Japanese childrens historical fiction up to 1983: a critical assessment of its place within Japanese childrens literature

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JAPANESE CHILDREN'S HISTORICAL FICTION

UP TO 1983: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

OF ITS PLACE WITHIN JAPANESE

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by

Wakiko Ohashi Collins

A Master's Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of a degree of Master of Philosophy

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October 1986.

JAPANESE CHILDREN'S HISTORICAL FICTION UP TO 1983: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF ITS PLACE WITHIN JAPANESE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE by Wakiko Ohashi Collins

ABSTRACT

The publishing of children's books in Japan has had a relatively short history, beginning only in the late nineteenth century. Whilst historical fiction has formed an important part of children's literature published since that time, it has not previously been the subject of any comprehensive study.

The aim of this thesis is to trace the progress of Japanese children's historical fiction and to look at the influence of Japanese society.

The study shows that since its inception Japanese children's historical fiction has neither reached a high level of quality nor apparently become very popular with children. Until the late 1950's there was no real historical fiction produced in Japan - historical stories were little more than short recounts of events written only to instruct children how to behave and to influence them to support the state and its policies. From the late 1950's, however, real children's historical fiction began to be produced with long stories, plots and developed characters. Since then the genre has become established and many works have been published. During this time it has shown consistent strengths and weaknesses. Most works have all the essential historical features but have serious literary flaws - in particular a lack of interesting plots and characters.

The main reasons why these literary weaknesses have occurred appear to be firstly that children's historical fiction has been written to teach the child reader how to behave, and secondly that authors have concentrated on providing historical information instead of interesting plots. Whilst the weaknesses have apparently been recognized by children themselves, as
demonstrated by their preferences for other fiction and biographies, influential adults—in particular librarians and critics—continue to value a historical novel on the instruction it contains rather than the pleasure it gives to the reader.
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When I was younger I obtained great pleasure from reading British children's historical fiction and was always puzzled why Japanese children's historical fiction did not provide the same enjoyment. This study sets out to look at the reasons for this and I dedicate my efforts to Japanese children and hope that in a small way it may contribute to the creation of a more enjoyable and realistic range of Japanese children's historical fiction for them.

Many people contributed to the completing of this thesis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Importance of Children's Historical Fiction

In order to understand our lives today we must understand our history, since the way we live, think and feel has its roots in our historical past. It is important that we begin to develop this understanding while we are children, not just by learning about historical events but by appreciating the experiences of people living in different times and circumstances and by understanding that these people had the same feelings as we do at present and that their physical achievements, social developments, and skills form a basis for many aspects of our life today.

As Nicholas Tucker has pointed out, whilst children under the age of seven find it difficult to understand the concept of the past, older children are able to divorce their concept of time from the immediate here and now. From the age of seven, although they cannot initially understand fully how time affects them or other people, children begin to think about themselves in a wider dimension within their own lives and begin to understand a little about their parents' childhood.

An understanding of history can be acquired through a variety of means including formal education, history books, television and cinema films, visits to historical sites and historical novels. However, children often find formal teaching, history books and visits to historical sites boring unless they can understand and identify with the experiences of people living in those times. Television and cinema can be an excellent means of bringing about this understanding. However they often glamorize the subjects and are not realistic; furthermore they are not accessible to all children. Children's historical
fiction can provide a realistic understanding of people's lives in the past and by being presented in an entertaining and interesting way it can be understood and enjoyed by many children. Historical fiction for children therefore forms an important component in learning about history and helps the understanding and enjoyment of the other components, such as formal historical education.

1.2 Previous Research

Children's literature has not been well researched in Japan. Studies did not begin until the early twentieth century, the first important work being Dowa no Kenkyua (The Study of Children's Stories) by Ashiya Ashimura (1913). In this work, which studies famous stories and their authors, Ashiya discussed the need to study children's stories with reference to children's psychology and education. At the same time, collections of myths, legends and folk tales became more readily available, and several critical studies were made of these; for example Hikaku Shinwagaku (The Comparative Study of Mythology), by Takagi Toshio (1904). The study of written literature and authors' thoughts and ideas was, however, rarely carried out before about 1960.

A remarkable study of Japanese children's literature was Nihon no Jido Bungaku (Japanese Children's Literature) - the first edition (1956), the second edition (1966) - by Kan Tadamichi. Kan surveyed the whole history of Japanese children's literature and looked at the development of children's books in general as well as the relationship between literature and society. Since about 1960 further critical studies of children's literature in general have been published.

Although children's historical novels have often received prizes, for example the Nihon Jido Bungakusha Kyokaisho (Japanese Children's Writers
Association Prize), and have been selected as good books by the School Library Association of Japan, there has been little critical research carried out on this area of children's literature. Many critics of modern children's literature do not seem to be interested in Japanese historical novels and recent historical fiction has hardly been examined.\(^6\) It appears that the only in-depth study of historical fiction has been Reimeiki no Rekishi Shosetsu (The Early Days of Historical Novels), (1977) by Katsuo Kinya.\(^7\) However this work only looks at books of the 1890's and does not examine whether or not they really fall into the category of historical fiction. Neither does it critically analyse the stories.

A survey of reading trends has been carried out every year since 1950 by Mainichi Newspapers Ltd. and the School Library Association of Japan. However these surveys divided books into the following groups: modern fiction, classics, biographies, history, science fiction, detective stories and non-fiction. No conclusions have been reached specifically with regard to historical fiction since it has not been treated as a separate group. Although these surveys have, to some degree, indicated children's reading trends since 1950, there has been little analysis of children's responses to children's literature. For example there has been no analysis comparable to that carried out by F. Whitehead and others and shown in Children and Their Books (1977)\(^8\) in which children's responses were examined in depth. The Japanese surveys have hardly examined what elements lead children to prefer certain books to others and although many statistics are provided, their meaning is not clear. Even the most popular books are not analysed as to the reason's why they were preferred - for example there was no attempt to provide the reasons why Nishi Manrui (Two Out, Bases Full) (1977) by Sunada Hiroshi,\(^9\) was one of the most widely-read children's books in 1983.\(^10\)
Studies of other aspects of children's lives over the years have provided useful insights into children's development and the relationship between children and society. For example, studies of the behaviour and development of children have been carried out in Japan since the late nineteenth century. The Japanese Child Studies Association, which was established in 1902 and started issuing its magazine *Jido Kenkyu* (The Study of Children) in 1905, has played a major role in this area. In their studies, child play, toys, songs, and folk tales have also been examined as a part of the life of a child.¹¹

Studies of society and education, such as *The Japanese Social Structure* (1982) by Fukutake Tadashi,¹² have been carried out by many sociologists, historians, and educationalists. In addition, studies of the history of childhood, child development, and the relationship between children and society, such as *Nihon Kodomo no Rekishi* (A History of Childhood in Japan) (1977) by Naka Shin ed.,¹³ have also been carried out although these studies have only been made in recent years.

Therefore, whilst there have been studies of different aspects of children's literature, children's development, and the influence of society, it can be seen that there has been no comprehensive study of the development of children's historical fiction from the Meiji Restoration to present times and the influence that Japanese society has had on its development.

1.3 Aims

Compared with countries such as Great Britain, the publishing of children's books in Japan has had a relatively short history. It was only after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that these books began to be published regularly in Japan;¹⁴ prior to that children's literature was mostly transmitted orally.
Historical fiction has formed an important part of the children's literature published since 1868. Nevertheless as mentioned in the previous section, there has been no comprehensive study of this aspect of children's literature.

The relationship between society and its children's literature is important, especially with regard to historical fiction through which children get many ideas about their history. As Darton said in his major work *Children's Books in England*:

> The story of English children's books has not yet, so far as I know, been written as a continuous whole, or as a minor chapter in the history of English social life, which is what the present volume is meant to furnish.

Children's literature also forms a minor chapter in the history of social life in Japan and the relationship between the two has been a strong one.

The aim of this research is to trace the progress of Japanese children's historical fiction and to look at the influence of Japanese society on it.

It is hoped that this study can contribute to scholarly writing on the subject of children's literature, principally by stimulating Japanese authors, publishers and reviewers to recognize the good and bad points of Japanese children's historical fiction and the influence that society has had on its development. In turn it is hoped that this will lead to the production of more accurately drawn and satisfying historical novels which will help children to appreciate more realistically their history and their role in society and which will, equally importantly, give them great pleasure.

1.4 Method

The research for this dissertation has been based on an examination of the available literature on Japanese history and social development,
critical studies of Japanese and British children's literature and children's stories of both countries.

In addition, original research was carried out by the writer of this dissertation in late 1984 to obtain teachers' views on children's historical fiction in Japan and on the use of history textbooks. In Japan teachers are the adult members of society most closely connected with children and the literature for them and their views are useful in any assessment of the relationship between the two.

One hundred and fifty primary school teachers in seventeen state schools within the Tokyo area were sent questionnaires. These seventeen schools were chosen because in each one there was a member of staff known to the writer who could assist in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. In each school every teacher with experience of history teaching was asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of one hundred and seven teachers (seventy one percent) completed and returned the survey forms. The teachers were asked three questions: "Do you think that historical fiction is an important feature of children's development?"; "Which books are more popular with primary school children - historical fiction or biographies?"; and "Do you think that inaccuracies in authorized teaching materials, such as the use of unproved myths, are important in history teaching at primary school level?" In each case teachers were asked to give reasons for their answers. Details of this primary research are given in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

The second chapter examines the nature of children's historical fiction. British children's historical fiction, which has a long history and includes many fine works, together with many critical studies, is used to establish a set of basic quality criteria which it is believed should be present in children's historical novels. These criteria are later used as a basis for the analysis of Japanese children's historical
The Second World War caused major changes in both Japanese society and literature. For this reason the analysis of children's historical fiction and its relationship with society has been divided into pre-war and post-war periods. The third chapter looks at Japanese society, education, government policy and child development in the pre-war period and the fifth chapter does the same for the post-war period.

The fourth chapter examines the development of children's historical fiction as an aspect of pre-war Japanese children's literature in general showing the influence that the latter has had on the former. The sixth chapter looks at post-war Japanese children's literature in general and the seventh examines the influence of non-Japanese children's fiction.

Finally, in the eighth chapter post-war historical fiction is discussed. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between current historical novels and society, the state, and the attitude of authors towards children. In addition comparison is made with the Japanese traditional style of children's stories.
Notes and References

2 For evidence on this point refer to the following:
   iii. Helen Cam, *Historical Novels* (London: Historical Association, 1961), in which she argues that the historical novel can give the young a taste for history.
6 See Ch. 8. Sect. 3.3 for discussion of this point.

2. THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S HISTORICAL FICTION

2.1 Introduction

In order to examine the development of children's historical fiction in Japan it is first necessary to define its nature. Since Great Britain has produced many stories and critical analyses in this field, the bases for definition and examples are drawn from it. There has been considerable discussion by critics and writers about the nature of children's historical fiction and the main points which have been selected are those which are believed to be the most important and useful for the analysis of Japanese children's historical fiction which appears in later chapters.

Section 2.2 looks at the question of historical setting - both time and place - and the development of characters in accordance with that setting.

Section 2.3 examines the treatment of historical events - in particular the levels of detail and accuracy needed and the question of bias.

Section 2.4 discusses the portrayal of characters' thoughts and feelings as opposed to descriptions of their actions.

Section 2.5 looks at some features of characterization - in particular, the identification of readers with characters and the roles of children and adults in stories.

Section 2.6 examines the use of themes which are relevant to present day life.

Section 2.7 discusses to what degree unhappy events should be portrayed in stories.
2.2 Historical Setting

It is often thought that if a story is written with a historical setting it is historical fiction. However this is not always the case. Some authors merely use a suitable historical period to provide an interesting and entertaining background to their stories. The critic Anna Davin uses the idea of costumes to describe this:

The period setting of an adventure story or romance can carry as little conviction as the costumes in a pantomime, and be as inessential to the story.\(^1\)

Where this happens the historical setting is not fundamental to the story, it merely provides interest.

However, historical novelists do not create settings to fit stories, they write stories which are based on historic events. The period setting is absolutely fundamental to the story, to the degree that Jill Paton-Walsh describes one test to see whether or not a story is historical fiction as follows:

Can we imagine the plot and characters set in any other period? If we can the book is not in any organic way about its historical period. It may be a good book but it is not a historical novel.\(^2\)

A good example of a historical novel in which the period setting is essential to the story is The Grove of Green Holly (1967) by Barbara Willard.\(^3\) In this story the protagonists are a family of actors who are thrown on hard times when the puritans of Cromwell's day close the theatres and ban acting. The period of Cromwell is essential to the story which could not have been successfully set in another period and been historically accurate.

The geographical setting of a historical novel is as important as the period setting since the portrayal of place gives reality to the story. As Eudora Welty says:
The moment the place in which the novel happens is accepted as true, through it will begin to glow, in a kind of recognizable glory, the feeling and thought that inhabited the novel in the author's head and animated the whole of his work.4

In historical fiction the place setting must be, to the best of our knowledge, in accordance with historical fact. The importance of place in historical fiction is shown by Rosemary Sutcliff in her novel The Lantern Bearers (1959). In this story the protagonist is a Roman soldier who decides to stay in Britain when the Roman army withdraws in 410 AD. His loyalty as a Roman soldier is overcome by his attachment to the country in which he has grown up. Early in the story when he discovers his feelings for Britain, he says:

It seemed to be out of that faint sea-wash in the silence that the knowledge came to him that he belonged to Britain. He had always belonged to Britain, but he had not known it before because he had never had to question it before. He knew it now.5

His actions and thoughts became dominated by his feeling that Britain is his home. The historical place and period are fundamental to the story. The attachment of the protagonist to place gives the story profound meaning which, since the story is well-written, can easily be understood by young readers.

Not only historical facts must be correctly shown, however. In addition, characters' beliefs and attitudes must be appropriate to the time and place. As Helen Cam puts it:

The historical novelist with a proper respect for history has a very stiff task before him; not only must his facts and his concrete details be consistent with those established by research; but the atmosphere of belief, the attitudes and assumptions of society that he conveys must be in accordance with what is known of the mental and emotional climate of the period.6

Where protagonists are children the influence of historical events on them as they grow up should also be shown— it is not enough to merely place the child protagonist in a historical setting as an
unaffected observer. Children's historical fiction is concerned with the thoughts and feelings of children and should show them developing and maturing as a result of their experiences. In order to be historically relevant these experiences should be a part of the historical events portrayed. For example in *Legion of the Eagle* (1954) by Henry Treece the protagonist's experiences are a direct result of the period in which he lives. The main character is the son of a British farmer who becomes a slave to a Roman family. Through his friendship with other slaves and the son of his master and through his own experiences he comes to understand the unfairness of slavery and the domination of some men by others. This is shown when the protagonist says:

> Well, you may laugh, brother, but in the fields, under the blue skies of Heaven, I have had many opportunities of thinking about life. And I have come to the conclusion that life isn't given to us just that we can exert our own strength on other men and turn their lives inside out for our own advantage.  

The invasion of the Roman army changes the boy's life. He matures through his experiences and the reader is made aware of the effect of the events of that time on people's lives.

2.3 The Balance between Fact and Fiction

For children's historical fiction to be read, understood and enjoyed it must be simple and clear and should have a degree of action and adventure. The levels of simplicity and clarity required depend in general on the age of the reader. For example, children under the age of eleven may have a limited ability to appreciate the passage of time through history. In general stories should avoid complicated emotional and moral issues and over-elaborate plots with too many characters. In addition, the novelist should be aware that excessive concentration on historical detail or place descriptions may result in a loss of interest.
For example, Eudora Welty warns against "the danger of overwhelming and warping the novel's structure with an overemphasis on place". Furthermore, as Nicholas Tucker says, younger readers normally "prefer action to analysis". Stories should therefore be simple, clear and well-balanced, with sufficient action and adventure to hold the child's interest.

It may sometimes be necessary to sacrifice historical accuracy in terms of minor details where it helps to simplify the plot. Again, this may be even more necessary for younger readers. As Helen Cam says, when a child first begins to read or listen to historical novels, accuracy is not of the first importance. What matters above all is that the story should be interesting. However, as Helen E. Haines says, the historical novelist may "reshape minor events to fit into his plot scheme, but he may not falsify history's fundamental record".

In order to achieve simplicity it may also be necessary for the author to adopt a biased view. As Margery Fisher says:

\[ \text{Academic history is a matter of adjustment of reservations, of constant parenthesis; but in a story for children the issues must be clear cut.} \]

However this biased viewpoint is not necessarily a major problem in terms of loss of accuracy; providing children have the opportunity to read a range of historical novels written from different viewpoints they will be able to form a balanced opinion. Fisher adds that:

\[ \text{A sensible child adjusts his ideas of history as he grows older, discarding parts of stories he has read, keeping others.} \]

Some authors, for example, Hester Burton, deal with the problem by describing the historical situation from the viewpoint of the protagonist. Others, such as B. Bartos-Höpper in The Cossacks (1962) and Save the Kahn (1963) present a situation as seen from two different points of view. In any event, as Cam says, the historical
novelist is not bound to give a fair statement of all points of view; he can be the advocate, it is not his function to be the judge. It is, however, important that the author demonstrates that the interpretation of history shown is being considered from the viewpoint of the characters portrayed and is not objective historical fact.

2.4 Emphasis on Feelings

It can be demonstrated that there are basically two types of historical novelist: one who is interested in people— their thoughts and feelings, and the other who is interested in people's daily lives— what they did and how they lived. It can be argued that each may appeal to different children who have different tastes and needs. However, the re-creation of the past without an emphasis on human thoughts merely delineates a point in history whereas the portrayal of thoughts and responses allows the reader to identify with the characters, thus creating a line continuing from the past to the present.

An example of a story which concentrates on describing people's daily lives and which lacks emphasis on thoughts and feelings is The Woolpack (1951) by Cynthia Harnett. This book gives many interesting details of daily life in the fourteenth century, in particular with regard to the manufacture and trade of wool. Winifred Whitehead says that Harnett's books, compared to Sutcliff's, are "quieter, less complex, less disturbing but full of interest and adventure nevertheless". However, as Whitehead adds, Harnett's writing lacks the warmth and enthusiasm of that of Sutcliff. Certainly this can be seen when comparing The Woolpack to Sutcliff's The Lantern Bearers which was mentioned briefly in the first section of this chapter, and which lays emphasis on the protagonist's thoughts and feelings, bringing him to life in the reader's mind. The Woolpack may be intellectually exciting but action frequently stops to
allow for the explanation of aspects of everyday life and the thoughts and feelings of characters are not developed. In this respect the story lacks imagination and enthusiasm and as Fisher says, without these "the most learned and well-documented story will leave the young reader cold, where it should set him on fire."  

Historical fiction which concentrates on informing the reader about characters' daily lives indeed runs the risk of leaving many young readers "cold". This should be avoided if the reader is to identify with the characters and thus appreciate the line of thoughts and responses running from past to present which brings history to life.

2.5 Characterization

In order that readers can identify with characters and thus acquire a personal feeling for the historical events shown it is necessary that characters do not differ greatly from readers in terms of their thoughts and feelings. Characters should therefore not be unrealistic - for example too pure or too evil. However, in creating identifiable characters, authors must be careful not to, as Cam says, inject modern, psychology and modern assumptions into them. Twentieth century values are, for example, quite different from those of the past, particularly in the area of inter-personal relationships. Relationships between men and women, children and parents, and masters and servants have changed markedly over time and modern concepts of these relationships bear little resemblance to the ways in which they were seen in the past. If novelists wish to introduce young readers to new ideas, such as sexual equality, they must be careful not to give a false impression of the attitudes of the period and place. This can be avoided - for example with regard to modern attitudes towards women Egoff says authors can choose situations where women's roles are both important and natural, as does Marjorie Darke in A
Question of Courage (1975), her book on the women's suffrage movement. Sutcliff also manages this blend of authenticity and modern ideas well and as Egoff adds "gives all her characters universal, human problems while making them vital and recognizable in their own time." On the whole, children are greatly fascinated by other children. As Nicholas Tucker says:

There is plenty of evidence to show that children - like adults - are deeply affected by their experience of their contemporaries, particularly when it comes to imitation, setting 'social norms' such as sex-role identifications, and learning values, conventions and attitudes. Children have not however generally played a dominant role in historical events and cannot be realistically shown as doing so. Child protagonists may then be best used as participating observers, playing a minor role in historic events and observing and interpreting them for the reader. This allows the younger reader to identify with the child's view of the events and characters shown. Some historical novelists use a child as narrator. T.N. Monjo says:

The use of the child as narrator, a child intimately associated with the person under scrutiny, makes possible a casual intimacy which, I believe, young readers find congenial. Children who are used as narrators should, however, be old enough to realistically understand and interpret events and situations presented in stories, a point mentioned by Egoff. This is successfully achieved in Hester Burton's Time of Trial (1963) in which the protagonist, a seventeen year old girl, interprets the injustice and oppression in eighteenth-century London.

The role of adults is also very important in children's historical fiction. As Egoff says, in the same way that child narrators should be old enough to interpret events so should the adults be strongly and realistically portrayed if their prominent role in the
unfolding of historical events is to be credible. For this reason, she adds, adults play a far more important role in historical novels than they do in other types of children's fiction.33

2.6 The Relevance of Themes to Present-day Life

In children's historical fiction it is important that authors select themes which are relevant to the issues and problems faced by readers. In this way readers can understand and relate to these issues and can benefit from realizing that they are universal - not peculiar to their own place or time. In children's literature many of these issues and problems come under the overall experience of growing up. As Sheila Ray says:

Most important of all, if it is to appeal to teenagers, a book requires a theme which they find relevant. Overall, of course, the theme is 'growing up' with all the related experiences and problems; teenage novel after teenage novel shows the hero or heroine coming to terms with himself or herself, learning through experience, and thus provides a measure against which the reader can test his own experience.34

An example of a theme relevant to a child's experience in modern society occurs in The Red Towers of Granada (1965) by Geoffrey Trease.35 The protagonist is a boy who is rejected by society because of his leprosy. On his travels he befriends a Jewish family and through this relationship comes to know racial discrimination. This theme is relevant to many readers who come into contact with discrimination in their own lives, either directed against them or against others.

2.7 Portrayal of Unhappy Events

Many adults prefer to hide the more tragic aspects of life from children on the grounds that they are too young to understand and that they might as well enjoy life when they are young - sorrow can wait until they are adults. However, it appears that some children disagree with his view. Two studies of children's reading preferences indicated that
older children (about ten years old) and children with higher I.Q.s prefer realistic story endings to merely happy ones. In any event, children who are sheltered from the sad and unpleasant incidents of life may still experience fear. As Nicholas Tucker says:

Furthermore all children are predisposed to experience fear, both real and imaginary, and when questioned young children, at least in the western world, still commonly talk of supernatural or other fantasy sources of danger rather than the more realistic ones such as fire or road accidents.

Indeed it may be that the unknown is more a source of fear in a child than the known, so that the realistic presentation of tragic incidents may benefit the child by increasing his understanding and thus lessening his fear.

There are several reasons why it is better not to avoid the portrayal of sad, unpleasant aspects of life in children's historical novels provided it is achieved with warmth and feeling by the author. Firstly it is impossible to present a realistic view of life in most historical periods covered without showing to some degree the death, suffering and poverty which existed in those times.

Secondly it may help children to deal with the tragic events that will sooner or later confront them in real life - whether they be personal tragedies or larger events such as wars or famines. For example, as James Giblin says, the child is exposed to external violence, either personally or through the television, which becomes part of his life experience, something he must cope with and absorb. In addition there is the internal potential for violence in all of us, including children. Stories told with warmth and feeling which show that it is internal human emotions which lead to external violence can help children to understand and deal with the violence that they encounter in real life.

Thirdly, showing the unpleasant aspects of life allows the author to inspire the reader by demonstrating that this kind of adversity can
often be overcome through courage, strength and perseverance. For example, in *Warrior Scarlet* (1958) by Rosemary Sutcliff the protagonist is a boy with a crippled arm who has to overcome his disability to be accepted as a tribesman. This kind of lesson can encourage young readers to fight against the adversities that they may encounter.

2.8 Conclusion

Children's historical fiction should be based on historical events which are essential to the story. It must present a broadly correct view of historical events and places and the attitudes and beliefs pertaining to them, whilst allowing for leeway in the portrayal of minor details. Stories should be clear and simple and in order to achieve this it may be necessary for authors to take biased positions in showing characters' responses to events.

The portrayal of characters should be realistic and their thoughts and feelings should be emphasized. This is so that young readers can easily identify with the characters and thus acquire a personal feeling for the experiences and events shown. Child protagonists should play a realistic role in the historic events shown and interpret them for the reader, and should be old enough to do this credibly. Furthermore the influence of the historical events on their growing up should be clearly shown. Adult characters should be strongly and realistically portrayed to give credibility to their role in history.

Themes used should be of relevance to present day readers in order to be interesting and to allow them to identify with events shown. Furthermore, unhappy events, such as death or violence should be shown where necessary to make a story realistic, providing they are treated with warmth and sympathy. The portrayal of characters dealing with and overcoming such adversities can provide inspiration to young readers.
In addition, stories must be interesting and enjoyable. They should not therefore be weighed down with too many historical details or descriptions and must have sufficient action and adventure to keep the young reader entertained.

In summary authors must balance historical content with exciting plots and interesting characterization if young readers are to discover history and its link to their lives in an enjoyable way.

These have been selected as the most important aspects of the nature of children's historical fiction after consideration of critical responses to historical novels and will serve as the basis of analysis of Japanese works in later chapters.
Notes and References


2 Walsh, "History is Fiction", p.221.


6 Helen Cam, Historical Novels, (London: Historical Association, 1961), p. 8. See also Horovitz, "Dimensions in Time".


8 Ibid, p. 163.


10 Quoted by Horovitz, "Dimensions in Time", p. 138.


12 Cam, Historical Novels, p. 7.


15 Ibid.


19 Cam, Historical Novels, p. 9.


24 Fisher, Margery, Intent Upon Reading, p. 224.

25 Cam, Historical Novels, p. 8.


27 Egoff, Thursday's Child, pp. 172-173.

28 Ibid., p.164.


31 Egoff, Thursday's Child, p. 184.

33 Egoff, Thursday's Child, p. 184.


37 Tucker, What is a Child, p. 54.

38 James C. Giblin, "Violence; Factors Considered by a Children's Book Editor", in Elementary English, 49, (January 1972), pp. 64-67.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JAPANESE SOCIETY BEFORE 1945

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to show briefly the social situation in Japan from the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to the end of the Second World War in 1945, insofar as it is relevant to children's literature, as a prelude to analysing the development of Japanese children's literature. Periods prior to this are not examined since written children's literature only began to be produced after 1868.

Section 3.2 looks briefly at the major historical events and influences in Japan during the period in order to provide a broad historical framework.

Section 3.3 looks at the official use of history books and teaching to support government policies and actions. This is of particular interest in the study of writers' and publishers' attitudes and the effects of censorship.

Section 3.4 looks at the way in which children were perceived and treated by the elements of society closest to them—their families and their schools—and the effect of government policies. This is especially relevant to the attitudes of parents and teachers who control the provision of reading material to children and to the attitudes of the young readers themselves.

Section 3.5 looks briefly at the restrictions on freedom of speech during the period insofar as they are relevant to children's literature.

These aspects of the social situation provide an important background to the study of the development of children's literature discussed in the next chapter.
3.2 Major Historical Events and Influences

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 represented the return to power of the royal family, which is believed to have existed since the fifth century A.D. For approximately one thousand years various Samurai families had ruled the country with the royal family as a powerless figurehead. However in 1868 a group of Samurai and royal family members defeated the Tokugawa shogunate which had been in power for two hundred and fifty years, comprising what is known as the Edo Period. In the new government formed by the victorious Samurai the Emperor Meiji had much more power than previous emperors had held.

The Meiji government realized that it was considerably weaker than the major Western countries in both economic and military terms and decided to strengthen these aspects. It embarked on a programme of industrialization and soon after, in 1872, made education compulsory in order to create a more advanced work force. The atmosphere at this time was generally pro-Western as Japan concentrated on absorbing Western ideas and technology as fast as possible to aid its development.

In the 1890's, however, the government reacted to what it saw as the excessive influence of liberal ideas from the West and began to adopt an anti-Western stance. In 1894 Japan and China went to war and with Japan's success in 1895 a portion of Chinese territory was won. However, following pressure from Russia, France and Germany who felt that Japan was becoming too powerful, this territory was returned to China. This increased the resentment already felt against Western powers over trade treaties and conditions imposed upon Japan prior to 1868 which were regarded as unfair. With the increase in anti-Western feeling Japan became more nationalistic and inward looking.
In 1904 and 1905 Japan and Russia fought a series of battles culminating in victory for Japan. However, despite popular expectations, no material benefit was achieved since the government did not consider Japan powerful enough to make demands on Russia. By 1910 a socialist movement had grown in Japan, mostly amongst intellectuals, which the government took steps to suppress. One of the main justifications for this action was a purported plot to assassinate the emperor.

