

and poets, they really did not produce a significant number of statesmen or officials. Members of the ruling class who employed such scholars tended not to make much use of them, and particularly not in the area of government.

Now put yourself in the sandals of the *jusha*, the Confucian scholars. They believed that in China people lile themselves got top jobs, and knew this to be the case in Korea. But in Japan they were ignored — ignored, moreover, by people who had reached positions of power simply by the accidents of birth. So they were permanently embittered. Nobody asked them for their advice, and if they offered it anyway, nobody took any notice. They were research assistants, entertainers and fashion accessories; they knew it, and they resented it. It is no accident that the most characteristic product of these Confucian scholars in the Jeremiad. If by chance they actually got some power, they usually failed miserably. Their very training as Confucian scholars made them elitist, doctrinaire and unused to cooperation or compromise; it is hardly surprising that such men made extremely difficult colleagues, and that those who worked with them generally rejoiced to see them go.

Looking at the situation objectively, however, it was probably just as well that nobody paid them any attention. Look at what they wanted for society — commerce stopped, cities destroyed, restrictions on everything from rice consumption to reading matter, all those things which made Tokugawa Japan one of the pre-modern world's more agreeable places. All in all it's a matter for congratulation that Tokugawa Japan's acceptance of Confucianism and the Chinese model was so selective, and remained at a superficial level.

Beneath my argument therefore is the contention that rather than being in any way central or defining to life in Tokugawa Japan, Confucianism was largely irrelevant. Certainly the people spoke the language of Confucianism, but when it came to behaviour they acted like ordinary human beings. I think we can all take some satisfaction from this.

Parody genre in the Edo Period literature

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The Edo period (1600-1868) was the time of incredible flourishing for any species of the popular literature in Japan. The appearance of a large mass of literate commoners stimulated the ever-increasing activity in writing and publishing of works primarily focused on entertainment. One of the distinguishing traits of this literature was a large amount of humorous and burlesque works. One may surmise that the parody occupied in the Edo

literature a more prominent place than ever in any other country. Many works became best-sellers even though they could be appreciated in full only by those well acquainted with the content of parodied works. The masterpieces of the Heian period, military epics (gunki), classical poetry, Noh and Kabuki plays, sacred Buddhist and Shinto texts as well as outstanding serious works of the contemporaries became targets of lampooning and mockery. This tendency was successfully nurtured not only by the cheery atmosphere of the city life but also by the peculiar character of the Japanese language and writing.

The language abound with homonyms and homographs and using the Chinese characters has more opportunities for puns, word-playing and travesty than any language using alphabet, syllabic or even purely Chinese writing systems. The Japanese imagination sought ways to exhaust any of existing possibilities. The sophisticated terms were replaced by lower or even frivolous counterparts, often coined by authors, with the same (or similar) pronunciation that at once brought to memory of readers their prototypes. Even slight changes (like a replacement of radicals) could produce a comical effect. The humour, irony, puns, indecent jokes became the only and indispensable device for lower samurais and educated commoners not only to express their dissatisfaction with the existing system of values but also to suggest own contrasting ideals.

The entertaining literature gave the authors a chance to reveal their fantasy, putting aside the "higher tradition". Similar writings were used to label "moderate works" (nanpa-mono), often called in common gesaku "light literature" as opposed to "vigorous works" (koha-mono) usually associated with serious literature. In the poetry the traditional waka and haiku genres became supplemented by the comical counterparts of the kyoka and senryu genres, while those who preferred the verses in Chinese (kanshi) expressed their wit and skill through the kyoshi ("crazy verses").

Sometimes whole passages or entire texts were reproduced only with slight changes of characters and certain expressions to turn the original into its opposite (e.g. "Nise monogatari"). The closer a new version coincided in its sounding to the original, the greater was fun for readers.

One of the first successful satirical works was "Ukiyo monogatari" (1661) by Asai Ryoi (d. 1691) that contained a sharp criticism of many aspects of the contemporary society. The hero is a wealthy youngster by name Hyotaro who having exhausted the carnal pleasures of the "floating world" and having failed to make a civil career, becomes a Buddhist monk and takes the monastic name Ukiyobo ("A Floating World Monk"). In spite of the rather primitively constructed plot, the work contained a fierce crysisism of the contemporary society. Humorous passages and frivolous scenes are intermingled with accusations of greedy merchants, cruel samurais and stupid commoners. The work ends with unsuccessful attempts of the hero to attain immortality following Taoist methods. After all he decided to use the method of "casting-off cicada" to free himself from his human flesh bonds like a cicada casting off its shell. The result was pityful because he was unable to make anything but releasing himself from his gown. The story ends with the words: "Nobody is aware what exactly

happened but Ukiyobo disappeared somewhere, having left only a poem. 'My spirit has now/ returned into the void./Only an empty body's cover/like a cicada's cast-off shell/Is being left here". At the same time the last chapter seems to be a parody of the "Kumo-gakure" chapter in the "Genji monogatari", and then the whole work may be interpreted as a modern satiric version of the famous novel with its clear Buddhist overtones and stress on the impermanence of human life.

