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**Title**

Islands of the imagination: Hokusai's Eight views of Ryūkyū

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/335659jg>

**Journal**

Andon: Journal of the Society for Japanese Arts

**ISSN**

0168-2997

**Author**

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**Publication Date**

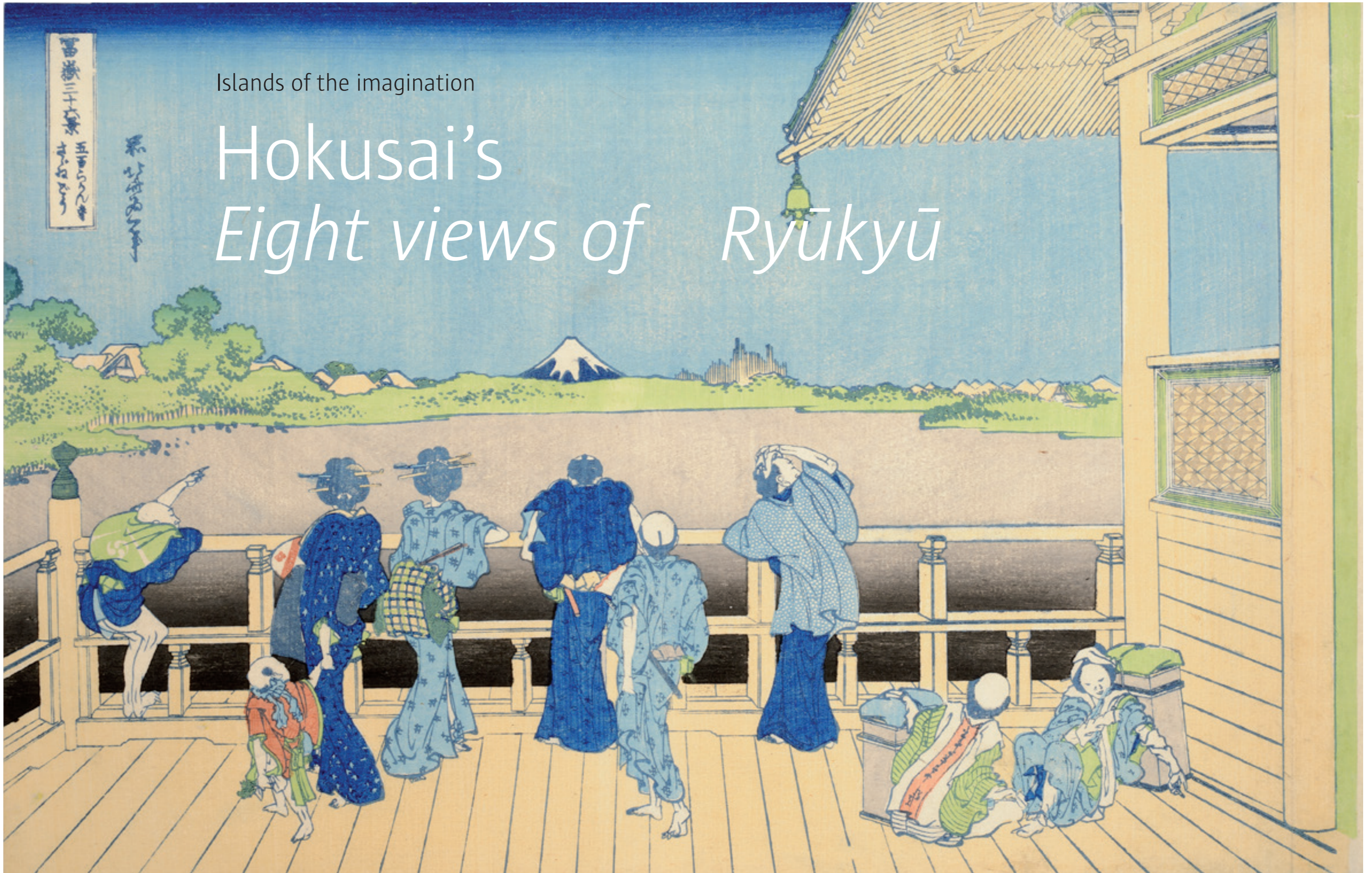
2018-12-01

Peer reviewed



Islands of the imagination

# Hokusai's *Eight views of Ryūkyū*





Enthusiasts for Hokusai's landscape prints discovered a new series on the stands in the 3rd year of the Tenpō era (1832), offering to provide *Eight views of Ryūkyū* (琉球八景, *Ryūkyū hakkei*), a sub-tropical island kingdom to which they could not travel, but could only picture. One print in the series shows a stone-walled shrine perched atop a rocky bluff, extending out over calm blue waters. Another depicts homes surrounded by banana plants, while another offers a quiet snow scene. These prints deviate significantly from both the compositional and aesthetic approaches typical of the *meisho* ('famous places') genre, and from the standard motifs of the traditional 'eight views' mode, and thus mark Ryūkyū as separate, 'other', from the Japanese sites seen in most other prints.

Travis Seifman

Miniscule islands lay scattered in vast seas of blue, suggesting a conceptual distance, and yet Japanese-style boats and architectural elements likely contributed a sense of cultural closeness for the early modern Japanese viewer. Numerous works were published over the course of the Edo period describing or depicting Ryukyuan subjects. Yet, Hokusai's *Ryūkyū hakkei* is the only set we know of today to depict landscape scenes of sites in Ryūkyū in full colour and in single-sheet prints (i.e., not in an illustrated book). As such, they represent a uniquely significant tool for understanding how Hokusai, and his fellow Edoites, conceived of Ryūkyū: as a part of a 'Japan' also crystallizing in the popular imagination at that time, and yet apart from it; culturally close and familiar, and yet distant and perhaps even slightly unreal.

