Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Memory, modernity and children's literature in Japan: premodern warriors as national icons in nineteenth and twentieth century literature and curriculum

Ewijk, A. van

Citation

Ewijk, A. van. (2022, September 1). *Memory, modernity and children's literature in Japan: premodern warriors as national icons in nineteenth and twentieth century literature and curriculum*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3454722

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3454722

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Introduction

Over three decennia ago, Nira Yuval-Davis asked why 'women are usually "hidden" in the various theorizations of the nationalist phenomena'.[1] The same can be asked of children. The role of the education system in the nation-state has been addressed by Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, namely as a tool for the standardization of the national language and the creation of colonial subjects.[2] This indeed happened in Japan as well. Following the Meiji restoration (1868), the new Japanese government identified compulsory elementary education and the subject of *kokugo* 国語 (national language) and ethics as one of the most important building-blocks for the young nation-state, and later also applied the method to its colonies.[3] However, the connection between childhood and the nation-state did not merely exist in the creation of citizens through the instrument of the school: by the late nineteenth century, new print media also started to address the 'young citizen'. Moreover, the efforts to mould children into ideal citizens by various parties went together with an increasing discursivity of childhood in imaginations of the nation-state.

As pointed out by the anthropologist Sharon Stephens, not only gender, but also (interrelated) concepts of childhood and adulthood are pivotal in the internal structuring of modern nation-states.[4] Within the internal structure of the nation-state specific roles are associated with and allotted to women (such as the care for future citizens) and men (such as defending and protecting the domestic places), which also reflect hierarchical relations in social life.[5] Like 'womanhood' and 'manhood', constructed ideas were (and are) applied to childhood and the dichotomous state of adulthood. The perceived needs and nature of 'the child' are for example used to validate political agendas.[6] Children are also cast as symbols of the nation's future, and definitions of 'normal' childhood can work as justified control of families who do not behave in the interest of the state. Childhood might resist deconstruction even better than gender, as it appears to be a natural state determined not

---

[1] Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 2.
[2] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*.
[3] Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*; Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education*. For *kokugo* education in colonial Taiwan see Holca, 'Insularity and Imperialism'.
[4] Stephens, *Children and the Politics of Culture*; Stephens, 'Editorial Introduction'.
[5] Stephens, 'Editorial Introduction', 6–7.
[6] Stephens, 8.

only by biological difference from adulthood, but also by cognitive and psychological immaturity. Zsuzsanna Millei and Robert Imre observe that during the late nineteenth century, the idea of children going through 'advancements', as discovered by new sciences such as psychology and pedagogy, became entwined with the idea of the development of nations from primitive to advanced.[7]

In this thesis, I will analyze the role of children's literature in Japan's nation-building process. Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark in the edited volume *The nation in children's literature* state that 'the emergence of modern nation-states [in Europe] towards the end of the eighteenth century and the rise of children's literature in the same period is not coincidental'.[8] Neither is it coincidental that Japanese youth literature emerged as a new genre in the 1890s, when after two decennia of focus on political and technical modernization, the government and intellectuals turned their attention to the creation of a sense of nation among the citizens. As observed by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*, the nation is an abstract concept, yet demands loyalty and faith from the subjects.[9] An appeal should thus be made to the emotions, at the earliest possible age. Adults are in charge of passing on the knowledge and ceremonials. Kelen and Sundmark moreover stress that youth literature is more than an instrument, as 'the manner in which children and childhood are represented in a dedicated literature will affect a nation's self-understanding; conversely, the way a nation wishes to see itself will have a bearing on the possible ways in which children and childhood can and may be represented'.[10] I will on the one hand, address the instrumental role of Japanese children's literature in the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-1926) period; on the other hand, I will ask what this new genre meant to the self-understanding of the adults who developed it.

