
THE WORLD OF THE MEIJI PRINT

IMPRESSIONS OF A NEW CIVILIZATION

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II

Pride in Progress: The Modernization of Tokyo in the 1870s

The end of the Tokugawa shogunate was mercifully quick. Propelled by a combination of internal and external pressures, the shogun resigned and direct imperial rule was restored in 1868. The "restoration" was carried out as a loyalist movement by low- and middle-ranking samurai eager to free themselves from the humiliation and domination of Western imperialist powers by establishing the foundations of a modern, centralized state. Emperor Kōmei died in January 1867 and was succeeded the following month by his fifteen-year-old son, Mutsuhito (known posthumously as Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) (figure 41). This boy-emperor, born and raised in the isolation of the Kyoto palace, was totally inexperienced and easily manipulated by the activists who chose the imperial figure as a symbol to lead Japan into the modern world. The emperor had long been a shadowy figure, totally divested of political power, but retaining still an aura of inviolable divinity by virtue of the common belief that he was directly descended from the sun goddess, Amaterasu. In 1868 the era name was changed to the positive-sounding *Meiji* ("enlightened government") and in 1869 the emperor was moved by palanquin to the new capital, Tokyo, so as to assure his public visibility. In order to successfully mobilize the entire nation, the government needed the goodwill which only the emperor could bring.

The youthful leaders of Meiji Japan were shrewd enough to abandon their previous anti-foreign and isolationist rhetoric and they began instead to open the doors to contact with the wider world; indeed, the Imperial Charter Oath of 1868 promised to search for knowledge throughout the world. The goal was to maintain national independence at a time when much of Asia was reduced to colonial status. The methods were to be the cultivation of national prosperity (industrialization) and military strength. In short, Japan set out to become rich and powerful, and ultimately the ruler of all Asia. In striking contrast to the delegation of bureaucrats who had sailed to America in 1860, the fact-finding mission that traveled to Ameri-



41. Emperor Meiji in court robes.
1860s. Albumen print. Yokohama Archives of History.

ca and Europe between 1871 and 1873 under the leadership of court noble and statesman Iwakura Tomomi (1825–83) included half of the country's top political leaders. The embassy was entrusted with the dual goals of adding to Japan's first-hand knowledge of the West and laying the diplomatic groundwork for the revision of the so-called unequal treaties.

The inequities of the Harris Treaty (extraterritoriality for treaty ports, low import levies, and a most-favored-nation clause) provided a heavy incentive to Japanese nationalism but simultaneously reinforced a traditional underlying sense of inferiority. One reason the Japanese changed so quickly in the Meiji era (1868–1912), adopting Western laws, clothes, technology, and so on was to show that they were in fact civilized and deserved to be treated as equals. "Civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) was the slogan for the 1870s. As Japan lurched into the modern world, there was a tremendous outburst of energy and euphoria for all things Western. Serious and otherwise responsible intellectuals advocated taking English as the national language or at least adopting the Western alphabet in place of Chinese characters. Mori Arinori, a diplomat at the Japanese embassy in Washington, greeted incoming Japanese students by advising them to intermarry and propagate children with superior Caucasian ethnic qualities. These were the extremes, of course, but on the whole it seemed that in the beginning modernization and Westernization were virtually synonymous.

Japan's willingness to accept Western learning and culture is not surprising. It reflects a long history of fascination with anything new, foreign and exotic. In the



42. *Fukuzawa Yukichi as a young samurai in Paris. 1862. Albumen print. Keiō University Library, Tokyo.*

past this had meant an absorption of continuous waves of influence from China and to a lesser extent from Korea and even, in the late sixteenth century, from Europe. This adaptability, combined with widespread education, a common language, large urban commercial centers with a skilled labor force, a strong secular tradition, and a rising agricultural surplus, helped to ease the transition from a feudal world.

FOR THE BEWILDERED SAMURAI

No one publicized Western civilization more effectively than the educator and writer, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) (figure 42). Fukuzawa began as a student of Dutch learning in Osaka in the 1850s and founded Keiō Gijuku (later Keiō University) as a private school for the study of Dutch in Edo in 1858. After a visit to Yokohama he wisely turned his attention to English, gained a reputation as a translator, and was sent overseas in 1860 as an attendant to the head of the first embassy to the United States. In 1862 he was recruited as a member of an official shogunal mission to Europe and in 1867 he was again ordered to accompany a delegation to America. Armed with first-hand information, he quickly published several books that established him as a serious authority on Western matters. Sales of the first volume of his *Seiyō jijō* (Conditions in the West) in 1866 reached the huge figure of 150,000.

Seiyō ishokujū (Western clothing, food, and homes) was published in 1867 on the eve of the Meiji Restoration as a detailed and neatly illustrated woodblock-printed guide to Western customs and manners (figure 43a-v). Written in simple, readable style, his advice was aimed at able young samurai of low rank who, like himself, were eager to rise in the hierarchy of the emerging New Japan and "obtain power commensurate with their talents."¹ The book provides fundamental kinds of information for which there was obviously a desperate need. The author teaches his bewildered readers how to eat, dress, and even urinate in proper Western style. Each illustration has Chinese characters (*kanji*) as well as phonetic symbols (*katakana*) for an approximation of English pronunciation. The umbrella, for example, has the character reading *kasa* but also the phonetic symbols reading *omuburera*. The full text is translated below:

I. CLOTHING Most undershirts and underpants are made of knit fabric, but some are made of flannel. People prefer to wear flannel underwear during winter. Top shirts are made of flax fabric and are worn every day. Flannel shirts are usually worn while traveling or during a voyage at sea. Since they are made of wool, they do not show the dirt.

Collars are made of ramie. Paper collars are also available. Although the paper kind is less expensive, it has to be disposed of after one day's use. One must always wear a collar with Western clothes. Wearing a Western suit without a collar is just like wearing the Japanese under-kimono without its collar. It is simply improper.

Regular shoes are worn by Westerners just like Japanese leather-soled sandals. Boots are worn either in rainy weather or when riding a horse. Slippers are worn only inside the house. A shoe horn is used by placing it at the heel of the foot to slip into the shoe.

A long coat is always worn by persons of high social standing. A short coat, usually worn by lower-class men such as craftsmen, is also worn by distinguished persons when relaxing at home. They sometimes wear a short coat even outside the house. On the other hand, the lower classes sometimes wear long coats, too. In short, people wear anything (without rules) depending on their taste. In general, the French wear long coats, whereas Americans and the British do not really care what they wear on top as long as they wear clean underthings, and therefore even distinguished people wear short coats.

For formal occasions, however, the long coat is worn by military officials as a "uniform" with gold and silver ornaments, depending on rank. There are numerous other kinds of coats but it is impossible to cite them all here.

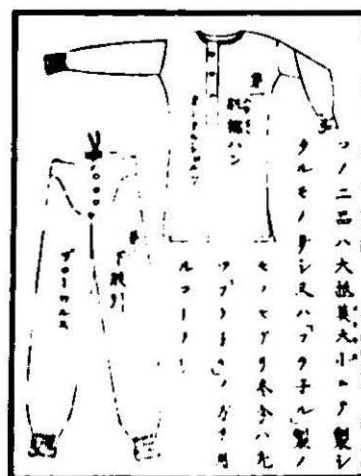
The most popular material for coats is wool but cashmere, which is a mixture of wool and silk, as well as flannel and white ramie are also used.

A top hat is worn by an aristocrat, while a man of lower rank wears a round one. However, it does not necessarily mean that men of high social rank never wear round hats. Just as in the case of coats, those of high social rank have the freedom of wearing whatever pleases them.

In general, one should keep in mind that a top hat is worn with a long coat and a round hat with a short coat.

Although flat caps are commonly worn by ordinary men, they are intended mainly for military officers, who attach gold and silver ornaments to the front. The design of these ornaments varies depending on the rank of the person wearing the cap. Some caps are trimmed with gold or silver. If you see someone wearing a cap with gold and silver decoration, it is advisable to assume that he is an officer.

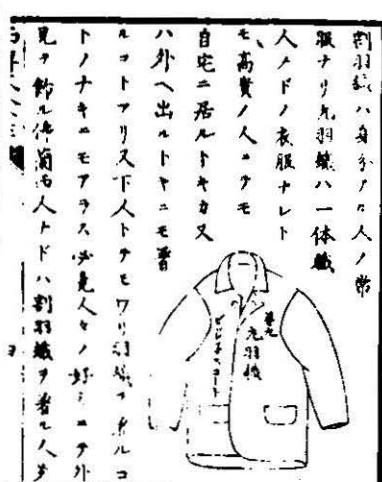
43. Fukuzawa Yukichi: Western Clothing, Food, and Homes (Seiyō ishokujū). 3 vols. 1867. Keiō University Library, Tokyo.



a. undershirt, drawers
b. topshirt, flannel shirt



c. trousers (breeches), suspenders, stockings
d. waistcoat, collar



e. shoes, boots, slippers, shoe-horn
f. short business coat

g. front of a gentleman's long coat
h. back of a gentleman's long coat



i. two styles of overcoat worn on top of other clothes during extremely cold weather
j. Macfarlane (tombi in Japanese)



k. top hat, cap, round hat
l. umbrella



Umbrellas are all made of silk. There are none made of paper in the Japanese manner. An umbrella, when folded, can also be used as a cane.

The preceding is a summary of Western clothing. As for the proper order of dressing, one puts on the undershirt first, then the underpants and the shirt. If one puts on each item following the illustrations in proper order, finishing with the overcoat, then the set of clothing will be complete.

Western clothes have pockets in various places inside where one can keep all small belongings. A handkerchief, for example, should be kept in the pocket of the coat, money in the pocket of the trousers. A watch should be put inside the pocket of the waistcoat and its chain should be put through a buttonhole.

The following is the proper way to go to the toilet: to urinate, simply unbutton the front of your trousers. To defecate, however, you must unbutton your suspenders front and back; putting them back on again is quite clumsy and troublesome.

II. FOOD Westerners do not use chopsticks for eating. Meat is cut very carefully and then transferred to each individual's plate. Set in front of each person are a knife which is held in the right hand in order to cut a small piece of the meat, and a fork which is held in the left hand in order to stick the piece of meat and bring it to the mouth. It is awfully bad manners to use a knife to carry food to your mouth.

Soup is also served in a plate, and is eaten with a spoon. It has to be remembered that slurping is bad manners, even when you drink tea.

This illustration [figure 43*m*] shows one place setting. At a banquet, twenty or even thirty guests sit at one big table.

For regular meals, red wine, sherry, or port wine are served. On special occasions champagne and various other kinds of liquor are served. One drinks brandy in a small cup after meals. The liquor made of barley called "beer" has a peculiar, bitter taste. Some people like beer because of that bitterness. Whiskey and brandy are too strong to drink during meals. They are unsophisticated drinks, preferred mainly by lower class men.

III. HOMES In the bedroom, Westerners keep a washstand where they not only attend to their toilette in the morning but also frequently wash their hands before and after each meal. The big bowl in this illustration [figure 43*p*] is ceramic. It is used just like the copper basins we have in Japan. The dirty water is poured into the jar underneath.

This illustration [figure 43*r*] shows a mirror placed on top of a chest of drawers. Since Western clothes have numerous buttons, it helps to use a mirror to look at yourself while buttoning and unbuttoning. You also need a mirror for combing your hair every morning and evening. That is why you find a mirror in every room in a Western house. For the finishing touch, you sprinkle perfume over the collar for purification. The small flask in front of the mirror is a perfume bottle and beside it is a brush for dusting off clothes.

Generally speaking, Westerners keep themselves cleaner than Japanese.

There are no tatami mats in Western houses. A thick carpet is placed over wooden floors and beautiful rugs are thrown on top of the carpet. There are usually several chairs on which to sit.

Since you do not sit directly on the floor, it is perfectly all right to go inside the house with shoes on. Besides, very often you find a mat in front of the entrance of homes. You wipe your shoes on it and clean off the dirt before entering the house. A Westerner who has just arrived in Japan tends to make the mistake of entering a Japanese house without taking off his shoes, but we should overlook this ignorance of our customs.

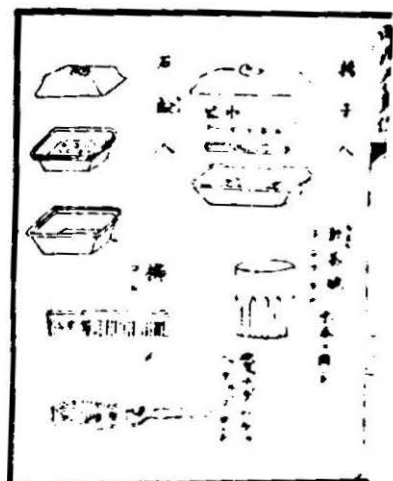
m. table and table cloth
n. plate, tumbler, table-
spoon, fork, knife, flower
vase, glass, champagne glass

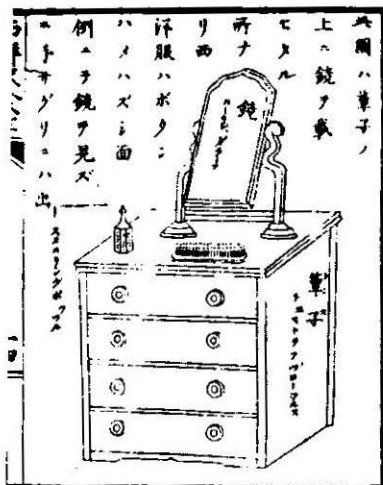


o. tea cup, teaspoon, wine
decanter, milk pot, sugar
mason, tongs, caster for oil
and vinegar
p. washstand

