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

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Chapter 1

Children and print in the Edo period

The origin of children's literature in Japan has been placed as far back as the seventeenth century or as recent as the early twentieth century. The appearance of children's literature as a *modern* genre was bound to the introduction of Western literature and the rise of the nation-state in the late nineteenth century. Canonically, Iwaya Sazanami's *Koganemaru* こがね丸 (1891) is considered the first work of modern Japanese children's literature, yet it has also been observed that this narrative of a dog taking revenge on the murderer of his father still stands in the tradition of Edo period popular fiction. Karatani Kōjin argues that a children's literature did not yet exist in the Edo and Meiji period, due to the absence of a concept of childhood based on Romanticism and psychology, that recognizes the different 'interiority' of children.¹ Although not specifically addressing children's literature, Philippe Ariès in his seminal study of childhood in France and England (1960) similarly argued that the concept of childhood is a modern phenomenon. Yet scholars of premodern social and cultural history have consequently shown that modernity was not preceded by a complete absence of a concept of childhood. In this chapter, I will discuss how 'books for children' can be understood in the (late) Edo period context, which will contribute to an understanding of how concepts of childhood (plural) existed yet varied from modern (Western) concepts.

Especially in the cities and mercantile households, many children were taught basic literacy. The number of *terakoya* 寺子屋 (writing schools) for children of commoner and lower samurai status grew exponentially in the late Edo period. Most *terakoya* could be found in urban centres where literacy was needed in mercantile occupations and social interaction, but also villages were not without literate people as communication with authorities was often conducted by the written word. Publishers turned out a great number of didactic texts (*ōraimono* 往来物) that were used for an unofficial curriculum focusing on writing or copying (*tenarai* 手習), reading (*sodoku* 素読) and arithmetic. In contrast to

¹ Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*.

ōraimono, a specific genre for children's leisure reading did not exist in booksellers' records. However, various recent studies suggest that children were amongst the audience of the picture book genre of *kusazōshi* 草双紙 (litt. 'grass books').² However, these findings still have holes and are not yet embedded in histories of Japanese literature. Why, for example, would there only be picture books for children in the first half of the eighteenth century (the sub-genre of *akahon* 赤本 or 'red cover books') even though the number of *terakoya* steadily increased? Introducing additional proof, I will show that 'books for the entertainment of children' did exist physically and in the minds of adults and propose a less Western-oriented perspective on 'books for children' and concepts of childhood.

Audiences of children were associated with legendary warriors and folktales. In the picture-oriented genre of *kusazōshi* various biographies of warriors can be identified as primarily aimed at children based on title, introduction, and contents. One of the most popular protagonists was Minamoto Yoshitsune, who (together with Benkei) was also represented on toy-prints, such as kites and *sugoroku* 双六 boardgames. These media invited those with basic literacy and yet little cultural knowledge into the world of popular entertainment and shared memories of Yoshitsune by offering digests of the main events and characters. Iconic figures like Yoshitsune were moreover used as an expedient to trigger children's interest in writing lessons.

The aim of this chapter is, first, to understand how children and childhood were conceptualized in the second half of the Edo period. Second, it discusses the contents and aims of literacy education, and connections between an audience of children and possible forms of 'leisure reading'. Third, it analyses the representation of Yoshitsune in both didactic and entertaining print media for children. Last, I will discuss variant (childhood) dispositions and gender in the popular representation of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Murasaki Shikibu. This visual and textual heritage profoundly influenced Meiji period authors of children's literature, who together with educators tried to bring early modern materials and modern concepts in agreement for a new generation.

² E.g., Seta, *Ochibo hiroi : jōkan*; Herring, 'The Hidden Heritage'; Kimbrough, 'Murasaki Shikibu for Children'; Williams, 'Visualizing the Child'; Kimbrough, 'Bloody Hell!'; Moretti, *Recasting the Past*.

1. The discourse on early modern concepts of childhood and children's books

Modern scholarship on childhood appeared in the early Shōwa period (1926-1989), when scholars became interested in finding the roots of Japanese childhood and education in the national past. They studied the conditions of children in the premodern period and started to 'conceive of the child as a reflection of a cultural consensus, that varied with class and time'.³ With his landmark studies from the 1950s and 1960s, Ishikawa Ken introduced early modern education and Japanese views on children (*jidōkan* 児童観) based on a wide range of sources, such as rituals, laws, autobiographies, educational treatises, (early Meiji) surveys of school attendance, and primers. Ishikawa's work on Edo period literacy education plays a significant role in Richard Dore's *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (1965), the first book-length study in English on the history of education in Japan, with a chapter on childhood education. In the same year, Herbert Passin also published a history of Japanese education. Ishikawa, Dore and Passin connect a wide diffusion of elementary education in the Edo period to a quick implementation of the modern school system in the Meiji period. Later research on education and literacy rather stresses the discrepancies between Edo period education practices and the modern school system.⁴ Japanese education history developed into a proper discourse, yet, as Michael Kinski observes, the perusal of both didactic treatises as well as other literary material for intellectual understandings of childhood hardly finds continuation after Ishikawa's initial efforts.⁵ This might be explained by the fact that 'the' concept of childhood came to be seen as a modern (Western) phenomenon under influence of the work of Philippe Ariès.

In *Centuries of Childhood* (1972, original title *L'Enfant et la famille sous l'ancien régime*, 1960), Ariès shows, through an analysis of attitudes towards young people and educational practices in fourteenth to eighteenth century France and England, how the worlds of children and adults distanced themselves from each other and how a concept of childhood developed as part of modernity.⁶ The idea of the innocence of children, that emerged with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), led to different attitudes towards children. Children needed to be safeguarded against 'pollution' but also socialized by developing character and

³ Piel, 'The Ideology of the Child in Japan', 264.

⁴ Platt, *Burning and Building*; Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*.

⁵ Kinski, 'Japanische Kindheiten in Der Frühen Neuzeit', 2015, 132.

⁶ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.

reason. Schools increasingly stressed discipline and separated children in classes based on age, which led to a clearer demarcation and extension of a period of childhood.

Independently from Ariès, Karatani Kōjin made similar observations about the modern construction of the concept of childhood, in the context of Japanese children's literature. The nation-state played a crucial role in the 'uprooting of children, as abstract and homogeneous entities, from the productive relations, social classes, and communities that had previously been their concrete contexts'.⁷ Like Ariès, Karatani stresses the role of schools in the separation of children from adults, although he more emphatically ascribes these developments to a particular moment: the rise of the Japanese nation-state in the late nineteenth century. Karatani however differentiates this Meiji period 'nationalized' child from the 'discovery of childhood' (i.e., the discovery that children have a different interiority from adults) that took place in the early twentieth century. The latter was based on a concept of childhood rooted in European Romanticism and psychoanalysis.

Ariès' focus on family and childhood was ground-breaking in French historiography, as well as his imaginative use of sources, representative of the *Annales* school. Critique followed on his cultural data, such as family portraits, that focused on elite families. These do not necessarily reflect practices in the wider society. Ariès' thesis moreover tended to be read as an outright denial of consideration of children (as a separate category) before the modern period. In the 1980s, studies of laws, letters and diaries in premodern Europe showed that childhood *was* in fact considered a special phase in life, as proven by, for example, the existence of legal protection or tokens of affection towards children.⁸ Recent studies on the cultural history of premodern childhood in Japan similarly focus on diaries and personal letters, and reflect on practices, attitudes, and experiences of people in certain social strata or localities.⁹ Minagawa Mieko, and Ōta Motoko in a more recent study, have taken up the late Edo period diary *Kuwana nikki* 桑名日記, written by a father of lower samurai status.¹⁰ They studied the reactions of adults on children's sickness and death and show that despite the high rate of infant mortality and a society that turned a blind eye on infanticide (discussed below), parents were emotionally involved in their children's lives.

⁷ Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 130.

⁸ E.g., Pollock, *Forgotten Children*.

⁹ E.g., Shibata, *Nihon yōjishi*; Ōta, *Edo no oyako*; Walthall, 'For the Love of Children'.

¹⁰ Ōta 2017; See Kinski 2015, 133–43.

An increased emotional investment in children and attention to their education is often treated by scholars as a sign of ‘early modernity’ and defies the idea that only modernity (i.e., the West) produced a concept of childhood. Shibata Jun argues that views on children significantly changed in the Edo period, when children became the ‘treasures’ (*kodakara* 子宝) central to the continuation of the *ie* 家 (household), and education was increasingly available.¹¹ Ōta argues in a similar vein that the diffusion of didactic treatises in the Edo period signals the ‘discovery of the child’ (*kodomo no hakken* 子どもの発見), as these texts conceptualize childhood as the foundation of human life and are written for a wide audience.¹²

Another way in which early modern concepts of childhood have been approached is by asking how early modern schools of thought *contributed* to the development and form of the modern concept of childhood in Japan. Lizbeth Piel argues that the modern ‘ideology’ of the child in Japan, ‘a product of discourse and debate that was motivated by the search for a national identity between 1868 and 1945’, consists of a cross-fertilization of bourgeois Romanticism from the West and non-European intellectual traditions, particularly Confucianism.¹³ Such traditions can be constituent to the modern concept, yet also contain elements that seem incongruent with what ‘childhood’ is supposed to be from a modern or Western perspective. Niels van Steenpaal points out for example, that the virtue of filiality is at odds with the notion of the child as someone who is dependent on adults (discussed in more detail below).¹⁴ The Taoist notion of ‘childlike nature’ (*dōshin* 童心) surfaces in the Taishō period (1912-1926) as an ideal in Japanese children’s literature. The similarity with the ‘innocent child’ in Romanticism is however retrospective: it does not explain how *dōshin* might have been understood and used in the premodern period.

Michael Kinski questions whether the available research into the cultural history of childhood in Japan can or does show us ‘how adults made children a reference object for their own actions, or how they empathised with children’s perspectives’.¹⁵ Ping-chen Hsiung’s study of children and childhood in late imperial China shows how such a study might be bent into a new direction in order to avoid a major pitfall. Hsiung points out that

¹¹ Kinski, ‘Japanische Kindheiten in Der Frühen Neuzeit’, 2015, 116–17.

¹² Ōta, *Edo no oyako*, 208.

¹³ Piel, ‘The Ideology of the Child in Japan’, 2–3.

¹⁴ van Steenpaal, ‘Conflicting Paradigms of Moral and Biological Childhood’.

¹⁵ Kinski, ‘Japanische Kindheiten in Der Frühen Neuzeit’, 2015, 149.

the assessment of childhood as increasingly 'modern' tends to be based on the values of European and American families.¹⁶ When the same yardstick is applied to non-Western societies, this leads to quantitative rather than qualitative answers.¹⁷ Hsiung in the context of China proposes to consider the existence of a multiplicity of views on children, changing over time but also existing side-by-side and mutually influencing each other. She identifies three different, yet interrelated, notions of the child in imperial China that were 'an operating force when it comes to specific areas of activity or concern'.¹⁸ These are a) the child as the 'junior', an inferior status that can also apply to servants, b) as a biophysically demarcated phase in a person's lifespan, and c) a more abstract notion of 'childlike nature' (in Taoist thought and Chinese medicine).

Not only Neo-Confucianism and Taoism but also Kokugaku (Native Studies), Shingaku and other schools of thought might be perused for concepts of children or childhood in early modern Japan. In fact, Anne Walthall makes an argument that leads into this direction in her study of the diaries of the prolific Kokugaku scholar Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and his son, namely, that attitudes towards childhood depended on the 'emotional community' a family related itself to.¹⁹ The multiplicity of views that Hsiung finds in late imperial China follows from a use of primary sources unconfined by disciplinary borders, such as primers, treatises, diaries, paediatric texts, artistic and imaginative works. For Japan there is no comparable study that connects intellectual texts, social realities, and artistic or literary representations in an analysis of Edo period, or premodern concepts of childhood.

Since the 1980s, various Japanese scholars have attempted to include Edo period books for children in the history of Japanese children's literature and the discourse on the 'discovery of the child'. Seta Teiji's *Ochibo hiroi* 落穂ひろい (1982) brings together a wide array of premodern literary and visual sources that take children as a subject or audience. The presence of some sources (such as the luxurious *Nara-ehon* 'picture books from Nara') is

¹⁶ Hsiung Ping-chen, *A Tender Voyage*, 20.

¹⁷ For example, Brian Platt in an article on Meiji period education, argues that a concept of childhood in early modern Japan existed, yet different and less intense than the modern concept. Even though children were viewed as different from adults, this did not result in 'elaborate displays of empathy with the child's perspective'. Platt, 'Japanese Childhood, Modern Childhood', 969.

¹⁸ Hsiung Ping-chen, *A Tender Voyage*, 24.

¹⁹ Walthall, 'For the Love of Children'.

questionable, yet the low threshold for including certain sources in a genealogy of children's literature is very useful for further research. The 1980s and 1990s saw the find of a late seventeenth-century collection of picture books in a Jizō statue dedicated to a deceased boy, first introduced by Okamoto Masaru²⁰, and several initiatives to include *kusazōshi* aimed at children in the research on early modern literature.²¹ This material has been interpreted as a predecessor of modern children's literature, not unlike Ishikawa's and Dore's visions on the linear development of Japanese education. Children's literature scholar Kami Shōichirō argues that the early modern investment in creating and buying books for children bespeaks an 'attention to the nature of children', and that the available commentaries (*hyōbanki* 評判記) of new book publications indicates an increased focus on the 'mental growth' (*kokoroteki seichō* 心の生長) of children in the late Edo period.²² This leads Kami to argue that Japan was well-prepared for the appearance of modern children's literature in the Meiji period.

In Anglo-American research, studies on early modern Japanese printed books for children only appeared very recently. In histories of Japanese literature, premodern books for children have so far merely featured as the primitive beginnings of the genre of *kusazōshi*. Early modern publishers indeed did not recognize a category of books for children, and book prefaces that claim that the consequent narrative is 'for children' cannot be taken at face-value as it was also employed metaphorically to avoid censure. Influential is also Karatani Kōjin's thesis that children's literature could not exist in the premodern period due to the absence of a modern concept of the child. Whereas modern children's literature indeed was the result of a paradigmatic change, his argumentation for a complete absence of books or narratives for children in the Edo period is hardly convincing. Citing the folklorist Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875-1962), he argues for example, that children were surely not interested in folktales as they contain much violence.²³ Within children's literature research such opinions based on modern assumptions about 'suitability' have long been refuted. (Violence is moreover not absent in modern children's literature.) Joan Ericson similarly

²⁰ Religious texts and objects were often hidden in the cavities of Buddha statues. Jizō is the guardian deity of children, also protecting those who deceased before their parents. Reproductions of this collection appear in Okamoto, *Shoki Kamigata Kodomo Ehonshū*. and Nakano and Hida, *Kinsei Kodomo No Ehonshū - Kamigata-Hen*.

²¹ Suzuki and Kimura, *Kinsei Kodomo Ehonshū - Edo Hen*. And more recently, Sō no kai, *Kusazōshi Jiten*; Kimura, *Kusazōshi No Sekai*.

²² Kami, 'Jidōbungaku Zenshi e No Izanai', 20-24. Kami here refers to Ōta Nanpo's *Ezōshi hyōbanki kikujusō* 絵草子菊寿草 (1782), and an anonymous *hyōbanki* titled *Sakusha hyōban sengokutōshi* 作者評判千石籥 (1754).

²³ Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 125.

argues that folktales were for the first time rewritten for children in the Meiji period and moreover that the premodern period only produced didactic works for children.²⁴

Ann Herring made a first step in another direction by challenging the assumption that children's publications started in 1891 with Iwaya Sazanami's *Koganemaru*. She introduces *kusazōshi*, paper toys and board games, that prove the existence of a wide variety of children's publications during the (late) Edo period. Kristin Williams takes Ericson to task in her dissertation about *akahon* 赤本 ('red cover books', published in the first half of the eighteenth century).²⁵ She argues that the highly picture-oriented *akahon* were intentionally published for an audience of children with the object of being 'entertaining' and not merely 'didactic'. The use of *akahon* as New Year's presents, their entertainment value, and their 'cultural value' as adaptations of literature created for adults clearly sets them apart from primers. Citing children's literature scholar Emer O'Sullivan, Williams moreover rightly argues that educational purposes are intrinsic to literature created by adults for children.²⁶ R. Keller Kimbrough has introduced the contents of the books found in the Jizō statue to an English-speaking audience as 'boy's books', and Laura Moretti's transcription, integral translation, and annotation of *Utagaruta* (an eighteenth-century adaptation of the *The Tales of Ise*) is the most detailed study of a single (two-volume) *kusazōshi* from the perspective of children's literature. She compares *Utagaruta* to European chapbooks, that children had adopted as reading material, as there existed yet no literature specifically intended for them till the middle of the eighteenth century. Different from chapbooks however, the preface of *Utagaruta* specifically mentions that the pictures were commissioned from an artist of the Torii school, 'so as to facilitate a child's quick grasp of the material'.²⁷ Moreover, *Utagaruta* tries to facilitate identification: The first spread shows the protagonist Narihira as a boy in a *terakoya*. Moretti adds that adults might have enjoyed this accessible adaptation of the classic *The Tales of Ise* as well.²⁸ The fledgeling discourse on premodern Japanese children's books stays mostly within the confines of Japanese literature research, but Jonathan Mills has introduced two eighteenth-century *kusazōshi* about Kumagai Naozane 熊谷直実 (1141-1208)

²⁴ Ericson, 'Introduction', viii-ix.

²⁵ Williams, 'Visualizing the Child', 40-42. Ericson's essay is an introduction to a collection of translated stories from the Taishō period children's magazine *Akai tori*.

²⁶ Williams also translated three *akahon* in her dissertation, of which one also appears in the edited volume *Childhood in Japanese History*. Williams, 'Children in an Early Red Book'.

²⁷ Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 19. Bakin in *Enseki zasshi* also associated an artist of the Torii school (Masanobu) with a style very suitable to children.

²⁸ Moretti, 20.

in the journal *International Research on Children's Literature*.²⁹ Like Moretti, Mills argues that such *kusazōshi* target a 'dual audience': the images of warriors and comic scenes might be enjoyed by children, while an adult audience would recognize the spiritual themes.

In sum, the point of orientation for most scholars writing on understandings of childhood in Edo period Japan is 'the' modern concept of childhood. Also, the (perceived) characteristics of modern children's literature loom large in the assessment of Edo period books. Whereas Karatani sees a complete break (because the concept of childhood in his theory is inherently modern and only present from the early twentieth century), a more common view is that there is a degree of continuity. The latter view appears generally from the identification of ideas represented in Edo period written texts that are perceived as close to 'modern' ideas about children. The views of children themselves are however still missing, as Kinski observes in his introduction to *Childhood in Japanese History*.³⁰ Associated with a mature understanding of the modern concept of childhood is the adoption of perspectives that acknowledge the child's specific needs or different interiority as rooted in Romanticism and psychology. Yet the concept of the child as 'young citizen' is treated differently. In Karatani's theory it is a political ideal separate from the 'discovery of the child', and in Piel's interpretation it is an 'ideology' imported from the West that takes a distinct shape through amalgamation with Japanese early modern schools of thought. None of these studies depart from an idea of a multiplicity of concepts of childhood as proposed by Hsiung. Furthermore, even though the existence of books for children or children's literature are seen as a hallmark of the (partial) existence of 'the' concept of childhood, the *contents* of early modern books for children and the connection with Meiji period children's literature has hardly been investigated.

In the vein of Hsiung's argument about the multiplicity of concepts of childhood, I will consider how 'books for children' might be understood in the Edo period context rather than the degree to which they are, or are not, similar to modern children's literature. The following paragraphs will first describe more concretely the physical and conceptual spaces that children occupied in Edo period Japan.

²⁹ Mills, 'Depictions of Martial and Spiritual Power'.

³⁰ Kinski, 'Japanische Kindheiten in Der Frühen Neuzeit', 2015, 1.

2. The *ie* and filial piety

Kathleen Uno in her study on early childhood care observes that the care for infants and young children in the Edo period was foremost aimed at their physical well-being, and not considered 'a complex and weighty duty with grave and indelible consequences for future mental, moral, and psychological development'.³¹ Older siblings, grandparents, servants, and apprentices might be assigned to the task of keeping them safe. I would however prefer to make a distinction between 'moral' and 'psychological': didactic treatises, maybe as a consequence of observing the contrary, admonished parents to take care of their own moral behaviour as it would influence that of young children. From the age of seven (in counted years) or younger in poorer households, children started to contribute to the household with simple tasks.³² One of these simple tasks was baby-sitting (*komori* 子守), for which brothers, sisters or a child from another family might be recruited if they were physically able to carry an infant on their back.

