

## Re-contextualizing *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, or When the Fish Declared War on the Greens

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This article focuses on *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, a Muromachi-period (1336–1467) text which describes an imaginary battle between vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods. Its theme of war and its anthropomorphic characters make it one of the oldest instances of *irui gassen mono* (tales of battles between nonhuman beings,) and as such it has been mostly valued for its intertextual relationship with war tales (*gunkimono*). This article has three major aims. First, it introduces this text to a Western audience in order to broaden the scope of investigation of Japanese literature. Second, it attempts to provide a fresh perspective on *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* by proposing to reconsider it as a textbook rather than an *otogizōshi* with a secondary pedagogic aim. The didactic content covered, I argue, was not limited to the acquisition of literacy regarding animals and plants, but included words for other semantic categories and encompassed a broader culinary education that also looked at food for its cultural and symbolic values too. Through this re-contextualization, I question the received view of the text as a parody of the war tale *Heike monogatari*. Finally, this article also offers this case study as a new touchstone for research on anthropomorphism and, more specifically, on its relationship with pedagogy and cognitive criticism.

**Keywords:** *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, *irui gassen mono*, anthropomorphism, food culture, Muromachi-period literature, *otogizōshi*, *ōraimono*, *gunkimono*, parody, cognitive criticism

### Introduction

The Muromachi 室町 period (1336–1467) text known as *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* 精進魚類物語 (Tale of vegetables and fishes) describes a battle between two armies of anthropomorphic foods, vegetarian vs non-vegetarian. It is the first known text to stage such an imaginary clash, but in subsequent centuries the trope was re-elaborated in different ways in various media.<sup>1</sup> This work is also regarded as one of the earliest instances of *irui gassen mono* 異類合戦物 (tales of battles between nonhuman beings), and as such is often

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<sup>1</sup> For a later graphic representation of the conflict, see, for example, the 1859 colored woodblock print by Utagawa Hirokage 歌川広影 (act. ca.1851–1866), *Aomono sakana gunzei okassen no zu* 青物魚軍勢大合戦之図

mentioned in general discussions as representative of this supposedly homogeneous group.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* in the *irui gassen mono* corpus and in the even broader genre of medieval short prose texts (*otogizōshi* お伽草子 or *Muromachi monogatari* 室町物語) has also resulted in an emphasis on its narrative component, its war theme, and consequently its intertextual relationship with war tales (*gunkimono* 軍記物).<sup>3</sup> The fact that the protagonists in this clash are trivial objects points to a satirical intention on the author's part perhaps originating in discontent at the imperial court, whose quiet, enclosed lifestyle was threatened by the rise of the warrior class (*bushi* 武士).<sup>4</sup>

This article builds upon previous research but offers an alternative to the established view. Specifically, I reconsider *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* as a didactic text in which the parodic, entertaining component serves a fundamentally pedagogic agenda. Moreover, I argue that this pedagogic agenda is not limited to imparting literacy through the long lists of words (*monozukushi* 物尽くし) that dominate the first half of the text, but extends to the dissemination of knowledge related to food culture and the ritual calendar.

The first section introduces the text and gives a brief overview of its reception in the secondary literature, and its relationship to the aforementioned “genres.” The second section challenges the reading of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* merely as a parody of the war tale *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tale of the Heike), and refutes the interpretation of the text as satirical.<sup>5</sup> The third section examines scholarly claims about the *monozukushi* food lists, and compares them with those of contemporaneous copybooks (*ōraimono* 往来物). The final section reflects upon the role of the foods mentioned in the story within the context of medieval dietary customs.

In sum, this article has three overarching aims: to introduce *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* to an Anglophone audience in order to broaden the scope of investigation into medieval Japanese literature; to provide a fresh perspective, while implicitly questioning the utility of categorizing all short prose text produced in that period as *otogizōshi*; and to offer a new touchstone for research on anthropomorphism and its relationship with pedagogy, especially with regard to recent trends in cognitive literary theory.

### The Text: What It Is and What It Is Said to Be

The urtext of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*—of which no documentation survives—is thought to have been written sometime in the Muromachi period and is traditionally attributed to a court aristocrat, either Nijō Yoshimoto 二条良基 (1320–1388) or Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良 (1402–1481).<sup>6</sup> There is a consensus that composition predates the Bunmei 文明 era (1469–1487), due to the fact that another *irui gassen mono* from around that time (*Aro kassen monogatari* 鴉鷺合戦物語 (Tale of the battle between the crow and the heron) quotes

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(Picture of the great battle between the armies of vegetables and fishes), available online at: [http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/chi05/chi05\\_03987/index.html](http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/chi05/chi05_03987/index.html) (Accessed 25 October 2018).

2 For an overview of *irui gassen mono*, see Itō 2017.

3 For a recent discussion in English on the *otogizōshi*'s nomenclature, see Nuffer 2014, pp. 10–13, and for an overview of the genre, see Kimbrough 2016, pp. 355–362.

4 Sawai 2002a.

5 The date of composition of *Heike monogatari* is positioned sometime in the thirteenth century, but the text has been incessantly remodeled in multiple variants. For a list of its main versions, see Bialock 1999, p. 73.

6 Several Edo-period sources note that in the early seventeenth century authorship was attributed to Nijō Yoshimoto (Shibata 2003).

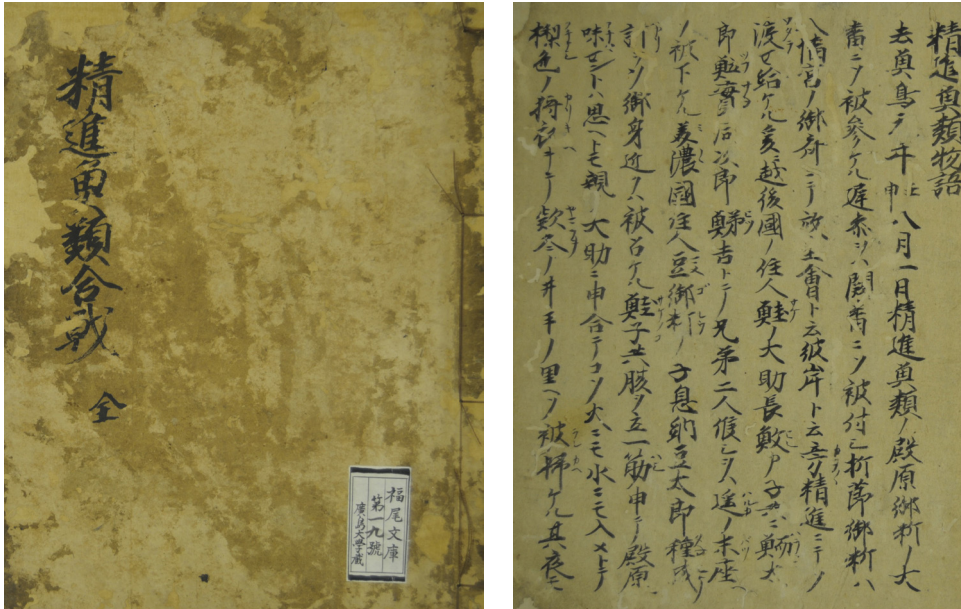


Figure 1. Cover (left) and folio 1r (right) of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* (Fukuo Bunko, Hiroshima University Library).

our story. Gotō Tanji compared the date in the beginning of the tale with the sexagenarian cycle and identified it as Kyōtoku 享徳2 (1452).<sup>7</sup> In any case, *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* must be older than 1484, since the dictionary *Onko Chishinsho* 温故知新書 compiled in that year quotes a fragment of it.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, we have no information about its intended readership.<sup>9</sup> The oldest citation is in one of the four scattered pages of the historical document, *Renren ni keiko seshimuru sōshi ige no koto* 連々令稽古双紙以下之事 (Below: Books for regular drilling) probably compiled by the Shingon monk, In'yū 印融 (1435–1519) before 1514.<sup>10</sup> These pages list the readings for novice monks to master by their sixteenth birthday, and *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* is one of them, alongside sutras, *ōraimono*, and *gunkimono*. Other records mentioning our text are diaries, such as that of the Buddhist priest Eishun 英俊 (1518–1596) contained in *Tamon'in nikki* 多聞院日記 (Journal of the Tamon'in; 1478–1618), the *Tokitsugu kyō ki* 言繼卿記 (Journal of Tokitsugu; 1527–1576) by the nobleman Yamashina Tokitsugu 山科言繼 (1507–1579), and the *Tokitsune kyō ki* 言經卿記 (Journal of Tokitsune; 1576–1608) by Tokitsugu's son Tokitsune 言經 (1543–1611).<sup>11</sup> From these diary entries, we learn that *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* was transcribed and enjoyed by male and female members of the imperial court of Kyoto and by Buddhist monks. In the same court diaries, the text is also

7 Gotō 1943, p. 122.

8 Takahashi and Komatsu 2004, p. 191.

9 See, for example, Kojima 1964, p. 2.

10 Facsimile in Takahashi 2007; transcription in Takahashi 2006.

11 *Tamon'in nikki*, vol. 1, p. 268; Yamashina 1914, vol. 3, pp. 121, 131, 272, and vol. 4, p. 45; Yamashina 1959, vol. 3, p. 212.

called *Shōjin gyorui tōjō* 精進魚類鬪状 (Account of the war between vegetables and fishes) and *Shōjin gyorui monogatari sōshi* 精進魚類物語草子 (Book of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*). It was first published in the Edo period (1600–1868), sometimes with the variant title *Gyochō Heike* 魚鳥平家 (Heike of the Fish-Bird era). By the end of the eighteenth century, it was deemed important enough to be included in the massive compendium of Japanese knowledge, *Gunsho ruijū* 群書類聚 (Anthology of various books by category), edited by Hanawa Hokinoichi (Hokiichi) 塙保己一 (1746–1821) in 1794, and printed over the following twenty-five years.