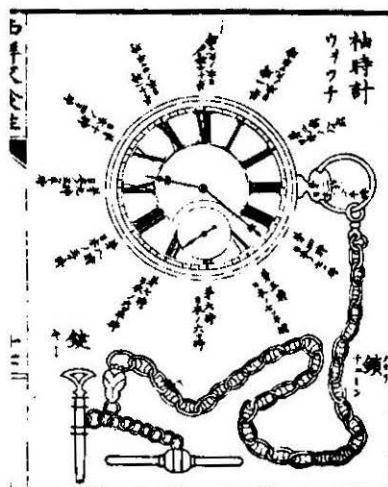


q. water pitcher, basin, tow-
el (width: two feet, length:
two and one-half feet
r. toothbrush dish, tooth-
brush, tumbler, soap dish,
comb, hairbrush





s. chest of drawers, looking glass, smelling bottle
t. chair

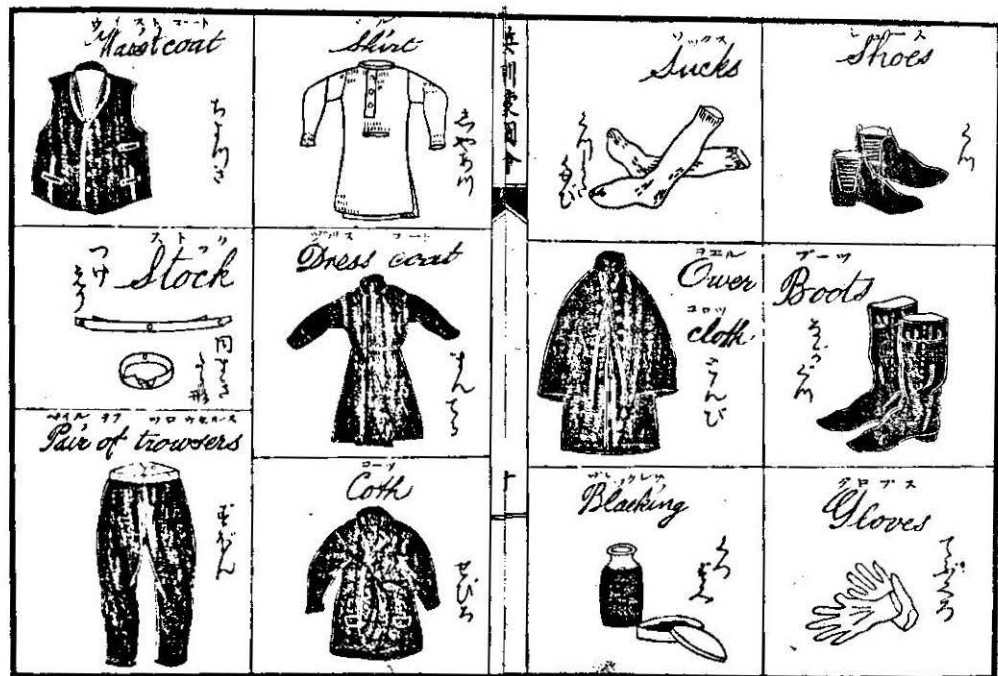


u. bed, bedstead, chamber pot
v. watch, chain, key

A bed is about three feet wide and six feet long. A double bed is about four feet wide. There are three layers of bedding; a straw mattress on the bottom, then a cotton one, and a wool one on the top. Finally, a white cloth is placed over them. The thickness of all layers should be almost one-and-a-half feet. However, the covers that are used are extremely thin. They use only two top sheets and one or two blankets. Although the top covers are thin, you can stay warm all night with your body sinking into the soft mattress. The bed linens are extremely clean. The sheets are white as snow, and you never find any fleas or lice.

The container that you see under the bed in the illustration [figure 43u] is a chamber pot. You always find this thing underneath the bed when you stay in a Westerner's house. You should be careful not to mistake this container for something else when you visit a Western country as some Japanese actually did.²

A watch is a somewhat irrelevant subject as regards Western living, but the author



44. Illustrated Manual of English Instruction (*Eiji kummō zukai*) 1871. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Mrs. Harold G. Henderson, 1986.

believes it is quite necessary to familiarize oneself with reading the time; all people carry a watch in the West to know the time without relying on temple bells as in our country.

Fukuzawa concluded with a painstakingly detailed description of the Western system of time-keeping. The useful information in his manual soon percolated down to schoolchildren throughout the country in the form of illustrated woodblock-printed English primers such as the *Eiji kummō zukai* (Illustrated manual of English instruction) of 1871 (figure 44). The table setting as well as many items of clothing are borrowed directly from *Seiyō ishokujū*, but there are some inevitable misunderstandings (apart from the usual linguistic problems): Fukuzawa's undershirt, for example, seems to have resurfaced here as a shirt. Tailors in Yokohama were kept busy meeting the demand for foreign clothing; there was a standing joke that the Japanese used to go in at the office door of Gilman and Company on Main Street in native costume and emerge from the private residence gate in all the glory of pantaloons and top hat.³ Sometimes more devious methods were called for. In 1870 *The Far East*, an illustrated fortnightly newspaper published in Yokohama by Scotsman John Reddie Black, reported a robbery at the residence of Reverend Brickworth Bailey, the British consular chaplain, who heard a noise upstairs while the family was dining. When he went to investigate, "some one, who seemed to wear light clothes,



45. A Meiji gentleman. Ca. 1877. Albumen print.
Collection of Kageyama Tomohiro, Fujisawa.

darted by as if disturbed, and made his escape. On entering one of the rooms it was found that a quantity of underclothing had been carried off, and a bundle consisting principally of dresses was made up, and ready to be passed out of the window.”⁴

The change to Western clothing was neither sudden nor totally successful. There is a “well-authenticated” story of a high court official being met one bitterly cold New Year’s Day, in the early 1870s, in what he believed to be full European costume. “He had on a very old, battered silk hat, a dress coat, a shirt, and—that’s all. He was not aware that trousers were *de rigueur*.”⁵ An example of a costume in transition is a nicely tailored white linen frock coat of early Meiji date passed down in the Katakura family, a branch of the Date clan. A family crest in the form of a small black rondel is unexpectedly embroidered on the back between the shoulders, just as one would find on a traditional man’s jacket (*haori*).⁶ Those who dressed in up-to-date Western clothes were called *haikara* after the high-neck collar attached to men’s dress shirts. A rare early photo shows a *haikara* gentleman with short hair parted down the center, a moustache, small wire-framed glasses, pocket watch, pencil, and cigarette holder (figure 45). The jaunty way he wears his scarf would have been much admired. He may have borrowed the dress shirt—the long sleeves protrude conspicuously.



46. Four former daimyo in Western attire. 1878. (Photo: after Konishi, *Meiji hyakunen no rekishi*.) From left to right: Matsudaira Sadanori's brother; Matsudaira Katamori (1835–93), former lord of the Aizu domain who refused to give in to imperial rule after the Restoration until forced to capitulate to superior military force; Matsudaira Shigeyoshi; and Tokugawa Yoshikatsu (1825–83), former lord of the Owari Tokugawa clan.

The sight of original combinations of East and West (the newest style of felt hat from Paris combined with a Japanese kimono) and of imports worn improperly (ankles protruding from trousers, collars unfastened, and cravats askew) was a source of both amusement and irritation for Westerners who were quite certain that the Japanese figure was “too dumpy and the legs too short to appear to advantage in this foreign dress.”⁷ On New Year’s Day, 1877, shortly after arriving from Germany, Dr. Erwin Baelz (1849–1913), who became the personal physician to many Meiji leaders and a professor of medicine at Tokyo University for twenty-seven years, confided his outrage in the pages of his diary:

On New Year’s Day we have the plainest demonstration of the grotesque way in which misunderstood European customs are being apishly imitated in Japan. Europeans in this country, even the English, have dropped a good deal of western etiquette, so that (for instance) one hardly ever sees a foreigner in a tall hat. The Japanese government, however, has, in its wisdom, thought fit to prescribe frock-coat and tall hat as the official dress for New Year visits. For this reason, today the streets have been full of figures more comical than you could possibly imagine. They look positively ridiculous, these unfortunate Japanese, in their incredibly ill-fitting frock-coats and trousers! On their heads are tall hats which look equally out of place. Their hands are adorned with white gloves, and hang stiffly by their sides, as if they were afraid of touching their “European”

clothes. Not only full-grown men, but even boys of ten to twelve are sacrificed to this preposterous convention. You simply cannot imagine how absurd they look as they go about the streets or wait in antechambers. Yet these same Japanese have a very fine appearance, dignified and distinguished, when dressed for great occasions in their native finery.⁸

The undaunted Isabella Bird, who arrived the following year, showed equally little mercy for these heroic attempts to modernize: "The Japanese look most diminutive in European dress," she wrote. "Each garment is misfit, and exaggerates the miserable physique and the national defects of concave chests and bow legs."⁹

EATING MEAT FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

By 1871 a visiting American science teacher could report on a European-style feast with gorgeous table setting and ten or twelve courses hosted by the daimyo of Echizen Province, who was "evidently used to foreign dinners." Some of his staff were not, however, for they "made loud noises in eating their soup, and one of them took a drink out of the finger bowls."¹⁰

Fukuzawa had popularized the idea that Japanese must eat meat to improve their physiques (the average height did in fact increase by one-half inch during the Meiji era), and soon meat-eating came to be taken as evidence of cultural enlightenment. The situation as it appeared in 1872 was recorded by the editor of *The Far East*:

When foreigners came to Japan, their consumption of animal food disgusted the Japanese. Cheese, butter and even milk were equally distasteful to them. We remember when ice was first brought here and an ice-cream was a great treat, three Japanese tasted some, and liked it so much that they demolished all that was on their plates. Unfortunately the curiosity of one caused the question to be asked what it was? On hearing that it was milk, one of them rushed out of the room and was very sick. All this is changed now. Restaurants kept by Japanese, where meat is sold both raw and cooked, are all over Yedo [Edo], and they are largely patronized. They are generally kept by men who have been in foreign employ either as cooks or house-boys, and the Japanese who patronize them accommodate themselves as comfortably to the chairs and tables, knives, forks and variety of dishes and condiments, as if they had been used to them. They moreover attack bottled beer and claret quite naturally, and are not slow to order or share a bottle of champagne. If a foreigner enters they are exceedingly polite. Those accustomed to foreigners may perhaps take no particular notice of them, but others will make them a polite bow, and gladly enter into conversation with them, watching all their movements and their method of dealing with everything placed before them.¹¹

There were not many Japanese who saw the humor in this rush to Westernization. The exceptions were to be found in the less serious echelon of the literary world. In 1871, Kanagaki Robun (1829-94), self-taught son of an Edo fishmonger and the leading *gesaku* (playful) writer of the late Tokugawa and early Meiji era, pub-

47. *Ochiai Yoshiiku*: Smacking His Lips Over Beef Stew from *Aguranabe*. 1871–72. (Photo: after Iwasaki, *Fūshi manga to sesō fūzoku nempyō*.)



lished an amusing short book of monologues devoted to the desirability of eating meat. Entitled *Aguranabe* (Sitting around the stewpan), it was illustrated by Ochiai Yoshiiku (of Yokohama print fame) with pictures of young dandies sporting items of Western attire (especially hats, umbrellas, and pocket watches) as they sit cross-legged in a *gyūnabe* restaurant savoring the chief culinary contribution of Japan's enlightenment: sukiyaki, a beef and vegetable stew cooked at the table in a large iron pot (figure 47). The first customer, introduced as "a young man fond of the West," dwells on the excellence of beef:

We should really be grateful that even people like ourselves can now eat beef, thanks to the fact that Japan is steadily becoming a civilized country. Of course, there are some unenlightened boors who cling to their barbaric superstitions and insist that eating meat defiles you so much you can no longer pray before the Buddha and the gods. Such nonsense merely proves that they don't understand natural philosophy. Savages like that should be forced to read Fukuzawa's article on eating beef.¹²

Robun's lightweight, satirical brand of journalism had surfaced first in occasional chatty texts on Yokohama prints (figures 25, 36) and tended to be directed at the simple, reactionary townsman. His style of writing had been contemptuously dismissed by Fukuzawa as a pointless waste of time—hence the merry revenge of *Aguranabe*.

A more powerful and witty critique of meat-eaters was delivered by Kawanabe Gyōsai (1831–89) in *The Enlightenment of Fudō Myōō* (plate 11). Gyōsai was a prolific

and successful painter, book illustrator, and printmaker with a penchant for the weird and grotesque (when still a child he is said to have retrieved a severed head from the river to use as a model for his sketches). He began as a student of Utagawa Kuniyoshi (who is noted for his humorous caricatures) and he admired the Hokusai *manga*, or cartoon volumes. He called his own cartoons *kyōga* or "mad pictures," and for a while used the *kyō* of "mad" as part of his art name (i.e., Kyōsai). After being arrested in 1871 he never again attempted political satire, but in 1874 he launched a short-lived comic paper, the *E shimbun nipponchi* (Illustrated newspaper Japan Punch) in partnership with Robun. His irreverent single-sheet print of Fudō dates from the same year.

Fudō, whose name means "immovable," is a fierce guardian of the Buddhist faith, one of the Five Great Kings of Brightness, or Godai Myōō. As described in religious texts and represented in art, the Myōō are terrifying and awesome, but their anger is compassionate; they embody the militant energy and retaliatory powers of the buddhas when confronted by such evils as passion, ignorance, and illusion. They also took on the role of protectors of the nation against physical enemies, as well as natural calamities. Fudō, worshipped in fire ceremonies at esoteric Buddhist temples, wards off enemies of the Buddha with his sword of wisdom, and binds evil forces with his lasso. In conventional paintings he is shown in a hieratic frontal pose flanked by two youthful servants, Kongara, whose body is white, and Seitaka, who is red.

In Gyōsai's cartoon, even the mighty Buddhist god has submitted to the forces of modernization. By the mid-nineteenth century Buddhism was no longer the force it had once been; trying to keep up with the times, Fudō is prepared to eat meat. (Buddhist monks, traditionally vegetarian, were granted official permission to eat meat in 1872.) Seitaka cuts bite-size pieces of beef with his master's sword, and Kongara boils them in a stew pot suspended over Fudō's halo of flames. Fudō himself is busy keeping up with the latest news, reading the *Shimbun zasshi*. This weekly newsbook (it was issued in pamphlet form), which first appeared in Tokyo in the summer of 1871, was sponsored by a government official and edited in government offices by bureaucrats employed in the Ministry of Education. It

stressed the need for discarding discredited patterns from the feudal past and for adopting the more enlightened ways of the West, both in governmental practice and in individual behavior. It encouraged enthusiasm for change. The items appearing ranged from reports and essays on the abolition of feudalism on the one hand, to news about the homely signs of 'civilisation': watches, haircuts, Western apparel, Western food. . . .¹³

In another of Gyōsai's comic prints, the King of Hell, who normally presides in flowing Chinese robes, receives a haircut and a new suit of Western clothing—complete with a top hat—while all of his little demon attendants are having their horns sawn off so that they, too, can wear hats.