The age of seven in counted years appears as a marker that separated young children from older children. A change in attitude towards the child around this age logically follows from a recognition of physical and cognitive development, but seven is also specifically mentioned in official documents as the age under which children cannot be prosecuted. Shibata Jun traces the origin of the significance of the number seven back to Chinese laws and theories that consider children under seven not liable for crimes or wrongdoing.³³ Moreover, both the Bakufu and books of popular instruction stipulated that children under seven should not (or only temperately) be mourned for, as infant mortality was high.

Especially in lower samurai and merchant households, education of one's children was a way to maintain or positively change social and economic status. Between age seven and nine, a child might start attending a writing school if the household head deemed this necessary. In merchant and artisan households, children would start an apprenticeship or enter domestic service in another household from around age ten. Apart from the household and the writing school, places of socialization for boys in villages (between seven and

³¹ Uno, *Passages to Modernity*, 24.

³² Age was counted from 1 at birth and in all calendrical years through the whole or part of which one had lived. 'Eight' would thus mean between six and seven in modern Japanese age reckoning. I will refer to the calendrical counting as 'counted years' (*kazoe-doshi* 数え年 in Japanese).

³³ Kinski, 'Japanische Kindheiten in Der Frühen Neuzeit', 2015, 112–13. Shibata rejects the idea that children under seven were considered closer to the gods as in the popular expression *nanatsu made wa kami no uchi* ('children under seven are with the gods'). This expression was observed by Yanagita Kunio, yet too optimistically taken to represent early modern thought.

fifteen) were the so-called *kodomogumi* 子供組 (children's groups). The activities of *kodomogumi* were led by the older members and centred on yearly festivities: they took upon them part of the 'program'.³⁴ Socialization processes were diverse and depended on decisions taken within households and customs in local communities: only for boys in the higher echelons of samurai society, intermediate and advanced intellectual education (mainly Chinese Studies) at domain schools was mandatory.

Children in the Edo period were raised within the logic of the *ie*, a stem-family that also included the ancestors (and progeny). They would be raised differently based on birth order and gender, as only the male heir could inherit. Anne Walthall observes in her study of letters from the Hirata Atsutane household in the 1820's to 1840's, that the boys and especially the heir get more attention from their grandfather than other children, which concurs with the fact that the 'child' mentioned in treatises on child-rearing is by default a boy.³⁵ As mentioned earlier, Atsutane was a lower ranked samurai and prolific Kokugaku scholar. His grandsons started school at age six (in the 1830's to 1840's) and underwent the coming-of-age ceremony at age fourteen (respectively seven and fifteen in counted years). Atsutane's granddaughters were literate and learned to play the koto. Both girls married at age sixteen. Their youngest brother was adopted by another family at age twelve. The children assisted in the household by copying texts (including texts for sale) and baby-sitting (only the second son). Ōta Motoko, who analysed the late Edo period diary *Kuwana nikki*, also written by a man of lower samurai status, compares child-rearing and education in the *ie* to a relay, in which fathers take responsibility for the preparation of the heir to take over.³⁶ One has to keep in mind however, that these accounts and several other early nineteenth century diaries appearing in research on Edo period parenting are written by people with rather affluent means, and who extended their personal interests in intellectual pursuits to their children.³⁷

The centrality of the household head highlights the fact that the state was hardly involved in the preparation of children for adult life. Contrary to the modern state, the Bakufu had only limited interest in making special provisions for children, but did recognize children's lack of 'good judgement' (*wakimae* 弁え) in criminal law, and also created laws

³⁴ Noguchi, 'Kodomogumi 子供組'.

³⁵ Walthall, 'For the Love of Children', 67–68.

³⁶ Ōta, *Edo no oyako*, 217–18.

³⁷ Fuess, 'A Golden Age of Fatherhood?', 396.

against infanticide. In 1772, the Bakufu considered as minors people up to fifteen counted years³⁸, the general age upon which male commoners and lower samurai would undergo the coming-of-age ceremony. From the late seventeenth-century, several shogunal edicts banned infanticide and child abandonment, and there is evidence that these laws were enforced in local communities.³⁹ In the late eighteenth-century, multiple domains created additional local laws or organised public lectures aimed to discourage infanticide, and even raised funds for families in need. This intervention by authorities followed from practical concerns over population drops, but also Confucian notions of moral obligation and benevolent rule.⁴⁰ Fabian Drixler argues that infanticide was a form of family-planning not limited to the poor. In a system of progeniture, families were better off concentrating on the heir. Ethical foundations for what was euphemistically called *mabiki* 間引き (pruning) could be found in Buddhist karmic thought, where the new-born could easily 'slide' back into the other world. Infanticide could even be considered an act of filial piety towards the ancestors, if the new-born was felt to endanger the continuation of the household or *ie*.⁴¹

In the mid- to late Edo period, for male commoners and mid- to lower ranked samurai, the coming-of-age ceremony (*genpuku* 元服) would take place around the age of fifteen, when they were physically able to do adult work. In contrast, where physical ability was of little consequence such as in courtier and elite samurai families, *genpuku* might take place as young as five or seven years of age.⁴² In such a case, the object was for the child to come into possession of a certain rank or privilege as soon as possible. According to Karatani, coming-of-age ceremonies are quite different from modern interpretations of childhood and adulthood, in that they are not based on the idea of psychological development.⁴³ *Genpuku* indeed was a 'changing of masks' by adopting different hairstyle and dress⁴⁴, but 'the

³⁸ van Steenpaal, 'Conflicting Paradigms of Moral and Biological Childhood', 219.

³⁹ Piel, 'The Ideology of the Child in Japan', 71–72.

⁴⁰ Policies in Mito province were the result of pressure from intellectual and political elite who considered infanticide morally wrong and a disgrace for the domain (Drixler 2015, 168–169). Proposals based on detailed analysis of the problems were handed to Tokugawa Harumori (1751–1805), the sixth daimyo of Mito, who made the case a priority upon which philanthropists rose to his call to finance his welfare plans.

⁴¹ Drixler, *Mabiki*, 62–67.

⁴² Ogata, 'Kinsei No Genpuku to Kyōiku', 62.

⁴³ Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 124.

⁴⁴ There were in fact several changes of mask. On the seventh day after birth till age three, infants had their hair shaved. From age three the hair would be tied in tufts, then let grow, and tied in a bob for both boys and girls, with a shaven patch on top of the head. Around age twelve to thirteen, girls would undergo *genpuku* and have their hair tied in a style specific for girls. Boys would have their hair tied in *wakashū-gami*, the shaven patch covered by a forelock. The forelock would be shaven upon *genpuku*. Unmarried women from age sixteen would typically tie their hair in a *shimada* (Kikuchi, *Edo ishō zukan* 江戸衣装図鑑). The encyclopaedia *Wakan sansai zue* 和漢三才図会 (1712) also stresses outer appearance: it defines children (*warawa* 童) as boys up to age fifteen (see vol. 8, *jinrin* 人倫 'human relations'), who have not yet undergone *genpuku*, or girls (*dōjo* 童女) with a

cultural dilemma of managing youths who are physically but not socially adults' is not unique to modern society and was addressed in several ways.⁴⁵ In many rural communities, the newly initiated adult would enter a 'young men's group' (*wakamono-gumi* 若者組, *wakashu-gumi* 若衆組, or a local variant) consisting of men between fifteen and middle age.⁴⁶ Older members would take leading positions and instruct younger members in the social rules of the village. In merchant or artisan households, *genpuku* would also mean the start of socialization as an adult. In the Edo period, also the coming-of-age ceremony of girls involved a change of dress and hairstyle, which would fall together with marriage or otherwise take place in their (late) teens.⁴⁷

Filial piety was the key virtue that had to keep the *ie* together. In Confucian thought, the five basic relationships are those between lord and retainer, parent and child, husband and wife, elder sibling and younger sibling, and friends. The influential scholar-teacher Nakae Tōjū 中江藤樹 (1608-1648) argued that the relationship between parent and child should be considered the basis for all other virtues. In the first volume of his *Okina mondō* 翁問答 ('Dialogue with the Elder', 1640-41), Tōjū focuses on the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經, attributed to Confucius) as a guide to human conduct, and argues that filial piety embodies the virtues that are fundamental to all relationships, namely love (*ai* 愛) and respect (*kei* 敬).⁴⁸ The *Classic of Filial Piety* considers filiality towards parents strongly related to loyalty to rulers and a harmonious society. Filiality was not only an internal affair of the *ie* but could count on regular maintenance by authorities.

As merchants increasingly gained economic power during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, samurai authorities tried to keep the socioeconomic status of commoners in check through moral instruction. The Bakufu rewarded acts of filial piety and introduced the accounts of virtuous people to the populace as exemplary cases. Hundreds of virtuous acts by people of all walks of life have been recorded in *Kankoku kōgiroku* 官刻孝義

hairstyle that does not make use of hairpins. *Warawa* are according to *Wakan sansai zue* comparable to young cow and sheep who have not yet grown horns. Terajima, *Wakan Sansai Zue* 8, 154-55.

⁴⁵ Furstenberg, 'Adolescence, Sociology Of', 94.

⁴⁶ Varner, 'The Organized Peasant', 465.

⁴⁷ Marcia Yonemoto in her study of women in early modern Japan generally uses the word 'adulthood' to refer to women who are physically adults and focuses on marriage as a meaningful concept rather than the coming-of-age ceremony. In one of her primary sources, the *sodenaoshi* 袖直 (litt. 'transforming the sleeves') is mentioned, a ceremony marking the adulthood of a teenage girl (Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, 208.). Like the *genpuku* for boys, this ceremony involved a change of 'outer appearance'. The marriage ceremony was followed by a move to a different household and the new role of young wife. Yonemoto does not specifically address the paths of unmarried women.

⁴⁸ Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 354-58.

録 ('Official Records of Filial Piety and Righteousness', 1801). Noriko Sugano argues that these accounts construe maintenance of the *ie* as the highest good for commoners. Rewards are given for filial acts that involve memorial services for deceased family members, care for parents and siblings, and dedication to the family enterprise.⁴⁹

Young age up till age sixteen puts acts of filial piety in a special light in *Kankoku kōgiroku*. Niels van Steenpaal introduces the account of the eight-year-old orphan Tomematsu.⁵⁰ In 1783, he was rewarded for filial acts mainly involving 'memorial services for a deceased family member' and 'caring for a (grand)parent'. It was noted that he did this 'despite his young age'. According to Ariès, childhood was considered a stage of dependence in early modern Europe. Yet Tomematsu's acts of filiality forced him to become independent of adult care and take adult responsibilities. Van Steenpaal therefore argues that filial piety ('moral childhood') and childhood as a stage of dependence are at odds with each other.⁵¹ However, *Kankoku kōgiroku* does not reflect 'ordinary' expectations. According to the influential Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), elementary learning consisted of ritualisation of the body: children from age eight should first be taught tasks such as sprinkling and sweeping the ground or greeting and replying properly. In Neo-Confucian thought, the virtue of filial piety was embodied in such activities.⁵²

Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars who theorised on the education of children, such as Nakae Tōjū, Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1619-1682) and Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714) were heavily influenced by Zhu Xi. According to Ekiken, in his *Wazoku dōjikun* 和俗童子訓 (1710), one should be loving and go easy on children under seven: let the child sleep long, and not put restrictions on food.⁵³ From age seven, girls and boys should not sit next to each other, nor eat together. One should teach them (we might infer, boys) manners in a way that they can understand, as well as the reading and writing of *kana* 仮名 (the Japanese syllabaries). Between age eight and ten, the boys start elementary education (*shōgaku* 小学). This first and foremost consists of learning the proper forms of address and etiquette, and how to be respectful and filial to parents, older siblings, and elderly people. This is the basis of human life according to Ekiken. If the child is disrespectful, but a parent laughs instead of

⁴⁹ Sugano Noriko, 'State Indoctrination of Filial Piety in Tokugawa Japan', 185.

⁵⁰ van Steenpaal, 'Conflicting Paradigms of Moral and Biological Childhood'.

⁵¹ van Steenpaal, 219-22.

⁵² Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child*, 35-37.

⁵³ Kaibara, 'Wazoku dōjikun', 240-42; Kaibara, 252.

telling the child off, it will be unable to distinguish (*wakimaezu*) right from wrong and turn into an unfilial adult. The child should be taught that stealing and indulging in food is shameful. From age eight, wilful behaviour should be corrected. The child should learn to write Chinese characters and be provided with proper calligraphy examples, otherwise his hand will become as bad as the example. Ekiken advises against letting children under ten recite texts from the Classics, as it will bore them, and they will hate learning for the rest of their lives. They should first recite and memorize short phrases. From ten to fifteen, the child will start *gakumon* 学文, in other words, read the Confucian canon under the guidance of an external teacher. Ekiken warns against starting only at age eleven with writing practice, as by then the child will have become coarse of heart and spirit, resulting in a difficult, lazy student.

Even though Ekiken shows a certain sensitivity to what children like and understand, he insists that children (over seven) should only study, and not engage in ‘trifling’ play. The child will come to enjoy mastering difficult things after a while, which cannot be learned as easily later in life. For Ekiken, growing up properly is thus a civilizing process: The infant is considered a *tabula rasa*, a being who can be ‘moulded’. According to Ishikawa Ken, this does not mean that Ekiken considers children to be passive, rather, their (inevitable) development should be guided along the right track from an early age.⁵⁴ Anything inscribed upon the child will become a habit: if the child ends up being a bad person, this follows from external influences. According to Ekiken, an adult is someone who adheres to the virtues expected of adults.⁵⁵ However, someone who underwent *genpuku* (here at age twenty, as in the ‘Chinese past’) but does not behave as an adult of virtue, still has the heart of a child (*dōshin* 童心). Ekiken’s *dōshin* can here be understood as a negative trait in adult life, quite different from the Taishō period literary concept of *dōshin* that rather symbolized the innocence of the child (see chapter 4.3).

Thus, the physical space in which children were raised was mainly the household and the neighbourhood or village community. The household (*ie*) has imagined extensions into the past and future, namely the ancestors and the progeny. On an intellectual level, childhood after infancy was considered a stage of mouldability and habituation. For Neo-Confucian educators, the central goal of this civilizing process was to attain certain virtues,

⁵⁴ Ishikawa, *Yōjōkun*, *Wazoku dōjōkun*, 298.

⁵⁵ Kaibara, ‘*Wazoku dōjōkun*’, 243–44.

notably a disposition of filial piety, from which the household and wider society would benefit.

3. Auspicious children and Edokko identity in *nishiki-e*

Contrary to Ekiken's admonitions, foreign visitors to Japan in the nineteenth century have observed that children did play a lot. Their positive views might have been influenced by a small window on children's daily lives, and a tendency to compare these Other children to their 'chastised' Western counterparts. Yet, using historical sources, Puck Brecher also finds that parenting was rather hands-off and rowdy play considered a healthy habit of boys. In the early nineteenth century, more or less organized disruptions would happen in the context of yearly festivals.⁵⁶ So-called 'stone-wars' and violent behaviour by groups of boys were moreover a pervasive social issue.⁵⁷ A laissez-faire attitude is according to Brecher also reflected in popular print. However, this does not necessarily make his argument stronger, as prints are imaginative works produced within the logic of popular print culture.

'Edo period children' have become the subject of recent exhibitions and popular publications in Japan. Making use of woodblock prints published in Edo, they conjure up a vision of 'the Edo period child' in a space of leisure and play, representing a post-modern interpretation of the early modern that Carol Gluck termed 'happy feudalism'.⁵⁸ We can assume that children have always played in some way to discover the physical and social world: Edo period children in print however seem to do little else. Late Edo period *nishiki-e* 錦絵 ('brocade prints') indeed seem to recognize childhood as a more naïve or happy state than adulthood, yet these representations are also highly symbolic and specific to the Edoite identity.

Children, and especially healthy boys, were an auspicious theme. Children often appear in prints that celebrate seasonal festivities and they might be accompanied by an idealized mother or *bijin* 美人 (beautiful woman). The first print in the series *Fūryū jūnigatsu no uchi* 風流十二月ノ内 ('Elegant Twelve Months', 1830-44) by Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞

⁵⁶ Brecher, 'Being a Brat'.

⁵⁷ Ujiie, *Edo no shōnen*; Brecher, 'Being a Brat'; Frühstück, *Playing War*.

⁵⁸ Gluck, 'The Invention of Edo', 264. The catalogue of the 2018 exhibition *Asoberu ukiyo-e* 遊べる浮世絵 ('Playful ukiyo-e') states for example: 'The images of the happy, mischievous little children in these works are sure to bring smiles as well as evoke nostalgic memories and feelings of tender affection. We invite both children and all those who were once children to enjoy playing for a time within the rich world of Ukiyo-e' (Fujisawa and Katō, *Asoberu Ukiyoe*, 2.). Spectators are mainly invited to discover themselves in these pictures, and not the lives of Edo period children.



Fig. 1.1 Utagawa Kunisada, *Fūryū jūnigatsu no uchi: sei'yō*, 1830-1844. NDL

(1865-1786), for example, shows a mother who dresses her precious son up for New Year's visits (fig. 1.1). Presents (scrolls and books) are stacked in preparation, and the upper left corner shows a kite, a toy associated with boys and the New Year. According to the instructional text *Onna Daigaku* 女大学 ('The Greater Learning for Women', attributed to Kaibara Ekiken) the mother should now first present herself to her parents-in-law.⁵⁹ As a perfect daughter-in-law she of course brings their grandson and household heir. Many examples exist of children as an auspicious theme and combined with auspicious symbols. Children are, for example, dressed up as the seven lucky gods, or play with

the character for *takara* 宝 (treasure), which combines into the expression *kodakara* 子宝, 'child as a treasure'. The late eighteenth-century print *Kodomo asobi daimyo gyōretsu* 子ども遊び大名行列 ('A daimyo procession of playful children', 1790s) by Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川歌麿 (1753-1806) shows cheerful children and youths simulating a daimyo procession (fig. 1.2). Supposedly they are on their way to a temple to celebrate the New Year, as hidden in the picture are the three symbols associated with good luck if they appear in one's first dream (*hatsuyume* 初夢) of the New Year: Mount Fuji, a hawk, and an eggplant. Such



Fig. 1.2 Kitagawa Utamaro, *Kodomo asobi daimyō gyōretsu*, 1790s. Kumon

⁵⁹ De Bary, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2 Pt. 1, 233.



Fig. 1.3a Utagawa Hiroshige, *Fūryū osana asobi*, 1830s. Kumon



Fig. 1.3b Utagawa Hiroshige. *Fūryū osana asobi*, 1830s. Kumon

children's processions were a popular theme in the early nineteenth century and are also depicted crossing Nihonbashi, the most famous bridge of Edo. The term *fūryū* in the title of the first prints signals a common technique in *nishiki-e*:

showing one thing in place of another thing.⁶⁰ Timothy Clark explains that this technique, in modern scholarship generally called *mitate* 見立て, can be understood as the 'refashioning' of recognizable themes or plots, appreciated for their humor, cleverness, charm, etc.⁶¹

Concretely in these two

prints, the theme of *bijin* is played off against the theme of the yearly festivities, and the themes of the daimyo procession and *meisho* 名所 (famous places) are reworked through the theme of lively children.

Nishiki-e depicting lively children can furthermore be understood as a metaphor for the Edo urban identity. Two prints titled *Fūryū osana asobi* 風流おさな遊び ('Elegant Pastimes of Children', 1830s) by Utagawa Hiroshige 歌川広重 (1797-1858) show children playing several kinds of games, separated by gender. The girls engage in board and card

⁶⁰ In the eighteenth century, *fūryū* often appeared in combination *yatsushi* 宴し in the titles of prints, together meaning 'elegant reworking'. In the nineteenth century, *yatsushi* was dropped but *fūryū* continued to signal the technique of 'refashioning' (Clark, 'Mitate-e', 11-12.). The term *asobi* 遊び 'play' often appears in print titles that use children as a constituent element of the 'refashioning'.

⁶¹ Clark, 'Mitate-e'.

games, they play house, *temari* 手毬 (a ball game), origami, and catch fireflies (fig. 1.3a). The boys play with kites or emulate heroes: fire-fighters, sumo-wrestlers, and kabuki-actors in warrior roles (fig. 1.3b). In contrast to modern associations of male childhood with martial dispositions however, there is no connection between make-believe and becoming a soldier. In *Fūryū osana asobi*, the make-believe of the boys is based on the heroes that the commoner inhabitants of Edo admired: kabuki actors and firefighters. The pretty and well-dressed girls, apart from those playing house in the upper left corner, are enthusiastically playing games not related to traditional feminine roles. These children, in other words, represent the ideal Edoites, or Edokko. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Edo became the fashionable center of Japan. Contrasting themselves with the Kamigata ‘stinginess’ and boorish samurai moving to Edo from the countryside, the ideal Edokko 江戸っ子, or ‘child of Edo’ was a man of elegance, generous with money, and at home in pleasure quarters, rebelliously pursuing a life respectable merchants would never dare.⁶² (Such dandies, also called *tsū* 通, had in fact a larger presence in the popular imagination than in the real world.) By the early nineteenth century, the notion of an Edokko identity had also spread to the common citizens, both male and female, where it morphed into an ideal of a spirited, courageous, honest, assertive, and unrefined character.⁶³ Dashing firefighters and defiant *oiran* 花魁 (high-ranked prostitutes) constituted the models. ‘The child’ may also have played a role in these imaginations: the *ko* 子 ‘child’ in Edokko should then not be merely understood as a ‘true-born Edoite’⁶⁴, but as someone with the ‘playful’ nature of a child.