## Background

During the 17th to mid-19th centuries, while the Tokugawa shogunate governed the Japanese archipelago, the semi-independent Ryūkyū Kingdom ruled the string of islands from Okinawa Island down to Yonaguni (near Taiwan) which today comprise Japan's Okinawa prefecture. Engaged in a tributary relationship with Ming-dynasty China since even before its unification of Okinawa Island in the early 15th century, the kingdom was invaded in 1609 by forces from the samurai domain of Kagoshima.<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of the Tokugawa period, the kingdom was something of a vassal state under Kagoshima's suzerainty. Ryūkyū sent embassies to Edo on seventeen occasions over the course of this period, each time congratulating a new shogun on his

succession, or expressing gratitude for the shogunate's formal recognition of a new king of Ryūkyū. These missions were not wholly exclusive affairs, consisting solely of elite meetings behind closed doors. To the contrary, they also involved grand street processions in which roughly one hundred Ryukyuan paraded through the streets of Edo, and of many other towns along their travel route. They wore colourful costumes and rode in lavish sedan chairs, carried banners, umbrellas, and decorative gilded and red-lacquered spears, and played Ryukyuan music, as they marched amidst a massive attention-grabbing procession of some three thousand Kagoshima samurai, porters, and other followers. These were exciting occasions for the residents of these Japanese towns – precious rare opportunities to witness foreigners first-hand – and as a result such events were often accompanied by great surges of popular interest in Ryūkyū, its people, and their culture. Japanese desired to learn more about the island kingdom and its people, or simply to possess a visual record or souvenir of the processions, and publishers responded, producing numerous illustrated books and single-sheet print series describing Ryukyuan subjects.

The *Ryūkyū hakkei*, or *Eight views of Ryūkyū*, designed by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and published in 1832 by Moriya Jihei (dates unknown), was one such series. Scholarship on it in English has been almost exclusively limited, however, to approaches which focus largely on form, colour, style, and the biography of the artist, rather than on wider cultural or historical context. The *ukiyo-e* expert Richard Lane discussed the series only in passing in his survey of Hokusai's life and career, portraying it as a more or less unremarkable example of Hokusai's many landscape prints series. Matthi Forrer, one of the leading experts on Hokusai, similarly devotes little more than a few short paragraphs to the series in his chief book on the artist.<sup>2</sup> Such a perspective is understandable for a publication interested in the trajectory of Hokusai's practice and development; however, it also teaches the reader precious little about early modern Japanese attitudes or conceptions concerning Ryūkyū and its people. Gian Carlo Calza comments briefly on the series as well, though for the most part only in very generic terms, mentioning for example "a long stone bridge", "large areas of light green among the blue roofs", and "a promontory with a fortification", without providing the names, histories, or cultural significance of any of the specific locations depicted.<sup>3</sup>

While I am very much indebted to the previous scholarship, the *Ryūkyū hakkei*, far from being simply another set of landscape prints, is of particular significance as the only series mentioned in Lane's comprehensive catalogue of Hokusai's oeuvre to depict landscape scenes in Ryūkyū in the form of single-sheet prints; indeed, to my knowledge, it is the only single-sheet series by any Edo-period Japanese artist depicting this subject. Common knowledge about Ryūkyū in Tokugawa Japan was mediated largely through illustrated books and single-sheet prints depicting or describing the Ryukyuan embassies or street processions.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of images produced in Tokugawa Japan depicting Ryukyuan subjects are illustrations of those things that print designers and their consumers might theoretically have seen: the costumes, musical instruments, banners, and other accoutrements seen in the Ryukyuan embassies' processions through the streets of Japan.<sup>5</sup> Illustrated books describing customs, architecture, or landscapes within Ryūkyū, based on Chinese accounts, were also widely available in Japan at this time, as were a number of works of fiction set in Ryūkyū, such as Takizawa Bakin's *Chinsetsu yumiharizuki* (*Strange tales of the crescent moon*, published 1806–1811), illustrated by Hokusai.<sup>6</sup> But single-sheet prints addressing these subjects were unknown, with the exception of this eight-print series by Hokusai. The *Ryūkyū hakkei* offers a different perspective in that it does not depict Ryukyuan people as observed in street processions, but rather purports to depict the landscapes of the island kingdom itself. The series must therefore be seen not merely as an example of Hokusai's landscapes and pictorial design aesthetic, but as a resource, alongside illustrated books and other materials, providing us today with a glimpse into what sort of place Ryūkyū might have been in the imaginations of the townspeople of Edo-period Japan.

## Zhou Huang and the history of the Liuqiuguo zhilue

As Kishi Akimasa has illuminated, Hokusai adapted his *Ryūkyū hakkei* from eight landscape views of sites in Ryūkyū found in a Chinese volume entitled *Liuqiuguo zhilue* (琉球国志略, J: *Ryūkyū-koku shiryaku*, *Abridged history of the land of Ryūkyū*) originally published in 1757 (attributed as a whole to Zhou Huang (d. 1785), a Chinese

scholar bureaucrat who served as deputy ambassador on an investiture mission to Ryūkyū in 1756–1757).<sup>7</sup> A comparison of the *Ryūkyū hakkei* prints and the images in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* reveals that Hokusai indeed based his compositions very closely on the Chinese source, with each of the eight prints corresponding directly to a two-page spread in the Chinese volume. Hokusai's distinct personal style is quite evident, but the selection of sites, overall compositions, and titles assigned to each image are taken directly from the Chinese source. Hokusai added a few elements such as ships, and the triangular form of Mt. Fuji in some prints, as well as making other alterations, for instance in the architectural style of several structures. However, the most striking difference is simply the addition of colour.

The lengthy text was assembled from the reports of previous Chinese ambassadors, official Ryukyuan royal documents, and Zhou Huang's own observations.<sup>8</sup> Compiled for the Chinese imperial bureaucracy to serve as an official history of the kingdom, the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* was copied and distributed in Japan in 1831 by the shogunate for similar official purposes, including as educational materials for the training of shogunate and domain officials, as well as in the upbringing of children destined for such posts.<sup>9</sup> It can be assumed that Hokusai employed one of these 1831 copies as the basis for his compositions.

