

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Lessons for Women: Woodblock Prints of the Tenpō Reforms Era

Doctoral Program: Major in Humanities
Graduate School of Letters
Ritsumeikan University
トットヒル・ヴァネッサ
TOTHILL, Vanessa K.

The Tenpō Reforms (1841-1843) had a visible, if short-term effect on the aesthetics of Edo-based, colour woodblock-print publishing. Using digital archives, this study has focused on a narrow timeframe in woodblock print history in order to ascertain the immediate effects of official censorship on *bijinga* and *yakusha-e* publishing.

In 1842, the Tokugawa *bakufu* government under the auspices of Senior Councilor Mizuno Tadakuni banned publications of pictures of beauties (*bijinga*) and pictures of actors (*yakusha-e*), and dissolved the self-regulating publishers' guilds. Edo's City Magistrate advised publishers and artists to issue designs that promoted loyalty, filial piety and fidelity by teaching women and children. This study explores the connection between government censorship and the emergence of didactic woodblock print series directed at women, which purported to offer the consumer lessons (*kyōkun-e*) and moral exemplar.

Tenpō Reforms-era Utagawa School *kyōkun-e* appropriated the language and iconography found in children's textbooks (*ōraimono*) and prescriptive literature for women (*joshi yō ōrai*) to create parodies and pastiches of moral lessons. This study explores the *retsujoden* theme by focusing on text-image compositions issued in relation to *Kagamiyama mono* before 1842 and the 'historical' prints that followed the ban. When *yakusha-e* returned in 1846-1847, these too purported to offer Confucian moral lessons to kabuki audiences in order to appease official censors.

In response to official censorship, Utagawa School *bijinga* series from the 1840s bore titles linking them to various kinds of advisory books (*tashinami-gusa*, *oshie-gusa*, *kokoroe-gusa*, *yashinai-gusa* and *tatoe-gusa*). Although *kyōkun-e* were conceived as parodies, some of the designs conveyed practical information to the reader and reflect the pragmatic concerns of urban commoner culture. Through an exploration of the connection between censorship and didactic prints, this paper highlights the link between education and social control.