The character of wakashu in Ihara Saikaku's Nanshoku ōkagami

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Introduction

While for some in modern times it may be tempting from a Western perspective to view same-sex relationships as a largely new emergence, apart from perhaps the Greeks, this could not be further from the truth. In many different cultures across the globe traditions including same-sex practices have appeared, and it is part of the pre-modern Japanese tradition that this thesis will examine. Often called *nanshoku*, it was predominantly male-focused and based on a relationship with an older and a younger partner with set social roles attached to them.

This research will look at this topic not from historical records, but rather from the perspective of popular literature, specifically the book *Nanshoku ōkagami*, published in 1687 by Ihara Saikaku. It is a collection of short stories and as such it can give interesting insights in how different male-male relationships, especially with a certain type of younger partner called *wakashu*, were imagined and portrayed at the time. While for ease of reading Paul Gordon Schalow's translation was principally used for this research, the original Japanese text was consulted in cases such as specific linguistic issues or when the exact terminology usage matters.

Firstly a general overview of its place in Japanese history will be given, placing the using sources like Gary P. Leupp's *Male Colors* and Gregory Pflugfelder's *Cartographies of Desire*. For a more specific overview of the topic of *nanshoku* and *wakashu* as well as the *Nanshoku ōkagami* itself Schalow's introduction to his translation has proven invaluable. This is followed by a study of the contents themselves which will focus mainly on the characterization of the *wakashu* in the stories.

Finally the work as a representative of its genre will be compared to an earlier genre of *chigo monogatari* which starred a different type of boy lover which is in some ways similar to the *wakashu*. Here will be made use of, amongst others, Sachi Schmidt-Hori's research on the genre.

When approaching this subject, there are multiple aspects to consider. One of the most important is the point that *nanshoku* is not to be equated with 'homosexuality', a term that first appeared in late 19th century European psychology and have cultural connotations attached to them and/or are technically

inaccurate regarding the topic. Joshua S. Mostow writes that this description of the concepts and practices around *wakashu* as homosexual is a too narrow consideration that affects works like Leupp's *Male Colors*.[1] For this reason, the undefined use of terms such as "bisexual" or "homosexual" to directly describe the people in the discussed relationships is avoided in this thesis. Instead, more objective terms like male-male relationships will be used. Despite social connotations being attached to these terms in modern times, this essay will use 'top' and 'bottom', both used as a noun and a verb, as a neutral term to refer to the different roles in these relationships. This choice is mainly because of the various unwieldy or usable but technically inaccurate alternatives used in literature, such as active vs passive, inserter vs insertee etc. It is impossible to meaningfully apply modern gender theory to historical people, if simply because they were not aware of the terms or had any way to identify with them. Nevertheless, this thesis will endeavour to shed light on the interesting social position and gender implication of these types of boys while attempting to steer clear of imposing modern views on the topic. Additionally, to reduce any misrepresentations caused by translating, this thesis will explain multiple Japanese terms yet render them untranslated.

[1] Mostow. "The Gender of Wakashu and the Grammar of Desire," p 49.

Edo period *nanshoku*

In the seventeenth century, rapid urbanization led to the rise of the merchant class and as such a greater number of wealthy commoners. This economic change was partly made possible by a period of peace after more than a century of political instability and civil war. The increased urban wealth made it possible for the general populace to indulge in more leisure pursuits apart from work. This culture gave rise to the idea of '*ukiyo*' or 'floating world', a fleeting world of urban pleasure. A term originally from Buddhism describing the transient and impermanent nature of life and the world as a whole, it came to describe the everyday business and enjoyments.[2] Another effect of this was an increase of education and literacy among the samurai as well as the general populace.

In his contested work *Male Colors*, Gary P. Leupp writes about the relation between these trends and the emergence of prostitution in cities.[3] As marriage was most often a strategic or economic affair, it was not uncommon for people with sufficient means to visit tea-houses and brothels in specially appointed neighbourhoods for romantic or erotic pleasure.[4] The Yoshiwara district in Edo is a well-known example, but in the three great cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka there were numerous other similar districts, some of which specialized in male prostitutes. Love or sexual relations outside male-female relationships seems not to have been taboo, ostracized or seen as inherently strange at the time, going from its prevalence in popular culture. Leupp writes the influx of people moving to the city was at first predominantly male and led to a large gender imbalance. This may have influenced the prevalence, or at least the availability, of male-male sexual relations. This notion has been brought into question by other scholars, however, as they point out that a lack of women does not necessarily lead to such sexual practices and vice versa.[5]

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[2] Schalow, *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, p. 14.
[3] Leupp, *Male Colors*, pp. 58-62.
[4] An interesting point Leupp notes is that "there seems to have been little relationship between marriage and homosexual involvements" and that "a buoyant bisexuality seems to have been the norm among the townsmen." (p. 64). This happens to be a problematic way of phrasing, though, apart from this assessment.
[5] Schalow, review of *Male Colors* by Gary P. Leupp, p. 196; Murphy, review of *Male Colors* by Gary P. Leupp.

Literary developments

Following this new urban cultural trend, the floating world and the people in them started to appear in the media of woodblock prints, *ukiyo-e*, as well as in a new genre of literature, later called *ukiyo-zōshi*, "books of the floating world".[6] One of the pioneers of this new genre was Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693).[7] Originally a merchant from Osaka, he became a *haikai* (linked verse) poet in the 1660s. In the 1680s he branched out to humorous vernacular fiction, publishing multiple books about the licensed pleasure quarters and people in them, which would be his breakthrough with the major public. These earlier books are more specifically in the category of *kōshokubon* 好色本, literally "books about a fondness for colours", which deals with stories about love and sex, mainly in the pleasure quarters.

Saikaku published multiple such books about the lives of characters and their dealings in the field of love. His debut book, *Koshoku ichidai otoko* (The life of an amorous man), follows a man who is determined to live his life to the fullest and experience everything there is in the field of sexuality. This includes dalliances with both men and women, starting at the age of 7 to 60, after which he travels to the mythical Isle of Women, symbolising his death. Although his earliest books generally featured only one focal protagonist throughout the work, some of his works contained a number of separate shorter stories. One of the most famous ones of these is the *Nanshoku ōkagami* 男色大鏡, translated by Schalow as *The Great Mirror of Male Love*. It is a collection of forty short stories about a certain category of young male prevalent in male-male relationships, the *wakashu*, which will be discussed at length later. The work falls in the more specific category of *shudō*, a shortening of the term *wakashudō* 若衆道, "way of the *wakashu*", and a term for the practice of, as well as a literary genre about, relationships with such young males.

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[6] The term itself would not appear until the early 18th century, but later definitions would include this earlier genre as well.

[7] While due to Japanese naming conventions Ihara would be the family name, Saikaku is generally referred to by scholars by his personal name. Ihara Saikaku was one of his multiple pennames.

Nanshoku and *wakashu*

The term 色 *shoku* or *shiki*, meaning 'colour', as used in the title comes originally from Buddhism and refers to the world of physical forms to which beings, such as humans, could exhibit desire (often erotic in nature).[8] This would inadvertently hinder their progress to enlightenment as that would require the rejection of all earthly desires. The degree in which sex is prohibited varies from tradition, sect, and interpretation of scripture but it is generally seen as negative. As will be later discussed, however, male-male sexual relations in monastic context in Japan were nevertheless far from rare. In common non-religious parlance, it became a term to speak about erotic interests in a more sophisticated and erudite way.

