Japan's Pre-Modern
IMAGES OF INTERSEXUALITY

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Abstract

This research is about the untold history of intersexuality during a time when androgyny in juvenile boys was desirable and men performed female roles on stage. Moreover, it introduces the role of the body in the story about gender ambiguity in pre-modern Japan. Until now, studies on the history of gender and sexuality have focused on the role of culture in sex determination. However, this study proposes that biology was equally important. Through a critical analysis of visual material produced during Japan's pre-modern times, the intersexed character may be revealed as an essential figure for understanding the construction of gender, sex and sexuality in historical and contemporary times. In the Heian-period (794-1185), the intersexed character was presented as an absurd sexual deviant in the *Yamai no Shōshi*. The Genroku-period (1688-1704) depicted intersexuality as a female deficiency in the work *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* by Yoshida Hanbei, which was also reproduced around one and a half century later in Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo's *Kaiin Suikōden Sho-hen*. Towards the end of the Edo-perdiod (1800-1868) more graphic works of intersexed bodies appeared. Keisai Eisen's *Makura Bunko* invoked a gaze of shameless fascination and pity, whereas Utagawa Kunitora's *Otsumori Sakazuki* put intersexuality into the realm of erotic fantasy. Ultimately, this research asks the question: What do early images of intersexuality reveal about attitudes towards gender, sex and sexuality in pre-modern Japan? The answer to this question reveals how intersexed bodies, in various periods of time, were to be looked at with humour, curiosity, pity and sexual desire.

Keywords: intersexuality, pre-modern Japan, gender fluidity, bodies, visual culture

Now these two figures in their close embrace were two no longer, but were something else, no longer to be called a man and woman, and although neither, nonetheless seemed both.[1]

(Ovid Metamorphoses 4.373–9)

[1] translated by Charles Martin (2004)

Introduction

The intersexed character has sparked the imagination in artistic, mythological, scientific and erotic fields for centuries (Gilbert, 2002: 20). These fields represent the intersex character in contradictory ideals, as a sexual grotesque or sign of social decay, as well as a spiritual ideal in their gender fluidity. Gender fluidity has attracted much attention in the field of Japanese art history and receives particular interest through the studies of *wakashu* and *onnagata*. However, research on gender fluidity in pre-modern Japan pays little attention to the oldest embodiment of this phenomenon: the intersexed body - in crude or archaic terms also known as: the hermaphrodite or *futanari* (in Japanese). *Sex, Science and Hermaphroditism in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (2014), a work by Teresa Ann Algoso, made a contribution to fill this gap by looking at intersexuality in the Taishō-period (1912 - 1926) through medical and literary sources. With *Early Modern Hermaphrodites* (2002) Ruth Gilbert made an inclusive addition to an increasing body of research on intersexuality in early modern Europe (Dreger, 2000; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Mann, 2006; Cleminson & García, 2010). To date, however, little work has thoroughly examined intersexuality in pre-modern Japan, partially due to the idea that bodies and biology did not matter until modern medicine mad its entry at the end of the twentieth century. As a result, the current paradigm endorses a narrative that characterises pre-modern Japan as a society with liberal attitudes towards gender and sexuality while ignoring the physical embodiment. Without an adequate investigation into the role of intersexed bodies in pre-modern Japan, the written history of intersexuality remains within Europe and ultimately prevents a comprehensive global history of gender, sex and sexuality. This thesis asks the question: what do early images of intersexuality reveal about attitudes towards gender, sex and sexuality in pre-modern Japan?

Images can tell much about attitudes towards sex, gender and sexuality. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, criticised traditional Western cultural aesthetics by raising questions about hidden ideologies in visual images, for instance through paintings of the 'female nude' and the idea that women are "objects to be looked at" (Berger, 2008: 46-47). Laura Mulvey developed this idea further by naming this "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1989: 346).

Therefore gender studies and methodologies like visual analysis and iconology are worthwhile to systematically assess images of intersexuality. Iconology is an interdisciplinary comparative method with roots in art history and social sciences that aims at the interpretation of visual content. It is a forensic approach where visual sources are treated as evidence, and where the researcher resembles a detective on an investigation to produce a plausible story about any given period (Müller, 2011: 5). In the case of this research, images of intersex characters will serve as evidence to investigate attitudes towards sex, gender and sexuality during Japan's pre-modern era. The term 'pre-modern', specifies a time before the Meiji-period (1868-1912) and the turning point in the way (inter)sexed bodies were perceived under the influence of modern medicine (Algoso, 2014: 3-4).

Segregation between gender, sex and sexuality is a modern construct, proposed to increase better understanding about the relationships between society and ourselves (Schleifer, 2006: 63). Particularly the terms of sex and gender are often posed in binaries, where one covers *the natural realm* and the other *the cultural realm.*

1) **Sex** is a physical phenomenon to separate between male and female biology (often based on primary and secondary sexual characteristics)

2) **Gender** is a cultural phenomenon encompassing masculine and feminine behaviour, dress, hairstyles and other social and cultural production.

3) **Sexuality** is either erotic/sexual attraction, *or* a derivative of the word 'sex'.

There is ample evidence to question the truth of this binary sex/gender-model, however, if a scientific theory is able to change the world it makes them real enough (Hacking, 1983: 146).

When a number of experts on Japanese art and/or gender were told about this thesis on images of intersexuality in pre-modern Japan, their response was often: "Do such images exist?!" This seems striking for a field of research that largely propagates early modern Japan as a society with more lenient attitudes towards gender variety. The institutions of *wakashu* (androgynous youths) and *onnagata* (male actor specialised in female-roles) have long been proposed as examples of gender fluidity in early modern Japan.

There is a consensus that in historical times gender (culture) outweighed sex (nature), which caused the physical body to disappear in the conversation about alternative genders. By reintroducing the role of biology, it becomes apparent that only male biologies were allowed acts of gender transgression. Another contributing factor to ignoring the body in pre-modern Japan are the woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*), which have a conventional aesthetic of hiding bodies under layers of kimono. This opposes the 'nude' convention in the art of Europe. Therefore, it becomes all the more interesting when naked bodies do appear in *ukiyo-e*, as this tells a story about the unconventional. For readers unfamiliar with *ukiyo-e*, there is an array of genres within the field of Japanese woodblock prints, of which one is *shunga/shunpon* (erotic works: lit. "pictures/books of spring"). A lot has been written about *shunga* - both by academics and collectors - and in one of such books was a remarkable comment how few prints there are of intersexed characters (Shagan, 2013: 333). This comment referred to a print by Keisai Eisen (1790-1848) in a book called *Makura Bunko* (see Figure 8). The print depicts a folding screen with next to it an intersexed character who is seated with an opened kimono in a bold display of breasts and non-binary genitals (a vulva from which appears an erect penis). The character's expression seems not befitting for such a daring act, since the mouth is drawn down and brows are knit together. The right upper corner reads *henjō nanshi*. According to several dictionaries this refers to "The Tale of the Dragon King's daughter", which is a chapter in the Lotus Sutra (*Hokekyō*) about a girl transitioning into a man in order to attain enlightenment.[2] However, sources from the Edo-period (1603-1867) indicate this was actually a term to describe intersexed people. The author Hata Ginkei (1790-1870) published a book in 1844 by the title: *Wakan Kiji Henjō Nanshi No Setsu*, which contains stories of people transgressing gender behaviour and includes several illustrations of intersexed genitals (Kume, 2002: 54). According to other sources from between 1815 and 1860, being *henjō nanshi* is considered a disease (*henjō nanshi no shō*), where a person carries both male and female parts (Gaikotsu, 1922: 32).

[2] According to Buddhist teaching, women were considered unable to achieve enlightenment since they were cursed by five forms of suffering: 1. marriage (by which she is removed from her own family and relatives) 2. menstruation 3. pregnancy 4. giving birth 5. her dependence of men (Harvey, 2000: 369)

Similar attitudes towards sexual indeterminacy can be found in a work from the 12th century that features medical anomalies (see Figure 3). This work, called the *Yamai no Sōshi*, showcases an early illustration of an intersexed character as a person who has non-linear genitals, but who also behaves in gender transgressive ways (Yamamoto, 2018: 77). This condition is here referred to as *futanari* instead of *henjō nanshi*. However, where *futanari* is nowadays used as the Japanese historical term to describe intersexed characteristics, the word *henjō nanshi* is largely forgotten. These examples provide a new look to a field of research that covers gender fluidity in Japanese art, while also contributing to the study of intersexuality in the pre-modern times.

As a transgender person, the author of this thesis has written it from the perspective of a minority group, and as someone who has lived experience with the pressure from society to conform, despite a desire to 'live between the sexes'. Having a non-linear body, the author is aware how arbitrary sex/gender/sexuality are, but also how it is a reality that is hard to ignore. Prior research on gender fluidity in pre-modern Japan poses a reality that has been influenced by heteronormative thought. By introducing the role of the biological body, it becomes apparent how generally only male bodies were granted an act of androgyny and the biologically androgynous (i.e. intersexed) body was ranked as less than an ideal. To contribute to a larger field of research on sexual minorities, the decision was made to use 'intersex(uality)' instead of the derogative term 'hermaphrodite' but also to limit Japanese terminology like *futanari* (lit. "having two forms"), *henjō nanshi* (lit. "transforming to male"), *haniwari* (lit. "half moon"), *han'in yō* (lit. "half yin-yang) or *ryōsei guyū-sha* (lit. "to have both sexes"). *Futanari* is the oldest known term and is still used today. *Henjō nanshi* is nowadays only known for its Buddhist religious meaning, whereas the Chinese inspired terms *haniwari* and *han'in yō* are hardly used at all. R*yōsei guyū-sha*, actually connotes the ideal of androgyny and less the biological aspect of intersexuality. Since these Japanese words have been subjected to change over time, 'intersex(uality)' functions as a diachronic but all-encompassing term. Delineating the body has a history, but to uphold an arbitrary distinction between 'the old term' *futanari* (or hermaphrodite) and 'the modern term' intersexuality, is to deny history to intersexed individuals who are living today. Listening to their voices, *intersex* is currently the most preferred term to describe non-linear biologies (Jones, 2016: 95).

