

## Transportation, Boundaries and Creativity

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# Transportation, Boundaries and Creativity

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## Introduction

This paper examines the penal transportation and its effect on arts, or how literature makes use of seclusion<sup>1</sup>. In the context of the British eighteenth-century studies the transportation to North America and then to Australia, both distant colonial destinations, is probably the main focus<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, my topic is on relatively short-distance relocation of the Japanese to islands within Japan or nearby, itself virtually isolated in the eighteenth century. It had a long tradition of penal transportation codified since the seventh century, especially for political offenders<sup>3</sup>. Usually offenders in Kyoto were sent to western islands. After the political centre moved to Edo, those in Edo were sent to Izu islands<sup>4</sup>. In the stable and settled society of mid Edo period, forced separation from home provided engaging material for literature. My focus is on the creativity of the separation from the ordinary everyday world.

Among those who were well known and transported, and related with creativity was an artist. Hanabusa Iccho (1652-1724) was an artist who seemed to have an eventful life; he went through expulsion by a master, imprisonment for two months and penal transportation to an island from 1698 till he was pardoned in 1709. He continued to draw pictures during the banishment and after he went back to the metropolis. However, his life is only sporadically known; the exact reasons for the punishment are not known, which contributed to make him known and popular as an artist with an eye to common people's ordinary lives<sup>5</sup>.

One of the most famous ousted is Shunkan (1143-1179), a monk whose life is told in *the Tale of Heike*, a popular war chronicle told since the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. He was transported to a south western remote island with two other men on a charge of treason. What made his life harder was that the two pious others were pardoned and permitted to go home. He is the only one that is to be left behind. He cries bitterly and reaches out for help but in vain. His banishment resulting in desolate solitude was adapted to the Joruri puppet show in 1719 and kabuki play in 1720. Because of the longevity of these literary versions Shunkan has become a person representing frustrated hope and despair on a bleak island. Or the 12<sup>th</sup>-century man first found a place in the oral narrative; then, long after that, in the eighteenth century, the theatres found an initiative to activate their imagination in this miserable man.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on my paper 'Transportation, Justice and Creativity' presented at an annual conference of the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in January 2019: 'Islands and Isolation'. The original paper's emphasis was on justice but here it has been modified to adjust to the interest in transboundary dynamics.

<sup>2</sup> James A Sharpe, 'Crime and Punishment' in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 358-66.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Miyoshi Okuma, *Entoh: shimanagashi* (Penal Transportation) (Tokyo: Yuzankaku, 2003) (大隈三好, 『遠島島流し』江戸時代選書 14 (東京: 雄山閣, 2003)), pp. 15-20; Fusako Koishi, *Edo no Rukei* (Penal Transportation in the Edo Period) (Toyo: Heibonsha, 2005) (小石房子, 『江戸の流刑』 (東京: 平凡社新書, 2005)), pp.7-40.

<sup>4</sup> Koishi, pp. 34-6, 24-34.

<sup>5</sup> Okuma, pp. 70-1; Koishi, pp. 58-9;

<sup>6</sup> For example, Yoshikazu Kobayashi, *Heike monogatari no seiritu* (The Creation of the Heike Chronicle) 小林美和『平家物語の成立』(大阪: 和泉書院, 2000). ビギナーズクラシックス日本の古典 平家物語 pp. 283-89.

## Banishment in a War Chronicle

The one extremely interesting example regarding isolation and imagination is Minamoto Tametomo (1139-1170). He was an uncle of Yoritomo (1147-1199) and Yoshitsune (1159-1189). Yoritomo was the first shogun of Kamakura, Japan's feudal government. The uncle was much more dynamic and interesting. He was big in size, much taller than even modern persons; he was said to be as tall as a modern professional US basketball player. He was extremely strong with his bow and arrows. At the age of 13, he was banished from the capital city to the south-western part of Japan by his father because he was too troublesome for his vandalism. However, the banishment did not let him down. Rather, his domineering swagger was such that he became an overwhelming leader of the areas he was sent. After a while, he was summoned to Kyoto but he declined to obey the order. Finally he went back to Kyoto only to be involved in the war between the emperor side and the ex-emperor side. He was on the wrong side and consequently was banished, again, this time to Izu Oshima, an island near current Tokyo.

On his banishment, as his mastery of archery was a great threat to the victorious opponents, the captive's tendons were intentionally injured so that he could no longer draw his bow. By this sneaky means the opponents intended to prevent his further feats. However, on the island he was transported to, again he behaved like somebody dispatched to the island by the central government, appointing himself as if he were the feudal lord of the island. To the inhabitants of the island, he was not a criminal but an honourable fearsome warrior coming down from the metropolis. He seems to have been a brave, imposing, authoritative, awesome, and somewhat amiable, offender and hero. His story is told in war chronicles, mainly in Hogen monogatari (established around 1220)<sup>7</sup>. His story as in the original chronicle was interesting enough. Historical facts were expanded and embellished by this narrative chronicle where he acquired an eternal life to be admired for his extremely distinguished archery skill and warriorship.

