Language and Representation with  
ōgi and uchiwa Fans: Considering  
“Applied Knowledge”  
in the Early Modern Period  

Suzuki Ken'ichi  

Translated by Jeffrey Knott

1. Introduction

The arrival of spring is heralded by the aroma of the plum blossom, or perhaps by the call of the warbler, or the wind that melts the ice. The river Asukagawa serves as symbol for the transience of things. Thus it is that elements of the natural world, and when enshrined as stock “poem-pillows” (utamakura) also many place-names, are found to bear particular standardized meanings. In some cases, such a phenomenon can also be observed with regards to items of human manufacture. Let mention of a certain class of item come to recall associations with some concrete event in particular—with repetition of the association, over time it finds itself a fixed feature on mental maps of “knowledge” shared by large numbers of people. In this paper I will explore the nature of this process through the example of two kinds of traditional Japanese fan: the accordion-folding ōgi 扇 fan, and the flat, round-shaped uchiwa 団扇 fan.

First, I will summarize in brief the general understanding as regards ōgi and uchiwa fans. The ōgi is a type of fan original to Japan, one developed during the Heian period. At the end of the Heian period it spread to China, where in the Song era the zhedieshan 摺畳扇 (or tangshan 唐扇) appeared. There are two kinds of ōgi fan, the hi-ōgi 檜扇 (“cypress-fan”) made with slats of wood, and the kōmori-ōgi 蝙蝠扇 (“bat-fan”; also kawahori-ōgi) made with paper. By the early modern period, it had spread in use to the population at large, giving rise to travelling peddlers of ōgi fans and their backing paper.

In contrast, the uchiwa fan can be traced back to ancient China, where indeed the very character for “fan” designated one of the uchiwa type. What today we would call an uchiwa is also described in the Han-dynasty “Poem on a Bamboo Fan” (Zhushan-shi 竹扇詩) by Ban Gu 班固 (32–82). The uchiwa type further spread to the Korean peninsula, where it was known as a “pine-fan” (songseon 松扇).
It arrived in Japan, however, from mainland China. In the early modern period, a variation known as the “Edo uchiwa” became popular, and some people even made their living as uchiwa-peddlers.

Such an account can also be found in *Katei kidan* 過庭紀談 (pub. Tenpō 天保 5/1834) by Hara Sōkei 原雙桂 (1718–1767):

凡ソ扇ト云ヒ、扇子ト云ハ、皆団扇ノコトナリ。今本邦ニテ扇ト云モノハ、本邦ニテ造り始めシモノニテ、中国ニハ元来無キモノナリ。中国ヘハ宋ノ時始メテ本邦ヨリ渡リシト云フ、明ノ永楽以後ハ本邦ヨリ渡リシコト、毎度タシカニ見ユ。本邦ニテ今云フ扇ノコトトハ、アノ方ニテ摺畳扇トモ、帖扇トモ、撒扇トモ云。団扇ハアノ方ニ古来ヨリ有リシ物ニテ、箑トモ、便面トモ云フハ、皆団扇ノコトナリ。

As a rule, when it comes to fans, the word *sensu* 扇子 always refers to the *uchiwa* type. What today in Japan we call an *ōgi* was first made in this country, and did not originally exist in China. It is said to have first crossed over from Japan to China during the Song period, and from the Yongle 永楽 era [1403–24] of the Ming period onwards, we certainly see it crossing over from Japan again and again. What we now call *ōgi* here in Japan, is over there called *zhedieszhan* 摺畳扇 or *tieshan* 帖扇 or *sashan* 撒扇. *Uchiwa*, on the other hand, have been present over there since ancient times, so that words such as *sha* 箑 or *bianmian* 便面 all refer to *uchiwa*.1

Furthermore, in the “Clothing and Other Handheld Items” (*fuku gangu* 服玩具) section found in vol. 26 of the encyclopedic *Wakan sansai zue* 和漢三才図会 (preface pub. date: Shōtoku 正徳 2/1712) the image under the entry for *ōgi* shows a *kōmori-ōgi* (Figure 1), with *bi-ōgi* and *uchiwa* appearing under separate entries (Figure 2).

What both *ōgi* and *uchiwa* can be said to have in common is the property of artificially producing a small space of coolness, and thereby manifesting a bit of the natural world in the midst of daily life. This property moreover shares something fundamental in common with what I have argued2 is a certain “nature-in-daily life” function, uniquely characteristic of the early modern period, to be found in items such as insect cages (*mushiko* 虫籠), firefly baskets (*hotaru kago* 蛍籠), flower vases (*kabin* 花瓶), and goldfish bowls (*kingyo-bachi* 金魚鉢).

What, then, is the difference between these two types of fan? If forced to compare, the *ōgi* would likely be found the more elegant, and the *uchiwa* the more commonplace of the two. One might also note the *ōgi* fan’s broader range of usage, brandished now to cries of “appare” (“Bravo!”), serving now as tray to pass someone an item, and so on. By folding in various ways, *ōgi* can also change their shape. But this is a matter I will return to in the conclusion.

2. Various Artistic Expansions

Before heading into the main argument, however, let us look at two examples...

---

of literary works that make mention of ōgi and uchiwa both.

