

Tsukioka Settei's Erotic Paintings

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This article focuses on the paintings of the Osaka artist Tsukioka Settei (1726–1786). There exists some research on individual Settei *shunga* paintings, but no attempt yet to assess his entire known *shunga* paintings, nor have the works of his pupils been considered. This article examines his extant works in order to outline the trends overall. Further, we examine the paintings in relation to his *shunga* illustrated books, and analyze how the various motifs were transferred among the paintings and between media. Finally we consider the *shunga* paintings of his son Tsukioka Sessai (d. 1839) and his pupil Shitomi Kangetsu (1747–1797), and examine how his art was transmitted to the next generation.

The conclusions from this analysis are as follows. Firstly, Settei was not very interested in depicting the background of the figures, a technique which stands out in opposition to general trends of the time. Settei tended to use gold leaf to produce an abstract background, and therefore kept alive and enhanced an earlier tradition of *shunga* handscrolls focused on the figures themselves with little or no background, going against the trend of Edo artists. Secondly, Settei often included images of both Chinese and Japanese in his *shunga*. Thirdly, there are little direct relations between his *shunga* books and his paintings. Finally, there is considerable borrowing of motifs among the paintings, and these were also re-used in the paintings of his pupils.

Keywords: Tsukioka Settei, *shunga* painting, Osaka *shunga*, Edo *shunga*, *shunga* prints and painting, *shunga* books and painting, Tsukioka Sessai, Shitomi Kangetsu, Chinese erotic art, eighteenth century, *shunga*

Introduction

In his *Mumei ō zuihitsu* 無名翁隨筆 of 1833, the artist and writer Keisai Eisen 溪齋英泉 (1791–1848) provided the following entry for Tsukioka Settei 月岡雪鼎 (1726–1786): “Pupil of Takada Keiho 高田敬輔, leading light amongst the erotic artists of Osaka and a prolific producer of illustrated books (*inpon* 印本)—indeed too many to enumerate. I myself have seen an erotic painted handscroll by Tange 丹下 [Settei] of uncommon quality.”¹ This and

1 Keisai Eisen 1979, p. 289.

other art writings of the Edo period suggest that Settei—better known today for his paintings of beautiful women (*bijinga* 美人画)—achieved greater renown in his own day as an erotic artist, one of sufficient caliber to earn the admiration of Eisen. A number of Settei’s erotic handscrolls—perhaps even those seen by Eisen—survive today and his erotic output testifies to the phenomenal creativity so highly regarded in his time. It is these works, produced from 1765 (Meiwa 明和 2) onwards, when the artist attained the Buddhist rank of *hokkyō* 法橋 (in 1778 [An’ei 安永 7] he would be awarded the rank of *hōgen* 法眼) that form the subject of my article.

Settei began his career as an illustrator of printed books before turning his efforts to the production of erotic paintings from the Meiwa period onwards. Some of these paintings have been introduced in earlier studies. In 1960–1980, the journal *Kikan ukiyo-e* 季刊浮世絵 published a number of Settei’s erotic scrolls,² while over the past decade several other works have been included in a series of fine publications dedicated to painted erotica.³ A study by the present author of the list of bibliographical references (*inshō shomoku* 引證書目) contained in Settei’s painted album *Shunshō hige zu* 春宵秘戯図, together with a recent book-length study of Settei’s erotic printed books by C. Andrew Gerstle and the increasing number of transcriptions, studies and translations of Settei’s work now available, have substantially contributed to our understanding of this artist.⁴ However, while previous studies have examined individual paintings by the artist, no full-length study of the entire corpus of the painted erotica of Settei and his studio has yet been undertaken.

The present paper will provide a brief survey of the extant erotic paintings of Settei and some of their defining characteristics, highlighting the relationship between the iconographies of Settei’s erotic printed books and paintings, as well as internal iconographic borrowings between paintings. It will conclude with a consideration of the legacy of developments of Settei’s erotic idiom in the works of two of his pupils, his son Tsukioka Sessai 月岡雪齋 (d. 1839) and Shitomi Kangetsu 薮関月 (1747–1797).

1. Settei’s Erotic Paintings

A list of erotic paintings currently attributed to Settei is provided in the Appendix. Two of these works can be considered representative of his early “*hokkyō*” period and late “*hōgen*” period. The first is the small-format handscroll (height 14cm) known as the *Shungakan* 春画卷 belonging to the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford, California.⁵ The work comprises twelve separate scenes of love-making: the first three, executed in ink on paper, depict Chinese couples (Figure 1), while the following nine scenes, executed in color on silk, are lively depictions of Japanese lovers (Figure 2). The contrasting techniques—ink versus pigment—specifically invoke painting taxonomies of the Edo period, ink suggesting Chinese painting while colored pigment suggested the native *Yamato-e* heritage of Japan.