Phrasing like 'genital/sexual ambiguity' is largely avoided because of stigmatising connotations. The word 'ambiguous, literally means 'confusing', so to call genitals 'confusing' invokes hegemonic discourse of sexual difference (Morland, 2005: 335). Ultimately, research is about conversation and although these decisions may invoke criticism, they have been made with the intention to facilitate - rather than complicate - a general understanding.

Summary of chapters

This research investigates images of intersexed characters in pre-modern Japan by first introducing recent studies on the history of intersexuality, followed by an outline of research into alternative genders and sexualities in pre-modern Japan (**Chapter 1**). The subsequent chapter contains the analysis of visual material to investigate the underlying meaning of intersexed bodies in pre-modern Japan (**Chapter 2**). In the **Conclusion** this thesis will reveal how the intersexed individual was anything but an epitome of gender fluidity and how the intersexed body was an object of curiosity, mockery and pornography. At the very end there are suggestions for **Future Work** to investigate intersexuality in pre-modern Japan. This work proposes the intersexed body as critical figure for understanding gender fluidity in pre-modern Japan, which ultimately, contributes to the debate about the very foundations of sex, gender and sexuality.

Chapter 1

Sexing and Unsexing Bodies in Past Research

And now, alone! ...alone ...forever! Forsaken, outlawed in the midst of my brothers! Ah! What am I saying! Have I the right to give that name to those who surround me? No, I do not, I am alone!

Herculine Barbin, *Memoirs* (1868)[3]

1.1 Introduction

One might think there is no impactful history of intersexuality beyond Europe and certainly not in pre-modern Japan, where androgynous youths were desired and cross-dressing actors admired. Research into the history of intersexuality contends the idea that sex was socially constructed without consideration of the body (Gilbert, 2002), while also demonstrating how the intersexed body has always been seen as 'an object to look at' (Mann, 2006). Ultimately, the intersexed character forces enquiry into how gender, sex and sexuality are constructed. Interest in alternative genders and sexualities during pre-modern times in Japan led researches to propose the desirable *wakashu* as 'third gender' (Mostow, 2016) and admirable *onnagata* as 'gender transcending' (Mezur, 2005). However, this vision ignores how this gender performance is fundamentally rooted in a physical male body. The intersexed body and its questioning of sexual determination serves to rethink the history of alternative genders and sexualities in pre-modern Japan.

[3] Barbin, H. (1980) *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* (R. McDougall, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books, p. 98.

1.2 Sexing bodies

In 1868, as Japan opened it borders to welcome an era of rapid modernisation, the lifeless body of a French intersex person was found in the quarter of the Theatre de l'Odeon, Paris (Barbin, 1980: 115). Known by the names Herculine / Adélaüde / Alexina / Abel / Camille Barbine, Barbine had committed suicide and left behind no more than a memoir, which heightened the curiosity of physicians like F. L. von Neugebauer and writers A. Dubarray and Oscar Panizza (Foucault, 1980: xiv). A century later, Foucault (1980) rediscovered the memoir and published it under the name *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* as an extension of his work on the *History of Sexuality* (p. 119). These sources prove the relevance of intersexuality in the fields of history and research.

1.2.1. Establishing and destabilising sex in 'the West'

Foucault asserts that intersex people in pre-modern times were robbed of leading a life between the sexes by the arrival of modern medicine. This assertion is strongly refuted by Ruth Gilbert, whose book *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (2002) is an inclusive work about the representation of intersexuality in early modern England.

> "Early Modern Hermaphrodites" challenges Foucault's assumption that hermaphroditic identity was ever a 'free choice'. In exploring the cultural codes that shaped representations of, and attitudes towards, sexual indeterminacy the book argues that sexual ambiguity, whether embodied or enacted, anatomical or erotic, has always generated confused responses. (Gilbert, 2002: 3)

Another author contending Foucault's statement is renowned gender theorist Judith Butler, whose work *Gender Trouble* (1990) devotes an entire chapter debating the construction of sex through its relationship with power. In the 1999 reprint, Butler laments not having written more about intersexuality (p. xxvi). Someone who picked up on this subject was biology and gender expert Anne Fausto-Sterling. Fausto-Sterling wrote an article in 1993 called *The Five Sexes*, which proposed the idea that there are not two sexes (male and female), but five sexes. These five sexes being: "herms" (named after true hermaphrodites, people born with both a testis and an ovary); "merms" (male pseudo-hermaphrodites, who are born with testes and some aspect of female genitalia);

and "ferms" (female pseudo-hermaphrodites, who have ovaries combined with some aspect of male genitalia) (Fausto-Sterling, 1993). In a revisit of the article, Fausto-Sterling (2000) says it was written with "tongue in cheek" (p. 19) and that the controversy it generated was unprecedented. Even more influential was Fausto-Sterling's work *Sexing the Body* (2000), which proposes a careful approach to gender, sex and sexuality. These topics however, evoked anything but neutral responses. One example of such a response is that of Leonard Sax, who argues that the prevalence of intersex people is a minor 0.018% and not Fausto-Sterling's estimate of 1.7% (Sax, 2002: 174). Iain Morland used Fausto-Sterling's number estimate as an argument for research about the semiotic analysis of the ontological assumptions in the medical treatment of intersexuality in the ironically titled article *Is Intersexuality real?* (Morland, 2001: 527). Myra J. Hird wrote an article about queer theory and the intersex body. Queer theory is about transgressing boundaries, which is what the intersex body does in terms of biology (Hird, 2004: 85). The article inverts the notion that culture is boundless in its creation of infinite genders and that nature is finite because reproduction is its raison d'être and created therefore merely two sexes. By presenting natural phenomena that prove nature is a lot more varied when it comes to gender and sex, Hird argues that it turns out culture and humanity, with its need to classify, is actually the side who limits. The intersex body is the most evident and oldest battleground for culture's need to construct gender, sex and sexuality, because rarely is the intersex individual granted the permission to 'just be'.

1.2.2. A history of intersexuality in Europe

The conceptualisation of intersexuality is traceable to Greaco-Roman philosophies with three dominant lines that lead to modern Western thoughts on the construction of sex and gender. Hippocrates (c.460-375 BCE) believed in a 'one-sex' model, where sexual differentiations were inferior varieties of the ultimate male sex. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) on the contrary, proposed a 'two-sex' model in *De Generatione Animalium* where male/female would be a continuum of Aristotelian polarities like: perfect/imperfect, active/passive and matter/form. Aristotle asserted that an individual could not be both male and female (Cleminson & García, 2010: 6).

The thought that underneath intersexed bodies would lie the 'true' sex of an individual would become more prevalent in the twentieth and twenty-first century (Feder & Karkazis, 2008: 33). The physician Galen (131-201 CE) would make a consolidated model of Hippocrates's and Aristotle's theory by suggesting that male and female parts were not anatomically different but that the female body was simply an inversion of the male body (Mann, 2006: 88). Remarkably, this theory of 'the inverted body' also appeared in Chinese medicine (Kanatsu, 2004: 8-9). Thomas Lacqueur wrote a provocative work about the history of sex in the book *Making Sex, Body and Gender* which questions the construction of sex over the centuries as an unfixed phenomenon (Laqueur, 1992: 19). By the suggestion there were multiple genders but only one adaptable sex during the Renaissance, Lacquer is questioned by Katharine Park and Robert Nye for thinking too simplistic however (Park & Nye, 1991: 54).

Alice Domurat Dreger would become one of the leading experts in the field of intersexuality and its relation to history, through an article *Doubtful Sex: The Fate of the Hermaphrodite in Victorian England* (1995) which proposes sex as a construction by medical men to uphold the gender binary (Dreger, 1995: 338). Dreger (1995) remarks that: "sex, so exquisitely doubtful, was never really doubted" (p. 365). Dreger's later work *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (1998) would become a foundational piece in following research about intersexuality in early modern times. Dreger explores events in France and Britain of the late nineteenth century and concludes how intersexuality challenges not only the preconceived notion about two sexes and sexuality but also the fluidity of gender identity (Dreger, 2000: 9). France and Britain serve as the main countries for investigating the medical construction of early modern intersexuality through research by, for instance; Foucault (1980), Lacquer (1992), Dreger (1998), Gilbert (2005) and Zajko (2009). Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García, broadened this scope through research on intersexuality in Spain between 1850-1960 (Cleminson & García, 2010). However, if (inter)sexuality is a construction proposed by modern - if not Western - medicine, how was it constructed beyond the borders of Europe?