First, a seven-character quatrain by Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山 (1583–1672) on the topic of “Mt. Fuji” 富士山:

仙客来遊雲外巓
神龍棲老洞中淵
雲如紈素煙如柄
白扇倒懸東海天

— Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山, Fushōshū 覆醤集 (pub. Kanbun 寛文 11/1671)³

Here the first ("opening" き起) and second ("developing" 承) verses depict a mystery-laden natural world, while the third ("turning" 転) and fourth ("concluding" 結) verses compare that scene to everyday objects like the おぎ and うちわ fans. The "handle" of the "turning" verse indicates the うちわ, while the mountain-shape resemblance of the "concluding" verse suggests the おぎ. Some have seen in this a contradiction, but it is equally possible to view it as simply a witty way of describing Mt. Fuji that made free use of properties found in commonplace objects, such as おぎ and うちわ fans.

I will also quote the 俳文 piece “In Praise of the Nara うちわ” (Nara うちわ san奈良団扇賛), by Yokoi Yayū 横井也有 (1702–1783), in full:

Nara, glad of verdant earth!—it was in the reign of that Emperor also so named, it seems, that by some royal wisdom [the うちわ] became a local specialty. In this world, know the art of your own trade through and through, and even a jack of very few trades gets by fine enough. That’s an うちわ for you—for the wind that it makes all gratitude duly granted, its lack of talent otherwise is absolute, yet if not quite suitable for song or dance, it also doesn’t go out folded up at the waist, with a penchant for public flattery. People despise it as a mere slip of wood, with all the lifespan of a drifting cloud or water flowing by. But it never demands a housing case of fine paulownia! It cools you at night by the gourd-flowers, and stands pillow-vigil for your daytime nap. Yet even when people’s interest chills with autumn, it places not a single hope in the summer to come. It bunks in the back corner of the shelf with the wastebasket, and suffers the filth of treading rats. Yet for all that, it’s better than the おぎ, with its backing paper all peeled up, so painfully exposed. I open my heart to you, and you grow close to me, even naked and asleep . . . but no more!—it is not something to tell others about.

— Yokoi Yayū 横井也有, Uzura-goromo 鶉衣, vol. 1 (pub. Tenmei 天明7/1787)

Contrasting the おぎ-fan’s air of luxury with the down-to-earth Nara うちわ, he characterizes the former as waka-like and refined, the latter as haikai-like and common, expressing for the latter the greater affinity.

---


3. The ōgi as Representing Japanese (wa) Literary “Knowledge”: Three Cases


The fantastical love story that develops between Hikaru Genji and Yūgao—lit. “Evening Faces,” named after the yūgao 夕顔 flower (moonflower)—begins in the following way:

A pretty little girl in long, unlined yellow trousers of raw silk came out through a sliding door that seemed too good for the surroundings. Beckoning to the man [sent by Genji to pluck a moonflower, unknowingly, from her mistress’ gate], she handed him a heavily scented white fan.

“Put it on this. It isn’t much of a fan, but then it isn’t much of a flower either.” Koremitsu, coming out of the gate [next door], passed it on [from the other man] to Genji.

—The Tale of Genji, “Evening Faces” (Yūgao 夕顔)\(^6\)

The appearance in this scene of the ōgi-fan is a literary fact of quite considerable fame.

For widespread recognition of the ōgi-fan as a token signifying Hikaru Genji and Yūgao’s love affair, however, the literary “knowledge” necessary to that recognition had to first widely circulate. Towards this end of broader circulation—and creative application—there was need for a variety of channels beyond reading the above original text alone. There was need also for commentaries and digests, for manuals of haikai poetic associations—tsukeai 書会 after the technical term for such associations, tsukeai 付合—and other written genres, as well as for treatments in painting and other forms of art. With repetition of this circulation and application, moreover, such literary “knowledge” gained in generic breadth, spanning a range of registers from the popular to the refined, a phenomenon particularly noticeable in poetry and ukiyo-e. Nor was this a one-way movement, going first from circulation to application later, for creative application of literary “knowledge” was itself an aid to the latter’s circulation, leading to a bi-directional dynamic in which both efforts mutually would reinforce each other.

To name a number of such circulation channels concretely, outside all printing and hand-copying of the original text, for commentaries, it goes without saying that Kitamura Kigin’s 北村季吟 (1624–1705) Kogetsushō 湖月抄 (pub. Enpō 延宝 1/1673) circulated particularly extensively. Among digests there was the Osana Genji おさな源氏 (pub. Kanbun 6/1666) of Hinaya Ryūho 雛屋立圃 (1595–1669), wherein the above scene, for example, is succinctly explained: “[Genji] was presented with a white, perfumed fan with a flower resting on it.”\(^7\)