2 See Yoshida 1968; Kaneko 1968; Higashiōji 1975; Higashiōji 1976; and Higashiōji 1978.

3 See, for example, in *Shunga meihin sen* 2001; Hayakawa and Shirakura 2003; *Shunga* 2006; and *Nikuhitsu shunga* 2009.

4 Yamamoto 2003, Yamamoto 2010, and Gerstle 2011. The following Settei *shunpon* are available in modern transcribed editions: *Onna dairaku takara-beki* 女大楽宝開 (see Kōtō 1998), *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* 女令川趣文 (see Gerstle and Hayakawa 2007), *Konrei hiji bukuro* 婚礼秘事袋 (see Taihei 2009), and *Bidō nichiya johōki* 艶道日夜女宝記 (see Gerstle and Hayakawa 2010).

5 Reproduced complete and in color in Gerstle 2011.

Thus, here, the Chinese lovers are depicted in a Chinese idiom and the Japanese lovers—the first two couples are courtiers, the fifth scene onwards depicts contemporary figures—are depicted in a native Japanese idiom.

The unusually small format of the scroll makes the figures (which exceed the picture space, from which they emerge almost hyper-realistically) appear excessively large, creating a powerful visual impact. The scroll is signed *Hokkyō Tsukioka Settei* and the style of signature belongs to the years immediately following Settei's receipt of the *hokkyō* title in 1765. It can thus be dated to an early phase in his career, between 1765 and 1772. In terms of format, the images call to mind Torii Kiyonaga's 鳥居清長 (1752–1815) well-known *Sode no maki* 袖の巻, produced some fifteen years later in 1785 (Tenmei 天明 5). *Sode no maki* is a similarly small format scroll, just 12cm high, and its figures project beyond the picture space in the same distinctive manner as this much earlier example by Settei.⁶



Figure 1. *Shungakan*, scene 1, by Tsukioka Settei. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Gift from the Clark Center for Japanese Arts and Culture in Hanford, California.



Figure 2. *Shungakan*, scene 12, by Tsukioka Settei. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Gift from the Clark Center for Japanese Arts and Culture in Hanford, California.

The second work representative of the early period is another small painted scroll known as the *Takanoha emaki* 鷹羽絵巻.⁷ This work, executed in color on silk and depicting ten scenes of couples making love, is just 10cm high. Small enough to slip into a sleeve, this is a format commonly known as sleeve-size (*shūchin* 袖珍), designed to be discreetly carried on one's person, or slipped beneath a wooden pillow in the bedroom. Although many sleeve-sized erotic books have survived, Settei appears to have been the first to adapt the format for the erotic scroll.

6 For a discussion of the influence of Settei and other Kamigata artists on Kiyonaga's *Sode no maki*, see Hayakawa 2009.

7 Introduced in Higashiōji 1976.

The opening section of the scroll features a short bibliography, a consistent characteristic of Settei's erotic works. The titles are inscribed in Settei's own hand (Figure 3) and reference works that contain either erotic episodes or erotic waka poems. I have discussed these poems elsewhere at length and so I will just touch on them briefly here.⁸ The opening work listed in the present scroll is the (possibly) Tang period *Mi lou ji* 迷樓記 (Jp. *Meirōki*), the tale of Emperor Yang of Sui 隋煬帝, who ordered the construction of a labyrinthine tower wherein he ensconced himself—having commissioned several score of erotic hanging scrolls to be displayed on the walls—devoting his days to the pursuit of pleasure.

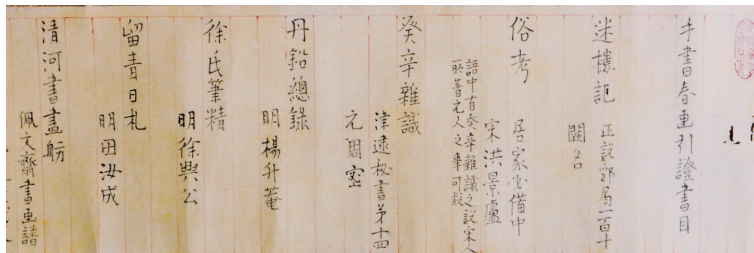


Figure 3. *Shungakan*, “inshō shomoku” (detail) by Tsukioka Settei. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Gift from the Clark Center for Japanese Arts and Culture in Hanford, California.