## Survival in Oral Narration

What is fascinating about him is that his fame did not stop here. He, or his story, acquired intriguing developments. Because of the narration and performance of blind minstrels, somebody like the troubadours, in the guise of monks, the stories of the warriors of the two clans, Genji and Heike, especially those gloriously defeated losers, were known over hundreds of years. He was one of the brave tragic heroes in the chronicle. Another well-known example of a kind is Yoshitsune, a younger brother of Yoritomo. His boyish and skilful valiancy together with the loyalty of his followers rouses sympathy and admiration. He was driven to kill himself, but later the legend had it that he survived the attack to go over to Ezo, the northern part of present Japan, and even to the continent, becoming Jinghis Khan (1155/62-1227, reign 1206-1227) of the Mongol Empire; it is wildly fanciful, but during the Edo period, there were serious controversies on the identification of the two<sup>8</sup>.

Yoshitsune is an extremely interesting topic, but we are going back to his uncle, Tametomo. As majestic, brave and valiant, and less pathetic and more authoritative hued with something wonderful and comic, Tametomo had his own way on the island and on the other islands around it. Justifying himself by claiming

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<sup>7</sup> For various versions of the story, see Tamiki Haramizu, *Hogen monogatari keitoh dempon ko* (The Hogen Chronicle in Manuscripts and Versions) 原水民樹 『『保元物語』系統・伝本考』(大阪:和泉書院, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Nobuo Harada, *Yoshitsune densetsu to Tametomo densetsu* (Yoshitsune and Tametomo, Their Legends: the North and the South in Japanese History) (原田信男 『義経伝説と為朝伝説 日本史の北と南』岩波新書 (東京:岩波 2017).

to protect the island's inhabitants from the cruel tyranny of the bailiff, he fought against the bailiff's troops. He won. Then, he virtually appointed himself as a ruler of the group of the islands, conquering even demons on another island. The legitimate lord asked for a command to subdue Tametomo, which was duly issued, and came to confront Tametomo with a fleet of 20 ships. Tametomo eventually gave up, killing himself.

However, his legend went on, and after 1600, his story began to involve his travel all the way to Ryukyu or Okinawa. He was associated with the dynasty there. Some thought he was king there; others assumed that his son was the first king of Ryukyu dynasty. Although the tidal currents are good for travel between Izu islands and Ryukyu, these are wishful but absurdly unbelievable circumstances. Both Tametomo and his son died without attempting to go over to the south west, according to the original chronicle. Yet the intellectuals in the Edo Period chose to believe the popular hero Tametomo survived the punishing attack of the disciplinary officials. A unique unprecedented reckless bravery beating punitive bureaucrats is itself delightful and it is part of the reasons of this development. In addition to this sympathy, there are other reasons.

## A Further Survival

Tametomo legend was shared, maintained and developed over time, and collective interest worked on him. Finally the definitive touch was added to the legendary Tametomo by Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848)<sup>9</sup>. Bakin's pen was significant though it is as important that before Bakin took Tametomo, his legend was there.

Bakin wrote *Chinsetsu yumihariduki*, which literary means, a very strange story about the half moon, the moon looking like a bow with its string on. It is a sophisticated Edo playfulness with pun and metonymy. The first part *Chinsetsu* is not written with a usual character meaning 'strange' but uses 'camellia' character which has the same sound with banal 'strange'. It could also be pronounced as *Chinzei*, which means taking control of the western countries. Because Tametomo once controlled the western countries, he was also called *Chinzei Tametomo*. The second part obviously implies a beautiful bow of a skilful bow and arrow warrior. Together, it refers to the unbelievably colourful life of the archery genius who once ruled in the western part of Japan, that is, Tametomo.

It placed Tametomo definitely as a legendary brave and skilful, authoritative and charming warrior hero, who glided along the boundaries of Japan, transcending the border to reach Ryukyu. The original 12<sup>th</sup>-century story had Tametomo in the south-western part of Japan and then on the Izu islands, where he died. More than 600 years later, in the eighteenth century, Tametomo had an extended life. Now he survived the rulers' attack on Izu islands, rowing away to Ryukyu. Ryukyu's position was complex and ambiguous with its independence of the kingdom though virtually controlled since 1609 by Shimazu, a feudal province of Japan.

A historian, Harada Nobuo, finds the extension of Tametomo legend to reach Ryukyu as politically motivated<sup>10</sup>. Shimazu and Edo needed some justification to invade Ryukyu, taking advantage of the connection Tametomo legend could make between Ryukyu and Japan. The legend at first had Tametomo come to Ryukyu to subjugate fiends. Before the Edo period, there was no detail about his connection with the Ryukyu dynasty. The intellectuals in the eighteenth century tended to nurture and expand Tametomo legend in their

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<sup>9</sup> Takizawa Okikuni used 'Bakin' as his authorial name in his playful works; he first chose it as his pen name as a haiku poet. Kornicki, Peter F. (Peter Francis) "Novel Japan: Spaces of Nationhood in Early Meiji Narrative, 1870-88 (review)", *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Volume 31, Number 2, Summer 2005, pp. 502-505.

<sup>10</sup> Harada.

books; as a result, Tametomo or his son was the founder of Ryukyu dynasty. In Harada's argument, the legend contributed to consolidating the political power of the central government over the southern islands, supposedly a kingdom established by a Japanese warrior.

