



Abteilung für Kunstgeschichte Ostasiens

Shunga Shingon: „True Words“ and Eros in Edo Popular Culture

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Abstract

"Shunga" or "Spring Prints" is a general genre term that refers to the erotic woodblock prints that emerge with great popularity from the 17th century on in Japan. "Shingon" literally "true word," is a translation of the Sanskrit term "mantra," and here refers to the phenomenon of the unification of sound and meaning in certain forms of performative utterances as practiced initially by esoteric Buddhists and later, as this paper argues, in a more broadcast fashion. This paper begins with a presentation of the 17th century work Shikidô Okagami [The Great Mirror of the Way of Eros] and argues for a combinative theory of Eros that includes Buddhism, Shinto and popular social practices. It then expands into a broader discussion of the roles of language and meaning in this discourse and concludes with a translation, and analysis, of one example of the mature form of this discourse.