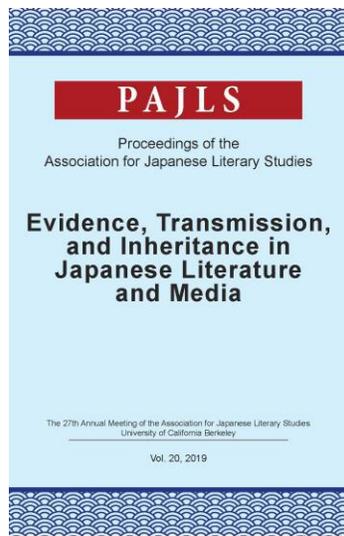


“Trouble All Around: Ichijō Kaneyoshi and
Women’s Authority”

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**TROUBLE ALL AROUND:
ICHIJŌ KANEYOSHI AND WOMEN’S AUTHORITY**

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My subject is someone who is perhaps not that well known, and who in some basic ways cannot be known, beginning with his name. I will call him Ichijō Kaneyoshi, following the reasoning that he must have wanted to invoke half of his grandfather Nijō Yoshimoto’s (1320–1388) name, and thus the proud tradition attendant upon one of the five regental houses of the Fujiwara. Yoshimoto’s name has endured in connection with *renga* linked verse as well, and although Ichijō Kaneyoshi was more a scholar and a *waka* poet, he was no slacker in *renga* either, having composed *Renju gappekishū* (Collection of Linked Pearls and Joined Jewels, 1476), “the most famous of [those] handbooks of associations”² for the practice. It had been more common, nonetheless, for authors to refer to him as Ichijō Kanera, even though as his biographer Nagashima Fukutarō notes, there is no documentary evidence for either reading, Kaneyoshi or Kanera.³ In this way Kaneyoshi?/Kanera? reminds us of elite women in the Heian period, of whom we must always say “this (Murasaki Shikibu, Sei Shōnagon, etc.) is a sobriquet,” or “it might be read Fujiwara no Shōshi, or Akiko.” (Cue slightly embarrassed explanation that women’s “real” names have not come down to us.)

This is not the only way that Ichijō Kaneyoshi puts us in mind of elite Heian women, first because on occasion he wrote in a fluid vernacular as they did, and second because he labored throughout his long years (1402–1481) to make the longest of their prose works, *Genji monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*, early eleventh century), accessible to his contemporaries. He is credited with almost a dozen commentaries on the *Genji*, the six most important of which together total well over 400 pages in the modern print edition, qualifying him as somewhat obsessed with the tale.⁴ He lectured about the *Genji* on numerous occasions, and recommended it to people,

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² H. Mack Horton, *Song in an Age of Discord: ‘The Journal of Sōchō’ and Poetic Life in Late Medieval Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 209.

³ Nagashima Fukutarō, *Ichijō Kanera* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1959), 26.

⁴ Nakano Kōichi, ed., *Kachō yosei, Genji wahishō, Genji monogatari no uchi fushin jōjō, Gengo hiketsu, Kudenshō, Genji monogatari kochūshaku sōkan*, vol. 2 (Musashino shoin, 1978).

with unbounded enthusiasm, as an incomparable treasure.⁵ That he also gave meticulous attention to *Ise monogatari* (*Tales of Ise*, ca. mid-tenth century) and the *Nihon shoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*, 720), works of different character and authorship, suggests that he was not perversely focused on what we now call *wabun* (vernacular) prose. Appreciated in his own day as a scholar of rare accomplishments, Kaneyoshi has been credited, with reason, for the emphases of Japanese studies (*wagaku*) in the subsequent warring states and Edo periods (thus Nagashima labels him *wagaku no biso*, the founder of such studies).⁶ In recent work, Tamura Wataru argues that this retrospective view situating Kaneyoshi within *wagaku* should not obscure the fact that at the time he was studying noble customs and lore.⁷ Crucially, Ichijō Kaneyoshi secured the foundation that linked the literary classics, and particularly the works of women writers, to the study of precedent. Precedents, and the journals and documents that transmitted them, were, in addition to land, rank, title, and emoluments, the source of court power. The court parsed its own history and justified its continuity into the future from such records. After Ichijō Kaneyoshi, *Genji monogatari*, which had been the touchstone for poetry (itself a key feature of courtly life and self-image), joined diaries as textual ground for the court's authority.⁸

