Tadano Makuzu and Her

*Hitori Kangae*

**Bettina Gramlich-oka**

*Given that this piece was written by a woman, her work puts robust men to shame.*" Thus wrote in 1848 the copyist of *Hitori kangae* (Solitary Thoughts), an essay in which the author, Tadano Makuzu (1763–1825), expresses frequently iconoclastic views on a wide range of issues. Seeing Confucian texts as harmful not only to the scholars who study them but to society as a whole, Makuzu castigates the bushi class, to which she belonged, for its lack of understanding of the money-dominated culture of the day. She presents her vision of how the economic misery of her class might be ameliorated, sets forth original notions of the cosmos, and discusses the relationship between men and women. Rather than confine herself to the subjects that at the time were considered appropriate to women, she takes on matters such as political and economic conditions thought the proper province of men alone. In her hands the brush becomes a tool with which to reflect on life itself.

Raised in late-eighteenth-century Edo as a physician’s daughter, Makuzu was directly affected by the political and economic dislocations of the regimes of Tanuma Okitsugu (1719–1788) and Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758–1829). During the Bunka-Bunsei period (1804–1829), she came to know a different reality, that of bushi life in the domain of Sendai, where she moved after marriage in 1797.

Makuzu first won a degree of fame during the Meiji period, when writers based...
in Sendai acclaimed her as a poet of remarkable skill. The first of her works to be published were essays and poems dealing with the Sendai region. Early biographers went on to fashion her into an exemplar of local culture. Filial, she followed her father’s wish that she marry a well-off samurai and left her beloved Edo for Michinoku, for her an unknown region in the far north. Despite her isolation there, she devotedly looked after her husband’s house during the extended periods when his duties kept him in Edo. Without any children of her own, she dedicated herself to raising her husband’s children from his first marriage and became a model educator who paid particular attention to the instruction of girls.

The main source for this portrait of Makuzu as a “true” bushi woman was her *Mukashibanashi* (Stories from the Past), a six-chapter narrative relating her personal history and describing life in the far north. Increased awareness of *Hitori kangae*, however, led researchers to see Makuzu in a new light. The filial daughter and dutiful wife became for some a voice challenging the Tokugawa social and political order. Others identified her as a pioneer feminist or a female critic of established norms. Makuzu’s appeal as a female thinker was further strengthened by the publication in 1994 of *Tadano Makuzu shū* (Collected Works of Tadano Makuzu), which has at last made available the greater part of her writings, including a more complete version of *Hitori kangae* and many pieces printed for the first time.

A number of researchers have pursued one aspect or another of Makuzu’s thought. Some have seen her approach to argumentation as similar to that of those who, influenced by Western science, advocated *jitsugaku* (learning based on experience). Already in the Taishō era one scholar described her scholarship as “learning based on experience” rather than knowledge gained from books. Because of her critique of Confucianism and her literary background, Makuzu is often considered to belong to the nativist school. But some have likened her views on economics, especially her criticism of the bushi for not recognizing what any merchant knows, to the mercantilist writings of Kaiho Seiryō 海保靾 (1755–1817). This diversity in the appraisal of Makuzu suggests that

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3 *Isozutai* いそづたひ (Along the Coast) and *Ōshūbanashi* 奥州ばなし (Stories from Ōshū) were both first published in Meiji 24 (1891). Makuzu presumably completed both in 1817. The first work is a travelogue about a trip in the Sendai area; the latter relates twenty-nine stories she had heard, most of which concern Sendai. Both are included in *Tadano Makuzu shū*.

4 Nakayama Eiko 中山栄子 gives an overview of writings on Makuzu, primarily by people based in the Sendai area, prior to her own 1936 biography. See Nakayama 1936, pp. 13–24.


6 Nakayama Eiko published the first chapter of *Hitori kangae* in 1936, based on the only manuscript then generally known. The main publications on Tadano Makuzu’s *Hitori kangae* are, in chronological order: Nakayama 1936; Shiba 1969; Miyazawa 1975; Seki 1980; Honda 1992; Suzuki 1994; Oguchi 1995; Kado 1998. Seki 1980 is a slightly revised version of Miyazawa 1975. Also of interest is Nagai Michiko’s 永井路子 1996 novel based on Makuzu’s life.

7 Cited in Nakayama 1936, p. 21.

many questions about her life and writings are yet to be resolved. It is hoped that
the following translation of *Hitori kangae* will contribute to the process of explo-
ration of her views and the context in which they were formulated.

The world in which Makuzu lived was notable for the concurrent existence
and intersection of a variety of different intellectual schools and circles. The
eclecticism of her thought reflects this circumstance. It shows the spread of ideas
associated with these circles, and it also gives us insight into what one woman
made of such ideas despite the general exclusion of women from the forums of
intellectual debate. Drawing in various ways from the views espoused by oth-
ers, Makuzu reflected on the controversies of her time vigorously and creatively
and expressed her thoughts in a strong, idiosyncratic style. *Hitori kangae* offers
an invaluable window into both the late Edo cultural world and the mind of a
remarkable woman.

**Makuzu’s Life**

What we know about Makuzu’s life comes primarily from her own account. She
was born Kudō Ayako in 1763, the oldest daughter of Kudō Heisuke (1734–1800), who served the Sendai domain as an Edo-based physician
to the Date house, and his wife, the daughter of Kuwabara Takatomo (also known as Joshō; no dates), another physician in the service of the
Sendai domain. As Edo physicians employed by a major domain, both families
belonged to the intellectual elite on the fringes of the samurai class.

