



Female Cross-Dressing as Subversive of the Gendered Division of Labour in the Nineteenth-Century Japanese Household

Daniele Durante

Ca' Foscari University, Italy

Abstract

In 1832 and 1837, magistrates of the Japanese military government sentenced a woman self-named Takejirō (circa 1814-1838) for dressing and behaving like a man, finding the defendant guilty of corrupting the “customs” (fūzoku) and “disrupting the human community” (jinrin wo midashi). Existing research argues that, in the judges’ opinion, Takejirō’s adoption of male attire and gendered conduct threatened to break down three supporting pillars of the socio-cultural order: the gender differences between men and women, the economic differences between the two sexes, and the survival of the ie, the patriarchal household. However, available scholarship has not fully investigated the fact that the authorities saw in Takejirō’s cross-dressing a fourth way this practice might have blurred the polarity between femininity and masculinity and posed a risk to the survival and perpetuation of the ie: in fact, Takejirō refused to do “women’s work” (joshi no shogyō), i.e. domestic activities such as weaving and cooking, and instead chose to do “men’s work” (otoko no shogyō), i.e. extra-domestic activities such as a career in a public office. By reading Neo-Confucian essays that posited the gendered division of labour as a cornerstone of the household and the whole society and culture, examining the verdicts passed against Takejirō, and analysing a sumptuary law enacted in 1843 to forbid parents from dressing young girls in boys’ guises, this paper aims to better understand an additional aspect of the complex social, political, economic, and cultural reasons for which the military magistracy fought against female cross-dressing as an ostensible menace to the socio-cultural order.

Keywords: anti-gender variance legislation, ie patriarchal household in early modern Japan, law and literature, Neo-Confucian ideology in early modern Japan, work and society in early modern Japan

1. Introduction

In 1832 and 1837, a biologically female person self-named Takejirō (circa 1814-1838) was brought before the High Court of Edo (modern-day Tokyo). In both occasions they were processed for crimes they had committed: on the first time, for stealing and homelessness; on the second time, for impersonating a person of higher status. What was more, on both

occasions Takejirō was forbidden to wear male-coded clothes and hairstyle and was instead ordered to wear feminine clothes and hairstyles in alignment with their anatomical sex. The sentences issued against Takejirō strongly emphasised the fact that Takejirō wore male clothes and hairstyle because they hated “women’s occupations” (*joshi no shogyō*), to which they preferred “men’s occupations” (*otoko no shogyō*). Furthermore, the anonymous judge who passed the second verdict used strong words against Takejirō’s cross-dressing, deeming it a threat to “social customs” (*fūzoku*) and a “disruption of the human community” (*jinrin wo midashi*). In 1843, the Osaka magistracy enforced a law that prohibited parents from dressing girls as boys lest they did not learn how to perform “high-status women’s occupations” (*kamionna no shogyō*).

Scholars have so far studied Takejirō’s case to understand the ways in which the Tokugawa magistrature viewed female cross-dressing and the repressive stance the judges took against this phenomenon. By focusing on the concepts of “social customs” (*fūzoku*) and “disruption of the human community” (*jinrin wo midashi*) invoked by the judge of the 1837 sentence, experts have opined that Takejirō’s cross-dressing posed a threat to society for three reasons: a) the possible erasure of the gender differences between women and men (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 45-49; Nagashima, 2017, pp. 62-65; Pflugfelder, 1999, p. 152; Robertson, 1998, pp. 52-53; Robertson, 1991, p. 92); b) the purported erasure of the economic differences between men and women (Wright 2004, pp. 22-23; Imai 2002, par. 28-29; Robertson, 1998, pp. 52-53; Robertson, 1991, p. 92); c) the feared disruption of the *ie*, the patriarchal family-household (Nagashima 2023, pp. 44-49; Seki 1980, pp. 76-78). As concerns the 1843 Osaka law, instead, the text has been briefly discussed by Gregory Pflugfelder (1999, pp. 152-153) and Nagano Hiroko (1982, pp. 189-190), who have seen it as part, alongside the verdicts passed against Takejirō, of a wider governmental strategy to eradicate female cross-dressing from contemporary Japanese society, focusing on the fact that the magistrates wanted cross-dressing girls to perform activities perceived as feminine.

