



Bloody Hell!

Reading Boys' Books in Seventeenth-Century Japan

Both in and outside of Japan, the early history of Japanese woodblock-printed children's literature continues to be insufficiently understood. Even the topic is controversial insofar as some contemporary scholars have denied the existence of a Japanese children's literature prior to the nineteenth-century importation of Western notions of the child. By examining a young boy's collection of picture books that were sealed inside a statue of the bodhisattva Jizō from 1678 to around 1980, the present article seeks to illuminate the contents and principal themes of "boys' books"—an incipient form of Japanese children's literature apparently written for and consumed by children—published in the Kyoto-Osaka region in the 1660s and 1670s. In particular, the article takes up the issue of extravagant representational violence in a subset of four illustrated warrior tales with obvious links to the contemporaneous *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* puppet theaters, exploring the salient features of those works in their historical and literary contexts.

KEYWORDS: Japanese children's literature—media violence—monsters—Yoshitsune-Benkei—Oguri—*sekkyō*—*ko-jōruri*—*yōkai*—*kodomo no ebon*—*irui-mono*

FOR CONTEMPORARY historians of Japanese children's literature, one of the most important discoveries of the twentieth century was a trove of ten illustrated children's books inside a sealed wooden statue of the bodhisattva Jizō 地藏 in the Dainichi Hall 大日堂 of the former (now defunct) Izawaji Temple 射和寺 in Izawa-chō, Matsusaka City, Mie Prefecture. The seated Jizō image seems to have been carved by a master craftsman of the Nanbokuchō period (1336–1392), and in 1950 it was designated an Important Cultural Property (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財) by the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. During the course of examinations and repairs in March 1915, December 1935, and August 1950, the statue was found to contain two paper-wrapped bundles of twelve small woodblock-printed books (ten of which were children's picture books), a thick sheaf of used calligraphy practice paper, a copybook of warrior pictures, and a *kawaraban* 瓦版 (broadsheet). The objects were largely disregarded until 1980, when the scholar Okamoto Masaru, having seen copies of the books and broadsheet made in the fall of 1978, had the statue reopened to further examine its contents.¹

Recognizing the historical significance of the materials, Okamoto was amazed by what he found. The books, calligraphy paper, and broadsheet had all apparently belonged to the late son of a seventeenth-century merchant by the name of Obiya (sash-maker/seller) Jirōkichi 帶屋次郎吉, who had placed them inside the image on the eleventh day of the ninth month of 1678 as a memorial offering for his child. Jizō was renowned in the medieval and early-modern periods for his salvation of children, and Jirōkichi's decision to seal a part of his dead son, represented by the boy's books and calligraphy, inside a statue of the bodhisattva would have ensured the boy's connection to Jizō in the afterworld. The boy's name, Obiya Chōkurō 帶屋長九郎, is written in a childish hand on the inside cover of two of the picture books, and the outer wrappings of the two bundles are inscribed with the incantation *namu Jizō daibosatsu* 南無地藏大菩薩, "Hail the Great Bodhisattva Jizō" and the boy's posthumous Buddhist name, Eigaku Hisamoto Shinji 永岳久甫信士. The boy's age at the time of his death is unknown, as are the causes and circumstances of his demise. Okamoto speculates that Chōkurō was fifteen or sixteen years old when he died,² but considering the awkward strokes of his signature on the inside cover of *Tengu-zoroe* 天狗そろへ (An assemblage of tengu), along with the date

Enpō 6 (1678, the year of the boy's death) written in the same unpracticed hand, it seems more likely to me that he was no older than eight or nine.

Three of Chōkurō's ten picture books contain publication dates, including 1667, 1668, and 1677, and considering that the entire collection was sealed inside the statue in 1678, Okamoto concludes that all ten volumes were likely published in the Kanbun 寛文 and Enpō 延宝 eras, between 1661 and 1677. This would make them roughly contemporaneous with the *akahon* 赤本 (red books) of Edo, which are believed to have flourished between circa 1661 and 1748, but none of which can actually be dated to before 1678.³ Several of Chōkurō's books were produced by prominent Kyoto publishers of *ko-jōruri* playbooks, including Yamamoto Kuhei 山本九兵衛, Hachimonjiya Hachizaemon 八文字屋八左衛門, and (probably) Tsurya Kiemon 鶴屋喜右衛門. Considering Izawa-chō's proximity to the old capital, which Chōkurō's father would have had occasion to visit in connection with his business, and from which he may have been expected to bring back souvenirs for his son, Okamoto surmises that they were all published there. Thus, given the circumstances of their likely purchase and preservation, Chōkurō's books—even the undated ones—are renowned today as the oldest extant children's books of the Kyoto-Osaka region.

The status, or even presence, of children's literature in premodern Japan is controversial among scholars today. Karatani Kōjin, for example, argued in a work written around 1980 that insofar as “the child” is a Western European philosophical construct, “it was not until [the notion of] ‘the child’ came to exist [in Meiji-period Japan] that literature and amusements ‘for children’ appeared” (KARATANI 1993, 119). In a 2002 review of the multi-volume *Nihon no jidō bungaku* 日本の児童文学 [Japanese Children's Literature], Joan Ericson likewise writes that “children's literature has a history rooted in state construction, nationhood and the arrival of modernity,” and that in one of the volumes she reviews, Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi “breaks new ground in pushing back the usual starting point in literature for children in Japan—conventionally dated from Iwaya Sazanami's 巖谷小波 *Kogane maru* かがね丸 (1891)—rooting it in a particular Sunday school tract of Christian missionaries published in 1872” (ERICSON 2002, 105 and 106). On the other hand, Kristin Williams argues that “children's literature emerged [in Japan] as early as the late 1670s,” and that although

it faded in the late nineteenth century, displaced by modern children's literature in movable type, Edo-period children's literature lasted for over two hundred years, borrowed from and transformed literary and theatrical sources, influenced the visual imagination of adult popular literature, and helped to shape both Edo-period concepts of the child and Edo-period children themselves.

(WILLIAMS 2012, 5)

In my own writings on eighteenth-century children's books (KIMBROUGH 2006a and 2008), I have implicitly sided with those who trace the history of Japanese children's literature back to the early Edo period. As Williams has observed, much of the current controversy seems to stem from a basic lack of information—particularly in English-language sources—about Edo-period publications for chil-

dren, as well as from the unfortunate tendency of some contemporary scholars simply to repeat what has become an entrenched “common knowledge” about the history of Japanese children’s literature. Thus, given the pressing need for more “data” in the field of Japanese children’s literary studies, the present article has two central aims: to introduce to English-reading audiences Chōkurō’s unique collection of illustrated books and to reflect on the implications of those books for our understanding of the early history of children’s literature in Japan. Among Chōkurō’s ten books are three concerning the exploits of the warrior Minamoto no Yoshitsune 源義経 (1159–1189) and his retainer Musashibō Benkei 武蔵坊弁慶, and I will argue that those works in particular demonstrate the presence of a kind of ultra-violent, non-didactic literature for children and young adults in the seventeenth century that was not unlike the sensationally violent “penny dreadfuls” and “dime novels” of nineteenth-century England and America—works written to entertain (rather than instruct) by appealing to a seemingly timeless and universal human fascination with bloodshed and brutality.