In his alterations of the eight landscape images, Hokusai drew upon his understanding of what Ryūkyū was like, based upon the things he surely saw, heard, and read about the island kingdom. Hokusai's mental image of the Ryukyuan landscape, and thus his *Ryūkyū hakkei*, were products of popular discourse, the very same popular discourse which the *hakkei* series then influenced in turn. Distribution or circulation statistics for early modern woodblock prints are notoriously difficult to pin down. However, it is generally agreed by *ukiyo-e* scholars that they had a significant popular discursive impact, both in the main cities and to a lesser extent in the provinces. Much has been written on the influence of landscape prints by Hokusai, Hiroshige, and others upon travel culture, and popular conceptions about other places within the Japanese archipelago; thus, it is no stretch to argue that this set of images of Ryūkyū, published one year after the artist's hugely popular Mt. Fuji series, likewise had a significant impact.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the alterations made by Hokusai (and/or his publisher) to the compositions he found in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* seem minor at first glance, the overall composition being quite similar. Yet these alterations, along with those elements which Hokusai chose to conserve, reveal much about his (and his publisher's) attitudes, intentions and conceptions of Ryūkyū, and the influence *Ryūkyū hakkei* might have had on the popular imagination. By extension, the compositions also permit insights into attitudes more widely held among the general populace, regarding Ryūkyū's geographical, political, economic and cultural position in the world in relation to Japan.

## The foreign and the familiar in the *Ryūkyū hakkei*

The *Ryūkyū hakkei* are not the only landscape prints Hokusai designed which depict sites he never visited, but merely imagined. In fact, Hokusai likely never travelled to most of the places outside of Edo that he depicted. Nevertheless these imagined scenes function to allow viewers to travel vicariously, experiencing the geographic breadth of 'Japan' and gaining an appreciation for the 'Japaneseness' of these sites. As Mary Elizabeth Berry writes, "actual discovery may not have been essential to the social role of *meisho* [...] It was the presentation of famous places in guides and maps, as well as the dissemination of the *meisho* image, that probably bound society more emphatically than travel itself".<sup>11</sup>

*Meisho* prints and other prints depicting landscapes within Japan employed a variety of signs and stylistic elements, along with standardized features of depiction throughout or between series, which helped reinforce the conceptual connections between disparate sites – or between sites and viewers – into a singular entity known as 'Japan'.<sup>12</sup> However, many of these features, consistent throughout Hokusai's depictions of landscape scenes within 'Japan', do not occur in the *Ryūkyū hakkei*, thereby setting Ryūkyū markedly apart. Comparisons of the *Ryūkyū hakkei* prints to other landscapes by Hokusai thus serve as a good starting point for determining the ways in which the *Ryūkyū hakkei* can be said to represent Ryūkyū as simultaneously distant and foreign, and yet in some respects 'close' and familiar.

To begin, Hokusai distances his viewer from Ryūkyū by employing a bird's-eye perspective and a relatively distant vantage point in his Ryūkyū prints. While there are surely exceptions, most of Hokusai's landscape



1.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Sazaidō at the Five  
Hundred Rakan Temple'  
*Nishiki-e*, ink and colour on  
paper.

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART,  
GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER,  
1991 (21972)

prints portray scenes from a relatively close viewpoint, often with the human figures relatively large within the frame of the composition. As Ewa Machotka articulates, "the artist emphasized the [foreground] plane and depicted it in close-up, focusing on people and their affairs. [...] [This] diminishes the distance between the object and the viewer evoking the overwhelming impression of the inclusion of the viewer into a picture".<sup>13</sup> Further, Hokusai "scarcely leaves the landscape uninhabited. [...] The artist does not present 'pure' landscape but presents landscape inhabited by people occupied with different tasks, mainly working or traveling".<sup>14</sup> The point of view in most of Hokusai's landscape prints is low, and near the ground-line, often approximating a view from human-eye level, making the scene seem more familiar or accessible. This can be clearly seen, for example, in 'Sazaidō at the Five Hundred Rakan Temple' from Hokusai's 36 *views of Mt. Fuji* series (fig. 1), in which the viewer is placed on a veranda, behind a group of figures looking out at Mt. Fuji. The figures are large enough that details of their clothing, hairstyles, and gestures or poses are visible, and the architectural foreground is presented as though the viewer were there on the veranda.

Throughout the *Ryūkyū hakkei* series, by contrast, Hokusai takes a perspective from outside of Ryūkyū. Entire islands are depicted within the frame of each print, and as a result, the figures and buildings in the Ryūkyū prints are a fraction of the size of those in the Edo or Japan prints. The island kingdom is literally portrayed as being at a considerable distance away from the viewer. As Gian Carlo Calza writes:

Here the vision is distant and detached, with a multiple vanishing point, also known as a 'bird's-eye' view. The observer is not directly involved, but is simply fascinated by a beautiful panorama, rendered exotic by the use of almost fairy-tale natural features emphasizing the sense of distant and unknown lands.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Lane further describes the effect in the *Ryūkyū hakkei* as "dangerously close [...] to *bonseki* – miniature landscapes fashioned from sand and pebbles".<sup>16</sup> This effect is enhanced by the expansiveness of areas of sea and sky which all but completely surround the landforms, and frame the compositions. Thinking of these 'frames' of sea or sky as comparable to *bonseki* landscapes, Lane's suggestion strikes a chord. In nearly all of Hokusai's eight prints, sea and sky surround islands so minute that they house only a handful of small structures each. Other lands are seen only in the distance, often obscured by mists, making each tiny island, such as those in 'Banana groves at Nakashima' (中島蕉園, *Chūtō shōen*, figs 2a and 2b), seem almost completely removed from any other, and alone in a vast ocean, thus dramatically exaggerating the impression of distance and isolation.<sup>17</sup>



This depiction of very small landforms with wide expanses of surrounding sea may in fact not be entirely unrealistic when it comes to sites such as the Chōkōtei embankment seen in 'Clear autumn weather at Chōkō' (長虹秋霽, *Chōkō shūsei*, *figs 3a and 3b*), or the long spit of land seen in 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai' (臨海湖聲, *Rinkai kosei*, *figs 4a and 4b*), both of which were, in reality, small spots of earth which jutted out into, or across, expanses of water.<sup>18</sup> Yet, on the whole, Okinawa Island, or, for that matter, even the far smaller islet of Ukishima which once constituted the core of the city of Naha, was not nearly as small, nor as divided up by the sea, as Hokusai's images would suggest.

