

Histories Official, Unofficial, and Popular: Shogunal Favorites in the Genroku Era

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Shogun Tsunayoshi (1646–1709) exerted great efforts to civilize the Tokugawa military regime, but he is most often remembered as a spendthrift, paranoid, lascivious eccentric.¹ He promoted the Confucian classics by going so far as to give 240 public lectures on the *Book of Changes*, and he regularly performed stately noh dances for the benefit of the ruling class.² Nor did he neglect the monthly round of Buddhist memorial services for the founders of the dynasty designed to instill a sense of awe and obligation in allies and rivals forced to participate in processions to mortuary temples and graves. And yet his aspiration to be known as an enlightened ruler (*meikun*) is haunted by criticism of his most extreme decrees and rumors of egregious misconduct that surfaced soon after his death. Not only did he issue a series of increasingly stringent animal protection laws and build a shelter for dogs while townspeople starved, he plucked the parvenu Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658–1714) from obscurity and allowed him to dominate the government. When Yoshiyasu's son succeeded to the province-wide domain of Kai following Tsunayoshi's death, gossip mills demeaned all three.

Tsunayoshi presided over the Genroku era (1688–1704) famous for its dichotomies of prosperity and disaster, virtue and vice.³ It saw the first flourishing of a literary and theatrical milieu dominated by the tastes of wealthy townspeople (*chōnin*), even though the purveyors of this culture, such as the celebrated playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724), hailed from the samurai class. Floods and famines punctuated years of plenty. In 1703 a major earthquake that struck between Edo and Odawara left at least 5,000 people dead. Mt. Fuji erupted in 1707. Just a few months before the earthquake, forty-seven men from Akō killed their lord's enemy in the most famous and often dramatized incident of the entire Tokugawa period.⁴ While critics questioned motives, approbation of the selfless sacrifice of the loyal retainers of Akō was almost universal. Both the era and the ruler thus epitomized extremes in need of explanation.

Thanks to contradictions in his personality and his age, Tsunayoshi became the most vilified of the Tokugawa shoguns. Even during his lifetime, Chikamatsu daringly alluded to Tsunayoshi's fondness for dogs in a puppet play first staged in 1703.⁵ Although set in the Kamakura period to evade shogunal censors, the scenes depicting stockades filled with howling dogs, the prohibitions against people killing dogs, the excessive deference shown to dogs, and the officials appointed to care for dogs all dramatized the effects of Tsunayoshi's obsession with the beast under whose sign he was born. In later years simply placing dogs in a print would be read as alluding to Tsunayoshi.⁶ The title for a 1991 two-volume historical novel, *Ōoku no inu shōgun* (The Dog Shogun in the Great Interior) tells the prospective purchaser that this book is about Tsunayoshi.⁷ In 1999 the venerable Sunday night NHK *Taiga* drama featured Tsunayoshi and his age in "*Genroku ryōran*" (The Jumbled Mess of Genroku). His sexual predilections even feature prominently in a recent English-language murder mystery.⁸

In keeping with the theme of this volume, the focus here is not on plays and novels but on eighteenth and early nineteenth century texts that called themselves histories or true accounts of the past. Whether official or unofficial, they shared certain traits that linked them to the popular culture of their day and situated them in a particular discursive field shaped by the mores of the time. At one extreme this field was defined by a fascination with the red light district and a tendency to explain behavior in terms of sexual desire. At the other can be found an obsession with genealogies and naming practices that situated men firmly in the hereditary status order. Expunged from or carefully submerged in official history, the dynamics of status antagonism and attraction played a critical role in unofficial and popular histories. An important element of popular culture that resonates in these histories is the consumption revolution epitomized in the spendthrift habits of Tsunayoshi and the perceived excesses of the Genroku era. Also germane are the censorship exercised by the shogunate over contemporary events and stories about the ruling class, a male-centered written and visual culture from which the male gaze is never absent, a desire to emulate if not supersede the glories of the past, and a predilection for the imagined truth over the evidence to be derived from dry fact-filled documents. These texts call into question the modernist distinction between history and fiction. By seeing truth everywhere, they do so in ways that need to be kept distinct from the postmodernist refusal to see it anywhere.

Diverse texts relate the story of Tsunayoshi's life and his times. The official version is *Tokugawa jikki* (True Chronicle of the Tokugawa; hereafter, *jikki*). Compiled by a team of researchers drawing on various records, it is not a coherent text. Its sources include *Matsukage nikki* (Diary in the Shade of a Pine) and *Sannō gaiki* (The Unofficial History of Three Kings), the first a laudatory record in the style of Heian court memoirs presented to the compilers by the Yanagisawa family, the second a highly critical account written in Sino-Japanese. Both exist in multiple copies hand-made in the Tokugawa period. The last several years have seen two new editions of *Matsukage nikki*.⁹ *Sannō gaiki* has been published only once in modern times, in 1880.¹⁰ Popular texts such as *Nikkō Kantan makura* (Kantan's Pillow at Nikkō) and *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* (Record of Great Peace about Women Who Protect the Kingdom) also draw on *Sannō gaiki* for their interpretations of Tsunayoshi's career. Written in the easily accessible mixture of characters and syllabary that characterized the literature of their day, they offer their readers—and clearly they targeted a middle-brow audience—a decidedly vulgarized version of events. Even though they rely heavily on the conventions of popular culture, their assumptions about what constitutes history resonate with the official story. By juxtaposing these texts, it is possible to uncover their underlying similarities that speak to a common understanding of what constitutes meaningful information about the past.

Tokugawa jikki

Compiled in 516 fascicles between 1809 and 1849 at the instigation of the Confucian scholar Hayashi Jussai (1768–1841), *Tokugawa jikki* became the official historical record for the Tokugawa dynasty through the reign of the tenth shogun, Ieharu (1737–1786). Inaugurated soon after the Kansei reforms of 1787–1793 by a leading proponent of orthodox studies, the project of composing the *jikki* epitomized one goal of the reforms: to control the present by ordering the past, a goal seen as well in the directive to military houses to codify their genealogies in line with the seventeenth-century military rosters (*bukan*). The *jikki* contains

a sprawling morass of information regarding appointments, promotions, and confiscations of domains and fiefs; it lists men and their heirs upon their first interview with the shogun; it provides potted biographies of daimyo, hatamoto, and the shogun's women at their deaths; it describes floods, fires, and earthquakes; and it gives the texts of the orders issued each month to commoners telling them to be careful of fire, not to indulge in luxuries, and, during Tsunayoshi's reign, to be kind to animals.¹¹ It even includes popular reports in its explanation of why Keishōin (1624–1705) had Gokokuji built with the priest Ryōken in charge.¹² The authors cite references and issue cautions when they have had to draw on sources of dubious veracity. The central focus is on the shogun and his daily round of activities. When he visits the shrines to his ancestors, his retinue is described in excruciating detail. The *jikki* presents the shogun engaged in the business of governance as he meets with his ministers and deals with affairs of state. It lists visits by imperial envoys, members of the ruling class, and priests as well as gifts exchanged between members of the shogunal family and important daimyo, all as precedents for posterity.

A seemingly straightforward chronology filled with more names than with deeds, the *jikki* clearly has an ideological purpose—the assertion of the shogun's centrality to history and to affairs of state, ceremony, and family. He is almost never mentioned either by name or title in the day-by-day record of his activities, yet he is the unquestioned subject around whom everyone revolves. Whenever the wealthiest and most powerful daimyo come to Edo, though they be known as Maeda, Shimazu, or Yamauchi at home, in the *jikki* they come as members of the Tokugawa extended family and are called by the surname Matsudaira. Even their personal names reflect their subordination to the shogun, showing homage by the incorporation of a character from his personal name or one of his predecessors. By listing the complete names and titles of all the daimyo who accompanied the shogun on visits to temples and retainers' houses and all who offered presents at his family's births and marriages or condolences at his mother's death, and through the deliberate use of honorific language, the *jikki* places these mighty lords firmly under the shogun's control.

The *jikki* spins a seamless web of what today we would categorize as governmental, ceremonial, and family affairs, each imbricated in the other. Family ties and fictive kin relationships linked the shoguns with their erstwhile enemies. The latter had to supply the goods for a shogunal daughter's trousseau and presents for a shogun's baby at its birth. Gifts were compulsory, as carefully spelled out in directives. The position each daimyo had to take when a bride left the palace was also stipulated in directives.¹³ Bureaucrats attended both Tsunayoshi and his mother on their junkets around Edo in ways that the modern conception of public servant does not begin to encompass.¹⁴ Women were central neither to policymaking nor ceremonial, but their prominence in the official history of the Tokugawa marks the gulf between past and present notions regarding the place of women in domestic and public space.¹⁵

The *jikki* is organized as a chronicle, but one in constant danger of slipping into narrative. For example, the accounts of the succession dispute that destroyed a daimyo lineage in Echigo (*Tokugawa jikki* 1931, 5: 414–17) and of the revenge of the Akō retainers are structured according to the principles of fiction, with a beginning, middle, and end (ibid., 6:433; 493–94; 499–500). The account of Tsunayoshi's childhood praises him for his respect for his older brothers, his veneration of his ancestors, which was "little short of extraordinary," and his filial piety for his mother. There is even dialogue to provide insight into his character, as

when he says to his mother, "I've loved the martial arts since a boy, and I've had heavy responsibilities since my youth, so I've had no time to read. I've never put any effort into the literary arts. This is the one thing I'm ashamed of. Please hire good tutors so that I may embark on the path of the sages" (p. 354).¹⁶ The editors usually record simply what the shogun did; they seldom offer an editorial comment. Following the model of Chinese histories that sum up a ruler's personality and achievements at the end of his reign, the *jikki* juxtaposes recollections from a variety of sources in attempt to present a balanced assessment of Tsunayoshi's personality and deeds. It is at this point that quotations from *Sannō gaiki* find their way into the official history.

