Laughter Connects the Sacred and the Sexual:
The Blooming of Parody in Edo Culture

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1. Introduction

This paper takes a look at the full bloom of parody in Edo culture, especially with respect to laughter, which, I believe, serves as a connection between the sacred and the sexual. Historians tend to follow the golden rule: erase yourself and let the documents speak for themselves. So, in a similar manner, I am letting parody speak for itself. Therefore, this paper does not seek to analyze; rather it merely introduces several examples of parody. Nonetheless, these examples speak eloquently on how people during the Edo period enjoyed an immensely rich and playful culture of parody.

As an icebreaker, I begin by introducing a comic book by Ishii Hisaichi, titled Gendai shisō no sonansha-tachi (The Shipwrecked Modern Philosophers). This is an excellent work of parody based on the series Gendai shisō no bōkensha-tachi (The Adventurous Modern Philosophers) published by Kodansha, an introductory series focusing on 34 prominent philosophers (Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Whitehead, Benjamin, Bataille, Barthes, Gadamer, Lacan, Foucault, Arendt, and Derrida among others). The point of this parody is that it took philosophy as its target, instead of politics or literature. The essence of often-abstruse modern philosophy is not only compressed within the four boxes of each comic strip, but is titillated, mocked, and even made the subject of laughter.

Of course, the basic thought of each philosopher is outlined next to the comic strip; the gags would not make much sense if the reader were totally lacking knowledge about philosophy. Readers must take a look at the comic, then read the explanation, and contemplate for a while, before enjoying a laugh in the final stage. The humor that catches the reader after a peculiar gap is quite intellectual. Let us take a look at an example (Fig. 1).

At first, I was attracted to the book because of its clever title. The great “adventurers” of “modern philosophy” are now “shipwrecked.” The title of the original series obviously aimed to showcase philosophers as “adventurers,” or pioneers of modern intellect, as they confront current issues. Ironically, however, they became “shipwrecked.” Let us take a look at the book cover. The 34 thinkers are on a single raft,
drifting across the ocean. This could imply that these “modern philosophers” are merely drifting through an ocean of concepts that would never lead them to land. Or, perhaps, the irony is that the unique ideas of “modern philosophy” that they espouse and over which they fight, exist only on the raft, and have nothing to do with the real world. Moreover, if we choose to be cynical, another message of the cover illustration could be that we should not get “shipwrecked” like our intellectual leaders. In any case, this piece of work laughs away all the pedantic and overly complicated discourse of scholars and philosophers. It mocks the highbrow, authoritative, and pigeonholed nature of academia, and suggests the possibility of thinking in a more familiar and secular tone.

 Such suggestions were already made in the Edo period. For example, there is a gesaku (戯作) titled *Hijiri yukaku* (聖遊郭) that dates from the mid-Edo period. It is a story about the three saints, Confucius (孔子), Shakyamuni (釈迦牟尼), and Lao Zi (老子), enjoying their time at the pleasure district. The teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, are applied to much more secular and vulgar scenes. So, what was happening in Edo? How were the scholars and their teachings mocked? How were the sacred scripts and sutras treated, twisted, and consumed as a source of laughter? In this article I hope to give many such examples.

2. Edo Culture: An Abundance of Parody

Here I will refrain from an attempt to defining parody. Instead, I will treat the concept rather loosely, and term as parody any work that has added a new meaning to an original text by either mimicking or altering a motif, structure, style, phrases, or rhythms. Newly generated meanings would include jest, mockery, satire, irony, humor, wit, pun, sophistry, and much more. All of the works have one thing in common and that is the playfulness of the author. Once we establish parody as above, and start investigating the Edo culture, we are faced with the fact that parody was so ubiquitous that it seems plausible to state that Edo culture itself was based on parody.

To make a long story short, we can begin by saying that luxurious pleasure districts, such as Yoshiwara, could be seen as a parody version of the Heian court. The stage name of *oiran* was called *genji-na*; this means the courtesans were expected to know the classics such as *Genji monogatari* and *Ise monogatari* by heart, while they also had to be dexterous in the art of writing, and other entertainments as well. *Oiran* (花魁) were not mere prostitutes; they were the living image of Hein court ladies. The men had their duties as well. They were not simply the consumers of sex. They had to know the manners and aesthetic standards of the pleasure district, and were expected to
visit regularly. After spending the night together, the courtesan will see the customer to the entrance, and promises to see him again. The relationship of the two is almost pseudo-marital, possibly modeled after the couples of Heian period, where the husband courts his wife at her home. Luxurious pleasure districts were a parody of Heian court, where men and women played by the rules.

The spirit of parody enriched the Edo culture, and doubtlessly made it more colorful. Such an inclination towards parody was, of course, not unique to Edo. It can be seen in any culture, at any time. However, in the context of Japan, it is likely that the Edo period was the time when parody flourished, and came to full bloom in numerous works. Then, why were the people of Edo so inclined to resort to parody in order to create and recreate the culture? A huge factor is the publication industry flourished during the Edo period. Knowledge belonged to the common people, and a market for products of laughter was well established. Still, this factor alone is not sufficient to explain the entire phenomena. Rather than striving further to solve this question, I would like to produce concrete examples to demonstrate the almost countless numbers of parodies created during the Edo period.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive list of works of parody produced during the Edo period does not seem to exist. The great portion of gesaku, which bombarded the people of Edo in massive amounts, draws upon parody, and a thorough investigation of these is both time-consuming and tedious. It would be similar to an effort to catalogue every single comic magazine published in Japan today. The following is a tentative list of works of parody and their original texts as a starting point for a more exhaustive list, divided into three sections for convenience.

**List of prototexts and their parodies**

The list includes the title, author and/or illustrator, and the date of publication. The original characters are shown in parentheses.

A. Parodies of notable literary works

*Genji monogatari* (源氏物語):

*Koshoku ichidai otoko* (好色一代男) Ihara Saikaku (井原西鶴) 1682

*Furyu Genji monogatari* (風流源氏物語) Miyako no Nishiki (都の錦) 1703

*Nise Murasaki inaka Genji* (偐紫田舎源氏) Ryutei Tanehiko (柳亭種彦) 1829-42
Kacho yōjo Azuma Genji (花鳥余情吾妻源氏) Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞) c. 1837
Ukiyo Genji goju-shi jo (浮世源氏五十四帖) Koikawa Shozan (恋川笑山)
Genji-e (visual works on Genji Monogatari) are found in vast volumes, and therefore omitted¹.

