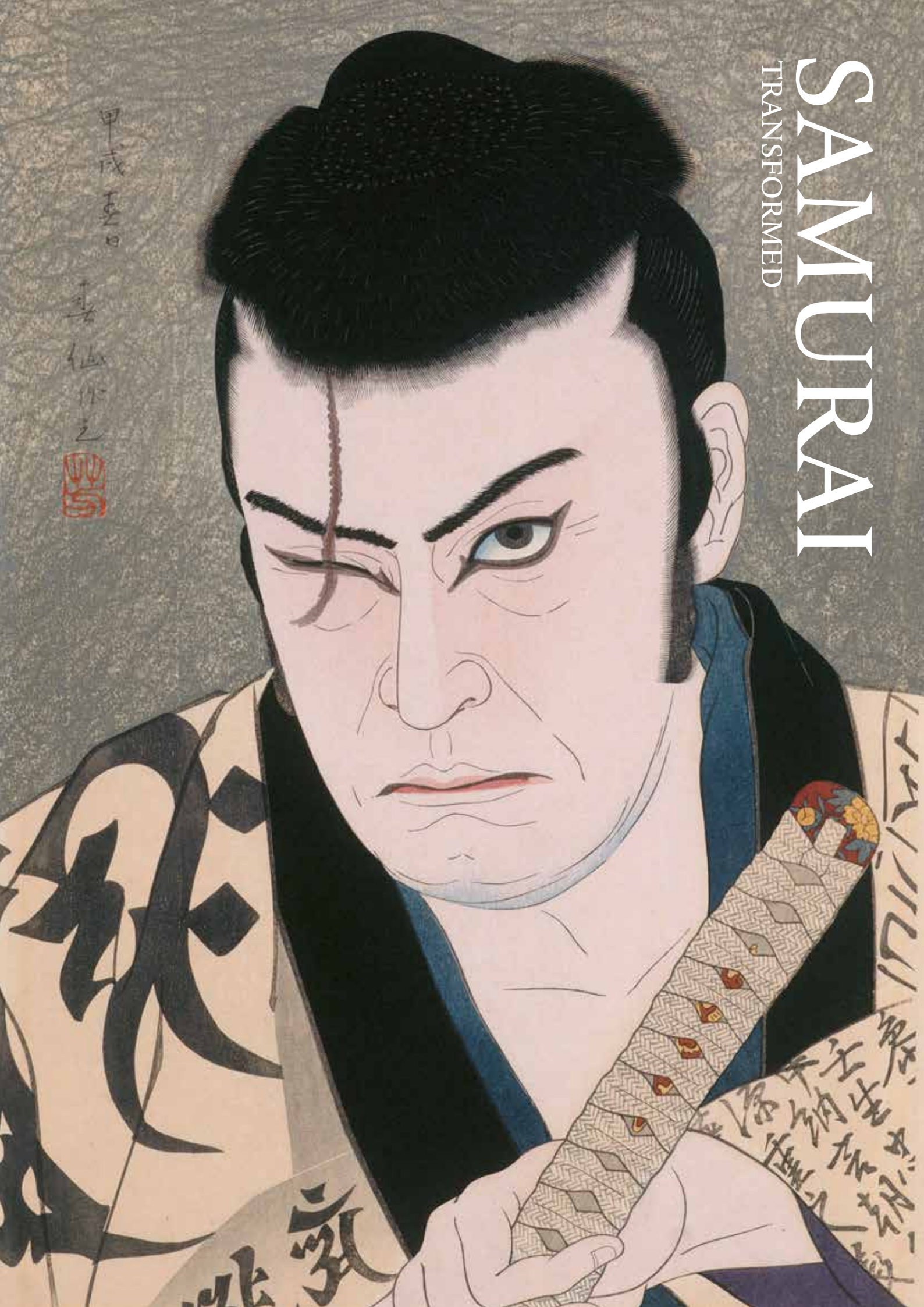
SAMURAI
TRANSFORMED



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above: Japan, *Tsuba, Warriors fighting under a pine tree*, c.1800, Japan, iron, copper-gold alloy (*shakudō*), silver, 8 cm (diam.); Bequest of Sir Samuel Way 1916

SAMURAI TRANSFORMED:
warrior, culture, class, commodity

Contents

Director's foreword

Rhana Devenport, ONZM

The Art Gallery of South Australia's collection of art from Japan has developed steadily for over a century, primarily through the generosity and connoisseurship of patrons. In the early twentieth century a series of significant bequests dramatically expanded our Asian decorative arts collection, while the first pair of matched swords were acquired in 1951. Today the collection has been strengthened through strategic acquisitions such as the magnificent *Samurai armour, with breastplate depicting Fudō-myōō*, which is featured in the exhibition and which was acquired in 2016 through the generosity of the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club.

This online publication, *Samurai transformed*, examines the influence of the samurai classes on the art and culture of Japan, from their ascension in the twelfth century to the present day. Through a series of essays by scholars from Australia, the United States and Japan, seeks to explore the complexity of the samurai, including their philosophical motivations and aesthetics, which continues to both fascinate and delight artists and audiences.

For over 600 years the samurai class ruled the archipelago of Japan and during that time transformed the socio-political and artistic landscapes. As warriors, their disastrous conflicts and heroic deeds provided a wealth of the material for the great military epics of Japanese literature and works of art. As patrons of the arts, they fostered a cultural renaissance, which still today underpins and defines the most recognisable forms of Japanese art and culture. As a class, their idealised code of ethics and their cultural pursuits continue to resonate with a global community. As symbolic personae, they were essential in presenting Japan to the world and are now a distinctive and fertile fixture in global culture.

This publication is presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Samurai*, shown at the Art Gallery of South Australia from 24 July 2020. *Samurai* includes significant works of art from the Gallery's Japanese collection, as well as those from private collections across Australia. In particular I wish to thank the Gwinnett Family for their tremendous generosity, alongside Joan and Colin Beer, M.J.M. Carter, AO, Brian and Barbara Crisp, David Forrest and Jánis Nedéla, Frances Gerard, John and Geraldine Halls, Mrs J. Howard Johnson, Elizabeth and Tom Hunter, Shane Le Plastrier, R.H. Longden Bequest, Alan Myers and Lee Grafton, James and Diana Ramsay, Mr E. Roberts, Raphy Star, Mrs Alec Tweedie Bequest, Ed and Sue Twedell, and Sir Samuel Way. The exhibition portrays

detail: Hirosada Gosoutei, Japan, active 1824–63, *Album of actor prints 'Surprising things'* (*Mezurashisashi*), 1851, Osaka, Japan, twenty-eight colour woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, metallic pigments, 26.0 × 19.0 cm (each image); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 2008

Adelaide's enduring fascination with the art and culture of the samurai and the Gallery's century-long association with this generative art.

Finally, I would also like to thank Russell Kelty for his curatorial vision and acknowledge the extraordinary breadth of expertise presented in each of these essays by the authors, Dr Adam Clulow, Dr Mark K. Erdmann, David Forrest, CBE, Dr Jennifer Harris and Dr Ryan Holmberg. I should also acknowledge the significant contribution to the development of the Japanese collection made by James Bennett, Curator of Asian Art and the first curator, Dick Richards.

I would also like to thank The Japan Foundation, Sydney, for their continued support and generosity for this publication.

The birth of the samurai class

Russell Kelty

Samurai means ‘to wait upon or to serve’ and it is this, above all other roles, that defines their place in society. As the hereditary military class, which includes the shogun, daimyo and various classifications of their retainers, the samurai were entrusted with serving and safeguarding the Emperor and administering the archipelago.

Evidence of a warrior culture in Japan appears in the form of iron body armour, helmets and straight swords, created from the third century BCE. Armour and helmets were made from pieces of iron, bound together with leather fixings and rivets, creating a durability and flexibility suited to warfare on horseback with bow and arrow. Innovations over the preceding centuries resulted in curved swords, which were the envy of East Asia, flexible lightweight armour and accoutrements of exceptional quality.

Standing figures created in terracotta (*haniwa*) (fig. 1) and stone (*sekijin*), wearing armour, swords and quivers have been found at the site of megalithic keyhole-shaped tombs in Japan.[1] It is believed these figures functioned as guardians of the treasures inside the tomb and delineated sacred space.

The earliest chronicles of Japan, compiled in the eighth century, describe the creation of the archipelago, as well as provide genealogical and anecdotal history of the imperial court and prominent clans. These chronicles not only recount the heroic struggles of the Emperors but also those of the Empresses.

The birth of the samurai occurred during the Heian period (795–1185), as the aristocracy of Kyoto indulged in the intrigues of the court and presided over a spectacular blossoming of art and culture. Imperial armies were disbanded and the conscription system abolished, leaving the security of provincial estates to the clan chieftains and governors appointed from the middle ranks of the aristocracy.[2] The governors were often provided with clan names such as Minamoto and Taira, members of which in the following centuries would vie for dominion over the archipelago.

At times, the Emperor appointed a commander as the *sei i tai shogun* or ‘barbarian-subduing great general’ on expeditions to the north of Kyoto to expand territory or subdue the indigenous clans (*emishi*). These expeditions were comprised of fast-moving mounted archers. As these estates became more independent from the court and took on peacekeeping responsibilities, they hired armed retainers, who provided their own horses and equipment, requiring substantial resources. These provincial gentry were called samurai.

Independent of the imperial court, these rural clans developed a feudal, familial structure, based on a mutually beneficial relationship between lord and vassal.[3] The samurai were encouraged to lead frugal and strenuous lives, hone their martial skills, practise hunting and hawking, and to value courage, honour and loyalty. It was the samurai in the east of Japan who refined the way of the bow and horse (*kyuba no michi*) with lethal efficiency.

fig. 1: Japan, Kofun period, 6th century, *Warrior in Keiko Armour Haniwa (Terracotta tomb figurine), Iizuka-machi, Ota Citi, Gunma*, 130.5 cm (height); Tokyo National Museum J36697

1 Tokyo National Museum, Colbase, *Warrior in Keiko Armour Haniwa (Terracotta tomb figurine)*, J-36697, <https://colbase.nich.go.jp/collection_items/tnm/J-36697?locale=en>.

2 J. Gabriel Barbier-Mueller (ed.), *Art of armor: Samurai armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011, p. 31.

3 Vassals were designated as housemen (*kenin*) or children of the house (*ienoko*) and the lords were viewed as their fathers.

Heroes, villains and the destruction of beauty in *The Tale of the Heike*

Russell Kelty

The Tale of the Heike is the great war epic of Japanese literature and for centuries has pervaded art, literature, drama and pop culture.[1] *The Tale* dramatically describes the historical events of the disastrous Genpei wars (1180–85), which 'convulsed twelfth century Japan and left indelible cultural memories'.[2] The thirteen books, or loosely connected chapters, describe the precipitous fall of the Taira (Heike), one of the most powerful clans in the late Heian period (794–1185), at the hands of the Minamoto (Genji). The prophetic opening lines evoke the Buddhist themes of impermanence (*mujō*) and karmic retribution, which were felt acutely in the tempestuous atmosphere of the fourteenth century, when it was compiled:

> The Jetavana Temple bells, ring the passing of all things. Twinned sal trees, white in full flower declare the great man's certain fall.[3]

These lines foretell the demise of the main protagonist, Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181), the powerful and influential head of the Heike clan, who was descended from the elegant courtiers and great poets of Kyoto (fig. 1). As a prominent historical figure, Kiyomori is described in other tales of the period as cowardly and foolish, but in *The Tale of the Heike* he is transformed into an arch-villain, becoming the archetype for all future villains. His ruthless acts transgressed the boundaries of honourable conduct, ultimately leading to his demise, wracked by disease and fever. The destruction of the Taira at the hands of the Minamoto led to the establishment of the first military government (*bakufu*) at Kamakura and the appointment of the first shogun by the emperor, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), a prominent figure in *The Tale*.

By the early fourteenth century *The Tale* had been transcribed from oral accounts and survived in two streams: texts to be read, and texts to be memorised and performed by blind monks, accompanying themselves on the *biwa*. Under the authority of the Ashikaga shogunate, the guild of the 'lute priests' (*biwa hoshi*) was regularly summoned to the palace for new year rituals for upper class samurai. Itinerant singers transmitted the war tales orally, spreading stories of warriors' loyalty, courage and virtue throughout the country.

The peace and prosperity of the Edo period saw a flourishing of the arts. The most dramatic moments and iconic figures of *The Tale of the Heike* were codified and became the subject of a range of media to suit all levels of society, and included illustrations on sliding doors, handscrolls, album leaves, woodblock prints and commentaries (*rufubon*),

fig. 1: Japan, *Taira no Kanemori (died 991), one of the thirty-six immortals of poetry*, 19th century, Japan, woodblock print; ink and pigment on paper, 34.5 × 25.5 cm (sheet); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2006

1 Royall Tyler (trans.), *The tale of the Heike*, Viking Penguin, London, 2012, p. xxi.
2 Tyler, p. xxi.
3 Tyler, p. 3.

fig. 2, detail: *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike (*Heike Monogatari*), early 18th century, Japan, pair of six-panel screens, colour and gold on paper, 155.0 × 357.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

all confirming the widespread interest in *The Tale*. The commentaries in particular analyse each chapter, and the characters and events in it, against the criteria of bravery, wisdom, benevolence, trust and loyalty. Guilds of Heike performers also flourished under the patronage of the 'Tokugawa shoguns who adopted it as a form of ceremonial music' and as an origin tale of their clan.[4] For the Tokugawa shogunate, *The Tale of the Heike* served a specific function: it glorified their connection with the victorious Minamoto, who ultimately defeated the evil Taira clan. As a result, they quickly sought to connect themselves with *The Tale* and ordered scholars to verify its historical accuracy so that it could be used as a tool for governing the country.[5]

The most spectacular vision of *The Tale of the Heike* was presented on folding screens, extant pre-sixteenth-century examples of which demonstrate the widespread creation of Heike paintings and their reception among the upper echelons of society.[6] Existing collections also attest to the fact that the Tokugawa commissioned numerous examples, often from Kanō school artists, and even used them as diplomatic gifts for Korea's embassy's to Japan.[7] Importantly, the shogunate strictly controlled the subjects chosen and how they were depicted to emphasise the military and moral excellence of the Minamoto, and by extension themselves. The screens were also designed to impress upon the viewer that the Taira were defeated because they lacked warrior virtues. Anecdotes of viewings of Heike screens by members of the Tokugawa family and Confucian scholars reveal their unqualified appreciation of the most heroic deeds and their recognition of the inferiority of their contemporaries.

4 Tyler, p. xxxvi.
5 Naoko Gunji, 'Heike paintings in the early Edo period: edification and ideology for elite men and women', *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2017, p. 6.
6 Gunji, p. 4.
7 Gunji, p. 6.

fig. 3, detail: *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike (*Heike Monogatari*), early 18th century, Japan, pair of six-panel screens, colour and gold on paper, 155.0 × 357.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

The Tale of the Heike screens in the Gallery's collection are unique, in that they both depict the key moments and characters in just one chapter, the Battle of Ichinotani of 1184 (from book 9). Most Heike screens link depictions of this battle with the Battle of Yashima of 1185 (from book 11), with the dark waters of the inland sea conventionally presented in the centre, separating the events of books 9 and 11. These two chapters are important, as together they mark the end of the Heike's dominance and include the most pivotal events of *The Tale*, valorising its heroic aspects. As noted, the Gallery's Heike screens diverge from the conventional depictions; here, the artist or patron has chosen to focus only on the Battle of Ichinotani, today a bucolic beachside town, near the city of Kobe. At the centre of the right-hand screen is depicted the child emperor Antoku (1178–1185), quietly ensconced behind a blind at the Fukuhara mansion, as a whirling drama takes place around him (fig. 2).

At the top of the screen, the beloved hero of Japanese war literature, Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189), the half-brother of the shogun-to-be, Yoritomo (1147–1199), leads a surprise attack, descending down the precipitous Hiyodori ravine, north of the stronghold (fig. 3), while another half-brother and leader of the campaign, Noriyori, attacked the Taira at Ikuta Shrine, to the east.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune's spectacular descent is one of the most celebrated military achievements in Japanese history and has endeared him to fans since that time. The chaotic encounter which precipitated this decision is captured in the following lines of *The Tale of the Heike*:

> they threw themselves into a free and furious battle, Genji against Heike – endless allies and sorties, endless fierce challenges as men roared out their names, until the mountains quaked and charging hoofbeats rang out like thunder. Arrows rained down in volleys … pairs grappled side by side … here a man pinned another's head down and cut it off.[8]

Minamoto no Yoshitsune and his forces descend the cliff, which is so steep that the 'stirrups of those behind touch the helmets and armor of those in front'.[9] In *The Tale*, Yoshitsune is not simply portrayed as courageous but he also seeks advice from the samurai under his command and leads from the front not the back.[10]

The Tale is characterised by idealised examples of heroism and courage, and the boundless loyalty of a samurai to his lord.[11] The ultimate test of a warrior was his willingness to die for his lord and disembowel himself if necessary, to avoid capture and disgrace. The ideal hero was a powerful warrior and literary man sensitive to human emotions. Minamoto no Yorimasa (1106–1180) represented this ideal, and his death poem as he commits *seppuku* after defeat in battle is later quoted approvingly: 'Writing poems has been a constant pleasure since his youth, so that even at the moment of death he did not forget'. Of all samurai epic tales compiled in the thirteenth century *The Tale of the Heike* reflects the warrior values institutionalised in the military government established by the Minamoto.[12]

The left-hand screen depicts the chaotic retreat of the Taira onto awaiting barges and is possibly the most iconic scene in *The Tale* and evokes the pathos of its opening lines.

The death of Atsumori (1169–1184) inspired a plethora of Nō plays and ballad dramas and became a subject in its own right (fig. 4).[13] According to *The Tale of the Heike*, Atsumori, the teenage nephew of Kiyomori, was just about to escape the wrath of the Minamoto when an older general, Kumagai Naozane (1141–1208), caught his attention by waving his red fan and coaxed him back to shore by questioning his virtue: 'My eyes tell me that you are man of high rank. For shame to turn your face from the enemy. Come back! Come back!' The elegantly dressed Atsumori returned to shore only to perish at the hands of the formidable Kumagai. The screen captures the moment of recognition by Atsumori as Kumagai races towards him, his cape billowing. The artist has captured a moment of calm amidst the chaos, as well as the sumptuous accoutrements of each warrior, as described at length in chapter 11:

> He was wearing a battle robe of finely woven silk embroidered in a crane design, armour of light green lacing, and a horned helmet. He carried a sword with gilt fittings and a quiver whose arrows were fledged with black and white eagle feathers and held a rattan-wound bow in his hand. He was seated on a gold rim saddle, astride a grey horse with white markings.

8 Tyler, p. 494.
9 Paul Varley, *Warriors of Japan: as portrayed in the war tales*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1994, p. 136.
10 Varley, pp. 126–7.
11 John Stevenson, 'The warrior in Japanese history', in J. Gabriel Barbier-Mueller (ed.), *Art of armor: Samurai armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2001, p. 36.
12 Stevenson, p. 36.
13 James Bennett & Amy Reigle Newland, *The golden journey: Japanese art from Australian collections*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, pp. 87–8.

fig. 4, detail: *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike (*Heike Monogatari*), early 18th century, Japan, pair of six-panel screens, colour and gold on paper, 155.0 × 357.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

The quiet pathos of each scene is heightened for viewers, who would have immediately recognised that these young innocents were to perish as a result of Kiyomori's hubris – Atsumori at the hands of Kumagai and Antoku drowned in the sea in the arms of his grandmother.

The death of Atsumori is one of the defining moments of *The Tale of the Heike* and inspired a Nō drama by the foremost playwright of the fourteenth century Zeami Motokiyo (c.1336–c.1443). *Atsumori* evokes the marked contrasts between the cultivated samurai from the capital of Kyoto and those from eastern Japan.

Even more striking is Kumagai's recognition of the distinct difference between the beauty and refinement of Atsumori's armour and his ability to play the flute, which contrasts with his own rough manner. This feeling is emphasised after Kumagai beheads Atsumori and realises that he has truly destroyed something beautiful and remarks that, among the tens of thousands of warriors, 'not one of them brought a flute with him into battle!'[14] The inevitability of the act and the recognition of what has happened come later, after Kumagai has gazed upon the rare beauty of Atsumori's flute, passed down from the aristocracy of Kyoto and which he had heard at dawn coming from the fortress:

> The name of the flute was Saeda.
> It is a touching thought indeed
> that the giddy charms of music
> served to turn a warrior's mind
> to praise the way traced by the Buddha.[15]

Kumagai was so distressed by the events that he repents his warrior lifestyle and takes tonsure, subsequently dedicating his life to atone for destroying beauty. In the Nō play, *Atsumori*, Kumagai finds redemption after visiting the site of the event and meeting the ghost of Atsumori.