Born the third son of Nagai Taian 長井大庵 (no dates), Heisuke had been
adopted by Kudō Jōan 秋山丈庵 (1755) at the age of thirteen. Jōan, a rōnin who
had become a physician, obtained employment by the retired lord of Sendai, Date
Yoshimura 伊達吉村 (1680–1751, r. 1703–1735), in 1746, when he was already
in his mid-thirties. As attendant physician (*gokinju* 御近習) on permanent duty
(*jōzume* 定詰) in Edo, he received the sizable stipend of 300 koku. Jōan served
in the new lower Date residence in Sodegasaki 袖ヶ崎 in Shinagawa 船川 until
his lord’s death in 1751. In 1754, when he was in his early twenties, Heisuke
inherited his father’s position, together with the income of 300 koku. He mar-
rried a couple of years later and had altogether eight children.

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9 Ages are given by traditional Japanese reckoning, one to two years older than by Western
count.
10 Accounts of Jōan and Heisuke are often contradictory and confusing. The above is based on
various sources, the most reliable being *Sendai jinmei daijisho*.
12 *Mukashibanashi* 1994, p. 14. Since the firstborn died before the seventh night, Makuzu usu-
ally refers only to seven siblings. Makuzu (also Ayako 菊子/あや子 or Michi みち) was the eldest
surviving child. The others, in order of birth, were the eldest son, Motoyasu 元保 (also Tarō 太郎
or Chōan 長庵); the second daughter, Shizuko しず子; the third daughter, Tsuneko つね子; the sec-
ond son, Genshirō 元四郎 (also known as Jirō 次郎 or Motosuke 元輔); the fourth daughter, Taeko
たえ子 (or 立子); and the fifth daughter, Teruko てる子. Genshirō once compared the siblings to the
“seven flowers of the fall” (*aki no nanakusa* 秋の七草): *kuzubana* 芋花 (arrowroot), *fujibakama*
藤袴 (ague weed), *asagao* 朝顔 (morning glory), *ominaeshi* 女郎花 (patrinia scabiosaefolia),
*obana* 尾花 (Chinese miscanthus), *hagi* 秋 (bush clover), and *nadeshiko* 水子 (wild pink). Learning
Makuzu grew up in Sukiyachō 数寄屋町, Nihonbashi 日本橋. She remembered her childhood as a prosperous time for her family; only one other place in the neighborhood, and that a Buddhist temple, she noted, bought more tofu a year.\(^\text{13}\) The house, which was designed to receive Heisuke’s patients, as well as the many people who gathered to enjoy his company or to ask him for advice, had a bath made of cypress wood on the second floor.\(^\text{14}\) Heisuke’s hospitality drew guests not only of samurai status, but also scholars, poets, actors, and, according to Suzuki Yoneko 鈴木よね子, even gamblers.\(^\text{15}\) While he was still in his early thirties, his reputation as a physician attracted disciples from all over the country to his medical school, Bankōdō 晩功堂.\(^\text{16}\) His interests, which included cooking and gardening, were broad, however, and today he is best known and remembered for his knowledge of Russia. His renown as a specialist on Russian affairs brought him close to the circle of Rangakusha. Maeno Ryōtaku 前野良沢 (1723–1803), Katsuragawa Hoshō 桂川甫周 (1751–1809), the Nagasaki interpreter Yoshio Kōgyū (or Kōzaemon) 良雄耕牛 (幸左衛門; 1724–1800), and especially Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄沢 (1757–1827), whom Heisuke helped find employment with the Sendai domain, all called upon him frequently.\(^\text{17}\)

Although Heisuke never took up Western studies per se, and could not read Dutch, he was able to collect enough information on Russia to compile a two-part study entitled Akaezō fūsetsu kō 赤蝦夷風說考 (Report on the Land of the Red Ainu [i.e., Russia]). The latter part of this work, written in 1780, discusses the geography, history, and culture of Kamchatka as described in Dutch sources.\(^\text{18}\) This served as background information for the first part of the study, which Heisuke either presented to the rōjū Tanuma Okitsugu on his own or in response to a request from one of Tanuma’s advisers who was seeking information on the Russian advance towards Japan.\(^\text{19}\)

In his book Heisuke challenged the rumor that the Russians were planning raids on Ezo 蝦夷 (Hokkaido) that had been planted by M. A. Benyovszky (1746–1876), the mysterious Hungarian who came to Japanese shores in 1771 and who had written a letter to that effect to the Dutch in Nagasaki.\(^\text{20}\) But he also proposed the development and colonization of Ezo so as to inhibit Russian expansion, and

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\(^{13}\) The family spent about 10 ryō a year on tofu. Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 91.


\(^{15}\) Suzuki 1994, p. 545. This might explain Makuzu’s preoccupation with the issue of gambling in Hitori kangae.

\(^{16}\) Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 45. Makuzu mentions the names of some of his students; see Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 44.

\(^{17}\) Satō 1976, pp. 632–34.

\(^{18}\) Heisuke asked others to translate Dutch books for him. Satō 1976, p. 633.


\(^{20}\) Satō 1976, p. 634.
the granting of commercial rights to Russians as a means of breaking the commercial monopoly of the Dutch.\textsuperscript{21} In the view of Ōguchi Yūjirō, recognizing a potential danger in Russian moves towards Ezo, agreed that Japan should thwart their further advance by trading with them and by developing Ezo with the profit from this trade.\textsuperscript{22}

Tanuma welcomed Heisuke’s dismissal of the rumors of Russian raids and his proposal for the colonization of Ezo. He acted on the proposal by commissioning a large expedition to Ezo in 1785. It looked, according to Makuzu, as if Heisuke would be assigned to a new office to run the development of the island. The dream ended, however, with the fall of Tanuma in 1786. His successor, Matsudaira Sadanobu, emphasized the primacy of politics over economics and rejected “any alternative to the current political structure.”\textsuperscript{23} The Kansei reforms that he inaugurated froze development plans for Ezo. Although alternative ideas were proposed, as someone outside the new government, Heisuke had no part in them.\textsuperscript{24}

