

## A look at some original paintings by Yoshitaki: Development from the late Edo period to the Meiji period

YAMAMOTO Sumiko

*Kamigata Ukiyoe Museum, Osaka*

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### Introduction

The object of this paper is to examine the hand paintings of UTAGAWA Yoshitaki (1841-1899), an *Ukiyo-e* artist who was active mainly in Osaka from the late Edo to the Meiji period. Yoshitaki's works have been introduced in general books on Osaka prints (*Kamigata-e*) including "*Kamigata-e Ichiran*" (Complete List of Osaka Prints) [1], some dictionaries, exhibition catalogues [2], and a book by MATSUDAIRA Susumu [3]. Recently, his prints were given wider publicity in books such as Volume 5 of the "*Kamigata Yakusha-e Shūsei*" by KITAGAWA Hiroko, from the Ikeda-bunko Library, and "*Kamigata Yakusha-e Chō*" edited by Kansai University [4], both of which are corpuses of portraits of *Kabuki* actors in Osaka. Moreover, TSUCHIYA Reiko examined some *Nishiki-e* (full-color wood block prints) newspaper illustrations by Yoshitaki in her book titled "*Osaka no Nishiki-e Shinbun*" (Full-color Wood Block Prints Newspapers in Osaka) [5]. All of these showed some of Yoshitaki's work. However, no comprehensive study has been conducted so far. Regarding his portraits of actors, KITAGAWA did not think highly of them, arguing that the "quality of works in the Meiji era is obviously lower than that of the Edo period, probably due to over production" [6].

On the other hand, according to Yoshitaki's profile written by his apprentice, his hand paintings of a family scene, especially those of mother and daughters, were highly praised in exhibitions such as the *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai* (Competitive Show for the Promotion of National paintings). Where do these two different assessments of the work of one painter come from? Is this simply because of the difference in nature between print works and hand paintings? This paper aims to reexamine Yoshitaki's work, not only his prints but also his brush drawings, with an attempt to provide an answer to these questions.

The first chapter outlines the painter's biography as well as the development of his print works. This is followed by a close study of his three hand paintings produced in the Meiji era, which bare many similarities with his previous print works. A further analysis shows how his works in his days were assessed with reference to the *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshinkai*. Chapter 3 looks at two very important paintings of beautiful women painted at the end of the Edo era: "*Kabu Onkyoku zu*" (Dance performance with musical accompaniment) from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and "*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*" (Standing beauty) from the British Museum. Careful observation of these works leads to the conclusion that both of them were produced at the end of the Edo period. With this in mind and in comparison with Yoshitaki's works in the Meiji era, it becomes clear that he successfully adopted a more sophisticated style in hand paintings, especially in compositions.

Examining two different types of Yoshitaki's works, prints and hand paintings, will offer an answer to the previous questions; he should not be judged on the basis of his prints during the Edo era only, but also by his Meiji hand paintings in which he graphically portrayed family life, especially that of women. It is on this basis that he should be re-evaluated.

## 1. Biography and portraits of actors

### (1) Biography

"*Yoshitaki Gashū*" (Collection of Yoshitaki's paintings, 1931) [7] that was published to commemorate the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Yoshitaki's death, volume 31 of the "*Ukiyo-e shi*" magazine (1931) [8] and a special edition of "*Kamigata*" magazine featuring illustrators of the Meiji era (1942) [9] containing Yoshitaki's biography. This was written by KAWASAKI Kyosen (1877-1942), a toy painter who learned paintings from Yoshitaki. The following is a summary of Yoshitaki's biography based on Kyosen's text.

1841 Born in Osaka

1852 Became a pupil of UTAGAWA Yoshiume, who used to study paintings from UTAGAWA Kuniyoshi.

1855 Left Yoshiume to be an independent painter. Mainly worked on theatre billboards, wood block prints including portrait of actors and landscapes, as well as other kind of commercial prints (*Surimono*). Also worked as a newspaper illustrator in the first years of the Meiji era.

1880 Moved to Kyoto.

1882 Awarded a bronze medal at the first *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*. Since then his paintings received good reviews in various exhibitions both domestically and internationally. Awarded another bronze prize at the second *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai* and a meritorious mention at the fourth *Naikoku Kangyō Hakurankai* (National Expo for the Promotion of Industry).

1885 Moved to Sakai. As the city was well known for sake liquor production, Yoshitaki made a picture scroll illustrating sake brewing at the requests from breweries. He also painted on a sake barrel to be dedicated to the Matsuo Shrine in Kyoto, a deity of sake.