Scholars have divided the surviving copies of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* into two main families of texts: “old texts” (*kotaibon* 古態本), comprising mid-Muromachi manuscripts and early Edo-period versions, and “circulating texts” (*rufubon* 流布本), that is, the later early modern versions.<sup>12</sup> None of them are illustrated, and all are written in *wakan konkō bun* 和漢混交文, that is a mixture of kanji characters with either the *hiragana* or the *katakana* phonetic syllabaries. The *kotaibon* are considered to be closer to the lost urtext (assuming that there is one), and they differ from the *rufubon* in several respects. They are generally more learned in their linguistic style, with a higher number of kanji and more peculiar, difficult readings written next to the characters, in particular those clustered in the lists. Overall, their language is closer to classical Chinese and maintains many of the glosses (*kunten* 訓点) necessary to read the sentences in the Japanese way. The *rufubon* by contrast have more kana and colloquial passages that testify to a vernacularization of the text’s language.<sup>13</sup> The most striking difference, however, is that all *kotaibon* lack completely the opening paragraph present in the *rufubon*, a point I discuss further below.<sup>14</sup>

The plot of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* can be summarized as follows.<sup>15</sup> In the first year of the Fish-Bird era, the Roe brothers, sons of Lord Salmon Ōsuke Long-Fin, are attending a formal ceremony at the imperial palace.<sup>16</sup> They get extremely upset when they see that Nattō Tarō Big-Seeds is seated close to Shogun Rice while they are demoted to the lowest seats, and they decide to return home. Their father cannot tolerate this affront to their dignity and decides to raise an army of fishes, mollusks, birds, and animals to attack Nattō’s father, Lord Soy, whose defense force comprises seaweeds, vegetables, roots, beans, sweets, and fruits. After fierce fighting, the attacking troops are defeated and both Ōsuke and his sons are killed.

Despite the simplicity of the storyline, the tale embeds a number of narratives focusing on minor characters, alongside poems, quotations from *kanshi* 漢詩 (poems in Chinese), and references to Chinese sources and historical figures. Moreover, the narration is interrupted

12 The extant copies about which bibliographical information is provided take the form of bound volumes approximately 27 x 19 cm large of around nineteen folios. For philological studies on the genealogy of *kotaibon* texts, see Akiya 1978, p. 40, and Mizuno 2004, p. 17; for *rufubon* texts, see Kondō 2004, p. 38.

13 Akiya 1978, p. 40.

14 As noted, for example, by Ichiko 1955, p. 371.

15 For this paper, I made use of the manuscript *kotaibon* preserved at the Fukuo Bunko, Hiroshima University Library (transcribed in Hiroshima Daigaku Nihongoshi Kenkyūkai 2012). I complemented the missing last folio with the transcription of the printed *kotaibon* of Tokyo University (transcribed in Yokoyama and Matsumoto 1973). For the *rufubon*, I consulted the partly annotated critical edition in Mozume 1930 and Sawai 2000. For the meaning, hence the translation, of characters’ names I also referred to Sawai 2012a and 2012b.

16 For the original Japanese names and their kanji, as well as for a detailed summary, see table 1.

Table 1. Structure of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* (folios refer to copy preserved at the Fukuo Bunko, Hiroshima University Library).

FOLIO	NARRATIVITY	EVENTS DESCRIBED
1r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	First year of the Fish-Bird era ( <i>Gyochō gannen</i> 魚鳥元年), first day of the eighth month: the seating plan of an official ceremony gives offence to the Roe (Hararago 鯛) brothers, who are relegated to the lowest seats while Nattō Tarō Big-Seeds (Nattō Tarō Tanenari 納豆太郎種成), son of Lord Soy (Mame Go Ryō 豆御料), is appointed to sit close to Shogun Rice (Go Ryō 御料)
1v – 2v	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Third day of the eighth month: the brothers return to Echigo and explain to their father Salmon Ōsuke Long-Fin (Sake no Ōsuke Nagahire 鮭大助長鯨) what happened; Salmon delivers a speech on the prestige of his family
3r – 4r	NON-NARRATIVE	List of the soldiers on Salmon's side: eighty-four nouns for fishes, fourteen for mollusks, fifty-five for birds, fourteen for other animals
5r – 6v	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Dramatic separation between the just-married Sea Bream the Red Good-Taste (Tai no Akasuke Ajiyoshi 鯛赤助鮫吉) and Wakame of the Rock (Iso no Wakame 磯ノ和布)
6v – 7r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Description of the garments worn by Salmon, his sons and Sea Bream
7r – 7v	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Prayer and offering at the temple Iwashimizu 鱒水
7v	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	District Officer Catfish (Namazu no Hōgan-dai 鯰ノ判官代) arrives late
7v – 8r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Nattō Tarō is warned of the imminent attack
8r – 9r	NON-NARRATIVE	List of the soldiers on Nattō's side: twenty-seven nouns for vegetables and seaweeds, twenty-two for fruits, thirteen for cooked food, spices and seasonings
9r	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Konjak-bē (Kon'nyaku-bē 苟筍兵衛) pays visit to the shrine of his tutelary deity
9r – 9v	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Preparation of the defense at the castle of Bean Cliff ( <i>Mametsu no shō</i> 豆津ノ庄)
10r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Description of the garments worn by Nattō Tarō, Soy Sauce Tarō (Karahishio Tarō 唐醬太郎), Parched-Bean Laughtarō (Irimame no Emitarō 炒豆笑太郎)
10v	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Battle begins; <i>nanori</i> of Rooster the Singer Long-Tail (Niwatori no Utanosuke Nagao 鶏ノ雅樂助長尾) and Nattō Tarō; first exchanges of arrows
11r	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	<i>Nanori</i> of Roe Tarō, who shoots the Chief Priest Taro-Corm (Imogashira no Daigūji 芋頭ノ大宮司)
11v – 12r	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Twenty-eighth day of the eighth month: death of the Chief Priest Taro-Corm
12v	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Assault on the castle; Bream the Red Good-Taste is wounded
13r – 15r	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Bonze Dolphin (Iruka no Nyūdō 鰐ノ入道) performs the Buddhist ceremony of the Six Realms of Rebirth ( <i>rokudō kōshiki</i> 六道講式)
15r – 15v	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Death of Bonze Pickled-Plum (Ume-bōshi 梅法師), former Lesser Captain Red-Plum (Kōbai no Shōshō 紅梅ノ少将)
15v – 16r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Charge led by the animals' side; successful counter-attack by the vegetables' side; new ineffective charge led by animals
16v	NARRATIVE (EMBEDDED NARR.)	Death of Chestnut, Lord of Iga (Kuri no Iga no kami 栗ノ伊賀守); Shogun Rice and the Lesser General Chinquapin (Shi no shōshō 椎ノ少将) compose poems for him
16v – 17v	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Showdown between Salmon Ōsuke and Turnip Saburō Ever-Good (Aona no Saburō Tsuneyoshi 青蔓三郎常吉); death of Salmon; death of Roe Tarō inside Pot Castle ( <i>Nabe no jō</i> 鍋ノ城)
18r	NARRATIVE (FRAME STORY)	Third day of the ninth month: war ends and Turnip is appointed retainer of Shogun Rice

several times by self-contained lists (*monozukushi*) of the names of the animal and vegetable soldiers, descriptive passages of the characters' attire, and religious sermons. In other words, it represents a good example of what Marie-Laure Ryan has termed "diluted narrativity."<sup>17</sup> A Buddhist tone seems to infuse the whole tale which culminates in the landslide victory of the vegetarian party over that of fish and meat.<sup>18</sup>