1.2.3. Establishing and destabilising sex in 'the East'

Traditional Chinese medicine played an important role in pre-modern Japanese society, until it received competition from Western medicine introduced by the Dutch Trading Company (Johnson, 2005: 43). In Chinese medicine,[4] female bodies were argued to simply be the inversion of male bodies (Koch, 2020). In the Chinese-based tradition, bodies consist of the so-called Five Organs and Six Viscera (*gozo roppu*) and a balanced interplay between yin/yang energy flows (Koch, 2013: 152). Sex/gender in traditional Chinese medicine appears as a relative and flexible matter. Nevertheless, the additional impact of Confucianism and its strict view on hierarchy and social kinship should not be underestimated (Furth, 1988: 1). Kanatsu Hidemi (2004) researched medical images (*shintai-zu*) of males and females during the eighteenth century and noted the similar depiction of their bodies, but also the lack of genitalia. This genital focus made its appearance through the introduction of Dutch medicine and in particular the book *Kaitai Shin-sho* (New Text on Anatomy, Dutch title: *Ontleedkundige Tafelen*). According to Kanatsu this meant that the body in pre-modern China and Japan were essentially perceived as sexless (Kanatsu, 2004: 4-5). This argument can be countered by the extensive discourse to describe genitalia and reproductive functioning in the *Suwen* (Basic Questions), a canonical piece for Chinese medicine which was compiled between 475 BC and 220 CE (Leo, 2011: 123). According to Angelika Koch, sex in pre-modern Japan was constructed through the activity of sexual intercourse and reproduction, rather than genitalia alone. In Sino-Japanese medicine 'the leaking of Essence', through ejaculation for instance, was regarded as detrimental to ones health. However, medical treaties were solely tailored to men's health, wherefore women's health became ignored. Subsequently, sexual differentiation naturally occurred, not through anatomy, but through the act of treatment (Koch, 2020: ?). On the other hand, there are also numerous illustrated and written sources from the Edo-period describing desirable and undesirable genitalia, which aid the construction of normal and abnormal bodies (Gerstle, 2007).

[4] 'Chinese medicine' is a generalising term, but the reader needs to be aware there were many streams with different approaches to their practice (Koch, 2020)

Andrew Gerstle and Hayakawa Morita made a number of these works available through modern Japanese and English translation, which provide an insight into the view of sex in popular culture.[5] For the contemporary reader, science and erotica are considered separate elements of enquiry, but pre-modern texts often drew from the same material and presented them in similar fashion (Gilbert, 2002: 140-141). To understand visions on the body in pre-modern Japan, it is thus important to investigate sources of medical and popular nature. Charlotte Furth did research into medical records from sixteenth and seventeenth century China which meticulously tracked examples of intersexuality and other cases that divert from the sexual norm. Furth concludes the importance of sexual reproduction for establishing sex and gender, but also the role of physicians and officials in producing 'the normal body' (Furth, 1988: 2-3).

1.2.4. Intersexuality in Japan

Intersexuality in Japan is still scarcely researched (Lusk, 2017: 614). Even in the text *Sexual Minority Studies in Japan* (2015) by Suganuma Katsuhiko, one sentence about the manga (2003-2009) and drama-series (2011) *IS - otoko demo onna demo nai sei* (Intersex - the sex that's neither male or female), represents the sole example for the slowly rising visibility of intersexuality in Japan (Suganuma, 2015: 247). Teresa A. Algoso was one of the first authors to write an English paper addressing intersexuality in early modern and modern Japan. Initially, Algoso investigated the work of Miyatake Gaikotsu, who wrote about intersexuality during the Taishō-period (1912-1926).

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[5] See: Gerstle, A. (2007). *Kinsei enpon shiryo shusei IV: Tsukioka Settei 1: 'Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi.* [Collected Erotic Texts of the Early Modern Period IV: Tsukioka Settei 1: 'Love Letters and a River of Erect Precepts for Women']. Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyu Centre.
Gerstle, A., & Hayakawa, M. (2010). *Nichibunken shozō kinsei enpon shiryō shūsei. 5 tsukioka settei 2, Bidō nichiya johōki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.
Gerstle, A., & Hayakawa, M. (2018). *Onna dairaku takara-beki* (Great pleasures for women and their treasure boxes), (Tsukioka Settei 3 'Onna dairaku takara-beki'': Kinsei enpon shiryō shūsei VI (Collected Erotic Texts of the Early Modern Period VI)'. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

This article was incorporated into Algoso's more extensive work on the history of intersexuality in modern Japan called *Sex, Science and Hermaphroditism in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (2014). Its first chapter investigates issues at the intersection of sex and nation-state through the vehicle of the conscription exam. The relationship between military conscription and a rising visibility of intersexuality was also seen in Spain (Cleminson & Garcia, 2010: 83). Algoso then examines intersexuality, or *han'in'yō* (half yin/yang) within the medical establishment and an attempt by sexologist Sawada Junjiro to delineate the two sexes, male and female. In the final chapter Miyatake Gaikotsu's book *Hannannyōkō* (Thoughts on Hermaphroditism) (1922) is introduced to situate societal concern about the convergence of the male and female sex (Algoso, 2014: 144). *Hannannyōkō* is a historical overview with cases of intersexuality in Japan through gatherings of writing that span from the 12th century to the early 20th century. Through the efforts of Tanizawa Eiichi and Yoshino Takao, a collection of all the work of Miyatake Gaikotsu was reprinted and made accessible (Miyatake, 1986).

In Japanese sources, the words for hermaphrodite and intersex have been adapted to Japanese as *herumafurodito* and *intāsekusu* (and the abbreviation *IS*), of which the katakana writing implies they are loan words.[6] This does not mean there is a lack of Japanese terms to explain the phenomenon. Diachronism and translations make it a troublesome task to identify them, though. One example of the confusion of translating such different terms is illustrated through a work by Fujimoto Yukari, called: *Transujendaa: Onna no ryōsei guyū, otoko no han'inyō* (1991), which was translated by Linda Flores and Kazumi Nagaike as *Transgender: Female Hermaphrodites and Male Androgynes* (2004). However, transgenderism, androgyny and hermaphroditism (intersexuality) are not the same and actually differ in lived experience. Transgenderism relates to feeling incongruity with ones biological sex assigned at birth and the (optional) voluntary process of transitioning to the desired gender through hormones and/or sex reassignment surgery.

[6] The word "hermaphrodite" as a term for intersexuality during the Meiji-period (1886-1912) and "intersex" as a more contemporary term.

Androgyny is the ideal of appearing in-between-the-sexes, through i.e. looks and fashion, and does not involve any psychological or physical condition (Kimbrough, 1982: 20). Hermaphroditism is an archaic and derogative term for physically/biologically having male and female biological traits. Unlike transgenderism, where an individual has agency in the diagnosis, this frequently is not the case with intersexuality. Doctors label an (often infant) individual as intersexed and therefore in need of sex reassignment surgery, disregarding whether this individual wants it or not. In Japanese *ryōsei guyū* covers androgyny and *han'inyō* means hermaphrodite, which suggests the title should actually be translated as: *Female Androgynes and Male Hermaphrodites*.[7] Fujimoto's article and especially the translation by Flores and Nagaike show the perils of mixing discourse, for it combines conditions with different experiences of trauma onto a single pile.

In conclusion, the intersexed body poses questions about the gender binary within and beyond country borders but also in modern and pre-modern times. Androgyny is the idealised aspect of being both male/female, whereas hermaphroditism/intersexuality covers its negative reality. The next section looks into enacted gender fluidity through the Japanese institutions of *wakashu* and *onnagata*. These two roles have been celebrated for their androgynous appeal and are considered as the evidence that gender is decided by culture and not biology.

1.3 Unsexing bodies: gender ambiguity in pre-modern Japan

Gender fluidity has attracted much attention in the field of Japanese art history and receives particular interest through the study of *onnagata*[8] and *wakashu*.[9]

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[7] lit. "**ryōsei guyū**: *danjo ryōsei wo sonaeta shinwa-teki sonzai.*" Notice the word *shinwa-teki sonzai*, which means mythological existence. **han'in'yō**: →*intāsekushuaru: gaiseiki ga seishokusen no shiyū to hantai no gaikan wo teisuru koto. Mata, dōitsu kotai ni ryōsei no seishokusen wo yūsuru koto.*. Notice, the focus on *seishokusen*, which means genitals or sex organs. (*Sūpā Daijirin* Accessed: 22 November 2019)

[8] Onnagata are actors of the kabuki theatre who specialise in playing female roles.

[9] Wakashu were male youths who were known for their "androgynous appearance and variable sexuality" (Mostow, 2016) and constituted a social category in early modern Japan.

Researchers like Katherine Mezur and Joshua Mostow, in particular, made significant contributions to the debate on gender fluidity. A sold-out catalogue of the 2016 exhibition "A Third Gender"[10] at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada evidences that interest in Japan's alternative genders is not only limited to the academic field (Kunimoto, 2017: 4). Also in Japan itself, there was a special exhibition from March 2nd to 25th 2018 featuring cross-dressing males and females in woodblock prints, which was organised by the Ota Memorial Museum of Art in Tokyo (Watanabe, 2018). Transgressive gender behaviour in historical Japan has thus enticed both Japanese and international audiences.

