

Observations on the Manners and Customs of Eros in Eighteenth Century Edo: The World of Suzuki Harunobu's *Fūryū Mane'emon*

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Suzuki Harunobu (1725?-1770) produced the series *Fūryū Enshoku Mane'emon* ("Mane'emon: elegance and beauty") in 1770, the year of his sudden death. *Mane'emon* is one of Harunobu's acknowledged masterpieces; it was also a new departure in at least two ways. In the Edo period, erotic colour prints or *shunga* ("spring pictures") were usually published in sets of twelve prints. *Mane'emon*, however, is composed of two sets, consisting of twelve prints each. Also, *Mane'emon* was composed as a continuous, pictorial story in the manner of the then popular, lowbrow genre of literature known as *gesaku*, while as a rule, in *shunga* sets, new characters and new settings were introduced with every picture and the pictures were not sequentially related.

The name "Mane'emon" is a pun; it implies that its bearer is both an imitator (from the verb *maneru*, "to imitate") and a tiny man of about the size of a bean (*mame*). The storyline of *Mane'emon* is that, once he has changed his shape, the hero, Mane'emon, starts on an erotic study tour that will take him to various places in eastern Japan. Harunobu uses this device to depict, in the first half of the series, the sexual life of the common people in Edo and its surrounding countryside and, in the second part, the customs of Yoshiwara, Edo's only licensed quarter, though by no means the only place where prostitutes plied their trade.

The idea of having scenes usually hidden from the eyes of others observed by a tiny little man was not new; Harunobu had his precursors. Of these we should mention two popular tales (*ukiyo zōshi*) by Ejima Kiseki (1666-1735), titled *Kontan iroasobi futokuro otoko* (1712) and its sequel *Onnaotoko iroasobi*. Harunobu must have known these books, because in both the illustrations were made by his teacher Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671-1750). After that, two further books using the same conceit (*Eiga asobi nidai otoko* and *Musō zokin*) were published in Kyoto, and from there the fashion spread to Edo. Five years before *Mane'emon* appeared, a book titled *Fūryū sandai makura* had been published (1765), and in the first month of 1769 *Tōsei anasagashi* was published -- a comical book that satirized Edo customs. Another book that Harunobu certainly knew, was *Fūryū Shidōken den* (1763) by Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779).¹ It is a kind of *Gulliver's Travels*, the hero of which has received a magical fan

from an immortal. With this fan, he can make himself invisible, but he can also use it as wings to fly through the sky, or as a boat to travel over water. In this way, he visits the countries of giants and of pygmies, but also real countries such as the Korea, China, and even Holland. Gennai's book may have inspired Harunobu to extend the radius of Mane'emon's observations outside the pale of Japan's three big cities Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo, to which the world of *shunga* is usually confined.

On each print of *Mane'emon* we find Mane'mon's observations of, and comments on the different aspects of Eros that he witnesses at the places he visits. The upper part of each print is taken up by an explanatory note or a *haiku*. These were written by Komatsu Hyakki (1720-1793), who was the master of a large pharmacy and a ardent admirer of Nishikawa Sukenobu. He possessed a complete collection of Sukenobu's albums, and contributed to the growing appreciation of Sukenobu's style amongst Edo connoisseurs. From this to writing popular literature himself was a small step. In this last capacity, Hyakki was asked to write the captions at the top of each print and also, the preface of the book.

There are, however, also short legends elsewhere on the print. These are comments and lines of dialogue, supposedly spoken by the characters themselves. These were all written by Harunobu. Between them, the captions and legends give the reader enough information to interpret in detail the setting of each picture, and the positions of the various characters.

First Series:



[fig.1] "In Front of the Shrine"

A man is kneeling in front of the red gate (*torii*) of a shrine. Two goddesses

appear before him on a cloud, bearing presents. Since it is the first print of the set, the top half is occupied with a large text balloon in which the main character is introduced and the initial story is told. The text reads as follows:

Long, long ago, before even the times of your grandfather and grandmother, there lived a really eccentric man, called Ukiyo-no-suke. By nature he loved love, and one day he decided that he would realize the ultimate secrets of the Way of Love and would teach these secrets to the world, as was done in Narihira's *Nise monogatari*. Thereupon he went to the shrine on Mount Ryūshin and prayed that the deity would aid his resolve. Suddenly the area in front of the shrine became brightly lit, and the immortal maiden of Mount Ryūshin appeared, together with the Maiden of the Wistaria Blossom from Mount Kinryū. The first maiden declared: "For a long time, you have desired to know the ultimate secrets of the Way of Love. Now your prayers shall be fulfilled." She gave him two boxes, saying: "One box contains mud cakes; you must open it and eat them. The other box should be opened when you are faced with great trouble." Then the Wistaria Maiden added: "Even if you succeed in mastering the ultimate secrets of the Way of Love, what would be the use, if you could not preserve your life?" And she gave him a powder of perennial youth and immortality. The two goddesses disappeared into the empty sky. Ukiyo-no-suke found it all very curious and baffling, but he ate the cake he had been given and his body became as small as a bean. He changed his name to "Mane'emon." Would it be a gross exaggeration to claim that this man had obtained the magical powers of the Way of Love?

This introductory text contains sundry references to episodes from classical literature and contemporary stories. The first line imitates the narrative voice of folktales, and the name of the hero, Ukiyo-no-suke, clearly echoes that of Yo-no-suke, the hero of Ihara Saikaku's *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* (1682; "A Man who Loved Love"). This novel was the ancestor of all erotic literature of the Edo Period. Moreover, when we recall that the plot of this novel consisted in the erotic experiences Yo-no-suke had in the course of his life on his jaunts through Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo, we have sufficient grounds to claim that Yo-no-suke was the elder colleague of our hero Ukiyo-no-suke.

Hyakki is not satisfied with these allusions. He also drags in that paragon of all amorous men, the poet Ariwara no Narihira (825-880). He does not, however, simply mention the title of the ninth-century compilation of poetic anecdotes in which Narihira figures as one of the main characters, *Ise monogatari* ("Tales of Ise"), but instead refers

to *Nise monogatari*, a parody of *Ise monogatari* that was published in 1639 and whose title could be translated as "Forged Tales." Parody is, of course, the stock-in-trade of a *gesaku* writer.

Mount Ryūshin where Ukiyo-no-suke goes to pray, is written with characters that can also be read *kasa* ("umbrella") and *mori* ("wood"). It is, in other words, Kasamori Shrine in Yanaka in Edo. It appears in this story, because in a tea-pavilion within the shrine precincts, Kagiya, there worked a waitress, called O-Sen ("Immortal"), who was famous throughout Edo for her peerless beauty. Thus, the Immortal maiden (*sen-nyo*) that appeared on the cloud, was an incarnation of O-Sen. Her companion, the Wistaria Maiden of Mount Kinryū, too, had a model in real life: O-Fuji, the girl whose attractions made the fortune of Motoyanagiya, a toothbrush shop in front of the Kannon Temple in Asakusa. All temples have "mountain names"; the mountain name of the temple in Asakusa is Kinryūsan, "Mount Golden Dragon," and Fuji means "wistaria." The paper bag the Wistaria Maiden holds in her hand is accordingly inscribed, in tiny characters, "Motoyanagiya."

The presents that the heavenly maidens gave to Ukiyo-no-suke also had to do with their respective trades. Cakes were the stock-in-trade of O-Sen's tea-pavilion, and "mud cakes"² were the habitual offering to the god of Kasamori Shrine. The "powder of immortality" that the Wistaria Maiden gave him, was one of the products sold in the toothbrush shop. It is a pun on *fushi*, "immortality," and a different word *fushi* that was the name of a powder ladies used to blacken their teeth.



[fig.2] "Virgin Island"

The first place Mane'emom goes to is "Virgin Island." There he witnesses the

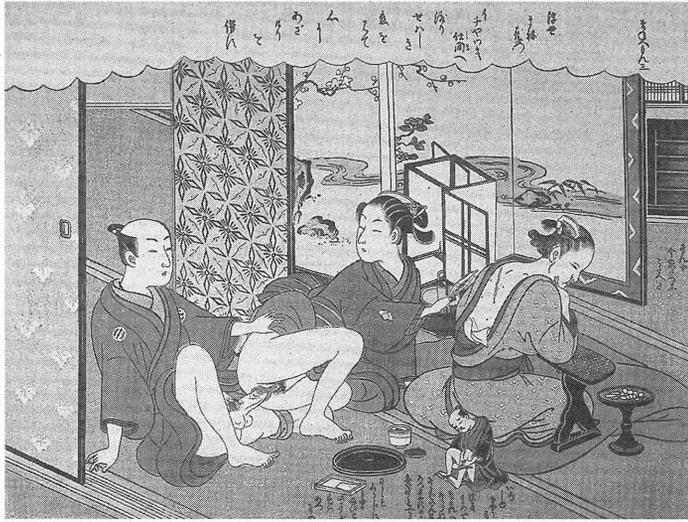
following scene: in a room on the first floor, with a desk on which a calligraphy book and a paper weight are set out, a middle-aged man with a full head of hair has forced an unmarried girl down on the mats (*tatami*) and is trying to kiss her. We know that the girl is unmarried because she is wearing a *furisode*, i.e., a kimono with long sleeves. She tries to ward off the man with both hands, which shows that the man is forcing her. Since the nameplate next to the door reads "calligraphy teacher" (*tenarai shinan*), the scene is set in a calligraphy school. The man will be the teacher, as is also suggested by his hairstyle; intellectuals such as physicians and Confucian teachers often did not shave the top of their head as ordinary men would, but let all of their hair grow and wore it bound in a tail or even let it hang loose at the back. The text next to the teacher confirms that the girl is one of his female students:

I am willing to promote you over the heads of O-Ran and O-Ton of your form and to teach you how to write the characters of the next form. Don't you like that? It won't last long. Just endure it for an hour.