---


As for tsukeaisho, we find in the collection Haikai ruisenshū (preface pub. date: Enpō 5/1677) a record of an association between “ōgi-fan” and “plucked yūgao”—in this case referring to the “evening faces” flower, and not Hikaru Genji’s lady whose name is taken from it. Among the educational genre of teikinmono 庭訓物 texts, the Onna teikin Go-sho bunko 女庭訓御所文庫 (pub. Meıwa 明和 4/1767) contains a diagram titled “Chart of Genji Perfumes” (Genji-kō のつる源氏香乃図), within which an ōgi-fan is pictured with a yūgao flower upon it. One can also find the same visual composition in any of the series of illustrated Genji texts (introduced by Prof. Komachiya Teruhiko 小町谷照彦) whose pictures are said to be by Keisai Eisen 源氏英泉 (1790–1848): Genji monogatari 54-jō ezukushi 源氏物語五十四帖絵尽 (pub. Bunka 文化 9/1812), Gunka byakunin ishu waka-en 群花百人一首和歌蔵 (pub. Tenpō 7/1836), Shōyūshū 逍遊集 (pub. Kansei 寛政 8/1817; Figure 3). By contrast, in the section on “Lady Yūgao” (Yūgao no ne 夕顔上) in Kurosawa Okinamaro’s 黒沢翁満 (1795–1859) work Genji hyakunin isshu 源氏百人一首 (pub. Tenpō 10/1839), her pose is instead that of using an ōgi-fan to hide her face (Figure 4). Through all these various conduits, the close relationship between Yūgao’s love story and the ōgi-fan came to be one that more and more people recognized.

Yet how was this link put to use in application? In poetry (Japanese and Chinese) we see the following:

夕顔

(1) 風のうへに咲くかとみえて涼しきは扇にのせしゆふがほのはな

Topic: Evening Faces

Out of the wind it almost seems to blossom—Ah, the coolness

Served up in the fan-borne face of an evening flower!

—Matsunaga Teitoku 松永貞徳 (1571–1653), Shōyūshū 逍遊集 (pub. Enpō 5/1677)

(2) 夕がほの露かけぞめしけとのはぞつひにあふぎのつまとなりぬる

Topic: Writing on the Tale of Genji’s “Evening Faces” Chapter

The evening flower’s words, that once did drop like dew-stains catching on the leaf—

At last alighting, married, be it but to the edge of a fan.

—Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), Sużunoya-shū 鈴屋集 (pub. Kansei 寛政 10/1798)

Footnotes:


(3) 氷花深巷見嚫娟
一扇相思両世縁
香燼芳空根不断
又抽柔蔓故纏綿

Through a gourd-flower deep in the alleys I met a maiden fair;
A single fan, love mutual, the bond between two lives.
Smoked with perfume, though scent be vain, the root itself breaks not;
But putting forth another vine soft, tighter it winds ever still.
The hour of dusk—when the fan is the one borne, by a white peony.

—Sonome 园女 (1664–1726), *Soga monogatari* 曾我物語
(pub. Kyōhō 享保 15/1730)

—Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787–1861), “On Reading the *Genji*”
(*Gengo wo yomu* 読源語)*

夕顔

(5) 夕がほの花に扇をあてぬるはたそかれ時の垣のぞきかな

Topic: Evening Faces

Why did Yūgao have her fan there exactly where the flowers were?
Could it be that at twilight, she was having a hedge-peek herself?
—Ishida Mitoku 石田未得 (1587?–1669), Gōgin wagashū 吾吟我集 (pub. c. Keian 慶安 2/1649?)

白扇子にかきつけ侍ける

(6) しのびてもそれとやしろきさしあふぎこれ見つらめとゆふがほの花

Topic: Written on a White Fan

Furtive as you please, obvious as daylight a white fan held out like that;
How could Koremitsu—of course he would see her “evening flower.”
—Nakarai Bokuyō 半井卜養 (1607–1678), Bokuyō kyōka shūi 卜養狂歌拾遺 (pub. Kanbun 9/1669)

And these are but a sample of the various works produced.11

The examples begin with two pieces of waka, the second of which contains a play on words around the homonyms “wife” (tsuma 妻) and “edge” (tsuma 褾) for a double entendre difficult to translate (reproduced here in part with “married, be it but to the edge of a fan”). The third example, a poem in Chinese, draws more broadly upon the story of the Tale of Genji. The “single fan” is a sign of the marital bond, and even if that “perfume” proves to “be vain,” still “the root itself breaks not,” and yet “another vine” will be “put forth,” all of which is to convey that though Yūgao herself quickly dies, Hikaru Genji will later care for her orphaned child Tamakazura 玉鬘 (partially homophonous with kazura "vine")—and in time feel romantically for her as well. The shorter fourth poem, in contrast, is a haikai-sequence hokku 発句 ("starting verse" of a linked-verse sequence), in which the yūgao flower has become a white peony. The fifth and sixth poems are both kyōka 狂歌, the latter of which contains an additional pun relevant to the story, playing on the phrase kore mitsurame, which means both literally “he [=Hikaru Genji’s servant Koremitsu] must have seen it [=Yūgao’s flower],” while also containing concealed that servant’s own name: kore mitsu(rame).

To summarize in more generic terms, the “refined” (ga 雅) register of the first three examples—traditional waka and a poem in Chinese—is thus matched by the more “common” (zoku 俗) register of the latter three—haikai and kyōka, signaling the literary breadth of the link’s reception.

This breadth extends even beyond the written word. In the field of painting, Suzuki Harunobu’s 鈴木春信 (1725?–1770) ukiyo-e rendering of the scene is well-known, and in the collections of Tokyo National Museum there survives an Edo-period kimono treating the motif: an ornate karaori 唐織 robe bearing the images of Lady Yūgao and her fan.\textsuperscript{12} Even in the fictional Hyakkacō mitate honzō 百化擬擬本草 with illustrations by Kitao Shigemasa 北尾重政 (1739–1820), one can find a phrase like the following: “Hi-ōgi fans go with the yūgao flowers over on Fifth Avenue.”\textsuperscript{13} As such examples make clear, reception of the original association, as found in other forms of art and different styles of writing, was as varied as it was broad.

