

Sex, Art, and Edo Culture An Introduction

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Contained herein are the papers presented during the conference, "Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750- 1850," held at Indiana University on August 17-20, 1995. This introduction is a new version of the opening remarks I made at the conference, expanded to include explanations of the themes presented and assumptions made in the papers. In order to make the proceedings accessible to a wide range of scholars, a more detailed discussion of the formation of the city of Edo, now Tokyo, and the particular construction of sexuality in urban arts has been added. In addition, special terms employed in Edo studies, which appear frequently in the papers, receive brief descriptions in this introduction.

Please note that Japanese and other Asian names are listed in the native order, family name **first**, throughout this volume. The only exceptions are the names of people who are active chiefly in English. For example, Ueno Chizuko, whose academic affiliation is in Japan and whose scholarly production is mostly in Japanese, is listed with her family name first, while Eiji **Sekine**, who teaches in the U.S. and writes chiefly in English, is listed with his given name first. In order to avoid confusion, the contributors' family names are **shown** in capital letters in the table of contents.

The Invented City

By the end of the 18th century, Edo counted among the world's largest cities. In contrast with Paris and London, which took centuries to grow into major centers of culture, Edo was **first** conceived of as a metropolis, and then built to conform to this image of a city. In 1603, when Tokugawa Ieyasu (shogun 1603-05) unified the country to begin his clan's **265-year** rule over Japan, Edo, located in the middle of the "barbaric Eastern regions," was chosen as the political capitol. The conception of Edo as a city, therefore, preceded its mapping and construction. As the seat of the "bakufu," or the shogun's government, Edo immediately acquired political significance, and as such it became the most important place for cultural production, consumption and trade. For the **first** time in Japan's history, the entire nation was **firmly** controlled by a central authority. The daimyo of all regions were now dictated by the bakafu's "Samurai Codes of Behavior" as well as by the rule of "sankin kōtai," or "alternate-year attendance," promulgated in 1635, requiring every daimyo to alternate his residence between his own "**han**," or domain, and Edo. As a consequence, every daimyo maintained two chief domiciles: one at home managed by his chief **retainer** "**karō**," or "councilor," who doubled as administrator of the entire domain, and one in Edo managed by his "**rusuiyaku**," or "Edo house manager," who also acted as a sort of diplomat and intelligence agent

in relation to the central bakufu and other domains. The daimyo's family was required to remain in the Edo mansion, obviously held hostage by the shogunate. The daimyo usually established another mansion within Edo for strategic and other purposes. Because of shogunal rules and competition among the daimyo themselves, their residences and the processions back and forth between their domains and Edo were quite extravagant and drained them financially. On the part of the bakufu, the whole daimyo phenomenon acted as an expertly crafted advertisement of its authority. The political panache naturally added to the splendor of Edo. The daimyo mansions not only opened up a great range of jobs for Edoites but also opportunities for training, particularly in performing arts and social manners, which elevated the quality of the urban dwellers' cultural lives. The wealth and style of each domain was embodied by the "Edo house manager," appointed as such not only for his managerial skills but also for his wit and taste. It was men in the manager's position who competed with the richest financiers and merchants as patrons of theater and **Yoshiwara** to set trends in fashion to be followed by the upper crust of Edo's city culture. In addition to the daimyo, a Korean embassy was sent to Japan **periodically** to make a procession to Edo from southern Nagasaki, the only port open at least to select foreigners (see Choi). Dutch merchants in Nagasaki were also required to travel to the **city** to pay their respects to the shogun from time to time. These processions, picturesque and performance-oriented, would have given the impression that the whole world had been paying homage to the city of Edo.

Under the shogun, an elaborate bureaucratic system was established, **confining** political power to the city. Thus the control of Edo and its citizens was of primary importance for the shogunate. North and South City Magistrates and other offices were created; city guards, firemen, and other types of samurai forces were installed. Within Edo, city ordinances were frequently announced and the shogun's edicts were disseminated on a national level with the help of the daimyo. In short, the government of Edo was designed to control a large city before the size of the population warranted such an elaborate system. In keeping with the magnificence of the invented city, urban planning took place on a grand scale. Canals, bridges, and streets were constructed, habitable lands were cultivated and the land-filling of various sections of the bay and marshes opened up more areas for development. The availability of city water was the pride of Edoites as it was not available anywhere else in Japan. Just as titles in the Tokugawa bureaucracy were rapidly invented and granted, so were names quickly assigned to districts, **streets**, and bridges. In Edo, built and populated during a relatively short period of time, the shogun government realized its dream of a magnificent capitol.

Duality of Tokugawa Discourse

Contrary to **official** accounts of Japanese history, claims that the authority over the country was centralized in any one group are suspect. In reality, power in Japan was split

between the symbolic authority of the imperial court and the political power of the shogunate. According to the history books, imperial rule has remained **uninterrupted** since ancient times, but, in reality, emperors were in power only from the 8th to the 11th centuries. However, the apparent lack of political power on the part of the emperor did not mean the shogun had assumed a position of ultimate authority. The presence of the imperial government in Kyoto constituted a whole system of signs that could not be ignored, even by the shogunate, in the ensuing centuries. Minamoto no Yoritomo (shogun 1192-1201), the first samurai who controlled the large part of Japan at the time was granted from the title of "**Sei Dai-Shogun**," or "Grand General for Subduing Barbarians" by the emperor. In spite of the fact that their power was based solely on military strength, various samurai rulers after Yoritomo had to be appointed by the emperor with similar titles. Thus, in receiving the title of "**Sei Dai-Shogun**," Ieyasu's rule was officially authorized by the symbolic ruler of Japan. From the outset, however, Ieyasu found the means to control the emperor and the noble court by establishing "Codes of Behavior for the Nobility and Manners at the Imperial Court" and by creating as elaborate and solid a system for shogunal bureaucracy as the imperial system of ranks and titles which had claimed its authority for centuries. When the entire country was **finally** united under Ieyasu, the shogunate made use of both the imperial discourse of "gods' country," where power came only from the hereditary emperor, and the Confucian discourse of the ideal ruler, justifying the shogun's rule as source of peace and prosperity in the land. Ieyasu, after his death, was deified as "Gongen," so that the succession of shogunal rule assumed a divine origin much like the imperial line. In short, there were two opposing sides to the political discourse: on the "omote," or the "obverse," the ultimate power was in the hands of the emperor and his court, but its "**ura**," or the "back side," was the site of actual power, that is, shogunal rule.