1.3.1. Onnagata: unsexed through performance

Kabuki theatre is one of Japan's cultural icons, which is illustrated by two characters from the kabuki play *Renjishi* even serving as mascots for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan ("Japan Unveils Official Mascots for 2019 Rugby World Cup," 2018). Aside from spectacular costumes, make-up and stage tricks, kabuki promotes itself through "the deviant beauty" (*tōsaku bi*) of the *onnagata*, a male actor who specialises in female roles (Terajima, 1992: 52). Moreover, some scholars state that *onnagata* are a prerequisite for kabuki, as they find only men are capable of perfectly conveying the softness of a woman (Pronko, 1967: 195).

Early European fascination with *onnagata* appears in research by Marcus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld was a German sexologist who lived during the early 20th century and did extensive research into sexual and gender varieties. In 1913 at the International Physician's Congress in London, he presented a collection of pictures which he referred to as "Wall of Sexual Transition" (see Figure 1).[11] This "Wall of Sexual Transition" served as a visual depiction of four sexual categories, proposed by Hirschfeld theories.

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[10] "A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Edo-Period Prints and Paintings (1600–1868)" at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (Canada) from May 7, 2016 to November 27, 2016

[11] During the Nazi book burnings in 1933, immense collections of images have been destroyed, including loss of actual evidence from the "Wall for Sexual Transistion".

In 1910, Hirschfeld established the term 'transvestite' as a category for cross-dressing non-homosexuals and included *onnagata* amongst them. This prompted an exhaustive investigation by Rainer Herrn and Michael Thomas Taylor in the article *Magnus Hirschfeld Interpretation of the Japanese Onnagata as Transvestites* (2018). Herrn and Taylor look at the transfer of sexual science between Germany and Japan during the early twentieth century and warn about Western hegemonic discourse in the transfer of information. For instance, Hirschfeld never used the Japanese term *onnagata* and instead called them *Frauendarsteller* (female impersonator), linking them to the tradition of cross-dressing actors in eighteenth/nineteenth century Europe. They also remark on the (indirect) influence of personal experience on the production of knowledge. Japanese researcher Iwaya Suewo was a friend of Hirschfeld and their relationship had a profound effect on the conception of their theories around gender and sexuality in Germany and Japan.

Transvestism and the Onnagata traditions in Shakespeare and kabuki (2008), edited by Fujita Minoru and Michael Shapiro, also connects *onnagata* practices to transvestism and European - specifically, Elizabethan - theatre. There was namely a tradition in both kabuki and Elizabethan theatre where female roles were fulfilled by boys and young men (Fujita & Shapiro, 2006). However, where kabuki continued with the *onnagata* tradition, Elizabethan theatre gradually abandoned the use of so-called *play-boys*.[12] This book received a rather negative review by Adele Lee (2008), who called the work an example of "the dangers of uncritically positing fashionable, large cross-cultural comparisons" (p. 99). The title was found to be misleading, for it does not focus so much on Shakespeare as it does on Elizabethan theatre (English theatre of the 16th century). Moreover, posing *onnagata* next to transvestism is in itself considerably deluding, according to the author (Lee, 2008: 98). Hirschfeld, who proposed the term *transvestite* and included *onnagata* amongst them, also had a refuting definition which defined transvestitism as an "irresistible urge" (*Drang*) by distinctly heterosexual men to wear women's clothes.

[12] Although the tradition of 'play boys' continued long after other European countries allowed women on stage, this was due to practical and economic considerations and not because of reasons connected to gender and sexuality.

This definition overlooks the fact that *onnagata* wear female attire not out of an irresistible urge, but for their profession.[13] On hindsight, early research on *onnagata* was a part of the study of homosexuality which is, needless to say, a now largely abandoned endeavour.

Katherine Mezur took a feminist approach to investigate *onnagata* through the lens of gender performativity in the book *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies* (2005). Yet, an article from four years earlier warns:

"The way of the Western practitioner or scholar wishing to analyse contemporary Japanese theatre in terms of gender and culture is fraught with peril. How is it possible to apply critical theory without imposing Western perceptions or using master narratives that reduce and conquer the "foreign"?"
(Abbitt, 2001, p. 249)

To show awareness of the dangers of ethnocentric misreading by using a non-Japanese framework, Mezur (2005) presents an account on how this was avoided as much as possible (pp. 9-10). According to Mezur, the male body underneath the carefully crafted female act,- i.e. attire and behaviour - is what makes the *onnagata*. Moreover, she asserts that the *onnagata* transcends gender through the variety of female characters the *onnagata* is able to convey, i.e. *waka-onnagata* (roles of young women: princesses, young courtesans and adolescent girls) and *fuke oyama*, previously called *kakagata* (roles of older women). Despite these various constructions of femininity it is prerequisite to know that there is a male body underneath (Mezur, 2005: 7). Episale called this necessity for *onnagata* to belong to the male sex an essentialist idea (Episale, 2012: 97). Samuel L. Leiter wrote a critical response to Episale's article by putting forward examples of female presence in contemporary theatre groups, like *Ichikawa Shōjo Kabuki* (Ichikawa Female Kabuki) (Leiter, 2012: 115). Known as the *Onnagata Ronso*, there has been a long and heated debate whether kabuki needs to move with its time and allow women on stage (Brandon, 2012: 123).

[13] Though Yoshizawa Ayame I (1673–1729) encouraged a female lifestyle off-stage in the *Ayamegusa* (Words of Ayame), this was not considered the norm and a link to transvestism remains highly doubtful (Mezur, 2005: 40).

Brandon gives the following statement:

"(...) let me return to the argument that only a male-sexed body contains the power and energy required to "truly" play kabuki's female characters, and its converse, that the female-sexed body cannot do this. This assertion has always struck me as illogical. Let's turn the argument on its head and suggest that only a female-sexed performer can "truly" portray the gentleness within a strong male role in kabuki. Following the Japanese aesthetic principle of blending opposites (in-yō or yin-yang), it is commonly said that strong male roles in kabuki should be shaded with softness (just as inner strength should under-gird soft female roles). According to this line of reasoning, in the ideal kabuki cast male-sexed actors would play the female roles (as they now do), and female-sexed actors would play the male roles. And of course no one proposes doing this." (Brandon, 2012: 125)

The gap of female performers during the pre-modern times, is filled in by Gabrovska in the article *Onna Mono: The "Female Presence" on the Stage of the All-Male Traditional Japanese Theatre* (2015). Gabrovska critically reassesses the history of kabuki: from retracing the story behind its founder Izumo no Okuni, to *Onna Sarugaku*, *Onna Kusemai*, *Nyōbō Kyōgen*, and *O-kyōgen-shi/Onna Yakusha*, as well as the largely overlooked importance of *kakikae onna kyōgen* (rewritten female plays) (Gabrovska, 2015: 388). Gabrovska mentions the influence of political power on attitudes towards sex and gender (p. 397). In another article about kabuki, Gabrovska investigated more specifically constructions of gender and the body, which are inevitably linked to power relations.

"I have argued that kabuki was a main site for performance of the notions of femininity and masculinity during the Edo period. It played a central part in consolidating Tokugawa gender notions and hierarchies, on the one hand, and in disrupting them, on the other, by constantly playing with conventionalised gender constructs and destabilising any fixed meanings." (Gabrovska, 2009: 81)

The *onnagata* is vital to understanding the construction of sex and gender during the Edo-period and since this institution appears so reliant on the physical (male) body, it becomes even more intriguing to investigate bodies that do not fall within the binary of male *otoko* or female *onna*.

1.3.2. Wakashu: unsexed through sexuality

An unaccustomed viewer of Japanese prints (*ukiyo-e*) might be surprised at the similarity between beautiful females and males and wonder when someone is a 'man' or a 'woman'. After all, their faces look alike and they both wear lavish kimono or *furisode* （long-sleeved kimono, mainly worn by adolescents). One hint is to look whether the figure has a bald spot or a small piece of cloth draped over their head (Figure 2). This (often purple coloured) cloth is called *murasaki bōshi* or *yarō bōshi* and was worn by *wakashu* (and *onnagata* before they started wearing wigs). *Wakashu* is an inherently Japanese word without Chinese origin, which is directly translated as: 'a young companion', who is commonly understood to be male. 'Youth' is likely its closest English equivalent (Pflugfelder, 1999: 30). In pre-modern discourse it had three distinct interpretations:
1) a teenage boy 2) a coupling of a *nenja* (senior) and *wakashu* (junior) 3) male prostitute (Mostow, 2016: 38).

The following passage is an investigation into *wakashu* and its relation to sex, gender and sexuality. Joshua Mostow (2016) asserts that *wakashu* represent a third gender "due to the fact 'he' can do something that no other gender can: he is sexually ambidextrous and assumes the passive role when with an adult man, but the penetrative role when with any kind of female" (p. 23). The footnotes (p. 39) clarify that the definition of 'gender' relates to a sexual object choice based on the sex/gender system by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (Epstein & Straub, 1991), which Mostow adopted from an article by Rosalind Morris.

"*Sex/gender systems are*[14] historically and culturally specific arrogations of the human body for ideological purposes. In sex/gender systems, physiology, anatomy, and body codes (clothing, cosmetics, behaviours, miens, affective and object choices) are taken over by institutions that use bodily difference to define and coerce gender identity." (Epstein, 1991, p. 3)

Rosalind Morris clarified that Epstein and Straub are followers of feminist scholar Gayle Rubin's sex/gender system (Morris, 1994: 25).

