

## Nineteenth-Century Japanese Printmaking, Part II: The Meiji Period

After over two centuries of seclusion and strict regulation of foreign trade, Japan concluded a treaty to open two Japanese ports to American commerce in spring of the year following Commodore Perry's trip to Japan in 1853. Additional treaties with other Western nations quickly followed. The Japanese had long been fascinated by foreign intellectual thought, which had been gradually introduced beginning in the 18th century. In the mid-19th century, the need to meet the challenge of Western industrialization came to the fore as the Tokugawa shogunate crumbled. A series of broad political, social, and economic changes was introduced in 1868 with the enthronement of the first Meiji emperor and the restoration of imperial power. Tokyo's rush to modernize is effectively represented in the triptych by Kunitaru II, while Kiyochika's interest in Western techniques of modeling and atmospheric perspective present another aspect of artistic borrowing by printmakers of the late 19th century.

With the thriving trade of the late 19th century came Japan's realization that Western powers were carving out spheres of influence in East Asia that posed a threat to Japanese security. When Japan decided to pursue its claims to Korea, it used a rebellion against the Korean ruler in 1894 as the pretext for introducing Japanese troops. Korea had called upon China for assistance, but the Japanese attacked the Chinese and declared war after the fact on August 1, 1894. A succession of quick victories resulted in an 1895 treaty that ceded Taiwan to Japan, but Japan's desire to annex Korea and Manchuria was halted by the intervention of Russia, Germany, and France. At the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Japan was finally able to block Russia's claims in these areas. Japan's exclusive rights over Korea were recognized and control over various Manchurian trade ports and railways was established. The battle prints in this exhibition, which were created by artists who never visited the front lines, convey the nationalistic pride that swept over Japan during these wars of expansion.

Suzuki Kason

Japanese, 1860-1919

**Woman Reading a Dispatch, 1904**

Polychrome woodblock print

This print records news received of a tragic event that occurred during the Russo-Japanese War.

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.5 \

Artist unknown

Japanese, early 20th century

**Warship Leaving a Japanese Port  
by Moonlight (no. 5 in a series  
of kimono designs, Tokyo),  
around 1904**

around 1904

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.18 >



Toyohara Chikanobu

Japanese, 1838-1912

**Women Doing Ikebana, 1890-1900**

Polychrome woodblock triptych

This domestic scene provides a contrast to the battle triptychs of the period. The brilliant colors used by Chikanobu here are typical of those commonly found in late 19th-century prints employing inks with aniline dyes.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Granoff 85.197.14a-c

Ogata Gekko

Japanese, 1859-1920

**The First Army Advancing on**

**Mukden, 1894**

Polychrome woodblock triptych

Mukden was the site of the Manchu emperor's summer palace in Manchuria. This print illustrates the Japanese advance toward that city in November of 1894. The print was probably made during the army's move, anticipating a victory that did not occur, as Mukden was never taken.

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.23351

Taguchi Beisaku

Japanese, 1864-1903

**Officer Oshima Bravely**

**Facing the Enemy during a**

**Winter Attack, 1894**

Polychrome woodblock triptych

Prints of the Sino-Japanese War

frequently honored well known

combat heroes.

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.1a-c

Kobayashi Kiyoichika

Japanese, 1847-1915

**Our Forces Attack the Chinese**

**Encampment at P'yongyang, 1894**

Polychrome woodblock triptych

The Chinese commander fled during

the night of the Japanese attack, and

this Korean city fell to the Japanese

army the next day.

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.6a-c

Kobayashi Kiyoichika

Japanese, 1847-1915

**The Great Victory of Our  
Forces at P'yongyang, 1894**  
Polychrome woodblock triptych

The victory commemorated here  
occurred on September 16, 1894,  
at the very beginning of the

**Sino-Japanese War.**

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.7a-c

Kobayashi Kiyoichika

Japanese, 1847-1915

**The Great Attack in Snow at  
Niuzhuang, 1895**  
Polychrome woodblock triptych

The city of Niuzhuang in Manchuria  
fell to the Japanese on March 5, 1895.

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.8a-c



Kuniteru II

Japanese, 1829-74

**The Bustle of Tokyo-Railroads,  
Carriages, and Rickshaws**

Polychrome woodblock triptych

Since the rickshaw (*jirikisha*, “man-powered vehicle”) was probably invented in Tokyo in 1869, the print presumably depicts the city in the early 1870s. It celebrates Tokyo’s modernization by depicting a steam engine and people in Western dress.

Anonymous gift 85.195.11a-c

Kobayashi Kiyochika

Japanese, 1847-1915

**Ducks and Withered Lotus, 1879**

Polychrome woodblock print

In this print, the modeling of the ducks and the receding forms of the lotus in the distance recall Western drawing techniques. In addition, Kiyochika has omitted a title and has signed the print horizontally along the lower right edge in the Western manner.

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.396