

Practical Frivolities: The Study of *Shamisen* among Girls of the Late Edo Townsman Class¹

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This article investigates the study of music by girls of the townsman class in the late Edo period. Girls were made to take lessons in performing arts, particularly *shamisen*, which was culturally specific to that class and officially looked upon with suspicion by the samurai. The parents hoped to put daughters with a talent in the performing arts into service with domain lords and high-ranking samurai families. There, daughters could acquire the tastes and culture of the samurai class in everyday life, which enabled them to transcend class boundaries. This was intended help them to make a good marriage in their own class, or to advance in a career as a lady-in-waiting, or to become a concubine of a samurai. This article compares Edo girls to Victorian girls, for whom music was just an “accomplishment,” highlighting the career focus in Japan. It will also become clear that those girls in the Meiji period who learned Western musical instruments had a more Victorian attitude. Women in the Edo period are often thought to have led submissive lives, but girls of the townsman class in Edo were industrious, and made concerted efforts to shape their own futures.

Keywords: girls’ education 女子教育, music education 音楽教育, Edo 江戸, *shamisen* 三味線, *terakoya* 寺子屋, *buke hōkō* 武家奉公, cultural capital 文化資本, *chōnin*

Introduction

The education of girls proves an excellent case study for the investigation of culture in the early modern and modern periods. This essay will explore girls’ learning in the townsman class in the late Edo period, particularly that of girls who lived in urban areas like Edo and its environs. The discussion begins with general schooling for girls and then the focus shifts to their learning in performing arts, particularly *shamisen* 三味線. In order to bring out the distinctive features of Japanese practice, this essay also offers a comparison of the situation in Edo with nineteenth century England. This essay will shed light on class distinctions in the

1 The author would like to thank Mark Langager and the two anonymous referees at *Japan Review* for very helpful comments on earlier drafts. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.

late Edo period and touch on the changes brought to the study of music by the Meiji Restoration (1868). The primary focus here is on girls of the townsman class—which comprised both merchants and artisans—but the education of samurai and, briefly, peasant class girls is also considered. Together they constituted—at least in theory—the class structure of Edo Japan (1603–1867). The townsman class can certainly be further subdivided according to economic situation but, as will become evident below, most townspeople shared a similar mentality, which was distinct from that of the samurai, whose class made up 6 to 7 percent of the whole population during the Edo period.²

This paper's primary interest is in an exploration of girls' learning of the *shamisen* and *shamisen* music (*shamisen ongyoku* 三味線音曲) in the late Edo period. The *shamisen*, a three-stringed plucked lute, was brought via Okinawa to Japan in the sixteenth century and became an indispensable music instrument in kabuki and bunraku. As it was portable, it was also used to accompany various kinds of songs, for example *tokiwazu* 常磐津, *gidayū* 義太夫, *jōruri*, *kouta* 小唄, and *nagauta* 長唄. It became the most popular musical instrument for the parents of Edo period townsmen to have their daughters learn. There are, however, few contemporary records of girls' music study, even for *shamisen*. It is also difficult to find either pictures or wood-block prints of the girls of the townsman class playing *shamisen*, particularly at home before their families. So why did these girls learn the *shamisen*, and how did their motivations to study music differ from other girls in other social classes and, indeed, in other countries?

Victorian England with its established culture, provides a relatively clear example of girls' music learning in the modern West, the model that Meiji Japan sought to imitate. While no simple comparison between Victorian era (1837–1901) England and late Edo culture in Japan is of course possible, it is not difficult to find interesting and informative contrasts between girls' learning in these two cultures. Comparisons between the two may serve to highlight the distinctive cultural, social and economic capital girls (or their parents) sought by taking lessons in performing arts in the Edo period, and help to shed a brighter light on the social role of women in Edo culture. That said, few records on women survive even from mid nineteenth century Japan, so it will be necessary to draw on a wide range of sources, including fiction writing and such material objects as board games. Taken together, such evidence as there is paints a clear enough picture of the activities of these women in the early nineteenth century.

The Schooling of Girls in Nineteenth Century Edo

Terakoya 寺子屋 is a name that points to the medieval practice of priests instructing the common people. In the Edo period, however, *terakoya* came to designate local private schools more generally. The Meiji government counted 15,000 *terakoya*, but it is now thought that there were approximately 75,000 such schools in Japan.³ Some scholars estimate that as many as 86 percent of children in Edo went to such a school.⁴ This proportion seems a little high, but considering that there was in the 1850s a *terakoya* even on

2 Kitō 2002, p. 105.

3 Ōishi 2007, p. 76.

4 Ototake 1970, *chūkan* pp. 610–612.

Hachijōjima 八丈島, a remote island some 300 km south of Tokyo to which criminals were exiled, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that there were *terakoya* everywhere in the Edo period.⁵ Even before the establishment of the modern public schooling system, foreigners who visited Japan at the end of the Edo period were invariably surprised at the literacy of Japanese people. Literacy was more widespread among Japanese men and women than in England or elsewhere in Europe.⁶ The basis of the high literacy of Meiji Japanese was laid in the Edo period.

Most *terakoya* were run by not samurai but by priests, Confucian scholars, doctors and merchants, and there was also a considerable number of female teachers.⁷ Traditionally, these schools did not formally set a tuition fee, and if parents could not pay for lessons in cash, they could pay the teachers in kind. For example, rice cakes and vegetables produced by parents were commonly accepted in lieu. Some schools separated girls from boys, but most employed a co-educational system, particularly with younger pupils. Ordinarily, children started going to *terakoya* when they were six years old, and most of them left school three or four years later.⁸ It seems that girls of the townsman class went to *terakoya* almost as often as boys. Table 1 is based on data from *terakoya* in nineteenth century Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka. It shows the proportion of female pupils in different residential areas in the nineteenth century before 1868.⁹

Table 1. Female Pupils in the Edo Period

Area		Female pupil numbers as a percentage of male pupil numbers (%)	<i>Terakoya</i>					Total number of schools
			Boys' schools (%)	Girls' schools (%)	Co-educational schools			
					(%)	boys in majority	girls in majority	
Tokyo (Edo)	A	94.8	1.0	0.5	98.5	54.0	44.5	191
	B	82.9	0	0	100.0	64.2	35.8	67
	C	73.3	0	0	100.0	71.8	28.2	39
	D	63.8	1.0	0	99.0	91.5	7.5	191
Kyoto	City	74.2	1.3	2.7	96.0	89.3	6.7	75
	Surroundings	42.9	52.7	0.5	46.8	46.1	0.7	489
Osaka	City	71.2	0	0	100.0	84.8	15.2	79
	Satellite towns	61.7	0	0	100.0	90.5	9.5	21
	Rural areas	48.1	5.2	0	94.8	92.9	1.9	571

Note A: Townsman areas; B: Mixed samurai and townsman areas; C: Samurai areas; D: Rural areas

5 Ibid., *jōkan* pp. 500–501.

6 Dore 1965, p. 291.

7 A survey of teachers of *terakoya* in Edo based on the *Kaigaku meisai shirabe* 開学明細調 of Meiji 6 (1873) reveals that eighty six out of 762 respondents were female (Ichikawa and Ishiyama 2006, p. 13). Another investigation based on the records of *Nihon kyōikushi shiryō* 日本教育史資料 published in 1890, found fifty three female administrators of *terakoya* in Edo, out of a total of 488 (Sugano 1998, p. 142).