During the First World War, and the early years thereafter, Japan's economy improved considerably as exports increased to take advantage of western powers industrial preoccupation with the war. This resulted in a growth of the middle class and an increase in liberalism amongst that group and amongst intellectuals.

As Western industries picked up again in the early 1920's Japan's economy began to decline and with the world economic crisis in 1929 it suffered substantial damage. During this period socialist ideas again became widespread as people were influenced by the economic decline and the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917. However, again the government took measures to suppress this movement.

In 1931 Japan invaded China and captured the area of Manchuria which was retained until 1945. During this period a considerable number of troops were stationed in Manchuria to deal with continued guerilla attacks. In 1941 the Second World War began between Japan and the Allied Powers which terminated with Japan's surrender in 1945.

3.3 Government Policy on History Education

When the Meiji government took power in 1868 most Japanese knew little about the royal family but were very aware of the preceding Tokugawa family and their authority. In order to overcome any
doubt in people's minds about the legitimacy of the emperor's rule. The new government spread the idea that the royal family were descended from the gods; that they had always ruled Japan and only they had the right to do so. Furthermore the government stated that Japan's royal family was supreme in the world and that Japan was thus honoured and authorized to lead other countries.

In order to ensure that people accepted and believed these ideas the government had historical books rewritten accordingly and suppressed any teaching which went against the official view. Historical facts which did not support their view were omitted from history books and untrue information was included. For example, new history books showed the royal family as having ruled Japan continuously whereas they had not ruled in effect since the ninth century A.D. The alteration of history books continued throughout the period 1868 to 1945. For instance, after the plot to assassinate the emperor was discovered in 1910, the government removed from the history books references to a twelfth-century A.D. dispute between two men who both claimed to be the legitimate emperor.

Justification for this false view of history was obtained from two books which represent the oldest written historical records in Japan. These were the Kojiki and Nihonshoki which were produced in 712 A.D. and 720 A.D. respectively by command of the royal family's ancestors. Some scholars regard the early sections of these works as myth; others believe that they were made up by the emperor's followers; however, most are agreed that they are not historically factual accounts.

The bases of these books were apparently the Teiki, a collection of genealogical and other data on the royal family, and the Honji and Kuji, collections of ancient myths, legends and songs. However, Tenmu, the emperor at that time, changed some elements of these older records when
compiling the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. Part of the preface to the *Kojiki* says:

Whereupon the Emperor said:

"I hear that the Teiki and Honji handed down by the various houses have come to differ from the truth and that many falsehoods have been added to them."  
"If these errors are not remedied at this time, their meaning will be lost before many years have passed".  
"This is the framework of the state, the great foundation of the imperial influence".  
"Therefore, recording the Teiki and examining the Kuji, discarding the mistaken and establishing the true, I desire to hand them on to later generations".

It is difficult to determine Emperor Tenmu's motives for rewriting these books but it is thought that he wanted to legitimize his rule since there were many disputes over power at that time. Unfortunately the earlier records no longer exist and it is therefore impossible to know what changes were made.

Between 1868 and 1945 the government used the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* to support their rewritten view of history, and school textbooks and history books for adults were largely based on these myths, which were altered and presented as factual history. For example, the legend Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, which portrayed the deeds of Prince Yamato Takeru was presented as historical fact in history textbooks. Furthermore the story was changed in each succeeding edition during the Meiji period - each time emphasizing increasingly his loyalty to the royal family. Heroes such as Takeru were gradually glorified over the years and portrayed as representing the Japanese national spirit.

Whilst some details of these myths were obviously incorrect, such as the portrayal of earlier emperors as having lived for nearly two hundred years, up to 1945 most historians did not criticize their being presented as fact. As Herschel Webb says,

Empiric historians might inwardly disbelieve the myth or discount it as unverifiable, but they ran a real risk of loss of positions, or worse, if they publicly said so.
Such historians defended their positions on the grounds that the study of history was different from teaching history at school. The few that did disagree publicly were indeed suppressed. For example, Tsuda Sokichi, who argued that the *Kojiki*, particularly in its earlier sections, was neither history nor myth but a late fabrication by the court intellectuals for the sole purpose of legitimizing and justifying the rule of the Imperial house, was forced to resign his professorship at Waseda University. In addition books and articles, even fiction, which presented a view of history which differed from the official view, were censored or banned.

Education played an important role in government policy - used in particular to plant widely and deeply amongst the common people the belief in the royal family's right to rule. Thus the teaching of history in state schools followed the official government line. Early history was based largely on the revived myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, now presented as factual history. Later historical events were biased to show the royal family in its best light. History textbooks contained only the biased history of the royal family, their loyal servants and figures such as famous priests. Common people were only included to show them receiving the emperor's affection, and nothing was said about social or political historical developments. As a warlike atmosphere developed in the years leading to the Second World War textbooks became more and more biased in their glorification of the royal family, the national spirit and Japan's divine right to lead other nations. Teachers who attempted to teach a more objective history were oppressed by the government. Between 1928 and 1931, seven hundred and sixty one teachers were arrested or forced to resign because they did not teach history according to the textbook version. For example Samukawa Michio who taught evolutionary theory and tried to show his students that the emperor was a human being like them.
in order that they might think about social change\textsuperscript{15} was arrested in 1941. Most children had no doubt about the version of history they were taught since they received little or no contradictory evidence and were scolded and given low marks if they questioned the official version.

3.4 Attitudes towards Children

When the Meiji government came to power it soon realized that Japan could no longer remain the isolated, feudal society that it had been during the Edo Period which had covered the previous 250 years. It realized that Western countries were far more advanced and powerful, both in economic and military terms, and that unless Japan caught up there was grave danger that it would be colonized. The government decided that Japan must be modernized. As the sociologist Fukutake says:

\begin{quote}
Japan's modernization was modernization for national defence, for revision of unequal treaties which had been forced on Japan by the Western powers, for the creation of a "wealthy country, strong army", as the dominant slogan of the time had it.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Modernization meant building a strong army and navy and developing a modern industrial system. Furthermore the nation had to be moulded into a unified group which would support these policies whilst retaining its traditional hierarchical structure which enabled the rulers to control the country at all levels. A fundamental policy of the government which was inherited from the previous Tokugawa government was to keep the people hardworking and obedient to authority. For the government, building a strong, unified Japan took priority over individual needs and desires.

In order to develop Japan's industry the government recognized the need to give the people a basic education so that they could provide the necessary skills. Before the Meiji Restoration, only a few children - sons of the Samurai class - had the opportunity to go to school. In 1872 a public education system was started and by the time of its revision in 1879
attendances were already high (49 percent of children of school age - between 7 and 10 years old). By the time the system was revised again in 1907 this rate had risen to 97 percent and the school leaving age had been raised to 12 years.\(^{17}\)

Initially the government wanted to give the people a sense of intellectual openness and inquisitiveness about western technology and culture and schools were allowed to choose their own text books. However, by 1880 the government had become aware of the danger of creating a desire for social change and by the 1900s the purpose of education had been reduced to the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic.\(^{18}\)

As Fukutake says:

> From the beginning of the century onward there was a conscious fear of the development of critical attitudes and active attempts to repress them. Enrolment rates which could put most of the world to shame had made almost the whole population literate, but this quantitative expansion of training in the three R's did not give people the eyes to look critically.\(^{19}\)

Children were encouraged to work hard to achieve success and prosperity for their family and country. Teaching reinforced the traditional hierarchical social system in which respect and obedience were the key to success. Children were taught absolute loyalty and devotion to the emperor from the earliest age. The ideal figure was deemed to be Ninomiya Kinjiro, a social reformer in the Edo Period, who was held to have combined the virtues of hard work and study, and a statue of him as a boy with a load of wood on his back and a book in his hands stood in most school playgrounds before 1945.\(^{20}\)

As Ienaga says, passive acquiescence to the state was not enough, the government wanted education to turn out citizens who spontaneously and enthusiastically supported national policies.\(^{21}\)
A few private schools were established in this period by educationalists who did not approve of the government education system. The attitude of these schools was much more liberal: for example in a private primary school called Seijo Shogakko established in 1917, children's individuality and emotions were respected and subjects such as nature study and science were taught. They also differed from government schools in that they did not teach ethics, on the grounds that children would develop their own values as they matured. In addition, they recognized the value of play for children's development. However, these schools had little impact on society since they had few pupils and most of them suffered from financial problems.

The attitude of adults towards children was not fundamentally different from that of the government. Up to 1945 it was widely felt in Japanese society that children were not individuals with rights or feelings - they belonged to their parents and had to obey and respect them at all times. Parental control was accepted as absolute even to the extent that infanticide was commonly practised among poorer families before the Meiji Restoration. Children learnt to work hard and to obey their parents. They learnt their place in the family and their family's place in their community. Educationalist, Karasawa Tomisaburo, when talking about his training as a pre-war child, says that his father taught him work skills and instructed him in correct mental attitudes; his mother impressed on him the need to work hard and explained to him the social position of his family and all the other families in the village and how to behave towards them. The respect and obedience learnt in the family was later applied outside the family to all those in higher positions - especially the emperor and those who delivered orders in his name. Children were taught that it was vital not to make the family lose face, so that established custom must always be followed -
personal feelings or values were of little import. As Fukutake says, the underlying attitudes and principles of most people brought up in pre-war Japan might be summed up in the two phases "supremacy of custom" and "submission to authority". These ethical codes were retained throughout the 1868-1945 period despite the changes in work and living styles brought about by technological development. In the main the codes were applied as much in the new working environment as they had in the old. Parents and teachers continued to bring up children in the narrow environment of absolute authority reinforced by the government's attitude.

In this strict environment children were allowed little in the way of play or pleasure. Their lives were occupied mostly with work and study. What little relaxation they did get was also controlled by their elders. For example, the books that they were allowed to read had to follow the established ethical codes and if they were set in the past could not go against the official view of history.

3.5 Freedom of Speech

As mentioned in Section 3.3 a fundamental policy of the government between 1868 and 1945 was to keep the people obedient to authority. The main tool used for this purpose was restriction on freedom of speech. All aspects of communication were controlled - cinema, theatre, newspapers, magazines, books, radio, public oratory, and teaching at all levels. Professor Ienaga summarizes the position well:

The Meiji Constitution did not guarantee basic human rights. Freedom of expression was recognized only "within the limits of the law". The liberties granted in the constitution would be virtually abolished by subsequent laws. Restrictions soon tumbled from the government's authoritarian cornucopia. Freedom of publication was affected by the Publication Law (1890) and its successor, the Public Order Police Law of 1900; and intellectual freedom by the lese majeste provision of the criminal code and
by the Peace Preservation Law (1925). Movies and theatrical performances were strictly controlled by the Diet. Thought and expression were so circumscribed that only a small sphere of freedom remained.27

These restrictions had the effect not only of suppressing dissident teachers and historians as mentioned earlier in this chapter, but also of censoring and banning works of fiction by authors who disagreed with government views.

3.6 Conclusion

With the restoration of the royal family to power in 1868 history books and teaching began to be distorted in order to legitimate their rule. Ancient myths and legends were altered and presented to the people as historical fact. Historians, teachers and novelists who tried to show a more objective view of history were suppressed and many were arrested.

Despite the introduction of education for practically all children, the social system remained fundamentally unchanged. Schooling was aimed at turning out children who could serve the state's industrial and military development plans. Children were therefore taught reading, writing, arithmetic and the ethics of hard work, obedience to authority and loyalty to the crown were stressed. The development of thought or reason was frowned upon since it could lead to criticism of the established system. Parents supported these ideas and reinforced them through their strict control of their children's lives.

Children were brought up to be hard-working and obedient and to fit in with the existing social order, and the vast majority blindly accepted these ideas and became "model" children, their heads full of "correct" ethics and jingoistic phrases related to the glory of their emperor and their country.

During this period the government controlled freedom of speech strictly and not only were dissident historians and teachers suppressed but
also works of fiction which differed from official views were censored or banned.

The effect of the above circumstances on the production and distribution of children's literature is discussed in the next chapter.
Notes and References


2Yoshimura Tokuzo, "Senso to Shinwa Kyoiku", in *Shinwa to Kyoiku*, ed. Naoki Kojiro (Tokyo: Shinnihon Suppansha, 1969), in which he shows how before 1945 the government distorted ancient myths and presented them as historical fact.


5Naoki Kojiro, "Kiki to Shinwa", in *Shinwa to Kyoiku*, ed. Naoki. See also Inoue, "Nihon Teikokushugi to Kokushigaku".


7Many historians support this, see Naoki, "Kiki to Shinwa".

8These changes are traced in Yoshimura, "Senso to Shinwa Kyoiku".


10Inoue, "Nihon Teikokushugi to Kokushigaku".

11Philippi, *Kojiki*, p.32.

13 Ienaga, *The Pacific War*.

14 Yoshimura, "Senso to Shinwa Kyoiku", p. 64.


18 For changing attitudes to education in the early Meiji Period see Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, pp. 19–32.


21 Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, p. 22.


24 Quoted by Tajima, Ibid., p. 20.


26 Ibid., p. 43

4. JAPANESE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE BEFORE 1945

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the development of Japanese children's literature from when it began in written form after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 up to the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The most important elements of children's literature in this period have been selected for study and are examined in Sections 4.2 to 4.5.

Section 4.2 looks at popular fiction throughout the period, concentrating on four major influences: the works of Iwaya Sazanami (1891-1910), the book series Tachikawa Bunko (1911-1923), the magazine Shonen Kurabu (1914-1945) and government controlled children's literature (1941-1945).

Section 4.3 deals with the Akai Tori school of writing which published works from 1918 to 1936 and was important for its attempts to improve literary quality.

Section 4.4 examines the proletarian school of literature which published works about 1926 to 1934 and was important for its recognition of working class issues.

During the period 1868 to 1945 there was no body of work which could be called historical fiction. All of the above groups included some stories set in the past. These are examined as a whole in section 4.5.

Each group of literature is critically examined and related to the social background shown in Chapter 3.

4.2 Popular Fiction

In the first few years after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 very few children's stories were published. However, after compulsory schooling was introduced in 1872, public demand for children's stories was stimulated and, with the development of printing skills, the publication
of books and magazines increased. This was in addition to the considerable growth in the production of school textbooks.

For the first twenty three years after the Meiji Restoration children's stories published in Japan were mostly translations of foreign stories. However, in the early 1890s, with a widespread reaction against western influence and a desire to reestablish a national identity, Japanese children's literature began to be written and soon became popular. The first important writer of Japanese children's books was Iwaya Sazanami, whose works dominate the period 1890 to 1910. Most of the authors who wrote children's books at this time only did so on a part-time basis - some of them, for example, were magazine editors. However Iwaya devoted himself entirely to writing children's stories.

He created new stories for children, such as Koganemaru (1891) the first original Japanese children's story. He also rewrote old Japanese folk tales and translated and rewrote foreign children's stories. Furthermore he wrote poems and plays and tried to improve school textbooks. He introduced the term "Shonen Bungaku" (children's literature) to Japan - as a translation of the German phrase "Jugendschrift". Until then Japan had not had any special title for children's literature.

Iwaya believed that children's stories should be written in the kind of language they heard spoken every day, whereas other authors used a more formal language for writing which children found hard to understand. He was also the first influential children's novelist to recognize the importance of imaginative stories as entertainment for children. He thought that if children were stimulated with imaginative stories they would develop their minds more broadly. However, most Japanese people, especially teachers, criticized imaginative stories, such as folk tales or fairy stories, for being unrealistic. These kinds of stories were regarded
as being only for amusement, suitable for only lazy or upper-class people, ordinary children were thought to need stories which taught them how to behave. In order that his stories would be widely accepted he made them less imaginative and more moralistic. Despite this change, however, his stories continued to be humorous.

Although his stories are not often read by children nowadays, these elements of humour and morality made them very popular in this period.

One of his most well-liked stories was Momotaro (1894), a famous folk tale which Iwaya retold. The original version told the story of Momotaro who was born from a peach and brought up by an old couple. He travelled to an island, defeated the demons who lived there and captured their treasure. Iwaya rewrote the story to emphasize the boy's dutiful behaviour to the old couple and his loyalty to Japan - in the new version the treasure belonged to Japan and was recovered by Momotaro for his country. For example in the new version when Momotaro decided to set off to fight the demon he made sure that the old couple would be all right in his absence and the old man says to Momotaro:

"It is no wonder that parents look after their children for when they grow up it is their turn to look after the parents."

Also later on Momotaro explains to the old couple why he must go:

"There is an island inhabited by demons which is far out in the sea to the north-east of Japan. These demons do not obey this holy country, and invade and steal our treasure."

In this way he introduced the virtues of duty and loyalty to the story. Most of Iwaya's stories were similar to Momotaro, in that protagonists' characters were not developed - only their moralistic behaviour was stressed. Protagonists' thoughts and feelings were not considered important.

Iwaya was the most prolific and popular writer in the years 1890 to 1940 and many other authors imitated his work - for example, Mori Keien
and Fukuda Satsuki in the book *Otoginbanashi 12-Kagetsu* (1902) (Twelve Months Folk Tales). In addition his work had a profound influence on authors from 1910 through to 1945 and to a lesser degree after the Second World War. As stated above, in order to make his stories more widely acceptable he made them less imaginative and more moralistic. However he overemphasized the moral aspects and neglected to make his characters interesting. Unfortunately, his influence was such that most popular fiction during and after this period repeated these weaknesses.

In 1911 a book series called Tachikawa Bunko was started by the family of Tamada Gyokushusai, a professional story teller. This series became extremely popular and approximately two hundred books were published until it ceased in 1923. The most popular hero of the series was Sarutobi Sasuke who appeared in about forty books. He was a ninja - a master of occult art - who served a famous samurai, travelling and fighting in his master's cause. He was never beaten.

Most of the books in this series stressed traditional ethics and portrayed the practice of martial arts. The protagonists were honourable, faithful, loyal, strong, brave and active. They were considered ideal characters by teachers and parents, and children were encouraged to be like them. For example, in Sarutobi Sasuke, when Saizo, a famous ninja, is defeated by Sasuke he refuses to tell of his master's whereabouts. Sasuke is impressed with Saizo's loyalty:

"Indeed - all men should be like you. Whenever a promise is made it should be kept."

However whilst the stories were full of adventure their literary quality was poor in that plots and characters were stereotyped.

In 1914, three years after the start of Tachikawa Bunko a magazine called *Shonen Kurabu* began to be published. This magazine was produced
until the 1960s. From 1914 to 1945 this was the most popular source of children's stories in Japan - circulation figures for the month of January for the years 1929 to 1934 (excluding 1931 which is not known) averaged 642,000, a huge circulation in those days. The magazine was published monthly and each edition had about three hundred pages with as many as ten different stories, some short stories and some episodes of serials. Most of the stories were aimed at and read by boys.

These stories aimed to teach children how to behave in the service of their country and emperor. Kato Kenichi, chief editor of Shonen Kurabu up to 1945 says:

I wanted to convey to children the idea that we should not die without having become great persons. However I did not want to force the idea so I tried to produce a magazine which children would enjoy reading. As Kato says the stories were designed to instruct and entertain. The magazine encouraged boys in particular to emulate the deeds of famous soldiers and politicians who served their country. The frontispieces often showed paintings of battle scenes or photographs of emperors, famous politicians or generals with their decorations. A favourite symbol appeared, for example, in the frontispiece photograph of the January 1930 edition. This showed the helmet of Kusunoki, a famous soldier loyal to the royal family in the fourteenth century A.D. with phrases such as "victory and glory" written beneath it. Stories were full of jingoistic phrases encouraging militarism in the name of emperor and country. Sato Nobuo, the historian, who went to school between 1937 and 1945, says:

When I recall my childhood, I was brought up to worship militarism through the influence of my teachers and by reading books such as Kodanshaya's picturebooks and Shonen Kurabu magazine which I had read avidly since I was small.

Many of these stories encouraged Japan's war efforts. An example of this is Aja no Akebono (The daybreak of Asia) serialized in 1931 and 1932 and
written by Yamanaka Minetaro. In this story, the protagonist is a Japanese secret agent who sets out to recover the secret plans of a weapon which had been stolen from his government. In the story the author says that although Japan respected peace it was necessary to fight the war to correct injustice. This kind of story was enjoyed by children for its excitement and encouraged children to become soldiers, implying that brave, loyal, obedient soldiers either did not die, or died happily and honourably. This was welcomed by many children who were afraid of having to fight in wars when they got older, especially in the period from 1931 to 1945 when Japan was almost permanently at war.

Whilst most stories were written for boys, some girls' books were published. However, most of them were sentimental stories with little literary quality. An example is Hanamonogatori (The Flower Stories) (1916) by Yoshiya Nobuko. The first story in this collection is Suzuran (The Lily of the Valley) which began as follows:

There were seven beautiful girls talking together. One of them looked at the others with dreamy eyes and spoke with a gentle tone. She was Sasajima Fusako, the daughter of the teacher at the mission school. The author writes of emotional themes - friendship, love and death - and uses sentimental words continually. In addition characters are drawn from wealthy families and they have luxuries such as pianos. The stories give an unrealistic view of society and of human nature. Nevertheless these sentimental stories were popular with girls before the Second World War.

From the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to the Second World War the Japanese government had always had a major effect on children's literature by influencing public opinion, censoring publications and silencing critical opponents. In 1941 the government went one step further by setting up its own association to control children's cultural activities - the Nihon Shokokumin Bunka Kyokai (Japanese
Children's Culture Association. Through this association the government aimed to ensure that all children were brought up to become responsible citizens - principally to support the emperor, the government and the war. One important aspect which was controlled was children's literature. From 1941 to the end of the war only books and magazines which closely followed the government's views were allowed to be published. Some magazines like Shonen Kurabu were not affected since they already followed the government's views. The association published its own magazine called Shokokumin Bunka (Children's Culture) which consisted of stories, poems and children's compositions - all of which supported the war. The magazine told children that to die for their emperor, country and family was the most honourable deed they could perform. For example the editor wrote in November 1942, in an article emphasizing this message:

Children are already learning the great wisdom of how to live and how to die from real life.

Some writers such as Toshima Yoshio, who had previously disagreed with the government's influence on children's literature, by this time also wrote pro-war stories for this magazine. However, the magazine was not widely read - the few families that could afford to buy books and magazines preferred to read publications like Shonen Kurabu.

In summary, popular fiction, from the early days of Iwaya through to 1945 was generally of poor literary quality. There were some exciting adventure stories, but in the main plots and characters were stereotyped, characters were not developed and no insights were given into society. This was due mostly to the fact that parents and teachers expected this kind of story with strong moral emphasis to teach children how to behave. This was encouraged by the government who wished to retain traditional ethics such as hard work, loyalty and obedience to authority and at the
same time to legitimize the rule of the royal family. In later years the
militaristic themes which dominated popular children's stories were also a
result of government pressure.

Stories which would entertain children whilst helping them to think
for themselves, understand emotions and use their imagination were not in
accordance with adults' views and were thus not encouraged. Nevertheless
exciting, action-packed adventure stories were enjoyed by most children and
attempts to provide a better class of story failed whilst popular fiction
was widely read throughout the period.

4.3 The Akai Tori School of Literature

During the second decade of the twentieth century the Japanese
public was increasingly influenced by liberal democratic and humanitarian
ideas from closer contact with Europe and North America. Some
educationalists began to recognize that the creative powers and thoughts of
children were the most valuable aspects of their development and artistic
teaching such as painting was seen as important. At that time several
private primary schools were established using these principles; for
example Seijo Shogakko (Seijo Primary School) which opened in 1917.

At the same time, many intellectuals, such as novelists and poets
realised that children's thoughts were different from those of adults and
that most adults did not appreciate this fact. These writers believed that
children had a pure spirit and a sense of justice whereas most adults felt
that children were merely empty vessels to be filled with adult ideas and
moral values.

Since the Meiji Restoration many works of popular fiction had
appeared but these authors considered them too crude and vulgar
for children - their emphasis being on action and adventure. For example
they criticized the stories of Iwaya for emphasizing morality and humour
and not developing characters feelings. Popular magazines such as Shonen Kurabu and sentimental stories for girls such as Hanamonogatari were considered to be of poor literary value.

After the end of the First World War in 1918 the atmosphere in Japan became slightly more liberal and author Suzuki Miekichi started a new magazine, Akai Tori, (A Red Bird) in 1918 with himself as editor. This magazine started a new school of writing which aimed to create stories and songs which would emphasize purity and literary value. Akai Tori was published until 1936, with a gap from 1929 to 1931 when poor demand, partly due to the poor economic situation, forced the owners to suspend printing. The magazine published stories for children as well as contributions from them. Akai Tori contributed greatly to the development of children's compositions, poems, songs and paintings by publishing selected ones. In school children were not generally encouraged to be creative or to portray their feelings. During literature classes for instance, children were often only allowed to copy teachers' examples - not to write their own compositions or poems. However Akai Tori encouraged children to develop creativity and express emotions. This magazine was particularly successful in improving the standard of children's songs. Previously songs were rather too long, often incomprehensible and unrelated to children's lives. As Noguchi Ujo, the poet, said of the old songs:

Children's songs are completely different from their life. It is not important whether children understand the song or not, they must simply learn it and sing it loudly. There are many faults in the songs. The lyrics are very difficult, uninteresting and too long.

However, through the influence of Akai Tori songs became more poetic and less moralistic, lyrics were written with simple words and had literary quality. Whereas the old songs are not remembered nowadays, children and adults are still singing those written for Akai Tori.
Shortly after Akai Tori started, two similar magazines began to be published - Kin no Fune (A Golden Ship) in 1919 and Dowa (Children's Stories) in 1920. Although the Akai Tori school helped to improve compositions, poems, songs and paintings the stories included in their magazines failed to interest children. Whilst characters' feelings and thoughts were often shown in detail and the quality of the Japanese was beautiful the characters were too idealistic and stories had little action. Almost all of the stories were too short and had little in the way of plot. For example A Nemui (I am sleepy) (1935) by Mori Saburo was a short story about two children who argued with their maid because they wanted to stay up late when their parents were out. Despite their wish to stay awake longer they soon fell asleep. That was basically the story - it had no real plot at all. The children portrayed are charming but not interesting or attractive to young readers.

In addition, most stories published in these magazines, like A Nemui, were about upper or middle class children. They did not look at the real lives and thoughts of ordinary children. Most children, who were from poor families could not therefore identify easily with the characters in such tales. For example, ordinary families did not have maids as did the one in A Nemui. Ordinary children were much more likely to end up as servants than masters. The authors of the Akai Tori school had also misjudged the taste of ordinary people, who were more receptive to traditional and nationalistic ideas than they had realised and preferred stories which followed these themes. These writers had been more anxious to promote literary purity than to consider the reading tastes of the mass of readers. A further problem of these magazines was that they were too expensive - three times as expensive as popular book series such as Tachikawa Bunko. Since the majority of Japanese families before
1945 were poor they generally chose the cheaper books and magazines.  
The Akai Tori school of writing attempted to improve the literary quality of children's stories and to emphasize the purity and innocent wisdom of children. It was a reaction against the crude traditional stories with their themes of battle and glory and continual emphasis on loyalty to emperor, country and parents, and thus a reaction against the government and against many people whose ideas these stories reflected. However, although the atmosphere of the times was more liberal than it had been, the writers did not wish to openly criticize or go against traditional views in their writing for fear of government and public censure. They therefore chose to ignore these themes completely in their stories. As a result stories mostly portrayed young children (under the age of eleven) showing wisdom and understanding and behaving well, in the hope that this would set an example to their readers. However in failing to provide interesting stories, by misjudging public willingness to read non-traditional literature and by overpricing their magazines they failed to reach the vast majority of children. Akai Tori for example never sold well - it was not published from 1929 to 1931 because of the lack of demand, and even in the better years only sold about 20,000 copies per month. This was very small compared with Shonen Kurabu which as shown in Section 4.2, averaged 642,000 for the months of January from 1929 to 1934.

4.4 Proletarian School of Literature

In the 1920's, the economic situation in Japan deteriorated. Factories closed, unemployment increased, wages fell and there were confrontations between workers and management. Many people felt the need for social change and with the influence of the Russian Revolution in 1917 socialist ideas became popular. Some of these people realised that
children's stories never depicted the reality of Japanese society, in particular the life of the vast majority of the people - the working class. Akai Tori was for example criticized by this group for only portraying upper and middle class life. Proletarian school author Makimoto Kusuo sums up their view:

The poets of Akai Tori do not recognize real children. They do not look at children in every corner of society. They only look at one part or one class of society and only at attractive children. They observe only petit-bourgeois children in order to satisfy their ideas and concepts, and consider those children to be representative of all children.29

The aim of the proletarian school of writers was to awaken children to the need for the class struggle and to make them future supporters of the cause. However their stories were not popular with children because they overemphasized their social beliefs and neglected to provide attractive characters and good plots. An example of this is Kusuri Bin to Hon (A Medicine Bottle and a Book) (1929) by Okawara Hiroshi.30 In this short story the protagonist is a thirteen year old boy who becomes ill from being forced to work too hard in a factory. Whilst lying alone in his room he has a dream in which he discusses the situation in the factory with his medicine bottle and his book. Through this dream he comes to realize that workers must write and fight against capitalist oppression. The story is very simple and not interesting for children and as with most of these stories characters were stereotyped. All workers and peasants are shown as pure and good, all ruling class members as evil. Since the message was the class struggle all the stories developed only this theme.

