

作藤忠信

春翁画



泉市

# Satō Tadanobu

Katsukawa Shunsen (Katsukawa Shunkō II)

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## Not on display

**Title/Description:** Satō Tadanobu

**Artist/Maker:** Katsukawa Shunsen (Katsukawa Shunkō II) (Artist)

**Born:** 1806 circa - 1820 circa

**Measurements:** Image h. 346 x w. 238mm

**Inscription:** Censor's seal

**Accession Number:** 41465

**Historic Period:** Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

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Between 1805-1821, Katsukawa Shunsen (Katsukawa ShunkōII)and his publisher Izumiya Ichibei issued this woodblock-printed design of the fearless, 12<sup>th</sup>-century samurai, Satō Tadanobu. [1] According to the medieval text, *The Record of Yoshitsune* (J. *Gikeiki* 吉成記), Satō Tadanobu enabled his master Minamoto no Yoshitsune to flee from the advancing troops of Yoshitsune's older brother, Minamoto no Yoritomo. Eventually, Tadanobu finds himself cornered by his enemies. In one legend, Tadanobu fights off his attackers with a game board before committing suicide.

The artist depicts Satō Tadanobu's tense, muscular frame bristling with hair and energy as he overcomes his opponent. Tadanobu is pictured pinning an assailant down with his right foot, while raising a large wooden game board above his head - eyes bulging with hatred. In the commotion, the game's black and white counters spill to the ground. The design's vigorous black lines enclose a restricted palette of natural dyes in shades of green, yellow, red and blue.

The improvised weapon in this scene is a *goban* used to play Go, a game of strategy often likened to Chess. This iconic showdown inspired the kabuki dramas: *Yoshino Shizuka goban Tadanobu* (Nakamura Theatre, 1698); *Hoshi kabuto goban Tadanobu* (Nakamura Theatre, 1728); and *Goban Tadanobu yuki no Nachiguro*(Nakamura Theatre, 1832). [2] The legendary figure of Satō Tadanobu is reinvented as the shape-shifting fox spirit, Genkurō in the kabuki classic *Yoshitsune senbon zakura*. In this drama, the fox assumes the outward appearance of Yoshitsune's loyal retainer (see object number: 41463).

Vanessa Tothill, May 2020

[1] The date of the print is based on the years when Katsukawa Shunsen (Katsukawa ShunkōII) was

active as a print artist. After 1821 he changed careers and became a decorator of porcelain. See Laurance P. Roberts, *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists*, (New York: John Weatherhill Inc., 1976).

A single 'kiwame' censor's seal marks the print, informing the viewer that the print was either issued in 1791-1805 or 1815-1842. Andreas Marks, *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* (Leiden; Boston: Hotei Publishing, 2011), pp. 470-75.

[2] Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of 'Kabuki Jiten'* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 128-29; Kabuki Playbill (*Shibai Banzuke*) Database, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.  
[https://www.dh-jac.net/db1/ban/search\\_portal.php](https://www.dh-jac.net/db1/ban/search_portal.php) [accessed 29 May 2020]

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## Further Reading

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

Andreas Marks, *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* (Leiden and Boston: Hotei Publishing, 2011)

Laurance P. Roberts, *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists*, (New York: John Weatherhill Inc., 1976)

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