8 Ichikawa and Ishiyama 2006, pp. 60–64.

9 Fukaya 1998, p. 35.

It is clear that townsman areas had the most girls in school, followed by those areas in which townsmen and samurai co-habited. Why were the parents of the townsman class so keen to have their daughters go to *terakoya*? Was this phenomenon peculiar to nineteenth century Edo, or can it be found at other times and places in Japan? *Onna shikimoku* 女式目, first published in the seventeenth century, has this to say:

The girls of the townsman class will become the wives of merchants, and so they are encouraged to be literate to help with their family business... People who cannot write are called illiterate. These people have eyes, but they are like the blind.¹⁰

This text was republished several times during the Edo period and the same point is found in the eighteenth century version, as well.¹¹ The nineteenth century *Onna shikimoku kagami kusa* 女式目鏡草 (1852), changed this passage significantly. It no longer refers to either reading or writing, but it encourages girls of the merchant class to learn division and multiplication with an abacus, which suggests that by the end of the Edo period it was taken for granted that girls would learn to read and write.¹² The parents of the townsman class seem indeed to have taken a practical approach to their daughters' education for almost the whole Edo period, from the seventeenth century through to the middle of the nineteenth.

If we shift our gaze to England, say in the middle of the nineteenth century, we find a striking contrast. Common women simply did not attend school.¹³ We can get some idea of levels of literacy in England and Wales by looking at the proportion of people able to sign their own name on the marriage register; at least, anyone unable to sign their own name is certainly not literate. In 1840, 40 to 50 percent of brides could do so, a figure which rises to 73 percent in 1870.¹⁴ The level of actual literacy, of course, could have been significantly lower than this. Even in the early 1850s, while some 87 percent of both boys and girls in England were learning to read, only about 60 percent of boys were learning to write, compared to 56 percent of girls.¹⁵ Most working class children went to so-called dame schools, which might teach no more than reading and perhaps spelling, sewing and knitting. It is hard to determine whether a common curriculum was taught to both girls and boys.¹⁶ For the first half of the nineteenth century, the dame schools were an important form of schooling for working-class girls, and were often combined with attendance at Sunday schools where girls learned reading and a little writing.¹⁷

10 *Onna shikimoku*, p. 26. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.

11 For example, *Misao kyōkun onna shikimoku* 貞節教訓女式目, pp. 672–673. According to *Kokusho sōmokuroku* 国書総目録, the oldest version of *Onna shikimoku* was published around the Kan'ei 寛永 era (1624–1664) and a surviving copy is now owned by Seikidō bunko 成篋堂文庫. The *Onna shikimoku* cited here is owned by Seikidō bunko, but there is no record of the precise year of publication. The oldest version with a clear year of publication dates to 1660. *Misao kyōkun onna shikimoku* was published in 1751. Even though the title is different, its content is the same as the Seikidō version.

12 *Onna shikimoku kagami kusa* based on photographs published online <http://ir.u-gakugei.ac.jp/handle/2309/7878>, p. 50.

13 Purvis 1989, pp. 75–79.

14 Stephens 1998, p. 27.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

16 Purvis 1989, p. 80. There were both mixed-sex and single-sex dame schools, and some gender differences in curricula were clear; knitting and sewing were taught to girls only.

17 Purvis 1991, pp. 15–16.

Japanese *terakoya* had a much broader curriculum: they taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and ethics for women following formal text books more intensively than in England.¹⁸ It was not only natural for girls of the townsman class to attend *terakoya*, they were often also made to take other lessons (*keiko* 稽古) outside school, for example in playing Japanese musical instruments, particularly the *shamisen*, and singing and dancing. Commoner parents wanted their daughters to be good at the performing arts. Some could easily afford their daughters' education, but others who struggled to afford the fees appear to have had still greater enthusiasm for their daughters' education.

2. Girls' Learning in the Performing Arts

2.1 Roots of *Shamisen* Study

Miyako fūzoku kagami 都風俗鑑, published in 1681, has the following to say of girls who learn performing arts, including the *shamisen* which had spread rapidly since its introduction from Okinawa in the sixteenth century.

In cities, if parents have daughters with good looks, they send those daughters out to the provinces, and put them in service with country lords. There are a good number of people who originally came from low class families, but became rich through their daughters' service. If such parents have a girl with sophisticated beauty, they place great hopes in her. In order to have her support the family, they raise her carefully and have her become literate and learn calligraphy or take *shamisen* lessons. Or, if they think that it might be valuable for her future, they send her to street performers to learn dancing.¹⁹

Miyako fūzoku kagami is referring to the situation in Kyoto, but within a few decades girls who could dance or play *shamisen* came to serve in the mansions of daimyo in Edo, the military capital of Tokugawa Japan. *Ochibo shū* 落穂集, an essay written by Daidōji Yūzan 大道寺友山 in 1727, appears to describe the origin of the practice. Daidōji only says "this place" 御当地, but it is clear from context that he is talking about Edo here.

Q: There are so many women who earn money by giving lessons in dancing, *kouta* popular songs, or *shamisen* in this place. Was it similar when you were young, or is it a contemporary trend?

A: When I was young, even though people wanted to employ dancers at a high wage, there was not a single female dancer from the townsman class. *Shamisen* players were mainly blind women, so if people saw an ordinary woman play the *shamisen*, the whole town would talk about her. Thus, some daimyos employed a few blind female players and had them play the *shamisen* or sing *kouta*, when they wanted some amusement. However, blind *shamisen*

18 Ichikawa and Ishiyama 2006, p. 23.

19 *Miyako fūzoku kagami*, p. 450. Although women had performed in public in earlier times, for example in Okuni kabuki 阿国歌舞伎 (Okuni died out after 1613), they were forbidden to perform in public in 1629 by the Tokugawa government.

players cannot be found nowadays. Numbers of young dancers and *shamisen* players have become a common sight in Edo since the Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704). Generally speaking, parents spend a large amount of money in order to have their daughters become dancers. Given this expense, these parents expect to have their daughters serve in the mansions of daimyo whose land is worth six or seven thousand or ten thousand *koku* 石. This is the reason why parents choose teachers and spend a huge amount of money on lessons for the girls. Even though lords do not originally set out to have love affairs with these girls, it is natural for them to let their guard down when surrounded by girls so young and beautiful.²⁰

From the end of the seventeenth century, particularly in the big cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka, it was becoming popular among townsmen to have their daughters learn dancing, *koto* 琴, *shamisen* and calligraphy, and the trend continued until the nineteenth century. Almost two hundred years after the publication of *Miyako fūzoku kagami*, Kitagawa Morisada 喜田川守貞 (b. 1810–?) wrote *Morisada mankō* 守貞謄稿. In this text, begun in 1837 and completed in 1853, Morisada set down what he had heard and observed about local mores and customs, particularly about the townsmen mainly in the Bunka 文化 and Bunsei 文政 eras (1804–30). With regard to the conventions of girls' learning, his observations echo those of seventeenth century commentators.

