

DEPICTIONS OF ANIMALS IN THE SATIRICAL WAR PRINTS OF KOBAYASHI KIYOCHIKA

This paper presents some selected images of animals in the satire of the two most important military conflicts that Japan experienced in the Meiji period: the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars. The examples come from the oeuvre of Kobayashi Kiyochika – considered by some to be “the last important ukiyo-e master and the first noteworthy print artist of modern Japan”.¹⁾

The practice of depicting animals in an allegorical or symbolic context is universal. From Aesop’s Fables and Aristophanes’ Comedies, depictions of animals have been used to convey messages concerning morals, philosophy and politics. In Japan, an early example are four scrolls widely known as *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals* (Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga) produced between the 11th and 13th century by Toba Sōjō (1053–1140) and other artists.²⁾ The practice of showing animals in a metaphoric or satirical context continued in later centuries. It was especially popular in the late Edo period.³⁾ Many artists used animal depictions for a wide range of subjects. A good example is the art of Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861) who created a series of prints dedicated to the twelve animals of the Japanese zodiac. He also produced other prints depicting animals in “human” situations. Many of them carried moral or

¹⁾ Lane (1978).

²⁾ *Chōju-Giga* – <http://int.physiology.jp> – access: 07.10.2020; Illerbrun (9) – <https://sites.ualberta.ca/> – access: 07.10.2020.

³⁾ Philipp, Tüting (2013: 24).

philosophical messages, like the series *Moral Philosophy Illustrated for Children* published around 1843. One of the prints from these series shows a cat and a mouse sharing a meal along with the message: “Even natural enemies can be friends”⁴).

Authors of satirical pictures in Japanese art have a long and well-established history of using representations of animals. The powerful “incentive” to do so was the censorship imposed by the shogunate. It led to the development of a very subtle system of social communication between authors and their public, which involved depictions of animals (as well as historical scenes or figures) to comment on current events, in order to avoid persecution⁵. In 1722 the government introduced a ban on depicting any historical events pertaining to the period when the Tokugawa family took control of the shogun office.⁶ Artists responded by using animals or reaching back to the mediaeval history of Japan for examples that would provide some manner of commentary on current affairs. The public was equally eager to read the hidden meanings.⁷

The Tempō reform of 1842, intended to renew the nation by curbing excess and luxury, brought new limitations regarding the subject matter as well as the aesthetic form of prints. Representations of kabuki actors, geishas and courtesans were prohibited as detrimental to public morals. The number of colour blocks produced for one print was restricted to eight. Although these limitations were relaxed after 1845,⁸ they provided further incentive for authors and publishers to develop codes of communication with the public that circumvented the censorial constraints.⁹ One example is showing kabuki actors as animals.¹⁰

⁴) Romanowicz (2011: 199–202).

⁵) The specific subjects that were objected to by censors were explored in the catalogue of the 1991–1992 exhibition *Undercurrents in the Floating World: Censorship and Japanese Prints*; Thompson, Harootunian (1991).

⁶) King, Iwaki (2007: 25); Philipp, Tüting (2013: 25).

⁷) Illerbrun (11) – <https://sites.ualberta.ca/> – access: 07.10.2020.

⁸) That year Mizuno Tadakuni (1793–1851), the creator of the Tempō reform and the sole force behind its implementation in the entertainment sector, was removed from the office.

⁹) *Introduction* – <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/japan/gallery/info%20kun.htm> – access: 26.11.2020.

¹⁰) For example: Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861), *Playing Frog Again*, 1847 – Philipp, Tüting (2013: 62–63).

The restoration of the Emperor's power did not necessarily bring any dramatic changes in the relationship between the print makers and the government. They consisted in shifting accents rather than a fundamental transformation of the system. Although it was now in the interest of the government that current political events and figures of power be illustrated in woodblock prints, still the specific content of particular prints could cause problems for both the author and the publisher.¹¹⁾ Thus, animal representations remained relevant in satire as well as other genres of printmaking.