It is quite a promotion the teacher has in mind, but his pupil is not interested: "Please, sir, please be kind!" The teacher, however, does not look like the kind of man that will be stopped by considerations of kindness. Before long, he will be behaving like the tomcat outside the window.

Mane'emon, who is looking on from under the desk, mutters "Well, really, how wretched and pitiful. And with that nose!" He shows compassion with the girl, and at the same time he is making fun of the nose of the teacher. And it is true; the man's nose is drawn larger than usual. Already in those days, the notion existed that the size of a man's penis was in proportion to the size of his nose; hence, a big nose was regarded as an indication of strong sexual appetites. In the scheme of values of those days, "to be interested in Love" and "to have strong sexual appetites" were diametrically opposed. An interest in the niceties of the Way of Love was greatly approved, but someone who merely had strong appetites was looked down upon as a clod.

The writer of the text, Hyakki, seems to be of the same opinion. "Seeing such cruel relations between man and woman," he writes, "Mane'emon considered the effrontery and brutality of it, and tears came to his eyes. This was the beginning of his instruction in the Way of Love."



[fig.3] "Neckers' Island" (Colour plate III)

The scene Mane'emon witnesses is a room, lit by a standing lamp (*andon*), in which a woman is burning moxa on the back of an old lady, while a man is forcing himself on the woman from behind. Since the man is wearing a kimono that has his family crest dyed into it, he must be the master of the house, who has just returned from one or other official function for which he had to put on this formal gown. The position of the woman is less easy to understand. The caption at the top is not very illuminating: "Ukiyo Mane'emon crossed over to Neckers' Island (*Ichatsuki-shima*). Seeing an act of eager lovemaking, feelings of scorn and condescension rose in his heart."

This does not tell us much about the relation between the man and the woman, but the words of the old lady help: "San, this one just now did really hurt!" She is addressing the woman familiarly as "San," which means that the woman is either a maid or her son's wife. Either would be possible, but I would prefer to see her as the wife of the son of the old lady, especially because the explanation at the top of this print speaks of "eager lovemaking." Because she has not yet shaven her eyebrows, she may even be a newly-wed, who has not yet born a child.

We could imagine the following situation: the husband has hurried home, thinking of his newly-wed wife, but he finds her busy, applying moxa to his mother. He cannot wait until she has finished with this, but profits from the soft light of the *andon* to press himself upon his wife in this impassioned way. The woman, somewhat annoyed with the eagerness of his advances, looks back over her shoulder. Perhaps the awkwardness of this position has caused her hand to go astray, which might explain why her mother-in-law complains that "just now it really hurt." If one misses the "pot"

(*tsubo*) when burning moxa, it can be really scalding. One could well imagine that a moment earlier her husband's onslaught had "really hurt" the woman.

Hyakki's comment on this eager lovemaking is, that "It made feelings of scorn and condescension rise in his heart," but in the picture, Harunobu's Mane'emon feels anything but scornful. Admiringly, he remarks: "Also in the practice of the Way of Love, one must be diligent." At the same time, he is applying moxa himself, to the spot below the knee called *sanri*, while he mutters to himself: "While the old lady is letting the burnt place cool off, let me have some moxa." Applying moxa at this spot helps against all ailments. It helps you to recover your health and vigour, and thus, to become more diligent also in the arts of the bedchamber.

In his final line Mane'emon alludes to an ancient love poem of the Heian Period: "This must be what the poet meant by 'love burning unbeknownst to her.' It is a heated affair." The poem Man'emon alludes to may be found in the section Love Poetry in the imperial anthology *Go Shūi shū* (1086). It was written by Fujiwara no Sanekata (?-998), and runs: "How could I breath this way? Like wormwood on Mount Ibuki my loving heart flares up, and you do not seem to know." (*Kaku to dani / e yawa Ibuki no / sashi mogusa / sa shimo shiraji na / moyuru omoi o.*) It is an aptly chosen poem, for Mount Ibuki was a place were the wormwood (*mogusa*) was reaped that was used to prepare the substance that was burnt. The imagery of the poem fits that of the print.

Hyakki ridicules the husband's "eager lovemaking," but Harunobu is ready to sympathize with him. One of the things that make *ukiyoe* -- always the result of a cooperative effort -- so entertaining is these occasional disagreements between the writer and the artist.



[fig.4] "Make-do Island"

The caption reads: "Mane'emon crossed over to Make-do Island. Here he saw a love affair uncovered. No reconciliation seemed possible, and he found the row so irritating that he quickly left the island." The scene he saw was that of a pregnant wife who one night has caught her husband *in flagrante*. That the woman is pregnant is evident from the way in which her belly is drawn, and also from the fact that she wears an "Iwata-obi, i.e., a sash of white cloth, worn from the fifth month of pregnancy onwards in order to protect the foetus.

The row has already started, and the lines put into the mouths of the three characters allow us to reconstruct the whole story. The wife, who in her right hand is carrying a lantern and with her left hand has grabbed her husband by his loincloth and is pulling him away from the girl, shouts:

What kind of a girl are you! Tomorrow I will tell Jirō! On the other hand, once Jirō knows, how can we ever apologize! Damn this no-good husband of mine! You have the time to play the thief, but you are too busy to be a guardian. I am furious!

Judging by these words, the girl is the daughter of one Jirō, who must be a friend of the family and has sent over his daughter to help with the housekeeping while the woman is pregnant. Understandably, the wife is angry, because she feels betrayed by the girl, who has started an affair with her husband. She would like to tell the girl's father right away, but the other party in this improper relationship is her own husband. So, if she tells Jirō, she will be the one who gets scolded. She blames her husband instead, and in a burst of furious anger she turns on him: "You no-good husband!"

The husband, pulled backwards by his loincloth, does not cut an elegant figure. He looks back over his shoulder and, holding one hand in front of his face, he says: "Look! I implore you!" All he can do is ask for mercy. The cause of all the commotion, forced out of the husband's loincloth by the strength of his wife's grasp, lets hang its head, too.

The third person concerned, the girl, who has been discovered by the wife in such an unseemly pose, is gripped by shame and remorse, and hides her face in her sleeve. She has at first kept still and watched the situation develop, but now she can no longer bear the wife's loud voice: "Please, auntie. It is all my fault. Please forgive me. The neighbours will hear you."

Is she bravely trying to assume all the blame and to placate the wife's anger, or is she mainly trying to prevent that the whole neighbourhood will hear of it and make life difficult for her afterwards? Her words could be interpreted either way. Since she

calls the wife "auntie," Jirō may be more than an acquaintance; he may be related. That would mean that the husband has slept with his niece. This is going too far, even for a confirmed philanderer. Clearly, the husband is in no position to defend himself.

Mane'emon, who has been watching the situation develop from under the folds of the girl's gown, is not amused:

Bah! What a racket. Tonight I really hit the wrong place. There, the wife's wrath is blazing forth. With this going on all night, I won't be able to do what I came for. I'd better make myself scarce right now. She herself consented to take the girl; if she'd only accept half of her apology, the thing would be over.

For Mane'emon, with his interest in the Way of Love, the scene is a boorish scene. Seeing that the wife's anger will not be easily assuaged, he decides to leave this island forthwith.



[fig.5] "Kabuki Island"

At first sight, this print seems to represent a man and a woman who have intercourse in a rather strange position, but if you look closely, you see that the one on top also has a penis. In other words, this print depicts homosexual lovemaking. Although, in traditional Japanese culture, homosexuality was not regarded as a particularly strange custom, it used to be restricted mainly to priests, court nobles and members of the warrior class. Only in the Edo Period did male love spread to the lower classes. It appears quite frequently in *ukiyo*; nevertheless, it was not an every-day occurrence. Therefore, it must have been a specific course of events that brought

Mane'emon to this scene. The story, told in the text at the top of the print, recapitulates Mane'emon's precipitous departure from "Make-do Island," and then continues:

He crossed to the Beach of Fukiya and the Island of Sakai, and that night he fell asleep in a certain house, taking as his pillow the cries of drunken men playing rock-scissors-paper and the tunes of sentimental ballads. He decided that he really should have a look at the first floors of the area and see what kind of love play went on in those bedrooms. Since it was the end of spring, the season for flying kites, he caught hold of the tail of a kite and landed on one of those platforms that women use for drying laundry. He saw everything he wanted to see and was extremely pleased, but all this carousing went to his head, and he wended his ways from there to the countryside and the healing waters of a hot spring.