Nanshoku 男色, literally 'male colours', is a term used for love towards men or more specifically, adolescents. It is used as complementary or opposite to *joshoku* 女色, 'female colours', meaning love towards women. What is interesting to note is that both of these terms are invariably used from the perspective of adult men. *Nanshoku* is men loving boys, while *joshoku* is men loving women.[9] Women loving men were not discussed as much, if at all, in this genre. There are singular instances in which *nanshoku* is used to describe a woman with a preference for *wakashu* – Gregory Pflugfelder writes of a certain comic poem with this idea – but the fact that this is used for humorous purposes illustrates all the more that it was likely not at all common.[10] Similarly, the concept of women loving women seems to be even less represented in literature. This is to be expected in a male-focused genre such as *shudō*, but in other branches of contemporary art the lack is apparent as well. In contrast to the modern Western idea of both male-male love and female-female love being 'homosexual', female-female love would be regarded as something wholly unrelated to male-male love at the time. A reason for this lack

[8] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, p. 25.
[9] Ibid., pp. 24-5.
[10] Ibid., p. 27, p. 29.

may also be that the market was usually dominated by men, both on the producing end as well as the consumer end, leaving little room for female-female discourse.[11]

Despite their religious origins, the terms *nanshoku* and *joshoku* would likely be associated in 17th century Edo more with the culture of the floating world than with religious teachings.[12] In a multitude of forms, ranging from literature to poetry, prints, theatre and brothels themselves, these types of commercialised love would be widely available.

When talking about the term *wakashu* it is important to make a distinction in definition. The word can have very different meanings and connotations in different contexts and timeframes. According to Joshua Mostow, the definition of *wakashu* 若衆 is in broad terms threefold. In the 15th century, the term is first described as simply meaning (1) 'young male' or 'youth', being the characters' literal meaning. By the early Edo period it had evolved within samurai and monastic society into a term for (2) a younger male object of affection to an adult male.[13] In this capacity, he would serve as a junior partner in a relationship with an (usually) older *nenja* 念者 (literally 'feeling or desiring person'), who would often be his social superior, acting as the senior. In the early 17th century, the term subsequently became associated with (3) adolescent and young adult boys working as sex workers. *Nanshoku ōkagami* is divided into two parts with the *wakashu* in question broadly following the two latter definitions, respectively.

One of the most important things that distinguished a *wakashu* was his hairstyle. Over the course of the early Edo period, it became mandatory for adult men of most social classes to have a shaved pate. As a symbol for their path to coming of age, a *wakashu* would have parts of his hair shaved compared to a child, but (part of) his forelocks would remain.[14] This was seen as one of the more erotic aspects of a boy in *shudō*, as a symbol of his youthfulness, and shaving off these forelocks would be the part

[11] Ibid., p. 24.
[12] Ibid., p. 26.
[13] Mostow, *A third gender,* p. 19.
[14] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, pp. 32-3.

of the coming of age ceremony, or *genpuku*. There were other aspects to it, a change in clothing style being among them, but the cutting of the locks is often used as a metonym for a boy formally becoming an adult. This also meant that that man would no longer be an eligible subject of desire within the confines of *shudō*. While it was not uncommon for adult males in Edo society to love a *wakashu*, it seems to have been abnormal to have a relationship with another adult male. It does not necessarily mean that this was not done in practice, but it is outside of the purview of *shudō* and *nanshoku* as the related literature considers only the relationships with boys.[15]

One of the more extensively discussed topics concerning *wakashu* in *shudō* was the age limits of the category. For instance, it is not clear when exactly a boy would be counted as a *wakashu*, it being a transitive state between childhood and adulthood. Although there was a clear literal cut-off point for a *wakashu*, there did not seem to be a distinct age at which a boy would become one. Pflugfelder writes that the youngest attested age would be seven, while other sources would find twelve or fourteen to still be young and unrefined.[16] What is interesting is that children were generally not eroticized, in stark contrast to *wakashu*.

Similarly, it was very much disputed at what age the category ended. Individually, it was the cutting of the hair, as described above, but the moment when a boy would do this varied. Some sources state late teens, many stating nineteen, others say early twenties or even thirties.[17] This limit was generally let go in practice in relation to the later grouping of *wakashu* as kabuki actors and male sex workers, however, which allowed them to continue to apply their trade at later ages. Still, Saikaku mentions that "[n]o kabuki actor can earn money much beyond the four or five years he is at his peak of beauty."[18]

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[15] Ibid., p. 33 note 23.
[16] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[17] Ibid., p. 34.
[18] Schalow, *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, p. 281; Saikaku, *Ihara saikaku-shū*, p. 569.

Historical tradition of *nanshoku* and *wakashu*

According to legend, the introduction of male-male sexual practices within monastic communities, or even in general, to Japan was due to Kūkai or Kōbō Daishi (774-835), founder of the Shingon school of Buddhism. While very unlikely to be factual, in the 17th century, it was a common understanding in popular discourse and the idea did have an influence on how the practice was seen by association.[19] The fact that an well-known Buddhist monk as well as the famous temple complex and pilgrimage destination of Koya-san, founded by him, is tied to *nanshoku* in such a way gave it a certain legitimacy. Although sexual desire was doctrinally discouraged, sexual contact with women was seen as worse than contact with boys. In an 18th-century collection of stories it is explained that the latter is not as bad because (1) the boy will grow up and become less attractive, so the desire is temporary, (2) no children could come from it, thus lessening the earthly connections and (3) according to both Buddhist and Confucian doctrine, women are described as lower beings.[20]

The practice of *nanshoku* in Japan had been present in samurai and monastic society for centuries by the 17th century. However, *wakashu* in the second definition were more of a staple of samurai society rather than monastic, with page boy or retainer and his lord as a frequent example of the dynamic. This relationship would be in part to educate the young man, in some ways similar to the custom of pederasty in ancient Greece. Pflugfelder writes that "popular discourse construed only the inserter role in anal intercourse as intrinsically pleasurable", while the bottom would let this be done to him "only out of duty, affection, coercion, or the prospect of material reward."[21] As such, the *wakashu* was not expected to have (sexual) desires in the relationship, this in contrast to the *nenja*, hence the term meaning "desiring person". On the other hand, Leupp argues that the role of bottom carried no social stigma, partly because the role was based on age rather than social status.[22] However, this aspect is less

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[19] For a more in-depth examination of this idea, among others in *Nanshoku ōkagami*, see "Kukai and the Tradition of Male Love in Japanese Buddhism" Paul Schalow, in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, 1992 pp. 215-30
[20] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, p. 74
[21] Ibid., pp. 41-2.
[22] Leupp, *Male Colors*, p. 172.

relevant when taking into account that sometimes male sex workers were older than their clients and invariably bottomed when engaging in male-male sex. A *shudō* work described the duty of a *wakashu* in the quote: "No youth, even one who is happy without a lover, should refuse a man who expresses a sincere interest in him".[23] This would be beneficial to the *nenja*, for obvious reasons, which might make it unsurprising that this sentiment was written from the perspective of an adult writer. The fact that this sentiment was spread in literature may even imply that *wakashu* were sometimes reluctant to enter a relationship.