A more obvious parody of the same work is the "Nise Murasaki inaka Genji" by Ryutei Tanehiko (1783-1842) that was applauded by the Japanese readers. Only after the last, thirty-seventh part had appeared in 1842 Tanehiko was admonished by the authorities to stop writing such licentious books. Simultaneously with "Inaka Genji" Tanehiko published under pseudonyms (mostly Sanehiko) a few erotic writings (ehon) such as "Shunjo gidan mizuage-cho" (1836), "Enshi goju yojiho" (1835), "Shunshoku iribune-cho" (1837), "Nise Murasaki Naniwa Genji" (1837), "Kaichu Genji Sumagin" (1838) etc. Some of them were obvious self-parodies of the "Inaka Genji" where all his adventures were almost exclusively in bed-chambers. A curious case is "Mizuage-cho" where only illustrations (by Fukiyo Matabei, a pseudonym of Utagawa Kunisada) to the "Inaka Genji" were a subject of travesty while the text himself is a sort of practical instructions for defloration (mizuage) and subsequent sexual dealings with a young bride. Utagawa constantly cooperated with Tanehiko, including his "Inaka Genji", so in this case he parodied himself adding to the illustrations erotic tints.

The literature of humour, entertainment, parody became a suitable device for those gifted outsiders who failed to find a proper place in the contemporary society. A French scholar H. Maes emphasized that in the 18th century in Japan had appeared more than in any other period people dissatisfied with political, social and economical situation in the country. One of the most talented and many-sided intellectuals of that time was Hiraga Gennai (1729-1779).

Gennai was well-versed in the classical Japanese and Chinese literatures. His interests went far beyond the recognized patterns of learning in the isolated Japan. He twice visited Nagasaki where studied the Dutch language and the European natural sciences. He strived to make accessible for the Japanese the Western science and technology, made translations from the Dutch and tried to introduce the Western scientific methods in Japan. The fiction was for him only a by-product that allowed to express the ever-increasing dissatisfaction with the social order. In 1763 he published his first fiction book "Nenashi-gusa" ("The Grass Without Roots") that at once brought him a fame.

In the same year under the pseudonym Furai Sanjin he published a satirical and fantastic work "The Life of the Jovial Shidoken" (Furyu Shidoken-den) in five books. Abound with hints, allusions and all sorts of puns, the work seems to have been addressed preeminently to a few intellectuals whose critical attitude along with deep knowledge of implicitly parodied sources would allow them to grasp the nippy humour and the consistent irony.

The work starts with a narration about a Buddhist monk by name Shidoken who amuses commoners by funny and indecent though instructive stories at the Asakusa temple in Edo. His sermons are a mixture from Shinto, Buddhist and Confucian ideas peppered with Taoist

theories. To keep the flow of his speech he strikes the rhythm with the matsutake mushroom (a standard phallic symbol!). The rest of the work deals with an account of his life and adventures before he settled at the Amakusa temple.

It is curious that the prototype was a real person by name Fukai Shidoken, well-known throughout Edo by his misogynist and funny sermons exactly as described above. So it was a parody of a living parodist who died a couple of years after Gennai's novel had been published. There is an evidence that Gennai read for him his work in a tea-house to get his opinion on it.

His parents were childless, and the mother constantly prayed to Kannon at the Amakusa temple asking to give her a child. Once in a dream a matsutake mushroom flew into her womb and afterwards she conceived. The child was called Asanoshin and as a gratitude to the merciful deity he was sent as an acolyte to a Buddhist monastery. He surpassed everyone by his learning and the brilliant knowledge of the Buddhist scripture. However, once he was visited in a dream by a Taoist immortal by name Furai Senjin who persuaded the youth to quit the Buddhist path, promising in return to introduce him to various Taoist mysteries. After all the immortal gave to Asanoshin a magical fan that enabled him to make miracles: to fly with the wind, to become invisible, to understand foreign languages, etc. Using this fan, Asanoshin visited all the "pleasure quarters" in Japan, travelled to distant countries. The fan everywhere allowed him to escape from the most complicated situations. Asanoshin even succeeded to penetrate into the Chinese Emperor's harem and enjoyed there pleasures with all the Imperial concubines, but once as a result of a fire he lost his magical fan and along with it the ability to do miracles.