Some annotation may be in order here. "Beach of Fukiya" and "Island of Sakai" refer to two wards of Edo, Fukiya-chō and Sakai-chō. This was a theatre district. Kabuki theatres lined the streets, and close by was Yoshi-chō, which was famous for its many tea houses, where young male prostitutes plied their trade. These boys, known as *iroko* or *kagama*, were budding Kabuki actors specializing in female roles; they dressed accordingly, in long-sleeved robes and wearing combs in their hair in the manner of a young girl. "Sentimental ballads" is our translation of the Japanese word *meriyasu*. It was a popular vocal genre; the tunes derived from Kabuki and the ballads were sung to the accompaniment of a *shamisen*, a typical Kabuki instrument. Thus, the world Mane'emon was visiting was steeped in Kabuki. Even the kite with which he had flown up was Kabuki. It shows a crest of three concentric squares (*mimasu*), which is the crest of the most celebrated Kabuki actor of the day, Ichikawa Danjūrō V.

The scene Mane'emon watched was the kind of homoerotic scene one would expect in this area: the lover holds the *kagama* on top of him, and enjoys him from behind. It is quite an awkward position. The boy has to support himself with his left hand on the floor, and the man has raised the upper part of his body while he clasps the boy with both arms. He says: "Ah! My arms have grown limp, I am tired!"

The *kimono* of the boy is decorated with a pattern of daffodils. In homosexual circles, the daffodil was the symbol of a beautiful young boy. In the same way, the mattress is decorated with chrysanthemums, a flower that symbolizes homosexuality. The crest on the customer's *kimono* is the same as that of the impatient husband two prints earlier. It does not necessarily follow that the men in both prints should be regarded as identical, but it serves to remind us that in the Edo Period love of women

and love of men were not seen as mutually exclusive, but that a cultivated man of the world would regard both as possible forms of sexual enjoyment. The customer is an accomplished man who is going all the way in enjoying the amusements that Edo has to offer.

Having studied the scene, Mane'emon formulates his thoughts are as follows:

This is unadulterated Master Gennai. Ain't it terrific what we see here? My, what people don't do in bed! No wonder that Gennai forsook the Mountain Road and left through Shinagawa!

Again, some commentary seems to be in order. "Master Gennai" is the Hiraga Gennai who was mentioned earlier. Gennai lived in the same ward as Harunobu and the two were on friendly terms. Amongst other things, Gennai was the author of such homosexual guidebooks as *Kiku no sono* ("The Chrysanthemum Garden") and *San no asa* ("The third morning"); someone, in other words, who had made no secret of his homoerotic proclivities. Since Gennai also had a well-known love affair with an *iroko* called Yoshizawa Kuniishi, it is obvious why Harunobu qualifies the scene as "straight Gennai."

The year before *Mane'emon* was published, Gennai had left Edo for Nagasaki in order to study Dutch Sciences (*Rangaku*). On the first leg of his journey, from Edo to Kyōto, he had taken the Eastern Sea Road (*Tōkaidō*), so the first station he passed through had been Shinagawa. The implication of Harunobu's words is, that Gennai had taken this route because he disliked the rustic Mountain Road (*Nakasendō*), that led through backwaters where such sophisticated amusements as male love would be difficult to find. You have to know of Gennai's sexual preferences in order to appreciate these jokes. It is a typical incrowd joke, which you find in all *shunga*, from those of Harunobu down to those of Utamaro and Hokusai.



[fig.6] "Gullible's Newfield" (Colour plate IV)

In order to sooth the strain and stress caused by the spectacle of male love, Mane'emon decides to visit a hot spring resort. He leaves Edo and travels through the countryside, which is an opportunity for him to observe its sexual mores and to see in which way they differ from those of the big city. The first place we visit is identified by Hyakki as "Gullible's Newfield on Neckers' Island." He adds: "Seeing this funny love play, Mane'emon could not help laughing."

It is a new rice field indeed, where the planting of the young shoots is in full swing. While the farmer, his wife, and his daughter are toiling on, suddenly a man has appeared, wearing a fearsome mask over his face and a sword in his sash. He has approached the daughter, who is bending over to do her work, from the rear and is doing outrageous things to her. The story is told in the words of the masked man:

Hear ye, hear ye! The godhead venerated in Inari's shrines, the godhead Yogarasu am I! If thou makest me have thy daughter, thou shallst not need to work thy land, and yet I will increase thy harvest by one hundred sacks of grain.

The man is, of course, a swindler who with his mask is impersonating a deity. His name "Yogarasu" already indicates that he is not on the square. On the face of it, the name means "night crow," but it puns on *yokarazu*, "to be no good." The farmer and his wife, however, seem to be taken in completely. "Oh, how terrible!" says the wife, but her husband exclaims: "Thank you, thank you, divine Yogarasu! I offer you my daughter and also my old wife. And please, intercede for me with Our Lady Inari."

The dialogue is funny, because it hovers between seriousness and playacting,

but what really makes you laugh is the punch line "If it will bring me one hundred extra sacks of rice without working, you may have the old wife, too." This belongs to the world of *rakugo*, of those tellers of funny tales that became so popular in the Edo Period. The divine Yogarasu's answer to the farmer's prayer continues in the same vein: "Good, thank you, my man, I shall come again tomorrow." In Japanese, we have another pun, this time on the word *kon*, which means "I will come again," but is also the Japanese rendering of the sound of a fox, and the fox is the animal into which the rice goddess Inari changes herself.

Mane'mon watches this hilarious scene from under a tree, having a smoke. His comment shows the superior attitude the inhabitants of Edo usually affected towards the people of the countryside: "This is great fun! Just the kind of thing people mock those clodhoppers for."

Of course, people who believe in such a swindler are ridiculous. Anyone would laugh at it. But if you take your time to study the picture, you cannot help feeling that it is not just another funny story, but almost a nostalgic fairytale. From ancient times, all Japanese rural festivals were characterised by ribald songs and dances, that had unequivocally sexual overtones. Originally, this may well have been due to the association of the ripening of the rice with the intercourse of men and women. With the advance of human knowledge, this association came to be regarded as a mere metaphor, but deep inside man's consciousness the old intuitions still lived on. The laughter in this print is not a merely mocking laughter; it is tempered by a smile, and this smile, I think, originates in this deep layer of the human psyche. In this way, the divine Yogarasu with his mask is no longer an ordinary swindler, but assumes the character of a trickster such as they appear in myth and legend.



[fig.7] "Desire-Only Village"

Hyakki introduces the scene with the following words: "From Gullible's Newfield he went to Desire-Only Village, where he stayed the night. Here he saw the pleasures of old age, and considered the feelings of old people." To judge by the mosquito net and the plow tucked away under the veranda, the print shows a room in a farmhouse on a summer night. In the garden, the high-growing maize has already ripened and two cockscombs rear their bright red flowers. The old couple has finished supper and is having a last cup of tea. In the adjoining room, inside the mosquito net, the old couple's son and his wife have already begun their amorous battle. The main characters, however, are not the youngsters, but their aged parents. "Hey, granny," says the old man, "let me kiss you. Ah, just listen to those sounds!" Apparently, the old man has heard the sounds emerging from the next room where the young couple is making love. Suddenly he feels the old, amorous sensations rising and he presses the old woman for a kiss.

The old woman answers, "What are you thinking of! Don't!" She seems to be somewhat annoyed, but nevertheless she turns her head and meets his lips. Was there ever a more touching, more sedate love scene than this?

One of the laughs in this print is that the old man is all talk, but that an essential piece of his equipment is not about to join in the fun. That explains the teasing title of this print: "Desire-Only Village." And there is another thing, that makes Mane'emon raise both his hands when he sees the private parts of the old man, exclaiming: "But this is huge! As big as a pumpkin. It is true what they say, they do have strange things in the countryside." Often in *shunga* characters express their amazement at the size of a man's penis, but even the old man would not be flattered by Mane'emon's amazement at the size of his "balls." Its origin may be pathological -- the condition known as hydrocele.

Such laughter, however, is only superficial laughter. In the same way as the foregoing print, the mood of this print, too, somehow invites the viewer to smile. The reason will be, that its designer, Harunobu, does not merely ridicule the sexual feelings of old people, but manages to create an atmosphere of empathy with the old couple that suffuses the whole picture. The artist implies that anyone might feel, or may have felt the same sensations, and he succeeds in eliciting feelings of sympathy towards the old husband and his wife.