\textbf{[B] The Tale of the Heike, “The Death of Atsumori”: Kumagai Naozane Taunts Atsumori with an ōgi}

Found in volume 9 of The Tale of the Heike (Heike monogatari 平家物語), the moment in the “The Death of Atsumori” episode where Kumagai Naozane 熊谷直実 taunts his enemy, Taira no Atsumori 平敦盛, to halt his seaward flight and instead turn and fight him—“[Naozane] beckoned to [Atsumori] with his fan... The warrior came back”\textsuperscript{14}—is a justly famous literary scene of ōgi usage.

Alongside readings of the passage itself, through visual arts like painting and various other such channels, the single action of Naozane taunting Atsumori with an ōgi-fan came to be accepted as symbolizing the “Death of Atsumori” scene as a whole. Based on that common understanding it was taken up as material, as much in poetic allusions as in the playful punning of humor collections.

In painting, among the oldest treatments of the scene, as introduced by Prof. Kitamura Masayuki 北村昌幸,\textsuperscript{15} are (1) the late-Muromachi illustrated scroll Ko-Atsumori emaki 小敦盛絵巻 in the Waseda University Library,\textsuperscript{16} and (2) the early modern-period Tosa-school 土佐派 folding screen Ichinotani kassen-zu 一の谷合戦図屏風 at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum.\textsuperscript{17} Both works are agreed


\textsuperscript{13} 檜扇は五条あたりの夕顔の花に類し.


\textsuperscript{15} Kitamura Masayuki 北村昌幸, “Heike monogatari no teisho” 『平家物語』の汀渚, in Hamabe no bungakushi 浜辺の文学史, ed. Suzuki Ken’ichi (Miyai Shoten, 2017).


\textsuperscript{17} Ichinotani kassen-zu 一の谷合戦図屏風, pair of screens, 6 panels each (Tokyo Fuji Art Museum). Images made publically available: https://www.fujibi.or.jp/our-collection/profile-of-works.html?work_id=3559.
Language and Representation with ōgi and uchiwa

in depicting Naozane on the shore, a fan in one hand, and Atsumori on horseback in the midst of the surf. The same is the case with the corresponding section in volume 5 (“Kumagai Atsumori wo utsu narabi ni Heike no kindachi uchi-jini” 熊谷討敦盛并平家公達討死) of the *Genpei seisuki zue* 源平盛衰記図会 (pub. Kansei 6/1794), by Akisato Ritō 秋里籬島, with illustrations by Nishimura Chūwa 西村中和 and Oku Sadaakira 奥貞章 (?–1813) (Figure 5). In *ukiyo-e*, there exist at least three treatments of the scene, in works by Suzuki Harunobu, Utagawa Sadahide 歌川貞秀 (1807–1879), and Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–1892), among which Yoshitoshi’s stands out in particular, for its boldness in visual composition. From an early-modern standpoint, works such as *Ko-Atsumori emaki* and *Ichinotani kassen-zu byōbu* are examples of literary “knowledge” as circulated, while the *Genpei seisuki zue*, or paintings in the *ukiyo-e* genre, constitute examples of knowledge applied. Yet as discussed above, applications of “knowledge” also themselves circulate, and ultimately feed back into the new wave of applications to follow.

Let us look now at a late early-modern humor collection, the *Fukukitaru* 富久喜多留 (preface pub. date: Bunka 11/1814) by Tachikawa Ginba 立川銀馬, where under a section on puns (*jiguchi* 地口), he recounts a case of word-play involving the Genpei War being used to hawk soba noodles. Here I quote only the first half, underlining the puns:

摂津の国一の谷は、いにしえ、元暦の頃、源平戦場の跡とて、平家の公達、無官の大夫敦盛の墓とて、何人が建てけん、五輪の石碑残れり。今はその前並木の方に、海の面を見晴らしたる所に、蕎麦を商ふ者ありて、往来の旅人を日の丸の扇にて呼びかけ、「そばのあつもり、あがらんか、あんばひ義経」といふ。地口好きの江戸もの、これを聞きて喜び、「代銭いかほど」といへば、「あつもり十六才の時」といふ。

As we can see from this, the *ōgi* was itself a token used to recall the scene, even when that purpose was as fodder for humor.

For examples in poetry, from the collection *Haifū yanagidaru* 誹風柳多留 we have the *senryū* 川柳: “With the very fan that taunted, Kumagai now catches his falling hair” (*maneida ōgi Kumagai wa ke-uke ni shi*). And from a Bakumatsu-period *kanshi* collection we have the following by Arai Gyōmin 荒井堯民, in his *Honchō jinbutsu hyakuei* 本朝人物百咏 (preface pub. date: Ansei 安政 2/1855):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>淡粧公子是平家</th>
<th>Lightly made-up, a lord’s son, he was of the Taira clan;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>単騎加鞭駆海涯</td>
<td>A lone rider, wielding the whip, he galloped into the surf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>開扇喚歸猛勇士</td>
<td>The fan opened, calling him back, that of the brave warrior;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>可憐風力散春花</td>
<td>Mourn, have pity, when tempest’s might scatters the flowers of spring!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

—Arai Gyōmin 荒井堯民, “Taira no Atsumori” 平敦盛

Here the warrior Naozane is represented by “tempest’s might,” and Atsumori himself by “flowers of spring.” By putting the fan at its expressive center, however, the poem acts nonetheless to further that token’s development in reception of the Naozane/Atsumori episode as literary “knowledge.”