The screens in the Art Gallery's collection are an eighteenth-century interpretation of events, recorded in the fourteenth century, which occurred in the twelfth century. The heroes and villains of *The Tale* permeate Japanese culture – from Nō, to Kabuki woodblock prints and movies. 'As visual narratives, the screens recall the Heike tale in complex ways at the same time re-envisioning them and reframing them … and how they contribute to an ever-expanding visual culture'.[16]

fig. 5, left-hand screen: *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike (*Heike Monogatari*), early 18th century, Japan, pair of six-panel screens, colour and gold on paper, 155.0 × 357.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

14 Tyler, p. 506.
15 Tyler, p. 506.
16 Tomoko Sakomura, 'Unfolding narratives: visualising the tales of Genji and Heike on the folding screen', in Bennett & Newland, p. 88.

It was only with the 'great peace' of the early seventeenth century under the Tokugawa *bakufu* that samurai were required to transition from warriors to a more sedate life of administration and policing the archipelago. The Tokugawa enacted rules and regulations to perpetuate their dominance and maintain the fragile alliance of over 260 regional daimyo lords. According to the 'Laws governing warrior houses' (*Buke shohatto*), issued in 1615, it was expected that all samurai would 'study literature and practise the military arts'.[17] For the Tokugawa, the value of *The Tale of the Heike* lay in its evocation of the daily life, etiquette and ethical values of the ideal samurai, the most important of which was fidelity to one's lord. The heroes and villains of these two iconic samurai families and the epic moments of the narrative itself continue to inspire artists to the present day and are presented to Japanese and global audiences in a myriad of media. This print created over 600 years after

fig. 6, above: Kobayashi Kiyochika, born Tokyo 1847, died Japan 1915, *Taira no Tadanori (1144–1184) composing a poem under a cherry tree*, 1884, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, triptych, 36.5 × 25.5 cm (each sheet); d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2013

17 Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Voices of early modern Japan: contemporary accounts of daily life during the age of the shoguns*, Westview Press Books, Philadelphia, 2014, pp. 68–73.

18 Tyler,

the historical events that inspired *The Tale of the Heike* depicts Taira no Tadanori seated beneath a cherry tree composing a poem on the night before his death at the Battle of Ichinotani (fig. 6).

The poem in the upper right-hand corner of the print is included in *The Tale of the Heike* and a Nō drama and reads:

> Were I, still traveling as night falls,
> to make a sheltering tree my inn,
> then would my host tonight be the blossoms themselves?[18]

fig. 7: Japan, *Netsuke, Manjū, Taira no Koremochi (c.1100) slaying the demon Kijo*, mid- to late 19th century, Japan, ivory, mother-of-pearl, 5.7 cm (diam.); M.J.M. Carter AO Collection 2004

The quest for beauty amidst the ashes: the creation of samurai culture

Russell Kelty

> The world is all a dream,
> and he who wakes the world is all a dream,
> and he wakes, casting it from him, may yet know the real.
>
> (The monk Rensho, formerly the Minamoto warrior Kumagai, from the Nō play, *Atsumori*)

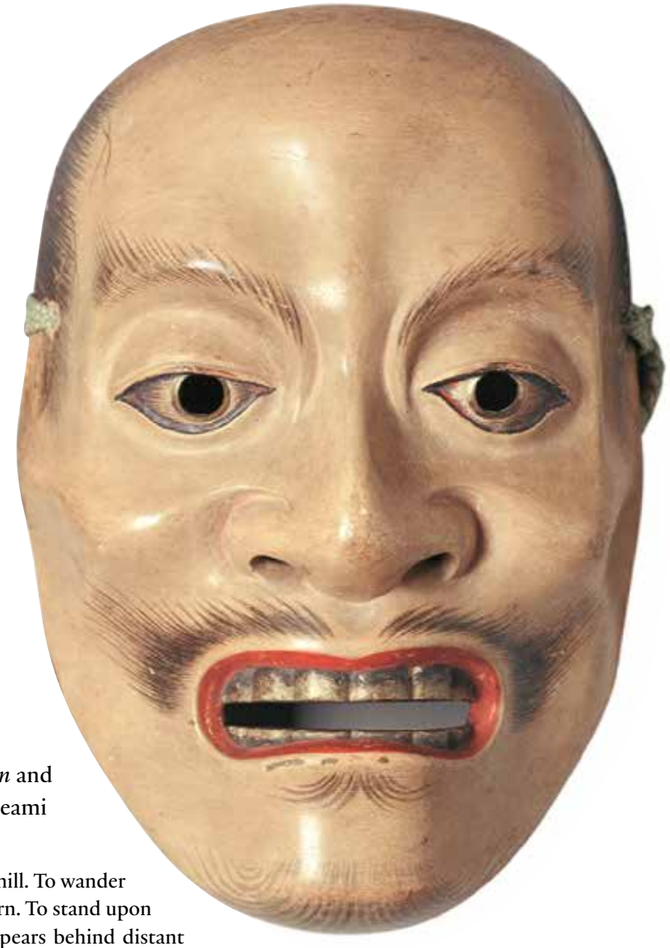
In a small mountain retreat nestled in the eastern hills of Kyoto, a failed shogun's passion for the arts inspired a renaissance amidst the chaos of war. As the power of regional daimyo expanded and the shogunate faltered, Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490) surrounded himself with the foremost Nō playwrights, tea masters and gardeners, and in his Silver Pavilion experimented with new types of interior architecture and displays. He was an artistic connoisseur of rare sensitivity and the culture which blossomed under his guidance and patronage shaped the tastes and pursuits of future shogun, daimyo and samurai. The new aesthetic was defined as mysterious and tinged with a recognition of impermanence and has been described as the 'the soul of Japan'.[1]

The calamitous historical events that inspired *The Tale of the Heike* ushered in the era of the samurai and the decline of the influence of the aristocracy in Kyoto. The victorious leader, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), established Japan's first warrior government (*bakufu*) in Kamakura on the east coast of Japan and assumed the title of shogun, the Emperor's military commander. For the next 600 years the archipelago was ruled and administered by a succession of hereditary military governments, which recognised the legitimacy of the Emperor.

Over time, the *bakufu* in Kamakura established offices in Kyoto and wielded such considerable influence that they were able to select emperors, control imperial appointments and maintain control over the regional provinces.[2] The first code of the samurai was written to deal with disputes over land and religious and criminal disputes (*joei shikimoku*) and recognised the separate function of the imperial court.[3]

The new military ethos, described as 'violent and masculine' (*masuraoburi*), contrasted with the 'gentle and feminine' (*taoyameburi*) culture of the Kyoto aristocracy.[4] However, the military elite indulged in the pursuits of the court and were 'more likely to compose poetry on the beauty of falling cherry blossoms than on the joys of victory in battle'.[5] The literature of the period reflected the interests of the samurai and was infused with a sense of pessimism and a recognition of impermanence, encapsulated in the widespread belief that Japanese society had entered a degenerate age of Buddhism (*mappō*) and had narrowly escaped the Mongol hordes who were turned away by divine winds (*kamikaze*).[6]

1 Donald Keene, *Yoshimasa and the silver pavilion: the creation of the soul of Japan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.
2 *Seiitaishogun* (Supreme commander against the barbarians), *shogun*, is the term most commonly used to refer to the heads of three samurai governments ('shogunates' or *bakufu*) which ruled Japan 1192–1333, 1336–1573, 1615–1868.
3 John Stevenson, 'The warrior in Japanese history', in J. Gabriel Barbier-Mueller (ed.), *Art of armor: Samurai armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011, p. 35.
4 Stevenson, p. 36.
5 Ryusaku Tsunoda, W.T. De Bary & D. Keene, *Sources of the Japanese tradition*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001, p. 364.
6 According to Buddhist beliefs, the period following the death of the historical Buddha is divided into three ages and *mappō* is the last and final age, which began in 1052 CE and will end with the arrival of the buddha-to-be, who will restore the *dharma*.



The aesthetic vocabulary established by the aristocracy to describe courtliness and refinement (*miyabi*) intensified and darkened. The term *yūgen* is often translated as 'deep mystery' and can be used to describe art forms that evoke the stirring of emotions, which cannot be fully expressed in words. Of all art forms, it was the subtle beauty of Nō theatre (fig. 1) that captured the ethos of *yūgen* and was aptly described by the great playwright Zeami Motokiyo (c.1363–c.1443):

> To watch the sun sink behind a flower clad hill. To wander on in a huge forest without thought of return. To stand upon the shore and gaze after a boat that disappears behind distant islands. To contemplate the flight of wild geese seen and lost among the clouds …

To achieve *yūgen*, works of art were required to be stripped of colour and glitter and achieve a stillness. Other terms such as *sabi*, appear in the earliest compilations of poetry, as well as in *The Tale of the Heike*, and refer to objects that had acquired the patina of age or rusticity. These terms were influenced by new forms of Buddhism.

The ascension of the samurai as the de facto rulers of Japan coincided with the emergence of new Buddhist lineages and schools, which advocated a more direct path to salvation and enlightenment. Pure Land Buddhism and Zen (ch: chan) Buddhism became increasingly popular. Zen, which was transmitted from India to China and then on to Japan, found favour with the new military government. Vast temple complexes were established in both Kamakura and Kyoto. From the beginning, Zen Buddhism was influenced by existing esoteric practices, featuring wrathful protectors such as *Fudō Myōō* (p. 43).

Zen practice elevates the discovery of the inner 'Buddha' within oneself over the worship of Buddhist icons. An emphasis was placed on the teacher–pupil relationship, which paralleled the loyalty of samurai to their lords. Zen also offered the opportunity for instantaneous enlightenment (*satori*), which required a type of discipline familiar to the samurai and their daily pursuit of martial perfection.

fig. 1: Japan, *Nō mask of Togo*, c.1700, Kyoto, cypress wood, lacquer, gilt-copper alloy, 20.3 × 13.9 cm; Bequest of Mrs Alex Tweedie 1940

Unkoku Tōgan, born Saga prefecture, Japan 1547, died Japan 1618, *Daruma*, c.1600, Japan, hanging scroll; ink and natural pigments on paper, 205.0 × 67.5 cm (overall); Gift of M.J.M. Carter AO through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2018

Zen temples acted as a window for the reception of prominent trends in poetry and painting from China and served as repositories for a wealth of art and culture. The arts of the brush (poetry, painting and calligraphy) merged into one format – hanging and hand scrolls (fig. 2). The patriarchs of Zen Buddhism, Daoist immortals and seasonal landscapes were prominent themes among artist monks. The most evocative are the complementary pair of dragon and tiger, which appear widely in the interior decoration of temples.

Tea, in the form of powder, was introduced for a second time to Japan from China as an aid to meditation among Buddhist monks. The elevation of tea from a drink to an artistic pursuit and ritual was influenced by monastic rules, leading to the common saying 'tea and Zen have the same flavour'. The way of tea (*chadō* or *chanoyu*) was literally shaped by the architecture of the Silver Pavilion. Although the ritual of tea originally featured Chinese ceramics and utensils, the influential tea master, Murata Jukō (died 1502), who transformed the tea ceremony in the late fifteenth century, initiated

fig. 3: Japan, *Tray, negoro ware*, c.1700, lacquer on wood, 6.5 × 42.0 cm (diam.); Gift of James and Diana Ramsay 1972

a taste for the imperfection of Japanese utensils that evoked a simple, unpretentious beauty (*wabi*). Murata elevated the 'cold, withered and shrunken' to represent artistic transcendence, and, according to him, 'no art worthy of the name, is intelligible to persons of shallow understanding' (fig. 3). Murata believed that, upon entering his small and austerely appointed tearoom, the trappings of daily life, particularly one's status, must be discarded, as each participant was considered equal. He also imbued his tea ritual with performative elements from Nō theatre and the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, which placed an emphasis on the communal nature of life. The most striking element of the ceremony was that participants were often required to use the same tea bowl. These were authentic rustic wares from Japanese or Korean kilns rather than luxurious porcelains from China (fig. 4). As a result, tea bowls became the most prominent utensils of Murata's *wabi-cha*, with the most spectacular examples coveted by the wealthy merchants of Sakai and powerful daimyo seeking to express their own prestige and power. For the samurai the way of tea would become essential to their lifestyle and essential for cultivating their own aesthetic sensibilities.

fig. 4: Japan, *Tea bowl (chawan) named Morning Light (Akebono)*, 17th century, earthenware, ash glaze, gold, silver mends, 8.0 × 13.0 cm (diam.); M.J.M. Carter AO Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2019

Symbols of failure, of success: samurai culture and martial architecture

Mark K. Erdmann

Katsushika Hokusai's (1760–1849) *Nihon bridge at Edo* (fig. 1), designed c.1830–34, almost certainly received its stamp of approval from government censors with little or no hesitation. Although the design employs the exotic feature of Western one-point perspective and was destined to be reproduced as a print – that is, the preferred medium of Edo-period (1616–1868) counter-culture – for the ruling samurai elite who sat on the censor board, Hokusai's vision reflected the world as it should be.[1] At the centre of the image sits one of Edo Castle's turrets, the public face of the ruling military government, known as a shogunate. The turret appears as not only overseeing a bustling scene on Nihon bridge in the foreground but is framed as directly responsible for the city's vibrancy. Reaching into the heavens and acting as link between this scene of commerce below and the divine peak that is Mount Fuji above,

fig. 1: Katsushika Hokusai, Japan, 1760–1849, *Nihon Bridge at Edo (Nihonbashi)* from the series *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji* (*Fugaku sanjurokkei*), c.1830–34, Edo (Tokyo), woodblock print, ink and colour on paper, 24.8 x 36.6 cm (sight); Gift of Edward Newman 2004

1 Timon Screech, 'The meaning of Western perspective in Edo popular culture', *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 47, 1994, p. 66.

the shogunate's architecture, like the government it represents, connects heaven and earth. According to the Confucian ideals upon which the samurai class based its claims to rule, the management of this divine association was the samurai's responsibility and, at least within Hokusai's depiction of a happy, healthy and wealthy populous, the members of this warrior class were marvellously succeeding.

Edo-period images such as *Nihon bridge at Edo* encourage a reading of history as unchanging and the samurai and their castles as eternal, but Hokusai's image is, in fact, the end point of a complete reversal of several centuries of tradition regarding the relationship between samurai, architecture and authority. For most of Japanese history, castles and other structures of a martial nature represented the opposite of the ideal world that Hokusai depicts. Indeed, towers, walls, ramparts and other sorts of defensive structures were a sign of a failure of government to manage the relationship with the heavens and cultivate prosperity for the governed.

Unlike the situation in the West, China and most of the world, Japan represents a remarkable exception in world history prior to the late sixteenth century, as it lacked a tradition of permanent martial architecture and, consequently, any association between fortress and ruler. When the samurai class first emerged in the later part of the Heian period (794–1185), defensive architecture was largely rejected, as it negated the samurai's strongest asset, their speed. Essentially contracted mercenaries – a point evidenced by a literal translation of the verb *saburau* (to serve), from which the name 'samurai' is derived – the samurai used their skill as mounted archers to quickly overwhelm and pacify opponents to the imperial court. Yet, even as these warriors usurped their masters in the late twelfth century, additional factors compounded their reluctance to embrace martial architecture. Protected by water, Japan was rarely threatened by foreign conquerors, who might be the catalyst for linking leader and fortification. Moreover, the consistent presence of a central authority; namely, the Emperor and later the shogun, the head of the shogunate, undermined extreme ideas such as cessation, in favour of negotiated settlement.[2] While the actual power of these leaders varied greatly over time, the respect they garnered offered an alternative to perpetual stalemates, which might demand permanent fortifications. In practical terms, this understanding equated to a martial culture of sneak attacks, the speed of which might enable quick resolution to a conflict, or temporary fortifications in readily defensible, remote locations – a delaying tactic that might allow time for appeals. Within this context, examples of martial architecture were rarely sustained for periods longer than a year and, consequently, their potential as symbols of authority was overlooked.[3] Instead, the primary functions of these structures were recognised as dark omens and signs of the loss of divine favour.

Although painted roughly six centuries after the events it depicts, the right screen of *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike (fig. 2), illustrates this pre-sixteenth-century reality with notable historical sensitivity. Situated at the centre of this image are several connecting permanent structures, marked by white plaster walls and cedar-shingle roofs, which have been transformed into a fort by warriors of the Taira clan. Fleeing from their rivals in the Minamoto clan, the Taira had settled on this location

2 Karl Friday, 'Valorous butchers: the art of war during the golden age of the Samurai', *Japan Forum*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1993, p. 8.

3 Mark Karl Erdmann, 'Azuchi Castle: architectural innovation and political legitimacy in sixteenth-century Japan', PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2016, chapter 3.

fig. 2, right screen: Japan, *Battle scenes from* The Tale of Heike *(Heike Monogatari)*, early 18th century, Japan, pair of six-panel screens, colour and gold on paper, 155.0 × 357.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003

(modern-day Kobe) – between the steep cliffs of Ichi-no-tani, depicted in the upper left of the screen, and Suma beach, shown in the left screen – precisely because of its defensibility. Untreated makeshift walls, as well as augmenting walls constructed from bamboo frames and planks, are depicted on the two exposed sides of the fort. Unable to win in a head-to-head battle, the Taira would use this stronghold in an attempt to survive until a moment when they might be able to reassert their claims to rule via the child–emperor Antoku (1178–1185), depicted as clad in red and at the centre of the fort. Their efforts would be in vain, however, as a sneak attack launched from the cliffs, again in the upper left of the screen, would force the Taira into another defeat. While the tactics of both sides reveal the pre-sixteenth-century preference for conducting war with decisive action and plays for time, the depiction of martial architecture serves to foreshadow the end of the war in which this battle took place. Rather than to aggrandise or reflect the strength of the Taira, these structures and the chaos of soldiers fighting around them are evidence of the Taira's failure to govern. Further building on this reading, the Minamoto's death-defying attack from the cliffs clarifies to whom heaven's favour had shifted.

In lieu of martial architecture, samurai would explore a variety of architectural styles to project their legitimacy. Both the Taira and Minamoto clans, as well as the shogunate that the latter founded, employed the architectural styles of the Heian imperial court, such as those shown in the right screen of *Scenes from* The Tale of Genji (fig. 3). These sprawling timber-frame palaces, with versatile movable walls and surrounding gardens, effectively functioned to link the image of the samurai to the perceived peace and prosperity and sophistication of the prior 'classical'

fig. 3, right screen: Japan, *Scenes from* The Tale of Genji *(Genji monogartari)*, early 17th century, Kyoto, pair of six-panel screens, colour, gold, silver on paper, 154.0 × 348.0 cm (each); Gift of Dai-Ichi Mutual Life Insurance Company through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, assisted by the South Australian Government Grant 1990

fig. 4 opposite, detail p. 47: Japan, *Almanac: Celebration of seasonal events (Daifuku setsuyo)*, first printed 1830, reprinted 1863, Osaka, woodblock print, ink and colour on paper (186 folded leaves), 25.0 × 18.0 × 4.7 cm; Gift of David Button 2007

age. Extensively developed by their samurai owners over subsequent centuries, the interiors of these palace complexes would evolve by the fifteenth century into a new architectural style known as *shoin-zukuri*. Characterised by desk, alcove and staggered-shelf fixtures, as well as tatami-mat floors, *shoin-zukuri* is synonymous today with Japanese interior space (fig. 4). Its features were invented as means to show off exotic Chinese and Korean, as well as Japanese, ceramics, lacquers, calligraphy and ink-landscape paintings. Along with the very design and material quality of the *shoin-zukuri* spaces, objects like the Chinese green-glazed stoneware vase (fig. 5) or Sōko Gesshū's (1618–1696) calligraphic

fig. 6: Sōko Gesshū, Japan, 1618–1696, *Nothingness (mu)*, c.1650, Kyoto, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 114.5 × 54.0 cm (overall), 30.5 × 51.0 cm (image); Gift of Shane Le Plastrier through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017

fig. 5: Japan, *Vase*. c.1300, Longquan, Zhijiang province, stoneware with overglaze, 18 cm (height); Bequest of R.H. Longden 1994

work *Nothingness* (fig. 6) were put on display in these dedicated spaces to reflect the wisdom and refinement, as well as the wealth, of their owners and, in turn, the righteousness of those owners' position of influence and authority. In this respect, both the Heian palaces and *shoin-zukuri* reflect the nature of the entrenched powers that inhabited them. Raw displays of strength could easily seize these buildings and settings, but to maintain them required a mastery over the material and a social culture that these chambers engendered and cultivated.

