Reassessing Edo Gender Restrictions: Limitations and Opportunities in the Lives and Art of Ike Gyokuran and Katsushika Ōi

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Abstract

This study reassesses Edo's patriarchal oppression and gender constraints in the lives and oeuvres of women artists Ike Gyokuran and Katsushika Ōi. It examines how they overcame Edo restrictions, nuances Tokugawa's limiting impact on their artistic opportunities, while acknowledging gender constraints. This study cautions against universalised notions of oppressed women artists, highlighting the multilateral cultural exchange between men and women. Through applying theories by Pierre Bourdieu and Linda Nochlin, re-examining oppressive institutions, and analysing Gyokuran and Ōi's individual socio-cultural circumstances, it reveals that Edo society was less limiting for their artistry than anticipated. Ultimately, cultural capital, favourable circumstances, eccentricity and the malleable, dual nature of Edo institutions helped these artists to circumvent gender restrictions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the beginning, woman was the sun. An authentic person. Today she is the moon. Living through others. Reflecting the brilliance of others.[1]

Hiratsuka Raichō, *Bluestocking* (1911)

Raichō's view illustrates a recurring theme in academia: Oppressive patriarchal institutions prompted the deterioration of early Japanese women's autonomy, relegating women to a life of docility.[2] Similar linear notions about female subjugation have also infiltrated art history's understanding of the Edo period (1603–1868), leading to misconstrued beliefs about gender restrictions.[3] Elicited by Meiji and 20th-century historical and art-historical-biased practices, a collective neglect of early modern women's artistry ensued.[4] Although scholarly recognition of Edo women artists re-emerged from the 1980s onwards, many modern writings have still presented oversimplified narratives about the detrimental impact of patriarchal control on their art.[5]

This situation is also the case for literati (Jp. *bunjin*) poet-painter Ike Gyokuran (1727/28–1784) from Kyoto and *ukiyo-e* artist Katsushika Ōi (ca. 1800?–after 1857?) from Edo. Active in the two schools in which most women artists painted, both artists attained high regard from their early modern contemporaries during a notoriously restrictive male-

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[1] Raichō posits antecedents of 'self-reliant' Japanese women; see Barbara R. Ambros, *Women in Japanese Religions* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 1.
[2] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 1.
[3] This thesis defines gender as socio-cultural constructed differentiations of masculine and feminine characteristics, including their respective gender roles.
Felice Fischer, Kyoko Kinoshita, and Jonathan Chaves, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 33; Marcia Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 3–4; Patricia Fister and Fumiko Y. Yamamoto, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900* (Honolulu, HI: Honolulu Academy of Arts, Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, 1988), 10, 12, 85.
[4] Marsha Smith Weidner, ed., *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1; Tomi Suzuki, review of *Splendid Japanese Women Artists of the Edo Period*, *Early Modern Women* 10, no. 2 (June 2016): 155–166, https://doi.org/10.1353/emw.2016.0013; Yutaka Yabuta, *Rediscovering Women in Tokugawa Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 11–12, 16–17.
[5] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 6-7; Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 155–166.

dominated era.[6] Despite these plaudits, English academic literature on these artists remains scarce compared with their male counterparts.[7] When these women are represented within museums or art history, their lives and art are frequently misrepresented by universalising gender-specific categories or linked to male artistic genius. The art world's preoccupation with the virtuoso of Gyokuran's husband, *bunjin* Ike Taiga (1723–1776), and Ōi's father, *ukiyo-e* artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), obscures these women's merit and sustains unequal representation.[8] This bias inadvertently turns these women into a contextual side note of male prowess while perpetuating notions of unilateral cultural exchange. Furthermore, recent studies by Julie Nelson Davis and Frank Feltens have revealed that male artists also benefitted from women artists and their connections.[9] Academic misconceptions about subjugated women artists further arise by overlooking the opportunities patriarchal institutions provided. Although gender certainly affected these artists, the generalised views outlined above obscure understandings of women's artistic contributions and positions in the art world.

To correct these narratives, I pose two interrelated research questions: In what manner did artists Ike Gyokuran and Katsushika Ōi overcome the restraints imposed on women by conservative Edo society?[10] How are these strategies and restraints reflected in their art? First, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. While aiming for an objective evaluation, the scarcity of autobiographical information and lack of translated Japanese

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[6] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 11, 86; Timothy Clark, ed., *Late Hokusai: Society, Thought, Technique, Legacy* (London: The British Museum, 2023), 58.
[7] The scarcity is also apparent in English literature on Asian women artists in general; see Melia Belli Bose, ed., *Women, Gender and Art in Asia, c. 1500–1900* (London: Routledge, 2018), 3.
[8] Conjoined accounts are apparent in Timothy Clark, ed., *Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017); Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*.
[9] Davis's findings are discussed in Chapter 6. Frank Feltens ed., *Japan in the Age of Modernization: The Art of Ōtagaki Rengetsu and Tomioka Tessai* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2023).
[10] I want to acknowledge Patricia Fister's outstanding research on Ema Saikō, employing the artist's biography to determine elements which 'produce acknowledged female artists in a male-dominated society'. Although our questions seem similar, this thesis is as odds with Fister's universal template of shared success factors. Instead of success and overarching narratives, this thesis focusses on what individually enabled Gyokuran and Ōi's artistry in their respective environments while highlighting the duality of gender restrictions; see Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 108–130.

research may lead to undue speculation and potential bias. I hope future research can remedy these shortcomings.

Through an interdisciplinary approach of sociology, gender studies, art history, and visual analysis, this thesis examines how Gyokuran and Ōi circumvented restrictions as women artists and how this is reflected in their art. Each artist represents unique challenges and opportunities and was selected on account of divergent genres, locales, times, familial circumstances, and cultural spheres. This variability presents a new perspective: it illustrates the impact of personal conditions on artistic prospects in the larger Edo art world, highlighting that constraints and opportunities to become women artists cannot be universalised.

I claim that Gyokuran and Ōi eschewed limitative regulations and enabled their artistry through shared and divergent strategies. Through residences in favourable locations at opportune times, unique socio-cultural backgrounds, networks, cultural capital, and eccentricity, these artists navigated gender and social restrictions while achieving relative freedom and equality in the early modern art world. These findings revise narratives of Tokugawa society and its institutions as solely oppressive to women and women artists. Barbara Ambros already noted that oppressive neo-Confucianism unintentionally facilitated women's prospects and freedom.[11] I argue this point especially applies to the two artists, as Tokugawa restrictions partially enabled their genres and cultural capital accumulation. I hope my findings facilitate a more accurate understanding of Gyokuran and Ōi's roles in the Edo art world and reshape how academia discusses women artists while still acknowledging early modern gender limitations.

To accomplish the objectives, the thesis is structured as follows: In Chapter 2, the literature review examines the dominant themes in Gyokuran and Ōi scholarship, introducing theories by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) and Linda Nochlin (1931–2017).

[11]Ambros, *Women Religions*, 105–106.

Chapter 3 discusses the dual nature of Tokugawa institutions, while Chapters 4 and 5 examine the opportunities and restrictions in Gyokuran's life and art. The same issue is addressed in Chapters 6 and 7 regarding Ōi. The conclusion reiterates my findings, offers solutions, and aims to revitalise future research on these artists.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review thematically presents key developments within academic research concerning Gyokuran and Ōi, and it introduces Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and the application and misapplication of Nochlin's views to Japanese women artists. This discussion is followed by current trends within scholarly literature and museum practices concerning Gyokuran and Ōi: gender and oppression, the category of women artists, conjoined artistic feats with male contemporaries, and questions of authorship and authenticity. The review concludes by identifying gaps in the existing literature and proposing alternative research approaches.

Bourdieu's cultural, social, and economic capital provides a fresh viewpoint for future studies on Gyokuran and Ōi, revealing how they accessed vital artistic resources to overcome limitations and gain opportunities. To my knowledge, academics have not applied this theory to these artists.

Bourdieu observes that structural imbalances in the distribution of, and access to, cultural capital generate academic inequality among students from various social backgrounds.[12] Cultural capital appears in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised, all of which required labour-time to amass and convert.[13] Embodied capital refers to the knowledge, abilities, behaviour, and cultural know-how obtained and internalised by an individual, its value being dependent on the time and effort spent to acquire it.[14] The objectified state includes physical cultural objects, such as books and artworks, which must be understood and appropriated through the embodied state.[15] Although this study does not cover

[12] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 243, 253.
[13] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 243–244.
[14] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 243–244.
[15] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 246–247.

the institutionalised state, it includes economic capital, meaning monetary resources or property, and social capital, exemplified by social networks.[16] Although these connections could be inheritable, they were often maintained through reciprocal relations, requiring time and effort.[17] As inherited cultural capital enhances prospects and advantages in unequal social settings, it became a welcome asset for Gyokuran and Ōi in patriarchal Edo.

Inequality is also addressed in Nochlin's 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', which reveals that patriarchal belief systems within Western institutions excluded great women artists.[18] Nochlin lists women's inaccessibility to male-dominated art institutions, genre hierarchy, the myth of genius, and limitations imposed on gender.[19] Nochlin's observations on institutional bias are not unfounded, for contemporary male artists gain overall more revenue and prestige than women.[20] However, her template of male greatness and widespread oppressive institutions includes reductive narratives of female artists, rendering their experiences as global, unchanging, and shared.[21] Nochlin's generalised exclusion framework is especially problematic when projected onto Edo women artists, but scholars such as Melia Belli Bose keep implementing her theory. Bose notes that Nochlin's coverage of 'traditional structural sexism' and other findings are 'equally applicable to other art histories around the globe'.[22] As universal limitations and gender are central in studies on the two artists, this is the first theme.

Davis's *Picturing the Floating World: Ukiyo-e in Context* and her chapter 'Partners in the Studio: Reconsidering Ōi and Hokusai' in *Late Hokusai: Society, Thought, Technique,*

[16] Due to time constraints and the relative dearth of 'academic' qualifications in the lives of the artists. Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 243, 248.
[17] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 249–250.
[18] Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? 50th Anniversary Edition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2021).
[19] Nochlin, *Great Women,* 38, 42–43.
[20] Rebecca Morrill, Karen Wright, and Louisa Elderton, eds., *Great Women Artists* (London: Phaidon Press, 2019), 12.
[21] Nochlin, *Great Women*, 33, 52.
[22] Bose, *Women Gender*, 3.

Legacy have been crucial in re-evaluating Ōi's life and oeuvre.[23] Wanting to reposition Ōi as an active contributor to the Hokusai atelier and explain why her contributions were obscured, Davis critically assesses Edo and Meiji source material. She further reveals that their collaboration under the Hokusai brand and the propagation of Hokusai's genius were driven by 'mutual benefit'.[24] While offering novel viewpoints, Davis still projects Nochlin's incompatible theory of male greatness and gender bias onto Ōi, as explored in Chapter 4.

Gender and limitations are also explored in Patricia Fister and Fumiko Y. Yamamoto's groundbreaking 1988 exhibition and concomitant catalogue, *Japanese Women Artists ca. 1600–1900*.[25] Centred on the accomplishments and development of female artistry during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, the exhibition was among the first to incorporate Gyokuran and Ōi. Fister and Yamamoto's exhibition remains a crucial cornerstone for studies on these artists, including this thesis, and provided a much-needed podium for forgotten female artistry. Claiming that women were 'forced into a subordinated niche', certain universalising statements on Edo's gender restrictive nature are outdated or contradictory, as explored later.[26]

The second trend, the women artist category, is embodied in Marsha Weidner's compilation of essays *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, which re-examines disregarded Chinese and Japanese women artists from various periods.[27] In addition to broad chapters about women artists, there are sections that discuss the artist separately. Particularly, Stephen Addiss' chapter, 'Three Women of Gion', exploring the life and accomplishments of Gyokuran, her mother, and grandmother, offers a fresh perspective. The chapter shifts the focus onto Gyokuran's female lineage rather than

[23] Julie Nelson Davis, *Picturing the Floating World: Ukiyo-e in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021), https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6b3ae2ea-dd04-3ffb-a25e-d75e30e8e23a; Clark, *Late Hokusai*.
[24] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 58, 69.
[25] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*.
[26] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 10, 12.
[27] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*.

solely concentrating on her connection to Taiga.[28] Nevertheless, combining artists from various periods and cultures remains complicated, as Weidner's broad grouping can unintentionally lead to generalisation and limit more in-depth and nuanced discussions.

The 2015 exhibition *Japanese Women Artists in the Edo Period* by Professor Nakamachi Keiko at the Tokyo Kōsetsu Memorial Museum further demonstrated that broad groupings can lack inclusivity.[29] The exhibition displayed 26 works by 22 notable early modern female artists, including Gyokuran, exploring the connection between gender and visual expression. It also investigated the circumstances that facilitated the journey of early modern women to participate in the arts.[30] Although this topic partially aligns with this thesis's research questions, the exhibition's generalised answer is inadequate and requires supplementation. Although the exhibition correctly stated that literacy, education, social status, and the emerging literati culture were essential for women's artistry, it overlooked vital geographical and individual factors, such as eccentricity and chance.[31] The exhibition failed to address Edo restrictions fully while presenting oversimplified notions of Buddhism as misogynistic and Confucianist literature as congenial to women.[32] Another oversight was the complete absence of female *ukiyo-e* artists.[33] Especially since they were more accepted than the represented women Kanō artists.[34]

The third trend, conjoining the two artists' feats to their male counterparts, is apparent in the exhibition and catalogue *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush*, held in 2007 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.[35] Although the exhibition prided itself

[28] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 241–263.
[29] Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 155–66.
[30] Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 155, 160.
[31] Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 159–160, 163.
[32] Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 159.
[33] Various women *ukiyo-e* artists are found in Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 48–49, 128,130; Nakamachi only refers to a record stating women could be *ukiyo-e* artists if their father or grandfather was as well; see Suzuki, review of *Splendid Women*, 165.
[34] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 14, 127.
[35] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 9.

on being the first dedicated to Gyokuran, it underrepresented her life and oeuvre compared with Taiga's.[36] Only 45 of the 208 works and one out of seven chapters in the catalogue concern Gyokuran.[37] Kyoko Kinoshita rightly states in the chapter 'The Life and Art of Tokuyama Gyokuran' that contemporary research on the artist is still 'rudimentary', indicating her marginalisation could be attributable to insufficient material.[38] However, since it is dedicated to both artists, the exhibition's imbalance could inadvertently evoke the impression that Taiga's work was the main act.

