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Twenty Years

This issue of *EMJ* marks the twentieth volume in the journal’s publication. Initiated in 1991 as a newsletter, *Oboegaki*, an informal publication, evolved into a refereed publication within its first years, changing to its present name with issue 5:2 in December, 1995. Since that time refereed articles and book reviews have comprised the journal’s overwhelming content. Throughout the years several individuals undertook a number of important tasks on behalf of the journal: Mark Ravina (Emory University, History) served as co-editor and editor for a spell; Lawrence Marceau (Aukland University, Literature), also served as co-editor for several years. Others have served on the editorial board and made special efforts to assure effective review of manuscripts submitted and helped to manage both journal and EMJNet business: Cheryl Crowley (Emory University, Literature), Patricia Graham (independent scholar, Art History), and Greg Smits (Pennsylvania State University, History). Of course, our many referees provided an invaluable service to the journal and the profession. In part as a result of referees’ careful attention to both form and substance, review of manuscripts for the journal has had an especially important, and overwhelmingly supportive role in moving younger scholars from the status of graduate student to that of scholar. Having a role in this process has been one of the important rewards of editorship. Informal conversations with our authors after publication has reflected their sense of gratitude to the referees who provided constructive criticism of their work, and I hope that all of you who have served in this role recognize the valuable contribution you have made to these individuals.

In This Issue

Our issue begins with Roger Thomas’s exploration of early modern attitudes toward language through analysis of “word spirit,” *kotodama*. Although Thomas begins with the ancient origin of the term and examples, his main focus is on an explosive use of the concept during the early modern era. He offers reasons for this growth in the context of a nineteenth-century ruralization of intellectual activity. D. Colin Jaundrill takes on a long-enduring image of Chōshū conscription of commoners, taking up the case of outcaste groups in particular. Our final essay, by Matthew W. Shores treats the career of Jippensha Ikku and his famous tale, *Hizakurige*, in a new way that speaks to historians as well as literature specialists by linking the author and his career-building efforts to a tradition of comic storytelling that maintains a place in modern Japanese entertainment venues.

EMJNet at the AAS, San Diego

Once again EMJNet will present two scholarly panels at the AAS Annual Meeting in San Diego in addition to sponsoring two more at the main AAS meeting itself. We have a good bit to offer, but it is all bunched up on Thursday and Friday, so plan to come early!

Overview

(PLEASE NOTE THESE TIMES AND THE LOCATION; NEITHER IS PUBLISHED IN THE AAS ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM:

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Abstracts

Panel I:
The Gender of Early Modern Japanese Buddhism, 1640-1882

If Buddhism in early modern Japan has proven a topic peripheral to most scholars of Japanese religion and to scholars of Edo history alike, then our understanding of gender within Edo Buddhism lags still further behind. While scholarship has illuminated the roles of women in some Edo-era new
religious movements, for instance, gender as a problem within the historical study of “establishment Buddhism” has so far attracted little attention. This panel showcases the results of research that takes gender seriously as a critical category for the study of early modern Buddhism. Eschewing the all-too-common approach of “add women and stir,” this panel does not merely focus attention on nuns and other female practitioners. Rather, it shows how broad thinking about gender helps to address existing problems in Edo religious history. This panel illustrates how changing notions of gender reflected the emergence of the status (mibun) system and legal battles among Buddhist institutions. It shows how different gender identities, both privileged and not, could be hindrances or conveyances in the common Edo-era practice of religious travel. It reveals that conspicuously gendered modes of expression formed part of an ongoing historicist search for knowledge of past Buddhist practice as grounding for the present. In this way, it demonstrates that gender is one key to understanding the complex ritual, social, and ideological roles of Buddhism in early modern Japan, and to understanding early modern Japan as a whole.

Nuns at the Intersection of Status and Gender: The Conflicts and Compromises of Daihongan’s Nuns in Early Modern Japan
Matt Mitchell, Duke University

Scholarship has demonstrated that status (mibun) was the central organizing feature of early modern society in Japan. Despite the extensive examination of various status groups over the past thirty years, work detailing women’s places within the status system has been sparse. This is particularly true in the case of Buddhist nuns: Only a few articles examine nuns and status, and they focus on the early seventeenth century. However, as Amy Stanley points out in Selling Women, conceptions of women and their places in the status system were in flux even through the late seventeenth century. Because of this, early seventeenth-century nuns were able to act and interact with monks and laypeople very differently from their later successors. Therefore, in order to fully understand nuns’ roles and places in early modern Japan, we must first understand how concepts of gender and their status as Buddhist clerics became solidified in the late seventeenth century.

In this presentation, I use published and unpublished temple documents to examine a series of lawsuits from the middle of the seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries. These cases, which determined the sectarian identity and administrative shape of the popular pilgrimage temple Zenkō-ji throughout the early modern period, were between its chief sub-temples: the Daihongan convent (of the Pure Land school) and the Daikanjin monastery (of the Tendai school). As I demonstrate, these conflicts and compromises also fixed gender and status boundaries for Daihongan’s nuns, circumscribing their roles within the Zenkō-ji temple complex for the remainder of the Edo period.

Bringing the Center to the Periphery: Buddhist Travel as the Extension of Masculine Authority
Gina Cogan, Boston University

Scholars have long studied Edo era religious travel, but like any pilgrims, they tend to follow only the well-traveled routes. Thus, lay pilgrims to sacred sites like Ise, as well as low-ranking itinerant Buddhist preachers, feature prominently in existing work. We know less about lecture tours by eminent monks. This is a troubling omission, since the travel of clerics like the Rinzai Zen reformer Hakuin (1686-1769) stands in sharp contrast to trips by itinerant preachers. Unlike those peripatetic figures, Hakuin spent years as the abbot of his home temple, Shōinji, setting out to preach only after he turned sixty. Even then, he periodically returned home to administer the temple and teach his disciples. This paper seeks to understand Hakuin’s travels in gendered terms. It argues that Hakuin’s time at Shōinji, a homosocial community and a site of ascetic meditative practice, gave him the religious capital that served him as a “travel pass.” This enabled him to voyage through Japan with no loss of status, and to avoid being grouped with the itinerant preachers, who were marked as marginal. Roads are often associated with liminality, in the language of Victor Turner, but here too Hakuin offers a striking exception. His time on the road did not place him in a liminal state, but instead extended his abbacy throughout Japan, affording him the opportunity to preach to his traveling companions just as he did at his home temple. Status, masculinity, and patronage all combined to make Hakuin one of the most popular monks of his day.
The Nun Kōgetsu and the Gender of Buddhist Historicism in Late Edo Japan
Micah Auerback, University of Michigan

Although today overshadowed by the towering figure of her monastic master Jiun Onkō (1718-1804), the late Edo-era intellectual and expert in monastic discipline Kōgetsu Sāgi (1755-1833) also promoted a historicist vision of Buddhism in her own right. While Jiun lived, Kōgetsu transcribed and edited his teachings about the life of Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha. In 1830, long after Jiun’s death, she published her own original illustrated literary biography of the Buddha, The Light of the Three Realms (Miyo no hikari). Here Kōgetsu wrote in a classicizing and overtly “feminine” style. She grounded her tale in the novel historicist scholarship pioneered by Jiun. In doing so, she explicitly attempted to counter and “correct” the vernacular variations of the Buddha’s life story circulating in Japan in her day. Republished in 1882 with the imprimatur of the early Meiji Buddhist reformer Fukuda Gyōkai (1809-1888), The Light of the Three Realms went on to assume a new role within the Meiji era effort to revive and reform Buddhism. This presentation locates Kōgetsu’s work in the context of Edo-period historicism in its Buddhist guise. It considers how Kōgetsu’s position as a nun speaking to the commercial reading public influenced her intellectual work. It further suggests the notably wide scope of Kōgetsu’s work, showing that it reached as far back in time as ancient India, and suggesting that it speaks to the continuing preoccupation with the Buddhist today.

Respondent: Barbara Ambros, Religious Studies
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Panel II:

The subjects and objects of performance studies and art history might seem at first glance to be mutually exclusive, but this panel draws on the rich early-modern archive to explore performances starring objects, objects storing performances, and agents who signify in spaces between subject- and object-hood. Screech deepens our understanding of Tokugawa diplomacy, expanding in recent scholarship, by introducing an exchange of precious ob-
jects, many still extant, between Hidetada and King James I of England. Feltens, based on Ogata Kōrin’s practice of painting on the spot before an audience using new media like ceramic surfaces and a combinatory logic of cultural cues from traditions like the noh theatre, argues for his centrality to period ideas of time and signification. Kanemitsu follows itinerant female bards as they change from the storytellers into the story told, picking up clues to their social identity from the material culture described in their ballads. Schwemmer introduces a previously-unknown picture-scroll adaptation of a post-medieval ballad which exorcises the violence of peacemaking, sublimating medieval warrior culture at the dawn of the Edo order. How do we conceptualize political or other agency in a performance studies that includes objects as actors? What does the performative activity of artistry, curatorship, and exchange, mean for art history? We break new methodological ground with reference to bodies both animate and inanimate.

Diplomacy and Performance in the Edo Period
Timon Screech, SOAS, University of London

This paper will look at the neglected subject of Edo-period diplomacy. While academics no longer call sakoku the defining feature of the Tokugawa state, studies of formal Tokugawa international intercourse have only just begun to emerge, mostly for the Korean case. Issues of performance and display at diplomatic encounters have barely been touched. I will take one case study, and lead from that into a wider inspection of the issues. The case study is the arrival of representatives of King James I in 1613. He dispatched a letter to the ‘emperor of Japan’ in 1611, which was duly delivered to Ieyasu, in retirement at Sunpu, two years later. Ieyasu was also given a telescope, probably the first in Asia. The English then went to Edo, where they exchanged gifts with Tokugawa Hidetada. Returning to Sunpu, they received a shuinjō, then proceeded to Kyoto, where they were given five gold screens, reciprocal presents from Ieyasu to the King. The whole episode took about a month, but it has never been properly analysed. There are scant records of the presents in Japan, but the fate of the objects sent to London is clear, and some are extant. The wider issue takes us from the performance to its representation. How were internation-

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al acts promoted in public? Paintings and prints of 
Korean retinues have been studied, but what of the 
European case? I will conclude with assessment of
important surviving works.

Performance in the Work of Ogata Kōrin—
Ceramics and Ink Paintings
Frank Feltens, Columbia University
This paper examines aspects of performance in
Ogata Kōrin’s paintings—largely ignored yet cru-
cial for understanding the oeuvre of this important
artist and the scene of art production in his time.
Performance is manifested in Kōrin’s work in two
ways: through so-called paintings on the spot, arti-
stic performances before an audience, and
through aspects of theatrical performance like noh
which permeated the artist’s aesthetic conscious-
ness. With examples of Kōrin’s ink paintings and
monochrome images which he added to ceramics
by his brother Kenzan, I will show that in situ per-
fomances blurred the boundaries of artistic media
and emphasized visual experiment over mean-
ing and representation. Kōrin painted both ink
paintings and ceramic illustrations before audienc-
es, making him the first Japanese painter to use
ceramic surfaces in precisely the same way as the
silk or paper ground of conventional paintings.
These images in two vastly different genres were
produced in a minimum amount of time and em-
phatically spotlighted individual virtuosity. Subs-
sequently, in spite of their reduction of form and con-
tent, the paintings immediately garnered a long-
lasting appreciation as collectible manifestations of
a single occasion, a never-reoccurring point in time.
The Edo period demonstrated a particular aware-
ness of time which I believe constitutes a central
aspect of Kōrin’s performed paintings. In light of
this cultural context, I will illustrate how Kōrin
used performance as a social tool and as a means to
disseminate his skills as a painter, while demon-
strating how performance altered contemporaneous
receptions of materials and artworks themselves.

In Search of Female Voices
Janice S. Kanemitsu, Cornell University
Described as the narrative origins of joruri, the
late sixteenth-century tale of Lady Joruri describes
the romance between the daughter of a wealthy
lord and the teenage Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a
fictionalized imagining of the heroic warrior before
the Genpei War. Although much light has been
shed on the identities and careers of Joruri reciters
from the 1600s onward, both by Tokugawa-period
writers and modern scholars, we know little about
those who initially crafted, disseminated, and re-
vised the tale of Lady Joruri. And especially con-
sidering the amount of Japanese scholarship fo-
cused on the Tokugawa-period puppet theater, the
lack of research into its "origins tale" seems curi-
ous. By tracing the flow of and ripples in the
transmission of this tale and its related narratives,
including the ballad-drama Eboshi-ori (The Hat
Folder), as well as the description of objects there-
in, I hope to trace the voices of female storytell-
ers—both the stationary entertainers at the rest sta-
tions along Eastern Sea Route and the itinerant
storytellers—and gauge a possible convergence in
narrative dissemination and detouring. In the pro-
cess, I hope to clarify a number of questions. How
and when did the telling of this tale pass from fe-
male entertainers to blind monks? Do the different
versions of the tale allow a profiling of the story-
tellers? What do the descriptions of objects within
the narrative(s) teach us about the possible produc-
ers, mediators, and consumers of the tale? Could
the character identified as the younger sister of
Kamata Masakiyo (former vassal of Yoshitsune's
father, Yoshitomo), who repeatedly appears in this
series of related narratives, actually represent a
group of female storytellers?

The Princeton Sagamikawa Scrolls and the
End(s) of the Ballad
Patrick Schwemmer, Princeton University
I have found a previously-unknown illuminated
manuscript of the ballad (mai/bukyoku) Sagami-
kawa in Princeton’s Firestone Library. Sagamika-
wa, also extant in a few early-seventeenth-century
prints, is an exorcism of the violence of peacemak-
ing: the archetypal shogun Yoritomo is haunted at
a ribbon-cutting ceremony by a host of great souls
whom his constructions have displaced, but his
preferment of a good vassal over a bad one assuag-
es their anger. Their ghostly laments read like a
medley of classic sixteenth-century ballads, and so
Fujii Natsuko argues convincingly for Sagamikawa’s
exclusion from the ballad canon. But why
was such a pseudo-ballad written? I argue that this
post-ballad ballad represents a hitherto-
undiscussed stage in the well-known seventeenth-century evolution of the genre from oral performance to reading material to narrative picture scroll: the demand for ballad-like texts was sometimes met with texts that had never been ballads. The Princeton exemplar, the only extant manuscript or scroll of Sagamikawa and the only version with painted illustrations, embodies the endpoint of this development. Its text shows scholasticizing improvements like the addition of exact dates and more elegant diction, and its paintings lavish gold leaf, azurite, and malachite on masterful compositions in the Tosa style. Finally, its calligraphy is in the hand of the Kyoto bookmaker Asakura Jūken (fl. c. 1660-1680), and so I situate it within the seventeenth-century Kyoto renaissance described by Pitelka et al: it protests the death of the old (dis)order while simultaneously participating in the sublimation of medieval warrior culture under the pax Tokugawa.

Respondent: Morgan Pitelka, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

EMJNet-sponsored AAS Panel Abstracts
Panel #17: “Reading Culture in Early Modern Japan,” Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
Panel #37: Public Interest and Public Works: Water Control and the State in Tokugawa Japan and Qing China,” Friday, 8:30 a.m.

N.B. Panel locations have not been published yet, so please look for them in your meeting program.
“A Land Blessed by Word Spirit”: Kamochi Masazumi and Early Modern Constructs of Kotodama

© Roger K. Thomas, Illinois State University

Attitudes toward language—whether native or foreign tongues—often provide keys to a people’s intellectual history. From the perspective of European cultural history, Umberto Eco claims in his The Search for the Perfect Language that many scholarly fruits of modernism—ranging “from taxonomy in the natural sciences to comparative linguistics, from formal languages to artificial intelligence and to the cognitive sciences”—were born as “side effects” of this very search.¹ A quest for the perfect language is also observable in Japan, where it has often been associated with kotodama (literally “word spirit”), a concept of ancient vintage that was resuscitated and variously interpreted during the early modern period. Studies have also demonstrated how theories of language can lay intellectual groundwork supporting ideas of emerging nation-states.²

Various beliefs in the incantatory quality of particular kinds of utterances are found around the globe, but an examination of the role of kotodama in Japanese intellectual and literary history suggests that there it became an important element of the “linguistic arm” of certain ideologies, most of them of a highly ethnocentric bent. Indeed, from the early modern period down to the present, kotodama has played a prominent role in what could be called “linguism” in Japan.³ The present study will begin with an overview of the ancient background of kotodama, but will concentrate mainly on its revival and development in the thought of several early modern figures, particularly in the writings of Kamochi Masazumi 麗持雅澄 (1791-1858), a Tosa scholar whose theories about language are a broad synthesis of much earlier thought, both nativist and Confucian, and whose prodigious corpus of writings exhibit a wide-ranging awareness of and interaction with contemporary intellectual activity in many parts of the country. Moreover, he is a foremost example of the Bakumatsu momentum toward ruralization of scholarship and the arts.⁴ In terms of the present discussion, his views on kotodama may be seen as an illustrative summation of much that had gone before, and our investigation must begin with an examination of these precedents. In conclusion, some possible reasons will be suggested for the enthusiasm with which this ancient belief was revitalized, and some of the ongoing repercussions of its revival will be noted.

Kotodama in Ancient Japan

After all that has been said and written about kotodama, many are surprised to learn that only three examples of its usage are found in pre-Heian writing, all in the Man’yōshū. Any discussion should begin by examining these. Most famously, Yamanoue no Okura (660-733) uses the word in a chōka addressed to a departing ambassador to China in 733:

... kamiyo yori / iitsute kuraku / soramitsu / Yamato no kuni wa / sumekami no / itsushiki kuni / kotodama (言霊) no / sakiwau kuni to ...  
... from the age of the gods / it has been told and retold / that the sky-vast / land of Yamato / is an august land, / its rulers of divine descent, / a land blessed / by word spirit … (MYS no. 894)

identities with the language itself,” to the extent of “the identification of the linguistic group as the political group.”

² The most noteworthy study examining the relationship between language theories and nascent concepts of “nation” in early modern Japan is Susan L. Burns, Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community (Druham: Duke University Press, 2003).
³ W. Martin Bloomer, in his “Introduction” to The Contest of Language: Before and Beyond Nationalism, ed. W. Martin Bloomer (South Bend: Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 2, defines linguism as “the most developed form” of “the habit of identifying patterns of life, allegiances, and

⁴ A general overview of this trend toward ruralization of culture is provided by Tsukamoto Manabu, Chihō bunjin (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1977).
It also appears in an anonymous tanka:

Kotodama (事霊) no / yaso no chimata ni / yūke tou / uramasa ni noru / imo wa aiyor-amu
At the intersecting roads / of word spirit / I do evening divination / the true oracle tells me / I shall see my beloved.  (MYS no. 2506)

Finally, in a verse possibly by Hitomaro, the word appears in an envoy (hanka) following a short chōka in which the poet significantly declares he will perform kotoage (apparently a type of ritual incantation) in spite of the dangers of doing so:

Shikishima no / Yamato no kuni wa / kotodama (事霊) no / tasakuru kuni zo / masakiku ari koso
The land of Yamato / in the region of Shiki / is a land / aided by word spirit— / may good fortune be with you.  (MYS no. 3254)

What generalizations can be based on these three usages of the word? Obviously they indicate that kotodama was part of a broader cultural construct that obtained among Nara-period Japanese, though just how pervasive a role it played is difficult to determine. The usage of both graphs 言 and 事 to record “koto” may be taken to suggest either that kotodama encompassed both meanings, or that the early Japanese mind made no distinction between “word” and “phenomenon” (a claim advanced by certain early modern nativists), but neither interpretation can be said to be conclusive. The second example above suggests a relationship with divination, and the third, with the better-documented practice of kotoage, which is generally understood as a ritual pronouncement to bring about either blessing or cursing. A full analysis of kotoage lies outside the scope of the present study, but it is worth noting in passing that in some sources (e.g., MYS nos. 972, 1113, 2918, 3250, 3253, and 4124), the practice is viewed either ambiguously or negatively as dangerous, and according to legend, Empress Jingū forbade her troops from performing kotoage during her military campaign against Korea. But exactly what relationship, if any, obtained between kotoage and kotodama is difficult to ascertain; only one usage of the former is accompanied by mention of the latter.

Nor do the six known usages from the Heian period support definitive pronouncements. The earliest of these is in a chōka dated 849 and recorded in the Shoku Nihon kōki 続日本後紀. In this exceptionally long poem, the monks of Kōfuku-ji offer their felicitations to Emperor Ninnō 仁明天皇 (810-850; r. 833-850) on the occasion of his fortieth birthday. In a section explaining why they chose to use a Japanese verse form and not Chinese is found the following:

… お－み－や－お / yorozu to inori / horoke ni no / kami ni no maoshi / tatematsu koto / koto no koto wa / kono kuni no / mototsu koto no / oiyorite / morokushi no / koto no karazu / fumi shiru / hakase yatowazu / kono kuni no / itsutauraku / hi no moto no / Yamato no kuni wa / kotodama (言玉) no / sakiwau kuni to zo / furukoto ni / nagare kitar eru …
… that your reign / may last myriad ages / we offer prayers / to the buddhas / and to the gods / using / for words / the primeval language / of this country / neither borrowing / from the words of China / nor employing / scholars to record— / thus has it been / hand-

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5 Evening divination (yūke) was performed by standing at an intersection at sunset and listening to snatches of the conversations of passers-by. One’s fortune was based on what one heard. I am grateful to Iori Joko, whose unpublished paper “Reassessing Kotodama: Usages and Interpretations” (Columbia University, 1993) led me to some of the sources I investigate here. Her analysis of ancient usages of the word (pp. 55-93) is the most thorough and comprehensive of any in English.

6 Roy Andrew Miller takes the analysis of these three verses as far as the evidence permits—and even somewhat beyond what it permits. See his “The ‘Spirit’ of the Japanese Language,” Journal of Japanese Studies 3:2 (1977), 241-298.

ed down in this country: / the land of Yamato / where the sun starts its course / is a land / blessed / by word spirit— / in ancient lore / so has it come down …

Here, *kotodama* is juxtaposed with statements describing two qualities of the prayers offered for Ninmyō’s reign: they used the Yamato language rather than Chinese, and; they were not “recorded.” What, if any, connection these two conditions have with *kotodama* is not immediately clear, but some have suggested that it indicates *kotodama*—however defined—was efficacious only in the Yamato language, while others have taken the supposition even further and argued that it demonstrates that the traditional rejection of all but pure Yamato diction in *waka* demonstrates a relationship between *kotodama* and native verse. The meaning of the second condition—that the verse was not “recorded”—is even less clear, because it was, after all, written down. Perhaps it means that it was not “composed” by scholars, as a Chinese poem would be, but was only recorded afterwards. This has given rise to the suggestion that the act of writing inhibited the working of *kotodama*. These suppositions might indeed be true, but ultimately rely on a good deal of speculation.

The second instance of Heian-period usage is found in a verse by Emperor Daigo 髙野天皇 (885-930; r. 897-930) as recorded in the *Okagami*. Responding to a *tanka* by Fujiwara no Korehira 藤原伊衡 (878-939) celebrating the birth of one of the emperor’s sons:

*Hitotose ni / koyoi kazouru / ima yori wa / momotose no / tsukikage o minu*

Counting this night / as one year / from henceforth / for a hundred years / you shall see the light of this moon.

the Emperor recited:

*Iwaitsuru / kotodama naraba / momotose no / nochī mo tsukisen / tsuki o koso mime*

If word spirit resides / in the blessing you have made, / a hundred years / from now we shall see / the unfading light of the moon.

Although a connection is implied between *kotodama* and Korehira’s felicitous words, there is no suggestion of any kind of ritual. Moreover, the conditional “if” in the emperor’s reply “can therefore be read as casting a shadow of doubt over the effectiveness of Koretada’s blessing, which would have been both offensive and imprudent had the two men truly believed in the power of *kotodama* and its ritual efficacy.” Rather than being part of a serious belief system, *kotodama* appears to be little more than a vague literary allusion in the polite social exchange that *waka* had become; such usage also characterizes the remaining four Heian-period applications of the word, the latest of which appears in the private collection of Fujiwara no Kiyosuke 藤原清輔 (1104-1177). Aside from some scattered citations of earlier usage, for almost six centuries thereafter *kotodama* effectively disappeared from the active lexicon, leaving no further clues to its original semantic burden.

**Kotodama in Early Modern Japan**

In spite of its obscure origins, by the nineteenth century, *kotodama* had become a household word with sundry literary, scholarly, and religious schools applying it to various ends. In just the

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11 Joko, p. 81.

12 One example of a citation is the inclusion of Emperor Daigo’s verse in the fourteenth-century *Gyokuyō wakashū*.

13 A concise but insightful overview of early modern thought focusing on different figures than those treated here is provided by Ann Wehmeyer, “The Concept of Kotodama in Edo Period Nativism,” *Annals, Association for Asian Studies, Southeast Conference* 13 (1991): 71-80. See also her “The Interface of Two Cultural Constructs: Kotodama and Fūdo,” in *Japanese Identity: Cultural Analyses*, ed. Peter Nosco, Japan Studies,
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half century following Bunsei 1 (1818), no fewer than fifty names of books beginning with this word are listed in Kokusho somokuroku, and it may be assumed that at least as many more include the term elsewhere in their titles. Of the many Bawakumatsu thinkers who frequently used the word, Masazumi was arguably the most broadly synthetic in his approach, but in order to understand the elements of that synthesis, it is necessary to examine some representative preceding theories.

Keichū’s (1640-1701) role in the revival of Man’yōshū scholarship and his contributions to the nativist movement are widely recognized; moreover, his pioneering work in the reconstruction of the sounds of the ancient language has also received some attention. Many appear, however, to be unaware that it was he who not only reintroduced the word kotodama into active usage, but also endowed it with enduring semantic content. In the kanbun preface to his 1695 work on kana usage, Waji shōran shō 合字正顕簿, he writes:

Our land is a mysterious region where the Shining Spirit (曜霊) condescends to reign, a superior state to which the Son of Heaven descended. Though on the remote eastern fringes [of the world], the sounds [of its language] are most clearly resonant and elegant, compatible (能通) with those of China and India. Therefore its words have marvelous efficacy (靈験), with blessing or cursing following as one desires. On the day Emperor Kamu-Yamato-iware-hiko [i.e., Emperor Jinmu] subdues the crafty rebels of the Middle Land (uchitsukuni 中洲), in worshiping the deities of heaven and earth he changed the names for firewood and water, completing the great task and thereby demonstrating his august power. Many such marvels are recorded in our country’s history, both from the age of the gods and from the age of mortals, and are too numerous to list. Where the Man’yōshū speaks of “a land blessed with kotodama” and “a land aided by kotodama,” it is referring to such things.

Actually, in the account Keichū cites from the Nihon shoki, Jinmu first performs ukei, an act of divination to determine the divine will or to discover whether something is auspicious or inauspicious. It was that ritual which predicted the outcome of the battle; the renaming was performed only after that, but Keichū appears to imply both that the renaming was efficacious in bringing it about, and that this is an example of the power of kotodama, though that word does not appear in the Nihon shoki account. With his Waji shōran shō, the term was not only resurrected with a new mantle of meaning, but it also came to be associated with philological and phonological inquiry, a connection that would remain strong throughout the early modern period. Keichū regards the Japanese language as refined and on par with such other cultivated languages as Chinese and Sanskrit, though unlike later nativists, he did not invoke the concept of kotodama to assert its superiority.

15 Keichū zenshū, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), p. 110. Regarding the “compatibility” of the sounds of Japanese with those of Chinese and Sanskrit, Keichū, criticizing those ignorant of proper kana usage, writes: “They know nothing of Chinese prosody (韻学), and have only learned to write a few letter of the Indian Siddham script ... while this country is far from India, the sounds [of their languages] are compatible.” (p. 113) In the Nihon shoki, Jinmu says: “The fire shall be called Istu-no-Kagutsuchi (又火名為厳香来雷) and the water, Itsu-no-Mitsuha-no-me (水名為厳罔象女). The food shall be called Itsu-no-Uka-no-me (穀名為厳稻魂女), and the firewood, Itsu-no-Yamatsuchi (薪名為厳山雷). Other objects are also given new names. Nihon shoki, jō, ed. Sakamoto Tarō et al., Nihon koten bungaku taikei 67 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1967), p. 203.
Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), for whom “the possibility of recovering [the primeval seamless relation of man/nature/sound] rested upon recovering the language of the ancient period,” charged the word kotodama with new semantic content by associating it with the “fifty sounds” of the syllabary, all of which naturally bore specific meanings in a manner similar to what is now understood by the terms “sound symbolism” or phonosemantics. Though Mabuchi is not usually associated with the later so-called phonosemantic school, or onghi 音義派, in many respects his ideas anticipated that movement. He begins his tract on philology, Goi kō 語意考 (1769, published 1789) with a comparison of three Asian civilizations:

In this Land of the Rising Sun words are formed according to the fifty sounds (itsura no koe) and the myriad things are conveyed orally. In the Land of the Full Sun [i.e., China] the myriad things are recorded using pictograms (kata o kakite). In the Land of the Setting Sun [i.e., India] only the fifty sounds are written [alphabetically] for use in [dealing with] the myriad things.

Mabuchi continues with a claim that, while many have slighted ancient Japan for its lack of writing, this was rather a virtue born of the purity and simplicity of its people, who had no need for the complication and artificiality of writing. “Father and Mother Heaven and Earth taught them to speak, and the fifty sounds appear to have come about without conscious thought.” He then continued with an abbreviated description of what some of these sounds “naturally” mean:

Now from ancient times in this country, the division of established words has lain in their horizontal sounds [i.e., vowels]. The first of these [i.e. a] is the sound of beginning; the second [i.e. i] is the sound of motionlessness; the third [i.e. u] is the sound of motion; the fourth [i.e. e] is the sound of commanding; the fifth [i.e. o] is the sound of giving aid.

Mabuchi does not state specifically what relationship kotodama bears to the heaven-ordained sounds of the Japanese language or to how these sounds are mysteriously bound to specific meanings, but the association is nonetheless clear. The link is further suggested in his Man’yō kō, a commentary on the Man’yōshū. Referring to Okura’s verse, he glosses kotodama: “Our imperial land is a land of [spoken] words, not one of [written] characters, and thus [the word kotodama] refers to the august presence of a spirit (tamashii) in those words.” Orality thus appears to be a condition for the presence of that spirit.

