printing, until his time, had been limited to black on white³¹ or *sumi-e*.³² Any color was added by hand, usually *tan-e*, an earth red-brown and orange. Although these first added colors were restricted to earth colors that were definitely of secondary importance to the black, many prints were not improved through this added adornment. The visual power of Moronobu's work was definitely weakened through the addition of these "subordinate" colors, and most authorities agree that he probably had little to do with subsequent coloring of this kind.

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Masanobu seems to have been the inheritor of Moronobu's inventive spirit, and any new technique was quickly adopted by the shop that he established in 1707. His must have been a philosophy of uniqueness that contrasted greatly with the artists who continued to conserve and assimilate Moronobu's accomplishments. Of course, the production of *sumi-e* and *tan-e* prints was the mainstay of his shop from the time of its opening, and broadsheets as well as books were boldly advertised in Masanobu's prints. As an enthusiast of the new, he probably introduced the following technical innovations: the lustrous black lacquer-prints (*urushi-e*);³³ the sprinkling of gold dust on wet ink; the use of Western linear perspective; and if his shop was not the first to sell pillar sheets, it certainly abounded in their production.³⁴

A. D. Ficke has commented that Masanobu's ability as an artist-shopkeeper probably resulted in the relatively secure

³⁰ Binyon, *loc. cit.*

³¹ Sometimes the paper would be brown, or some tinted color.

³² See Appendix II.

³³ See Appendix II.

³⁴ These long and narrow sheets were used to hang on the pillars of houses, and became very popular. As with anything so numerous, these sheets were little valued, and not many remain today.

introduction of printed color in the early 1740's.³⁵ Masanobu's adaption of the *kanto* or "aim" is what made color printing technically possible. The *kanto* consisted of two coinciding registration lines at the bottom of the block.³⁶ It is not certain how this practice began because map-makers and fan-makers contemporary with Masanobu used the *kanto* for the same purpose—accurate registry of color. This practice grew rapidly and still serves as a flexible and yet positive means of registration.

Most early Japanese color prints consisted of two colors (*beni-e*): a pink-red and an earth-green. Shortly after the introduction of these two, a full family of colors was developed for the artist's use. These polychrome prints paralleled the complexity of painting and brought new technical challenges. Later artists such as Utamaro still were interested in the craft of printing itself, just as the common people of Japan also have retained an interest in printmaking. *Surimono*, or greeting cards, have been exchanged since the Genroku era. Often these prints are done by the people themselves, and Utamaro is said to have printed his own. These cards are usually embellished with gold, silver, bronze, and mother-of-pearl dust. They are characteristically printed on a thicker and softer paper than generally was used by the ukiyo-e artists.

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Conclusion

While the beginnings of ukiyo-e prints are elusive, and many authorities are contradictory in regard to this era that gave such momentum to printmaking in Japan, the medium never seems to lose its quality of book illustration. Moronobu's achievements clearly indicate he did not simply "hit" upon the idea of using the woodcut for his ukiyo-e prints, but carefully constructed his expression upon his experience as a book-illustrator. His illustration of popular kimono designs in *Onna Shori Shu* was one of a number of guides not only to young ladies, but to young printmakers as well. The large quantity of books that Moronobu produced provided future artists an encyclopedic resource of antecedent art forms, for in his books he combined his power-

³⁵ This [position] must have afforded him great opportunities for experiments in technique, and may have been no small factor in making possible the remarkable advances for which he was responsible. Ficke, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

³⁶ See Appendix III.

fully delineated line and dramatic pattern with such strength that any added color would have been a needless embellishment.