All ten of the works cited in the bibliography include some reference to erotica. Amongst the Japanese works listed is the poetry collection of Lord Ōnakatomi Yoshinobu 大中臣能宣朝臣 (921–991), one of the thirty six immortal poets, which includes a poem purportedly composed in front of an erotic image. The introduction to the poem alludes to the image, in which a man and woman are making love; the poem itself reads:

A powerful urge/deep feelings whose nature/I know not, yet to which I/bodily submit
Ushirometa/shi ta no kokoro wa/shirazu shite
mi o uchitokete/makasetaru kana
 うしろめたしたのこころはしらずして身をうちとけてまかせたるかな

All of the Japanese works cited—the “Ukifune” 浮舟 chapter from the *Tale of Genji*, *Kokon chomonjū* 古今著聞集, and *Shūmyōshū* 衆妙集, the poetry collection of the late sixteenth century poetic arbiter Hosokawa Yūsai 細川幽齋 (1534–1610)—contain similar allusions to erotic works. The list of works testifies to the fact that Settei was versed in both Chinese and Japanese literature (and the scroll again features both Japanese and Chinese figures), a point to which we will return later.

A work representative of Settei's later style, when he had attained the Buddhist rank of *hōgen*, is the painted album *Shunshō higi zu* (A). This opulent work, executed on silk with a gold-leaf background, depicts twelve Japanese couples. The second scene shows a woman attempting to arouse her partner (Figure 4). The clothing is painted with extreme care, and the drapery is expressed in a highly naturalistic idiom, with the contours and folds of the woman's kimono traced in a darker shade of red, highlighted by fine gold lines. This minute

8 Yamamoto 2003.

attention to detail contributes powerfully to the lavish appeal of the work. The flowing curves of the loosened *obi* are particularly eloquent and the kimono motif of waves with gold dragons is beautifully executed. Moreover, while the image does not depict the sexual act itself, details such as the rhythmic curvature of the interlocking toes contribute to a powerful erotic charge. The flesh, too, is executed with characteristic care, the distinctive Settei profiles outlined in pale ink, and carefully filled with flesh-colored pigment in such a way that the black outline remains discreet yet at the same time enhances the milky whiteness of the smooth complexions.



Figure 4. *Shunshō higi zu* (A), scene 2, by Tsukioka Settei. Private collection.

C. Andrew Gerstle has already noted the correlation between this image and Settei's erotic printed book (*shunpon* 春本) *Onna dairaku takara-beki* 女大楽宝開.⁹ The erotic book counsels that if the man is in a bad humor, his wife should treat him gently, mollify and cajole him. The present image appears to be an illustration of that counsel: the man appears disgruntled, the woman gently enticing. This work also offers a brief bibliography listing the same titles of Chinese and Japanese texts noted earlier. We will examine further correlations between Settei's painted works and his erotic books in the third section.

2. Key Characteristics of the Works

The works considered hitherto have been representative of Settei's output from 1765 to 1786, when he reached the ranks of first *hokkyō* and then *hōgen*. The current section will consider one of the most distinctive features of Settei's painted erotica: the emphasis on the emotional interaction between the man and the woman and the almost total absence of background detail.

The absence of background marks a clear distinction between Settei's painted erotica and that of other artists. Katsukawa Shunchō's 勝川春潮 erotic scroll *Abuna-e zukushi* あぶ

⁹ Gerstle 2006.

な絵づくし was produced at roughly the same time as Settei's *Shunshō higi zu* (A). Figure 5 shows the ninth scene from that work: a geisha on a bridge being taken from the rear by her attendant, who has deposited the *shamisen* box and lantern on the ground. The scene is set in the country and suggests a line of events whereby the geisha, either on her way to her appointment or during her return, succumbs to her sexual desires.



Figure 5. *Abuna-e zukushi*, scene 9, by Katsukawa Shunchō. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection RES.09.239. Photograph © 2013 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved. c/o DNPartcom.

A similar narrative tendency is evident in erotic works by the painter Chōbunsai Eishi 鳥文齋栄之 (1756–1829): for example, his *Kisa no tsuna* 象の綱, produced during the Bunka 文化 era (1804–1818).¹⁰ The sixth scene of the scroll shows a summer scene: a man and woman make love surrounded by the summer utensils of a water pail, hand towel, fan and reed blind. These two works are typical of the tendency of Edo period erotic paintings to include seasonal signifiers or allusions to seasonal rituals, which locate the erotic scene within a narrative context. By contrast, Settei's painted erotica strips away all contingent detail, simply to show the act of love-making.

Shirakura Yoshihiko has discussed the narrativity of erotic art, achieved through its inclusion of domestic and seasonal detail. Shirakura suggests that a ludic narrative element has been a characteristic of Japanese erotica since Heian times.¹¹ The *Koshibagaki zōshi* 小柴垣草紙 painted handscroll, produced in the late Heian period, the Kamakura period *Chigo no sōshi* 稚児之草紙, and the late Kamakura *Fukuro hōshi ekotoba* 袋法師絵詞 scroll

¹⁰ The work is reproduced in *Shunga meihin sen* 2001, nos. 4–6, p. 53.

