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*Rebirth After Retirement: Intersections of Life Stage and Gender in Early Modern Japan*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in History

by

Erin K. Trumble

Committee in Charge:

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June 2026

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*Rebirth After Retirement: Intersections of Life Stage and Gender in Early Modern Japan*

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By

Erin K. Trumble

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## **ABSTRACT**

Rebirth After Retirement: Intersections of Life Stage and Gender in Early Modern Japan

By

Erin K. Trumble

Women in early modern Japan (1603-1868) faced strict social and governmental regulations on their behavior and mobility. However, retirement—marked by the rearrangement of household duties following the arrival of a daughter-in-law—granted these women a unique space for self-discovery. In my dissertation I argue that, due to a shift in neo-Confucianist moral codes which came into effect as people entered retirement, retired women experienced greater freedoms compared to earlier stages in their lives. I further argue that this newfound freedom manifested in travel, religious expression, and, for literate women, literary endeavors, allowing retired women to fashion new identities and femininities.

Societal norms, rooted in neo-Confucianist moral codes, largely confined women to domestic roles earlier in their lives. However, my research reveals that while prescriptive literature for women instructed them on how to behave as daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers, it was silent on expected behaviors for retired women. Further, ideas of self-cultivation encouraged religious and artistic pursuits during retirement. Women took advantage of these shifting codes to redefine their identities, particularly in the context of pilgrimage.

To make these arguments, I draw on the travel diaries of Yamanashi Shigako, Kutsukake Nakako, Tanaka Aijo, and Oda Ieko. Using micro-history as a methodological approach, I bridge the gap between normative ideals and individual experiences, unraveling the nuanced negotiations and adaptations made by Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko in response to

societal expectations. This gendered analysis reveals the agency of retired women in crafting their femininities in retirement.

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## Introduction

For women in early modern Japan (1603-1868), retirement was defined as the period in their lives when they were able to pass on their household duties to their daughters-in-law. This often occurred after a few years of apprenticeship in which the daughter-in-law would learn from her mother-in-law about how the household should function and was usually punctuated by the ceremonious handing over of the rice paddle, to note that the daughter-in-law was ready to take over household duties. Retirement often represented a substantial portion of women's lives. While, in general, life expectancy was lower in early modern Japan, if women survived their childhoods and then survived childbirth, they often lived until their 60s or 70s while they typically retired in their 40s and 50s.<sup>1</sup> This meant that, if a woman lived long enough to reach retirement, they might have around 20 years of their lives that was not dictated by serving their fathers and husbands. While not all women who retired were necessarily "old," by our own or even by early modern standards, they were often some of the oldest people within the family structure, lending them the authority that came with seniority.

Retirement offers a unique window into how diversely women understood and performed gender in early modern Japan. Women were taught for most of their lives, through prescriptive literature, their mothers, and their mothers-in-law what would be expected of them in becoming a wife and running a household. In contrast, there was a relative lack of prescriptive literature on how women ought to behave in retirement, and retired women themselves often became the authority figures teaching the next generation. Age hierarchies

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<sup>1</sup> Susan B. Hanley and Kozo Yamamura, *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan 1600-1868* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 213.

working alongside gender hierarchies allowed retired women more freedom in recrafting their femininity. Retirement offered women the time to pursue other activities as their daughters or daughters-in-law took over household management. Their age offered them respect and greater freedom of movement as they pursued activities they had not had access to earlier in their lives.

This project shows that women experience multiple femininities as they matured and aged. It further shows that life stage, along with status and class, was a key component in constructing these femininities. The gender identities of women, and therefore the performance of these identities, were unstable not only until they reached adulthood but also later, as they moved through subsequent life stages. This necessitated that women rebecome and reconstruct their femininities throughout their lives. In retirement, they had greater control over the identities they were able to craft and perform, due to the authority and freedom that old age and their positions within the household brought them.

To understand the femininities that women could construct in their retirements, I first look at how prescriptive literature and popular media portrayed (or did not portray) retired women, showing that retirement was not only a time when women were able to pursue travel and other hobbies, but that this was expected of them. In the following four chapters, I will focus more concretely on the travel diaries of four wealthy merchant women: Yamanashi Shigako (1738-1814), Kutsukake Nakako (1749-1829), Tanaka Aijo (1781-1834), and Oda Ieko (1789-1870) to explore the differences in the ways that they portrayed themselves as travelers, pilgrims, and poets to show the way that each author was engaging with and defying different gendered expectations within their carefully cultivated travel diaries.

The travel diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko allow me to explore different performances of femininity in retirement. While many women in the Edo period reached retirement, few left behind robust records. Many of the records that were left behind came in the form of travel diaries. In their travel diaries, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko assert themselves as cultured travelers, pilgrims, and poets. In earlier stages in their lives, they had not been able to travel to the same extent, nor had they been able to pursue leisurely artistic activities. Moreover, despite their similarities in background; the rural locations they hailed from, being of the same class and merchant status, the similar literary works that they were drawing from in their diaries, they represented themselves very differently.

Yamanashi Shigako was born in 1738 in Ibara, modern-day Okayama Prefecture to a wealthy merchant family. She was married at around 17 or 18 and raised five sons and three daughters. While she had likely studied literature early in her life, she did not begin producing her own works until she was in her 50s, at which point she achieved a fair amount of renown in local literary circles.<sup>2</sup> In 1792, when she was about 55 years old, she set out on pilgrimage with her fourth son, Tōhei, traveling to such places as Ise Jingu, Kyoto, Mt. Kōya, and Edo. She recorded this journey in her travel diary, *Haru no michikusa*. It is not clear when she published her diary and how long she spent editing it alongside her tutor, but based on patterns from other diarists, it is likely that it took a few years.

Kutsukake Nakako was born in 1749 in Imazato and, according to her travel diary, started learning about literature from a young age, under the tutelage of her grandmother, who she was sent to live with when she was three years old. Nakako's interest in ancient Japanese literature is clear throughout her travel diary, *Azumaji no nikki* which catalogues the

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<sup>2</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū* ed. Maeda Yoshi (Fukuoka-shi: Ashi Shobō, 2001), 42.

pilgrimage she took around the Chichibu Kannon Circuit in 1803, when she was 55 years old. Like Shigako, Nakako went on this trip with her son, Doen, who was also interested in literary arts. After her trip, she spent over twenty years editing her travel diary, finally publishing it in 1827 when she was 78 years old. Also similar to Shigako, Nakako gained a fair amount of local celebrity for her literary works, often publishing under the pen name Issō. She was likely most known for her poetry, but also wrote several other works, such as *Mono no tane*, a collection of moral teachings, and *Oboroyo monogatari* a short story in which she dreamed that she met several poetic icons, including Matsuo Bashō, and Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) whose work she had admired since she was young.<sup>3</sup> In her writing, Nakako also offers the clearest evidence of the fact that she had to put off her desire to go on pilgrimage or focus on her writing so that she could take care of her family. For example, she wrote “because I have the body of a woman, I have followed the path of the three obediences,” in other words, she had to focus on being obedient to her father, husband, and her son.<sup>4</sup> In her diary, she wrote “though I have wanted to go on pilgrimage to many places, only now...am I able to depart,”<sup>5</sup> suggesting that her duties had previously taken precedence over her desire to leave on pilgrimage until she was in her retirement and was able to leave the house more freely.

Tanaka Aijo was born in 1781 to a wealthy merchant family in Ōyama and likely began her literary studies alongside her older brothers. She left for her pilgrimage in 1827 when she was 47 years old. Aijo also travelled with family, though she was travelling with two female cousins, also of retirement age, rather than a son. She titled her travel diary *Michi*

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<sup>3</sup> Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 96

<sup>4</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi: chihō wo chūshin*, (Kasama shoin, 1998), 172

<sup>5</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 142.

*no ki*. Aijo had two tutors, Tominokōji Sadanao, and Ikeda Gensai, who helped her edit her diary and who both wrote postscripts at the end of her diary, praising both her writing ability and her character. It is not immediately clear when the diary was published, but both of her tutors postscripts were dated to 1833, so it is likely that she spent at least six years editing it before she was ready to show it to her literary circle.

Oda Ieko was born in 1789, also to a wealthy merchant family, in Sokoino. Her husband married into her family and was adopted as a son by Ieko's parents. She began her months long pilgrimage in 1841 at the age of 52 years old and travelled with female family friends, who were also retired. Ieko travelled the most widely of the four, and for the longest period of time, taking to the road for over five months, and visiting Kyoto, Ise, Osaka, Edo, and Zenkō-ji before making her way back home. Her trip was marked by her careful cataloguing of her location throughout her journey, likely influenced by her tutor, Itō Tsunetari, who was also a cartographer. Under his guidance, Ieko edited her diary for ten years, and then waited another seven years for Tsunetari to write a preface to the diary before she published it in 1858, when she was 69 years old.<sup>6</sup>

Each of the four women in this study were born into wealthy merchant families that came from rural areas. They all almost certainly received educations in their youths that went far beyond learning to read and write and instead taught them about the classics of Japanese literature. Based on what they wrote in their diaries, it is clear that they were all drawing from the same literary canon, citing works such as the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shōki*, *Man'yōshū*, *Ise monogatari*, *The Bamboo Cutter*, *Genji monogatari*, and *Kokin wakashū* along with some slightly later works such as *Heike monogatari* and *Gikeiki*. The standard

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<sup>6</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei chihō joryū bungei jūi*, (Genshobō, 2005), 418

rules of poetry also influenced many of the main subjects of their diaries; Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko all focused on nature, histories, and sacred sites in their writings.

Despite all of their similarities, both in their backgrounds and in the subjects they wrote about, they presented distinct differences in how they wrote about their journeys. Shigako, for example, was fascinated by sacred objects that were displayed at temples, particularly those that had to do with war. Nakako demonstrated a clear passion for the *Man'yōshū*, to the extent that she not only wrote *tanka*, the most common form of poetry at the time, which consisted of five lines and followed the syllabic structure of 5-7-5-7-7, but she also wrote four *chōka*, or long poems, which had not been popular since the time of the *Man'yōshū*, typically dated around 759. Aijo liked to focus on the long histories of the places she visited, commenting more often on the longevity of sacred sites and the nature that she encountered on her trip. She was more reluctant to discuss war tales that had been written more recently. Ieko, on the other hand, had no such reluctance. Her diary was full of references to not only ancient literature but also *bunraku* and *kabuki* plays as she framed her travel diary as a trip into the “floating world,” often a reference to pleasure districts, but also a suggested a focus on living in the moment, outside of the constraints of everyday life.

These distinctions are important. Though Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were far more similar than they were different, having come from similar, wealthy merchant backgrounds, living in rural areas, studying similar texts, and travelling within a 50 year timespan of one another, they had completely different approaches to their trips and to how they presented themselves within their travel diaries. The fact that their diaries were edited over the course of years shows that the femininities they projected within them were carefully thought out and curated, something that they were happy to be a reflection of

themselves that they could share with friends and family. Gendered analysis of early modern Japan often falls along lines of status— if one was a samurai or a townsperson— because Tokugawa law and social expectation often treated the groups differently. Studying the works of four women of similar backgrounds allows me to highlight the complexity of the ways in which these four women negotiated their femininities on the pages of their travel diaries.

This project is in dialogue with recent scholarship focused on life stage and identity making, particularly those that have shown that women had more free time in their retirements. In *Excursions in Identity*, Laura Nenzi notes that the majority of women who took to the road and left travel records did so “between the ages of forty and fifty-nine”<sup>7</sup> while in her book *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan* Marcia Yonemoto states that many women writers “wrote their major works relatively late in life” because they “found themselves able to devote far more time to their literary pursuits once their children were grown and married and they had relinquished responsibility for household matters.”<sup>8</sup> Nagashima Atsuko makes a similar argument about women gaining more freedom, particularly when they became mothers-in-law, in her exploration of the Sekiguchi family. She shows that mothers-in-law would go on outings far more frequently and for longer periods of time than their daughters-in-law because they were released from many of their family duties.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Marcia Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 201.

<sup>9</sup> Nagashima Atsuko, “Bakumatsu nōson josei no kōdō no jiyū to kaji rōdō, Bushū Tachibana-gun Namamugimura Sekiguchi nikki o sozai toshite,” in Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Ronshū kinsei joseishi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), 139–173.

Marcia Yonemoto uses life stage as part of her analysis, devoting a chapter to each stage that a woman might pass through. Her final chapter, on retirement, lays a foundation for my project. I expand on Yonemoto's work in my exploration of prescriptive literature and popular media discourse around women's retirement. In her retirement chapter, Yonemoto does not focus on the silences in prescriptive literature around retired women, which I argue was a reflection of age hierarchies that worked alongside gender hierarchies to allow retired women more authority to pursue their interests. Further, the silences in prescriptive literature directed at retired women shows that there was a fracture of audience for whom women were performing their femininity: earlier in life this performance is focused on the family, while later in their lives that focus turns outward towards their communities and for literate women, towards their literary circles.

Anne Walthall and Laura Nenzi have both explored how retired women were able to craft their identities in *Weak Body of a Useless Woman* and *The Chaos and Cosmos of Kurosawa Tokiko*, respectively.<sup>10, 11</sup> Their arguments, in part, focus on the political unrest leading up to the Meiji Restoration in which Matsuo Taseko and Kurosawa Tokiko decided to take to the road. For these women, political unrest was their motivation for travel, while their life stage was one of the factors that enabled them to take to the road. In contrast, in my dissertation I look at the travel diaries of four women who were living and writing during a period of peace and relative political stability. Women's lives, their abilities to travel, and their desire to place themselves among other poets and works of literature were products of the social forces that situated them, regardless of whether they were living through political

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Walthall, *Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998)

<sup>11</sup> Laura Nenzi, *The Chaos and Cosmos of Kurosawa Tokiko: One Woman's Transit from Tokugawa to Meiji Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015)

instability or times of peace.<sup>12</sup> In writing about women who lived in a time of stability, I argue that retirement enabled women to pursue their interests outside of the home, and that this pursuit was both expected and encouraged by societal norms.

I also build on explorations of gender and travel in Laura Nenzi's *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*. Nenzi's approach allows her to identify broad trends in the ways that travel and travel diaries were gendered. By focusing the majority of the dissertation on four specific women, I am able to show the diversity of the ways in which women engaged with famous literary and pilgrimage sites, and how they expressed themselves within their travel diaries and complicate some of the trends that Nenzi identifies, such as the idea that women were reluctant to comment on war tales and battles. By focusing on retired women, specifically, I am also able to delve further into the social processes that existed to encourage retired women to take to the roads.

### **Retirement, Travel, Pilgrimage and Poetry**

There were two terms that could have been used for retirement in the early modern period: *inkyō* 隠居 and *shukke* 出家. “*Inkyō*” suggests a withdrawal from the world, and particularly the secular world, a concept that is often associated with Buddhist ideals of retreating from worldly desires. “*Shukke*,” the other word for retirement, also denotes that a person would be leaving the home to become a Buddhist monk or nun. Both of these terms were used for men and women and show that retirement and spiritual pursuits were linguistically linked. Though women were barred from many sacred spaces shrines and

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<sup>12</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Harvard University Press, 1996) 15-16

temples had begun making more space for them, and their age meant that they were not only allowed but encouraged to step out of their day-to-day lives and go on pilgrimage.

In addition to the fact that women were able to use the authority that came with age to assert their desires to travel, other societal forces actually encouraged retired women to leave the house more frequently, a drastic change from previous stages in their lives. While prescriptive literature was relatively silent regarding retired women, one of the most prevalent prescriptive texts for women, *Onna Daigaku*, intoned that “To temples (whether Shinto or Buddhist) and other like places where there is a great concourse of people, she should go but sparingly till she has reached the age of forty.”<sup>13</sup> This was not, necessarily, encouraging of women to travel in retirement, but did allow for it to a greater extent later in women’s lives. Popular media, on the other hand, often warned against women becoming overbearing mothers-in-law and would depict positively retired women who traveled to nearby temples and shrines. This is likely because retirement, as mentioned earlier, was often marked by an increase in spiritual activities. It was expected—for both men and women alike—that their retirements would lead to them to cultivate merit for their next lives. In contrast to men, though, women’s opportunities to travel outside the home were far more restricted earlier in their lives, meaning retirement represented a significant break in how they were able to conduct themselves.

While wealthier, literate, retired women were able to go on longer trips and were able to leave far more extensive records of these journeys, they were not the only ones who were able to travel in their retirements. Retired women were far more likely to go on overnight

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<sup>13</sup> Kaibara Ekiken (with an intro. by Shingoro Takaishi), *Women and Wisdom of Japan* (London: J. Murray, 1905), 42.

journeys to nearby temples and shrines than their younger counterparts.<sup>14</sup> Further, for the many villages with confraternities, or groups of lay people who often organized around devotion to a particular sect of Buddhism, or a particular temple, would raise money for their members to go on pilgrimage. This money almost always went to older members of the group, including women, to facilitate their travel to nearby sacred sites. While younger women may have been involved in these groups, hosting dinners and participating in festivals, it was not until they had retired that they were able to participate in pilgrimage. Not only were retired women able to travel, but the social systems in place in early modern Japan allowed and even encouraged them to do so.

Retired women traveling also made greater sense, legally. While retired women, like all travelers in the Tokugawa period, would have had to obtain passports and would need to be traveling for reasons that were approved of by the government (largely for pilgrimage or to seek medicinal treatment), they were also viewed with less suspicion by border guards than their younger counterparts. Younger women's travel could potentially pose a threat to social order; they might have been running away from their fathers or their husbands, in other words, from their duties to the household. Retired women, on the other hand, had given over their duties to the household to a daughter-in-law. Their absence from the home, then, was both less threatening and less suspicious, enabling them to take to the roads more easily.

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<sup>14</sup> Shinno Toshikazu, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early Modern Period," trans. Laura Nenzi, *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 4 (2002), 460

## Travel and Travel Diaries

Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko all traveled within the “travel boom” that corresponded with the rule of the tenth Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Ienari. Lasting from 1787 to 1841, this period was marked by a significant increase in movement, for people of all backgrounds. While there are several underlying factors that contributed to this increased culture of movement, some of the main ones were the long standing peace that Tokugawa rule had brought about, which allowed for not only more political stability, but more economic stability as well, providing a larger amount of the populace with the money required for travel. Culture around travel also increased; print culture became more prevalent and literacy improved, creating audiences for travelogues, travel diaries, maps, and boardgames centered on travel.<sup>15</sup> Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, then, were all traveling at a time when travel was understood and accepted as a leisure activity that was gaining popularity among the populace.

Travel diaries were an important genre of literature in the Edo period. Rather than personal records meant to reflect the writers’ innermost thoughts, travel diaries were meant to be shared with others in their community, often the author’s friends, family, and literary circles that they were a part of. The diaries were often carefully curated and edited over the course of many years, as we know was the case with Nakako, Aijo and Ieko, and was likely the case with Shigako as well. These edits mean that changes would have been made to their diaries long after trips were complete and likely after details had faded. It was also quite common for details to have been completely fabricated in travel diaries. Herbert Plutschow has noted that travel diarists “sought to travel time-honored paths and celebrate time-

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<sup>15</sup> Constantine N. Vapori, “Caveat Viator. Advice to Travelers in the Edo Period,” *Monumeta Nipponica* 44, no. 4 (1989), 462

honored sites in prose and poetry, often using time-honored imagery. Realism being a lesser concern, mere facts were frequently distorted.”<sup>16</sup> One of the more famous examples of this phenomenon is Matsuo Bashō’s famous *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, in which Bashō often forwent realism in favor of creating a more enticing scene for his poetry. There is another diary from Bashō’s companion on the journey, Kawai Sora, that directly contradicts many of the details Bashō wrote about.<sup>17</sup> As Laura Nenzi points out, “Diaries, far from being neutral chronicles, were texts in which identity was created, asserted, and debated.”<sup>18</sup>

While travel diaries should not, then, be looked at for the “truth” of what happened, or the writers’ personal thoughts, they are important sources for understanding how the authors sought to present themselves. They represent both what the women who made these journeys found interesting and what they thought others in their lives would find interesting. In trying to understand how women redefined themselves in their retirement, they are an invaluable source because they reflect how the women who wrote them wanted to be perceived by others and what they found significant in their travels.

In this dissertation, I show that retired women, in contrast to earlier stages in their lives, were encouraged to travel, and therefore, to explore parts of their identities that they were not able to fully access previously. To further examine this phenomenon, I look at three aspects of identity that come across most clearly in the diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko: their identities as cultured travelers, pilgrims, and poets. There is a large amount of overlap within these categories, and one cannot be fully extricated from another. My goal is

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert Eugen Plutschow, “Japanese Travel Diaries of the Middle Ages,” *Oriens Extremus* 29, no. 1 (1982), 2

<sup>17</sup> Donald Keene, *Travelers of a Hundred Ages: The Japanese as Revealed Through 1,000 Years of Diaries*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 313-315.

<sup>18</sup> Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 92.

not to act as if they are separate but explore each from different angles to better understand the ways that the four women were presenting themselves.

In my first chapter, I examine prescriptive literature and popular media to argue that women's retirement in early modern Japan was socially constructed in such a way that upheld their authority and encouraged them to pursue activities, such as travel, that they were barred from during previous stages in their lives. My analysis of prescriptive literature directed at women reveals the silences around retired women and mothers-in-law more broadly. While there are many directives towards younger women on how to manage the household and how to treat her husband and parents-in-law with respect, there are no such directives aimed at how a mother-in-law should conduct herself. This is slightly less true for popular media, which suggests that mothers-in-law should refrain from being overbearing. At the same time, however, popular media also stresses that mothers and mothers-in-law should be treated filially. Further, there are examples of popular media encouraging retired women to pursue hobbies and travel, typically framed as a way for them to avoid meddling in the household. These two sets of sources, and evidence from the lives of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko show that there was an expectation for retired women to pursue activities that they had not been able to earlier in their lives.

Chapter 2 focuses on the travel diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko and the different ways that they conveyed themselves as cultured travelers. This chapter shows the vast divergence in the ways in which each woman framed her trip, delving specifically into how they dealt with references to war tales, the pleasure quarters, and suffering hardships on the road. It shows the different ways that each woman embraced the liminality

of the road, and what aspects of their femininity they wanted to cultivate to present to the world or, conversely, to re-create while not constrained by everyday expectations.

The third chapter argues that retired women were encouraged to go on pilgrimage. Many did this through confraternities which would raise money to send people on pilgrimages to the main site the confraternity worshipped. Women going on pilgrimage with their confraternities would not have had a choice in the pilgrimage site they went to, many of which barred women from full access to the site due to beliefs about their impurity. However, wealthy women like Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, designed their own journeys and prioritized sites that were open to both women and men. Further, they used their knowledge of spiritual icons to construct themselves as devoted worshippers. Their use of feminine icons, in particular, reified the importance of women's wholehearted devotion to the sacred.

The final chapter examines how Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko represented themselves through their poetry and their literary ability. It argues that poetry allowed them to move through both space and time as they continuously referenced famous classical Japanese poems and stories. At the same time, their stylistic choices, which works they referenced, and how they presented themselves and their journeys were heavily influenced by their tutors. This chapter argues that their poetry was a way for them to convey their own emotions (or the emotions they wanted to be perceived as having) while simultaneously representing a break in who they were performing their femininities for. While previously in their lives, this performance of femininity had been focused on their families, in their retirements, this focus turned outwards— towards their tutors and their literary circles— as they edited and published their travel diaries.

In exploring life stage, *Rebirth after Retirement* shows that social hierarchies based on age fractured gender binaries in early modern Japan.<sup>19</sup> For women, retirement was a period of increased agency in which they were both allowed and encouraged to pursue activities from which they had previously been restricted. In studying the travel diaries of four specific women—Yamanashi Shigako, Kutsukake Nakako, Tanaka Aijo, and Oda Ieko—this project reveals the myriad ways that women decided to present themselves as they performed their identities for a more public audience made up of their literary circles and tutors.

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<sup>19</sup> Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories of Analysis?” *Journal of Women’s History* 18, no. 1 (2006), 12.

## Chapter 1

### “Just Tell Yourself You’re Already Dead:” The “Rebirth” of Retired Women

#### Introduction

Considering life stage is a critical part of understanding gender expression. In Tokugawa (1603-1868) Japan, the ideal life course for women was to be a filial daughter, who then got married and had children. Anne Walthall, in examining the life course of farm women in early modern Japan, denoted these stages as being first a daughter, then a wife, then a mother.<sup>1</sup> Defining women’s life stages in this way mirrors the language of the time. In documents, women were most often referred to by their relationship with the men in their lives, rather than their own names: they would be “so-and-so’s” daughter, wife, and then mother.

In her book, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan* Marcia Yonemoto extends these life stages a bit farther, introducing the concepts of “filial piety” and “self-cultivation” as essential learning for girls when they were daughters, the period of “succession” when mothers-in-law trained their daughters-in-law, and “retirement” when their daughters-in-law had officially taken over all household duties, freeing their mothers-in-law to pursue activities that would not have been as acceptable for them to pursue earlier in their lives.<sup>2</sup> In organizing her book by women’s life stage, Yonemoto argues that “a woman’s stage the in life course set parameters for her behavior.”<sup>3</sup> Yonemoto shows a range of

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Walthall, “The Life Cycle of Farm Women in Tokugawa Japan,” in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Marcia Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, (University of California Press, 2016), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women*, 16.

possibilities and trainings that women might encounter in each of these life stages and how the expectations put upon them would change over the course of their lives.

Most in-depth studies of retired women in the early modern period focus on women who were living through the extraordinary time of the Meiji Revolution. In writing about Matsuo Taseko, Kurasawa Tokiko, and Nomura Bōtō-ni, Anne Walthall, Laura Nenzi, and Roger K. Thomas, respectively, explore the journeys and writings of three women famous for involvement, limited though it was, in the Meiji Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Each of these works notes that the women they focus on were able to make their journeys, in part, because they had retired and therefore had more time available to them to engage in travel and politics. These women were relatively ordinary, but for the times that they lived in and the extensive records they left behind. This chapter, however, argues that women's ability to travel in retirement was expected and even encouraged. Rather than focus on women whose travel and literature writing might have also been attributed to the volatile times in which they made their trips, I argue that travel for retired women was an activity made normative by societal expectations.

This chapter expands on understandings of life stage by more thoroughly examining “retirement” as a period that not only offered women the ability to engage in pursuits of literature, travel, and worship, but also examines a fracture in audiences for whom women were performing their femininity. It argues that retirement represented the social reproduction of an age hierarchy between older women and younger women. For the majority of their lives, women's performance of their femininity revolved around the family. They were filial to their parents, cultivated themselves for the sake of their future husbands

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration*, (University of Chicago Press, 1998), Laura Nenzi, *The Chaos and Cosmos of Kurosawa Tokiko: One Woman's Transit from Tokugawa to Meiji Japan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), Roger K. Thomas, *Counting Dreams: The Life and Writings of the Loyalist Nun Nomura Bōtō* (Cornell East Asian Series, 2021).

and children, learned how to be supportive wives and mothers, and then ultimately trained their daughters-in-law to do the same. When mothers-in-law retired, their ability to leave the house more easily and to openly engage in writing literature for their own sake marked them as distinctly different from their daughters-in-law and their earlier selves.

To better understand retirement and fractured femininities in the early modern period, I look at three sets of sources in this chapter. The first is prescriptive literature, which is important for understanding the ideals for women, if not their reality. Here, I build on Yonemoto's argument that prescriptive literature demonstrated the power dynamics within a household.<sup>5</sup> As Yonemoto points out, prescriptive literature instructed that young women should be filial to their parents-in-law, just as they should be to their own parents and their husbands. I point out that prescriptive literature offers no clear or specific guidance for retired women. This silence is suggestive of the age hierarchies at work within the household. Retired women were typically among the oldest members of a household, which gave them greater authority, and the authors of prescriptive literature were likely hesitant to give younger women the tools to criticize their elders. At the same time, I argue that prescriptive literature also served as educational tools for women, laying the groundwork for literary or religious interests that women might want to pursue later in their lives.

The second set of sources I will look at is popular literature, which gives greater insight into how women should be treated in their retirements and is able to fill in some of the silences left by prescriptive literature. These works offer a more diverse understanding of how women might navigate their retirements. In some popular literature, women are seen as wise, patient, and helpful to their families. In other works, retired women are encouraged to

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<sup>5</sup> Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women*, 196.

leave the house or are shown as happy in their freedom from responsibilities. These different explorations of women's retirements, alongside the lack of instruction in prescriptive literature, show that ideals for femininity in retirement were not as clearly dictated as ideals for women in previous life stages. Using David Atherton's understanding of form, I analyze character types that appear in popular literature to argue that certain markers made women's retirement legible to early modern readers while simultaneously suggesting an array of approaches women may take to their retirements.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the lives, travel diaries, and other writings of four women, Yamanashi Shigako (1738-1814), Kutsukake Nakako (1749-1829), Tanaka Aijo (1781-1834), and Oda Ieko (1789-1870), offer insight into how retired women themselves were constructing their own femininities during their retirements. While each of these women almost certainly had a fair amount of training in literature when they were younger, the only records of them actively pursuing tutoring for their written works, or trying to get their works published, exist after they had entered their retirements. This shows that Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were each able to pursue activities that they had put on hold while they were running their households. Furthermore, because travel diaries in early modern Japan were often written with the intent that they would be edited and then distributed to be read by others, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko would have written them to present a very carefully crafted self, rather than a projection of their innermost thoughts. These travel diaries, then, offer distinct examples of four women's differing understandings of idealized womanhood in their retirements.

