

BEYOND *THE GREATER LEARNING FOR WOMEN*:
INSTRUCTIONAL TEXTS (*JOSHIYŌ ŌRAI*) AND NORMS FOR WOMEN
IN EARLY MODERN JAPAN

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Beyond *The Greater Learning for Women*: Instructional Texts (*Joshiyō ōrai*) and Norms for
Women in Early Modern Japan

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This thesis aims to further our understanding of norms and education for women in early modern Japan by investigating exemplary women and the practice of reading and writing by women discussed in *joshiyō ōrai* 女子用往来, published primers written for women in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). I argue that social expectations for women constantly changed in Tokugawa Japan due to multiple social forces such as the rise of commercialism, increased literacy, and the nuclearization of peasant families. As a result, some acts that were considered unconventional in the early years came to be justified in the later years as acts that conformed to sanctioned values of chastity, filial piety, and moral cultivation. I also demonstrate that conforming to those social norms enabled some women to be active outside the home and household and, in some cases, ironically enabled them to deviate from the social norms of their time.

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INTRODUCTION

The progressive view of history has long cast a negative light on *joshiyō ōrai* 女子用往来, published primers written for women during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868).¹ Ever since Japan's modernization took off in full force in the late nineteenth century, progressives have viewed the ideals for women articulated in *joshiyō ōrai* as the very reason Japan was “backward” compared to “the West.” This is because women's status was one of the yardsticks used to measure modernity. In the light of the ideal “modern woman,” who is free-willed, independent, and political, everything was wrong about the image of the ideal woman depicted in *joshiyō ōrai*—she seemed subservient to men, dependent on others, and ignorant of politics and society.

As a consequence of this view, intellectuals of the Meiji period harshly criticized *joshiyō ōrai*. Perhaps the best-known denunciation was that of Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1834-1901), the leading progressive intellectual of the Meiji period. In his *Shin Onna daigaku* 新女大学 (New Greater Learning for Women), he castigated *Onna daigaku* 女大学 (Greater Learning for Women), one of many *joshiyō ōrai*, and took it upon himself to rewrite it into a modern version. He summarizes his commentary by saying that Japanese men during the early modern period “not only treated women coldly and ignored them, but also indulged in nymphomania and therefore abused and humiliated their spouses. There was no one in society that reproached such behavior; rather, the social principles then called those subservient women wise wives and virtuous women.”² Fukuzawa then proposes to completely rid Japan of the “feudal relics” by stating that *Onna daigaku* was “once an apt instrument, today a [useless] artifact.”³

¹ Some scholars (like Ishikawa Ken) call them *joshiyō ōraimono* while others (like Koizumi Yoshinaga) call them *joshiyō ōrai*. This paper uses the latter.

² Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Onna daigaku hyōron • Shin onna daigaku* (1899; reprint, Tokyo: Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko, 2001.), 84-85.

³ *Ibid.*, 85.

In later years, many intellectuals referred to *Onna daigaku*—which now became the sole representation of *joshiyō ōrai*—for the purpose of condemning the “evil” practice of gender inequality that had spanned the early modern-modern divide. Yamakawa Kikue 山川菊栄 (1890-1980), an activist of the feminist movement in the twentieth century, laments the custom of concubinage during the Tokugawa period: “Fukuzawa’s condemnation of men for taking advantage of this situation is to the point. The sexual morality of men of the time was indeed very low.”⁴ Katō Shidzue 加藤シヅエ (1897-2001), an influential feminist and a politician, writes in her autobiography about how during her childhood she received *Onna daigaku* as a gift from her grandfather, but, as time went by, she developed rage against it: “But later, when I realized what was written in the manuscript, I could not help revolting against the conception of woman disclosed in this book. It was the epitome of all I have had to struggle against—the moral code which has chained Japanese women to the past.”⁵ Contemporary Japanese and non-Japanese have adopted these attitudes as well. Anthropologist Jennifer Robertson claims in her article that “Kaibara Ekken’s (貝原益軒) widely circulated, consulted, and cited *Onna daigaku* (Greater Learning for Women, 1762) epitomized the misogyny of the Tokugawa social system and its spokespersons.”⁶

While it is indisputable that during the Tokugawa period *joshiyō ōrai* assisted women of all social statuses in familiarizing themselves with gender hierarchy, the overemphasis on this

⁴ Yamakawa Kikue, *Women of the Mito Domain: Recollection of Samurai Family Life*, trans. Kate Wildman Nakai (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 108. Yamakawa wrote this book in 1940s, when leftist intellectuals and academics were under constant surveillance by the state police. Nakai explains in the introduction to *Women of the Mito Domain* that such social circumstance probably explains why Yamakawa chose to rely on quotes of Fukuzawa Yukichi rather than her own observations to criticize *Onna daigaku* (xxii).

⁵ Ishimoto Shidzue, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 38.

⁶ Jennifer Robertson, “The Shingaku Woman: Straight from the Heart,” in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, edited by Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 91. For a long time Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714) had been believed to be the author of *Onna daigaku*, but there is no clear evidence that he was the author.

single aspect (as well as the negative assessment placed on it) seems to have deemphasized the historical value of *joshiyō ōrai*. A close and comprehensive reading of *joshiyō ōrai* is crucial in order to situate them properly within early modern culture and intellectual history. And by doing so, it becomes possible not only to do justice to *joshiyō ōrai*, but also to learn from *joshiyō ōrai* what the moral landscape for women was like in the Tokugawa period, a moral landscape that was constantly shaped and re-shaped by social forces, such as rise of commercialism, rise of popular literacy, and changes in family structure. This study aims to further our understanding of Tokugawa women's norms and education by investigating exemplary women depicted in *joshiyō ōrai* (Section One) and the practice of reading and writing by women discussed in *joshiyō ōrai* (Section Two).

The questions this paper asks are as follows: 1) what exactly are the norms for women's behavior discussed in *joshiyō ōrai*? Did they remain the same throughout the Tokugawa period or did they change over time?; and 2) how do Tokugawa women's autonomy and agency come into play in this picture? The argument of this paper is twofold. One is that social expectations for women—specifically in the realm of behaviors and literary skill—constantly changed during the Tokugawa period. Some acts that are considered unconventional in the early years of the Tokugawa period (such as learning to read and write a substantial amount of *kanji*, working in public, and using violence as a form of redress) come to be justified in the later Tokugawa period as acts that conformed to sanctioned values of chastity, filial piety, and moral cultivation. The other is that conforming to those social norms enabled some women to be active outside the home and household and, in some cases, ironically enabled them to deviate from the social norms of their time. The present study contributes to the existing scholarship on *joshiyō ōrai* by demonstrating the fluid nature of orthodox norms during the Tokugawa period.

Historiography

Historically, *joshiyō ōrai* enjoyed a broad circulation in cities as well as in the provinces. They were published in major cities, such as Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Sendai, and Mito. There is no record of how many women of which status group read what kind of *joshiyō ōrai* or how high the demand for *joshiyō ōrai* was in rural areas, but some depictions of women reading *joshiyō ōrai* are present in biographies and recollections, such as Yamakawa Kikue's *Women of the Mito Domain*. And more than anything, just the fact that more than 1,000 texts of *joshiyō ōrai* are extant allows us to assume that they were at least widely read.

These *joshiyō ōrai* that have survived to date have been carefully compiled and categorized by historians. While there are some comprehensive works on *joshiyō ōrai* in Japanese, in Western scholarship the topic remains understudied. There are some articles that tap into the source base from the standpoint of educational history, literary history, or women's and gender studies, but an in-depth study of *joshiyō ōrai* has not yet been done.

Joshiyō ōrai's basic historiographical and categorical frameworks were first established by a group of educational and literary historians in the early decades of the twentieth century. Although the first catalogue of *ōraimono* 往来物 was Okamura Kintarō's *Ōraimono bunrui mokuroku* 往来物分類目録, *joshiyō ōrai* were largely omitted from this work.⁷ In order to address this omission, Ishikawa Ken published *Joshiyō ōraimono bunrui mokuroku* 女子用往来物分類目録 in 1946.⁸ This is the first comprehensive catalogue of *joshiyō ōrai*, which laid the groundwork for later studies. Ishikawa made three major contributions with this work. One is that he catalogued a total of 1,106 *joshiyō ōrai*. Ishikawa says in the preface that as of 1946,

⁷ Okamura Kintarō, *Ōraimono bunrui mokuroku* (Tokyo: Keimeikai Jimusho, 1922). *Ōraimono* are primers that existed from the late Heian period until the early Meiji period. *Joshiyō ōrai* is a subgroup of *ōraimono*.

⁸ Ishikawa Ken, ed., *Joshiyō ōraimono bunrui mokuroku: Edo jidai ni okeru joshiyō shotō kyōkasho no hattatsu* (Tokyo: Dainihon Yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1946).

more than 500 types of *joshiyō ōrai* were known to exist; if all editions were included, the number increases to 1,106. Ishikawa explains that out of 6,600 *ōraimono* he looked through, he catalogued 1,106 that obviously catered to women or to both men and women. He judged the latter based on style and prose of the textbooks; he assumed that women most likely read the ones written in *kana*. Ishikawa excluded from the catalogue the textbooks which women possibly read but whose style, prose, and context showed they were not specifically aimed at women.

Another contribution of Ishikawa is his establishment of four categories of *joshiyō ōrai*. They are: *kyōikuka* 教訓科 (morals guides), *shōsokuka* 消息科 (letter-writing guides), *shakaika* 社会科 (social guides), and *chiikuka* 知育科 (intellectual guides). Morals guides are texts with strong emphasis on moral cultivation and instructions on proper ways of rearing children. Some texts that are considered as morals guides are *Onna imagawa* 女今川 (1687), *Onna kyōkai kojidan* 女教誡古事談 (?), and *Onna kyōkun bunshō nyohitsu* 女教訓文章女筆 (1694). *Onna kyōkun bunshō nyohitsu* could be considered as a letter-writing guide, but since it has a strong moral component it falls under the category of morals guides. Letter-writing guides are texts that provide the reader with examples of sentences she can use in letters she customarily sends out for certain social occasions such as an acquaintance's marriage. Some of them are *Nyohitsu kana bunshō* 女筆かな文章 (1802) and *Nyohitsu tehon* 女筆手本 (1670). Social guides are mostly instructions on poetry: *Onna kasen* 女歌仙 (1658) and *Tanabata no shiika* 七夕の詩歌 (?). Lastly, intellectual guides consist of texts on intellectual development like history and geography: *Nyoyō tsuzuki bunshō* 女用続文章 (1787) and *Miyako meisho zukushi* 都名所尽 (1824). *Nyoyō tsuzuki bunshō* could be categorized as a letter-writing guide, but it probably has more geographical component to it. In this way, *joshiyō ōrai* from different categories can have

many overlaps in terms of content. These categories are still in use by scholars today; they usually focus on one of these categories and do a close study of it. Koizumi Yoshinaga and Amano Haruko, for example, have been the leading scholars of letter-writing *joshiyō ōrai*.

The third contribution is Ishikawa's creation of statistics based on *joshiyō ōrai*'s publication years. This enabled scholars to find out with just a quick glance when in Tokugawa period each category was in demand. Ishikawa's contribution to scholarship of *joshiyō ōrai* is immeasurable; later historians have been building upon Ishikawa's findings and statistics. This paper, too, has benefited greatly from Ishikawa's statistics and graphs of *joshiyō ōrai*'s publication records.

Spurred on by Ishikawa's accomplishment, many educational and literary historians have been working to make *joshiyō ōrai* more accessible as primary sources. Many *joshiyō ōrai* are now available in facsimile and in print. In 1977, Ishikawa Matsutarō (Ishikawa Ken's son) published *Onna daigakushū* 女大学集, in which he compiled *Onna daigaku takarabako* 女大学宝箱 (1716) and its variant editions.⁹ He transcribed them in print and annotated them. In 1980, *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō* 近世女子教育思想 was published.¹⁰ This is a three-volume set of *joshiyō ōrai*; it includes some of the major *joshiyō ōrai* (such as *Himekagami* 比壳鏡, *Onna gakuhan* 女学範, and *Honchō jōkan* 本朝女鑑) that circulated in the early modern period. Many primary sources discussed in this paper are from this work. These republications of *joshiyō ōrai* were followed by *Ōraimono taiki* 往来物大系 (1992-1994), *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu* 江戸時代女性生活絵図 (1993-1994), *Onna daigaku shiryō shūsei* 女大学資料集成 (2003), and *Kinsei*

⁹ Ishikawa Matsutarō, ed., *Onna daigakushū*, vol. 302 of *Tōyō bunko* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977). *Onna daigaku takarabako* was one of the most popular *joshiyō ōrai* that was published and re-published throughout the Tokugawa period.

¹⁰ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980).

ikujisho shūsei 近世育児書集成 (2006).¹¹ Ishikawa Ken's catalogue was also updated in 1996 by Koizumi Yoshinaga, with an addition of *hyakunin isshu* 百人一首 to the original four categories.¹² This catalogue is also online on his webpage called *Ouraimono Club* 往来物倶楽部.¹³ The catalogue was last updated in July 1999, so this is probably the most up-to-date one available. Digital images of many *joshiyō ōrai* (and *ōraimono* in general) are readily available, too, on the websites of university libraries in Japan.¹⁴

Largely as a result of the enhanced accessibility to *joshiyō ōrai* in the last three decades or so, some educational and literary historians of Tokugawa period have begun in-depth study of these textbooks. The first book-length study on *joshiyō ōrai* is Nakano Setsuko's *Kangaeru onna tachi: Kanazōshi kara Onna daigaku* 考える女たち—仮名草子から「女大学」, published in 1997.¹⁵ From her extensive reading of *joshiyō ōrai* from the late medieval period to the mid-eighteenth century, she concludes that it was *yasashisa*, or kindness, that was expected of women in the late medieval period and the early Tokugawa period. Towards the end of the book, she provides an alternative way of seeing *Onna daigaku*; based on the demise of *kakichirashi* 書き散らし (an ornate style of writing) and the rise of a more bold and legible style represented by the style used in *Onna daigaku*, she argues that *Onna daigaku* manifests the shift from the culture of gentleness to a more bold and practical one for women.

¹¹ Ishikawa Matsutarō, *Ōraimono taikēi*, 100 vols. (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1992-1994); Emori Ichirō, ed., *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu*, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1993-1994); *Onna daigaku shiryō shūsei*, 21 vols. (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 2003) and; Koizumi Yoshinaga, ed., *Kinsei ikujisho shūsei*, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 2006).

¹² Koizumi Yoshinaga, ed., *Joshiyō ōrai kanpon sōmokusoku* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1996). *Hyakunin isshu* is a compilation of *waka* where one hundred poets each contribute a poem. The first *hyakunin isshu* was made by Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家 (1162-1241) in the twelfth century. In the Tokugawa period, variant versions of *hyakunin isshu* begin to appear in *joshiyō ōrai*.

¹³ http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/ha/a_r/indexOurai.htm.

¹⁴ See: <http://library.u-gakugei.ac.jp/lbhome/mochi/mochi.html>; and <http://cross.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/>.

¹⁵ Nakano Setsuko, *Kangaeru onna tachi: Kanazōshi kara Onna daigaku* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1997).

Another work that closely examines a genre of *joshiyō ōrai* is Amano Haruko's *Joshi shōsokugata ōrai ni kansuru kenkyū* 女子消息型往来に関する研究 (1998).¹⁶ This work looks exclusively at letter-writing *joshiyō ōrai*, which was a very important sub-genre, and reaches the conclusion that the model handwriting presented in the textbooks changed throughout the Tokugawa period from *kakichirashi* style (that had uneven-sized letters and had the beginning of a sentence in the middle of a page and the rest of the sentence on the sides) to a simpler, more orderly and practical one, with sentences that read from top to bottom, right to left. This is an important finding about women's writing which I will further explore in Section Two of my thesis.

Umemura Kayo's *Kinsei minshū no tenarai to ōraimono* 近世民衆の手習いと往来物 (2002) is a survey of popular education during the Tokugawa period from the standpoint of educational history.¹⁷ Umemura includes *ōraimono* in this work to show that popular literacy steadily increased throughout the Tokugawa period. In terms of women's literacy, it saw a remarkable growth especially in the Hōreki era (1751-1763).¹⁸ Although many scholars mention *joshiyō ōrai* in their works, these three books are perhaps the ones that work most closely with *joshiyō ōrai*.

On the side of Western-language scholarship, one of the first books that mentions *joshiyō ōrai* (although in passing) and women's education is R. P. Dore's *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (1965).¹⁹ Dore discusses samurai women's education as an appendix to a chapter on samurai education. The points Dore makes are as follows: 1) moral education for women was important just as it was for men; 2) *Onna daigaku* taught a woman self-abnegating obedience to her parents,

¹⁶ Amano Haruko, *Joshi shōsokugata ōrai ni kansuru kenkyū: Edo jidai ni okeru joshi kyōikushi no ikkantoshite* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1998).

¹⁷ Umemura Kayo, *Kinsei minshū no tenarai to ōraimono* (Tokyo: Azusa Shuppansha, 2002).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁹ R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

to her husband and, in widowhood, to her son; 3) aggressiveness in women needed to be avoided; 4) arduous training in classical Chinese was not considered necessary; 5) women were not supposed to outwardly display their learning; 6) women enhanced their femininity through acquisition of certain some literary skills; and 7) education of samurai women was conducted at home.

Although Dore acknowledges that he drew these conclusions from limited sources, most of them are confirmed and supported by later scholarship.²⁰ However, nuances of these conclusions are yet to be examined. For example, it is true in some aspects that “*Onna daigaku* taught a woman self-abnegating obedience,” but the term “self-abnegating” remains problematic. That is to say, it remains difficult to determine that women’s obedience to men was necessarily a “self-abnegating” act. Even if it was outwardly “self-abnegating,” it could have been motivated by self-interest, depending on what women would or could obtain in return for complying with the social norm. In that case, can it still be called “self-abnegating”? It is certainly a challenge to examine human emotions and give agency to figures in the past. However, recently scholars who are working on elucidating the relationship between women in East Asia and Confucianism have been tackling this problem and slowly revising the perception of “oppressed women.” Revision of *Onna daigaku* itself is not the central concern of my thesis, but it certainly questions the conventional view of that text. It also rethinks and elaborates more on the third, fourth, and fifth of Dore’s conclusions. Section One partly examines aggressive women who were

²⁰ The following work confirms Dore’s first point: Martha C. Tocco, “Norms and Texts for Women’s Education in Tokugawa Japan,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, edited by Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 193-218. The importance of education for both genders is examined more in depth in scholarship on China: Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Book of Filial Piety for Women Attributed to a Woman Née Zheng,” in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, edited by Susan Mann and Yu-yin Cheng (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 47-69. The third and sixth points are supported in: Nakano Setsuko, *Kangaeru onna tachi*.

considered exemplary. In Section Two, women's increasingly arduous learning of Chinese and display of their learning in the form of art are investigated.

For a time women's education did not seem to receive much attention, most likely because there was an agreement among historians that the Confucianization of Tokugawa society caused greater oppression for women. It is only recently that Martha C. Tocco provided an alternative perspective with her article, "Norms and Texts for Women's Education in Tokugawa Japan." Tocco contributes to scholarship by arguing that prevalence of Confucian education actually benefited women of the Tokugawa period.²¹ Tokugawa Confucianism encouraged all people to be able to read and write; this significantly enhanced women's literacy and eventually led to the emergence of many women working as teachers at local schools. With this article, Tocco opened up discussions for possibilities of seeing Tokugawa norms and textbooks in different terms. The objective of my thesis is similar to that of Tocco's article. This paper intends to rethink women's education in Tokugawa Japan without ignoring conventional and patriarchal aspects of it. The major difference in terms of research focus is that while Tocco attempted to see how *joshiyō ōrai*, represented by *Onna daigaku*, functioned as manuals for acquisition of basic literacy, this paper seeks to scrutinize the nature of the norms articulated in *joshiyō ōrai* by giving close readings of the sources themselves.

Another scholar who works on female literacy and uses some *joshiyō ōrai* as sources is Peter Kornicki. In one of his most recent articles, "Unsuitable Books for Women?," he argues that female literacy was high enough already in early seventeenth-century Japan to create

²¹ Martha C. Tocco, "Norms and Texts for Women's Education in Tokugawa Japan," in *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, edited by Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 193-218.

uneasiness among Confucian scholars.²² He demonstrates this point using Confucian scholars' debate over whether *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 and *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 are suitable books for cultivation of women's moral uprightness or not, and if not, if they should be replaced by Confucian works. The specific *joshiyō ōrai* he uses in this article is *Onna shikimoku* 女式目 (1660); he shows that it encouraged women of all social statuses to be literate in order to "gain access to the *pleasures* that books provide as well as to knowledge."²³

Overall, it seems that many Japanese scholars have been doing close readings of the stylistic changes in *joshiyō ōrai*, while in Western scholarship no comprehensive study has been done on *joshiyō ōrai*. The works that do approach *joshiyō ōrai* do so to measure female literacy. Besides Nakano's work, which argues that *yasashisa*, or kindness, was the main virtue that was encouraged in female readers in the early Tokugawa period, there seems to be no work done on the kinds of values and behaviors that are actually encouraged in *joshiyō ōrai*.