In contrast, in John Carpenter's *Hokusai and His Age: Ukiyo-e Painting, Printmaking and Book Illustration in Late Edo Japan*, Hokusai appears alongside Ōi and other pupils.[39] Containing 15 English essays by Western and Japanese Hokusai scholars, this book finally made Japanese research available to a Western audience.[40] Furthermore, Kobayashi Tadashi's extensive research was vital for this thesis, dedicating an entire chapter to Ōi's life, art, and authentication.[41]

This authentication leads to the final academic practice: authorship and authenticity. Davis claimed that Ōi could be the main artist of several late Hokusai works, even creating Hokusai's masterpiece *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (c. 1830–1832), commonly known as 'The Great Wave'.[42] She rightfully argued that, through disregarding the male 'genius' Hokusai as the sole artist of his oeuvre, one can validate Ōi's contributions to his work and contextualise *ukiyo-e* as a collaborative studio practice.[43] As authentication has highlighted

[36] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 9.
[37] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 118–374.
[38] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 33.
[39] John T. Carpenter, ed., *Hokusai and His Age: Ukiyo-e Painting, Printmaking and Book Illustration in Late Edo Japan* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005).
[40] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 7.
[41] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 93–103.
[42] Paul Steenhuis, "'De Grote Golf' Is Mogelijk Niet van Hokusai, Maar van Zijn Dochter Ōi," *NRC Handelsblad*, August 23, 2023, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2023/08/23/de-grote-golf-is-mogelijk-niet-van-hokusai-maar-van-zijn-dochter-a4172476.
[43] Steenhuis, "Grote Golf".

Ōi's significant role within the atelier, it might also help re-evaluate the extent of Edo gender restrictions.

This literature review revealed four trends, each with merits and shortcomings. The first was gender and limitations. Although this focus exposes how artists encountered bias within the male-dominated art world and art historical practices, it frequently neglects the complexities of dualistic Tokugawa institutions and other factors affecting women artists.

Second, women-artist categories reclaim Gyokuran and Ōi's overlooked female artistic heritage. However, gender-selective categorisation creates separate artistic spheres and obscures the interconnectedness of male and female practices. Notwithstanding, male artists did dominate the field, but Edo women artists were more proliferent than in previous eras.[44] Although gender remains unequivocally socio- and art-historically imperative for analysing women artists, it should not be their primary definition. Considering women's art is often deemed a subcategory, these gender markers perpetuate the unequal status quo within art history and museums.

The third trend, placing Gyokuran and Ōi alongside their male counterparts, has similar effects. Rebecca Morrill notes that museums still rely on 'name recognition', as the traditional 'greats' ensure visitors.[45] This placement amplifies such artists' prestige and recognition but also upholds uneven representation, diminishing individual contributions and suggesting a unilateral male influence on passive female artists. This approach reinforces the perception that women artists are less significant to art history and have a subordinate role compared with their male counterparts.

Finally, regarding authorship and authenticity, Morrill notes the Western world's longstanding habit of primarily linking an artwork's value, whether economic or art historical,

[44] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, xi, 219.
[45] Morrill, Wright, and Elderton, *Women Artists*, 12–13.

to its authorship.[46] This practice re-evaluates female contributions and uncover lost legacies, yet many genres rely on collaboration making authorship never entirely verifiable.[47]

To move forward, the artists studied here must be imbricated into the larger socio-cultural structures of early modern life to prevent distorting narratives. This approach means assessing Gyokuran and Ōi on their individual merits, circumstances, and socio-geographical contexts and as part of a broad, bilateral cultural community of men and women. Adopting such strategies prevents sub-categories and corrects oversimplified narratives of passive and limited female artists. By integrating these artists into a larger male–female Edo art world, one can revise the male-dominated artistic canon and finally shift the focus from women artists to simply artists.

[46] Morrill, Wright, and Elderton, *Women Artists*, 10.
[47] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 19.

Chapter 3

The Duality of Adversity

The emphasis on Edo's patriarchal nature frequently overshadows the benefits its institutions provided for women and female artists. Therefore, this chapter reframes early modern gender-related challenges and oppression while acknowledging unequal gender limitations. Through encouraging a nuanced view of the restrictive features within Edo institutions, this chapter demonstrates that oppressive belief systems did not always equal reality. Understanding the dualistic systems outlined below is crucial for evaluating the effect of restrictions on Gyokuran and Ōi in the following chapters.

Under Tokugawa rule, relative peace and socio-political stability ensued, fostering wealth and cultural pursuits, enabling Edo women artists to thrive.[48] Simultaneously, this era is characterised as the all-time low for women's status.[49] Various academics have noted the restrictive social constructs and legislation to which Edo women were subjected. Fister states that the feudalistic Tokugawa Government, the hierarchical class system, moral books, and misogynistic Buddhist and neo-Confucian tenets could negatively impacted women.[50] Ambros adds virilocal marriage, childbearing, male inheritance practices, travel constraints, and the stem family (Jp. *ie*) to these factors.[51]

Although policies, family circumstances, and socio-economic factors certainly affected Edo women's lives and social stations, Gail Lee Bernstein explains these elements were repeatedly renegotiated.[52] Edo's gender restrictions and roles changed over time and were not systematically applied.[53] Family roles and societal expectations shifted with biological age; motherhood was more pronounced in late Edo culture, whereas class

[48] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 9.
[49] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 97.
[50] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 10–11.
[51] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 97–98, 110.
[52] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 1.
[53] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 222.

restrictions were more stringent for higher-class women.[54] This diversity and fluidity of restrictions, even within one lifetime, prevent generalising statements about collective female oppression.[55]

Gender-selective oppression was further nuanced by Edo men, who encountered, though to a lesser extent, constraints embodied in the moral teachings of obedience, patriarchal inheritance, and complying to specific social roles within the *ie*.[56] This point does not imply equality; unequal power relations between genders were evident in many facets of women's lives, as in their exclusion from political posts and lawful permanent household headship.[57] As Yabuta states, Edo society employed a bicultural system of gender and status in which women were deemed subordinate to men.[58] Despite such gender limitations, Watanabe Hiroshi cautions academics that 'the existence of gender roles' does not always imply 'patriarchal domination'.[59] Though crucial, gender was often considered of secondary or tertiary concern. Screech, Fister, and Yonemoto all note that class and the stem family frequently took precedence over gender, as gender was 'never the ultimate categorisation' in Edo.[60] This view might seem remarkable, considering Edo's ideological, religious, and legislative prejudice against women; however, Edo limitations extended beyond gender bias, revealing greater duality and nuance than initially presumed, especially for women artists.

The Tokugawa Government was nevertheless restrictive. Fortunately, such legislation was inconsistently enforced and implemented, giving women more leeway regarding gender-conforming conduct.[61] Edo's prioritisation of orthopraxy over orthodoxy further enabled

[54] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 11; Yonemoto*, Problem Women*, 16-18.
[55] Yonemoto*, Problem Women*, 16-18.
[56] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 15, 58.
[57] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 11, 14.
[58] Yabuta, *Rediscovering Women*, 10.
[59] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 15.
[60] Patricia Fister, "Feminine Perceptions in Japanese Art of the Kinsei Era," *Japan Review*, 8 (1997): 6, https://doi.org/10.15055/00000328; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 9, 13.
[61] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 14, 222.

women's conduct to deviate from the theoretical norm without challenging its value.[62] As Edo norms of similar value became interchangeable, this enabled non-confirmative behaviour. Artists deemed eccentric, such as Gyokuran and Ōi, were therefore not necessarily considered an affront to Edo's norms but inherent to its system.[63]

Edo's class system, reflecting the natural Confucian cosmic order while rendering Tokugawa rule and stratification as heavily ordained, also contains duality.[64] Theoretically, this immutable hereditary four-tiered system circumscribed women's conduct and prevented social mobility and inter-class marriage. In practice, hierarchical limitations among classes were less adhered to from the 18th century onwards, when Gyokuran and Ōi were active.[65] As Yonemoto notes, although the populace was 'defined' by Edo's hierarchical class system, they were not necessarily 'confined'.[66] Comparatively, the class-based stratification of Edo hindered more men than women, as they were legally prohibited from social climbing.[67] Women were less curbed by status, using self-cultivation and education to gain upward mobility to neutralise professional, social, and class impediments.[68] Women attained greater opportunities through adoption, employment in *hatamoto* households, and marital unions.[69] Yonemoto, therefore, rightly argues that gender-sanctioned social mobility undermines preconceived notions of 'women's confinement and subjugation'.[70]

Despite this nuance, ideas of female subjugation were nonetheless prevalent in Edo society, particularly in state-mandated Zhu-Xi Confucianism and moral books, which granted authority to the Tokugawa's patriarchal views and hierarchical relations.[71] Several

[62] Francesca Bray initially made this observation about China; see Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 221.
[63] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 221.
[64] Gary P. Leupp and De-min Tao, eds., *The Tokugawa World* (London: Routledge, 2021), 2.
[65] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 2; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 95–96.
[66] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 16.
[67] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 87.
[68] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 15, 87, 190.
[69] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 104–105; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 55, 87, 190.
[70] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 87.
[71] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 102.

misogynistic Confucian doctrines, including the seven grounds for divorce (Jp. *shichi-kyo*) and the three obediences (Jp. *sanjū*), frequently appear in discussions about early modern female oppression.[72] These ethics were also embodied in the infamous neo-Confucianist primer *Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna Daigaku*, 1716), aimed at women's moral education.[73] This book has often been deemed a direct reflection of Edo women's lives, an idea originating from Meiji Enlightenment thinkers and Western intellectuals.[74]

However, revisionists have refuted the generalised nature of this claim, arguing that neo-Confucian books and stereotypes were not always aligned with reality.[75] The principles in *Greater Learning for Women* embody this dualism. Despite advising women to prioritise their virilocal family over the natal household and avoid disgraceful divorce, divorce and remarriage were prevalent among both genders without overt disparagement, and natal families retained their importance.[76] Moral books for women (Jp. *jokun)* also contained samurai culture, reflecting the increasing commodification and adoption of elite decorum among commoners and their daughters, which generated benefits for women and their families.[77]

Furthermore, Tocco notes that the main goal of these books was obtaining female literacy.[78] This point contrasts with studies that have claimed that neo-Confucianism and its scholars generally disavowed literacy and overt education. Tocco tempers these claims, stating that views on education diverged, and that neo-Confucian moral books, as well as

[72] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 56, 126-127.
[73] Ekken Kaibara, *Women and Wisdom of Japan*, trans. Basil Hall Chamberlain (London: J. Murray, 1914), https://archive.org/details/womenwisdomofjap00kaib_1, 35–39.
[74] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 3–4; Yabuta, *Rediscovering Women*, 11–14, 17.
[75] Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott, *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 20, 194–195, 200, https://research-ebsco-com.leidenuniv.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=62b7fa1c-f65e-3911-8c09-22a68f9d6d2b.
[76] Kaibara, *Women Wisdom*, 36–38; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 93, 116.
[77] William C. Lindsey, "Religion and the Good Life: Motivation, Myth, and Metaphor in a Tokugawa Female Lifestyle Guide," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32, no. 1 (May 2005): 36–38, https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.32.1.2005.
[78] Ko, Haboush, and Piggott, *Confucian Cultures*, 200.

some notable figures perceived as anti-education, frequently supported it.[79] The backing of neo-Confucian scholars and books promoting women's learning, including the utility of education for self- and moral cultivation, paved the way for educated women and more opportunities.[80] As Ambros remarks, the neo-Confucian legitimisation of female education unintentionally negated many of the restrictive moral elements it propagated.[81] As the state's endorsement of neo-Confucianism fuelled Japanese interest in the relative gender-indifferent Chinese literati culture, both the Tokugawa regime and neo-Confucianism contributed to the emergence of numerous female *bunjin*.[82]

Buddhism similarly aided female literati, as discussed in Chapter 5, while also harbouring misogynistic views. The *Blood Pool Sutra* and *Lotus Sutra* incorporated damaging views on women, ranging from impure female bodily functions resulting in karmic retribution to notions that women were only capable of enlightenment if reincarnated as men.[83] Conversely, Buddhism also incorporated progressive views. The *Queen Śrīmālā Sutra* includes examples of sage female leadership, while the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* renders gender differences as entirely irrelevant.[84] The *Lotus Sutra* further provides artistic opportunities for women by encouraging the creation of Buddhist art.[85] Nuns were less susceptible to travel impediments than other women, gaining significant artistic freedoms, as illustrated by artist-nuns Chiyo (1703–1775) and Kikusha (1753–1826).[86] The strictness of female travel regulations diverged. Yonemoto points out the rise of 19th-century travel and women's travel diaries, recounting how pilgrimages and family obligations justified their journeys.[87]

The stem family often relying on patrilineal succession and primogeniture, further

[79] Ko, Haboush, and Piggott, *Confucian Cultures*, 195–196.
[80] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 105–106; Ko, Haboush, and Piggott, *Confucian Cultures*, 196.
[81] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 105–106.
[82] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 108–109; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 227.
[83] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 47, 85.
[84] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 46–47.
[85] Bose, *Women Gender*, 148.
[86] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 56, 61–62.
[87] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 18, 204.

epitomises deviations between theory and practice. Sons and daughters had to leave upon marriage, keeping the household small and financially stable, contributing to the family's prosperity and continuation.[88] As the *ie* infiltrated all social classes in middle Edo, women were increasingly curtailed through patrilineal succession, virilocal marriage, and inheritance customs.[89]

Compared with families in mainland Asia, the Edo stem family was more versatile; its composition frequently precluded gender discrimination, valued both maternal and paternal kin, and enabled the adoption of both kin and non-kin.[90] This flexibility arose from an initial rigidity and need for continuation. As the ascent of the virilocal household jeopardised samurai-inherited positions, stipends, and lineage, legal adoption practices for both genders emerged as compensation. Adoption gave women benefits beyond social mobility; the pressures to birth a male successor decreased causing widespread infanticide to become relatively indiscriminate towards gender.[91] The welfare and survival of the household were the primary priorities, making Edo stem families malleable.[92]

Pragmatism also fuelled gender indifference, as the *ie* household functioned as a joint work sphere. Although, theoretically, patrilineal stem families precluded women from permanent household headship and primogeniture inheritance, this also affected younger non-inheriting sons.[93] Furthermore, regulations were not always observed; women could gain (temporary) household headship if men were unable to inherit movable property and, in some cases, land.[94] Yonemoto concludes that the *ie* expanded the normative roles of women.[95]

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[88] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 9–10, 228n25.
[89] Ambros, *Women Religions*, 98.
[90] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 10, 13.
[91] Only when the number of children was almost complete was there was a partiality towards sons; see Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 166–167, 11; Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 3.
[92] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 9–10, 14, 173; Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 3, 6.
[93] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 9–10, 14.
[94] Leupp and Tao, *Tokugawa World*, 239; Ambros, *Women Religions*, 79.
[95] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 13.