Recently girls have come to learn *jōruri* and *shamisen* more enthusiastically than any other subjects, such as sewing... However, this convention has been maintained for more than one hundred years [sic]. Nowadays girls in Edo in particular start learning at the age of seven or eight, and their mothers are very keen to have them take lessons. Most townsman families want their daughters to be good at some performing art so that their talent might gain them entry to service with samurai families. Without experience of this service, it is hard for girls to make a good marriage, and without any talent in performing arts, it is hard to be chosen to serve in samurai families. This is why the daughters of townsmen study *shamisen* and *koto* seriously... At the same time, the reason why parents in Kyoto and Osaka are not as keen to have their daughters take lessons on the *shamisen* as those in Edo is that [Kyoto] girls do not serve in samurai families.²¹

The parents of the townsman class of Edo wanted to have their daughters attend domain lords or high ranked officers from an early age. Due to the obligation of alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai* 参勤交代) imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate, approximately two hundred and fifty daimyo maintained compounds in Edo. Apart from these domain lords, the upper vassals of the Tokugawa family, *hatamoto* 旗本, who numbered approximately five thousand in the Kansei 寛政 era (1789–1801) lived permanently in Edo from one generation to the next. Around two hundred and fifty of the *hatamoto* families had a good income of over

20 *Ochibo shū*, pp. 359–360.

21 *Morisada mankō* vol. 3, p. 436.

three thousand *koku*, and they enjoyed high status as officials.²² Thus the daughters of the townsman class had a real chance to serve with samurai families in Edo, if they had talent in the performing arts. Serving at the residence of a daimyo or high ranked samurai in this way was called *buke hōkō* 武家奉公.

It was natural for parents aspiring to send their daughters on such service to have them take lessons in performing arts in which samurai women themselves did not engage. Kitagawa's statement that parents in Edo, or in the east of Japan, were more enthusiastic about *buke hōkō* than those in Kyoto is reasonable, as Kyoto was the city of court nobles, who had their own culture, different again from the samurai.

2.2 Entering Service

In *Ukiyo buro* 浮世風呂, Shikitei Sanba 式亭三馬 (1776–1822) takes a humorous look at daily life and culture in late Edo period Japan through the conversations of customers at a public bath. The text is in four parts, which were published one at a time from 1809 to 1813. One chapter, styled “Jochū yu no irō” 女中湯之遺漏, serves to highlight the townsman class enthusiasm for girls' education. The girl in this story, “of the age of ten or eleven,” works to the following schedule:

Rising	Arrange desks at <i>terakoya</i> and take <i>shamisen</i> lesson at teacher's home.
Breakfast	Take dance lesson at teacher's home and learn reading and writing at <i>terakoya</i> .
2 o'clock	After bathing, take <i>koto</i> lesson at teacher's home. Practice <i>shamisen</i> and <i>koto</i> at home. Play a little.
At night	Practice <i>koto</i> . ²³

It is not plausible to suggest that a ten year old girl chose such a tight schedule for herself. Even though this is a fictional tale, Ototake Iwazō 乙竹岩藏 reports that the reality was very similar.²⁴ Why does the heroine's mother have her daughter study so hard? For no other reason than that she wants her daughter to serve at the residence of a lord or samurai officer. In Part Two of *Ukiyo buro*, “Jochū yu no maki” 女中湯之巻, published in 1810, two mothers of the townsman class talk about the lessons their daughters are taking and their service with the domain lords in Edo.²⁵ The daughter of one mother learns dance, and is fortunately able to start serving a domain lord from the age of six. This was in reality not uncommon, and such young girls were accompanied by their nurse. The parents had to pay the costs of the nurse and of lessons for their daughter, even though she lived in the domain lord's residence. The other mother in the story has not yet been able to get her daughter into samurai service. She says her daughter has been learning *koto* and laments the fact that a girl who can dance can go into service much earlier than a girl who can play the *koto*. The former mother is proud of her daughter and recounts the merits of service to the latter mother:

22 Suzuki 1973, pp. 208–209.

23 *Ukiyo buro*, p. 162.

24 Ototake 1970, *chūkan* p. 728.

25 *Ukiyo buro*, pp. 99–102.

If your daughter is accepted into the residence of a lord or high-ranked officer of the Tokugawa government, she will automatically gain good manners. It is hard to improve her manners at home. Through service at the residence, she will improve herself in various other respects. Yes, she will acquire some distinction through such an experience.²⁶

High ranked samurai or domain lords did not accept girls of the townsman class directly into service. Rather girls were initially attached to different ladies in waiting at the samurai mansion. They were called “maids of ladies in waiting” (*matamono* 又者, *heyakata* 部屋方 or *heyako* 部屋子), and learned samurai customs and proper manners from their mistress, who assumed a somewhat parental relationship with these girls; the girls called their mistresses *heya oya sama* 部屋親様, which might be translated as “chamber mother.” Later, once accustomed to samurai culture, these girls then served the samurai family directly. The concern of parents was not that their daughters earn an income from this service; rather that they gain the tastes, manners and style of samurai women.²⁷

The case of Shibue Io 渋江五百 (1816–1884), the fourth wife of Shibue Chūsai 渋江抽齋 (1805–1858) may serve as a good example of a girl who went into samurai service. Io was born into a family running a wholesale hardware business in Edo. Her father was sufficiently wealthy to provide her with tutoring in reading, writing, and performing arts. She was trained in the martial arts, too, even though her family belonged to the townsman class. When Io was ten or eleven, she went to Edo castle 江戸城 to serve as a junior attendant. She was attached to the chief lady-in-waiting of the time, Anegakōji 姉小路. Io left Edo castle at the age of thirteen and began service with Lord Tōdō’s 藤堂 family one year later in 1830.²⁸ Io employed two maids and paid for her own food. Her father invested a large amount of money in her service in the Tōdō residence. According to Mori Ōgai’s 森鷗外 non fiction essay, *Shibue Chūsai*, daimyo residences required applicants like Io take an examination and interview. For example, at the residence of the Yamanouchi 山内, the lord of Tosa 土佐藩主, Io had sat a test that included a calligraphy question asking her to write a poem of her own composition. She was also asked to chant a *tokiwazu*, a type of music for kabuki plays accompanied on the *shamisen*.²⁹ Her good education and then her service in the residences of domain lords facilitated Io’s marriage across status boundaries to Shibue Chūsai, a medical doctor of the Hirosaki domain 弘前藩, who later became an attendant of the twelfth Tokugawa shogun, Ieyoshi 家慶.