Heisuke’s interest in politics continued, however. In 1791 he wrote an introduction to \textit{Kaikoku heidan} (Discussion of the Military Problems of a Maritime Nation) by Hayashi Shihei (1738–1793),\textsuperscript{25} and it is possible that he participated in the famous New Year’s celebration at the Shirandō academy in 1795, which was in itself a political statement.\textsuperscript{26} Despite his contribution to \textit{Kaikoku heidan}, Heisuke, unlike Hayashi, who was put under house arrest, did not become a direct victim of the Kansei reforms. The fate of the Kudō family, nevertheless, took a drastic turn for the worse, as Makuzu tells us reproachfully.\textsuperscript{27}

Having spent her childhood and teenage years in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the busy, lively Kudō household, with its many guests and students from all over the country, in 1778, when she was sixteen, Makuzu entered the service of Princess Akiko, daughter of Date Shigemura (1742–1796).\textsuperscript{28} Five years later, Akiko married into the Ii family of the Hikone domain, and Makuzu followed her from the Edo residence of the Date to that of the Ii. Altogether Makuzu remained in Akiko’s service for ten years, but we do not know much about her experiences as an attendant in the women’s quarters. One wonders why since she otherwise writes about her life in Edo in some detail.

\textsuperscript{21} Lensen 1959, p. 178; Hall 1955, pp. 102–104.
\textsuperscript{22} Ōguchi 1995, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{23} Ooms 1975, pp. 119–20.
\textsuperscript{24} Ōguchi 1995, p. 223.
\textsuperscript{25} Yamagata 1983, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{26} Kado 1998, p. 166. One participant in that celebration was Daikokuya Kōdayū (1751–1828), the castaway who returned to Japan with the first official Russian mission led by Adam Luxman. The party itself was subversive because it celebrated the Western calendar, and Reinier Hesselink suggests that the officials who allowed Kōdayū (officially not alive) to be part of the celebration might not have known the reason for their gathering. Hesselink 1995, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Mukashibanashi} 1994, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{28} Ōguchi 1995, p. 221.
Oguchi Yūjirō speculates that her reticence may have been rooted in the oath she, like all those who entered daimyo or bakufu service, took not to reveal affairs within the residence.29

Tanuma’s removal from office seems to have directly affected Makuzu. Her father had planned to wait until he had risen in rank to find her a spouse, but with his potential sponsor ousted from power, that day never came. When Makuzu left service and went home to her parents in 1787, she was already twenty-five.30

In the winter of 1789, with a friend of Heisuke acting as go-between, she was married to a man substantially older than she, a retainer of the Sakai 酒井 family from Tsuruoka domain 鶴岡藩. Since she was not that young herself, her father said, she had no reason to complain about the advanced age of her spouse. She, however, was distressed about the situation. It was not her fault, she wrote, that she was still unwed. When she first met her husband, she saw that his eyes were red and rheumy and that he had not a single black hair on his head. The first thing he told her was that he would live no more than five years at the most and that she should be prepared to take care of all his affairs thereafter. She was so unhappy that she wept continuously, and eventually was sent back to her parents’ house.31

The Kudō family’s ill fortune continued. Already, during the time Makuzu had been in service, her parents’ house had been destroyed by fire. Heisuke had received condolence gifts of about 200 koku from different lords, but had encountered difficulties in rebuilding the house. Makuzu recounts that the person entrusted with the money for reconstruction went bankrupt and the family had to stay temporarily in Hamamachi 浜町 with a friend. In the same year, Makuzu’s grandmother died.32 Tragedy continued with the death of her brother, the designated heir, Motoyasu 元保, of whom the family had had great expectations.33 In the 1790s, several other members of the family were brought low by illness, or, as Makuzu put it, were the victims of bad fortune. The second daughter, Shizuko, had married a retainer of the Tsugaru domain 津軽藩 but fell ill and returned to her parents’ house, where she died not long after. Makuzu was then twenty-eight years old. The same year, 1790, the third daughter, Tsuneko, was wed, but she, too, was to die before long.34 When Makuzu was in her early thirties, her mother, who for some time had been ill, died, and Makuzu took her place in her father’s household. The youngest daughter, Teruko, for whom

29 Oguchi 1995, p. 222. Makuzu refers only twice to the time she spent in service. In Hitori kangaе she mentions a dispute between a slow-witted bushi woman from the countryside and the more clever townspeople in the inner quarters. Hitori kangaе, pp. 288–89. Oguchi notes that in Mukashibanashi Makuzu cites the name of a person within the inner chambers who knew her grandfather. Oguchi 1995, p. 222.
31 Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 128.
33 Kado 1998, p. 164. Motoyasu died at the age of twenty in the twelfth month of Tenmei 天明 6 (1786).
34 Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 56.
Makuzu was like a mother, was later to be married to a doctor in Sendai, but she, too, would die young. Apart from Makuzu, only Taeko, the fourth Kudō daughter, who never married, survived past early middle age. Taeko first served the Tayasu family but later followed their daughter to the Shirakawa Matsudaira 白河松平 house, remaining in its employ until her mistress died. She then became a nun in Reiganjima 霊岸島, taking the name Hagi-ni 秋尼.

Heisuke remarried and found a new spouse for his eldest daughter, Makuzu, too. Her second husband was Tadano Iga Tsurayoshi 伊賀長行義 (d. 1812), a high-ranking Date retainer. The Tadano house had served the Date since the days of Masamune 伊達政宗 (1566–1636). In 1757 the Tadano became the jinushi 地主 (landowner/fief holder) of Nakaniida 新田 in Kami-gun 加美郡, Mutsu. Tadano had an income of 1200 koku and in 1796 had been appointed Edo bangashira 江戸番頭 (captain of the lord’s guard unit) at the Sendai residence in Edo. His family remained at his home in Sendai. His wife had recently died, leaving him with three sons, and a mutual acquaintance suggested to Heisuke that Makuzu would make him a good second wife.