CHŌKURŌ’S BOOKS

It is hard to overstate the importance of Chōkurō’s book collection, especially insofar as it suggests a range of reading material that would have been deemed appropriate for merchant-class boys in the 1660s and 1670s. Like those of many boys today, Chōkurō’s tastes (or perhaps those of his father and/or other relatives who likely bought the books) seem to have tended toward monsters, anthropomorphic animals, silly jokes, and violence. Unfortunately, one can only speculate as to what sorts of books we might have today if Chōkurō had been a girl. The books span a continuum between those that were published for very small children—for example, highly simplistic works like *Tengu-zoroe*, which are dominated by their illustrations and which contain very little supporting text—and those that purvey more sophisticated narrative content, such as *Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari* おぐり判官てるて物語 (The tale of Oguri Hangan and Terute), that was based on a related theater book for adults and which would probably have been more interesting and appropriate for older children. Based on the books’ relative contents, which suggest the gradual growth and maturation of a child, we can imagine that Chōkurō’s father may have bought one or two volumes for his son every year until he died.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the collection is its lack of obviously didactic content. The principal aim of Chōkurō’s picture books, it seems, was to entertain rather than to inculcate or instruct. Other than a vague celebration of martial heroics, there is no explicit mention of Confucian, Buddhist, or any other philosophical principles or moral values that are so common in more sophisticated works of “adult” literature of the time, including woodblock-printed collections of filial piety tales, *bukemono* 武家物 (samurai tales), and illustrated biographies of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhist exemplars. One of Chōkurō’s contemporaries, the best-selling Confucian moralist Fujii Ransai 藤井懶斎 (1618–1709), seems to have single-handedly flooded the book market with virtuous tracts in the mid-



FIGURE 1. Inside cover and first page of *Tenguzoroe* (An assemblage of tengu), ca. 1661–1677. The inside cover is dated Enpō 6 (1678) and signed “Obiya Chōkurō.” The text on the first page reads, “First, there is Buzenbō of Mount Hiko in Tsukushi.” Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council (Izawa-chō jichikai).



FIGURE 2. *Dōke e-zukushi* (A compendium of silly pictures), ca. 1661–1677. King Enma, the judge of the dead, leers at Datsueba, the “clothes-snatching hag” of the Sanzu River in the afterworld. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

to-late seventeenth century; a bookseller's advertisement from the time tells us that "we should certainly read Master Fujii Ransai's works, because every one of them serves to elucidate the Five Righteous Human Paths, elevate virtue and castigate vice, and illuminate ignorance."⁴ Yet despite the popularity of authors like Ransai, Sōtoku Gudō 宗徳愚道, Asai Ryōi 浅井了意, and Gensei Shōnin 元政上人 (Nissei 日政), all of whom published highly moralistic collections of stories in or between the 1650s and 1680s, the narrators of Chōkurō's books are clearly uninterested in articulating ethical codes. Furthermore, the characters in those works (both the simpler illustrated catalogs and the more developed narratives) behave with impunity, demonstrating little or no thought for the motivations, implications, or consequences of their sometimes callous and brutal actions—a characteristic fundamentally at odds with what Judy Wakabayashi and others have described as the pre-Meiji penchant for didacticism in children's books (WAKABAYASHI 2008, 227–28).

The following is a descriptive list of the ten picture books discovered inside the wooden statue of Jizō at Izawaji Temple. All of them are small—a mere five inches tall and some three-and-a-half inches wide—and most of them are extremely well preserved. (The exception is *Ikusa mai*, which is far more battered and worn than all of the other books.) The books were published with black-and-white monochrome illustrations, many of which were skillfully colored in (by their owner, perhaps) in shades of red, green, yellow, orange, blue, and brown.⁵ Only *Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari* was left wholly untouched; considering that it was published in 1677, Chōkurō may not have had the interest or the opportunity to color it in before he died in the following year. I have grouped the works according to Okamoto Masaru's three categories of compendium books, nonhuman tales, and *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* volumes.⁶ The four compendium books appear to have been published for younger audiences (both readers and listeners, insofar as the works were likely read aloud to children by their parents), while the two books of nonhuman tales and the four *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books were apparently published for older children.

COMPENDIUM BOOKS

Tengu-zoroe 天狗そろへ (*An assemblage of tengu*)

One volume; undated; published by "Tsuruya" 鶴屋, whom Okamoto takes to be either the Kyoto publisher Tsuruya Kiemon or Tsuruya Gohei 鶴屋五兵衛, but more likely the former (OKAMOTO 1982, 320). The front inside cover is signed "Obiya Chōkurō, Enpō 6" (1678). Contains drawings of thirty-five *tengu*, including Buzenbō ぶぜん坊 of Mount Hiko (see FIGURE 1), Tarō-tengu 太郎天狗 and Jirō-tengu 二郎天狗 of Mount Konpira in Shikoku, Izuna no Saburō いづなの三郎 of Shinano Province, Kozakurabō ござくらぼう of Mount Yoshino, and the like. The *tengu* are shown in various poses, and while most of them are drawn with long noses, a few have beaks. Some of the *tengu* names that appear here also appear in the noh play *Kurama tengu* 鞍馬天狗 and other sources, but some of them are unique to this book (NAKANO and HIDA 1985, 484).



FIGURE 3. *Akusō-zukushi* (A compendium of wicked priests), ca. 1661–1677. Right: Katsura no Nanzen かつらのなんぜん of the Nachi Kumano Shrine. Left: “Sumitomo” すみとも, about whom the text explains: “This Sumitomo was a child of Fujiwara no Okikaze ふちはらのおきかぜ. His father died in exile, when Sumitomo was seven. He immediately made his way into the mountains and ate the animals there. He would come down into the villages to devour the peasants’ horses and oxen. He grew, and because he did so as a result of his meaty diet, he decided in his eighteenth year that he would cast a pall on all the land. He therefore raised his banner at Tomonoura Harbor and marched on the capital” (OKAMOTO 1982, 254). Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 4. *Senmitsu hanashi* (Tales of three in a thousand), ca. 1661–1677. Illustration of a doctor who says that when he was relaxing by his brushwood fence, “neither dreaming nor awake,” he saw “a single four-foot head with a light in its mouth flying about in the sky” (OKAMOTO 1982, 47). Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

