

Female Cross-Dressing and Cross-Gendering in Premodern and Modern Japan

Part 1

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1. Introduction

Numerous illustrations, prints and photographs from premodern and modern Japanese history show women in cross-dress, i.e. adopting garments, hairstyles, accessories and body language that the culture and society of the time associated with men. By way of example, in an illustration to the work titled *Origins of the Hachiman Shrine* (*Hachiman engi*, seventeenth century, unknown author) Queen Consort Jingū (according to traditional dating 169-269, reign 201-269) is portrayed, while on board of a boat headed towards the Korean peninsula, dressed in full armour and a male hairstyle called *mizura* in which long hair was combed in two braids pinned to the sides of the head (Kokugakuin University Museum, 2025, p. 21). One of the illustrations attached to *Poetry Contest about Works Held in Tsuruoka* (*Tsuruoka hōjōe shokunin utawase*, mid-thirteenth century) shows a ritual specialist called *shirabyōshi* who, while wearing a tall hat known as *tateeboshi* which was commonly donned by adult men at the royal court and a ritual sword, performs a fast-tempo dance called *otokomai*, “man’s dance” (Okimoto, 2016, p. 65). In one of the illustrations contained in the booklet *Images of Kabuki Theatre* (*Kabuki zukan*, early seventeenth century, by Karasumaru Mitsuhiro, 1579-1638), Izumo no Okuni (1578-1613), the founder of the Kabuki Theatre, wears her hair in the topknot usually worn by adult men and carries two swords as it was customary for adult men of the warrior class (Tsuji, 2017, p. 39). In the print *Niwaka Festival at Shin Yoshiwara* (*Seirō Niwaka Zenseiyū*, circa 1811-1813), Kikukawa Eizan (1787-1867) drew a procession of *geisha* who have their hair combed in the topknot usually worn by adult men as part of the aesthetic and the spectacle of the Niwaka Festival, one of the main annual events held in the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter (Watanabe, 2018, pp. 10-11). Lastly, a photograph published in 1954 shows Kasugano Yachiyo (1915-2012), an actress of the Takarazuka Revue specialised in playing male characters and thus called “male role” (*otokoyaku*), in her stage dress with tuxedo, bow tie and Pompadour hairstyle (Robertson, 1998, p. 79).

At the current state of research, female cross-dressing has been extensively studied in connection with ritual, artistic and theatrical performances. Wakita Haruko (2001), Okimoto Yukiko (2016), Tsuji Hirokazu (2017) and Hosokawa Ryōichi (2017) have argued that *shirabyōshi* assumed a male appearance as part of their highly spectacular dances as a way to gain the benevolence of the *kami*. Asano Miwako (1987) and Tsuji (2017) have suggested that Okuni adopted a male appearance in imitation of the *shirabyōshi*, thereby creating a theatrical performance that employed cross-dressing less for its ritual function and more for its eye-catching and erotic appeal. Kishii Yoshie (2011, first published in 1974), Hayashi (2025, first published in 1977), Cecilia Segawa Seigle (1993), Joshua S. Mostow (2008, 2016), Masuda Yoshiko (2010), Tanaka Yūko (2016), Andō Yūichirō (2016) and Akasaka Chiseki (2023) have explored how *geisha* assumed male garments and hairstyles to signal the artistic skills they acquired from their male colleagues and to assume a sophisticated and subtly eroticised appearance in imitation both of the *shirabyōshi* and Okuni. A. Kimi Coaldrake (1997) has suggested that in Onna Gidayū female chanters wore male clothes to indicate, like *geisha* did, that their artistic proficiency was on par with their male counterparts. Lastly, Robertson (1989, 1991, 1992ab, 1998) and Yamanashi Makiko (2012)

have investigated how actresses of the Takarazuka Revue assumed a male appearance, both on and sometimes off stage, to perform male roles. In conclusion, experts have shown how, starting from the ritual specialists called *shirabyōshi*, female cross-dressing was employed as a strategy to gain the favour of the gods and how their highly spectacular dances gave way to a long history of performances that become more and more theatrical in nature, beginning from Okuni Kabuki and arriving to modern and contemporary Takarazuka Theatre.

While scholars have written a highly coherent history of female cross-dressing for its ritual, artistic and theatrical functions, other aspects and interpretations of the phenomenon have been overlooked. In *A Brief History of Sexuality in Premodern Japan*, Kimura Saeko (2010, pp. 31-33) has suggested, based on a close reading of *The Chronicles of Japan (Nihongi or Nihonshoki, 720)*, that Jingū adopted a male appearance to gain the prerogatives, which the culture and society of her time attributed only to men, of mobilising and moving troops to invade the Silla Kingdom in the Korean peninsula. In his analysis and translation of *Partings at Dawn (Ariake no wakare, late twelfth century, unknown author)*, Robert Omar Khan (1998, pp. 153-156) has shown how the text's protagonist assumes a male appearance at the wish of her parents who want her to have a political career at the royal court and to continue the genealogical line of their family, where pursuing a political career and continuing the genealogical line of one's family were possibilities available only to men and not to women. In *Cross-Dressing and Culture in Modern Japan* (2002, pp. 26, 30-31), Yuxin Ma has observed that the Japanese Modern Girls, also called *moga*, who became the cultural heroines of the 1920s donned men's clothes and short hair to reject the gender and sexual roles that society cast on them and instead acquired opportunities that the culture and society assigned only to men, in particular the possibility of leaving the private sphere of their homes and their reproductive occupations to enter the public sphere and work and play alongside men. Yuxin has termed this refutation of female roles and adoption of male roles cross-gendering, which was made possible by the assumption of a male appearance through cross-dressing. While female cross-dressing as a ritual, artistic and theatrical performance has been studied in a systematic manner, female cross-dressing in relation to the assumption of male roles and prerogatives has received only limited attention.

The present study aims to fill this gap by studying female cross-dressing as a cross-gendering strategy. In other words, the research will investigate how Japanese women, both real life figures and fictional characters, adopted a male appearance through the wearing of clothes, hairstyles, accessories, language and body language that the culture and society of their time associated with men to refute roles that were projected on them for their anatomical sex and gender performance and to gain roles and privileges that the same culture and society reserved to men. The project adopts a historiographical approach according to which cross-dressing emerges as a practice whose logic, function and applicability change over time. The study will explore female cross-dressing and cross-gendering from the first century,¹ where the practice emerges in connection with the *asobibe* ritual specialists and the martial feats of the solar goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami and the Queen Consort Jingū, until the

¹ In the original project, the author aimed to begin his analysis from the urban culture of cross-dressing that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century. However, since cross-dressing and its connection with cross-gendering existed well before the early modern period, he has decided to include earlier manifestations of the phenomena to conduct a more exhaustive study.

mid-twentieth century, when Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy and Gender-Affirming Surgery were first introduced to Japan. While the importation of hormone therapy and surgery did not bring an end to cross-dressing as a gendering practice, which instead continues to be adopted to this day, the introduction of hormone therapy and surgery has redefined the relationship existing between cross-dressing and cross-gendering. The present Part 1 of the project begins the analysis from the first century and ends in the mid-nineteenth century, covering the premodern segment of Japanese history.

2. In the Beginning, the Cross-Dressing Woman Was a Priestess

According to the *Collected Commentaries on the Administrative Codes* (*Ryō no shūge*, second half of the eighth century), there existed, between the first and the fifth centuries, a group of priestesses called *asobibe*. According to the text, two ritual specialists from this group, whom the source indicates by the service names *negi* and *yohi*, were called to the royal court following the death of Sovereign Suinin (according to the traditional dating 69 BCE - 70 CE, reign 29 BCE - 70 CE) with the function of pacifying the spirit of the defunct king and guiding him to cross the threshold between the world of the living and the world of the dead. To do so, Negi and Yohi entered the temporary building in which the body of the sovereign was moved, called *mogari*. According to the explanation given in *Collected Commentaries on the Administrative Codes*, Negi brought with her a sword and a lance, whereas Yohi brought with her a sword and an offering of food and liquor. The source also mentions that, after Sovereign Yūryaku (417/418-479, reign 456-479) passed away, the sacred offering of food did not take place for seven days and seven nights and, as a consequence, the spirit of the defunct king became violent. The last remaining member of the *asobibe* was soon summoned and asked to perform the necessary rite, however she turned the request down, explaining that it was inappropriate for a woman to handle weapons. For this reason, her husband took her place and performed the rite, after which the spirit of the king was successfully appeased (Kudō, 2016, p. 182). In summary, the *Collected Commentaries on the Administrative Codes* describes the *asobibe* as a group of priestesses who were specialised in performing the funerary rite through the use of offerings and weapons and recounts that in the fifth century one of the group members refused to perform the rite because handling weapons was unbecoming of a woman.

An Account of Ancient Matters (*Kojiki*, 712) contains a description of the funerary rite that the *asobibe* presumably performed as part of the mytho-history of the Heavenly Rock-Cave. In this narration, the solar goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami is enraged because her brother, Susanowo no Mikoto, has defiled the sacred palace in the Heavenly Plain where she resides. In her wrath, Amaterasu retreats in a cave whose entrance is blocked by a boulder. Since the cave and the entrance closed by a boulder appear similar to the tumuli called *kofun*, which served as tombs for queens, kings and nobles between the third and seventh centuries, it is possible that the mytho-history portrays a temporary or metaphorical death of Amaterasu. With the goddess's light now gone, the Heavenly Plain is shrouded in darkness and the remaining deities cry out in despair. To make Amaterasu get out of the cave and restore order to the Heavenly Plain, the goddess Ame no Uzume no Mikoto performs an ecstatic dance: with her hair tied in a head-band, Ame no Uzume overturns a bucket and stamps her feet on it, creating a loud sound until she becomes possessed. Amaterasu, intrigued by the dance, opens the entrance to the cave and a strong god catches her by her hand and pushes her outside the cave. The text refers to this dance as *asobi*, literally “play,” the first part of the term *asobibe*, whereas *be* indicates an occupational group (Kōnoshi, Yamaguchi, 1997, pp. 63-67). In another mytho-history from *An Account of Ancient Matters*, Ame no Uzume gives

orders to a deity by using a ceremonial dagger tied with a rope (*himo katana*; Kōnoshi, Yamaguchi, 1997, pp. 119-120). By analysing the rites performed by Ame no Uzume, it is possible to speculate that the *asobibe* performed a frenetic, divinely-inspired dance with which they guided the angry spirits of the dead to the otherworld and weapons such as swords and spears presumably served to confront and subdue the spirits.

Akima Toshio has emphasised the important role that divine possession fulfilled in the funerary rites performed by the *asosibe*. According to his careful reconstruction, the service names *negi* and *yohi* indicate a pair of ritual specialists wherein the *yohi*, a word derived from the verb *yose* which Akima has translated as a “person who causes the spirit to come,” serves as a vessel for a deity, who possesses the *yohi* and speaks through her, and the *negi*, which Akima has translated as the “appeaser,” interrogates the divinity (Akima, 1993, p. 153). An example of the interaction between the *negi*, the *yohi* and a deity can be found in *An Account of Ancient Matters* regarding Jingū. In the mytho-history, a divinity, later identified as Amaterasu, speaks to Sovereign Chūai (149-200, reign 192-200) through Jingū, the king’s wife. According to the mythical-historical narration, Chūai play the *koto*, a stringed musical instrument, to induce the possession while Jingū serves as a vessel for Amaterasu, in the original text *kami wo yose*, and Takeuchi no Sukune, the leader of Chūai’s armed forces, asks Amaterasu questions and interprets her answers (Kōnoshi, Yamaguchi, 1997, pp. 243-244). In the funerary rite performed by the *asobibe*, the divine possession appears as a central factor in inspiring the sacred dance with which the priestess guides the defunct spirit to the otherworld.

A number of *haniwa*, terracotta clay figures, may offer important visual clues as to the weapons, hairstyles and headgear worn by the *asobibe*. *Haniwa* were positioned on top of the *kofun* burials and/or in public spaces outside of the tomb chamber to show the sociopolitical prominence of the chieftain who was interred in the mound. Usually, *haniwa* replicated the party that conducted and participated in the mourning rituals performed for the deceased (Gerhart, Linduff, 2020, p. 119). Archaeologists commonly categorise human-shaped *haniwa* based on their hairstyles and presence or absence of breasts: while female figures comb their long hair in a style called *mage*, with their hair tied at the top of their heads, and have breasts, male figures do not have breasts and have long hair combed in a style called *mizura*, with their hair parted left and right in the middle of their heads and tied up near the ears; this hairstyle was typically worn by kings, men of high status and warriors for ritual performances (Mitsumoto, 2022, pp. 196-197; Gerhart, Linduff, 2020, pp. 125, 130; Masuda, 2010, pp. 42-44; Wakasa, 2009, p. 52).

Among various types of female terracotta figures, ritual specialists, called “priestesses” (*miko*) by modern-day experts, usually don a long-sleeved short tunic worn over a long skirt (*mo*) and have a band of cloth (*tasuki*) draped over the shoulders, wound around the waist and tied in front. Karen Gerhart and Kathryn Linduff (2020, pp. 120, 130-133; see also Mitsumoto, 2006, pp. 156-158) have discussed a pair of *haniwa* depicting ritual specialists that has been unearthed in the Tsukamawari site in Gunma Prefecture, which dates to the early sixth century. One of the two *haniwa* is represented dancing, with her left arm parallel to the ground and her right hand on her hip, and has a *magatama*, a sphere with spiritual powers, presumably used to host or entrap spirits and deities within it. The other *haniwa* holds a ceremonial great sword called *kabutsuchi tachi*. The fact that the figure holds the ceremonial sword indicates that this priestess is the leader of the group of priestesses. This

type of sword is different from the swords owned by male-shaped *haniwa* in that the swords of male figures do not have scabbards and are tied to their attires, suggesting that they were used as weapons, whereas the great swords held by ritual specialists do not have scabbards, therefore they may have been ritual implements. The pair of *haniwa* seem to be performing the dance and the intimidatory gesture that *An Account of Ancient Matters* attributes to Ame no Uzume: as has been seen, the goddess dances to appease the angry (and metaphorically dead) Amaterasu and uses her sword to prompt a god to follow her instructions. It is moreover possible that the *haniwa* represent the funerary rite performed by the *yohi* and the *negi* of the *asobibe*, where the *yohi* danced and held a sword to pacify violent spirits while the *negi* used her heavier military equipment of sword and lance to submit the spirits to obedience.

Sugiyama Shinsaku and Mitsumoto Jun have reported on the discovery of other *miko*-depicting *haniwa* that present a masculine hairstyle and headgear. Mitsumoto (2022, pp. 202; 2013, pp. 62-65) has described a *haniwa* which apparently represents a feminine figure, whose sex is presumably rendered clear by line engravings which depict breasts, with a headgear that is exclusively worn by male-shaped *haniwa*. Similarly, Sugiyama (2006, pp. 49-55; 2003, pp. 10-20) has studied a human-shaped *haniwa* which is supposedly a female, given the presence of breasts, that also has its hair combed in the *mizura* hairstyle, the style generally worn by adult men. In summary, a comparison of the textual descriptions of the activities carried out by the *asobibe* and Ame no Uzume corroborates the hypothesis that ritual specialists appeased angry spirits via ecstatic dances and weapons. The swords that the *asobibe* and Ame no Uzume employed possibly brought the ritual specialists close to the group of the human-shaped *haniwa* that represent male warriors, although ritual specialists hold ceremonial implements while warriors have functional counterparts. While Sugiyama and Mitsumoto have not advanced an hypothesis to explain why the *haniwa* present such hairstyle and headgear, the analysis of two mytho-histories from *An Account of Ancient Matters* and *The Chronicles of Japan*, which follows, may shed light on this question.

The first mytho-history sees a confrontation between Amaterasu Ōmikami and her brother Susanowo no Mikoto. Both born from a holy ablution conducted by their father Izanaki no Mikoto, the latter establishes that Amaterasu will rule over the Heavenly Plain and that Susanowo will rule over the seas. However, Susanowo mourns the death of his mother Izanami no Mikoto. To express his grief, he cries to the point that the mounts, rivers and seas cry with him. Furthermore, he lets his beard grow as was customary for mourners to do. He tells his father that he wants to visit the land of the dead where Izanami is, disobeying the orders of Izanaki who, after Izanami passed away, established the separation between the land of the living and the land of the dead. Enraged that his son would want to subvert the order he created, Izanaki banishes Susanowo (Kōnoshi, Yamaguchi, 1997, pp. 49-55). Susanowo then goes to the Heavenly Plain where Amaterasu resides. When he arrives there, the mounts and rivers shake and the earth trembles. Amaterasu, worried, confronts him head on in full martial and ritual gear: she wears a band with multiple *magatama* spheres, has a quiver full of arrows and a bamboo arm guard. Furthermore, she combs her hair in the *mizura* style. Lastly, she performs an energetic dance by stamping her feet on the ground with such force that the text compares her strength to that of a mighty man (Kōnoshi, Yamaguchi, 1997, pp. 56-57).

In this scene, Amaterasu probably performs the pacification rite that the *asobibe* conducted. As has been seen, the priestesses appeased the violent spirits of the dead and in this mytho-history Susanowo is strongly associated with the defuncts, given that he mourns his mother who is in the land of the dead, and he possesses a supernatural force that shakes the natural world. Furthermore, Amaterasu has many *magatama* spheres as the dancing *haniwa* does and acquires a complete military attire complete with arrow and quiver. In this manner, Amaterasu has both the ritual and the military gear that the *asobibe* employed. Additionally, Amaterasu combs her hair in the *mizura* hairstyle, the hairstyle worn by kings, men of the elite and warriors, and dances with the strength of a man. While the text does not explain why Amaterasu wears her hair in the *mizura* style, it is possible to speculate that the use of brute strength and weapons was necessary for the goddess, and possibly the *asobibe* as well, to face and subjugate enraged spirits. However, as *Collected Commentaries on the Administrative Codes* reports, using weapons was deemed inappropriate for a woman and for this reason a member of the *asobibe* had her husband perform the funerary rite in honour of Yūryaku. If this assertion is correct, perhaps Amaterasu wears the masculine *mizura* hairstyle and the text considers her dance as powerful as that performed by a mighty man to adopt from men the strength and the weapons necessary to appease angry spirits. This explanation may also apply to the *haniwa* described by Sugiyama and Mitsumoto.

