

Judge's Commentary

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Early Yūzen Dyeing: The Baby Clothes said to have been worn by Date Tsunamura

This article examines the issues relating to and offers new evidence regarding the production date of the *yūzen*-dyed *Infant Garment with Mirugai (Trough Shell) and Fishing Net Design*, traditionally said to have been owned by the early Edo period Sendai clan *daimyō* Date Tsunamura. The article's principal argument is that the previously posited theory that this garment was created in 1659 (Manji 2), the year that Tsunamura was born, is incorrect, and indicates the strong possibility that the date should be pushed forward to the Jōkyō or Genroku eras. Using this opportunity to examine the theories of some scholars and providing new, specific historical materials as proof, Takagi's conclusion is the result of extremely compelling documentary evidence.

Recent reports of newly confirmed early period *yūzen*-dyed works with Genroku era dating that accord with images in *hinagatabon* printed sample books strongly underpin the idea that a group of extant works were created in the late 17th century, from the Jōkyō through Genroku eras. Even though the *yūzen*-dyed infant garment with Tsunamura provenance would appear to be an unusual example that predates that period by about 30 years given that evidence, there had been little previous discussion focused on that discrepancy. In that regard, this paper examines the techniques, design composition and palette characteristics of early period Yūzen dyeing examples such as the *Uchikake Made of Kosode Fragments with Pine and Willow Designs* and, through a comparison of those works and their characteristics and the ex-Date family provenance infant garment, it reconsiders whether the ex-Date garment can be recognized as early period *yūzen* dyeing. Furthermore, with regard to the ink writing appears on part of the infant garment, the article demonstrates that this

does not immediately link the work to the *tsujigahana* dyeing period via an examination of similar works.

The article also illustrates its thesis through the introduction of specific design examples, such as in the case of the distinctive fishnet motif that appears on the hem of the garment. The author argues that the net motif forming a large arch in only one direction cannot be found in the *tsujigahana* or Kanbun *kosode* era. However, the same motif can be found in a *shikishi hinagata* dated 1689 (Genroku 2), and even later, fishnets were included within landscape or other designs. Finally, Takagi examines the design composition on the infant garment, with motifs divided into areas above and below the waist, reconfirming the fact that such compositions were standard in the Jōkyō and Genroku eras, as seen in *hinagatabon* images. She concludes that this garment is probably an example from this period. In other words, she refutes the standard provenance and offers instead the new possibility that this garment was worn by a boy born into later generations of the *daimyō* Date family during the late 17th century.

The possibility remains that new viewpoints will be presented by the future discovery of similarly new materials. Further, room remains for an examination of the concordance with this theory with images found within genre paintings of the period. Albeit these issues, this article should be highly praised for its multifaceted investigative method based on a comprehensive examination of the historical materials known at this time for *yūzen* dyeing and related subjects, and for highly appropriate conclusions that are presented in careful and detailed form.

For these reasons we have awarded the *Bijutsushi* Article Prize to Ms. Takagi.