The frivolity of such works as *Sitting Around the Stewpan* soon gave way to quite different attitudes more in keeping with the goals of Meiji officials. Donald Keene has clearly outlined the manner in which the government stepped in to turn even

the lowly arts of *gesaku* writing and Kabuki theater into instruments of public morality. In 1872 the Ministry of Religious Instruction issued prescriptions defining the purposes of literature as educational, stressing piety and patriotism, conditions Robun promptly agreed to accept. Kabuki producers and playwrights were summoned to the municipal office and similarly encouraged to take only such noble and time-tested themes as the encouragement of virtue and the chastisement of vice, and to embody in their works the Confucian virtues of loyalty and filial piety. "The actors and playwrights, far from being offended by this seeming interference, were delighted to be taken so seriously." Dialogue in modern Kabuki plays was "dotted with expressions of gratitude for the great good fortune of living under so compassionate a government."¹⁴

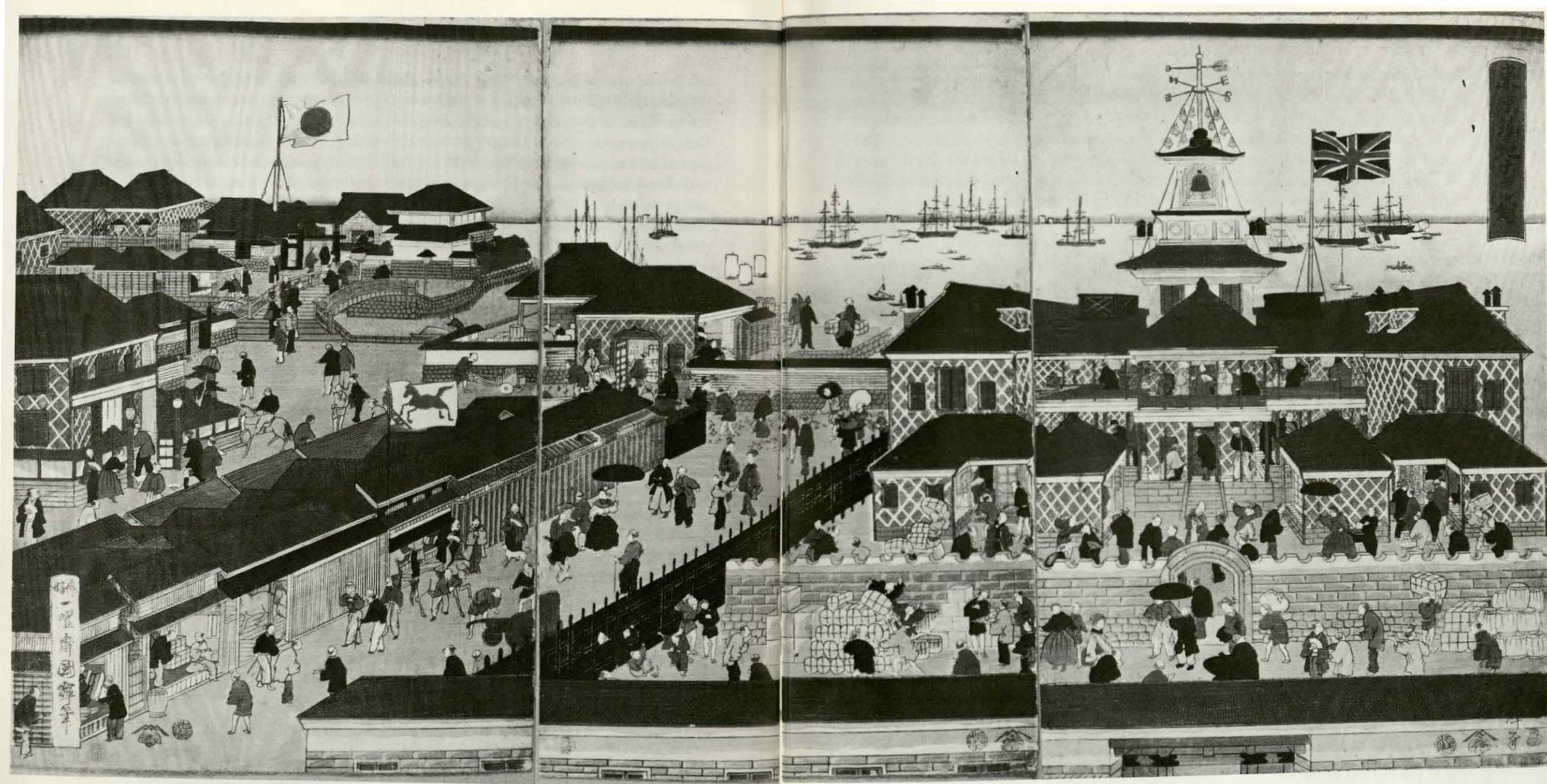
Print artists and their publishers were also willing to accommodate themselves to the high aspirations of the new government since there were few who doubted that *bummei kaika* was desirable—official and private interests were closely intermeshed. They took as their subjects the many tangible symbols of enlightenment emanating from the capital: Western-style architecture, new modes of transportation, gas lamps on the Ginza, industrialization, and even foreign circus acts.

PORTRAITS OF BUILDINGS

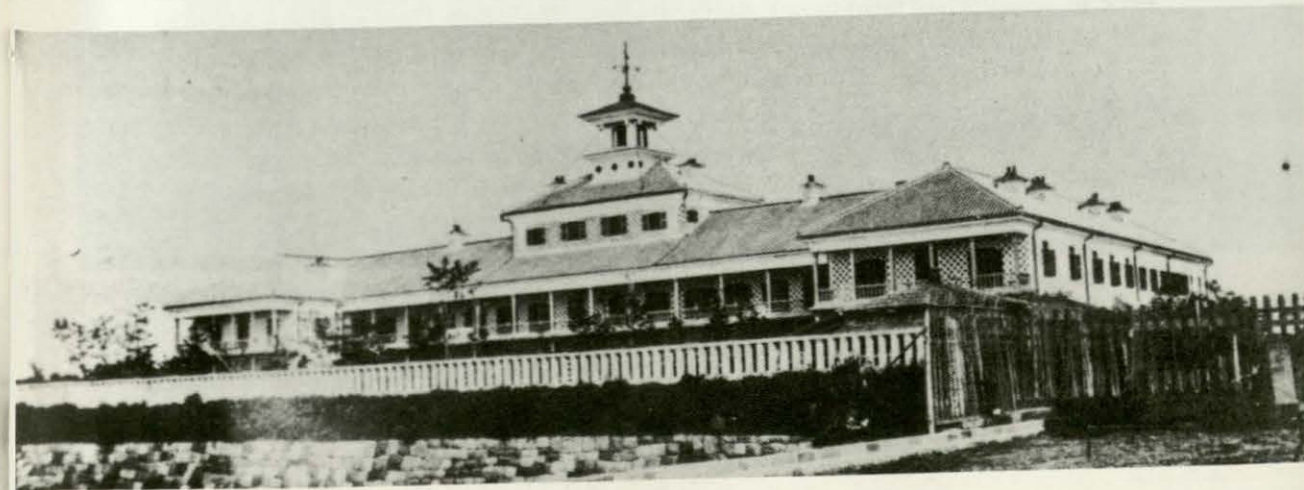
Solid and conspicuous, Western architecture lent dignity and authority to the new regime. There were two kinds of new buildings; those designed by Japanese and those conceived by hired foreign experts. The latter were admittedly more stately, authentic, and grand in scale, but the former, characterized in the early period by a mongrel East-West combination, had an appealingly artless freedom. The Japanese details made these buildings more accessible than the strictly foreign styles.

The beginning of Tokyo "enlightenment" prints is marked by the over one hundred woodcut designs that commemorate the opening of a hotel in Tsukiji in the fall of 1868, the first year of the new Meiji era. As Japan's first Western-style hotel, this exciting symbol of civilization attracted crowds of Japanese sightseers and spawned a flurry of color prints in 1869 and 1870, many distributed like posters by the management of the hotel.¹⁵ A triptych by Utagawa Kunitaru II (1830–74) shows local merchants making their deliveries in the busy walled forecourt (figure 48). The Japanese flag at the upper left marks the Custom House at Akashi Bridge.

The waterfront district of Tsukiji had been selected by the Japanese authorities as an appropriate location for the foreign settlement at a time when the physical protection of Westerners was still a serious problem. A great part of Tsukiji was cleared and divided into lots for those who wished to buy with a view to constructing their own homes or business establishments there. To provide comfortable lodging for visitors and to facilitate trade the Japanese government commissioned a hotel (known to the natives as Tsukiji Hoterukan—a combination of the words *hotel* and *ryōkan*, or "inn"—and to Westerners as the Edo Hotel) fronting the water on a picturesque site adjoining the settlement at Odawara 1-chōme.¹⁶ Just as at Yokohama, a spe-



48. Utagawa Kuniteru II: Tokyo Tsukiji Hoterukan.
1869 (Meiji 2, seventh month). Kanagawa Prefectural
Museum, Yokohama.



49. Tsukiji Hotel from the waterfront side, from *The Far East*,
August 6, 1870. (Photo: courtesy Columbia University Library.)

cially licensed pleasure quarter, with some two thousand courtesans and geisha, was opened close by in 1869 for the pleasure of foreign men. Boat travel between Yokohama and Tokyo had been inaugurated in 1867 and by 1869 an American-operated steamboat called *City of Edo* was transporting passengers quickly and cheaply. The hotel was originally designed with its entrance facing the water for the convenience of those arriving by boat, but new legal restrictions forbidding foreigners direct entry by sea made it necessary to change the back door into the main entrance.

An eclectic mixture of Western design and Japanese materials, the hotel was the masterpiece of the fledgling Japanese architect Shimizu Kisuke II, a master carpenter who had trained as a building contractor for the foreign settlement at Yokohama. Although it was symmetrical in plan with a wide veranda and central bell tower, the hotel was basically Japanese in structure, having a timber frame construction, dark tiled outer walls patterned in traditional style with white interstices, and a tiled roof. Comparison with a rare contemporary photograph confirms the accuracy of Kunitaru's map-like layout (figure 49). Built at great expense for a reported \$100,000 it was a spacious two-story establishment with between eighty and one hundred rooms.¹⁷

In the end the Tsukiji district failed to develop as an open market and few houses were built in the settlement proper; most foreigners who went to reside in Tokyo took up their quarters among the Japanese. Even the pleasure district moved away. Ironically, although both the American and Spanish consuls had apartments in the hotel in 1870, it was never highly esteemed by the foreign community and by the end of that year the large building already had a semi-deserted appearance.¹⁸ Critics objected to the monopoly of Japanese merchants who controlled access to the hotel guests; goods purchased from other than the approved tradesmen were subject to an additional levy. Further, the sitting room had vanished and the all-important billiard room was reduced from two tables to one. The hotel was temporarily closed in 1871 and did not last long in any case; it was burned to the ground in the devastating fire that leveled a large portion of Tokyo in the spring of 1872.

Another exotic-looking pseudo-Western structure designed by Shimizu was Japan's first bank, known as Mitsui House when it was completed in 1872 in the Nihombashi district of Tokyo. A symbol of the country's aspirations for higher productivity, it was a five-story wooden building faced with stone, embellished with rows of bronze columns on the two open galleries lining the facade, and sporting a central tower similar to that of the Tsukiji Hotel. The roof details harked back to examples of traditional architecture such as Edo Castle, where Shimizu had worked as a young man. That Kunitaru's *True Picture* of the bank (figure 50) is indeed accurate can be documented once again by a contemporary photo taken from virtually the same angle (figure 51). The print features cartouches advertising not only particulars of the building's construction (materials, dimensions, architect, date) but also the names of the Mitsui family members who commissioned it.

A major financial backer of the Meiji government, the Mitsui family had transplanted the European banking system and was authorized to construct a bank on their property on the north side of Kaiun Bridge. Just as construction was initiated



50. Utagawa Kuniteru II: Famous Scenes in Tokyo: True Picture of a Five-story Building at Kaiun Bridge. 1872 (Photo: Christie's, New York.)



51. Mitsui House. Ca. 1872-73. (Photo: after Takasugi, Meiji Taishō kenchiku shashin shūran.)

in 1871, however, the government changed its policy, opting instead for a new banking system modeled after the national banks in the United States. The contract with Mitsui was canceled and the government announced its intention of appropriating Mitsui House as the First National Bank. For one year, from August 1872, when construction was completed, until August 1873, when control was transferred to the First National Bank, Mitsui Company used the building as their headquarters while planning a new private bank of their own in Suruga-chō. To commemorate the opening of their building at Kaiun Bridge they distributed color woodcuts such as the example by Kuniteru as a means of advertising, spreading far and wide the reputation of their firm as one of the famous landmarks of the capital.¹⁹ It is symptomatic of the commercial nature of these prints that the same artist was employed in 1873 to recut the block slightly, reworking the title cartouche and substituting the star-emblem flag of the First National Bank for that of Mitsui.²⁰

THE FRENCH CIRCUS

In a lighter vein there is Kuniteru's *French Circus* celebrating the visit of the Cirque Soullier in the autumn of 1871 (figure 52). Led by a sixty-two-year-old Frenchman named Soullier who is said to have staged the best equestrian acts in the world, they opened the night of August 8 to a crowded house in Yokohama. In addition to an assortment of dare-devil riding stunts there were the usual aerial acrobatics, but what most impressed the critics were the trained Circassian and English horses. Obeying their master's voice, "they did everything he told them with the most wonderful exactness. They did everything but speak."²¹ In early December the troupe obtained permission to visit Tokyo and performed on the grounds of Shōkonsha (Yasukuni Shrine), attracting the attention of several artists. The half-naked lady lying on her back on a horse at the upper left of Kuniteru's triptych is particularly intriguing: perhaps this was the Japanese interpretation of a "bareback" rider.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Roads and street traffic replaced waterways as the principal transport network of Tokyo in the early years of Meiji. A vibrant triptych by Yoshitora (plate 12), crowded with old and new (but mostly new) modes of transportation, conveys the exciting flavor of urban civilization in 1870; it might also be seen as prophetic of the massive traffic jams that were soon to clog the busy heart of the nation's capital. For Yoshitora, who repeated this popular image for several publishers in 1870, the speed and motion of the wheel in its various manifestations was obviously synonymous with progress. The dray at the lower left indicates that old ways lingered on when it came to the transport of the beloved staple, rice. Other small handcars are included in the center panel. Horse-drawn carriages, of which two



52. Utagawa Kuniteru II: French Circus at Shōkonsha. 1871.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.

varieties are shown here, had a rather short history in Japan, dating only from the arrival of foreigners some ten years earlier. On the far left is the small and rather elegant type of carriage used by wealthy foreigners, and pictured first in Yokohama prints, while at the far right is a more spacious and open carriage for Japanese, holding many passengers and operating like a bus service. Each is carefully labeled, for the benefit of envious inhabitants of the remote provinces.

Although modern two-wheelers were supposedly not imported until 1881, there is a rather convincing, if primitive, wooden bicycle at the bottom of the center panel. On the far right is a very inventive car that is also operated by man-power; the driver steers and the passenger propels it with hand levers. Less spectacular velocipedes were seen in the foreign settlement but must have been intended more for amusement than as a practical matter of transport; in his 1865 *Record of Things Seen and Heard* Sadahide had pictured an elderly American woman breezing down Main Street in Yokohama astride a hand-operated wooden three-wheeler.