Proletarian literature also suffered from the problem of government restrictions on freedom of speech mentioned in Section 3.4. Most books, newspaper articles and magazines with themes of class struggle were banned. For example, Shonen Senki (A Flag of War for Children), the main
children's magazine of this school, which was printed twenty one times between 1929 and 1931, had twelve of these editions banned from distribution. In addition writers who expressed support for the class struggle were severely suppressed by the government and in many cases arrested. Even where books with this theme were distributed most teachers were reluctant to show them to children since if it was known that they possessed them they would be arrested or forced to resign.

Faced with these problems some of the authors of the proletarian school changed their tactics in later years and wrote stories about the life of working class children without criticizing the social situation. They wrote generally tranquil, domestic stories showing children working or playing together. In this way they hoped to transmit two messages: firstly the joy of peace (as opposed to the suffering of the war that Japan was fighting at the time) and secondly the benefits obtained from people working together. Author Kawasaki Daiji followed this line in many of his stories which centred around the lives of poor families; for example *Taiyo o Kakomu Kodomotachi* (Children Surrounding the Sun) and *Yujo* (A Friendship) (1940). The characterization in this author's work is interesting in that he portrays quite normal children, not the idealistic ones shown by most other children's novelists. His stories occasionally supported the war in order to avoid censorship or condemnation but he did not stress this aspect. In the same way, most authors eventually ceased to openly oppose the views of the government, especially as pressure increased in the years leading up to and during the Second World War.

Although the proletarian literature school's idea of opening children's eyes to social injustice was quite different from the Akai Tori school's pursuit of literary quality and emphasis on children's purity, it suffered the same fate of not reaching many children. In both cases this
was a result of overemphasizing the messages that they wished to transmit and neglecting to provide interesting plots and characters. In addition, proletarian literature suffered greatly at the hands of the government censors. As pressure increased on both groups in the years leading up to 1945, authors either ceased writing or became more supportive of government policies and views.

4.5 The Development of Children's Historical Stories

Following the government's enthusiastic efforts to teach history to all children, albeit their own version of history, many historically-related children's books were published. However, like that taught in schools, the history shown in these books bore little resemblance to historians' knowledge of events.

The first well-known historically-related children's stories appeared as a series of 12 books called Katei Kyoiku Rekishi Dokuho (Home Education: Historical Tales) published in 1891.35 They contained short accounts of different famous historical figures from the early days of Japan to more recent times. The authors, Ochiai Naobumi and Onakamura Yoshitaka, in the preface to these works, recognized that children's education was an important influence throughout their lives and stated that they therefore intended to write stories which conveyed messages in favour of loyalty to crown and country and filial piety.36 They therefore chose characters who would emphasize these principles. Historical novelist Katsuo Kinya says of these books:

...they started children's historical fiction in Japan. They emphasized morality, adoration of the emperor, loyalty, filial piety, wisdom and courage. They also idealized young heroes who did not hesitate to die for the cause.37

Many copies of these books were sold; Katsuo recalls having found the 36th impression of them in 1915, only 24 years after they were first written.38
History-related stories became very popular, probably due mostly to a desire by the Japanese people, encouraged by the government, to reestablish pride in their national identity following twenty years of living with unfair treaties and ideas that all things western were better.39 An example of the popularity of historical stories was a book series called Shonen Bungaku (Children's literature) which started in 1891. Eighteen history-related books were published in this series out of a total of thirty-two books issued. The most popular of these books was Omi Seijin (The Sage of Omi) (1892) by Murai Gensai,40 which was reprinted twenty eight times by 1905, representing some 37,500 copies.41 This book tells the story of a philosopher's childhood during the Edo Period (1603-1868). The story emphasizes the theme of filial piety. For example, the author says that when Toju, the philosopher, became famous he refused to take any students. One young man, Shinsuke, was determined to study with Toju and sat by the entrance to his home for many days hoping to be accepted. Then Toju's mother persuades him to take Shinsuke in:

Since Toju was small he has been a dutiful son and has never opposed his mother's wishes. When his mother interceded on Shinsuke's behalf, Toju accepted the sincerity of his desire and allowed him to study with him.42

The main weaknesses of the story are that it does not consider the historical period at all and the portrayal of the philosopher is used only to teach moral values - mainly respect for, and obedience to parents.

These two series were so popular that the publisher Hakubunkan began another called Shisen Nihon Gaishi (New Japanese History) (1892)63 with the same authors that wrote the stories for Katei Kyoiku Rekishi Dokuhon, Ochiai and Onakamura. These books were described by the author as history books for children and as Ochiai said they were written to teach children the origin of the royal family and to cultivate the spirit of Japan.44 The
authors mentioned famous historical events and people but distorted them to fit in with their overall theme; for example, if a famous person had opposed an emperor he was depicted as evil. There is no significant difference between these works and the historically-related fiction of the period except that they were described and distributed as factual history books.

In 1896 the same publisher, Hakubunkan, started *Nihon Rekishi So* (Japanese Historical stories) a series of twenty four volumes written as children's history books by Owada Takeki. This series also emphasized ideas which supported government policies, especially the virtue of loyalty and the benevolence of the emperor. For example in Volume 21 there were two stories called *Shogitai* (A Group of Shogi) and *Byakkotai* (A Group of Byakko), which featured groups of young samurais whose masters supported Shogun Tokugawa (the ruler overthrown before the Meiji Restoration). These stories were unusual among pre-war stories in that the author did not denounce these samurai for fighting against the emperor, but only showed them as misguided and praised them for their loyalty to their masters. Furthermore he emphasized the emperor's kindness in forgiving their masters and treating them generously. Whilst the historical events portrayed are basically true, there is no evidence to support the idea that the emperor personally had anything to do with the pardoning of the supporters of Tokugawa. The author presents this as historical fact in order to create a good image of the emperor and at the same time emphasizes the value of loyalty to one's masters. These two publications, *Shinsen Nihon Gaishi* and *Nihon Reikishi So*, were the most popular children's history series until the 1920s.

During the same period, 1890 to the 1920s, Iwaya Sazanami, who was the most important children's novelist, wrote many historically-related stories. In 1897 he started a book series called *Nihon Otogibanashi*
Old Stories)⁴⁹ of which twenty four volumes were published. These stories were based on legends and historical events and famous figures and served mostly to emphasize the importance of traditional ethics. For example, Hiyoshimaru (1898),⁵⁰ tells the story of the childhood of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a samurai ruler of Japan in the sixteenth century. The story tells how Hideyoshi overcomes his humble origins through hard work, wisdom and courage and becomes the ruler of Japan. At the end of the story he dies whilst invading Korea. Iwaya uses Hideyoshi to demonstrate traditional virtues, including the nationalistic virtue of conquering other countries.

Iwaya's way of writing gives a very biased view of Hideyoshi and his deeds. For example, his failure to capture Korea is lamented:

When he became ruler of Japan he made plans to invade Korea and turn it into a tributary state. However, regrettably he died before the invasion was completed.⁵¹ Later, Iwaya, makes Hideyoshi out to have been a uniquely successful ruler:

I wonder if anybody achieved as much in their lifetime as Hideyoshi. This is why Koreans, Chinese and Westerners are amazed when they hear the story of his life.⁵²

These stereotyped views of how great leaders should behave were used to influence readers. The author says little about the historical period and does not describe its effect on his protagonist. History has no significance to the story other than providing the background.

These early stories set the pattern for almost all the historically-related works written before 1945, the main characteristics being the neglect of historical aspects and of character development and an emphasis on officially-approved virtues and achievements. An example of later works is the popular series of books Shonen Rekishi Monogatari (Children's Historical Stories) written in twelve volumes by Hojo Ryoiku Kenkyu Kai.⁵³ In these stories, comparison is made between the merits of
Japanese and foreign emperors and princes. In each case the virtues of the Japanese figure is contrasted with the vices of the foreigner. For example, in Volume Seven Emperor Nintoku is contrasted with Emperor Nero - the former being praised for his generosity and kindness and the latter criticized for his wickedness. Each case was deliberately chosen to emphasize the superiority of the Japanese nation and the royal family.

Many of the stories in Shonen Kurabu, previously discussed in Section 4.2 were history-related. One of the earliest examples was the serialized story Shinshu Tenmakyo (The Divine Land of Tenmakyo) (1925 to 1928) by Yoshikawa Eiji. This story was important for Shonen Kurabu in that its popularity encouraged the editor to include many more historical stories. The author wrote about Inamaru, the last son of one of the leading samurai rulers in the early fifteenth century. After his family is completely defeated, Inamaru has to hide from his enemies and to make a new life for himself. Through his experiences he comes to appreciate the folly of fighting for power. The tone of the story is somewhat didactic and continually shows reverence for the emperor: for example

"Our loyalty is not to our county of Kai but to Japan. We should look up to our heavenly Emperor and should try to help ordinary people." The author succeeds in reproducing the atmosphere of the period but the historical setting is not important to the story. As Kan Tadamichi says:

"Unlike his later works, it does not show any profound meaning of history because he does not deal with the search for personal fulfilment or the actual circumstances of history. However, the lightness of story telling was new to children at that time." As Kan points out, the author used the historical background to provide the unusual atmosphere of the story, which, together with the high quality of Japanese, attractive characterization and exciting, adventurous plot
made it extremely popular with children. Following the success of this story Shonen Kurabu encouraged the production of other long stories aimed at entertaining readers. An example is Kakubeijishi (A Street Tumbler) by Osaragi Jiro which was serialized in 1927 and 1928.57

Nationalistic ideas were emphasized in most children's historical stories in this period. For example, in a story written about the Roman Empire by Murakawa Kenko which appeared in the popular series Nihon Jido Bunko 1927 to 1932, the following message appeared:

If we were as strong as the Romans were when they built their Empire we would never be defeated even by our strongest enemy. Children! Let us be strong Japanese!59

In an earlier book in the same series, author Fujita Toyohachi, encouraged children to support Japan's expansionism; for example with regard to China and India:

These are old countries which used to have advanced civilizations. However now they are treated badly by Western countries:... Japan, which is very powerful compared with these western countries must not desert her Asian friends.60

Later works such as Rekishi Dowa Gensho (Historical Tales (1929) by Hayashi Isamu,61 Nihon Kenkoku Monogatori (A Tale of the Founding of Japan) (1937)62 by Kikuchi Kan and Nihonjin wa Doredaka no Koto o Shitekitaka (What Have the Japanese Accomplished in the Past?)63 (1943) by Nishimura Shinji emphasized even more the themes of loyalty to the emperor and country as the spirit of nationalism was whipped up in the years leading up to and during the Second World War. By then children's stories were nothing more than vehicles used to encourage children to fight for their country and dedicate their lives to the emperor.

Children's historical stories written by authors of the Akai Tori and proletarian literature schools suffered from faults similar to the above "popular" works. In the magazine Akai Tori many historical stories appeared. However, although they refrained from glorifying
warriors and the royal family they still put priority on the teaching of morals. For example in Otsune no Kata (Lady Otsune)\textsuperscript{64} (1919) author Morita Sohei emphasizes obedience as the most important quality of women. The story is set in the Edo Period but the author does not show anything of the period in his story, which could have been set in any time. Even in the few stories where morals are not emphasized other aspects are neglected. For example in Genji no Hataage (Genji goes to the War) (1919)\textsuperscript{65} by Kojima Masajiro twelfth century events are depicted, but they are shown as a chronicle with no real plot and no development of the character's thoughts and feelings. In another example, Ito Keisuke no Hanashi (A Tale of Ito Keisuke) (1922)\textsuperscript{66} author Mori Senzo describes the efforts of a famous medical practitioner to introduce western medical science to Japan in the Edo Period. Again it is merely a description of events, there is no plot or character development. Basically, the historical stories of Akai Tori suffered from the same problem as the general stories - they were intended to convey the author's moral values and an overconcentration on this aspect resulted in the neglect of other elements such as an accurate reflection of the historical period, character development and interesting plots.

Historical stories provided by authors of the proletarian literature school were no better. These authors overemphasized their social opinions and neglected other aspects. For example, in Inaba no Jinushi (A Landlord of Inaba) (1929)\textsuperscript{67} author Sakanashi Mitsuo tells a story of how Okuminushi, a mythical hero, captures territory and gives it to his emperor and how this results in the oppression of the peasants who work that land. The author does not attempt to realistically show life or events in the historical period, he is only interested in demonstrating how past events can be related to current social lessons.
To summarize, none of the historically-related stories written in this period from 1868 to 1945 can be classed as historical fiction using the criteria established in Chapter 2. The historical period is not generally fundamental to the stories or accurately depicted. Beliefs and attitudes are not shown, characters are not developed and life is not realistically portrayed. The stories are all little more than vehicles for authors' opinions - either reinforcement of traditional ethical values or government policies; or, in the case of the Akai Tori and proletarian literature schools, opposition to those values or policies.

4.6 Conclusion

The major part of children's literature during the period 1868 to 1945 can be broadly classed as popular fiction. The first influential author was Iwaya Sazanami who produced many stories between 1891 and 1910. However, his desire to provide imaginative stories for children was restricted by public opinion and his works ended up as moralistic stories which had plenty of humour but lacked any portrayal of characters' feelings. Following Iwaya, book series such as Tachikawa Bunko and Shonen Kurabu became extremely popular, the latter right up to 1945. These stories stressed traditional ethics and action but lacked literary qualities such as interesting plots or character development. In addition Shonen Kurabu served as pro-emperor, pro-war propaganda for most of the period. Between 1941 and 1945 the government controlled all children's literature to ensure that children were brought up to support and fight for their country.

Two groups of writers set out to create stories with different ideas to those shown in popular fiction discussed above. The Akai Tori school of authors attempted to improve the quality of children's literature and children's own creativity. Improvements in the latter were achieved
to some degree through the publishing of selected examples of children's compositions, poems, paintings and songs. Particular success was achieved with regard to children's songs which became much simpler and more lyrical. However, the stories written for these magazines were too short, lacked proper plots, were too idealistic and showed only upper and middle-class children, with whom the vast majority of readers could not identify. Despite the beautiful Japanese used in these stories, the combination of these faults with the high price of the magazines meant that few children actually read them. The other group of authors, the proletarian literature school, created stories focussing on social problems aimed at raising the consciousness of children, in particular the vast majority who were from working-class families. However they overemphasized their social theories and neglected to provide entertaining stories and interesting characters with the result that most children did not enjoy reading their works. In addition their publications were strictly censored and often banned.

After the first historically-related children's stories were published in 1891 they became very popular. Their early popularity was probably due to a desire by the Japanese people, encouraged by the government, to re-establish pride in their identity following many years in which they were told that western culture was superior.

The first decade of children's history stories set a pattern which was broadly unchanged until 1945. The stories were generally either chronicles or descriptions of historical events or depictions of the virtues and achievements of famous figures. Historically-related stories of the Akai Tori and proletarian literature schools did not differ greatly from this pattern, except that the latter depicted the wickedness of famous figures rather than their virtues. None of the
stories written in the period can be classed as historical fiction using the criteria laid down in Chapter 2. The historical period is not generally fundamental to the stories or accurately shown. Life is not realistically portrayed, characters are not developed and beliefs and attitudes are not shown. Stories serve basically for the expression of authors' opinions - either to reinforce traditional ethical values or government policies or to oppose them. This is undoubtedly due to the atmosphere in Japan during those years - an atmosphere of strict government control and widely held traditional ethical values in which liberality and freedom of expression were highly restricted.
Notes and References


3. Ibid., pp.9-48. Here the author analyses children's books and discusses adults' attitudes toward children at that time.


5. Ibid., p.12.


10. Ibid., p.76.


12. Ibid., p.17.


16. Ibid., p.10.

18 Ibid., p.3


20 This article was written in a postscript to the November 1924 edition of the magazine *Shokokumin Bunka*, by one of the editors whose name was not given.


30 Okawara Hiroshi, "Kusuribin to Hon", *Shonen Senki*, December, 1929.


32 Kan, *Nihon no Jido Bungaku*, p. 214. See also pp. 157-234 where the author follows the development of proletarian literature for children.

34 Kawasaki Daiji, "Yujo", *Taiyo o Kakomu Kodomotachi*, Ibid.


37 Ibid., p.103.


42 Murai, *Omi Seijin*, p. 128.


47 Ibid., pp. 77-84.


51 Ibid., p. 51.

52 Ibid., p. 53.


55 Ibid., p. 496.


64 Morita Sohei, "Otsune no Kata", *Akai Tori* 2, 5, (1919).

65 Kojima Masajiro, "Genji no Hataage", *Akai Tori* 2, 5, (1919).

66 Mori Senzo "Ito Keisuken no Hanashi", *Akai Tori* 8, 1, (1922).

67 Sakanashi Mitsuo, "Inaba no Jinushi", *Shonen Senki* 9, (1929).
5. BACKGROUND TO JAPANESE SOCIETY AFTER 1945

5.1 Introduction

Japan's defeat in 1945 and subsequent occupation by the United States of America brought profound changes to Japanese society which affected all parts of life including literature. This chapter sets out the events and influences between 1945 and 1983 which are most relevant to the development of children's literature in general and to children's historical fiction in particular, and thus provides a background to Chapters 6 and 8 in which these topics are discussed.

Firstly the principle relevant events during the period are set out briefly in Section 5.2 to provide a framework for the discussion of specific influences.

Secondly, Section 5.3 examines briefly the main influences on children's lives insofar as they relate to the development of children's literature in general, and children's historical fiction in particular.

Thirdly, Section 5.4 looks at the improvements in historical research and analysis brought about by the introduction of academic freedom.

Fourthly, Section 5.5 examines the growth of historical knowledge during the period and the principal reasons for that growth.

Finally, Section 5.6 deals with the changes in education after 1945, in particular with regard to history. Two major points are examined in detail: the government authorization of history textbooks and the treatment of myths.

5.2 Important Events and Influences

Following its defeat in 1945 Japan was occupied by the United States of America. Preparations were made for Japan to become a democracy and in 1947 a new constitution was signed which guaranteed popular sovereignty and human rights, and declared that Japan would never again go to war. The
armed forces were officially disbanded and the emperor took no further role in government. In 1949 after a long struggle a communist government took power in China. In 1950 and 1951 the Korean War was fought, terminating in the northern part of Korea becoming a communist country. Following these events the United States encouraged the Japanese government to adopt an anti-communist role in the Far East, to suppress communism in Japan and re-arm for defensive purposes. This policy was confirmed by the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty which became effective in 1952 following which the occupation formally ended, although America retained military bases in Japan, notably the island of Okinawa. In 1960 the two countries reaffirmed Japan's position as America's anti-communist outpost in the Far East with the signing of the U.S. Japan Mutual Security Treaty. There was considerable popular discontent in the 1960's against this treaty, from the intelligentsia, students and many working-class people. A strong campaign was mounted to persuade the government not to renew the treaty in 1970. However, the treaty was renewed and with this failure, the public lost faith in their ability to change society and many people lost interest in politics.

During the Korean War in 1950 and 1951 the Japanese economy took off and continued to expand rapidly through the following years until by the 1970s Japan had become a major world economic power. With the benefit of this economic success, the people's disillusionment with their ability to influence their government was assuaged with the satisfaction of material desires.

5.3 The Situation of Children

Japanese children were both physically and mentally affected by their country's participation in the Second World War. As the following figures
demonstrate children deteriorated physically, mostly due to the shortage of food.

Table 1  Average Weights and Heights of Japanese twelve year olds in 1937 and 1946

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1937</th>
<th>1947</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average weights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boys</td>
<td>29.8 kg.</td>
<td>27.9 kg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls</td>
<td>30.4 kg.</td>
<td>27.1 kg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average heights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boys</td>
<td>134.7 cm.</td>
<td>129.9 cm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls</td>
<td>136.6 cm.</td>
<td>130.0 cm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Toshi Kokumin Gakko in 1946.³

By 1946 the average height and weight of twelve-year olds had fallen to the equivalent of eleven year olds in 1937. This deterioration was experienced more or less equally throughout Japan.⁴ In addition children were emotionally affected by the loss of loved ones and the traumas of bombing and evacuation.

At the same time many children were bewildered by the changes caused by the war. Whereas before the war discipline and authority were wielded harshly and traditional ethics strictly enforced, after 1945 adults became more permissive. In a composition written when twelve years old, Sato Tozaburo stated the following about his experience of this change as a ten year old:

The war ended in August, 1945. We were in fourth grade at school. Whereas we used to be frightened of the teachers because they hit us, they now suddenly became gentle. It seemed so peculiar to us. From this time the phrase 'Katte da be' [we can do what we want] became popular. Some of us smoked our father's cigarettes and when we were reprimanded by adults we ran away shouting 'Katte da be'.⁵

As demonstrated by this quotation, many children reacted to the weakening of authority in school and in the home by rebelling. Not only was authority weakened but also the traditional values deeply
embedded within adults and children were to be rejected almost overnight and new values adopted, although in many families it was impossible for adult values and attitudes towards children to change so abruptly. Children felt the change first in the school, where teachers had to adjust their teaching, attitude and materials to the new policy. For example, immediately after the war, before new textbooks became available, teachers and students had to paint out with black ink those parts of the old textbooks which were associated with emperor-centred absolutism.

This was a shocking thing for students and even more so for teachers. Some teachers resigned because they could not bear the knowledge that they had taught inaccurate history and had encouraged children to support the war; and now they had to offer the opposite opinion to children. There was debate amongst teachers as to whether history should be taught at all under the circumstances, although many accepted that it was not possible to understand present society unless they examined history.

The new generation of teachers, however, earnestly taught democracy to children. Nishio Kanji, the philosopher, wrote the following about one of his teachers who taught him in 1948 at junior high school:

The teacher said that teachers should not teach students in a pedantic way as happened in pre-war schools; teachers and students were equal.

Nishio gave the example of orders being changed to requests in the carrying out of exercises. "Answer questions" became "Let us consider the questions". In addition to the adoption of more democratic behaviour teachers were told that they should respect the individuality of students.

The confusion caused by the weakening of authority and the abrupt change of ethics increased the sense of inferiority and lack of confidence
felt by the Japanese after defeat in the Second World War. By the 1960's however, self confidence had been recovered following the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. Whereas before 1945 families could spare little money for their children, they were now much better off and could afford to look after their material needs.

Despite the aforementioned changes, many adults still clung to one traditional idea - that childhood was nothing more than preparation for adulthood. Most parents believed that children must dedicate their childhood to study in order to achieve success in the very competitive society that existed (and still exists) in Japan. Whilst the instilling of ethics into children was not as strong as it used to be before 1945, it was still present to the degree that many adults believed that children's literature should be didactic.

5.4 Improvements in Historical Research and Analysis

With the new constitution in 1947 the Japanese acquired academic freedom. Feelings of relief that the war was over were mixed with a desire in intellectual quarters to reflect upon pre-war Japanese society. Before 1945 historians had not been allowed to portray history in any way other than that laid down by the government. Historians who disagreed kept their views to themselves. After the war historians began to look at their research to see if it was scientific and if it had some relationship to present society. In addition some historians set out to find causes of the war from analyses of pre-war historical developments.

With the release from government control and the guarantee of academic freedom the study of history improved in several ways. In the first place, historical research began to cover all known periods from the primitive ages to present day. For example historians began to study freely for the first time the Ashikaga Period from the fifth century A.D.
In addition, historians began to use the results of the research of archaeologists who also now had more freedom. Through this deeper research historians were able to show that Japan had not originated by divine intervention but by a normal pattern of human domination of stronger groups over weaker.

Secondly, historians began to study for the first time historic relationships with other countries, taking into account the research of historians from those countries, in particular those of China and Korea with which Japan has many aspects of ancient history in common.

Thirdly, different ways of analysing history were adopted or developed. Of these two in particular are important in demonstrating the change in historical studies: the Marxist viewpoint and the common people viewpoint, - neither of which could be used before 1945.

Since 1945, the Marxist viewpoint has been used by the majority of Japanese historians in their analysis. This viewpoint sees human history as proceeding through a limited number of defined stages before reaching the ultimate goal of communism. The agents of this historical development are the social classes defined by reference to their relations to means of production. Many history books have been written from a Marxist viewpoint after the war. For example, Showashi (History of Showa era) (1955) by Toyama Shigeki, Imai Seiichi and Fujiwara Akira, used this viewpoint in its focus on the period from 1927 to 1955 and its attempts to find the reasons for Japan's entry into the war. In the preface to the first edition, the authors say:

We attempted to clarify the reasons why we were involved in and carried away by the war and why we could not stop it, in order to compare the situation then with that of the present age.

This book demonstrates not only the change represented by the use of different methods of analysis but also the freedom after 1945 to examine subjects related to the Second World War. The book wascriticized by other
historians for overconcentrating on the political, diplomatic and economic aspects of the period and neglecting the human and social sides, and was rewritten by the authors to take their criticism into account. The book rose to fourth position on the bestsellers list in 1958.

After the Security Treaty crisis in 1960 an important group of historians responded to contradictions in post-war politics and society by developing a new approach to modern Japanese history. This approach focuses on the history of ordinary people, a form of history which has also been developing in Western countries over the past thirty years particularly in the field of family history. Professor Gluck writes of these historians:

Inevitably drawn to the period that most closely preceded, produced and vexed their own, they concentrated on the century before the Pacific War. They set out to re-examine Japan's modern experience and to do so in their own way. Rejecting Marx and modernization theory as useful methodological guides these scholars began a search for what they call an internal-indigenous-approach to modern Japanese history. They work largely outside the confines of the more conventional subjects of political, diplomatic and institutional history; for them, the focus of history interest is "the people" (minshu), and the history they hope to write, "people's history" (minshushi).

This long quotation sums up well the origins of the new focus on Japanese history - a focus on the common people. Prior to the work of these historians most ordinary Japanese people did not imagine that their forefathers had played an important role in their country's history. The main opposition of intellectuals, students and working class people against the Security Treaty in the 1960's was the biggest popular movement against authority in recent history. Through this action people became more conscious of the authority of the state and the importance of maintaining democratic rights. Interest was aroused in the role of common people in history and the effect of history on them.

Who did these historians regard as common people? Professor Haga
Noburo defines them as those who are ruled and Professor Saito Hiroshi as the lower class - the majority of the population in any period.\textsuperscript{26} High-level government officials, big land owners, capitalists, high military officers are all excluded.\textsuperscript{27} On the whole, from this viewpoint, famous heroes and rulers are not considered as important elements of history. For example the peasants' revolution in the Edo Period is examined from the peasants' viewpoint - not from that of the rulers.

This idea of the "people's history" has been well accepted by ordinary people, many of whom have begun to study their family or village history, with the encouragement of minshūji historians such as Irokawa Daikichi.\textsuperscript{28} Many writers of both adults' and children's historical fiction do much historical research for their stories and many current children's historical novelists have concentrated their research on common people's history.

5.5 The Growth of Historical Knowledge

Prior to 1945 only a few people such as historians had any historical knowledge beyond the limited distorted version taught in schools. After 1945, historians became aware of the importance of the diffusion of reliable historical knowledge amongst ordinary people in order to overcome this ignorance and began to write history books for popular reading. In contrast to the pre-war history books, these provided well-researched versions of Japanese history written from differing viewpoints.

With the production of these books in the late 1950s and the accompanying promotion by publishers wishing to expand the market for them, popular interest began to increase. One of the first popular history books was \textit{Nihon no Rekishi} (Japanese History)\textsuperscript{29} published by Yomiuri Shimbunsha as a series starting in 1959. This
series became a bestseller. As *Shuppan Nenkan* (the Japanese publications year book) stated in 1959, the boom in history books had begun. Ozaki Hokki diagnosed the reason for the success of *Nihon no Rikishi* as being due mainly to an upsurge in people's interest in history, especially amongst people who were educated before 1945 and who wished to obtain a new understanding of their history. Furthermore, history was no longer regarded as simply the story of the past but was seen to have relevance for the present. This type of serialized history book continued to be published and has sold well. Another example is a series with the same title, *Nihon no Rekishi* (Japanese History) published in 1965 by Chuokoronsha which was also very popular. In addition history periodical magazines began to be published, notably *Rekishi Dokuhon* (Book of History) (1960), *Rekishi to Jinbutsu* (History and People) (1971) and *Rekishi to Tabi* (History and Travel) (1974).

In the 1960's historical fiction also became widely popular, partly due to the influence of television. In the early 1960's many historical programmes began to appear on television. For instance, *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* (N.H.K.) the public broadcasting organization began an annual series of historical dramas in 1963, one drama being completed each year. The books on which the dramas are based were also very popular; some of them became bestsellers. The following list shows the years in which these books were successful and the places that they achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Place in annual list</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryoma ga iku</td>
<td>Shiba Ryotaro</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten to chi</td>
<td>Kannonji Chogoro</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haru no Sakamichi</td>
<td>Yamaoka Sohachi</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunitori Monogatari</td>
<td>Shiba Ryotaro</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 contd....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Place in annual list</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kashin</td>
<td>Shiba Ryotaro</td>
<td>21st</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogon no Hibi</td>
<td>Shiroyama Saburo</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hojo Masako</td>
<td>Nagai Michiko</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Shuppan Nenkam

The above seven historical novels were widely read not only because of the influence of the television programmes but also because they were well-written, interesting books.