Io’s interview was hardly exceptional, as can be seen for example in the diary of the lord of Yamato Kōriyama 大和郡山, Yanagisawa Nobutoki 柳沢信鴻. The diary, known as *Enyū nikki* 宴遊日記, was written during his retirement from 1773 to 1785. He liked *shamisen* music so much that he often set a performance examination to applicants at his mansion in Edo.

26 Ibid., p. 101.

27 McClellan 1985, p. 29. “The fact is that women serving in military houses as Io did had no expectation of making a lot of money. They were there to be educated. Today, their counterparts would go to women’s colleges... After all, an education is something one spends money on; going to school is hardly a money-making occupation.” The original version in Japanese is *Shibue Chūsai* by Mori Ōgai. Mori 2009, pp. 101–102.

28 Tōdō Takayuki, the eleventh lord of Tsu 津, a domain of 320,000 *koku* in Ise (what is now Mie prefecture).

29 Concerning the life of Shibue Io, see McClellan 1985. The description of this test can be found on p. 27. In Japanese, see Mori 2009, p. 99.

In one entry, he wrote: “Jōruri player named Koyo. Bad.”³⁰ He seems to have been interested in those who had taught *shamisen* and *gidayū* to his applicants, sometimes recording their names.³¹ According to the diary, he employed thirteen girls between 1773 and 1783, each of whom was accomplished at the *shamisen*, dance, or singing accompanied on the *shamisen*. Most of them were apparently girls of townsman birth in Edo.³²

2.3 The Daughters of Rural Kantō

It was perhaps natural for a townsman living in Edo to want his daughters to serve at the mansions of lords and high ranked samurai in Edo, but rural entrepreneurs in eastern Japan, particularly in the wider Kantō 関東 area, were no less enthusiastic. For example, some daughters of rural entrepreneurs from what is now the Tama 多摩 area went to serve in the Ōoku 大奥 of Edo Castle, and in the mansions of some domain lords.³³ In the north western region of Kantō, a girl named Suzuki Tame 鈴木ため (later called Tsune つね) was born into such a family in 1842. Her father, the second son of a village head (*nanushi* 名主), ran a plantation for sericulture, indigo and tea, and he kept a diary entitled *Kōshi nikki* 公私日記. According to this diary, Tame started not only to learn reading and writing but also to take *shamisen* lessons at age 7.³⁴ After the first *shamisen* teacher retired, her parents let a blind *shamisen* teacher stay with them repeatedly while she gave lessons to Tame.³⁵ Tame went into service with the lord of Murakami domain 村上藩 in Edo in 1856, aged 13.³⁶ It is interesting that women in the same area and relatives who had experience of service often helped young applicants to find such employment. Even with such an introduction, girls without accomplishment in the performing arts seem to have ended up as general maids called *otamon* 御多聞.³⁷

Sekiguchi Tōemon 関口藤右衛門 (1807–1864), the head of a family of hereditary village heads, moneylenders and night soil merchants in Namamugi 生麦 near Edo, in what is now Yokohama, sent his three daughters to serve as maids with daimyo, while he sent his sons to study at private academies in Edo.³⁸ One of these three daughters, Chie 千恵, apparently learned *shamisen* before she first went into service with the Kinoshita family 木下 in their mansion in Edo in 1807.³⁹ After serving with several families, she married a son of a merchant living in Edo in 1815.⁴⁰ Her marriage into the merchant class suggests that both the farmer class and the merchant class had the same attitude to samurai service. In the next generation of the Sekiguchi family, Chie’s niece Ai 愛 was sent to her mother’s parents’

30 *Enyū nikki*, p. 28.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 564.

32 Hata 2001, p. 39.

33 A special exhibition, *Tama no josei no buke hōkō* 多摩の女性の武家奉公, held in 1999 exhibited records of eleven girls who went into service from 1794 to 1868 (Edo Tatemono En 1999).

34 *Kōshi nikki* vol. 12, p. 23. On the 7th day, 2nd month, Kaei 2 (1849), she started *tenarai* 手習. *Kōshi nikki* vol. 13 p. 68. On the 1st day, 8th month, Kaei 3 (1850), the family held a special event to show Tame’s achievements in *shamisen* and dance, so she had clearly started her studies some time earlier.

35 *Kōshi nikki* vol. 14, the 15th day, 3rd month, Kaei 4 (1851), p. 40, and the 24th day, 8th month, 1851, p. 84.

36 Kōno 1988, pp. 99–103.

37 Hata 2001, pp. 51–52.

38 Hisaki and Mita 1981, pp. 82–90.

39 Ōguchi 1988, p. 186. Her father paid for changing the strings of her *shamisen* in the 8th month, Bunka 3 (1806).

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 190–191.

home and studied several arts, including the *shamisen*, before going into service in the mansion of the Saga lord, Nabeshima 鍋島.⁴¹

These girls did not receive a high salary from the domain. It seems that two *bu* 分 was considered reasonable for the first year in this period. By way of comparison, Chie's father spent three *ryō* 兩 (twelve *bu*) on preparing her for service. For example, he paid two *bu* for a single summer kimono (*katabira* 帷子) for her to wear while in service.⁴² The Sekiguchi family expended enormous sums to ensure their daughters could gain refinement in the homes of high class samurai.⁴³

Yoshida Ito 吉田いと was born into a wealthy family that ran a textile factory in Kiryū 桐生, in what is now Gunma prefecture, more than 100 km north of Edo, in the first half of the nineteenth century. She learned various arts, tea, *shamisen*, flower arrangement, sewing, poetry composition, and some classic literature. She was particularly accomplished at calligraphy and the *koto*. When she reached fourteen years old, her parents sent her to Tachibana Moribe 橋守部 in Edo. Ito's father had studied nativist learning (*kokugaku* 国学) under Tachibana, and the Yoshida and Tachibana families knew each other well. Ito lived with the Tachibana family and continued to take lessons in arts in Edo. Ito's mother wanted to put her into service in the household of a retired domain lord, and Tachibana tried but failed to assist with this plan. Ito therefore returned home and married a man from the same province.⁴⁴ Samurai service was not essential to Ito's marriage prospects, but nevertheless it was the clear goal of her education.

