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# “Washing Off the Dust”

## Baths and Bathing in Late Medieval Japan

LEE BUTLER

**T**O the American or European of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, bathing may be as closely linked to Japanese culture as sushi and sumo. Japanese today are well known for their high standards of cleanliness and for the seemingly scalding tubs of water in which they soak. Visitors who fail to describe, in letter or diary, their experiences at the bath are rare, and have been since Europeans began traveling to the islands in the mid-sixteenth century. Their comments have long been marked by observations of bathers as “naked as frogs” or “red as boiled lobsters” and the like, although individuals such as João Rodrigues (1562–1633) and Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) offered detailed descriptions of baths that remain useful to scholars today.<sup>1</sup> Despite this long-standing interest in Japanese bathing practices, Western scholarly literature on the subject, particularly that undertaken from a historical perspective, is scant, and even work in Japanese is not extensive.<sup>2</sup> Recent social and anthropological studies have offered insights into the meaning of bathing in Japan today, but nothing comparable is available for earlier periods.<sup>3</sup> One result

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<sup>1</sup> Heine 1990, pp. 133–34 (in 1860 Francis Hall observed a young lady in a bath and noted that he was “curious to know how much boiling a *musume* needed before she was done”; see Notehelfer 2001, p. 85); Rodrigues 2001, p. 154 (also see Rodrigues’s comment about the many public baths in the capital, p. 169); Kaempfer 1999, pp. 266–67.

<sup>2</sup> The one existing scholarly article in English on Japanese baths was published in 1939 by Alfred Martin in *Ciba Symposium* (published by the Ciba Pharmaceutical company of New Jersey); see Martin 1939. The lack of academic interest is summed up in *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*’s entry for the bath (vol. 1, p. 146), which lists no author, even though authors are noted for most entries of even modest length. As Tsurusaki Hiroo 鶴崎裕雄 notes, studies of the bath in Japanese are not numerous. See Tsurusaki 1992, p. 175. *Kokushi daijiten* refers one to early twentieth-century articles by Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 and Nakagiri Kakutarō 中桐確太郎, suggesting that little has been produced more recently. In fact, Taketa Katsuzō’s 武田勝蔵 work, though written either for the commercial market (Taketa 1967; Taketa 1977) or, like *Kōshū yokujōshi* 公衆浴場史 and *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō* 公衆浴場史略年表, for an organization of public bath owners, is informative and well researched. *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, for which Taketa was the main author, is a particularly useful compendium of references and diary selections. Another useful introduction to the topic in Japanese is Ōba 1986.

<sup>3</sup> See Clark 1994; Bergman 1980; Chun 1995.

is that readers are left with generalizations about bathing that tend to conflate lengthy periods of time and ignore the effects of changes in society and culture. Some of these generalizations exoticize the bath, “In the West, a bath is a place where one goes to cleanse the body; in Japan, it is where one goes to cleanse the soul,” while others suggest naively that regular communal bathing is as old as the state, “Public baths were maintained by temples and by the wealthy for the poor and unfortunate [from Nara times] until the Muromachi period.”<sup>4</sup>

This article analyzes bathing practices during the late medieval period (1338–1600), an era of particular richness in the uses and styles of the bath. Although baths and bathing were not uncommon in ancient and early medieval times, their place in society and culture was limited, both in numbers of participants and in the range of practices associated with bathing. Baths of those eras were, for economic and social reasons, limited largely to a narrow elite of courtiers and clerics. By the early fifteenth century, changes were occurring, and in the next two centuries the bath developed into a significant social and cultural institution. As we shall see, bathing practices of this period offer insights into issues as diverse as religion, recreation, social relations, and personal hygiene. And though the elite continued to play a large role in bath culture, it was an elite of expanded numbers that included warriors as well as courtiers and clerics. Commoners, too, were participants in this culture, a significant shift from earlier times.

### *Baths and Bathing Before 1400*

Bathing in Japan is as old, it seems, as the history of the inhabitants of the archipelago. Chinese historians of the third century noted the people of Wa’s concern with cleanliness and religious purification, and the myths of *Kojiki* 古事記 contain numerous references to bathings and ablutions. These suggest that the bath had religious origins. That may be true, but one can argue just as well that its origins lay in geography, in the abundant hot springs found throughout the islands.<sup>5</sup> In any event, these two factors made bathing a familiar practice to many, even though few would have had opportunities to bathe regularly in prehistoric and ancient times.

In type and variety, Japanese baths were remarkably diverse well before the late medieval era. Despite that diversity, however, the purposes for which people bathed can be grouped into just two categories: religious and therapeutic. The bath’s religious connections were strengthened following the importation of Buddhism in the sixth century. Although purifications with water were common in native religious practices, bathing in large tubs or in steam baths, often as groups, was not. This changed under Buddhism, as bathhouses became common fixtures at large Buddhist temples. The Tōdaiji 東大寺 complex in Nara was said to have contained a bath, for example, and plans still exist for a bathhouse built at Hōryūji 法隆寺 in the mid-eighth century. Water for the latter was heated

<sup>4</sup> Smith and Yamamoto 2001, p. 51; *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 1, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi*, p. 4; Taketa 1977, p. 2; Grilli and Levy 1985, pp. 24, 26, 44, 46–48.

in a huge copper cauldron, five feet in diameter and four feet deep. From this central location the heated water was piped to smaller wooden tubs for bathing.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these baths that used hot water for soaking and washing, steam baths similar to saunas were common at temples. The primary purpose of all these baths was to purify priests in preparation for conducting religious ceremonies.<sup>7</sup> These and similar bathing practices persisted in later centuries and within various schools of Buddhism. In Zen monasteries, for example, the bath held considerable significance; it was not only a place to cleanse one’s body, but a location to meditate and even attain enlightenment.<sup>8</sup>

Purification baths—undertaken in cold water, though not necessarily through immersion—were also practiced by emperors and courtiers, both in preparation for officiating in ceremonies or visiting a temple and as part of a rite or a conclusion to a rite. References likewise appear in the Heian and Kamakura eras to “newborn” baths received by infants, ceremonial “first baths of the New Year” performed by the emperor and courtiers, and baths following ceremonies such as the emperor’s accession to the throne, the appointment of the crown prince, and the court entrance of an imperial consort.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the latter group of baths had some connection to native beliefs about defilement, while the former were clearly influenced by yin and yang divinatory practices, since a primary concern was that they be performed on auspicious days. These ceremonial baths may have provided the impetus for more regular, mundane bathing among the nobility, although much about the type and frequency of such “ordinary” baths is unknown. Both Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 and Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 made brief mention of bathing in their writings, and in the mid-tenth century, Fujiwara no Morosuke 藤原師輔 (908–960) instructed his descendants to “bathe every five days,” and to do so on “auspicious days.” According to Emperors Juntoku 順德 (1197–1242) and Go-Daigo 後醍醐 (1288–1339), during their eras emperors took daily baths. Unfortunately, the descriptions they gave provide little information other than the titles of those who attended the emperors and in what manner they did so.<sup>10</sup>

A second type of religious bath had charity or social welfare as its aim. This custom originated in the occasional baths that temples offered for lay members, which in time were opened to the poor so that they, too, might bathe. Wealthy patrons provided funds for heating the bath and for supplying bathers with loin-cloths (special loin-cloths were worn in the bath, so that one’s personal loin-cloth remained dry for redressing). The terms used to define these baths—*seyoku* 施浴, *kudoku* 功德, and *ryūgan* 立願—suggested either the pious requests of the baths’ sponsors or the saving grace of the Buddha (see figure 1). In time this

<sup>6</sup> Grilli and Levy 1985.

<sup>7</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>8</sup> See Collcutt 1981, pp. 202–204.

<sup>9</sup> Taketa 1967, pp. 74–78.

<sup>10</sup> Grilli and Levy 1985, pp. 58–60; Taketa 1967, pp. 78–79. See, for example, Go-Daigo’s description of the emperor’s daily bath in *Nitchū gyōji*, p. 405.

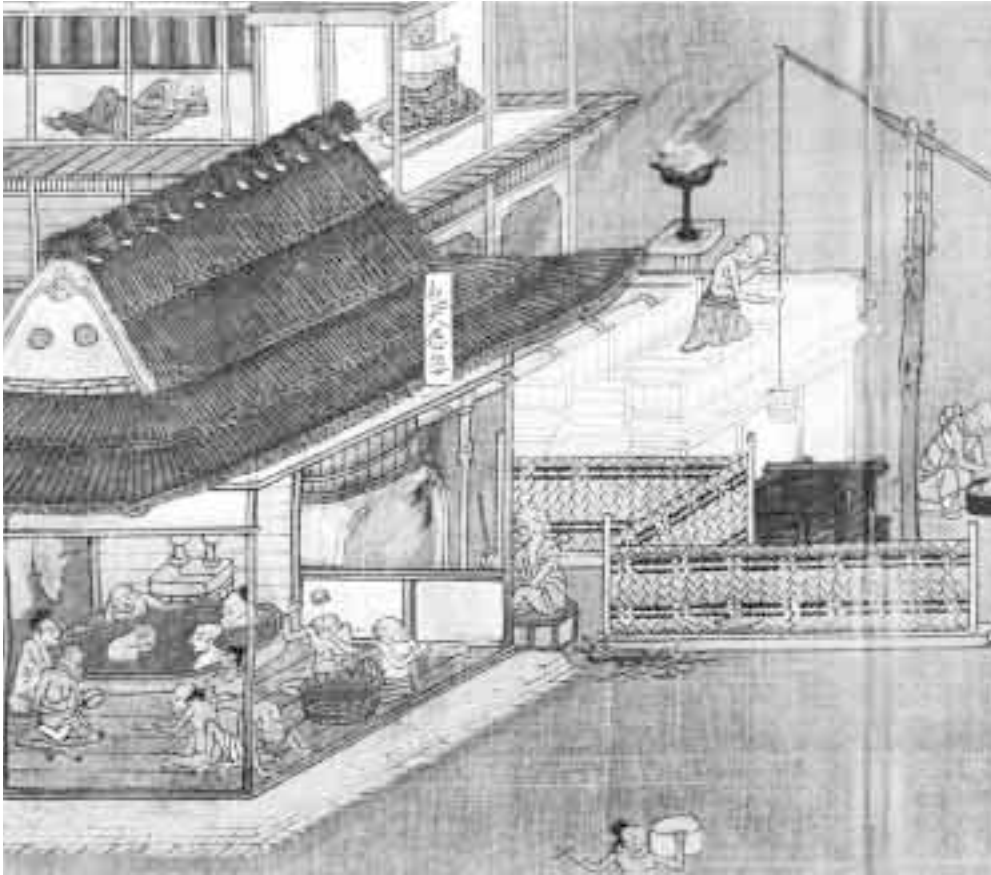


Figure 1. Depiction of a medieval charity bath at a Buddhist temple. *Hokekyō mandara ezu* 法華經曼荼羅絵図 (1326). Courtesy of Honpōji 本法寺.

charitable practice was believed to be of as much value to the patron as giving food or alms to the sick and poor. Best known for such piety was Empress Kōmyō 光明 (701–760), consort of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756), who vowed to wash one thousand beggars with her own hands, which she reportedly did at the Hokkeji 法華寺 bathhouse in Nara in 747 (see figure 2). Among the many others who sponsored baths in later centuries was Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–1199) who, according to *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡, provided one hundred days of “charity baths” in Kamakura in 1192 as a memorial service to the recently deceased Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河 (1127–1192).<sup>11</sup> Some patrons chose to fund baths on an ongoing basis by donating land to temples as “bath-fields” (*yuden* 湯田 or *furoden* 風呂田), the income from which was to be used to provide baths at regular intervals. A document of 1117 includes the first reference to a “bath-field,” donated at that time to the Nara temple Tōdaiji.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Taketa 1967, pp. 60–68; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>12</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 23.



Figure 2. Tokugawa-era portrayal of Empress Kōmyō washing beggars at Hokkeji bathhouse. *Sentō tebigigusa* 洗湯手引草. Courtesy of Columbia University.

Religious baths of the ancient and early medieval eras were dominated by the elite. Courtiers and clerics, those who wielded power and monopolized wealth and status, set the standards for religious baths and were the primary participants in them. The occasional temple bath for commoners was in reality no more for them than were courtiers' ceremonial baths. In both instances, elite members of society were the key figures, whether as stately bathers or generous patrons. Indeed, Empress Kōmyō's name and deed remain familiar still, more than a millennium after the fact, while the unnamed thousand she bathed left the temple in obscurity, and only temporarily clean.

Therapeutic baths (*kusuriburo* 薬風呂) had origins distinct from religious baths, and they followed their own path of development. The primary reason was that geography rather than wealth and power lay behind their establishment. One form of therapeutic bath originated in the archipelago's natural hot springs, found throughout the land in mountains and lowlands.<sup>13</sup> The most famous was at Arima 有馬, in the outskirts of present-day Kobe. Arima's springs were well known from ancient times. According to *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, Emperor Jomei 舒明 (593–641) made excursions to Arima in 631 and 638, and among those who

<sup>13</sup> Taketa 1977, p. 2.

visited Arima in later centuries were Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, the regent Fujiwara no Yorimichi 藤原頼道 (990–1074), and Retired Emperor Horikawa 堀川 (1079–1107). On the occasions when diarists provided details about the purposes of these visits, they inevitably wrote of “recuperation.”<sup>14</sup> Arima’s reputation as a place to recuperate, or undergo bath therapy, ensured that it would continue to be frequented by men of position and wealth, and eventually military might.