This paper will re-address the sentences issued against Takejirō and the 1843 Osaka law for three reasons:

- Firstly, the paper aims to strengthen the connection academic scholarship has drawn between the sentences issued against Takejirō and the 1843 Osaka law by drawing attention to the fact that, according to these sources, cross-dressing girls and Takejirō did not perform women’s occupations, an aspect of the phenomenon which Pflugfelder and Nagano have discussed about the Osaka law but which the other scholars have only mentioned in regard to Takejirō’s case; the paper’s main aim is thus to indicate a fourth reason, the rejection of feminine activities, for which the magistracies of Edo and Osaka banned female cross-dressing;
- Secondly, the paper aims to locate Takejirō’s case and the 1843 Osaka law in the context of the nineteenth-century discourse and legal movement against working women, seen as dangerous for the survival of the patriarchal household (*ie*). While the connection between Takejirō’s case and the discourse against women working outside the home has admittedly been drawn by Imai Shiho (2002, par. 28-29) and Seki Tamiko (1980, pp. 76-78) and the fact that the judges’ worry about Takejirō’s cross-dressing has already been read by Diana E. Wright (2004, pp. 22-23) and Imai (2002, par. 28-29) as concern about the purported erasure of the economic differences between men and women and by Nagashima Atsuko (2023, pp. 44-49) and Seki (1980, pp. 76-78) for the feared disruption of the *ie*, re-studying the sources with an emphasis on women’s activities reveals new ways and reasons for which female cross-dressing was seen as a danger for the division of labour between men and women in the *ie* and the purported disruption of the household. The paper’s second

aim is thus to show the ways and the reasons why female cross-dressing was considered a threat to the *ie* and to the division of labour between men and women in the household;

- Thirdly, and connected to the former point, the paper aims to locate the 1843 Osaka law in the context of the Tenpō reforms, a cycle of reforms which were promulgated between 1841 and 1843, and the reforms' regulation of women's work outside the home. In this way, the paper will produce a more in depth discussion of the cultural, economic, and social influences that may have played an important part in the writing of the law.

The paper is structured in the following way:

- Section 2 will discuss the paper's methodology, explaining the sampling criterion used, the translation strategy employed, and the paper's limits;
- Section 3 will offer background information on five topics whose knowledge is crucial to locate Takejirō's case and the 1843 Osaka law in their social, cultural, and economic contexts:

the *ie*, the patriarchal household;

the gendered division of labour in the household;

the rising participation of women in the workplace;

the discourse against women working outside the household in moralistic tracts;

the laws the Tenpō reforms introduced to regulate the activities of highly visible and self-sufficient categories of working women;

- Section 4 will follow Takejirō's story and how their case was handled by the judges of the Edo High Court, with an emphasis on the ways and the reasons for which Takejirō put distance between themselves and "women's activities" (*joshi no shogyō*);
- Section 5 will analyse the text of the 1843 Osaka law, highlighting that the magistracy enforced the law so that girls returned to perform "high-status women's activities" (*kamionna no shogyō*);
- Section 6 will discuss the similarities between the sentences passed against Takejirō and the Osaka law, advancing a hypothesis according to which the three texts were part of a uniform deliberate strategy to eradicate female cross-dressing;
- Section 7 will argue that the 1843 Osaka law not only was associated with Takejirō's case, but was also promulgated as part of the ampler strategy of control on women working outside the *ie*.

2. Methodology

The paper selected the primary sources through purposive sampling, thus choosing the works more relevant for the study, in this case the texts that contain information on female cross-dressing, the gendered types of work carried out in the premodern patriarchal household, and legal texts that addressed these two topics.

The paper romanises Japanese terms following the Hepburn system, which uses English orthography to phonetically transcribe sounds. As for the English translation of Japanese, the paper adopts the translations that English speaking researchers have already offered for words relevant to the study, for example *ie* as "household" as translated by the majority of the experts mentioned in the paper.

The paper's main limit is the low degree of generalisability of the results reached: the results are valid only for anatomically female persons who adopted male social roles in nineteenth-century Japan and the legal texts taken into consideration here. As presumably only a very small number of people adopted the abovementioned strategy and was targeted by the laws, the results cannot be considered valid for other groups of people.

3. Background

The term *ie* indicated 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. The headship of the *ie* was typically held by the man of the middle generation and then passed down to the first son or an adopted heir. 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 referred to any nonkin who shared the residence (the household) and to workers who participated in the family enterprise (the staff; Berry & Yonemoto, 2019, p. 4). The *ie*, then, was more than a biological unit: it included nonkin and was also a corporate entity, which revolved around a shared enterprise and often came with household property, domestic animals, ancestors and unborn descendants, and intangibles such as family reputation (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3).