The term became even more nuanced under Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801) who in his approach to language adopted Keichū’s methodology but Mabuchi’s spirit. In his Kuzubana (1780), Norinaga responds to a critique of his Naobi no mitama by the Confucian scholar Ichikawa Tazumaro 市川匡磨 (1740-1795). Ichikawa opines that accounts transmitted orally for such a long time could not be counted reliable, to which Norinaga counters that the ancients “got by very well without writing,” and that an age

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17 Burns, p. 57.
19 Goi kō, p. 125.
20 Kamo no Mabuchi, Man’yō kō, in Kamo no Mabuchi zenshū, 3:278.
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without writing had its own way of understanding, and therefore even its oral transmissions were quite different from oral transmission in an age of writing, and did not include careless errors.” Moreover, this was especially true in Japan since it is “a land aided by and blessed by kotodama,” and this “can be called the power of transmitting by wondrous kotodama rather than with the cleverness of writing.”22 In ancient Japan, then, orality and kotodama were mutually reinforcing, the former being a necessary condition for the latter, and the latter insuring the correctness of the former.

Norinaga also charges the word with a very different meaning in his work on grammar, Kotoba no tama no o 詞の玉緒 (1785). In a section describing kakari-musubi, he marvels that the mere change of a particle can alter the meaning so thoroughly, and concludes that “it is a most wondrous precept (sadamari) of kotodama, and is moreover its indisputable feat (waza).”23 Here, the effects of kotodama are seen in the grammatical structures of the Japanese language. This connection was further developed by Norinaga’s disciple, the kokugakusha poet and grammarian Kurosawa Okinamaro 黒沢翁満 (1795-1859), who in 1852 authored an analysis of syntax entitled Kotodama no shirube. After describing some basic conjugations, he marvels that they are a “truly wondrous and subtle thing,” adding that “it is fitting that from antiquity this imperial land has been called a land of words (kotoba no kunin), a land aided by kotodama.” He concludes the first half of the treatise with an appeal for the correction of the erroneous conjugations that had crept into usage, and enjoins readers to bear in mind the “virtue of kotodama, which, never erring, marvellously and subtly facilitates conjugation.”24

Another nativist scholar who had much to say about kotodama was Fujitani Mitsue 富士谷御杖 (1768-1822), a maverick in the kokugaku tradition whose writing has had an ambivalent reception. On the one hand, he has been accused of “using terminology after his own fashion, coining numerous neologisms, and employing unusual locutions,” his opaque use of jargon accounting for the obscurity into which he fell in the succeeding generation.25 On the other hand, the twentieth century has witnessed a marked revival of interest in his work, some even seeing in it an almost prescient anticipation of postmodernism.26

The independence of Mitsue’s thinking from mainstream nativism is seen already in his estimation of one of its revered founders, Keichū, and of Keichū’s interpretation of kotodama. Aside from his criticism of Keichū’s erudition as “too broad … neglecting the details of our great imperial land’s customs,” Mitsue rejects the notion that kotodama caused blessing or cursing. He notes that of course “it is generally the case that there is happiness when good things [happen] and misfortune when bad things [happen],” but queries: “Ought one to bless that there be happiness in something that was originally not meant for happiness (moto sachi arumajiki koto).”27 Mitsue casts a critical eye on all preceding scholarship treating early native texts, claiming that it “has neglected the kotodama [of those texts] and, betraying dissatisfaction that our imperial land has nothing like sacred classics (経), has resorted to forced analogy to and embellishment from Buddhist and Confucian works.” He further maintains that such scholars “treat [these texts] either as sacred classics or as histories (史), consisting of things either to be believed or disbelieved.”28 Just how far Mitsue’s thought was from mainstream kokugaku is thus evident in his view of the Kojiki, which he viewed as a product of kotodama; it was “not a record of actual events during the Divine Age, but rather a ‘teaching’ that explained” both the establishment and unification of the country—in other words,

23 From Kotoba no tama no o, in Motoori Norinaga zenshū, 5:21.
26 Burns, p. 133, describes some of these approaches in passing, but does not adopt them.
28 From the opening lines of Kojiki tomoshibi, p. 37.
“the production of Japan as a community.”

Mitsue’s most withering attacks are aimed at Norinaga who, “failing to understand that the language of our imperial land makes kotodama its principle (kotodama o mune to suru), has instead made elegance (miyabi) fill that role.” Even Norinaga’s works on the gods “look only at the surface of the words” and claim that “our language has nothing hidden about it.”

For Mitsue, then, kotodama and the power that inheres in the Japanese language could not be sought exoterically, as Norinaga is specifically faulted with doing. Such a superficial understanding leads to embellishment, “but if you look at the words (言) and embellish them with spirit (霊), they will die, and if you kill them, what profit have you?”

Rather than in embellishment, Mitsue sees kotodama at work in what he calls “inverted language” (tōgo or sakashimagoto 倒語). If one consults a standard dictionary for the definition of this term, it appears to be commonly used to refer to the practice of reversing syllables—for example, neta instead of tane or kone instead of neko—to create code words. Mitsue, however, bases his usage on what he takes to be the meaning of its sole appearance in the Nihon shoki, where it is used to subdue unruly spirits. Mitsue writes:

Inverted language is something between what is said and what is not said. [It comes forth] when you suppose you have said what is on your mind but you [actually] said something you never thought, or you suppose it is about that, but when you look at it, it is not. This is the essential point of inverted language.

Now this seeming discord between rhetoric and thought cannot be described as “aporia” in the Derridean sense, because it is employed intentionally. For Mitsue, “inverted language takes what was originally direct [speech] and forms speech as spirit (tamashii to shite koto o tsukuru) so that from that speech, the other party determines to know what your thoughts are. This is what is meant by the aiding and blessing of kotodama: that which is vivified outside the speech (sono koto no soto ni ikashi-okitaru tokoro) is called kotodama.”

There is thus a third party—or parties—at play in such acts of communication: kotodama, of course, but also “the gods, too, [who] take pity on the anguish of a mind that has been very circumspect about articulating what it wants to say,” for such circumspection is an essential part of “inverted language,” which he further defines as “expressing sorrow for joy, or calling short long,” or of “saying one is not going when one goes, or saying one does not see when one sees.”

Mitsue further illustrates the involvement of the gods where he refers to MYS no. 3100:

Omowaru o / omou to iwa / matori sumu / Unade no mori no / kami shi shirasamu
If you say you think so, / though indeed you do not, / then the God of Unade Shrine / where the eagles dwell, / will see through your words.

Mitsue writes that “when, entrusting all the threads of one’s thoughts to this God [of Unade Shrine], one creates words as if they can start from the human, the tutelary deity (氏神) will bless and aid [what lies] outside the words and will not fail to make others understand. This is what is meant by ‘a land blessed,’ ‘a land aided,’ and ‘a true land’ (masaki kuni).” And this aiding and blessing language (倒語之用、始起乎茲)” Nihon shoki, jō, p. 215.

— From Kojiki tomoshibi, p. 38.
— From Kojiki tomoshibi, p. 43.
— From Kojiki tomoshibi, p. 53. The relevant passage in the Nihon shoki is from kan 3 of that work: “On the day when the emperor [Jimmu] first began [reigning] as the Son of Heaven, Tōtsuoya-michi-no-omi-no-mikoto of the Ōtomo clan, leading [a band of] the Kume [clan], received the secret plan [from the emperor] and, using an allegorical poem as code (能以諷歌倒語), was able to ward off the evil. This was the first use of coded...
is inextricably linked to “kotodama, [which] refers to the spirit of the gods that know our thoughts beyond speech, those unsaid things that are confined [within us].”

According to Susan Burns’ analysis of Mitsue’s poetics, in arguing that the “public” and the “private” are both realms internalized in the psyche of each subject—and that poetic language thus arises from a dynamic internal tension—he “introduced a new complexity into the discussion of the subject-social relation.” His employment of devices like tōgo “to convey the expressive power of a wide range of linguistic forms in which words were used for other than their strictly referential value” resulted in a “‘poetic language’ in which various forms of semiotic slippage were deployed to convey meaning.” And, for Mitsue, kotodama referred to “the power of metaphor and metonymy to convey the kami within one speaker to another.”

The contrast could hardly be more stark between Mitsue’s theory of “inverted language” and the advocacy of direct and unmediated language implicit in Norinaga’s claim in his Kojikiden that koto言, koto 事, and kokoro 意 were essentially identical. The afore-mentioned phonosemantic school, or ongiha, which had its roots in the thought of Ma bushi’s later years, did not become an important current in nativist philology until much later, and is represented most notably by Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and Tachibana Moribe 楠守部 (1781-1849). Typical of their views on kotodama is what the latter wrote in his Gojūon shōsetsu 五十音小説 (1842), where he claims that “these fifty syllabaries were not created by anyone,” but rather “are something spontaneously transmitted from the beginning of the age of the gods,” and “the full range of all things in heaven and earth find voice therein.” Moreover, “the source of that which from antiquity has been called kotodama is none other than the fifty syllabaries.” They are the source of pure language and the basis of linguistic study in general; while some have linked their conception to the sounds of Sanskrit, “in reality they should be called kotodama [itself], and there is no [true] study of language that does not proceed thence.” Indeed, it was a hallmark of many of the ongiha writers that they glossed the characters for gojūon 五十音 with the reading kotodama, indicating that they considered them to be identical.

Finally, one movement that took phonosemat school thought in a decidedly mystical direction and that deserves mention in view of its enduring legacy in popular conceptions of kotodama in post-Restoration Japan is best represented by the works of Yamaguchi Shidō 山口守道 (1765-1842) and Nakamura Kōdō 中村孝道 (b. 1772). The former linked each sound of the syllabary with the birth of a god in the Kojiki, while the latter regarded “su” as the “seed syllable” of the language, as opposed to Atsutane’s claim of “u” for that role. One of Nakamura’s influential works, Kotodama wakumon 言霊或問 (1834), employs a question-answer format to unfold its views:

Q: What exactly is this thing called kotoda ma?:
It is the spirit of the human voice. When people produce each of the seventy-five sounds [i.e., syllables], each is endowed with meaning (義理), and that meaning (義) is called kotodama. With the spirit that is in each of these sounds, when two or three—or even four or five—are combined together, they become the myriad words and names, and there is nothing in the world that they cannot express, and nothing of which they cannot give understanding. And that which teaches the functions of language is the “perfectly clear mirror” (masu-kagami 真須鏡).

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37 From Man yōshū tomoshibi, p. 86.
38 Burns, pp. 135, 139.
39 “Meanings, things, and words are all in mutual accord, and are all the truth (makoto) of the ancient age.” Motoori Norinaga zenshū, 9:6.
When asked if these teachings of kotodama were his own creation, his response hints at the beginnings of a secret transmission that in fact came to characterize this “mystical” movement. He writes: “This Way of kotodama was transmitted to me when I was a young man in the capital by an old man from the province of Hyūga.” But during the intervening years, he had become unsure of some things and had forgotten others, and had studied night and day to restore those, but insisted that the basic principles were unchanged. When asked about his pedagogical approach, he responded:

“First, I teach kotodama. This is the basis for all teaching … Next, I teach the masukagami. This is a mirror of the human voice, differentiating the three sounds and the five vowels (三音五韻) … Next, I teach the Way of words … [Finally], I teach the origins of the three types: the origin of kotodama, the origin of masukagami, and the origin of uta. The origin of kotodama is none other than the origin of the spirit with which the seventy-five sounds are endowed.”

Writings of the “mystery” branch of kotodama studies would eventually prove to be profoundly influential in such new religious movements as the Ōmoto-kyō 大本教 of Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎 (1871-1948) and the Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光 of Okada Kōtama 岡田光玉 (1901-1974), informing much of their cosmology.

kagami in Nakamura's writing: “The name ‘masukagami’ appears frequently in the late Toku-gawa period in relation to … kotodama. ‘Kagami’ implies history as something that reflects the past. Together with the eulogistic prefix ‘masu,’ it seems to mean a mirror that clearly il-lumines the historical changes in words and human sounds of speech.”

14 In early modern phonology, goin generally refers to the five vowels, and san'on to the three readings of Chinese characters (kan, go, to), but it appears to have a different meaning here.

43 On the influence of Yamaguchi Shidō and Nakamura Kōdō on the development of doctrine in Ōmoto-kyō, see Nancy K. Stalker, Prophet Motive: A fully representative overview of early modern kotodama ideology would require a hefty volume, and is beyond the scope of the present project, but the foregoing perhaps serves to give a sense of the various meanings and emphases with which the term was charged. One thing they all had in common was exclusive focus on the archaic language. As Lee Yeounsuk has noted, “it is indeed the case that kokugaku clearly connected the ‘Japanese spirit’ and the Japanese language,” but it was not just any Japanese language; what they “idealized was yamato kotoba, the ancient language of Yamato free from karagokoro, ‘the Chinese mind’ … it was neither kokugo nor even the Japanese language (nihongo).” Aside from that commonality, the Bakumatsu period saw some attempts to synthesize the other various strands into a sort of “field theory” of kotodama, and of these one of the most broadly conceived was that of Kamochi Masazumi.

Kamochi Masazumi and Kotodama

Masazumi was descended from a court family that had relocated to Tosa to escape disturbances in the capital during the Bunmei 文明 era (1469-1487). Asukai Masakazu 飛鳥井雅薫 (dates unknown), grandson of the Middle Counselor Asukai Masayasu 雅康 (1436-1509), became the governor of Tosa. When the Yamauchi 山内 clan


45 This biographical sketch is indebted primarily to information found in Ozeki Kiyoaki, Kamochi Masazumi kenkyū (Kōchī: Kōchi Shimin Toshokan, 1992), but other sources have also been consulted, including: Irimajiri Yoshinaga, “Bakumatsu Tosa-han ni okeru kokugaku no hatten to Kamochi Masazumi,” Shakai keizai shigaku 24:4 (1958), pp. 1-10; Ogata Hiroyasu, Kamochi Masazumi (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1949); Ogata Hiroyasu, Man’yōgaku no taisei: Kamochi Masazumi no kenkyū (Kyoto: Sanwa Shobō, 1954).
was enfeoffed there in 1689, the Asukai family entered their service, Masakazu’s grandson Masaharu 雅春 (d. 1687) adopting the surname Kamochi, which was used along with Fujiwara and Yanagimura down to Masazumi’s generation. With the change in command, however, most of the Asukai/Kamochi family ended up becoming rōnin and eventually leaving Tosa; by the second generation, only Masaharu’s grandson Yanagimura Yasuharu 安治 (d. 1730) remained, settling in Fukui Village where his great grandson Masazumi would be born.

Masazumi’s father, Korenori 慎則, held the rank of assistant (goyōnin) in Tosa’s rigidly stratified samurai society, serving as keeper of the Yamauchi family cemetery. By all accounts, Masazumi showed little interest in books when he was a child, but in his seventeenth or eighteenth year developed a passion for learning and began to study under Miyagi Nakae 宮地仲枝 (1768-1841), one of the prominent scholars in the domain. Thus, Masazumi’s intellectual pedigree drew on the eclectic nativist and Confucian tradition of Tani Mashio 谷真潮 (1727-1797) under whom Nakae had studied, as well as the Suzunoya school of nativism through Nakae’s father Haruki 春樹 (1728-1785), a direct disciple of Motoori Norinaga. Masazumi continued to consider himself a student of Nakae’s until the latter’s death, and his eclectic intellectual background is also attested by his close associations with the historian Nakayama Izumi 中山敏水 (1764-1832), the Confucian scholar and Mashio’s nephew Tani Kagei 谷景井 (1798-1870), and the nativist and poet Yasunami Masakage 安並雅景 (1803-1851).

Masazumi’s devotion to the Man’yōshū is difficult to ascribe to any single source of influence, but an unusual degree of interest in that anthology had been part of the intellectual milieu of Tosa since Mashio’s time, and is reflected in the massive annotated edition Ko Man’yōshū 古万葉集 produced in 1803 under the direction of the local scholar Imamura Tanushi 今村楽 (1765-1810). Masazumi’s first work devoted to that ancient anthology, Man’yōshū kibun 万葉集記聞, a detailed annotation of the first kan, appeared in 1813 when he was twenty-three years old. This early work draws on such preceding studies as Kamo no Mashio’s Man’yō kō 万葉考, Katō Chikage’s 加藤千嶺 (1735-1808) Man’yōshū ryakuge 万葉集略解, and Norinaga’s Man’yōshū tama no ogoto 万葉集主の小蛻, as well as the writings of various local scholars. No sooner had he completed Man’yōshū kibun than he began working on what would be his magnum opus, Man’yōshū kogi 万葉集古義, a labor that would occupy much of the rest of his life. Man’yōshū kogi, as will be demonstrated in the following pages, also illuminates much concerning Masazumi’s theory of kotodama.

In 1816, Masazumi was given his first assignment in the han school, the Kyōjukan 教授館, and worked there in various capacities until his thirty-first year. In 1821, he was assigned to instruct the daughter of the retired domain lord Yamauchi Toyokazu 山内豊策 (1773-1825) in waka poetry and calligraphy. A verse, recorded in his usual Man’yō-gana, expresses his reaction:

倭文手纏賤吾乎殿上爾召上而在乎恐懼毛有香
Shizutamaki / iyashiki ware o / tono no e ni
meshiagete areba / kashikoku mo aru ka
That I, / the lowest of the low, / should be summoned / by our lord— / how it humbles me with awe! 48

Masazumi served in this position for six years,

46 The surname Kamochi was taken from Kamochi Village, which had been the site of Masakazu’s castle, Kamochi-jō 鹿持城.

47 These include various studies by Tani Mashio, as well as Haruki’s Man’yōshū shikō 万葉集私考. For a survey of Mashio’s work on the Man’yōshū, see Yoshino Tadashi, “Tani Mashio no Man’yōshū kenkyū” Köchi Daigaku gakujutsu kōron (Mar. 1965), pp. 83-100.

after which he received various teaching assignments for the Yamauchi family. Most of his students, however, were from lowly gōshi (郷士) or shōya (庄屋) families, and exposure to Masazumi’s radical nativism in his jiku was a factor in turning many of them—including his nephew, Takechi Zuizan 武市瑞山 (1829-1865)—toward the loyalist movement.  

The Tenpō 天保 years (1830-1844) were fruitful ones for Masazumi’s writing. In addition to his continued work on Man’yōshū kogi, he produced such noteworthy studies as an analysis of poetic and rhetorical devices in Nara and Heian language, Gagen sehō 雅言成法 (1835), a collection of and commentary on folk songs, Kōyōhen 巷謡編 (1835), a study of the poetic structures (歌格) employed in pre-Heian poetry, Eigenkaku 永言格 (1837), and the miscellany Kokemushiro 苞席 (1842) among scores of other titles. Of particular importance for the present study, Kotodama no sakiwai 言霊徳用 (1838) also appeared during this period.

Along with a remarkable degree of scholarly productivity, this stage of Masazumi’s life was also marked by many personal hardships, as is described in a verse larded with Man’yōshū diction:

取懸之肩之加々布乃如海松和々気那賀良
Torikakeshi / kata no kakafu no / miru no goto / wawakenagara ni / toshi wa hateniki
The tattered rags / draped over my shoulders, / looking like strips of kelp / and hanging torn and in wild disarray—/ the year comes to an end.  

The hardships he endured were multiplied by the death in the twelfth month of Tenpō 7 of his wife, Kiku, which was devastating not only because he had always been very devoted to her but also because with her passing, the care of his aged father and his young children fell on his shoulders.

The nexus between Masazumi’s views on language and his theories on belletristic writing is found in his poetics, which focuses almost exclusively on ancient verse, especially the Man’yōshū. There were two strands of Man’yōshū-centered poetics during the early modern period. One idealized makoto (sincerity), a quality thought to obtain in ancient verse which allowed no mediation between feeling and expression. In the dual emphases of traditional poetics—kakikoto (feeling) and kotoba (diction)—it clearly gave priority to the former, and its ideals were most notably articulated by Kamo no Mabuchi. The other strand gave pride of place to poetic “frameworks” (kakaku 歌格), formal features that were thought to enhance auditory effects as well as sense, and it placed more emphasis on kotoba.  

Given his many exhaustive studies devoted to explication of kakaku, it would not be incorrect to place Masazumi squarely in that camp, but it is important to note that he did not slight the ideal of makoto. In his commentary on Hitomaro’s famous chōka lamenting the death of his wife (MYS no. 207), Masazumi writes:

Even in times of extreme grief, to put on a manly facade and act as if it were nothing [may sound] true, but it is rather of irresolute intent. When one thus reaches a point where one is pressed unbearable by feelings and expresses them in their real form, it [may] sound irresolute in intent, but is [actually] true (makoto). Who but this noble man (ason, i.e. Hitomaro) would have been able to tell the truth [of his feelings] without revision?  

Scattered through his commentaries on verses in the Man’yōshū are many passages that praise a poem as an example of unmediated expression. For example, speaking of Akahito’s famous verse on snow falling on Mt. Fuji (MYS no. 207),

Even in times of extreme grief, to put on a manly facade and act as if it were nothing [may sound] true, but it is rather of irresolute intent. When one thus reaches a point where one is pressed unbearable by feelings and expresses them in their real form, it [may] sound irresolute in intent, but is [actually] true (makoto). Who but this noble man (ason, i.e. Hitomaro) would have been able to tell the truth [of his feelings] without revision?  


Sansaishū, p. 133. Some of the phrases in this verse are taken directly from Okura’s famous “Hinkyū mondō” 貧窮問答, MYS no. 892.

Ozeki, p. 240. For an overview of kakaku in early modern waka poetics, see my “Sound and Sense.” Many of the examples cited below are also mentioned by Ozeki.

Masazumi writes:

[Akahito] has composed a verse on a scene exactly as he had seen it, with no complications, but making it seem as if that same sight appears before [the reader’s] very eyes: such is an excellent poem.\(^{53}\)

While there is no lack of passages extolling ma-koto, it must be conceded that on balance Masazumi’s poetics lay relatively greater stress on the formal features of poetry: diction, phrasing, lineation, in short what is generally understood by ka-kaku. Here his ideas show evidence of a diverse pedigree, including most importantly Norinaga. It is typical of Masazumi that what applies to poetry applies to language in general; he argues that “generally, in the ancient age it was the practice to take delight in verbal communication (kotodai) that had an elegant tone and was embellished (aya aru),” because “the gods are deeply moved by the embellishment of words.”\(^ {54}\) This was all the more true for poetry. Even more than the sense of a verse or its affective qualities, Masazumi argued that “in waka (uta), words are primary,”\(^ {55}\) and that since “waka (uta) is something that is sung (utau mono), elegantly embellishing [those] words is the main objective.”\(^ {56}\) In similar terms, the purpose of makurakotoba in the ancient age is described “not as something to supplement the tone (shirabe),” as was thought in later ages, but rather “elegantly to embellish (kazarite [written 文りて]) the words.”\(^ {57}\) The emphasis that Masazumi places on embellishment throughout his writings marks him as the spiritual descendent of Norinaga, who similarly gave pride of place to aya (文 “patterning”) as primary in waka, though Masazumi applies it to the Man’yōshū in contrast to Norinaga’s idealized anthology, the Shin Kokinshū.

At the same time what Masazumi understood by “embellishment” (aya, kazarī, and other related terms) appears to be qualitatively very different from what Norinaga and most others meant by that concept. It is impossible to speak of Masazumi’s ideas of “embellishment”—or of frameworks generally—apart from his views on the “perfect” primal language, which are embodied in his concept of kotodama and what he often refers to as “the elegance (miyabi) of kotodama.”\(^ {58}\)

In spite of the paucity of its appearance in his venerated Man’yōshū, the word kotodama appears with remarkable frequency throughout Masazumi’s writings. Commenting on Okura’s famous verse in this anthology (MYS no. 894, cited above), Masazumi defines kotodama as “the divine spirit (shinrei 神霊) of words, the marvelous spirit (kushibi naru mitama 微妙霊徳) that exists naturally in uttered words.”\(^ {59}\) His commentaries on the two other appearances of the word, MYS nos. 2506 and 3254, add that it is “the miraculous virtue (tama no shirushi 神霊) present in language,” and that it is “the mysterious spirit that is naturally present in human language.”\(^ {60}\) Some of Masazumi’s own poems suggest meanings he attached to the

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\(^{53}\) *Man’yōshū kogi*, vol. 18 (kan 3, jō), 137r.  
^{55} *Man’yōshū kogi*, vol. 9 (kan 1, ge), 26v.  
^{56} *Man’yōshū makurakotoba kai*, 1:4r.  
^{57} *Man’yōshū makurakotoba kai*, 1:5r-5v.  
^{58} See, for example, *Man’yōshū kogi*, vol. 3 (sōron, kan 3), 53r.  
^{59} *Man’yōshū kogi*, vol. 30 (kan 5, ge), 81r.  
^{60} *Man’yōshū kogi*, vol. 11 (kan 55, chū), 61r; vol. 66 (kan 13, jō), 64v.
word. One that implies a link to makoto is:

Yononaka no / aware shirite mo / kotodama
no / tasuke shinaku wa / munakoto naramu

Though one may know / the pathos of
the world, / without the aid of kotodama / all is
but falsehood.  

It is in his essays and critical works, however,
that we begin to see not only a broader range of
meanings attached to the word, but also how he
viewed its relation to waka poetry. In his
collection of essays Yamiyo no tsubute 喧嘩の縁, he
maintains that “poetry (uta) is a practice whereby
kotodama blesses and gives aid.” It is so utterly
different from the poetry of other lands that “it
should not even be discussed on the same day as
the tongues of foreign peoples, with their sounds
like birds, insects, and instruments.” Here, it is
the sound of the poetic language that is important,
more than the sense or perhaps even than makoto.
But it is not just the raw sounds of the Japanese
language that make it suitable for poetry conducive
to kotodama:

The poetry (uta) of our divine land ... hav-
ing once been established in the Age of the
Gods to accord with sacred kotodama, is
naturally endowed with both frameworks
and faultless rules, all without the aid of
human power.  

The proper prosodic forms of waka poetry were
also of divine provenance, their existence owing to
kotodama, which could be invoked by their ob-
servance.

Masazumi devoted one of his major works, Ei-
gankaku, to explication of those formal features
falling under the rubric of what early modern theo-
reticians meant by kaku, and it is telling that the
concept of kotodama also figures prominently in
this treatise. Surprisingly, its lengthy preface ad-
varces another characteristic of kotodama that ap-
pears to be unique to Masazumi: the necessity of a
hierarchically structured society headed by the le-
gitimate heir to the divine throne. He explains
why China fails in this regard:

In China, that country’s beginning is called
honghuang caomei 鴻荒草昧 (“wild and
uncivilized”); in that age, there was no dis-

tinction between ruler and subject, and
their actions were no different from those
of beasts. Later, there appeared those
called sages who taught some sort of rules,
but they seem to have established them ac-
cording to their own private feelings (wa-
takushi no kokoro). From the beginning
of heaven and earth in our divine land,
there were already established ranks of ru-
er and subject, of high and low. The
hearts of the people were upright, and their
actions were proper ...  

Conditions in China’s earliest history parallels the
lack of kaku in its early verse, while it is allegedly
present in ancient Japan. Speaking of the Shijing,
Masazumi writes:

In ancient [Chinese] verse, the number of
phrases was not fixed and there were no
laws governing tones and rhyme. It was
only much later that poetic framework and
rules were clearly provided. The poetry
(uta) of our divine land from the begin-
ing of heaven and earth both was naturally en-
dowed with frameworks and rules ...  

It was no mere accident that Japanese poetry could
claim kaku from the very beginning, while Chinese

61 From Chiuta no kurigoto 千首のくり言, in
Kōhon sōsho, ed. Oyama Tokujirō, vol. 1 (Tokyo:
Kokusho Kōhon Kankōkai, 1927), p. 135. Unlike
most of his collections, this one is recorded in the
conventional mixture of kanji and kana.

62 Quoted in Ozeki, p. 247. In the previously
cited manuscript of Kokemushiro, following an
admonition to study waka, Masazumi adds that
“since this is a divine country blessed by kotodama,
it [i.e. waka] cannot be discussed as if it were
[merely] equal to Chinese poetry.”

63 Quoted in Ozeki, p. 249.

64 Kamochi Masazumi, Eigenkaku, Preface, vol. 1
(Tokyo: Kunaishō, 1893), 4r. The phrase hong-
huang caomei appears in several Chinese texts
referring to the social chaos of the earliest human
societies.

65 Eigenkaku, Preface, 1:4v.
verse allegedly could not; this difference owed to none other than kotodama:

Now the speech of our divine country was, from the time it first came from the mouths of the imperial deities at the creation of heaven and earth, endowed with a strange and marvelous spirit, and [our country] is thus lauded as “a land blessed by kotodama,” or “a land aided by kotodama” …

And comparing the “benefit” to be derived from “composing” (tsukuru) Chinese poetry and “reciting” (yomu) Japanese verse, he writes:

When you recite a good uta, both gods and mortals will sense the elegance of its kotodama, and you too will have profited from expressing what is in your heart. Is there such a benefit to be had from composing a good Chinese poem?

Masazumi leaves no doubt that the answer to his rhetorical question must be negative, and not just because Chinese poetry is too “contrived,” but more importantly because it cannot be a vehicle for kotodama.

The formal features of non-poetic language in antiquity were also expressions of the workings of kotodama. In his Yōgen henkakurei, a grammar book written in 1840 and revised in 1856—Masazumi argues that “apart from these rules [of conjugation], the distinction between elegant and vulgar (ga-zoku) is lost, and all becomes confused.” Beyond that, “the fact that the sounds produced by those conjugations are felicitous and unadulterated by anything that would grate on the ears ultimately owes to the marvelous effects of kotodama, which exists in an unfathomable sphere (hakarigatakero).

It is apparent, too, that for Masazumi not all Japanese language is equally amenable to the workings of kotodama; the ancient language was more conducive to that elusive effect not only because of the putative purity of its sounds, but also because of the subtlety of its semantic distinctions. Responding to an unfriendly question asking if use of archaic language was not just a way of sounding novel or showing off, Masazumi responds:

It is childish to think that the ancient language is used to startle people’s ears. Unless you try using it yourself, there is no way to know the nuances with which the ancients used the words … and unless you know the nuances of the ancient language, you cannot know the Way of kotodama.