The boisterous nature of children often plays out in depictions of *terakoya*, a place where rules apply that can be defied in a most delightful way. *Terakoya*-humor already appears in *kusazōshi* quite early. In *Terako tanka* 寺子短歌 (‘Pupil’s Poem’, 1762) boys re-enact a kabuki scene in a messy classroom (fig. 1.4). They show a *mie* 見得 (a ‘freeze pose’ in kabuki) and *tenarai* books (calligraphed copying examples bound together) serve as armor. Imagining a Soga-piece, one of them yells: ‘I am Gorō from the Eastern Provinces’, while the other says ‘And I am Asahina’.⁶⁵ If one would moreover believe early nineteenth century

⁶² Jones and Watanabe, *An Edo Anthology*, 19–20.

⁶³ Jones and Watanabe, 20–21.

⁶⁴ As the word is translated in Jones and Watanabe, 19.

⁶⁵ Sō no kai, *Edo No Kodomo No Hon*, 66. A kabuki performance featuring the Soga brothers, Jurō (Sukunari) (1172-1193) and Gorō (Tokimune) (1174-1193) was shown around the New Year. Their vendetta against the murderer of their father is dramatized in the war tale *Soga monogatari* 曽我物語.

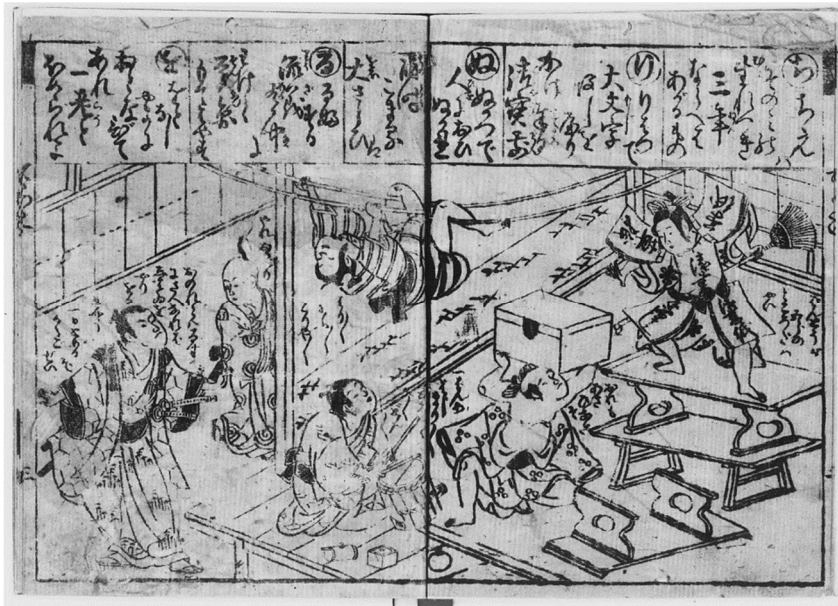


Fig. 1.4 *Terako tanka*, 1762. NIJL

nishiki-e, writing schools were the messiest place imaginable. Both moralism and discipline in *terakoya* education, as well as the pretensions of families who have their children trained for upward social mobility through education (also parodied in Shikitei Sanba's *Ukiyoburo* for

example) can be a satisfactory object of ridicule. A *terakoya* teacher is moreover a harmless representation of authority. According to Puck Brecher, such images, that are not framed by admonitions at all, represent a counter-narrative to the ideal of strict parenting and concurs with the lenient attitude towards the upbringing of boys that speaks from historical sources.⁶⁶ However, lenience towards rowdiness is a step removed from creating prints about rowdy children, that should have a special meaning to adults, otherwise they would not invest in such prints. Lively or rowdy children were an auspicious theme, a category used for a humorous 'refashioning' of other themes, and a metaphor for the liveliness of Edo and its heroes.

There were however also prints and illustrations of children working serenely on their calligraphy. In her study of concepts of childhood in imperial China, Hsiung also highlights the dichotomous representations good and badly behaving children, and argues that these different narratives are mutually dependent. Diligent or filial children can only seem exceptional if they are contrasted to children who do not control themselves.⁶⁷ For every diligent child, there are many outside the picture who are lazy or rebellious. On the other hand, play and mischief, especially if they are exaggerated, invite amusement or even admiration. In Japan, this dichotomy extends to the representation of historical and legendary characters in illustrated books. Such figures as Yoshitsune, Sugawara Michizane

⁶⁶ Brecher, 'Being a Brat', 107.

⁶⁷ Hsiung Ping-chen, *A Tender Voyage*, 234–35.

and the poet Ono no Komachi (see fig. 1.26) are shown as good students. The Neo-Confucian scholar Arai Hakuseki even provided in such stories himself: in his memoirs (*Oritaku shiba no ki* 折たく柴の記, 1717?) he stresses his precociousness and diligent study as a child.⁶⁸ Famous became the anecdote according to which he threw cold water over himself to stay awake (see also fig. 4.7). On the other hand, the young Musashibō Benkei, the legendary thief Kumasaka Chōhan 熊坂長範 (another character from the cycle of Yoshitsune legends), and Toyotomi Hideyoshi are depicted as rowdy boys and badly behaving students. The two tropes reflect in a rudimentary way the idea that exceptional deeds need an explanation that can be found in childhood. The *terakoya* formed a very recognizable site for these displays of rowdiness (or diligence) for Edoites.

4. *Ōraimono*: literacy and cultural knowledge

In the late Edo period, writing schools for children were widespread especially in parts of large towns where literacy was needed in commerce. The lessons were conducted at the home of a teacher, or some other building and instruction was given on an individual basis. These schools were referred to as *terakoya* (litt. ‘temple schools’) but also variant terms such as *tenarai-sho* 手習所 (‘place for writing instruction’).⁶⁹ They mainly offered instruction in writing/copying, reading, basic calculation, moral instruction, (oral) lessons about popular legends, songs, or sewing for the girls. Umemura Kayo describes a *terakoya* in Shima province (part of current Mie prefecture) owned by two generations of teachers of the Kurihara family between 1855 and 1888.⁷⁰ The school was attended by boys and girls of commoner status and boys of samurai status. (If the samurai boys had sisters, they were probably educated at home.) They all sat in the same room, although the desks were grouped in the clusters ‘samurai – male’, ‘commoner – female’ and ‘commoner – male’. The pupils started to attend the school from between seven and twelve years of age, the most common age being nine years. The average length of attendance at the Kurihara school was two to three years, which has also been observed for other schools. The boys attended up to

⁶⁸ Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 376.

⁶⁹ The term *terakoya* originally referred to schools in Buddhist temple buildings that offered formal education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These temple schools went far beyond teaching the rudiments of reading and writing and were in fact elite learning centres. Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*, 36–37. The term *terakoya* only started to be applied as an abstract category when the Meiji government needed to distinguish early modern elementary education from the new primary schools. Platt, *Burning and Building*, 25.

⁷⁰ Umemura, ‘Kinseiki, Kodomo No Yomikaki Keiko to Ōraimono’, 12–15.

four years and were enrolled mainly for writing and arithmetic. The girls attended in most cases less than two years and focused on writing, sewing and arithmetic.⁷¹

There are no Edo period surveys of school attendance, as surveys on education were invented to measure progression and intervene on a national level during the Meiji period. According to a survey conducted in 1877, the national average school attendance rate was 39.9 percent, with 56 percent for boys and 22.5 percent for girls.⁷² The gap between the sexes was smaller than the regional gaps: school attendance in Osaka prefecture was 67.1 percent, while Aomori prefecture scored only 22.5 percent. The Japan National Commission for Unesco (1966) however found only 9.33 percent actual school attendance in 1875.⁷³ No enrolment, erratic attendance or short attendance was prevalent throughout the nineteenth century, which can be directly related to other duties of children: domestic, field or factory work.

Many printed primers are however left to us that give an insight into what adults conceived of as basic literacy education. Teachers or others charged with the instruction of children would make use of printed textbooks, by contemporary publishers classified as the genre of *ōraimono* 往来物. An extensive number of such texts was first made available in modern type by Ishikawa Ken in the 1960s and 1970s (in the compendium *Nihon kyōkashō taikai*), yet there is still comparatively little research on the contents of these books. This section introduces how not only the technical aspect of writing, but also basic cultural knowledge was conveyed in printed *ōraimono*.

Ōraimono are now understood as ‘early modern textbooks’, but historically, in the Heian and Muromachi (1336-1573) period the term *ōrai* (literally ‘come and go’) was applied to prose texts in an epistolary style that functioned as writing examples.⁷⁴ During the early modern period, the term was also applied to texts that might rather be described as written lectures.⁷⁵ In the late Edo period, canonical texts for basic literacy education appeared in collected volumes. These compendia included models of (archaic) letters with a moralistic message, lists of Chinese characters, proverbs, and miscellaneous cultural information.

⁷¹ Depending on what teachers had to offer, children might also be taught other things. In the Kyoto-Osaka area example, teachers taught *utai* extracts from *noh*, *kyōgen* or other types of plays that were recited during weddings and village-festivals. (Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 272.) These texts can also be found in *ōrai-mono*.

⁷² Koizumi, ‘Learning to Read and Write’, 94. The numbers are based on *Gakusei Hyakunenshi* 学制百年史 (1972), a collection of data going back to the early Meiji period that was compiled by the Japanese Ministry of Education.

⁷³ Galan, ‘Home vs. School vs. Work’, 282.

⁷⁴ Rüttermann, ‘What Does “Literature of Correspondence” Mean?’, 154.

⁷⁵ Rüttermann, 149.



Fig. 1.5 Katsukawa Shunshō, *Ehon sakae gusa*, 1790. NDL

Models of letters for contemporary, practical use were referred to with the term *yōbunshō* 用文章 ('compositions with a purpose'). *Ōraimono* served the double role of writing example and moral instruction. To this end, the main text was calligraphed and

printed in a large script, while secondary texts and images might be placed in the upper part of the page (*kashiragaki* 頭書) in smaller print (see fig. 1.8 for an example of such a layout). Teachers also created manuscript primers, with local placenames for example. These manuscripts are invisible in the modern compendia that focus on woodblock printed material.

Students would generally not copy directly from printed books, but from a selection of the text calligraphed by the teacher, kept at their left hand. This *tenarai* 手習 (copying) was practiced next to *sodoku* 素読 (reading aloud). Figure 1.5 shows an idealised *terakoya* teacher in her own home.⁷⁶ The two-volume book (*Ehon sakae gusa* 絵本栄家種 'Prosperity of the Family', 1790) from which this picture is taken, depicts events in the lives of well-to-do women, such as making formal and casual visits, marriage, childbirth, and taking the young heir to a seasonal festivity. The female pupils are the protagonists of the image. The two girls in front of the teacher are reading their lessons aloud from a textbook, using a pointer. The other children are practicing writing, apart from the young child behind the teacher that gestures towards a toy on the ground and is probably the teacher's own child. The children practicing *tenarai* copy an example that was calligraphed by the teacher. The writing paper

⁷⁶ Based on a survey of *terakoya* teachers in Edo, Ishikawa Ken shows that it was not uncommon for women to be a *terakoya* teacher during the late Edo period, especially in areas such as Nihonbashi, Kyōbashi and Kanda, where many commoners lived and more and more girls were expected to have writing and calculating skills that would be useful in a small family business. (Ishikawa, *Terakoya*, 130–33.)

on the desk of the boy on the left has been used repeatedly. Used paper would be dried, after which a new layer of writing would be visible as wet ink. The teacher's examples was bound into a so-called *tenaraibon* 手習本 that could be re-used by a younger sibling. (In fig. 1.4 the boys use these for their 'armour'.)

Writing instruction at a school or at home would start with learning the *iroha* いろは. *Iroha* refers to the first three syllables of a late Heian-period (794-1185) poem that contains every *kana* syllable once, its function comparable to the ABC. In the Kurihara *terakoya* in Shima province, a little under half of documented students already mastered the *kana* syllabary before they started to attend the *terakoya*, which means they must have learned this basic skill at home or elsewhere.⁷⁷ According to an early twentieth century nation-wide survey led by the pedagogue Ototake Iwazō 乙竹岩造 (1857-1953), conducted among 3007 *terakoya*-educated people and eighty-three former teachers, roughly a quarter of children already learned to write *kana* at home or somewhere else privately before becoming a pupil.⁷⁸ Next to primers, printed *iroha* games (cards or boardgames) were for sale as an aide in teaching for families wanting to give their child a head-start.

The *iroha* would be followed by the character *miyako* or *kyō* 京 (Kyoto), numbers, personal names, and place-names. Rather than a progress in difficulty (in stroke number or concept), these character-lists reflect the cultural status tied to the specific character. In printed primers, the standard list of characters used in names started with *gen* 原, *hei* 平, *tō* 藤, and *kitsu* 橘, representing the historically significant warrior and courtier clans of the Minamoto (or Genji), Taira (or Heike), Fujiwara and Tachibana. The list of placenames started with provinces in the Kansai area, followed by the fifteen provinces one would pass through while travelling the Tokaidō from Kyoto to Edo. Next come the provinces that could be reached by other major roads: the 'Eight provinces of the Tōsandō', the 'Seven provinces of the Hōkūrikudō' etc. (this list appears in the *kashiragaki* of fig. 1.8). Coherence is created through a mental 'itinerary', instead of the totalizing view of a geographical map.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Umemura, 'Kinseiki, Kodomo No Yomikaki Keiko to Ōraimono', 36–39.

⁷⁸ Koizumi, 108–109. Ototake conducted this nation-wide survey in 1915–1917. The questionnaires were taken home by Ototake's students at the Tokyo Higher College of Education and the Tokyo Higher Women's College of Education during their holidays.

⁷⁹ Jilly Traganou observes that Japanese maps represent two different kinds of organization of space: maps based on observation (surveys) and accuracy, consisting of a totalizing view from above, were in exclusive possession of the scientific and governmental elite. Road maps on the other hand, relied on (a mental) itinerary (containing 'mythical, historical, and bodily time'). Lists of provinces in primers seem to follow the same way of organizing place. Traganou, 'Representing Mobility in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan', 184–85.

Genpei (the Minamoto and Taira clans) and *miyako* (the capital where the Emperor resides), take a central place in the cultural/historical/spatial framework presented in these wordlists in printed primers.

The former *terakoya* pupils and teachers who participated in the Ototake survey mentioned around seven-hundred different primers they had (been) taught, showing a great variation in the pupil's paths of study. Certain tendencies can however be discerned. Apart from the wordlists discussed above, most widely used *ōrai* in the middle of the nineteenth century were related to commerce and letter-writing: *Shōbai ōrai* 商売往来 (The Merchant's Primer), that contains a list of common objects, various primers that introduce models of practical letters, *Teikin ōrai* 庭訓往来, a collection of archaic letter models dating back to the Muromachi period, and *Shōsoku ōrai* 消息往来, a list of words commonly used in letters.⁸⁰ Two collections of maxims, *Jitsugokyō* 実語教 and *Dōjikyō* 童子教, were often used for reading practice or recitation. *Teikin ōrai*, *Imagawa-jō* 今川状 (a Muromachi-period letter with admonitions) and the Confucian Four Books and Five Classics are also in the top ten of books for *sodoku*. There was also a gendered diversification. In the Kurihara *terakoya*, for boys it was common to study *Shōbai ōrai* and *Shōsoku ōrai*. Girls would study *Joshi sanshū* 女子三習 ('Three Skills for Girls'), a work combining reading, writing, and information about sewing. Some girls studied *Onna shōbai ōrai* 女商売往来 ('The Merchant's Primer for Women'), and/or *Onna Imagawa* 女今川, a moralistic primer for women.⁸¹ Practical letter models for girls were also different in calligraphic style and phrasing from those taught to boys.

Late Edo period publications of *ōraimono* contain illustrated frontispieces and opening pages that introduce basic cultural knowledge. In many cases, these first teach the young learner their proper place in the social hierarchy of *shinōkōshō* 士農工商 (from high to low: 'samurai-farmers-artisans-merchants'). Merchant children are dutifully reminded of the fact that the education they are currently receiving is not for making a profit and becoming rich(er than the samurai). At the same time, frontispieces ornamented with auspicious symbols tend to invoke the idea that literacy education will highly contribute to the prosperity of the family. Cultural references related to the script, scholarship and poetry also commonly appear in the opening pages. The primer *Nanatsu iroha* 七ツいろは (late Edo

⁸⁰ Koizumi, 97.

⁸¹ Umemura 2013, p. 13.



Fig. 1.6 *Nanatsu iroha*, late Edo period. WKD

period) for example opens with a picture of Kūkai, the founder of Shingon Buddhism (fig. 1.6).⁸² According to legend, Kūkai invented the *iroha* poem, which he based on verses of the Nirvana Sutra. The picture shows his famous acrobatic feat of writing simultaneously with five brushes, performed when he was in

China at the Tang court. The opposite page introduces the *iroha* poem and four lines of the Nirvana Sutra that correspond with the meaning of the poem. Also often depicted is the Heian period (794-1185) scholar Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845-903), who was deified as the patron of study and scholarship. In the lavishly illustrated collection *Shin dōji ōrai bankatsū* 新童子往来萬家通 ('New Family Primer for Children', 1845) he is depicted as an eleven-year-old boy who composes his first *kanshi* 漢詩 (Chinese style poem) (fig. 1.7). The canonical poem itself is also represented. Young Michizane should clearly be taken as an example by the learner.

From the seventeenth century, letters appearing in war tales were published separately as *ōrai*, serving as writing model, history lesson, and moral instruction. These so-called *kojō* 古状 ('ancient letters') included (apocryphal) letters by warriors like Yoshitsune, Benkei, Kumagai Naozane and Kiso Yoshinaka 源義仲 (1154-1184). The influential three-volume *Buke ōrai* 武家往来 (1670) introduced fifty-six letters taken from *Genpei jōsuiki* 源平盛衰記 (an extended version of *Heike monogatari*) and *Taiheiki*. Similar works would follow, often under the banner *kojō soroe* 古状揃 ('collection of ancient letters'). Elizabeth Oyler argues that in war tales such as *Heike monogatari*, documents (letters, oaths, records) added a 'flavour of historical accuracy' to the events and were used to emphasize a particular version

⁸² Title given as it appears on the title slip.

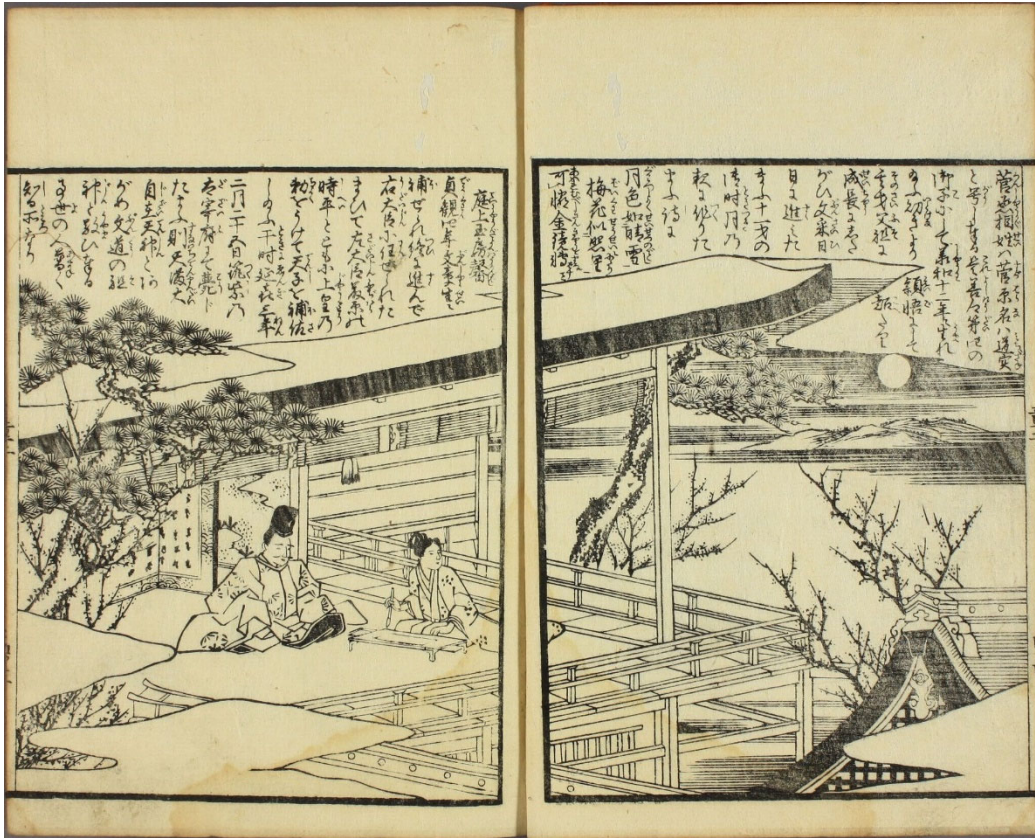


Fig. 1.7 Young Michizane and his teacher in *Shin dōji ōrai bankatsū*, 1845 (1872 reprint). WKD

of ‘the truth’ where disagreement was expected.⁸³ Even though most letters were of dubious provenance, one might say that compendia of *kojō* distilled from the war tales both the ‘history’ and the pivotal moments. In the late Edo period, such *kojō* appeared in compendia as well as separate volumes, with illustrations. Among the most popular of these was the *Koshigoe-jō* 腰越状, that represented a pivotal moment in the cycle of Yoshitsune legends and contained a didactic lesson about harmony between brothers, the avarices of slander, and just rule. This letter and the representation of Yoshitsune in *ōrai* is discussed in more detail in section 6.1.