2.4 Goals and Dreams

It was possible for daughters of wealthy townsmen and rural entrepreneurs, and for those whose families were not so rich, to make a good marriage after serving, and a woman's refinement became an element of the family's economic and social status. Such service might offer good opportunities to meet high officers of the Tokugawa government, and some girls became the concubines of those men. This was not dishonorable, but rather desirable. This is suggested, for example, by the *Yūsō nikki* 游相日記, a travel sketch book compiled in 1827 by Watanabe Kazan 渡辺華山 (1793–1841), a famous painter. He was a retainer of Tawara 田原藩, a small domain of 12,000 *koku*, and made a trip to Atsugi 厚木, west of Edo, in order to see Ogin お銀, the mother of an illegitimate son of the previous lord. She had been born into a peasant family. After serving the lord and giving birth to his second son, she left the mansion and went back to her village, while her son was brought up as a little lord at the mansion. Villagers told Kazan that she wore brocade and put ornaments in her hair. Back in the village, she married a farmer who had been granted a surname, that denotes a man of relatively high social rank.⁴⁵ Indeed, it was not uncommon for daughters of wealthy townsmen who became concubines of relatively poor samurai to join the household with a formal trousseau as if they had married.⁴⁶

41 Ōguchi 1995, pp. 202–203.

42 Ōguchi 1988, p. 187.

43 Ōguchi 1995, pp. 171–173 (for Chie) and pp. 203–208 (for Ai).

44 Takai 1991, pp. 34–52.

45 *Yūsō nikki*, pp. 227–228.

46 Yamakawa 1983, p. 137.

Becoming the favored concubine of a domain lord seems to have been a kind of fairy tale for the poor in particular. At least, this is suggested by a fictional example in *Hachigorō shusse* 八五郎出世 (also known as *Mekauma* 妾馬), one of the most famous *rakugo* 落語 written in the Edo period.⁴⁷ Hachigorō, his mother, and his younger sister Otsuru お鶴 lived in a *nagaya* 長屋, a humble terraced dwelling. A domain lord happened to see Otsuru from his palanquin and liked the look of her. She was called to his mansion and became a concubine. Her mother was delighted with Otsuru's fortune. After Otsuru gave birth to an heir, Hachigorō was called to the mansion and appointed a samurai.⁴⁸

Sugoroku 双六 offer further evidence of these practices. *Sugoroku* are board games in which the players aim at a goal, called “*agari*” 上がり, enjoying travel through an imaginary world in the process. *Oku hōkō shusse sugoroku* 奥奉公出世双六, an illustrated *sugoroku* painted circa 1844–1864 by Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞 and designed by Mantei Ōga 万亭応賀, ranks female jobs in service with domain lords or high ranked samurai families, and regards becoming a concubine as a promotion for girls of the townsman class. The *Oku hōkō shusse sugoroku* starts from *obashita* 御端 and *osue* 御末, maids of all work, and among the jobs portrayed on the way to the top are *shamisen* playing and dancing. *Oheyasama* 御部屋様, a concubine who has borne children, is placed as the goal on the right side, while the goal on the left side is *rōjo* 老女, the highest ranked lady in waiting, who organizes the household of the mansion. The concubine says:

A girl like me who was born into a humble family now has such a high status.
This is a gift from heaven. When I think of this, I always pledge myself
greatly to respect the master's wife.⁴⁹

Another *shusse sugoroku* called *Musume shogei shusse sugoroku* 娘諸芸出世双六 shows what sorts of talent are required for service and advancement in a samurai mansion. It is clear that *shamisen* is one of them. This *sugoroku* also places the concubine and the highest ranked lady in waiting, here called *Otoshiyori* 御年寄, as the goals for girls in service.⁵⁰ We might note finally that Buyō Inshi 武陽隠士 in his *Seji kenbunroku* 世事見聞録 (1816), comments on how even the poor and vulgar living in small rooms at the back of *nagaya* have their daughters learn the performing arts of the theatre, hoping they will become concubines or musicians and dancers. He also laments that some samurai keep concubines and enjoy having them dance and play *shamisen*, *tsutsumi* 鼓 and *taiko* drums.⁵¹

2.5 Dubious Learning

Even in the nineteenth century, the *shamisen* was thought to be a musical instrument for courtesans. The 1847 version of the *Onna chōhōki* says of the *shamisen*:

47 The year of its first performance is unclear, but it was evidently an Edo period product. See *Rakugo jiten zōho* 1981, p. 427.

48 *Hachigorō shusse (Mekauma)*, pp. 48–77.

49 *Oku hōkō shusse sugoroku* can be viewed online at <http://ir.u-gakugei.ac.jp/handle/2309/9624> (last accessed 30 May 2011).

50 Walthall 2010, p. 42.

51 *Seji kenbunroku*, pp. 736–737.

Its tone sounds so lecherous that it is not regarded as a musical instrument.⁵²
It is a tool for courtesans. You should definitely not learn to play the *shamisen*.
However, you should learn the names of its parts.⁵³

The final sentence above reveals that the author could not deny the popularity of the *shamisen* in the mid nineteenth century.

Geisha, who came into existence in the demimonde in the middle of the eighteenth century, were not just prostitutes, but literally specialists in performing arts.⁵⁴ They were called to dinner as entertainers to play *shamisen* and drum, and sing. A few other women also performed in the early nineteenth century. These female performers and retired geisha are thought to have become teachers of arts, particularly of *shamisen* music for girls at the end of the Edo period.⁵⁵ As music for solo *shamisen* was rare, these *shamisen* teachers often taught songs accompanied by the *shamisen*. Most were taken from plays about love affairs: tragic love, one-sided love, broken hearts, unconsummated love, hidden love, jealousy, sadness, and passion were common themes.

As samurai pretended to scorn the sound of the *shamisen* as “lecherous,” samurai women ordinarily did not play the instrument, but it was indispensable to such performing arts as kabuki, bunraku puppet plays, and accompaniment for popular songs. Given the negative official opinion, samurai feigned a lack of interest in popular culture, but domain lords and high ranked samurai enjoyed popular music at home, having girls play musical instruments and perform popular dance instead of the more traditional *noh* 能 dance. Such girls were a desirable addition to the staff of a samurai household. Naturally, the *shamisen* was not played exclusively by women. Some low-ranking retainers, who accompanied their lords to Edo, learned *shamisen*. The lord of Kii 紀伊 restricted the instrument in the domain as a frivolous activity.⁵⁶ A retainer, Sakai Banshirō 酒井伴四郎, described the house of a *shamisen* teacher in Edo as having an atmosphere of “*koiki*” 小粋, an urban and sexualized style popular among commoners.⁵⁷ Indeed, female *shamisen* teachers seem to have been especially glamorous and sexualized. *Shunshoku mu tamagawa* 春色六玉川, an erotic novel written in 1832, says these female *shamisen* teachers struggled to earn enough, and many became the subject of salacious rumor, at the least.⁵⁸



Figure 1. *Onna kuku no koe* 女九九乃声, 1787 (Tenpō 7). National Diet Library, Tokyo, YD-京-210 (Microfiche).

Caption: “Women who don’t know lovers’ games, *kouta*, or *jōruri* are graceful.”