Further evidence of the success of historical fiction since 1947 can be gleaned from the reading surveys conducted annually by Mainichi Shinbun Sha (Mainichi Newspapers). In 1982, for example, six thousand people over the age of sixteen were selected at random for the survey. Five historical novelists appeared amongst the most popular ten authors selected: Matsumoto Seicho was first, Shiba Ryotaro second, Yoshikawa Eiji fourth, Yamaoka Sohachi eighth and Yamamoto Shugero ninth. Moreover five historical novels were amongst the twenty most popular books of the year chosen: the highest, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1950-1967) by Yamoka was the second most popular. Furthermore four historical novels appeared amongst the top thirty most impressive books ever read: Tokugawa Ieyasu was third, Miyamoto Musashi (1949) by Yoshikawa Eiji was fifth, Sangokushi (1946) by Yoshikawa eighth and Ryoma ga iku (1962-1966) by Shiba twenty-eighth.

In every year from 1963 to the present there have been historical novels among the bestsellers and it is fair to say that there has been a historical fiction boom as an aspect of the history boom. The success of historical fiction since the war is due principally to two main factors: the greatly improved quality of stories and the increase in public demand.
for historical works.

After the war the quality of historical fiction improved enormously. Whereas most pre-war stories were stereotyped, moralistic depictions of famous heroes with no plots and no accurate descriptions of historical events and places, post-war authors chose varying themes and plots and often portrayed the lives of ordinary people. They showed historic events and places realistically and demonstrated the relationship between the past and the present. Ozaki analysed this improvement of historical fiction and thought that it was due not only to the release from the pre-war emperor-dominated view of history but also to this realization of many authors that there is a relationship between the past and the present; that history does not merely involve the past. 42

The works of two important novelists, Yoshikawa Eiji and Shiba Ryotaro exemplify these improvements in quality.

Yoshikawa Eiji is said to be the national writer of Japan because of his popular historical novels. Before 1945 he wrote many popular children’s stories set in the past, which have been mentioned in the previous chapter. However, in these stories the historical setting was not significant and they mainly concentrated on preaching virtues such as loyalty to an emperor. Nevertheless his stories, such as Shinshu Tennmakyo (1925-1928) 43 were popular with children. However after the war he eliminated these weaknesses and produced some great historical novels. He tried to show the search for personal fulfilment, for example in Miyamoto Musashi, and the continuity of time, for example in Shin Heike Monogotari 44 (1950-1957). Yoshikawa did considerable research into the historical periods portrayed and consulted many historians. 45 The carrying out of their own historical research has now become a feature of most historical novelists' work.

Shiba Ryotaro, another extremely successful historical novelist only
started writing after the war. In contrast to pre-war authors he showed protagonists who do not allow themselves to be ruled or enslaved by traditional attitudes, they are practical and independent. An example of this is Shiba's *Royona ga Iku* mentioned previously in this section. Shiba recognized the danger of author's bias and tried to show differing opinions and effects with regard to events portrayed. Kano points out that Shiba is more interested in periods than in heroes and that his writing could only exist as such in the post-war period since pre-war stories needed heroes to show traditional virtues. The success of post-war writers such as Yoshikawa and Shiba is due not only to the great improvement in the quality of stories but also to the increased public interest in historical works and a greater awareness of qualitative values among readers.

By the 1960s ordinary people had become increasingly interested in their country's history. Immediately after the war, they were too busy trying to survive to think much about the past and in addition many people were confused, since values which had been deeply impressed upon them before and during the war - such as the god-like worship of the emperor - had been suddenly changed after Japan's defeat. Even though these values were outwardly changed, the conflict with the deep-set values embedded firmly in their minds caused anger and confusion in many people. Most people found it easier to accept the western culture brought to Japan as a result of the American occupation and to try to forget completely the past and their feelings of shame in the actions of their government before and during the war.

However, by the 1960s the rejection of the past and sense of inferiority in Japanese culture had begun to wear off. A national social survey carried out every few years demonstrates an increasing
recovery of confidence, as shown in this table:

Table 3. Comparison of Japanese attitudes to themselves and to Westerners (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese people are:</th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Inferior</th>
<th>No different</th>
<th>Cannot generalise</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Institute of Statistical Mathematics, Kokuminsei Chosa [Survey of the national character].

This survey shows that whereas twenty eight percent of people had thought themselves inferior to Westerners in 1953, by 1968 that figure had fallen to eleven percent. Moreover, by 1968 nearly fifty percent of the people considered themselves superior. As Fukutake points out, national self-confidence had returned in full measure. The success of the economic recovery was undoubtedly a major cause. Immediately after the war in 1945 Japan had no economic strength left and rapid recovery was not expected. However after the Korean War (1950 to 1951) the economy improved rapidly. By 1955 the economic situation was better than it had been in the years 1934 to 1936, the best years up to 1945. Thus by the 1950s, with the recovered confidence in their values and culture, Japanese people were ready to think about their history objectively. The debate over the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan which seemed to contradict Japan's role as a nation that had totally rejected war, helped to focus interest on Japan's past involvement in wars and the reasons for such involvement.

The success of history books and historical novels since 1945 and the improved historical accuracy portrayed indicates that Japanese people have in general been provided with and have absorbed a fairly realistic view of
Japanese history and an enjoyable range of good quality historical fiction. However most of these works have been aimed at adults and as the following sections indicate, the situation of children, at least with regard to history books, has been different.

5.6 History Education

5.6.1. Changes in educational policy

After the end of the war in 1945, education underwent a major change. Ethics, geography and history lessons were quickly suspended and in December 1945 textbooks on those subjects were withdrawn by order of the Occupation Army. With the signing of the new constitution in 1947 the government set about building a democratic society. A new law, the Kyoiku Kihon Ho (Basic Education Law) was passed in 1947. It said the following:

The purpose of education is to complete characters. Education should be expected to create a whole nation which loves truth and justice, respects the value of individuality, esteems work and responsibility and possesses an independent spirit; in order to create a peaceful state and society.

This statement shows the great progress made in education policy compared with before 1945 when education was intended to turn out people who were unquestioningly obedient to authority and loyal to the emperor, and who placed respect for the family and group above individual values.

At primary schools history became a part of social studies designed to teach children these concepts of democracy and peace.

Pre-war history teaching was reviewed and its faults pointed out by historians and educationalists. Prior to 1945 most historians had been indifferent to history teaching and teachers had lacked independence; however now they took a leading role in history education and tried to ensure that it was based strictly on known fact and not influenced by government policy.

The contents of history textbooks were completely rewritten and now
started from the earliest known period and included results of archaeological research. All those involved with the production of these textbooks regarded it as very important that events should not be distorted. For example, the first post-war state textbook on history, *Kuni no Ayumi* (*Our Nation's Path*) attempts to show an objective picture of Japan's involvement in the Second World War. For instance it says:

Japanese people suffered terribly from the long war. Military leaders suppressed the people, launched a stupid war and were responsible for this disaster.

The Ministry of Education was apparently in agreement with this attitude of independent objectivity until the 1950s when controversy began in connection with the authorization of history textbooks and the use and treatment of myths in history teaching.

### 5.6.2. Textbook authorization

In Japan since 1945 all textbooks for primary, junior high and high schools have had to be officially approved. Since the 1950s when the government, with American approval, adopted a militaristic, anti-communist stance, this approval has not always been given, in particular when books are believed to be over-critical of government actions.

Several historians and educationalists have argued that this system has been used to distort the view of history given in schools. Ienaga Saburo, a well-known historian who had a textbook rejected, opposed the authorization system in the Tokyo High Court in 1965 on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. He won his case but the Ministry of Education appealed and final judgement has not yet been given. The Ministry of Education claimed that this system was not unconstitutional and that it was the government's responsibility to ensure that neutral ideas were taught uniformly throughout schools. Ienaga, however, argued that the principle of the Ministry was reactionary and he explained his view of
their position as follows:

The situation changed drastically in the 1950s. In the 1953 Ikeda-Robertson conference, the United States and Japan agreed to promote militarism among the Japanese people in a bid to increase public support for rearmament. The Ministry of Education did a volte face on the official interpretation of the war. I personally experienced that change of policy. In 1963 the ministry refused to approve a high school history textbook I had written. A ministry textbook reviewer told me the book was unacceptable because it was too gloomy on the whole. He cited the illustrations as a case in point. There were pictures of the air raid destruction, of the atomic bomb and devastated Hiroshima, and of disabled veterans begging for money. I contested the decision in a lawsuit. During the trial, a government brief elaborated on the shortcomings of my manuscript. Certain phrases such as "The war was glorified as a 'holy cause" "atrocities by Japanese troops," and "reckless war" were objectionable because "These are excessively critical of Japan's position and actions in World War II and do not give students a proper understanding of this country's position and actions in the war".55

Ienaga was concerned that the government was reverting to the pre-war distortion of history which had played a part in getting public support for the Second World War. He also felt it his obligation, both as a historian and as a man who had experienced the war, to ensure that the truth be told.

The majority of rejected textbooks are in the field of social studies, which consists of geography and history. In history teaching, the ancient and post-Meiji Restoration periods have been the most sensitive. Aspects related to the former have been rejected if they cast doubt upon the divine origin of the royal family, and of the latter if they critically analyse areas such as emperor-centred absolutism, the Meiji Constitution, the Second World War, post-war society, the new constitution or the relationship with the United States of America.56 These are all crucial points of history which relate closely to the reasons for Japan's involvement in the Second World War and the after-effects of that war.

Dissatisfaction with this authorization system has caused
several historians, for example, Toyama Shigeki, to cease writing history textbooks, because they feel that their responsibility as historians does not allow them to distort the facts. However, the government control of textbooks through the authorization system has meant that school children do not always have the opportunity to read an objective view of history or to be presented with different viewpoints so that they can analyse and decide for themselves.

A particular area of debate in connection with the authorization of textbooks has been the use and treatment of myths and legends.

5.6.3. The treatment of myths

The use of myths to support the distorted view of history presented to the Japanese people before 1945 has been discussed in Chapter 3. In that chapter it was argued that Kojiki and Nihonshoki, two books containing collections of myths compiled in the eighth century AD which are thought to have been distorted at that time to show the divine origin of the royal family, were presented between 1868 and 1945 as historical evidence of this divine origin and used as justification of the expansion of Japan's empire.

After the war the Ministry of Education admitted that myths had been wrongly used before 1945 as accurate historical records and that the distinction between legend and fact should have been preserved. In 1951 the Ministry made the following recommendation about teaching history at junior high school level:

The students need to be taught to criticize myths and legends carefully; ancient society can not be known only through its myths and legends, and therefore scientific studies, such as archaeology and anthropology, are an important help in the understanding of history.58

By the late 1950s, with the government's adoption of a militaristic, anti-communist stance, the ministry's attitude had changed and the need
for careful criticism of myths was no longer emphasized. In 1958 the Ministry stated that it was desirable to use myths and legends in order to understand the thoughts and religious beliefs of ancient people. By 1968 the Ministry's attitude had gone a stage further and it announced that when studying early periods it was necessary to use myths and legends to understand the thoughts and religious beliefs and also the establishment of the nation state. Furthermore it recommended that teachers explain to pupils that these myths and legends were widely believed in ancient Japan and thus were an accurate reflection of the thoughts and beliefs of those times.

Primary schools were affected and in 1967 the Ministry announced that in order to improve the quality of history teaching in them, it should be based on myths and legends and famous historical figures. In 1968 another recommendation said that history should be taught mainly from the unification of the state in the fourth century A.D. with only a brief section on periods prior to that era. The intent of these recommendations appears to be to influence history teaching to show the divine origin of the state and royal family in the fourth century A.D. and the idealistic behaviour of famous historical figures in following periods. After a brief period of objective criticism immediately following the war the Ministry of Education had changed back to the pre-1945 policy of using history as a means of instilling nationalistic ideas into children and using the historically doubtful myths and legends of Kojiki and Nihonshoki as evidence to support those ideas.

An examination of current history textbooks for primary schools shows the degree of revival of the pre-war treatment of myths as historical fact. For example in the textbook published by Tokyo Shoseki, Kojiki and Nihonshoki are dealt with in the section which covers the unification and creation of the state in the fourth century A.D. The
book describes the myths as old stories which say that the descendants of God came to ancient Japan, unified it and created the state with the emperor as its head. Most historians disagree with this form of presentation and agree that Kojiki and Nihonshoki should be dealt with in the period covering the eighth century A.D. on the grounds that they reflect better the thoughts of the time when they were written rather than those of the period in which they were set. In another textbook, publisher Chukyo Shuppan recounts the myths in which God decides that his descendants will become the royal family and govern Japan. Three other textbooks, by Kyoiku Shuppan, Gakko Tosho, and Osaka Shoseki are a little more cautious, saying for example that the myths were collected together in the eighth century A.D. by the royal family and that they give a clue to the thoughts of the aristocracy of that period. However, three textbooks, the Tokyo Shoseki, Chukyo Shuppan and Osaka Shoseki versions, make no comment on the doubtful veracity of the myths, despite the opinion of most historians that this should be clearly stated.

In addition it is interesting to note that three of these textbooks give the story of Yamato Takeru no Mikoto mentioned in Chapter 3.3, as an example of the myths. As stated in that section, this myth was used by the pre-war government as a symbol of the national spirit with its ideal of loyalty to the royal family.

Many historians, educationalists, teachers and parents have criticized the use in this way of myths and legends in history textbooks and are concerned about the repetition of the way in which distorted history was used before 1945 to win support for Japan's participation in the Second World War. For example, a survey of 107 primary school teachers carried out by the writer of this dissertation in 1984 showed that 33 percent of them were concerned about distortions in history textbooks. A further 11 percent said that they were not concerned, but only because they
taught their own view of history, not that shown in the textbooks. 43 percent merely said that the debate about historical accuracy was of little relevance to their teaching which probably indicates that they also teach their own view of history.\textsuperscript{70}

Some critics believe that myths and legends should not be used at all in history teaching. In ancient times myths and legends were the main means of transmitting history and as Anna Davin points out, history and story were the same thing, although stories also served to present political, cultural and religious ideas.\textsuperscript{71} Myths and legends cannot be regarded as factual. Even though the events on which they are based may well have occurred it is likely that the timing, placing and other details have been changed, either for the political, cultural or religious reasons given above or for the embellishment of the stories as they are passed from person to person.

The use of myths in history teaching not only runs the risk of introducing untrue elements into a factual subject but also may spoil the literary value of the myths by dealing with them out of context. As Elizabeth Cooke writes:

\begin{quote}
Since myths and legends are so tenuously attached to historical times and geographical places, it is usually misleading to bring them into a history or geography lesson, or a 'project' on Greece or Scandinavia. Mythology is storytelling, and the genius of the story teller is rebuked by the genius of the historian. It spoils the story of Odysseus to make it an introduction to a study of 'real' eighth-century armour. The one natural point of contact is the historical date of writer or listener.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

This has happened with Japanese myths which, due to the distorted way in which they have been used, have rarely been enjoyed by Japanese people for their literary value.

The myths and legends of Kojiki and Nihonshoki are believed to have literary quality and to be comparable with ancient European myths.
Translator Donald Philippi has said:

The importance of the Kojiki as a work of literature - or more precisely, as a work having elements of literary value - was recognized as never before; and scholars realised that the accounts in Kojiki and Nihonshoki were comparable in many ways with the myths and legends of the ancient Greeks and Romans.73

This view is supported by Miriam Cox, who finds similarities between the myths of Greece and those of Japan even though they did not emerge from a common pool of ancient Aryan beliefs.74

After 1960, many of the myths of Kojiki and Nihonshoki were retold and published as stories for children, partly following the increasing government pressure to use myths in schools and partly because of heightened public interest as part of the history boom. Unfortunately some of the original literary quality was lost in the retelling of the stories.75 Whilst many of these myths can provide good stories for children and are a rich source of imagination and creativity, some historians are concerned about their publication, even if they are only considered as imaginative literature. They believe that the use of these myths as material for Japanese lessons or merely as interesting stories gives children an idea that their contents are correct. Since in history lessons they are often not informed to the contrary they may grow up with these ideas embedded in their minds.76

Due to the distortion and misuse of myths, both before and to a lesser degree after the war, they have not been widely read for pleasure in an unadulterated form. This represents a loss to the Japanese people of an important part of their cultural history. Since much of the original literary quality has been lost in the retold versions published for children in the 1960's, children are also not able to enjoy this unique part of their cultural history. The importance of myths for children was stressed by Elizabeth Cook when she wrote about European children:
Children need to feel that the forests and shores of their own continent are haunted, and that they themselves inherit the great symbols of European culture, even more than they need to picture the gods and goddesses who live in the rainforest of Burma and the sacred rivers of India.\textsuperscript{7}

It is therefore important that the children of Japan also have access to their ancient myths in a form as close as possible to the original and that they are helped to understand that these stories are not necessarily true but that they nevertheless form a vital part of their cultural history.

Unfortunately the use of myths and legends since the 1950's has created a risk of giving children a limited and distorted view of history in just the same way as before 1945. Whilst the introduction of democracy and individualism into the schools after 1945 has been very beneficial the government has always attempted to control education through textbook authorization and influence over the curriculum.\textsuperscript{78}

5.7 Conclusion

Japan's defeat in 1945 and the occupation by, and subsequent strong influence of America, brought about profound changes in Japanese society. The first main change was the introduction in 1947 of constitutional guarantees of democracy, individual freedom and peace. The second was the adoption by the government of an anti-communist, militaristic policy in the 1950s.

Children were greatly affected by the Second World War, not only physically due to food shortages and emotionally due to the loss of loved ones and the traumas of bombing and evacuation, but also by the abrupt changes in values after the war ended. With the introduction of democracy and the rejection of imperial power, children were instructed to replace the traditional ethics of obedience to authority and respect for the social group with individualistic values. This change was introduced
quickly in education and soon permeated many homes, even eventually to those where parents clung to traditional values. Adults and children were confused. Not only were traditional values to be rejected and replaced by new ones but also the authority of teachers and parents over children was weakened.

With Japan's economic success, from the 1950's onwards families became better off and were able to provide materially for their children. Nevertheless the traditional ethic of hard work was maintained and now applied to studies. Parents felt that without studying hard, children would not achieve success in the competitive academic and business worlds, and without this success they would not achieve happiness. Childhood was still seen by many parents as preparation for adulthood, not a stage of life to be enjoyed in its own right. This attitude affected children's literature to the degree that books were preferred if they taught moral lessons.

Historical research and analysis benefited greatly from the academic freedom introduced after the war. Historians began to study all periods, including ancient times and used the conclusions of archaeologists and historians of other countries in their research. Different ways of analysing history were adopted, notably the Marxist and minshushi (common people's history) approaches. Furthermore historians examined critically pre- and post-war Japanese society, in particular to see the cause and effects of Japan's involvement in the Second World War.

The benefit of this improved research - a more objective and complete picture of Japanese history presented from different viewpoints - was made available to the Japanese public through television, history books and historical novels. By the 1960s, with economic success national pride returned and the desire to know about Japan's history increased. The history boom commenced. History books became regular bestsellers
and historical fiction of good literary quality also became widely popular. However, these books were aimed at, and to a large extent only reached, adults.

The introduction of anti-communism and the revival of militarism in the 1950's met with considerable popular opposition which came to a head in the 1960s. Nevertheless in the 1950's the government began to influence children's education, mainly through the system of textbook authorization. In particular, history textbooks which showed the divine origin of the state and royal family were preferred and books which openly criticized this belief or discussed actions of the government with regard to sensitive areas such as the emperor-centred absolutism in the period 1868-1945, or the Second World War, were rejected. Despite the disagreement of many teachers and historians the government has attempted to instil nationalistic ideas into children in this way.

In summary, there were several important aspects of life after 1945 which were in a position to influence children's historical fiction. Firstly the improvements in historical studies and the dissemination of historical knowledge meant that most adults acquired more interest in, and a better knowledge of, their history. As a part of this history boom, adult historical fiction improved greatly in quality and became very popular. However, history taught in schools did not improve on a par with history for adults since despite beneficial changes in the school system, textbooks, in particular history textbooks were used to transmit a distorted view of history to fulfil the policy requirements of the government. In addition childhood was still seen by many adults as preparation for adulthood, not a time of life to be enjoyed in its own right. Study and learning how to behave took preference over enjoyment and individualistic development. This has permeated aspects of
culture such as children's literature, which many adults continue to believe should be of a didactic nature.
Notes and References


4 Ibid., p. 42.

5 Ibid., p. 43.


8 Ibid.


11 Ibid., pp. 50-55, for changing attitudes to children at school.


16 Ibid., pp. 229-230.


23 Gluck, "The People in History", p. 25.

24 Oe, "Anpo Toso".

25 Ibid.

26 Gluck, "The People in History" pp. 31-32.

27 Ibid. pp. 31-32.


31 Ibid.
32 Ozaki, Rekishi Bungakuron, p. 114.
41 Kano, "Kokumin no Rekishi Ishiki, Rekishizo to Rekishigaku".
42 Ozaki, Rekishi Bungakuron, p. 98.
46 Kano, "Kokumin no Rekishi Ishiki, Rekishizo to Rekishigaku", p. 249.

49 Ibid.

50 Kyoiku Kihon Ho Dai 1-Jo (1 of the Basic Education Law).


53 Tenaga, *The Pacific War*.

54 Horio Teruhisa, "Kyoiku Kihonho 30-nen to Kokumin no Kyoikuken", in *Nihonkoku Kenpo to Sengo Kyoiku*, ed. Igasaki.

55 Tenaga, *The Pacific War*, p. 255. See also Kanazawa, *Aru Shogakko Kocho no Kaiso*, pp. 66-86, in which the author shows the changes in education policies which occurred in the 1950's as a result of the United States of America's pressure on Japan to adopt a militaristic, anti-communist position.


57 Ibid. p.260.

58 Tokutake, "Kyokasho Jido Bungaku to Sengo no Shinwa Kyoiku", p. 75. In this article the author discusses the treatment of Myths as history teaching materials.

59 Ibid., p. 80.

60 Ibid., p. 81.

61 Ibid. p. 82.


68 Naoki "Ki-Ki to Shinwa".
69 See the history text books by Kaigo, Ono and Shigematsu.
70 See Appendix.
75 Tokutake "Kyokasho, Jido Bungako to Sengo no Shinwa Kyoiku".
76 Ibid.
77 Cook, *The Ordinary and the Fabulous,* p. 32.
78 Ota Takashi, "Gendai Shakai to Kodomo no Hattatsu", in *Kodomo no Hattatsu to Koyoiku* ed. Ota Takashi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979, p. 36.
6. JAPANESE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AFTER 1945

6.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine the development of Japanese children's literature in general after 1945, in particular those aspects most relevant to the development of children's historical fiction which is examined in Chapter 8.

The chapter begins with an examination in Section 6.2 of the changes in authors' attitudes brought about as a result of Japan's defeat in the Second World War in 1945.

Section 6.3 looks at the development of children's magazines which served as an important outlet for new children's stories before the 1960's.

Section 6.4 examines the development of children's books, in particular the new, better quality stories which emerged between 1945 and 1969.

Finally, Section 6.5 looks at the development of the criticism of children's literature which occurred in the 1950's and 1960's and which helped to improve the quality of that genre after the war.

6.2 Changes in Authors' Attitudes after the Second World War

In October 1945, two months after Japan's surrender, Nihon Shokokumin Bunka Kyokai, the organization set up by the government in 1941 to spread pro-war propaganda through the control of children's culture, was dissolved by the Allied Occupation Forces. Following that, two associations of children's authors, Nihon Dowa Kyokai (Japanese Children's Stories Association) and Nihon Jido Bungakusha Kyokai (Japan Children's Writers' Association) were formed by writers and editors who wanted to promote an anti-war, pro-democratic type of children's literature. The majority of authors, who regretted having collaborated in the war effort, joined these associations. However, those authors who were regarded by the
organizers as having directly and enthusiastically supported the war were not allowed to join. There was a degree of soul-searching as to how guilty people were; author and editor Seki Hideo, who was a founder member of Jido BungakuSy Sy Kyokai, wrote of his feelings:

I have asked myself if I am eligible to establish a new democratic organization of children's literature since the defeat of Japan. Although I was against the war, I was compelled to remain silent. As a picture book editor I let illustrators draw warships and warplanes. I made a living at Nihon Shokokumin Bunka Kyokai and so I cannot help confessing that I am not eligible. Nevertheless I have not written warlike stories. I have criticized the warlike stories of authors who took advantage of the war. I believe there are three categories of people: first is the man of power who drove people to war, second is the man who was cajoled into supporting the war and third is the man who was forced to support it.

Seki considered that he and fellow members of the new literary associations fell into the third category on the grounds that if they had not supported the war they could not have earned their living as writers. They believed that editors and writers of magazines such as Shonen Kurabu were guilty of enthusiastic collaboration and would not let them join the associations. Furthermore, even though these "guilty" magazines changed to a pro-democratic, anti-war stance, the members of these associations would not generally write stories for them. However, these publishers were powerful and had no real trouble getting authors to contribute. Most of the rejected writers on the other hand were unwilling to change their traditional, nationalistic views and took up the retelling of foreign stories.

6.3 Children's Magazines

In the years immediately following the war, in addition to reformed magazines such as Shonen Kurabu, many new magazines were published. In 1946 more than one hundred magazines appeared on the market. All of these magazines contained stories with anti-war and pro-democracy themes and
aimed to teach children the new ideals. One of the best-known magazines, *Akatombo* (The Red Dragonfly) (April 1946–October 1948), included the following comment by the editors in its first edition:

> We would like to devote ourselves to giving children a sense of justice and warmth and a richness of thought in a neutral way in order to build a beautiful and powerful Japan from the present misery. We still remember the *Akai Tori* movement, under Suzuki and we would be very pleased to recreate their fine work in the world of children.

There were several reasons why publishing this sort of magazine became so popular at that time. Firstly, censorship of publications was imposed by the Occupation Forces and permission was more easily given for this kind of magazine. Secondly, publishers preferred to follow the policy of the government and promote democracy. Thirdly, many publishers and writers were genuinely enthusiastic about the new democracy and wished to spread these ideas to children through literature.

Stories related to the war or which mentioned warlike items such as guns or swords were banned, a ban which prevented writers from producing the vulgar kind of fighting stories that had been popular before 1945. Magazines which had published this kind of story before the war now only included democratic stories. For example *Shonen Kurabu*, which as mentioned in Chapter 4, was full of jingoistic fighting stories before 1945, now only included pro-democracy stories. However, in these "reformed" magazines democracy was not explained well. For example in an article on democracy in *Shonen Kurabu*’s March 1948 edition, Miyazawa Toshiyoshi explained that real democracy meant not making trouble for other people, apparently referring to Japan’s error in having attacked the United States of America in 1941.

The pro-democracy magazines sold quite well initially since they were the first new stories to appear after the stereotyped pro-war stories
which were all that were published during the war. In addition the anti-war, democratic themes appealed both to adults and children. However, by 1951 almost all the pro-democracy magazines had ceased to be published. The main reason for their failure was that children did not find these stories very enjoyable and preferred other magazines consisting of vulgar adventure and romantic stories and strip cartoons. In addition the many small publishers who produced the pro-democracy magazines had great difficulty getting paper for printing, whereas the more powerful and wealthy publishers of adventure magazines did not.

The reason why children did not find the pro-democracy magazine stories enjoyable is because the authors overstressed the anti-war and democratic views that they were trying to put across and neglected to provide entertaining stories. This is demonstrated by one of the stories published in Akatombo in 1947: "Tarai" (Washtub) by Tsukahara Kenjiro. This story tells how a group of children discover the names of many people from their village carved on a small washtub that they are delivering to their house. They ask their father about it and he tells them that before the war there was a children's club in the village and as one of their activities they put on a play for the village. With the money that they received from the customers they bought this washtub which was lent to every new mother in the village to bath her baby, and the baby's name was written on the tub. The purpose of the story is really to describe the perfect way in which the children behave. For example, the father explains that:

On the one hand, children who do not belong to the club will not often speak or sing when requested; however, they often start to chat or sing when someone else is already speaking or singing. On the other hand, children from the club will do something willingly when requested but never want to overdo it.

The author thus stresses the thoughtful behaviour of his protagonists. He
also shows their sense of justice:

They never hesitate to tell people when they are wrong, even teachers. 12

He gives an example of their willingness to stand up for democracy when the father tells the children that:

One day the father of one of them told them that a sparrow which had accidentally become trapped in the house was a harmful bird and that it should be killed. The children answered that his comment did not take into account their own feelings. So the man said then that they should let the sparrow go free.... 13 However, the children said that they themselves would decide and the man then told them that they were truly a democratic group. 14

Finally, the father explains to his children what happened to the club:

The group was dissolved by the police who thought that they were disobedient and disrespectful to their teachers. However their experience was useful to them in their later years. 15

The author generally depicts pre-war teachers, parents and police as authoritarian and shows children idealistically as brave and independent, full of concern for other people and unhesitating in voicing their opposition to injustice. In addition he tries to show that discussion and co-operation are keystones of democracy. One can see the similarity between this kind of story and those of the Akai Tori and proletarian literature schools before the war in its portrayal of idealistic children and its emphasis on teaching children how to behave. They suffered the same problem in that the creation of idealistic protagonists with which children could not identify and the emphasis on didacticism resulted in stories which children could not enjoy.

