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Consumer Consumption for Children

Conceptions of Childhood in the Work of Taishō-Period Designers

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Translated and adapted by Emily B. Simpson

Amid the flourishing of a new culture of consumption in urban areas in modern Japan, children too came to be seen as objects of expenditure.¹ With the development of the capitalist market came information about children and products for them that spread through the populace, particularly the urban middle class, via expositions, magazines, and department stores. In my publications to date, I have demonstrated that the interaction between the disparate trends of collecting toys as an individual hobby on the one hand, and the academic study of children on the other, both drawing from the various networks of knowledge about children characteristic of the Meiji period, created fertile ground for research on and the development of goods for children that exceeded demand (Jinnō 1999, 2005). This concern for items made for and used by children was accompanied by the general expansion of domestic production including toys and stationery for children's use, mainly for export, but also in part for domestic circulation. Within this domestic market, goods for children were not only for children to use, but became the desired objects of the urban middle class, which had discovered modernity in the world of children. From then on, designs suitable to children came to be incorporated into various products.

In this paper, I trace the genesis of a view of childhood as marked by an innocence believed to be inherent, a perspective that was prominent during the Taishō period (1912–1926) and that continued thereafter, as we see in chapters 6 and 9. In particular, I examine how designs aimed at children were incorporated into products. Rather than toys and picture books geared toward children, my object of inquiry lies in the domain of furniture and interior design, where the

differentiation between children and adults is precise, and wherein I analyze the process that generated the concept of designing for children.

CHILD-BASED THOUGHT AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE IN THE TAISHŌ ERA

Following the rise of children's studies at the end of the Meiji period, consideration of the theme of "children" and the "family" became all the greater in the Taishō period. Information on this subject was transmitted to people via expositions, magazines, and the like. Aiming to free people from what was deemed the traditional feudal household, those who advocated Western-style democracy, such as socialist historian Sakai Toshihiko and journalist and historian Tokutomi Sohō, came to consciously use the term *katei*, or family (Sakai 1904; Tokutomi 1891–98). The debut of this concept of family created the foundation for a transformation from children as subjects who must be educated by the state to children as members of a democratic family who should be cared for while being granted their freedom. (Of course, this exceedingly democratic and idealized image of family was only in the limelight for the brief period of Taishō; once the Shōwa period [1927–1989] began and Japan turned toward war, the family was once again reconceptualized as the foundation of the nation-state system.) Interest in this sort of family grew gradually stronger at the end of the Meiji period, with family and women's magazines appearing in quick succession. In addition to *The Japanese Family* (Nihon no katei), which ran from 1895 to 1900 and *Women's World* (Fujin sekai; 1906 to 1933), several women's magazines that began at the beginning of the twentieth century continue today: *The Housewife's Friend* (Shufu no tomo), originally *The Family's Friend* (1903); *Women's Pictorial* (Fujin gahō, 1905); and *Women's Opinion* (Fujin kōron; 1916). Women occupied a central role in the newly defined family, and among their familial duties, child rearing held an important position.

Not only magazines but also expositions emphasized children's education at home as much as their school education, presented in a fashion easy to understand. Exhibitions on the subject of children began with the 1906 *Children's Exhibition*, sponsored by the Dobunkan publishing house, and came to be held frequently from the end of Meiji onward, even at department stores. As is clear from the fact that this *Children's Exhibition* was mainly organized by the magazine *The Japanese Family*, many child-themed events gave primary place to family culture rather than school education. This focus on family lifestyle and children drew much from the growing movement during Taishō to improve the Japanese people's lifestyle.

A representative example of the expositions related to family at this time was the *Family Exposition* of 1915, sponsored by the Citizen Newspaper Company.² At this exposition, organizers showcased concrete exhibits and items on the subject "What is the ideal family?" It placed children at the center of the family, and along with the concept of child-centric families, the exposition presented goods suitable

for giving to children. The majority of children and women's expositions at the time shared this characteristic, and the display of items pertinent to children continued in later years.

In 1917, Abe Isoo (1865–1949) published *A Child-Based Family* (Kodomo hon'i no katei). After graduating from Dōshisha University, Abe quickly became a professor at Waseda University. He participated actively in the early feminist movement and joined wholeheartedly in various activities from the standpoint of Christian humanism. As a pioneer in Japan's socialist movement, Abe called for democratization from a socialist viewpoint, connected affairs of the home with affairs of state, and advocated for the importance of family, believing that the democratization of the country would start with the democratization of the home. In *A Child-Based Family*, he suggests that building a child-based family was the best way to democratize the family, and he also emphasized home education, focusing attention on women and children. Starting at this time, the use of the phrase “child-based” or “childlike” (Jones 2001) became conspicuous within the dissemination of the modern concept of family.

Another example of the trend toward a child-based approach can be found in children's literature. Rather than the fairy tales (*otogi-banashi*) that reflected the Meiji educational outlook, at the beginning of the Taishō period, children's literature created from a child's point of view emerged. Starting with *Child's Friend* (Kodomo no tomo) in 1914, *Red Bird* (Akai tori) in 1918, and *Children's Country* (Kodomo no kuni) in 1922, children's magazines, which differed from their Meiji counterparts, appeared one after the other. In place of the mainstream view up to that point, which had seen children as the object of education, an outlook that respected children's unique world and childlike innocence spread. Out of it grew not only children's literature, but also children's songs and pictures. This movement of successive crusades for lifestyle improvements attached importance to the lifestyle of children, in accordance with the so-called “child-based” school of thought. However, later criticism of this principle of childlike innocence suggested that it glorified the innocent and pure existence of children and was no more than a view of childhood idealized by adults (Kawahara 1998).