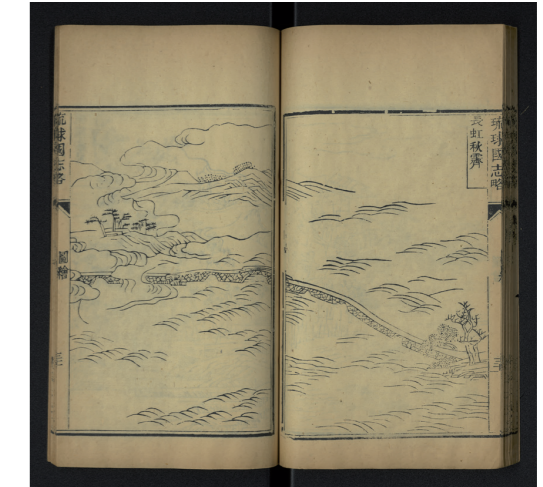
Bridges and boats abound in 'Banana groves at Nakashima', 'Bamboo grove of Kumemura' (桑村竹籬, *Beison chikuri*, *figs 5a and 5b*), and other prints in this series, each of which depict tiny communities crammed onto a small island or peninsula, the sea never more than a few yards away.<sup>19</sup> 'Bamboo grove of Kumemura' ostensibly depicts the Kumemura (Okinawan: *Kunindaq*) area within Naha, which was home to the chief community of Confucian scholar-aristocrats in the kingdom, and the centre of Confucian study and ritual. In reality neither Nakashima nor Kumemura were so small, nor so detached from neighbouring communities as they appear in Hokusai's prints, whereas Naha was a bustling port town of thousands of homes. Indeed, few if any communities in the entire Ryukyuan archipelago sat on islands that small. In this, Hokusai may have simply taken after the Chinese source, regarding that volume as accurate and reliable; nevertheless, it reflects how he and viewers of his prints probably imagined Ryūkyū. The blending of sea and sky in several of these prints, with no clear horizon line dividing the two, contributes to this effect as well. The islands appear to float against an undifferentiated sea/sky, ungrounded. This effect, along with the bird's-eye view, and isolation of landforms in a frame of sea and sky, create a sense of detachment and distance which lends the scenes the appearance of miniaturised fantasy landscapes, distancing them not only from the viewer, but also from reality.

The addition of boats not present in the Chinese volume may simply be a design choice, in terms of space or balance, or a result of Hokusai's personal enjoyment of the subject; numerous Hokusai works feature similar watercraft. However, for viewers, these boats may have also strengthened the association of Ryūkyū with the sea, and with both physical and conceptual distance. At the same time, these are Japanese-style boats, which



3a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Clear autumn weather at Chōkō'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21902)



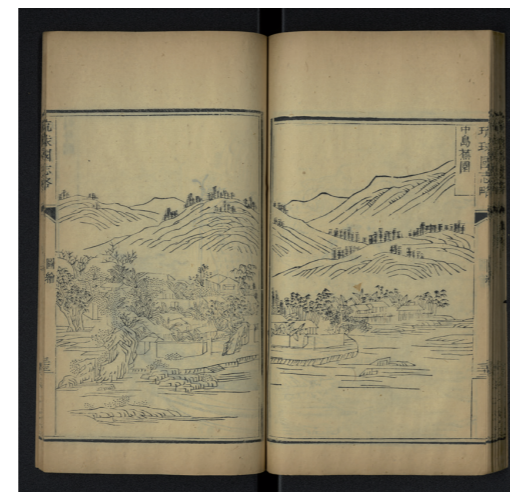
3b.  
'Clear autumn weather at Chōkō'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

SAKAMAKI-HAWLEY COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA LIBRARY, HW797



2a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Banana groves at Nakashima'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21904)



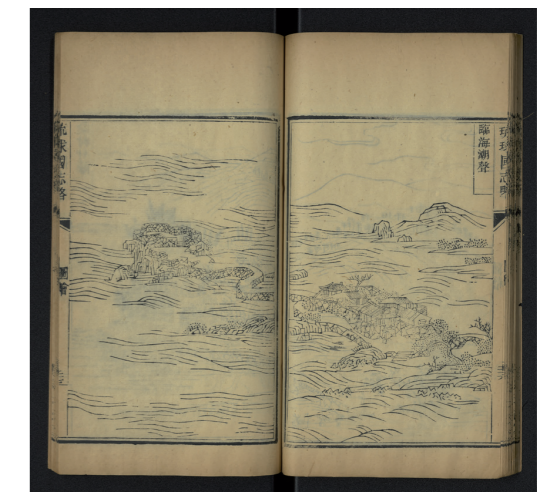
2b.  
'Banana groves at Nakashima'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

SAKAMAKI-HAWLEY COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA LIBRARY, HW797



4a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Voice of the lake at Rinkai'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21908)



4b.  
'Voice of the lake at Rinkai'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

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would have looked familiar to viewers, who might conversely take their presence as a suggestion either that Ryūkyū is geographically close to Japan, and that Japanese fishermen or traders do travel there, or that these are Ryukyuan boats, an indication of Ryūkyū's cultural closeness to Japan.

Nevertheless, the Ryūkyū prints are further marked as foreign by Hokusai in the style of the cartouche enclosing the series title, signature, and print titles. In the vast majority of his other landscape prints depicting scenes within Japan, Hokusai employs a simple rectangular cartouche. Yet, in the Ryūkyū prints, the cartouche takes a more elaborate form, resembling a style of Chinese fan known as a 'duck's foot' shape or 'Swatow fan'. Fans similar in shape to these cartouches are also seen in traditional Ryūkyū dance, and in the Ryukyuan *kumi odori* (Okinawan: *kumi udui*) theatrical form. This use of a Chinese- or Ryukyuan-inspired cartouche can be read as one of a number of design elements implying the foreignness of Ryūkyū in the minds of Hokusai and the Japanese people of his time.