1889 Died in Sakai. Entombed at the Nanshū-ji temple, Sakai.

Since he started paintings under Yoshiume in 1852, the most of Yoshitaki's career for the next 13 years was dedicated to Osaka prints, namely, portraits of actors. According to Kyosen, Yoshitaki was touched by ITŌ Jakuchū's large paintings in the Shōkoku-ji temple, and favored producing detailed and rich-colored genre pictures in the style of Jakuchū. He also copied a painting of a ghost by MARUYAMA Ōkyo. Kyosen wrote that Yoshitaki received a request from the Kyoto prefectural government to be a lecturer at the Kyoto Prefectural Art School, and also described how he communicated with his contemporary painters. Since Kyosen married Yoshitaki's daughter whose name was Hamako, he became Yoshitaki's son-in-law as well as his student. It is therefore fair to argue that Kyosen's statement about Yoshitaki is reliable.

## (2) Development of portraits of actors

### (A) Ansei period (1854-1860)

Yoshitaki's work first appeared around 1854 [10]. Ansei was a time for Yoshitaki to establish his own style. In “*Keisei Ōmonguchi*” (1859) [Figure 1], the physical shape of the actor is somehow distorted, especially the balance between the head and the body. Similarly, the lines from neck to shoulder are not clear, making the way the arms relate to the body look unnatural. As a result, the upper body is oddly flat and does not look real. This kind of improper balance is often observed in his early works, but he quickly acquired skills in drawing body shape and catching the movement of actors with simple and moderately curved lines, so that figures appeared more natural.



Figure 1: *Keisei Ōmonguchi*, Kamigata Ukiyo-e Museum, Osaka

### (B) From the Bunkyu period (1861-1864) to the first half of 1870's.

During this time, Yoshitaki rendered the shapes of arms and legs with accuracy as well as the volume of the body. By doing so, he managed to express the strong presence of actors as if their auras on stage also appeared in prints. This can be seen in “*Kanadehon Chūsin Gura*” [Figure 2]. The actor is depicted in a balanced way with a well-built upper body, a firm stance with spread legs, which contrasts with the flat figure in “*Keisei Ōmonguchi*”. Yoshitaki's new style can also be seen in the shape of shoulders and the round hems of costumes. This change was clear in other works too, such as “*Ichinotani Futabagunki*” [Figure 3] in which the costume of an actor playing a female role was drawn in delicately curved lines, clearly expressing the thickness and soft texture of the fabric. In the same way, Yoshitaki used soft curves for the wrinkles on the sleeves of the actor also playing a female role in “*Asamagadake Omokage Zōshi*” [Figure 4] (1871). During this time, actors in his picture were still depicted with a round shaped body.



Figure 2: *Kanadehon Chūsin Gura*, Kamigata Ukiyo-e Museum, Osaka



Figure 3: *Ichinotani Futabagunki*, Kamigata Ukiyo-e Museum, Osaka



Figure 4: *Asamagadake Omokage Zōshi*, Kamigata Ukiyo-e Museum, Osaka



Figure 5: *Akegarasu Tsuyuno Nuregoromo*, an image from the *Japanese Art Catalogue in the Náprstkovo Muzeum Collection, the Czech Republic*



Figure 6: *Yumeji no Tabi Seiyō Meguri*, an image from the *Japanese Art Catalogue in the Náprstkovo Muzeum Collection, the Czech Republic*

### (C) The late 1870's

As was seen in “*Akegarasu Tsuyuno Nuregoromo*” [Figure 5] (1875), Yoshitaki began to use straight lines for the wrinkles on sleeves. In addition, the elbows' angle became sharper than that in previous works, even though some roundness was still seen in the way the hems of clothing was painted. In a word, he altered his way of painting to express wrinkles. In “*Yumeji no Tabi Seiyō Meguri*” [Figure 6] (1878), many lines were used for the wrinkles on the inner side of sleeves, around the *obi* belt and for the contours of the shoulders of the *Haori* jacket, which even appears obsessive compared with his earlier works where simple curves were used for making the *Kimono* costumes look soft and thick. His preference for using multiple lines to express the *Kimono* wrinkles became even more obvious toward 1880.

In summary, the development of Yoshitaki's style observed in his print works is as follows. The odd body balance in the earliest works soon disappeared, mutating into figures depicted by round and soft lines that expressed the strong presence of actors on stage. However, by the late 1870's this softness was replaced by sharpness using increasingly a multitude of lines notably for the wrinkles of costumes.