The majority of studies of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* insist that it is a parody of *Heike monogatari*, basing the claim on the evident operation of parodic rewriting recognizable in the opening paragraph of the *rufubon*.<sup>19</sup>

All things are transient since they hear the Jetava Woods Temple bells ringing. The bracken soup of the Sal Tree Woods Temple reveals the great man's certain death from fatal sips. The charcoal that burns does not long endure. When one burns tasty foods, they turn into ashes. Even the fearless boar in the end becomes dust under the dried grass.<sup>20</sup>

*Gion-rin no kane no koe, kikeba shogyō mo mujō nari. Sharasōrin-ji no warabi no shiru, jōsha hissui shinu beki kotowari o arawasu. Okoreru sumi mo hisashikarazu. Bibutsu o yakeba hai to naru. Takeki inoshishi mo tsui ni wa karumo no shita no chiri to naru.*

祇園林の鐘の声。きけば諸行も無常也。沙羅双林寺の蕨の汁。盛者ひつすひしぬべき理をあらはす。おこれる炭も久しからず。美物を焼ば灰となる。猛き猪も遂にはかるもの下の塵となる。

The war theme and the contrast between two opposing parties supposedly provide further support for this claim of parody. Few scholars have sought other commonalities between the two texts, however. Akiya Osamu has argued that it is possible to draw parallels, for instance, between the scene of Salmon Ōsuke's death and that of Taira no Atsumori 平敦盛, as well as between the scene of Bream the Red bidding farewell to his family and a similar situation featuring Taira no Koremori 平維盛.<sup>21</sup> Sawai Taizō has investigated the characters' names, and identifies Salmon instead with Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 and a few other food soldiers with minor warriors quoted in *Heike monogatari*.<sup>22</sup> Were this type of analysis to be expanded to all the anthropomorphic characters, we could perhaps affirm with certainty the direct relationship of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* with *Heike monogatari*. But it seems that the correspondences are limited to a few characters, and so the question of whether all

17 A narrativity in which "the plot is interspersed with extensive non-narrative elements, such as descriptions, philosophical considerations and digressions" (Ryan 2010, p. 317).

18 It is no accident that the vegetables are always referred to as *shōjin* 精進, from the term *shōjin ryōri* 精進料理, which indicates the vegetarian cuisine introduced in Japan with Buddhism in the sixth century. It further developed and spread beyond the walls of Buddhist temples in the medieval age (Murai 1979, p. 35).

19 Kojima 1964, p. 2; Mulhern 1974, p. 194; Akiya 1978, p. 43; Itō 2008, p. 345; Haruta 2008, p. 30; Komine 2010, p. 15; Sawai 2002b; Sawai 2012a, p. 129. Itō and Sawai both add that the text draws elements also from other *gunkimono* such as *Taiheiki*, but neither scholar provides examples other than comparisons with *Heike monogatari*.

20 *Gunsho ruijū*, vol. 504, p. 262. All the other translations are by the author.

21 Akiya 1978, pp. 43–46, and Akiya 1984.

22 Sawai 2012a; Sawai 2012b.

the names in our text actually rework those of warriors present in the *gunkimono* remains unresolved.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, scholars have identified a connection between *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and other textual traditions, suggesting an intertextual dimension that goes beyond *Heike monogatari* alone. For example, Kojima Yoshiyuki argues that the fake era name (*ginengō* 擬年号) at the beginning of the narration and the choice of warrior characters may both derive from literary conventions of *hayamonogatari* 早物語 (“quick tales”).<sup>24</sup> These were short humorous stories swiftly told by blind travelling Buddhist storytellers (*biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師 and *zatō* 座頭) while reciting long war tales. They served to break up extended recitatives and loosen the tension caused by those dramatic narrations.<sup>25</sup> The choice of talking animals, instead, derives from folktales, which were also mastered by Buddhist storytellers. More specifically, the name of the main villain of the fish army may have come from a tale widespread in the Tōhoku region, in which the name of the protagonist King of Salmon is none other than Ōsuke.<sup>26</sup>

The first part of our text, in which each side claims to be better than the other, has been linked to what is called “debate literature” (*ronsō bungaku* 論争文学).<sup>27</sup> *Ronsō bungaku* texts developed on the continent many centuries earlier, and the oldest examples that can be linked to this genre are three *fu* 賦 (rhapsodies, or poetic expositions) by the Han author Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179 B.C.–117 B.C.).<sup>28</sup> In these works, two imaginary characters argue about the superiority of their own thesis, but eventually a third character arrives and puts an end to the discussion with his stronger argument. Further texts were written in the following centuries, and sometimes the protagonists were not human beings, but the very objects of debate, anthropomorphized and speaking for themselves. Among these later works, there are contrasts between philosophical concepts, animals, plants, and even foods.<sup>29</sup> Similar stories can also be found in Korean and Vietnamese literature, and in these cases, the winner among the two fighting parties is decreed by an external judge, either a king, an emperor, or a goddess.<sup>30</sup> The presence of a ruler standing above the contending parties and supporting one of them is similar to *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* as well.

23 Moreover, a few names vary between the *kotaibon* and the *rufubon* versions, undermining some of the correspondence found by Sawai. Since this study does not address the discrepancies between the different versions of the text, I direct the reader to Takahashi and Takahashi 2004a and 2004b, who discuss variances in great detail.

24 Kojima 1964, pp. 7–9.

25 *Kyōgaku shiyō shō* 経覚私要鈔, a Muromachi-period diary of a Buddhist monk annotated in 1471, records that *Heike monogatari* was chanted together with *hayamonogatari* by a blind storyteller on the tenth day of the first month, with the comic counterpart serving as a celebrative interlude proper to the new year (Kojima 1964, p. 4).

26 Kojima 1964, pp. 11–12.

27 Kim 2005, p. 42. Kim is the first Japanese scholar to propose this term for classifying these texts.

28 Kim 2005, p. 44. A translation is available in Watson 1971, pp. 29–51.

29 For example, abstract concepts start a debate in an Eastern Jin period (317–420) poem by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 called “Xing ying shen” 形影神 (Body, shadow and soul). In “Shilin guangji” 事林廣記 (Vast records of forest matters), there is a quarrel between an ant and a fly, eventually settled by a mosquito, and in “Qiuya ji” 秋崖集 (Collected works of Qiuya) a dialogue between a peach, a plum, and a bamboo; both texts date from the Southern Song period (1127–1179). Two more *fu* in vernacular dating from the late Tang period (618–907) were found in the Dunhuang Caves: “Yanzi fu” 燕子賦 (Rhapsody of the swallow) and “Cha jiu lun” 茶酒論 (Tea alcohol debate). For exhaustive lists of works, see Kim 2005; see Idema and Lee 2019 for cats against mice stories in Chinese literature.

30 Kim 2005, pp. 48–50. For alcohol and rice debates in Korea, see Kum 2013.

The only tangible evidence of the transmission of continental “debate tales” to Japan is the 1513 text entitled *Quanshi wen jiu cha siwen* 勸世文酒茶四問 (Exhortation to the world: Four questions for alcohol and tea), a farewell gift to a delegation sent by the Muromachi bakufu to the Ming empire, written by a Ningbo scholar called Song Zhai 松齋.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, Itō Nobuhiro claims that *ronsō bungaku* made a major contribution to the creation of Japanese stories. The thematic similarity of these works with the first part of our text suggests that *irui gassen mono* originated by combining elements of local and continental cultures.<sup>32</sup> Space precludes an extended discussion of commonalities with texts coming from outside Japan, but I am persuaded that this intuition merits further exploration. It is more than likely that the author of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* was familiar with and had taken inspiration from Chinese works. In particular, I think that the very idea of having two different “categories” (*ru* 類) on opposing sides, as in *ronsō bungaku*, could account for the structure of our text more than the historical contrast between the Taira and Minamoto families.

Finally, another genre that has been associated with our text is *ōraimono*, those copybooks used to impart literacy. Ichiko Teiji first suggested that the *monozukushi*—the self-contained lists found in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*—could have served, as with the copybooks, to teach reading and writing kanji for animals and plants.<sup>33</sup> He even put forward a hypothesis, based only on the *monozukushi*, that the text itself could therefore be considered as an *ōraimono* that combines didacticism with humor.<sup>34</sup> This hypothesis was dropped in later scholarship, but I explore it in greater detail below. Ichiko further noted that the author of our text made skillful use of a stylistic peculiarity of war tales known as *mushazoroe* 武者揃 or *seizoroe* 勢揃 (collection of warriors), namely enumerations of all the fighters on both sides present on the battlefield.<sup>35</sup> In war stories this feature served to illustrate which families faced each other in battle. Yet, according to Ichiko, this device was employed in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* not only to make clear who was fighting whom, but also to display long inventories of words in the manner of a copybook.