Although such roles varied with class and age, stem families offered elderly women familial respect, enabling retirement and the resumption of self-cultivation without over-scrutiny.[96]

Other female life phases necessitated more taxing domestic roles. Virilocal marriage and motherhood was time-consuming, requiring women to assume the triple role of wife, daughter-in-law, and mother. This triple role included serving the new virilocal family with filial piety and taking on domestic responsibilities as household managers.[97] Furthermore, as submission to mothers-in-law was expected from brides when learning their future role as household managers, strained relationships ensued.[98] Fister notes that being married off by family; controlling, dominant spouses; and divorce limitations were harsh realities for women.[99] However, arranged marriages were common for both sexes.[100] Depending on class and socio-economic circumstances, women could even select their preferred marriage candidate.[101] Furthermore, not all marriages were created equal. Although virilocal marriages gained dominance around the middle of the Edo period, uxorilocal marriages remained an alternative. Adopting a son-in-law (Jp. *mukoyōshi*) into the natal household relieved women of their daughter-in-law responsibilities, keeping their labour within the maternal family.[102] The position of *mukoyōshi* is occasionally equated to wives in virilocal marriages. Although *mukoyōshi* were more easily divorced and subject to the whims of their wives and in-laws, the predominance of such maltreatment is yet unclear.[103] Ultimately, marital power dynamics were more balanced and relied on spousal harmony, as G. William Skinner and Yonemoto reveal.[104]

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[96] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 16–17, 198, 201.
[97] Lindsey, "Good Life," 38.
[98] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 195.
[99] Apart from divorce temples; see Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 10.
[100] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 15.
[101] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 98–99.
[102] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 5–6.
[103] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 178–179.
[104] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 13–14.

Takagi Tadashi balances Fister's previous observations on divorce inequality, noting that Edo divorce papers (Jp. *mikudari han*) were filed by both parties and their families rather than just the husband.[105] The effects of child-rearing are more complex, since attitudes towards pro-natalism and motherhood fluctuated during the Edo period. Certain Confucian texts even caution against the 'overindulgence' of maternal involvement.[106] However, Uno demonstrates that child-rearing was a family affair, requiring the participation of both sexes.[107]

The dualities above do not imply the Edo era was egalitarian; it remained a male-orientated society and culture, as noted by Walthall.[108] Professional women artists were outnumbered by men due to conflicting domestic roles and the time-consuming nature of art creation.[109] However, Edo roles could be bent, making Nochlin's notion that women artists had to choose between 'marriage or a career' appear oversimplified.[110]

Under the right circumstances and with family approval, Edo women could circumvent limitations and step outside their respective gender boundaries.[111] It was this fickle and malleable nature of Edo's patriarchal society that provided opportunities, as Gyokuran's and Ōi's stories attest in the subsequent chapters.

[105] Yabuta, *Rediscovering Women*, 2–3.
[106] These include texts by Nakamura Kōki; see Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 140–141, 143.
[107] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 3-4.
[108] P. F. Kornicki, Mara Patessio, and G. Rowley, eds., *The Female as Subject: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 2010), 216.
[109] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 229.
[110] Nochlin, *Great Women*, 58.
[111] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 6.

Chapter 4

Kyoto: Literati Artist Ike Gyokuran

Kyoto-born *bunjin* Ike Gyokuran, née Tokuyama Machi, was one of the most famous female painters of her time. Numerous art books have reiterated her harmonious marriage to the famous literati paragon Ike Taiga, exuding the image of a pure-hearted couple of eccentrics continuously dabbling in the arts.[112] Taiga's life as an unconventional commoner painter, his true views (Jp. *shinkeizu*), and other revolutionary literati contributions are well-known, but details regarding Gyokuran's life are scarce and conjoined with her husband's despite her artistic journey beginning before her marriage.[113] Therefore, this chapter shifts the perspective to Gyokuran's story by addressing the strategies that enabled her artistry in a controlled yet dualistic society, demonstrating that Taiga also greatly benefitted from the marriage.

Gyokuran's life began in a commoner household of independent, unmarried women. Her grandmother Kaji (active in the 18th century) and mother, Yuri (1694–1764), ran the Matsuya teahouse in Gion's entertainment district and were skilled and published classical *waka* poets. Renowned throughout the Kyoto and Kantō regions, Kaji was a well-connected *waka* prodigy, famous for invigorating its rather antiquated verses.[114] Although unmarried, Kaji became the adoptive mother of Edokko Yuri, Gyokuran's biological mother.[115] Yuri's early life remains the subject of speculation, but Rai San'yo's posthumous publication, *Yuri Den*, helps illustrate her later years.[116] San'yo depicts Yuri as a beautiful, talented poet, skilled calligrapher, and gifted musician. Gyokuran was born during Yuri's decade-long relationship with an unnamed samurai from the Tokuyama family. Following the death of his brother,

[112] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 251–252.
[113] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 43–44.
[114] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 71–73; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 243.
[115] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 73.
[116] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 244.

Gyokuran's father was urged by his kin to carry on the virilocal household. Despite his desire to introduce Yuri and Gyokuran to his new household, Yuri declined, fearing their problematic status difference would lead to disgrace.[117] This worry was not unfounded; although inter-status marriage occurred, class commensurability was desirable among samurai to alleviate the shogunate's fears of strategic unions.[118]

The demands of the virilocal samurai household affected Gyokuran's status in a double-edged manner. Although Gyokuran was officially demoted to commoner status, lower-class female *waka* poets encountered fewer restrictions than higher-class women poets in displaying their skills in urban settings.[119] Gyokuran's partial samurai lineage nevertheless brought her distinction in a status-conscious society. Numerous accounts, including Yuri's, have highlighted Gyokuran's samurai surname and high-born status.[120] Considering Taiga's paternal peasant lineage, Gyokuran's unofficial samurai heritage must have given him elevated standing.[121]

Not having a high-ranking father figure did not hinder Gyokuran's educational or artistic chances. Her matrilineal family had sufficient cultural, social, and economic capital to compensate for this loss, providing Gyokuran with a thorough cultural upbringing. Yuri taught her young daughter Japanese *waka* poetry through homeschooling, the predominant mode of education for Edo women, since public temple schools (Jp. *terakoya*) emerged later.[122] Kaji and Yuri's embodied capital of literacy, calligraphy, and *waka* poetry laid the foundations for Gyokuran's cultural capital.[123] Although educated women were more readily accepted in artistic circles, schooling was not equally accessible.[124] Regarding educational opportunities,

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[117] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 244–245.
[118] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 96.
[119] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 222.
[120] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 74.
[121] Melinda Takeuchi, "Ike Taiga: A Biographical Study," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, no. 1 (1983): 145–146, https://doi.org/10.2307/2719020.
[122] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 74; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 61.
[123] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 72, 74, 81.
[124] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 219, 221.

Richard Rubinger notes that 'geography trumped gender'; women living in urban areas acquired literacy more easily than those in southwest and northeast Japan.[125] Therefore, residing in Kyoto gave Gyokuran a regional advantage.

The economic capital generated by the Matsuya teahouse preserved the family's artistic and personal freedoms. Addiss notes that, in addition to financial stability, this popular social hub provided a vast social network.[126] The teahouse became a perfect cultural setting for developing lasting friendships and exchanging poetry with a varied clientele, fortifying social connections.[127] Kaji and Yuri were admired and published poets; their visitors and network consisted of an array of prominent individuals, including Nakanoin Michishige (1631–1710), court noble Reizei Tamemura (1712–1774), and samurai poet-painter Yanagisawa Kien (1703–1758).[128] Their collective renown and social capital were crucial factors for Gyokuran's engagement in the arts. Gyokuran served tea while connecting with her family's social network and pursuing the arts without compromising her time-consuming domestic responsibilities.[129] In Bourdieu's terms, the 'investment of time and cultural capital' necessary to develop Gyokuran's artistic aptitude depended on the early 'transmission' of abundant cultural capital at home through her kin and their teahouse.[130] Her family's financial independence in her formative years extended the time of her artistic cultivation.[131] This home-and-family advantage facilitated access to cultural circles, enabling Gyokuran's first foray into the literati arts.

Gyokuran deviates slightly from Fister's observation that 18th-century female literati were mainly the 'wives, sisters, or daughters of well-known *bunjin* artists'.[132] Gyokuran did

[125] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 219.
[126] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 245–246.
[127] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 72, 74.
[128] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 72-74.
[129] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 241, 246, 250-251.
[130] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', 244, 246.
[131] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', 246; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 241.
[132] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 227.

not hail from a family of painters; nevertheless, she gained artistic opportunities in this field through inheriting familial social capital. Kien, a Matsuya patron and visitor and first-generation literatus, happily taught 10-year-old Machi the literati arts at Yuri's request.[133] This point adds nuance to Fister's account, as Gyokuran did not enter the profession solely through the backing of benevolent male literati relatives. Gyokuran was already a *bunjin* before meeting her husband, Taiga, and her initial social capital came from her female kin and scholar-artist Kien. Although Taiga's tutelage enhanced her skills, he was not the initial reason for her *bunjin* qualification. Kien's instruction was exceptional, as mostly higher-class women benefitted from outside tutelage.[134] However, Kien taught Gyokuran at her mother's request. It was Gyokuran's non-literati female relatives who encouraged her to become the first painter in their family. Kaji and Yuri's support and investment in Gyokuran's cultural upbringing were essential, revising Bettina Gramlich-Oka's binary notion that female self-cultivation and achievement exclusively hinged on male encouragement.[135]

Male encouragement nevertheless aided Gyokuran, especially since Kien hailed from a distinguished, wealthy samurai clan. Adding Gyokuran to his prestigious network, including Ōbaku-zen monk Eppō Dōshō (1655–1734), ancient learning scholar Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728), and fellow literatus Gion Nankai (1677–1751), amplified Gyokuran's reputation and social capital.[136] Through Kien's versatile knowledge and education, Gyokuran became acquainted with Chinese model books, literati art, silk painting, and Nanpin bird-and-flower painting, gaining embodied and objective capital.[137]

Gyokuran made a bold choice in becoming a female *bunjin* painter at this early stage. Chinese learning was male-dominated, and only a few male artists were acquainted with the

[133] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 74–75.
[134] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 61.
[135] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 139.
[136] Brecher notes additional tutelage by Gion Nankai; see W. Puck Brecher, *The Aesthetics of Strangeness: Eccentricity and Madness in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 67–69, 72.
[137] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 43–44; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 251.

still-obscure Chinese literati style.[138] Meeting Kien, one of the main disseminators of the Japanese literati style, indicates that luck also shaped her artistry. After completing her studies, Kien bestowed upon Machi the art name Gyokuran, or 'jade waves'.[139]

Gyokuran's art education was supplemented through studies with the free-spirited second-generation literatus Taiga. As related in *Records of the Ike Taiga Lineage* (Jp. *Ike Taiga Kafu*, n.d.), Taiga's childhood was shaped by the passing of his father, making his mother the primary caretaker of the precocious youngster.[140] From the age of five onwards, the good-natured Taiga became familiar with the cultivated arts, including calligraphy, Confucian recitation, and seal script. The Buddhist clergy of the Ōbaku-zen Manpuku-ji, a temple renowned for its Chinese literati culture and monks, provided his early education.[141] Taiga further accessed Chinese literati literature and art through Confucianist and first-generation *bunjin* Gion Nankai (1677–1751), patron-pupil Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802), and Kien, who became key figures in Taiga's upward mobility in the Kyoto art world.[142] Over several decades, Taiga propelled himself from a fan-shop-owning town painter to an iconic scholar-artist.[143]

Despite Taiga's rising fame, he was still relatively unknown to the public and in financial distress when introduced to the Gion household as Gyokuran's painting tutor. Through Yuri's involvement and support, Gyokuran and Taiga went from study partners to partners for life.[144] The mutual benefits of this partnership should not be underestimated. Although Taiga's cultural capital expanded Gyokuran's artistic knowledge and abilities, her economic capital complemented Taiga's lack of funds. Gyokuran's social and embodied

[138] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 72; Melinda Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views: The Language of Landscape Painting in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 12.
[139] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 250–251.
[140] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 13.
[141] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 13–14.
[142] Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 160, 170–171.
[143] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 15, 26.
[144] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 21–22; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 251.

capital further offered Taiga additional connections, prestige through her renowned family and samurai heritage, and a like-minded literatus partner.