In addition to portraits of actors, Yoshitaki made other kind of prints including “*Naniwa Hyakukei*” (A hundred views of Osaka), co-produced with Kunikazu and Yoshiyuki, and *Nishiki-e* newspapers published around 1875. In particular the *Nishiki-e* newspapers are quite important to follow Yoshitaki's style, because the year 1875 was exactly the time during which Yoshitaki changed his way of painting as discussed above. Actually, the figures in the *Nishiki-e* newspapers showed the same features as those in portraits of actors, in which their knees and elbows were drawn by straight lines. Thus, it is fair to argue that the same analysis of portraits of actors can be

applied to other works. The next chapter will therefore examine the evolution of Yoshitaki's style in hand paintings after he stopped producing print portraits of actors.

## 2. Hand paintings in the Meiji era

### (1) Shift to hand paintings

It is established that Yoshitaki shifted to hand paintings in 1880. Kyosen's biography in the picture book entitled “*Yoshitaki Gashu*” states that in 1880 Yoshitaki stopped producing theatre billboards, portraits of actors, newspaper illustrations and other kind of print works. He then relocated to Takamiya-cho, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto to begin hand paintings with focus

on women's daily life. Actually, there has been no discovery of Yoshitaki's portraits of actors after 1880. Kyosen explained this change in the *Kamigata* magazine mentioned above as follows: "Yoshitaki had known too much about the theater world".

The next paragraph provides an overview of his hand paintings in the Meiji era.

## (2) Works after the shift

The total of twenty one color plates in "*Yoshitaki Gashū*" include five hand paintings, six sketches, seven prints, a drawing painted by Yoshitaki's fellow painters, a sketch book, and an unpublished print design [11]. The following close studies of two hand paintings and a sketch are taken from these plates. They are supported by Kyosen's comments and aim at providing a view of the development of Yoshitaki's style after 1880.

(a) *Fujin Fūzoku Saihō no zu* [Figure 7] (Women sewing in a room)

This picture was awarded the bronze medal at the first *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshinkai* in 1882. Six women and a girl are gathering and sewing. Five of them in the lower part of the picture are shown as being busy with sewing next to sewing boxes on their side. They sit in a circle, giving thus a sense of depth to the picture. There is a screen in the upper right part, and in the upper left, another woman is shown reeling some thread with a girl as an assistant. The screen is the only indication that this is the inside of a room, and the positioning of the figures creates a sense of integrated space in the painting. The design of their *Kimono* dress and the *obi* belts are different for each of them, which makes the whole image look colorful. On the other hand, the soft atmosphere emanating from the women gives a gentle touch to the scene.

(b) *Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu* [Figure 8] (Women in a family gathering in Kyoto)

This painting, too, was awarded the bronze prize at the second *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshinkai* in 1884. At the bottom of the picture, a woman is sewing while watching over her child's studying, and another woman is giving something to a woman holding a toddler. Behind screens the two partitioning screens in the middle of the picture, two women are playing each a different instrument, *Koto* (Japanese harp) and *Shamisen* (a three strings music instrument). At the top of the picture, we can see a sixth woman and an elderly man next to a charcoal brazier, both listening to music. Overall, this vertically shaped picture evokes a happy gathering in a family room. The composition can be divided into three parts whereby the figures in each group sit or stand face to face. While the room



Figure 7: *Fujin Fūzoku Saihō no zu*, an image from the Photo Collections of *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*



Figure 8: *Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*, an image from the *Yoshitaki Gashū*

is separated by two screens, the whole space is so integrated that the viewer's eyes are attracted to the back of the room.

The movement of the women's body is expressed by a number of lines from shoulders to sleeves. This is particularly visible in the representation of a woman sewing at the bottom of the picture. The *Kimono* dresses and the *obi* belts depicted with fine patterns as well as the graceful aura of the women are indicative of Yoshitaki's gentle feeling towards women's everyday life.