The work that most closely resembles this paper in terms of methodology is Sugano Noriko's study that touches upon the fluidity of official norms as seen in *Kankoku kōgiroku* 官刻孝義録, a list of exemplary people compiled by the Tokugawa bakufu in 1801.²⁴ Sugano points out the strangeness of two female teachers, Yayo and Sayo, being listed as exemplary filial figures in this official record. These women are praised for earning money and supporting their poor and debilitated parents. They refused to marry for this purpose, but this unfilial deed is officially excused in order for them to be filial. Sugano speculates that what Yayo and Sayo

²² P. F. Kornicki, "Unsuitable Books for Women?: *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* in Late Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60 (2005): 147-193.

²³ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁴ Sugano has this article in several books: Sugano Noriko, *Edo jidai no kōkōmono: "Kōgi roku" no sekai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999); Sugano Noriko, ed., *Kankoku kōgiroku* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1999) and; Sugano Noriko, "State Indoctrination of Filial Piety in Tokugawa Japan: Sons and Daughters in the Officials Records of Filial Piety," in *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, edited by Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 170-189.

desired in reality could have been to continue their unwomanly profession. More broadly, Sugano argues that the fact that these women had to be praised as filial figures shows a changing Tokugawa society, in which women came to be increasingly active in the public sphere as teachers. Unlike *Kankoku kōgiroku*, an official record, *joshiyō ōrai* may not always depict official norms. But they may be very useful sources that reflect what was thought to be common sense and commendable behavior among the general populace. As in Sugano's work, this paper aims to tease out the tension between convention and female agency.²⁵

***Joshiyō ōrai* and Neo-Confucianism**

Neo-Confucianism is a much discussed ideological and cultural force that shaped the lives of East Asian men and women. Its discourse on gender roles deserves closer attention here, for it meant far more than just the inferiority of women to men. In Neo-Confucian cosmology, men and women are born with differing human qualities but share the same goal of bringing about a peaceful, self-governing society. In the Neo-Confucian view, men are *yang* (brightness) while women are *yin* (darkness), and men represent Heaven while women represent Earth. Men and women are different, and women are considered inferior to men in some ways, but just as much as women need men, men need women. This is evident in the complementary social roles men and women are expected to play in society. While men are in charge of the public sphere, women manage the household, or the inner world where they nurture children (girls *and* boys).²⁶ In the Neo-Confucian perspective, the extent of one's influence is not restricted to the space in which one resides. In fact, one's seemingly small acts in his/her daily life can affect his/her

²⁵ Most of the *joshiyō ōrai* I use in this paper are included in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu* and *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*. Both of these works have *joshiyō ōrai* in print. Since my current ability to read facsimile copies of *joshiyō ōrai* is limited, I have relied heavily on printed primary sources including these two.

²⁶ The term "public sphere" is a contested notion among scholars specializing in early modern Japanese history. In this context I use it to mean a sphere outside of households.

neighbor and even heaven and earth, going well beyond physical limitations. Acknowledging this perspective is critical in enriching our understanding of women during the Tokugawa period. Women were not necessarily “confined to the home” or “deprived of freedom” for being in the home; rather, by managing the home, they could exert a moral influence that extended outward even to the people outside of their domestic sphere.²⁷ Patricia Buckley Ebrey concisely explains how women, in a Neo-Confucian social context, can affect society through the people around them:

For instance, a daughter-in-law, through her influence within the household, can by degrees transform others, beginning with her relatives and working outward; and the wife of the Son of Heaven (the Emperor), through her influence on her husband, can have an impact that reaches everywhere in the realm. Moreover, *Biographies of Women* supplies many concrete examples of women who transformed the men around them and thus indirectly had an impact on larger political realms.²⁸

In this way, women (as daughters, wives, and mothers) contributed to the shared goal of establishing a peaceful, self-governing society. All in all, Neo-Confucianism does posit that the Way of women is to serve men. Such gender discourse is reiterated in classical texts like the *Analects* as well as in early modern primers like *joshiyō ōrai*. But we must be careful not to equate the condition of women serving men with the idea of women blindly following men. The two conditions may have some overlapping aspects, but they are at the same time substantially different from each other because the former has a connotation of “women supporting, and at times guiding men.” Similarly, “serving men” implies that women are to discipline themselves and cultivate wisdom so as to become men’s competent partners. The practical training ground

²⁷ The same can be said about men. Even when one lived in a certain province, his good or bad deeds could affect the heaven and earth.

²⁸ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Book of Filial Piety for Women Attributed to a Woman Née Zheng,” 48.

to achieve this end was moral education conducted at home. This task, in turn, was entrusted completely to mothers.²⁹

In Japan it was during the Tokugawa period that Neo-Confucianism became prevalent as one of the prominent social forces. In this context *joshiyō ōrai* functioned as effective educational tools for moral education conducted at home. Although *joshiyō ōrai* as a genre had existed in Japan since the Heian period (794-1185), it was not until the rise of a publishing industry during the Tokugawa period that such texts circulated among and were read widely by commoners.³⁰ *Joshiyō ōrai* were initially comprised mostly of letter-writing guides, but during the Tokugawa period they diversified to include moral instruction, social instruction, and practical intellectual enrichment. Publication records of *joshiyō ōrai* indicate that among the four types of *joshiyō ōrai*, morals guides and letter-writing guides were the ones constantly in demand throughout the Tokugawa period.³¹ The morals guides were textbooks that taught Neo-Confucian doctrines, such as the Five Principles, Five Admonitions, and Three Obediences. They conveyed to female readers the social roles they were expected play (as daughters, wives, and mothers), as well as behaviors and qualities proper to those roles (e.g., gentleness, diligence, and cleverness). They also instructed women to acquire practical skills, such as sewing, cooking, and reading and writing. These were the skills that were generally considered necessary for women to work as managers of the house.

²⁹ Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," in *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, edited by Wm Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 325-367 and; Martha C. Tocco, "Norms and Texts for Women's Education in Tokugawa Japan," in *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* edited by Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 201.

³⁰ There existed between 1,000 and 1,500 types of *joshiyō ōrai* during the Tokugawa period. They enjoyed a broad circulation all over Japan, including: Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Gōshū, Sendai, and Mito.

³¹ Ishikawa Ken compiled the publication years of *joshiyō ōrai* to analyze when in Tokugawa period each type of *joshiyō ōrai* was in demand. See: Ishikawa Ken, *Joshiyō ōraimono bunrui mokuroku* (Tokyo: Dainihon Yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1946).

Neo-Confucianism, however, was not a monolithic entity that was transplanted from the continent. Japan, in actuality, was a state that seemed to develop a variant type of Neo-Confucianism. This is made clear in *Women and Confucian Cultures*, a very informative collection of articles that discuss complex development of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in premodern China, Korea, and Japan. In the introduction to this book, Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott agree that “the label ‘Confucian’ proves to be most problematic to historians of Japan, where the influence of the Confucian discourse was most limited in scope and impact.”³² Indeed, many social phenomena in Tokugawa Japan proved to be contrary to or divergent from Confucian social practices. One is that women did not sever their ties to natal families. Confucianism teaches that women’s parents-in-laws are their genuine parents, not their natal parents; therefore, women were to value their parent-in-laws more than their own blood-related parents. This is emphasized in morals guides in Japan as well, but interestingly, many biographies of exemplary women imply that the reality could have been the opposite. The absence of the cult of chastity also bespeaks Japan’s limited importation of Confucianism. In China, prostitution was tolerated until the Qing period (1616-1912) because one’s proper sexual behavior was contingent upon her social status. During the Qing period, however, the central government strictly prohibited consensual illicit sexual intercourse in order to make all commoners equal under the law. Women of all social statuses were therefore expected to “conform to gender roles strictly defined in terms of marriage.”³³ In Japan, such cult of chastity never took root. Prostitution was tolerated until the end of the Tokugawa period, and in fact, they could even be considered chaste and exemplary in certain conditions. In the analysis

³² Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds., *Women and Confucian Cultures*, 5.

³³ Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 5.

of *joshiyō ōrai* that follows, Japan's idiosyncratic importation and development of Confucianism will be discussed.

CHAPTER I: THE TRANSFORMATION OF EXEMPLARY WOMEN

In any period, biography seems to be one of the literary genres that are susceptible to changing values and ideals in society. Perhaps Anne Walthall articulates this point the best using the case of Matsuo Taseko 松尾多勢子 (1811-1894). Through an extensive research of everything she could find on Taseko, Walthall reconstructs the life of a peasant woman who passionately wrote poems, attended tea ceremony meetings, found her core belief in nativism, enjoyed drinking sake, enjoyed sightseeing, and busied herself maintaining and expanding her social network. But in the process of remembering and forgetting, Taseko in popular memory became far from who she actually was. From the Meiji period to the end of World War Two, Taseko was reinvented posthumously in a conservative fashion. As she was remade into the perfect example of “good wife and wise mother,” she was transformed into a figure who always acted in accordance with her husband's wishes—when in fact Taseko was the one that had more authority within the household than her husband did. In sharp contrast to this, in contemporary society Taseko seems to appear in discussions on how to live after the childrearing years, reflecting less Taseko's actual life, and more the needs of a large number of Japanese women readers who struggle to find meaning in their lives in their old age.³⁴ In this way, biographies may not contain accurate historical information of the figures they narrate, but more often than not they say a fair amount about the society in which they were written.

In the early modern period, short biographies of exemplary women were one of the most frequently used didactic methods in moral education. Among *joshiyō ōrai*, too, there are many

³⁴ Anne Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 329-348.

texts that describe exemplary women. Drawing from five biographical *joshiyō ōrai* from different times in the Tokugawa period, this section argues that while in the early period women were praised for their passivity and creation and maintenance of harmony through prayers, in the later period they were praised for manifesting their female virtues, such as gentleness and filial piety, in their own actions and skills. In other words, as time progressed, women needed to be active (meaning they had to actively bring changes to their unfortunate circumstances instead of patiently waiting for Heaven's assistance) and have certain skills in order to demonstrate their virtue. Ironically, in this process some behaviors that were considered unwomanly in the early period, such as taking up weapons, came to be accepted and justified in the later period.

The locus classicus of this genre is *Lienü zhuan* 列女伝 (Biographies of Exemplary Women), written by a scholar named Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 B.C.E.) in Han China (202B.C.E.-8 and 25-220). This book provides examples of good women who bring prosperity to household and to society at large and bad women who bring disarray and conflicts within household and destroy state. Liu used examples of 104 women and categorized them into seven groups: wise mothers, women with discipline, cautious women, chaste women, women who are willing to risk their lives for the sake of principle and chastity, women who solve problems by persuading surrounding people, and lewd and jealous women who bring disaster to society. Liu's objective in writing *Lienü zhuan* was to restore order and principle to the groups of women surrounding Emperor Cheng (51B.C.E.-7B.C.E.). Liu was greatly concerned about the presence of Zhao Feiyan and Zhao Hede, the sisters who were of low birth but were welcomed to the court by the Emperor Cheng because of their beauty. Zhao Feiyan even became the empress. Thinking that the Han Dynasty would follow the path of decline if nothing was done to improve the situation, Liu wrote *Lienü zhuan* to admonish Emperor Cheng. Although *Lienü zhuan* was written for

Emperor Cheng and not for women in general, in later years biographies of exemplary women were usually written for female readers, as Neo-Confucianism spread throughout East Asia.

Lienü zhuan seems to have been introduced to Japan as early as the Heian period, but it did not circulate widely because the patriarchal social structure and culture depicted in *Lienü zhuan* were foreign to Japanese elite society in which women and their families wielded considerable power. It was during the Tokugawa period that social and political change created an audience receptive to *Lienü zhuan*, and it was published and became widely read among the general populace.³⁵ The text was published in classical Chinese for the first time in 1653, and in 1655, a Japanese translation of it, *Kana retsujo den* 仮名列女伝 was published by Kitamura Kigin 北村季吟 (1625-1705), a poet.

Japanese versions of *Lienü zhuan* appeared one after another early on in the Tokugawa period. *Honchō retsujo den* 本朝列女伝 (1668), written by a Confucian scholar of the Matsue domain named Kurosawa Hirotada 黒沢弘忠, clearly follows the style of *Lienü zhuan*; it presents exemplary women categorically. But the major difference is that the exemplary women introduced in *Honchō retsujo den* are all Japanese. Asai Ryōi's 浅井了意 (?-1691) *Honchō jōkan* 本朝女鑑 (1661) is similar in many aspects. In the following pages, some exemplary women who appear in *Honchō jōkan* will be examined.

***Honchō jōkan* 本朝女鑑 (Exemplary Women of Japan)**

An early example of a collection of biographies of exemplary women in Japan is *Honchō jōkan*. The author of this *jōshiyō ōrai* is said to be Asai Ryōi 浅井了意, a monk and a renowned

³⁵ In Japanese scholarship, there exists a compilation of *Lienü zhuan* but not a study of this: Hattori Unokichi, *Koretsujo den, Onna shisho* (Tokyo: Yūhōdō Bunko: 1924).

author of many *kana zōshi* 仮名草子, or popular didactic tales. *Honchō jōkan* follows the similar stylistic pattern as in *Lienü zhuan* and *Honchō retsujo den*. It is divided into five categories: wise women (four women), compassionate women (four women), women who are willing to risk their lives for the sake of chastity and principle (six women), chaste women (three women), and women who solve problems by persuading people around them (four women). *Honchō jōkan* was first published in 1661, then reprinted in 1703. The edition *Honchō jōkan* I consulted is the 1703 edition, but the content remains nearly the same as in the 1661 edition.

The overall impression of the exemplary women presented in *Honchō jōkan* is that they are all very reserved, mild-tempered, and conversant in poetry. It is also notable that out of twenty women that appear in this didactic text, only one is a courtesan. The rest of them are either emperors' wives, emperors' consorts, ladies-in-waiting, or samurai women. Among all the women who appear in *Honchō jōkan*, I will take up Empress Jingū 神功皇后 (?-?), Princess Sotoori 衣通姫 (?-?), Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (701-760, and Kesa Gozen 袈裟御前 (late Heian period) as some examples of ideal women in the mid-seventeenth century.

Empress Jingū 神功皇后 (?-?) is a legendary empress whose life is recorded in *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), the first official history of Japan that narrates the country's history from the mythical past up until the eighth century. She is said to be the wife of Emperor Chūai 仲哀天皇, another legendary figure. My primary concern here is not to discuss whether Empress Jingū truly existed but to analyze why she is selected as one of the exemplary wise women in the early Tokugawa period. As will be examined below, Asai depicts Empress Jingū as a wise woman who is in accordance with the Heavenly way. She made important decisions based on the will of the Heaven, and it was this spiritual strength that was considered exemplary in the mid-seventeenth century.

Empress Jingū's biography pays attention to her political accomplishments in two events: suppression of Kumaso 熊襲 and conquest of the Korean peninsula.³⁶ In the suppression of Kumaso, Empress Jingū plays the role of a wise wife who assisted the emperor in politics. When Emperor Chūai learned that the province of Kumaso refused to pay tribute to him as a form of protest, the emperor was infuriated at this and organized an expedition to Kumaso. Hearing this, Empress Jingū advised him as follows:

“Kumaso is a barbaric province. Hence, you should not be upset by its defiance. There is a remarkable country superior to Kumaso. It lies in the northwest of Japan and it is called Silla. Next comes Koguryo, then comes Paekche. There are many other countries besides these, but you should subjugate these three countries first and make them pay tribute to Japan. If these countries became submissive to Japan, then the people in Kumaso will naturally follow you on their own will.”³⁷

Here Empress Jingū is presented as if she was endowed with the wisdom to know what is best for the Japanese court. But the emperor did not listen to his wife's advice; he continued to attack Kumaso, and in the end he was shot to death by a warrior named Chiriwa. Empress Jingū and Takeshiuchi no Sukune 武内の宿禰, one of the retainers, took the body to a shrine in the province of Nagato in the southern tip of Honshū. From this day onward Empress Jingū ruled in place of the deceased emperor. What she did as the ruler of Japan was not to go immediately to war with Kumaso but to pray for the protection of Heavenly deities:

The empress ascended to the throne from then on. She chose a fortuitous date and cloistered herself in a shrine to accumulate fortune. She prayed for the arrival of various deities. She first prayed for [the protection of] the god of wind and the spirit of Amaterasu enshrined at the shrine in the Sakusuzuisuzu 折鈴五十鈴 district in the county of Watarai 度逢 in the province of Ise. The liason for the god of heaven, the god of the sky, the god of light, as well as the gods of Sokuo 底筒, Nakazu 中筒, and Uwazu 表筒 in the Awagiharatachibana 檍原橘 county of the province of Hyūga 日向 gathered, with the gods of Kashima 香島 shrine and Kandori 香取 shrine as the heads [of all the deities].³⁸

³⁶ Kumaso was one of the clans that opposed the Yamato state. The Kumaso clan is said to be from the southern part of Kyūshū.

³⁷ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 3-4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

With the protection of various deities from many different provinces, Empress Jingū subjugated Kumaso with ease and all people in the province surrendered. Then Empress Jingū proceeded to conquer the Korean peninsula. The method with which she decided to take this action highlights her connection with the will of Heaven.

By the side of a creek in the village of Tamashima 玉島, the empress bent a needle to make it into a fishhook and put food as bait. She then climbed onto a rock in the middle of the creek and said, “If I should subjugate Silla, Koguryo, and Paekche, a fish should eat this.” She threw the bait into the water; she caught a sweetfish.³⁹

On another occasion, she attempted to know the will of Heaven by placing her hair in the water.

“At Kashihi no Ura 檣日の浦, she untied her hair and put her hair in water; her hair split in

two.” The empress took this unnatural phenomenon to mean that she was entrusted by the

Heaven to subjugate the Korean peninsula. The story implies that Empress Jingū’s action to go

on an expedition to the Korean peninsula was not a decision of hers but that of Heaven; she is

solely playing her role as a mediator between Heaven and the people. For this reason, the course

of events that ensue in the story—her trip to the Korean peninsula and the subjugation of Silla,

Koguryo, and Paekche—are realized with ease due to the assistance of Heavenly deities and the

miraculous power with which Empress Jingū was endowed by Heaven. Historically, the voyage

across the Sea of Japan was a daunting venture. Fierce winds that blow across the ocean and the

hostile climate shipwrecked a countless number of ships and boats. Even in the fifteenth century,

when shipbuilding technology was more advanced with the implementation of masts, it took

approximately half a month to a month to cross the ocean.⁴⁰ If this was the case in the fifteenth

century, then in the time when Empress Jingū is said to have existed, it must have taken even a

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ Nakaya Sōju, *Minshū kyūsai to buppō no rekishi* (Tokyo: Ikuhōsha, 2006), 148.

longer time to cross the sea, and the possibility of losing life must have been high. However, due to the heavenly assistance, Empress Jingū accomplishes this task with ease:

In winter, in the tenth month, the god of wind generated a tail wind [for Empress Jingū's ship.] The god of sea caused waves [in the sea]. And a school of gigantic fish, under the order of the dragon god, placed Empress Jingū's ship in between the waves. . . . [Empress Jingū and her army] arrived at the kingdom of Silla in no time.⁴¹

The conquest of the peninsula is also depicted as if it was destined to happen under the order of Heaven. Takeshiuchi no Sukune used one of the gems he received from the god of the sea named Isora to cause flood in Silla. The king of Silla attempted to fight against the Japanese army, but only in vain. He surrendered to Empress Jingū:

“I have heard that in the southwest [of our kingdom] lies the country of god. It is called Nihon (Japan). The ruler of the country is the god; he is called the emperor. I assume that it was destined that you come conquer [our kingdom]. We have fought against you, but with no belief in winning.”⁴²

Hearing what had happened in Silla, Koguryo and Paekche surrendered as well. Empress Jingū's biography concludes with the empress making a triumphant return to Japan, giving birth to her son in the province of Buzen in northern Kyūshū, and suppressing more rebellions within Japan.

Japan's conquest of the Korean peninsula is, of course, fiction. But somehow this story was worth remembering in the early Tokugawa period, although it is unclear whether people understood it as fiction or not. What about this story makes Empress Jingū an exemplary wise woman? Throughout the story, Empress Jingū makes decisions that are in line with the surrounding deities' will. While Emperor Chūai was not able to defeat Kumaso, she successfully suppresses them with the help of the invisible deities. And the invasion of the Korean peninsula was from the beginning to the end assisted by external forces because it was Empress Jingū's mission entrusted to her by the heavenly deities. Empress Jingū was therefore a wise woman

⁴¹ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

because she acted in accordance with Heaven and she made important decisions based on the will of Heaven. Emperor Chūai, on the other hand, could not defeat Kumaso because he let his personal emotions take control of him. It is clear from the story that a woman who is in accord with the will of Heaven was considered ideal.

But not all women had to know the will of Heaven or undertake a major expedition to be exemplary women. In fact, Empress Jingū is almost an anomaly among the women depicted in *Honchō jōkan*. Many other women are praised for their selfless and altruistic behaviors, which create harmony among people and save the unfortunate. Princess Sotoori 衣通姫 (?-?) is one such example. Just like Empress Jingū, she is a legendary figure whose life story differs between *Kojiki* 古事記 (712), the oldest extant official history of Japan, and *Nihon shoki*. In *Kojiki*, she is said to be Emperor Ingyō's 允恭天皇 (mid-fifth century) daughter, who committed a crime by engaging in a sexual act with her blood related brother. The brother was exiled to the province of Iyo 伊予 after the death of Emperor Ingyō; Princess Sotoori later went after him to commit suicide together with her brother. In *Nihon shoki*, however, she is told as one of Emperor Ingyō's consorts. The emperor's primary wife was Princess Sotoori's older sister, which created uneasiness among three of them. Asai uses the story from *Nihon shoki*, not the scandalous one from *Kojiki*.