In *The Chronicles of Japan*, besides wearing the abovementioned weapons and guard and performing the dance with which she faces Susanowo, Amaterasu also ties the train of her vest, an overdress with a train called *mimo*, in the form of trousers called *hakama*, probably by tying the train on the sides of her legs (Kojima *et al.*, 1994, p. 63). According to Masuda (2010, pp. 31-35), beginning from the mid-fifth century women wore ensembles consisting of a “vest” (*kinu*) with a “train” (*mo*), whereas men wore ensembles consisting also of a *kinu* vest but, unlike women, they wore *hakama* trousers. According to Takeda Sachiko’s (1998, pp. 14-22) reconstruction, the use of the *hakama* trousers for men emerged among farmers who wore them for practicality since, given that *hakama* were sleeveless and reached to the knees, they did not restrict the wearer’s movements while he carried out hard labour. Apparently, noblemen adopted the *hakama* also for practicality both at home and at court. The use of *kinu* and *mo* for noblewomen and of *kinu* and *hakama* for noblemen was systematised by Sovereign Tenmu (630-686, reign 673-686), who in 658 emitted an edict to this effect. Seemingly, Tenmu aimed at codifying the clothes noblemen and noblewomen wore at court based on contemporary custom and also following the influence of analogous edicts promulgated in China, where a similar pair of trousers was part of the prescribed attire required at court (Takeda, 1998, pp. 14, 31). In spite of this edict, already at the court of Sovereign Kanmu (735-806, reign 781-806) a group of female officials called *uneme*, girls and young women who were at the personal service of the king, donned the *hakama* as part of their attire known as *jūnihitoe* or “twelve layers,” which consisted just in a series of clothes worn on top of others as layers. As part of this attire, the *uneme* wore a vest with a train on top of *hakama* trousers. Similarly to men, women apparently donned the *hakama* not only while at work, but also at their homes. In Takeda’s (1998, pp. 30-31, 38-42; see also Takeda, 2014, pp. 239-265) opinion, women and female officials adopted the *hakama* because it conveyed an image of maturity and responsibility and also because of the influence coming from China, where women of the Tang Imperial Court also wore trousers in imitation of male

officials (Yata, 2017, pp. 98-115). In *The Chronicles of Japan*, it is plausible that, when Susanowo arrives in the Heavenly Plain, Amaterasu wears a vest with a train as it was customary for noblewomen of the period, but when she hears her brother coming she ties the train in the shape of *hakama* trousers as female officials did. Presumably, Amaterasu ties her train because it may restrict her movements while she dances. By tying her train, Amaterasu also follows a practice often observed in the *haniwa* of priestesses, on which the train is draped over their shoulders, wound around the waist and tied in front. In summary, Amaterasu adopts a male garment, in the process also reproducing a custom practised by noblewomen and female officials, not to restrict her movements while she faces her brother via the pacifying ritual performed by the *asobibe*.

In *The Chronicles of Japan*, Jingū, too, resorts to the ritual of the *asobibe* when confronting a powerful adversary. According to this mytho-history, Amaterasu, speaking through Jingū who acts as a medium, orders Chūai to conquer the Realm of Silla in the Korean peninsula. However, Chūai does not believe her words, saying that in the direction Amaterasu has instructed him to go there is nothing but sea. Convinced that this is the prophecy of a malevolent deity, Chūai ignores Amaterasu's instructions and prepares a campaign to submit the Kumaso tribe. However, Chūai dies of illness during the expedition. His corpse is buried and then cremated in secret and Jingū acts as sovereign in his place unbeknownst to anyone outside Chūai's inner circle. Differently from Chūai, Jingū follows the instructions left by Amaterasu. To do so, she prays to the gods through a sword and a mirror, which work as receptacles for the deities, and performs a sacred ablution. Before entering the water, she ties her hair and prays that the divinities may send her a sign: if her hair parts in two, she will interpret it as the will of the gods who want her to submit the Silla Kingdom. When she finally enters the water, her hair parts in two and she combs it in the *mizura* style. She then orders the commanders of her army to prepare for invading the Korean realm. She says that, since she is a "woman" (*tawoyame*), it would not be appropriate for her to issue such a command. Nevertheless, now that she has "changed into a man in appearance" (*masurawo no sugata wo karite*), she is able to take part in the war. In the poetry of *The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yōshū*, circa 759), *tawoyame* and *masurawo* represent two distinct but connected figures where the *masurawo* is the warrior who leaves home and his wife, the *tawoyame*, to participate in the expeditions as he is ordered to do by his lord; in his solitude, he has only the company of his weapons and misses home and his wife; on the contrary, the *tawoyame* is the wife who is left at home and misses her husband who is at war (Naitō, 1996, pp. 35-65). In Jingū's mytho-history, the queen consort assumes the appearance of a man through wearing her hair in the masculine *mizura* hairstyle to adopt the social role of the warrior and commands the troops in the absence of her husband. Jingū goes to the Silla Kingdom via sea bringing with her the spirits of the gods who protect and guide her. Once in Silla, she subjugates the king (Kojima *et al.*, 1994, pp. 410-413, 423-429).

In this source, Jingū performs an extended version of the ritual of the *asobibe*. The mytho-history takes place during the time of mourning for the deceased Chūai and the adversary, the king of Silla, can also be assimilated to the dead because, as Akima (1993, p. 153) has argued, in this period the dead were imagined to reside not only in the underground or in moulds, but also in the distance over the seas. Furthermore, Jingū commands her army to go to war and receives signs, protection and guidance from the deities. As has been seen,

the *asobibe* employed military weapons to submit angry spirits and the *magatama* spheres to contain and direct the power of helpful spirits and gods. By behaving as both the military and spiritual leader of her army and her country, Jingū appears to be behaving in the guise of a supremely powerful *asobibe* priestess. In this enhanced version of the *asobibe* funerary rite, Jingū's cross-dressing emerges as a practice which allows the consort to adopt the male role of warrior and commander necessary for her to deploy the troops, an ability which, as Jingū herself explains, she would not normally possess as she is a woman.

The funerary rite of the *asobibe* exerted a lasting influence on other categories of ritual specialists who were active well after the *asobibe* disappeared in the fifth century. In the ninth century, the royal court created a group of female officials known as *azuma warawa* who formed part of the retinue of the sovereign during his excursions and expeditions and were tasked with giving him his footwear and safeguarding it. The *azuma warawa* were active, with periods in which their services were not requested because of conflicts between the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, until the early years of the Meiji period, when royal excursions were no longer held. While many of them apparently wore regular women's clothes, a number of them donned hunting vests called *kariginu* and worn by male courtiers, *hakama* trousers and hats called *suiei no kanmuri*, headgear with a cord on the back, which, similarly to the other garments, were used by adult men of the aristocracy. Furthermore, some of them also had service names, such as the epithet *Sanshi* attributed to an *azuma warawa* from the early fifteenth century, that were commonly attributed to male officials and workers (Takeda, 2020, pp. 1-6; Fukutō, 2017, pp. 18-23; Fukutō, 2014, pp. 265-266, 278-284). Unlike the *asobibe*, who assumed the appearance of aristocratic men of the Nara period and employed service names that indicated their roles and were not used by men, the *azuma warawa* imitated the attire of aristocratic men of the Heian period and also adopted service names commonly granted to men.

While Fukutō Sanae and Takeda Kazuya, the two experts who have most extensively studied the *azuma warawa*, have not established what function, if any, their cross-dressing fulfilled, it is plausible that it served to placate angry spirits. As Fukutō and Takeda have observed, the main task the *azuma warawa* carried out was giving the king his footwear and safeguarding it over the course of royal expeditions. In the mytho-histories and the poetry of *The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, when a person enters a foreign region they risk angering the god who presides over the area unless they ask for permission of passage in the form of a *kotoage*, or “pronunciation of words,” in which the person generally proclaims that they mean no harm and will pass through without disturbing the forces and the inhabitants of the zone (Levy, 1984, pp. 18-19; Komaki, 1976, pp. 15-22). If the person does not appropriately ask for permission, the consequences may be dire. In *An Account of Ancient Matters*, the hero Yamato Takeru goes to Ibukino Mountain and, instead of asking for permission to transit, he says that he will kill the god of the mount. The god, a white boar as big as an ox, attacks Yamato Takeru and gravely injures him (Levy, 1984, pp. 18-19; Komaki, 1976, pp. 15-22). Entering foreign areas was therefore extremely dangerous, as the uncared-for traveller may anger a god. In China, emperors and nobles wore special shoes that were crafted specifically to ward off angry spirits, usually by using images of dangerous animals such as the tiger (Hui, 2017, pp. 192-197). It is possible that the *azuma warawa* were tasked with protecting the king from angry spirits and the footwear they safeguarded was an item

that protected the sovereign from inadvertently enraging the gods who presided over the areas through which the royal retinue would pass. If this interpretation is correct, it is possible that the *azuma warawa*'s cross-dressing was, like the *asobibe*'s, a practice which helped the female officials pacify and ward off violent spirits.

The late twelfth century saw the creation of a new category of ritual specialists, the *shirabyōshi*. In *Essays in Idleness* (*Tsurezuregusa*, 1330-1332), Yoshida Kenkō (circa 1283-1350) reported that a religious man taught a woman named Shizu (dates unknown), the daughter of a zen master, his style of dancing and Shizu implemented his teachings by dancing wearing a white *suikan*, the upper part of the *kariginu* hunting vest usually donned by male courtiers, and a tall hat called *eboshi* which was worn by adult men of the royal court. The source also states that Shizu sang and danced a dance called “man’s dance” (*otokomai*). The *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*, fourteenth century) presents a slightly different testimony, according to which under the reign of King Toba (1103-1156, reign 1107-1123) a different woman independently created the *shirabyōshi* style of dance and, besides wearing the *suikan* vest and the *eboshi* hat, she also wore *hakama* trousers and used a short sword with a hilt in a decorative wrapper (Akasaka, 2023, p. 27; Tsuji, 2017, pp. 26-29; Okimoto, 2016, pp. 57-58). Like the attire adopted by the *azuma warawa*, apparently the *shirabyōshi* imitated the appearance of contemporary male courtiers, seeing as the *suikan* vest, *hakama* trousers, *eboshi* hat and short sword were all garments worn by noblemen of the time.

The *shirabyōshi* donned the garments and the accessories listed above only when they first appeared, while they gradually stopped wearing some of those items. According to Miura Jōshin (1565-1644) in *Tales That Come to Mind* (*Sozoro monogatari*, 1680s), the *shirabyōshi* wore only the white *suikan* vest and stopped using the *eboshi* hat, *hakama* trousers and ceremonial sword because they were deemed “excessive” (*kotogoto*; Groemer, 2019b, p. 67; Hayakawa, 1912, p. 15). While Miura did not indicate a specific point in time when this change took place, Wakita (2001, pp. 150-151) has noticed that, in *The Chronicle of Yoshitsune* (*Gikeiki*, late fourteenth century), a *shirabyōshi* is described as wearing all the implements mentioned in *Essays in Idleness* and *The Tale of the Heike*. Based on this evidence, Wakita has supposed that the *shirabyōshi* wore their full costume at least until the late fourteenth century.

The songs and dance that the *shirabyōshi* executed fulfilled a ritual purpose. As Kenkō added in *Essays in Idleness*, the songs that Shizu performed served to gain the favour of the gods and buddhas. Furthermore, in *Continuation to Dialogues about Ancient Matters* (*Zoku kojidan*, 1219), the songs and dance that the *shirabyōshi* performed are said to belong to the realm of the dead (Wakita, 2001, pp. 151, 155). As the sources testify, the *shirabyōshi* were considered able to communicate with the dead and to earn the benevolence of the deities and the buddhas.

At the current state of research, scholars have debated about the function which the *shirabyōshi*'s cross-dressing played, but they have not yet reached a unanimous conclusion. On the one hand, Saeki Junko (2009, pp. 180-191) and Hosokawa (2017, pp. 74-76) have proposed, based on literary evidence, that the *shirabyōshi* wore male clothes and accessories so to enter holy sites such as Buddhist monasteries and sacred mountains, a topic which will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this project, where entrance was forbidden to women. On the

other hand, Gorai Shigeru (1982, pp. 107-109), whose opinion has been echoed by Wakita (2001, pp. 151-152) and Janet Goodwin (2007, pp. 89-90), has instead proposed, based on the many resemblances between the two categories of priestesses, that the *shirabyōshi*'s cross-dressing had a ritual purpose influenced by the model set by the *asobibe*. The *shirabyōshi* presented several points in common with the *asobibe*: they both performed rites meant to communicate with and appease the dead and integrated various cross-dressing elements, in particular weapons, clothes, hairstyles and headgear, and their dances were both compared to dances by men, seeing as the *shirabyōshi*'s dance was called "man's dance" and Amaterasu's dance is compared to a dance done by a mighty man in *An Account of Ancient Matters*. Given these similarities, it is plausible that the *shirabyōshi* recreated the performances of the *asobibe* and that the former's cross-dressing fulfilled the same function it had played for the latter: adopting the social role of male warriors to exercise control over the spiritual world.

3. Cross-Dressing as the Great Equaliser in Court Literature

In the seventh century, women from the “aristocracy” (*kuge*) were eligible to hold bureaucratic posts. In accordance with the “criminal and administrative” (*ritsuryō*) codes enacted in 645, the royal house decreed that noblewomen could serve in the state bureaucracy in the “inner palace” (*kōkyū*), which organised female officials, called “persons of the court” (*miyabito*) in the *ritsuryō* codes, into twelve bureaus. By finding employment in the inner palace, aristocratic women usually were granted bureaucratic posts, received titles and rank promotions and were paid through the assignment of land and properties. As part of their jobs, female officials served as channels of communication between the king or queen and the court council. In this manner, female officials exercised considerable political authority in receiving commands from sovereigns and in having the responsibility and power to control that the court council would execute the sovereign’s will (Fukutō, Watanabe, 2007, p. 18).

Between the eighth and the tenth centuries, however, women of the nobility were gradually excluded from the state bureaucracy. According to Joan Piggott (2003, pp. 65-68) and Fukutō Sanae’s (Fukutō, Watanabe, 2007, pp. 15, 19) reconstruction, female officials witnessed a decline in their political power after the death of Queen Kōken-Shōtoku (718-770, first reign 749-759, second reign 764-770), following which no female sovereign ascended to the throne until the Tokugawa period as a result of the growing Chinese influence that was exerted on the *ritsuryō* codes, which sustained the view according to which only men could rule, and also because of the political instability that court leaders witnessed during the Queen’s two reigns. Consequently, women could not govern the country on their own, but could act as wives to the ruling kings, greatly limiting their political influence. Furthermore, with the move of the capital from Nara to Nagaoka in 784 and to Heian in 794, Sovereign Kōnin (708-782, reign 770-781) integrated the office of his principal consort, which had functioned independently from the royal house and had been located outside the inner palace, into the main palace, signalling that consorts had become politically and physically subordinate to the backing of the kings. As a consequence of the erosion of the political power and independence held by queens and consorts, the posts held by female officials became less and less preeminent and their place was taken by consorts and female relatives of the royal family. In fact, by the reign of King Kōnin female officials who were employed in his palace were consorts of ministers who served as representatives of their husbands.

Another fiery blow to the possibility for noblewomen to work in the state bureaucracy came in the aftermath of the frictions between King Saga (784-842, reign 809-823), Retired Sovereign Heizei (773-824, reign 806-809) and Heizei’s consort Fujiwara no Kusuko (dead 810). Heizei used Kusuko’s position as “Head of the Royal Handmaidens” (*naishi no kami*) to transmit ordinances to the “Great Council of State” (*Daijōkan*). To eliminate Heizei’s unwanted influence on the Council, Saga established the “Chamberlain’s Office” (*kurōdo dokoro*) to regain control over the issuing of royal orders. With the creation of the Chamberlain’s Office, which functioned as a royal chancellery, Saga gradually stripped female officials of their main political prerogative of acting as intermediaries in the communications between the sovereign and the court in favour of the Chamberlain’s Office,

which employed male officials (Fukutō, Watanabe, 2007, p. 22; Piggott, 2003, pp. 67, 74 note 74; Nagai, 1975, pp. 165-172). As Piggott (2003, p. 67) has suggested, by the tenth century transmission of royal orders, which had been performed by the office of the Royal Handmaidens, was completely supervised by the Chamberlain's staff.

As a result of these changes, aristocratic women lost many possibilities of holding political power through work in the state bureaucracy. Instead, male officials acquired the posts of which their female counterparts were stripped as in the case of the Chamberlain's Office whose male officials inherited the positions held by the Head of the Royal Handmaidens and her help. Furthermore, as a consequence of their loss of bureaucratic posts, aristocratic women entered the court and obtained ranks, jobs and stipends based mainly on their family bonds and the marriage accords they stipulated with male courtiers and sovereigns. In this way, not only women of the nobility became more dependent on the political and economic backing of their husbands and male family members, but they also had to rely not on their direct political power and decision-making but on the emotional and sexual services they provided for men (Fukutō, Watanabe, 2007, pp. 15, 19, 22).

The loss of bureaucratic posts also weakened the position aristocratic women held within their families or *ie*. Established in the late eleventh century, the *ie* consisted of both a physical domestic space (the house) and the family residing there (the kin), usually consisting in more than one generation of kin; in its mature form, the *ie* housed three generations of kin, i.e. grand-parents, parents and children. Since the *ie* included more than one generation of a given kin, in recent scholarship the term *ie* has been translated as stem family. Other than to the kin, *ie* also refers to any nonkin who shared the residence (the household) and to workers who participated in the family enterprise (the staff). The *ie* included also domestic animals, ancestors and unborn descendants and intangibles such as the family reputation (Berry, Yonemoto, 2019, p. 4; Kurushima, 2004, pp. 228-230; Wakita, 1993, pp. 83, 87-89, 100-101; Bernstein, 1991, p. 3). Since it gathered kin and non-kin and also included the residence where all these people lived, the *ie* served as a social unit for the nobility.

The people who were part of a *ie* formed, to use Wakita's (1993, p. 88) words, a domestic organisation of production and reproduction. Within the *ie*, all members carried out several tasks to ensure its survival. As concerns the types of labour performed by the wife and the husband, who formed the core of the kin, male courtiers typically occupied bureaucratic posts and generated income from the revenues of the lands and properties they possessed as payment for their jobs, while wives of aristocratic families commonly took care of the household by overseeing the work of servants in connection with the acquisition and preparation of food and clothing and managed the household budget (Wakita, 1993, pp. 88-89). Labour formed an essential component of the *ie* system because it generated money and produced the goods necessary for a person's wellbeing. Given the importance of labour within it, the *ie* emerged not only as a social unit, but also as a corporate entity.

While it was crucial that an *ie* survived in the present, it was equally important that it continued to exist in the future. To ensure the stability and the prosecution of the *ie* in the future, husband and wife produced offspring and passed their jobs, households, lands and properties to them. Between the seventh and the late fourteenth century, both men and women of the aristocracy could, in theory, equally inherit the jobs and lands possessed by their parents (Wakita, 1984, pp. 79-82). However, by the twelfth century bureaucratic posts

became hereditary and there were systems in place according to which high posts in the bureaucracy such as the title of “regent” (*sesshō*) and “chancellor” (*kanpaku*) were distributed among families of high nobility and headships of government departments became available only to members of certain families. Since such bureaucratic posts had become available mainly to men, men were also preferred in inheriting them. As a result, by the twelfth century the aristocratic *ie* developed a system of single inheritance to the eldest son, who received bureaucratic posts, lands and other assets from his father (Kurushima, 2004, pp. 228-230). Consequently, within the *ie* men were granted the possession of jobs, households and lands and established a patrilineal line within which the continuation of the *ie* passed from father to son to grandson, thereby greatly augmenting their social standing within the *ie*.

In summary, between the eighth and the twelfth century women of the aristocracy witnessed a gradual weakening of their political, economic and social standing as they were excluded from the bureaucracy and from inheritance. Noblewomen had less and less opportunities to be hired in the government bureaucracy as female sovereigns, to whom the authority of female officials was intimately tied, lost their ability to govern the country and their posts were replaced by other departments. Such factors directly benefitted aristocratic men, who, as observed in the case of the creation of the Chamberlain’s Office, took many of the jobs that had been performed by female officials. The position that men held in the nobility was even firmer by the twelfth century when the most important titles in the court hierarchy and the headships of government departments became hereditary for male members of specific families. Men’s privileged access to bureaucratic posts also reinforced their position vis-à-vis women within the *ie*, because, while members of a household could theoretically inherit the jobs, lands and assets of their kin regardless of their sex, after bureaucratic posts and headships of government headships became hereditary families of the nobility developed a system of single inheritance to the eldest son, as a consequence of which the *ie* was organised along the patrilineal line. As a result of these numerous changes, noblewomen occupied less important places in the *ie* and could access the royal court through blood relations with male courtiers and marriage accords with noblemen and kings, meaning that they depended on the family ties and the emotional and sexual care they provided for men.