(c) *Hinamatsuri zu* [Figure 9] (Doll festival)



Figure 9: *Hinamatsuri zu*, an image from the *Yoshitaki Gashū*

This is the sketch of a painting Yoshitaki made in 1888 at the request of the *Tokyo Bijutsu Kyōkai* (Tokyo Art Association), which was purchased by Count SANO Tsunetami, the then president of the *Tokyo Bijutsu Kyōkai*. According to the *Kamigata* magazine, “Yoshitaki received a commission to produce a large silk painting of a doll festival celebration in *Kamigata* (western area of Japan including Osaka and Kyoto) style, and he drew it in rich color and detailed manner”. In the back of the room, a large *hina* doll set is on display along with miniature furnished goods. In front of it, the lady of the house and her daughter are receiving guests, a mother and her little girl, who are coming to have a look at the dolls. In the lower part, two women and other girls are given tea and sweets in a space separated by screens, the left one displaying painted cranes. This represents the scene of a wealthy family enjoying a doll festival. Yoshitaki also captured the various movements of different figures. For instance, a woman looking at the dolls is so earnest that she is bending her body forward, while a woman in front is taking care of a child and another is distributing sweets. In addition, he used equally in this picture too a number of lines for wrinkles on their *Kimono* clothing. He also positioned figures and screens in a way that drives the eyes of the viewer from the front to the back of the space.

Yoshitaki's style as examined above can be summarized as follows. He carefully depicted furniture and other goods in details, and was eager to express woman's gentle movement and soft atmosphere. For this purpose, he used many straight lines for wrinkles so that joint parts of the body such as elbows and knees could be felt even when they were concealed in clothing. Thus, an abundant usage of lines was a significant factor in Yoshitaki's style.

As discussed in the prior chapter, this was also observed in his print works immediately before he shifted to hand paintings, namely those in the late 1870's. Therefore, it can be argued that his style in prints continued in his hand paintings as well[12].

Moreover, as seen in “*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*”, he favored the representation of figures according to a vertical arrangement in order to give a sense of perspective. He also placed screens at odd angles, which, in spite of the whole space being partitioned, induce the viewer's eyes to be driven toward the back of a room. This tendency to emphasize depth from front to back is another characteristic of his hand paintings.

### (3) How Yoshitaki was evaluated at *Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*

As mentioned above, both “*Fujin Fūzoku Saihō no zu*” and “*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*” were awarded with the bronze medal at the first and second *Kaiga Kyōshin Kai* respectively. The *Kyōshinkai* was a national competition of paintings organized by the then Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in 1882 and 1885. It aimed to promote fine arts as one of the industries. The report from the 1882 *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai* [13] indicated how Yoshitaki was assessed in this competition and the reasons why he received a bronze medal twice.

The first *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai* was held at the Ueno Park in Tokyo from October 1st to November 20th 1882. Yoshitaki’s picture entered group 4, and more precisely the *Utagawa* School, which was one of the six divisions in this group. The following is the number of works for each category in the competition.

#### Group 1

School name: *Kose, Takuma, Kasuga, Tosa, Sumiyoshi, Kōrin*

187 works

#### Group 2

School name: *Kanō*

460 works

#### Group 3

School name: *Shina Nanboku* (Southern and Northern China)

1889 works

#### Group 4

School name: *Hishikawa, Miyagawa, Utagawa, Hasegawa and others*

74 works

#### Group 5

School name: *Maruyama, Shijō and others*

655 works

#### Group 6

Miscellaneous

312 works

Total of 4568 works by 2048 artists

As shown, group 4 was the smallest with just 37 painters, and the *Utagawa* school painters were only twenty three of them. Artists like KŌNO Bairei, KUBOTA Beisen were on the panel, and foreign specialists such as Gottfried Wagner and Earnest Fenollosa were advisors. In this competition [14], four were awarded the silver medal while twenty five were awarded the bronze medal. Yoshitaki was one of the bronze medals’ winners - only one from group 4 [15].

General comments on group 4 were: “These type of works (in group 4) have been produced as a kind of supplementary to conventional fine arts and no high quality neither sophistication should be expected. Even though there are one or two works that are worth seeing, others are too earthly”

This suggests that Yoshitaki’s painting was highly appreciated because of its gentle and happy family atmosphere of women sewing together, unlike other group 4 works that were

considered to be “too earthly”. It was the reason why he became the only award winner of group 4.

After the *Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*, he received requests from prestigious arts association such as *Tokyo Bijutsu Kyokai* (mentioned above) and *Ryūchi kai* to offer his paintings to their exhibitions, which also indicated that Yoshitaki established his position as a painter due to the *Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*.

Kyosen stated that theatre billboard paintings by Yoshitaki had been popular even before that. Still, after completely shifting to hand paintings, he earned a good reputation as a genre painter who specialized in women’s family life in such a short time. Why was it possible? The answer to the question can be found in his paintings back to the very end of the Edo period.