At the same time, designers became conscious of this child-based trend of thought, and began to create designs for children. While researching this topic, I have been in charge of furniture design and decoration in the Wooden Arts Division of the Tokyo High School of Industrial Arts. My work there has brought me into contact with Taishō-period dwellings and lifestyles. In particular, I have investigated the design approaches launched by Kogure Joichi and Moritani Nobuo.

The historian of modern design Kashiwagi Hiroshi states that Kogure and Moritani put children in a central place in the household, and from there attempted to reform the family. For example, he points out that establishing a separate room for children in order to respect their individualism and privacy resulted in a demand for living rooms. The existence of families who took children seriously

brought the philosophy of functional modernism into family relations. During the Shōwa period, this functional view of the household was absorbed by the movement toward a new way of organizing the family for the nation (Kashiwagi 1987). In short, a major characteristic of Japanese modernization was the incorporation of children in such efforts. For that reason, therefore, the view of childhood held by these two designers relied on an extremely modern framework, as I will discuss below. However, a closer examination of their concern for children reveals many other dimensions quite different from the principles of modernism. These dimensions gave rise to a subtle discrepancy in the practical expression of design for children.

KOGURE JOICHI'S DESIGNS AND VIEW OF CHILDHOOD

Kogure Joichi provides an excellent example of a designer and writer whose views on childhood had both a child-centered dimension and a concern for industrial production. In designing houses and furnishings, he took a decidedly modernist approach typical of the Taishō period emphasis on democracy and the individual. In his designs for toys, however, Kogure both looked back to the Edo period and tried to create products that would sell in the international market.

Although Kogure advocated various housing reforms in the Lifestyle Improvement Alliance (Seikatsu kaizen dōmeikai), it is thought that he did not personally adopt his central proposal, the “rational” Western custom of sitting in chairs, until forty to fifty years later, when his children were already adults. For this very reason, he believed that Japan should move forward with improvements in children’s quality of life, and it would be most effective if people grew used to the custom of sitting in chairs from childhood. In his representative works, such as *The New House and Furniture Decoration* (Atarashii ie to kagu sōshoku, 1927), *Housing and Architecture* (Jūtaku to kenchiku, 1928) and *Improving One’s Home* (Wagaya o kairyō shite, 1930), we see many illustrations of new housing, in accordance with the proposals made by members of the Lifestyle Improvement Alliance. The books also include numerous descriptions relating to children.

Kogure criticized the contemporary norm of entrusting children’s education solely to schools and repeatedly put forward the importance of education at home, which had tended to be belittled. In *The New House and Furniture Decoration*, he says this about the importance of giving children their own room(s): “At this time, when children’s minds and bodies are most full of vim and vigor, pay special attention to this point, and respect their individuality; guiding them to openly display their [personality] holds great significance in terms of family education” (Kogure 1927: 399). As this quotation suggests, Kogure’s ideal for children’s education was one that fully demonstrated the child’s individuality more than anything else. As to how this individuality was to be acquired, in his pet theory, Kogure linked it

with a child's creative activities: "As a rule, either in home education or together with school education, if we start with children's natural productivity—to put it differently, freely inventing and freely producing a so-called crafting lifestyle—then we can cause the individuality of children's minds and bodies to fully develop in the most natural way" (Kogure 1927: 401–2). As this shows, Kogure believed that children have an innate disposition toward creating things, and that children's handicrafts were the foundation for a gifted education and the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility. Therefore, a lifestyle full of crafts, not only at school but also at home—in other words, an environment in which children need not care about their surroundings and can make things freely—advanced children's mental and physical individuality. In addition, he felt that a space for children—the child's room—made these creative activities possible. Setting aside an individual room was an important part of encouraging the independence of every room's occupant.

Kogure's proposals contained many functional considerations for children's rooms, such as the use of desk and chairs to advance lifestyle improvements, paying attention to ventilation and lighting, and planning installation of home heaters, furniture, and the like with an emphasis on safety. However, among these proposals, we also find suggestions relating to how one should decorate a child's room and what sorts of designs are suitable for children (see also Sand 2005: 90). Under "Housing and Ornamentation," he states that "decoration is the domain of the child" (Kogure 1928: 248). Having children's walls covered with crayon drawings, maps, and cut-outs for shadow puppets and the rooms decorated with flowers, goldfish bowls, and bird cages, was a part of creating the most enjoyable lifestyle for children, and he advocated essentially letting children decorate with their own hands.