In literature of the time, cross-dressing emerges as an equaliser that allows female characters to hold bureaucratic posts and be part of patrilinear genealogical lines, both advantages that, in historical reality, were available only to men. Cross-dressing appears in particular in three works that belong to “court literature” (*ōchō monogatari*), the corpus of fictional stories produced by members of the royal court which detail the lifestyles and the beliefs held by this segment of the Japanese population. The three narratives are:

- *The Changelings (Torikaebaya)*, composed in the second half of the twelfth century;
- *Partings at Dawn*, composed in the late twelfth century;
- *The New Chamberlain (Shinkurōdo)*, composed in the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Differently from *The Changelings* and *Partings at Dawn* that comprise only of written text, *The New Chamberlain* is told through both written text and images in black ink which illustrate scenes that happen outside the written text.

The works follow a similar plot structure: the main character, who is anatomically female, dresses and behaves as a boy/man. Later on, she is introduced at court where she receives

bureaucratic posts and, in *The Changelings* and *Partings at Dawn*, starts her own family. However, a male character discovers that she is anatomically female by undressing her and making her pregnant. Forced by the social expectations cast on her by the male character and by her pregnancy, the protagonist dresses and behaves like a woman and, by separating from her male persona and her role as a male courtier, she becomes the wife of the male character. Among the many themes with which the stories deal with, the main characters gain access to the bureaucracy and the patrilineal line, privileges which were available only to men, through convincing others that they are cis-gender men, only for their anatomical sex to be revealed and be obliged to assume roles in the royal court in conjunction with their family ties and emotional and sexual care they provide for male characters. The narratives dramatise how only men were given access to the state bureaucracy and the patrilineal genealogy and how women entered the court in regard to their positions as daughters and wives of noblemen.

In *The Changelings*, the protagonist lives part of her life as a man because of a curse that a *tengu* or goblin cast on her as retribution for an unspecified transgression she committed in a previous life (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 174, 377-8). In *Partings at Dawn*, the protagonist lives as a man at the wish of the “gods” (*kami*), who instructs her father to raise her as a man through a “divine revelation” (*kami no oshirube*) in the form of a dream (Khan, 1998, pp. 212, 271; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 44, 46, 122, 124). Furthermore, in a key scene she is visited by a group of “heavenly maidens” (*amatsu otome*) who follow the sound of her *biwa*. One of the maidens gifts the protagonist with a flower and composes a poem in which she recalls a previous existence when the protagonist and she picked flowers together. In response, the protagonist says that she will one day return to the realms above the clouds, the heavens (Khan, 1998, pp. 395-397; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 438, 440). Based on this interaction, it is plausible to suggest that the protagonist of *Partings at Dawn* is the manifestation of a heavenly lady and her cross-dressing, which was wanted by the gods, a sign of her extraordinary existence. In *The Changelings* and *Partings at Dawn*, cross-dressing appears connected to supernatural beings such as the *tengu*, the gods and the heavenly maidens and as a result of a previous life, the consequence of karmic retribution for a transgression from a past life in *The Changelings* and the reincarnation of a being who was a heavenly maiden in *Partings at Dawn*. The main difference between the two texts seems to be one of value: in *The Changelings*, cross-dressing emerges negatively, as the karmic retribution for past misdeeds; in *Partings at Dawn*, instead, cross-dressing emerges positively, as an extraordinary sign which reveals the protagonist’s extraordinary nature.

The Changelings devotes ample space to describe the ways in which the protagonist assumes behaviours and mannerisms that the society of the time deemed as masculine. Already during her childhood, the main character acts like a boy: she spends most of her time outdoors, where she likes to run and play with a ball and a small bow. Additionally, she writes texts and poems in Chinese and is proficient at playing the flute to the point that she is able to play tunes that nobody has taught her. Furthermore, she often plays with boys and young men from the house and she seeks the company of the noblemen who visit her father, a high-ranking courtier. To be with them, she wears her father’s clothes and together they sing and make poems. Given her sociability, they do not think she is a “lady” (*himegimi*, literally a princess of royal blood or a young girl from a high-ranking family), but rather that she is a “young lord” (*wakagimi*; Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 167-168).

To highlight that the protagonist behaves as the opposite gender, the narration has her half-brother, the story's co-protagonist, act like a girl: unlike his sister and regardless of societal conventions, he spends most of his time indoors, where he draws and plays with dolls and shells and neglects practising writing texts in Chinese. Furthermore, he is extremely shy to the point that he avoids meeting with his father and feels comfortable only in the presence of his mother, his wet nurse and small female children. When he meets with his father and ladies in waiting he does not know well, he conceals himself behind curtains (Ishino and Misumi, 2002, p. 167). *The Changelings* presents a clear binary system for gendered behaviour, according to which boys spend their time outside and play ball, bow, and flute, study and write Chinese texts and meet, according to a homosocial mentality, with other boys and men. On the contrary, girls stay inside and often conceal themselves, play with dolls and shells, do not engage with Chinese texts and lastly, always according to a homosocial mentality, meet only with other girls and women. In *The Changelings*, the protagonists reverse this binary system.

Clothing fulfills a crucial role in constructing the protagonist's male gender performance. In a scene where she is around twelve *sai*, the protagonist wears a hunting attire known as *kariginu*, a dress with straps (*sashinuki*) at the legs which men wore during hunting expeditions and as an informal dress both at their homes and at court (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, p. 172). After the sovereign and the heir apparent request that the protagonist be introduced to court, the father organises for her the coming of age ritual known as *genpuku*. The *genpuku* was the last of several rites of passage that marked the progression of a person in age and signalled a person's entry to adulthood. These rites of passage usually marked a person's progression thanks to sartorial and tonsorial practices. During *genpuku*, a guest of honour gave the boy clothes that were appropriate for an adult man and shaved the top of the head of the boy and put on it a tall hat known as *eboshi*, a masculinity marker at the royal court. In the case of the protagonist of *The Changelings*, she is bestowed several ceremonial dresses and a hat (*kōburi*) which signals that she belongs to the fifth rank in the court's ranking system (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 175-7).

The illustrations to *The New Chamberlain* provide useful visual indications to how the protagonist appears in feminine and in masculine clothes and hairstyles. In the illustrations 1, 2 and 4 of the text, the protagonist is shown in typical feminine fashion with long hair and robes both of which train on the floor and her body, too, reclines on the floor (Abe *et al.*, 2014, pp. 18-19, 22-23, 30-31). In illustration 5, instead, the protagonist is separated from a group of three maids who occupy the right part of the image and stays in the left part of the image in front of her brother, sitting with her upper body right and wearing a *nōshi* robe, a male informal dress with straps similar to the *kariginu*, short hair and a court hat. Compared to her brother who sits in front of her, the two characters look like reflections on a mirror (Abe *et al.*, 2014, pp. 34-5, 97-8, note 13). In *The New Chamberlain*, gendered appearance is constructed through clothes, hairstyles, body language and proximity to members of one's own sex where femininity is connected with long hair and robes and body which recline on the floor and masculinity is connected with short hair, sitting straight, wearing hats and occupying a space separated from other female characters. To show how the protagonist changes her appearance and behaviour, the illustrations to *The New Chamberlain* construct

the character first by associating her with the female-coded tropes and then with the male-coded tropes.

On a linguistic level, the texts employ a variety of words and sentences to refer to what, in modern parlance, would be called the protagonists' gender performances through indication to their body, appearance and behaviour and to the changes the characters make to said body, appearance and behaviour. In *The Changelings*, the words and sentences appear starting only from an advanced phase of the plot. Previously, the work relies on detailed descriptions of a character's clothes and behaviour, as seen for example in the opening of this chapter. Possibly because the words and sentences that indicate the characters' gender performances emerge only later in the narration, their number is smaller in *The Changelings* compared to the other texts. In any case, in *The Changelings* words and sentences about gender performance indicate the character's "body" (*mi*) and appearance, with the words "figure" (*sugata*) and "appearance" (*arisama*). Similarly, the change the protagonists make in regards to their gender performance is expressed in regards to changes in their appearances, as seen in the sentences "[character] changed [their] body" (*mi wo kae*), "[character] changed [their] appearance" (*sama kawarite, sama wo kaete*), and "[character] assumed the figure of a man" (*otoko no sugata to nari*; Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 293, 295, 298, 302, 341-345). In *Partings at Dawn*, the protagonist's appearance is referred to by the words and phrases "body" (*mi*), "appearance" (*arisama, sama*), "appearance of her body" (*mi no arisama*), and to the change to her appearance, when she discards her male appearance and assumes a female appearance, as a "change" (*hake* and *hakebakeshii*), where *hake* means a change or transformation (Khan, 1998, pp. 227, 248-249, 306-307, 320; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 64, 94, 96, 170, 188). In *The New Chamberlain*, the author utilises sentences that more succinctly refer to being a man, as can be seen in the following: the protagonist wants to "become a man" (*otoko ni narite*) and repeatedly asks her father to let her be by using the sentences "to be exchanged for a man" (*otoko ni te torikae*, where the use of the verb *torikae*, "to exchange," alludes to the original title of *The Changelings*), to "be let to become a man" (*otoko ni nasase*). The writer also introduces the term "behaviour" (*furumai*) to indicate gendered conduct and uses the following expression to indicate how the protagonist stops having the appearance and behaviour of a girl: "her appearance and behaviour are not feminine" (*katachi mo furumai mo onnashiki koto tsuyu nashi*; Abe et al., 2014, pp. 92, 97-98). As has been observed, the narratives do not have an equivalent, more or less exact, to the modern expression gender performance, but they refer to their characters' body, appearance and behaviour and to the changes made to body, appearance and behaviour.

In the three texts, the protagonists enter the royal court as biologically male cis-gender characters and gain two main social and political privileges that were reserved to men and unavailable to women of the time: the assignment of bureaucratic positions and, correlated to this, the creation of a genealogy. In *The Changelings*, the protagonist is introduced at court coincidentally with the celebration of her *genpuku*. During the yearly round of promotions, she is first appointed *jijū* and then is promoted until she becomes *saishō*, all bureaucratic positions with decision-making powers (Ishino and Misumi, 2002, pp. 178, 183, 185). Shortly after the celebration of the coming of age, the main character is married to a woman in a wedding that is wanted by the protagonist's parents to save appearances. Later in the work, her wife has children with a secret lover and the protagonist is officially recognised as

their father. In this way, the main character continues the patrilineal genealogical line uniting her to her father and children. In *The Changelings*, the career the protagonist has in the state bureaucracy and her role in the patrilineal genealogy emerge as consequences of the *tengu*'s curse: the main character does not actively seek for these advantages, but she receives them as the result of social expectations that are cast on her as a presumably cis-gender man.

In *Partings at Dawn*, bureaucratic posts and the patrilineal line play a bigger role. Before the protagonist is born, her father does not have a male heir. Worried that his *ie* might die out, her father consults diviners and offers prayers until his wife is pregnant with child. In a dream, the man receives a divine revelation according to which the protagonist has to be raised and introduced to court as a man, a course of action that will also ensure that his *ie* will survive and prosper (Khan, 1998, pp. 212, 271; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 44, 46, 122, 124). In *Partings at Dawn*, the divine origin of the main character's cross-dressing is connected to the political and genealogical destiny of her *ie*.

Differently from the protagonist of *The Changelings*, the main character of *Partings at Dawn* is aware and proud of her place in assuring that her household will survive and of her political career. Once she is introduced to court, she, too, receives a series of posts in the state bureaucracy. Furthermore, when she considers not behaving like a man anymore and when she has to give up her male persona because of her pregnancy, she realises that she would miss the political and social stature she enjoys at court. In a passage, she regrets giving up her career in the bureaucracy because she would occupy the loftiest positions available if she continued to live as a man. After she has started living as a woman, she misses the admiration that scholars felt for her when she composed poems in Chinese, as it was befitting for a man but not a woman. In particular, throughout the narration she hesitates to stop playing the flute, a musical instrument that the text claims only a man can sing. The flute presumably serves as a phallic substitute and by being hesitant to not play it anymore the main character expresses her wish not to give up her male persona (Khan, 1998, pp. 160-166, 248-249, 253, 268-270, 280-281, 322-323; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 94, 96, 102, 120, 122, 132, 134, 192). While the protagonist of *The Changelings* occupies different posts in the state bureaucracy as a consequence of her life as a man, the father of the protagonist of *Partings at Dawn* raises her to ensure that his *ie* remains relevant in the political landscape of the time and the protagonist herself appreciates the honours and the admiration that she receives at court.

Similarly, the main character of *Partings at Dawn* plays a more active role in continuing the genealogical line of her *ie* compared to her counterpart in *The Changelings*. Whereas the latter marries because of the social expectations cast on her as a purported cis-gender man, the protagonist of *Partings at Dawn* decides to marry on her own. After following the story of a young woman who is abused by her stepfather, the protagonist decides to marry her to protect her. Furthermore, the young woman is pregnant with her stepfather's son and, by accepting him as her own son, the protagonist is able to continue the genealogical line of her *ie* and fulfills the dream of her father (Khan, 1998, pp. 215, 240-244, 250-251, 306-307; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 48, 50, 80-88, 98, 100, 170, 172). Through a complex narrative, *Partings at Dawn* shows the protagonist as proud of her career as a bureaucrat and as willingly participating in the continuation of the patrilineal genealogy of her *ie*.

If the pursuit of a career in the state bureaucracy is important in *Partings at Dawn*, its importance is crucial in *The New Chamberlain*. While in *The Changelings* and *Partings at*

Dawn the main characters are introduced at court as men as the result of a complex connection with the supernatural and familial ambitions, in *The New Chamberlain* the protagonist wants to be introduced at court as a man exactly to pursue a career as a bureaucrat. At the beginning of the narrative, the father of the protagonist, a high-ranking courtier, who has one son and three sisters, asks himself whether he should raise one of the latter as a man (*nado ka ima hitori otoko ni te torikae ni mo sesasezariken*). After a brief consideration, he decides that their daughters should live as their hearts dictate (Abe *et al.*, 2014, p. 92). This beginning sets the topics of a woman living her life as a man and of following one's desires as central for the story.

After the father's interior monologue, the original text inserts the first picture of the work. In it, the father and mother are shown on the top right. The father, through a short text on his right, says that children should live as they want, thus reinforcing the message seen in the opening. The mother agrees with him. On the left, the picture shows the son, daughters and two maids, all of voice their desire: the third daughter, the character who will cross-dress and live a part of her life as a man, says that she wants to become a man and run and walk (Abe *et al.*, 2014, pp. 18-9, 92). The work sets her wish to be a man by connecting it with the desire to move freely.

In the following pages, the main character elaborates on this wish. She asks her parents if they would permit her to live as a man and serve the king. She asks her parents and siblings "not to call her a lady anymore" (*hime to na ii so*). The parents protest by saying that this is not possible (*utsu utsu na*). In spite of their refusal, the protagonist acts on her words and from then on she behaves like a man. Seeing her resolve, the father allows her to follow her dream. He goes back to what he said in the opening about following one's heart. Therefore, he permits her daughter to be a man and she is introduced at court as an anatomical cis-gender man. Eventually, she takes the job of her brother and is promoted to chamberlain. As will be recalled, this job was created by Saga when he erased the administrative prerogatives of the Head of the Royal Handmaidens, one of the top positions available to female officials, and transmitted the tasks to male officials of the crown. By reclaiming this post, the main character takes back the very position that was taken away from female officials and given to their male counterparts, contributing to the diminishing of the opportunities for noblewomen to be hired in the state bureaucracy.

As has been observed, the protagonists of the three texts construct a male gender performance by wearing male clothes and hairstyles and by assuming behaviours considered by the society of their time as masculine. However, the assumption of a male appearance and male behaviours is often undermined in the three narratives by biology, which functions to reveal the characters' female anatomical sex. In *The Changelings*, the protagonist spends four or five days every month at the village of her wet nurse. Courtiers find her regular absences weird, but they interpret them as religious retreats. Actually, the protagonist leaves to hide her menstruations (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, p. 187). In other scenes, clothing and biology work in unison to undermine the character's gender performance. In a scene, the protagonist of *The Changelings* has short hair and wears a dress with a train called *suso*, an unisex piece of clothing. Although the short hair and the dress were usually worn by men, the dress's train unfolds on the floor like the edges of a folding fan, an analogy which is commonly found in court literature to describe women's long hair (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, p. 173). In this manner,

although the character has had her hair cut short and wears a dress to create a masculine appearance, the clothing, almost following a will of its own, assumes a different appearance which alerts the character's father, who is watching her, and the reader, who is assisting to the scene through her father's eyes, that the protagonist is a biological woman. In another scene, she exposes her shoulder from under a *nōshi* and her body looks petite, hinting at the fact that she is anatomically a woman (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 189-90). Furthermore, when a male character strips her down he understands that she is a woman by seeing her genitals (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 274-5). Afterwards, he attempts to persuade her into wearing female clothes and assuming a feminine gendered behaviour, suggesting that, to him and probably according to the mentality of the time, gender should align with sex (Ishino, Misumi, 2002, pp. 287-91). As concerns her half-brother, his hair, where long hair was generally deemed a marker of femininity, is often described as relatively short, suggesting the fact that he is anatomically male (Ishino and Misumi, 2002, pp. 170-1). *Partings at Dawn* and *The New Chamberlain* contain similar scenes. In the former, the protagonist is sometimes described as shorter than men usually are and with more delicate features (Khan, 1998, pp. 209-210, 310-311; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 40, 174, 176). In a key scene where she brings her wife to her house, the narrator directly states that the protagonist looks like a woman in the moonlight and that she is too weak to carry her spouse in her arms (Khan, 1998, p. 242; Ōtsuki, 1979, p. 84). Analogously to what happens in *The Changelings*, the protagonist of *Partings at Dawn* is assaulted by a male character, the king, and he opens her robes, thus understanding that she is a woman by seeing her primary sexual traits (Khan, 1998, pp. 286-287; Ōtsuki, 1979, pp. 140, 142). In *The New Chamberlain* as well, the king uncovers the protagonist's anatomical sex when he opens her robes (Abe et al., 2014, pp. 47, 100-2, note 2). The text refers to this discovery as "the change/transformation was discovered" (*hake arawarenu*). The narration does not explain how the king uncovers the main character's secret, saying "who knows how" (*ikaga ariken*), however immediately before the text says that the sovereign keeps the protagonist at his personal service both day and night and even when he drank, so it is possible that he, inebriated, tries to make love to protagonist and, after undressing her, sees her genitals. If this reconstruction is correct, in all three texts primary sexual traits work as indicators with which to attribute sex and gender to a person.