Yet it is sometimes surprising to see as direct a reference to Moronobu's book-illustration as is evident in Kaigetsudo Dohan's print *Courtesan Arranging Her Coiffure*, Example 8, produced in the early eighteenth century. The vital line is still performing its function of integration, and the handling of the kimono could easily pass for Moronobu's own answer to the limitation of black and white. Apparently, the entire Kaigetsudo school³⁷ was devoted to a fusion of Moronobu's discoveries. Nearly all of the black and white prints produced in the Kaigetsudo manner exhibit no really new development beyond the unification of the ukiyo-e style. As in Example 8, this first pure ukiyo-e art was achieved through the rather obvious device of eliminating everything from the picture but the courtesan herself. The stylistic command thus gained enabled the Kaigetsudo artists to transform the image of the courtesan from an object of incidental diversion to a symbol of their culture.

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In Dohan's print the stylized pose consolidated the elements of Moronobu's genre illustration, but the character of the courtesan was presented in a dominating, imperious way. Dohan's success in utilizing Moronobu's sweeping line and ponderous blacks and whites to reveal the defiance symbolized by the courtesan signified the final rooting of the ukiyo-e style. To artists like Dohan, Moronobu's work must have remained as a postulate that the dichotomous elements of the Yoshiwara, rebellion and pleasure, could be unified in a black and white print. Dohan and other members of the following generation of printmakers fostered this belief until it became the guiding force for all ukiyo-e art that followed.

³⁷ Kaigetsudo Ando (1671-1743) was the founder of this school, and Kaigetsudo Dohan's black and white prints probably represent the greatest contribution this group made to the ukiyo-e tradition. For an enlightening discussion of this school that had remained enigmatic, see Richard Lane, *Kaigetsudo* (Rutland, Vermont; Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959).

Mr. Binyon has well stated that color printing in Japan is a medium of "unmatched felicity" due to the method of printing as well as to the sympathetic texture of the paper. Some consideration of the techniques and physical labor that are responsible for such "felicity" should be helpful in reaching an understanding of the ukiyo-e print.

Appendix I, The Making of Paper¹

The making of mulberry paper begins with the planting of the trees. The trees, which are cultivated by replanting the roots of old trees, are tended for five years before they are ready to be cut for papermaking. There are many varieties of the mulberry, each producing a distinct type of paper. The trees are cut in the tenth month of the mature year. Sometimes this wood is sold uncut on sight, or it may be marketed, the price being determined by its value as paper (bark) and firewood.

1. The branches are cut into lengths of about two and one-half to three feet and steamed. This process separates the bark from the wood, so that it can be peeled. The branches are placed in a large kettle with their root ends down.
2. The bark is peeled off and then hung to dry—this step takes about three days. The wood is also dried and sold for firewood.
3. When paper is to be made, the bark is put to soak for a full day in the currents of a swiftly flowing stream.
4. The black portion of the bark is stripped off with a knife and thrown aside to be used for the making of coarse paper.
5. The bark is again thoroughly washed in a stream. Then it is placed in a bucket, washed again, removed, and weighted down to express the water.
6. The pressed bark is placed in a kettle with lye to be boiled, a process which turns the bark into fiber.
7. The fiber is placed in a rush basket, immersed in a stream, and thoroughly rinsed of lye and ashes—then drained well.
8. The fiber is then beaten with a stick that is three feet long and an inch square. The beating table is five feet long, three feet wide, four feet thick, and usually made of oak or cherry.

¹ Kunisaki Jihel, *A Handy Guide to Papermaking*, after the Japanese edition of 1798, translated by Charles E. Hamilton (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1948), *passim*.

9. This product is then put into a mold. The fibers of another plant are added if the stock is not viscous enough. Equipment for this step: bamboo stick, strainer, straw broom, an inner frame, an outer frame, and a mat. The mat is of bamboo strips, and is placed in the inner frame—pressed firmly in place by the outer frame. The fiber is placed in the strainer, and then formed in the frames and mat. The sheets are carried to boards for drying by means of the bamboo stick. They are brushed with the broom.