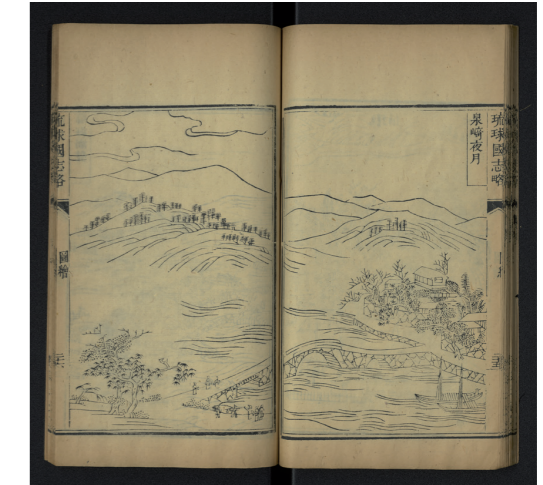
The architectural styles of structures depicted in these compositions tell a more complicated story, however. The architecture depicted in the *Ryūkyū hakkei* includes Japanese-style rooftops, Chinese-style gates, and traditional Ryukyuan stonework, crafting for the consumer of Hokusai's prints an impression that Ryūkyū was exotic, but not wholly foreign, a place with its own distinctive architectural aesthetics, including influences from China, Korea, and beyond, employed alongside familiar Japanese elements.

Ryukyuan stonework can be seen throughout the series, for instance in bridges, as in 'Clear autumn weather at Chōkō' and 'Night moon at Izumizaki' (泉崎夜月, *Senki yagetsu*, *figs 6a and 6b*); in walls, as in 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai' and 'Evening glow on precipitous cliffs' (筍崖夕照, *Jungai sekishō*, *figs 7a and 7b*); and in stone stairways leading to the water.<sup>20</sup> Along with the titular Buddhist temple Rinkai-ji, 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai' depicts *Mie gusuku*, a fortress built in the late 16th century to defend the harbour. Traditional Okinawan fortresses (*gusuku*) are known for their stonework, and made extensive use of local Okinawan limestone; traditional homes were often encircled by limestone walls as well. To present such stonework constructions as a distinctive and notable element of Okinawan architectural culture reflects Hokusai's fairly accurate impressions, therefore, on at least this point. However, he over-emphasised the ubiquity of limestone stonework in Ryūkyū, copying the Chinese source in drawing in stonework foundations beneath nearly every island – as if some sort of seawall or breakwater were built at every single stretch of seashore.



6a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Night moon at Izumizaki'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21906)



6b.  
'Night moon at Izumizaki'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

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5a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Bamboo grove of Kumemura'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21903)



5b.  
'Bamboo grove of Kumemura'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

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7a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Evening glow on precipitous cliffs'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21909)



7b.  
'Evening glow on precipitous cliffs'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

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A Chinese-style gate in 'Sacred fountain at Jōgaku' (城嶽靈泉, *Jōgaku reisen*, figs 8a and 8b) is perhaps the only overt example of Chinese architecture in the series. While the rooftops in many of the original *Liuqiuguo zhilue* images are distinctively Chinese in appearance, curving upwards at the corners, those in Hokusai's prints are not.<sup>21</sup> This is a significant change. The "concave curve of roof eave ends" which Hokusai eliminates is "a trademark of Chinese wooden architecture. That curve is present in most Chinese roofs."<sup>22</sup> It would seem that Hokusai intentionally altered the rooftops presented in the Chinese images to become hipped-gable roofs in the Japanese *irimoya* style, where the front and back planes of the roof descend directly diagonally downwards from the peak of the roof, not curving but flat. The triangular form they create is visible on the sides of the building, where roof elements extend out to the sides at a comparatively shallow angle. Hokusai's contemporary audience would have seen these as familiar forms, not as exotic or foreign. Many of the other rooftops in the *Ryūkyū hakkei* are in a much simpler yet closely related style, in which the roof simply descends in roughly rectangular forms on the two long sides of the building, with no secondary segments descending down the short sides of the building. These too would look quite typical to the Japanese viewer, contributing to the impression that while Ryūkyū was distant, foreign, and exotic, it was in some ways quite close and culturally familiar at the same time.

As the majority of the *Ryūkyū hakkei* prints depict neighbourhoods and not specific famous buildings, we cannot know precisely how those sights might have looked historically. However, comparison to extant structures from that time, pre-war photographs, and evidence from archaeological research indicates that neither the up-turned eaves seen in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* nor the hipped-gabled *irimoya* roofs seen in Hokusai's images reflect traditional Ryukyuan architectural styles. The roofs of Ryukyuan elite homes, as seen in examples such as the Nakamura family house in Nakagusuku, bear squat, tiled, hipped roofs in which the four roof segments descend from a short ridge-beam.<sup>23</sup> The ridge-beams on these roofs is far shorter than those in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* images, which seem to extend the full length of the rooftop, and which are completely absent from Hokusai's images. The eaves curve up only slightly at the corners, less dramatically than is suggested by the Chinese images, but more so than the eaves in Hokusai's prints, which do not curve up at all. The roof tiles are a shade of red-orange that is extremely common in the Ryūkyū Islands, and contrasts sharply with the dark blue employed in Hokusai's prints.<sup>24</sup>



8a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Sacred fountain at Jōgaku'  
Nishiki-e; ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21907)



8b.  
'Sacred fountain at Jōgaku'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

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The form of the Okinawan aristocratic home was strongly influenced by Japanese *shoin* ('writing room') architecture in the early 17th century, following the Kagoshima invasion, and is believed to have changed very little over the course of the 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>25</sup> This means that Hokusai's alteration of the style of the rooftops cannot be taken as an effort to 'correct' the Chinese images based on information he might have somehow obtained as to actual architectural changes in Ryūkyū between 1757 (the year of the publication of the *Liuqiuguo zhilue*) and his own time. Rather, we must see this alteration as either an effort to depict Ryūkyū as he imagined it to be – that is, more culturally close to Japan than the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* suggests – or simply an effort to sketch the rooftops in the manner most familiar to him.<sup>26</sup>

It seems, however, unlikely that Hokusai might have been seeking to correct the Chinese images. He probably had no solid source of information as to the true appearance of Ryukyuan architecture, and may have made these alterations in order to make the images better match his own impressions or conceptions. This is, perhaps, only a difference of nuance, but it is arguably an important one.