Printed *ōraimono* thus not only reproduced canonical texts but also established spatial and social hierarchies and gave cultural depth to literacy education. In many primers, the *kashiragaki* contained miscellaneous cultural knowledge also seen in household encyclopedias (*chōhōki* 重宝記), such as legends, explanations about musical instruments, how to fold a letter, or short excerpts from *noh* plays. In the late Edo period, pictures played a large role in making the lessons more appealing, yet the archaic texts themselves were not simplified or challenged by progressive didactic insights until the Meiji period.

⁸³ Oyler, *Swords, Oaths, and Prophetic Visions*, 17–18.

5. Children as an audience of popular literature

The earliest extant woodblock printed picture books for children were found in a seventeenth-century Jizō statue that was located in Nara and dedicated to a boy who passed away in 1678.⁸⁴ Part of the books can be traced to Kyoto publishers who specialized in *jōruri-bon* 浄瑠璃本 (libretti from the puppet theatre). They were probably bought as souvenirs by the boy's father, who was a merchant.⁸⁵ The books consist of illustrated digests of warrior legends, *ko-jōruri* 古浄瑠璃 (puppet) plays and *sekkyō* 説教 (Buddhist sermon-ballads), and several non-narrative 'compendia' of *tengu* 天狗 (long-nosed goblins or bird-like creatures), weird people and creatures, evil warrior-monks, and strange dreams. Of the ten books, three are about Yoshitsune and Benkei (discussed in the next section). The narratives (where present) are based on existing tales such as *Benkei monogatari* 弁慶物語 ('The Tale of Benkei') and *jōruri* plays. The texts incorporate also sentences from these sources.⁸⁶ The books with narratives represent thus not an attempt at writing original stories for children, but are simplified, predominantly pictorial, derivatives of texts aimed at adults.

The genre of woodblock printed picture books produced in Edo, or *kusazōshi* (litt. 'grass books') spanned the late seventeenth century to late nineteenth century and is generally considered to have followed a path of 'maturation' leading from *akahon*, *kurohon* 黒本 ('black cover books') and *aobon* 青本 ('green cover books') to *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 ('yellow cover books') and *gōkan* 合巻 ('combined books'). *Akahon*, with their red covers (an auspicious colour), were published as New Year's presents (*otoshidama* お年玉) in Edo from the late seventeenth century till the mid eighteenth century.⁸⁷ Although *kusazōshi* with red, black, and green covers made their first appearance chronologically, their existence overlaps: *akahon* could at the same time or later be sold with a black cover, and the covers of green and black books were interchangeable.⁸⁸ The heyday of *akahon* was in the early

⁸⁴ See Okamoto 1988 and R. Keller Kimbrough 2015. In the 1980s, Okamoto Masaru's publications on the books in the statue challenged the hitherto accepted idea that the development picture books started in Edo with so-called *akahon* 'red books'.

⁸⁵ Okamoto, *Kodomo Ehon No Tanjō*, 78–80.

⁸⁶ Okamoto, 157–58.

⁸⁷ *Akahon* were of *chūbon* 中本 size (about 18 x 13 cm), and a volume consisted of ten pages (five *chō* 丁).

⁸⁸ Kimura, 'Akakohon Kara Aobon Made', 605; Emmerich, 'Picture Books: From Akahon to Kibyōshi and Gōkan', 515. The plant-based pigment used for green covers would moreover easily discolour and appear as a yellow cover, upon which publishers switched to covers that were originally yellow.

eighteenth century. They disappeared after the 1750s conceivably because the pigment had become too expensive.⁸⁹

As mentioned before, *akahon* are in literature research associated with an audience of children, while consequent terms refer to picture books of increasing length and/or sophistication, not associated with the interests and literacy levels of children. Among *akahon* there were many that introduce folktales (*mukashibanashi* 昔話) and stories that feature anthropomorphic rats, such as the repeatedly adapted tale *Nezumi no yome-iri* 鼠の嫁入り (The Wedding of the Rat), that introduces in a playful way customs around marriage, or *Fukujin Ise dōchū* 福神いせ道中 (The Ise Pilgrimage by the Lucky Gods), that alludes to popular literature about travel and famous places.⁹⁰ Rats were associated with Daitokuten, the god of wealth and the household. Some *kurohon/aobon* are adaptations of more difficult, canonical literature, such as the earlier mentioned *Utagaruta*. Another example is *Shio-uri bunta monogatari* 塩売文太物語 (The Tale of Bunta the Salt-seller, 1749), an adaptation of *Bunshōzōshi* 文正草紙 (The Tale of Bunshō), that was ‘recommended reading’ for girls during the New Year.⁹¹ Such books could serve as an appropriate *otoshidama* for those who could not (yet) read the original text.⁹² Some *akahon* seem to be aimed at adults, such as an *akahon* about Enma, the god of hell, that plays with lines from popular songs and is full of jokes that ask for more cultural knowledge than might be expected of children.⁹³ Jonathan Mills, who analysed two *kurohon* about the warrior Kumagai Naozane, argues that such characteristics point to a ‘dual audience’ of children and adults.⁹⁴

From the late eighteenth century, the genre of *kusazōshi* is generally considered to have left audiences of (young) children behind. *Kibyōshi*, whose first appearance is dated to 1775, are associated with humorous narratives set in the contemporary world of entertainment and the pleasure quarters, and might be conceived of as the visually-oriented counterpart to

⁸⁹ The covers of *akahon* were painted with a pigment made from lead oxide. *Kurohon* were painted with ink, and *aobon* were painted with a plant-based pigment. *Akahon* were five *mon* during the 1750s, equivalent to three bowls of soba. Kimura, *Kusazōshi No Sekai*, 64.

⁹⁰ Kimura, 43–45.

⁹¹ See for a translation of this Muromachi-period tale Araki, ‘Bunsho Soshi. The Tale of Bunsho, the Saltmaker’. Ryūtei Tanehiko wrote in 1841 that after their ‘first calligraphy’ in the New Year, girls were supposed to do their ‘first reading’, a reading of *Bunshōzōshi*. Araki, 244. *Shio-uri bunta monogatari* was also sold with a black cover.

⁹² Kimura, *Kusazōshi No Sekai*, 64–66.

⁹³ Kimura, 34–36.

⁹⁴ Mills, ‘Depictions of Martial and Spiritual Power’.

sharebon 洒落本 ('book of manners').⁹⁵ Historical metaphors were used to criticize and ridicule contemporary society and politics. This development is closely connected to the Kyōhō Reforms (1716-1745). In an edict from 1721, children's books (*kodomo moteasobi kusazōshi* 子供翫び草双紙) were specifically mentioned as exempted from censure, which invited artists to explore the possibilities of this form of expression for social comment.⁹⁶ In the early nineteenth century, the number of volumes that comprised a single work increased, and during the first decennium of the nineteenth century, the term *kibyōshi* was replaced with 'combined books' or *gōkan*. In relation to trends in the kabuki theatre, *kataki-uchi* 敵討 (revenge) stories became popular, as well as narratives about (historical) heroes. These stories have a moralistic inclination to lecture the reader about 'good and evil' (*zen'aku* 善悪), although audiences of various ages might rather have been attracted to the heroic, fantastic or grotesque nature of these works.⁹⁷

According to Kristin Williams, one of the reasons why Edo period books for children are overlooked is that the traditional subcategories of *kusazōshi* obscure continuity.⁹⁸ Moreover, the expression 'for women and children' (given by Kern as *jochū samagata on-kosamagata*) in popular literature was found to be a trope rather than an accurate description of an actual audience of children. Kimura argues that the discursive use of 'children' (*okosama*) in prefaces appeared after the above-mentioned Kyōhō reforms, that exempted children's books from censure.⁹⁹ She gives several examples of Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761-1816) addressing the adult reader as *okosama* and observes that it became a standard expression also seen in many other works during the Kansei period, and even in Meiji period novels. Adam Kern translates the expression 'for children' (*on-kosamagata*) in the preface of Kyōden's *Gozonji no shōbaimono* 存知商売物 ('Those Familiar Best-sellers', 1782) as 'you kids'.¹⁰⁰ According to Kern, the actual readership of *kibyōshi* consisted of men in their twenties and thirties who frequented the pleasure quarters and would understand the jokes, but the books might also have attracted teens, as it offered a window on the adult world of entertainment. However, these metaphorical uses do not rule out the possibility that there

⁹⁵ Kimura, *Kusazōshi No Sekai*, 32. See also Kern 2006 for a comparison of *sharebon* and *kibyōshi*. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, 100–103. The comedy in *kibyōshi* is typically based on the failure of the rookie protagonist to grasp the sophisticated manners of the pleasure quarters.

⁹⁶ Kimura, 'Akakohon Kara Aobon Made', 608.

⁹⁷ Uda, 'Kibyōshi', 621.

⁹⁸ Williams, 'Visualizing the Child', 33–34.

⁹⁹ Kimura, 'Akakohon Kara Aobon Made', 610.

¹⁰⁰ Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, 49–51.

were also *kusazōshi* specifically aimed at children hidden under the larger classification and typification of *kibyōshi* and *gōkan*.

The government seems to be convinced that there are books genuinely aimed at children next to books that merely pose as such. In 1790, the Bakufu tried to close the loopholes left by the Kyōhō Reforms. The first edict (1790) of what became known as the Kansei Reforms addresses the offending ‘children’s books’.

Recently some wicked children's picture books etc. have appeared which are ostensibly set in ancient times; henceforward these are to be regarded as undesirable. However, books that convey ancient matters in a direct manner, making use of images in a straightforward style, and being only intended as playthings for children, are allowed.

近年子供持遊び草紙絵本等、古代之事によそへ、不束成儀作出候類相見候、以来無用ニ可致候、但、古来之通質朴ニ仕立、絵様も常体ニいたし、全子供持遊びニ成候様致候儀は不苦候

101

The first part of the admonition targets ‘historical’ *kibyōshi* that use the pre-Edo period past to satirize contemporary politics and are presumably mainly aimed at adults. Peter Kornicki and Kristin Williams only introduce this part.¹⁰² However, the edict next specifically mentions that picture books that are genuinely aimed at children, are not forbidden. Important to note is also that these books are associated with a straightforward (*jōtai* 常体) representation of ‘ancient matters’. A too rigid belief in the term ‘for children’ as merely a trope obscures the fact that the second half of the Edo period produced many straightforward versions of warrior legends. Concrete examples will be discussed in section six of this chapter.

Although *mukashibanashi* were a theme that people would outgrow, warriors-legends were constantly ‘renewed’ for people of all ages.¹⁰³ A new Soga piece was always staged

¹⁰¹ Ishii and Takayanagi, *Ofuregaki Tenpō Shūsei* 御觸書天保集成, 810. (#7417).

¹⁰² Kornicki, ‘Nishiki No Ura’, 156. Williams, ‘Visualizing the Child’, 65.

An example of such a *kusazōshi* ‘ostensibly set in ancient times’ is *Yorokonbu hiiki no Ezo-oshi* 悦鼻蝦夷押領 (Happy Seaweed and the Advantages of a Push into Ezo, 1788) by Koikawa Harumachi and Kitao Masayoshi, that takes the legend of Yoshitsune’s crossing to Ezo as its *shukō* 趣向 (plot). The narrative parodies the corruption of Senior Counselor Tanuma Okitsugu’s (1719-1788) regime and the strict Neo-Confucian policies advocated by Tanuma’s successor Matsudaira Sadanobu (1787-1793) who was responsible for the Kansei Reforms. Readers would be able to connect the Ezo legend to Tanuma’s plans for the development of Ezo-chi. The historical warriors around Yoshitsune can be conflated with the men around Tanuma and the episodes represent several misdeeds of the Tanuma faction. Uda, ‘Yorokonbu Hiiki No Ezo-Oshi’.

¹⁰³ Koike, ‘Edoki Kodomohon’, 161.

around the New Year for example, and anyone who had a basic understanding of the Soga *sekai* 世界 (the story world) and characters, could join in the excitement. So-called *musha ehon* 武者絵本 ('warrior picture books') produced in Edo as well as the Kansai area introduced various famous warriors in their most iconic moment, with short textual explanations, while *ichidaiki* 一代記 told the life of a specific famous character, largely based on well-known iconographies. Seta traces *musha ehon* back to the popularity of so-called *kinpira-bon* 金平本.¹⁰⁴ These appeared mainly in the Kanbun (1661-1673) period and were based on puppet plays (*kinpira jōruri* 金平浄瑠璃) about the adventures of Kinpira, the son of the warrior Sakata Kintoki 坂田金時.¹⁰⁵ Like the books found in the Jizō statue, *akahon* and *kurohon* from Edo were produced by publishers specializing in libretti, such as the Urokogataya 鱗形屋.¹⁰⁶ The connection between the theatre and *kusazōshi* remained strong throughout the Edo period. Adam Kern has refuted theories that characterize *kusazōshi* as wholistically reflecting or constructing the stage and proposed that they should be read 'with their own generic ends foremost in mind'.¹⁰⁷ However, as an alternative model, the connection between the stage and *kusazōshi* might be placed outside the concrete works, on the level of a shared visual and narrative lexicon that they both continuously refer to. As such, *ichidaiki* and *musha ehon* that represent famous characters and plots are especially meaningful for those with yet little cultural literacy.

There is contemporary evidence that adults stimulated an interest in books in children. The eighteenth-century Neo-Confucian scholar Emura Hokkai 江村北海 (1713-1788) argued in his treatise *Jugyō hen* 授業篇 ('On teaching', 1786) that young children should be given illustrated books as toys in order to foster a love for books.¹⁰⁸ In the beginning anything will do, even if they merely enjoy tearing them apart. They will ask what the pictures stand for out of curiosity, and in Hokkai's experience, the explanations he gave to his children would stick very well. Apart from illustrated books with a clear didactic function, such as *The twenty-four exemplars of filial piety* or *Teikin ōrai*, Hokkai also advised to introduce guidebooks, encyclopaedias, *Soga monogatari* and *Heike monogatari* and explain the

¹⁰⁴ Seta, *Ochibo hiroi : jōkan*, 321.

¹⁰⁵ Seta, 56–66. His childhood name was Kintarō. Legends about this strong boy still belong to the canon of Japanese fairy tales.

¹⁰⁶ Most *kurohon* appeared as a by-product of the libretti/theatre business. The use of black covers for *kusazōshi* is probably related to the fact that libretti were customarily bound with black covers. Kimura, 'Akakohon Kara Aobon Made', 606. *Musha ehon* were published in Edo as well as the Kansai and are thus not necessarily *kusazōshi*.

¹⁰⁷ Kern, 'Kabuki Plays on Page', 185.

¹⁰⁸ Nagatomo, *Edojidai No Shomotsu to Dokusho*, 193–94; Williams, 'Visualizing the Child', 51–53.

illustrations. For pictures of warriors, it is most important to introduce the names, which the child will then quickly memorize. This is indeed what *musha ehon* do: even if there is no other written text, at least names are provided. Although Hokkai was maybe ahead of his time, late Edo period publishers seem to rely on adult's ability and willingness to do some *etoki* 絵解 (picture-explanation). Iconographies and central episodes of warrior legends appeared not only in *kusazōshi*, but also on *sugoroku* 双六 boardgames. Specific episodes can be identified if the viewer is acquainted with the iconography. To Hokkai this is where everything starts: the child learns the name of the exemplar or historical person, and then the very basics of what he/she is remembered for.

Children's literature scholar John Morgenstern is critical of the tendency to exclude 'the works that we know children took pleasure in but which we dismiss because they were not specifically written for children'.¹⁰⁹ He is here speaking of chapbooks, but this also applies to *kusazōshi*, and for the more advanced readers, war tales. With no clear boundaries between books for children and adults, precocious boys from intellectual families proceeded at their own pace from simple to more complicated vernacular literature shared with adults. Moriyama Takamori 森山孝盛 (1738-1815), an adviser of Matsudaira Sadanobu, wrote in his *Ama no takumo no ki* 蟹の焼藻の記 ('A Fisherman's Flotsam Bonfire', 1798) that till age ten, he recited his lessons without any understanding, as if they were sutras.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, he very much enjoyed the folktales and the legends of the Genpei War told by his mother. Her stories awakened in him an interest in war tales and *jōruribon*, and for a period in his youth he was absorbed in these books. The Neo-Confucian scholar Suzuki Tōya 鈴木桃野 (1800-52) wrote in his *Mukayūkyō* 無可有郷 ('Utopia') that as a child he was sickly, and to the dismay of his father and grandfather, cried when confronted with books for study. His mother would comfort him when distressed about the path set out by his father. From nine years of age, he entered a *terakoya* but had to stay home regularly because of illness. This was when he discovered popular fiction and started to read *gōkan* by Santō Kyōden, Takizawa Bakin, Shikitei Sanba, Santō Kyōzan and other popular authors, followed by *Heike monogatari*, *Hōgen monogatari*, *Heiji monogatari*, *Gikeiki*, and ghost stories. He bought any new *gōkan* that appeared, he states. According to Tōya, the illustrations made a deep impression

¹⁰⁹ Morgenstern, 'The Rise of Children's Literature Reconsidered', 65.

¹¹⁰ Seta, *Ochibo hiroi : jōkan*, 201-2.

on him and played a large role in his enjoyment of these books.¹¹¹ *Gōkan* did not yet exist in Takamori's time, but both men carved out a path that led to the war tales as satisfactory reading material.¹¹² In the mid-Meiji period, well-educated boys like Tanizaki Jun'ichirō arrived at this same stage by way of (illustrated) history series written for young (male) citizens and adults enthusiastically promoting the theme, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

Gōkan are also mentioned as a boy's preferred reading material in the second part of Shikitei Sanba's *Ukiyoburo* 浮世風呂 ('Floating-world Bathhouse', 1809-13). A mother talks about the reading behaviour of her third son, who buys 'a kind of *kusazōshi* called *gōkan*' (*gōkan to yara mōsu kusazōshi* 合巻とやら申草双昏) the moment a new volume appears, and who talks knowledgeably about artists like Toyokuni and Kunisada.¹¹³ Her friend answers that in *their* time children would read 'The Wedding of the Rat' and *akahon* about folktales (*mukashibanashi no akahon* むかし咄の赤本). It can be questioned if this scene gives a true account of what children read as Sanba might simply have dropped the names of Toyokuni and Kunisada as a form of advertisement. The cheapest *gōkan* in this period were about 110 *mon* per volume.¹¹⁴ In the present-day, this would be around 2200 yen.¹¹⁵ In comparison, a bowl of soba would be sixteen *mon*, borrowing a book from a *kashihonya* 貸本屋 ('book rental store') would be twenty-four *mon*, and the monthly fee for a *terakoya* was about two hundred *mon* in early nineteenth century Edo.¹¹⁶ However, various authors and artists who grew up in the early Meiji period also report that *gōkan* belonged to the reading experiences of their youth.¹¹⁷ As just mentioned, books could also be borrowed cheaply from a *kashihonya*, and the questionable part of Sanba's scene is maybe the 'buying' rather than the 'reading' or enjoying the pictures.

A testimony to children's engagement with illustrated books appears in a copy of *Gikeiki* (dated 1645) held in the Waseda University Library (fig. 1.9). The first book of *Gikeiki* describes how the young Yoshitsune secretly practices sword fighting at night in Sōjō valley

¹¹¹ Seta, 202–3.