### 3. Hand paintings during the end of the Edo era

#### (1) “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” in the MFA collection

“*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” [Figure 10] (Dance performance with music instruments) is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [16]. NAITO Masato wrote that face lines as well as nose and eyes showed features of the *Utagawa* school, and that this was probably painted during the very last days of the Edo era or the beginning of Meiji (1850’s–1860’s) [17]. The following is the examination of this painting, “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”, based on the analysis of Yoshitaki’s development in the previous chapter.

The picture is on paper, sized approximately 103.8 centimeters long and 49.0 centimeters wide. Four women are playing shamisens and drums and, in the centre, two women are dancing with fans in their hands. All of their *Kimono* dresses are painted in rich colors and fine designs. In the right lower part of the picture, a woman is playing hand drum. In the opposite corner, another woman is holding a shamisen and a quill as she watches two dancers. In the upper part, two women are facing each other, each playing on a big and a small drum. Amongst the music performers, there are two dancers; one standing with her hem of *Kimono* flipped, the other kneeling down and looking up to the standing one. The designs of each woman’s *Kimono* include flowers on a black background, silver grass with butterflies, bamboo leaves, bold pine trees with gradual tones from pink to light blue, willow and swallows, and stylish *Yorokejima* (waved stripes). For two dancers, a vivid red is used for their *Kimono* hems and cuffs, while music performers’ undergarments shown along the neckline are in soft red. These rich color variations are effective to capture the glamorous party atmosphere.

This style, expressing the glamorous air of the scene by the colorful and fine designs of the *Kimono* dresses and the *obi* belts, is typical of Yoshitaki’s hand paintings in the Meiji era, as already mentioned. On the other hand, in this picture Yoshitaki used sophisticated curved lines to make the shoulders and elbows look round. Additionally, he outlined figures with



Figure 10: *Kabu Onkyoku zu*, MFA, Boston

simple and thick brushstrokes, as is manifest in his depiction of the *Kimono* dress of a woman beating a big drum. This kind of lines is clearly different from the hand paintings made in the Meiji era, in which a number of straight lines were used to represent folding knees on the floor, or the shape of shoulders and elbows.

This distinctive form of expression through soft curves can equally be seen in “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” (Standing beauty) from the British Museum collection.

### (2) “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” from the British Museum collection

It is clear that “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” [Figure 11] (Standing Beauty) [18] was painted in a similar way to the “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”. A woman standing alone holds what looks like a paper tissue case, slightly leaning on the right, and looking up in the air to the left side. She is in a blue-gray *Kimono* dress with designs of willows and swallows, tying a large red *obi* belts decorated with the *Shippo* (seven treasures) pattern. A red undergarment can be seen at the edge of the sleeves and hems, with a rounded drape contrasting with her slim lower body. Profile lines are thick and dynamic as seen in the soft curves from shoulders to sleeves. In this brush work, Yoshitaki gave volume to the dresses’ hems emphasizing thus the slenderness of the standing beauty. Her *kimono* dress has almost the same design as those seen in “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”. Yoshitaki’s seal that reads “*Naniwa Yosyitaki*” (Yoshitaki of Osaka) is also the same.



Figure 11:  
*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*, The British Museum, London

Even though the composition is different, it is clear that “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” was produced in a style identical to the “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”, as was observed with the round shape of shoulder-to-sleeve lines, the soft brush works, as well as in the typical way he painted faces. It can therefore be concluded that two works were painted in the same period.

### (3) Hand paintings at the end of the Edo era

The common style in the two hand paintings discussed above also appears in portraits of actors produced at the end of the Edo era; those during the Ansei period (A); and from the Bunkyo period to early 1870’s (B). The style during this time is quite distinctive from that in the Meiji era in which Yoshitaki expressed body shapes such as knees and elbows with a multitude of straight lines. This form of expression was what Yoshitaki began in his portraits of actors in the late 1870’s, immediately before shifting to hand paintings. He continued to use it in hand paintings.

With this in mind, we can safely guess that “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” and “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” were painted at around the same time as his print works which are stylistically similar, i.e. between 1850’s and 1860’s. This analysis of the evolution of Yoshitaki’s style in his prints and hand paintings confirms Naito’s assessment of “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” according to which the facial lines and features show that the paintings should be dated back to the end of the Edo era. Furthermore, “*Kiyomizu no Butaitobi no musume zu*” in “*Yoshitaki Gashū*”, thought to have been painted in the Ansei period, carries the seal of “*Naniwa Yoshitaki*”, similar to “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”

and “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*”. This is further evidence that all three works were produced at the end of the Edo era.