This prioritisation of architectural interiors, exemplified in *shoin-zukuri*, over exteriors as a means to project qualifications ended with the age of castles. The end of the fifteenth century marks the beginning of a series of civil wars, which would last roughly a century-and-a-half. With the loss of any adherence to a central authority brought on by these conflicts, the Japanese archipelago was stripped of a reliable arbiter and, in turn, the strategy of delaying conflict with temporary means until appeals were heard proved to be a recipe for defeat. Long-term survival gradually came to depend on fortifications. Nonetheless, the established relationship between architecture and elites did not suddenly dissolve with this demand and, as a consequence, defensive and legitimising functions were combined. Azuchi Castle, built in 1576 by the first of the so-called 'three unifiers of Japan', Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), would usher in this new age of martial architecture. At Azuchi, the qualities of defensibility and monumentality derived from defensive constructions, along with the exquisite materials and decoration demanded by *shoin-zukuri*, were integrated to spectacular effect. With a six-story donjon, crowned with a gold-leaf cover keep and seated atop a small mountain, Azuchi towered over its surrounding territory (fig. 7). More than a display of refinement and wealth, it physically appeared as linking heaven and earth. In its very forms, the castle evoked Confucian notions of a sage king chosen by heaven and pointed to its owner as solely capable of ending a century of instability and civil strife.[4] Although Nobunaga never realised this goal and Azuchi was razed in the wake of his assassination in 1582, his successors would directly copy his example to build Osaka and Edo castles. It is the same conflation of castle turrets, samurai rule and heavenly mandate that, centuries later, Hokusai would exploit in *Nihon bridge at Edo*. While Hokusai's vision obfuscates a longer history, it is nonetheless instructive, as it reveals an association between martial architecture and authority, one that is all too easily taken for granted.

fig. 7: Naitō Akira reconstructive model of the Azuchi donjon, Azuchi-jōkaku Museum, Ōmi-Hachiman, Shiga prefecture, Japan
photo: Mark Erdmann

4 Erdmann, chapter 5.

Painting power and prestige: the shogun, daimyo and the Kanō school

Russell Kelty

For more than 400 years, the Kanō school of painters, based in Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo), created a definitive style of painting and a common visual language, which still resonates today. The remarkable longevity of the school 'was the product of resourceful adaption to an ever changing landscape of patrons and prospects'.[1] The school's origin in the fifteenth century during the failing Ashikaga shogunate and subsequent commissions from prominent daimyo and temples in Kyoto allowed the establishment of numerous branches throughout the archipelago. The Kanō school flourished into the nineteenth century and remains the longest running and most influential hereditary assemblage of professional painters in Japan and is unique in world art history.

Catering to the military elite, the Kanō painters used a combination of Chinese themes, bold brush-and-ink strokes, lush pigments and cut gold. This innovative style was intended to illuminate and embellish works initially intended to decorate temples and large castle interiors, with the aim of conveying a sense of grandeur and opulence. The artists of the Kanō school were not simply great painters but also connoisseurs who established collections from which to draw inspiration.

Birds, tree and flowers is signed by the artist Kanō Sanraku (1559–1635) (fig. 1), a master screen painter who was an adopted fifth-generation Kanō school artist and founder of the Kyoto branch. It displays the graceful and refined flowing style that set him apart from his contemporaries.

Painted late in Kanō Sanraku's life, between 1624 and 1635, this six-panel screen was most likely one of a pair and depicts the birds and flowers associated with late winter and early spring amid an expanse of cut gold leaf. On the left, an ancient willow tree extends its branches over a bamboo fence, while flowering camellias and young bamboo shoots, symbolising renewal and regeneration, indicate that spring is near. A white heron takes flight, while another rests on the tree – a staple motif in Japanese poetry and art, as herons evoke elegance and are often associated with winter. The extravagance of the cut gold contrasts with the dark blue stream, in which a solitary duck swims. The rock is a reminder that Chinese philosophical and cultural elements such as Daoism and brush-and-ink painting had a profound impact on this school.

1 Yukio Lippit, 'The Kanō school: the first hundred years', in Felice Fischer & Kyoko Kinoshita, *Ink and gold: art of the Kanō*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015, p. 1.

fig. 1: Kanō Sanraku, born Shiga prefecture, Japan 1559, died Kyoto, Japan 1635, *Birds, tree and flowers*, 1624–35, Kyoto, six-panel screen, ink, colour and gold on paper, 173.0 × 370.0 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2015. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

The signature on the lower left side displays the characters for his name (Kanō Sanraku hitsu), meaning 'the brush of Kanō Sanraku', with two seals that are consistent with screens from the period, after 1619.

Dragon and bamboo (fig. 2) was created by the foremost painter of the period, Kanō Tan'yu (1602–1674), who was appointed as the official artist for the Tokugawa shogunate in 1615. In this dynamic performance of brushwork, Tan'yu captures the moment the head and claw of a dragon emerge from the whorls of rain-laden clouds. The 'wetness' of the moment is emphasised by the use of a watery ink and controlled splashes. The poem below captures the majesty of the dragon and its connections to the natural world:

> rising out of the clouds,
> dragons run and fly on the ground,
> mountains and rivers.

The hanging scroll was created in c.1625, not long after Tan'yu's relocation from Kyoto to Edo, and its significant size indicates that it was intended for a patron of importance and stature. Dragons remain a prominent symbol of enlightenment, and Kanō Tan'yu was aware of the spectacular paintings of them at the Zen temples throughout Kyoto that had been created by the founders of the Kanō school.

According to ancient accounts, dragons are composed of a fantastic collection of beastly parts, such as the horns of a stag, the belly of a sea monster and the claws of an eagle. As a result, the dragon was considered to be the king of animals and was associated with the elite and powerful, such as the Emperor. The symbolic potency of dragons was heightened by the fact that they appeared at will in the sky, accompanied by dynamic meteorological events such as rain, lightning and tornadoes, the latter still referred to as a 'dragon's whirlwind'. For Daoists, the dragon and tiger symbolise the dynamic balance of the forces of yin and yang, which foster harmony in the cosmos. The presence of a tiger is indicated in the painting by the trunk and leaves of a solitary bamboo, which is depicted on the left.

fig. 2, left: Kanō Tan'yu, born Kyoto 1602, died Edo (Tokyo) 1674, *Dragon and bamboo, with inscription after Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506)*, c.1625, hanging scroll, ink on paper (overall), 94.0 × 50.5 cm (image); box: 9.0 × 8.0 × 75.0 cm; Gift of Shane Le Plastrier through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017

fig. 3, right: Kanō Tan'yu, born Kyoto 1602, died Edo (Tokyo) 1674, Daigu Sōchiku, born Mino province, Japan 1584, died Japan 1669, *Hotei*, c.1625, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 172.5 × 28.5 cm (image); Gift of Shane Le Plastrier through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017

As an artist trained in the longest surviving and most influential school of painting in Japan, Kanō Tan'yu had an acute understanding of his artistic lineage, as well as of the history of art. *Dragon and bamboo* includes an intriguing inscription, dating the painting to the 'second year of Bunmei [1468], fourth month, fifth day; poem and painting by the pen of an eighty-year-old'. This seems to be a homage to the great Japanese master of brush and ink, Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506), and identifies Kanō Tan'yu as an avid collector and historian of Chinese and Japanese brush and ink.

As a well-known painter of the period, Kanō Tan'yu often created paintings collaboratively with prominent Zen Buddhist monks, whose own painting and calligraphy were highly sought after. The hanging scroll, *Hotei*, created c.1625 by Kanō Tan'yu and the Zen Buddhist monk, Daigu Sōchiku (1584–1669) (fig. 3), depicts one of the most loved and revered characters in Zen Buddhism. The word *hotei* translates as 'cloth sack', shown here as the cheerful, pot-bellied monk with a shaven head, Hotei, who is said to have roamed the countryside in Southern China. In Japan, Hotei is revered as one of the seven gods of good fortune and is often associated with new year's rituals. Kanō Tan'yu has deftly used a diversity of brushstrokes and ink colours to portray Hotei's dense sleeves, rigid walking stick and the soft contours of his bag and unshaven face. Above the image is a *koan* or riddle, given to students as a way to empty their minds of rational thought and which can produce a moment of profound insight into the nature of existence. It reads from top to bottom, right to left:

> Monk Genyo: 'Now I have nothing'
> Priest Choshu roared: 'Throw it away'
> Genyo said: 'I have nothing, what can I throw away'?
> Choshu said: 'Then you have to carry it'.

The humorous contrast between the much-loved Hotei, who is inextricably linked to his bag, and the *koan*, which advocates the discarding of both physical and mental baggage, would have been obvious to those viewing the scroll.

As connoisseurs, members of the Kanō school held repositories of the works of well-known Chinese and Japanese brush-and-ink painters. At times they compiled or rehoused images they felt were worthy of significant status. Identifying the unsigned works of prominent artists elevated their status as connoisseurs and, similar to the tradition of impressing a collector's seal on a scroll, they provided a statement to that fact. The album, *Collection of paintings by Sesson* (*Sesson gajō*) (fig. 4), includes twenty-two brush-and-ink paintings attributed to the artist Sesson Shūkei, whose work is often described as singular, unique, individual and eccentric. This rare collection includes two inscriptions by Kanō school artists, signifying that it was once a revered heirloom.

Sesson Shūkei (c.1492–1589) is considered the last great brush-and-ink painter of the Muromachi period (1392–1573), although his life is shrouded in mystery as a result of his constant travel to study collections of Chinese and Japanese paintings in Zen temples in the Kantō region (near present-day Tokyo).

Born into the Satake military family in northern Japan, Sesson entered a Buddhist Zen temple to train as a painter at an early age and in 1546 travelled to present-day Fukushima prefecture to teach 'painting connoisseurship' to an unknown daimyo. During a period of considerable turmoil and shifting military alliances, Sesson's ability to maintain independence and convivial relationships with patrons is possibly the reason for his particular painting style. In his seventies Sesson settled in the province of Iwaki (present-day Fukushima prefecture).

Collection of paintings displays a diverse selection of themes and techniques, these reflecting the Zen Buddhist aesthetic of the period and now considered 'classic'. Sesson's depictions of flora and fauna show a subtle elegance, which contrasts with the power evoked in the portraits of Daoist and Buddhist patriarchs also in the album, although his novel interpretations of Chinese landscape painting, which are easily identified by their splashed ink and lack of depth, are particularly striking. Sesson's landscapes show similarities to those of artists such as Tenshō Shūbun (1414–1463) and Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506), with Sesson deriving his name from the latter. The entire album is a tribute to Sesson's enduring influence on generations of artists in Japan, who used his life and pursuit of individual perfection as a model for seeking their own particular aesthetic.

While Sesson did not sign his works until later in his life, the album includes inscriptions by the well-known Kanō school painters, Kanō Tsunenobu (1613–1713) and Kanō Isen'in Naganobu (1775–1828), on the first and last pages; in these inscriptions Sesson is identified as the artist of the collection.

Possibly compiled in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the album is assumed to have been an heirloom – the luxurious textiles on the front of the album are an indication of its high status – which artists of the Kanō school consulted on auspicious occasions for inspiration or simply to admire a master painter.

fig. 4, details: Sesson Shūkei, born Hitachi province, Japan c.1492, died Fukushima prefecture, Japan 1589, *Collection of paintings by Sesson* (*sesson gajō*), compiled 18th century, ink, gold on paper; silk, metallic thread, natural and resist dyes and supplementary-weft brocade, twenty-two paintings, 26.5 × 23.5 × 2.5 cm; Gift of Raphy Star through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Woman warrior (*onna bugeisha*)

Russell Kelty

> There are quite a few women who are the heads of castles. They brought silver or provisions from their family, took the castle or territories as security, and virtually managed the castle.[1]

The predominant image of the samurai is a Japanese male in a suit of armour carrying a pair of swords. Dispersed throughout history are accounts of samurai who do not fit that description, such as Yasuke (c.1550–c.1582), an African-born retainer to Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), as well as samurai-class women, known as *onna bugeisha*, who inspired their own legends.[2]

The earliest documented evidence of a female warrior appears in *The account of ancient matters* (*kojiki*) written in the eighth century.[3] Empress Jingū (c.169–269 CE) is one of the most prominent figures portrayed in *The account* and describes her military exploits.

Empress Jingū was the consort and court shaman of Emperor Chuai (149–200 CE). On advice from the gods, Jingū raised a fleet and invaded the kingdoms of the Korean Peninsula, donning men's armour and while she was heavily pregnant. Her conquest was swift and successful and she returned to give birth to the future Emperor Ōjin (c.200–310 CE), quell an uprising initiated by her husband's older sons, and rule until her own death seventy years later.[4] In the nineteenth century, Empress Jingū appeared in numerous woodblock prints as a symbol of national pride and by 1881 she was the first woman to be featured on a banknote, her image conceived by an Italian painter. This image of the Empress, created by Katsukawa Shuntei (c.1824), depicts her dressed in fine armour and holding a bow, while a Korean emissary humbles himself before her (fig. 1).

During times of warfare, women were often responsible for managing the castle and preparing troops, but at times they also entered the field of battle. Samurai-class women used a long pole with a curved blade at the top, known as a *naginata*, which became their symbol. In addition to their other responsibilities, they would have been trained as young women to use the *nagainata* to enhance their martial spirit, with one included in their wedding dowry, along with a small dagger (*kaiken*) to protect themselves outside the house.[5]

During the tempestuous sixteenth century, women were placed in control of castles when the head of the clan was away and they became a more prominent part of vast armies of infantry, at times forming their own gunnery detachments.

As peace returned to the archipelago, women were expected to be faithful and subservient to their husbands and wear clothing appropriate to his status. Luxurious garments and lacquer ware were their only possessions and displayed prominent emblems of power and prestige (figs 2, 3).

fig. 1: Katsukawa Shuntei, born Japan 1770, died Japan 1820, *Empress Jingū*, no. 1 from the series *Triad of martial valour* (*Buyû sanban tsuzuki*), 1820, Japan, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour, blind printing, silver & gold on paper, 21.3 × 18.9 cm (*shikishiban*) 21.3 × 18.9 cm (image & sheet); Gift of David Button 2004

1 Luis Frois, *Historia de Japam*, ed. Josef Wicki, Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, 1976–84.
2 Thomas Lockley & Geoffrey Girard, *Yasuke: a true story of the legendary African samurai*, Sphere, London, 2019.
3 Sachiko Hori, 'The roles of women in the samurai class', in J. Gabriel-Mueller, *Art of armor: Samurai armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011, p. 53.
4 Emily Blythe Simpson, *Crafting a goddess: divinization, womanhood and genre narrative of Empress Jingu*, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2019, p. 4.
5 Sachiko Hori, 'The roles of women in the samurai class', in J. Gabriel-Mueller, p. 54.

fig. 2: Japan, *Portable storage chest* (*hasamibako*), 18th century, wood, lacquer, gold leaf, metal, embossed paper, 63.5 × 46.5 × 35.5 cm; Gift of Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2011 in recognition of Dick Richards as the first Curator of Asian Art (1968–2000)

fig. 3, opposite: Japan, *Summer robe* (*katabira*), *with hollyhock, chrysanthemum and 'rising steam' motifs*, c.1780, Edo (Tokyo), plain-weave ramie, ink painting, stencil imitation tie-dyeing and embroidery in silk and gold-wrapped threads, 150.0 × 127.0 cm; Gift of Joan Beer in memory of her husband Colin through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2019

The samurai class: cultivating the arts of war and peace

Russell Kelty

During the last thirty years customs have changed: now when young samurai get together, if there is not just talk about money matters, loss and gain, secrets, clothing styles or matters of sex, there is no reason to gather at all … What things a person should be able to accomplish if he had no haughtiness concerning his place in society.[1]

Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659–1721), retainer, Nabeshima clan

fig. 1: Yoshitora Utagawa, Japan, active 1840–80, *Procession of warriors* (*Musha gyôretsu no zu*) 1865, Edo (Tokyo), colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, triptych, 35.8 × 72.5 cm (overall); David Murray Bequest Fund 1940

1 Sato Hiroaki, *Legends of the samurai*, The Overlook Press, Woodstock, 1995, p. 287.
2 Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *The Hagakure: a code to the way of the samurai*, Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1980.

It is the height of folly to neglect to rule the country by the means of the arts of peace, and to imagine that good government can be achieved by striking out one's elbows and assuming a fearful countenance, terrifying the people with the threat of punishment and attempting to belabor the country into obedience.[2]

Ogyu Sorai (1666–1728), Confucian philosopher

fig. 2, detail: Myōchin Munesuke, Japan, 1643–1735, *Samurai armour (gusoku) with breastplate depicting Fudō myōō and inscribed 'A fortuitous day, the 8th month of the 12th year of Genroku (1699), Myōchin Munesuke'*, c.1699, Edo, iron, gilded, silvered and patinated copper, gold leaf, wood, silk, cotton, leather, animal fur, 170.0 cm (height); Gift of M.J.M. Carter AO, Susan Cocks, John Crosby, Dr Peter Dobson, Sandra Dobson, Frances Gerard, Arata Gwinnett, Sam Hill Smith, Shane Le Plastrier, Mark Livesey QC, Joan Lyons, Dr Leo Mahar, Skye McGregor, Diana McLaurin, John Thornton, Zena Winser and David C. Urry through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2016

In 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) destroyed Osaka Castle and assumed control of the archipelago, officially ending the age of war and initiating 'the great peace'. In the aftermath, Ieyasu organised search parties to comb the wreckage of the castle and collect the broken pieces of ceramics, lacquer, Nō masks and swords once owned by prestigious warriors, tea masters and merchants, which had been amassed by his main rival, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598). The remnants of this 'spectacular accumulation' were painstakingly repaired and entered Tokugawa's own collection, extending a 'symbolic authority over Hideyoshi and heightening his own prestige as a collector of the most cherished objects in Japan'.[3] This culture of appreciation was first established by Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435–1490), whose failure as a shogun contrasted with his pursuit of beauty and the ideals informing Nō and the tea ceremony, reflecting the influence of Zen practice.

The Edo period is marked by the unification of over 260 regional daimyo, which were established and maintained by the military government of the Tokugawa shogunate. This fragile peace fostered the blossoming of art and culture and gave rise to a lively urban culture of increasingly literate, wealthy and sophisticated townspeople and merchants, who indulged their passion for material culture and the numerous diversions of the floating worlds. In an era of peace and relative prosperity after a prolonged period of war, the shogun, daimyo and samurai were expected to honour their illustrious past and maintain their aesthetic cultivation and military pursuits in accordance with Confucian values. As such, they projected their cultivation, power, prestige and illustrious past. Although the shogunate employed a rigorous caste system and enacted a series of sumptuary laws in the streets of urban centres like Edo, Kyoto and Osaka, what you read, wore and owned defined your status, and the ruling elite were the most conscious of this fact.

During the great peace, the implements of war so readily associated with the daimyo and samurai were rarely required for daily life. The emphasis on cultural skills grew from the samurai's need to govern lands acquired through warfare, which were maintained through the arts of the brush not the sword. Administration and participation in courtly arts such as Japanese verse (*waka*) strengthened the samurai's cultural authority and prestige. In this age of peace, the warrior class was constantly on display and the armour they wore was no longer an implement of war but instead a symbol of the samurai's refinement, style and erudition. Armour, in particular, which was costly, was worn during the auspicious times of the year as symbols of wealth and status. Daimyo collections of treasures were divided into two categories: official and private objects (*omote-dogu* and *oku-doge*), with armour and swords in the first category.[4] Armour created after the unification of Japan was utilised to evoke the aesthetics of extravagance and restraint so prized by the military elite and was installed in alcoves during auspicious times of the year.

Samurai armour, with breastplate depicting Fudō-myōō is a spectacular example of armour created by master craftsmen in Edo (Tokyo) for the military elite during the Edo period (1615–1868). The pristine condition of this armour is indicative of its careful handling by its owners and also that it was worn for auspicious ceremonies or processions. The Genroku era (1688–1704), when this armour was created, is often regarded as the 'golden age' in Japanese history, with a hundred years of peace having fostered an unprecedented flourishing of the arts, as displayed by this suit. The ingenious integration of lacquered iron, chainmail, silk lining and cords provided lightweight and flexible protection, while the stenciled doeskin, gilded copper, wood, animal hair and embossed iron breast plate are all beautifully crafted to portray the aesthetic cultivation of the first owner. The suit embodies the samurai's life pursuits: to cultivate martial prowess and an aesthetic sensibility (fig. 2).

The spectacular and rare embossed breastplate of the suit was created in 1699 by Myōchin Munesuke (1643–1735?), the fifty-fourth head of a distinguished line of metal craftsmen and premier armour and sword expert of Japan, who lived in Edo. It depicts the wrathful Buddhist deity, *Fudō Myōō*, the deity most often associated with samurai. Fudō is depicted in his usual form with a sword and lasso and wearing a distinctive Indian *dhoti* with a striking *shippō* motif, possibly influenced by

fig. 3, right: Japan, *Fudō Myōō*, 14th–15th century, Japan, wood, traces of colour and gilding, brass, cotton, 60.0 cm (height, including base); M.J.M. Carter AO Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017

3 Morgan Pitelka, *Spectacular accumulation: material culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and samurai sociability*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2016, p. 5.

4 Fabian Drixler & William D. Fleming, *Samurai and the culture of Japan's Great Peace*, Yale Peabody Museum, 2015, p. 35.

