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*The Heritage
of Hiroshige*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[TO IRENE CARPENTER MERRIMAN](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[CONTENTS • ILLUSTRATIONS](#)

[Illustrations](#)

[NARA, THE CRADLE OF JAPANESE ART](#)

[THE HIERATIC SCHOOLS OF JAPANESE PAINTING](#)

[THE RIVAL GLORIES OF TOSA AND KANO](#)

[INFLUENCES THAT LED TO COLOUR-PRINTING](#)

[MEMORIAL PORTRAIT OF HIROSHIGE \[BY TOYOKUNI \]](#)

[FOREWORDS TO SOME OF HIROSHIGE'S BOOKS](#)

[APPENDIX](#)

[AKITSU](#)

[BIBLIOGRAPHY](#)

[INDEX](#)

TO IRENE CARPENTER MERRIMAN

[Table of Contents](#)



INTRODUCTION

[Table of Contents](#)

As a Preliminary Note to this little book, the following remarks of Mr. Happer prefacing the Catalogue of his Collection of Colour-Prints by Hiroshige, best interpret the authors' intention: "In collecting the Colour-prints of the Ukiyo-ye School, the work of Hiroshige early attracted the interest of the collector. Finding that there was more or less uncertainty regarding his work and that of two of his pupils, who used the same brush name, it was decided to acquire everything obtainable bearing his signature, in the hope that from numerous examples some definite knowledge of the artist might be attained. This purpose, kept steadily in view for years, was attended with unexpected success. By comparing thousands of prints, and by the careful scrutiny of every character and seal on each print, important data were obtained which are given to the collectors of the world for their information with the hope that the works of Hiroshige the Great will receive their proper recognition, his fame be enhanced and that he may be given a lasting place in the School of Ukiyo-ye as the greatest interpreter of Nature in all her moods."

Though timorous of the honour, the writer undertook the task of putting into shape the material Mr. Happer had collected but had not time to arrange for publication. Being permitted to come and go at will in the old Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, she followed in the footsteps of Mr. Okakura Kakuzo, named by the Nivedita Vivekananda as "in some sense the William Morris of Japan," who was arranging and

classifying the treasures garnered from the Orient. When the custodians unrolled the masterpieces of Cho Densu of Motonobu and Okyo, the classic painters cast a spell; the walls lined with screens by Koyetsu and Korin were a delight and the flowers of Sotatsu strewed the path of Art.

So the claim for Hiroshige's genius of an inalienable birthright from these master painters, from whom alone says W. von Seidlitz "the exact nature of Japanese taste can be studied," gave rise to our title, The Heritage of Hiroshige; and the endeavour is to give in condensed form the opinions of those who, like Mr. Okakura, are authorities on the early art of Japan. The Biographical information and Forewords were translated for Mr. Happer by Japanese scholars; copious notes and important details were supplied by him, and his Seal Discovery determines once and for all the attribution of the prints bearing the signature of Hiroshige.

"Tokaido" Hiroshige, magical impressionist! seizing as he travelled with his sketch-book, in storm and sunshine, the noted scenes, aspects and humours of the Great Highway; letting his brush play over birds, fishes and flowers, with dragon-fly flashes of iridescence. He "with the simple and restricted means of the Japanese colour-printer," says Mr. Arthur Morrison, "and a direct audacity of technique surprising to analyze, caused the natural aspect of old Japan to live before our eyes forever."

The writer here acknowledges her indebtedness to the authors included in the Bibliography; to Mr. Happer for his illuminating correspondence; to Mr. Elder, and to Irene Carpenter Merriman, who assembled the author's collection and, living in the Orient, by her discrimination and

appreciation of Japanese and Chinese art methods, kept her friend in touch with the magic and charm of oriental art.

Dora Amsden.

CONTENTS • ILLUSTRATIONS

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	v
Nara, the Cradle of Japanese Art	3
The Hieratic Schools of Japanese Painting	8
The Rival Glories of Tosa and Kano	17
Influences That Led to Colour-Printing	21
Biographical Notes Upon Hiroshige	32
Memorial Portrait of Hiroshige—Mr. J. S. Happer's Seal Discovery	36
Forewords to Some of Hiroshige's Books	43
Notes Upon the Masterpieces of Hiroshige	57
Appendix—	
Facsimiles of Hiroshige's Signatures, and Seals of Two Noted Publishers of Colour-Prints	75
The Twelve Zodiacal Signs Contained in the Seal Dates, with Three	76-77

Examples of Cycle Ciphers and Two
Hiroshige Seals

Facsimiles of Signatures of the Most
Noted Artists of Ukiyo-ye 78-79

Akitsu—A Note Upon the Dragon-fly 80

Bibliography 81

Index 83

Illustrations

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
The Moonlit Saru-Hashi (Monkey Bridge)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Moonlight and Mist at Miyanokoshi	10
The Sacred Mountain, Fuji-san	26
The Snow Gorge—A View of the Fuji River in Winter	30
The Memorial Portrait of Ichiryusai Hiroshige	37
Asakusa Kinryusan, with the Signature of Shigenobu	39
In the Shallows of the Sea	53
The Eagle. From the "One Hundred Views of Yedo"	54
Midnight at Tsukudajima	56
Pilgrims Gazing at the Poisoned Stream near the Koya Shrine	58
The Siesta—One of the Kwa-Cho Panels	60
The Combat Between	63

Yoshitsune and Shirikawa no
Tankai

Evening Snow at Kambara 64

Mariko—Meibutsu Cha-ya 66
(Souvenir Tea-House)

The Woods of Sui Shin in Cherry 68
Blossom Season

The Thunderstorm at Ohashi 71
Yudachi

***The* HERITAGE OF HIROSHIGE**

[Table of Contents](#)

NARA, THE CRADLE OF JAPANESE ART

[Table of Contents](#)



LOVE of Nature, inherent and profound, gave to Japan her national religion, nourished her patriotism, and was the quickening source of all her art. "The spirit continually penetrated by Nature," says Michel Revon, "imitates her and reproduces her little by little. It deifies her benevolent powers, it would retrace the image of her beauty." Therefore, Religion and Art are born together.

In Nara, the ancient capital and sanctuary of Shinto, moss-grown before the foundation of Kyoto in 794, arose the national art. The glory of Nara has departed, but her beauty remains enhanced by time, and a peace as of Nirvana broods in the still glades, where votive lanterns, time-worn and gray, seem one with the stones scattered beneath the trees—sacred vestiges of temples and pagodas. The gentle deer pause, gazing questioningly at the passing pilgrim, and the vibration of the temple bells steals solemnly across the plain.

Yamato, the province in which Nara is situated, was the scene of many an old historical romance and mythological legend. Here flourished the princes Fire-Shine and Fire-Fade, the mysterious ancestors of the Mikados, and Yamato was the centre of the story of the gigantic crow and miraculous sword, told in the "Genji Monogatari" and immortalized by