As discussed so far, Yoshitaki applied the same style to his prints and hand paintings, both of which following the same development. No previous studies established a connection between “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” and “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*”, apart from the seal and Kimono designs. This paper is indeed the first to notice that the two works share the same style and period of production. The fact that “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*” was also produced in the same period suggests that Yoshitaki already made a number of hand paintings while he was still a popular *Ukiyo-e* print artist—“*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” was no exception. Thus, it is necessary to look back to the end of the Edo era in order to assess the evolution of his hand paintings. During this period he made numerous portraits of actors for prints, but also favored portraying beautiful females for his hand paintings, from which he developed genre paintings with focus on women in the Meiji era.

The next chapter attempts to identify the features of Yoshitaki’s hand paintings in both the Edo and Meiji periods.

#### 4. The significance of hand paintings for Yoshitaki

##### (1) Analysis on “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”

The way Yoshitaki applied color in his hand paintings appears to be a significant factor. In this regard, Naito commented that the patterns and colors on women’s Kimono clothing differ from that of the Edo era. Vividly colored Kimono dresses with various designs inexorably attract viewers’ attention. In particular, the contrasts in dark colored Kimonos, such as between black, green, and red inner garments that appear around the cuff links or at the hem of dresses, create a noticeable effect. This combination of colors seems to be Yoshitaki’s favorite, as it can also be seen in his portraits of actors [19]. Moreover, gradations of colors from pink to light blue as shown on the Kimono dress of the woman in the centre, was a technique Yoshitaki often used in his prints for the costumes of actors [20].

In addition to sharing similarities as for the colors, his hand paintings and print works also share the same design for the Kimono garments [21]. Indeed, as stated above, the same pattern is used on Kimono dresses in “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” and “*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*”. It can therefore be argued that Yoshitaki took the Kimono designs from prints and used them for hand paintings such as “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”.

The golden fans held by two dancers were also taken from the Osaka prints. The Osaka prints of the end of the Edo era can be divided into two groups determined by the degree of quality; *Jōzuri* (top quality prints) and *Namizuri* (average quality prints) [22]. Although both use the same woodblock, a lot of golden or silver paint was used on the *Jōzuri* print for fans, swords, and armors, while they were painted in yellow on the *Namizuri* print. The fans in “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” are golden, probably because Yoshitaki brought the techniques of the Osaka prints into his hand paintings.

All observations of the color patterns and designs of the *Kimono* dresses indicate that Yoshitaki painted “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” in the style of the Osaka prints.

The next section compares “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” with the hand paintings of the Meiji era.

## (2) Comparison with the hand paintings of the Meiji era

“*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” shows six women who make three couples; in the each pair, two women are depicted side by side, and the three pairs are positioned vertically. This composition is typical in the Osaka prints, not only in Yoshitaki’s works but in general. In the Osaka prints, several sheets of prints are put together to show the whole image of a scene or a story from *Kabuki* drama, while each print has its own composition. The composition of “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” potentially follows the style of this Osaka prints format.

The way the two dancers’ positions relate to each other is also typical of portraits of actors [23]. Many of Yoshitaki’s print works were *Chuban* (middle-sized prints). Very often, these prints show two figures face-to-face simply because such a configuration fitted the dimensions of the sheet. We can see that while two women are grouped together in the center of the image, there are four music players in relative isolation from each other as, unlike the dancers, they are not really looking at each other although they are playing in a concert. Thus, the whole composition of “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*” was just like a patchwork of the several images taken from prints. What was Yoshitaki probably trying to do was to construct a larger composition from them.

He carried on composing images in this multi-layered way for hand paintings during the Meiji era. In particular, this is obvious in “*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*”. On the other hand and compared to “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”, it seems that he tried to put more focus on the relationships between figures, such as a woman sewing and looking at the same time at a child studying, while another woman by a charcoal brazier is listening to music. In other words, in each case, human relations are expressed with the directions of the gazes or faces. The three groups divided by screens are not only configured following some verticality, but also in a way that creates a sense of perspective in the picture. This more complex composition is quite effective in displaying the image of a happy family gathering at home.