[fig.8] "Hot-spring Hotel"

After the new rice field and Desire-Only Village, Mane'emom finally arrives at his destination, the hot spring resort. According to the text at the top of the print, he has come to Ikaho Onsen. Ikaho is a resort located at the eastern foothills of Mount Haruna in what was then called the Province of Kōzuke and nowadays, Gunma Prefecture.

In a room next to the bath a man and a woman are having sex in an unusual position. They are both craning their necks to peer into the next room, in which we see the figure of a *zatō* who is playing the *shamisen*. *Zatō* is the generic name of blind men who belonged to the blind men's guild. They shaved their hair like the Buddhist monks, and made their living principally by reciting tales or singing songs to the accompaniment of such stringed instruments as the *biwa*, the *koto*, or the *shamisen*, and also by giving massage and burning moxa. We are in a hot spring resort, so the obvious assumption would be that the woman is a *yuna*, a prostitute connected to the bathhouse. Both the man and the woman, however, have let their hair down. Apparently, they have just taken a bath together, which means that they are an intimate couple, perhaps even a married couple that has come to the waters for a cure. What the print shows is, in fact, a quicky between baths.

Looking through the barred window into the next room while drying her hair with her sleeping gown, the woman remarks: "Kamisō is creating quite an uproar!" Since she uses a shortened name with the suffix *-san*, this Kamisō probably is an acquaintance who has come to take the waters together with our couple. He has been drinking *sake* between the baths, and in his high spirits he may even now be dancing naked to the tune of the blind man's *shamisen*. The man answers: "Kotobuki no Ichi plays *sukasuka denden*, but we go *sukosuko denden*." It is a play on words. Kotobuki no

Ichi is the name of the *zato*, who traditionally had names ending on "no Ichi." *Sukasuka denden* are onomatopoeic words describing the sound of the *shamisen*; *sukasuka* indicates that the *zato* is setting a brisk pace, and *denden*, that he strikes the body of the *shamisen* with his plectrum. When the man says that "we go *sukosuko denden*," he is associating the blind man's use of his plectrum with the way in which he uses his own "plectrum," his penis. Mane'emon, who has just emerged from the bath himself, has heard the man's quip and says "Really, what a huge plectrum!"



[fig.9] "The River Ferry"

This print and the following two are episodes that happened on Mane'emon's way back from Ikaho to Edo. We see a case of amateur acrobatics, performed by a woman on horseback and a groom on foot. If you only look at the print, you might think that the groom is raping his female customer, but if you look at the dialogue, this does not appear to be the case.

The woman says: "Yes, now it goes in. This is what they call 'a titmouse catching his fodder in flight.' We still have some time before the boat will come." The titmouse (*yamagara*) is a small bird that was known for being able to learn all kinds of tricks. The expression "a titmouse catching his fodder in flight" (*yamagara no e otoshitori*) refers to the trick that a titmouse would with its beak catch food that someone dropped before it touched the ground. In this picture, the female customer, clutching the horse with one hand, has lowered her hips, and the groom, supporting her from below, has only now managed to unite himself with her. The woman associates the groom with the titmouse, and uses this metaphor to describe their peculiar position. Her words suggest that she has seduced the groom with the kind of bait men love, in order

to kill time until the ferryboat arrives.

The groom has been taken in completely by the woman's whiles, even to the point of throwing his business to the winds. "I won't need any money for the ride any more," he says, "I'll bring you for free along the dike of Kumagaya to the second post-station from here."

The whole dialogue is inscribed underneath the horse, so on that score one could interpret both of them as the words of the groom, but since polite expressions are used only in the second phrase, the first phrase should be regarded as the words of the woman. It is also more fun, that way.

Mane'emon is having a smoke under the tree. As always in these scenes, he is intrigued by the man's phallus. His comment is this time: "My, his instrument is huge! But his face does not fit him for a Yosaku."

"Yosaku" is not a name Harunobu made up as a fitting name for a yokel. In that case, Mane'emon's remark would have meant that the groom is too handsome to be a groom. Such words of praise, however, would not suit Mane'emon's character. No, Mane'emon refers to the hero in Chikamatsu Monzaemon's libretto of the puppet play *Tanba Yosaku matsuyo no komurobushi*, who is a groom.³ In other words, he belittles our well-hung, good-looking groom, of whom he is more than a little jealous.



[fig.10] "The Silkworm Room"

Hyakki's inscription at the top of this print says: "On his way back from the hot springs he saw all sorts of wheat and could not help laughing." The word *baku*, "wheat" is a slang word, that refers to unlicensed prostitutes; Hyakki must be thinking of the waitresses of the inns who served the guests also in other ways, and who were an

ubiquitous phenomenon in all stations along the great roads. Licensed prostitutes were known as *yone*, "rice," a nobler grain. Harunobu's drawing, however, shows no prostitutes, but a couple that is having a fling in a room. Shelves on which the wicker trays have been placed in which silkworms are kept show that it is the silkworm room of a farm.

The man says: "When I saw those shocking *Azuma nishiki* pictures amongst the things my brother took back with him from Edo, I suddenly felt unwell." The woman tries to stop him, saying: "You, listen! If we do it in front of the children, they will be defiled." The children, of course, are the silkworms.

What has happened is that the husband, having seen the lavishly executed coloured prints (*nishiki-e*: "brocade prints") that his brother had brought with him as a souvenir from Edo, suddenly feels the overpowering urge to have sex and is even now pressing his wife for a bout. The "Eastern Brocade" that his brother bought was in all probability not an ordinary set of wood-block prints, but will have been a set of coloured pictures, *iro-e*, in the more pregnant sense of the word *iro*; *shunga*, in other words. There is more than a whiff, here, of self-advertisement of Harunobu, for he was the originator of the genre of *nishiki-e*.

The wife wards off her husband with both hands, crying "Not in front of the children; they'll be defiled!" She refers to a belief that in those days was shared by all cultivators of silkworms, namely, that if a couple were to have intercourse in front of the shelves on which the silkworms were spinning their cocoons, the worms would be polluted and no good silk would be produced.

Since the whole family depends on the silkworms, the father of the house, who has heard strange noises emerging from the room where they are kept, has risen, lit a candle, and stark naked comes to see whether they are all right. He says: "What is this creaking and squeaking? It won't be mice that have gotten to the children?" The husband whose passions have been inflamed by lewd pictures is a comical character, but that in the end the husband's wishes will come second to the silkworms is even more hilarious. For that, you have to be in the countryside. Mane'emon's comment from under the silkworm shelves is: "There, it has begun."



[fig.11] "Lovers' Tiff Island"

Mane'emon's trip is nearing its end. Hastening back to Edo, in the middle of the night, he observes a young man and woman lying side by side in the shade of the dike. When he approaches, he sees that at their side there are a candle and a short sword, and that both of them hold rosaries in their hands. This is not just another lovers' tryst. On the other side of the dike, we see a man carrying a lantern and a weeping, old man who is leaning on his stick. The situation becomes more and more intriguing. Let us wait no longer and see what the inscriptions tell us:

Having seen all kinds of shapes that love can take, Mane'emon is now on his way back. He is overtaken by a fashionable young man who has still not shaven his forelocks in the company of a girl of about sixteen years old in a long-sleeved robe. "This might become interesting," he thinks, and he follows them. Hiding in the thick grass next to them, he becomes witness to what looks like a love-suicide. Then he says goodbye to Lovers' Tiff Island. He leaves the scene and crosses to the Shore of Shops.

In the dark of the night, he sees an inexperienced young man leading a girl. Thinking that this might be interesting, he follows them, but who could have thought that? They are going to commit suicide! But in that case, the old man who is walking on the other side of the dike must be the father who is searching for them, crying his eyes out.

If this were the whole story, it would be a serious matter and there would be nothing to laugh at. Harunobu, however, manages to change grief into laughter through

his inscriptions and his rendering of the scene. If you read the dialogue of the two, you see that the way things went was slightly different. "You are terribly late," the girl says, and the boy replies, "I won't be late, but don't you hear that there are people around"

Apparently, the girl was the first to arrive at the rendezvous, and the boy had kept her waiting. Moreover, the girl has no hesitation about committing suicide, while the boy, who is worrying about the sounds others make, is still clinging to this world. The girl is using the verb ending *-nanshita* in imitation of the way of speaking in Yoshiwara, so quite possibly their projected suicide, too, is conceived in imitation of something else -- a theatre play, for instance.

The print renders the final farewell to this world in a typical *shunga* manner: the young man is distracted by the sounds he hears and seems to be hesitant, but the girl has resolutely reached for the young man's rod and is now clasping it firmly. The way it is depicted, it seems as if she is in a hurry and she is leading him. One could put an even finer point on this interpretation, and construe the print in such a way that she is helping the boy's rod to regain its interest -- the interest that it lost when the boy became distracted. In this way, Harunobu succeeds in making us laugh at a serious scene through showing the different emotional reactions of a man and a woman in such a life-or-death situation.

