

The Projection of Quotidian Japan
on
the Chinese Vernacular:
The Case of Sawada Issai's
“Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan”

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Ideas are almost inexpressible in the language of the outlaw, of which the metaphors are sometimes so outrageous that one feels that they have worn manacles. But despite all this, and because of it, this strange patois is entitled to its place in that vast, impartial assemblage which finds room for a worn halfpenny as well as for a gold medal, and which is known as literature. Argot, whether we like it or not, has its own grammar and its own poetry. If there are words so distorted that they sound like the muttering of uncouth mouths, there are others in which we catch the voice of Villon.¹

Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

“Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan” and the Alien Parole

The short novel “Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan” (Engi kyōgiden 演義 侠妓傳) is but one of dozens of popular narratives written by Japanese using vernacular Chinese in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first question that comes to mind when reading such a text is why Japanese chose to write narratives in a vernacular language other than their own. These narratives were not meant for Chinese readers and must have been a tedious effort for anyone save an aficionado of the Chinese language. They were a part of the larger fascination with contemporary China at the time, and yet all texts such as “Chivalrous Courtesan” describe contemporary Tokugawa customs rather than contemporary Qing customs. Vernacular Chinese was not only used to compose such innovative tales it was also inserted into jōruri 浄瑠璃 plays and found its way into a variety

¹ Victor Hugo. *Les Misérables*. Part 4, Book 7 (London: Penguin Classics, 1982), 1219.

of popular texts during the eighteenth century.

Understanding why writing in vernacular Chinese had such an appeal for certain Japanese intellectuals requires us to consider the status of literary Chinese in Japan, which was essentially a domesticated discourse employed by a wide range of writers until the twentieth century. There was a well established position for writings on a great variety of topics within literary Chinese from the beginning of written language in Japan. Vernacular Chinese became a subset of the well-accepted register of literary Chinese that had the unique capacity to defamiliarize a range of topics that otherwise would not have been represented in literary Chinese narrative. What is striking about eighteenth-century Japan is the link between exposure to vernacular Chinese texts and attempts by intellectuals to evaluate as literature vernacular Japanese. Because Chinese vernacular narrative remained within the larger discourse of Chinese culture, which was privileged, but had “text-immanent features of orality,” as Sheldon Pollack puts it, Japanese readers felt that the category of literature could be extended to include vernacular writing.² It is no coincidence that the first attempt at a literary appraisal of Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s drama in Naniwa Miyage 難波土産 was written by Hozumi Ikan 穂積以貫, a Confucian scholar who made a reading dictionary for vernacular Chinese narrative.³

Literary Chinese played a central role in Japan, as well as Korea and other East Asian countries, as a privileged medium of social discourse that both gave the weight of

² Pollock, Sheldon. “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (February 1999): 6-37.

³ Chūgi Suikoden gokai 忠義水滸伝語解, a reading dictionary for Shuihuzhuan.

cultural authority to its message and assured it a universality and timelessness, since it was assumed that a text written in literary Chinese would be understood at any future date anywhere in Asia because of its stable stylistic traits and linguistic rules.

The increased circulation of vernacular Chinese narrative in East Asia posed a potential challenge to the status of literary Chinese as a universal language. Narrative containing colloquial Chinese language had had a low standing in the Chinese intellectual tradition, but was printed in increasing amounts from the seventeenth century. Vernacular Chinese novels such as *Shuihuzhuan* attracted the attention of many Japanese readers. Often these novels were read in editions that included a critical analysis of their literary content, thus suggesting that they could be read as literature. Such novels were at a distance from the Confucian classics which formed the basis for the dominant intellectual ideology of the Tokugawa period. Yet their concrete descriptions of Chinese daily life suggested a more direct path to the living culture of contemporary China and thus they attracted the attention of noted scholars.

The Role of Literary Chinese in East Asia

It is difficult to separate the question of when vernacular writing was recognized as literature from the larger question of why indigenous language has become the only form for writing in present-day Japan but was subordinate to literary Chinese within a significant section of intellectual discourse before the twentieth century. The present age still lies in the shadow of that divisive beast known as the “nation state” and its demand that language, customs and ethnicity be coequal with the physical borders of a country. The resulting

perspective thus engendered leads us ineluctably to think that writing in the vernacular language is the most natural of acts and that writing in a classical language is forced and artificial. When studying the pre-modern, an obvious question is this: Why did so many previously choose to express themselves in the literary languages of Latin, Sanskrit, Greek, Persian, Arabic and Chinese even when those languages were at a considerable distance geographically or temporally?

