

STEVENSON, JOHN. *Yoshitoshi's Thirty-Six Ghosts*. Introduction by Donald Richie. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992. 92 pages. 50 illustrations (49 in color), bibliography. Cloth US\$29.95; ISBN 0-295-97170-3.

History often moves in cycles, with features of antiquity recurring in the modern age; in a sense, antiquity and modernity are correlating notions. At the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), the modernity of Western Europe shocked Japan into adopting many aspects of Western civilization. However, while identifying themselves to some extent with the science, administration, and literature of the West, many Japanese came to feel an inner contradiction between their modern and their traditional identities. The subsequent movement back toward antiquity can be seen as an attempt by the Japanese to resist modernity as a "cultural other" and preserve their traditional identity in the guise of archaism.

Archaism of this type influenced a vast range of art and literature in Meiji Japan, including the Ukiyoe, the popular "floating world" art form that first appeared during the seventeenth century. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi's (1839-92) Ukiyoe collection *Shinkei sanjūroku kaisen* 新形三十六怪選 [Modern selection of thirty-six ghosts] shows many signs of this tension between the modern and the archaic. The collection, Yoshitoshi's last, comprised a series of his prints of ghosts and the supernatural, inspired by Kabuki, Noh, folklore, and the Japanese classics. The collection's title, with its use of the word *shinkei* 新形 (modern or new-style), suggests the pull that the modern era had upon Yoshitoshi. Yet there are several homonyms of *shinkei* that indicate a greater underlying complexity. One is written with the characters 神經 and means "nerve," the other with the characters 真景 and means "realistic description." Both meanings of *shinkei* were used by the *rakugo* storyteller Sanyūtei Enchō, whose tale *Shinkei Kasanegahuchi* presents an extremely true-to-life depiction of a series of murders carried out because of a nervous (i.e., psychological) disturbance in the murderess. Yoshitoshi, who was familiar with Sanyūtei's work, followed the latter in accepting Western civilization and technology, yet simultaneously questioning them by presenting as his subject matter the psychic realm of ghosts and the supernatural that cannot be explained by the rationalism of science.

In *Yoshitoshi's Thirty-Six Ghosts*, John Stevenson situates Yoshitoshi's final work in this context and provides us with his interpretations of Yoshitoshi's prints. Yoshitoshi had always been interested in the supernatural, and many of his early pieces were of ghosts and other such beings. His fascination with violent and supernatural scenes was one of the reasons for his interest in the Ukiyoe form: Ukiyoe had from at least the time of Hokusai and Kuniyoshi (Yoshitoshi's teacher) dealt with subjects excluded from Japan's classical arts, among them sex, passion, and murder. Yoshitoshi's fascination with these themes, as well as his visionary temperament, may also have contributed to the nervous breakdown he suffered in 1873.

The emergence in Japan of the Western world as a cultural other changed the nature of Yoshitoshi's art. Yoshitoshi, though fascinated by Western ideas (he attended exhibitions of Western works and adopted the technique of perspective), attempted to counter Western civilization by seeking an awareness of the national identity and "consciously tr[ying] to preserve the past through his work" (12). The more committed he became to Western civilization, the more conscious he became of the crisis in the Japanese identity.

As the word *ukiyoe* (picture of the floating world) suggests, the art form was es-

entially concerned with the secular world and the interests of the pleasure-loving city dwellers, and was far from concerned with religious sentiment. Thus Noh drama—originally performed to calm the resentment of the dead—was not originally accepted as a suitable subject for Ukiyoe woodblock prints. This changed with Yoshitoshi, who made such drama a major subject of his later works. While the images of his earlier prints were often bloody and frightening, those of his later ones were designed more to soothe the passions and reconcile present and past. “This suggests the desperate straits into which Japanese culture had been thrown by the impact of the West” (12), and can be seen as a loss by the Ukiyoe form of its original character as a secular art that stimulated the passions and subconsciousness. It became instead a retreat into the sameness of the Japanese identity, and the calmness of Yoshitoshi’s late work is a symptom of such a retreat. For example, Oiwa, the heroine of the bloody revenge of Tsuruya Nanboku’s *Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan*, appears in a “scene of domestic tranquility” and the portrayal is “positively sympathetic” (88).

A small additional indication of Yoshitoshi’s turn to the past is the aged, worm-eaten appearance that he gave to the title page of *Shinkei sanjūroku kaisen*. Some interpreters relate this to Yoshitoshi’s nervous breakdown, but Stevenson sees it as an indication of “Yoshitoshi’s self-imposed role as guardian of the past, not a sign of mental deterioration” (15). It could also be interpreted as a statement by Yoshitoshi that the retreat into antiquity can heal the mental deterioration that Meiji Japan experienced when it encountered the West as a cultural other.

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CHINA

MYERS, JOHN E. *The Way of the Pipa: Structure and Imagery in Chinese Lute Music*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1992. xvii+155 pages. Photographs, tables, music examples, glossary, bibliography, select discography, index. Hardcover US\$30.00; ISBN 0-87338-455-5.

Music for the *pipa* 琵琶 (a Chinese lute) constitutes one of the oldest and most interesting Asian musical traditions. Yet the *pipa* and its musical repertory have not as yet received sufficient scholarly attention from Western musicologists. In his *The Way of the Pipa*, John Myers seeks to fill this gap by addressing a large number of significant issues: the origin and development of the instrument; the history and aesthetics of *pipa* music; and the form and structure of certain pieces found in the *Hua shi pu* 華氏譜 (Hua family collection), an anthology of solo *pipa* music published in 1819.

In attempting both a historical and an analytical study of one of the world’s richest musical traditions (Chinese music) as well as a specific product of it (the music of the *Hua shi pu*)—and this in a mere 135 pages of text and musical examples—Myers has set himself a formidable, if not impossible, task. The results are, not surprisingly, disappointing.

Chapters 1 and 2, treating the history of the *pipa* and Chinese music aesthetics, are perhaps meant to be introductory, and may be excused for being superficial. The core of the book begins with chapter 3, the first of five chapters of music analysis.