The following sections build upon current scholarship to explore further the didactic intent of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and the role of its lists. It is, however, impossible to address these issues without first clarifying at least briefly the relationship of the text to war tales, and to *Heike monogatari* in particular.

### Laughing at Warriors or with Warriors? *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and *gunkimono*

Even though most studies of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* assert that it parodies mainly the *Heike monogatari*, none specifies at what level this parody happens and which elements are involved in the rewriting process. As a matter of fact, the very meaning attributed to the concept of “parody” is never specified, and even if the overall impression is that it is used with a nuance of “mocking caricature,” one is left to second guess what precise meaning to

31 The text, preserved at the Tenryūji Myōchiin 天龍寺妙智院 in Kyoto, is introduced in detail in Kim 2008.

32 Itō 2009, pp. 10–11. Itō’s claim is based on the collection of both continental and Japanese *ronsōmono* in Kim 2005.

33 Ichiko 1955, p. 372.

34 Ichiko 1955, p. 373.

35 Ichiko 1955, p. 372.



give to the term.<sup>36</sup> In most cases, the only evidence adduced to prove parody is a quotation of the few lines that constitute the introduction and that are a minimal parodic rewriting of those in *Heike monogatari*. However, we have seen above that this paragraph is missing from all *kotaihon* versions. Additionally, only Edo-period *rufubon* texts present the variant title *Gyochō Heike*, which supposedly highlights a direct relationship between the two.

This raises doubts as to whether the author made any conscious attempt to introduce the work with such a blatant reference to the war tale. Publishers of the seventeenth century, in fact, might have decided to add this paragraph to tickle the taste buds of contemporaneous readers. War tales were experiencing great popularity at the time, and were enjoyed in different ways, reaching an increasingly broader slice of population. On the one hand, there was a high number of newly composed war tales, printed alongside older medieval tales rewritten in kana phonetic script and sometimes also illustrated.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, street performers, such as *Taiheiki yomi* 太平記読み (literally, “reading of ‘Taiheiki’”), were giving oral accounts and commentaries of texts all over the country.<sup>38</sup> It is not hard to imagine that in this context an explicit reference to a famous war tale at the beginning of the text offered an additional purchasing incentive for readers.

Moreover, no event narrated in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* literally recalls episodes in *Heike monogatari*. All the passages identified by Akiya as rewritings of parts of the *gunkimono* have only an imprecise connection to the original in narrative terms. The correspondence in some cases is limited to some linguistic expressions, which nonetheless can be found scattered not only in *Heike monogatari*, but also in other *gunkimono*. Yet, such sentences and words are too random and specific to suggest that they are taken directly from one single work. For instance, one of the sentences highlighted by Akiya is “they hid in the castle,” variously transcribed as *shiro ni zo komorikeru* 城にぞ籠ける in the old text preserved at Tokyo University, and *shiro o zo koshiraekeru* 城をぞこしらへける in circulating texts.<sup>39</sup> In the edition used for this article, the same sentence as found in folio 17v reads *shiro ni so kakusarekeru* 城ニソ被<sub>レ</sub>藏ケル. This would supposedly be similar enough to a sentence in the Kakuichi version of *Heike*, *shiro o zo kamaekeru* 城をぞかまへける.<sup>40</sup> While all these sentences can be translated into English in the same way, neither the verbs nor the particles are exactly the same in the two texts. And the phrase in question commonly occurs in other *gunkimono*, for example in the thirty-fourth book of *Taiheiki* (*shiro he zo komorikeru* 城へぞ籠りける).<sup>41</sup> This lack of consistency in the two texts applies also to other expressions quoted by Akiya. The reader probably did not recognize them as quotations of particular source texts, but rather as a distinctive way of narrating war tales.

Our text also makes use of other devices found in most *gunkimono*. One is the listing of warriors’ names involved in the fighting (*seizoroe*), as mentioned above. Others include “name-announcing” (*nanori* 名乗り) and (*idetachi* 出で立ち), or “dressing the hero” as Varley

36 When not quoting Japanese scholars, I use the word “parody” as defined by Margaret Rose, that is, “the comic refunctioning of preformed linguistic or artistic material” (Rose 2000, p. 52).

37 Inoue counted 132 Tokugawa period printed war tales (Inoue 2014, p. 22).

38 For an extensive study on *Taiheiki yomi*, see Wakao 1999.

39 Akiya 1978, pp. 44.

40 *Heike monogatari*, vol. 2, p. 25.

41 *Taiheiki*, vol. 4, p. 161.

has defined it.<sup>42</sup> The former refers to warriors declaring their name, and sometimes also age, rank, position, and family genealogy before engaging the enemy. They did this to acquire renown among fellow warriors, and to identify themselves and so intimidate the enemy. In *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, we find an example of *nanori* prior to the duel between Rooster and Nattō:

In that moment, someone advanced and announced his name aloud: “When you were far away you heard my sound, but now look at me with your eyes! I am Rooster the Singer Long-Tail, dweller of Aizaka no Seki where the lovers meet, third-generation descendant of Peacock and Phoenix, who now resides in the Paradise of the Pure Land.” So he announced himself, hit his helmet cape and commanded, “Attack-a-doodle! Attack-a-doodle!” (10v)<sup>43</sup>

*Sono toki kake-idete daionjō ni nanorikeru wa tōku wa oto ni mo kiki ima wa me ni mo miyo Gokuraku Jōdo ni annaru Kujaku Hōō ni wa sandai no basson koishiki hito ni Ōsaka no Seki ni sumu Niwatori no Uta no Suke Nagao to nanorite horo o tataite kakero kakero to zo geji shikeru*

其時懸出テ大音声ニ名乗ケルハ遠クハ音ニモ聞今ハ目ニモ見ヨ極楽浄土ニ有ナル孔雀鳳凰ニハ三代ノ末孫恋シキ人ニ相坂ノ関ニ棲ム鶏ノ雅樂助長尾ト名乗テ布露ヲ扣テカケロノトソ下知シケル

The “dressing the hero” practice was specifically designed for the audience, the readers, and listeners of war tales. It consisted in description of the warriors’ attire, the better to provide the protagonists with a distinctive physicality.<sup>44</sup> In *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, such descriptions appear in folios 6v–7r and 10r, and allow the author to show his skillful mastery of wordplay. In fact, the main features of fishes and vegetables are comically matched with their garments, and kanji are chosen according to the possibility of playing with their multiple readings in order to fit better the categories of vegetarian or non-vegetarian:

That day Salmon Ōsuke was wearing a *hitatare*<sup>45</sup> of Shikama [kanji translation: “deer-place”] dark greyish blue with a Jay-wing armor and a five-plated helmet in the same color, topped with a tall [kanji translation: “hawk”] crest. (6v)<sup>46</sup>

*Sake no Ōsuke Nagahire ga sono hi no shōzoku ni wa Shikama no konji no hitatare ni kashidori odoshi no yoroi kite onajike no gomai-kabuto ni taka-zuno uchite zo kitarikeru*

鮭ノ大助長鮫カ其ノ日ノ装束ニハ鹿間ノ紺地ノ直垂ニ鶴緘ノ鎧着テ同毛ノ五枚甲ニ鷹角打テソ着タリケル

42 Varley 1994, p. 63.

43 Sasaki 2012, p. 70.

44 Akiya 1984, p. 63.

45 *Hitatare* was a garment worn together with *hakama*, loose-legged pleated trousers.

46 Sasaki 2012, p. 67.

Another feature common to both war tales and *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* is the insertion of references to famous Chinese poems and historical figures. Our author evidently drew, for example, on the renowned anthology of Chinese and Japanese poems, *Wakan rōei shū* 和漢朗詠集 (1013). *Gunkimono* incorporated poems to ornament the prose style, and anecdotes to emphasize some points of the plot.<sup>47</sup> It is likely that in our text these references served the same purpose. Finally, the use of a *wakan konkō* style, together with an underlying Buddhist flavor, are both typical of war tales as well.