---

There is one more scene in *The Tale of the Heike* for which a fan serves as an important token. The episode in question:

... there emerged from the cabin an elegant beautiful lady eighteen or nineteen years old, attired in a red divided skirt and five willow-combination white robes with green linings. She produced a pole surmounted by a red fan with a golden sun design, wedged it between the prow and the planking, and beckoned, facing the land. ...

... [Yoichi] closed his eyes in silent prayer. “Hail, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman and ye gods of my province of Nikkō, Utsu-no-miya and Nasu Yuzen! Vouch-safe that I may hit the center of that fan...” When he opened his eyes, the wind seemed somewhat gentler, and the fan looked easier to hit.

—*The Tale of the Heike*, vol. 11, “Nasu no Yoichi” (那須与一)*19

This is the scene where (the Minamoto warrior) Nasu no Yoichi shoots and hits the target on an ōgi-fan.

Beyond reading the original text, recognition of the fan as a token signifying the “Nasu no Yoichi” episode was spread through a variety of channels, including commentaries and *haikai tsukeaisho*, as well as other forms of art like painting. Based on this shared understanding, it became material for writing poetry, in Chinese and in Japanese.

For commentaries, Nonomiya Sadamoto 野宮定基 (1669–1711) in his *Heike monogatari kōshō* 平家物語考証 (vol. 11) had this to say on the scene: “A ‘bat-fan’ with vermillion coloring added. This corresponds to the red of the rising sun. Nonetheless, depicting an image of the sun rising was doubtless not their purpose.”20 *Haikai ruisenshū* also draws a connection between the “ōgi-fan” and the “boats of the Taira clan” (*Heike no fune* 平家の舟).*21

There are many visual representations of the scene as well. In addition to an illustration from the *Heike monogatari* text published in Meireki 明暦 2/1656 (*Figure 6*), there is another in the *Ehon kojidan* 絵本故事談 (pub. Shōtoku 4/1714) illustrated by Tachibana Morikuni 橘守国 (1679–1748), and also a picture in the *Genpei seisuiki zue*. Among *ukiyo-e* paintings there exists a *mitate* presentation of the scene by Suzuki Harunobu.

How does the scene fare in poetry? The Bakumatsu-period collection *Yamato nishiki* やまとにしき by Takahashi Žanmu 高橋残夢 (1775–1851) contains the following verse:

射たりけむ扇のまとにかける日のかげのまぶゆき業にも有かな

---

19 The *Tale of the Heike* (op. cit.), pp. 366, 368.
21 *Haikai ruisenshū* (op. cit.), p. 400.
The truly-shot fan-target marked by the sun—how blinding-bright
The shadow that was cast by the glory of that deed!
—Takahashi Zanmu 高橋残夢, *Yamato nishiki* やまとにしき
(preface pub. date: Kaei 嘉永 2/1849)

The poem seeks to commemorate Yoichi’s feat, praising his skill as something that shines, indeed with the light of that very sun painted to be the fan’s target. Likewise in his *Honchō jinbutsu hyakuei*, Arai Gyōmin writes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>軍船官女遠如華</th>
<th>On the war-boat, court maidservant, far off a blossom she seemed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>辱敵計謀却相差</td>
<td>Enemy mocking, their plans and ploys turned now themselves to hinder,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一箭鳴弦飄扇的</td>
<td>A single shot the bowstring shrieked, and the fan’s target tumbled;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>源家勇士武人花</td>
<td>Minamoto in clan the hero, flower among men of war.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

—Arai Gyōmin, “Nasu no Munetaka” 那須宗高

*Figure 6.* After (L) Nasu no Yoichi’s shot, (R) the fan tumbles into the waves. Illustration from *Heike monogatari* 平家物語, vol. 11, “Nasu no Yoichi no koto” なすの与一の事, pub. Meireki 2/1656. (National Institute of Japanese Literature). [https://doi.org/10.11501/2567341](https://doi.org/10.11501/2567341)
I end this section in quoting a famous passage from the *Nihon gaishi* 日本外史 (orig. preface date: Bunsei 文政 10/1827) of Rai Sanyō 頼山陽 (1781–1832), which can be said to have contributed to the episode’s circulation as a work of history, and to its literary application by expressing that same history in such exquisite language:

敵以一舟載美姫、挿扇于竿、植之舳、去陸五十歩、麾而請射。（中略）宗高一発断扇轂、扇翻而堕。

The enemy bore a comely maiden midships and she, setting atop a rod a fan full-splayed, planted this now in the bow, and with the ship fifty paces offshore, issued a challenge to shoot it. . . . Munetaka rent the fan’s very hub with a single shot, and the fan tumbled and fell.22

[D] Other Representations Connected to ōgi

Above, examining one case from the *Tale of Genji*, and two cases from *The Tale of the Heike*, we saw the ōgi-fan functioning as token within Japanese literary works of the highest rank, observing many examples also of it being circulated and creatively put to use as an item of Japanese (*wa*) literary “knowledge.” From these, it can be concluded that the ōgi-fan has in general a character of elevated refinement. As an aside, I briefly note below two further examples of ōgi thus functioning as a literary token.

