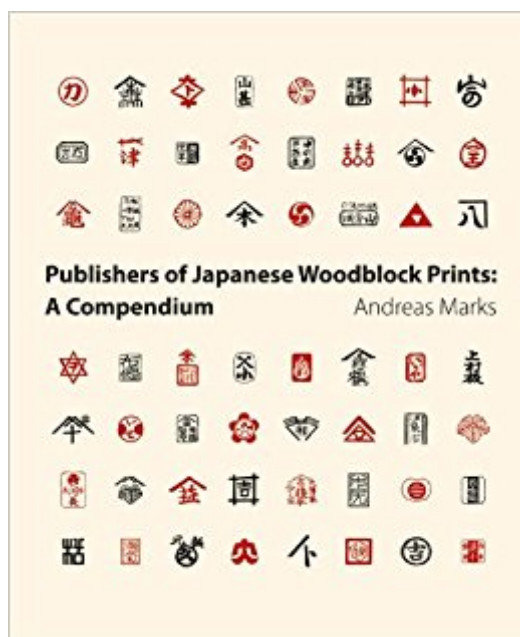


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# Publishers Of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium



## Synopsis

Japanese woodblock prints exemplified by such iconographic images as Hokusai's Great Wave, Hiroshige's Heavy Rain on Ohashi bridge, or Utamaro's enticing beauties, constitute one of the most important and influential art forms in art history. Today, the names of these artists themselves are celebrated throughout the world, and yet very little is known about the publishers of these artworks, despite the fact that they played a crucial role in the production, visual appearance and actual distribution of the works within the highly commercial world of Japanese printmaking. It was the publisher who gauged the markets, commissioned the artists and took on the risks of production. Once a design was completed by an artist, it was the publisher who coordinated the production process, farming out the work to the block carvers and printers, and also managed the distribution of the prints in the appropriate markets. This volume champions the publisher - the enabler - without whom the great artworks which influenced painters like Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and others, would never have been produced. *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* focuses on the production process of Japanese woodblock prints with an emphasis on the role of the publisher. This publication presents over 1,100 publishers, with comprehensive lists of publications by a total of 572 artists and facsimiles of over 2300 publisher seals, spanning a time period from the 1650s to the 1990s. The publisher entries include details on the residence of a publisher, his clientele, the period of his commercial activity as well as a list of issued print series in chronological order. This listing offers insight into the status and versatility of a publisher, as well as indicating the publisher's specialities, favoured artists and the particular strategies pursued. With almost 600 pages of information on the publishers of Japanese woodblock prints, this publication is an essential reference work for scholars and collectors of Japanese prints alike.

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Japanese woodblock prints exemplified by such iconographic images as Hokusai's "Great Wave," Hiroshige's "Heavy Rain on Ohashi bridge," or Utamaro's enticing beauties, constitute one of the most important and influential art forms in art history. Today, the names of these artists themselves are celebrated throughout the world, and yet very little is known about the publishers of these artworks, despite the fact that they played a crucial role in the production, visual appearance and actual distribution of the works within the highly commercial world of Japanese printmaking. It was the publisher who gauged the markets, commissioned the artists and took on the risks of production. Once a design was completed by an artist, it was the publisher who coordinated the production process, farming out the work to the block carvers and printers, and also managed the distribution of the prints in the appropriate markets. This volume champions the publisher the enabler without whom the great artworks which influenced painters like Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and others, would never have been produced. "Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium" focuses on the production process of Japanese woodblock prints with an emphasis on the role of the publisher. This publication presents over 1,100 publishers, with comprehensive lists of publications by a total of 572 artists and facsimiles of over 2300 publisher seals, spanning a time period from the 1650s to the 1990s. The publisher entries include details on the residence of a publisher, his clientele, the period of his commercial activity as well as a list of issued print series in chronological order. This listing offers insight into the status and versatility of a publisher, as well as indicating the publisher's specialities, favoured artists and the particular strategies pursued. With almost 600 pages of information on the publishers of Japanese woodblock prints, this publication is an essential reference work for scholars and collectors of Japanese prints alike.

Andreas Marks, Ph.D. (Leiden University), is Director and Chief Curator of the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford, California. He is the author of *Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers and Masterworks, 1680-1900* (2010), *Tokaido Print Series: Kunisada's Puzzles* (forthcoming), and co-editor of *Dreams and Diversions, Essays on Japanese Woodblock Prints* (2010).

This book is an absolute must-have if you are serious about Japanese woodblock prints. There is just so much misinformation out there on publishers and seals, finally, someone tackled the problem. The author, Andreas Marks, is a mad man for taking this on, but you gotta love the mad men. There is something about ukiyo-e that periodically brings us these scholars who are willing to meticulously compile and correct information, and present it in such a way that the rest of us can make use of. It seems most of the seals that I thought I had read in the past 10 years need to be reconsidered using this book. And whenever I show the book to fellow-ukiyo-e enthusiasts I end up having to buy another copy to give them as a gift. It's well worth the price when you take into account the wealth and accuracy of the information. You can push aside all of your out-dated books and photo-copied sheets (you know you have them) and make this your go-to book on ukiyo-e publishers.

This publication is by far the easiest to look up publisher's information and censorship.