As described earlier, in monastic circles it was not uncommon for (predominantly Buddhist) monks or priests to have relations with boys. In popular fiction related to *nanshoku*, including the *Nanshoku ōkagami*, priests would often be depicted as "one of that culture's prime connoisseurs".[24] However, this would not be in the same construction as with samurai. Rather, at least as depicted in literature, it was more common for priests and higher monks to take acolytes as lovers, called *chigo*. Literally and originally meaning "child", *chigo* were in this context young Buddhist acolyte boys from elite families who would usually have a sexual relationship with their master—a priest, abbot or other religious official. In a more general sense, it was also used as a term for "younger partner of male homoerotic relationships", much like a *wakashu*.[25] Additionally they would likewise be an object of sexual desire by men, and would be until the moment they reached adulthood. Appearing in the early fourteenth century until around the sixteenth, the genre of *chigo monogatari* (*chigo* stories) recounts stories of relationships of *chigo* with (usually) a monk.[26] This is by no means the only literary genre in which *chigo* appear, but being specifically about this category and therefore the most relevant to this research, it will be the only one examined later in this thesis.

In popular Edo literature, male-male love was not seen as abnormal or frowned upon, provided it was within the usual social norms, at least. Rather, it was part of the more general category of literature

[23] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, p. 56.
[24] Ibid., p. 26.
[25] Schmidt-Hori, *Idolized Boys*, p3.
[26] Ibid, p46.

dealing with sexual themes.[27] However, there were literary debates discussing the merits of boys and women and the accompanied type of love that would come with it. Schalow argues that the fact that these debates exists indicates that *shudō* was practiced by a minority of men and had to defend and justify itself in the face of love with women.[28]

In general, a man was expected to shift (mainly) to *joshoku* upon marriage, although visiting boys would be accepted when acting as a *nenja*.[29] Though this shift would appear logical, as marriage would be with a woman, it may be less obvious than one would think. The literary genre that was the female counterpart of *shudō*, *nyodō*, would generally not be used to describe the love relationships between a man and his wife, but rather the more 'sophisticated' pastime of visiting courtesans in the pleasure quarters.[30] Curiously, this association with expressly commercial love is not necessarily made with regards to *shudō*. Of course, as can be gleaned from the *Nanshoku ōkagami* itself, there are male sex workers represented in the literature. However, the more private variety of male-male love as seen in the first part constitutes *nanshoku* as much as the second part, albeit not commercial.

As noted before, the *wakashu* would usually be the junior in the relationship, if not in age then at least in dynamic. Social status or rank would not play a great role in this dichotomy. Although it was most often between adult men and young to adolescent boys, this was not necessarily the case. For example, in Saikaku's *The Life of an Amorous Man* there is a scene in which the young protagonist purchases the services of a *wakashu* who turns out to be 10 years his senior. The customer still acts in the top role, however, as he acts as the *nenja* in the situation. Pflugfelder explains that a *wakashu* can develop into a *nenja* as he ages, but not the reverse, as the latter would be an inherently later stage in a man's life than the former.[31]

Acting as sex workers, *wakashu* played an interesting dual role. They could have sexual relations with men, in which they would invariably play the bottom role. However, if dealing with women, they

[27] Ibid., p. 6.
[28] Ibid., p. 7.
[29] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, p. 38.
[30] Ibid., p. 27.
[31] Ibid., pp. 37-8.

would be the top. From a gender viewpoint, the *wakashu* is therefore in a remarkable position. On the one hand, he is biologically male and will grow to be an adult man. On the other, he is in a transient state that could be seen as androgynous in the frame of his services. For example, in a story in the *Nanshoku ōkagami*, a kabuki player is invited by a number of women for entertainment, but he is taken by a brother who initially believes he is a woman.

The position of the *wakashu* has by some been likened to the concept of a third gender, a category outside of the binary of men and women. This viewpoint has spurred some discussion, however. As the title may suggest, Mostow argues in *A Third Gender: Beautiful Youth in Japanese Edo-period Prints and Paintings* (2016) that *wakashu* could indeed be seen as a third gender, if based in the context of sexual practices, rather than identity. Pflugfelder, however, writes in *Cartographies of Desire* (1999) that it would be misleading to do such a thing "since membership in the *wakashu* category was only temporary."[32] He sees the *wakashu* as male in terms of anatomy as well as broadly masculine. What the *wakashu* is not is virile, i.e. "having the characteristics of an adult male".[33] He does note that the closest *wakashu* could be with regards to a "third gender" is as a actor sex worker, who would adopt elements of both masculine and feminine appearance and presence, yet this too is ultimately temporary. Leupp (1995) does not seem to explicitly take a side, or ponder the idea of a third gender specifically, but does consider the construction of *wakashu* gender status and a "fascination with androgyny" throughout the Edo period.[34]

[32] Ibid., p. 36.
[33] Ibid., p. 35.
[34] Leupp, *Male Colors*, p. 172.

Ihara Saikaku and *Nanshoku ōkagami*

Saikaku was originally from Osaka, and it was here that he had started as a writer, catering mainly to an Osaka and Kyoto audience.[35] While these cities were smaller than Edo, Kyoto was the birthplace of kabuki, and both had a large kabuki theatre scene and consequently a large amount of actor sex workers. In Kyoto, these theatre districts were mostly along the dry riverbed of the Kamo river, while in Osaka it would usually be the Dōtombori district along the eponymous canal. In both cases, rivers and particularly their beds were used as a shorthand for these quarters.

Although the writer was stationed in Osaka, and the second is placed mainly in the theatre districts of Kyoto and Osaka, the first half is placed mainly in Edo. Additionally, Saikaku seems to imply in the first chapter that it was written in Edo as well, despite the setting of the second half.[36] According to Shirane, this move was due to the fact that the shogun and subsequently more samurai had developed an affection for "young boys as lovers and making Edo the place for male-male love among samurai." Regardless, Edo was also an important market as well as a way for Saikaku to broaden his audience to include the male samurai there.[37]

Kabuki had originated as a form of dance theatre in Kyoto in 1603 and was initially performed by women as well as men. It became famous as a form of entertainment and became early on associated with prostitution with an increasingly ribald nature of the plays. Sex workers could use this medium to advertise their services and there even plays emerged that had a prostitute and her client as main topic. In 1629, female kabuki was banned by the government because of its eroticism. This was taken over by *wakashu*-kabuki, with young boys playing the roles of women. This had a similar effect, however, and the medium was used for male sex work instead. Though it was not technically a requirement to

[35] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 14.
[36] Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, p. 44; Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 3.
[37] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 13.

actually be part of a theatre to be counted as such, kabuki apprentices called *kagema* would provide similar services. This term and kabuki *wakashu* are often conflated, though.

Because of this reason, *wakashu*-kabuki was itself banned in 1652. Only men that were officially of age were allowed to play roles in kabuki. What followed was *yarō,* "male", kabuki, played by often still young men only. Players who specialised in the roles of women were called *onnagata* and were most often young and beautiful men. After the *wakashu* were banned from performing, the actors who were not technically *wakashu* anymore would often be depicted wearing a cloth on their head to conceal the fact that they no longer had their youthful forelocks.

Some of the stories in the *Nanshoku ōkagami* are set in a time when some laws were not yet enacted or not as strict, so it is unlikely to reflect the situation in 1687. This seems mostly true for the samurai stories, at least. As the named *wakashu* mentioned in the actor stories are virtually all based on or inspired by contemporary actors, as far as can be verified, it is easier to place these stories in a certain timeframe.

Sometimes, works were put in a religious or literary framing to legitimate the writing itself or gain authority of knowledge, other times they would mimic the names of well-known classics.[38] For instance, the term *(waka)shudō* mirrored other cultural terms with dō 道 'the way (of…)', imagining

the loving of boys as a noble pursuit and worthy of cultivation. *Nanshoku ōkagami* itself is an example of this too. It refers to the *Ōkagami* (the Great Mirror), an early 12th century historical tale. He was not the first to reference this title, however. Fujimoto Kizan had published a work called *Shikido Ōkagami* (The great mirror of the way of love) nine years earlier, so a certain sexual link to the classic work had already been made. In fact, he himself referenced it in *Shoen Ōkagami*, a work with a similar format, only a few years prior. The audience would likely have picked up on the reference to the classical work, but also to these similarly titled works.