TROUBLES OF WAR

As with any figure from the era of conflagration begun by the Ōnin wars of 1467 to 1477, there is much we cannot reconstruct regarding Ichijō Kaneyoshi's individual life. Networks of familial relations gave him access to resources and rank, political calibrations that are easily tracked, and we know a lot about his movements because one of his sons, the prelate Jinson (1430–1508), kept good notes.⁹ Ichijō Kaneyoshi's scholarly achievements have a clear profile, and fittingly so, because he was a man of the book. Books mattered to him above much else. It is not surprising in the premodern Japanese context, of course, that he says

⁵ See the preface to *Kachō yosei*, for example. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ Nagashima, *Ichijō Kanera*, 26.

⁷ Tamura Wataru, *Ichijō Kanera no gakumon to Muromachi bunka* (Bensei shuppan, 2013).

⁸ Nagashima noted this shift, saying that *Genji* became known as a treasury of Heian customs (*seikatsu*), not just *waka*; see *Ichijō Kanera*, 22. Steven Carter demonstrates as much in his analysis of Kaneyoshi's major commentary on *Genji monogatari*, *Kachō yosei*, and its focus on court customs; see *Regent Redux: A Life of the Statesman-Scholar Ichijō Kaneyoshi* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1996), 159–64.

⁹ He is known for the lengthy record *Daijō-in jisha zōjiki*.

nothing memorable about his four wives and twenty-six children, but by contrast his attachment to his texts is obvious from the record.

The imperative of writing as documentation was strong with Ichijō Kaneyoshi. Many of his works are identified in catalogs as *yūsoku kojitsu*, that is to say that they are about the customs and ceremonies of the court as defined in the past.¹⁰ This was a text-mediated tradition of accuracy and obsession. Power, not to mention wealth, in the present was a product of hierarchical relationships that had to be documented, observed, and reproduced.¹¹ He was also a poet, and while much of the canon was doubtless in his memory, installed there by practices of chanting and repetition, the great collections of poetry were textual compilations that inspired written commentaries. The contemporary poetry scene, too, although it favored genres such as linked verse that took the ephemerality of nature as their motive, as well as contests that called for the social display of poems on a specific occasion, was underwritten by habits of submitting poems for judgment. Someone had to transcribe the poems on paper and put them in the hands of the arbiter, who would compose an opinion about their quality.

It is fair to say, then, that Ichijō Kaneyoshi was born into a world of paper. His family legacy—including descent on his mother's side from Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), appreciated as the divinity of letters—was scholarship, which took the tangible form of a library that had its own name and location, the Tōkabō on the Ichijō estate. In the preface (1476) he produced for Sōgi's (1421–1502) *Chikurinshō* (*Poems from the Bamboo Grove*), Kaneyoshi notes that he had some 700 *gō* of manuscripts, which Motoori Norinaga calculated as amounting to some 35,000 volumes.¹² Kaneyoshi took advice to move away from the estate in the capital as turmoil spread in the autumn of 1467, but its destruction was imminent. After war brought fire to the Ichijō mansion (which caused the loss of the Tōkabō library not to flames, but to robbers), some rescued rolls went to the Kōmyōbuji in the eastern hills district of the capital. The fires

¹⁰ For example, the celebrated *Kuji kongen* 公事根源 (The Origins of Court Ceremony, 1422?), *Ichijōke sōzokushō* (一条家装束抄, 1480), *Segen mondō* (世諺問答), *Gōshidaishō* (江次第抄), and *Ganjitsu no sechie shidai* (元日節会次第). The *yūsoku kojitsu* genre accounts for “fully half of his extant writings,” according to Carter in *Regent Redux*, 20.

¹¹ Carter points out that in a collection of fragments known as *Tōka zuiyō* (桃華藥葉, “Flowers and Leaves of the Peach Blossom”) Kaneyoshi charges his heir Fuyuyoshi “to safekeep the old documents upon which family claims were based.” These were literal claims to estate rights; see *Regent Redux*, 195.