The contradictions made manifest in the two sides of power also surfaced in the structure of the shogunal system itself. As the bureaucracy became increasingly stable, high officials in the government came to acquire actual power while the shoguns began to assume positions of symbolic authority. Tanuma **Okitsugu** (in prestigious roles from 1751 and Grand Councilor, 1772-86), known for his promotion of industrial and commercial ventures as well as his bribe-mongering, came to be the de facto ruler in the bakufu's administration. In opposition to the Confucian ideology and feudalistic physiocracy of the bakufu's official policies, Tanuma spear-headed Japan's move to modern economy. **Shogun** with Ieyasu's intelligence and leadership were few so that officials in high posts tended to create, in the name of the shogun, new laws and proclaim "reforms" for the country during the rest of the Edo period. In short, by acting as a front for the real power, shogunal rule, like the emperor's reign, came to represent the obverse side of authority.

Within the shogun's castle, and on a smaller scale, in daimyo's mansions, rooms were named and functions as-

signed which corresponded to the system of bureaucracy. Daily life was conducted according to the newly invented rules of the shogunate, as a counterpart to courtly life. After several centuries of wars, large and small, the centralized and systematic control of the bakufu was so complete that the entire Edo period saw no war. Samurai, contrary to their name, were no longer warriors but fief-owners and bureaucrats, who constituted the top rung of the social hierarchy. Because men stayed home, there was a new-found appreciation or, one could **argue**, a "discovery" of family and quotidian life, which inspired the establishment of elaborate management systems and decor in samurai mansions. As a result, women became far more important than ever before. Although women were excluded from the **official** bureaucracy, the shogun's and daimyo's harem acquired power derived from the importance placed on daily life of the ruler and sanctioned by the harem's own system of hierarchy. Recent studies show that a number of women acquired much power and drew income even equal to daimyo and bakufu officials in their capacities as chief waiting ladies and nurses for the **shogun's** and daimyo's families. Female members of the Tokugawa clan, whether as Buddhist nuns in control of important temples or as wives of members of the imperial and shogunal families, influenced the decisionmaking of the bakufu. Thus the backside of the male-dominated system of government was the less systematized world of women.

Like women within samurai society, the **entire** population of commoners constituted the other, or reverse, side of the political scheme. The high bourgeois class, consisting of financiers and merchants, who were given no power of representation in the bureaucracy, posed a threat to the Tokugawa ideology. According to the prescribed scheme of class hierarchy, the so-called "**shi-nō-kō-shō**" (**samurai-farmers-artisans-merchants**), the high bourgeoisie could be found on its bottom rung. In fact, because the nation's economy was supported chiefly by commercial and secondarily by agricultural endeavor, the actual **hierarchical** order, in terms of true productivity, would be "**merchants-farmers-artisans-samurai**." As described above, the behavior of the daimyo and the rest of the samurai class, considered to be potential rivals and enemies of the Tokugawas, was fairly successfully regulated by the system, but it was more difficult to control the merchants, who were positioned outside of the system. Despite the unreasonable confiscation of assets on the grounds of "un-becoming luxury" and occasional **arbitrary** annulments of **all** debts, the financial power of the bourgeoisie remained intact. Based on rice, the strength or weakness of the samurai economy depended on variables such as the weather which were almost impossible to control. In contrast, the currency-based merchant economy was fundamentally more stable, which put the samurai at a financial disadvantage.

Although the shogunate drew from one school of Confucianism to establish an ideological base and code of behavior for samurai, Confucianism was not the **only** influence on political and intellectual discourses of the time. "Jugaku," or Confucian studies, met with intense **competi-**

tion from the camp of “wagaku,” or “**nativist**” Japan studies. Focused on philological and classical studies, *jugaku* and *wagaku* developed theories not only of language and culture but also of politics on the basis of classical canons. While the former’s image of the ideal state corresponded to the bakufu’s ideology, the latter sought legitimacy in the imperialist past of Japan. These two schools of intellectual thought, along with their separate languages (classical Chinese and Japanese), contributed to the variety and complexity of stylistic, formal and thematic features of Edo arts. **Pornography** was often written in either language as neo-classical parodies. In addition, the newly formed “*rangaku*,” or Dutch studies, introduced western ideas, mainly, in natural sciences and medicine. Its scientific and practical approach to the body conflicted with the more philosophically-inclined *jugaku* medicine, which had a long history of practice in Japan, as well as the dominant Confucian discourse of family (see Burns). The introduction of anatomy as a discipline, including the practice of dissection, inspired a conception of the body hitherto absent from ideas based on Confucianism. The knowledge of, and fascination in, the shape of the body and bodily parts, encouraged the graphic depictions in *shunga* and other erotic arts in Edo.

Religion in Japan during the Edo period was equally complex. Buddhism and Shintoism co-existed both as national religions and as ways of faith among the people. In addition, Edo citizens embraced all sorts of folk religions and superstitions. Here, again, no god was favored exclusively. Moreover, religion did not confine itself to spiritual matters and became, in fact, a lucrative institution. Like the dominant and **official** religions, folk religions raked in profits from festivals, markets, shows, and the sale of talismans, fortunes, and other items. It was these popular but minor faiths that influenced the formation of sexuality in the urban city (see Miyata).