Given the above characteristics, it would appear that the mechanism at play is not one of systematic adaptation and minimal parodic rewriting of *Heike monogatari* or other single works. *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* instead imitates the *gunkimono* as a style of narrating, adopting the genre's structures and making skilled (and comical) use of its conventions to create something new. Indeed, it is quite hard to identify here any satirical discourse on Genpei warriors, on the *bushi* class in general, or on war itself. The characters in the tale are not ridiculed, but rather described as real warriors who fight real battles and die in duels, as in war tales. The narration equally lacks any moral commentary on the futility of violence. On the contrary, military values are praised by the only character that could criticize them, namely Bonze Dolphin (folio 5v). But the text is certainly comical, and its humor comes from sophisticated puns and wordplay that work mainly on multiple kanji readings and references to animals and plants rather than from mockery and belittlement of warriors.

Two further observations help refute the suggestion that a Japanese premodern audience read the text as ironical or satirical. The first is the inclusion of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* in the *Gunsho ruijū*. This anthology was promoted and subsidized by the bakufu itself, and it is thus hard to believe that the editor would have carried a text critical of his own patrons, or that his patrons would have tolerated its criticism.<sup>48</sup> The second is the existence of a literary precedent that employs nonhuman warriors not to mock that social class, but rather to appeal to its taste. This is the fifteenth-century *Jūnirui kassen emaki* 十二類合戦絵巻 (Picture scroll of the battle of the twelve animals), which describes a war between the twelve animals of the calendric cycle and a similar number of animals excluded from that group. This text is also humorous and even ridicules some of the warriors depicted. Nonetheless, as Sarah Thompson has convincingly shown, the work was enjoyed by *bushi*, and may even have been commissioned by the shogun himself, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358–1408).<sup>49</sup>

So why parody the literary conventions of popular texts and use anthropomorphic characters? Parodic rewritings and other sub-genres undermine our genre expectations based on established literary conventions. This subversion of expectations activates in the reader a cognitive mechanism that seeks to understand where to place the new genre-type within acquired cognitive models.<sup>50</sup> This mechanism, at the same time, triggers the readers' perceptions, attention, and memory. In other words, when the readers are presented with something outside the usual "knowledge comfort-zone," they become more receptive to new information. Once we adopt the lens of cognitive criticism, we can look afresh at the

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47 Ōsone 1964, p. 44.

48 Kornicki 1998, p. 440.

49 Thompson 1999, pp. 299–328. A translation is available in Kimbrough and Shirane 2018.

50 Stockwell 2002, pp. 38–39.

use of the anthropomorphism and of the humor in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*. On the one hand, laughter fosters even more readerly engagement. On the other hand, the characters' anthropomorphism itself challenges and fuels the cognitive activity of the reader, making it necessary to cross the chasm between empirical knowledge (which excludes the experience of talking animals and objects) and aesthetic knowledge (in which anything can happen).<sup>51</sup> The next sections discuss the variety of didactic content included in our text that was more accessible to engaged readers.

### Learning to Write: *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and *ōraimono*

It has already been stated that *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* might have had a secondary didactic intention of imparting literacy. To support their claims, scholars have focused only on the self-contained lists of animals and vegetables (present in folios 3r–4r and 8r–9r).<sup>52</sup> The first of these inventories relates to the faction of Salmon Ōsuke. There we find seventy nouns (compounds or single kanji) for fishes and other aquatic animals, twelve for quadrupeds, fifty-five for birds, and fourteen for mollusks. They all represent edible living beings, although among them there are also exotic animals like crocodile (*wani* 鱷) and lion (*shishi* 獅子), and even mythical ones like the Chinese *qilin* (*kirin* 麒麟) and phoenix (*hōō* 鳳凰).<sup>53</sup> The second of these *monozukushi*, on the side of Lord Soy, lists twenty-seven nouns for vegetables and seaweeds, twenty-two for fruits, and thirteen for such cooked food as noodles or sweets, spices, and seasonings.<sup>54</sup>

Medieval men of letters recognized the erudite nature of these lists, and they seem to have been directly influenced by them. Six dictionaries of the late-Muromachi period introduced some major changes in their lists regarding fishes and molluscs after those of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*.<sup>55</sup> Some of them added to their previous editions (compiled in the mid-Muromachi period) whole segments of its *monozukushi*, even maintaining the same order of *kanji*; others included some of the most peculiar readings found only in the tale and that cannot be seen even in other similar material of the time.

However, I propose that the long *monozukushi* were not the only sections in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* that included words useful for medieval readers. A few extra characters for types of food can also be found scattered throughout the narration. Some are disguised within the warriors' names, such as that of the sea bream Tai no Akasuke Ajiyoshi, where "Aji" can be understood as "taste" (*aji* 味), but is written with the homophonous kanji for "sardine" (*aji* 鮫); others are linchpins around which the puns of some embedded narratives revolve. For example, in the passage below, the author cleverly combines in an embedded narrative the two ways of referring to ginger (*Zingiber officinale*):

51 Nikolajeva 2014, pp. 41–42.

52 For example, Itō 2008.

53 It should be remembered, however, that medieval Japanese knowledge of these animals not present on the archipelago was still acquired only through Chinese encyclopedias, and even animals like crocodiles were imagined more as fantastic beasts (Sugiyama 2011).

54 Here too I refer to the *kotaibon* preserved at Fukuoka Bunko, Hiroshima University Library. In the *rufubon* versions some of the most complex characters were substituted by their reading in *hiragana*; others were simply cut out or were substituted with other nouns, completely changing their meaning.

55 Takahashi and Komatsu 2004.

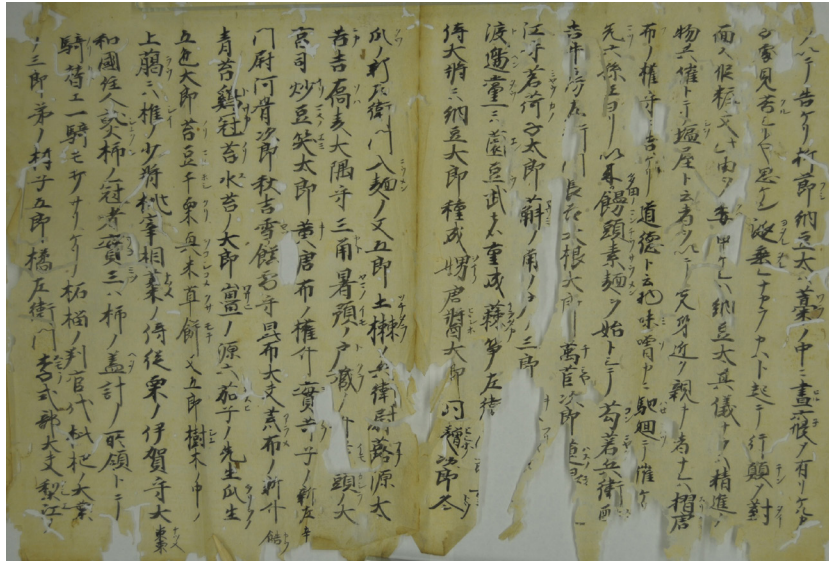


Figure 2. List of vegetarian dishes in folios 8r-8v of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* (Fukuo Bunko, Hiroshima University Library).

Among them, Konjak-bē went to worship the tutelary deity Ginger [...]. He performed his talents to the full all night long, and danced various *narekomai*,<sup>56</sup> but since he had forgotten the musical instruments, he could only act as a singer [lit.: “to perform a song (*shōga* 唱歌)”] (9r).<sup>57</sup>

*Naka ni mo Konnyaku-bē wa ujigami no Hajikami ni mairite kinen suru sama wa [...] tsuya wa ga mi no geinō o tsukushite sama-zama no narekomai nanto shikeru ga kangen no gusoku o toriwasurete shōga bakari o zo shitarikeru*

中ニモ苟筭兵衛ハ氏神ノ薑ニ參テ祈念スル様ハ [...] 通夜我身ノ芸能ヲ尽テ様ニノ馴子舞ナ  
ントシケルカ管弦ノ具足ヲ取忘テ生薑計ヲソシタリケル

In addition, I argue that words belonging to semantic areas other than food should be considered as having a didactic function. They are not in the self-contained lists, but are dispersed throughout the text. A first group of terms is military, and can be found, for instance, in the descriptions of the garments worn by the commanders of the two armies before battle (folios 6v–7r, 10r). Armor, weapons, some horse breeds, and their equipment are mentioned. Military vocabulary features also in other passages, like those about the preparation of ladders, abatisses, and other items to be used in war, or those that describe battles (folios 9r–9v, 10v, 12v, 15v–16r). A second recurring category is religious. Related words can be found both in the two sermons delivered by Bonze Dolphin (folios 5r–5v,

<sup>56</sup> A dance performed only with the hands.

<sup>57</sup> Sasaki 2012, p. 69.