[38] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, pp. 50-1.

Books in this genre included didactic manuals for how to behave when courting a boy. Although these works were read by *wakashu* as well, they were mainly meant for *nenja*. The texts were written from the perspective of the latter, with an often sagely or masterly narrator offering his indispensable knowledge. For *wakashu* readers it was a way to emulate famous beauties for the pleasure of the *nenja*. Many of the idealised *wakashu* would always put their *nenja*'s pleasure before their own. For *nenja* readers, it was a way to develop a standard by comparison to said beauties as well as a way to 'groom', 'raise' or 'educate' a *wakashu*.[39] Furthermore, it educated the *nenja* how to be a connoisseur and how to compare to other adult males and peers, and to prevent shame or embarrassment. What would be considered good and bad would be decided by the knowledgeable master narrator.

While *shudō* was initially on boy love in general, it became more concerned with professional sex workers. Catalogues describing and reviewing specific actors appeared, discussing not only their thespian skills but also their beauty, sophistication, manner and sexual skill. Schalow explains in his introduction how both the ways of loving female and male prostitutes, *nyodō* and *shudō*, respectively, were culturally seen as deriving from classical sources. The first was seen as a reflection of courtly love as exemplified in works like *Genji Monogatari*, while the second was present among samurai and Buddhist clergy as a tradition described in literature.[40]

In the *Nanshoku ōkagami*, Saikaku depicts two types of men engaging in *shudō*; 小人好き *shōjin-zuki* (connoisseurs of boys) and 女嫌い *onna-girai* (woman-haters).[41] The former would have interest in boys, but were often married and could have relations with women as well. The latter, as the name suggests, were not married and would not have relations with women, focusing only on boys. In the work, Saikaku focuses on this second category rather than the first. The characters in the stories are more than once focused in life on the pursuit of *wakashu* alone, spending all their time and money on this, sometimes even to their ultimate detriment or downfall. Furthermore, in multiple stories the

[39] Ibid., p. 54.
[40] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, pp. 1-2.
[41] Ibid., p. 4.

characters voice negative opinions about women and loving them, especially when compared to boys. There are stories in which a *nenja* does have a wife, such as *Tears in a Paper Shop*, but in this story the husband neglects his marital duties in favour of the boy he has fallen in love with, much to the displeasure of his wife and family.[42] While this may be explained as misogyny on the author's part, it could also be seen as elaborate praise of *shudō* for an audience partial to it.

[42] Story 5.1. Schalow, *Great Mirror* p. 189-195. Specific instance on p. 194.

Analysis of *Nanshoku ōkagami*

To reach an overview of how the *wakashu* was used in this work, an analysis of the contents are in order. Due to the number of stories and the scope of this research they will not all be examined individually in detail, but rather the apparent similarities, motifs and themes in them will be analysed to compose a more general characterisation of the *wakashu* as a character. For clarity's sake, the book is structured following Schalow's terminology used in the book: it starts with a short preface, the rest of the work is divided in two parts. Each of these contains four sections, which contains five stories each with forty in total.

While *shudō* was present among both samurai and monks, the majority of the stories in the first part seems to focus on samurai. It may be that Saikaku had more sources on this topic, or made a deliberate choice in theme, but it is curious. That being said, it must be mentioned that of the two halves, Saikaku had more experience with the matter discussed in the second part and had to rely on written sources to aid in his samurai half.[43] This also may help explain why these stories are generally less recent compared to the kabuki stories, a scene with which he had ample familiarity. As most of his audience would be townsfolk, it is likely that they, too, would be more acquainted with kabuki actors than with samurai. While Saikaku was not involved in the theatre himself, it was not uncommon for actors to engage in the poetry genre of haikai, a comic and playful linked verse, in which he had been active since the 1660s.[44] Some actors mentioned in the book were even students of his in this craft and had work cited in his poetry compilations.

Shirane writes that Saikaku likely set out on writing *Nanshoku ōkagami* focusing on male-male love involving kabuki actors, but was drawn into the traditions of the samurai.[45] Although different altogether in perspective to the kabuki *wakashu*, hence the stark division between them, they offer

[43] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, pp. 24-6.
[44] Ibid., p. 36.
[45] Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, p. 121.

another view on aspects of male-male love, as well as draw in a new audience. The fact that a number of following books by Saikaku are about samurai themes supports this claim.

Preface

In the short preface to his work, Saikaku describes the mythical origin of boy love. He refers to the *Nihon Shoki*, a 8th-century Japanese document chronicling Japanese history, both mythical and historical. Here he stresses the fact that in the first three generations of the creation myth, there were only male entities, only for female deities to appear afterwards. The author seems dismayed by the latter. He writes that women may be fit companions for older men for whom youths are not an option, but for men in their prime they are no good. Schalow argues that this misogyny should not be taken at face value, however, nor should the preface as a whole be taken seriously. Within the oeuvre of Saikaku, *Nanshoku ōkagami* is an exaggerated praise of *nanshoku* for an audience partial to the topic. An earlier work from 1684, *Shoen Ōkagami*, was written in a format similar to this one and contained 40 short stories as well, but focused entirely on *nyōdō* instead of *shudō* and implied its superiority instead. Schalow points at evidence that these two works were intended by Saikaku as a pair.[46]

The reference to the Japanese creation myth is also insincere. Books of a comical nature would sometimes use references to classical works, *Ōkagami* included, to deride the work referenced or give the work of fiction an air of authority by association. At times Saikaku goes so far as to mock this practice itself by making outlandish claims in service of conveying the superiority of *nanshoku*. The *Nihon Shoki*, for instance, describes the god and goddess Izanagi and Izanami marrying and procreating. This aspect had been referenced by works about *nyōdō* to support their claim that loving women was more sophisticated if even the gods were created in mixed pairs.[47] Saikaku uses three

[46] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 17.
[47] Ibid., p. 8.

primordial deities only described as male that existed prior to these pairs to make fun of this argument while at the same time turning it around to make it work for his own angle.

The language used and references made in the text say a lot about the readership of these books. Although it was popular and widely available, there are some aspects that would require some degree of education. As stated above, the title is partly taken from a classical work of 12th century literature. Not only is it a reference to this work, though. The title can also be interpreted to mean 'models' or 'paragons' exemplifying the ideal meaning of *nanshoku*, to be mirrored.[48] This would either mean characteristics for *nenja* to expect or to look for in boys, or for the boys themselves to cultivate. This is underlined by the subtitle Schalow translates as "The Custom of Boy Love in Our Land."

Apart from that, the book contains many allusions and references to various works of poetry and theatre, even disregarding the fact that the second part is about actors. Similarly, there are numerous comparisons to historical events and people. This would strongly imply that not only would the readers have to/likely be familiar with famous actors of the previous years, but also with the corpus of Japanese and at times Chinese poetry, stories, and history to a certain degree to grasp the full breadth of the work. However, the fact that this book was partly meant for an educated samurai audience, together with the fact that due to the rising literacy among commoners access to classical works had been unprecedented, would mean that this was unlikely to be an insurmountable leap. It is outside of the scope of this thesis to discuss how much literary reference there was in his earlier works, however.

