

Comment

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When I was a beginning student in elementary school, one of our textbooks was called a “pictionary.” I no longer own this book, nor remember much about it, but I do remember enjoying it enormously. While Prof. Fukuta is no doubt correct that there is no English word for “e-biki,” in my following comments, I shall use the word “pictionary.”

Japan seems to have a particularly old and rich history of pictionary-like genres. The practice of categorizing geographical features can of course be found in the *fidoki* 風土記, though I am aware of no visual component of these early eighth-century works, but they came to be used in the making of *yuki* 悠紀 and *suki* 主基 *byōbu* 屏風 for the *Daijō-e* 大嘗祭, which depicted specific provinces, a practice that can be traced back to at least the tenth century. Then of course there are *meisho-e byōbu* 名所絵屏風 more generally, and *tsuki-nami byōbu* 月並屏風 served as visual dictionaries of sorts of poetic topics, or *dai* 題. Finally, there is the famous *Nenjū Gyōji Emaki* 年中行事絵巻 of Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河院 of the Hōgen 保元 to Jishō 治承 era (1156-1181).

The medieval (中世) period sees genre such as the *Shokunin Uta-awase* 職人歌合, and *kai-awase* 貝合わせ, which include pictures of various animals, plants, fish and fowl. Finally, in the early modern period we get Nakamura Tekisai’s 1666 *Kinmō Zui* 訓蒙図彙, which of course became a whole genre of its own. In the past, I have described this trend as the “lexicalization” (語彙化) of visual imagery during the early modern period, which created a visual vocabulary largely shared by the entire population. Of course, these are all rather different from the kind of work envisioned by the Kanagawa E-Biki Project.

Prof. Fukuta mentioned “e-nikki.” In fact, there is evidence for *e-nikki* as far back as the Heian period, and Michitsuna no Haha, author of the *Kagerō Diary*, clearly kept one. But such diaries of course require a set of conventions that are easily used by people who are not professional artists, and some have argued that this need is the origin of a kind of picture called “onna-e” in the period. Since the *onna-e* genre were used both for *e-nikki* and for *monogatari-e*, we can imagine the problems inherent in using them as historical resources (歴史資料).

As explained by Prof. Fukuta, *zue* too are a combination of fact and fantasy, and include many imaginary landscapes or re-envisioned historical scenes. Indeed, the Edo period also saw the publications of such titles as the *Ise Monogatari Zue* 『伊勢物語図絵』 and the *Hyakunin Isshu Zue* 『百人一首図絵』. Certainly texts like 『東海道名所図絵』 are celebratory in intent, something like a travel guide such as Fodor’s or Lonely Planet, and one would like to see the E-Biki Project go hand-in-hand with an analysis of their sources as rhetorical statements, that is, what authors and artists like Akisato 秋里 and Takehara 竹原 thought they were saying. Prof. Fukata stated that 「^{ざそう}図像は偶然記録である」 and one would like to balance this “accidental” quality with an analysis of the purpose for which such imagery was originally made.

Yet, despite these reservations, when one sees what can be learned following Prof. Tajima’s insightful reading of scenes of the *Nōgyō Zue*, one is certainly impressed. I must say that I share his regret that analysis must be limited to

so-called “jōmin”—surely this is a rather dated folklore studies prejudice. Nor did Shibusawa keep to his own rules, as the 『日本常民生活絵引』 does include aristocrats in its utilization of “The Hungry Ghosts Scroll” 餓鬼草紙^{がき}. On the other hand, Prof. Tajima no doubt feels that the project is difficult enough as it is, without adding more classes and sectors of society!

But what I like most is all the questions that Prof. Tajima’s raises—about how clothes were actually worn, whether eye-brows were shaved or not, or the relation between bridges and tobacconists. In these cases, one is hesitant to take the pictures as solid evidence, but they do raise intriguing questions, and one is alerted to keep an eye out for corroborating evidence, whether visual or verbal.

When one sees the variety of fields, such as architecture, commerce, and farming, that one needs to know in order to be able to “read” these pictures, one appreciates what an enormous undertaking the scholars at Kanagawa have taken on. And, as Prof. Tajima remarks, one understands how much has been lost of the knowledge of daily life. Which makes me wonder if perhaps the Kanagawa E-biki project should not focus on the other end of history and start compiling an E-biki of the twentieth century. I remember showing a Japanese graduate student a book published in Japan immediately after the war in 1946. It was printed by mimeograph, and the student had never heard of such a thing. Many of the forms of mechanical reproduction that people of my generation were raised with have now disappeared. Last month I went shopping with my mother to buy her a new telephone/answering machine/fax machine, and we were able to find only one model—clearly fax machines are being quickly replaced by scanned documents sent on email. Which brings me one last time to the word “jōmin.” No doubt scholars such as Shibusawa used the word because “tsune” not only has the meaning of “ordinary” but in classical Japanese “tsune naru” means “eternal” (永久)—the unchanging Volk. But, of course, as we have seen, 変化が世の常というもの, “change is the way of the world.” Our research occurs in a space where the differences between tradition, history, and ephemera seem increasingly ill defined. Nonetheless, I for one am enormously impressed by and grateful for the Kanagawa E-biki project, and I look forward to its successful completion.