



Reconsidering Illustrated Educational Books for Women with regard to Hishikawa Moronobu's "Woman's Imagawa"

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journal or publication title	Bulletin of the study on philosophy and history of art in University of Tsukuba
volume	32
page range	20-21
year	2017-03-01
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2241/00147338

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Keywords:

education, ukiyoe

Introduction

"Woman's Imagawa" were a popular form of imagery in Edo from the Edo Period into the Meiji period. There are a lot of variations. This version has eight illustrations and dates back to the year 1700. They appeared for the first time in illustration in the year 1700, which has generally been attributed to Hishikawa Moronobu (1618–1694). Hishikawa is sometimes referred to as the originator of ukiyo-e, as he is considered to be the first person who both painted and created woodblock prints in the ukiyo-e genre. The first printed description of a "Woman's Imagawa" is in the "Textbook Classification Catalog for Girls" published by Ishikawa Ken in 1946¹. The first reference about a painter appeared in the "Encyclopedia of Japanese Literature" in 1963. However, it's unclear who wrote this reference. There is no identifying signature on the "Woman's Imagawa" recorded. Perhaps without considered attention, it would be easy to assume that the work is by Hishikawa Moronobu. In this paper I would like to discuss whether the imagery of the "Woman's Imagawa" was in fact created by Hishikawa Moronobu.

1. About "Woman's Imagawa"

The first "Woman's Imagawa" was published in 1687². After that, they became widely available and later published in different versions. The format was 23 sentens on different aspects of female etiquette and behaviour. The form imitated that of the publication "Imagawa jo", for boys to learn. Each section was very short — about 15–25 words and it was assumed that a young girl would learn the text by heart.

Kichi Sawada (?–?) edited a new version in 1700 with eight illustrations and a variant text of the first publication in 1687. Sawada was a well-known calligrapher at the time. It is this version that the most divergent varieties at present are confirmed. In this original version, there are eight kinds of image depicting Hishikawa Moronobu. I would like to compare with two images "Woman's Imagawa" to Hishikawa's works.

2. Compare "Woman's Imagawa" with Another Hishikawa works

The first image is of three women, huddled together, talking image. The second is of a woman reading, who is dressed in the style of the Heian period. The talking lady's waist is projecting forward. Also, the draping of her kimono is portrayed by three curving lines and her skirt by a triangle

shape. These features appear frequently in Hishikawa's work and can be considered characteristic of his style. The depiction of the body shape and kimono are quite different compared with other painters. However, considering only this point would not be enough to conclusively say that it is a work by Hishikawa. This is because he ran a workshop, and other painters may have been involved in the creation of any particular work.

3. Classification of Hishikawa work and reconsideration of image of "Woman's Imagawa"

From the research of Hishikawa works to date, the development of his style is gradually becoming clear. I would like to consider the images of "Woman's Imagawa" in relation to these developments.

First initial stage. This term is hard drawn lines, and eyes represented by single lines, and spacing from eyes to chin relatively large.

Next Early stage. This term is a unique style appears. Woman's faces is portrayed with high cheekbones. And eyes are still represented by lines. However, there are two distinct face shapes round, and oval.

Third, Middle stage. This term is that face shapes and expressions become more diverse. Eyes become more oval.

The last is Late stage (1694–). The proportions of the face relative to the body change.

Around 1677, production at the Hishikawa workshop increases greatly in response to fashion for illustrated books between 1677–1683 in Edo area. A unique style is also evident in Hishikawa's work by this time.

Next I would like to consider the imagery of the "Woman's Imagawa", which was published six years after Hishikawa Moronobu died. In this work the clothes are firm and decisive. Compared with other works, the features are uncommon. The screen (几帳) and desk are not depicted with realistic perspective.

4. Hishikawa workshop

Moronobu's eldest son and protege leave works independently around 1684. But after Moronobu's death, the eldest son gave up painting and left the workshop. Not much is known about the workshop after Moronobu's death. However, the "*Yakusha-shōgei* (役者諸芸)" dates from 1716, which indicates that production continued at least up to then. In other words, when the "Woman's Imagawa" was being produced, the Hishikawa workshop is assumed to still have been operating. It is difficult to judge whether Hishikawa Moronobu created sketches of the "Woman's Imagawa", and it

was very likely that another member of his workshop produced sketches for the “Woman’s Imagawa” after Moronobu’s death.

Conclusion

There are a lot of common features shared with other works from the Hishikawa workshop, and therefore it is possible to conclude that the imagery of the “Woman’s Imagawa” was created in the Hishikawa workshop but not by Moronobu himself.

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- 1 Ishikawa Ken “Joshiyo Oraimono Bunken Mokuroku”, Dai Nippon Yubenkai (Kodansha, 1946).
 - 2 Yasuda Chiemi, “‘Woman’s Imagawa’ Seiritsuko: Joshi-yo-orai-mono Shahon to Kanpon,” *Shien*, no.73(2013): 123–138.