Events of a catastrophic nature were also commented on with the use of animal figures. In 1854 and 1855 three major earthquakes known as the Ansei great earthquakes hit Japan. According to a folk legend, the creature responsible for the earthquakes was a giant catfish pinned down under a large stone, called the *kanameishi*, at the Kashima Shrine. When the catfish moved about it caused earthquakes. It is highly unlikely that the majority, if any, of the public believed that a giant fish was in reality responsible for the natural phenomenon.¹²⁾ All the same, a catfish remained a symbol of earthquakes in general and the Ansei earthquakes in particular and appears in many woodblock prints produced soon afterwards.¹³⁾

Animals could appear in prints as a result of a fad. Between 1872–74 rabbits were a frequent motif in prints due to a government initiative to promote their breeding. Numerous rabbit shows and rabbit markets were held. The most sought after breed was the calico or tortoiseshell rabbit, which was purchased at exorbitant prices – even as much as the price of a house. The fad was short-lived, however, as the speculative bubble burst (very much like the Tulip Bubble in the Netherlands in 1630s) and breeding was forbidden.¹⁴⁾ This phenomenon left behind a number of prints, such as *Rabbit Show Exhibition List* by Utagawa Yoshitsuya II (active in 1870s)¹⁵⁾ or *The Ballad of Fugitives Okaru and Kanpei in the Kiyomoto Style* by Utagawa

¹¹⁾ Illerbrun (24–25) – <https://sites.ualberta.ca/> – access: 07.10.2020.

¹²⁾ At the time it was ascribed to an imbalance in yin (cool) and yang (hot) energy. When too much yang energy cumulated within the earth and tried to escape upward, an earthquake could result.

¹³⁾ Smits – <https://meijiart150dtr.arts.ubc.ca/> – access: 23.11.2020.

¹⁴⁾ The National Diet Library Newsletter, no 129 – http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl_newsletter/129/295.html – access: 14.12.2020.

¹⁵⁾ Ryuko usagi shukkai zue, 1873, National Diet Library, call no. 425–1401.

Yoshifuji (1828–1887)¹⁶⁾ where the actors and musicians playing shamisen are represented as rabbits.

Such is the background against which the prints by Kobayashi Kiyochika should be regarded. He was born in 1847 as Kobayashi Katsunosuke.¹⁷⁾ His father was a minor shogunal official in charge of the government rice granaries. The artist himself was also loyal to the Tokugawa family. He followed the last shogun into self-imposed exile in Shizuoka in 1868. To earn a modest living he tried his hand at numerous jobs, including working as a travelling entertainer. In 1874 he returned to Tokyo and started his career as a woodblock artist. Little is known about his formal training and it is highly likely that he was self-taught. Between 1876 and 1881 he published series of *Famous Views of Tokyo* which employed the Western style perspective. In 1882, Kobayashi's comic series of prints *Thirty-Two Faces* were published. The publisher was Hara Taneaki (1853–1942), a former shogunal official, later a Christian book seller, who also helped to secure Kobayashi's employment as a political cartoonist for the *Marumaru chinbun* – an influential satirical newspaper of the early Meiji period.¹⁸⁾ He drew weekly cartoons for this newspaper for the next ten years. The artist enjoyed his greatest success as the author of woodblock illustrations during the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895. Beside them he also produced comic prints, including the series *One Hundred Victories*, *One Hundred Laughs*. After the war he continued the cycle of *Famous Views of Tokyo* and produced some landscape prints of the Musashi province. The later years of the artist's life were marred by family tragedy – the death of one of his daughters – and financial difficulties. During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905 he produced woodblock depictions of battles similar to those from the Sino-Japanese war,¹⁹⁾ but they did not meet with similar success. The popularity of woodblock prints as a source of news for the general public fell into decline due to the rapid development of lithographic prints and press photography. Still, some were produced, as were more comic illustrations of the cycle *One Hundred Victories*, *One Hundred Laughs*.

¹⁶⁾ Philipp, Tüting (2013: 130).

¹⁷⁾ Biographical information based on: Ulak (2008) – https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/kiyochika_tokyo/ – access: 09.11.2020; Lavenberg – <http://www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/kiyochika-kobayashi-1847-1915-> access: 02.11.2020.

¹⁸⁾ See: Duus (1999: 46–55).

¹⁹⁾ Sometimes he even used the woodblocks made for the Sino-Japanese war illustrations with only minor alterations.

As mentioned above, the series *One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* (Hyakusen hyakushō) was first published during the Sino-Japanese war and then continued during the Russo-Japanese war. The series title, literally: “One Hundred Selections, One Hundred Laughs”, is a pun on the expression “One Hundred Battles, One Hundred Victories” – as both phrases are pronounced “Hyakusen hyakushō”.²⁰⁾ The first and second part of the series referred to the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895. The first part’s full title was: *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* (Nihon banzai: Hyakusen hyakushō). It consisted of fifty prints published between September 1894 and August 1895. The second part, *Magic Lantern Society: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* (Shakai gentō: Hyakusen hyakushō), was published between November 1895 and December 1896 and included only 12 prints. The third part, referring to the war with Russia, was published ten years later, between April 1904 and April 1905, under the same title as the first part: *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* (Nihon banzai: Hyakusen hyakushō).²¹⁾ Each print included a comic illustration by Kobayashi Kiyochika accompanied by a text written by Koppi Dōjin (“Master Skin and Bones”). This was the pseudonym of Nishimori Takeki (1861–1913), a journalist and a writer, a major contributor to the *Marumaru chinbun* and a frequent co-worker of Kobayashi Kiyochika.²²⁾