What defined the beginning of civilized society in Japan was the transcription of native words using Chinese characters and the translation of native tales into literary Chinese. Literary Chinese was not an alien form of writing introduced into Japan from Korea (or China); it was the only form of writing known. By the twelfth century literary Chinese had settled into certain set patterns in Japan following the precedents set by the Chinese classics and interpreted, distilled and propagated by such writers as Han Yu 韓愈 in the Tang dynasty and Su Shi 蘇軾 in the Song dynasty. It was a language that had clear advantages over the spoken not only in that it was putatively universal and timeless, but also because it embodied a set of clear modes of expression and articulation ranging from the logical and sequential ratiocination encouraged by prose discourse to the allusive and suggestive literary umbra surrounding the radiant words of poetics.

If we think it strange that Japanese writers before the twentieth century frequently chose to write in a language at considerable remove from their spoken language, they would most likely have been equally amazed that we use a contemporary and protean language for all our writing that will most likely be difficult to read in two hundred years and illegible in five hundred years. And what would they have made of the fact that so many of us keep

most or all of our notes on computer drives that can only be accessed with the appropriate technology and proper electrical current? We ourselves live in an age bent on its own cultural oblivion: we store our most precious data on compact disks which will decay within fifty years and the acid-based paper on which we print will most likely disintegrate long before then. Our lack of foresight is equally disquieting.

The boom in printing in seventeenth-century China (the late Ming and early Qing dynasties) produced in large numbers a vast range of texts at some remove from the Chinese classics such as treatises on poetry, manuals on painting, gazetteers, collections of model exam essays and legal rulings, and informal histories. Licensed merchants imported such Chinese books into Japan from Nanjing and Fujian via the port of Nagasaki during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. A glance at the customs record *Hakusai shomoku* 船載書目 [List of Books Brought by Ship], reveals that their number increased suddenly during this period.⁴

Most striking among these newly introduced texts were the extended Chinese vernacular narratives (*tongsuxiaoshuo* 通俗小説 in Chinese) which were reprinted in seventeenth-century China. The seventeenth-century reprintings of Chinese vernacular narratives -- such as *Sanguozhiyanyi* 三国志演義, *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸伝, *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 and *huaben* 話本 vernacular short-story collections -- introduced Japanese readers to unfamiliar vernacular Chinese vocabulary and grammar that suggested a previously

⁴ *Hakusai shomoku* 船載書目 (facsimile reproduction with notes by Ōba Osamu 大庭脩です。). For a concise account of the importation of Chinese books during the Tokugawa period, see Ōba Osamu's *Edo jidai ni okeru Tōsen mochiwatarisho no kenkyū* 江戸時代における唐船持ち渡り書の研究 (Osaka: Kansai daigaku Tōzai gakujutsu kenkyūjo, 1967), 1-62.

obscured facet of that cultural entity.⁵ Whereas the Chinese language had been understood through a narrow range of normative texts intended as models for composition and conduct, it became a larger body made up of overlapping registers of usage and style.

Although the unfamiliar linguistic contours of Chinese vernacular narrative may have been more difficult than literary Chinese for the Japanese reader, it was compelling and intriguing because it described an aspect of Chinese culture distant from the ideal society presented by the Four Books and the Five Classics. Within the pages of these narratives, cunning merchants, crafty go-betweens, indulgent young girls, selfish and foolhardy boys, battle-hardened warriors, devious bandits and feckless Confucian scholars fumbled their way through a world of getting and spending. Many of these novels explicitly challenge, parody, and subvert the authority of the Confucian tradition, even if their conclusions hold up its basic tenets. Chinese vernacular narrative simultaneously drew attention to the unfamiliarity of Chinese cultural practice for the Japanese reader and also suggested an immediate tie to the domestic world of Japan. Dozens of Chinese vernacular narratives were translated into Japanese and printed for the domestic market starting with *Sanguozhi yanyi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) in 1693.