Owing to his acuteness Asanoshin managed not only to escape a punishment for his illicit deeds but even to gain the Emperor's favor. He was sent to Japan at the head of a special mission to take measures of the Fuji mountain, because the Chinese Emperor decided to reproduce its exact replica in his own country. However, by chance the hero and his companions arrived to the Island of Women where they were imprisoned and placed into a special "pleasure quarter" to satisfy the caprices of licentious women. Exhausted from the loss of vital force all Asanoshin's companions died and he was left not long to follow them, but at the last moment the Taoist saint appeared to him again to announce that though Asanoshin during all his wanderings stayed young, seventy years had passed since their first meeting. In a moment the hero turned into an ugly humpback, and a wooden matsutake had appeared in his hand. The immortal explained that it was the merciful bodhisattva Kannon who had manifested into the mushroom form (i.e. the phallus) and satisfied the lascivious women to preserve his vital force and life. To retribute for that generous deed Asanoshin was advised to return home and to preach henceforth at the Asakusa temple. Then he adopted the new name Shidoken ("Striving for the Way") and at once found himself at Amakusa where since then he started his sermons.

The main principle of the work is constant reverse, when the hero transcends from one status to another until at the end he returns to the starting point and becomes again a

Buddhist monk. Implicitly Gennai himself is present in the work in two persons. He is simultaneously the jovial Shidoken and his Taoist master Furai Senjin (a slightly changed Furai Sanjin, a pseudonym often used by Gennai). When the immortal reprimands the uselessness of various popular “arts” (the tea ceremony, ikebana, the Japanese chess and draughts, the shamisen playing, etc.) he expresses the Gennai’s own views who believed that only practical knowledge may be of real use for the society. Like the Taoist who voluntarily left the mundane world, Gennai considered himself to be just “a free ronin who serves to the state”.

The whole narration is pivoted on the juxtaposition of dream and reality. Just before the first appearance of the Taoist saint Asanoshin had dreamt that a beautiful celestial fairy was born out of an egg. She led him to a cave where the hero was welcome by nice girls and enjoyed exquisite meals and drinks. But at the most culminative moment the dream interrupts and everything disappears. The appearance of the immortal is also at first taken by Asanoshin to be only a dream, but this dream goes on and on until another appearance of the Taoist puts the end to it as well. A reader may only guess whether it was a dream or reality, because the author highlights the principle that “the life itself is only a dream, an illusion”.

And not by chance in the hand of the hero who suddenly became an old man appears again the same matsutake, a symbol of his exhausted male energy, that long ago penetrated into his mother’s womb and gave birth to him. In fact, the Taoist saint explains that the mushroom was nothing but a manifestation of Kannon. Having completed his long way in search of truth the hero returns to the same Asakusa temple, where long ago his mother prayed to the bodhisattva Kannon to give her a child, now to explain for others the principle of illusion and impermanence of the “floating world”. Thus, the whole story may be interpreted as an illustration of the Buddhist karmic law when any deeds, both good and evil, are subject to be retributed. But Gennai never was an ardent follower of Buddhism, and this work seems to be rather a parody of the didactic Buddhist genre dangi and may be considered a precursor of the kokkeibon novels that had flourished since the end of the 18th century and attained its peak in the works of Shikitei Sanba and Jippensha Ikku.

Because of a number of fantastic countries described in the novel some modern authors often call this work by Gennai “the Japanese Gulliver”. Haga Toru in his monograph on Hiraga Gennai (1989) traces striking parallels between “Shidoken-den” and Voltaire’s “Candide” written only four years earlier (1759).

The story gained the popularity and in 1774 a work by a certain Yukokushi called “Ikoku kidan Washobei” (Strange Tales of Washobei about Distant Countries”) appeared. It describes the adventures of a Nagasaki merchant by name Washobei who visited six phantastic countries. Two years later this work was lampooned in an erotic writing under the title “Ikai kikei Oshobobo”. The exact translation of the title is impossible because among eight characters three — “kai” and “bobo” — were used for female sexual organs, and “kei” (a stalk) was a standard term for the phallus. “Osho” was the name of the main character, a vendor of sexual devices from Nagasaki who was by chance taken away by a storm and visited six

countries with unusual sexual manners. An approximate translation (that hardly contains the whole complex of the Japanese overtones) could be "Queer Openings and Strange Stalks: Osho's Jade Opening". The work ends with awakening of the hero from that queer and at the last moment menacing dream.

Gennai himself wrote a few frivolous and erotic pieces under various pseudonyms as well, the most famous of them being "Nagamakura shitone gasen" that resembles by its form a Joruri play.

