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# The Ide Jewel River in Yamashiro Province

Iwatoya Kisaburō

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## Not on display

**Title/Description:** The Ide Jewel River in Yamashiro Province

**Artist/Maker:** Iwatoya Kisaburō (Publisher)

**Born:** 1790 circa - 1800 circa

**Object Type:** Graphics

**Materials:** Ink, Paper

**Technique:** Woodcut

**Measurements:** Support and image h. 330 x w. 225 mm

**Inscription:** Publisher's seal

**Accession Number:** 41455

**Production Place:** Asia, East Asia, Japan

**School/Style:** Hosoda School

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Hosoda Eishi (1756-1829) and publisher, Iwatoya Kisaburō issued this design in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The scene in the woodblock print takes inspiration from a combination of poetic references to the Ide River in Yamashiro province.

As a result of Japan's rich literary heritage, the 'Six Jewel Rivers' (J. *mutamagawa*) of Ide, Mishima (or Kinuta), Noji, Kōya, Chōfu and Noda had entered popular consciousness as places of significant natural beauty. These place names functioned as inspirational 'pillow words' (J. *utamakura*) and were used by poets to recall an emotive past event or to evoke a sense of nostalgia for classical antiquity.

Depictions of the Jewel Rivers as a group of six images, each with its own specific iconography, developed during the Edo period (1600-1868). [1] The *mutamagawa* theme mainly owed its popularity in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to woodblock print artists Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770), Utagawa Toyoharu (1735-1814) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) who produced designs inspired by the 'Six Jewel Rivers'. [2] In paintings and prints, representations of the Ide's River are relatively formulaic and comprise a Heian-period courtier on horseback crossing the river accompanied by two male attendants on foot.

Eishi playfully departs from this convention by replacing the two male figures with a young, barefoot female dressed in the finest, contemporary Edo fashion. The woman's naked feet and ankles infuse the encounter with a subtle eroticism. In reinterpreting the subject matter, Eishi has created a *mitate* print that forms an 'analogical juxtaposition' between high and low culture, antique refinement and contemporary vulgarity, tradition and modernity (J. *ga/zoku*). [3]

The scene in Eishi's design is partly inspired by Episode 122 of the literary classic, *Tales of Ise* (J. *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語, c. 980), and may depict the courtier and gifted poet Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) with his lover. [4] The final line of this poem informs the reader that in spite of their pledges of love, the woman fails to keep her promise. [5]

In Yamashiro

in Ide's jewelled waters  
our hands entwined and  
troth plighted,

but to no avail

*Yamashiro no*

*Ide no tamamizu*

*te nimusubi*

*tanomishi kaimo*

*nakiyo narikeri* [6]

In the background of the print, Eishi shows the banks of the river blooming with the yellow flowers of the Kerria shrub rose (J. *yamabuki no hana*). This visual reference eludes to a poem composed by Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114-1204) that was included in the early 13<sup>th</sup>-century anthology, 'New Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern' (J. *Shin kokin wakashū* 新古今和歌集). [7]

I stop my horse  
and have him drink for a time  
where the dew falls  
from the kerria flowers  
at the Tamagawa in Ide.

*Uma tomete*

*nao mizu kawan*

*yamabuki no*

*hana no tsuyu sofu*

*Ide no tamagawa* [8]

By layering poetic references to the Ide Jewel River and kerria flowers, Eishi provides his audience with an original and playful interpretation of the 'Six Jewel Rivers' theme. Consumers of prints would have enjoyed identifying the river by its iconography and may have been able to recite the poems by heart.

Vanessa Tothill, September 2020

[1] Miyeko Murase, *Bridge of Dreams: The Mary Griggs Burke Collection of Japanese Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), p. 322.

[2] See composition of *Ide no Mutamagawa* from 'Six Fashionable Jewel Rivers' (*Fūryū mu tamagawa*) by Utagawa Toyoharu (1735-1814), British Museum (object number: 1963,0731,0.5). According to pictorial convention, the page is usually shown carrying the courtier's sword.

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_1963-0731-0-5](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1963-0731-0-5) [accessed 28 August 2020]

[3] For a more detailed and nuanced examination of *mitate*, see Alfred Haft, *Aesthetic Strategies of the Floating World: Mitate, Yatsushi, and Fūryū in Early Modern Japanese Popular Culture* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).

[4] Ariwara no Narihira contributed to imperial poetry anthologies and is eulogised as one of the Six Immortal Poets (J. *Rokkasen*), and as one of the Thirty-six Poetic Geniuses (J. *Sanjūrokkasen*). The authorship of 'Tales of Ise' is traditionally attributed to Narihira.

[5] Helen Craig McCullough (trans.), *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 148; 254.

[6] Episode 122 in Peter MacMillan and Donald Keene (trans.), *The Tales of Ise* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. 225; 160-61;

[7] <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/56875>

[accessed 1 September 2020]

References Murase, pp. 319-31.

[8] Translation by Dr Thomas McAuley, University of Sheffield  
<https://www.wakapoetry.net/category/prose-works/tales/ise-monogatari/> [accessed 1 September 2020]

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## Further Reading

Haft, Alfred, *Aesthetic Strategies of the Floating World: Mitate, Yatsushi, and Fūryū in Early Modern*

Japanese Popular Culture (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013)

MacMillan, Peter and Donald Keene (trans.), *The Tales of Ise* (London: Penguin, 2016)

McCullough, Helen Craig (trans.), *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth- Century Japan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968)

Murase Miyeko, *Bridge of Dreams: The Mary Griggs Burke Collection of Japanese Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000)

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