Ise monogatari (伊勢物語):
Nise monogatari (似勢物語) author unknown; c. 1639-40
Ise monogatari haikai mame otoko Muso Zukin (伊勢物語俳諧まめ男夢想頭) Okumura Masanobu (奥村政信) published during Enkyo and Horeki periods 1744-1763

Makura no soshi (枕草子):
Inu makura (犬枕) Konoe Nobutada (近衛信尹) et al., c. 1606
Mottomo no soshi (尤之双紙) Saito Tokumoto (斎藤德元) 1632
Ehon haru no akebono (笑本春の曙) Komatsuya Hyakki (小松屋百亀), illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa (北尾重政) c. 1772

Tsurezuregusa (徒然草):
Inu tsurezuregusa (つれづれ草) before 1619
Kakishita tsurezuregusa (垣下徒然草) 1611
Sorezore gusa (それぞれ草) 1681
Shin Yoshiwara tsurezuregusa (新吉原つれづれ草) 1689
Zoku tsurezuregusa (俗つれづれ草) Ihara Saikaku (井原西鶴) 1695
Yoshiwara tsurezuregusa (吉原徒然草) Yukiya Raiji (結城屋来示) end of Genroku period? 1688-1703
Keisei tsurezuregusa (傾城つれづれ草) date unknown
Shin tsurezuregusa (新つれづれ草) attributed to Hiraga Gennai (平賀源内) c. Meiwa period 1764-1769
Irozato tsurezuregusa (色里つれづれ草) preface written in 1766
Tsurezure Akirakagawa (つれづれ眸か川) Enko Hoshi (艶好法師), a pseudonym of Nishimura Sadamasa (西村定雅), 1783

Senzai wakashu (千載和歌集):
Manzai kyokashu (万載狂歌集) Yomono Akara (四方赤良); Akera Kanko (朱楽菅江) eds. 1783
Hyakunin isshu (百人一首):

*Edo meisho hyakunin isshu* (江戸名所百人一首) Kondo Kiyoharu (近藤清春) ed. 1663

*Inu hyakunin isshu* (犬百人一首) Shiso-an (歯双庵) ed. 1669

*Imayo shokunin zukushi hyakunin isshu* (今様職人尽百人一首) Kondo Kiyoharu (近藤清春) ed. published during the Kyoho period 1716-1735

*Doke hyakunin isshu* (どけ百人一首) Kondo Kiyoharu (近藤清春) ed. 1725

*Kyoka hyakunin isshu yamiyo no tsutete* (狂歌百人一首闇夜礫) Rinsai Ichiro (鱗斉一鱸) ed. 1780

*Danjo kyokun hyakunin isshu hozo* (男女教訓百人一首宝蔵) editor unknown, 1787

*Kogo doke hyakunin isshu* (校合道化百人一首) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝) 1790

*Hyakunin isshu zare koshaku* (百人一首戯講釈) Shiba Zenko (芝全交); Santo Kyoden (山東京伝) 1794

*Teiryu-o kyoka zenshu ruidai* (貞柳翁狂歌全集類題) Nagata Zenpachi (永田善八) 1809

*Gion meigi hyakunin isshu* (祇園名妓百人一首) Harukawa Goshichi (春川五七) 1820

*Okage mairi hyakunin isshu* (おかげまいり百人一首) editor unknown 1829

*Kyoka hyakunin isshu* (狂歌百人一首) Ota Nanpo (大田南畝) 1843

*Kyoka hyakunin isshu suppon no tsuki* (狂歌百人一首泥亀の月) Koshigaya Sanjin (越谷山人) 1804-1830

*Shibai hyakunin isshu* (戯場百人一首) Kankodo Osamaru (諫鼓堂尾佐丸), a pseudonym of Kino Osamaru (紀尾佐丸), 1819; preface by Sikitei Sanba (式亭三馬)

*Shibai hyakunin Yamiyo no Tsubute* (狂歌百人一首闇夜礫) Rinsai Ichiro (鱗斉一鱸) ed. 1826

*Ehon doke shibai hyakunin isshu* (絵本道化芝居百人一首) Kankodo Osamaru (諫鼓堂尾佐丸) ed. date unknown

*Doke hyakunin isshu* (串戯百人一首) Doke Sanjin (戯劇山人) 1847

*Shinban shibai hyakunin isshu* (新板しばゐ百人一首) Umenoya Kosanjin (梅廼屋垢山人) 1848

*Shibai hyakunin isshu yamiyo no tsutute* (戯劇百人一首闇夜礫) 1848

*Hyakunin isshu jikuchi-e tehon* (百人一首地口絵手本) illustrated by Shosai
Hoshu (松斉芳宗) 1852
Kyoka doke hyakunin isshu (教歌道化百人一首) Tamenaga Shunsui II (二世為永春) 1852

Kana dehon chushingura (仮名手本忠臣蔵):
Shijū shichihiki chushingura nezumi anagura (四十七足忠臣鼠穴蔵)
Chushin shi-shichi moji (忠臣四十七文字) 1778
Ana dehon tsujingura (案内手本通人蔵)³ Hoseido Kisanji (朋誠堂喜三二),
illustration by Koikawa Harumachi (恋川春町) 1779
Kanai dehon choningura (家内手本通人蔵) Ariwara Enbi (在原艶美)
illustration by Kitao Masanobu (北尾政演) 1781
Chushingura juni-dan me (忠臣蔵十二段目) Ichiba Tsusho (市場通笑) 1782
Bakemono nana-dan me (化物七段目) Ikuji Monai (幾治茂内) 1782
Kami dehon tsujingura (髪手本通人蔵) Satoyama (山里), illustrated by Kitao Masanobu (北尾政演) 1784
Senzaki Hayano kara teppo chosingura (千崎早野砲鉄炮灯具羅) Takezue Sugaru (竹杖為軽), illustrated by Kitao Masanobu (北尾政演) 1785
Arata ni tatsu shi chushingura tendo daifuku-cho (新建立忠臣蔵天道大福帳) Hoseido Kisanji (朋誠堂喜三二), illustrated by Kitao Masayoshi (北尾政美) 1786
Kana dehon kikimaze Soga (仮名手本混曾我) Manzo-tei (万象亭), illustrated by Kitao Masayoshi (北尾政美) 1786
Kana dehon futsujingura (仮名手本不通人蔵) Sakuragawa Toho (桜川杜芳),
illustrated by Kitao Masanobu (北尾政演) 1787
Hana dehon banzeikura (半奈手本万歳蔵) Itagi Suriyasu (板木摺安),
illustrated by Toyomaru (豊丸) 1787
Mana dehon gishi no hitsuryoku (真名手本義士之筆力) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝), illustrated by Masateru (政てる) 1788
Dai sen sekai henjingura (大千世界變人蔵) Mitsuhashi Kisanji (三橋喜三二),
illustrated by Katsukawa Shunen (勝川春泉) 1899
Mane dehon shoningura (真似手本小人蔵) Misokusai Zosui (美足斎象睡) 1899
Gozonji yōuchi no soba (御存知夜討蕃友)⁵ Shicchin Manpo (七珍万宝) 1790
Chushingura kabe no rakugaki hitowa tada isshin no isshin no isshin (忠臣蔵壁楽書人唯一心命) Torai Sanna (唐来参和) 1793
Chana dehon chaban kyogen (茶成手本茶番狂言) Shinra Manpo (森羅万宝), illustration by Utagawa Toyokuni (歌川豊国) 1793