The discussions above can be summarized as follows. Yoshitaki’s hand paintings in the Meiji era, such as “*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*” and “*Hinamatsuri-zu*”, are composed in a more sophisticated way than in his previous works such as “*Kabu Onkyoku zu*”; In the latter, he focused on the individual position of each female couple, while in “*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*” he tried to relate each group to each other more closely as well as combining figures and furniture (e.g. screens and *hina* dolls) together to create a more integrated space.

## (3) The nature of Yoshitaki’s hand paintings

A close study of Yoshitaki’s hand paintings reveals that his style developed from his portraits of actors, especially in the contours of figures, in the way he used colors, and how he designed the clothing as well as the composition as a whole. Then he developed compositions in which depicted figures and objects were arranged in a more complex and sophisticated way. It ensues that his paintings gained depth, with clear emphasis on human relationships expressed for example by the feminine and elegant air of women exchanging gazes, or by the mother looking at her child with affection. Such a gentle atmosphere made Yoshitaki’s hand

painting begetting a new genre of family portrait in the Meiji era. This was precisely the reason why he was highly praised at the *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*.

Another point that needs to be considered is the historical background from the end of the Edo period to early Meiji. A number of factors in this period of fast changes might have driven Yoshitaki to alter his course, not only in terms of stylistic development, but also his shift to hand paintings.

That was a time when the *Ukiyo-e* prints introduced a variety of new methods from the West, including lithography, etching, and photography. This brought aspects of Western realism into the *Ukiyo-e* prints. How these new trends affected Yoshitaki's evolution awaits further studies—namely the shift from pictorial flatness to the effect of perspective as well as using many straight lines rather than soft and simple curves.

Moreover, KŌNO Bairei's and KUBOTA Beisen's influences on Yoshitaki is another issue to look at, since Yoshitaki decided because of them to apply to the *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*. "Yoshitaki Gashū" contains a group painting in which KŌNO, KUBOTA and NOMURA Bunkyō took part, who were three prestigious artists of the time. In particular KŌNO and KUBOTA were members of the evaluation panel of the *Kyōshinkai*. The painting offers evidence of the close ties Yoshitaki had with them [24].

This personal "networking" was another factor behind Yoshitaki's abandonment of portraits of actors to specialize in hand paintings. He produced hand paintings like "*Kabu Onkyoku zu*" even before he stopped working with prints. Thus, it can be argued that the shift to hand paintings in the Meiji era was a logical choice for him.

## Conclusion

This essay attempted throughout to provide a reassessment of Yoshitaki's work by exploring both his prints and hand paintings.

Comparing "*Kabu Onkyoku zu*" with his portraits of actors confirmed that it was produced at the end of the Edo era and that it adopted some elements of the Ukiyoe prints. "*Shinzō Tachisugata zu*" and "*Kiyomizu Butaitobi no Musume*" are thought to be painted during the same period. Thus, "*Kabu Onkyoku zu*" was not an exception but one of many hand paintings Yoshitaki had already started during this time.

Hand paintings in the Meiji era such as "*Kyoto Fujin Fūzoku Ikkadanran no zu*" show Yoshitaki's change in style. He introduced perspective in his pictures, which successfully created more complicated configurations compared with the flatness of, for example, "*Kabu Onkyoku zu*". This is what makes his work distinctive since no other artists amongst his contemporaries adopted such a compositional style. Another distinctive feature is that he divided the space into several parts in the way he positioned figures and furniture, enabling him to depict exchanges of women's gentle gazes and creating thus an atmosphere of happy family life.

Yoshitaki's works in the Meiji era have not so far been highly considered, being described as "deteriorated quality". However, this evaluation only took account of his prints. The fact is that he was praised for his hand paintings at the *Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshinkai* and other exhibitions.

The fact that he was indeed asked for his pictures to be displayed proves that he was highly appreciated in his time. The conclusion that is drawn here is that Yoshitaki's hand paintings should be given fair consideration if we are to assess the painter's work as a whole. This is what this essay tried to do.

Around 1880, the Osaka prints were in decline with the effect that many other *Ukiyo-e* painters tried to find new possibilities in other fields, just like Yoshitaki [25]. With this in mind, his choice to abandon his portraits of actors to specialize in hand paintings was already apparent at the end of the Edo period.

So far, Yoshitaki's career as that of a hand painting artist has been ignored. This essay has attempted to contribute to providing a new aspect of the painter's work by looking at his early brush drawn paintings as well as those of the Meiji era. There are still some issues that await future studies, one of which is Yoshitaki's role in the development of *Nihonga* (Japanese style paintings) in the modernizing process of Japan since he served as a teacher at the Kyoto Prefectural Art School, an art institution that significantly contributed to the evolution of such a specific style as well as to modern Japanese design.