The number one hundred, which appears in the titles of all three parts of the series, should not be taken literally. It is often interpreted symbolically with regard to quantity as well as quality. It can signify a considerable number and perhaps point towards the diversity of the presented images. Collections of “one hundred” images or stories usually mean collections of many. The number 100 can be perceived as a sort of a threshold. Inanimate domestic objects could turn into *tsukumogami* – supernatural beings – after reaching a hundred years of age.²³⁾ One version of a legend describing the first encounter of the popular hero Minamoto no Yoshitsune with his future lover

²⁰⁾ Descriptions of prints by Kobayashi Kiyochika from the series *One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston website, accession numbers: 2000.208–2000.211, 2016.1463–2016.1464 – <https://collections.mfa.org/search/objects/> – access: 06.11.2020.

²¹⁾ Lavenberg – <http://www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/kiyochika-kobayashi-1847-1915-> access: 03.11.2020.

²²⁾ Thompson, Harootunian (1991: 91).

²³⁾ Foster (2017: 64).

Shizuka-gozen has it that in 1182 the ritual for bringing rain was conducted at Shinsen-en shrine in Kyoto and although 99 women danced in dedication, there was no rain. The rain came only when the hundredth woman, Shizuka-gozen performed her dance.²⁴⁾ A good example can be also the *hyaku-monogatari* – a popular pastime in the Edo period. It was the practice of social gatherings during which stories about unnatural or unusual events and creatures were told. The belief was that after the hundredth story was told a real ghost/monster or *yōkai* would appear. The term *hyaku-monogatari* literally means “one hundred stories”, but printed collections of such stories hardly ever included that specific number.²⁵⁾

The series *One Hundred Victories*, *One Hundred Laughs* was obviously a part of the war propaganda effort. The satire that it represents is rather harsh. Enemies of Japan are represented as inferior in every respect. The Chinese are portrayed as backward, weak, slow-witted, there are even deprecating references to their religious practices. The Russians depicted ten years later are ridiculed for their alleged cowardice, inaptitude and conceit, often mocked at the moment of their defeat. Although it was highly unlikely that anyone would persecute the author for anti-Chinese or anti-Russian caricatures in the militant atmosphere surrounding both wars, the practice of presenting animals in a satirical context was well-established and the artist included it in his work.

The first print, *The Clueless Pig/ The Pig's Dilemma* (Fig. 1) from December 1894,²⁶⁾ from the first part of the series *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories*, *One Hundred Laughs*, shows a pig wearing traditional Chinese clothes, held at

²⁴⁾ The legend – <http://thekyotoproject.org/english/yoshitsune-minamoto/> – access: 12.12.2020.

²⁵⁾ Foster (2017: 64).

²⁶⁾ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), publisher: Matsuki Heikichi, *The Clueless Pig/ The Pig's Dilemma* (Buta no tōwaku), December 1894, signed on the block, lower right, includes chop, woodcut in colour, 35.2 x 23.2 cm, no: 11021-16, Ukiyoe Caricatures, Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=1059&lang=e&first=1> – access: 03.11.2020. A copy in the Lavenberg Collection has the title *The Pig's Dismay* – Lavenberg – <http://www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/kiyochika-kobayashi-1847-1915-access>: 04.11.2020. Another copy, held in the collection of the Library of Congress, under the title *Stinging power* (37.2 x 25.2 cm, control no: 2009630461), was dated for 1895 and mistakenly described as depicting a small elephant instead of a pig – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009630461/> – access: 05.11.2020.

the gunpoint by a dragonfly dressed in a Western-style suit, carrying a sword, and tormented by three bees with human heads.