[48] Ibid., p. 4.

Part 1

Initially reminiscent of the preface, the first introductory chapter starts with praising *nanshoku* and quoting all sorts of famous historical examples to support the author's claims. That these examples are at times tenuous or outright factually incorrect seems of no real concern. The writer examines the differences between love for the two sexes by posing a few dozen questions with two seemingly barely related options, one with a woman and one with a *wakashu*. The following conclusion is that in all instances the latter is obviously far more desirable.

While not explicitly apparent everywhere, characters, especially (sometimes self-professed) 'connoisseurs of boys' at times make the point seen in the introduction that boys are the only thing worth attention as opposed to women. While there are only a few who are actively repulsed by the idea of loving women, and there are multiple stories in which characters do have relationships with women, boys are generally presented as superior in every regard, as posed in the introductory chapter.

By far most couples are not of the same age, which is in line with the expectation of a *wakashu* and a *nenja*. Most *nenja* are in their twenties or thirties, but at times there is a larger age difference. In almost all stories, however, even in case of a small age difference, it is made (sometimes implicitly) clear that the older lover is considered an adult. For instance, in *The Sickbed no Medicine Could Cure* the 16-year-old is described as *bidō* 美童 or "beautiful child", while the 18-year-old is called a 若き者 or "young man".[49] This would imply that the latter would already be considered of age. However, in *The ABCs of Boy Love*[50] two children who do not seem different in age or standing have a relationship with each other. This is the only story that comes to mind, however, in which two explicit peers rather than two males both alike in age and age category have a relationship.

[49] Story 3.4. *Ihara Saikaku-shū* p.413.
[50] Story 1.2.

An interesting point that comes forward in the stories is that the central love relationship is never the one of a lord with a retainer. There are multiple stories in which such a relationship exists, but they serve more as background or even as a source of conflict rather than the focus of the narrative.

In *Though Bearing an Umbrella, He Was Rained Upon*[51], for instance, a poor boy is brought to the lord's mansion and becomes his object for love. The boy acquiesces, for the position itself would be far better than the poor life he led, but says explicitly that he does not love the lord and later falls in love with another young man. The lord, learning of this, threatens the boy with death, which he gladly accepts to protect his lover, upon which he is killed.

This is a contrast to the image of historical relationships between *wakashu* and *nenja* among samurai as put forward in literature. There, although the *wakashu* is still (mainly) the object of love and the *nenja* the more active lover, there is an expected aspect of loyalty and reciprocity in this relationship. A lord-*wakashu* relationship is not narratively necessary for there to be a case of forbidden love, however. Apart from angering the lord itself, there are stories in which it is outright illegal for a youth in the service of a lord to establish sexual relations with another samurai, and in which such a thing happens nevertheless.[52] A more general source of emotional conflict that regularly appears in the stories is the one between duty according to a social code, and emotions or desires violating that code. Using the example above, the boy is bound by duty to his lord yet maintains a romantic relationship even at the risk of his own life. Generally, the samurai (*nenja* and *wakashu*) in the relationship are seen as exemplary in ways of their honour and sense of duty, yet with a sense of emotionality, prepared to give their life for either their duty or their love.

In most samurai stories in *Nanshoku ōkagami*, explicit written and/or spoken vows between the *wakashu* and the adult were made to validate and/or officiate the relationship.[53] In *Implicated by His Diamond Crest*, however, it is explicitly stated that they proceeded "without ever exchanging formal

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[51] Story 2.2.
[52] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 321. The footnote does, however state that "[i]t was a crime against the laws of *the domain*" (emphasis mine), so it is unknown how universal this was. However, in other stories similar plot points are apparent.
[53] Ibid., p. 27.

vows of love."[54] This could be explained by the fact that they wished to keep the relationship a secret. This does not seem to diminish the love they have for each other, however, as one ends up dying for the other all the same. Nevertheless, in multiple other stories there is a case of a forbidden or otherwise secret relationship in which such vows are, in fact, made.[55] In most other stories it is either stated that they made vows or, less commonly, not stated that they did *not*. Whether that means that it would be implied is uncertain, but presumable.

There seems to be an element of reciprocation in most stories. There are those in which an adult sees a boy, is smitten immediately, and tries to obtain his love, but usually it seems a two-way street of affection. This could of course be a textual or social misinterpretation on the part of this research, but it would seem to contrast with Mostow's point of the direction of love being only a unilateral *nenja* to *wakashu*.[56] The extent to which this happens does vary from story to story, but in Mostow's defence it is most often the older or senior person who pursues the younger one and/or initiates the relationship. What is true, is that the boy is often an objective example of beauty, regularly loved by more than one person, which sometimes even leads to a fight over his affection. Meanwhile, the *nenja* himself is rarely of notable appearance, more often characterised by his unwavering love for his *wakashu*.

In about half of these stories one or even both of the lovers do not survive. A very important source of drama in these cases is the honour of the samurai involved.[57] There are stories in which a lover succumbs to an illness, but in most one or both die by more violent means. Often when one dies violently, the other commits ritual suicide by seppuku if not already dead or, less frequently, dies avenging his deceased lover. Apart from actual death, the majority of the stories include a moment where one or both is willing or even planning to commit seppuku. This is usually either to keep their honour, because the law demands it, or to not have to be without the other. There are multiple stories in which a character has killed another and is therefore ordered to commit suicide, the more

[54] Story 1.5.
[55] Examples are stories 1.4, 2.3 and 2.5.
[56] Mostow, "The Gender of Wakashu," p. 52
[57] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 32.

honourable alternative to a criminal's execution. It is not wholly uncommon to offer this when the lovers have only met a few times, or even once, which could be read as all the more testament to the depth of their love. It also plays to the ideal of a samurai dying for his honour.

Often when a *wakashu* dies in a story, there is a remark upon the fleetingness of the world, mirroring the fact that their boyish beauty and youth would have been only temporary anyway. To add to this, a few stories end with the conclusion that "these lovers were truly the pinnacle of love", that "they are unsurpassed in their devotion" and similar descriptions. While the ending of most stories is either "one (or both) died and it was a great loss" or less frequently "and they lived happily ever after", there are a few in which the relationship is dissolved. [58] This is usually because of the law or a lord's demand, as described above. They can be separated by being stationed elsewhere, for instance, one becoming a monk, or the boy is forced to take the coming-of-age ceremony which would render him an adult man ineligible of love with another adult man.

A returning motif is a *nenja* being challenged by another for their *wakashu* because the third loves him himself. In these stories this often ends in a duel to the death of at least one of the three. In several cases, *wakashu* are challenged themselves because they have refused or ignored the advances of a third. This is yet another instance of the rigidity of a samurai's honour causing drama, as the slighted party considers it a personal insult and is bound to seek retribution.

This significance of the concept of honour of samurai, including associated violence and death, combined with *shudō* was quite a usual feature in popular texts. Saikaku summarises this concisely in part of the introduction to *They Waited Three Years to Die* which reads, translated, "[t]he samurai quandary: love or honor".[59] Pflugfelder writes how this could have appealed to samurai and commoners in different ways, both parts of the intended audience for *Nanshoku ōkagami*. [60] For the commoners, it may have given them insight into the samurai's warrior culture as well as an exciting

[58] The 'ever after' of course being insofar as the younger person in the relationship had not yet grown to be an adult.
[59] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 174.
[60] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies*, pp. 70-2.

interpretation of *shudō* different from their own. Whereas for the samurai, it may have called back to more turbulent, exciting and heroic periods of history for their class. For many of the stories it is unclear in what year it is set, which serves the purpose of putting the perspective in "the past." Whether this is intentional to support this historicity or simply because the sources were vague is unknown.