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<sup>6</sup> David C. Atherton, *Writing Violence: The Politics of Form in Early Modern Japanese Literature*, (Columbia University Press, 2023).

In retiring from the gendered labor of housework, women entered a life stage in which gendered lines became more nebulous. For both men and women, retirement offered a time in which they could travel, particularly on pilgrimage, and for those who were literate, a time when they could focus on literary pursuits. One of the main differences between men and women in retirement was that men were more freely able to engage in these pursuits earlier in their lives; it was more acceptable, socially, for men to be outside of the home, and legally, they were able to move through check points on the road far more easily than women could.<sup>7</sup>

Travel for both genders was often associated with self-improvement. For men, this self-improvement was internally focused both when they were younger and when they retired. Travel was more heavily restricted for women when they were younger,<sup>8</sup> and if women were able to travel at all earlier in their lives, it was often done as a type of finishing school to improve themselves for their future families. Similarly, they were often exposed to famous literary works in their prescriptive texts, largely to benefit their husbands, by being better and more interesting conversationalists, and so that they could teach their future children.<sup>9</sup> Women were largely only able to engage on journeys for self-improvement, focused on their *own* interests and for their *own* sakes, when they retired.

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<sup>7</sup> Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*, (Harvard University Press, 1994), 155

<sup>8</sup> Diane Wright, "Female Crime and State Punishment in Early Modern Japan," *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 3 (2004): 19.

<sup>9</sup> The prescriptive work *Onna shikimoku* (Rules for Women), for example, goes over famous works such as *The Tale of Ise* and *The Tale of Genji*, and suggests that "women high or low" should learn these texts, but that learning to read and write was particularly important for "merchants' wives," likely to help their husbands with business practices (page 26) Anonymous, *Onna shikimoku* in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu*, vol. 1, 26-31.

## **“It is important to be filial to your parents and mother-in-law:” Prescriptive Literature**

Prescriptive literature for women was a genre focused on teaching women to be good daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers, and blended both philosophical and practical knowledge. Neo-Confucian thought was often the backbone of these works, highlighting the “three obediences” that women would have throughout their lives, to their fathers, husbands and then sons, as well as what were seen as women’s inherent shortcomings, or the “five infirmities of women:” indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy and silliness.

Prescriptive literature detailing ideal feminine behavior in the early modern period was a robust genre and changed throughout the period. Marcia Yonemoto calculates that there are “over two thousand *individual titles* of Tokugawa texts on the subjects of women’s roles and behavior,”<sup>10</sup> many of which were issued and reissued throughout the period. While at the beginning of the period, these texts were largely geared towards elite women (those who were more likely to be able to read and write), as literacy spread and marriage became a way for women to improve their social standing, non-elite women also began to read these texts in greater number. *Onna kuku no koe* (Ninety-nine women's voices) suggests that even commoner women should be educated so that they would be better able to attract husbands of a higher economic status.<sup>11</sup> This goal to educate women of all classes and status groups seems to have been borne out, as literacy rates increased in the early modern period and more girls and young women were exposed to these didactic texts.

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<sup>10</sup> Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Shimokōbe Shūsui, “Chigyō kyōkun: onna kuku no koe” in *Kikō ōraimono shūsei*, vol. 30 (Ōzorasha, 1998).

Practically, though, these works focused on women learning how to properly run a household, for which she would need to express filiality towards her husband and her parents-in-law. This was particularly true of her mother-in-law, as the mother-in-law was the one that would teach new housewives the inner workings of the house. The goal of prescriptive literature for women was to make sure that women entered their marriages with sufficient knowledge to run a house: how to cook, sew kimono, and take care of household finances. There were also sections in prescriptive texts on motherhood: what to eat during pregnancy, how to care for a young child, and what to teach their children.

In theory, women were supposed to support and serve their children, and their sons in particular, as part of the “three obediences.” In reality, filial piety played a role in constructing two hierarchical orders, a gender-based order, and an age-based order. On the one hand, the three obediences encouraged women to follow their male family members. On the other hand, children were supposed to be filial to their parents, and being among the oldest in the family, as retired women often were, came with authority and respect that had the potential to override gendered norms of obedience. Retired women, particularly if their husbands had already passed, had the potential to exert a great amount of control over family affairs as the eldest member of a household.<sup>12</sup>

This was a typical pattern, but it was not laid out in prescriptive literature directed at women. Indeed, mothers-in-law are rarely mentioned in these texts, and when they are, it is not because the texts are describing the duties of the mother-in-law, but rather the duties that a daughter-in-law had to her mother-in-law. Text from the prescriptive book *Shin onna Imagawa-hime kagami* (New Mirror for Imagawa Women), written anonymously in 1771

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see Luke Roberts, “Governing the Samurai Family in the Late Edo Period,” in *What is a Family: Answers from Early Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 2019).

states “It is important to be filial to your parents and mother-in-law and faithful to your husband.” This quote is interesting as it singles out the mother-in-law over the father-in-law, who is not mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Another states that “from the time of marriage, a woman is bound to her husband for the rest of her life, and is expected to obey his orders and be filial to her father-in-law and mother-in-law.”<sup>14</sup> These quotes show that parents-in-law, and particularly the mother-in-law, were figures of authority for a woman who had moved into her husband’s household.

There are some warnings directed at younger women that hint at a critique of mothers-in-law, such as in *Onna kuku no koe* which tells women that they must refrain from becoming “angry over small things” and “speaking meanly” because “the habit of speaking rudely will continue into old age.”<sup>15</sup> This could be seen as a critique of a sharp-tongued mother-in-law; the framing of the statement suggests that women should, for their entire lives, speak kindly and repress their anger. Therefore, if a mother-in-law is particularly rude or controlling, the text suggests that it was because she developed bad habits in her youth. Nevertheless, the instructive point is still focused on the younger woman. Critique over small things is frowned upon, but the fact that it could continue into old age is a warning to the daughter-in-law rather than a straightforward rebuke of her mother-in-law.

In other words, retired women only appear as people that younger women have to respect, obey, and take care of, much as they would have been expected to do for their fathers and husbands. This silence represents a break for retired women. Until they passed on their

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<sup>13</sup> Anonymous *Shin onna imagawahime kagami*, in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu daijiten* (Ōzorasha, 1993), vol. 2, 123-124.

<sup>14</sup> Hasegawa Myōtai, *Onna bundai ayabukuro (Women’s writing desk)*, in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu daijiten* (Ōzorasha, 1993), vol. 2 page 230.

<sup>15</sup> Ōe Bunpa, *Onna kuku no koe*, in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu daijiten* (Ōzorasha, 1993), vol. 2 page 243.

duties, these women would have been aware of the ideals for them in how to behave. Even if they did not follow these ideals, because of their own personalities or personal circumstances or a mixture of both, they would have been aware of them.

Upon entering retirement, there was no longer a clear ideal laid out for women in the way there had been for most of their lives up until that point. Retirement represented a time in their lives when women were able to shape what “ideal” meant for them. For some women, this meant using the authority they gained as senior members of the household to exert control over their children and children-in-law, or to influence the political standing of their families. Some women helped their daughters-in-law raise their children. Depending on the family dynamics, this help could have been met with gratitude or, conversely, could have been a detriment to the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Many women traveled, most often for pilgrimage or for medical treatment. For literate women, or those interested in the arts, retirement represented a time for them to focus on developing their artistry. If they had sufficient economic means, they would often hire tutors or join artistic circles of people also interested in the arts.

That does not mean, however, that there was no guidance on what women should do upon reaching their retirement, but that guidance was less gendered. Confucianism, also the backbone of prescriptive literature, taught that people should cultivate themselves throughout their lives. Much of the prescriptive literature written for women was with the goal of their self-cultivation, for the betterment of themselves, their families, and their society. Once they retired, this self-cultivation continued, but no longer with the goal of taking care of their husbands and children. Instead, they were able to focus on other aspects of self-cultivation,

like going on pilgrimage, learning about art and literature, and writing their own literary works.

In many ways, prescriptive literature prepared women for this stage of their life as well, by educating them about famous stories, poems, and religious sites, though this knowledge was framed as being useful for women to interact with their husbands and to teach their children. A woman would have been considered more appealing as a wife if she had a more educated background, and one of the few reasons that young, unmarried women traveled in the early modern period was to search for employment at wealthy samurai households where part of their job would include training in deportment.<sup>16</sup> Other wealthy families, if they were too far away from a samurai house, might have sent their daughters on pilgrimage as a sort of finishing school to develop their faith and to see famous sites.<sup>17</sup>

To improve women's understandings of literature, there were sections of prescriptive texts that were devoted to educating them on classic literature like *The Tale of Genji*, *The Bamboo Cutter*, and *One Hundred Poems; One Hundred Poets*.<sup>18</sup> Versions of classical literature also began to be published with women in mind, showing the growing importance not only for women's literacy, but for their knowledge of classical literature.<sup>19</sup> While these texts were largely read by women from the samurai status group at the beginning of the early modern period, townswomen began to read them with greater frequency as the period wore

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<sup>16</sup> Walthall, "The Life Cycle of Farm Women," in *Recreating Japanese Women 1600-1945*, (University of California Press, 1991), 48. This option was only available for wealthier families because, even though daughters might have been paid a small wage as a result of their work, their families were expected to pay for their daughters daily necessities as well as fees for employers and go-betweens.

<sup>17</sup> Walthall, "The Life Cycle of Farm Women," 48.

<sup>18</sup> Emori Ichiro, ed. *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu daijiten* (Tokyo Ōzorasha, 1993), vol. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua S. Mostow, "Illustrated Classical Texts for Women in the Edo Period," in *The Female as Subject: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Japan* ed. P.F. Kornicki, Mara Patessio, and G.C. Rowley (Center for Japanese Studies at The University of Michigan, 2010), 59-86.

on. Since samurai women were considered among the highest in status, literacy and knowledge of classical literature was an important tool for increasing social standing.

While this learning may have initially been framed as important for a woman to make a good connection in marriage and raise her children, in retirement it could take on new meanings. Retirement afforded some women the ability to engage in the literature that they had read about, to travel to the places featured in classical and prescriptive literature and to partake in worship at shrines and temples sites that were beyond the village they lived in.

Of all the leisure pursuits that opened to women during their retirements, going on pilgrimage was the most accessible, even those who were not as wealthy. Women could join confraternities which would raise money for people to go on pilgrimage. When women were younger and still needed to care for their families, they would host services in their households in these confraternities, but when they were older and had retired, they were more able to travel since they did not have their families to take care of.<sup>20</sup>

Pilgrimage also played an important role in retired women's self-cultivation. Indeed, in one of the most famous pieces of prescriptive literature at the time, *The Greater Learning for Women*, the author notes that "To temples (whether Shinto or Buddhist) and other like places where there is a great concourse of people, she should go but sparingly till she has reached the age of forty."<sup>21</sup> The idea that women's travel should be limited earlier in their lives was also borne out by laws set forth by the Tokugawa government. Travel documents, which were difficult to obtain for younger women, due to the worry that young women might be traveling to run from their husbands, were easier to get for older women. Both the

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<sup>20</sup>Shinno, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions," 460.

<sup>21</sup> Kaibara Ekiken (with an intro. by Shingoro Takaishi), *Women and Wisdom of Japan* (J. Murray, 1905), 42.

suggested norms of prescriptive literature and norms upheld by legal codes enforced the idea that when women were raising their children, they should limit their travel. However, once they had reached an age when their duties to their household had lessened, pilgrimage became not only more accessible, but also more acceptable.

### **“It’s because you’re home all the time that things are so bad:” Retirement and Popular Media**

Popular media, in contrast to prescriptive literature, gives a more diverse representation of women and the various approaches they might take to their retirements. This is not to say that popular literature was not prescriptive in its own way. Characters who failed to live up to societal standards are often punished within the story, whereas those who behaved “properly” were often rewarded. In this way, popular literature is revealing about societal norms. It examines people and situations that prescriptive literature does not. In popular literature, retired women and their relationships with their families appear as common character types and dynamics.<sup>22</sup> Across different genres, including folktales, comedic works, dramas, and board games, retired women exist as a “highly formalized category” which allowed authors to experiment with form and create different representations of the character type.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Old, monstrous, women also appear in literature in the Edo period, for example in stories about the *yamauba* an old mountain witch, or the figure of the *amazake babaa* who people believed brought disease such as smallpox. Although these are common depictions of old women in literature, these women are rendered monstrous in part because they exist outside of societal norms, both in terms of their location in relation to society and in their behaviors. Retirement, on the other hand, was a normative process for women, so the trope of the non-normative monstrous old woman will not be considered here.

<sup>23</sup> Atherton, *Writing Violence*, 10

In his *Writing Violence: The Politics of Form in Early Modern Japanese Literature*, David Atherton uses a metaphor from Raymond Williams to describe form: “form is ‘simply a way of being of the material, the glass’s way of being a wineglass as opposed to an eyeglass or a window.’ This ‘way of being of the material’ applies as well to a glass as to a sonnet or a *waka* verse or a plot structure.”<sup>24</sup> It can also apply to character types, like that of a retired woman. Through the fluidity of the forms of glass, the glass itself is still recognizable. So too is the figure of a retired woman. Though retired women are portrayed in multiple ways across multiple genres, they can nevertheless be recognized as women who should have sons who are filial, may, but should not, berate their daughters-in-law, and who should spend their time in their retirements going on pilgrimage.

One of the most famous stories that focuses on an older, retired woman is *Obasuteyama*, or “the mountain where old women are thrown away,” where elderly women would be abandoned by their children. As Laura L. Cornell has shown in her in-depth study, this story was not based on a widespread practice of abandoning the elderly but instead serves as a parable focusing on filial piety. There are many versions of the story; in some it is common practice to abandon elderly women on a mountain, in others this practice results from the cruel policies of a domain lord, in still others, a disgruntled daughter-in-law orders her husband to abandon his mother or aunt.

The story of the mother and son, or aunt and son, heading up the mountain remains fairly standard across most versions. A son puts his older female family member on his back and starts to head up the mountain, planning to abandon her when they get far enough away from the village. As they walk, he notices the woman breaking off twigs and branches from

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<sup>24</sup> Atherton, *Writing Violence*, 6

the trees they pass by. When he asks her why she is doing such a thing, she replies that it is so he can find his way home more easily, after he has left her behind. Overwhelmed by this act of loyalty, despite the fact that he was planning on abandoning her, he decides to turn around, with her still on his back, and return to the village to face whatever consequences may come.

The earliest reference to the mountain appears in the 156<sup>th</sup> episode of the *Tales of Yamato*, written in the tenth century, in which a man is encouraged by his wife to abandon his aunt, but feels guilty for doing so and goes back to rescue her.<sup>25</sup> It ends with the following poem, which also appears in the *Kokinshū*, a tenth century collection of poetry:

As I gaze at the moon  
Shining on  
Mount Obasute  
In Sarashina,  
My heart cannot be consoled.<sup>26</sup>

The story was further adapted in the fifteenth century when it was turned into a *noh* play that continued to be staged into the early modern period. Both versions of the story take place in Sarashina (in modern day Nagano Prefecture) to the extent that a local mountain, Mt. Kamuriki, is referred to as Mt. Obasute (or, Mt. Throw Away Old Women). Matsuo Bashō, one of the most popular and famous poets of the early modern period, also remarked on it when he visited the region.<sup>27</sup> Its prevalence both in poetry and on stage suggest that the story resonated with audiences.

Like the beginning of the story, the ending of the story often varies as well. The original version in *The Tales of Yamato* ends with the son going to fetch his aunt. In the *noh*

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<sup>25</sup> Mildred Tahara, “*Yamato monogatari*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 27, no. 1 (1974), 29.

<sup>26</sup> Tahara, “*Yamato monogatari*,” 30.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Keene, “Bashō’s Journey to Sarashina,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* ser 3 v.5 (1957).

play, an old woman was abandoned and dies, but her ghost helps a traveler find a beautiful spot to observe the full moon. Interestingly, one common ending sees the retired woman using her experience and wisdom to save the village from calamity.<sup>28</sup> In this version of the story, in particular, the son and his mother are rewarded for their dual filiality towards each other. The mother is willing to help her son despite being abandoned, showing him filiality by making sure he would be able to return home more easily, while her son shows her filiality by not abandoning her and taking her back down the mountain, despite the fact that he might face social consequences. These various versions of this story often reinforce messages of filiality found in prescriptive literature but show more clearly that there was an expectation that both sons and daughters-in-law should be filial to their parents, just as mothers should be filial to their sons.

The fable “The pigeon’s obedience to his mother,” or “The pigeon’s filiality” also illustrates the importance of filiality between sons and mothers. This fable centers on a contrarian son, a pigeon, who never obeyed his mother. As his mother approached death, she realized that he would not respect her wishes for her burial, so “she purposefully asked him to make her grave in the sandbar of the river,” expecting him to do the opposite.<sup>29</sup> Upon her death, her son is filled with remorse for how he treated her in life, and buries her just as she requested. However, this led to a fear that his mother’s grave would be washed away whenever the river filled up with rain, thus now when it looks like rain he cries “to-to-poppo, poor, dear mother!”<sup>30</sup> The fable ends with the line “It would have been better if he had

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<sup>28</sup>Noriko T. Reider, “Hanayo no hime” or “Blossom Princess”: A Late-Medieval Japanese Stepdaughter Story and Provincial Customs,” *Asian Ethnology* 70, no. 1 (2011): 66

<sup>29</sup> Fanny Hagin Mayer and Yanagita Kunio, “Yanagita Kunio’: Japanese Folk Tales,” *Folklore Studies*, 11, no. 1 (1952), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Mayer and Yanagita, “Yanagita Kunio’: Japanese Folk Tales,” 3.

obeyed his mother a little sooner.”<sup>31</sup> The fable asserts the importance of filiality of sons towards their mothers, showing that older mothers should be able to expect obedience from their sons and enjoy a certain amount of authority in their old age.

At the same time, popular literature offered moral lessons directed towards older women in a way that prescriptive literature did not. This is demonstrated by the story *The Monster Takes a Bride*, which is an illustrated work written by Jippensha Ikku with drawings by Katsukawa Shun’ei. The tale follows typical marriage customs for the Edo period, told in the context of a monster-world.<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of the tale, there is a meeting between the two families whose children are to be wed. Mrs. Momonjii, the mother of the daughter, says “My daughter’s so reserved. I don’t want to see her badgered by her mother-in-law,” to which Mrs. One-Eye, the mother of the son, assures her “you know we’re not the domineering in-law types, even if my mouth does stretch to my ears.”<sup>33</sup> Though this story is written about the realm of monsters, it represents many of the anxieties that a new daughter-in-law and her family might face, such as an overbearing mother-in-law. The story affirms, through this conversation, that mothers-in-law should not badger or domineer their daughters-in-law and should instead take a passive role in the relationships of their children, once the two have been married.

Though this story does not provide an answer for what retired women should do once they have given over the duties of the household to their daughters-in-law, other stories from the Edo period do. In *The Woman’s Bathhouse* Sanba imagines conversations that might have occurred between women of various backgrounds and life stages. One of these conversations

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<sup>31</sup> Mayer and Yanagita, “‘Yanagita Kunio’: Japanese Folk Tales,” 3.

<sup>32</sup> Jippensha Ikku, “The Monster Takes a Bride,” trans. Adam L. Kern, in *An Edo Anthology: Literature from Japan’s Mega-City, 175-1850*, eds. Sumie Jones and Kenji Watanabe (University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>33</sup> Jippensha Ikku, “The Monster Takes a Bride,” trans. Adam L. Kern, 141-142

is between “Mrs. C” and “Mrs. D,” two older women (seventy and sixty, respectively) who have retired. In their conversation, Mrs. C is complaining about her daughter-in-law, who she sees as lazy and too demanding. It is clear that she feels like she, Mrs. C, is doing too much work around the house, that her authority is not being respected, and that she believes that her daughter-in-law is not fulfilling her role as a filial, obedient daughter.

Mrs. D is unsympathetic. Rather than commiserating with Mrs. C about the proper roles of daughters-in-law, she says that “If you want a peaceful household, it’s best for a mother-in-law to beat a retreat once she’s found her son a bride.”<sup>34</sup> Rather than trying to control her daughter-in-law, Mrs. D tells Mrs. C to “just tell yourself you’re already dead, and none of this will bother you!” and to “try going out to a sutra dedication or something instead.”<sup>35</sup> Taking part in religious ritual and going on pilgrimage was fairly common for people who had reached retirement in the early modern period, regardless of gender. For women, however, retirement offered a particular opportunity for them to travel and take part in religious practices that they were unable to pursue earlier in life.

As mentioned previously, women were expected to stay in the home and take care of their duties there. But Mrs. D’s conversation with Mrs. C suggests a shift in this way of thinking once a woman retired, to the extent that Mrs. D says, “It’s because you’re home all the time that things are so bad.”<sup>36</sup> Rather than sympathizing with Mrs. C about her errant daughter-in-law and all of the work she is still doing around the house, Mrs. D encourages her to abandon this work to the daughter-in-law, to not say anything, and to instead leave the house for religious pursuits. Mrs. D also notes that the reason she is saying these things is

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<sup>34</sup> Shikitei Sanba “Ukiyoburō” trans. Robert W. Leutner, in *Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Japan*, (Harvard University Press, 1985). 182.

<sup>35</sup> Shikitei Sanba “Ukiyoburō” trans. Leutner, 182.

<sup>36</sup> Shikitei Sanba “Ukiyoburō” trans. Leutner, 182.

because she “[thinks] like a man” lending her an in-text authority as a reasonable figure, contrasted to Mrs. C’s depiction as a nagging woman who is unable to process and embrace the changing dynamics of her household.<sup>37</sup>

Mrs. D’s suggestion that Mrs. C leave the house more often, particularly for purposes of worship, very much played out in real life. In her study of the Sekiguchi family, Nagashima Atsuko notes that older women were able to travel far more often and for longer distances.<sup>38</sup> Laura Nenzi points out that the majority of travel diaries that archivist Shiba Keiko has collected were written by retired women,<sup>39</sup> and Shinno Toshikazu points out that, while young housewives could participate in confraternities for Kannon, they did activities that kept them in the village, while retired women were the ones who were traveling for pilgrimage.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, not all women were able to pursue these aspects of self-cultivation, and not all of them wanted to. Poorer women might have needed to help manage the family business or farm well into what would have been their retirements, had they been from a wealthier family. Other women may have had the opportunity to travel and write, but, like Mrs. C, might have focused more on keeping control of their management of the household, seeing retirement not as a period of freedom or an opportunity to pursue their interests, but as a period when the control they had exercised over their households had been usurped.

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<sup>37</sup> Shikitei Sanba “Ukiyoburō,” trans. Leutner, 182.

<sup>38</sup> Nagashima Atsuko, “Bakumatsu nōson josei no kōdō no jiyū to kaji rōdō, Bushū Tachibanagun Namamugi mura Sekiguchi nikki o sozai toshite,” in *Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai*, ed., *Ronshū kinsei joseishi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), 139–173.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*, (University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 86.

<sup>40</sup> Shinno Toshikazu, “Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early Modern Period,” trans. Laura Nenzi, *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 4 (2002), 460.

This is largely the case for the mother-in-law, highlighted in another one of Shikitei Sanba's works: *In the World of Men, Nothing but Lies*. This piece highlights contradictions between what various characters say, and what they actually feel. In the section titled "A Mother-in-Law's Lies," readers are introduced to a woman who has nothing but complaints about her daughter-in-law, never recognizing her own faults in her household dynamic. She claims "I'm not the demanding type; I just keep myself in the background and let them do whatever—why, I'd never even dream of interfering!"<sup>41</sup> This suggests that she is aware that the ideal mother-in-law would not be overly involved in her children's lives, and is trying to present herself in alignment with this ideal. The more likely truth comes out later when she notes that, according to her daughter-in-law, all she does is "nag, nag, nag about every little thing!"<sup>42</sup>

Though she complains about her daughter-in-law and all of the work she has to do to help take care of her grandchild, she also says that she is able to "go to Gyōtoku for the Ten Nights Prayers at Tokuman-ji Temple."<sup>43</sup> As the name suggests, the Ten Nights Prayers were prayers that would last for ten days and ten nights, particularly prominent in the Pure Land Buddhism sect. This set of prayers was believed to be a great way to earn merit for those who participated. The temple she mentions would likely have been at least a day's travel outside of Edo (modern-day Tokyo), where the story takes place. Even as she complains about being overburdened with childcare, she is planning a trip that would take, at best, twelve days, something that would be quite difficult to do if she was still a young wife, caring for a child. Through these sly contradictions that he presents in the mother-in-law's statements, Sanba

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<sup>41</sup> Shikitei Sanba, "In the World of Men, Nothing But Lies," trans. Joel Cohn in *An Edo Anthology: Literature from Japan's Mega-City 1750-1850* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 358.

<sup>42</sup> Sanba, "In the World of Men, Nothing But Lies," trans. Joel Cohn, 359.

<sup>43</sup> Sanba, "In the World of Men, Nothing But Lies," trans. Joel Cohn, 360.

shows a mother-in-law quite similar to Mrs. C: someone who is able to travel but, rather than take greater interest in that, chooses to spend her time critiquing her daughter-in-law. This clearly negative portrayal suggests that retired women should do the opposite of the woman that Sanba represents. Having no responsibilities to the household meant, on the one hand, that the best thing retired women could do was fade into the background. On the other hand, it allowed them the opportunity to travel and earn merit for their next lives.

There are also other stories and tales where retired women are not mentioned in much detail but are nevertheless living up to these tropes. For example, in Santō Kyōden's *The straw sandal, or, The scroll of the hundred crabs* (*Mukashi banashi inazuma-byōshi*), the character Kamon decides to “shun the world” and live in the mountains with his mother.<sup>44</sup> Here, he “carried out of his filial duties to his mother day and night.”<sup>45</sup> The tale asserts the importance of sons behaving filially towards their mothers by having Kamon, a well-respected character within the story, perform these filial duties. One day, Kamon's mother decides to go on a short pilgrimage to a nearby mountain temple. On her way back, she runs into a bear and is rescued by a young man who, it turns out, was searching for Kamon.<sup>46</sup> The mother is not a particularly significant character to the story, and while she is scolded within the story for going on pilgrimage alone, it is because it is dangerous to venture on mountain paths alone, and not because she should have been staying home. In a brief episode, the story shows the authority of older women to command filiality from their children and the autonomy that they had in being able to leave on pilgrimage when they chose.

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<sup>44</sup> Santō Kyōden, *The Straw Sandal or The Scroll of the Hundred Crabs*, trans, Carmen Blacker, (Global Oriental Ltd., 2008), 128.

<sup>45</sup> Santō Kyōden, *The Straw Sandal or The Scroll of the Hundred Crabs*, trans, Carmen Blacker, 128.

<sup>46</sup> Santō Kyōden, *The Straw Sandal or The Scroll of the Hundred Crabs*, trans, Carmen Blacker, 129.

A popular version of the game *sugoroku* reaffirms this idea by suggesting that retirement was something that women should aspire and look forward to. This version of *sugoroku*— a game similar to chutes and ladders— traced the various life paths that might play out for women. Rolling dice would determine which squares you would advance to, and your new position would determine the paths that you were able, and unable, to take. Each square was illustrated with a depiction of a woman occupying the status represented by the square. If you were unlucky in the game, you might end up as a nagging wife or, worse, a blind street singer, in which case you would have to start the game over. If, however, you had a streak of luck you could achieve the ultimate goal of the game: a retired woman, surrounded by her fortune and symbols of her success.<sup>47</sup> Retired women in these games were drawn to be alone, or surrounded by servants. Their families were not depicted or written in the descriptions of the square. The fact that a solitary, wealthy existence was the goal of a game that followed the various life paths that a woman could take shows how positively retirement was viewed, particularly if the retired woman had amassed some wealth throughout her life.

These depictions of retired women in popular media show the liberation and autonomy that retired women were capable of attaining, and encouraged to pursue, even if they did not always do so. Edo period authors created a recognizable form for retired women as older women who should be respected, but simultaneously should not be overbearing, particularly towards their daughters-in-law. It also portrayed them as having the autonomy to go on pilgrimages. The story of *Obasuteyama* shows the dual filiality that existed between

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<sup>47</sup> Susanne Formanek, “The ‘Spectacle’ of Womanhood: New Types in Texts and Pictures on Pictorial Sugoroku Games of the Late Edo Period,” in *Written Texts, Visual Texts: Woodblock-Printed Media in Early Modern Japan*, (Hotei Publishing, 2005), 80.

retired women and their children and that gender hierarchies were disrupted by age hierarchies. Through his critique of mothers-in-law who meddle in their children's affairs, Shikitei Sanba suggested that the ideal retired women should fade into the background and allow their daughters-in-law to manage the household without interference. While some retired women may have resisted this advice, others used their freedom from household duties to travel more widely— something they would not have been able to do when they were looking after a household, and something that Sanba's character, Mrs. D, encouraged. This sense of liberation for retired women is also supported by the version of *sugoroku* that places a wealthy retirement as a goal for women to achieve. These women were not surrounded by their families, but by their riches or their servants, suggesting that a retirement in which women achieved freedom by giving up their household duties was not only normative, but aspirational.