The date of the nuptials is uncertain, ranging from 1746 to 1752, with some scholars even speculating about the legality.[145] Speculation also concerns Gyokuran's strife with her mother-in-law.[146] Fraught mother-in-law relationships were common, and didactic literature clearly instructs that brides should exhibit filial piety to their in-laws even if maltreated.[147] Gyokuran's relationship with her mother-in-law seems more positive. The inscription by Ōbaku priest Monchū Jōfuku (1739–1829) on one of Gyokuran's paintings contradicts any form of conflict or illegitimate union, stating 'how she served her aged mother-in-law years ago'.[148] Gyokuran's filial piety indicates that heterodox behavioural patterns in Gyokuran's bohemian life co-existed with adherence to Confucian-orthodox Edo gender roles, supporting the previously discussed orthopraxy versus orthodoxy theory.

Unfettered by the virilocal household due to the absence of Taiga's parents, Gyokuran's marriage was either uxorilocal or neolocal. These marriages were considered amenable to women and female inheritance, as demonstrated by the couple's humble abode near the Gion Shrine, which was gifted by Yuri.[149] Once married, the happy couple retreated to their cluttered, modest domicile, with Gyokuran keeping her maiden name.[150] Numerous anecdotes have highlighted Gyokuran's unorthodox character and her relationship with Taiga. A key element in these stories is the couple's disregard for social norms, such as their

[145] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 37.
[146] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 429.
[147] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 196–197.
[148] Gyokuran, *Sages Playing Go Under Pine Trees*, ink and colour on paper, hanging scroll, 127.3 x 33.8 cm, private collection, Japan; see Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 428–429.
[149] This depends on Yuri's lodgings, which are unclear. Yuri's bequeathment of property could indicate neolocal marriage, in which the bride's parents provided the couple's lodgings; see Ambros, *Women Religions*, 58, 78; Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 157.
[150] Some scholars argue that Gyokuran's maiden name suggests an illegitimate union. However, the name might signify maternal filial piety, Gyokuran's prestigious samurai heritage, or perhaps, as the couple moved into Yuri's former residence, Taiga's unofficial role as *mukōyoshi*; see Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 10; Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 72.

unwillingness to pursue wealth despite enduring poverty.[151] Gyokuran is depicted as an eccentric, smoking, charitable, free-spirited *bunjin*, untainted by make-up or pretence.[152] Their artistic relationship was mutually beneficial; both decorated tobacco pouches and lanterns to supplement their income. Gyokuran additionally sold her art, despite it conflicting with the *bunjin* ideal of not painting for profit.[153] Gyokuran further trained Taiga in *waka*, a skill she acquired through her family and Reizei Tamura, whereas Taiga instructed her in literati art. As the pair immersed themselves in painting, music, calligraphy, and poetry, they cultivated each other in the arts and benefitted from each other's networks.[154] This relationship demonstrates that marriage was not always a vehicle of oppression for women artists. The couple's 'companionate marriage' was a bilateral exchange of intellectual and artistic interests.[155]

This view collides with Fister's claim that Taiga's progressive, benevolent nature allowed Gyokuran's 'artistic fantasies'.[156] Fister's emphasis on Taiga's male magnanimity in permitting Gyokuran's artistry is short-sighted, especially since she also notes that Yuri purposely selected Taiga to ensure Gyokuran continued her *bunjin* aspirations.[157] Yuri's marriage criteria for the then-obscure Taiga make it highly unlikely that Gyokuran needed permission to paint. Furthermore, terms such as 'artistic fantasies' and 'male permission' are problematic, as well as Fister's notion that Taiga may have inspired fellow male colleagues' liberal attitudes towards their spouses, making future artists reconsider pairing up with 'meek, feudal wives'.[158] Such phrasing reinforces views of subjugated wives while framing Gyokuran's artistry as a subsidiary, frivolous pastime allowed by the altruism of her artistic, superior husband.[159] Having an artist-husband was undoubtedly an asset in overcoming

[151] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 252.
[152] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 72; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 252.
[153] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 75; Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 89.
[154] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 75; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 251–252.
[155] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 35.
[156] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 85.
[157] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 75.
[158] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 85.
[159] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 85.

restrictions for Gyokuran and other early female literati artists, but it was not the cause of her artistry.

Despite their fortuitous union, the couple remained childless. However, Gyokuran should have had no fear of divorce. Kaibara Ekken's *Methods for Teaching Girls* (Jp. *Joshi Wo Oshiyuru Hō*, n.d.) allowed virtuous infertile wives to adopt an heir, challenging assumptions that Edo women were merely valued for their fecundity, at least in Gyokuran's time.[160] Studies by Bernstein and Yonemoto indicate marriage held greater significance than biological motherhood for women, especially in the mid-18th century.[161] As the couple neglected to adopt, Gyokuran could focus on the arts, as she was unencumbered by time-consuming child-rearing.[162] The lack of an heir was nevertheless perceived as disappointing, with family friend Abbot Daiten (1719–1801) grieving, 'They had no children, and their house has come to an end. What a lamentable matter!'[163]

In 1764, Yuri died. Despite the Matsuya's waning popularity, Gyokuran continued working there, even inheriting the establishment and its economic capital.[164] Amy Stanley reveals that shop, home, and land ownership existed among affluent female townspeople.[165] That Gyokuran was favoured over Taiga in property bequeathment indicates that strict inheritance patterns did not restrict or permeate the lives of all Edo women.[166]

Fortunately, Yuri's network survived, for the couple received tutelage from the celebrated waka poet Reizei Tamemura. Considering the longstanding amicable relations between the Gion and Tamemura households, it is probable that Gyokuran's family's connection initiated Taiga's introduction to the high-ranking poet.[167] From 1766 onwards,

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[160] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 142–143.
[161] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 3; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 143.
[162] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 128.
[163] Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 180.
[164] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 75; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 260.
[165] This was as long as male representatives settled legal disputes; see Leupp and Tao, *Tokugawa World*, 239.
[166] Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 157.
[167] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 245–246, 251.

Reizei instructed the couple through both in-person and long-distance learning. The latter enabled women to circumvent travel restrictions, as corrections were provided via mail. However, Gyokuran remained unhindered in her travels, as Tamemura lived in Kyoto.[168] Gyokuran also circumvented costly travels thanks to the literati knowledge and social connections obtained by her travelling, mountain-aficionado husband. Taiga expanded Gyokuran's social capital by connecting her to wealthy merchant Kenkadō, Ōbaku priest Goshin Genmyō (1713–1785), and Fukuhara Gogaku (1730–1799), leading to multiple collaborations.[169]

Around this period, Gyokuran's artistic renown reached its apex. As with Taiga, she was listed as a painter of renown in the 1768, 1775, and 1782 issues of *Who's Who in Kyoto* (Jp. *Heian Jinbutsu Shii*).[170] This listing was a beneficial feat for Gyokuran, as the popular guide only mentions 16 painters and catered to prospective students and tourists.[171] The couple's newfound celebrity status alleviated their economic hardships, leading to substantial donations to the Gion Shrine in 1773. Unfortunately, their prosperity did not last, for Taiga's health slowly declined. Although Taiga ensured Gyokuran was well provided for by giving her his paintings and calligraphy, sources indicate he died penniless.[172]

Although the passing of her husband impacted Gyokuran, her life went on. She belonged to the first delegation of teachers at *terakoya* emerging in the late 18th century, reflecting burgeoning opportunities for women through education.[173] Although the sources vary, they indicate Gyokuran either became a calligraphy instructor at a private school or was employed as an elementary school teacher at Shin Yakumachi.[174] These accounts could imply

[168] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 33, 40–41.
[169] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 40, 429; Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 155.
[170] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 33.
[171] Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 163.
[172] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 28, 39; Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 164.
[173] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 13, 75.
[174] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 39–40, 51n18.

that widower Gyokuran required additional income, perhaps lacking the economic support of the *ie* household to retire.[175] Kinoshita notes that Gyokuran's inherited social network from Taiga remained intact after his passing. Kenkadō's diary entry of 1782 describes sightseeing trips with Gyokuran, Suzuriya Chūshichi (dates unknown), and Satake Kaika (1733–1790), as well as Kenkadō accompanying her to Sōrin-ji temple's exhibition and art auction.[176]

Gyokuran kept making art and managing her mother's teahouse.[177] Fukuhara Gogaku (1730–1799), a frequent visitor of Gyokuran, composed a poem to his 'honorary mother', stating, 'No change in your artistic ways'.[178] Four of Gyokuran's hanging scrolls feature writing by Taiga's pupils and friends, including Kenkadō and Hakuun (1764–1825), indicating his social capital facilitated artistic collaboration. Gyokuran was buried at the Saiun-in temple, outliving Taiga by eight years. There, she performed her final act of filial piety, interred alongside her own 'Honorary Mother', Yuri.[179]

Despite having defined Gyokuran's opportunities and restraints, the anecdotes surrounding her life remain dubious. As noted by Takeuchi, firsthand and secondary Edo sources frequently combine elements of reality, fiction, and rhetoric.[180] This is evident in *Eccentrics of Recent Times* (Jp. *Kinsei Kijiden*, 1790) by Ban Kōkei (1733–1806), Rikunyo (1734–1801), and Mikuma Katen (1730–1795), which includes Taiga and Gyokuran.[181] This biographical compilation of eccentrics favoured oddball goodness over artistic achievements and was rife with Kōkei's partiality.[182] Certain portrayals are a rhetorical device to emphasise the virtuous, eccentric nature of its subjects, connecting them to the social value of *ki*.[183]

[175] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 204–205.
[176] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 40.
[177] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 260.
[178] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 40.
[179] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 40.
[180] Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 144–145.
[181] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 117, 122.
[182] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 122–124, 132, 134.
[183] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 116–117, 133.

Nevertheless, the compilation offers insights into the eccentricity that helped Gyokuran navigate restraints. Therefore, this chapter concludes with eccentricity.

Fuelled by the ideas of Daoist thinkers Lao-tzu and Zhuang-zi, eccentricity gained traction amongst 18th-century early modern Confucianists and *bunjin*. Takeuchi notes that Daoist eccentricity (Jp. *ki*) shaped a fascinating culture of peculiar, impulsive irrationality.[184] The concept's multifarious meanings, ranging from talented to bizarre, and the continuous interchange of *ki* and *kyō* (Jp. *madness*) obscure eccentricity's precise definition.[185] Eccentricity was both symbolised in the disengaged Daoist eccentric person (Jp. *kijin*) harmonised with heaven and the neo-Confucianist non-conformist madman (Jp. *kyōsha*) close to the Middle Way.[186] Neglecting the Confucian *kyōsha*, Tsuji Nobuo argues that Daoist eccentricity was anathema to Confucian doctrines and thus criticised.[187] This notion of depreciated eccentricity resonates with the common misconception that 18th-century eccentricity resulted from a repressive Tokugawa milieu.[188] Brecher notes the Tokugawa tolerance of benign apolitical eccentricity, as it was neutralised by reclusiveness, separate aesthetic spheres, and the promotion of societal unity.[189] When Gyokuran's peculiar behaviour misaligned with Tokugawa norms, she could avert social scrutiny through eccentricity, which absolved abnormal behaviour. Gyokuran's unconventionality, which additionally elevated her cultural status and appeal, was thus more asset than obstacle.[190] As 18th-century eccentricity mainly manifested itself in *bunjin* culture, the period and genre both facilitated Gyokuran's artistry in a restrictive era.[191]

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[184] *Ki* similarly connotes *weird* and *exceedingly talented*; see Takeuchi, *True Views*, 122–123.
[185] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 5, 11–12, 115.
[186] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 10, 99.
[187] Takeuchi, *True Views*, 122–123.
[188] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 84–85.
[189] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 50–51, 92.
[190] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness,* 71, 117.
[191] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 141.

Turning now to the various eccentric-inspired forms of atypical behavioural patterns and artistry, as displayed by Taiga and Gyokuran,[192] Takeuchi Gengen'ichi's (1742–1804) *More Accounts of Eccentric Poets* (Jp. *Zoku-haika kijindan*, 1833) describes the couple's eccentricity: 'They were poor and unabashedly wore each other's clothes, though Gyokuran also used to play the zither in the nude… They both were carefree, open-hearted, and famous for being so.'[193]

The couple's harmonising strangeness can make one forget that Gyokuran inherited this embodied capital from her natal family, not merely Taiga. Brecher notes that eccentric behaviour or artistic style was a deliberate choice, passed down by masters, relatives, or cultural tradition.[194] He adds that Gyokuran's 'aesthetic eccentricity' was the legacy of her unusual family of female poets, who were unmarried and independent teahouse owners, fully immersed in *waka* art.[195] This point again undermines views of unilateral male cultural exchange, as evident in Gyokuran's art.

[192] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 5.
[193] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 73–74.
[194] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 91.
[195] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 91–92.

Chapter 5

The Art of a Painter-Poet

The favourable intellectual and artistic climate of 18th-century imperial Kyoto was crucial in Gyokuran's cultural development. By evaluating Gyokuran's art, artistic achievements, and the socio-geographic context of Kyoto, this chapter illustrates that oppressive institutions, such as Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, and Tokugawa reforms, provided direct and indirect opportunities for Gyokuran's literati pursuits. Furthermore, the chapter reveals how the characteristic elements of Gyokuran's literary and artistic genre negated many obstacles faced by this painter-poet.