¹¹ Shirakura 2009a.

all reveal this narrative tendency. From the end of the Muromachi period, however, Ming erotica of the Wanli 万曆 period (1573–1620) began to enter Japan. It was at this stage that Japanese erotica began to shed its narrative tendency and adopt a twelve-pose format inspired by Ming Chinese models.

The color-printed Chinese erotic books *Fengliu jue chang tu* 風流絕暢圖 (Jp. *Fūryū zetchō zu*) and *Hua ying jin zhen* 花營錦陣 (Jp. *Kaei kinjin*), which were introduced to Japan around this time, are typical of the style that subsequently came to dominate Japanese erotica. These works focus on the act of copulation itself, conventional in Chinese erotic works, and are without narrative plots; they all tend to be in sets of distinct erotic scenes.

The painted scroll with twelve separate couples against a blank ground became the standard format of the Hishikawa 菱川 school, and influenced the eighteenth-century Edo artists Miyagawa Chōshun 宮川長春 (1682–1752), Torii Kiyonobu 鳥居清信 (1664–1729), Okumura Masanobu 奥村政信 (1686–1764), and the Kamigata (Kyoto–Osaka) artists Nishikawa Sukenobu 西川祐信 (1671–1750) and Tsukioka Settei.¹² Thus, as Shirakura has noted, painted erotica of the first half of the eighteenth century—for example, the works of Kiyonobu and Chōyōdō Anchi 長陽堂安知 (active early 18th century)—shows little interest in the background, which is either left blank or extremely curtailed. The same tendency is evident in the works of Sukenobu; that is to say, both Edo and Kamigata erotica at this period followed similar models.

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, while the painted erotica of Edo artists had renewed its interest in narrative, the works of Settei from the Meiwa to Tenmei 天明 eras (1764–1789) continue to favor the earlier, non-narrative model. One reason for this new Edo-Kamigata divergence is surely the development, from 1765, of color printing. As is generally known, with the introduction of color-printed *nishiki-e* 錦絵 made in Edo, the twelve-sheet color-printed album came to dominate erotic production: leading artists from the latter half of the eighteenth century, including Suzuki Harunobu 鈴木春信 (1725?–1770), Isoda Koryūsai 磯田湖龍齋 (1735?–?), Torii Kiyonaga, Katsukawa Shunchō (active late 18th century) and Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川歌麿 (1753?–1806), all produced color-printed erotic albums. The significant difference, however, was that the erotic scenes newly exploited their narrative potential, making reference to apposite seasonal signifiers and the paraphernalia of domestic interiors.

For example, Shunchō's album *Kōshoku zue jūnikō* 好色図会十二候 of 1788 consists of twelve erotic scenes, one for each month of the year. Thus, the scene for the fourth month shows the cuckoo on the first day of summer, while at a second story window we see a husband and wife making love.¹³ This emphasis on seasonal and narrative references is a new development in the color-printed erotica of the period, and, importantly, it begins to inform the *painted* erotica produced in Edo too.

The same tendency, however, is not visible in the production of the Osaka-based Settei, who appears to have turned his back on contemporary developments in Edo and continued to set his erotic scenes against a blank ground. This becomes a key difference between Osaka and Edo erotic production. This is not to say, however, that Settei's work stagnated: on the contrary, he continued to innovate, yet in different directions.

¹² Shirakura 2009b.

¹³ The images are reproduced in Hayakawa and Shirakura 2003, p. 100.

Let us consider once again his *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figures 4, 6-2, 7-2). Notable here is the gold background to the figures. Painted erotica against a gold background are rare: I know only of this work and Settei's *Shiki shunga emaki* 四季春画絵巻 which has the same gold background. Gold ground, like gold clouds, is a legacy of screen painting of the Momoyama to early-Edo periods. The luminosity of the gold has a flattening effect on the picture space, which contributes to a sense of pictorial abstraction. Thus, while Edo painted erotica, influenced by developments in color printing, began to explore the narrative possibilities of erotic scenes, evoking a greater sense of realism, Settei adopted the use of gold ground to emphasize, by contrast, the flatness and abstraction of the image. And while Figure 4 of *Shunshō higi zu* (A) admittedly shows figures against a screen with sake vessels, slightly detracting from the sense of abstraction, all the other scenes are set in isolation against a gold ground with no contingent detail.

The use of gold, even in non-erotic ukiyo-e painting, is exceptional. Gold was used throughout the Edo period as background in paintings by the Kano and Rinpa Schools, as well as by Maryama Ōkyo 円山応挙 (and the Shijō School) and individuals like Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲. However, among surviving paintings of beautiful women (*bijinga*) it is rare to find gold in the background. The *Hikone byōbu* 彦根屏風, which depicts Kyoto's pleasure quarters, and other early-seventeenth century paintings of city life and customs use gold, but in the late-seventeenth century the use of gold becomes uncommon in paintings of beautiful women. Settei's *Shunshō higi zu* (A) is a conscious revival of this gold background tradition.