The Kudo family hoped that the marriage might help Makuzu’s younger brother Genshirō, the appointed successor to the Kudō household, obtain full samurai status and a good post within the domain government. Aside from such considerations, marriage to a well-off bushi of 1200 koku (compared to Kudo’s stipend of a mere 300 koku) meant for Makuzu quite a rise in status and financial well being. She proudly relates that while in Edo three servants accompanied her when she went out, in Sendai her entourage swelled to seven attendants.

Makuzu, who had never before left Edo, nevertheless described her move to Sendai in the fall of 1797 at the age of thirty-five as a step on “the journey to hell.” She apparently got along well with her new mother-in-law and her three stepsons. But her husband remained in Edo, bound by duty to the Sendai mansion in Edo. He was unable to join his new wife until the following spring. When the second winter came, Iga’s duty called him back to Edo, this time accompanied by his eldest son. The second son was adopted into another family, and only the youngest, then eight years old, stayed with Makuzu. During their fifteen

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35 According to Nagai Michiko, she married into the Nakanome family, a house that practiced the obstetric methods of the Chūjō 中条 school, which was infamous for its performance of abortions. Nagai 1996, p. 346.
36 According to Nakayama 1984, p. 226, Taeko lived until 1835.
37 Regarding the Tadano family and Nakaniida, see Morris 1997, p. 354.
38 Nakayama 1936, p. 15.
39 Towazugatari, p. 375. This is, in fact, a letter from Makuzu to Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴, dated the eleventh day of the third month of 1819. While Heisuke’s official stipend was 300 koku, he also received income from his school and his work as a town physician.
40 Hitori kangae, p. 260.
41 See the letter from Makuzu to her husband, transcribed in Kado 2000, pp. 72–73. Iga had four sons, but the eldest had died young. The second son became the heir and took the name Zusho Naoyuki 園書由章. Nakayama 1936, p. 142, indicates that Naoyuki was fifteen and the youngest son seven when Makuzu moved to Sendai.
years of marriage, Iga’s duty allowed him to return to Sendai a mere sixteen
times.43

In Edo, the Kudō family fortunes continued to decline. In 1800, two years after
she left Edo, Makuzu’s father died at the age of sixty-seven following a long ill-
ness that placed a heavy financial burden on the shoulders of Genshirō, the only
surviving son and heir.44 Exhausting himself in the attempt to repay the family’s
debts, Genshirō also fell ill and died in 1807 while still in his early thirties. He
left no children of his own. By then, four out of the seven siblings had died. Two
daughters, Makuzu and the youngest, Teruko, were married and living in Sendai,
and Taeko was still in service. To continue the Kudō name, a cousin from the
maternal Kuwabara side was adopted as Genshirō’s successor. Makuzu, who in
Mukashibanashi describes in detail the bad relationship that existed between the
two houses, was upset by this development. To clear the debts, she notes, the
new successor sold everything in the household, from furnishings and other
household items down to its store of pickles, for the measly sum of 50 ryō. To
add insult to injury, a book with the seal of her father’s library turned up for sale
in a Sendai bookstore.45

Writings
Makuzu’s writings date largely from the last twenty years of her life. They include
travelogues, essays, and reminiscences as well as a vast number of poems. There
is almost no textual evidence for earlier pieces by her, although one scholar states
that Iga became interested in Makuzu after seeing two of her poems.46 Whatever
the historicity of that episode, the move to the unknown north seems to have
inspired her to write. After arriving in the Tōhoku region, she recorded her
impressions of the nearby places that she visited as well as her loneliness and
her longing for her family, in particular for her sister Teruko, who was only
twelve when Makuzu moved to Sendai.47 The brush became not only her com-
ppanion, but also a tool to understand her new environment.48 Aware of her lone-
liness, Iga encouraged her to use her literary gifts to write prose as well as
poetry.49

In 1811, at the age of forty-nine, Makuzu embarked on her longest work, the
one for which she is best known today, Mukashibanashi. Stylistically Mukashi-

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43 When he did return, he took care to bring news of Makuzu’s family, recent trends, and books.
44 Ōtsuki Gentaku refers to Heisuke’s long illness and his subsequent debts. Cited in Suzuki
1994, p. 549.
45 Mukashibanashi 1994, pp. 169–70. We have to rely almost entirely on Makuzu’s account for
information about the two families. For another perspective on the Kuwabara family, see Andō
46 Cited in Nakayama 1936, p. 15.
48 Kado Reiko notes that in her writings Makuzu included a number of tales that were
banashi belongs to the genre of zuihitsu, but it is also something of a family saga. While the anecdotes at first appear unrelated, as is common in the zuihitsu style, Makuzu, as the “narrator” who witnesses or hears them from people in the neighborhood, links them one to the other.50 One of her objects in writing Mukashibanashi was to provide a remembrance of their mother for her sister Teruko, who was still a child when the mother died. As the reader soon discovers, however, she expanded this recollection into an account of her father and his legacy. She relates anecdotes concerning him and describes exotic objects that he was given. A distinctive feature is the recurrence of references to a wet-nurse named Shime, whom Makuzu blames for the conflict between the Kudo and the Kuwabara families. Her presence leads us like a red thread through the often independently structured stories.

In 1812, while writing the fifth chapter of Mukashibanashi, Makuzu learned that her husband had died suddenly in Edo (the twenty-first day of the fourth month). Her sorrow led her to incorporate the tragedy and her feelings into the text, as if it were a diary.51 Teruko, her youngest sister, who had been living in the Sendai area, died sometime soon after Iga’s death. Now a widow, far from her birthplace, with only one surviving sibling, and her birth family in ruins, Makuzu experienced profound despair. The meaning of her life, a life her father had chosen for her, had evaporated. To continue living she had to find a new sense of purpose. She had already written in Mukashibanashi that she wanted to make her father’s name known to the world. As long as she could realize this goal she did not mind if her life was one of hardship.52 She was keenly aware, however, how difficult it would be for her as a woman to elevate her family’s name. She struggled for years with this dilemma, until, as she recalled later, on two occasions, two deities, Kannon 観音 and a “buddha” (mihotoke 御仏) transmitted poems to her. Both poems instructed her to carry out her initial goals, despite her gender.53 Since she and her sister were women, and therefore not capable of reviving the Kudo household, Makuzu chose another path: she would carve a monument to her father through her writing.