Residing in 18th-century Kyoto gave Gyokuran sufficient opportunities to become an artist and mitigate restraints. First, imperial Kyoto was less subject to Tokugawa military control and restraining edicts than Edo city. Second, living in relatively peaceful times in Kyoto's liberal atmosphere allowed new artists, such as Gyokuran, and intellectuals to blossom. Third, the city was the focal point for both Neo-Confucianism and the literati, thus eliminating Gyokuran's need to travel for artistic growth and opportunities.[196]

Despite Kyoto's position as the cultural heartland for religion, manufacturing, and intellectual and artistic movements, the region experienced setbacks: the Great Kyōhō Fire of 1730 and the Tenmei Fire of 1788.[197] The first calamity likely did not impact Gyokuran, and she passed before the latter fire. Nevertheless, Gyokuran could not escape Kyoto's cultural decline, a phenomenon prompted by several factors, including the relocation of Kanō school branches to Edo, the Rinpa school's lack of virtuoso painters, and the declining court-

[196] Matthew P. McKelway and Yoko Woodson, *Traditions Unbound: Groundbreaking Painters of Eighteenth-Century Kyoto* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture, 2005), 7, 16.
[197] McKelway and Woodson, *Traditions Unbound*, 22, 50.

sponsored Tosa school. This cultural decline reached its zenith around the mid-18th century, thus creating opportunity for the literati movement and Gyokuran.[198]

Several factors enabled the advent of the literati genre, including the early 18th-century rise of a new wealthy merchant class in Kyoto favouring both traditional and new art styles and patronising unconventional artists.[199] Additionally, the proliferation of Chinese culture and Neo-Confucianist thought in Kyoto facilitated the spread of literati culture and self-cultivation, as advocated by the Ancient Learning school (Jp. *kogaku*) paragon Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728).[200] Education, and by extension Neo-Confucianist advocacy of literacy and literati art, accelerated women artists' access to the literati genre and groups.[201] Another factor aiding aspiring *bunjin*, such as Gyokuran, was the relocation of Chinese Ōbaku zen monks to Japan, including several highly skilled calligraphers and literati artists. These monks brought the latest developments in Chinese art and culture and founded various temples, which became literati repositories of Chinese artistry and theory.[202]

The Ōbaku zen monks' main temple, Manpuku-ji, conveniently located in Kyoto, helped Taiga access Southern-style Ming and Qing painting and literati knowledge.[203] Taiga shared this artistic knowledge with Gyokuran. Japanese amateur *bunjin* were professionals from various strata of society, which diverged from the refined Chinese scholar-gentleman amateurs (Ch. *wen-ren*) overseas.[204] Literati art, based on Chinese Southern School painting, emphasised the artist's expressive personal depiction of the object's innermost essence.[205] Japanese literati painters also incorporated the professional, detailed Northern School style,

[198] McKelway and Woodson, *Traditions Unbound*, 16–17.
[199] McKelway and Woodson, *Traditions Unbound*, 18–19.
[200] Takeuchi, *True Views*, 116; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 227.
[201] Fister notes this was facilitated by public schools yet neglects the role of Neo-Confucianism's legitimation of education; see Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 219, 224, 227.
[202] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 42–43.
[203] McKelway and Woodson, *Traditions Unbound*, 63.
[204] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 84–85; Murase, *Bridge of Dreams*, *The Mary Griggs Burke Collection of Japanese Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 374.
[205] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 33–34.

even though literatus Dong Qichang (1555–1636) deemed this school inferior.[206] This co-existence is not remarkable, for imported Chinese woodblock painting treatises combined the influences of the Northern and Southern Schools. These woodcuts were based on continuous reproductions of the original paintings and were depicted in a stark medium, which diluted their essence.[207] Whether this style was subconsciously absorbed from Chinese styles or an eclectic process developed by Japanese artists is still debated.[208] The *bunjin* repertoire further expanded after Yosa Buson (1716–1783) and Taiga fused the style with Japanese elements, the latter including Rinpa and indigenous folklore.[209] Painting manuals such as *Eight Types of Picture Albums* (Jp. *Hasshū Gafu*) and *Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* (Jp. *Kaishien Gaden*) found in Ōbaku zen temples were crucial, as closed country politics and restricted overseas travel inhibited direct access to Chinese literati culture. Nevertheless, *bunjin* culture remained available through Nagasaki mainland merchants and even Tokugawa Yoshimune (r. 1716–1745) moralising Kyōhō Reforms. These reforms still benefitted Gyokuran through lifting the foreign book ban and producing an influx of Chinese literati manuals.[210]

Gyokuran could access and 'appropriate' the objective capital of these manuals through Kien and Taiga or even via Taiga's self-authored *Taigadō's Model Painting Book* (Jp. *Taigadō Gafu*).[211] That painting manuals aided her artistry is reflected by her Chinese-themed pair of hanging scrolls, *Luoyang Avenue* (n.d.; Fig.1).[212] Likely based on a poem by Chu Guangxi (active c. 742), Gyokuran depicts the journey of two tastefully attired young gentlemen on horseback hailing from the area Five Mounds, as represented by the five dwellings at the centre. However, the dashing youngsters are upstaged by Gyokuran's

[206] Takeuchi, *True Views*, 11–12, 86.
[207] Takeuchi, *True Views*, 23, 29.
[208] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 42–43.
[209] Murase, *Bridge of Dreams*, 374; Takeuchi, "Biographical Study," 141–142.
[210] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 65; Murase, *Bridge of Dreams*, 373–374.
[211] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 246–247; Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 65, 67, 438–439.
[212] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 283.

vibrantly brushed landscape imbued with literati spirit. Various techniques, including Mi Fu dots, were patterned after *Taigadō's Model Painting*, a book which Gyokuran frequently referenced. However, Gyokuran's rendition of the delineated swirls of candyfloss-shaped mountains is her personal hallmark.[213] This scroll demonstrates that Gyokuran's literati style was not passive. While improving under Taiga's influence, he did not define her style.

The literati genre's relative indifference to status and gender, while prising itself on amateur status, likewise facilitated Gyokuran's artistry during restrictions.[214] Although amateurism justified female artistic activity, it carries negative undertones in the West. Nochlin notes Western society compelled women to become 'self-demeaning' amateurs to prevent household neglect.[215] This concept of artistically inferior and self-demeaning amateurs was inconsistent with the Edo art world. As Weidner indicates, amateurism was respected in the arts and granted women artists renown.[216] Furthermore, whether a professional artistic career for Edo women was an intentional objective *an sich* is unclear. For female poets, publication during their lifetime was not necessarily their primary goal, evident in Gyokuran's posthumous poetry bundle from 1910, *White Mallow* (Jp. *Shirofuyō*).[217]

Certainly, amateur literati artists were less bound to continuous, time-consuming studio work, as Rosina Buckland notes.[218] Unlike professionalism, amateurism was easier to balance with female domestic responsibilities and considered morally appropriate.[219] Fister notes that if the atelier was the only option, the prospects of Chinese and Japanese women artists would dwindle due to 'gender mobility'.[220] As leisurely amateurism could be practiced at home, Gyokuran's need to travel to an external atelier, which interfered with household

[213] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 441–442.
[214] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 227.
[215] Nochlin, *Great Women*, 55.
[216] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 15.
[217] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 225; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 247.
[218] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei: A Woman Artist in a Floating World," December 18, 2020, YouTube video, 1:00:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR94xCIySkU.
[219] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 15, 229.
[220] Fister, "Feminine Perceptions," 17.

duties, was eliminated. Amateurism thus enabled women to sidestep gender restrictions and join the art world.

While Gyokuran was technically an amateur artist, she and Taiga also sold a variety of goods, including paintings, fans, and lanterns, to generate income.[221] Fister notes, economic adversity in the *ie* (household) could lead amateur women to blur the lines, thus morally condoning female professionalism.[222] Gyokuran systematically sold numerous fans at the Matsuya teahouse, and people actively sought out their tea establishment to obtain these popular items.[223] Perhaps because Gyokuran's fans were so desired, they comprised half her oeuvre.[224]

Gyokuran's style was not merely an extension of Taigas but highly valued on its own. Gyokuran's renown for her lineage of female poets fostered interest in her fans which, such as her poetry, fetched high prices.[225] Through the public's esteem for her female family, Gyokuran could convert her social capital into economic capital through her fans.[226] Indeed, while Taiga was also familiar with fan painting, Gyokuran's fans fetched a higher price than Taiga's.[227] The higher monetary value of Gyokuran's fans suggests that Gyokuran's art sometimes surpassed her husband's in critical acclaim and economic capital.[228] Gyokuran's situation defies Davis's notion that female 'names did not command equal share [to male names] in the marketplace', thus nuancing the universality of Edo's gender limitations.[229]

Fister notes that early modern artistic communities' deference of literary prowess facilitated renowned female poets such as Gyokuran to become artists.[230] Her late 18th-century

[221] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 75.
[222] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 6; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 234.
[223] Fisher and Kinoshita, *Masters Brush*, 39.
[224] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 253.
[225] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 426–427.
[226] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 243.
[227] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 39, 426.
[228] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 39.
[229] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 60.
[230] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 224.

fan, *Akashi Bay* (Fig. 3), reflects this. Gyokuran departs from the literati tradition of the idealised fictional Chinese landscape, choosing the real Japanese locale of the Akashi fishing village instead.[231] The poetry in the middle left is juxtaposed with small fishing boats at the upper right, and pine trees in various tonal gradations structure the composition on three separate levels. The equilibrium between text and image, soft calligraphy, and atmospheric perspective instil this composition with a reposed quality.[232] The poem states,

On Akashi Bay
this evening's moon is now
glittering brightly—
boats out on the waters are
sailing to the distant sea.[233]

Akashi is a physical location and a poetic metaphor representing woeful partings at night during autumn. Gyokuran plays with text and image by letting her *waka* poem echo the visual elements. The glistening mica paper displays the glittering moon, which Gyokuran substitutes with the ideogram for 'moon'.[234] Hence, her calligraphy becomes a surrogate for actual figures. As a true *bunjin*, Gyokuran's objective poetry style primarily highlights nature, while Kaji and Yuri are more drawn to matters of the heart or renunciation.[235]

Additionally, Gyokuran's embodied capital of poetry and calligraphy aided her technical transition into painting, as bamboo and orchids were rendered with brushstrokes comparable to strokes used in calligraphy.[236] Uniting poetry, calligraphy and painting was standard in Chinese literati aesthetics, reaffirming the importance of Edo's rising female

[231] Minneapolis Institute of Art, "Akashi Bay, Ike (Tokuyama) Gyokuran," accessed August 11, 2023, https://collections.artsmia.org/art/116887/akashi-bay-ike-gyokuran.
[232] Minneapolis Institute of Art, "Akashi Bay."
[233] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 257.
[234] Fischer, Kinoshita, and Chaves, *Masters Brush*, 426.
[235] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 247, 249.
[236] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 268.

literacy rates for women artists. Addiss hails Gyokuran's contribution to the Edo art world, referring to her 'fresh' subjective synthesis of literati art and her family's Japanese literary tradition of *waka*.[237] Whereas most painters combined Chinese poems and painting, Gyokuran opted for the Japanese vernacular, giving Gyokuran 'profits of distinction' in her genre'.[238] Apart from reflecting Gyokuran's family's *waka* legacy, her Japanese poetry could additionally suggest circumvention of gender obstacles in poetry. Atsuko Sakaki notes that women practicing male-associated Chinese *kanshi* poetry encountered difficulties due to their sex.[239] However, historical precedents of Japanese women's longstanding classical literary tradition, including *waka*, facilitated and normalised the acceptance of female poetry.[240] Although various Edo female *kanshi* poets were formally educated, Sinological institutions were generally hesitant to accept women.[241] Conversely, female *waka* poets encountered less resistance and were relatively encouraged and treated amenably in Kokugaku circles.[242] Gyokuran's artistic chances in patriarchal Edo were thus augmented by working in the *waka* tradition.

Even so, having embodied capital was not always sufficient to enter the Edo art world. Although acceptance into late-Edo poetry circles was relatively common, Fister argues that for 18th-century *bunjin* women, attending was more complex.[243] She reveals that 18th-century male *bunjin* often congregated to collaborate on painting and poetry, postulating that mid-Edo wives, such as Gyokuran, and women were generally not permitted to join these circles.[244] This exclusion would certainly undermine the egalitarian and welcoming nature of the *bunjin* genre, were it not for Tajihi Ikuo's research demonstrating that Gyokuran, Taiga, and

[237] *Weidner, Flowering Shadows, 257.*
[238] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 245; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 257.
[239] Atsuko Sakaki, "Sliding Doors," in *Obsessions with the Sino-Japanese Polarity in Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 122, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824840648.
[240] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 222.
[241] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 18, 34.
[242] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 69.
[243] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 98–99.
[244] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 85.

Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795) were all esteemed members of the Confucian scholar Iwagaki Ryūkei (1741–1806) poetry group.[245] Luckily, literati art was joined by another genre congenial to women, *ukiyo-e*.

[245] Brecher, *Aesthetics Strangeness*, 121.

Chapter 6

Edo: *Ukiyo-e* Painter Katsushika Ōi

While sources on Ōi's life are scant, various Edo and Meiji accounts of Hokusai have given general details of her life, ranging from Edo sources, such as Satō Gesshin's (1804–1878) *Supplement to Various Thoughts on Ukiyo-e* (Jp. *Zōho Ukiyo-e Ruikō*, 1844) to Meiji accounts, such as Iijima Kyoshin's (1841–1901) *Biography of Katsushika Hokusai* (Jp. *Katsushika Hokusai Den*, 1893).[246] Anecdotes recount their complementary father–daughter bond, evident in their witty banter and preoccupation with art, whilst eschewing conventions and decorum. Aside from the impoverished pair's incessant relocation and cluttered bohemian lifestyles, these sources describe Ōi's eccentricity, including favouring liquor, smoking, and take-out meals over cooking and cleaning.[247] Nevertheless, a significant part of Ōi's life remains elusive to scholars, including her dates of birth and death.[248] Through contextualising Ōi's life and artistry against a socio-cultural backdrop, this chapter offers clearer insight into her limitations and strategies as a professional woman artist in Edo.