That Masazumi viewed both the superior qualities of the ancient language of Yamato and the effects of kotodama in terms of sounds is nowhere better illustrated than in his Kotodama no sakiwai 言霊徳用 (1838), a work whose title may have been inspired by Norinaga. This treatise begins by repeating many of the definitions of kotodama that he has articulated elsewhere, adding emphasis to the role of the imperial line in bestowing and transmitting that elusive quality. He exalts the Yamato language above all other tongues of the earth, which he repeatedly dismisses as producing sounds worthy only of birds, beasts, or objects. Further distinctions are made within the native tongue itself, assigning the “purest” sounds to the highest classes: “… unvoiced [i.e., “pure”] sounds are ranked at the top, and belong to the Son of Heaven.” Masazumi contends that the sounds of the ka, sa, ta, and ha lines are never voiced in initial position, and in the speech of the Son of Heaven (and presumably of the entire imperial family) not even when they are repeated in sequence.

The language of ministers and officials allows for “provisional” voicing in compound words, “such as the ga of yamagawa 山川 or the gi of asagiri 朝日”

More details on the nature of the ancient language and how it is used can be found in Kamauchi Masazumi, Kotodama no sakiwai ([Tokyo]: Kunaisho, 1893), 12v.

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66 Eigenkaku, Preface, 1:5v.
67 From the afore-cited manuscript of Kokenmushiro.
68 Yōgen henkakurei (Tokyo: Kunaisho, 1893), 22r-22v.
69 From the afore-cited manuscript of Kokenmushiro.
70 Toyoda Kunio, Kotodama shinkō: sono genryū to shiteki tenkai (Tokyo: Hachiman Shoten, 1985), p. 563, points out that the use of toku 徳 to transliterate “sakiwai” appears in Norinaga’s Kuzubana, but not in Okura’s original poem.
71 Kamochi Masazumi, Kotodama no sakiwai ([Tokyo]: Kunaisho, 1893), 12v.
In the language of commoners, voiced and liquid consonants are permitted “in medial or final syllables,” as in the “gi of kagiru 限” or the “ra of hara 腹,” but again never in initial position. One can only wonder how Masazumi would have the Son of Heaven pronounce kagiru, but at this level it must perhaps be read as an expression of an ethereal ideal rather than as a literal description.

The categorization of the Yamato language is followed by an analysis of the “incorrect” sounds of foreign speech. It is unclear which languages he has in mind where he argues that “all words consisting of one syllable are voiced, and words of two or three syllables voice the initial.” Labio-velarized sounds (e.g., kya, sha, etc., or kwa, mwa, etc.) “are found only in foreign languages and in [the noises] of birds, insects, and instruments,” but not in the Yamato language. He offers as evidence the fact that the ancients adapted the pronunciation of words like shukuse 宿世 to sukuse.

The syllabic “n” (ん) is also seen as a foreign pollution, responsible for having corrupted the original omina 女 to onna and nemokoro 懇 to nengoro. Foreign tongues use liquid sounds indiscriminately, including initial syllables, and all use of the so-called “semi-voiced” sounds (the pa line) is viewed as a vulgarism arising in medieval “military writings, and in the glossed readings of Chinese books with such words as nanpito or appare.” Doubled consonants are likewise held to be a corruption of later ages.

The sounds of the Chinese language are impure not only because they cannot accommodate kotodama, but also because the Chinese people lack a proper ability to recognize and maintain the high and the low.

The Chinese emperor …… pretentiously refers to himself as the “son of heaven” and without equal, [but] when the time [for change] comes and his virtue wanes, his country will be taken by another, and he will be driven out, descending to [the ranks of] the lowest commoners. And when the time comes for one among the ranks of the lowest commoners to rise in power, then that person will take the country, ascend the throne, be revered as its ruler, and proudly call himself the “son of heaven.” That is the usual state of affairs there, but in reality they are unable to distinguish the high from the low.

The implication is clear: whether cause or effect, China’s unstable social class structure is closely related to the corrupt state of its language. Japan, with its unbroken imperial line and its “correct” division of social classes, is a perfect environment for kotodama to take effect.

A somewhat later work, Yamaguchi no shirube 山口郷導 (1844)—inspired by Norinaga’s Ui-
yamabumi and obviously intended to serve a similar purpose—takes these ideas further in associating kotodama with a higher moral order. As in earlier works, he makes the claim that “all nation of the earth have language, but they do not have the divine spirit (神霊).” He adds a new dimension by connecting it to “debt of gratitude” (on 応): “The people of our imperial realm naturally embrace the divine spirit of language, reverence the transmission of language, and give priority to the three great on of gods, sovereign, and ancestors.” As he illustrates in this graph, in which the “human way” is linked to kotodama, followers of that way not only eat, but feel a debt of gratitude to the sovereign for their food; they not only love their children, but feel a debt of gratitude to the ancestors. Those with an animal nature (畜質) also eat and love their children, but feel no debt of gratitude, and the clear implication is that the virtue of on is lacking in foreign countries.76 Thus, kotodama is efficacious in Japan not only because of the purity of the language, but also because of its higher moral order that prevails there.

The most immediately apparent element of Masazumi’s broad synthesis may be seen in Norinaga’s influence. Not only was Masazumi in a direct line of Suzunoya teachings through his mentor Miyaji Nakae, but the fact that one encounters phrasing and emphases—including such things as a preoccupation with aya 文 and kazari 文り—at every turn bespeaks the extent to which Masazumi regarded Norinaga as authoritative. (The similarities in phrasing between Norinaga’s Kanji san’on kō and Masazumi’s Kotodama no sakiwai could hardly escape a reader of both texts.) But significantly, Masazumi never formally joined the Suzunoya-ha, or any other school, for that matter. Throughout his magnum opus, the Man’yōshū kogi, he cites and often argues with a breathtakingly broad range of earlier scholarship, including those treated in the previous section.77 His views on kotodama also reflect this breadth, revealing familiarity with all preceding approaches including the ongihä and the mystics. In many respects, his theory of kotodama thus serves as an overview of early modern developments in the meaning of that term.

Conclusion

In spite of the breadth of their erudition, most of the claims of early modern scholars regarding kotodama are textually unsubstantiated and are driven rather by ideological imperatives. Moreover, they left a legacy of misreading that is still very much with us; many assertions made about kotodama even in recent scholarly writing arguably owe more to early modern constructs than to dispassionate assessment of the few extant ancient examples of its usage.78

result is a list of all kokugaku luminaries ranging from Azumamaro to Ōhira.

76 A comprehensive treatment of this early modern legacy in contemporary academic discourse is beyond the scope of the present study, but a few illustrative examples are worth citing. Konishi Jin’ichi’s widely influential Nihon bungeishi (translated by Aileen Gatten et al. as A History of Japanese Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984–)) offers the following definition: “In ... the Ancient Age, there remained no distinction between literature and religion; both narratives and songs drew on kotodama, the concept of words as incantatory and divine, so that poets not only transmitted meaning but imparted a sense of the supernatural.” (1:61) He links kotodama with the better documented practice of kotoage, maintaining that the former was the spiritual force that made the latter efficacious (1:104–6), but he is forced to buttress his argument by citing parallels to similar concepts in other early societies. Moreover, he boldly asserts that kotodama was a literary ideal, one that was displaced by continental notions of ga (1:203–5). Others read much more into the term than the scant record of its use warrants. H. D. Plutschow, in his Chaos and Cosmos: Ritual in Early and Medieval Japanese Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1990), claims in the context of the Hitokotonushi myth that “kotodama was believed

77 From Yamaguchi no shirube, as reproduced in Ogata Hiroyasu, 1949, pp. 222–224.

But for our purposes, a more important question is: why was the relatively obscure term kotodama picked out of the historical dustbin in the early modern period and reinstated to common use? And more importantly, how does one account for the recruitment of the word to describe such a diverse range of linguistic and spiritual phenomena, a movement that gained striking momentum over the first half of the nineteenth century? Even if one sees the kotodama revival as illustrating Hobsbawm’s argument that many traditions are “invented”—some using “ancient materials” to create new traditions “for quite novel purposes”—we must still ask what it was about the intellectual climate of the time that proved to be fertile soil for the resurgence of what purported to be an ancient faith.79

Toyoda Kunio has noted the shift that occurred in nativism over the course of the early modern period, beginning with emphasis on ancient language (古語), then on ancient meanings (古義), and finally on the “Ancient Way” (古道), and adds that “a kotodama-like view of language was gradually generated as a result of this” course of development.80 The conception of kotodama itself also shifted in parallel fashion during this period toward greater mysticism, tending to move from kotodama shisō toward kotodama shinkō. The methodological framework established by Keichū’s monumental Man’yō daishōki virtually assured that every fragment of life and language in early Japan was destined to be reexamined and reevaluated. Of course, since every ancient term and concept was to be a divine language taught to man in illo tempore” (p. 11), and referring to the preface of the Kokinshū asserts that “Tsurayuki almost seems to define kotodama as a ritual language which has power to maintain the human order” (p. 12). The word kotodama itself appears in neither of these texts, and an assumption that it was the operative concept in these contexts appears to accord closely with the theories of its kokugaku revivalists.


not similarly resurrected, the explanation still begs the question: why kotodama?
Roy Andrew Miller suggests that the early modern kotodama revival was heavily influenced by the work of Qing dynasty philologists and the “speculation about a philosophical entity existing between the phonological shape of words … [音] and their semantic content … [義],” and that “fortified with these massive latter-day borrowings from China, the Edo kokugakusha proceeded to buttress their own revival of the kotodama into impressive proportions.”81 As Miller himself concedes, definitive pronouncements on the extent of such influence requires more research on the currency of continental ideas among nativists. Those considered in this study, however, evince little familiarity with Sinocentric philology. It is nevertheless safe to say that an awareness of China was a major factor, if only as something eliciting reaction.

Another possible explanation may be sought in the tendency to link kotodama to spoken rather than written language. According to Naoki Sakai’s cogent study, “a typically phonocentric view of language developed” over the course of the eighteenth century following Keichū’s death.82 A heightened preoccupation with the sound of the language is evident in the growth of phonology during this period and in the many attempts to reconstruct the ancient tongue, and theories of kotodama certainly lent an aura of authority and mystery to such enterprises. Karatani Kōjin also addresses this phenomenon, advancing the view that “the phonocentrism of Japan’s eighteenth-century nativist scholars contains within it a political struggle against the domination of Chinese ‘culture,’ or a bourgeois critique of the samurai system since Chinese philosophy was the official ideology of the Tokugawa shogunate.” Though Karatani does not use the term kotodama, he seems to have something very much like it in mind when he compares nativist ideas of language to the Saussurean “langue which isn’t born, doesn’t age, doesn’t die,

81 Miller, p. 291.

but simply ‘is.’\textsuperscript{83} Beyond the many examples Sakai and Karatani cite, one might also mention what appeared to be a heightened awareness of \textit{spoken} foreign tongues—the rangakusha and the activity of the \textit{tsujii} (通詞／通辞) in Nagasaki, use of Chinese colloquialisms in \textit{yomihon}, and so forth—that moved beyond the \textit{kanbun-yomikudashi} approach to other languages and demonstrated a consciousness of what they sounded like. The question remains, however, why an ancient and poorly documented concept should be pressed into the service of the new phonology.

One persuasive reason is suggested in Uchimura Kazushi’s study of \textit{gojūon} ideology, which from the beginning had a “metaphysical (形而上学) character.” He argues that the preoccupation with “seed syllable” and the like seen in \textit{gojūon} theories has its roots in “the cosmology of Shingon esoteric Buddhism, the matrix of which was [in turn] the study of Siddham characters (悉曇学).”\textsuperscript{84} Although he mentions \textit{kotodama} only in passing, the possibility is strongly implied that, just as this word disappeared from the active lexicon with the ascent of esoteric teaching and its mantras, dhara-nis, and seed syllables, so also \textit{kotodama} made a comeback with the declining influence of Buddhism in intellectual discourse, and its resuscitation was accomplished by none other than a Shingon priest. The view of \textit{waka} as a form of native \textit{dharani}—an idea formulated notably by Mujū 無住 (1226-1312) in his \textit{Shasekishū}—is a medieval attempt to amalgamate Buddhist and native concepts about the power of language. It would follow, then, that \textit{kotodama} played a role similar to that of the esoteric verbal formulae. This theory is appealing, and may provide a partial explanation, but it still begs many questions.

These questions may be answered in part by an application of Philip Rieff’s theory of culture, in which he describes both mana and taboo as characteristic of “first cultures,” as he refers to those not yet affected by an interdictory symbolic. Central to Rieff’s analysis as the term “primacy of possibility,” which “implies the efficient transferable force recognized in all remarkable things”—put

more simply: primeval chaos, or a state of unbounded possibilities. This force may portend either good or ill. “Mana refers to the positive aspects of the primacy of possibility, while taboo refers to the negative aspect.” The question remains whether ancient (or “first culture”) \textit{kotodama} is best understood as mana or as taboo. As argued above, a definitive answer to this question may not be possible, and in any case is beyond the scope of the present study. More amenable to analysis is the question of how \textit{kotodama} was understood when revived in the latter part of the early modern period, an age on the threshold of what Rieff refers to as a “third culture,” or one at some stage in the process of shedding an earlier interdictory symbolic. He argues that third cultures have a tendency to resurrect motifs from first cultures, but that they invariably understand them anachronistically; hence, the “third culture is a fictional superimposition upon the first.”\textsuperscript{85} These various early modern “fictional” interpretations of \textit{kotodama} were thus entirely in keeping with the increasing “third culture” spirit of the age, in which “first culture” terms and concepts were avidly taken up.

Similarly, in the context of his analysis of Baudelaire’s Paris of the 1850s, Walter Benjamin famously observed that “it is precisely the modern which always conjures up prehistory” (... \textit{immer zitiert gerade die Moderne die Urgeschichte}).\textsuperscript{86} That is, it is modernity’s appetite for the new that, paradoxically, produces a longing in many for a past Golden Age rather than a future utopia. The adoption of Western historiography’s term of periodization “early modern” to describe Tokugawa Japan was entirely apt, because though situated slightly later chronologically, it describes similar conditions of growing rationalism and secularism, increased mercantilism replacing an older manor

\textsuperscript{83} See his “Nationalism and \textit{Écriture},” \textit{Surfaces} v. 201 (1995), pp. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{84} Uchimura, pp. 44-45.

\textsuperscript{85} Philip Rieff, \textit{The Crisis of the Officer Class: The Decline of Tragic Sensibility}, Sacred Order/Social Order vol. 2 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), pp. 21-23.

system, the beginnings of the modern nation state, and a gradual breakdown of earlier social castes (the trend in Western societies from a patronymic system to use of surnames for commoners occurred earlier than the growing practice in many han to permit surnames and swords for prominent chōnin, but the parallels are close and in both cases “early modern”). For many Japanese—but particularly for those of a nativist stripe—the anxieties generated by what were seen as the leveling forces of incipient modernity drove them to “prehistory” in a quest to shore up their identity. The revival of kotodama may also be understood in this context.

Appendix: A Land Blessed by Kotodama (Kotodama no sakiwai)

“A land blessed by kotodama” and “a land aided by kotodama” are ancient expressions that have been transmitted from the Age of the Gods. What is meant by “kotodama” is that the words one speaks are of their own accord endowed with a wondrous spirit. To be “blessed” (sakiwau) means, for example, to prosper by doubling or tripling the benefits obtained from one thing, or to evade misfortune and receive good fortune. To be “aided” means, for example, to be rescued when one is faced with disaster or about to fall into a dangerous situation, and to be brought to safety. These two [examples] refer to the process of arranging [things] (torimakanaikonau) by the divine spirit of language. This much is obvious to anyone adept in the ancient language and would hardly beg comment, but is mentioned in detail here for the instruction of beginners.

Thus the work of this blessing and aiding kotodama touches every one of the myriad things between heaven and earth, and yet after the ancient age, teachings of foreign sages came to be practiced and for all things under heaven, reason was made primary (moto) and language usage secondary (sue). That of course affected people’s thinking, and with the passing years the most noble, mysterious, and exquisite principle of kotodama came to be buried. Later, when the warrior class assumed control of the government, investigation of etymology became a sort of pastime among poets. Their own compositions, however, came to be like those of aristocrats or of hermits; their poetry turned into an effeminate and overly refined pastime unworthy of warriors, reflecting the enormous change that had taken place in the world. However, in recent ages since the way of ancient learning has been opened and has now spread to all corners of the realm including the remote countryside, we are truly fortunate that there are now believers in the ancient style. As a result, the kotodama that had lain buried for centuries has also begun to appear in many ways, almost making possible a return to antiquity. This is evidence of the blessing and aiding of kotodama, which is worthy of all our reverence and respect.

Now what reveals kotodama to be superior, pure, clear, correct, and noble is that the descendants of the Great Goddess Amaterasu, who illumines every land between heaven and earth, have continued ruling through myriad ages, passing down [their authority] in perpetuity in perfect accord with the movements of the universe. His majesty the emperor is unrivaled among the nations of the earth, none of whose rulers could make the slightest claim to be his equal. Moreover, since this is accordingly the matrix (oya) of all nations—a land where grain, the thousand things and the myriad doings (chi no mono no yorozu no koto mo) are all superior and auspicious—the sounds of its language are likewise correct and auspicious, far superior to those of other lands. As mentioned before, this land is subservient to kotodama; it is a land where kotodama coincides with the flourishing of the imperial grandeur (itsu) and where the blessing and aid of kotodama are as eternal as heaven and earth. No one will understand this with a smattering of ancient studies. Chirping foreign tongues are all full of turbid (i.e., voiced) sounds and various other impurities, and are utterly base, on par with the calls of birds or insects, or sounds emitted by utensils. The superiority of our divine land’s language to those of foreign countries has already been recognized by Motoori Norinaga in his Kanji san’on kō, and so all would appear to have been said on the correct-

87 In Masazumi’s treatise, where the word appears in kana it is consistently written “kotodama.” While recognizing his dislike of voiced consonants, I have used the more familiar “kotodama” in this translation.
ness or incorrectness of language. But this kotodama shines together with the majesty of the Son of Heaven, which is exalted by the blessing of kotodama and which should not be thought of apart from this revered principle [of kotodama]. Now the ancient language of our divine land includes no improper sounds outside of the fifty syllables. When the twenty voiced sound of the “ka,” “sa,” “ta,” and “ha” lines are added, it comes to seventy syllables, but in the ancient language of our divine land, voiced sounds were altogether few in number, and had correct, prescribed forms. There were no examples of interchanging of voiceless and voiced sounds, and unlike later ages, there was simply no mistaken pronunciation of them. There was no confusion [on this matter], and there was certainly a reason why those voiced sounds always followed the fifty unvoiced sounds.

Now as proof that voiced sounds were prescribed in form and not used indiscriminately, [we see] that all monosyllabic words are unvoiced, as in “ka” (香) and “ki” (木). In disyllabic words, the first syllable is always unvoiced, as the ka of kami (神) or the ki of kimi (君). Trisyllabic and tetrasyllabic words may also be understood according to this [same pattern]. Voiced sounds appear only for euphony in compound words and in the middle or final syllables of disyllabic or trisyllabic words. Now examples of voicing in compound words include [such things as] the provisional voicing of the ka of kawa in yamagawa (山川), or the ki of kiri in asagiri (朝霧). Voicing the in the middle or end of a word is seen in such examples as the ga of naga 長, the ga of nagaru 流, the gi of tagi (瀧), and the gi of kagiru (限).

Now in disyllabic and trisyllabic words—of course, not to mention monosyllabic words—there are no examples in the ancient language of the voicing of the first syllable, and even down to the present age there is not even one instance of it in a hundred in elegant poetic diction. In the tales of the middle [i.e., Heian] period the occasional examples of initials that are supposed to be voiced owe incontrovertibly to the rapidity with which the words of China (Karakuni) and India (Hotokekuni) became acculturated in common speech, and [their voiced initials] were adopted intact. Moreover, such [native] words as gōna 寄居子 (hermit crab), beni 紅 (rouge), or buchi 斑 (speckle) are all vulgarisms of a later period; no such examples are to be found anciently, and these do not amount to sufficient evidence [to the contrary]. Also, there are a few lines in Man'yōshū poems such as “Damuochi ya shika mo na ii so (Donor, don’t say such things),” or “Baramon no tsukureru oda o (The field that the priest made)” which use foreign words with voiced initials, but in the language originally spoken in our divine land, we must suppose that [such sounds] were exceedingly grating on the ears, and that they must have sounded vulgar and loathsome. It only stands to reason that such words ought not to be employed at all in poetic diction. In the Kokinshū those poems [that used such words] are classified as so-called haikai; they now stand out as amusing, and since they were deliberately composed using base words to elicit laughter, they are something quite different from the beautifully composed verses with proper, elegant language. Since verses using vulgar diction were only for momentary amusement, they ought not to be included in respectable collections. That collection [i.e., the Kokinshū] was not originally compiled according to pure [principles]. Yet it was put together as things were heard and seen, and hence it is not particularly blameworthy.

Setting aside for now the matter of foreign

88 In Kanji san’on kō, Norinaga says for example: “Among the myriad things and affairs that are all felicitously of a higher order, it is especially the fact that the sounds of our language are correct and beautiful that is far superior to all lands. Its sounds are pure and clear, like looking up at the sky on a perfectly clear day; there is not a trace of clouds. It is simple and direct, with no bending, and is the sound of pure and true elegance between heaven and earth.” Motoori Norinaga zenshū, ed. Ōno Susumu, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1970), pp. 381-2.

89 The second syllable of taki (waterfall) was voiced in the archaic language.

90 MYS #3847. Damuochi is a transliteration of the Sanskrit dānapati.

91 MYS #3856. Baramon is from the Sanskrit Brāhmaṇa. Here, it has the meaning of “priest.”
words, for present purposes let us establish for the language of our divine land categories consisting of four types and three levels, [the four types being] voiceless, provisionally voiced, voiced, and liquid. Their relative levels of high and low—of superiority and inferiority (尊卑優劣)—are: voiceless = highest; provisionally voiced = middle; voiced and liquid = lowest. [The unvoiced] is placed highest because that corresponds to his august majesty, the Son of Heaven, the middle rank corresponds to counselors, and the lowest rank corresponds to commoners. Now the principle obtains in every land that all things purely resplendent and elegantly correct are revered, but just as the thousand things and myriad doings (ちなものよろずにこと) are not purely resplendent, neither are the sounds of human speech. It stands to reason that if the thousand things and myriad doings were purely resplendent, the sounds of human speech would be also. But in fact, since that [principle] appears to be mysteriously accompanied by the august powers of the imperial deities, [purely resplendent speech] lies all the further beyond the powers of human beings.

The reason why the august Amaterasu Ōmikami identified herself as Tsukisakaki Itsu no Mitama (撫琴木儚之御魂) is because her divine light illumes and penetrates all of heaven and earth, leaving no place untouched. Itsu (儚) is an ancient word referring to the full extent of bright purity and immaculacy. Abiding in the flourishing of the divine light as the progeny of the boundlessly pure Goddess of the Sun, [the Son of Heaven occupies] the imperial throne which is passed on eternally in perfect accord with the movements of heaven and earth, and is the supreme ruler over the myriad lands under heaven. It stands to reason, then, that [even] the various heads of foreign lands should actually be called his subjects and pay him proper obeisance. How much less, then, can those who live in this divine land transgress even for an instant by turning their backs to the imperial court. The pure and noble truth is strikingly apparent that from the beginning of heaven and earth this is the apex of all gatherings, a country of great peace with no trouble in any part. Thus, the bright purity shines forth, and there is neither intimidation nor embellishment of language and flattery.

The Chinese self-importantly refer to the land they rule with such names as “Great Civilization” (華夏)4 or “Middle Kingdom” (中国), and yet even the one there who is pleased to be called the “Son of Heaven” always refers to himself humbly with such terms as “One of little virtue” (不穀) or “Not good” (不穀). That was originally a strategy used to make the people submissive, or to intimidate or flatter them, and it is not pure in spirit. It is an impure practice, and it is important to realize that it produces an effect quite opposite to what is found in our divine land. Now it is true that, since ancient times, our land has occasionally been referred to by such names as “Middle Kingdom” (中国) or “Great Civilization” (華夏), but there were reasons why it was unavoidable, and the occurrences were rare. Since antiquity we have not hesitated to refer to our land by such names as “The Great Eight Islands” (児島) or “The Central Land of the Reed Plain” (阿智河不破), and it was an established practice to call the emperor “Sovereign” (sumera mikoto) or “Great lord” (okimi), though he attempted neither to intimidate the people nor to flatter them. It has become usual in recent ages for those who pursue ancient studies to use such words as “Imperial

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92 This appears to refer to the liquid consonant “r.” In traditional Chinese phonology, bansheyin (半舌音) refers to “r.”

93 This appellation appears only in kan 9 of the Nihon shoki, where Empress Jingū 神功皇后 prayed for seven days and nights in a specially built shrine in order to discover the identity of the deity who had instructed the former sovereign. The answer came: “I am the deity who dwells in the shrine of fifty bells, in the district of Watarai of a hundred legends, in the province of Ise, blown by godly winds (神風伊勢国之百伝度逢). My name is Tsukisakaki-Itsuno-mitama-Amasakuru-Muka-tsu-hime-no-mikoto (撫琴木儚之御魂天孫大 misunder 向津媛命).” Nihon shoki, jō, p. 331.

94 華 means 文華, or “civilization,” while 夏 means “great.”

95 献人, meaning 徳の献 (すく)ない者, was a humble self-appellation used among the Chinese aristocracy. 不穀, also written 不谷, had the meaning of 不善, and was similarly used among the nobility.
Land” (mi-kuni), “Sovereign Land” (sumera mi-kuni), or “Great Sovereign Land” (sumera ō-mi-kuni), but these are unavoidably used in order not to be confused with appellations employed in foreign lands. Those who, lead astray by the theories of later self-styled Confucian scholars, make bold to use such names as Wakoku (倭国) or Nittō (日東) certainly intend to be provocative, but it is not a matter of their disparaging those who are lower since in China they arrogantly call the land they rule Chūka.

Although [we are privileged] to have the august great lord of all nations between heaven and earth, there have always been base types who, collaborating in the evil deeds of wild kami, have impertinently played tricks on his majesty’s court. Hence, there have been times when the august mind of the great lord has been troubled. But is it not marvelous that ultimately [the evil forces] have been overpowered by his great virtue and have perished without a trace? Thus, since it is the great virtue of the Son of Heaven which both illumines and penetrates with pure clarity to the ends of the earth and as far as clouds lying along the distant horizon, as mentioned before the unvoiced “pure” sounds of human language at the highest level belong to him. Therefore, in words ranking at the very top, from ancient times down to the present there was not even one in a hundred that had a voiced sound, and the fact that the emperor occupies an unequaled and august position between heaven and earth has long been obvious through the subtly pure and bright principle of kotodama.

From the Age of the Gods this has been lauded as a land of kotodama, but even those who study antiquity have not been mindful of that; comprehension of ancient language has been understood as proper only to old-fashioned poets or to the writing of prose. Even pronouncements by Shinto scholars give priority to reason, and this shows that bad habits have hardly been eliminated. And that is not all; beneath heaven there are hundreds and thousands of “ways.” It is difficult to determine which is good and which is bad, and so one ought not to make definitive statements. All are accustomed to follow their desired path and to revere their own side exclusively, indiscriminately looking down upon and despising the other side. It is like the proverb “Our family’s buddhas are exalted” (wagaya no hotoke tōtōshi). It is difficult when addressing any matter to divide the superior from the inferior or the noble from the base, but for the Chinese sages to revere their own country and despise others is well suited to their own teachings, and to suppose that such reasoning is correct is the result of weak faith in antiquity and insufficient scholarly mettle.

Beyond the necessary reasoning for what is superior or inferior in anything, of the various countries the only one that is superior and truly correct in everything is [this] divine land. Especially with regard to the sounds of its language, as I have argued in detail above, it is without equal among the nations of the earth and vastly superior to all of them. Even after ten thousand ages it will always be true that the most exalted sounds of language are those that are subtly pure and bright, and this is precisely the same principle whereby the divine imperial light will continue for countless ages, neither diminishing nor weakening. Although language changes continually with each age passing from antiquity to the present, yet what a marvelous and fortunate thing it is that among the highest ranking sounds there is not even one that is voiced. This divine land ranks as both the center (mune) and the head (kashira) of all countries. It is a subtle manifestation of kotodama that everything here, including the grains, is superior to other lands and is auspicious and fine.

Next, provisional voicing is ranked in the middle, and is assigned to retainers. The reason these words are ranked in the middle is that, while they were originally voiceless, they came to be provisionally voiced for euphony in repetition of syllables. It works on the same principle as those holding office in the imperial government who, though of illustrious descent and prospering, having excelled in virtuous deeds, are nevertheless no match for those who have the divine light of the imperial line. Now those who administered in the government anciently included ranks ascending even to the imperial. Even if they later left the

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96 Both of these are names for Japan that were used among the Chinese.
97 谷づゝのさわたるきはみ, a phrase from Man’yōshū no. 800 by Yamanoue no Okura, literally meaning “as far as toads hop.”
imperial ranks, their lines of descent were correct and pure, and it was thus only natural that there should be restrictions making those of other families unworthy to administer. No matter how much time had passed or how much moral virtue they had attained, if they were not of [the privileged] families, they were not able to ascend [to court rank]. However, in later ages, there were some examples of people of uncertain lineage who, taking advantage of the conditions of the times, were able to ascend [to court rank] replacing those who left. Now to begin with, whether for good or bad [purposes], no person [of] another [rank] is worthy to look upon the emperor. One who does not belong to the highest imperial ranks cannot even for one day set the throne at naught, and yet in spite of such strict regulation, those who administer in the government take advantage of the conditions of the times and have occasionally been able to set [the throne] at naught for a period. According to principle, this lies outside the Way and is contrary to righteousness. And yet, the fact that [those ministers] are replaced even within a day makes it evident how unapproachable the imperial line is. Therefore, it stands to reason that if one were even provisionally to voice a sound that is naturally pure and unvoiced, one would be overawed by the divine light. Since it is an unimpeachable principle that the pure unvoiced sounds have ranked supreme from antiquity down to the present and have never been carelessly voiced, [the practice of provisional voicing] may be said to be of the middle rank.