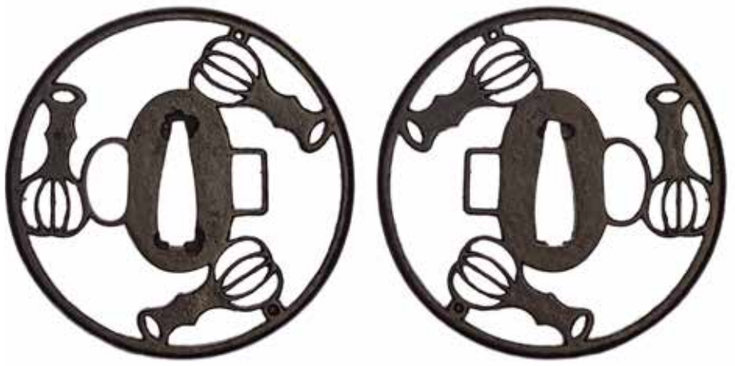


fig. 4: Yasuyuki, Japan, active early 18th century, *Tsuba, tea-whisks design*, early 18th century, Japan, iron, 7.7 × 7.7 cm; Gift of John and Geraldine Halls 1984

imported textiles from India or Indonesia (fig. 3). The seventeenth-century breast plate offers a striking contrast to the Gallery's sculpture of *Fudō Myōō* (figs 2, 3). The helmet includes a frightful sculpture of a demon or *shigami*, which was intended to strike fear in the opposition and endow the wearer with talismanic protection. The helmet also carries small crests, which have yet to be identified, but which are no doubt symbolic of the samurai's status or even his clan affiliations. The box containing the *shigami* also included a letter dated to the Shōwa period (1926–89), which described the sale of the 'exquisite armour' to a private collector.

This type of armour is known as *gusoku*, which literally means 'equipment is sufficient' and refers to a lighter and more flexible armour, suited to the new military tactics that addressed the chaos of the sixteenth century. 'As military tactics changed to using massed infantry and the introduction of firearms, warriors favoured lighter and more functional suits of armour'.[5] To enable samurai to be recognised in the midst of battle, their armour featured unique and striking ornaments.

One of the most readily identified accoutrements of the samurai was of course their two swords, known collectively as *daishō* (figs 4, 5, 6). The term refers to the 'big' *katana* and 'little' *wakizashi* or *tantō*, which became a symbol of the samurai class after the 'sword hunt' of 1588 and to be worn only when on official duty.[6] During the peace of the Edo period, samurai cherished the aesthetic value of the swords and as a result decorated them with refined fittings created from iron and featuring gold and elaborate carving. The most aesthetically pleasing swords also display a delicate undulating woodgrain-like pattern on the ground of the blade, the result of the arduous process of its creation.

Through various political devices, the Tokugawa shogunate ensured peace and stability: one of the defining decrees of the Edo period, emblematic of the shogunate's strategic internal and external strategies to maintain hegemony, was 'alternate attendance' (*sankin-kotai*) (fig. 1). This decree, issued in 1635 and expanded in 1642, has precedents in the Kamakura period (1185–1333), as well as in France under the reign of King Louis XIV, who required 'nobility of the sword' (*noblesse d'épée*) to spend six months of the year at the palace.[7] Alternate attendance required daimyo

5 Bettina Zorn, *The elegance of the Hosokawa: tradition of a samurai family*, Hirmer Publishers, Zurich, 2019, p. 34.

6 Victor Harris, *Cutting edge: Japanese swords in the British Museum*, Tuttle Publishing, London, 2005, p. 26.

7 Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Tour of duty: Samurai, military service in Edo, and the culture of early modern Japan*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2008, p. 2.

fig. 5, above: Japan, *Long sword* (*Katana*), c.1780, iron, lacquered wood, *shakudō*, gold, 92.0 cm (length); Gift of Mrs J. Howard Johnson 1951

fig. 6, below: Japan, *Short sword* (*wakizashi*), c.1780, iron, lacquered wood, *shakudō*, gold, 63.0 cm; Gift of Mrs J. Howard Johnson 1951

to maintain two residences, one in their domain and the other at the capital. Every other year they were required to reside at Edo while their families remained there indefinitely as virtual hostages of the shogunate. The expense of maintaining two residences, replete with articles of refinement and culture, was compounded by the need to employ vast processional retinues commensurate with a daimyo's standing and the size of his domain, with these retinues also participating in huge parades. The military parades (*daimyō gyōretsu*) included hundreds, if not thousands, of lancers, musketeers and archers, who were expected to wear clothing and accoutrements befitting the stature of their daimyo. The size and grandeur of the parades fostered a more comprehensive road system and the dissemination of culture throughout Tokugawa Japan.

Illustrated in prints and handscrolls of the Edo period, chests such as *Portable storage chest* (*hasamibako*) (p. 38), covered in lacquer and embellished with family crests in gold, were carried on a pole by lavishly dressed attendants. The most evocative and readily identifiable of these emblems was of course the Tokugawa shogunate crest (*mon*), composed of three hollyhock leaves in a circle. The Gallery's large eighteenth-century box is coated with black lacquer, on which the Tokugawa family crests and an arabesque pattern were decoratively applied, using gold and silver

maki-e. The lower portion of the *hasamibako* has two metal fittings, through which a long wooden pole could be slotted for carrying over the shoulder. The interior of the *hasamibako* however reveals an unexpected level of elegance, as the entire interior is covered with embossed gold leaf. This may have been a later addition, or the box may never have been used for transport. *Hasamibako* is emblematic of the high level of craftsmanship and artistry attained in Japan during the Edo period and the vast networks of distribution. In the capital, the belongings and furnishings of the shogunate and wealthy daimyo were of the highest quality and artistry and were divided into two principal categories for public and private display. The Gallery's *hasamibako* displays the restraint and refinement that characterises lacquer created for members of the shogunate and was most likely created in the official studios of the Tokugawa family during the eighteenth century for a woman's trousseau. The pristine quality of the gold decoration (*hiramaki-e*), black lacquer and the delicacy of the engraved metal fittings have led scholars to believe that *Portable storage chest* was used to transport clothing and other goods on auspicious occasions. *Hiramaki-e*, literally means 'flat sprinkled picture' and refers to the application of gold powder to wet lacquer, which produces a design in low relief, such as the plant motifs (*hanakusa*) depicted on the chest. Although this technique was pioneered during the Heian period (794–1185), the relative peace and tranquillity of the Edo period enabled artists to realise its fullest expression.

For the military elite of the Edo period, maintaining their martial prowess and their connection with the illustrious past was required by a series of fifteen laws promulgated by the shogunate, which governed the responsibilities and activities of the daimyo and samurai and ensured perpetuation of Tokugawa suzerainty. Known as the 'Laws governing warrior houses' (*Buke shohatto*) and issued in 1615, they forbade new castle construction and renovation, as well as exhorted daimyo to excel in both the martial and literary arts.

The arts of peace and war, including archery and horsemanship, should be pursued single-mindedly. From old, the rule had been to practise the 'arts of peace on the left hand and the arts of war on the right'; both must be mastered.[8] (fig.7)

As a result, archery contests and hunting expeditions remained a part of the lifestyle of the military elite. Confucian scholars and advisors to regional daimyo began to write down their own personal codes for samurai to live by, which were often closely guarded and not made public until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Birds of prey, used during hunting expeditions, were a symbol of martial prowess. The custom of 'hawking' has a long tradition, dating back to the Kamakura period (1185–1333), and maintaining hawks constituted a status symbol. No shogun indulged his passion for hunting excursions into the provinces more than the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, as it conjured the fraternity and hierarchy of his warrior past. In the words of one contemporary observer, Ieyasu was a first-rate falcon fetishist (*ichi dan taka suki*).

fig. 7: Japan, *Archery contest at Sanjusangendo* (*Sanjusangendo toshiya no zu*), c.1750, Kyoto, *tsuitate* screen, wood, silk, ink and pigments and paper, 131.3 × 148.0 cm (image), 143.0 × 159.8 cm (overall); Gift of Frances Gerard and Mark Livesey QC with the assistance of the Roy and Marjory Edwards Bequest Fund through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2014

8 'Buke Shohatto', in Martin Collcutt, 'Daimyo and daimyo culture', in Yoshiaki Shimizu (ed.), *Japan: the shaping of Daimyo culture*, 1185–1868, George Brazziler, New York, 1988, p. 37.

The globalised samurai

Adam Clulow

In my classes focused on the samurai, I often show students this beautiful suit of samurai armour, which was crafted at the end of the seventeenth century. The armour seems to fit perfectly with many assumptions about Japan and the samurai: that Japan was a place of age-old traditions; that it was a closed-off system, isolated from the world; and that the samurai were near-legendary warriors who lived only for combat. In fact, this suit of armour challenges all of these notions.

After a century of almost uninterrupted peace, it was crafted in 1699 by Myōchin Munesuke for a samurai, probably a very wealthy one, who never saw combat. The battle of Sekigahara in 1600 established Tokugawa control over the archipelago, and in the decades after this, successive Tokugawa shogun set about preventing the possibility of renewed conflict by establishing an elaborate system of control, one in which the samurai were transformed from a violent and poorly defined class of warriors into a rigidly regulated group of bureaucrats.

This suit of armour was never intended for war – because there was no war in Japan in this period. But equally interesting, this armour was not a uniquely Japanese object drawn from deeply held traditions; rather, it stood as the end product of a globalised supply chain, which stretched thousands of miles to Southeast Asia.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, and as the post-Sekigahara Japanese economy started to boom, Japan imported a wide range of goods into ports such as Nagasaki. The most famous of these goods was silk, which was produced in China but was in constant demand in sprawling cities like Edo. Less well known is that Japan also imported hundreds of thousands of deerskins each year from Cambodia, Ayutthaya (modern-day Thailand) and Taiwan, which was first controlled by the Dutch East India Company and later by the Zheng maritime organisation.

In Japan, deerskin was prized for its use in armour: it was softer, could be more easily shaped and could be decorated with elaborate designs and gorgeous colours. The Florentine merchant, Francesco Carletti, who sailed around the world in this period, wrote that the Japanese:

> obtain very large numbers of buckskins, which they call *sichino cava*, and which they prepare in a curious manner, cunningly painting on them with various designs diverse pictures of animals, and other things. And they do this with the smoke from rice straw, which colors the entire skin except the part which has been covered with the form of the pictures, which remain impressed and delineated on the white unsmoked part of the skin.[1]

Myōchin Munesuke, Japan, 1643–1735, *Samurai armour (gusoku) with breastplate depicting Fudō myōō and inscribed 'A fortuitous day, the 8th month of the 12th year of Genroku (1699), Myōchin Munesuke'*, c.1699, Edo, iron, gilded, silvered and patinated copper, gold leaf, wood, silk, cotton, leather, animal fur, 170.0 cm (height); Gift of M.J.M. Carter AO, Susan Cocks, John Crosby, Dr Peter Dobson, Sandra Dobson, Frances Gerard, Arata Gwinnett, Sam Hill Smith, Shane Le Plastrier, Mark Livesey QC, Joan Lyons, Dr Leo Mahar, Skye McGregor, Diana McLaurin, John Thornton, Zena Winser and David C. Urry through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2016

1 Francesco Carletti, *My voyage around the world*, translated by Herbert Weinstock, Pantheon Books, New York, 1964, pp. 130–2.

Such designs can be seen in the *Samurai armour*. While it started here, demand for deerskins gradually filtered down from the samurai class to different layers of society.

The scale of the trade meant that it became a driver for change and conflict along each stage of the wider commodity chain. In hunting grounds across Southeast Asia, the relentless demand for skins prompted environmental devastation; in port cities scattered across the region, the trade became the site for ferocious competition between Asian and European merchants; and in Japan, the vast influx of skins generated clashes over status and rights of production.

An examination of this suit of armour shows, first, that the samurai were not always the formidable martial figures that students imagine; rather, they were figures of fashion, who were associated with conspicuous consumption. And in service of this consumption, they imported vast quantities of goods like deerskins, which could be processed in Japan and transformed into items such as the beautiful suit of armour displayed here.

left, back view, right, detail:
Myōchin Munesuke, Japan, 1643–1735, *Samurai armour (gusoku) with breastplate depicting Fudō myōō and inscribed 'A fortuitous day, the 8th month of the 12th year of Genroku (1699), Myōchin Munesuke'*, c.1699, Edo, iron, gilded, silvered and patinated copper, gold leaf, wood, silk, cotton, leather, animal fur, 170.0 cm (height); Gift of M.J.M. Carter AO, Susan Cocks, John Crosby, Dr Peter Dobson, Sandra Dobson, Frances Gerard, Arata Gwinnett, Sam Hill Smith, Shane Le Plastrier, Mark Livesey QC, Joan Lyons, Dr Leo Mahar, Skye McGregor, Diana McLaurin, John Thornton, Zena Winser and David C. Urry through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2016

Samurai on stage, samurai in print

Russell Kelty

The unification of the Japanese archipelago by the Tokugawa shogunate during the Edo period led to a time of unprecedented political stability, economic growth and urban expansion. The artistic blossoming that ensued was defined by a striking cultural contrast, one arising between the elegant, yet conservative, culture of the military elite and the transgressive culture of the literate and increasingly wealthy 'townsmen' (*chōnin*). As the Tokugawa shogunate sought to control the archipelago through strict protocols and social hierarchy and to shape the character of its inhabitants through neo-Confucian values and sumptuary restrictions, the lower classes sought more freedom.

The boisterous urban culture was characterised by the diversions on offer at the Kabuki theatres and pleasure districts throughout Tokugawa Japan, which were collectively described as the 'floating world' (*ukiyo*). The sensibility of the era's unofficial culture was articulated for the first time by the prolific writer and head priest of a temple in Kyoto, Asai Ryōi (1612–1691), in *Tales of the floating world* (*Ukiyo monogatari*).[1] Asai transformed the medieval Buddhist term *ukiyo*, which originally referred to a recognition of the transience of human existence, to refer to the lifestyle and culture of the townsmen, who indulged in a myriad of hedonistic pleasures.[2]

The Kabuki stage was well suited for the print format, as it featured actors in striking poses and with dramatic facial expressions, these complemented by sumptuous costumes and set designs. The Kabuki theatres established in each of the three urban centres of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka reflected the ethos of the populations. Since Edo was filled with brash samurai, the style of acting was defined as 'rough' (*aragoto*) and featured exaggerated speech and actions, bold make-up, and evocative costumes. By contrast, the actors in Kyoto and Osaka utilised a 'soft' (*wagoto*) style of speech and gestures.

By the mid-eighteenth century the creation of 'brocade prints' (*nishiki-e*) presented the world of Kabuki in full colour to fans throughout the archipelago and fostered the meteoric rise of specialist print schools.[3]

Depictions of well-known actors playing popular samurai roles on stage, particularly in Osaka, were complemented by designs showing historical warriors and samurai, and sought to 'display a person embodying an attribute such as courage, determination and perseverance'.[4] As the Tokugawa shogunate slowly collapsed, the population of Edo yearned for the feats of heroism and valour and destruction of the late sixteenth century prior to the unification of the archipelago.

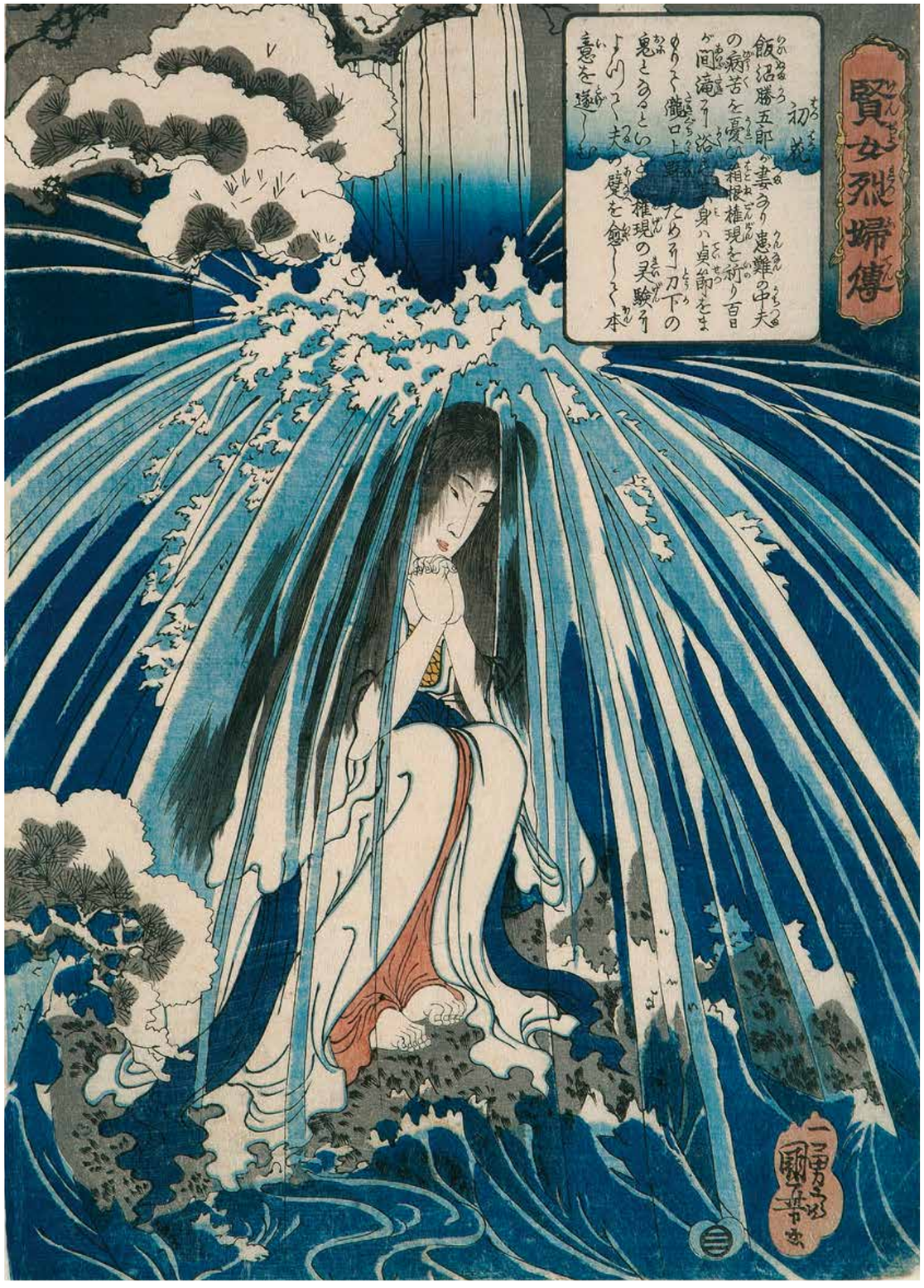


fig. 1: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, born Edo (Tokyo) 1798, died Edo (Tokyo) 1861, *Hatsuhana in prayer underneath the waterfall at Hakone* from the series *Biographies of wise women and virtuous wives* (*kenjo repu den*), c.1842, Edo (Tokyo); colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, triptych 35.8 × 25.5 cm (image, *oban*); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew 2003

1 Miriam Wattles, *The lives, and afterlives of Hanabusa Itcho: artist-rebel of Edo*, Brill, Leiden, 2013, p. 16.
2 Wattles, pp. 16–17.
3 The most prominent schools were the Utagawa, Torii and Katsukawa.
4 James King & Yuriko Iwakiri, *Japanese warrior prints*, Hotei Publishing, Leiden, 2007, p. 15.

Tales of warriors and samurai fighting the oppression imposed by established authority became popular with the townsmen (*chōnin*) of the great urban centres, who were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy. *The heroes of the water margin* (*suikoden*), the flamboyant rogues known as *kabukimono*, the forty-seven *rōnin* and Ishikawa Goemon (1558–1594) in particular were exceptionally popular. The success of warrior prints (*musha-e*) by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) and their pupils preceded the rise of Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861), the master of the warrior print, who transformed the heroes and loyal women of the late sixteenth century in epic fashion.

Utagawa Kuniyoshi was part of a spectacular revival in printmaking in the wake of the disastrous sumptuary laws, known as the Tenpō reforms (1842–47), which affected the Kabuki theatres and print publishing in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka.[6] His use of vivid colour and bombastic designs is often attributed to his own precocious talent, recognised from a young age, his interest in warrior prints and the influence of his father, who was a textile designer. At the age of fourteen he was accepted to study woodblock printing under Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769–1825) and would become one of his most successful students.

The decades following the publication in the 1830s and 1840s of Hiroshige's and Hokusai's peaceful views of scenic Japan saw a rise in popular demand for the fierce, fearsome and fantastical in *ukiyo-e*, which Kuniyoshi embraced. In 1814, he left Toyokuni's studio to pursue a career as an independent artist. Initially, he had little success, selling tatami mats in order to support himself. His fortunes changed in 1827 with his dramatic series *108 Heroes of the Suikoden*, and from that point on, he became known for portrayals of famous samurai and legendary heroes. Kuniyoshi also worked in other print genres, producing landscapes and pictures of beautiful women, and transformed historic stories of samurai and their faithful wives into paragons of valour and fidelity for contemporary consumption.