Pointing out that something an adult favors may not necessarily please a child, he suggested limiting the adult's hand to the absolute minimum and repudiated the method of fitting children into adult molds. On allowing adults to participate only in making simple decorations, leaving as much room as possible for children to express themselves, he noted that "decorations which truly fascinate children are difficult to envision with good results without returning to childhood again ourselves. It would certainly be ideal to go back to thinking like a child, but once one has become an adult, it becomes rather difficult" (Kogure 1928: 245). Here, the "going back to thinking like a child" that Kogure endorsed was nothing other than the child-based philosophy of truly thinking from the standpoint of a child. We could say that he communicated precisely the principle of childlike innocence that infused the contemporary Taishō view of childhood.

Yet from his standpoint as a designer, Kogure insisted that designs for children had to meet the need to educate children in what was true, good, and beautiful, and that it had to be possible to improve their taste. This reveals his viewpoint that desirable designs were those that tamed children's minds and nurtured a spirit of creativity. If people considered that getting children acquainted with beautiful forms and colors from a young age was more important than schooling, then



FIGURE 3. A children's room that resembles a Western-style room by Okamoto Kiichi.

the role of design for children would not be denied. In his works, Kogure repeatedly emphasized that furniture design, in addition to being safe and sized to fit children's bodies, should express "a soft, childlike feeling" (Kogure 1927: 410). For example, even if an older child of eleven or twelve is the same size as an adult, he or she still requires a youthful design attractive to children. This is the other side of Kogure's philosophy: the consideration of how one expresses a "childlike" quality as a maker of items for children.

How was Kogure's thinking, which conformed to the child-based philosophy characteristic of the Taishō period, reflected in his designs? The effective link between his words and his designs are the illustrations employed in his series of books, in the sections on children's rooms. Some of the illustrations have apparently been taken from overseas literature, but even so, they introduce materially rich and dream-like children's rooms. The sort of child's room that appears in these illustrations resembles the Western-style rooms for children, overflowing with toys, being drawn by children's illustrators of the period, such as Okamoto Kiichi (see figures 3 and 4).³

It is worthy of note that Kogure's own expression of childlike design, shown in these illustrations by Okamoto, differed fundamentally from a child-based design that stressed possibilities, which he had otherwise emphasized. An exception appears in *Improving One's Home*, where he proposes how a children's room might be created in a regular, already-existing house through the example of the children's room at his own residence. In this room, which includes a desk and bed

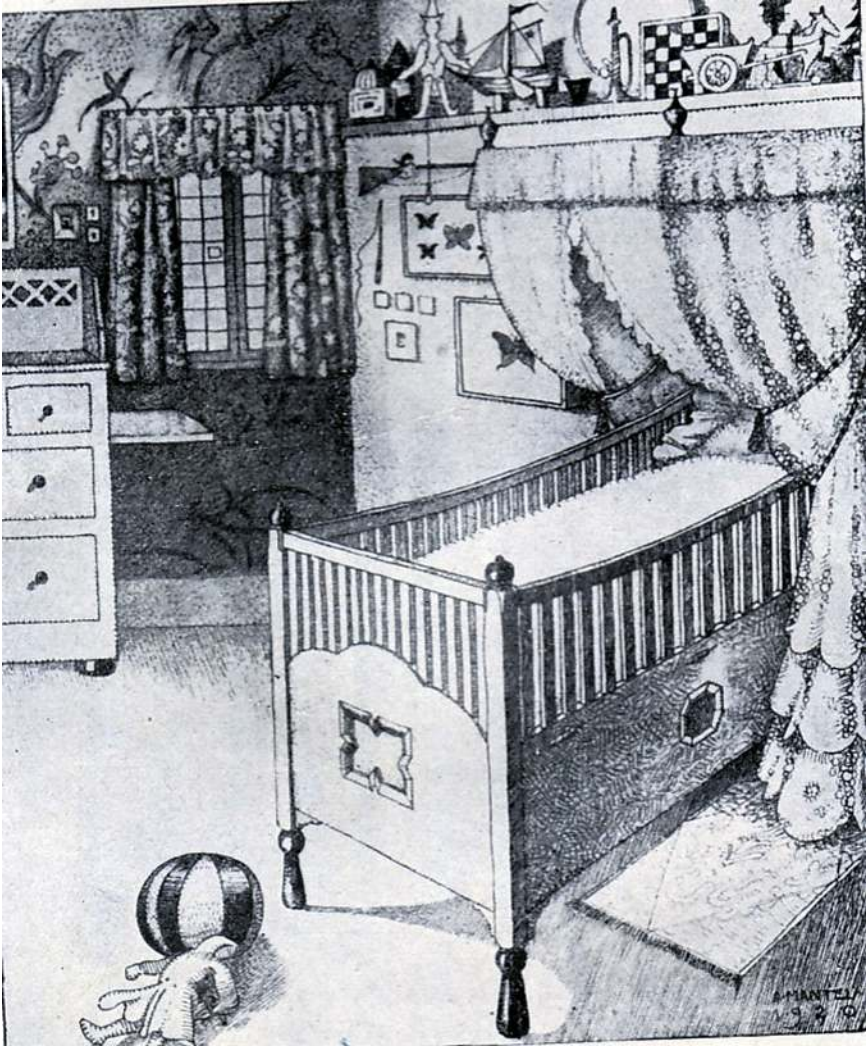


FIGURE 4. An illustration of a children's room by Kogure Joichi that originally appeared in *Wagaya o kaizen shite* (Improving one's home) in 1930.

