

# THROWING OFF ASIA III

WOODBLOCK PRINTS OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR (1904-05)

BY JOHN W. DOWER

## Chapter Six: Sources

Sources, followed by [Credits](#)

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### Complementary Readings

*For background reading and/or classroom assignment, teachers may find entries #1 and #2 below particularly useful.*

1. Marlene Mayo, ed., *The Emergence of Imperial Japan: Self-Defense or Calculated Aggression?* (D. C. Heath, 1970). This collection of essays addressing Meiji Japan's emergence as an imperialist power includes a particularly valuable "Prologue" by Yoshitake Oka, from which several of the quotations in the Essay derive. Oka's concise essay is one of the best short overviews available of "Social Darwinist" and "Realist" thinking by late-19th-century Japanese.

2. Donald Keene, "The Japanese and the Landscapes of War," in Keene's *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (Kodansha International, 1971), 259-99. This essay by one of the most distinguished literary and cultural scholars of Japan is excellent for placing the woodblock prints of the Sino-Japanese War in the broader context of Japanese popular culture (and war enthusiasm) at the time. The essay has had several lives. See also Keene's "The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and Its Cultural Effects in Japan," in *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*, Donald Shively, ed. (Princeton University Press, 1971), 121-75; also the 1981 Kodansha reprint of *Landscapes and Portraits*, which is titled *Appreciations of Japanese Culture*.

3. Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (Columbia University Press, 1970). This scholarly analysis is the best account of the politics of the Russo-Japanese War on the Japanese side. It concludes with discussion of the riots that erupted in Japan when the terms of the "Portsmouth peace settlement" were made public.

4. Richard Hough, *The Fleet That Had to Die* (Ballentine, 1960). Although not at all essential to understanding the background of the war prints, this readable account describes the ill-fated journey of the Russian Baltic Fleet as it sailed around the world to Port Arthur, only to be destroyed by Admiral Tōgō in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905. Hough's narrative captures some of the flavor of the times on the (hapless) Russian side in a particularly colorful manner.

5. Henry D. Smith II, *Kiyochika: Artist of Meiji Japan* (Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1988). This short (and hard-to-find) publication provides an overview of the greatest Meiji woodblock artist, whose war prints—particularly of the Sino-Japanese War—receive close attention in the present Web site.

### **Illustrated English-Language Publications of Meiji War Prints**

*"Throwing Off Asia" is at present the most densely illustrated and accessible treatment of Meiji woodblock prints focusing on the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. (The Essays alone include 165 prints, of which 111 depict the Sino-Japanese War and 34 the Russo-Japanese War.) There are four noteworthy published catalogs in English that feature the war images. These include prints not included in the MFA collection on which "Throwing Off Asia" is based, as well as interesting captions and commentaries.*

6. *Impressions of the Front: Woodcuts of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1983). Devoted entirely to prints of the Sino-Japanese War, this excellent catalog is based on the extensive collection of Meiji war prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A total of 86 full-color prints are reproduced (in small format), accompanied by generous commentary. The arrangement is chronological rather than thematic or by artist, enabling the reader to follow the course of the war visually. Essays by Shumpei Okamoto (on the war) and Donald Keene (on the prints) enhance the value of this hard-to-obtain publication. *Impressions of the Front* also includes maps, a battle chronology, and a bibliography.

7. *The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)*, Nathan Chaikin, ed. (Bern, Switzerland: privately published, 1983). This sumptuous volume reproduces 92 prints of the Sino-Japanese War, primarily from the Geneva-based collection of Basil Hall Chamberlain, a famous turn-of-the-century British expert on Japan. The full-page reproductions include many in color, and editor Chaikin provides detailed commentary on both the prints and the military history of the war. Organization is chronological, rather than by artist or theme.

8. *In Battle's Light: Woodblock Prints of Japan's Early Modern Wars*, Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, ed. (Worcester Art Museum, 1991). Based on Meiji war prints from the Sharf Collection (before that collection was donated to the Boston Museum of Fine Art), this catalog includes prints from both the Sino-Japanese War (53 plates) and Russo-Japanese War (27 plates). Within this, grouping is by artist. Brief captions and commentary accompany each print.

9. *Japan at the Dawn of the Modern Age: Woodblock Prints from the Meiji Era*, Louise E. Virgin, ed. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2001). This exhibition catalog celebrates the donation of the Jean S. and Frederic A. Sharf Collection of Meiji prints (on which this present "Throwing Off Asia" web site is primarily based) to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The catalog contains 77 color plates (22 depicting Meiji Westernization and the emperor, 39 on the Sino-Japanese War, and 16 on the Russo-Japanese War), with brief commentaries for each. Also included are essays by Donald Keene, Anne Nishimura Morse, and Frederic Sharf.

### **Illustrated Japanese Publications of Prints**

10. KONISHI Shirō, *Nishikie—Bakumatsu Meiji no Rekishi* [Woodcuts—A History of the Bakumatsu and Meiji Periods], 12 volumes (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977). This lively, large format, full-color collection of "brocade pictures" (*nishikie*) depicting current events between 1853 and 1912 includes volumes devoted to the Sino-Japanese War (vol. 11) and Russo-Japanese War (volume 12).