Another interesting aspect is the illustrations in the book. All stories have at least one and usually multiple illustrations accompanying it. These often depict the characters, setting and the most dramatic scenes, but never seem to be (explicitly) amorous in nature in contrast to genres like shunga. Additionally, while there are some explicit scenes, plenty of the stories have nothing of the sort. Even though the beauty of the boys is emphasized at almost every possible turn, the sexual aspect is downplayed and it is usually more the sense of loyalty and dutiful support—especially the *wakashu*'s—they have for each other and exude in their relationship that is mentioned outright and focused on. This supports the idea that these stories were not seen as erotic fiction by the reader but rather examples of or ideals for a relationship with a *wakashu*. Or as likely just for non-sexual entertainment, of course.

A peculiar story within the work is *Nightingale in the Snow*, which seems to be the only story in which a *nenja* has two concurrent boy lovers.[61] Two pages come to find a cure for their lord's sick son and the samurai who is enamoured by them eventually offers it. They return to express their thanks and ask him "to be [their] lover and teach [them] the way of boy love." There are multiple stories in which a previous lover appears but this relationship has usually been dissolved or they already have become an adult and so no concurrent relationships occur. The story above does conclude "In the annals of boy love, this surely ranks as one of the most unusual troths," which would confirm that is was uncommon and explains the lack of similar stories. It is also possible that the peculiarity lies in the fact that the

[61] Story 2.5.

wakashu ask the man rather than the other way around, as the samurai notes himself, but it would seem less likely as similar occurrences happen in other stories.

A remarkable absence is the lack of stories about monks, especially when one thinks of the origin of the more historic context of *nanshoku*, or its legendary origin with Kōbō Daishi. While there certainly are stories in which lovers are monks or become one by the end, there seems to be only one story, *Grudge Provoked by a Sedge Hat*, in which there is an explicit relationship between an high priest and an acolyte, but even this relationship is not the focus of the story, nor does the priest appear in person.[62] There is also *The ABCs of Boy Love*, in which two children in a relationship with one another each separately share a night with the same elderly monk, but in the narrative this, too, seems remarkably minor. This story was likely more used as a contrast to the first chapter with its lofty introductions, it being about two nine-year-olds, not even *wakashu* age, who are used as an example for ideal male lovers, having already marked themselves for each other.[63]

As a whole, it is a curious given that few of the stories in the *Nanshoku ōkagami* concern relationships between a direct superior and their vassal or charge, given that in a more historic sense, this seems to have been more usual.

Part 2

The second half focuses more on the young male kabuki actors who often also acted as boy sex workers. While the first part stories are usually situated in Edo or Kyoto, if in a city, this part also features Osaka. The biggest urban centres at the time, these three cities where the only places that had permanent kabuki theatres, in active theatre quarters which would likely be familiar to urban readers.[64] Some of the stories, mostly in the first section, start with a more general introduction to the theatre scene. One tells of the reason why boy kabuki was banned in the first place, another describes the

[62] Story 3.1.
[63] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 29.
[64] Ibid., p. 343, note 2.

situation of boy actors of the nostalgic times just after the ban, while a third mentions the origin of kabuki and the pricing and customs of the actors.[65]

Although less so than in the first part, there does seem to be a nostalgic view of the times shortly after the ban on boy kabuki, about thirty-five years before publishing. Even discounting the occasional hyperbole the likes of "no other such actor was seen in past, present, or future" it seems that twenty or thirty years ago most things were considered much better, and many actors nowadays pale in comparison.

As far as can be determined, virtually all kabuki actors mentioned by name in the stories are based on real actors. In contrast to the samurai stories, Saikaku was familiar with many of them due to his presence in the poetry scene.[66] This does not necessarily mean that the contents of the story are strictly factual, of course, but it would have grounded them in a scene known to the reader. An instance in which this relative familiarity could be shown is in a rare use of the first person in *Loved by a Man in a Box*.[67] At the beginning of this story he tells of an anecdote of an temple offering he made in remembrance and penance for the assumed suffering of 'a thousand' boys in the 27 years prior to this work. The thousand is probably a rounding exaggeration and it certainly would not have been the only way in which he interacted with actors, but this event is certainly a curious inclusion, not the least because it seems little relevant to the story that follows. *Nails Hammered into an Amateur Painting* is told in the first person as well, seemingly placing the author among the group of actor travelling, but it is unclear whether this was Saikaku's intention.[68]

In this part, too, monks and clergy do appear several times. Although it would be inappropriate for a monk to purchase the services of a *wakashu*—sexual desires were still distracting from Buddhist enlightenment—they certainly had the image of an appreciator of *nanshoku*. For instance, a sudden influx of pilgrims one year is named as the reason that the prices for *wakashu* had risen dramatically.[69]

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[65] Stories 5.5, 5.1 and 5.2, respectively.
[66] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 36.
[67] Story 8.3.
[68] Story 7.5.
[69] Story 5.1.

In *A Huge Winecup Overflowing with Love*, they are depicted rather sarcastically as wisely spending their received offerings on actors while piously keeping to their Buddhist diet, save the abstention from alcohol, that is.[70] One priest "with unusual tastes" dresses an actor up as a woman "simply satisfying his natural curiosity about women", as monks were generally not allowed to interact with women in private. Later they do talk to one, but send her away immediately when a group of commoners comes along.

In this story, the monks are not the only ones ridiculed and illustrated as hypocrites, though. The boy actors are warned not to visit the (women's) pleasure quarters but to remain devoted to the way of male love, lest it would reflect on them in the form of blemishes on their face. All boys present chuckle at the remark, after which the author informs the reader that all had had engaged in exactly that kind of behaviour before. There are also stories in which a monk is more virtuous, however. In one, a priest repeatedly sends an actor a thoughtful gift in secret and flees before he can meet him, leaving the actor longing behind.[71] In another, a former actor turned monk piously rejects the advances of a fellow actor and lover who came looking for him, prompting the latter to become a monk as well. Another interesting religious notion is that both halves contain stories set on or during a pilgrimage to Koya-san, the temple complex founded by Kōbō Daishi, the monk associated with the origin of male love in Japan. It is just one of the more veiled symbols associated with male love that Saikaku uses in his stories.

Although samurai were not allowed to attend kabuki plays and logically feature less often in these stories, this does not mean they are wholly absent. Be it through reputation or secret visits to the theatre, actors gained the admiration of samurai as well. That being said, only three times in part two do characters appear that are called such, two of whom in the shape of an uncivilised and rough patron that the boy in question is reluctant yet obliged to service.[72] On the other hand, there is a character in *Tears in a Paper Shop* which could reasonably be assumed to be a samurai—with a servant and

[70] Story 6.1.
[71] Story 7.1.
[72] Stories 7.1 and 7.4.

carrying a sword—who develops a relationship with an actor, but seems to be the only one.[73] Unlike the two above, he is depicted as handsome, courteous and capable, and meets the actor on the street instead of at a play or a brothel.

Somewhere between these two is a poor samurai and titular character from *A Man Who Resented Another's Shouts* who, being an avid fan of an actor, attacks a patron who was being a nuisance heckling him during a play. From taking this bold risk springs a relationship with the actor, which ends with him having to leave and the boy dying from grief. As a contrast to the first two, this and the previous samurai are depicted as valiant and standing up for the actor in question. Whether it be a censure against criticism or implication of the samurai class – upstanding samurai would not be at the kabuki theatre to begin with – or simply the relative rarity of them among the actors' patrons, the absence is curious.