Edocentrism

It took Edo one and a half centuries after its designation as the government’s seat to overtake Kamigata and establish itself as the nation’s cultural center. Until the **mid-18th** century, “*kudarimono*,” or “imported from Kamigata,” was the mark of quality. However, even after Edo assumed its position as a cultural power, that culture was itself divided between the high and the low. High culture continued to flourish in genres such as Confucian thought, poetic compositions in Chinese and classical Japanese, landscape and other paintings in Chinese and traditional Japanese styles on screens and scrolls, the tea ceremony, and the **nō** theater, but a sort of rebellious counter-culture emerged more conspicuously in Edo’s “lower” culture. Artists from the educated samurai and merchant classes developed many new forms and genres of more popular appeal during the mid-eighteenth century. Indeed, the label, “**Edo-mae**,” or “made in Edo,” became a mark of quality.

To a much greater degree than that of its counterparts in Paris and London, Edo culture was distinctly self-centered

and self-congratulatory: it was created by Edoites for the Edoites to enjoy, it focused on life in Edo, and it was expressed through Edo dialect and Edoesque styles, all in celebration of the glories of Edo. Thus the revolution in culture which occurred in Edo was not initiated by masters of traditional high genres of the arts and learning. Rather it was the new breed of Edoite artists and writers who invented forms and styles, which appealed to a wider audience. The spread of dilettantism was connected to the fascination with the newly created “Edo dialect,” “famous places of Edo,” “Edo cuisine,” and assorted Edoesque pleasures. There was the sense that Edo, in contrast to Kamigata, encouraged the amateur’s interest in the arts. The rhetoric of advertising here is very strong: the so-called “Edo dialect” was still an eclectic assortment of fashionable phrases and speech styles culled from various classes and professions. So-called “famous places” in Edo could not approach the natural beauty or symbolic significance of their traditional counterparts established in the classics. Edo arts even appropriated the symbol of Japan, Mt. Fuji, visible on a clear day only in the distance, in order that Edo’s landscape would gain a symbolic and looming presence.

Edocentrism was promoted during the **18th** century by intellectuals so that the texts, whether verbal or pictorial, were inclined toward in-group jokes and complex stylistic manipulations. With the spread of literacy, albeit on a basic level, the development of printing and publishing, and the spread of readership through increased number of book-sellers and lending libraries, Edo culture spread to the masses not only in Edo but in other regions in Japan. Much sophistication and technical excellence came to substantiate the claims of such labels as “Edo style” and “made in Edo.” In this sense, the history of Edo culture tells a story of the victory of a counter-discourse, that is, low over high culture, Edo over Kamigata. And yet, something prevents us from **labelling** Edocentrism as perfectly subversive. The initial formation of “**Edo**” was intentionally rebellious: the writings of the **18th** century leaders subverted the assumptions of many established systems. This attitude seems to have continued, albeit from inertia and convention, in Edo products of the **19th** century, which spoke to a more popular readership. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that Edocentrism followed the bakufu’s policy of centralization and its efforts in developing the city. Thus privileging of Edo over Kamigata culture was tantamount to supporting the **shogunal** over the imperial reign.

Thus, **Edocentrism** in the arts functions in an ambivalent manner. The obverse side of Edo-the shogun’s rule, samurai life and politics-is ignored in the arts not merely because of the law prohibiting any depiction of contemporary political reality but also because of the citizens’ fetishistic interest in the reverse side as represented by the notorious places, i.e., the sites of sex and performance. It is true that the samurai are mocked along with Kamigataites and country bumpkins, yet the pride of Edoites in their city surfaces in certain emblems which give brief nods of respect to the system. For instance, laudatory references are made to

the golden dolphin which decorated the roofs of the shogun's castle and to the drinking of city water, which only Edo citizens could enjoy. No matter how contrived the use of a historical samurai hero as *deus ex machina* in kabuki or the use of a long-lost member of a samurai class as a rebel or a beautiful lover may seem, their presence in Edo arts supports a belief in the superiority of the ruling class.

Edocentrism was personified by the idealized figure of "Edokko," or the "true Edoite." The original version of Edokko, which was promoted in 18th-century writings, featured the image of an affluent financier and merchant, whose taste in fashion and entertainment impressed Edo's citizens. The term "tsii," referring to both a connoisseur and **connoisseurship**, frequently appeared in the writings of this period as indication of a privileged background, a broad knowledge of theater and brothel districts, and a strong sense of fashion. The image of Edokko at this stage was not very different from the image of an extraordinarily wealthy merchant in Kamigata during the 17th century. The Edokko, however, was more strongly connected to the activities which took place in entertainment districts of the city. He also was better known for his outrageous attire and preference for luxurious settings. The standards of the Edokko remained superficial: taste and style were all that mattered. The formation of Edokko as representatives of the high life not merely undercut the prescribed class hierarchy and erased the importance of the samurai-filled central parts of the city, but also subverted the **bakufu's** and samurai's standards of Confucian morality. As cultural production and appreciation spread to the masses in the city at the turn of the century, the image of the Edokko also changed. The true Edoite was transformed into what seems to be a combination of a simple-minded day laborer and a tough talking, gambling gangster. He became so care-free about money matters that he was often depicted as poverty-stricken. His passion for fighting was intensified to the point that he **would strike out with only the** slighted provocation. Wearing a **fireman's** uniform or clad in a carpenter's garment which exposed much of his body, including his tattooed arm, this fast-talking creature showered abuse at anyone he encountered. The emergence of this "baser" Edokko coincided with the popularization of **Edocentrism** in the 19th century, when Edoites acquired a taste for blatant displays of sex and violence. It appears that commoners felt that they could vent their frustration over the repressive system through the abusive language of Edokko heroes.