Inspired by this vision, in 1817, at the age of fifty-five, Makuzu embarked on writing Hitori kangae, declaring, “I wrote this book thinking that unless I pursued my father’s goals, he would have developed his ideas in vain.”54 Her aim, she said, was to keep her father from being forgotten by the world, to act herself as a model for women, and to offer hope to those in a state of despair.55 She wrote from the standpoint of one who, having suffered much, had risen above her trials and attained a state of enlightenment. As in Mukashibanashi she gives many

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50 Suzuki 1986, pp. 52–53.
52 Mukashibanashi 1994, pp. 6, 170.
53 Towazugatari, pp. 375–76.
54 Hitori kangae, p. 283. Consisting of three parts, Hitori kangae was probably written between the first of the twelfth month of Bunka 14 (1817) and the twelfth month of Bunsei 1 (1818). See the preface and the end, Hitori kangae, pp. 260, 307.
55 Towazugatari, p. 375.
details about her own experiences and those of her family. Suzuki Yoneko, the 
editor of Makuzu’s collected works, concludes from this that *Hitori kangae* is 
one piece in an ongoing autobiography.56 The focus on herself and her family 
may indeed be seen as an attempt to establish her identity. At the same time, 
*Hitori kangae* attests to the broad knowledge, including economic matters and 
conditions in Russia, she had acquired from her father and brother and from 
extensive reading.57 The repeated references in it to her own enlightenment, self-
referential as they may seem to the modern reader, might be interpreted as a tool 
to overcome the social restrictions faced by an intellectually ambitious woman 
in the Tokugawa environment. As one of the “enlightened” she could raise her 
voice in the public space defined as a male domain. Through her “self-writing” 
she not only established her identity; more precisely she redefined it.58

**Appeal to Bakin**

A year after she began to write *Hitori kangae*, Makuzu sent the text through her 
sister to the famous author Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴 (1767–1848) with the 
request that he edit and publish it. Why she chose to send a text that meant so 
much to her to him is a mystery. At the time Bakin was at peak of his popular-
ity as an author of popular fiction, but as far as can be ascertained, the two had 
not previously had any contact. She says only that she acted in response to a sign 
from the Buddhist deity Fudō 不動.59

Makuzu presumably believed that Bakin might be willing to help other authors 
publish their works. Amateur authors, he tells us, often sent their writings to him 
in hopes that he might accept them as disciples, although he declares he never 
did so.60 The timing of Makuzu’s overture to Bakin coincides with a strikingly 
similar incident. The previous year, Suzuki Bokushi 鈴木牧之 (1770–1842), the 
learned gōnō 豪農 of Echigo province, tried for a second time to obtain Bakin’s 
assistance in publishing his *Hokuetsu seppu* 北越遊讃 (Snow Country Tales), but 
the Edo author left him with nothing but empty promises. At this point, the ques-
tion whether there was more than coincidence in two peripheral writers seeking 
help from the same central cultural figure in virtually the same year is unresolved. 
What is clear is that he failed both.61

In *Makuzu no ouna* 真葛のおうな (Madam Makuzu), written in 1825, Bakin 
recaptured for a circle of his literati friends the unusual circumstances under 
which he received *Hitori kangae*.62

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58 I find the term “self-writing,” proposed by Ronald P. Loftus, more appropriate than “autobi-
graphy” since it does not carry with it modern Western assumptions about the nature of the genre. 
See Loftus 1996.
59 *Towazugatari*, p. 376.
60 *Makuzu no ouna*, p. 257.
61 For information on Suzuki Bokushi and his nearly forty-year-long effort to publish *Hokuetsu 
seppu*, see Walthall 1985, pp. xlii-xliv.
Around the end of the second month of 1819, a fifty-something old nun accompanied by one servant called on Bakin at his house in Iidamachi. It just happened to be a day when all the other family members and servants were out. For over ten years, Bakin had preferred to live in seclusion and to avoid contact with others, let alone strangers, so he felt most uncomfortable, but had no choice but to inquire who was calling.

"I am an acquaintance of the medicine seller Tanaka Chōeki from Ushigome in Kagurazaka, and came to see the master of the house."

"The master left early this morning, and nobody else is here, just me, to watch the house while everybody is out. But I'll tell him that you came by," Bakin said with a red face, unwilling to disclose his identity. "This is from a relative of mine in Michinoku," the nun replied, "Please give it to the master. She wrote this manuscript and would like Bakin to read and correct it. He'll find more details in the letter. I am staying at Tanaka's house for the night, and will be back tomorrow morning. Please ask him to leave me a note, even if it is only one brush stroke."

Out of her kimono sleeve she took a letter, an envelope with money, and a bundle containing three volumes.

"You are aware that the master is quite exhausted from writing so much," Bakin said, in an attempt to escape his dilemma. "I cannot accept this from you. I am just here to watch the house while everybody is out. If I keep it, I'll be scolded." But the nun would not listen, and Bakin ended up with the bundle in his hands. Saying "I'll be back tomorrow around the fourth hour [10 A.M.]," she left.

Bakin rushed upstairs to his study and opened the letter. The content was more or less what the nun already had told him, but when he saw its ending, he became furious. It said, "To Mister Bakin, from Makuzu in Michinoku." No address, nothing. He was stunned by her haughtiness. Even letters he received from high-ranking persons were never that disrespectful. She had to have some proper identification, to be somebody's wife. Or a mistress, or someone at the daimyo's residence in Sendai. She could not be just "Makuzu."