The print should be viewed in the light of the specifics of the ongoing conflict with China. To wage a war against the ancient and powerful empire which Japan had emulated for the best part of the country's history seemed unthinkable. Yet in December 1894 the Japanese were already in possession of Port Arthur – the key naval base that controlled the Yellow Sea – and the Liaodong Peninsula. The ease with which the victories were gained (Port Arthur was taken after a one-day battle) gave an enormous boost to the country's morale and evoked a wave of national pride. In December 1894, journalist Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957) gave a short summary of these sentiments: “Before, we did not know ourselves, and the world did not yet know us. But now that we have tested our strength, we know ourselves and we are known by the world. Moreover, we *know* we are known by the world”.²⁷⁾

These emotions are reflected in the print. The choice of a dragonfly to represent Japan was probably inspired by the legend, included in the *Chronicle of Japan* (Nihon Shoki) written down in 720 AD, according to which the first divine Emperor sitting on a very high mountain looked down upon the islands of Japan and their image reminded him of a dragonfly. There is also a story concerning the 21st Emperor about a dragonfly that ate a horsefly which had bitten the Emperor. To honour the dragonfly, the Emperor named Japan “Isle of the Dragonfly” (Akitsu Shima). Dragonflies were thought of as *kachi-mushi*, victor insects, because of the speed and certainty with which they kill their prey. They were believed to bring good luck and therefore their images were placed on numerous items, including samurai helmets.²⁸⁾ In the print, the dragonfly is dressed – and armed – in Western fashion, while the pig has a traditional Chinese plait and garments. The clothes are used to convey the opposition between modern, westernised Japan and backward China, that had lost track of current affairs.²⁹⁾ The pose of a dragonfly reflects confidence, strength and determination in stark contrast with the figure of

²⁷⁾ Quote after: Meech-Pekarik (1986: 200).

²⁸⁾ The Dragonfly Isles (2004) – <https://web-japan.org/nipponia/nipponia29/en/animal/animal01.html> – access: 27.11.2020.

²⁹⁾ The pig dressed in the traditional Chinese garments symbolised China also in another satirical print by Kobayashi Kiyochika: Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), publisher Fukuda Hatsujirō, *Chinese black boat – Japanese white boat* (Sina kurofune Nihon shirofune) – *The pig's big wound* (Buta no taibyō), from the series *Laughs over*

the pig – tearful, humiliated and helpless, kneeling with its arms stretched sideways in a gesture of resignation. The bees circling around the pig’s head have European features – long noses, blond hair and beards, one of them is even wearing a hat. They represent Great Britain, France and Russia, the countries that were seen as the outside forces attempting to dominate Asia. The war against China was in part intended to curb these attempts.³⁰ Representing them as bees is highly significant. They are noisy, can cause some pain but – according to the print – it is the dragonfly that is the force to be reckoned with.

The text in the upper part of the print relates the conversation between the dragonfly and the pig.³¹ The dragonfly/Japan announces victory, adding a few insults to the enemy – calling him “daft as a maggot”. In response the pig/China delivers a profuse apology, admitting that it was greedy, and then confessing to the gravest insult, which is disregard and contempt that China had shown the Japanese people, when they were “spreading their wings”. The apology concludes with a plea for mercy and sparing the Chinese lives. Then the bees representing European powers join in the conversation asking, how the pig/China intends to satisfy their demands.

the Sino-Japanese war (Nisshin sensō shōrakugakai), 1895, Library of Congress, control no: 2009615026.

³⁰ Dower (2008: part 3, pp. 2–4) – <http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu> – access: 12.12.2020.

³¹ Dragonfly: “So, how is it? If you’ve been cornered like this, isn’t it a rather unpleasant feeling, even though you are daft as a maggot? However, I don’t know if you still have a pretentious look on your face or not, but if that’s the way it’s going to be then it will be our victory – no matter if we want to cook and eat or roast and eat you.” Pig: “Well, in this case, when I get to the bottom of things, I swallowed those chickens in one whole bite and tried to get rich. I was terrible! But not only that, I was extremely terrible when I regarded you people spreading your wings out into the world as weak insects (and held you in low esteem) and defied you. I’m sure you must be angry. We ask you kindly to forgive us this time and at least spare our lives, since we just deal out every letter of apology. We hereby apologize sincerely and bow down to you.” French bee: “That’s fine, but how do you want to deal with us?” Russian bee: “What are you going to do with me?” English bee: “What are you going to do with me? If you don’t get things straightened out quickly I will cast you down with this sword (because of this issue).” Pig: “Crying in desperation, being cornered from all sides and attacked, I have no idea what to do and have really gotten into trouble.” Translation after: no 11021-16, Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=1059&lang=e&first=1> – access: 03.11.2020.

The tone of the conversation underlines the helplessness and utter humiliation of China, as caused by Japan and witnessed by Western powers. China is represented as weak, stupid, backward and being completely at the mercy of modern, strong and resolved Japan, which on its part shows no promise of being merciful. The grievances of the Japanese society are summed up in the pig's apology for being greedy and showing disrespect or, indeed disdain to the Japanese "spreading their wings". That particular phrase is a resounding echo of the statement of Tokutomi Sohō quoted above and illustrates the deep emotional background – at least on the part of the Japanese – of the military conflict in question. The Western powers are shown as bothersome, but not particularly dangerous to Japan, though capable of causing serious damage to already heavily injured China.