The *jikki* exposes the scaffolding on which unofficial and vulgar histories hung Tsunayoshi's reputation. Tsunayoshi's fondness for noh led him on numerous occasions to incorporate actors into his retainer band.¹⁷ He also appropriated the retainers of his attendants.¹⁸ His delight in showering gifts on his favorites depleted the gold hoarded by his ancestors. Plain to see in the pages of the *jikki* are the marks of favor shown by Tsunayoshi to Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. On New Year's Day 1682, Yoshiyasu participated in a ceremonial reading of the Confucian classics inaugurated by Tsunayoshi and lectured at the poetry competition (5: 435). In 1684, he received an award of gold coins and clothing for diligent service (5: 527).¹⁹ At the end of 1685, he received the lower fifth court rank and the title of Dewa no kami (5: 560). The next year he started attending Tsunayoshi on his trips to the ancestral graves or went in Tsunayoshi's place.²⁰ In 1687 he received permission to ride in a palanquin (5: 597). At the end of 1690, he was promoted to junior fourth rank and given permission to have two long-handled spears (*nagae no yari*) carried in his procession (6:94). On 1693.3.2, his eldest son Yoshisato (1687–1745) made his first appearance at the castle. Following the presentation of gifts, Tsunayoshi invited them into his private quarters for an exchange of sake cups. They also met Otani, Tsunayoshi's concubine, in a gesture of familiarity allowed no one else (6:164).²¹ A year later Tsunayoshi had the Yanagisawa family mortuary temple added to the ranks of the Ten Kantō temples and renamed in honor of Yoshiyasu's father (6:207). In 1705 Yoshiyasu and Yoshisato received permission to send one man before them when they entered the castle. On 1707.9.4, they received permission to have long-handled swords (*naginata*) carried in their processions (6:669).

In accordance with its charge to record the moments of Tsunayoshi's life, the *jikki* describes his visits and those of his wife, mother, and concubine to the Yanagisawa mansion in exhaustive detail. Among the sources it draws on is *Matsukage nikki*, the memoir prepared by one of Yoshiyasu's concubines. For the first shogunal visit on 1691.3.22, Yoshiyasu built a new sitting room and landscaped a garden. Accompanied by his entire cabinet, Tsunayoshi arrived in style. He greeted Yoshiyasu's family, from his mother to the concubine who had borne his eldest son, and they all exchanged lavish gifts. After refreshments and an exchange of sake cups, Tsunayoshi inspected the women's quarters, a practice he continued on subsequent visits. The entertainment consisted of a series of lectures on the Confucian classics, beginning with Tsunayoshi followed by Yoshiyasu, and Yoshiyasu's retainers. Priests recited sutras. Tsunayoshi performed five noh dances. Another meal, another exchange of gifts, a tea ceremony; it was dusk by the time Tsunayoshi left. The next day Tsunayoshi sent gifts to the members of Yoshiyasu's staff who had provided services and entertainment. An editorial comment in the *jikki* notes disapprovingly, "For rear vassals to be blessed with the shogun's favor

in this fashion was unknown at the dynasty's founding, and there is nothing to be compared to it in recent ages" (6:103–04).²² Three visits later, Tsunayoshi gave a jacket to Yoshiyasu's retainer who had supervised the reconstruction of the Yanagisawa mansion. "It is unprecedented for a rear vassal to receive a garment with the Tokugawa crest" (6:123).²³

The *jikki* dutifully traced Yoshiyasu's rise from a low ranking retainer to unprecedented prosperity. Yoshiyasu received his first raise of 300 *koku* as a *konando* (junior page) in 1681 (5: 409). At the beginning of 1686, he received a thousand *koku* increase in stipend (5: 565). At the end of 1688, he was promoted to chamberlain and given daimyo status with an income of 12,300 *koku* (6:26). In 1690 he received a 20,000 *koku* increase (6:70). In 1692, he received a raise of another 20,000 *koku* (6:155). A year later his income base rose to 72,030 *koku* and he became the lord of Kawagoe, meaning that he now had a castle (6:187). At the end of 1694, he took his seat in the Tribunal (*hyōjōsho*), a board with responsibility for resolving major disputes within the government (6:214).²⁴ In the middle of 1697 he received another 20,000 *koku* increase in his income base (6:303). The *jikki* reports these gifts without comment or explanation.

Further marks of extraordinary favor seemingly required explanation. After Yoshiyasu's son performed his coming of age ceremony in front of Tsunayoshi, the shogun visited the Yanagisawa mansion, where he bestowed the Matsudaira name plus a character from his given name on both Yoshiyasu and his son, and they received new honorific titles. Even Yoshiyasu's second and third sons became Matsudaira. Tsunayoshi's justification was that Yoshiyasu had served faithfully and honestly day and night as Tsunayoshi's disciple in Confucian studies and carefully guarded his teachings. "He is a model retainer." An editorial note remarks dryly, "Although there have been many meritorious retainers since the beginning of the dynasty, Yoshiyasu is the first to rise from a lowly position to achieve such great heights of glory, or so it is said" (6:455). When Keishōin received junior first rank from the Kyoto court, Yoshiyasu received an additional 20,000 *koku* because "for the past several years he has managed the affairs of state and his efforts to deal with internal and external problems have been without equal" (6:466). After Tsunayoshi formally adopted his nephew Ienobu (1662–1712) as his heir in 1704, he bestowed the province of Kai, formerly Ienobu's domain, on Yoshiyasu because it had been Yoshiyasu who arranged the adoption and thereby "solidified the foundation of the state." Tsunayoshi admitted that he defied precedent in giving ancestral house lands to a retainer, but "I consider Yoshiyasu to be one of the family" (6:555, 559).²⁵

The *jikki*'s account of Tsunayoshi's death in 1709 involved Yoshiyasu only by indirection. "People who heard that Tsunayoshi died suddenly spread many baseless rumors. . . . Such things could not possibly have happened." A search through old records revealed that Tsunayoshi had suffered from smallpox and refused the ministrations of doctors until Yoshiyasu convinced him otherwise. By then it was too late. "We have compiled this account from what the people who served close to Tsunayoshi heard and saw, and we add it here to dispel the suspicions that arose later" (6:772, 773). Nowhere does the *jikki* suggest that these suspicions revolved around Yoshiyasu.

The *jikki* attempted to render an impartial judgment on the fifth shogun and his reign. In its version of events, at first Tsunayoshi put the government on the right track, but later he ignored the senior councilors and left everything to Yoshiyasu. He encouraged the study of Confucianism and tried to educate military men who had no knowledge of letters. "Out

of an excess of talent, in his old age he became addicted to empty speculation and allowed himself to be led astray by monks.” Even the animal protection laws had their origin in a worthy cause—to curb violence and teach love for living things (6:752). Tsunayoshi’s penchant for actors, on the other hand, aroused the chroniclers to be censorious: “This led to partiality and error. We respectfully record these faults as an eternal warning for later generations” (6:725). Anecdotes illustrate his devotion to his mother, his sterling childhood character, his absorption in Confucian studies, his commanding presence, and his respect for the emperor and his ancestors. The text lists men rewarded for loyal service in shogunal administration and men promoted to the ranks of daimyo because they had gained his affection (*chōken*).²⁶ “His magnanimity and generosity were such that he preferred to reward without stinginess or regret, making him cheerful and open-hearted” (6:738–39). Even though Yoshiyasu enjoyed unprecedented marks of shogunal favor, he never committed any crime. Gossip to the contrary, he gained Tsunayoshi’s trust because of his superior intelligence and ability (6:746).

Matsukage nikki

A woman wrote one of the texts that informed the *jikki*’s positive appraisal of Yoshiyasu’s character and his relationship with Tsunayoshi. Ōgimachi Machiko (d. 1724) was the daughter of a minor court noble by a courtesan. One of her maternal relatives served in the shogun’s Great Interior.²⁷ In addition to bearing Yoshiyasu’s fourth and fifth sons, she embodied the aristocratic Kyoto style that he used to such advantage in gaining Tsunayoshi’s favor. Yoshiyasu acquired her sometime after Tsunayoshi’s first visit to his mansion in 1691. His rebuilding project on this occasion transformed what had been a military house into a noble mansion, and it is not surprising that he wanted to decorate it with a Kyoto woman.²⁸ According to Kado Reiko (b. 1931), Machiko became the channel through which the Kyoto court learned that it would be a good idea to bestow junior first rank on Keishōin, and Machiko was also instrumental in arranging to have Yoshiyasu’s poetry critiqued by retired emperor Reigen (1654–1732, r. 1663–87), a signal honor.²⁹ She thus epitomized the civilizing process that Tsunayoshi was trying to promote.