At the upper left of Yoshitora's print the clouds have parted to reveal a modern steamboat (already a familiar sight by the Meiji era) paired with several more modest native conveyances. The most unusual vehicle is the steam engine at the top of the center panel. The first steam engine was not in use in Japan until 1872 but this did not deter Yoshitora. Although he had obviously never seen one he clearly knew what the future held in store. Plans for the construction of the Yokohama-Tokyo railroad had been announced in 1870 and long before it was com-

pleted it had become an emblem of civilization and enlightenment. Consisting essentially of a large smokestack and a handle for steering, Yoshitora's contraption looks like a roller car or a compressed steamship on wheels. This vehicle first appeared in the artist's 1865 triptych entitled *France*, where it is seen beyond some coconut trees (to indicate an exotic setting in southern France), running on a road surface without any rails. Japanese researchers have found that it closely resembles an American locomotive run in 1830, and should therefore not be dismissed out of hand as merely a product of the artist's fertile imagination. Yoshitora persisted in drawing this type of steam engine for his color prints until 1872, when the railway was actually opened. In a print dating from 1870 entitled *Picture of a Steam Engine Passing on a Land Route*, he shows the same engine, piloted by Westerners, harnessed to a double-decker passenger car filled with Japanese.²²

The vehicle that Yoshitora singles out for special emphasis (including a rear view) in this print is the rickshaw, or *jinrikisha* (literally, "man-powered vehicle"), perhaps the most momentous transport innovation of the Meiji period. Though its invention was often attributed to an American missionary in Yokohama named Goble, it is now generally accepted as the creation of Izumi Yōsuke, a denizen of Tokyo with a workshop at the foot of Nihombashi or "Japan Bridge," the center of the nation's road network. In 1869, inspired, it is said, by the Western horse-drawn carriage, he substituted man for horse and with the support of two friends he approached the Tokyo Metropolitan Government for licensing rights, describing his invention as

a little seat in the Western style, mounted on wheels so that it can be pulled about. It does not shake as much as the usual cart, and it is easy to turn round. It will not hinder other traffic, and since it can be pulled by one person, it is very cheap.²³

Official permission was obtained in 1870, and the three friends held a monopoly on the business for the first three years. A quantum improvement over the comfortable basket-chair palanquin (*kago*) that had served as the universal conveyance throughout Japan in earlier times, the rickshaw took hold with a vengeance and by 1871 there were already twenty-five thousand in the city (some sources give numbers as high as fifty thousand by 1872) creating a cacophony of clattering wheels and yelping runners. "The highest and the lowest may equally use them if they like, without being remarked," observed *The Far East*, "and as the charge is quite trifling, one frequently sees very common looking people riding, who certainly never dreamt a few years ago of getting over the ground so luxuriously."²⁴

In their early form rickshaws were somewhat primitive structures with four poles and a canopy mounted on a wagon, a type much in evidence in Yoshitora's print. Some of these carts have the look of miniature private chambers equipped with bamboo blinds, paper walls (*shōji*), fancy fringed canopies, and curtains. The over-size perambulators that became the standard form were at first lavishly decorated with colored lacquer designs such as the big peony on the vehicle at the bottom of the center panel. (Painter and printmaker Ogata Gekkō [1859–1920] began his

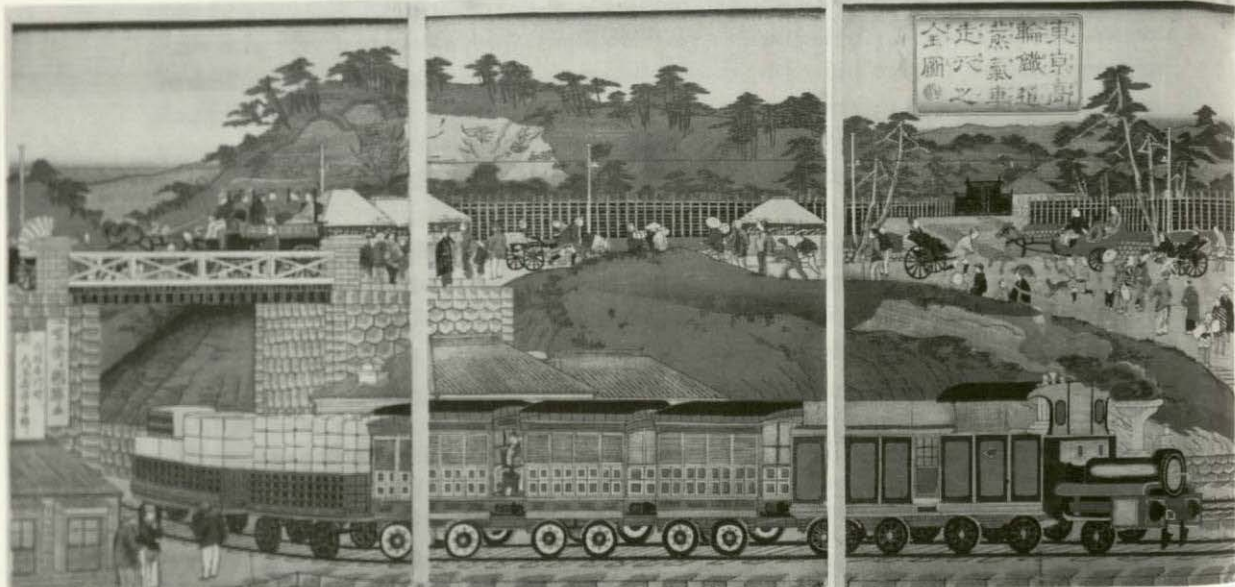
career decorating rickshaws with ornamental lacquer paintings.) They could seat one or two passengers (the structure was modified from the late 1880s to a one-passenger vehicle), were pulled by one or two men, according to the speed desired by the occupants, and there were always extra men for hire to push them up Tokyo's many slopes. The three-wheeler featured in the center panel quickly became a popular variant and was especially useful for longer trips. Several of the runners sport the characters *jinriki* on the back of their short jackets.

Newly arriving Westerners were invariably astonished and delighted by the rickshaw; one called it "a comfortable, flying arm-chair—a little private, portable throne."²⁵ Isabella Bird gave this first-hand account:

Men can make so much more by drawing them than by almost any kind of skilled labour that thousands of fine young men desert agricultural pursuits and flock into the towns to make draught-animals of themselves, though it is said that the average duration of a man's life after he takes to running is only five years, and that the runners fall victims in large numbers to aggravated forms of heart and lung disease. Over tolerably level ground a good runner can trot forty miles a day, at a rate of about four miles an hour. They are registered and taxed at 8s. a year for one carrying two persons, and 4s. for one which carries one only, and there is a regular tariff for time and distance. . . .

. . . They cost from \$2 upwards. The shafts rest on the ground at a steep incline as you get in—it must require much practice to enable one to mount with ease or dignity—the runner lifts them up, gets into them, gives the body a good tilt backwards, and goes off at a smart trot. . . . When rain comes on, the man puts up the hood, and ties you and it closely up in a covering of oiled paper, in which you are invisible. At night, whether running or standing still, they carry prettily-painted circular paper lanterns 18 inches long. It is most comical to see stout, florid, solid-looking merchants, missionaries, male and female, fashionably-dressed ladies, armed with card cases, Chinese compradores, and Japanese peasant men and women flying along Main Street, which is like the decent respectable High Street of a dozen forgotten country towns in England, in happy unconsciousness of the ludicrousness of their appearance; racing, chasing, crossing each other, their lean, polite, pleasant runners in their great hats shaped like inverted bowls, their incomprehensible blue tights, and their short blue overshirts with badges or characters in white upon them, tearing along, their yellow faces streaming with perspiration, laughing, shouting, and avoiding collisions by a mere shave.²⁶

The most impressive and influential of the new transportation facilities was the railroad system, which the government financed by floating bonds on the London money market. From the time plans for construction of a Yokohama-Tokyo line were announced and surveying began in March 1870, the populace was wild with curiosity. Publishers immediately set out to satisfy the demand for pictures of this proposed technical marvel and artists competed to produce the most imaginative and ingenious designs. Kunitaru's picture of a train passing under the bridge at Takanawa just beyond the southern limits of the city (figure 53) is dated to the equivalent of March 1870, and is thought to be based on a British model illustrated in a Western book. The three passenger cars are distinguished by their special white wheels and bamboo window shades; the only visible passengers, however, are two men inexplicably seated in the open space between the cars. The cluster



53. Utagawa Kuniteru II: Complete View of the Railroad Steam Engine at Takanawa in Tokyo. 1870 (Meiji 3, second month). *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.

of buildings to either side of the track must represent Shinagawa Station, which did not in fact open for business until June 1872.

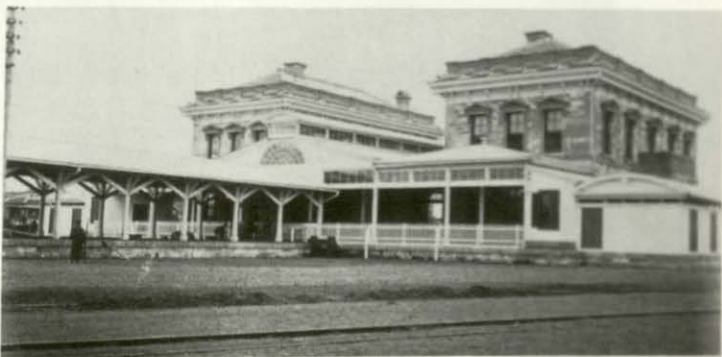
Traffic on the overhead highway (the Tōkaidō) includes most of the conveyances featured in Yoshitora's vehicle triptych of the same year: there are rickshaws, two types of horse-drawn carriages, and assorted handcarts. Telegraph wires, yet another example of the latest in imported technology, are conspicuous along the highway. A line half a mile long had been constructed between the public offices in Yokohama in September 1869 under the supervision of an Englishman named Gilbert using British equipment. Yokohama and Tokyo were connected in January 1870.²⁷

The Japanese relied on British technicians to lay this twenty-four kilometer (seventeen-mile) railway line. The chief engineer, E. Morel, formerly engaged in railway construction in Borneo and New Zealand, had a staff of 114 European overseers (all but 5 of them British), many of whom had done service in the colonies. To the distress of some Western observers, actual construction was the work of Japanese contractors under the minister of public works: "The work is done entirely under the supervision of the foreigners, but how close their overlooking has to be may be imagined," complained *The Far East*, "when it is considered that none of the contractors or their men ever saw a railway, nor a railway engine; and have little or no idea of what the road is being so carefully made for."²⁸

The train service which had begun operation between Yokohama and Shinagawa



54. Utagawa Kunitoku II: Railroad Steam Engine Traffic at Shiodome, Tokyo. 1872 (Meiji 5, ninth month). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.



55. Shimbashi Station, from *The Far East*. October 1872.

during the summer of 1872 was extended to Shimbashi (originally called Shiodome) in Tokyo in the autumn. Locomotives, passenger and freight cars, even a ticket vendor, had been imported from Europe.

Kunitoku's triptych of October 1872, commemorating the opening of Shimbashi Station, must have been sketched on site (figure 54). The train crew, for example, are shown to be Westerners. In fact, it was not until 1878 that three Japanese engineers were allowed on duty. A photo of the station taken from approximately the same angle and published in *The Far East* in October 1872 (figure 55) leaves no doubt of Kunitoku's conscientious efforts to record with accuracy. The building, finished two months earlier, had its twin in the Yokohama terminus and both were designed by an American free-lance architect, R. P. Bridgens, one of several

hundred foreign experts working for the Meiji government by 1872. Unlike so many others, Bridgens left no papers and remains an obscure figure. Shimbashi Station, a plain and unassuming two-story edifice of wood faced with stone, had regular fenestration, cornices, and overall symmetry. Projecting from between its two wings was a long covered shed for protection of passengers arriving and departing in inclement weather. It was heralded by the Western press as "the soundest and most tastily constructed" building yet erected by a foreigner in Japan, and "far superior to any other buildings in Yedo."²⁹

A little-known artist named Shōsai Ikkei (active 1871–72), working for another publisher, left a second view of the newly opened Shimbashi Station (plate 13). His passenger cars are labeled first, second, and third class. The third-class cars, where almost all Japanese traveled, are shown closest to the engine and are distinguished here by the drastic reduction of their windows to mere peeholes. Perhaps reflecting the high price of tickets, most of the potential passengers appear to be Westerners. A group of Japanese peer into the station yard from behind a wooden fence in the foreground.

The crowds on opening day were of a different magnitude, of course—their numbers were estimated at between sixty and one hundred thousand. One need scarcely mention the genuine awe and excitement of a public exposed to these powerful moving vehicles for the first time. As reported in *The Far East*:

One most intelligent person, who had heard of the Railway at a distance and come up to Yedo to witness the ceremonies, said he had expected to see some ordinary carriage such as foreigners had introduced, drawn along at a great speed on a smooth iron road. But when he saw the real thing, it appeared to him like the moving of a small town; for the carriages were as big as many a Japanese home.

The grand opening on October 14, 1872, an event that had long been looked forward to by the public, was inaugurated by the emperor, who arrived in an open barouche built by Lawrie and Marvell of London. To the tune of the Japanese national anthem, newly composed by English bandmaster John W. Fenton, and accompanied by a carload of Japanese and foreign reporters, he set off for Yokohama in a first-class carriage reserved exclusively for his use, its exterior handsomely carved and gilded and the interior lined with rich brocades. At both stations he gave laudatory speeches and was warmly welcomed by a multitude of dignitaries. Exulting in the success of this opening day, the foreign press professed the hope that this might be but the forerunner of an extensive scheme of similar lines,

until all Japan is so closely united by the iron roads . . . that prosperity and wealth may increase, and the country become so compact and homogeneous that it shall become also very great and powerful! With all we have seen in Japan during the last three years . . . we cannot but feel that for the land we live in—there is a good time coming.³⁰

The vogue for railway prints was sustained only briefly beyond 1872 by adding time and fare tables for the practical benefit of local residents.



Plate 11. Kawanabe Gyōsai: The Enlightenment of Fudō Myōō
from the series Gyōsai Cartoons. Collection of Shimizu Isao, Tokyo.



Plate 12. Utagawa Yoshitora: Vehicles on the Streets of Tokyo. 1870.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1960.



Plate 13. Shōsai Ikkei: Picture of Steam Engine Traffic at Shiodome. 1872 (Meiji 5, ninth month). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.