In addition, like the Akai Tori works, these stories tended to ignore the problems faced by children in the early years after the war. University lecturer Honda Kazuko has described some of these problems:

The effect upon children's lives was devastating. Books and toys were not so important to children who wanted and needed food and homes. While adults were elated with the end of the war
and the new democracy, there were more than 10,000 war orphans and 150,000 (estimated) repatriated orphans seeking left over food in Tokyo. Chewing gum and chocolate from the pockets of American soldiers were the most attractive things for them. 16

Many children were hungry and confused with the new society and could not see any relationship between their own lives and those portrayed in the pro-democracy stories such as "Tarai". Critic Ofuji Mikio illustrated this problem with an example of a pro-democracy story hero:

Prince Akihito was a symbol of a good Japanese citizen who loved justice. He had an English tutor and enjoyed playing tennis with famous players. However ordinary children had nothing; their schools were inadequate and they had no toys. They realized that those magazines were remote from real life. 17

The pro-democracy authors only saw children as future citizens who could continue to implement the democratic reforms and must therefore be taught about democracy. They were not interested in the needs and desires of children and the moral lectures they gave were only appreciated by adults, not by children. As Watanabe says:

Yet there was a fatal flaw in the stories contributed to those magazines, i.e. most of the writers forgot what children liked to read and concentrated on what they ought to read. 18

There was only one exception to these moralistic, unreal stories published in the pro-democracy magazines. That was Biruma no Tategoto (A Harp of Burma) by Takeyama Michio 19 which was serialized in Akatombo in 1947. The story is about a group of Japanese prisoners of war after the end of the war in Burma. The group becomes popular with their British guards because they sing and play British folk songs. One of their group, Mizushima, escapes and disappears without telling any of the other members of the group and they do not understand why he has escaped or what has happened to him. Some time afterwards they see a priest who looks like him but they are not sure whether it really is him when he refuses to acknowledge them. When they eventually return to Japan they receive a
letter from Mizushima in which he explains that he was the priest that they
saw and that he had felt the need to stay in Burma and become a priest in
order to look after the souls of all his fellow soldiers who died there.

This story has been criticized for not telling of the suffering caused
by Japanese soldiers in Burma or the responsibility of the emperor and
government for Japan's actions and the death of many Japanese soldiers;
only Mizushima is portrayed as feeling responsible for them. However,
it is perhaps one of the first longer stories for children and has a well-
written, interesting story-line with an intriguing air of mystery about
the missing soldier. These aspects and the war-related theme make it
unique amongst the magazine stories of that time.

Whilst these pro-democracy magazines declined rapidly in popularity
their place was being taken by the cheap magazines with poor
quality adventure stories and vulgar cartoon strips. Among the first
of these magazines to be published were Boken Shonen (Boys' Adventure
Stories) in 1948 and Mangao (King of Comics) in 1949. The most popular
subjects were adventure, detectives and romance. These magazines were
generally of poor quality, and the strip cartoons have been particularly
criticized for the bad writing and illustrations.

With the adoption by the government of an anti-communist, militarist
policy in the early 1950's the adventure themes of these cheap magazines
received encouragement and anti-war themes such as those published in the
short-lived pro-democracy magazines were frowned upon. With this
couragement, magazines like Shonen Kurabu which had adopted a theme
policy of peace and democracy after 1945 now reverted to their pre-1945
action and adventure stories and became pro-militarism again. For example
the May 1951 edition of Shonen Kurabu included the following statement
about re-armament:
Recently some Asian communist countries have enthusiastically attempted to increase their influence in the Far East and that is why the wars have been fought in Korea and Indochina. We need help from the United States of America in order to defend ourselves against these countries. However, we should not be protected by the United States without doing anything for our own defense. We must share this obligation.

With the reversion to the pre-1945 themes these magazines took back their pre-war writers and illustrations. For example author Minami Yoichiro and illustrator Kabashima Katsuichi, had ceased providing work for these magazines in 1945, but began again in the 1950's.

These magazines became extremely popular with children, who wanted to enjoy tales of action and adventure and not be preached at. One child summed up the views of many in a letter to the magazine Boken Q (King of Adventure):

At present all Japanese children are depressed. However, this magazine encourages us to build a new Japan. It really cheers us up and is enjoyable.

By "encourages us to build a new Japan" it seems that the child meant that the magazine showed children victorious heroes and in this way gave children hope and confidence in the future. Of course, these were escapist stories, but that is precisely what children, who had day to day problems of poverty and hunger, really wanted and enjoyed. As Ofuji says, children rushed to buy these popular magazines with their enjoyable, easy-to-read stories.

Over the years these magazines gradually turned into comics. For example, Shonen Kurabu in January, 1948 had three serialized strip cartoons; by June of the same year it had six. By the 1950's most of its contents were strip cartoons. By the early 1960's weekly comics such as Shonen Magajin (from 1959) and Shojo Furend (from 1962) had taken over the children's magazine market and the old monthly magazines had almost al ceased publication, including Shonen Kurabu which
stopped in 1962. Weekly comic books have remained enormously popular with older children since then and are probably more widely read today than children's stories.

6.4 Children's Books

Towards the latter end of the Pacific War few children's books were published, mainly because of the lack of printing paper. However, after 1945, publishing began to pick up although initially the quality of paper and printing was poor. According to Nihon Shuppan Nenkan (The Japanese Publications Annual) eighteen percent of all books published in 1946 were children's books. Most of the books published in that year were reprints of old stories since well-known stories had a relatively secure market. That situation remained the same until the early 1960's and with a few exceptions the only new stories appeared in the pro-democracy magazines until their demise in the early 1950's. Until the early 1960's only approximately ten to twenty new stories were published in book form.

Amongst the few original children's stories published in book form however, there were some outstanding ones which have become recognized as classics, in particular Non-chan Kumo ni noru (Non-chan Rides a Cloud) (1947) by Ishi Momoko; and Haha no naiko to Kono nai haha to (A Mother Without Children and Children Without a Mother) (1947) and Nijushi Hitomi (Twenty-four Eyes) (1952), both by Tsuboi Sakae. These three books were widely read and became bestsellers in 1952. Yayoshi Mitsunaga says of these books' success:

It was said that children's books do not become bestsellers, but in 1952 this saying was proved wrong. Ishii and Tsuboi showed that if authors created stories which could be enjoyed by adults as well as children, they could become bestsellers.

Non-chan Kumo ni noru is a story about a dream that Non-chan, a little girl, has after falling out of a tree. In her dream she meets an old man
with a long white beard who lives on a cloud. The story has been called a fantasy but in fact the theme is about a realistic subject - life in a middle class family. The story has its moral lessons. For example, Non-chan is told by the old man that:

If we are not modest, we are not good. It was silly of you to boast about your school record.

However, despite the didactic tone, the author shows characters' feelings convincingly and the story is enjoyable to read.

Tsuboi also succeeded in showing children's feelings and creating enjoyable stories. Both of her two books mentioned deal with the effect of the war on ordinary people and show their suffering and vitality. Nijushi no Hitomi, for example, shows the social changes as viewed by a young teacher and her twelve pupils in a small country school between 1928 and 1945. Whilst the war plays an important role in the story the novelist's main theme is the peace-loving nature of ordinary people and the problems of living in human society. From its publication in 1952 until at least 1970 this story reached a larger public than any other children's story.

Despite the quality of these stories they had little impact upon other authors at that time. Watanabe Shigeo concludes that the lack of influence was because Ishii, Tsuboi and Takayama (who wrote Biruma no Tategoto which was discussed in the previous section) were not accepted as professional writers by the main body of novelists and their stories did not follow the tradition of Japanese children's stories. Watanabe says:

It should be noted that these authors were not originally professional writers of books for children. A Harp of Burma, Non-chan Rides a Cloud, and Twenty-four Eyes have become new classics of the post-war period, although conventional and professional children's writers were reticent in saying what they thought of works by these outsiders and what they themselves were doing. They were reticent perhaps because by children's stories they had meant, traditionally, only short fairy-tales so that they had nothing to say about long novels written for children.
Most authors and publishers were completely locked into the traditional style of children's stories and it was rare for an author to experiment and create a new style. For example, authors who had learned their style of writing from the Akai Tori school thought that only that kind of story had any value and could not accept other styles or new ideas.

In 1950 the Japanese Library Law was passed authorizing the establishment of public libraries. This was followed in 1953 by the School Library Law which laid down that every school had to have a library. The increased demand for books was met by re-publishing well known stories and it became more difficult to get new stories published, since by then most of the pro-democracy magazines had ceased publication and publishers did not want to take the financial risk of publishing new stories when they had a guaranteed market for old ones. In the early 1950's many children's novelists had become frustrated with this situation and formed groups to publish coterie magazines. These magazines contained new children's stories but were only circulated amongst fellow authors, not amongst children. Nevertheless they served to encourage authors to produce new stories at a time when there was no public outlet for their stories.

One outstanding author to emerge from these new literary coteries was Inui Tomiko. Her story Nagai Nagai Penguin no Hanashi (A Long, Long Story of Penguins) (1957), which first came out in a coterie magazine in 1954, was the first longer story for younger children and one of the best children's books published in the latter half of the 1950's. The story tells of the adventures of a pair of young penguins, Ruru and Kiki, who get carried out to sea on an iceberg. It is basically an adventure story and yet has social relevance. In particular the author uses the
story to criticise militarism and absolutism, the main pre-1945 problems of Japan, and shows how bravery and justice can triumph over tyranny. For example, when they are washed up on an island ruled by a dictator penguin, Ruru is taken to see a parade of soldiers and he complains to the emperor penguin about the bad treatment of the soldiers. "Stop the parade, the soldiers are exhausted", he cries. The emperor has him imprisoned for his impertinence but he is rescued by a group of penguins who are encouraged by his bravery to oppose their emperor for the first time, and he and Kiki return to their own island.

The author successfully transmits her views of absolutism as part of the story; unlike many previous authors who tried to make their point only with slogans and thus did not get their message across to readers. The feelings of Ruru and Kiki are carefully written and their reactions similar to those of ordinary children. The story is easy to read and the author proved not only that social messages could be transmitted within an enjoyable and interesting story but also that younger children (under eight) could enjoy a longer story.

Many new children's stories were published in coterie magazines during the 1950's, mostly from younger authors who had started writing after 1945. After 1959, however, the situation changed and publishers began accepting new stories for general publication. Initially many of these stories had already appeared in coterie magazines but with the increasing acceptance by publishers of new stories authors went directly to these publishers.

The main reason why more new books began to be published was because a small number of publishers, Kodansya, Rironsha, Totoshobo and Fukuinkan, adopted a specific policy to promote new authors and original stories. This is undoubtedly partly due to the development of intelligent criticism of children's stories after 1953 which made publishers,
librarians, teachers and parents aware of the need for new, better books. Other reasons include the arrival of good translations of both old and new foreign children's stories on the Japanese market and possibly the success of original Japanese stories such as *Nagai Nagai Pengin no Hanashi* in the 1950's.

The quality of children's stories also improved from 1959 onwards, both in terms of content and style. Again this is partly due to the influence of new and better translations of foreign stories and the growth of a critical awareness of quality. Younger authors were mainly responsible for this improvement. These authors were not enslaved by the traditional Japanese style of children's stories - short fairy tales or didactic stories - and aimed to create long stories in which interesting plots and characters' feelings could be developed. The style of story writing became less didactic and whilst many authors still had messages for children they fitted them in as part of the story and no longer allowed them to dominate to the extent of excluding good plots and characterization.

In addition the content of stories became more interesting and meaningful. Writers who had grown up before the Second World War tended to accept the existing social system without question - the new democracy imposed by the West as much as the pre-1945 autocracy - and did not attempt to analyse democracy or explain its meaning. For example, the authors who wrote for the pro-democracy magazines between 1945 and 1950 only explained that democracy was important without attempting to convey its real meaning and value. However, younger writers brought up during and after the war had developed their own values and did not automatically accept the system. They were able to analyse democracy and its effect on society more deeply and transmit their ideas
through their stories. Also the younger authors had been brought up to recognize individual human rights and feelings, not only for adults but also for children. This helped them to understand children's needs and the reality of their lives which made their stories more interesting and relevant for children.

Several new younger authors have demonstrated these qualities in their stories from 1959 onwards. These include Sato Satoru with *Dare mo Shiranai Chisana Kuni* (The Tiny Country Nobody Knows) (1959)⁴² and Yamanaka Hisashi, with *Akage no Pochi* (Pochi, the Red Dog) (1960)⁴³ and *Boku ga Bokude Arukoto* (I am me) (1969),⁴⁴ which are discussed below; Matsutani Miyoko whose *Tatsunoko Taro* (Dragon Taro) (1960)⁴⁵ was placed on the honour list of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for 1962; Kanzawa Toshiko with *Chibikko Kamu no Boken* (The Adventure of Little Kamu) (1961);⁴⁶ Tomiki Inui whose *Nagai Nagai Pengin no Hanashi* has already been mentioned and whose *Hokkyoku no Mushika Mishika* (Mushika and Mishika at the North Pole) (1961)⁴⁷ was a runner-up for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for 1964; Otsukoshi Toshiko with *Piechashan* (1964);⁴⁸ Ozawa Tadashi with *Meosamase Toragoro* (Wake up! Toragoro) (1965);⁴⁹ Furuta Taruhi with *Shukudai Hikuike Kabushiki Gaisya* (The Homework Company) (1966)⁵⁰ and Maekawa Yasuo with *Yan* (1967).⁵¹ These authors have been recognized internationally as well as in Japan for the quality of their works. The recognition achieved by *Tatsunoko Taro* and *Hokkyoku no Mushika Mishika* is an example of this.

In order to show more clearly the improvement in stories three of these successful books are examined. The first is *Dare mo Shiranai Chisana Kuni* (The Tiny Country Nobody Knows) (1959) by Sato Satoru. In this story a young boy discovers a hill where dwarfs live, but has to leave the area before he can visit the hill again. Twenty years later, after the war he finds the hill again and moves to live nearby so that he
can get to know the dwarfs and become their friend. The relationship between the dwarfs and the man is well portrayed, in particular the initial mistrust of the dwarfs due to previous mistreatment by humans. The story is also interesting in that the protagonist adopts the side of the dwarfs against fellow human beings, for example when a new motorway is to be built over the dwarf's hill. The author also paints a vivid description of the dwarfs' home which transports the reader in his mind. Sato writes:

They lived under the earth of the small mountain. They did not all live together - there were many towns where they had apartments. The towns were connected with tunnelled roads which had rotten trees as street lamps. The blue phosphorous rays from these trees shone onto the white sand spread on the tunnel floors.52

The main theme of the story is that of individualism. Sato believes that the individual's right to his or her own thoughts and feelings and the expression of them is important, especially in Japan where, prior to 1945 this concept was not accepted and individualism in any form was disapproved by the state.

This idea of individuality is not only important for society in general but also for authors in particular since only when it is recognized and respected can original stories and viewpoints emerge. This book was an important milestone in Japanese children's fiction since not only was it the first popular story to stress individualism but it also helped to establish the genre of fantasy in Japanese children's literature, which had not previously been well accepted.

The theme of realism has had a comparatively long history in Japanese children's literature, dating back to the proletarian literature in the 1920's. However as seen in Chapter 4 the quality of that literature was generally poor, due mainly to an overemphasis on the social message and a corresponding neglect of plot and characters. The first good quality book

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in the category of children's realism was provided by Yamanaka Hisashi in
Akage no Pochi (Pochi, the Red Dog) in 1960. Through his descriptions of
a poor miner's family, the author shows the importance of understanding
and co-operation in creating a good society. However the author does not
depict an idealistic view of society, but presents a realistic view of
actual life. In particular, he shows children and adults living in the
same world and affected by the same social problems. Previously, many
authors, for example those of the Akai Tori school, showed children in an
isolated world of their own in order to hide the problems of adult society.
This book deals with the need for social change in general and not
specifically with children's problems which in any event must be seen in
the context of society as a whole. The social message and realistic
portrayal of life in the book form part of the enjoyable story and the
characters are well-depicted.

The recognition of children and adults living in the same world also
appears in the same author's later work, Boku ga Bokude Arukoto (I am Me)
(1969). However, this story also deals with the theme of individual
development and the author's previously expressed idea of the need for
social reform is not stressed. In this story the mother of Shuici, the
protagonist, dominates her family and continually scolds him for his poor
performance at school. Eventually he can stand no more and runs away from
home. When he is away from his family he is able to look at
them objectively and begins to establish his feeling for himself
as an individual. In the meantime the story shows how the mother is
upset by his running away but only because it made her lose face in front
of the neighbours. At the end of the story, after the eldest son is
arrested for political activities and the family home is burnt down because
the mother forgets to switch off the iron, Shuichi visits his mother as she
lies in bed recovering from shock. Shuichi says to himself:

She might say that she does not want to see me, but I want her to see me. She might hit me, but I won't avoid it. I want her to understand that I am her son and that I am me.54

As Ueno Ryo, the critic, says, this quotation shows how the boy finally accepts that he is her son and yet at the same time that he is an individual in his own right. He adds that the author shows how a child is also a human being, an individual with feelings and views; and yet the individual can not be separated from relationships with other people but exists within the context of those relationships.55 Although the boy's situation does not change in the story he finds his identity through looking at his relationship with other people.

In the early 1960's many new children's stories had themes about the need for massive social reform and Sato's theme of individualism was not immediately taken up. However, following general recognition at that time that social change would not quickly be achieved,56 many authors turned their attention to individual problems. The change of theme between Yamanaka's 1960 and 1969 books mentioned above is an example of this. In particular, authors became aware that the poor, who were the subject of many children's novels, could do little to improve their situation through organized social change, however much they tried, and that only individual improvements were possible.

Since 1959 Japanese children's literature has covered a full range of stories including fantasy, science fiction and realistic and historical stories. In addition books for all ages of children have been published, whereas before most stories were for the eight to ten year old child, in particular traditional stories. However, although children's literature made progress in these ways the quality of literature has not been consistent. The improvements in quality achieved in the 1960's were not sustained and in the 1970's children's literature became
more commercialized and quality dropped as a result. In particular, the new authors of the 1960's became established names with ready markets for their works and their stories became somewhat stereotyped. In addition, whilst some good stories were produced by new authors after the 1960's they lacked the high quality, and in particular the originality, of the 1960's works.

6.5 The Development of Criticism

Before 1945 there had been few critical analyses published on the subject of children's literature. The authoritarian political and social systems did not allow for much criticism of official or traditionally-approved values and it would have been impossible to perform any useful critical analysis without bringing repercussions. After 1945, however, as the new liberal society developed and the first generation to absorb these new ideas matured, criticism of children's literature began to develop.

The first major attack on traditional children's literature came in 1953 from a group of students at Waseda University. When they announced their rejection of all Japanese traditional children's stories it caused a sensation in the literary world especially since many established writers had graduated from that university and it was extremely rare for students to criticize the work of their seniors. The brunt of their criticism fell on the Akai Tori and proletarian literature schools of writing; Mukokuseki Dowa (Stories without Nationality), a new type of children's literature in which it was impossible to identify nationalities because unidentifiable names and setting were used; and Shonen Shojo Monogatori, (Boys and Girls Stories), the popular adventure and sentimental stories. Jingu Teruo one of the group, explained that they wanted to encourage longer stories in the realistic style with themes which sought political and social ideals. As Jingu himself pointed out in
later years the group failed to recognize the importance of fantasy for children and did not concern itself with children's interests and needs. Nevertheless, the group's emphasis on longer stories which showed the reality of children's lives was valuable and the fact that they called into question traditional children's literature served to pave the way for future critics and authors.

In 1959 Sato Tadao wrote *Shonen no Risoshugi* (Boys Idealism) in which he evaluated the stories of *Shonen Kurabu*. Even though these stories had been widely popular with children, especially boys, they had previously been neglected by critics because of their vulgar and nationalistic themes. He compared these vulgar adventure stories with those which portrayed the purity of children's spirit, such as the *Akai Tori* stories, and criticized the latter stories for their unrealistic attitude to children:

Doshin - children's pure spirit - was for children a fictitious concept used by adults to hide the disagreeable facets of real society from children. However, children were more conscious of their selfishness and wickedness than those writers supposed.

As Sato says, many children's stories followed the *Akai Tori* approach, and the fact that the behaviour of the characters portrayed was too idealized for child readers to identify with was a major cause of their lack of popularity. In contrast, the *Shonen Kurabu* stories were popular because children could identify with the behaviour of the characters shown. Sato explains that it was more important for children to be able to identify well with the behaviour of the characters portrayed than to feel that the characters really existed. In other words, although children did not feel that the superheroes of *Shonen Kurabu* were real, they could identify with and enjoy their exploits - these heroes behave as children would like to behave. On the other hand, whilst children could feel that the
ordinary characters of *Akai Tori* were real, they could not identify with and enjoy their idealized, perfect behaviour.

The recognition of this need for identification was an important step in the development of children's literature.

In 1960, further controversial criticism emerged with the publication of *Kodomo to Bungaku* (Children and their Literature). It was written jointly by six authors who all had something to do with children's literature: Ishii Momoko, author and translator; Inui Tomiko, author and editor; Suzuki Shinichi, editor; Seta Teiji, editor and translator; Matsui Tadashi, editor; and Watanabe Shigeo author and lecturer.

Watanabe Shigeo explained the view of the group:

They intended to compare Japanese children's literature and foreign children's literature, especially books by European and North American authors. What the group wanted to prove was simple enough. No force in the world can compel children to read what they do not want to read. Only books of value should be put into the children's hands - books of honesty, integrity and vision - books which would help them mature emotionally and intellectually.

The authors evaluated the work of six pre-war authors. Rather negative criticism was made of Ogawa Mimei, Tsubota Joji and Hamada Hirosuke but the works of Miyazawa Kenji, Chiba Shozo and Miimi Nankichi were praised. *Kodomo to Bungaku* argued that Japanese children's literature was different to that of other countries, mainly because Japanese authors did not deem it necessary for children's stories to be enjoyable or easily understood. In addition, it claimed that many of Japanese children's stories emphasized ideals which were transient and this made these stories uninteresting when the ideals became outdated, since children's knowledge and experience are not enough to enable them to understand them. It used proletarian literature as an example of this transient idealism; however this example was disputed by other
critics who saw it as no more transient and ideal than the Christian values on which most of the European and North American literature praised by Kodomo to Bungaku was based. Nevertheless, the main point that ideological messages must be easy to understand and placed within the context of enjoyable stories, was not disputed. Kodomo to Bungaku was important also in that it was the first critical work in Japan to be based upon an analysis of actual stories; previous criticism had tended to be general and emotional rather than specific and objective.

The growth and improvement of intelligent analysis and criticism of Japanese children's literature also owes much to the translation into Japanese of Paul Hazard's Books, Children and Men in 1957 and Lilian H. Smith's The Unreluctant Years in 1964, both of which were popular and influential with students of children's literature.

Although the approaches of the Waseda University group, Sato and the Kodomo to Bungaku group to the criticism of traditional children's literature were different, their basic idea was the same – that authors should take into account children's needs and wishes and produce realistic, enjoyable stories. The development of criticism of Japanese children's literature was a crucial factor in the improvement of children's literature from the 1960's onwards. From that time traditional children's literature was subjected to much more critical appraisal and authors began to produce original non-traditional stories, and have them accepted by publishers, librarians, teachers and parents, as well as by children.

6.6 Conclusion

With the introduction of democracy, after the end of the Second World War in 1945, most authors and publishers concentrated on producing pro-democracy literature for children through magazines. However, the
initial popularity of these magazines soon faded because children did not find the stories enjoyable. This was mainly because the authors overstressed their anti-war and pro-democracy views and neglected to provide interesting and entertaining stories. In particular, children were depicted too idealistically and real-life problems were ignored; both factors made identification of readers with protagonists' lives difficult. Authors had reverted to the pre-war styles of the Akai Tori and proletarian literature authors and had repeated the faults of these schools.

In the late 1940's popular magazines with adventure, detective and romantic stories, both in story and strip cartoon form, began to attract children. After 1950, with the government's adoption of an anti-communist, re-armament policy these popular magazines dominated the market for children's magazines and the pro-democracy, anti-war magazines went out of business. These popular magazines were in turn replaced by weekly comics in the 1960's and these comics have dominated the children's magazine market until the present day.

Between 1945 and 1959 very few new stories appeared in book form. Most books published in this period were reprints of well-known pre-war stories and re-told foreign stories. A few interesting stories of good quality were written by new authors but these stories had little influence on other authors because they were too different from traditional stories. In the 1950's, many children's novelists formed coterie groups because they could not get their stories published any other way. These groups edited magazines containing contributing authors' stories and they were circulated amongst group members.

In the 1960s following the efforts of a small group of publishers, the growth of intelligent criticism of existing children's fiction, and the stimulus provided by improvements in translation of foreign works,
several good books were produced by new authors. These works are notable for their originality: they deal with children's lives in a realistic and yet enjoyable way; characters and plots are well-developed and the themes of social and individual problems are presented as part of the story, not didactically.

From the 1960's onwards a full range of children's fiction has been published, including science fiction, fantasy, realism and historical novels. However after the 1960's the quality of new stories has not been sustained, mainly because children's literature has become more commercialized and stories have become somewhat stereotyped.
Notes and References


2Ibid., pp. 13-14.


4Akatombo 1 (April, 1946).

5Kan, Nihon no Jido Bungaku, p. 243.


9Kan, Nihon no Jido Bungaku, p. 509.

10Tsukahara Kenjiro, "Tarai" in Akatombo 2, 9 September, 1947.

11Ibid., p.11.

12Ibid., p.11.

13Ibid., p.12.

14Ibid., p.13.


18Watanabe "Post-war Children's Literature in Japan", p. 380.

20 Ueno Ryo, *Wareira no Jidai no Piita Pan* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1978, pp. 88-184. Here, although the author points out the good features of this story, he criticises one of the themes of the story - Takeyama’s praise of the self-sacrifice of the protagonist. Ueno considers that the idea of self-sacrifice has been an important theme of many children's books and that this idea often prevents authors from providing stories which amuse and entertain young readers.


23 This article was in *Shoren Kurabu*, May, 1951, p.152, but the writer was not mentioned.


25 Ibid., p. 382.


35 Watanabe, "Post-War Children's Literature in Japan", p. 381.

36 Ishi, Non-chan Kumo ni Noru.

37 Watanabe, "Post-War Children's Literature in Japan", p. 382.

38 Ibid., p. 382.


40 Ibid.

41 Kan, Nihon no Jido Bungaku, p. 435.


51 Maekawa Yasuo, Yan (Tokyo: Jitsugyo no Nihonsha, 1967).

52 Sato, Daremo Shiranai Chiisana Kuni, p. 99.

53 Ibid., pp. 215-216, see postscript.

54 Yamanaka, Boku go Boku de Arukoto.


56 Furuta Taruhi, "Dowa Shosetsu no Nagare", in Jido Bungaku no Sengoshi, ed. Seki, p. 93.

57 Ibid., p. 100.
Kan, *Nihon no Jido Bungaku*, pp. 408-411, in which the author discusses the effects of this criticism.


Ibid., pp. 42-43.


Ibid., p. 266.

Ibid., p. 268.


Watanabe, "Post-war Children's Literature in Japan", p. 385.

Ibid., p. 385.


Watanabe, "Post-war Children's Literature in Japan", p. 385.
7. THE INFLUENCE OF NON-JAPANESE CHILDREN'S FICTION

7.1 Introduction

Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868 many foreign stories have been translated into Japanese. This chapter sets out to look at the development of translations of foreign children's stories and the effect that they have had on Japanese stories since that time, in particular on Japanese children's historical fiction.

The development and influence of translations of foreign children's stories before and after 1945 are examined in Sections 7.2 and 7.3 respectively.

Section 7.4 looks specifically at the development and influence of foreign children's historical fiction.

7.2 Translations of Foreign Children's Fiction before 1945

During the Edo Period (1603 to 1868), Japan was closed to all foreign influence with the exception of limited trade with the Dutch and Chinese. There were therefore almost no translations of foreign children's stories in that period.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868 the new government recognized Japan's under-development in comparison with Western countries and set out to learn as much as possible from them. As a result many foreign children's stories were translated and published. This benefited early Japanese children's literature in two ways. Firstly it stimulated the collection and publishing of Japanese folk tales. In the early years much of this was done by Iwaya Sazanami; for example in his series Nihon Mukashi Banashi (Japanese Folk Tales) (1894 to 1896) in twenty four volumes. The idea for this collection came to him when translating German folk tales.

The second benefit from the introduction of foreign children's
literature was the stimulus that it gave to the production of children's magazines, which do not appear to have existed before 1868. A typical early children's magazine was Eisai Shin Shi (The New Talent Magazine), started in 1878. Like other magazines at that time it mainly consisted of contributions from children, such as poems and compositions.