¹¹² War tales were – not surprisingly – also recommended reading for samurai boys. Richard Dore describes that at fief schools in Mito, Hikone and Aizu (that offered obligatory Chinese Studies to young men of samurai status), students who by age twenty still failed to qualify for the upper school were placed in a class that read 'histories and suitably warlike novels written in Japanese'. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 86.

¹¹³ Shikitei, *Ukiyoburo*, 118.

¹¹⁴ Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji*, 413.

¹¹⁵ Maruta, *Mono No Nedan de Shiru Edo No Kurashi*.

¹¹⁶ Maruta, 134., resp. 181, 103.

¹¹⁷ Emmerich, 'Picture Books: From Akahon to Kibyōshi and Gōkan', 518.

near Kurama temple. The text mentions that the valley is the abode of *tengu*, but there is no mention of interaction with Yoshitsune.¹¹⁸ The iconic scene of Ushiwakamaru battling with *tengu* at Sōjō valley originates in various theatrical adaptations, such as the noh play *Kurama tengu* 鞍馬天狗. This latter version having become the most popular interpretation, the viewer presumably ‘missed’ the feathered *tengu* and added one themselves. (This might have happened any time between the publication of the book and the Meiji period, when such books were still around in people’s homes.) The copies of *Utagaruta* in the collection of the NIJL and British Library have furthermore been coloured with various pigments, which leads Moretti to ask whether the book was sold



Fig. 1.9 *Gikeiki*, vol. 1, 1645. WKD

with colours or treated as a colouring book.¹¹⁹ In many other printed illustrations the colouring is executed in such a way that the second option is most plausible, such as the brownish marks in figs. 1.18 and 1.26. Kimura Yaeko observes that the faces of antagonists in *kusazōshi* are often painted with black ink. She cites a text from an early Meiji period *kashihonya* that apologizes to customers and blames children for the red or black smudges on faces, ‘who applied it to characters they consider to be nasty’.¹²⁰ These examples show that children not only engaged with illustrated books but also had an understanding of the depicted characters and the relationships between them, either by reading the text or with the help of a narrator.

By the late Edo period, *akahon* and *mukashibanashi* were more or less conflated as a genre for (young) children that was disappearing. Sanba wrote in 1812 two *gōkan* that bear in

¹¹⁸ See Kajihara, *Gikeiki*, 31; McCullough, *Yoshitsune*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 25.

¹²⁰ Kimura, ‘Akakohon Kara Aobon Made’, 57.

the title the words ‘*akahon* revival’ (*Akahon saikō* 赤本再興), consisting of *Momotarō* and *Hanasaka jiji* 花咲爺 (‘The old man who made withered trees blossom’). Bakin also had an interest in *mukashibanashi*, including *kusazōshi* versions. In the fourth part of his essay collection *Enseki zasshi* 燕石雜誌 (‘Miscellany of Imitation Jewels’, 1811), he introduces the storylines of seven different *mukashibanashi*, annotated with his observations about origins, meanings, and variants.¹²¹ He reproduces pages from two ‘vintage’ early eighteenth century *akahon* or *kurohon* featuring the folktale *Saru-kani gassen* 猿蟹合戦 (‘The battle of the monkey and the crab’). Also represented are two double pages from a late seventeenth-century *kinpira-bon*. Bakin complains that ‘today’s children’ no longer care about such books’.¹²² He praises Okumura Masanobu’s 奥村政信 (1686-1764) simple and vigorous illustrations, that stand according to Bakin for a better past in which children were frank (*guchoku* 愚直) rather than smart-alecky (*namasakashiki* 生さかしき).¹²³ During the Bakumatsu period and early Meiji-period, the term *akahon* was applied to tiny picture books (also called *mame-bon* 豆本, ‘bean books’) representing digests of *mukashibanashi* and biographies of warriors.¹²⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century, Iwaya Sazanami also used the word *akahon* in the sense of *kusazōshi* that introduce *mukashibanashi* to children. In his address to the young reader preceding the main story in *Momotarō* (1894), he refers to *akahon-rui* 赤本類 (‘*akahon*-type’) books that are not published anymore but belonged to the listening and reading experiences of his youth.¹²⁵

Prints of children who are reading for leisure are hard to find but do appear sporadically in *kusazōshi*. That reading children are difficult to find in *nishiki-e* can be explained by the fact that such a scene has no auspicious qualities. As described in Suzuki Tōya’s memoir, we might even suspect the child who indulges in reading of having a weak health. Ann Herring introduces an image of a girl flipping through a *kusazōshi* she received as a New Years’ present.¹²⁶ This can be read as an advertisement for the publisher of the

¹²¹ Takizawa, ‘Enseki zasshi’, 434–75. Bakin introduces *Saru-kani gassen* 猿蟹合戦 (‘The battle of the monkey and the crab’), *Momotarō* 桃太郎 (‘Peach Boy’), *Shita-kiri suzume* 舌切り雀 (‘Tongue-cut sparrow’), *Usagi no ōtegara* 兎大手柄 (‘The Rabbits’ Glorious Achievement’, better known as *Kachi-kachi Mountain*), *Hanasaka no okina* 花咲爺 (‘The old man who made withered trees blossom’), *Saru no namakimo* 彌猴の生胆 (‘The liver of the monkey’), and *Urashima ga ko* 浦嶋之子 (now generally known as *Urashima Tarō*).

¹²² Takizawa, 424.

¹²³ Bakin is speaking of ‘those under fifteen, sixteen years of age’. Masanobu’s early work is influenced by the Torii school, known for its clear lines and expressive, bulging eyes of human figures.

¹²⁴ Katō, ‘*Akahon Kara Mamebon e*’, 4.

¹²⁵ Iwaya, *Nippon Mukashibanashi*, 13.

¹²⁶ Herring, ‘The Hidden Heritage’, 173.



Fig. 1.10 Shikitei Sanba, Hashimoto Sadahide, Takarada Chimachi, *Go Taiheiki shiraishi-banashi*, 1836. WKD

book in which the illustration appears. A similar image appears in *Go Taiheiki shiraishi-banashi* 碁太平記白石噺 (Shikitei Sanba, 1836), in which the last page shows a boy and a girl enjoying their new *kusazōshi* (fig. 1.10).¹²⁷ Children can also be spotted in pictures of *ezōshiya* 絵草紙屋, the stores that sold *kusazōshi* and other forms of popular print (fig. 1.11). Children were also involved in the book selling business. In *Ehon ikoku ichiran* 絵本異国一覽 (1799), a *detchi* 丁稚 (boy servant) who works in an upscale bookstore is shown reading a small book (fig. 1.12). The image is the last in a series of rather fantastic representations of ‘foreign countries’, and the bookstore represents Japan. According to the text, in that country people read books in every house. However, the boy seems to be scolded for

ignoring his work instead of applauded for his interest in books. Clearly, in this context selling books is more important than reading them. Although these representations do not necessarily reflect a very large audience of literate children, publishers at least believed children to be among their clientele.

Various scholars have argued that different from modern children’s literature, that tries to separate children from certain aspects of the adult world, premodern books for children rather ‘eased’ them into the realities of the adult world.¹²⁸ The books discussed by Kimbrough contain graphic violence, and *Utagaruta* refers to sexuality in a number of scenes.¹²⁹ Both Moretti and Kimbrough argue that these themes would not be considered inappropriate for children in Edo period Japan, nor disqualify the books as readings for children. Adults in the premodern period apparently did not consider violence in books

¹²⁷ The book is based on a famous *jōruri* and kabuki play, both staged for the first time in 1780 in Edo.

¹²⁸ Kimbrough, ‘Bloody Hell!’, 134; Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 22. Baba Mitsuko argues that narratives introduced to children (for example, stories that include representations of marriage) played a role in their ‘initiation’ into the adult world already in the medieval period. Baba, ‘Inishieeshon Toshite No Warabe’.

¹²⁹ Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 21–22.

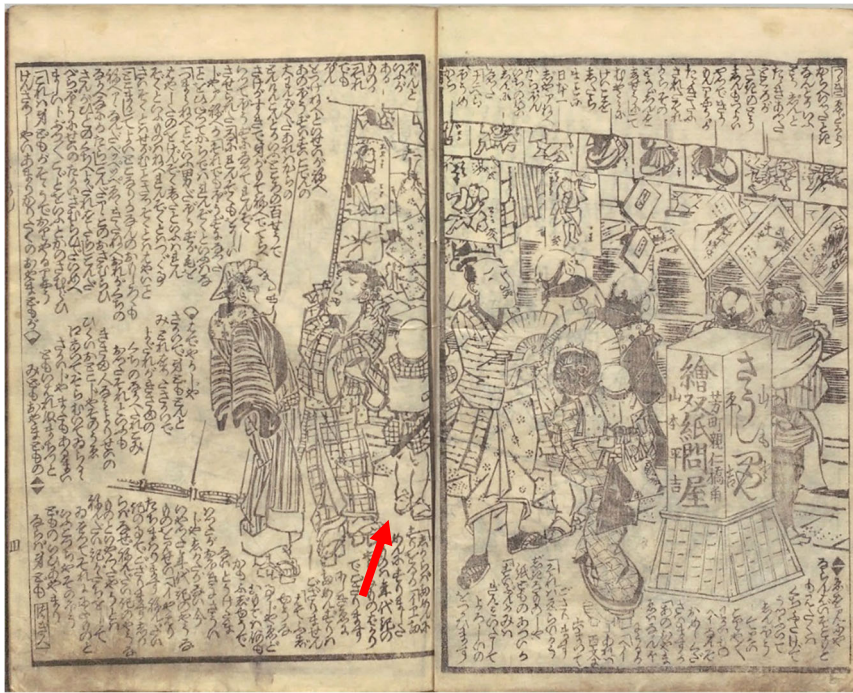


Fig. 1.11 *Hōnen mitsu no hanabusa, zenpen* vol. 4, 1839. NDL



Fig. 1.12 *Shunkōen Hanamaru*, Okada Gyokuzan, *Ehon ikoku ichiran*, vol. 5, 1799. WKD

presented to children a subject worth of discussion or special measures. Did adults care to keep books with sexual content away from children? Suzuki Toshiyuki also argues they did not. *Ezōshiya* would display their books and prints of any subject side-by-side.

Suzuki finds additional proof for this practice in a song from a primer (from 1780) for girls that warns against looking at ‘amorous’ books sold at these roadside bookstores.¹³⁰

Opinions about children and the contents of *kusazōshi* have however not been thoroughly researched.

Kami Shōichirō mentions an

eighteenth-century *hyōbanki* 評判記 (written commentary) in which a reviewer considers *kusazōshi* containing warrior stories and revenge stories appropriate reading-material for samurai children ‘and so forth’, but he is of the opinion that *iromeita mono* 色めいた物

¹³⁰ Suzuki, *Ezōshiya*, 231.

(‘amorous books’) should not be shown to children.¹³¹ Apparently, some adults *did* care. There is also a possibility that *ezōshiya* simply ignored any moral concerns that might have existed as it was not in their interest.

Books aimed at children were thus among *kusazōshi*, and children were among the readership of *kusazōshi* and other books in the vernacular not specifically aimed at them. The discursive use of the words ‘for children’ makes making clear distinctions a complex task, but also shows that a concept of ‘books for children’ existed.¹³² That books specifically aimed at children disappeared together with innovations in text and image and new (adult-centered) themes in *kusazōshi* is however implausible, considering for example rising literacy levels, the commercial value of introducing young people to books and products associated with the theatre, and the continued practice of gift-giving during the New Year (in certain strata of society). Such works as *Utagaruta* have flown under the radar because they were initially not known, and because it turns out they cannot be judged by their covers. The words ‘for children’ in introductions to *kusazōshi* have been read as merely a trope by default, but closer inspection of themes, narratives and forms of adaptation (text and image) brings to light that a) there was a body of *kusazōshi* characterized by simplified language supported by images aimed at a readership of children or a ‘dual readership’ and, b) many of these were adaptations of (canonical) works aimed at adults, and provide the reader with basic cultural knowledge and/or moral instruction in an entertaining way. Children also ‘adopted’ *kusazōshi* and illustrated popular literature written in the vernacular (not specifically created for them) as their own reading material. Several scholars have pointed out that even if the contents of *kusazōshi* aimed at children seem partly incongruent with modern concepts of children’s literature, such books might be for a ‘dual audience’ or serve the aim of ‘easing’ children into the realities of the adult world. The adult world does however not only consist of realities. *Kusazōshi* about warriors rather invited children to the popular history and fiction of the adult world.

¹³¹ Kami, ‘Jidōbungaku Zenshi e No Izanai’, 23–24. The *hyōbanki* here referred to is the anonymous *Sakusha hyōban sengokutōshi* 作者評判千石籥 (1754).

¹³² Williams, ‘Visualizing the Child’, 60.

6. Yoshitsune in *ōraimono* and *kusazōshi* for children

This section analyses the representation of Minamoto Yoshitsune in both didactic and entertaining books for children. Although *kusazōshi* for children might contain (implicit) teachings, ‘didactic texts’ for children were clearly differentiated by their classification as *ōraimono*, a distinct layout and canonical status within the (unofficial) *terakoya* curriculum. Yoshitsune appears prominently in both genres. As discussed on section four, closely associated with Yoshitsune was the so-called Koshigoe letter (*Koshigoe-jō* 腰越状), that served like various other *kojō* or ‘ancient letters’ as a writing model, history lesson, and moral instruction. On the other hand, *kusazōshi* for children (or a dual audience) focused on the pivotal moments of the cycle of Yoshitsune legends, each adding a distinct flavor to the line-up of famous episodes.

6.1. Yoshitsune in *ōraimono*

Several (apocryphal) letters written by Yoshitsune were published as writing models, of which the Koshigoe letter was the most popular. In the late Edo period, the Koshigoe letter was included in compendia of *kojō* and in collections of miscellaneous *ōrai*. The document not only appears in *Heike monogatari*, but also in *Gikeiki*, the historical chronicle *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡 (‘Mirror of the East’), and the *kōwakamai* 幸若舞 (a form of recitative dance) libretto *Koshigoe*. After Yoritomo was installed as the first Kamakura shogun, he purportedly denied Yoshitsune the rewards that he deserved, nor allowed him to enter the city. While Yoshitsune waited at Koshigoe, he sent Yoritomo’s retainer Oe no Hiromoto 大江広元 (1148-1225) a letter to convince his brother of his loyalty. The first part of the letter according to *Gikeiki* reads:

Minamoto Yoshitsune respectfully states the following: After having been chosen as one of His Lordship’s deputies, I wiped out our clan’s humiliation by overthrowing the Heike as an imperial messenger. I have earned a reward; yet I weep vain tears of blood, undone by the slanders of an evil mouth. Prevented from entering Kamakura because of a calumniator whose statements have not been examined, I spend my days in idleness, unable to express my true feelings. If I may not behold His Lordship’s countenance now, it must seem that our fraternal tie is severed, that our fated relationship has ended. Or perhaps I must think of it as the result

of a sin in a previous life. Alas! Who will explain my unhappiness or sympathize with my plight, unless it might be my dead father's reborn spirit?¹³³

The letter stresses the innocence of Yoshitsune's motives, while the 'evil mouth' refers to Kajiwaru Kageotoki's 梶原景時 (?-1200) slander, here identified as the cause of Yoshitsune's downfall. Matthew Thompson observes that the inclusion of the Koshigoe letter as a twelfth-century 'artifact' in the *Heike* 'functions as both cause and effect of the mystification of Yoshitsune's persona and the events surrounding his fall'.¹³⁴ In *Gikeiki*, the text (more so than in *Heike monogatari*) carefully builds up to this testament of Yoshitsune's innocence. The *kōwakamai* libretto *Koshigoe* dramatizes the episode even more and recapitulates how Kajiwaru Kageotoki became resentful over the 'reverse oars incident' and plotted Yoshitsune's death.¹³⁵ The compassion with Yoshitsune that many imaginative works elicit from the audience came to be termed *hōgan biiki* 判官鼻眞 or 'sympathy for the lieutenant'.

Thompson connects the appearance of the Koshigoe letter as a pedagogical text (in the seventeenth century) to *kakun* 家訓 (house codes), which were epistles addressed to the younger members of samurai households that instructed about such things as the proper management of vassals.¹³⁶ The Koshigoe letter reflects how this should *not* be done. Kageotoki is the moral antithesis to Yoshitsune, and Yoritomo appears as a ruler and brother who failed to judge and act wisely. Considering the continued popularity of the Koshigoe letter as an instructional text, the morality also must have been relevant to commoners.

Not only the Koshigoe letter itself appeared in *ōraimono* as an example to copy and remember, but also variant types of *ōrai* refer to this lesson. As discussed in section four, the basic list of Chinese characters in names, as seen in printed primers, starts with *gen* 源 and *hei* 平, referring to the warrior clans Minamoto and Taira. These clans, and Yoshitsune in particular, also appear in the late eighteenth century primer *Honchō senjimon* 本朝千字文 ('One Thousand Characters of Our Country'). The work is a Japanese variant of the Chinese *One Thousand Characters* (*Qiānzì Wén* 千字文), a primer that was widely used to teach basic literacy in China and represented Confucian ethics, historical knowledge, and aphorisms

¹³³ McCullough, *Yoshitsune*, 393–94.

¹³⁴ Thompson, 'The Tales of Yoshitsune', 192.

¹³⁵ Thompson, 193–95.

¹³⁶ Thompson, 196–97.

that encourage good behaviour in children.¹³⁷ The Japanese *Honchō senjimon* lists four-character compounds that introduce the mythical origin of Japan and history/legends up till Tokugawa rule and stresses the importance of writing practice. The work follows a view of history as the inevitable rise and fall of clans (i.e., the Taira and the Minamoto) and powerful figures.¹³⁸ The 1850 version of *Honchō senjimon* is illustrated and gives explanations in the vernacular. For example, *Ushiwakamaru hisoka ni sari* 牛若潜去 is explained as: ‘When Ushiwaka was three years old, Kiyomori ordered to spare [Ushiwaka’s] life if he would become a priest, and he was sent to Kurama temple. However, [Ushiwaka] practiced swordsmanship at Sōjōgatani, and at age seventeen left for Ōshū in secret’.¹³⁹ This piece of information is illustrated with a picture of Ushiwaka walking in the mountains near Kurama with a short description: ‘Ushiwakamaru left Mount Kurama in secret together with the gold merchant Kichi-ji and departed for Ōshū’.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, *nan wo tōka ni nogaru* 遁難東蝦 is explained as ‘even though Yoshitsune was honourable, Kajiware’s slander ... made him the victim of the night attack at Horikawa, upon which [Yoshitsune] hid deep in Yoshino, and later crossed over to Ezo.’ (Yoshitsune committed suicide in 1189, yet according to a very popular legend he actually fled to Ezo, the current Hokkaido.) Kajiware’s slander and Yoritomo’s unjust treatment of his Yoshitsune are mentioned several times. The descriptions are particularly reproachful when it comes to Yoritomo, who ‘thought his younger brother a piece of garbage and did not even feel a little compassion’.¹⁴¹ He failed to properly maintain the reciprocity between ‘elder brother and younger brother’, as well as ‘superior and subordinate’, which are fundamental to the Confucian concept of human relations.

In the years 1823 and 1824, eleven *ōrai* edited by the popular author Jippensha Ikku 十返舎 一九 (1765-1831) appeared that describe the life of famous warriors such as Yoshitsune, Minamoto Yoshiie, the Soga brothers, and Minamoto Yorimitsu (Raikō). Ikku was very active as an editor of compendia of instructional texts. The main text of his *Yoshitsune yūsō ōrai* 義経勇壮往来 (‘*Ōrai* of Yoshitsune’s Heroism’, 1823) is written in large characters intended for copying and glossed with *kana* readings in the vernacular (fig. 1.8). The *kashira-*

¹³⁷ Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child*, 26–27.

¹³⁸ Ishikawa, *Ōraimono no seiritsu to tenkai*, 90–96.

¹³⁹ The former province Ōshū 奥州 (or Mutsu 陸奥) covers current-day Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate and Aomori prefectures in northern Honshū. Yoshitsune’s went there to ask for military support from Fujiwara Hidehira 藤原秀衡 (1122-1187) in Hiraizumi. He would later return to Hidehira after falling out of favour with Yoritomo.

¹⁴⁰ According to *Gikeiki*, Kichiji visited Kurama and took Ushiwakamaru with him to the Fujiwara in Ōshū, allies of the Genji.

¹⁴¹ Ishikawa and Ishikawa, *NKT Ōrai Hen 11*, 474.