¹² Nagashima, *Ichijō Kanera*, 96, citing Norinaga's *Tamakatsuma*.

of war again struck, leaving only a portion to be moved to the Daijō-in in Nara, where Kaneyoshi fled at the height of the conflict.¹³ Steven Carter speaks of the loss in the more dramatic terms that Kaneyoshi himself used in his *Fude no susabi* (Amusements of the brush, 1469): “In the end, there was left not a single volume of the Chinese and Japanese documents preserved by the family for more than ten generations.”¹⁴ This bit of hyperbole stresses how paper was conceived as the sediment of a legacy that stretched over time. The loss of that library to plunderers must only have reinforced the feeling that writing had to be preserved in order to guarantee power. With the family he had to support, Kaneyoshi could not afford a romantic dismissal of such a loss as an airy lesson in impermanence to sigh over. This tragedy demanded action, and many have noted the energy Kaneyoshi must have put in to gathering texts, and composing them, during his time in Nara.¹⁵

Kaneyoshi faced a number of problems in exile (wives and children dispersed to different temples or provincial properties caused headaches, no doubt), but few were so critical as the problem of language. Compared to the gore and displacements of war, and the threatened total destruction of civil order, the problem of language seems as though it should not have caused a great worry. After all, when one’s house is on fire, rather elemental expression at best comes into play. Flee, save yourself, save the storehouse!—this is no time for poesy, and certainly not for a debate over the relative merits of fiction versus history or *waka* versus *renga*.

In one important sense, however, this is the moment when nothing matters so much as language. If there is ever to be a chance of reestablishing the authority of the ruling class in the wake of war, it will be the language arts—rhetoric—that save the day. When the troops withdraw, laws, edicts, and governance, all mediated by language, will show their utility. The faction that mobilizes text best will reestablish its rights.

David Spafford writes that the political landscape of medieval Japan was structured as a hierarchy in which Kyoto was the top.¹⁶ Even before the fires of the Ōnin War, that political geography was more symbolic than actual—Kyoto was “up” from everywhere else in spite of its basin

¹³ Hashiura Hyōichi, “Kanera no zuihitsu—toku ni josei seidōkan o megutte,” *Miyagi kyōiku daigaku kokugo kokubun* 9 (April 1978): 15.

¹⁴ Carter, *Regent Redux*, 147.

¹⁵ See for instance Harada Yukinari, “Ichijō Kaneyoshi—Sono kotengaku o sasaeta dokusho naiyō no kaimei 1,” *Nihon bungaku* 29 (Dec. 1980): 20–30.

¹⁶ David Spafford, *A Sense of Place: The Political Landscape in Late Medieval Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 208–9.

topography (low sea level height), but even so the radical loss of Kyoto's physical markers in the conflagration must have induced concern, if not despair, over the future of the symbol. One could reconstruct the city in actuality, but it was more important to maintain the textual grounds for any recovery, since battles might mean that reconstruction would have to occur over and over again.

TROUBLES OF POWER AND GENDER

When all was darkest, Ichijō Kaneyoshi's hand turned to the vernacular masterwork *Tale of Genji*. Was he simply attempting to distract himself from the bleak everyday with the consolations of literature? Was he reaching back to an age when his family, the Fujiwara, swayed the court much as the fictional Genji did? Or was he invoking the authority of a female author in a calculated attempt to change the story of his own times?

Steven Carter has shown how Ichijō Kaneyoshi was engaged, even during his first regency (1447–1453), in “consciously working for a revival of the golden days of the noble families.”¹⁷ How much more necessary was this in the days when the nobility could not even be physically present in their beloved capital. For this purpose, *Genji monogatari* was an old and prominent exemplar, redolent of court music and graceful pastimes. To invoke *Genji* was to fall in line behind generations of courtly readers, of poets, of prose writers who had gestured at the eponymous hero of the tale, and of commentators from well-placed families. Despite the existence of a few meta-tales whose authors were women—*Sarashina nikki* (the Sarashina journal) from Sugawara no Takasue's Daughter (b. ca. 1008) and the *Mumyōzōshi* (Nameless booklet) of Shunzei's Daughter (ca. 1171–1251)—along with some anonymous critiques about the *Tale* that fall into the category of “gossip,”¹⁸ there is no reason to see the invocation of *Genji* as a particularly gender-conscious act. Its author was a woman, but it is not as though Kaneyoshi made a point of this. And yet we have a sign that Kaneyoshi had a special view of female authority by the time of the Ōnin Wars. Wrapping up an essay titled *Sayo no nezame* (Awake at night, 1473?), Kaneyoshi acknowledges the gentleness of women, even as he goes on to demur:

¹⁷ Carter, *Regent Redux*, 94.