**“Though I have wanted to go on pilgrimage to many places, only now...am I able to depart:” The Lives and Travel Diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko**

What we know about the lives of the women at the heart of this study, Yamanashi Shigako, Kutsukake Nakako, Tanaka Aijo and Oda Ieko, suggest that they generally followed a normative life course. Because they were each from fairly wealthy families, this included training in literature and, for Ieko, a finishing-school-like pilgrimage in her youth. While they were married and raising children, they might have continued their studies and interests in literature, but no evidence of that study remains. Indeed, Nakako specifically states that she largely put both her interest in literature and her desire to go on a Buddhist pilgrimage— cultivated before and early on in her marriage— on hold for her to raise her

family.<sup>48</sup> While none of the other women express this sentiment as clearly, by tracing when they came in contact with their tutors, who were essential in helping them establish themselves as literary women, and looking at when they went on their extended pilgrimages, it is clear that they were only able to engage more deeply with their desire to travel, their faiths, and their literary interests when they had retired.

The requirement of complex knowledge of ancient texts, such as the *Man'yōshū*, the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, *Tale of Genji*, *Tale of Ise*, and the ability to use and transform them in their own work, meant that women who engaged with literature in the early modern period had to have extensive training. While women had more time to engage in literature in their retirements, most women who did so had some sort of training from their youths, meaning that they likely had a parent or grandparent who took an interest in their education and made sure that they were exposed to literary classics. Women might have been exposed to this literature when they were younger because of their parents' own interests, and this might have also been done with the goal of social mobility in mind. As mentioned above, self-cultivation and education for women in their early lives was often a way to appeal to their future husbands and to put them in a better position to educate their future children.

Women would have rarely been able to adopt poetic and artistic endeavors once they had gotten married and started having children. As Eiko Ikegami points out, this is in part because people in the early modern period were able to suspend—temporarily—their everyday identities by leaning into artistic and poetic identities.<sup>49</sup> For women, this temporary suspension of identity was far easier to achieve once they had turned over their household

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<sup>48</sup> Kutsukake Nakako, "Azumaji no nikki," in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 142.

<sup>49</sup> Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (University of Cambridge Press, 2005), 204.

duties to a daughter-in-law. Though some women, like the artist Ema Saikō, might have been able to assume these artistic identities from an early age, most women would not have been able to devote significant time to artistry until they were retired, if they were able to do so at all. Indeed, Ema never married which likely allowed her to maintain a consistent career as an artist, more free than her peers of family obligations.<sup>50</sup> Retirement, then, was a period in a woman's life when she was more easily able to cross borders of identity and construct a femininity based on her own art and poetry rather than her ability to look after the home, teach her children, and converse with her husband.

Self-cultivation in retirement allowed women to focus on themselves. Their children had reached adulthood and often their husbands had already died. Rather than seeking tutors to help them discuss literature, as they might have earlier in life, they were seeking tutors to help them write their own works, something they would not have had the time to do when they were managing their households. This pattern, of being well-educated in their youths, but being unable to write about themselves or for themselves until their retirements, is largely present in the lives of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko. Their diaries show the liberatory experiences they were able to participate in during their retirements, and how they made sense of their femininities at a time when prescriptive literature was not dictating how they should behave.

The four diaries of Yamanashi Shigako, Kutsukake Nakako, Tanaka Aijo, and Oda Ieko show not only that women, particularly wealthy women, were able to pursue a greater wealth of activities in their retirements, but how they chose to frame themselves while doing so. Not only were they all wealthy, merchant women from rural areas, they were also

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<sup>50</sup> Patricia Fister, "Female *Bunjin*: The Life of Poet-Painter Ema Saikō," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (University of California Press, 1991).

drawing on similar texts to inform their poetry and writing more broadly. Yet the femininities that they carefully cultivated in their diaries, after years of editing and reworking, were very different. This micro-historical approach allows me to explore the complexity of the negotiations of femininity that Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko undertook in their travel diaries. Further, as these diaries were written with the intent to be published and circulated, they also represent an expression of femininity that was meant to be public— a break from the femininities they experienced earlier in their lives.

### *Yamanashi Shigako*

There is little information about Shigako's early life. She was born in 1738 to a merchant family in Ibara (modern day Okayama Prefecture). It is likely that she started learning waka poetry from an early age, due to the influence of her mother.<sup>51</sup> Around 1755 or 1756, she married at age 17 or 18 a man named Iizuka Sasuke, who was 26 or 27 at the time. This man had been recommended to her family by the Buddhist priest Hakuin, who was teaching Shigako's father Zen while training Sasuke in the art of meditation.<sup>52</sup> Shigako ultimately inherited the Yamanashi family branch with her husband and became the mother of five sons and three daughters. Two of her children became well-known for their scholarly and artistic pursuits. Her fourth son, Tohei, was a known scholar of Chinese literature while her eldest son, Hiranaka was a painter and was a prominent figure in the region.<sup>53</sup> It was common for literate women to give their children supplementary training in reading and

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<sup>51</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, (Fukuoka-shi: Ashi Shobō, 2001), 40.

<sup>52</sup> Maeda, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū* 42.

<sup>53</sup> Maeda, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū* 42.

writing, and it is possible that Shigako fostered these interests in her children while they were growing up, just as they had been fostered in her.

Despite this interest in literature, she did not start producing her own writing until she was in her 50s, after which point she became quite prolific. Indeed, according to the *Tokaido Jinbutsu Shi* (Records of the Tokaido School of Authors), written in 1803, Shigako was a well-known female poet in the region during her time. Her reputation was likely bolstered by the fact that her teacher was Shibayama Mochitoyo who had become famous in his own right.<sup>54</sup> While she had made brief trips to Edo before, she did not go on a larger pilgrimage until she was 55. Her husband was still alive when she made each of her trips, suggesting that she did not have much anxiety when it came to leaving her family behind. She was accompanied by her son, Tōhei, for the four-month journey which she described in her travel diary, *Haru no michikusa*.

Though Shigako traveled with her son, she barely mentioned him throughout her diary. Instead, she focused on her own experiences and interests. These ranged widely from a fascination with war tales and the weapons and armor that had been preserved in various temples and shrines, to old legends about women attaining Buddhahood. In one particularly moving moment, she visited a monument to two female poets, a mother and daughter named Kadzi and Yuri, who were born and wrote during the early modern period, one of whom had died only 35 years before Shigako began her own journey. She wrote “Kadzi and Yuri, [who lived] in a world close to [mine] and became famous— when I see the poetic words of these women, my tears keep flowing.”<sup>55</sup> Monuments to female poets, particularly those who lived

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<sup>54</sup> Maeda, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū* 42.

<sup>55</sup> Yamanashi Shigako, “Haru no michikusa,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 77.

in the early modern period, were very rare, and seeing one such monument likely meant a great deal to Shigako as a female poet herself. The fact that she also remarked on their fame—something she does not do when encountering monuments to male poets— suggests that she is aware of the difficulties of becoming famous in the world of poetry as a woman and appreciates their poems all the more because of this. While she never became as famous as Kadzi and Yuri, retirement allowed Shigako to break into this world of poetry and create poetic words of her own.

### *Kutsukake Nakako*

Most of what we know about Nakako's childhood comes from her own writing. Born in 1749, she was separated from her mother (for reasons that are unclear) when she was three and went to live with her grandmother, who taught her how to read and write and, according to her diary, had a profound impact on her life. When she was five years old, her grandmother taught her to recite *Hyakunin issu* (*One Hundred Poems; One Hundred Poets*), a classical Japanese anthology of 100 waka poems written by 100 poets. She then learned about the 36 Immortals of Poetry, followed by the "Spring" section of the *Kokinshū*. From an early age, Nakako had an interest in poetry and wanted to write poems herself. Her grandmother likely also had a background in Japanese literature and was able to teach Nakako these classics.

There seemed to have been a battle within Nakako from a younger age between the expectations of her as a filial daughter to get married, and her own desire to write poetry and worship the Buddha. In her travel diary, she wrote "though I have wanted to go on

pilgrimage to many places, only now...am I able to depart.”<sup>56</sup> She was finally able to do this once she reached retirement. This sentiment is further reflected in Nakako’s diary when she notes that her “thoughts were in turmoil, day and night,” but could not be cured by a doctor, and it was instead her faith in the Buddha that allowed her to quiet her mind.<sup>57</sup> Nakako characterized herself as thinking deeply since she was a young child, causing her to become ill, and ultimately being saved by her Buddhist faith. She cited her faith as one of her main reasons for traveling. It is clear from her diary, though, that her deep thinking carried into adulthood, and that her lessons in Japanese literature continued to have a profound influence on her.

Nakako married her husband, Kutsukake Michihide in 1765. She moved from Imazato to Shiojiri to be with her husband, and had four children with him, one daughter who did not live beyond childhood, and three sons. In 1783, Mt. Asama, a nearby volcano, erupted, causing a great deal of damage to the surrounding provinces and years of bad harvests. The Kutsukake family were wealthy enough that they were able to sustain themselves through this time, but they took an active role in helping other families in the surrounding areas.<sup>58</sup> A few years later, in 1787, the Kutsukake family suffered from a major fire that destroyed everything in their home, and a year after that, her husband died of an illness at the age of 51. Nakako herself was only 40 years old, and her eldest child Michiro, now the head of the household, was 19.<sup>59</sup> While the death of a husband might have marked the beginning of retirement for some women, Nakako was focused on helping her son get

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<sup>56</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 142.

<sup>57</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 142.

<sup>58</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi: chihō wo chūshin*, (Kasama shoin, 1998), 167.

<sup>59</sup> Maeda, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi*, 168.

used to his tasks as a household head and running the family business for the next several years.

Nakako's travel diary *Azumaji no nikki* centers herself and her pilgrimage around the Chichibu circuit, a pilgrimage route that includes 34 temples to Kannon, located in modern-day Saitama prefecture. The diary showcases her devotion to Buddhism and communicates how moved she was upon seeing the temples, their architecture, and the many statues of the Buddha. It also clearly demonstrates her own literary prowess, her philosophical thoughts about religion, and an exploration of herself and her bravery. In many ways, it is a reflection of a new form of femininity that she was only able to experience once she retired. A freedom to move around the world in a way that she had not been able to previously, and to pursue literary and scholarly passions that she had had no time to dedicate towards. But it also carries forward the femininities she explored during her married life. The relationships she had with her children were a key part of the diary, because they were a key part of Nakako as a person and as a woman.

An exploration of Nakako's diary shows that her retirement did not necessarily represent a break from how she understood her own femininity, but rather a chance to enact that femininity in a new way. She was devout but was not able to go on pilgrimage until she no longer had to look after the household. She was interested in literature but could not write her own until she had passed on her duties. Retirement allowed her to put these aspects of her femininity into practice.

Aijo was born into a wealthy merchant family in 1781 and was able to pursue her studies due to the support of her family. While not much is known about her childhood, it is likely that her literary talents were fostered by her uncle, Asaharu, her father, Masatake, and her older brother, Masahiro, whose pen name was Manshun. Both her father and older brother had taken literary pen names, and they were likely involved in teaching Aijo about literature and cultivating her interests. Her elder brother was born in 1772 and lived until 1823.<sup>60</sup> He spent his early childhood and adolescence learning about Chinese folktales and studying Japanese literature, something he did under both his father and his uncle. While much less is known about Aijo's childhood, given what is written in her diary, and how she seems to be extremely familiar with not only the Japanese classics, but some of the Chinese classics as well, it is likely her childhood learning followed much the same path as her older brother's.

Aijo might have had a more consistent exposure to literature throughout her marriage due to her brother's influence. It is certainly likely that Manshun introduced her to one of his friends who would later become her tutor, Ikeda Gensai. Little is known about her husband, who died when she was only 39, and it is uncertain when Aijo started writing collections of poetry that she intended to present to others. Her travel diary, *Michi no ki*, which she began at age 47 in the latter half of the second month of 1827, is her earliest extant work. Though her main reason for going on the trip was a pilgrimage to Ise, Aijo traveled widely during the trip, also going to places such as Kyoto, Osaka, Suma, Akashi, and Edo before she returned home to Ōyama.

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<sup>60</sup> Maeda, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, 359.

During her travels, she made clear her interest in literature and history, which she likely learned, in part, alongside her brother. Texts like the *Man'yōshū*, the *Kokinshū*, the *Shin-kokinshū*, and the *Tale of Ise*, are all important to and referenced by Aijo. They were both significant literary and historical works, and Aijo often uses references to them to point out how the land and atmosphere themselves are imbued with historical meaning. These places often carry a religious significance as well, which makes the feelings that Aijo has upon standing in places that have so much history even more powerful and moving. For example, when visiting the forests of Takasago, a place made famous by poetry written in the *Kokinshū* in the 10<sup>th</sup> century she writes “there are still the roots of old trees remaining, showing the traces of 1000 years of prosperity.”<sup>61</sup> Aijo’s discussion of these places not only shows her in-depth knowledge of ancient literary works, but also her appreciation of the histories that they reveal, and their lingering connections to the present.

Aijo often refers to “traces” of the past that she is able to see by visiting places of historical significance. While she may have studied these places and their historical and poetic meanings since she was young, her diary makes clear that it was only in physically traveling to these sites that she was able to truly appreciate them. The importance of traveling to poetic and historical sites to compose your own poems was a common understanding for literati in the early modern period, but was out of reach for most women until they reached their retirements and had a greater amount of free time that allowed them to travel.

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<sup>61</sup> Tanaka Aijo, “Michi no ki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 198.

## *Oda Ieko*

Though she left behind an abundance of records in her retirement, little is known about Oda Ieko's earlier life. She was born in 1789 to part of a very wealthy merchant family that sold soy sauce.<sup>62</sup> Little is known about her husband, Yoshikatsu. Rather than the typical arrangement in which a woman would marry into her husband's family and move into his house, Yoshikatsu married into the Oda family and was adopted into the house as a son. Though ostensibly a typical family structure would have been maintained in cases where a man married into a woman's family, it was often the case that the person moving into the new household would have had less power in the family unit. Being an outsider to the household and removed from one's natal family meant a clear disadvantage for the newcomer, regardless of gender, and would have also meant that Ieko was in a more powerful position in her household than many of her contemporaries who would have had to leave their natal families upon their marriages. Nor did Ieko have to adapt to new family dynamics, particularly dealing with a mother-in-law who would have overseen her transition into the new household.

Ieko found a tutor in the scholar and Shinto priest, Itō Tsunetari, whom she likely met when she was in her early to mid-forties. While the majority of Tsunetari's students were male, he had a fair number of female students, at one point, women numbered almost a quarter of those seeking his teachings. He was also willing to publish his female students' works. For example, in the 1836 *Okanoagata Collection*, which he compiled, included 307 poems composed by 41 different women. Ieko herself had 20 of her poems included.<sup>63</sup> While the *Okanoagata Collection* was published when Ieko was 47, it is likely that she had been

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<sup>62</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei Fukuoka chihō joryū bungeishū* (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 418.

<sup>63</sup> Maeda *Kinsei Fukuoka chihō*, 418.

working with Tsunetari for a few years before that, refining her poetry into something that could be published and circulated.

Ieko set out in 1841 at the age of 52 on a five-month long pilgrimage to such famous religious sites as Ise shrine and Zenkō-ji temple, and recorded her journey in her travel diary, *Azumaji nikki*. She frames her trip at the outset of her diary as a pilgrimage to pray for her ancestors and her children.<sup>64</sup> She does offer a very moving prayer for one of her granddaughters, who had died at the age of 10 while at Zenkō-ji temple, but hardly mentions her family outside of that instance. It is clear that her interests varied widely. Like the other women of this study, she makes ample references to classic literature like the *Man'yōshū*, but she also commonly refers to war tales like the *Tale of the Heike* and often comments on past battlegrounds and war heroes.

She also demonstrated a fascination with the “floating world” and pleasure districts. The pleasure districts she went to included Dontonburi in Osaka and the Yoshiwara district in Edo where she watched multiple plays and delighted in seeing the *oiran*, a high-ranking courtesan.<sup>65</sup> While she described being very moved by the shrines and temples she frequented, her most detailed and ample descriptions of her surroundings occurred when she was discussing her time in the Yoshiwara district. This is unsurprising considering that, from the opening pages of her diary she wrote the poem

The writing flows  
While floating  
Like my hand moving  
What do I happen to see  
A dancing woman at the gates of literature<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Oda Ieko “Azumaji nikki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 317.

<sup>65</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 366.

<sup>66</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 318.

Significantly, she characterized the gates of literature as being guarded not by any of the great poets from centuries past, but by a “dancing woman,” a word that often-implied prostitution. The trip that Ieko took in retirement, while she might have framed it around praying for her family, was also clearly something she took personal delight in. It offered her the opportunity to engage with literature, history, and popular culture for no one else’s sake but her own.

## **Conclusion**

Different life stages introduce different femininities that women were meant to perform in early modern Japan, and the life stage of retirement represents the first life stage in which women were able to define their femininity as an individual, rather than as a larger part of a family unit. The relative silence from prescriptive literature, and popular media’s encouraging retired women to not instigate issues with their daughters-in-law— in part by engaging in activities outside of the house and if wealthy enough, travel—shows that women had more freedom in determining what an ideal femininity was in their retirements. At the same time, retirement represented a break from how and where they would have been expected to perform this femininity in other stages of their lives.

To be certain, women’s retirements were informed by decades of training in how to benefit and contribute to their families, and the way they expressed themselves in retirement cannot be divorced from the teaching they received throughout their lives. Indeed, many women saw their retirements as extensions of their previous life stages with the main difference being the greater amount of authority they possessed. Anxieties around difficult mothers-in-law in both prescriptive literature and popular media suggest that older women

who were unwilling to relinquish full control over daily household tasks were a persistent problem. However, this anxiety also suggests that retired women were encouraged to leave the home for periods of time, or pursue hobbies that were not related to governing a household.

In this way, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko were not exceptional. They were more educated than many women, and wealthier, but the fact that they traveled on pilgrimage and pursued tutoring in writing was not out of the ordinary for families with means. Indeed, they were expected to pursue this self-cultivation. In doing so, they were able to present a version of themselves that was focused on their writing abilities, and their literary and historical interests, rather than their roles in their families.

## Chapter 2

### Writers and Wayfarers: Inscribing New Identities on a Liminal Road

#### Introduction

The Edo period experienced a boom in recreational travel, particularly in the period from 1787 to 1841.<sup>1</sup> There were many reasons for this increase. Roads and travel stations had been built up due to the practice of *sankin kōtai*, which required daimyo and their retinue to regularly travel to and from their Edo residences. At the same time, shogunal laws restricting travel eased, allowing more people to take to the roads, as long as they did so under the guise of going on pilgrimage or receiving medical treatment. Further, the proliferation of print culture meant that sacred sites were able to advertise themselves to local communities and beyond. The increase in print culture also allowed for a greater production of maps, travel guides, and works of literature that focused on “famous places” to enable and entice a greater number of people to begin their journeys.

For many—particularly the educated class—while they may have officially been “going on pilgrimage” or “seeking medicinal treatment” their trips also allowed them to visit sites that had been made famous by literature, partake in local specialties, and experience the liminality of life on the road. The myriad reasons for travel often overlapped and intersected, as many sacred sites had, themselves, been made famous by literature, and as many locals began to cater to the increase in travelers that frequented their towns and villages. This allowed the trips Edo period travelers took to take on many different meanings and

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<sup>1</sup> Constantine N. Vaporis, “Caveat Viator. Advice to Travelers in the Edo period,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 4 (1989): 462.

motivations, which many carefully wove together in travel diaries that would later be read by friends, family, and their literary circles.

Much work has been done regarding travel in the Edo period. Constantine Vaporis has contended that going on pilgrimage allowed travelers to take extended journeys, arguing that the Tokugawa shogunate was likely more reluctant to restrict travel to sacred sites.<sup>2</sup> Laura Nenzi has built on this argument by showing that locals sites became aware of this trend and adapted to it, to create travel packages that allowed people to not only engage with sacred and famous sites, but also encouraged people to try local specialties.<sup>3</sup> Nenzi further shows how print culture contributed to an increased amount of travel and tourism through advertisements and making the roads more legible.<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, Marcia Yonemoto has shown that a shift in mapmaking contributed to people's desire and ability to take to the roads, as maps became not only geographical indicators, but also explainers and guides for people seeking to go on a journey or learn more about a place.

Studies into travel diaries have also produced a robust set of scholarship. Herbert Plutschow has offered insight into the complex history of travel diaries in the middle ages, and how they had long been a method for the educated to interact with ancient literature and create their own works of literature.<sup>5</sup> Shiba Keiko has written at length of women's travel diaries in the Edo period, compiling a number of these travel diaries and analyzing trends within them.<sup>6</sup> Nenzi has offered a gendered analysis of travel diaries more broadly,

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<sup>2</sup> Constantine N. Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*, (Harvard University Asia Center, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Laura Nenzi, "Cultured Travelers and Consumer Tourists in Edo-Period Sagami," *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Eugen Plutschow, "Japanese Travel Diaries of the Middle Ages," *Oriens Extremus* 29, no. 1 (1982)

<sup>6</sup> Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabi nikki* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997).

suggesting that the types of literature and historical events that women and men contend with were different. She notes that women were more likely to reference Heian period works, pointing to the fact that there were many more famous female writers in the Heian period. Conversely, she argues, men were more interested in pointing out the more masculine histories of war, pointing out legendary battlefields in their diaries and more commonly making reference to war tales.<sup>7</sup>

Nenzi and Anne Walthall have also discussed how travel allowed people— and women in particular— to re-create themselves on the road. Travel offered people a liminal space in which they could reconstruct themselves and behave in ways that may not have been socially acceptable in their day-to-day lives. Not only were travelers able to re-create themselves on the road, those who were literate were able to re-create themselves within travel diaries, which were meticulously crafted to present the identity that the author wanted to put forward. In addition, poetry was often a key part of these travel diaries, and, as Walthall has pointed out, “poetry makes a performative break with everyday speech. In so doing, it makes room for voices otherwise marginalized.”<sup>8</sup>

Retirement, as a time in which women’s lives and duties were less regulated, also represented a break from the “everyday” that women had experienced up to that point in their lives. The combination of retirement with travel and poetry writing represents a fracturing of the quotidian which allowed retired women to embrace new versions of femininity that they themselves chose and constructed. Travel diaries written by retired

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<sup>7</sup> Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*, 98-99 and “Women’s Travel Narratives in Early Modern Japan,” 54.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Walthall, “Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration: Texts of Self and Gender,” in Tonomura, Walthall, and Wakita, eds., *Women and Class in Japanese History* (University of Michigan Press, 1999), 221.

women, then, reflect a carefully cultivated re-creation of self, and a particular version of the self that was outside of the confines of everyday tasks and everyday speech.

This chapter argues that one of the main goals of the travel diaries was to show that Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were cultured and knowledgeable travelers, regardless of whether or not their knowledge would have been considered “feminine.” Their re-creations of self on the road allowed them to begin to—but not fully—embrace works and activities that were gendered masculine. They did this in part by engaging with war tales and histories. Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko also visited and commented on pleasure districts, the “floating world,” and the contemporary plays that they produced, showing an interest not only in ancient literature, but in works that had been written and performed in their own time. Finally, each woman also took care to describe the hardships that they encountered on their journeys, both giving their diaries a sense of realism, but also portraying themselves as existing within the long-standing literary tradition of travelers who suffered hardship on the road. The varied re-creations that the women constructed in their travel diaries shows how differently each perceived the ideal self that they wanted to present to the world. The liminal spaces that existed within retirement, the road, and poetry greatly expanded the ways in which their femininity could be performed.

### **Travel in the Edo Period**

Women were often discouraged from traveling in the Edo period by both laws and social norms (which often reinforced one another). However, retirement not only offered women a chance to take to the road, due to the lessening of their household duties, it was also a time in which travel was encouraged. As explored in the previous chapter, evidence

from both prescriptive and popular literature suggests that retired women were enabled and expected to travel, particularly if that travel was centered around pilgrimage, whereas earlier in their lives they would have been expected to stay home to look after their husbands, children, and parents-in-law. This shows that understandings of what femininity was and could be expanded under retirement. In allowing women to re-create themselves, travel diaries furthered and reinforced this expansion of femininity.

Legally, both men and women's travel was regulated with the goal of maintaining social order. Ostensibly, the Tokugawa government's laws restricting women's travel originated in their desire to keep high ranking samurai women, particularly the wives of daimyō, from leaving Edo without permission. Men's travel was constricted for the purpose of controlling the movement of weapons in and out of the capital. While these are often seen as the main reasons that the Tokugawa government sought to control travel, these laws affected men and women of all status and backgrounds. They were also used to keep women from fleeing marriages, men from leaving their positions, and peasants from covertly leaving their villages to seek greater opportunity in larger cities.

The majority of travelers would travel using the *gokaido*, or Five Routes. These were the roads that daimyo used when traveling to and from Edo and were therefore the best maintained. The 53 barrier stations along the Five Routes were tasked with policing movement. Guards at these stations monitored the comings and goings of travelers and ensured that no one was going where they should not have been. Guards were tasked with inspecting travel documentation that men and women were required to carry to confirm their identities and purposes for travel. These documents contained detailed physical descriptions

of the travelers. If travelers had the wrong documentation, or if border guards took issue with their documentation, they could be turned back.

Travel edicts showed a great deal of concern to the life stages of female travelers, particularly regarding if they were married or unmarried. For example, when Inoue Tsūjo was traveling with her father to visit Edo, border guards stopped her at a checkpoint in the town of Arai because her travel documents stated that she was a “woman,” but she was wearing a long-sleeved kimono which, sartorially, marked her as a “girl.” She was made to turn back and obtain new travel documents that correctly identified her stage in life.<sup>9</sup> In fact, while travel was made difficult for everyone, it was made particularly difficult for women of marriageable age, who might have been high-ranking samurai wives fleeing Edo in disguise, or regular women running from their fathers or husbands. Guards did not make the same distinction as often between adult males and boys, despite the fact that they were also a large part of the traveling population, and, like women, would have been easily distinguishable based on their hair and clothing.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Diane Wright points out that “regulations concerning female travelers overall tended to be applied more consistently than those directed at men.”<sup>11</sup> In 1815, for example, fifty percent of women’s travel passes were challenged by border guards. Both genders faced issues with miswording, as happened to Inoue, but women were more likely to face extra scrutiny for physical features like their sleeve style and their hair length, which could also indicate whether or not a woman was married. In the same way that the style of Inoue’s kimono suggested she was an unmarried

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<sup>9</sup> Marcia Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, (University of California Press, 2016), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*, 52 .

<sup>11</sup> Diane Wright, “Female Crime and State Punishment in Early Modern Japan,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 3 (2004): 19.

“girl” rather than a married “woman,” a woman’s hair length could help identify her as an unmarried woman, wife, widow, prostitute, or nun.<sup>12</sup>

These laws reflected a social norm that women would stay in the house, looking after her husband and her children, and that their travel represented a threat to social order. As Nenzi notes, both the Tokugawa government and local communities “[identified] mobile women as a menace to order” because by traveling outside of the home, she “automatically threatened the delicate stability of the household, the village, or the family business.”<sup>9</sup>

Some women travelled in search of work as a means to support their families or to improve possible matches they could make through marriage. Employment at a samurai household, for example, would offer young women a chance to seek refinement and better their marriage prospects,<sup>13</sup> while other, often poorer women, might be permitted to leave the home to work as prostitutes, allowing their families, brothels, and samurai authorities to benefit from the sale of sex.<sup>14</sup> However, these journeys, supported and authorized by the men of the family, differed from journeys, like pilgrimages, that women sought out themselves. Women’s travel for leisure, therefore, was particularly suspect.

Nevertheless, these laws were often circumvented. One of the most common ways of doing so was taking roads and paths that did not have check points on them. This method of eluding authority was so common, in fact, that guides often offered to show people how to circumvent official checkpoints. However, while many women were able to make use of unofficial routes to travel covertly, this was considered more dangerous, both because of

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<sup>12</sup> Wright, “Female Crime and State Punishment,” 20.

<sup>13</sup> Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women*, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Amy Stanley, *Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets, and the Household in Early Modern Japan*, (University of California Press, 2012), 44.

their illegality, and because of the danger that guides, often men, might pose to a woman, particularly if she were on her own.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the many difficulties presented for women's travel, there are numerous records of women taking to the roads, legally and illegally, of all statuses and ages. When looking at these records, though, it is clear that older women were able to travel more often than younger women, and wealthier women left more robust records of their journeys. For example, Shiba Keiko holds one of the most extensive collections of women's travel diaries from the Edo period, and of the 133 female diaries she examined, the age group that was by far the most likely to take to the road was women between the ages of forty and fifty-nine.<sup>16</sup>

Though some women did travel while they were young, their older counterparts traveled more often and for longer distances. In her study of the Sekiguchi family, Nagashima Atsuko pointed out that mothers who passed on their duties and obligations to their daughters-in-law (or, less commonly, to their own daughters if they had not given birth to or adopted a son) had more time to travel.<sup>17</sup> This is clearly borne out in Nagashima's study, which shows that Orie, the house's matriarch, traveled quite extensively between 1806 to 1813 and was absent from the house for a total of 187 days, while, in the same time period, her daughter-in-law only left the house twice for a total of seven days.<sup>18</sup> While many women were required by circumstance, or their own desire, to maintain a constant presence at home, other women chose to use the free time that they newly possessed to take to the roads. With their fathers long dead and their husbands often dead as well, retired women on the road were

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<sup>15</sup> Amy Stanley, "Writing the History of Sexual Assault in the Age of #MeToo," *Viewpoints*, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabi nikki* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), 178, fig. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Atsuko Nagashima, "Bakumatsu nōson josei no kōdō no jiyū to kaji rōdō, Bushū Tachibanagun Namamugi mura Sekiguchi nikki o sozai toshite," in *Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai*, ed., Ronshū kinsei joseishi (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), 139–173.