Many book series for Japanese children (initially mainly teenage boys) in the 1890s were devoted to historical fiction, that brings the past and future (i.e., children) of the nation together. The most obvious transmitter of cultural memory is public history, a valued and contested commodity of the nation-state.[11] The earliest history series were published in reaction to the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), that promoted the

---

[7] Millei and Imre, 'Introduction', 5–6.
[8] Kelen and Sundmark, *The Nation in Children's Literature*, 1.
[9] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
[10] Kelen and Sundmark, *The Nation in Children's Literature*, 4.
[11] Wilson, 'The Past Re-Imagined', 112.

creation of loyal citizens through education. The Rescript in fact merely introduced the constituent abstractions of the Japanese nation, that were, as discussed by Carol Gluck, consequently explained by many 'ideologues' who disseminated their views in the print media.[12] But how to make children understand, or rather, 'feel' that they are national subjects? The guidelines from the Ministry of Education stipulated an integrated curriculum, in which historical icons were used to teach not only national history (as a lineage of 'Great Men') but also exemplary dispositions. However, much more elaborate narratives and imagery were created by authors, illustrators, and publishers in the commercial realm. The use of exemplary icons in the curriculum has been addressed in the research on Japanese education[13], but the development of narratives and imagery surrounding heroes from Japanese history in youth literature has not.[14] If the Japanese pioneers of youth literature were simply repeating the government's ideas, why would they not just leave it to the Ministry of Education, textbook-makers, and teachers to create good citizens? From the perspective of 'instrumentality', I will ask how the lives of historical warriors were canonized and adapted in youth literature to fit various modern ideals, and how these concurred or contrasted with the metaphors of good citizenship in textbooks.

Most historical narratives for children were not selected directly from the available historical sources, but based on premodern war tales and warrior legends, that had been dramatized extensively in popular culture during the early modern period or Edo period (1600-1868). One obvious question that I will address is: what did authors take, and what did they leave away, and what does this say about their ideals and concept of the young reader?

As already hinted at above, this re-writing of warrior legends as youth literature can also tell us more about the modernization process of literary categories and the role of youth literature in cultural memory. The shift from premodern to modern literary categories has only been addressed from the perspective of 'adult' literature. Edo period popular literature, so-called *gesaku* 戯作, was in the Meiji period re-evaluated as decidedly 'unmodern' and

---

[12] Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*.

[13] E.g., Tsurumi, 'Meiji Primary School Language and Ethics Textbooks'; Fridell, 'Government Ethics Textbooks in Late Meiji Japan'; Cave, 'Story, Song, and Ceremony'.

[14] Jason Karlin's study of adventure stories for adolescents in the early twentieth century identifies voices of protest against the Meiji government (Karlin, 'Narratives of Heroism in Meiji Japan'.), but does not place this tendency in the wider context of children's literature. Henry David has addressed the allegorical function of the folk hero Momotarō in imaginations of the Japanese empire, which is not unrelated to my case study of Yoshitsune (as I will discuss in chapter two), but he is not a historical figure (Henry, 'Japanese Children's Literature as Allegory of Empire'.)

therefore rejected by authors seeking to reform Japanese literature. The modern re-conceptualization of war tales has also been studied from the perspective of literature for adults, and intellectual discourse. As shown by David Bialock, Japanese literature scholars of the late Meiji and Taishō period redefined war tales such as the fourteenth-century *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 ('The Tale of the Heike') as 'classic' or 'epic', in other words, as national literature.[15] However, youth literature has no place in such theorizations. The unmodern was foremost to be separated from the *modern, adult male*, but the connection to the past was not to disappear entirely: the Edo period also offered 'suitable past' for the legitimization of the modern nation.[16] Suitable past also needs a suitable medium and audience. What better place than youth literature, a modern genre for those who are not yet adults, but will (ideally) internalize what they have read and seen?