Born to the *ukiyo-e* artist Hokusai and his second wife, Kotome (?–1828), Ōi (*née* Oei or Ei) grew up in a productive, unconventional artistic household. Ōi's exact family composition remains inconsistent across studies. She likely had a sister, Nao (n.d.), and a brother, Kase Sakijūrō (Takichirō, ?–1861), a later adoptee of a lower-class samurai family.[249] Ōi also had two older half-sisters, Tatsu (n.d.) and Miyo (n.d.), and a half-brother, Tominosuke (?–1816). The latter was the adopted heir to the mirror-making household of Nakajima Ise in 1803, a position formerly held by Hokusai.[250] Kishi Fumizaku states that although Hokusai's father was the eldest son of the mirror-making family, the position of

[246] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 63.
[247] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 129.
[248] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 61.
[249] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 7, 65.
[250] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 93; Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 19–20, 65.

household head was bestowed on Hokusai's uncle, who then assigned young Hokusai as his successor.[251] This digression is relevant because the mirror-making family were of bannerman (Jp. *hatamoto*) rank, meaning Hokusai was officially of samurai descent.[252] In a class-based society, this samurai affiliation must have positively affected commoner Ōi's prestige during her formative years. Hokusai's decision to send his sons out for adoption further demonstrates men also needed to conform to patriarchal stem family roles.[253]

Ōi and her sisters were likewise bound to such expectations and became painters in Hokusai's studio to contribute to their *ie*, suggesting a lack of economic capital also creates artistic opportunity.[254] As demonstrated by the ateliers and apprenticeships offered by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861) and Tsunoda Kunisada (1769–1825), co-ed *ukiyo-e* studios were not unheard of.[255] This resonates with Yonemoto's statement that Japan was less 'sex-segregated' than other countries.[256] Hokusai's atelier was also not gender selective, even including non-related women.[257] In this non-restrictive, welcoming environment, Ōi received her basic *ukiyo-e* instruction. As the atelier master's daughter, Ōi's accumulation of embodied capital began early, learning through configuring materials and perhaps completing some of Hokusai's projects.[258]

Ōi's early art education was provided by Tsutsumi Tōrin III (1743–1820) and her father, who in turn was instructed by actor print expert Katsukawa Shunshō (?–1792).[259] *Ukiyo-e* specialist Hokusai was a jack of all trades. Hokusai composed amusing mad verses (Jp. *kyōka*); made *surimono*; and mastered Chinese, Japanese, and Western painting styles

[251] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 20-21.
[252] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 21.
[253] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 15.
[254] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 65.
[255] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 230-231.
[256] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 5.
[257] Clark notes pupil Hokumei of Edo (dates unknown); see Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 79, 83.
[258] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 65.
[259] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 55; Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 128.

and subjects, all of which could help Ōi become an artist.[260] Ōi's repertoire and embodied capital benefitted from this expertise. Ōi further received opportunities for collaboration and patronage through Hokusai's extensive social network of colleagues, students, and patrons, thus extending her social capital. Sources note Ōi's acquaintance with the affluent *sake* merchant and patron Takai Kōzan (1806–1883), *ukiyo-e* painter Keisai Eisen (1790–1848), and writer Shikitei Sanba (1776–1822), with whom she made an impromptu painting with a *kyōka* verse.[261]

However, family demands frequently made professional artistry a luxury women could not afford. Ōi's luck being born into a renowned artist family cannot be overstated, granting her time and access to accumulate the necessary cultural capital for *ukiyo-e* artistry.[262] Family demands likewise legitimised potential gender role violations, as Ōi's professional exploits were intertwined with the family brand's success, thus ensuring the socioeconomical survival of the *ie*.[263]

Ōi's signed illustration in a *kyōka* book at age 10 shows the early success of Hokusai's lessons.[264] As her education continued, Ōi became a fervent composer of *senryu* poetry. This embodied capital and self-cultivation likely helped her navigate her father's literary network.[265] Whether Ōi acquired literacy through Hokusai, homeschooling, or by attending a *terakoya* remains unclear. Ōi's letters and calligraphy demonstrate proficiency in Japanese and some Chinese *kanji*. Davis deduces from these letters that Ōi handled various studio business affairs, indicating Hokusai also benefitted from Ōi's expertise.[266] This evidence reflects the expanding roles for educated women at the time and parallels the illustrations in

[260] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 55–56.
[261] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 62; Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 129,131.
[262] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei."
[263] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 14.
[264] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 66.
[265] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 285; Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 66.
[266] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 62.

Onna shôbai ôrai (Jp. *Commercial Primer for Women)*, which depict literate women assisted in the mercantile business in accounting and sales.[267]

Tōrin III instructed Ōi's artist-husband Tsutsumi Tōmei (active 1804–1830), whose initial marital bliss ended in divorce. Kobayashi notes that Ōi's remarks about Tōmei's meagre painting skills likely expediated their separation because they starkly contrasted with the subservient ideal demanded of wives at that time.[268] As stated earlier, while divorce had oppressive overtones, divorces occurred regularly, and Edo divorce proceedings were generally a mutual decision between both households.[269]

Hokusai suffered a stroke in the same year of Ōi's divorce in 1827, while her mother died a year later. Moving back home, Ōi took care of her father while aiding him in the studio. Sister Miyo also returned home after separating from artist Yanagawa Shigenobu (1787–1832), albeit with her little son.[270]

With this information, Davis constructed two theories: Ōi purposely divorced Tōmei to work with her ailing father, and Tōmei or Shigenobu were prospective Hokusai studio and household heads.[271] Davis's assertions are somewhat conflicting, considering the latter statement makes Tōmei an adoptive son-in-law (Jp. *mukoyōshi.*). Designating a *mukoyōshi* would enable Ōi's natal family to continue profiting from artistic labour post-marriage, and it also eliminates the motive of divorcing to aid Hokusai.[272] Kobayashi notes that Shigenobu, instead of Tōmei, was Hokusai's legally adopted son-in-law.[273] Iijima's statement that Ōi 'returned to live with Hokusai and never remarried' suggests virilocal residential patterns during her marriage.[274] Furthermore, as *mukoyōshi* faced similar treatment as brides, Ōi's

[267] Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, *Female Subject*, 12–13; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 221–222.
[268] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 93.
[269] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 10; Yabuta, *Rediscovering Women*, 2–3.
[270] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 24, 64.
[271] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 64-65.
[272] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 170–171.
[273] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 93.
[274] Perhaps it could be a neolocal marriage. Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 64.

derisive humour towards her spouse would be less detrimental to the union.[275] This nuances Kobayashi's previous statement that Ōi's non-conformation to gender roles prompted the divorce.

Davis further notes that Ōi, if married, would need to 'work' for her new virilocal household.[276] This paper proposes a different theory. Matthi Forrer's research demonstrates that six European-styled genre scenes (ca. 1824–1826) commissioned by captain Jan Cock Blomhoff (1779–1863) were mostly collaboratively created by Hokusai, his pupils, and Ōi.[277] The timeline of 1824–1826 corresponds with Ōi's marriage, indicating that Ōi still actively collaborated with the studio and contributed to her natal household during her virilocal marriage.[278] If this theory is correct, it nuances Davis's earlier statement that once married, Ōi had to redirect her labour towards her new kin and needed to divorce to work for Hokusai. Divorce and her natal household's needs certainly enabled Ōi to circumvent potential Edo gender restrictions on a full-time professional career within Hokusai's atelier. However, Ōi's virilocal marriage did not necessarily limit her art or studio participation.[279] Furthermore, although Ōi remaining childless eliminated another potential time-consuming obstacle to her professional *ukiyo-e* career, her situation must have been more difficult than Gyokuran as pro-natalist rhetoric intensified.[280]

This chapter now turns to the extent of Ōi's managing role in the North Star studio and contributions to the Hokusai brand, which are still uncertain.[281] Edo sources have given certain insights into Ōi's character and her position as an *ukiyo-e* painter. Both Eisen and Gesshin note Ōi's role in the Hokusai atelier, with Gesshin even stating that Ōi made 'many

[275] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 178–179.
[276] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 65.
[277] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 82.
[278] A still-single Ōi could have painted these works in early 1824, yet Fister notes speculation that Ōi's marriage occurred in 1820; see Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 128; Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 88.
[279] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 128.
[280] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 128; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 137.
[281] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei"; Steenhuis, "Grote Golf."

of the block drawings that appear under the name of Iitsu'.[282] Ōi's significant share in Hokusai's oeuvre was recognised by her contemporaries. Her decision to work under Hokusai's name while taking a leading position in his studio after his infirmity possibly came from the role she assumed in her natal family. Hokusai could have relied on Ōi's exceptional artistic skills and atelier expertise to maintain the wealth and survival of both the family and his studio when he was out of commission. As Bernstein aptly mentioned, the needs of the family could 'justify the transgression of customs and laws that favored men', enabling Ōi to take a more active role in the North Star studio and overcoming limiting gender roles.[283] Perhaps Ōi's decision to assist her unwell father also reflected filial piety, as suggested by her playful sobriquet name 'loyal to Iitsu', one of Hokusai's art names.[284] This theory resonates with Yonemoto's orthopraxy, suggesting that Ōi adhering to conventional moral principles for women while leading an unconventional lifestyle was not mutually exclusive.[285]

Hokusai's health rebounded, and Ōi must have taken pride in her own skills, even though the *ukiyo-e* genre was considered low in social standing.[286] However, by becoming a painter and picture master (Jp. *eshi*), Ōi was granted higher prestige and cultural capital than the lower-ranked designation of printmakers and book illustrators (Jp. *gakō*).[287] This title further distinguished her in a competitive art world and raised the value of her art.[288] Indeed, the signatures on Ōi's paintings and book illustrations frequently incorporate the phrase 'brush of' (Jp. *hitsu*), emphasising to the public her high-ranking profession and the status it entailed.[289]

[282] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 62–63; Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 129.
[283] Bernstein, *Recreating Women*, 6.
[284] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 94.
[285] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 221.
[286] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 284.
[287] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 62.
[288] Davis, *Floating World*, 19.
[289] Davis, *Floating World*, 50.

Apart from being an artist, Ōi was also a painting teacher for many of Hokusai's students. In Ōi's letter to a pupil on how to mix pigments one can see her familiarity with the latest studio expertise.[290] Due to the similarities between the instruction letter and Hokusai's *Illustrated Essence of Colouring* (Jp. *Ehon Saishiki Tsū*, 1848), Davis speculates that Ōi (co)-authored Hokusai's famous instructional manual.[291] Ōi's literacy was vital for transferring knowledge to the next generation and maintaining the brand's networks through letters with potential patrons.

Although Ōi remained by Hokusai's side until his passing in 1849, subsequent records about Ōi's whereabouts were scarce. Withdrawing from her social network, she continued to paint and received temporary support from her brother. Her last documented commission was in 1857 at an inn along the Tōkaidō Road. Although Ōi's last resting place and age are still debated, her legacy remains unchallenged.[292] This chapter closes with Davis's application of Nochlin's theory, which illustrates the merits and pitfalls of viewing Ōi solely through the lens of institutional restrictions and gender oppression.

By evaluating Iijima's Meiji period *Biography of Katsushika Hokusai*, Davis demonstrates how Ōi was overlooked as a female artist and eclipsed by Hokusai in art historical narratives.[293] Davis questions the potential agenda of Iijima as he refashioned Ōi from an atelier artist into a loyal daughter serving Hokusai and his inherent artistic 'genius'.[294] Davis notes this depiction aligns with larger developments in the Meiji and Western art worlds, in which women could reside in the male artistic realm yet never attain an equal position.[295] She connects Ōi's portrayal to Nochlin's notion of the gender-biased 'Great

[290] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 61–62.
[291] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 62.
[292] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 94.
[293] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 4, 58, 60.
[294] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 58, 60.
[295] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 65.

Artist', which in turn reflects patriarchal art historical practices.[296] Davis cites Nochlin to demonstrate that solely male connections afforded women the 'opportunity for instruction, time and space to work, as well as social status and connections in support of artistic practice'.[297] This conflation of early modern Edo artists with Western women artists is challenging since such unilateral notions of male support and connections were far more complex. Female initiated cultural support is evident in Kaji's and Yuri's support of Gyokuran, *ukiyo-e* artist Sadaka-me's (n.d.) encouragement of her pupil Kakuju-jo (active 1861–1864), and Ōtagaki Rengetsu (1791–1875) benefitting Tomioka Tessai (1836–1924) through social capital and artistic guidance.[298]

Nevertheless, Davis's application of Nochlin's framework has merit, as gender could negatively impact Edo women artists. Expected to embrace domestic roles, pursuing a full-time artistic career was arduous for Edo women.[299] This lack of female representation was evident in the Kanō, Rinpa, and Tosa schools, even though professional women artists were occasionally admitted to these institutions.[300] Davis and Nochlin caution that seeking exceptions to refute exclusive male 'greatness' indicates that the system itself is rigged.[301] However, as Rebecca Morell explains, the values determining greatness are not fixed but culturally dependent and contingent on changing times and values.[302] In this vein, by referencing Nochlin, Davis projected a Western definition of greatness, such as professional artistry, on Edo women. As noted, whereas amateurism was diminished in the West, Edo culture granted female amateur artists respect.[303]

[296] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 58–60.
[297] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 60.
[298] Feltens, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, 27, 37; Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 130.
[299] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 229.
[300] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 229–230.
[301] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 60.
[302] Morrill, Wright, and Elderton, *Women Artists*, 11.
[303] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 15.