13r–15r), and in Buddhist remarks in embedded narratives or battle scenes. Compared to the self-contained lists of foods, these passages are graphically less defined, with the nouns scattered in different points of the narration. This does not imply, however, that they were not used for teaching characters and their readings, or at least to familiarize readers with that kind of vocabulary.

One unresolved issue concerns similarity with another nonfictional genre that was purely didactic in its intentions, namely *ōraimono*. Scholars have yet to engage fully with medieval *ōraimono*, and no specific source text for *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* has been identified yet. The resemblance remains limited to the visual aspect of the long lists of kanji. In order to establish a clearer relation between our text and *ōraimono*, it is necessary to consider the kind of copybooks in circulation around that time and, accordingly, to reflect on how education was conceived.

Medieval pedagogy was pragmatically designed to meet the needs of the different ruling classes, namely aristocrats, warriors, and monks.<sup>58</sup> In the imperial court, boys were taught to embody the ideal noblemen, mainly through the study of Confucian classics and poetry, both in Japanese and Chinese.<sup>59</sup> The coalescent warrior class tried to combine the learning of both literary and military arts (*bunbu* 文武), in an effort to equal the imperial court.<sup>60</sup> Monks, instead, were trained to build an encyclopaedic knowledge of Chinese matter, which was not limited to Buddhist texts.<sup>61</sup> But literacy was a fundamental requirement for members of each of these classes, who by the Muromachi period had all adopted the use of copybooks to learn reading and writing.

The nature of *ōraimono* greatly changed over the centuries. The oldest copies, which date back to the mid-Heian period, were collections of letters between two fictitious parties.<sup>62</sup> They were sometimes used by monks in Buddhist temples, but also at home by young aristocrats who, by reproducing these letters, learned how to deal with court affairs and etiquette.<sup>63</sup> However, from the mid-Kamakura 鎌倉 period (1185–1333), new types of textbooks that were just inventories of words and short phrases appeared. In the fourteenth century, a blended form of texts that included these lists within the framework of correspondence was also produced.<sup>64</sup> From the second half of the fourteenth century, then, *ōraimono* were more and more often used in temples. Pupils now were not only nobles, but also sons of warriors and, in later decades, those of the wealthiest commoners. The subjects treated in *ōraimono* started to change accordingly. Whole sections of vocabulary regarding armaments, weapons, or horse equipment, along with useful words on food and everyday material objects, were inserted.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, lists containing words for court

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58 Haga 1984, p. 109.

59 Haga 1984, pp. 113–121.

60 Haga 1984, pp. 139–144.

61 Haga 1984, pp. 126–132.

62 *Ōrai* stands for the “coming and going” of the letters.

63 Ishikawa and Ishikawa 1968a, p. 43.

64 Ishikawa and Ishikawa 1967, p. 24.

65 Ishikawa and Ishikawa 1968a, pp. 44–46; Ishikawa 1967, pp. 37, 46.

rituals and ceremonies decreased.<sup>66</sup> Eventually, *ōraimono* became practical compendiums of vocabulary specifically designed for young warriors learning how to read and write.<sup>67</sup>

Among the textbooks surveyed for this study, seven produced before the early-modern period (or “old *ōrai*,” *koōrai* 古往来, as Ishikawa Ken names them) have proven to be particularly interesting in relation to *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* (see table 2).<sup>68</sup> These copybooks are among the first exemplars to include food lists. What is noteworthy is that they place this group of words sequentially adjacent to those for weapons, horse breeds, and other items related to the world of the warrior. At the same time, most of them retain some vocabulary related to Buddhism and Confucianism, differently from later *ōraimono*. More specifically, in the fourteenth-century *Daijōin zōhitsu shū* 大乘院雜筆集 (Collection of diverse brushes of the Daijōin) there is for the first time a whole independent section that lists twenty-nine nouns for fishes, twenty-five of which are present in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, although with different characters. In *Shinsen ruijū ōrai* 新撰類聚往来 (New guide to correspondences divided by categories; 1492–1520), the number of fishes goes up to 118, and there are also independent sections with similarly high figures for sweets (sixty), fruits (ninety-one), seaweeds (twenty-eight), vegetables (twenty-eight), and birds (109).

Two copybooks particularly relevant for a comparison with *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* are *Isei teikin ōrai* 異制庭訓往来 (Different correspondence for home education; 1356–1372) and the mid-Muromachi period *Kamakura ōrai* 鎌倉往来 (Correspondence of Kamakura). In the former, a collection of twenty-four letters (two per month of the year) that are frameworks for catalogues of words, three features should be highlighted. First, there is a letter listing nouns for Japanese foods including birds (nine), quadrupeds (eight), fishes (twenty-seven), seaweeds (nine), vegetables (twenty), fruits (twenty-four), sweeteners and seasonings (five), and desserts (four). In other words, it lists these words in a thematic order similar to that of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*. Second, the following letter deals with Chinese delicacies, and it includes legendary animals such as the *qilin* and the phoenix, which also occur in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*. Third, there is one letter for military vocabulary, and two more for Buddhist terminology. In summary, *Isei teikin ōrai* contains most of the words that feature in our text.

*Kamakura ōrai* is a much briefer text, but its layout is suggestive of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*. It is formed of ten short letters, each presenting vocabulary related to one or more different subjects essential for the basic knowledge of a medieval *bushi*.<sup>69</sup> Notably, the first letter comprises an inventory of words for weapons and armor (thirty-eight); the third one focuses on seafood (fifteen); the fourth letter puts together names of warriors (twenty-nine), words for birds (seven, including the rabbit, which was counted as a winged animal), and for fruits and desserts (twenty-four). Despite the fact that these nouns do not correspond perfectly to those in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, the semantic domains considered necessary for the education of pupils are the same.

66 Ishikawa and Ishikawa 1968b, p. 74.

67 The contents changed even further later in the Tokugawa period, when many new and different types of copybooks were designed to meet the demand for specialized knowledge of different social classes.

68 I used the transcribed versions contained in Ishikawa and Ishikawa 1967, 1968a, 1968b, and 1970.

69 Despite maintaining the exchange of letters format typical of older *ōraimono*, it condenses in a few pages all the innovations in content that had been introduced in the earlier decades. For example, it omits entirely words relating to the court culture, such as poetry and incense.

Table 2. Details of seven select *Ōraimono*.

TITLE	PERIOD	AUTHOR	TYPE (based on Ishikawa's classification)
<i>Isei teikin ōrai</i> 異制庭訓往来	1356–1372	Unknown	<i>Teikin ōrai</i> 庭訓往来 type (words listing within a framework of twenty-four letters, two per month)
<i>Shinsatsu ōrai</i> 新札往来	1367	Soken 素眼	<i>Zappitsu ōrai</i> 雑筆往来 type (lists of words necessary to letter writing)
<i>Daijōin zōbitsu shū</i> 大乘院雑筆集	Nanbokuchō period (1336–1392)	Son'en 尊円親王	<i>Shūyōshō ōrai</i> 拾要抄往来 type (lists of words related to everyday life)
<i>Teikin ōrai</i> 庭訓往来	Between Nanbokuchō and Muromachi periods	Gen'e 玄恵 (at- tributed)	<i>Teikin ōrai</i> type
<i>Shinsen ruijū ōrai</i> 新撰類聚往来	1492–1520	Tanpō 丹峯和尚	<i>Teikin ōrai</i> type
<i>Kamakura ōrai</i> 鎌倉往来	Mid-Muromachi period	Unknown	<i>Meigō ōrai</i> 明衡往来 type (collection of letters which include vocabulary about daily life at court)
<i>Sekiso ōrai</i> 尺素往来	Mid-Muromachi period	Ichijō Kaneyoshi (attributed)	<i>Zappitsu ōrai</i> type

To sum up, my purpose is not to demonstrate that our text sought to reproduce an existing textbook. I propose rather that its readers easily recognized here kanji and words usually included in other contemporaneous copybooks. By staging a war between two sides, the text effectively visualized the different categories of foods that were treated separately in *ōraimono* while adding words for more practical military knowledge.<sup>70</sup> My argument, thus, already extends beyond that in the secondary literature to propose that the entire text may have been intended as a copybook. In the following section, I expand this idea further and argue that the didactic content was not limited to the question of literacy. In order to do so, we need to look back at the animal and vegetal protagonists, and reconsider their part in the story.