<sup>18</sup> Nagashima, "Bakumatsu nōson josei."

seen as less of a threat to the social order, and likely would not have faced the same amount of scrutiny as someone like Inoue.

### **Retired Women's Interest in History and the Military**

In their diaries, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko showed a great interest in works like *Heike monogatari* and the realm's military past. This is somewhat unexpected as travel diaries—and particularly women's travel diaries—focused on sacred sites and famous places that were present in poems and literary works of the past. Most of the commonly cited works were written in the Heian period and prior, or were imperial anthologies compiled for the court. Laura Nenzi has pointed out that women were more likely to reference works from the Heian period, while men were more likely to focus on literary works that dealt with war, as these were more masculine.<sup>19</sup> While that may have been true for some women, the diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko reveal that gendered interests were more complex. They did not limit their literary interests to the Heian period, and instead it is clear that literary works like the *Heike monogatari* and subsequent kabuki, joruri, bunraku, and noh plays based on this story impacted the way that the four women of this study saw the places they visited.

While literary tradition might have put other works at the forefront, works of literature exalting the samurai were incredibly significant during the Edo period, a time of both great peace and warrior rule. Given the *Heike monogatari's* significance to literary tradition, and the number of other stories and reimaginings it produced made it a tale worthy

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<sup>19</sup> Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*, 99

of being referenced by a cultured traveler. Other war tales, such as the *Gikeiki* and *Taiheiki* also clearly had an impact on the way that the diarists understood the landscapes that they traversed and the famous sites that they encountered.

In writing about war tales, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko often used poetry as a way to interact with the works. This was to be expected: writing poetry upon encountering sites made famous by literary works was inseparable from the genre of travel diaries. In the travel diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, then, poetry acted as a medium that allowed them to reframe war tales that might have been seen as more masculine, to important works of the literary canon that they, as cultured travelers, were able to comment on. At the same time, however, the variation in the extent to which the diarists were willing to reference these war tales also suggests that Shigako and Ieko were more willing to use this method to reframe war tales than Nakako and Aijo were. The range of their interests and the ways in which they were expressed show the diversity of performance of femininity that the four were willing to portray.

### *Heike monogatari*

The *Heike monogatari* was one of the most famous and most adapted pieces of literature in Edo period Japan. The story had been told and retold as different chapters were made into noh or kabuki plays. Further, it produced a material culture around artifacts such as weapons and armor that could be associated with different warriors highlighted in the story. This allowed Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko to engage with the *Heike monogatari* in a variety of ways. For example, when visiting Byōdō-in in Kyoto, Shigako noted that “This

is the land where Minamoto no Yorimasa of the third rank was killed. Even now there is a fan-shaped lawn.”<sup>20</sup> About this, she wrote the following poem:

Deeply moving  
Drawing near  
The fan-shaped lawn  
Just looking—traces of  
A tearful past<sup>21</sup>

The “lawn of the folding fan” that Shigako noted, came from the noh play *Yorimasa*, written by Zeami. In the play, a monk explains to the ghost of Yorimasa, disguised as a traveler, that because Yorimasa had killed himself in front of Byōdō-in seated on an open fan, that turf had been cut in the shape of an open fan to commemorate him. In making poetic reference to the noh play, Shigako was referencing a famous piece of literature, but one that was outside of the typical era of the travel diarists canon, which often focused on works in the Heian period or before, or works of poetry that were produced by and for the imperial court.

In addition to engaging with the noh play based, in part, on *Heike monogatari*, Shigako was also able to engage with material culture that had been preserved by the temple. She writes that they were shown “Yorimasa’s armor, helmet, and longsword” by a monk at the temple. She does not dwell on these items, but the fact that she mentioned them shows that she was interested in going beyond literary and poetic aspects of *Heike monogatari* and *Yorimasa*, and was also willing to engage with the armor and weapons that were purportedly used in the Genpei war. This is a further departure from what might be expected from

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<sup>20</sup> Yamanashi Shigako, “Haru no michikusa,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 55.

<sup>21</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 56.

women's travel diaries, both in terms of the subject matter (armor, helmet and longsword) and the way she presented it (through prose rather than poetry).

Ieko also commented on the relationship between the temple and Yorimasa, writing when she reached Byōdō-in that it was the “grave where [Yorimasa] reached enlightenment,” though she did not mention being shown Yorimasa's armor.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the armor Shigako was shown was no longer on display when Ieko went to the temple. It is also possible that Ieko did not feel the need to mention the armor and instead addressed the temple as she would any other site that had been made famous by a literary work, marking its importance so that her readers would both understand that significance and understand that she herself was aware of it.

Shigako continued to detail her interest in military material culture when she went to Yoshimizu-in in Nara where “There was Yoshitsune's armor in addition to various other treasures.”<sup>23</sup> Minamoto no Yoshitsune was also featured in the *Heike monogatari* and, according to legend, stayed in Yoshimizu-in while on the run from his brother, Yoritomo. Shigako did not say anything else about Yoshitsune, nor the treasures that she observed, but the fact that she chose to highlight Yoshitsune's armor suggests that this was the object displayed by the temple that was most interesting to her, perhaps due to its literary legacy.

Yoshitsune also had many works written about him in the centuries after the *Heike monogatari* was first sung, including the *Gikeiki* which explains his meeting with his loyal retainer, Benkei. According to the *Gikeiki*, Benkei gained notoriety by wandering around Kyoto with the goal of stealing 1,000 swords from samurai warriors who he deemed

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<sup>22</sup> Oda Ieko, “Azumaji nikki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 396.

<sup>23</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 58.

unworthy. He had successfully collected 999 swords before meeting a young man playing a flute at the Gojotenjin shrine in Kyoto. He challenged the man to a duel and the two went to Gojo bridge to fight, where Benkei ultimately lost to the man, who then revealed himself as Yoshitsune. Later, Benkei, looking for revenge, challenged Yoshitsune once more at the Buddhist temple, Kiyomizu, where he lost a second time.<sup>24</sup> After this, he swore his loyalty to Yoshitsune, fought with him in the Genpei war, fled with him when Yoshitsune was marked as an outlaw and ultimately died protecting him while he committed seppuku. The two were often depicted together in noh and kabuki plays that retold this famous initial encounter, portrayed them fighting together in battle, depicted their flight from Yoritomo and their eventual deaths.

Their significance in Edo period literature is clear, which is perhaps why Aijo's only reference to the *Heike monogatari* is a reference to their bond. Aijo also referenced the two's compelling story while walking alongside the Yoshino River in Nara. She wrote "The bamboo on the distant [mountain] peak came into view and I remember such stories as the time of Lord Yoshitsune's wandering, he clung to the snow-bent bamboo and crossed the river, only then did Musashibō [Benkei] also go toward the bamboo."<sup>25</sup> This is in reference to a scene from the *Gikeiki*, which focuses on the story of Minamoto no Yoshitsune. Yoshitsune was fleeing from his brother's forces with his loyal retainer Benkei, when they were stopped by a particularly deep and narrow section of Yoshino River, made even more dangerous by the excess water from melting snow. Though the river seemed impossible to cross, they

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<sup>24</sup> Helen Craig McCullough, *Yoshitsune: A Fifteenth-Century Japanese Chronicle*, (Stanford University Press, 1966).

<sup>25</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 193.

spotted bamboo on the opposite side, bent low over the water. Using the bamboo, he and the rest of his men were able to make it across the river safely.<sup>26</sup>

Aijo does not dwell on this reference to a war tale for long though; instead she follows it immediately with a reference to the *Man'yōshū*. She wrote “Though I had heard of it, my eyes had not yet seen” a reference to the poem

I heard of it  
But had not yet seen it  
I wonder if, today  
I will see the Mutsuta pool  
At Yoshino River<sup>27</sup>

The Mutsuta pool (*mutсутa no yodo*), or a very calm section of the Yoshino river was famous as a poetic place where willows grew. Aijo wrote that she “crossed the Mutsuta pool on a boat” and “was able to see the ancient willows on the riverbank.”<sup>28</sup> Aijo’s deft references undoubtedly show her skill and knowledge of literature, but the fact that she followed a reference to the *Gikeiki*, a war tale, immediately with a reference to the *Man'yōshū* and a spot famous for poetry suggests that she may not have been entirely comfortable writing about war tales. Indeed, unlike the other three diarists, Aijo hardly ever references war tales throughout her diary, instead choosing to focus on classical texts.

Nakako also focuses on classical texts for most of her diary, but deviates from this noticeably at the end of her journey when wrote about Yoshitsune’s exile, dedicating one of her *chōka*, or long poems, to Yoshitsune’s plight. This is particularly significant due to Nakako’s interest in the *Man'yōshū*. *Chōka*, which appear comparatively often in the

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<sup>26</sup> Helen Craig McCullough, trans. *Yoshitsune: A Fifteenth-Century Japanese Chronicle* (Stanford University Press, 1971), 193.

<sup>27</sup> *Man'yōshū Volume 7* poem 1105.

<sup>28</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 193.

*Man'yōshū* largely fell out of style afterwards. In writing *chōka* herself, Nakako demonstrated her knowledge and appreciation of the *Man'yōshū* and skill as a poet. In choosing to dedicate one of these poems to Yoshitsune, she showed that she was not reluctant to engage with war tales in the same way Aijo might have been. She wrote the poem about Yoshitsune while at Koshigoe, an outpost on the sea outside of Kamakura, where Yoshitsune had written a letter pleading with Yoritomo to allow him entry to explain himself. According to the *Heike monogatari*, Kajiwaru Kagetoki had lied to Yoritomo about Yoshitsune in order to convince him to exile his brother. Nakako references this writing “I heard that long ago...Kajiwaru made a false accusation against [Yoshitsune].” Her poem is clearly sympathetic to Yoshitsune, noting that

It was sung by  
The emperor that  
Minamoto no  
Yoshitsune was  
An unparalleled  
Warrior<sup>29</sup>

While Nakako rarely brought up the *Heike monogatari* throughout the rest of her diary, the *chōka* at the end of her diary in many ways represent a culmination of the literary aspect of her diary which largely highlighted the *Man'yōshū*. The fact that she chose to dedicate one of her *chōka* to a reference to the *Heike monogatari* indicates its significance to Nakako.

### *Histories of War and Other War Tales*

The *Heike monogatari* was by far the most commonly referenced war tale in the diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, but it was not the only depiction of war that they

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<sup>29</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 165.

engaged with. This is unsurprising, as there was a great interest in wars of the past during the Edo period which was characterized by being a time of Great Peace, but also a time of military rule. Many works of art and literature focused on wars and warriors of time past, both because they offer interesting and entertaining stories, but also because they glorified warrior ethos and therefore helped legitimize a warrior rule. When Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko engaged with these stories, they were engaging with popular and famous artistic works. At the same time, there was a clear difference between the way that Shigako and Ieko referenced war tales and the way and extent to which Nakako and Aijo did. While Shigako and Ieko seemed more interested in military history and literature broadly, including that which may have been written more contemporaneously to them, Nakako and Aijo expressed these interests less and used them as a way to demonstrate their poetic ability.

Another famous work of literature focused on war was the *Taiheiki*, or the *Chronicle of Great Peace*, which largely covers the period of 1319-1367 with a particular focus on the Genkō war (1331-1333), Emperor Go-Daigo's failed attempt to restore imperial power, and the rise of the Ashikaga shogunate. Like the *Heike monogatari*, the *Taiheiki* spawned many works of literature in the years following its composition, with such plays as *Taiheiki Chūshin Kōshaku*, *Sakurai*, and *Go Taiheiki Shirashi Banashi*, showing its longevity and importance to Edo period literature. Both Shigako and Ieko mention famous figures from the *Taiheiki* in their diaries.

Shigako did so and continued her interest in material culture surrounding war tales while at Hōryū-ji, a Buddhist temple in modern day Ikaruga, Nara prefecture. She wrote that the temple was “full of long swords and naginata” and that she saw “the armor of Kusunoki

Masashige and the armor of Hideyoshi, alongside women's combs and hairpins.”<sup>30</sup>

Kusunoki Masashige was a samurai and military commander who fought in the Genkō war on the side of Emperor Go-Daigo, to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate and restore imperial political power. Shigako mentioned in her diary that these items were dedicated to the temple “in order to fulfill great wishes.”<sup>31</sup>

Like Shigako, Ieko also shows an interest in military figures from the *Taiheiki*. While in Nikkō, she wrote that “there was a monument to Nitta Yoshisada.”<sup>32</sup> Yoshisada (1301-1338) was, a military commander in the Nanboku-cho period who marched on Kamakura in support of Emperor Go-Daigo. Ieko did not mention Yoshisada further while in Nikkō, but when she visited Shichirigahama beach, she noted that “it is said this place was an ancient battlefield.”<sup>33</sup> This likely referred to Nitta Yoshisada, who invaded Kamakura in 1333. According to legend, Yoshisada was unable to invade Kamakura on land, and so he prayed to the god Ryūgin at the impassable cape at Inamuragasaki to allow him to traverse the difficult waters. He ultimately succeeded in doing so, and his troops marched up to Shichirigahama where they fought the battle that Ieko is referred to. This battle was written about in the *Taiheiki* and was also referenced in a number of plays which were popular during the Edo period, including the kabuki plays *Kamakura Sandaiki*, and *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*. Ieko did not mention Yoshisada by name here, only pointing out that this area had been the site of a battle. However, when discussing other battles and military endeavors she was more specific, showing that she did not feel the need to shy away from interest in stories of war.

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<sup>30</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 57.

<sup>31</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 57.

<sup>32</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 361.

<sup>33</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 370.

Ieko seemed to go out of her way to mention battles and military figures as her party passed famous sites of battle. For example, when pausing for a rest, in Shinano province, she noted that “long ago, this was the place that Lord Shingen of Kai and Lord Kenshin of Echigo fought each other.”<sup>34</sup> The two had fought in a series of battles in the Sengoku period (1467-1615) called the Battles of Kawanakajima, which took place between 1553-1564, for control of the territory of Kawanakajima in northern Shinano Province (modern day Nagano). While neither of the two ultimately gained control of the land, the battles themselves became quite famous and were the subject of many woodblock prints during the Edo period. When resting on what had once been the battleground, Ieko said that she was able to listen to “a detailed story” about the battles.<sup>35</sup> The Battle of Kawanakajima clearly interested Ieko. She referenced it again a few pages later, mentioning that “towards the mountain on the right, I saw a pine that marked Lord Shingen of Kai’s encampment. Towards the mountain on the left, was Lord Kenshin of Echigo’s encampment.”<sup>36</sup> Ieko’s interest in and knowledge about battlefields— to the extent that she knew where each man’s encampment was— underscores the fact that women writing travel diaries did not always limit themselves to works of the Heian period and before. Ieko commented on wars and war tales because she knew about them and was interested in them. Since she included them in the final version of her diary, she likely assumed that her audience would be interested as well.

Ieko’s interest in histories of conflict was not limited to conflicts of the distant past. For example, while in Shirokawa, she saw “Akechi Mitsuhide’s monument.”<sup>37</sup> Mitsuhide

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<sup>34</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 347.

<sup>35</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 347.

<sup>36</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 349.

<sup>37</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 389.

was the man who assassinated Oda Nobunaga, and upon seeing his monument, Ieko wrote the following poem:

Like the dew of Ogurusu  
Has vanished  
The name of the warrior  
Who rebelled against his master  
Has also disappeared<sup>38</sup>

Akechi Mitsuhide often appeared as a villainous figure in bunraku and kabuki plays such as *Ehon Taikoki* and *Toki wa Ima Kikyō no Hataage*. The fact that Ieko is marking the monument to Mitsuhide with a poem underscores its importance in her diary. The poem itself underscores a common motif of Edo period plays focused on warriors: that warriors should be loyal to their lord.

Ieko also references a martial event that was even closer in time to when she was writing when she wrote about the Akō incident, most famously popularized by the bunraku play, the *Chushingura*, (Treasury of Loyal Retainers) which was quickly adapted into a kabuki play. The play tells the story of forty-seven loyal retainers who avenged their lord after he was forced to commit seppuku for drawing his sword on another lord. Based on actual events that occurred in 1701, numerous kabuki and bunraku plays retold this story, the first being a bunraku play written by Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shouraku, and Namiki Senryuu and first performed in 1748. The story was immensely popular, evidenced by the fact that Ieko goes to two different locations that have monuments dedicated to the forty-seven ronin. The first is in Ako, the domain that the 47 ronin were originally from, at Akōishi shrine.

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<sup>38</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 389.

There, a priest told her the story of “people of the past, who had punished the enemy of their lord.”<sup>39</sup> She wrote the poem

Though I don’t know  
The path of the warrior  
I stopped by  
And heard the old stories  
Of Akō<sup>40</sup>

She then “went to the left of the temple towards the graves of the warriors” and wrote

Forty  
And seven more  
Hidden graves  
My sleeves were wet  
As clothing dampened by dew<sup>41</sup>

Months later, Ieko also visited Sengaku-ji temple in Edo, where the graves of the forty-seven ronin are located.<sup>42</sup> There, “in front of a monument to Lord Ōishi,” the leader of the forty-seven ronin, she wrote another poem

Looking at the remains  
Of the path the warrior  
Protected  
At this stele  
My tears fall

Ieko dedicated more poetry to the events that took place at Ako than any other singular event. This shows the diverse tastes that women traveling in the Edo period displayed in their travel diaries. While Ieko does reference works from the Heian period and before, such as the *Kojiki*, the *Man’yōshū*, and *Genji monogatari*, she also dedicates a fair amount of space to works that were far more recent, and which did not have the same poetic legacy as older works. Nevertheless, from Ieko’s poetry, it is clear that this story not only

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<sup>39</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 325.

<sup>40</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 325.

<sup>41</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 325.

<sup>42</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 364.

moved her deeply, but that she thought that those reading her diary would also find value in her experiences of them.

In contrast to Shigako, and especially Ieko, Aijo mentions war stories less frequently and more obliquely. For example, while near Kikyōgahara, she mentioned “a battle between Oda and some others.”<sup>43</sup> This likely refers to the Battle of Nagashino, which marked the downfall of the Takeda clan that had challenged Oda Nobunaga in his campaign to unite Japan under his rule. Aijo’s lack of detail when referring to those who fought in this battle could suggest that she wanted to downplay her knowledge of the battle. Nevertheless, she does highlight the field’s importance by writing a poem about it:

Of the flowers and autumn leaves  
On the fields of  
Past conflict  
All that remained  
Was dew

Aijo does write about war tales, and highlights this with poetry, but kept her reference to the battle vague and the focus of her poetry on nature, rather than the events of the conflict or the motivation of the warriors fighting. Her reluctance to go into the same amount of detail as Shigako and Ieko shows a difference in the way that she wanted to represent herself in her diary, which was more focused on Heian period poetry and the imperial court.

Nakako’s reference to past warriors serves to show her skill as a poet, and her familiarity with classical works such as the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Besides her reference to the *Heike monogatari* at Tsurugaoka Hachimangū, she wrote another *chōka* that referenced Emperor Ojin and his mother Empress Jingu, both of whom were enshrined there. Both of

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<sup>43</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 183.

them were known for their martial abilities. Empress Jingu is most known for the expedition to Korea that she led, while Emperor Ojin was revered as Hachiman, a god of war. Indeed, in her poem, Nakako praises his dedication to “the way of the warrior” that had been “transmitted through/thousands of years.”<sup>44</sup>

War tales, and their reimaginings, were incredibly significant to literary culture in the Edo period which likely inspired Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko to write about them. However, each diarist wrote about these tales to different extents and varying degrees of interest. Ieko clearly showed the most fascination with martial exploits throughout her diary and referenced works that were written in the distant past, as well as those that were more contemporaneous with her. Shigako’s interest in war tales was particularly evident in her interactions with material culture surrounding war tales that were presented at temples, suggesting a greater willingness to discuss these tales when they were alluded to through sacred objects. Nakako, on the other hand, used her reference to the war tales to demonstrate her poetic skill during the most advanced poetic feat of her diary, showing their importance to her, and validating their role in her understanding of literary canon. Aijo rarely mentioned war tales and, when she did so, did not make them the sole focus of her poetry. These different approaches to war tales and poetry shows the myriad ways in which retired women were able to express themselves and their various literary interests in their travel diaries.

### **The Floating World**

Pleasure seeking alongside pilgrimage was common in the Edo period, and Shigako, Ieko, and Aijo each went to pleasure quarters, sometimes referred to as “the floating world”

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<sup>44</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 164.

(*ukiyo*) during their journeys. These were meant to be places where visitors could indulge in hedonism and which, much like being on the road itself, represented a break from the monotony of everyday life. Pleasure quarters were also great producers of art and literature. Many famous plays and woodblock prints came out of the “floating world,” and it is unsurprising that diarists who were presenting themselves as educated and cultured women, would have included trips to places that were both advertised as tourist attractions, but were also heavily involved in the production of art.

At the same time, many criticized pleasure districts as base, particularly in literary circles which were more focused on reviving literature of the ancient past. This meant that discussion, or lack thereof, of the pleasure districts could also be a way for diarists to assert their sophistication. Of the three who actually went to the pleasure districts, Ieko was the only one who described them in great detail. Aijo showed more reluctance in mentioning her involvement in pleasure districts, though she did go to multiple pleasure districts throughout her trip. Nakako would have had the opportunity to go to Shin-Yoshiwara while she was in Edo, but if she did so, she did not mention it in her diary.

Ieko is the most straightforward about her appreciation of the floating world, and asserts her interest in it from the opening part of her diary. The first part of her trip necessitated the group taking a boat to take them along Onga river, and Ieko described the boat as “floating.”<sup>45</sup> While the boat was certainly floating on the water of the river, Ieko was probably also marking her entrance into the “floating world.” The idea that Ieko was referencing the floating world here is solidified even further in her next poem:

Looking out over

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<sup>45</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 318.

The endless sea  
The time that I am satiated by sake  
Has not yet come  
Today's pleasure<sup>46</sup>

By evoking the floating world and the idea of pleasure at the beginning of her journey, Ieko suggested a secondary reason for her trip: to have an adventure. While sacred and literary themes played a large part in her diary, she often dedicated a particular amount of time to exploring and thinking about the floating world. For example, while on this boat, Ieko noted that “there were many dancing women<sup>47</sup> riding this boat.”<sup>48</sup>

This trend is continued in a poem she wrote a few lines later:

While floating  
The writing flows  
Like my hand moving  
What do I happen to see  
A dancing woman at the gates of literature<sup>49</sup>

Ieko portrayed herself from the outset of her diary not only as someone who was interested in exploring the pleasure districts, but also as someone who linked aspects of the pleasure districts, such as dancing women, to literature.

It was not only literature that could be linked to the pleasure quarters, but sacred sites as well. A pilgrimage to Ise, perhaps the most famous and revered religious site because it enshrined the main god of the Shinto pantheon, Amaterasu, could not have been separated from the Furuichi pleasure quarters that was positioned between the inner and outer parts of

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<sup>46</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 318.

<sup>47</sup> The term “dancing woman,” 浮かれ女, was also written with the character “to float,” continuing the theme Ieko had laid out of entering the floating world.

<sup>48</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 318.

<sup>49</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 318.

the shrine.<sup>50</sup> At its height, Furuichi employed around 1,000 women working at brothels and was the highlight of many pilgrims' trips.<sup>51</sup> Much of the scholarly focus on pilgrimage to Ise, which often included a visit to Furuichi, focuses on male pilgrims. They were, of course, more common than female pilgrims, and were the population to whom the pleasure quarters were mostly catered to.

Priests at Ise started recognizing this and began trying to attract pilgrims accordingly. The *oshi* priests at Ise were responsible for hosting pilgrims as well as spreading the word about Ise and encouraging pilgrims to make the trip. As Teeuwen points out, "the *oshi*-pilgrim relationship neither began nor ended in Ise."<sup>52</sup> *Oshi* from Ise were particularly active in the latter half of the Edo period, distributing amulets and encouraging pilgrims to go to the shrine. Once the pilgrims got there, the *oshi* would host them, organizing food and kagura dances for the pilgrims to see.<sup>53</sup> While many of these efforts might have been directed at men at first, women were clearly impacted by them as well, and in the latter half of the Edo period, Furuichi became a place that women began to explore more frequently.

Shigako went to both the outer and inner shrines at Ise, and mentioned going to Furuichi, the pleasure quarters between the two. While visiting Ise was clearly a sacred experience for her, it was just as clearly an entertaining one. She called Furuichi a "courtesan town" (*yūri*). While there, she wrote "there were many people enjoying themselves, I believe they played a song that was called *Ise ondo*<sup>54</sup> that people joined

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 141.

<sup>51</sup> Teeuwen and Breen, *A Social History of Ise Shrine*, 141.

<sup>52</sup> Teeuwen and Breen, *A Social History of Ise Shrine*, 149.

<sup>53</sup> Teeuwen and Breen, *A Social History of Ise Shrine*, 147.

<sup>54</sup> Likely a type of folk song that was common in the region.

together to dance. It was truly entertaining thing.”<sup>55</sup> In her only in-depth description of a pleasure district, Shigako kept her focus on people dancing to local music, rather than mentioning the brothels and sex workers that she undoubtedly saw, suggesting a reluctance to reference the bawdier aspects of her experience.

Aijo is interesting in her circumspection in regard to visiting Furuichi. She clearly went through the pleasure district, since she visited the inner shrine at Ise, and would have had to pass through the town to make her way from the outer shrine to the inner shrine. Yet, she did not mention the town, instead focusing on the sacred aspects of her experience. While she did mention seeing singing and dancing, this was done by shrine maidens:<sup>56</sup> “two or three shrine maidens, holding bells and fans in their hands, raising their voices to sing songs in praise of the gods.”<sup>57</sup> This omission shows, like Shigako, Aijo did not want to go into detail about the pleasure quarters, likely because doing so may have been read as uncouth.

Perhaps surprisingly, given her interest in other pleasure quarters, when she went to Ise, Ieko did not mention Furuichi. This is perhaps because she only went to the Outer shrine, thought to be the more important of the two during this period, and Furuichi was located between the Outer and Inner shrines.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, many pilgrims to Ise were less interested in going there to pray at the Inner shrine, and more interested in briefly stopping by the Outer shrine to purchase souvenirs and *ofuri* (indulgence boxes).<sup>59</sup> Pilgrims would tie the *ofuri*

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<sup>55</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 50.

<sup>56</sup> Mekannagi; women who served the gods and performed sacred music and dance to appease the gods as well as who performed rituals to summon them.

<sup>57</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 186.

<sup>58</sup> Teeuwen and Breen, *A Social History of Ise Shrine*, 143.

<sup>59</sup> Constantine Vaporis, “Early Modern Origins of Japanese Tourism,” *Senri Ethnological Studies* 38 (1995), 34.

under the brims of their hats, and they could act like a travel permit for the rest of the journey back.

Another famous pleasure district in the Edo period was Dōtonbori, which was the Tokugawa-designated pleasure district in Osaka. It was largely famous for its kabuki, noh, and bunraku theaters. As more people came to the district seeking entertainment, tea houses and restaurants became more ubiquitous, and Dōtonbori also became known for its food culture alongside its entertainment culture. Both Shigako and Aijo went to Dōtonbori but, despite its fame, neither of them write about it extensively in their diaries. Shigako merely stated “Today, I went to see Dōtonbori kabuki.”<sup>60</sup> This must have taken up the entirety of her day— which would be unsurprising as kabuki plays often lasted from late morning until dusk— because that is the extent of her entry that day. She did not mention which play she saw, nor if she enjoyed it. Aijo wrote even less about the pleasure district. After leaving Osaka, she traveled briefly by boat and simply noted that after several days “we returned to the lodging we stayed at previously in Dōtonbori,” though this was her first mention of the pleasure district.<sup>61</sup>

Ieko, on the other hand, delighted in observing sex workers that she passed when going past Shinmachi, a redlight district in Osaka that was connected to Dōtonbori, once again highlighting the sex workers in her poetry:

The good, the bad,  
To tease or to yield?  
The white caps of  
Naniwa coming into view  
Its village’s women of pleasure<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 64.

<sup>61</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 200.

<sup>62</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 329.