over tatami floors, he allows for the adoption of a more practical modern design to encourage possibilities (figure 5). But this possibility is limited to this volume alone. Even though he accepted the child-based philosophy, perhaps Kogure had not quite attained a concrete image of how the idea should be expressed in design form. Was it for this reason that he published foreign photographs of children's rooms without qualm?⁴

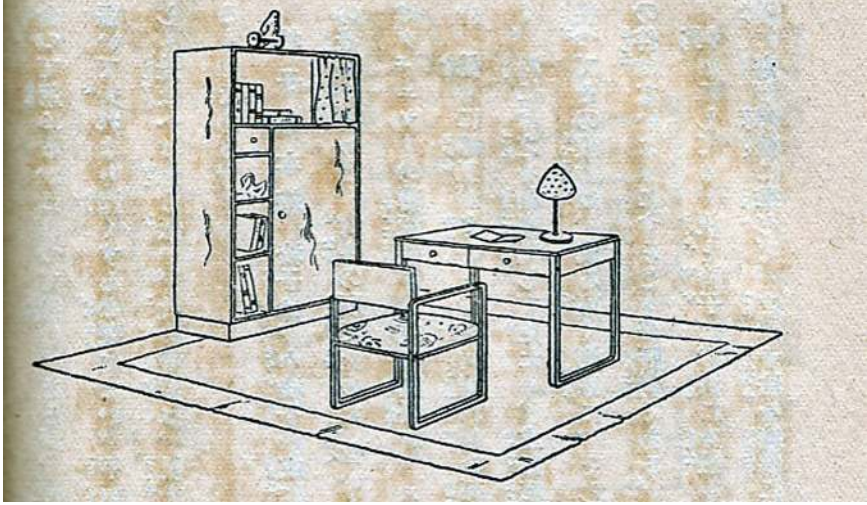


FIGURE 5. Another children's room with desk and bed over tatami floors in Kogure Joichi's residence.

If we widen our scope to encompass Kogure's view of childhood beyond the works pertaining to his profession in furniture decoration, a different dimension surfaces. In *Excerpts from My Life in the Industrial Arts* (Watashi no kōgei seikatsu shōshi, 1942), a series of Kogure's recollections, he makes it clear that at the beginning of the Taishō period, he held a special interest in toys and began to collect international toys as a pastime. The catalyst for this was the Mitsukoshi Dry Goods Store Items for Children event, in which he participated in 1917–1918 as an employee of the Tokyo Prefectural Industrial Arts School: “Mingling with Iwaya Sazanami, Takashima Beihō and other illustrious figures, I took part in the research on children's toys as one member of the team. This event also included an examination of many toys in stock at Mitsukoshi and a competition in evaluating them, thus promoting the creation of toys” (Kogure 1942: 117).

Aiming to develop a new domestic market, the Mitsukoshi Dry Goods Store, which became a department store at that time, threw much effort into handling children's items. At the same time, a wave of development in domestic industry also enveloped children's goods such as toys, and their export value quickly increased. Nevertheless, the toy factories of the time were tiny and unable to expand their stock of goods. Mass production of inferior goods became rampant, inviting unfavorable criticism from abroad. Large retail stores with capital like Mitsukoshi took up the burden of product development, a position they had held since the Children's Goods Research Group (Jidō yōhin kenkyūkai) was organized in 1909 (see also Jones 2001: 101ff). An advisory organization aimed at improving the quality of

goods for children, starting with toys, and disseminating them domestically, this research association attracted many celebrity members, sponsored periodic meetings, and was generally quite active.

In addition to the goals of sharing its views with merchants and capitalizing on goods, the association also had an academic nature that promoted research on children by specialists for its own sake. Moreover, in addition to scholars who worked on product research related to children, many connoisseurs who collected regional toys, following in the footsteps of Edo-period hobbyists, also participated. Having become a member of an organization that encompassed so many diverse interests, Kogure must have been strongly influenced by the hobbyists he met there.

Edo-period hobbies, some of which prospered in the Meiji period, implicitly offered criticism of the system that had developed under the Meiji state. As Yamaguchi Masao (1995) has pointed out, Kogure had played an active role in the Lifestyle Improvement Alliance under the Ministry of Education, making him a person of inconsistent views given his proposals for improvement on the side of the system and government. Considering this contrasting sense of values, we might assume that temporarily experiencing the world of individual hobbies through the collection of toys made Kogure alter his view of childhood. However, in reality, his seemingly contradictory views of childhood did not lead him in either direction, but rather coexisted. This perspective is supported by the contents of Kogure's private library, currently under the custodianship of Matsudo City Hall. Aside from materials on architecture, furniture decoration, and survey results related to his profession, his library included a great number of books on the regional toys collected by Edo enthusiasts, particularly those by Arisaka Yotarō.⁵

Rather than treating toys as objects for children, these books presented collections of objects to enthusiasts through beautiful formats and illustrations. In addition, this library contains evidence of Kogure's aim to rationalize lifestyles. We must also pay attention to the period in which these books were so vigorously published and purchased. In other words, the library reveals that not only did Kogure absorb the modern view of childhood, but he also had a personal interest in children's culture. Partially through the influence of Mitsukoshi's Children's Goods Research Group, Kogure did not stop at furniture decoration. Instead, in looking toward the development of a new market for timber crafts, he struggled ambitiously for a period of time to improve the quality of wooden toys in the toy industry (Kogure 1942: 118–21).