Another print, *The Mice in the Bag* (Fig. 2) from April 1895,³²⁾ from the first part of the series *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs*, shows two Chinese men-of-war represented as mice (or according to other interpretations – as rats) being chased into a bag by a Japanese warship shown as a cat. The bag is adorned with a *noshi* – a gift tag made of folded paper and used to express appreciation and respect to the receiver, and two labels saying: "China's leftovers" and: "Sixteen fine war ships with guns, cannons, rifles and war flags, also rice and millet. Please plunder if feasible. China shop".³³⁾

The text in the upper part describes an exchange between three mice not sure what to do about the cat that is chasing them.³⁴⁾ While one suggests

³²⁾ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), publisher: Matsuki Heikichi, *The Mice in the Bag* (Fukuro no nezumi), April 1895, signed on the block, lower left, includes chop, woodcut in colour, no: 11021-30, Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=1059&lang=e&first=1> – access: 03.11.2020. A copy in the Lavenberg Collection is listed under three different titles, which mean more or less the same: *Mice in a Trap*, *Mice in a Sack*, *Rats in a Bag*, and dimensions 36.8 x 24.8 cm – Lavenberg – <http://www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/kiyochika-kobayashi-1847-1915> – access: 04.11.2020. Another copy, held in the collection of the Library of Congress, under the Japanese title (37.4 x 25.1 cm, control no: 2009615024) – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009615024/> – access: 05.11.2020.

³³⁾ Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=1059&lang=e&first=1> – access: 03.11.2020.

³⁴⁾ The cowardly mice, who are being chased by the cat, seem to not have a clue what to do. As if there were no such things as thoughtfulness or sense, they worship the "obedience", even though that's no more than lip service, because in truth there exists not (one animal), who is a true subject. Kō: "This really is a great danger. And

fleeing, another proposes bravely facing the danger, but this suggestion is rejected. Finally the cat/Japanese warship appears and scares the mice/Chinese warships into getting into a bag that is marked “China’s leftovers”.

The conversation illustrates the vision of China as weak – one of the mice in the dialogue says outright: “we are weak and small”. This weakness seems to be stemming from stupidity noted by the narrator: “as if there were no such things as thoughtfulness or sense”, and the habit of blind obedience. As a result, mice/Chinese warships are paralysed by indecision described as “this endless discussion about how this and that may be”. That leads to the final defeat. The print was published in April 1895 after the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed. Its stipulations were unfavourable to China.³⁵ That is reflected in the label on the bag, into which the mice/Chinese warships are chased, mentioning military equipment and food to be plundered from China. An additional insult lies in using the term “China shop” instead of “China”.

The introduction of a cat as a symbol of Japanese navy is quite interesting. Cats have been very popular in Japan ever since they arrived from China, probably sometime in the 6th century. They are believed to bring good luck. In the Edo period they became a frequent subject of ukiyo-e prints. The legendary cat-obsession of Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861) is only the most vivid example of the interest that surrounded these animals. Artists were fascinated with their graceful agility, while many also noticed a particularly appealing combination of beauty and cruelty that these small carnivores manifest while hunting. Kobayashi Kiyochika also took up this subject. His most famous depiction of a cat is probably *Cat and lantern* from 1877 showing

since it’s come so far their tails go limp and they flee with all their might because there is no other possibility left.” Otsu: “Your reaction is disappointing. After all, they say: When confronted with death, the mouse can devour a cat. That’s why I’m staying here, whether I get ruthlessly chewed to bits or not.” Hei: “Excuse me for interrupting, but we can only achieve that if we were brave daredevils, but we can’t even consider that because we are weak and small. A wise man, though, tries to steer clear of dangers and thinks about saving his own life above all. This to me seems to be a better way.” During this endless discussion about how this and that may be, the big cat suddenly runs towards them yelling with a loud voice: “What’s this about?”. The cornered mice panic and jump into the bag. Watching them, the cat chases after them. Translation after: no 11021–30, Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=949&lang=e&first=1> – access: 03.11.2020.

³⁵ China had to recognise full and complete independence of Korea, cede to Japan the control over Taiwan and Liaodong Peninsula with the strategically crucial Port Arthur and pay Japan a considerable sum as a war indemnity.

a cat chasing a rat into a paper lamp-shade lying on the floor. In the discussed print he used a cat – an animal that brings good luck and is popular in Japan as the substitute for the country’s navy. A cat’s haunting instincts are also relevant in this context as they explain the fear they strike into the mice.