First, in the work *Shingaku hayazomegusa* 心学早染艸 (pub. Kansei 2/1790), by Santō Kyōden with illustrations by Kitao Masayoshi 北尾政美, there is a scene portraying a battle between the proverbial “good side” (*zendama* 善玉) and “bad side” (*akudama* 悪玉), wherein it is figures on the “bad side” who are seen brandishing the ōgi-fan, with the purpose of rousing evil thoughts. This iconography of the “bad side” wielding the ōgi was moreover passed down afterwards as something of a stock portrayal.23

Another example is a pictorial representation featuring Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛 using the ōgi-fan to beckon the very sunset to stop, for construction purposes related to Itsukushima Shrine 厳島神社—an image which begins to appear more frequently from the later early-modern period onward.

[E] The ōgi-Fan in Early-Modern Life

As discussed above, the basis upon which all representations of literary “knowledge” linked to the ōgi-fan rested was the universal quotidian use of that object in early-modern domestic environments.

Already early on in the early modern period, with this *haikai*—

---

22 Text in Rai Sanyō 頼山陽, *Kōkoku Nihon gaishi* 校刻日本外史 (preface pub. date: Tenpō 15/1844), vol. 3.

Coolness—another thing that unfolds round and outwards, just like its fan.

—Matsunaga Teitoku, *Enoko shū* 犬子集 (pub. Kan'ei 宽永 10/1633)

being the earliest example, the *ōgi*-fan begins to feature as a very frequent subject of early-modern poetry, both in Japanese and in Chinese. Combining eclectically as it did the more vulgar aspects of a presence always close to hand, together with its own more refined and elegant aspects, the fan was thus not merely a simple class of object, but a cultural entity unto itself.

### 4. The *uchiwa* as Representing Chinese (*kan*) Literary “Knowledge”: Two Cases

Next, I want to expand this examination to consider also the *uchiwa*-fan. I have not been able to discover for the *uchiwa* any examples of associated Japanese literary “knowledge” like those found with the *ōgi*-fan. What stands out instead are Chinese literary associations, of which the story of Lady Ban’s autumn fan can serve as a paradigmatic case. We begin by reviewing its details.

[A]. Lady Ban’s Autumn Fan

In the Former Han period, during the reign of Emperor Cheng 成帝 (51–7 B.C.), a female poet known as Ban Jieyu 班婕妤 (c. 48–c. 6 B.C.) (Jp. Han Shōyo) composed the poem “Yuange xing” 怨歌行 (Song of Regret), later collected in volume 27 of the *Wen xuan* 文選:  

新裂齊纨素 鮮潔如霜雪
裁成合歓扇 団団似明月
出入君懐袖 動揺微風発
常恐秋節至 涼飆奪炎熱
棄損篋笥中 恩情中道絶

If newly sheared, silk from the land of Qi
Is purest fresh, no less than frost or the snow.
Cut it to fit the pair-matched sides of a fan,
And round as round, it mirrors the full-bright moon.
Always in and out of my lord’s own garments’ arms,
It moves and sways to send up the slightest breeze.
Yet ever it fears, when days of autumn arrive,
Should the chill gales steal off all its heat and warmth,
Abandonment, in some box to lie away,
With tender love’s cord at midpoint for all time snapped.

Above all, she expresses here her fear of losing the emperor’s favor, comparing it to a fan being cast away into some box with the arrival of autumn. This truly

---

famous story came to be widely recognized, not only through readings of the original text, but also through various other channels such as baikai tsukeaisho. Based on this shared understanding, it became material for writing poetry in Chinese and Japanese, or even prose gesaku. Already in this poem from the kanshi collection *Chūka jakuboku shishō* 中華若木詩抄—

| 巧製斎執宮様新 | Expert cut, the silk of Qi renews the palace prospect; |
| 高堂六月主恩頻 | Tall towers in the Sixth Month, my lord’s kindnesses frequent. |
| 一朝秋至龍還斷 | Then one morning autumn comes, and his favor stops cold; |
| 恨在西風不在人 | Still my anger is with the west wind, and not with the man himself. |

—Saiin 西胤 (1358–1422), “Autumn Fan” (*Shūsen* 秋扇)*25*

we see reception of the trope, here moreover with a new interpretation, attributing the lady’s loss of the emperor’s love to the appearance of a new beauty. Entering the early modern period, the association between “ōgi-fan” and “Lady Ban” (Hanjo) is recorded in the *Haikai ruisenshū*. To take a specific example in baikai poetry:

| 秋とならん契宇治茶の後むかし | In autumn things fade, yesterday’s fresh-cut promise today’s Uji tea: Seasons Past— |
| をけるあふぎのしばしおなさけ | As of a fan cast aside, kindness, just for a while! |

—Sōin 宗因 (1605–1682), *Sōin dokugin koi baikai hyakunin* 宗因独吟恋俳諧百韻, “Hana de sōrō” 花で候*26* Here the connection is used to convey: “Being like a fan cast aside in autumn myself, give me at least a little while’s kindness!”*27* There are also poems such as—

| つくづくと絵を見る秋の扇哉 | How much more closely one looks over the painting of an autumn fan! |

—Shōshun 小春, *Arano* 阿羅野 (preface pub. date: Genroku 元禄 2/1689) among many others, attesting to the frequency with which cases of this autumn fan concept are encountered.

