

# **An approach for using kabuki 'acting patterns' encountered in Edo plays and performance-related materials**

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The biggest challenge in Edo theater studies today is to understand how plays were performed. In this dissertation I explore the relationship between the performance of Kabuki plays in the Edo period and their representation in popular prints. I pay particular attention to the acting patterns employed by the actors. I propose a new method for using pictorial evidence to reveal Edo performance practice. Kabuki plays were presented through sequences of acting patterns. Successful acting patterns were used again and again by actors. Audiences enjoyed seeing their favorite actors perform well-known acting patterns.

In kabuki, powerful situations and popular characters were regularly taken from one play and introduced into another play with a completely different plot. Audiences enjoyed encountering familiar acting patterns in entirely new contexts. Knowledge of acting patterns allowed them to identify specific scenes, situations and actors in prints even when the prints did not have any texts on them.

The artist Hishikawa Moronobu created a new genre of 'theatre pictures' (gekijo-zu) in the late seventeenth century. He and his pupils used acting patterns as the basis for their theatre pictures.

Finally, I seek to explain the relationship between stage performances and the representations of those performances in two categories of illustrated books that are based on kabuki plays: e-iri kyogen bon and e-iri nehon. These books also contain evidence of performance practice.

In this dissertation I have presented a new method for linking actor prints to actual performances through the study of acting patterns. This method allows us to recreate Edo performance practice on the modern stage.