[14] Inserted by the author for clarification

Gayle Rubin developed the sex/gender system in 1975 as a way to distinguish nature from culture, in more specific words, the physical reality from a sociological construction (Rubin, 1975). Rubin gave the following preliminary explanation:

"a 'sex/gender system' is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied."
(Rubin, 1975, p. 159)

Mostow uses sex/gender system as the foundation for his argument that 'sexual object choice' is a way to define gender, yet there is no such classification in either article by Morris, Epstein & Straub nor Rubin. Nevertheless, the ideology[15] that there are cases in Japan that transcend sexual dichotomy has been intriguing scholars already since the early twentieth century. The idea of three genders, or three sexes, was also proposed by Hirschfeld (Hirschfeld, 1901: 3) before he developed an even more extensive system of categorisation, mentioned earlier in this chapter (Hirschfeld, 1925). One element that plays a disrupting factor in Mostow and Hirschfeld's theory is 'sexuality'. In 1995 a book appeared by the name *Male Colors – the construction of homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*, written by Gary P. Leupp, which showcased the large prevalence of sexual activity between members of the same sex (Leupp, 1995). The book was a significant contribution to the field of Japanese gender studies, while also raising questions about appropriate terminology.[16] Leupp (1995) mentions how the term 'homosexuality' is inadequate because of its cultural and historical luggage, yet for lack of a better word decided to use it anyway (p. 5). A major argument against words like 'homosexuality', is the modern connotation of having an identity formed by ones sexual preference (Altman, 1996: 77). Whereas 'homosexuality', or other forms like 'heterosexuality' and 'bisexuality', may connote the identity of an individual shaped by ones sexual preference, the neutral word 'sexuality' also means: sexual activity, as well as: (biological) sex.[17]

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[15] The definition of 'ideology' as a set of ideas (not ideals).

[16] In contemporary discourse one will hardly find 'homosexuality', but instead: male-male sexual relations, same-sex relations or the Japanese terms *nanshoku, wakashudo* etc.

[17] *Oxford Dictionary* Accessed: 22 November 2019

Mostow attempts to avoid the word 'sexuality, but in turn poses *wakashu* as a third gender because of their 'sexual object choice' (which is: sexuality). This muddles the definitions for sex, gender and sexuality.

Sex denotes male *or* female and refers to the biology (body) of an individual, primarily based on genitals. In layman's terms: when a child is born, the question: 'is it a boy *or* a girl?

Gender connotes male *and/(n)or* female as masculine *and/(n)or* feminine, while referring to a cultural construction. In layman's terms: when a child is born, to give presents in blue *or* pink.

Gender Identity whether one relates to their sex. In layman's terms: whether this child feels male, female, both, neither (or any other variety)

Sexuality 1. which gender one is attracted to (often based on ones own gender)[18] 2. sexual activity.[19]

These distinctions are constructed to facilitate better understanding. However, like the distinction between nature and culture, sex/gender/sexuality are real but not necessarily true (Schleifer, 2006: 63). These concepts explain the relation of an individual towards oneself and society and can therefore differ per generation, per society or even per person.

Europe developed the modern concept of sex during the 17th and 18th centuries, which does not mean there was no segregation between male and female in the eras before that.[20] Whereas sex comes above gender and biology above culture in modern times, this used to be the other way around. That is to say, in the pre-modern period gender stood above sex and culture came before biology (Gilbert, 2002: 77). An important gender marker during those times was clothing (Epstein & Straub, 1991). This relates to *wakashu* and their wearing of *furisode*, which is considered to be attire for unmarried girls.

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[18] An easy example: a feminine biological female who identifies herself as such, feeling sexually attracted to masculine biological men, who identifies himself as such. A complex example: a non-binary female-to-male transgender, feeling sexually attracted to masculine men, who can either be transgender or biologically male.

[19] Simply which partner one has sexual intercourse with. Sexual intercourse includes sexual acts like oral and manual stimulation (i.e. cunnilingus, fellatio and fingering) and not only penetration. Viewing penetration, moreover penile-penetration, as the only means of sexual intercourse would be a narrow - if not patriarchal - view which this research does not wish to propose.

[20] That is to say, being classified female *or* male based on an individual's genitals. (Schleifer, 2006, p. 62)

Mori Rie explains how *wakashu* constructed their own kind of beauty through their behaviour and dress (Mori, 2006: 41-42). One artist celebrated for depicting the appealing androgyny of *wakashu* was Suzuki Haranobu (1725?-1770) (Haft, 2013a). Harunobu's work is considered the epitome of gender ambiguity because characters are difficult to be distinguished as male or female (Mostow, 2016: 29). From a contemporary perspective, *wakashu* are seen as boys wearing girl's clothes and engaging in bisexual activities, which would make them transcend the gender binary.[21] Yet, *wakashu* were eventually supposed to transition into manhood and quit their act of gender fluidity. With Mostow's argumentation in mind, that would make gender a temporal matter. Combined with the idea of 'sexual object choice', this brings questions to other social institutions. For instance, are children a fourth and the elderly a fifth gender because they are deemed asexual (i.e. they should not have sex) and do nuns/monks then constitute a sixth gender?

In either case, the *wakashu* plays a crucial part for investigating the role of culture (clothes, hairdo etc.) on the construction of sex and gender during the Edo-period, since they show that although androgynous for some period of time, they would eventually have to conform to social expectations and become a man.

During the Bunka-Bunsei era (1804-1830) there was the appearance of so-called *haori-geisha*, which were biological women dressing and shaving their hair as if they were *wakashu* (Mostow, 2016: 38). This act of gender transgression was done by prostitutes and working-class women, wherefore it constituted only for a small percentage of Japan's pre-modern population. Further research is necessary to understand the true influence of such gender transgression to deeply understand its impact.

In conclusion, gender transcendence is broadly researched in relation to Japanese institutions like the *onnagata* and *wakashu*, where the androgynous ideal is frequently proposed. The role of cultural production, like clothing and behaviour, cannot be overlooked to understand the construction of beauty during the Edo-period.

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[21] On a side note: what argument would arise if the *furisode* is not viewed as female attire but simply a marker for youth and beauty?

To the contemporary viewer, cross-dressing might seem transgressive gender behaviour which enhances the appeal of the *onnagata* and *wakashu*. Yet, in the end it matters what body is hidden underneath the act. After all, a male playing male roles is less interesting than one playing female roles. Likewise, a stereotypical boy engaging in bisexual activity is less interesting than the one who performs an additional act of androgyny. Nevertheless, is it not telling enough how little is actually known about the gender-bending *haori geisha* and her act of performing boyhood? Without discarding the impact of culture, nature did matter in the Edo-period and having an indefinable body was anything but ideal.

1.4 Conclusion

Only the biological male body is allowed to be *onnagata* or *wakashu*. Thinking otherwise is to believe Foucault's reverie that sex did not exist in pre-modern times. Bodies of sexual indeterminacy have a long history of questioning the way society deals with gender, sex and sexuality. The *onnagata*, and later *wakashu*, are posed as third gender, much like the *hijira* of India. However, these social groups have a clear understanding themselves of what they are. *Wakashu*, much like *onnagata*, would likely say they are men and, if one were to listen, *hijira* would say they are women. Nevertheless, their biological male body prevents the majority from accepting them the way they perceive themselves. Intersexed bodies are confronting because they beg the essential question how to classify someone as male or female and are therefore, destabilising but also confirming sex. The next chapter builds on this outline of sexing and unsexing bodies to show how images of intersexed bodies in pre-modern Japan tell a different story about gender fluidity in society.

Chapter 2

Re-sexing the Body in Visual Culture

Haniwari ha jō-hantsuki otoko nite, ka-hantsuki onna naru mo ruri,
mata inmon to dankon to aigu suru mono mo ari, kono dankon ha inmon ni kakurete-ari.
Haniwari are those who are a man the first fortnight and a woman the second fortnight,
but also, they possess a penis and this penis is hidden within vagina.
Kyokutei Bakin. (Tenpō 3, 1833). Ese no Dōseiai ka.*Toen-shosetsu yoroku.*[22]

2.1 Introduction

The earliest known Japanese image featuring an intersexed character stems from the twelfth century, although the most distinguished image appeared seven centuries later by the artist Keisai Eisen. These two prints have a lot in common, because they invite a viewer to shamelessly observe the intersexed body. However, the intersexed body is something to be laughed at in the earliest image and something to be pitied in the latter. Other ways of viewing the intersexed body can be seen in works by Yoshida Hanbei (1668) and Utagawa Kunitora. Hanbei invoked the scientific gaze, in similar fashion as the artist Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo (1859). On the contrary, Utagawa Kunitora subjected the intersexed character to the domain of pornography. What most of these prints have in common is how the field of medicine served as a means to reveal naked bodies and label those not falling within the norm. Judging by these pre-modern images, the intersexed character was an object of laughter, intrigue, pity and fantasy. The following chapters present an analysis of these images through the methods of visual analysis and iconology.

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[22] Gaikotsu, M. (1986). "Hannannyōkō" (Thoughts on Hermaphroditism). In E. Tanizawa & T. Yoshino (Eds.), *Miyatake Gaikotsu Chosakushu* (Collected Writings of Miyatake Gaikotsu). Vol. 5. Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, p. 363.