Compiled between 1710 and Yoshiyasu’s death in 1714, *Matsukage nikki* is a memoir written in the style of the Heian court. Machiko draws heavily on the Japanese literary tradition created by women, epitomized in works such as *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes* and *Tale of Genji*. Just as the former celebrated the life and times of Fujiwara Michinaga (966–1028) and his connections to the imperial house, so did *Matsukage nikki* glorify Yoshiyasu’s role in Tsunayoshi’s administration by placing emphasis on births, deaths, amusements, and religious observances, occasions on which the shogun treated Machiko’s lord with special favor. If *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes* made Michinaga into a model of aristocratic virtue, *Matsukage nikki* made Yoshiyasu into a model of military virtue—erudite in Chinese as well as Japanese, skilled in his appreciation for the martial arts, firm in his support of Buddhism, and astute in the ways of his world.³⁰ The memoir fits within the *Tale of Genji* tradition not only in its diction but also in its sensibility, seen particularly vividly in its depictions of landscapes and the pursuits thought appropriate for enjoying nature.³¹ Chapters full of excitement alternate with chapters showing Yoshiyasu keenly attuned to the melancholy (*mono no aware*) that lies in wait for a truly refined individual. The scene depicting Tsunayoshi’s first visit to the Yanagisawa mansion resonates with the end of “The Maidens” chapter in *Tale of Genji*, and

Yoshiyasu's retirement villa at Rikugien is described as though it were Genji's Rokujo palace. As befitted a woman schooled in the classical tradition, Machiko made delicate allusions to poems scattered throughout the canon of Japanese literature, especially the imperial poetry anthologies, and she made references to the Chinese classics, as well. By shifting the emphasis away from Yoshiyasu's political achievements, she sought to portray him as a man of taste and elegance for generations to come.

Like *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, *Matsukage nikki* takes a positive approach to events and people. In the first chapter, titled "Musashino," a summary of human history since the age of the gods is followed by a paean of praise for Tsunayoshi, whose reign surpasses all others (p. 1). "He ushered in an age of such peace and security that people had no need to lock their doors" (p. 2). Chief among his achievements was recognizing Yoshiyasu's superior intelligence and ability, his virtues and his wisdom. Machiko traces the Yanagisawa genealogy back to a branch of the Seiwa Genji that settled in Kai, thus providing Yoshiyasu with an illustrious lineage and justifying Yoshiyasu's claim to Kai as his family's hereditary domain. This connection also gives her an opportunity to tie the wide-open political climate of the Genroku era to legends of imperial blood.³²

Machiko focuses less on Yoshiyasu's political astuteness than on his ingratiating personality and the many marks of special favor he received. At the palace moon viewing party in the fall of 1689, he is granted the rare privilege of being allowed to share the food on Tsunayoshi's tray. As an expression of humble gratitude, Yoshiyasu writes a poem that alludes to one in the *Murasaki Shikibu Diary*. Chapter Two, "Tabigoromo" (Traveling Clothes) describes Tsunayoshi's famous first visit to the Yanagisawa mansion in 1691. A highlight of the day's events is the shogun's lecture on the *Great Learning*. "People expressed their wonderment that such a mighty lord had the sagacity to grasp such a difficult text so thoroughly" (p. 22). And of course his performance of noh dance was "really splendid" (p. 23). The visit occasions an elaborate round of congratulatory gift giving, not only between the members of Tsunayoshi's and Yoshiyasu's extended households, but between Yoshiyasu and the three Tokugawa collateral houses, the chief daimyo, and officials. Giving thanks for these gifts took days.

Matsukage nikki credits Yoshiyasu's superior qualities for the many honors he received. Because Tsunayoshi recognized his talents and virtues, he relied on Yoshiyasu to handle government matters; he even left it to his favorite retainer to choose his heir. "It got to the point that everyone first asked Yoshiyasu to put in a word with Tsunayoshi who then told Yoshiyasu to make a decision based on whether he thought the case had merit" (p. 68). "Tsunayoshi and Yoshiyasu enjoyed such perfect communication that they must have had a karmic connection carried over from a previous existence" (p. 73). An intimate gesture demonstrating the shogun's confidence was allowing Yoshiyasu to have interviews with Tsunayoshi's concubine, daughter, mother, and wife (pp. 34, 35, 80). Tsunayoshi also had Yoshiyasu's wife visit the Great Interior. "It seems that people found this sort of thing to be completely unprecedented. As my lord's success became ever more evident, it is not surprising that the boons he enjoyed had nothing with which they could be compared" (p. 150). The ceremonies attending these meetings incorporated Yoshiyasu into Tsunayoshi's family circle and reinforced the bonds displayed in the regular exchange of lavish gifts. After Yoshiyasu's adopted daughter married Matsudaira Terusada (1665–1747), Tsunayoshi paid his first visit to Terusada's house.

He treated the bride kindly, gave her husband a 10,000 *koku* raise, and made him lord of Takasaki. "All of my lord's relatives near and far are enjoying a wonderful prosperity" (p. 57). Although they did not have political implications in the narrow sense of policy making decisions, these encounters played an essential role in solidifying Yoshiyasu's standing as the most powerful political actor of his day. The memoir's title refers obliquely both to the protection (*kage*) Yoshiyasu received from Tsunayoshi and to the protection Machiko and everyone else in the Yanagisawa camp received from Yoshiyasu—*matsu* (pine) is the first character in the name Matsudaira.³³

To depict Yoshiyasu in the mode of Genji or Michinaga, Machiko emphasized his wide-ranging interests apart from politics. Steeped though he was in the Confucian classics, he had an abiding interest in the Ōbaku school, the third and last of the Zen sects to be introduced into Japan. His correspondence with the Chinese abbots of Manpukuji continued for years, and he held long conversations with them both through a translator and with a brush whenever they visited Edo (pp. 66–67). "Monks and priests praised his deep understanding of Buddhist truths . . . They were delighted with his interest in Buddhism and sought his protection" (pp. 40–41).³⁴ His penetrating insight into Zen teachings was said to surpass that of most monks (p. 204). He took advantage of every opportunity to cleanse his spirit by enjoying the flowers and the moon (p. 51). He liked to rise early to savor the fresh cool dew and write poetry (pp. 187, 193, 198). In 1700 he summoned Kitamura Kigin (1624–1705), famous for his annotations of the classics, to initiate him into the secrets of the *Kokinshū* (p. 113). He devoted much time to perfecting Rikugien as a retreat for himself and his family.³⁵

Of all the histories from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *Matsukage nikki* provides the most positive assessment of Yoshiyasu, Tsunayoshi, and the relationship between the two. Whether or not Machiko knew of the scurrilous rumors that circulated at the time, her goal was to glorify her heroes by assimilating them to classical figures who epitomized the aristocratic canon of taste. Her skill at creating this image was validated when the editors of *Tokugawa jikki* incorporated her text and cited it by name. Despite its polished literary style and wide circulation among people of Machiko's status in Edo and Kyoto who copied it repeatedly, it was not published until after the shogunate had been replaced by a modern regime.³⁶ Perhaps this is because a woman wrote it, but the more likely explanation is that even well-meaning appraisals of the shoguns were not allowed into print under the strict Tokugawa censorship laws. It can be read as a ploy by Yoshiyasu to create a favorable reputation for himself and his lord, but it had no impact on popular histories. Was this because subsequent shoguns wanted to distance themselves from Tsunayoshi's eccentric policies or because its near contemporary, *Sannō gaiki*, written by a man in Sino-Japanese, had more clout?

Sannō gaiki

Unofficial and popular histories presented the mirror opposite to *Matsukage nikki*. Instead of depicting Tsunayoshi as a sagacious ruler and his intimacy with Yoshiyasu as a meeting of minds, they focused on the dark side of Genroku politics and what passed for moral depravity at the time. Written probably about the same time as *Matsukage nikki* and like it cited in *Tokugawa jikki*, *Sannō gaiki* purported to tell the true if unofficial story of Tsunayoshi's reign along with those of his successors Ienobu and Ietsugu (1709–1716).³⁷ The anonymous author's unparalleled access to daimyo who had known Tsunayoshi, his skillful

deployment of Chinese, and his use of the character for king (*ō*) to refer to the shogun all point to the probability that this was the work of the famed political economist, Dazai Shundai (1680–1747).³⁸ Being written in Sino-Japanese gave *Sannō gaiki* an aura of veracity and authority unmatched by other texts. It circulated in numerous manuscript copies during the course of the Tokugawa period,³⁹ and its version of shogunal politics and favorites came to dominate the popular imagination.