The early modern *ie* was not the universal family pattern, on the contrary it was one pattern among a patchwork of local family patterns. The stem family formation was not within the reach of the poor, but rather it was adopted by rural and urban commoners who enjoyed a degree of economic stability (Lindsey, 2007, p. 12). In spite of the existence of other family patterns, the *ie* became a majority practice around the turn of the eighteenth century (Bernstein, 1991, p. 7) and formed a growing norm and a cultural ideal that William Lindsey (2007, p. 12) has called an *ie*-consciousness.

The *ie* as a corporate enterprise required that its members, both kin and nonkin, fulfilled a number of tasks to ensure its survival. Kathleen Uno (1991, p. 25) has divided these tasks into the categories of productive work, which sustained the *ie* by creating essential goods and income, and reproductive work, which included child rearing, cooking, and housekeeping. Neo-Confucian ideology promoted as an universal rule a strict separation of production and reproduction based on gender, according to which men fulfilled productive activities outside the home while women fulfilled reproductive activities inside the home, as evidenced by the concept of "women's work" (*nü kung*) used by Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200; Birge, 1989, pp. 332-333, 343-344, 360-361). However, Uno (1991, pp. 25-26, 33-34) has persuasively demonstrated that, at least in Japan, such division of labour existed only in high-status households, particularly in the case of nobles and warrior families, whereas in lower-status families, such as merchant and farmer families, said division of labour was blurred, with men performing some types of reproductive work, especially grocery shopping, housework, and child rearing, and women engaging in many forms of productive work.

The following paragraphs offer an overview of the reproductive and productive occupations women carried out according to status:

- In warrior households, 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 foods for special occasions, sewed

clothes, entertained guests, managed servants, and inventoried household goods (Uno, 1991, p. 28);

- In merchant households, women took care of shopping, cooking, sewing, cleaning, entertaining guests, and exchanging gifts. While such tasks may seem to be 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, while 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). Furthermore, 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*;
- In farmer households, women planted, cultivated, weeded, and harvested paddies and fields. Furthermore, 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 types of productive activities in which women of different statuses engaged, it is possible to state 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 argued, 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' labour in the meantime.

The rise of the market economy starting from the late seventeenth century quickly 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 the early modern Japanese 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, par. 1, 4). A textual genre that incorporated said discourse against the presence of women in the workplace was

the *jokun*, the “moral tracts for women,” a genre published from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. *Jokun* authors, mostly men with a background in Neo-Confucian philosophy, expounded principles on the correct conducts women were expected to keep. As regarded women’s work, *jokun* writers reinforced the Neo-Confucian notion of the domestic division of labour which saw men working outside the *ie* holding offices and concerning themselves with broader social and political issues and women running the household (Yonemoto, 2010, pp. 38-39). According to Marcia Yonemoto (2010, pp. 44, 47), *jokun* texts presented women’s labour as strictly connected to the *ie* to maintain the fiction that women’s occupations had always taken place only within the context of the household itself and not in the workplace.

The discourse targeting women working beyond the confines of the *ie* 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 Tokugawa government itself with the reforms of the Tenpō era (1831-1845). Undertaken between 1841 and 1843 by the Elder Mizuno Tadakuni (1794-1851), the reforms aimed at resolving perceived problems in the economic, agricultural, financial, and social systems. A part of the social reforms regulated the activities of different categories of women, to the point that historian Ishii Kendō (1926, pp. 73-74) has suggested 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. In 1842, the government issued three laws which respectively regulated the job of hairdressers and private prostitutes, whereas the third law forbade landlords to rent to women living 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 (1980, pp. 93-97) has argued, the magistrates attempted to limit the independence of self-sufficient women.

4. Takejirō’s Case Re-Examined

In this section, the paper will reconstruct Takejirō’s connection with men and women’s work both in their lived experiences and in the sentences issued by the Edo High Court magistrates. For this part of the argumentation, the paper will utilise as sources *Fujiokaya’s Diary* (*Fujiokaya nikki*), a text which discussed many social and cultural trends of the time it was written, composed between 1804 and 1868 by Sudō Yoshizō (born 1793), and the two sentences issued against Takejirō by the, supposedly two, anonymous judges of the Edo High Court who followed Takejirō’s case. According to such sources, Takejirō (born circa 1814), birth name Take, lost their parents when young 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*; Nagashima, 2023, p. 14) and, when they were around twelve or thirteen years old, they spent their time playing and hanging around with male playmates (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 14-15). Around the same age of twelve or thirteen, Takejirō was hired to work as a cook, however their employer reprimanded them for hanging out with male friends (Nagashima, 2023, p. 15).