In *Honchō jōkan*, Emperor Ingyō learns about Princess Sotoori for the first time at a banquet; Empress Oshisakaōnaka 忍坂大中姫, after showing the emperor her dance, informed him of the beauty of her younger sister. She explained that her sister is named Princess Sotoori because her countenance and overall appearance are beautiful to the extent that her body radiates. Driven by curiosity, the emperor sent delegates to welcome Princess Sotoori to the palace. Fearing her sister's wrath, however, Princess Sotoori rejected the offer. As the last resort, the

emperor sent Ikatsuomi 鳥賊津臣, one of his retainers, to the princess. At Princess Sotoori's house Ikatsuomi told her that if she did not come with him to the capital he would be given the death penalty. He then insisted that there was no difference between dying at the capital and dying in Princess Sotoori's yard, so he lay flat in the yard for seven days as a form of protest. He secretly ate food and drank water, but made it seem like he was starving himself to death. Princess Sotoori was tormented—she did not want to anger her sister but she did not want to kill the emperor's retainer either. Learning that the situation was beyond her control, she decided to go to the capital.

Emperor Ingyō was overjoyed to see Princess Sotoori. He built a special building for her just outside of the palace in Fujiwara so that he could keep his wife from knowing the situation while still having Princess Sotoori close to him. But things did not turn out to be as favorable as the emperor hoped; his wife eventually learned about the emperor's secret love for Princess Sotoori. Tormented by being the cause of the emperor's trouble, the princess suggested the emperor build her a palace far away from the capital for her to live. She said as follows: "The empress is enraged at you. She is also furious that I live near your palace. I am in pain for you. Please make a palace far away; I would like to live there."⁴³ The emperor agreed to the suggestion and let Princess Sotoori moved to the new palace in the province of Kawachi 河内 in central Japan, where he visited her once in a while. The story concludes with praise for Princess Sotoori for her ability in poetry. She supposedly wrote many poems to express her love for the emperor. One of them is "It must be a night that my loved one come visit me. Ah, a spider is

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

making a web tonight. (*waga seko ga / kubeki yoi nari / sasagani no / kumo no okonai / koyoi shirushi mo*).⁴⁴

Asai does not explicitly state why Princess Sotoori is considered as one of the wise women. But the plot of the story suggests that it is her altruism that is praised. She assisted both Ikatsuomi and the emperor, and she decided to follow Ikatsuomi to the capital because she wanted to save his life. Also she suggested to the emperor that she live far away from the capital so that the relationship between him and the empress would not deteriorate further. These actions also make her a wise woman because she shows an ability to see through to the heart of things, such as the power conflicts at the court, and come up with the best solution for the surrounding people. She is quite different from Empress Jingū, who is praised for following the will of Heaven and accomplishing her mission to conquer the three kingdoms in the Korean peninsula. She does not summon deities either, like Empress Jingū did. However, her selflessness makes her another type of exemplary woman in the mid-seventeenth century.

Most other women in *Honchō jōkan* are praised for their selflessness like Princess Sotoori. Perhaps the epitome of this is Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (701-760). She was one of the best known historical figures in prewar Japan. In fact, there is a national sanatorium (National Sanatorium Okukōmyōen 邑久光明園) in Okayama prefecture that is named after her. She is a historical figure from the Nara period (710-784), who was the wife of Emperor Seimu 聖武天皇 (701-756) and the mother of Empress Kōken 孝謙天皇 (718-770). She is known to have espoused Buddhism, which is also discussed in *Honchō jōkan*; she built many temples, including those specifically for beggars and sick people. Asai describes in *Honchō jōkan* that it was because of her that the Japanese court at the time enjoyed harmony and prosperity: “The

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12. It was believed that a spider making a web was an omen of a visit by a loved one.

court's rule was upright; there were no subjects who were enraged. All Four Seas equally received the mercy [of the court.] These are all due to the advice [given to the emperor] by the empress.”⁴⁵ Out of many accomplishments Empress Kōmyō is known for, in *Honchō jōkan*, Asai decided to focus on the anecdote about her interaction with a leper to illustrate the depth of her compassion.⁴⁶

According to *Honchō jōkan*, one day Empress Kōmyō heard a voice from above. It said, “the empress should not become arrogant thinking, ‘I have made enough positive causes.’ The benefit of [building] a bath and [helping people] bathe themselves is immeasurable.” The empress was suspicious of the voice at first, but was pleased to undertake this task. She built a bath for people of high and low as she was told, but went beyond the expectation and made a vow to scrub the bodies of 1,000 people. The thousandth person that appeared at the bath was a leper. He had unpleasant odor and was extremely dirty. At the sight of this, Empress Kōmyō said, “How is it that I scrub [your body]?” To this, the leper said, “It is said that your vow does not discriminate between people high and low. If that is the case, then how is it that us lepers are left out from the people [you help]?” The empress was consumed by his words and scrubbed the leper's body. The leper continued as follows:

“We lepers contracted this disease and asked a doctor [to cure it]. We received treatment, but there was no sign of improvement. The doctor said, ‘If you hired a person to suck your pus [from your sores], the disease is sure to be cured.’ But there is no one in the world who is compassionate enough to suck our pus. Now is the time for you, Empress Kōmyō, to sympathize with us with immeasurable compassion. My hope is that you suck the pus from my sores and cure my disease. If you cannot do this, you do not have immeasurable compassion.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁶ Stories of one's compassion measured by his/her interactions with a leper can be seen in many other regions in the world. Though published about 200 years after *Honchō jōkan*, Gustave Flaubert's *The Legend of St. Julian Hospitator* is one such story. This story is dramatically different from the common legend of St. Julian in that in the common legend St. Julian does not interact with a leper: Gustave Flaubert, *Three Tales* (1877; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1961).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

The empress did as she was told, albeit reluctantly. The moment Empress Kōmyō finished her task, the leper's body radiated to reveal his true nature as Ashuku nyorai 阿閼如来.⁴⁸ Ashuku nyorai told the empress, “You need to be humble as to not tell anyone that you scrubbed the body of a leper.” He then soared into the sky. The story concludes with Empress Kōmyō building a temple, which is named after Ashuku nyorai.

Although Empress Kōmyō is a historical figure, her biography is clearly mythologized; there is no evidence of her scrubbing the body of 1,000 people or her sucking the pus of a leper. But the point of her biography is clear: an exemplary woman is one who is compassionate and altruistic to all people she encounters. What was at stake when the leper told Empress Kōmyō to suck his pus was “immeasurable compassion.” As we have seen, Empress Kōmyō decided to follow what the leper told her to do, despite the obvious risk of contracting the disease herself. This selflessness depicted in the story is the same as in the case of Princess Sotoori, who attempted to create harmony among her surrounding people by sacrificing her own happiness. The biographies of Empress Kōmyō and Princess Sotoori therefore show that one did not have to have certain skills or experiences to be exemplary; it was her spiritual strength and inner richness that were of foremost importance.

But inner richness was valued to the extent that sometimes one needed to choose death in order to claim possession of it. This was the case for Minamoto Wataru's 源渡 wife, also known as Kesa Gozen 袈裟御前 (late Heian period), who chose death in order to stay both filial and chaste. According to *Honchō jōkan*, one day Kesa Gozen attended a ceremony for the opening of a bridge. Endō Moritō 遠藤盛遠, the organizer of the event, happened to see her when she raised the blind of her palanquin. He thought that Kesa Gozen was a “woman of rare beauty.”

⁴⁸ Ashuku nyorai, Sanskrit for “Immovable One,” is one of the Five Wisdom Buddhas.

He was “dazzled [by her beauty] and he lost his heart [to Kesa Gozen].” He followed after the palanquin only to find that she was the wife of Minamoto Wataru, his cousin. After pondering from the end of spring to mid-autumn about what to do, he decided to threaten Kesa Gozen’s mother, Koromogawa 衣川:

[Moritoo] went up to the mother and pulled out his sword. He put it on her chest without any hesitation and said, “Although you are my aunt, in my view you are my enemy. You made Kesa Gozen marry Wataru and made me go through agony, which I could not share with anybody. For the last three years, I have attempted to disappear (i.e., die) like dew because of my agony [for my lamentable situation].⁴⁹ This is indeed a case of an aunt murdering her nephew. It is suffocating to live and agonize [over my hopeless love], so I intend to die together with my enemy.” Koromogawa feared for her own life and said as follows: “I did not know that you loved [Kesa Gozen] to this extent. I wonder what to do since Wataru has deprived you [of Kesa Gozen] and taken her [from you].”

Koromogawa then summoned Kesa Gozen to her house. She explained to Kesa Gozen the course of events with Moritoo. This upset Kesa Gozen tremendously because she realized that both her filiality and chastity were at stake. She thought, “One is supposed to be filial to his/her parents no matter what. But it is the way of wife to risk her life for her husband.” After contemplating for a while, she summoned Moritoo and said, “If it is true that your feeling for me is not little, then kill Wataru. We should marry without having any concerns.” Kesa Gozen told Moritoo of the conspiracy she planned out. “I will go home, wash Wataru’s hair, and make him go to bed drunk. He will be sleeping besides a window, with his pillow placed towards the east. Find his wet hair and cut off his head.” Contrary to what she told Moritoo, however, Kesa Gozen, after returning home, soaked her own hair and impersonated her own husband. Past midnight, Moritoo sneaked into Kesa Gozen’s house as he was told and cut off the head of the person, who was lying besides the window with the pillow placed towards the east. He hid the head in his sleeve and carried it home. It was only after he arrived home and saw the head in

⁴⁹ There is a disparity in terms of the duration of Moritoo’s agony. The narration states that he brooded over the situation from “the end of spring to mid-autumn,” but Moritoo tells Kesa Gozen’s mother that he agonized for over three years. It is not clear which was the case.

light that he realized he had in fact killed Kesa Gozen. Moritoo deeply regretted his deed and implored Wataru to kill him. Wataru understood this situation as karmic retribution, and decided to become a monk together with Moritoo. Asai remarks in the end as follows: “It is the way of human being to value *gi* 義 (justice and principle) and treat death lightly. This is the heart of the saying that goes, one should not belittle *jin* 仁 (benevolence) by having an attachment to life.”

In Asai’s view, Kesa Gozen fulfilled this high expectation placed upon human beings.⁵⁰

Kesa Gozen had to choose death because she was caught in between filial piety and chastity. Under Moritoo’s threat, she needed to be with him to stay filial to her mother and save her life. But becoming Moritoo’s partner would have jeopardized her chastity. In order to secure both filial piety and chastity, Kesa Gozen reached the conclusion of choosing death. This is yet another example of selflessness as seen in the cases of Princess Sotoori and Empress Kōmyō. All three of them appear under different categories in *Honchō jōkan* (Princess Sotoori as a wise woman, Empress Kōmyō as a compassionate woman, and Kesa Gozen as a woman of principle), but what they share in common is their highly idealized altruism. In Kesa Gozen’s story, Moritoo is obviously being unreasonable, claiming that Koromogawa is his enemy for arranging the marriage between Wataru and Kesa Gozen, whose existence he came to know *after* Kesa had already wed Wataru. This part of the story setting is slightly different in other biographies of Kesa Gozen that appeared later in the Tokugawa period. In *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* 本朝女二十四孝 (1713), the story is told that Moritoo expressed to Koromogawa his wish to marry Kesa Gozen for a long time, but instead of accepting the proposal, Koromogawa made Kesa Gozen marry Wataru.⁵¹ This version of the story presents a more understandable reason behind Moritoo’s outrageous action, but in *Honchō jōkan*, he is simply a man madly in love with

⁵⁰ *Kinsei jōshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 40-43..

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

an already married woman. This unreasonableness of Moritoo in *Honchō jōkan* further highlights Kesa Gozen's compassion and altruism because she does not treat him with disdain. Rather, she indirectly leads him to the path of enlightenment by making him kill her.

On a side note, Kesa Gozen's relationship with her mother attests to Japan's limited importation of Confucianism. In China, women were supposed to value their parents-in-laws more than their own parents. In *Nüxiaojing* 女孝經 (Book of Filial Piety for Women), Miss Zheng quotes the *Book of Poetry*'s line, "When a woman departs, she distances herself from her parents and brothers."⁵² Some *joshiyō ōrai* show that there were Tokugawa scholars who attempted to promote this idea. In *Onna daigaku takarabako* 女大学宝箱 (1716), the author explains marriage as follows: "For women, their husbands' households are their home. It is for this reason that in China, a woman joining her husband's household is [considered as] 'returning home.'"⁵³ In *Shinsen onna yamato daigaku* 新撰女倭大学 (1785), the author clearly states that women are to sever ties with her natal families after marriage: "Women are *ying*; it is their way to always serve people. They are not supposed to return to their natal families after marriage."⁵⁴ Contrary to these ideals, however, Kesa Gozen's biography reveals that women could still visit their natal households. When a woman's husband's household was to be more valued than her natal household, it seems logical that she should choose chastity over filial piety towards her own parents. But to Kesa Gozen, they were of equal value. The fact that Kesa Gozen was a semi-fictional figure endorses this point further. It would have been ideal in Confucian perspective that Moritoo threatened Kesa Gozen's mother-in-law and Kesa Gozen sacrificed herself to save her. However, despite the freedom they had to modify the plot to meet their objectives, the

⁵² Patricia Buckley Ebrey, "The Book of Filial Piety for Women Attributed to a Woman Née Zheng," 53.

⁵³ Ishikawa Matsutarō, ed., *Onna daigakushū*, 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

Tokugawa writers chose to make Kesa Gozen die for her own mother. It may be that this setting made more sense to both the authors and the readers, either because filial piety to a woman's own parents was a common practice or because it was accepted as an ideal. Either way, Kesa Gozen's story differs from the Confucian idea of marriage; it therefore points to the viability of seeing Tokugawa Japan as a strictly Confucian society.

All in all, when taken altogether, the biographies of Empress Jingū, Princess Sotoori, Empress Kōmyō, and Kesa Gozen in *Honchō jōkan* delineate the image of an exemplary woman in the mid-seventeenth century. Empress Jingū always acted in accordance with the will of Heaven; the other three women demonstrated the depth of virtues, such as compassion, filial piety, and chastity. These mythologized women were all far removed from ordinary women for two reasons. One is that they were all women of high status—they were princesses, empresses, or samurai women. This is the same with other women in *Honchō jōkan*. Furthermore, Empress Jingū is even endowed with a supernatural power, which must have been beyond the reach of ordinary women. Another is that these women show selflessness that is almost unreal. They did not attain anything in return for their inner richness. Interestingly, many exemplary women in the later period are commoners and they receive reward for their exemplary deeds, more or less.

***Honchō onna nijūshi tei* 本朝女二十四孝 (Twenty-four Filial Women of Japan)**

Honchō onna nijūshi tei 本朝女二十四孝 is a *jōshiyō ōrai* published in 1713. The author is unknown. Two manuscripts of *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* survive to date. One is the 1713 edition. As for the other, the publication year is not known. In terms of style, *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* has much shorter biographies per person, and the prose is more readable; each sentence is shorter and clearer compared to *Honchō jōkan*.

In terms of structure, the way in which *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* differs greatly from *Honchō jōkan* is its overarching theme of filial piety by women toward their own parents. In *Honchō jōkan*, biographies are classified into six categories to strictly follow the style and content of *Lienü zhuan*. By the early eighteenth century, however, biographies of exemplary women, imported from China, were adjusted more to the needs of Tokugawa society. This is due to the rise of commercialism and print culture around the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century; publication became more profit-oriented, and a book needed to have a certain level of popular demand or accordance with popular taste in order for it to be published. For this reason, books on exemplary women focused solely on the theme of filial piety emerging around this time most likely indicates that filial piety was one of the general concerns among the general populace.⁵⁵

Peasant family structure during the Tokugawa period also provides contextual evidence for the increasing emphasis on filial piety at this time. Up until the end of the Warring States period, a peasant household was comprised of a nuclear family, hereditary servants, and laborers. In the early seventeenth century, however, the Tokugawa bakufu enforced a law to make non-blood related members of a household (specifically hereditary peasant servants and laborers) establish their own neolocal households. To be sure, this law was interpreted differently in various regions. One of the works that demonstrate this point is Sasaki Junnosuke's study on enforcement of the peasant independence law in the Higo domain in central Kyūshū. His findings show that while in some villages implementation of the law was fully embraced, in others there was an attempt to find compromise between the previous family structure and the

⁵⁵ The first chapter of Mary Elizabeth Berry's *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* illustrates the dynamic publication environment of this period: Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

new family structure.⁵⁶ But many scholars, including Sasaki, agree that in the end establishment of stem families solidified by the end of the seventeenth century.⁵⁷

Some historians posit that this restructuring of farm families in the early seventeenth century intensified the value of *ie* 家, or household, among the general populace. Nagashima Junko argues that in this new family structure, family resources became the most important asset that was inherited from one generation to another. It is for this reason that protection of *ie* became the shared goal among family members. And women played important roles in the perpetuation of *ie* as daughters, wives, and mothers; their norms were therefore shaped to fit the changing needs of the *ie* system.⁵⁸ An emphasis on filial piety, in this context, can be seen to reinforce the values underpinning a smaller and more fragile stem family. Mega Atsuko's recent finding on the importance of filial piety in the Okayama domain attest to this point furthermore. She used the domain-initiated record of commendation of good deeds that began in early Tokugawa period (the earliest known year of the record is 1601) and ended in 1871, the year the domainial system was abolished. No other domains kept a record like this, and it is certainly a rare and invaluable historical source. Based on her close examination of this source, Mega notes that in the seventeenth century, filial piety was merely one of the many reasons for which people in Okayama domain were commended; other than filial piety, people were praised for loyalty, community service, rescue of the poor, diligence, familial harmony, and communal harmony. However, from the mid-eighteenth century onward, filial piety became the dominant value. Between 1820s and 1860s, filial piety accounted for approximately 90% of the reasons for

⁵⁶ Sasaki Junnosuke, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku no kihon kōzō: Shōnō jiritsu to gun'eki* (Tokyo: Ocha no Mizu Shobō, 1964), 167.

⁵⁷ Sasaki Junnosuke, *Bakuhatsu kenryoku no kihon kōzō*, 174; Nagashima Junko, "Kinsei kazoku ni okeru josei no ichi to yakuwari," in *Ajia joseishi: Hikakushi no kokoromi*, edited by Hayashi Reiko and Yanagida Setsuko (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1997), 322; and Mega Atsuko, *Kinsei no kazoku to josei: Zenji hōshō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Seibundō, 2008), 177-78.

⁵⁸ Nagashima Junko, "Kinsei kazoku ni okeru josei no ichi to yakuwari," 323.

commendation.⁵⁹ To be sure, this is a case study and there is no evidence that other domains followed the same model as the Okayama domain did. The extent to which filial piety was valued in other domains remains unknown, but given the presence of the bakufu-initiated publication of *Kankoku kōgiroku* (Official Record of Filial Piety) in 1801, it is probably not too far-fetched to think that filial piety must have been valued in other domains, too, more or less. Seen in this way, it is not surprising at all that *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* revolves around the theme of filial piety towards natal parents.

Honchō onna nijūshi tei also differs from *Honchō jōkan* in three significant ways. One is that the women who appear in this text are of various social status; many of them are commoners. Another is that many poor women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* rise in social status through winning favors of high-ranking men or being conferred court ranks due to their devout filiality to their natal parents. This may reflect a society in which family welfare for many comers was uncertain. In fact, works like Ikegami Akihiko's "Kōki Edo kasō chōnin no seikatsu 後期江戸下層町人の生活" and Yasukuni Yoshikazu's "Kansei kaikaku-ki no Osaka machikata shihai 寛政改革期の大阪町方支配" attest to the fact that well-being of commoner families was very unstable; any changes in circumstance caused by disease, death of parents, fire, and failure in business could quickly ruin family fortunes.⁶⁰ In such fragile family conditions, children and wives provided important manpower for survival of households. For many children, filial piety, or contribution to the continuation of *ie*, became the important social norm. It therefore makes sense that women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* are praised for their filial deeds, such as taking care of their ill parents and offering prayers to kannon for months, sometimes even years. Many of

⁵⁹ Mega Atsuko, *Kinsei no kazoku to josei*, 140-41.

⁶⁰ Ikegami Akihiko, "Kōki Edo kasō chōnin no seikatsu," in vol. 2 of *Edo chōnin no kenkyū*, edited by Nishiyama Matsunosuke (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1973); and Yasukuni Yoshikazu, "Kansei kaikaku-ki no Osaka machikata shihai," *Nihonshi kenkyū* 217 (1980).

them end up raising the social status of their families by marrying high-ranking men, who are impressed by the depth of their filial piety. To what extent this occurred in reality is unknown, but for many women and their families suffering from poverty and illness, this must have been the most desired happy ending. And lastly, women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* are different from women in *Honchō jōkan* because in the process of assisting their unfortunate parents, some women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* crossed the line between appropriate and inappropriate; but potentially improper deeds like defying officials and working in the public sphere were offset by their sanctioned virtue of filial piety.