During World War I, when European countries such as Germany could not produce and export toys, America, the largest importer of toys at the time, sought goods from Japan. However, Japan drew criticism from the United States because it had no system of mass production in place and either could not fulfill orders for large quantities, or overproduced unsafe goods of poor quality. To ameliorate the situation, in 1914, two toy goods merchants in Tokyo, Kuramochi Chōkichi and Kojima Hyakuzō, established the Wooden Toy Production Stock Company,

which aimed at creating a system to enable modern industrial production. Kogure was working at the Tokyo Prefectural Industrial Arts School at the time. He took an active role in the management of this factory, undertaking all the plans for its construction as well as the provision of equipment and machines for production. At the factory, built in Tokyo's Mikawajima district, the company actively strove to improve the quality of toy production through such means as employing students from industrial schools all over the country. Unfortunately, as soon as the factory itself was on track, America, the chief importing country, prohibited the importation of toys. It then became difficult to continue production, and in 1918 the company dissolved and the factory closed. However, during those years, Kogure certainly exhibited an interest in bringing about the industrial production of toys.

These activities, undertaken from an economics-based philosophy, preceded Kogure's later child-based emphasis. In other words, these activities clearly show another side to Kogure, as a person with economic interests in addition to his democratic view of the family, for which he was later remembered. The earlier Kogure understood that children's items must be mass produced, and his later interest in mass production that would be striking even in the West may have started then. Yet at this time, mass production was driven more by department stores' profit than children's desires. It was more concerned with production, capital, and the market, and so was decidedly based on industry.

MORITANI NOBUO'S DESIGN AND VIEW OF CHILDHOOD

Moritani Nobuo, who was in charge of furniture decoration at Tokyo Prefectural Industrial Arts School at the same time as Kogure, was like him a Taishō-period designer greatly interested in the world of children. Even as a higher-school student, he had been fascinated by toys. During the first part of his career as a professional furniture decorator, he focused on lifestyle improvement in the home, which of necessity centered on children. Nonetheless, his work differed from that of Kogure in its willingness to incorporate elements of a fantasy world. Rather than try to rationalize the production of toys, which would have taken him far afield from his profession, he enjoyed them for their own sake as an expression of a romantic view of childhood innocence.

In a short note entitled "Lifestyle Improvement and the Betterment of Furniture" (Seikatsu kaizen to kagu no kaizen), Moritani, like Kogure, pointed to the importance of children in making progress toward improvements in the Japanese lifestyle. As for the custom of children sitting in chairs, he stated that it could not be achieved without the parents' full understanding (Moritani 1928a). In other words, he thought that beyond having a modern household and understanding lifestyle customs, giving children a well-conceived room was linked to lifestyle improvement.

In *Interior Decorating from Now On* (Korekara no shitsunai sōshoku), Moritani expounded on the necessity of a child's room: "For our children, the most important people in our lives, this has been too often forgotten until now. Making unreflective assumptions about what children are has been decisively consigned to history" (Moritani 1927: 356).

Moritani also stressed the importance of thinking with a child's heart, in other words, of child-based design. In particular, Moritani drew attention to the different characteristics of children versus adults and emphasized the gap between children's reality and what adults think of as "childlike." For example, he argues that wallpaper with a pattern of dogs, cats, or other things that children would seem to like, as seen in Western nurseries, were adult conceptions and would soon be forgotten by children. To substantiate this claim, Moritani gave an example showcasing children's characteristic interests. "Even if you take a child beneath the bronze statue of Commander Hirose, he will not come to want to see it.⁶ Yet it is likely that he will rejoice at seeing the train, which runs under it. Even if you bring him in front of something like the Great Buddha, it is a fact that he will take joy in the adorable puffing of the pigeons." Moreover, even if adults hang a child's favorite picture on the wall, the child does not only admire it, but touches it and finally scrawls across it with crayon. Seeing these actions, "adults, let us be of a mind that looks on with satisfaction." In this way, he classified children as completely different from adults (Moritani 1927: 357–58). Taking into account that children's essential nature differed from that of adults, he concluded that designs that were not overly finessed were good for children. This view of design was not far from Kogure's.

Moritani gave concrete examples of his child-based design through the illustrations in his books. For example, in the frontispiece entitled "An Unlikable Children's Room in America," he introduced a Western-style children's room. With checkered curtains and all furniture—chair, chest, mirror stand, toy box, and bed—uniformly white, it was a typical children's room, "from corner to corner carefully conceived for the children," as Moritani said. Nonetheless, he criticized it later in the book as "it somehow having a feeling of 'high-pressure salesmanship,' because it was a children's room favored by adults" (Moritani 1927: 359). It was clearly the children's room in an affluent family with a great many pieces of furniture to arrange. But the design did not stand out as excessive to others: the children's magazine *The Sun* (Ohisama), issued by Shiseidō, published a diagram of this same room. Far from criticizing it, the magazine endorsed it as a design recommended for a child's room (*Ohisama*, no. 7, October 1922). Moritani's second frontispiece, "An English Children's Room," shows a simpler design than the first frontispiece. Though it included a "childlike" animal-pattern frieze of the sort that Moritani had earlier repudiated, he did not criticize it.