## Notes

- [1] KURODA Genji, *Kamigata-e Ichiran*, Sato Shōtarō Shoten, 1929
- [2] For example, a catalogue of the exhibition *200 Anniversary of Kamigata Ukiyo-e* held in 1950.
- [3] MATSUDAIRA Susumu, *Kamigata Ukiyo-e no Saihakken (Rediscovery of Kamigata Ukiyo-e)*, Kodan-sha 1999
- [4] Volume 5, *Kamigata Yakusha-e Shūsei*, 2005 and *Kamigata Yakusha-e Chō*, 2006
- [5] Referred to *Osaka no Nishiki-e Shinbun* and a catalog of the exhibition *Nishiki-e Shinbun in Osaka, Meiji* held at the Itami City Museum in 2006
- [6] Referred to commentary by KITAGAWA Hiroko in Volume 5 of *Kamigata Yakusha-e Shūsei* and *Kamigata Yakusha-e Chō*.
- [7] *Yoshitaki Gashū* is a private publication by KAWASAKI Kyosen in 1931 that commemorates the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Yoshitaki's death in 1931
- [8] *Ukiyo-e shi* contained Yoshitaki's episode along with an announcement of the publication of *Yoshitaki Gashū*
- [9] Referred to the reprinted edition published by Showa Shuppan Ltd. From 1969 to 1971.
- [10] Confirmed with reference to MATSUDAIRA Susumu, *Kamigata Ukiyo-e no Saihakken (Rediscovery of Kamigata Ukiyo-e)*
- [11] Many works in the book are missing.
- [12] Yoshitaki did some print designs after he shifted to hand paintings. One of them was *Hikifuda* (a wood block print advertisement) ordered by the Osaka Beer Brewery in Suita (The current Suita factory of Asahi Beer Ltd.). It was said that the founder, TORII Komakichi asked Yoshitaki for *Hikifuda* to announce the establishment of the company in 1891. The style in *Hikifuda* is similar to that in the hand paintings of the same period in which many straight lines were used. Thus, it can be argued that he produced the image in exactly the same way regardless of the format, prints or hand paintings.
- [13] *Art Catalogue Selection of Modern Japan, Naikoku Kaiga Kyōshin Kai*, Yumani Shobō, 2001
- [14] Works were scored from 1 to 10 points according to ten criteria, namely, form, originality, composition, shape, brush work, how ink is used, how color is applied, liveliness,

if following conventional rules, and respect for tradition. They all together made a total of 100 points. A work that would score a full mark would be awarded a a gold medal; higher than 70 points was a silver medal; higher than 50 was a bronze medal; and higher than 30 was a merit.

- [15] Referred to reprinted edition published by Showa Shuppan Ltd., from 1969 to 1971.
- [16] The author was fortunate to do some research on the “*Kabu Onkyōhoku Zu*” in the MFA, which has also a large collection of Osaka prints. It seems that William. S. Bigelow, the original collector, was keenly interested in the Osaka prints.
- [17] Boston Museum of Fine Arts, *Nikuhitsu Ukiyo-e (Ukiyo-e by hand paintings)*, Kodansha, 2000
- [18] *Hizo Ukiyo-e Taikan*, The British Museum, Kodansha, 1987
- [19] As seen in “*Keisei Ishikawa Zome*” from the Kamigata Ukiyo-e Museum Collection.
- [20] As seen in “*Katakiuchi Ganryū Jima*” from the Kamigata Ukyo-e Museum Collection.
- [21] As seen in “*Osome Hisamatsu Ukina no Yomiuri*” from the collection of the Ikeda Bunko Library, Hankyū Gakuen.
- [22] With acknowledgement of Ms KITAGAWA Hiroko, who advised on the differences between *Jozuri* and *Namizuri*.
- [23] As seen in “*Keisei Ōmonguchi*” from the collection of the Ikeda Bunko Library, Hankyū Gakuen.
- [24] Three artists worked together at the Kyoto Prefectural Art School. Yoshitaki’s personal networks in Kyoto is a topic for future studies.
- [25] In the *Kamigata* magazine is a report written by MITANI Sadahiro reported that YUKAWA Shōdō, a *Kamigata Ukiyo-e* artist, joined the Asahi Newspaper Ltd. in 1881 as an illustrator. MITANI was an apprentice of YUKAWA.