Next are the voiced sounds and liquid sounds, which are found at the lowest rank among the commoners [of the realm]. Now these voiced sounds which rank at the bottom were determined from the beginning to be voiced, and their voiced sounds may include the second syllable, the third syllable, or even several syllables including the final, but not one of them voices the initial syllable. As noted above, it is very obvious that this practice corresponds to that of the commoners. The same is true for liquid sounds. Thus, the frequency with which voiced or liquid initials occur in foreign words [shows that] the leaders of those countries are no different from the commoners of this divine land. Although in our divine land voiced and liquid sounds appear only in the middle or end of a word, in foreign lands no distinction is made between beginning, middle, or end, and thus their rulers rank together with our commoners. Now in language this is a very base [practice], not so very different from the sounds emitted by birds, insects, and objects, and so in the present essay I have ranked it lowest among the beasts. Thus, in such countries as China, where [their leader] pretentiously refers to himself as the “son of heaven” and without equal, when the time [for change] comes and his virtue wanes, his country will be taken by another, and he will be driven out, descending to [the ranks of] the lowest commoners. And when the time comes for one among the ranks of the lowest commoners to rise in power, then that person will take the country, ascend the throne, be revered as its ruler, and proudly call himself the “son of heaven.” That is the usual state of affairs there, but in reality they are unable to distinguish the high from the low [in social classes]. Seen from our perspective, such practices bear little difference from those of the beasts. Thus, along with the bright purity of the imperial line, one should firmly bear in mind the noble principle of kotodama as one looks at the abbreviated charts below.

Charts of the Correct Sounds

Son of Heaven (high rank, unvoiced 清音)

There are no examples of the voiced sounds of the four lines ka, sa, ta, and ha occurring even when these sounds are repeated, as in kaki 香木, and in disyllabic words such as kami 神 or kimi 君, the first syllable is never voiced. Each of these can be understood by analogy. Trisyl-

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98 Somewhat later, Kurosawa Okinamaro would note in his Kotodama no shirube: “There are very few voiced sounds that were anciently not the correct [i.e. unvoiced] sounds, but one after another the numbers of the voiced sounds grew because they were easy to pronounce. But no voiced or liquid sound should come at the beginning of a word, for this is a vulgar sound. Regarding this, one should remember that our imperial land is a land of elegant words.” (p. 62)
labic and tetrasyllabic words are also analogous to these, and it goes without saying that the same applies to ancient words. In later ages down to the present, in elegant poetic diction not one word in a hundred is voiced. Therefore, unvoiced sounds are ranked at the top, and belong to the Son of Heaven.

Counselors (middle rank, provisional voicing 仮濁音)

Syllables of the ka, sa, ta, and ha lines which were originally unvoiced are sometimes provisionally voiced in compound words, which one may know by comparison to such syllables as the ga of yamagawa 山川 or the gi of asagiri 朝霧. Thus, provisional voicing ranks in the middle, and belongs to counselors.

Commoners (low rank, voiced and liquid 濁音・平舌音)

Original voicing of the sounds of the ga, za, da, and ba lines occurs only in the medial and final syllables of words. This can be known by such comparisons as to the ga of nagara 長 or nagaru 流, or the gi of kagiru 限. The five liquid sounds of ra, ri, ru, re, and ro never appear in monosyllabic words. These sounds never occur at the beginning of disyllabic and trisyllabic words, but only in medial or final syllables, which can be seen in such examples as the ra of hara 腹 or haramu 腹 or the ri of chiru 柄 or hirifu (hiryū) 拾. Both voiced and liquid sounds are ranked lowest, and belong to the commoners.

Having understood the above three types and distinguished the high and low ranking, when one attempts to recite the ancient language the passages are smooth, none cause doubt, and all are pure and correct. Now the language of our divine land consists of fifty syllables arranged by phonemes vertically and horizontally in five rows and ten columns with no disorder. Since those sounds are simple and elegantly correct, they do not merge with each other to create confusion. Myriad words are created when they are inflected according to [sense] or when they are expanded or contracted, and yet there are no words for which these fifty syllables are insufficient. Neither is there any surfeit; not one [syllable] could be deleted or added. All of the correct sounds for human beings are provided therein. One should understand that apart from these fifty syllables, all sounds are foreign lands and belong to the same category as the sounds of birds, insects, and utensils; they are both incorrect and base. When one understands this principle one can rest easy, because there is no need to borrow foreign [models] of phonology or Siddham [characters].

In all foreign lands, they have the practice of stating principles in a pretentious and complicated manner, and thus will apply phonology to such things as the five pitches, the five elements, the five directions, and the five changes of seasons. They become

99 The study of Sanskrit and Siddham script (Shittangaku) grew in Tang dynasty China along with the rise of Esoteric Buddhism, and was furthered in Japan by the Tendai monks Annen 安然 (841?-915?) and Myōgaku 明覚 (1056-?), whose respective works Shittanzō 悉発藏 (880) and Shittan yōketsu 悉発要訣 (1101) are widely regarded as contributing to the idea of the fifty syllables.

100 The “five pitches” are the five notes in the Chinese pentatonic scale: gong 宫 (do), shang 商 (re), jiao 角 (mi), zhi 徵 (sol), and yu 羽 (la). The “five elements” were wood 木, fire 火, earth 土, metal 金, and water 水, which were thought to generate each other in cyclical fashion. The “five directions” were east, west, north, south, and center. The “five changes of seasons” included the
lost in their explanations of these and various other
details. It is an extraordinary misunderstanding for
them to think of the sounds of [the language of]
China as the “sound of civilization” (kaon 華音),
and of the sounds of [the language of] our divine
land as “shrike tongues” (gekizetsu 賤舌).101

Now the principle of the simplicity and correct-
ness of sound is not to be found anywhere in the
world outside of our divine realm. What kind of
delusion is it to forget all of that and incline one’s
heart to foreign lands? Distinguishing among the
three applications of language described above,
one should also understand that the human lan-
guage transmitted from the Age of the Gods is su-
perior and noble. Those three types do not go
outside the fifty [syllables]; that which goes be-
yond the fifty [syllables] is the language of for-
eigners, the sounds of which are like birds, insects,
and objects, and one should realize that [those
sounds] are base. This is because outside of the
fifty [syllables] base and confused sounds are
mixed in and it is disagreeably complex; because it
is disagreeably complex, all kinds of detailed
meanings are established [so that] things can be
said pretentiously. Certain people think that the
chart of the fifty syllables was created [on the
model of] the Siddham alphabet, that [such an
idea] did not originally exist in our divine land,
and that it was only after this chart existed that we rea-
alyzed the wondrous effect of [our] language. This
is really absurd. The chart of the fifty sounds was
[indeed] modeled after that alphabet, but it does not transcribe the sounds of that country. Since

101 In the “God of Agriculture” 神農 section of the “Duke Wen of Teng” 聶文公篇 chapter of
Mencius, Mencius uses this description of foreign
tongues where he berates a man named Xu Xing
for abandoning the teachings he had received:
“Now some tribesman with a twittering shrike’s
tongue comes from the south condemning the Way
of the ancient emperors, and you turn against your
teacher and go to study with him.” (今也南蠻鴂舌
之任，非先王之道；子倍子之師而學之)
Mencius, tr. David Hinton (Washington: Counter-
point, 1998), p. 94.

there were fifty of those sounds, [the chart] is natu-
really suited to the correct sounds of our divine land,
and thus in the ancient language there are no incor-
correct sounds that go beyond the fifty [syllables].
Since that ought to be well known to anyone who
is familiar with the wondrous effects of the ancient
language, it goes without saying. If all of us had
merely imitated others, then wouldn’t we be mix-
ing incorrect sounds [in our speech], just like for-

Charts of the In-
correct Sounds
Birds and Beasts
(voiced sounds
濁音)

All words con-
sisting of one
syllable are voice-
ed, and words of
two or three syll-
ables voice the
initial syllable,
which is the voice
of foreign words
as well as the
sound of flutes and drums. It is found in the likes
of the cry of birds and insects, but never in the lan-
guage of our divine land. Thus, anciently when
they heard the language of foreigners, they called it
“Korean chirping” (Kara saezuri), or they said
“How they chirp, these Chinese” (saizuru ya Ka-
ra).102 This was because their language was base
and difficult to understand, and only sounded like
the chirping of birds. The next lowest all take
after this, and thus these voiced sounds now belong
to the birds and beasts.

102 This description appears in the “Bidatsu
Tennō ki” 敏達天皇紀 chapter (kan 20) of the
Nihon shoki, where an imperial envoy to Paekche
was able to understand a Korean woman’s “chirped”
words. (Nihon shoki, ge, pp. 142-3.) In
later poetry, saizuru ya became a pillow word
associated with China or Korea (cf. MYS no. 3886:
... saizuru ya / Kara usu ni tsuki ...).
Birds and Beasts (palatalized/labio-velarized sounds 拗音)

The top row shows open palatalized sounds (開口拗音) for the “a” line while the bottom row shows labio-velarized sounds (合口拗音) for the “a” line. There are various other details [not illustrated here], but in general the language of our divine land is only simple and straightforward, containing no palatalized or labio-velarized sounds. Now such sounds are found only in foreign languages and in [the noises] of birds, insects, and instruments; even in later ages, not one of these sounds was combined in elegant poetic diction. Even in books of the middle period, the palatalized or labio-velarized readings of Chinese characters were frequently converted to “true” sounds 真音. [For example,] byōsha “sick person” 病者 was read bōza パウザ, zuryō “provincial governor” 受領 was read zurō ズラウ, shukuse “fate” 宿世 was read sukuse スクセ, jūsha “follower” 従者 was read zusu ズサ, shijō “reception” 祗承 was read shizō シゾウ, and so forth. This was because palatalized/labio-velarized sounds were so unlike the language of our divine land. Therefore, they belong to the birds and beasts.

Birds and Beasts (closed finals 関口音)

These are the so-called “closing kana” (hanekana 跳仮字). skritists generally call these “empty marks” 空点, and indicate them by placing a circle at the head of the Sanskrit letter. Now the sound “n” does not belong in the five rows or ten columns, and is an independent sound. None of the [other] sounds are produced with the mouth closed, but only this “n” is pronounced with the mouth completely closed, and it is entirely a nasal sound. Thus, this sound is also classed together with foreign words and the sounds of birds, insects, and instruments, and is incorrect. In the ancient age, this sound was never combined with words. Such practices as pronouncing omina 女 as onna ランナ, kamukaze 神風 as kankaze カンカゼ, or nemokoro 懇 as nengoro ネンゴロ are euphonic adaptations dating from the move to the present capital, and do not belong to the ancient age. Also, such words as minu (見), kikamu (聞), yukamu (行), or komu (來) are all now pronounced min, kikan, yukan, and kon, but anciently they all definitely ended with mu. Thus, when reciting ancient texts, the sound of this syllabic “n” should not be mixed in. Thus, closed finals belong to the birds and beasts.

Birds and Beasts (liquid sounds 半舌音)

The five sounds ra, ri, ru, re, and ro are not used in monosyllabic words [of the Yamato language]; neither are they used in the first syllable of disyllabic or trisyllabic words. That is found only in foreign words, and in the sounds of birds, insects, and instruments. Thus, these liquid sounds also belong to the birds and beasts.

Birds and Beasts (repeated voiced sounds 極濁音)

This voicing is not limited to monosyllabic words, but also extends to disyllabic and trisyllabic words which begin with a voiced sound. As stated previously, this is not found in the ancient language. Even if voicing occurs in medial or final syllables, there are no ex-
amples of repeated voicing. Thus, such current pronunciations as *tabibito* or *Ujigawa* are in error, and one must realize that this is also found only in foreign words and the sounds of birds, insects, and instruments. Therefore, repeated voicing also belongs to the birds and beasts.

**Birds and Beasts ("semi-voiced" sounds 半濁音)**

These sounds are halfway between the voiceless and voiced sounds of *ha*, *hi*, *fu*, *he*, and *ho*, and are produced by [closing the mouth] as if to make a voiced sound but then producing a voiceless plosive with the lips. These are known as “semi-voiced” sounds 半濁音. In China, this sound is also thought to be voiceless. These sounds include the *pa* of *keppatsu* 結髪, the *pi* of *kippi* 桔皮, and the *pu* of *happu* 髢膚. These appear only in the vulgar language of later ages, in military writings, and in the glossed readings of Chinese books with such words as *nanpito* or *appare*, but it is hardly necessary to mention that in the *waka* poetry books even of the present age one does not find a single example. These must be classed along with doubled consonants (急切音) and closed finals (閉口音). Because anciently there were no such incorrect sounds as doubled consonants or the syllabic “*n*,” neither was there any “semi-voiced” sound. It is clearly derived from the above incorrect sounds [of doubled consonants and syllabic “*n*”]. Thus, the “semi-voiced” sound also is one of foreign words, birds, insects, and instruments, and belongs to the birds and beasts.

Birds and Beasts (doubled consonants 急切音)

When the entering tone (入声) of the sounds *fu*, *tsu*, *ku*, *chi*, and *ki* are doubled—as in *fukki* “wealth and fame” 富貴, *keppatsu* “hairdressing” 結髪, *akkō* “slander” 恶口, *kissō* “propitious sign” 吉祥, or *sekkō* “barnacle” 石花—where *fu*, *ketsu*, *aku*, *kichi*, and *seki* are always shortened to *fukk-, kepp-, akk-, kissh-, and sekk*.

As for the reading of the character, this was always limited to the entering tone. In the language of later ages, this was not limited to the entering tone, but there are frequent other examples, such as *matto* for *mahito* 真人, *otto* for *ohito* 夫, *notto* for *norito* 祝詞, or *hossu* for *horisu* 欲. This belongs only to the vulgar language of later ages, or to the glossed readings of such things as Chinese books, and was not used in the ancient language. Even well into the middle period, it was not found in elegant language. Even in the present age, not a single [instance of this practice] is found in such things as *waka* poetry books, and so [the incorrectness of] it does not need elaboration. Thus, these doubled consonants may also be likened to the sounds of foreign words, birds, insects, and instruments, and belong to the birds and beasts.

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104 While modern research in historical linguistics does corroborate many of Masazumi’s arguments, it does not support this one. Most linguists are convinced that anciently the initial consonant of the *ha* line was some kind of bilabial sound, some even arguing that it was a *pa* line. Samuel E. Martin, in his *The Japanese Language Through Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 10-13, argues that a *fa* line coexisted with a *pa* line. More recently, Marc Hideo Miyake, in his *Old Japanese: A Phonetic Reconstruction* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 164-66, maintains that this sound was a voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop, closer to “*p*” than to other sounds that have been suggested.

105 In modern terminology, doubling of consonants is referred to as sokuon 促音. *Nisshō* 入声 refers to one of the four tones in classical Chinese phonology which, significantly for the present discussion, always ended with *p*, *t*, or *k.*
Military Reform and the Illusion of Social Mobility in Bakumatsu-era Chōshū*

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In the sixth month of 1866, a peculiar battle took place outside the village of Ōno, as this hamlet located on the border between Chōshū and Hiroshima domains suddenly became center stage for the opening act of Chōshū’s rebellion against the Tokugawa shogunate. Although this battle may have seemed unremarkable when compared to the more dramatic events of the campaign, it stood out for two reasons. First, the day’s fighting ended with a Tokugawa victory—a rare event in the war that ultimately toppled the shogunate. But the battle was remarkable in another respect: during at least one point in the firefight, neither of the forces engaged was composed of hereditary warriors.¹

To grapple with the deteriorating political climate of the 1860s, the shogunate and a number of domains used the inherent flexibility of the Tokugawa status system to recruit front-line soldiers who were not of warrior status. During the shogunate’s 1866 war against Chōshū domain, peasant conscripts from the Kantō region formed the backbone of the Tokugawa army. Many of these commoner soldiers were veterans who had seen service in Mito domain during the shogunate’s suppression of the Tengū Insurrection in 1864. By the same token, Chōshū forces consisted primarily of several hundred troopers from the famous mixed units, or shotai (諸隊), many of which permitted warriors and commoners to serve side-by-side; they also included between three and four infantry companies composed of outcasts. Beginning in 1865, Chōshū’s leaders recruited more than four hundred outcasts to serve in the ranks of the mixed units. This decision demonstrated the lengths to which Chōshū was willing to go in order to maximize its available manpower. Of the domains that made major military recruitment efforts, it appears that only Chōshū organized all-outcaste combat units.²

While the domain’s decision to employ outcasts as fighting men was unparalleled at the time, the experience of outcaste soldiers was in many ways typical of the men caught up in the military reforms of the Restoration era, whether those men were menial warriors, peasants, townsmen, or outcasts. The military reform efforts conducted by the shogunate and several domains during the 1860s sought to widen the pool of available manpower by recruiting men on the social margins. From the perspective of those in power, warrior menials and commoners, among others, represented a more pliable option than the warriors in the shogunal and domain armies because they lacked a vested interest in the organizational status quo. For higher-ranking warriors, on the other hand, rank and unit affiliation were more than occupational concerns; they also determined warriors’ position within the retainer band. As such, the reform of existing military organizations portended a potentially serious restructuring of the warrior elite—one that domain authorities were eager to avoid.

Chōshū’s auxiliary units have received significantly more scholarly attention than other experiments undertaken in this era of widespread military reform. Historians of the Bakumatsu era in particular have treated the shotai as a microcosm of the motivations at work within Chōshū in the 1860s, and by extension, in the Meiji Restoration. This perspective pervaded the work of prominent post-

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¹ This essay uses the term “warrior” to refer collectively to men who could claim some status as arms-bearers, and “samurai” to refer only to the high-ranking “full samurai” (士) who might enjoy drastically different privileges, responsibilities, and compensation from lower-ranking ashigaru (足軽), or foot soldiers, and warrior menials (武家奉公人) like chūgen (中間), who performed a wide variety of tasks.

² Inoue Kiyoshi provides a valuable overview of a variety of efforts to recruit commoners during the Bakumatsu era. Inoue Kiyoshi, Nihon no gunkokushugi (Tokyo: Gendai Hyōronsha, 1975), 1:98-139.
war Marxist scholars like Tōyama Shigeki and Inoue Kiyoshi, who argued (albeit along different lines from one another) that the genesis of the shotai provided a window into the tensions and contradictions that would characterize the modern Japanese state. They were thus much more likely to concur with E.H. Norman in viewing units like Chōshū’s Kiheitai (奇兵隊) as a bridge to the modern Japanese military:

The Kiheitai of Chōshū…. is an interesting transitional type, containing in it the seeds of the armies of the early Meiji era, when all four classes were regarded as equal in status and when the government army recruited from all four classes routed the old samurai armies of feudal reaction…

This point is echoed in Edward Drea’s recent history of the modern Japanese army, which also views the shotai as the primary progenitors of the modern Japanese army. For these scholars,

3 For Tōyama and E.H. Norman, mixed-status units like the Kiheitai represented a domanial effort to co-opt the revolutionary energy of the peasantry—an approach continued by the Meiji government in the years after the Restoration. Later Marxist scholars approached the issue differently. Inoue Kiyoshi—and later, Tanaka Akira—viewed the shotai as products of a "middle-class ethno-nationalist" (中間層民族主義) movement, in which low-ranking warriors and well-to-do commoners partnered with one another for the cause of barbarian expulsion. Both of these scholars also viewed the shotai as essentially transitional, incorporating both progressive and “feudal” elements.


5 Edward Drea, Japan’s Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 1-9. Although Drea does treat the Kiheitai as a point of origin for the modern Japanese army, his critical analysis of its military capabilities represents a welcome departure from the often-laudatory assessments of its performance.


point. By juxtaposing the Kiheitai with the Ishindan (維新団), an all-outcaste unit organized in 1865—and one unit among many in a broad-based military reform effort that incorporated hunters, Shinto priests, outcasts, and other liminal status groups—it becomes evident that the domain’s military reforms were intended primarily to use the inherent flexibility of the status system to address manpower needs in wartime, and were thus not aimed at implementing a more egalitarian vision of military service. In this respect, while the outward appearance of Chōshū’s military reforms seemed to distinguish the domain from its contemporaries, it had far more in common with the other reformist polities of the era than is typically acknowledged.8

This essay aims to connect scholarship on military reform with the resurgence of interest in the status system. Recent works of historical scholarship have advanced a more nuanced understanding of the fundamental—and often complex—role of status in Tokugawa society, which “…permeated and shaped virtually every aspect of the social formation…”9 While earlier conceptions of the status system stressed its supposedly static and quadripartite character, a notion echoed in Tokugawa-period Neo-Confucian discourse, the situation on the ground was often significantly more complex. More often than not, occupation rather than heredity determined where individuals fit into the status hierarchy; thus, changes in occupation could allow individuals to achieve a small measure of social mobility, though this was often only temporary.10 The warrior estate was no exception. In Chōshū, while some men of menial chūgen status had hereditary rank, many others who were employed in the domain’s provincial administration were commoners, and the terms of their employment differed little from that of paid laborers.11

When military recruiting became a pressing concern in the 1860s, the shogunate and reformist domains were able to use the flexibility in the status system to their benefit, as they promised volunteers a range of status-based incentives for enlisting. In Tokugawa vassal lands (旗本知行地) in the Kantō region, peasants answered the shogunate’s call for conscripts not only for the signing bonus, but also for the prospect of promotion to menial warrior status.12 In Chōshū, commoner volunteers were often permitted to comport themselves as warriors by exercising the right to surname and sword (名字帯刀) for the duration of their service. Outcasts who enlisted were promised a similarly status-appropriate reward: the legal abrogation of their status (穢多之名目被差除).13 Temporary status promotion was also a common recruitment tool in domains that did not anticipate using commoners in front-line service. Mito, Hiroshima, Tosa, and Wakayama domains, for instance, created peasant militias charged with coastal defense; their militiamen were permitted the right to surname and sword while on duty.14 In this respect, Satsuma, despite its reputation as a reformist domain, proved (as usual) to be a significant exception to the trends of military reform. Rather than seek new sources of manpower, the domain simply mobilized its large population of rusticated warriors (郷士 or 外城士), many of whom made their actual livelihood as agriculturalists, but who outnumbered castle warriors by a ten-to-one margin.15

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8 For instance, a number of domains—including Mito, Obama, Kokura, Tosa, Geishū (Hirosima), and Chōshū—organized commoner militias for coastal defense. However, although some of these units saw combat, many were little more than ill-equipped neighborhood watch organizations. Inoue, 98-112.


10 David Howell, Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 34.


14 Inoue, 99-104.

When viewed in this light, late-Tokugawa military reforms that led to the creation of non-traditional units were more often than not stopgap measures—not intentional repudiations of the status system. As the military crisis surrounding the 1868 Meiji Restoration began to abate, outcaste and commoner volunteers were the first to be disbanded. Moreover, the temporary social advancement secured by individual soldiers was soon effaced by the legal abolition of status distinctions in the early Meiji period. Simply put, while the stretching of status boundaries greatly facilitated the shogunate and domains’ ability to carry out military reforms, the apparent social mobility offered to volunteers was transitory in most cases and largely illusory in many others, as in the case of Chōshū’s outcaste soldiers.

Military Reform in the Bakumatsu Era

The inclusion of commoners and outcastes in the ranks of late Tokugawa military units was a consequence of a half-century of heightened concern for the protection of shogunal and domainal territory from foreign incursion. For most of the eighteenth century, military concerns had remained peripheral for both central and regional authorities in Japan. However, the situation changed as Euro-American imperial powers began expanding their reach into East Asia. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, scholars like Hayashi Shihei urged the shogunate and domains to strengthen coastal defense (海防). The point was driven home by the infamous Phaeton incident of 1808, when the eponymous British frigate raided the Dutch factory in Nagasaki. After infiltrating the harbor under Dutch colors, the British abducted two of the Dutch traders and extorted provisions from local officials. The incident so embarrassed the officials charged with the port’s security that the Nagasaki magistrate committed ritual suicide. In the wake of the Phaeton debacle, the shogunate and southwestern coastal domains—especially Fukuoka and Saga, who were charged with the security of Nagasaki harbor—expended a great deal of effort and resources to upgrade existing coastal artillery batteries and construct new ones. Concerns over defense intensified in the two decades following the First Opium War (1840-1842) between Great Britain and Qing-dynasty China, as efforts to strengthen coastal defense were subsumed under the rubric of military reform (軍政改革).

Although shogunal and domainal authorities continued to concern themselves with the construction of shore batteries, their attention began to turn to the creation of new kinds of military units capable of deploying updated weaponry in battle. In most cases, reform efforts took place with the guidance of instructors associated with Takashima-ryū (高島流) musketry and gunnery (砲術), a putatively “Western” style that incorporated Dutch flintlock muskets, artillery, and tactics in its lessons, whereas most contemporary schools continued to stress the use of older matchlock muskets.

Although influential Takashima-ryū instructors eagerly conflated their school with Dutch military science—to the point of encouraging its designation as “the Western School” (西洋流)—its pedagogy changed regularly and often significantly in the twenty years between the school’s founding in the 1830s and the tumultuous 1860s. What began as a local offshoot of more traditional Ogino-ryū (荻野流) musketry eventually morphed into a widely patronized school dedicated to advancing Westernizing military reforms. An 1841 demonstration before the senior councilors (老中) proved impressive enough that the shogunate not only permitted Takashima-ryū instructors to seek domainal patrons, but also took steps toward patronizing the school on its own.

During the 1840s, most efforts to adopt Takashima-ryū as the basis for far-reaching military reforms met with failure. Would-be reformers found themselves in conflict with those who stood to lose from change—particularly Japanese mus-

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masonry schools (和流) that feared a loss of influence as a result of the move towards Western-style drill with flintlock muskets, instead of the traditional emphasis on individual marksmanship. In Chōshū, for instance, warriors who had trained under Takashima-ryū instructors advocated its adoption, but the domain made no official move to patronize the school. However, after the shogunate’s embarrassing failure to present a credible military threat during the visit of American Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854, Takashima-ryū enjoyed a resurgence in popularity. The shogunate charged Takashima-ryū instructors with retraining bannermen (旗本) and housemen (御家人) at its new Martial Arts Academy (講武所) in Edo. Chōshū authorities sent dozens of men to study under Takashima-ryū instructors in Edo and Nagasaki. In 1859, Yamada Matasuke, one of the domain’s high-ranking officials, proposed the complete reorganization of the retainer band into Western-style infantry companies. But in Chōshū, as elsewhere in Tokugawa Japan, warriors’ rank and affiliation represented more than their role in the domain army; it also defined their status within the retainer band. For many within the domain, Yamada’s proposal was a bridge too far; vehement opposition forced the daimyō, Mōri Takachika, to order the abandonment of any radical restructuring. A similar fate soon befell the shogunate’s Martial Arts Academy. In 1858, an inspector (目付) charged with reviewing the academy offered a rather critical assessment of warriors’ enthusiasm for Western drill, and by 1860 Japanese musketry and archery instructors had bowed their way into the curriculum, where they held a great deal of influence until the Bunkyū (1861-1864) military reforms.

In the early 1860s, military reforms moved beyond early Takashima-ryū efforts to introduce new technology and techniques into existing units, and into thoroughgoing attempts to create Western-style rifle companies. On one hand, these efforts were partly a reflection of the deteriorating domestic political situation. As domains competed with one another and the shogunate for the attentions of a politically revitalized imperial court, open conflict between two or more parties became increasingly likely. On the other hand, the military reforms conducted by the shogunate and reformist domains like Satsuma and Chōshū were also prompted by foreign considerations. For the shogunate, then under the leadership of Fukui daimyō Matsudaïrō Shungaku, the decision to create a Western-style force composed largely of peasant conscripts was motivated by a desire to have not only a force capable of subduing domestic opponents, but also one that could bolster Tokugawa legitimacy in the eyes of foreign powers. For Chōshū, the military reforms that led to the creation of non-warrior units were the direct result of engagements between the domain and Western nations.

New Wars, New Soldiers

Chōshū fought a number of small engagements with European and American naval detachments between 1863 and 1864, as imperial loyalists within the domain government seized upon a foreigner expulsion edict (攘夷令) issued by the Kyoto court in late 1862 that the shogunate had mistakenly regarded as pro forma. In three separate incidents during the summer of 1863, Chōshū’s coastal batteries fired upon foreign ships traveling through the Shimonoseki Straits. Reprisals by American and French naval vessels annihilated Chōshū’s fledgling navy and routed the men manning its coastal batteries. This display of unpreparedness 260. The revamped curriculum even included inu-ōmono (犬追物), or archery practice on moving canine targets.


23 Furukawa Kaoru, Bakumatsu Chōshū han no jōi sensō: Ōbei rengō kantai no shūrai, Chūkō
shocked domain authorities into action. Soon after the French attack on Chōshū’s shore batteries the domain recalled Takasugi Shinsaku from internal exile and appointed him to the command of the defenses along the Shimonoseki Straits. Takasugi came from a high-ranking samurai family and had studied both at the domain school, the Meirinkan (明倫館), as well as Yoshida Shōin’s school, the Shōka Sonjuku (松下村塾). In 1862, Takasugi had received domain permission to travel to Shanghai, where he witnessed firsthand the powerlessness of Qing authorities at the hands of Western empires and Taiping rebels. The experience made him a convert to the anti-foreign cause, and he engaged in a variety of anti-Tokugawa and anti-foreign activities before his return to Chōshū and exile in 1863.

While some accounts of the Kiheitai’s creation paint Takasugi as a visionary, the unit is best understood as one of many auxiliary forces designed to augment the domain army’s capability during a time of crisis. As Takasugi’s petition to the domain government put it:

There are [two kinds] of soldiers: regulars and irregulars. There are [two kinds] of battles: [battles of] deception, and [battles of] truth. One can secure victory by knowing one’s force. Regulars face the enemy with massive force—they meet truth with truth. Units like the eight divisions (八組) led by the chief magistrate (総奉行) are regulars. What we want to organize is [a unit] that will penetrate the gaps in the enemy masses, harassing them by disappearing and reappearing as if by magic (神出鬼没). Because they will use unorthodox methods to secure victory, they will be called the Irregulars (奇兵隊).24

Takasugi went on to state that his Kiheitai would welcome volunteers regardless of rank, but with language specifically describing the recruitment of warriors, noting that they would be selected “without distinguishing between rear vassals, foot soldiers, or domain samurai (陪臣輕卒藩士を不選同様相交り).”25 The petition made no specific mention of recruiting commoners, let alone outcastes.