Dōke e-zukushi どうけゑつくし (*A compendium of silly pictures*)

One volume; undated; publisher unknown. Contains a series of unrelated illustrations of funny or improbable scenes, including ones in which two hungry ghosts (*gaki* 餓鬼) hold down a demon with a gourd; a man keeps a dragonfly tied to the end of his excessively long nose hair; a person has attached a sail to the back of an ox; a demon loses a sumo wrestling match to a hungry ghost; a man rides backwards on a wild boar; and a demon smokes a pipe. Some of the scenes are notable for the levity with which they treat sacred religious figures. For example, in the second illustration, King Enma 閻魔王, the judge of the dead, is shown embracing the bodhisattva Jizō while a jealous boy lover (*oni no wakashu* 鬼の若衆; a “demon *wakashu*”) looks on. Likewise, in the book’s fourth illustration (see FIGURE 2), Enma is shown leering at Datsueba 奪衣婆, the “clothes-snatching hag” of the Sanzu River 三途の川 in the afterworld, who is dressed as a lovely courtesan and trailed by her own “demon maid” (*oni no gejo* 鬼の下女). As Okamoto has observed, the illustrations in this work are likely to have appealed to children of various ages (OKAMOTO 1982, 321).

Akusō-zukushi 悪僧づくし (*A compendium of wicked priests*)

One volume; undated; judging from the publisher’s mark on the cover—the character 九 in a circle—it was probably published by Yamamoto Kuhei of Kyoto. Contains portraits of eighteen evil warrior-monks, beginning with Ōishi Yamamaru 大いし山丸, who is said to have been a great villain of Mount Midoro in Bitchū Province during the reign of the forty-seventh human emperor (Junnin 淳仁, r. 758–764). The book concludes with Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 (1118–1181), the leader of the Taira during the first years of the Genpei War, whom it shows being carried off to hell in a burning carriage. The textual explanations are more substantial than in either *Tengu-zoroe* or *Dōke e-zukushi*.

Senmitsu hanashi せんみつはなし (*Tales of three in a thousand*)

One volume; undated; publisher unknown. Contains the inner title *E-hanashi* ゑはなし (Picture-stories). A collection of fifteen illustrated accounts of rare, strange, and sometimes terrifying dreams: so rare, in fact, that they are like only “three in a thousand.” The dreams include those of a man who once encountered a giant disembodied head in the mountains; a man who overheard King Enma pronouncing judgment on another man who had been unfaithful to his master; a man who was blown off course on his way to Nagasaki and then sailed to the island of Mount Penglai 蓬萊山; a man who found a three-foot, seven-eyed baby abandoned in the mountains; a man who was approached by three giant skulls that demanded to be avenged; two men who, in parallel dreams, ran away from the same blood-stained *ubume* 産女 (the ghost of a woman who died in childbirth); a man who was saved from a venomous snake by his copy of the *Kannon Sutra*; and various others.



FIGURE 5. *Ikusa mai* (Dance of the armies), 1668. A council of birds meets to discuss staging an attack on their enemies, the animals. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 6. *Imo jōruri, Bijin tataki* (Potato puppet theater/Beating the beauties), ca. 1661–1677. The planted potatoes (left) attempt to fight off the assault of Suki Tarō すき太郎 and Kuwa Jirō くわ二郎, “the plow and hoe brothers.” Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 7. *Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe* (Minamoto no Yoshitsune's glorious feats), ca. 1661–1677. Yoshitsune (left) fights Benkei on Fifth Avenue Bridge in Kyoto. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 8. *Ushiwaka sennin-giri Hashi Benkei* (Little Yoshitsune slays a thousand, and Benkei on the bridge), 1667. Yoshitsune (left) slaughters 999 people on Kyoto's Fifth Avenue Bridge while Benkei (right) stands and watches. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

NONHUMAN TALES

Ikusa mai 軍舞 (*Dance of the armies*)

One volume; published in Kanbun 8 (1668) by Yamamoto Kuhei of Kyoto. Contains the inner titles *Tori kedamono mai* とりけだ物まひ (Dance of the birds and beasts), *Mushi mai* むしまひ (Dance of the insects), and *Uo gasen narabi ni shōjinmono* うおがせん并しやうじんもの (Fish fights and vegetarian fare). As the inner titles suggest, this volume is actually three tales in one: stories of the mock-heroic battles between birds and animals, insects and other insects, and fish and an assortment of beans, vegetables, and mushrooms. The work contains an abundance of wordplay on the names of various edible plants and animals. Unlike the preceding compendium books, this and two of the other volumes (*Imo jōruri*, *Bijin tataki* いも上るりびじんたたき and *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*, *Hashi Benkei* 牛若千人切はし弁慶) contain full pages of text interspersed with full-page illustrations, suggesting that they were produced for more advanced readers.

Imo jōruri, *Bijin tataki* (*Potato puppet theater/Beating the beauties*)

One volume; undated; published by Tsuruya Gohei, probably of Kyoto. On the inside cover there is a crude drawing of a man beside the signature “Obiya Chōkurō.” This is two works in a single volume: the first, *Imo jōruri*, is a parodic warrior-tale of the harvesting, washing, cooking, and consumption of a patch of planted potatoes. Okamoto observes that in accord with its title, which invokes the *jōruri* puppet theater, the opening and closing passages of *Imo jōruri* are written in the style of *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* (OKAMOTO 1982, 326). The second work, *Bijin tataki*, is a sing-song list of beautiful women of the past—both historical and fictional—including Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 of China, the goddess Kichijōten 吉祥天, the Some-dono Empress 染殿后, Izumi Shikibu 和泉式部, Koshikibu no Naishi 小式部内侍, Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部, the daughter of Ki no Arisune 紀有常の娘, Jōruri-hime 浄瑠璃姫, Matsukaze 松風 and Murasame 村雨, Terute-no-hime 照手の姫, Ono no Komachi 小野小町, Tokiwa Gozen 常磐御前, Sayohime 小夜姫, Senju-no-mae 千手の前, and many others.

SEKKYŌ AND KO-JŌRURI BOOKS

Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe

源よしつね高名そろへ (*Minamoto no Yoshitsune's glorious feats*)

One volume; undated; published by Hachimonjiya Hachizaemon of Kyoto. An illustrated catalog of Minamoto no Yoshitsune's fourteen greatest martial exploits from before, during, and after the twelfth-century Genpei War. Like *Senmitsu hanashi*, *Benkei tanjōki* 弁慶誕生記, and *Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari*, nearly every page is made up of a large illustration capped by a small (roughly quarter-page) passage of text.