Further, as she was making her way home, she stopped in Osaka once again and from the twenty first day to the twenty fourth and wrote, “day after day, until sundown, [I watched] kabuki and puppet plays, though I don’t remember any details.”<sup>63</sup>

Where Ieko most clearly shows her interest in the floating world, however, is in Shin-Yoshiwara the famous red-light district located in Edo, which had moved to its new location in Asakusa from Fukiyacho after the great fire of 1657. She dedicated a significant amount of space to her journey through Shin-Yoshiwara, writing “I saw what was called Shin-Yoshiwara’s lunch shop. Further, there was what was called a monk dance, four or five monks, holding up something like parasols danced various dances. It was very interesting. Further, there were many dancing girls, I could see them lounging behind lattice, they were very beautiful. As for the middle of the town, first we went to a place called Yanagi tea shop... Eventually, there was someone called an *Oiran*, she was carrying a large umbrella and had *kamuro* on each side of her, along with many other attendants accompanying her, she walked into tea shop after tea shop and was extremely beautiful.”<sup>64</sup> Pleasure districts were designed to be interesting places, and Ieko felt no qualms in communicating her interest, perhaps because, as she stated at the beginning of her diary, she understood them to be gates into a world of literature.

Another central aspect of the floating world was the theater, and kabuki plays in particular. While most people in the Edo period would not have been able to see many (if any) kabuki plays in their lives, Ieko saw multiple on her journey. One she saw while in

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<sup>63</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 399.

<sup>64</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 366.

Ueno<sup>65</sup> and she must have enjoyed it because the very next day, when she was unable to travel due to the rain, she went to see another one and wrote the following poem:

Entering the border  
Of pleasure  
I cannot forget  
The interesting floating  
Pillow of grass<sup>66</sup>

She does not name either of the kabuki plays she saw, nor did she go into detail about the stories they told. Of the first one, she simply says she “saw so many things” that she was “unable to express in words.”<sup>67</sup> Her poem about the second play is her only comment on it.

The “floating world” represented more than mere indulgence; it offered a reprieve from the constraints of daily life, a space for cultural exploration, and an opportunity to engage with art and performance. The inclusion of pleasure quarters in their diaries demonstrates how Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko were crafting their diaries to present themselves as both familiar with and a part of the cultural landscapes they were moving through. While Shigako and Aijo limited their discussion of the pleasure quarters, Ieko embraced them as sites of literary and artistic production, thereby reframing them as appropriate for her to talk about in her travel diary.

### **Suffering and Hardship on the Road**

A common understanding of travel was that it involved hardship. This hardship was seen, by some, as an integral and even beneficial part of the journey. For example, Yasumi Roan,

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<sup>65</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 363.

<sup>66</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 363.

<sup>67</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 363.

the author of the popular travel guidebook, *Ryokō Yōjinshū* wrote, “Indeed, those who have not traveled, whether they are rich or poor, will not understand the hardships mentioned above. They will think that a journey is merely a pleasant recreation; as a result they will learn so little of human nature and will remain so selfish that people will laugh at them behind their backs.”<sup>68</sup> The hardship of travel, then, was an essential part of a character-building journey. It also added a sense of realism to the travel diaries.

Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko wrote about physical difficulties that they experienced on the road. However, they wrote about specific difficulties that they faced, and omitted others that almost certainly afflicted them on their journeys. Laura Nenzi has noted that men’s travel diaries often did not shy away from crude descriptions of their surroundings, including sharing details about stepping in dog excrement, encountering the sale of toilet paper, and the difficulties of having stomach problems that compounded with the summer heat.<sup>69</sup> While Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko discussed precipitous climbs, inclement weather, and discomfort they faced on their journeys, they did not detail any episodes of digestive distress or unpleasant smells that they faced while on the road. This shows that they were willing to acknowledge their hardships and limits of their bodies—to an extent. They emphasized themselves as travelers that faced hardship as a way to show what they were capable of overcoming for the sake of their art, rather than as a way to give their audiences a sense of realism, which male travel diarists were often less reluctant to convey. This indicates that while there were many divergences within the diaries in how the four women re-created

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<sup>68</sup> Vaporis, “Caveat Viator,” 470.

<sup>69</sup> Laura Nenzi, “Women’s Travel Narratives in Early Modern Japan: Genre Imperatives, Gender Consciousness and Status Questioning,” *Journeys*, no. 5 (2004): 48-49.

themselves and their femininity, there were also limits to what they were willing to express and share.

One of the most obvious difficulties that travelers would face was dealing with harsh weather conditions, occasionally exacerbated by sleeping outside. Shigako wrote, for example, “today it rained all day, and I spent the night with my sleeves and the hem of my robe soaked.”<sup>70</sup> The rain Shigako experienced was also often exacerbated by the bitter cold, causing Shigako to write the following day “though the rain had cleared up, the blowing wind made the lingering cold nearly impossible to bear.”<sup>71</sup> This was a relatively regular occurrence for Shigako. While traveling near Kojima, Shigako wrote “the rain did not stop, and thought I was wearing a straw hat, my traveling clothes were soaked.”<sup>72</sup> The rain was also often exacerbated by the bitter cold, causing Shigako to write “though the rain had cleared up, the blowing wind made the lingering cold nearly impossible to bear.”<sup>73</sup>

Adverse weather conditions also often meant that it was difficult to find places to stay. There were a few nights throughout Ieko’s journey that she had difficulty finding a place to spend the night, something that seemed to be especially common when it was raining, because more travelers would have been seeking shelter. Some nights, she and her group were forced to go to the next town over, in the rain, because there are no vacancies in any of the inns, and no one was willing to take them in. For example, while in Imao (modern day Gifu prefecture), she wrote “because it had been raining, though we passed many inns on our path...we were not given permission [to stay].”<sup>74</sup> Aijo faced similar difficulties

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<sup>70</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 52.

<sup>71</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 52.

<sup>72</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 68.

<sup>73</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 52.

<sup>74</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 383.

throughout her journey. She wrote “Although it was already twilight, because we had no place to stay, we hurried toward the village of Niitsu as the rain fell without stopping.”<sup>75</sup> She encountered similar problems while in Shiojiri.<sup>76</sup> While outside of Tochigi, she wrote “we were overtaken by darkness and spent the night in a field called Takauchi, rain was falling hard and there was no way to relieve our misery.”<sup>77</sup>

Another hardship that travelers encountered was traversing difficult terrain. Shigako often referenced the precipitous (*kewashiki*) climbs that she had to make. For example, when climbing Mt. Misen, she wrote of the “very precipitous slopes” that she was forced to traverse in order to get to the Dainichi hall.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Nakako faced many precipitous climbs, but something that made her journey especially difficult was that she was afraid of heights. She often referenced the harrowing climb up mountains that she faced as she moved from temple to temple. These climbs often involved ladders and stairs that were meant to make the road easier for travelers, but still would likely have been difficult to climb, particularly given her phobia. Nakako also faced dangerous paths, such as one mountain road where “round stones came tumbling into the path, it was very difficult and various places [began to] shake.”<sup>79</sup> Aijo ascribed her ability to traverse a treacherous road to her faith. She wrote that, while descending the mountain at a point she “should have broken into a thousand pieces and died, [she] wholeheartedly said the Nembutsu and descended.”<sup>80</sup>

One of the most difficult mountain passes to cross during this time was the Kiso mountains, which Ieko wrote about at length. Crossing the mountain in early spring, as Ieko

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<sup>75</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 182.

<sup>76</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 184.

<sup>77</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 213.

<sup>78</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 73.

<sup>79</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 150

<sup>80</sup> Aijo, “Michi no ki,” 206.

did, was particularly trying, because the cold mountain winds made already difficult travel even more uncomfortable. She wrote about this part of her journey that her “suffering is unspeakable” and later “unending.”<sup>81</sup> In addition to describing her suffering due to her pain, she also mentioned the medical treatments she received to help alleviate this pain. When she arrived at the top of the Kiso mountains, she got a moxibustion treatment—a Chinese medicine that was applied either through acupuncture or through burning dried mugwort near the skin. Ieko wrote that she “heard there was a person who administered moxibustion, and everyone went and baked their legs.”<sup>82</sup> She received this treatment a second time a few days later.<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps the most harrowing event in all of the four diaries was when Aijo got lost and was then attacked by bandits. While traveling in Nasuno, Aijo noted that she was on an overgrown path that “did not have even one guiding stone” to help them identify where they were or where they should be going.<sup>84</sup> Even after stopping to ask for directions at a house, they were unable to find a clear road, something that was particularly upsetting because the sun was setting. Though they ultimately were able to ask for directions from another couple and find a town, it was undoubtedly frightening for them to think that they might be lost at night.<sup>85</sup> The day after briefly getting lost, Aijo wrote that she saw bandits “rising out of the grass.”<sup>86</sup> She did not detail the encounter itself, other than writing that they decided to run away, but it must have been a terrifying experience. Had she not been traveling with two male servants, it is possible that she and her cousins would not have been able to escape. Nor

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<sup>81</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 343.

<sup>82</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 345.

<sup>83</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 347.

<sup>84</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 213.

<sup>85</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 213.

<sup>86</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 213.

did the night bring any relief, as Aijo wrote that “the night wind pierced her body” and she “remembered crying violently.”<sup>87</sup> The next morning, she felt incredibly fainthearted, writing “women going to Nikkō should instead return to Utsunomiya” because “Nasuno is a very very frightening place with no guiding stones.”<sup>88</sup> These events are a reminder that, though the diaries largely detail aspects of cultural refinement, these women were taking their lives in their hands to make these journeys.

The women’s embodied experiences—soaking wet clothes, sore feet, moxibustion treatments, and the chill of night winds—anchor their suffering in the physical realm, emphasizing the body as a site of both struggle and actualization. As much as these women were seeing fantastic sites, commenting on past military exploits, and exploring the glittering world of the pleasure quarters they were also risking their lives and their health. They traversed hundreds of miles for months on end, climbing up and down mountains, crossing rivers and seas and battling harsh weather conditions. By documenting the hardships they endured and overcame, they positioned themselves as resilient and capable individuals who articulated themselves as cultured travelers not only because they saw culturally significant sites, but because they faced and overcame adversity.

## **Conclusion**

The travel diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Ieko and Aijo illustrate the intersections of gender, retirement, and cultural production in Edo period Japan. By transferring domestic responsibilities to younger generations, they were able to engage in physical and intellectual mobilities. As older women, their travel posed little threat to the status quo allowing them to

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<sup>87</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 213-214.

<sup>88</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 214.

move more freely, often with less scrutiny from authorities. Taking to the road and writing travel diaries that they intended to publish enabled them to carve out a space for themselves in the public sphere when they had previously been relegated to the home.

The variety and the extent to which Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko engaged with war tales and the pleasure districts show the differences in the forms of femininity that they wanted to express to their audience and the ways that they were re-creating themselves on the road. They were, at every turn, making choices about what they would include in their travel diaries, and then editing and re-editing those choices as they prepared their diaries for publication. In retirement, there was a broadening understanding of what femininity could be, and travel diaries gave them the chance to express this femininity in a way that they found most compelling. At the same time, their description of hardships on the road shows that there was a limit to the ways in which they could realistically portray their journeys. While they felt comfortable describing the difficulties of the road itself, to portray themselves as cultured travelers, they avoided depicting elements of their journey that would have been considered crude, instead favoring more poetic descriptions of the world around them.

### Chapter 3:

## Sacred Paths: Retired Women's Spiritual Geographies

### Introduction

This chapter explores why Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko went on pilgrimage and how they conceptualized and articulated their place as women in their interactions with religion. It argues that, though women were encouraged to go on pilgrimage, despite restrictions on the places that they were able to visit, women found ways to engage with sacred practices and demonstrate their faith by creating itineraries that catered to them. It further argues that, by invoking their knowledge of the histories of sacred figures and sites, the women of this study not only demonstrated their engagement with their faith but also placed their journeys within a broader historical context.

Much has been written about women and their interactions with sacred spaces. Most notably, scholars have commented on women's lack of access to many Buddhist and Shinto spaces due to their perceived impurity. Caleb Carter and Miyazaki Fumiko, in particular, have discussed the paradox of increasingly encouraging women to travel during the latter half of the Edo period while continuing to bar them from parts of the temples, shrines, or mountain tops that they were encouraged to go to.<sup>1</sup> Sherry Folwer, has discussed alternative places of worship that existed for women to pursue, such as Mt. Murō, which came to be

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<sup>1</sup> Caleb Carter, "Adding Value (with Limits): Pilgrimage and Women's Exclusion in Japan's Sacred Mountains," *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 1-30, Miyazaki Fumiko, "Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji: Changing Perspectives on the Exclusion of Women," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 3 (2005): 339-391.

known as a “woman’s Mt. Kōya.”<sup>2</sup> Laura Nenzi and Nagashima Atusko, have noted that one of the most popular forms of travel, particularly for women, was pilgrimage, and that these women were increasingly able to go on pilgrimage once they had retired.<sup>3</sup>

Pilgrimage was also one of the main ways that women were able to legitimize their travel. Women’s travel was far more policed than the travel of men, and pilgrimage and travel to hot springs were the “only culturally and politically sanctioned reasons for travel.”<sup>4</sup> As Constantine Vaporis points out, it is impossible to know, and pointless to debate, how large a part faith played in people’s decisions to take to the road compared to their interests in tourism and sightseeing.<sup>5</sup> Sightseeing itself was often linked to temples and shrines, and the various attractions that had emerged around them. Pilgrimage and visiting attractions were linked, and they were journeys that were carefully planned and cultivated, aided by the proliferation of travel literature that developed during the Edo period. For women, it was often one of the few, if not only, chances they had to venture far outside of their villages, and it would make sense that they would carefully plan out the trips that they wanted to take.

In focusing my research primarily on the diaries of four retired women, I am able to refocus my arguments on how Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were creating their own spiritual geographies in response to their being barred from sacred spaces. In this chapter, I argue that going on pilgrimage was normative for retired women; even those who would not normally have been able to afford it were able to go on pilgrimage through confraternities

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<sup>2</sup> Sherry Fowler, “Setting Foot on the Mountain: Mt. Murō as a Woman’s Alternative to Mt. Kōya,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 3, no. 4 (1997): 52-86.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan*, (University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), Nagashima Atusko, “Bakumatsu nōson josei no kōdō no jiyū to kaji rōdō, Bushū Tachibanagun Namamugi mura Sekiguchi nikki o sozai toshite,” in *Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai*, ed., *Ronshū kinsei joseishi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), 139–173.

<sup>4</sup> Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*, (Harvard University Press, 1994), 238.

<sup>5</sup> Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*, 237-238.

that they were a part of. While they were able to go on pilgrimage, however, these women would not have been able to choose for themselves the sacred site they were visiting. They would visit the most famous sites in the vicinity nearest to them, often times these would be sites that were barred to women, such as Mt. Fuji, Mt. Kōya, and Mt. Oyama. As the Edo period wore on, and women increasingly went on pilgrimage, temples and shrines had to adapt, more clearly demarcating the spaces women were not allowed to go and building women's halls where they were able to stay instead.<sup>6</sup> This shows the popularity of these sites among women, even though they would not have been able to access the temples in their entirety.

There were many popular pilgrimages that women were allowed to go on. The Kannon circuits, split into three different pilgrimage routes— the Saigoku, consisting of 33 temples, the Bandō, also consisting of 33 temples, and the Chichibu circuit, consisting of 34 temples— were all available to both men and women. So too was Ise, the oldest Shinto shrine in Japan, and a very popular pilgrimage site. Women in confraternities near these sites would have been able to go on pilgrimage there more easily, but this would have been a matter of the convenience of the confraternity, rather than their own choice.

In contrast, wealthier women like Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were not only able to go on pilgrimage but were able to design their pilgrimages in such a way that they would have full access to the major sites that they visited. Though there were many shrines and temples that did restrict their access, the focus of their diaries remained on famous and popular temples and shrines that were equally accessible to both men and women. Further, the spiritual geographies that they designed were not only physical but mental, as seen

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<sup>6</sup> Miyazaki Fumiko, "Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji, 356

through their focus on legends about sacred women, and their careful attention to the feminine icons that they interacted with throughout their journeys.

### **Facilitating Pilgrimage for Retired Women**

By the latter half of the Edo period, travel had become more accessible and temples and shrines were increasingly encouraging people to go on pilgrimage. The roads were easier to traverse than they had been in previous periods, allowing people travel to temples and shrines with greater ease. The Tokugawa government had also relaxed travel restrictions; though travel was still fairly controlled, by the mid-Edo period, pilgrimage was an accepted reason to take to the roads. Print culture, and the increased literacy that allowed people to partake in it, had both expanded, meaning a wider audience had access to information about, and advertisements for, pilgrimage.

Documents centered around pilgrimage included both sacred tales and practical guides, encouraging people to go on pilgrimage and giving them the tools they needed to do so. Such documents included miracle tales, foundation stories for different temples and shrines, guidebooks that explored both pilgrimage destinations and other surrounding sites.<sup>7</sup> In the early nineteenth century especially, landscape prints depicting famous places also became increasingly popular. The proliferation of print culture, and the diversity of media surrounding the advertisements of pilgrimage meant that there was a wide audience consuming these materials at the same time that travel had become even easier. Further encouraging and facilitating travel were *oshi*. Some *oshi* would go out to the provinces,

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Ambros, "Pilgrimage in Tokugawa Japan," in *The Tokugawa World*, ed. Gary P. Leupp, De-min Tao (Routledge, 2021), 818

encouraging villagers to go on pilgrimage, while others would organize places for pilgrims to stay and activities for them to do while they were at sacred sites. Many other sacred sites had similar practices, creating vast networks of people who worked to convince others to go on pilgrimage and then to make worship at sacred sites as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the people in this wide audience of consumers were women, and there is evidence that sacred sites were intentionally creating materials that catered to women's interest in an effort to encourage them to go on pilgrimage. For example, pilgrimage sites would use female protagonists in illustrated miracle tales, or print feminine icons such as the Eleven-headed Kannon of Nakayamadera who had an alternate identity as an Indian Queen.<sup>9</sup> Confraternities focusing on different sects or deities also grew more popular throughout the Edo period, welcoming women and enabling some of them to go on pilgrimage as part of a larger group. This was particularly true for older women who no longer had the responsibility of looking after their children or taking care of the household.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to wanting to help women spiritually, there was a financial incentive for these temples and shrines to court women. Miyazaki notes that, as travel restrictions on women's movements decreased as the Edo period progressed, Yoshida *oshi* increasingly targeted women to encourage them to go on pilgrimage to Mt. Fuji, despite the fact that they would not have been able to climb the mountain itself, due to beliefs about their bodies being impure. She points out that the *oshi*, as well as the towns surrounding sacred sites, largely depended on the income generated by pilgrims who would pay for things like access to

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital*, (Bloomsbury, 2017), 152-153

<sup>9</sup> Sherry Fowler, "Setting Foot on the Mountain: Mt. Murō as a Woman's Alternative to Mt. Kōya," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 3, no. 4 (1997), 221

<sup>10</sup> Shinno Toshikazu, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early Modern Period," trans. Laura Nenzi, *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 4 (2002), 460

sacred spaces, conducting rituals, and exhibiting relics. Local people would offer lodging, food, and water to travelers able to pay for it.<sup>11</sup> Pilgrims would also often spend money on amulets and blessings for their friends and families back home. Women's bodies might have been polluted, but their money was not.

While in many sacred spaces acceptance for women was only partial, they were nevertheless encouraged to travel to at least the outskirts of these spaces to stay in the women's halls, worship there, and purchase talismans and other sacred items. They were also increasingly encouraged to go on pilgrimage by support networks in their own communities. Confraternities would often sponsor groups of people to go on pilgrimage or to otherwise engage with a sacred figure or sect, and these groups would often welcome women. As Shinno Toshikazu has pointed out, the types of activities in which women would participate in these confraternities depended largely on their age. Younger women would often join after they married and help host services at the houses of members. However, "as housewives grew older and freer from child rearing, their position within the family became stronger, and they could play a more positive role in confraternity-related activities."<sup>12</sup> One of the main ways that they would do this was to go on pilgrimage. Shinno uses the confraternities associated with Kannon near Aizu as an example of this practice and notes that they would attempt to fund a pilgrimage around the Kannon circuit of Aizu every few years. This was not, however, a unique practice, and he states that "similar practices could be observed in almost every region of Japan."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Miyazaki Fumiko, "Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji: Changing Perspectives on the Exclusion of Women," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 3 (2005), 354

<sup>12</sup> Shinno, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions," 460

<sup>13</sup> Shinno, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions," 460

Shrines and temples encouraged women's pilgrimage, and village confraternities enabled women to go, even if they were not independently wealthy, as Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were. However, much of this travel was limited to women whose children were older, who had more authority within the family, and had more freedom to leave their villages for days at a time. Coupled with the fact that women's prescriptive manuals and literature written about older women suggested that they should leave the house more often in their retirements, this shows that pilgrimage for retired women was a normative experience.

### **Women Barred from Sacred Spaces**

At the same time that women were increasingly encouraged to go on pilgrimage, they were still actively barred from many sacred spaces, which Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko encountered multiple times within their diaries. Even the most spiritual of women would not have had access to Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in the way that men did. In both Shinto and Buddhism, women were seen to be "impure." Shinto associated blood with pollution, and therefore both women's menstruation and the blood that was produced during childbirth were seen as inherent impurities. Similarly, Buddhism in Japan also located impurities in women's menstruation, as seen in such sutras as the Ketsubonkyō, a sutra which was meant to help save women from the Blood Pool Hell where they were destined to go after death due to their impurities.<sup>14</sup> Further, women faced five obstacles (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt) that meant that they were unable to obtain the five existences of a Buddha: a Brahmā, a Shakra, a Devil King, a Wheel-Turning King, or a Buddha.

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<sup>14</sup> Sherry Fowler, "Setting Foot on the Mountain," 5

The idea of women's inherent impurity remained even after women had stopped menstruating. This is demonstrated in a legend about Kūkai, the founder of Shingon Buddhism, and his mother, found in the Sekkyō Karukaya, which dates back to the Muromachi period (1336-1573).<sup>15</sup> According to this legend, Kūkai's mother wanted to visit him on the top of the mountain where he lived. However, Kūkai refused, saying that because the mountain was sacred and women were forbidden. When his mother pressed him, still wanting to climb the mountain, Kūkai offered her a test. If she was able to step over his kesa, which he placed over a rock, she would be allowed to climb the mountain. His mother attempted to do so, however "although she was around eighty years old and she had not menstruated for a long time, a drop of her blood fell down and defiled the kesa. Suddenly the kesa burned up and the rock burst into flames, scattering into tiny pieces."<sup>16</sup> This legend demonstrates the belief in the fact that women were inherently impure, and that, should they try to defy this impurity, it would only make itself more apparent.

This belief in women's impurity created a tension, clearly articulated in the diaries of the women of this study, between women who were encouraged to embrace their spirituality to go on pilgrimage to worship, but who were kept out of some of the spaces deemed most sacred. Indeed, as more and more women began to go on pilgrimage, temples and sacred cults made the demarcations between where women were and were not permitted to go more and more clear, to ensure that these boundaries would not be crossed, and that these sacred spaces would remain free from being defiled.<sup>17</sup> These boundaries reflected the fact that more women were going on pilgrimage: as the number of women who were going on pilgrimage

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<sup>15</sup> Sherry Fowler, "Setting Foot on the Mountain," 6

<sup>16</sup> Sherry Fowler, "Setting Foot on the Mountain," 6

<sup>17</sup> Miyazaki Fumiko, "Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji, 356

increased, the necessity of making clear where they were and were not permitted to go likewise increased.

Sacred sites encouraged people to worship through pilgrimage while simultaneously ensuring that a gendered difference was maintained by enforcing a border which women could not cross. To this end, many temples and shrines created spaces where women could worship at these peripheries. Many pilgrimage sites had women's halls that demarcated how close to a sacred space women's bodies were allowed to encroach. For example, when Oda Ieko went to Chūzen-ji, she described putting up *ofuda*— name slips that pilgrims leave posted on the gates or buildings at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples— at various temples in the complex. One of the temples, however, was forbidden to women, so she and the rest of her group stayed in the women's hall which was “a place where women, too, could place their *ofuda*.”<sup>18</sup> Though were unable to go to one of the temples, they were still able to participate in the act of putting up their name slips. The temple was making an active effort to include women in ritualistic practice while still keeping their access to sacred spaces limited.

Other temples that denied women access to parts of the temple complex were less accommodating in creating alternative spaces for women to worship. Aijo experienced being excluded from the main hall at Akiha-dera (in modern-day Shizuoka); she was able to look into the hall but was not permitted to actually go inside. She described the interior of the hall as “decorated with jewel-adorned *gongen* inlaid with gold,” but noted that it was “forbidden to women.”<sup>19</sup> As a result, she “crossed over as far as [she] was able to in order to see the

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<sup>18</sup> Oda Ieko “Azumaji nikki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 358

<sup>19</sup> Tanaka Aijo, “Michi no ki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 207

sparkling forms” of the *gongen*, once again demonstrating how women were kept at the peripheries of sacred spaces.<sup>20</sup>

Related to the physical boundaries that women faced were the spiritual boundaries of being unable to attain Buddhahood while in a woman’s body. Shigako was directly confronted with this while at Tokuiwa temple (in modern-day Aichi). Women were also barred from going past a certain point in this temple complex. Though she was barred from going further into the temple, Shigako felt very moved by being at the temple, writing “without knowing why, I felt very grateful and tears fell from my eyes.”<sup>21</sup> However, just after this emotional moment, an “old man” came over to her and began explaining the “five obstructions of women” in Buddhism, namely that they cannot become a Brahmā, a Shakra, a devil king, a wheel-turning king, or a Buddha.<sup>22</sup> Despite being barred from part of the temple, Shigako was experiencing a profoundly spiritual moment, only for her inability to access Buddha in the same way that men were to be re-enforced by a man passing by.

Though she did not communicate any frustration at that moment, it is clear later in her diary that Shigako was affected by her inability to access these spaces and make a stronger connection with Buddha. When she was at Mitsui temple (in modern day Shiga Prefecture), Shigako wrote about the “dragon girl’s trail to become a Buddha,”<sup>23</sup> referring to a well-known story from the twelfth chapter of the Lotus sutra, in which one of Sakyamuni’s disciples explains to a dragon girl that she is unable to become a Buddha despite her deep understandings of Buddhism, because of her female body, which is defiled by the five

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<sup>20</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 207

<sup>21</sup> Yamanashi Shigako, “Haru no michikusa,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 47.

<sup>22</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 47.

<sup>23</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 53.

obstacles. When the dragon girl offers up a precious gem to Sakyamuni, however, she is able to transform into a man and then become a Buddha.<sup>24</sup> Only part of this temple was open to women, and Shigako compared her own circumstances to the plight of the dragon king's daughter before she has been transformed writing that "although I also desired to make a connection with Buddha, because this was a place where women were not allowed, I fruitlessly worshipped Kanzeon and then climbed back down to the foot of the mountain to spend the night."<sup>25</sup> Shigako's description, expressing her frustration at her limited ability to make a connection with Buddha, was a rare departure from the matter-of-fact way she— and the other women of this study— typically referred to women being unable to access certain religious spaces. It showed her frustrations with the limitations put on her gender.

### **Shaping Spiritual Geographies**

Though Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko went to temples and shrines that did not allow them full access to worship, it is clear that they organized their journeys around larger temples and shrines that they had full access to. While they do not specifically state that they are doing this in response to being barred from certain spaces, their disappointment in encountering places that were "forbidden to women" and the relative lack of detail that they spent on those temples and shrines, compared to the temples and shrines they had more access to suggests that when women were able to plan and carry out their own pilgrimages, they focused on places where they would not be restricted, even though those places were fewer.

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<sup>24</sup> *The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic*, trans. Gene Reeves, (Wisdom Publications, 2014), 251-253.

<sup>25</sup> Yamanashi, "Haru no michikusa," 53.

## *Designing Pilgrimages*

This can be seen from the beginning pages of each of their diaries, where they state the goals of their journeys. Both Shigako and Aijo write that they are taking pilgrimages to Ise Shrine. Shigako begins her diary by writing “I have wanted to go on pilgrimage to Amaterasu Ōmikami’s shrine.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Aijo writes “even someone as worthless as I wants to make an offering to the gods at the Great Shrine.”<sup>27</sup> Though they both go to many other temples and shrines, they pay particular attention to Ise as the shrine that inspired their trip.

Nakako went into more detail, beginning by describing why she wanted to go on a Buddhist pilgrimage, focusing on the role Buddhism had played in her life, connecting it with relationships she had with her family. She wrote that when she was a young child her “thoughts were in turmoil, day and night” and, though she visited a famous doctor, she was not cured.<sup>28</sup> It was Buddhism, introduced to her by her parents, that helped calm her mind. Later, when she moved in with her new husband, she began to lose her eyesight and was struggling both physically and emotionally. It was her mother-in-law who brought her to a Buddhist temple to pray to Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, after which she recovered her eyesight.<sup>29</sup> While this was surely a profound religious experience for her, it was also likely an important moment of connection. Nakako was particularly far from home, having moved from Imazato to Shiojiri, about a three days journey, at seventeen years old.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 45.

<sup>27</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 180.

<sup>28</sup> Kutsukake Nakako, “Azumaji no nikki,” in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 142.

<sup>29</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 144.

<sup>30</sup> This great of a distance was relatively rare in the Edo period, when the majority of people would marry someone who was a day’s journey away at most, see Kiyoko Segawa, “Kon’in Oboegaki, Tsūkon.” ken 3, *Kazoku Kon’in Bunken Senshū* 16 no. 3 (1991), 30-33.

Being so isolated from her natal family while also having to get used to becoming a wife and the routines of a new household would have been enormously stressful. In addition to her religious experience, having a mother-in-law who would take her to a temple and look after her while she was having trouble with her eyesight under those circumstances would have been a great comfort.