There is an additional issue worth discussing with regard to this print. The figures in the print are essentially hybrids of animals and inanimate objects. The use of such figures in the satirical context was not unheard of in Western art, especially press cartoons, which were well-known in Meiji Japan³⁶. Kobayashi Kiyochika himself was acquainted with the *Illustrated London News* cartoonist Charles Wirgman (1832–1891),³⁷ so he had a personal connection with the circles of British cartoonists. Moreover, his work for the *Marumaru chinbun* familiarised him with this convention. However, the use of hybrids did not necessarily come from Western inspiration. The concept of hybrids is well-grounded in Japanese culture. Traditionally they were called *yōkai*. It is a wide category of supernatural beings, sometimes malicious, sometimes benign, very popular in the Japanese literature as well as folklore.³⁸ Some of them were only known locally, and only a few – like *kappa* or *oni* – are popular all over Japan. It is possible that the author drew from this tradition by depicting hybrids of warships and a cat and mice in the print. This supposition is corroborated by the fact that in some prints from the third part of the series *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs* he directly quoted traditional depictions of one of the most commonly known *yōkai* – the *oni*. The *oni*, in English often translated as ogre, is usually shown with horns, long teeth protruding from the mouth and with claws. Kobayashi Kiyochika included them in his prints twice. One – representing an *oni* as a beggar with an empty purse on its neck, with a wreck of a Russian warship in the background³⁹ – shows the creature with all the features named above, with the sole exception of horns being replaced with broken ship chimneys. The other print shows Russian soldiers as *oni*,⁴⁰ with horns

³⁶ Stewart – <https://comicsforum.org> – access: 28.11.2020.

³⁷ WDL – <https://www.wdl.org> – access: 27.11.2020.

³⁸ Foster (2017: 23–52).

³⁹ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), publisher: Matsuki Heikichi, *Ōchie no oni*, 15.08.1904, signed on the block, lower right, includes chop, woodcut in colour, no: 11023-37 – Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=1159&lang=e&first=1> – access: 29.11.2020.

⁴⁰ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), *O’Fuko throwing beans for good luck and to drive*

and claws (Fig. 3). It illustrates a popular New Year (Setsubun) tradition of throwing beans around a house or out of the windows and doors with a cry: “Be gone, *oni*; come in, good fortune!”. In some regions the more elaborate versions of this tradition include people masquerading as *oni* being tamed and chased away by the entire community as personifications of misfortunes.⁴¹ In the print this role is assigned to Russian soldiers who, indeed, run away in panic. The handwritten English caption in the upper margin calls them devils,⁴² which probably reflects the cultural background of the author of the caption. This direct use of traditional folklore figures by Kobayashi confirms the possibility of indirect influences in other prints, as suggested above.

After the Treaty of Shimonoseki three European powers – Russia, Germany and France – in the so-called Triple Intervention forced Japan to give up one of important gains of the Treaty: the control of Liaodong Peninsula together with Port Arthur. That caused a great deal of frustration throughout Japanese society, who felt that they were being robbed of the fruits of their hard earned victory. The frustration was further aggravated by the increasing military and political presence of Russia, which soon took over Port Arthur as the naval base for its Far East Fleet. The result was a war between Japan and Russia over the control of the Liaodong Peninsula, Korea and Manchuria between 1904 and 1905. During that war, despite the drop in popularity of woodblock prints as a source of information about current war events, a number of them were still produced, as were satirical prints, among which were those from the third part of the series *Long Live Japan: One Hundred Victories, One Hundred Laughs*. Three of them show animals as the main protagonists.

The first, *Octopus treading* (Fig. 4) published in 1904,⁴³ shows a Japanese officer sitting on the head of an octopus shown against the simplified map

the devils away on New Year's Eve, 1904–1905, signed on the block, middle right, includes chop, woodcut in colour, copy in the collection of the Library of Congress, 37.0 x 24.9 cm, no: 2009630466 – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630466/> – access: 29.11.2020. The entry at the Library of Congress website gives an incorrect title: *O’Fuko throwing beans for good luck and to drive the girls away on New Year’s Eve*, resulting from misreading the word “devils” in a handwritten caption in the upper margin of the print.

⁴¹ Foster (2017: 151).

⁴² See: footnote 40.