FIGURE 9. *Benkei tanjōki* (The birth and life of Benkei), ca. 1661–1677. Benkei (left center) thrashes the monks of Mount Shosha and burns down their temple. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 10. *Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari* (The tale of Oguri Hangan and Terute), 1677. Oguri and Terute (left) watch as Terute's brother Saburō commits *seppuku* beside their father, Lord Yokoyama. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

Ushiwaka sennin-giri, Hashi Benkei 牛若千人切はし弁慶
(*Little Yoshitsune slays a thousand, and Benkei on the bridge*)

One volume; published in Kanbun 7 (1667) by Yamamoto Kuhei of Kyoto. Tells the story of the teenaged Yoshitsune's slaughter of 999 people in the capital, as well as his legendary first meeting with his loyal retainer, the warrior-monk Benkei. Unlike the other three *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books in Chōkurō's collection, *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* alternates between full pages of text and illustration, suggesting that it may have been intended for slightly older, more accomplished readers.

Benkei tanjōki 弁慶誕生記 (*The birth and life of Benkei*)

One volume; undated; judging from the publisher's mark on the cover (the character 九 in a circle), it was probably published by Yamamoto Kuhei of Kyoto. Subtitled *Ushiwaka sennin-giri no koto* うし若千人きりの事 (The matter of Little Yoshitsune slaying a thousand) and *Oniwakamaru suterareshi koto* おにわか丸すてられし事 (How Little Benkei was abandoned). The work contains the inner title *Benkei monogatari* べんけいものかたり (The tale of Benkei), and it chronicles the legendary birth and life of Yoshitsune's loyal retainer, Benkei.

Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari

おぐり判官てるて物語 (*The tale of Oguri Hangan and Terute*)

One volume; published in Enpō 5 (1677) by “Shōhei” 庄兵衛, whom Okamoto Masaru takes to be either Izutsuya Shōhei 井筒屋庄兵衛 or Sakaiya Shōhei 堺屋庄兵衛 of Kyoto, but more likely the latter (OKAMOTO 1982, 339). Recounts a simplified version of the medieval *sekkyō* story of Oguri Hangan and Terute-no-hime.⁷

Although Okamoto classifies Chōkurō's picture books as compendium books, nonhuman tales, and *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books, we might as easily divide the ten works into two alternate groups: tales of the strange and supernatural, and warrior tales. Judging from the limited sample in Chōkurō's library, the two themes of creepiness and combat constituted the heart of boy's literature in the Kyoto-Osaka region in the mid-to-late seventeenth century. *Tengu-zoroe*, *Dōke e-zukushi*, and *Senmitsu hanashi*—three of the simpler volumes—clearly fit the former category, while *Akusō-zukushi* and the four *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books fit the latter. As works of fantasy warrior fiction, *Ikusa mai* and *Imo jōruri* can be placed in either group; they are multivalent, much like the animator Craig Bartlett's contemporary American cartoon series “Dinosaur Train,” which cleverly appeals to many boys' disparate interests in dinosaurs and trains. Only *Bijin tataki* is inappropriate to either category, although, in defense of Okamoto's classifications, it fits in well with the compendium books (but not with his category of nonhuman tales, in which he places it as a result of its combination with *Imo jōruri*).



FIGURE II. Covers of the four *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books in Chōkurō's collection. From left to right and top to bottom: *Oguri Hangan Tēnute monogatari*; *Benkei tanjōki*; *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*, *Hashi Benkei*; and *Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe*. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

CHŌKURŌ'S WARRIOR TALES

For Okamoto, Chōkurō's *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books are children's books that take characters from the *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* puppet theaters as their heroes, and that seem to have been produced by simplifying, condensing, and/or abridging preexisting *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* playbooks (*shōhon* 正本, "true texts") for adults. Only one of the four volumes has yet been matched with an actual extant *shōhon*: *Oguri Hangan Terute monogatari*, the text and illustrations of which Okamoto has shown were strongly influenced by those of the *Oguri Hangan* おぐり判官 published by Shōhon-ya Gohei 正本屋五兵衛 in 1675. But based on the language of the stories (which incorporate many of the distinctive linguistic conventions of *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri*), their characters and contents, and the physical aspects of the books (three out of four of which have black-patterned covers like those used for *shōhon*), Okamoto suggests that the four *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* books in Chōkurō's collection were published as "byproducts" (*fukusanbutsu* 副産物) of theater books for adults.⁸ As both Okamoto and Nakano Mitsutoshi have observed, this is not particularly surprising insofar as three of the four volumes were published by either Yamamoto Kuhei or Hachimonjiya Hachizaemon, both of whom are known to have been prominent Kyoto publishers of *shōhon* playbooks.⁹

Of the four *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* picture books in Chōkurō's collection, three concern the twelfth-century Genpei War hero Minamoto no Yoshitsune and his devoted retainer Benkei, both of whom have been celebrated as cultural icons since the thirteenth or fourteenth century.¹⁰ Whether their presence in nearly half of Chōkurō's warrior books indicates their popularity in early Japanese children's books in general, or whether it mirrors Chōkurō's (or his father's) own preferences in particular, is impossible to say. But in either case it is remarkable, and it reflects Yoshitsune and the wild warrior-monk Benkei's prominence in the popular adult fiction and drama of Chōkurō's day.

The first of the three Yoshitsune-Benkei books, *Benkei tanjōki*, or, loosely translated, "The birth and life of Benkei," chronicles the life of Musashibō Benkei from his inauspicious birth to his abscondence to the northeast with the young Yoshitsune prior to the Genpei War. The story that it tells would have been well-known to audiences of the time from its inclusion in numerous other sources, including seventeenth-century woodblock-printed editions of the medieval *Gikeiki* 義経紀, the *otogizōshi* お伽草子 *Benkei monogatari* 弁慶物語, and various *noh*, *kōwakamai* 幸若舞, and *ko-jōruri* texts. Unlike those other works, however, *Benkei tanjōki* focuses on Benkei's earlier years, which may have held greater appeal for younger audiences, rather than on his more famous later exploits, including his valiant defense of Yoshitsune in the years following the Genpei War and his outstandingly gruesome "standing death" at the Koromo River 衣川. Instead, *Benkei tanjōki* tells of Benkei's mother's unusually protracted pregnancy, which is said to have lasted for a full three years and three months; Benkei's laughing declaration at birth that it was "too bright outside" (the illustration of which appears to be indebted to earlier woodblock-printed editions of *Gikeiki* [FIGURES 12 and 13]); little Benkei's



FIGURE 12. *Benkei tanjōki* (The birth and life of Benkei), ca. 1661–1677. At his birth, Benkei (left) springs from the womb and exclaims, “Oh, how bright!” Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 13. *Gikeiki*, vol. 3. Undated edition, ca. Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704). Scene of Benkei's birth. Author's collection.