¹⁸ As Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane call their set of lovingly translated “women's talk” (*onna-goto*) in *Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 39–140.

But, this land of Japan is called *wakoku* [“land of harmony and peace”], a place that should be governed by women.¹⁹

Invoking the cases of Amaterasu, Jingū, and Hōjō Masako, along with the wisely ruling women emperors of the past, Kaneyoshi closes by affirming that such a woman should rule even now.²⁰ It may be an understatement to call this “the most notorious of all Kaneyoshi’s statements,”²¹ for it has earned him everything from censure as a sycophant to praise for his rhetorical sleight of hand that enabled him to back up his patron within the bounds of precedent. The woman to whom the text was addressed, Hino Tomiko (1440–1496), has herself courted censure as one of history’s unparalleled evil women for her role in provoking and financing the war.²²

Ichijō Kaneyoshi’s purposeful use of writing to secure his own place in the world may imply that he was not above cynical maneuvering with his statements on Hino Tomiko and leadership. In the seventh month of Bunmei 9 (1477), the *renga* worthy Sōgi visited and conveyed the wish of the former shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490) and his wife Tomiko for Ichijō Kaneyoshi’s responses to a poetry competition. In the *Bunmei kunen shichigatsu nanuka shichishu utaawase* (文明九年七月七日七首歌合) that Kaneyoshi judged, Ashikaga Yoshimasa led off for the right and was awarded three wins, one loss, and three draws.²³ Tomiko, on the other hand, was on the left; her score of five wins and one draw invites comment that this is how Ichijō Kaneyoshi curried favor and was able to return to the capital in the third month of Bunmei 10 (1478). Even if we conclude that Tomiko’s success in this event had little to do with her gifts as a poet, however, Kaneyoshi endorsed her efforts in the time-honored format of the *waka* competition. He also included her in the audiences for his lectures on the *Tale of Genji*.

What is the connection between being governed by women and written by women, between female authority and female authorship? As Christina Laffin has shown, we can no longer assume that women’s role

¹⁹ Carter, *Regent Redux*, 182.

²⁰ His examples are likely the product of his reading of Jien’s *Gukanshō*. Ozaki Isamu lays out the correspondences in “*Gukanshō* to Ichijō Kanera *Sayo no nezame no seiritsu*,” *Kumamoto gakuen daigaku bungaku, gengogaku ronshū* 1:1–2 (Nov. 1994): 276–52.

²¹ Carter, *Regent Redux*, 182.

²² Nakayama Aiko, “*Akujo sanninshū*: Fujiwara Kusuko, Hōjō Masako, Hino Tomiko,” *Rekishi to tabi* 15:7 (May 1988): 116–23.

²³ The left won twenty-seven matches, three times as many as the right. Almost half the matches (thirty-four) ended in draws; see Hanawa Hokiichi, ed., *Gunsho ruijū* 13: *Waka bu*, vol. 210 (Heibonsha, 1933), 165–79.

