

Selections from NDL collections

***Hinaasobi* — little book of the Edo Period**

Yukimi Ueda, Humanities, Maps, Rare Books and Old Materials Division, Reader Services and Collections Department

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Photo 1: cover

Published in the middle of the Edo period; 1 volume, 12 folios, 5.5×3.9cm; Dark blue ground cover with gold paint and a title slip (3.0×0.7cm) "Hina asobi"; covered binding, four-hole binding; NDL Call No. YR15-N6 (belongs to the Rare Books and Old Materials Room, Tokyo Main Library); Single-line borders all around, size of the frame of folio 1 recto: 4.1×3.2cm; *Hanshin*, note on fore edge of the folios: "hina 1 (- 12)" no foreword, no afterword, *Shikigo*, no hand-written note appended; Folio 1 recto to folio 8 recto: 8 drawings (one drawing on the folio 1 recto and one drawing on two page spread from folio 1 verso to folio 8 recto); Folio 8 verso to folio 12 verso: text beginning with the title "*Awashima no yurai*" 6 lines on each half folio; Owned by the National Diet Library

March 3rd is *Hina Matsuri* or Doll Festival in Japan, when people pray for the happiness and healthy growth of girls. This seasonal festival is popular among Japanese people, but contrary to general belief of Japanese people, the custom is new and considered to have started in the Edo period. *Hina Matsuri* was called *Hina asobi* until the middle of the Edo period as the custom came from the *Mamagoto asobi* (lit. playing house) game that children play with dolls (*hina*).

Here, I will introduce a book on *Hina Matsuri* (*Hina asobi*), published in the Edo period. It is so tiny and lovely that it looks as if the book itself were used as a *hina* ornament.

The size of the book is 5.5cm×3.9cm. It is probably the smallest book in the NDL's rare books and old materials collection. Though it is tiny, the binding is splendid like a bride's trousseau item: gold-painted flowering plants are designed on a dark blue ground cover, the title "*Hina asohi* (*Hina asobi*)" is written in ink on a slip at the center of the cover, and the book is bound with thread in *Yotsume toji* or four-hole binding, a typical method with Japanese-style books.



Photo 2: folio 1 verso and folio 2 recto

Photo 3: folio 7 verso and folio 8 recto.  
A drawing on outdoor *hina asobi* is rare

When it is opened carefully, a series of eight drawings on *Hina asobi* appears. As shown in Photos 2 and 3, different scenes of *Hina asobi* are described and no text is on the drawings, so the drawings are likely to convey no story.

Photo 2 shows *hina* dolls in a sitting pose set up on a mat in the upper-left part of the drawing. *Hina* dolls in a standing pose are also placed next to them in front of a folding screen. *Sanbo* offering stands are placed in front of the *hina* dolls and a *shimadai* ornament is placed on their right. Being called by the young woman, the young man in front might have just turned toward her. They seem to be talking happily with each other.

Partially expanded photo 2: *sanbo* (left) and *shimadai* (right)Partially expanded photo 2: a *hisage* is on the man's left and a *choshi* is on the right

The *hisage* (pot-shaped sake bottle) on the man's left and the *choshi* (sake bottle) on the man's right are adorned with the *ocho* (lit. paper folded into a male butterfly) and the *mecho* (lit. paper folded into a female butterfly). These items have often been used in Japanese-style wedding ceremonies. So, it can be assumed that some of the *hina* ornaments came from items for wedding ceremonies. Unlike a modern set of *hina* ornaments, there is no tiered stand.

The series of drawing is followed by a text titled "*Awashima no yura*" (The origin of Awashima) (photo 4). Awashima is a shrine in Kada, Wakayama City. Awashima has been widely believed to be a god with miraculous efficacy for female ailments as well as the god of the *Hina Matsuri*. It is said that a wandering monk called *Awashima Gannin*

spread the story of Awashima: "Awashima was the deified empress of *Sumiyoshi no okami* (lit. The God of Sumiyoshi) but she was exiled to Awashima island as she contracted a female ailment. She arrived at the island on March 3rd. She made paper dolls there and that became the beginning of the *Hina Matsuri*." It is said that Gannin gathered contributions from many women who heard his story and Awashima shrines in various places in Japan were built based on the contributions. "*Awashima no yura*" is likely to have been based on the story of *Awashima Gannin*.

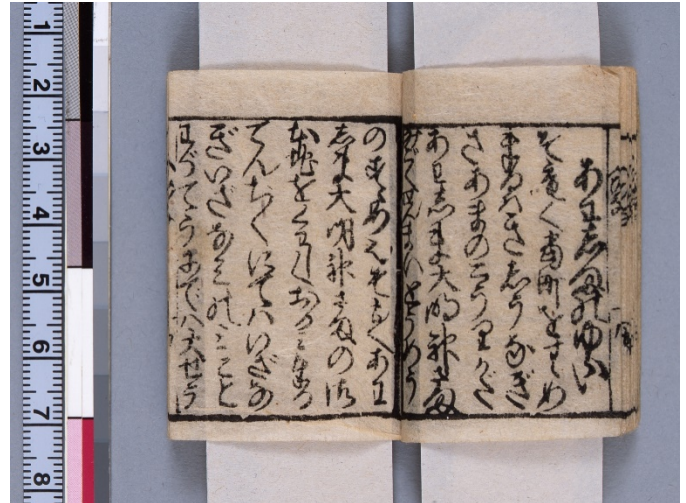


Photo 4: folio 8 verso to folio 9 recto

The book has no *kanki* (note giving details of publication), so when and where the book was made remain unclear. The time of publication is assumed to have been in the middle of the Edo period in the column above, but actually it can be estimated at any time from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th century at the latest from appearance of the *hina* ornaments. Why was this book made in such a small size? Was this book really produced as a *hina* ornament?

The sets of *hina* ornaments handed down in Daimyo families sometimes include a small manuscript of a tale. By modeling after such specially made manuscripts, small books for *hina* ornaments might also have been produced as publications in order to respond to a wider range of demand.

According to *Yoshufushi*, a topography of Kyoto in the Edo period, *e-zoshi-ya* (stores which sold illustrated story books) produced paper *hinadolls* in addition to books. Could there be a possibility that stores of this kind, which made both books and *hina* dolls, also produced small books as *hina* ornaments?

Unfortunately, we have not been able to discover the details of the production of this book. A lot remains unknown about the publication of small books in the Edo period. We expect future studies to find out how the tiny little book should be positioned in the history of publishing culture in Japan which has produced a wide array of publications.