⁵ I have chosen to refer to all of these works as “Chinese vernacular narratives” for the sake of convenience. It is a foregone conclusion that such a generalization will not and cannot cover the complexity of the linguistic and stylistic issues involved. To start with, the word “novel” could be substituted for the word narrative in most every case, although there is some debate as to whether that term properly covers the full implications of the Chinese term *xiaoshuo* 小說. In addition, although the term “vernacular” does accurately describe the employment of vocabulary closer to spoken Chinese that is found in such novels, we cannot assume that the usage represented Chinese language as it was spoken. It might be more accurate to say that such narratives employ Chinese vernacular expressions on occasion as a means of suggesting “vernacularity.”

Japanese Society and the Acceptance of Vernacular Chinese Narrative

The position of the samurai class at the apex of the political realm was a political given in Japan that did not assume moral superiority, scholarly ability, or a commitment to Confucian values. The contract between feudal lords hammered out after the battle of Sekigahara and affirmed in the Buke shohatto 武家諸法度 described explicitly the power relationship between the individual domains and the central government in terms of rights and obligations. Peace was attributed to neither the sagelike qualities of samurai nor the contributions of meritorious officials. The Tokugawa social order was based on a social contract between feudal lords to accept a system of unified administration, but it did not imply a commitment to any one ideology.⁶ And certainly nowhere was it suggested that a samurai's legitimacy was born of his command of the classical Chinese tradition, or even of his possession of superior moral qualities. Often the Shogun saw the value of expressing his reign in Confucian terms, but that discourse was only one of many possible forms of rhetoric available to him.⁷ There were many attempts to reformulate the samurai imperative to rule in moral terms, but the samurai remained the ruling class by fiat: their status as warriors, rather than as Confucians, underlay their claim to legitimacy.

Because scholarly reputation did not translate into political power and the command of the Chinese classical tradition was not tantamount to the right to rule within the discourse of the Tokugawa period, Japanese intellectuals did not consider alternate registers of

⁶ Bolitho, Harold, "The Han and Central Control, 1600-1651," in *The Cambridge History of Japan. Early Modern Japan*, Vol. 4, ed. John Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 194-96.

⁷ Ooms, Herman, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

Chinese language (or Japanese language for that matter) as an immediate threat to their authority. The head of the Shogunate's Confucian academy in the early seventeenth century, Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657), maintained an avid interest in waka poetry and compiled two collections of popular tales of the strange: Kaidan zensho 怪談全書 and Kōbishō 狐媚抄. Moreover, unlike Korea and China, Confucianism did not have an absolute status as the unquestioned central ideology of the nation. Thus the full range of Chinese texts that did not conform to the dictates of Confucian ideology were not as easily dismissed, and although Chinese vernacular writings were disparaged by some Japanese scholars, their presence was not viewed as a direct threat.

There were samurai in the eighteenth century who defined their social role in terms of the Confucian scholar and took a dim view of vernacular Chinese or Japanese narrative. Yet there were also many samurai, as well as merchants, whose readings and writings strayed into the unconventional and even questionable. Although the government banned books on occasion, Japan never experienced a thorough-going rectification of writing as witnessed in eighteenth-century Korea and China. Not only were Chinese narratives read in Japan, they were republished, translated, their plots adapted in Japanese narratives. Nishida Korenori 西田維則 translated and published in 1760 the salacious novel relating the sexual excesses of Emperor Yang, Sui Yangdi yanshi 隋煬帝艷史 (1631), as Tsūzoku Zui yōdai gaishi 通俗隋煬帝外史. Tōyama Katō 陶山荷塘 compiled a written commentary on the novel of adultery Jinpingmei 金瓶梅.

A powerful argument was advanced in the early eighteenth century that the Japanese scholar had to master the vernacular Chinese language to understand the classics. As a result

Chinese language evolved into a signifier of the authentically Chinese and rose to the status of a true field of study. In particular, the iconoclastic Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 emphasized spoken Chinese in his academy in Edo. Sorai suggested that those who had failed to comprehend Chinese language as a foreign tongue could not understand Confucian texts. Sorai insisted on the study of vernacular Chinese, “Tang language studies,”⁸ as the path to the proper understanding of China. Sorai hired the Chinese interpreter Okajima Kanzan 岡嶋冠山 to give lessons in spoken Chinese at his Translation Society (yakusha 訳社) which took vernacular Chinese narrative as its material.