52 The sound of the *shamisen* had long been called “lecherous” elsewhere. For example, the Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680–1747) called it “*insei*” 淫声 (*Dokugo*, p. 335) and a text for girls, published in 1738, describes its sound as “*inran*” 淫乱 (*Onna yōbun shikishi zome*, p. 259).

53 *Onna chōhōki*.

54 Nakano 1982, p. 178.

55 Asano 1995, p. 62.

56 Vaporis 2008, p. 197.

57 *Edo e bossoku nikki chō* 江戸江発足日記帳, 13th day, 6th month, Man'en 1 万延元年 (1860), p. 537.

58 *Shunshoku mu tamagawa*, p. 71.

According to *Fujiokaya nikki* 藤岡屋日記, female *shamisen* and *jōruri* teachers in Edo were forbidden to give lessons to men in the 3rd month of Tenpō 天保 13 (1842);⁵⁹ but in the 8th month eighteen female teachers were arrested for precisely that offence.⁶⁰ Female *shamisen* teachers were not models to be respected or admired. Parents of the townsman class, nonetheless, sent their daughters to them for instruction.

The study of performing arts was calculated to advance girls' careers, but not necessarily in the field of music. True, there were some professional female singers of *jōruri* active in the early nineteenth century, who wore male costume and sang in a masculine register. They became very popular, but *jōruri* performance by women was prohibited by the government in 1833. Asano Miwako 浅野美和子 suggests that some women of the townsman class taught music, and went on to become professional musicians.⁶¹ It remains, however, that it was not the goal of the majority of parents to have their daughters be professional musicians. We certainly never encounter a professional musician as a goal in any *sugoroku* game.

There were many young girls who did not advance to the top of the musical ladder, and the fictional *Ukiyo buro*, which reflects the dry humor of nineteenth century Edo citizens, describes such a girl after she had served with a samurai family. She had absorbed the culture of samurai ladies and her very way of speaking was different from that of the townsman class. People criticized her snobbish air, but it is clear that they felt jealous of her and her acquired samurai culture. A young man fell in love with her, and let her keep the life style of upper class samurai, even though he could not afford it. Needless to say, she was good at tea, flower arrangement, and the game of smelling incense, as well as playing the *shamisen*.⁶² For the purpose of becoming sophisticated and different from common women of the townsman class, she had had to learn *shamisen* before taking up service with a samurai.

3. Girls of the Samurai Class in the Edo Period

Shamisen and *shamisen* music ordinarily belonged to the culture of the townsman class. What though can we know of the attitude of the samurai class to this art in particular? Soon after Ieyasu's 家康 victory over the Toyotomi 豊臣 family, the Tokugawa

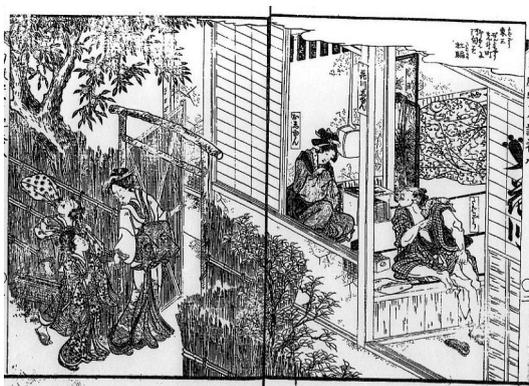


Figure 2. *Shunden jitsujitsu ki* 旬殿実々記
In this illustration from Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴, *Shunden jitsujitsu ki* (1808), a mother and her daughter visit the heroine, Oshun お旬, and ask her to give lessons in *shamisen*. The girl, Konui 小縫, is jealous of her friend, who is a good *shamisen* player. Although Konui's father is very serious and thinks popular music leads to an immoral life, the mother wants to have her daughter learn it. National Diet Library, Tokyo, YDM89420 (Microfiche).

59 *Fujiokaya nikki* vol. 2, p. 248.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 285.

61 Asano 1995, pp. 60–62.

62 *Ukiyo buro*, pp. 192–193.

government required each lord and samurai to master both martial and literary arts.⁶³ The accomplishments suitable for samurai had the role of maintaining a warrior mentality and dignity; for example, loyalty to the shogunate, simplicity, stoicism, and bravery. Samurai constantly questioned the meaning of the arts throughout the Tokugawa period. Even at the end of the Edo period, the last great elder of the Tokugawa shogunate, Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 (1815–1860) clearly reaffirmed that each samurai should contribute both to self-cultivation (*shūshin* 修身) and to state governance (*chikoku heitenka* 治国平天下) through the performance of tea.⁶⁴ He thought that samurai should be conscious of their status in every situation, even when they were enjoying tea. Girls of the samurai class were also required to maintain self-composure.

Sugimoto Etsuko 杉本鉞子 (1873–1950) wrote about the days of her youth in her book, *Buke no musume* 武家の娘. Her father was a retainer of the Nagaoka domain 長岡藩 (in what is now Niigata prefecture), which supported the Tokugawa government and fought against the imperial forces in the civil war of 1868–9. Her family preserved the samurai mentality through to the Meiji period. She says that the daughters of samurai were required to maintain both dignity and moderation in their posture even while sleeping.⁶⁵ Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山 (1811–1864) noted that girls born into samurai families must learn writing and reading, but he questioned whether it was good for them to read *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 because of its immorality.⁶⁶ He also sought to prohibit girls from playing the *shamisen* because such things lead girls to a bad way of life.⁶⁷ Shōzan encouraged girls to play the more refined *koto*, a thirteen-stringed, plucked zither. A lady playing the *koto* was the ideal image of modesty and elegance for the medieval Japanese, making the *koto* a suitable musical instrument for late Edo girls of the samurai class; Shōzan also emphasized the importance of sewing. The most famous text for girls' learning, *Onna daigaku* 女大学, treats women more strictly still. It says:

A woman must be intent on the duties of her household, and must not weary of weaving, sewing, and spinning..., nor must she feed her eyes and ears with kabuki, *kouta*, and *jōruri*.⁶⁸

From an essay describing a samurai family of the Mito domain 水戸藩, *Buke no josei* 武家の女性, written by Yamakawa Kikue 山川菊栄 (1890–1980), it is clear that samurai girls of Mito at the end of the Tokugawa period learned *koto*, flower arrangement, tea, sewing, weaving and some martial arts.⁶⁹ Yamakawa describes an interesting episode epitomizing the different attitudes to *shamisen* held by samurai and townsman girls. A teacher, a low ranked samurai lady, taught sewing at home. She sometimes went out during the lesson and left the girls in a room alone. If only samurai girls were present in the room in the absence of the

63 See the first article of the Laws for the Military Houses, *Buke shobatto* 武家諸法度 (1615), p. 454, and the Law for Warriors, *Shoshi hatto* 諸士法度 (1635), p. 463.