Ieko also wrote about her motivations for going on pilgrimage at the beginning of her diary, framing her pilgrimage as a filial task. Unlike the other three women of this study, Ieko did not mention a specific site that she intended to travel to during her pilgrimage. Instead, she wrote that her motivation for going on pilgrimage is to pray for her ancestors and grandchildren. This was a fairly normal sentiment; part of the purpose of pilgrimage for both men and women was to collect amulets and blessings for those who were not able to travel to religious sites themselves. This filial framing may have been a nod to the fact that Ieko was leaving her family for a long period of time, and an affirmation that she was doing so, in part, for their benefit as well.

Though she began her diary this way, Ieko did not mention her ancestors until she reached Zenkō-ji (in modern day Nagano). At Zenkō-ji she makes an offering and prays for her parents, a moment that she writes about in the following poem:

Looking into  
The flame  
Offered for the sake of  
My parents  
A desired face (of someone who has passed)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 350.

Significantly, Zenkō-ji is one of the largest Buddhist temples that was fully open to women at the time. Ieko also spends a great deal of space in her diary describing the temple complex.

Each woman highlighted the shrines and temples that they had full access to. It makes sense that they would have been more interested in the sites that they were allowed to fully explore and worship in, rather than the sites that partially barred them from entry. By stating the main temples and shrines that they were setting off on pilgrimage to worship at, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko demonstrated that when retired women had enough wealth to choose their destinations on pilgrimage, they chose to highlight the sacred spaces that they were not barred from.

### *Worshipping Kannon*

Being barred from sacred spaces affected where women were able to go, but it also affected what deities they were able to worship, something that the temples themselves were likely aware of. By far the most common deity referenced in each of the four women's diaries was Kannon, the goddess of compassion and mercy, and the Kannon circuits were some of the most common pilgrimage circuits in the Edo period. It is likely that temples that displayed images of Kannon were also aware of the fact that women would want to pray to them. The layout of the Mitsui temple that Shigako was unable to fully access suggests that some of the temples themselves understood Kannon to be a deity that women would want to worship. Though Shigako was frustrated that she was unable to have a greater connection with Buddha and characterized her worship of Kannon there as "fruitless," it is telling that a statue of Kannon was placed at the boundary demarcating where women were forbidden

from going further. It suggests that the temple understood Kannon to be a deity that women wanted to worship.

Kannon was appealing to women on pilgrimage both because she was associated with pregnancy and safe childbirth, but also because temples in which Kannon was the primary deity were far less restricted to women. Indeed, nearly the entirety of Nakako's journey is a pilgrimage to the 34 Kannon temples on the Chichibu circuit, none of which were barred to women. Kannon is directly mentioned in each woman's diary multiple times, and, though they all go to several temples where she is the principal deity without mentioning her directly.

It makes sense that women would have more intense spiritual experiences when visiting sacred spaces where they were not restricted. These spiritual experiences revealed themselves particularly in the diaries of Nakako and Ieko, who wrote poetry about their visits to certain Kannon temples. Poetry in the diaries of all four women was typically reserved for natural phenomenon or when they were at a site made famous for poetry. In other moments, however, poetry represented a conveyance of true emotion—or something that they wanted to project as their true emotion—and was therefore a marker to express when they were feeling deeply moved.

Ieko very rarely dedicated a significant amount of prose to describing the temples and shrines that she visited while on pilgrimage, much less dedicating a poem to these sites. Her poems written in moments of religious worship stand out for this reason. When visiting Edo, she was so moved by the crowds worshiping before the image of the Kannon displayed at Sensō-ji that she wrote the following poem:

Depthless are the hearts  
Of the people  
Who have come on pilgrimage  
As they ask the favor of

Sensō-ji's Buddha<sup>32</sup>

Ieko has a similar experience at the Kannon temple Yanagidani (also known as Yokoku-ji), just outside of Kyoto, where many people had gathered to worship. She writes “my eyes could not contain the many people that had gathered” to chant a pilgrim’s hymn that “caused even the mountain to thrum.” She writes the following poem about the experience:

It is close  
The blessing of the eyes  
At the willow  
Of the sacred  
Yanagidani<sup>33</sup>

Important to both of these instances was the sense of community that Ieko felt while worshipping. She mentions the crowds at Sensō-ji and the many people that had gathered at Yanagidani. Her ability to fully access these sites allowed her to be a part of these moments of togetherness that worship brought her and led to two of the most profound spiritual experiences that she discusses in her diary.

Nakako’s entire trip revolves around the 34 Kannon Chichibu circuit, which, as the name suggests, is a circuit of Kannon worshiping temples, and she makes her devotion to Kannon, also called *Kanzeon bosatsu*, clear throughout her diary. At the beginning of her diary, she wrote “In the real world, if those who encounter unexpected disaster recite the name of the compassionate and merciful *Kanzaeon bosatsu*, they can get rid of the pain or trouble. If they always recite the Name with purity and sincerity, the deep spiritual requests in their heart, they will definitely be able to have their wishes fulfilled.”<sup>34</sup> In writing this, Nakako did not note any difference between the way Kannon may treat men and women. The

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<sup>32</sup> Oda “Azumaji nikki,” 362.

<sup>33</sup> Oda “Azumaji nikki,” 393.

<sup>34</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 142 .

focus is, instead, on those who are sincere. This echoes the twenty-fifth chapter of the Lotus Sutra which notes that chanting Kannon's name would help alleviate the pain and suffering of the pure of heart, especially from natural disasters such as fire and water.<sup>35</sup> This was likely particularly important to Nakako who had survived the eruption of the nearby volcano, Mt. Asama in 1783.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike Ieko, Nakako positions herself as deeply devout from the beginning pages of her diary and often describes the temples she visited in great detail. Despite this, it was still rare for her to be so moved in her diary that she wrote poetry about a deity. One of these moments happened when she encountered the image of Kannon upon visiting Takisan-ji and wrote:

From your hand  
The light of the  
Treasured jewel  
Also graciously protects  
The pure heart<sup>37</sup>

Kannon is often portrayed as holding a wish-fulfilling jewel (*nyoi hōju*) as a symbol for her ability to grant wishes and alleviated suffering. The elements of this poem play on the elements that Nakako highlighted at the beginning of her diary, most notably the idea of a pure, or sincere heart. While women were often excluded from sacred spaces, many forms of Buddhism in Japan focused on devotion and sincerity of heart in obtaining salvation, and were therefore more welcoming to women. Nakako kept her focus on these aspects of her faith, and largely designed a pilgrimage to places that were accessible to women. While she

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<sup>35</sup> *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Reeves, 370. "Kannon" is translated here as "Regarder of the Cries of the World."

<sup>36</sup> Maeda Yoshi, "Kutsukake Nakako to "Azumaji no nikki" in *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi tabi nikki hen: chihō wo chūshin ni* (Kasama Shoin, 1998), 167.

<sup>37</sup> Kutsukake, "Azumaji no nikki," 154.

may not have had control over which temples she could access in their entirety, she did have control over which temples she devoted most of her time to and how she framed her worship.

*(Woman's) Mt. Kōya*

One of the most famous and traveled-to pilgrimage sites during the Edo period was Mt. Kōya, but women were not allowed to climb to its summit. To accommodate women, who often came as part of a larger group that included men who would climb the mountain, there were seven women's halls. These halls were built at exclusion points for women—points that demarcated when a woman's further progress up the mountain would have made it impure. In these halls, women would be allowed to worship the buddha of the mountain from afar. Mt. Kōya was popular enough with female pilgrims that its seven women's halls were joined together to make a pilgrimage circuit specifically for women who wanted to worship at the mountain.

Of the four women, only Shigako—who was traveling with her son— went to Mt. Kōya. At Mt. Kōya, she and her son separated so that he could climb up to the temple above while she stayed in the women's halls at the base of the mountain. She did not complete a pilgrimage of the seven different halls, and only mentioned staying at two, neither of which she named. Indeed, Shigako barely mentions Mt. Kōya and offers little description of the halls that she stayed in, noting only that “in front of the woman's hall, there was a bronze Buddha out in the open.”<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, staying in this woman's hall is one of the few times that Shigako mentions speaking with another person in her travel diary. She mentioned that

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<sup>38</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 61.

there was “an older woman who came from Higo who was also staying with her group and who she relied on for conversation through the night.”<sup>39</sup>

This is a departure from the bulk of Shigako’s travel diary, which is largely self-focused and rarely includes conversations with others.<sup>40</sup> For example, the only description she has of separating from her son at the base of Mt. Kōya is “a group climbed with a monk; I stayed the night in the women’s hall.”<sup>41</sup> She makes no mention of their reunion in her diary, nor does she mention any of the conversations that they had between them throughout the duration of her trip. The notable aspect of Shigako’s journey to Mt. Kōya, then, is not spiritual in nature, it is the fact that she noted down, however briefly, a conversation that she had with a woman from Higo in the woman’s hall. If her experience in the women’s halls at Mt. Kōya held any spiritual significance to Shigako, she did not mention it in her diary, instead focusing on the “fierce winds through the mountains and valleys and the cold that made it feel like winter.”<sup>42</sup>

Ieko, on the other hand, did not mention Mt. Kōya at all, even when she is quite close to it; instead, both Nakako and Ieko mention a “women’s Mt. Kōya.” This is not in reference to the pilgrimage women can make around the base of the mountain. Indeed, when they reference a “women’s Mt. Koya,” they are not even talking about the same place. When visiting the fourth temple on the Chichibu circuit, Kinsho-ji (in modern day Saitama), Nakako describes a path lined with small stone Buddhas. Along the path, there are occasionally larger Buddhas, along with both temples and shrines. She mentions that another

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<sup>39</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 61.

<sup>40</sup> A notable exception to this occurs on page 62 of her diary where she describes a lengthy conversation with a woman from Totsukawa, modern day Nara Prefecture.

<sup>41</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 61.

<sup>42</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 61.

name for the path is “the Koya pilgrimage”<sup>43</sup> and that it is also known as “the women’s Mt. Koya.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, while Ieko was climbing down Mt. Horaiji (in modern day Aichi), she saw many temples and shrines and notes that “this is called Mt. Koya in the world of women.”<sup>45</sup> These two places, both far apart from each other and quite a distance from the actual Mt. Kōya had the fact that there were many temples and shrines, as well as many statues of the Buddha in common.

The idea of a “woman’s Mt. Kōya” was a fairly common one. Perhaps the most famous of these was Mt. Murō and the Murō-ji temple, located in modern day Nara prefecture.<sup>46</sup> In her analysis of how this temple became known as a “woman’s Mt. Kōya,” Sherry Fowler notes that multiple records promoting travel and pilgrimage to lay people claimed that Murō-ji was also known as a “woman’s Mt. Kōya.” These records included *The Record of Famous Places in Yamato*, written in 1681, which stated that “Because this is such a spiritual place, lay people call it Mt. Kōya for women,” and a nearly identical sentence was found in the 1791 record *Illustrations of famous places in Yamato*.<sup>47</sup> Fowler argues that there was a clear influence by the lay community to label certain temples as “women’s Mt. Kōya’s,” though this was also likely a branding method used by monks and priests to encourage women to spend money at their temples.<sup>48</sup> Whether done by the lay community or spiritual leaders working alongside the lay community, it is clear that these places were given the

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<sup>43</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 159.

<sup>44</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 160.

<sup>45</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 379.

<sup>46</sup> Sherry Fowler, “Mt. Murō as the Woman’s Mt. Koya.”

<sup>47</sup> Sherry Fowler, “Mt. Murō as the Woman’s Mt. Koya,” 11.

<sup>48</sup> For example, in Laura Nenzi, “Cultured Travelers and Consumer Tourists in Edo-Period Sagami” *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 3 (2004), she argues that educational and spiritual aspects of travel had been commodified and marketed back to pilgrims in the nineteenth century. While she focuses on a case-study of Sagami, it is clear that this sort of commodification was happening throughout Edo period Japan.

name “women’s Mt. Kōya” to offer alternatives for women who were not able to climb the actual Mt. Kōya.

There were multiple such cases of these temples. Nakako is at the fourth temple on the Chichibu circuit, Kinshō-ji, and walking along a path with “thousands of stone buddhas” when she references the women’s Mt. Kōya,<sup>49</sup> while Ieko is near Mt. Tanigawa where she sees “various temples and sub-temples” that are “called women’s Mt. Kōya.”<sup>50</sup> Other temples purported to be “women’s Mt. Kōyas, such as Anno-ji (located in present day Nara prefecture), Kongo-ji (Osaka prefecture), and Jison-in, which marks the entrance to the pilgrimage route for Mt. Kōya (in present day Wakayama prefecture).<sup>51</sup> Neither Nakako nor Ieko seem to be referencing a specific temple when they mention a women’s Mt. Kōya; Nakako seems to be more focused on a path with many stony Buddha, while Ieko mentions only a series of temples. It is likely that the idea of a “women’s Mt. Kōya” was a marketing technique with the goal of making various paths during a pilgrimage more appealing to women traveling along it. The many different “women’s Mt. Kōyas” suggest that people were willing to cater to women who wanted to have greater access to temples so that they could worship and shows that women were seen as a valuable group to market to.

The fact that Nakako and Ieko both referenced a “women’s Mt. Kōya” shows that they were both engaging with materials that were promoting temples and sacred sites to women.

Nakako’s pilgrimage around the Chichibu Circuit did not take her close to the actual Mt. Koya, so it is understandable that she would seek out what purported to be a similar experience— and one that was open to women. Ieko, though, passed right by Mt. Koya

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<sup>49</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 159-160.

<sup>50</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 379.

<sup>51</sup> Sherry Fowler, “Mt. Murō as the Woman’s Mt. Koya,” 13.

without mentioning it, only invoking its name when she was a several-day's journey away on a different mountain entirely. She did not go to one of the women's halls at the base of the mountain, nor did she travel to one of the "women's Mt. Kōyas" that were closer. Instead, she engaged with Mt. Kōya on her own terms, and made sure to travel to a "woman's Mt. Kōya" that was more in line with the rest of her trip.

### **Women in Sacred Stories**

In addition to shaping their pilgrimages around which sacred spaces they would have full access to, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko also supplemented their visits to these sacred places with legends of women who were important to their faith. The legends that they focused on often highlighted women's devotion or how they were foundational to the establishment of religious sites. The fact that they were interested enough to devote time in their diaries to these famous women and their stories shows that they were prominent in the diarists' minds. Thus, they both constructed spiritual geographies of temples and shrines in which they were able to worship, and constructed a web of prominent, feminine spiritual figures, enabling them to make room for themselves and their gender within a spiritual landscape.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Shigako, who expressed the most frustration at being unable to access sacred sites, is the one who most often referenced famous women in the context of sacred spaces. For example, Shigako wrote "At Taima-dera, I worshiped the divine spirit of Chūjō-hime and the mandala that was before my eyes."<sup>52</sup> Chūjō-hime was a figure that appeared in many Japanese folk stories; she is largely thought to be the daughter of Fujiwara no Toyonari, born after Toyonari and his wife, desperate for a child, prayed to Kannon. The

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<sup>52</sup> Yamanshi, "Haru no michikusa," 57.

two were granted a daughter on the condition that one of her parents had to die. According to most versions of the story, Chūjō-hime's mother died when she was three, and her father quickly remarried. Her stepmother becomes jealous of the fact that Chūjō-hime spent her time making copies of Buddhist sutras for her mother's salvation, ultimately forcing Chūjō-hime to flee to Taima-dera in Nara and become a nun.<sup>53</sup> In highlighting Chūjō-hime, Shigako foregrounded a woman's role in the creation of the mandala that she is worshipping.

It was not only legends of the distant past that Shigako recounted, but also the actions of women in more recent memory. When visiting the Konpira shrine, she mentions that "Lord Kyōgoku's wife had dedicated 30 strips of paper (*tanzaku* – a long narrow strip of paper on which Japanese poems are written) framed in gold."<sup>54</sup> Kyōgoku was the name of the lord of Marugame domain, where Konpira was located (present day Kagawa prefecture).<sup>55</sup> In relating this detail about Lord mentioning Kyōgoku's wife, Shigako chose to highlight the importance of women's actions within sacred spaces.

Aijo also highlighted the importance of women in the founding of sacred spaces when she visited Hōtoshi no miya (now known as Saminaga shrine), though she did so less directly. She noted that the shrine "has remained unaltered even after thousands and thousands of generations" and referenced the legend behind the founding of the shrine, stating "even now, the crane's forehead coming into view is quite auspicious."<sup>56</sup> According to Hōtoshi no miya's founding legend, Yamatohime-no-mikoto, the princess who founded Ise Jingū, had also gone to Shima province and, while there, she saw a crane holding an ear of rice. She decided to

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Ashkenazi, *Handbook of Japanese Mythology* (Santa Barbara, ABC CLIO Inc, 2003), 129-130.

<sup>54</sup> Yamanashi, "Haru no michikusa," 70.

<sup>55</sup> The association between the Kyōgoku family and Konpira must have been well-known, because Nakako also referenced this when she noted while at Mt. Iwaya that where the "Konpira gongen is enshrined, Lord Kyōgoku had constructed many guardians." Nakako, "Azumaji no nikki," 156.

<sup>56</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 188.

enshrine the crane because she was so moved that even a crane could make an offering to the gods.<sup>57</sup> While Aijo does not mention Yamatohime-no-mikoto directly, it is likely that her readers would have been aware of this legend. By mentioning the forehead of the crane, Aijo demonstrates not only her own knowledge of the legend but invokes a story that centers a woman's actions within a sacred space.

Ieko, too, engaged with legends that focused on women's roles within the sacred. When she went to Honen-in temple in Kyoto, she was particularly interested in the graves of Matsumushi and Suzumushi, who had been two favored ladies-in-waiting for the emperor Gotoba.<sup>58</sup> Inspired by the preaching of two of Honen's disciples, they decided to escape the palace while the emperor was away and become nuns. Upon learning this, the emperor was enraged, and had Honen's two disciples executed, and Honen himself was exiled. Ieko writes the following poem about how Matsumushi threw the floating world away.

Throwing away the floating world  
Of wheeled palanquins  
Coming around  
After the Buddhist Law<sup>59</sup>  
This is Matsumushi

Though Honen was incredibly important to Ieko as the founder Pure Land Buddhism, the sect her family practiced, while at this temple, she focused her writing on two women who were also profoundly impacted by Honen's teachings. Significantly, Honen taught that women and men had equal potential for fulfillment through invoking the name of Amida

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<sup>57</sup> "Saminaga Shrine," Shima City Tourism Association, accessed March 2, 2026, <https://www.kanko-shima.com/purpose/2308/>.

<sup>58</sup> Oda "Azumaji nikki," 390.

<sup>59</sup> Here she uses *minori*, which is also the title of the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, when Murasaki wants to become a nun but Genji forbids it.

Buddha. In this sect of Buddhism, women were able to attain fulfillment, which is why there was a significant focus on Matsumushi and Suzumushi's devotion to their faith.

While most of the tales relating to women that the diarists highlighted were positive, Ieko also mentioned a negative story she heard about Hashi-hime while at Hashi-hime Shrine in Uji. She wrote that "Upon arriving at Hashi-hime's shrine, I heard that in the past there was a woman with overflowing resentment who became a demon while she lived. I heard this story and wrote:

I wonder who  
Became a demon  
Because of resentment  
Waiting for someone to cross  
It is Hashi-hime"<sup>60</sup>

Hashi-hime, who the shrine was named after, was a character that appeared in folklore, often as a woman who was waiting for her lover. She appeared, for example, in the *Kokinshū* (ca 905) in a poem that reads

Does she wait for me  
Again tonight, having spread  
But a single robe  
On her woven rush matting—  
The maiden at Uji Bridge? (*Uji no Hashi-hime*)<sup>61</sup>

She also appears in *Genji monogatari* to invoke a woman waiting forlornly at a bridge. The story that Ieko was told, however, is likely from a version of the *Heike monogatari*, which portrays Hashi-hime as so jealous of a rival that she turns into an oni so that she can take revenge, ultimately killing her rival her former lover and many others.<sup>62</sup>

That this version of the legend was highlighted to Ieko shows that it was not only in spaces

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<sup>60</sup> Oda, "Azumaji nikki," 396.

<sup>61</sup> Hellen Craig McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology*, (Stanford University Press, 1985), 153.

<sup>62</sup> Noriko T. Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2010), 53.

that were forbidden to women that female pilgrims were made aware of their spiritual limitations. While there were likely many legends that reminded women of these limitations, for the most part, in their diaries, they chose to focus on legends of women who were celebrated for their devotion.

The focus on feminine sacred figures was a way for Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko to engage with women's devotion to sacred sites and sacred teachings. It allowed them to create a spiritual landscape of women who had gained fame through their devotion and proper forms of worship. It showed that, though women were seen within Shinto and Buddhism as impure, they were still able to achieve recognition within these spiritualities through their sincere piety and good acts.

### **Sacred Knowledge and Icons**

Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko often focused on spiritual legends that referenced women, but that is not to say that they rarely spoke about men. One of the ways that the women of this study accessed spirituality, and performed their own devotion to Shinto and Buddhism, was through their knowledge of historical figures and the significance of the sacred sites they visited. By demonstrating and relating their knowledge of these figures and sites, the women of this study show the depth of their interest in learning about their faith, contextualizing their journeys as part of a greater, centuries long tradition of worship. Additionally, these icons were considered an embodiment of the Buddha equivalent to his visionary appearances in meditation or even his original physical incarnation.<sup>63</sup> These journeys into the histories of Buddhism and Shinto were still largely shaped by the

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<sup>63</sup> James C. Dobbins *Behold the Buddha: Religious Meanings of Japanese Icons*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020): 22.

knowledge they had access to, such as guidebooks that would have explained the significance of various sites, but the women themselves had control over when and how they brought this knowledge to their readers attention.

The most common of historical figure that each of the women referenced in their diaries was Kōbō Daishi. Also known as Kūkai, he was a famous Buddhist priest born during the late Nara period and practicing into the Heian period, who founded the Shingon school of esoteric Buddhism in Japan after studying in China for many years. Much about Kōbō Daishi's life has been mythologized; in particular, he has an enormous amount of paintings, sculptures, and temples that he is said to have created, though to do so, he would have needed several lifetimes.<sup>64</sup> It is likely that either the temples themselves drew attention to the (purported) fact of their association with Kōbō Daishi, or else published guidebooks that communicated the main attractions of their shrines. His works were particularly important because images of the Buddha were themselves sacred as embodiments of the Buddha and were meant to be a way for people to feel a Buddha's presence. Indeed, Kōbō Daishi himself noted about sacred images that "with a single glance, one becomes a Buddha."<sup>65</sup> These figures held great significance, all the more so when they were created by a man who was himself understood as a bodhisattva and who advocated for using sacred icons to become closer to Buddhahood.

Shigako's diary suggests the way that the name "Kōbō Daishi" had become somewhat of a tourist attraction. While in Ōmi (modern-day Shiga prefecture) she came across a stoneware shop that is selling carvings of the Buddha, and the shop is called "Kōbō

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<sup>64</sup> U.A. Casal, "The Saintly Kobo Daishi in Popular Lore (A.D. 774-853)," *Folklore Studies* 18 (1959), 115

<sup>65</sup> Dobbins *Behold the Buddha*, 22.

Daishi One Night Carvings.”<sup>66</sup> This shows that, beyond being an important figure in Buddhism, Kōbō Daishi was a selling point for the temples that claimed to have works that they could attribute to him. Kōbō Daishi was mentioned numerous times throughout her diary, and it was not only his works, but also his relics that she marked as significant. For example, while staying at a temple in Nara, Shigako and her companions became close to the monk in charge of the temple, and he brought out many of the temple's treasures for them to see, including the “true signature” of Kōbō Daishi.<sup>67</sup> The fact that Kōbō Daishi's signature itself was an object of worship shows his importance as a sacred figure in his own right and gives further credence to the importance of Buddhist icons that were thought to be carved by him. The next day, at Henjo-ji, (likely the modern day Tenpōrin-ji temple currently located in Gojo city, Nara prefecture) Shigako saw the remains of Kōbō Daishi.<sup>68</sup> She also travels to Zentsu-ji, which she claims is the place of Kōbō Daishi's birth, and admires the large temple there.<sup>69</sup>

In her diary, Nakako even comments on how many works are attributed to Kōbō Daishi. While at the twenty-eighth temple on the Chichibu circuit, she observes a “limitless” amount of carved Buddha statues and notes that “though it is said that Kōbō Daishi made everything, I wondered how he could have made so many.”<sup>70</sup> She came to the conclusion that it would not have been impossible for an ordinary person, implying that, because Kōbō Daishi was so extraordinary, he was capable of carrying out such feats. She continued to reference Kōbō Daishi throughout the rest of her diary, mentioning at both the twenty first

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<sup>66</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 70.

<sup>67</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 60.

<sup>68</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 61.

<sup>69</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 70.

<sup>70</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 155.

and eighteenth temple on the circuit, that Kōbō Daishi had created a Fudō Myōō, a guardian deity in esoteric Buddhism.<sup>71</sup>

Ieko referenced the “88 sacred places on Shikoku,” or the 88 temples of the Shikoku pilgrimage, all of which claim a relationship with Kōbō Daishi.<sup>72</sup> It was not only places that were well-known to have a connection with Kōbō Daishi that she attributes to having his statues, however. While in Nagano, she describes climbing up a mountain path in which there was “a statue of Kannon made by Kōbō Daishi.”<sup>73</sup> There is no indication of how she knew that he made this statue that does not appear to be affiliated with any temple. Similarly, in Nara Ieko saw a copper torii which she claimed was built by Kōbō Daishi. She did not mention it being attached to a shrine.<sup>74</sup> While Kōbō Daishi is more often associated with Buddhist relics, in Shingon Buddhism, Shinto *kami* were understood as local manifestations of the Buddha helping to further the syncretism between the two belief systems. These consistent references to Kōbō Daishi suggest his continuing importance to Buddhist mythologies and worshippers. Knowledge of Kōbō Daishi and interactions with relics that he created also lend legitimacy to the Shigako, Nakako, Aijo and Ieko as devout pilgrims as they interacted with images of the Buddha created by a saint.

While Kōbō Daishi was the most famous religious and historical figure that these women talked about, he was far from the only one. For example, Ieko was particularly interested in Honen Shonin, the founder of the Pure Land Buddhist sect, because that was the sect that Ieko’s family was a part of. She goes to quite a few temples that were related to Honen. For example, she visited Higashi Hongan Temple, which housed Shinran Shonin’s

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<sup>71</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 157-158.

<sup>72</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 321, 322.

<sup>73</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 348.

<sup>74</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 334.

grave. Shinran was a Buddhist monk, student of Honen, and founder of the Jōdō Shinshuu sect of Buddhism.<sup>75</sup> Shortly after this, they go to Choin-in temple, which was built in Honen's honor by another one of his disciples, Genchi, in 1234. This is a place that Ieko had gone in her youth on another, shorter pilgrimage, and she wrote "Even though I had seen it twenty years earlier, I nevertheless felt truly refreshed."<sup>76</sup> She was particularly enamored of the large bell on display at the temple about which she wrote the following poem

When I arrived  
Within the capital  
I was amazed  
At the reverberation  
Of this great temple's bell<sup>77</sup>

By demonstrating their knowledge of famous religious figures and sites, the women of this study legitimize their positions as devout and informed worshippers. In emphasizing their interactions with relics that were created by such figures as Kōbō Daishi and Hōnen Shonin they were also interacting with manifestations of the Buddha that were more readily accessible to them. In mentioning the icons and images created by or for Kōbō Daishi— and, in Ieko's case, Hōnen Shonin— the women of this study were able to highlight their interactions with manifestations of the Buddha created by people who were themselves extremely significant to practitioners of Buddhism.

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<sup>75</sup> Oda, "Azumaji nikki," 389. Here she uses the phrase 目さむる心ちす, which references Yoshida Kenkō's *Tsurezuregusa* (*Essays in Idleness*). The phrase typically denotes the feeling a traveler may get upon seeing something new.

<sup>76</sup> Oda, "Azumaji nikki," 389.

<sup>77</sup> Oda, "Azumaji nikki," 389.

## Conclusion

Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko constructed their pilgrimages—and how they wrote about them in their diaries—in a very specific way. Though women were barred from many sacred spaces, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko built their pilgrimages around spaces that they had more access to. Shigako and Aijo both claimed that the main goal of their pilgrimages was to see Ise, while Nakako wrote about traveling through each of the temples on the Chichibu circuit. Ieko, the only woman who did not name a specific temple as the goal of her journey, highlighted her desire to pray for her ancestors and grandchildren a wish she only mentions fulfilling at Zenkō-ji. None of the shrines and temples that they highlighted in the beginnings of their diaries had areas that women were restricted from. Though they did encounter other shrines and temples that did have these restrictions, they were not the main goal or focus of the women's diaries. In this way, they were able to create their own spiritual geographies which focused on spaces that they were able to access fully.

They were not only shaping their physical spiritual geographies during their journeys, they were also highlighting women's place within spiritual practices. By focusing on stories that relayed the spirituality of famously devout women, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko emphasized the important role that women could play in spiritual mythologies. Further, by engaging with and commenting on icons that they encountered throughout their journeys they emphasized their ability to interact with manifestations of the Buddha further legitimizing their own spiritual journeys. In doing so, they were able to construct themselves as devout worshipers at the same time that they were constructing their spiritual geographies.