Many of the stories are about a well-known and/or exceptionally beautiful and talented boy actor that falls in love with or gains the affection of another man. Due to the availability of the actors, there is logically far less an issue of forbidden love or revenge plots from spurned admirers, compared to the samurai stories. As Saikaku puts it: "since working boys were available for the viewing pleasure of anyone who could pay the fee, it was unnecessary for anyone to die of frustrated yearning."[74] With sufficient money or gifts, one can secure time or attention from an actor. Many stories, however, are about a lover who bypasses or transcends the status of customer. Some are even about a man who has fallen in love with a boy having only seen him once, sometimes not even that, and devoting much effort to a chance to see him again. Alternatively, there are also multiple stories in which there is not really a relationship between two people at all. These instead focus more on a group of actors travelling, enjoying themselves, and reflecting on their livelihood and the nature of *nanshoku*. For example, *Nails Hammered into an Amateur Painting* follows a group of actors as they travel along the coast where they discover an angry message on a portrait of a boy and muse on what that love would

[73] Story 5.1.
[74] Story 7.3; Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 261.

have been. While this does imply a certain (in this case rejected) relationship, it is wholly indirect and in the scope of the story itself of relatively minor importance.

It is occasionally described how the boys in their beauty are not just the object of desire from men but also women, and it was not uncommon for *wakashu* to have business with either. This is shown in *A Secret Visit Leads to the Wrong Bed*, mentioned before, in which a *wakashu* hired by a group of women is mistaken for a women by the hirer's brother and taken to his bed.[75] Upon discovery of his actual sex, the brother exclaims "Why, this is even better!" and spends the night with him, leaving the women displeased and without entertainment. While there are multiple instances in which a woman loves an actor, often he does not reciprocate out of adherence to *shudō*. There is a case, however, the boy is so touched by the love a dying girl had for him that he later died himself of grief.[76]

In this half of the book, age differences are notably of lesser importance. Due to the fact that most named actors in the stories were based on real actors of the time, one can infer that the majority of these stories is set after 1652. This was the year in which *wakashu* kabuki, kabuki with boy actors, was outlawed by the government and *yarō* kabuki, with all roles being played by men of age, remained. The actors would wear purple kerchiefs on their head to cover the shaved part that made them men, keeping their appearance youthful and desirable. This meant that a *wakashu* could apply his trade for longer than the coming of age would allow. In *Votive Picture of Kichiya Riding a Horse* it is described thus: "It used to be that no matter how splendid the boy, it was impossible for him to keep his forelocks and take on patrons beyond the age of twenty. Now, since everyone wore the hairstyle of adult men, it was still possible at age 34 or 35 for youthful-looking actors to get under a man's robe. How strange are the ways of love!"[77] Similarly, in story *Bamboo Clappers Strike the Hateful Number*, a group of actors out on a stroll happens upon a monk who offers a bamboo clapper that will tell the age of anyone who holds it.[78] Curiosity turns to embarrassment as the strikes go on and reveal that the

[75] Story 6.4.
[76] Story 6.5.
[77] Story 5.5. Schalow. pp. 214-5.
[78] Story 7.4.

actor is actually 38 years old, to which the other actors kindly decline the monk's offer. In multiple other stories, actors are described cheating at a tradition on New Year's Eve in which people would eat a number of beans equal to their age. The repeated implying of a considerably differing actual age of the actors seems to be mainly a playful jab by the author, acknowledging that not all are as youthful as they seem.

This change in age differences also reflects on the relationship between *wakashu* and *nenja*. In some cases, the fact that male-male relationships were commonly between these two categories seems little more than a role. As long as a partner acted as the boy with another acting as the adult man in the relationship, it would be accepted.[79] This notion is similar to the samurai story *Two Old Cherry Trees Still in Bloom* which features a lover of 63 who after falling in love at 16 never shaved his head and was therefore technically still a *wakashu*.[80] The story does tend to treat them as a humorous outlier rather than a common occurrence, though.

A different case that may be minor and an outlier, but is nevertheless an interesting detail challenging the usual *wakashu* relationship comes from *Love's Flame Kindled by a Flint Seller*.[81] Here, a *wakashu* is explicitly depicted as "entertain[ing] without restraint and yet maintain[ing] all the while complete control over his patrons, using them for his own personal pleasure."[82] Although the *wakashu* as a kabuki actor is different from the more traditional *wakashu*, but they were not necessarily supposed to be the ones getting pleasure. *Wakashu* of both types were mostly the object of love by the *nenja*, hence the term, and yet this one seems to turn that aspect around. That being said, the customer in all likelihood would have been pleasured as well.

A striking contrast with the stories of the first half can be found in *An Unworn Robe to Remember Him by*. In this story, a boy actor falls in love with another actor.[83] To show his loyalty, he restricts the

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[79] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 29.
[80] Story 4.4.
[81] Story 5.3.
[82] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 205.
[83] 7.3 It must be noted that it is not made explicitly clear in the text that this is a fellow boy actor or an adult male role actor, but an annotation clarifies that this person plays the role of older person in the relationship. *Ihara Saikaku-shū*, vol. 2, p549, note 18.

entertainment he offers his patrons, who subsequently start to leave him, rendering him without sufficient income. Eventually, when his tailor comes to collect his dues and takes all of the boy's clothes as collateral, he ends up committing suicide. What is especially curious is that the boy is described as "continu[ing] without mending his ways", while acting in a way that would not go amiss with the stories in the first half of the book. The conclusion reads "He really not need have died. He was pushed to kill himself by an exaggerated sense of honor, something not even a samurai would have done in the circumstances."[84] Saikaku writes with apparent disapproval about an actor acting out of honour rather than practicality, even though similar characters in the first half were lauded for their adherence to samurai ideals. This may be partly explained by the simple fact that the actor was not a samurai and was not expected to adhere to such ideals. Possibly it was also because Saikaku knew this scene and these people better than the already idealised samurai from the stories and he had more of an emphatic connection with this loss. Despite the dramatic instance discussed above, death generally plays a smaller role in this half. This is partly due to the fact that there are fewer samurai, who in these stories seem to have a proclivity for duels and seppuku to, for instance, keep their honour intact. The biggest reasons for death in this part are illness and wasting away in grief, which are sometimes linked, the former causing the latter. However, death is not the only way a sacrifice can be made. In the kabuki stories, a more common "ultimate sacrifice" seems to be leaving the kabuki stage or the floating world as a whole.[85] Sometimes this wording is fairly ambiguous; 'leaving this floating world' could be interpreted as leaving the world of pleasure and acting, or the transient world as a whole, i.e. dying. This can be done in various ways; some characters leave to become a monk, some accepts no more clients and focus only on their lover. This shows his devotion to his partner while simultaneously meaning that he would lose a substantial part of his income and make him more dependent on his partner.

[84] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 266.
[85] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 28.