A second form of therapeutic bath was the *iwafuro* 石風呂 (also read *ishiburo*), or rock bath. This curious bath was particularly common along the shores of the Inland Sea, where it apparently originated. *Iwafuro* were rock enclosures that could be heated with a fire and then turned into a steam bath by placing damp straw or shore grasses upon the hot rocks, or by pouring salt water over them. Some *iwafuro*, possibly the oldest, were made from naturally occurring rock caves; many others were built of piled-up rocks. The purpose of these baths was medicinal; the salt from the seawater or shore grasses was believed to give the steam recuperative properties.<sup>15</sup>

A final type of therapeutic bath was the *kamaburo* 釜風呂, or oven bath. This was a steam bath, commonly found in mountainous areas. The name *kamaburo* came from the bath’s resemblance to clay ovens, though today one might do better by comparing its shape to an igloo lacking an entrance extension. It had a low doorway on one side that served both as the opening for feeding the fire and as the entrance and exit for bathers. The *kamaburo* was prepared by burning green branches and leaves within the bath, raking out the ashes, and then laying down a straw mat that had been soaked in water (or salt water) for bathers to lie upon. After the bathers had entered, the doorway could be sealed off to maintain the heat and humidity (see figure 3). Best known of the *kamaburo* was the bath at Yase 八瀬, to the northeast of Kyoto. According to stories passed down by inhabitants of the region, the *kamaburo* was developed by chance, originating as a kiln for drying (or “blackening”) green brushwood to sell in the city as fuel. Before long, someone realized that the steam produced by this process could be used for a therapeutic bath. Like the Arima hot springs, the Yase oven bath gained renown as a site visited by emperors and others of the elite.<sup>16</sup>

Individuals who desired a recuperative bath, but were unable to travel the distance to visit one, could prepare a bath in a personal tub, a practice that appears from the mid-Heian era among the elite. These recuperative baths were known by the names of the herbs, leaves, or other items that garnished them: “orchid bath” (*ran’yu* 蘭湯); “iris bath” (*shōbuyu* 菖蒲湯); “salt bath” (*shiburo* 潮風呂); “five-herb or five-leaf bath” (*gomokuyu* 五目湯); “three-herb or three-leaf bath” (*sanbokuyu* 三木湯).<sup>17</sup>

As these names of recuperative baths suggest, a diverse vocabulary formed

<sup>14</sup> “Arima onsen,” p. 346; Nakagiri 1928, pp. 9–11.

<sup>15</sup> Nakagiri 1928, p. 16; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 32–33; *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> Nakagiri 1928, pp. 9–14; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 44–46. *Yōshū fushi*, a seventeenth-century gazetteer of the Kyoto region, supports this theory about the origins of the *kamaburo*; see pp. 34, 240–41.

<sup>17</sup> See frequent references in quoted selections in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 36–80. For



Figure 3. Yase oven bath. *Miyako meisho zue* 都名所図絵 (1780). 3 vols. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1910–1912.

around bathing practices. Considerable work has been done on this topic; here I merely introduce the main points. Of the two terms closely associated with the bath today, *furo* 風呂 and *yu* 湯, the latter is the older of the two, having been used since ancient times to describe the hot water of natural springs. *Yu* was also associated with court bathing customs—the palace “bath room,” *oyudono* 御湯殿, being just one example. *Furo* is not nearly so old a term. It first appears in writing in the thirteenth century and initially referred to a steam bath. Scholars agree that the characters for *furo* carry no bath-related meaning; they are *ateji* 当て字, used as phonetic equivalents. This implies that the spoken term, *furo*, must have had a distinct meaning that linked it to bathing. The folklorist Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875–1962) argued that *furo* probably came from *muro* 室, cellar or cave, because some ancient steam baths were created from rock enclosures that may have resembled cellars. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the more logical characters 風炉 were used quite commonly to refer to the bath, but more generally meant a hearth or brazier, particularly of the type used for tea (*chanoyu*).<sup>18</sup>

example, pp. 28 (“salt bath”), 35 (“iris bath”), 36 (“five-herb bath”), 40 (“orchid bath”), 79 (“three-herb” bath).

<sup>18</sup> For details about the linguistic origins and etymologies of *yu* and *furo*, see Nakagiri 1928, pp. 3–8; Yanagita 1969; Taketa 1967, p. 10; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 10–21.



*Late Medieval Baths*

In certain respects, there was considerable continuity between ancient baths and those of the late medieval era. Religious baths and therapeutic baths continued to be important, and new developments, when they occurred, tended to unfold gradually; some appeared in nascent form prior to the late medieval era. Nonetheless, significant changes in bathing took place during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Among them, the most striking was the development of the bath as a place to gather and socialize—in short, its emergence as a source of communal recreation or pleasure. Although some baths of earlier centuries had no doubt provided pleasure, and bathing was often done as a group, people did not describe bathing—in word or image—in those terms; baths of ancient and early medieval times had more serious purposes than pleasure or recreation. Nor were earlier baths explicitly connected to the task of getting clean (except in a symbolic sense), though we can assume that, too, occurred. In the late medieval era, this also changed; sources at last begin to point to the practical, cleansing aspects of bathing. That was not all. A third development saw the bath evolve as an aesthetic space, where members of the elite participated in artistic practices characteristic of group arts of the time.

All these developments speak to the increasing social importance of bathing. Borrowing, renting, and sharing baths became common, and new baths were built at temples as well as at courtier and warrior residences, despite the warfare and destruction (and economic loss) common to the period. The real proliferation of baths took place, however, not in the private but in the public, commercial sphere. Unknown at the beginning of the late medieval era, public baths could be found without difficulty in Kyoto by the fifteenth century, and by the mid-sixteenth century, they were fixtures in many neighborhoods of the city. Public baths also existed by then in some smaller cities and villages. This, of course, was a major cultural development, providing ready bathing opportunities for commoners (who would have previously experienced only rudimentary forms of bathing) and their superiors. With the establishment of public baths, bathing could and did become a part of daily life and culture.

*Old and New Baths: Religious, Therapeutic, and Hygienic*

Baths of a religious nature continued to hold considerable interest during the late medieval era. Yet the continuity of practices in this area was more apparent than real. This is seen, for example, in the sponsoring of baths as charity or social welfare, customs that were much less narrowly defined than earlier. Now such baths could be sponsored for any number of good causes. Some baths were held as memorial services to deceased relatives, in which case mortuary tablets were brought to the bath, incense was burned, and bathers were expected to offer prayers for the souls of the deceased. Other baths were held not in temple bathhouses but in private residences; these often included a meal (called *otoki* 御齋) after the bath, a term that referred to food offerings at Buddhist temples. Individuals who were particularly worried about their own salvation could spon-

sor charity baths for themselves, the merit of which would redound to their benefit after death.<sup>19</sup> Common to each of these baths was the practice of limiting bathing opportunities to a select group of individuals. In other words, the poor and destitute were less often the object of service than in earlier centuries; one could now provide a religious bath for one’s friends, family, or retainers, and still realize personal religious benefit from that service. This exclusionary attitude is reflected in stipulations such as the following, one of a set dated to autumn 1508, and found within the records of Chōrakuji 長樂寺 temple in Suruga province: “Commoners and the like are prohibited from entering the bath.”<sup>20</sup>

The charity baths of Hino Tomiko 日野富子 (1440–1496), the aristocratic wife of the eighth Ashikaga shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政 (1436–1490), were a conspicuous example of the “self-serving” religious baths of the fifteenth century. Rich and influential as she was, Tomiko annually sponsored a “one-hundred-day *seyoku*” during the late fifteenth century for the benefit of her parents, who were still living. This bath was held in the shogun’s private bathhouse in Kitaōji 北大路, and guests included low-level courtiers lacking personal baths as well as Tomiko’s relatives and family retainers—in all instances individuals whose status was beneath hers. Besides providing the bath, Tomiko also furnished a meal, *otoki*, to the bathers.<sup>21</sup> Information about the charity baths of this era can also be found in the diary of Yamashina Tokikuni 山科言国 (1452–1503), who occasionally noted that “there was a bath for Buddhist purposes” (*butsuji ni furo kore ari* 仏事に風呂在之) and that he, fellow courtiers, and women from his household participated.<sup>22</sup>

Another type of religious bath of this period was the “devotional bath,” known by names such as “nenbutsu bath” (*nenbutsuyu* 念仏湯), “Jizō association bath” (*Jizō-kō-buro* 地藏講風呂), “Kannon association bath” (*Kannon-kō-buro* 観音講風呂), and “village devotional bath” (*gō kudoku yu* 郷功德湯). An early example appears in 1344. In the spring of that year, the courtier Nakahara Moromori 中原師守 recorded that he joined others of the “Sacred Lights True Word Association” (*Kōmyō Shingon-kō* 光明真言講) for a Buddhist ceremony and bath.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to earlier practices, this bath was not merely a preliminary purification; it was an act of devotion in and of itself. In a similar manner, participants in nenbutsu baths gave praise to the Buddha in the bath, not merely after leaving it. In the centuries that followed, and indeed throughout the Tokugawa period, many Japanese did likewise as members of associations devoted to Jizō,

<sup>19</sup> Taketa 1967, pp. 60–61, 66–68; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 53–55.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 147.

<sup>21</sup> Taketa 1967, p. 68; *Chikanaga-kyō ki*, Bunmei 2.12.20 (1470), vol. 1, p. 10, Bunmei 3.12.20 (1471), vol. 1, p. 79; also quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 124–25.

<sup>22</sup> *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 13.8.26 (1481), vol. 3, p. 267.

<sup>23</sup> For references to baths of this type, see *Yasutomi ki*, Bun’an 6.11.18 (1449), vol. 3, p. 99; *Hōtoku* 2.2.18 (1450), vol. 3, p. 151; *Kyōtoku* 2.5.21 (1453), vol. 4, p. 9; *Kyōkaku shiyōshō* 経覚私要鈔, Bunmei 1.4.22 (1469), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 122; *Suō no kuni Amidaji monjo* 周防国阿弥陀寺文書, Bunmei 12.7.19 (1480), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 134.

Kannon, or another bodhisattva or buddha.<sup>24</sup> At the heart of these bathing practices was the establishment and spread of *kō* 講, or “associations,” which flourished in the late medieval era along with the Kamakura “new schools” of Buddhism. By appealing to a broad segment of society, and being open to all classes, these new schools played a large role in making Buddhism a popular religion. Through the *kō*, they also brought bathing to a portion of the common people. But commoners were not alone either in their commitment to the new schools or their participation in *kō*. In fact, most references to religious-association baths describe courtiers and clerics as bathers.

Not everything about religious baths of the late medieval period was new. References to *gyōzui* 行水—ablutions done in pure, unheated water as preparation for performing ceremonies before gods or buddhas (and eventually referring to hygienic baths)—continue to appear in the diaries of priests and courtiers, and in descriptions of court purifications.<sup>25</sup> One change was that not all *gyōzui* were carried out in cold water; some were specifically described as “conducted in cold water,” others as “conducted in hot water,” leaving the reader unable to be sure about the temperature of those referred to merely as *gyōzui*.<sup>26</sup> Diarists like Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537), who lacked a bath at his residence and only rarely wrote of bathing for pleasure, provide a picture of purifying *gyōzui* performed at home. Sanetaka recorded his *gyōzui* practices somewhat irregularly, but he appears to have followed a standard routine. Each month on the first, the eleventh, and the twenty-first, he made his ablutions, after which he read sutras, visited a temple, called at court, or performed some other ceremonial act.<sup>27</sup> Anciently these ten-day intervals, known as *shun* 旬, were ceremonial days on which the emperor met with his court advisers and learned of the affairs of state. This was followed by an imperial feast. Though the practice had become much abbreviated well before the late medieval era (held only twice a year), courtiers like Sanetaka continued to treat the dates as important.<sup>28</sup> Yamashina Tokitsune 山科言経 (1543–1611) also did so. He regularly noted in his diary on these ten-day intervals that “because it is *shun*, I bathed.” Like Sanetaka, he then engaged in ceremony. Besides reading sutras, he commonly played classical court music or called at Kasuga 春日大社 or Gion 祇園社 shrines. The celebration

<sup>24</sup> The point is made by the editors of *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> For general discussions of *gyōzui*, see *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 49–55; and Taketa 1977, pp. 104–11.

<sup>26</sup> For specifically hot-water religious *gyōzui*, see *Chikanaga-kyō ki*, Bunmei 8.9.2 (1476), vol. 1, p. 275; and *Nobutane-kyō ki*, Bunmei 12.12.2 (1476), vol. 1, p. 160. For a specifically cold-water religious *gyōzui*, see *Yoshida-ke hinami ki* 吉田家日次記, Ōei 10.1.1 (1403), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 95. Of the many references to religious *gyōzui* that fail to mention water temperature, here are several examples: *Noritoki-kyō ki*, Ōei 12.12.10 (1405), vol. 1, p. 88; *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Meiō 3.2.12 (1494), vol. 5, p. 27; *Nisui ki*, Kyōroku 3.4.21 (1530), vol. 3, p. 234; *Nisui ki*, Kyōroku 3.8.17 (1530), vol. 3, p. 253.

<sup>27</sup> See Tsurusaki 1992, pp. 188–89. Also see the appropriate days of the month (1, 11, 21) in *Sanetaka-kō ki*, passim.