Mane'emon's comments: "How the father is lamenting! Pitiful, pitiful! Will they really scatter the flowers of their prime? I wish I could do something. Let me at least hide the sword and save their lives. Before long, they'll find them here. Bah! This is not interesting, this is nihil Nichts nada!

Mane'emon has been touched by the tears the father is weeping. When he thinks of the two bodies that will be lying there, he decides to save their lives by hiding the short sword. Until now, our bean man has always kept aloof and been satisfied to watch, but now, for the first time, he intervenes in an situation. He could not let it happen. On the other hand, youth is not an excuse for everything. Seeing the love of these two youngsters who have nothing else in mind but their theatrical suicide, Mane'emon cannot help muttering to himself that "This is anything but entertaining; it is nihil Nichts nada." Of course, he does not use those words, he says *nasubi nakabashi*, which would literally translate as "eggplant middle bridge." Both words, however, contain the root *nas* (*NASubi*, *NAkabaShi*), which is the stem of the verb *nashi*, "there is not."



[fig.12] "In front of a tea house"

From this print on, all scenes are set in Yoshiwara, the licensed district of Edo. In Yoshiwara, special customs and rules of conduct applied, and the plot of the story that holds the following prints together, is the investigation of these rules and customs. In this transitional print, we find ourselves in front of a gayly decorated tea house (*chaya*), confronted with a slightly farcical scene. The hooded man is a customer; to his left is seated the high-ranking prostitute or *oiran*, with whom he is conversing, and to his right we see her attendant. Attendants of *oiran* came in two kinds: *shinzō* and *kamuro*. Both were young girls, who were apprenticed to a brothel, learning the trade, but the *kamuro* were younger than the *shinzō*. The long sleeves of her gown and her elaborate hairdo show that in this case we have to do with a *shinzō*. *Kaburo* wore their hair straight down the neck, child's fashion.

In the middle of the room a lamp has been placed and at the entrance of the shop we see a huge farewell lantern. Apparently, the *oiran* has even now been taken to the tea house from her living quarters in the brothel (*okiya*). This was the custom. A client of Yoshiwara did not go directly to one of the *okiya*, where the prostitutes lived, but to a *chaya*. Here he arranged an appointment with a particular *oiran*. A servant of the tea house would then go to the brothel where the prostitute concerned was living, and bring her to the *chaya*. When the *oiran* had arrived, a party was held at which the client drank and ate in the company of the *oiran*, while a number of *geisha* would play the *shamisen*, sing songs, and so on. Customarily, this would be the first stage of a man-of-the-world's visit to Yoshiwara.

The cherry tree in front of the house is in full bloom, so it must be the third month -- a night in Yoshiwara at the height of spring. The client in the purple hood is

embracing the *shinzō*, who protests, saying, "Please, miss Shigahara, mister Rokō is behaving quite impossibly! People will see it!" This Rokō may be identified as Segawa Kikunōjō II, who at that time was Edo's most popular female impersonator (*onnagata*) on the Kabuki stage. When he wrote *haiku* -- a hobby he had in common with many other Kabuki actors -- he affected the pseudonym Rokō. It is a telling sign of his celebrity that in Yoshiwara, too, he is called by this pseudonym. He had become immensely popular because of his natural good looks and grace. Especially the women competed in imitating the way he dressed on stage. The way he tied his sash (in the form of the *hiragana* sign for the syllable *ya* ...) was called "a Rokō knot," and the colour that he preferred for dying his gowns was called "Rokō tea." Both started a fashion. The gown he is wearing in the print -- the yellow and green with a tinge of brown -- is exactly this "Rokō tea," and for all we know, the *shinzō* may have tied her sash in a Rokō knot.

Since this twelfth print is the last of the first series, by way of a grand finale, Hyakki lists the various attractions of Yoshiwara:

On his way back from Lovers' Tiff Island, Mane'emon had rescued the young couple from its contemplated suicide, and he had been confronted with the wickedness of tiffs and squabbles. From there, he crossed to the Country of Pleasure, and has now arrived in the Suburb of Kitsugen, where he will amuse himself by studying all kinds of entertainment. His first steps take him to the tea houses, where he finds himself intoxicated with the blooming cherries, the wit of the drummers, the beautiful attire of the *oiran* as they pass down the streets, so busy with people that sleeve brushes against sleeve. He writes in his travel diary that this country truly is the Heaven of Opulence.

His praise of Kitsugen -- a different reading of the characters used to write Yoshiwara -- in the Country of Pleasure as the "Heaven of Opulence," and as the utopia of the Way of Love, is Hyakki's way of concluding the first series. It is the genius of Harunobu's brush, however, that does not let Hyakki have his way. Harunobu puts Mane'emon high up in a cherry tree, and makes him say of Rokō, who is so uninhibited that he openly fondles a *shinzō* right in the front of a tea house:

He is too cocky. This can't quite be the way it is done. Let us try the eightfold cherry blossom from the capital of Nara.

"Eightfold cherry blossom" is slang for "fart."⁴ When he has concluded that

Rokō "Just is too much of a clod," Mane'emon bares his buttocks and farts. Rokō twitches his nose and says, "What an odd smell." Harunobu ends the first part of the series with a laugh.

Second Series:

The twelve prints of the second series are located in Yoshiwara. They illustrate several aspects of the Way of Love that are peculiar to the licensed quarters. They are less realistic than the scenes of the first series, that were taken from all walks of ordinary life, but they provide interesting insights into the ecology of Yoshiwara.



[fig.13] "First Encounter"

The caption at the top says, "Leaving the tea houses he strolls around, looking at the stalls; then he goes inside and observes the way a first encounter (*shokai*) is conducted." "First encounter" is a term of the trade; it means the first time that a customer spends the night with a specific prostitute.

The scene is set in an *oiran's* room where everything is prepared to receive the customer. Three layers of red mattresses and a thick coverlet, a magnificent folding screen and an ornament to decorate the alcove, and next to the bed a shaded lamp, a smoking set, and wiping paper -- all the usual accoutrements, all of them equally gorgeous.

The customer seems to be inexperienced, and Mane'emon grows irritated: "Get on with it! What a timid man he is! It seems as if the thread of his conversation has snapped and he sees no way to tie it up again. How poor he is at this!" The *oiran* must have been unable to watch it any longer, for she lights a pipe and when it burns, she

presents it to the customer with the hand she had held inside her gown. "Please, have a smoke," she says, in an effort to relax him a bit. This may have been a standard routine; nevertheless, Mane'emon comments: "Even if it is standard, those to whom this happens are lucky birds." Can it be that in Yoshiwara inexperienced men are attractive to the ladies?



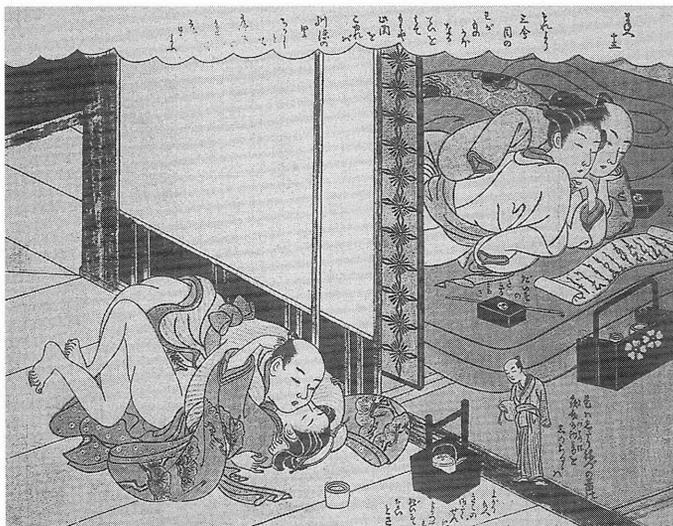
[fig.14] "Second Encounter"

The caption at the top says that when Mane'emon saw the customer's demeanour at the second encounter, he was reminded of the phrase about dying threads in the second part of *Nenashigusa*. This is again a reference to Hiraga Gennai, who in his *Nenashigusa* ("Rootless Weed") compares visiting the licensed quarter to dying white thread: "The more you go there, the more you are untangled, the more you frequent it, the more you grow accustomed; it is like a white thread that is put into a pot with dye and is gradually steeped in its colour."

When a client engages the same prostitute for a second time, this is called "turning her over" (*ura o kaesu*). If at the first meeting the *oiran* has decided that she does not like the client, she will not come to the tea house and give a casual excuse. The *shokai* is a test for both parties. The second time, the atmosphere is slightly different. The *oiran* will be more relaxed, and the customer, too, can allow himself to be more expansive.

Behind the sliding door the *oiran's* young maid, her *kamuro*, has fallen asleep. The *oiran* says, "Well, untie your sash," but the customer claims he has drunk too much and just wants to lie down. Mane'emon does not believe him for a moment, but he is relieved: "Good, he is needling her and catching her attention, but in his heart he must

be quite, quite ..." Then his attention is suddenly caught by the mattresses on which he is resting his elbow, and admiringly he remarks: "To climb these mattresses, I would need a garden ladder."