FIGURE 14. *Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe* (Minamoto no Yoshitsune's glorious feats), ca. 1661–1677. In the spring of his fifteenth year, Yoshitsune (right) slashes through the head of Sekihara Yoichi, a warrior affiliated with the ruling Taira clan. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

abandonment in the mountains; his mischievous days as a temple acolyte, culminating in his self-performed tonsure; his burning of Enkyōji Temple 円教寺 on Mount Shosha 書写山 in Harima Province; his quest to steal a thousand swords from members of the ruling Taira clan; and his fateful meeting with Yoshitsune at Kyoto's Fifth Avenue Bridge, among other events.

The second of Chōkurō's three Yoshitsune-Benkei books, *Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe* (Minamoto no Yoshitsune's glorious feats), hereafter abbreviated to *Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe*, is an illustrated catalog of fourteen of Yoshitsune's most famous accomplishments, all of which appear in other contemporaneous works of literature and drama. Following a short biographical introduction, the work begins by recounting the legend of the fifteen-year-old Yoshitsune's *sennin-giri* 千人切 (slaughter of a thousand): his attempted murder, as a Buddhist memorial offering to his late father, of a thousand people associated with the Taira. The story is mentioned in passing in *Benkei tanjōki*, and it constitutes the principal dramatic event in *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*, *Hashi Benkei*. The boy ultimately fails in his vindictive endeavor insofar as his thousandth victim is Benkei, who, as we can see in FIGURE 7, fights and then surrenders to the nimble Yoshitsune and becomes his loyal retainer. This first account is followed by the stories of Yoshitsune's annihilation of the disrespectful samurai Sekihara Yoichi 関原与市 and all of his thirty-six men (FIGURE 14); Yoshitsune's extermination of Kumasaka Chōhan 熊坂長範 and his band of bandits; Yoshitsune's killing of the six thieves who murdered his mother at the Yamanaka post station (FIGURE 15), a marvelous bloodbath that has been most colorfully depicted in the Yamanaka Tokiwa 山中常磐 picture scrolls attributed to Iwasa Matabei 岩佐又兵衛 (1578–1650); several of Yoshitsune's more



FIGURE 15. *Minamoto no Yoshitsune kōmyō-zōro* (Minamoto no Yoshitsune's glorious feats), ca. 1661–1677. Yoshitsune (center right) avenges his mother's murder. Notice the blood spurts hand-colored with a reddish-yellow ink. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.



FIGURE 16. *Benkei tanjōki* (The birth and life of Benkei), ca. 1661–1677. Yoshitsune (upper left) cuts off a man's head while Benkei (lower left) pulls his captors by the rope that binds him. Notice the blood spurts in red. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

famous exploits in the Genpei War, many of which are represented in screen paintings from the late medieval and early Edo periods; and, in the end, Yoshitsune's *seppuku* 切腹 suicide at Takadachi.

What may be most surprising for modern readers of these children's books is the extremity of their violence and the seemingly cavalier ways in which that violence is portrayed. Nevertheless, when compared to some nineteenth-century children's literature in England and America, Chōkurō's Yoshitsune-Benkei books are hardly unique. American dime novels of the 1860s and 1870s, whose "primary audience," according to Harold SCHECHTER (2005, 34), "was young boys," trucked in particularly gruesome and salacious material. Russel Nye explains that "twenty deaths per novel was not unusual, and the formula demanded at least one dangerous crisis per chapter. You began, said Robert Davis, who wrote dozens of Westerns for Street and Smith, with 'a hero, a villain, dustbiting redskins, three Colts, thin air, and much desperado dialogue,' and proceeded from there" (NYE 1970, 205). Schechter writes that

American boys weren't the only audience for sensationalistic schlock during the late nineteenth century. In Britain, their juvenile cousins were devouring countless of so-called "penny dreadfuls"—a term indicative of both the cut-rate cost and quality of these tacky publications and the frequently appalling content of their stories.

Like *Seth Jones*, *Deadwood Dick on Deck*, and other dime novels, the penny dreadfuls of the Victorian era specialized in escapist fantasies with a heavy emphasis on frenzied action and graphic gore. If anything, these lurid entertainments—which were aimed primarily at working-class youngsters, mostly (though not exclusively) boys—were even more wildly violent than their American counterparts. Besides celebrating the exploits of outlaws, thieves, and murderers—who were invariably cast as Robin Hood-style heroes—they often focused on the crimes of psychopathic killers, whose atrocities were recounted in hideous detail. (SCHECHTER 2005, 34–36)

Like Chōkurō's warrior tales, penny dreadfuls included illustrations, many of which sought to capture "the most bloodcurdling moments of the story" (SCHECHTER 2005, 41), appealing to what William James once described in a different context as "our aboriginal capacity for murderous excitement."¹¹

Whether or not the "problem" of violence in our own contemporary children's entertainment would have been a problem for seventeenth-century audiences in Japan is unclear. The perception of "referential violence" (represented, as opposed to actual, violence) is inherently subjective, and as contemporary social scientists have shown, it tends to result more from the ways in which that violence is portrayed—what the film scholar Stephen Prince has dubbed the "stylistic amplitude" of its depiction (PRINCE 2003, 35)—than from the represented behaviors themselves. In discussing Prince's work on violence in modern motion pictures, James Kendrick writes that "we can see film violence as having two primary components: the referential component (that is, the behavior depicted) and the cinematic treatment (what Prince terms 'stylistic amplitude'), which is a function of graphicness and



FIGURE 17. *Ushiwaka sennin-giri, Hashi Benkei* (Little Yoshitsune slays a thousand, and Benkei on the bridge), 1667. Yoshitsune (left) learns martial arts under the tutelage of *tengu*. Courtesy of the Izawa Town Council.

duration” (KENDRICK 2009, 13). We can apply Prince’s notion of stylistic amplitude to a variety of media. For example, in their originally uncolored woodblock-printed forms, the picture books in Chōkurō’s collection would have been slightly less graphic than they are today (or were in 1678), after some unknown person—probably Chōkurō—colored them in, highlighting blood spurts and the like and thereby increasing the amplitude of their depictions (FIGURES 15 and 16). Rather than being repelled by the stories’ violence, the unknown amateur artist seems to have reveled in it (like many boys might today), and, as an active consumer, to have actually participated in its vivification. In one particular scene in *Benkei tanjōki*, for example, the only part of the line drawing to which color has been added is the blood—now painted bright red—shooting out of a swordsman’s severed neck and head (FIGURE 16).¹² The utter absence of color from the rest of the image allows for a surrealistic intensification of the pictorial gore.