Both linear histories of youth literature and deconstructionist theories that consider youth literature to be the result of paradigmatic change in the early twentieth century, do not adequately explain the role and nature of youth literature in the Meiji period. There exists no 'linear' history of Japanese children's literature in the English language, nor any other kind of comprehensive book-length study. Instead, quite influential seems to be Karatani Kōjin's (translated) book chapter on the 'discovery of the child' in Japan, in which he argues that there was no concept of youth literature in the premodern period, and that also Meiji authors of youth literature 'discovered neither "literature" nor "the child"'.[17] He more specifically refers to Iwaya Sazanami's 巌谷小波 (1870-1933) early work *Koganemaru* こがね丸 (1891), that is canonized in the Japanese histories as the first modern Japanese children's book. Japanese scholars of the history of children's literature in his opinion wrongly try to identify a 'continuity' from the Edo period to the modern period. In contrast, like Philippe Ariès in his *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), Karatani argues that the concept of the child appeared with modernity. This modern concept crystallized in Europe under influence of Romanticism and psychology and was consequently imported in Japan in the early twentieth century, which contrasts with the child as an object of instruction of the Meiji state, and the absence of 'the' concept of the child in the Edo period. Youth literature would moreover follow the discovery of interiority in modern literature for adults (confessional

[15] See, for example, Bialock, 'Nation and Epic'.
[16] Gluck, 'The Invention of Edo'.
[17] Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 116–17.

literature, Naturalism). Karatani argues that before this discovery there was no children's literature, i.e., children's literature was the result of a paradigm change.

Japanese histories of children's literature in Japan find, for example, 'proto forms' of youth literature in the eighteenth-century picture books known as *akahon* 赤本 ('red cover books'). This has been used to prove that Japan was on its way to a modern concept of childhood and children's literature on its own. But can this literature be properly understood by measuring it against 'the' modern (we can add Western, middle-class) concept of the child? I will first investigate notions of childhood in the Edo period and what 'books for children' would mean in *this* context. Second, I will re-assess the Edo-Meiji divide through the lens of cultural memory. In chapter three, I re-examine various late-nineteenth century adaptations of popular warrior legends for children and the author's essays through the lens of Juri Lotman's theory on cultural memory. In Lotman's spatial model of culture, or semiosphere, foreign codes and concepts are translated into internally intelligible communications in the periphery of a given cultural sphere, in an ongoing process of 'creative memory'. The experimentation with applying the foreign codes of youth literature to Japanese early modern material was instrumental in the phasing out of structures of early modern text generation and the shaping of the new semiosphere of modern youth literature.

As mentioned above, *Koganemaru* (1891) is canonized as the first modern Japanese children's book. However, rather than identifying a single book as the original and representative work of a new type of literature, I will consider the 1890s to be the period in which authors started to explore the concept of a separate literature for children as it existed in the West. *Koganemaru* was the first part of a series titled *Shōnen bungaku* 少年文学 which is also the first Japanese term for 'youth literature' or 'children's literature'. However, despite the bold declaration of the commencement of this new literary genre, what followed was a period of experimentation. From the perspective of books for children, we might speak of a 'long Edo period' that lasted till the 1880s and was followed by a period in which both the material and existing modes of representing narratives were re-assessed to truly fit the modern age.

Childhood intersects with expectations of gender roles: boys and girls, or boyhood and girlhood were imagined differently, with the future roles of citizens in mind. This thesis focuses on boys: not only finds Japanese youth literature its roots in books and magazines

that were (mainly) written for boys, but 'boy's literature' is also largely absent from the Anglo-American research on Japanese (children's) literature. Whereas the early twentieth-century literature for *shōjo* 少女 (teenage girls) has drawn attention in the context of the ideal of the *ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母 ('good wife, wise mother'), the creation of a literature and modern role models for boys that reach back to the late nineteenth century are taken for granted. For example, in the quite recent *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature* the sole chapter on youth literature - in the wide sense - is a chapter on *shōjo* manga.[18] This literature 'for boys' was not inconsequential for girls: it established for example the way in which the nation's history was imagined and narrated well into the twentieth century. The narratives furthermore taught *both* boys and girls how they should position themselves on the axis of age-appropriate and gender-appropriate behavior, and within in the nation's constellation.