---


27 This interpretation follows the commentary in Fukasawa and Fukasawa 2018 (v. s.).
A picture under the title “Lady Ban’s Fan” (Hanjo no ōgi はん女の扇) is included in Kyōbun takara-awase no ki 狂文宝合記 (pub. Tenmei 3/1783). The fan as depicted there, however, is clearly an ōgi, betraying an interpretation in Japanese terms. Indeed, quite likely in the story’s haikai reception as well, it was not the uchiwa being envisioned, but again the ōgi—a reflection, in a sense, of just how far the story itself had been “Japanified.”

[B] “Little Fan Swats Firefly”
To better understand such representations of uchiwa-borne Chinese literary “knowledge,” let us look at one more example, this time one considerably less famous than Lady Ban’s fan in autumn. We will consider the development of the poetic tag “Little Fan Swats Firefly” (Ch. xiǎoshān pu yìng 小扇扑萤). (Having already discussed this case in depth elsewhere, here I will limit myself to the argument’s main points).

We begin with a quatrain-stanza “Palace Poem” (Ch. gōngcī 宮詞) by Wang Jian 王建 (847–918), anthologized in Santishi 三体詩 (Jp. Santsai or Santeishi):

銀燭秋光冷画屏  
银燭秋光冷画屏  
Silver candle, autumn light, cold against the painted screens;

軽羅小扇扑流萤  
軽羅小扇撲流蛻  
Lightly silk-paned, her little fan swats a passing firefly.

玉階夜色凉如水  
玉階夜色涼如水  
Stairs of cut jade, night’s tableau, like the water’s touch icy-chill;

臥看牵牛织女星  
臥看牽牛織女星  
Lying she looks at Cowherd above, and at Weaver, always waiting.

The explanation here for the little fan’s firefly-swatting would seem to lie in the palace maiden taking out on the firefly her own anger at failing to gain the emperor’s favor (the interpretation of the commentary Santai Shi Sōin shō 三体詩素隠抄). As a poetic tag, recognition of “Little Fan Swats Firefly” gradually expanded, not only through readings of this original text, but also thus through vernacular commentaries (shōmono 抄物), or though collections of verse in Chinese such as Lianzhu shìge 聯珠詩格 and Shiren yuxié 詩人玉屑, among a number of other channels. By the middle of the early modern period, in non-court-style waka the tag saw itself reframed to fit a type of scene far closer to actual life in Japan: the popular pastime of “firefly hunting.” Such reframing is an excellent example of what this article means by “application” of literary “knowledge.”

---

To illustrate I quote below *waka* by the poets Ozawa Roan 小沢蘆庵 (1723–1801), Ban Kōkei 伴蒿蹊 (1733–1806), and Kamo no Suetaka 賀茂季鷹 (1754–1841):

小扇撲蛍
うなゐらがきそふ扇を打ちやめてあがるほたるを悔しとぞみる

*Topic: Little Fan Swats Firefly*

All the children, trying to outswat each other, stopped and held their fans—
Watching now with bitterness as the firefly escaped.

—Ozawa Roan 小沢蘆庵, *Rokujō eisō* 六帖詠草 (pub. Bunka 8/1811)\(^{31}\)

蛍
うなゐ子がまねく扇にはかられて空ゆく蛍袖にとまれり

*Topic: Fireflies*

The child had him—persuaded down with her fan—so thoroughly tricked,
The sky-going firefly parked himself right on her sleeve.

—Ban Kōkei 伴蒿蹊, *Kanden eisō* 閑田詠草 (pub. Bunsei 1/1818)

たをや女の扇もて蛍をおふ所
少女子が扇の風に靡きつゝなか〳〵高く行くほたるかな

*Topic: Maiden Chasing Firefly with an ōgi-Fan*

The little maiden with her fan sends up a wind that quite entices,
Yet how remarkably high the firefly steers his course!

—Kamo no Suetaka 賀茂季鷹, *Unkin’ō kashū* 雲錦翁家集 (pub. Tenpō 2/1831)

Here we have examined two cases of Chinese literary “knowledge,” this time revolving instead around the *uchiwa*-fan. To put the matter differently, as regards Japanese literary “knowledge” the *uchiwa* seems not to possess any function. In such a light, compared to the ōgi-fan, the *uchiwa* can be characterized more clearly as low and “vulgar.”

By artistic practices of the medieval period, stereotype painting-topics of Chinese (*kan*) association were to be painted on *uchiwa*-shaped fan-paper. In this sense too, the *uchiwa* is, culturally-speaking, “Chinese.” This Chinese character in turn connects the *uchiwa* to the sphere of kyō (i.e. as of *kyōka*, or “mad” poetry). This then leads back again to the “vulgar” realm, the world to which it seems, ultimately, the *uchiwa* firmly belongs.


The everyday familiarity providing the necessary basis for such a reception of

---

the *uchiwa* along Chinese lines was derived, without doubt, from the place of the *uchiwa* fan in quotidian usage. In summertime scenes of enjoying a moment’s cool, the figures depicted are shown holding *uchiwa* in their hands. The image of the fan-seller in Suzuki Harunobu’s “Kasamori O-sen to uchiwa-uri”笠森お仙と団扇売り, for instance, is particularly well-known. Poems such as the following—

Ah, for the fan, so humbly does it offer up the gift of coolness!