The last of the three Yoshitsune-Benkei books is *Ushiwaka sennin-giri, Hashi Benkei* (Little Yoshitsune slays a thousand, and Benkei on the bridge), hereafter abbreviated to *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*. Like *Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe*, it depicts the teenaged Yoshitsune (known in his youth as Ushiwaka 牛若) as a twelfth-century mass-murdering terrorist-hero. The immediate origins of the story are obscure, but there is a loosely related *ko-jōruri* playbook with nearly the same title (*Ushiwaka sennin-giri* 牛若千人切, as opposed to *Ushiwaka sennin-giri, Hashi Benkei*), published in 1679 by Yamamoto Kuhei and attributed to the chanter Uji Kaganojō 宇治加賀掾. Unfortunately, that work dates to a dozen years after Chōkurō’s book, and its plot is far more convoluted. However, Muroki Yatarō has suggested that a reference to a lost play by the name of [Blank] *sennin-giri* 〇千人切 in a list of *ko-jōruri*

compositions in a 1661 entry in the diary *Matsudaira Yamato no kami nikki* 松平大和守日記 may in fact refer to the 1667 picture book's antecedent work.¹³

Chōkurō's *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* begins with Yoshitsune's widowed mother, Tokiwa Gozen, deciding to send her young son to live and study at Kurama Temple 鞍馬寺 after her husband's unsuccessful rebellion against the Taira. Yoshitsune finds himself surrounded by 380 other acolytes, 90 of them Taira. Because Yoshitsune wears the same clothes every day—even on special, formal occasions—the other acolytes tease him, calling him the “*minomushi chigo*” みのむしちご, or “bag-worm acolyte,” in reference to the *minomushi*'s supposedly unchanging appearance throughout the four seasons.¹⁴ Yoshitsune blushes, hides, and weeps, after which he writes a letter to his mother. Tokiwa immediately sews him a splendid set of clothes, the elaborate description of which takes up more than a third of the entire tale. Later, Yoshitsune is pleased to receive his new attire, but he takes to sneaking away from the temple to practice martial arts in the woods of Sōjō Valley 僧正が谷. The accompanying illustration (FIGURE 17) shows him sparring with the various *tengu* of Mount Kurama—a visual reference to the legends of his miraculous training, recounted in the *otogizōshi Tengu no dairi* 天狗の内裏 (The palace of the *tengu*) and other late-medieval sources—but, surprisingly, the written text contains no mention of *tengu*.

One day Yoshitsune realizes that it has been thirteen years since the death of his father, whom he recalls having lost at the age of two. In Japanese Buddhist culture, the thirteenth death anniversary is a particularly important one, and Yoshitsune decides that rather than reciting “one thousand or ten thousand scrolls of sutras” for his father's sake, as an ordinary person would, he should travel into the capital and kill a thousand Taira as his own more personal Buddhist offering. He spends seven days and seven nights reciting sutras and chanting the *nenbutsu* 念仏 (the ritual invocation of the name of Amida Buddha) for his father, after which he makes his way into the city and kills 999 passersby, both high and low alike. He utterly terrorizes the capital, for as the narrator whimsically explains, “those who saw or heard tell of what he did all exclaimed, ‘Oh, how frightening!’” As in all other versions of the story, Benkei approaches Yoshitsune at Fifth Avenue Bridge, but before Yoshitsune can kill him, Benkei surrenders and swears allegiance to the young lord. The two return to Kurama Temple, and in a final, formulaic line reminiscent of countless *ko-jōruri* playbooks, the narrator declares that “there was no one at all, noble or base, who did not praise Yoshitsune for his glorious feat.”

At the risk of oversimplification, *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* is thus the story of a sensitive boy who is teased about his clothes, and who gets revenge by first procuring a better set of clothes—far fancier than those of his peers—and then killing 999 strangers whom he associates with the men who killed his father and, presumably, with the Taira acolytes who bullied him at school. On a purely emotional level, his actions make perfect sense. Furthermore, his ambition to avenge his father's death is admirably filial, especially in the context of a seventeenth-century storytelling culture that valorized vendettas. But however brave and accomplished Yoshitsune

might have been, the way in which he pursues his revenge is disturbing insofar as he targets seemingly random residents of the capital.¹⁵

In *Tengu no dairi*, it is in fact Yoshitsune's late father Yoshitomo 義朝 who, in his rebirth as Dainichi Buddha 大日如来, urges Yoshitsune to abandon his Buddhist endeavors in order to focus on killing the Taira. In a late Muromachi-period picture scroll in the possession of the British Library, for example, Yoshitomo/Dainichi tells Yoshitsune that he would rather be avenged than have his son transcribe for him "a thousand or ten thousand sutras."¹⁶ (Having already become a buddha, Yoshitomo is not likely to have needed the merit.) More significantly, in the course of an extended prophecy at the conclusion of the tale, Yoshitomo/Dainichi actually commands his son to carry out the *sennin-giri* memorial offering to him. He says,

You will be fourteen next year, and in observance of the thirteenth anniversary of my death, you must set out to slay a thousand men at Fifth Avenue Bridge. After you have killed the first 999, Musashibō Benkei, the heir of the Kumano shrine intendant Tanzō, will come. Don't kill him; save his life and make him a retainer. He will serve you for a very long time. After that, go back home and have a blood celebration. (TSUJI 1999, 367b–68a)

This strange and callous instruction seems to have been too much for some medieval storytellers, because at least one *Tengu no dairi* manuscript—the Shinoda Jun'ichi text—seeks to justify Yoshitomo's directive by having him explain that the 999 people whom Yoshitsune will kill at Fifth Avenue Bridge will be reincarnations of the ants that devoured Yoshitsune when he was a winged insect listening to a sutra recitation in a former life.¹⁷ It is therefore those people's karma—their own just rewards, and nothing that ought to weigh on Yoshitsune's conscience—that they should be slaughtered by the reincarnated creature whom they themselves once consumed. In *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* (as in most extant *Tengu no dairi* texts), this kind of karmic justification is conspicuously absent, leaving a gaping moral void at the center of the tale. One might argue that by heroicizing loyalty, valor, and filial piety (as opposed to empathy, mercy, and restraint), the story models some of the "samurai virtues" that it fails to address more explicitly; but such an interpretation cannot account for the insensitive brutality of Yoshitsune's actions, or for the visceral, seemingly homicidal glee that pervades all of the warrior tales in Chōkurō's collection. More likely, Chōkurō's warrior tales simply cater to what Harold Schechter describes as "our age-old hunger for spectacles of suffering, torture, and violent death."¹⁸

Yoshitsune's great medieval biography, *Gikeiki*, which circulated widely in numerous woodblock-printed editions in the seventeenth century, circumvents the troubling moral issue of Yoshitsune's rampage by avoiding it altogether. In *Gikeiki*, Yoshitsune's first meeting with Benkei occurs in the course of Benkei's campaign to steal a thousand swords. After having accumulated 999 blades, Benkei sees Yoshitsune, who is wearing a particularly marvelous weapon, and he attempts to steal it. The result, of course, is that Benkei ultimately surrenders to Yoshitsune and



FIGURE 18. Kyokutei Bakin, *Enseki zasshi*, 1811. Reproduction of an illustration from the *ko-jōruri* playbook *Kinpira sennin-giri* (Kinpira slays a thousand), 1691. Kinpira (left) fights Dobu Kuma (“Gutter Bear”) on Yahagi Bridge in Mikawa Province; notice the ten severed heads at the bottom left. Author’s collection.

becomes his retainer.¹⁹ Whether or not the unknown *Gikeiki* author intended to substitute the story of Benkei’s thousand swords for that of Yoshitsune’s extraordinary vendetta is impossible to say, but the text’s deviation from the Yoshitsune-slaughters-a-thousand narrative is intriguing—as is the children’s book’s author’s choice not to do the same.

