

Appendix D

The Harada/Yokoi Controversy

D.1 Introduction

Arguably the most controversial aspect of collecting Kōitsu prints is the dating of those prints published by Doi Hangaten that contain the offset seal combinations K33 and K34, with Yokoi as the printer and Harada as the carver (see page 278 in Appendix A). In particular, the possibility of pre-war¹ use of these seals is of great interest to most Kōitsu collectors and is a topic that can arouse quite heated debate. In the following article we discuss this controversy, comment on theories held by Kōitsu enthusiasts, and introduce our own thoughts on this matter.

D.2 The Current State of Affairs

The melding of several events has resulted in the current uncertainty in dating prints that contain the Harada/Yokoi seal combination. The first was the death of all the principal players, namely Harada in 1969 and Yokoi in the late 1980's. Also, the sudden demise of Doi Eiichi in 1996 ruled out any easy route to a conclusive answer.

The current consensus among Koitsu collectors on seal usage is as follows: the Doi Sadaichi seals K0 to K13 were used only pre-war. Sadaichi closed the Doi business in 1944 and passed away in 1945. There is no suggestion of post-war use of these seals by Doi Eiichi. The Doi Hangaten seals K33 to K34 were used at least from the mid-1950's until 1963, succeeded by the Hamamatsu-Dō seals K51 to K54 from 1963 until sometime in 1981 when the Doi business name changed from Hamamatsu-Dō back to Doi Hangaten. From 1981 the Doi Eiichi seals K61 to K65 were used, with the printer/carver combination of Hamano/Harada (K65) being the seal currently used.

There has been less certainty about the period of use of the 'Hangaten In-Line seals' K21 to K25, and the time of first use of K33 to K34 (along with K31 and K32). It is generally accepted that K21 to K25 were used prior to those of the Hangaten offset seals K31 to K34, probably from the time Eiichi reopened the Doi business, but there has been speculation that these seals may have been used pre-war in the late 30's or early 40's. This is because all in-line seals carry the name of a pre-war carver (Ikeda, Katsumura, Yamada). As for the 'Hangaten Offset' seals, in the article "The Doi Publishing House Seals" [21], Grund and Crossland list the period of use of the Harada/Yokoi seal combination as "approx. 1956 - 1962", and in general Kōitsu collectors agree that this seal combination was in use during this period. However, there has been some talk of these seals being used from the early 1950s. For example, the Noël Nouet print "Tokyo, Temple De Kanda Miyojin" first published in 1950 carries a Doi Hangaten Offset seal K33. Because it is believed this print was probably only published in a single edition, some Kōitsu scholars consider the time of first post-war use of the offset seals K31 to K34 was as early as 1950. Further evidence of usage to this date is listed below.

¹We loosely use the term 'pre-war' in this article to mean the period prior to Doi Sadaichi closing his business in 1944, and the term 'post-war' to mean the period after Doi Eiichi restarted the Doi Hangaten business in 1948.