Hokusai's alteration of the rooftops seems, again, a deliberate move to balance the 'familiar' with the 'foreign'. The concepts of 'Chinese' and 'foreign' were closely associated, or even conflated, in early modern Japan. The term *Tōjin* (唐人, lit. 'person of Tang', i.e. of China) was frequently used at the time to refer to foreigners in general, revealing a general conception of equivalence between foreignness and Chinese-ness. Numerous Edo-period texts and images reflect a conceptual conflation of all foreigners, both Westerners and non-Westerners.<sup>27</sup> The presence of Chinese elements in the *Ryūkyū hakkei* landscapes, therefore, would not necessarily have been seen by Hokusai as simply signs of a foreign culture, namely, specifically, Chinese culture, but as equivalent to signs of foreignness itself, that is, foreignness in a more general sense. Thus, we can perhaps see Hokusai thinking of his stylistic decisions not in terms of Japaneseness and Chineseness, but more broadly and directly in terms of the familiar and the foreign.

Hokusai's decision to convert a rather non-descript structure in 'Sacred fountain at Jōgaku' – just the barest description of a roof and three legs in the Chinese volume – into a distinctively Chinese-style gate is therefore curious, in light of his conversion of so many other architectural elements from Chinese forms in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* compositions into Japanese forms in the *Ryūkyū hakkei*. The gate in Hokusai's 'Sacred grove' resembles a *chuihuamen*, a type of Chinese gate topped by a tiled roof with short eaves.<sup>28</sup> The gate in Hokusai's 'Jōgaku' is further distinguished as Chinese by the way its wings curve. On Japanese gates, the wings, or adjoining walls, tend to be quite straight and rectilinear in form, and form a straight line with the gate itself.<sup>29</sup>

A *torii* gate in 'Evening glow on precipitous cliffs' is another example of Japanese architectural elements in the series. Curiously, a form closely resembling a *torii* appears in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* version of this scene as well, though this is a distinctively Japanese structure, a gate marking the entrance to a Shinto shrine. However, when Zhou Huang saw Naminoue (Okinawan: Nanmin), the site depicted in 'Evening glow', in 1757, and when Hokusai reproduced an image of it in 1832, the shrine still belonged to the indigenous Ryukyuan religion. A sense that Ryūkyū was, perhaps, not so far away after all is bolstered by the inclusion of triangular forms, far in the distance in two of the prints, which scholars have identified as bearing a striking resemblance to conventional depictions of Mt. Fuji.<sup>30</sup>

Whether this was an aesthetic choice does not exempt it from having potential discursive meanings. Hokusai's 36 views of Mt. Fuji, which he began to produce in the first year of Tenpō (1830), enhanced both Fuji's prominence in the collective consciousness, and its prominence as a national symbol, allowing it to take on various connotations and resonances in the *Ryūkyū hakkei*.

This is not the only example of Fuji appearing in Edo-period depictions of foreign lands. Scholars have argued that mountain forms in a mid-18th-century folding screen painting of Ezo (i.e. Hokkaido) and in a page from *Hokusai manga* depicting West Lake in Hangzhou, were intended to represent Fuji; stories of Katō Kiyomasa glimpsing Fuji from the shore just north of the borders of Joseon Korea in the 1590s inspired numerous depictions as well.<sup>31</sup> While it is unclear whether Hokusai or others of his time believed Fuji to be actually visible from such foreign lands (it is not), the inclusion of Fuji in these images suggests several symbolic possibilities. For some viewers, the supposed visibility of Fuji from Ryūkyū may have simply suggested a geographical or cultural closeness. Others may have seen Fuji's inclusion in these images as indicating that Japan's greatness is seen and recognised even in foreign lands, or perhaps that these lands came under the purview or protection of the Japanese gods, emperor, or shogun.

## Comparison to the classic hakkei mode

Hokusai's 'Pine wave at Ryūdō' (龍洞松満, *Ryūdō shōtō*, figs 9a and 9b) stands out among the *Eight Views of Ryūkyū* as particularly fantastical, as it presents a snow scene.<sup>32</sup> Okinawa Island has only seen snow once since the beginning of modern weather records; it is unimaginable that anything approaching a snow-covered landscape as seen in this print could ever occur there.<sup>33</sup> The decision to include a snowy scene in a collection of views of sub-tropical Ryūkyū may therefore seem perplexing. Gian Carlo Calza has suggested that snow may have been "included to render the landscape more familiar to the Japanese public", though it is equally possible that Hokusai simply was unaware of Ryūkyū's year-round warm weather.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of a snowy landscape, however, also serves to recall, or make reference to, the classic theme of the 'Eight views of Xiao and Xiang' (C: *Xiaoxiang bajing*, J: *Shōshō hakkei*) which is seen in countless iterations across more than a thousand years of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Ryukyuan art and poetry.

The theme of 'Eight views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers' is said to have originated with Song-dynasty scholar-official Song Di (c. 1015–c. 1080). Song Di was not the first to produce views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers in painting, nor in poetry, but he is cited as having established the specific set of 'eight views' that Chinese, Korean, and Japanese artists would reference, recreate, adhere to, and adapt, for centuries. Song Di's original 'eight views' paintings do not survive, but scholar-official Shen Kuo (1031–1095) discusses the works, and provides their titles, in his *Dream Pool essays* (C: *Mengxi bitan*), a compilation of his writings on a wide variety of subjects. The eight standard Chinese themes he cites are: 'Wild geese descending to sandbar', 'Returning sails off distant shores', 'Mountain market in clearing mist', 'River and sky in evening snow', 'Autumn moon over Lake Dongting', 'Night rain on Xiao and Xiang', 'Evening bell from mist-shrouded temple', and 'Fishing village in twilight glow'.<sup>35</sup>

For centuries, these eight titles served as themes for ink landscapes by painters in China, Japan, and Korea. In early modern Japan, *ukiyo-e* print designers adapted the theme to locations in Japan, producing, most famously, series depicting eight views of Ōmi (*Ōmi hakkei*), the region around Lake Biwa in central-western Japan, and later series such as *Eight views of Edo*. Throughout East Asian art, when a set of landscapes is organized into 'eight views' (*hakkei*), it is almost assuredly a reference to the 'Eight views of Xiao and Xiang'.