One example of these women is Seritsumi no Kiski 芹摘妃 (?-?), or Princess Dropwort-picking, who rose in social status by marrying the legendary Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子(574-622). She was a lowly born woman from Asuka during the time of the Yamato state:

Her father passed away when she was young and she remained very filial to her mother. One day on her mother's request, [she and her mother] went to a field to pick dropwort (*seri*). This day [happened to coincide with] Prince Shōtoku's visit to the palace in Ikaruga 斑鳩. [He passed by the field where Seritsumi no Kiski and her mother were working]. At the appearance of Prince Shōtoku, many of the locals went to the sides of the road and prostrated themselves. But Seritsumi no Kiski showed no interest and she continued to single-mindedly pick dropwort [because of her deep filiality and sense of duty to her mother.] Prince Shōtoku saw the girl from inside his carriage and wondered [why she was acting differently from others]. He made one of his retainers ask Seritsumi no Kiski the details [on why she continued picking dropwort]. Seritsumi no Kiski answered, "I am picking dropwort on my mother's request. And my mother did not tell me to take a look at the prince's procession to the palace." Prince Shōtoku heard this and was deeply moved by her filiality; he thought, "She is indeed a woman of filiality." On his way home from the palace, he stopped by at Seritsumi no Kiski's house. He told the mother about how he was touched by Seritsumi no Kiski's filial piety. He then carried Seritsumi no Kiski on the back seat of his carriage, returned to his palace, and took her in as his wife. People have called her Seritsumi no Kiski (Princess Dropwort-picking) ever since.⁶¹

In this story there is no mention of Seritsumi no Kiski and her mother being in poverty, but without the father in the household, they must not have been well-off. However, Seritsumi no

⁶¹ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 3-4.

Kisaki's commendable behavior, which she showed without an intention of gaining something in return, won Prince Shōtoku's heart. This led to Seritsumi no Kisaki and her mother joining the court.

Another case of a woman and her parents rising in social status is Iwami no Saijo 石見の才女 (The Intelligent Woman of Iwami). She was a filial daughter of a fisherman in the province of Iwami 石見 in southern Honshū. One year the central government replaced the *kokushi* 国司 of the province; on the occasion of the arrival of the new official, the local fishermen's daughters sang songs to him. Among them was Iwami no Saijo, whose voice and appearance were extremely beautiful. The official visited the girl's house and asked her to read a poem. The girl made an impromptu poem as follows: "Plovers have fished together for a long time. I wonder how they are going to soar into the sky? (*morotomo ni / asarishi mono wo / hamachidori / ikani kumoi ni / tachi noboru ran*).” The official was deeply moved by the poem and offered a purple kimono made of silk. The girl refused this and recited, “Even a purple kimono of Heaven is no use to me. I am a fisherman's daughter, who solely dives into water (*murasaki no / kumo no uwagi mo / nani narazu / katsugi nomi suru / ama no ko nareba*).” The official highly praised her. When his duty in the province was over and was about to leave for the capital, he tried to take the girl with him. But she refused because she loathed to be separated from her parents: “The intelligent girl declined [the offer] because she grieved that she would not be able to stay filial to her parents [if she left].” In the end, the official invited her parents to come to the capital as well. The author concludes the biography by stating, “It is truly rare the virtue of *waka* and the miraculous benefits [accumulated] by filial piety.”⁶²

⁶² Ibid., 12-13.

Needless to say, the overall plot of this story is similar to that of Seritsumi no Kisaki. Iwami no Saijo successfully won the favor of the official who was temporarily stationed in her province; and she did this by demonstrating poetry that manifested the depth of her filial piety. However, it is important to emphasize here that the happiness of Seritsumi no Kisaki and Iwami no Saijo and their families is conditional. They accumulate family fortunes not by actively seeking for them and winning them by themselves, but only by (unintentionally) winning the favor of men of high status. The same can be said about the other women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* who were conferred court ranks; they indirectly impress the emperor with their filial deeds.

The point worth noting about this type of commendation is that the exemplary women never have any direct contact with the emperor. The emperor somehow finds out about their commendable deeds through officials, who are attentive to rumors circulating among people. The flipside of this is that inappropriate behaviors could be known as well. This may reflect the popular worldview of early eighteenth century—the worldview in which the line between private and public is blurred.

One of the women who received a court rank is Fukuyome 福依売. She was a “woman of barbaric clan (*iyashiki* 賤しき *tami no onna*), who lived in that [notorious] village in the province of Satsuma.”⁶³ Her parents were old and they constantly fell ill. It was therefore all on Fukuyome’s shoulders to take care of her ailing parents and make sure that the *ie* continued. In order to fulfill the responsibilities, she decided to get a paid job:

Fukuyome and her parents had been always poor. For this reason, Fukuyome acquired a job and [worked until she] grew emaciated. She supported her parents with the little money she earned. She sought for medicine and made her parents take them. Then she prayed to gods for their illness to be completely cured. Although her body was barbaric

⁶³ There is no description in the text as to which village the author is referring to and why it was “notorious.”

(*sono mi iyashi to iedomo*), she continued caring for her parents in this way for more than twenty years.

An official found out about Fukuyome's commendable conduct and reported it to Emperor Montoku 文徳天皇 (827-858). The emperor was moved and impressed to the extent that he bestowed a court rank onto Fukuyome and hung a sign of "filial woman" at the entrance of Fukuyome's family home. The household of Fukuyome is said to have enjoyed prosperity ever since.⁶⁴

Two aspects of this biography deserve attention. One is that Fukuyome was allowed to work and earn money in order to support her parents. In the ideal Confucian and Neo-Confucian gender roles, men are supposed to be in charge of the outer sphere (the sphere outside of household) while women are responsible for the inner sphere (the household itself). But in Fukuyome's story we see a case in which a woman transgresses this gender demarcation; and more importantly, this transgression is condoned by the emperor, the official, and the author of *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* because of its objective, filial piety. The increasing visibility of women in public beginning around the late eighteenth century has been a popular topic among scholars, but the biography of Fukuyome in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* may indicate that working in the public sphere was a possible option for women as early as the early eighteenth century. The other point is that despite the hardship, Fukuyome did not seek out external assistance. She earned money and prayed to the gods, but she did not actively seek out help. It was only when the emperor found out about her situation in a roundabout way—after she and her family had been in a dire condition for as long as twenty years—that Fukuyome finally received assistance. Indeed, the author of *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* seems to consider it virtuous that one displays patience and passivity. This is similar to the virtues presented in *Honchō jōkan*, in which women

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

are praised for their inner richness. The only difference is that many of the women in *Honchō jōkan* do not necessarily suffer from realistic issues like disease and poverty, for one because they are people of affluence and, for another because they are highly mythologized. Women in *Honchō jōkan* do not obtain anything in return, but in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, exemplary women do achieve reward of some sort, which helps them break free from poverty and misery. This could have been appealing to non-elites, the new reading public.

Another woman who exemplifies the latter point (passivity and patience as virtues) is Take-shi Kōjo 竹氏孝女 (Take's filial daughter). She is praised for looking after her sick mother in severely constrained conditions. The biography explains that she was a peasant in the province of Echigo 越後 in northern Honshū. Her father, Take, died when she was young but she remained filial to her mother and served her well. One winter, when she was around the age of seventeen, her mother fell ill. Take-shi Kōjo made exhausting efforts to support her mother get through the severe winter:

They lived in the northern region so it was severely cold; snow would accumulate as high as the eaves of their house. Being a poor family, they did not have many clothes or blankets. So the daughter would wear a jacket without cotton padding in it and provide the one with cotton padding for her mother to keep her from the cold. She would also barely make porridge for her mother every morning and evening. To make fire, she would use bamboo and wood [torn apart] from the porch. [All these] she did out of her desire to make her mother feel at ease. It is inexpressible the [degree of] stress [she must have had]. But medicine was difficult to acquire in such snowy rural region and her mother's illness worsened. The daughter deeply grieved this and she prayed to gods and bodhisattvas for her mother's illness to be completely cured. Heaven showed mercy; snow melted earlier than usual in spring. Moreover, the daughter's situation came to be known in her neighborhood and it eventually reached the daimyo of the region. The daimyo provided her not only food and money but also a doctor to treat the mother's illness.⁶⁵

The overall plot of this story is the same as that of Fukuyome. Take-shi Kōjo took care of her ailing mother and she obtained an external assistance through her prayer. In this story, too, the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

point is that Take-shi Kōjo summoned favorable conditions *without* taking actions outside of the household. If her neighbor did not find out about her situation, the mother's illness would not have cured.

All in all, many of the biographies of exemplary women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* from the early eighteenth century are about taking care of parents and protecting the *ie* in challenging conditions, whereas those in *Honchō jōkan* are about moral cultivation of privileged women. In the process of pursuing filial piety, some women—specifically Fukuyome—transgressed the line between supposedly appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Although in the Confucian perspective women were ideally not supposed to work in the outer sphere, Fukuyome acquired a job in order to eke out a living to support her ailing parents. The fact that such an act was condoned indicates that in early eighteenth-century Japan women's filial piety towards their parents outweighed strict conformity to the gender roles.

The theme consistent in the biographies in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* is that when one devotes oneself to the virtue of filial piety without expecting anything concrete (like money) in return, she will eventually receive assistance from her superiors. This image of exemplary women changed drastically in the early nineteenth century. As will be discussed below, exemplary women were transformed into ones who not only sought for assistance, but also ventured out into cities to fulfill expectations placed on them, foremost among them filial piety. While the kinds of virtues women were expected to possess did not change, the means with which they expressed them changed over time.

***Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* 大東婦女貞烈記 (Women of Principle in the Great East)**

Daitō fujo teiretsu ki 大東婦女貞烈記 was published in 1801. The author is Matsudaira Yorinori 松平頼紀, whose biographical information cannot be found in any encyclopedia or dictionaries. This book narrates the lives of eight exemplary women, most of them commoners. Most of the women in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* are praised for their filial piety, just as in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*. The others are praised for their chastity and loyalty. Unlike in the previous biographies of exemplary women, however, *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* is filled with bloody stories of vengeance; in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* women's single-minded support of their parents somehow attracted external support, but in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* we see women who actually take up arms to revenge their murdered parents. This is unimaginable in *Honchō jōkan* and *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, in which women passively wait and pray to the gods and bodhisattvas for their circumstances to improve or depend on a powerful man's benevolence to improve their lives.

In the biography of Riya, we gain a glimpse of a woman whose filial piety leads her first to move to Edo and then to take up swordsmanship. The outline of the story is as follows. There was a man named Iwabuchi Dennai 岩淵伝内, a drunkard, who fell in love with Sazaki Kōemon's 左崎幸右衛門 wife (Riya's mother). Dennai approached her, but the wife refused him out of her chastity for her husband. One night, taking advantage of Kōemon's absence, Dennai barged into Kōemon's house and made an obscene approach to Kōemon's wife. Kōemon came home just in time to see the scene before his eyes. Kōemon attempted to kill Dennai but was killed instead. The wife died soon after from grief. Her sister and her husband took in her three-year old daughter: this was Riya. When Riya turned thirteen she learned for the first time what had happened to her parents. When she turned eighteen she made up her mind to avenge her parents' death at the hands of Iwabuchi Dennai. She told her adoptive parents:

Looking back on the debt of gratitude I owe to you, I am hesitant to bring this up, but I hope to go to Edo and become a servant there. After several years, I hope to visit the thirty-three sacred places in Chichibu to pray to kannon (bodhisattva).⁶⁶ I am a woman, but I shall receive Buddha's mercy. I want to kill Iwabuchi Dennai to revenge my father.

Although she was a woman, she believed that killing a man (an unwomanly deed) in order to avenge his crime against her parents would be understood by deities and bodhisattvas as a filial act. Riya's parents were shocked:

They told Riya that Dennai would not be easily killed by a woman. They attempted to dissuade her, but Riya did not take this advice. The parents said, "If that is the case, let your heart handle the situation."⁶⁷

The parents at first object to Riya's idea not because she was about to make a mistake of diverging from a woman's proper role, but because they were concerned that Riya would be hurt or killed from battling with Dennai. In the end the parents give in to Riya because they think thought she is being reasonable: she is willing to face danger and avenge her parents, which is the ultimate form of filial piety.

Riya went to Edo to serve Nagai Gensuke 永井源助, a *hatamoto* 旗本.⁶⁸ Gensuke was an instructor of swordsmanship; he had many students and he kept himself busy with sword lessons. Riya served Gensuke and his wife sincerely. Gensuke and his wife cherished Riya as well. One day out of curiosity they asked Riya what her background was. With tears in her eyes, Riya shared with them her life story. Gensuke and his wife responded thus:

Gensuke and his wife were deeply moved by her filiality. Gensuke said, "You should be able to kill your enemy easily. I will teach you swordsmanship."⁶⁹

From that time on Riya practiced swordsmanship every day. After one year of training Gensuke told Riya that she should serve many different *hatamono* in order to find the whereabouts of

⁶⁶ Kannon are enshrined in thirty three places in Chichibu, a region in the Kanto plain. People would visit all thirty three places in order to make their wish come true. There are actually thirty four of them, not thirty three.

⁶⁷ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 32.

⁶⁸ *Hatamoto* were vassals of the Tokugawa shogunate, who had the right to have an audience with the shogun.

⁶⁹ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 33.

Dennai. Riya served seventy men within three years. One day, among the retainers of a *hatamoto* in the Honjo district of Edo named Sakabe Yasubē 坂部安兵衛, Riya found a man named Koizumi Dennai 小泉伝内. He turned out be the Dennai Riya was looking for. Riya did not want to make rash decisions so she did not kill him on the spot. She later told Gensuke about the situation. Gensuke was overjoyed with this news and he helped Riya acquire an official permission for revenge. The rest of the story deserves full quotation because it seems to illustrate the culture of filial piety and vendetta that is peculiar to early nineteenth-century Tokugawa society:

Gensuke took Riya to Murase Tōma 村瀬東馬 to discuss this matter. They took the case to the bakufu. The bakufu ordered that Riya kill Dennai. Murase then took the case to the official in the province of Bitchū. The official was deeply moved by Riya's filiality. Dennai was summoned to the judicial council. He then met with Riya face-to-face, and admitted that he killed her father. Dennai was then sent from the judicial council to Batch's official; the judicial council ordered that Dennai's case be handled at the Bitchū domains' lower mansion.⁷⁰ The officials of Bitchū received Dennai and placed him in a prison. The judicial council told the officials that since Riya's case sets an example of filial piety, all women in the inner quarter as well as all the people in the lower mansion should watch [the duel between Riya and Dennai]. Even people unrelated to Bitchū should be able to see the battle if they wish. A bamboo fence was built for the battle. The date of the battle was decided and [the duel took place] under the heavy guard of some low-ranking samurai. The ceremony of vendetta took place in accordance with the traditional manner. Murase Tōma attended Riya. Riya bowed to Dennai then the duel began. The battle lasted for a while; but with the firm resolution of a woman, Riya finally cut Dennai down. She cut off his head and offered it to her deceased father. There was no one among the observers that could not be moved and impressed by Riya's action. Moved by Riya's filiality, the official of Bitchū made Riya one of his daughter's servants. Riya eventually became the head servant of the inner quarter. Riya later renamed herself Nagai to never forget the debt of gratitude she owes to [the sword instructor] Nagai Gensuke.⁷¹

We do not know whether Riya is a historical figure or a fictional character. Her existence can only be confirmed in stories like this one. Furthermore, there is no way of knowing whether, if the story was based on fact, to what degree it was fictionalized or embellished.

⁷⁰ Besides higher mansions (*kamiyashiki* 上屋敷) and middle mansions (*nakayashiki* 中屋敷), each domain usually had lower mansions (*shimoyashiki* 下屋敷) in the outskirts of Edo. Lower mansions were normally used as daimyo and their families' villas.

⁷¹ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 35-36.

Though the accuracy of the story is open to speculation, Riya's case nevertheless provides valuable insight into an ideal form of women's filial piety. This story reveals that strong value is placed upon filial piety, even more so than in the stories in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*. It is valued to the point that none of the people around Riya object to the idea of vendetta itself. (Riya's adoptive parents did oppose, but this was out of their concern for the possibility of losing Riya. They did not oppose the idea of vendetta itself.) In fact, the judicial council was very much moved and impressed by Riya's filiality to the extent that it recommended that the duel between Riya and Dennai be made public. This act not only showcases the ideal form of filial piety to the public but also encourages others to follow the same ideal.

What was Riya allowed to do in the name of filial piety? First of all she was able to go to Edo. There she learned swordsmanship from Nagai Gensuke—this in and of itself seems extraordinary compared to the feminine and passive form of filial piety depicted in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*. Riya also served more than seventy *hatamoto* in Edo, through which she gained much experience in the outside world. And more than anything, she obtained an official permission to kill a man and cut off his head in public. Taking all of these together, it can be concluded that within the social context that places strong emphasis on filial piety, exemplary women seem to transgress the Confucian and Neo-Confucian gender boundaries as well as the private-public ones. It is quite obvious that there is a stark contrast between Riya and the passive and feminine exemplary women in *Honchō jōkan* (such as Princess Sotoori).

What is even more interesting is that Riya's story is not an odd case. Stories of vendetta abound in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*. The biography of a peasant named Yotarō's 與太郎 two daughters follows a similar plot. Yotarō was a peasant in Sakato 逆戸 village in the Sendai domain in northern Honshū. He had two daughters, one sixteen and the other thirteen years old.

One day the three of them went to work in the field. At that same time a retainer of the Sendai daimyo's advisor Katakura Kojūrō 片倉小十郎, Shiga Danshichi 志賀団七, happened to pass by the field. A bundle of grass the younger sister tossed in the air accidentally hit Danshichi's shoulders. Yotarō and his daughters apologized to Danshichi, but it further inflated Danshichi's rage. In the end Danshichi pulled out his sword and killed Yotarō. The daughters fled. Danshichi reported to his master, Katakura Kojūrō, that he killed a peasant because of his insolent behavior; Katakura understood this so the case was not investigated further.

The two daughters returned home and explained to their mother what happened. The mother, who had been sick in bed, could not bear the situation; she fell into deep despair and finally passed away. The process of inheritance after the death of the parents is worth noting:

The representative of the village (*shōya*) took care of the situation. He sold the land of Yotarō's household and handed the money to the daughters. Then the representative of the village arranged that the daughters' aunt in another village take custody of them.⁷²

In this we see that the sisters inherited the family assets. A short while after the sisters moved into their aunt's place, they explained to their aunt that they wanted to serve a samurai household in the town of Fukushima. From there they venture out to avenge their parents:

They then went to Edo and stayed at a lodge in Denma-chō 伝馬町. Every day they walked around Edo, inquiring people to find the best sword master. Everyone they talked to agreed that Yui no Shōsetsu 由井正雪 is the most renowned sword master in their time. So the sister visited Shōsetsu's house to meet him in person. They explained to Shōsetsu that they are from Sendai, a rural region, but they came all the way Edo to ask him a favor. Shōsetsu welcomed them into a guest room and asked them what the favor was. The sisters explained to him the details of Shiga Danshichi's murder of their father. They then said that although they are low-born, they desire to revenge their father. With tears streaming down their faces, the sisters asked Shōsetsu to take them in as his servants. Shōsetsu understood and was moved by the purity of the sisters' wish. He entrusted them to his consorts. Shōsetsu named the older sister Miyagino 宮城野 and the younger sister Shinobu 信夫. He taught Miyagino sickle and *shuriken* (throwing knives) and Shinobu *naginata* (halberd). He trained them day and night.⁷³

⁷² *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

In this story, too, vendetta by women is justified for filial piety. Shōsetsu does not show any hesitation in training the sisters to wield various weapons.

After five years of training Miyagino and Shinobu mastered the use of their weapons. Shōsetsu thought that the sisters were ready to avenge their parents. He bid farewell to the sisters and the sisters traveled back to their home domain. They visited the Shiroishi castle, the castle of the Sendai domain, and met with Katakura Kojūrō's retainers to explain their wish to be killed by Shiga Danshichi: "We are bereaved daughters and we do not have anything to rely on in this world. So just as our father was killed by Sir Danshichi, we would also like to be killed by him. We would like to ask for your kindness to arrange the matters so that our wish will come true." The retainers reported to Katakura Kojūrō the sisters' wish; Kojūrō was moved by their filiality: "Danshichi is guilty of misconduct. The wish of the sisters to be killed by Danshichi, this truly shows their will to avenge their parents. Their filiality is truly moving."