While several accounts of Bakumatsu-era Chōshū portray the Kiheitai as the direct antecedent of the conscript army of Meiji, it is better understood as a warrior auxiliary unit that incorporated progressively larger numbers of commoners.26 The initial decision to permit the recruitment of commoners was motivated partly by Takasugi’s desire to secure the financial backing of wealthy Shimonoseki merchants like Shiraishi Sei’ichirō.27 Many of the earliest commoner volunteers were men of mercantile background connected to Shiraishi and his confederates.28 Although commoners eventually made up more than half of the Kiheitai, they most likely accounted for fewer than one-third of the unit’s troopers through the end of 1864.29 The percentage of commoners serving in the ranks increased significantly in early 1865 when the Kiheitai and other mixed units conscripted peasants in their rebellion against conservatives in the domain government. However, the seemingly egalitarian recruiting procedures of the Kiheitai did not extend to outcasts, who were not permitted to join at any point in the unit’s six-year existence. In fact, in an 1865 letter to two of his junior officers, Ōta Ichinoshin and Yamagata Aritomo, Takasugi advocated excluding outcasts “for the time being.”29 While the letter does not reveal the logic behind this decision, Tejima Kazuo has argued that Takasugi may have viewed outcasts as less than fully Japanese, and thus a hindrance to achieving the


24 Suematsu, 1:454. The title of the Kiheitai refers to Sunzi’s distinction between “regular” (set) and “irregular” (ki) forces.

25 Ibid.
26 Norman, 30.
28 Craig, 270-281.
29 Tejima Kazuo, “Kiheitai ni okeru ‘eta’ gunji tōyō no igi: Takasugi Shinsaku no kyōheiron,” Buraku mondai kenkyū, no. 111 (May 1995), 58. In fact, the Sharpshooters (狙撃隊) summarily executed a shrine attendant (宮番)—also outcastes in Chōshū—for attempting to join the unit while pretending to be a peasant.
ethnic unity he thought would be necessary for dealing effectively with foreign powers.\textsuperscript{30}

Despite the prominent position of the Kiheitai in many narratives of the Bakumatsu era, it was only one of a dozen similar units.\textsuperscript{31} Domain authorities granted Takasugi permission to form the Kiheitai in the sixth month of 1863. At that time, they also allowed the creation of several other volunteer auxiliary units. At nearly five hundred men—to the Kiheitai’s three hundred—the largest of these was the Yūgekitai (遊撃隊), later known as the Yūgekigun (遊撃軍), which had originally been created to accompany the domain heir on a procession to Kyoto. Composed largely of menial warriors such as chu-gen and ashigaru, the Yūgekitai became an umbrella unit for several smaller outfits. Many of these units were formed on a voluntary basis by liminal status groups: a group of ikkō Buddhist monks formed the Vajra Platoon (金剛隊); a group of Shintō priests formed the Divine Power Platoon (神威隊); a group of fifty wrestlers formed the Brave Wrestler Platoon (勇力隊), which was at one time commanded by Itō Hirobumi; and a small group of hunters formed a unit of sharpshooters.\textsuperscript{32} For the most part, however, each of these units furnished fewer than fifty fighting men.

Whether dealing with warriors, commoners, or Buddhist monks, domain authorities took great pains to minimize any potential social disruptions. The mixed unit regulations issued in the twelfth month of 1863 imposed stringent restrictions on the enlistment of samurai men. Heads of household (本人) and heirs (嫡子) from high-ranking households were only permitted to enlist if they received express permission from shotai commanders. Samurai serving in the domain army were allowed to join up provided that they found suitable substitutes for themselves. The same scrutiny extended to commoners. Only peasants and townspeople who had no domestic or occupational responsibilities were permitted to enlist in the mixed units. However, as the “examination” (詮議) intended to verify the status of commoners consisted of a single short form to be completed by a town magistrate (町奉行) or rural intendant (代官), it seems likely that any clever commoner could talk his way into one of the shotai.

Not all of the auxiliary units created by Chōshū were composed of marginal men and relations between units were sometimes tense. The Vanguards (先鋒隊) consisted entirely of volunteers from among the ranks of the high-ranking mounted warriors who formed the daimyō’s bodyguard (馬廻). As these men lacked any significant status-based incentive for volunteering, it is possible that political factionalism within the domain—in this case, the desire not to be outdone by the loyalist-leaning Kiheitai—led high-ranking samurai to join another unit, the Senpōtai.\textsuperscript{34} Unlike the troopers in the Kiheitai and the Yūgekitai, the all-samurai Senpōtai was only obligated to obey orders from the domain elders. And unlike many of the other mixed units, they were not required to train in Western-style infantry tactics. In other words, their chain of command never overlapped with those of any other mixed units. Relations between the Senpōtai and other less pedigreed units were rocky from the start. Tensions finally boiled over in the eighth month of 1863, when the Kiheitai and Senpōtai engaged in a drunken brawl during a visit by the domain’s heir.\textsuperscript{35} It appeared that not all of the warrior troopers in Chōshū’s auxiliary units were enthusiastic about fighting next to commoners.

Recruiting Outcastes

In the same year that Chōshū permitted the creation of the Kiheitai and other mixed units, Yo-

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 76-78.

\textsuperscript{31} Tanaka, appendix 2. According to Tanaka Akira’s estimate, the Kiheitai accounted for just one-quarter of Chōshū auxiliaries at its high-water mark in the twelfth month of 1863. After major military reforms were undertaken in 1865, the Kiheitai’s size declined precipitously relative to the domain’s overall manpower.

\textsuperscript{32} “Kijima Matabei, Kusaka Yoshisuke [Genzui], jōkyō otomo ni tsuki yūgekitai toritate ôsetsuke no koto,” in Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin, 6:76.

\textsuperscript{33} “Yūgekitai sono hoka shotai kisoku, ninzū sadame no koto;” in Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin, 6:87-89.

\textsuperscript{34} Craig, 209.

\textsuperscript{35} Tanaka, 23-27.
Shida Toshimaro (Eitarō), a minor official in the
domain’s administration, proposed tapping a hitherto
unexploited pool of manpower: outcasts. Toshimaro was
born into a low-ranking foot soldier household. In fact, the family’s status was so low
that one of his patrons in the domain government
once derisively referred to him as “the gatekeeper’s
cid” （門番の子）． At the age of sixteen, he en-
rolled at the Shōka Sonjuku of Yoshida Shōin (no
relation), where he met the men who would later
lead the domain in its rebellion against the shogun-
ate, including Maebara Issei, Yamagata Aritomo,
and Itō Hirobumi. In fact, Toshimaro earned a
place among the so-called “Four Heavenly Kings”
（四天王） of Shōin’s school, a group that included
Takasugi Shinsaku, Kusaka Genzui, and Iriye Ki-
chi.

In early 1863, Toshimaro sent a proposal to the
domain government advocating the recruitment of
outcaste soldiers for military service. Volunteers
would be rewarded with the legal abrogation of
their outcaste status. The date of the petition’s
composition is unclear; however, according to
Nunobiki Toshio, the leading historian of Chōshū’s
outcaste military units, it was likely composed
sometime between the third and fifth months of
1863—before the formation of the Kiheitai. 37
While the original text of the memorial is no longer
extant, in a subsequent letter Toshimaro recom-
manded the recruitment of outcasts for two rea-
sons. First, they represented a more reliable source
of manpower than masterless warriors （浪人） and
other transients（浮食之徒）． Second, recruiting
outcasts instead of peasants would prevent disrup-
tion of the agricultural base of the domain．38 Both
36 Nunobiki Toshio, Chōshū-han Ishindan:
Meiji Ishin no suheijiku (Osaka: Kaihō Shup-
pansha, 2009), 54.
37 Ibid., 62-66. Nunobiki’s work represents the
most complete appraisal of the Ishindan and other
outcaste units. However, it is primarily concerned
with the significance of these units vis-à-vis the
outcaste community in Chōshū, and less occupied
with their place in the history of military reform
and the status system.
38 “Toyū toritate ni kansuru Yoshida Eitarō
shokan danpen,” in Nunobiki, Chōshū-han Ishin-
dan, 184-187.

of these points make it clear that Toshimaro saw
the recruitment of outcaste soldiers as a means of
augmenting the domain’s military power without
undermining its economic and social stability.

The domain government responded positively
to Toshimaro’s recommendation. In the seventh
month of 1863, Toshimaro was given a temporary
promotion to higher rank （土御扉） and responsibil-
ity for overseeing the recruitment of outcaste sol-
diers with an eye toward using them in the field．39
Just three days later, the Yamaguchi town magis-
trate issued a call for volunteers to outcaste com-
munities both within the town and in villages
throughout the domain．40 The document began by
referencing Chōshū’s enforcement of the imperial
expulsion order, then moved quickly into a call for
soldiers—a not-so-subtle suggestion that outcasts
who volunteered on the domain’s behalf would see
front-line service against its foreign enemies.
Young men from outcaste communities were to be
recruited up to a maximum of five men per one
hundred homes; recruitment beyond this total was
strictly forbidden. The pronouncement listed four
criteria that potential volunteers would be required
to meet: strength （強壮）, bravery （勇気）, agility
（早道）, and quick wits （才知）． Those who served
the domain faithfully would earn the right to com-
port themselves as menial warriors by wearing
warrior over-garments （胴服） and a single short
sword; they could also earn abrogation of their
outcaste status （穢多之名目被差除）．41

But the call for volunteers provided no detail as
to how the post-service abrogation of outcasts’
legal status would be carried out, posing a potential
problem for domain authorities and the outcasts
themselves. Sheding the derogatory label of “out-
caste” may have represented a step forward, but it
meant little in practice if emancipated individuals
remained in their communities and plied the same
trades. The rewards outlined in the pronouncement
suggest that the domain may have planned to or-
ganize outcaste soldiers into a new status category
39 “Yoshida Toshimaro toyū toritatekata hiki-
uke ni shite kengi ōsetsuke no koto,” in Yama-
guchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin, 6:49.
40 “Kaki no uchi kyōkō no mono ra sashimenji
no koto,” in Ibid., 6:50.
41 Ibid., 6:50.
among the ranks of warrior menials, in much the same way the shogunate did with its commoner conscripts. Toshimaro’s efforts came to naught as the turbulent politics of the Bakumatsu era forced a temporary halt in efforts to recruit outcaste soldiers. In mid-1863, the Chōshū delegation to the imperial court was ousted from Kyoto at the instigation of a rival delegation from Satsuma. Rather than attempting to outmaneuver Satsuma in the diplomatic arena, Chōshū’s loyalist leadership launched an ill-advised coup attempt in the seventh month of 1864. Several hundred men from the domain army attacked the Tokugawa, Satsuma, and Aizu guard force around the imperial palace. Chōshū forces were repulsed with heavy losses, and the domain was branded an “enemy of the court” (朝敵), as several musket balls had struck the interior of the palace compound.\(^{42}\)

For what would be its last effective show of military might, the shogunate organized a twenty-one domain, 150,000-man punitive expedition to subdue the rebellious domain. With civil war looming, the domain’s loyalist-leaning leadership was replaced by a conservative faction that was eager to reach a peaceful accommodation with Tokugawa negotiators. In the twelfth month of 1864, the domain’s new leaders agreed to disband the shotai—with the exception of the Senpōtai—and execute the leaders responsible for the failed coup attempt. With its mission apparently accomplished, the shogunal punitive force decamped without attacking. As Tokugawa forces began marching home, Takasugi and the other mixed unit commanders, having disobeyed the domain’s directive to disband their men, attacked domain offices at Shimonoseki. After a brief three-month civil war, the shotai commanders overthrew the conservative faction and took the reins of the domain government.\(^{43}\)

One of the new leadership’s first priorities was a thorough reform of the domain’s military capabilities. After all, since the shotai victory in the domain’s civil war represented an embarrassing reversal of what had initially seemed like a Tokugawa political victory, it was a forgone conclusion that the shogunate would organize another punitive expedition. Under the leadership of Ōmura Masujirō (formerly known as Murata Zōrōku), Chōshū began a three-pronged military reform that involved the purchase of vast quantities of updated weaponry, the expansion and regularization of the mixed units, and a gradualist reorganization of the main-line domain army.\(^{44}\) As part of the effort to expand the available manpower resources of the mixed units, domain authorities resurrected Yoshida Toshimaro’s plan to recruit outcaste soldiers.\(^{45}\)

The actual recruitment of outcaste soldiers seems to have begun in 1865, just a few months after the mixed units seized control of the domain government. Although it is unclear precisely when recruitment began, a later account of the Ishindan (維新団), the most prominent of the outcaste units, refers to outcasts undergoing “Western firearm training” (洋銃習練) from the winter—i.e., the ninth through twelfth months—of 1865.\(^{46}\) Formal regulations for the Ishindan’s dress and conduct followed in the opening month of 1866. As a result, it seems likely that the Ishindan and other outcaste units were organized in mid-1865, trained for several months, then put into the field in the opening months of 1866, just before the domain’s war against the shogunate.

The Ishindan was one of three outcaste units organized by Chōshū’s military leaders. Most of its soldiers hailed from an outcaste community in the Kumage district on the domain’s eastern border. The Ishindan was comprised of four platoons of approximately forty men each, for a total of 160 men.\(^{47}\) Although the Ishindan’s commanding officer was a commoner, many of the unit’s non-commissioned officers hailed from the upper strata.

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42 Noguchi Takehiko, Bakufu hoheitai: bakumatsu o kakenuketa heishi shiidan, Chūkō shinsho 1673 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002), 63-68.
43 Tanaka, 78.
of the Kumage outcaste community; the unit’s first sergeant (懸頭頭), Katsujirō, was one of the community’s elders (年寄). Coincidentally, it seems that Katsujirō’s prominence in his village was largely due to his involvement in the expanding gunpowder trade. The domain also organized two other outcaste units: the Isshingumi (一新組) and the Yamashiro Chasentai (山代茶筌隊). Unlike the Ishindan and Issingumi troopers, who came from communities that handled animal products, the Yamashiro troopers belonged to a community of chasen—a subgroup of outcastes who made a livelihood by manufacturing and selling small implements such as tea brushes (茶筌).

Although the troopers of the Ishindan, Isshingumi, and Yamashiro Chasentai fought alongside both warriors and commoner soldiers, an array of physical signs set them apart from their supposed comrades. All of the troopers in Chōshū’s mixed units were required to wear shoulder patches (袖印) listing their unit and name. At the same time Chōshū’s leaders organized the Ishindan, they also permitted the creation of peasant and townsman militias, in which volunteers were allowed to serve as foot soldiers, despite the fact that many of these units were armed with antiquated weapons and were not intended to see frontline service. But unlike most commoner volunteers, outcaste soldiers were not granted the right to surname and sword for their term of service. As a result, the Ishindan troopers’ patches listed only their given names. Not that a casual observer would need to read troopers’ patches in order to distinguish them from commoners and warriors—troopers in the Ishindan, for instance, were required to wear black tunics, black trousers, and black bamboo hats. The same regulations prohibited outcaste volunteers from wearing fabrics made from silk or grosgrain (呉絹服) or decorating their uniforms in any way. Using sumptuary regulations to distinguish outcaste volunteers from their warrior and commoner counterparts was one way to preserve the status system despite the fact that the notional separation between arms-bearers and the rest of the population was being transgressed in fact.

The singling-out of outcaste units extended beyond the sartorial realm, as status distinctions were effectively maintained in less publicly apparent ways. A glance at the Ishindan’s regulations reveals that Chōshū’s military leaders were also skeptical of outcastes’ abilities on the battlefield. While most of the Ishindan’s regulations resemble those of other mixed units, even those composed primarily of samurai, two provisions specifically prohibited acts of battlefield cowardice. For instance, item three read:

In matters of movement and tactics (進退かけ引之儀), always request [orders] from your superiors. As a matter of course, those who commit willful acts (我儕之側き), exhibit cowardly behavior, or do not wait for the orders of their superiors will be punished severely.

The next provision warned that “those who withdraw before the enemy is sighted may be punished summarily.” To prevent the feared lapses in discipline, each of the outcaste units was placed under the command of a separate mixed unit. The Ishindan was under the command of the predominantly samurai Yügekitai, and the Isshingumi was under the Mitatetai (御楯隊). In addition, as if to emphasize the outcaste units’ position vis-à-vis the other mixed units, the commanding officers of both the Ishindan and the Isshingumi were commoners.

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48 Nunobiki, Chōshū-han Ishindan, 78.
49 Animal by-products like feces and bones were used to produce potassium nitrate, or saltpeter, an essential component gunpowder production. Despite the growing demand for these commodities in the Bakumatsu era, the open transport of animal “pollutants” caused the occasional disturbance. Ibid., 73-82.
50 “Nō shō hei kisoku no koto,” in Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin, 6:425-426.
51 “Ishindan heifu ku go kikai taimei no koto,” in Nunobiki, Chōshū han Ishindan, 193.
52 In this respect, the regulations echo Donald Shively’s contention that sumptuary regulations helped preserve the appearance of status distinction in the face of late Tokugawa social change. Donald Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Vol. 25 (1964 - 1965): 156.
53 Nunobiki, Chōshū han Ishindan, 191.
whereas warriors commanded the majority of the mixed units. Simp
dy put, the same mixed units that promised social mobility to commo
and outcaste volunteers effectively re-constituted Tokugawa categories in
new ways, as the pre-recruitment status of any trooper would have been
obvious to any of his comrades. While the use of
omers and outcastes as fighting men repr
sented a significant departure from the past, life in
the ranks was probably more like life in the village
than soldiers had expected.

Although a desire to secure trainable recruits
motivated domain authorities’ decision to recruit
from the social margins, they distrusted the loyalty of
volunteer outcaste units that they did not organize
themselves. In the first month of 1865, a chasen
named Kinsaku attempted to contribute to Chōshū’s war effort by organizing his own out
caste platoon: the thirty-man Kaminoseki Chasen
tai (上関茶釜隊). How Kinsaku intended to
contribute to Chōshū’s auxiliary forces is unclear, but
the unit’s training schedule was far from rigorous,
calling for just six days of practice per month.
Any ambitions Kinsaku had came to naught. In
1866, the Second Kiheitai (第二奇兵隊) arrested
Kinsaku and his second-in-command, Tomizō,
pending an investigation into allegations of espionage.
The investigation never took place. Both of
the accused committed suicide days after their ar
rest, though the circumstances surrounding their
deaths were suspicious to say the least: despite
being in custody, Kinsaku and Tomizō both ac
quired short swords that they used to dispatch
themselves. After the two men’s deaths, all of the
chasen who had signed the founding oath of the
unit were taken in for questioning by local authori
ties. The Kaminoseki Chasentai’s history thus
came to an abrupt end.

War and Peace

Chōshū’s outcaste soldiers saw combat for the
first time in the summer of 1866, when Tokugawa
forces began their second punitive expedition
against the rebel domain. Troopers from the Ishi
dan played a major role in repulsing the first shogun
al advances from their Hiroshima camp into Chōshū’s branch domain of Iwakuni. In fact, the
unit’s performance on the battlefield silenced the
jeers of its Iwakuni compatriots. During the 1866
battle for the village of Ōno, the Ishindan lost one
man killed and six wounded, which accounted for
nearly one-third of Chōshū’s casualties on the
day. Although casualty counts for the war lack
a great deal of detail, it seems that a total of six out
caste soldiers—in the Ishindan, Isshingumi, and
Yamashiro Chasentai—died in the fighting, while
twenty-six were wounded.

Although outcaste soldiers had acquitted them
selves well on the battlefield, the domain replaced
them with low-ranking warriors like ashigaru,
chūgen, and rear vassals (陪臣) as soon as it was
able. While the shotai had been fighting Tokugawa
forces on Chōshū’s borders, the loyalist domain
government had hurriedly re-organized the main
body of the domain army into rifle battalions. That
process was almost complete by the end of 1866.
As these new units came into service, outcaste
units were the first to be disbanded. The Yama
shiro Chasentai was disbanded in the eighth month
of 1866. While it is unclear when the Ishindan and
the Isshingumi were disbanded, Nunobiki suggests
that they most likely met the same fate soon after
ward.

Chōshū eventually granted the outcaste troopers
bonuses in recognition of their service, but only in
1871—several years after the units were disbanded.
Katsujiro, the Ishindan’s organizer and first ser

54 Nunobiki Toshio, “Bakumatsu Chōshū han
hisabetsu burakumin shotai no katsudō,” Nihonshi
kanken, no. 112 (May 1970), 66.
55 Nunobiki, Chōshū han Ishindan, 113-119.
Kinsaku’s journey had begun in 1864, when he
traveled to Kyoto in an attempt to join the
Shinsengumi (新撰組). After that attempt ended
in failure, Kinsaku returned to his home village
of Ōno, where he organized his own unit.
56 “Kaminoseki Chasentai ketsumeigaki,” in
Nunobiki, Chōshū han Ishindan, 198-201.
geant, received the highest sum: three gold ryō, to be paid as five bales of rice. The unit’s other non-commissioned officers also received between two and three bales of rice each, depending on their rank. Most soldiers received far less: seventy-five bales of rice to be divided among 132 men. The dead reaped the greatest reward. The families of Saikichi and Kimizō (two troopers who fell on the Hiroshima front) received modest stipends for life, as did the families of those who suffered serious wounds. However, given the timing of the bonuses, it is unclear whether these “lifelong” stipends continued to be disbursed after the domain’s dissolution.

Did outcaste soldiers receive the abrogation of their status advocated in Yoshida Toshimaro’s original recruitment proposal? The official list of the troopers’ mustering-out bonuses made no mention of whether any of the volunteers were granted the legal abrogation of their outcaste status. This raises two possibilities: one, that any status promotion was granted in another set of documents; or two, that Chōshū either abandoned some of the recommendations outlined in Toshimaro’s proposal or reneged on its promise entirely. While the paucity of sources precludes a definitive answer, the question is immaterial; once the need for non-warrior auxiliary forces had passed, Chōshū authorities took swift and decisive steps to return the status system in the domain to the prewar status quo.

In that respect, the experience of outcaste troopers was a harbinger of what was to come for many commoner veterans. In 1869, after the coalition of loyalist domains led by Satsuma and Chōshū successfully overthrew the shogunate, Chōshū embarked on a program of military re-trenchment. The domain began dismissing commoners from the shotai, often with the tenuous justification that they had requested discharges. Not all of the former soldiers went home willingly. The night of his discharge, Kiheitai trooper Isono Kumazō, the second son of a merchant in the castle town of Hagi, committed ritual suicide in a training building within the unit’s camp. Although the unit’s records state that Isono killed himself to atone for past offenses, the timing of his actions—in this case, the immediate aftermath of his discharge—suggests at least some measure of intent to register disaffection with the domain’s policy. Soon afterward, the domain announced plans to create a four-battalion regular army of 2,200 men, hand-picked from its regular and irregular units. In the end, almost all of those selected were samurai. The domain disbanded the remaining commoner units two weeks later.

The decision sparked a revolt. Over a thousand recently unemployed soldiers from the Kiheitai—mostly commoners—left their camp outside Yamaguchi and established a base at the town of Miyai. With the prospect of promotion to warrior status off the table, these disaffected veterans began petitioning the domain government to redress the unfairness of the regular army selection process. The mutineers’ ranks soon swelled to two thousand. After the veterans crushed an all-samurai force organized by the domain government, the Meiji government intervened. In March of 1870, a force commanded by Kido Takayoshi arrived in Chōshū and defeated the rebels in less than a week. The remaining soldiers dispersed; some tried to return home, while others fled to neighboring domains. Chōshū, however, had no intention of letting the matter drop; it appointed investigators to track down fleeing rebels.

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61 “Ishindan’ senkō shōten sata,” Yamaguchi-ken shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin, 6:1042-1049.
64 “Jōhei seisen no koto,” in Yamaguchi-ken shi, shiryō-hen, bakumatsu ishin, 6:917.
65 “Shotai kaisan ni tsuki jotai, hōchikusa no ranbō torishimari no koto,” Ibid., 920.
66 Ichisaka, 192-93. The mutineers also objected to what they viewed as the domain’s attempt to fully Westernize its regular army. Suematsu, Bōchō kaitenshi, 2:1663.
67 “Dattaisha no tansaku tsuho to shite Terauchi Sannosuke ra sho sho sashimawashi no koto,” Yamaguchi-ken shi, shiryō-hen, bakumatsu ishin, 6:981-982. Once armed conflict seemed likely, domain authorities compiled a list of any rebel
main authorities also investigated the households of former soldiers suspected of participating in the revolt, as well as any reports of peasants wearing swords. Similar, though less violent, phenomena occurred in other localities in 1869, as domains and prefectures alike tried to restrict commoner volunteers’ attempts to exercise the rights to surname and sword.

Conclusion

Both outcaste and commoner volunteers joined Chōshū’s war effort in search of some kind of social mobility. For commoners, that may have meant pursuing the prospect of employment as a warrior menial. For most outcasts, mobility may have meant the potential abrogation of their status—at least on an individual level. The political and military crisis of the Bakumatsu era led the shogunate and reformist domains to use the inherent elasticity in the Tokugawa status system to employ commoners—and in Chōshū’s case, outcasts—as fighting men. But when the crisis faded, domains like Chōshū moved quickly to close the narrow avenues of social mobility they had opened.

Not that it mattered in the end. When the status system was legally abolished by the Meiji government between 1869 and 1871, the social context that gave meaning to commoner and outcaste veterans’ mobility disappeared. While the 1873 Conscription Ordinance eventually opened up a different military path to social mobility, elements of the Tokugawa status system persisted even in the early years of the modern, conscript army. This was particularly true for outcasts, according to Yamagata Aritomo’s biographer:

From the moment the Conscription Ordinance was promulgated, Duke [Yamagata] gave sufficient attention to the former XX [eta] and XX [hinin], who were now the same as commoners. Because many from that group were engaged customarily in leatherworking and were well practiced in the treatment [of leather], when they conscripted and assigned to active duty, they were made cobblers and assigned to the mending and production of the shoes used in the military.

In other words, outcasts had been emancipated so that their sons could be conscripted by the state to perform the same trades their ancestors had. For outcasts, at least, social mobility proved largely illusory in both the experimental military forces of the Bakumatsu era and in the early Meiji army.

units and veterans they were able to identify. Sidney Devere Brown and Akiko Hirota, eds., The Diary of Kido Takayoshi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983), 1:326.

68 “Dattaisotsu kyōdō no kyōbōsha todokedashi no koto,” “Moto dattaisotsu no uchi fukokoroe nite taito haikaisha torishimari no koto,” Ibid., 6:927, 932.

69 In 1869, for instance, a group of rusticated warriors from the hamlet of Totsukawa (outside Kyoto) who had fought for the new government protested when they were not offered military employment. Meiji leaders quelled the nascent uprising with both threats and exhortations to loyal behavior. Senda Minoru, Ishin seiken no chokuzoku guntai (Tokyo: Kaimei Shoin, 1978), 23. The following year, officials in Kumihama prefecture complained to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (民部省) that, despite the end of the Boshin War, many commoner veterans refused to stop exercising the right to surname and sword. Kumihama-ken, “Nōmin taitō no gi ni tsuki ukagai” (Kōbunroku 2A-9-36-41, National Archives of Japan, 1870).

Jippensha Ikku, *Hizakurige*, and Comic Storytelling

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Old men and far travelers may lie by authority.  
—Source unknown

History, literature, and theater specialists who write about the Tokugawa era are surely aware of Jippensha Ikku (1765-1831) and his famous travel comedy series *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* (1802-09). This was one of the first *kokkeibon*, a genre of comic fiction for commoners. Specialists are probably also aware of the one-man modern comic storytelling art called rakugo, and perhaps its connections to Edo-period popular literature. What they may not be aware of is the degree to which Jippensha Ikku and his work can be linked to comic storytelling. In the pages that follow, I will shine new light on Ikku as a person and writer, showing that he did much to improve his chances at fame, including and among other things, leading for decades a circle of men who gathered for regular storytelling parties. In his lifetime Ikku published around thirty *hanashibon*, “spoken books” holding specially selected short joke tales (*hanashi*) that he and friends performed for one another. Ikku’s involvement in the *hanashi* world put him in position to meet a number of interesting people, mostly other writers, but also *ukiyo-e* artists, professional storytellers, and perhaps some actors. Through a combination of translations and textual analysis I present a clearer picture of who Ikku was, develop a renewed understanding of *Hizakurige*, and insight into its connection to pre-nineteenth-century *hanashi* and travel-themed modern rakugo stories.

**Ikku the Writer, Traveler, Travel Writer**

Jippensha Ikku is a celebrated early nineteenth century writer-illustrator counted as one of the six *gesaku* greats (*gesaku rokkasen*), but much about his life has remained a mystery. What we know about him today is based largely on what he himself has written in books, and, to a lesser degree, what his contemporaries wrote about him. Jippensha Ikku was born Shigeta Sadakatsu in Suruga province in 1765. His father was police constable (*dōshin*) under the magistrate (*machibugyō*) of Fuchū. In his youth he was stationed in Edo, but soon left for Osaka to begin writing *jōruri* plays and practicing the art of incense burning. His first play, “Battle of Hazama

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1 I presented earlier versions of some of the ideas in this paper at the Early Modern Japan Network panel “Live from Edo, It’s Saturday Night: Ticklish Tales of Text, Image, and Performance in Tokugawa Japan,” held at the 2008 AAS meeting in Atlanta. For their helpful comments and insight, I would like to extend my warm thanks to Philip Brown, Joel Cohn, Dave Conklin, Hayashiya Somemaru IV, Laurence Kominz, the faculty and staff at Ritsumeikan University’s Art Research Center, and especially, my anonymous reviewers.


4 Sunpu (in Suruga Province) and Osaka, and later took up residence in Edo at age 50, in 1792. There he served as north Edo magistrate until his death. Odagiri was highly trusted by the Shogunate and held the official title Tosa Province Governor.

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in the Shadows Under Trees” (Ki no shita kage Hazama no kassen), co-written with Namiki Senryū II and others, debuted when he was twenty-five. He returned to Edo five years later, in 1794. The following year he wrote his first book, a yellow-backed satiric picture book (kibyōshi) titled Gleanings in Shingaku Clock Grass (Shingaku tokei gusa), for the famous publisher Tsutaya Juzaburō. In 1802, Ikku gained fame almost instantly when his travel comedy Hizakurige debuted in print. Ikku and his publisher (Murataya Jirōbei) were surely happy his work sold well, but winning fame also meant Ikku would be on the radar of government censors, prepared to prosecute anyone who produced work that might conceivably pose a threat to the “Era of Great Peace.” While we cannot say censors were targeting Ikku specifically, it took just two years in the spotlight for him to have a kibyōshi banned, and receive a harsh reprimand of fifty days of house arrest in manacles.