—Ryūho 立圃, *Sora-tsubute 空つぶて* (pub. Keian 2/1649)

Sleeping or awake, the fan never fails to move—a parent’s love.

—*Haifū yanagidaru 謹風柳多留* 32

From time to time, looking up the fan finds me in dreamland again—

Its breeze hitting the body like a sudden gust of nap.

—Okuma Kotomichi 大隈言道 (1798–1868), *Sōkeishū 草径集* (pub. Bunkyū 文久 4/1864)

also give evidence of this.

This is not to say, however, that cases of *uchiwa* alluding to “knowledge” of a “Japanese” pedigree are entirely lacking. Let us note a few such examples.

First, there is the case of the battle-*uchiwa* used in the wars of medieval Japan. One particularly famous episode involving such a fan took place at the Battle of Kawanakajima 川中島, where Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521–1573) used his battle-fan to stop the blade of Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 (1530–1578). This scene was among those included in the collection *Ehon kojidan*, illustrated by Tachibana Morikuni. As *Nihon gaishi* records it, “[Kenshin] raised his sword and struck. Shingen, with no time to draw his own sword, blocked this using the signal fan (*kisen 麓扇*) he had been holding. The fan broke.” 33 Nonetheless, such battle-use *uchiwa* should probably be distinguished from the *uchiwa* used in everyday life.

Also, in novels of the early modern period, the *uchiwa* was famously what the God of Poverty (*Binbōgami 貧乏神*) held in his hand. Being a god of the winds, perhaps the *uchiwa* was for stirring up the air. Figure 7 is an illustration from Ihara Saikaku’s 井原西鶴 (1642–1693) *Nippon eitaigura 日本永代蔵* (pub. Jōkyō 貞享 5/1688), chapter 1 of volume 4, captioned “Tray from the Gods as a Sign of Prayer” (*inoru shirushi no kami no oshi*祈る印の神の指示).

---


33 招刀撃之信玄不暇抜刀以所持麾扇扞之扇折. *Kōkoku Nihon gaishi* (op. cit.), vol. 11.
All the same, such connections between the *uchiwa*-fan and the God of Poverty or Tengu Demons are admittedly somewhat insubstantial as story-frames when compared to other examples like Yūgao’s *ōgi*, or the *ōgi* used by Naozane to taunt Atsumori, or the *ōgi* bullseye of Nasu no Yoichi, or Lady Ban seeing herself in the discarded fan of autumn.

5. Conclusion

As I explained at the beginning, not limited to an aesthetics of nature and named landscapes alone, unique literary resonances could also attach themselves to specific categories of object. Through the structure inherent to such literary “knowledge,” moreover, as these resonances circulated and spread in society, they became available for creative application.

By the early modern period, the conduits for such a process had attained a dazzling variety. Through the triumph of print culture, for example, not only could such “knowledge” be circulated more easily and widely than ever before, it was
also simply encountered more frequently. And with the rise also of a mass culture, one can observe a broadening in the traditional dyad-values of “refinement” (gi) and “vulgaritiy” (zoku). In contrast, ages up through the medieval period knew only a limited circulation based on manuscripts, and conduits for knowledge were far less dazzling in their variety. The refined and the vulgar, too, were as concepts more narrowly defined.

In this article, I have explored such phenomena through a concrete focus on specific objects: ōgi and uchiwa fans. Here at the end, I want to consider the issue more broadly from the standpoint of Sino-Japanese comparison.

As we have seen, despite the ōgi’s Japanese origins, and the contrastingly greater authority we expect the uchiwa to derive from its origins in China, we find that while resonances with Japanese literary “knowledge” exist for the ōgi, for the uchiwa such associations are rare. As a result, within Japan it is the ōgi that enjoys the greater air of refinement and luxury. The uchiwa, in contrast, is the more vulgar and commonplace. Yet what is responsible for causing this inversion of the usual hierarchy?

To begin with, the ōgi is found actually used in works like the Tale of Genji, acquiring thus a connection of historical depth to courtly aesthetics. And indeed, some reason for the inversion may lie merely in this: that before the uchiwa had a chance to make inroads aesthetically, the beauty of the ōgi had already taken root as a fixed idea.

It is also the case that as a matter of sheer functionality, the ōgi outdid the uchiwa. Not limited to mere unfolding and fanning, the ōgi also had a number of potential uses when folded up. The impression of freedom this gave, it is not unreasonable to imagine, might well have contributed to its association with the beautiful.34

One might also see it this way: Alongside the traditional Japanese habit of imputing greater value to productions of Chinese origin, there has also existed among Japanese people a contrary impulse, attaching as much value to things from Japan as from China—if not indeed greater value—precisely because of their Japanese origin, attempting thereby to feel their own country superior.35 Perhaps it is for this that people came to say that, compared to the uchiwa, the ōgi had the greater grace.

The reasons are in any case surely multiple, with no single one standing out. Because it is more than possible, moreover, to discover ample grace in the uchiwa as well, no clear-cut decisive difference between the two exists to be found. Indeed, especially as the people of early modern Japan steadily incorporated both types of fans into their everyday lives, the border between the two itself lost clarity.

As something, then, that characterizes the ōgi and the uchiwa both, one might say that the sense of an item for creating coolness in summer has ultimately prevailed all around.

34 I am indebted to Prof. Matthias Hayek for this suggestion.