In all the stories, pregnancy is the biological aspect which ultimately undermines the protagonists' male gender performance and makes them assume a female gender performance in alignment with their anatomical sex. In *The Changelings*, the male character who saw her genitals tries to convince the main character to live as a woman. She does not do so at his request, however, but because she becomes pregnant. She then modifies her appearance and behaviour during her pregnancy. In *Partings at Dawn*, the protagonist does the same after the king discovers that she is biologically a woman and before she becomes a royal consort and is soon with child. In *The New Chamberlain*, too, the main character discards her male persona when she is pregnant with the king's child. In conclusion, biology undermines the character's assumption of a male gender performance, which is constructed through gendered clothing, hairstyles and behaviours, and ultimately disrupts said gender performance through pregnancy, which emerges as the incontrovertible truth of the body over the protagonists' will.

In the narratives, cross-dressing functions as the great equaliser between men and women of the nobility. While in the historical reality aristocratic women had few chances to be hired in the state bureaucracy and to inherit the jobs, lands, households and assets that were part of their *ie*, in fiction female characters can pursue careers in the bureaucracy and be part of the patrilineal genealogy of their families. However, biology deconstructs the appearance and behaviours that the characters assume and in the end social expectations and pregnancy force them to live as women and renounce their careers and their place in the patrilineal genealogy. Even in fiction, noblewomen have to accept that their roles revolve around their family ties and the emotional and sexual relationships with male courtiers.

4. Mobility Hindrances

4.1 Accessing Sacred Sites

For a large portion of Japanese history, women were not allowed to enter the inner precincts of Shintō shrines and numerous Buddhist temples and were excluded from climbing most of the country's holy mountains. The prohibition for women to access sacred sites is called *nyonin kinsei* or *nyonin kekkai* and was in force from the Heian period until 1872, when the Meiji government, rejecting many indigenous religious practices in the pursuit of Western democracy, lifted the ban on most places. The origins of this interdiction are not clear, but Miyazaki Fumiko (2005, pp. 340-342) has argued that it stemmed from the influence of two notions: the premise that menstruation and childbirth blood is polluted, thus rendering women themselves polluting, and the Buddhist idea that women suffer from the so-called “five obstructions” (*goshō*) which prevent them from reaching the five highest stages of enlightenment, including buddhahood. With time, Miyazaki (2005, pp. 340-342) has suggested, folklore legends incorporating these views reinforced the notion that women are polluted/polluting and then male ascetics, who observed strict rules regarding the avoidance of ritual contamination, contributed to the formation of rules that forbade women from entering holy spaces.

In spite of this prohibition, some female devotees did access sacred sites and among the various ways they found to circumvent the *nyonin kinsei* ban they used cross-dressing. According to the testimony that Retired Sovereign Go Uda (1267-1324, reign 1274-1287) left about a pilgrimage he made in 1313 to Mount Kōya, the main monastic center of the Tendai Buddhist school whose entrance was precluded to women, numerous women from nearby villages “provisionally took the appearance of men” (*kari danshi sugata*) and joined large groups of pilgrims to enter the mountain's holy grounds and climbed to the peak (Abe, 1998, pp. 91-92; Yamakage, 1988, p. 339). In 1832 a female member of the Fujidō school named Tatsu (dates unknown) secretly reached the summit of Mount Fuji, another holy mountain that women were banned from entering, by disguising herself as man. Accompanied by the founder of the Fujidō school Rokugyō Sanshi (1765-1841), four other male Fujidō members and two luggage carriers, Tatsu took many precautions not to be discovered: she dressed as a man by wearing an *eboshi* tall court hat, she went together with Sanshi, the other male school members and the luggage carriers presumably not only for sponsorship and help but also to look less conspicuous in case someone would stop them (it is possibly for this same reason that the women who climbed Mount Kōya joined groups of pilgrims) and attempted the climb during autumn when fewer devotees went to the site because of the wind, coldness and snow. Tatsu and her party successfully reached the snow-covered peak on the twenty-sixth day of the ninth month. She was the first woman on record to reach the summit of Mount Fuji. Differently from the women who climbed Mount Kōya, Tatsu climbed Mount Fuji not only out of personal devotion, but also as part of a concerted effort led by the Fujidō school to have the *kyonin kinsei* ban lifted by demonstrating that the mountain's deity would not obstacle Tatsu. She was aware of the importance her climb would have for all women when, before reaching the peak, she said, “Even if I will die here [she probably meant to say if the

god grew furious at her climbing the mount and killed her on the spot], I want to reach the summit. If I can return home, I will share [my experience] with many other women. I want to encourage them to climb the mountain” (Miyazaki, 2005, pp. 352-353; Hatogayashi bunkazai hogo iinkai, 1989, pp. 57-60).

Literature of the day references this practice. In 1424, Zeami (1363-1443) composed a Nō piece titled *Extravagant Women* (*Kayō no monogurui*) and/or *Tatatsu no Saemon* after the name of the father of the female main character. Apparently, the play was never performed except for a celebratory staging in 1988 (Abe, 1998, p. 357 note 45). In the story, a woman and her wet nurse wish to visit the woman’s father, Tatatsu no Saemon, who has taken Buddhist vows and has retreated to Mount Kōya. As entering this holy site is forbidden to them, the women “take the appearance of men” (*otoko no sugata ni so narite*) by wearing, like the real life Tatsu would do four centuries later, *eboshi* court hats. The play describes the women as “extravagant” (*onna monogurui*, *kyōshin*) and their wearing men’s clothes as “odd” (*okashi*), both words that indicate a non-commonsensical behaviour. Despite the garments they don, the text says that it is clear that they are women. To express this, the piece uses two verbs for “to see” (*miru*, *goran*), indicating that a person can use their sight to notice, presumably by their secondary sexual traits, that the characters are women; in the words of the play, they have “women’s bodies” (*onna no mi*). After the text makes this point clear, a saint man, *hijiri*, appears on scene and addresses the climbers as “women” (*nyoshōtachi*), signalling that he has read the climber’s bodies and is aware that they are anatomically female, and states that entry is not permitted to them and have to leave. The daughter asks him to let them continue on by pleading to the *hijiri*’s empathy, explaining that they wish to visit her father and referring to the fact they have even worn men’s clothes, a gesture she considers “painful” (*kurushiki*), as proof of the depth of her filial piety. The *hijiri*, at first unperturbed, orders them to leave. The daughter and her wet nurse, dejected, retrace their steps weeping, when the *hijiri*, now moved to compassion, finds a compromise: he has the father meet his daughter outside the mountain’s holy grounds. The play ends with the heartfelt reunion between the father and the daughter (Kawase, 1943, pp. 208-222).

In *The Life of an Amorous Woman* (*Kōshoku ichidai onna*, 1686), novelist Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) inserts a short chapter where the main character is taken by a monk as a “hidden concubine” (*daikoku*). To join him in the temple where he resides, to which access is forbidden to women, the protagonist pretends to be a “temple acolyte” (*otera goshō*). To be convincing, although she feels “ashamed” (*hazukashi*), she “shaves part her head in the style of a youth” (*wakashugami ni nakazorishite*), i.e. she shaves her hair on the temples leaving only the forelock, wears a *fundoshi*, a loincloth used by men, a sword, a *haori* jacket, a wide-brimmed hat, *zōri* straw sandals and draws fake facial hair with ink (Higashi, Teraoka, 1996, pp. 443-444).

4.2 The Checking Stations System

As part of their control strategies and proof of power over the *daimyō*, the Tokugawa *bakufu* created the system known as “alternate attendance” (*sankin kōtai*), which required the local lords to leave their provinces to come wait on the *shōgun* in his designated base of

operations in Edo. This system, whose origins traced back to the twelfth century, was institutionalised in 1635 when it was imposed on the provincial lords from outside the coalition that supported the Tokugawa house in the Battle of Sekigahara of 1600 and in 1642 when its observance was declared compulsory for the *daimyō* who inherited the title. The alternate attendance constituted a form of “contractual service” (*hōkō*), a type of labour that the local lords owned the military general of the country in exchange for the domains and the right to rule the lands that were bestowed on them. The alternate attendance was relaxed in 1862 and suspended in 1867 (Vaporis, 2008, pp. 1-2, 12, 15).

As a corollary to the alternate attendance, the *bakufu* also required the provincial lords to keep their principal wives and children, especially daughters and male heirs, in permanent residence in Edo. In this way, wives and offspring acted as hostages whose function was to ensure that the *daimyō* would not rebel against the *bakufu*. Similarly to the alternate attendance system, the hostage system, too, was already in place before the Tokugawa period as it was practised already in the fifteenth century. After Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616, reign 1603-1605) was declared *shōgun*, many *daimyō* voluntarily offered him hostages as proof of loyalty. The *bakufu* made the hostage system obligatory in 1635, the same year in which the alternate attendance was institutionalised, and in 1642 the system was extended to hereditary lords. The hostage system was eliminated in 1862 when the alternate attendance was relaxed (Vaporis, 2008, p. 12, 15).

To ensure that a *daimyō*'s principal consort and daughter(s) would remain in Edo, the *bakufu* needed to monitor the movements of women. To do so, the government channelled traffic along the central highway network, the Gokaidō, where guards checked the people leaving and entering a given area at “checking stations” or “barriers” (*sekisho*). Checking stations were wooden gates erected in a road with palisades running on both sides to avoid that anyone would pass around it. Additionally, barriers had a “guard office” (*bansho*), dwellings for the officials, a watchtower and a jail house where transgressors were detained. The first stations were built before the Tokugawa rose to power, however the majority of the system was put in place by the second *shōgun*, Tokugawa Hidetada (1579-1632, reign 1605-1623). In 1616, Hidetada had temporary barriers erected at crucial water crossings to prevent the survivors of the anti-Tokugawa coalition from regrouping and launching a new attempt at regaining political power. Hidetada also had permanent barriers elevated on the main roads and the last stations were built in 1662 and 1686, completing the network. It is evident that the barriers originally functioned as a means of military and political control and, after the possibility of wars against the shogunal house receded, the system was repurposed to supervise the movements of the general population (Vaporis, 2021, p. 152; Vaporis, 2008, pp. 12-13, Vaporis, 1994, pp. 6, 99, 101, 103, 129, 149, 154).

Travellers, generally only when they left Edo, were allowed to pass through a checking station only if they had a “barrier transit permit” (*sekisho tegata*). To apply for such a document, the *bakufu* created different issuing systems based on the traveller's geographical provenance, status and gender. “Townsmen” (*chōnin*), i.e. men of commoner status who resided in cities, typically applied to the City Magistrate whether they lived in towns administered by the central military authority or in private domains. Men of the “farmer” class (*hyakushō*), i.e. men of commoner status who resided in rural areas, ordinarily applied to the Magistrate of Rural Affairs. Men living on land belonging to a religious institution commonly

applied to the Shrine and Temple Magistrate. Lastly, men of the “warrior” (*bushi* or *buke*) class applied to their immediate superior or overlord. In summary, men applied directly to a governmental authority. Furthermore, while the system allowed men to apply for a permit, they usually did not carry it, meaning that they could skip the complicated and time-consuming application process (Vaporis, 2021, pp. 152-154; Vaporis, 1994, pp. 137-143, 149, 154-155).

For women, procedures were more complex depending on their status and geographical provenance. As regards townswomen and farmer women, firstly they needed the approval of a guarantor, normally a local town official or the village headman, depending on whether they resided in a city or a rural area. Secondly, they submitted the application to a *bakufu* authority, i.e. the City Magistrate or the Magistrate of Rural Affairs, depending on where the woman in question lived. The procedure women of the warrior class had to follow was the most complex, owing to the fact that the *bakufu* was interested in controlling the travels of this particular social group. A warrior woman needed the approval of the Domain Elders, who acted as her guarantors. Then, she applied to a figure designated by the *bakufu*. In summary, differently from men who applied directly to a *bakufu* authority, women needed first an approval and then could apply to the government. It is also important to note that, while men were allowed not to have the permit, women were required to carry it and thereby had to apply to obtain one. Most probably, this system took much time before the necessary document was issued and moreover, since issuers varied according to area and also changed over time, it was easy to make mistakes, in which case permission of passage was negated (Vaporis, 2021, pp. 152-154; Vaporis, 1994, pp. 137-143, 149, 154-155).

The permits men and women obtained also differed in the personal information that such documents contained. Men’s permits usually followed a basic common form that contained the following pieces of information: number of travellers, purpose of the journey, destination, request of safe passage though a specific barrier, name of the authority issuing the document, date of issuance and name of the station through which the holder wished to pass. Women’s permits contained not only these but also more detailed pieces of information, such as: secular or religious status, if their hair was cut, unmarried or married status and distinguishing features. Women who showed their permits to the officials guarding a station had to physically match the description written on the documents, otherwise gatekeepers would not let them pass (Vaporis, 2021, p. 153; Vaporis, 1994, pp. 120-121, 143, 155-156).

Once at a barrier, a woman went through varying checks depending on her status, if her destination was outward or toward Edo and on the strictness of the controls performed at a specific barrier. Stations, in fact, did not follow the same protocols. Instead, whereas some were classified by the government as “very important” (*omoki*), such as the Hakone barrier, and thus the personnel on duty were instructed to conduct thorough controls, other stations were considered “less important” (*karuki*) and guards were ordered to do less complete checks. A commoner woman who wanted to pass through a less important barrier on a journey towards Edo would reach the guard house and the gatekeeper would interrogate the man accompanying her, to which questions the man would answer for both him and her. The inspection generally ended at this point. However, if a woman of warrior status wished to go through a very important station, she underwent a rigorous physical examination. In this case, while the man would give the permits to a male official and answer his questions, the woman

would be examined by an “Inspector of Women” (variously called *aratame onna*, *aratame oba*, *hitomi onna* or *rōjo* depending on the location). The Inspector, a woman herself who commonly was the wife or mother of a male guard or, in Hakone, a woman from a wealthy family of the area, would physically check female travellers to make sure that there were no inconsistencies in the description contained in the transit permit. To do so, the Inspector would control if the female traveller was married or unmarried by whether she wore a wide- or tight-sleeved vest (unmarried girls usually wore a wide-sleeved vest) and then check the woman’s eyebrows and teeth (unmarried girls generally kept their eyebrows unshaved and did not blacken their teeth). Then, the Inspector would look at the traveller’s hairstyle, who would be asked to loosen her hair and allow the Inspector to comb through it. If the Inspector had any reason to doubt the traveller’s sex, she would examine the woman’s breasts. The logic underlying this procedure is clear: primary and secondary sexual traits were deemed indicators of a person’s sex and sex, in turn, invested a person of certain characteristics, in this case impediments to travel. After the Inspector completed the examination, she would report the results to the male official. If the information gathered through the physical examination matched the details contained in the permit, the woman was allowed to go through the barrier. If the results did not match the document, the female traveller underwent other physical inspections until either any gaps in the information was clarified or she was sent back to obtain a corrected permit. Women who were subjected to the examination found the experience unpleasant. In 1689 Inoue Tsūjo (1660-1738), while on a journey from Edo to her home province of Marugame, was examined by the Inspector of Women. As Inoue recorded, the Inspector checked her hair and other parts of her body in a courteous manner, but she also reported that she felt relieved once the examination was complete and she was allowed to continue her journey. While commoner women, another diarist named Shirabyōshi Masako (dates unknown) wrote, could be inspected without being touched, she also stated that warrior women were subjected to inspections so thorough that they sweated out of stress (Vaporis, 1994, pp. 105, 156, 164-167).

Women who wished to skip not only the cumbersome and time-consuming process of application for a permit but also a potentially intrusive physical examination could evade control in two irregular ways. The first way was by going around the barrier, an act termed “stations smashing” (*sekisho yaburi*). However, if a woman was stopped while going around a barrier, consequences might have been dire. A woman travelling alone could be punished by crucifixion, while a woman accompanied by a man may have been forced into servitude and the man crucified. This difference in penalty was due to Neo-Confucianism, a system of thought which strongly influenced Tokugawa law, according to which women, being morally inferior to men, committed crimes only if induced by men and thus were found less guilty than were men. In spite of the severe punishments which women could receive for evading inspection, they often took roads that went around some of the less important barriers where controls were less strict, knowing that guards would rarely catch up to and arrest them. For example, the Honzada and the Oiwake streets were frequently used by women and were thus referred to as “ladies’ roads” (*hime kaidō*; Vaporis, 1994, pp. 109, 126-127).

The second way for a woman to skip the application process and the ensuing physical examination was cross-dressing. In this case, girls, and more rarely adult women, disguised themselves as boys by combing their hair in a “forelock” (*maegami*), the hairstyle worn by

youths who had not yet celebrated their coming of age ceremony, and by exploiting the fact that boys, girls and unmarried women generally wore the wide-sleeved *furisode* vest. This strategy usually led to different outcomes: as will be illustrated in the following paragraphs, while in some instances travellers did evade checks and successfully passed through stations, in other cases transgressors were refused passage or were punished to the full extent allowed by the law. Although gatekeepers were ordered to arrest travellers with invalid transit permits, officials could be lenient towards disguised girls as revealed by a set of instructions valid at the barrier of Namiai, in Shinano Province, according to which girls dressed as boys were to be turned away and not incarcerated as the law generally required for transgressors (Vaporis, 1994, pp. 167, 175, 184).

According to the anonymous writer of the miscellany *Essays of the Master (Baiō zuihitsu*, late eighteenth century), in 1789 the Hakone station was the theatre of a peculiar story. A masterless warrior went through the Hakone barrier, one of the most important stations where controls were normally severe, with a girl who wore boys' clothes. Shortly after they had passed the gate, however, a transport worker understood what had happened and tried to bribe the warrior. Since he did not want to pay the worker, the latter went to inform the guards. However, in another interesting twist a peasant offered to have the girl who was with him exchange clothes with the warrior girl. When the officials, alerted by the worker, arrived, they found everything in order and the warrior and the child were free to go. As the author reported, the peasant acted under order from the officials at the barrier. Apparently, the guards knew that girls sometimes disguised themselves as boys, but they had to keep up appearances perhaps to cover potential oversights or not to acknowledge the lenient treatment cross-dressing girls often received so as not to encourage the practice (Vaporis, 1994, p. 183).

In 1676 a group of three people, two adult men and a girl, attempted to irregularly pass through the barrier at Kiso Fukushima Province by dressing themselves as mountain ascetics. The guards, probably suspecting a deception, requested that the young member of the party be examined by the Inspector of Women, but the adults refused. Finally, they admitted their mistake and the gatekeepers escorted them to the previous station on the Kiso road. In 1788 a sixteen-year-old girl in the company of three men tried to go through the same station in Kiso Fukushima Province by pretending to be a boy. Once the guards understood that she was anatomically female, she was refused passage and the officials even received a reward for upholding the law (Vaporis, 1994, pp. 182-184).

According to Yamada Keiō (dates unknown) in *Events of the Hōreki Era (Hōreki genraishū*, 1831), a military retainer named Itō Han'uemon regularly met with women with whom he had a relationship by having them pass through unspecified barriers irregularly. In 1831, Han'uemon went on a pilgrimage to Ise together with a lover named Taki. Along the route, the two passed through a number of unspecified stations with Taki dressed as a youth. While they were travelling, the officials of the Hakone barrier, one of the stations through which the couple had presumably gone, caught up to and arrested them. Apparently, the gatekeepers had realised that Taki had passed through the station irregularly and punished them even after they had passed controls (Kitagawa, Mori, 1982b, pp. 367-368).