CONCLUSION

Media violence is a perennial concern for many parents today, but for one prominent Japanese writer in the early nineteenth century, the lack of violence in contemporary children’s literature was the real cause for concern. In his 1811 *Enseki zasshi* 燕石雜誌 (Swallowstone miscellany), Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 decries the recent trend of parents teaching their children about profit [*ri* 利]. “In the past,” he explains, “parents taught their children about valor, because valor [*yū* 勇] is close to virtue [*gi* 義].”²⁰ In a discussion of “ferocious heroes” (*mosa* 猛者) in the performing arts of earlier years, Bakin writes,

Again, in that same age [around the Genroku era, 1688–1704], Izumi Dayū’s [和泉太夫] puppet plays came to be called “Kinpira” [金平].²¹ When you think about things like that in connection with [the popularity of ferocity in the kabuki of the time, it is no wonder that] in that age even children were wholeheartedly enamored with derring-do. However, if you were to show a picture book like *Kioi sakura* [きほひ桜] illustrated by Okumura Genpachi Masanobu [奥村源八政信] to today’s kids, they would not like it.²²

As Kristin WILLIAMS has observed (2012, 103),

Bakin was not the only one to see warrior stories as appropriate for children. *The Convenient Guide to Gift-giving*, published in the same year [1811], recommended ‘warrior picturebooks’ (*mussha ehon* 武者絵本) as a gift for a boy when he wore trousers for the first time (*hakama gi* 袴着) in the eleventh month of his fifth year.

In *Enseki zasshi*, as an example of the kind of work that he seems to have approved of for children, Bakin reproduces an illustration from the 1691 playbook *Kinpira sennin-giri* 金平千人きり (Kinpira slays a thousand), published by the Izutsuya 井筒屋 publishing house of Tōriaburachō 通り油町 in Edo (FIGURE 18).²³ The play is only loosely related to the older story of Yoshitsune’s rampage—in this version, the great Sakata no Kinpira defeats a *tengu* challenger and then receives a famous sword capable of beheading a thousand men with a single stroke, which he subsequently uses to capture a spy in the capital, slay 999 men on Yahagi Bridge in Mikawa Province, and then, with the help of the former spy, find and kill a provincial traitor—but both the title of the play and its titular scene are indebted to the tale preserved in *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*. Even the woodblock-printed illustration of Kinpira’s fight with Dobu Kuma (“Gutter Bear”) on Yahagi Bridge (FIGURE 18) seems to be based on images of Yoshitsune and Benkei’s battle on Kyoto’s Fifth Avenue Bridge, although with more severed heads. *Kinpira sennin-giri*’s plot is certainly more complicated than that of Chōkurō’s *Ushiwaka sennin-giri*, but Bakin’s playbook, which was presumably published for adults (or at least young adults), revels in bloody carnage in much the same way.

So how are we to understand boys’ books in seventeenth-century Japan? The *ko-jōruri* theater was notoriously violent, and that brutality seems to have carried over into Chōkurō’s *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* and the other warrior tales in his collection. While we might now expect children’s books to make a kind of moral sense, there may have been no such expectation among seventeenth-century readers of works like *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* and *Yoshitsune kōmyō-zoroe* (or, for that matter, among American and British boys in the late nineteenth century).²⁴ Nakano Mitsutoshi has pointed out that our contemporary opinions about what constitutes a “children’s book” differ considerably from those of people in the Kyoto-Osaka region in the early-modern period. Nakano writes that while today we tend to think of children’s books as works that preserve, reveal, or appeal to the “spirit of childhood” (*dōshin* 童心), for people in the Edo period, children’s books were ones that served to quickly introduce children to the world of adults (NAKANO 1985, 497–98). This may be a key to understanding the works in Chōkurō’s collection. The world of seventeenth-century adult entertainment, including the *sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* theaters, was a strange, lecherous, and savage one, and as byproducts of the playbooks and other ephemera that were produced in that setting, Chōkurō’s picture books may have served to introduce children like him to the popular diversions awaiting them in adulthood.

In a 2008 article on modern Japanese children's literature, Judy Wakabayashi writes that "although texts read to or by Japanese children had existed for centuries, it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that child-centered works—texts specifically oriented toward children's interests and needs in terms of content, language, and presentation—began to appear, and the initial catalyst for this was translations of foreign (predominantly European) children's literature." Wakabayashi then describes the emergence of modern Japanese children's literature as being characterized by a "shift from a didactic and moralistic orientation to a focus on reading pleasure" (WAKABAYASHI 2008, 227). Although Wakabayashi is not alone in holding this opinion, the books in Chōkurō's collection, with their plain disinterest in didacticism and conventional morality, would appear to refute this view. And if works like *Tengu-zoroe* and *Imo jōruri* are not child-centered "in terms of content, language, and presentation," then it is hard to imagine what is.

Nevertheless, as others have shown in different cultural contexts, defining the parameters of "children's literature"—or even "the child"—is no easy task.²⁵ I would propose that in the case of Edo-period Japan, at least, scholars should avoid the deceptive simplicity of binary dualisms (that is, child vs. adult, and children's books vs. adult books) and instead seek to understand all published works as lying on thematic and linguistic/orthographic continuums ranging from the simplistic and/or juvenile to the more complex and/or adult. Likewise—and the most recent science supports this proposition—we might better understand human beings as existing on a developmental continuum from birth to old age, rather than occupying one of two or three stages: "child" and "adult," or, in the language of contemporary American publishing, "child," "young adult," and "adult."²⁶ The fact that a boy named Chōkurō appears to have owned the ten picture books in the statue of Jizō at Izawaji Temple has conveniently allowed me to describe those works as "boys' books," but I suspect that my inclination to lump together such disparate publications as *Tengu-zoroe* and *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* may be almost as misguided as wholly denying the existence of children's literature in Japan prior to the late nineteenth century.