Unlike *Tokugawa jikki* and *Matsukage nikki*, *Sannō gaiki* does not follow a strict chronology. Although it begins with the dispute over who should succeed Ietsuna (1641–1680), it proceeds thematically by selecting events from Tsunayoshi's life that need to be explained. Like *Matsukage nikki* and popular histories, it ignores the revenge by the Akō retainers. Like them as well, it provides exhaustive lists of names, although these lists do not correspond exactly to those in the *jikki*. As befits a text modeled on the norms of Chinese historical writing, at the end of each "king's" reign an attempt is made to sum up his rule and portray the whole man through anecdotes. At times it reads like an indictment in listing a series of accusations, but it mitigates them by faint praise for Tsunayoshi's commanding presence, his support of the imperial family, his promotion of Confucianism, and his public works projects. Rather than exhaust each topic before moving on to the next, it returns repeatedly to its major themes. These include Tsunayoshi's fondness for soothsayers that leads to the animal protection laws, his promotion of his mother's relatives, his extravagance, his predilection for boys, the rise of Yoshiyasu, and questions surrounding Yoshisato's parentage.

According to *Sannō gaiki*, the reason for the animal protection laws had less to do with teaching compassion than with Tsunayoshi's gullibility. The priest Ryūkō rose in the Buddhist hierarchy because he had devoted himself to praying for Tsunayoshi's health since before Tsunayoshi became shogun. When Tsunayoshi grieved that he had no heir, Ryūkō led him to believe that this lack was in retribution for having done much killing in a previous life. To compensate, he would have to demonstrate his love for living beings by eradicating killing. Since he was born under the sign of the dog, it would be most appropriate to show a particular fondness for dogs. Tsunayoshi's mother seconded this advice. Tsunayoshi issued increasingly draconian laws to protect all living things. He also developed such an attachment to Chinese pugs that he ordered two daimyo to raise them for him. His favorite dogs rode in palanquins with an escort of guards and attendants to clear the way.

Tsunayoshi even perverted filial piety, the epitome of Confucian virtue, in the view of *Sannō gaiki's* author. Of all the shogunal women, Tsunayoshi's mother is the one best known for her lavish support of the Buddhist establishment. Through her influence, Buddhist priests gained Tsunayoshi's confidence in ways unseemly for a ruler. In addition to promoting parvenu monks, Tsunayoshi also favored his mother's step-brother, Honjō Munesuke. Munesuke rose from being a servant in the household of a Kyoto noble to being a daimyo worth 70,000 *koku*. His sons and grandsons too enjoyed daimyo status. "Never since the dynasty's beginning had maternal relatives been so successful. . . . For one family of maternal relatives in our Japan to have three daimyo, is it possible not to say this was a mistake?"

If *Tokugawa jikki* simply chronicles Yoshiyasu's rise without explanation and *Matsukage nikki* attributes it to Yoshiyasu's superior personal qualities, *Sannō gaiki* blames it on sex. Yoshiyasu pleased Tsunayoshi from the time he was a junior page. His unparalleled access to Tsunayoshi's private quarters gave him an "authority exceeding that of the senior council-

ors.” He received extraordinary privileges, from receiving a character of Tsunayoshi’s name, “making him equivalent to a brother,” to being allowed to ride a palanquin into the castle, to receiving the Kai domain normally reserved for members of the Tokugawa family. Yoshiyasu also kept a stable of boys for Tsunayoshi’s delectation and regulated their behavior as though they were a bevy of courtesans. No questions were asked about family background so long as the boys were attractive.

According to *Sannō gaiki*, Yoshiyasu was but one of at least twenty boys with whom Tsunayoshi had sex. Tsunayoshi raised the low-ranking retainer Kitami Shigemasa to daimyo status and made him a senior councilor before Shigemasa committed such egregious crimes that he had to be exiled. Tsunayoshi had sex with the sons and younger brothers of the *tozama* lords; he went after his own retainers even if they were mere foot soldiers. If they were even the least bit attractive, he made them his attendants. So many men offered themselves to Tsunayoshi in order to gain stipend and status that it would be impossible to list them all. In this last great flourishing of same-sex relations, the *tozama* daimyo imitated him “like stupid children.”⁴⁰

Sannō gaiki also castigated Tsunayoshi for his taste in entertainment. Unlike his ancestors, he did not like hunting, a sport long valued by military men for sharpening martial skills. Instead he preferred banquets and parties. He was particularly fond of visiting monks’ residences and the mansions of the daimyo he had created. He also visited the senior councilors and the three collateral houses (*sanke*). Since he did not enjoy drinking, these visits consisted of lectures on the Confucian classics by shogun, host, host’s sons, and retainers, and then *noh* dances performed by Tsunayoshi and the assembled men. Each performance was accompanied by lavish exchanges of gifts in a display of conspicuous consumption typical of the Genroku age. “Tsunayoshi liked to make those he valued rich, and it gave him pleasure to confer stipends and titles on people.” This kind of extravagance emptied the gold from the Tokugawa family storehouses. To meet his demand for an extravagant expedition to his ancestor’s tomb at Nikkō, his ministers debased the currency. “This was the beginning of making bad money in Japan.”

Sannō gaiki was the first text to assert that Tsunayoshi visited his retainers’ houses for less than honorable reasons. Perhaps because Tsunayoshi was known to go to the women’s quarters, the obvious leap in logic was that he went to have sex. At Makino Narisada’s (1634–1712) mansion, for instance, he saw Narisada’s daughter, already married to the Makino adopted heir, and took his pleasure of her. This so distressed the heir that he committed suicide; the violated daughter died of grief and shame. Yoshiyasu was himself a womanizer and had at least twelve concubines who bore him many children. When Tsunayoshi first visited Yoshiyasu’s mansion, he met these beauties. One in particular attracted his attention. When Yoshisato was born, Yoshiyasu announced that the infant did not resemble him at all. Tsunayoshi agreed and treated Yoshisato as though he were his own son. Tsunayoshi supervised the boy’s education and showered him with gifts. “People said that the reason why Tsunayoshi showed such favor to Yoshiyasu was out of affection for the child.”

At Yoshiyasu’s urging, Tsunayoshi made special plans for Yoshisato. Having acquired the province of Kai, Yoshiyasu next set his eyes on Suruga, once the retirement headquarters for the great Ieyasu, and he used his connection to one of Tsunayoshi’s favorites in the Great Interior, Ōsa, to push his case.⁴¹ Ōsa encouraged Tsunayoshi in his plan to retire, formally

acknowledge Yoshisato to be his son, and bestow on him the two provinces. Since none of the daimyo showed any concern at this proposed breach of custom, Yoshiyasu went so far as to plot to make Yoshisato shogun. Tsunayoshi died before these plans could be brought to fruition. Why? According to hearsay Tsunayoshi's wife had become aware of these machinations and wanted to stop them. On the day before Tsunayoshi was to proclaim Yoshisato his heir, she stabbed him with a dagger. She then committed suicide.

Although *Sannō gaiki* makes bold assertions regarding Tsunayoshi's motivations whereas *Tokugawa jikki* is reticent, the two histories, one unofficial, the other official, complement each other. Both demonstrate an obsessive concern with giving full names, titles, and ranks. They both consider natural disasters to be an integral part of the historical record, so much so that the natural world is seen as reflecting and interpenetrating the social and political order. In *Sannō gaiki*, currency debasement almost becomes the proximate cause of the worst earthquake since the founding of the dynasty. The two texts differ on why and how Yoshisato was promoted, but they agree that Tsunayoshi's promotion of his favorites was unprecedented. Like *Matsukage nikki*, *Sannō gaiki* is written in a language that only the highly educated could be expected to appreciate, and it too draws on the world of the *Tale of Genji* in depicting the relations between Yoshiyasu and Tsunayoshi. According to Noguchi Takehiko (b. 1937), in *Sannō gaiki*, "the bizarre imaginative power of widely-held assumptions regarding the Great Interior imitated the world of Genji in a way so completely opposite to *Matsukage nikki* it was as though they were joined at the back."⁴²

Nikkō Kantan makura

Nikkō Kantan makura tells the Tsunayoshi-Yoshiyasu story as though it happened in a dream. The title refers to stories popular since medieval times about the Chinese figure Handan (Kantan in Japanese), who had planned on traveling to seek his fortune before a dream of success followed by disasters persuades him to return home.⁴³ James T. Araki notes that "dream pillow" tales enjoyed a vogue in the late eighteenth century publishing world.⁴⁴ Many versions depict commoners who overcome status barriers to inhabit the world of the daimyo, there to enjoy wine, women, and luxury. In some cases, the lead character gets involved in a succession dispute. These elements readily lent this genre to underground histories about the shogun and the ruling class. Like *Sannō gaiki* and *Matsukage nikki*, *Nikkō Kantan makura* circulated in manuscript. The Edo antiquarian Mitamura Engyo (1870–1952) found it under a number of titles, from *Tōeizan tsuya monogatari* written in 1709, with Matsudaira Terusada as the putative author, to *Zōho Nikkō Kantan makura*, a revised and supplemented version by a disgruntled former samurai from Hikone, according to a copy from 1773.⁴⁵ Since *Nikkō Kantan makura* credits the Hikone lord Ii Naooki (1656–1717) with saving the dynasty, it is not surprising that the text claims one of his retainers to have the inside story.⁴⁶ By placing the narrative within the framework of a dream, it both disclaims the veracity of historical records and asserts complete knowledge of what happened.

