

Introduction: *Onna dairaku takara-beki* (Great Pleasures for Women and Their Treasure Boxes)

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Shunga Parodies

Over 120 pages (63 *chō*), *Great Pleasures for Women and Their Treasure Boxes*, a relatively long, single volume, believed to be by Tsukioka Settei (1726–86), is an important source for understanding both the practice and the perception of sexuality in the Edo period. It was the first of a series of erotic parodies produced in Osaka and Kyoto of educational books in the second half of the 18th century. Two other erotic parodies by Settei, *Bidō nichiyō jobōki* 艶道日夜女宝記 (A Treasure Book for Women on the Way of Love—Day and Night, c. 1764, Nichibunken sōsho series, no. 44) and *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* 女令川おへし文 (Love Letters and Erect Precepts for Women, c. 1768, Nichibunken sōsho series, no. 40), are both reprinted and translated in the same Nichibunken series as *Great Pleasures for Women*. All three follow the pattern of parodying a popular educational book and transforming the original into a humorous treatise on sexual life. These are available online.¹

Great Pleasures for Women masterfully parodies in detail the influential women's moral and educational conduct book, *Onna daigaku takara-bako* (A Treasure Chest of Great Learning for Women), first published in 1716. It toys with the many images and substantial text of the original to produce a lively and racy alternative textbook for women's education, and covers a wide range of topics about sexuality more broadly. The sharpness and cleverness of the parody is most evident when compared with the original, both its text and images. Wordplay and wit effectively eroticize the text, including the classical poems. The parody transforms the many scenes in the original of women at work with no men about into sensual love-making trysts. The tremendous effort and attention to detail expended in creating this parody of both images and text is well beyond that needed simply to produce a titillating pornographic book. Its aim was undoubtedly to counter and offer an entertaining alternative to the stiff, Confucian-inspired serious conduct book *Great Learning for Women*, which denied women pleasure in sexual life.

Edo-period Sources and Women's Sexuality

Great Pleasures for Women spawned a new genre of *shunga* parodies of didactic texts, particularly in Kyoto and Osaka, which continued until at least the end of the 18th century. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki* (1776), another *shunga* parody, includes the image of the cover of *Great Pleasures for Women* as the key representative text for sex education,² giving us a clear sense of how importantly *Great Pleasures for Women* was viewed within *shunga* discourse itself. I have previously argued that *Great Pleasures for Women* and others by Settei produced a sustained alternative discourse to the standard moral textbooks for wom-

1 <https://nichibun.repo.nii.ac.jp/> (Nichibunken Japanese Studies series, nos. 40 and 44). The 1998 publication, *Onna dairaku takara-beki*, *Onna daigaku takara-bako* (Taihei Sho'oku), contains an almost complete transcription of the texts, and includes reproductions of both the original *A Treasure Chest of Great Learning for Women* and the parody *Great Pleasures for Women*.

2 See C. Andrew Gerstle, "Analysing the Outrageous: Takehara Shunchōsai's *Shunga* Book *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki* (Pillow Book for the Young, 1776)," *Japan Review*, no. 26 (2013), special issue: *Shunga: Sex and Humour in Japanese Art and Literature*, p. 177.

en.³ Further, Settei's influence extended to Edo artists in the late 18th century. Until relatively recently the taboo over *shunga* in academic and museum worlds, however, has meant that social and cultural historians have been unaware of or have ignored these sources when researching Edo-period society, considering them irrelevant for our understanding of Edo-period society. These many *shunga* parodies and *shunga* in general are important historical sources that offer us a different discourse on sexuality in the Edo period, especially for women.

Great Pleasures for Women is a large book on various aspects of a woman's sexual life, but it also should be considered an 'encyclopaedia of sex and sexuality' more broadly, as it includes information on sex toys, male-male sex and the costs of hiring women and men in pleasure quarters around the country, as well as a short story set in a pleasure quarter and a section of model love letters. The book has several elements, the first two focused on women: one is a treatise for women on sex and sexual desire within conjugal relations, and a second is illustrations and dialogue showing women having sexual encounters while working in more than 30 different kinds of jobs. Both the original and its parody presume that a woman will get married and move into her husband's house. In contrast to the original text, however, which stresses obedience to the in-laws, the parody stresses that a woman should make herself attractive and seek sexual intimacy and pleasure with her husband as her most important principle.

Aspects of Sexuality for Men and Women

After the initial major section that focuses on women's sexuality, the book continues in three distinct parts arranged in horizontal parallel columns. The top column has 'Male and Female Physiognomy'; the middle, 'On Preparing a Calamite (*Wakashu*)'; and the bottom, 'Thirty-Two Aspects of a Beautiful Woman.' A version of this 'Aspects of a Beautiful Woman' section is also included in *Bidō nichiyō jobōki*. 'Thirty-Two Aspects' is a detailed treatise on an ideal female body. The most often used adjective for different parts of the body is 'curved' or 'fleshy' (*maru-maru*, *mutchiri*, *maruki*, *maruku*). The text offers us insights both into an 18th-century view of corporeal beauty and into a model for the beautiful woman paintings (*bijinga*) produced in Kyoto and Osaka.