### Learning to Eat: *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and Medieval Food Culture

Medieval pupils learned how to write the kanji for foods, but also needed no doubt to master the value of those foods within their specific social context. The events narrated in our text cleverly taught the reader how to identify foods according to three categories: ingredients, either allowed or prohibited during specific periods of purification; local specialties, savored in banqueting after political ceremonies; and symbols, when chosen as key elements in agricultural rituals. All this information is provided by the context of the story, set in a specific time frame with edible characters interacting, fighting, and dying in dates clearly signaled in the plot: the first, third, and the twenty-eighth days of the eighth month, and the third day of the ninth month. This span includes, therefore, the whole of

<sup>70</sup> Empirical experiments have suggested the efficacy of anthropomorphism in the word-learning process, although thorough studies remain to be conducted (Blanchard and McNinch 1984).



the eighth month of the lunar calendar, which was rich in religious and secular celebrations. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know which dates correspond exactly to which moments of the lunar calendar, but we can hazard some plausible guesses.

The very first line of the text (in its *kotaibon* versions) informs the reader that the Hararago brothers and Nattō Tarō have been called to serve as the shogun's great guards (*ōban* 大番) on the first day of the eighth month. We can imagine that this refers to *hassaku* 八朔, also called *tanomu no sekku* 田実の節供 or *tanomono iwai* 田物祝. This was originally an agricultural ritual that celebrated the new harvest, but in the Heian period it was reshaped into an annual offering by a subordinate to a superior, meant to strengthen the relationships within the aristocratic court and, later on, within the warrior class.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, it is likely that the term *ōban* plays with the homophone that derives from *wanban* 椀飯, the ritual feasts hosted first by the imperial family at the court and then adopted by the *bushi*. It was the first shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–1199), who started this tradition among the warrior class in order to reinforce bonds with his retainers across the country. *Ōban/wanban* celebrations were inherited by later shoguns, and gradually developed into “gastro-political arenas for articulating one's status and prestige.”<sup>72</sup>

The eighth month also saw two important periods of purification. The narrator mentions them a few lines into the tale, reminding the reader that in recent years vegetarian dishes are regularly consumed during the rites of *hōjōe* 放生会 (on the fifteenth day) and *higan'e* 彼岸会 (a week centered on the equinoxes). *Hōjōe* was a ceremony for releasing captive birds and fish into the wild. Despite its Buddhist origins in the *Bonmōkyō* 梵網經 (Sk. *Brahmajāla Sūtra*) and the *Konkōmyōkyō* 金光明經 (Sk. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*) sutras, the ritual in its Japanese version ended up embracing components of a diverse nature.<sup>73</sup> It was performed in shrines as well as in Buddhist temples and a close connection was also created with the multi-faceted deity Hachiman 八幡.<sup>74</sup> Priests at the three major sites devoted to him in Usa, Iwashimizu, and Tsurugaoka held annual ceremonies that endured for days. In these large religious complexes, however, the focus of the rituals was much less on the Buddhist merit gained from non-killing than on the display of shogunal power. For example, the late ninth-century text *Hachiman Usagū hōjōe engi* 八幡宇佐宮放生会縁起 informs us that from the first days of the month lords of several provinces made offerings, while dances and sumo matches were also performed.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, there was an enforcement of bans on fishing and hunting (*sesshō kindanrei* 殺生禁断令) on the grounds surrounding the shrines, and meat consumption among the warriors of the bakufu was regulated.

The *higan'e*, on the other hand, were Buddhist memorial services conducted for the deceased over seven days centered on the equinoxes. We know from court aristocrats' diaries that they observed a vegetarian diet during *higan* weeks.<sup>76</sup> Similar customs may well have been adopted by Muromachi-period warriors, especially because from the time of the

71 *Nihon kokugo daijiten* and *Kokushi daijiten*, s.v. “*hassaku* 八朔.”

72 Selinger 2013, pp. 75, 98.

73 For studies on *hōjōe*, see Law 1994; Grumbach 2005, pp. 86–148; Williams 1997. (I am indebted to Barbara Rossetti Ambros for pointing me to these sources.)

74 For a summary of the transformation of Hachiman from a Korean deity to the tutelary god of war of the Minamoto family, see Law 1994, pp. 329–334.

75 A translation of the text can be found in Law 1994, pp. 344–348.

76 See, for example, the entries for the sixth day of the eighth month of Ōei 応永 24 (1417) and the first day of the ninth month of Ōei 29 (1422) of the *Kanmon gyōki* 看聞御記 (*Kanmon gyōki*, vol. Addendum 1, p. 359).

Ashikaga bakufu, shoguns sought to appropriate rituals followed by the imperial court.<sup>77</sup> From the same diaries, we also learn that the equinoxes fell on different days each year. The autumnal equinox, for instance, could have happened in any of the dates mentioned in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*: at the beginning of the eighth month, around its middle, or even early in the ninth month.

In the opening of the tale, the reader is thus reminded of the alternation of periods of observance of a sober diet with those of opulent meals, the latter usually prepared with the in-kind gifts brought to the shogun as offerings from all over the country. Indeed, Haruta Naoki argues that the battle that features in our text is precisely between the sober, vegetarian dishes (*shōjinmono* 精進物) that were consumed during days of purification and “foods that taste good” (*bibutsu* 美物), which used fish and meat and were prominent in all the other formal meals.<sup>78</sup>

Haruta further notes that in the *monozukushi* of the two armies all the names of the edible warriors are accompanied by the provenance of the food they personify (for example, Cucumber Lord of Yamashiro, (Kyūri Yamashiro no kami 胡瓜山城守, 8r). This testifies to a growing awareness of the branding of “regional specialties” (*tokusanbutsu* 特産物), for which specific toponyms began to be used as qualifiers for the goods produced there. In this way, the toponyms themselves had become synonymous with the quality of those goods.<sup>79</sup> This tendency does not simply reflect the importance that sumptuous banquets were acquiring among the warrior class in the fifteenth century.<sup>80</sup> These lists invite readers not only to learn the kanji for the foods, but also to memorize which among them are particularly delicious, the better to develop a more refined taste. This culinary knowledge was vital to participation in future banquets.<sup>81</sup> Yet, a refinement in taste did not merely denote the achievement of greater elegance. Distinguishing delicacies from across the country served also as a sort of economic training for the future ruling class. *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* was also, thus, preparing pupils to deal with foods as economic goods and objects of transactions, since the higher quality of certain products equaled a higher value of those on the market.

A food was considered a specialty not only because of its provenance, but also because of the season in which it was produced, or could be enjoyed at its best. In this regard, the second part of the tale provides information about delicacies typical of the beginning of autumn, which fell at the end of the eighth month. First there are the episodes relating the death of the Chestnut and the homage paid to it by the Chinquapin (16v), both nuts that people eat in this season. Then Turnip Saburō Ever-Good makes its appearance (17v). This turnip is not generic; its provenance is spelt out as Toyoura of Gamō County in Ōmi Province (present-day Shiga Prefecture). Gamō County has been famous since the Muromachi period for a particular variety of turnip known as *hinona* 日野菜, and legend has it that in the 1470s the local lord, Gamō Sadahide 蒲生貞秀 (1444–1514), brought it back from a pilgrimage to a nearby Kannon Hall in Yabusō 爺父溪. The pickled turnip

77 Selinger 2013, p. 99. While no specific references to vegetarian diet, and *higan* can be found in warriors' records, the officer Saitō Chikamoto notes in his diary that in the eighth month of Bunshō 文正 1 (1466) he observed a period of three days of *shōjin* (see *Saitō Chikamoto nikki* 齋藤親基日記, p. 369).

78 Haruta 2008, p. 31.

79 Haruta 2008, pp. 31–32.

80 Haruta 2008, p. 34.

81 Selinger 2013, p. 75.

quickly became popular due both to the great taste and to the lively pink color that resulted from the marination process. It gained favor at the Heian court, and inspired poetic praise from Emperor Gokashibara 後柏原天皇 (1464–1526).<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the season for sowing the turnip was also around the end of the eighth lunar month. Finally, at the very end of the story, on the third day of the ninth month, the character Goryō dines on the defeated Salmon while praising the fish's succulent taste.<sup>83</sup> In other words, not only is the rebel Salmon not condemned for his military action, but he is even celebrated for his quality. Besides, this was the first salmon of the year, caught in autumn and so considered particularly delicious, as the existence of the poetic seasonal words *akiaji* 秋味 (“taste of autumn”) and *hatsu-zake* 初鮭 (“first salmon”) testify.<sup>84</sup>