In a bid to make the teachings of Confucianism more palatable during the seventeenth century to readers unfamiliar with its details, Japanese scholars such as Hayashi Razan and Yamazaki Ansai emphasized the abstract universal principles that lay beneath the Confucian tradition. By the early eighteenth century, there was no longer a need to justify the very study of the Chinese classics or propound its legitimacy in metaphysical terms, but the ignorance shown by the previous generation in their handling of the Chinese material tradition, their inability to write flawless literary Chinese or answer nice philological questions, became a central issue.

Sorai produced a primer for the study of Chinese language entitled *Yakubun sentei 訳文筌蹄* (A Mechanism for Translation) in 1714 in which he viciously attacked the *kundoku 訓読* system of annotation prevalent in Japan (whereby Chinese was read according to Japanese syntax). Sorai stressed that if the Chinese must be translated, a

⁸ The standard term employed before the twentieth century for the study of Chinese language is *Tōwagaku 唐話学* “Tang Languages Studies.” Sorai uses the less common term *Kiyō no gaku 崎陽の学* (the Nanjing Method) in his writings, although the meaning is the same.

vernacular contemporary Japanese must be used -- not the elegant but misleading classical Japanese employed in kundoku annotation. Sorai argued that the Chinese archaic language had once been vernacular and thus deserved to be rendered into vernacular Japanese. Yet this very argument privileged vernacular writing in both Japanese and Chinese. When Sorai suggested that in all instruction “one must translate Chinese texts into vernacular Japanese and avoid at all costs kundoku annotation,”⁹ he raised the Japanese vernacular to a new level of significance as the discourse denoting authenticity.

The primary teacher of Chinese at Ogyū Sorai’s Translation Society, Okajima Kanzan, established himself as an important translator of Chinese vernacular fiction with his translation both of the Chinese novel Huangming yingliezhuan 皇明英列伝 in 1705 and of Shuihuzhuan as Chūgi Suikoden 忠義水滸伝 which he continued to work on until his death in 1728. The Chinese vernacular narrative tradition was not merely a source to be mined for entertaining stories; it offered a new conception of Chinese culture and of the vernacular language which Kanzan actively promoted.

Among the most remarkable of Kanzan’s achievements is the translation of the Japanese historical romance Taiheiki 太平記 into vernacular Chinese as the novel Taiheiki engi 太平記演義 (published jointly in Edo and Kyoto in 1719). Although Japanese works had been rendered into literary Chinese before by Japanese writers -- that being the obvious language for analytic discourse -- never had a Japanese narrative been rendered into the linguistic register of the vernacular narratives Sanguozhi yanyi and Shuihuzhuan. It can be

⁹ Imanaka Kanshi and Naramoto Tatsuya, eds., Ogyū Sorai zenshū 荻生徂徠全集, Vol 5 (Tokyo: Kawade, 1977), 28.

inferred from its publication by two different publishing houses that *Taiheiki engi* was intended for a large reading audience, not a small group of specialists.¹⁰ Vernacular Chinese had become, in its own right, a domestic language.

Taiheiki is a classic of Japanese popular history relating in fluent classical Japanese the tragic campaign by Emperor Godaigo with the support of the loyal general Kusunoki Masashige against both the Hōjō regents of the Kamakura Shogunate (led by Hōjō Takatoki) and then the Shogun Ashikaga Takauji. Although *Taiheiki* (1371) most likely predates *Sanguozhi yanyi* (15th century?), its loyal but doomed hero Masashige resonates with the virtuous but unsuccessful Liu Bei of *Sanguozhi yanyi*. So also Takauji resembles the triumphant Cao Cao: cunning, patient and detached from the fray. The competition among three major military powers in *Sanguozhi yanyi*, Liu Bei of Shu, Son Quan of Wu and Cao Cao of Wei, is paralleled in *Taiheiki* in the struggles among the Hōjō Forces, the armies loyal to Emperor Godaigo and the forces led by Takauji.