Fig. 1.8 Jippensha Ikku, *Yoshitsune yūsō ōrai*, 1823. NIJL

gaki (the upper part) contains a list of the provinces and castle-towns, and a picture of the Sumiyoshi shrine in Osaka. The major episodes of Yoshitsune's biography appear in the text. The last part of the text recapitulates that the 'treacherous retainer' Kajiware Kagetoki slandered Yoshitsune even though Yoshitsune's merits in battle were admirable, and therefore 'the world will never forget this evil deed'. This is of course in line with the message of the Koshigoe petition. Taking his role as an educator seriously, Ikku downplays the popular Ezo legend: this was made up afterwards, 'by people who regretted the way in which the heroic Yoshitsune came to his end'.

Ikku explains the purpose of this work as follows in the introduction:

Considering that since old times, apart from stilts and toy pigeons, children (*dōmō* 童蒙) have enjoyed so-called *akahon* about Momotarō and the demon island, or the revenge tale of the monkey and the crab, and enjoyed the thrilling sights of heroic warriors and battles of the past in *musha-e* [warrior prints] the publisher [Yamaguchiya Tōbei in Edo] eagerly requested this

book. This [text] looks like a lighthearted historical legend, but as even girls (*dōjo* 童女) can hardly resist learning about of the achievements of famous warriors, we introduce the military exploits of Hangan Yoshitsune that [children] will have heard of, and by taking up this subject, we merely aim to make them remember the characters (*moji* 文字). In other words, this is like sweetened medicine, an expedient means to achieve progression in [the reading and writing skills of] children (*shōni* 小兒).¹⁴²

This preface confirms that in the early nineteenth century, there was an awareness of children as an audience of popular print, folktales, and narratives about warriors. Ikku implicitly associates warriors with boys, but there is no reason to assume that he is merely exaggerating when he says that girls are attracted to these stories as well. He seems to invite them to profit from this work. In *Onna daigaku* 女大学 (The Great Learning for Women), slander is mentioned as one of the five worst avarices of women, and the text admonishes to keep the household in proper order.¹⁴³ *Onna Imagawa* furthermore states '[Do not] fail to discern between good and bad servants, nor fail to correct [their behavior]'.¹⁴⁴ The exemplary nature of Yoshitsune should not be sought in martiality or masculinity, but in morality, which renders this episode relevant for the ideally unarmed Edo period commoners, including women.

Yoshitsune was thus recognized as a popular figure among children who could facilitate the attainment of literacy as well as correct behaviour. The connection between educational value and entertainment offered commercial opportunities not noticed by Ikku alone. For example, the two-volume picture book *Osana etoki kojō soroe* 幼稚絵解古状揃 ('Picture-explanations of Collected Ancient Letters for Children', undated) introduces the Koshigoe letter and the Fukumi-jō 含状, another letter attributed to Yoshitsune.¹⁴⁵ However, different from actual primers, the letter does not take the shape of a calligraphed writing example. The images are largely based on the iconographic visualisations of Yoshitsune's most famous moments as seen in *nishiki-e* and *kusazōshi*. Even though as a pedagogical text, the Koshigoe letter was taken out of the original context, it still participated in the more

¹⁴² Ishikawa and Ishikawa, 438.

¹⁴³ De Bary, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2 Pt. 1, 234.

¹⁴⁴ Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, 52.

¹⁴⁵ Written and illustrated by Keisai Eisen 溪斎英泉 (1790-1848). Eisen uses here the surname Ikeda, and the author is given as Ippitsuan 一筆庵, which is also one of Eisen's pseudonyms. This *gōkan* is also discussed in section 6.3.

expansive popular memory of Yoshitsune, and adults were intent on sharing this with children.¹⁴⁶

6.2 Yoshitsune in *kusazōshi*: plots, characters, and iconographies

Jonathan Mills in his study of two early *kusazōshi* about the warrior Kumagai Naozane argues that rather than producing entirely new material, ‘the writers [of *kusazōshi*] generally preferred to adapt and combine materials from the past, or from other genres such as kabuki or jōruri puppet theatre ... It suggests that the readers of *kusazōshi* were not interested in brand-new plots or completely unknown characters: rather, that they wanted to see interesting changes and new developments to material with which they were already familiar to some extent’.¹⁴⁷ The Yoshitsune *sekai* provided ample material. In his detailed study of legends about Yoshitsune, Shimazu Hisamoto identifies eighteen categories of legends spanning Yoshitsune’s entire life, and a bewildering number of characters.¹⁴⁸ This body of legends does not go back to a single original source, and therefore *kusazōshi* that chronicle the highlights of Yoshitsune’s life can also be understood as ‘short-cuts’ to the most widely accepted versions of these legends. The iconic episodes of Yoshitsune’s life were endlessly revisited in biographies and *musha ehon*. These works tried to engage a readership of children as well as adults looking for some ‘interesting changes’.

The battle between Ushiwakamaru and the warrior monk Musashibō Benkei on Gojō bridge in Kyoto became one of the most popular episodes in *kusazōshi*. Both characters seem to have been a favorite of the boy (and probably his father) to whom the Jizō statue in Nara was dedicated.¹⁴⁹ The statue contained three books about Yoshitsune and Benkei: *Benkei tanjōki* 弁慶誕生期 (‘The Birth and Life of Benkei’, 1660s), *Ushiwaka sennin-giri, Hashi Benkei* 牛若千人切はし弁慶 (‘Ushiwaka Slays a Thousand’, and Benkei on the Bridge, 1667), and *Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe* 義経高名そろへ (‘Yoshitsune’s Glorious Feats’, ca. 1684-1704). *Benkei tanjōki* narrates how Benkei, called Oniwakamaru 鬼若丸 (‘young ogre’), in his youth, was an exceptionally big and wild child. As an adult, he started a quest to steal a thousand swords but was beaten by Yoshitsune at Gojō bridge in Kyoto, after which he became

¹⁴⁶ Thompson, ‘The Tales of Yoshitsune’, 201.

¹⁴⁷ Mills, ‘Depictions of Martial and Spiritual Power’, 52.

¹⁴⁸ Shimazu, *Yoshitsune Densetsu to Bungaku*.

¹⁴⁹ Let me here make clear that the books from the Jizō statue are not *kusazōshi* (a picture book genre from Edo), but these are the earliest extant woodblock printed picture books of Yoshitsune. Also in Kyoto, picture books of warrior legends and other themes continued to be produced in the eighteenth century, but they differ in style and size from *kusazōshi*.

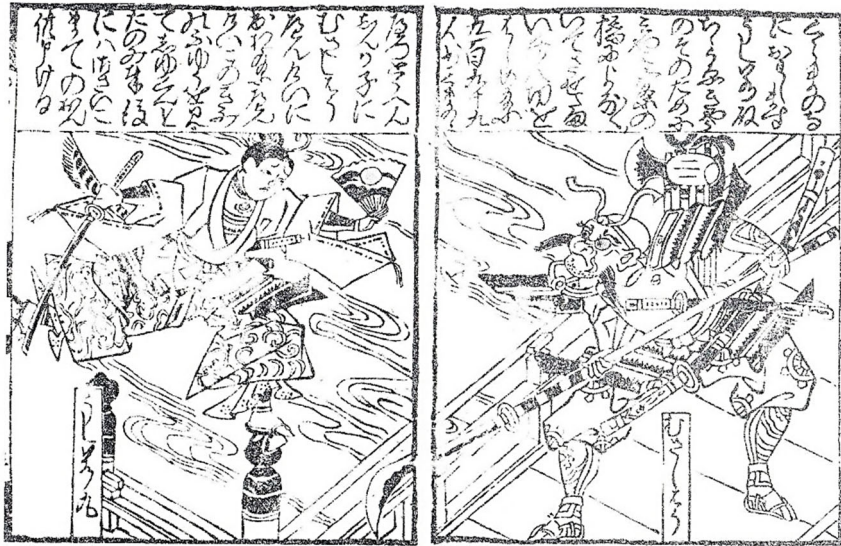


Fig. 1.13 *Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe*, ca. 1684-1704.
As reproduced in Okamoto 1982, p. 144

Yoshitsune's retainer.
The book thus
concentrates on
Benkei's early years
and his martial power,
which might have been
appealing especially to
young audiences.¹⁵⁰
The second book,
Ushiwaka sennin-giri,
Hashi Benkei, focuses on

Yoshitsune's younger years.¹⁵¹ The narrative is probably based on a now lost *ko-jōruri* play.¹⁵² This time, Ushiwakamaru is the one who is terrorizing people in the capital: he decided to kill a thousand Taira (as a filial act towards his father). After killing 999 people, he encountered Benkei on Gojō bridge, who however vowed to be Yoshitsune's retainer and thereby survived the massacre. Both books thus select the Gojō bride episode as a focal episode, in which the respective protagonists instigate the encounter.

Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe, following a textual introduction of Ushiwakamaru's antecedents, similarly focuses on the encounter between Ushiwakamaru and Benkei (fig. 1.13).¹⁵³ In the illustration, Ushiwakamaru jumps nimbly on a pole of the bridge, with a sword and a fan in his hands. Benkei, in full armor and with bulging eyes, wields a naginata. He carries his iconic *nanatsu-dōgu* 七つ道具 ('seven weapons') on his back. Both characters are provided with nametags. The text on top reads: 'Ushiwakamaru, who was at Kurama temple, out of filiality towards his father went to Gojō bridge in Kyoto every night and began [his quest of] killing one thousand people. The 999th person was the son of the Kumano abbot Benshin, Musashibō Benkei. When Benkei saw the valor of this young master, he asked to become his retainer and vowed to stand by him till the end.' Benkei's antecedents are clearly considered more important than a smooth narrative, as it remains

¹⁵⁰ Kimbrough, 'Bloody Hell!', 125.. Reproduced and transcribed in Nakano and Hida, *Kinsei Kodomo No Ehonshū - Kamigata-Hen*.

¹⁵¹ Reproduced in Okamoto, *Shoki Kamigata Kodomo Ehonshū*, 124-40.

¹⁵² Kimbrough, 'Bloody Hell!', 130-31.

¹⁵³ This episode originates in *Benkei monogatari*, the *otogizōshi Hashi Benkei*, the noh play *Hashi Benkei*, and other sources. In *Gikeiki*, the encounter takes place near Kiyomizudera. Shimazu, *Yoshitsune Densetsu to Bungaku*, 303-4.

unclear why killing a thousand random people would amount to an act of filial piety. Such representations however seem to do exactly what Emura Hokkai advocated for: they introduce an engaging image and a name as a starting point for further (oral) narration.¹⁵⁴ Whether this results in a lesson about filial piety and loyalty depends on the storyteller.

Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe is a biography-like text that introduces canonical episodes from the cycle of Yoshitsune legends in chronological order, a format that would also be popular in *kusazōshi*. The first pages establish Ushiwakamaru as a martial prodigy, who beats Benkei on Gojō bridge and consequently kills the thief Kumasaka Chōhan. This is followed by the highlights of his military career: Yoshitsune and Benkei looking upon Kajiwara Kagesue 梶原景季 (1162-1200) and Sasaki Takatsuna 佐々木高綱 (1160-1214) competing to be the first to cross Uji river (during the battle of Uji in 1184), the descent from Hiyodorigoe during the Battle of Ichi-no-tani against the Heike, the episode of ‘the dropped bow’ during the battle of Yashima (1185), and Yoshitsune’s *hassō-tobi* 八艘飛 (‘jumping over eight ships’) during the battle of Dan-no-ura (1185).¹⁵⁵ The last part deals with the attack on Yoshitsune’s residence at Horikawa by Yoritomo’s hitman Tosabō, followed by Yoshitsune’s flight to Ōshū. The book introduces how Benkei warded off the spirits of the Heike at Daimotsu-no-ura, how Satō Tadanobu impersonated Yoshitsune to facilitate his lord’s safe escape from Yoshino, and finally, Yoshitsune’s ritual suicide.¹⁵⁶ Suzuki Akira summarizes this way of representation, as also seen elsewhere in early modern print, with the modern term *jinbutsu-chūshin meibamen-shugi* 人物中心名場面主義, or ‘character-focused and favoring famous scenes’.¹⁵⁷ Specific scenes that represent famous historical characters and plots were taken out of the narrative context, which led to simplification but also facilitated the transmission of Muromachi period legends to the Meiji period and beyond. The episodes represented in *Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe* can be traced back to a range of literary, visual, and theatrical sources,

¹⁵⁴ As discussed in section 5. Nagatomo, *Edojidai No Shomotsu to Dokusho*, 193–94; Williams, ‘Visualizing the Child’, 51–53.

¹⁵⁵ In the ‘the dropped bow’ episode in *Heike monogatari* (11:5), Yoshitsune risks his life to retrieve his shamefully small bow that fell in the sea during the battle of Yashima, but his small stature also has its benefits, as he lithely jumps over eight ships (*hassō-tobi*) during the battle of Dan-no-ura (11:10).

¹⁵⁶ With the blood squirting from Yoshitsune’s belly, the suicide scene is particularly gruesome and together with several bloodbaths on earlier pages, represents the violent content found in several of the books from the Jizō statue, whose shocking ‘lack of moral standard’ Kimbrough has addressed in his article. The last scene however deviates from *Gikeiki* in an important aspect: Yoshitsune’s wife, his five-year-old son and new-born daughter were all stabbed to death at the same occasion, which is also depicted in illustrations in *Gikeiki*. The illustrator of *Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe* either did not want to clutter the image with more figures or draws here a line after all, with the intended audience in mind. This is in fact a rare instance of a representation of the suicide: *kusazōshi* would end on a celebratory note: namely, Yoshitsune’s kingship over Ezo.

¹⁵⁷ Suzuki, ‘Meiji-Ki No Jidōshōnenzasshi’, 40–41.

such as (illustrated versions of) *Gikeiki*, *Benkei monogatari*, *Heike monogatari* and *Soga monogatari*, noh plays (*Hashi Benkei*, *Funa Benkei* and others), and *ko-jōruri* texts.

Musha ehon were similarly based on this *jinbutsu-chūshin meibamen-shugi* logic. These compendia depicted a famous historical warrior on every page (or double page) according to established iconographies, supplemented with nametags and/or a cursory description. In eighteenth-century *musha ehon*, for pages representing Yoshitsune, most commonly selected are Ushiwakamaru's battle with Benkei on Gojō bridge, his sword-fighting practice with *tengu*, his fight with the robber Kumasaka Chōhan, and *hassō-tobi*. The compendium *Musha kagami* 武者鏡 ('Mirror of Warriors') by Tanaka Masunobu 田中益信 (active ca. 1740-1750), for example, selects the episode of Ushiwakamaru's fight with Kumasaka Chōhan (fig. 1.14).¹⁵⁸ According to *Gikeiki*, this event took place when Ushiwaka travelled to Ōshū for the

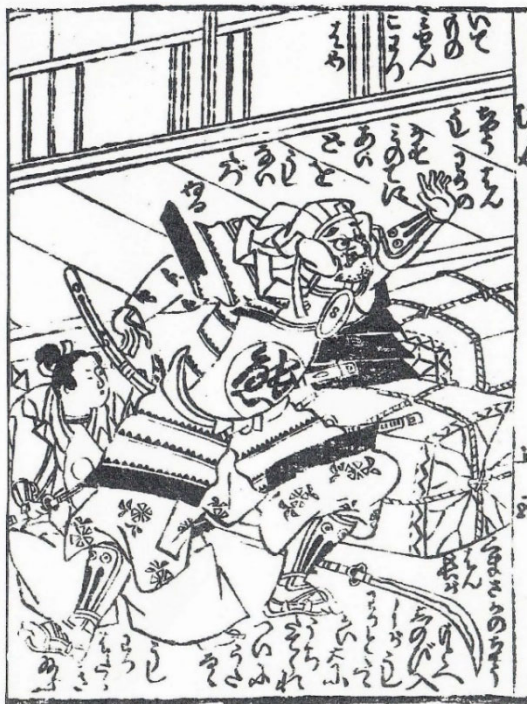


Fig. 1.14 Tanaka Masunobu, *Musha kagami*, ca. 1740-1750. As reproduced in Suzuki and Kimura 1985, p. 380

first time together with the gold merchant Kichiji.¹⁵⁹ The text reads:

Kumasaka Chōhan sneaks into the storehouse [where the merchant Kichiji stored his goods] but he is defeated by Ushiwaka in the fight and then killed. [Under Ushiwaka:] Ushiwaka makes his move. [Above Chōhan:] 'Where are you, little punk?' A perplexed Chōhan asks, confronted with Ushiwaka's mist hand [quick techniques].¹⁶⁰

Chōhan's pose clearly resembles a *mie* (freeze pose). He is staring wide-eyed at his empty left hand and his naginata lies on the ground. Half hidden behind him stands Ushiwakamaru

carrying a tiny sword and a fan.¹⁶¹ The text identifies the small Ushiwakamaru as the victor. As no particular directions are given in the scattered text, the above might also be read in a

¹⁵⁸ The legend of Kumasaka Chōhan originates in *Gikeiki*, *Soga monogatari*, the noh plays *Eboshi-ori*, *Kumasaka* and other sources. (In *Gikeiki* the chief robber is however called Yuri Tarō.) Shimazu, *Yoshitsune Densetsu to Bungaku*, 274.

¹⁵⁹ See McCullough, *Yoshitsune*, 82-86.

¹⁶⁰ *Musha kagami* 武者鏡 (Kyōho period, 1716-1736). Reproduced in Suzuki and Kimura, *Kinsei Kodomo Ehonshū - Edo Hen*, 380.

¹⁶¹ In *Gikeiki*, the thief mistakes Ushiwakamaru for a girl.

different order, but the message remains the same: The boy Ushiwakamaru, here called ‘little punk’ (*kowappame* 小童め), defeats the big, strong man by being quicker than his opponent. This episode was very popular in the early modern period (see also fig. 1.18, left page), yet in the Meiji period Chōhan’s popularity waned, as the same David and Goliath-like situation could be expressed with the Gojō bridge episode. Moreover, Benkei has a continued presence in the narrative as Yoshitsune’s loyal retainer. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this episode was revisited in modern primary school textbooks and children’s literature.

6.3 Biographies of Yoshitsune

The chronological combination of famous scenes into a ‘biography’, as seen in *Yoshitsune kōmyō soroe* became a popular format in *kusazōshi* from the mid-eighteenth century into the 1880s. These *ichidaiki* were based on canonical iconographies, yet each has its own characteristics. *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 義経一代記 (‘Biography of Yoshitsune’), a mid-eighteenth century *kurohon/aobon* illustrated by an artist of the Torii school, reworked the famous scenes into a comparatively intimate narrative of Yoshitsune’s life.¹⁶² It contains important life events not seen in other *ichidaiki*, visual humour and hints about socially acceptable behaviour.¹⁶³ There is no preface, but we might recall that in the preface of *Utagaruta*, images by Torii school artists were considered attractive to children¹⁶⁴, and at least one of the extant copies of *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* has been coloured by someone who had difficulty staying within the lines, presumably a child.

The book opens with a picture of Tokiwa gozen 常盤御前 (1138-?, a concubine of Yoshitsune’s father Yoshitomo), covered by an embroidered robe, who has just given birth, while three women are washing the new-born in a tub (fig. 1.15). This is similar to the way in which, for example, the birth of Momotarō has been depicted.¹⁶⁵ The iconographic quality is here not specific to Yoshitsune. The servant holding Ushiwakamaru comments ‘What a

¹⁶² The book was originally 10 volumes. The represented volume is bound together in one volume (NIJL, Kaga Bunko 886825-1).

¹⁶³ There seem to be no (extant) *akahon* that chronicle Yoshitsune’s life, although *Yoshitsune shima meguri* (an adaptation of the tale *Onzōshi shima watari*) does exist as *akahon*. This might be explained by the fact that despite all the bravura, a dead Yoshitsune is not particularly suitable for the New Year. *Yoshitsune shima meguri* on the other hand, leads the reader/viewer along various exotic islands and contains a Buddhist message of salvation.

¹⁶⁴ Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ Momotarō (‘peach boy’) is a hero from Japanese folklore. The tale, in which the protagonist beats the demons of ‘demon island’ with the help of three animals, was standardized as a children’s classic in modern elementary school textbooks. In modern versions of the tale, Momotarō is born from a peach. A common version in the premodern period was however that the old woman who found the magic peach ate it, regained her fertility, and gave birth to Momotarō.