Things wound up even worse for another traveller. In 1819 a certain Tadasuke was on pilgrimage to Shinano Province together with a twelve-year-old girl whom he had comb her hair in a forelock so to present her as a boy. The guards at the barrier asked him about the sex

of the child who was with him, to which he answered that it was a boy. Unconvinced, the gatekeepers had the child examined by the Inspector of Women, who confirmed that it was a girl. Tadasuke and the girl were detained and the guards asked the authorities both at his home province and at Edo for instructions. In accordance with the sentence that was issued, Tadasuke was beheaded and the girl pardoned. It is possible that Tadasuke did not receive a lenient treatment like the fake ascetics did because he continued to lie to the officials. Had he apologised and confessed, maybe he would have been pardoned (Vaporis, 1994, p. 184).

4.3 Leaving the Yoshiwara

The Yoshiwara was the licensed pleasure quarter of Edo. The object of infinite fascination by (aspiring) patrons, writers and painters, the Yoshiwara put in place a system to regulate the comings and goings of the various female entertainers who found employment there. The grounds of the Yoshiwara were closed on all the four sides by a tall wooden fence and the only entry and exit was the Great Gate. The gate was operated as a small scale *sekisho* where a guardian, traditionally known as Shirobei, often aided by a group of brothel owners on monthly duty, checked that no suspicious-looking man entered and no woman left without permission. Again analogously to the checking stations, Shirobei and the proprietors created a system of wooden passes: Shirobei and the owners issued each month a number of passes to the houses of assignation. The woman who wanted to temporarily leave the premises would ask for a pass at the establishment where she worked, obtain a written permission from the ward leader stating the reason for which she went out, generally an illness, go, usually chaperoned by a male servant of her employer, to the gate, show the pass and, if Shirobei and his aids found everything in order, leave and return before the 6 p.m. curfew. To avoid this cumbersome series of checks, women wore men's clothes to pretend to be men and leave the Yoshiwara undisturbed. A *senryū* satirises this practice: “At Kurosuke's side [a manifestation of the fox deity Inari, Kurosuke was the tutelary god of the Yoshiwara; in folklore, foxes were considered able to change their forms to seduce/trick humans, and this association is extended in the poem to the woman who dresses as a man], [a woman] changes into a man” (*Kurosuke no waki de otoko ni bakete iru*; Andō, 2016, p. 192; Lindsey, 2007, pp. 69-70, 167, 171-174; Seigle, 1993, p. 181).

4.4 Less Regulated Mobility Hindrances

In the miscellany *Records of Events from the Genbun Era* (*Genbun seisetsu zatsuroku*, 1730-1740), the anonymous author recorded that in 1736 a woman had an “illicit relationship” (*mittsū*) with a man, so she “assumed the appearance of a man” (*otoko no tei ni koshirau*), hid her face with a hood and wore a *haori* jacket. Then, under the cover of the night she met her lover in the same street where she lived, presumably in Edo, and together they went to Komagome, an area near the city, and took their lives. Most likely, their relationship was deemed illicit because her lover was blind and blind people could only marry inside their own community. She dressed as a man not to be recognised and move

more freely around Edo without rousing suspicions about their plan to commit suicide (Kokusho kankōkai, 1970, pp. 401, 404).

In the *bakumatsu* period, a young girl from Kurume Province in Kyūshū Island pretended to be a boy so she could board ships and visit foreign countries to draw from life. She first boarded a ship in 1867 when she was 13 *sai* and continued for two or three years. During this time, sailors would spread rumours about her, saying that “she is a girl, she just pretends to be a boy” (*aitsu wa onna no kuse ni, otoko no fū wo shite iru*), an experience that the young artist considered “very painful” (*zuibun kurushii*; Hara, 2001, pp. 37-39).

5. Art and Prostitution in the Demimonde

5.1 Izumo no Okuni

In 1603, Okuni held in Kyoto a show known as *kabuki odori*, the progenitor of the form of theatre later known as Kabuki. According to a testimony found in the diary *Recording of Recent Events* (circa 1624-1644, attributed to Matsudaira Tadaakira, dates unknown), during the show Okuni, whom the author presents as a “ritualist” (*miko*) from Izumo province, played a male role by wearing a “sword” (*katana*) and a “short sword” (*wakizashi*). In the accompanying illustration, Okuni is shown wearing a “headband” (*hachimaki*) that noblemen usually wore beneath an *eboshi* tall court hat. Furthermore, she sports a rosary and a cross in imitation of Christian priests. In the piece, Okuni visited a female teahouse server and closed the show by performing a *kabuki odori* dance (Akasaka, 2023, pp. 20-21). According to Miura Jōshin in *Tales That Come to Mind*, whose opinion was also accepted by Kitagawa Morisada (born 1810) in *Morisada’s Jottings* (*Morisada mankō*, composed between 1837 and 1867), in other unspecified performances Okuni and other female members of her troupe played male roles by wearing men’s clothes and by cutting their hair short or by combing them in a topknot as adult men did. As the authors went on to argue, Okuni and her troupes played in cross-dress in imitation of the *shirabyōshi* by taking the appearance of contemporary men and by performing an *otoko mai kabuki* as a contemporary version of the *otoko mai* perfected by the *shirabyōshi* (Groemer, 2019b, p. 41; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992b, p. 3; see also: Akasaka, 2023, p. 27; Asano, 1987, p. 12). The fact that Okuni and her actresses played male roles and wore men’s accessories greatly contributed to the success of the early Kabuki actresses: as Miura wrote about Ikushima Tango no kami (dates unknown), a courtesan who performed by imitating Okuni’s style, Ikushima “did not look like a woman, but rather like a handsome man. Hers was the image of Narihira, known in the distant past as the god of yin and yang” (*onna to wa miezu. Tada mameotoko narikeri. Inishie in’yō no kami to iwareshi Narihira no omokage zo ya*; Akasaka, 2023, p. 31; Groemer, 2019b, pp. 42-43). The allusion was to Ariwara no Narihira (825-880), renowned poet from the Heian period and main character of the *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*, late ninth century), whose figure was reconfigured during the Kamakura period in conjunction with yin and yang as male and female energy, whose fusion was achieved through erotic union (Klein, 1997, pp. 441-444, 449-460). By referring to this tradition, Miura described Ikushima as having achieved, through her anatomically female body and male clothing, the fusion of male and female, whose erotic allure served to win over the favour of her audience.

5.2 Dancers

After the *bakufu* banned *yūjo Kabuki*, the type of Kabuki where, based on the model set by Okuni, the cast was composed of actresses, a category of entertainers known as “dancers” (*odoriko*) appeared. According to Akasaka (2023, pp. 12, 18, 36), dancers were young entertainers who were summoned to sing and dance in the mansions of patrons of warrior status and were active from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century when *onna*

geisha, a category of entertainers whom will be examined in more detail below, rose to fame. During the Genroku era (1688-1704), dancers active in the Kamigata region of Kyoto and Osaka cross-dressed because, according to Akasaka (2023, pp. 37-47), of the influence exerted on them by *yūjo Kabuki* and *wakashu Kabuki*.

In *The Life of an Amorous Man* (*Kōshoku ichidai otoko*, 1682), Saikaku described the upbringing and activities of a category of cross-dressing artists known as “dancers” (Saikaku employed the terms *odoriko* and *maiko* as synonyms) active in the theatre districts of Kyoto. According to Saikaku, future dancers were trained to adopt the appearance and mannerisms of men since they were children. Between eleven and fifteen *sai*, they joined parties with female guests and drank liquor with them. After they turned sixteen, they had the top of their heads shaved in the *sakayaki* style worn by adult men, learned to make their voices sound as men’s, donned *hakama* trousers, a sword and a *komusō* wide-brimmed hat. They could be hired either as *zōri* holders and in this case became “acolytes” (*koshō*) of monks and abbots or work in the prostitution sector. In the latter case, they were neither entertainers in a teahouse nor courtesans, but, as Saikaku called them, “women in between” (*ai no onna*), i.e. women who, while employed by a house of assignation, worked according to the wishes of their customers. Later on, they became “old ladies” (*baba*), women who worked at the service of the proprietor(s) of a house of assignation to train and supervise the new generation of courtesans and entertainers (Higashi, Teraoka, 1996, pp. 121-122).

In *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, Saikaku also described the training young dancers received by a *maestra* named Shuraku. Active during the Manji era (1658-1661) and native of Suruga Province, Shuraku moved to Edo where she played music in the mansions of the warrior class and gathered a small troupe of eight artists. Afterwards, she moved to Kyoto where she expanded her trade by inventing stylish dances and songs. She also trained young girls to be “dancers” (*maiko*). According to the training regime as reported by Saikaku, Shuraku had her trainees dress as boys: she had her hair shaved on the top of their heads leaving the forelock (*kami wa nakazori*) in the “style of a youth” (*wakashu no gotoku*), she had them wear a short sword (*wakizashi*) and a medicine pouch (*inrō*) that only boys and men generally used. *Maiko* would work in banquets by singing, dancing, drinking liquor with customers and offering guests with smoking utensils (Higashi, Teraoka, 1996, pp. 403-405).

5.3 Youth-Prostitute

Sources from the mid- to the late seventeenth century reported on a category of cross-dressing courtesan known as “youth-prostitute” (*wakashu jorō*) who took the appearance of young men. There are two traditions as to who created this figure. According to Kitamura Nobuyo (1783-1856) in *Be Happy, Play, Laugh and Watch* (*Kiyūshōran*, 1830), a miscellany about life in the pleasure quarters, the originators of *wakashu jorō* were courtesans from the mid-seventeenth century with ties to the Kabuki theatre who imitated the style of actors after it came into vogue, presumably with the establishment of *wakashu Kabuki* (Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu, 1929, p. 326). According to Fujimoto Kizan (1626-1704) in *The Great Mirror of the Way of Love* (*Shikidō ōkagami*, 1678-1688), the originator of this figure of courtesan was Sennosuke (dates unknown; this name, presumably

a stage name, ends in the suffix -nosuke which was commonly attached to the names of boys) from Osaka. In 1669, she took the appearance of a youth by cutting her hair short and wearing vests with short trains (Fujimoto, 1928, p. 109). Kamimura Yukiaki (1982, p. 182) has proposed that Sennosuke might have wished to capitalise on the looks of young Kabuki actors after *wakashu Kabuki* was banned by the *bakufu* exactly in 1669. Furthermore, Fujimoto continued, her style was soon imitated by other courtesans in Kyoto and Nara. According to Fujimoto, they took the appearance of youths to win over the patronage of male customers who enjoyed sexual relationships with young men (Fujimoto, 1928, p. 109). Following the reconstruction developed by Kamimura (1982, pp. 185-186), the *wakashu jorō* were at the peak of their fame in the Shinmachi pleasure quarter of Osaka during the Tenwa era (1681-1684). Between this time and the 1730s, however, the courtesans created new styles of appearance and entertainment and the *wakashu jorō* disappeared.

5.4 Haori geisha

The *haori* is an article of clothing that came into use during the Shokuhō era (1568-1600).² It consists of a sleeved jacket with a collar, an open front from which the garb is worn, two sleeves and a back. The length of the jacket is variable: there are short versions that only cover the upper part of the body and long versions which are above the feet. The *haori* is usually donned on top of other clothes as if to wrap around the wearer's body; in fact, *haori* is the noun form of the verb *haoru*, "to wrap around." From the late sixteenth to the first half of the eighteenth century, the *haori* was adopted by men of the warrior class, who donned it for various purposes: as part of their formal and everyday attire, usually worn on top of a *kosode*, a "narrow-sleeved" garment and *hakama* trousers, it formed an ensemble called *haori-hakama*; during the Warrior States period (1467-1600), men wore it on the battleground to protect themselves against swords and arrows, against the cold and to move *incognito*; after the establishment of the *pax Tokugawa*, men wore the *haori* outside their homes as protection against the cold, especially in winter, for fashion and to conceal their appearances and identities (Masuda, 2010, pp. 227-229, 232).

Although originally meant to be used by men, women wore the *haori* starting from the mid-eighteenth century, too. These women belonged to a category of performers known as *onna geisha*. *Onna geisha* is a phrase that can be translated as "female artists" and indicates a group of entertainers proficient in playing music, chanting and narrating stories who worked in pleasure quarters to cheer banquets and accompany the customers' meetings with friends, colleagues, courtesans and prostitutes. *Onna geisha* first appeared in the unlicensed brothel of Fukagawa, an area near Edo, between the Kyōhō (1716-1736) and Genbun (1736-1741) eras (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 152-153). *Onna geisha* were originally dancers who learned to play music and sing from a group of male entertainers known as *geisha* and later as *otoko geisha*, "male entertainers," to distinguish them from the *onna geisha* who specialised in playing the drum and narrating stories and buffooneries. *Otoko geisha* mainly worked in pleasure quarters where customers could hire them to cheer banquets and encounters with friends,

² A previous version of this chapter was published in Durante 2025b.

colleagues, courtesans and prostitutes. *Otoko geisha* first appeared in Kyoto and Osaka around the Manji (1658-1661) era (Hayashi, 2025, pp. 466-468).

When *onna geisha* learned the trade from their male counterparts, some of them also assumed parts of a male persona and aspects of a man's appearance: for example, they assumed nicknames ending in -ji or -yoshi, suffixes often found in men's names, and shaved bigger or smaller patches of hair on the top of their heads in imitation of the shaven pate sported by adult men (Hayashi, 2025, p. 468; Akasaka, 2023, pp. 43-44; Mostow, 2016, pp. 35-37, 196). In this context, as the anonymous authors of *Bad Sermons in the Modern Style* (*Imayō heta dangi*, 1752) and *The Customs in Kōfu during the Kanpō and Kyōhō Eras* (*Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi*, late eighteenth century, hereafter *The Customs in Kōfu*) explained, some *onna geisha* adopted the *haori* in imitation of *jōruri* chanters from Kyoto between the Genbun and Enkyō (1744-1748) eras (Akasaka, 2023, pp. 108-110; Kitagawa, Mori, 1982a, p. 11). Wearing the *haori* thus constituted for some *onna geisha* part of the manly attire they acquired to signal their association with *jōruri* chanters and to indicate their artistic proficiency. The use of the *haori* by this category of performers became so iconic that the artists wearing it were called *haori geisha* and set an example that non-professional women from the main cities of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka imitated, as will be seen in more detail in the next chapter.

5.5 As Husband and Wife

In *Crude and Incoherent Words* (*Saitō yago*, 1820s), Kan Chazan (or Sazan, 1748-1827) wrote down and commented on a testimony left by a friend of his, the Kokugakusha Tonomura Yasumori (1779-1847), about Ukichi (dates unknown), a drummer who lived in the Gion neighbourhood of Kyoto. According to Tonomura's testimony, Ukichi was a biological woman who assumed a male appearance as part of their job as a drummer by completely shaving the top of their head in the *sakayaki* style, the hairstyle worn by adult men, and also donned male clothes and adopted male behaviours and mannerisms. Ukichi had relationships with many, presumably female, prostitutes who lived and worked in the neighbourhood. Afterwards, they retired from their job and moved into a house together with a woman. To describe the bond Ukichi had with the prostitutes, Tonomura used the word *mabu*, a term which commonly refers to the clients and lovers of courtesans who were usually understood to be men, as the character *bu* indicates a man or a husband. By employing this word, Tonomura apparently compared the relationships Ukichi had with the prostitutes to a relationship between a man and a woman with Ukichi in the role of the man, presumably for their male-coded appearance, behaviour and mannerisms. Similarly, Tonomura indicated the bond Ukichi shared with the woman with whom they lived as *meoto*, a word composed by the characters meaning man/husband and woman/wife. In this manner, Tonomura presented the relationship as between a man and a woman and a husband and a wife. Furthermore, Tonomura recorded that Ukichi was known by the community in which they lived as an *otoko-onna*, a compound word which consists of the words "man," *otoko*, and "woman," *onna* (Sunaga, 2012, pp. 115-116). An early example of this word appears in *Miscellany of Rumours about the Genbun Era* (*Genbun sesetsu zatsuroku*, mid- or second half of the

eighteenth century), where the unknown author used *otoko-onna* to indicate a certain Hayato, apparently a hermaphrodite, who showed their body as part of a *misemono* show (Kokusho kankōkai, 1969, p. 476). In later sources from the late Edo and early Meiji period, *otoko-onna* was seemingly used to indicate males who took on the lifeways of females and females who took on the lifeways of males and their anatomical sex and the assumption of the lifeways of the opposite gender was known by the community where they resided. Such a use, which is very similar to how it appears in *Crude and Incoherent Words*, can be found in the late Edo-period miscellany *Proceedings of the Bunny Garden Association* (*Tōen shōsetsu*, 1825), where author Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848) indicated an anatomical man self-named Okatsu (dates unknown) who dressed and lived as a woman and had a wife and children by the rare variant *onna-otoko* (Sunaga, 2012, pp. 113-114), and in an early Meiji-period newspaper from the *Yomiuri shinbun* 07/08/1876, where a biological woman who dressed and behaved like a man and had a relationship with a woman is also referred to as *otoko-onna* (Anonymous, 1876, p. 3).

In his comment to Tonomura's testimony, Kan explained why Ukichi assumed a male appearance and behaviour in spite of their anatomical sex by suggesting that Ukichi was a "hermaphrodite," *futanari*, literally "double form." As Kan wrote, *futanari* refers to a person who has the upper body like a man and the lower body like a woman, or, alternatively, has both male and female genitalia. Furthermore, Kan recounted the story of a neighbour of his whose child was hermaphrodite. According to Kan, the child was born with female genitalia and their parents socialised them as a girl: for example, their mother brought them to the women's section of the public baths with her. Afterwards, at an unspecified point during their childhood, they grew a penis. From their birth until they were seven or eight *sai*, they wore female clothes and at ten *sai* they wore male clothes, assumed a masculine name and later took on their father's job like a male heir would. According to Kan's reconstruction, as the child's body changed the gendered behaviour the parents expected of them also changed, as they went from being socialised as a girl to wearing male clothes and being socialised as a boy/man. Based on the analogy with this story, Kan argued that Ukichi changed her appearance and behaviour from female to male because they were *futanari* (Sunaga, 2012, p. 116). As seen also in the change in the meaning of *otoko-onna*, individuals who took on the lifeways of the other sex were often understood to be and conflated with hermaphrodites.

The bond Ukichi shared with the prostitutes and the woman with whom they lived appears different from the social and emotional dynamics that romantic and erotic relationships between women assumed during the Edo period. As physician and prolific writer Morishima Chūryō (circa 1756-1810) observed in *Things Seen and Heard* (*Kenmon zasshi*, 1790s), women who worked in the royal palace would sometimes enter a relationship in secret, seeing as it was forbidden by their families. Morishima referred to the partners as *onna kyōdaibun*, where *onna* means "woman," *kyōdai* "older and younger brother," and *bun* "akin to" (Ishigami, 1994, pp. 341-342). Tonomura, in the same passage about Ukichi, mentioned that women who worked in pleasure quarters would also create relationships between them and Tonomura called the partners *kyōdaibun* in the *furigana* where *kyōdai* means "older and younger brother," while the characters the author used are those for "older and younger sister," which are commonly read *shimai* (Sunaga, 2012, p. 115). As Gregory Pflugfelder (1999, p. 41) has eloquently maintained, *kyōdaibun* was a fictive bond of brotherhood

wherein two males established a dynamic unequal in terms of age and social position. In Morishima and Tonomura's texts, women created similar relationships between an older and a younger woman in the context of spaces, such as the royal palace and the pleasure quarters, where the inhabitants were predominantly women.