<sup>28</sup> On *shun*, see *Yūsoku kojitsu daijiten*, pp. 365–66; see also *Kuji kongen*, p. 68, for developments that had taken place by the early fifteenth century.

of the division of the seasons (*setsubun* 節分) offered another reason for Tokitsune to bathe himself, as did the responsibility of receiving from Ise shrine a “purification box” (*oharae bako* 御祓箱) on one occasion and that of preparing prayers (*norito* 祝詞) and rice gruel to present to the gods on another. Finally, when Tokitsune received the secret transmission of the divinatory practices known as Konjinsai 金神祭, his careful preparations included taking a bath (*gyōzui*).<sup>29</sup>

Therapeutic baths were likewise common during the late medieval period. *Tōji* 湯治, or “bath therapy,” properly conducted by the elite, was a lengthy ritual of seven, seventeen, twenty-seven, or thirty-seven days, and it involved a range of herbs and water temperatures.<sup>30</sup> Although less extensive treatments were possible, diarists commonly wrote that they “began bath therapy today,” suggesting that the process was ongoing, even if they did not note bathing on subsequent days. If possible, individuals traveled to Arima or Yase for their recuperative baths. When they were unable to do so, they either mixed herbs and minerals in their own baths, or had water brought from Arima and reheated in the capital.<sup>31</sup> This may have been the procedure for Emperor Go-Tsuchimikado 後土御門 (1442–1500), whose recuperative baths were conducted within the palace confines. In any event, water from Arima hot springs clearly made it the recuperative bath of choice for the period’s elite, who referred to it as *yu no yama* 湯の山, “mountain of hot springs.”<sup>32</sup>

References to warriors at Arima increased dramatically in the late sixteenth century, probably because the political process of reunification brought men of influence to the home provinces (and to the attention of diarists and chroniclers). Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536–1598) had particular interest in Arima, carrying out construction there in 1585 and 1596, besides bathing at the hot springs on occasion.<sup>33</sup> Two letters from Hideyoshi to a consort, Matsunomaru-dono 松の丸殿, express his confidence in the healing powers of the bath. At the time (probably 1594), Matsunomaru was suffering from an eye ailment, about which Hideyoshi was concerned. In his letter, he urged her to proceed to the bath and receive treatment. He would, if at all possible, meet her there within a few days.

<sup>29</sup> Tokitsune was remarkably faithful in recording his bathings “because of *shun*.” See the appropriate dates in any volume of his diary, *Tokitsune-kyō ki*. For specific references to ceremonial acts that followed, see Tenshō 4.1.1 (1576), vol. 1, p. 4; Tenshō 10.9.1 (1582), vol. 1, p. 293; Tenshō 10.10.11 (1582), vol. 1, p. 310; Tenshō 15.4.11 (1587), vol. 2, p. 262; Tenshō 15.5.1 (1587), vol. 2, p. 271; Tenshō 18.5.16 (1590), vol. 4, p. 59; Tenshō 19.12.23 (1591), vol. 4, p. 315; Keichō 6.10.29 (1601), vol. 11, p. 173.

<sup>30</sup> Taketa 1977, pp. 148–51.

<sup>31</sup> *Kennai ki* 建内記 notes in 1440 that the shogun Yoshinori 義教 was seeking a particular type of scented wood for a recuperative bath; quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 113. See the editors’ discussion about reheating Arima water in the capital (in reference to *Kanmon gyōki* 看聞御記), in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 111. For *yu no yama* references, see *Oyudononoue no nikki*, Eiroku 12/9/10 (1569), vol. 6, p. 528; and the letter by Hideyoshi cited in Kuwata 1979, pp. 280–81.

<sup>33</sup> “Arima onsen,” p. 346.

He added that she should allow only her mother to accompany her and keep quiet about her plans, “or everyone will desire to go, too”—a statement suggestive of the level of interest in the hot springs.<sup>34</sup> That same year the author of *Komai nikki* 駒井日記 noted several times that Hideyoshi was suffering from “sore muscles,” “pain in the upper arms,” and “a general malaise,” and that he had plans to travel to Arima for bath therapy.<sup>35</sup> A decade later, another renowned middle-aged warrior, Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542–1616), sought rejuvenation at the bath, though not at Arima but at the hot springs of Atami 熱海, in the eastern part of the country. As national hegemon, and recently appointed shogun, Ieyasu could afford to spend seventeen days in bath therapy, as appropriate to the aristocratic class.<sup>36</sup>

Many others among the warriors, courtiers, and priesthood likewise found opportunities to visit Arima, Atami, or Yase during these decades, evidence of which appears in various forms. In 1591, for example, the courtier Yamashina Tokitsune was in exile in Settsu Nakajima 摂津中島, present-day Osaka, and his income came in part from his practice of medicine. On the eighth day of the fifth month, Tokitsune noted in his diary that he examined several members of the Kenson 顯尊 household of Honganji 本願寺 temple that day and provided the “minor captain,” who was departing for the hot springs, packets of “medicine” to add to his baths. Tokitsune recorded as well that “the wet-nurse is, of course, going to the bath,” so he also gave her supplements for her bath.<sup>37</sup>

The increased activity at Arima was a boon to local business, as seen in Konoe Nobutada’s 近衛信尹 (1565–1614) account of his ten-day stay there in the late 1580s. As Nobutada noted, there were two baths available and female bath attendants to assist at both. Because the inn that Nobutada had arranged to stay in was unacceptable, he moved to a different one. In the process he entered both baths and was treated so well by both sets of bath women that he felt obliged to split his time between the two. On the sixth and tenth days of his stay, Nobutada summoned the bath women (from “bath one” and “bath two”) and presented them with gifts: “two sashes and 20 *hiki* 疋” to each of the “‘big’ bath women” (adults) and “one sash and 10 *hiki*” to each of the “‘little’ bath women” (young girls).<sup>38</sup>

Though personal hygiene or physical cleanliness might seem to us today to have been an obvious object of bathing, evidence suggests that, until the late medieval era, few Japanese baths were prepared explicitly for that purpose. To be sure, attitudes toward defilement and ritual cleanliness had long shaped washings and other acts of purification at temples and shrines, but these were symbolic; physical cleansing did not necessarily occur, particularly where enthusiasm for bathing may have been muted by cold water. We know, however, that in time bathing and cleanliness came to be closely linked. Western visitors of the early modern era commented on the natives’ habit of taking regular cleans-

<sup>34</sup> See the letters, and commentary on them, in Kuwata 1979, pp. 280–83.

<sup>35</sup> *Komai nikki*, Bunroku 3.4.22–25 (1594), pp. 565–67.

<sup>36</sup> *Tōdai ki*, Keichō 9.3.1 (1604), p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 19.5.8 (1591), vol. 4, p. 223.

<sup>38</sup> “Arima nyūto ki,” pp. 161–64.

ing baths, woodblock prints point to the practice, and during the Victorian era, when, in the West, public bathhouses were established and the “gospel of cleanliness” preached, there was no similar movement in Japan calling for adoption of the custom of regular bathing—it was unnecessary.<sup>39</sup> The problem for the historian is finding significant evidence of hygienic baths prior to the Tokugawa era. The reason is that diarists or chroniclers never described trips to public baths or gatherings at a neighbor’s *furo* as occasions for removing grime. When the purposes of these baths were noted (which was rare) or implied, it was as a form of pleasure or relaxation. As for personal baths, the task of washing oneself was too mundane for inclusion by most diarists, who apparently never considered mentioning anything about their habits of hygiene. Meeting with friends at the *furo* was one matter; entering a small tub or taking a sponge bath at home was another.

Exceptions to this are found in at least two sources: first, the folding screen paintings of Kyoto (*rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu* 洛中洛外図屏風), and second, the diary of Yamashina Tokitsune. The former, depicting “scenes in and around the capital,” were produced in large number in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though there are only three extant screens from the sixteenth century. Of these, the Machida-ke 町田家 and Uesugi-ke 上杉家 screens both depict a bathhouse in the northeast section of the city near the temple Chionji 知恩寺 (Hyakumanben 百万遍), in which several male figures bathe. The three bathers in the Machida-ke screen appear to be assisting one another, and in the Uesugi-ke screen, one of the bathers is having his hair washed by a female attendant. In each depiction, cleanliness appears as a primary component of the bath (see figures 4 and 5).<sup>40</sup>

The second source, *Tokitsune-kyō ki* 言經卿記, is exceptional in discussing cleanliness, with its author, Yamashina Tokitsune, regularly noting baths and washings of all types. Perhaps this was a result of his work as a physician and an accompanying concern for hygiene. At any rate, he was as inclined to record his personal baths as outings to the *furo*. As already noted, Tokitsune recorded the *gyōzui* that he took in preparation for religious ceremonies and readings. He also, however, used the term *gyōzui* to refer to simple physical washings. Tokitsune usually mentioned these as part of a context of other events. Among Tokitsune’s patients, for example, was his sister-in-law, who was also the daughter-in-law of the Honganji head, Kenryo Kōsa 顯如光佐 (1543–1592). Nishi Onkata 西御方, as Tokitsune wrote of her, was an influential woman who appears frequently in his diary and was an obvious hypochondriac. More than once she desired Tokitsune’s expert opinion about her health “because she needed to bathe” (*gyōzui aru beki no aida* 行水可有之間) and was “worried about being out in the breeze,” or because she was apprehensive about taking “her first bath since being sick” (*byōgo hajimete gyōzui seshime*, 病後始而令行水).<sup>41</sup> Similar references

<sup>39</sup> Much has been written about cleanliness and the establishment of public bath houses in the West. See, for example, Bushman and Bushman 1988; Terret 1993; Sheard 2000; Glassberg 1979.

<sup>40</sup> For reproductions of the Machida and Uesugi screens, see Ishida 1987. Illustrations of the baths appear on pp. 82 and 95 of the respective volumes.

<sup>41</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Bunroku 2.6.9 (1593), vol. 5, p. 302; Keichō 1.10.2 (1596), vol. 7, p. 228; Keichō 3.5.29 (1598), vol. 8, p. 256.



Figure 4. Detail of a bath depicted in the Machida-  
*ke rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu* (sixteenth century).  
 Courtesy of Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Haku-  
 butsukan 国立歴史民俗博物館.

to post-illness “first baths” of other aristocrats, including Tokitsune’s wife and son, suggest that these *gyōzui* were hygienic baths, part of a bathing routine that was temporarily suspended because of sickness.<sup>42</sup> That by this time *gyōzui* had come to connote physical washing for purposes of cleanliness is supported by the definition in the Japanese-Portuguese dictionary of 1603, *Vocabvlario da lingua de Japam*: “to cleanse oneself in hot water.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Keichō 6.4.14 (1601), vol. 11, p. 53; Keichō 8.3.5 (1603), vol. 12, p. 45; Keichō 8.4.11 (1603), vol. 12, p. 61; Keichō 9.11.14 (1604), vol. 13, p. 75; Keichō 10.6.23 (1605), vol. 13, p. 198. The practice of bathing after recovering from illness appears to have been followed nearly two centuries earlier, as recorded by Tokitsune’s ancestor Noritoki 教言, who used the term *mokuyoku* 沐浴 to describe the baths that Emperor Go-Komatsu 後小松 and the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimochi 足利義持 had in 1405 and 1407 respectively following recovery from illness; see *Noritoki-kyō ki*, Ōei 12.11.30, 12.20 (1405), vol. 1, pp. 84, 93; and Ōei 14.11.6 (1407), vol. 2, p. 153.

<sup>43</sup> See Doi et al. 1980, p. 302, entry for *guiozui*.



Figure 5. Detail of a bath depicted in the *Uesugi-ke rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu*. Courtesy of Yonezawa-shi Uesugi Hakubutsukan 米沢市上杉博物館.

*Gyōzui* as hygienic baths also appear in *Tokitsune-kyō ki* as a norm of social etiquette, something offered to visitors who stayed the night as one’s guests. For example, in the summer of 1597, Tokitsune spent part of a day with Mizoe Nagashige 溝江長成, who desired to sell a copy of the *Kokinshū* 古今集 he owned and had enlisted Tokitsune’s help. They had dinner together, and Tokitsune stayed the night, after taking a bath (*gyōzui*) his host provided.<sup>44</sup> On numerous other occasions, Tokitsune was the host, offering baths to his guests, which included a nephew from Echizen province, a niece and her wet-nurse, one of his wife’s cousins, and a Shingon priest bearing a letter for Tokitsune.<sup>45</sup> The most instructive example, which reveals the reach of this custom, concerns Tokitsune’s treatment of three workers he employed in 1590. The three were thatchers

<sup>44</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Keichō 2.6.8 (1597), vol. 7, p. 406.

<sup>45</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 16.5.3 (1588), vol. 3, p. 65; Keichō 3.4.3 (1598), vol. 8, p. 223; Keichō 1.6.7 (1596), vol. 7, p. 116; Keichō 1.17.9 (1596), vol. 7, p.172; Tenshō 10.5.21 (1582), vol. 1, p. 276.



and were hired for the day to put on a new roof. Besides paying them 20 *hiki* each and feeding them lunch, Tokitsune “provided them a bath in the evening.”<sup>46</sup> In each of the preceding examples, Tokitsune used the term *gyōzui*, indicating the bath’s purpose of physical washing and suggesting that it was meant for an individual, not a group.