Settei, as the pupil of Takada Keiho (1674–1755), was artistically affiliated with the Kyoto Kanō painters and it is possibly this connection that gave him the idea of using gold ground in erotic painting.¹⁴ A highly skilled brush technique, together with the use of high-grade pigments and gold leaf thus gave rise to high-caliber, extremely luxurious pictures redolent of the rich hues of Momoyama so called “gold and blue” (*kinpeki* 金碧) screens. Settei seems to have used gold consciously in order to make his *shunga* paintings more splendid, and as a technique to put the *shunga* genre onto a higher level of art, and thereby to gain patrons from the upper classes.¹⁵ Settei's painted *shunga* in fact bears witness to a trajectory from the twelve-pose model of Ming period erotica with its blank background, through to the abstraction of Momoyama to early Edo period screen painting, both of which find expression in his exquisite painted scrolls.

3. Painted Erotica and Printed Books

The contrast between Settei's painted erotica and contemporary Edo erotica throws light on one of the most distinctive features of this artist's work, namely the absence of background detail. However a comparison of these same paintings with the iconography of Settei's printed erotica—in particular the five volumes: *Onna dairaku takara-beki*, *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* 女令川趣文, *Bidō nichiya johōki* 艶道日夜女宝記, *Onna teikin gesho bunko* 女貞訓下所文庫, and *Konrei hiji bukuro* 婚礼秘事袋—also brings out significant characteristics.

14 For Settei's artistic lineage, see Yamamoto 2010, ch. 7.

15 *Naniwajin ketsudan* 浪速人傑談 (1855) attests to the popularity of Settei's *shunga* among the aristocracy. See *Naniwajin* 1980.

There are few obvious similarities between the print iconographies and the paintings. Exceptions are the young girl with shut eyes and clasped hands in *Onna teikin gesho bunko*, who recalls the figure in *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figures 6-1, 6-2); and one figure in *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi*, who also recalls a figure in the same scroll (Figures 7-1, 7-2). However, even in these cases, only the figure from the printed version is cited in the painted work, while the background elements and other details are elided.

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Settei consciously adopted different idioms for his paintings and printed books. *Konrei hiji bukuro*, for example, lists in its bibliography the painted scroll by Settei entitled “Hikyoku jūni tsugai” 秘曲十二番 and reproduces three of the twelve couples from the scroll as double-page spreads (Figure 8). While the size of the



Figure 6-1. *Onna teikin gesho bunko* by Tsukioka Settei. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.



Figure 6-2. *Shunshō higi zu* (A), scene 9, by Tsukioka Settei. Private collection.

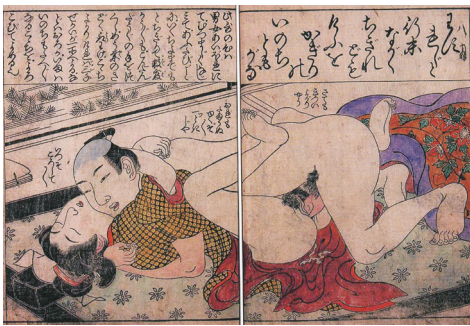


Figure 7-1. *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* by Tsukioka Settei. Honolulu Institute of the Arts.



Figure 7-2. *Shunshō higi zu* (A), scene 12, by Tsukioka Settei. Private collection.

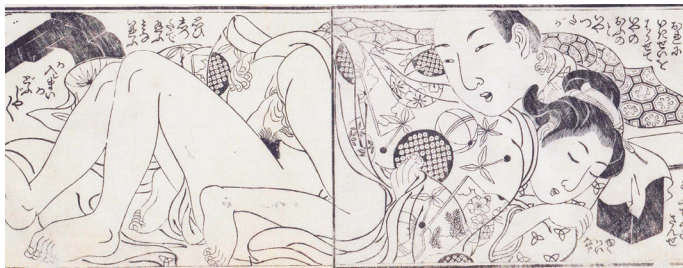


Figure 8. “Hikyoku jūni tsugai” from *Konrei hiji bukuro* by Tsukioka Settei. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

figures means there is little room left for any detailed rendition of the background—which indeed is blank in the scroll—in the book version, Settei manages to squeeze in a plethora of background details.¹⁶