The Chinese model of fiction, which was a subset of the larger framework of historical writing, offered Kanzan a new means for reframing this Japanese classic and rethinking the indigenous tradition. Although *Taiheiki engi* may well have served as an aid for those wishing to improve their Chinese, its appeal more likely lay in the literary effect that reading a famous Japanese text in the form of a popular Chinese novel must have had on eighteenth-century readers. Equally important was the conception of the vernacular

¹⁰ The joint publication of Kanzan's *Taiheiki engi* and several dictionaries as well in both Kyoto and Edo indicates something of Kanzan's continuing ties with the Kansai region that would eventually lead him to return there. See Shimura Ryōji's 志村良治 chapter, "Tōwa to sharebon" 唐話と洒落本 in *Edo kōki no hikaku bunka kenkyū* 江戸後期の比較文化研究 (Tokyo: Pelikan, 1990), 376.

novel as a means of expressing original thoughts and high sentiments that Kanzan imbibed from his readings of Chinese vernacular narrative. The Chinese vernacular narrative and the criticism surrounding it suggested a new relationship between the author and the narrative, that the novel could be the expression of the intentions of the author in the same manner as poetry was. Such sentiments were not absent in the previous narrative tradition, but they were not explicit, and certainly were not tied to the use of the vernacular. Kanzan's intentions in writing *Taiheiki engi* are described by his student Moriyama Sukehiro 守山祐弘 in the preface:

One day Master Kanzan sighed in despondency, "I am starting to grow feeble. I am getting on in years. If I do not follow Luo Guanzhong's thinking and thereby realize something of the small ambitions I have harbored throughout my life, I fear another chance will not come." He entered his study without ado. Picking up his brush, he proceeded to translate that famed history of our country *Taiheiki* as a *yanyi*¹¹ novel.¹²

Kanzan's translation activities formed part of the serious consideration of Chinese vernacular narrative particularly in the Kyoto area, and especially in the academy of Sorai's rival, and Kanzan's patron, Itō Tōgai 伊藤東涯. Tōgai increasingly introduced vernacular Chinese readings into his teachings with the purpose of expanding the perimeters of the field of Chinese studies.

¹¹ *Yanyi* 演義 or *engi* in Japanese, is a vernacular version of a narrative. The literal meaning is "expansion of content."

¹² Preface of *Taiheiki engi* from printed edition of 1719, Naikaku bunko Library, 3.

Sawada Issai's "Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan"

On the eighteenth of the third month in the second year of Kan'en (1749) a courtesan by the name of Aburaya Kashiku 油屋かしく was put to death for the crime of murder. Kashiku came from the New District of Northern Osaka where she was kept as a concubine by a certain man. She was subject to insult and injury from her patron's older brother Yoshibei, who was frequently drunk. In the end she grabbed a knife and stabbed Yoshibei to death in self defense.¹³ She was speedily convicted. In a show of bravado, she put on her finest kimono and put up her hair in the most elaborate coiffure before being led to the execution grounds.¹⁴

By the twenty-sixth day of the same month Kashiku was the heroine of a jōruri puppet play put on stage at the Toyotake Theater 豊竹座 in Osaka entitled Yaegasumi Naniwa hamaogi 八重霞浪花浜荻.¹⁵ As was the custom in Osaka in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, local scandals of general interest were almost immediately presented as plays or popular songs. Sordid or noble tales of women from every walk of life were passed around in the form of songs and became an integral part of urban folklore. All of the tragic women who die in their attempts to escape their hopeless fates through

¹³ The original source for this information is a record on the Jōruri theater, Jōrurifu 浄瑠璃譜 (quoted in Nakamura Yukihiro chojutsushū 中村幸彦著述集, Vol. 7, 71).

¹⁴ In the miscellany Unkin zuihitsu 雲錦隨筆 (quoted in Nakamura Yukihiro chojutsushū, Vol. 7, 72).