The Notorious Places

By the early 18th century, signs of strain in the government's fiscal policies began to show. While the shogun's treasury became depleted due to famines and mismanagement of finances, the **bourgeois** classes thrived. The government's policies for frugality, which prevented wealthy citizens from enjoying luxuries at home and making real estate investments, encouraged extravagant spending of money and energy in ephemeral pleasures at the theater and brothel

districts. It is these officially marginalized and enclosed sections of Edo that became sites for the imagination and production of the most lively and sumptuous part of the city's culture. Because it was both illegal and impossible to describe the magnificence of the shogun's castle and daimyo's mansions, **Edocentric** advertisement in art and literature dwelt upon the luxury of the pleasure quarters and the theater district. Called "akusho," or "notorious places," in opposition to "meisho," or "famous places," the pleasure quarters and the theater district were begrudgingly tolerated by the censorious city government. The licensed districts, relegated to the outskirts of the city, were subject to the will of the bureaucracy and could be moved at any time.

Yoshiwara, like Edo itself, was an invention; it did not consist merely of clusters of small-scale brothels that had emerged with the designation of Edo as the shogun's capital. Yoshiwara was authorized in 1617 in response to the petition by a group of brothel owners, who envisioned a government-sanctioned pleasure quarters constructed on a large scale. In return for granting control to the government over an area that would attract criminals and other unsavory characters, the brothel owners would operate their establishments without the interference of the police. In 1656, the district in **Fukiyachō** was found to be too close to the center and was moved to Asakusa in the outskirts of Edo, where it remained until the Meiji period. Complete with brothels, teahouses, caterers, and other shops, it is this "New Yoshiwara" that formed the chief stage for Edoesque arts and entertainment (see Campbell and Markus). The negative connotation of the terms like "yūjo" (women for play) and "keisei" (poison for the state) applied to prostitutes acquired respectability because of Yoshiwara's claim to high style. By ranking the prostitutes from "oiran" (top courtesans) and "shinzō" (junior courtesans) down to "kamuro" (child attendants), by holding annual events, and establishing an elaborate code of behavior and set of rituals, Yoshiwara strove to legitimate itself. A special language was even invented in order to unify communication and at the same time to wipe out the country accents of the prostitutes who had come from rural regions. In contrast with unlicensed and less formal quarters at Shinagawa, Fukagawa, and other districts, Yoshiwara's system appeared to be unshakable. Interest in Yoshiwara was stimulated not only by the inclusion of admiring references in literature and arts but also by the publication of special guidebooks on the district and reviews of prostitutes. The aesthetic merits of Edo's sexual center were also increased by beauty of the prostitutes, the scale and intricacy of the parties and rituals as well as the ideal of **tsū connoisseurship**. At the same time that Yoshiwara worked to achieve legitimacy, it cultivated a certain sense of decadence and shadiness. Distanced from the city's center, encircled by a moat, its entrance guarded by the gate keeper, the isolation of Yoshiwara from respectable citizens was emphasized. Though it was perfectly legal for citizens to enter the quarters, fashion dictated the donning of a hood and the use of pseudonyms in the quarter.

In an attempt to maintain a balance between legitimacy and shadiness, Yoshiwara played on the naming of prostitutes as "brides of the night." Ceremonies were staged to promote the illusion of a marital relationship between an *oh-an* and her client. After the initial "wedding" ceremony on the first night, love poems were exchanged between the *oiran* and her client in the manner of ancient courtly courtship. Even monogamy was simulated under Yoshiwara's rule as the client was expected to remain faithful to one *oiran*. If he associated with another woman, he was severely punished by the staff of the **betrayed** prostitute. The *oiran* also insisted upon using the rhetoric of "you are the only one" and her client would, of course, play along. The appearance of a conjugal tie was further enhanced by requirements that the client visit his lady at all annual Yoshiwara events and that he also help her furnishings and her attendants with gifts. In the "marital relationship," a "bride of the night" assumed the roles of entertainer and companion as well as lover. Her ability to perform was showcased during Yoshiwara's parties, for which the client paid dearly. During these elaborate affairs, "geisha" provided music and dance and a "**hōkan**," a freelance entertainer trained in many types of music, dance and story-telling styles who accompanied affluent men to the quarter, added to the festive mood of the evening. The *oiran* was trained in higher arts such as poetry and calligraphy so that she could join her **literati** clients in group compositions. Letter writing was another important skill, one that she used to entice her client to return to Yoshiwara and increase his generosity.

Besides Yoshiwara, there were numerous other marketplaces for sex in and around Edo. None of these districts were licensed and the government's attitude toward them was lax. Nonetheless, often less expensive and more informal than Yoshiwara, these districts not only survived but also thrived. Shinagawa and **Fukagawa** brothels and teahouses, in particular, flourished, each having created its own character and specialties. In the absence of extravagant costume and ceremonious manner, greater demands were put on prostitutes' skills in music and dance as well as in seductive conversation in these quarters than in Yoshiwara. In addition, festivals at the numerous temples and shrines nearby (for some reason, religious sanctuaries and sexual ones were placed in close proximity to Edo) provided brothel employees occasions for performance. Like Yoshiwara, these districts provided backdrops for all types of the arts and their prostitutes supplied models for kabuki, **ukiyo**, and narrative works.

Along with Yoshiwara, kabuki theater established itself very early as a favorite of Edoites. The term "kabuki" came from the fashion in the late 16th and early 17th century of dressing and acting in an outrageous manner often reflecting the behavior of low-rank employees of samurai mansions. **Okuni**, (active in the beginning of the 17th century), a dancer who claimed to be from the Izumo shrine, invented, "kabuki dance," featuring odd but nevertheless dashing costumes. Eroticism and transvestism were embedded in this legendary origin of kabuki theater. One of **Okuni's** first hits

involved her troupe's simulation of bawdy brothel and bathhouse scenes, in which she herself dressed as a man. The growth of this sort of all-women kabuki was naturally tied to prostitution and led to the ban of women's kabuki in 1629. Pretty young boys took over the female roles, but the result was the same: for the sake of social morals, young men's kabuki was outlawed in 1652. It was after the second ban that Edo **Kabuki** theater truly flourished. Fully grown men were required to play female roles convincingly, and substantial entertainment was sought in plot and in skills such as dance and acting. Theater could no longer rely on the sexual appeal of the actors alone.