NOTES

* I would like to thank Joan Ericson, Mark Jones, Sharalyn Orbaugh, Melek Ortabasi, and Kristin Williams for their feedback on an earlier version of this article at the Symposium of Japanese Children's Literature held at Colorado College on 31 May and 1 June, 2014. I would also like to thank Charlotte Eubanks and Puck Brecher for their comments on a later draft of this work.

1. Much of the information in this section is drawn from OKAMOTO (1982, 337–40). Kristin Williams also writes about the collection of books in WILLIAMS (2012, particularly pages 27–29). On 13 December 2013, I visited Izawaji Temple, and I was able to examine and photograph the picture books and other contents of the Jizō image, which is currently housed within a small concrete structure beside the original Dainichi Hall. The books and other artifacts are no longer stored within the statue; like the Jizō image and the Dainichi Hall itself, they are owned and administered by the Izawa Town Council (Izawa-chō jichikai 射和町自治会), who I would like to thank for allowing me to reproduce my photos here.

2. See OKAMOTO (1982, 339–40). Okamoto bases his supposition on his observations that Chōkurō’s handwriting in the calligraphy practice sheets is relatively accomplished; that Chōkurō had once been entrusted with tracing out the characters in a sheet of his father’s business ledger; and that Chōkurō’s posthumous name included the word *shinji* 信士 (a suffix commonly added to the posthumous Buddhist names of male children) rather than *dōji* 童子 (child).

3. See KATŌ (2006, 2a). For a relatively comprehensive collection of extant *akahon*, see SUZUKI and KIMURA (1985).

4. Quoted in UENO (1984, 251b). The Five Righteous Human Paths (*jinrin gojō no michi* 人倫五常の道) refers to the five Confucian “constants” (常) of humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity. Fujii Ransai is best known today for his three-volume *Honchō kōshi den* 本朝孝子伝 (Biographies of filial children of Japan), published in four separate editions in 1684, 1685, 1686, and 1687.

5. I have previously written about the use of eighteenth-century children’s books as coloring books in KIMBROUGH (2008, 266–67).

6. *Sekkyō* and *ko-jōruri* (“old *jōruri*”) were two forms of seventeenth-century puppet theater for adults. For a history of these genres, see KIMBROUGH (2013, 1–22). All ten of the picture books are typeset and photographically reproduced in OKAMOTO (1982).

7. I have translated an undated seventeenth-century version of the *sekkyō Oguri* in KIMBROUGH (2013, 123–60).

8. See OKAMOTO (1982, 346–51). I briefly discuss Shōhon-ya Gohei’s 1675 *Oguri Hangan* in KIMBROUGH (2013, 259).

9. See OKAMOTO (1982, 345); NAKANO (1985, 496). According to the *haikai* 俳諧 miscellany *Kyō habutae* 京羽二重 (published in Kyoto in 1691 by Izutsuya Shōhei), the Kyoto publishers Yamamoto Kuhei, Tsuruya Kiyon (Jōruriya Kiyon じゃうりや喜衛門), and Hachimonjiya Hachizaemon specialized in *jōruri* playbooks. Munemasa Iso’o writes that these three publishers were particularly active from around the Meireki 明暦 and Kanbun periods (1655–1673), and that of the three, Yamamoto Kuhei was dominant; Tsuruya Kiyon and Hachimonjiya Hachizaemon each published around only half of the volume of Yamamoto. See MUNEMASA (1982, 8–9 and 36–37).

10. For a recent discussion of Yoshitsune’s place in medieval and early-modern storytelling, see THOMPSON (2014, 1–13).

11. Quoted in SCHECHTER 2005, 9.

12. For color photos of these images, see the electronic version of this article on the *Asian Ethnology* website.

13. Okamoto cites Muroki’s observation in OKAMOTO (1982, 346). He also discusses the 1679 *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* on page 345.

14. This and the following quotations from *Ushiwaka sennin-giri* are from the transcription in OKAMOTO (1982, 273–78).

15. Charlotte Eubanks has suggested to me that “in staking out Fifth Avenue Bridge,” Yoshitsune stations himself “at one of the major travel points between the Taira compounds around Rokuharamitsuji (east of the river) and the rest of the capital,” making it seem “fairly likely that many of the people crossing that bridge will be on their way to or from a Taira neighborhood” (personal correspondence, July 2014). Eubanks makes an excellent point, but I would still maintain that Yoshitsune’s selection of victims is essentially random.

16. See TSUJI (1999, 367b). For a further discussion of this section of *Tengu no dairi*, see KIMBROUGH (2006b, 280–86).

17. See YOKOYAMA and MATSUMOTO (1981, 630b). Yokoyama and Matsumoto date the transcription of the Shinoda *Tengu no dairi* manuscript to the mid-Edo period, but Shinoda argues that it preserves a particularly old version of the tale; see SHINODA (1982, 40b–41a).

18. See SCHECHTER (2005, 88). Quoted from within a discussion of “the blood-drenched melodramas” of the Parisian Théâtre du Grand-Guignol (1897–1962).

19. For the *Gikeiki* account of Yoshitsune’s battle with Benkei, see KAJIHARA (1971, 166–74).

20. See NIHON ZUIHITSU TAISEI HENSHŪBU (1929, 365). I am grateful to Kristin WILLIAMS for introducing me to *Enseki zasshi*, which she also discusses in her dissertation (2012, 103).

21. *Kinpira jōruri* 金平浄瑠璃, which takes its name from its leading character, the obstreperous Sakata no Kinpira 坂田金平, is a *ko-jōruri* subgenre pioneered by the chanter Izumi Dayū and his playwright Oka Seibei Shigetoshi 岡清兵衛重俊 in the five-year period of 1657–1662; see KANEMITSU (2011).

22. See NIHON ZUIHITSU TAISEI HENSHŪBU (1929, 365). Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764) was a famous illustrator and *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 artist of the eighteenth century.

23. The same playbook is reproduced in a facsimile edition in the multi-volume *Kinpirabon zenshū* (1926). For a plot synopsis, see MIZUTANI 1926, 111–13.

24. Still, as Russel NYE explains (1970, 202–203), “The better dime novels rarely attained the level of literary mediocrity, but they were highly conventional in their regard for contemporary standards of conduct. The action might be bloody and the heroes roughhewn, but the books were resolutely virtuous.” One could perhaps make a similar argument in regard to Chōkurō’s Yoshitsune-Benkei books, especially considering Bakin’s association of valor (*yū*) with virtue (*gi*).

25. See Kristin WILLIAMS’s discussion of these issues in the introduction and first two chapters of her dissertation (2012).

26. Karatani Kōjin suggests this, too, when he writes that unlike in rites of passage in which “a clear distinction is drawn between child and adult,” our modern understanding of human maturation posits “a ‘self’ that develops and matures gradually. Paradoxically, it is *our* ‘division’ of children from adults that removes the absolute distinction between the two” (KARATANI 1993, 124; emphasis mine).

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