

Abstract: “the tales in the age of Emperor Go-Saga ; *Iwashimizu Monogatari* and *Koke no Koromo*.”

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Over time, the fictional tales (*tsukuri monogatari*) created in the Kamakura period and thereafter came to be known as “pseudo-classical tales” (*giko monogatari*). However, because the phrase “pseudo-classical tales” very often included negative undertones, in recent years the phrase “medieval court tales” (*chūsei ōchō monogatari*) has started coming into use as means of avoiding such value judgements. The purpose of this development is to read these works anew and to achieve fresh perspectives on them.

However, the majority of the works in question have yet to be reappraised in this manner. Of these as yet untreated works, this paper shall deal with two fictional tales, *Iwashimizu Monogatari* and *Koke no Koromo*. (As with most such fictional tales, the authorship of these two works is unclear.)

The reason why we have chosen to cover these particular two works together is that they are both thought to come from the same period (known as the age of Emperor Go-Saga; reigned 1243-46; cloistered reign 1246-72), and it is probable that the writers and readers shared a broadly similar basic sense of values and intellectual formation.

Prior research on these two works has dealt with the extent to which each of them has assimilated and imitated the tales of the Heian period, with *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji) first and foremost among them. However, what this approach overlooks is that the act of imitating these tales of the Heian court in itself transmits the social circumstances and reflects the values of the age in which these “imitative” tales were written. If this point is overlooked, one is very likely indeed to come away from these “medieval tales of the Heian court” with the impression that they are entirely derivative, with nothing new to offer.

However, literature can never exist in absolute isolation from society, and so to accurately understand and evaluate these works fairly, it is essential to ascertain what meaning these “imitative” tales of the Heian court had at the time, and to clarify what intentions their creators had in writing them.

This paper first clarifies that the upper classes (the aristocracy) at the time had a grasp of the plot, expressions and characters of *Genji Monogatari* as a matter of course; moreover, designations of historical models and precedents (*junkyo*) and historical knowledge of Heian period may well have formed part of a shared body of knowledge at the time. This done, we then proceed to a search for the themes of the two fictional tales *Iwashimizu Monogatari* and *Koke no Koromo*. This paper’s findings on each of the works are discussed below.

## I *Iwashimizu Monogatari*

1. In portraying its hero, the warrior Iyo no Kami, *Iwashimizu Monogatari* makes liberal use of war chronicles and narratives of the same era, and displays extensive knowledge of religion

and history. Specifically, the work draws on narratives about Koremori such as *Heike Monogatari* (Tale of Heike) and narratives on Saigyō such as *Saigyō Monogatari* (Tale of Saigyō). The purpose in doing so seems to be to model Iyo no Kami as a “warrior-like” character.

2. This study has established that the relationship between the hero - the warrior Iyo no Kami - and the princess has its fundamental basis in the relationship between Genji and Lady Fujitsubo in *Genji Monogatari* by designating the parallels and similarities of expression. It has also established that attention should be given to the fact that the relationship between Iyo no Kami and the princess are of greater importance for this tale than the individual characters. We see that the childless nature of the relationship between Iyo no Kami and the princess, drawing from the narrative of Prince Genji and Lady Fujitsubo, allows the tale to avoid dealing with the conflicts of parenthood and relationships with other characters; instead, the focus is placed on the element of tragedy in a love affair between a man and a woman who, while longing for each other, are unable to be together because of the difference in their social statuses. *Iwashimizu Monogatari* is essentially a romance novel that succinctly expresses the tragic love between two characters connected from their previous lives but unable to share their lot in this, and they yearn to do so in the next.

3. The genealogical records between the characters of *Iwashimizu Monogatari* very closely resemble those between Emperor Go-Horikawa, Shijō and Emperor Go-Saga, and other points in common that the stories share have been discussed – developments in the harem politics of the regent houses, the situation in regard to generalships for the two princes, and the outbreak of disorder in the East the year after the accession of the new Emperor. Furthermore, in terms of actual historical genealogy, the princess of *Iwashimizu* corresponds to Konoe Nagako, and mention has been made of the resemblance between her and the once-married (in court) princess of *Iwashimizu*, in how they both took an amorous interest in the reigning Emperor of the time. Also, because *Iwashimizu Monogatari* is a romantic novel portraying a noblewoman modeled on Konoe Nagako, it has been suggested that the work was possibly written by a court lady in Nagako’s circle.

## II *Koke no Koromo*

1. *Koke no Koromo* is set in the age of Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1028), and the relationships between the characters are modeled on those prevailing in the regent families of the time. If the eponymous hero, the chief of the Imperial Guard, Koke no Koromo, is positioned as Michinaga’s son, the web of relationships around him is basically identical with Michinaga’s circle. In addition, it is noteworthy that the process leading to Koke no Koromo entering the priesthood is structured as a compilation of anecdotes on Michinaga’s sons (Yorimichi, Norimichi and Akinobu) as given in the *Eiga Monogatari* (A Tale of Flowering Fortunes).

In telling the unprecedented, sensational story of the Imperial Regent's (*kanpaku*'s) only male heir, the chief of the Imperial Guard, withdrawing from the world into reclusive life, the main character's motivation is based on real-life anecdotes about the sons of the regent families. This adds to the impact on the readership of the story of Koke no Koromo's reclusion (*tonsei*) of the world - as a tale which is more believable because, perhaps, it "could have really happened."

2. A survey of the complex web of relationships between the characters in *Koke no Koromo* has cleared up a number of contradictions. Furthermore, this study has established that the family trees in *Koke no Koromo* almost completely correspond with their counterparts in the heyday of the Fujiwara (the period of rule by the regents Michinaga and his son Yorimichi), and anecdotes about historical personages are incorporated into the text in building up its characters by comparing with the characterization of *Eiga Monogatari* and *The Great Mirror (Ōkagami)*. In this way, *Koke no Koromo* - prolifically incorporating the family trees of real people and anecdotes about them - deserves attention as a possible example of a writer designating historical models and precedents (*junkyo*); and this in an age when *Genji Monogatari* was increasingly coming to be seen as a major object of study.

3. At first glance, the final volume ("Winter") of *Koke no Koromo* seems superfluous. Its significance, as it appears in this study, is how the ascetic zeal of the chief of the Imperial Guard, who retreated from the world and seclude themselves, is stressed in comparison with that of Hyōbukyō no Miya, who looked like the chief of the Imperial Guard but was irreligious. It appears that the overarching main theme of the tale from start to finish is the depiction of the chief of the Imperial Guard's unprecedented seclusion from the world for the ascetic practices in the mountains, and of his Buddhist piety.