[fig.15] "Third Encounter"

When he observes the self-satisfied expression on the man's face at third encounter, Mane'emom concludes that "Once this barrier has been passed, the Village of Going Steady is close at hand," and he hovers near the corridor. According to custom, when a patron engaged the same prostitute for a third time, they were considered a steady couple; the Japanese term was *najimi* ("intimate, familiar"). In the brothel concerned, they were treated as if they were husband and wife. There even existed a special "*najimi* ceremony," and once this ceremony had been performed, the client could not engage another *oiran*. Neither were *oiran* allowed to accept invitations from the *najimi* of other *oiran*, though, of course, one *oiran* could have a number of *najimi*.

Our couple is lying in bed, leaning their cheeks on their hands and reading a letter. The whole scene is imbued with that intimacy and harmony that the word *najimi* implies. On the other side of the sliding door, in the corridor, we see a couple having intercourse. From Mane'mon's remark ("Well have I ever ... Yosuke of the sleepless watch is made to cry the First Note.") we learn, that the man is the night watch, Yosuke, and that the girl is the *oiran's* *shinzō* Hatsune ("First Sound"). This was, of course, against the rules. No man working in Yoshiwara was allowed to have a love affair with any of the *oiran* or *shinzō*.

The customer's attention is drawn by the noise in the corridor and he asks, "What is that gasping sound?" The *oiran*, who has to protect her *shinzō*, uses her wit

and allays her customer's suspicion by saying that "It is the sound of the water boiling on the commode." Yosuke hears her words, and quips: "Be happy, my dear! According to our lady's oracle, it is not incommodious for us to enjoy ourselves." In Yoshiwara, eros was not confined to the *oiran* and her customers.



[fig.16] "Family Village"

The caption at the top introduces the scene as follows: "Now that he has arrived in the Village of Going Steady, Mane'emon thinks in his heart that there must be many more customs of the country of Yoshiwara and numerous other ways of pleasure. This would be the night in which to conclude his travel diary; one of those nights that are nowhere lovelier than in Yoshiwara.⁵ When outside the latticed door you reach out with one hand and decide to enter, and your spirit has soared up towards the highest heaven, you will agree that there is no country that engrosses you so completely as Kitsugen, and leaves you less time to keep a diary."

In this print, concrete details have been selected to show, how an *oiran* and a customer who have become *najimi*, would conduct themselves after the act. With swift hands, the *oiran* wipes her partner's penis with a sheet of paper, while the customer takes the paper the *oiran* holds out to him, no doubt to wipe her nether parts. Mane'emon is embarrassed by this show of familiar affection. He has watched the battle lying on his stomach on top of the mattress, but when he sees this, he says: "Bring yourself to boil again and have another go. I for one am knocking off for a little bit of sleep."



[fig.17] "A Broken Rule"

The caption at the top introduces the scene with the following words: "In his heart Mane'emon has reached a conclusion and decided to stop writing his diary for the time being. 'Good for him, but if there would be no words at all at the top, it would look very unfriendly and aloof,' so the boss of Eijudō⁶ complained. At his prodding, I have written a few uninspired *haiku* as captions for the following prints." It continues the argument that was begun in the preceding print, where Mane'emon decided that there would be too many customs in the country of Yoshiwara and too many ways of pleasure for him to record them all, and that he might as well stop keeping his diary.

This is hardly a convincing argument. It is striking, however, that from this print on, Harunobu's prints no longer illustrate rules and conventions, but depict breaches of the rules and unconventional situations. The copulating couple in the corridor of figure 16 represented one such violation, and the frolicking couple that is walking down the corridor in this print, is another instance. They are not customer and *oiran*, but an *oiran* and a servant of a tea house, who has come to the brothel where she lives to pick her up and bring her to a party. We can deduce this from the lantern the man is holding in his hand; such lanterns were typically used when an *oiran* was escorted to or from a tea house.

In the licensed quarters, it was of course strictly forbidden for male employees to become involved with the prostitutes, but few things break bonds more readily than the love between man and woman. As if to illustrate the Japanese saying that "bad deeds will be out" (*warui koto dekinai*), they are watched through the shop curtain by another prostitute, who will have gotten wind of their affair, and the man drops from his bosom a bundle of important letters (perhaps entrusted to him by a customer to give to

the *oiran*?) on the floor. Mane'emon has discovered them, and remarks with his usual wit: "They do not overstep their fetters, they trample them underfoot. Let us have a look at them!"

The lantern the man is carrying reads "Ōshima," and the meal delivery box in the corridor is inscribed "Kazusaya." Both are names of actual businesses that existed in Yoshiwara in those days. Ōshimaya was a tea house (*hikitejaya*) in Nakanochō, and Kazusaya was a brothel in Edo-chō.



[fig.18] "Late Night in Bed"

The *haiku* reads *Otozureru / kane mo nururu ya / yoko shigure*. In *shunga* of this nature, part of the fun is, to find out what relation there is between the *haiku* and the picture. If we take only the superficial meaning of the *haiku*, it could be translated as follows: "Even the temple bell / that is ringing / will be wet? / The slanting shower."

The man in the picture is stretching his arms, and the girl beside him is fast asleep. The other woman, who wears the white kimono, is the *oiran*. She will have been making the round of her various customers, the technical term for which was *mawashitori*. Only now, late at night, she has arrived at this final bed where her *najimi* has been waiting. In such cases it was usual that the customers who were waiting while the *oiran* was busy elsewhere, were entertained by a *shinzō* who was acting as her proxy (*myōdai*). However, according to the rules of Yoshiwara, the customer was forbidden to sleep with the *shinzō*. In other words, the girl lying next to the man is the *shinzō*, who has fallen asleep waiting for her mistress.

The man, too, has tired of being kept waiting, but if he were to get angry, he would be regarded as inelegant. So, when the *oiran* finally arrives, he confines himself

to making a sarcastic remark: "It must have been all lacquered head rests for you, tonight?" The woman merely answers: "What are you talking about?" and refuses to rise to the bait. It is, of course, a pun: *nurimakura* are lacquered wooden head rests, but it sounds almost the same as *nuremakura*, "wet pillows." He means to say that she will already be "wet" from the pillows she has shared with other men that night. Mane'emon is impressed: "He has taken quite a dig at her."

By now, the full significance of the *haiku* will have become clear. The allegorical interpretation hinges on the word *otozureru*, that means both "to make a sound," and "to visit." In other words, the poem says that "You have finally come to visit me, but your 'bell' is wet already." It is Harunobu who has associated the prostitute who is doing her rounds, with the wet bell in Hyakki's poem.⁷



[fig.19] "Butterfly" I (Colour plate V)

The *haiku* is *Hana ni asobu / naonaochō no / hanagokoro*. It could be translated as: "The flighty heart / of the butterfly who more and more / frolics amongst the flowers." Harunobu's picture illustrates this poem by identifying the flowers with women and the butterfly with men. He shows the customer's capriciousness, who would like to fly from flower to flower as does the butterfly. While his steady *oiran* was making the round of her other customers, this customer has been teasing the *shinzō*, who was standing in for her mistress. The fact that his foot is showing from under the coverlet hints at this. Such behaviour was against the rules, so now that the *oiran* shows up, Mane'emon hastily draws in his legs and remarks: "Now you'll have it, his regular mistress has come." The *shinzō* complains: "Elder sister, mister Gochō has ... you know..." The *oiran* understands immediately, and replies: "It is always the same with

him." The name of the customer is telling: "Five Butterflies."



[fig.20] "Butterfly" II

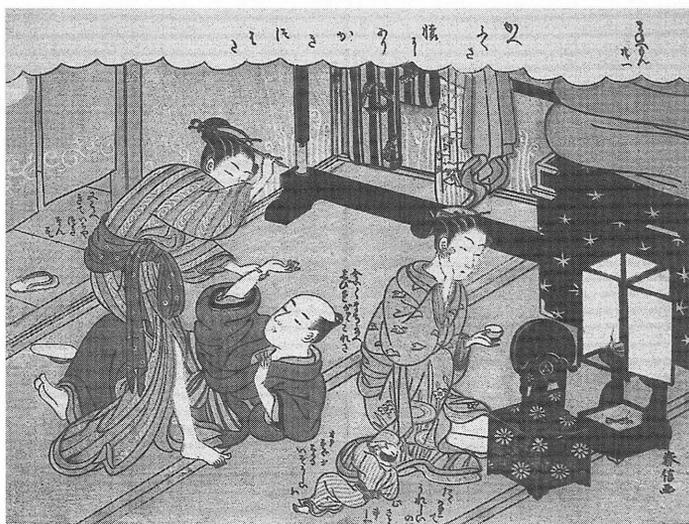
This picture takes the foregoing scene somewhat further and shows a customer who is transgressing the rules more grossly. The *haiku* is *Moeizuru / haru no tegiwa ya / hayawarabi*, which could be translated as: "Is this a feat of spring / in which all flowers are in bud? / Early bracken." Saying "Come here, and let us for a moment ...," the man, catches hold of the *shinzō*, begins to fondle her and forces her hand to clasp his penis. The *shinzō* protests, "Hey, don't do such wicked things. The *oiran* may come any moment now."