Nikkō Kantan makura belongs to the genre of unpublished popular histories known as *jitsuroku* (true records) that circulated widely through lending libraries.⁴⁷ Frequently featuring succession disputes in the houses of the great (*o-ie sōdō*), these works drew as much on fiction as history to construct a narrative, adding color and twisting facts in order to enhance

the plot.⁴⁸ *Jitsuroku* purport to tell the story of what really happened in the past, and they name names to achieve an aura of verisimilitude. As Ōhashi Yūkichi pointed out in 1928, “the mixture of fact and fiction and the inclusion of anachronisms make it almost impossible to discover the historical facts behind them. House elders (*karō*) start to smell like peasants, the lord acts like a townsman, the wife becomes a dancing girl, and the concubine turns into a teahouse woman.”⁴⁹ Mark Oshima calls them scandal sheets, akin to supermarket tabloids.⁵⁰ The attitude that underlies *jitsuroku* is different from today’s postmodern rejection of any possibility of knowing the truth. Instead, people were willing to forego credulity in order to accept a multitude of often conflicting narrative possibilities.

Kawatake Shigetoshi (1889–1967) has identified three stages in the development of the *jitsuroku*. The first originates in directives to create documentary accounts of past events. As early as 1644, the shogunate ordered daimyo and hatamoto to compile genealogies. Then under Tsunayoshi the shogunate began to compile records lauding the exploits of the previous shoguns. Finally, Ōoka Tadasuke (1677–1751), Edo city magistrate between 1717 and 1736, ordered the townspeople to prepare histories of their occupations and enterprises. The second stage came about when two types of professional storytellers (*kōshaku*) started playing with these documents, rewriting them in ways that would appeal to a larger audience, stringing them into narratives, and adding large doses of imagination. Rōnin whose repertoire included the *Taiheiki* told tales of military valor. The so-called *kyōkō* (crazy storytellers), many of whom were Buddhist priests, used humor, satire, and the supernatural to make their stories less didactic and more entertaining. What Kawatake calls the mature *jitsuroku* of the early nineteenth century owed a great deal to the theatrical conventions of *jōruri* and kabuki, which dominated Edo culture at this time. Written by *gesaku* writers, hatamoto, rōnin, and retired men of leisure, they were labeled *shahon* (“manuscripts”) to signify that they had been copied from earlier and hence more authentic sources.⁵¹ The various versions of *Nikkō Kantan makura* belong to the second stage; *Gokoku onna Taiheiki*, the subject of the last section of this essay, belongs to the third.

The dreamer in *Nikkō Kantan makura* is Yagi Chikara. He is a beautiful man skilled at noh who becomes one of Tsunayoshi’s pages. “Just like those of proper lineage, he found favor with the lord” (p. 2). When he admonishes Tsunayoshi for getting drunk, Tsunayoshi sends him into exile. Despite this unjust treatment, he remains a loyal retainer. On a trip to Nikkō to pray for his lord’s eternal rule, he spends the night at an inn. There he falls asleep on Kantan’s pillow, which provides the dreamer with a lifetime of experience. An old man appears at the door to the shrine saying that Chikara’s loyal service has moved the deified Ieyasu. Chikara is welcomed into the shrine to view Tsunayoshi’s fate. In an instant he is back in Chiyoda castle, privy to everything that occurs.

Ii Naooki appears in *Tokugawa jikki* and *Sannō gaiiki* as one of several senior shogunal administrators, but in *Kantan makura* he assumes a singular importance. His family’s genealogy directly follows that of the Tokugawa family, and much is made of how his ancestor saved Ieyasu’s life at Sekigahara. Worried that Tsunayoshi has no heir and prefers boys, Naooki and Chikara arrange to have the daughters of military men and commoners line the route he is to take to view the cherry blossoms at Ueno. Tsunayoshi chooses two women—the wife and daughter of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. When Tsunayoshi orders Yoshiyasu to be placed among his attendants, Naooki and the other senior councilors fuss at the lack of precedent for a lowly

individual to serve the lord in an intimate capacity. It takes several more months before they are able to overcome Tsunayoshi's scruples at having sex with women. Tsunayoshi's excuse is that "he has promised the gods and the deified Ieyasu to succor the people and devote himself to maintaining peace. Lest he violate this oath, he has refrained from summoning women to his room" (p. 12).

Tsunayoshi's precipitous moral decline comes with his famous first visit to the Yanagisawa mansion. There he drinks heavily. Yoshiyasu's wife and daughter escort him to a bedroom whereupon he proceeds to seduce the wife, an unprecedented breach of the bond between lord and retainer. The next day Tsunayoshi grants Yoshiyasu a 10,000 *koku* domain. Subsequent visits to the Yanagisawa mansion and encounters with Yoshiyasu's women are followed by augmentations to this domain. As Yoshiyasu's influence grows, so do the number of people who profit through him, including Ryūkō, who entertains Tsunayoshi with magic tricks. When Yoshiyasu's daughter dies suddenly, his henchmen procure a young woman who is even more beautiful and more talented, intending to pass her off as a younger sister of the departed. To make sure no one can dispute this claim, they murder the new young woman's parents and the men who discovered her (pp. 21–22). Yoshiyasu's faction envelops Tsunayoshi, plying him with women and saké while they take over the government.

The moral depravity fostered by Yoshiyasu brings calamities both man-made and natural. In his garden, Yoshiyasu creates replicas of the fifty-three stations of the Tōkaidō, with the wives of daimyo acting as tea-house women. "Tsunayoshi and his retainers dressed in traveling clothes in a confusion of lord and retainer, men and women, something never heard of nor seen before" (p. 23). Yoshiyasu has his concubines fight with flowers. The ones who lose have to drink until they collapse, to the amusement of all. When Ryūkō urges Tsunayoshi to show compassion for all living things if he wants to live a long life, people lose their lives for the sake of flies and ants. "The heavens change and the earth goes mad. Oceans groan, yellow clouds appear, an evil star shines" (p.25). A ghost appears who eats an attendant. Mt. Fuji erupts. The string of natural disasters causes the shogun to grow ever more cowardly.

While Tsunayoshi cowers, Yoshiyasu's depredations grow bolder. He appropriates land belonging to merchants, hatamoto, and daimyo for his building projects. He engineers moving the gold stored in Chiyoda castle to his own domain in Kai. He makes money from minting money. He receives kickbacks from the notorious entrepreneur Kawamura Zuiken (1618–1699).⁵² Yoshiyasu conspires to make sure that Tsunayoshi favors only his supporters; men in other factions are ruined. The dispute over who should succeed Tsunayoshi finds Naooki supporting Ienobu, Yoshiyasu supporting the Kii collateral house because its daimyo is Tsunayoshi's son-in-law. The death of Tsunayoshi's daughter throws the succession to Ienobu. Yoshiyasu convinces Tsunayoshi to confer the Suruga domain on him with its castle stocked with armor, weapons, gold, and silver. He tries to cast a spell on Ienobu to drive him mad, but a loyal retainer reverses its effects. When Yoshiyasu's new "daughter" bears a son, Yoshiyasu gives him the childhood name of Tsunachiyo as part of his plan to replace the Tokugawa lineage with his own.

In elaborately drawn scenes of duplicity and betrayal, *Kantan makura* traces the tortured path followed by Yoshiyasu in his efforts to bring down the dynasty and the equally convoluted countermeasures taken by Naooki. Plots to poison Ienobu fail only because a loyal retainer sacrifices his life and Naooki rides to the rescue in the nick of time. Yoshiyasu gets

Tsunayoshi to force Naooki to resign, meanwhile conspiring to assassinate Ienobu and put Tsunachiyo in his place. In a desperate effort to save the dynasty, Naooki enlists Tsunayoshi's wife to stop her husband from plunging the country into civil war. She murders Tsunayoshi in his bedchamber. Pretending he is still alive, she summons Ienobu, Naooki, Yoshiyasu, and the senior councilors to hear her repeat his last words. As Tsunayoshi's wife she has the right to speak in his name, and no one questions her decrees. Later that night she announces Tsunayoshi's death. Having rectified the realm, she returns to her own quarters where she slits her throat (p. 54). Chikara awakes from his dream to discover that Tsunayoshi has indeed died. As a loyal retainer, even though he is a mere actor, he commits suicide to follow his lord in death. His pillow, a gift from Tsunayoshi, is stored at Nikkō.