64 *Sadō no seidō no tasuke to narubeki o agetsuraheru fumi* 茶道の政道の助となるへきを論へる文, pp. 309–314.

65 Sugimoto 1960, p. 384.

66 *Jokun*, pp. 730–731. For the comment on *Genji monogatari*, see *Jokun*, p. 732. This work was written ca. 1840.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 732.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 738. *Onna daigaku*, p. 203.

69 Yamakawa 1983, p. 27. Sewing, weaving, flower arrangement and tea were domestic skills deemed suitable for girls of samurai status. See Sugimoto 1960, p. 383.

teacher, they worked diligently following the teacher's instructions, and the room remained silent. However, if girls of the townsman class were involved, they imitated *shamisen* sounds, theatre plays, and popular shows so cheerfully that even the samurai girls were drawn into laughing.⁷⁰ Even though samurai girls enjoyed such performances from girls of the townsman class in the teacher's absence, they did not imitate them.

Of course, samurai culture was not perfectly uniform. Direct samurai retainers (*hatamoto*) and vassals (*goke nin* 御家人) of the shogunate who lived in Edo had a different lifestyle from samurai who lived in domains. Yamakawa mentions a young bride of a high ranked samurai of Mito. She was a *hatamoto* daughter, and criticized because she enjoyed playing the *shamisen* and *koto* even in the morning. The neighbors all agreed: "It was unbelievable that the daughters of samurai should play the *shamisen* and *koto*." The Mito domain office duly ordered the couple to divorce.⁷¹ However, lower Tokugawa vassals, such as the *yoriki* 与力 and *dōshin* 同心 involved in policing the city of Edo—for example, those who lived in the central area called Hatchōbori 八丁堀—had their daughters learn *shamisen*.⁷² At the end of the period, there were still samurai who were repelled by such a trend.⁷³

Asano Miwako cites two examples of female professional musicians who were born into samurai families at the end of the Edo period. One was born into a family of *bakufu no kishi* 幕府の騎士, mounted warriors of the bakufu, apparently a vassal of the Tokugawa, and learned dancing in Edo.⁷⁴ These women cannot be ignored, but they do not change the fact that the majority of samurai women, particularly those living in rural domains, followed traditional samurai conventions. Yamakawa says that her mother (1857–1947) studied *Onna daigaku* when she was young not only for reading and writing practice, but also for learning proverbs for girls.⁷⁵ Girls of samurai birth were particularly taught that their husbands' house must become their house.⁷⁶ Even at the end of the Edo period, Sakuma Shōzan was saying it was rare for samurai women to go out and that they must stay at home.⁷⁷ Wives of samurai families were required to preserve the lineage of the family and to organize their households.

Samurai parents had little interest in their daughters learning performing arts. Their role rather was to learn to maintain their dignity and pride in their houses. Samurai women thus seem to have been submissive to the house and to have lacked autonomy, while women of the townsman class were involved in the family business or expected to advance its social or commercial standing by serving lords' families. Indeed, they could transform their circumstances by their skills in performing arts. It is ironic that one of the main aims of their study was to absorb samurai culture during service since samurai culture always focused on maintaining the status quo, keeping townsmen in their clearly distinct, and distinctly lower, place.

70 Yamakawa 1983, p. 45.

71 Ibid, p. 101.

72 *Edo jidai bunka* 1978, p. 223.

73 *Iseki Takako nikki*, pp. 30–33. Iseki (1785–1844) was born into a high ranking *hatamoto* family in Edo. In her diary, she criticizes people who followed lower class trends.

74 Asano 1995, p. 61.

75 Yamakawa 1983, p. 33.

76 *Onna daigaku*, p. 202: "In China, marriage is called 'returning,' because a woman must consider her husband's home as her own." This opinion was common during the Edo period. For example, we can find it also in the 1692 and the 1847 versions of *Onna chōhōki*.

77 *Jokun*, p. 731.

4. Musical Accomplishments in Victorian England and Late Edo Japan

It is notable that even wealthy merchants had their daughters take music lessons, and then sent them off to work in daimyo mansions in order to enhance the family's standing. Working was simply not a shameful activity for women of the townsman class in Japan. As discussed before, girls of the townsman class in Edo would become the wives of merchants, and were encouraged to become literate and numerate to help with their family business.⁷⁸ Walthall has analyzed family documents of rural entrepreneurs in nineteenth century Japan, and suggests that women were expected to participate in commerce, and indeed that family prestige might require them to do so. She contrasts them with samurai women, whose contributions were likely to be subordinated to the man's role as government official. Walthall focuses on women of the class of the rural entrepreneurs, but her comment is equally applicable to the townsman class. She also suggests that, unlike in England, where apparently much tighter restrictions were placed on women's economic roles, the family in Japan allowed women the space to define a range of practices for themselves.⁷⁹

From the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth centuries, an industrial, commercial and factory system developed in England. This system, existing outside the home, helped physically to separate work and home, and thus creating a division between production and consumption, between the public domain of "work" and the private sphere of "home." The growing middle class placed an increasing importance on home and housewives. Housewives were distinguished from working class wives who engaged in paid work to supplement the family income. Instead of working outside, women at home, called "The Angels in the House," were supposed to provide peace and shelter for the men who had to encounter all the perils and trials of the outside world.⁸⁰ What were Victorian girls expected to do at home? Victorian girls of respectable families were supposed to acquire a smattering of French, some music and drawing, and fancy needlework. Music in particular was an indispensable attainment for refined girls. For example, there are extant many pictures illustrating girls of different classes, from the middle class to the upper, playing musical instruments at home. Indeed, Queen Victoria (1819–1901) is shown playing the piano for her family. When she was around ten years old (sometime between 1827 and 1830), the future queen entertained her mother's guests on the piano, singing, or reciting poetry.⁸¹ Such a fashion spread rapidly, and pianos became popular across the classes of Victorian England.

According to the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of London in 1851, English piano makers made up thirty eight out of 102 makers from ten different countries participating in the exhibition.⁸² Annual production of the instruments in London was estimated at more than 23,000, of which 80 to 90 percent were uprights (20,000); the remainder were grands and squares. This proportion suggests that most consumers of pianos possessed just small parlors. A girl playing the piano at home was an ideal image of the middle class in nineteenth century England.⁸³ H. R. Hawies estimated in 1871 that there were about 400,000

78 See above note 12.

79 Walthall 1990, pp. 473–475. Walthall quotes from Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, comparing the situations on p. 474.

80 Ruskin 1895, p. 146. "The Angels in the House" is the title of a narrative poem composed by Coventry Patmore (1823–1896). It was first published in 1854 and expanded in 1862.

