



此届明治十九年三月 日  
豊月岡米次郎  
版 秋山武工門

月  
吳蘇

**Moon over the Yamaki Mansion: Spearman Kagekado**  
battling Kanetaka, 1886, by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

# Moon over the Yamaki Mansion: Spearman Kagekado battling Kanetaka

1886 (Meiji period, 1868–1912)

From the series *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon* (*Tsuki Hyakushi*)

Color woodcut

15 1/2 × 10 1/2 inches (39.4 × 26.7 cm)

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (Japanese, 1839–1892)

Block carved by Noguchi Enkatsu (Japanese, active 1894)



Memorial Portrait of Taiso Yoshitoshi, 1892, by Toshikage; block carved by Horikō Enkatsu



A Noh Actor as the Warrior Kamasaka Chōhan on a Night with a Misty Moon, 1886, by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi



Strolling: A Fashionable Married Woman of the Middle Meiji Period (1880s) Dressed in Western Style, 1888, by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

## Let's Look

What do you think is happening in this picture?

This image shows one moment from a much longer story about two warriors. What do you think happened leading up to this part of the story and what do you think happens next?

## Let's Look Again

Yoshitoshi was famous for making prints that are filled with drama and suspense. What are some of the ways that he creates those feelings in this picture?

Each color that you see here was printed using a different woodblock. How many woodblocks do you think were used to make this print?

## About the Artwork

In the corner of a darkened room, a brightly dressed samurai warrior bends at his waist as an ominous shadow approaches. The figure on the other side of the screen—whose sword is raised over his head, ready to strike—seems like a monumental opponent. The crouching samurai balances his helmet on the blade of his outstretched spear as a clever decoy to trick the unseen warrior. The spear's blade is stretched so far forward that it extends outside of the frame of the picture. A view of the night sky through a window above the samurai's head reveals the full moon glowing brightly in the distance.

This color woodcut print is from Yoshitoshi's most famous series, *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon* (*Tsuki Hyakushi*). The one hundred prints in the series range in subject matter from historic battles to beautiful women of the court. The presence of the moon in each print, sometimes large and imposing and sometimes hardly noticeable in the distance, is the common thread that runs throughout the series.

This print shows a dramatic moment from *The Tale of the Heike*, an epic story about two warring clans in the late 1100s. The Taira and Minamoto clans had a long history of conflicts in their quest to control Japan. Though based on real events, the stories in *The Tale of the Heike* were passed down orally and came to be embellished over time. The man in the foreground is Kagekado of the Minamoto clan, who snuck into his opponent's palace in the cover of night. He is shown here in an attempt to trick Kanetaka of the Taira clan, the menacing shadow behind the screen. This clever deception gives Kagekado the upper hand and allows him to carry out a sneak attack while his opponent is distracted.

## About the Artist

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi was born in Tokyo (formerly Edo), in 1839. He is recognized as the last great master of the ukiyo-e (yoo-kee-oh-ey) tradition of Japanese woodcut printing. Yoshitoshi's life and career spanned a period of time that witnessed many important cultural and political shifts in Japan. He grew up and trained as an artist in the final years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which existed between 1600 and 1868. During this period, Japan was organized in a feudal system of government in which the military ruled over the country while the emperor remained a figurehead with very little power. Japan was almost completely isolated from other nations, both near and far, for most of the Shogunate. Big changes came in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration, when power was returned to the emperor and Japan's borders were opened up to the rest of the world. Yoshitoshi's art reflects these major cultural changes.

It was in the final years of the Tokugawa Shogunate that Yoshitoshi became well known for his prints that feature scenes of great violence. Though he wasn't the first artist to depict this subject matter, Yoshitoshi's artworks became especially known for the expressiveness of his figures and the special mixtures of red ink he used for blood that heightened the gore. These works were extremely popular at a time when the people of Japan were witnessing the conflicts between the forces backing the Shogunate and the military that supported the restoration of the emperor's power.

As Japan opened up its borders and modernized, traditional Japanese woodcut printing faced competition from modern technologies like photography and lithography. Yoshitoshi skillfully navigated between an adherence to traditional printmaking and experimentation with new materials, techniques, and subject matter. To that end, he took advantage of brighter, more intense ink colors newly imported from the West. The bright colors complemented the energetic quality of his lines and expressiveness of his figures, invigorating the ukiyo-e tradition for this new modern era. This tension between tradition and innovation is one thing that makes Yoshitoshi's work so unique and admired.

## The Ukiyo-e Tradition

Ukiyo-e, literally "pictures of the Floating World," refers to entertainment typically found in urban centers like Edo. Traditional ukiyo-e subjects included famous actors, samurai warriors, sumo wrestlers, scenes from history and folklore, and beautiful landscapes. Color woodcut prints flourished from the mid-1700s to the late 1800s. The tradition influenced and inspired artists from all over the world, most famously Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists like Vincent van Gogh. Ukiyo-e has had a lasting impact on artists and its influence can be seen in manga (comics) being produced in Japan today.

Though paintings are a part of the ukiyo-e tradition, most artists, Yoshitoshi among them, specialized in designing woodcut prints. The process for making a woodcut print was a long one that involved many people with unique skillsets. Woodcut prints were typically produced as collaborations between an artist and a publisher. In the 1870s newspapers commissioned and published many prints and series by Yoshitoshi.

The ukiyo-e artist was responsible for making the initial drawing that would be transferred to the woodblock for mass production. Artisans who were specially trained as woodblock carvers would then use the drawing as a guide to carve the woodblock. A different woodblock had to be made for every color that you see in a ukiyo-e print. Each block would then be rolled with a different colored ink and printed in succession on the same piece of paper to make the final multicolored print. This was done by placing the same piece of paper in perfect alignment on top of each block and rubbing it with a special tool to transfer the image. This could be repeated over and over again to create as many prints as the publisher wanted in the edition.