Chushingura zense mumaku (忠臣蔵前世無幕) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝), illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa (北尾重政); preface written in 1794

Chushingura sokuseki ryori (忠臣蔵即席料理) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝), illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa (北尾重政) 1794

Chushingura juichi-dan odogu shachite manku nashi (忠臣蔵十一段続大道具鱐幕無) Torai Sanna (東来三和), illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni (歌川豊国) 1794

Temae zuke Ako no shiokara (手前漬赤穂の塩辛) Honsentei Tsubohira (本膳亭坪平) 1795

Hayano Kanpei wakage no ayamari (早野勘平若気誤) written and illustrated by Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1796

Kara dehon tojingura (中華手本唐人蔵) Tsukiji Zenko (築地善交) 1796

Kakogawa Honzo komoku (加古川本蔵綱目) Muroi Bakin (室井馬琴) 1796

Okkabuse Moronao kaicho (師直開帳) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1797

Chushingura tanauke jo (忠臣店請状) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1797

Kanai dehon yojingura (家内手本用心蔵) Torai Sanna (東来三和) 1798

Chushingura hoshi zukiyo (忠臣辰月夜) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1780

Gi wa hikaru yako no tama (義光夜功珠) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1780

Kana monjo onna chushin (仮名文章女忠臣) written and illustrated by Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1780

Onagusami chushingura no kangae (御慰忠臣蔵之攷) Kyokutei Bakin (曲亭馬琴), illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa 1799

Kana dehon mune no kagami (仮名手本胸之鏡) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝), illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni (歌川豊国) 1799

Saru onkata no okonomi ni suki kodomo shu no chushingura (去御方御好二付稚衆忠臣蔵) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1780

Egoto shiroto kyogen (画事素人狂言) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1781

Chushingura shiju-hachi moji (忠臣蔵四十八文字) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1801

Bakemono chushingura (化物忠臣蔵) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1801

Kari tazuna chushingura (仮手綱忠臣鞍) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝) 1801

Chushingura setomonogura (忠臣陶蔵) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1802

Chochingura yamiyo no nana yaku (桃燈庫闇夜七扮) Kinomeno Dengaku (椒
Yatarō 1802
Taiheiki chushin koshaku, and its sequel Chushin koshaku koza no maki (大平記忠臣講釈, 忠臣講釈後座巻) Kairaishi (傀儡子) 1802
*Chushingura Okame hyoban* (忠臣蔵岡目評判) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1803
*Chushingura ten naru kana gishin no heisei* (忠臣蔵後日天哉義心平生) Kosuifu (恆酔夫) 1803
*Ehon shushingura* (会本執心久楽) Kitagawa Kikumaro (喜多川喜久麿) 1803
*Kakogawa-bon kura konryu* (加古川本蔵建立) Jippensha Ikku (十返舎一九) 1809
*Chushingura henchiki-ron* (忠臣蔵偏痴気論) Shikitei Sanba (式亭三馬) 1812
*Ana dehon shushin kurawa* (安名手本執心廓) Tozai Sanjin (東西散人), illustrated by Ikeda Eisen, date unknown
*Kana dehon yako no tama* (仮名手本夜光玉) Rakugakian Kagefude (落書庵景筆), illustrated by Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞) 1826
*Chushingura kohen* (口吸心久茎後編) illustrated by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳) 1829
*Chushingura ura hiniku-ron* (忠臣蔵裏皮肉論) Ippitsuan Shujin (一筆庵人), a pseudonym of Ikeda Eisen (池田英泉), illustrated by Utagawa Kuniyasu (歌川国安) 1848
*Ada makura chushingura* (仇枕忠臣蔵) illustrated by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳) 1857

*Tokai dochu hizakurige* (東海道中膝栗毛):
*Dochu Chiwakurige* (道中千話栗毛) Maekata Kumosuke (前肩雲輔) 1807
*Keichu hizasurige* (閨中膝磨毛) Kyuuhensha Ippachi (九返舎一八) 1812

*Toshisen* (唐詩選):
*Tsushi senshochi* (通詩選笑知) Ota Nanpo (大田南畝) 1783
*Toshisen* (通詩選) 1784
*Toshisen kotowaza kaishaku* (通詩選詠解釈) 1787
*Toshisen okai* (蕩子筌枉解) 1770

*Suikoden* (水浒伝):
*Keisei suikoden* (傾城水浒伝) Takizawa Bakin (滝沢馬琴) 1825-1835
*Tozei suikoden* (当盛水浒伝) Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳) 1829
Kaiin suikoden (快淫水好伝) Koikawa Shozan (恋川笑山)

Sangokushi engi (三国志演義):
Tsujin sangokushi (通人三国師) Yumenaka Rakusuke (夢中楽介) 1781
Fuzoku sangokushi (風俗三国志) Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞) 1830

B. Parodies of philosophy and sutras

Rongo (論語, Lunyu):
* Rongo cho (論語町)22 Ota Nanpo (大田南敟) 1761-1765
* Rongyo (論御) Musankoshi (無三公子) 1842

Daigaku shoku (大學章句):
Shingaku shokei daigaku shoku (心学捷経大學笑句)23 Tamenaga Shunsui (為永春水), illustrated by Ikeda Eisen (池田英泉), date unknown

Roshi (老子, Tao Te Ching):
Sekifu den (跖婦伝) Yamaoka Matsuke (山岡浚明) 1753

Hokekyo (法華経, Lotus Sutra)
Shikido sho kagami (色道小鏡) Fujimoto Kizan (藤本箕山) 1678

Ichimai kishomon (一枚起請文, One-sheet Document):
Inshu ichimai kishomon (飲酒一枚起請文) Sonchobo Shinno (尊朝法親王)24
Chanoyu ichimai kishomon (茶の湯一枚起請文) Senno Rikyu (千利休)
Haikai ichimai kishomon (俳諧一枚起請文) 1708
Shonin ichimai kishomon (商人一枚起請文) Tejima Choan (手島堵庵)
Kanemochi shonin ichimai kishomon (金持商人一枚起請文) Nakai Ryoyu (中井良祐)25 1819
Tosei ichimai kishomon (渡世一枚起請文) Koritsu Taiga (孤立大我) 1754
Fugen nogyo ichimai kishomon (付言農業一枚起請文) Ito Seisaku (伊藤正作)26 1840
Waka ichimai kishomon (和歌一枚起請文) Ozawa Roan (小沢芦庵)27
Inkyo ichimai kishomon (隠居一枚起請文) Shonenbo (正念坊)28