Whereas authors in the early 1890s mainly envisioned an audience of male teenagers, the scope gradually widened, leading to the development of narratives and modes of address (written language and illustrations) for younger children. This thesis is mainly concerned with the adaptation of warrior legends in literature for children of primary school age, but also pays attention to the literature for teenagers for whom the first book series and magazines were developed. Children's Literature Studies, or the Japanese *jidōbungaku kenkyū* 児童文学研究, encompasses the study of literature intended for kindergartners to adolescents. 'Children's literature' is the most common umbrella term while 'youth literature' is used both synonymously and to refer to children's literature that asks for a comparatively high literacy. I generally use the term 'youth literature' when the text presupposes a literacy level that in the contemporary context can be associated with older children or adolescents ('youths'). As Yoko Koyama-Siebert explains, the Japanese terms used to describe young people and the literature intended for them, as well as what these terms signified, changed over time.[19] Most important here are the terms *shōnen* 少年 and *yōnen* 幼年. Whereas in the 1890s these both referred to 'children', in children's literature of the early twentieth century *shōnen* (teenage boys) came to be differentiated from *yōnen* (young children) and *shōjo* (teenage girls).

Most heavily investing in historical fiction for children was the Tokyo-based publishing house Hakubunkan 博文館, on whose magazines and book series I will focus.

[18] Shirane, Suzuki, and Lurie, *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature*.
[19] Koyama-Siebert, 'Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in Japan'.

Hakubunkan's publications feature very positively in the memoirs of various authors who grew up in the last two decennia of the Meiji period. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) in his *Yōshō jidai* 幼少時代 ('Childhood Years', 1955-56) not only wrote of his enthusiasm for the serialized stories in the Hakubunkan magazine *Shōnen sekai* 少年世界 ('Youth's World') but also of his deep investment in the publisher's history series.

> Yoda Gakkai's *Lord Toyotomi* was another novel that was serialized over a long period in the same magazine [*Shōnen sekai*], and it marked the beginning of my interest in historical fiction. … I must not omit the name of Ōwada Takeki, the author of *Tales from Japanese History* [*Nippon rekishitan* 日本歴史譚, 1896-99]. … It consisted of a series of twenty-four volumes, beginning with "The foundation of Japan", with illustrations by Yamada Keichū, and ending with "Weihaiwei" [about Japan's victories in the First Sino-Japanese War], illustrated by Koyama Mitsukata. I read most of the series, and found it hard to put aside some volumes, reading them over and over again: "Lord Sugawara" (illustrated by Kajita Hanko), "The Soga Brothers" (Ogata Gekkō), "Sagami Tarō" (Yamanaka Kotō), "Kurō Hangan Yoshitsune" (Tsutsui Toshimine), "Akushichibyōe Kagekiyo" (Mizuno Toshikata), "Lord Kusunoki" (Kobayashi Eiko), "Prince Morinaga" (Utagawa Kunimatsu), and a number of others.[20]

Tanizaki read these books around or before the age of thirteen. What attracted him most were the characters, some of whom (Yoshitsune and Kagekiyo) he remembered from Kabuki performances he had seen as a little boy (and belonged to his first memories). These books, next to the lessons in classical literature by his teacher, inspired him to buy 'grown up' versions such as the war tale *Taiheiki* 太平記 ('Chronicle of Great Peace', late 14th century), that had just appeared in Hakubunkan's Teikoku Bunko series, and for which he went straight to the publisher.[21]

Tanizaki however also had an idol in the land of the living: namely the author Iwaya Sazanami, who, with his *Shin Hakkenden* 新八犬伝 ('New Hakkenden', a serialized adaptation of Takizawa Bakin's *Hakkenden* in *Shōnen sekai*, 1898) gave him 'the first real taste of the pleasures of fiction'.[22] Since the publication of *Koganemaru*, Iwaya had written many

[20] Tanizaki, *Childhood Years*, 225.
[21] Tanizaki, 157–58.
[22] Tanizaki, 223.