2.2 Unknown (12th CE) *Yamai no Sōshi*

The *Yamai no Sōshi* was originally a narrative hand-scroll (*emaki*) created at the end of the Heian-period (794-1185), with various paintings of illnesses. As was often the case in early pre-modern times, the author of the work is anonymous. One segment of the scroll features the image of an intersexed individual (referred to as *futanari*) accompanied by a written description on the right (Figure 3). The text reads as follows:

Nakagoro, miyako ni tsutzumi wo kubi ni kakete, urashi-aruku otoko ari. Katachi otoko naredomo, onna no sugata ni nitaru koto mo ari keri. Hito kore wo obotsukanagari, yoi hairitaru ni hisoka ni kinu wo kakiagete mikereba, danjo no ne, tomo ni ari keri. Kore futanari no mono nari.

Not too long ago, a man with a drum carried around the neck, walked around the capital foretelling fortunes. Although looking like a man, there were certain aspects that looked feminine. Some people with misgivings about that, crept in the sleeping chambers during the night and when they lifted up the robes, saw the genitals of both, male and female. This is what one calls *futanari*.

The image features three individuals in a chamber setting. On the right side, someone is popping their head through a curtain door. Another person has already stepped inside the room and has lifted the undergarment of the third figure, who is asleep on the floor and whose genitals have become fully exposed in the process. In the background are attributes like a flute, drum and a fan, whereas the foreground shows a bundle of clothes. All three characters wear a black hat (*eboshi*), which is, just like a beard, connoting masculinity. However, the sleeping figure is also showing feminine features like blushed lips, cheeks and eye-shadow. These subtle androgynous qualities are nothing compared to the audacious exposition of intersexed genitalia through the depiction of an erect penis appearing from between the outer lips of a hairless vulva. The attributes in the background indicate this intersexed character works as a shaman (Yamamoto, 2018: 78). Shamans had a precarious position within society, since they were mediators of the physical and spiritual world. Moreover, this profession was (and is) primarily conducted by women and therefore makes the male shaman somewhat of an oddity.[23]

[23] Though there were times when people could choose between male or female shamans. See, the *Midō kanpaku-ki* (Diary of the Midō Regent) by Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1029), which features the summon for a male shaman. (Yamamoto, 2018: 77)

The character lifting the shaman's kimono gestures with his hand to the figure outside, as the latter slips his head between the curtains. These two peeping Toms are clearly sneering at the sleeping figure, who is seemingly unaware of what is happening. Peeping is not an uncommon motif in Japanese art and literature. As a matter of fact, the motif even features in renowned works like *The Tale of Genji* and *Tales of Ise* (Croissant, 2005: 105). Voyeurism carries excitement of seeing something that others do not - including the person who is being watched. From the Heian-period until the Edo-period it carried romantic or erotic connotations.

A good example is a print in Yoshida Hanbei's book (1687) *Kōshoku Kai Awase*, where two men peek under the kimono of a sleeping woman (Figure 4). The viewer is unable to see what the two peeping Toms are seeing, but being able to guess makes it a titillating image. On the contrary, the illustration from *Yamai no Sōshi* leaves little to the imagination. For a deeper analysis, lets compare the two images side by side (Figure 5).

'Reading' begins at the right upper corner and ends at the left lower corner. In a diagonal line the gaze follows the curious spectators down towards the sleeping figure. This primary visual path (red) is identical in both pictures, but it becomes interesting to look at the second line of vision (blue). There is not much distraction in the illustration from *Koshoku Kai-awase*. Only the front part of the chamber screen stands in opposite direction,- starting left and going down to the right. Repeating these cross-cutting lines, it becomes apparent that they serve a rhythmic function meant to enhance the main subject of the image: peeping under the clothes of a sleeping person. The opposite counts for the painting in *Yamai no Sōshi* which has not one, but two visual paths (blue)! The lines in red tell a story of voyeurism, similar to the previous image, whereas the blue lines reveal the mocking opposite. At the centre of the illustration are the intersex genitals, which point to the left upper corner. From the left upper corner, lines can be drawn downwards towards the right lower corner. Tracing the red and blue cross sections are: the face of someone looking inside the room (utmost right); the pursuing gesture and the second person; the hand and elbow in action of lifting up a kimono; an opened right leg; the revealed genitals (centre); a hand placed on the chest; the face of the sleeping figure (utmost left).

Central to this illustration are the exposed intersex genitalia, which are at the cross section of both lines of vision. What would the message be if they were unexposed, just like the image of *Koshoku Kai-awase*? The supporting text may rouse (erotic) curiosity to what these male/female genitals (*danjo no ne*) look like, but by depicting an erect penis between a fully developed vagina, there is no room for further suggestion or doubt. The two intruders are an essential part of the composition, since their humorous expression nearly tell the viewer to look at this scene with amusement instead of shock or erotic interest. In conclusion, this painting is about revelation and not about speculation. Moreover, it involves the mocking gaze instead of a gaze of desire.

Yamai no Sōshi is (so far as known) the earliest Japanese image of an intersexed character, but remarkably also the only one where the figure is visualised as 'gender ambiguous', since later depictions will show how intersexuality becomes associated with a feminine embodiment.

2.3 Yoshida Hanbei (1686) *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui*

The *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* is a book by the artist Yoshida Hanbei (late 17th CE), which is described as Japan's first encyclopaedia of sex (Haft, 2013b: 99). It draws on the long history of East Asian sex education, while also being a parody (*mitate*) of the Confucian text *Kinmō zui* (Collection of Pictures to Enlighten the Young) written in 1666 by Nakamura Tekisai (1629-1702). In the Edo-period Confucian scholarship was often the target for satire. These parodies can largely be discerned by words like *kōshoku* (salacious) or *makura* (pillow; a euphemism for erotica), which precede the original title. The original *Kinmō-zui* (1666) was an illustrated vocabulary meant for children to learn about the Chinese classics, whereas *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* (1686) was aimed at an adult audience. One section deals with reproduction, which the original work explains without any mention of sex. On the contrary, the parody deals with this topic through vivid imageries of male and female genitals ranked from perfect to imperfect appearance.[24]

[24] There is also a section with popular hair and eyebrow styles for men and women, which were additional ways of categorising society into e.g. male/female, youth/adult and married/unmarried (Haft, 2013b: 107).

Another section deals with the categorisation of people (*Jinrin*), categorised by Hanbei in order of attractive genitalia. In this part the image of an intersexed character appears.
The illustration features a figure with an opened kimono and a hunched back seated on a bench, legs spread and toes curled inwardly (Figure 6). There is a fully exposed groin and text above the image which reads: *futanari*, *haniwari* (hermaphrodite), *hangetsu-in* (half-moon shadow/yin), *hangetsu-yō* (half-moon light/yang), *kyō-yō* (having both). Other pages simply show one word per image, so no other image carries this much additional terminology. What is more, the *futanari* figure is the only character hunched over. The *futanari* in *Yamai no Sōshi* had masculine and feminine traits, which were brought together in a mocking fashion. The character in *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* appears feminine and is positioned amongst an assembly of women with high and low class vulva's (*tsubi*). There is a half a dozen of these images, so for the purpose of a comprehensive overview, lets juxtapose the illustration of the character with a high-class vulva *jō-tsubi* to the picture of the *futanari* (Figure 7).

Since all the images have a central composition, where the genitals are the focal point, there is little to compare in terms of composition. Moving towards the visual subject matter, there is only one image which contains two people. In the *jō-tsubi* picture there is an admirer with a large erect penis kneeling next to the person with the high-class vulva, whereas the *futanari* personage is seated alone on a bench. There is one similarity between both characters. They wear their hair draped over their shoulders and tied low on their back in a style called: *tama-musubi*. This was a casual hairstyle, not depicted as often as the intricate topknots and its variations (e.g. *shimada-mage*). However, the *jō-tsubi* character wears a lavish kimono which seems enhanced by the simple hairstyle, as if to imply a subdued beauty that sets itself apart from the extravagant beauty of courtesans. On the contrary, the hair of the *futanari* character drags down in line with the hunched shoulders. The kimono is sparsely decorated and appears rather simple. The combination of this casual hairstyle and plain kimono makes the *futanari* character appear anything but sophisticated. Another striking detail are the curled toes, which imply agony (or total ecstasy) (Shagan, 2013). The *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* seems to say that: a perfect set of genitals makes you loved, but the further they diverge from the norm, the deeper one should feel ashamed.