Other parodies of aphorisms concerning various dieties, Confucianism, and Buddhism:
**Hijiri Yukaku** (聖遊郭) author unknown, 1757
*Tsujin koshaku sankyo shoku* (通神孔釈三教色) Torai Sanna (唐来参和) 1783
*Koshi jima toki ni aizome* (孔子縞干時染) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝),
illustrated by Kitao Masanobu (北尾政演) 1789
*Tosei daitsu butsu kaicho* (当世大通仏買帳) Shiba Zenko (芝全交) 1781

*Kaso nehan-zu* (果蔬涅槃図) Ito Jakuchu (伊藤若冲) Kyoto National Museum

*Mitate Narihira nehan-zu* (見立業平涅槃図) Hanabusa Iccho (英一蝶) Tokyo National Museum

*Iro jigoku zoshi emaki* (色地獄草紙絵巻) late Edo period, International Research Center for Japanese Studies

C. Parodies of textbooks and how-to books

*Wakan sansai zu* (和漢三才図会) by Terajima Ryouan (寺島良安):

*Akan sansai zu* (無飽三財図会) first edition written and illustrated by Akatsuki Kanenari (暁鐘成); second edition written by Genka Joshi (幻花情史), illustrated by Akatsuki Kanenori. Preface written in 1821.
*Sansai zu osana koshaku* (三歳図会稚講釈) Santo Kyoden (山東京伝) 1797

*Honzō komoku* (本草綱目, Bencao Gangmu) by Li Shizhen (李時珍):

*Honzō momoku* (翻草盲目) Hiraga Gennai (平賀源内) 1780

*Honzō momoku-shu* (本草盲目集) Tozaian Nanboku (東西庵南北) 1819

*Kunmo zui* (訓蒙図彙) by Nakamura Tekisai (中村惕斎):

*Koshoku kunmo zui* (好色訓蒙図彙) written and illustrated by Yoshida Hanbei (吉田半兵衛) 1686

*Shibai kunmo zui* (劇場訓蒙図彙) Shikitei Sanba (式亭三馬) 1802

*Kai tsusho ko* (華夷通商考) by Nishikawa Joken (西川如見):

*Kari tsusho ko* (華里通商考) 1748

*Onna daigaku* (女大学) by Kaibara Ekiken (貝原益軒):

*Yujo daigaku* (遊女大学) Nishimura Sadamasa (西村定雅) 1807

*Onna daigaku takarabako* (女大学宝箱) by Kaibara Ekiken (貝原益軒):
*Onna dairaku takarabeki* (女大楽宝開) illustrated by Tsukioka Settei (月岡雪鼎) 1751

Onna Imagawa oshiebumi (女今川おしえ文):

*Onna Shimekawa oshiebumi* (女令川おしえ文) illustrated by Tsukioka Settei (月岡雪鼎) 1768

Konrei shiyo keshi bukuro (婚礼仕用罌粟袋) edited and preface by Hakusui (白水):

*Konrei himegoto bukuro* (婚礼秘事栁) illustrated by Tsukioka Settei (月岡雪鼎), date unknown

Ido nichiyo chohoki (医道日用重宝記) by Hongo Masatoyo (本郷正豊):

*Bidō nichiya chohoki* (艶道日夜女宝記) illustrated by Tsukioka Settei (月岡雪鼎), possibly during Meiwa and Anei periods.

Onna teikin gosho bunko (女庭訓御所文庫) 1751:

*Onna teikun gesho bunko* (女貞訓下所文庫)

Shokumotsu waka honzo (食物和歌本草) by Yamaoka Genrin (山岡元隣):

*Shokumotsu baka honzo* (色物馬鹿本草) Isoda Koryusai (礫田湖竜斎) 1778

Honcho shoku kagami (本朝食鑑) by Ono Hitsudai (小野必大):

*Honcho shoku kagami* (本朝色鑑) Suiko Sensei (酔妓先生) date unknown

Note: works underlined implies *enpon* (艶本), *shunga* (春画), or those inclined to such genres. Works marked with an asterisk (*) will be discussed further in this article.

As you can see, the number of such works is surprising. If I were to go through the whole *gesaku* (戯作) genre, the list would grow even longer. Before I continue the discussion, I would like to make a brief comment on the list.

Although every genre was the target for parody, well-known literary works were naturally parodied more often. Among the classics, *Genji monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*, *Tsurezuregusa*, *Senzai wakashu*, and *Ogura hyakunin isshu* were regularly reproduced. The last was apparently the most popular, and vast amounts of parodies were made using the rich rhymes and puns in the original waka poems. It is safe to say that it is a widely accepted fact that Ihara Saikaku’s first *ukiyo monogatari*, *Koshoku...*
ichidai otoko, models its 54 chapters after those of the *Genji Monogatari*. Ryutei Tanehiko’s *gokan* (合巻) volume, *Nise Murasaki inaka Genji*, is an adaptation of *Genji Monogatari* that takes place in the Muromachi period (because it was politically unsafe to stage the tale in the inner palace of Edo Castle), and is another famous parody, or pastoral variation of *Genji monogatari*. *Nise monogatari* (published 1639, author unknown), an amazing parody of *Ise monogatari*, is another famous work, and is arguably the greatest masterpiece of parody in this era. In case of *Makura no soshi*, its signature phrase *ito okashi* was often used in the works of parody. *Tsurezuregusa*, another master essay, was often parodied in works such as *Inu tsurezuregusa* (1619), *Kakishita tsurezuregusa* (1671), *Sozoregusa* (1681), *Zoku tsurezuregusa* (1695, Saikaku), and *Yoshiwara tsurezuregusa* (end of Genroku period, Yukiya Raiji). The last in the list is especially noteworthy, for it has parodied all of the 243 chapters in the original *Tsurezuregusa*, and its perfection is comparable to that of *Nise monogatari*. *Yoshiwara tsurezuregusa* is also valuable as a historical document; through the mimicry of the original text, it depicts with great deftness the people and customs of Yoshiwara pleasure district.

Among the contemporary texts, *Kana dehon chushingura* is probably the most parodied. This text, a dramatization of actual incident of the Forty-Seven Ronin, could be deemed a parody in its own right. The text was made into kabuki and woodblock prints, which further boosted the popularity and production of parodies. A study suggests that Chushingura was used as the theme of several thousand woodblock prints. Among the prints, those that presented the characters as notable contemporary beauties (*bijin mitate-e*) were popular. However, more sensual versions, recreated into pornographic picture books, or *ezoshi* (絵草紙), were also in great demand. As far as parody is concerned, the latter types have much stronger impact (Fig. 3).