## Chapter 4

### Poetic License: Classical Texts and Self Presentation

In order to establish their literary identity, poetry writers in the Edo period required both a poetic lineage, and a sincerity of feeling (*makoto*). They often gained a poetic lineage through tutors who ensured that they knew about poetic traditions, commented on and corrected their work. Their sincerity of feeling was communicated more directly through their poetry, and their ability to reference older works while still asserting their own experiences and emotions. For Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, writing poetry that encouraged them to focus on their own emotions and experiences allowed them to showcase their interests, knowledge and skill. Further, as Anne Walthall has pointed out, poetry allowed women in the Edo period to express themselves by not following the norms and constraints outlined to them in their day-to-day lives.<sup>1</sup> Retirement was a period in which literate women had an opportunity to dramatically increased their poetry writing, and it allowed the women of this study to carefully cultivate and present a poetic identity.

In this chapter, I argue that Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko's work was directly influenced and shaped by their tutors, in the sites and poetic references that they focused on, and in the way that they presented their journeys in their diaries. Shigako and Aijo both mentioned their tutors within their diaries. They both used their tutor's physical and familial proximity to the aristocracy, which produced many of the ancient works heralded in the Edo period, to lend legitimacy to their own writings. Nakako and Ieko's diaries, on the other hand,

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Walthall, "Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration: Texts of Self and Gender," in Tonomura, Walthall, and Wakita, eds., (University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1999), 221.

showcased how their writing styles were affected by the styles and preferences of their tutors. Nakako's clear preference for the *Man'yōshū* likely either affected the tutor she sought out or was affected by her tutor's preferences while Ieko's focus on geography was influenced by her tutor, Itō Tsunetari, who was a cartographer. Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko's travel diaries—meant to be read and published—were forays into making their identities consumable by a broader (though still limited) public. They were not performing their femininities for their families alone, but for their tutors and literary circles in the surrounding areas.

Both their tutors and their own literary identities were shaped, in part, by *kokugaku*, a literary movement that was gaining popularity in the latter half of the Edo Period.<sup>2</sup> Also called “national learning,” *kokugaku* prioritized classical Japanese texts such as the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, *Ise monogatari* and *Genji monogatari*. It also focused on collections of poems such as the *Man'yōshū*, the *Kokinshū* and the *Shin-kinshū*. In large part because of *kokugaku*, these texts experienced a revival at the time when Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko set out on their journeys and clearly shaped the way that they interacted with both their own writings and the world around them.

While *kokugaku* was most popular at the time as a literary movement, it also had strong political and intellectual dimensions; however, the women of this study were often more interested in the literary aspects of the movement. At the same time, some of the core literary aspects of the movement were inherently political: in prioritizing Japanese classics, *kokugaku* often rejected Chinese classical literature and philosophies, like Confucianism and

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<sup>2</sup> While *kokugaku* was also part of a larger intellectual and political movement, the main focus for it in this chapter is how it shaped literary landscapes and the texts that the women at the heart of this study read and interacted with.

Buddhism. Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were aware of and interfaced with *kokugaku* largely due to their interest in literature rather than the political and philosophical movements that it represented. For example, Shigako traveled with her son who was a scholar of China and wrote his own travelogue detailing their journey in Chinese. Similarly, Aijo's brother was trained in Chinese scholarship, and she was likely able to sit in on some of his lessons, as she referenced Chinese poetry and scenery within her travel diary, though not nearly to the extent that she referenced Japanese poetry. Rather than understanding this as an intentional eschewing of the philosophical side of *kokugaku* it is far more likely that these women were simply interested in literature and poetry which were irrevocably shaped by *kokugaku* at the time they were writing.

This chapter further argues that the way Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko referenced and changed the poetry of the past showed how they were reinventing themselves and their femininity in their retirements. By continuously referencing different emotions, stories, and poetic styles of the past at particular famous locations, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were not only moving through space, but also through time. They highlighted moments of the past to showcase their own knowledge while using their poetry to express their emotions. The sense of nostalgia for the past that they invoked through their poetry, and poetic knowledge allowed them to situate themselves in the literary canon. Because their poetry was expected to present their sincere feelings the poems that they chose to reference, and the ways in which they altered those poems show how they reflected on their own lives. By playing with seasonal poems and love poems, they showed both the differences in their physical experiences, and their different emotional journeys.

### *The Tutors*

Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko had overlapping interests in classical Japanese works, but they also presented distinct writing styles, literary interests, and claims to legitimacy which were impacted by their tutors. Literary tutors could shape the interests and studies of their pupils by encouraging them to pursue different genres of literature, or to present themselves in their diaries in a certain way. They would also read over their pupils' work and offer advice or correct mistakes that their pupil had made in their references or poetry. The tutors themselves gave their pupils legitimacy as writers because they offered a poetic lineage for their pupils to point to. A tutor's fame for their own work could also lend legitimacy to their pupil's work.

Nakako's tutor, Tachibana Moribe (1781-1849), does not appear directly in her diary, but his influence is clear in Nakako's writing style. Nakako developed a relationship with Tachibana Moribe when she was around sixty-six and sent him a letter asking him to look over her work and expressing her joy at finding a new teacher.<sup>3</sup> Moribe himself was quite noteworthy. As Susan Burns points out in *Before the Nation*, while Tachibana Moribe enjoys less fame today than his contemporary, Hirata Atsutane, during the 1840s he was as well known for his nativist work which emphasized that the emperor and the Japanese people were inextricably linked, and that the Japanese people were duty bound to support their emperor.<sup>4</sup>

Nakako began corresponding with him long before he had reached the height of his fame. He was relatively unknown until he published his first work, the *Yamabiko zōshi* (Book

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<sup>3</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, (Fukuoka-shi: Ashi Shobō, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Susan Burns, *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 10, 183-184.

of the Mountain God) in 1831, the year after Nakako's death.<sup>5</sup> In the 1820s, when he was in contact with Nakako, he was more interested in poetry and poetry composition, particularly that of *chōka*, long poems which are more commonly found in the *Man'yōshū*. He was able to support himself by teaching children and by helping adults with their own poetry composition. Perhaps this is why, as his student, Nakako also tried her hand at this longer form of poetry when, in most of her other works and throughout the majority of her diary, she had mainly focused on *tanka*.

Moribe clearly had an influence on Nakako's poetry, and she continued to compose poems under Moribe's guidance until her death at age 81. In addition to *tanka*, Nakako also studied *sedōka*— a traditional style of poetry that had six lines and followed the pattern of 5-7-7-5-7-7 syllables per line— and *chōka*, poems that were nine lines or longer, following the same 5-7-7 syllabic pattern as *sedōka*. This is in contrast to the other women in this study, whose poems consisted entirely of *tanka* poetry, which followed the pattern of 5-7-5-7-7. Nakako was also the only one of the four women who included *chōka* in her diary, likely due to Moribe's influence and his stress on the importance of the *Man'yōshū*. There is a series of longer poems towards the end of her diary, which deal with recounting Japan's past and allude heavily to works like the *Kojiki* and the *Heike monogatari*.

Moribe praised Nakako's work, saying it was “excellent, manly, and rare.”<sup>6</sup> This was likely due to Nakako's knowledge of the *Man'yōshū*, considered by many *kokugaku* scholars, such as Kamo no Mabuchi, to be the most masculine of the ancient Japanese texts, because it bore the most resemblance to contemporary Japanese language. Nakako's ability to write *chōka* and her easy engagement with the *Man'yōshū* evidenced a skill that was more

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<sup>5</sup> Burns, *Before the Nation*, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi: chihō wo chūshin ni* (Yūgengaisha, 1998), 174.

associated with masculinity, not an uncommon compliment towards women who were famous writers and artists.<sup>7</sup>

Moribe also stated that there were rumors that “she was a woman of strong character,”<sup>8</sup> suggesting that she was not only a great poet, but that he also respected who she was as a person. Furthermore, her poems can be found in Moribe’s *Shimokage-shū*, further suggesting his admiration for her. Indeed, Nakako seemed to be a relatively famous *haiku* poet, often writing under the pseudonym Issa (一素), which she also used in relation to her Zen studies. There are several letters that still exist today that were written to her under this pseudonym, many of which refer to her poetry writing.

It is clear that both Nakako’s prose and poetry was heavily influenced by Moribe’s teachings, particularly in regard to her appreciation of the *Man’yōshū*. Moribe’s tutelage both affected what she wrote and also gave her the legitimacy to advance in the world of poetry. Nakako drew heavily from ancient works such as the *Man’yōshū* and the *Kojiki* in her prose, in addition to her poetry. In the very opening lines of her diary she writes “together the waves come closer to the shore,” using the phrase “*nami no muta*,” an archaic way of referring to the waves that was originally found in the *Man’yōshū*.<sup>9</sup> The opening lines of her diary immediately signal to her readers her familiarity with this text. Perhaps the most obvious example of Nakako’s interest in the *Man’yōshū* comes from the fact that she wrote four *chōka*, or long poems, which had largely fallen out of style after the time of the *Man’yōshū*.

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Patricia Fister, “Female *Bunjin*: The Life of Poet-Painter Ema Saikō,” in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (University of California Press, 1991), Bettina Gramlich-Oka, *Thinking Like a Man: Tadano Makuzu (1763-1825)*, (Brill Publishers, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi*, 174.

<sup>9</sup> Kutsukake Nakako, “Azumaji no nikki,” in *Kinsei nyōnin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 142.

Like Nakako, Ieko's tutor, Itō Tsunetari, had a clear impact on the way she composed her diary, though his impact had less to do with her poetry and more to do with her careful cataloging of her location. It is unclear when Ieko formally became a student of Tsunetari,<sup>10</sup> but they likely met because he lived close by her hometown of Sokoino (modern day Kamisokoino). While the majority of Tsunetari's students were male, he had a fair number of female students. At one point women numbered almost a quarter of those he was teaching.<sup>11</sup> He was also willing to publish his female students' works. For example, the Ogata Collection, which he compiled, included 307 poems composed by 41 different women. Ieko herself had 20 poems included.<sup>12</sup> Published in 1836, when Ieko was 47 years old, the poems in the Ogata Collection were likely Ieko's first published works.

Tsunetari was an accomplished cartographer. He worked for about 40 years to compile the Dazai Kannaishi (太宰管内志), an 82-volume work that maps Kyushu as well as the islands Iki and Tsushima.<sup>13</sup> The work provides provincial histories, county histories, place name traditions, discusses temples and shrines, draws on a vast array of historical materials and is the largest topographical description of the Kyushu region from the Edo period.

The fact that her teacher was interested in cartography clearly influenced the way that Ieko understood and wrote about her travels. She meticulously recounted where she was, when she passed certain checkpoints, which new domains she crossed into, and even which domains they bordered. While the other three women in this study might have mentioned

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<sup>10</sup> Some people pronounce it Tsunetaru.

<sup>11</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei chihō joryū bungei jūi*, (Genshobō, 2005), 418.

<sup>12</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Kinsei chihō joryū bungei shūi* (Tsuru shobo, 2005), 418.

<sup>13</sup> Ueda Masaaki, Nishikawa Junichi, Hirayama Ikuo, Miura Shumon eds. *Nihon jinmei daijiten* (Kodansha: 2001).

when they arrived in larger cities, they were nowhere near as clear in the mapping of their journeys as Ieko.<sup>14</sup> Tsunetari, who would have edited her diary, clearly influenced her writing in his role as a cartographer.

While Shigako's poetic lineage was not immediately made clear through her writing style, she still uses her tutor to lend her writing legitimacy. Shigako was the only woman who wrote about visiting her tutor in her diary. Her tutor, Shibayama Mochitoyo, lived in Kyoto, the old capital, which was deeply associated with poetic tradition and meaning. Indeed, it was still seen and written about as the capital of poetry in many ways: in both ancient poetry and Edo period poetry, when speaking about Kyoto, people would typically note that they were "ascending" up to the city, or "descending" from it, emphasizing its geographical importance to the literary canon. Kyoto was therefore a prominent destination for those who were composing poetry, and having a tutor that was from Kyoto who she could visit gave Shigako a clear tie to the ancient world of poetry writing. Mochitoyo himself took on many students, some of whom included court nobles who also had an association with poetry, since the poetry of the ancient past was often written by the aristocracy. His proximity to both Kyoto itself and the nobles there further emphasized his legitimacy and connection to the past.<sup>15</sup>

The importance of this visit is also highlighted by the fact that Shigako rarely mentions visiting others during her trip. While inns for travelers were plentiful, it is likely that people stayed with family and friends as they were traveling, however these visits would often go unmentioned due to the self-focused nature of the travel diaries. Indeed, Shigako hardly mentions her son in her diary, despite the fact that she is traveling with him for nearly

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<sup>14</sup> Oda Ieko "Azumaji nikki," in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> *Kōdansha Nihon jinmei daijiten s.v. Shibayama Mochitoyo*.

the entire trip. This was a common practice for travel diarists, who tended to “emphasize notions of solitude” rather than realistically portray trips that were taken with others.<sup>16</sup>

Mentioning her tutor at all would give him a place of prominence in her diary, but Shigako also details the activities that she pursued with her tutor including the fact that he gave her a tour of the city. As part of the tour, they visited a variety of sites such as Arayashima, where they took in the flowers, which were most likely cherry blossoms. They then went to the Taishido temple, where she mentioned seeing two nobles walking along the path, and many noble ladies following behind them, a site that she notes was “something surprising to her eyes, because she never saw it in the countryside.”<sup>17</sup> Shigako clearly feels an awe and reverence for the nobility that she sees showing the significance of having a tutor that not only tutored her, but also tutored some of the nobles that she so admired. As a part of the tour, Shigako also accompanied her tutor to other temples such as Honri-ji, Tenryū-ji, and Ninna-ji (which she refers to as Omuro in her diary).<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps most notably, during the day with her tutor, they go to Katsura River, where they “pour drinks together and dance and compose poetry,” a common activity for the literati.<sup>19</sup> Her poem reads:

Even the storms  
On the great mountain  
Calm in spring  
So that the flowers  
Can bloom<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert Eugen Plutschow, “Japanese Travel Diaries of the Middle Ages,” *Oriens Extremus* 29, no. 1 (1982), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Yamanashi Shigako, “Haru no michikusa,” in *Kinsei nyōnin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Fukuoka-shi: Ashi Shobō, 2001), 54.

<sup>18</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 54.

<sup>19</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 54.

<sup>20</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 54.

Shigako uses her relationship with her tutor to emphasize her own poetic legitimacy; she was able to get a tour of the ancient capital from a renowned poet, visited places of poetic importance, and wrote poetry alongside him.

Tanaka Aijo had two tutors, Sadanao Tominokōji and Ikeda Gensai, both of whom wrote postscripts to Aijo's diary praising her as a poet. Tominokōji's postscript was dated on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of 1833, and Gensai's postscript was dated the tenth month of the same year.<sup>21</sup> It is likely that Aijo had finished her diary the previous year and that these postscripts were written after both men had read the diary and ultimately approved of it as her tutors. Since Aijo did not pass until the sixth month of 1834, after both postscripts were dated, these were clearly meant to lend her writing legitimacy while she was alive, rather than a posthumous acknowledgement of her skills.

Aijo met Sadanao through her family. The Tominokōji family had financial ties to the head of the Tanaka family who it was thought supported them.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the head of the Tanaka family, Masanori, was particularly close to Sadanao, who also gave Masanori guidance with his literary works. Indeed, in the third month of 1811, Masanori sent Sadanao a scroll to read over and correct.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that the reason Aijo started receiving guidance from Sadanao in the first place was at the encouragement of her older brother and Masanori.

Sadanao could offer a great deal of legitimacy to his students due to his poetic skill and his family lineage. He was originally from a branch Fujiwara family, giving him ties to one of the oldest aristocratic families in Kyoto. As with Shigako's tutor, this family lineage and proximity to the old capital lent him legitimacy, even though he had been adopted by the

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<sup>21</sup> Tanaka Aijo, "Michi no ki," in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 220.

<sup>22</sup> Maeda, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi*, 362.

<sup>23</sup> Maeda, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi*, 362.

Tominokōji family when he was younger. Aijo also briefly mentioned meeting Sadanao in her diary as she neared Kyoto, and mentioned that his wife guided her around, though she did not go into much detail about what they did.<sup>24</sup> In his brief postscript at the end of Aijo's diary, Sadanao notes that Aijo "devoted herself to writing and wrote with the utmost care" and that her "eye for the Japanese style is comforting."<sup>25</sup> This postscript served as an acknowledgement of Aijo's work and the skill that she displayed in her diary, validating the writing that preceded it.

Gensai was the eldest son of a samurai, Ikeda Yuhei Yasuzo (who received a stipend of 100 koku). He was going to take over as the head of the family from his father but lost his hearing at age 30 and gave up the position to his younger brother, Yasutane, instead. From there, he began studying literature and Confucianism, later taking a greater interest in *kokugaku*. He was well known as a scholar and tutor in Oyama, the area where Aijo was from, and was known for taking on many female students.

Gensai's postscript, in particular, held a great deal of praise for Aijo, noting that she was not only highly skilled in literature, but also in the arts of music, the tea ceremony, and the art of incense. Mentioning these three skills was important because they showcased Aijo's feminine refinement. While more institutionalized learning around these arts, as well as the art of literature, was typically seen as a manly pursuit, authors like Rebecca Corbett have noted that women would also participate in these arts as "a means of learning to comport themselves in the manner of the elite," which would then enable them to have a greater chance at class mobility, and it thus became a more feminine activity for women with

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<sup>24</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 191.

<sup>25</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 219.

the money to pursue it.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, discussions of tea culture, the art of incense, and introductions in how to play the *koto* are not uncommon in prescriptive literature for women at the time Aijo was writing.<sup>27</sup> Gensai also writes that Aijo was known as not only a woman of great refinement, but she was known for her elegance (婀娜) as well.<sup>28</sup> In describing her writing and other activities, Gensai uses gendered language and examples which suggests that he appreciated and wanted to foreground Aijo's femininity in his praise. In the body of her diary, Aijo herself discussed practicing the tea ceremony and incense, which may have inspired Gensai to comment on them.

While Aijo had a life-long interest in the literary arts, Gensai specifically noted that she was able to pursue these other types of refinement after the death of her husband when she was 39. Retirement, then, allowed Aijo to establish and explore a new identity and sense of femininity that included a greater pursuit of the arts. Retirement enabled her extensive travel and therefore her ability to write her own literature based on the places that she visited, but it also allowed her to explore other markers of, particularly feminine, refinement such as music, incense, and the tea ceremony.

A sense of legitimacy was incredibly important for Edo period poetry writing, and this legitimacy was most clearly granted through becoming pupils to tutors who had made a name for themselves through their own poetry. Shigako and Aijo both feature their tutors in

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<sup>26</sup> Rebecca Corbett, *Cultivating Femininity: Women and Tea culture in Edo and Meiji Japan*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 17.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the collections of prescriptive literature organized by topic in *Edo jidai josei seikatsu ezu daijiten* vol. 4: *gakki* (214-266) *kōdō* (268-288), and *cha no yu* (290-298).

<sup>28</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 220. Here Gensai is using the term *ada* 婀娜 which can allude to a woman's elegance and beauty, but, during the late Edo period it also came to imply that a woman was seductive or *chic*. While it is most likely that Gensai meant the former here, he might have also been commenting on Aijo's allure or her sophisticated style.

their diaries as a way to access this legitimacy, while Nakako and Ieko clearly demonstrate, through their writing styles and choices, the influence that their tutors had on their work. While their tutors certainly shaped the way that they wrote, these tutors, and the legitimacy they offered, also allowed each of these women to then craft their own poetic identity, focused on the thoughts and emotions that they wanted to convey to their readers.

### *Interactions with Kokugaku*

While Nakako, Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko were all influenced by the literary aspects of *kokugaku*, they did not display much interest in celebrating Japanese works at the expense of eschewing Chinese philosophies and literature. None of them blatantly involve themselves with more political aspects of *kokugaku* discourse, instead there are a few moments in their diaries where they speak to the opposite.

For example, *kokugaku* lifted up Shinto as the native religion of Japan, claiming its superiority to Buddhism, despite the fact that the two had been developing side by side for a millennium. Nakako seems to speak to that idea when she writes this poem:

Something called kami  
Something called Buddha  
Water clashing in narrow straits  
Should there be a partition  
In these profound blessings<sup>29</sup>

Which suggests that she is aware of the ideological discourse around Shinto and Buddhism at the time, and that they seem to be “clashing” but considers them to be connected and questions the idea of them being separated. Though Moribe, her tutor, was likely engaging in these philosophical debates at the time he was working with her, it is clear that their

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<sup>29</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 156.

relationship was largely about classical texts, particularly the *Man'yōshū*. Moribe may have shared some of his beliefs about Shinto and Buddhism, or Nakako may have heard about these debates from her wider literary and intellectual systems, but it is not surprising that she largely kept her focus to the literary aspects of *kokugaku*. Of the four diarists, Nakako is the clearest in professing her profound Buddhist faith, and her pilgrimage largely focuses on the Chichibu circuit, a circuit of Buddhist temples to the deity Kannon.

Aijo, on the other hand, demonstrated her knowledge of and appreciation for traditional Chinese poetry, alongside Japanese poetry by referencing poetry from the Chinese poet Li Bai (701-762). In doing so, Aijo showed she had training in classical Chinese as well as classical Japanese. When describing the scenery near Lake Biwa, she referenced the poem “Early departure from the City of Baidi” by Li Bai, one of the most famous and celebrated Chinese poets. Li Bai’s poem reads:

At dawn I take leave from Baidi amidst the rosy clouds  
A thousand *li* to Jiangling – I will arrive in one day  
Apes call out unceasingly from both shores  
My light boat has already passed through ten-thousand layers of mountains

Describing her journey along the Tama River, Aijo also notes that “the light boat has already crossed ten thousand layers of mountains.”<sup>30</sup> It is particularly interesting that Aijo references Li Bai, writing about a place in China, in light of the fact that many of the references she makes in her poetry are governed by her location being the same as the writers who wrote the poem she is referencing. By referencing Li Bai, she was going out of her way to demonstrate her knowledge of Chinese classics, much in the same way that she did with the Japanese poems she referenced.

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<sup>30</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 194.

Influences for Aijo's poetry are tied to her education when she was younger and her relationship with her older brother. Her elder brother was born in 1772 and lived until 1823 becoming a fairly celebrated poet in the region.<sup>31</sup> One of his biographers notes that he spent his early childhood and adolescence learning about Chinese folktales and studying Japanese literature, something he did under both his father and his uncle, Tanaka Masatake. While much less was written about Aijo's childhood, given what was written in her diary, and how she seemed to be extremely familiar with not only the Japanese classics, but some of the Chinese classics as well, it is likely her childhood followed much the same path as her older brother's. Likely due to learning alongside her brother, Aijo herself also seemed to be fairly aware of Chinese classical poetry and was interested enough in it to allude to it in her diary. Rather than a rejection of *kokugaku*, though, Aijo's reference to Li Bai's poetry can be understood more as a way for her to demonstrate her vast knowledge of poetry and her ability to engage with it.

Nevertheless, it is likely that Aijo was at least somewhat aware of the ideological aspects of the *kokugaku* movement, as she demonstrated an awareness of Motoori Norinaga's work when she referenced his *Sugagasa Diary*. Norinaga is often framed by historians as a founder of *kokugaku* and was quite insistent in his claim that Japanese literature and philosophies were far superior to their Chinese counterparts. Rather than engaging with this thought, Aijo focuses on her own learning and interests. Because she had knowledge of both classical Chinese and Japanese poetry, she took the chance to demonstrate that knowledge when crossing the Tama River reminded her of Li Bai's "Early departure from the City of Baidi."

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<sup>31</sup> Maeda, *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, 359.

While *kokugaku* undoubtedly had an influence on the way that each of the women approached poetry and constructed their trips, they all clearly demonstrated their own interests outside of the movement. Even though they were undoubtedly aware of the suggestion by some of the most prominent *kokugaku* scholars, such as Motoori Norinaga, that Chinese influences should be eschewed, they demonstrated that their interest in the movement was largely a literary one, rather than a philosophical or political one. Their diaries remained about showcasing their own literary knowledge and capabilities rather than discussing ideological debates.

Nevertheless, the fact that they did not discuss these debates—with Nakako simply writing a single poem and Aijo referencing Chinese works with no commentary—despite the fact that they were almost certainly aware of them shows that they were making choices about how they wanted to be perceived in their diaries. Nakako’s diary was a testament to her literary skill and the importance of her Buddhist faith. She acknowledged the fact that Buddhism and Shinto might be at odds in the mind of some people but focused her poetry on the “profound blessings” that she received from both. Aijo was often cerebral in her writing and her reference to a Chinese classic likely had more to do with the way she wanted to present herself to her peers than it had to do with her eschewing tenants of *kokugaku*.

### *Traces of the Past*

Central to both Japanese poetry and travel literature were *uta makura*, or “pillow words.” Travelers would often go to a site that had been made famous by a poem to write their own poetry, and, in doing so, would replicate a word or brief phrase, an *uta makura* from the

original poems. After centuries of poetry writing and repetition of the *uta makura* these words themselves became evocative of a myriad of emotions and meanings that poets could use and expand on, so long as they were aware of the literary canon that the words had derived from.<sup>32</sup> Often going in hand with *uta makura* were *meisho*, or “famous places” that were associated with particular poems, stories, and seasons. As a result of *kokugaku*, during the Edo period, ancient poetry anthologies such as the *Man'yōshū*, the *Kokinshū* and the *Shin-kokinshū* had gained more prominence, but the ability to reference older poetic works and comment on places that had been imbued with poetic meaning had remained important for nearly all of the history of Japanese poetry writing.<sup>33</sup>

This standard of poetry writing created a sense of nostalgia in Japanese poetry writing and travel literature. In order to write “good” poetry, authors had to be able to invoke the past. Poets would often travel to *meisho*, specific locations that had been imbued with a poetic history and meaning. Because the *uta makura* had been used and repeated for centuries, poets were often also expected to know or be aware of the many histories of a particular place to better be able to understand the emotions and senses that they were attempting to evoke in their own poetry writing.

This sense of nostalgia in travel literature also went beyond *uta makura*, as poets would also reference works such as the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, *Genji monogatari* and *Heike monogatari*. *Meisho* could be expanded to include these sites that had been made famous by stories alongside poetry, that did not necessarily have an *uta makura* immediately associated with them, but nonetheless evoked meaning and poetic importance.

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<sup>32</sup> Susanna Fessler, “A Brief History of Japanese Travel and Travel Writing,” in *Musashino in Tuscany: Japanese Overseas Travel Literature 1860-1912*, (University of Michigan Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Plutschow, “Japanese Travel Writing of the Middle Ages,” 18-19.

When at sites that had been made famous by poems or stories, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko often used these *uta makura* in their poetry, in addition to allusions that they made in their prose. In doing so, they harkened back to the past and showed their own knowledge of literature and the histories it relayed. By traveling to specific places and invoking the past, they traveled not only through space, but also through time. They were living and communicating in liminal spaces; weaving through time and space and language to create and articulate something that was both built out of the layers of the past, and something new and all their own. These trips, therefore, enabled them to define identities in ways they did not have access to before.

This is most clearly exemplified by her journey to Takasago during which she made the comparison between new and old pines. The Takasago and Sumiyoshi pines were referenced in the *kana* preface of the *Kokinshū*, which is largely heralded to be one of the best descriptions of poetry and profoundly influenced subsequent poetry writing in Japan. In it, the author, Ki no Tsurayuki lists things that inspired ancient poets to write, including the “thought of aging with the pines of Takasago and Suminoe.”<sup>34</sup> The pines at Takasago have since been appreciated for their literary importance, particularly in regard to the passage of time, and were later made even more famous by a *noh* play titled *Takasago*, written by Zeami in the early fifteenth century. This play had previous been called *Aioi matsu*, or “twin pines,” and references the introduction to the *Kokinshū* in the body of the play, clearly demonstrating where it was drawing inspiration from.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ki no Tsurayuki, “Kana Preface,” trans. Torquil Duthie, in *The Kokinshū: Selected Poems* (Columbia University Press, 2023), 175.

<sup>35</sup> Richard A. Gardner, “Takasago: The Symbolism of Pine,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, no. 2 (1992): 216

While at Takasago, Aijo mentioned that the “shape of the young pine trees are very lovely” and that “there are still the roots of old trees remaining, showing the traces of 1000 years of prosperity.”<sup>36</sup> This plays off of the final lines of the *Kokinshū*’s kana preface which assert the longevity of poetry stating “if like the threads of the willow they are unceasing, if like the leaves of the pine they do not scatter, if like the vine they stretch long, if like the tracks of birds they remain, those who can understand the style of song and the meaning of things, just like when they gaze at the moon in the great sky, will revere the old and desire the new.”<sup>37</sup> In appreciating the new pines as well as the roots of the pines that are 1000 years old, Aijo is showing both her reverence of the old and appreciation for the new.