Kojūrō brought the case to Date Tadamune 伊達忠宗 (1600-1658), the daimyo of the Sendai domain. Tadamune sanctioned a vendetta. The battle scene in this story is as ritualized as in Riya's story:

On a riverside in Shiroishi 白石 bamboo fences were built. Hagino Gyōbu 萩野刑部, the inspector (*metsuke*), Kisou Tajima 競但馬, the inspector (*metsuke*), and Katakura Kojūrō sat in a row. The battle took place under heavy guard. Danshichi entered [the battle ground] from the west side of the fences. The two girls entered from the east side; they were clad in white kimono. The three samurai who accompanied the sisters during their trip from Edo to Shiroishi were allowed to enter as well and observe the battle; they were clad in travel garb. This was so that they could assist the sisters if needed. The two girls and Danshichi each received a wooden bowl with pickled vegetables soaked in warm water [from the daimyo?] This is a traditional ritual [for vendetta]. Then water was poured into ceramic bowls. These bowls were placed in the middle. Danshichi and the girls had water from these bowls, then threw these to the ground and shattered them into pieces. The three of them then walked away from the middle of the battleground. This is also a traditional ritual. Danshichi and the girls were told that when they heard a drum roll from the castle they would need to fight. Even if when they are tired, once they hear the drum roll they will need to stand opposite from each other [to fight again]. In a short while the drum roll was heard. Shinobu, the younger sister, stood up and dueled with Danshichi using *naginata*. They battled for a while; each of them got three scars. With

the drum roll, six samurai retainers carried a pole and stood in the middle [of the battleground] for a break. Another drum roll was heard. This time Miyagino, the older sister, battled with Danshichi using her sickle with a ball of lead attached to it by chain. She caught Danshichi's arms with the chain then called out for Shinobu. Shinobu cut off Danshichi's arms using her *naginata*. Miyagino then severed Danshichi's head with her sickle. The sisters put their palms together and offered the head to their deceased father's spirit. The audience was very much moved.⁷⁴

Just as in Riya's case, this ceremonial vendetta justifies the sisters' usage of weapons (an unfeminine deed). The battle is ritualized to follow "the tradition," but it is clear that the sisters are guaranteed to win from the beginning. The daimyo had sanctioned the vendetta; moreover, three samurai were allowed to assist the sisters when needed. The whole ceremony, therefore, is not for Danshichi and the sisters to compete with each other using their skills, but for the sisters to demonstrate their filial piety. And by having an audience, the Sendai domain officials are able to use this event to indoctrinate the general populace in the official norm of filial piety.

After their triumph, Miyagino and Shinobu attempted to commit suicide but the investigator prevented them from taking this action. Thinking that they no longer had any desire to live in this impermanent world, the sisters cut their hair on the spot to become nuns. They explained to the daimyo that they hope to offer prayers for their deceased parents and Danshichi for the rest of their lives. Deeply moved by this, the daimyo awarded them a piece of land to be used for their Buddhist worship.

Riya, Miyagino, and Shinobu's biographies have many commonalities. For one, they are all praised as filial daughters. Their social status is not very high, but their filial deeds attract official attentions. And compared to the exemplary women in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, women in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* actively seek out for ways to pursue filial piety. They do not wait for deities, bodhisattvas, and surrounding people (daimyo, samurai and nobles) to rescue them from their dire situations. Rather, they persuade their guardians to let them go out to Edo, find sword

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

masters there, learn to wield weapons, and acquire official permission to revenge their murdered parents. It is also the premises of the stories in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* that prompt the women to act out filial piety in such extremity. In *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, none of the women's parents are murdered unjustly. Seritsumi no Kisaki and Take-shi Kōjo's fathers die because of illness. And Fukuyome's parents, too, fall ill and Fukuyome is praised for taking good care of her sick parents. In this book, therefore, it is death and poverty that set the context for exemplary women's misfortune and adversity. In contrast, in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki* exemplary women's adversity is caused by certain individuals' injustice or misconduct; the stories are set up so that these women right the wrongs in society as they pursue filial piety. They also obtain opportunities to go to cities, expand their social networks, and acquire certain skills in the process.

To be sure, these biographies of exemplary women need to be read with caution. They do reflect the moral landscape of Tokugawa society, but they represent the social reality only partially. Many of the women's existence cannot be confirmed, and at the very least these stories are embellished for dramatic appeal.⁷⁵ To what extent women in early nineteenth-century Japan sought to perform vendettas in actuality (and ventured out to cities for that purpose) cannot be verified.⁷⁶ But considering the rise of commercialism and the rise of print culture (in which

⁷⁵ The story of the two sisters (Miyagino and Shinobu) was made public for the first time in 1780 in *jōruri* (a genre of play) called "Go taiheiki shiraishi banashi 後太平記白石話." The overall plot is the same, but there are a few difference in terms of character settings. According to *Nihon josei jinmei jiten* 日本女性人名辞典, a *jōruri* writer thought of the two sisters' names, Miyagino and Shinobu. Their actual names were Sumi すみ and Taka たか. It is not known whether the story was based on an actual occurrence or not.

⁷⁶ As far as I know, vendetta during the Tokugawa period seems to be an understudied topic. The only works I have been able to find on this topic are: J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); D. E. Mills, "Kataki-uchi: The Practice of Blood-Revenge in Pre-Modern Japan," in *Modern Asian Studies* 10 (1976): 525-542 and; Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). In Chapter Eleven in her work, Ikegami discusses how vendetta epitomized samurai's inherent nature but had to be tamed in the early modern period in order for the "integrated yet decentralized" *bakuhatsu* system to work. This section, however, examines the significance of vendetta for samurai male only. There is not yet a work that takes a look at the culture of vendetta

writers wrote works that were somewhat in accordance with what publishers, consumers, and state officials wished to see) from the late seventeenth century onward, published books (like *Honchō onna nijūshi tei* and *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*) must have had to lie somewhere not too far from the point where the two axes of supply and demand met. In short, although biographies of exemplary women may not represent lives of a majority of Tokugawa women, they must reflect the combination of what those women wished to read and what state officials could approve as appropriate. Some aspects of the biographies may be exaggerated for the purpose of entertainment, but they must not have been too foreign or incomprehensible for female readers.

Retsujo hyakunin isshu 烈女百人一首

Yoshikai Naoto, the leading literary scholar of *hyakunin isshu* (compilation of one hundred *waka* by one hundred poets), notes that popularization of *hyakunin isshu* began around the Kanpō era (1741-1743).⁷⁷ *Hyakunin isshu* itself originates in the twelfth century; and from then on until around the Genroku era (1688-1703) they were aimed towards a highly literate audience comprised largely of monks, nobles, and samurai. But from around the Kanpō era publication of more simplified *hyakunin isshu* with accompanying illustrations can be seen. In fact, publication records of such variant forms of *hyakunin isshu* soars during the Hōreki (1751-1763) and Meiwa era (1764-1771). Perhaps the popularization of *hyakunin isshu* was one of the by-products of the emerging social forces of commercialization, the rise of print culture, and the rise of popular literacy during the early modern period. But this phenomenon was probably also backed up by the culture that valued *waka* as the cornerstone of women's basic education; many

for the rest of the population. In Japanese scholarship, too, vendetta in Tokugawa Japan is little studied, although vendetta is one of the most popular themes in soap operas with historical setting of the Tokugawa period. Some works on vendetta are: Hirade Kojirō, *Katakiuchi* (1909; reprint, Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1990) and; Ōkuma Miyoshi, *Katakiuchi no rekishi* (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 1972).

⁷⁷ See footnote 12 for more detailed information on *hyakunin isshu*.

of these variant forms of *hyakunin isshu* list one hundred female poets with their poems. These *hyakunin isshu* were, of course, aimed at female readers.⁷⁸

Beginning about two decades ago, Japanese scholars began studying these variant forms of *hyakunin isshu* together with *joshiyō ōrai*. By and large, they seem to agree that the variant forms of *hyakunin isshu* can be considered as a part of *joshiyō ōrai* because they have an instructional component. In fact, the more I studied these *hyakunin isshu*, the more I came to see parallels between them and biographies of exemplary women. In addition to listing the names of poets and their poems, these *hyakunin isshu* provide a brief biography for each poet. And interestingly, they usually explain why certain female poets' behaviors and deeds are commendable and how they manifest in their poems.⁷⁹

One example of this hybrid genre is *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* 烈女百人一首, published in 1847. The author is the fifth *senryū* master, Mizutani Ryokutei 水谷緑亭 (1787-1858).⁸⁰ Ryokutei was born into the household of fish merchants. His parents died early on in his life; he was adopted and raised by a fisherman named Mizutani Taiheiji. The Mizutani household was not financially well off so Ryokutei spent much of his childhood assisting his father's fishing business. He would study whenever he had spare time. Later he became one of the disciples of the second *senryū* master, eventually taking the position later in his life.

⁷⁸ Yoshikai Naoto, "Joshiyō ōrai to shiten hyakunin isshu," in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu kenkyū* edited by Emori Ichirō (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1993-1994), 118-19.

⁷⁹ The rising popularity of these types of *hyakunin isshu* did not mean that *hyakunin isshu* completely replaced biographies of exemplary women. Biographies of exemplary women that evolved from *Lienü zhuan* continued to be published. Some of these are: Kiyohara Nobuaki's *Onna shisho geibun zue* (1835) and Tsusaka Tōyō's *Buke jōkan* (1839).

⁸⁰ *Senryū* is a genre of poem that was invented in late Tokugawa period. It has no strict rules as in *waka* or *haikai*. *Senryū* gained much popularity among literate circle.

Ryokutei's life was very much affected by the Tenpō Reform (1830-1844).⁸¹ During this reform led by the regent Mizuno Tadakuni 水野忠邦, the Tokugawa bakufu banned many publications that had anything to do with politics, foreign affairs, and pornography.⁸² The bakufu never banned *senryū* as a literary genre, but it placed restrictions on its literary circle; the fourth *senryū* master was forced to resign and Ryokutei was made the fifth *senryū* master. Ryokutei was a prolific writer throughout his life. Before the appointment as the fifth *senryū* master he published many critical works on *senryū*. He continued to write critical works on *senryū* after the appointment, too, but during this time his interest seems to have diversified; he also wrote novels and many variant forms of *hyakunin isshu*.⁸³ One of them is *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*.

Since *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* was written after the Tenpō reform, the female norms emphasized in this work probably hew more closely to official views of women's role. In fact, many women that appear in this book are not as active as the ones in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*. They don't venture out to cities, kill men, or acquire swordsmanship. Often they are passive figures who pray for external support (of deities, bodhisattvas, samurai, and nobles), just as in *Honchō jōkan* and *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*. But there is a critical difference between these two works and *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* —in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, female literacy is emphasized throughout. The exemplary women in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* are praised for their ability in poetry, and female readers are therefore encouraged to be literate like them.

⁸¹ The Tenpō Reform was the bakufu's response to deal with the internal problems (droughts, peasant uprisings, and inflation) and external problems (the looming foreign threat). The reform affected the Tokugawa society in every aspect: culture, economy, and foreign affairs.

⁸² For a specific case of how this reform affected *kibyōshi*, a genre of popular literature colored by social satire, see: Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006).

⁸³ Kawakami Ippei, "Gosei senryū no kenkyū," in *Ryukoku University the Bulletin of the Graduate School of Letters*, 27 (2005): 380-382.

To be sure, *Retsujo hyakunin issyu* is inherently different from the other two works; unlike *Honchō jōkan* and *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, *Retsujo hyakunin issyu* evolved from *hyakunin issyu*, a compilation of poems. It therefore seems evident that emphasis on poetry and literacy forms the basis of the work. But the very fact that such variant forms of *hyakunin issyu* began to appear in the late eighteenth century and that *Retsujo hyakunin issyu*, published in 1847, enlists exemplary female poets for female readers is indicative of how much popular education in general and women's education in particular had become widespread by the late eighteenth century. That all women (including courtesans) are praised for their literacy and their ability in poetry in *Retsujo hyakunin issyu* is itself telling evidence that the moral landscape of the Tokugawa period shifted over time. What this signifies is that in order for women to be praised, they had to be literate. It might also be possible to think the other way around, just as Sugano Noriko did in her study that elucidates the relationship between *Kankoku kōgiroku* (The Official Records of Filial Piety) and the reality of working women. To the fact that the state decided to praise filial daughters who chose to not marry so that they could support their natal parents, Sugano argues as follows: "The bakufu had taken this seemingly contradictory attitude because by the end of the eighteenth century in Japanese society the pattern of the household itself was changing, and the bakufu needed to find a way to adapt."⁸⁴ Likewise, it might have been that female literacy was so high by the time *Retsujo hyakunin issyu* was published that social norms had to be adapted to the presence of the increasingly literate general populace, men and women alike.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Sugano Noriko, "State Indoctrination of Filial Piety in Tokugawa Japan: Sons and Daughters in the *Official Records of Filial Piety*," in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, edited by Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 188.

⁸⁵ For a survey of Tokugawa educational institutions, see: R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) and; Richard Rubinger, *Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). For more information on qualitative measurement of popular literacy (measurement of literacy based on signatures, not schooling), see Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early*

Out of one hundred women that appear in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, twenty-one are courtesans. They constitute about a quarter of all the women in this book. This is worth noting because unlike in the earlier period, courtesans could now join the circle of exemplary women if they expressed their chastity or Buddhist enlightenment through their poems. One such woman is Muro no Miyaki 室宮木 (Miyaki of the town of Muro no Tsu). She was a courtesan whose poem is in *Go shūi wakashū* 五拾遺和歌集 (Later Collection of Japanese Poems), an official compilation of poems completed in 1087. She is described as follows in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*:

Miyaki was a courtesan in the town of Muro no Tsu in the province of Harima 播磨 [in central Japan]. She had a beautiful appearance. One time when a monk named Shōkū 性空 at Mount Shosha chanted a Buddhist sutra, Miyaki offered monetary contribution to the monk. The monk did not accept the contribution, saying that courtesans are [too] sinful [to offer contributions]. Miyaki then composed the poem: “How is it that us courtesans, who immerse ourselves in the floating world at Naniwa 難波 in the province of ports different from Buddhism? (*tsu no kuni no / naniwa no kotoka / hō naranu / asobi tawabure / made to koso kike*).”⁸⁶ The heart of this poem is that the true aspect of all phenomena is Buddhism; even courtesans should not be despised. This poem is very famous—it is included in the Later Collection of Japanese poems.⁸⁷

Through her poem, Miyaki, a courtesan, taught the monk what was considered the heart of Buddhism. This is not the only time Miyaki impresses men. She was loved by Minamoto no Akimoto 源頼基 (1000-1047), a middle counselor (*chūnagon*) at the court. For a while she lived at the capital with Akimoto, but was later abandoned and was forced to return to her hometown, Muro no Tsu. Before leaving the capital, she handed a piece of paper folded in half to Akimoto’s servant. In it she wrote a poem, “To an inexhaustible grief that seems to extend far into my future, even after I become a nun my sleeves will be soaked [with my tears] (*tsuki mo*

Modern Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007). Many scholars are aware that attainment of literacy varied depending on gender, geography, and social status, but they still agree that the overall popular literacy rose throughout the Tokugawa period.

⁸⁶ I relied on Wakita Haruko and Abe Yasurō’s translation for this poem: Wakita Haruko, *Josei geinō no genryū: Kugutsu, kusemai, shirabyōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2001), 117.

⁸⁷ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 8.

senu / uki wo mihate no / kanashisa ni / ama to naritemo / sode wa kawakanu).”⁸⁸ She also placed a lock of her hair in the paper. Miyaki became a nun. Akimoto became a monk, too, out of pity he felt for Miyaki.

Retsujo hyakunin isshu explains through Miyaki’s anecdotes that although Miyaki was a lowly courtesan, she was able to convey in her *waka* the essence of Buddhism to the monk at Mount Shosha. *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* shows how female virtues such as filial piety, femininity, faith in Buddhism, and chastity, need to manifest in *waka*, regardless of one’s status. Miyaki’s interaction with Akimoto also supports this point—without the enigmatic power of *waka*, Akimoto would not have regretted his decision to abandon Miyaki.

Another courtesan praised for her *waka* is Kokonoe 九重. In her case she is praised not for Buddhist enlightenment but for her filial piety expressed in her poem. Her filiality, just like in the stories in *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, garners external support:

Kokonoe was a courtesan at the new Yoshiwara 吉原. . . . She was originally from Gojō 五條 of Kyoto. She lived in Edo [as a courtesan] but her filiality towards her parents was immeasurable; she always inquired after them and frequently delivered them things like clothes. Grieving the situation of living far away from her parents, she read the following poem: “I have come all the way, to live in the East [to aid my parents]. For how long will I have to lead, the floating life as a courtesan? (*harubaru to / tooki azuma ni / sumida gawa / taenu nagare wo / itsumade ka kumu*).” Gods felt her filiality; the poem was presented to the emperor [by nobles] as a commendable poem written surprisingly by a courtesan. Kokonoe was officially pardoned and quit her job as a courtesan. With mystic occurrences, she was able to break free from her desperate circumstance. This is truly due to the virtue of poetry. Although she was lowly born, she interacted with nobles. And though she was not blood-related to those nobles, became good friends with them. Even the white dragon (*hakuryūshi*) praised Kokonoe and read, “All throughout, the emperor’s mercy is prevalent in Japan. It reaches even, to the body of a courtesan (*nabete yo ni / kimi no megumi wo / shikishima ya / kono kawatake no / nagare kumu mi mo*).” It is rare that a lowly born woman [like Kokonoe] be praised as thus and to be known to the world.⁸⁹

The point here is that Kokonoe attains external support because of her poem. In *Honchō onna nijūshi tei*, women attracted external support because their commendable deeds and behaviors

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

were talked about among villagers and among nobles. In *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, however, a woman had to write a commendable poem in order to capture the attention of the superiors and of heavenly deities. In short, Kokonoe's story (as well as Miyaki's story) makes clear that an exemplary woman was expected to be literate.

Other than enlightenment in Buddhism and filial piety, many courtesans in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* are praised for their chastity. One example of this is Shiraito 白糸, a courtesan at Yoshiwara:

Shiraito was a courtesan at new Yoshiwara. . . . There existed no equivalent to her beauty. She was also well-versed in poetry; she always cherished and held interest in the moon and flowers. She had immeasurable compassion towards others. She and a man named Torii 鳥井 fell in love with each other. They got engaged, but out of the blue a rich person from the countryside frequently visited Shiraito; he then attempted to purchase her contract. Out of desperation, Shiraito wrote a letter to Torii explaining the situation. And as a remembrance for Torii, wrote the following poem on a white kimono: "I had heard that roads come together like threads do. But we will have to part. I shed tears for my name (*ito ni yoru / mono to kikishi ga / wakare ji no / waga na ni kururu / namida narikeri*)."

She delivered the kimono to Torii, then somehow crept out [of Yoshiwara] and threw herself into the Sumida River. In an ordinary woman existed such firm chastity and will. Even for men, ones who forget the principle are not few.⁹⁰

In this passage, Shiraito is praised for her chastity, even though she is a courtesan. According to Confucian and Neo-Confucian doctrine, a woman is supposed to have only one husband; she cannot have another. In the case of Shiraito she was conflicted because of the two social roles she possessed. As a woman, she was supposed to become a devoted wife to Torii. But as a courtesan, she was supposed to serve her client. Caught between the two conflicting social roles, Shiraito chose death. And Ryokutei highly praises her; saying that even many men cannot hold fast to their principles and obligations like Shiraito did.

Shiraito demonstrated her chastity through suicide and the *waka* she had left behind for Torii. This is not a rare case. Many other courtesans who are praised for their chastity follow

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

the same pattern: unable to be with their loved ones, they write *waka* for them expressing their devoted love—a supposedly unimaginable action for courtesans, who earn money for entertaining male clients. Many of them either commit suicide or become nuns. The courtesans that are praised in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* for writing *waka* of chastity are: Nabiki 靡, Nogami no Hanjo 野上の班女, Kewaizaka no Shōshō 化粧坂の少将, Ōiso no Tora 大磯の虎, Takao 高尾, Uneme 采女, Komurasaki 小紫, Karumo 苺藻, and Hanaōgi 花扇. Others are praised for filiality, like Kokonoe, or enlightenment in Buddhism, like Miyaki.

Just by looking at the cases of courtesans in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, it can be concluded that the ability to compose *waka* that manifest female virtues seems to have become one of the dominant norms for women of all social status by the mid-nineteenth century. Composition of *waka* requires more than rudimentary literary skills. As Anne Walthall states in *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, in order for one to compose *waka*, one needed “a familiarity with the lexicon derived from the first three court anthologies beginning with the *Kokinshū* compiled in 905,” learn classical grammar, and create in their poem “an ongoing dialogue with the past” by drawing on at least one previous poem.⁹¹ Judging from the kinds of women introduced in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* (many of them are commoners from the Tokugawa period) and the expanding literate populace, many women did acquire the ability to write *waka* despite the enormous investment of time and energy needed to acquire the skill.

Generally, literary skills including writing of *waka* were supposed to enhance female virtues. This is made clear in many *joshiyō ōrai*, such as *Wazoku dōjikin* 和俗童子訓 (1710), *Onna imagawa oshiebumi* 女今川教文 (1778), and *Onna imagawa masukagami* 女今川益鏡

⁹¹ Anne Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, 26.

(1841). The courtesans that appear in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* are praised precisely for following this official norm.

But in reality, the literacy reflected in these ideals could be used for many different purposes—even for something that could subvert the official norms. Maeda Toshiko argues in her study of some ukiyoe, which illustrate courtesans (such as *Yoshiwara keisei shin bijin awase jihitsu kagami* 吉原傾城新美人合自筆鏡, published in 1784), that literacy was one of the most basic skills for courtesans to have. That is to say, literacy was a necessary skill for entertaining clients. In *Yoshiwara keisei shin bijin awase jihitsu kagami*, Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761-1816) depicts several courtesans gathered in one room. And right above them are *waka* written by each courtesan illustrated in the ukiyoe. This, according to Maeda, signifies that the courtesans' literacy and ability in *waka* were sold as entertainment. Moreover, it was customary that courtesans write letters in beautiful handwriting to their clients.⁹² It can be concluded that while literary skills including writing *waka* were officially encouraged in books like *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* for enhancing female virtues, this social skill enabled many other women to subvert the official doctrines that subordinated them to men.