Looking at the list, it is clear that many parodies focus on sexual themes. Moreover, in many cases, something that is sacred is used as material for mockery, no matter how distant from sexuality it may seem at the beginning. In the following section, such examples would be discussed in more detail.

3. The Sacred Mocked Down to the Sexual

The parody-crazed authors of *gesaku* were brave enough to mock all that was sacred: the Buddha, the gods, the saints, and the holy sutras. *Hijiri Yukaku* recounts the story of Confucius, Shakyamuni, and Lao Zi enjoying themselves at the pleasure district. Another work, *Tsushin koshaku sankyo shik*
通神孔釈三教色), written by Torai Sann (唐来参和), is a similar story, but this time Amaterasu-omikami (天照大神) replaces Lao Zi. In Shiba Zenko’s Tosei daisu hotoke kaicho (1781), Ksitigarbha (地蔵菩薩), Tako Yakushi (蛸薬師), and the Sleeping Shakyamuni (寝釈迦) pay a visit to a pleasure district in Shinagawa. Ksitigarbha decides to become a customer of the pleasure district, saying, “The world has become entirely sexual. I can’t be so square and serious about Buddhism anymore. I shall train myself in the series of love affairs, so that I can lead others into this track, and become the new Ksitigarbha, the love guru.” He soon falls in love with his partner, Wakamatsu, and elopes to Shining disguised as tengu (天狗), using the mask and wings he borrowed from Kompira (金比羅).

Sekifuden (跖婦伝), published in 1753, is an example of the great parody of Lao Zi’s Tao Te Ching. Doro Roshi, the author’s name, is a pseudonym of Yamaoka Matsuoka (山岡浚明 1712-1780). Matsuoka, a retainer of the shogunate, was a student of Chinese classics under Hayashi Razan, but he later turned to Kamono Mabuchi to pursue Kokugaku. Sekifuden is modeled after the episode in Zhuangzi, where a burglar named Zhi defeats Confucius in debate. In Sekifuden, Oseki, a street prostitute, refutes Takao, a high-ranking courtesan of Yoshiwara. The merit of this work is not merely the play of words, but the irony it poses against the vanity of Yoshiwara, making use of the context seen when Taoists criticize the Confucians.

In Sekifuden, Oseki confronts Takao. The high-ranking courtesans will need more and more things, and grow greedier. They are always scheming, and sit in front of their abacus. In no time, they will lose their romance and appeal. On the other hand, street prostitutes like Oseki “have nothing to do with such cunning and vulgar greed. We sell romance, and polish our affection. We care about honor. Street prostitution is about real lovemaking. There is nothing greedy or vulgar about it. The sky is our nightgown, the ground is our bed. The moonlight is our candle, and it illuminates everywhere; we even don’t have to worry about replacing the wick. We don’t waste our time on those stupid quarrels of love. If he doesn’t like me, he won’t be back. If he likes me, he’ll be back. Customers don’t lie, and we don’t conspire. Everything is true in our hearts. Nothing is ostentatious about us. If there is no lie, the truth is not needed. If there is no vanity, there is no need to be honest. We just are ourselves, a man and a woman. That's how love is made, and if I may boast, this is the yin and yang nature of love.”

Here, Oseki’s carefree life is layered upon Lao Zi’s belief of unconditioned spontaneity, and Yoshiwara’s vanity is exposed as a result. The section titled Shikisetsu (色説), placed at the end of the book, is a parody of Lao Zi’s Tao Te Ching:
(On refinedness, chapter 1) “What is refined (粋) among the refined, is not the usual refinedness. What is true among the true is not the usual truth. If all customers know what was refined among the refined, then it would not be refined at all. That is why something very refined is in fact not refined. And that is refinedness. Being unrefined is in fact refined, very refined. But knowing that does not mean one is refined. If everyone were refined, the way of the romance decay. Stop writing letters with your blood. Stop making promises. That is how you can be loyal to the women of pleasure.”

(On romance, chapter 2) “The way of the romance decays, and here comes the day of festival. There comes a paramour, and I am falling. Thirty

The stream of paradoxes seen above is typical of Lao Zi’s philosophy; the excerpts seem strangely thoughtful. Shakyamuni is often parodied in pictures called kawari-nehan, which depicts Buddha entering nirvana, but in a slightly unorthodox fashion. High priests, such as Nichiren and Honen, also enter their sleep in Nichiren shonin nehan-zu and Honen nehan-zu, respectfully. Other works include Basho nehan-zu (late Edo period, Suzuki Fuyo), and those depicting the nirvana of actors, or even whales. One typically funny piece would be Ito Jakuchu’s Kaso nehan-zu and Hanabusa Itcho’s Mitate-e Narihira nehan-zu (Tokyo National Museum). In the former, a Japanese radish with a split end is depicted as Buddha, while vegetables and fruits mourn his departing (Fig. 4). Turning Shakyamuni into a radish is the product of extraordinary imagination, but it is somewhat understandable in case of Jakuchu, for his family business was that of vendor of vegetables and fruit. In the latter work, Narihira, the main character of Ise monogatari, is dying. Numerous ladies, young and old, mourn for him, and to the viewer this seems to be a facetious scene (Fig. 5). This work proves the legendary allure of the master playboy Narihira, who is said to have bedded with 3733 women in his lifetime. Some monks and young men are also among the crowd. Probably they had relationships with Narihira as well. It is surprising how people of Edo even ventured to mock the scenery of death, which no doubt was supposed to be solemn.

But what is even more surprising is a work like Iro jigoku zoshi emaki (地獄草紙絵巻 tentative title, Fig. 6). This is a pornographic version of Jigoku zoshi, the picture books about hell, which was a popular theme in the late-Heian period. At the end of the book is a signature, which reads: “In the winter so cold that it gives you a boner. Signed, Onna Mara Mita（婦満羅味多）.” The name “Onna Mara Mita” is
obviously wordplay on “Maka Hanny Hara Mita (摩訶般若波羅蜜多),” a phrase seen in the Heart Sutra, and it of course alludes to genitalia. Who Onna Mara Mita actually was is not known. The date of publication is also unclear, but because the name Santo Kyoden is mentioned within the text, it was definitely produced after his emergence, which means in the late Edo period.