When Bakin started reading the manuscript, however, he had to admit that this woman had astonishing ideas. The lamentable thing was that she really did not know the Way (michi 道). Not having studied or received the tutelage of a teacher (fumon 不聞), she inevitably was wrong about many things.

Bakin nevertheless decided that night to respond to her. He wrote that she should have known that he had long since withdrawn from society—it was common knowledge. There were many Confucian or nativist scholars in Edo, so why should she send her manuscript to him? But what had most stunned him was her haughtiness. If she asked someone to be her teacher, she should observe the proper etiquette. "Kyokutei" and "Bakin" were his pen names, and used only in this context and among his friends. How embarrassing to be addressed as such by an old woman who obviously did not know him since she was ignorant of his real name. Even worse, he did not have any idea who she was. Therefore she could not simply write "to Bakin"! It also was contrary to proper etiquette for a man and woman to exchange writing on their own without appropriate go-betweens. He thus had to reject her request.

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63 The nun was Hagi-ni, or Taeko, Makuzu's only surviving sister.
When the nun came back the next morning, Bakin said, “The master went out again very early today. I was told to say that this is his answer,” and gave her the letter.

Despite this somewhat awkward beginning, Bakin and Makuzu entered into a regular correspondence. Towards the end of the year, however, Bakin sent her a sixty-page (in modern printed form) critique, entitled *Dokkôron* (Discourse on Solitary Thoughts). In it he examined *Hitōri kangae* paragraph by paragraph, discussing Makuzu’s arguments and largely dismissing them as diverging from the “Way.” Together with this critique Bakin sent a letter requesting an end to their correspondence because of his busy writing schedule. Many questions remain about what might have caused him to take this step after having earlier praised Makuzu for her intellect and talent. The following spring he received one letter each from Makuzu and her sister, accompanied by gifts (a brush, a bookmark, and paper, all specialties from Echizen). With this their correspondence came to a close. Knowing only Bakin’s side, we are left to conjecture how Makuzu must have felt.

Makuzu stopped writing not long after. Some speculate that Bakin’s sharp, meticulous, and lengthy criticism of *Hitōri kangae* may have undermined her self-confidence. On the other hand, she had already written that her right hand had been bothering her for some time and that her eyesight was worsening, and this was perhaps another factor.

In *Makuzu no ouna*, written five years later, in the tenth month of 1825, Bakin expressed regret for having initiated the rupture in their relationship. He again praised the “manly spirit” (*otokodamashii*) that had impressed him so much, and noted that he still wept at night when he thought of her and her sad life. He later learned, having asked a friend who was going to Sendai to inquire after her, that when he wrote this essay, Makuzu was already dead. She had died in Sendai on the twenty-sixth day of the sixth month of 1825 at the age of sixty-three. Several treasured items were placed in her grave: her favorite hairpins and rice bowl and her reading glasses.

**Expository Style**

According to Makuzu, her grandmother Kuwabara Yayoko 桑原やよ子 (no dates) was skilled in womanly tasks, including calligraphy, and was also well known for an essay on the date of composition of *Utsuho monogatari* 字津保物語 (Tale

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64 In saying that Makuzu diverged from the “Way,” Bakin meant that she was not educated in classical Chinese, nor trained in discussing theories or philosophy. See *Makuzu no ouna*, p. 249.
65 *Makuzu no ouna*, p. 251.
66 Nakayama 1936, p. 119.
68 *Towazugatari*, p. 376.
69 *Makuzu no ouna*, p. 257.
70 These were discovered in 1933, when her remains were moved to a different site. Nakamura 1936, p. 207.
of the Hollow Tree), a late-tenth-century tale of unknown authorship. Makuzu’s mother also must have been accomplished in writing and poetry, since we know that she encouraged Makuzu to practice those arts from an early age.\(^{71}\) It was not out of the ordinary for a quasi-samurai daughter from Edo to be educated in reading and writing poetry. Makuzu was fortunate, however, to have Kada no Tamiko 荷田春子 (1722–1786), who lived in her family’s neighborhood, as her first formal teacher. Tamiko was the younger sister of Kada no Arimaro 荷田在満 (1706–1769), the nephew and later adopted son of Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1668–1736), one of the “great masters” (đnushi 大主) of Kokugaku. She taught Makuzu to read and write in the style of Heian classics, such as Kokinshū 古今集 or Ise monogatari 伊勢物語.\(^{72}\)

From Sendai Makuzu continued to correspond with poetry teachers who corrected her poems, such as Shimizu Hamaomi 清水浜臣 (1776–1824), a student of the noted Kokugaku scholar Murata Harumi 村田春海 (1746–1811), who was himself a disciple of Kamo no Mabuchi 加茂真淵 (1697–1769). Makuzu’s training in wabun 和文 poetry and prose therefore followed the latest trends in Edo literary circles, and her reputation as a poet reached as far as Edo. In Hitori kangae 妖怪 she mentions that Harumi once praised a sample of her writing that was shown to him.\(^{73}\) A nun from Ise who once visited her in Sendai remarked, “I heard the name Ayako [Makuzu] in the land of Musashi [Edo].”\(^{74}\) But unlike Ema Saikō 江馬細香, the famous kanshi poet-painter, who grew up in a similar household, she never learned another language. Heisuke did not allow Makuzu to study Chinese, which she confesses she found regrettable at first. Later in life, however, she writes, she came to realize that being kept from studying Chinese had had positive consequences: it was better to be able to think freely for herself than to have her mind fettered by the Chinese way of thinking and Confucian rules.\(^{75}\)