¹⁵ There is a play entitled Yaegasumi naniwa no hamaogi in volume nine of Nihon ongyoku zenshū 日本音曲全集 (Tokyo: Nihon Ongyoku Zenshū Kankōkai, 1927). It is a later shinnai 新内 version of the original play. The original by Asado Itchō 浅田一鳥 and others are reprinted in Shōhon'ya Kyūsaemonban shichi gyōhon 正本屋九左衛門版七行本. I have not been successful in my efforts to locate this text.

desperate means in Ihara Saikaku's 井原西鶴 Kōshoku gonin onna 好色五人女 were real people. For example, Oshichi, the daughter of a greengrocer, started a terrible fire in the hope that in the confusion of the moment she would be able to see her true love. She became the tragic heroine of Saikaku's Koigusa karageshi yaoya monogatari 恋草からげし八百屋物語. Japanese urban narrative in Western Japan, both ukiyo-zōshi 浮世草子 narrative and jōruri puppet theater, were dominated by the constant search for hayari 流行, the most recent attention-grabbing gossip. Tales of women who showed their unyielding character by means of their own self-destruction were cherished, and Kashiku epitomized this habit.

Among the works relating Kashiku's tale, the short Chinese vernacular version entitled "Chivalrous Courtesan" was published in Osaka.¹⁶ The publisher Sawada Issai 沢田一斎 (1701-1782), was the author of this Chinese vernacular text and the postface was written by the translator of Chinese vernacular fiction Nishida Korenori 西田維則.¹⁷ This absorbing tale relates the prostitute's spirited effort to control her own destiny. The tale is striking because although it is written entirely in vernacular Chinese language, with furigana inserted, the actual content is irreducibly Japanese.

Sawada Issai was a unique product of the Kyoto literary world. Pupil of the Confucian scholar Wakabayashi Kyōsai 若林強齋, careful student of the Japanese classics,

¹⁶ The entire text of Engi kyōgiden is reproduced as part of a collection of original texts in Makamura Yukihiko chojutsushū, Vol. 7.

¹⁷ Engi kyōgiden is attributed to Uyu Dōjim 烏有道人. The preface is attributed to Tenkadō Hōsanjin 天花堂呆山人. Nakamura identifies these two as Sawada Issai and Nishida Korenori respectively. The reference book Tenseki sakusha binran 典籍作者便覧 includes an entry for a narrative titled Kyōgi ashukuden 俠妓可淑伝 (attributed to Sawada Issai) that is most likely Engi kyōgiden. See Nakamura Yukihiko chojutsushū, Vol. 7, 71.

literatus with far-reaching connections to other cultural figures in Western Japan, and author in his own right, Issai was best known as a professional publisher and book dealer who owned one of the most famous bookstores in Kyoto, the Fūgetsudō 風月堂. Issai was at the center of the new network tying together previously separate fields in western Japan. Issai studied Chinese vernacular language and fiction with the translator Oka Hakku 岡白駒, perhaps attending his lectures on the Shuihuzhuan 水滸伝. He developed enough of a command of spoken Chinese to compile a dictionary of vernacular Chinese usage, Zokugokai 俗語解,¹⁸ and to produce a translation of the Qing story collection Lianchengbi 連城壁 by Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680). Issai's decision to publish Oka Hakku's annotated Chinese vernacular huaben narratives grew naturally out of his personal interest in their content.¹⁹ Issai eventually published his own collection of huaben stories in 1758 entitled Shōsetsu suigen 小説粹言.

The plot of “Chivalrous Courtesan” is as follows. The courtesan Yae Kashiku,²⁰ famous throughout the pleasure quarters of Kyoto, moves to the Northern Quarter of Osaka. After her arrival she quickly becomes the object of affection for Jirō, the manager of a wealthy merchant family. Jirō secretly uses up a significant part of the family's wealth to pay for his frequent visits to Kashiku's boudoir. In anticipation of the impending denouement of their affair when the crime is discovered, Jirō proposes that they commit

¹⁸ According to Matsumuro Shōkō 松室松峽, who attributes an ability to write novels exactly like a Chinese in his diary (see *Nihon koten bungaku daijiten* 日本古典文学大事典), Vol. 3, 90).

¹⁹ For a detailed biography of Sawada Issai, see Ishizaki, 153.

²⁰ Kashiku's name is given as Yae Oshuku 八重御淑 in *Engi kyōgiden*.

suicide together as a final affirmation of their love. Although she goes along with Jirō's proposal at the moment, Kashiku secretly informs her madame of their intentions with the result that the plan is foiled.