Perhaps one might expect that Moritani disdained commercially designed children's rooms that were complete with every possible product. In his other illustrations,

however, he introduced a great number of children's rooms that abounded in material objects and celebrated "childlike" design. It is therefore impossible to deny that there is some inconsistency between Moritani's assertions and his tangible designs. Having appraised the children's room in the first frontispiece as "lacking a feeling of comfort, and needing more and more 'breathing space,'" Moritani was himself unable to give an answer regarding what a design suitable for children, complete with "breathing space," should look like (Moritani 1927: 359).

Unlike the above message directed toward citizens on behalf of lifestyle improvement, Moritani's actual view of childhood was individualistic and lyrical. His exhibit in the 1925 Eleventh Annual National Arts Exhibition, three varieties of interior decoration titled "Furniture as Primary in the Dining Room, Study, and Bedroom," demonstrates this vividly. Published the following year as *Small Indoor Art* (Chiisaki shitsunai bijutsu, 1926), these three rooms, which constitute Moritani's most representative work, contained an indoor space of strong workmanship, each accompanied by a particular motif and dependent on a world of fantasy. We may observe that these rooms share a number of features, but the main ones might be "the importance of feeling," "adopting Japanese elements in detail," and "a childlike expression." This work symbolically expresses Moritani's view of childhood and design for it in its "childlike" quality.

The bedroom titled "Sleeping Beauty's Bedroom," from the *Sleeping Beauty of Grimm's Fairy Tales*, which appeared in the National Arts Exhibition, features the bedroom of a sleeping princess. So, too, in *Small Indoor Art*, Moritani wrote: "Quietly hoping for a charming princess to appear, stepping into a country of folktales, a royal palace from our native poetry." It follows that we Japanese are not limited to taking Western folktales into our own expressive work; instead we may seek direction by immersing ourselves in our own fantasy world. In this room, Moritani arranged a bed for the charming princess to sleep in. Particularly on the footboard of the wooden frame, which is replete with ornamental designs, we can recognize symbolic expressions of childhood such as moon and stars, a small castle, and a single heart (see figure 6). A similar sort of delicate outline can also be seen, for example, in the relief above the entrance to Kyoto University's Philharmonic Hall.

Moritani's "Study with a Window Reflecting the Shadow of a Bird" (Torikage no utsuru mado no shosai) was inspired by a line from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde: "The fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect" (Wilde 1891: 3). This was a design fully conscious of *japonisme* in the West, and here too, Moritani has added detailed childlike elements. For example, the front of the desk's tabletop features a human figure wearing a hat. A similar figure appears on the small box affixed to the side of the desk near the wall, and this "small box with a red background and a human figure," more than simply a box for putting things in, takes on the symbolic meaning of representing the child's world.

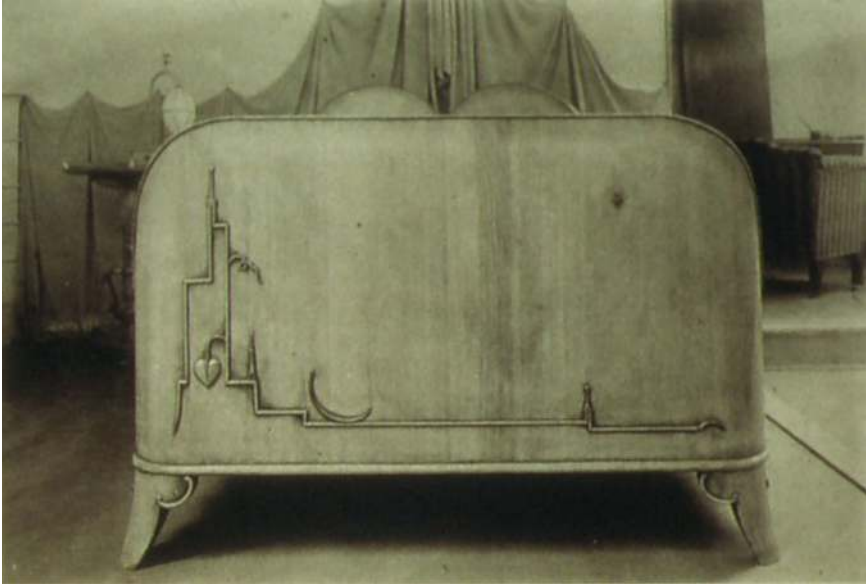


FIGURE 6. Children's bed footboard design by Moritani Nobuo, first printed in an essay on lifestyle improvement in 1928.

"Dining Room with Crimson-Painted Furniture," known for its scarlet chair, conveyed an Eastern liking for things foreign through overlapping eighteenth-century English-style furniture with China's red-painted furniture. Moritani explained: "In a spirit of playfulness, wondering 'If I took a meal on the red stand used to hold the nuptial cups of sake, how on earth would I feel?'" I started to want to make a dining room with the feeling of a little poem" (Moritani 1926: 5). With a degree of childlike intuition, he conceived this eclectic design. Here, too, we can observe expressions of the childlike at every turn, such as the human figure placed in a small box underneath the shelf on the sideboard, the pattern of small gold hearts, and the birds among the shelves. Since the feeling of "a small poem describing a young child taking a meal with red all around" is ultimately expressed in his creation, the image at the heart of the work was the scene of a child innocently having a meal.