The first magazine with stories for children was probably Shonen en (Children's Home) which was started in 1888 using a British magazine Little Folks as its model. The purpose of Shonen en was stated to be the provision of suitable stories for children. This magazine was divided into several sections: articles, studies, literature, biology, news and readers' contributions. In the literature section most stories were translations of foreign works such as the tales of Hans Christian Andersen. The magazine was aimed at both boys and girls. For example, in the July 1889 issue Takahashi Goro wrote an article about the general situation of girls, in which he encouraged them to study. This was in opposition to the generally held view that girls should not occupy themselves with study.

One of the earlier translations of foreign children's books was Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886) by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It was translated into Japanese in 1890 by Wakamatsu Shizuko who thought that the story should be told to Japanese children because of the highly moral behaviour of the hero. She considered the story to be valuable and her translation was faithful to the original. However, her example was not followed by other translators.

The major translator of children's stories in the early twentieth century was Iwaya Sazanami. He retold all the stories he translated in order to shorten them and make them more moralistic. He believed that this was necessary to make foreign stories suitable for Japanese children.
because he thought that it would be hard for them to understand Western culture. In 1953 Iwaya Eiji wrote the following about his father's works:

As far as possible he omitted descriptions of scenery and characters and their thoughts from the original books and simply retold the story to follow the interesting parts of the plots.

Iwaya's way of retelling stories served as a model for many later translators. One of these was Suzuki Miekichi, the editor of Akai Tori. For example in his translation of The Story of Little Black Sambo (1899) by Helen Bannerman he changed the end of the story. In the original version the tigers are changed into butter and Sambo makes pancakes with it, whereas in the Suzuki version the story ends when the tigers die and the humorous ending is lost. Whilst Suzuki aimed to create better quality Japanese stories for children through Akai Tori the vast majority of the stories in that magazine were not Japanese but were retold versions of foreign stories.

Until the Second World War, most foreign stories were retold in this way. If translators considered part of the story unnecessary they would omit it or tell it in a different way.

In common with Japanese stories at that time, translations of foreign stories were intended to be didactic - to teach important moral lessons. In addition, if foreign stories seemed to be in opposition to government policies it was difficult to get them published unless they were changed accordingly. Stories were therefore changed to achieve these goals and the notion of faithful translations was considered unimportant.

During the Second World War, however, several faithful translations of foreign stories were published. The first was Winnie The Pooh (1926) by A.A. Milne which was translated by Ishii Momoko and published in 1940. Following that, The Story of Dr. Doolittle (1920) by Hugh Lofting was translated by Ibuse Masuji and published in 1941. These stories were not retold in any way and were translated into good Japanese;
and these translations are still popular today. These two books introduced the genre of fantasy to Japan. For Japanese people it was a new idea that people could communicate with animals and toys and could share the same world with them. These books were found especially attractive and stimulated the production of Japanese fantasy books which have become very popular in recent years. In addition, good translations of some foreign picture books were made by Mitsuyoshi Natsuya during the war; in particular Chinese Ink Stick by Kert Wiese, The Elephant Twin by Inez Hogan and Ferdinand by Munro Leaf, all of which were published in 1942. These translations of foreign picture books were the few good stories published for younger children during the war. However, the government did not approve of them, for example Ferdinand was considered anti-war, and by restricting the printer's access to paper ensured that few copies reached children.

In summary, then, most translations of foreign children's stories before the war were retold in order to make them shorter, more didactic and - from the translators' viewpoint - more interesting. The few faithful translations of foreign works had little or no appreciable influence on Japanese children's fiction at that time or later.

7.3 Post-war Translations of Foreign Children's Fiction

In the early years after the war publishers preferred well-known foreign stories for the same reason that they preferred to republish traditional Japanese stories - they considered that these stories had a good, safe market. However, despite the publication of several faithful translations during the war, publishers and translators continued in the main to prefer retold versions of foreign stories. As Kume Moitoichi, the translator, wrote to children in a postscript to one book:
An original is three times longer than the retold version. The reason for retelling the story is to help you to understand it. I recommend that, when you get older, you read the original story which will then be more enjoyable.\textsuperscript{18}

Translators like Kume thought that foreign stories were too difficult for Japanese children to understand and that they needed to be explained by Japanese adults. Therefore stories had to be retold.

The trend to retell foreign stories rather than to translate them became much less in the 1950s due initially to the efforts of one publisher, Iwanami Shoten, who produced many faithful translations of foreign stories. In 1950 this publisher started a book series called Iwanami Shonen Bunko\textsuperscript{19} (Iwanami's Children's Books) under which a total of one hundred and ninety four books were published before 1960. Most of these were translations of foreign stories but some Japanese stories were included. The first books published under this series were Treasure Island (1883) by Robert Louis Stevenson,\textsuperscript{20} A Christmas Carol (1843) by Charles Dickens,\textsuperscript{21} A Norwegian Farm (1933) by Marie Hamsun\textsuperscript{22} and The Level Land (1943) by Dola De Jong.\textsuperscript{23} The series included classics such as Treasure Island, which were already well-known in Japan and stories which were not known, such as Stozharty (1948) by Musatov.\textsuperscript{24}

One of the aims of this series was to translate completely and faithfully original stories into Japanese. The series showed that complete translations were more profound than retold versions and that they provided readers with entertaining visions of new worlds which were not given by retold stories. Following the success of this series the faults of retelling and the need for good translations were recognized and accepted by translators and publishers.\textsuperscript{25}

A major benefit provided by this series was the impression that original versions of good foreign stories made upon Japanese authors who were motivated to write more and better stories for children, particularly
in the field of fantasy. One of these authors was Inui Tomiko who wrote Kokago no Ie no Kobitotachi (Little Men in the House under a Tree) (1959). The story is about a tiny English family who live on the bookshelves of a normal Japanese family. The tiny people are dependent on the Japanese family who provide them with everything, even their food. The story shows how important it is to keep one's sense of justice and kindness even in difficult circumstances and is really a criticism of Japanese society during the war. The situation and behaviour of the tiny family is similar to the characters in The Borrowers (1952) by Mary Norton which was translated into Japanese in 1956, and it is obvious that Inui took the idea of the story from that book. This kind of fantasy has become popular in Japan because it enables the author to express his thoughts through the interaction of the imaginary world with the real world. In this story for example the problems are real-life even though the main protagonists are imaginary. After the war authors were able to use fantasy in this way as an indirect means of criticising society and suggesting solutions to social problems.

In 1953 the same publisher started a picture book series called Iwanami Kodomo no Hon (Iwanami's Children's Picture Books) with the same main aim of providing complete and faithful translations of foreign stories. This series provided mostly good translations of foreign stories such as The Story of Little Black Sambo but also included some new Japanese stories. The first good quality Japanese picture books with clear illustrations and amusing stories, were issued in this series. Until then picture books were of very poor quality. For example, Momotaro (1953) written by Matsumura Takeo and illustrated by Saito Ioe had such complicated and overcoloured pictures that it was hard to understand them or to read the narrative which was printed on the colour. On the other hand Curious George (1940) by H.A. Rey which was issued under the
Iwanami Kodomo no Hon in 1954\textsuperscript{30} was a great improvement. The illustrations were made with clear drawings and limited, selected colours and the narrative was shown separately, all of which made it easy for young children to follow the story. Author and critic Ando Mikio said of this series:

\begin{quote}
Iwanami Kodomo no Hon gave the motivation to change the concept of picture books from consumer goods to cultural assets.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

There was an initial problem with this series because all the books issued were of one size and shape which did not take into account the different sizes and shapes of the original foreign illustrations. Further problems were caused because Japanese books were bound on the right hand side as opposed to Western books which were bound on the left. However, Iwanami Shoten and other picture book publishers soon recognized and solved these problems.

This picture book series has been and still is, extremely popular with children and it has been a major influence on authors, illustrators and publishers who have been stimulated to produce similar books. One such publisher was Fukuinkan Shoten who started a picture book series called Kodomo no Tomo (The Children's Friend) in 1956. Through this series many new Japanese picture books of very high quality have been published in recent years; for example Kaba Kun (The Baby Hippo) (1962) by Nakatani Chiyo.\textsuperscript{32}

In summary it can be said that foreign children's literature had little or no impact on Japanese children's literature before the 1950's due to the fact that most stories continued to be retold when translated as had been the case before 1945. However, from the 1950's onwards many faithful translations of foreign children's stories have been published in Japan and these appear to have had a considerable beneficial impact on
Japanese children's stories. The continuing dominating presence of foreign children's books can be seen from the fact that in 1980, of the four hundred and forty-four newly issued children's books (for ages up to fifteen), two hundred and forty-four (fifty-five percent) were translations of foreign works.

7.4 Translations of Children's Historical Fiction

Prior to the 1950's foreign children's historical fiction only appeared in Japan as retold stories and therefore had little or no influence on Japanese authors. Since 1950 the increasing number of good translations of children's fiction in general has stimulated Japanese authors to produce better books covering a wider range of subjects and categories. However, the same cannot be said of children's historical fiction since few foreign works have been translated into Japanese. The following table shows that out of four hundred and ninety-two English language children's books, including picture books, translated for the first time, only four were historical novels. (These figures are for complete translations, and do not include retold stories). These four historical novels were *Otto of the Silver Hand* (1888) by Howard Pyle, *Bows against the Barons* (1934) by Geoffrey Trease and *Warrior Scarlet* (1958) (and *The Lantern Bearers* (1959) by Rosemary Sutcliff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Number of New Translations</th>
<th>Number of Translations of Children's Historical Fiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946 to 1949</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 to 1954</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955 to 1959</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 to 1964</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965 to 1969</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>492</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Eibe Jido Bungaku Nenpyo: Honyaku Nenpyo.*
Whilst this table only shows English language books, they in fact comprise the major part of foreign children's stories translated into Japanese. However, during the same period some works of German children's historical fiction were also translated and published: notably Die Hölhen Der Grossen Jäger (1953), Steppenssohne (1954), Der Sohn des Columbus (1951) and Ich gog mit Hannibal (1960) all by Hans Baumann. The low quantity of foreign children's historical novels translated is even more significant when one takes into account the high proportion of foreign children's stories to Japanese children's stories published in Japan: approximately five foreign to four Japanese children's stories in 1980, for example.

The main reason for this lack of foreign children's historical fiction translated into Japanese seems to be that neither publishers nor translators regard it as particularly interesting or widely saleable because foreign history is seen as too difficult for Japanese children to understand and not interesting for them. In a personal interview with the writer of this dissertation on the 3 October 1984, Jingu Teruo, a well-known translator, gave the following reason for the low number of translations of foreign children's historical novels:

Foreign children's books are chosen for translation in two ways: either publishers choose them because they are interesting and they think they will sell well or sometimes translators choose them because they are of personal interest. For example, I translated The Namesake by Walter Hodges because it interested me. However, foreign historical fiction is not often chosen because it is thought to be too difficult for Japanese children.

In a personal interview on the 9 November 1984 Ogawa Toshihiko, a children's librarian for many years now working with the Japanese Library Association, confirmed this:
Translators select books because they are either interested in them or they think that they have some value and historical fiction does not generally get chosen on either count.

On the whole, then, insufficient foreign children's historical fiction has been translated into Japanese to have a significant impact on Japanese children's historical fiction. This appears to be due to the fact that both translators and publishers regard foreign children's historical fiction as too hard for Japanese children to understand and of little interest to them because of its basis in foreign history. Whether this is true or not is hard to say. However, one must take into account the fact that foreign history has not been taught in Primary or Junior High School since the 1950s and is only an option in High School, with the result that many children are not familiar with it.

7.5 Conclusion

Until the 1950's translations of foreign children's stories had little or no influence on Japanese children's fiction because most stories were retold and adapted to fit the perceived social purpose of children's stories and to make them simpler for children to understand.

From the 1950's onwards, however, faithful translations of foreign children's books appeared on the market in increasing numbers. This appears to have beneficially influenced Japanese children's literature by stimulating the production of more and better children's stories covering a wide range of themes and categories.

However, very few children's historical novels have been translated into Japanese because they are perceived by translators and publishers as being uninteresting and hard to understand for Japanese children. It therefore appears that there has been little possibility of influence of foreign children's historical novels on Japanese children's historical fiction.
Notes and References


4. Kan Tadamichi, *Nihon no Jido Bungaku*, 2nd ed (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1966), pp. 16-21, where the purposes of the editors of *Shonen* and other later magazines are mentioned. For instance the editor of *Shonen*, realised the importance of enjoyable reading to which children rarely had access at school.


19 Iwanami Shonen Bunko has been recently re-issued as a paperback.


25 Ando, "Honyaku Jido Bungaku no Nagare to Kadai". See also Seta "Eibei Jido Bungaku o Nihon wa do Toriiretaka", where the author assesses Iwanami Bunko and shows the comments of children's novelists on how much they were influenced by these faithful translations.


31 Ando, "Honyaku Jido Bungaku no Nagare to Kadai", p. 76.


8. JAPANESE CHILDREN'S HISTORICAL FICTION AFTER 1945

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter the writer sets out to examine the development of Japanese children's historical fiction after the Second World War.

Section 8.2 discusses the traditional style of stories which dominated children's historical books in the 1940's, 1950's and to a lesser degree the 1960's.

Section 8.3 looks at the development of historical fiction proper which began in the late 1950's. In the first two subsections a selection of historical novels is examined and in the third their strengths and weaknesses are summarized and some causes of the weaknesses are suggested.

8.2 The Old Style of Historical Stories

In the early years after the end of the Second World War few historical stories for children were published, but from the 1950's onwards the number increased considerably. Until the 1960's this category was dominated almost completely by the pre-war type of historical stories comprised of short episodes describing famous events and people. Most books opened with the legends and chronicles of Kojiki and Nihonshoki mentioned in Chapter 4 and generally covered periods up to the end of the Second World War. Most of the books were published in series with titles like Rekishi Monogatori (Historical Stories) or Rekishi Shosetu (Historical Novels).

One of the first of these post-war old-style historical stories was Monogatori Nihon Rekishi (Historical Stories of Japan) written by Higo Kazuo and published in 1954. The author starts the book with a moral message to children in the preface:

The Second World War was a big mistake, but the state sometimes makes mistake as do we all. Nobody is perfect.
It is necessary for us all to consider the past but we should not lose confidence. We must make an effort to build a better country.\(^2\)

The author describes famous historical events and characters in short chronological episodes. However, he is not very objective and emphasizes what he considers to be the better aspects of Japanese history. In addition he makes no attempt to show the relationship between past events and the present, and his stories have no plots - they merely superficially describe the events and people depicted.

A similar work is *Nihonshi Monogatori* (Japanese Historical Tales) published in two volumes in 1954 and 1955.\(^3\) Author Okado Akio sets out to write short stories depicting major historical events and characters based on the up-to-date versions of history given by historians. He mentions the old legends but states that they may not be historically accurate:

> The Emperor Jimmu is said to be the first Emperor of Japan. However, we do not know if this is true since the only evidence is provided by the legends about that period.\(^4\)

Despite his knowledge of the new versions of history put forward by historians and his expressed doubt about the veracity of the legends, he does not completely remove the influence of the old version of the divine ancestry of the royal family and often used obsequious expressions for the emperors in these stories. Like *Monogatori Nihon Rekishi*, this book also had no real stories with plots - it comprises merely descriptions of famous events and people.

Some of the books published during this period were based on pre-war books issued by the same publishers. Whilst the authors were new and stories incorporated to some degree the new views of history the style of writing was similar to that of the pre-war books. An example of this is *Nihon Rekishi Monogatori* (Japanese Historical Stories) published by Arusu in three volumes in 1954 as part of the series *Nihon Jido Bunko*,\(^5\) which was based on seven books produced by the same publisher in 1928 for the same
book series. A comparison of these 1928 and 1954 stories shows that in general the same historical figures were portrayed but the opinion of the value of their deeds changed. For example both sets of books described Kusunoki Mosashige, a famous servant of an emperor in the fifteenth century AD. The 1928 version says:

Masashige asked for no reward because it was the natural duty of a Japanese subject to work unsparingly to carry out the Emperor's wishes.

However, in the post-war version a different view is shown:

We used to learn about famous samurais such as Kusunoki. Although the stories were interesting these people were not useful members of society - they were just good warriors. We would be better learning about good academics, artists and religious people - it is more important to know the lives of ordinary people in the past than those of great warriors.

The publisher basically showed the same events and historical figures, replacing the traditional messages of obedience and loyalty with the post-war ideas of democracy and individualism which rejected the glorification of war.

A clear example of the influence of state policy on historical stories of this type can be found in Nihonjin wa Doredake no Koto o Shitekitaka (What Have the Japanese Accomplished in the Past?) published by Shinchosya. In the first edition of this book in 1943 the author, Nishimura Shinji, gives children the official view that the Japanese are a superior race:

Two or three thousand years ago Japanese blood was mixed with that of the Indonesians, Indo Chinese, Chinese and Mongolians. However, only good things, not bad, were passed down by our ancestors; that is why the Japanese are a superior nation.

In this way the author supports the divine right of Japan to rule other countries. Nishimura also stresses the superiority of the Japanese in comparison with other nations, particularly those of the West.

However, in the second edition in 1950, author Iwamura
Shinobu reflects the view of Western countries as superior and praises Britain for achieving greatness through diplomacy and trade:

Britain was aware of the differences between European countries and through good management of relations with those countries that small island country developed itself into a major world power.

In this edition the author rejects the view that Japan was created by God and stresses that it is fundamentally a peaceful country.

In the third edition in 1956 the same author follows the revived nationalistic view of the government. Here he no longer refers to European countries and merely sets out to praise Japan:

Our ancestors accomplished great deeds, made beautiful things, kept the peace and retained independence. They made Japan into an advanced country.

The author reverts to his 1943 acceptance of the myths and their depiction of Japan's divine creation by reproducing parts of them without any accompanying warning of their probable inaccuracy. In addition he often shows some elements of the myths as fact although there is no evidence. For example, he states that the third emperor of Japan was Jimmu despite the fact that there is no reliable evidence. The author does not attempt to provide an objective view of history but instead uses the book to reproduce the official view of Japan and its role in the world - altering the message in accordance with the government's changing views.

The old style of historical stories continued to be published in the 1960's and afterwards, although to a lesser degree over recent years. A major publication of the 1960's was Monogatari Nihon Rekishi (Historical Stories of Japan) issued in twelve volumes in 1961 and written by Hiratsuka Takeji. The author has explained how he wrote it:

I selected those events and characters which I wanted children to read about while they were young. I tried to create interesting stories showing events chronologically and respecting known historical fact. These books were checked by historians for their accuracy.
Whilst the events portrayed were, as he said, in accordance with historical knowledge at that time, the style of writing was unchanged from that of pre-war writers. For example, the episode dealing with the life of Kusunoki Masashige, the famous warrior of the emperor in the fifteenth century does little more than repeat his reputed farewell message to his son as he leaves for what he believes will be his last battle against Takauji, the enemy:

Masashige said to Masayuki:
"The lion cub was pushed by its father out of its hillside den when it was three years old. You are now eleven years old. If I die, you must wait until you are old enough to kill Takanji."
Then Masayuki went back to their home in Kawachi, carrying his father's sword.

This is a famous story of the farewell at Sakurai. It is said to have happened on the sixteenth of May, 1336.16

The way in which these short narratives are interspersed with descriptions of events makes it hard for children to follow the story.

Many similar books were published in the 1950's and 1960's, notably:


In the 1960's another kind of pre-war historical story emerged. These were moralistic stories similar to that of the *Akai Tori*
school of literature mentioned in Chapter 4. An example of these stories is *Jokoba* (The Women's Factory) (1961) by Saeki Chiaki. The story is about a group of women spinners in a silk factory in the late nineteenth century. It tells how one worker encourages others to work hard for their country:

> Every day she prayed to be a good silk spinner. Other workers followed Eiko's example and they produced good silk.

---Thanks to the effort of these workers Japan produced the best silk in the world."

The story emphasizes the message of patriotism and neglects to show the misery and suffering which these workers really underwent in that period. The stories have no real plots or characterization and are merely written to transmit moral lessons. The other stories in the ten volumes of the series, *Tanoshii Rekishi Dowa* (Interesting Historical Stories), in which this story appeared, were similarly moralistic. Another series with the same kind of stories was *Ohanashi Nihonshi* (Tales from Japanese History) published in five volumes between 1959 and 1961 and written by Maeda Akira.27

Together these pre-war types of historical stories dominated children's historical literature in the 1950's and continued to be widely published in the 1960's.

Although authors to some degree took into account the new versions of history produced by historians, in the main they merely reproduced the pre-war versions of history and altered their views of the characters' actions to reflect changing government perceptions of Japan's role as a nation and new ethical values. The dominance of these kinds of stories was mainly due to the fact that there was a ready market for them with libraries, in particular with school libraries. Purchasing authorities found them attractive because it was thought that children would learn history and ethics from them.28 In addition, publishers and authors
were happy to produce these traditional stories which required no literary effort or research and which had a guaranteed market. They felt no need to take into account children's needs or desires for entertainment and the creation of interesting and enjoyable plots and characters was considered unnecessary.

8.3 The Development of Children's Historical Fiction

8.3.1 The 1950's and 1960's

Whilst the old-fashioned type of historical stories dominated children's historical literature in the 1950's, at the end of that decade real historical novels - long stories with plots and hero figures - began to be written and published. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, authors and the public in general became more interested in history as new knowledge became available from historical research and authors realized that there was a hitherto unused source of material for children's stories within the realm of history. Secondly, there was a general increase in the production of long children's stories with defined plots and characters in the 1960's, of which historical fiction formed a part.

All of the twelve books examined in this section are well-known. Ten of them had previously been reviewed by critics and the other two won prizes. Eight of the twelve concerned the dominating theme of the 1950's and 1960's - the improvement of society. This theme had various aspects such as national independence, human rights, democracy and the maintenance of peace. Many authors believed that the social changes introduced after 1945 were not fully understood or put into practice and wished to spread these ideas throughout society. The other four novels had themes which dealt with individual human problems and experiences. These themes began to appear in the mid 1960's and represented the feeling of
disillusionment felt by many authors following the failure of massive popular protest to influence government decisions on issues such as rearmament. Some of these authors turned away from promoting social change to looking at individual human development. Nevertheless, many of these stories showed the oppression of ordinary people, which was seen as relevant to present-day society at the time of writing.

The first real children's historical novel published appears to be Tenpyō no Shonen (A Boy of the Tenpyō Period) (1958) by Fukuda Kiyoto. This was a long story which showed the lives of poor people in the eighth century AD. The hero, Nohiko, is an orphan who travels to Nara to help build a giant Buddha ordered by the Emperor Shomu. After a while he discovers that there are many poor people working on the construction as part payment of their taxes and that they are often treated badly by the officers in charge. When he is also badly treated he goes to work instead with a priest who is building a flood embankment to help peasant farmers.

The story is quite different from traditional historical stories in that it does not glorify events or praise the emperor. For example traditional stories about the construction of the Buddha merely stated that it was the biggest Buddha in the world and that it was built by the kindness and wisdom of Emperor Shomu. However, Fukuda showed how the emperor's idea to make the Buddha to bring peace to the nation was out of touch with the reality of the suffering of the ordinary people due to problems such as food shortages and high taxes.

The story also has a literary quality not found in previous historical works. The plot is interesting and well-structured with elements of adventure and mystery. In addition the historical event—the construction of the Buddha—is fundamental to the story and the atmosphere of period and place is carefully shown.

However the characterization is weak. The author fails to show the
hero's thoughts and feelings and portrays him rather idealistically — always lively, warm and courageous. In addition characters are oversimplified as either completely good or evil. Despite these weaknesses the author showed other writers and publishers that it was possible to create a long, interesting historical story and the novel won a prize in 1958.

The second historical novel to be published appears to have been Koya no Tamashii (A Soul of the Wilds) by Saito Ryochi, which appeared in 1959. The story tells of the invasion and incorporation of the Ainu tribes of Hokkaido by the mainland Japanese in the early nineteenth century. The hero, Mubian, is the son of an Ainu chief who is confronted with the problem of whether to fight to maintain their independence or to accept incorporation into the mainland culture.

The book has a lively plot and vividly depicts how and where the Ainu people lived. The historical period is important to the story in order to successfully portray the subjects of independence and freedom of small groups of people. Furthermore there is a degree of analysis of their situation, as shown when the hero wonders:

> What would be best for us? Would it be the life of the mainland Japanese? Although there are problems of discrimination, they wear beautiful clothes, eat good food and live in nice houses. But do they have a happy life? On the other hand, can we say that our way of life, in which we share many things, such as food, is happier?

However, the novel has some weaknesses. Firstly, the author introduces too many subjects, such as freedom, war, cultural differences, discrimination and women's independence and fails to explore any one of them in sufficient depth. For example, Saito mentions briefly the theme of women's independence through Pechika, the hero's sister, but fails to examine the problem of male domination to any significant degree. Secondly, no solutions are given to any of these problems, which leaves the reader somewhat frustrated. Thirdly, the characters are stereotyped
all those who want independence are good and all those who oppose it are evil. Finally the hero is portrayed as an observer for much of the story and the author does not attempt to show his thoughts and feelings with any depth. Nevertheless, this book was one of the first children's historical novels to deal with problems of freedom and independence and was recommended by the critic Seki Hideo as a good book which showed the similarity between current and past problems of society.

Seki also recommended Uzushio Maru no Shonentachi (Children on the Uzushio Maru) (1962) by Furuta Taruhi, for the same reason. This story is set in the fifteenth century at a time when several Samurai clans were fighting for overall power, and tells of the travels and adventures of three boys and a girl who are chased by a group of samurai and escape by hiding on a Dutch ship sailing to China.

One of the better elements of the story is the characterization. This is one of the first Japanese children's historical novels to give a fairly central role to a girl and the four children are not shown as perfect - their behaviour and responses are similar to those of normal children and it is easy for readers to identify with them. However, the beliefs and attitudes of the protagonists are essentially modern and are not in accordance with the period or place. For example, although two of them are children of a high-ranking samurai, they are shown as easily understanding and accepting the democratic ideal that all should be equal. Such easy acceptance by children of that class would be unlikely in that period. In addition, like Koya no Tamashii, the book has too many themes and none of them are explored deeply. Furthermore, the story becomes too didactic in the second half of the book with excessive emphasis on the evils of war and the joy of peace. For example later on in the story the author writes:
A peasant said "The war has caused us serious problems. While we were working in the fields some of us were killed and others injured."

Then Fujihime flushed because she had never thought of this. She was the daughter of a samurai and was therefore accustomed to the life of fighting. She had never thought that there could be a world where people listened to reason and lived in peace.

With the assumption of this didactic style the story loses the ability to hold the reader's attention. This book was Furuta's only published historical novel although he wrote several other children's stories and became quite well-known.

A later book mentioned by the critic Jingu Teruo was Kusa to Taiyo (The Grass and the Sun) by Kurozumi Kaku which was published in 1964. The story is set in the third or fourth century A.D. at a time when different tribes were fighting for overall domination over Japan and tells of the experiences of the son of a chief of one of these tribes while he is growing up and when he becomes chief after his father's death. The book was one of the first children's historical novels to show that Japan was not created by God with an emperor at its head, as had been shown in pre-war stories and history books, but became a unified country as a result of one tribe gaining domination through fighting.

The story has several good points. Firstly, the historical setting is fundamental to the story and is well re-created by the author, with good descriptions of customs and places. Secondly the characters are quite realistic and show the bad side of human nature, not only the good. Thirdly the author shows the development of the hero while growing up and the effect that the experiences of the period have on him. Finally the author portrays to some degree the feelings of the characters about the misery of war. For example he writes about the destruction of villages and their crops as follows:

This was Makibi's land under our feet. When the other soldiers and I went into those desolate, burnt-out fields, we could not speak but only muttered to ourselves:
"Is this really the village of Makibi - can it be true? Is this really Makibi, whose people fought so furiously against us?"

Despite these positive aspects, the story is unfortunately too complicated and hard to follow, mainly because the author introduces too many characters and spends too much time describing them, rather than concentrating more on the hero's experiences and feelings.

In 1965 another milestone was reached with the publishing of the first children's historical novel to look at history from the viewpoint of ordinary people. This was Higo no Ishiku (A Stonemason of Higo) by Imanishi Sukeyuki, a famous writer of children's stories. The story is set in the early nineteenth century when ordinary people were greatly oppressed by the samurai ruling class. It tells of a leader of a group of stonemasons who is chased by a secret killer from a neighbouring area after he and his group have built a bridge there. The rest of his group are killed and when he evades the killer and returns to his village alone, many villagers shun him, believing that he is responsible for the death of the others. As a memorial to the dead and to help his village, the mason builds a bridge across the local river and thus regains the trust of the villagers.