other works that earned him this star status among boys, and he was also the editor-in-chief of *Shōnen sekai*. Tanizaki's remark would have greatly pleased Iwaya, as he made it his lifework to stimulate children's imagination, getting into disputes with contemporaries about the 'bizarre ideas' that he presented to children. Although Iwaya has a bleak reputation outside the Japanese sphere of children's literature studies, he should be seen as an innovator in the Meiji period, who in the Taishō period also kept giving new form to his ideas in the diversifying arena of children's literature (with Hakubunkan's support). Next to Lizbeth Piel's study of the reception of *Koganemaru*, there is only David Henry's article on Iwaya's adaptation of the folktale *Momotarō* 桃太郎 ('Peach Boy', 1894), which he interprets as an 'allegory of empire'.[23] Empire indeed played an important role in Iwaya's understanding of Japan's 'maturation' as a nation, but this must be placed in a more complex process of discovering and disseminating his notion of the ideal citizen, at variance with the government. *Momotarō* was the first volume in the series *Nippon mukashibanashi* 日本昔話 and the sequel *Nippon otogibanashi* 日本お伽噺 that spans a total of forty-eight volumes. The latter series introduced similar characters and themes as Ōwada Takeki's *Tales from Japanese History* but for the first time sought to speak to the imagination of pre-teens. I will zoom in on Iwaya's essays and rewritings of warrior legends and discuss how he experimented with applying the Western codes of fairy tales and youth literature to the Edo period legacy of warrior legends that circulated in cultural memory.

Tanizaki mentions all the names of the illustrators in his memoir, and the pictures played an important role in his boyhood reading experiences. Hakubunkan attracted some of the best illustrators, whose prints were also displayed at bookstores, which formed a daily free attraction for Tanizaki and his friends.[24] Takeuchi Keishū's illustrations of Iwaya's *Shin Hakkenden* contributed to Tanizaki's yearning 'for that world of the *New Hakkenden* the way an adolescent going through puberty yearns for love'.[25] The illustrations that went with the stories about exemplary historical icons were largely based on premodern iconographies, as seen, for example, in woodblock prints and picture books from Edo, or *kusazōshi* 草双紙, about famous heroes. Such works were strongly associated with an audience of children, upon which I will elaborate in chapter one. In other words, the scenes to be illustrated were

[23] Piel, 'Loyal Dogs and Meiji Boys'; Henry, 'Japanese Children's Literature as Allegory of Empire'.
[24] Tanizaki, *Childhood Years*, 82.
[25] Tanizaki, 223.

largely pre-determined and can be studied in similar ways as the text, as 'material' that was used to negotiate between premodern and modern concepts. (How this phenomenon challenges the way in which book illustrations are generally understood and studied, I will address in chapter four.) These iconographies came to play an even larger role in initiating children into the history of the nation in the Taishō period, when picture magazines employed the iconographies as a method to familiarize preliterate children with the heroes and legends.

Main case studies throughout this thesis focus on representations of the generals Minamoto Yoshitsune 源義経 (1159-1189) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537-1598). They both served as exemplars in textbooks as well as modern youth literature, and the representations reflect the various ideals of the makers. Yoshitsune was a popular hero among children in the early modern period. Legends about the young Yoshitsune, also called Ushiwakamaru, were adapted in modern primary school textbooks and he is the first historical general taken up by Iwaya Sazanami in his two book series that introduced folktales and warrior legends. Ushiwakamaru was in the early twentieth century furthermore cultivated as a hero for preliterate children: he is depicted more often than any other warrior in the picture-magazine *Yōnen gahō* (discussed in chapter four). Hideyoshi was further removed from the fairy-tale world, and canonized in textbooks as one of the Great Men and an embodiment of the Meiji slogan *risshin shusse* 立身出世 ('rising in the world'). The young Hideyoshi (Hiyoshimaru) was according to early modern legends however also a difficult and violent boy, a trait that Iwaya used to challenge the government's interpretations of citizenship.

