



Children's Daimyo Procession

Utagawa Hiroshige

Not on display

Title/Description: Children's Daimyo Procession

Artist/Maker: Utagawa Hiroshige (Artist)

Born: 1835 circa - 1835

Object Type: Kodomo-e, Mitate-e, Print, Ukiyo-e, Woodcut woodblock print

Materials: Ink, Paper

Technique: Woodcut

Measurements: Image h. 366 x w. 501mm (total)

Accession Number: 41466

Historic Period: Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

School/Style: Utagawa School

Utagawa Hiroshige's design (1797-1858) depicts a procession of domain officials and samurai foot soldiers wending their way along the Tōkaidō highroad – the main route connecting the eastern city of Edo with the western capital of Kyoto. The roadside's towering red cedars and the magnificent cone of Mount Fuji dominate the scene, making the marching figures appear small and child-like.

After closer inspection, the viewer discovers that the diminutive figures are children impersonating a daimyo's retinue. Carrying standards and boxes of luggage, the children imitate the pageantry of a domain lord's travelling procession. In 1635, the ruling Tokugawa family inaugurated a system of alternate attendance (J. *sankin kōtai*), which forced daimyo households to reside in Edo every alternate year. This ritualized biennial or triennial obligation made daimyo processions along the Tōkaidō a familiar sight.

The charming device of showing children performing adult duties frequently occurs in woodblock prints. These sweetly comical designs are referred to as 'analogue prints' (J. *mitate-e*) or 'pictures of children' (J. *kodomo-e*). Utagawa Hiroshige is famous for producing multiple print series inspired by the beauty of the landscape along the Tōkaidō highroad. The design in the Sainsbury Centre Collection can be appreciated as a variation of Hiroshige's popular Tōkaidō theme (see object number: 41457).

A related design has been identified in the Honolulu Museum of Art's collection. This design titled 'Children's Daimyo Procession' (*Yōdōgyōretsu dōchūno zu* 子供御成行列) comprises three horizontally-formatted sheets (J. *yoko-e*), published circa 1835 by Sanoya Kihei. [1] Hiroshige may have reworked this drawing to create a polyptych from vertically-formatted (J. *tate-e*) sheets.

Unfortunately, the design in the Sainsbury Centre's collection is incomplete, missing one sheet or more. For this reason, the title of this design cannot be confirmed. It appears that Utagawa Hiroshige and his publisher Tsutaya Kichizō issued the polyptych during a period of relatively lax censorship, since neither sheet in the Sainsbury Centre Collection has a 'kiwame' seal. Hiroshige's multi-sheet design possibly dates from the Tenpō era (1830-1844), and may have been published early in 1842 when the censorship system was under review. [2]

Vanessa Tothill, May 2020

[1] Honolulu Museum of Art (object number: 19198).

<https://art.honoluluuseum.org/objects/3408/childrens-daimyo-procession-yodo-gyoretsu-dochu-no-zu?ctx=fb4b46bb-dc23-497c-83d3-ee7fca782a5b&idx=0> [accessed 21 May 2020].

[2] Andreas Marks, *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* (Leiden and Boston: Hotei Publishing, 2011), pp. 476-77.

Further Reading

Andreas Marks, *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* (Leiden; Boston: Hotei Publishing, 2011)