⁴³ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), *Octopus treading* (Tako no asirai), 1904, signed on the block, lower right, includes chop, woodcut in colour – a copy in the collection of

of the Bohai Strait with Port Arthur to the east. The octopus holds captured warships/fish in its tentacles. On the upper margin of the copy from the Library of Congress there is a handwritten note in English: “The Japanese Octopus off Port Arthur”.⁴⁴⁾ This note sums up the print. As mentioned above, Port Arthur was a strategically crucial port that ensured control of the Yellow Sea. In order to successfully conduct military operations in the region the Japanese started their offensive with a surprise attack on the Russian fleet in the Port Arthur roadstead. The port itself was defended for almost a year, but the Russian warships based there were under the Japanese blockade, which is referred to in the print.

The octopus is a popular theme in Japanese prints. It appears in illustrations of legends and literary works, where it is usually shown as a formidable enemy of heroes and heroines. In the Shinto tradition there is a minor *kami* named Akkorokamui, which is essentially a monstrous octopus.⁴⁵⁾ One of the characteristics usually associated with it is the fact that it is virtually impossible to escape its grasp. According to the print the same is to be assumed about the Japanese navy which like an octopus, catches the fish representing Russian warships and only very few manage to escape. The dominance of the Japanese is emphasised by the relaxed pose of the officer who seems to be meditating rather than overseeing a fight. He is in control and is well aware of this fact. On the other hand, the fish representing the Russian ships are given expressions of fear and confusion testifying to their helplessness in the situation. As in the case of the Sino-Japanese war, the enemy is represented as weak and cowardly against the victorious Japanese forces.

The octopus as a political symbol appeared in another print published in Japan at approximately the same time. In March 1904 Kisaburō Ohara, a student at Keio University, published *A Humorous Diplomatic Atlas of Europe and Asia*.⁴⁶⁾ The map was inspired by the famous “octopus map” by Frederic W. Rose.⁴⁷⁾ This time it is Russia that is depicted as a giant octopus grasping and

the Library of Congress (36.9 x 24.9 cm, control no: 2009615031) – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009630461/> – access: 05.11.2020.

⁴⁴⁾ The author of this paper was not able to find full translations of texts accompanying the prints regarding the Russo-Japanese war.

⁴⁵⁾ Meyer – <http://yokai.com/akkoroakmui/> – access: 18.11.2020.

⁴⁶⁾ Kisaburō Ohara, *A Humorous Diplomatic Atlas of Europe and Asia*, 1904, Cornell University Library.

⁴⁷⁾ Frederic W. Rose, *Serio-comic War Map for the Year 1877*, published in London in

stifling the nations of Europe and Asia. Japan is shown as a soldier standing on a cannon, raising the Japanese flag and scaring the octopus away with an appliance resembling a firehose. It would be interesting to find out if this print inspired Kobayashi Kiyochika. The use of a fragment of the map as the background for the print may point towards such a conclusion. On the other hand, Kobayashi might have been familiar with the print of Frederic Rose, which also included a map. Whatever the case, it is evident that in all three instances dominance was the concept associated with an octopus.

The second print concerning the Russo-Japanese war, *A Whale and Three Fish Sitting down to a Formal Dinner of Russian Sailors* (Fig. 5) was published on 10 June 1904.⁴⁸⁾ The print shows a sea bream dressed in a traditional Japanese attire serving a meal of Russian sailors to a whale and two fish wearing jackets. One sailor is served on a plate, lying flat with his arms spread out to the sides, other three are in a bowl. All of them have very prominent noses, receding hairlines and blond beards. Their eyes are closed, they are listless and lifeless. The sea bream apologises that the sailors taste bad and lack guts, in spite of the magnificent impression they give. The guests in turn express their surprise at the ease with which sailors can be swallowed whole.

The print alludes to the situation of the Russian navy, which was blocked in the Port Arthur harbour from the very beginning of the war. The initial Japanese attacks had a devastating psychological effect on the Russians, who basically relinquished any initiative to the Japanese. Numerous clashes with the Japanese navy resulted in losses of vessels and personnel and attempts at breaking the siege were unsuccessful. On 13 April 1904, during such an attempt, the highly esteemed commander vice-admiral Stepan Osipovich Makarov was killed. That deepened the Russians' reluctance to leave the harbour even further. Kobayashi Kiyochika ridicules this passiveness and lack of determination on the part of Russians at the same time referring to the impression of superiority they like to give. In doing so, he is in line with authors of other satirical prints who represented Russians as conceited and

1877. The map gained vast popularity and inspired many imitations produced with many different political agendas in view.

