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Images from Japan: Views of Westernization, Late Nineteenth Century

This selection consists of two prints by Japanese artists from the Meiji period of Westernization. The first print, Figure 23.1 is called *Monkey Show Dressing Room* (1879), by Honda Kinkachiro. What is this print's message? What is the artist's attitude toward Westernization?

The second piece, Figure 23.2, *The Exotic White Man*, shows a child born to a Western man and a Japanese woman. What is the artist's message? Does the artist favor such unions? What does the artist think of Westerners?

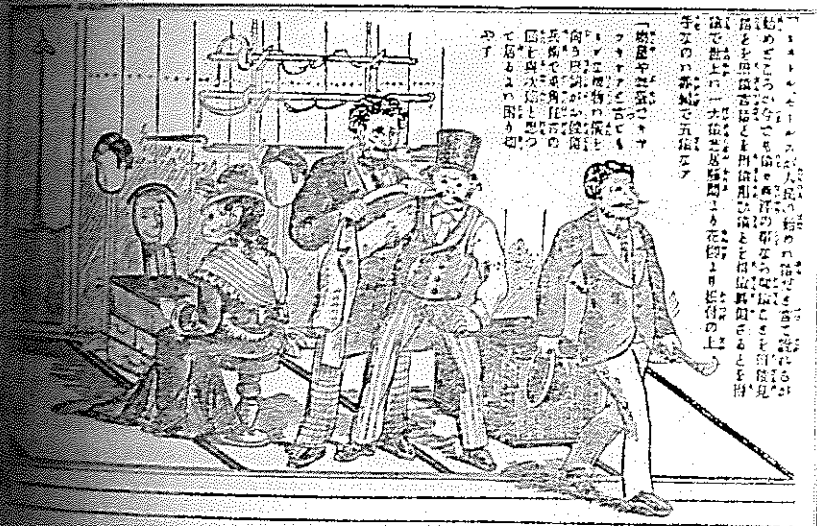


Figure 23.1 Monkey Show Dressing Room.

Source: Honda Kinkachiro, *Monkey Show Dressing Room*, in Julia Meech-Pekarik, *The World of the Meiji Print* (New York: John Weatherhill, 1986).



Figure 23.2 The Exotic White Man.

Source: Japanese color print, late 19th c., Dutch private collection, in C. A. Burland, *The White Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), fig. 38. Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY.

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Compare the attitudes of these artists with that of Fukuzawa Yūichi. Prints, like cartoons, are a shorthand that must capture an easily recognizable trait. What, evidently, were the widely understood Japanese images of the West? Where do you think these stereotypes of the West came from? Do you see any signs in these prints of ambivalence on the part of the artist?