

Guide to the UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print Collection

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Collection number: Consult repository

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Archives and Special Collections
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Descriptive Summary

Title: UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print collection

Dates: 1600-1900

Collection number: Consult repository

Collector: Minami, Atsumi

Collector: de C. Saunders, John B.

Collection Size: 400 items 366 online items

Repository: University of California, San Francisco. Library. Archives and Special Collections.
San Francisco, California 94143-0840

Abstract: A collection of Japanese woodblock prints on the subject of health and medicine. Included are Ukiyo-e prints depicting diseases, health practices, public health messages, and drug advertisements, as well as maps of Nagasaki and textual drug advertisements. The website for the [UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print Collection](#) includes an introduction to the collection, as well as essays on prominent themes, and allows users to view the prints by theme and search the collection.

Physical location: East Asian Collection

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English, Japanese

 <http://content.cdlib.org/search?style=oac-img&sort=title&relation=ark:/13030/kt3t1nc589>

Access

Collection open for research.

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Preferred Citation

UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print collection. Consult repository, Archives & Special Collections, UCSF Library & CKM.

Acquisition Information

The prints in the collection were purchased over a 30-year period. In 1963, UCSF Provost and University Librarian (later Chancellor) John B. de C. Saunders began the collection, which was developed over the next thirty years by Librarian/Curator Atsumi Minami. The prints were purchased from various collections in Japan: Asakuraya, Kuichi Seisho, Mori, Nakamura, and Nakayama.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists of 400 Japanese woodblock prints on various topics relating to health and medicine. Even within that collecting focus, the subject matter ranges widely. Most of the prints are examples of Ukiyo-e, a Japanese art form that flourished from the late 17th to mid-19th centuries.

The prints focus on health-related themes: diseases such as measles and cholera, traditional Asian medicine, aspects of obstetrics and women's health, herbal medicine, nutrition, drug advertisements, and images of prominent physicians.

The interplay of health and religion is a recurring theme throughout the collection. Buddhist and Shinto deities are shown conquering diseases such as measles and smallpox, and diseases are often personified as demons. Buddhist and Confucian philosophy underlies the imagery in the prints, especially in prints depicting pregnancy or childbirth.

A large portion of the collection consists of advertisements for drugs. Many of the advertisements are Ukiyo-e scenes depicting kabuki actors, courtesans, aristocrats, deities, demons, or animals. Approximately 60 of the drug advertisements are text-only.

The opening of Japan to the West is a major theme throughout the collection; several of the prints depict Dutch traders or physicians. There are several detailed maps showing the island near Nagasaki where European visitors were segregated. Several of the drug advertisements are for "new" Dutch remedies.

The website for the [UCSF Japanese Woodblock Print Collection](#) includes an introduction to the collection, as well as essays on prominent themes, and allows users to view the prints by theme and search the collection.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Health attitudes Japan

Drugs Japan

Dutch in Japan

Buddhism Japan History Pictorial works

Measles History

Women's Health

Woodblock prints

Ukiyo-e

Advertisements

Maps

Japan

Nagasaki-shi (Japan)