Despite such scoldings, Takejirō “found men’s activities interesting” (*otoko no shogyō omoshiroku sōrō*; Nagashima, 2023, p. 15). As a consequence, Takejirō 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 in a ceremony that amounted to a rite of passage, and assumed the mannerisms of a man, such as wearing a *hanten* jacket, a garment usually

sported by men, 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 men's names. Between around 1826 and 1832, Takejirō lived 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 tattooed and sentenced to prison for fifty days; - having an illicit relationship; - illegally leaving their employer. Furthermore, they were forbidden to wear men's clothing (Nagashima 2023, pp. 15-16, 20-23; 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 clothing 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; - the wearing of men's garments, with which Takejirō broke the former verdict. In this second sentence, the judge spoke at length about the danger Takejirō's cross-dressing posed to society, labeling it a corruption of "social customs" (*fūzoku*) and a possible "disruption of the human community" (*jinrin wo midashi*; Nagashima, 2023, pp. 32-33). For impersonating someone of superior social status and for resuming wearing men's clothes in open defiance of the 1832 sentence, Takejirō was sentenced to banishment to the island of Hachijōshima, a punishment which Wright (2004, p. 23) has described as second in gravity only to the death penalty itself. Takejirō died in prison only a few months later from an uncured illness they probably contracted because of the prison's poor hygienic conditions.

What were these so-called women's occupations the texts mentioned? The sources did not elaborate on this point, despite its importance to understand Takejirō's story, presumably because the authors assumed the reader would know what these activities involved. However, contemporary *jokun* books did expand on this notion. In the volume entitled *The Great Learning for Women* (*Onnadaigaku*, circa 1713-1729), traditionally attributed to Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), the most famous and studied book of the genre, the author provided a list of women's occupations.

In this book, the author used different words to refer to feminine activities, in particular he called them *fukō* (Ishikawa, 1977, p. 10), where the character *fu* indicated a wife, while the second character was the Japanese reading of *kung* found in the Chinese expression for women's work used for example by Zhu Xi, *jokō* (Ishikawa, 1977, pp. 16, 173), where the first character meant woman and the second character was the Japanese reading of the Chinese character *kung*, and *onna no waza* (Ishikawa, 1977, p. 16), where the last word is an alternative reading for *gyō* in *shogyō*. According to the author of *The Great Learning for Women*, feminine activities included "domestic tasks" (*kaji*; Ishikawa, 1977, p. 173) that covered two areas: - preparation of food: a woman cooked and prepared drinks for her husband and father-in-law; - clothing: a woman sewed, spinned thread, raised silkworms, cleaned and sorted clothes.

A woman should have carried out her tasks by waking up early in the mornings, going to sleep late in the nights, and not napping in the afternoons. Furthermore, she should not have enjoyed telling jokes, playing, laughing, singing, and dancing (Ishikawa, 1977, pp. 10, 173). Later *jokun* writers closely followed the example set by the author of *The Great Learning for*

Women in defining feminine activities. In *A Treasury for Women (Onna chūyō menō bako*, circa 1730), the author Uemura Gyokushishi (dates unknown) analogously stated that “women’s activities,” which he called *fukō* and *onna no subekiwaza*, where the latter word is an alternative reading for *shogyō*, were domestic tasks to which women should have applied with the utmost seriousness and which consisted in sewing and washing clothes (Bun’yūdōhenshū, 1910, pp. 33-34). In *The Classic of Filial Piety for the Edification of Women (Jokun kōkyō*, second half of the eighteenth century), the author Tajiri Baiō (1731-1808) similarly wrote that “women’s activities” (*fukō*) consisted in preparing foods and drinks and sewing and mending clothes for husbands and in-laws and in not playing, telling jokes, and laughing (Bun’yūdōhenshū, 1910, p. 112). Briefly put, Japanese thinkers accepted the notion of feminine occupations as domestic tasks proposed by Chinese Neo-Confucian philosophers such as Zhu Xi.

5. The 1843 Law against Female Cross-Dressing

In 1843, the magistrature of Osaka promulgated a law which prohibited parents from dressing their daughters as boys. It is important to note that the law was enacted only a few years after Takejirō’s case, whose last sentence dated from 1837. According to the law text, some parents of commoner or “townspeople” (*chōnin*) 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 stated that if, this custom persisted, young girls might not learn how to perform “high-status women’s occupations” (*kamionna no shogyō*). To avoid this risk, the commoner population 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*). According to this law, female cross-dressing was deemed as a custom to be corrected because it erased girls’ abilities to perform the occupations the Neo-Confucian ideology and the society of the time expected girls to carry out (Osakashi sanjikai, 1913, pp. 1688-1689).