2.4 Keisai Eisen (1822-23) *Makura Bunko*

The illustration *Henjō Nanshi*, featured in the *Makura Bunko* (The Pillow Library), by Keisai Eisen (1790–1848) is a compelling image. It depicts a character with hair in disarray who is seated with an opened kimono and spread legs in front of a folding screen, as if purposefully displaying the genitals to the viewer (Figure 8). Nevertheless, the character's expression does not seem to match such a bold act, since the mouth is down and eyes are drawn together. The image is different from the beautiful women in *bijin-ga* for which Keisai Eisen is known, and it does not seem to be in line with the other portrait genre of actor prints (Ikeda, 1997). The book title *Makura Bunko* implies it might be *shunga* (erotic print) (Screech, 1999). However, it does not correspond with the conventional imagery of such erotic prints. In the right upper corner are four characters which say *henjō nanshi*. According to several Japanese dictionaries this refers to: "a story in the Devadatta of the Lotus Sutra, in which a girl changes herself into a man in order to become a Buddha" (*Joshi ga danshi ni umarekawaru koto. `Hokekyō' daibadatsutabon ni aru, dōjo ga danshi to natte jōbutsu shita hanashi ga yoku hikareru.*) (Sūpā Daijirin, 2018; JapanKnowledge Lib, accessed: 9th December 2018). This passage is a subject of research on its own, because it made scholars, particularly in Buddhist Studies, wonder why women would commit themselves to a Buddhist sect if they could not attain Enlightenment (Juri, 2015). However, a book called *Wakan Kiji Henjō Nanshi No Setsu* from 1844 by Hata Ginkei (1790-1870) asserts that *henjō nanshi* was a term with a use much broader than transitioning from female to male to attain Enlightenment and did cover intersexuality (Kume, 2002: 54-56). During the late Edo-period, *henjō nanshi* became a more prevalent term to describe intersexuality as opposed to the term *futanari* (Gaikotsu, 1922: 30-31). The word *futanari* had gradually become associated with the positive meaning of *futanarihira*[25], as it became used to describe the androgynous qualities of *onnagata* (a male kabuki actors specialised in female roles) (Morinaga, 2002: 253).

[25] A wordplay of *futanari* and the legendary personage Ariwara no Narihira (825-880), a poet who lived in the Heian-period and was renowned for his androgynous traits. (Mezur, 2005: 55)

Lets return to the image in the *Makura Bunko* and how to look at it (Figure 9). Unlike the previous sources where the intersexed genitalia stood at the centre of the illustration, this picture is different. However, our eyes are immediately drawn to the crotch of the character because the line of vision travels from the left bottom corner upwards towards the right top corner. This visual path is inverted compared to the *futanari* image in *Yamai no Sōshi*, where two additional figures function to dictate the emotion of the viewer. It is not clear how the viewer should feel while looking at the *henjō nanshi* print, but it certainly is not amusement. During the mid and late Edo-period (1790s - 1850s), there was an increase in stories about intersexed individuals (Gaikotsu, 1922: 30-37). An example is *Wakan Kiji Henjō Nanshi No Setsu* by Hata Ginkei (1790-1870), which is a collection of stories featuring people with intersex characteristics. In 1806 there was also a carnival (*misemono*), where a "testicle girl" was exhibited, who looked like such a lovely lady that one of the many admirers even married her. However, s/he passed away during an operation to remove these “vestiges of abnormality” (Markus, 1985: 528). Reproductive quality was a strong indicator for sex assignment. Genitalia diverting from the norm could be a potential danger for healthy sexual reproduction and the creation of male offspring. In a patriarchal society where women were a second-rate citizen judged by their ability to reproduce, being intersexed was something to be pitied (Furth, 1988: 22). Keisai Eisen's print depicts a married woman (as indicated by the shaved eyebrows) whose exposed groin leaves much to doubt about *her* (reproductive) duties as a wife.

2.5 Utagawa Kunitora (1826) *Otsumori Sakazuki*

A set of prints by Utagawa Kunitora (1804-1844) from the book *Otsumori Sakazuki* (1826), shows the intersex character as an object of sexual fantasy, while inadvertently playing with issues of sexuality. The following examples showcase the intersex character as an erotic object for being: 1) The dominator in female/female sex; 2) The dominator in male/male sex; 3) The submissive party in male/female sex.

The first image depicts an extravagant setting where two lavishly dressed figures are on the verge of intercourse on luxurious looking bedding (Figure 10). They both appear like beautiful courtesans. Their upper bodies are covered by intricate kimono but while their lower halves are exposed, one of them has a vulva and the other an erect penis.

The latter is licking some fingers, a seeming means of lubrication. The person to be penetrated is a younger girl, apparent by her colourful *furisode* (long-sleeved kimono) and abundant hairstyle, whereas the penetrator is wearing a subdued kimono which is a sign of older age. The importance of age is evident in *wakashudō*, a sexual practice between men where the penetrative role is decided by maturity (Schalow, 1991). However, instead of two men engaging in homosexual intercourse, this image was revamped into a lesbian version. Even nowadays, two women engaging in sex continues to be a popular sexual fantasy amongst men (Joyal, Cossette, & Lapierre, 2015: 334). The titillating speculation of "how two women engage in sex" has been solved by giving one of them a phallus. Connections can also be drawn to the contemporary *futanari,* a character in hentai (Japanese drawn pornography) depicted as an attractive female with a phallus.

The second illustration shows one figure pushed to the floor by another and a simple setting of a chamber screen and a booklet on the ground (Figure 11). On the left is the pinned down personage, a man with the bottom of his kimono undone and his penis popping out from the side of his underwear. The dominating character has a feminine hairstyle but wears no make-up and from underneath a colourful kimono appears an erect phallus of equal size to the person being dominated. Behind the latter is an erotic book (*shunpon*), featuring the illustration of a man and woman in missionary position, which is quite the contrary of what is happening here. Being forced into submission by a woman would be a scandalous fantasy, so by giving the dominating party a phallus, this image draws upon the established male homosexual[26] tradition (*nanshoku*).

The third illustration appears like conventional *shunga*, where two figures have sexual intercourse in a spoon position on a blanket in an indoor setting (Figure 12). Although appearing heteronormative, a look at the genital area shows a flaccid phallus peeping its head out from underneath the undergarments (*jiban*), which the feminine character struggles to hide by pulling the garment down and choke-holding the masculine character. Nevertheless, the latter has already uncovered the secret of this beautiful courtesan. This image visualises the fantasy of dominating the body and claiming ownership of its secrets.

[26] Meaning: male/male sex, without the contemporary connotation of homosexuality.

In Kunitora's prints the intersexed character plays a versatile role in erotic fantasies about lesbian, gay and straight relationships by being able to be both penetrator and penetrated. The intersexed character moved away from reality and is placed into the realm of fantasy.

2.6 Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo (1859) *Kaiin Suikōden Sho-hen*

A print from *Kaiin Suikōden Sho-hen* (1859) by Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo returns the intersexed body to the realm of abnormality (Figure 13). It presents a collection of feminine figures with opened kimonos in seated position, publicly displaying their groins and accompanied by a name tag with the 'abnormal' condition of their nether region. These names correspond to Yoshida Hanbei's *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* of ca. 170 years earlier. In the upper middle is the *futanari* character, executed in similar style as Yoshida Hanbei's work. This time, s/he is not the only one hunched over in apparent shame. The other characters also have their bodies curled and gaze down on their genitals in likely embarrassment. This reworking of *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* is an example of continuous fascination with the physical body and the normalising of biology, since it depicts types of genitals that are desirable and undesirable.

2.7 Conclusion

From the 12th to the mid-19th century, the intersexed body was an object of mockery, fascination, pity, fantasy and abnormality. Beginning as a queer personage with a job at the margins of society, the intersex character became a deficient female, but also a controversial erotic fantasy. Artists imagined intersexuality with remarkable consistence, by drawing them as characters with a vulva and a (half) erect phallus sprouting from above or between the labia. This stable depiction contrasts to pre-modern European imageries, where, depending on the religious and political climate, the intersexed person (hermaphrodite) was envisioned like a beautiful androgynous being or an unsightly conjoined twin-like monster (Figure 14). Although the intersexed character was not portrayed as a literal monster in pre-modern Japan, s/he was at best an outcast, a deficient female or a sexual fantasy.

Conclusion

Summary

Bodies mattered in pre-modern Japan. Masculine bodies were granted the act of androgyny through the institutions of *wakashu* and *onnagata*, which feminine bodies struggled to attain. Izumo no Okuni developed kabuki as a gender-bending performance and although she often played the male lead, she became reduced to her female biology as women were banned off-stage. Moreover, the androcentric belief that Okuni must have been assisted by a man to establish kabuki has continued from the seventeenth century until now (Gabrovska, 2015: 392). It shows how the feminine body is always subjugated to the masculine body. There were *haori geisha* (geisha cross-dressing as male), whose acts sparked the popular imagination, but they were grossly under-represented in comparison to *wakashu* and *onnagata*. Besides, how are images of *haori geisha* recognised if not for some erotic appeal. Imagine in *shunga* where a depiction of their biology says: "this handsome young man is, in fact, a woman!" It serves to remind that, youth was eventually the element that carried most sex appeal. Once past the age of adulthood, strict gender roles kicked in where women were expected to live indoors and men worked outdoors. This made the feminine body dependent and controllable. So, what happened to bodies that defied the sexual norms? In the 12th century the scroll *Yamai no Sōshi* appeared, with the image of a *futanari* as an absurd sexual defiant. It depicts two intruders laughing as one of them is exposing the genitals of a sleeping intersexed character. The character is a soothsayer, which had become a marginalised profession. Essentially, the message says it is 'all-right' to mock those who do not conform. The book *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* from 1686 was a sex encyclopaedia by the artist Yoshida Hanbei, in which one section deals with normal and abnormal bodies. It also showcases the *futanari*, but this time as a malformed being amongst female characters with varied vulva's. Rather than an object of humour, the intersexed body is presented as undesirable. A work from one and a half century later by Keisai Eisen tells a similar story with an additional sense of pity. In the *Makura Bunko* appears an intersexed character who is no longer referred to as *futanari*, but *henjō nanshi* instead. The character has shaved eyebrows, which is an indicator for married women.