Here, husband and wife are being judged in front of Yama. The kyoka (狂歌) poems attached on this scene are truly hilarious. Yama, who should admonish lust, nonetheless laments: “The couple/Still together after their death/Makes me envy/I, Yama of two worlds.” Yama in fact looks envious, with his eyes wide open. In the other corner, the red devil is clinging on the blue devil. The kyoka here reads: “Blue or Red devil/It’s all the same/They all have fell/In love and in lust.” Even the devils are prey of iro (色), or love, and perhaps that is why they have particular iro (色), or colors on their skin. The mirror of johari (浄玻離), which projects the doings of the dead during their lifetime, shows the couple having sexual intercourse. The secretary, whose job is to note any wrongdoing, peeks at the mirror. If we take a closer look, we can see that his hand is placed inside his clothes, somewhere near the crotch, which is slightly humped. The kyoka placed right next to this secretary reads: “The infernal bureaucrat who records the sins/Is still not good enough to be enlightened/Love overcomes him.” The original text inverts the word horeru (falling in love) as reruho, and this probably implies that lust can easily take over reason.

In the next scene, the couple is sent to hell accordingly to the judgment of the scale. Once in hell, the husband’s male organ is dismembered by a devil with an equine head (Fig. 7). The kyoka here reads: “Because you said your penis was as large as a horse’s/The equine devil gets rid of it for you.” The man falsely took pride in the size of his penis, so it had to be removed. In other scenes of hell, we can see a man being boiled in the cauldron that looks like female genitalia, or a woman who was sent to toyorin (刀葉林, the woods of sword-leaves, an area in hell usually associated with men) being thrust with branches that resemble male genitalia. The couple continues to suffer in different parts of hell, but the final leaf shows that the couple is about to be saved by the Amitabha Buddha (Fig. 8). Here, the viewer will reach the climactic laughter. Amitabha and two followers, Guanyin and Mahasthamaprapta arrive on a lotus leaves that look like female genitalia. And believe it or not, the faces of these sacred figures are in the shape of male genitalia. The couple once doomed for their sexual acts were redeemed by the sex saints; here, we see an ultimate parody paradox. The people of Edo had an immense sense of humor that accepted such mockery of the sacred. It was probably regarded as unrefined to be offended by such act.
Next, let us examine the parody on works designed to promote female morals. Many such textbooks and codes circulated in Edo, as so did parodies bearing shady titles. A good example of such works is a series published by Tsukioka Settei (月岡雪鼎 1710-1787), an artist from Kyoto who was renowned for his drawings of beautiful women. He has created *Onna dairaku takarabeki* (女大楽宝開) out of *Onna daigaku takarabako* (女大学宝箱), *Onna Shimekawa oheshi* (女令川おへし文) out of *Onna Imagawa oshiebun* (女今川おしべ文), *Konrei himegoto bukuro* (婚礼秘袋) out of *Konrei shiyō keshi bukuro* (婚礼仕用罌粟袋), and *Bido nichiya johoki* (艶道日夜女宝記) out of *Ido nichiyo chohoki* (医道日用重宝記). Without a doubt, he deserves the title of the most prolific sexual parodist in the Edo period. Both the text and illustrations are deftly designed to resemble the original work, and the level of achievement is simply astounding.

Let us take *Onna dairau takarabeki* as an example. This is a parody of Kaibara Ekiken’s famous work, *Onna daigaku Takarabako*. First, the design of the book itself is clever. Let us take a moment to compare book covers (Fig. 9 and 10). In Takarabeki, “Kaibara Ekiken Sensei,” the name of the author, is transformed into “Hekken Kaimara Sensei.” The name of the publisher, “Naniwa Shoshi (浪花書肆)” is changed into “Keika Shoshi (閨花書肆),” which sounds more erotic. The scripture *jin* (仁), *gi* (義), *rei* (礼), *chi* (智), *shin* (信) is edited into *jin* (腎), *bi* (美), *ai* (愛), *wa* (和), *shin* (心). If we look closer, we notice that the illustrations of phoenix and Qilin are changed into similar mythological organisms with heads of male and female genitalia (Fig. 11 and 12).

If we compare the front cover, we see the illustration *Onna nogyo no zu* (女農業之図) in Takarabako (Fig. 13). In Takarabeki, it is titled *Onna noshoku no zu* (女農色之図), and the composition of the illustration is slightly errant. Again, with a closer look, it is clear that the woman is in a questionable position (Fig. 14). The text above the illustration compares the production of crops and men, saying, “women bear children with men’s seed, so keep on with the intercourse.” All the following pages are written in similar manner, with designs scrupulously tracing the original book.

What is interesting here is that, through parody, the sexual philosophy of the author is showcased. For example, the first entry of Takarabako states that, because “daughters will grow up and move in to their husbands’ house, where they will serve his parents, they shall not be spoiled. If spoiled, they will act selfishly in their married homes, and will be hated.” Such wives would be driven out by their husbands, which is no doubt shameful. In Takarabeki, this rule is turned upside down; instead, the author instructs the parents to spoil their daughters.

As “daughters will grow up and move in to their husbands’ house, where they
will serve his parents, they shall be trained sexually.” The daughter was born in the first place because the parents enjoyed lovemaking. If parents try too hard to keep the daughter away from sexual matters, the daughter will “lose allure and charm, which will result in the boredom of her husband.” In turn, the couple will become estranged, and the daughter will be kicked out from the husband’s home. The daughter becomes a “mournning pussy.” How sad! And this all resulted from her parents being overly controlling, while “forgetting how they were crazy about sex in their youth, and suddenly became serious.”

What should the wife do when she quarrels with her husband? Takarabako advises the following, if the husband is to blame. “State your opinion in an elegant voice. If he does not listen, or becomes infuriated, wait until until he is in a better mood, and then state your opinion again. Never show your anger, and never raise your voice.” Basically, wives are supposed to obey the husband, and only share their opinion when the husbands are in a good mood. However, Takarabeki suggests a speedier tactic. The quarrel should be settled during the same night, with a much more clever strategy:

Quietly enter your husband’s bed, undress, and cuddle up to him with your naked body. Put your head on your husband’s chest, facing down. He might push you away once or twice, grunting. Just keep your mouth shut, and cuddle some more. In the end, he will feel much better, and stop fighting. Once he is in this state, slowly start fiddling your husband’s member. Your fingers become the matchmaker, and voila, the quarrel is over. Such a well-behaved wife will never expose the couple’s trouble to the outside world. The husband will admire her, and the family will no doubt prosper.

Takarabeki is obviously aware of the fact that quarrels can be solved more smoothly through physical contact rather than a war of reason. Sexual intercourse is a way to strengthen the bond of men and women; it is never a selfish pursuit of pleasure. Such is the lesson Takarabeki shares with its reader.