The emphasis on women's relationships existing in all-female environments and being established between an older and younger partner can also be found in the sexual manuals and the epigrams examined by Anne Walthall. According to the scholar, in these written and visual genres sexual encounters between women take place exclusively between women who do not have access to men, such as widows and nuns, and in homosocial spaces where men are temporarily or permanently absent, such as the inner quarters of *daimyō*'s mansions. Furthermore, women conform to unequal relations of age and social position that were present in men's rapports with an older woman assuming the role of a mentor while a younger woman assumes the role of a disciple (Walthall, 2009, pp. 4-5, 7, 9-10). Generally speaking, women establish romantic and sexual relationships within the confines of homosocial spaces and by assuming positions which are unequal in terms of age and social position.

The bond that Ukichi developed with the prostitutes and the woman with whom they lived seemingly did not follow that pattern, but instead adopted the pattern of a male-female rapport both on a linguistic and social level. As has been seen, Tonomura referred to Ukichi as *mabu*, a male patron, vis-à-vis the prostitutes with whom they had a relationship and indicated the bond they had with the woman with whom they lived as that between *meoto*, a man/husband and a woman/wife, thus suggesting that Ukichi assumed a masculine role vis-à-vis their partners. Furthermore, Ukichi apparently assumed a position that was commonly reserved to men and not to women when they moved in with a woman: as has been observed, women entered relationships only within the context of homosocial spaces, whereas Ukichi first had relationships with prostitutes from the pleasure quarter where they all were employed, but they later brought a relationship out of said homosocial space when they moved to a house together with a woman. Since it was typically men who moved in together with their wives because they had more money and the legal prerogative to start families based on patrilineal lineages, apparently Ukichi also adopted a masculine privilege when they moved in with a woman. Given the masculine role Ukichi adopted, the relationships they established with women appear different from the majority of female-female rapports.

6. The *Haori* Craze Among Non-Professional Women

Around the mid-eighteenth century, *onna geisha* were not only the women who adopted the *haori*, but the jacket was also worn by non-professional women.³ A sumptuary law enacted in Edo in 1748, which will be discussed in further detail below, stated that women living in the shogunal city used the jacket as protection against the winter cold (Iwai, 1978, p. 358). Kimuro Bōun (1713-1783) wrote in *Kyoto Observed (Mita kyō monogatari, 1781)*, a miscellany which Bōun composed about a work trip he made to Kyoto in 1766, that women living in the royal capital, too, wore the *haori* in winter to protect themselves against the blowing cold wind (Groemer, 2019, pp. 194, 205). However, according to Ogura Takemasa (1703-1758) in a note to *Tales of Long, Long Ago (Mukashi mukashi monogatari, composed by Shinmi Masatomo, 1651-1742, in the first half of the eighteenth century)*, the anonymous author of *The Customs in Kōfu* and the anonymous legislator of a second sumptuary law against women's use of the *haori* enforced in Edo in 1848, non-professional women wore the *haori* in bigger numbers, sparking a veritable *haori* craze, by imitating the *onna geisha* (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 143-144; Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 212; Kitagawa, Mori, 1982a, pp. 10-11).

According to Ogura and the author of *The Customs in Kōfu*, Edo women wore the *haori* already during the Genbun and Enkyō eras, at the same time when *onna geisha* started donning the garment, in imitation of the performers from Fukagawa. As Ogura added, when crowds gathered, he saw two or three women of different social classes, from commoners to women of warrior status, sporting the *haori* (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 212; Kitagawa, Mori, 1982a, pp. 10-11). According to Sudō Yoshizō (born 1793) in *Fujiokaya's Diary (Fujiokaya nikki, composed between 1804 and 1868)*, Edo women wore the *haori* well into the Bunsei (1818-1830) era (Koike and Suzuki, 1987, p. 397). Moreover, as Kitagawa mentioned in *Morisada's Jottings*, the custom spread from Edo to Kyoto and Osaka during the Bunsei and Tenpō (1830-1844) eras (Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992c, p. 51; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 211).

6.1 Women's Adoption of Other Male Sartorial and Tonsorial Items: the *Hanten* Jacket and Short and Shaved Hair

In the wake of the *haori* craze, female entertainers and urban women adopted not only the *haori* but also the *hanten* jacket. According to Kitagawa, after the Tenpō era women in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka wore, as an alternative to the *haori*, the *hanten* jacket to protect themselves from the cold (Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, pp. 211-212, 226-230). Much like the *haori*, the *hanten* consists of a sleeved jacket with a collar, an open front and a back. Its length is variable and is commonly used as an outer garment which wraps around the wearer's body. Visually and practically, it is very similar to the *haori*. Women wore it for the same purposes as the *haori*: as Kitagawa explained, as protection against the cold and to conceal their appearances, identities and anatomical sex. The only difference with the *haori* was that the

³ A previous version of this chapter was published in Durante 2025b.

hanten was generally made with cheaper materials and its prints were less colorful and original and, perhaps for this reason, was deemed less elegant than the *haori*.

Some non-professional women, too, cut their hair short in imitation of men's haircut and/or shaved bigger or smaller patches on the top of their heads in imitation of the shaven pate worn by adult men. Dazai Shundai (1680-1747) reported in the miscellany *Monologue* (*Dokugo*, 1730s) that some women in Edo shaved their hair (Groemer, 2019b, p. 168; *Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu*, 1976, pp. 285, 287-288). Similarly, Kanzawa Tokō (1710-1795) wrote in *The Words of an Old Man* (*Okinagusa*, composed between 1772 and 1792) that women from Edo also shaved and cut their hair short during the Enkyō and Kansei (1789-1801) eras (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, pp. 58-59). Lastly, Kitagawa reported that starting from Tenpō era women of all ages from Edo cut or shaved parts of their hair, a custom which was originally practised only by elderly ladies (Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992c, p. 51; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 211).

6.2 Women's Use of the *Haori* and Short/Shaven Hair as Seen by Authors of Miscellanies: Subversion of the Status System Hierarchy and Erosion of the Differences between Status Groups

Authors of miscellanies wrote disparagingly about women's adoption of the *haori*. In *Tales of Long, Long Ago* and *The Customs in Kōfu*, Ogura and the anonymous author described women's wearing of the *haori* with evident disdain for its association with the *onna geisha* and other figures from the demimonde. Despite writing separately, the two eighteenth-century men similarly labelled workers of the demimonde as "lowly" (*iyashiki*), a term which indicates people at the bottom of the social hierarchy with a negative connotation (Masui, 2012, p. 87; Tsukishima, 2011, p. 248). Furthermore, the authors reported that such custom, which emerged among people of low status, spread to urban women of different classes, including women of commoner and warrior households. By his tone, Ogura seemed shocked when he saw, in "places where crowds gathered" (*gunshū no tokoro*), women of different classes wearing the same garb (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 212; Kitagawa, Mori, 1982a, pp. 10-11). These testimonies thus despised women's donning of the *haori* for its connection with the low-status people of the demimonde and its diffusion among women of higher classes.

To better understand the complex social, political and cultural reasons why the *zuihitsu* authors despised the influence exerted by members of the demimonde on those from other classes, it is crucial to see in more detail how the "status system" (*mibunsei*) worked in Tokugawa Japan. The *mibunsei* was an institutional structure which inserted people in different categories based on their occupation. Of the status groups relevant to this study, it is worth describing the following ones:

- The "warrior" (*bushi* or *buke*) class;
- The commoner class, whose members living in cities were called "townspeople" (*chōnin*);
- The so-called "riverside dwellers" (*kawaramono*), a group which incorporated those who worked in theatres and pleasure quarters.

The *mibunsei* emerged in the late sixteenth century when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and the first Tokugawa *shōgun* gave order and structure to the Japanese provinces which had been until then the stage of a century-long civil war. Under the *bushi* leaders of the Warring States period, soldiers were organised according to rank and duties. Under Toyotomi and the first Tokugawa *shōgun*, this technique of army mobilisation was extended to civil society, whose members were now inserted in varying status groups depending on the formal duties they performed for the sake of the country (Ehlers, 2023, pp. 571-572, 576-578; Teraki *et al.*, 2019, pp. 66-67, 99; Geiger, 2011, p. 17; Howell, 2005, pp. 21, 28-29, 32-33, 36; Ooms, 1998, pp. 25-27; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987, pp. 82, 88-89). In the sense that the Tokugawa government mobilised all elements of society, Takagi Shōsaku (2007, p. 123) has called Tokugawa Japan a “garrison state.”

The *mibunsei* linked each individual, through the *ie* or households to which they belonged, with one or more specific tasks. Of the categories relevant for this thesis, the *buke* class carried out both military and bureaucratic functions and commoners oversaw production and circulation of essential and luxury goods, while *kawaramono* were historically associated with leather tanning, hunting and killing, occupations deemed ritually polluting (Ehlers, 2023, pp. 571-572; Teraki *et al.*, 2019, pp. 27-30, 36; Howell, 2005, pp. 21, 28-29, 34). Based on the relevance of their respective duties, these groups formed a vertical hierarchy wherein warriors occupied a high position, commoners a median position and *kawaramono* a base position.

Membership in a given status group was visually indicated by clothing. In the Warring States period, for example, the Go Hōjō house issued a regulation establishing that retainers decorate their weapons with gold and silver and while on marches dress in white and maintain a dignified appearance. By the importance placed on “adding gaiety to the parade” (*gyōsō no kira wo kazaru*), the Go Hōjō were aware of the psychological and political effect garments and accessories had to stir up the fighting spirit of one’s forces, intimidate the adversaries and win over the people (Takagi, 2007, pp. 129, 132). Under his rule, Hideyoshi applied these strategies to other categories of civil society by decreeing, for instance, that only warriors could have garbs lined with silk, whose use was instead forbidden to commoners (Berry, 1982, pp. 108-109). In this way, clothes became visual indicators of one’s status or, to borrow the expression coined by Herman Ooms (1998, p. 25), “social tattoos.”

It was in the context of the correlation between status and clothing that the testimonies of Ogura and the author of *The Customs in Kōfu* made sense. The witnesses found scandalous that the *haori*, a garb originally worn by warriors, i.e. members of one of the most exalted status groups, was adopted by *kawaramono*, people at the foot of the social ladder, and then this custom spread to women of the commoner and warrior classes, abolishing the sartorial differences which should have made their membership to a specific status group explicit. In the eyes of Ogura and the anonymous writer of the later miscellany, this practice constituted a subversion of the *mibunsei* and the concomitant erosion of the important differences between classes.

The individual’s membership to a given status group was made visible not only by the clothes she or he wore, but also in urban conglomerates such as Edo, Kyoto and Osaka by the spatial area in which the person was housed and carried out his or her occupation. Edo, Kyoto and Osaka were “castle towns” (*jōkamachi*), i.e. cities built around a castle which acted both

as the private residence of the military ruler and as the center of administration and was defended by a fortified perimeter. Warriors were domiciled in neighbourhoods that occupied the space between the castle and the fortifications, forming the town's central community. Instead, commoner settlements were built outside the city's defences, whereas theatres and pleasure quarters were confined to the literal and figurative margins of the city (Gaubatz, 2023, pp. 630-632; Stavros, 2014, pp. 151-152; McClain and Wakita, 1999, pp. 12-15; Satoh, 1998, pp. 217-218; Hall, 1955, pp. 38, 46, 51). As a result, the castle town's topography was organised according to the *mibunsei* and its vertical hierarchy, with vicinity to the castle as a geographical indicator of the centrality or marginality of a given class. This spatial arrangement reinforced the idea that warriors occupied one of the top positions of the social hierarchy, the commoners the middle and the *kawaramono* the bottom.

It was against this background that Ogura's indignation at seeing crowds of women of different classes wearing the *haori* can be understood. Just like clothing indicated status, living in a specific sector of Edo was analogously tied to the *mibunsei*: women from warrior families should have restricted their movements to their dedicated neighbourhoods and commoner women to their settlements. On the contrary, in "places where crowds gathered," to quote Ogura, presumably intersections between the neighbourhoods of different classes, women stopped by, possibly chatting and attending the performances of the many street artists that moved across Edo. According to Ogura, these women violated the rules of decorum related to the space allocated to each status group. Moreover, by donning the *haori* regardless of their class, they furtherly transgressed the status norms.

6.3 Erasure of the Visual, Behavioral and Moral Characteristics of Women Vis-à-Vis Men

In *The Words of an Old Man*, Kanzawa lamented witnessing a "gradual loosening of men and women's customs" (*danjo no fūzoku dandan ni yasashiku nari*; Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58) brought about by the women who donned the *haori*. As a result of women wearing a man's garb, he could not, Kanzawa wrote, see any differences between women and men, a fact he decried as "perverse" (*hentai*, Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 59). In this manner, Kanzawa implicitly considered clothes as visual indicators of gender and, according to him, by donning a garment originally meant for men women abolished an important visual difference between them and men (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, pp. 58-59). To make things worse, Kanzawa added, "women exclusively performed men's arts" (*onna wa moppara danshi no sunaru gei wo tashimi*; Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58), presumably referring to *onna geisha* learning their trade from their male counterparts and *jōruri* chanters. In this way, by wearing the *haori* women also carried out activities that were once the purview of men.

It is interesting to note that in this entry Kanzawa reported not only on the *haori* but also on other sartorial and tonsorial items that women adopted from men and vice versa. In particular, Kanzawa wrote that the recent trend for women to shave or cut their hair short contributed to the erasure of the visual differences between women and men (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, pp. 58-59). In *Monologue*, Dazai expressed the same thought (Groemer, 2019b, p. 168; Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu, 1976, pp. 285, 287-288). Furthermore, Kanzawa reported that

women no longer hid their faces outside, a custom which was instead picked up by men who wore a hood known as *zukin* (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58). In Dazai's text, men who hid their faces are said to resemble women, whereas women who revealed their faces are said to compromise their female modesty (Groemer, 2019b, pp. 164-165; Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu, 1976, p. 286). In this manner, according to Kanzawa and Dazai's opinion, women's wearing of men's garments and hairstyles caused concerning changes in women's appearance, behaviour and morality.

6.4 Diffusion of the Merchant Mentality

In *The Words of an Old Man*, Kanzawa deemed women's donning of the *haori* a threat to the social customs for its point of origin. As Kanzawa reported, women's use of the jacket emerged in Kyoto, as the *onna geisha* from Fukagawa wore the apparel in imitation of *jōruri* chanters active in the capital. In Kanzawa's opinion, Kyoto was the city of the merchant, a town where inhabitants led an expensive and dissolute lifestyle (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 59). Kanzawa's view on the matter was shared by Dazai, who, writing about women's shaved and short hair and their immodestly showing their faces, contrasted Kyoto to Edo, the capital of the warriors, men able to regulate their behaviour and their expenses (Groemer, 2019b, pp. 164-165; Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu, 1976, p. 287). By witnessing the diffusion of Kyoto's customs to Edo, Kanzawa and Dazai voiced their concern that the spirit of the Edo warrior might have weakened and Edoites might have adopted Kyoto's manners, bringing forth economical bankruptcy and moral lassitude.

6.5 The Sumptuary Laws against Women's Use of the *Haori* and *Hanten*

In 1748, the magistracy of Edo enacted a sumptuary law to prohibit women from wearing the jacket. In the opening, the text states that in recent years before the decree's promulgation some women in Edo donned the *haori*, coherently with the observations Ogura and the author of *The Customs in Kōfu* made on the matter. Furthermore, the law records that women used the *haori* as protection against the cold, similarly to what Bōun saw in Kyoto, and in this case, the legal text continues, women, especially those of humble status, were allowed to wear it. However, the law also maintains that women sported the garment for fashion and in this case this use was considered "eccentric" (*monozuki*) and forbidden (Iwai, 1978, p. 358).

In his note, Ogura reported that the law was respected and, at the time he was writing, no more women were seen wearing the jacket (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, p. 212). However, it is plausible the decree exerted only a temporary effect, as women continued to don the *haori* well after the issuance of the law text, since, as has been remarked, the custom persisted in Edo until at least the 1820s and spread to Kyoto and Osaka in the 1830s and 1840s.

At this time, the magistracies of the three cities intervened to ban women from wearing the *haori*. In 1841, the magistracy of Edo enforced a second sumptuary law that forbade women from donning the *haori* as well as the *hanten* jacket. In the following year, the magistracy of Kyoto promulgated a decree that analogously prohibited women from wearing the *haori* and

in the same year the magistracy of Osaka adopted Kyoto's law text (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 146-151; Kyoto machibure kenkyūkai, 1986, p. 199). While the Kyoto and Osaka decree succinctly state that women were not permitted to use the garb anymore, the Edo sumptuary law is much more informative about the complex socio-cultural reasons behind the ban. In the opening, the text quotes almost verbatim the previous 1748 law to reiterate that women could borrow a *haori* from their husbands to protect themselves from the cold and this practice was forbidden only if it was a fashion choice. The text then introduces new paragraphs in which the legislator condemned women's wearing of the men's garb as "bizarre" (*iyō*) and "transgressive to the social customs" (*fūzoku no kakawari*). In this manner, the anonymous lawmaker implicitly considered the use of certain clothes as restricted according to sex and gender and any (mis)use of the clothes that blurred this division as contrary to common sense and social practice. The legal text also criticises the custom because the use by women of the *haori* and *hanten* emerged among people of the demimonde. In this way, the legislator echoed the argumentations made by Ogura and the author of *The Customs in Kōfu*, according to whom women's use of the jacket constituted a subversion of the *mibunsei*. For these reasons, the law concludes, women's donning of the *haori* was again banned in order to restore the social customs (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 143-144). While, contrarily to the 1748 sumptuary law, no testimony observed a decline in women's use of the *haori*, Kitagawa observed that women sported the *hanten* even more after the enforcement of the legal text (Asakura, Kashikawa, 1992d, pp. 211-212, 226-230). In fact, the *haori* was used by women at least for the whole Meiji period (Daimaru, Takahashi, 2019, pp. 30-31, 61-63, 93-94, 104-107, 141, 177-178). Similarly, women continued donning the *hanten* into the Meiji period as well (Daimaru, Takahashi, 2019, p. 142).

7. On a Path to Revenge

In 1818 a man named Asada Tadasuke, a retainer of the *daimyō* of Odawara Province, was killed by an acquaintance called Narutaki Mansuke. Mansuke, who was initially detained, managed to escape from his cell and Tadasuke's death was seemingly left unpunished. In 1820 Tadasuke's sons, Asada Tetsuzō and Asada Monjirō, requested permission from the authorities to search for Mansuke and kill him. The magistrate office promptly granted the necessary authorisations. To find their enemy, Tetsuzō dressed as a *komusō*, an itinerant monk that belonged to the Zen school. Since *komusō* wore a basket-like headgear which concealed a large part of their faces, many people who had reasons to hide their appearances and identities disguised themselves as *komusō*. In 1824, after a long search that brought the two brothers to travel in different provinces, they found the place where Mansuke had taken refuge and killed him (Mills, 1976, pp. 527-528).

To retaliate for their father's death, Tetsuzō and Monjirō followed a custom known as *katakiuchi*, literally "striking down one's enemy," which legally allowed a person or a small group to avenge the death of a close relation. According to the list compiled by Hiraide Kōjirō of the *katakiuchi* recorded in the Tokugawa period, the right to avenge a death was primarily exercised by family members of the deceased, typically sons and younger siblings, to avenge the death of a father and then, in decreasing order of cases reported, of other family members such as a mother, a sibling, an uncle and so forth. Only rarely did a person take revenge for the death of a superior, friends and colleagues. Thus, *katakiuchi* apparently was a family business. Furthermore, revenges were committed almost exclusively by members of the warrior class, only rarely did commoners and farmers reclaim this right (Bitō, 2003, pp. 161, 163; Hiraide, 1990, pp. 33, 52-66; Mills, 1976, pp. 533, 536-537).