In accordance with the new print regulations, which stipulated that woodblock print designs should present virtue among women and children rather than simply depict courtesans and geisha, Kuniyoshi created *Hatsuhana in prayer underneath the waterfall at Hakone*, from the series *Biographies of wise women and virtuous wives* (*kenjo repu den*) (fig. 1).

Hatsuhana, who is depicted in this print under the great Hakone waterfall, was the beautiful wife of the warrior Iinuma Katsugoro (c.1590). She spent 100 days under a waterfall praying to the deity Hakone Gongen to cure her husband's illness. Although she was subsequently killed by her husband's evil rival, the deity healed her husband and he exacted revenge for her death. This print was inspired by a *bunraku* and Kabuki 'revenge play' titled: *Miracle of the deity at Hakone, the cripple's revenge*, which was based on these historical events and first performed in 1801. Hatsuhana's loyalty and fidelity are mentioned in the text and provided the impetus for this print.

fig. 2: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, born Edo (Tokyo) 1798, died Edo (Tokyo) 1861, *Miyamoto Musashi*, from the series *Tales of fierce warriors* (*retsumoden*), 1844–46 (1856), Edo (Tokyo), colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, 49.2 × 18.3 cm (image & sheet); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew 2005

5 Timothy Clark, 'Ready for a close-up: actor "likenesses" in Edo and Osaka', in C. Andrew Gerstle et al., *Kabuki heroes on the Osaka stage: 1780–1830*, Hotei Publishing, Leiden, 2005, p. 51.

Kuniyoshi also created prints of the great swordsmen of the late sixteenth century who wandered through the chaos of the warring states period. No one has become more beloved in Japan and throughout the world than Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645), a legendary samurai known as a master swordsman, spiritual seeker and author of the classic book of strategy, *Book of five rings* (*go rin no sho*). During a period of turmoil, Miyamoto wandered the countryside as an aesthetic practising the martial arts (*mushu-shugyō*) to perfection and seeking duels and defeating his opponents with his distinctive two-sword style. He also stumbled into iconic battles between vast armies of infantry belonging to great daimyo. This print was part of the series *Tales of fierce warriors* (*retsumoden*), created c.1844–48 (fig. 2). His formidable reputation as a swordsman and 'uncompromising adherence to freedom' inspired puppet and Kabuki plays and devotion from the general populace. The mystic aura that his legend inspires is conjured in this print, which is believed to depict his encounter with a martial arts master in the mountains.[6]

Between 1847 and 1852, seals from censors were required for publishers to sell their prints. As a true 'child of Edo', Kuniyoshi created prints to appeal to both the authorities, who appreciated them for their didactic value, and the city-dwelling commoners, who purchased them for their legends from history, but which were presented in an exciting and new style.[7] Understanding the shogunate's sensitivity to the printing of any historical event, particularly those concerning their great rival Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), which led to the unification of the archipelago, Kuniyoshi transposed the events of the late sixteenth century to the fourteenth century. Those reading the print would have understood the subtle deception and appreciated it all the more.

The print *Sasai Kyuzo Masayasu*, from the series *Heroes of the great peace* (*Taiheiki eiyuden*), created in 1848–50 (fig. 3), displays Kuniyoshi at his bombastic best. This print depicts the courageous fifteen-year-old Sasai Kyuzo Masayasu (representing the historical figure Sakai Kyuzo Narishige [1555–1570]) at the moment of his death, in a hail of gunfire. In one of the more memorable prints of the series, Utagawa Kuniyoshi captures the valour of the young samurai as he tries to move forward, even as he is engulfed in smoke and with gunfire illuminating his face. The unrelenting violence of the print and Masayasu's steadfastness, with the helmet, standard and sword – symbols of military success – at his feet, are indications of his impending death.

fig. 3: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, born Edo (Tokyo) 1798, died Edo (Tokyo) 1861, *Sasai Kyuzo Masayasu*, no. 12, from the series *Heroes of the great peace* (*Taiheiki eiyuden*), 1848–50, Edo (Tokyo); colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, triptych, 35.7 × 25.7 cm (image & sheet); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew 2005

6 Amy Riegle Newland, 'Symbols of bravery, designs of disaffection: Shades of meaning in Japanese hero prints', in Bennett & Newland, p. 212.
7 Elena Varshavskyaya, *Heroes of the grand pacification: Kuniyoshi's Taiheiki eiyū den*, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, 2005, p. 14.

A dish best served cold: the Akō incident and the forty-seven *rōnin* in print

David Forrest and Russell Kelty

> It is said that the sweetest food, if left untasted, remains unknown, its savour wasted. The same holds true of a country at peace: the loyalty and courage of its fine soldiers remain hidden, but the stars, though invisible by day, at night reveal themselves.
>
> *(Treasury of Loyal Retainers* [*Kanadehon Chūshingura*], Act 1[1])

Of all the spectacular tales of loyalty, revenge and death none resonates more profoundly in Japan and around the world than the Akō incident (*Akō Rōshi*, 1701–03), more commonly known as the revenge of the forty-seven *rōnin*. The Akō incident took place during the 'golden age' of the Edo period, known as the Genroku era (1688–1704), when a century of peace fostered a blossoming of art and culture. It also marked the transition of the samurai from their primary function as warriors to bureaucrats and administrators of regional domains. Tantalising aspects of the incident immediately inspired fictionalised accounts on the puppet (*bunraku*, *jōruri*) and Kabuki stages in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka, the most famous of which, *Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadenhon Chūshingura*) is one of the most popular plays of all times. Throughout the Edo period (1615–1868) the Akō incident continued to spark controversy and debate. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was translated into numerous languages in Asia and Europe. For over 300 years the story of the forty-seven *rōnin* has been retold endlessly on the stage, in print and on the large and small screens, transforming it from a national legend of Japan to an international phenomenon.

The Akō incident began in Edo in 1701, the seat of the military government (*bakufu*). The powerful daimyo of Akō domain (present-day Hyōgo prefecture), Asano Naganori (1667–1701), was obliged by the shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646–1709), to arrange a suitable reception for the imperial envoys from Kyoto. To assist Asano with the strict protocols of the event, the *bakufu*'s highest ranking master of protocol, Kira Kozunosuke (1604–1702), was assigned to instruct him in matters of etiquette. It is likely that Kira expected compensation for his instruction, while Asano believed it was simply his duty. The contempt each held for the other erupted after Kira insulted Asano, prompting the latter to draw his sword and strike Kira in the face in the Corridor of Pines at Edo Castle. While Kira was not mortally wounded, the act of drawing a sword and striking a man of significant status and in the shogun's residence was against the law and transgressed every reasonable expectation of civil conduct among samurai.

1 Columbia University, *Chûshingura on stage and in print*, exhibition, 2003, <http://www.columbia.edu/~hds2/chushingura/exhibition/pt1.html>.

Asano was immediately arrested and during questioning he lamented that his actions had taken place in the residence of the shogun, but that his only regret was that he had failed to kill Kira. After the inspector general completed his investigation, the shogunate condemned Asano to death by disembowelment (*seppuku*), his vast lands were to be confiscated and his brother placed in house arrest. Prior to his death and being laid to rest in Sengaku Temple, Asano composed a death poem:

> More than the cherry blossoms,
> Inviting the wind to blow them away
> I am wondering what to do,
> With the remaining springtime.[2]

The news travelled quickly to Asano's castle and to his chief retainer, Ōishi Kuranosuke Yoshio (1659–1703) (fig. 1). Ōishi and 300 retainers debated a honourable course of action before the arrival of the shogunate's emissaries. Ōishi urged the retainers to surrender the castle peacefully and to attempt to re-establish the Asano family and prepare to take revenge on Kira. Instead of seeking service in other domains, Ōishi and sixty retainers, including his son, decided to become masterless samurai (*rōnin*), which meant a loss of status and a dissolute life. Ōishi himself left his wife and spent his days and nights in Edo's pleasure districts, including in the famous Ichirikiya tea house in Gion. Shogunal reports of the period note that Ōishi's inability to properly train or educate Asano may have led to the conflict and his inability to kill Kira. Today he is portrayed as a faultless hero, but during his life Ōishi was known as Lord Daytime Paper Lantern (*hiru andon*), a nickname for a useless person, attributed to his failings as an administrator and his penchant for heavy drinking.[3]

For over a year the *rōnin* waited until Kira had relaxed his defences and then forty-seven of them gathered on 14 December 1702 and attacked Kira's Edo mansion (fig. 2). Kira was found in a cellar of the kitchen, where he was violently attacked by the *rōnin*, the trophy of his head then taken to Sengaku Temple, where Asano had been buried. Forty-six of the *rōnin* subsequently turned themselves in to the authorities. Scholars, philosophers and advisors debated an equitable resolution, one that would restore order, as there was no codified 'way of the samurai'. According to Yamaga Soko (1622–1685), an advisor to Ōishi in Akō domain, the *rōnin* had performed their duty. For others, the decision to condemn Asano

fig. 1, three side views: Ogata Shūhei, born Kyoto, Japan 1788, died Kyoto, Japan 1839, *Teabowl (chawan) depicting Ōishi Kuranosuke Yoshio in the Ichiriki Teahouse*, 19th century, Kyoto, earthenware, underglaze blue decoration, gold mends, 15.0 cm (diam.); Gift of Raphy Star in recognition of the continuing generosity of M.J.M. Carter AO to the Art Gallery of South Australia 2019

2 Yoel Hoffman (comp.), *Japanese death poems: written by Zen monks and Haiku poets on the verge of death*, Tokyo, Tuttle Publishing, 2018.

3 Bitō Masahide & Henry D. Smith, 'The Akō Incident, 1701–1703', *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2003, pp. 149–70.

to death and confiscate his domain while imposing no punishment on Kira had been controversial. Confucian scholars suggested that the *rōnin* commit *seppuku*, but instead they were beheaded in mock *seppuku* at the Edo mansion of a prominent daimyo on 20 March 1703 and buried together at the Sengaku Temple.

The revenge of the forty-seven *rōnin* continued to be a matter of discussion throughout the Edo period, with some scholars, such as Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659–1719), whose thoughts and belief on the samurai were compiled and published in the *Hagakure* (1716), believing that they had waited too long; others believed that they should have honoured the decision of the shogun. The debate encapsulated the collision between the old-fashioned values of samurai family honour and the more modern, legalistic thinking of the Tokugawa shogunate.[4] Either way, the event marked a distinct transition for the samurai class, as well as their transformation into legend.

fig. 2: Hasegawa Sadanobu II, born Osaka, Japan 1848, died Osaka, Japan 1940, *The night attack of the forty-seven rōnin*, 1894, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, 26.0 × 40.0 cm; On loan from David Forrest and Jánis Nedéla, Perth

4 Masahide & Smith, pp. 149–70.

The intrigue and violence of the Akō event inspired adaptation to the stage only two weeks after the deaths of the *rōnin*. The provocative incident, still fresh, were considered controversial and the play was immediately banned by the shogunate. To protect the artists and publishers from censorship, the printed books of the plays altered the names of the characters and transposed the events to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Fifty years after the initial incident, in 1748, in Osaka, the puppet play, *Calligraphy primer of the Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*) debuted and still remains the most frequently performed play on the *bunraku*, *jouri* and Kabuki stages.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the success of the play, as well as a wave of printed books and prints advertising it, inspired the creation of woodblock prints. The characters of the *Chūshingura* were depicted in woodblock prints and illustrated books from the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries. Print designers such as Kitagawa

fig. 3: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, born Edo, Japan 1797, died Edo, Japan 1861, *Kurahashi Zensuke Takeyuki*, no. 25, from the series *Biographies of loyal and righteous samurai* (*seichu gishi den*), c.1848, Edo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 36.9 × 25.0 cm; On loan from David Forrest and Jánis Nedéla, Perth

Utamaro (1753–1806), Utagawa Toyokuni (1769–1825), Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) created prints depicting Kabuki actors in the roles of the *rōnin* and scenes imagined from the story.

The popularity of the forty-seven *rōnin* in the late Edo period was promoted as much by legends of the historical Akō avengers as by the theatrical productions, a trend stimulated largely by the genre of oral storytelling, which focused less on the overall story of the vendetta than on tales of the individual 'righteous samurai' (*gishi*). As a result, print series were created that offered individual portraits of all forty-seven samurai.

It was only in the nineteenth century that warrior prints (*musha-e*) fully emerged and the exploits of the individual *rōnin* were celebrated in print form. During the nineteenth century, this tale of loyalty provided ongoing inspiration for artists. The master of the legendary and historical warrior print, Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861), seized this theme in his dramatic

fig. 4: Tsuchiya Koitsu, born Shizuoka prefecture, Japan 1870, died Kanazawa prefecture, Japan 1949, *Takanawa Sengaku Temple* (*takanawa sengakuji*) from the series *Tokyo views* (*tokyo fukei*), 1933, Tokyo, colour woodblock print; ink and colour on paper 70.0 × 30.0 cm (overall, triptych); On loan from David Forrest and Jánis Nedéla, Perth

and dynamic series *Stories of the true loyalty of the faithful samurai* (*Seishū gishin den*) (fig. 3). Created between 1847 and 1848, this series presents each of the *rōnin* in dramatic poses, accompanied by their individual histories and of the role they played in avenging the death of Asano. This series was created at a time when it was still forbidden to use the real names of the Akō *rōnin*, and consequently they appear under thinly disguised alternative names – but not necessarily those used in *Chūshingura*. Utagawa Kuniyoshi captures the *rōnin* as he imagined them from the legend.

Even after the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate, the restoration of the Emperor and abolishment of the samurai class, the tale of the historical events of the Akō incident and the forty-seven *rōnin* continued to be depicted by woodblock designers. During the Meiji era (1868–1912) artists presented the chaotic events of the tale in striking fashion. As the Empire of Japan became modernised, a return to a romanticised vision of the Japan of old emerged, encouraged by the print publisher, Watanabe Shozaburo (1885–1962). Watanabe Shozaburo was instrumental in fostering the 'new print' (*shin-hanga*) movement in the early twentieth century, in which an idealised and nostalgic vision of Japan is presented to Western audiences. In 1933, the designer Tsuchiya Koitsu (1870–1949), who studied with the prolific war-print designer, Kobayashi Kiyochika, known for his use of light and dark, created an image of the precinct of the Sengaku Temple in Tokyo. The image presents the final resting place of Asano and his forty-seven *rōnin*, suffused with rain and nostalgia (fig. 4).

The last samurai: Saigō Takamori 西郷 隆盛 (1828–1877)

Jennifer Harris

By the mid-nineteenth century, in the period known as the Bakumatsu (1853–67), the military government (*bakufu*) established by the Tokugawa shogunate was in decline. The backbone of the *bakufu*, the samurai class, had become militarily and socially irrelevant. Weakened by domestic food shortages and external foreign threats, in 1858 the shogun was forced to accept the opening of foreign treaty ports, much against the wishes of the populace. Under the slogan of 'Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians' (*Sonnō Jōi*), the notion of restoring the Emperor to power was gaining momentum.

After more than 670 years of samurai rule and 260 years of rule by the Tokugawa shogunate, the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837–1913), relinquished power, on 9 November 1867, in the hope that a political alliance with the Emperor would eventuate.[1] Instead, a civil war between *daimyo*, loyal to the shogun, and 'outside' lords (*tōzama*), loyal to the Emperor, began with an attack on the Emperor's centre of power in Kyoto. The Boshin war (27 January 1868 – 27 June 1869) involved numerous skirmishes and battles, the most decisive being the Battle of Ueno, in the capital of Edo, on 15 May 1868.

fig. 1, detail: Utagawa Yoshitora, Japan, active 1840–1880, *Illustration of the great battle of Tōdai (todai daisenso no zu),* 1874, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*), ink and colour on paper, nine sheets, 35.5 x 137 cm; On loan from David Forrest and Jánis Nedéla, Perth

1 Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and his world 1852–1912*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, pp. 116, 117.

After the capitulation of the shogun in 1867, Edo castle was vacated and disgruntled supporters gathered in Ueno. When the battle commenced, Kaneiji Temple, the shogun's personal temple, was attacked.

The woodblock print artist Utagawa Yoshitora (active 1840–1880) records the full extent of the Battle of Ueno in a spectacular panorama of nine panels (fig. 1). Samurai fighting for the Emperor are dressed in Western-style military uniforms and are armed with modern guns and bayonets. They were a coalition of *tōzama* clans, the Satsuma, Chōshū and Tosa, from outside the political and cultural centre of Edo. The Tosa clan from Shikoku can be identified by their distinctive red-bear wigs (*shaguma*), while the shogun's troops are wearing clothing appropriate to samurai and are armed with swords and long poles (*naginata*).

Amidst the chaos, the Buddhist monks of Kaneiji Temple escape, carrying treasures from the temple; defeated samurai commit suicide; the temple is razed to the ground and the air is filled with smoke. In the lower left panel, a figure dressed in a straw coat and protected by soldiers makes his escape. This is most likely the abbot, Rinnōjinomiya (1847–1894), who had returned to the temple days earlier, from Kyoto, after unsuccessfully pleading with imperial forces for the safe passage of the shogun.[2]

The imperial victory cemented the beginning of the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912), with the fifteen-year-old Mutsuhito enthroned as Emperor Meiji (1852–1912). Two months after the battle, Edo became Tokyo, 'eastern capital'.

The chief architect of the coalition of *tōzama* clans and leader of the victorious battle was Saigō Takamori (1828–1877), an impoverished samurai of the Shimazu clan from Satsuma domain in southern Kyushu. Saigō Takamori is often referred to as 'the last samurai' and the story of his life and accomplishments inspired such devotion that he attained legendary status. This is eloquently depicted in woodblock prints created after his death in 1877, which recognise his role in the birth of the modern nation of Japan, as well as his ability to maintain values considered consistent with the samurai.

Saigō Takamori was born in the Satsuma domain (present-day Kagoshima prefecture) on the island of Kyushu, ruled by the formidable Shimazu clan. During the battles to unify the Japanese archipelago in the sixteenth century, the Shimazu clan had opposed the victorious Tokugawa and as a result were viewed as an 'outside' (*tōzama*) clan. The Shimazu were distrustful of the shogunate and were fiercely independent.

The Satsuma domain was populated by an abundance of samurai and this had a profound influence on Saigō Takemori's own values and education.[3] Frugality and valour were values shared by both samurai and peasants. Physically, Saigō Takamori was extremely tall; he was charismatic and a powerful fighter. His formal education was typical of the samurai class and encompassed the humanistic study of classical Chinese texts and state-endorsed Zhu Xi Confucianism. These studies provided the means by which samurai could exclusively enter the services of *daimyo* lords.

In 1849 the Shimazu clan was split by a succession dispute. Saigō supported the appointment of Shimazu Nariakira (1809–1858), who became Lord of Satsuma in 1851. Lord Nariakira and the lowly samurai, Saigō, travelled to Edo together in 1854 as part of their biannual

2 The abbot, Rinnōjinomiya, was a prince who, from a young age, had entered the Buddhist Tendai sect. For details on his escape, see Keene, pp.148–54.

3 Ivan Morris, 'The apotheosis of Saigō the Great', *The nobility of failure*, Martin Secker and Warburg, UK, 1975, p. 227.

obligation to the shogun, known as alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai*).[4] On their way along the main Tōkaidō highway, it is possible that Saigō witnessed first-hand or heard of the 'black ships' of Commodore Matthew Perry (1794–1858), anchored in Kanagawa, which ultimately forced the shogunate to open Japan to foreign ships.[5]

Edo was a confusing, overcrowded city, given to rumours and intrigue. Nonetheless, Saigō's reputation and diplomatic skills in the service of Nariakira were well respected. In 1858, however, Nariakira died and Saigō planned to commit suicide to be with his lord. He was dissuaded by his friend Gesshō (1813–1858), a Buddhist priest at Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto, who was a loyalist conspiring to overthrow the shogun and restore the Emperor. An arrest warrant was issued and Gesshō fled with Saigō to Satsuma, where he unsuccessfully sought protection. The two men boarded a boat with the intention of committing double suicide in Kagoshima Bay. Gesshō drowned but Saigō was rescued.

In the turmoil of the declining shogunate and the advent of a new, unsympathetic Satsuma lord, Hisamitsu (1817–1887), Saigō was banished twice for a total of five years between 1859 and 1864 to the distant Ryukyu islands, present-day Okinawa. In exile and on his return to Satsuma, he actively opposed the extreme poverty and slavery he found there, also setting up schools for local children.

As further evidence of the vicissitudes of life during the turmoil of the Bakumatsu, Saigō was unexpectedly released from exile by Lord Hisamitsu. A month after his triumphant return to Kagoshima, he was appointed Satsuma War Secretary, to be based in Kyoto. This post enabled him to confer with the British government through Sir Harry Smith Parkes (1828–1885), the British Plenipotentiary, and the diplomat, Ernest Satow (1843–1929). The British supported the anti-shogunate stand of the Satsuma domain, providing weapons.[6]

Saigō's reputation continued to soar. His frugality and samurai spirit were demonstrated publicly with his refusal of any honours or rewards from the new Meiji government.[7] By the 1870s, while he continued to exercise supreme military power, he wearied of the seemingly endless political skirmishes. His simple lifestyle, in which he eschewed the money and opulence of other Meiji bureaucrats, contributed to his popular appeal and reputation amongst alienated samurai.