The printed books also throw light on Settei's use of allusion to China. *Onna teikin* includes a section entitled *Wakan meijo tsukushi: Kyōkun eshō* 和漢名女尽し: 教訓絵抄. It is divided into two parts: and “Honchō meijo bu,” each with seven illustrative tales. The “Morokoshi meijo bu” section consists of short narratives relating the deeds of “Famous Women of China,” accompanied by an erotic illustration. The narratives are labeled, in order: “Onna makoto no michi o mamoru koto” 女信の道を守る叟, “Tohi ga tsuma no koto” 都卑が妻の事, “Soku no kimi no kisaki no koto” そくの君の後の事, “Shūko shi ga tsuma no koto” 秋胡子が妻の叟, “Chin Gyoshuku ga tsuma Kaki ga koto” 陳御叔が妻夏姫が叟, “Kuni o midasu Hōji ga koto” 国を乱すほうじが叟, and “Ōshi ga tsuma no koto” 王氏が妻の事. This emphasis on literary sources clearly suggests that in the preparatory stages of his work, Settei turned for inspiration to Japanese and Chinese classics.

“Onna makoto no michi o mamoru koto” recounts the story of a man from Qi, who married a woman from Song. The man became ill and lost his member. The woman's mother advised her to find a new husband, but the woman maintained that one should marry only once and serve one's husband until death, thus teaching her mother the true meaning of chastity. In the erotic version, the woman attaches a dildo as a substitute for the man's missing organ and the two conjoin by this means. In the image, the mother is shown watching the couple making love. The man encourages his wife to have a go, (“You mustn't forget how!”); “Don't worry about it,” she replies, while the mother exclaims, “Oh, this is heart-breaking!” (Figure 9). While this kind of narrative inspiration was central to the scenes depicted in the printed erotic books, however, it is totally absent in the painted erotica (Figure 1).

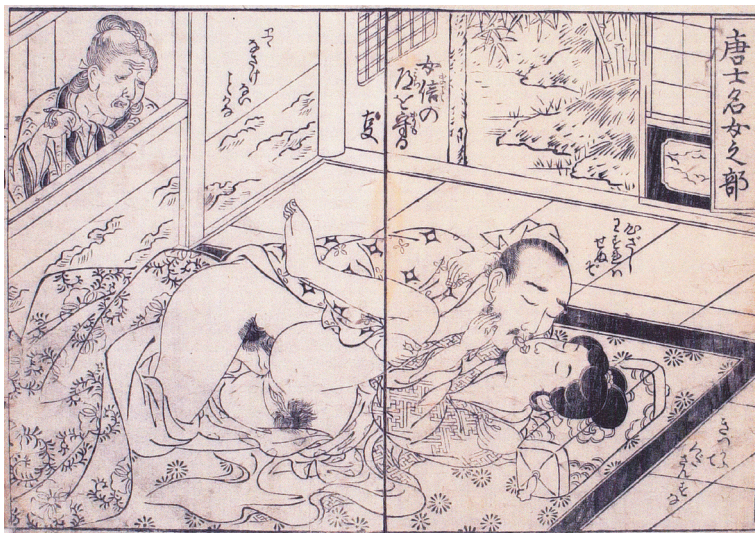


Figure 9. “Onna makoto no michi o mamoru koto” from *Onna teikin gesho bunko* by Tsukioka Settei. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

16 The similarities between the scroll and the printed book are discussed in Taihei 2009.

4. Internal Iconographic Borrowings in the Paintings

While relatively few iconographies from the erotic books are invoked in the paintings, a number of the paintings share similar imagery. Thus, for example, Figure 2, taken from the Clark Center *Shungakan*, recalls the eighth scene from *Shunshō higi zu* (B), which bears the signature *Hōgen Tsukioka Settei* (Figure 10). The angle of the legs of the man and woman, the tilt of the woman's face and the overall design of the two images are almost identical. This same design features in another Settei school scroll, and it may be that the Clark Center scroll is closest to the original model, which subsequently became stock-in-trade of the Tsukioka school. Figure 11 (from the Clark Center scroll), in which the man takes the woman from behind, is another motif reused in other scrolls, such as the *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figure 6-2). This pose derives originally from *Onna teikin gesho bunko* (Figure 6-1).



Figure 10. *Shunshō higi zu* (B), scene 8, by Tsukioka Settei. Private collection.



Figure 11. *Shungakan*, scene 11, by Tsukioka Settei. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Gift from the Clark Center for Japanese Arts and Culture in Hanford, California.

Settei's erotic works were reputed to be efficacious in the aversion of fire and he presumably received a large number of commissions as a result. This could well be the reason that the same poses are frequently repeated in different scrolls and the iconographic variety is limited.¹⁷ The focal point of the works of both Settei and his studio remained the act of sex itself.

¹⁷ See Shirakura 2009a.