Fig. 1.15 *Yoshitsune ichidaiki*, mid-eighteenth c. NIJL



Fig. 1.16 *Yoshitsune ichidaiki*, mid-eighteenth c. NIJL

healthy young lord', while a second servant stands ready with a towel, and the third proposes to pour in some more hot water in the tub. On the other side of the folding screen (which can be read as a different scene) the men discuss war. The next three pages consist of bloodshed, culminating in Yoshitomo's head on a wooden board, placed in front of the victor, Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 (1118-1181), for inspection. Tokiwa flees, carrying the infant Ushiwaka at her bosom while trying to protect one of the older boys (who whines 'mother, I

am so cold') with her hat against the snow. (This scene/iconography is also depicted in figs. 4.1 to 4.3.) They are however captured and brought to Kiyomori. Entrusted to a priest at Kurama temple, Ushiwakamaru shows himself to be a very diligent student, who like an eighteenth-century *terakoya*-student practices *tenarai* and *sudoku*, and studies even at night (fig. 1.16). Ushiwakamaru however also secretly practices sword fighting with the supernatural *tengu* at Sōjogatani and then leaves for Ōshū, but not without properly informing his teacher in a letter. Ushiwakamaru on his way to Ōshū visits the beautiful

princess Jōruri, who is just holding a party and Ushiwaka joins with his flute in the orchestra. The next day they are however raided by robbers and although Ushiwaka manages to kill the attackers, princess Jōruri also loses her life. After visiting her grave in Kyoto, Ushiwakamaru embarks on the next adventure: he manages to copy the secret scrolls on war strategy of the priest Kiichi Hōgen by seducing his daughter, and then beats Benkei on Gojō bridge. The image shows the moment that Benkei promises his loyalty rather than the fight itself. After a meeting between Yoritomo and Yoshitsune, during which they shed tears of happiness, the narrative focuses on Yoshitsune's military career.

Although Kajiwaras's slander eventually makes Yoshitsune a fugitive, the narrative retains an upbeat atmosphere, because the warriors successfully rid themselves of Tosabō and the Taira ghosts. Pretending to be *yamabushi* 山伏 (mountain ascetics), Yoshitsune and his retainers travel to Ōshū. (In an interlude, the sad fate of Yoshitsune's lover Shizuka gozen, who was left behind in the mountains of Yoshino, is also addressed.) Benkei manages to lead the party through the Ataka barrier, and arriving in Hiraizumi, Yoshitsune takes command again. During the attack by Yoritomo's forces, Yoshitsune fakes his death, and stand-ins are also found for his retainers, whose heads are sent to Yoritomo and neatly lined up for inspection. The real Yoshitsune and Benkei board a ship to Ezo (current Hokkaido), where they are welcomed by the exotically dressed natives. Benkei beats the queen (who has the size of a sumo-wrestler) in a tug-of-war game and Yoshitsune is allowed to marry the queen's daughter.¹⁶⁶

The newness and relevance of this particular *kusazōshi* leads from (mainly) three inventions: humour, personal moments of joy and grief, and (anachronistic) social and cultural knowledge. The ending is, for example, a humorous variation on the ending of the medieval tale *Onzōshi shima watari* 御曹司島渡り ('Yoshitsune's Island-Hopping') in which not Benkei, but Yoshitsune himself battles with the *king* of Ezo and wins the hand of the princess.¹⁶⁷ Like the books from the Jizō statue, violence and death are repeatedly

¹⁶⁶ The very last page of *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* shows an exotically dressed Benkei sitting on a tree and a smaller man standing below. The page is however in a bad shape and it is unclear what the text tries to convey. However, as Yoshitsune marries the princess we can assume that he becomes king. Another extant copy (reprint) of this book (NIJL, Tōkyō Shiryō 4752-137) misses several pages but has a different ending: it shows Yoshitsune's retainer Hitachibō Kaison ripping up the floorboards and digging a tunnel to Ezo under the *butsudan* (altar). In *Yorokonbu hiiki no Ezo-oshi*, Ezo is equally reached through a hole (*nuke-ana* 抜け穴), that is being compared to a *seri* 迫 (stage trapdoor). *Seri* started to be used in the 1750's, so the phenomenon was still comparatively new.

¹⁶⁷ An English translation of this tale appears in Kimbrough and Shirane, *Monsters, Animals, and Other Worlds*.

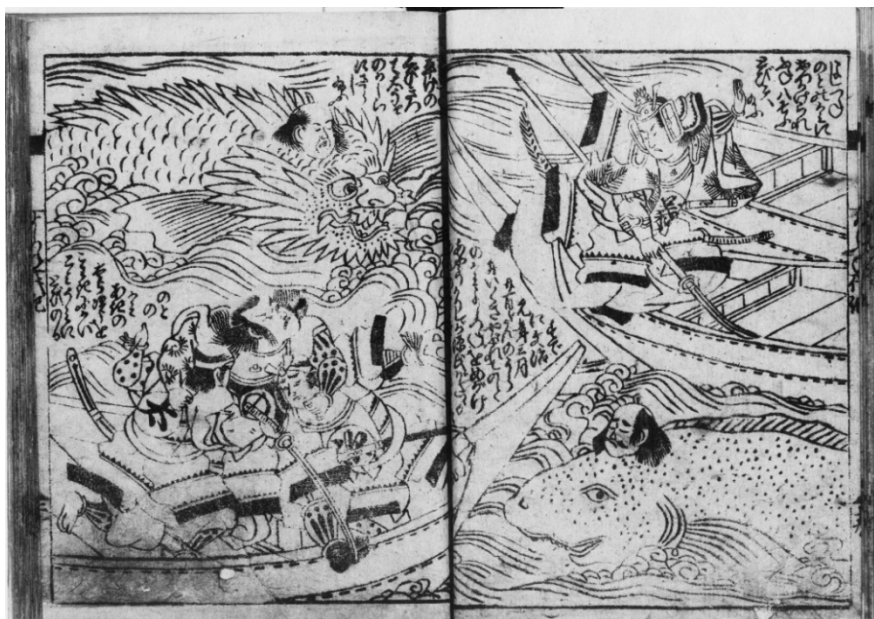


Fig. 1.17 *Yoshitsune ichidaiki*, mid-eighteenth c. NIJL

represented, but it has a more cartoonish quality, for which the Torii school artist can be credited. The number of chopped-off heads is quite over the top, and a touch of absurd humour is added to well-known iconographies. For example, in the

depiction of Yoshitsune's *hassō-tobi*, the conventional elements are the jumping Yoshitsune, and some ships with warriors. In this picture, we also find the heads of slain warriors sticking to giant fish (fig. 1.17).

Ushiwakamaru is presented as a very decent boy, who not only studies well at the temple – resembling an Edo period *terakoya* – but is also considerate to his teacher by informing him of his departure from Kurama rather than sneaking away. The visual/verbal narrative includes practical knowledge, such as the shape and names of different kinds of musical instruments. When Yoshitsune marries the Ezo princess, the picture shows them exchanging sake cups, as was the custom in the Edo period. *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* thus not only entertains, but also instructs both boys and girls in social customs and expectations.

The more personal moments introduce important events in life, such as childbirth and visiting the grave of someone who was dear to you (in this case not a filial act). As I will discuss in chapter three, Meiji authors of children's literature avoided the episodes related to romance or sexuality and presented the world of the warrior as homosocial. In this *Yoshitsune ichidaiki*, several female characters are present not only in the role of mother, but also as wife/lover. We witness Tokiwa who has just delivered the baby, and the birth of Yoshitsune's own son in the mountains during the flight to Ōshū. Apart from the wife that went to Ōshū with Yoshitsune, introduced are his lovers Jōruri-hime, Maizuru-hime (Kiichi Hōgen's daughter who gave him the secret scrolls), Shizuka gozen, and the Ezo princess.

Shizuka's story is treated like a side-story: grief-stricken over the parting with Yoshitsune in Yoshino, she is first robbed, and then their child Tsunewakamaru is thrown into the sea at Yuigahama in Kamakura (a spot reserved for executions) by none other than the evil Kajiwaru. Shizuka's side-story ends with her famous dance in front of Yoritomo, during which she recited a poem that speaks of her loyalty to Yoshitsune. (This latter intention made her relevant for some Meiji authors, although it was safer to call her Yoshitsune's 'wife'.)

Although *kibyōshi* are known for their parodic content, there are also *kibyōshi* that introduce Yoshitsune's biography without any parodic subtext, presumably with a young (or at least new) audience in mind. The five-volume *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 義経一代記 (1780s) by Torii Kiyonaga 鳥居清長 (1752-1815) first introduces Yoshitsune's early life, the second and third volume focus on Yoshitsune's military career, and the fourth volume introduces Kajiwaru's slander and its consequences. The last volume chronicles Yoshitsune's flight to Ōshū, his fake suicide and his departure to Ezo. The first volume relates that Ushiwaka was sent to Kurama temple at age seven where he studied diligently, which can again be read as a reference to *terakoya* education, something that readers could relate to and take as an example.¹⁶⁸ He however gives up the idea of becoming a monk and upon hearing about his ancestry starts to practice sword fighting with *tengu* (fig. 1.18). On the opposite page, Ushiwaka is shown creeping upon Kumasaka Chōhan in much the same way as the image from *Musha kagami*, but he is presented as a handsome youth (as he would be on the stage) rather than a little boy. In consequent pages, Ushiwaka tames a wild horse in Hiraizumi, he manages to copy Kiichi Hōgen's secret scrolls on martial techniques by seducing his daughter Maizuru-hime, and finally, beats Benkei on Gojō bridge. Following the two volumes that focus on Yoshitsune's military career, Kajiwaru's slander makes Yoshitsune a fugitive. Here attackers, ghosts, and the barrier keeper at Ataka are most admirably defeated with force, prayers, and wit by Yoshitsune's loyal retainers. Different from the earlier discussed *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* with its personal drama and comical touch this *kibyōshi* mainly introduces iconic martial exploits in an upbeat, straightforward way. The Bakufu would be satisfied: it has no characteristics that could mark it as the parodic 'fake' children's books

¹⁶⁸ Ushiwaka as a good student is also seen in for example the *gōkan Fushimi Tokiwa* 伏見ときは (Tokiwa at Fushimi, 1821) by Ryūtei Tanehiko and Utagawa Kunisada, in which Yoshitsune's mother Tokiwa is the main protagonist. The volume closes with an image of her youngest son Ushiwaka studying diligently at Kurama temple, which confirms she was a good mother, against all odds.



Fig. 1.18 Yoshitsune ichidaiki, 1789. ARC

mentioned in the edicts. There is no preface that singles out a specific audience, but the copy held by Maizuru city Itoi Bunko, like many other *kusazōshi*, has been coloured with a brown-reddish pigment that betrays it has been in the hands of a child or children at least some time during its 'active life'.

Although Kiyonaga duly introduced the canonical episodes, Eisen in the earlier mentioned 'educational' *gōkan Osana etoki kojō soroe* (that introduced the Koshigoe letter) expresses frustration with the pictorial tradition and thereby draws attention to its authority. He replaced the mythical *tengu* by monkeys both in the illustration inside the first volume and on the covers, that form an attractive diptych (fig. 1.19). In the illustration of Tokiwa and her three sons (Imawaka, Otowaka and Ushiwaka) in the snow, Eisen comments: 'Imawaka should actually not be in this picture, but for the time being, I will abide to the conventional [way of depicting the] image'. He probably mistook Imawaka for the young Yoritomo, who was not Tokiwa's son and was already sent to a temple in Kyushu. As to the Ezo legend, Eisen the critical author/educator and Eisen the print artist was either in conflict with himself or chose to present different options to illiterate and literate audiences. Following the main episodes of Yoshitsune's successful military career (combined with the



Fig. 1.19 Ikeda Eisen, *Osana etoki kojō soroe*, 1830s/1840s. WKD

last chunk of the Koshigoe letter), he states that the Ezo legend is probably not true. Yet at the end of the book, we find a huge sailing boat carrying Yoshitsune, Shizuka, their child and a large group of retainers to Ezo. The last page shows three Ainu who are worshipping at a rural Shinto temple. These are the two options for representing the Ezo legend as seen in *nishiki-e* and *kusazōshi*. The pictorial information is thus true to both the iconographic tradition and the idea that Yoshitsune went to Ezo. The confident replacement of the *tengu* moreover gives the other pictures an air of truthfulness. Eisen even invented an extra image in which we see Yoshitsune, Shizuka, and Benkei (carrying the child on his back) leave the burning Takadachi castle in Hiraizumi, where they should have perished.

In Bakumatsu period *gōkan*, Yoshitsune was increasingly placed within an ideological framework that makes him a tragic victim of a petty strife, and at the same time a hero who represents a powerful Japan that can lord over others. As discussed in section five of this chapter, the Koshigoe petition as a primer represented a moral lesson about (Kajiwara's) slander and (Yoritomo's) bad judgement, which in the context of commoner education could be applied to social interaction and household management. The Kajiwara trope thrived in a

context of revenge stories and *gōkan* occupied with the theme of *zen'aku* 善悪 (good and evil). Yoshitsune was moreover attractive as a hero because he was an outsider to the Kamakura government – that represented the roots of the inept Bakufu. The preface of *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 義経一代記 (1857) by Kisekitei Shigeyama 奇石亭重山 (?-?) and Utagawa Yoshitora 歌川芳虎 (1836-1880) stresses that Yoshitsune is amongst those heroes in Japan and foreign lands who sacrificed themselves for the country.¹⁶⁹ Yoshitsune got rid of Kiso Yoshinaka and the Heike clan for the Emperor's peace of mind and he liberated the people (*banmin* 萬民) from their suffering. However, Kajiwaras's slander caused Yoritomo's appreciation of Yoshitsune's merits to turn into resentment, upon which Yoshitsune had nowhere to go but Ōshū. 'Heroic boys (*gikiyūkan no wakagotachi* 義気勇敢の児童衆) will naturally feel pity for Hōgan [Yoshitsune] and despise Kajiwaras', the author states. The preface stages Yoshitsune as a hero who tried to restore order for the greater good with the emperor's fiat but who was thwarted by a man with a personal grudge. Although the consequent prose text describes the reverse oars incident and the two men almost coming to blows in some detail, Yoshitsune's 'tragic downfall' is in fact overshadowed by descriptions and impressive images (representing Kabuki actors) of his successful martial exploits, epitomizing in Yoshitsune's lordship over Ezo. Different from the exotic fantasy that represented Ezo in the second half of the eighteenth century, in this *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 'the king of Ezo' is lying prostrate for Yoshitsune, and according to the text his descendants will continue to worship Yoshitsune as the deity Gikurumi.

Ivan Morris in *The Nobility of Failure* argues that Yoshitsune's survival legends were 'never accepted as part of the main legend, whose central theme is that the hero, far from surviving or succeeding, is fated by his sincerity and lack of political acumen to die at an early age as a glorious failure.'¹⁷⁰ Morris finds the roots of Yoshitsune as the archetype of a tragic hero in *Heike monogatari*, *Gikeiki* and the noh play *Ataka*. In *kusazōshi* however, the *hōgan biiki* sentiment hardly plays a role. The period of Yoshitsune's downfall is represented as a number of thrilling adventures that he with help of his retainers successfully overcomes. (Except for the Ataka barrier episode, Yoshitsune is generally actively involved.) Every

¹⁶⁹ National Diet Library, 207-1117. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10301688> (accessed 24-01-2022)

¹⁷⁰ Morris, *The Nobility of Failure*, 101.

kusazōshi that I have seen ends with Yoshitsune's survival.¹⁷¹ To speak of a multiplicity of legends would be more accurate, and *kusazōshi* show which ones were most widely known and thus comprised the cycle of 'main legends'.

In the early Meiji period, or more specifically the 1880s, Yoshitsune and other warriors were introduced to young children in so-called *mame-bon* 豆本 or 'bean-books' (see fig. 4.3). These were often published alongside booklets that introduce *Momotarō* and other folktales and contain a small selection of famous iconographies with a very short text. Between 1884 and 1891 there appeared moreover at least twenty copperplate-printed *kusazōshi* that introduce Yoshitsune's biography under the established title *Yoshitsune ichidaiki*, or *Yoshitsune kunkōki* 義経勲功記 ('Chronicle of Yoshitsune's Heroic Exploits').¹⁷² Copperplate

kusazōshi were sold side by side with woodblock printed books in Meiji *ezōshiya*.¹⁷³

Although the printing technique is new, like the Edo period *kusazōshi* they represent Yoshitsune's life as a succession of famous episodes and iconographies.

They were specifically intended for children, and

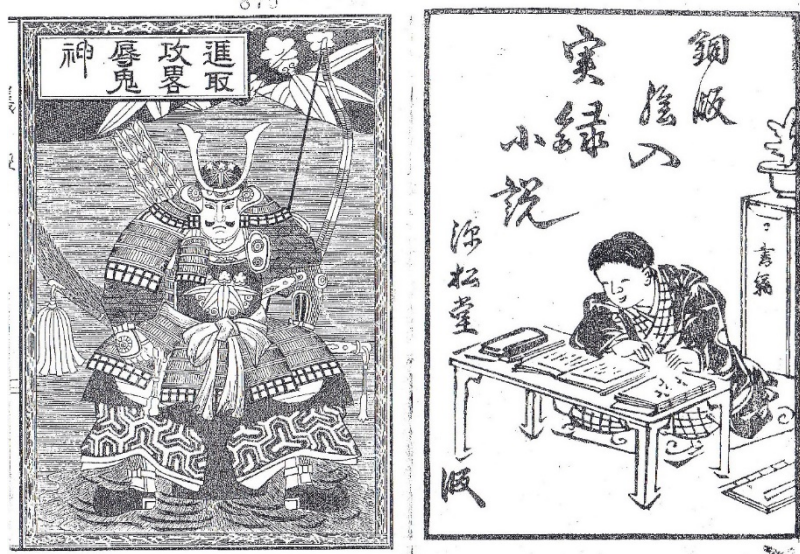


Fig. 1.20 *Ehon jitsuroku Yoshitsune Kunkōki*, 1890. NDL

especially boys, which can be inferred from introductions (where present) and frontispieces.

The publisher of *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* (1884) explains in the introduction that the contents are a summary of Yoshitsune's heroic exploits for children (*dōmō* 童蒙).¹⁷⁴ The frontispiece of *Ehon jitsuroku Yoshitsune kunkōki* 絵本実録勲功記 (1890) shows a boy who is studying at his desk (fig. 1.20).¹⁷⁵ The opposite page shows Yoshitsune who is sitting in a doll-like position

¹⁷¹ Various late Edo period *yomihon* and *kibyōshi* for adults also make use of the Ezo plot. One of the books from the Jizō statue (that precede the Edo *kusazōshi*) ends with Yoshitsune's suicide, but different from illustrations in *Gikeiki*, the reader is spared the sight of the young son who was also killed.

¹⁷² At least twenty different copperplate *kusazōshi* about Yoshitsune are held in the Special Collections of the National Diet Library (Kansai-kan).

¹⁷³ Isobe, 'Dōhan Kusazōshi-Kō', 108. These books have been termed variantly.

¹⁷⁴ *Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 義経一代記, 1884. Edited by Machida Takiji 町田滝司 and published by Kinkōdō 金幸堂. National Diet Library call nr. 特 60-382. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/885228>

¹⁷⁵ *Ehon jitsuroku Yoshitsune Kunkōki* 実録義経勲功記, 1890. Published by Kamata Ariake 鎌田在明. NDL call nr. 特 42-875. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/883655>

and labelled 'Shinshu kōryaku joku kikin' 進取攻略辱鬼神 ('the vengeful fierce god of conquest'). In consequent pages, *Ehon jitsuroku Yoshitsune kunkōki* shows the iconic scene of Tokiwa and the boys in the snow, but otherwise concentrates on the martial exploits of the adult Yoshitsune and his retainers, including a fold-out panorama image (another technical invention) of the battle of Yashima.

The legend of Yoshitsune's kingship over Ezo is still the default ending and its representation ranges from benevolent rule to violent conquest. Various books, including *Ehon jitsuroku Yoshitsune kunkōki* use the word *dojin* 土人 ('natives') instead of 'Ezojin' 蝦夷人 ('barbarians') to refer to the Ainu inhabitants of Hokkaido. This term was introduced by the Bakufu in 1856 and replaced by *kyūdojin* 旧土人 ('former natives') by the Meiji government in 1878 as part of the assimilation of Hokkaido into the Japanese nation-state.¹⁷⁶ *Ehon Yoshitsune ichidaiki* (1886) asserts that the 'Ezojin' happily accepted Yoshitsune as their king as they recognized that the fugitives were not 'average people'.¹⁷⁷ The image shows Yoshitsune as a benevolent ruler who listens to two men with short haircuts, invoking the early Meiji government's ideal of an outer appearance that would make the Ainu more 'civilized' and Japanese. *Ehon Yoshitsune kunkōki* 絵本義経勲功記 (1887) on the other hand shows Yoshitsune cutting down ferociously a bearded inhabitant of Ezo.¹⁷⁸ The copperplate-printed pictorial accounts of Yoshitsune's exploits are generally part of a serialized publication focusing on famous warriors. The sheer number of such books published over a six-year period may reflect an increased interest in introducing the nation's heroic warriors to boys. However, these copperplate-printed *kusazōshi* do not represent a new concept of the young reader or literary genres.

