

*Haetori-de: the time Kodomo no Kuni reflects*

Terumi Fukushi  
Director General  
Reader Services and Collections Department

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title  
in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 614 (May 2012).



<<Photo 1: Haetori-de>>

The title of this illustration, “Haetori-de,” translated into “Catching Flies Day,” looks funny but the events were actually carried out in past days. The movement to eradicate flies was started in the United States around the beginning of the twentieth century as part of sanitation movements. The movement was also started in the Taisho period in Japan, for flies were regarded as the vector of cholera epidemics at the time. Being settled as part of the campaign, “Haetori-de” was first carried out in Osaka in 1920. After flies swarmed over Tokyo because of the worsening of sanitary conditions after the Great Kanto Earthquake (September 1, 1923), August 15 was established as “Haetori-de” in Tokyo city in 1925 and people tried to exterminate flies. After that, “Haetori-de” events were carried out every summer. Both adults and children devoted themselves to catching flies, sometimes competing between each neighborhood association for a prize.

In “Okamoto Kido nikki” (lit. Diary of OKAMOTO Kido), it is written that the Okamoto family received a

## National Diet Library Newsletter

bottle of soda from the neighborhood association for catching 103 flies on the day in 1925. The cheery and funny illustration depicting two pig characters with bags walking around catching flies (Photo 1) skillfully portrays the society of the day.

The author of this illustration, HATSUYAMA Shigeru (1897-1973) is well-known for his unique and fancy style. He was popular and worked actively for over 50 years.

“Kodomo no kuni (lit. Children’s World)” which carries this illustration (volume 15 number 11 (September 1936)), was one of the leading picture magazines for children featuring artwork of the prewar period. After its foundation in January 1922 when the momentum of Taisho democracy (a series of liberal movements in the Taisho period) was still alive, 287 issues (23 volumes) were published up to March 1944. The magazine is well-known for its focus on art, carrying stories, songs, music and dances for children accompanied by high-quality “pictures drawn for the sake of children” (called “doga” by TAKEI Takeo) in order that even small children who could not yet read characters could enjoy them.

Top artists were gathered from each field, such as [KITAHARA Hakushu](#), [NOGUCHI Ujo](#), [SAIJO Yaso](#), [NAKAYAMA Shinpei](#), [OKAMOTO Kiichi](#), [TAKEI Takeo](#), SHIMIZU Yoshio and [HATSUYAMA Shigeru](#). The magazine contains famous children’s songs which many Japanese still know and love.

On the other hand, the magazine also readily covered contemporary events, news of the period and developing situations of the day, exploiting the advantage of periodicals: the situation after the Great Kanto Earthquake carried in the issue immediately after the disaster (Vol.2, No.12), new vehicles (Photo 2 & 3) and machines (Photo 4 & 5), new snacks such as cake, donuts and chocolate and scenes of town, such as a department store where children are happily riding an escalator (Photo 6). These pages may freshly bring back scenes which are used to be familiar to many Japanese people or those which have been lost from people’s memory.



<<Photo 2: Chikatetsu densha (subway train) illustrated by YASUI Koyata, volume 11 number 14 (December 1932)

The new subway line opened between Kanda and Mitsukoshimae in April 1932. It can be seen from the destination board on the platform indicating “for Kanda Mitsukoshimae” that this illustration was drawn soon after the opening of the line. >>

<<Photo 3: Kyuko ressha (express train) illustrated by YASUI Koyata, volume 13 number 11 (October 1934)>>



<<Photo 4: Rajio (radio) illustrated by OKAMOTO Kiichi, volume 10 number 6 (May 1931)

This illustration was first drawn in December 1927. You can see that radio broadcasts had spread among people in just a few years after the first service on March 22 and the start of the full-fledged service on July 12, 1925. >>

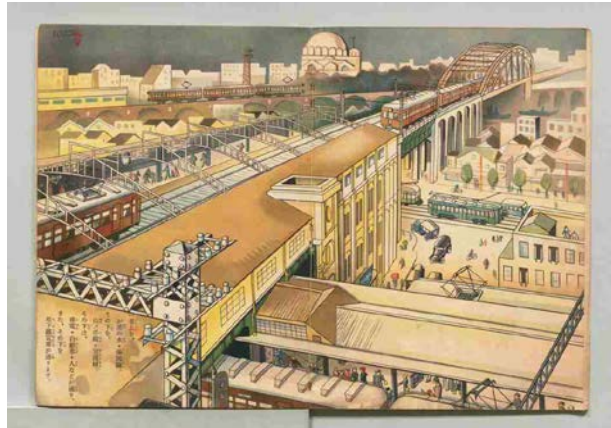
<<Photo 5: Cho-san utsushimasuyo (lit. Dear butterflies, I will take your picture.) illustrated by HATSUYAMA Shigeru, volume 12 number 6 (May 1933)

Hatsuyama says the camera in the hands of the girl is inexpensive, which shows that cheaper cameras were becoming popular at that time. >>





<<Photo 6: Depato (department store) illustrated by YASUI Koyata, volume 11 number 2 (February 1932)>>



<<Photo 7: Akihabara eki (Akihabara Station) illustrated by YASUI Koyata, volume 11 number 12 (October 1932)>>

Through “Kodomo no kuni,” enjoy seeking for the fragments of past Japan still remaining in people’s memories.

Page images of “Kodomo no kuni” can be seen in the “Kodomo no kuni magazine article search”:

[http://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/search/index\\_e.html](http://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/search/index_e.html)

and in a digital exhibition featuring this magazine:

[http://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/KODOMO\\_WEB/index\\_e.html](http://www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/KODOMO_WEB/index_e.html)