Jingu Teruo judged this book to be one of the best children's novels of the 1960's. It has several good features. Firstly, the historical period and place are essential to the story and are beautifully created. Secondly, the life of ordinary people at that time is portrayed realistically. Thirdly, the attitudes and beliefs of the characters appear to be appropriate for the time and place. However, there is no main character with whom children can easily identify. The protagonist is a middle-aged man with sensible, mature behaviour and the children in the story appear only intermittently and are not attractively portrayed. It is therefore not a book which children can easily enjoy.
The first Japanese children's historical novel set completely in another country was published in 1966. This was *Hachigatsu no Taiyo* (The August Sun) by Otsukoshi Toshiko, who wrote several other children's books, mostly realistic novels. This well-known prize-winning book is set in Haiti around the end of the eighteenth century during the struggle for liberation. The story tells about the adventures of Placid, the son of one of the leaders of the independence movement.

The story has a good plot and is quite exciting. The author succeeds in recreating the misery of colonization and the hardships endured during the liberation struggle. In addition the characters are well-portrayed. The author does not adopt the stereotyped view of the blacks and whites depicted but shows good and bad individuals amongst each race. The hero, and his relationship with his father, are also portrayed realistically; for example he opposes some of his father's ideas which he does not fully understand. In addition, the author manages to explain complex issues in a way which children can understand. In particular, she shows the difficulty of uniting people for a single goal and how individual desires for power and personal benefit can impede the fight for justice. She is also careful to distinguish individual behaviour from the cruelty of social and political systems. For example, the hero's father explains:

> We will fight white people in order to remove this system which was established by them and which makes us miserable, not because we hate all white people.

In a postscript to the book, the author explains briefly about current problems in Haiti and asks children to compare its history and development with that of Japan. This novel was one of the first effective works of children's historical fiction, with few weak points.

An unusual subject chosen by Kurusu Yoshio for his book *Kurosuke* (Black Boy) (1968) was the life of an African man in sixteenth-century Japan. The event on which the story is based was a true one - an African
was taken to Japan by the Portuguese, was given to the leading samurai and became a samurai himself.

The author uses the opportunity to show the Japanese perception of foreigners — in particular the puzzlement at the first black man they had seen.

The main failing of the story is that there is no attempt to show the hero's thoughts and feelings. In particular his difficulties in adjusting to Japanese life and his feelings about the way he is treated, for example when the samurai's servants try to wash off his blackness, are neglected. In addition the author does not use the chance to compare the African's old way of life with that in Japan. Whilst the historical place and period were well created and the story gives children an insight into an unusual event in Japan's history it thus lacks any depth and emotional feeling. Although the book has been praised by critics Seki 44 and Jingu 45 and won several prizes, it can be considered as not a particularly good children's historical novel.

One of the few outstanding works of children's historical fiction to emerge in Japan has been Tenmon Komoriuta (A Tenmon Lullaby) which was published in 1968. 46 Author Yamanaka Hisashi is well-known for his children's stories which include Akage no Pochi (1960) and Boku ga Bokude (1969) both discussed in Chapter 6, Section 4, but Tenmon Komoriuta has been his only historical novel.

The story is based in the fifteenth century during the Tenmon period and tells of the adventures of a boy who sets out to take revenge on a famous thief who kills his stepmother. The boy, Musasabi, has strange powers over wild animals and uses them to frighten the thief, Kidomaru. However, the thief falls ill and when Musasabi confronts him he discovers that he became a robber and a murderer to take revenge on society for the
cruel and unjust killing of his family by a ruler. Musasabi reluctantly helps the thief during his illness and later grows fond of him. Eventually, when Kidomaru is killed by another thief the boy sadly goes off to live with the wild animals.

This is an especially interesting children's story because of the more complex nature of Kidomaru who, although an evil man, is deserving of sympathy and understanding. In addition it has an exciting plot with unexpected twists and turns which keep the reader eager to turn the pages to find out what happens. Furthermore, the author shows the characters' feelings realistically and with depth. For example the author writes of Musasabi's feelings on the death of Kidomaru:

Musasabi's grief was indescribable. If Kidomaru had been an evil man he would have deserved to die by the sword, but he was not evil. He had suffered such agonies with the torture and death of his mother and family that he had erased it from his memory. He was frightened of the ghosts of all the people he had killed. He was really a normal man underneath.

The author portrays the hero's sense of justice and contrasts it with the cruelty of the ruling samurais. However the author's moral message is made through the story, not didactically.

Critic Jingu has assessed this story as providing a clear view of the virtues and vices of human beings and the good and bad aspects of this historical period, with the use of a dynamic, supernatural protagonist and elements of mystery. The historical setting is interestingly and realistically shown and through the exciting plot and the use of unusual characters Yamanaka created a most entertaining story. Not only does he give a clear image of the period and the people but he shows aspects of human nature which are relevant to the present age.

In 1968, another well-known author of children's historical stories produced what was perhaps the second popular historical novel written from the viewpoint of ordinary people. This was Tenpo no Hitobito (People of
the Tenpo Period) by Katsuo Kinya. The story is set in the early nineteenth century and tells of the experiences of a group of peasant farmers who are exiled to the high mountains for requesting a tax reduction.

In many respects this is a successful historical novel. The harsh life of the peasants is well portrayed and can be easily appreciated by the reader. Historical events provide the fundamental basis for the story and the major details of period and place are accurately shown. In addition the beliefs and attitudes portrayed appear to be appropriate for the period. However there are weaknesses in characterization. Whilst the hero's life is affected by the events of the time, his growing up does not seem to be influenced by these experiences. This is basically because the characters are not developed. The hero is an understanding, idealistic boy who is used by the author merely as an observer. All characters are stereotyped - the samurai are evil and the peasants are good, hard-working and cheerful. The lack of interesting characterization plus an emphasis on description, such as of the tax system, prevents the story from being enjoyable.

In 1969 another historical novel based on ordinary people was produced by Imanishi Sukeyuki, whose Higo no Ishiku (1965) was examined earlier in this section. Unlike his earlier work, Urakami no Tabititotachi (Travellers of Urakami) had an attractive, interesting hero. This story tells of the adventures of an orphan boy in late nineteenth century Japan - in particular of his travels with a group of Christians on their way into exile and with a lower class samurai. From these experiences the boy acquires a set of moral values which he retains throughout his life and at the end of the story he is shown as putting them into practice during the Second World War through his help for a crashed
American pilot and for war orphans in Nagasaki.

This is one of the first Japanese children's historical novels to introduce an unorthodox female character. Fumi is a girl who meets the hero when he is young and is the first person to show him love. However, instead of following the traditionally depicted role of wife and mother she chooses to become a doctor and sets up an orphanage. Female characters have had little significance in Japanese children's historical fiction and this is one of the few works to depict a woman in a more modern independent way.

However, the character of Fumi is not developed to any depth and she is shown as behaving too perfectly. In addition, despite the realistic portrayal of the hero and the effect of his experiences on his growing up, the author frequently interrupts the story to provide lengthy descriptions of events and it is easy for the young reader to lose interest.

Nevertheless, Imanishi played an important role in establishing the ordinary people's viewpoint of history through his work. As the critic Jingu has said of this author:

He attempts to inform the reader that history is built up and moved by the many small efforts of prudent, honest, humble ordinary people.  

In Rigo no Ishiku he pointed out their skill and industriousness, whilst in Urakami no Tabbitotachi he emphasized the importance of developing strong, independent moral codes - different themes but both relevant to the social problems of Japan in the 1960's, in particular the need for ordinary people to appreciate their worth and to develop their own individual values.

When the Japanese think about the independence and freedom of a small nation or group, the most familiar situation to them is that of the Ainu tribes. The Ainu used to live in a large area covering the centre and north of Japan. After the Yamato tribe succeeded in dominating mainland
Japan in the fourth century A.D. many Ainu merged with the other tribes under the Yamato rule. However some Ainu groups resisted and were pushed further north. Whilst they were all eventually conquered, those living on the northernmost island of Hokkaido were never completely incorporated and still live a separate existence today. Because of the familiarity of Japanese authors with the history of the Ainu, several historical novels have been written about them. Perhaps the first such book was Koya no Tamashii (1959) by Saito which was examined earlier in this section.

A later, well-known book about the Ainu is Togoku no Kyodai (Brother of the Eastern Country), published in 1969 and written by Hamano Takuya, a popular author who has written several children's historical novels. The story is set in the eighth century A.D. and tells of the experiences of a young soldier from the Yamato tribe who is injured in a battle with the Ainu and is helped by an Ainu girl. He stays with the Ainu tribe and learns that they are people similar to his own and tries to help them to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The story is quite well written at the beginning and shows clearly the suffering that the Yamato tribe's aggression causes the Ainu. For example, the girl explains to the hero early in the story:

We used to live peacefully, hunting animals in the valley and forest and growing our crops by the swamp. You, the Yamato people destroyed our way of life. You do not understand our sorrow at having to abandon the land which belonged to our ancestors and our anger at being pushed further north like beasts.

The author's main themes of discrimination and domination are well shown early on in the book but the latter part of the story becomes confused when the author introduces other minor themes, such as the problem of bureaucracy in the central court of the Yamato. In addition the author increasingly overemphasizes moral lessons and neglects to develop the characters' thoughts and feelings and, although the book was highly
praised by the critic Nishizawa Shotaro\(^{54}\) for its historical setting, it is not an enjoyable read.

The last book examined from the 1960's is *Majin no Umi* (A Devil from the Sea) (1969) by Maekawa Yasuo,\(^{55}\) a well-known writer of children's books. This book, which is also about the Ainu, is set in the early nineteenth century at the time when the mainland samurai were trying to take over Hokkaido and subjugate the Ainu living there. The story tells of a youth whose father, an Ainu chief, allows a group of Shisamu (mainland Japanese) traders to come to live in their village because he believes that his people will benefit from trading with them and will learn new ideas which will release them from their poverty. However, the Shisamu's motive is to gradually dominate the Ainu and turn them into slaves and in time their plan succeeds as most of the villagers get into debt with the traders. The chief's son, who has always suspected the Shisamu's real motives leaves the village and sets up a small commune in the mountains to escape the trader's domination. The Shisamu oppose this, there is fighting and eventually the chief persuades his son to surrender to avoid the further shedding of Ainu blood. One of the Shisamu who sympathises with the Ainu obtains a pardon for the youth but he is executed before it arrives.

The plot is well-devised and the story well written. The characterization is good and thoughts and feelings are shown in depth. For example, Setsuhaya, the hero, muses about feelings between people of different blood, in particular about his feelings for his step-brother:

> Why was I unkind to Ikorikayani; often I treated him badly when I was a child. I disliked him simply because our mothers were different - Ikorikayani was not of my mother's blood. Why do I hate somebody who does not have the same blood as me?\(^{58}\)

The author does not idealize the hero but shows his weaknesses, such as his hatred for his step brother. In addition the hero is portrayed growing
up through the events of the period and coming to understand about
society and individuals.

The main theme of domination of the individual by the state can be
clearly understood and yet it is not oversimplified - the author does
not merely accuse the rulers and politicians of causing wars but attempts
to look at the root causes in human beings and their society. The
historical period and place are beautifully reconstructed by the author and
the situation of the Ainu is realistically shown - more so than in the works
of Saito and Hamano discussed earlier in this section. Critic Jingu
praised this book for its deeper analysis of the causes of war and the
responsibility of individuals for it. However, perhaps the most
important feature of the book is its successful blending of the theme with
the plot, historical setting and interesting characterization.

8.3.2 The 1970's and early 1980's

By the 1970's the dominant theme of the 1960's - that of improving
society - had become less popular. As the critic Jingu says, by 1965 many
authors realized that the abstract ideas of democracy expounded through
children's literature were of no use to children. The general feeling
of political impotency which affected many intellectuals and ordinary
people following the failure of massive public protest to prevent the
signing of the U.S. - Japan Security Treaty in 1960 and its renewal in
1970 was also felt by most children's novelists who gave up their
optimistic themes of social improvement and substituted themes of
individual experiences and problems, generally within a context of
oppression. As Jingu writes, after the mid 1960's authors began to rely on
their own experiences and those of their ancestors. This theme of
individual experiences dominated children's historical fiction in the
1970's.

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At the same time the majority of children's historical novels after the 1960's ceased to show history from the viewpoint of princes, samurai or chiefs and instead portrayed the role of ordinary people. This followed the lead given by several historians, who developed the study of ordinary people's history and allowed authors to present a more realistic view of history, and at the same time to show readers the important role of ordinary people in contributing to social change.

Three recurrent subjects can be seen in children's historical fiction of the 1970's. The first is that of ordinary people's suffering under oppression, the second is that of the daily lives and occupations of common people and the third is that of peasant rebellions.

Twenty books are examined in this section. Eleven of these have been the subject of discussion by critics and a further seven have either won prizes or were written by well-known authors. The remaining two were selected by the writer of this dissertation out of more recent fiction — Saraba! Bahon no Shiro yo (1975) as an example of a good book and Hokuten no Hosii yo Kagayake (1978) as an example of a poor one.

In the 1970's author Katsuo Kinya, who wrote Tenpo no Hitobito which was examined in the last section, produced three further similar works: Ansei 5 Nen 7 Gatsu 11 Nichi (The Eleventh of July in the Fifth Year of the Ansei Period) (1970), Gokayama Gurashi (Life in Gokayama Village) (1972) and Noto no Oikezukuri (Building the Pond in Noto) (1973). The first of these books concerns the lives of village craftsmen in the nineteenth century A.D. and the second is a sequel to Tenpo no Hitobito. Both of these show the heroic suffering of ordinary people under the fierce oppression of the ruling samurai. These two novels have basically the same strengths and weaknesses as Tenpo no Hitobito — they give accurate, realistic portrayals of events, period, place and people's attitudes but the excessive emphasis on description and the
lack of interesting characterization make them not very enjoyable to read.

The third novel, *Noto no Oikezukuri*, is slightly different. Whereas, in the novels examined previously the ordinary people were heroic losers, in this one they achieve success in combating oppression, albeit only to a small degree. In addition, the characterization of this story is a little better than the others in that the characters are not portrayed in a straightforward way but are shown as having secrets which only the reader is party to. This can be an enjoyable feature for children. Furthermore the author introduces an attractive element of fantasy into the story. However, as in his previous novels examined, the author over-simplifies the characters — they are either completely good or evil — and overemphasizes the historical detail. Thus the author's effort in carrying out his own research and carefully transmitting his historical knowledge is wasted in books which are not enjoyable for children.

Despite their weaknesses *Noto no Oikezukuri* won prizes and *Gokayama Gurashi* was praised by the critic Jingu.63

Another well known author who looked at the individual experiences of ordinary people during times of war or oppression was Kishi Takeo. His book *Moguri no Kumonsa* (The Hidden Life of Kumonsa), published in 1970,64 is set in the early twentieth century.

The hero Kumonsa is an old man who is shunned by other villagers because he deserted from the army when he was young. He explains to two young children who befriend him how he joined the army during the civil war in the late nineteenth century because he could not pay his taxes but found that he could not accept the cruelty and killing — especially with regard to civilians. The story has several good features. Firstly, the author does not interrupt the flow of the story
with lengthy descriptions of events or characters. Secondly, the story is easy to understand because he does not attempt to cover too many themes. Thirdly, he attempts to some degree to show the thoughts and feelings of the hero. However, the characterization remains weak—the hero is portrayed too idealistically and his thoughts and feelings are not shown as being affected by his experiences. It is therefore difficult for young readers to identify with him.

Kishi's next children's historical novel was Senbon Matsubara (The Forest of One Thousand Pine Trees) (1971). The story is quite similar to that of Katsuo's Noto no Oikezukuri and evolves around the building of a flood prevention embankment. Whilst the historical setting is accurately portrayed the plot and characterization are weak. The author does not make the mistake of giving the stereotyped view of good peasants and evil samurai. However, he fails to explain the thoughts and feelings of the characters. For instance, he does not explain why the samurai are under pressure to do a good job of building the embankment and why some commit suicide when the work does not go well. In addition, the hero is always portrayed as a perfect child—his thoughts and deeds are always focussed on helping others. For example Kishi writes:

Yokichi thought how much the flood seriously affected the lives of the peasants and decided that they must finish the embankment as soon as possible.

Even though it is not necessary to the plot the author has the hero sacrifice his life to save the embankment in order to emphasize his goodness.

Another weakness of this book is that the author explains everything directly through the dialogue and narrative and leaves nothing to the readers' imagination. The author's overemphasis on historical detail and idealized behaviour plus his desire to explain everything makes the book unenjoyable.
Kishi's later work *Sumiyaki no Tatsu* (Tatsu the Charcoalmaker) (1972) repeats these weaknesses. In this book, an old man recounts the events of his life to his grandchildren - in particular the change in life styles brought about by industrialization, the irrationality of pre-war society and the misery of war. There is no plot or interesting characterization and as in the author's previous works examined the hero is portrayed as perfect.

Whilst Katsuo's and Kishi's novels of the early 1970's were about ordinary people's efforts to combat oppression and war, another group of authors began to produce books showing such people's normal daily lives. One of the earliest of these books was *Edo no Omochaya* (A Toyshop in Edo) (1970) by Kurusu Yoshio, who also wrote *Kurosuke* (1968) which was examined in the last section. This book consists of six short historical stories, each depicting the atmosphere of a different period. The story from which the title takes its name shows the lives of ordinary people in Edo, the old name for Tokyo, describing their work, clothes and hair styles for example. Through the narrator, the owner of a toyshop, the author describes the social problems of the period. Whilst the story was rightly praised by Jingu for successfully recreating the atmosphere of the period, it does not make enjoyable reading since the author concentrates more on showing society than developing characters and plot.

In 1971 a similar collection of short stories was published under the title *Kujira to Shonen* (A Whale and a Boy). These stories, which were about whale fishing, were written by Kawamura Takashi, a well known writer of children's historical fiction. Like *Edo no Omochaya*, this book provides interesting historical information but the lack of real plot and interesting characterization makes it rather dull.
In the same year Kitamura Kenji wrote a much better book about whaling - Maboroshi no Okujira Shima (Shima, the Giant Phantom Whale). This story not only provides a good description of whaling and the social situation but also has an enjoyable plot and interesting characters. Kaizu, the hero, is a young whaler who becomes unhappy with the unfair way in which all of the profits go to the owner of the boat whilst the rest of the villagers go hungry. He attempts to steal rice from the boat owner to feed the poor but is caught and sent to prison. After his release he returns to the same boat and when they catch Shima, a giant whale, he realizes that for him the whale's freedom is more important than the boat-owner's profit and he lets it escape and swims away with it. Unlike Kujira to Shonen, this book brings to life the old whale-catching society through the narrative, instead of merely describing it. Furthermore the characterization is well realised. People's good and bad points are depicted and their thoughts and feelings are carefully shown. This novel is one of the few good works of children's historical fiction of the 1970's and has been praised by Seki, Jingu and Nishizawa.

Jingu also recommended Shonen no Ishi (A Boy's Stone) and Akai Ho no Fune (The Boat with Red Sails), both written by Kubo Takashi and published in 1972. In particular he praised their portrayal of the unchanging nature of human problems and feelings. Shonen no Ishi contains several short stories showing the development of society through different historical periods. A small stone is used as the link between the stories - each one tells of a boy who owns it. The first story, Yao, is set in ancient Japan and shows the life of a boy and his mother as they try to survive by hunting and the conflict between the boy's wish to move to a new place where the hunting is better and his desire to look after his crippled mother who cannot travel. Whilst each story is different the author attempts to show that people's thoughts and feelings
are similar no matter in which place or time they live. However, the
stories do not leave a strong impression since they are too short to allow
for the development of plot and characters. Akai Ho no Fune, which is
also a collection of short stories, shows the lives and problems of
fishermen over the centuries. The theme of the universality of human
problems and feelings is repeated in this book, which also suffers from a
lack of plot and character development.

A later book about normal people's working lives was Hanasakika
(Flowers in Bloom), published in 1973 and written by Iwasaki Kyoko. The
story is set in the Edo Period (1603 to 1868) and tells of the life of
a professional gardener. The critic Nishizawa praised the historical
detail of the story, but whilst the author recreates the atmosphere of
the period through her depiction of the daily life and work of the
gardener, the story is not particularly attractive for children since
the flow is often interrupted by lengthy descriptions and the
characters are not very interesting. In particular the hero is too
quiet and patient for young readers and his mature ideas and attitudes
remain the same from when he is a young trainee through to his old age.

Another popular theme of children's historical novels in the early
1970's was that of peasant rebellions - again shown from the average
person's viewpoint. One of the earliest novels on this subject
was Matakita Manroku (The Return of Manroku) (1972) by Yoshida Takino. The
book is based on the true story of Yagohei (nicknamed Manroku), a
leader of a peasant uprising in Nanbu province in the middle of the
nineteenth century. The rebellion, which included hundreds of villages and
lasted for seventeen years, eventually succeeded and the peasants' wishes
were granted by the samurai. The author describes the rebellion and Yagohei's part in it accurately and well but there is no real plot and
the story is often interrupted by detailed descriptions. In addition the characterization is weak — thoughts and feelings are not shown and the hero is portrayed as perfect.

Another well-known book about peasant rebellions published in 1972 was *Oinoko wa Yoske ni Hoeru* (Oinoko Cries at Daybreak) by Suzuki Minoru. This story is quite similar to *Matakita Manroku* and also shares its weaknesses. Suzuki concentrates on explaining the struggles of the peasants in detail and neglects plot and characterization. For example the author does not show how the hero’s experiences help him to mature but merely states that the boy matured:

Yokichi cried as he ran, his eyes full of tears. While he was running he remembered that every time he had cried in the past he had felt closer to the adult world.

A later well-known book on the same subject was *Temryugawa no Kagaribi* (A Beacon on the River Temryu) (1973) by Hirasawa Kiyoto. This story is also similar to that of *Matakita Manroku* but is better written. The critic Jingu explained the improvement as follows:

Although the story does not have many dramatic events, the author succeeded in creating an interesting, understandable story with a good plot and clear characters. He does not need to explain the situation of the samurai, landlords and peasants since it is made clear through the development of the story.

As Jingu points out the author succeeds in recreating the historical period through the development of the plot and characters and thus avoided the lengthy descriptions used by many other authors which made their stories dull. In addition the characters portrayed by Hirasawa are more lively and cheerful than those of many children’s novelists. However, some of the weaknesses of other books are repeated here. Firstly the author does not show the hero maturing as a result of his experiences but through lessons explained by adults:

Shinta was very pleased that nowadays he could talk to his father because he could learn new words and ideas. He felt that he was becoming an adult and this made him extremely happy.
Secondly the author portrays the hero as a perfect child which makes him less interesting and harder to identify with. Thirdly, he shows peasants and samurai in a stereotyped way—all peasants are good and all samurai are evil.

Historical novels about peasant rebellions continued to be published throughout the 1970's but they generally all had similar stories and weaknesses. A later example is Shiro Aka Dasuki Komaru no Hatakaze (White and Red Sashes and the Little Circle on the Flag Fluttering in the Wind) (1976) by Goto Ryazi.85 The author deals with the same rebellion as Yoshida in Matakita Manroku. However, whilst he recreated the atmosphere of the period better than Yoshida did, his story is much more complicated and hard to follow. The author overemphasizes historical detail and the story is little more than a recounting of events with no real plot or characterization.

During the 1970's few children's historical novels had elements of adventure. However Saraba! Bahan no Shiro yo (Farewell! Bahan Castle) (1975)86 by Shikata Shin is an effective adventure story. It is set in the middle of the sixteenth century when many samurai clans were fighting for overall power and tells of the adventures of a fisherman's son who tries to protect a mysterious girl who is in hiding from the local samurai ruler. The characters in the story are attractively portrayed—they are realistic, not stereotyped, and their thoughts and feelings are carefully shown. For example Ryuta's father, realizing that the boy is worried about the girl's plight, gives him hope with an analogy of the storm through which they are sailing:

Before long the rough sea will become calm and the sky bright and clear, as if the storm had never existed. If we do not believe that peace follows the storm we will lose our strength and even if we try, we will not survive.87
Another significant feature of this book is that one of the central characters is a girl. The mysterious heroine plays an important role in the story and she is effectively portrayed as a strong personality with modern ideas, which do not however seem out of place in the historical context, since it is apparent that she is an unusual individual. Furthermore, the atmosphere of period and place is conveyed by the author without interrupting the story with lengthy descriptions and the adventurous and mysterious elements of the story make it interesting and enjoyable for the young reader. Although this book does not seem to have been recognized by critics or awarded prizes it is probably one of the best, and certainly one of the most enjoyable, works of children's historical fiction of the decade.

Whilst most books of the 1970's had ordinary people as protagonists there were a few exceptions. For example Hokuten no Hoshi yo Kagayake (The Bright North Star) 1978 by Kikuchi Keiichi has a samurai ruler as the hero. The story is set in the mid-eleventh century during fighting between the ruling samurai and the Ainu tribe. The book is similar to those of the early post-war period in that there is little plot or characterization, merely a recounting of events and descriptions of the period and place.

Few historical novels have been written for children under twelve years old. However, Kawamura Takashi, who wrote several children's historical novels including Kujira to Shonen examined earlier in this section, attempted to write a historical adventure story for ten year olds with Akai Kaizokusen (The Red Pirate Ship) published in 1978. However this story, which tells of an orphan's adventures on the South Asia seas, merely uses the historical setting as the scenery for the story and it should not really be classed as historical fiction.

Historical fiction of the early 1980's appears to be little different
from the majority of similar works in the previous decade. An example is Tone to Onimaru (Tone and Ominaru) (1981) by Hamano Takuya, who also wrote Togoku no Kyodai (1969) which was examined in the previous section. Tone to Onimaru was selected as a subject book by the Japan School Library Association for its 1981 competition of children's compositions. These selected books are purchased by most school and public libraries and are widely read by children. The story tells of a boy and girl who leave their homes to save their families' food. The boy trains to be a samurai and the girl becomes a dancer. When her troupe is banished from the city, the youth is killed trying to help her, and she returns home. The author's attempt to create a historical novel which would attract girls as well as boys by giving a girl a central role failed because of the neglect of plot and characterization. The story is not very enjoyable - the plot is weak and there is too much description of events and places. The characterization is also uninteresting - the protagonists are portrayed idealistically and the peasants and samurai are shown in a stereotyped way. In addition the characters are shown as having modern beliefs and attitudes which are not in accordance with the period and place depicted. It is indicative of the lack of progress of Japanese children's historical fiction since the 1960's that the same basic weaknesses are still being repeated in 1981 and that a book which demonstrates those weaknesses so clearly can be selected as a subject book for a children's competition.

8.3.3 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses

An examination of the quality of Japanese children's historical fiction from the 1950's to the 1980's shows only two significant differences between novels published before 1970 and those published after. In the 1960's, although there was only one dominant theme - that of social reform - historical novels encompassed a wide range of different
stories and settings. However in the 1970's, whilst a slightly wider range of themes were covered - oppression, peasant rebellions and ordinary people's daily lives - most novels' story-lines and settings became stereotyped within each theme. For example most of the books about peasant rebellions were very similar. One reason for this is that when early books on these subjects were commercially successful and won prizes other authors were encouraged to write similar books.

The other main difference is that several of the books of the 1950's and 1960's attempted to deal with too many social problems and did not look at any one of them in depth. For example in Koya no Tamashii, Saito attempts to discuss freedom, war, cultural differences, discrimination and women's independence but fails to cover any one of them properly. This specific fault was not, however, found in the books examined after 1969 probably because later authors did not write about social reform in general but focussed on individual problems and experiences.

In terms of other strengths and weaknesses there was little change in historical fiction over the period. The majority of the books examined had all the essential features of children's historical fiction. The historical events portrayed are fundamental to the stories, the period and place are accurate in terms of major details, life is shown realistically and beliefs and attitudes are appropriate. The only exeptions are Akai Kaizokusen (1978), in which the historical setting is not important, and Uzushio Maru no Shonentachi (1962) and Tone to Onimaru (1981) in which the protagonists have modern beliefs and attitudes.

However, in terms of literary quality most of the books examined have major recurring weaknesses. Only five of the thirty two books analysed can be regarded as good novels. They are Hachigatsu no Taiyo (1966) by Otsukotsu, Tenmon Komori Uta (1968) by Yamanaka, Majin no Umi (1969)
by Maekawa, Maboroshi no Okujira Shima (1971) by Kitamura and Sarabi Bahan no Shiro (1975) by Shikata. Only these five novels combine historical quality with an interesting story and enjoyable characterization.

The other twenty seven books analysed demonstrate to varying degrees the following literary weaknesses. Firstly, most of the books have weak plots. Many of them, such as Urakami no Tabibitotachi (1969) and Hanasaki ka (1973) have lengthy descriptions of events, place and other historical details which interrupt the flow of the story. Several of them, such as Hokuten no Hoshi yo Kagayake (1978), have no real plot at all but simply recount historical events, much in the style of the historical stories of the 1950's discussed in Section 2 of this chapter. Most of the authors do not attempt to bring the historical period to life through the plot and the characters, providing instead historical information only through lengthy description. Furthermore every aspect of the story is explained to the reader: nothing is left to the imagination and there is no element of mystery. As a result of these deficiencies, most stories are dull: there is little mystery or excitement and readers are not encouraged to use their imagination.