9a.  
Katsushika Hokusai  
'Pine wave at Ryūdō'  
Nishiki-e, ink and colour on paper

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JAMES A. MICHENER, 1991 (21850)



9b.  
'Pine wave at Ryūdō'  
Woodblock printed book illustration from *Liuqiuguo zhilue*,  
1757

SAKAMAKI-HAWLEY COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA  
LIBRARY, HW797

Some series adhere quite closely to the eight themes cited by Shen Gua, and apply each to a site in or around Ōmi.<sup>36</sup> Other series such as the *Eight views of Edo* parody or otherwise twist or adapt the original eight themes while staying true to the overall schema.

Notably, none of the *Ryūkyū hakkei* prints refers specifically, and solely, to one of the standard eight themes. The classic 'eight views' theme of 'Autumn moon over Lake Dongting' for example, is referenced in the titles and compositions of Hokusai's prints 'Night moon at Izumizaki', 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai', and 'Pine wave at Ryūdō' (the Chinese character for the 'dō' in Ryūdō 龍洞 is the same as the 'Dong' in the name of Lake Dongting). However, while 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai' mentions a lake in its title, it does not depict an autumn moon, nor do any of the other *Ryūkyū hakkei* prints. Neither do any of Hokusai's prints make direct mention of Dongting. Similarly, 'Evening glow on precipitous cliffs' recalls the classic theme of 'Fishing village in twilight glow' through its reference to evening or twilight, but does not depict a fishing village.<sup>37</sup> Several of the *Ryūkyū hakkei* include depictions of sailing ships, but none include the classic phrase 'Returning sails' in their title. 'Pine wave at Ryūdō' depicts a snow scene in allusion to the classic theme of 'River and sky in evening snow', but again does not employ any of the characters for river, sky, evening, or snow in its title.

Granted, Hokusai did not choose these sites, titles, or compositions, and so the blame for the divergence could be laid at the feet of the illustrator of the *Liuqiuguo zhilue*. However, Hokusai made the conscious decision to adopt the compositions and their titles without altering them to better fit the standard eight themes. Along with his publisher, Hokusai also made the decision to label and market these as a *hakkei* series. A possible explanation is that the series was intentionally designed, both by the Chinese illustrator and Hokusai, to represent a foreign place, not fully within the realm of China nor of Japan. Conceived of as being geographically and/or culturally located outside these realms, Ryūkyū thus falls outside the realm of the applicability, or appropriateness, of standard Chinese or Japanese thematics of poetry and painting, such as the 'eight views'.

## Conclusion

In adapting the images from the *Liuqiuguo zhilue* into his *Ryūkyū hakkei*, Hokusai made some alterations to the compositions to convey a stronger Ryukyuan cultural connection to Japan than do the images of Ryūkyū in the Chinese source. This suggestion of close connections between Japan and Ryūkyū is accomplished chiefly through the inclusion of Mt. Fuji on the horizon in several of the prints, and of Japanese architectural elements such as a *torii* gate, and Japanese-style rooftops, where structures in Chinese style were seen in the *Liuqiuguo zhilue*.

These images remain scenes of a foreign land, however, seen from a distant bird's-eye perspective. The islands are portrayed as far away, and the impression of miniature size that results – both of the islands and the architecture and people populating them – removes the viewer from the scene in terms of implied physical distance, thus creating affective or conceptual distance between the viewer and Ryūkyū. The landforms are also surrounded almost completely by expanses of sea and sky, as though physically cut off from the world of the viewer. Chinese and Ryukyuan architectural elements further contribute to a sense of cultural distance or difference.

As one element of a vibrant and complex web of popular Edo-period Japanese discourses on Ryūkyū, the *Ryūkyū hakkei* both draws upon and contributes to understandings prevalent in Hokusai's time of the Ryūkyū Kingdom as a place that straddled the discursive or conceptual line between the foreign and the familiar, the exotic and the domestic, the Other and the Self. ○

## NOTE

The dimensions of Hokusai's print are approximately:

Sheet: 9 11/16 × 14 7/8 in. (24.6 × 37.8 cm)

Mat: 19 × 25 in. (48.3 × 63.5 cm)

Frame: 20 × 26 × 1 1/4 in. (50.8 × 66 × 3.2 cm)