Plate 14. Utagawa Hiroshige III: Scenic View of Tokyo Enlightenment: Picture of Stone Construction at Kyōbashi and Prosperity of Brick and Stone Shops on Both Sides of Ginza Street. December 1874. Kanagawa Prefectural Museum, Yokohama.



Plate 15. Utagawa Yoshitora: Picture of an Imported Silk Reeling Machine at Tsukiji, in Tokyo. 1872 (Meiji 5, fourth month). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.

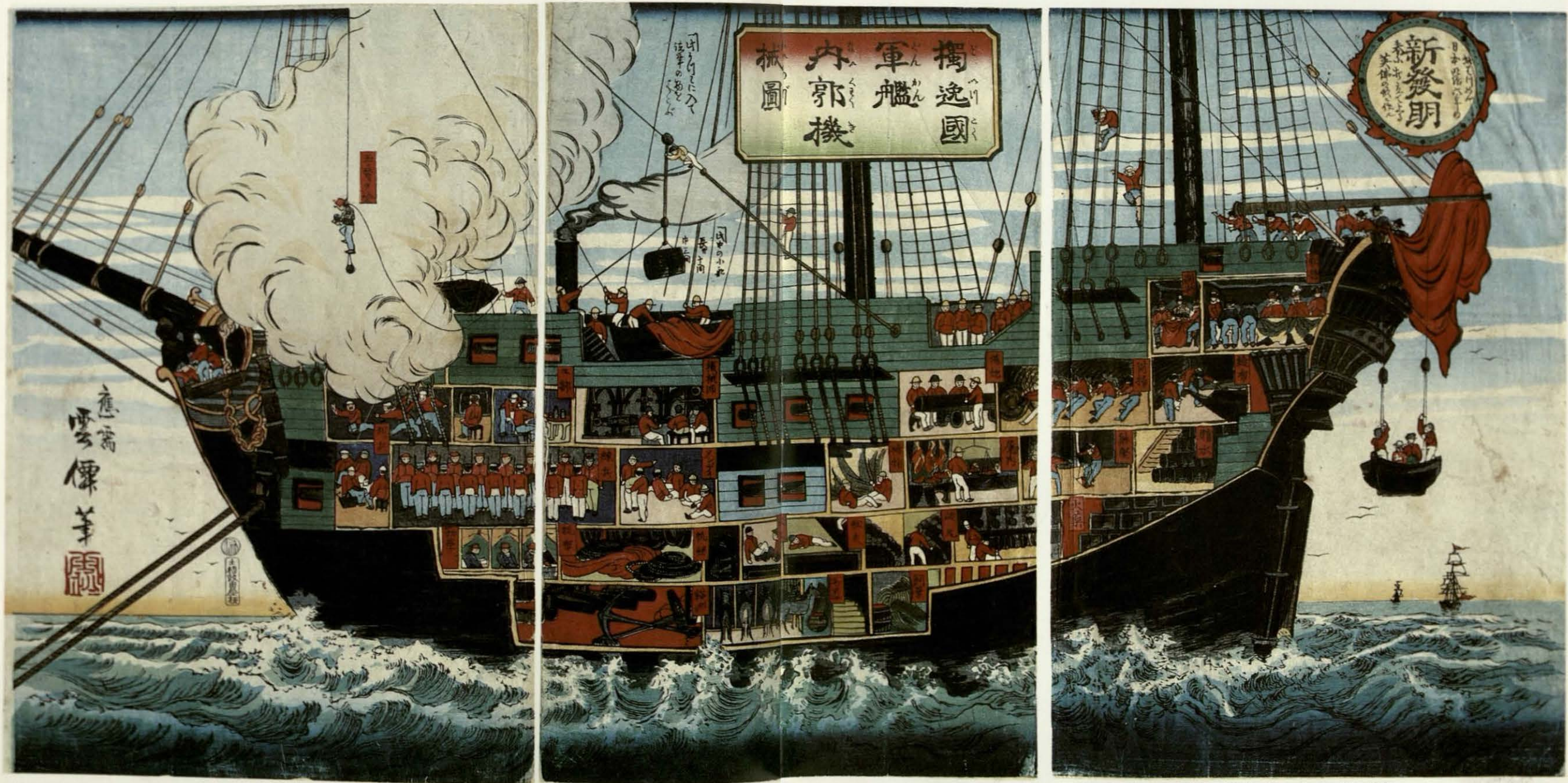


Plate 16. *Unsen*: Newly Invented in 1873, Based on English and French Models: The Interior Works of a German Battleship. February 1874. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1962.

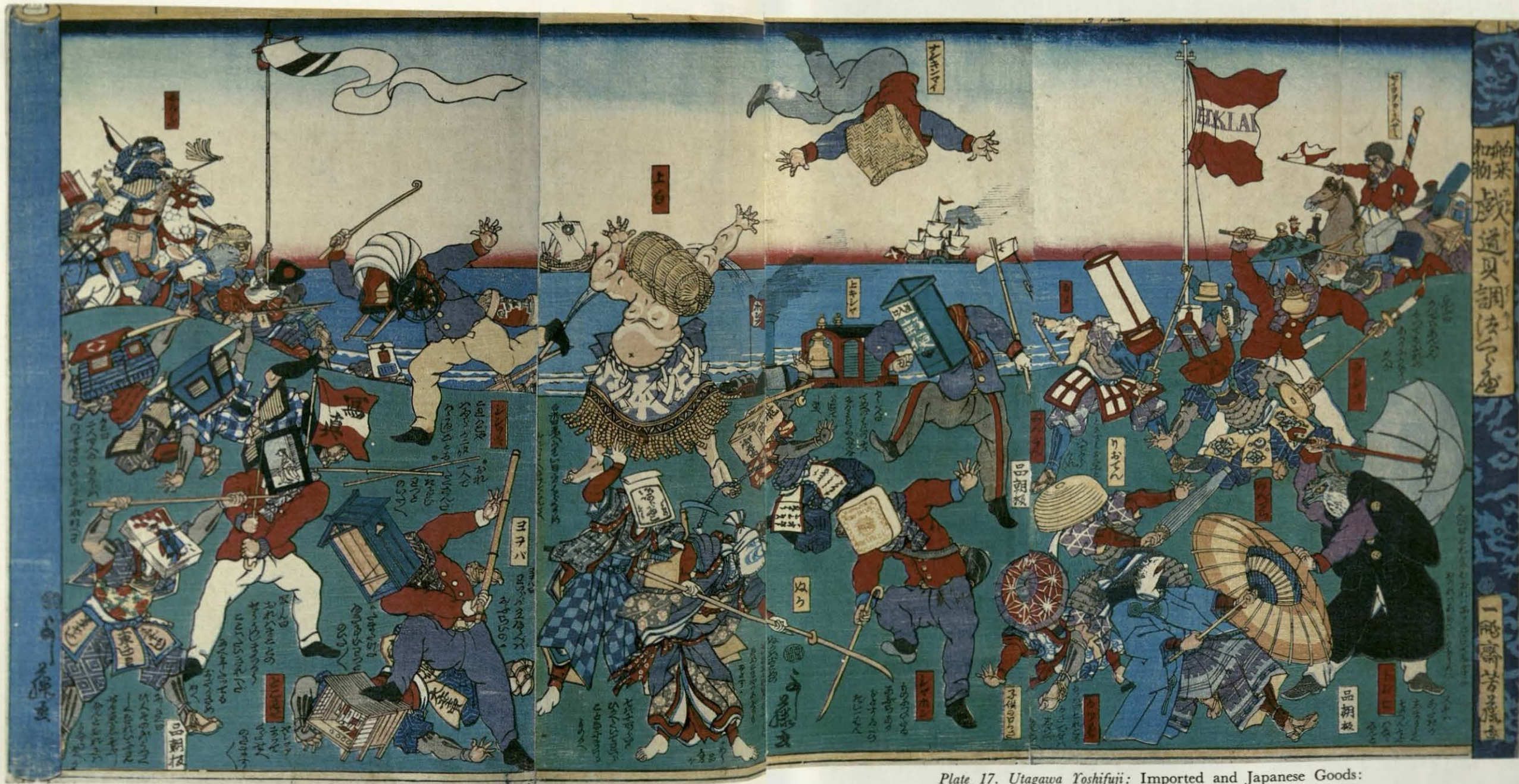


Plate 17. Utagawa Yoshifuji: Imported and Japanese Goods: Comic Picture of a Playful Contest of Utensils. Ca. 1873. Private collection. (Photo: O.E. Nelson.)



Plate 18. Toyohara Kunichika, with background by Utagawa Kunisada III (Kunimasa IV, 1848–1920): America: the Splendor of the Procession of Mr. Grant. July 16, 1879. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1962.



Plate 19. Utagawa Kunisada III (Kunimasa IV): Dance of the Stars and Stripes from Biography of Mr. Grant: Japanese Documents, by Kanagaki Robun. Frontispiece for a set of booklets. July 1879. The Mary and Jackson Burke Collection, New York. (Photo: O.E. Nelson.)

It is obvious that from the point of view of the foreign observer the English telegraph lines, American-built train station, and English railroad cars were a triumph of Western technology, but seen from the Japanese perspective they were emblems of the nation's amazingly rapid modernization—a telling difference. The prints pictured here were not offered in praise of hired foreign employees, although those foreign teachers were genuinely respected and valued.³¹ The prints have to be seen as a tribute, rather, to what the Japanese themselves had accomplished in a matter of only a few short years.

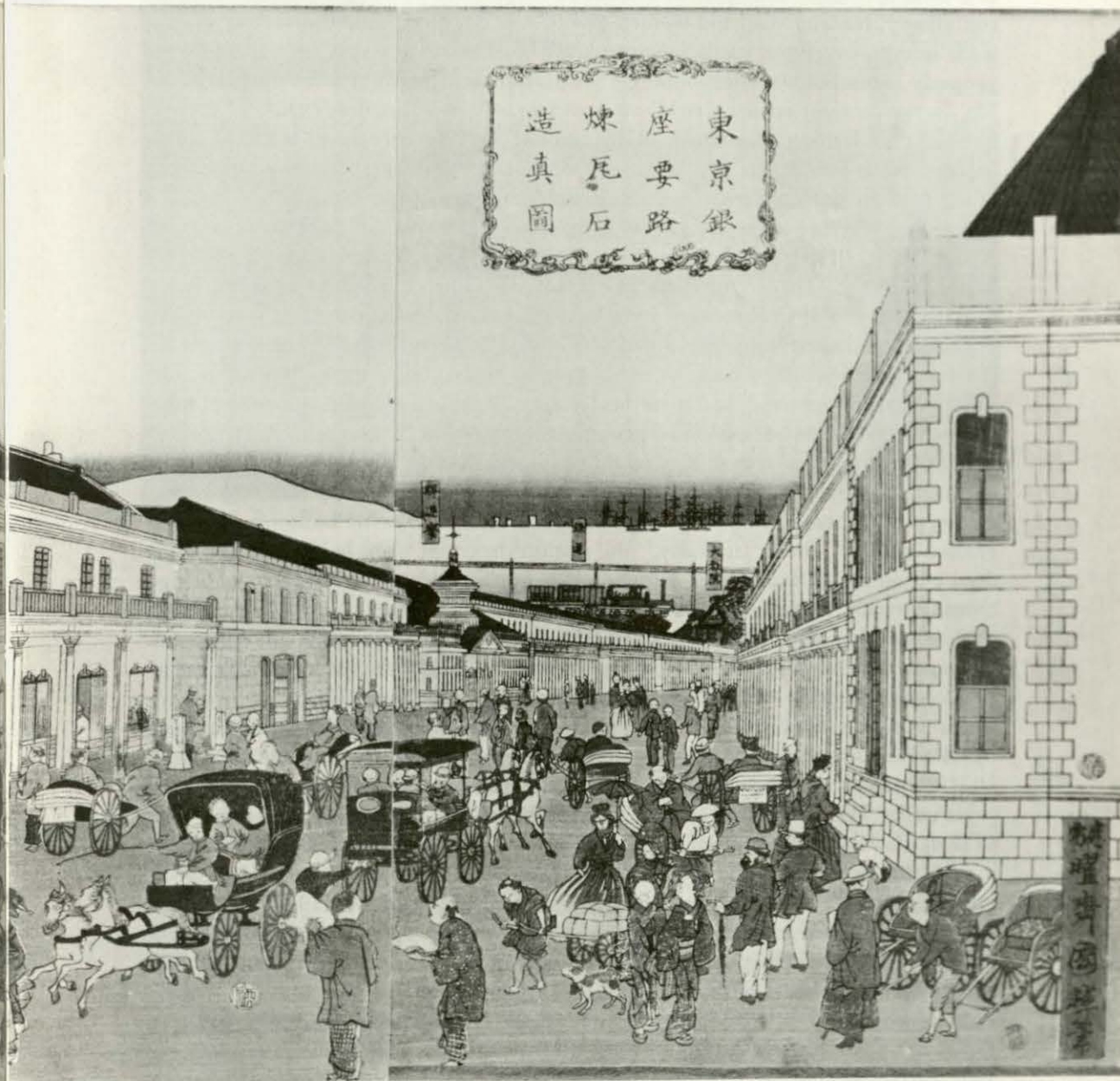
LIGHTING UP THE GINZA

The Ginza district, seat of the silver mint from 1612 to 1800, was chosen to be the centerpiece of civilization and enlightenment in the 1870s and the most characteristic “enlightenment” prints are the street scenes that begin to appear in late 1873 and 1874 after the total renovation of this area by British architect Thomas Waters. The immediate catalyst for the renovation was a devastating fire that swept through Ginza and Tsukiji in April 1872, reducing some forty-eight hundred wooden houses to ashes. At the same time Shimbashi terminal, the new gateway to Tokyo at the southern end of the Ginza, brought the prospect of increased numbers of tourists and visiting businessmen.

Meiji political leaders persuaded the governor of Tokyo to issue a building ordinance requiring the substitution of brick buildings for wooden ones along the main street which lay between the bridges of Kyōbashi to the north and Shimbashi to the south. This was more than a simple safety measure; it was a costly and concerted effort to produce Tokyo's first truly “Western” street, a miniature replica of London or Paris. Waters, who had arrived to help build the New Japan in 1868 at the age of thirty-seven or eight, had already completed a number of buildings in simple classic style (the Osaka mint, for example, and the red brick military barracks at Takebashi in Tokyo) when he was assigned the Ginza project. Transverse and side streets were not completed until 1878, but by late 1873 the main street was lined with houses of uniform height (just over fifty feet) having colonnades on the street level and balconies on the second floor. The street itself was widened, paved with brick, and provided with broad sidewalks, the first in the country. Cherry and maple trees were planted at curbside and pine trees dotted the street corners.