As with Yoshiwara, the government took measures to control the theater district by licensing. Small and casually built huts for theatrical productions emerged early in various parts of downtown usually on river beds and temple grounds. As they were **fire** hazards and hotbeds for crimes, city ordinances forced them to move frequently, until 1632, when theaters were concentrated into one district of **Negimachi**. At this point, four "grand theaters" were designated, resulting for the **first** time in large and permanent theaters for Edoites. One of the four was closed in 1714 due to a sex scandal involving the most powerful supervisor of the harem of the **shogun's** wife and one of the most popular kabuki actors. The fact that the supervisor dared to break the castle's rule against theater-going and even the curfew for the women of the castle by visiting the theater accompanied by hundreds of her women reveals much about the authority attached to her position. Her resulting exile is indicative of the ongoing battle between male bureaucrats and powerful women within the castle. The government's frantic attempts to control the sexual life of its citizens may be evident both in its repeated order to move theaters and in its designation of licensed "grand theaters." The three remaining grand theaters in the Negimuchi district were moved once again in 1842 to settle in **Saruwaka-chō** near Yoshiwara for the rest of the Edo period. It should also be noted that theaters, specially licensed by the government, developed elaborate styles as well as categories of plays and ranks of actors.

The ties between prostitution and the theater are strong. The most obvious lies in the fact that the theaters were either near brothels or acted as places for prostitution itself. Licensed teahouses, connected to the grand theaters, functioned not only as ticket offices and high-class restaurants but also as convenient spots for rendezvous between high-ranked and wealthy clients and actors. Less elegant teahouses which surrounded **smaller** and unlicensed theaters were more obvious in their offering of space for male prostitutes, whose clients were most often men. A more subtle link between prostitution and theater involves performance. In Yoshiwara and other pleasure quarters where female prostitutes provided their services, performance was not only visible in impromptu play-acting, pieces of music and dance but also in the rituals and festivities held in the establishments. In short, both types of "notorious places" commodified sex by transforming it

into performance and it is sex and performance which most steadfastly resist systematization, hence control. Given the pleasures associated with these two aspects of human behavior, it should be no surprise that popular culture includes so many reference to the "notorious places."

The "notorious places" constituted the other side of the strictly Confucian world of samurai politics, which separated men from women and samurai from commoners. In the pleasure quarters and the theater, isolated from the rest of the community, men and women could meet and samurai and commoners could mingle with one another on equal terms. Moreover, the fact that members of the samurai class and highly ranked employees (such as ranked **officials** among the waiting ladies of the shogun's castle and samurai mansions) were officially prohibited against entering the "notorious places" contributed to the belief that they were exciting sites of carnal and aesthetic pleasure, not regulated by **social** codes and therefore meant for satisfying the pleasure of the common classes. Pleasure quarters and theaters were elegant and exciting places which functioned like a combination of the courts, ladies' salons, chocolate houses, opera theaters and brothels of Paris and London. Yoshiwara and kabuki theater contained the high and low of social life. Structured to appear as respectable systems, Edo's subculture formed the reverse side of the city and social hierarchy as mapped by the **official** samurai culture.

Gender Trouble

The significance of the "notorious places" can be traced to the fact that, on the average, at least one fourth of the city's population consisted of single men, a figure that does not include married men whose wives remained in home provinces. **Daimyo's** retainers who **maintained** residence in Edo, employees of merchants who had Edo branches of their shops, and migrant laborers from the provinces provided a large number of potential customers for the "notorious places." **Ordinances** concerning the pleasure quarters and the theater district usually referred to the need for security, but the isolation of these districts from residential areas indicates an intention to provide men with outlets for their sexual needs, thereby "protecting" "honest" women in the city.

Gender is an ambiguous concept in Edo culture. Homosexuality and heterosexuality were more a matter of fashion than psychological or biological issues. More often than not, men would go either way, depending on the situation and the mood. During the earlier Edo period, debates were rampant in sex manuals and literary works on the relative merits and demerits of homosexual and heterosexual practices. "Nanshoku," or "male love," and "nyoshoku," or "female love," were the terms used for homosexual and heterosexual inclinations, respectively. These terms indicated object choice, the subject always being man. Because women's choice was not a concern in the debates, lesbianism was not considered a category.

"Nyoshoku" was an old term used in Buddhist and Confucian teachings against sexual indulgence. Here, the word "woman" was synonymous with sin or personal degeneration. The choice of male objects provided a clever loophole for the holy and the distinguished. The ancient custom among the Buddhist clergy and the nobility of keeping young page boys for sexual services was inherited by the ruling samurai classes since the middle **ages**. Having been released from their duties as warriors, the samurai during the Edo period occupied themselves by polishing their martial arts and involving themselves in theories and manuals on "bushidō," or samurai philosophy. Spiritual ties among the **samurai** were emphasized to glorify nanshoku relationships (see Ujiie). The fashion spread to the high bourgeoisie, so that nanshoku flourished as an aesthetically and spiritually commendable practice (see **Leupp**). In Kamigata literature and art during the **first** half of the Edo period, nanshoku was often featured as the ideal form of love.