Furthermore, unlike Western art institutions, such as the École des Beaux-Arts, which excluded professional women artists, *ukiyo-e* studios accepted women.[304] Ōi did not face the same obstacles that Nochlin detected among her Western counterparts and was neither excluded nor limited in her education or artistic genre. She was active in a progressive genre amenable to women, thus encountering fewer restrictions than professional women in more hierarchical schools.[305] Whereas Nochlin argues that women's exclusion from the nude impeded their mastery of history painting and becoming 'great', Buckland states that this category was virtually absent from Edo visual culture before the 1870s.[306] Gender exclusion also did not apply to erotic *shunga*, as attested by various Edo women artists, including Ōi.[307] Subject matter in painting was less restrictive for Edo women than for their Western colleagues. Fister notes while poetry could display gendered elements, subject matter and style in painting depended on the teachers and schools with which women artists were affiliated.[308] Davis should not neglect this divergence. Especially since Davis claims that the potential hand of Ōi in Hokusai's late work indicates that 'Ōi was not limited by her sex and gender' in the atelier, thereby attenuating Nochlin's theory.[309] Further observations by Davis on gender, Ōi and her art are explored in the next chapter.

[304] Nochlin, *Great Women*, 52–53; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 230.
[305] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 229–230.
[306] Nochlin, *Great Women*, 42–43; The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei."
[307] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei"; Matthi Forrer, ed., *Hokusai: Prints and Drawings* (1991; reis., Munich: Prestel, 2001), 203.
[308] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 231–232.
[309] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 69.

Chapter 7

The Art of a Former Ghostbrush

His daughter Ei-jo is skilled at drawing, and following after her father has become a professional artist (eshi) while acquiring a reputation as a talented painter.[310]

—Keisai Eisen, *Master No-Name's Miscellany* (1833)

As illustrated above, Ōi received high praise from her peers for her artistic endeavours. Although these plaudits demonstrate Ōi had overcome Tokugawa restrictions as a professional female artist, her few authenticated works seem to contradict this statement. Davis demonstrates that Ōi's current oeuvre now contains three letters, a book illustration, a *surimono* with poetry, 12 paintings and four illustrated books, although two of the latter are missing a signature.[311] Therefore, this chapter reevaluates Ōi's art through situating her artistry within Edo's socio-geographical context to gain better insight into restrictions. Furthermore, it presents additional theories explaining her scant oeuvre while nuancing art-historical bias and gender oppression.

Residing in the urban city of Edo gave Ōi unprecedented opportunities to accumulate cultural capital due to its socio-economic and cultural climate. Edo's thriving market economy, rising affluence, and increasingly literate populace were fertile grounds for a flourishing printing culture.[312] In the 19th century, 917 publishers existed in Edo, thereby surpassing Kyoto and Osaka's publishing industry. As the growing *ukiyo-e* market was an extension of print culture, Edo's supremacy in Japan's publishing industry was beneficial for the *ukiyo-e* genre.[313] During the first half of the 19th century, these favourable circumstances produced an unprecedented number of female *ukiyo-e* artists who became increasingly present in *ukiyo-e* ateliers. Furthermore, whereas female *ukiyo-e* artists in previous centuries were

[310] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 93.
[311] Clark, *Late Hokusai*, 65.
[312] Davis, *Floating World*, 17, 28.
[313] Davis, *Floating World*, 28.

primarily focused on painting, in Ōi's time, they expanded their repertoire by venturing into printmaking.[314] As previously discussed, Ōi did both painting and printmaking. Restrictive for Ōi, was that 19th-century Shogunate-ruled Edo was more regulated than Gyokuran's 18th-century Kyoto.[315] Furthermore, developments during the last decades of the Tokugawa period transformed Japan into a veritable pressure cooker with calamities such as smallpox and the Tenpō Famine (1833–1836). The latter prompted print and book publishing industries to crumble, caused riots, and urged the poverty-stricken Ōi and her father to relocate temporarily to coastal Uraga.[316] Additionally, the repressive Tokugawa Tenpō Reforms (1841–1843) infringed on civilian's rights and curtailed artistic freedom while producing censorship in *ukiyo-e* and its numerous themes.[317] Although mass-publicised prints encountered governmental resistance due to their public nature, privately commissioned paintings did not face these strictures.[318] While Ōi's genre was affected by the Tenpō Reforms, her embodied capital of painting was the perfect medium to circumvent these Tokugawa restrictions.

The floating world of Kabuki theatre and the licensed pleasure quarters paved the way for *ukiyo-e*, an art genre welcoming to women due to liberal deportment within the urban and Yoshiwara spheres.[319] Ōi's *Display Room in Yoshiwara at Night* (1844–1854; Fig. 3) demonstrates that although she was a female painter, she was not restricted to such areas. Her heavy-shaded scene depicts the Yoshiwara entertainment district's nightlife and the hustle and bustle of courtesans and their clientele at *Izumiya*. Attached to this mid-ranking brothel is a yellow lantern stating 'A thousand customers, a thousand welcomes', beckoning to prospective customers on the street.[320] Their hazy silhouettes are revealed through the

[314] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 127.
[315] McKelway and Woodson, *Traditions Unbound*, 7.
[316] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 22–24; Forrer, *Hokusai Prints*, 28, 35.
[317] Forrer, *Hokusai Prints*, 35; Davis, *Floating World*, 128–129.
[318] Janice Katz and Mami Hatayama, eds., *Painting the Floating World: Ukiyo-e Masterpieces from the Weston Collection* (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 2018), 191, exh. cat.
[319] Murase, *Bridge of Dreams*, 333; Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 230.
[320] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 297; Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 96.

brothels' light and three handheld lanterns, each displaying a letter of Ōi's name. Peering through the display room's latticework at the sumptuously dressed seated courtesans are their male clientele, other courtesans, and their junior attendants. As the lattice and shadows inhibit a direct view of most courtesans' faces, individuality is rendered obscure. Their identical white face paint and tortoiseshell pin coiffures make these courtesans practically interchangeable.[321]

The tendency towards standardisation and lack of particularities, including the establishment itself (several brothels were named Izumiya), makes this scene difficult to interpret. Kobayashi Tadashi argues that Ōi chose to portray 'the darker, grimmer side of the pleasure district'.[322] Linking 'darkness' to 'melancholy', Kobayashi claims that Ōi's painting reflects the harsh reality for female entertainers, in contrast to traditional *ukiyo-e*'s glamorous Yoshiwara portrayal. He notes Ōi's 'shadows' become symbols of their despair, testifying to the 'black depths' and 'sinking feelings' these courtesans endured.[323] Kobayashi's view of the detrimental living conditions of Yoshiwara sex workers' is accurate. His claim that Ōi's stylistic depiction hints at the plight of the courtesans is highly debatable. One could even wonder if such interpretations of covert female solidarity would have been uttered if Ōi had been male. Kobayashi's equation of shading with the psychological distress of living in Yoshiwara lacks sufficient substantiation.

First, Fister argues that although women sometimes conveyed their 'feminine viewpoints' in writing, they rarely did so in their art.[324] Finding personal views in their art is further challenging considering female artists often painted the same styles as their school and male tutors, as noted earlier.[325] Moreover, Fister states that female *ukiyo-e* artists operating in

[321] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 297; Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 96.
[322] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 96.
[323] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 97.
[324] Fister, "Feminine Perceptions," 4.
[325] Fister, "Feminine Perceptions," 6.

the family business likely depicted courtesans either to comply with their patrons or to gratify commercial interests.[326] As most patrons were male, it is unlikely Ōi would have portrayed the dismal circumstances to which sex workers were subjected.[327]

Second, because *ukiyo-e* anticipated trends to cater to the cultural needs of urban Edokko, shading could have simply been Ōi's response to urban market needs.[328] Shading and other Western modes, such as perspective, were employed by numerous late-Edo *ukiyo-e* artists, indicating a market for such stylistic bravura.[329] Ōi's shading could further reflect her personal display of skill because *ukiyo-e* painters frequently utilised technical prowess to compete with the more affordable *nishiki-e*.[330] John Carpenter concurs, stating that Ōi's shading should be considered 'a technical tour de force'.[331]

Kobayashi continues that Ōi went against traditional depictions by portraying courtesans as 'doll-like, static, and devoid of emotion'.[332] However, perhaps Ōi's reasons were pragmatic or stylistic. Ōi supplemented the family income through manufacturing dolls, making the doll-like de-individualisation merely a reflection of direct experience.[333] Furthermore, Carpenter notes that studies analysing Edo genre prints and paintings indicate that artists prioritised subjects' posture, garments, and fabric over their personal facial expressions.[334] *Ukiyo-e* artists were not completely unaware of ill-treated female sex workers, as Katsukawa Shun'ei (1762–1819) addressed their dire situation by depicting emotion in their facial features.[335] Ōi's courtesans were emotionless, their physiognomies likely resulting

[326] Fister, "Feminine Perceptions," 8.
[327] Weidner, *Flowering Shadows*, 235.
[328] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 128.
[329] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 130; Robert T. Singer and John T. Carpenter, eds., *Edo: Art in Japan, 1615–1868* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 476, exh. cat., https://www.nga.gov/research/publications/pdf-library/edo-art-in-japan.html.
[330] Davis, *Floating World*, 73.
[331] Singer and Carpenter, *Edo Art*, 476.
[332] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 96.
[333] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 130.
[334] Singer and Carpenter, *Edo Art*, 370–371.
[335] Timothy Clark. *Ukiyo-e Paintings in the British Museum*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 17.

from artistic idealisation or Ōi's experience with dollmaking rather than representing a concealed gender statement. One might wonder if such statements were desirable for the unknown patron who commissioned this piece. Indeed, Kobayashi's modern lens of gender neglects the more pragmatic intentions of the Edo past.

Pragmatic intentions are also evident in moral and didactic literature for women, which were the perfect vehicle for gaining self-cultivation and social mobility.[336] A famous moral book example is the *Illustrated Handbook for Women (E-iri Nichiyō Onna Chōhōki*, 1847; Fig. 4), hereinafter 'OC', containing illustrations by Ōi.[337] Ōi secured the OC commission through the social capital of Hokusai and paradoxically due to her gender. As scholar Takai Ranzan (1762–1838) edited the OC, his earlier collaborations with Hokusai perhaps influenced the publisher's choice for his daughter.[338] Fister notes moral books for women illustrated by a woman was rare and thus appealing.[339] Consequently, in this case, Ōi's gender was a blessing rather than an impediment to her career, especially since this book brought her fame.[340]

Ōi's signature is remarkable for a book promulgating moral values, as her sobriquet had two meanings: 'following Iitsu', the former art name of Hokusai, and 'tipsy'. Kubuta Kazehiro explains that following Iitsu hinted at Ōi's filial piety, ideal for a moral book.[341] Matsuba Ryōko mentions that Ōi's signature's meaning, 'tipsy', might be a humorous nod to her love of alcohol.[342] Perhaps it could likewise reference her unconventional *kijin* nature. Uselessness (Jp. *muyō*) was a common hallmark of eccentric behaviour and could manifest in solitary drinking.[343] Notably, 19th-century commodified eccentricity was used by *ukiyo-e*

[336] Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 82.
[337] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 135.
[338] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 300.
[339] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 135.
[340] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 135.
[341] Carpenter, *Hokusai Age*, 94.
[342] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 300.
[343] Brecher, *Aesthetic Strangeness*, 25, 51.

artists such as Hokusai to thrive in a consumption culture centred on spectacle, innovation, and the urban market. Purportedly, Hokusai himself adopted and advertised his reputable eccentric *Gakyō* persona for profit and likely taught Ōi this strategy.[344] As book illustrations had to be innovative to sell, it could be a strategic marketing decision to include Ōi's full signature 'brush of the woman Ei, Katsushika Ōi', thereby emphasising Ōi's gender, witty eccentricity, loyal morality, and family renown.[345]

The OC was originally written in 1693 as an encyclopaedic moral guide by Confucian physician Namura Jōhaku.[346] Although the OC incorporated misogynistic concepts from Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Shinto in its moral sections, this was mitigated by guiding advice on a variety of subjects and numerous illustrations.[347] Ōi's large illustrations in contemporary fashion employed technical flair similar to the European perspective to captivate the reader.[348] As stated in Chapter 1, these guides were investments, facilitating the female accumulation of elite cultural capital by the lower classes, inadvertently breaking down Tokugawa class boundaries.[349] The OC was practically an Edo woman's 'Bourdieu guide' to accumulating embodied and social capital through objectified capital. Its chapters converge with Bourdieu's cultural capital. Skills of self-cultivation and education could be acquired in *Volume Four: Accomplishments*, which includes *Literacy and Calligraphy*. Its *Volume Five: Suitable Usages for Women* informs its readers how to mimic refined courtly speech and introduces them to the *Table of Contents of the Tale of Genji*.[350] In this process, Ōi's 38 beautiful illustrations were crucial for the appeal and understanding of the OC.[351] The

[344] Brecher, *Aesthetic Strangeness*, 142, 148–149.
[345] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 300.
[346] Lindsey, "Good Life," 37.
[347] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 134–135; Lindsey, "Good Life," 38, 45.
[348] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 135.
[349] Lindsey, "Good Life," 36–37.
[350] Reiko Tanimura and David Chart, "The Record of Women's Great Treasures: Pregnancy and Childbirth in the Edo Period: A Translation of Volume Three of Onna chōhōki," *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 71, no. 2 (2017): 550–551, https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2017-0039.; Yonemoto, *Problem Women*, 69–70.
[351] Fister and Yamamoto, *Japanese Women*, 135.

OC and other didactic books hastened class barrier disintegration by enabling the accumulation of elite cultural capital across social classes and the broad appropriation of ruling-class culture and etiquette among lower-class women.[352] The OC partially helped rectify Bourdieu's unequal 'distribution of cultural capital', at least in Edo.[353] Ultimately, Ōi's informative illustrations indirectly contributed to this feat.