As was to be expected, the *oiran* has caught them, but the funny thing is, that she does not enter the room, but from behind the curtain is poking her long pipe (*kiseru*) towards the man's private parts. At first sight, this seems an inexplicable thing for her to do, but if we compare the scene to that of another *shunga* Harunobu made, it becomes clearer. In that print, that is almost identical with this one, the caption at the top contains two famous lines from a Chinese poem that is collected in the well-known medieval poetry collection *Wa-Kan rōei shū*: "The young, purple-dusted bracken resembles a clenched fist, / and the jade-green, frosty reed looks like an awl boring its way out of a sack."⁸ The poem was written by Ono no Takamura (802-852) on the theme of "Early Spring in the field."

In the context of this picture, the young bracken is associated with the fist of the *shinzō* as she clasps the man's phallus, and the frosty reed with long pipe the *oiran* is thrusting forward. We may assume that those who knew Harunobu's pictures, will have been reminded of these lines the moment they read the *haiku* with its *HARU no TEGIWA*

no / hayaWARABI, in which *haru* means "spring," *te*, "hand," and *warabi*, "bracken." In many of Harunobu's pictures we find this combination of vigorous realism and imagery derived from classical poetry.

Mane'emon, who is watching the scene from the other side of the sliding door, calls out, "Hey, you, Master Shitsubuka!" The scholar Hayashi Bi'ichi is of the opinion, that this Master Shitsubuka is the writer of the captions of this series, Komatsu Hyakki.⁹ In which case Harunobu, through calling this ill-bred customer Master Shitsubuka, has forcibly propelled Master Hyakki into the scene and is making fun of him. A similar instance of incrowd jokes we have already encountered in print No. 5.



[fig.21] "Butterfly" III

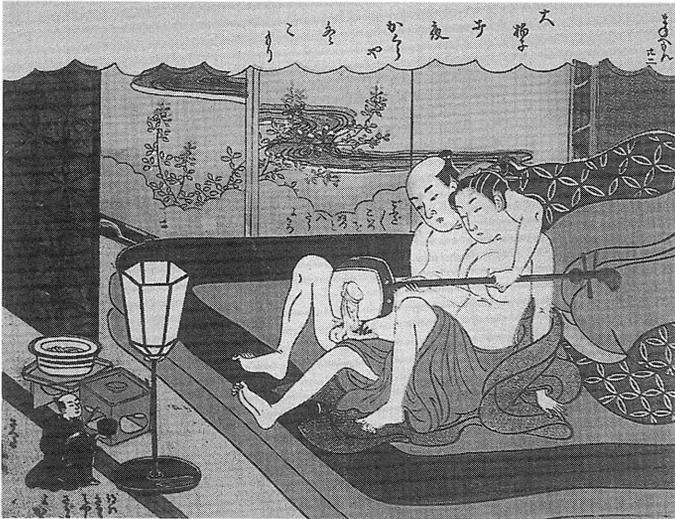
The *haiku* is *Kaefukusa / futokoro ni ari / kakitsubata*, which may be translated as "A spare kerchief / is in her bosom / an iris." In the print, we see a woman who is applying her make-up in preparation of going out to display herself in the shop front. Another woman has entered her room and is raising her long tobacco pipe over a man who has tumbled on the floor. When we read the dialogue, the second woman is angrily crying: "This is the second time you have come here, and again you are flirting with her!" The man is apologising abjectly: "I'm going now. Please wait. Ah! My legs are numb!" Presumably, the angry woman is the man's mistress, his *najimi*. While she was away, the man will have wandered into the room of another prostitute and perhaps has tried to fondle her while she was applying her make-up. This was, of course, strictly forbidden. Our man fully deserves to be chastised with a *kiseru*.

Perhaps the man is one of those perennial guests of Yoshiwara who have become thoroughly accustomed to the place and hang on for days on end, without

going home. Familiarity breeds recklessness, and eventually they will begin to pursue other prostitutes. Observing the scene, Mane'emon is amused by the man's irrational behaviour: "This is the only place where people love it when they are beaten," he remarks. Then he continues: "Ah! he bell has told. How busy we are." Another Yoshiwara night in which the irrational is acceptable has begun.

The operative words in the *haiku* are *kaefukusa* and *kakitsubata*. The first word most likely refers to the other woman. The situation Hyakki had in mind, was a tea ceremony. During such a ceremony, the host uses a small, square piece of silk called *fukusa* to wipe the dust off the tea utensils. He has, however, a second *fukusa* ready in his bosom, that he will put underneath these utensils when he shows them off. In other words, he always carries two *fukusa*. This image could describe the feelings of the man who has set his sights on two women at the same time. In those days, the word *fukusa* also had the nuance of "informal, casual." This would make a spare *fukusa* a very trivial and casual thing indeed. And an apt image of the relation between a customer and a prostitute.

Finally, in the Japanese literary tradition, the iris (*kakitsubata*) is not just another flower. It reminds the reader of a well-known anecdote of Ariwara no Narihira and could also be regarded as a symbol of this famous poet, the hero of *Ise monogatari* and the legendary lover who is immortalised in Nō and Kabuki plays. This association allows us to interpret the *haiku* as follows: "Constantly he has capricious feelings for other women in his heart, just like Narihira used to have."¹⁰



[fig.22] "Funny Play"

The *haiku* is *Daihyōshi / utsu yokagura ya / fuyugomori*, which could be

translated as "A big drum / is struck. Is it *kagura* night? / Retired for the winter." *Kagura* are dances or mimes that are executed as an offering to the gods. The usual venue is a Shinto shrine and as a rule the performance takes place at night. *Fuyugomori* is a stock epithet in classical Japanese poetry and refers to the stillness of nature in winter, when everything has retired into itself.

At first sight, the scene looks quite bizarre. Harunobu probably hit upon the idea for this scene when he was mentally checking, which of the various things that go on in a brothel could match the *haiku*. We see a prostitute and her client, seated on three layers of thick red mattresses, stark naked and closely pressing against each other. Together they are playing a *shamisen*, the man using his phallus as a plectrum to hit the belly of the instrument.

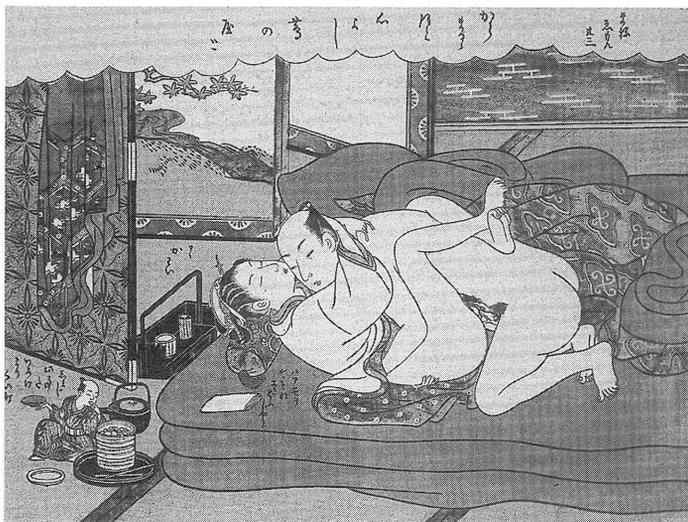
The print reminds one of a painting Harunobu made of an emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Xuanzong, and his beloved concubine Yang Guifei.<11> In this painting, we see the emperor and Yang Guifei, sitting shoulder to shoulder on the edge of the bed and playing a traverse flute together -- the very image of harmonious love. If we substitute a *shamisen* for the flute, our print is the exact double of this painting, apart, of course, from the intrinsic ribaldry required by the genre of *shunga*.

A *shamisen* was a standard piece of equipment in a brothel. Moreover, its belly may well be compared to a drum, and a phallus to a plectrum. Once you have these associations, you have what you need for a *shunga* on the theme of "the night when a big drum is struck." Mane'emon, for one, is quite carried away by it, and is beating the time with his chopsticks on a rice bowl that serves as a gong. The picture illustrates the kind of uproarious gaiety you will find nowhere but in the licensed quarters.

The man says: "What do you say of it? Wouldn't it feel good, if I shoved it in head first?" He is quite proud of himself, and the woman is more than ready: "Please, lie down. I want it inside of me now!" However ludicrous the foreplay was, it seems to have served its purpose. Mane'emon makes one of his witty remarks, and in the best of moods he prepares to leave the scene. "From here on, they will be galloping along like two swift horses. And for this boy, it's the grand exit music. This was so cool!"