Moritani did not chose children as simply an apt motif for his work in these three examples of interior decorating. Their design points to his association with Western art and decoration, renewed again and again through time spent studying abroad in Europe.⁸ Yet the belief in childlike innocence, a worldview that was spreading widely among the Japanese intelligentsia of the time, is also strongly reflected in his work. Moritani had children himself, and it is clear that he was habitually concerned with children and the philosophy of their childlike innocence: we can understand these three rooms as dedicated to his own children. But

as we shall see in what follows, I suspect that Moritani's own childlike and innocent aim must have long predated having children of his own.

There is a lot of evidence which supports the supposition that from an early period Moritani greatly admired the world of children. For example, *The Posthumous Manuscripts of Moritani Nobuo* (Moritani Nobuo ikō) features an essay called "Achieving a Mantelpiece Lined with Toys" (Omocha wo narabeta mantorupi-su o ete). The mantelpiece, installed in the second-floor study of his newly constructed house, was built at his express demand, and to top it off, he lined it with the toys he liked so much. "Every day a great number of toys above the mantle, painted in tea-blessing [an old color close to walnut], greets me and sends me off to work. How much better I feel turning my face to these toys than speaking with friends who only string out pointless arguments, I do not know" (Moritani 1928d: 22–23). We can read between the lines of this essay and find that Moritani's liking for toys, beyond its link to his true understanding of children, was steeped in the world of childlike innocence. Moritani was himself attached to the bedroom of the sleeping princess. He commented that "with a child's heart and liking both toys and tales, I wanted to make this princess's room." In other words, it was a question not only of making it for kids, but also of pursuing his own hobby.

While one might entertain the notion that his personal fondness for toys began either in his time in Europe or when he had his own children, we can actually trace its roots a little further back. His lecture "Concerning the Construction of Wooden Toys" supports this interpretation. Before embarking on explanations regarding toy construction and facts about toys abroad, he stated that "there is in truth a close connection between these things called toys and my actual hobbies." And he went on to say, "Since I was small I have had a great interest in toys, and I had some understanding of the toys favored by adults. Then later, during my school days, every time someone took a trip to any region, I would receive as my number one souvenir a toy made out of wood, and I always gave thanks for this gift" (Moritani 1928e: 93).

From this story, we can understand that the interest Moritani showed toward toys from his earliest childhood became ever deeper during his time as a student when he began collecting them. In addition, as expressed in the phrase "I had some understanding of the toys favored by adults," Moritani, like Kogure, was acquainted with the contemporary collections of regional toys. If he started collecting as a student at the beginning of the Taishō era, that would coincide with the period in which research on toy development undertaken by department stores was flourishing, and expositions and other events related to toys began to be held everywhere.

We can discover many of the sources for Moritani's "becoming childlike" designs in the children's illustrations of the same period. If we compare the childlike design found in the details in *Small Indoor Art*—and indeed in the images and direction in all of his folktale-inspired work—to children's illustrations at the time, we easily perceive their commonality. For example, the designs on the



FIGURE 7. A children's book illustration by Takei Takeo, originally published in *Children's Friend* (Kodomo no tomo), May 1926. Courtesy of Burando Suishin-shitsu.

“Sleeping Beauty” wooden bed frame closely resemble the style of contemporary children’s illustrator Takei Takeo (see figure 7).⁹ Moritani had also managed the venue design for the Imperial Grandchild’s Birthday Children’s Exhibition in 1926, and that design likewise bore an evident resemblance to another children’s book illustration by Takei Takeo.

Furthermore, we can trace this relationship between Moritani and these types of children’s illustrations to a particularly early period. In his diary entry of January 7, 1915, he recorded: “I think I will make a copy of the first issue, about Momotarō, in *A Long, Long Time Ago* (Mukashi mukashi), a young children’s magazine to be published at the end of this month.¹⁰ Publishing House: Marukiya. Price: Five Sen” (Moritani 1928f: 140).

Around the time he graduated from Tokyo Higher School of Industrial Arts, he was already handling products intended for children. At that point (1915), *Red Bird* and other children’s magazines had not yet been published, and it was just before literature based on the principle of childlike innocence, stripped of fairy tales, genuinely began to blossom. Moritani’s other work also includes a piece called “Momotarō,” which takes the Japanese folktale as its theme. His work as an illustrator for children thus provides an important clue concerning his interest in magazines of the childlike innocence school that he later incorporated into his profession in furniture decoration.

CONCLUSION

Influenced by the lifestyle design of the Taishō period and as a result of selecting the private domain of family life as their area of activity, these two furniture designers came of necessity to focus on children within the family. Plans for the lifestyle environment of children were bound to adopt the essential functionality and low price of modern design thanks to the possibility of mass production. Given the diffusion of Western-style furniture and the increasing rationalization of lifestyle, we see a tendency in both Kogure Joichi and Moritani Nobuo towards more practical proposals and modern design from the start of the Shōwa period. In relation to children's design, however, their work was limited to one part of the populace. In reality, at that time only very wealthy families were able to actually create the children's rooms that Kogure and Moritani recommended, and it was difficult to find a basis for the application of modern design. Nevertheless, behind their adherence to the world of children, we can see the influence of the culture of consumption, which began during the Meiji era.