Other examples from *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* praise filial daughters who rise in social status because of their filial *waka*. Mashiko 増子 is one such woman:

Mashiko was the daughter of Tokiharu 時春, who lived in the Iitaka 飯高 district of the Ise province. Her mother passed away when she was seven years of age. And at the age of fourteen, her father fell ill with a serious disease. Mashiko took care of him day and night, without sleeping or eating adequately. Towards the end of his life, the father told Mashiko the story of how [Mashiko's mother] conceived of Mashiko when he went to pray to the kannon at Hase. He then told Mashiko to pray to the kannon at Hase even after his death, receive the great power of the kannon, pray for his spirit to rest in peace, and pray for [happiness in] the rest of her life. The father finally took his last breath. Mashiko saw his body off to a crematory. Mashiko went to Hase every month after this. Each time she offered the mirror she inherited from her parents to the kannon. She placed a poem together with the mirror. The poem reads: "Though pitiful, Buddha must

⁹² Maeda Toshiko, *Kinsei nyonin no sho* (Tokyo: Tankōsha, 1995), 64-70.

be seeing in this mirror, the reflection of my parents (*aware tomo / hotoke koso mime / masu kagami / uki omokage no / soko ni utsuruwo*).” The provincial official who frequented the temple saw this and thought that she was indeed a woman with gentle heart. He accompanied her to his house and fell in love with her; Mashiko became a person of affluence. This took place in 1171. It is said that for the rest of her life, Mashiko chanted the Lotus Sutra and repaid her debt of gratitude to Buddha.⁹³

This case is very much similar to the instances in *Honchō onna nijushi tei*, except that Mashiko was able to rise in social status because of the filial *waka* she presented to the kannon. Since literate commoners were almost nonexistent during the Heian period, it is probably safe to assume that this story was either crafted or elaborated for the Tokugawa female readers.

Other women in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* are praised for being loyal and wise wives. It is worth noting that these types of exemplary women are relatively new to this period; not many loyal wives appear in biographies of exemplary women prior to the nineteenth century. Instead, the emphasis in the early Tokugawa period is on filial piety. This may reflect a Tokugawa society in which husband-wife disputes or marital discord was not unusual. The plot line in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu* typically goes as follows: a husband falls in love with another woman, but because of the wife’s loyalty, chastity, or Buddhist enlightenment manifested in her *waka*, the husband decides to come back to her.

The biography of Kasanui no Tamiko 笠縫の民子 (Tamiko of the Kasanui village) is perhaps the case in point:

Tamiko was a woman in the Kasanui 笠縫 village of the Mino province [in central Japan]. The husband that she had been with for a long time had built another house and welcomed in another woman. All the people in Tamiko’s house followed the husband into the new house without giving much thought to it. They all stopped talking to Tamiko. One time Tamiko’s husband borrowed clothes from Tamiko and had his current mistress wear them. The mistress treated the clothes terribly and returned them to Tamiko after a while; she delivered the clothes together with birds like pheasant, goose, and duck [as a form of apology?]. Tamiko composed a poem using the names of all those birds and delivered it to her husband: “Ah, a hunting gear that makes a pheasant domesticated. But once the hunting gear touches my body, I indeed become nervous (*inaya kiji / hito ni naraseru / karikoromo / wagami ni fureba / ukikamo zo suru*).”

⁹³ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 11-12.

[Feeling the uneasiness of his wife], the husband felt ashamed of himself. He returned to his former house [to live with his wife again]. He never again held interest in any other woman; he loved and cherished Tamiko. They enjoyed a good companionship more than ever before.⁹⁴

By indirectly addressing her uneasiness, Tamiko was able to win her husband back. *Waka* could therefore be used as an invaluable method for solving disputes and discord between married couples. By composing a *waka* of quality, that is to say, by writing *waka* that demonstrates one's familiarity with classical poems, classical grammar, and resonance with the past, a woman was able to exhibit her moral worth. And ideally, that was what made a woman attractive for a man.

But just as in the case of courtesans, this very emphasis on literacy and poetry-making enabled many women to transgress gender norms. By the late eighteenth century, many women were active in the public sphere (the sphere outside of household); many of them took advantage of their literacy to work as teachers at *terakoya*, local secular schools. More will be discussed on this point later in this paper. For now, it should suffice to conclude that the very norm of female literacy and *waka* composition enabled courtesans to enhance their attractiveness as entertainers in show business and enabled many other women to go out into the public sphere.

By taking a close look at four biographies of exemplary women from throughout the Tokugawa period, this section attempts to elucidate women's norms depicted in each text; it also examined the kinds of skills and opportunities women of each period could have gotten out of in the process of pursuing official norms. In *Honchō jōkan*, the ideal womanhood was passivity and creation of harmony. In *Honchō onna nijushi tei*, filial women's sincere prayers and devout filiality garnered external support, which allowed them to rise in social status and contribute to prosperity of the *ie*. In *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*, many women actively sought to go out into cities,

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

learn swordsmanship, and avenge their murdered parents in order to pursue the ultimate form of filial piety. And lastly, in *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, many women acquired not only literacy but also competence in composing *waka* in order to verify their possession of women's norms, such as filial piety, Buddhist enlightenment, chastity, and loyalty as wives.

When juxtaposed in this way, it becomes clear that as time progressed, exemplary women obtained social skills and opportunities that could potentially subvert official doctrines for female behavior. In *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*, women utilized these opportunities and skills for displaying filial piety; but the fact that these opportunities and skills had the potential to empower women to diverge from official norms is worth emphasizing. In *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, exemplary women compose *waka*; but the increasing presence of women in the public sphere and the role *waka* had at brothels and show business attest the fact that literate women were encouraged to attain in order to be virtuous was not necessarily used in accordance with the official female norms. Biographies in any time period illustrate ideals and values that grow out of social realities. Ideals and realities are in many ways flipsides of each other and they affect each other. The ideals presented in the four biographies of exemplary women from the Tokugawa period indeed delineate this complicated relationship.

However, because I take up only four biographical *joshiyō ōrai*, this section is at best a case study of exemplary women in Tokugawa Japan. Further studies of biographical *joshiyō ōrai* such as Kurosawa Hirotada's 黒沢弘忠 *Honchō retsujo den* 本朝列女伝 (1668), Nakamura Tekisai's 中村惕斎 *Himekagami* 比壳鑑 (1661), and various other biographical *joshiyō ōrai* such as *Ominaeshi monogatari* 女郎花物語 (1661), *Teijo retsujo ban* 貞女列女判 (1698), *Wakoku tamakatsura* 和国玉加津羅 (1709), *Onna shisho geibun zue* 女四書芸文図絵 (1835),

and *Buke onna kagami* 武家女鑑 (1839) should assist us in understanding better the images of exemplary women which constantly changed throughout the Tokugawa period.⁹⁵

CHAPTER II: THE TRANSFORMATION OF FEMALE LITERARY CULTURE

As I have shown in the analysis of *Retsujo hyakunin isshu*, literacy and composition of *waka* were closely related to women's norms and morality in Tokugawa Japan. In this section I aim to examine this point further. For anyone who has glanced through *ōraimono* or *joshiyō ōrai*, s/he probably has noticed how much reading and writing (*yomikaki*) are emphasized in them. In fact, *yomikaki* had moral and social significance for both men and women of the Tokugawa period. Many scholars bring up this culture of *yomikaki* as the reason for the rise of popular literacy in Tokugawa Japan. While this is true, few of them go beyond to ask why *yomikaki* was an important norm—besides the fact that it was encouraged in Confucian and Neo-Confucian education.

My major concern in this section is to elucidate what *yomikaki* was supposed to mean for women by taking a close look at some practical moral guides from throughout the Tokugawa period. The questions this section asks are: 1) what do *joshiyō ōrai* say about the importance of *yomikaki* for women?; 2) did the norms for *yomikaki* change over time?; 3) if so, what social

⁹⁵ Manuscripts of *Honchō retsujō den* are available at Kasei Gakuin University, Tamagawa University, and Tokyo Metropolitan Library. *Himekagami* can be found in *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980). For *Ominaeshi monogatari*, see *Edo jidai josei bunko*, vol. 82 (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1994). A manuscript of *Teijo retsujō ban* is available at Nara Joshi University; it is in volumes 9 and 10 of *Tsubo no ishibumi* 壺の石文 (1698) by Matsue Sanshirō 松會三四郎. It is available online as well: <http://www.lib.nara-wu.ac.jp/nwugdb/edo-j/html/j019/n09/p001.html>. *Wakoku tamakatsura* is at Waseda University. It is available at: http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/nu05/nu05_00366/index.html. *Onna shisho geibun zue* is stored in Tokyo Gakugei University, National Diet Library, Tokyo University, Tōhoku University, and many other universities. It is available at: <http://ir.u-gakugei.ac.jp/images/EP20000248/kmview.html>. *Buke onna kagami* is stored in Tamagawa University, National Diet library, Tōhoku University, Narita University, Tenri University, and University of California, Berkeley.

conditions might have spurred such change? and; 4) what were the consequences—intended and unintended—of the official promotion of *yomikaki*?

Drawing from eight practical moral guides from throughout the Tokugawa period, this section will demonstrate that while the overall objectives of *yomikaki* remained consistent, the methods through which one could fulfill the objective changed over time. That is to say, the objective of *yomikaki* was always conservative in nature—for defining and reaffirming where women stood in society—but whereas in the early years *kana* was by default what women were encouraged to learn, beginning around the early eighteenth century *kanji* (which had previously been reserved for men) also became a requirement. This social phenomenon was due not only to the rise of female literacy but also to the kinds of books women were encouraged to read. As Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism became more prevalent in Tokugawa Japan, women were encouraged to read Chinese books published in Japan, such as *Onna kōkyō* 女孝經 (Ch. *Nüxiaojing*), *Onna rongō* 女論語 (Ch. *Nüluanyu*), *Daikun* 内訓 (Ch. *Neixun*), and *Jokai* 女誡 (Ch. *Nüjie*). Even in conduct manuals written by Japanese authors, more *kanji* needed to be used than ever before in order to explain Confucian concepts. It was also easier to use the combination of *kana* and *kanji* to explain Chinese concepts to the increasingly literate female audience than to compose prose in *kana* for pure aesthetic purposes. Hence, reading and writing in *kanji* naturally became more common for Tokugawa women.

Although this may seem like a subtle change in literary culture, it brought about a significant shift in the realm of social opportunities for women. Nakano Setsuko argues in her study of literary culture that the official endorsement to read and write in *kanji* beginning around the eighteenth century signified that “women and men now had the common ground in terms of

letters.”⁹⁶ To be sure, literary culture never became gender neutral—there still existed distinct masculine and feminine forms of *yomikaki*. Although more kanji were used in the feminine form of *yomikaki* in the later years of Tokugawa period compared to the earlier period, in general, texts for women still used a lot less *kanji* than those for men. But the fact that the difference between masculine and feminine forms of *yomikaki* decreased over time is in and of itself a significant change, as Nakano states. And this change in the feminine form of *yomikaki* allowed some women like Arakida Reijo 荒木田麗女 (1732-1806) and Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787-1861), both celebrated female authors of the later Tokugawa period, to demonstrate their ability in Chinese poems, which had hitherto been reserved for men. Moreover, some women like Tadano Makuzu 只野真葛 (1763-1825) even went on to write political treatises, which were certainly not appropriate for women to write. But these women were active only from the mid-Tokugawa period onward, when *kanji* begin to be encouraged in *joshiyō ōrai*. Of course, women like Arakida Reijo and Tadano Makuzu came from privileged backgrounds and they are in no way representatives of the majority of the Tokugawa women. However, it is probably safe to state that they owed much of their prominence to the new literary culture that encouraged them to write more in *kanji*.

So what exactly is written about *yomikaki* in *joshiyō ōrai* and how did it change over time? In her study, Nakano Setsuko tracks changes by measuring the number of *kanji* that appear in practical moral guides like *Onna shikimoku* (1660) and *Onna daigaku takarabako* 女大学宝箱 (1836). This section of the paper tracks changes by looking less at writing style, and paying attention instead at what the authors of *joshiyō ōrai* say about *yomikaki*.

⁹⁶ Nakano Setsuko, *Kangaeru onna tachi: Kanazōshi kara Onna daigaku*, 220-221.

Onna shikimoku (Formulary for Women) is one of the oldest moral guides from the Tokugawa period. The earliest publication year that is known today is 1660. The author is not known. *Onna shikimoku* consists of two volumes. The first volume contains two sections, one of them being discussions of proper behaviors and morality guides for women. This section is broken down into four different parts, each of which discusses women of different social statuses: women working in the Ōoku (Tokugawa shogunate's inner quarter), wives of merchants, nursing mothers, and nuns. The intended audience indicates that *Onna shikimoku* was targeted for women of relatively high social statuses. This is also clear from *Onna shikimoku*'s style of writing; it is written in long sentences, which women of lower social statuses most likely would not have been able to read in the early years of the Tokugawa period. The other section provides instructions on nurturing girls and detailed explanations on Confucian doctrines, such as the five basics, five principles, and five admonitions. The second volume is dedicated in its entirety to the author's encouragement of women's education. The first section, which will be examined in this paper, is a discussion of the value of *yomikaki*. It focuses on various reasons why one should strive to practice *yomikaki*. The second section is more of a practical guide with a list of terms that are useful when writing letters.

What stands out the most about the discussion of *yomikaki*, especially with regard to writing, in *Onna shikimoku* is that it seems to be based more on spiritual more than practical emphasis. This I say because while *Onna shikimoku* encourages its reader to practice writing as a form of Buddhist moral cultivation, it does not explain why writing is an important social skill for women in order for them to fulfill their role in society. It is probably beneficial to take a look at an excerpt from *Onna shikimoku* that summarizes the value it places on writing:

“Try planting. There is no village that does not grow flowers. It is indeed from the heart, though one's body may be humble (*uete miyo / hana no sodatanu / sato mo nashi / kokoro kara koso / mi wa iyashi kere*).” The heart of this poem is that even if one

possessed seeds of thousands of plants and cultivated his/her land, if s/he does not plant those seeds thinking, “They probably will not grow if the soil was hard,” or, “They probably will not grow if it was humid,” s/he will not seek after it for the rest of his/her life. Even if soil was different from what one expected, if one plants the seeds, they will receive the blessings of rain and dew. And they will naturally grow and must thrive. The same can be said about writing. If one does not strive [to write] thinking, “I probably will not be able to write,” then it is like the unplanted seeds—there will be no way that s/he be able write. Even if s/he thinks s/he is clumsy, if s/he is not negligent at heart and strive to exercise this principle, then s/he will no doubt be able to write as days go by. In one story a person asked, “Should one’s writing be done with his/her hands or with his/her heart?” The other person answered, “It should be done with the combination of the two. However, the heart is of foremost importance.” . . . Indeed, learning one letter is cannot be replaced by thousands of pieces of gold. “Wealth accumulated can disappear, but the treasure within one’s body will never disappear.” Thus an ancient sage said, and this must not be a lie. In any case, it is this principle that one should learn.⁹⁷

As is clear from the excerpt above, writing here is introduced more as a spiritual practice than a practical, social skill that benefits one in the mundane world. In fact, the explanation given here is not gender specific—it seems to apply to anyone, regardless of gender. Although *yomikaki* continued to be encouraged as a form of moral cultivation for the remainder of the Tokugawa period, influence from medieval Buddhism seems to be more pronounced in *joshiyō ōrai* from the earlier years of the Tokugawa period.

As for style of writing, *Onna shikimoku* does not specify whether a woman should be writing in *kana* or *kanji* or both. However, as Nakano makes clear in her study, since the Heian period, there existed a literary culture that argues against women writing in *kanji*. Nakano uses *Menoto no sōshi* 乳母の草紙 (thirteenth century) written by Abutsu-ni (?-1283) as evidence of this attitude from the medieval period. According to Nakano, Abutsu-ni states in her conduct manual, which is written in the form of a letter to her daughter, that although *kanji* is not appropriate for women, they can learn a little so that they will be able to read titles of books; but they should learn it as a type of pastime.⁹⁸ Such gendered literary culture existed throughout the medieval period. *Onna shikimoku* does not state its view on *kana* and *kanji*, but it is clear from

⁹⁷ Emori Ichirō, *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu*, 1:31.

⁹⁸ Nakano Setsuko, *Kangaeru onna tachi: Kanazōshi kara Onna daigaku*, 193.

its prose dominated by *kana* that it most likely inherits the literary culture from the medieval period.

Himekagami 比売鑑 (The Book of Exemplary Women) is a *joshiyō ōrai* of thirty-one volumes written by Nakamura Tekisai 中村惕斎 (1629-1702). It was published in 1661. This voluminous work is divided into two parts. The first twelve volumes are called *Jutsugen* 述言, in which Nakamura writes in prose about appropriate manners and behaviors for women based on Neo-Confucianism. This derives from Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) *Shōgaku* 小学 (Ch. *Xiaoxue*), a conduct manual one of Zhu Xi's disciples wrote in 1187 under Zhu Xi's instruction. The rest of *Himekagami* is called *Kikō* 紀行, in which Nakamura lists exemplary women in China since the ancient period; it is mostly based on Liu Xiang's (77-6 B.C.E.) *Lienü zhuan* (Biographies of Exemplary Women).

Nakamura Tekisai was born into the household of a kimono merchant, but he pursued his interest in academics; he was conversant in various academic fields, such as astronomy, geology, musicology, zoology, and botany. Nakamura was also a devoted advocate of Neo-Confucianism, just like Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627-1705), his contemporary. This is quite obvious from the fact that *Himekagami* is largely indebted to Confucian works from China. Besides *Himekagami*, he also wrote *Shisho shōku shicchū shōsetsu* 四書章句集註鈔說 (1690) and *Kinshiroku jimōkukai* 近思錄示蒙句解 (1701), both of which are also heavily influenced by Neo-Confucianism.

Naturally, *Himekagami* is based more on Confucian philosophy than on Buddhist philosophy, although it was published only a year after *Onna shikimoku*. This is apparent in two aspects. One is that Nakamura uses much more *kanji* than the author of *Onna shikimoku* does. And the other is that Nakamura criticizes *kakichirashi*, a style of writing that was popular among

women of high social status. Hasegawa Myōtai 長谷川妙躰 (?-?) and Ono Otsū 小野お通 (1568-1631) are famous for writing the examples of the *kakichirashi* style. According to Koizumi Yoshinaga, this style was popular for about one hundred years, from the Manji years (1658-61) until the Hōreki years (1751-64). After the mid-eighteenth century, however, this style quickly declined and became outdated.⁹⁹ In a letter written in the *kakichirashi* style, one was to read not from top to bottom, right to left, but in a complicated order. Each graph has different size, and overall, graphs are written in a delicate yet ornate manner. A hook of a letter (*harai* はらい) is more extended than usual to emphasize feminineness. Nakamura, who preferred a simpler, more practical form of writing, shows ambivalence about *kakichirashi*—the style of writing that was born out of pursuit of feminine aestheticism rather than practicality.

The following excerpt is on Nakamura's perception of *yomikaki* for women:

Women should discern the main points of female conduct and learn them well. It is acceptable even if a woman does not know skills other than cooking and appropriate conduct. She does not have to have an outstanding ability in reading poems and books. However, since the heart of her words and her habits in reading could be written down in *kana*, she should learn to read and write to some degree and retain them in her heart. A woman who is not used to reading *kana* is always awkward in her speech; she has many accents and errors that make her difficult to listen to. Writing is required often in things like playing koto, playing chess, writing, and drawing. Writing is called “heart stroke” because one's [state of] heart becomes apparent in letters. Thus, when one's heart is upright, the shape of her letters will naturally be beautiful. *Mana* 真名 is called men's letters (*otokomoji*). There are three styles in *mana*: *shinsho* 真書, *gyōsho* 行書, and *sōsho* 草書. *Kana* is called women's letters (*onnamoji*). There are *hiragana* 平仮名 and *katakana* 片仮名. These are both [derived] from the exemplary handwriting from the ancient time; one should learn the heart of these letters. Women today scribble (*kakichirasu*) when they write letters in *kana*. They abandon their hearts and adorn solely their appearances. This should not be called writing. When one writes, it is desirable that she makes dark ink, soaks up a brush, and writes calmly.¹⁰⁰

Nakamura clarifies here that *mana* (or *kanji*) and *kana* are for men and women, respectively.

And from the fact that he only discusses *kana* when explaining female writing, we can assume

⁹⁹ Koizumi Yoshinaga, ed., *Nyohitsu tehon kaidai*, vol. 80 of *Nihon shoshigaku taikēi* (Tokyo: Seishōdō Shoten, 1998), 6 and; Umemura Kayo, *Kinsei minshū no tenarai to ōraimono*, 289.

¹⁰⁰ Nakae Kazue and Yamazumi Masaki, eds., *Kosodate no sho*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko, 1976), 196.

that *kana* was the dominant form of writing for women in the early years of the Tokugawa period. He also criticizes the *kakichirashi* style because he thinks that it only embellishes appearance of one's letters; in his opinion, clearer and simpler writing style—close to men's penmanship—was more favorable. This opinion of Nakamura is intriguing in the sense that it anticipates the change in female penmanship in the Tokugawa period. As Nakano states, the *kakichirashi* style was later replaced by clearer, more bold style spearheaded by a woman named Isome Tsuna's 居初津奈 model in a practical writing manual called *Onna kyōkun bunshō* 女教訓文章 (1694). Isome's model was also innovative because of the large number of *kanji* it uses. Nakano argues that this is due to Isome's consultation with Confucian conduct manuals.¹⁰¹ If that is the case, then the large number of *kanji* and the critique of the *kakichirashi* style that appears in *Himekagami* may be also due to Nakamura's study of Neo-Confucianism.