6. Takejirō’s Case and the 1843 Osaka Law as an Unified Strategy Against Female Cross-Dressing

The sentences issued against Takejirō and the 1843 Osaka Law had two main points in common:

- Both forbade women from cross-dressing, ordering them to wear clothes and hairstyles that the culture and society of the time deemed appropriate for girls and women;
- Both put emphasis on the fact that cross-dressing women rejected activities considered feminine. In Takejirō’s case, the magistrates explained at crucial junctures of the sentences that Takejirō did not appreciate women’s works, to which they preferred men’s occupations. Such rejection of feminine activities and embrace of masculine occupations occurred, according to the sentence texts, to explain why Takejirō preferred the company of boys and why they assumed a male-coded appearance and mannerisms. In the Osaka law, the purported inability of cross-dressing girls to perform women’s activities was the reason the legal text was promulgated and its main area of intervention, seeing as the magistrates urged *chōnin* parents to re-socialise their daughters so they would learn to perform feminine manual activities.

The sentences and the law text thus had in common a concern over the fact that at least some women rejected feminine occupations and intervened to rectify this situation by forcing women who did not perform women's works to engage in those activities.

7. The 1843 Osaka Law in the Context of the Tenpō Reforms and the Phenomenon of Women Working Outside the *Ie*

The year in which the Osaka law was promulgated, 1843, suggests that the legal text might have been thought as part of the social reforms enacted in the Tenpō era. If this were the case, the law would be part of the wider reform movement directed against women in general and working women in particular.

Firstly, the law could be compared to the abovementioned laws which 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 tried to discipline according to its ideology. 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. Second, 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 documented what specific activity Osaka's cross-dressing girls performed (did they embrace men's activities as Takejirō did?), the law ordered those girls to go back to engage in feminine activities, 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 Japanese 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 preserved as it was.

8. Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the ways and reasons cross-dressing girls and women rejected the performance of domestic labour and the strategies the Edo and Osaka magistracies adopted to force them to carry out such activities. The paper has shown that the *ie*, the patriarchal household, was a social and economic unit which included both kin and nonkin who fulfilled different tasks according to status and gender. In the case of female members of the household, said tasks, while differing according to status, typically involved cooking, weaving, attending customers and in-laws, producing small items for sale, and farming vegetables and cash crops. Generally speaking, female labour was thus conducted in the physical, social, and economic sphere of the *ie*. However, the rise of the market economy brought bigger and bigger numbers of women to take contractual jobs in the service and entertainment sectors. Social critics of the time worried over this change in women's lifestyle as they feared the rise of the market economy would erase the old bonds of fealty and responsibility, and the *ie* was one of the prime sites to imbue such values in its members, with the risk of destroying the social fabric. As a reaction to this change, the Tokugawa government enacted a part of the Tenpō reforms to regulate the activities of self-sufficient categories of women working outside the household.

The paper has aimed to locate the cases of Takejirō and the Osaka cross-dressing girls in the context of the early modern *ie*, the division of labour between men and women, the growing

presence of women in the workplace, and the strategies the government took to reign in the activities of women working outside the physical, social, and economic confines of the *ie*. In pursuing this objective, the paper has analysed how Takejirō embraced “men’s activities” (*otoko no shogyō*), which in their case consisted in adopting a male-coded appearance and mannerisms and impersonating a male-warrior retainer, because they “despised women’s activities” (*joshi no shogyō wo kirai*). The judge who followed their case in 1837 harshly sentenced Takejirō to prison, a place hence they would not return alive, because, by cross-dressing, they disrupted the social community. Takejirō’s case was followed in 1843 as part of the Tenpō reforms by the promulgation in Osaka of a law which forbade citizens of commoner status from dressing their daughters as boys to save on clothes and hair accessories. As the legal texts itself stated, such practices risked that girls would not learn how to perform “high-status women’s occupations” (*kamionna no shogyō*). As a corrective, the law instructed parents to dress girls in ways appropriate for their sex according to current cultural expectations and to re-socialise their daughters to carry out “women’s manual works” (*onna no shugyō*). The sentences passed against Takejirō and the 1843 Osaka law thus appear as a uniform strategy to eradicate female cross-dressing from society, a phenomenon which, it was presumably feared, would contribute to girls and women’s distancing from socio-culturally approved domestic occupations, in an effort to redirect the female population to work in the *ie*.

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