Nevertheless, a troubled expression at the groin implies great displeasure with a phallus sprouting from between the legs. In 1826, only three years after *Makura Bunko*, Utagawa Kunitora presented the intersexed character as a sexual fantasy in a book called *Otsumori Sakazuki*. This pornographic work provokes thought on sexuality by situating the intersexed body in lesbian, homosexual and heterosexual situations. It can be considered an early example of the contemporary *futanari*, who has become a popular character in the *hentai* (animated porn) industry and is portrayed as an attractive (often young) female with a penis. In spite of that, the intersexed body also continued to be deemed a sexual abnormality, evidenced by Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo's *Kaiin Suikōden Sho-hen* from 1859, which is a reinterpretation of Yoshida Hanbei's *Kōshoku Kinmō-zui* from 1686. Unlike the earlier version which presented a single character per page, this version bunched most of them together in an assembly of hunched over people inspecting their genitalia. This work is practically a look-book for bodies one should and should not want. Foucault asserted that the intersexed individual was able to live between the sexes until the arrival of modern medicine. This claim was refuted by Ruth Gilbert who found that sexual ambiguity always generated a confused response, whether it was embodied or enacted, anatomical or erotic. In pre-modern Japan, enacted androgyny was celebrated under prerequisite that the person was a male youth and/or beautiful. Someone with an intersex condition was often discovered around adulthood and subsequent marriage (Gaikotsu, 1922: 360). This would remove them from any desirable category, since they lost their youthful beauty but could neither attain the Confucian ideal of becoming a dutiful wife and mother. Unlike the feminine body which needs ownership by a masculine body, the intersex body has no owner and thus becomes an unfortunate subject of enquiry for the public sphere. S/he can be ridiculed, pitied, medicalised and eroticised. When a baby is born with genitals that do not have the size of a clitoris (under 1 cm) or a penis (above 2.5 cm), doctors often assign a sex through surgical intervention, a practice which continues to this day. Many intersex people share the traumatic experience of feeling dehumanised, but where they have a voice now, the pre-modern intersex individual has been muted by history and is solely represented through the whispers of images and words of others.

Future work

The representation of intersexuality in pre-modern Japan is broader than images alone. There are several written sources dealing with intersexed characters as well, which are worthwhile for further investigation. They include for instance: *Honkoku Wakan Kiji Henjō-nanshi no Setsu* by Hata Ginkei, "The Tale of the Dragon King's Daughter" found in the Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* and a passage in *Kiryo Manroku* by Bakin Kyokutei. Another interesting subject would be the evolution of discourse for intersexuality from pre-modern times until now. In conclusion, this research has focused on visual material to present attitudes towards intersexed bodies in pre-modern Japan, which is only the tip of the iceberg that is the history of intersexuality.

Figures

Figure 1 Magnus Hirschfeld. Wall of Sexual Transition. (Herrn and Taylor, 2018, p.64)

Hermaphroditen 'hermaphrodites' (upper left corner)

Androgynen 'forms of androgyny' (upper right corner)

Uranier 'homosexuals' (lower right corner)

Transvestiten 'transvestites' (lower left corner)

Figure 2 Miyagawa Isshō (1736–44) Bewhiskered Man Importuning a Wakashu.

(Sebastian Izzard collection.)

Figure 3 Unkown (12th CE) Futanari in Yamai no Sōshi.

(Courtesy of the Kyoto National Museum)

Figure 4 Yoshida Hanbei (1687) Kōshoku Kai Awase.
(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

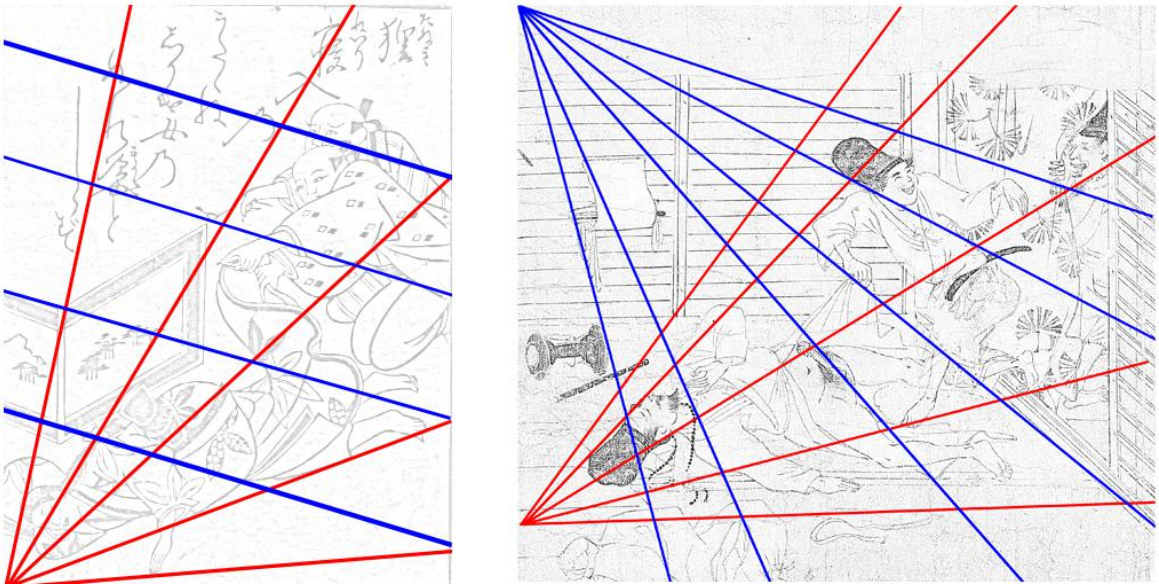

Figure 5 Visual analysis.

Yoshida Hanbei (1687) Koshoku Kai-awase and Unknown (12th CE) Yamai no Sōshi.

Primary visual path (red) Secondary visual path (blue)

Figure 6 Yoshida Hanbei (1686) Futanari in Kōshoku Kinmō-zui
(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Figure 7 Yoshida Hanbei (1686) Jō-tsubi in Kōshoku Kinmō-zui
(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Figure 8 Keisai Eisen (1822-23) Henjō Nanshi in Makura Bunko
(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

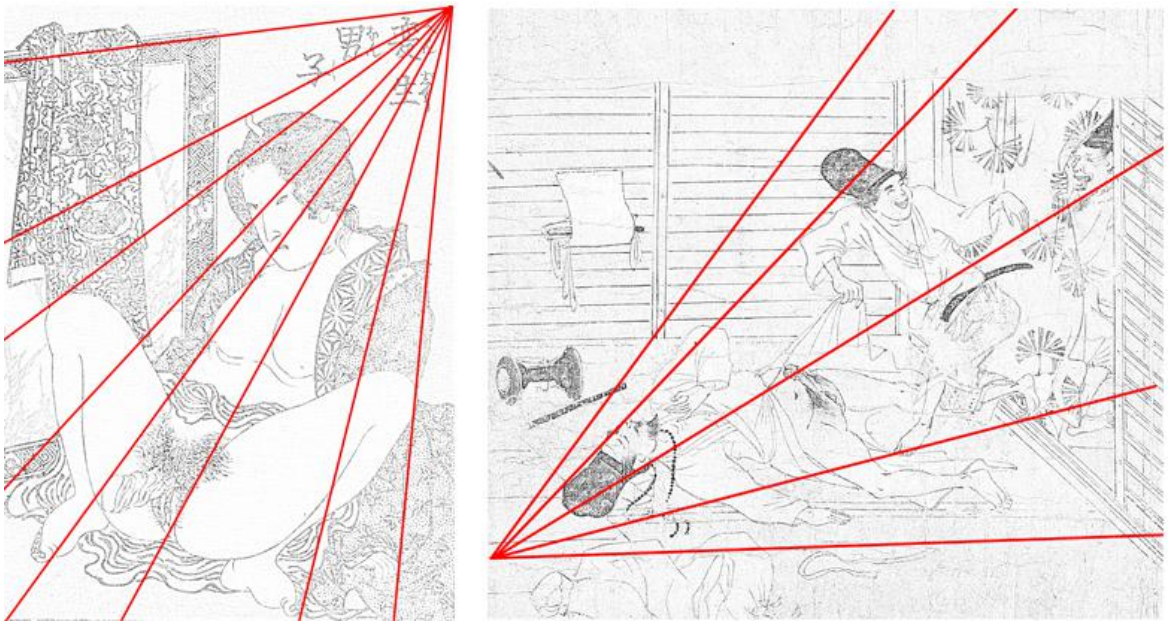

Figure 9 Visual analysis.

Keisai Eisen (1822-23) Makura Bunko and Unknown (12th CE) Yamai no Sōshi.

Visual path (red)

Figure 10 Utagawa Kunitora (1826) Otsumori Sakazuki

(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Figure 11 Utagawa Kunitora (1826) Otsumori Sakazuki

(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Figure 12 Utagawa Kunitora (1826) Otsumori Sakazuki

(Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Figure 13 Ryōsuitei Tanekiyo (1859) Kaiin Suikōden Sho-hen
(Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 14 Emblema XXXIII. Hermaphroditus mortuo fimilis, in tenebris jacens, inge indiget. (Hermaphrodite on grill) (1687)

(Courtesy of Cornell: Images from the Rare Book and Manuscript Collections)

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