4. Rongyo(論御)- Lunyu’s questions sexually answered

Many of parodies among Edo’s gesaku bravely mocked all the sacred teachings of Shintoism, the Chinese Classics, and Buddhism. Out of the three, Chinese Classics were mocked most. The authority of Confucius and Lunyu were utterly debased. For example, in Santo Kyoden’s Koshi jima toki ni aizome (孔子織干時藍 published 1789),
Confucius suffers from gonorrhea. The phrase Koshi jima in the title is a pun on koshi jima (格子縞), a kimono pattern fashionable at the time. The setting of this work is a world where most people are properly educated with philosophical ideals. It is a time when “everyone from beggars to untouchables respected li.” A master and his students, all beggars, study the scrolls. When one of the students says “The hunter went to the west of Lu, and his game was lin (麟),” the other student continues, “Ah, even Confucius had to suffer the gonorrhea (淋病).” Here, the wordplay is on the two characters both pronounced lin (麟 and 淋), and by this, the ancient tale about the mythical beast Qilin, which was caught in the west of Lu, is connected to the alleged sickness of Confucius. Here we see again the typical method of parody, where the sacred is mocked down to sexual. The bigger the drop, the bigger the laugh. Moreover, it must be noted that behind this work of parody lies a satire against Matsudaira Sadanobu’s revolution, which promoted both philosophical and physical training through the teachings of Confucius.

Among the works of Ota Nanpo (大田南畝), is the parody of Ogyu Sorai’s (荻生徂徠) famous commentary of Lunyu, Rongo cho (論語徴). Nanpo’s Rongo cho, which sounds identical to Sorai’s text, implies the Yoshiwara pleasure district with the character cho (町). “Kyorai Sensei,” a clear wordplay of “Sorai Sensei,” adds jocular connotation by using the character meaning void (虚), which crudely alludes to “lies.” The famous opening sentence of Lunyu, which states “Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?” (学而時習之不亦説乎) is interpreted, rather forcefully in Rongo cho as the pleasure of learning the lessons of love with the first courtesan he has encountered at the pleasure district, where the clerk has taken him after studying a list of famous courtesans. The second phrase in the sentence (時習) is explained in Zhu Xi’s interpretation as following: “Many birds fly over the sky. Likewise, we should learn without stopping, as the birds do not cease to fly.” Rongo cho makes use of this interpretation, but reads it thus: “Like the birds, we wish to fly over to Yoshiwara.” This sort of distortion is made throughout Rongo cho to the amazement of the reader.

Let us take another example. In the book of Zi han in Lunyu, there is a following passage: “Confucius, standing on a river bank, says, ‘The passage of time is very like the flow of water – rushing away endlessly, day and night!’” Traditionally, it is said that through the metaphor of river, Confucius is either lamenting the rapid and transient nature of life, or is praising the interminable continuation of people’s solemn and silent life. However, Nanpo comments, “He must be talking about the boats going back and
“Frequenting this place will lead to endless visits. All the fooling around should be over.” Here, Nanpo states that Confucius is warning the reader not to visit Yoshiwara so often, because it is unlikely that the heart of the courtesan can be won. As seen in the examples above, Rongo cho parodies the well-renowned phrases of, a sacred text, through the theme of love life at the Yoshiwara pleasure district. Such mockery of Confucius and his holy text would be deemed outrageous in Joseon, where classical philosophy of China has permeated throughout. In Edo, however, the great Confucius was a typical fool in the gesaku world.

As an extreme example of this, I would like to introduce another work entitled Rongyo(論御). The radicalness of this text is even incomparable to that of Rongo cho. Rongyo parodies every single phrase of Lunyu’s book ten, or Xiang Dang(鄕党). This meticulous piece of work is no doubt the manifesto of the author’s passion, perseverance, intellect, and the peculiar talent. In the forward, written by the author himself, we can find the following passage: “At the time of the tiger’s first intercourse, at Furyoken (風涼軒, or phonetically ‘bad guy’s house’), located in Bakanayatsu (馬鹿南谷, or ‘the fool’), by Musankoshi(無三公子).” If “the time of the tiger’s first intercourse” means the year of the tiger, then this work might have been published in interpretation of Lunyu, Rongyo uses Zhu Xi’s Analects of Confucius. Therefore, to be precise, Rongyo is a parody of Xiang Dang, as seen in the Analects of Confucius. The design of the book itself is similar to Zhu Xi’s text (Fig. 16), and it could be possible to pick up the wrong book when in haste (Fig. 17). The front page boasts a similar font with the original text, but the phrase itself is shady. Instead of Shuki shu chu (朱熹集註, Zhu Xi’s interpretation on the Analects), it states the phonetically similar title, Shugi shitsu chu (手戯膝中, playing with your hands between the knees), which explains a lot about the content of the book. Obviously, shugi implies masturbation. Therefore, this book is a sexual translation of all the phrases in Xiang Dang of Lunyu. We have seen that other similar works that have mocked Lunyu with a forceful interpretation, but Rongyo ventures even further. It is as if this book answers all the questions posed in Lunyu through the matters of sex.
The content of Rongyo is sexually explicit, and I must admit I hesitate to share it with the reader. However, because I believe it is crucial to introduce this great Lunyu parody, and to discuss further the connection between the sacred and the sexual, I have chosen to go on with it. The original text is written in kanbun, so I will cite those lines as well to preserve the connotation that can only be expressed through it.

The following is the section where Confucius’ behavior in the court is described:

(Lunyu) 朝与下大夫言、侃侃如也。与上大夫言、誾誾如也。君在踧踖如也。與與如也

When Confucius was waiting at court, in speaking with the great officers of the lower grade, he spoke freely, but in a straightforward manner. In speaking with the lords, he did so blandly, but precisely.

The above is transformed into the following in Rongyo:

(Rongyo) 町与下大夫言、安閑如也。与上大夫言、慇懃如也。君在宿夕如也。夜夜如也。

The playful explanation is appended as a footnote:

The town (町) is the pleasure district. High-ranking officer (大夫), is the title used for courtesans of high status. Of course, some are better and some are worse. The idleness (安閑) means his attitude is simple, and polite (慇懃) means his attitude is caring. The lord (君) means courtesan. When Confucius sits in front of her, his body is melting as if he suffers from a hangover. He did this all night. How he loved and respected her! The passage above teaches us that Confucius faced courtesans of different status with different attitudes.

Rongyo rewrites the story thus: when Confucius visits the pleasure district, he treats low-ranking prostitutes with simplicity, while he treats great courtesans with politeness. When he is in front of the women, we can see his body is steaming with fatigue, as if he had drank and worked out all night. Such is the way to show to the courtesan of his affection and respect. This passage recounts that Confucius acted accordingly to the ranks of each prostitutes.

The solemn act of Confucius at the court has suddenly metamorphosed into his
behavior at Yoshiwara. Although it seems preposterous that Confucius would serve a courtesan as if she was a lord, in fact courtesans of highest reputations were treated like princesses. In the same context, the passage “when the lord summoned Confucius, he left his house before a carriage was ready” in Lunyu is interpreted that when courtesans summoned Confucius, he went right away without a carriage, because she was probably in an emergency, perhaps a financial one.