A final thread of evidence from Tokitsune’s diary of the increasingly hygienic nature of bathing is seen in his depictions of visits to the commercial hot water bath, or *oriyu* 居湯, in this case in Osaka. On occasion Tokitsune noted that he shaved his head before going to the bath, but other times he wrote of shaving at the bath. The practice of shaving the front of the head in the shape of a half moon was carried out at least weekly among courtiers and was usually done at home, and usually separately from bathing. Tokitsune himself notes many occasions on which he shaved his head without then visiting the bath. The two activities were, however, becoming linked. Similarly, Tokitsune wrote in 1595 of “entering the hot water bath” and then “washing my hair.” The latter was another exercise that traditionally had been done separately from the bath—certainly not in the *furo* or *oriyu*.<sup>47</sup>

### *Communal Baths*

Of the baths described in the preceding section, only the devotional baths carried out by groups such as Jizō or Kannon associations were specifically communal in nature. Traditional charity baths had a communal aspect, but this was not a definitive quality. Therapeutic and hygienic baths were taken individually in most instances, not in groups. And yet, despite these important examples of individual bathing, the late medieval bath strikes one above all as a social institution. Because of the costs of heating water, either for a steam bath or a tub, there were economic reasons for this. More important, however, was a social or cultural attitude that saw bathing as an activity to be done with others, whether friends or peers, family or neighbors. Underlying all of this was another idea missing from ancient and early medieval depictions of the bath—that it should be a place of relaxation, recreation, even pleasure.

One result of this increased interest in communal bathing as recreation was a corresponding increase in the number of bathhouses built on the grounds of private residences, something uncommon—and unmentioned by diarists—before the fifteenth century. An early example is the Yamashina family bath, described

<sup>46</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 18.5.2 (1590), vol. 4, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> On head-shaving practices, see *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 16.10.15 (1588), vol. 3, p. 135; Tenshō 16.11.1 (1588), vol. 3, p. 139; Tenshō 16.11.9 (1588), vol. 3, p. 143; Tenshō 17.1.4 (1589), vol. 3, p. 166; Tenshō 17.1.22 (1589), vol. 3, p. 174; Tenshō 17.2.15 (1589), vol. 3, p. 183; Tenshō 17.6.1 (1589), vol. 3, p. 229. Similar references to head shaving both prior to and distinct from the bath are common in this part of Tokitsune’s diary. The reference to Tokitsune washing his hair at the bath is found in Bunroku 4.11.30 (1595), vol. 6, p. 391. In contrast to Tokitsune, in the early sixteenth century, Washinoo Takayasu 鷲尾隆康 always washed his hair separately from the bath; see *Nisui ki*, Ōei 5.12.24 (1525), vol. 3, p. 29; Kyōroku 1.12.28 (1528), vol. 3, p. 204; Kyōroku 3.1.19 (1530), vol. 3, p. 218.

in *Noritoki-kyō ki* 教言卿記 by its proud owner, Yamashina Noritoki 山科教言 (1328–1410). At the turn of the fifteenth century, Noritoki and his associates of the Kyoto nobility were already regular bathers, making use of private, temple, and public baths. After the family residence burned in 1405, Noritoki undertook its reconstruction and, in the fall of 1407, added a bathhouse. His diary entries over the next three months provide a close look at the process of acquiring a cauldron and related apparatus, building a bathhouse, and finally celebrating the “first heating” that followed. Here are selected diary entries.

Ōei 14.8.19 (1407). The priest Sōkin 宗金 came. [We] decided on [a price of] 3 *kan* 貫 for a small bath (*koburo* 小風呂) and cauldron (*kama* 釜).<sup>48</sup>

Ōei 14.8.25. I wanted to send for the *furo*, but was told that the cauldron was in poor shape, so it wouldn’t be delivered today.

Ōei 14.8.27. The priest Sōkin came. He said that the cauldron is damaged, so he will lower the price by 20 *hiki*. Tomorrow morning he’ll bring it over.

Ōei 14.8.28. I received the small bath today. . . . Six lesser attendants, two stable boys, and four servants, for a total of twelve, carried it. Very nice. [Then] I went to see the carpenter.

Ōei 14.9.9. Lumber for the *furo* came from Saga:

Twelve “double pillars”—at 60 [*mon* 文] a piece, equaled 720 *mon*—of *hinoki* 檜 wood. Chestnut pillars, twenty, for 700 *mon*. “Double support stops,” five bundles, for 500 *mon*. [Labor of] carters, 100 *mon*. For a total of 2 *kan*, 20 *mon*.

Ōei 14.9.23. The bath cauldron was repaired and brought. I paid 700 *mon* [for the repairs].

Ōei 14.10.14. Two carpenters [came]; they began constructing the bathhouse. [Noritoki notes the regular appearance of two to three carpenters over the next month.]

Ōei 14.10.29. Because today was an auspicious day, the bath pillars as well as the ridgepole were raised. Celebration, as is custom. I gave the head carpenter, Shirō Dayū 四郎大夫, 100 *hiki*. . . . Very fine.

Ōei 14.11.3. A metalworker came; he painted the bath cauldron. Very fine.

Ōei 14.11.30. First firing of the new *furo*. Exceptionally fine. [The attendant] Sukechika 資親, served [to heat it]. Those who came included: Ubuei 右武衛 [Norifuyu 教冬] father and sons, three; the new captain, Noritaka 教高; Kurabe 倉部 [Norioki 教興] father and sons, three. I entered [the bath] three times. All the women entered, too. However, because the elderly nun [Noritoki’s mother] hasn’t gotten her strength back after her bout with diarrhea, she decided not to enter today. That is unfortunate. Next we feasted everyone with drinks and refreshments.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The term *koburo* probably referred to the structure in which the cauldron was placed and perhaps other elements of the heating apparatus.

<sup>49</sup> *Noritoki-kyō ki*, vol. 2, pp. 109, 113, 114, 119–20, 127, 137–38, 147, 151, 165. The gathering for the “first firing” was a family affair. Norifuyu, Noritaka, and Norioki were Noritoki’s sons.

Half a century later, the warrior Ninagawa Chikamoto 蜷川親元 (1433–1488) recorded in his diary the lumber list for the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa's *furo*.<sup>50</sup> Given Yoshimasa's refined tastes, we can assume that it was carefully made and furnished. This was in 1465, and in all likelihood the bath was different than the one that appeared in his Higashiyama 東山 villa in 1486. This latter bath was furnished with a plaque designating it a place to “wash off the dust” (*senjin* 洗塵), a term that alluded to a Song-period text and suggested receiving banquet guests who had come from a great distance.<sup>51</sup>

The most impressive example of a new bath was that of the Konoe family, erected in 1489. Like most of their peers in the nobility, the Konoe suffered substantial losses, both in property and income, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were thus able to build a bathhouse only at the expense of other amenities. We get an idea of the substantial cost of their bathhouse by comparing it to other construction undertaken at the time. In 1478, the Konoe residence and surrounding structures were destroyed by fire. Nothing was left, and so the rebuilding, begun in 1482, was done from scratch. Two years later, the main residence was completed, as was a surrounding wall and exterior gates, allowing the family to occupy the structure. The project was described as “half finished,” and had cost approximately 100 *kan*, excluding labor. Financial records kept by Konoe Masaie 近衛政家 (1444–1505) reveal that the next large structure added to the property was a bathhouse, in the spring of 1489. Completed over a four-month period, this required 58 *kan* to complete, 45 *kan* for materials and 13 *kan* for labor. What these figures suggest is a bathhouse that was nearly two-thirds as expensive as the “half-finished” Konoe residence, and eight to ten times more expensive than the simple bathhouse that Yamashina Noritoki constructed earlier in the century. The Konoe bathhouse was also a luxury that preceded the reconstruction of the family library—which was, like the bath, a separate structure.<sup>52</sup>

The bath immediately became a center of social activity at the Konoe residence. As at Yamashina Noritoki's bath, the “first heating” was celebrated with associates among the nobility. Seven straight days of bathing followed, and guests included friends, vassals, priests, and the chancellor, Ichijō Fuyuyoshi 一条冬良 (1464–1514). In the years that followed, the Konoe bath was heated once a week or once every two weeks and was a significant gathering place for influential courtiers, priests, and warriors—and at least one master of linked verse.<sup>53</sup> Whereas courtiers made up the bulk of the visitors in the late fifteenth century,

<sup>50</sup> *Chikamoto nikki*, pp. 671–72.

<sup>51</sup> *Inryōken nichiroku* 蔭涼軒日録, quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 140. For the reference to the Song-era text (*Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事), see the dictionary *Hanyu da cidian*, vol. 5, p. 1156. Thanks to my colleague, Michael Farmer, for help with this.

<sup>52</sup> Statistical data come from charts in Yukawa 1992b; and Yukawa 1992a, pp. 75, 138–40. In the case of the latter work, the chart listing expenses for the *furo* on p. 75 includes labor costs, while the chart on pp. 138–40 includes only costs for material.

<sup>53</sup> See entries in *Go-Hōkō-in ki*, Bunmei 17.6.11–17 (1485), vol. 1, p. 275, for Masaie's comments on heating the bath seven days in a row and for guests. References to bathing and guests occur regularly in the diary from this point on.

warriors were just as common during the early sixteenth century, and included men such as Hosokawa Takakuni 細川高国 (1484–1531), who was accompanied by his mother and his son. The recreational nature of the Konoe bath (and others like it) was reflected in the activities that preceded, accompanied, or followed bathing. Among the most common were feasting, drinking, archery, kickball, and backgammon. During the spring, flower viewing and bathing were closely tied. The day-long gatherings at the Konoe residence in the third month, a primary part of which was an excursion to “appreciate the flowers,” often included a session at the bath.<sup>54</sup>

Although the scale of the gatherings at the Konoe bath during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was exceptional, little else about them was. References to group bathing in the capital among courtiers and priests (and less commonly, warriors, few of whom resided in the capital) appear regularly in diaries of the era. But neither private baths nor temple baths were numerous or readily available for use, particularly after the destruction of the Ōnin War. Individuals with connections to temples might occasionally join priests at a temple bath, but few had standing invitations. Private baths likewise were accessible only by invitation, and in post-Ōnin War Kyoto, the expense of regularly heating a private bath exceeded many personal budgets. Bathers thus had to consider other possibilities—which indeed they did, since all existing evidence suggests that communal bathing became increasingly popular during the next century and a half.

The first way individuals (primarily courtiers and clerics) worked around the shortages of baths and expenses of bathing was through the *gōmokuburo* 合木風呂.<sup>55</sup> As the term suggests, this was a bath heated with “wood supplied in cooperation.” In other words, each bather brought a portion of firewood to heat the bath, which was generally a private or temple bath made available to friends or colleagues who agreed to furnish fuel and heat the water. Naturally, the larger the party of bathers, the less wood each had to bring. Diarists regularly listed the names of between four and seven individuals, and as many as ten on occasion, who gathered for a *gōmokuburo*. In fact, more bathers usually participated, but because they were attendants or of lesser status, they were noted only as “and others” or not at all.<sup>56</sup> When the number of bathers (and thus firewood) was insufficient, “cooperative baths” were cancelled, as happened to Yamashina Tokitsugu 山科言繼 (1507–1579) and several associates in the spring of 1548.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Butler 2002, pp. 71–77; *Go-Hōkō-in ki*, Entoku 2.3.9 (1490), vol. 2, p. 320.

<sup>55</sup> *Moromori ki* 師守記, Engan 4.7.19 (1339), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 79; *Kenshun sōjō nikki* 賢俊僧正日記, Shōhei 1.6.11 (1346), as noted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 82.

<sup>56</sup> Many courtier diarists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries recorded occasions of “cooperative baths” (which also appear as *gōrikiburo* 合力風呂). Here are a few, of many, examples: *Yasutomi ki*, Ōei 26.6.4 (1419), vol. 1, p. 88; *Yamashina-ke raiki*, Bunmei 4.12.15 (1472), vol. 2, p. 316; *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 8.12.14 (1476), vol. 2, p. 209; *Chikanaga-kyō ki*, Bunmei 8.12.14 (1476), vol. 1, p. 281; *Nisui ki*, Eishō 16.11.2 (1519), vol. 1, p. 187; *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Tenmon 17.4.28 (1548), vol. 2, p. 395.

<sup>57</sup> *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Tenmon 17.4.19 (1548), vol. 2, p. 393.

A second way for courtiers and priests to enjoy communal bathing was through public baths, commercial enterprises that developed in Kyoto, and at least some sections of the rest of the country, in the late medieval era. The earliest evidence of commercial baths appears in *Gion shugyō nikki* 祇園執行日記, a fourteenth-century diary kept by priests at Kyoto's Gion shrine. A reference of 1352 notes that in the first month of that year, a “penny bath” (*sentōburo* 銭湯風呂) was established at Gan'ajji 岩愛寺. The same entry adds that such a bath, operated by a commoner, had appeared first during the Genkō era (1321–1324) on the grounds of Unkyoji 雲居寺. Taketa Katsuzō 竹田勝藏 believes that these two temples, Gan'ajji and Unkyoji, were located within Gion shrine and that the baths operated at them, as *sentōburo*, were commercial enterprises.<sup>58</sup> The bath proprietors had no doubt seen the wisdom in opening these baths at temples, locations where people regularly congregated and where communal bathing was already established as an occasional practice. Shrine administrators probably gave their approval to open baths because of the rents they received.