In the majority of cases, men conducted *katakiuchi*, but the record also shows episodes in which women, too, followed this custom. For example in 1798 a 45-years-old mother named Miki and her 18-years-old daughter named Haru avenged the death of their husband and father. Swords in hand, Miki and Haru confronted the killer, a 24-years-old named Senryū, on the streets of Fukagawa. Senryū tried to flee saying he was not the man for whom they were looking, but Miki and Haru caught up to him. After a confrontation during which all three were wounded, the crowd stopped them from fighting. Afterwards, Senryū died because of the wounds Miki and Haru had inflicted on him. The office of the Edo magistrate did not charge the women with any crimes, instead praising them for their "sense of duty and an exceptional filial piety" (*kōshin kitoku naru gi*; Ujiie, 2007, pp. 93-95).⁴

In other cases, women cross-dressed to bring their revenges to completion. Around 1731 a woman of the warrior class named Akishino avenged her father. She got close to her unsuspecting target dressed as a man and revealed that he had killed her father and her mother bore a resentment that lasted for twenty years. Then she brought the man to the office of the town magistrate (Inagaki, 1976, pp. 129-131). In 1868 a young man named Hasegawa Saburō from Aitsu Province lost his life in the fight against the forces of the neighbouring province of Yamashiro. The battle was part of the wider Boshin War (1868-1869) during

⁴ For other instances of *katakiuchi* conducted by women, see: Ujiie, 2007, pp. 83-102; Hiraide, 1990, pp. 159-168.

which a coalition of domains loyal to the shogunate fought a coalition of provinces that wanted to reclaim the political power for the sake of the king's house. Aitsu sided with the shogunate while Yamashiro with the royal coalition. To avenge Saburō, his older sister went to the enemy base in Yamashiro wearing Saburō's *kimono*, *hakama*, *zōri* straw sandals and double swords as mementos. While the text does not disclose whether she was able to find Saburō's killer and duel him, the woman's testimony, recounted on the pages of the magazine *Woman's World (Fujin sekai)* released in 1909, includes a photograph of her, now an elderly lady, wearing Saburō's clothes as in the day she went to avenge her brother (Okano, 2005, pp. 204-209).

Writers of literature did not miss the chance to create stories where women in cross-dress avenge their loved ones. In *The Transmission of the Way of the Warrior (Budō denraiki, 1687)*, Saikaku writes of a woman who avenges her husband. At the beginning of the story, the killer is walking through a street at night when a group of men blocks his path. Among these men three individuals, to whom Saikaku refers as "stylish men" (*dateotoko*), wear wide-sleeved vests and long and wide hats and hold large fans and lanterns with no symbols, all items they use to conceal their identities. One after another, they break away from the group and go closer to the man while saying their names, where they are from and menacingly drawing their swords and other weapons. The killer realises that these three "are not men" (*otoko ni wa arazu*), but that they have the "appearance of sensual women" (*iro aru onna no sugata*). The illustration accompanying the text shows the three women with the aspect of "youths" (*wakashu*), their hair tied in a top knot and wearing double swords, which only members of the warrior class were allowed to have. As customary, the leader of the group recounts her story, states the grudge she holds against her enemy and finally strikes him down by cutting his head. In the ending, the town magistrate rules that the man was not responsible for the husband's death and sentences the wife to jail. What is interesting about the story is the way in which Saikaku describes the women's cross-dressing: on the one hand, he views it positively as a marker of fashion and sensuality; on the other hand, he maintains that their use of "men's clothing" (*otoko shōzoku*) is "eccentric" (*monozuki*) and a "fake appearance" (*nisesugata*), thus conveying the idea of a behaviour out of the ordinary and not authentic. Another interesting consideration is that, at the beginning of the story, the alleged killer also uses clothing to conceal his identity. In fact, he wears a fake beard and a wide-sleeved vest (*furisode*), commonly worn by boys and girls, whereas he is an adult man. Throughout the story, Saikaku connects the women's cross-dressing and the alleged killer's clothing as similar ways to alter one's appearance (Fuji and Hiroshima, 2000, pp. 161-166).

In *Continuation to Stories Told by a Maid (Shūi otogi bōko, 1704)*, Ryūshidō (dates unknown) creates a fictional narrative set in 1646. In the narration, a woman of the warrior class sets out to avenge her father's death. She cuts her hair short and brushes it downwards in the guise of a boy, then she goes to the killer's house on the cover of dark and asks for refuge for the night. Once the man lets her in, she reveals that she is "actually a woman" (*makoto wa watashi wa onna ni saburu*) and that he has killed her father. She says that not avenging her father would be "unfilial" (*fukō*) and she wants to avenge her father "despite being a woman" (lit. "despite having the body of a woman," *onna no mi naritomo*). The man is so moved by her unwavering loyalty, which Ryūshidō describes as typically "feminine" (lit. "of someone who has the body of a woman," *onna no mi ni te*) that he turns himself in to

the town magistrate so that he may receive a fair punishment for his actions (Kokusho kankōkai, 1987, pp. 254-258).

In *The Oath Sworn by Rokusuke and his Comrades, Manifestations of the Deity of Mt. Hiko* (*Hikosan gongen chikai no Sokedachi*, 1786), a piece of puppet theatre composed by Umeno Shitakaze (dates unknown), female character Okiku wishes to avenge her father. However, she faces an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, she considers herself unable to commit the revenge because, as she explains herself, women are “immoral” (lit. “women and *li* do not belong together,” *onna to ri wo hi ni mage*), thereby she lacks the necessary moral fiber. On the other hand, she is also aware that, were she to leave her father’s death unavenged, she would behave in an “unfilial” (*fukō*) way. As a solution to this conundrum, she pretends to be a *komusō* and uses the religious and ethical stature of this figure to appeal to Rokusuke, the piece’s main character, to avenge her father on her behalf (Kokuritsu gekijō jigyōbu, 1975, pp. 32-37). In the historical record as well as in fiction, women seemingly cross-dressed to commit *katakiuchi* for two main reasons: to conceal their appearances and identities and catch their enemies by surprise, but also to adopt the male social and ethical role of avenger.

8. Women and Productive Work in the Early and Mid-Nineteenth Century

As has been said, the late eleventh century saw the development of the *ie* system. In the passage between the Heian-Kamakura and the Tokugawa periods, the *ie* as a social unit and corporate entity had expanded outside the confines of the aristocracy, within whose close circle it emerged, and had shaped the formation of the family in other classes as well, including the warriors, the commoners and the farmers. The Tokugawa-period *ie* presented many similarities to its eleventh-century aristocratic model: like in court nobility, the *ie* included both a house and more than one generation of kin and the staff that resided in the household. Furthermore, the survival of the *ie* depended on the labour that its members performed: in the case of the aristocratic *ie*, women, especially wives of the family heads, oversaw the work of servants in regards to the acquisition and preparation of food and clothing and managed the household budget. In this manner, women fulfilled a crucial role within the *ie* of the royal nobility by carrying out different types of work.⁵

As the *ie* system was maintained in its essential form from the late eleventh to the Tokugawa period, the importance of the labour that women performed for the sake of the *ie* remained indispensable as well. In the genre known as “women’s instructional texts” (*jokunsho*), a corpus of books composed between the seventeenth and the early nineteenth century for the edification of female readers, the labour performed by women of warrior and high-level commoner families is referred to as *waza*. According to the detailed reconstruction offered by Ohishi Junko (2021, p. 2), *waza* indicates a customary act performed for a purpose and it can refer to a job, a skill or an art. The *kun’yomi* (native Japanese) reading of *waza* can be applied to seven Chinese characters, of which two will occupy an important place in the sources discussed below, each with its own *on’yomi* (Chinese pronunciation) reading. When *waza* is expressed by the character also read *gyō/gō*, it means an undertaking or job or otherwise an academic or artistic pursuit. When *waza* is expressed by the character also read *kō/ku*, it indicates a craft, with an emphasis on a person’s technical sophistication to create an elaborate product. In summary, *waza* refers to the performance of a job, often with high technical expertise.

In a key passage in *Precepts for Children in Vernacular Japanese* (*Wazoku dōjikin*, 1710), the Neo-Confucian scholar Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714) defined the types of labour that a woman was expected to carry out for the sake of the *ie*. In Kaibara’s opinion, there existed “feminine works” (*fukō*, a term composed by the character *fu* of woman/wife and the character *kō* analysed above in relation to *waza*) that amounted to “occupations” (*waza*) that every woman should have performed. According to Kaibara, such occupations consisted in sewing, spinning and mending clothes. Needlework thus emerged as the main duty that a woman should have performed. Additionally, she should have provided food and beverages for her husband, parents-in-law and guests. In other words, a woman was expected to take care of the wellbeing of her family and acquaintances and the main way with which she was to do so was through cooking and the preparation of drinks (or supervising the preparation of

⁵ A previous version of this chapter was published in Durante 2025a.

food and drinks in the case she had servants). Furthermore, a woman should not have stayed idle or laughed (Ohishi, 2021, pp. 3-6). In his exposition of the kinds of labour that women were expected to perform for the *ie*, Kaibara indicated needlework and cooking as the main types of work to be carried out, but he also connected them to ethical concerns such as caring for family members and not being fickle and lazy.

The importance given to these ethical concerns referred to three other feminine qualities that Kaibara indicated in the same passage in which he listed the skills a woman should have possessed. More specifically, Kaibara wrote of “feminine virtue” (*futoku*), stating that he expected women to be chaste, upright and docile. Kaibara also wrote of “feminine speech” (*fugen*), stating that women should have been well-spoken, always told the truth, avoided vulgarities and been careful not to offend others. Lastly, Kaibara mentioned “feminine comportment” (*fiyō*), under which heading he said a woman should have always dressed gracefully and elegantly, but never in an extravagant way. Since these qualities guided women to be subservient to others and not to offend them, a concept that appeared also as part of the feminine duties in connection with taking care of family and community members, it is possible that Kaibara thought that women should have not only carried out certain types of labour for the sake of the *ie*, but that they should have also possessed an inward disposition of subservience and a desire to be of use to others that underpinned the performance of domestic duties (Ohishi, 2021, pp. 5-6).

The list of the types of labour that women were expected to perform within the *ie* made by Kaibara served as the basis of other writers of women’s instructional texts. In *The Great Learning for Women (Onnadaigaku, circa 1713-1729)*, an abridged version of *Precepts for Children in Vernacular Japanese* composed by Kaibara or a later editor, the author indicated women’s domestic work using the expressions *onna no waza, jokō* and *fukō*, where *onna no, jo-* and *fu-* mean “women(‘s)” and *waza* and *-kō* refer to duties. According to the writer of *The Great Learning for Women*, such feminine activities covered two areas:

- Preparation of food: a woman should have cooked and prepared drinks for her husband and in-laws;
- Clothing: women were expected to sew, spin thread, raise silkworms, clean and sort clothes.

Additionally, a woman should have carried out such activities by waking up early in the morning, going to sleep late at night and not napping in the afternoon. Furthermore, she should not have told jokes, played, laughed, sung and danced (Ishikawa, 1977, pp. 10, 16, 173). While the author listed more specific activities that a woman was expected to perform, they also stayed within the example set by Kaibara and imitated the emphasis he put on diligence.

Later writers of women’s instructional texts similarly followed the example set by Kaibara and the author of *The Great Learning for Women*. In *A Treasury for Women (Onna chūyō menō bako, circa 1730)*, Uemura Gyokushishi (dates unknown) stated that “women’s activities” (*onna no subekiwaza, fukō*) consisted in sewing and washing clothes, to which women should have applied with the utmost seriousness. Analogously, in *The Classic of Filial Piety for the Edification of Women (Jokun kōkyō, second half of the eighteenth century)* Tajiri Baiō (1731-1808) wrote that “women’s occupations” (*fukō*) consisted in preparing food and drinks and sewing and mending clothes for one’s husband and in-laws and in not playing,

telling jokes or laughing (Bun'yūdōhenshū, 1910, pp. 33-34, 112). In summary, writers of women's instructional texts proposed a vision of the *ie* where different kinds of labour were divided along gender lines and women carried out tasks related to needlework, cooking and taking care of family and community members.

As will be shown in more detail below, contemporary scholars have argued, on the basis of the analysis of extensive groups of sources, that women fulfilled many more types of tasks than the ones mentioned by writers of women's instructional texts. Experts have proposed various explanations as to why authors of the genre advanced an inaccurate portrayal of the duties women performed in the *ie*. It is possible that Japanese thinkers were influenced by Chinese Neo-Confucian philosophers, who promoted as an universal rule a strict separation of duties based on gender, according to which men fulfilled economic activities outside the home whereas women fulfilled domestic tasks, a separation of activities which, apparently, while not accurate in the Japanese case, was followed in China (Birge, 1989, pp. 332-333, 343-344, 360-361). If this explanation is correct, Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars recreated, whether willingly or unwillingly, a depiction of a gendered division of labour that was adhered to in China but not in Japan.

Regardless of the reasons behind the testimonies left by authors of the genre, Kathleen Uno has drawn a different portrayal of the types of labour that men and women performed in the context of the *ie*. Uno (1991, p. 25) has grouped these duties into the categories of productive work, which sustained the *ie* by creating essential goods and income, and reproductive work, which included childrearing, cooking and housekeeping. As Uno (1991, pp. 25-26, 33-34) has shown, the division of labour wherein men and women fulfilled respectively productive and reproductive activities existed only in high-status households, particularly in the case of noble and warrior families, whereas in lower-status families, such as commoner and farmer families, said division of labour was blurred, with men performing some types of reproductive work, especially grocery shopping, housework and childrearing, and women engaging in many forms of productive work.

Women typically carried out the following reproductive and productive occupations according to their status:

- In warrior houses, girls did menial chores sweeping the yard, pruning bushes, cooking, sewing bedding quilts and weaving mosquito nets. Married women, instead, waited on their husbands and in-laws, prepared food for special occasions, sewed clothes, entertained guests, managed servants and inventoried household goods (Uno, 1991, p. 28);
- In merchant families, women took care of shopping, cooking, sewing, cleaning, entertaining guests and exchanging gifts. While such tasks may seem related to housekeeping, Uno (1991, pp. 28-29) has highlighted that they were intimately tied to the productivity of the family trade, since a woman's skill in frugal consumption created savings that might have been reinvested in the enterprise, whereas good social abilities maintained the goodwill of business partners and boasted morale among the employees. Furthermore, in smaller enterprises merchant women kept books, waited on customers and took care of personnel matters (Uno, 1991, p. 29). Additionally, women of merchant status realised clothes and small objects such as paper fans, paper strings, paper making, prayer beads, etc. (Wakita, 1999, p. 89; Yokota, 1995, pp.

373-374). These items were put on sale and the profits used for the *ie*. As regards women's roles in the production and sale of items, Wakita (2010, pp. 261, 266) has suggested that women usually engaged in light industry by producing everyday objects whose creation did not require hard work or specialised knowledge and technical expertise, such as dyeing and weaving, fan-making and folded paper case production. On the contrary, men most often worked in fields where hand work and technical expertise were more required, such as construction, metalwork, art and craft implements and weapon construction;

- In farmer households, women planted, cultivated, weeded and harvested paddies and fields. Moreover, in economically advanced regions women cultivated cash crops such as vegetables and tobacco, raised silkworms, spun thread and/or wove cloth for market (Uno, 1991, p. 27).

After seeing the many types of productive activities in which women of different statuses engaged, it is possible to say that women's work, whether it could be defined as productive or reproductive, was strongly linked to the *ie*, seeing as it was generally conducted within the family property, was connected with the family trade and was often done *in tandem* with other family members (Yokota, 1999, p. 161). Women's labour was essential for the survival of the *ie*, the more so the lower the status and smaller the size of the family was. As Thomas Smith (1977, pp. 93-95, 97, 131, 144) has shown, women's labour was crucial in the case of low-status families to the point that many such families retained girls beyond marriageable age to benefit from the girls' work.

The rise of the market economy starting from the late seventeenth century, however, partially undid the link between women's labour and the *ie*. In bigger and bigger numbers, women took contractual labour, a form of work usually indicated under the term *hōkō*, which bound them to work as maids in warrior and commoner households, in cottage industries and textiles and in the service sectors of entertainment, food, hospitality and prostitution (Lindsey, 2007, p. 10; Yokota, 1995, pp. 373-374; Smith, 1977, pp. 152-153). The influence of the market economy thus brought women to work outside the physical, social and economic confines of the *ie*.

Women's growing presence in the job market and outside the home triggered a profound anxiety in Tokugawa society. According to many observers and social critics, the *ie* formed a secure foundation for the individual and society at large because the *ie* invested each of its members in a series of mutually responsible relationships that constituted the family and bound communities together. The rise of the market economy made many worry that all human relationships would be mediated by the exchange of cash and the bonds of fealty and obligation, which had brought society together, would dissolve and society would disintegrate. As a result, women who worked outside the household began to represent, in the eyes of social critics of the time, the negatively inflected market values of self-interest and autonomy, with all their potential to bring an end to society as it had been (Stanley, 2012, pp. 108-109, 186).

As a consequence of this mounting social fear, women who worked outside the *ie* became the object of a negative discourse that marked them as deviant (Imai, 2002, parr. 1, 4). According to Marcia Yonemoto (2010, pp. 38-39, 44, 47), the genre of the women's instructional texts reinforced the Neo-Confucian notion of the domestic division of labour

along gender lines, with men working outside the *ie* holding offices and concerning themselves with broader social and political issues and women running the household, in order to maintain the fiction that women's occupations always took place only within the context of the household itself and not in the workplace.

The discourse targeting women working beyond the confines of the household was not the only way concerned observers reacted to the growing presence of women in the workplace. On the contrary, a far more systematic strategy was adopted by the *bakufu* with the reforms of the Tenpō era (1831-1845). Undertaken between 1841 and 1843 by the Elder Mizuno Tadakuni (1794-1851), the reforms aimed to resolve perceived problems in the economic, agricultural, financial and social sectors. A part of the social reforms regulated the activities of different categories of women, to the point that Ishii Kendō (1926, pp. 73-74) has argued that women were their primary target. A number of reforms also addressed the issues brought about by women working outside the *ie*, particularly three categories of women: the unlicensed prostitute, the woman tenant and the "hairdresser" (*onna kamiyui*). In 1842, the government issued three laws which respectively regulated the job of hairdressers and private prostitutes, whereas the third law forbade landlords from renting to women who lived alone, i.e. to women who did not move in as part of a *ie* with a male househead (Yasukuni, 1990, pp. 74-77, 98-103; Nagano, 1982, pp. 187-189; Seki, 1980, pp. 93-97). As Seki Tamiko (1980, pp. 93-97) has argued, the magistrates attempted to limit the independence of self-sufficient women.