One source of the early twentieth-century child-based philosophies, as represented by the principle of childlike innocence, was a romantic view of childhood, originally idealized by adults. The "child-based" designers themselves had a view of childhood that tended toward the vague. This led them in a direction somewhat different from a modern design approach, which considered children's lifestyles from a practical perspective (as seen in chapter 12 on child welfare institutions in contemporary Japan). At the root of the expression of the "childlike" in the two designers' most active periods was its perceived contradiction with the interests and concerns of adults, seen also in the same period's view of children as pure and innocent. As a result, the commercial world picked up this contradiction and linked it to a materially rich and dream-filled image of children. In other words, Kogure and Moritani's emphasis on child-based designs and their ambiguity of expression facilitated the expansion of commercial designs for children in the Taishō period and helped to build the foundation for today's highly developed market for children's items.

NOTES

1. The research for this article was funded by a 2004–6 Ministry of Education Science Research Grant for Foundational Research on "Historical Research on Items for Children in Modern Japan: The Background and Establishment of Design for Children." This article has been translated and adapted for this volume from the author's 2007 article "Kodomo o meguru shōhi to dezain: Taishō-ki dezainaa no kodomo-kan to sono hyōgen o rei ni," *Dezain riron* [Theories of design], no. 50: 31–46.
2. *Kokumin shinbun* [Citizen newspaper], March 10, 1915, March 15, 1915, March 16, 1915, and others; Tokutomi Iichirō (Sohō), *Risō no katei* [The ideal family] (Kokumin shinbunsha, 1915).
3. After studying Western painting at the Hakubakai Aobashi Research Center, Okamoto Kiichi (1888–1930) deepened his association with kindred spirits of the White Horse Society (Hakuba-kai) and participated in the Fusain Kai (Charcoal Sketch Society). Later, his experience with children's

illustrations in *The Golden Boat* [Kin no fune] and *Children's Country* [Kodomo no kuni] led to his energetic contributions to children's illustrated magazines.

4. We see some deviation from this sort of rational emphasis and images of longing for the West in the magazine *Housing* [Jūtaku], which featured articles on children's rooms during the same period. For details, see Jinnō 1998.

5. Kogure's library included six works by Arisaka Yotarō: *A Collection of Japanese Toys: Pacifiers, Tōhoku Compilation* (Nihon omocha shū Oshaburi Tōhoku-hen, 1926); *Pacifiers, Ancient Times Compilation* (Oshaburi Kodai-hen, 1926); *A Collection of Japanese Toys: Pacifiers, Tokyo Compilation* (Nihon omocha shū Oshaburi Tōkyō-hen, 1927); *Picture Books of Toys*, vol. 1 (Omocha ehon sono ichi, 1927–28); *Picture Books of Toys*, vol. 4, *Puppy Dogs* (Omocha ehon sono yon chinkoro, 1927–28); and *Picture Books of Toys*, vol. 6, *Making Horses* (Omocha ehon sono roku umazukuri, 1927–28). It also included two other works on toys, Yamada Tokubē's *Battledore* (Hagoita 1937) and *Old Toys* (Kogan, author unknown).

6. Hirose Takeo was an officer in the Imperial Navy whose heroic death in the Russo-Japanese War resulted in his deification as a war god. His statue was erected at the Manseibashi Railway Station in Tokyo, where it remained until removed in 1947.

7. In traditional wedding ceremonies, a practice called *sansankudo* (three-three-nine-times) involves the bride and groom drinking three cups of sake each three times.

8. In a record of his experiences during his stay in Europe, Moritani frequently alluded to the influence of expressionism on industrial design. Moritani's interest in expressionism did not lay in the expressionist style of using geometric shapes or sharp zigzag lines, but rather was based on a deep understanding from the creator's perspective of how to transcend naturalism and turn toward an abstract world. Moritani himself mainly observed design museums rather than mass production factories, and these experiences stimulated his artistic sensibility. In addition, though fully aware of the necessity of popularizing in Japan the high-quality industrial design of Germany and other countries, he considered the possibility of Japan simply copying the techniques of the Secession art movement, which separated itself from official and academic art institutions. He stated that Japan must not superficially imitate the expressionism rooted in German popular history but must come to understand the spirit of expressionism and create an original Japanese style (Moritani 1928b, 1928c).

9. After studying Western-style painting at the Tokyo Art School (now Tokyo University of the Arts), Takei Takeo (1894–1993) began to produce children's illustrations for *Children's Friend* [Kodomo no tomo] and *Children's Country* [Kodomo no kuni]. Emulating the terms *dōwa* (children's stories) and *dōyō* (children's songs), he coined the term *dōga* (children's pictures) for his illustrations for “new” children. In 1927 he formed the Society for Japanese Children's Illustrators and played a leading role in the world of illustration for children.

10. Momotarō, often translated as Peach Boy, is one of the most popular Japanese folktales. It concerns a young boy born from a peach who goes on a successful quest to defeat a group of vicious demons with the aid of various talking animals he meets on the way.

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