The **mid-18th** century saw the end of nanshoku as a dominant aesthetic and spiritual theory. Though the aestheticism of nanshoku could still be seen in the presence of beautiful boys on the kabuki stage and the practice of nanshoku was carried on by all classes of teahouse visitors, Edo culture became dominantly heterosexual. Some of the leading Edo artists of the time were conscious of the sexual crisis and responded to it either with an anachronistic return to nanshoku or a neutralization of the fear of women by depicting relationships between androgynous looking men and women (see Jones). However, Edo **ukiyo**e found beauty in "real" women. The term "nyoshoku," used only by anachronistic moralists, was replaced by "**iro**," which meant sexual love, and love was connected to women. Whereas the nanshoku-nyoshoku dichotomy assigned women to either the position of prostitutes or non-sexual beings, ordinary women in Edo culture became objects of an erotic gaze. Motherhood became the subject of erotic art (see Ueno) and domestic spaces became sites for sexual encounters (see **Haga**).

The figure of the Edokko added complexity to the formation of gender in urban **art**. Because masculinity was the essence of Edo's ideal, Edo women were often praised for features that had been considered masculine: honesty, loyalty, dependability, courage, and strength. Even Yoshiwara prostitutes, particularly those of high repute, were characterized as masculine. Wearing men's jackets and speaking in a masculine manner, women from the Fukagawa district became favorites of men. Late ukiyo glorified the eroticism of strong-looking women with pointed chins dressed in fashionably simple clothing while late kabuki featured **sharp-tongued** and spirited female characters, criminals and vengeful ghosts. In narrative arts, gutsy and dependable heroines were contrasted with their helpless lovers in sentimental **novels; the cruel woman seeking** revenge became a staple in crime stories. It is the merging of the feminine and the masculine in the late and popularized image of the Edokko that inspired the new image of women in the arts in the end of the Edo period. As seen below, **Edoite** ambivalence in gender took the forms of transsexualism and androgyny in the arts.

Sex and Art

Bourgeois culture was highly developed in Kamigata during the 17th century and its Edo counterpart certainly found models in Kyoto-Osaka genres and techniques. What distinguishes the Edo brand of culture, however, is its **Edocentrism** as well as its strong emphasis on sex and performance. "Ninjō," or human sentiment, which constituted the core of Kamigata's bourgeois arts, conceived erotic and other natural sentiments in opposition to Confucian notions of family duty and loyalty. Particularly in narrative and dramatic arts, **ninjō** was the essential element that moved the story forward and gave the action/plot its plausibility. In contrast, the first group of genres developed in Edo were characterized by wit, which not only ignored rules of realism but also rejected the traditional notion of **ninjō** and its attributes such as family, motherhood, emotional attachment, and any **interiority** of the human psyche. The age of wits roughly coincided with the period of the "higher" Edokko, characterized by style, polish, and emotional detachment. In an effort to create urbanity in the arts, themes of family, memory, and the country were the **first** to be discarded. The discovery of real women and the return of a strong narrative sense, the country, and the past to the later group brought with them a revival of sentiment; however, it was more inclined toward sexual attachment than Kamigataesque **ninjō**. The conflict between feeling and duty, or love and social pressure, was treated only superficially; what mattered was the quality of feeling and of the relationship.

In pictorial art, important technological and artistic innovations occurred during the mid-18th century in the genre of "**ukiyoe**," or "floating-world pictures," which had been developed earlier in Kamigata to reflect contemporary fashion. More often in wood-block prints than in painting, ukiyoe had featured prostitutes, actors, and scenes of entertainment in monochrome with a reddish color added in parts. The Edoite contribution to the genre was in "nishikie," or "brocade pictures," polychromatic pictures employing highly polished techniques of gradation, tinting, and embossing. In these works, Edo was often promoted through the display of titles such as "Edo nishikie" and artist name like "Edo illustrator so-and-so" in the comers. Ukiyoe by the early group of artists was rich in wit: pictorial jokes, parodies, allusions, and games abounded. The chief device used by the artists to convey their wit was "**mitate**," a sort of likening of one thing to another. Components of **mitate** include elements of **allusion**, parody, pastiche, metaphor, and **metonymy**, but what distinguishes it from Western rhetorical devices is its accentuation of the overlapping which occurs between incongruous items. This device helped artists to collapse the boundaries between the classical and the modern, and between the sublime and the mundane (see Hayakawa). The device was often employed in literary and dramatic genres, functioning not only as a bridge between the high and the low but also as a catalyst that collapsed boundaries between genres and media.

Edo's ukiyoe naturally lavished its attention on the notorious places of the city. What can be called portraits in early Edo ukiyoe have as their subjects **oiran**, accompanied by their attendants and popular actors **striking** theatrical poses. Scenes of entertainment depicting the theater or the brothel made up impressively large triptychs. In later ukiyoe, ordinary women came to embody the erotic and were depicted in portraits or in intimate scenes with equally attractive men. Wore blatantly sexual ukiyoe constituted a separate category called "**makurae**," or "pillow pictures," and sometimes "**waraie**," or "pictures for laughs," but the term "**shunga**," or "spring pictures" is most widely used currently (see Smith). The government's drive to frugality and its ban of erotic subjects pushed artists toward the transgressive. Works for public distribution, whether books or picture prints, had to be inspected and authorized. Because of restrictions on the types of colors and paper, privately commissioned work was most attractive to artists. In lavishing expensive material and production technique on commissioned **shunga**, one could at once bypass the laws against luxury and the erotic. This is likely to be the chief reason why works in this category display the sort of artistic quality rare in the **porno-graphic** arts outside Japan and why the majority of **best-known** ukiyoe artists spent so much energy on the production of **shunga** (see **Forrer**).