These parallel sections are followed by another set of illustrations of types of women clothed and naked on the lower column, and above is a section on divining success in relationships by the direction of three fans after tossing them. The upper column then continues with witty couplets about the foibles of sexual life. The final lower column section has a series of model love letters. The upper horizontal column has details about the costs of hiring sex workers across Japan from Edo to Kyushu. This is, then, followed by a *sharebon* short story set in the Osaka pleasure quarter, which offers the reader, man or woman, a glimpse inside life in a brothel. Interspersed are small sections on sex toys, techniques for foreplay, and analysis of different kinds of vulva.

Nanshoku Male-Male Sexuality

The section on male-male sex (*nanshoku*), while seeming at first out of place in a book for women, is actually about how to prepare a youth (*wakashu*) for male prostitution. *Nanshoku* was the custom of fundamentally one-way sexual relations between an older man (*nenja*) and a youth (*wakashu*). The process of preparing a novice *wakashu* for prostitution is related matter-of-factly with an explanation of methods to aid the youth so as not to be injured. I have written an essay on the representation of *nanshoku* in *shunga*

3 C. Andrew Gerstle, *Edo onna no shungabon: Tsuya to warai no fifu shinan* 江戸女の春画本: 艶と笑いの夫婦指南. Heibonsha, 2011.

in which I argue that in a wide range of *shunga* works across the 18th century, while presenting male-male sexual relations positively as common and uncontroversial, the discourse is also critical of prostitution and the abuse of the custom in which adult males force sex upon youths.⁴ The various *shunga* parody books of this era produced in Kyoto and Osaka tend to focus on conjugal or consensual relations both heterosexual and homosexual, while being critical of prostitution. *Great Pleasures for Women* does include an extensive list of pleasure quarters around the country but only offers information on the price of sex as a commodity. An underlying theme in Settei's *shunga* parodies is that sexual pleasure within a warm conjugal relationship is an ideal and that prostitution is simply for sexual release without affection.

Dating and Artist/Author

After the censorship laws instituted in 1722 banning erotic books (*kōshoku-bon*), most *shunpon* do not include a colophon with author/artist or publication dates. *Great Pleasures for Women* was thought previously to have been published in the early 1750s, following a new edition of *Great Learning for Women* in 1751. However two parts of the book suggest a somewhat later date.

Dating *Great Pleasures for Women*:

1. The short story 'Images of the Quarter' section is almost entirely the same text as in the *sharebon*, *Kagetsuyōjō* 月花余情. This story was originally scheduled to be published privately in 1750, but its printing was stopped by a publisher and was only issued several years later. Nakano Mitsutoshi in *Sharebon taisei* argues for a date of 1757 for its publication.⁵

2. The section 'Male and Female Physiognomy' in *Great Pleasures for Women* is very similar to a section 'Iro-goto ninsō: Nana-iro no kangae' 艶史人相 七品考 which is in the *sharebon*, *Irogoto ninsō: Hiji matsuge* 艶史人相秘事真告. Nakano Mitsutoshi posits that its publication date is also around 1757. The text in *Irogoto ninsō* is similar (but without poems), however, the illustrations are different, and drawn with more care and larger (this book is 16 x 10cm) than in *Great Pleasures for Women*.⁶

This would suggest that the date of *Great Pleasures for Women and their Treasure Boxes* is around this same time of 1756–57.

It is generally accepted that the illustrations in *Great Pleasures for Women* are by Tsukioka Settei. For an introduction in both English and Japanese to Settei's *shunga* books, see C. A. Gerstle and M. Hayakawa, ed., *Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi* (Nichibunken Japanese Studies Series, no. 40). We do not know if Settei wrote the text or not, but we know that he was a scholarly artist who wrote the texts in some of his other illustrated books and is known to have researched about the history of art and *shunga* in Japan and China.⁷ Text and image are precisely integrated in the *shunga* books considered to be by Settei, which suggests that he was also the author, or at least worked regularly and very closely with an author.

4 "Shunga ni okeru nanshoku no byōsha" 春画における男色の描写 (The representation of male-male sex in shunga), in *Mō hitotsu no Nihon bungaku shi* もう一つの日本文学史 (Alternative history of Japanese literature), edited by Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan 国文学研究資料館, Bensei Shuppan, 2016, pp. 149–170.

5 *Sharebon taisei* 洒落本大成, vol. 3, Chūō Kōronsha, 1979, pp. 371–72.

6 *Sharebon taisei*, vol. 2, Chūō Kōronsha, 1978, p. 415.

7 See Yamamoto Yukari 山本ゆかり, *Kamigata fūzokuga no kenkyū: Nishikawa Sukenobu to Tsukioka Settei o chūshin ni* 上方風俗画の研究: 西川祐信と月岡雪鼎を中心に, Geika Shoin 藝華書院, 2010; Timothy Clark, C. Andrew Gerstle, Aki Ishigami and Akiko Yano, *Shunga: Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art*, British Museum Press, 2013. (Japanese translation published by Shōgakukan in 2015).

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