Did conviction cause Ikku to be more careful? The government’s sternness persuaded most to steer clear from blatantly breaking censorship rules, effectively bringing an end to the gesaku genres sharebon and kibyōshi. Still, the priority of writers and publishers continued to be earning money. They responded by creating new formats for expression, namely the kokkeibon. Hanashibon, another “harmless” genre, enjoyed a major comeback around the beginning of the nineteenth century, as well. As Ikku moved on from kibyōshi, he made kokkeibon, gōkan, and, to a lesser degree hanashibon, his bread and butter. His new works were as absurd and vulgar as ever (e.g., the protagonists of Hizakurige repeatedly harass women, lie to children, steal food, and start fights), but they made no direct critique of the establishment and were therefore permitted. Hizakurige was especially popular. Each installation of the serial sold well, inspired numerous sequels, copycat books, and professional stage performances.


6 Taiheiki. Ikku does not seem to have been terribly concerned about censorship, especially considering he wrote his earliest works for Tsutaya Jūzaburō, one of the targets in the hubbub over Saiō Kyōden’s Nishiki no ura.


8 Sharebon are books of wit and fashion.

9 Gōkan are bound picture books with kabuki and historical drama themes.

10 I am borrowing this term from other scholars who used it first, such as Constantine N. Vaporis.
provided critical domain for identity formation. Indeed, during the two-plus centuries that Japan was effectively closed to the outside world, countless Japanese of various backgrounds took to the road, most often for pilgrimages or official business. “Pilgrimage” may have been the official purpose listed on documents, but, as scholars have made clear, these trips were often taken for secular purposes. Traveling through Japan was expensive and physically challenging, but the number of people who traveled kept increasing.

Considering the fact many Japanese at the turn of the nineteenth century were consumed with thoughts of travel, Ikku (and his publishers) had every reason to think a vast readership would embrace a comedy such as Hizakurige. Public response to his work was proof he was right. Travel guides (meisho ki, meisho zue, etc.) were so widely circulated by the time of Hizakurige’s publication that one wonders if Ikku did not use these as models for his serial. Jilly Traganou classifies Hizakurige a “fictional guidebook,” but says, “the serial form of the work makes obvious that it was not meant to be used as a guidebook, but rather as a piece of popular literature.” This, and Traganou’s point that little attention is given in describing the historical background of the physical surroundings of the road, is well taken. Still, I think Hizakurige was meant as a guide. Ikku was aware that readers were not simply interested in history and topography. They were just as eager to know about the sexual and palatal pleasures to be found along the Tōkaidō. Hizakurige served as a long running guide to those pleasures, parody though it may be. In a sense, it is a “what-not-to-do-when-traveling” guide. The wild popularity of this fictional guidebook at a time when Japan was experiencing its first travel boom is indication that it, like maps aimed at popular audiences, gave something of value to the countless Japanese stricken with travel fever. In addition to entertainment and escapism, it provided them with information about spaces, places, and subcultures that were often kept hidden in official, or officious, forms of mapping and other more serious printed matter.

Ikku had much insight on matters related to travel since he himself frequently took to the road. Living in two major urban centers and traveling through the provinces brought him in touch with a diverse range of people and cultures. Moreover, Ikku actively sought out different people and cultures, and demonstrated himself to be a diligent note taker while on expeditions, gathering material for his books. This naturally qualified him as popular conveyer of knowledge about that which existed in remote Japan.

Book 1 of Hizakurige was inspired in part by a two-week hot springs trip Ikku took to Hakone in autumn of 1801. It was at this point, Nakayama Hisao suggests, that Ikku found a way to shine as an author. Until this point Ikku had produced nothing he was fully satisfied with. It was likely during his trip to Hakone that he came to the conclusion that, rather than keeping gesaku at home in Edo, he


12 Based on numbers in travel journals written in the (mostly mid-) nineteenth century, travelers required around 400 mon per day. A journey lasting around two months generally cost more than four ryō (24,000 mon, roughly enough to feed a family of four rice for a year). Most Edo commoners could not afford this on their incomes alone. Edo commoners (in these cases, wealthy merchants) who could procure means to travel spent an average of 714 mon a day; commoners from surrounding areas (farmers) spent around 440 (see Hironori Tanigama, “Kinsei kōki ni okeru Edo shomin no tabi no hiyō: Edo kinkōchi no shomin ni yoru tabi to no hikaku o tsūjite,” [Tōyō hōgaku, vol. 53, no. 3 {2010}], 49-50). Regarding the physical challenge of travel, travelers continuously complain in their journals about recurring foot pain, as did the Tosa retainer Gotō Einosuke in 1791 (see Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan. [Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008] 37).


14 Traganou, The Tōkaidō Road, 108.

would do better to take it on a journey, far into the provinces. Instead of producing something only city dwellers would find interest in, he brought forward something much more accessible, universal.  

Ikku’s work spoke to so many people because it was inspired in part by actual trips he took along a number of major routes, including the Tōkaidō. For example, from the twenty-sixth day of the tenth month to the fifth day of the following month of 1805, Ikku went on a pilgrimage to the grand shrine at Ise. Nakayama believes this particular journey was a field trip Ikku took to gather material prior to the release of Hizakurige book 5.1, early the following year. To give an illustration of how serious Ikku could be about his work, there is an account of an affluent man who invited the author to accompany him on a trip, in hopes of being treated to some amusing back and forth resembling his fictional protagonists Yaji and Kita. The man came home disappointed, though. Ikku seemed to care about little more than taking notes on the observations he was making. Ikku’s meticulous note taking helped make his work travel-guide quality. Adding to the mix outlandish characters who trek through real landscapes made his work that much more entertaining and memorable.

There are passages in nineteenth-century travel diaries that indicate trekkers had Ikku’s work in mind, or were reminded of it, while on the road. In an untitled 1850 diary one commoner writes, “Okazaki girl is nothing more than a name. They’re nothing but waitress-prostitutes after all.” These Okazaki girls, or jorōshū, were women who worked as waitresses-prostitutes (meshimori baijo) at inns in Okazaki, made popular by their appearance—friendly, accommodating, adorable, but not beautiful—in Hizakurige book 4.2 (1805). This traveler’s commentary illustrates he was disenchanted upon learning Okazaki girls had over the years been made out to be more than they actually were.  

Golden Straw Sandals (Kane no waraji, 1813-33), another Ikku long running bestseller, was a model for the 1847 travel diary titled Kosei dōchūki, written by a fifth-generation Edo merchant, whose real name is not known. Therein he auspiciously dubs himself “Splendid Roadhome-good” (Medetaya Kijirō), and his companion “Illness-less Smooth” (Tsusuga Nashihō), after Kane no waraji’s much more ridiculously-named protagonists.  

Ikku the Comic Storyteller

As mentioned earlier, censors cracked down on the popular gesaku genres sharebon and kibyōshi, to silence their frequent authorial “hole-poking” (ugachi), or satirizing flaws in society, policy, or people in power. Kokkeibon developed and flourished following the crackdown, but while humor was still the name of the game, it was of a far less satirical and more superficial variety. This has much to do with the fact kokkeibon developed alongside professional comic storytelling around the turn of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, these share humorous similarities, two being they take up related subject matter, and consist mostly of dialogue. Rakugo tales heard today also share with kokkeibon numerous points of comparison.

Thomas Joshua Young says kokkeibon “were not simply recreations of rakugo performances, and were not scripts to be used by performers, but tried to get at the phenomenon of characters performing voices.” This may be true, but what Young fails


Kane no waraji also served as a model for making a popular sightseeing pleasure course out of the temple circuit of twenty-four sites related to the disciples of Shinran.


to make clear is that *kokkei bon* would never have become the popular genre it did if authors had not incorporated the comic stories composed for performances at comic story parties (*hanashi no kai*).\(^{22}\) *Kokkei bon* were not recreations of performances per se, but comic storytelling is certainly at the heart the genre. *Kokkei bon* texts may not have been intended as scripts, but the men who went on to become the first full-time professional storytellers (*hanashika*) found much in them to use on stage.

Jippensha Ikku was an active man to say the least. In addition to being a frequent traveler and practitioner of an array of fine and literary arts, he was also at the center of an energetic storytelling circle that came together for regular *hanashi no kai*. His group was called the Eiyūdō *hanashi no kai*, named for and presumably based at the Eiyūdō publishing house, also known as the Murataya. Since early on in his career, Ikku had a close relationship with the owner, Murataya Jirōbei, who, beginning in 1792, published a good deal of Ikku’s *gesaku*. Murataya also published the first installment of *Hizakurige*.\(^{23}\) Best remembered for his *kokkei bon* and *gōkan*, Ikku also put out around thirty *hanashibon*, books that typically featured his group’s best *hanashi*. Ikku generally wrote and illustrated his *hanashibon*, and he also wrote forwards for and contributed *kyōka* poetry to his friends’ *hanashibon* as well.\(^{24}\)

At *hanashi no kai*, the idea was to generate material for future publications, *hanashibon* and otherwise, but these were not simply work meetings at which members hashed out new ideas. First and foremost they were parties for divergence and play (*asobi*), to eat, drink, and carry on, and sometimes with hired professional entertainers. Considering Ikku’s central role in his Eiyūdō *hanashi no kai*, it becomes clearer not only that he was a fun-loving man (legend has it he was quite a drinker), but also that he enjoyed the practice of literary exchange with like-minded people. He was an enthusiastic composer and performer of comic stories, and his experiences at *hanashi no kai* had a substantial impact on his comedy writing.

Tayamachi Noriyuki has produced a comprehensive list of sources that likely inspired scenes in *Hizakurige*. He agrees, comic storytelling was a major influence on Ikku, whose source material includes premodern works such as *kyōgen* plays, and a profusion of scenes pulled from Edo-period genres such as *ukiyo-zōshi*, *sharebon*, *kibyōshi*, other *kokkei bon*, and popular theater. It is *hanashi*, however, that stand out as Ikku’s most important source.\(^{25}\) While some of these *hanashi* predate the Genroku period (1688-1704), most were published in the roughly thirty year period before he began publishing *Hizakurige*, during the An’ei era (1772-181) and later. The following are examples of such *hanashi* prior texts. The first excerpt is titled “Sleeping” (*Netari*), the second “Idiot Seller of Clam Meat” (*Baka no mukimi*), each is matched with the corresponding scenes from *Hizakurige*.

### EXAMPLE 1

“Sleeping” (*Netari*) in Mindful Children (*Kiki dōji*, 1775)

Two palanquin carriers chant in lighthearted unison until they reach Namiki. They come to Kaminarimon, and, just as they are about to let down the pole for a rest, they hear from inside the palanquin a cough.

**PASSENGER**: The carriers I had yesterday were such fashionable fellows, and they did the most remarkable thing! “We’re going to stop here for a drink,” they said. “Master, by all means, do join us.” And when I told them no, they all but forced the liquor upon me. I wonder if there will not be more carriers like the ones I had yesterday. The men today don’t seem like complete boors, but...

And so the passenger goes on, talking to himself. The carriers continue on, only this time snoring.

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\(^{22}\) Depending on the time and case, early modern comic stories were called *waraiibanashi*, *karukuchi*, *otoshibanashi*, *kobanashi*, or simply *hanashi*.

\(^{23}\) Nakayama, Jippensha Ikku Kenkyū, 10.

\(^{24}\) These and Ikku’s other works can be found listed in timeline format in Tanahashi, *Warai no gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, 233-266, and in more comprehensive detail in the previously cited work.

loudly as they go.\textsuperscript{26}

Scene in \textit{Hizakurige} 2.2 (1803)

\textbf{TRAVELER:} This horse is so slow it’s making me sleepy. The horse I took yesterday from Mishima, now, that was a fine horse. And the packhorse driver was a splendid man. It costs 150 \textit{mon} from Mishima to Numazu, but, when I paid to get on the driver said, “Master, you could fall off at any moment riding a swift horse like this. And you won’t be able to get a wink of sleep either. You probably only chose me to be kind. What a pity. No, there’s no way I can take your money for the ride.” And when we arrived at Sanmai-bashi shortly thereafter, he said, “Master, I bet your back hurts from the saddle. Please, come down and have a rest. If you’re a drinking man, the tab’s on me,” and he gave me 150 \textit{mon}! Once we arrived in Numazu he said, “I would like to take you to the next stage, but my horse prances. I’ll get another horse; please ride that one. The fare will be on me.” And right there he gave me another 150 \textit{mon}! Now, there couldn’t possibly be a packhorse driver as good at that one.

The driver leading the traveler’s horse simply walks on, snoring and mumbling as he goes.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{EXAMPLE 2}

“\textit{Idiot Seller of Clam Meat}” (\textit{Baka no mukimi}) in \textit{Thousand-ri Wings} (\textit{Senri no tsubasa}, 1773)

When an idiot seller of clam meat comes around and somebody calls out, “Idiot!” he responds, “That’s right!” The innkeeper next door hears this and decides to give it a try for himself. He calls out, “Idiot!” and gets the answer, “That’s right!”

\textbf{INNKEEPER:} What a fool! Let’s try it again. \textit{Idiot}!

\textbf{SELLER:} That’s right! \textit{You’re} the idiot!

\textbf{INNKEEPER:} Okay, you’ve got me.\textsuperscript{28}

Scene in \textit{Hizakurige} 8.1 (1808)

From there they [Yaji and Kita] go down Tanin-machi Street, and from Andōji to Babanohara.\textsuperscript{29} They wander along, talking, and soon find themselves crossing the bridge at Tenmabashi. Truly, the Yodo River runs wide, and the boatmen sing as they punt their boats along to and fro. There are also pleasure boats outfitted with shamisen and drums, and \textit{hayashi} music plays as they cruise along. From atop the bridge, a passerby stops and shouts down.

\textbf{MAN ON BRIDGE:} Ahoy there jackasses! Go ahead, squander all your money away! The bill collectors will still show up to pester you for what you owe when you’re home. Then you’ll all be in tears! You’re all a bunch of idiots! \textit{I-diots}!

\textbf{MAN ON BOAT:} What’s that? \textit{You’re} the idiot?

\textbf{MAN ON BRIDGE:} Ah, what are you blabbing about? Jackass idiot!

\textbf{MAN ON BOAT:} Oh, you think you’re hot stuff, do you? Why don’t we just have ourselves a contest to see who the bigger idiot really is? Now, we couldn’t lose that one!

\textbf{MAN ON BRIDGE:} Okay you jackasses; think I’m going to lose to you? Well, I’m a bigger idiot than all of you!

He goes too far, ending up right where his opponent wants him.

\textbf{MAN ON BOAT:} Oh, okay, that’s fine! Now everybody knows you are the biggest idiot...\textsuperscript{30}

The \textit{Eiyūdō hanashi no kai} comes up frequently in Japanese works on Ikku, but this storytelling club is usually only mentioned in passing and it is therefore difficult to get a clear picture of Ikku’s \textit{hanashi no kai} activities. Piecing together the bits, we are able to come to a few conclusions; the \textit{Eiyūdō hanashi no kai} included at least sixteen members, most of whom were \textit{gesaku} writers;

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{26} Sadao Mutō, ed., \textit{Hanashibon taikei} 10, (Tokyo: Tokyo Dō Shuppan, 1979) 122. Another \textit{hanashi}, “Snoring” (\textit{Ibiki}) in \textit{Purse of Strange Tales} (\textit{Chinwa kanezaifu}, 1779), is quite similar to \textit{Netari} (see Mutō, \textit{Hanashibon taikei} 11, 244).


\footnotesize\textsuperscript{28} Mutō, \textit{Hanashibon taikei} 9, 219.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{29} The front entrance (west side) of Osaka Castle.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{30} Nakamura, \textit{NKBZ} 49, 473. Readers may refer to Addendum I for more examples.
there were a couple artists in the group; Ikku’s hanashi no kai was most likely based at the Murata, the publishing house mentioned above; and, since some members’ names appear in a number of unrelated works put out by the Murata, we can assume Ikku met some of his hanashika no kai friends through his publisher. At this point little is known about these men aside from their names. The list includes Kanwatei Onitake (1760-1818), a gesaku writer and pupil of Sanō Kyōden (1761-1816) and, later, Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848); and Kitagawa Tsukimaro (years unknown), an ukiyo-e artist and pupil of Utamaro (1753-1806). Another member was Yūji, none other than the publisher himself, Murataji Yūrōbei.31

Details surrounding how Ikku’s hanashi no kai were run are disappointingly unclear. Based on the frequency at which Ikku published hanashibon, we can be sure his group convened at least once a year between the years 1802 and 1829, a few years before his death.32 Ikku published an average of one hanashibon per year, but his group was most active during the Kyōwa (1801-4) and early Bunka (1804-18) years.33 While the Eiyūdō hanashi no kai was most likely based at the Murata publishing house, there is evidence (e.g., the preface of Ikku’s 1804 hanashibon titled Funny Stories: Waist-side Purse [Otosibanashi koshi kinchaku]) the group also held hanashi no kai at establishments in the Yoshiwara pleasure district.34

Ikku appears, at least in his own hanashibon, to have been the most prolific composer/performer of hanashi in the group. In the cases that members’ names are listed beside hanashi, most are credited with just one or two while Ikku has a good deal more. For example, in the 1805 hanashibon Fukusuke’s Funny Stories to Drive Out Demons (Oni Soto Fukusuke banashi), Yūji is credited with two stories and listed as “presenter of auspicious remarks” (no doubt given this honor because it is New Year, and he is the publisher of the work), others have one or two stories each, and Ikku has thirteen.35 The following are two hanashi appearing in the publication. Both are performed regularly in rakugo repertoires today, albeit in much longer and somewhat altered versions.

“Blowfish Soup” (Fugu jiru)

Some friends get together. One has come into some blowfish of all things, only it looks suspicious and he cannot eat it. He asks someone try it first, but not a single person wants to. A man in the group speaks up.

FRIEND 1: Hey, why don’t you take some and give it to the beggars who sleep on the bridge?

FRIEND 2: Indeed! And we go back and have a look at some random time. If nothing’s out of the ordinary, it’ll be safe for us to eat.

He agrees, prepares fugu jiru, and sets out to give some to the beggars.

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: Hey you, want some fugu jiru, or what?

BEGGAR: Oh that is very kind of you!

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: If you want some, go get something I can pour this into.

And so the beggar does. The man waits a while, returns to have a look, and nothing seems to be out of the ordinary.

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: Okay everyone, the

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31 Utamaro and Tsukimaro received punishment along with Ikku in 1804 for representing scenes of the sixteenth-century warrior-general Toyotomi Hideyoshi in commercial prints. The list of Eiyūdō hanashi no kai members also includes Keiō Gotoku, Hakugindai Ichimaro, Biya Issaku, Gusha Ittoku, Ōhara Ichijō, Ichikusai (this may actually be Ikku himself), Rikatei Tōyū, Hamanoya Shūdō, Sanriete Tōshi, Tanpō, Yūhiko, Sakekiki, and Bakakichi. Most are presumed to have been gesaku writers, or men with other connections to the literary world.

32 In 1802 Ikku published his first hanashibon A Nest Egg of Funny Stories (Otosibanashi hesokuri kane); in 1829 he published Funny Stories: Kite in Disguise (Otosibanashi yatsushi tobi) and Funny Stories Unparalleled (Hanashi no daigokujō).

33 Nakayama, Jippensha Ikku kenkyū, 211. Ikku’s hanashibon tend to be released at the same time or shortly after installments of Hizakurige and other kokkeibon.

34 Nakayama, Jippensha Ikku kenkyū, 103-4.

35 These thirteen hanashi also appeared in Ikku’s first hanashibon. Mutō therefore does not present them a second time his section on Oni soto Fukusuke banashi (in Hanashibon taisei 19, 319-25).
coast is clear! Come on, gather around. Eat hot-pot to your hearts' content!
Afterwards, they all agree, it was wonderful.
Later, they walk past the same bridge.
FRIEND 1: Now, was that good fugu or what?
FRIEND 2: Absolutely delicious.
BEGGAR: Hey, did you gentlemen happen to already have your meal?
FRIEND 1: We sure did!
BEGGAR: So long then, I’m going to go eat mine now!

“Pounding Rice Cakes” (Mochi tsuki)

It is already the time of year to pound rice into mochi. A certain doctor is out of work, and therefore cannot afford to even make rice cakes.
DOCTOR: Sansuke, what has happened? Why is it that I’m the only one who cannot do mochi tsuki? This is quite disgraceful. Can’t you come up with a plan?
SANSUKE: I’ve got a good idea. I’ll just take my rear end out, and you go ahead and whack it with the palm of your hand. Do that and it will sound just like you’re pounding rice cakes, and people in the neighborhood won’t know the difference.
DOCTOR: Indeed! Fine idea!

Inside the house the following morning, the doctor gives Sansuke’s bare bottom a good whacking.

At first, Sansuke is able to endure the pain, but, as his rear end turns purple, he can no longer bear it.
SANSUKE: Hey, Master!
DOCTOR: What’s wrong?
SANSUKE: Please, can we do something that’s a little easier on my ass?36

Inverting the class system—real figures in government were officially off limits, of course—and making smart or regular people look silly were recurring themes in hanashibon. Travel and related matters such as cultural and linguistic differences were especially popular during Ikku’s lifetime. The next two hanashi are from his 1817 hanashibon Joke Tales: Pleasantly Drunk on New Year’s Sake (Otoshibanashi tosokigen).

“A Man from Kamigata” (Kamigata mono)

A man from Kamigata comes to Edo for the first time. Although people say there is no place like Edo, the man soon finds himself in the middle of a busy crowd of people. Walking along he recalls that he has heard for some time that Edo is a place one should not let their guard down. He hands his cloth-wrapped bundle to the man accompanying him.
MASTER: Here, Sansuke, Edo’s no place to let our guard down. Be sure not to let anybody get away with that bundle.
And off they go, and while on their way:
MASTER: Indeed, Edo is a booming city! Sansuke, do you still have that bundle?
SANSUKE: Yes, I do.
MASTER: With so many people in such a big place, it will pay to be cautious. My, what a lively place this is! Sansuke, you still got that bundle? I can’t seem to stop worrying about it.
SANSUKE: I’m terribly sorry, it was just stolen.
MASTER: What! Stolen? Well, at least I can put my mind at ease now.38

“Travel Companions” (Tabi no michizure)

The saying goes, “travel is better with companions and the world with kindness.” And so a group of travelers walks along with this in mind, one rij then two, talking together without a single worry.39
COMPANION 1: Hey, what province are you from?
COMPANION 2: I’m from Enshū.40 How about you?
COMPANION 1: I’m from the province right next to yours, Sunshū.41 How about you over there?

36 Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 14, 60. The title of the modern rakugo version is “Blowfish Hotpot” (Fugu nabe).
37 Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 14, 63. The final line is actually “let’s just do kettle-rice or something for the next batch (i.e., no more pounding). The title of the modern rakugo version is “Butt Mochi” (Shiri mochi).
38 Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 18, 110.
39 The adage in Japanese is tabi wa michizure, yo wa nasake.
40 The western part of modern day Shizuoka prefecture.
41 The central region of modern day Shizuoka prefecture.
Where are you from?
COMPANION 1: I’ve never heard of a province called Tsukeshū before.
And when asked just where Tsukeshū might be:
COMPANION 3: It’s the province of glue! 42

Figure 2: Kamigata mono (l) and Tabi no michizure (r) in Jippensha Ikku’s 1817 hanashibon Joke Tales: Pleasantly Drunk on New Year’s Sake (Otoshibanashi tosokigen). Woodblock prints; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

We cannot be certain, but it appears Ikku had connections with other hanashi no kai than his own, including Utei Enba’s (1743–1822) group, Mimasu ren. 43 This group—named after the triple wooden drinking box crest that men in the Ichikawa Danjūrō line wear on their kimono—also effectively served as the official fan club for Danjūrō V (1741–1806), a close friend of Enba’s and regular participant at this particular hanashi no kai. 44 If Ikku’s Eiyūdō hanashi no kai was similar to Enba’s Mimasu ren, it would mean the following: members usually met privately but occasional gave public performances (dramatic readings of texts is probably more accurate); they sometimes convened in secret, to avoid censorship; hanashi no kai were held on numerous occasions throughout the year, the most important being the New Year’s gathering. 45

Thumbing through hanashibon of different eras, one soon notices hanashi become longer over time. By Ikku’s day they are normally longer than those in collections compiled a century earlier, and they consist of much more dialogue. Still, each hanashi tends to be relatively short, what we today might consider a paragraph or less, but sometimes two paragraphs or more. Nobuhiro Shinji thinks men at Enba’s Mimasu ren parties may have been allotted around twenty minutes each. 46 If this indeed were the case, members would have had to come prepared with several hanashi to fill their slots, or give longer performances based on one or two, or more. Unfortunately, even with scores of extant hanashibon, it is hard to do more than guess at what the specifics may have been because they tend not offer information about things such as time allotment, or exactly how hanashi were performed. Hanashibon do tell us, however, what tropes were popular at a given time and often indicate who the most talented (or senior) storytellers/writers were. Some hanashibon include illustrations of gesaku writers bowing, dressed as professional hanashika, but these are generally taken as tongue in cheek mitate parodies.

Literary men were the mainstay of hanashi no kai in the early nineteenth century, but, as we have seen, non-writers were involved too. 47 Some were originally comb makers, pawnbroker apprentices, kabuki actor impersonators, etc., and some came

42 Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 18, 118-9. Nikawa no kuni, a fictitious province that serves as a metaphor for the group’s friendship. In other words, they stick together like glue.
44 Nobuhiro, Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka, 9-12. Enba and his group had close friendships with other Edo actors, too, including Danjūrō VII, Nakamura Nakazō, Ichikawa Omezō, and Onoe Matsusuke. They also cheered on Osaka actors Asao Tamejūrō and Ichikawa Ichizō.
45 The Mimasu ren called their New Year’s gatherings Hanashi zome, or First Funny Stories (of the year).
46 Nobuhiro, Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka, 21.
47 Literary men were the mainstay of these Edo-based hanashi no kai, but this was not necessarily the case in Kamigata, where hanashi no kai were often organized and attended by men who were not artistic professionals.
from merchant or samurai families. A few had their sights set on making live comic storytelling a lucrative, full-time career. These “amateurs” (shirōto) did not stand out in the early stages of hanashi no kai, but some eventually made names for themselves as professional entertainers. Those with exceptional talent took hanashi beyond gesaku and salon art, steering hanashi no kai—or their own versions of it—onto a more public, commercial track. These men are remembered today as the first “shokugyō (career) hanashika.” The group includes Sanshōtei Karaku I (1777-1833), Asanēbo Muraku I (1777-1831), San’yūtei Enshō I (1768-1838), Hayashiya Shōzō I (1781-1842), Sen’yūtei Senkyō I (d.1829), Katsura Bunji III (d.1857), and Kikutei Jugyō (years unknown). These men usually presented hanashi daily at yose for a fee, texts were done away with—in audience view—and reading stands were also thrown out in favor of elevated daisies, or kōza.

Ikku was close with some of the first shokugyō hanashika, one being Sanshōtei Karaku, who opened his own yose on the grounds of the Yanagi Inari Shrine in 1798. He is believed to be the first to open a yose, and is therefore credited with initiating the yose boom that marked the dawn of a new era for professional comic storytelling. Ikku and Karaku probably spent time together at hanashi no kai, and the former—just as Shikitei Sanba (1776-1822) frequently had—publicized confectionaries the latter was selling in his store.

Ikku had another good friend in Karaku’s pupil, Hayashiya Shōzō, who lived for a time in the same neighborhoods Ikku did (Hasegawa-chō and Tachibana-chō), and became one of the most famous hanashika of their day. Like Ikku, Shōzō published gōkan and hanashibon, based on original ghost stories (kaidanmono, also bakemono banashi). He narrated these at his yose, located on a major thoroughfare in Nishirōyōgoku. The playful camaraderie these men shared may be best illustrated by the late Edo period rumor that Jippensha Ikku stuffed his clothes with fireworks while confined to his deathbed, as a joke on those who would be attending his cremation rite. This actually originated in one of Shōzō’s stories.

Ikku’s friendships with professional hanashika make sense considering not only that he himself was an amateur storyteller, but also that he, like other gesaku writers of his day, produced books to be performed. Reading aloud was the mode of jinkō ki. Here, “store” (mise) most likely refers to Karaku’s yose.

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48 Shogei Konwakai, and Osaka Geinō Konwakai, ed., Kokon tōzai rakugoka jiten, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989) 25-33. According to this source, the number of hanashi in the professional repertoire was raised to some 800 in 1808.

49 Nobuhiko, Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka, 23-25. Kendai, a short desk of sorts, is still used in the Kamigata style for some stories, but not to place texts on.

50 Shogei Konwakai and Osaka Geinō Konwakai, Kokon tōzai rakugoka jiten, 26. Karaku may have sparked a yose boom at this time in Edo, but that he opened the first is arguable. People had been performing in more or less fixed spaces for years prior to this.

51 Tanahashi, Warai no gesakusha Jippensha Ikku, 154-5. The advertisement being referred to can be found in the 1809 gōkan titled Fukushū
consumption that partially dictated the production of texts. Mingling with hanashika and heading the Eiyūdō hanashi no kai were two more ways Ikku found inspiration as he worked to make books enjoyable for readers. In the process he had a hand in transforming, as Howard Hibbett puts it, “little anecdotes of the Edo joke books into miniature comic dramas that elevate low humor to the realm of consummate art.”

Friendships that Ikku and other writers enjoyed with professional hanashika benefited everybody involved. Writers got professional entertainers’ input on material, which could be adapted for playful fiction; hanashika got help creating more substantial material, much needed for shows at the yose that began popping up everywhere in urban neighborhoods.

Yaji and Kita

Hizakurige protagonists Yaji and Kita became cultural heroes almost as soon as the book had begun selling. It is not surprising, then, that Ikku’s work inspired all kinds of sequels, spin-offs, and copycat works, including scores of modern rakugo stories, their common denominator typically being a Yaji-Kita-like traveling duo. Their endless list of flaws notwithstanding, Ikku’s heroes continue to this day to maintain a special place in the hearts of Japanese readers.

By the Edo period, it had long been common practice in Japanese literature to poke fun at the backwardness of provincial locals. Likewise, travelers from large population and culture centers were painted as “normal” if not smarter and more refined than their rural counterparts. During the seventeenth century, however, writers such as Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) and Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714) began treating provincials notably differently, in a more objective, and at times, solemn manner. About a hundred years later, while he does not necessarily write about provincials with reverence, Jippensha Ikku was portraying them as quicker witted if not more intelligent than travelers. Yaji and Kita, travelers and representatives of an imagined witted if not more intelligent that helped Ikku win fame.