Before this finale, however, another food receives much attention. Three half folios (11r–12r), in fact, are dedicated to the episode of Chief Priest Taro-Corm (Imogashira no Daigūji 芋頭ノ大宮司), with the long scene of the agony of the mother on her deathbed. “Taro” (*imo* 芋), a staple component of the traditional Japanese diet, was closely linked to the eighth month of the lunar calendar.<sup>85</sup> Its fifteenth day was also called *imo meigetsu* 芋名月, and in many regions of the country agricultural rituals celebrated the new crops with offerings of *taro*.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, in celebrations of the same kind in China, the corm (the rounded, underground structure that stores food for the plant) is placed in the center of a big plate and named “mother corm” (Ch. *Yutou mu* 芋頭母), while smaller *taro* are laid around it.<sup>87</sup> Even though nowadays the only other way of rendering corm into Japanese is *oya imo* 親芋 (“parent taro”), *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* testifies to the possibility that at one time this noun was used during harvest ceremonies in Japan, too. Therefore, the whole episode of the death of Taro-Corm might well be interpreted as a parodic description of the first *taro*'s harvest of the year around the autumn equinox and the rituals related to this.<sup>88</sup>

These references scattered throughout the story serve to alert the reader to different autumnal ceremonies involving different dietary habits and specific foods. For example, the fact that fish and vegetables end up killing each other in battle is a metaphorical staging of the fact that purification periods required temporary abstention from meat consumption. We can surmise that at least one of the dates mentioned in *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* refers either to the autumn equinox of the year of composition of the text or to the beginning (or the end) of the *higan* week, and that the events happening in the second part of the story

82 <http://www.maff.go.jp/kinki/jimusyo/shiga/local/siganougyou/hinona.html> (Accessed July 2018 through [www.web.archive.org](http://www.web.archive.org)).

83 This detail removes any doubt that the character should be interpreted as “Shogun Rice” rather than “Emperor Rice.” This is because on the day in question the emperor was required to observe a vegetarian diet for the *gotō* 御灯 ritual (*Kadokawa kogo daijiten*, s.v. “*gotō* 御灯”).

84 *Nihon daihyakka zensho*, s.v. “*kigo* 季語.”

85 Nowadays *taro* are specified in Japanese as *sato imo* 里芋.

86 On the importance of the cultivation of *taro* in Japanese culture, see Tsuboi 1983. In more recent years, scholars have shown that in some provinces the rituals are not held only on the fifteenth day, but also in the *higan* period and especially during the autumn equinox, although we can imagine that the situation was similarly more flexible in the past as well. In contemporary Japan, this day is also called *hōjōe* (without any reference to the Buddhist rite) or *imo no tanjōbi* 芋の誕生日, “birthday of the *taro*” (Honma 1967, pp. 39–41).

87 The purpose was to pray for a long line of descendants (see Takemura 1966, p. 316).

88 Tales centered on *taro* and its harvest are testifying to its importance in premodern culture can be found also in *hayamonogatari* (transcriptions in Yasuma 1964, pp. 15–16) and in the picturebook from the Kanbun 寛文-era (1661–1673) *Imo jōruri, bijin tataki* いも上るり・びじんたたき (*A jōruri of taro, a rhythm of beauties*; facsimile of the originals and transcriptions in Okamoto 1982).

largely refer to that. These special periods were linked not only to purification as prescribed by Buddhist precepts, but also to harvest rituals and to the culture of banqueting and offering that was consolidating among the warrior class in the fifteenth century. The text, thus, also seems to reflect changes in the conception of foods as delicacies in terms of both local provenance and their seasonality. In other words, the foods listed here were not simply presented as belonging to the categories of “allowed” and “not allowed” in specific phases of the annual cycle, but were also included for their symbolic and economic value.

*Shōjin gyorui monogatari* was not the first attempt to experiment with imaginative textbooks intended to impart literacy and other information. Takahashi Hisako and Takahashi Tadahiko speculate that sometime after the 1430s another unknown author wrote a book that does likewise.<sup>89</sup> Its title, *Katsuragawa Jizō ki* 桂川地藏記 (Record of the Katsura River Jizō), refers to the ephemeral cult built around an alleged prodigious apparition of the Bodhisattva Jizō in a village outside Kyoto in 1416.<sup>90</sup> For the following ten years, the site of the miracle attracted waves of pilgrims. Within this historical frame, the text offers a broad range of didactic content: anecdotal facts about the origin of the cult and Katsura village; lists of words related to arts, foods, alcohol, weapons, famous painters, and much else; quotations from sutras; information concerning the Bodhisattva Jizō; and philosophical dialogues (*mondō* 問答) about Buddhist concepts. The two scholars highlight how *Katsuragawa Jizō ki* combines *monozukushi*, prose narrative, quotations from Chinese sources, and poems in both Japanese and Chinese in a way that recalls *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*.<sup>91</sup> Precisely because of these features, it has always been included in the genre of *ōraimono*, leaving unexplored its belletristic qualities.<sup>92</sup> If this was the fate of *Katsuragawa Jizō ki*, is it not possible that *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* was also considered mainly a textbook at the time of its composition? Further research is definitely needed in order to assess whether our text was a unique case, or whether we can find other literary works which similarly have been misleadingly labelled as a specific genre. By querying their inclusion in broad genres (such as *otogizōshi*) we might, in fact, uncover revealing insights into the texts’ nature and the context that created them.

## Conclusions

The starting point for the argument developed in this paper is the claim that originally *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* probably was not meant to be read as a parody of *Heike monogatari*. The plots of the two texts have nothing in common but the war theme. Minimal parody is limited to the opening paragraph, which was only added around three hundred years after the formation of the original text. The structure of the tale based as it is on a quarrel between two parties draws not from the historical Minamoto-Taira conflict, but from a combination of two different elements. On the one hand, it was a stylistic feature typical of “debate literature,” which was introduced to Japan from the continent. On the other hand, this narrative structure allowed the author to visualize in a more concrete and creative way the different dietary habits that regulated the life of the upper classes—particularly that of

89 A facsimile of the oldest extant copy (dated 1491) and a transcription are in Takahashi and Takahashi 2012.

90 Takahashi and Takahashi 2012, pp. 336–338.

91 Takahashi and Takahashi 2012, p. 340.

92 Takahashi and Takahashi 2012, p. 335.

*bushi*—in medieval Japan. By imagining the edible characters dying and being consumed or being praised on specific days of the year, *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* introduced the reader to the different roles that certain foods played in rituals and ceremonies, both secular and religious. However, the text did adopt the language and idioms of *gunkimono*, appealing to readers through the literary conventions of one of the most popular genres of that time. This technique exposed the reader to numerous words for foods, military terms, and religious concepts in a more humorous, digestible way. A short, entertaining book brimming with puns and wordplay was surely more attractive to pupils than collections of complicated letters designed for adults or endless lists of kanji.

My analysis suggests that, from the fourteenth century, authors of educational works were experimenting with new pedagogic approaches that comprised elements of a diverse nature. This can be seen in the many new kinds of *ōraimono* that combined already existing typologies to different degrees. The authors of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* and *Katsuragawa Jizō ki*, however, took this merging further by adding a narrative framework that encompassed didactic content, and by applying established literary conventions from other genres. The interplay between narrative and non-narrative elements, and between different genres, made for a more fertile cognitive ground for the reader to absorb the information contained in those works. In addition, our text combines this approach with the device of anthropomorphism, to increase further the readers' attention and, thus, cognitive receptivity. This interpretation departs radically from the established understanding of anthropomorphism in Japanese literature and arts, which tends to be reckoned as stemming from an innate feeling of closeness to nature, or from an animistic ideological context.<sup>93</sup> I propose that, at least in the case of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, the intended effect was to engage readers and challenge them to question the boundary between human and nonhuman, precisely because of an awareness of the difference between the two categories.

While this article has only scratched the surface of *Shōjin gyorui monogatari*, it offers a launchpad for multiple trajectories of study. First of all, it calls for a deeper investigation of the text's many embedded narratives, which promise to reveal other insights about medieval culture, especially food consumption. At the same time, it draws attention to the shortcomings of classifying literary works in too-broad categories such as *otogizōshi* or *irui gassen mono* only according to length, period of composition, or overall theme. Finally, it invites scholars of Japanese literature to rethink the accepted theories on anthropomorphism that only consider it in animistic terms, or that fail to heed examples from non-Western cultures. If it is true that in Western literature inanimate objects are targets for anthropomorphism only for readers of a younger age—unlike animals that continue to be humanized into adulthood—the Japanese case proves that this does not necessarily have to be so.<sup>94</sup> As mentioned at the beginning, *Shōjin gyorui monogatari* is only one of many texts that has foods as protagonists. Moreover, the Japanese literary landscape is populated by all sorts of humanized objects, whose audience was not always uniquely children. More revealing insights into literary devices and cognitive processes at large could, thus, stem from incorporating examples offered by cultures other than those already exposed by Anglophone scholarship in general discourses on anthropomorphism.

93 For example, Doi 1963, p. 43, and Itō 2017, p. 124.

94 Boyd 2007, p. 237.

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