Apart from these dramatic shows of sacrifice or tragedy, Saikaku sometimes also depicts less glamourous aspects of the trade. *Fireflies Also Work Their Asses at Night* is a prime example of this.[86] It begins with a previously well-respected son brought low to doing demeaning and humiliating chores and receiving bad treatment. Later, a boy actor that was earlier introduced in an idealised way as an exemplary beauty and "unequaled in the present-day world of theater", is compared to this man and said to be "in an equally painful occupation."[87] After a long night's work with a samurai, he is assigned to a group with a repulsive old man. For the sake of money, he agrees, but it does not give him any more wealth because it goes to the business owner instead. It is described how only the looks and admiration he gets from men and women when he is outside "made him willing to bear his bone-grinding regimen." Another night, when entertaining another group of customers, he makes a reference to a line from a play likening himself to a firefly, "I cry, I burn, yet know not which way to go." It is rudely responded to by a patron saying "This firefly's work also involves using its ass," a response very similar to the title of the story. This depiction of the actors is an interesting departure from most stories, in which they are often seen as idealised beauties deserving of all praise and admiration. Here, the author specifically takes a leave from this ideal to look at the more real hardships that these boys face to stay afloat in the world. Although the "floating world" as well as the art and literature about it was in essence an escapist notion, Saikaku pierces this veneer in multiple different ways.[88] Not only does he show the less attractive parts of the kabuki actor lifestyle, like in this story in which the patrons react rather awkwardly to the comparison the actor made when they realise how his life is not all glamour and pleasure, as described above. He also gets at the actors themselves, like in the story where they are the ones who get awkward when their age is revealed.

[86] Story 7.1.
[87] The son oddly does not serve any further narrative purpose but to set up the comparison.
[88] Schalow, *Great Mirror*, p. 38.

Comparison with Chigo

Although the number of stories in which monks play a primary role is remarkably slight, there is another way in which this angle may be fitting for the concept of *wakashu*: the *chigo.* Although from an earlier time, there are interesting similarities that can be drawn between the *wakashu* and the *chigo*. In her work *Tales of Idolized* Boys, Schmidt-Hori characterises the *chigo* in three different types of liminality, two of which are comparable to the *wakashu*. First there is the space between a child and an adult. Like the *wakashu*, *chigo* had a characteristic hairstyle, in their case a ponytail, that denoted their status, which would be removed upon attaining adulthood. Secondly, both tread the boundaries between male and female, often being depicted as androgynous. Like the *Nanshoku*, the stories generally do not focus on the sexual aspect and instead take a more romantic angle.[89]

Another specific point is that like in some stories in the *Nanshoku ōkagami*, the established formal relationship is usually less often the focal point than its subversion, and more a narrative obstacle. In multiple stories, the *chigo* enters a relationship with a monk other than their master, sometimes even of a rivalling monastery. This makes the forbidden aspect of the love even more tangible.

In comparison to the *Nanshoku ōkagami*, the largest similarities would be in the first half. Here, boys that are still officially not adults yet have sexual relationships with older men. Moreover, the samurai stories more frequently contain an established formal master-*wakashu* relationship, whereas the kabuki stories are understandably not as exclusive in their relationships. Aside, many of the actors are technically adults already, and so in general less applicable for a comparison to *chigo*. For instance, there is a case in which an actor becomes a monk and is pursued by a former lover who becomes a monk himself, implying both are of age to take the tonsure. However, even in the actor stories there is still the aspect of perceived or social liminality between child and adult.

[89] Faure, *The Red Thread*, p241.

Schmidt-Hori measures the works within the genre of *chigo monogatari* using five plot features shared among most, with a work containing all five to be the most quintessentially '*chigo monogatari'*. This includes bases like "one of the principal characters is a Buddhist acolyte", but also more esoteric aspects like "the *chigo* turns out to be an avatar of a bodhisattva." However, only a small minority of the examined works contain all five. Interestingly, following the criteria of her research, at least one story in the *Nanshoku ōkagami* could be counted as such; *Grudge Provoked by a Sedge Hat*.[90]

Shortly summarized, the story goes as follows. A group of *chigowakashu* including the beautiful fourteen-year-old Rammaru passes by a procession during a festival of village women who wear multiple pans on their head to denote the number of their partners. Rammaru is the son of a samurai and is described as beautiful "and every monk in the entire complex was in love with him." As a joke, a boy called Sadasuke puts his own hat on Rammaru's and mocks him implying promiscuity. He replies "When priests use me as their plaything, that is not love. I have but one lover, the man who comes to visit me from the capital each day. (…)" The argument seems resolved, but Rammaru is resentful and secretly plans to kill Sadasuke for the offence after meeting with his lover, Seihachi, one last time while sadly pondering his love letters. He and Seihachi spend the day together. Afterwards the latter notices the former going to a shop to have his sword sharpened, which raises his suspicions and he starts to go after him. When he arrives, the temple is in an uproar because Rammaru had just killed Sadasuke and is now apprehended by a number of monks. The monks have gotten drunk and want to have their way with him before he would be executed for his deed. They start torturing and violating him, until he is saved by Seihachi who scares the monks off and flees with the boy, never to be seen again.[91]

First of all, this is a singular story in the *Nanshoku ōkagami* in terms of this research, being to this author's knowledge the only story in which *chigo* appear and are named as such. While in several other stories monks do appear and their reputation as wakashu lovers is usually reinforced, the monks

[90] Story 3.1.
[91] *Ihara Saikaku-shū* pp. 403-4; Schalow, *Great Mirror*, pp. 131-2.

are only rarely part of the central relationship. There are two stories that do come close; *His Head Shaved on the Path of Dreams* and *Visiting from Edo, Suddenly a Monk*.[92] The one story has a *wakashu* who starts a bond with a former lover, who is in the process of becoming a monk, of his deceased love interest. The other concerns a former actor who becomes a monk and is followed by a fellow actor and former lover who becomes a monk himself.

In this story there are multiple elements that coincide with aspects in the *chigo monogatari* genre. When following the flowchart Schmidt-Hori provides, the protagonist is (1) a *chigo*, (2) he is a Buddhist acolyte, (3) romance is central to the story, (4) the *chigo's* lover is male but not a monk, and (5) the *chigo* does not die. This would place it on the same level as multiple works within the genre in terms of "*chigo monogatari*-ness". In the story itself, the main character is described as a *chigowakashu,* denoting the overlap between the two concepts.[93]

[92] Stories 2.3 and 5.4.

[93] *Ihara Saikaku-shū* 井原西鶴集, vol 2, p397.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to explain the concept of *wakashu* as it is characterised in Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami*. Although an anthology of internally mostly unrelated stories, the whole of the work in fact paints two distinct pictures of *wakashu*, and gives examples of how an ideal one should act. Overall, they are beautiful and lovely beyond measure, fiercely loyal to their lover and, especially in the case of the samurai stories, often even willing to sacrifice their life. Nevertheless, the two categories are fundamentally different in several ways as well. Where the one is built on a tradition of hierarchical structures going back centuries, the other is developed from a commercialisation of a theatre ideal.

What they do have in common is that they are both ways in which a form of youthful masculinity can be expressed. Although the idea of a separate gender expression may only really be applicable to the category of *wakashu* as an onstage character or a cultural description of their sexual versatility, it seems that the category carries a social weight that is not grasped by either the terms "masculine" or "feminine".

When looking at the two examined genres of *nanshoku* literature, there are interesting similarities even though the heydays of the respective genres are centuries apart. Both, concern desirable young adolescent boys having relationships of a romantic and/or erotic nature with older men. In both cases formal hierarchical relationships are often shirked in favour of informal love. The influence of or at the very least likely familiarity with this genre is visible in stories like *Grudge Provoked by a Sedge Hat*. To ascribe these similarities to a linear tradition stretching from one directly to the other would in all likelihood be too short-sighted, however. These should rather be seen as different branches within the tradition of *nanshoku*. That being said, a promising topic for further research could be a more extensive examination of the interplay between different genres of *nanshoku* and the influences they have had on each other.

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