The new Bricktown was an example of open planning, spacious thoroughfares, and fireproof buildings quite unlike the narrow, cramped streets and wooden structures of the old Edo. By 1875 Kyōbashi Ward (Edward Seidensticker's “Low City”) boasted approximately one thousand brick structures, in contrast to a mere twenty-odd brick buildings distributed among the more traditional city wards.

Dated September 1873, and apparently issued just before the installation of sidewalks and trees, Kunitaru's *True View* of the Ginza is alive with the hustle and bustle of street traffic (figure 56). There are rickshaws as well as fast-moving public



56. Utagawa Kunitaru II: True View of the Brick and Stone Street Construction along the Main Street of Ginza, Tokyo. September 1873. Kanagawa Prefectural Museum, Yokohama.

and private carriages, one of which, at the left of the center panel, is preceded by a groom who races along in front of the horses to clear away pedestrian traffic. The role of grooms included "lifting fat babies out of the middle of the road where they sat confidently, leading deaf old women politely to one side, and apparently saving a life once in every ten yards." A sprinkling of Westerners—just enough to give a properly cosmopolitan effect—mingle with animated Japanese from every walk of life. In the far right corner a rickshaw operator solicits a Japanese customer dressed in the latest fashion, a mixture of traditional long jacket (*haori*) and split skirt (*hakama*) with bowler hat and Western shoes. In the distance there are other signs of the modern world: a train, framed by telegraph wires, is pulling into Shimbashi Station and foreign ships are clustered in Tokyo Bay. As one contemporary said of the Ginza, "Here one feels as if one were in a foreign country for a while."³² For the average Japanese in early Meiji the new Ginza must have been as exotic as the monumental Chinese-style temples at Nara were in their time.

Probably inspired by prints of this sort, visiting country folk flocked to stand on this very spot when they came to the big city. The first thing they often did was to tuck into a delicious meal, and then they would purchase a colorful woodcut of their own to show friends back home. They might eat sushi at Tamazushi, in the building at the near left corner, or they could head next door to Matsuda, the most popular restaurant on the Ginza. Kunitaru shows satisfied patrons of Matsuda gawking at the passing scene from a balcony brightly decorated with hanging lanterns. Praised as both "cheap and tasty," the restaurant could pack in at least one hundred customers. It was as well known for its unusual décor—a red lacquer bridge crossing over a fountain on the ground floor—as it was for the house specialty, *gyūnabe*, or beef stew. Other Ginza prints show an enormous flagpole out front with a banner proclaiming "Beef." (Matsuda was to the Ginza of the 1870s what McDonald's became in the 1970s.) Further along on the same side of the street we see the country's first post office, a Western-style building near Edobashi designed by Hayashi Tadayuki, a young government engineer, but not completed until 1874; Kunitaru was pleased to be an artist ahead of his time.

Hiroshige III (who called himself "Meiji" Hiroshige) gives nearly the same view of Ginza Street in his triptych of December 1874, but pulls back a few steps to include the bridge (Kyōbashi) and a distant view of Mt. Fuji (plate 14). Labels on the left panel identify, from left to right, Tamazushi, Matsuda, and Nippōsha. Among the first of some thirty newspaper offices that were concentrated on the Ginza by mid-Meiji, Nippōsha published the city's first daily, the *Tokyo nichichi shimbun*. At the far end of the street there is a label for Shimbashi and at the lower right corner of the title cartouche on the center panel is a small label pointing to the location of a famous dry goods store, Ebisuya, owned by one of the wealthy old Edo merchant families. The local rickshaw stand is in the same location as before, at the right end of the bridge, and traffic is still heavy. There are some improvements, however, in the form of sidewalks and cherry trees that are in full bloom. (Once the trees were planted, it was always spring in Ginza prints.) The latest addition to the city's vehicular traffic is presented at stage center: a big omnibus



57. Utagawa Hiroshige: Nihombashi from the series Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō. 1833–34. Art Institute of Chicago.

drawn by three horses, with the name of the bus company displayed prominently on the side and on a little flag.

The most striking new evidence of Tokyo enlightenment are the gas lamps standing so proudly on the bridge and lining the entire street: it can be no coincidence that the first eighty-five gas lamps flared on the Ginza, from Kyōbashi Bridge to Shiba at the southern end of the street the very month this print was issued. Electric lights followed within a decade.

In 1907 the novelist Natsume Sōseki identified “illumination” with the soul of Meiji. With very few exceptions, the Meiji print artists avoid night scenes (Japanese artists were not adept at representing chiaroscuro and artificial lighting.) They chose instead to illuminate the Ginza with vivid, eye-catching colors—a beet-red sky and clouds of pink blossoms. When used to excess, especially in second and third editions, these newly imported aniline dyes could produce abhorrent effects, but vibrant colors were eminently suited to the bright sunshine of Meiji enlightenment.

Stone bridges like that at Kyōbashi were beginning to replace the old wooden ones. Bridges had been a subject full of charm for earlier Edo-period artists, and especially for Hiroshige (1797–1858), who favored romantic, quiet images emphasizing the picturesque arc of a bridge that was often obscured by slanting lines of rain. Comparison of Hiroshige’s single-sheet *Nihombashi* (figure 57) of 1833–34 with the Kyōbashi image of his follower, Hiroshige III, reveals the dramatic



58. Attributed to the school of Shimooka Renjō: Main Street, Ginza. Late 1880s. Albumen print. Courtesy of E and J Frankel Gallery. (Photo: O.E. Nelson.) Rails for horse-drawn streetcars were laid down the middle of the main street between Nihombashi and Shimbashi in June 1882. By the late 1880s willows had replaced the unfortunate pines, cherries and maples.

changes that occurred within a period of four decades. Nihombashi was the center of the old city, the spot from which all distances were measured, and the start (or end) of the Tōkaidō linking Edo and Kyoto. The bridge was a gateway to the city, a psychological weight that is pictorialized quite literally in *Nihombashi*, where the lead men in a daimyo procession are just making their entrance. Fishmongers from the central fish market, which was located at the foot of this bridge, move out of their path. It is an image of shogunal authority on the one hand, and a portrait of the bridge on the other—the bridge as symbol of Edo and of travel.

Kyōbashi, at the center of modern Tokyo, was the first bridge a traveler would cross after setting out from Nihombashi. By spreading it across all three sheets of his triptych, Hiroshige III expresses the wide horizons and exhilarating scale of Meiji Japan. The triptych format favored by artists in the nineteenth century was ideally suited to evoke the breadth of a boulevard or the length of a bridge. This composition exhibits a controlled sense of balance and symmetry not unlike that of *Nihombashi*, but the bridge itself is now only one of many distractions. The theme is the new and the unfamiliar; only Mt. Fuji remains unchanged. Beneath its colorful facade this image conveys a strong sense of dignity and pride in progress. Even the rickshaw pullers look distinguished: following the 1872 ban on public nudity (inspired by acute sensitivity to Western prudery), they were required to cover their bare buttocks.

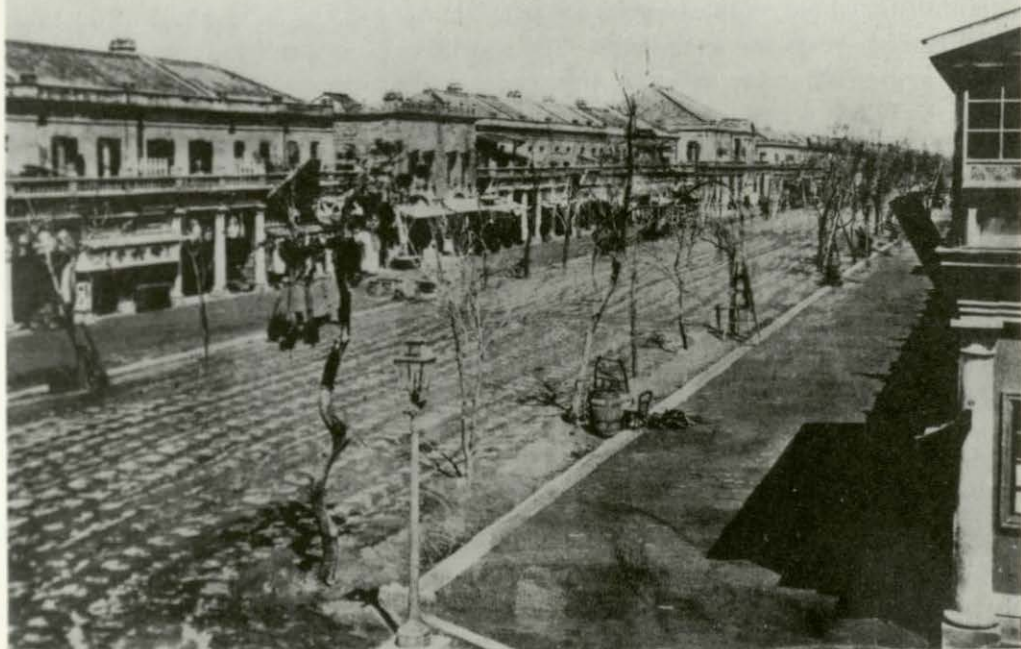
Might prints like these have been sponsored by the local bus company or by the restaurateurs whose establishments are so prominent in the foreground? Hiroshige III's triptych bears the designation "by special commission" (*ōju*) preceding the artist's name. Whatever the case, the scenes are idealized and public-spirited. In truth, the Ginza was not nearly as glamorous as Kunitaru and others would have us believe (figure 58). One Japanese journalist lamented that clumsy, patched-up omnibuses,

covered with tattered rags and drawn by moribund ponies, are a perpetual eyesore. Nowhere else in the world are such wretched affairs to be seen. What sort of impression must they produce upon foreigners coming to Japan? A visitor to Tokyo whose attention chanced to be directed to one of these rickety, filthy traps, could not fail to carry away a very low idea of Japanese civilization. The treatment which the horses that draw them receive is an outrage to humanity.³³

Even before the government began selling space in the newly constructed two-story houses, a rumor spread that the bricks would induce fatal dropsy, whereupon the local townspeople lobbied the governor to suspend construction. No one would move in when the buildings were newly finished and they were eventually taken over in 1874 and 1875 by noisy, low-class street vendors and show-business types featuring wrestling bears, dancing, and swordsmanship.³⁴ Many new occupants were driven out by poor air circulation that fostered mold in Japan's very humid and damp climate. Even in its heyday, the Ginza, like the Western-style hotel in Tsukiji a few years before, failed to properly impress its foreign visitors. Eliza Scidmore, an American who spent three years in Japan in the late 1880s, dismissed the Ginza with this devastating critique:

This is not the Yeddo of one's dreams, nor is it an Occidental city. Its stucco walls, wooden columns, glaring shopwindows, and general air of tawdry imitation fairly depress one. In so large a city there are many corners, however, which the march of improvement has not reached, odd, unexpected, and Japanese enough to atone for the rest.³⁵

A photo taken around 1875 or slightly later (there is a gas lamp but no streetcar tracks) gives a bleak view of withered foliage and scraggly pines on Ginza Street (figure 59). It also leaves no doubt as to why photographs, generally lacking the benefit of either color or action, were never serious competition for prints in the early Meiji era. The need for long exposures meant that moving objects would necessarily appear more or less cloudy and blurred. This exposure must have been made at dawn, without a single human being in sight. In all cases where similar comparisons of woodblock print and photograph can be made—the Tsukiji Hotel, Mitsui Bank, or Shimbashi Station, for example—it is invariably the common woodcut that best documents the exuberant spirit and irrepressible optimism of Meiji. Some photos were hand-tinted to resemble woodblock prints, but they were much too costly for the average citizen. Early photos of outstanding quality such as we admire today were in any case aimed at a different audience—the Western tourist or the armchair traveler in Europe and America.



59. Ginza. Ca. 1875. (Photo: after Takasugi, Meiji Taishō kenchiku shashin shūran.)



60. Baron von Stillfried: Rickshaw. 1870s. Collection of Howard and Jane Ricketts, London. (Photo: after Worswick, Japan: Photographs 1854–1905.)

There was no lack of either amateur or professional photographers in Japan by the 1870s. In 1867 the *Photographic News* in London reported that in Osaka alone there were already forty commercial photographers at work. The first Japanese professional was Shimooka Renjō (1823–1914), who opened a studio in Yokohama around 1862. It appears that his reputation became somewhat tarnished when he started to pander to foreigners' wishes for exotic images that demeaned their Japanese subjects by making them look clownish. Another, Ueno Hikoma (1838–1904), purchased a camera from a Dutch merchant in Nagasaki and established a successful studio portrait business there in 1862.

Two European commercial photographers had a major impact in these years. Felix Beato, a naturalized British citizen born in Venice, opened a studio in Yokohama in 1863, after many years spent documenting British military activity in Asia. Until he sold out to his competitor, Baron von Stillfried, in 1877, Beato specialized in delicate views of scenic spots in the manner of Hokusai and Hiroshige favored by the foreign community, and quaint "native types." The typecasting of the latter genre followed economic lines identifying the social status of the sitter, rather than evoking his personality. Tradesmen and samurai were approached with a detached European objectivity, an ethnographic interest characteristic of the nineteenth century. Beato initiated the use of hand coloring in Japan, hiring a native craftsman for this subtle and painstaking work. Baron R. von Stillfried, an Austrian nobleman who had traveled widely in Asia, arrived in Yokohama in 1871 to carry on the tradition of the studio portrait, but he probed more deeply into the personality of his Japanese "types," producing some powerful if romanticized images (figure 60). These commercial photographers created their "views" for the export market, for tourists, and as mementoes for Yokohama businessmen returning to Europe after a tour of duty in Asia. Studios in Yokohama bound collections of such photos in decorative albums with gaudy lacquer covers. Clark Worswick concluded that these commercial studies of Old Japan apparently enjoyed little local patronage in the Far East. "Consequently, an entire genre, developed first by European photographers, then further adapted by Japanese photographers, was preserved by its popularity outside the country whose life it captured."³⁶

WOMEN WORKERS

Textile manufacturing formed the mainstay of Japan's industrial revolution, as it did in other developing countries around the world. Silk production had been an important luxury industry for several centuries, but the market had been limited. Once Japan was opened to the West in the mid-nineteenth century, raw silk and cotton became the nation's major product and most valuable export. Raw silk production jumped from 2.3 million pounds in 1868 to 10.2 million pounds in 1893. The first modern silk filature was constructed in Gumma Prefecture north of Tokyo by the Maebashi clan, pioneers in the importation of Western equipment and

spinning techniques. They hired a Swiss expert from Yokohama named Müller to establish a silk reeling factory in Maebashi using Italian equipment. The plant opened in June 1870 with twenty-four female employees, but was soon moved to the western suburbs of the capital.