81 Williams 2009, p. 185.

82 Ehrlich 1990, p. 28.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

pianos and one million pianists in the British Isles, illustrating the instrument's importance in a girl's education.⁸⁴ Of course, most of these were amateurs who performed for their families and friends of the same class.⁸⁵ Girls learned to play and sing for pleasure at home. Even though some progressive schools for middle class girls, for instance Cheltenham Ladies College (established in 1858), provided music classes, girls' parents expected them to amuse their friends with the piano, not to become music teachers.⁸⁶ Teaching music was a suitable job for governesses, women who had tragically lost their position in society, most often due to their father's death.

Most children of the working class and most villagers in nineteenth century England, before the first Education Act of 1870, went to local dame schools. It seems unlikely that all children attended, but even so pupils there learned only the basics of literacy and sewing, not music. There was no question of them becoming music teachers. Victorian women of no class were expected to be virtuosos; it was enough if their playing was pleasant. Performing arts were accomplishments for Victorian "ladies" of leisure, part of the "paraphernalia" provided both by and for husbands and fathers in nineteenth century England. A daughter's level of skill was not important.

The contrast with late Edo Japan is striking. Without real ability in the performing arts, it was impossible for girls of the townsman class to enter samurai service. To this end, parents had their daughters learn *shamisen* industriously, neither as an accomplishment nor for their own pleasure. *Shamisen* playing itself was not cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's term; it was a means to the end of samurai service, which provided that capital. In Victorian England, by contrast, playing the musical instrument itself was cultural capital for girls who were supposed to lead an innocent existence apart from the world as angels, and not acquire great skills at the piano, say. This is a stark contrast with the *shamisen*, which maintained a close relationship with the demimonde, commonly called "*akusho*" 悪所, literally a "bad place."

Conclusion

Comparing the accomplishments of girls in Victorian England and girls in late Edo Japan, we see that both learned performing arts; such skills were valuable for both groups. For both groups of parents, actual musical attainment was secondary because most expected their daughters to make good marriages, not to earn money through music. However, there were considerable differences. Playing the piano or the violin was an ideal for a daughter of a wealthy and respectable family in the Victorian era. A young girl was called "an angel of the family"; she was not hard working, but was expected to maintain high moral standards.

On the other hand, girls of the late Edo period townsman class were more serious about learning and had a clear aim. Their parents had hopes for their development, too. The aim of music lessons was twofold. With talent in those arts not performed by samurai themselves, girls of the townsman class would be able to serve with a samurai family.

84 Ibid., p. 92. Ehrlich quotes from *Music and Morals* written by H. R. Hawies in 1871.

85 Ibid. Ehrlich quotes *Cassell's Household Guide IV* 1869–71, p. 327. "On no account may ladies say 'bravo' to a lady performer," and the author was forced to confess that the "amateur musicians at a party are frequently principally attractive to each other."

86 Purvis 1991, p. 85.

Through this service, they could then acquire the tastes and culture of the samurai. Serving in daimyo houses was likened by Mori Ōgai in *Shibue Chūsai* to attending a fashionable women's college in his day.⁸⁷

Pierre Bourdieu argued that judgments of taste are related to social position. He called such distinctions “cultural capital”; differences in cultural capital marked the differences between the classes. The acquisition of cultural capital depends on immersive unconscious learning, mainly performed within the family, and each individual gradually gains “proper tastes for the class” through suitable schooling. Bourdieu emphasized that class distinctions and preferences were mostly found in the ordinary choices of everyday existence.⁸⁸ Serving with a samurai family was part of the “suitable schooling” for girls with talent in the late Edo period, as Mori Ōgai suggested.

Playing the *shamisen* was proper learning for the townsman class, but not for the samurai. Difference between the classes is easily perceived as overwhelming, but if a girl of the townsman class acquired the instincts of samurai culture, her cultural capital would gain distinction for her and her family. The cultural investment made by daughters of the townsman class in acquiring a specific competence, such as *shamisen*, was orientated to a market that promised attainments transcending the difference in class. This cultural capital might help a girl to make a good marriage in her own class, to advance her career as a lady-in-waiting, or to become a concubine of a high ranking samurai and give birth to a son. Girls who lived in the metropolis of Edo and its surroundings had the opportunity to change their lives with their talent and skill. It can perhaps be said that Japanese girls of the townsman class in Edo were more industrious and made more serious efforts to shape their own futures than their counterparts in Victorian England. Even if their parents initially set the course, success was dependent on the girls' own diligence and ability.

With the Meiji Restoration (1868) and society's enthusiastic adoption of Western culture, girls' lives changed. A new ethics of the family, specifically the concept of “*hōmu*” ホーム, was introduced by Protestant social reformers, who also used the Japanese *katei* 家庭.⁸⁹ They believed that emulating the Western middle class family would enable Japanese women to be modern. The concept of *hōmu* was closely related to that of “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母), which became the goal of girls' education in modern Japan, and the introduction of Western morality meant the station of concubine was no longer respectable.

Girls from respectable families were sent to *jogakkō* 女学校 where they learned Western musical instruments.⁹⁰ There are Meiji pictures a plenty of girls playing Western musical instruments. Such teaching started in missionary schools and gradually spread, so that around 1905 (Meiji 38), playing the violin became popular among *jogakusei* 女学生.⁹¹ Neither these girls nor their parents seem to have been as dedicated to the development of musical ability as people of the townsman class were in the Edo period. Girls carried their violins in conspicuous bags made of colorful cloth. The *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* mocked girls carrying violins saying “they do not know that people can distinguish girls carrying violin cases from

87 McClellan 1985, p. 27. Mori 2009, p. 102. This essay was originally published in the *Ōsaka Mainichi shinbun* 大阪毎日新聞 and the *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* 東京日日新聞 from 13 January to 17 May in 1916.

88 For example, see Bourdieu 1989.

89 Muta thinks that the term *hōmu* was current around 1887. See Muta 1994, p. 53, and Sand 2003, p. 22.

90 Satō 2006, pp. 25–26.

91 Concerning mission schools in particular, see Tanbo 1980, p. 64 and Satō 2006, p. 72. For the popularity of playing the violin among *jogakusei*, see Takahashi 2001, p. 170.



Figure 3. *Wayō gassō no zu* 和洋合奏之図, by Sakaki Teitoku 彭城貞徳 (Japan, 1858–1939), 1906 (Meiji 39). Oil on canvas, 73.2 x 150.4 cm. Collection of Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum. (Reproduced with permission)

girls playing the violin.”⁹² Maybe there was some truth in the intimacy that these girls had no real interest in developing their musical ability. Girls familiar with Western instruments were already highly esteemed as modern and sophisticated. The quality of their violin playing was secondary. Carrying a violin or playing a Western musical instrument had become an ornament for modern Japanese girls in the Meiji period.

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Abbreviations

NKBZ *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*
 SNKT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai*
 NST *Nihon shisō taikai*

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92 From the article on p. 4 of the 27 March edition of the *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* 東京日日新聞 Meiji 42 (1909). *Mainichi shinbun* 毎日新聞 microfilm no. 196.

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