It is in this highly complex context in which women's work was being pulled from the economic and social sphere of the *ie* to the workplace and the social anxiety that this change generated in social critics, such as the authors of women's instructional texts, and government reformers that cross-dressing emerged as a strategy with which a small number of women worked outside the home in roles and spaces that had been reserved to men. According to the *Gazette/Records of Customs in Aizu Province (Aizu fudoki fūzokuchō*, early nineteenth century), in Aizu Province farmer women transplanted rice seedlings during the fifth month and wore a type of *hakama* trousers called *saruhakama*, literally "monkey's *hakama*," the trousers that in the Tokugawa period had been adopted by men of the warrior class, and kept their hair in disarray, possibly because the use of trousers and a disregard for the state of their hair was more practical for work in rice paddies. As a result, the anonymous author of the text wrote, "women have the same appearance that men do and it is impossible to recognise men and women" (*onna [...] danshi dōyō no sugata ni te danjo no miwake mo*). Women resembled men not only in appearance, but also in the way they worked: "Recently women work like real men [...] when they work alongside farmer men, women toil as if they were born men" (*kinnen wa fujin no gidanshi to dōyō ni makarinari [...] nōgyō danshi to ichidō shiwaza, jōbu naru umare no onna wa otoko masari ni hataraki*). In this passage, the writer positively compared the labour women performed, expressed by the word *waza* in *shiwaza*, with the labour done by men to the point they said that women workers seemed biological men (Walthall, 1991, p. 57; Sugano, 1982, p. 92). In *Chronicle of Untiring Hard Work (Ryūryūshinkuroku*, 1805), the anonymous author recorded that farmer women from mountain areas brought cows and bulls to graze by leaving home together with their husbands, wearing the same travelling clothes as their husbands and arming themselves with axes, swords and scythes (Sugano, 1982, p. 93). While the use of weapons was generally

considered a privilege of men, especially branding swords was a privilege that the law reserved to men of warrior houses, these women and their husbands presumably used weapons to protect themselves and their cattle from thieves. In *Proceedings to the Bunny Garden Association*, Bakin wrote about a cross-dressing woman named Yoshigorō (dates unknown). According to Bakin's testimony, at seventeen or eighteen *sai* Yoshigorō shaved the top of their hair in the *sakayaki* style, the hairstyle worn by adult men, and wore a constrictive cloth to hide their breasts so that people from their neighbourhood would think they were an anatomical male. They did physically demanding jobs, a kind of labour that, as has been observed, was performed by men, by carrying loads on their back (Sunaga, 2012, p. 113). In 1875, a woman dressed as a man and adopted the masculine name Tokijirō as a way to find employment (Swale, 2020, pp. 22-24). During the nineteenth century, a small number of women performed hard and dangerous jobs that were commonly carried out by men and assuming the appearance and weapons of men emerged for practicality, for self-protection and as a way to hide their identities and find employment.

The emerging phenomenon of cross-dressing women who adopted men's activities and labour caught the attention of social critics and the Tokugawa government in the 1830s with the case of Takejirō (circa 1814-1838), birth name Take, who was condemned twice by the Edo High Court for a series of crimes and whose echo reached the pages of several authors of miscellanies. According to Sudō in *Fujiokaya's Diary* and the anonymous judge(s) who emitted the two sentences promulgated against Takejirō from the Edo High Court, Takejirō lost their parents during their childhood and was placed in the care of their relatives (Suzuki, 2003, pp. 351-353; Koike, Suzuki, 1987, p. 493). Takejirō "despised women's occupations" (*joshi no shogyō wo kirai*, where the word *shogyō* is composed by the character *sho-* which means "various" and *-gyō* which is the first Chinese character mentioned above that renders *waza* in Sinified reading; Nagashima, 2023, p. 14). When they were twelve or thirteen *sai*, they spent their time playing and hanging around with male playmates. Around the same age, they were hired to work as a cook, however their employer reprimanded them for hanging out with male friends (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 14-15).

Despite being scolded, Takejirō "found men's activities interesting" (*otoko no shogyō omoshiroku*; Nagashima, 2023, p. 15). As a consequence, they adopted a male appearance by shaving the top of their head in the *sakayaki* style, the hairstyle commonly worn by adult men, by themselves, contrary to custom according to which a male relative or family friend performed this operation during a coming-of-age ceremony, and assumed the mannerisms of a man by wearing a *hanten* jacket, presumably to hide their body, and going to the men's section of public baths (Nagashima, 2023, p. 15; Suzuki, 2003, pp. 351-353; Koike, Suzuki, 1987, p. 493). Presumably in the same period they also took the name Takejirō, with which they rewrote their birth name Take, written in *hiragana* syllabary, in Chinese characters (it is important to note that the *hiragana* syllabary was, and still is today, culturally associated with femaleness for its eyepleasing roundness and simplicity, whereas Chinese characters were, and still are, linked with maleness for their stylistic and intellectual complexity) and added the suffix *-jirō* often found in adult men's names.

In the miscellany *Night Stories of the Kasshi Year* (*Kasshi yawa*, circa 1821), Matsura Seizan (1760-1841) included an artistic rendition of Takejirō in which they have their hair shaved in the *sakayaki* style, wear a cloth rolled up around their waist and whose hem ends

above the knees and wear a *fundoshi* loincloth. The hairstyle and the clothes Takejirō wears were commonly sported by men: as has been said, the *sakayaki* hairstyle was worn by adult men; according to Takeda Sachiko (1998, pp. 14-18), Japanese-style clothes were gendered for women if the lower part was longer and hid the shape of the legs, while clothes were gendered for men if the lower part was shorter and showed the shape of the legs; if Takeda's opinion is correct, the cloth Takejirō uses can be considered appropriate for a man. The *fundoshi* was worn by men and not women: young boys received one as a gift when they turned thirteen *sai* as a symbol of sexual maturation, whereas young girls, at the same age, were gifted underskirts (Nagano, 2011, p. 207). Furthermore, in *Five Women who Loved Love* (*Kōshoku gonin onna*, 1686) by Saikaku, a character finds out that the boy with whom he is about to have sex is actually a girl in cross-dress because the girl does not wear a *fundoshi* (Emoto, 1984, pp. 442-443). While Takejirō has a hairstyle and clothes that visually construct them as a man, Matura also drew them with breasts, a detail which signals that they were anatomically female (Nakamura, Nakano, 1983, p. 115).

Between around 1826 and 1832, Takejirō was homeless and committed thefts. In 1832, they were brought for a first time before the Edo High Court. On this occasion, they were sentenced for three crimes: stealing, for which they were sentenced to prison for fifty days, having an illicit relationship and illegally leaving their employer. Furthermore, they were forbidden from wearing men's clothing (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 15-16; Wright, 2004, p. 22; Suzuki, 2003, pp. 351-353; Koike, Suzuki, 1987, p. 493).

In 1837, Takejirō was again brought before the Edo High Court, this time because they wore men's clothes to impersonate a warrior-class male retainer. The judge who followed their case found Takejirō guilty on two accounts: the impersonation of someone of superior social status, a crime which should have resulted in one hundred days in prison, followed by severe exile, and the wearing of men's garments, with which Takejirō broke the prohibition established by the previous verdict. For committing these crimes, Takejirō was sentenced to banishment to the island of Hachijōshima, a punishment which Diana E. Wright (2004, p. 23) has described as second in gravity only to the death penalty. Takejirō died in prison only a few months later from an uncured illness they probably contracted because of the prison's poor hygienic conditions. In this second sentence, the judge wrote at length about the danger Takejirō's cross-dressing purportedly posed to society, labelling it a purported corruption of "social customs" (*fūzoku*) and a possible "disruption of the human community" (*jinrin wo midashi*; Nagashima, 2023, pp. 32-33). In the opinion of contemporary scholars, the judge deemed Takejirō's cross-dressing as a threat for three reasons:

- The possible erasure of the gender differences between women and men (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 45-49; Pflugfelder, 1999, p. 152; Robertson, 1998, pp. 52-53; Robertson, 1991, p. 92);
- The purported erasure of the activities, both leisure- and work-related, between men and women and the economic differences between the two sexes (Wright, 2004, pp. 22-23; Imai, 2002, parr. 28-29; Robertson, 1998, pp. 52-53; Robertson, 1991, p. 92);
- By blurring the gendered distinction of labour, the feared disruption of the *ie* (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 44-49; Seki, 1980, pp. 76-78).

In 1843, the magistrature of Osaka enacted a law which prohibited parents from dressing their daughters as boys. According to the legal text, a number of parents of commoner status

brought up their daughters by having them wear male clothes in order to save money on girls' clothes and hair accessories, which were commonly more expensive than boys' garments. The law explicitly states that, if the custom persisted, young girls might not have learned how to perform the "occupations of high-status women" (*kamionna no shogyō*, where *shogyō*, also found in the sources concerning Takejirō, refers to the works women performed within the *ie*). To avoid this risk, the commoner population of the city was ordered to re-socialise young girls, having them wear clothes appropriate for their sex and teaching them how to perform "women's manual works" (*onna no shugyō*, where the character *-gyō* indicates, again, the types of labour that women were expected to carry out in the household; Osakashi sanjikai, 1913, pp. 1688-1689). According to this law, female cross-dressing potentially erased girls' abilities to perform the occupations that Neo-Confucianism and the society of the time expected girls to carry out. To correct this problem, the law found a solution in prompting parents to re-socialise young girls by having them wear clothes deemed feminine in alignment with their anatomical sex and by teaching them to fulfill tasks that the society and culture associated with this segment of the population.

The year in which the Osaka law was promulgated, 1843, suggests that the legal text may have been enacted as part of the Tenpō social reforms. If this were the case, the law would be part of the wider reform movement directed against women in general and women working outside the confines of the household in particular. The law could be compared to the abovementioned legal texts that targeted unlicensed prostitutes, women tenants and hairdressers. If this were the case, Osaka's cross-dressing girls may be seen as a further category of women which the government attempted to discipline. In this case as in the case of unlicensed prostitutes, women tenants and hairdressers, Osaka's cross-dressing girls emerged as a target of intervention by the city magistracy. It is plausible that Osaka's cross-dressing girls became the target of reformation for similar reasons for which unlicensed prostitutes, women tenants and hairdressers were targeted: to bring women back to the physical, social and economic confines of the *ie*. Although no additional source documents what specific activities Osaka's cross-dressing girls performed (did they engage in men's jobs as Takejirō did?), the law ordered girls to fulfill feminine tasks, which were strongly tied to the *ie*. It is possible that Osaka's cross-dressing girls were seen, like unlicensed prostitutes, women tenants and hairdressers, as agents of change who threatened the social fabric of Tokugawa society. And the answer to such perceived danger was, as again in the case of unlicensed prostitutes, women tenants and hairdressers, to tie them to the *ie* so that the mutually responsible relationships could be maintained and Japanese society perceived as it was.

In literature, Tamenaga Shunsui (1790-1844) represented the phenomenon of working women and its connection with cross-dressing in his *magnum opus Spring Colours: The Plum Calendar* (*Shunshoku umegoyomi*, 1832-1833) with the fictional characters of Oyoshi and Ochō. Oyoshi is introduced as a "valiant woman" (*onnadate*), a category of warrior women active during the Tokugawa period. Oyoshi is the master of a band of five or six boys who consider her their boss, a figure similar to the avenger cross-dressing woman that has been examined in Saikaku's *The Transmission of the Way of the Warrior*. In their appellation, the boys call Oyoshi *anego*, a word composed by the honorific *-go* and the character *ane-* which literally means "older sister" and refers to a female who is superior in age and/or status.

While the text alludes to the fact that Oyoshi and her band correct wrongs and protect the innocent from evildoers, the narrative focuses on the way Oyoshi takes care of Ochō. In particular, Oyoshi redeems the contract with which Ochō sold her services as a prostitute and lets her move into her house. Oyoshi redeems the contract and owns a house thanks to the money she earns as a hairdresser (Woodhull, 1978, pp. 203, 224-226, 254-256, 295-299; Nakamura, 1962, pp. 73-75, 110-111, 114-115, 160). According to Seki (1980, p. 37), hairdressers typically generated substantial profits to the point that they could maintain their husbands, in a reversal of the economic roles of men and women within the *ie*, as suggested by the expression “the hairdresser’s husband” (*kamiyui no teishu*) that became current in the nineteenth century. Later in the narrative, Ochō economically maintains her lover Tanjirō by working as a chanter of Onna Gidayū. As part of this job, Ochō assumes a male appearance by cutting her hair short, combing the back of it in a topknot and shaving the top of her head in the guise of a boy (Mostow, 2016, pp. 36-37). While the text does not explain why Ochō assumes a male presentation, it is plausible that she does so because the most proficient declaimers of Gidayū were men and she wishes to signal, similarly to what *haori geisha* historically did, that she has learned their art from them and deserves to be seen as their equal. In historical reality, Takemoto Kyōshi (1845-1910) adopted the *hakama* and *kataginu* as part of her dress in 1882 and these garments are still worn by female performers to this day (Coaldrake, 1997, pp. 14, 59-66). Regardless of the reasons why Ochō cross-dresses, Tamenage portrayed the changes that occurred in the economic and gender roles of men and women as a consequence of the fact that a number of women did not carry out the tasks that tied them to the economic, social and physical confines of the *ie* but rather they entered the space and performed occupations that had been strictly associated with men. As part of this phenomenon, cross-dressing emerged as both a symbol and a strategy signalling the new activities that some women fulfilled.

9. Toward an Ideal World: The Fujidō School

During the Tokugawa period, Mt. Fuji became the object of popular worship for the mystical characteristics attributed to the mountain itself and to the deities who presided over it. Convinced of the mystical powers of the mount, different groups of believers resided and performed austerities and proselytised on its holy grounds. Among those ascetics was Jikigyō Miroku (1671-1733), who was devout to Bodhisattva Sengen, one of the figures who presided over Mt. Fuji, and practised ascetic and purification rites for his sake and the sake of his community. By elaborating a series of oracles that he believed to have received from Sengen, Jikigyō Miroku developed a personal teaching which revolved around his conception of the ideal world, which he called the “World of Miroku” (*Miroku no yo*). In the Tokugawa period, the Bodhisattva Miroku (Sanskrit: Maitreya) was at the center of a messianic belief according to which he would appear in the future to save all sentient beings. The cult of Miroku held an important place in folk religion in connection to the notion of the World of Miroku, the future age in which Miroku would appear, imagined as a world free from suffering, injustice and hunger. In his doctrine, Jikigyō Miroku developed his interpretation of such ideal world (Miyazaki, 2014, pp. 39-41; Miyazaki, 2005, pp. 339-340, 348).

In his doctrine, Jikigyō Miroku took into serious consideration how women were envisioned in religious movements of his time and the role they were reserved in society. In particular, he rejected the Buddhist notions about the pollution of menstruation and childbirth blood and about the five obstructions. Menstruation and childbirth blood, Jikigyō Miroku argued, is the tool which Heaven has created so that humans can be born, therefore it is not polluting; on the contrary, it serves an important purpose for humanity in accordance with Heaven’s designs. Analogously, Jikigyō Miroku suggested that women are not more inclined to commit evil, as the Buddhist concept of the five obstructions claims: in the ascetic’s opinion, a woman can accrue negative karma not because it is innate in her but only if she commits an evil action, in the same way as a man can accrue negative karma only if he commits an evil action. Based on this moral reevaluation, Jinkigyō Miroku stated that women should not have been regarded as inferior to men on a personal as well on a social level (Miyazaki, 2014, pp. 37-39, 41; Miyazaki, 2005, p. 349; Miyazaki, 1994, pp. 320-321).

In 1733, Jikigyō Miroku passed away after fasting in protest against the *bakufu*’s attempt to raise the price of rice, which caused many poor people to starve. After his death, his disciples acquired large numbers of followers and reunited them into associations which by the late eighteenth century were called Fujikō, or Fuji confraternities. In the early nineteenth century, Rokugyō Sanshi inherited one of the groups descended from Jikigyō Miroku. Sanshi distanced himself from the remaining branches because they won popular support by conducting magico-propitious rites. For his part, Sanshi stressed understanding Jikigyō Miroku’s teachings as well as further developing them. To distinguish his school from the other Fujikō associations, Sanshi named his confraternity Fujidō, the Way of Fuji (Miyazaki, 2005, pp. 349-350).

In elaborating his predecessor’s teachings, Sanshi developed Jikigyō Miroku’s ideas about the place women should have occupied in society and the contributions they could offer to pursue the ideal world. In Sanshi’s opinion, Tokugawa society was riddled with suffering,

injustice and inequality because of the imbalance that existed between yin and yang. Sanshi considered yin and yang the forces at the origins of existence and behind the workings of society. Furthermore, he identified yin and yang respectively with women and men and believed them to be the origin of men and women's anatomical bodies as well as of their sexual and gender roles. According to Sanshi, the predominance that men with their yang force had over women with their yin force generated the imbalance between the two principles and this created further imbalances in the natural and social world. To rectify this situation, Sanshi encouraged his devotees to restore the right balance between men and women starting from their everyday lives, which, in turn, would create changes in the social and natural worlds, thus bringing about the prophesied ideal world of Miroku (Miyazaki, 2014, pp. 42-43, 45-47; Miyazaki, 2005, pp. 350-351; Miyazaki, 1994, pp. 324-327).

In line with Sanshi's views, the Fujidō school fostered equality in the practices and the roles male and female adepts held. Women and men prayed side by side, fasted and carried out the same purification rituals. Women could act as leaders in the Fujidō school as well as in other Fuji confraternities. In fact, two daughters of Jigikyō Miroku were among the first who inherited his teachings, acquired their own followers and ran their organisations. Matsushita Chiyo (dates unknown), the wife of a rich merchant of the day, acted as an adviser to Sanshi's successor and administered the Fujidō branches in Shinano province. In 1788, when a man petitioned the *bakufu* to adopt Jigikyō Miroku's teachings, it was his wife who carried the appeal to the dean of the senior councilors, one of the highest organs in the *bakufu* (Miyazaki, 2005, pp. 351-352).

Sanshi included in his doctrine numerous suggestions on how men and women should have modified their behaviour on a personal level and cross-dressing fulfilled a central function in this context. As Sanshi wrote in a song in which he expounded his teachings to bring about Miroku's World, men and women should have traded their appearances: women should have styled their forelocks in the way boys did and combed the back of their hair in a topknot in the way adult men did and worn *hakama* trousers and *fundoshi* loincloths, whereas men should have donned *furisode* robes like boys, girls and women did and made their breasts look bigger and their figures petit like the slim trunk of a willow tree, a common analogy to refer to the silhouette of a woman. If men and women had changed their appearances, Sanshi continued, they would have also switched their social roles: while men would have raised children, women would have collected money from their debtors and clients, thus acting as the heads of their *ie* (Miyazaki, 2005, p. 351; Asano, 1989, pp. 208-209).

The abovementioned episode of Tatsu, the woman who climbed Mt. Fuji in defiance of the prohibition for women to access sacred sites, illustrates how Sanshi thought women should have acted to remove the obstacles that gender expectations placed on their paths. As has been seen, in 1832 Tatsu reached the peak of Mt. Fuji dressed as a man as part of a concerted effort to lift the *kyonin kinsei* ban. In writing about Tatsu's journey and the importance this event held for female pilgrims who wished to access sacred sites to advance in their spiritual journey, Sanshi stated that Tatsu showed a great determination that was worthy of a woman who could bring forth the World of Miroku, a figure whom Sanshi called *myō*, a word written with the characters for woman and man, the new human species that would inhabit the ideal world (Miyazaki, 2005, p. 353; Hatogayashi bunkazai hogo iinkai, 1989, pp. 56-57).

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