Appendix II, Pigments and Vehicles^{2, 3}

1. Black is prepared by macerating Japanese ink (similar to India ink) in water for a few days until glue is dissolved. It is then ground with a mortar and pestle. A glue solution or rice paste is added when the pigment is used for printing. If a glue solution is desired, the glue is added and mixed in a basin. If rice paste is used, the mixing is done on the plank.
2. White "to-no-tuschi" is white lead, and is used alone or mixed with other pigments.
3. Imported red "yo-ko" is now used. Formerly the best kind of safflower was employed, but it is too expensive today.
4. Blue "hero ai" is Prussian blue. Formerly "ai-ro" paste was used, obtained by extraction from blue threads or rags dyed with indigo, or from "ai-gami," a paper saturated with indigo. Since the introduction of Prussian blue from Europe, it has become quite generally used due to its comparative cheapness.
5. Yellow "ki-wo" is orpiment. Formerly "zumi," an extraction from a particular yellow wood, was used. Turmeric, "wakon ko," and a yellow ocher, "wo-do," were used, but orpiment has now taken their places.

For mixing these colors, water only is used, never any sizing such as the glue used in lampblack. A small quantity of rice paste is, however, mixed with the colors on the block or plank. Various hues can be obtained by mixing these colors. The results depend entirely upon the printer, who does not use weights and measures, but mixes either in his color dishes or on the plank directly. Rice paste gives a particular luster to the colors,

² Edward Strange, *Japanese Colour Prints* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1913), *passim*.

³ T. Tokuno, "Japanese Wood-Cutting and Wood-Cut Printing," *U.S. National Museum Annual Report, 1891-92* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), *passim*.

and much of their beauty depends upon the time and care of grinding them with water.

Sometimes the printer makes dry impressions, known as *graffage* or embossing. This technique is used to give the ground a new texture and brilliance. The texture is added only after all registers have been made and the paper is completely dry. Sometimes the *baren* is used for this purpose, but more often the necessary pressure is exerted with the point of the elbow.

Appendix III, The Block-Cutter^{4, 5}

Painters very rarely cut their own blocks. The painting was usually done on a semi-transparent paper, and passed on to the printer. The drawing was pasted on a piece of cherry-wood with rice paste. The wood most generally used was *sakura*, cherry smoothed on both sides with a planer, for the block-cutter used both sides. The image was always cut on the grain (as opposed to *engraving*, which was cut on the end grain of the plank). To make the drawing clear, oil was sometimes applied, or the paper was scraped with a knife.

The cutter followed the design throughout with a knife, drawing with the right hand and guiding with the left. The unnecessary parts were chiseled away so that the drawing stood in bold relief. Theoretically, he cut exactly the lines given him by the artist, but there seems to have been some latitude in this operation at times. Block-cutters who completely understood the desires of the artist could often make "corrections" in the spirit of the artist's wishes, and those who didn't have this sensitive gift probably blundered badly. In other words, the good block-cutter played every bit as important a role in Japan as did the *Formschneider* in Renaissance Germany. Following is a summary of the tools of the cutter.

1. Ruler—for cutting straight lines and fixing lines of registry.
2. Brush—for removing the chips thrown by cutting tools.
3. Engraving knife—this same knife is used for cutting all work (both fine and coarse). It measures approximately 4½ inches long.
4. Chisels—6 sizes; for removing smaller portions between lines.
5. Chisels—2 sizes; used for removing unsatisfactory parts for "plugging." These two chisels are used for small corrections, cutting grooves in which new wood is inserted.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁵ James A. Michener, *The Floating World* (New York: Random House, 1954), *passim*.

6. Saw—for removing parts of the plank where corrections are to be made.
7. Chisels—4 sizes; for removing larger portions of wood.
8. Chisels—concave; for the same purpose.
9. Grinding stone—used for sharpening tools.
10. Grinding stone—to take off somewhat roughened edges of the tools, before sharpened on stone 9.
11. Grinding stone—for leveling surface of regular grinding stone.
12. Oil pot—in which the oil of *sesamum orientale* is kept, for rubbing portions of the plank to soften the wood and make the cutting cleaner and easier.
13. Oil brush—for application of the oil.
14. Wooden mallets—for driving larger chisels.