11. ASAI Yūsuke, ed. *Kinsei nishikie Sesōshi* [A History of Modern Times through Woodcuts], 8 volumes (Tokyo, 1935-36). This old collection, with extensive black-and-white reproductions, is a standard reference source.

### **Illustrated Collections**

12. H.W. Wilson, *Japan's Fight for Freedom: The Story of the War Between Russia and Japan*, 3 volumes (London: Amalgamated Press, 1904-1906). This exceptionally lavish, large-format British publication totals 1,444 glossy pages and includes hundreds of photographs as well as excellent black-and-white reproductions of sketches and paintings by foreign artists. This is surely the best single overview of the type of war photography and serious war art that appeared regularly in British periodicals like the *Illustrated London News*. As the title indicates, the overall approach is favorable to Japan.

13. James H. Hare, ed., *A Photographic Record of the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Collier & Son, 1905). This glossy, large-format, 256-page volume includes photographs by a number of cameramen (as well as a brief commentary on “The Battle of the Sea of Japan” by the influential American naval strategist A. T. Mahan). In comprehensiveness as well as clarity of the reproductions, this is an outstanding sample of the war photography of the times. (The same publisher produced another large-format volume on the war—titled *The Russo-Japanese War: A Photographic and Descriptive Review of the Great Conflict in the Far East*—that includes many of the same images, is also of considerable interest, but is of lesser technical quality.)

14. *Nishi-Ro Sensō* [The Russo-Japanese War] (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1974). This volume reproduces the distinctive and elegantly tinted photos of the American photographer Burton Holmes, whose war work deserves to be better known.

15. *Shashin: Meiji no Sensō* [Photos: Wars of the Meiji Period], Ozawa Kenji, ed. (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2001). This thick volume (270 pages) contains numerous black-and-white reproductions of photos of the Seinan civil war (1877) and the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.

16. *A Century of Japanese Photography*, John W. Dower, ed. (Pantheon, 1980). This is an English-language adaptation of an outstanding collection of prewar Japanese photography edited by the Japan Photographers Association and originally published under the title *Nihon Shashin Shi, 1840-1945* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971). Three plates depict the Sino-Japanese War (plates 169-71) and twelve are photos from the Russo-Japanese War (plates 172-83). The latter include several truly classic images.

## General Historical Texts

*Teachers, students, and anyone else who wishes to pursue the history of Japan’s emergence as a modern nation further will find the following publications particularly useful as both general overviews and reference sources:*

13. James H. Hare, ed., *A Photographic Record of the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Collier & Son, 1905). This glossy, large-format, 256-page volume includes photographs by a number of cameramen (as well as a brief commentary on “The Battle of the Sea of Japan” by the influential American naval strategist A. T. Mahan). In comprehensiveness as well as clarity of the reproductions, this is an outstanding sample of the war photography of the times. (The same publisher produced another large-format volume on the war—titled *The Russo-Japanese War: A Photographic and Descriptive Review of the Great Conflict in the Far East*—that includes many of the same images, is also of considerable interest, but is of lesser technical quality.)

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17. *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. This outstanding encyclopedia exists in two editions: (1) a detailed 9-volume version (published in 1983 and containing over 10,000 entries, including extended essays by major scholars); and (2) an abridged and lavishly illustrated two-volume version titled *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (1993). Anyone seriously interested in Japanese history and culture should have these reference works on hand. For this present web site, see in particular the entries on "Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95" (by Akira Iriye) and "Russo-Japanese War" (by Shumpei Okamoto).
18. Paul H. Clyde & Burton F. Beers. *The Far East: A History of Western Impacts and Eastern Responses, 1830-1975*, 6th edition (Prentice-Hall, 1975). Originally published in 1948, this standard "diplomatic history" remains a useful reference for sharp analysis as well as basic data.
19. Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford, 2003). This survey history by a leading scholar reflects the most recent research on modern Japan. (384 pages).
20. Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 2nd edition (Westview Press, 1992; originally published in 1982). Hane's great strength lay in his keen ear for the "voices" of people at all levels of Japanese society. (473 pages).
21. Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 2nd edition (D.C. Heath, 1996). Originally published in 1978, this thoughtful overview has the additional virtue of brevity. (307 pages).
22. Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, 2nd edition (Houghton Mifflin, 1998). Originally published in 1976, this is another reliable survey text. (376 pages).
23. Julia Meech-Pekarik, *The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization* (Tokyo and New York: John Weatherhill, 1986). This is the standard introduction to Meiji prints in English.

## Illustrated Periodicals

For American and British graphic responses to the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars as these appeared in popular periodicals, the following weeklies are of particular interest:

*Illustrated London News*

*Punch*

*Harper's Weekly*

*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*

## Credits

"Throwing Off Asia" was developed by Visualizing Cultures at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and presented on MIT OpenCourseWare.

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