The Edo period was the gold age for the erotic writings in Japan. The Edo literary erotic works (not to be mixed with pure shunga) are rather unusual (and still insufficiently unexplored) phenomena of Japanese culture. Many of the most outstanding and respectable writers contributed to that "unrespectable" genre. The best artists of that time were ready to make illustrations for them. There were hardly any popular artists or writers who did not left at least a few of erotic pieces. Among them were such world-known artist, popular novelists, poets, well-known Confucian and Kokugaku scholars like Katsushika Hokusai, Kitagawa Utamaro, Suzuki Harunobu, Utagawa Kunisada, Utagawa Toyokuni, Tamenaga Shunsui, Kyokutei Bakin, Ryutei Tanehiko, Ota Nanpo and others. Because most of similar works were published under pseudonyms, it is not always clear who exactly was the real author. Because among them were the most outstanding writers and artists, it is hardly surprising that, compared with the contemporary European or Chinese works, the Japanese erotic writings surpass them in many aspects and hardly may be defined by the Western term "porno".

One cannot deny that the Japanese erotic fiction also intended to stir a sexual desire of the readers, but in fact it was only a by-product. In contrast to the West, the Japanese erotic or porno writings (at least many of them) bear an evident mark of the imagination and creativity of their authors. Some of them used the well-known works or plots as an initial pattern turning them into fascinating sexual escapades while leaving remarkable hints and allusions to the parodied texts. Only a person well-acquainted with originals could to a full measure appreciate the inventiveness of the author and his mockery. Moreover, most of them demanded from readers a good knowledge of the written Japanese (or, even Chinese) to get into the real meaning of sexual allusions because of the oblique and colourful terms used. Even if coloured illustrations to them could appeal to the taste of an illiterate persons, one may wonder whether the literary works (and some of them did not even contain illustrations) could enjoy such a popularity only because of their dissolute subject.

There was hardly any genre or well-known classical or contemporary work that lacks its erotic counter-part. A famous Dannoura battle was turned into a bed-scene by Hanawa Hokiichi, a famous scholar and compiler of monumentous "Gunsho ruiju" collection, in his erotic novel "Hatsuhana". The plot of the distinguished Kabuki play "Kanadehon Chushingura" was exploited in the "Ehon shushingura". The voluminous didactic novel by Takizawa Bakin was modified into the "Koi no yatsufuji" by Hanagasa Bunkyo. The famous humorous novel "Tokaidochu hizakurige" by Jippensha Ikku was turned into an erotic story called "Keichu hizasurige". In most cases such writings bear a distinct ironical and satirical

emphasize and are intentional parodies of specific works or whole genres. In studies of cultural history of the Edo period those works hardly may be ignored for puritanical reasons. The Tokugawa popular culture was in many aspects intentionally humorous, grotesque, allowed to give way out for the accumulating annoyance, dissatisfaction, boredom.

It is evident that in spite of sporadic restrictions repressions against "illicit works", the government did not try to extinguish them at all, even though in a number of the Edo works members of the Imperial house, Shoguns, influential daimyo or respectable courtiers could become subject to the most ridiculous and voluptuous sexual escapades. The government accepted the existence of such literature as a possible valve that allowed to give out the dissatisfaction steam accumulated among the intellectuals, samurais, and commoners who were the main producers and consumers of the entertaining works. In fact, the whole Edo fiction was nothing but *taishu bungaku*, and its only function was to meet the tastes and needs of the citizens.

The popular culture during the Edo period was preeminently created by "liminal persons" (following the term of V. Turner). The ideals nourished and promoted by members of the "liminal *communitas*", though in a modified manner, in a certain way mirrored the existing social structure. Not by chance the eccentric behaviour, burlesque, sardonic humor, obscenity are felt to be a pivot of the Edo popular culture. A large number of literary works is focused on life and manners of the "pleasure quarters", treated as an imaginary, temporary release from the strict social order. The marginality of the "open" structural *communitas* where the members had actually lower and suppressed position, was intentionally opposed by such particularist groups, like courtiers, high-rank samurais and upper priests.

The liminality of those social groups that brought to life and consumed the entertaining literary works, including pornography, predetermined the function of humorous and burlesque works. As V. Turner states: "Cognitively, nothing underlies regularity so well as absurdity or paradox. Emotionally, nothing provides a great satisfaction as much as extravagant or temporary permitted illicit behaviour. The reversal status ritual accommodates both aspects. Raising the lower and lowering the upper, this ritual emphasizes once again the hierarchy principle. Forcing the lower to parody the conduct of the upper and restricting their feelings of pride, they stress the importance of culturally predictable conduct of different groups of the society".

This device proved to be quite efficient until 1790, when the authorities proclaimed a number of decrees to suppress or at least to restrict the *nanpa-mono*. A number of authors or publishers suffered from home-arrests, penalties, etc., the underground works were consistently confiscated, but in spite of any repressions they went on to flourish. Moreover, the last decades of the Tokugawa shogunate were the time of abrupt increase of the erotic works, especially of that type when the text and illustration combined on the same page constituted an unseparable entity.