The completed block furnished the key to the whole and usually supplied black outlines to the entire picture. (Utamaro used a pinkish color for his key blocks that depicted partially draped women.) Proofs were then taken, and the artist indicated the positions of added colors. The registration marks have remained the same until today. Along with the weighty responsibility of cutting the artist's design, the block-cutter also had the relatively simple task of adding *kanto* marks that also remained in relief. These two marks, a right angle coinciding with a long line, were the only necessary aids to registration.



The "key" block was printed and proofs were glued down on additional blocks just as the master drawing had been. The *kanto* marks were charged with ink and printed as part of the "key" block image. Therefore, all color blocks had *kanto* marks in exactly the same related position. A simple notch corresponding to the *kanto* in each paper sufficed as a secure means of locking sheets into place.

Generally speaking, wood-blocks have remained the same since the Genroku era. Modern wood-blocks are shallower than the earlier ones, possibly due to slightly more refined instruments and a change in the practice of cutting the design.

The blocks are usually stored by nailing wide wooden strips at either end. The advantage of this type of storage is that it allows for accessibility. Usually a sign is attached to the wood strips for reference to the individual planks. This identi-

fication is used only for the key blocks, as color blocks may contain many different registers. Sometimes sheets of two or more subjects or designs have been discovered. These sheets are very rare and were intended to be separated, but some examples like Hiroshige's "Fifty-three Tokyo Stations," containing three, four, or five views on one sheet, remain today.

Appendix IV, The Printer^{6, 7, 8, 9}

The printer prepared his papers by dampening them with a brush and placing them under a weight so that the moisture would be evenly distributed. The paper was rather under- than over-moistened. Many times the paper would be slightly "re-freshed" in moistness by adding water with a brush on the back of the paper just prior to printing.

The color was mixed on the plank. The pigment was in a powder form, and rice paste was added as a vehicle. The block was charged with color prior to every printing. A backing sheet was sometimes used to protect the print from tearing from the rubbing of the *baren*. Printing families usually worked eight hours every day of the week. Fairly "easy" registrations would number as many as 1,200 to 1,800 impressions per day. "Hard" registers, where much gradation was involved, would number about 600 to 700 per day. An average week would see about 6,600 registrations.

Following is a summary of the tools of the printer.

1. Box—with rack for hanging brushes to dry.
2. Boards—for pressing wet paper.
3. Small box—for color dishes; stored in box #1 when not in use.
4. Printing table—when not in use serves to close top of box #1.
5. Brushes—for charging the cut planks with the printing colors. One brush is used for each color. These are also hung on the rack.
6. Brush—for wetting paper.
7. *Baren*—a rubbing tool, to be described in detail later.
8. Oil holder—a bottle containing oil of *sesamum orientale*.

⁶Laurance Binyon, *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Woodcuts in the British Museum* (London: William Clowes, 1916), *passim*.

⁷A. D. Ficke, *Chats on Japanese Prints* (Rutland, Vermont; Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1958), *passim*.

⁸Basil Stewart, *Subjects Portrayed in Japanese Colour Prints* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1922), *passim*.

⁹Tokuno, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

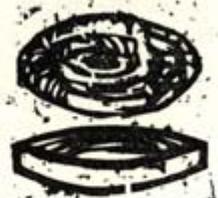
9. Chisels and knife—used to correct registering marks if necessary.

The *baren* is a hard shield consisting of a stiff disk made of layers of paper pasted together and covered with cotton material on the outside. This forms a dish shape or receptacle.

1.



2. A second disk of twisted cord fits inside the receptacle.



3. This is held in place by a bamboo sheath.

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4. The complete *baren*, seen from the back, is illustrated below. The bamboo sheath has a ribbed surface which is tightly drawn over the whole and twisted. Paper is placed over the twisting to make a handle.



The ribs of the bamboo sheath are very important in preventing the adhesion which would occur with a flat-surfaced instrument. The printer moves the *baren* in a zig-zag direction, keeping the ribs at a right angle to the movement.

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