⁴⁸⁾ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), *A Whale and Three Fish Sitting down to a Formal Dinner of Russian Sailors*, 10.06.1904, signed on the block, lower right, includes chop, woodcut in colour, a copy in the collection of the Library of Congress: 37.0 x 24.8 cm, control no: 2009631600 – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009631600/> – access: 05.11.2020. The dating for 10.06.1904 after WDL – <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/6599/> – access: 27.11.2020.

cowardly.⁴⁹⁾ The whole print can be summed up as a depiction of the Japanese serving dead Russians to the fish in the sea. This may seem rather drastic for today's sensitivities, but it is not the only print that treats the significant number of casualties as an opportunity to mock the enemy.⁵⁰⁾ This was in fact a common subject for satirical prints during both wars discussed here.

The last print of the Russo-Japanese war, *Three Crab Soldiers, Two with Picks Chopping up the Ground and the Third is Standing on the Wall of a Fort* (Fig. 6) was published on 1 April 1905.⁵¹⁾ The print shows three crabs in Russian army caps. The two in the foreground are vigorously digging a hole with picks while the third is standing on a wall of a fort, apparently keeping guard. Crabs are known for their ability to escape in any direction and dig holes in the ground. In the Japanese tradition they are associated with the Taira clan, defeated in the Genpei War in the 12th century. The Taira clan was also called Heike, from which the name of a particular species of crabs called Heikegani (*Heikeopsis japonica*) is derived. They are distinguished by their shells bearing a pattern that resembles a human face, and are believed to be reincarnations of Taira warriors killed in the naval Battle of Dan-no-ura (1185). This belief is reflected in imagery. Heikegani crabs as incarnations or ghosts of the fallen Taira warriors appear for instance in woodblock prints by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861), such as: *The Sea Bed at Daimotsu Bay*⁵²⁾ (Fig. 7) and *Yoshitsune attacked by Taira ghosts*.⁵³⁾ As these examples show, crabs symbolise

⁴⁹⁾ See for example the series: *The Expeditionary War Against Russia: Tales of Laughter* produced by Utagawa Kokunimasa (1874–1944) and Nashimori Takeki.

⁵⁰⁾ See for example prints by Kobayashi: *Hell is Booming* (Jigoku no ōhanjō), November 1894, no: 11021–09, Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=899&lang=e&first=1> – access: 12.12.2020; *Rush at the River Styx* (Sanzugawa no ō-konzatsu), May 1895, no: 11021–38, Ukiyoe Caricatures Wien (2007) – <http://ukiyoe.univie.ac.at/detail.asp?docid=898&lang=e&first=1> – access: 12.12.2020.

⁵¹⁾ Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), *Three Crab Soldiers, Two with Picks Chopping up the Ground and the Third is Standing on the Wall of a Fort*, 1.04.1905, signed on the block, lower left only with chop, woodcut in colour, a copy in the collection of the Library of Congress: 35.8 x 24.4 cm, control no: 2009630495 – LC – <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009630495/> – access: 16.11.2020. The dating for 1.04.1905 and substitution of “crabs” for “lobsters” (that are in the title of Library of Congress) after WDL – <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/6597/> – access: 29.11.2020.

⁵²⁾ Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861), publisher Fujiokaya Keijiro, *The Sea Bed at Daimotsu Bay*, (Daimotsu-no-ura kaitei no zu), 1851, British Museum, museum no: 2008,3037.20104.

⁵³⁾ Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861), publisher Joshuya Juzo, *Yoshitsune attacked by*

the soldiers of a defeated army, which was a very appropriate analogy for the Russians' situation in April 1905, more than a year after the war with Japan started. Port Arthur was already in the hands of the Japanese, the Baltic Fleet was wending its way tediously to the Pacific. The Russians were besieged, desperate and hopeless. Even escape was not an easy option, because there was nowhere to run. Hence the scene of digging holes in the ground.

As the examples given above demonstrate, the use of animal figures in satirical prints of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars has a complex background. The prints themselves were created in relation to two military conflicts that helped to shape Japan as a modern country. They praise the modernisation of Japan. And yet they use depictions of animals rooted in a long tradition of symbolic as well as satirical representations, the tradition further reinforced by pressure from the shogunate censorship. The choice of the specific animals to be depicted was also based on the traditions recorded in the literary works or folklore which stretch as far back as the Middle Ages. There lies the paradox of the war propaganda of a country that sees itself as modern and deliberately rejects everything that is old and traditional and yet uses symbols rooted in a thousand-year-old tradition to convey its message. It seems that the explanation of this paradox lies in the fact that the references to creatures and beliefs familiar to all Japanese provided the widest possible reception of the presented message and this pragmatic consideration proved to be the most relevant one.

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