

BIJUTSUSHI

Journal of Japan Art History Society

186 Vol. 68 No. 2 pp. 247–264

HIGUCHI, Atsuko. Modernity in “*Genroku* Design” of the Late Meiji Period

“*Genroku* design,” a collection of motifs promoted by Mitsukoshi from 1905 and widely favoured by customers, has been considered by many researchers as an early example of design deliberately and consciously created by the department stores. However, no prior research has analysed the design patterns in depth, and the term “*Genroku*” has caused this idea to be categorised as a mere classicism of kimono design. This paper aims to trace the modernity of Meiji kimono design, in other words, it aims to find the influence of Western design and technology in kimono design patterns of the late Meiji period.

In the beginning, the motifs appeared repeatedly in *Jikō*, Mitsukoshi’s advertising journal. They included *tsuchi-guruma* (hammers depicted on a forked wheel), *katawa-guruma* (spoked wheels in a stream), *aoi* (leaf mallow), *mokari-fune* (small boats to gather seaweed), *kotoji* (koto bridges), *jakago* (gabion), *magaki* (bamboo fences), *nami* (waves), *senmen* (fans), *cho* (butterflies), *hagi* (bush clover) as major motifs, and *ichimatsu* (chequered patterns), *hitta* (dotted patterns), *kanton-jima* (stripes) as fillers.

Secondly, this paper compares the characteristics of late Meiji *Genroku* design with Edo-period *kosode*. Its research is based on surviving garments and *kosode-hinagata* (design pattern plates) of the Edo period and the patterns introduced in *Jikō*, and *yūzen* textile fragments held by *Chisō* of the Meiji period. It reveals that *Genroku* design in the Meiji period repeatedly used the technique of *kyūten-moyou* (filling design), which combines two different motifs in the filling of spaces.

Hitta is the only *kyūten-moyou* found in the Edo period, and using other kinds of motifs as *kyūten-moyou* can be seen as a characteristic of *Genroku* design during Meiji. There were also some visually experimental designs based on the contrasting sizes of repetitive patterns or the combination of *ichimatsu* and *benkeijima* patterns. Thus, *Genroku* design in the Meiji period did not consist of the reproduction of motifs of the *Genroku* era but rather the creation of new expressions using those motifs. The invention of *kyūten-moyou* may have been associated with the development of the *utsushi-yūzen* technique. On the other hand, some Meiji *Genroku* designs assimilated new Western expressions such as deformation and three-dimensional effects. Although it has been accepted in studies of Japonisme that plain and simple repetitive Japanese patterns greatly influenced Western arts and crafts, this paper introduces an example of Western design that appeared on kimono design patterns in 1905.

The designs introduced in this paper were often overlooked in the field of academic studies under the shadow of the classical name *Genroku*. Through the analysis of patterns, this paper shows that the development of *utsushi-yūzen* expanded the expression of designs, and that kimono design patterns worked as the medium connecting both Japanese and Western design characteristics.

THE JAPAN ART HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2019

All rights Reserved, Copyright © The Japan Art History Society