

## Appendix C

# How to Date Kōitsu Woodblock Prints

### C.1 Introduction

The process of determining the age of a Kōitsu woodblock print generally involves a multi-step procedure that gradually narrows down a time-window that extends from 1895 (the year of production of the first known Kōitsu prints) to the present. This may surprise some novice collectors who mistakenly believe that dating a woodblock print simply involves decoding the Japanese date text that is usually found within the margins of a print. If things could only be so simple! The Japanese dating text found on a woodblock print is generally considered to be the date at which a print was first published, or perhaps more correctly, when the artist first sketched the print's scene. The reality is that, while this 'original production' date places a lower limit within the 100+ year time-window, the upper limit may well be very recent, because Kōitsu prints are still being produced even today by the publishers Doi Hangaten and Watanabe. Yes, your Kōitsu print may well have been printed within the last few years! The following article describes a step-by-step process that will gradually narrow down this time-window.

### C.2 The Dating Process

The dating process generally involves the following analysis steps:

**Step 1** Confirming your print's artist attribution to Tsuchiya Kōitsu;

**Step 2** Confirming your print's publisher;

**Step 3** Determining printer and carver attribution;

### C.3 The Dating Process in Detail

**Step 1** Confirming your print's attribution to Tsuchiya Kōitsu.

You will need to locate the artist seal on your print. It is usually red in colour but may also be black. Use Section A.1 of Appendix A to view the list of known Kōitsu artist seals and signatures and confirm that your print contains one of these seals. If your print is half-postcard in size and does not carry an artist seal (e.g., like those published by Doi Hangaten), go directly to Step 2 below.

**Step 2** Confirming your print's publisher.

This is where the analysis task becomes more difficult, for reasons that will be discussed a little later. To determine the publisher of your print you should first locate your print's publisher seal and compare it to those of Section A.2 of Appendix A.