The trickle of evidence that refers to public baths in the fourteenth century becomes a flood in the fifteenth, when commercial baths flourished. Within the first decade of the new century alone, five public baths appear in sources by name or location in the capital,<sup>59</sup> a pattern that continued throughout the remainder of the late medieval era. In all, more than twenty Kyoto baths were identified by name by authors writing between 1400 and 1600. Particularly common were those like Ichijō-Muromachi bath 一条室町風呂, Shijō-Higashinotōin bath 四条東洞院風呂, and Gojō-Horikawa bath 五条堀川風呂, names adopted from nearby street intersections. One of the more interesting baths of this type was the “second-floor *furo* of the Sō intersection” (さうの辻二かいふろ) referred to in 1470 by the author of *Yamashina-ke raiki* 山科家礼記. Besides these twenty-some baths, many more are referred to without specific appellation; instead they show up as “neighborhood,” “rented,” or “penny” baths, or were identified by owners (“the bath proprietor Yosaburō 与三郎”) or other distinguishing evidence, such as cost. Some bathhouses became such fixtures in their neighborhoods that intersections were known by the local bathhouse name rather than the reverse.<sup>60</sup>

Public baths were communal for economic reasons. Patrons of the bath needed to be able to afford to visit them, and proprietors needed to keep fuel costs down by ensuring that hot water and steam were used efficiently, in other words by groups rather than individuals. Though data on the cost of public baths are extremely limited—most diarists wrote nothing about bathing expenses, and those

<sup>58</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 85. Also see the editor's accompanying comments.

<sup>59</sup> See diary references in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 93–100.

<sup>60</sup> Names and references to Kyoto baths for these two centuries come from the diaries and documents referred to in these notes. Many can be found in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 92–168. Some diarists never mentioned public baths by name; others did so regularly. “Yosaburō” appears in a document in *Daitokuji monjo* 大徳寺文書, Eishō 15.9.6 (1518), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 149. Two references to intersections known by neighborhood bathhouses may be found respectively in *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*, Bunmei 15.7.29 (1483), vol. 8, p. 58; and a tax document dated Chōkyō 1.8.3 (1487), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 141.

who did usually noted the cost per group rather than individual—a few sources provide insight into the matter. The most explicit reference to cost per individual appears in a 1471 entry in *Yamashina-ke raiki*, a diary kept by retainers of the aristocratic Yamashina family. On 12.23, Ōsawa Hisamori 大沢久守 (1430–1499) recorded that he and four associates paid eight *mon* each to enter the bath, an amount approximately equivalent to the mean price of a liter of rice during the century.<sup>61</sup> In another entry for the same year, Ōsawa Shigetane 大沢重胤 (1447–1472) noted that a priest’s expenses to heat a bath for their group totaled 120 *mon*, and on two other occasions, he wrote of the “bath payment” or “fee to the bath owner” for the Yamashina group as 10 *hiki*, or 100 *mon*.<sup>62</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, dating to the end of the sixteenth century, corroborates what is found in *Yamashina-ke raiki*. Tokitsune, too, writes of paying 10 *hiki* to have a bath heated for his group on one occasion, and of covering his individual bathing expenses “up until today” with 100 *mon* (10 *hiki*) on another.<sup>63</sup> While questions arise about the meaning of these figures, since we are ignorant about the quality and reputation of the baths, possible discrepancies between prices for aristocrats and commoners, and other factors, simple calculation indicates that a public bath owner would require fifteen bathers at a price of 8 *mon* a session to meet expenses (calculated at 120 *mon*); more bathers would ensure a profit. Although this might suggest that bath owners, needing relatively few bathers to break even, were turning an excessive profit, written and illustrated evidence reveals bathhouses of limited size.

It was possible for a group to pool their funds and rent a public bath for several hours, thereby restricting entrance to their invited guests. This was known as the “rented bath,” *tomeyu* 止湯, 留湯, or *tomeburo* 止風呂.<sup>64</sup> Expenses for either *gōmokuburo* or *tomeburo* were slight enough that even courtiers known for their economic straits, such as Yamashina Tokitsugu, regularly noted their participation. And courtiers and priests were as likely to gather one week at a *gōmokuburo*, the next at a *tomeburo*, and then not bathe communally for two or three weeks,

<sup>61</sup> *Yamashina-ke raiki*, Bunmei 3.12.23 (1471), vol. 2, p. 139. For information on rice prices during the era, see *Dokushi biyō*, pp. 746–49.

<sup>62</sup> *Yamashina-ke raiki*, Bunmei 3.11.27 (1471), vol. 2, p. 173; Bunmei 3.10.25 (1471), vol. 2, p. 122; Bunmei 13.1.16 (1481), vol. 4, p. 10. In 1472, Ōsawa Hisamori recorded entering rented (*gōmoku*) baths on 12.15 (vol. 2, p. 316), and 12.29 (vol. 2, p. 324), among other days. He paid 5 *mon* as his portion for the first bath; for the second bath, *each* person paid 70 *mon* (*ofuro gōmoku nanajūmon ate* 御風呂合木七十文宛). It is difficult to know what to make of the latter figure. I am inclined to dismiss it as an error in transcription (even by Hisamori himself), since the bath warrants no special mention in the diary. Surely there were baths of great expense, but they would have been sponsored by powerful individuals.

<sup>63</sup> *Tokitsune kyō ki*, Tenshō 14.10.13, 12.24 (1586), vol. 2, pp. 191, 214.

<sup>64</sup> These were particularly common among courtiers and clerics. I note here just a few examples (some individuals, like Yamashina Tokitsugu, entered rented baths regularly over years or decades): *Yamashina-ke raiki*, Bunmei 3.10.17 (1471), vol. 2, p. 161; *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 6.i5.13 (1474), vol. 1, p. 83; *Yasutomi ki*, Kyōtoku 2.10.21 (1453), vol. 4, p. 39; *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Kyōroku 2.1.8 (1529), vol. 1, p. 128; and Tenmon 13.4.4 (1544), vol. 2, p. 75; *Rokuon nichiroku*, Tenmon 5.8.23 (1536), vol. 1, p. 242; *Tokiyoshi-kyō ki* 時慶卿記, Keichō 8.11.30 (1603), noted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 168.

as to follow any sort of set pattern. Even those with their own baths could be found occasionally at a rented bath or “cooperative bath.” The reason, of course, was that these were communal gatherings, more significant for the social interactions and entertainment they provided than for the physical cleansings that took place.

Courtiers and priests in the capital undoubtedly preferred bathing with individuals of like status. Nonetheless, the public bath was available to them when a rented bath was not, or when colleagues were too busy to join them. Obvious references to bathing during a public bath’s regular hours are rare in the period’s diaries (all produced by members of the elite), but they do exist. Some diarists, like Konoe Masaie, mentioned nothing of bathing at commercial baths, even in a rented or cooperative bath. These were apparently beneath his dignity (an attitude that fits with the general tone of his diary). On the other hand, the imperial prince Fushimi no miya Sadafusa 伏見宮貞成 (1372–1456) had no qualms about using such baths, and in 1436 he noted that a “Lord Oka” 岡殿 desired to enter a bath, but “because there are none in this vicinity, we had to steal out secretly [to a more distant bath].”<sup>65</sup> A similar situation was recorded in 1450 by the courtier Nakahara Yasutomi 中原康富 (ca. 1399–1457), who, while visiting a colleague, “suggested entering a penny bath,” so the two of them went to one at the Shijō-Higashinotōin intersection.<sup>66</sup> During the sixteenth century, the diarists Yamashina Tokitsugu and Tokitsune (father and son) each wrote of using public baths. Such visits were to a neighborhood bath with an associate or two or, as noted by Tokitsune in the first month of 1582, by himself. On that occasion, Tokitsune entered a *furo* in “upper Kyoto” 上京 and then strolled around the Ōmiya 大宮町 neighborhood when he was done.<sup>67</sup>

Neither Yamashina Tokitsune, nor any other diarist, wrote of the commoners he presumably encountered at the bath on these solitary or small-group outings. Perhaps the elite chose to ignore the fact that they were sharing water with their social inferiors. Despite this, there is considerable evidence that status lines at the bath were not rigidly drawn. Even where private or rented baths were concerned, tight hierarchies of status were not maintained. During the 1470s and 1480s, while residing in Sakamoto 坂本, Ōmi province, for example, Yamashina Tokikuni frequently shared baths with men of limited rank and status. Typical bath partners included his own attendants, priests from one of the subtemples of Enryakuji 延暦寺, and, more rarely, local dignitaries or warriors. Among this group were the Yamashina family retainers (and skilled ikebana artists) Ōsawa Suketomo 大沢資友 and Shigeari 重有 and the warrior Sakurai Shingorō 櫻井新五郎. Although these individuals enjoyed higher stature than the local villagers,

<sup>65</sup> *Kanmon gyoki*, Eikyō 8.2.24 (1436), vol. 1, p. 364.

<sup>66</sup> *Yasutomi ki*, Hōtoku 2/6/6 (1450), vol. 3, p. 167.

<sup>67</sup> *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Tenmon 2.12.21 (1533), vol. 1, p. 283; Tenmon 22.11.12 (1553), vol. 3, p. 322; *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 10.1.10 (1582), vol. 1, p. 223; Tenshō 16.11.1 (1588), vol. 3, p. 139; Tenshō 17.1.12 (1589), vol. 3, p. 170.

they hardly resembled the high-born associates with whom Tokikuni bathed in the capital.<sup>68</sup>

Social mixing of a different sort occurred at the bath in the context of the family and the house, or *ie* 家. Both terms (family and house) are relevant—the first referring to those tied by blood (or adoption), and the second to the members of a household, related or not, and including retainers, attendants, and servants. During the late medieval era bathing among families and houses was a regular occurrence. The best example of a family that bathed together was that of Yamashina Tokitsune. Both prior to and while in exile, Tokitsune frequented the bath with his wife and children.<sup>69</sup> More common to most courtiers, however, were family gatherings at the bath that included the larger body of the house. Even in the Yamashina case, household members (described as *kachūshū* 家中衆) often accompanied the family to the bath. A Yamashina gathering at a rented bath in 1579 consisted of the family head, Tokitsugu; his sons Tokitsune and Moromitsu 諸光; Achamaru 阿茶丸 (Tokitsune’s son); the wives of the first three men; house members and house officials of various statuses; and others, including children.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, when Konoé Masaie’s bath was newly constructed in 1489, one day of bathing was set aside for family retainers and others attached to the house.<sup>71</sup>

Because warriors appear infrequently in communal recreational baths during much of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I have left the primary discussion of them to the end of this section. This is certainly justified in chronological terms, since references multiplied significantly after 1568. This increase was surely not a result of warriors acquiring a sudden appreciation for bathing, however, but rather a consequence of their increased activity in the Home Provinces and thus appearance in diaries and chronicles; their earlier baths merely went unrecorded. The communal bathing activities of warriors like Ashikaga Yoshimasa and Hata Tsunetane 畑経胤 during the mid-fifteenth century lend strong support to this claim.<sup>72</sup>

Warriors who accompanied Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582) into Kyoto in 1568 did not enjoy the luxury of constructing residences and bathhouses immediately, and so when they appear in baths, it is as visitors. One bath that saw its share of warrior bathers at the time was the Yoshida shrine 吉田神社 bath, administered by the priest Yoshida Kanemi 吉田兼見 (1535–1610). Among the visitors to it were Akechi Mitsuhide 明智光秀 (1528–1582), Yamaoka Kagesuke

<sup>68</sup> *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 7.7.8 (1475), vol. 1, p. 286; Bunmei 8.8.4 (1476), vol. 2, p. 139.

<sup>69</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 10.9.12, 10.19 (1582), vol. 1, pp. 298, 313; Keichō 11.3.19 (1606), vol. 13, p. 238; Keichō 7.11.11 (1602), vol. 11, p. 336.

<sup>70</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 7.2.11 (1579), vol. 1, p. 155. For other references to *kachūshū* participating in baths, see Bunroku 1.10.1 (1592), vol. 5, p. 154; and Keichō 1.10.12 (1596), vol. 7, p. 233.

<sup>71</sup> *Go-Hōkō-in ki*, Chōkyō 3.6.16 (1489), vol. 2, p. 275. For additional examples, see *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 6.4.15 (1474), vol. 1, p. 15; and Bunmei 8.2.26 (1476), vol. 2, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> I discussed Yoshimasa’s baths above, p. 18; for Hata Tsunetane, see below, p. 25.



山岡景佐, Takigawa Kazumasu 滝川一益 (1525–1586), and Hosokawa Fujitaka 細川藤孝 (Yūsai 幽齋, 1534–1610). On several occasions, Kanemi noted that he prepared the bath because the warriors came and requested it. The visits of Yūsai were clearly the most enjoyable for Kanemi, who shared not just the bath but also tea, food, and conversation with his talented guest.<sup>73</sup>

Though Oda Nobunaga apparently failed to include a bath in Azuchi castle 安土城 or in other residences he built,<sup>74</sup> his successors did not make the same mistake. Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Jurakutei 聚楽第 palace, constructed in 1587, included a steam bath, and when the palace was about to be destroyed, Hideyoshi had the bath moved to Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 temple, where it remains today. A similar interest in bathing was displayed by the Japanese warriors who invaded Korea, and who Hideyoshi intended to join: chroniclers noted that daimyo entered baths in the camps they set up after their initial advance up the peninsula. Not to be outdone by his predecessors, Tokugawa Ieyasu likewise built baths in the residences he erected. One was the product of a gift of New World mulberry wood that the merchant Tanaka Shōsuke 田中勝助 presented to him upon returning from Mexico in 1610. Lesser warriors as well added baths to their residences. Katō Kiyomasa 加藤清正 (1562–1611) not only built a *furo* at his home, but also put one in a ship he had constructed—an immense vessel, a veritable luxury cruiser that overawed those who saw it.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, few details exist of the recreational gatherings these warriors held in their newly constructed baths, but it seems safe to conclude that at least some were fine affairs.