Yoshitsune and Hideyoshi were not presented in a vacuum, so next to the representations of these icons, I will discuss how these representations related to the formation of a modern canon (or pantheon) of national icons, that apart from many other martial heroes also included some scholars and politicians, and a (very) small number of women. The latter often originated in the early modern canon of *retsujo* 列女 (exemplary women), or were the wives of famous men. The only historical female figure with a relatively stable presence in the 'main canon' as presented in modern elementary school textbooks was Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (born around 973), the author of *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 ('The Tale of Genji'). How was Murasaki Shikibu made to fit within the male-

oriented canon of exemplary historical figures? I will analyze the representation (or absence) of Murasaki Shikibu in textbooks and the magazines for boys. A full consideration of the modern representation of exemplary women from Japanese history is however out of the scope of this thesis. I imagine this would start with the representation of *retsujo* in girl's and women's magazines (as shortly addressed in chapter four), and the question of how important Japanese historical role models were thought to be for women. Florence Nightingale seems to have been a more popular exemplar than Murasaki Shikibu.[26] Which brings me to another caveat: the lives of heroes from the West, like Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and various American presidents, were also dramatized in Meiji youth literature, next to their Japanese counterparts. I also leave these out of scope, as my main concern is with exemplars who are also part of a transformation of premodern warrior legends to modern youth literature.

Hideyoshi's main exemplary function in the Meiji and Taishō period was in his remarkable *shusse* 出世 ('rising in the world') from farmer's son to unifier of Japan. Popular representations that already highlighted this remarkable ascendance, as well as Hiyoshimaru's unruliness, developed rather late in the Edo period. Murasaki Shikibu was in the early modern period canonized as a learned and beautiful woman of exemplary character, yet no legends formed around her childhood. Yoshitsune on the other hand was one of the most extensively dramatized figures in early modern literature and visual culture, including picture books aimed at children. He was a general who led several successful battles during the Genpei War (1180-1185) under orders of his half-brother Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147-1199), the first Kamakura shogun. Some historical facts related to Yoshitsune, and many legends, came together in Muromachi period (1336-1573) war tales, such as *Gikeiki* 義経記 ('The Chronicle of Yoshitsune') and *Heike monogatari*, and were dramatized in the noh theater and other performance traditions. Ivan Morris interpreted Yoshitsune as the quintessential 'tragic hero', based on his reading of the war tales *Gikeiki*, *Heike monogatari* and the noh play *Ataka* 安宅.[27] However, in the context of early modern popular print and modern youth literature, it is far more helpful to consider Yoshitsune the pivot in a cycle of plots and characters originating in a wide variety of sources (including the above). The most important 'side character' was Musashibō Benkei 武蔵坊弁慶 (1155–1189),

[26] See Kawana, 'Romancing the Role Model'.
[27] Morris, *The Nobility of Failure*.

a warrior monk who was Yoshitsune's most loyal retainer, and his antithesis in stature and personality. Edo period playwrights and other authors and artists continuously mulled from the body of plots and characters from what in contemporary playwriting terms was called the Yoshitsune *sekai* 世界 (world). The Genpei War was moreover used as a setting in which contemporary social and political issues could be addressed, as direct critique and 'recent' history related to the reigning samurai clans was censured. Shimazu Hisamoto in his *Yoshitsune densetsu to bungaku* 義経伝説と文学 ('Yoshitsune Legends and Literature', 1935) lists eighteen main plots distributed over the sections 'Ushiwakamaru period' (referring to Yoshitsune's boyhood name), Yoshitsune's 'triumphant period' (plots related to his actions as a general), the 'period of despair' (when he was out of favor with Yoritomo and travelled around as a fugitive), and 'legends related to Yoshitsune's end'.[28] Besides these, there are many subplots and local legends. Shimazu, as a modern scholar of Japanese literature, duly separated 'literature' from 'art', or the pictorial tradition, but the listed main plots could also be represented by iconographies.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Edo bookstores brought to children *kusazōshi* that introduced the plots and characters surrounding famous warriors like Yoshitsune: these formed the visual-textual cornerstones of cultural memory and reflect basic notions about human relations. Yet the way in which the question of books for children in premodern Japan, and the rise of a dedicated genre, have been addressed hinges upon twentieth-century Western notions of 'originality' and 'quality literature'. As such, one ends up looking for things like journeys of self-discovery and Western middle-class values that make no sense in the context of contemporary worldviews or narrative tropes. On the contrary, to gain more insight into the latter, books for children, whether recognized as a genre or not, should be included in Japanese literature research.