## A Hero Who Blurs the Boundaries

Let us consider this in a literary perspective. It is about the border. The legend had a boost after Japan closed itself in the seventeenth century. The country was virtually closed to foreign countries when the legend developed. Under the regulation of feudal society, people were confined and only their imagination could go beyond. Their imagination found someone who could fly high up above the mediocrities. That someone was the one who was banished from the ordinary mundane world to an island which was near the boundaries of the Edo period. Only the legendary heroes who were equal to rampant imagination of the closed stable society of Edo Japan could transgress the boundaries. Once going beyond the borders, as the ordinary people's persons were prohibited to go, the heroes belonged to the rich world of free wild fancy. Tametomo could fight with rebels, wild vagrants, even fiends, or smallpox and any other frightening monsters and wonders.

The ideas about the plot are said to come to the author when he left Edo to travel westward in 1802<sup>11</sup>. It represented newly emerged interests in various local curiosities, or even exoticism, by the authors in Edo whose contented attention hitherto had been mainly to Edo where they lived<sup>12</sup>. The travel invited him to be innovative in choosing location settings. And specifically, at Nagoya, he saw *Suiko koden* (*A Sequel to Water Margin*, published in 1664 in China). Unfortunately it was not available even in Kyoto and Osaka where he afterwards went. It is said that it was in 1830 when he purchased a copy<sup>13</sup>. In it the protagonist left for Xian-luo, resulting in ending the war there and becoming the king. It provided a model plot where a hero goes across the borders so as to rule the land beyond<sup>14</sup>.

Literary critics regard Bakin's outer-oriented inclination as a kind of liberation from the suffocation of the Edo period. Some say Ryukyu represented Shangri-La, an earthly paradise<sup>15</sup>. Others think, rather than escapism, Bakin chose to let the sea breeze into the closed society<sup>16</sup>. Bakin took advantage of the domestic belief and the motif in a Chinese literature; he combined the current Tametomo legend with Xian-luo move. Here geographical extension was not massive. The hero did not move across the Pacific, never getting to Hawaii, Australia, India, Europe or Africa. The imagination of a creative individual in the isolated country did not go further than Ryukyu. Instead of geographical stretches, Bakin's imagination resorted to other-worldly spheres. The fiction features strange animals, spirits, monsters and demons. In other words, Tametomo crossed the boundaries not between Japan and foreign countries but went along the boundaries, inviting other-worldly creatures to his world.

Penal transportation began to be applied to common people in the Edo period. Former banishment was

<sup>11</sup> Preface to Chinsetsu Yumihariduki 『椿説弓張月 上』 後藤丹治校注 日本古典文学大系60 (東京: 岩波書店, 1980), 解説 pp. 10-1; Mamoru Takada, *Takizawa Bakin* (高田衛 『滝沢馬琴』 (京都: ミネルヴァ書房, 2006)), p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> Hiroshi Nakatani, 'Chinsetsu Yumiharizuki to sono eikyo' (『椿説弓張月』とその影響) 古典日本文学全集27 『椿説弓張月』 (東京: 筑摩書房, 1960)), p. 437; Minoru Mizuno, *Bakin* (水野稔 馬琴の文学と風土 日本文学研究資料叢書 日本文学研究資料刊行会編 『馬琴』 (東京: 有精堂, 1974), p.31;

<sup>13</sup> Preface to Chinsetsu Yumihariduki, pp. 10-1.

<sup>14</sup> Takada, p. 176.

<sup>15</sup> Kiyoteru Hanada, 'Tametomo zu ni tsuite', (花田清輝, 「為朝図」について 『椿説弓張月』 (東京: 筑摩書房, 1960)), p. 442.

<sup>16</sup> Hanada, p. 444.

for those who were accused of political reasons and they were from the upper echelon of society. When people searched for someone to whom they could consign their imagination, the contemporary criminals with petty crimes did not appeal but the convicts in the past who were once privileged and tragically fell to become the accused had possibilities to become glamorous heroes.

Koda Rohan (1867-1947) categorizes Bakin's characters into three types: the good heroes who are not real, the wicked enemies who are exaggeration of the real people and the minor roles who are from the real world. According to Koda, the first group did not exist as real individuals in the Edo period but they were those who people in the Edo period shared only in mind<sup>17</sup>. They were the realization of something shared in their wild fancy and as a result such heroes could attract many readers.

To sum up, people who were politically isolated in their small country poured their imaginative powers onto a man who lived long ago, about 600 years before them, banished from the central society to the west and then to a desolate island. In contrast with the real voyages' impetus to stimulate the British novelists' pen describing ordinary people's everyday life, the national isolation generated inventiveness to work on a privileged and long-dead banished warrior hero, making him fabulous and mythical.

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<sup>17</sup> Koda Rohan, 'Bakin no shousetsu to sono toji no shakai' in *Chinsetu Yumihariduki* (幸田露伴「馬琴の小説とその当時の実社会」 古典日本文学全集27 『椿説弓張月』(東京：筑摩書房, 1960)), pp. 424-27.