Despite its fanciful elements, *Kantan makura* shares certain similarities with *Tokugawa jikki*. It lists full names and titles for all the men promoted and demoted by Tsunayoshi. The announcement of Tsunayoshi's death is followed by a summary of his career; even Tsunayoshi's wife is granted a summary of her genealogy. The listing of Yoshiyasu's promotions and career agrees with information in the *jikki*, right down to the small domains conferred on Machiko's sons. The naming of names, tracing of lineages, and recounting of facts that could be corroborated by other sources—*Nikkō Kantan makura* has the lineaments of history common to the historical texts of its day.

Gokoku onna Taiheiki

The chief editor of *Tokugawa jikki*, Hayashi Jussai, had this to say about *Gokoku onna Taiheiki*: "It is based neither on shadow nor substance. [When the text was first written,] no one believed it, but as time went on, people started to give it more credence."⁵³ The title refers to the most popular of war tales during the Edo period, the *Record of Great Peace (Taiheiki)*. *Gokoku* also refers to Gokokuji, the large temple complex instigated by Tsunayoshi's mother, and to the ongoing expense of her religious devotions. It draws heavily on *Nikkō Kantan makura* for its account of Tsunayoshi's career and the Genroku era, but it has a more elaborate narrative line that comes from the story-telling conventions popular at the time. It describes the animal protection laws and the rise of Kawamura Zuiken; it also blames Yoshiyasu for the shogunate's expropriation of the Osaka merchant house Yodoya Tatsugorō (d. ca. 1705). Ghosts and magic spells abound, but the focus of the plot is on the women who surrounded Tsunayoshi. Rather than saké, his downfall is blamed on sex.

Tokugawa jikki and *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* share similar structural characteristics. Both include chronicle-like attempts to name names to the fullest possible extent, names being the most universal markers of rank and status in a written text, and they string events along a chronological line, mixing the trivial with the significant simply because they follow each other in a temporal sequence. The *jikki* is not devoid of narrative, though it has much less than *Taiheiki*. Both works aim at verisimilitude, both engage the emotions. Both speak to a world obsessed with status inequality in which the unceasing competition for advancement is expressed in seating arrangements, position in processions, and gifts, and success is measured not only in income but also in the shogun's favor.

Like other unofficial and popular histories, *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* takes the kind of information that appeared in the *jikki* and explains it by telling stories. *Jikki* focuses on the outward forms of attendance on the shogun; *Taiheiki* purports to offer an inside view, to

purvey intimate secrets. Tsunayoshi's predilection for hiring noh actors is taken to mean that he expects them to provide sex. He visits the Yanagisawa mansion not to lecture on Confucian texts but to have sex. Yoshiyasu is less an able administrator than a procurer. Whereas *jikki* portrays Tsunayoshi as a man of wide-ranging interests in Confucian philosophy, the various schools of Buddhist teachings, nativism, and the martial arts, *Taiheiki* sees him as a man obsessed with sex. Both emphasize his attachment to his mother, but while *jikki* calls it a laudable demonstration of filial piety, *Taiheiki* sees it as leading to superstition and the clutches of venal monks. In providing such interpretations, *Taiheiki* follows *Sannō gaiki* and ignores *Matsukage nikki*.

Like all good histories, *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* begins at the beginning, in this case with Ieyasu's birth. After lightly touching on the foibles of the first four shoguns and their chief advisors, it moves quickly to the main topic, the life of Tsunayoshi. It claims that Yoshiyasu first wins favor before his patron becomes shogun not by becoming Tsunayoshi's sex toy, as *Nikkō Kantan makura* has it, but simply by lifting him out of his usual melancholy through clever conversation, dancing, and song. By making her son happy, Yoshiyasu wins the trust of Tsunayoshi's mother, Keishōin. Yoshiyasu then arranges to have his wife Osame introduced to Keishōin. Keishōin soon gives her permission to visit on a regular basis. Yoshiyasu then tells Osame that the next step is to so derange Tsunayoshi with lust that he will make it possible for them to rise in the world (*risshin*).⁵⁴

One of the themes of *Taiheiki* is that women can lead Tsunayoshi astray in ways that men cannot. Before he falls into Yoshiyasu's clutches, Tsunayoshi believes that women are the root of all evil and he uses his pages to satisfy his sexual needs. His mother has long been troubled that he prefers books to women, rarely visits his wife, and has no concubines. When he next comes to visit her, she shows him Osame's poetry. Impressed by her skill, he summons her for an interview, in which he is stuck by her beauty and her elegant demeanor. Having seen one attractive woman, he allows Yoshiyasu to find him a concubine. He is so pleased with Une that he starts having sex with his wife as well, and both bear children. After he becomes shogun, he allows Yoshiyasu to talk him into bestowing large domains on Keishōin's brother and nephew. Women who had served him in Tatebayashi become supervisors in the Great Interior, with rank and stipends equivalent to hatamoto. His attendants achieve advancement and success (*risshin shusse*), women along with men, and all credit Yoshiyasu for their promotions (p. 31).

According to *Taiheiki*, Yoshiyasu rises from page to senior councilor to chief administrator simply because he knows the power of sex. He has noh performed for Tsunayoshi featuring beautiful boys. Like the hero in one of Saikaku's novels, Tsunayoshi goes back and forth from the way of boys to the way of women, all through Yoshiyasu's agency. Yoshiyasu plots to befuddle Tsunayoshi with lust. He is delighted when the shogun seeks sex every night, unable to make up his mind between boys and women (p. 46). Worn out by his exertions, Tsunayoshi falls ill. The priest Ryūkō announces that unless he wants his life cut short, he will issue orders to protect all animals, especially dogs. Women in the Great Interior treat Ryūkō as a living Buddha and pay him visits on the slightest pretext. He employs two beautiful monks to entertain them; this too may be blamed on Yoshiyasu.

Yoshiyasu's crowning achievement is to bring the world of the red light district to the Great Interior in an example of how *Taiheiki* appropriates the dynamic culture of the townspeople. First he has five beautiful geisha, splendidly attired, sing and dance for the shogun

at his mansion. Tsunayoshi has never seen anything like it. Everything about them is different, and he orders that they be secretly brought to the castle. Yoshiyasu then has famous courtesans from Edo and Kyoto teach Osame all the tricks of the trade—how to dress and how to entertain customers. One day when Tsunayoshi is looking particularly bored, Yoshiyasu invites him to the Yanagisawa mansion. There Tsunayoshi is ushered into the inner quarters where Yoshiyasu has built a house of assignation (*ageya*) with Osame in the role of courtesan (*tayū*). Never having been to a brothel, Tsunayoshi is entranced. He quickly learns his role as the customer and has sexual relations with Osame. Yoshiyasu becomes a 100,000 *koku* daimyo. Osame is summoned to the castle on the pretence that she is needed to assist the maids-in-waiting. There she becomes pregnant. The birth of Yoshisato brings Yoshiyasu a 20,000 *koku* increase in the size of his domain. He buys an adopted daughter, acquired under the dubious circumstances described in *Nikkō Kantan makura*, and has her perform *noh* for Tsunayoshi. By acting as Tsunayoshi's pimp and providing him with fresh supplies of women in a variety of settings, Yoshiyasu is able to whip up Tsunayoshi's flagging libido and keep him so befuddled by sex that he little realizes how much Yoshiyasu has corrupted the government.

Tsunayoshi's wife is the true heroine of *Taiheiki*, a text that has no heroes. She is praised for possessing all the feminine virtues. She is intelligent, well educated, discreet, and full of affection for the women who win Tsunayoshi's favor (p. 139). She is so virtuous, in fact, that her name never appears in the text. Although she murders her husband as described in *Sannō gaiki* and *Kantan makura*, she insists that Yoshisato be allowed to succeed to the Yanagisawa house as lord of Kai lest she be accused of jealousy. Ienobu becomes shogun, the head of the Ii house is restored to his rightful position as chief administrator, and virtuous retainers are promoted. Tsunayoshi's wife then commits suicide. She is the complete opposite of other famous women in Japanese history, Hino Tomiko (1440–1496) and Yodogimi (1567–1615), who caused civil war. It is nonetheless remarkable that loyalty to the state (*kokka*) so far outweighs the crime of regicide that she is praised as a virtuous woman.

Gokoku onna Taiheiki represents the culmination of the power of the popular imagination to explain Tsunayoshi's reign in a way satisfying to readers. Although it purports to be a history of the Tokugawa period from the beginning to the crisis caused by Tsunayoshi's eccentric policies, it is not a historical text like the ones we know today. Rather than try to find the truth in it or in *Nikkō Kantan makura*, it makes more sense to analyze them for their perspective on popular values regarding sex and fortune. Whatever the realities of the status system, the desire for advancement and success flowed strongly in the hearts of military men and commoners alike. Encompassing money, power, and prestige, *risshin shusse* justified conduct that jibed ill with the principles of shogunal rule. This desire for success may have been criticized in unofficial and popular histories alike, but nothing else served so satisfactorily to explain why people did what they did.