Having won the Battle of Ueno and victory for the restoration of the Emperor, the new regime did not, however, live up to its promises in the eyes of the Emperor's staunchest allies, the Satsuma and Chōshū clans. Although the clans had supported the Emperor as a means to keep foreigners out of Japan, this did not happen. Furthermore, Meiji modernisation had resulted in the loss of feudal domains and samurai privileges. In 1872, for reasons of equality, the newly formed Imperial Japanese Army recruited commoners, thereby depriving the samurai of their function in society. In 1876, samurai not only lost hereditary privileges but also had to relinquish their swords, cut their distinctive topknot hair and suffer the indignity of having to wear Western clothing.

Seven hundred years of samurai culture had become cause for embarrassment. Modernity had corrupted and threatened to destroy the samurai spirit. While Saigō represented the last vestige of samurai

fig. 2: Kunichika Toyohara, 1835–1900, *Onoe Kikugoro V as Shinohara Kunimoto*, from the series *One hundred roles of Baiko* (*Baikohyakushu no uchi*), 1893, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 37.0 × 25.0 cm; d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2013

4 *Sankin kōtai* 'alternate attendance' system began in 1635. Feudal lords had to reside in Edo for several months every two years leaving their families behind as hostages.

5 Mark Ravina, *The last samurai: the life and battles of Saigō Takamori*, John Wiley and Sons, New Jersey, 2004, p. 53; in 1854 the Treaty of Kanagawa opened the treaty ports of Hakodate and Shimoda to American ships, thereby increasing the instability of the shogunate.

6 The French supported the pro-shogun forces. After the Battle of Ueno was lost, the shogunal forces escaped to Hokkaido (Ezo) with the intent of declaring a separate republic.

7 Morris, p. 241.

principles, in reality he had endorsed many of the changes, possibly without understanding their full consequences. Despite the obvious contradictions, disenfranchised samurai turned to Saigō as a potential leader to air their grievances.

After 1873 he turned to life in Kagoshima prefecture (formerly Satsuma domain) and organised a number of private schools for several thousand students, whose education comprised training in the military arts – both traditional and modern – agriculture and morals, based on Buddhism and Confucianism. The schools operated on Saigō's basic tenet 'Revere Heaven, Love Humanity' (*keiten aijin*).

A key person involved in the delivery of the military training in the schools was Shinohara Kunimoto (1836–1877), who is depicted with Saigō Takamori in a Kabuki actor print by Kunichika Toyohara (1835–1900) (fig. 2). This print, *Onoe Kikugoro V as Shinohara Kunimoto*, created in 1893, depicts Japan's most famous actors of the period, Ichikawa Danjurō IX in the role of Saigō (above), and Onoe Kikugorō V as Shinohara (below). Both men are shown in imperial uniforms, fighting for the Emperor before their ill-fated defection to the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877.

It is generally believed that Shinohara used his position to recruit students in the schools established by Saigō Takamori to take advantage of the social unrest in the former Satsuma and Chōshū domains.

The students banded together and, without Saigō's knowledge, attacked the imperial arsenals in Kagoshima. This act of rebellion was the impetus for the Satsuma Rebellion, with Saigō as its unwilling leader. The Satsuma rebels were heavily outnumbered by the conscripted Imperial Army, which also included eleven warships. The Satsuma Rebellion's ill-advised siege of Kumamoto Castle lasted only twenty days and Kagoshima quickly fell to imperial forces. Saigō and his remaining forces withdrew to caves on Shiroyama, which overlooked Kagoshima Bay, where Saigō was killed on 24 September 1877.

The circumstances of his death are controversial: it is generally accepted by historians that, having been shot in the groin, he was decapitated by his deputy Beppu Shinsuke (1842–1877) to evade capture. His head was hidden to avoid its becoming a trophy for government forces.

Even before his death, woodblock print artists, including those employed by the rising number of newspapers in the Meiji era, became obsessed with Saigō and the Satsuma Rebellion, which threatened to destabilise the government. One of the most innovative and prolific woodblock print artists of the Meiji era, Kiyochika Kobayashi (1847–1915), depicted the famous journalist Fukuchi Gen'ichirō (1841–1906) standing on Shiroyama reporting on the action around him, as imperial soldiers attacked Saigō's rebels (fig. 3).

One of the more evocative print designs demonstrating the popular appeal of Saigō Takamori was created by Utagawa Kunimasa (1848–1920) prior to Saigō's death on 15 August 1877. The print (fig. 4), which links his ascension to the heavens – literally and metaphorically – with a comet that appeared in the southwestern sky on 2 August 1877, depicts a commonly held belief that Saigō had 'risen' to become a star. An Osaka newspaper reported that through a telescope you could see Saigō sitting

fig. 3: Kiyochika Kobayashi, Japan, 1847–1915, *The journalist Fukuchi Gen'ichirō*, no. 45 from the series *Instructive models of lofty ambition* (*Kyōdō risshiki*), 1885, woodblock print, ink and colour on paper, 36.1 × 24.5 cm; d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2013

on a star ‘healthy, fit and in full imperial uniform’.[8] In addition to this celestial phenomenon, in August and September the planet Mars was close to earth and shone very brightly. At the time, John Reddie Black (1826–1880), formerly of Adelaide, an English language newspaper editor in Yokohama and the author of *Young Japan: Yokohama and Yedo, 1858–79*, commented: ‘in the popular belief, the spirit of their once great general has taken up its abode in the planet Mars and his figure may there be seen, when this star is in the ascendant’.[9]

Public sympathy for Saigō and his cause was very strong. Even the leading reformer and architect of Westernisation in Meiji Japan, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), was of the opinion that Saigō had been driven to death by the government’s tyranny.[10] Although Saigō was officially a traitor, on the occasion of the proclamation of the constitution in 1889, he was pardoned posthumously by Emperor Meiji and was elevated to a court rank normally reserved for high nobles. Two years later, during the visit of Crown Prince Nikolai of Russia (1868–1918; later, Czar Nicholas II), rumours were circulating that Saigō had escaped and was sheltering in Russia. It had been anticipated by Saigō’s followers that he would return on a Russian naval ship with Nikolai. When he did not materialise, a policeman tried to assassinate Nikolai, provoking an international incident.

Saigō’s life and death were full of contradictions. Alive, he had been an enemy of the shogun, and in death, he was regarded as a traitor by the Meiji government, for whom he had fought valiantly. His heroic samurai spirit became a commodity, a focus of nostalgia, which continues to endure. His statue in Ueno Park – the scene of the major battle – showing him in simple clothing, walking with his dog, became a site of pilgrimage. In the aftermath of the rebellion, his body, along with 2000 Satsuma rebels, was buried in temple grounds in the Nanshū Cemetery in Kagoshima.[11] Amongst the graves is that of his fellow soldier, Shinohara Kunimoto.

In the tumult of the Meiji era, the story of ‘the last samurai’ became a beacon for fading samurai and rising militarists. Japan would enter the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, as well as conduct military excursions and oversee the colonisation of Korea and Taiwan in the lead-up to the Pacific War, 1941–45. His spirit of martyrdom was immortalised in the use of the pseudonym ‘floating chrysanthemum’ (*Kikusui*), the password he allegedly used in the Satsuma Rebellion.[12] It was adopted by kamikaze fighters in the Pacific War as they solemnly embarked on their last flight.

In post-war Japan his legendary status has continued. The national broadcaster, NHK, has produced at least two TV series dramatising his life, the first in the 1990s and again in 2018, when a series consisting of forty-eight episodes went to air. The wider world knows him through the Hollywood film, *The Last Samurai* (2003), a film which, like the woodblock prints of his time, distorted the facts to make a good story.

fig. 4: Utagawa Kunimasa, 1848–1920, *Saigō’s star* (*Zokushō Saigōboshi no zu*) from the series *Strange News from Kagoshima and Prefectures in the Southwest, no. 7* (*Seinan chinbun: Kagoshima kakuken. dai 7-go, zokushō Saigōboshi no zu*), 1877, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 36 × 24 cm; National Library of Australia

8 Ravina, p. 7.
9 John Reddie Black, *Young Japan: Yokohama and Yedo, 1858–79*, Trubner, London, 1880–81, p. 497.
10 Ravina, p. 7.
11 Between 1877 and 1885 bodies of dead warriors were repatriated to the cemetery: <https://wiki.samurai-archives.com/index.php?title=Nanshu_Cemetery>, accessed 7 July 2020.
12 This is mentioned by his first English language biographer, Morris, pp. 274, 380. Subsequent biographers have not mentioned it. Kikusui was also the name of a village near Kumamoto.

Samurai as an export commodity

Jennifer Harris

For over two hundred years, foreign powers had been excluded from Japan, the exception being Dutch and Chinese traders, who were confined to Nagasaki. Japanese travel abroad was forbidden and foreign ships were refused entry into all Japanese ports, even in emergencies. In 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry (1794–1858) challenged Japan's sovreignty by demanding that United States whaling ships in distress be granted rights of entry. Although the shogun tried to ignore the demands, Perry returned a year later and insisted that a treaty be signed to 'open' Japan's ports for trade and humanitarian access. Intimidated by Perry's flotilla of 'black ships', the shogunate capitulated and signed the Treaty of Kanagawa, in 1854. While this was a victory for the West, it was deeply resented in Japan and ultimately marked the beginning of the end of the shogun's power and of samurai culture.

Other foreign powers insisted that they too be accorded the same rights and in 1858 the number of 'treaty ports' that could be accessed by foreigners expanded. By the 1870s Japan had become a tourist destination for wealthy travellers. Foreign passengers usually disembarked in Yokohama, which, catering for the tourist market and encouraged by Meiji government incentives to produce goods for export, had become a centre of souvenir production.

For tourists, photographic images were important. While foreign photographers such as Felice Beato (1832–1909) and Baron Raimund von Stillfried (1839–1911) were early pioneers of commercial photography in Yokohama, photography in Japan had an earlier history, having been encouraged by daimyo prior to the fall of the shogunate. For example, Lord Shimazu Nariakira (1809–1858), of the Satsuma domain, had purchased daguerreotype equipment and ordered his retainers to study the techniques as early as 1849.[1] By the time tourism had become an industry in Yokohama, numerous Japanese photographers had set up professional photographic studios.

Kusakabe Kinbei (1841–1932) specialised in producing rich, lacquer-covered albums for foreign consumption, these containing hand-coloured photos of Japanese views and costumes. The covers of the albums depicted exotic images and designs removed from their historical or cultural contexts. The cover of *Untitled album* is a good example (fig. 1). Placed over a background of cherry blossoms are two cartouches showing kimono-clad women weaving, dyeing and applying patterns to textiles.[2] For additional artistic effect, prestigious *mon* (family crests) of old samurai

1 Terry Bennett, *Photography in Japan 1853–1912*, Tuttle, Tokyo, 2006, p. 35.
2 Kusakabe Kinbei came from a family of textile merchants (Bennett, p. 205).

fig. 1: Kusakabe Kinbei, born Yamanashi prefecture, Japan 1841, died Kobe, Hyogo prefecture, Japan 1934, *Untitled album* (*with landscapes and portraits*), c.1880, Yokohama, album: wood, lacquer, gold, silver, silk, paper; forty-six albumen-silver photographs, 35 × 40 × 10 cm; Gift of Shane Le Plastrier through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2018

clans – restricted in earlier times – are applied as indiscriminate design motifs. Two of the *mon* are those of the deposed Tokugawa shogun (three hollyhocks) and the Toyotomi clan (paulownia), with the third crest likely to be that of a Kabuki actor (three plovers).

Presented inside the albums compiled in Kinbei's studio are images of 'old Japan': kimono-clad *musume* 'girls' and the lost world of daimyo, samurai and courtiers, all artificially posed in studios. Photos such as *Ancient noble style* (fig. 2) show an upper class samurai with his two swords, wearing indoor formal *kataginu* (top) and *nagahakama* (long pants) and standing on tatami matting.[3] Behind the samurai is an incongruous *tsuitate* (portable single standing screen) bearing geese flying in formation.

fig. 2: Kusakabe Kinbei, born Yamanashi prefecture, Japan 1841, died Kobe, Hyogo prefecture, Japan 1934, *Ancient noble style*, from the *Untitled album* (*with landscapes and portraits*), c.1860–1900, Yokohama, albumen-silver photograph; Gift of Shane Le Plastrier through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2018

3 In other Kusakabe Kinbei albums this photograph was also known as 'actor'.

In Yokohama and elsewhere, shops filled with lacquer, paintings, prints and metalware were established to cater to a wave of foreign travellers. One traveller, South Australia's Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Way (1836–1916), acquired a selection of metalware on his trip to Japan in 1891. Samurai accoutrements such as swords and sword guards (*tsuba*) were very popular and displayed the exceptional craftsmanship of Japanese artists and their ingenious use of alloys of silver, gold and copper metal. Sir Samuel Way, for example, returned with thirty *tsuba*, which are now part of the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia (fig. 3).

Japanese attention to their own art was deflected in the turmoil of the Meiji Restoration. The closing decades of the nineteenth century provided rich opportunities for foreign private collectors and museum collections. As a consequence the greatest collections of sword furniture are to be found in museums outside Japan.[4]

Tray with three tsuba by Munechika (fig. 4) has *tsuba* created from lacquer and ivory, showing the extent to which objects pertaining to samurai had become appropriated for export.

Amongst the most popular purchases by foreigners in Yokohama and other treaty ports such as Nagasaki were Japanese ceramics, especially Satsuma wares, originally produced in the kilns of the Satsuma domain in Kyushu from 1600 CE (fig. 5). Following the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877, led by Saigō Takamori, many kilns in the Kagoshima area were destroyed; the 'Satsuma style' was subsequently copied by potters and painter–decorators far removed from Satsuma, located as far north as Tokyo and Yokohama.[5] The exquisite gold brocaded style became increasingly gaudy – to cater for Western tastes – with the decorations often appropriated from samurai warrior culture. These export commodities, however, provided important foreign revenue for Japan, at the time struggling to transition from a feudal to an industrial economy.

fig. 3 left: Japan, *Tsuba, Oni and two samurai in battle*, c.1820, iron, gold, silver and brass, 8.0 × 7.5 cm; Bequest of Sir Samuel Way 1916

fig. 3 right: Yoshimasa, *Fuchi-kashira set, fuchi: samurai on horseback carrying a standard*; *kashira; obverse: samurai on horseback*; reverse: tent, lances and flag, c.1790, *shibuichi*, *shakudō*, gold, 3.4 cm (*fuchi*, length), 3.9 cm (*kashira*, length); Gift of John and Geraldine Halls 1984

fig. 4, opposite above: Munechika, Japan, active late 19th century, *Tray with three tsuba*, late 19th century, lacquer, gold, metal, ivory, enamel, mother-of-pearl, coral, 28.0 × 20.0 cm (tray); Gift of The Zorich Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2017. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

fig. 5, opposite below: Kinkōzan workshop, Japan, *Dish in double rhombic shape, Satsuma ware*, c.1900, Kyoto, earthenware, overglaze and gold decoration, 2.5 × 28.3 × 17.2 cm; Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1904

4 The Victoria & Albert Museum holds over 5000 sword fittings (Josef Kreiner [ed.], *Japanese collections in European museums*, Bier'sche Verlagsanstalt, Bonn, Germany, 2005, vol. 2 p. 26).

5 Anna V. Saveleva & Maria Menshikova, *Perfection in details: the art of Japan in the Meiji Period, 1868–1912 from a private collection*, exhibition catalogue, Tabula Rasa Publishing House, St Petersburg, 2016, p. 11.

The samurai in a modern world

Russell Kelty

> What Japan was she owed to the samurai. They were not only the flower of the nation but its root as well. All the gracious gifts of heaven flowed through them.[1]

The restoration of the Emperor and the establishment of his 'enlightened government' in 1868 initiated an artistic and cultural revolution in Japan. The Meiji era (1868–1912) is defined by the Japanese empire's rapid ascension on the world stage due to modernisation and technological innovation. Art was considered an essential part of the government's ambitions to present Japan as a modern nation and thus avoid the perils of colonisation that had befallen the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Under the slogan, 'Enrich the country, strengthen the military' (*fukoku kyōhei*), the new government actively encouraged artists to create *objets d'art* on a par with those of industrialised nations for display at international exhibitions in America, Australia and Europe.

This revolution meant the official end of the reign of the shogun, daimyo and samurai. In 1876 the right to wear swords in public was banned, and many young samurai, realising the need for reform to the military and society, gladly cut off their top knots, donned Western clothing and joined the bourgeoisie. In addition to forming the new Japanese military, ex-samurai also became civil servants, teachers, merchants, farmers and artists, enacting a successful self-transformation from samurai estate to modern office holder. The previous function of the samurai was replaced by a conscripted army, who wore Western military uniforms and who were trained by Western experts. Once the top of the social hierarchy, the samurai had now lost their class, privilege and vast estates. The old view of the samurai as a tool of society was transformed: they were now seen as an army which acted as the protective force of the fabric of a society menaced from abroad by real and imagined internal subversion.[2]

The samurai may well have been deposed, but they cast a long shadow on modern Japan. Authors such as Inazō Nitobe constructed an idealised samurai for Western audiences, with the aim of countering the critical response to Japan's growing military power in East Asia. *Bushidō: the soul of Japan* was first written in English and published in Philadelphia (1899) and translated into Japanese in 1909. 'Bushidō' literally translates to 'the way of the warrior' and is largely based on Western ideas of chivalry rather than on the specific code of conduct conceived during the Edo period.[3] Nitobe 'attributes the foundation and flourishing of the national soul to the samurai ancestors' and attempted to forge a distinct and unique Japanese identity in order to explain ideals and values from Japan's past. *Bushidō* was highly influential in Japan and the West, with presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) and John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) reading it in an attempt to understand the new rising power.

1 Inazō Nitobe, *Bushidō: the soul of Japan*, Cosimo Classics, 2007, p. 67.
2 L.M. Cullen, *A history of Japan, 1582–1941: internal and external worlds*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 261.
3 Cullen, p. 266.

The ethos articulated in Nitobe's book is envisioned in prints depicting the Imperial Army and Navy of Japan as it embarked on a series of military engagements in East Asia. While these encounters defined its place in the world order, at the same time they served to revitalise the woodblock print industry. Woodblock print designers trained during the last flourishing of prints, in the Edo period, began to transform the repertoire of motifs used to portray historical warriors from the nineteenth century to present an idealised vision of the modern soldier, who fought on behalf of the Emperor and the nation of Japan.

War prints (*senso-e*) were designed from the late 1870s and depict the events and exploits of the Imperial Army in subjugating the samurai class in Japan and, later, foreign forces in China and Russia (fig. 1). The defeat of the Russian Imperial Army was a shocking event for the world community, as it was the first time in the modern era that an Asian country had defeated a European power. The rising popularity of the daily newspapers and their capacity to feature contemporary events, which were banned during the Edo period, had a positive effect on the woodblock print industry.[4] War prints placed a distinctive emphasis on the Emperor and inserted images of the new modern soldier in the lineage of warriors popularised in the woodblock printed books and prints of the nineteenth century.

The woodblock designers of this era often had diverse training due to the decline of the market for prints. The heroics of the modern soldier were presented through the visual language of the newspaper, lithography and photography and imbued with the ethos of the samurai. The samurai of the feudal Edo period, depicted with two swords (*daishō*) and topknot

fig. 1: Kobayashi Kiyochika, Japan, 1847–1915, *Scouts near Newchang on a snowy night* (*Nyūchan fukin yukiyo no sekkō*), 1894–95, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 35.7 × 69.3 cm; Gift of David Forrest CBE and Jánis Nedéla through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2019

4 Andreas Marks, 'Meiji-period war prints and their publishers', in Philip Hu, *Conflicts of interest: art and war in modern Japan*, St Louis Art Museum, St Louis, 2016, p. 25.

