



Children's Literature and Education according to Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933): Building a Bridge between Edo Tradition and Meiji Modernity

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Abstract

Although Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933) is widely recognized as being at the origin of children's literature in Meiji Japan, his efforts to contribute to children's education have gone largely unnoticed. This is in sheer contrast with Suzuki Miekichi (1882-1936), editor of the Taishō period children's magazine *Akai Tori*, whose "Reader on Compositions" (1935) is said to have had a profound influence on modern-day education of Japanese as a first language. The object of this research is to reexamine what relationship between children's literature and education Sazanami tried to establish prior to Suzuki Miekichi. To do this, we first analyze his theoretical approach to the use of children's stories as a means for education, which he formulated in "New Families" (1930) and "How to Tell Children's Stories" (1931), as well as several short texts. Then we look at the types of children's books he actually wrote, paying special attention to books for school children. Finally, we compare his views with those of Miekichi to highlight any differences or similarities. We find that, notwithstanding his pronounced disagreement with the use of children's stories for educational purposes, Sazanami actively wrote stories for this exact purpose. We also came to the conclusion that, in contrast to Miekichi's focus, which is considered to be on developing children's writing skills, Sazanami concentrated on cultivating children's kanji reading skills while preserving the Edo period storytelling tradition.

Keywords: *Iwaya Sazanami, Japanese children's literature, education, storytelling, Meiji period, Edo period*