While Makuzu’s thinking is unconventional, the lack of training in Chinese rhetorical style is also evident in the somewhat irregular logic of her writing, particularly when she tries to explain abstract issues. Her wabun style is likewise idiosyncratic in that she freely incorporates dialect and colloquial phrases, explaining that she uses “some vulgar expressions in places where it is difficult to explain things without using colloquial language.”\(^{76}\) Kado Reiko 門玲子 describes Makuzu’s prose style as one faithful to the nuances of everyday lan-

\(^{71}\) Hitori kangae, p. 264.
\(^{72}\) Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 110. Tamiko followed her elder brother to Edo, worked for a while in the residence of the Kii Tokugawa house, and later taught wabun 和文 at a location near Makuzu’s house.
\(^{73}\) Makuzu states that through her father’s connections she was able to show her essay about her pilgrimage to Ichinomiya 一之宮 to Harumi (Hitori kangae, p. 281). In Makuzu no oua (p. 246), however, Bakin remarks that she was sixteen when her father showed the piece to Harumi.
\(^{74}\) Makuzugahara, pp. 456–57. Makuzu also wrote some pieces offering women practical advice on how to begin letters and such. See Tadano Makuzu shū, pp. 394–415.
\(^{75}\) Hitori kangae, p. 269. Regarding Ema Saikō, see Fister 1991 and Sato 1998.
\(^{76}\) Hitori kangae, p. 261. See also Mukashibanashi 1994, p. 3.
guage (shajitsuteki na zokubun 写実的な俗文); it thereby, Kado holds, allowed her to express with immediacy her new experiences after leaving Edo, including contact with the local dialect of Sendai.\(^{77}\) Mukashibanashi is particularly notable in this respect with its stories and use of direct speech, but Hitori kangae, too, is written in a highly individual style.

We know little about Makuzu’s education other than in calligraphy and poetic composition. There are no traces, for example, of any training in medicine. As a woman, she never formally studied Rangaku (Western studies). But growing up in the Kudō house she learned about foreign customs and to some extent even Western science, as can be seen in Hitori kangae.\(^{78}\) She also read scholarly books, some of which had a direct impact on the ideas expressed in Hitori kangae. Motoori Norinaga’s 本居宣長 (1730–1801) Kojikiden 古事記伝 influenced her discussion about men and women, and the works of Kamo no Mabuchi may have shaped her ideas about the “rhythm between heaven and earth” (tenchi no hyōshi 天地の拍子).\(^{79}\)

Range of Ideas
The ideas set forth in Hitori kangae are not always easy to grasp or categorize, owing partly to the stylistic issues discussed above. Makuzu labels each section, lending the text the appearance of an orderly structure. Its content, however, is not strictly organized according to these headings, nor does her argumentation follow what a modern reader might regard as conventional logic. Her strategy, rather, is to take up repeatedly certain issues she considers particularly important. As in Mukashibanashi, she lays out a red thread for the reader. Since Hitori kangae is a treatise rather than a narrative, she in fact sets out a number of such threads, which she raises, drops, and picks up again along the way. A thorough analysis and discussion of her ideas and reasoning must await another opportunity. For now, I would like to draw attention to some of the notions that figure prominently in Hitori kangae.\(^{80}\)

Makuzu notes that after her experience of enlightenment she realized that the Confucian “Way” was a human construction and therefore not immutable. This perspective, which echoes the arguments of Norinaga and Mabuchi, was probably drawn from her reading of their works. Having rejected the premise of a fixed moral order, she held that the only certainties in this world are the “rhythm of heaven and earth” and the “number of days and nights” (chūya no kazu 昼夜の数). “Phenomena that never change,” she writes, “are the revolutions of the sun and moon, the number of days and nights, and the rhythm that floats through them all.”\(^{81}\) Although she does not closely define these terms, “rhythm” might

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\(^{77}\) Kado 1998, p. 178.

\(^{78}\) Kado 1998, p. 186. In Mukashibanashi she includes various anecdotes about foreign objects that were brought to her father; see, for instance, Mukashibanashi 1994, pp. 48–49.

\(^{79}\) See Hitori kangae, pp. 266, 269, 294.

\(^{80}\) For an overview of Makuzu’s thought as expressed in Hitori kangae, see Seki 1980.

\(^{81}\) Hitori kangae, p. 269.
be interpreted as a kind of pulse, or simply the course of nature, inasmuch as she describes it as “the living rhythm that occurs naturally (onozukara aru おのづから有) between heaven and earth.”82 “The number of days and nights” might be understood as the regularity in the number of hours in a day, the passage of time with night following day, and/or the limited span of life. In other words, these terms would seem to be her way of grasping the phenomenological natural environment.

Makuzu’s interest in these matters is not from a metaphysical perspective, but as regards their relationship to human behavior and social organization. Days and nights repeat themselves with continuous regularity, she says, no matter what people do. One can try to enact rules and norms, but these are constructed things and therefore cannot substitute for the natural order, the rhythm that cannot be changed. People who acknowledged the existence of this rhythm and were willing to move with it would, she thought, succeed in this world. Learned scholars and bushi who believed in the teachings of the sages were, by contrast, so rigidly bound that they could not follow the rhythm. She admits that she herself failed to match it, which was one reason why she did not get along well with others.83 In her view, the meaning of the rhythm between heaven and earth that “floats” through nature and society undermines so-called metaphysical principles. This assumption led her to a distinctive understanding of human nature.

