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ROGER S. KEYES. *Ehon: The Artist and the Book in Japan*. New York Public Library/University of Washington Press, 2006. 320 pp. US\$60.00, hardcover.

This handsome tome is based on an exhibition of Japanese picture books held by the New York Public Library from October 2006 to February 2007. Despite the more contemporary connotations associated with the term *ehon*, this is not a catalogue of books for children. The collection is best described as a volume that traces the traditions of Japanese artists' books. With the inclusion of two more recent works by non-Japanese (American and German) artists, the volume also features international entries that are currently "contribut[ing] to the living Japanese book tradition" (p. 313). Although it excludes neither children's nor contemporary books altogether, given that the collection provides an introduction to both visual and literary artists, there is a notable absence of even one example from the multitude of innovative picture books available within the rich culture of children's literature in Japan today. This aside, the volume is indeed a work of art in itself, with inclusions of stunning images from various types of books on every page showcasing the richness and depth of Japanese picture books through the ages. While one of the stated goals is to bring the largely unknown works from the collections held at the New York Public Library to public attention (p. 8), no exhibition catalogue can ever fully capture the breadth of the original display, although this one succeeds in providing insight into the essence and splendour of a diverse range of Japanese artists' books.

Initial chapters provide a very brief history of Japanese artists' books, the first concluding by justifying this inclusion (in the exhibition and book) of the abovementioned two books to showcase how the "*ehon* tradition originated in Japan and developed there..." (p. 21). The second chapter deals with the formal components of Japanese picture books and is very informative on such physical and technical issues. The core of the book is a selection of 70 'Japanese Artists' Books, 770–2005', and this section is the most stimulating and enlightening, primarily due to its extensiveness and layout, but particularly because of the inclusion of so many luxuriously printed images. One entry on 'The Shell Book' by Kitagawa Utamaro (1789) even reproduces this book in full (in entry 25, pp 112–23). The core entries are presented in roughly chronological order, each with its individual verbal exposition of approximately one to three pages.

As might be expected given the wide scope of material covered and the confines of information that can be included in such a book, there are some limitations in the expository essays. Decisions about what to include or exclude are always difficult and the explanations in the two early chapters tend to alternate between being overly detailed and too fleeting, often leaving the reader wondering why certain information has been included and other material omitted. One such example, found in the early information on page 11 about the *Lotus Sutra* and how it (does not) function as a picture book, is rather brief and thus somewhat superficial. The inclusion here of names and places pertinent to medieval court life in Japan, however, assumes prior knowledge, and while interesting and relevant, this example foreshadows the tone of unevenness found throughout. The lack of contextualisation – for example, of why specific works have been chosen over others for inclusion, how the presented bibliographical, historical or cultural information

relates to the whole, or how the artistry or the interaction between word and picture in the books is to be examined – is indicative of the general patchiness of the structure of both the introductory remarks and the entries that accompany the selected works. While those more familiar with the context may appreciate more depth, both they and readers less conversant with Japanese art, history or culture may find the experience a bit frustrating. An explanatory note on structure, direction and more specific aims may have rectified some of these matters to a degree, but it is probably also an issue of editorial direction. A similar issue also arises in the expositions on the core picture book entries. That is, the explanations of each *ehon* and its background in this section are very uneven. It is a pity that the entries have not been synthesised more cohesively with, for example, a more substantially uniform format that clearly exposed the rationale behind the information provided. It would also have been enlightening to read more about how specific art forms convey meaning in conjunction (or otherwise) with their verbal texts, for example, in a similar manner to the explanations found within entry 4 (p. 48) on ‘The Tale of Genji’.

Nevertheless, this book is full of fascinating and significant information – historical, cultural and artistic. *Ehon* provides an excellent introduction to the art and development of Japanese books, literary and artistic, simultaneously providing a pictorial history of Japanese life and culture. The superb quality of production makes it a wonderful coffee table book to be dipped into at random, while its excellent appendices and reference lists also make it a treasure trove of further academic sources.

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MARIE HØJLUND ROESGAARD. *Japanese Education and the Cram School Business: Functions, Challenges and Perspectives of the Juku*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2006. 213 pp. Illus. US\$65.00, hardcover.

This book gives a comprehensive account of *juku* in terms of their functions, challenges and future. The author reconsiders the image of the *juku* projected by media which has spread not only in Japan but to the world: that they are the after-school educational institutions where children spend their time cramming facts in an inhumane Spartan teaching environment in their quest to pass the entrance examinations for prestigious schools and universities. She reveals the diverse roles of *juku* and concludes that they are necessary to keep the present system of Japanese schooling alive. The book focuses on the nature of after-school tutoring in the *juku* targeted at elementary and middle-school students because of the increasing number of children of this age group who sit the entrance examinations for private middle schools. This trend is due to several changes taking place in the public school system, such as the implementation of a five-day school week and consequent reduction in the curriculum, and the expected impact of this on the future of Japanese schooling, particularly of elementary and middle schools.