This chapter concludes with nuancing Davis's assertion that Ōi's small oeuvre and the lack of female brushes was the result of global socio-cultural gender limitations.[354] Curator Koike Makiko notes Ōi's modest oeuvre resulted from collaborating under Hokusai's name.[355] Indeed, *ukiyo-e* required collaborative teamwork, Davis even describing Hokusai atelier as 'a collective brush'.[356] Buckland further reveals that taking on an indistinctive role in the studio centred on the Hokusai brand also applied to male pupils and artist sons.[357] Perhaps the need for indistinctive studio collaboration contributed to the lack of established female brushes. Ōi produced far less paintings than prints.[358] Therefore, Ōi's paintings were likely more susceptible to potential natural and political calamities. Clark mentioned that the great Kantō earthquake, the subsequent fire of 1923 and the bombing of Japan during World War II decimated Hokusai's extensive painting oeuvre.[359] This could be similar for Ōi and perhaps Hokusai's lost paintings were partially hers. Indeed, while Kazuhiro researched Ōi's stylistic traits, including long fingers, European shading, and plasticity, Clark notes that Ōi and Hokusai's lifelong studio collaboration complicates style disentanglement.[360] Nevertheless, if Ōi's modest oeuvre signified overall gender bias and a lack of opportunity, it would be

[352] Lindsey, "Good Life," 36–38.
[353] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 243–244.
[354] She supports this by Nochlin; see, Davis, *Floating World*, 135, 141n40.
[355] Katherine Govier, *The Printmaker's Daughter*: *A Novel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 478.
[356] Steenhuis, "Grote Golf."
[357] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, "Katsushika Oei."
[358] Davis, *Floating World*, 135.
[359] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 14.
[360] Clark, *Beyond Wave*, 18-19.

illogical for her contemporaries in 1847 to call her ‘one of the greatest painters of Edo’.[361] Hopefully, over time, traditional art history will follow Ōi’s contemporaries’ lead.

[361] The Japan Foundation, Toronto, “Katsushika Oei.”

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This thesis addressed the necessity to reassess Edo gender restrictions in the lives and art of Gyokuran and Ōi. Contemporary discourse and museums have frequently misrepresented these artists by predominantly assessing them through universalising gender constructs and patriarchal control. This study nuanced and corrected these narratives, demonstrating that although misogynistic and gender oppressive tendencies were undoubtedly present in patriarchal Tokugawa laws and institutions, they were frequently dualistic and inconsistent. Furthermore, the restrictive institutions which circumscribed Gyokuran and Ōi's conduct simultaneously granted them artistic prospects. In this vein, without Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, and the household's facilitation of female art production, it would have been much harder for them to become artists. This curious blend of restriction and opportunity inherent in Edo institutions enabled Gyokuran and Ōi to overcome the restraints imposed on women by conservative Edo society as artists.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the research question challenged notions of female artists as a generalised category. These artists' approaches to overcoming restrictions in their artistic pursuits exhibited both similarities and divergences. Shared elements in overcoming restraints included accumulating sufficient cultural and social capital, whether acquired directly or inherited from their families, which enabled transcending traditional status and gender roles and expediting their acceptance into artistic milieus. They, likewise, circumvented gender limitations through education, self-cultivation, homeschooling, outside tutors, moral books, painting treatises, inclusive art movements, and diverse social networks of prominent figures. Unhindered by virilocal marriages and childbearing, they were afforded greater artistic freedoms. Rather than being purely restrictive, the *ie* allowed these artists to immerse themselves in their work to provide for their families. Their unorthodox behaviour

was absolved by eccentricity, and if they theoretically infringed on traditional gender roles, orthopraxy ensured their actions were framed as filial piety.

Additionally, this thesis highlighted that circumventing restrictions depended on luck. These women avoided artistic roadblocks by being born into unusual artistic families, living during times of burgeoning cultural production and affluence, and residing in geographically opportune urban locations. However, each artist's circumstances involved other variables. For instance, 18th-century imperial Kyoto was less regulated than the Shogunate's 19th-century Edo. Gyokuran's timely passing spared her from restrictive Kansei reforms that would have affected her work, while the Tenpō Reforms affected Ōi's household through censorship.

Their strategies to negate restrictions also diverged. Through opting for either a neolocal companionate marriage or divorce, they evaded stringent family roles and a decline in artistic output. Gyokuran became an amateur *bunjin* painter, whereas Ōi became a professional *ukiyo-e* artist. These choices suited their specific familial and artistic needs.

Disjunctions between Edo restrictive theory and reality were also reflected in their art, as demonstrated in Ōi's OC 'tipsy' lifestyle, which diverged from the virtues the moral book advocated. Her illustrations facilitated the dissemination and negation of the OC's restrictive values for women. Ōi's Yoshiwara painting cautions explaining art singularly through gender while neglecting practical concerns. Gyokuran's *Akashi Bay* illustrates that deference for female *waka* and the comingling of painting and poetry eliminated gender restrictions for *bunjin* women. Her hanging scroll shows that Gyokuran's style should not be interpreted as a woman's passive imitation of her husband.

Through re-examining Gyokuran and Ōi individually, this thesis presented a more nuanced view of these artists' lives, art, and position in Edo's cultural production. This study revised generalising notions of Edo's rigidly restrictive impact and unilateral cultural exchange in these artists' lives. Art historians must reassess gender restrictions in the Edo art

world and recognise that dualistic Tokugawa constraints also contributed to women's artistic opportunities. Considering these variables, the notion of the universally oppressed, early modern woman artist deprived of opportunities is invalid. As Gyokuran and Ōi demonstrated, each artist's story is unique, as it should be.

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Illustrations

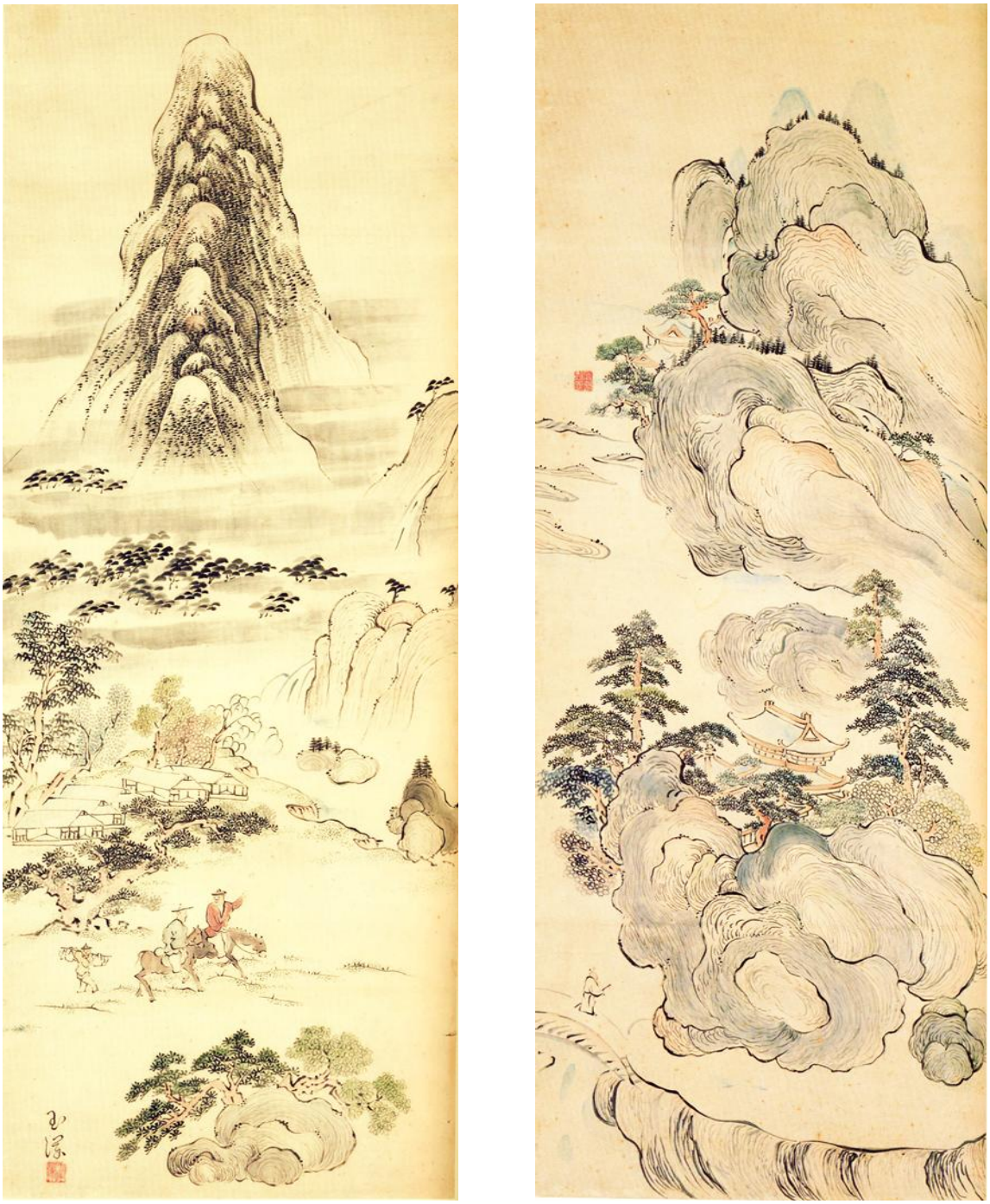

Fig 1: Ike Gyokuran, *Luoyang Avenue*, n.d., pair of hanging scrolls (from a set of twelve hanging scrolls), ink and colour on paper, 134.5 x 55.6 cm each, private collection, in Felice Fischer et al., *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 283.

Fig 2: Ike Gyokuran, *Akashi Bay*, late-18th century, fan mounted as a hanging scroll, ink on mica paper, 17.6 x 44.8 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota, Public Domain. https://collections.artsmia.org/art/116887/akashi-bay-ike-gyokuran

Fig 3: Katsushika Ōi, *Display Room in Yoshiwara at Night*, ca. 1844–1854, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper**,** 26.3 x 39.8 cm, Ōta Memorial Museum, Tokyo, in Timothy Clark, ed., *Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017), 297.

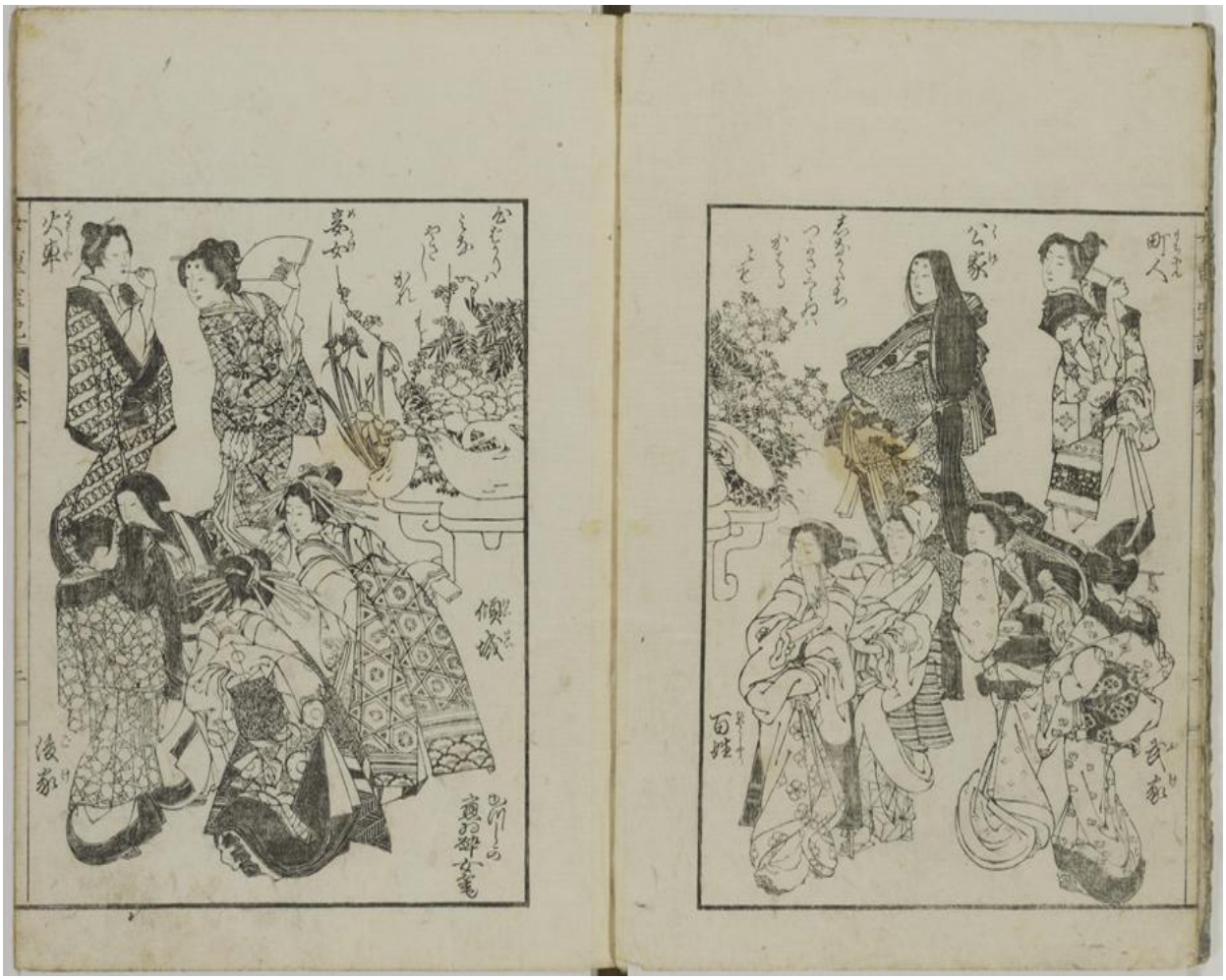

Fig 4: Katsushika Ōi, *Women of Different Social Classes*, illustration from Takai Ranzan, E-iri Nichiyō Onna Chōhōki (*Illustrated Handbook for Women*), 1847, woodblock-printed book, 25.0 x 18.0 cm, The British Museum, London. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A1979-0305-0-558. Used under (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). © The Trustees of the British Museum