A final aspect of recreational, and in a sense communal, bathing returns us to the domain of language, in this case, the term *yuna* 湯女. The word appears in Nelson's *Japanese-English Character Dictionary* with the meaning of “hot-springs prostitute,”<sup>76</sup> a definition that by 1615, although incomplete, was not totally inaccurate. The term has quite a different origin and history, however. It began not as *yuna*, but as *yuina* 湯維那, and was used at temple baths, not public ones. *Ina* referred to a temple official, so the *yuina* was the official in charge of regulating activities at Buddhist temple baths, ensuring, for example, that priests were orderly and bathed in silence. Just when the term was first used is unclear; it may have been the Heian era or earlier. By the mid-fourteenth century, one can find examples of the abbreviated title *yuna*, written 湯那 (which was in time written as 湯名, the second character serving as an *ateji*). A century later, there are references to “female bath attendants” as *yuna no onna* 湯名ノ女. At this time and, indeed, up until the early seventeenth century, references to and images of

<sup>73</sup> *Kanemi-kyō ki*, Genki 1.11.13, 23 (1570), vol. 1, pp. 9, 11; Genki 3.11.25 (1572), vol. 1, pp. 52–53; Genki 4.7.23 (1573), vol. 1, p. 73; Tenshō 11.6.17 (1583), vol. 2, p. 127; Tenshō 11.11.4 (1583), vol. 2, p. 151; Tenshō 12.12.29 (1584), vol. 2, p. 254.

<sup>74</sup> References to a bath are found neither in Ōta Gyūichi's 太田牛一 description of the castle in *Shinchō-kō ki*, pp. 197–200, nor in the construction plans for the castle, *Tenshu sashizu* 天守指図. For the latter, see Naitō 1976.

<sup>75</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 8–10, 471–73; *Sanmyaku-in ki*, Keichō 6.1.30 (1601), p. 68; *Keichō nikkenroku*, Keichō 9.4.16 (1604), pp. 97–98.

<sup>76</sup> Nelson 1974, p. 561.

female bath attendants depict them as assistants who scrub backs, pour water, and fix the hair of male bathers. No doubt there were those who provided carnal pleasures as well, but we learn of them only when the Tokugawa government began prohibiting “female-bath-attendant baths,” or *yunaburo* 湯女風呂, in the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>77</sup>

### *Aesthetics and the Bath*

If certain forms of late medieval group bathing could have a religious quality, then why not an aesthetic one, particularly in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, when another mundane activity—the drinking of tea—was made into an art? On the one hand, the bath was early recognized as a site for, and an accompaniment to, cultural activities, refined or not. Recall the outings at the Konoe residence, complete with excursions to appreciate the spring blossoms, play kickball, eat delicacies, and enjoy one another’s company in the bath. These and similar activities continued at elite baths throughout the late medieval era, but no art form emerged from the bath itself. In fact, the most striking aesthetic phenomenon related to the bath had already appeared, in the early and mid-fifteenth century, and then disappeared. This was the *fūryūburo* 風流風呂, or “stylish bath.” The Kōfukuji 興福寺 priest Kyōkaku’s 經覚 (1395–1473) description of one such bath on 1469.7.10, in Nara, is as follows.

Today there was a summer bath heated by [the warrior] Hata Tsunetane. I came as directed in the afternoon and entered it. [While in the bath, we consumed food from] a matching box set of five sections, two or three casks of wine, two trays of melons, and one bowl of ginger. [The room was decorated with] a “wine and moon” ink-painting, two scrolls of calligraphy—hanging at the ends to the east and west—and a formal *tatehana* 立花 setting of flowers. On top of the large bathtub was placed a small dividing screen, upon which was hung a painting. Two groups of flowers in vases and one incense burner were also set [nearby]. Above the bathtub and laid out broadly upon the ceiling was a flower arrangement. All of this was viewed by surrounding villagers. To them was offered wine and noodles, and they ate and drank using lotus leaves for utensils.<sup>78</sup>

A similar pattern of cultural elegance was seen at other stylish baths that Kyōkaku attended. And each contained a distinctive intellectual component. Above the tub on one occasion, for example, was a model of the “Palace of Long-Life,” constructed of lotus leaves.<sup>79</sup> This was the name of the Tang palace that overlooked the “Pond of Splendor and Purity,” famous as the place where Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (719–756) bathed and attracted the attention of Emperor Xuanzong (685–762). The allusion, complete with the bath as pond, was clever. It was obviously created for the culturally refined, those familiar with the tapestry of legends surrounding Yang Guifei.

<sup>77</sup> Taketa 1977, pp. 69–74; *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 83, 87, 141; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 472–73.

<sup>78</sup> *Kyōkaku shiyōshō*, Bunmei 1.17.10 (1469), quoted in Tsurusaki 1992, p. 177.

<sup>79</sup> *Kyōkaku shiyōshō*, Bunmei 1.8.23 (1469), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi*, pp. 367–68.

The aesthetic side to *fūryūburo* extended also to chanoyu. As Kyōkaku recorded of a summer bath in the fifth month of 1469, tea was the first diversion he and his peers enjoyed upon entering the bath. It was placed in two bowls, one “upper” and one “lower.” The former was Uji 宇治 tea, of superior quality, and the other of lesser quality. Tea was followed by a meal, a cup of sake, and the arrival of a large number of guests. As many as one hundred and fifty persons entered the bath that day.<sup>80</sup>

Nowhere else are *fūryūburo* described in such detail, but where they were held, they impressed participants. In the earliest reference found, Fushimi no miya Sadafusa noted attending a stylish bath in Kyoto in 1423 in conjunction with the Tanabata 七夕 celebration of the seventh day of the seventh month. In his words, the bath “amazed my eyes and was truly delightful.”<sup>81</sup>

Similar connections existed between the bath and the composition of linked verse. The priest Jinson 尋尊 (1430–1508), of Daijōin 大乘院, a subtemple of Nara’s Kōfukuji, wrote of a gathering at the bath in which poets composed ten linked-verse sequences of one hundred stanzas each. These were produced in the bath itself and probably took more than a day to complete.<sup>82</sup> More common were gatherings in which poetry was followed by a soak in the bath. In other words, the social and physical relaxation of the bath was offered as a contrast to the intellectual exertion of composing verse. The two went together naturally. Twice during the early 1520s, the courtier dilettante Sanjōnishi Sanetaka met with associates to compose linked verse and to share the bath. The first occasion was the autumn of 1521. Sanetaka and the renga master Sōseki 宗碩 (1474–1533) met at the latter’s residence, where they undertook a votive sequence of one thousand verses, to be presented to the gods of Sumiyoshi shrine 住吉大社. They completed this in four days and entered the bath at the end of day two’s work and again on the morning of day five, after reading over the completed sequence. Two and a half years later, the poets again met at Sōseki’s, this time with a third poet, the noted master Sōchō (Saikuken Sōchō 柴屋軒宗長, 1448–1532). They followed much the same pattern as before, once again entering the bath in the midst of their composition as well as on the morning after its completion.<sup>83</sup>

### *Bathing by Women and Commoners*

As earlier sections of this paper have occasionally suggested, the late medieval bath included some women, at least of the elite classes. In fact, these women were full-fledged participants in the activities of the bath. This meant that, like men, aristocratic women occasionally rented baths for their use alone or gathered

<sup>80</sup> *Kyōkaku shiyōshō*, Bunmei 1.17.10 (1469), quoted in Tsurusaki 1992, p. 177.

<sup>81</sup> *Kanmon gyōki*, Ōei 30.7.7 (1423), vol. 2, p. 396.

<sup>82</sup> *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*, Bunshō 1.i2.13 (1466), vol. 4, p. 44; also quoted in Tsurusaki 1992, p. 177.

<sup>83</sup> *Sanetaka-kō ki*, Ōei 1.11.1–5 (1521), vol. 5, no. 2, p. 770, quoted in Tsurusaki 1992, p. 190; *Sanetaka-kō ki*, Ōei 4.3.17–22 (1524), vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 149–50, quoted in Tsurusaki 1992, pp. 190–91.

at baths like that of the Konoe for a day. Since no women’s diaries (excepting the jointly maintained palace women’s diary, *Oyudononoue no nikki* 御湯殿上日記) are extant for the late medieval era, our information about these baths is limited largely to what men wrote about them—and they wrote much, or at least often, evidence that women’s baths must have been prevalent. Among those who mentioned “women’s baths” (*jochūburo* 女中風呂) and women’s “rented baths” were Konoe Masaie, Fushimi no miya Sadafusa, Nakahara Yasutomi, and Sanjō-nishi Sanetaka. Another was Yamashina Noritoki, who recorded late in 1405 a gathering of court ladies at a rented bath to which “they traveled by cart.”<sup>84</sup> The frequency with which aristocratic women bathed is apparent in *Kanmon gyōki* 看聞御記, where Fushimi no miya Sadafusa even recorded occasions when “the women did not accompany [us to the bath]” or when the women entered one temple or private bath while the men were at another.<sup>85</sup>

Women also participated in religious baths. Some of these were private, small-scale charitable baths of the type common during this era. Others were held at temples and probably required the good offices of family members who were priests or nuns or in some other sense temple patrons. A 1474 entry in the diary of the Nara Kōfukuji priest Kyōkaku notes that women entered the bath after priests had completed their ablutions. Though there was nothing unusual about women participating in temple baths, this practice apparently raised concerns among higher officials. Eleven months later, the priest Jinson recorded that certain temple administrators had complained that it was historically unheard of for women to enter the Kōfukuji subtemples, Daijōin and Ichijōin 一乘院, especially to bathe.<sup>86</sup>

Although Ichijōin and other temples may have restricted women’s bathing opportunities at their institutions, as a whole women shared the pleasures of the bath. Some may have even used the bath to enjoy a measure of independence or to travel about the capital. Yamashina Tokikuni’s wife, for example, took several day trips to her parents’ home in 1493 and 1494 for the purpose of entering their bath; on occasion she spent the night and returned the following day.<sup>87</sup> A century later, Yamashina Tokitsune’s wife followed a similar pattern over a much longer period of time, though her objective was the public bath. Exiled as she was in Nakajima with her husband during the 1580s and 90s, Kitamuki 北向

<sup>84</sup> *Go-Hōkō-in ki*, Meiō 4.12.29 (1495), vol. 3, p. 227; Meiō 8.12.29 (1499), vol. 3, p. 431; *Kanmon gyōki*, Eikyō 4.1.28 (1432), vol. 2, p. 8; *Yasutomi ki*, Kyōtoku 2.10.21 (1453), vol. 4, p. 39; *Sanetaka-kō ki*, Bunmei 17.2.9 (1485), vol. 1, no. 2, p. 554; Eishō 6.9.2 (1509), vol. 5, no. 1, p. 253; *Noritoki-kyō ki*, Ōei 12.12.27 (1405), vol. 1, p. 97; also quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 97.

<sup>85</sup> *Kanmon gyōki*, Eikyō 4.1.28 (1432), vol. 2, p. 8; Eikyō 8.2.24 (1436), vol. 2, p. 364; Eikyō 8.i5.19 (1436), vol. 2, p. 309; Eikyō 10.4.24 (1438), vol. 2, p. 539.

<sup>86</sup> *Kyōkaku shiyōshō*, Bunmei 3.3.24 (1469), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 125; *Chikanaga-kyō ki*, Bunmei 2.12.20 (1470), vol. 1, p. 10; and Bunmei 3.12.20 (1471), vol. 1, p. 79; also quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, pp. 124–25; *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*, Bunmei 6.1.5, 11.9 (1474), vol. 5, p. 440, vol. 6, p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Meiō 2.3.27 (1493), vol. 4, p. 121; Meiō 3.4.7, 11.17 (1494), vol. 5, pp. 60–61, 161.

(as Tokitsune referred to her) made regular trips to the bath. Many she made in the company of her husband and children, but just as often she went with her female friends or with her young son and attendant women or servants.<sup>88</sup>

Some women in the late medieval era even made journeys to recuperative baths, a much different matter than visiting a neighborhood *furo* or spending a day at one's parents. Several references to these show up late in the period: in 1569, the female palace official known as the Kōtō no Naishi 勾当内侍 spent nearly three weeks at the Arima hot springs; in 1583, the Kōtō no Naishi and a high-ranking consort traveled to the Yase oven bath, where they recuperated for seven and fourteen days respectively; and in the winter of 1606, the chancellor Konoe Nobutada's mother likewise recuperated at Yase.<sup>89</sup>

Thin though the evidence is in places, there is no question that many elite women were active participants in the late medieval bath. Illustrations such as the *rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu*, which portray all bathers as men, are clearly mistaken. Women at this time may have composed little poetry, arranged few flowers, and rarely performed chanoyu, but they did visit private and public baths.<sup>90</sup>

The prevalence of commoners, male and female, at the bath is a more difficult point to establish. On the one hand, the many references to specific commercial bathhouses—as well as to “neighborhood baths” (*kinjoburo* 近所風呂), “penny baths” (*sentōburo*), and rented baths (*tomeyu*)—suggest that public baths were numerous and relied on the patronage of commoners as well as the elite.<sup>91</sup> One might argue as well that a Muromachi bakufu edict of 1542 that prohibited warriors from visiting public baths (in part because of recent street killings) likewise points to the common clientele of some baths.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, there are few hints as to who was able regularly to afford a bath. Could farmers, petty merchants, craftsmen, simple laborers? Certainly warehouse owners and moneylenders could afford to bathe, but they probably did so in private baths. As we have seen, a visit to the bath could cost the equivalent of a liter of rice, but even if the price was half that or less, it seems likely that the public bath was an occasional luxury for many. And what about commoners' participation in other baths: religious, therapeutic, and hygienic?