Conclusion

Comparing the histories of Tsunayoshi's reign provides multiple and contradictory perspectives on how he was viewed in the decades subsequent to his death and what was deemed to be history. By juxtaposing the texts clearly intended for wide consumption along a continuum, with Ōgimachi Machiko's elegant memoir and the anonymous but authoritative-seeming *Sannō gaiki* toward one end and the vulgar histories in *Nikkō Kantan makura*

and *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* toward the other, and comparing these with the official and not-for-circulation *Tokugawa jikki*, it is possible to assess the range of possibilities that constituted historical writing in the Edo period. Historical writing as we define it lay outside this range; for Tokugawa-era authors, the constitution of significant information and the modes of interpretation were different.

Unofficial and popular histories point to a specific type of popular imagination at work in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Japan. We cannot assume that the people who read these texts were so credulous as to accept everything in them as an accurate portrayal of events that had happened in the past. It is simply that they were less enchanted with veracity than modern historians—Mitamura Engyo for example—who have combed texts such as *Sannō gaiki* and *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* for nuggets of historical truth. In writing about eighteenth century France, Sarah Maza has pointed out that “Readers of trial briefs more easily believed them if their authors borrowed the themes, language and techniques of fiction.”⁵⁵ Her insight points to the same disjuncture between modern and pre-modern notions of factuality seen in manuscript histories. Why be constrained by dull, hard facts when a fertile mind can contrive narratives that are so much more satisfying? Nonetheless, even in Tokugawa society, there was an inherent limitation to the power of the popular imagination. In the culture of play that characterized urban Japan in this period, nothing was to be taken too seriously, perhaps out of apathy, perhaps out of frustration with a system that permitted townspeople and most military men no voice in politics. In such circumstances, writing salacious histories that named historical figures could be cathartic. Tsunayoshi was depicted as weak, misguided, and in thrall to his penis, but such criticism remained at the level of entertainment, not politics.



Actors in the 1875 production of “Ura-omote Yanagi uchiwa-e,” from right, Ichikawa Danjurō as Yanagisawa Dewa no kami, Iwai Hanshirō as Osaha, and Ichikawa Kenjurō as Tsunayoshi. Prints by Toyohara Kunichika. Collection of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University.

Epilogue

In November 2004, the National Theater in Tokyo presented “Kanete kiku Yanagisawa sōdō,” a kabuki play by Kawatake Mokuami (1816–1893) first performed in 1875. It enjoyed some popularity during the Meiji period, but it had not been revived since 1903.

The fall of the shogunate having obviated the need to conceal identities behind figures from previous dynasties, the piece names names and follows the plot of *Gokoku onna Taiheiki* in emphasizing the improper relationship between Tsunayoshi and Osame. In a beautifully crafted dance sequence, the couple step into a pleasure boat at Asazuma on Lake Biwa, famous for its women who plied their trade dressed as *shirabyōshi*, courtesans who wore male hats and coats. According to popular lore, the eighteenth century painter Hanabusa Itchō (1652–1724) spent twelve years in exile for having painted a picture of just such a scene that alluded to Tsunayoshi.⁵⁶ In the end, Tsunayoshi is dead, Yoshiyasu is placed under house arrest, and peace is restored to the realm.

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NOTES

1 In her recent book, *The Dog Shogun: The Personality and Policies of Tokugawa Tsunayoshi*, Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey tries to counter this image.

2 Tsunayoshi began a regular series of lectures on the four Confucian books on 1690.8.21, according to *Tokugawa jikki* 1931, 6:82. (Citations in the text for this section are to this source.) Lectures on the *Book of Changes* began on 1693.4.21 (6:168), and the audience gradually expanded until it included all

daimyo (6:252) and even the housemen (*gokenin*). The lectures ended on 1700.11.15 with a celebratory banquet (6:422).

3 The standard biographical sketch of Tsunayoshi in English refers to the conjuncture of the man and his age in its title. See Shively 1970, pp. 85–126.

4 Recent articles in *Monumenta Nipponica* have reassessed this incident and the reasons for its enduring popularity. See Smith 2003 for the contours of the project.

5 For a discussion of this play, see Shively 1955, pp. 159–180.

6 See, for example, a late nineteenth century triptych by Chikanobu (1838–1912) that shows a troop of men with a bundle crossing a bridge. In the foreground are palace women; in the middle ground are two dogs. The print can thus be read as representing the 47 loyal retainers in the lascivious age of Tsunayoshi.

7 Fudeuchi 1991.

8 Jowland 1998.

9 Ōgimachi 1999; Ōgimachi 2004.

10 Tōbuyashi 1880.

11 These decrees begin in 1687 with orders to the people to cherish horses, cows, and other livestock. The first mention of dogs is on 2.21. Two months later, a man is exiled for killing a dog. *Tokugawa jikki* 1931: 5:594, 595, 598.

12 Ryōken had a reputation as an ascetic. When Keishōin was pregnant, he offered prayers for a safe delivery. He examined Tsunayoshi's physiognomy at birth and proclaimed that his features were beyond compare. From that time on, Keishōin had Ryōken offer prayers for Tsunayoshi's protection. *Tokugawa jikki* 1931, 5: 400. The *jikki* also analyzes the gossip that swirled around the assassination of Hotta Masatoshi in 1684 on 5:521–22.

13 For the monetary gifts that the daimyo were expected to present when Tsunayoshi's son moved to separate quarters, see *Tokugawa jikki* 1931, 5:387–88.

14 When Keishōin visited Gokokuji in 1683, her chief attendant was Makino Narisada, Tsunayoshi's chamberlain (*sobayōnin*), along with a large escort and seven troops to patrol the premises and guard her route (5: 473).

15 The first lines on Tsunayoshi in *jikki* describe his mother as from the Fujiwara lineage and give her name as Mitsuko, the daughter of Kitakōji Tarōbei Munemasa, a retainer for the Nijō house. From an early age she served in the palace under the name of Otama no tsubone. She was later to be called *ju-ichi-i* (junior first rank) Keishōin. Her older brother also served the Tokugawa and was granted the house name Matsudaira (5: 353).

16 See also the vigorous debate between Sakai Tadakiyo (1600–82), Makino Narisada, and Hotta Masatoshi (1634–84) over whether Tsunayoshi should succeed his brother. The *jikki* editor notes reprovingly that “the conflict between Tadakiyo and Masatoshi is not one which should be exposed to the public” (5: 355).

17 Tsunayoshi began this practice on 1685.5.19 (5: 547); he continued it to 1707.4.5 (6:693). After Ienobu became Tsunayoshi's heir, he too incorporated actors into his corridor guard unit (6:624). In 1689, three actors were banished for delinquent behavior (6:55); in 1691 two more were fired (6:100).

18 See, for example, 1702.8.4 when Tsunayoshi abruptly hired one of Yoshiyasu's retainers and made him a companion (*go-aite*). 6:479. In 1703, Tsunayoshi hired two of Yoshiyasu's housemen and put them in charge of his bath (6:507).

19 Yoshiyasu figures frequently in the list of personnel awarded special gifts, for example, 5: 621; 6:40, 355). When the Yanagisawa mansion burns down in 1702, Tsunayoshi postpones a cherry viewing party in condolence (6:470). On 1705.7.29, Yoshiyasu received permission to mint gold in his domain (6:627).

20 For Yoshiyasu's attendance on Tsunayoshi, see, for example, 5: 593, 594 and *passim*.

21 In 1695 after Yoshiyasu's son attended his first lecture on the *Great Learning*, he became Tsunayoshi's disciple and received a sword directly from Tsunayoshi's hands (6:243). Tsunayoshi paid a special visit to the Yanagisawa mansion in 1697 when the boy moved to his own quarters and presented him with sword, horse, clothing, and money (6:289). Two years later the boy received court rank and the title of Echizen no kami (6:388). He was given a seat next to the senior councilor in charge of the Great Interior (6:391). In 1702 Yoshisato began to accompany Tsunayoshi on his excursions outside the castle (6:469). At the end of the year, he was made a close attendant (6:491). In 1705, Yoshisato's mother presented a series of gifts to Tsunayoshi (6:592).

22 This visit to the Yanagisawa mansion was repeated less than two months later on 5.9 (6:109), on 9.11 (6:121), on 10.13 (6:123) and on 12.11 (6:128)—five visits in less than a year. By the end of his life, Tsunayoshi had visited Yoshiyasu 58 times. He viewed the martial arts (see 6:182 and *passim*), mock trials (6:312; 6:383), lectures on poetry and *Tale of Genji* (6:492), poetry contests in the manner of the Kyoto court (6:567), debates between Buddhist monks (6:613 and *passim*), and lectures on the age of the gods (6:595). In 1708 Yoshiyasu staged a debate between Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) and his retainers for Tsunayoshi's edification. Tsunayoshi asked questions regarding sections in the *Mencius* related to currency and sex (6:712). Although *jikki* dutifully records the fewer visits to other daimyo, it does not provide the same exhaustive detail, perhaps because *Matsukage nikki* provided a better source of information than anything available for Tsunayoshi's other visits.