Hizakurige was not the first travel book to adopt a comic style, nor were Yaji and Kita the first picarosque duo featured in a travel comedy. But early examples differ from Hizakurige in a number of ways. For example, Tomiyama Dōya’s Chikusai monogatari, first published around 1621, is more of a comic travel poetry journal. Some think Chikusai and his counterpart may be the prototypes for Yaji and Kita. This take is understandable for obvious reasons, but Chikusai’s humor is far more satirical—one moment directed at others, the next at his own position in life as quack doctor—and his counterpart is little more than his shadow. In addition, unlike the later Yaji and Kita, Chikusai has no hometown pride; he hates his native Kyoto and insists on leaving. More commanding of reader attention, however, is the parallel Dōya draws between Chikusai and Ariwara no Narihira’s mono no aware (pathos)-saturated plights. In one more example of early travel

Plutschow discusses these and other men who witnessed and recorded realities concerning Japan’s hinterlands and its inhabitants. These were the forerunners to what he calls the Edo-period Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Traganou points out early examples written by Tomiyama Dōya and Asai Ryōi in The Tōkaidō Road, 108.


Granted, it was probably more than enough to tickle the funny bones of early Edo-period readers that a quack doctor of Chikusai’s standing would be likened to the legendary courtier Narihira, alleged hero of the poem-tales that make up Ise monogatari. Chikusai was written at a time when
comedy, if we may call Tōkaidō meishoki (c. 1658-60) such, author Asai Ryōi insists on giving readers lesson after lesson on landmarks, lore, and local histories. Consequently, the tone remains more intellectual than comical, and the antics of the traveling duo amount to little more than comic relief. In contrast, Ikku’s comedy is nonstop as Yaji and Kita head southwest on the Tōkaidō, running away from their debts and other troubles in Edo.

Figure 4: Yaji and Kita with farmer. Tōkaidōchū hizakurige: nanahen-ge (book 7.2, 1808). Woodblock print; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

While trekking across the Japanese mainland Yaji and Kita self-identify as Edokko, or “native sons of Edo.” They are not actually Edo natives, though. It turns out Yaji and Kita are former lovers who hail from a small town in the provinces, from which they also ran. These wannabe city slickers most likely identify as Edokko because they, like many people in Japan at this time, are caught up in the campaign of Edo-centrism, which involved mapping Edo as the central cultural space against a variety of peripheries. So caught up are they that not once in Hizakurige do Yaji or Kita claim to be from anywhere but Edo. While trekking in the provinces, they proudly assume the roles of Edokko know-it-alls, which only adds to the humor each time they fail. Yaji and Kita’s characters are set quite similar to the half-baked connoisseur (hankatsu) of sharebon, who believes himself refined and claims that in title but in fact is not.

Yaji and Kita use their previous Edo residency as an excuse to act arrogantly and bully countless people as they travel hundreds of miles down the Tōkaidō on foot. The way they act shows they think any person not able to at least claim ties to Edo is of a lesser breed. What makes this otherwise un-funny business comical is that Yaji and Kita are nothing they claim to be. They are unremarkable commoners who would never make it far in a stylish place such as the Yoshiwara. They are neither chic (iki) nor connoisseurs (tsū), but are too thick-headed to know it. In actuality, however, they are quite weak and do not mean any real harm in their mischief. Perhaps it is these last two details that kept early modern readers in the provinces from feeling as though they were being laughed at, and therefore inclined to dislike Yaji and Kita. Quite the opposite, readers can hardly help feeling sympathy for, opening their hearts to, and cheering on these travelers who were underdogs from the start.

John Mertz is right that Hizakurige is entertaining because, “in every scene and at every juncture, Yajirobei and Kitahachi are at play with nuances of social being that differentiate them from the people they meet,” but I disagree that readers are simply “plopped down at its sidelines... to observe the story’s action only from a distance.” We must recall the book’s intended audience, and the manner in which they read. Ikku did not intend Hizakurige to

Ise monogatari parodies were popular, so this kind of humor was quite common.

A translated excerpt of Tōkaidō meishoki and full translation of Chikusai can be found in Bresler, “The Origins of Popular Travel and Travel Literature in Japan,” 296 and 219, respectively.

In Sex and the Floating World, 270, Screech comments on the homosexual references and puns that abound in Hizakurige. “The story” he says, “is not pornographic, but its premise is sex: the two heroes... are lovers... who come up to Edo and make it their home together before embarking on their travels.”

Kern, Manga from the Floating World, 25.

Nakayama, Jippensha Ikku kenkyū, 271.

be read quietly; he intended it to be read out loud, as an amusing performance event, just as he may have experienced reading parts of it with friends at hanashika. Ikku went to much trouble to write his heroes and provincial characters with authentic, entertaining dialogue. Reading—bringing this text to life—was clearly enjoyable for early nineteenth-century readers. It still is fun today. Hizakurige was anything but a passive experience for readers.

Ikku’s work served as an outlet for people to picture themselves in scenes with (or as) Yaji and Kita, traveling to place after place, yearning to be read quietly; he intended it to be read out loud, as an amusing performance event, just as he may have experienced reading parts of it with friends at hanashika. Ikku went to much trouble to write his heroes and provincial characters with authentic, entertaining dialogue. Reading—bringing this text to life—was clearly enjoyable for early nineteenth-century readers. It still is fun today. Hizakurige was anything but a passive experience for readers.

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The abundance of *tabibanashi* in Osaka-based Kamigata rakugo is one thing that sets it apart from its Tokyo-based counterpart. Uehara Chiaki, who categorizes Kamigata *tabibanashi* into the groups “meishoki-style” and “Hizakurige-style,” says there is a natural explanation for the cornucopia of *tabibanashi* in the Kamigata repertoire, and relative paucity thereof in Tokyo rakugo.  

*Edokko* were introverted; they thought any place outside of Edo was merely countryside, that no place could be as good [as Edo].  

*Edokko* [therefore] did not care a great deal for taking trips. If *Edokko* were centripetal, then people from Kamigata were centrifugal... They wanted to see and experience things, and tended to think other places might have something good to offer... Hence, it is natural there are more rakugo travel stories in Kamigata.  

It is not true that all people from Edo disliked traveling in the early modern era, nor is it correct to say everybody native to Kamigata was fervent about long journeys on foot. Nevertheless, Uehara points to real problems embedded in the historic tension and rivalry and characteristic differences between the residents of these places. This is a matter for another study though. If Uehara is right about one thing, it is that there are many more *tabibanashi* in the Kamigata repertoire.

Contemporary Kamigata rakugo master Hayashiya Somemaru IV (1949-) considers *tabibanashi* indispensable to his art for a number of reasons. In addition to calling to mind the travels of Yaji and Kita, they serve as wonderful windows to the past, teaching listeners about historical geography and an array of culture. *Tabibanashi* are also important to the art because they are traditionally used for *hanashika* training (*shūgyō*). Since protagonists in these stories are constantly in motion, and come into contact with any number of characters, narrating *tabibanashi* gives fledgling *hanashika* the opportunity to practice various scenarios without having to explore character psychology in much depth.  

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72 Uehara, “Hizakurige: rakugo to no kanrensei,” 100.  
73 Shigeru Ekuni believes a “Tokyo complex,” especially noticeable in the arenas of big business, professional sports, and performing arts, continues to affect people in modern Japan. He half-jokingly reports that Osakans give an “Osaka nationalist” response when asked about the matter (see Koten rakugo taikei 8, [Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1969] 217).  
74 Somemaru Hayashiya, Kamigata rakugo sai-jiki, (Osaka: Nenshōsha, 1999) 102-3. *Hanashika* in training are called *zenza* (lit. first seat) because they appear in shows as warm-up acts. Traditionally, *zenza* would narrate sections of *tabibanashi* as
In his school (ichimonzō), Somemaru continues the tradition of implementing tabibanasī into the curriculum of his pupils in training. One of the first exercises he begins with is a routine called “striking” (tataki), which is an excerpt from the first installation of the tabibanasī series “Journey to the East” (Higashi no tabi). For anybody who knows tabibanasī, the tataki sequence is quite memorable. Therein, hanashika insert loud, rapid strikes—on a kendai with a hariōgi and kōbyōshi—between cadence-like sections of narrative. Tatakis serves as an entertaining presentation of stops along a major route between Osaka and Nara, and effectively places listeners in the role of traveler.

TSU POPO PON! (four quick strikes)
The minute you leave Osaka you’re in Tamatsukuri. Here you find two teahouses belonging to Masuya Yoshibē and Tsurrya Hidejirō. TSU POPO PON!
This area is called “two-teahouse town.” TSU POPO PON!
You pass some time here exchanging cups of fine sake with your friends, here to see you off. TSU POPO PON!
And now you’re on your way, on an unhurried and enjoyable two-man journey. TSU POPO PON!

audiences came into yose, ending as soon as there were enough people in the audience to begin the show proper. The linear nature of tabibanasī makes stopping at any point possible. The beginning of Higashi no tabi consists of the stories Tabidachi (Departure), Niuriya (The Nimono Stop), and Shichido gitsune (Fox of Seven Disguises), and these together make up the longer story Ise sangū kami no nigai (Pilgrimage to Ise and the Gods’ Festivity). These can all be found in Beichō Katsura, Beichō rakugo zenshū 6, (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1982) 36-72.

The tataki exercise, adapted from the more serious-themed narrative art kōshaku, is supposed to help young hanashika acquire proper rhythm, enunciation, and projection. Hariōgi is a fan or fan-shaped object wrapped in paper or leather used for keeping beat in music/voice training. Hariōgi are also referred to as a tataki. Kōbyōshi are two small wooden blocks, always kept on kendai regardless of story.

Hey now, here we go! Okay, okay! TSU POPO PON!
You go from Nakamichi to Honjō, and after Tamatsubashi you find yourself in Fukae. TSU POPO PON!
They say if you’re going to buy a kasa, get one at Fukae. There’s a song about Fukae specializing in these sedge hats. TSU POPO PON!
They’re called Fukae-gasa, but they’re actually quite shallow. You each get one, put them on, and are on your way. To the east, to the east! TSU POPO PON!
After Takaeda you pass Fujii Teahouse, Miki-riya, Nukata, Matsubara, and Toyura. Then, standing right before you, none other than the Kuragari Pass.
Ascend 18-chō and you’re at the summit. Don’t forget to make a water offering to the mountain deity. TSU POPO PON!
You can still see here a stone tablet inscribed with the Bashō haiku:
Though called Kuragari
You can see as far as the Akashi horizon
TSU POPO PON!
Legend has it this place was originally called the Kuragaeri Pass; because the slope here is so steep those with horses had to change saddles. TSU POPO PON!
From Ose you pass Sunajaya and Amagatsuji,
ending up at a fork in the road. To the right you see Yamato Koriyama, and to the left is, yes, Nanto, also known as Nara!

**TSU POPO PON!**

Nanto is written with the characters “south” and “capital.”

*The ancient capital Nara’s eight-petalled cherry blossoms*

*Today bloom in nine-petalled profusion.*

Now, isn’t this a lovely poem that’s been passed down?

**TSU POPO PON-PON!**

Shortly after the *tataki* bit, the sightseeing protagonists of Higashi no tabi, Osaka townsmen (chōnin) Seihaichi and Kiroku—Seiyan and Kikō for short—head out from Nara. The former suggests they play a game of capping (*atozuke*), because, after all, “it’s no fun to walk along in silence.” The following section exhibits old Japanese word play at its finest, complete with references to Japanese literature classics.

**KIKŌ:** Seiyan, what’s *atozuke*?

**SEIYAN:** Come on, you know, it’s that game *shiritori*.

**KIKŌ:** Huh? What you scoop up and throw trash away with?

**SEIYAN:** That’s *chiritori*, dummy! *Shiritori* is the game where we incorporate the last part of whatever the other person says. Basically, all we have to do is use it to start our own phrase. So, if I start off with something like, “the tie that binds a couple, is none other than a...” you just have to start with something that begins with “a.”

**KIKŌ:** All I’ve got to do is say something that starts with an “a”?

**SEIYAN:** That’s right. Look, if you can’t figure it out, just cheer me on by chanting “*a kora kora!*” Try to jump in whenever you think you can. Okay, here I go! The tie that binds a couple is none other than a...

**KIKŌ:** *A kora kora!*

**SEIYAN:** A child! Smart-alec, a cow he couldn’t sell.

**KIKŌ:** *A kora kora!* Hey, if he can’t sell cows, he’d better try horses!

**SEIYAN:** Come on, don’t say such dumb things! Couldn’t sell the right snow, so snow piles up.

**KIKŌ:** *A kora kora!* Hey, I bet ice in the passing night is colder than snow!

**SEIYAN:** Kikō!! Would you at least play the game right? Piles up, pain of parting, love it has to be.

*A kora kora!* Be-cause the head will not work, neither will the tail.

**KIKŌ:** *A kora kora!* Say, if they do happen to work, what should we to do?

**SEIYAN:** One, two! Tale of Tōda Hidesato, the Fujiwara rice bag. *A kora kora*! *Baggage* of the bumpkin Komachi, hundred years old.

*A kora kora!* Old little shop, can’t make a dime.

**KIKŌ:** You know, that Komachi couldn’t turn a

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84 Today Osaka is called Oze-chō, just south of Ikoma City; Sunajaya is in modern-day Tomio; and Amagatsuji is located a station south of Saitaidaiji on the Kintetsu Kashihara Line.

85 Minami and miyako, respectively.

86 *Inishihē no / Nara no miyako no / yaa-zazkura / kefu kokonohe ni / nihohinuru kana*, by Ise no Tayū. Poem 61 in Ogura hyakunin isshu.

87 This is a translation of the version in Kamigata banashi: Hayashiya Somemaru no sekai (Osaka: Yoshimoto Kögyō, 2008) DVD #2 of 3.

88 *Somosomo imose no hajimari wa.*

89 This, like a *yoi yoi*, is a filler that, when exuberantly shouted between passages, helps sustain tempo during songs and wordplay games such as this one.

90 *Wa > warabe kozashi ushi uranu*. Hereafter “>” indicates links/progression in the game.

91 *Uranu > uranu bosetsu ni tsumoruyuki*, a play on *Hira no bosetsu* (The evening snow in Hira).

92 *Tsumoru yuki > yuki mo chiku chiku ai rashi ya; ai rashi ya > rasha [kashira] ga mawaranya, o ga mawarana*; a saying that means, “if a leader is no good, neither will his/her people be.”

93 *Mawaranu > mawaranu Tōda Hidesato*, a reference to the tenth-century military general Fujiwara no Hidesato, also popularly referred to as Tawara (straw sack) no Tōda.

94 *Tōda Hidesato > sato no Komachi no momotose*, a play on *Satoba Komachi*, a nō play attributed to Ze’amī’s father, Kan’amī (1333-84).

95 *Momotose > motose no usu koakinai; motosen* (also called *gen no ji sen*) is a coin that was minted in Osaka during the years 1741-45.
profit if she tried, nothing but loss!

SEIYAN: One, two! Dime-pinchin shopkeepers, fat on boiled tasteless fare. A kora kora! Fairly fat only daughter, that girl Osome. A kora kora! Oh some Osome] fate to dye [die], here on Suma shore. A kora kora! Surf [shore] enough Ōsuke, lived to a hundred-six. A kora kora! Six times craving love, fading in and out of sleep. A kora kora! Sleepy love? Come along...

SEIYAN: Did you get that tea-cup?

KIKÔ: I grabbed it when we were takin' a break at that last teashop.

SEIYAN: Dammit, I wish you would quit doing such dim-witted things! Teashops are set up for groups of five, and groups of ten. They'll be in trouble if they're missing even one cup.

KIKÔ: That's what I thought too, so... I've got five more here... four here... and... this one. Perfect right? I have enough for a party of ten!

Seiyan and Kikô bear a striking resemblance to Yaji and Kita, who are also keen on word play and guilty of their own acts of petty thievery. Scenes such as this one, which exhibit decontextualization of the classical with the popular (and vice-versa) and incorporate a plethora of homophonic word play, abound in Hizakurige. These—essentials of kyôka poetry humor—are the nuts and bolts of both Hizakurige and rakugo. While some maintain Seiyan and Kikô are no more than the Kamigata rakugo versions of Yaji and Kita, others do not feel comfortable settling on the Hizakurige protagonists as models. Such divergence is understandable since it is difficult to determine if one preceded the other and, moreover, they can both be connected to an earlier tradition of travel-themed stories (i.e., hanashi in the early modern sense). Scrutinizing modern tabibanshi may not put us closer to answering questions regarding origins, but it helps further illustrate how closely Hizakurige and comic storytelling are related.

The list of tabibanshi reminiscent of Hizakurige goes on, and includes stories such as “Buying a Nun” (Amagai), “The Nimono Stop” (Niuriya), and Sarumaru. The story Yajirô, needless to say, is named after Yaji of Hizakurige. In this rakugo, the compulsive liar protagonist makes up ridiculous stories, and

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96 Akina > akina mono no nie futori; a play on aijina (flavorless, bland) mono no nie futori, a phrase that refers to people who eat only the mundane (tasteless) in order to have (boil) a large amount.

97 Futori > futori musume no Osome, a play on hitori musume, referring to Osome, Aburaya Tarô-bê’s only daughter (who also worries she may be pregnant [futori]) in Tsuruya Namboku IV’s 1813 kabuki play Osome Hisamatsu ukina no yomuiri.

98 Some > some tote koko ni Suma no ura, a reference to a line in the in the climactic kuse scene of the Zeami play Atsumori, and to other famous Suma exiles in Japanese literature, most notably Genji monogatari. Some(ro) means “to dye.”

99 Suma no ura > Noura Ōsuke hyaku matsu, a reference to late-Heian military general Miura no Ōsuke Yoshiaki (1092-1180), who appeared in Heike monogatari as a brave warrior that dies in battle on the side of Yoritomo. An implausibly 106-year-old Ōsuke appears in the kabuki play Ishikiri kajiwara, based on the 1730 ningyô jôruri play Miura no Ōsuke kôbai tazuma.

100 Hyaku matsu > mutsura mutsura to koi kogare, a play on mutsu (six) and utsura utsura, a state in which one repeatedly dozes off and wakes.

101 Koi kogare > koi kogare kozare amazake.

102 Amazake > amazake nomaso choku dashare.

103 Kiyan is another nickname for Kiroku (Kikô).
declares himself fearless traveler following a journey to Kyoto. In “The Gion Festival” (Gion matsuri), a traveler from Edo gets into a heated argument with a Kyotoite. Conflicts such as these, between ineffectual travelers and provincial locals, are only too predictable in tabibanashi. But, in the vein of Hizakurige, no one ever gets seriously hurt, and it is almost always the provincials who come out on top. This is true in the story “List of the Well-to-do” (Chōja banzuke), too.

In this tabibanashi, two traveling Edokko come to a distillery in Kyoto and bully the head clerk (bantō) when they find he is not willing to sell them a small amount of sake. The bantō is not necessarily an intelligent man, but, by the end of the story, he is able to turn things around on the travelers, making them the butts of the humor.

EDOKKO: [In Edo dialect] Sell us some, won’t you? It’d make us happy if you could just do that. BANTŌ: [In Kyoto dialect] How much would you like? EDOKKO: Yeah, okay, give us about a shō. BANTŌ: Come again? EDOKKO: One shō.

BANTŌ: Oh, respectable men of Edo, I’m terribly sorry, but I couldn’t possibly sell you just one shō. You see, this is a distillery I run here.

EDOKKO: Fine, we’ll take three shō then.

BANTŌ: Whether it’s two shō or three shō, it’s really a pain to prepare such a small amount…

EDOKKO: Well then, how much will you sell us?

BANTŌ: Right... You see, this is distillery, so a small amount would be something along the lines of a horse load, or a cartload.

EDOKKO: How much comes in a horse load?

BANTŌ: A horse load? A horse can carry about 80 shō.

EDOKKO: Huh! How about a cartload?

BANTŌ: I think you could probably load up around 500.

EDOKKO: And if we wanted to load up a damn boat!

BANTŌ: Oh, a boat? I think you could transport a little over 560, or so…

EDOKKO: Oh get off it already! You think we want to buy that much, you son-of-a-bitch?

BANTŌ: I’m sorry?

EDOKKO: Ah, just shut up! Any amount we ask for, you’ll just try to sell us more. You’re just trying to make asses out of us, aren’t you? Hey, look at who’s talking to you and listen to what

111 Alternate title “Gion Festival” (Gion kai).
they say! See us? Yeah, we’re Edokko! And we’re on a journey here! Even if we did pay you to load up a damn horse with sake, you think there’s any way we could drink it all as we traveled down the road? You damn untoku!\footnote{Edo dialect for fool, idiot, dumb ass.} If it’s too much of a hassle for your distillery here to do such small business, you say so with a polite mouth! Just say you can’t handle it, you untoku! You just don’t have a clue, do you? Untoku!\footnote{Ekuni, } As we can see, the Edokko issues the bantō a harsh verbal whipping (akutai). The bantō does not (or pretends not to) understand the Edo word untoku, and subsequently misinterprets it to mean “rich man” or “millionaire.” He proceeds to question the Edokko about their “odd way” of speaking and this causes them to react with even more silly intimidation tactics and bravado. The story draws to an end when the two Edokko make their leave, steaming mad. The bantō is not yet through with them, though. He chases after them, calling from behind.

**BANTŌ:** Hey!! Masters of Edo!! Wait!

**EDOKKO 2:** Aniki, look who’s trying to catch up with us! I bet he found out what untoku means and is coming after us for revenge.\footnote{Literally, older brother. A term of endearment or respect used for an older in-group male.}

**EDOKKO:** Oh, come on, it doesn’t matter if he comes after us now. We’re not indoors anymore; we can make a run for it if we need to. Come on, quit fidgeting already! [To BANTŌ] Hey there, what’s the matter untoku?

**BANTŌ:** Masters of Edo!

**EDOKKO:** What do you want?

**BANTŌ:** Gentlemen, I just wanted to say, once you get back to Edo, be sure to work as hard as you can, so you can become reputable untoku like me.

**EDOKKO:** What the hell are you talking about? We can’t stand stupid untoku.

**BANTŌ:** Well then, I guess there’s nothing to do if you’re born to be poor.

\footnote{Ekuni, }\footnote{Koten rakugo taikei 4, 254-5.}

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**Niuriya, a final example, bears a resemblance to a scene in Hizakurige 3.1.**\footnote{See Addendum I, Example 2 for a partial translation of the Hizakurige scene.} This *tabibanshi* is also linked to early works including “Fool” (Utsuke) in the 1623 *hanashiban* Laughing Off Sleep (Seisuishō).\footnote{Mushū Ui, *Rakugo no genwa*, (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1970) 335.} *Niuriya* too is part of the Higashi no tabi series, coming after the *tataki* and capping game excerpts presented above. It is occasionally narrated together with the story that follows in the sequence, “Fox of Seven Disguises” (Shichido gitsune). Here, Seiyan and Kikō decide to make a stop to eat after the latter repeatedly complains about his hunger. The first place they come to is a *niuriya*, in this case a small mountain dwelling specializing in *nimono*.\footnote{Gently simmered, seasoned foods. Examples of *nimono* popular today include *niku jaga*, chikuzen ni, kabocha no nitsuke, and hijiki.} Once they have taken their seats inside, Kikō seems to forget all about the fact that he is hungry. He is distracted by the opportunity to poke fun at the local man standing before him, to complain about his countryside establishment, and the poor dishes it has to offer. After a good deal of teasing and banter, Kikō decides on an order of *Kōya-dōfu*, though he pushes his luck by mixing special requests with snide remarks.\footnote{Kōya dōfu is a seasoned dish made with freeze-dried tofu. It was originally frozen in the cold of winter by the monks at My Kōya. After it was thawed it was allowed to dry and later reconstituted with water.}

**KIKŌ:** Tell us, what’ve you got?

**OLD MAN:** Let’s see here... I have some *bōdara*. How about some of that? **KIKŌ:** *Bōdara*... No, eating *bōdara* would be like preying on my own kind. It won’t do to have people saying, “oh look, that *bōdara* is eating *bōdara*.” Maybe I’ll have that next time I pass through, whenever that could be.\footnote{Bōdara (dried cod [here, in a boiled dish]) is also a term that, in kabuki dressing rooms, meant something similar to daikon yakusha, or an actor}
OLD MAN: Okay fine, how about okara then?  
KIKÖ: Oh no, we’ve been eating that crap for the last ten days, since we started our trip. It’s made my eyes turn red, and my ears grow long.  
OLD MAN: Oh come now.  

In this story, too, we find urban travelers entering a countryside setting where they assume it certain they can outwit their slow, provincial counterparts. Once again we see this supposition backfire. The old man in Niuriya may not be the quickest-thinking person in the world, but he not only has it in him to endure a barrage of jokes and insults, he is able to hold on until the end, beating the travelers at their own game. As the old saying originally went, “better the last smile than the first laugh.”  

Conclusion  
Jippensha Ikku made a number of wise moves that ensured he would be famous, and in the bargain won a prominent place in literary history. He took gesaku outside of its Edo home into the provinces, where many Japanese were interested in traveling; he himself spent time on trips and took with little or no artistic talent. In Bunsei and Tenpō eras (1818–44) bōdara was a popular expression used to describe people who were as good as worthless (yaku ni tatanu mono). Kikō is applying self-deprecating humor here.  

Red eyes and long ears are a playful reference to albino rabbits, commonly fed okara (soybean fiber, left after making tofu). Dry, red eyes are also a symptom of dehydration, caused by frequent bowel movements or diarrhea, a result of over-consumption of dietary fibers. Okara is made up of more than fifty-percent dietary fiber.  


meticulous notes about remote Japan; he devised entertaining characters that readers could sympathize with if not feel close to; he incorporated into his work an array of material from comic sources; for at least thirty years he performed hanashi with other artists in his hanashi no kai, in a sense testing material before it would be released in book form. The list goes on and is an important key to understanding why Ikku stands out as excellent, and gives good reason for his placement in the gesaku rokkasen.

Anyone who hears even one tabihanashi narrated and reads Hizakurige at least in part is bound to feel a sense of deja vu. Perhaps because it pre-dates modern rakugo, the immediate assumption is that Hizakurige was the model. As shown above, it is more appropriate to view both as products of a world where popular literature and oral storytelling went hand in hand, where texts were meant to be read out loud, or performed. The relationship between comic storytelling and Hizakurige is therefore a much more correlative than causal one. Ikku’s activities as an amateur storyteller, his friendships with others enthusiastic about storytelling, his publication of around thirty hanashibon, and his repeated reliance on this genre for source material all serve to shine light on his love for, and Hizakurige’s correlation with, comic storytelling. Furthermore, it explains his choice to use everyday language and avoid incorporating private matters (gakuya ochi) that could rarely be understood by outsiders. Ikku witnessed firsthand the success of hanashika as they redirected comic stories at the masses, and taking a similar approach he became a star.

Addendum I: Selected Hanashi and Corresponding Hizakurige Scenes

We see in the following examples that Jippensha Ikku referred to earlier hanashi when writing his bestseller Hizakurige. In these and other cases, Ikku filled out the hanashi, making them funnier or more absurd.

EXAMPLE 1

In the hanashi and Hizakurige excerpt that follow, the parallel is men who live in extreme poverty...
discussing apparel. The humor lies in the fact these men are prouder or more narcissistic than people who are much better off.

“Straw Mat People” (Komo kaburi) in Good at Listening (Kiki jōzu, 1773)\(^{128}\)

Two or three beggars gather and split up the food they have left. Another comes up wearing a straw mat of multiple bright colors.

BEGGAR 1: Hey everyone, nice work! Could you share a little with me?

BEGGAR 2: Oh, you Chō, is it? Here, come on over. My, you’re wearing something else!

BEGGAR 1: Oh yeah, I just found this; but it’s a little loud for my taste.

“Brocade” (Nishiki) in Stories of Today (Kotoshi hanashi, 1774)

A beggar has decided to return to his hometown, and is now making preparations. One of the beggars in his group comes up.

BEGGAR 1: Sir, where are you off to?

BEGGAR 2: I’m going home.

BEGGAR 1: In that case, sir, that colorful straw mat you have on won’t be enough to keep you warm. I’ll give you my mat as a farewell gift. Please do wear it.\(^{129}\)

BEGGAR 2: Don’t be ridiculous. You expect me to wear a [plain] straw mat? When going home, one must go in brocade!\(^{130}\)

“The Outcaste’s Straw Mat” (Hinin no komo) in Light-mouthed Tales: Paper of Five Colors (Kakuruki goshikigi, 1774)

BEGGAR 1: Hey Hachi! You’ve gotten yourself a fine straw mat there. Why on earth are you cutting it up?

BEGGAR 2: No, you see, I just tried it on, but it’s too long and all I look like is a damn doctor.\(^{131}\)

Scene in Hizakurige 2.1 (1803)

YAJI: Kitahachi, let’s take a break before heading out.

They head into a teahouse. In the garden, they find a group of homeless porters huddled around a woodstove, trying to keep warm.\(^{132}\) Some are wrapped in bedding; others have on packing paper that has been sewn together. Some even dawn straw sleeping mats and capes made of red oilpaper. Another joins the group, a bamboo pipe clenched in his teeth.

PORTER 1: That damn bum, Akakuma! That piece of trash got himself a long haul all the way to the summit.

PORTER 2: Hey, I bet that guy’s stolen forty or fifty mon worth of abite from me. These so-called ‘long hauls’ are worth about 600 mon, and abite are tips.\(^{133}\)

PORTER 3: Well, that’s just fine, but get a load of what this guy here is wearing! He’s acting as if the sake trademarks on his straw cape are actual crests!

CAPED PORTER: I finally got myself one of these yesterday at the Kōshūya in Odawara. But when I put it on the hem was so long it made me look like a damn doctor.

NAKED PORTER: No, you’re just resourceful. And that’s why you get to wear what you want. See, I’m the only one here without any clothes. Old lady Rattle-mouth told me she would give me an old umbrella, and that I should strip it down and wear it. That idiot. I’d just look like a wild pig. When I told her there’s no way I would wear anything like that, she said, “here, wear this then,” and gave me a straw mat. And, just listen to this; last night in Hata when I went out to take a bath, a damn horse ate my beloved new clothes! Dammit to hell!\(^{134}\)

\(^{128}\) Komo kaburi is a term that refers to beggars.