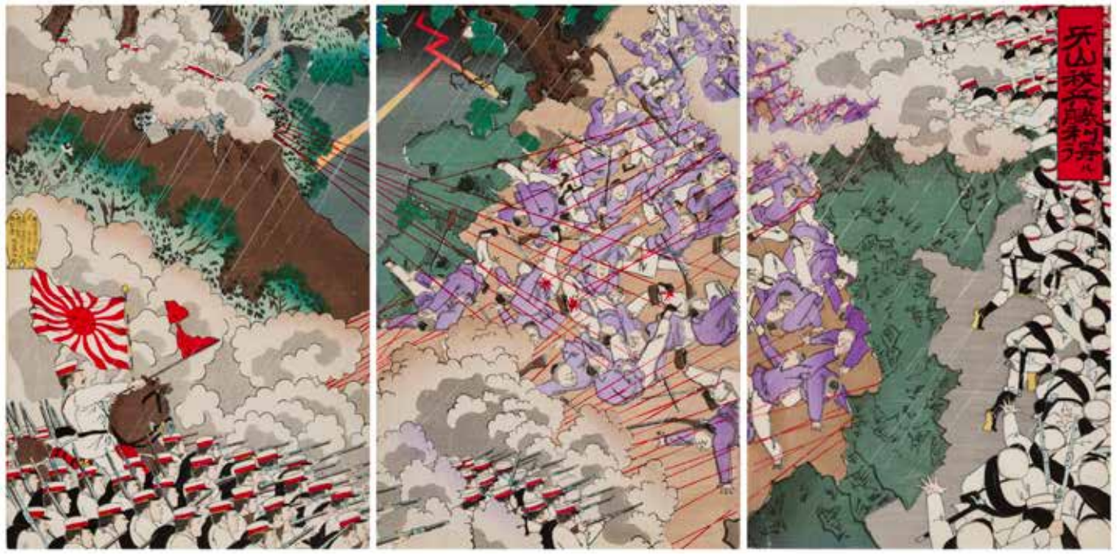
(*chonmage*), now had his hair cut and wore a crisp military uniform with a single sword. The print by Ginkō Adachi displays the samurai and the modern soldier in a lineage of historical and fictional imagery (fig. 2).

One of the most prolific artists to create propaganda during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars was Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915) (fig. 3). Kobayashi was born into the lower ranks of a samurai class in Edo, the seat of the Tokugawa government, in 1847. His early print designs display the influence of both the woodblock style of the Edo period and his training in Western printing techniques.[5] Kobayshi, whose prints often feature harsh contrasts of light and dark, as well as perspective, is best known for his designs featuring the valour and chivalrous acts of the modern warrior, whose sabre was always at his side or in his hand. He also created satirical prints critical of the Meiji government.

fig. 2, above: Ginkō Adachi, Japan, 1853–1902, *Warriors of Japan*, c.1895, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 35.7 × 69.3 cm; M.J.M. Carter AO Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2019

fig. 3, below; Kobayashi Kiyochika, Japan, 1847–1915, *Massacre of the Chinese at Asan*, 1894, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 36.9 × 75.0 cm (overall); M.J.M. Carter AO Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2019

5 Sonja Hotwagner, 'Laughter about war in modern Japan: three series of satirical prints by Kobayashi Kiyochika', in Hu, p. 36.



The samurai or *bushi* became a symbol of Japan's dominance on the world stage and the great tales on these themes continued to inspire even children's games (*suguroku*) (fig. 4) and dioramas (*tatebanko*). Lithographs created after the spectacular military success of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) present the samurai as a dominant force in East Asian politics and the symbol of Japan, and advocate a return to the spirit of the samurai as a motivating force for the nation. The acts most readily associated with the samurai were encouraged for similar reasons but caused unforeseen responses in the new society.

fig. 4: Tada Hokurei, publisher, active 1900–30, *Castle attack game* (*shirozeme ichibannori suguroku*) Tokyo, 1927, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper; Collection of Satoko and Yugen Tomimori

On September 1912, the day of Emperor Meiji's funeral, General Nogi Maresuke and his wife committed ritual suicide in a display of their devotion and affirmation of the samurai code, whereby an individual followed their lord into death (*junshi*). At the time, this act was perceived by some in the nation as a sign that Japan had not yet crossed the cultural line separating tradition from modernity. Nogi's legacy in Japan is complicated, as he played a prominent role in the rise of Japan as an imperial power during the Russo-Japanese War, a war that had a polarising effect on Japanese society. His own misgivings about the war and the soldiers he sent to their death were expressed in a poem composed by him while visiting the grave of his son in Port Arthur, titled 'Outside the fortress at Goldland':

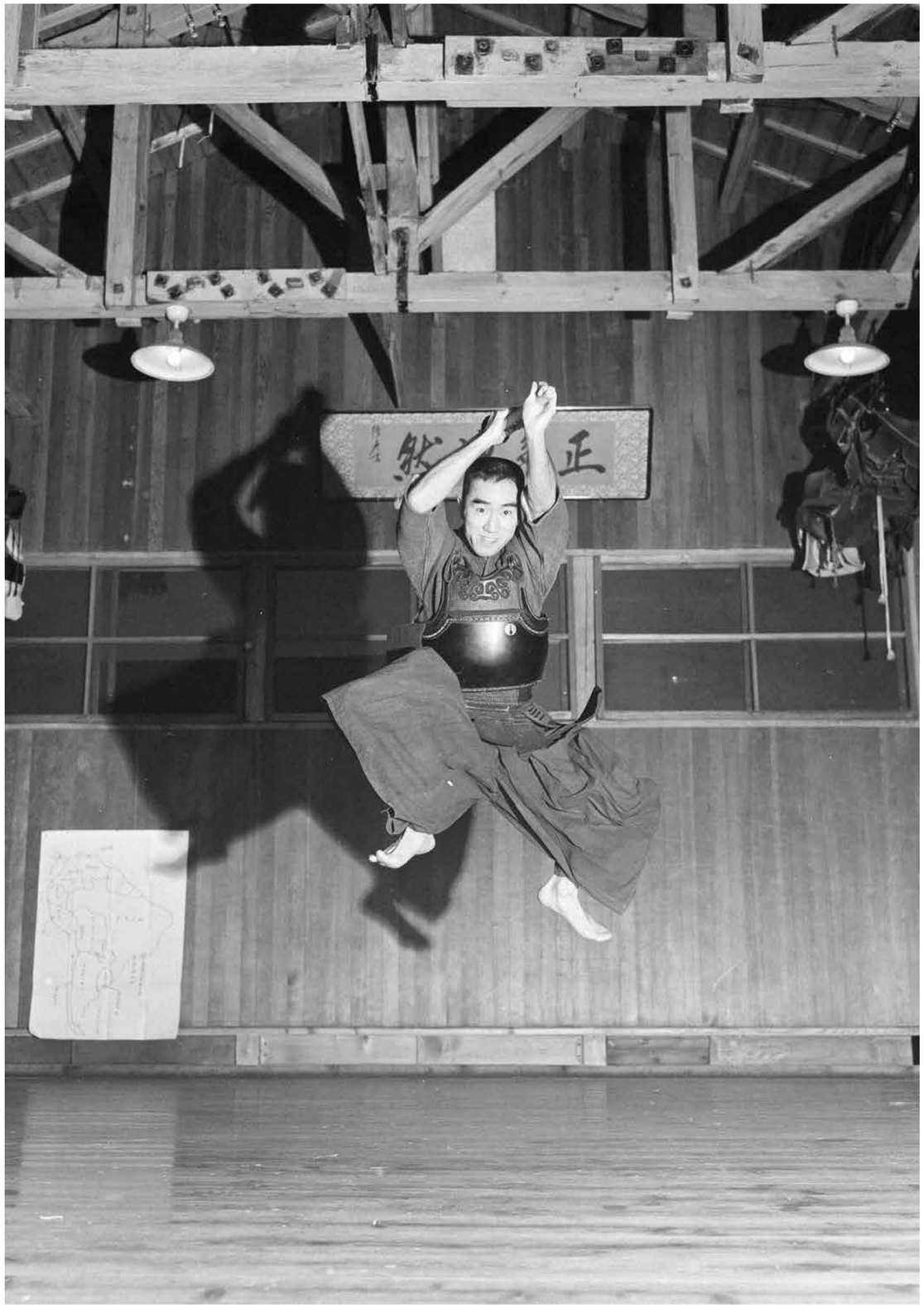


fig. 5: Mishima Yukio, photo: The Asahi Shimbun via Getty Images

Hills, river, grass, trees
Truly desolate, a ten mile stretch
A foul, blood soaked wind
Over a fresh battlefield
The horses do not stir
The men do not speak.
In the slanted rays of the setting sun
Outside the Fortress of Goldland.

In August 1967 the noted author, playwright and actor, Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) (fig. 5), committed *seppuku* at the Self Defense Force Headquarters in Tokyo. In the wake of his death, his personal interpretation of the *Hagakure* (hidden among leaves) became a bestseller in Japan 'for those who admired him, as well as those who despised him for his political positions'.[6] The *Hagakure* consists of a series of short anecdotes and reflections of the retainer Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659–1719), which provide both instruction and insight for the daimyo and samurai of the Nabeshima domain.[7] The eleven volumes were kept secret until after the end of the Edo period and during the Second World War Mishima returned to his copy again and again, regarding it as essential to his development. One of Mishima's many perceptions of himself was that of a modern samurai, and to that end he engaged in the martial and literary culture.

In the post-war period Mishima sought to embody the ethos of the *Hagakure* and present the moral decay of Japan, which he believed had been caused by feminisation, industrialisation and Americanisation.[8] Central to Mishima's return to a 'traditional, manly samurai life' was a readiness or preparation to die, as advocated in the *Hagakure* in its best-known lines: 'the way of the samurai is death'.

fig. 6: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Japan, 1798–1861, *Asahina Saburo Yoshihide breaking down the great gate during the revolt of the Wada against the Hojo*, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 36.7 × 72.5 cm (image overall); South Australian Government Grant 1975

6 Mishima Yukio, *The way of the samurai: Yukio Mishima on Hagakure in modern life*, Basic Books, New York, 1977, p. vii.
7 Hiroaki Sato, *Legends of the samurai*, The Overlook Press, New York, 1995, p. 287.
8 Michelle M. Mason, 'Empowering the would-be warrior: Bushido and the gendered bodies of the Japanese nation', in *Recreating Japanese men*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2013, p. 82.

Rearmed and dismembered: the samurai in post-war visual culture

Ryan Holmberg

After the Second World War, the samurai, like his country, found himself disarmed. With the fall of the Japanese empire and the commencement of the Allied Occupation of Japan in August 1945, moves were made to dismantle the militarist and 'feudal' values that had underpinned Japanese society, in favour of democratic reforms that promised individual freedom and pacifism.

Passages in school textbooks that praised self-sacrifice unto death, unquestioned loyalty to one's male seniors and the moral superiority of the Emperor's subjects – a modernised samurai ethic – were blacked out in ink until revised editions were issued. Likewise, images of not only samurai, but traditional swashbuckling characters in general, were largely banned from visual culture. The Gordon W. Prange Collection at the University of Maryland, amassed by the Occupation's Civil Censorship Detachment, contains numerous examples of manga (Japanese comics) featuring samurai, ninja and Edo-era police and thieves wielding blades and slicing through bodies, in which offending images are marked with 'X' in wax crayon, and words like 'VIOLATION', 'DISAPPROVED', or 'RIGHTIST PROPAGANDA' are written and stamped on their covers (fig. 1).

fig. 1: Tōge Teppei, *Kurama Tengu* (Tateyama shobō, Osaka, 1948), cover. Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries

With the relaxation of press codes and the partial reacceptance of Japan's military past as part of the nation's repositioning as a bulwark against perceived communist threats from China and the Soviet Union, the samurai made a roaring comeback in the 1950s, although infused with a new, more naturalistic and contradictory 'humanity'. Released in 1950, Kurosawa Akira's (1910–1998) *Rashomon*, about a cowardly bandit who kills a hapless samurai and assaults his female companion, not only won a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, it also established the growling, leaping Mifune Toshirō as the paradigm of the charismatic, if crazed, Japanese swordsman in the international imagination for years to come. *Seven samurai* (1954) cemented Kurosawa's reputation as the premier auteur of samurai films that were both scintillating and philosophical, offering brash cinematic action, subtle characters and philosophical meditations on military virtue and violence.

Children's comics and adjacent forms such as illustrated fiction, on the other hand, still largely worked with older models. They used the bouncy cartoony forms of pre-war manga to make slapstick-driven samurai adventures, or the naturalistic styles of pre-war magazine illustration to create *emonogatari* (picture stories, with equal parts image and text), starring coiffed and hooded, blade-wielding heroes solving mysteries and subduing bad guys.

Things began to change with the expansive stories, humanistic messaging and cinematic panelling of Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989) in the late 1940s. Although best known for science fiction and adventure tales like *Astroboy* (*Tetsuwan atomu*, 1952–68) and *Kimba the white lion* (*Janguru taitei*, 1950–54), Tezuka also created samurai titles such as *Cartoon Taiheiki* (*Manga Heigen Taiheiki*, 1950), based on the classic epic about a power struggle between competing court families in the fourteenth century and their warrior retainers, and *Tange Sazen* (1954), about a fictional one-eyed, one-armed *rōnin* (masterless, wandering samurai), a character who had been popular in novels and movies since the 1920s. Boys' manga magazines, as they grew into one of the main vehicles of baby boomer entertainment over the course of the 1950s, were filled with fast-paced, big-action period fiction and featured more samurai and ninja than perhaps any other type of character.

Then, in the mid-1950s, a new genre of comics emerged: gekiga (literally, dramatic pictures), which revolutionised, first, comics and then swathes of Japanese culture. Although gekiga's focus on creating suspense through carefully cadenced cinematic panelling was initially designed for contemporary mystery settings, it was effectively applied to standoffs between swordsmen in desolate windswept fields, as well as to short-tempered samurai passing one another in the street. Where action was once typically depicted panoramically, now it was syncopated across panels of blades gleaming in the sun, brows sweating, eyes staring, speed lines cutting through the air, blood spurting and limbs falling. Cold-blooded killers and Kurosawa-esque samurai, whose military values are compromised by life's necessities, also began to feature more prominently. Saitō Takao (born 1936), for example, otherwise famed for the James Bond-like *Golgo 13* (1968–present), was an avowed Kurosawa fan, who, from the mid-1950s, regularly published popular gekiga titles combining high action and brash heroes (fig. 2). His *Muyōnosuke* (1967–70), about a one-eyed samurai bounty hunter, was popular enough to be made into a live-action TV show.

Although a central genre in mainstream manga by the late 1960s, gekiga initially thrived as subculture on the 'rental book' *kashihon* market, where working class children could borrow books for a small sum per night and in which artists were allowed a greater freedom of artistic and political expression. Hirata Hiroshi (born 1937) led the way in the samurai genre. His naturalistic, yet dynamic, drawing style derived not from post-war cartoonists like Tezuka, but rather from a lineage of illustrated fiction dating back to print-designer Tsukioka Yoshitoshi in the late nineteenth century.

In contrast to the stereotyped killers and heroes of most other manga, Hirata often explored the lives of low-class samurai and the feelings of frustration and resentment they experienced while subject to the terrors of their superiors and the humiliations of poverty. Although with a strong fan base and praised in later years by luminaries like the novelist Mishima Yukio and *Akira*'s Ōtomo Katsuhiro, Hirata sometimes ran afoul of the wider public. His *All falls: a tale of revenge* (*Fukushū: tsunde wa kuzushi*, 1961) was singled out by parent and teacher groups as a case of gratuitous and corrupting violence in comics. His *Bloody stumps samurai* (*Chidaruma*

fig. 2: Saitō Takao, *The dance of Asura* (Hinomaru bunko, Osaka, 1956), interior page. Aomushi Shōwa Manga Library

fig. 3: Hirata Hiroshi, *Bloody stumps samurai* (Hinomaru bunko, Osaka, 1962), cover. Image courtesy Asakawa Mitsuhiro

kenpō, 1962) (fig. 3), the tale of a young samurai of outcaste (*buraku*) descent who vows to avenge the wrongs against him and his people by the sword, even after he loses his arms and legs in gruesome combat, was attacked so aggressively by the Buraku Liberation League that the book was withdrawn from circulation and copies were burned.

Both books made quite an impression on Hirata's peers, however. Umezu Kazuo (born 1936), one of Japan's most beloved horror manga authors, published a homage in the form of *The demon of revenge* (*Fukushū kijin*, 1967), the story of an armless samurai. Tezuka's popular Dororo (1967–68), about a *rōnin* born limbless and without organs, was also probably influenced by Hirata's frequently grotesque work.

Political-period manga of a more sensitive and systematic sort was pioneered by Shirato Sanpei (born 1932) – although you wouldn't know it from his debut manga, *The wintry swordsman* (*Kogarashi kenshi*, 1957), a swashbuckling samurai tale in a mixed gekiga and Disney-like Tezuka style. Shirato was the son of the painter Okamoto Tōki, one of the leaders of the pre-war proletarian arts movement. This background is readily apparent, however, in Shirato's *The legend of Kagemaru* (*Ninja bugeichō*, 1959–62), a seventeen-volume epic featuring armed peasants, armed monks, evil samurai lords, soul-searching *rōnin* and shapeshifting ninja working behind the scenes. *Kagemaru* was not only one of the most popular *kashihon* manga, it was also extensively written about by intellectuals, who interpreted its themes of class struggle and guerilla warfare in relationship to contemporary protests against the right-wing government and remilitarisation in Japan.

In 1964, Shirato co-founded the monthly magazine *Garo*. Although remembered primarily as a venue for avant-garde and subcultural experimentation, in its early years *Garo* was an activist children's magazine with strong leftist commitments, voiced mainly through samurai and ninja comics. The magazine's pillar serial, Shirato's nearly 5800-page *The legend of Kamuy* (*Kamui den*, 1964–71), wove together the struggles of multiple oppressed peoples in Japan's past – with tenant farmers and *buraku* outcastes at the fore – against rapacious samurai lords and greedy capitalist merchants (fig. 4).

Supplementing Shirato's social realist epic in the pages of *Garo* were Mizuki Shigeru's (1922–2015) short parodies of Miyamoto Musashi, the famed seventeenth-century *rōnin* and paragon of manly lone-wolf fortitude, and Tsuge Yoshiharu's (born 1937) comical and sentimental tales about poor samurai scheming to make ends meet or milking their receding status privileges. Thereafter, samurai and ninja would not feature prominently in *Garo*'s pages, with the exception, in the early 1970s, of Hanawa Kazuichi's (born 1947) gory S&M send-ups of pre-war samurai fiction.

While Mishima's ritual suicide in the Tokyo offices of the Self-Defense Forces in 1970 is often thought of as a tragic, if absurd, setback to attempts to revive reactionary forms of samurai manhood in Japan, samurai gekiga only really came into its own in the 1970s, helping to fuel the explosion of manga magazines for 'mature' readers (meaning young to middle-aged men), with increasingly more sex to balance out the blood.

fig. 4: *Garo* no. 16 (December 1965), cover artwork by Shirato Sanpei

Some of the most popular and influential of these titles were collaborations between writer Koike Kazuo (1936–2019), who had previously worked with Saitō Takao on *Muyōnosuke*, and Kojima Goseki (1928–2000), one of the lead artists for Shirato's *Kamuy*, who originally made his name in the early 1960s with samurai romances for female readers, diverging from the genre's masculinist norms. *Lone wolf and cub* (*Kozure ōkami*, 1970–76), concerning a wandering samurai forced to care for his toddler son while hunting his wife's murderers, and *Samurai executioner* (1972–76), about the moral and personal trials of the shogun's official executioner, are among their most famous titles. The former was made into a popular series of pulpy movies, with the sexuality amplified – this at a time when a fair number of erotic 'pink films' were set in the past.

In the late 1970s, the doyen of samurai gekiga, Hirata, created his most famous work, *The loyal warriors of Satsuma* (*Satsuma Gishiden*, 1977–82), about a group of samurai from an oppressed domain in Kyushu summoned north to create mammoth flood control works for the shogun. Hirata's historical detail and draughtsmanship are as impressive as ever, but the chauvinistic chest-beating has begun to show its age. Samurai and courtesan themes also featured in the burgeoning genre of 'ero-gekiga' for men.

Not only were samurai gekiga bestsellers in Japan, they were also among the earliest manga to be translated into English and exert an influence on American and European comics. Hirata features in the simply titled *Manga* (published by Metro Scope, c.1980–82), potentially the first anthology of Japanese comics in English.

The great American cartoonist Frank Miller's (born 1957) love for samurai and ninja gekiga and movies began shaping his work early on, as evident in his *Wolverine* mini-series (1982) with Chris Claremont (born 1950) and his solo graphic novel *Rōnin* (1983–84), continuing in classics like *Batman: the dark knight returns* (1986). Kevin Eastman (born 1962) and Peter Laird's (born 1954) *Teenage mutant ninja turtles* (begun in 1984), which was conceived as a parody of Miller's Japanesque comics, with obvious homage to *Rōnin*, effectively translated the swelling samurai and ninja boom into a full-blown entertainment franchise. The Japanese–American artist, Stan Sakai (born 1953), commenced his own Musashi and Kurosawa-inspired series, *Usagi Yojimbo*, starring a *rōnin* rabbit, likewise in 1984. It is still ongoing. Netflix recently announced it will produce an animated version.

And then the translations began in earnest. In 1987, First Comics in Illinois began publishing English editions of *Lone wolf and cub*, with covers by Miller (fig. 5). Each issue sold well over 100,000 copies. Also in 1987, Eclipse Comics in California included Shirato's *The tales of Kamuy* (*Kamui gaiden*, published as *The legend of Kamui*) as part of its pioneering manga line. It also published an original collaboration between Hirata and the writer Sharman DiVono, *Samurai, son of death* (1987), with extensive background material on the historical personages and events depicted.