Müller was then hired by the Ono Silk Filature to build a modern factory in Tokyo. Ono was one of the three richest merchants in the city in the Edo period, the others being Mitsui and Shimada (of the Ebisuya). Using equipment bought up from Maebashi, Ono opened in late 1871 at Tsukiji 2-chōme with machinery for sixty silk reeler.³⁷ Because there is almost no information about the Ono filature, Yoshitora's triptych (plate 15), issued in the spring of 1872, has become a precious record of its appearance as well as being a charming genre scene. In a bright, spotlessly clean work space the pretty young women, their long sleeves tied up with red cord, seem to be enjoying themselves, chatting and gossiping as they perform their tasks. First they empty baskets of cocoons into vats of steaming water. (The hot water softens the sericin, releasing the outer bave and providing a point from which reeling can commence.) Next they locate the ends of the thread of several cocoons which have been steamed and reel the threads onto a spinning frame. This required a delicate touch to prevent the threads from breaking. The number of threads wound together on the frame had to be just right so as to produce raw silk fibers of uniform thickness. The workers also had to be careful not to let the cocoons get oversteamed, a condition that would destroy the luster of the silk. In later, larger plants, the machinery was operated by steam-driven pumps, but the Tsukiji apparatus is apparently propelled by a single strong man. Three chimneys in front are adorned with horse heads whose meaning in this context is not clear—could they represent the company trademark?

The Yoshitora print may have been intended to advertise the excellence of the Ono company's fancy new machinery in the face of sudden competition from the much larger and more efficient government-sponsored model plant that opened under French supervision at Tomioka in Gumma Prefecture in 1872. (The Ono factory closed in 1873 and Ono went bankrupt shortly thereafter.) In any case, the artist takes obvious pleasure in the novel spectacle of an all-female work force. The realities of life in a silk filature during the Meiji era, however, were something quite different.

The underside of Japan's industrial revolution was the merciless exploitation of female factory workers. Young unmarried women from impoverished rural communities constituted eighty percent of the work force in the textile industry and bore the brunt of Japan's massive efforts to catch up with the advanced Western nations. Housed in unsanitary, overcrowded and foul-smelling dormitories, they were underpaid, overworked, beaten, and abused. Fukuzawa Yukichi, an ardent advocate of industrialization, admitted that Japanese textile workers were being paid one-tenth the wages of their British counterparts but contended that cheap labor was necessary to compete effectively with the West.³⁸ Injury compensation was so minimal that although the work was hazardous, fingers and toes were considered by the mill to be expendable.³⁹ Factory owners favored young country girls because

they could perform the work but at the same time they could be paid little and were easily controlled. Child labor was common. As for working conditions, the steam from the hot water in which the cocoons were soaking permeated the entire plant. The interior was smelly, wet, and hot, and it was also noisy. There was a high incidence of tuberculosis in these factories. When the women were on the job they were under intense pressure to produce quality work at a fast pace; plants introduced a system of grading their work with group competition and rigid discipline that became a nightmarish experience. Many young girls lost hope and committed suicide. Pay was determined according to the rating of a supervisor, giving rise to the saying, "A dagger is not needed to kill a girl worker. Just choke her to death with the texture and fineness of the fiber."⁴⁰ Seen in this perspective, Yoshitora's triptych, projecting such an upbeat image, is cheerfully misleading. The print hints at none of the social ills that sometimes accompanied Japanese factory work.

WORSHIP OF THE WEST

Unsen, an artist who is otherwise totally unknown, was specially commissioned to draw a cross section of a German battleship, a subject dear to the hearts of the new leaders of Meiji Japan, whose own imperial navy was still weak and heavily dependent on foreign technical advice and equipment (plate 16). The artist may have drawn some inspiration from earlier Japanese cross sections of Dutch East Indiamen carrying elephants and camels in their hold, but he went about his task very conscientiously: every compartment is carefully labeled. At the upper right the captain's table is in a splendid long room, while his first mate dines next door at a little table for three. Immediately below, men are preparing sails, on the next level down there are barrels of drinking water, then cases of gunpowder, and so on. Although the subject may be somewhat menacing (the threat from the West laid bare for all to see) it is presented with a light-hearted carnival mood that is very entertaining.

The confusion that arose during the transitional phase in early Meiji, when old and new vied for dominance, is exemplified by an 1873 image of a playful contest of imported and Japanese goods, by Utagawa Yoshifuji (1828-87) (plate 17). Rapid modernization is pictured as a continuous struggle. Each side states its case in colloquial, conversational Tokyo dialect, with the words written directly onto the print. The battle is led by two generals, traditional at the upper left, modern at the right. Their troops include animal attendants reminiscent of the cast of characters in popular medieval picture-*tales* in which the twelve animals of the zodiac are messengers of the twelve guardian generals of Yakushi, the Buddha of Medicine. This triptych is actually given a frame to right and left suggesting a horizontal handscroll format.

The traditional (or old-fashioned) articles do not give up without a fight. In most such prints there are always two clear winners on the Japanese side: the native

rice and cooking oil. Sometimes there is a draw; standoffs include duels between shoes and geta, or whiskey and sake. Bricks, on the other hand, are bashing tiles with little effort. Comic prints of this type were inspired by the brief vogue for public exhibition matches of the ancient style of fencing with sticks (*kenjutsu*) that sprang up in Tokyo around April 1873. In Yoshifuji's print the *ancien régime* of the Tokugawa shogunate is represented at the upper left by a mounted samurai general in Japanese armor carrying a bow and preceded by the traditional long white battle standard of the Minamoto clan, ancestors of the Tokugawa family. In his right hand he flourishes an incongruous item, a stick with paper streamers. This is the *harai-gushi*, an instrument of purification used by Shinto priests before any ceremony of worship. Its appearance here refers to the persistence of a primitive, native folk religion. The general's entourage includes a folding campstool, a barrel of sake, a narrow bolt of kimono fabric, and a block-printed Confucian text with a sewn binding. His opposite number is preceded by a steam engine. The modern general's standard-bearer, personified by a large *chapeau*, carries a banner with nonsense Cyrillic and Roman lettering fluttering from a telegraph pole. This general brandishes what may be a railroad signal flag, and carries as his weapon a candy-striped barber's pole. The cartouche overhead reads "Western scissors," and close scrutiny of his spectacles and drooping mustache reveals them to be, in fact, a pair of scissors. They have obviously been put to recent use to produce an especially bushy haircut. Commenting on this most startling innovation, the editor of *The Far East* in 1872 observed that in Tokyo there were now

barber's shops with regular American chairs and napkins and cloths and towels, and brushes and combs and pomatum and hair-brushes and soap and shaving tackle of all sorts, and paint and perfumery *ad lib*.

The old-fashioned Japanese *queue* is fast disappearing, and men allow their hair to grow; and it does grow, sticking up all over the head like porcupine quills. Some are doing all they can to cultivate whiskers, beards and moustaches. Such men, in the utter impossibility of getting anything approaching the proper thing, curse the day when they were taught to have the hair of their chins, upper lips and gills pulled out one by one; and the youngster who had not got so far on in manhood as to warrant such onslaught on his capillary sprouts before the changes, is now proud as Punch at his superiority over seniors, upon whom the utmost tonsorial skill cannot persuade two hairs to grow in the same direction or to lie smoothly side by side.⁴¹

The cutting of all topknots had been ordered by the government in 1871 but there was no rush to be shorn. A popular contemporary song nonetheless conveys the idea that traditional hair styles were considered passé: "If you tap a shaven and topknotted head you will hear the sound of retrogression . . . but if you tap a close-cropped head of hair you will hear the sound of civilization and enlightenment."

The modern general also has among his accouterments a shoe, a wide bolt of woolen fabric, a brick, two whiskey bottles, a Western-language bound book, and a chair. One American summed up the matter of chairs and their value to the Japanese people as follows:

That the position of the Japanese in sitting is really unnatural and unhygienic, is shown by measurements taken by the surgeons of the Japanese army. These measurements prove that the small stature of the Japanese is due largely to the shortness of the lower limbs, which are out of proportion to the rest of the body. The sitting from early childhood upon the legs bent at the knee, arrests the development of that part of the body, and produces an actual deformity in the whole nation. This deformity is less noticeable among the peasants, who stand and walk so much as to secure proper development of the legs; but among merchants, literary men, and others of sedentary habits, it is most plainly to be seen. The introduction of chairs and tables, as a necessary adjunct of Japanese home life, would doubtless in time alter the physique of the Japanese as a people.⁴²

In the uppermost duel on the left panel the modern (Western) rickshaw uses his walking stick to soundly beat not one but two old-fashioned palanquins with bodies dressed in native style, complete with straw sandals. He is the winner, he says, because his vehicle can seat two persons at once. (The paper lantern at his waist ornamented the shafts of a rickshaw at night and bore the operator's name and license number.)

In the lower left corner a figure in Western attire personifying photography, in the form of a framed photo of a courtesan modishly seated in a chair, is put on the defensive by a stick-wielding Japanese representing a bundle of color woodblock prints that depict conventional standing courtesans. "I show only the truth," says the photograph. "I dislike mistakes. No matter how many years pass, I am still interesting to look at." The print responds: "I make beautiful women and other things look more beautiful than they really are by means of illustrated books and sets of prints. You can't knock me down." Here the victor is unclear because both have their good points: realism versus idealization. Tokyo had its share of portrait photographers in the early 1870s, but there were also booths on the street selling snapshots of actors and courtesans. An American journalist writing several decades later describes the practical aspects of the latter:

We visited some of the leading photographers in Kyoto to add to my collection of Japanese beauties. In each place they put before us a number of black lacquer trays, each containing a dozen photographs of popular geishas. You can buy not only the pictures, but the girls too—that is, you can secure their address and get them to assist at a banquet with their song, samisen, or dance.⁴³

At the top of the center panel Japanese rice is personified by a sumo wrestler who needs only his well-muscled arms to toss foreign (or Chinese) rice out of the ring. To the right the ancient letter box is stomped by the new Western model. The latter has snatched from his opponent an old-fashioned bamboo pole, a letter inserted in its split end, of the type hitherto carried by runners clad only in a loincloth and a head kerchief who whizzed along the Tōkaidō as occasion required. An elaborate new postal system with daily deliveries was initiated in 1870 under the guidance of an American expert, Samuel W. Bryan, and became fully centralized by May 1873. On that date, the old courier businesses were absorbed into a government monopoly.

At the bottom of the center panel a bar of Western soap (*shabon*), armed with a cane, does battle with traditional Japanese soaps in the form of powder and rice bran (*nuka*). The outcome here is still unclear.

At the top of the right panel a Western lamp takes on a Japanese candle and an *andon*, or paper-covered oil lamp. "I don't wonder that the Japanese rise early," declared Isabella Bird,

for their evenings are cheerless, owing to the dismal illumination. . . . The lamp consists of a square or circular lacquer stand, with four uprights, 2½ feet high, and panes of white paper. A flattened iron dish is suspended in this full of oil, with the pith of a rush with a weight in the centre laid across it, and one of the projecting ends is lighted. This wretched apparatus is called an *andon*, and round its wretched "darkness visible" the family huddles. . . . Almost more deplorable is a candlestick of the same height as the *andon*, with a spike at the top which fits into a hole at the bottom of a "farthing candle" of vegetable wax, with a thick wick made of rolled paper, which requires constant snuffing and, after giving for a short time a dim and jerky light, expires with a bad smell. Lamps, burning mineral oils, native and imported, are being manufactured on a large scale, but, apart from the peril connected with them, the carriage of oil into country districts is very expensive. No Japanese would think of sleeping without having an *andon* burning all night in his room.⁴⁴

At the bottom of the right panel the victor is clear: it is the *tonbi*, the word for both this particular species of bird (the Siberian black kite) and for the black invernness in which he is cloaked. The favorite garb of Meiji dandies, it advertises itself here as "impervious to rain, warm in winter, and a good fit." *Tonbi's* opponent is the *kappa*, a Japanese mythical birdlike creature, and he wears a traditional cape of a type known as *kappa*, made of cloth or paper, with little durability. Their weapons are suited to their unequal status: the Japanese paper umbrella is no match for the Western cloth import. When the first English umbrellas were imported in 1859 demand was so low that the shipment had to be returned. In 1872, by contrast, fifty thousand dozen were imported at a total cost of three million yen—the umbrella had become a recognized emblem of enlightenment.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Guiding his countrymen along the path toward civilization was the emperor himself. He led the way in 1872 by cutting his topknot (in 1872 only ten percent of Japanese men had cut their hair), donning Western clothing for official appearances (he continued to wear his more comfortable native garments at home), and eating meat, the latter despite the fact that he really did not care for foreign food and never became a large consumer of flesh. He did, however, take to foreign wines, especially *Château la rose*, and one of his physicians later testified that it was his alcoholic indulgences, among other things, that shortened his life.⁴⁵

In an albumen print thought to date from 1872 and attributed to Tokyo portrait photographer Uchida Kuichi (1844–75), the twenty-year-old emperor is striking



61. Attributed to Uchida Kuichi: Emperor Meiji. Ca. 1872. Albumen print. Collection of H. Kwan Lau, New York. (Photo: O.E. Nelson.)



62. Gōshin (active first half of fourteenth century): Portrait of Emperor Hanazono. 1338. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Kyoto, Chōfukuji. (Photo: Shōgakukan.)

in full-dress French-style uniform, heavy with gold braid (figure 61). His left hand rests on the golden hilt of his dress sword and a splendid hat ornamented with luxurious ostrich plumes is set on the table at his side. Though still uncomfortable in his new clothes and unnatural pose (he appears to slouch a bit, his right foot is bent at a peculiar angle, and his epaulets look to be a size too large), this rather glamorous image of authority, so reminiscent of Napoleon III, was consciously exploited by government officials as a symbol of national continuity as well as unity, making the transition from shogunal rule an easier task.

In the August 1872 issue of *Kyōchū shimbun* of Yamanashi Prefecture, the editor praised the patriotism and national feeling of a local man who brought back from Tokyo several dozen photographs of the emperor so that he and others in this remote corner of the country might worship the image and place one on their household shrine (*kamidana*). It was the opinion of the newspaper editor that this man should be singled out and rewarded for his virtuous deed.⁴⁶ Educational reforms throughout the country at this time emphasized the absolute obligations of loyalty to the emperor on the part of all Japanese and the custom of bowing before the emperor's portrait soon began. Using the imperial figure to publicize the new regime was a shocking departure from tradition. In the past, the emperor never made public appearances and was approached only by high court officials. Furthermore, imperial portraits were commissioned only as private religious dedications. Japanese portraiture had developed in a Buddhist context and such works were often intended as devotional objects to be enshrined in a particular temple with which the subject was closely associated. This was true, for example, in the case of the seven portraits Emperor Hanazono had commissioned of himself in the fourteenth century (figure 62). They show him as he looked after abdicating the throne,

with aristocratic and slightly idealized features, but attired in the somber vestments of a tonsured Buddhist monk, for he had taken religious vows, as was the custom upon retirement.