23 Tsunayoshi had set the precedent for his mode of visiting his retainers' houses with Makino Narisada. Not only did Tsunayoshi's women visit Makino, but Narisada's wife had permission to visit the shogun's Great Interior, which she did frequently (6:245). In 1701, Tsunayoshi's mother visited the famous garden of Rikugien where Yoshiyasu had prepared a special treat for her—shops with specialty products ranging from clothing to candy for her to inspect and acquire (6:439). In 1703 Yoshiyasu entertained the shogun's daughters at Rikugien (6:540). Tsunayoshi also set a new precedent when he granted interviews to household officials (*keishi*) in 1705.3.15 (6:616). In 1708.10.4 Yoshiyasu's housemen who had received permission to wear the Tokugawa crest were informed that they might hand this privilege down to their descendants (6:712).

24 See Totman 1967, pp. 187–189, for the importance of controlling the Tribunal for building a political clique. Soon after his appointment to the Tribunal, Yoshiyasu was made a close attendant (*jijū*), a position he shared with Tsunayoshi's maternal uncle (6:215, 219).

25 A few months later, on 1705.i4.15, Tsunayoshi gave Yoshiyasu a red-sealed document confirming the grant because of his perfect loyalty. "He is to govern the domain forever" (6:579).

26 Ienobu returned to their former status 47 commoners who as recipients of Tsunayoshi's affection had served in his retinue (6:739).

27 According to *jikki*, in 1708 Machiko presented the pregnancy band to Ienobu's concubine because there was a family connection between the two and Machiko had successfully borne two healthy boys (6:714). For the details of Machiko's family and a modern text of *Matsukage nikki*, see Ōgimachi 1999. Citations in the text for this section are to this source.

28 Masubuchi points out that by the 1690s all the high-ranking daimyo in Edo wanted a Kyoto woman in their household who could introduce them to court culture. All of Yoshiyasu's other women, his wife and concubines, were from the Kantō. Ōgimachi 1999, p. 381.

29 Kado 1995, p. 157. *Matsukage nikki* attributes Keishōin's promotion to Yoshiyasu's instigation (p. 145).

30 For a discussion of the topics appropriate to tales written by women, see McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, pp. 7–12. By the time Machiko left Kyoto, *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes* had twice been published (*ibid.*, p. 66), though as a member of the aristocracy, she might well have seen it in manuscript form. A modern retelling of *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, one that tries for historical

accuracy within the confines of a novel, is Enchi 2000.

31 Reading Rowley 2000, p. 27, first brought this text to my attention. See also Noguchi 1985, p. 118.

32 Noguchi 1985, p. 123.

33 Masubuchi dissects the memoir's title on p. 383 of Ōgimachi 1999.

34 Helen J. Baroni maintains that the Tokugawa shoguns and daimyo were less interested in the teachings of the Ōbaku School than they were in the Chinese culture it represented. While Yoshiyasu may have corresponded with the Manpukuji abbot at least in part to show off his erudition in Chinese, Machiko depicts him as sincere in his study of the Dharma. See Baroni 2000, p. 183.

35 *Matsukage nikki*, in Ōgimachi 1999, pp. 163–165, 181. Rikugien later became his retirement villa.

36 The citation for *Matsukage nikki* in *Kokusho sōmokuroku* lists thirty-nine copies, some partial, in modern libraries and collections, in addition to five print editions.

37 *Sannō gaiiki* was published by Gaijikkanga Shoya in 1880. There are a number of manuscript copies more readily available; I used the one in the Kaga Collection at Tokyo City Library copied by Hayashi Keishi in 1826.

38 Shively 1970, p. 88; Noguchi 1985, p. 125.

39 According to *Kokusho sōmokuroku*, approximately forty-one copies of *Sannō gaiiki* are extant today. The earliest dated copy is from 1789.

40 Ujiie Mikito has argued that subsequent to Tsunayoshi's age, the daimyos' sexual habits changed. No longer did they keep scores of pages, and they were less likely to indulge in same-sex relations. Ujiie 1996, p. 117. It may be that Tsunayoshi's behavior, although perfectly acceptable at the time, with changing mores was later seen as degenerate.

41 This may be a reference to the connection between Ōgimachi Machiko and the elder Uemonsa.

42 Noguchi 1985, p. 128.

43 Gerstle 2001, p. 450.

44 Araki 1970, pp. 43–105.

45 Mitamura 1976, p. 64; Ōhashi 1928, p. 6. In "The Enmeiin Affair of 1803: The Spread of Information in the Tokugawa Period" (Kornicki 1982), p. 516, P. F. Kornicki points out that a "profusion of titles is characteristic of *jitsuroku* manuscripts."

46 See the prologue to the printed text in Tsubouchi 1929, p. 1. Citations in the text for this section are to this source.

47 For evidence of their circulation and the regulations regarding censorship, see Kornicki 1982, pp. 503–11.

48 As a form of underground literature, *Jitsuroku* also served to tell the stories of peasant uprisings. See Walthall 1991.

49 Ōhashi 1928, p. 5. The *Tokugawa jikki* section that recounts the story of Tsunayoshi's reign reports that the commoners showed great disrespect by believing these stories.

50 Oshima 2004.

51 Kawatake 1929, vol. 1, pp. 5–36.

52 For a summary of Zuiken's career, see Crawcour 1966, pp. 1–23.

53 Ōhashi 1928, p. 5. This quotation is from a conversation Jussai had with Matura Seizan (1760–1841), author of *Kasshi yawa*.

54 Tsubouchi 1929, vol. 8, p. 20. Citations in the text for this section are to this source.

55 Maza 1993, p. 221.

56 According to the art historian Kobayashi Tadashi (1968), Itchō was sent into exile because he ran afoul of Keishōin by making fun of the animal protection laws. The marker for his grave at Shōkyōji in Tokyo asserts that he was exiled for painting a series of paintings titled "Tōse hyakunin issu." Neither the series nor the painting alleged to have been of Tsunayoshi, either with Tsunayoshi's own concubine,

as is claimed in some reports, or with Yoshiyasu's wife, exists today.

GLOSSARY

- ageya* 揚屋
 Akō 赤穂
 Asazuma 朝妻
bukan 武鑑
 Chikamatsu Monzaemon 近松門左衛門
 Chōken 長絹
chōnin 町人
 Dazai Shundai 太宰春台
 Dewa no kami 出羽守
 Fujiwara Michinaga 藤原道長
 Genji 源氏
Genroku ryōran 元禄繚乱
gesaku 戯作
Gokoku onna Taiheiki 護国女太平記
 Gokokuji 護国寺
 Hanabusa Itchō 英一蝶
 Handan 邯鄲
 Hayashi Jussai 林述齋
 Hino Tomiko 日野富子
 Honjō Munesuke 本庄宗資
hyōjōsho 評定所
 Ichikawa Danjūrō 市川団十郎
 Ichikawa Kenjūrō 市川権十郎
 Ienobu 家宣
 Ietsuna 家綱
 Ii Naooki 井伊直興
 Iwai Hanshirō 岩井半四郎
 Kado Reiko 門玲子
Kanete kiku Yanagisawa sōdō 噂音菊柳澤
 騒動
karō 家老
 Kawamura Zuiken 河村瑞賢
 Kawatake Mokuami 河竹黙阿弥
 Kawatake Shigetoshi 河竹繁俊
 Keishōin 桂昌院
 Kitami Shigemasa 喜多見重政
 Kitamura Kigin 北村季吟
Kokinshū 古今集
kōshaku 講釈
kyōkō 狂講
 Maeda 前田
 Makino Narisada 牧野成貞
 Manpukuji 万福寺
matsu 松
 Matsudaira 松平
 Matsudaira Terusada 松平輝貞
Matsukage nikki 松蔭日記
meikun 名君
 Mitamura Engyo 三田村鳶魚
mono no aware ものの哀れ
 Musashino 武蔵野
nagae no yari 長柄の槍
naginata 長刀
Nikkō Kantan makura 日光邯鄲枕
 Noguchi Takehiko 野口武彦
 Ōgimachi Machiko 正親町町子
o-ie sōdō お家騒動
 Ōoka Tadasuke 大岡忠相
Ōoku no inu shōgun 大奥の犬將軍
 Ōsa 大佐
 Osame [no kata] おさめ[の方]
 Otani [no kata] 小谷[の方]
 Reigen 靈元
 Rikugien 六義園
rishbin shusse 立身出世
 Ryūkō 隆光
 Ryōken 亮賢
sanke 三家
Sannō gaiki 三王外記
 Seiwa Genji 清和源氏
 Shimazu 島津
shirabyōshi 白拍子、素拍子
 Tabigoromo 旅衣
 Taiga 大河
Taiheiki 太平記
tayū 大夫
 Tokugawa 徳川
Tokugawa jikki 徳川実記
 Toyohara Kunichika 豊原国周
 Tsunachiyo 綱千代

Tsunayoshi 綱吉

Tōeizan tsuya monogatari 東叡山通夜物語

Une 采

Ura-omote Yanagi uchiwa-e 裏表柳団画

Yagi Chikara

Yamauchi 山内

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu 柳沢吉保

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