By the 1990s, ninja and samurai feature in countless American comics, including Mark Moretti and Joe Quesada's *Ninjak* and William Tucci's *Shi*. Animated cartoons like Genndy Tartakovsky's *Samurai Jack* (2001–03, 2017) – influenced by *Lone wolf and cub*, Miller's *Rōnin*, Kurosawa's films –

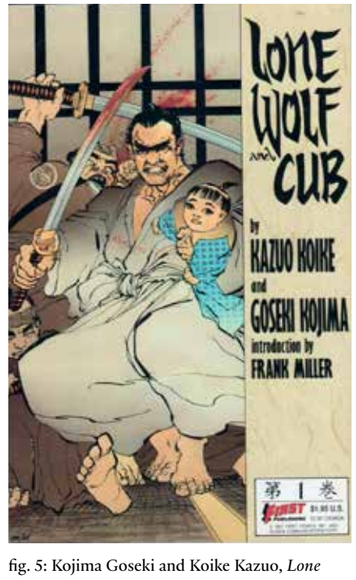


fig. 5: Kojima Goseki and Koike Kazuo, *Lone wolf and cub* no. 1 (First Comics, 1987), cover artwork by Frank Miller

and more recent comics by artists such as Paul Pope and Ronald Wimberly attest to how far the DNA of samurai and ninja manga have reached into American cartooning, not to mention the impact they have had on cartoonists across Europe and East Asia. The movie version of Kamimura Kazuo's (1940–86) *Lady Snowblood* (*Shurayuki hime*, 1972–73), a manga series about a female assassin during the Meiji period, scripted by Koike of *Lone wolf and cub* fame, inspired Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003).

Meanwhile in Japan, although no longer the dominant genre that it was in the 1970s, samurai manga continue to produce major hits, inspiring adaptations in animation and live-action movies. Among the best-known globally is Samura Hiroaki's (born 1970) *Blade of the immortal* (*Mugen no jūnin*, 1993–2015), starring a cursed *rōnin* who must kill a thousand evil men to regain his mortality and banish the 'bloodworms' in his body, which enable him to seal gaping wounds and reattach severed limbs.

Others include Inoue Takehiko's (born 1966) *Vagabond* (1998–present), a stylish, spacious, expressionistic retelling of the trials of Musashi, and Yamaguchi Takayuki's (born 1966) *Death frenzy* (*Shigurui*, 2003–10), an extremely graphic adaptation of novelist Nanjō Norio's retelling of a seventeenth-century death match at a Tokugawa daimyo's court. Not only does Yamaguchi's penchant for ultraviolence recall Hirata Hiroshi's work, but Hirata (who once adapted the same Nanjō novel in the 1960s) also created the calligraphic titles for the manga series. There is not a convenience store in Japan that doesn't carry *Comic Ran* (est. 1998), Saitō Pro's (Saitō Takao's studio) long-running samurai gekiga monthly, popular among white- and blue-collar men on their lunch breaks and commutes.

The future of the samurai, however, lies in diversification. Okazaki Takashi's (born 1974) initially obscure *Afro samurai* (1998–2002) (fig. 6), about a black *rōnin* seeking to obtain the power of a magical headband and avenge the murder of his father, became a pop culture phenomenon after it had been adapted as an animated series (2007) and subsequently an animated movie (2009), with Samuel L. Jackson serving as producer and lead voice actor, and the RZA of Wu-Tang Clan overseeing the soundtracks. Video games and plans for a live action film followed. Higashimura Akiko's (born 1975) *Snowflower tiger* (*Yukibana no tora*, 2015–20), constructed around the theory that the famed daimyo, Uesugi Kenshin, was actually a woman, is a rarity in the male-dominated field of samurai manga: a popular work by a female artist, originally serialised in a woman's magazine, with a female samurai as its main protagonist.

Samurai themes have even witnessed a resurgence in the fine arts, with painters like Yamaguchi Akira (born 1969) and Tenmyouya Hisashi (born 1966) creating neoclassical *nihonga* paintings crossing Japanese art history, retro-futurism, yakuza machismo, and pop culture such as manga and anime. The bushido codes of a bygone Japanese masculinity may perish at last, but the image of the samurai could very well prove to be immortal.

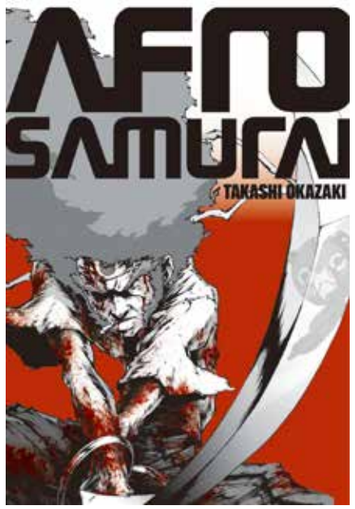


fig. 6: Okazaki Takahashi, *Afro samurai* (Parco shuppan, Tokyo, 2009), cover

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Selected samurai comics in English

Hirata Hiroshi, *Bloody stumps samurai*, Retrofit/Big Planet Comics, 2019.

Hirata Hiroshi, *Satsuma gishiden*, 3 vols, Dark Horse, 2006–07.

Hirata Hiroshi & Sharman DiVono, *Samurai, son of death*, Eclipse Comics, 1987.

Inoue Takehiko, *Vagabond*, 12 vols, VIZ Media, 2008–15.

Kamimura Kazuo & Koike Kazuo, *Lady Snowblood*, 2 vols, Dark Horse, 2005–06.

Kojima Goseki & Koike Kazuo, *Lone wolf and cub*, omnibus, 12 vols, Dark Horse, 2013–16.

Kojima Goseki & Koike Kazuo, *Samurai executioner*, omnibus 4 vols, Dark Horse, 2014–15.

Miller, Frank, *Rōnin*, DC Comics, 2019.

Okazaki Takashi, *Afro samurai*, 2 vols, Tor/Seven Seas, 2008–09.

Samura Hiroaki, *Blade of the immortal*, omnibus 10 vols, Dark Horse, 2017–19.

Sakai, Stan, *Usagi Yojimbo: the special edition*, Fantagraphics, 2015.

Tezuka Osamu, *Dororo*, Vertical, 2012.

Tsuge Yoshiharu, *The swamp*, Drawn & Quarterly, 2020.

Watsuki Nobuhiro, *Rurouni Kenshin*, omnibus 9 vols, VIZ Media, 2017–19.

Wimberly, Ronald, *Prince of cats*, Image Comics, 2019.

The spirit of the samurai in a contemporary world: an interview with Tenmyouya Hisashi

Interview by Russell Kelty

Tenmyouya Hisashi 天明屋尚様 is a Japanese contemporary artist and art theorist whose paintings and installations engage with the history of Japanese art and expose lost narratives. His practice imbues media that are often perceived as historic with a distinctly urban aesthetic and a disregard for existing proscriptions of taste. The world he creates is inhabited by motorcycle-riding provocateurs emblazoned on golden screens and images of Buddhas holding machine guns.

Tenmyouya Hisashi has written at length about his painting style. In the early 2000s he formulated the neo-Nihonga concept, literally 'new Japanese painting', as an antithesis to modern Japanese painting influenced by European and American artistic trends. Tenmyouya was recognised, along with other artists, for utilising characteristic features of Japanese art in a contemporary fashion. He also conceived of the art concept BASARA, which focuses on works of art across the history of Japanese art that were considered flamboyant, extravagant and eccentric. According to Tenmyouya, this 'reflects a samurai mentality rooted in the Japanese streets, BASARA contrasts the Western scheme of high and low art', as well as *otaku* culture and *wabi-sabi*.[1]

For the exhibition *Samurai* at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Tenmyouya Hisashi, courtesy of the Mizuma Gallery, Tokyo, has lent a limited edition print which displays his engagement with a repository of flamboyant samurai imagery from nineteenth century woodblock prints.

Tenmyouya Hisashi, born Tokyo 1966, *Conquest of the Karasu Tengu*, from the series *One hundred new ghost stories* (*shinkei hyaku monogatari: karasu tengu taiji no zu*), 2005, Tokyo, inkjet print, edition of 50 © Tenmyouya Hisashi, Courtesy of Mizuma Art Gallery

1 <http://tenmyouya.com/biography/profile.html>

Russell Kelty (RK): Japanese history and culture play a prominent role in your painting style, particularly the samurai, why?

Tenmyouya Hisahsi (TH): When I was in elementary school, I liked Japanese history classes. Although I still like them, I am not particularly knowledgeable about history like an *otaku*, and I was initially drawn to the strange form of armour. I still feel that way.

RK: You grew up in Japan during the 1970s and 1980s, what impact did the anime and manga of that period have on you then and your art now? Has street culture such as graffiti and culture of customised motorcycles and trucks (*bosozoku*) had an influence on your art as well?

TH: I was really interested in a popular form of manga called *supokon mono* (sports manga), as well as *yanki manga* (hoodlum manga), which there was a lot of during that time. It was a time when the ruffian type was more liked by girls than the serious type. In junior high school, the manga *Karate Master* was my bible, and I even practised karate every day. In my third year of high school, graffiti was introduced to Japan through the movie *Wild Style* (1982), which portrayed hip-hop, and at first I was hooked on break dancing, which I practised every day. After that, I became interested in graffiti. I must have liked physical activities during middle school and high school years.

RK: You mention the artist Okamoto Taro (1911–1996) as an influence on your work. Are there other artists from the period you admire?

TH: Okamoto Taro is respected for his view that Jomon pottery is Japanese art, and his extraordinary motivation and persuasiveness [in being able] to build his iconic sculpture *Tower of the Sun*, 1970, which projected through the ceiling of the building. Damian Hirst's (born 1965) work *A Thousand Years*, 1990, is a favourite because it clearly expresses the view of life and death in terms of sight and time. I have a great deal of respect for Damien Hirst.

RK: You seem to merge the history of the samurai with urban street culture, such as the subculture of *bosozoku*. Do you feel that the *bosozuku* embodies the brash qualities of the anti-social samurai from the late sixteenth century (*kabukimono*) or the extravagance of *basara* daimyo culture?

TH: In the Japanese street culture, there is an impertinence or the 'the spirit' of *kabukimono* and *basara* that has existed unchanged. In addition, Japan's *yanki* culture is diverse and deeply rooted in modern culture.

RK: In 2010 you proposed a new art theory known as BASARA. Could you explain it a bit and how or why you came up with it?

TH: In the September 2009 issue of the Japanese art magazine *Art Notebook (Bijutsu Techo)*, I was invited to edit a section called 'outlaw aesthetics'. The project provided me with the opportunity to reposition and reconsider my previous works, and I arrived at the concept of BASARA.

The genealogy of gorgeous and destructive beauty that has taken root in Japanese streets is collectively called BASARA. BASARA appears throughout the history of Japanese art and culture, from the appearance of mythical Japanese native deities (*Kunitsukami*), to the elite of the Nanbokuchō period (1336–1392), *basara* daimyo, and *kabukimono* of the latter half of the Warring states period (1467–1615). It also appears in the late Edo period (1615–1868) with a collection of painters described as 'eccentric' and of course the modern representation of the malevolent god, Godzilla. The spirit of BASARA runs contrary to the literati temperament, as well as to the austere values that *wabi-sabi* and Zen embody. It is best represented by art which evokes the festive spirit of warrior.

Japanese contemporary art shares a weakness with modern Japanese novels, which tend to focus on individualistic 'micro expressions' of one's interior state. BASARA is an attempt to explore new identities of Japanese art that do not end with the story of 'individuals' and instead preference art which exists at the axis of Japanese culture and history. This is an alternative way of perceiving the history of art, one that does not fall into a simplistic understanding of art and culture which can be described as high or low, either the tastes of the aristocracy (high) or mass culture (low). This type of culture and art is native to Japan and is based in the martial spirit found in the streets of Japan.

This concept is described in more detail in *Basara cross-border Japanese art theory: from Jomon pottery to decorated trucks (Decotra)* (Art Publisher, 2010), which I edited. *Basara* is a festive military spirit that manifested during the Warring States period, and is based on the sacred and dynamic life force embodied by Jomon pottery, which was oppressed in the early Edo period when the imperial culture was restored. However, over the course of the Edo period it was revitalised by artists described as eccentric.

The street culture that embodies BASARA originated with ancient Jomon pottery, and is represented through a vast array of visual cultures such as golden folding screens, helmets, Oribe tea bowls, woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*), colour woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*), festival floats, the Toshogu shrine at Nikko, tattoos, and today's decorated truck culture, graffiti, and graphic novels (gekiga). The artists whose work express BASARA are Kanō Eino, Iwasa Matabe, Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Kawanabe Kyosai, Kanō Yoshikazu and Kanō Kazunobu. My aim is to position painters with idiosyncratic styles and ideas as a genealogy of BASARA without disregarding them as simply 'unusual' or 'eccentric'.

While Okamoto Taro and Hashimoto Osamu established a dichotomy between Yayoi and Jomon pottery, I believe that the spirit of Jomon pottery extends from the mythological era to the modern age. It can be said that BASARA is an attempt to connect those two styles of art and culture. The root of the problem is the distorted aesthetic sense of traditional Japanese art, in which 'Jomon', is perceived as exciting and wild, as opposed to the the delicate and graceful 'Yayoi'.

The birth of 'Japanese painting' (*nihonga*) in modern times is often attributed to *Tenson Korin* (A legend of the descent of the sun goddess's grandson to earth). From that time, Japanese painting was meant to evoke the values of Western art. BASARA stands in opposition to the matière and modernity of Western painting. As a result, the above-mentioned 'Yayoi-like' is placed in a genealogy of beauty, along with Western modernism, and is considered opposed to a lineage of beauty associated with 'Jomon' beauty. Festivity, folklore and indigenousness are understood as myth, which embodies the values of premodern times (like the former relationship between *Amatsukami* – heavenly deities – and *Kunitsukami*). However, *wabi-sabi*, the spirit of Zen, and tea ceremony are not the only significant elements of Japanese culture. I love the sight of cherry blossoms in full

bloom, I am enchanted by the fireworks that decorate the sky and the spirit of the festivals with the gorgeous festival floats called *mikoshi*. [These are] just one aspect of Japanese culture.

Nowadays an awareness of the limitations of the existing framework of 'Nihon-ga', initiated during the Meiji era, has been subject to much discussion and attempts to redefine Japanese art. *Lineage of eccentrics: the miraculous world of Edo painting* (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tokyo, 2019) presented the works of artists described as eccentric, such as Ito Jakuchu and Soga Sohaku, and sought to correct the rigid view of conventional understanding. To put it simply, BASARA is an untamed flamboyant attitude exhibited at times throughout history that modern Japan disregarded. BASARA is a genealogy of fantasy that cannot be entwined with traditional literary values such as the withered and austere aesthetics of *wabi-sabi*. It is the possibility of an alternative style of Japanese painting, an alternative genealogy that connects these seemingly divergent styles with the ethos of present-day street culture.

RK: If *basara* daimyo were still alive today what do you think they would say about society?

TH: Horie (Takafumi Horie) (born 1972, founder of Livedoor) [who adopted the] unconventional behaviour of wearing a t-shirt and not a suit might be described as a *basara* daimyo.

RK: Two of my favourite paintings of yours are *Flying Trapeze* and *Scallop*, both from 1989. Could you talk about what inspired them and how your art has changed since then?

TH: *Flying Trapeze* was inspired by Ito Jakuchu's *Flock of cockerels* (1761–65). *Scallop* was the result of 'sampling' from a painting of *The Wave* (*onanami*) on the ceiling of the Kanmachi Festival Cart, painted by Katsushika Hokusai. There is no blank space on *The Wave* but my scallop opens in the middle to provide a room for imagination. The trio of paintings *Scallop*, *Floating in the air* and *Firefly hunting* was the beginning of my *nihonga-like* style painting.

RK: This year is the fiftieth year of Mishima Yukio's death. He is often considered, at least in the West, as the last person who evoked the ethos of *bu* and *bun*. What are your feelings about Yukio and do you think this assessment is correct?

TH: Mishima is probably the last person to take the concerns of the country seriously enough to act. I like Mishima. I don't believe the Western world's understanding of him is incorrect.

RK: You have engaged with samurai culture in a way that most never will. Is there something that you think Western audiences often misunderstand about the samurai?

TH: It would be natural for there to be misunderstandings in the Western world as it is not their culture. There are people who believe that the samurai still exists in Japan. I think this cannot be helped due to the influence of manga, anime and movies, which do not depict them accurately. This is a phenomenon in Japan. Miyamoto Musashi is a typical example of a samurai who has been turned into a superhero over time.

RK: Do you think the samurai is a warrior, culture or commodity?

TH: I think a warrior.

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, born Edo (Tokyo) 1839, died Tokyo 1892, *Minamoto no Raiko* (*Yorimitsu*) *preparing to kill the Earth spider* (*Minamoto no Raiko tsuchigumo o kiru zu*), no. 32, from the series *Thirty six ghosts in new forms* (*shinkei sanjurokaisen*), 1891, Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 33.5 x 22.7 cm (image, *oban*), 37.6 × 25.5 cm (sheet); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew 2003

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Dr Mark K. Erdmann, a lecturer in art history at the University of Melbourne, specialises in Japanese pre-modern architecture and the intersection of space, painting, carpentry and power. His research focuses on castles, warrior residences and palaces, as well as the Jesuit mission in Japan and its impact on visual culture. He received his doctorate from Harvard University in 2016 and a master's from the University of London, SOAS in 2001. He is currently working on a book titled *Azuchi Castle: Oda Nobunaga and the origins of the Japanese castle*. Erdmann is a core member of the Azuchi Screens Research Network, a group of scholars and artists attempting to discover the fate of a lost painting of Azuchi Castle gifted by Oda Nobunaga to Pope Gregory XIII, via the Jesuits, in 1585. He is also working on an annotated translation of *Shōmei* (Elucidation of the craft), a secret sixteenth-century architectural manual.

David Forrest, CBE, is a specialist in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japanese woodblock prints and, together with the artist Jánis Nedéla, is currently the Director of Gallery East in Perth, established in 1991. David has presented numerous exhibitions around Australia featuring prints created during the Edo period (1615–1868) and Meiji era (1868–1912). Over the past five years he and Jánis have concentrated on researching and cataloguing warrior prints created by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861), as well war prints created during the Sino-Japanese (1894–95) and Russo-Japanese (1904–05) wars.

Dr Jennifer Harris's doctorate in art history examined the formation of the Japanese art collection at the Art Gallery of South Australia within national and international contexts. She was formerly a teacher of Japanese language, and a lecturer/tutor in Japanese art history at the University of Adelaide, where she is a visiting research fellow. Her MA thesis examined the nineteenth-century calligrapher, Ichikawa Beian. She is the author and curator of *Netsuke and other miniatures from the Japanese collection* (2014) and *The power of pattern: the Ayako Mitsui Collection* (2015) at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Most recently, she has been co-editor and contributor to the publication *Exporting Japanese aesthetics: evolution from tradition to cool Japan* (Sussex Academic, 2020).

Dr Ryan Holmberg is a freelance arts and comics historian. He has taught at Duke University and the University of Tokyo, among other schools. As a freelance art historian and critic, he is a frequent contributor to *The Comics Journal*, *Artforum International* and *Art in America*. As an editor and translator of manga, he has worked with Breakdown Press, Drawn & Quarterly, Retrofit Comics, New York Review Comics and PictureBox on over two dozen different books. His edition of Tezuka Osamu's *The mysterious underground men* (PictureBox) won the 2014 Eisner Award for Best US Edition of International Material: Asia. He is also the author of *Garo manga: the first decade, 1953–1973* (Center for Book Arts, 2010) and *No nukes for dinner: how one cartoonist and his country learned to distrust the atom* (forthcoming).

Russell Kelty is Associate Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia, where he has curated and contributed to major exhibitions and catalogues, including *Edo style* (2018–19), *Chiharu Shiota: Embodied* (2018), *Ever blossoming: the flower in Japanese art and culture* (2016) and *Treasure ships: art in the Age of Spices* (2015–16). He completed an MA in Art History at the University of Adelaide, with a thesis that examined Vietnamese architectural tiles from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries found in Indonesia. He is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Sydney, researching the depiction of foreign ships by Japanese artists during the Edo period (1615–1868).

AGSA

AGSA Kaurna yartangka yuwanthi.
AGSA stands on Kaurna land.

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cover detail: Shunsen Natori, Japan, 1886–1960, *Okochi Denjiro as Tange Sazen*, 1931 or 1934 (original series 1931), Tokyo, colour woodblock print (*nishiki-e*); ink and colour on paper, 37.8 × 25.7 cm (image, large *ōban*), 40.2 × 27.3 cm (sheet); Gift of Brian and Barbara Crisp in memory of their son Andrew 2005

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