I was not able to have access to *Onna kyōkun bunshō*, but was able to take a look at *Onna jitsugokyō/Onna dōjikyō* 女実語教・女童子教 (The Teaching of Truth for Women / Instructions for Female Children), a *joshiyō ōrai* written by Isome Tsuna in 1695. Just as in *Onna kyōkun bunshō*, it is written with bold brush strokes; letters are large, clear, and uniform in size. This is so that the textbook could be used as a practical writing guide for girls who were just beginning to learn to write; the reader was supposed to practice penmanship by tracing over Isome's handwriting. When juxtaposed with *Onna shikimoku* from 1661, the increase in the number of *kanji* used in *Onna jitsugokyō/Onna dōjikyō* is quite obvious. Moreover, the *kanji* used are of more advanced level with many strokes. One example of a sentence from *Onna jitsugokyō/Onna dōjikyō* is: “Wisdom is the treasure [that lasts] for eternity; when one's life

¹⁰¹ Nakano Setsuko, *Kangaeru onna tachi*, 205.

terminates, it follows one's soul (智恵は是万代の宝、命終る時は魂に随ふ).”¹⁰² In contrast, *Onna shikimoku* uses minimal number of *kanji*: “Content of a letter should be changed depending on [what] the other person [says]; it is to be based on diction of ultimate adorableness (文のぶんしやうは、さきの人によりてかはるべし。ことはつゞきのいかにもあいあいしきを本とす).”¹⁰³ The same can be said about other textbooks from the mid-1600s. *Onna kagami hidensho* 女鏡秘伝書 (1650) also has a limited number of *kana*: “One should value that [her children] begin writing from when they are little. If one does not write letters, she cannot accomplish most anything [in life] (おさなきより物かく事かんとせらるべし。まづ、文をかゝざれば、万のやうかくる。).”¹⁰⁴ The ratio of *kanji* and *kana* in both textbooks are about the same as in these excerpts. Even by looking at portions of the textbooks, it is evident that expectations of female literacy (i.e., amount of *kanji* a reader was expected to know or learn as she read a textbook) changed significantly in a mere few decades.

However, Isome does not state anywhere in *Onna jitsugokyō/Onna dōjikyō* to what degree women were supposed to know *kanji*. It is also difficult to tease out from the textbook what Isome actually thought on this point because the textbook is written in bullet points for the intended young audience. Unlike *Onna shikimoku* and *Himekagami*, this textbook is aimed at girls, not women because its points are summarized in bullet points, it is written with larger and clearer font, and it is accompanied by pages of illustrations to intrigue younger audience. It therefore introduces only the most basic ideas on *yomikaki* represented by the statement like: “If one does not study, one will not have the [basic] ability [needed in life]; if one does not have

¹⁰² Emori Ichirō, *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu*, 1:51.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1:33.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:133.

ability, one is equivalent to plants.”¹⁰⁵ The only clue is the style of penmanship Isome uses and the amount of *kanji* she uses in the textbook; based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the importance of Chinese classical learning in Tokugawa Japan transformed female literary culture from a feminine and elaborate one dominated by *kana* to a more practical and bold one represented by the increasing use of *kanji*.

By the early eighteenth century, usage of *kanji* was officially accepted—in fact encouraged—for all women. In *Joshi o oshiyuru hō* 女子を教ゆる法 (Instructions for Teaching Girls), which is Volume Five of *Wazoku dōjikin* 和俗童子訓 (1710) written by a renowned scholar Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714), Ekiken clearly states that girls should learn *kanji* as well as math on top of *kana*:

Make them (girls) learn *kana* from when they are seven years of age. They should be taught to learn *otokomoji* 男文字 (*kanji*) as well. Have them read many ancient poems that are without lewd ideas; make them learn the way of refined poetry. Just as with boys, make them read and learn by heart short poems and poems with no extra syllables. After this, have them read the preface to *Kōkyō* 孝経 (Ch. *Xiaojing*), the Education Chapter in the *Analects*, and Madame Cao's 曹大家 *Jokai* 女誡 (Ch. *Nūjie*) to teach them the way of filial piety, obedience, chastity, and purity. Do not let them go outside after the age of ten; make them stay in the inner quarter and make them learn weaving, sewing, and spinning wheels. Never have them hear or learn about anything lewd. *Kouta* 小歌 (popular songs), *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 (puppet plays), and *shamisen* 三味線 (three-stringed instrument) are fond of inappropriate tones so [if one hears them] her heart will be ruined. It is bad to comfort girls' hearts with such base, insane things. They should be comforted with refined, proper things. Women nowadays teach lewd tones to their daughters on their own volition. This completely ruins [the girls'] behavior and personality. When [girls] see, hear, and learn about base things in their youth, these quickly affect them. Books to show girls should be carefully selected as well. Books written on the past (i.e., history books) are harmless. Do not show insane books like *kouta* and *jōruri* without teaching them the rightful way of the sages. The prose of books like *Ise monogatari* and *Genji monogatari* is refined; but do not show these books to girls early on because these books are written on lewd matters. Girls should write properly and learn math as well. If they cannot write or do math, they will be unable to keep record of their households and manage the household budget.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:51.

¹⁰⁶ Ishikawa Matsutarō, ed., *Onna daigaku shū*, 11.

As Ishikawa Matsutarō states in his annotation to *Joshi o oshiyuru hō*, Ekiken seems to provide many ideas innovative for his time. For one, he writes that girls should be taught *kanji* as well as math, which was unthinkable before. As we have seen in *Himekagami*, it was desirable that women know a minimum amount of *kanji*; however, it was never stated outright that women need to learn *kanji* just as men do in their youth. When it comes to math, I know no instance of *joshiyō ōrai* from the early years of the Tokugawa period that encourage women to learn math. The increasing cases of women taking charge of household economy are most likely the result of nuclearization of families in the Tokugawa period, as discussed in the previous section. In this changing social setting, women, together with men, now held an important responsibility of maintaining and passing down *ie* to their offspring. *Kanji* and math became skills required for this end. Here we see an important turning point in female literary culture because the objective of writing shifted from the earlier one, which was pursuit of aestheticism. It is probably for this reason that the *kakichirashi* style, an elegant and ornate style of writing, was replaced shortly by bold and more legible style. The kind of woman in demand now was one who could manage households by juggling language and arithmetic skills, not one who sought for aestheticism and femininity solely in the spiritual realm.

Another innovative aspect of *Joshi o oshiyuru hō* pertains to the list of books it encourages women to read. The books introduced are *Kōkyō*, the *Analects*, and *Jokai*. Among these, two (*Kōkyō* and the *Analects*) were supposedly for men. Ekiken suggests that girls read only the preface to *Kōkyō* and a chapter from the *Analects* because they are too advanced for them. But reading portions of these texts still requires one to know more than a rudimentary level of *kanji*. These books were not encouraged in the earlier years of the Tokugawa period. The books recommended in *Onna shikimoku* are *Genji monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*, and *Eiga*

monogatari 栄花物語, all of which are written mostly in *kana*.¹⁰⁷ *Onna shikimoku* mentions Miss Zheng's *Onna kōkyō* 女孝経 (Ch. *Nü xiaojing*), but only as an example of a work in other country that set guidelines for later generations—it does not necessarily recommend that it be read.¹⁰⁸

In this way, it becomes clear from the juxtaposition of reading lists from different times in the Tokugawa period that the prevalence of Chinese learning in Tokugawa Japan integrated *kanji* into the female literary culture; the recommended Chinese books (written, of course, in Chinese) enhanced a woman's ability in *kanji*, which in turn enabled her to read even more advanced Chinese books. Chinese concepts are mentioned here and there in *joshiyō ōrai* from the 1600s, but it was around the 1700s—when female literacy became higher and nuclearization of families necessitated women's use of *kanji*—that the suggested books in *joshiyō ōrai* came to be dominated by Chinese books.

By the mid-eighteenth century, learning to write *kanji* did not even need to be emphasized anymore; *kanji* was already very much ingrained in female literacy culture. A poet and a calligrapher named Ōe Genpo's 大江玄圃 (1729-1794) *Onna gakuhan* 女学範 (Norms of Learning for Women) published in 1768 demonstrates this point. On writing, Ōe states as follows:

Teach all of the techniques of writing to girls early on. It is very admirable when a girl selects the most refined brush and inkstone that have no equivalence and learn to write [using those] by distilling in her heart the ability of the masters of the ancient time. It is without a doubt [admirable] that a girl advances in her skill in *mana* (*kanji*); it is also delightful [that she] writes well in expansive and leisurely *kana*.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Emori Ichirō, *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu*, 1:26-30.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:27.

¹⁰⁹ *Kinsei joshi kyōiku shisō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1980), 34.

It is taken for granted here that women learn to write *kanji*. This signifies that *kanji* already played a large part in female literary culture.

Onna gakuhan also shows that many women were now praised for their skills in Chinese poetry, which had been reserved for men. Ōe in fact compares Japanese women to Chinese women and praises the former for their effort in actively learning the letters (i.e., *kanji*) and the art (i.e., Chinese poem) foreign to them:

The fact that women in China compose poems is apparent in many works such as *Ming yuan hui shi* 名媛彙詩 (edited by Zheng Wenang 鄭文昂 of the Ming dynasty), *Ming yuan shi gui* 名媛詩歸 (edited by Zhong Xing 鍾惺), and *Ming yuan shi xian* 名媛詩仙 (edited by Teng Changlin 藤昌琳). Women of this country (i.e., Japan) are known for not adequately being able to read and understand *manaji* (*kanji*); for this reason, when they take up brush on their own volition and compose poems, it indeed seems as if they are hoping to bring their works to venerable China and transmit them there. If we are to compare Japanese women to people of other countries, should we discuss Japanese women's fruitful days on the same terms? No, we should not. We see [Chinese] poems written by women of this country in the works like *Bunka shūrei shū* 文花秀麗集 (818), *Keikoku shū* 経国集 (827), *Rōei shū* 朗詠集 (1013 and before 1135), *Gyokuko shikō* 玉壺詩稿 (?), *Kika nikki* 歸家日記 (1689), *Rekichō shisan* 歷朝詩纂 (1756), *Kinraishishū* 金蘭詩集 (1754), and *Nakayama shikō* 中山詩稿 (1758).¹¹⁰

Ōe insists here that although Chinese is foreign to Japanese women, they strive to learn it and compose poems that are as fine as the ones written by Chinese women. This comparison in and of itself is indicative of the high level of *kanji* Japanese women were expected to know in the mid-eighteenth century. The poetry collections that appear in the list above are mostly from the classical period and the Tokugawa period—none are introduced from the medieval period, which is indicative of the scarce number of Chinese poems written by women during this period due to the dominant *kana* culture among women. Indeed, as Wakita Haruko states, cultural development in Japan during the medieval period revolved around Japanese classical novels such

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27. *Gyokuko shikō* is by Kinoshita Rankō 木下蘭皐 (1681-1752), a Confucian scholar who studied under Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728). *Kika nikki* is by Inoue Tsūjo. *Rekichō shisan* is a compilation of *kanshi* edited by Matsudaira Yorihiro 松平頼寛. *Kinraishishū* is by Ryū Sōro 龍草廬 (1714-1792). *Nakayama shikō* was written by Tachibana Gyokuran 立花玉蘭 (?-1794), a *kanshi* (poems written in Chinese) poet.

as *Genji monogatari* and *Ise monogatari*, not around Confucian classics.¹¹¹ It was therefore natural that Chinese poems were rarely written by women in medieval Japan. Seen in this way, the development of feminine, ornate literary culture discussed earlier seems to be a natural byproduct of the cultural inclination towards classical Japanese literature. In the mid-Tokugawa period there is a significant shift in the sense that female literary culture departs from this medieval legacy; the presence of female Chinese poets during the Tokugawa period is telling evidence that Chinese poetry, which had been reserved for men, was now accessible for women as well. In this instance we see fluidity of official norms for women during the Tokugawa period.

What did women do with the *kanji* skill and high literacy they acquired? Indeed, the official encouragement to learn *kanji* expanded many opportunities for women. From the mid-Tokugawa period onwards, we see the rise of female writers and poets. Many of them, who are well known today and are frequently studied by scholars, are indeed from the mid- to late Tokugawa period. To list a few, these are the *kanshi* (poems written in Chinese) poet Tachibana Gyokuran 立花玉蘭 (?-1794), the novelist Arakida Reijo 荒木田麗女 (1732-1806), the writer and a philosopher Tadano Makuzu 只野真葛 (1763-1825), the artist and *kanshi* poet Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787-1861), and the poet Ōtagaki Rengetsu 大田垣蓮月 (1791-1875).¹¹² Inoue Tsūjo 井上通女 (1660-1738) from the early years of the Tokugawa period is famous, too, but besides her, most of the well known female writers and poets are from the mid- to late Tokugawa period. Often scholars refer to them as examples of women that were able to not only explore

¹¹¹ Wakita Haruko, *Nihon chūsei joseishi no kenkyū: Seibetsu yakuwari buntan to bōsei/kasei/seiai* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1992), 22.

¹¹² See: Maeda Toshiko, *Kinsei nyōnin no sho*; Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabinikki*, vol. 13 of *Rekishi bunka raiburari* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997); Kado Reiko, *Waga Makuzu monogatari: Edo no joryū shisakusha tanbō* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2006); Kado Reiko, *Ema Saikō: Kasei-ki no joryū shijin* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2010); Seki Tamiko, *Tadano Makuzu* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008) and; Kado Reiko, *Edo joryū bungaku no hakken: Hikari aru mi koso kurushiki omoi nare* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2006). These female writers and poets are also popular topics in Shiba Keiko's journal, *Edo-ki onna kō*.

their inner world but also manifest their ideas in the form of art despite the Neo-Confucian gender restrictions, which prohibited women from playing active roles in the public sphere; but in actuality, it was the very prevalence of Chinese learning in Japan that enabled these women to become educated, to become writers and poets and be known in the public sphere. Without the official encouragement to learn *kanji* and to read advanced books from China, these women would not have been able to acquire the level of literacy needed to engage in writing Chinese poems, novels, and political treatises. The rise of female artists towards the end of the Tokugawa period can be interpreted as follows: 1) literacy acquired by complying with the widely encouraged Chinese learning enabled some women to learn and write Chinese poems; and 2) the rise of female writers and Chinese poets occurred in tandem with the shifting female literary culture, which encouraged women to learn *kanji* for practical reasons.

Because the official literary culture itself changed overtime, female writers and Chinese poets from the mid- to late Tokugawa period were not considered eccentric. In fact, many of them were praised as learned women whose moral uprightness and literary ability were equivalent to those of women in China. However, the literary culture that produced exemplary learned women also produced anomalous women, who found loopholes in official norms and criticized them. Tadano Makuzu is one good example. She wrote a political treatise called *Hitori kangae* 独考 (1817), which criticized Confucian gender hierarchy under the pretext of filial piety and called for political reform. Although her action was unconventional, this does not signify that she lived outside the norms of her time.¹¹³ *Hitori kangae* was indeed “a collage of familiar notions merged in unfamiliar ways,” as Jo Burr Margadant states.¹¹⁴ Her life story is telling evidence that although individuals of the same period lived by the same social norms,

¹¹³ Bettina Gramlich-Oka. *Thinking Like a Man: Tadano Makuzu (1763-1825)* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 171.

¹¹⁴ Jo Burr Margadant, ed., *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2.

each of them embraced different aspects of those norms—some of them even resisted certain aspects of the norms due to their personality and social circumstances specific to them.¹¹⁵

Despite the literary trend that encouraged women to learn more *kanji*, Makuzu herself was trained to read and write in the classical Heian style of writing. This is intriguing because she was brought up in an academic environment. Kudō Heisuke 工藤平助 (1734-1800), Makuzu's father, was a physician who served the Date family of the Sendai domain. Many prominent people frequented Heisuke's mansion in Edo, such as the Sendai daimyo, Dutch scholars, and kabuki actors. Growing up in the environment filled with lively academic discussions, Makuzu naturally became familiar with scholarship of various disciplines, such as Confucianism, nativism, and Dutch studies. However, despite the environment, Makuzu was prohibited by her father from learning Chinese because he thought that it was not ideal for a woman to be too learned. According to Bettina Gramlich-Oka, Makuzu found this regrettable at first, but "later in her life she came to realize that her lack of education in Chinese was owing to her father's wisdom and for her own good: she did not fall into the Chinese way of thinking, but instead was able to have her own free thoughts."¹¹⁶ This anecdote is intriguing because it demonstrates that not all people embraced the cultural trend of women learning *kanji*; nativists, who aspired to purify Japan of foreign imports, were especially opposed to this cultural trend. Considering all of these, the fact that Makuzu always used a limited amount of *kanji* in her writings seems to derive from the training she received in her early years to read and write in the style of the Heian classics as well as her studies in nativism later in her life.

¹¹⁵ For more information on discussion of the tension between official norms and historical agency, see: Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott, eds., *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*.

¹¹⁶ Gramlich-Oka, *Thinking Like a Man*, 70.

But Makuzu still benefited from the female literary culture of her time. This is evident in *Hitori kangae*, in which Makuzu writes commentary and critiques on scholarly works that require an advanced reading ability in *kanji*. She references Confucian classics, Western anatomy books, and scholarly works by a nativist Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), a nativist Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), a politician and a Confucian scholar Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1725), and a Confucian scholar Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619-1691). That Makuzu was able to not only read them but also make comments on them indicate that she could read Chinese as well as Japanese scholarly writings abound with *kanji*. There seems to be no record that shows how she acquired this ability, but given the abundance of Chinese books as well as *joshiyō ōrai* that taught women to learn Chinese in the period Makuzu lived, it must not have been difficult to learn the foreign language on her own. There were certainly many means for women to learn Chinese by the late eighteenth century. The ability to read Chinese enabled Makuzu to access scholarly books—which were supposed to be off limits to women—on her own. In this sense, Makuzu owed much to the female literary culture of her time.

But not all women took advantage of the female literary culture like Makuzu did; Makuzu was undeniably an anomalous woman. Many women during this time wrote Chinese poems and might have been familiar with scholarly works, scholarly debates (e.g., Confucianism verses nativism), and political debates of the time (e.g., looming foreign threat and economic crisis), but few of them actually transgressed the gender demarcation in the realm of literary culture. To be sure, the language used in female literary culture was changing; women were allowed to—in fact encouraged to—learn Chinese, at least in the instructional manuals like *joshiyō ōrai*. However, as Gramlich-Oka explicitly states, *gakumon*, or academic pursuits,

remained strictly a male domain.¹¹⁷ Many female poets and writers in the mid- to late Tokugawa period were learned in Chinese, but their literary activities remained in the realm of art and fiction:

It is not that there were no educated women in the Tokugawa period. To the contrary, upper-class women and wealthy elite commoners were educated beyond basic literacy. . . . Women's education, however, was meant as an investment toward better social status, and not toward intellectual independence. Women were educated to prepare them for domestic and social responsibilities after marriage. . . . *Gakumon*, or academics, was a male domain.¹¹⁸

Hence, hardly any women participated in academic discussions or even dared to write political treatises like Makuzu did.

Makuzu's deviation from the official norms had much to do with the bitter experiences she had to go through in her life. Makuzu's life was largely shaped by her father Heisuke's ambition to overcome the ill-defined social status as a physician and achieve a samurai status. Makuzu married late (at thirty three years of age) for this reason; Heisuke wanted her to marry a high-ranking samurai after he successfully built his political career. After she finally married to a retainer in Sendai, she reluctantly left Edo for Sendai in the northeastern region, an alien place where she had to endure loneliness for years. Makuzu patiently held up to this fate until unfortunate events occurred one after another: fire burned down the Kudō family's mansion in Edo, Heisuke fell into financial trouble, and Motosuke, Makuzu's younger brother whom she was counting on to turn around the fate of the Kudō family, died of illness. These events shattered Makuzu's hope; she felt an intense sense of victimization. Gramlich-Oka claims that it was these incidents that stimulated the writer in Makuzu.¹¹⁹ To add insult to injury, succession disputes occurred between the Kudō family and the Kuwabara family, Makuzu's mother's natal

¹¹⁷ Gramlich-Oka, *Thinking Like a Man*, 177.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

family. The Kudō family miserably lost, and their prized possessions were sold off by the members of the Kuwabara family to clear Heisuke's debts.

Makuzu decided to write *Hitori kangae* because she thought that her gender prohibited her from becoming the head of the Kudō household. She was frustrated by how she sacrificed herself all her life for the sake of prosperity and reputation of the Kudō family, but when the family faced adversity there was little she could do because of the patriarchal society. Though *Hitori kangae* was never published, the content was provocative enough to cause uneasiness for Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴 (1767-1848), whom Makuzu asked for editorial comments. *Hitori kangae* was therefore a product of the intense misery, resentment, and despair Makuzu developed throughout her life. Without those emotions and the bitter experiences she went through, Makuzu probably would not have been able to produce a writing that transgressed the gender demarcation of the period. Makuzu's life is indeed a collage that was extraordinary yet inseparable from the period in which she lived.