Following this debacle Jirō dies of despair. Kashiku continues to work, but because of her reputation, she has no customers. Her owner considers selling her to another brothel, when who should appear but Jirō's older brother Ichirō and his mother. The brother and mother take Kashiku in to their household and leave for Edo. Ichirō orders Kashiku to promise to give up wine and devote herself to serving him and his mother. But whatever she may promise, Kashiku cannot give up her wandering eye. She soon embarks upon a relationship with the dashing young Saburō.

While the mother and Ichirō are out one evening, she invites Saburō to her home. Ichirō returns home early. Discovering the lovers he flies into a rage. Saburō manages to make a getaway, but in the ensuing struggle Kashiku grabs a pair of scissors and stabs Ichirō to death. She tries to kill herself, but is stopped by the mother who pleads that if Kashiku dies, there will be no one to care for her. Mother and murderous daughter-in-law bribe the neighbor to have the body buried secretly.

Next Kashiku takes up with a kabuki actor named Gihei. Saburō, filled with jealousy, gets even by reporting the murder of Ichirō to the authorities. When confronted, Kashiku boldly confesses to the crime. Her execution date is quickly set and Kashiku is granted one last drink of wine before being carried off on the back of a horse to the execution grounds. She speaks of those characters from the jōruri theater that have met with a similar fate as she is led from the hall of justice. After her execution her ashes are interred

in a temple outside the city. The youths of Osaka jostle for a chance to see her gravestone and write poems of tribute. As a result, business in the surrounding shops improves dramatically.²¹

Issai took great pleasure in inserting every imaginable narrative convention from the Chinese huaben story into “Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan.” The narrative of “Chivalrous Courtesan” is crowded with the standard indicator of orality from vernacular Chinese writing huashuo 話説. Huashuo means literally “let us start telling” but in general was employed as a means of indicating a change of subject within a vernacular narrative. Huashuo is never employed in either literary Chinese or vernacular Japanese. In Issai’s writing, however, there are so many huashuo inserted that the flow of the tale is broken up. The Chinese vernacular quality of the narrative is overdetermined.

Issai also frequently uses phrases such as “I will speak no longer of such idle details” to draw attention to the role of the narrator. The narrator frequently poses questions to the reader that are borrowed right out of the Chinese vernacular tale, such as “Who knows what will happen to Kashiku in the end? Just listen to the next installment to find out.” Issai even adds the inter-linear commentary typical of the great Chinese annotator of vernacular novels Jin Shengtan 金聖歎. The conventions of the story teller and the gritty vernacular language grabbed Issai’s fancy because they created a parallel universe in which the everyday can be described. Issai found a well-stocked box of narratological toys.

“Chivalrous Courtesan” uses Chinese poetry as a major structural element: the story

²¹ “Their number did not stop at a hundred. As a result, for a certain period of time the pubs and restaurants of the area had a great occasion to make a lot of money.” Nakamura Yukihiro *chojutsushū*, Vol. 7, selection of original texts, 6.

opens with a Chinese poem in the ci 詞 mode and closes with a mock gufeng 古風 (old style) poem at the end. The tale also features the moral diatribes typical of Chinese huaben short stories both in the introduction and the conclusion, though the tone conveys more imitation of an exotic medium than a serious statement. But even if the opening and closing had been less tongue-in-cheek, it is hard to imagine that they could have contained the willfulness of Kashiku's personality. Kashiku's appeal comes not from any adherence to propriety in the Chinese sense of the concept, but rather from her bravado. Her moral status is unabashedly ambiguous and this is precisely the point that appeals to the reader. Kashiku displays no remorse; her self-possessed obdurability dominates the narrative.

Although the Chinese vernacular tale may have described daily life in greater detail than the Chinese classical tale, it was more limited in terms of the range of human experiences conveyed. Many of the ambiguous experiences of life were more likely to appear within the classical Chinese tale. Such a brazen character as Kashiku does not fit the moral frame that was essential to the huaben genre in China. There is none of the required "reward of good and punishment of evil" (kanzen chōaku 勸善懲惡) in "Chivalrous Courtesan." On the other hand, jōruri plays and ukiyo-zōshi narratives were the two native genres that treated the everyday tragedies of the average urban citizen in Japan. Both genres were extremely limited in their narrative strategies. For example, there was little possibility for rhetorical questioning by an imagined storyteller within these two genres. Most of the text is made up of quoted dialogue punctuated by occasional allusive descriptions that do not supply the three-dimensional materiality of a huaben tale. There is no indication of who is speaking at any one time; the text is a set of floating quotations that must be pieced

together by the reader/listener. In short, whether the reader is reading the text of a jōruri play or an ukiyo-zōshi narrative, he must constantly imagine the mise-en-scène. The Chinese vernacular tale gives a concrete description.