## ENDNOTES

- 1 Based in the castle-town of Kagoshima, near the southern tip of Kyushu.
- 2 R. Lane, *Hokusai. Life and work*, E.P. Dutton, New York 1989, p. 207.; M. Forrer, *Hokusai. Prints and drawings*, Prestel, New York 1991, p. 26, also cat. no. 53.
- 3 G.C. Calza, *Hokusai*, Phaidon, London 2003, pp. 481–482. Nagata Seiji and Sarah Thompson are among those who do, however, mention the history and significance of sites depicted in several of these prints, in brief catalogue entries. Nagata Seiji, *Hokusai*, Prisma Media, Paris 2014, pp. 359–360.; S. Thompson, *Hokusai*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 2015, p. 136.
- 4 Lane's catalogs of Hokusai's prints can be found in: Lane, *op. cit.* (1989), pp. 279–298, and R. Lane, *Images from the Floating World*, Konecky & Konecky, New York 1978, pp. 255–269.
- 5 See, for example, *Ryūkyū-jin gyōretsu ki*, Hishiya Chikubei, Kyoto 1832.; *Ryūkyū-jin daigyōretsu ki*, Bensōdō, Kyoto 1790; Yamazaki Yoshishige, *Ryūkyū nyūkō kiryaku*, Yamashiroya Sahei, Edo 1850.
- 6 See, for example, Morishima Chūryō, *Ryūkyū banashi*, Suwaraya Ichibei, Edo 1790.; Beizanshi, *Ryūkyū kidan*, 1832.; Tomioka Shukō and Utagawa Hiroshige, *Ryūkyū kaigo*, Edo 1850.
- 7 Kishi Akimasa, 'Hokusai no Ryūkyū hakkei ni tsuite', in: *Ukiyo-e geijutsu*, no. 13, 1966, pp. 36–39.
- 8 Zhou Huang, Hirata Tsugumasa, trans., *Ryūkyū-koku shiryaku*, San-ichi Shobō, Tokyo 1977, pp. 1–2.
- 9 Kishi, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–39.
- 10 M.E. Berry, 'Was early modern Japan culturally integrated?', in: *Modern Asian studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1997, pp. 575–578.; M.E. Berry, *Japan in print*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2007; A. Marks, *Japan journeys*, Tuttle, Tokyo 2015; J. King, *Beyond The Great Wave*, Peter Lang, New York 2010.
- 11 Berry, *op. cit.* (1997), pp. 576–577.
- 12 The appellation *Nihon* or *Nippon* 日本 (i.e. Japan) appears regularly in printed materials of this time, as do several other terms for 'Japan', including Yamato 大和 or sometimes simply Wa 和 (also roughly signifying simply 'Japan'), as well as terms such as *wagachō* 我朝 (lit. 'our realm').
- 13 E. Matchotka, E., *Visual genesis of Japanese national identity*, PIE Peter Lang, Brussels 2009, p. 191.
- 14 Matchotka, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
- 15 Calza, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
- 16 Lane, *op. cit.*, (1989), p. 207.
- 17 English translation of the titles of the prints are those employed by the Honolulu Museum of Art.
- 18 The Chōkōtei was an earthen embankment or causeway, approximately 1 km long, which was built during the reign of King Shō Kinpuku (r. 1450–1453) to link Naha, which then sat on its own tiny island in the bay, with the port of Tomari (O: *Tumai*) and the royal capital of Shuri (O: *Sui*), on the 'mainland' of Okinawa Island. The causeway is no longer extant today, as the waterways around it have been filled in, and Naha connected to the Okinawan 'mainland'. However, some sections of modern roads still follow its old path.; The blue-roofed compound seen in 'Voice of the lake at Rinkai' is meant to depict the Buddhist temple Rinkai-ji, which once stood midway along a spit which extended out into Naha harbour; as suggested in the print, a fortress stood at the end of that spit, helping to defend the entrance to the harbour. Some ruins of the fortress, *Mie gusuku* (O: *Mii gushiku*), can still be visited today, while Rinkai-ji has been re-established in a different location, elsewhere in the city.
- 19 The Nakashima area was known as a pleasure district in the early modern period, and is today home to the Naha Bus Terminal. Any significant banana grove is believed to have been gone already by Zhou Huang's time. The large rocks seen in the print are known as *Nakashima nu ufu-ishi* ('large rocks of Nakashima'), and at least one can still be seen just outside the terminal today. *Hokusai no egaita Ryūkyū: Ryūkyū hakkei*, Urasoe Art Museum, Urasoe 2007, p. 10.
- 20 Izumisaki was a village which sat on the 'mainland' of Okinawa Island, on the opposite side of a narrow waterway from Naha proper. The prints 'Banana groves at Nakashima' and 'Sacred fountain at Jōgaku' also depict sites within Izumisaki.
- 21 Jōgaku, or Gusukudake ('castle peak') in Okinawan, is a noted hill and public park just outside of Izumisaki. The hill is not associated with any known castle, but was formerly the site of a sacred space, or *utaki*, of the native Ryukyuan religion. Urasoe Art Museum, p. 9.
- 22 Fu Xinian, 'The Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties', in: Sun Dazhang et al., *Chinese architecture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2002, p. 130.
- 23 This style of roof, in which the sides are triangular on the short sides of the building, and trapezoidal on the long sides, most closely resembles what is called a *yosemune* roof in Japanese. A hipped roof style, it is markedly different from the hipped-gable *irimoya* style employed by Hokusai.
- 24 *Okinawa bijutsu zenshū*, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, pp. 97–100.
- 25 *Okinawa bijutsu zenshū*, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 100.
- 26 That Hokusai could have, or would have, obtained such information is rather unlikely, in any case, as he had no direct access to visiting Ryukyuan officials, to Japanese who might have met with the Ryukyuan visitors, or to official documents.
- 27 Keiko Suzuki, 'The Making of *Tōjin*. Construction of the Other in early modern Japan', in: *Asian folklore studies*, no. 66, 2007, pp. 83–105.
- 28 Guo Qinghua, *A visual dictionary of Chinese architecture*, Images Publishing, Victoria, Australia 2002, p. 26; R. Knapp, *China's old dwellings*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2000, p. 66.
- 29 Examples of many forms of Japanese gates can be found in: Kondō Yutaka, *Ko kenchiku no saibu ishō*, Taiga Shuppan, Tokyo 1972, Plate 7 (following p. 20).
- 30 Kishi, *op. cit.*, 36–39.; Yonahara Kei, 'Ryūkyū shisetsu-dan ga motarashita Edo-Ryūkyū buumu', in: *Tokyōjin*, no. 271, August 2009, p. 137; R. Toby, 'Sakoku' to iu gaikō, *Shogakukan*, Tokyo 2008, pp. 301–302.
- 31 Toby, *op. cit.*, pp. 275–328.
- 32 A reference to the Buddhist temple Ryūdō-ji, which once stood on its own tiny island in Lake Man (*Manko*), a body of water extending inland from Naha Harbour. Ōnoyama Park now stands on the former grounds of Ryūdō-ji. Urasoe Art Museum, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 33 'Okinawa hontō de hatsu no yuki kansoku – Nago-shi de mizore furu' in: *Okinawa Times*, 25 Jan 2016.
- 34 Calza, *op. cit.*, p. 481.
- 35 A. Murck, *Poetry and painting in Song China. The subtle art of dissent*, Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge 2002, p. 71; V. Malenfer Ortiz, *Dreaming the Southern Song Landscape. The power of illusion in Chinese painting*, Brill, Leiden 1999, pp. 64–65, 76.
- 36 A. Hockley, *The prints of Isoda Koryūsei. Floating World culture and its consumers in eighteenth-century Japan*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2003, pp. 55–56, 68ff.
- 37 The terms 'Evening glow' and 'Twilight glow' here are translations of the same two-character phrase, 夕照.