The heart (kokoro no katachi 心のかたち), according to Makuzu, is shaped by the drive to succeed, or more literally, to emerge a winner in the competitive struggle for supremacy (shôretsu no arasoi 勝劣の争).84 She saw the same drive at work in all living beings, beasts and humans alike. She also held that the relationship between men and women (danjo no aikakarai 男女のあいかからび) is shaped by this instinct. The struggle for superiority explains why women and men just do not get along. Their determination to resist defeat at the hands of the other results in conflict. From where does this specific drive come? It is, declares Makuzu, “rooted in their private parts” (injo o ne toshite 陰所を根として).85

In Makuzu’s view, the man was the inevitable winner of such struggles, and since nature had endowed him with physical superiority, it was wrong for a woman to challenge him. It was not a matter of yin and yang, nor of the assumed intellectual inferiority of women, as Confucian texts proposed. It was her physical lack of a penis that put the woman in a subordinate position. Taking this physical difference as a given, Makuzu advised young women to accept it. She argued that even when a man was stupid or of lower status, such as a servant, the woman had to subordinate herself to him.86

In stating that differences in intellectual capacity have nothing to do with male

82 Hitori kangae, p. 277.
83 Hitori kangae, pp. 265-66.
85 Hitori kangae, pp. 266, 267.
86 Hitori kangae, p. 266.
superiority, Makuzu disagreed with the perspective found in works such as Onna daigaku (Greater Learning for Women). As Oguchi Yūjirō notes, her views on this issue were extraordinary for her time. Yet the divergence between her argument and that characteristic of better-known works such as Onna daigaku also suggests the need for a reevaluation of the scope of the discourse on women in the Edo period.

Makuzu’s premise that the struggle for superiority was a fundamental of human existence led her to further conclusions about the nature of society. Everyone, she observed, was pitted against the lord. Positioned at the pinnacle of society and therefore the target of everyone below, he was, she noted with regret, doomed to suffer defeat without even realizing it. Constrained by impractical ideas of Confucian virtue, the lord was not equipped for a battle in which the actual weapon was money. Merchants preyed on him as moneylenders, peasants evaded their taxes, and even the lord’s retainers greedily clung to their share without considering whether the domain might go bankrupt in the process. Reflecting ideas she presumably got from her father and his knowledge of Russia, Makuzu suggested that the lord should be a mercantilist instead of a virtuous Confucian ruler. As her sympathy with the ruler indicates, despite her recognition of struggle as rooted in human nature, Makuzu did not reject the principle of a class society. Instead she called for reform to restore the upper class, namely the bushi, to their proper position. With the bushi in control of material wealth, society would once again be in tune with the “rhythm of heaven and earth.”

The Story Behind the Text

How did a text such as Hitori kangae, unpublished during the author’s lifetime, make its way to the present? It would appear that although Bakin did not respond to Makuzu’s desire to see her work published, he was ultimately responsible for its survival. It was through his Dokkaron and Makuzu no owa that she became known, and most likely his copy of the manuscript of Hitori kangae was the basis for the one that has survived to the present. Suzuki Yoneko surmises that Bakin’s copy passed into the hands of Kimura Mokurō 木村默老 (1774–1856), a friend of his from Shikoku. A certain Tamai Yukiatsu 玉井行篤 made a transcription of this version in 1848. Tamai’s transcription, Hitori kangae shōroku 独考抄録 (Excerpts from Solitary Thoughts), which comprises about fifty pages in two fascicles, was included in the second volume of Nisshōen sōsho 日涉園叢書, a collection of miscellaneous works compiled by Katayama Chūdō 片山冲堂 (1816–1888), which is today held by Seikadō Bunko 静嘉堂文庫 in Tokyo.

88 Hitori kangae, pp. 269–72, 277. It is in regard to these points that some see her ideas as resembling those of Kaiho Seiryō.
89 These first appeared in print in 1912 and 1928 respectively.
90 Tamai added a number of comments to the text. In the translation we have identified these as by the “copyist.”
existence of this version was only discovered by modern researchers after 1980. As the title suggests, Tamai seems not to have copied the entire manuscript, apparently omitting two or three sections, but it is the fullest extant version of Makuzu’s work known today. A manuscript of the first chapter in Makuzu’s hand evidently was preserved in the Tadano family until the twentieth century. According to a colophon (dated 1926) to a copy of that manuscript, also held by the Tadano family, plans had been made to publish it, only to have the original lost in the 1923 Kantō earthquake.

In 1990 Sugiura Minpei included some passages from *Hitori kangae*, based on the Seikadō Bunko manuscript, in *Edoki no kaimen shiso* 江戸期の開明思想, a collection of excerpts from the writings of late Edo thinkers. The first “complete” edition of the work appeared only in 1994, in *Tadano Makuzu shū*. Suzuki Yoneko, the editor of this version, based it on the Seikadō Bunko manuscript, but also utilized the sections of *Hitori kangae* cited by Bakin in *Dokkōron; Hitori kangae tsuika* 独考追加 (Supplement to Solitary Thoughts), an addendum to *Dokkōron*; and the manuscript copy of the first chapter held by the Tadano family. For our translation we have followed the *Tadano Makuzu shū* version, but have referred to Sugiura’s rendering where relevant, and as Suzuki and Sugiura’s readings diverge in a number of cases, have consulted as well the Seikadō Bunko manuscript.

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91 Seki Tamiko 関民子 found the piece and identified it as being by Makuzu after writing the analysis of *Hitori kangae* included in Seki 1980.

92 See Suzuki 1994, p. 598. Suzuki Yoneko has also discussed the differences among these copies in Suzuki 1987. The copy of the first chapter held by the Tadano family includes one paragraph ("Kimizu tsumaru koto" 気水つまる事, The Matter of Ether and Water Filling Up Space) not found in the Seikadō Bunko manuscript. Suzuki describes the Tadano family copy as having been done by Itō Tadakaze 伊藤忠風, but he in fact signs himself as Takanarita Tadakaze 高成田忠風. Regarding Takanarita, see also Nakayama 1936, pp. 19–20.

93 See Sugiura 1990, pp. 63–89.

94 The two at times give quite divergent renderings of the handwritten text. An example is *Hitori kangae*, p. 306, 外国人 (people of foreign countries), and Sugiura 1990, p. 89, 我国人 (people of our country). In the translation, unless noted otherwise, we have followed Suzuki’s reading.
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