Emperor Meiji was a very public figure. By 1872 he was riding around Tokyo in his open carriage, free to be gazed upon by one and all, and his subjects were no longer expected to crouch on all fours in his presence. His first public state ceremony was on New Year's Day, 1872, when he visited the Imperial Dock Yard and Arsenal at Yokosuka, just beyond Yokohama. The emperor was dressed in traditional white robes with a tall black lacquered hat, but he was accompanied by two young pages in European-style clothing in a shade of violet and wearing neckties of the most extravagant colors. Upon visiting the casting department, where a casting was being made of the Japanese characters which mean "May the Mikado live a million years," there was no lack of excitement when "a slight explosion took place and red hot pieces of metal flew about in all directions, covering everyone, and causing a general stampede. For some seconds afterwards the visitors were clearing the hot iron off their persons; the Mikado, who came in for his full share, amongst the number. One of the officials near him at the explosion held up his cap to save the Mikado's face."⁴⁷ Throughout the 1870s he showed himself in more distant parts of the country as well. Although at first he disliked these public appearances (some Western observers found him overly detached and even sullen), his advisors persistently sent him off on exhaustive rounds of inspection as far north as remote and backward Aomori Prefecture. He opened large numbers of Western-style buildings and technical sites along the way, helping to sanction the spread of *bummei kaika*. The sentiment of the people who turned out in the thousands at every rural stop-over was one of religious veneration as well as increasing affection. At one site villagers actually rushed to scoop up and preserve the earth where he had walked, believing he had sanctified it by his very footsteps.

His last public appearance in ancient court costume was the grand ceremonial opening of the railway line in October 1872, but he was seen several times earlier that year in fancy foreign clothing. The following is a Westerner's eyewitness account of the emperor's visit to Yokohama in July 1872:

The young Emperor is tall for an Asiatic—about 5 ft. 10 in. height—of dignified bearing, slightly built, of darker complexion than the majority of higher class Japanese, with a thin, composed face, somewhat Mongolian in cast, full lips and dark eyes, which regarded attentively the objects which attracted their gaze. His Majesty was richly, and not untastefully attired; carrying himself—save a slight stiffness in his gait, as if unused to boots—well in his European habiliments, which consisted of a black full-dress coat, lined with purple silk, of diplomatic cut, buttoned to the throat, embroidered in gold from waist to throat with fancy designs—as also was the Prussian collar, which was continued in a semicircle to between the shoulder blades, like a gorgeous tippet or Victorine,—the cuffs and pocketflaps being similarly adorned and a broad gold stripe running down the trousers. A dress-sword with gold-mounted scabbard and hilt, and a cocked hat, of English Naval shape, with gold binding, and a gold cockade on either side, something like a flying bird of the kind represented upon the paper money, completed the Mikado's costume.⁴⁸



63. Takahashi Yuichi (1828-94): Portrait of Emperor Meiji. 1879. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Imperial Household Agency, Tokyo. (Photo: after Skrzypczak, Japan's Modern Century.)

Was the emperor handsome? There was some difference of opinion on the matter among the foreign community. The observer for *The Far East* in October 1872 wrote that the emperor "can by no stretch of the imagination be considered good-looking. . . his profile is decidedly plain—very prominent mouth with a very retiring chin." On the other hand, a young American named Clara Whitney saw him pass in procession in 1876 and judged him to be "very good-looking," and later added that he was "so much better looking than I fancied from his photographs." In any case all agreed that he was taller than average (average in those days being about five feet two inches), with a swarthy complexion and distinctive, heavy features. ("Something after the Inca type" in the words of one enthusiastic American lady.)⁴⁹ It was said that he cut a fine figure and had long arms suited to Western clothing.

The portrait by Uchida was one of only a few authorized photographs of the emperor, who apparently hated to have his picture taken. Some prints and paintings a full decade later were simply copies of this photo (figure 63). Until 1877, however, when rising nationalism and an increasingly strong central government began to foster an emperor cult, no attempt was made to show His Majesty's countenance in color woodcuts—his presence was merely suggested by indirect means. Later, as time went by and publishers felt free to capitalize on the now familiar face, artists presented an ever more idealized and handsome visage. Be that as it may, the emperor was on balance a youthful and virile ruler whose man-

liness and looks must have helped the Meiji oligarchy rally the people to their cause. (It is noteworthy that there are far fewer images of his son and grandson, Emperors Taishō and Hirohito, neither of whom can be described as charismatic personalities.)

The amount of gold décor on the emperor's jacket, especially the chrysanthemum, which is the royal emblem, is remarkable in Uchida's photograph and was commented upon by most who saw him. When he rode into Kyoto in July 1872 wearing the dress of a cavalry general and accompanied by his gentlemen-in-waiting in black dress suits, the crowds later went home to "wonder which was the Mikado, as very few Japanese recognized him amongst the many gorgeously dressed persons they saw on horseback, and who . . . all resembled each other in the amount of gold lace about their dresses." It was simply not possible for the emperor and his high officials to appear dressed like commoners; court costumes had always signaled rank and status in Japan. (The peerage was now expected to wear an elaborate uniform of frock coat with gold lace, while civil officials wore tuxedo with gold lace.) Writing in 1874, a Japanese intellectual confessed that he could not accept the extravagance of the full court dress (*taireifuku*) of his country's civil officials; he pointed out that in Europe and America all persons from king to commoners wore the same formal dress in their capacity as civil officials—a dress that was the equivalent of the Japanese semi-formal dress. But he concluded with this anecdote:

Years ago while still young, I sailed to Europe by the Cape of Good Hope. My ship on the return trip stopped in Hong Kong. And when I visited the Dutch consulate, the consul was clothed in a gold embroidered uniform that closely resembled our present full court dress. In some wonder, I asked the reason since I had never seen such garments worn in Europe except by ambassadors, military officers, or members of the nobility such as dukes, counts, and viscounts. The consul smilingly replied that the barbarian peoples of Asia would not recognize the high station of the consul of Holland if he failed to wear such attire. I too smiled and then departed.⁵⁰

STARS AND STRIPES

The emperor was challenged to behave like a European monarch when he entertained a real world leader: On July 4, 1879, dressed in the uniform of a field marshal, he stood up to shake hands with Ulysses S. Grant. Trivial as this might seem, it was something of an historic event, being the first Western hand His Majesty had ever shaken. It was noted that the emperor seemed constrained, almost awkward, having "the manner of a man doing a thing for the first time and trying to do it as well as possible." Not a very graceful person, he seemed slightly ill at ease, as though anxious to please without making any mistakes. Grant's reception differed markedly from that accorded the first foreigners received by the emperor in the 1860s, when he still sat immobile on a throne dais raised ten feet above the floor, swathed in a voluminous flowing brocade robe that covered his whole body. He

deigned only to touch with his scepter the speech that was read in his name.⁵¹ "The Japanese are showing the most extravagant enthusiasm for General Grant," wrote an envious representative of the German community in Tokyo. After two terms in the White House, the hero of the American Civil War had seized on the favorite elixir of former politicians, a world tour, setting off on a two-year journey in 1877 that took him across Europe to India, China, and then Japan. He was accompanied by his wife Julia, his son, and John Russell Young of the *New York Herald* who filed stories as they progressed. Japan-America relations were at a peak and there was an outpouring of good will toward Grant. Everywhere he went he was greeted with the sight of streets lined with red, white, and blue lanterns and entwined national flags. He was invited to review the troops with the emperor, a unique honor, and the emperor met with him privately to solicit his advice on vexing questions pertaining to a territorial conflict with China. Prime Minister Sanjō Saneyoshi entertained him in Parisian style, everything being as he would have found it on the Champs Elysées. A former feudal lord, Prince Date, treated him to a meal with baked pork and beans which would have done honor in Boston. "Who inspired this dish and who composed it are mysteries," wrote Young. "It came into our dinner in a friendly way, and was so well meant, and implied such an earnest desire to please on the part of the host, that it became idyllic, and conveyed a meaning that I venture to say was never expressed by a dish of pork and beans since the *Mayflower* came to our shores."⁵²

The hospitality accorded Grant was partially in reciprocation for the kindness he had shown the Iwakura mission, which toured America during his presidency. His martial skills were also much admired in a nation led by a group of former samurai intent on building up world-class armed forces of their own. "The military side of General Grant's career had taken hold of their imagination," noted Young,

and the street literature of the day is devoted to the achievements of the General and the Northern armies. You find these written in pamphlets, in broadsheets, in penny tracts. You find rude engravings of the General in the shop-windows. Sometimes these pictures are in a heroic stage of color, and although I am not familiar with the Japanese text, I am sure, from looking over the illustrations in the pictorial lives of the General, that he has achieved tremendous feats in war. Most of these engravings depict the General as a military athlete doing marvelous things with his sword.⁵³

The pictures in question include a variety of woodblock triptychs commemorating Grant's arrival and documenting the festivities staged in his honor by the citizens of Tokyo—everything from Kabuki plays to sporting events. *America: The Splendor of the Procession of Mr. Grant* is the title of a specially commissioned actor print by Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900) with background provided by Utagawa Kunisada III (Kunimasa IV, 1848–1920) (plate 18). It was issued July 16, the same day the Shintomiza, Tokyo's finest theater, staged a Kabuki gala for Grant (figure 64). Under the management of Morita Kan'ya, the Shintomiza boasted the best actors and featured innovations such as gas-lit night performances. Kan'ya thought of himself as a member of the modernizing intelligentsia. He catered to the foreign

64. Utagawa Kunisada III (Kunimasa IV): Julia and Ulysses S. Grant at the Kabuki from Biography of Mr. Grant: Japanese Documents by Kanagaki Robun. Vol. 8. July 1879. The Mary and Jackson Burke Collection, New York. (Photo: O.E. Nelson.)



community, going so far as to incorporate foreign actors into his plays, and is said to have been so infatuated with things Western even in daily life that he "would not touch such Japanese food as soy sauce, saying that it was harmful to health, spurned Japanese sake in favor of beer, and ate his raw fish seasoned with Western table salt."⁵⁴ For the performance in honor of Grant, Kawatake Mokuami (1816-93), the leading Kabuki dramatist, wrote a special historical play, the *Gosannen ōshū gunki* (Chronicles of the Later Three Years War in the North) in which Grant was represented by Minamoto no Yoshiie, an eleventh-century general who successfully quelled an uprising in the provinces.

Among the foreign invitees seated with the Grants in the dress circle was Clara Whitney, whose synopsis of the plot was that "Yoshiie reorganized the army, initiated a new campaign, and by a succession of victories reduced the rebels to submission. The peculiar feature of his triumph was the clemency he displayed towards the vanquished enemy at the moment when their lives and possessions were at his sole disposal. In this particular he was supposed to resemble Grant." Following the intermission, the actors, who wished to pay their respects to the general, walked up the *hanamichi* in a procession wearing Western clothing, "clumping in foreign shoes, and formed themselves in a line before the curtain. The actors immediately began a kind of dialogue in voices of different pitches, in which they congratulated themselves upon their good fortune of having so renowned a chief among them and hoped their poor acting had amused him."⁵⁵

Kunichika's stunning triptych shows just this mixture of East and West: the seven actors (their names listed in the cartouche on the center panel) are, from

right to left, the fifth Onoe Kikugorō, Ichikawa Kuzō, Nakamura Shikan, Ichikawa Sadanji, the ninth Ichikawa Danjūrō, Onoe Taganojō, and Suketakaya Takasuke. Takasuke consults his pocket watch and Danjūrō wears a bowler. Ichikawa Danjūrō (1838–1903), the leading Kabuki actor of his time, was much attracted to modern, edifying themes (as opposed to the “decadent and unhealthy” subjects typical of mid-nineteenth-century Kabuki); he also affected European clothing, ordering his hats and shoes from Yokohama.⁵⁶

The shadow picture (*kage-e*) technique had been used effectively a decade earlier for actor portraits by Yoshiiku, who may have been influenced by photography. The use of dark silhouettes as shadow theater against paper doors had a long tradition, however. In the Grant print, some of the actors make gestures with their hands in the manner of shadow puppeteers. The backdrop, of course, evokes Grant's procession through central Tokyo, identified as Yūshiren in Nihombashi.

According to Miss Whitney, the evening's entertainment continued with a special presentation of a new dance by a bevy of Shimbashi geisha (plate 19). The curtain was drawn aside,

revealing a street scene in Tokyo, all illuminated by lanterns with flags. Upon the floor sat thirteen musicians hard at work upon *samisens*, their clothing being of red and white stripes. A few upon an elevated platform wore *kamishimo* [ceremonial dress] upon which the “stars” in the “azure robes of night” shone out beautifully. After a solo by the “stars” and a concert by the “stripes,” a line of girls, dancing as they came, advanced simultaneously from the door of either vestibule, waving their fair hands and keeping time with sandaled feet. What made the blood rush with a thrill through the hearts of the Americans? What in the appearance of these girls made thousands of sweet memories and patriotic thoughts arise in our minds? Ah, the old flag, the glorious Stars and Stripes! . . . Each girl was dressed in a robe made of the dear old Stars and Stripes, while upon their heads shone a circlet of silver stars. It made the prettiest costume imaginable. The stripes constituted the over-robe itself while one sleeve slipped off from one shoulder revealed a sleeve of stars below, their girdles were dark blue, sandals, red and white, and presently they took out fans having on one side the American and upon the other the national flag.⁵⁷

This magnificent tribute was immortalized in the full-color frontispiece of Kanagaki Robun's long-winded nine-volume biography of Grant, published the day after the event. Robun, who claims to be addressing himself to women and children, begins with the discovery of America, then works his way through Grant's early life and the Civil War, concluding with the post-presidential tour and the triumph in Tokyo. Peppered with hyperbole (General “Gurando” shoots glittering light from the midst of his eyeball and raises his voice like a peal of thunder when confronting the enemy) these little volumes probably did much to popularize the general's visit. When the Grants finally sailed for San Francisco two months later, the German observer wondered whether Japanese would suffer from a “next-morning headache.” General Grant was shown a copy of the Robun biography purchased by an American tourist in Tokyo in 1880; he kept the volumes for a week and then returned them to their owner without comment.⁵⁸