As much as Makuzu seems not to represent unexemplary women of her period, she and other learned women like Arakida Reijo and Ema Saikō were all products of the female literary culture of their period. That is to say, the female literary culture, which produced acclaimed writers like Arakida Reijo and Ema Saikō, also produced a woman like Tadano Makuzu. These learned women lived in the same world and shared much in common, like social norms, literary culture, and privileged background. But they produced different perspectives and opinions of the world they shared because as Hannah Arendt states, "the world opens up differently to every [woman], according to [her] position in it." Based on how the world opened up to them, each learned woman in the Tokugawa period went on to formulate her own *doxa* (i.e., opinion), which

is “the formulation in speech of what *dokei moi*, that is, of what appears to me.”¹²⁰ Women like Arakida Reijo and Ema Saikō expressed their perspectives and opinions about the world through “womanly” art. Tadano Makuzu, on the other hand, did the same in the form of “unwomanly” political treatise. The former was what Confucian scholars in the mid- to late Tokugawa period wanted to see. The latter, the opposite.

Seen in this way, the female literary culture of the mid- to late Tokugawa period (that encouraged women to learn *kanji*) seems to have produced both favorable and unfavorable outcomes, judging from conventional understandings of Confucian thinking. What other unfavorable or unintended consequences did the female literary culture produce? One of them is certainly the increasing number of female *terakoya* 寺子屋 (local secular schools) teachers towards the end of the period. Throughout the Tokugawa period, education for women was supposed to be for the attainment of behaviors and skills appropriate to their social roles as daughters, wives, and mothers, who were in charge of the inner sphere (i.e., household). Kaibara Ekiken’s *Joshi o oshiyuru hō* from the mid-eighteenth century was revolutionary in the sense that it encouraged women to learn *kanji* as well as math, but this was not because he wanted women to be independent or liberated by any means, but because he felt that those skills were becoming increasingly necessary for women to acquire in order for them to effectively fulfill their roles of maintaining the household. Despite such effort on the part of Confucian scholars to designate women to the inner sphere, the rise of female *terakoya* teachers towards the end of the Tokugawa period meant that some women were now coming forth into the outer sphere. How was this possible? What does the female literary culture have to do with this social phenomenon?

¹²⁰ Hannah Arendt, “Philosophy and Politics,” *Social Research* 71 (2004): 433. I cited from the section in which Hannah Arendt explains what *doxa* was for Socrates and how he saw it as the truth.

The emergence of female *terakoya* teachers in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century shows that many women had high enough literacy to teach rudimentary reading and writing to local children. It is probably important to emphasize here that this does not mean all women had high literacy by any means—only some did. As Richard Rubinger attests, attainment of literacy varied depending on geography and social status. And even in countryside, there existed “two cultures” in terms of literacy. Village headmen acquired high literacy because of their role in society as middlemen between the Tokugawa officials and the general populace; but the rest of the population in rural areas remained illiterate or literate but only at rudimentary level.¹²¹ Despite the existence of a part of the population that remained illiterate, however, the increase in number of *joshiyō ōrai* published and the change in term of their content to a more advanced level (which required the reader to have higher literacy) testify to the fact that more and more Tokugawa women became literate as time progressed.

The emergence of female *terakoya* teachers also indicate that women teaching at *terakoya*—and sometimes even running them—to make money were becoming accepted in the Tokugawa society. Sugano Noriko’s work on *Kankoku kōgiroku* 官刻孝義録 (1801), an official record of commendable people, paved the way for studies pertaining to the reciprocal relationship between official norms and social reality and fluidity of female norms. The exemplary figures are listed by regions, then by the awards they received (e.g., filial piety, loyalty, diligence in agriculture, and chastity). Sugano examines two women listed in *Kankoku kōgiroku*, Yayo and Sayo, who are commended for supporting their natal family by refusing to marry and involving themselves in business and teaching.¹²² This, according to Sugano, signifies

¹²¹ Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 5 and 7.

¹²² Sugano Noriko, *Edo jidai no kōkō mono: “Kōgi roku” no sekai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999) and; Sugano Noriko, “State Indoctrination of Filial Piety in Tokugawa Japan,” 185-188.

the dramatic departure from the earlier period, when undesirable behaviors (e.g., refusal to marry and working in the outer sphere) could not be justified even for filial piety. Based on this finding, Sugano interprets the extent to which changing norms among the general populace could have affected the official ideas regarding “commendable” behavior by the early nineteenth century.¹²³

Since there is no translation of *Kankoku kōgiroku*, it should be beneficial to cite the cases of Sayo and Yayo here. Sayo was appears under the section on filial people from the Musashino 武蔵野 province:

In the Kitagawa district of Fukagawa, there was a blind man named Haruyoshi 春養, who made living as a masseur. In the previous year his [new] wife named Shimo came to join Haruyoshi's household with her daughter Sayo. Sayo served her parents well. Because her [step] father's eyes were disabled, she took a very good care of him. The family was poor so she went to serve at a samurai's household. In between her service, Sayo would learn to write and play koto. She was also fond of reading books; with the little remainder that was left of her salary she sought for (bought) the Four Books and Kōkyō 孝經 (Ch. Xiaojing) and read them. Sayo was concerned about her mother single-handedly taking care of her blind father so she took time off from service and returned home. It was difficult to eke out living just with the father's occupation, so Sayo taught local girls writing. When there was demand, she also taught koto, reading, and the outline of the way of women. The local girls naturally became well behaved; this eased the hearts of their parents. Sayo did not go on pilgrimage frequently; the family lived in perfect harmony. When Sayo became a marriageable age, the parents encouraged her to marry. To this Sayo said, “I am afraid that I might neglect taking care of you.” She decided that her duty was to devotedly take care of her parents. In the third month of the third year of Kansei 寛政 (1791) she received silver as reward for her filiality. It is said that a local commissioner named Odagiri Tosamori 小田切土佐守 received the silver [to be given to Sayo].¹²⁴

It is evident from this commendation that Sayo was a commoner of humble origin, but had high enough literacy to serve at a samurai's household. Moreover, she had literacy high enough to study Confucian books on her own. Reading Chinese may not have been easy, but it must not have been too difficult either, given the abundance of Chinese books, the official norms that were supportive of women reading them, and surrounding people (especially at the samurai's household) whom Sayo could consult for assistance in reading them. With the high level of

¹²³ Sugano Noriko, “State Indoctrination of Filial Piety in Tokugawa Japan,” 187.

¹²⁴ Sugano Noriko, ed., *Kankoku kōgiroku*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1999), 132.

literacy she attained, she ran a school to support her parents. This is an unintended consequence. Within the Tokugawa society women were encouraged to learn both *kana* and *kanji* (and sometimes math) so that they could read increasingly *kanji*-oriented instructional manuals and ably manage the inner sphere (i.e., household). But it was precisely because of the literacy and the skill(s) women acquired that some women like Sayo could choose to go out into the outer sphere (i.e., working outside of the household).

The basic outline of the story is the same for Yayo, except Yayo did not serve at a samurai's household because she was a samurai woman herself. She was from the province of Aki 安芸 in western Honshū:

Yayo is the older sister of Ryōsuke 良助, who lives in a rented house in the Takeya district of the castletown of Hiroshima. Her father is Tanaka Kin'ueemon 田中金右衛門, who used be a domain official. But one day he became a *rōnin* (lordless samurai) and came to live in this town. Yayo was filial to her parents from an early age. She was fond of reading and writing so from the age of thirteen she taught others to read and write; she earned a living for her parents and her brother. Later the brother was sent [by his parents] to serve a samurai household. Yayo lived with her parents, but her father fell ill with a swelling disease and passed away thirteen years ago. While the father was battling the illness, Yayo never left his side and took very good care of him. Determined not to let her parents know the dire state of their household finances, Yayo worked together with her brother to take care of many things [in the household]. Her mother was always sickly, but the last three years [before her death] she was not even able to move her arms and legs at will. Even for meals, Yayo had to help her eat. Yayo looked after her mother day and night. When she had time on her hands Yayo would either carry her mother on her back and take her to a nearby place to console her heart or teach reading and writing [to local children]. She would teach students everyday, without any negligence; students increased in number day by day and [the place Yayo taught at] became lively and cheerful. [Due to the Yayo's job] she was able to feed her mother any kind of food. Yayo's mother told her that she wished to find the right man for Yayo, take him in as the head of the household, and make him succeed to the family headship. But Yayo thought that even if that was her mother's wish, if a stranger joined the household she would not be able to take care of her mother in the way she desired. She asked her mother to forgive her for not marrying during the time she was alive; she stayed at home and took care of her mother by herself. It is said that the mother passed away of illness in the first month of the first year of Kansei. She was seventy years old. While the mother was battling the illness, Yayo stayed close to her with her younger brother. She took care of the necessary procedures after her mother's death with much sincerity. Yayo soon after cut her hair and did not blacken her teeth. For about one hundred days she visited her mother's grave every other day. To commend her filiality from her early age, the daimyo

of the domain awarded her silver on the tenth month of the second year of Kansei 寛政 (1790).¹²⁵

Yayo's level of literacy is more difficult to know compared to Sayo's because there is no mention of the kinds of books she read. The only statement that can be made is that it was high enough to teach rudimentary *yomikaki* skill to local children.

Another commonality Sayo and Yayo share besides teaching is refusal of marriage. Both of them refused to marry so that they can take care of their parents. Sugano speculates that filiality was only their excuse; their real purpose was to continue working in the public sphere. It is difficult to verify this hypothesis, but it is certainly a possibility. Whatever their real purposes, their refusal to marry indicates their digression from ideal gender roles. And as Sugano states, the fact that such deviation is commended in *Kankoku kōgiroku*, an official record, insinuates that it was condoned, if indirectly, by the bakufu.

In any case, Sayo and Yayo's stories demonstrate that women were able to take advantage of their literacy and teach at *terakoya*. In Sayo's case she seems to have taught only girls. As for Yayo, we do not know if she taught girls, boys, or both. It was common in the mid-eighteenth century that women teach only girls, but between the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, more women ran or taught at co-ed *terakoya*. This is evident from the records of female *terakoya* teachers like Ariura Kinkō 有浦琴虹 (?-?), Tamura Kajiko 田村梶子 (1775-1862), and Kurosawa Tokiko 黒沢登幾子 (1806-1890).

According to Shiba Keiko, Ariura Kinkō's Sansendō 三遷堂 had about 2,000 students in a fifty-year span, which meant that it was more successful in terms of numbers of students served than other *terakoya* run by men. This *terakoya* was located in Hita 日田 in the province of Bungo 豊後 in northern Kyūshū. Little information is available on this school; even the years

¹²⁵ Sugano Noriko, ed., *Kankoku kōgiroku*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1999), 162.

during which the school existed is unclear, but it must have been in the early nineteenth century because it is recorded that Hirose Tansō 広瀬淡窓 (1782-1856), a Confucian scholar, built the famous Kangien 咸宜園 (1817-1893) in the same location soon afterwards.¹²⁶ Gender ratio of students at Sansendō is not known, but given the large number of students that attended the school, it is difficult to believe that all 2,000 students were girls.

Tamura Kajiko taught students of both genders. She was born in the province of Kōzuke 上野 in the northwestern Kanto region. She worked at the Ōoku 大奥 (the inner quarter of the Edo Castle) from age seventeen to thirty one and after retirement she opened a private academy called Shōseidō 松声堂 and taught both boys and girls *waka*, reading and writing, as well as decorum.¹²⁷ The number of students is known to have exceeded one hundred. Her *waka* were highly praised by many and Tachibana Moribe 橘守部 (1781-1849), a nativist scholar, included them in *Shitakage shū* 下蔭集 (1838) and *Kane no hibiki* 鐘のひびき (1839).¹²⁸

Another example is that of Kurosawa Toki or Tokiko.¹²⁹ Tokiko was a daughter of a *shugenja* 修験者, or a mountain ascetic, from the province of Hitachi 常陸 in the north of the Kantō region. Her father's *shugendōjō*, or a training hall, also functioned as a *terakoya*. Tokiko is the most studied figure among all the female teachers for two reasons. One is that she was remembered in the modern period as a female loyalist, just as in the case of Matsuo Taseko.

When the Mito daimyo Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川斉昭 (1800-1860) was placed under house arrest

¹²⁶ Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabinikki*, 149. Kangien was the largest private academy in Tokugawa Japan. The number of students that attended the school was more than 4,000.

¹²⁷ As Shiba Keiko states, the distinction between *terakoya* and private academy was hazy. See: Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabinikki*, 150-51.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 152 and; *Nihon jōsei jinmei jiten* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1993), 688. A student named Yoshida Motojiro's 吉田元次郎 experience at Shōseidō can be found in: Takai Hiroshi, *Tenpō-ki shōnen shōjo no kyōyō keisei katei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1991), 108-117.

¹²⁹ There are several ways the name Tokiko can be written in Japanese: 登幾, と起, とき, 時子, and 止幾子.

in 1858 after he lost the dispute with the official advisor of the Tokugawa shogunate Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 (1815-1860), Tokiko traveled to Kyoto by herself to vindicate the Mito domain's honor. She visited the house of Higashibōjō 東坊城, a noble household, on the twenty-fifth day of the third month. There Tokiko presented a *waka* to protest Nariaki's vindication. In the fourth month bakufu officials arrested her at Osaka; she was released in the tenth month. During the Meiji period, however, the action that caused Tokiko's incarceration was now commended. In 1875 the court awarded her as an exemplary figure; after her death, Tokiko was conferred a court rank for her loyalty to the court.

Tokiko is most known for her loyalist actions, but she is also well studied because of the diary she has left (and has miraculously survived) on *terakoya*. The diary is called *Terakoya nikki* 寺子屋日記 (Terakoya Diary), and according to Anzō Ryōko, this is a rare and invaluable historical source because there is no other diary written by female *terakoya* teachers that document their life at *terakoya*. In her article on Kurosawa Tokiko, Anzō closely examines Tokiko's *Terakoya nikki*. Tokiko's meticulous records show that the *terakoya* was co-ed. She wrote down every little occurrence at the *terakoya*, such as “In early evening we planted [seeds of] vegetables and plowed the field. Kamekichi 亀吉, Kichijirō 吉次郎, Minotarō 巳之太郎, and the three boys listed on the right [Tatsugorō 辰五郎, Minekichi 峯吉, and Masatarō 政太郎] assisted. The eleventh day of the seventh month.” All of the names enlisted are boy's names. Another entry says, “Students come early [to *terakoya*]. Kubota Kamekichi 久保田亀吉 was the first to arrive. During lunch break he fell into a pond. But no injuries. . . . Second day of the eighth month.” There were female students as well. Tokiko wrote, “Wakamiya Oaki 若宮お秋 showed up early evening saying that she feels sick from the heat. Eighth day of the eighth

month.”¹³⁰ *Terakoya nikki* is in and of itself a fascinating source which deserves much attention, but for the purpose of this paper, it should suffice to state that Tokiko’s lively school was open to both boys and girls.

Statistics in the early years of Meiji also bespeak the increasing visibility of women in the outer, our public sphere. Both Sugano Noriko and Shiba Keiko mention in their studies that there were 174 female *terakoya* owners among the recorded 15,652 *terakoya*.¹³¹ This is about one percent of all owners that are recorded. When it comes to the number of female teachers, it is about three percent of all teachers. Illustrations also reveal the presence of female *terakoya* teachers; *Jokyō bunkai chiebukuro* 女教文海智恵袋 (1785), *Onna imagawa masukagami* 女今川益鏡 (1841), and *Onna shisho geibun zue* 女四書芸文図会 (1835) are some *joshiyō ōrai* with depictions of women as teachers.¹³² It is also worth mentioning the intriguing nature of *terakoya* that were run by women. Sugano explains that they had as many female teachers as male teachers and they tended to have more female students than male students. Content of education at *terakoya* for girls seems to have changed overtime as well. Towards the mid-nineteenth century, more *terakoya* run by women taught not only reading and writing, but also *koto* and *shamisen* (the instrument that was considered lewd by Confucian scholars).

This section examined the official norms of *yomikaki* that changed throughout the Tokugawa period. It demonstrated that in the mid-seventeenth century many *joshiyō ōrai* were

¹³⁰ Anzō Ryōko, “Onna terakoya shishō no seikatsu: Kurosawa Tokiko no nikki ni miru terakoya kyōiku no yōsu,” *Edo-ki onna kō* 11 (2001): 33.

¹³¹ Sugano Noriko, “Shomin josei no seikatsu to rōdō” in *Nihon joseishi* edited by Wakita Haruko, Hayashi Reiko, and Nagahara Kazuko (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987), 78 and; Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabinikki*, 64. Both Sugano and Shiba use *Nihon kyōiku shi shiryō* 日本教育史資料 as the source. *Nihon kyōiku shi shiryō* was compiled by the Ministry of Education in the first year of Meiji; it includes statistics of the number of schools and school teachers.

¹³² Emori Ichirō, *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu*, 4:7, 4:36-37, and 4:51.

written mostly (80 to 90%) in *kana*. *Joshiyō ōrai* from this period also imply that *kana* is for women and *kanji* is for men. Beginning around the early seventeenth century, however, we begin to see Chinese learning becoming a prominent influence in *joshiyō ōrai*. This is evident from the kinds of books women were encouraged to read; while in the earlier period women were encouraged to read Japanese classical works like *Genji monogatari* and *Ise monogatari*, beginning around this period women were encouraged to read many more *kanji*-oriented books and books from China. There were Japanese translations of these Chinese works, but even those translated works used a large amount of *kanji*. In order to “Confucianize” Tokugawa women, officials and Confucian scholars encouraged women to learn *kanji* on top of *kana* so that they could read these canonical works and become able managers of the inner sphere (i.e., household). While some women did follow this social norm, some resisted, intentionally or unintentionally. Women being able to learn *kanji* and being able to have higher literacy meant that some of them could access scholarly works that were reserved for men or work in the outer sphere and make living. In this way, it was precisely the prevalence of Chinese learning in the Tokugawa society that ironically enabled some women to divert from the ideal gender roles.

CONCLUSION

For a long time the progressive view of history functioned as a driving force for people in Japan—intellectual and non-intellectual alike—to break free from the “feudal relics” that seemed to be hindering Japan from undertaking modernization. In this process, those “feudal relics” seem to have been reduced to simple discourses; social norms for women during the Tokugawa period are some of them. Too often they were simplified to fit the clear-cut conclusion that they suffocated women for more than 250 years. The prolonged criticism of *Onna daigaku* as the

“textbook that fettered women” derives from such a progressive view of history; it certainly froze women’s norms in early modern Japan into a monolithic entity.

Problematizing this notion became the point of departure for my thesis. By specifically focusing on the transformation of exemplary women and the shift in female literary culture throughout the Tokugawa period, this paper attempts to show the complexity and fluidity of social norms for women. They were constantly affected by changing social and political conditions, such as nuclearization of peasant families, political reforms, and the rise of popular literacy. In this sense, both top-down and bottom-up social forces molded norms for women. Nuclearization of commoner families in the seventeenth century and the subsequent rise of *ie* as a social and cultural phenomenon set the context for filial piety to be a virtue of foremost importance for both men and women. Likewise, the Tenpō Reform in the early to mid-nineteenth century was most likely one of the most influential social and political events that contributed to the making of tamer exemplary women, who had been becoming violent as seen in *Daitō fujo teiretsu ki*. And the rise of popular literacy spurred by the prevalence of Chinese learning among the general populace compelled women to be able to read and write in *kanji* more than ever before. Knowing arithmetics in addition to a sufficient amount of *kanji* also become important social skills for women to have around the mid-eighteenth century; in the increasingly nuclearized familial structure, it probably made sense that women be able to efficiently manage households by keeping (financial and literary) records and maintaining strong kinship by means of letter exchange. All in all, it is clear that social norms for women were more than just Confucian and Neo-Confucian discourses the Tokugawa bakufu imported wholesale from the continent and kept intact for more than 250 years in order to subjugate women. Rather, social norms were constantly defined and redefined by multiple agents in the

Tokugawa society—the bakufu, daimyo, publishers, popular writers, scholars, and the reading populace—and multiple social forces, some of them mentioned above. Confucianism was only one of such social forces. In fact, the Tokugawa agents embraced some aspects of Confucianism while rejected others.

In addition to demonstrating fluidity of social norms in Tokugawa Japan, this paper teased out unintended consequences of social norms put forward by the authors of *joshiyō ōrai*. The growing weight filial piety came to have as a social value by the mid-Tokugawa period transformed exemplary women from passive and patient figures, who prayed to gods for help, to more violent and active figures, who were willing to travel miles and acquire training in “unwomanly” swordsmanship to fulfill their responsibilities as filial daughters. The high level of literacy level expected for women enabled many to express their virtues in the form of poems, but also allowed “lewd” courtesans to attract more male clients. And *kanji*, which was encouraged for women to learn so that they could read increasingly *kanji*-heavy morals guides and cultivate appropriate virtues, enabled some to access scholarly works reserved for men and produce scandalous political treatises. In this way, contrary to the previous view that all women were oppressed, some Tokugawa women embraced social norms while others resisted. This tension existed in each individual as well; Tadano Makuzu, for example, embraced the norm of filial piety while resisted to some extent the gendered literary culture.

Fukuzawa Yukichi stated that *Onna daigaku* was once an apt instrument but in his time it was a useless artifact. His intention was to discard altogether the social norms expressed in *joshiyō ōrai*, which seemed to be the cause of women’s oppression. But why did those social norms exist at all? What is necessary is to approach them with the intention to understand why

they made enough sense to be accepted by many women, rather than to approach them with presumption that they were simply modes of oppression.

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