5. Settei's Pupils: Sessai and Shitomi Kangetsu

Strong similarities between the work of Settei and his son, Tsukioka Sessai, suggest that the latter was thoroughly imbued with Settei's technique and models. The first scene of Sessai's *Yōka hiyō zu* 厭火避妖図 (Figure 12), for example, bears notable resemblances to the second scene in Settei's *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figure 4): the design and color of the clothes of the couple, the man's apparently bored expression and the cajoling efforts of the woman are all carefully imitated. The position of the figures is certainly different, yet in ambience and detail the work reveals striking similarities. The sixth scene from Sessai's *Yōka hiyō zu* (Figure 13), meanwhile, recalls the final scene in Settei's *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figure 7-2): the woman's expression and the posture of the bodies are similar in both images. Indeed, this particular sexual position became a staple of the Tsukioka studio, and can frequently be observed in studio erotica (Figure 10). The original model for the pose appears to be, once again, the Clark Center work (Figure 2), which was often repeated by Settei and popularized by his studio.



Figure 12. *Yōka hiyō zu*, scene 1, by Tsukioka Sessai. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection RES.09.235. Photograph © 2013 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved. c/o DNPartcom.



Figure 13. *Yōka hiyō zu*, scene 6, by Tsukioka Sessai. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection RES.09.235. Photograph © 2013 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved. c/o DNPartcom.

The works of another pupil, Shitomi Kangetsu, however, exhibit some differences from the master. Figure 14, for example, shows a married couple making love, but their faces and expressions are distinct from those of Settei, suggesting an endeavor amongst the next generation of Kamigata painters to achieve a greater sense of realism in their works. Here, the image evokes the intimate sense of familiar sex between a long-married couple, the emphasis having shifted away from the depiction of passion and luxurious clothing. The scroll again contains twelve couples, but the scenes are on the whole more sophisticated and refined than those depicted by Settei.

Nonetheless, Kangetsu by no means wholly rejected Settei's models. The fifth image in the same picture scroll (Figure 15) is clearly taken from the sixth image of *Shunshō higi zu* (A), and the scroll concludes with a scene that is an inversion of another scene from *Shunshō higi zu* (A) (Figure 7-2). Both Kangetsu and Sessai, moreover, inherited the same attitude to the depiction of background, showing little interest in evoking a narrative element in their images. In this respect, Settei's influence remained strong through the next generation, and Kamigata erotica maintained its difference from developments in Edo. The twelve-scene format, together with the absence of a background would remain the staple of Kamigata painted erotica.



Figure 14. *Shungakan*, scene 7, by Shitomi Kangetsu. Private collection.



Figure 15. *Shungakan*, scene 5, by Shitomi Kangetsu. Private collection

Conclusion

An examination of the painted erotica of Tsukioka Settei and his studio reveals important differences between the Kamigata and Edo erotic traditions. Kamigata paintings in particular eschewed the depiction of background and contingent detail, and handscrolls relied heavily on the format of the twelve copulating couples. Settei's occasional use of gold leaf was a distinctive feature of his work, as was his use of both Japanese and Chinese sources. Meanwhile, although Settei appears to have been reluctant to transpose iconographies from his printed books to his painted erotica, he often recycled motifs within his painted works, which were likewise used as models by his pupils.

Despite the fact that restrictions on the publication of erotic images have been lifted over recent years, very few of Settei's painted works have so far come to light, and it seems likely that many still remain in private collections. We are clearly far from a full understanding of the erotic output of this artist, and hopefully the present article will serve as a point of departure for future research.

(Translated by Jennifer Preston)

APPENDIX

Tsukioka Settei's *Shunga* Paintings List

(Artist, Work, Collection, Description, Measurement, Signature, Date, Where published, Figure number in essay)