<sup>88</sup> For representative examples, see *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 16.10.1, 11.11, 11.17 (1588), vol. 3, pp. 13, 130, 143, 145; *Bunroku* 1.10.1 (1592), vol. 5, p. 154; *Keichō* 1.10.12 (1596), vol. 7, p. 233.

<sup>89</sup> *Oyudononoue no nikki*, Eiroku 12.9.10, 27 (1569), vol. 6, pp. 528–29; and Tenshō 11.2.28, 3.4, 6, 7, 13 (1583), vol. 6, pp. 26–29; in both entries the Kōtō no Naishi appears as the Nagahashi no Tsubone 長橋局, an alternate title. *Keichō nikkenroku*, *Keichō* 11.3.11 (1606), pp. 257–58.

<sup>90</sup> For essays that address the question of women's texts in Warring States Japan, see the chapters by Chance, Butler, Ikeda, and Lillehoj, in Brown and Arntzen 2002.

<sup>91</sup> The following is a small sampling of references to neighborhood baths, penny baths, and rented baths: *Noritoki-kyō ki*, Ōei 13.7.26 (1406), vol. 1, p. 207; Ōei 13.10.4 (1406), vol. 1, pp. 238–39; Ōei 14.1.26 (1407), vol. 2, p. 12; *Tokikuni-kyō ki*, Bunmei 6.4.6 (1474), vol. 1, p. 49; Bunmei 6.6.15 (1474), vol. 1, p. 98; Bunmei 6.6.30 (1474), vol. 1, p. 108; *Sukemasu-ō ki* 資益王記, Bunmei 6.3.27 (1474), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 128; *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Tenmon 20.3.12 (1551), vol. 3, p. 136; Tenmon 21.12.7 (1552), vol. 3, p. 233.

<sup>92</sup> *Chikatoshi nikki* 親俊日記, Tenmon 11.2.10 (1542), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 152.

The most extensive references to common people’s religious baths are found in the documents of medieval Suganoura 菅浦, a town at the northern end of Lake Biwa 琵琶湖. Suganoura was an independent farming and fishing community (*sō* 惣) that kept detailed records of its internal legal and economic transactions. The village bath is the subject of six documents, dating from 1516 to 1529. The first document has the title “Bath Land Inventory,” though it is actually a record of donations in support of the bath.<sup>93</sup> The second dates to 1518 and is a record of the construction of a bathhouse, which probably replaced the previous one. The document reveals that a simple bathhouse—probably a steam bath—was an inexpensive addition to a village temple or shrine. The document reads as follows:

Bath House Expenses

600 *mon* (tree): To Tōsuke 藤介 [for] a tree  
 600 *mon*: Cost of a large saw  
 8 *shō* 升 of rice: Fee for the sawyer Saiemon さい衛門  
 6 *shō* of rice: [Expenses related to] cutting the tree  
 1 bag of rice: [Consumed on] occasion of the celebration  
 800 *mon* of rice: [Unclear]  
 100 *mon* for sake: For carpenters’ refreshment  
 400 *mon* for sake: For the celebration  
 1 *kan*, 200 *mon*: Construction fee  
 100 *mon*: For the celebration feast  
 800 *mon*: For nails  
 Total: 4 *kan*, 600 *mon* [plus 1 *koku*, 4 *shō* (and 1 bag) of rice]  
 Eishō 15/2/21 [1518]<sup>94</sup>

In the following decade, two donations of land were made in support of the bath. In both instances, documents of conveyance noted that this was done for the “future salvation” of the donors. The first, in 1522, was signed by the daughter of a man (presumably dead) whose wish was that his land be ceded to the bath. The second, in 1529, was granted by a man who was still alive.<sup>95</sup> Although it is possible that not all six Suganoura documents refer to a single bath, since connections to the village shrine (or temple) appear only in these last two, the organization and workings of the medieval community suggest that the temple bath and community bath were one and the same. In either case, these documents reveal that some villagers were establishing baths in their communities, at their local temples, and were supporting them through donations of lands meant to sustain the baths for generations and redound to the salvation of the donors. In this these baths were similar to temple baths patronized by society’s elite.

Evidence that commoners made use of therapeutic baths is sparse. Such use is suggested, however, by the expansion of bathing establishments (and inns) at

<sup>93</sup> *Suganoura monjo* 872, vol. 2, pp. 102–103.

<sup>94</sup> *Suganoura monjo* 873, vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>95</sup> *Suganoura monjo* 720, 876, vol. 2, pp. 33, 104–105.

Arima, Yase, and Atami in the late sixteenth century. More convincing evidence appears in a document the warrior Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521–1573) issued in 1567. As a result of a petition from the residents of Kusatsu 草津, Kōzuke province, Shingen decreed that nonresidents were prohibited from entering the Kusatsu therapeutic springs from 6.1 to 9.1.<sup>96</sup> The reasons behind the petition are unknown, but whether they reflected local desire to keep the hot springs as a private preserve or to limit the flow of visitors, who might have become a nuisance, it seems likely that the bathers included common folk. Like the 1508 edict of Chōrakuji, which prohibited commoners from using the temple bath (see above, p. 9), this suggests that it was not just among the elite that bathing was becoming an increasingly frequent activity. This view is reinforced by a set of Honnōji 本能寺 temple documents from the early sixteenth century that refers to land occupied by the *hininburo* 非人風呂 or “outcastes’ bath,” in the capital.<sup>97</sup> This bath may have been established as a sop to the outcastes or as a means of separating them from public baths. Or it may have been erected through the outcastes’ efforts. Whatever the case, the outcastes of Kyoto operated a bath, which we can assume they entered on occasion.

Another way to address the question of common people’s participation in the era’s bathing practices is to consider the geographic spread of baths. The bulk of the sources we have examined so far were produced in Kyoto and focused on Kyoto, which is not surprising, given the nearly universal literacy of courtiers and clerics there and the corresponding traditions of record keeping and journal writing—and of course the absence of those abilities and traditions in much of the rest of the land. The old capital of Nara, with its many temples, was in this sense an extension of Kyoto and its culture. What other references are there? The primary ones show up in the travel diaries of aristocrats, who seem to have had little difficulty locating baths as they traveled about the land. During the upheaval of the Ōnin War, Yamashina Tokikuni split his time between the capital, family lands in Yamashina (over the mountains, east of Kyoto), and Sakamoto (on Lake Biwa, near Mt. Hiei). At each location, Tokikuni found opportunities to bathe. The most distant location, Sakamoto, offered baths of all types, and Tokikuni’s bathing activities mirrored those of courtiers in Kyoto during more peaceful times: he bathed with Enryakuji priests, sometimes at their invitation and sometimes at his, and sometimes at their baths and sometimes at public baths they rented; he bathed with retainers and family members; and the baths he entered were often accompanied by food, entertainment, and arts.<sup>98</sup>

Tokikuni’s grandson Tokitsugu wrote of provincial public baths he visited

<sup>96</sup> *Agatsuma onsen shi* 吾妻温泉史, Eiroku 10.5.4 (1567), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 161.

<sup>97</sup> *Honnōji monjo* 本能寺文書, Bunmei 18.8.17 (1486), quoted in *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 140. Also see Gay 2001, p. 31, and note 75, p. 244, for a discussion of these documents.

<sup>98</sup> References are scattered throughout the first three printed volumes of *Tokikuni-kyō ki*. For several representative entries, including one that describes an outing in the capital, see Bunmei 6.1.9 (1474), vol. 1, p. 8; Bunmei 6.4.6 (1474), vol. 1, p. 49; Bunmei 6.i5.13 (1474), vol. 1, p. 83; Bunmei 7.2.8 (1475), vol. 1, p. 201; Bunmei 7.4.17 (1475), vol. 1, pp. 250–51.

while serving as the imperial court’s envoy to Oda Nobunaga. In the summer of 1569, Tokitsugu traveled from the capital to Nobunaga’s headquarters in Gifu 岐阜 and there stayed at an inn that “had a bath.” It may in fact have been a bath that “had an inn,” since Tokitsugu described the proprietor as the “bath owner Yogo Magozaemon 余語孫左衛門.”<sup>99</sup> Tokikuni’s great-grandson Tokitsune had no more trouble than his predecessors in finding baths outside the metropolis. When he was exiled in 1585 (along with two associates) and found a temporary home in Nakajima, he and his colleagues soon established a pattern of visiting public baths.<sup>100</sup> Because Tokitsune often noted, by owner’s name, which bath they attended, we get some idea of the proximity of public baths in their neighborhood. During 1589, the Tokitsune and his companions split their time between the baths of Jintarō 甚太郎, Hikoshirō 彦四郎, Gosuke 五介, and Kurōemon 九郎右衛門. Though it is unclear how close each of these baths was to the courtiers’ residences, they were clearly all within walking distance. Eventually Tokitsune and his colleagues became friends with one of the bath owners, Kurōemon (who also happened to be the landlord of one of them, Reizei Tamemitsu 冷泉為満, 1559–1619), which resulted in prebath social visits and invitations to special “first heatings” of the bathing season.<sup>101</sup> A different connection to bathers came as a result of Tokitsune’s work as a physician. In the first month of 1586, Tokitsune recorded that he treated a tofu-shop owner (also named Kurōemon), who got in an argument at the bath and received a gash on his head.<sup>102</sup> These examples speak strongly to the existence of a considerable number of public baths in late-sixteenth-century “Osaka,” and the regular patronage of those baths by commoners.

Konoe Nobutada’s exploits took him much farther afield than any of the Yamashina, but he, too, entered public baths away from the capital. Between 1592 and 1596, Nobutada journeyed to Kyushu three times, twice with intentions of joining Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea and once on the road to exile.<sup>103</sup> His journal entries of the second and third trips show him stopping at towns along the Inland Sea or in remote locations in Kyushu, where he occasionally “entered

<sup>99</sup> *Tokitsugu-kyō ki*, Eiroku 12.7.13 (1569), vol. 4, p. 358.

<sup>100</sup> The public baths that Tokitsune and his colleagues visited in Nakajima went by the name of *oriyu*, or hot-water bath. Tokitsune (as well as his wife and children and two associates) bathed approximately every ten days during the “bathing season”—the cool months of the year. The public baths they patronized did not operate during the summer. Between 1587 and 1594, these displaced aristocrats visited public baths one hundred times or more. After that, each of the three families acquired its own *oriyu*, and they then took turns bathing together at one another’s bath. Tokitsune usually provided little information besides the names of those who visited the bath and the name of the bathhouse proprietor or host. For several examples see *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 16.1.5, 10, 15, 2.6 (1588), vol. 3, pp. 5, 7, 9, 18; Tenshō 17.2.18, 3.29, 10.13 (1589), vol. 3, pp. 184, 205, 295; Bunroku 1.10.1 (1592), vol. 5, p. 154; Bunroku 4.2.5 (1595), vol. 6, p. 219.

<sup>101</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 17.1.4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 22, 30, 2.8, 18, 3.29, 10.13, 25 (1589), vol. 3, pp. 166, 168, 169, 170, 172, 174, 176, 180, 184, 205, 295, 301.

<sup>102</sup> *Tokitsune-kyō ki*, Tenshō 14.1.6 (1586), vol. 2, p. 114. See the entry under Tenshō 14.10.13 (1586), vol. 2, p. 191, for the reference to the tofu-shop owner.

<sup>103</sup> See Brusckke-Johnson 2002, pp. 42–46, for a biographical overview of these four years of Nobutada’s life.



a bath,” “went to a bath with the local priest,” or discovered “a bath within five blocks of my lodging.” These, along with the temple baths and private baths that Nobutada entered while in exile, suggest that the practice of bathing had spread broadly into western Japan and was not restricted to a narrow elite.<sup>104</sup> The same can be said about the bath’s place in central Japan, as seen in the journeyings of the head priest of Rokuon’in 鹿苑院, Shōkokuji 相国寺 temple, at the turn of the seventeenth century. Judging from the diary entries in *Rokuon nichiroku* 鹿苑日録, baths could be found either in local inns, commercial establishments separate from inns, or in shrines or temples (which he was able to use as a priest from an influential Kyoto temple).<sup>105</sup> Another point that can be drawn from these two diaries is that the late medieval bath was apparently not just an urban phenomenon. Had it been, its reach would have been, of course, much shorter (since most of the population was rural), and it would have experienced limited growth until the urban boom of the early Tokugawa era.

### *Conclusion*

The significance and meaning of Japan’s late medieval baths cannot be summed up in a sentence or two. This is not because bathing was of such overwhelming importance but because baths and bathing practices were so remarkably diverse. For such a seemingly simple act, bathing touched many aspects of life; baths were numerous in type and numerous in meaning. Some represented religious piety, others the development of religious community. Some offered simply physical cleansings, others symbolic cleansings. Another type was meant to heal the infirm or invigorate the weary. For a limited group of individuals, and for a limited time, the bath was a place for refined culture and entertainment. But for a large percentage of bathers, of all social classes, the bath was primarily a place for recreation and social interaction.