\(^{129}\) Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 9, 66-7. Ora ni mo chitto kure no kane (Could you give a little to me?) is a play on “bell at dusk,” juxtaposed with the colorful (hade) mat.

\(^{130}\) Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 9, 147. Here a colorful straw mat becomes a poor man’s brocade, proof to those back home he has made something of himself out in the world.

\(^{131}\) Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 10, 9. In Edo-period Japan, doctors were not necessarily esteemed as they are today.

\(^{132}\) Homeless porters is kumosuke in the original.

\(^{133}\) This is an aside by Ikku.

\(^{134}\) Nakamura, NKBZ 49, 112-3. See note 23 on
EXAMPLE 2

The hanashi and Hizakurige excerpt that follows make reference to a popular Edo-period style of music and narrative singing, Bungo bushi, founded by Miyakoji Bungonosuke (d. 1740). The phrase koto kai na (trans. could it truly be?) was frequently chanted at the end of Bungo bushi passages and the characters below are doing their best imitations of chanters. Perhaps this was as amusing to Edo-period readers/listeners as, say, Americans today screeching a high quality, “Ha! Ooh! Hit me!” in reference to the American funk music legend, James Brown.

“Heavenly Being” (Tenjin) in Strange Tales: Sacred Drum (Chinwa gakudaiko, 1772)\(^{135}\)

Two provincial samurai are on a pilgrimage to Kannon.

SAMURAI 1: Here we are, offer up your prayers.

SAMURAI 2: Is the one in the middle Kannon?

SAMURAI 1: Yes, of course.

SAMURAI 2: How about the one on the right?

SAMURAI 1: That’s Dainichi.

SAMURAI 2: And the one on the left?

SAMURAI 1: Seishi.

SAMURAI 2: Oh, that’s all?

Finding an image of a heavenly being [tenjin] on the ceiling, he speaks up once more.

SAMURAI 2: Hey, that doesn’t look like Kannon to me. Who’s that woman laying down there?

SAMURAI 1: That? It’s a Bungo bushi chanter.

SAMURAI 2: Now, I’m not going to buy that one!

SAMURAI 1: You oaf! That honorable figure, could it truly beehee?\(^{136}\)

Scene in Hizakurige 3.1 (1804)

PROPRIETOR: So the young man is hungry. Okay, let’s get something in your stomach. Then you’ll be good to go.

KITA: On second thought, I’ll start with something to drink. Thank you, fine, that’ll do. By the way, what kind of soup is this here? Boiled baby sardines and veggies, Senba-style? What’s next, huh? Pumpkin sesame soup and sweet potatoes?

YAJI: Now, let’s not be harsh. Hey, look at these shrimp. When they splash around they look like those heavenly beings [tenjin] painted between the cross strips on temple ceilings.

KITA: You mean the Bungo bushi? Could it truly beehee?\(^{137}\) Or so they say, ha ha ha! Hey old man, let me pour you another.\(^{138}\)

EXAMPLE 3

The next hanashi and Hizakurige excerpt share characters who seek to disgrace members of the outgroup. Humor comes with a twist in which the men initiating conflict are the ones humiliated, an outcome they clearly deserve.

“Idiot Seller of Clam Meat” (Baka no mukimi) in Thousand-ri Wings (Senri no tsubasa, 1773)

When an idiot seller of clam meat comes around and someone calls out, “Idiot!” he responds, “That’s right!” The innkeeper next door hears this and decides to give it a try for himself. He calls out, “Idiot!” and gets the answer, “That’s right!”

INNKEEPER: What a fool! Let’s try it again. Idiot!

SELLER: That’s right, you’re the idiot!

INNKEEPER: Okay, you’ve got me.\(^{139}\)

“The Idiot Vendor” (Baka uri) in The Six Categories of Joke Tales (Otoshibanashi rikugi, 1797)

This story is virtually the same as Baka no mukimi, above.\(^{140}\)

Scene in Hizakurige 4.2 (1805)

\(^{135}\) The title refers to the drums used in kagura music, but hints at taikomochi, professional male companion-entertainers.

\(^{136}\) Mutô, Hanashibon taisei 9, 40.

\(^{137}\) The line is also found in part II of Ryûtei Tanehiko’s Shunjô gidan mizuage-chô, (ca. 1836).

\(^{138}\) Nakamura, NKBZ 49, 165-6.

\(^{139}\) Mutô, Hanashibon taisei 9, 219.

\(^{140}\) Nakamura, NKBZ 49, 230 note 1.
YAJI: Hey there gentlemen, I’ve been listening to you and have been holding my tongue, but just what did you mean by calling us idiots, huh?
TRAVELER: It was nothing to do with you. It concerns us.
YAJI: How do you figure, “it concerns us?” You were blabbing about what happened at the inn last night, right? Yeah, well those so-called idiots who knocked down the sliding door, that was us!
TRAVELER: Ah, so, you guys are the idiots?
YAJI: Yeah, we’re the idiots.
TRAVELER: Ha ha! We only called you idiots because you are idiots! So then, what’s the big deal?
YAJI: Ooh, this wise guy’s making jokes now!
TRAVELER: Eat crap!
YAJI: Yeah? That’s real funny! Go get some and I will!
Yaji is absolutely furious. Not to be beaten, the traveler finds some horse manure and brings it forward on a stick.
TRAVELER: There you are, eat up!
YAJI: No, I hate horse crap!
TRAVELER: How can you say such a thing? Looks like we’re going to have to make you eat it!\(^{141}\)

EXAMPLE 4

The following demonstrate a cornucopia of word play. Contemporary readers/listeners probably chuckled at the implausible homonyms (groaners), misunderstandings, forgetfulness, or sheer silliness of characters. Unfortunately, a few references are so dated that it may be difficult for today’s readers to find them amusing.

“The Forgetful Bumpkin” (Inakamono mono no dōwasure) in Shika’s Paper-wrapped Brush (Shika no makifude, 1686)

A man in his thirties or so comes into town, arriving at the street 3-chōme. He walks up to a youth and says he would like to make a simple inquiry. When the youth asks what it is, the man says he would like to call on someone in the area. Asked the person’s name, the man says he forgot. Asked the name of the house, he has forgotten that too. The man is hopeless. When told there is no way of knowing, the man presses further.
MAN: I have traveled quite far, from Mito. If you cannot help me, I’ll have no choice but to take the two-day trip back.
Thinking this a pity, the youth asks if there is nothing the man can do remember the name or the person or house. Thinking for some time, the youth speaks up.
YOUTH: There are a number the inns lined up across the way; could it be Matsubaya Arisuke?
YOUTH: Then, how about Ms. Harima at the Kagamiya?\(^{142}\)
MAN: That’s is not it either. It’s something that pricks and stings.
YOUTH: I know! Hachibei of the Igaya?\(^{143}\)
And so they carry on until they come up with the place he was looking for.\(^{144}\)

“The Provincial Messenger” (Inaka no hikyaku) in Jewels of Table Coral (Eda sango ju, 1689)

A hikyaku messenger is sent on business from the provinces to the estate of a high-ranking man in Kyoto. The name of the noble is difficult to remember, so it is taught to him with a special phrase.
HIKYAKU: Yes, yes, I have it.
On his way up to Higashi no Dōin, he passes through Shinzaike, arriving at the gate of Ogawa Castle. There he asks if this would be the residence of a noble. The man standing guard, thinking the inquiry nonsense, begins by asking who the hikyaku is looking for.
HIKYAKU: His name sounds like something that flies in the sky.
GUARD: It must be some kind of bird. Could it be Master Asukai?\(^{145}\)
HIKYAKU: No, that doesn’t sound right. It’s a

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\(^{141}\) Nakamura, NKBZ 49, 229-30.

\(^{142}\) Hari is the phonetic equivalent of needle, kagami of mirror.

\(^{143}\) Hachi is the phonetic equivalent of bee, iga of burr.

\(^{144}\) Mutō, Hanashibon taikei 5, 208-9.

\(^{145}\) The first two characters in this name mean to fly and bird, respectively.
mischievous bird.
GUARD: Master Karasuma?¹⁴⁶
HIKYAKU: No, it’s an even more mischievous bird.
GUARD: Master Takatsukasa?¹⁴⁷
HIKYAKU: No, more mischievous yet.
GUARD: High Counselor Washinoo?¹⁴⁸
HIKYAKU: Now that was a washi that ceased soaring.¹⁴⁹

Scene in Hizakurige 5.3 (1806)

MAN AT INN: Hello there, need a place for the night? Please, I can set you up here.
YAJI: Hi, is Myōkenmachī far off yet?
WOMAN AT INN: No, it’s just a little further down the road.
YAJI: There’s supposed to be an inn, something-or-other, in Myōkenmachī, you know, the one that guy from Kamigata we met on the road said he would be lodging at...
No matter how long he thinks about it, Yaji cannot remember that the place is called the Fujiya.¹⁵⁰
YAJI: Man, it’s on the tip of my tongue! It’s name sounds like something that hangs down from a trellis... Hey, is there an inn in Myōkenmachī that hangs down?
MAN NEARBY: What! An inn that hangs in mid-air? How’s anybody supposed to answer a question like that?
YAJI: I hear you. I can’t find out by asking people in these parts. Let’s move on and ask someone down the road.
So they [Yaji and Kita] proceed, hurrying along until they arrive at a sign that reads “Mankintan: Yaharaya Shichizaemon, Myōkenmachī.”¹⁵¹ They figure this must be the place, so they stop a passerby to ask.
YAJI: Hi there, you got anything with a name that sounds like it might be dangling down?
PASSERBY: What! What the hell’s that supposed to mean, something dangling down?
YAJI: An inn, of course.
PASSERBY: Well, what’s the name of the place?
YAJI: No, you see, I’ve forgotten the name.
PASSERBY: Come on, how am I supposed to know if you can’t even tell me the name? Look, if it’s something dangling down you want, go have a look over where those people are standing, on the corner. Last year somebody hanged himself over there. Now there’s something that dangled!
YAJI: Oh good grief! Not something that used to dangle!
PASSERBY: Just go on over. That’s probably an inn over there too.¹⁵²

EXAMPLE 5

Both excerpts below are set on rivers in sanjukko-ku— barges used for transporting up to thirty bushels of rice and ferrying people. The passengers are in a comical state of uproar following accidents involving urine. The humor is of a scatological variety, a mainstay of gesaku. If this hanashi was indeed Iku’s inspiration as some scholars suspect, he spent more time on this adaptation than the ones above.

“The Burdensome Passenger” (Noriai meiwaku) in Great Collection of Early Spring Stories (Risshun hanashi taishū, 1774)

The passengers quiet as night falls on the sanjukko-ku ferry. An elderly woman relieves herself in an earthenware pot. She stagers with it as she tries to dispose of it into the river, but catches herself on a

¹⁴⁶ Karasu means crow.
¹⁴⁷ Taka means hawk.
¹⁴⁸ This name is written with the characters for eagle and tail, respectively. Washi means eagle.
¹⁴⁹ It is not clear exactly whom this refers to. One candidate is Washinoo Takakore (1645-84), who died relatively young, a few years prior to the publication of the hanashibon this appears in. It could also be a reference to one of several ancestors who also reached the rank of High Counselor (dainagon), one being Washinoo Takasuke (1324-1404), who renounced the world by taking the tonsure two years prior to his death at 81.
¹⁵⁰ Fuji means wisteria.
¹⁵¹ Mankintan was a medicine taken as a restorative, or for detoxification.
¹⁵² Nakamura, NKBZ 49, 319-20. This continues for some time, and, with each new person asked, the scene becomes increasingly absurd.
rush mat and spills it onto the legs of a sleeping passenger. The urine splashes onto him, but he continues sleeping without even taking notice. Thinking it terrible what she has done, she takes out a teacup, scoops water from the river, and pours it on the man’s legs to clean them. The man wakes up.

MAN: Hey, this old lady here starts by pouring hot water on me, and now she’s pouring cold!153

Scene in Hizakurige 6.1 (1807)

YAJI: What are you going to do?
KITA: Pee...
YAJI: You gotta go?
KITA: I’m going to throw it up!154
YAJI: What! Get over to the side of the boat! Go ahead, stick your head way out there and let ‘er go. I’ll hold on to you. How’s that? Are you done yet? Come on, you can do it... Well, I guess no dog’s going to come since this is a river.
KITA: Huh? What dog?
YAJI: Go ahead, I’ll call, “here, Whitey, Whitey, Whitey!” for you so you can vomit up the pee.155
KITA: You fool... Gluhhh.

Meanwhile, the old man also vomits, washes his mouth out, and gargles with river water.
OLD MAN: How’s that boy doing over there? Is he all right?
KITA: Somehow or other, things are better now. He rinses his mouth with a sober look on his face. Yaji does his best to hold back his laughter. Yaji appears on the outside to be a decent fellow, so the old man does not get especially angry.
OLD MAN: Well now, it looks like we’ve had ourselves quite an incident. We could drink the rest of my sake to get the taste out of our mouths, but I don’t have anything else to heat it up in. What should we do?"
CHÔMATSU: In that case, here, how about I give you an actual urinal pot to use?
OLD MAN: Well look there, a real urinal. And cleaner than anything else we’ve got. Wow, just as you bought it in Fujinomori, not used even once? We’ll take it.
KITA: Absurd! That’s just too much.
YAJI: Don’t be ridiculous. Green tea is good in earthenware pots, and the same will be true for hot sake in this urinal.
KITA: How do you expect a guy to drink sake out of a piss pot!
YAJI: Fine. Sorry, sir, could we go with the teapot after all?
OLD MAN: I tossed it into the river. This pot is brand new, so it’s clean.
With this the old man pours sake from the tub into the urinal, and places it on the brazier.
OLD MAN: Chômatsu, pull out those teacups. Now, here we are, real sake! Drink up boys.
He holds a cup out to Yaji, who takes it in his hand.
OLD MAN: Good at turning a blind eye, aren’t ya?156 Here you go, how about some fish? Can you eat irigara?
YAJI: Yes, well, what is it?
OLD MAN: It’s whale meat with the fat stripped off. I guess we can’t really call it irigara in that case, though.157
YAJI: Wow, fancy stuff. Here Kita, let me pour you one.
Yaji passes his teacup to Kitahachi and proceeds to pour from the urine pot. Kitahachi is now convinced the pot is clean, and therefore no longer worried. He takes the sake and gulps it down in one shot.
KITA: I tell you, there’s nothing like sake that hasn’t been mixed with piss. Here, may I pour for you?
OLD MAN: Why don’t we share with our friends over there?
With this Kitahachi offers a cup to the man from Echigo, next to him.
ECHIGOITE: Thank you there, don’t mind if I do.
He takes the cup and Kitahachi begins to pour.
ECHIGOITE: Isn’t that a pot to piss into?

153 Mutô, Hanashibon taikei 10, 236.
154 Moments earlier, Kita and another passenger accidentally drank sake from a teapot that Yaji had urinated into.
155 Parents encouraged potty-training children to go by calling for dogs with names such as Whitey (Shiro) and Blackie (Kuro).
156 Yaji knew well that he should not drink the sake (mixed with his own urine) passed around earlier. Now he is more than happy to drink.
157 Play on irigara, which can be phonetically interpreted to mean, “containing (iri) outer layer or shell (kara),” in this case blubber.
KITAHACHI: Don’t worry; it’s brand new, so it’s clean.
He finishes pouring and the man downs it.
ECHIGOITE: Ah, very good, very good! Now, my brother from Nagasaki, you’re next.
He passes along the cup and pours.
NAGASAKIAN: Oh, I’m very sorry, I shouldn’t make you...
OLD MAN: Go ahead, keep on passing it down that way.
NAGASAKIAN: Okay, next is you sir!
He goes to pass along the cup, but finds the man next to him looking quite ill, his face pale. He is covered in grime at that. There is gauze wrapped about his neck, and he is leaning on a blanket. He has paid for a four-person space, and is accompanied by an old man who is looking after him.
SICK MAN: I can’t drink, so please give a cup to me...
The cup is passed down to his attendant. Since he just heard the urinal was clean, he downs the sake without hesitation.
ATTENDANT: I’m sorry, but could I have you pass that urinal down this way? Maybe I’ll just pour one for myself here.
OLD MAN: Please, by all means, have a cup...
YAJI: Well now, in that case, pass the pisser on down this way.
ATTENDANT: Yes, there you are.
He passes the urinal to Kita, who in turn passes it to Yaji. He fills his cup to the brim and takes it all down in one big gulp, then suddenly hurls his teacup.
YAJI: Ohhhhhh, this can’t be happening! Huhhhhhh...
KITAHACHI: What happened?
YAJI: What the hell do you think happened! This isn’t sake, dammit! It’s piss!
ATTENDANT: What? I’ve really done it; I picked up the wrong stale pot and gave you ours! Oh, the sake’s right here. Could you pass ours back, please?
KITAHACHI: Ha ha ha ha! This is classic!
YAJI: My god, what should I do now? I could probably handle drinking that much piss, but... Oh, how that sick man reeks! Gluuuuuahhh! P’tu kha...
KITAHACHI: Ha ha ha! Look at that sick man’s face! It looks like he has syphilis! Pus is running from his head down the back of his neck!
YAJI: Oooohhghhuuu, please, stop it! My throat feels like it’s going to burst! I can’t take it, gluuah!
KITAHACHI: See, now your going to need to pee again! They should really prohibit pissing on boats...

Addendum II: “The Nimono Stop” (Niuriya)

NARRATOR: Here we have the two usual suspects, wandering along at their leisure until they arrive at Ise Kameyama. From there they pass through Shōno and Ishiyakushi and come to a fork in the road. They take a right, heading for the Ise Highway. From Kanbe they move on to Shiroko to see the “ever-blooming cherry trees,” and from there, they’re off to the village of Ueno.
KIb: Hey Seiyan, I’m running on empty here. I’m starving!
SEIYAN: Hey, don’t say things like that so loud! Have you no shame man? We’re Osakans! We don’t say things like our stomachs are empty.
KIb: That’s ridiculous! It doesn’t matter if we’re from Osaka or some other place. When you’re hungry, you’re hungry!
SEIYAN: No, listen, you’ve gotta say it in a way people around these parts won’t understand.
KIb: You mean, say it in code, or something?
SEIYAN: Are you that stupid? We’ve got plenty of trendy words in Osaka that would be perfect! Come on, say something like this: “My machsto is Kitayama! How ‘bout we put in the stopper?” If somebody hears you say that, they won’t know what to make of it.
KIb: I don’t even know what to make of it!
SEIYAN: I tell you, you’re hopeless man. “Mach-
sto” is just “stomach” backwards. When you say “Kitayama,” it just means “empty.”

KIKO: How do you figure?
SEIYAN: Look in the direction of Kitayama on a nice day; it looks wide open, vast, and spacious! That’s why Kitayama means “empty.”
KIKO: So, when we’re full we say “minamiyama”?
SEIYAN: I don’t know about that, but for “eating food,” we have to say, “put in the stopper.”
KIKO: So for taking a crap, then, we say, “pull the plug,” right?
SEIYAN: Nobody says anything like that! Oh look, perfect! That house over there looks like it might be a niuriya. Go over and see how things look.
KIKO: … Okay, I went over, but it’s no good.
SEIYAN: Why not?
KIKO: They’re closed today.
SEIYAN: No, countryside shops look like they’re closed every day of the year. If you go in, you’ll see they’re open for business.
KIKO: No, they had a sign out front.
SEIYAN: What’d it say?
KIKO: “Won’t make a single thing, emphatic. A various variety we’ve got, but not.”
SEIYAN: What the hell’s that supposed to mean?
KIKO: I think it’s an apology or something. Here, take a look. It’s written right over here.
SEIYAN: You dimwit! It says “Food stop. Sake, fish, and much more. The Yanagiya.”
KIKO: Pretty bad writing, huh?
SEIYAN: More like bad reader! Go on inside, see if they can make anything for us.
KIKO: Hello! Anybody home?
OLD MAN: Yes, what is it?
KIKO: It won’t be a problem if we come in and have a seat for a while, will it?
OLD MAN: If was a problem, don’t you think I’d already have these stools put away?

KIKO: Oh, right… Okay, we’ll have a puff here then.
OLD MAN: It’s your tobacco. Smoke as much as you like.
KIKO: What’ve you got?
OLD MAN: I’ve got a boil on my keister.
KIKO: No! I’m asking if you’ve got anything fired up.
OLD MAN: Oh yeah, plenty. The boards on the back fence are all charred black.
KIKO: That’s not what I mean! I mean, don’t you have anything a little fishy?
OLD MAN: Even worse, we’ve got two cesspits.
KIKO: Cesspits! Don’t you have anything you’ve made, dammit?
OLD MAN: You need straw sandals or something?
KIKO: For the love of... I’m asking you for something consumable man!
OLD MAN: The elements have already consumed our stonewall out back. Ready to fall any day, I tell ya.
KIKO: Seiyan!! Would you just get in here?
SEIYAN: Hey hey, okay. Quit your crying already. Watch out… Hey old man, what this guy’s trying to ask is, do you have anything that’ll go good with sake. He’s just trying to see if you’ve got anything tasty to eat.
OLD MAN: Oh, was that it? I was wondering what he was thinking asking for all that weird stuff, one thing after the next. And at the end of it all, here he goes and starts bawling. I didn’t know what I was gonna do! Ha-ha. So, anyway, what province do you boys come from?
SEIYAN: See there, Now that’s how you handle these bumpkins. So, old man, come on, what can you make?
OLD MAN: See there on the wall? I can make anything written on that paper.
KIKO: Seiyan, Let me do the reading, okay… uh… yeah. “Kuchira-ke,” “Akae-ke,” “Akakai-ke” “Tochiyau-ke...” Hey old man, is this supposed to be some kind of joke?
OLD MAN: Those say kujira-jiru, akae-jiru, ak-

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162 Raha, hara.
163 South-mountain. Kitayama is written with two characters, those for north and mountain.
164 Soko nuku. Soko ireru in the previous line.
165 Hitotsu senmeshi, shuch. Iro, iro iro, ariya nakiya. This is basically nonsense. This translation is one possible interpretation.
166 Ichizen meshi. Sake sakana iro iro ar. Yanagiya.
167 Yaita mono.
168 Kusai (i.e., namagusai) mono.
169 Kueru mono.
agai-jiru, and doiō-jiru, you know...

KIKO: Like hell! Those characters say ke and you know it!

OLD MAN: If they said ke they wouldn’t have dots for radicals, now would they? See the rest of ‘em? They’ve got dots too, right?

KIKO: What radical? Where?

OLD MAN: There, on the left side!

KIKO: Huh? That little hull there?

OLD MAN: No problem. There are tons of ‘em out there. I’ll throw out the trap and they’ll be in there waiting for sure, by the time my old lady gets back.

KIKO: You said she was going into town to buy miso. Is town nearby?

OLD MAN: Just eight-and-a-half miles over those mountains.

KIKO: Hey, hey! There’s no way she’s going to make it eight miles and back any time soon with old legs like that!

OLD MAN: No, you see, we country folk are quite used to the mountain trails here. It doesn’t matter how old we get, just give us two days and we’ll be fine.

KIKO: Oh quit your jabbering! You think we want to shack up here while we wait for miso soup! Fine, bring us whatever, as long as you can do it right now. And hurry up with it.

OLD MAN: All right then, something ready-made? How about ko-imo?

KIKO: No, those are all slimy and make me sick.

OLD MAN: I can bring some nishin over.

KIKO: No, sorry. Nishin leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

OLD MAN: Kazu no ko is okay, right?

KIKO: No, the little eggs get stuck in my cheeks. Sorry.

OLD MAN: Gompo no good either?

KIKO: Makes my stomach bloat up and I can’t stop farting.

OLD MAN: How about carrot?

KIKO: No, I can’t eat those, people will be calling me a pervert.

OLD MAN: Namabushi?

KIKO: Too spendy.

OLD MAN: Look, if you’re gonna be so tight with your money, you’re not going to find anything to eat!

KIKO: No, I like namabushi and all; I just can’t have it right now. I can’t have meat today because it’s a day of abstinence for my late father.

OLD MAN: Oh, I’m sorry... Well, if you’re abstaining today, I have just the thing. How about some Kōya-dōfu? That’s vegetarian.

KIKO: Kōya-dōfu? It’s that dry, tasteless stuff, right? Well, if you don’t have anything else, I’m just gonna have to deal with it... Oh hey, wait, old man. Would you mind squeezing the juice out of that before bringing it over?

OLD MAN: What are you saying? You just said it’s dry and tasteless... If I go and squeeze all the juices out, it’ll be so desiccated you won’t be able to swallow it!

KIKO: Don’t worry; I’ll still eat it. Go ahead, just wring that baby out.

OLD MAN: You’re sure now? Okay... like this?

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170 All types of miso soup. These, in order, are made with whale, red stingray, ark clam, and loach. Dots is chōbo in the original.

171 Hayamaku de shiten ka. Hayamaku is term born in the kabuki theater. Those who experience kabuki can hardly help being amazed at the swiftness of some opening curtains. Hayamaku also came to be used at restaurants, barbershops, etc., to express that one was in a hurry and wanted quick service.

172 Three ri eighteen chō. About 14 kilometers.

173 Baby taros.

174 Herring.

175 Herring roe.

176 Another term for gobō (burdock root).

177 These are not the Western carrots found in most Japanese dishes today, but red kintoki carrots, loaded with nutrients, especially those thought to increase male virility.

178 Also namabushii, this is katsuobushi (smoked, dried bonito) with the process stopped at the smoking stage. It can be sliced with a knife.
KIKÔ: Hey!! Not on the cutting board with your chopsticks like you’re scared of the thing! Just take that sucker in both hands and give it a good twist.
OLD MAN: You sure like to do strange things to your food before eating it... Okay, there, How’s that?
KIKÔ: Yeah, good. But... on second thought, it really does look parched now. No, there’s no way I’m gonna be able to eat that.
OLD MAN: That’s what I told you at the very beginning!
KIKÔ: I’m sorry, okay? Look, do you think you could just pour a little soup from that namabushi over it?
OLD MAN: Aha! So that was your grand scheme, was it? Well, I suppose it’d be all right to spare a little soup. But only soup, you hear? Hey, didn’t you say you have abstinence for your father today?
KIKÔ: That’s right. These here were his final words: “What ever you do, be sure to observe days of abstinence. For doing that you can have soup, but only soup, you hear...”
OLD MAN: Some way to abstain! Very well then. I’ll just pour some soup on, like so.
KIKÔ: We appreciate it. Hey, hey! Old man! You know, you really don’t have to pick out the little chunks that fall in with the soup. I thought you’d at least let one or two go, but jeez! Looks like you’ve got no backbone at all.
OLD MAN: No, you’re the one without a backbone!
KIKÔ: What’s that you’re spouting? Okay, if you’re gonna talk like that, I’ll show you a real man! I’ll buy some of your damn namabushi after all! Get a slab of that over here!
OLD MAN: This doesn’t come in slabs; it comes in slices!
KIKÔ: Of course it comes in slices... that are way too thin!! I want a slab! That one there, now that’s a good-sized hunk! Go ahead, you gonna heat it up in the pot, or what?
OLD MAN: What are you talking about? I’m cutting you off a slab!
KIKÔ: Oh, look at you go, you’ve got some skill! You should really come out to Osaka to slice up the daikon radish they use for sashimi garnishing. They could use a guy like you back home! I’ve seen that stuff your slicing in turtle-shell cuts here and there, but this is the first time I’ve seen it sliced paper-thin!180 Hey old man, be careful when you bring it over, if somebody coughs that stuff will be fluttering all over the place.
OLD MAN: Oh quit already, will you? Namabushi doesn’t flutter about!
KIKÔ: Listen to him... I bet I could blow from here and send those little shavings he calls slabs flying! Watch how it’s done, my friend. One, two, three, fuu! There! Look at it go!
SEIYAN: Yeah, yeah! Gone! It blew away!
KIKÔ: Yeah, right onto your plate, look!
OLD MAN: There! You boys have been served!
KIKÔ: Oh really? I thought something fell off your hands.
SEIYAN: Hey, we better knock it off, the old man’s getting pretty angry. Hey, we want to have a little something to drink, too. Got any sake?
OLD MAN: We’ve got superior brands of sake made right here in this village. Murasame, Niwasame, and Jikisame.
KIKÔ: Strange names for sake... How’s the Murasame?
OLD MAN: Drink it here and you’ll fall into a delightful drunken state.
KIKÔ: Yeah, I think that’s the whole idea behind drinking.
OLD MAN: Yep, it gives you a good buzz all right, but the minute you step out of the village the drunkenness wears off.181
KIKÔ: That’s not very encouraging sake, now is it. Is Niwasame any good?
OLD MAN: You sober up the moment you step outside.182
KIKÔ: And Jikisame?
OLD MAN: Sobers you up as you drink183
KIKÔ: Well that’s as good as useless. Yeah, old man, I bet you water the sake down, don’t you?
OLD MAN: No, I mix sake in with the water.

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180 Kamibushi, a play on kamebushi, one type of katsuobushi made from the two blocks of meat cut away from a small-sized bonito’s spine. When processed it resembles a turtle shell.
181 Mura means village. Same(ru) means to sober up.
182 Niwa means yard, or garden.
183 Jiki means right away, immediately.
KIKÔ: Old man, you sure are an artful one.\textsuperscript{184}
OLD MAN: I’d say I’m a heart-full one.\textsuperscript{185}
KIKÔ: There you go turning things around on us again! Fine, whatever, bring over the best sake you’ve got.
NARRATOR: So there you have it, after a spell of pouring cups and receiving cups, our two usual suspects find themselves in a fine drunken state.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{184} Mizukusai sake. Literally, alcohol that reeks of water. Mizukusai is also an expression for one who is standoffish, reserved, coldhearted, or secretive.
\textsuperscript{185} Sakekusai mizu. Literally, water that reeks of liquor, which I chose to leave out of the translation.
\textsuperscript{186} This translation is based on a transcription in the 1938 magazine Kamigata hanashi (vol. 25), reprinted in Shôkaku Shôfukutei V, ed., Kamigata hanashi (jôkan), (Tokyo: San’ichi shobô, 1971) 611-14. Shôfukutei Shôkaku V (1884-1950) and Katsura Yonedanji IV (1896-1951) ran Kamigata hanashi out of the “Rakugo Cottage” (Rakugo sô), which was actually Shôkaku V’s own home. These men were the masters of post-WWII Kamigata rakugo greats Shôfukutei Shôkaku VI (1918-1986) and Katsura Beichô III (1925-), respectively.
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