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Monk Tokiyori of Saimyōji Temple (Saimyōji Tokiyori Nyūdō)

Utagawa Kuniyoshi

Not on display

Title/Description: Monk Tokiyori of Saimyōji Temple (Saimyōji Tokiyori Nyūdō)

Artist/Maker: Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Artist)

Born: 1834 circa - 1834

Object Type: Graphics

Materials: Ink, Paper

Technique: Woodcut

Measurements: Image h. 371 x w. 248, support h. 388 x w. 291, mount h. 554 x w. 431

Inscription: Actor's name

Accession Number: 41460

Historic Period: Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

School/Style: Utagawa School

Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) and his publisher, Izumiya Ichibei issued this print of actor Sawamura Tosshō I in connection with an unidentified kabuki production. [1] The name of the actor Sawamura Tosshō appears in cursive script on either side of his likeness, with the additional phrase 'Ōatari. Ōatari' meaning 'Big Hit! Big Hit!'

Sawamura Tosshō I (Suketakaya Takasuke III, 1802-1853), held this name between 1831 and 1844, and it is likely that the print was issued during this period. In 1840 he became the leading actor at the Nakamura Theatre in Edo. Tosshō later received the hereditary titles Sawamura SōjūrōV, and Sawamura ChōjūrōV. [2] In the Sainsbury Centre Collection there is another print that pictures Sawamura Tosshō I (object number 41453), designed by Utagawa Kunisada.

Utagawa Kuniyoshi places the actor, dressed in a Buddhist monk's habit, against a sparsely decorated ground ornamented with abstract tracteries in brown and purple. The shapes, in-filled with *shippō* patterns, are suggestive of clouds, mountains and a path. In character as SaimyōjiTokiyori,

the actor wears a blue fabric head covering and a *kosode*, or robe suitable for a journey. The black over-kimono with pleated skirt is a *sumizome no jikitotsu* traditionally worn by monks. Shod in straw sandals, SaimyōjiTokiyori is depicted grasping a conical hat (J. *ajirogasa*) and a pilgrim's walking stick.

The kabuki character of SaimyōjiTokiyori is inspired by the life of Hōjō Tokiyori (1227-1263), who was head of the Hōjō clan and regent of the Kamakura shogunate. It is possible that the theatre production was a history play or it may be a design of the actor in an imagined role (J. *yakusha mitate* -e).

Vanessa Tothill, June 2020

[1] A print design by Utagawa Kuniyoshi that is in the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum portrays Sawamura Tosshō I as SaimyōjiTokiyori. This could indicate that a kabuki production was staged circa 1835 and that this design is not a *mitate* print. See Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University, object number: 005-0613.

https://archive.waseda.jp/archive/detail.html?arg={%22subDB_id%22:%2252%22,%22id%22:%22164301%22}&lang=en [accessed 15 May 2020]

[2] Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of 'Kabuki Jiten'* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 559.

Further Reading

Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of 'Kabuki Jiten'* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1997)