In theater, the chief genre in Kamigata was "**jōruri**" puppet plays, which achieved technical perfection during the 17th century. Themes **drawn** from history and legends were presented in an elegant and often tragic manner while modern life was depicted with psychological realism based on **ninjō**. In many ways, the younger kabuki, still in its early stages at this time, was a human version of **jōruri** plays, emphasizing "**wagoto**," or "romantic acts," of beautiful actors in male and female roles. Edo kabuki competed with Kamigata's "**wagoto**" by the invention of "**aragoto**," or "tough acts" embodied in the godly figure of a young hero whose mask-like makeup and grandiose costume inspired awe. In **kabuki**, the glorious appearance of the **aragoto** hero was all important, overshadowing the plot and other elements of a play expected by the theatergoer. Actors were fetishized by their audience and their masculinity was hailed as the essence of Edo theater. By striking a pose called "**mie**," or "display," to **form** a still picture, the actors gave the audience a chance to shout, in admiration, the actor's stage name. The emphasis here was not on the story or any psychological depth but performance itself.

During the 18th century, Edo kabuki experienced many technical advancements which enhanced its capacity for spectacle. Elaborate mechanical devices were invented for staging all sorts of tricks which accommodated the audience's fascination in ghosts, demons, and other supernatural beings. Stars displayed their virtuosity by taking several roles in the same play, resulting in the so-called "**hayagawari**," or "quick changes," which seemed magically quick. This technique encouraged Edo kabuki's focus on identity changes and transsexuality. **Mitate** also contributed to the spectacular

nature of kabuki by providing a wide range of possibilities for linguistic as well as pictorial jokes.

Edo kabuki during the 19th century changed to reflect the widening of its audience and the newly discovered interest in daily life. Strong Edokko types continued to dominate the stage, but the fascination in violence and crime was expressed more through theme than spectacle. Word play and the rhythm of language remained important and devices for spectacle such as identity changes continued to be featured. However, stage tricks were toned down to make way for more fleshed out plots. Troubles in ordinary lives constituted important parts of the plot and sentiment began to define characters. Unlike other Edo genres, kabuki did not possess a theatrical version of shunga or shunpon. No blatantly pornographic plays exist among the scripts of kabuki at the licensed grand theaters. There remain, however, some sexual and scatological plays, which would have been composed as studio plays or merely scripts for reading.

In literature, "**gesaku**," or "playful composition," as most of the Edo genres were called, began in the form of "**dangibon**," or "sermon books," printed versions of popular and lay "sermons" that mixed Buddhist, Shintoist, Confucian, and other teachings with comments on contemporary life and events often in bawdy language. In this genre, sexual references were frequent as were boastful descriptions of Edo's pleasure quarters. A greater triumph for Edocentrism were "**sharebon**," or "books of manners," which originated in the form of manuals for pleasure seekers. As it developed as a genre of narrative, it acquired the label, "made in Edo" as the result of its extraordinary form: dialogue occupied the text while minimal descriptions of characters and clothing were inserted **only** in small print. Conversations among the **oiran** and her attending staff and the client and his party were recorded reflecting the fashionable speech styles of the time, and their topics were the fashion and events of the notorious places. Attention is focused on **tsū** connoisseurship, but in an ironic manner **sharebon** showed the patron to be not quite a true **tsū**.

"**Kibyōshi**," "yellow covers," was, in many ways, the most quintessential Edo genre. Having borrowed its format from children's books, **kibyōshi's** pages were equally divided between the verbal and the pictorial. As 18th-century wits vied with one another in this genre, **mitate** in the form of linguistic and pictorial puns proliferated in **kibyōshi**, a genre constructed as **mitate**. The fun in **kibyōshi** was its outrageous combination of the high and low, putting comical, and sometimes satirical, spotlights on contemporary events and fashion. Visuality, apparent in all types of the arts in Edo, evinced itself in **kibyōshi's** privileging of illustrations. Edocentrism surfaced in the genre's fetishistic interest in all things Edo: names of places and persons, commercial brands, and references to the notorious places crowded each work. As in **sharebon**, masterpieces of **kibyōshi** were not openly sexual, but **sexual** desire, along with social ambition, constituted the chief base for their comedy and satire.

During the 19th century, "**ninjōbon**," or "sentimental books," were all the rage among Edoites. Although more

like novels in format than the earlier **sharebon**, **ninjōbon** also depended much on dialogue. **Ninjōbon** differed from the earlier form in that it depicted male-female relationships **with** psychological intricacy and expanded its locale to include areas outside the pleasure quarters. As such, ordinary people and quotidian life came to be the chief matters of the story, eroticism being the goal of writing and reading (see Sekine). Many works of pornographic fiction parodied this genre or at least followed its format and convention.

Generally, 18th-century literati writing was short. **Kibyōshi**, for example, were printed in the form of thin pocket-size booklets. The expanded reading public, who emerged in the end of the 18th century and dominated the market during the 19th century, demanded story rather than wit, so that the large scale best-sellers were large in volume. "**Yomihon**," or "books for reading," were named such because **they** were not merely "listened to," as with the dialogue of **sharebon**, or "glanced at," as with the picture-oriented **kibyōshi**. Dealing with history/pseudo-history, legends, and crimes, **yomihon** provided the reader with the satisfaction of following a long series of stories, published over years and sometimes over decades. An elongated version of **kibyōshi** would be "**gōkan**," or "combined volumes," which treated similar topics as **yomihon** and also constituted thick volumes and serials. Something of a later version of **dangibon** was "**kokkeibon**," or "funny books," which also produced best-sellers that ran for up to a few decades. As works in this category featured low life in Edo and uneducated travelers on Japan's highways, sex formed the chief part of jokes. While extending narrative, these books also emphasized **visuality** (see Inoue). In contrast with the sketchy illustrations in **kibyōshi**, these late genres featured luxuriously colored **frontispieces** with monochrome and polychrome illustrations within the text. Many of the **ukiyo** masters collaborated with popular writers in these types of publications.

