About "Edo-zu-byobu: Folding Screen with Illustrated Scenes from the Edo Period": Search for Clues to Determine Who Drew Them, When They were Drawn and for Whom They were Drawn

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"Edo-zu-byobu" kept at the National Museum of Japanese History is well known as it was introduced in "Edo-zu-byobu" published by the Heibonsha in Showa 46 or "Edo-zu-byobu" published by the Mainichi Shinbunsha in showa 47. As a matter of fact, this "Edo-zu-byobu" carries very rare examples of illustrations depicting scenes from the Edo period, and is often used for many pictorial records or as a cut-in illustration for various history books. As to when it was made and what period those illustrated scenes represent, however, there are conflicting opinions including a widely-held one which states that it was made a little after the Kanei period; a unified opinion yet to be settled. Who drew those illustrations or for whom those were drawn are not known, either.

The purpose of this thesis is to review all the problems such as the above concerning "Edo-zu-byobu."

"Edo-zu-byobu," like many other folding screens of this type that depicted capital scenes, has slips of paper with notes plastered on them. Examination of 101 of them in total reveals the following two points. The first point: "On," an honorary prefix, is used for facilities including objects or buildings, all of which are associated with the shogunate. The second point: these notes describe more of samurais than of townspeople, and still more of the shogunate than of samurais. It may be concluded from this that the screens were intended for describing the shogunate. Then, as to what period the scenes on the folding screen represent, it is estimated that they represent the period from the end of Kanei 10 to the beginning of Kanei 11 as was pointed out in Akira Naito's research report entitled "The Capital of Edo and its Works of Construction." This thesis basically supports Naito's conclusion and determines the period to be from the last year of Genwa/the first year of Kanei to the end of Kanei 10/the beginning of Kanei 11. The scenes represent some of the activities and achievements of the shogunate Iemitsu of this period and features of major buildings that existed at the time.
Getting back to the screen, the entire screen is covered with golden clouds illustrated but some parts are clear from the clouds such as a part of the Edo castle, or scenes of wild boarhunting or hunting by falcon, which are all enlarged out of proportion and are considered drawings of the Edo shogunate in the activities of hunting and so on.

As a conclusion, “Edo-zu-byobu” was made for drawing the achievements of the shogunate Iemitsu from the last year of Genwa/the first year of Kanei to the end of Kanei 10/the beginning of Kanei 11. The time of drawing is not definitely identified yet but is estimated to have been a little after Kanei 10/11.