Ukiyo-e dates and censor seals from 1791-1875. Publisher's seals from 17th century to present day with 637 out of 1143 entries identified by name with 506 being unclear.

Not perfect, but getting close! Where else can you find such a VERY well organized and complete list of Japanese woodblock print publisher's seals linked to publisher information (physical addresses, history, ownership, active dates, and impressively complete list of artists, print and book series and dates)? There is some narrative inside, but MAINLY this book consists of tables of information which are organized as if pulled straight from the author's (extensive!) computer database. Wouldn't it be SO lovely if this information could be accessed on-line? Yes, it would!

I consider this work as the priceless source of information about one of the commonly unknown aspects of the world of ukiyo-e or Japanese woodblock prints. This book is the massive expander of horizon of knowledge about Japanese woodblock publishers. After I got my copy of this book I received not only vast amount of knowledge but also significant improvement options for the private catalogue of my tiny ukiyo-e collection.

An excellent reference guide to Japanese woodblock prints. A Herculean effort in compiling information regarding long-neglected world of print publishers. Details of the book follow: Chapter 1 - Japanese Woodblock Print Publishing: The Logistics of Creative Production pages 11-32) A very

good introductory essay on various aspects of print publishing in Japan. Includes a couple of tables showing typical fees paid to designers, carvers, and printers before Meiji (pre-1868) and in the mid-Meiji period. Also, sale prices for various forms of prints between the period 1805 and 1884 are listed. Chapter 2 - Publisher Seals (pages 33-92) 2,367 publisher seals from original prints are listed and arranged by shape. These seals were used as trademarks and identified the publisher who produced and distributed the prints. The arrangement by seal shape was the method originally used by a Japanese book (published in 1920) on the topic of publishers of woodblock prints. The author felt that this was the most efficient way of searching for a seal, and I agree. There are 30 categories according to shape. The categories are listed w/ explanations. Each seal is identified by a unique number which corresponds to a listing in Chapter 3 - Publisher Entries. Using Chapters 2 and 3, one can track down information on: 1) the print or print series which employed the seal, 2) estimated time period when the seal was used, 3) the original art designer of the print (which most of us would identify the prints with - e.g., Hiroshige, Kunisada, etc.), 4) the publisher responsible for printing the prints. Chapter 3 - Publisher Entries (pages 93-468) Lists 1,143 publishers with period of activity, physical location of the publisher, etc. Listing of over 5,700 prints or print series by almost 600 artists. Chapter 4 - Ukiyo-e Date and Censor Seals 1791-1875 (pages 469-494) Provides an overview of censor and date seals from 1791 to 1875. The seals were taken straight from the original prints (as were the publisher seals in Chapter 2). Chapter 5 - Bibliography and Indices (pages 495-575) Indices of: Publisher names (including family names and shop names) Publication names Print designers. The author collected and verified the publishers by a time-consuming procedure of looking at the original prints. The book states that additional publishers (in excess of the 1,143 publishers originally included in the book) were found (some through secondary sources), but these could not be verified as print publishers and, therefore, left out of the book. Perhaps future scholars will be able to include some of these "unverifiables" back into the main entries upon further research. Around additional 100 publisher seals were gathered via secondary sources but could not be found on the original prints, but these appeared to have been included in Chapter 3 (Publisher Entries) in the book nevertheless. This is one-of-a-kind publication focused much on the often forgotten aspect of Japanese woodblock prints - publishers. Much of our attention is paid to the artist (designer) of the prints. Publishers (and to the same extent, the engravers of these fabulous prints) deserve as much. Andreas Marks' book goes a long way in establishing the importance of these publishers in making these beautiful prints available to the general public over the centuries, the fruit of which we are enjoying today. This is a landmark publication in the world of Japanese woodblock prints and should serve as a standard reference tool for a long time to come. The

amount of information gathered here is simply astounding. The publication deserves much praise and appreciation from this reviewer. If you afford it, get it. For the price it delivers an unbelievable amount of information. You will not regret it. Note: Andreas Marks also published another book of a similar vein in 2010 named "Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers and Masterworks 1680-1900. It's a more readable and enjoyable book (and a lot more affordable) written for non-specialists. It's also a sizable book (336 pages). It covers 50 major artists/designers of Japanese woodblock prints from the mid 17th century to the early 20th century (first part of the book). The second part of the book covers 49 major publishers of woodblock prints. Both the artists and the publishers are listed in chronological orders (loosely based on their life span and sometimes span of their work). Biographical information is provided whenever available, along with representative works (the works designed by the artists and those that were printed by the publishers). There are countless gorgeous print reproductions in the book, including many triptychs - a big plus in my book. Most are reproduced beautifully and faithfully. A few of them are not quite as crisp and bright as I would like, but given the price of the book and the information contained, I can't really complain. The book gives you a nice overview of the collaboration needed between the artists and the publishers to create these magical prints of old Japan. Highly readable and definitely worth every dollar. Get a copy before the price goes up.

The most comprehensive book on this subject. The amount of research done for this book is huge but the reproduction of the publishers' marks is very poor. Some are so small that even with a magnifying glass is difficult to identify the ideograms. The result is a badly designed book at very high price

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