Her commentary on the pines can also be seen as a parallel to her own writing, which was rooted in the literature of 1,000 years prior. Just as the young pine trees were taking shape through the roots of the pines from centuries past, so too were poets of the Edo period using classic texts to shape and influence their own works. Aijo set herself apart by not only referencing Japanese classics, but by specifically remarking on how similar the landscapes she experienced are to those that existed a thousand years ago, finding the “traces” of the past in what she saw in front of her. She found value in things that are old, and lasting while at the same time she was producing new poetry and literature.

Aijo found similar value when she visited the Yahiko shrine and detailed the kagura hall and the large trees around it, but seemed most taken with the blue clouds, the withdrawal of the sun, and the sprinkling of rain. She wrote that, in these things, she saw “traces of the

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<sup>36</sup> Tanaka “Michi no ki,” 198.

<sup>37</sup> Ki no Tsurayuki, “Kana Preface,” trans. Torquil Duthie, 181-182.

time of the *Man'yōshū*,”<sup>38</sup> a reference to a poem in volume 16 of the *Man'yōshū*, which describes the same event in the same place:<sup>39</sup>

Iyahiko itself  
Is divine  
Even on days  
With wisps of blue sky  
A light rain falls

Aijo not only referenced Japanese classics, but by specifically remarked on how similar the landscapes she is experiencing are to those that existed a thousand years ago, finding the “traces” of the past in what she sees in front of her. She found value in things that are old, and lasting, remarking that the Yahiko shrine is precious, in part, because of its age.<sup>40</sup>

In a similar vein, Shigako also commented on the ancient past. While in Miwa, Shigako admired the many towering cedar trees around her and referenced the *Kokinshū* when she wrote “There was a poem composed about a cedar gate, and I thought of the ancient past.”<sup>41</sup> The poem she was referencing reads:

Should you pine  
For my hut  
At the foot of Mt. Miwa  
Come visit  
At the gate where cedars stand.<sup>42</sup>

Though she herself does not write a poem about the gate, by referencing this poem, Shigako shows not only her knowledge of the *Kokinshū*, but how she understood the place that she was in; not only through what she herself experienced, but the poetry and emotions of the ancient poets who wrote about the same spot. Through her knowledge and articulation of

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<sup>38</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 183.

<sup>39</sup> *Man'yōshū*, Volume 16 poem 3883.

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 183.

<sup>41</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 57.

<sup>42</sup> Translated in Yokoi Yayū, “Uzuragoromo,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 34, no. 3 (1979), 295.

ancient poetry, and the invocation of a “cedar gate,” she is able to move across temporal boundaries as she also moves through space.

Nakako is particularly interesting in her use of poetry to evoke different eras because she not only uses the substance of her poetry to reference previous works but also uses the form of her poems to conjure images of the past. This enables her to access multiple different time periods and nostalgias that appear separate but are based on the same location. While the majority of the poems that Nakako writes are the more common *tanka*, she also writes a series of poems near the end of her diary that are *chōka*. *Chōka* are both longer in a longer form than *tanka* and often use this longer format to convey a more complete narrative. Each of the *chōka* that Nakako writes is followed immediately by *tanka*, a style which evokes the *Man'yōshū*. Following a *chōka* with a *tanka* was a style of poetry writing popularized by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, who was a major contributor to the second half of the *Man'yōshū*. Prior to Hitomaro's contributions, *chōka* would typically stand alone, but his contributions marked the beginning of the practice of including a *tanka* after a *chōka*. After the *Man'yōshū*, which contains over 260 *chōka*, this form of poetry quickly fell out of style. The *Kokinshū*, which is touted as the next major work of Japanese poetry, only contained five *chōka*. Within the twenty other imperial anthologies, the form is rarely used.<sup>43</sup> It is clear, then, that when Nakako was writing *chōka* followed by *tanka*, she is referencing a very specific style of poetry mainly found in the *Man'yōshū*. She further makes this clear by using the terms

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<sup>43</sup> H. Mack Horton, “*Man'yōshū*” in *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature*, eds. Shirane, Haruo, Tomi Suzuki, and David Lurie, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 53.

“*naga-uta*” (long poem) and “*mijika-uta*” (short poem) to define her poems, rather than *chōka* and *tanka* because this was the pronunciation that had been used in ancient times.<sup>44</sup>

As would have been done in the *Man'yōshū*, Nakako uses her *chōka* as a narrative device to evoke the ancient past. She writes the first two of her *chōka* at Hachimangū, in Kamakura, which was dedicated to Emperor Ōjin, his mother Empress Jingu, and his wife, Himegami. The shrine itself was named after Ōjin who, after his death, was deified as Hachiman, a *kami* of warriors. All three are mentioned in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, both of which claim that Empress Jingu invaded Korea and ultimately bore a son who became Ōjin. While it is unclear when this invasion happened, or indeed if it happened at all, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* suggest that Ōjin was born around the turn of the third century and ruled from the late third century to the early fourth.<sup>45</sup> Nakako alludes to both Empress Jingu and Ōjin in her poem, which largely recounts their story, and particularly praises Ōjin for his strength as a warrior and his protection of the realm.<sup>46</sup> At the end of the poem she compares the way that Ōjin protected the realm to that of the Minamoto, who claimed that they were his direct descendants. She then writes another, briefer, *chōka* on “the same thing,” in which she praises the peaceful world under Ōjin’s reign. With these poems, she is able to weave together a legend told in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* with the poetics of the *Man'yōshū* and also shows her knowledge of the connection between Ōjin and the Minamoto. In doing so, she engages with multiple pasts, through both the style and substance of her poetry.

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<sup>44</sup> *Naga-uta* and *chōka* are written using the same *kanji* characters, but Nakako occasionally spells out “*naga-uta*” in *hiragana* to make sure that her readers know the pronunciation that she is using.

<sup>45</sup> While most historians agree that Ōjin likely existed, there is some debate regarding the dates of his reign, and many believe that he was in power not in the late third century, but 100 years later in the late fourth century.

<sup>46</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 164.

Her third *chōka*, written in the same place, is about Minamoto no Sanetomo, the third shogun of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). The Minamoto were deeply connected to the Hachiman shrine because they claimed a lineage to Ōjin and Hachiman as a way to legitimize their rule.<sup>47</sup> Sanetomo was a largely ineffectual ruler and was largely seen as a figurehead for his maternal grandfather, Hōjō Tokimasa and was later killed by his nephew while descending the steps at the Hachimangū shrine, which is likely why Nakako chose to write a poem about him there.<sup>48</sup>

Sanetomo did not take a great interest in governing and instead focused on his poetry and became renowned for his *waka*. His most famous collection of which was titled *Kinkai wakashū* (金槐和歌集).<sup>49</sup> In his work, Sanetomo preferred the style of the *Man'yōshū*, despite the fact that the *Shin-kokinshū* was written and published during his lifetime and was the popular style of poetry for many in the imperial court. Sanetomo's poetry was often more vivid and direct, and used words that were popular in the *Man'yōshū*, but which had largely fallen out of fashion.<sup>50</sup> This was clearly something that Nakako was aware of, as she praised him in her own poem, writing that she “hopes his style of poetry (手ぶり) from long ago will return.”<sup>51</sup> Nakako uses her knowledge and praise for Sanetomo, a man who revitalized the style of the *Man'yōshū*, to legitimize her own choices to prioritize the *Man'yōshū* in the form and substance of her poetry.

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<sup>47</sup> While previously Japan had largely been ruled by emperors who claimed to be descended directly from an imperial line, in 1180 the Taira and the Minamoto, two imperial branch families who had become known for their prowess as warriors, fought for control of the realm. The Minamoto ultimately proved victorious in 1185, beginning the Kamakura period and their rule as shoguns.

<sup>48</sup> Higuchi Yoshimaro, “Kōchū,” in *Kinkai wakashū (Minamoto no Sanetomo)*, (Shinchōsha, 1981), 234.

<sup>49</sup> Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, 330.

<sup>50</sup> Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, 332.

<sup>51</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 164-5.

To write her fourth *chōka*, Nakako traveled a short distance to Koshigoe, an outpost on the sea outside of Kamakura. She introduces this poem by saying “I heard that long ago, when Yoshitsune was returning to the capital from here, Kajiwarra made a false accusation against him.”<sup>52</sup> This is in reference to Kajiwarra Kagetoki who served both Minamoto no Yoritomo and Minamoto no Yoshitsune and, according to the *Heike monogatari*, worked to drive a wedge between the two brothers after Yoshitsune embarrassed him.<sup>53</sup> Koshigoe itself was a place made famous by the *Heike monogatari* a war tale that describes the battles for power between the Taira and the ultimately victorious Minamoto clans from 1180-1185. Within the tale is the “Koshigoe Letter” which purports to be written by Yoshitsune to Yoritomo after Yoshitsune was denied entry into Kamakura. In the letter, he pleaded for entry into Kamakura and professed his innocence for the crimes that Kajiwarra had accused him of. Yoritomo ultimately denied him entry.

In this poem, Nakako demonstrates her expansive knowledge of Japanese literature. She is clearly familiar with the *Heike monogatari* as she praises Yoshitsune’s skills as a warrior, and his desire to defeat his “father’s enemies, the Taira.”<sup>54</sup> She also references a *chōka* from the *Man’yōshū*, written by Ōtomo no Yakamochi. This poem was written in celebration of an imperial edict noting the discovery of gold on Ōtomo’s family land, and asserts his loyalty to the Emperor. He writes:

If we go to the sea  
Our corpses will be water-logged  
If we go to the mountains  
Grass will grow on our corpses

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<sup>52</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 165.

<sup>53</sup> At the battle of Yashima, Kajiwarra suggested that Yoshitsune fit out Minamoto ships with reverse oars, to make a quick escape if necessary. Yoshitsune refused, suggesting that such an action would be cowardly. Royall Tyler, trans. *The Tale of the Heike* (Penguin Books: 2014), 582-583.

<sup>54</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 165.

But I wish to die  
Near the Emperor<sup>55</sup>

Nakako writes:

If you go to the mountain  
Your swords will cut stone  
If you go to the sea  
Your corpses will be stained with water<sup>56</sup>

Nakako is not only using the form of *chōka* to allude to the *Man'yōshū*, but is directly referencing a *chōka* from the *Man'yōshū* at the same time that she is talking about different events from history, recorded in the *Heike monogatari*.

With this series of poems, Nakako shows both her complex understanding of history along with her skill in poetry writing and her diverse literary knowledge. By communicating her knowledge of this history through narrative *chōka* rather than prose, and by referring to this style of poem as “*naga-uta*” she is clearly harkening back to the *Man'yōshū* at the same time that each of her poems reference different time periods and pieces of writing. Her first poem can be traced back to legends told in the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*, written around the same time as the *Man'yōshū*, but referencing events that took place centuries before. Her second poem references Minamoto no Sanetomo's writing, most of which he did between the years 1210-1218. Finally, her third poem shows her knowledge of the *Heike monogatari* which relates the tale of the Genpei war (1180-1185). All three poems are evoked based on her present location.

Through literature, Nakako is able to travel not only through space, as she goes from the Hachimangu shrine to Koshigoe, but is also traveling through and bending time. In doing

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<sup>55</sup> Alexander Vovin *Man'yōshū (Volume 18)* (Brill: 2016), poem 4094.

<sup>56</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 165.

so, she is expressing and asserting a literary identity as someone who is not only able to make reference to literary works and historical time periods, but as someone who is able to write in the style of a piece of literature that is largely outside of the other works that she is referencing as her style of writing for the poetry, and the works that she is referencing within the poetry are largely different.

Through referencing the past, Shigako, Aijo, and Nakako are able to show their literary knowledge as they travel both through space and through time. While these references are common in each of the women's diaries, the references above convey a clearly articulated remembrance of a past that they themselves never lived through and serves to highlight their own interests. Nakako, in particular, is able to weave together multiple moments in time, through her use of the *chōka*, popular at a specific moment in poetry's history, and her references to multiple different historic and poetic figures. In conveying and focusing on these interests, the women further cement a poetic identity.

### *Different Seasons*

Writing about nature was incredibly common in Japanese poetry. Even when not writing about nature, poems would be expected to have a "seasonal word" that offered imagery to suggest to the reader of the poem what season the poem was written in, a practice dating back to the *Kokinshū*, the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry. This collection of poems was comprised of 20 volumes organized by themes; the first themes it highlighted were the four seasons, setting a precedent for later collections of poetry and foregrounding the importance of denoting the seasons in later works. This meant that many places that these poems were written about evoked a particular season; indeed Susanna Fessler notes that "if a

place were famous for a seasonal occurrence, such as the bloom of a specific flower, one would schedule one's journey to see that flower at its height; arriving at any other time would be disastrous.”<sup>57</sup>

“Disastrous” is perhaps a bit exaggerated; Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were taking once-in-a-lifetime journeys and often came upon *meisho* when they were “out of season.” Some travel diarists, notably Matsuo Bashō in his *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, might exaggerate the sites that they saw to better match descriptions in ancient poetry,<sup>58</sup> but such exaggeration was not possible when dealing with discrepancies of season, particularly because the four diarists would keep track of the months and days that they were on the road. Despite this, they often still wrote poetry about or commented on these sites, likely to show their knowledge of the importance of the sites and cement their identities as capable poets. Here, too, they were bending time, across seasons instead of across centuries.

One technique that Shigako used to show that she was referencing an older work despite visiting the *meisho* in a different season was to acknowledge the work in her prose but write a poem that reflected the site she actually saw. When she crossed Mt. Utsu, she was reminded of the *Ise monogatari*, referencing the line from book nine of the tale which states “When I reached Mt. Utsu, the path that I entered was dark and narrow, overgrowing with ivy.”<sup>59</sup> Shigako mentioned that “young leaves of ivy were just beginning to sprout,” before writing her own poem about the site:

Were the red leaves I saw  
In autumn a dream?

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<sup>57</sup> Fessler, “A Brief History of Japanese Travel and Travel Writing,” 17.

<sup>58</sup> Donald Keene, *Travelers of a Hundred Ages*, (Columbia University Press, 1999), 313-315.

<sup>59</sup> Helen Craig McCullough *Tale of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford University Press, 1968), 75.

New leaves are beginning to sprout  
On this narrow path  
Of Mt. Utsu<sup>60</sup>

Shigako wrote this poem shortly after she set out in the second month, before ivy leaves had a chance to grow, but she was still able to reference *Ise monogatari* by using similar imagery of “ivy” and a “narrow path.” In this way, she was able to keep her poetry authentic to her own experiences, but also show that she was aware of the poetic significance of the site.

Aijo also visited and wrote about a *meisho* that was “out of season.” She went to the Tatsuta River at the beginning of summer, but the site was initially given poetic importance when it was written about in the *Kokinshū* which described the river in the middle of autumn. The version of the poem in the *Kokinshū* reads:

Autumn leaves in disarray  
In the flows of  
The Tatsuta River  
Were I to cross  
My brocade would be torn<sup>61</sup>

While Aijo’s poem is:

Although there are budding leaves  
By Tatsuta River  
If they fade  
Will I also see  
Traces of the famous flows<sup>62</sup>

Like Shigako, Aijo acknowledges the season that she was in while visiting the river but still paid homage to the season that the original poem referenced, by noting that she might only see the “famous flows” of autumn leaves in the river should the budding leaves “fade.” In

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<sup>60</sup> Yamanashi, “Haru no michikusa,” 45.

<sup>61</sup> *Kokin wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* trans. Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford University Press, 1985), 70.

<sup>62</sup> Tanaka, “Michi no ki,” 192.

addressing both in her poetry, she is able to communicate a sense of longing within her poem and perhaps regret that she was not at the river in the correct season.

While famous locations in poetry were often associated with a season, and that season would be the preferred season to visit those locations, Shigako and Aijo were able to bend the scenes they encountered to simultaneously allude to the poetic significance of the scene while maintaining their authentic observations. In alluding to famous works, they established their poetic knowledge, and in writing poetry that reflected their own observations and experiences they were able to maintain a sense of authenticity in their works.

### *Reimagining Love and Love Poems*

Many of the poems in classical texts emphasized the subject of love— young love, pining for a lover, competition over love. Yet, in their diaries, Nakako, Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko do not write love poems or about love in general. Instead, their poetry largely focuses on nature and their own experiences on their trips. Nonetheless, when they traveled to *meisho* that had been made famous, in part, due to the love poems written there, they would have been expected to reference that poetic canon. By reworking these poems, they showed an awareness and understanding of classical poetry and their ability to use that poetry to convey their own emotions.

It is impossible to know why Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko did not reference their own feelings of love, whether contemporary or reflecting on their pasts, but it is telling that none of the four diarists wrote a single love poem, even when referencing love poems from the past. In their retirements, they showed that they were uninterested in reflecting on

feelings of love or longing for another person, instead shaping their poetry to reflect their own life, circumstances, and interests, while simultaneously showing that they were aware of the poetic history of a particular location.

In Kasuga, Ieko references another famous love poem, which was written in the *Kokinshū*. The original poem reads:

Light no fires today  
On the plain of Kasuga  
For sweet as new grass  
My young wife is hidden here  
And I am hidden here too<sup>63</sup>

The poem references the common practice of burning fields to make them more fertile for growth the next season. The narrator asked people to not light the fires because he and his young spouse were hidden away in the fields, with the heavy implication that they were engaged in love-making.

In her poem, Ieko uses the word “wife,” but rather than using it to suggest a relationship with her spouse, she instead compares a “wife” to an *uguisu*, a Japanese bush warbler which often remains hidden:

In the plains of Kasuga's  
Mt. Wakakusa<sup>64</sup>  
The *uguisu*  
Cries out  
Hidden away like a wife<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Adapted from, *Kokin wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* trans. Helen Craig McCullough, (Stanford University Press, 1985), 17. In McCullough's translation, she uses the word “spouse” for the word *tsuma*, which can also mean “wife” in Japanese. I have changed this translation to more clearly match Ieko's use of the word *tsuma* which is clearly referring to a wife, rather than the gender-neutral “spouse.”

<sup>64</sup> “wakakusa,” in addition to being the name of the mountain, can also mean “new grass,” further linking her poem to the poem in the *Kokinwakashū*.

<sup>65</sup> Oda, “Azumaji nikki,” 330.

Rather than referring to two lovers hiding away, Ieko's reference to "hiding" is not the result of an amorous affair, but a description of a wife's position in the household: hidden away in the back. This shift represents a focus on Ieko's own experiences as a housewife rather than as someone who had hidden away with her lover. In this way, she asserts her own identity and experiences onto the classic poem that she is referencing.

Like Ieko, Aijo also has a chance to write about love, but chooses instead to focus on her own interest in her journey. While just outside of Kyoto, Aijo alludes to the *Man'yōshū* when she talks about "three mountains," which are the three mountains of Yamato: Mt. Unebi, Mt. Miminashi, and Mt. Kagu. In the *Man'yōshū*, Prince Naka no Oe (who later became Emperor Tenchi) wrote a poem starting a legend about the Sanzan Wife Conflict (三山の妻争い).<sup>66</sup> In this poem, the three mountains are gendered. Mt. Unebi is female while Mt. Miminashi and Mt. Kagu are male. Mt. Kagu falls in love with Mt. Unebi, and ends up fighting with Mt. Miminashi over her. According to legend, Naka no Oe wrote this poem as a metaphor to describe a conflict between himself and his younger brother, Prince Oama (who later became Emperor Tenmu) over the Princess Nukata, who also wrote several poems in the *Man'yōshū*.

In writing about these mountains, Aijo not only referenced the *Man'yōshū*, but also Motoori Norinaga's Sugagasa Diary, which was written in 1772, about 56 years before Aijo herself set off. In his diary, Norinaga lamented the fact that he was unable to tell which mountain was which, and, though he sought out someone to tell him, no one he asked was able to give him an answer. At first, Aijo had a similar experience, searching for someone to

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<sup>66</sup> Emperor Tenji, *Man'yōshū: One Thousand Poems*, translated by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai (Chicago University Press, 1941), 5-6.

tell her which of the mountains is which. Eventually, they came across a local man wielding a sharp sickle, who was able to identify the different mountains for them. She writes this poem about the experience:<sup>67</sup>

Though I have asked  
Every person  
No one can answer  
If this is  
Mt. Miminashi

Then later, after encountering the man with the sickle:

The heaven's Mt. Kagu  
Is an endless climb  
When you do not know  
The old hearts  
Of the distant past<sup>68</sup>

Rather than referencing the love triangle and resulting conflict, she writes about her own experience in trying to find out the differences between the mountains, perhaps so that she could better understand the story in the *Man'yōshū*, and her pleasure in finally being able to do so. Like Ieko, she talks about asking others for help, suggesting that these journeys represented not just an opportunity to show their knowledge of classical literature, but also an opportunity to understand it better. The focus of their poetry is often on their own experiences of the places that they are in, showing that they are interested in engaging with ancient texts, but are still prioritizing their own journeys.

Love poetry in ancient texts, particularly when written in the context of travel, often evoked a sense of longing for home, or the bittersweetness of departure. While there is a sense of nostalgia for the distant past, a longing for home does not appear throughout the majority of the diaries of Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko. As mentioned previously, travel

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<sup>67</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 192.

<sup>68</sup> Tanaka, "Michi no ki," 192.

diaries were often very self-focused and, for Shigako, Aijo, and Ieko, this meant that their travel diaries rarely referenced other people, even though they were all travelling with friends or family members. When they did, it was often brief and always as they had met them on the road, rather than longing for the people back home.

Nakako is a notable exception to this rule. While the majority of her travel diary is largely about her own journey and her own thoughts and feelings, it is impossible not to note the smattering of poems written by her son that appear alongside her own. Upon reading the postscript to her diary, the reason for this deviation from the norm becomes obvious. Doen, the son that she had travelled with passed away before his mother, in the eighth month of 1817. Nakako completed the diary on the seventh anniversary of his death, and it is likely that she distributed the diary to her friends and acquaintances as a memorial service for him.<sup>69</sup> The last few pages of the diary are a very raw explanation of the grief she felt upon losing her child. She wrote “even though I knew the world was impermanent, I never thought we would be separated like this.”<sup>70</sup> She wrote about how he helped her get her diary ready to publish, he “wrote on her behalf” in a neater hand, and “chose good people” to review it before she ultimately published it.<sup>71</sup> But he ultimately fell ill in the middle of his efforts, and so his work was left unfinished. Unfortunately, he fell ill in the middle of his efforts and died before her diary was complete. In light of this, it is likely that Nakako made the effort to include his poems in her diary after his death as a way to memorialize him and their trip together.

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<sup>69</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi* 179.

<sup>70</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 168.

<sup>71</sup> Kutsukake, “Azumaji no nikki,” 168.

## *Conclusion*

Poetry allowed Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko to demonstrate their knowledge and skill, while simultaneously allowing them to present a carefully crafted identity to their audiences. They all sought tutors to improve their writing and to offer legitimacy to their identities as poets. *Kokugaku*, as a major inspiration for the literary movements at the time, helped frame the poetry that they were referencing, and the places that they traveled to. It further allowed them to delve into a sense of nostalgia for past ages of Japan, and literature. In writing poetry that incorporated *meisho* and *uta makura*, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko were able to move through both space and time, cultivating an identity as writers with deep awareness of the past and how overlayed and shaped the world that they were currently in. At the same time when referencing ancient poems and scenery, they were also able to assert their own emotions and experiences, showing that they were both aware of the literary canon and able to proclaim their own positions within it.

## Conclusion

Women's retirement in early modern Japan intersected greater authority for women with an increased amount of free time, as they benefitted from age-based hierarchies and handed over household duties to a daughter-in-law. Women were told from a young age that they had to observe the "three obediences," that is, to be obedient to their father, then their husbands, and finally their sons. Women undoubtedly negotiated these expectations within the home throughout their lives, but retirement offered them different tools for negotiation. Filiality to one's parents was also an important virtue in early modern Japan. Ostensibly, mothers may have been expected to "obey" their sons, the filiality that was expected from sons and daughters-in-law meant that older women more authority over the home, particularly if their husbands had already died.

This increase in authority and free time meant that retired women experienced more freedom compared to earlier stages in their lives. Retirement was a life stage in which women were able to take to the roads far more frequently, and in which wealthy, literate women, like Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko, had a new audience for whom they performed their femininity. They had been taught for their whole lives how to be feminine for their families. In their retirements, however, as they took up writing brushes and sought to have their work published, this performance turned outwards, towards tutors and literary circles. As a result, their retirements broadened understandings of femininity and what could be considered feminine.

The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the increase in the amount of travel that women partook in upon entering their retirements. Travel was made easier for retired women across multiple axes. Not only were they no longer expected to stay in the home to take care of their duties, they were encouraged to be outside of it. Popular literature suggests that there was a great deal of anxiety around the relationship between mothers and daughters-in-law, and that one solution for this was for a mother-in-law to take trips more often. This idea is borne out in studies by Toshikazu Shinno and Nagashima Atsuko, which show that older women traveled far more often than their younger counterparts.<sup>1</sup> It is also borne out in the travel records that women have left behind, which are more populated by retired women than women of any other age group.<sup>2</sup>

Travel for retired women was also easier, logistically. While women were more likely to be stopped at barriers along the roadway than men were, this was largely due to the fact that the Tokugawa government was wary of women travelers who might be fleeing from their homes, shirking their household duties, and thus upending social order. This fear applied less to retired women who had already passed their duties along to daughters-in-law. Further, monetary support was also more available to retired women, as confraternities were more likely to sponsor women who had retired to go on pilgrimage than they were their younger counterparts.

Pilgrimage, itself, was also an important element of retired women's travel. As Constantine Vaporis has pointed out, pilgrimage was one of the best ways for people to take

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<sup>1</sup> Shinno Toshikazu, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early Modern Period," trans. Laura Nenzi, *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 4 (2002), 447-471, Nagashima Atsuko, "Bakumatsu nōson josei no kōdō no jiyū to kaji rōdō, Bushū Tachibanagun Namamugi mura Sekiguchi nikki o sozai toshite," in *Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai*, ed., *Ronshū kinsei joseishi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), 139-173.

<sup>2</sup> Shiba Keiko, *Kinsei onna tabi nikki* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), 178, fig. 2.

to the road, since the Tokugawa government was reluctant to be seen as interfering with people's access to the sacred.<sup>3</sup> It was more common for older people to go on pilgrimage, typically with the goal of gaining merit before they passed away. Indeed, the fact that both words for retirement, *inkyō*, and *shukke* suggest a turn to the spiritual further emphasizes the expectation that retired people were more likely to focus on their spirituality.

At the same time, because pilgrimage was one of the few ways that people were able to travel, it also became a way for people to explore their secular interests as well. This was certainly the case for Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko. Their travel diaries record their pilgrimages, showing how they interacted with the various sacred sites that they visited, but also show them as tourists, pursuing excitement in the pleasure quarters or seeking out famous objects and historical sites. Further, they crafted their identities as poets. Shigako wrote about admiring other female poets of her time, Nakako showed her love of the *Man'yōshū* throughout the pages of her diary, Aijo was continuously struck by the power of the ancient past, and Ieko playfully imagined her trip— and literature itself— as an entry into the floating world.

Despite their similar backgrounds, each of the four diarists presented themselves and their femininities differently. Shigako, Nakako, and Ieko all showed an interest in war tales, a subject that was typically marked as masculine. Shigako seemed fascinated by artefacts of war that were on display at the temples she visited. Ieko was fascinated by a myriad of violent stories, including the revenge story that played out at Ako in 1702, immortalized in the bunraku play *Chūshingura*. Her references to this tale, in particular, represented a break from both the more typically feminine interests in court poetry and travel diarists' typical

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<sup>3</sup> Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*, (Harvard University Press, 1994).

focus on classical literature, but was still in line with her own understandings of literature as at the heart of the floating world. Nakako, on the other hand, used her interest in war tales to highlight her fascination with the *Man'yōshū*, dedicating her *chōka* to famous warriors like Yoshitsune and the emperor Ojin. Nakako's interest in the *Man'yōshū* itself was likely viewed as masculine, as Motoori Norinaga claimed that the *Man'yōshū* was a particularly manly text, and even Nakako's own tutor called her writing "excellent, manly, and rare."<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Aijo shied away from mentioning war tales, focused almost exclusively on classical literature, and was praised by her tutors for her feminine qualities.<sup>5</sup>

Retirement represented a break from previous expectations placed on women, and this meant it allowed them a greater opportunity to define their femininity for themselves. For wealthy, literate women, they were able to do this more publicly, as they sought out tutors, joined literary circles and wrote works that they intended to publish. Their travel diaries, largely focused on their own journeys and thoughts, edited and re-edited over the course of years, and sometimes decades, are encapsulations of how they wanted to be perceived— as cultured travelers, as pilgrims, and as poets.

In their retirements, and in their travel diaries, Shigako, Nakako, Aijo, and Ieko crafted identities that were meant to be consumed by others. Retirement itself gave them more freedom to do this, and their own interests, likely shaped in part by their tutors, influenced how they presented themselves in their travel diaries. Their diaries show how widely these gendered presentations could diverge, even as they were crafted by four women, whose backgrounds were far more similar than they were different, writing less than fifty years apart.

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<sup>4</sup> Maeda Yoshi, *Edo jidai joryū bungeishi: chihō wo chūshin ni* (Yūgengaisha, 1998), 174.

<sup>5</sup> Tanaka Aijo, "Michi no ki," in *Kinsei nyonin no tabi nikkishū*, ed. Maeda Yoshi (Ashi Shobō, 2001), 219-220.

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