vis-à-vis the literary tradition was simply as passive consumers of texts.²⁴ It is premature as well to conclude that Ichijō Kaneyoshi was merely asserting masculine prerogatives over the labors of women when he put his stamp on so much of the written commentarial corpus. We do well to take seriously Kaneyoshi's protests that a woman has written the highest literary treasure, and that women should lead in governance. One key to forging a link here is to realize that the exercise of rule by the court was not strictly political—to govern the realm meant to effect a series of rituals and ceremonies whose literary character was deep. *Sayo no nezame*, although frequently classed as a quasi-political text (*kyōkun*, precepts) is itself heavily in debt to the language of *Genji monogatari*. Kaneyoshi first invokes the Tang poet Bai Juyi (772–846) with opening lines that refer to the preference of the Chinese for spring over the autumn breezes that Hikaru Genji felt more keenly. Citing Chinese poetics is just one more way Kaneyoshi gestures toward the equivalence of what we would consider the literary and the political, since the equation was longstanding on the continent. One can imagine that Kaneyoshi was strongly affected by the destruction of his city, which “started when one day those who had been like father and son began to confront each other like tigers and wolves,”²⁵ as he relates in one miscellany. He figures the war as an enterprise of men, and its resolution as the task of women, perhaps not coincidentally.

Elsewhere Kaneyoshi signals that at least one woman is capable of comprehending the world. His premier work on *Genji monogatari* is *Kachō yosei*, the opening of which makes a forceful case for the superiority of the *Tale*. Comparing it to a deep spring that is not exhausted however often one draws water from it, he predictably disparages his own efforts at commentary. In taking up the author's intentions (*sakui*), he notes immediately the episode in Murasaki Shikibu's journal in which she tells us that Saemon no naishi, jealous that the sovereign recognized in the tale deep familiarity with the *Chronicles of Japan (Nihongi)*, dubbed Murasaki “lady of the chronicles.”²⁶ Not only that, but Kaneyoshi cites Juntoku-in's reference to the same anecdote, doubling his focus on the author as historian.²⁷ When Kaneyoshi takes up the point in the “Hotaru” (Fireflies) chapter in which the characters Genji and Tamakazura talk about fiction,

²⁴ Christina Laffin, *Rewriting Medieval Japanese Women: Politics, Personality, and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), especially 125–33.

²⁵ From *Fude no susabi*, 1470, trans. Carter, *Regent Redux*, 225.

²⁶ Nakano, ed., *Kachō yosei*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4. See *Diary of the Juntoku Retired Emperor (Juntoku-in gyōki)*, 1220, trans. T. Harper, in Harper and Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 168.

he observes that Tamakazura's response (in which she famously points out that Genji is used to telling lies and so thinks that fiction would be untruthful as well) conjures a truthful lie (*makotoshiki soragoto*), and seems to express one of the meanings of the *Tale*. Kaneyoshi next seizes the opportunity to praise *Nihongi* as the most important of all Japanese texts. In the two characters' conversation, Genji comments that tales fill in many things *Nihongi* does not cover—a criticism that Kaneyoshi, author of a major commentary on the *Chronicles*, might not be expected to support. He finds a way out of the problem by concluding that Genji is voicing his amusement at Tamakazura's defense of stories (not slamming the classic account that goes back to the Age of divinities).²⁸ To Kaneyoshi, then, Murasaki Shikibu's treatment of history passes muster with its combination of lightness and serious text.

We might also look at *Genji wahishō* (1449). There Kaneyoshi admonishes us not to think of the *Tale* as only dealing with the ways of love. His list of four things the *Genji* records puts the conduct of public affairs (*ohoyake no koto no tatazumai*) second, after the Inner and Outer Teachings, but before the Way of Japanese poetry and details of costuming.²⁹ Looking at the sixteen segments that compose this text, many of which contain brief glosses on words that were treated as esoteric knowledge at the time, we sense Kaneyoshi's gravity about this tale.

Ichijō Kaneyoshi has been cherished for inheriting the classics and transmitting them faithfully to the next generation, across the world-rending barrier of the Ōnin conflict. This brief paper has offered only suggestive evidence of the key ways in which Kaneyoshi enhanced the value assigned to the *Tale of Genji*, adding a concern with history and duty to the accepted virtues of poetry and emotion. Even if he was unable to make a lasting case for women's authority, at the very least he contributed to the normalization of women's authorship. When we consider the fact that the burning of the capital might well have ended with the destruction of its cultural capital, in the form of its past literature, as well, Kaneyoshi's sleepless labors become ever more remarkable.

²⁸ Nakano ed., *Kachō yosei*, 200.

²⁹ "Inner and Outer Teachings" refers to Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings; see *Genji wahishō*, in Nakano Kōichi, ed., *Kachō yosei*, 423.