Actually, in Japanese Mane'emon uses two terms that are associated with music and refer back to the opening *haiku*. "Gallop along like two swift horses" is our rendering of *kirin-bayashi*. *Hayashi* is the kind of simple, rhythmic music that is played at Shinto festivals, for instance to accompany a *kagura*, but the word also means "fast," and as such it is linked to the word *kirin* -- not yet a giraffe in those days, but a mythical animal whose name is here used metaphorically for very swift horses. "Grand exit music" is in Japanese *sagariha*, i.e., the kind of solemn music that in a performance marks the entry and exit of a nobleman. This conventional use of music in Kabuki

performances may also explain the use of the word *fuyugomori*: when a *ninja* enters the scene, the orchestra strikes up what is called a *kagura-bayashi*, a "kagura tune." And *ninja* do all things in secret, hidden from men's eyes, as is nature in winter.



[fig.23] "The Climax"

Karamaruru / hodo kokoro yoshi / tsuta no yado runs the *haiku*, which could be rendered as "The more you are entwined / the better it feels: / my lodging covered with ivy." Up till now, we have been shown the various rules and proprieties of Yoshiwara, but in the end we are shown a couple that has forgotten all about such things and about the distinction between customer and prostitute, and is having glorious sex. The woman has twined both arms and both legs around the man; her eyes are tightly shut, and she is lost in ecstasy. Her text is reduced to: "Oh! Aaah! Yes! Ai! What to do!" The man, too, shows his true feelings, when he says "How sweet she is." The creeping ivy of the *haiku* has turned out to be an image of the clutching arms and legs of a woman.

In this stage, there is no difference between Eros in Yoshiwara and Eros anywhere else. Mane'emon has nothing else to comment than "This is what everything comes down to in the end. Rather than amorous passion, it's appetite."



[fig.24] "A True Lover" (Colour plate VI)

When Mane'emon comes out of the tea house, he catches a couple making love on the street, late at night, at the entrance of a brothel. It is a secret tryst, as is clear from the dialogue. "How was your customers tonight?" the man with the black hood asks, and the woman answers: "Oh, just a traveller." The woman is evidently an *oiran*, and the man must be her true lover, or *mabu* in the slang of those days. It was the pride of an *oiran* in Yoshiwara to have not only some rich and generous *najimi*, but also a *mabu*. The preceding print showed the true feelings of a prostitute who was on the job; this last print shows her true passion when she is off the job, meeting the man she truly loves. This, I think, is the reason why Harunobu decided to put this scene at the end the series.

Mane'emon is not really amused when he sees this illicit meeting of a prostitute with her lover. His final comment of the series is: "This is what they mean by the saying 'The extreme of luxury is a monk's simple coat.' When a girl gets this way, she will loose her edge and the shop will fall on hard times. It's funny, though. Next spring, I'll go to Cats' Country in front of the Ekōin or to the country of Fukagawa and see how they do things down there."

The monk's coat, literally "a leather coat (*kawagoromo*)," stands as the symbol of extreme indulgence. The cats' country and Fukagawa are two places in Edo where unlicensed prostitutes plied their trade. "Cats' Country" is both a pun on the name of the temple, Ekōin (*ekō* reminds one of *neko*, cat), and topical, because the prostitutes there were called Gold Kitten or Silver Kitten.

Thus the story ends with a volley of puns. It seems as if Mane'emon expected from Yoshiwara above all an exchange of witty banter. When he is shown a harlot's true

feelings and these turn out to be the same as those of men and women in the everyday world, he has no reason anymore to tarry in Yoshiwara.

In order to bring the series to a suitable close, Harunobu has smuggled certain things into the picture. One of these is a man with a lantern in his hand, who comes walking towards the couple in the company of his white dog. "Shiro, come, come! Are you there? Good dog." This man will be the servant of a brothel who has come to escort the girl back from the tea house. But nothing prevents us from thinking that the man has also come to collect Mane'emon, for the lantern the man carries in his hand shows a crest consisting of three comma-shaped dots (*tomoe*). This crest was the shop emblem of the publisher of this series, Nishimura Eijudō.

The lengthy caption at the top is a kind of postscript. It reads as follows:

Lord Ei[ju] said: "My, my, such insipid *haiku*. They are only fit for primitive prints (*beni-e*). We are done with *haiku*; that boring travel diary of yours is still preferable." Mane'emon replied: "You're right, I quite agree. But the more you indulge in the amusements of this quarter, the more you will understand that there is no end to them. Even if I had a hundred pages, it would be insufficient, so let us leave it at this. The meeting with the *mabu*, and the scenes of the first till third encounters, when you see how they get more and more intimate, are interesting enough. Let's first try this one shot, and then wait for the next spring tide. I shan't leave yet for Cats' Island or the Country of Fukagawa. However, this year has few days left. Spring days are long, and we will have more time." Lord Eiju could not but give in to these most reasonable arguments of Mane'emon.

It will not necessary to explain this. Ukiyo-no-suke's long journey of research into the Way of Love has ended here, and for the time being, he takes off his straw sandals. Ukiyo-no-suke placed Eros in the centre of his life, and his ideal was, to gain insight in all the subtleties of this Way. This is not the time or place to discuss the spirit of eroticism that is such a strong undercurrent of Edo culture. Anyone who is cognizant with the cultural phenomena of the Edo Period will know, how the people of this period wanted to become experts in the Way of Love, and how they strained their minds to express their insights. Nothing tells this better than the popularity of *shunga* as a sub-genre of *ukiyo-e*.

NOTES

1. This book has been translated by Hubert Maës as *HISTOIRE GALANTE DE SHIDÔKEN. Traduction du FÛRYÛ SHIDÔKEN-DEN de FURAI-SANJIN, suivie de ATTRACTIONS FORAINES AU JAPON SOUS LES TOKUGAWA et de LES VOYAGES FICTIFS DANS LA LITTÉRATURE JAPONAISE DE L'ÉPOQUE D'EDO*, Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1979. See also Hubert Maës, *Hiraga Gennai et son temps*, Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. 72, Paris, 1970.
2. "Cakes" actually is somewhat of a misnomer. The Japanese word is *tsuchidango*, and *dango* are little balls of flour that were steamed or cooked, coloured, sold a few on a stick, and considered a delicacy; "mud balls" would be a more appropriate translation. In the 1760s and 1770s, it was the custom at this Inari Shrine in Edo for people suffering from syphilis to present "mud balls" to the deity, and exchange them for real *dango* after their prayers had been heard. The deity, therefore, did have an ample supply of mud balls at hand.
3. As all titles of Kabuki plays, this one, too, is a dense play on words. *Komurobushi* was a folk song that was originally sung by, and hence associated with, grooms. It can also be translated, however, as "the tune (*fushi*) of a small (*ko*) shed (*muro*). *Matsuyo* means "the night in which he waited," but it resonates with the words *matsuyoi* and *matsuyō*. *Matsuyoi* means "the night in which one waits for one's lover," or "the night in which one waits for the moon," i.e., the night of the fourteenth day of the eighth month, and *matsuyō* means "the final year, the end of times." Tanba is the name of a province to the southwest of Kyoto, and Yosaku is the name of the character.
4. The expression derives from a famous poem in the series of "One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets," which runs: "The eightfold cherry blossoms / of the ancient / capital of Nara / today glow / ninefold." In Japanese, the text is *Inishie no / Nara no miyako no / yaezakura / kyō kokonoe ni / noinuru kana*. The offensive part is *kokonoe ni niou*: "glow ninefold," but also "smell ninefold." "Ninefold" (*kokonoe*) can be analysed as *koko no he*, and *he* means fart.
5. In Japanese the phrase runs *kore wa yame no yoru wa Yoshiwara bakari sukiyo kana*, which is a take-off on a poem, *Yami no yo wa / Yoshiwara bakari / tsukiyo kana*: "In nights of darkness / only in Yoshiwara / they have moon-lit nights."
6. The boss of Eijudō is the owner of the blocks (*hanmoto*), i.e., the publisher of these prints, Nishimura Yohachi.
7. One could also point out that the word *kane* (bell) is close to *kani* (crab), and that "crab" is one of the words for the vagina: both squeeze. See Nakano Eizō, *Edo higo jiten* (Ōsaka: Daibunkan Shoten, 1968), p. 132, s.v. *kani*.
8. *Wakan rōei shū*, poem no. 12.
9. "This Master Shitsubuka is not, as Shibui Kiyoshi claims, the *kyōka* poet Hōseidō Kisanji, but Komatsu Hyakki." (Hayashi Bi'ichi, *Enpon kenkyū Harunobu*, p. 228)
10. The reference is to *Ise monogatari*, section 9. Actually, if one reads this section, one sees that the context is that of a man who is on a journey and, far from home, longs for his wife and worries over her. Which reminds us of the one person who definitely was not a casual relation: the customer's wife.
11. The painting is at present in the possession of the MOA Museum. It is dated 1764, painted on silk, and measures 44.6 x 64.3 cm.