In the first chapter, I ask what early modern (1600-1868) notions of childhood (with a focus on Edo) preceded the influx of Western concepts, and how we might understand 'books for children' in this context. I show that even though a specific literature for children did not exist, children were seen as an audience of books, independently from modern (Western) concepts of childhood. Associated with the interests of children were folktales and warrior

[28] An overview of these legends, as categorized by Shimazu, is given in the appendix.

legends, and adults were keenly aware of children's interest in pictures. Representations of famous warriors in didactic texts (*ōraimono* 往来物) and picture books from Edo (*kusazōshi*) familiarized children with widely circulating sets of characters, plots, and iconographies upon which popular entertainment was structured. They moreover taught correct behavior and 'history'.

In chapter two, I discuss the development of a historical canon and exemplars in the modern elementary school curriculum. Whereas the Imperial Rescript on Education formed the impetus for the interpretation of elementary education as a place for creating loyal subjects, I will focus on the pedagogical ideals of Herbartianism and 'progressive' insights into the child's cognitive abilities that influenced the creation of metaphors. Late nineteenth-century German Herbartians proposed to appeal to the child's imagination through narratives and pictures, and present material that relates to the nation, such as heroic tales. This idea was translated to the Japanese sphere, by making selective use of warrior legends. The heroes functioned as ethics exemplars and an expedient means for imparting 'historical consciousness' (*rekishiteki kannen* 歴史的観念), in the sense of a collective identity.

In chapter three I will discuss how commercial authors and publishers entered the arena, and how they after initially paying lip-service to the government started to create their own versions of ideal young citizens and historical heroes. I focus on the magazines and book series of the successful Tokyo publishing house Hakubunkan, and the pioneering author and editor Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933). I re-examine this early development of the genre of youth literature in Japan through the lens of Juri Lotman's theory of cultural memory. In Lotman's spatial model of culture, or semiosphere, foreign concepts travel from periphery to center of a given cultural (sub)sphere through amalgamation with established texts, in a process of 'creative memory'. The genre of youth literature was such a foreign concept. Following a discussion of exemplary heroes in Hakubunkan's magazines and history series of the early 1890s, I zoom in on Iwaya's essays and serialized adaptations of premodern warrior legends, in which he explores the codes of nineteenth century youth literature from the West. He shaped his protagonists into exemplary boys who display *wanpaku* (spirited) dispositions, in opposition to moralism and 'narrow-minded nationalism' imparted at home and in schools.[29]

---

[29] A version of chapter three has been published in *Japan Forum*. van Ewijk, 'Premodern Warriors as Spirited Young Citizens'.

The fourth and last chapter asks how the Taishō period trope of the 'childlike child' intersected with representations of the remote national past and national icons and examines the re-use of early modern warrior iconographies. Youth literature became an established genre catering to the various segments of the middle-class. I will analyse the representation of premodern Japanese warriors in Hakubunkan's successful magazine *Yōnen gahō* 幼年画報 ('Children's Illustrated', 1906-1935). The 'cultured' middle-class started to focalize the child as a 'pre-reader', or someone who is in the process of attaining full literacy. The images in *Yōnen gahō* were largely based on premodern iconographies, as seen in warrior prints and illustrated books. I ask how the iconographies and accompanying text changed based on new notions of the (young) child, and how the re-interpretations construct concepts of national history, family, and gendered play. *Yōnen gahō* not only invites the 'wise mother' but also fathers and siblings to play a role in the cultural education of young children by expecting them to recall and tell the stories about the selected heroes and legends, thereby forging strong connections between personal and collective memory. I contrast this view to the use of the childlike in 'progressive' youth magazines *Akai Tori* 赤い鳥 ('Red Bird') and *Kin no hoshi* 金の星 ('Gold Star'). Despite the reputation of Romanticism and an enlightened view of children's 'innocence' that these magazines have, they also introduced adaptations of war tales that realistically represent violence and idealize notions of loyalty and sacrifice. In this remote past, the 'innocence and sincerity' of children shines as a sublimation of the warrior spirit.

By analyzing the connection between youth literature and premodern warrior legends, I aim to re-assess the way in which authors and illustrators modernized Japanese literature during the Meiji period and redefined the child to give shape to modern society.