Issai appropriated the huaben genre to narrate the Kashiku story because it was a competing genre that offered a new set of schemata for describing the quotidian. Huaben narrative treated aspects of daily life, but was at a linguistic distance from Japan. It offered a means of relating the commonplace in an unfamiliar manner. Thus whereas previous writers had the choice of rendering a tale either in Japanese (which seemed closer to the spoken language) or literary Chinese (which had the authority of the analytic tradition), “Chivalrous Courtesan” offered a third option: an intellectually privileged register for the close-at-hand. In the tales of Saikaku, narration of the ugly side of human experience was justified by the Buddhist setsuwa 説話 tradition of describing the futility of human experience. Both ukiyo-zōshi and jōruri retain a sorrowful Buddhist tone. Issai’s experiment, however, is playful experimentation.

The huaben genre allowed a mimetic description that gave more substance to the scene in a manner closer to that of the Japanese historical narratives such as Taiheiki. But previous Japanese historical narratives did not touch upon such low mimetic characters as Kashiku. Although we find the poignant tale of three courtesans, Gio, Gion and Hotoke, in Taiheiki, they are paragons of propriety and victims of exterior forces. Chinese vernacular narrative was the means by which Issai was able to extend the focus into the mundane. Through composition in vernacular Chinese the writer not only gained a new knowledge of the Chinese language, he also found a means to represent previously near-invisible aspects

of Japan itself.

Conclusion

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed an explosion in the number of original Japanese narratives built upon themes borrowed from Chinese vernacular narrative. The Edo rivals in serialized novels Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 and Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 made liberal use of plots taken from Chinese popular fiction throughout their lengthy works. Yet the language of such novels as Bakin's famous saga Nansō satomi hakkenden is written in a stylized Japanese at some distance from vernacular Chinese, and often closer to sōrōbun. There are almost no texts like “Chivalrous Courtesan” after the 1760s.

The influence of Chinese vernacular narrative on a novelist like Kyokutei Bakin rather lies at the level of the theoretical conception of the vernacular novel as literature. Bakin places unprecedented emphasis on the literary quality of his novel in the preface to Nansō satomi hakkenden and makes references to Chinese vernacular narrative in its defense. Moreover, Bakin adopted the conceptual approach presented in the commentaries by Mao Zonggang on Sanguozhiyanyi, but adapted them into a prescription for his writing of narrative rather than a descriptive methodology. Bakin even claimed that his novels realized the narrative aesthetic embodied in the pingdian 評点 commentaries more perfectly than any Chinese novel.²²

The ultimate product of the exposure to Chinese vernacular narrative in Japan was

²² See Bakin's “Seven Laws of the Vernacular Novel” (“Haishi shichi hōsoku” 稗史七法則) in Hakkenden daikyū shūchū chitsu fugen 八犬伝第九輯中帙附言. In Nansō Satomi Hakkenden 南総里見八犬伝. In Aritomobunko, Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Aritomoshoten, 1929), 1-13.

the birth of a discourse on vernacular narrative, both Chinese and Japanese. As a result, Japanese vernacular narratives were considered full-fledged literary works and therefore fitted with extensive prefaces and filled with classical allusions and rhetorical twists.

Sawada Issai's "Vernacular Tale of the Chivalrous Courtesan" is an experiment with genre born of the fascination with Chinese language of the early eighteenth century. Such playful works marked the beginning of the gesaku 戯作 movement. Gesaku (playful literature) soon moved beyond play with Chinese language to include sophisticated configurations of differing registers of Japanese language. The exposure to an foreign vernacular allowed the Japanese intellectual to see his own vernacular -- otherwise invisible (like the air we breathe) -- itself as alien. As a result, indigenous vernaculars, such as the language of the pleasure quarters, were treated in later gesaku in exactly the same manner as vernacular Chinese had been: as a defamiliarizing alien parole for experimentation.