The other main weakness is in characterization. The majority of the books examined have only boys as principal characters and there are very few interesting female characters with which girl readers can identify. The only exceptions are Uzushio Maru no Shonentachi (1962), and Sarabi Bahan no Shiro (1975), in which girls have central roles, and Koya no Tamashii (1959) and Urakami no Tabibitotachi (1969) in which female characters have interesting, non-traditional roles but appear only intermittently.

Many of the books examined, such as Tenpyo no Shonen (1958) and Tone to Onimaru (1981), have stereotyped characters - for example all the peasants are good and all the samurai are evil. No attempt is made to
show that within a group there are good and bad individuals. Furthermore individual characters are generally shown as either completely good or bad - most authors do not try to show that human beings are complex mixtures of virtue and vice.

This is particularly true of the portrayal of protagonists. Most of the authors paint their heroes as ideal beings: for example Yokichi in Senbon Matsubara (1971) is a perfect child who only thinks of helping others - to the extent of willingly sacrificing his life.

Many of the books examined do not show the thoughts and feelings of their characters but merely recount their actions and experiences. In the books where thoughts and feelings are shown, they are generally only put there by the author to demonstrate the goodness of the character and do not represent realistic reactions to experiences. Characters are not shown as growing up or developing as a result of their experiences. Tenpo no Hitobito is a good example of this. In many cases protagonists are used only as observers of events and are not directly affected by those events in a personal way. In addition characters are generally portrayed in a straightforward, oversimplified way - there is no element of mystery about them and nothing is left to the imagination. In the main, characters do not come to life - readers can neither identify with them nor enjoy them.

The principal weaknesses of plot and characterization have recurred consistently throughout the 1960's and 1970's. For example Tone to Onimaru published in 1981 demonstrates the same fault of excessive description found in Kusa to Taiyo in 1964 and the same weaknesses of stereotyped characters and idealistic protagonists found in Tenpyo no Shonen in 1958.

There are several reasons why these weaknesses have occurred and persisted. For example, the scarcity of important female characters can
be attributed to the fact that women have had less active roles than men in the traditionally male-dominated Japanese society.\textsuperscript{91} However, the main reason is that children's historical fiction has been regarded primarily as a way of teaching children important lessons. As Inokuma Yoko, lecturer and translator of English children's literature has pointed out, this tendency to try to teach children through stories is a feature of Japanese children's literature in general.\textsuperscript{92} In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, English children's literature suffered from the same weakness. Darton describes the majority of these English moral tales as follows:

They were very much of a pattern. They were far better at telling a story than at constructing one. Their very themes made for feebleness of plot. They did not, till the end of the period, run to great length, a fact which upsets all comparison with modern books. Nor, except for an evidently increasing ease (fluency is the better word), did they differ greatly in their conception of what a Moral Tale should be. It should illustrate a particular platitude, and that was about all.\textsuperscript{93}

Japanese children's literature has suffered since its inception from excessive doses of ethics and the common fault of idealistic protagonists in children's historical fiction can be attributed to this traditional desire to teach children how to behave. In addition, social and political ideas have been emphasized continually. For example, most pre-1945 books had messages in favour of the emperor's government and its expansionist policy and post-1945 children's historical fiction initially emphasized social reform and later stressed oppression and rebellion. As the critic Jingu says, post-war children's literature has continued to be closely linked to political and social developments.\textsuperscript{94}

However, unlike other categories of children's literature, historical fiction has also suffered from the tendency of trying to give children lots of historical information. Traditionally historical stories have been
regarded as providing primarily details of historical events and characters. Most modern historical novelists have been influenced by this tradition and have also wanted to provide detailed, accurate information to offset the perceived inadequacies of pre-war and post-war history textbooks.\textsuperscript{95}

The excessive emphasis on providing historical information and on teaching ethical and socio-political ideas has resulted in the neglect of literary aspects - in particular the provision of entertainment through exciting plots and interesting characters. Stories have been written to adults' requirements rather than to children's and adults have not taken into account that however instructive a story may be, if it is not enjoyable it will not be read and remembered.

The weaknesses of children's historical fiction have not in the main been recognized - neither by those involved in its production and distribution nor by critics.

In part this stems from a lack of critical analysis. Following extensive research, the writer could only find five short papers in which children's historical novels are mentioned. Two of these papers, one by Seki Hideo (1978)\textsuperscript{96} and one by Nishizawa Shotoro (1983)\textsuperscript{97} recommend a total of twenty-six books as good historical fiction because of their themes and historical value. However, they do not analyse their literary value and of the six of those books examined in this chapter, five have major literary weaknesses and only one, Maboroshi no Okujira Shima can really be classed as a good novel. As Jingu points out, critics have been partly to blame for the neglect of literary quality since they have praised books merely on the grounds that they have liberal themes.\textsuperscript{98} The other three papers are by Jingu himself: two of which were published in 1974\textsuperscript{99} and 1976\textsuperscript{100} and examine one book each. The third was also published in 1974\textsuperscript{101} and is the only paper of the five
which goes into any detail, but even this has only a brief section on historical fiction, covering eighteen novels. Whilst Jingu is the only critic who has analysed literary quality to any degree his published comments do not perhaps go far enough in their criticism of weak points. For example he praises *Edo no Omocha ya* for successfully recreating the atmosphere of the period but does not criticize the shallowness of the characterization.

Publishers, authors and librarians are also to blame for not recognizing the importance of literary quality. Many of the novels examined in the last two sections have been recommended as good books or awarded prizes even though they have obvious and major literary faults. For example, *Kurosuke* (1968) was named as best book of 1968 by the Nihon Jido Bungakusha Kyokaisho (Japanese Children's Novelists' Association) and was selected as a subject book by the Japanese School Library Association in 1969, despite its lack of depth and emotional feeling. Similarly *Senbon Matsubara* (1971) won the Noma Jido Bungeisho prize for 1971 and was selected as a subject book by the School Library Association in 1972 despite having a weak plot and poor characterization. This lack of recognition of literary faults has continued into the 1980's as evidenced by the selection of *Tone to Onimaru* (1981) as a subject book by the School Library Association in 1981 despite having similar weaknesses.

A survey carried out by the writer of this dissertation appears to indicate that according to teachers children have, however, recognized the weaknesses of historical fiction. Sixty eight percent of a group of primary school teachers interviewed thought that children preferred biographies to historical fiction because children are interested in individual people's lives and experiences which received.
more coverage in biographies. Most historical novelists have failed to recognize children's interest in people and have neglected the development of their heroes.

In summary then, an examination of a selection of well-known historical novels, many of which were recommended by critics or awarded prizes and have therefore been made most available to Japanese children, appear to indicate that the genre has, in the main, failed to entertain children. This is mostly due to an overemphasis on historical detail, socio-political ideas and ethical lessons and a lack of recognition of the importance of good plots and enjoyable characters. The root cause of this can be found in adult society with its traditional emphasis on teaching children what to think and how to behave instead of allowing them to enjoy literature for its own sake and to select their own values as they mature. Unfortunately the only ones to recognize this appear to have been children themselves who have demonstrated it consistently by preferring other types of stories.

8.4. Conclusion

Whilst historical books for children were written in the late 1940's and in the 1950's they mainly comprised the pre-war style of short stories which merely recounted historical events and described famous figures. Several of them took into account post-war historians' views of history but mostly they reproduced the pre-war version of history and altered their views of characters' actions in accordance with changing political and social values. These stories were popular with authors, publishers and librarians since they were easy to write and it was thought that children would acquire historical information and ethical values from them. However, children's needs and desires were not taken into account and the provision of enjoyable plots and interesting
characters was generally neglected.

In the late 1950's with the increased interest in Japanese history and a general improvement in children's literature, historical fiction proper - with long stories, plots and protagonists - began to be produced. In the 1960's the genre became established and many works have been written and published since then. The dominating theme of the late 1950's and the 1960's was that of social reform, but with an increasing feeling of political impotence in the mid 1960's many authors turned to themes dealing with individual human experiences albeit often within the context of oppression. Whilst a wider range of themes was covered in the 1970's, however, stories and settings within themes became quite stereotyped - for example most of the stories about peasant rebellions were similar in format. However, the early novels suffered from a different problem in that they often attempted to deal with too many social problems and failed to examine any one of them profoundly.

In the main the other strengths and weaknesses of the novels examined are similar. Most of them have all the essential features of children's historical fiction - historical events portrayed are fundamental to the story, period and place are accurate in terms of major details, life is shown realistically and beliefs and attitudes are appropriate. However, the vast majority of them have major literary weaknesses - in particular a lack of interesting plots and characters. Most authors do not attempt to bring history to life through the story but provide only historical information through lengthy descriptions. Furthermore, everything is explained to the reader - there is no element of mystery and nothing is left to the imagination. Characters are often stereotyped and over-simplified - no attempt is made to show that within a group there are good and bad individuals and that individuals have good
and bad points. In particular, heroes are generally portrayed idealistically. Also there have been few important female characters with whom girl readers could identify. In addition, characters' thoughts and feelings are rarely shown and they are not seen to develop as a result of their experiences. In general it can be said that characters do not come to life and cannot be identified with or enjoyed by the child reader.

These literary weaknesses have occurred consistently throughout the 1960's and 1970's. The main reason appears to be that children's historical fiction has been written to meet the adult requirements that it should instruct the reader. Not only does it teach ethical, social and political ideals in common with much of children's literature in general but it has the added burden of having to provide as much historical information as possible. With such an emphasis on instruction it is hardly surprising that those aspects of a story which provide enjoyment for the child have been neglected. The weaknesses have not even been detected by most of the people concerned with children's literature. Many of the books examined have been recommended by critics or awarded prizes even though they clearly demonstrate these literary flaws. Even the few good novels published have apparently done little to draw attention to the weaknesses in the others. In addition little critical analysis appears to have been carried out of this genre and that which has been does not seem to be sufficiently rigorous. The only group who appear to have recognized the flaws are the readers themselves - children who, for example, prefer biographies because they are more interesting and exciting. However, most children get their books from school libraries and public libraries, where the books are purchased by adults who form part of that adult world that continue to judge the value of a novel on the instruction it contains rather than the pleasure it gives.
Notes and References

2. Ibid., pp.1-2.
4. Ibid., p.25.
5. Three volumes were edited by famous historians, the first one by Ienaga Saburo, the second one by Takahashi Shinichi and the third one by Konishi Shiro. Nihon Rekishi Monogatari, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Arususha, 1954).
6. The 1928 version was mentioned briefly in ch. 4, sec. 5.
10. Ibid., p. 5.
13. Ibid., p.64.
15. Ibid., p. 3.
16. Ibid., p.35.


26 Ibid., pp. 68-69.


28 Honda Kazuko, Jido Bunka, (Tokyo: Koseikan, 1973), p. 172. See also Kan Tadamichi, Nihon no Jido Bungaku, 2nd ed., (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1966), p. 514, where the author shows that many book series were published after 1951 because there was a steady demand from school libraries. Many historical stories were included in the series.


32 Ibid., p. 152.


34 Seki Hideo, "Jido Bungako no Sengoshi", in *Jido Bungaku no Sengoshi* ed. Seki, p. 34.

35 Furuta, *Uzushiomaru no Shonentachi*, p. 103.


37 Ibid.


39 Jingu, Gendai Nihon no Jido Bungaku, p. 81.


41 Ibid., p. 43.

42 Ibid., p. 204.


44 Seki, "Jido Bungaku no Sengoshi".


47 Ibid., p. 150.


50 Imanishi Sukeyuki, *Urakami no Tabibitotachi*, (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no...

51 Jingu, "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin", p. 140.


53 Ibid., p. 88.


56 Ibid., p. 102.


58 Ibid., Gendai no Jido Bungaku pp. 7-86, where he analyses the changing trend of children's literature from 1945 to 1970.

59 Ibid., "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin," , pp. 138-139.


63 Jingu, "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin", p. 141.


66 Ibid., pp. 85.


Jingu, "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin", p. 142.


Ibid., p. 215.


Jingu, "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin", p. 142.

Hirasawa, Tenryugawa no Kagaribi, p. 74.


Ibid., p. 200.


See Moguri no kumonsa and Sumiyaki no Tatsu by Kishi, as examples of this trend, where the authors attempted to give children a realistic view of history since he felt that children did not acquire a true view of history at school.

Seki, "Jido Bungaku no Sengoshi".

Nishizawa, "Gendai Jido Bungei no Sakuhin to Sakka - Shonen Shozo Shosetu".


Idem, *Jido Bungaku no nakano Kodomo*.


Idem, "Dai 2-ji Sekai Taisengo no Sakuhin".

See Appendix 1. See also Matsutoya Hikoshiro ed. *Gakko Dokusho Chosa 25-nen* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1980), which shows that according to surveys carried out in schools, biographies were the most popular books with children during the previous twenty five years.

For further evidence on children's reading preferences, see:

1. *Minna no Toshokan*, 9, 1983. This librarian's magazine listed the most popular 50 books in five large public libraries in
different Japanese cities in 1982. Over seventy percent of the books listed were for young children, under ten years old, such as picture books. The rest fell mainly into the genres of realism and fantasy. There were no works of historical fiction listed.

ii. Many reading surveys carried out by public libraries give similar indications of the lack of popularity of children's historical novels. For examples, see the following public library reports: Nagoya-city Maizuru Library, "Chugakusei no Dokusho to Toshokan nitsuiteno Chosa-1980"; Yamaguchi-prefecture Libraries, "Jido Dokusho Chosa Hokoku-1980"; and Nagoya-city Nakamura Library, "Dokusho Chosa Hokokushuo-1976".


105Yamaguchi-prefecture libraries, "Jido Dokusho Chosa Hokoku-1980", p. 11. This survey shows that in one prefecture for example, only nine percent of school library books were bought in accordance with children's preferences.

106See Nagoya-city Maizuru Library "Chugakusei no Dokusho to Toshokan nitsuiteno Chosa-1980". This survey found that most books chosen by librarians for children were selected because they were considered to be instructive for children. Of the one hundred books selected as best for children by the librarians, two were Japanese historical fiction; Tenpo no Hitobito by Katsuo and Senbon Matsubara by Kishi. Both of these were examined in Ch. 8 and were found to have major literary weaknesses.
Since children's books began to be published in Japan after the Meiji restoration in 1868, children's historical fiction has neither reached a high level of quality nor apparently become very popular with children. Despite the fact that several books have won prizes and recommendations since the early 1960's, this analysis shows that many historical novels have major weaknesses and surveys indicate that few have appeared prominently on the reading lists of children, who seemingly prefer biographies. The reasons for these failures are to be found in the development of children's literature and the social and political history of Japan.

Historically-related books were first published in the 1890's and over the years became popular as subsidiary history teaching materials. The first decade of publishing set the pattern for these works through to 1945. Books were similar to history textbooks - collections of short accounts of historical events and moralistic descriptions of the virtues and achievements of historical figures. None of these books can be classed as historical fiction since there are no plots and characterization and the events are generally not accurately depicted.

The weaknesses of plots and characters were a feature of most children's literature during this period which was dominated by moralistic action stories of the type published under the popular series Shonen Kurabu. Whilst many of these stories had enjoyable plots and attractive characters they were generally stereotyped and lacked any depth of development. In later years these stories became little more than vehicles for jingoistic propaganda to encourage children to take up nationalistic, pro-war positions. The Akai Tori and proletarian literature produced as reactions against the poor quality and
feudalistic nature of this popular fiction also suffered from a lack of interesting plots and characters and with their excessive emphasis on idealized characters and their didactic style, they were not enjoyable for young readers. During this period there was no possibility of influence from foreign children's books since they were all retold when translated in order to make them similar to Japanese works.

The didactic, moralistic nature of all children's fiction during this period is a reflection of the social and political situation. Whilst the introduction of schooling after 1868 gave an education to most children this education was designed to provide only basic skills and a strong dose of traditional ethics—hard work and obedience, respect and loyalty to all those in higher positions, in particular the government and the emperor. The development of free thought or reason was frowned upon since it might lead to individualistic behaviour and a questioning of the existing socio-political structure. Parents supported and reinforced this social training since it was universally regarded as vital that children grew up to accept their role in the existing structure and conform entirely to social norms.

In addition, the historical information given in the historically-related books had to follow the official view taught in schools which was slanted by the government to legitimize the rule of the royal family and to encourage nationalism and militarism. Historians, teachers and authors who attempted to present a more objective view of history were suppressed and often arrested.

In summary, during the period from 1868 to 1945 there was no real historical fiction produced. Historically-related books were written but only to instruct children how to behave and to influence them to support the state and its policies. The only books which were enjoyable for children were the early stories of the Shonen Kurabu type, which despite
being moralistic had elements of action and excitement. However, books produced during the period had little literary quality since they generally lacked interesting, original plots and character development.

Following Japan's defeat in 1945, democracy was introduced and freedom of thought and expression was accepted. However, the effects of this took some years to materially influence children's historical fiction. Until the 1960's the pre-war style of historical books, with short recounts of events and descriptions of heroes, continued to dominate. In general they depicted the same events and heroes as before but showed them from a different viewpoint in accordance with the changed political and social values. They still cannot be classed as historical fiction since there are no plots and the historical information, whilst more objective than before the war, was still not always accurate. Nevertheless they were popular with authors and publishers since they were easy to write and there was a steady market with librarians and teachers who thought that children would get useful historical information and ethical values from them.

Children's fiction in general also did not develop much in the 1940's and 1950's. Most novels during this period were reprints of well-known pre-war stories and retold foreign stories. Whilst a few interesting stories of good quality were published they had little influence because any marked degree of difference from the traditional style was not accepted by the main body of authors and publishers. In the early years after the war several new magazines were published containing short stories on themes of democracy and peace. However the themes were over-stressed and characters too idealistic for the stories to be enjoyable. The magazine market was soon dominated by magazines with adventure, detective and romantic stories.
Whilst of poor literary quality, these magazines were very popular since they provided the entertainment that other children's stories lacked. By the late 1960's these magazine turned into weekly comics which have continued to dominate the children's magazine market until the present day.

From the late 1950's improvements in general children's fiction came about as a result of the stimulation of the first faithful translations of foreign works, the growth of more rigorous criticism and the efforts of a small group of dedicated publishers. Several good children's novels were published with original stories; realistic, well-devised plots and interesting and enjoyable characters. Themes of social and individual problems were dealt with as part of the stories, not merely by description and not didactically.

With the improvements in historical research and the increased dissemination of historical knowledge after 1945 most adults became more interested in Japan's history. Using the results of this research, together with authors' own studies, many good historical novels were published and became very popular. However, history education for children did not improve much: textbooks continued to be used by the government to present official viewpoints in order to influence children to support their policies.

These improvements in the quality of children's fiction and increased interest in history led to the production in the late 1950's of the first real children's historical fiction with long stories, plots and developed characters. The genre became established in the 1960's and many works have been written and published since then. Initially, themes of social reform dominated, but with the increased feeling of political frustration in the mid 1960's many authors turned to topics of individual human experiences. In the 1970's stories and settings became rather stereotyped and
the increase in quality in the previous decade was not maintained. This was true of children's fiction in general and relates to the increased commercialization of children's literature in recent years.

Through the two and a half decades that real children's historical fiction has been produced it has, in the main, shown consistent strengths and weaknesses. Many works have all the essential historical features - events are fundamental to the stories, period and place are accurate in terms of major detail, life is realistically portrayed and beliefs and attitudes are appropriate. However, most novels have serious literary flaws - in particular a lack of interesting plots and characters. Most authors do not attempt to transport the reader to the past by blending the history with the story but give historical information only through long description. In addition everything is explained to the reader - there is no element of mystery or need for imagination. There have been few important female characters with whom girl readers could identify. Characters are generally stereotyped and over-simplified and protagonists are portrayed idealistically to give readers examples of perfect behaviour. Characters' thoughts and feelings are rarely shown and their experiences therefore have no significant effect on their development. In general characters are not brought to life and cannot be identified with and enjoyed by the reader.

The main reason why these literary weaknesses have occurred consistently up to the present time appears to be that children's historical fiction has been written to meet a requirement of most Japanese adults - that it should instruct the reader. Despite social changes in Japan after 1945 it still appears that many adults see childhood as a time of preparation for adulthood when study and learning how to behave and take one's place in society take precedence over enjoyment and
individualistic development. However, not only does children's historical fiction carry the burden of ethical, social and political instruction but it also has to provide historical information. Authors' dissatisfaction with the inadequate teaching of history in schools appears to have led them to concentrate their efforts on including as much accurate historical information as possible in their works and this, together with the didactic style has resulted in the neglect of those aspects of a story which provides enjoyment for the child - interesting plots and enjoyable characters.

These literary weaknesses appear not to have even been detected by most adults concerned with the production of children's books. Many novels with clear flaws have nevertheless been awarded prizes and praised by critics. In addition, there has been insufficient critical analysis and the few good books have not served to draw attention to the weaknesses in most. Furthermore, there have been few translations of good foreign children's historical novels because they are perceived by translators and publishers as being uninteresting and difficult for Japanese children to understand since they are about foreign history and culture.

Whilst the weaknesses have apparently been recognized by children themselves, as demonstrated by their preference for other fiction and biographies, adults - in particular school and public librarians and critics continue to value a historical novel on the instruction it contains rather than the enjoyment it gives to the reader. They have failed to see that if children do not enjoy a book they are not likely to absorb the information included therein. They have also failed to understand that the most important function of children's historical fiction is to help children develop their own ideas through a better understanding of the lives and experiences of people who lived in the past and this can only be done when those experiences are clearly shown and can be identified with.
Hazard made the point well when he said:

I like books of knowledge; .... I like them when they do not deceive themselves about the quality of knowledge, and do not claim that knowledge can take the place of everything else. I like them especially when they distill from all the different kinds of knowledge the most difficult and the most necessary - that of the human heart.¹

When children can identify and sympathise with people living in the past the authors' ideas can be taken in and digested. However, when authors neglect the heart in their stories the knowledge and ideas expressed fail to inspire the children who read them. Hazard also said:

But to misshape young souls, to profit by a certain facility that one may possess to add to the number of indigestible and sham books, to give oneself too easily the airs of a moralist and scholar² to cheat in quality - that is what I call oppressing children.²

This quotation by Hazard is very relevant for current Japanese historical novelists. Despite their intention to provide good books, by trying to mould children's minds in order to instil their philosophies they are not liberating children but are continuing to oppress children in the same way that previous authors did before the war.
References


2Ibid, p. 45.
APPENDIX I

Survey-Outline and Results

According to research in Britain, historical fiction only seems to appeal these days to a small minority of British children, although it is rather more popular amongst children over the age of eleven than those of eleven and under.¹

However there appears to have been no research carried out in Japan to establish the popularity of children's historical fiction amongst Japanese children. Whilst school reading surveys in Japan have been carried out since 1954, firstly by Mainichi Newspapers Ltd. and later by the Japanese School Library Association, historical fiction was not dealt with as a separate category and no clear information is provided as to its popularity. These surveys show that between 1955 and 1979 biographies were the most popular books for children from ten to twelve years old whilst children from thirteen to fifteen preferred classics and detective stories to biographies.² No works of historical fiction were apparently included amongst the classics chosen by the children. Whilst from 1980 to 1983 no one category emerged as a clear leader, biographies continued to be well represented among those books preferred by children from ten to twelve years old.³ Although these surveys show that biographies have been consistently preferred by younger children over the last three decades they provide no reasons as to why that might be.

In an attempt to assess and analyse the popularity of historical fiction amongst Japanese children, the writer of this dissertation carried out a survey of primary school teacher's views in late 1984. The survey also attempted to ascertain teacher's views on the importance of historical fiction in children's development and on the use of inaccurate history textbooks.
Primary school teachers were chosen for this research for the following reasons. Since the writer did not have the time or resources to question children directly about their reading preferences the only two groups of people who could provide this information are teachers and librarians. However, it appears that few public libraries have librarians who deal specifically with children's books, whereas primary school teachers give reading lessons using children's books and run school libraries. In addition primary school teachers come into contact with the many historical novels published for the ten to twelve year age group which are selected as material for compositions. In general as critics have said, teachers are the most influential agents between children and their books.

One hundred and fifty primary school teachers in seventeen state schools within the Tokyo area were sent questionnaires. The seventeen schools were chosen because in each one there was a member of staff known to the writer who could assist in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. In each school, teachers with experience of history teaching were asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of one hundred and seven teachers (seventy one percent) completed and returned the survey forms. The teachers were asked three questions. Firstly they were asked "Do you think that historical fiction is an important feature of children's development?" as a general question to assess teacher's feelings about the value of historical fiction. Secondly they were asked "Which books are more popular with primary school children - historical fiction or biographies?" This question was intended to obtain information as to the comparative popularity of historical fiction using biographies as a benchmark, biographies having been the most popular category of children's books for the ten to twelve year age group in recent years, as mentioned above. Reasons for teacher's opinions were requested in order to help to ascertain
the strengths and weaknesses of the genre. Thirdly, the teachers were asked "Do you think that inaccuracies in authorized teaching materials, such as the use of unproved myths, are important in history teaching at primary school level?" This question was asked to ascertain how teachers regard and use inaccurate information in historical textbooks.

The findings of the survey can be summarized as follows:

1. The majority of primary school teachers (eighty five percent) consider that historical fiction is an important feature of children's development. The main reasons indicated were that historical fiction can provide a good view of the atmosphere of the past and a degree of historical detail not given through formal history teaching. This is in itself a reflection of the limited nature of history textbooks used in primary schools which have generally only dealt with describing famous events and people. The majority of these teachers who thought that historical fiction is not an important feature of children's development gave their reason as being that there is a risk of it giving a wrong view of the past due to the biased views of authors.

2. Most primary school teachers (sixty eight percent) believe that primary school children prefer biographies to historical fiction. The main reason according to teachers appears to be that biographies are easier to understand because children already have some knowledge of these famous historical figures through their lessons. Other reasons appear to be that children are more interested in the lives of individual people than in the past in general and are more attracted by the heroic figures shown in biographies. Another possible reason not mentioned by the
teachers surveyed is that children choose the biographies because their history lessons draw attention to and stimulate interest in the heroes portrayed. However the reasons given by the teachers indicate that children find biographies easier to understand, more interesting and more enjoyable than historical fiction.

3. A substantial number of primary school teachers (fifty three percent) feel that their teaching of history is not affected by any inaccuracies which may occur in history textbooks due to government control over those publications. The reasons given were either that history is not taught deeply enough at primary school for inaccuracies to be important, or that teachers do not depend on authorized textbooks but give their own views of history. Thirty four percent, however, feel that the use of inaccurate teaching materials is important, the main reasons given being that textbooks are the main teaching material and teachers want to teach children the established facts and not their own opinions.
Notes and References


APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information to help assess the development of Japanese children's historical fiction.

1. a) Sex of teacher
   
2. Age of teacher
   
   20 - 29
   30 - 39
   40 - 49
   50 - 59
   60 - 69

Please answer each question and give your reasons.

2. Do you think historical fiction is an important feature of children's development?

   A. Yes

      Because

      (1) It can give a good idea of the atmosphere of the past

      (2) It can provide historical detail not given in formal history teaching such as the thoughts of peasants.

      (3) Other reasons -

   B. No

      Because

      (1) Its value is no different from children's literature in general.

      (2) There is a risk of giving a wrong view of the past due to author's bias.

      (3) Other reasons -

3. Which books are more popular with primary school children - historical fiction or biographies?

   A. Historical fiction

      Because --
4. Do you think that inaccuracies in authorized teaching materials, such as the use of unproved myths, are important in history teaching at primary school level?

A. Yes

Because --

B. No

Because --
APPENDIX 3

Summary of Questionnaire Answers

1. **Age and sex of teachers who responded**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Old</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60-69</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Do you think historical fiction is an important feature of children's development?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Because**

A. **Yes**

(1) It can give a good idea of the atmosphere of the past. 47

(2) It can provide historical detail not given in formal history teaching such as the thoughts of peasants. 61

(3) Other reasons 8

B. **No**

Because

(1) Its value is no different from children's literature in general. 6

(2) There is a risk of giving a wrong view of the past due to authors' bias. 8

(3) Other reasons 2

C. **Unclear**

1 1%

3. **Which books are more popular with primary school children - historical fiction or**
biographies?

A. **Historical fiction** 14 13%

Because

1. Children want to know how people lived in the past. 3

2. Children can be transported to the past through characterization 5

3. Children want to read books relating to their history lessons 3

4. Other 2

5. No reason given 1

B. **Biographies** 73 68%

Because

1. Biographies are easier to understand because children already have some knowledge of the person through their lessons 25

2. Children are more interested in the lives of individual people than in the past in general. 12

3. Children are more attracted by the heroic figures shown in biographies 6

4. Children can get these books more easily from school libraries 11

5. Other 9

6. No reason given 15

C. **No answer given** 20 19%

4. Do you think that inaccuracies in authorized teaching materials, such as the use of unproved myths, are important in history teaching at primary school level?

A. **Yes** 36 34%

Because

1. Textbooks are the main teaching material 6
2. We try to show the established facts - not our own opinions.  
3. No reason given

B. No  

Because

1. We teach history from our own viewpoint and do not depend on authorized materials

2. History is not taught deeply at primary school level.

3. No reason given

C. No answer given
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