

Selections from NDL collections

Mitate Sano no watari ("Crossing at Sano" Mitate)

Artist: Suzuki Harunobu (1725?-1770)
 Published ca. 1765. 28.0 × 20.7 cm
 Owned by the National Diet Library, Japan
 * Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

At dusk in heavy snow, a young woman is trudging across a bridge. Her feet are bare except for black lacquered clogs; she is holding one long sleeve of her scarlet kimono over her head to protect it from the driving snow.

This picture is based on a *waka* (Japanese short poem) "Sano no watari" by Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) in *Shin kokin wakashu*. The original *waka* features Teika himself, but in this picture, a contemporary young woman takes his place. A picture substituting a contemporary figure for a person in the past like this is called "*mitate-e*."

This picture is an *e-goyomi*, picture calendar, of a kind called *daisho-reki*. The *Daisho-reki* calendar showed the

long months (of 30 days) and the short months (of 29 days), which changed year by year. This is a *daisho-reki* of 1765. The numbers are printed very small at the bottom of right corner of the picture on the side of the snow-covered bridge.

Suzuki Harunobu was an *ukiyo-e* artist working in Edo in the mid-18th century. He was the leading artist in the early stage of the multicolor woodblock prints called *nishiki-e*, but little is known about his life. His work is celebrated both inside and outside Japan for its colors, poetical atmosphere, and elegance and refinement.