Considered more broadly, what do these practices tell us about the period? Are there more general conclusions or insights we can gain from them? First, the bath fits with other facets of late medieval society, such as the centrality of small-group cultural activity or entertainment. Linked verse, chanoyu, and flower arranging are the prototypical examples, but other activities such as blossom-viewing and gatherings of Buddhist “associations” follow a similar pattern. The bath did, too. Rather than being dominated by public baths as in the Tokugawa period, late medieval bath culture was characterized by the private bathing of small groups. Public baths were just one segment of this culture, and, where possible, they were rented by groups that desired to bathe among themselves. Although the artistic possibilities of bathing were pursued for just a brief period,

<sup>104</sup> For relevant entries, see *Sanmyaku-in ki*, Bunroku 1.12.21, 25, (1592), pp. 3–5; Bunroku 2.1.3 (1593), pp. 6–7; Bunroku 3.4.20, 5.5, 5.16, 5.24, 6.6, 6.16, 6.25, 7.10, 7.11, 7.18, 7.20 (1594), pp. 3–34; Bunroku 4.?.14, p. 44; Bunroku 5.7.23, 8.3, pp. 49, 53.

<sup>105</sup> *Rokuon nichiroku*, Keichō 5.2.26, 3.12 (1600), vol. 3, pp. 309, 313; Keichō 6.6.14, 16, 17 (1601), vol. 3, p. 381.

among courtiers and priests and some warriors, the late medieval bath often contained an aesthetic component. In this is evidence that it was a product of its age.

Similarly, the bath’s development appears to have depended heavily on two factors that are often regarded as representative of the time: the expansion of Buddhism among commoners and the growth of the late medieval economy—neither of which is especially well understood, despite their importance to the history of the era and to the early modern age that followed. The example of the Suganoura temple bath—established in a rural village and supported by villagers’ donations—points to a link between the spread of Buddhism and the spread of baths. Also important were the Buddhist *kō*, or “associations,” which, stressing communal worship and fellowship, often incorporated devotional bathing among their activities.

Buttressing these developments within Buddhism was the expanding late medieval economy, reflected most obviously in the appearance of the public bath as a new form of business. To flourish as it did meant that bathing had become a viable enterprise and that it was worth risking capital to build and run a bath. With the decline into warfare and convulsion after 1450, the risk in many parts of the country, certainly in the capital, increased. And yet public baths became more numerous during the Warring States era, evidence that profits were greater than risks. This meant as well, of course, that bathers had surplus funds to spend on the bath. Though courtiers may have been less wealthy than before, and thus had to pool their funds to reserve a bath, some commoners now could spare a few *mon* to make an occasional visit to a neighborhood bath. The value of a bath is well represented in an entry in *Tokitsune-kyō ki* from autumn of 1582, where the author notes that a blacksmith paid his annual tax in the form of one bath cauldron. By all evidence, by the end of the medieval era, bathing had become a familiar activity for many individuals, and more than a small sum of money passed hands as bathhouses were built, cauldrons forged and sold, and water heated.

The origins and focus of the sources considered here are clearly the elite of society—courtiers, priests, and, to a lesser extent, warriors. On the one hand, this suggests narrowness, that the late medieval bath was potentially a phenomenon of limited influence and limited geographic scope. On the other, this circumstance points to the important role these individuals had in shaping and defining bathing practices. The elite was at the forefront of developments at the bath during the late medieval era. This makes sense when we consider the history of the bath, with its largely aristocratic past, and the economic requirements associated with bathing, which naturally limited certain practices to those of uncommon economic means. In other words, the bath of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries is best considered an aristocratic product.

And yet, at the same time, the sources speak to a much broader phenomenon encompassing both elites and commoners. Written linguistic evidence, though

potentially difficult to sort out by class or status, seems suggestive in this regard. The dictionary *Vocabulario da lingoa de Japam*, published in 1603 by Jesuit priests, includes quite extensive references to baths and bathing. Among the more than twenty entries are simple terms (*yu*, *furo*, *guiozui*, *xentō*), and more complicated ones (*yubune*, *gomocuyu*, *yukatabira*, *furotaqi*). Entries for *furo*, *yu*, and *xentō* are lengthy, and include subentries for idiomatic uses of the terms. Under *furo*, for example, is a subheading *furoagarino furumai*, defined as a feast eaten after getting out of the bath. The entry for *yu* includes the saying *yuuo vacaite mizzuni iruru*, meaning to “heat the water, but enter a cold bath”—in other words, to perform valuable labor to no effect.<sup>106</sup> These suggest that baths and bathing were familiar images, cultural symbols that carried their own vocabulary and could be used as metaphors for other ideas and actions.

As we have seen, there was more than linguistic evidence—the numerous references to public baths, the ease with which travelers outside the capital found baths, the existence of documents such as those of Suganoura village—to suggest that bathing had spread beyond the elite by the latter half of the sixteenth century. Put differently, I believe that the late medieval bath represented one aspect of the period’s popular culture or popular life. In using the term popular culture, I follow those who view it as that which was common to the people of a society, irrespective of class, group, or ethnicity. In other words, it consisted of the culture (“a system of shared meanings, attitudes, and values, and the symbolic forms [performances, artifacts] in which they are expressed and embodied”)<sup>107</sup> of the whole, not of any particular part. One could argue that prior to the Muromachi era (and back through at least the Nara period), popular culture was limited in Japan, when defined in these terms. The difference, for example, in the ideas, beliefs, and material culture of Heian peasants and their superiors at the Kyoto court was great indeed. By the early fifteenth century, the distance between the two had begun to shrink, and by the end of the sixteenth century it had narrowed considerably. This is not to deny the significant differences that remained between the two, but merely to point out how much had changed.

Evidence of the narrowing gap is seen in the following (some of which were also causes of that narrowing): the spread of Buddhism beyond the elite; the economic growth of the medieval era and the profound effect this had on local political, social, and military affairs; the increasing ability of commoners to organize

<sup>106</sup> Doi et al. 1980. The following terms appear under main headings: *furo* (フロ, 風呂), *furotaqi* (フロタキ, 風呂焚き), *furoya* (フロヤ, 風呂屋), p. 283; *guiozui* (ギョウズイ, 行水), p. 302; *gomocuyu* (ゴモクユ, 五目湯), p. 307; *ixiburo* (イシブロ, 石風呂), p. 348; *mocuyocu* (モクヨク, 沐浴), p. 416; *tōgi* (トウジ, 湯治), p. 657; *voriyu* (オリエユ, 居り湯), p. 719; *xentō* (セントウ, 銭湯), p. 753; *xiuburo* (シオプロ, 潮風呂), p. 784; *xiuoyu* (シオユ, 潮湯), p. 785; *yocuin* (ヨクイン, 浴院), *yocuxit* (ヨクシツ, 浴室), p. 824; *yu* (ユ, 湯), *yu agari* (ユアガリ, 湯上がり), *yubune* (ユブネ, 湯槽), *yucatabira* (ユカタヒラ, 湯帷子), p. 833; *yudono* (ユドノ, 湯殿), *yuguchi* (ユグチ, 湯口), p. 834; *yuna* (ユナ, 湯女), p. 836; *yuya* (ユヤ, 湯屋), p. 838.

<sup>107</sup> This definition comes from A. L. Kroeber, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York, 1963), and was used by Peter Burke in his now classic study, *Burke 1978*. Useful discussions of the study of popular culture and the difficulties it involves include Chartier 1987, Harris 1995, and Scribner 1989.

themselves politically, as seen in the independent corporate village (*sō*), commoner leagues of various stripes (*ikki* 一揆), and other communal action; the increased literacy of commoners (which in absolute terms was slight, but when viewed as a percentage increase—for example, in a village where no one had been literate in 1200, but five persons were literate in 1550—was enormous); improvements in the material life of commoners (represented, for example, in residential construction in the spread of elements such as tatami), and so on; and finally, in the very inadequacy of the term “commoner” for members of the non-elite in the sixteenth century. By then, a “commoner” could be a sake brewer, a moneylender, a warrior (though some were clearly aristocrats and others part-time farmers—where does one draw the line?), a village priest (perhaps literate, perhaps not), a literate village head, and, of course, a peasant or artisan of the humblest sort.

The narrowing of the cultural gap, and the subsequent development of a popular culture, was spurred as well by the social mobility and physical dislocation characteristic of the late medieval era.<sup>108</sup> As the old nobility was removed from its cloistered lives, its members interacted with commoners on a hitherto unknown level. The events of the period of Warring States, in particular, led to associations such as those between Yamashina Tokitsune and tofu sellers and bath owners in Nakajima. It is hardly surprising that such associations fostered the appearance of a common culture, one element of which was the bath. Significant in this regard is the fact that the “flow of culture” was not all in one direction, from the elite to the commoners. Of course, in reality, there was no simple flow; instead a mixing occurred, with much back and forth, borrowing, sharing, and developing. Where the bath was concerned, this was manifest in the “rock bath” and “oven bath,” both of which, scholars have argued, originated with commoners but saw development among the elite in later centuries.<sup>109</sup> During the late medieval era, this sort of cultural give and take may have been most apparent in the practices of communal recreational bathing that took shape. We see it, on the one hand, in gatherings at the imperial palace bath that included the emperor (assemblies at court for refined arts, like waka, and not-so-refined activities, like drinking, had long been held, but recreational bathing, with the emperor disrobed except for a loincloth, was a different matter). It is evident, on the other hand, in commoners’ gathering at public baths to share water, conversation and, in some cases, the services of bath women (*yuna*), a custom that originated in baths of much greater refinement.

In sum, during Japan’s late medieval era, the bath developed into a social and cultural institution of significance. Bathing, which had been an occasional practice of a tiny elite in ancient and early medieval times, had become common by 1600. Many now saw it as a necessity: for personal hygiene, as physical therapy,

<sup>108</sup> This is a point Barbara Ruch stresses in her discussion of the development of certain arts and customs as “national practices”; see Ruch 1977; and Ruch 1990.

<sup>109</sup> *Kōshū yokujōshi ryaku nenpyō*, p. 54; *Kōshū yokujōshi*, p. 44.

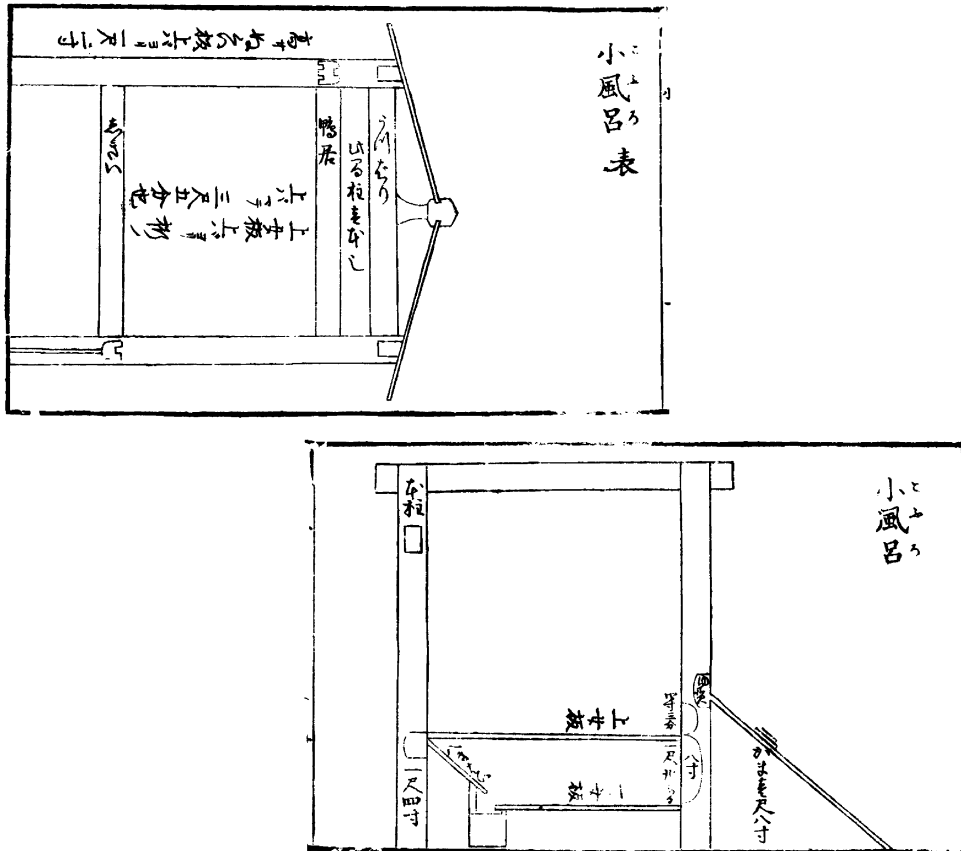


Figure 6. Tokugawa-era plan for a small residential bathhouse, included in an architectural pattern book, *Taishō hinagata* 大匠雛形 (1685). Courtesy Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan 国立公文書館.

as recreation and leisure (see figure 6). If we believe the Europeans who visited Japan in the late sixteenth century, bathing had become universal there. As João Rodrigues noted, “All the houses of the nobles and gentry have bathrooms for guests. These places are very clean and are provided with hot and cold water because it is a general custom in Japan to wash the body at least once or twice a day. . . . [Indeed] the Japanese seem to excel everybody else in this matter, not only in the frequency with which they bathe during the day, but even more so in the cleanliness and dignity which they observe in that place.”<sup>110</sup> Exaggerated though these claims may be, bathing had been embraced broadly by the inhabitants of the archipelago, high and low. In this sense, it represented a common culture, linking those of privilege with those of limited means, and bringing them closer to each other in an age when distinctions were less profound than in the past.

<sup>110</sup> See selections in Cooper 1965, pp. 220–21, 238, 279.

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