In conclusion, most *ichidaiki*-type books introduced multiple episodes from Yoshitsune's youth and select Ushiwakamaru-iconography for the cover image (if there is one), presumably to attract a young audience. Ushiwaka is represented as a diligent student (while it lasts), and a determined, brave boy. The characters of Kumasaka Chōhan and Benkei contrast with Ushiwaka's small stature and admirable agility, and the sword-fighting with the *tengu* adds a magical touch to his superior fighting skills. The *kurohon/aobon*

¹⁷⁶ Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, 139–40.

¹⁷⁷ *Ehon Yoshitsune kunkōki* 絵本義経勲功記, 1887. Baidō Kunimasa 梅堂国政 (Utagawa Kunisada III, 1848–1920), published by Fukawayaya 深川屋. NDL call nr. 特 60-385. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/884650> See the last page.

¹⁷⁸ *Ehon Yoshitsune ichidaiki* 絵本義経一代記, 1886. Edited and published by Naitō Hikoichi 内藤彦一. NDL call nr. 特 60-383 <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/884646>

Yoshitsune ichidaiki initiated the reader not only into the *Yoshitsune sekai*, but also important live events and social skills such as consideration and loyalty. Humour and personal drama (involving various women) gave the conventional iconographies and narrative elements spice. During the Bakumatsu period, artists continued to revisit the same iconographies, while *Yoshitsune* gained a new metaphorical meaning: on the one hand, as the victim of an ‘inept’ regime, on the other hand, a courageous general and successful colonizer. This mode of representing *Yoshitsune*’s life through iconic episodes in *kusazōshi* continued till the 1880s in *mamebon* and copperplate printed *kusazōshi*.

7. Representations of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Murasaki Shikibu

This section considers two additional parameters in the popular representation of cultural icons, namely variations in childhood dispositions and gender. In this way I aim to come to a deeper understanding of the process of selection and adaptation of cultural icons in the Meiji period. Toyotomi Hideyoshi was different from *Yoshitsune* depicted as a disobedient child, which in modern primary education became an element to carefully avoid, while some commercial authors purposely selected it for adaptation. I have moreover selected Murasaki Shikibu from the premodern canon of *retsujo* 列女 (exemplary women) as she was one of the few historical female characters taken up in the modernizing elementary school curriculum.

7.1 Hiyoshimaru, a difficult boy

The most influential premodern biography of Hideyoshi was the twenty-two-volume *Taikōki* 太閤記 (‘Chronicles of the Regent’) by Oze Hoan 小瀬甫庵 (1564-1640), first published in 1625. In line with his Confucian background, Hoan examined history for the moral lessons it can provide and argued that despite Hideyoshi’s extraordinary rise to power, his ruthless actions in later life cost him the support of heaven.¹⁷⁹ In other words, the Toyotomi lost from the Tokugawa because Hideyoshi knew how to win but not how to rule. For a popular audience, the appeal of the narrative lay in Hideyoshi’s rise from impoverished surroundings to unifier of Japan, his courage, and his bold personality.¹⁸⁰ An illustrated version titled *E-iri Taikōki* 絵入太閤記 appeared in 1698. During the eighteenth century,

¹⁷⁹ Boot, ‘Het Voortleven van Hideyoshi’, 88–90.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, ‘The Trouble with Hideyoshi’, 286.

Taikōki was performed by professional storytellers and Hideyoshi (under the name Mashiba Hisayoshi) appeared in jōruri and kabuki plays. Just before the turn of the century, the adapted and illustrated *Ehon Taikōki* 絵本太閤記 (1797-1802) inaugurated a ‘Hideyoshi boom’, much to the displeasure of the authorities.¹⁸¹ The publication of various parodic or otherwise ‘presumptuous’ prints led to one of the most famous cases of censure in the Edo period.¹⁸²

Hideyoshi’s rise in the world (*shusse* 出世) and his bold personality continued to appeal to the popular imagination during the nineteenth century. Iconographies developed based on illustrations in *Ehon Taikōki* and a later work, *Ehon Toyotomi kunkōki* 絵本豊臣勲功記 (1855-1884), both forming the inspiration for *gōkan* such as *Kanayomi Taikōki* 仮名読太閤記 (1871) and other *kusazōshi*. The main episodes represented in picture-oriented publications are a) Hideyoshi’s auspicious birth, b) his misbehaviour at the temple where he is supposed to study, c) his encounter with the samurai Koroku Masakatsu on Yahagi bridge in Okazaki, d) his apprenticeship to the lord of Ōmi, Matsushita Yukitsune, and e) his service to Oda



Fig. 1.21 Jōno Saigiku, Utagawa Yoshitora, *Kanayomi Taikōki*, 1871. WKD

Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534-1582), initially as a sandal-bearer but gradually climbing the ranks.

Hideyoshi’s childhood name was Hiyoshimaru 日吉丸, and like Benkei he was depicted as an extremely badly behaved boy. *Ehon Toyotomi kunkōki* and *Kanayomi Taikōki* depict him smashing an Amida Buddha statue (fig.

1.21), the reason being that the

¹⁸¹ *Ehon Taikōki* was easier to read and contained new illustrations to appeal to a wider audience. The text inspired playwrights to write various new *Taikōki*-themed jōruri and kabuki plays, and also the original *Taikōki* was re-issued. See Davis, 286–87.

¹⁸² E.g., Davis, ‘The Trouble with Hideyoshi’. The Tokugawa government censored representations of the origins of its rule, but *Taikōki* had (safely) not touched upon the sensitive issue of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s betrayal of Hideyoshi’s heir and the eradication of the Toyotomi clan and their followers. The publication of *Ehon Taikōki* was initially also allowed. The law forbade publications about the ruling families, which did not apply to Hideyoshi as he had no official descendants. However, after the work had inspired print artists to use Hideyoshi in parodic works that might be read as a critique on the decadence of the shogun, both the prints and *Ehon Taikōki* were censored.

statue did not eat the food offerings. Of course, Hiyoshimaru is sent back to his family, but he leaves the house and starts roaming. While sleeping on Yahagi bridge in Okazaki, he is woken by Hachisuka (Koroku) Masakatsu 蜂須賀正勝 (1526-1586) and his underlings. Hiyoshimaru chooses to pick a fight rather than to move aside. This scene is depicted in *Ehon Taikōki* and appears in illustrations and on the covers of various *kusazōshi* (fig. 1.22), as



Fig. 1.22 *Ehon Taikōki*, 1888. Private collection

well as Iwaya Sazanami's work (see fig. 3.15 and 3.16). The popularity of this scene is in all probability related to the Gojō bridge episode in Ushiwakamaru legend. The connection is made explicit at least once, in a 1861 print by Utagawa Yoshitsuya 歌川芳艶 (1822-1866). This triptych shows the Yahagi bridge episode, yet Hiyoshimaru is tagged Onzōshi Ushiwakamaru, and Koroku is tagged with the name of Yoshitsune's retainer Ise Saburō.

The three-volume *Hiyoshimaru tanjōki* 日吉丸誕生記 (1867) focuses on Hideyoshi's younger years. The books are explicitly aimed at children and show the Yahagi bridge scene on the covers, forming a

triptych. In the preface, ornamented with lucky symbols related to the New Year, the author compares the work to an *otogibanashi* お伽噺 (folktale or fairy tale – see chapter 3.5) and he hopes that children will enjoy it. The first book introduces how Hiyoshimaru is sent to learn *tenarai* at the temple, but does not listen to the priests, incites other children to join his mock battles, and wrecks the Amida statue. After picking a fight on Yahagi bridge and shortly serving Koroku, he starts his first apprenticeship at age fifteen to (Imagawa) Matsushita Yukitsune. The image shows how the obstinate Hiyoshimaru is being grabbed by his hair and just got a slap on the wrist (fig. 1.23). In the last booklet, Hideyoshi (then called Tōkichirō) has come into direct service of Oda Nobunaga. It introduces two important



Fig. 1.23 Ryūtei Senka, Utawaga Yoshiharu, *Hiyoshimaru tanjōki*, 1867. ARC

anecdotes about the way in which he climbed the ranks. First, different from other servants, he was stand-by in the early morning, anticipating Nobunaga's early departure. Second, he built a castle almost overnight, which greatly elevated his position in the eyes of his master.

Hideyoshi's remarkable social ascendance connected well to the (early) Meiji period ideal of 'rising in the world' (*risshin shusse* 立身出世), although the reception of Hiyoshimaru legends differed based on variant modern ideals of childhood.

7.2 The *retsujo* Murasaki Shikibu

The early modern tradition also offered an abundance of legends about exemplary women (*retsujoden* 列女伝). This concept originates in the Chinese *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 ('Categorized Biographies of Women') first compiled by the scholar Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-6 BCE). Following the introduction of these texts in Japan in the seventeenth century, compilations of Japanese exemplary women appeared, based on ideals from Confucian and Buddhist worldviews. An iconography moreover developed of the most popular exemplary women, and *retsujoden* appeared in *ōraimono* for girls. Murasaki Shikibu was one of these women.

Naito Satoko observes that although *Genji monogatari* was a controversial work in the context of a female audience in the early modern period, its author Murasaki Shikibu was generally prized for her many feminine virtues.¹⁸³ In *Honchō bijin kagami* 本朝美人鑑 ('Mirror

¹⁸³ Naito, 'Beyond The Tale of Genji'. The *Genji* was on the one hand seen as a text that could instruct women in *waka* and aristocratic etiquette. On the other hand worries existed about the sexual content, which is all very implicit, but drew the attention of moralists because of the 'sexualization' of the work in seventeenth-century popular print. See Kornicki, 'Unsuitable Books for Women?'

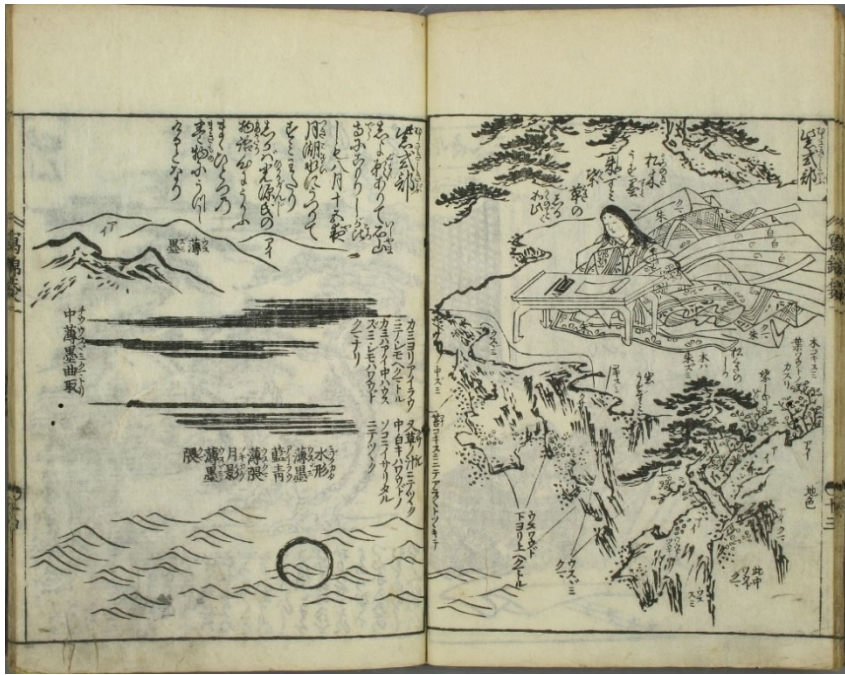


Fig. 1.24 Tachibana Morikuni, *Ehon shahō bukuro*, 1770. The texts instruct amateur painters in painting this scene, that depicts Murasaki Shikibu at the moment *Genji monogatari* occurred to her while looking at the full moon reflecting in the lake (Biwa) and trusting it to paper. WKD

of Beauties of our Land', 1687), a compilation of *retsujoden*, Murasaki Shikibu is praised for her beauty and intelligence. Moreover, she is depicted as a loyal widow as she did not remarry after the death of her husband.

According to legend, she started writing the *Genji* at Ishiyamadera, which stresses her devoutness and indirectly countered

another popular legend that she ended up in hell for writing lascivious 'fabrications'. There was in some compilations also praise for Murasaki Shikibu as a historian, by placing the *Genji* alongside Japanese and Chinese classical histories. A last interpretation highlighted by Naito is the idea of Murasaki Shikibu as the mother and teacher of Izumi Shikibu, or her daughter Daini no sanmi, which places her at the head of a lineage of female literati. These tropes can be found in various degrees of detail (depending on the ideological or religious orientation of the text) in the early modern compilations of *retsujoden* and instructional texts specifically written for girls and women (*jokunmono* 女訓物). Naitō concludes that 'the accolades given the author, paradoxically, do not derive from the substance of her work'.¹⁸⁴ In the next chapter, we will see that this tendency was equally present in Meiji and Taishō period elementary education.

¹⁸⁴ Naito, 'Beyond The Tale of Genji', 77.

In popular print, Murasaki Shikibu was often depicted writing the first chapters of the *Genji* at Ishiyamadera (fig. 1.24). Another well-known iconography is based on a portrait attributed to Kanō Takanobu 狩野孝信 (1571-1618), displayed at this same temple. In the nineteenth century, pilgrims who visited Ishiyamadera could buy woodblock printed copies of this image (fig. 25). Different from



Fig. 1.25 *Ishiyamadera genji kan murasaki shikibu eisan*, 19th c. The object on the left represents Murasaki Shikibu's legendary inkstone, a treasure displayed at Ishiyamadera. WKD

Hideyoshi and Ushiwakamaru, no specific legends or iconographies developed around her childhood. As mentioned earlier, there is however a tendency in biography-like *kusazōshi* to depict the protagonist as a 'terakoya student' at the beginning of the narrative. This especially makes sense for literati (male and female). *Shinpan Murasaki Shikibu* 新版紫式部 (ca. 1749) shows young Fuji (Murasaki) Shikibu reading a text under the guidance of her father

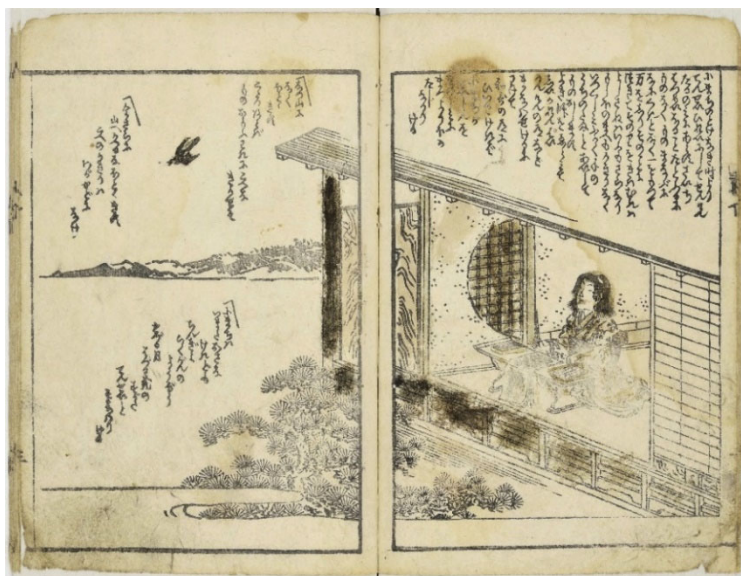


Fig. 1.26 *Ono no Komachi ichidaiki*. Although some of Ono no Komachi's poems are represented on the left, the smudged paper, and the writing example next to it, represent the humble childhood practice of copying. ARC

Tametoki, while a third character called Yabase no Rokurō (who may be her brother) also attends.¹⁸⁵ The text relates that she was 'learned and intelligent from youth, and she delighted in reading'. As mentioned earlier, also Ushiwakamaru has been depicted and described as a child engaged in diligent study. An undated *kusazōshi* about Ono no Komachi's life shows the famous poet practicing *tenarai* as a girl

¹⁸⁵ Kimbrough, 'Murasaki Shikibu for Children', 34.

(fig. 26), and Ariwara no Narihira is shown in a *terakoya*-like setting in the first spread of *Utagaruta*.¹⁸⁶ The setting of study was appropriate for displaying Murasaki Shikibu's talents, but also an iconography that represented the important childhood event of partaking in literacy education.

8. Conclusion

The subject of Edo period books specifically aimed at children has been treated with caution in the greater scheme of Japanese literature, as the appearance of *modern* children's literature is closely connected to paradigmatic changes in the perception of children and childhood during the Meiji period. Proceeding from an idea of plurality of concepts of childhood rather than a linear development towards 'the' modern concept, I addressed Edo period notions of childhood and practices surrounding children, with a focus on the part of society that had access to literacy education and popular print culture.

The household was the main place of socialization for children. According to the metaphysical concept of the household (*ie*), the male heir formed a chain between the ancestors and the future of the household. Although the state or lower authorities created some basic laws for the protection of children, they did not conceptualize children as a group in society in need of state-led education and intervention programs. From a Confucian viewpoint, the period of childhood was crucial for the development of moral judgement and social skills. The most central virtue, namely filial piety, was a relational concept of childhood that applied to one's whole life, beginning with household chores and proper etiquette in childhood. On an imaginative level, childhood was conceived of as a space of freedom differentiated from the norms of adult society. Children appeared as an auspicious motif in *nishiki-e*, including embellished representations of a 'prosperous household' in the form of a beautiful mother and healthy son. The motif of childlike boisterousness might also be read as a representation of the Edokko identity.

Health being the focus of a child's early years, literacy provided further security for the continuation of business and the *ie*. Decisions about literacy education were generally made by the household head, based on family occupation, social and economic position, but also the birth order and gender of the child. I have furthermore shown that despite the

¹⁸⁶ Moretti, *Recasting the Past*, 42–45.

absence of a specific genre in booksellers' catalogues, the government, publishers, and authors imagined children to be the audience of books for leisure reading, and as having a specific interest in warrior legends (or history), folktales and pictures. The use of 'you kids' to mockingly refer to an adult male audience as well as the Bakufu's anger about 'fake children's books' can hardly be understood if the referent did not actually exist. Literacy education also appears as a common element of the lives of famous icons as introduced in books for children. Both educational texts (*ōraimono*) and *kusazōshi* introduce literati like Murasaki Shikibu and Sugawara Michizane as exemplary children who diligently practiced *tenarai* in their youth. A recognizable *terakoya*-like setting might also be used to display the protagonists' defiant character.

Next to the attainment of literacy, represented in text for children are the virtues of loyalty, filiality and harmony between siblings. Although the curriculum was not orchestrated by the state, the extant body of *ōraimono* reflects the ethics and cultural knowledge at the core of (commoner) society. The Koshigoe letter as a late Edo period educational text contained a message about slander and good judgement that was relevant in the context of social interaction and the maintenance of the household, even if the learner was not of samurai status. Also in *kusazōshi* Yoshitsune was presented as a worthy heir who helped to bring his clan back to power, and who continued to be supported by his loyal retainers even as a *persona non grata*.

During the Bakumatsu period and the early Meiji period, Yoshitsune in *kusazōshi* was represented as a powerful Japanese hero who eventually conquered Ezo, reflecting frustration with the inept Bakufu, as well as imperialistic ideals. Moreover, representations of Hiyoshimaru/Hideyoshi seem partial to the ideal of *shusse* or 'rising in the world'. Loyalty (to Oda Nobunaga) is still presented as a virtue, yet representations of the unruly Hiyoshimaru in late Edo period and early Meiji period *kusazōshi* seem to challenge the ideal of the good son and heir. Whereas *ōraimono* teach that the feudal status system reflects the natural state of the world, and depictions of a wild young Benkei or Kumasaka Chōhan hardly imply a challenge of the system, Hiyoshimaru's unruly behaviour can be connected to a significant change of status. In the 1890s, Iwaya Sazanami would develop this narrative (and imagery) into one of the most convincing metaphors of his ideal Meiji boy, as will be discussed in chapter three.

Although there was no concept of a separate literary genre for children in the Edo period, the discussed books show a degree of sensitivity to what children would enjoy. The childhood adventures of Yoshitsune were clearly recognized as relevant, inspiring, and amusing for children. He was depicted as a brave boy and successful general, whereas the *hōgan biiki* sentiment is largely absent. Ushiwakamaru's sword-practice with the *tengu*, his fight with Kumasaka Chōhan, and his fight on Gojō bridge with Benkei were the three most commonly represented plots from Yoshitsune's youth and established him as a small, agile fighter. The visual representation of these plots, so pivotal to the creation of new narratives in plays and other representations in popular culture, should be included in our understanding of books for children in the 'long Edo period', and the process of adaptation in the 1890s onwards. The printed books teach children the repeated plots and iconographies central to popular culture, but also invited the reader to engage with them 'creatively' by employing humour, introducing recognizable (anachronistic) settings, and elaborating upon various emotions: joy, grief, or admiration for heroic action. However, (a degree of) character development and/or a narrative focusing solely on the protagonists' youth was apparently inconceivable without new conceptual and literary tools.