Graphically sexual works appropriated the format and convention of **all** of these genres, but they were specially designated as "**ehon**," or "erotic books," "**makurabon**," or "pillow books," or more commonly "**shunpon**," or "spring books." In poetic genres, "**kyōka**," the "mad" version of classical **waka**, "**kyōshi**," similarly subversive application of classical Chinese poetry, and "**senryū**," the mundane version of respectable **haiku**, were all **Edocentric** manifestations of language **play**. As such, they favored contemporary and sexual topics. **Senryū**, by nature, featured sexual colloquialisms and sexual habits, but particularly blatant works were separately categorized as "**bareku**" (see Solt). The joke competitions which took place during the parties of Edo wits, which usually resulted in group publications, easily turned to erotic subjects and language for humor (see Hibbett). Classical forms were not immune from parody. All sorts of traditional forms and conventions were submitted to scatological distortions. **The Tale of Genji** was the great favorite of pornographers and even the **nō** could not escape the assault of dirty-minded **parodists** (see Quinn).

The shogunate's policy of censorship was basically consistent throughout the Edo period, but the execution of the

laws was intermittent and sometimes arbitrary. Nevertheless, many major writers and artists were punished, ostensibly for dealing with the pleasure quarters in their work but more likely it was for their political satire, which usually went hand in hand with sexual topics or descriptions of the notorious places. Publishers and artists were exiled, kept in manacles for weeks, had their assets confiscated, and a number ended up dying in mysterious ways. It is clear that in the eyes of the government, sex and political dissension appeared inseparable. Sexual language took the lead in Edo arts and became increasingly blatant toward the end of the period as though in response to the increasing signs of failure in the Tokugawa rule.

The mixing of categories is a defining aspect of any bourgeois culture, but the generic and stylistic boundaries of Edo arts were particularly fluid. If ukiyoe artists made portraits of kabuki actors, actors deliberately imitated pictures by striking poses; if fiction writers parodied stories and lines in kabuki plays, playwrights appropriated the same from books and pictures. In addition, these books, because they featured contemporary topics and tastes in fashion, often wove non-literary arts and non-artistic phenomena into their texts, resulting in an abundance of multi-media jokes. Whether in literature, art, or theater, Edo texts were not firmly established objects. Books were constructed through the collaboration of writers and illustrators. Revised, distorted, parodied or plagiarized versions of books were published. Kabuki scripts were changed often to reflect the audience's current fancy or an actor's particular preference. Edoites were participants, players, and readers of the culture being created by and around their city.

Finally, it is important that we consider the city of Edo itself to be a fluid text. Sexuality found expression in the lively array of popular songs, scandal sheets, and street shows, etc., which were more sexually charged than the sort of well-preserved works manifest in literary and art histories. The studies of cultural production such as advertisement and fabric, which respond to Edo's consumerism, are still in their early stages (see Pollack and Tanaka). These areas are too complex and amorphous for our first attempt at a collaborative reading of Edo so that they are largely left for future study.

Multidisciplinary Perspectives

In order to effectively address the textual multiplicity of Edo culture, the reader, too, must demonstrate a certain fluidity or willingness to collapse boundaries. The ideal way to study Edo is through multi-disciplinary collaborations. Scholars have tended to limit themselves to areas of their specialties. Art historians have rarely looked at the words which accompanied the pictures except as references for identifying artists and sources. Literary scholars have commented on texts solely on the basis of words, using pictures merely as aids for understanding the verbal text. Only recently have a handful of scholars in literature begun to make interpretive comments on the pictorial portions of the so-called *kibyōshi*,

in which every pair of open pages depicts a scene consisting of illustrations and text. Currently, the ever increasing number of achievements in modern transcriptions and commentaries on Edo books are often supported by specialists outside literature who supply necessary information on references to popular music of the time, the jargon of pleasure quarters, names of fashionable fabric designs, and such matters. The trend was not extended to include the study of sexual materials until several years ago, when I began soliciting interest of several leading scholars of Edo culture in a collaborative study of sexuality. The few learned scholars who wrote about sexual subjects had been categorized as dilettantes while respected specialists of Edo culture had avoided the issue altogether. Luckily, my call for collaboration coincided with the so-called "*heā kaikin*," or the "relaxation of the hair gauge" in Japan. Japan's censors had treated the exposure of pubic hair as the chief sign of pornography so that the classics of Edo shunga had been reproduced with white or black covers on the hair area and pornographic films and videos had contained similarly obstructing grits over the area. The relaxation of censorship resulted in a flood of publications of Edo materials in fuller and more authentic forms. High quality anthologies of shunga have been published, and modern editions of shunbon have become available in recent years. Today, Hayashi Yoshikazu and other scholars no longer fear imprisonment and have rightfully assumed positions of scholarly distinctions.

In comparison with studies in *historiography* and intellectual thought, those of popular literature and arts have been published relatively late primarily because of scholarly prejudices against comedy. It is common knowledge that sexuality is at the core of comedy and, in Edo arts, this core is perhaps more visible than in those of its western counterparts. Many pornographic works in literature and the arts of the Edo period are ignored by self-respecting scholars for good reason. Sexuality, however, is a chief part of human life and language, and it finds expression in the best of artistic creations. In the case of Edo culture, as discussed above, eroticism and sexuality are inseparable from the rhetoric of the city's culture. Western masterpieces of sexual literature, such as Boccaccio's *Decameron*, de Sade's writings, Cleland's *Funny Hill*, and the novels of James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller, have survived their struggles with censorship, have become objects of scholarly investigation and have even found their way into literary anthologies and the classroom. Nude paintings by Boucher and Fragonard have also come to enjoy similarly respected positions in art history. Edo studies must follow suit and widen its scope of investigation. Masterful and important Edo works deserve to be included in the canon, and the comic and sexual aspects of Japanese culture ought to be open to scholarly studies.

In that spirit, I organized the conference, "Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750 - 1850." Its chief goal was to correct the unbalanced image of Edo culture by applying theories and methods from a wide variety of disciplines to hitherto neglected materials. By bringing together distinguished specialists and innovative younger scholars, I believe the con-