1. Tsukioka Settei, *In'yō enshō zu* 陰陽厭勝図. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Handscroll, color on silk, 10 scenes, 27.2 × 412.0 cm. Signed: Hokkyō shinten'ō Tsukioka Masanobu Settei fusen 法橋信天翁月岡昌信雪鼎父撰. C. 1764–72. *Bosuton Bijutsukan Nikuhitsu ukiyo-e: Bekkan* ボストン美術館肉筆浮世絵: 別巻. Kōdansha, 2001.
2. Tsukioka Settei, *Shungakan* 春画卷. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Gift from the Clark Center for Japanese Arts and Culture in Hanford, California. Handscroll, ink on paper (3 scenes), color on silk (9 scenes), height 14 cm. Signed: Hokkyō Tsukioka Settei 法橋月岡雪鼎. C. 1764–72. C. Andrew Gerstle. *Edo onna no shungabon: Tsuya to warai no fūfu shinan* 江戸をんなの春画本: 艶と笑の夫婦指南. Heibonsha, 2011. [Figures 1, 2, 3, 11]
3. Attributed to Tsukioka Settei, *Gokumi gobeki zu* 五組五開図. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Album, color on silk, 10 scenes, 18.3 × 28.0 cm (each). C. 1764–72. *Bosuton Bijutsukan Nikuhitsu ukiyo-e: Bekkan* ボストン美術館肉筆浮世絵: 別巻. Kōdansha, 2001.
4. Tsukioka Settei, *Shiki shunga emaki* 四季春画絵巻. Michael Fornitz Collection. Handscroll, color on gold-foiled silk (8 scenes), 24.6 × 67.8 cm (each). C. 1772–81. *Shunga: Himetaru warai no sekai* 春画: 秘めたる笑いの世界. Yōsensha, 2003. *Bessatsu Taiyō: Shunga* 別冊太陽: 春画. Heibonsha, 2006. *Bessatsu Taiyō: Nikuhitsu shunga* 別冊太陽: 肉筆春画. Heibonsha, 2009. C. Andrew Gerstle. *Edo onna no shungabon: Tsuya to warai no fūfu shinan*. Heibonsha, 2011.
5. Tsukioka Settei, *Shunshō higa* 春宵秘画. British Museum. A section from a handscroll, color on silk, 2 scenes, 30.3 × 33.3 cm. Signed: Hokkyō Tsukioka Settei 法橋月岡雪鼎. C. 1772–81. Rosina Buckland. *Shunga: Erotic Art in Japan*. British Museum Press, 2010; (in

- Japanese) *Daiei Hakubutsukan shozō shunga* 大英博物館所蔵春画. Heibonsha, 2010.
6. Tsukioka Settei, *Shunshō higi zu* 春宵秘戯図 (B). Private collection. Handscroll, color on silk, 12 scenes, height 23.1 cm. Signed: Hōgen Tsukioka Settei 法眼月岡雪鼎. C. 1781–89. *Bessatsu Taiyō: Nikuhitsu shunga* (titled “In’yō kōkai no maki”). Heibonsha, 2009. [Figure 10]
 7. Tsukioka Settei, *Shunshō higi zu* 春宵秘戯図 (A). Private collection. Album, color on gold-foiled silk, 12 scenes, 29.3 × 52.3–54.4 cm (each). Signed: Shinten’ō Tsukioka Masanobu Settei fusen 信天翁月岡昌信雪鼎父撰. C. 1781–89. *Shunga to nikuhitsu ukiyo-e* 春画と肉筆浮世絵. Yōsensha, 2006. *Bessatsu Taiyō: Shunga* (titled *Nikuhitsu gakan* 肉筆画卷). Heibonsha, 2006. [Figures 4, 6-2, 7-2]

(Other Published Paintings Attributed to Tsukioka Settei)

- Kikan ukiyo-e* 季刊浮世絵, no. 33. Gabundō, 1968.
Kikan ukiyo-e 季刊浮世絵, no. 61. Gabundō, 1975.
Kikan ukiyo-e 季刊浮世絵, no. 67. Gabundō, 1976.
Kikan ukiyo-e 季刊浮世絵, no. 72. Gabundō, 1978.

Shunga Paintings by Settei's Pupils

8. Tsukioka Sessai 月岡雪齋, *Yōka hiyō zu* 厭火避妖図. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A section of a handscroll, color on paper, 6 scenes, 38.7 × 618.0 cm. Signed: Hokkyō Tsukioka Sessai zuhitsu 法橋月岡雪齋圖筆. C. 1772–86. *Bosuton Bijutsukan Nikuhitsu ukiyo-e: Bekkan* ボストン美術館肉筆浮世絵: 別巻. Kōdansha, 2001. [Figures 12, 13]
9. Shitomi Kangetsu 蒨関月, *Shungakan* 春画卷. Private collection. Scroll, color on silk, 12 scenes, height 15.5 cm. Seihidō 菁菲堂?, Genji 阮二 seals. C. 1781–89. [Figures 14, 15]
10. Unsigned, *Shungakan* 春画卷. Private collection. Scroll, color on silk, 12 scenes, height 21.9 cm.
11. Signed “Tsukioka Settei,” *Shungakan* 春画卷. Private collection. Scroll, color on silk, 12 scenes, 31.7 × 587.0 cm. Signed: Hokkyō Tsukioka Settei giga 法橋月岡雪鼎戲画.

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C. Andrew Gerstle. *Edo onna no shungabon: Tsuya to warai no fūfu shinan* 江戸をんなの春画本: 艶と笑の夫婦指南. Heibonsha, 2011.

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C. Andrew Gerstle and Hayakawa Monta 早川聞多, eds. *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* 女令川おへし文. In vol. 4 of *Kinsei enpon shiryō shūsei: Tsukioka Settei 1* 近世艶本資料集成: 月岡雪鼎 1. International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2007.

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