The following passage is from Lunyu:

(Lunyu) 康子饋藥、飲而受之、曰、丘未達、不敢嘗

Zhu Xi’s Analects of Confucius interprets this as following, citing the study of Yang:

揚氏曰、大夫有賜飲受之禮也、未達不敢嘗、謹疾也、必告之直也○此一節、記孔子與人交之誠意

The passage from Lunyu means that when Kang Tsu, the chief retainer of Lu, sent medicine to Confucius, he accepted the gift politely with a bow. Then he said, “Since I, Qiu, am not aware of this drug’s effects, I will refrain from taking it now.” Zhu Xi, quoting Yang, interprets this as a proof of Confucius’ honesty. On the contrary, Musankoshi, the author of Rongyo, decides to switch the letters “丘不達” into “丘不屈”. This simple alteration changes everything.

(Rongyo) 康子饋藥、飲而受之、曰、丘未屈、不敢嘗

And instead of quoting Yang, he quotes Yamashi (椰麻氏, possibly a pun of ‘swindler’), and explains the passage as following:

藥今俗所所謂長命丸之類、不屈行淫勢不屈撓也。不假藥功而足矣。故不嘗也。嘗試也。椰麻氏曰、大夫賜受之禮、未屈不敢嘗、直也、此一節、記孔子家鄉之淫。(The medicine here is something similar to chomei-gan that is popular today. The indomitable (不屈) means that his stamina to have sex is invincible. The power of medication is not needed. Therefore he does not take the drug. To lick (嘗) means to try. According to Yamashi, this passage deals with the sexual ability of Confucius.)
What an interpretation! The lord (大夫) here is obviously a courtesan. She gave Confucius medicine. He accepted the gift as an act of *li*, but declared that he was not in need of it. Even without the power of medicine, his private was already upright (直). The same character (直) was used to imply “honesty” in case of Yang’s interpretation, but is heavily distorted here. *Chomei-gan*, the medicine mentioned above, was a tonic sold at Yotsume-ya, in Ryogoku. Such an aphrodisiac was unnecessary for Confucius.

Throughout the text, Musankoshi tries to give a sexual interpretation of *Lunyu*. What the author means in the following text should be obvious:

*(Lunyu)* 有盛餚必變色而作

When invited to a feast (盛饌), Confucius stood up with a solemn face to thank the host for luxurious food. In case of *Rongyo*, it is changed as the following:

*(Rongyo)* 有全盛必變色而立

The footnote reads:

If the courtesan, both beautiful and full of virtue, is renowned county-wide, she is called *zensei* (全盛). To be precise, she must have the looks of Ono no Komachi, the elegance of Murasaki Shikibu, the wit of Takao and Takamado, and the boldness of Katsuyama. If such a woman practices proper *li yue*, she must be deemed *zensei*. Such a courtesan is hardly found throughout the world. Fortunately, Confucius has met one of them. He was scared, surprised, lost, and he turned pale. However his heir instantly stood up, erect as ever.

When Confucius met a famous and sought-after courtesan, he was taken aback, and did not know what to do. But his “heir” knew what to do, and becomes “erect as ever.”

Confucius, without a doubt, was the master of *li*.

*(Lunyu)* 入公門、鞠躬如也、如不容
If he were to enter the gate of the palace, he would bend over so low that he almost could not enter the gate. But according to Musankoshi, Confucius was not only polite, but an expert on homosexuality as well:

\[ (Rongyo) \quad \text{入肛門、鞠躬如也、如不容} \]

This, again, is explicated further with a footnote:

\[ \text{The anus (肛門) is narrower than the vagina... Bending down very low is a precaution not to harm the partner. This is the ren of a sacred man. So it goes through.} \]

Of course, the footnote is parody of the Zhu Xi’s text as well.

Although Confucius was such a man of great libido, he never forgets to act righteously. For example, he believed that the “true man does not commit adultery (君子は姦通を以て固善とせず).” Here, the original text is “君子は紺緅を以て飾にせず”， meaning that true man does not decorate his collar or sleeves using colors such as navy blue or pink, because they imply purification through abstinence and mourning that has just ended.

Finally, let us take a look at how refined Confucius was.

\[ (Lunyu) \quad \text{升車必正立執綏} \]

When Confucius was to ride a carriage, he stood up straight, and held to the reins tightly. Musankoshi, however, is possessed with the view of the pleasure district. Thus, we have the following change of story.

\[ (Rongyo) \quad \text{臨郭必正立執粋} \]

He explains this as follows:

\[ \text{郭遊里之郭。通為称号焉。粋砕也。遊里語闊達不拘物曰粋。孔子至臨遊里、必正立肉具、執持粋容。故。持也。} \]

\[ \text{With the character 砕, he probably means to destroy one’s enemy (in the pleasure district, enemy meant the courtesan one is dealing with), but his real intentions} \]
are unclear. In any case, the sense of refinedness (粋) implies one’s broad-mindedness and generosity, and to Musankoshi, Confucius boasted all these qualities. Once at the brothel, he made his member (肉具) stand upright, and kept it “refined” for a long time.

I have shared with the reader few examples of the parody in Rongyo. But again, this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Musankoshi mimics all the passages in Lunyu’s book of Xiang Dang. The author’s knowledge on Chinese classics is extraordinary. The Japanese language has many homophones, and those words are differentiated with the use of different characters. The author takes advantage of this characteristic, and by shifting around phonetics and meanings in the text, he creates jests and wisecracks (for example, Shu ki shu chu and Shu gi shitu chu). The parody he maneuvers through the characteristics of Japanese language is absolutely vulgar, but nonetheless astounding.

Is it possible to make such a mockery of sacred beings and their texts in other cultural spheres? Although my knowledge is rather limited, I must say it is unlikely. If someone ventures to make a satire out of the Koran in the Muslim world, his or her life will be at stake. The situation would be similar even in the Christian world, given the audiences’ response towards the movie *The Da Vinci Code*: it is in fact a taboo to represent Jesus Christ in a manner that would sully his sacredness. And what about the Confucian world? In Joseon, a nation that earnestly accepted Confucianism, the elites of the Yangban (両班) class were mocked occasionally, but the tongue of parody never reached Confucius or the sacred volumes. In comparison, Japan seems to be very open-minded. By reading through *Rongyo*, the reader would feel as if Xiang Dang itself was written with such intentions. Of course, it is possible to say that *Rongyo* is merely a product of a verbal game, and is a perverted book with no academic value whatsoever. To me, however, this work not only proves the great verbal ability of the author, but it seems that through his obsession with sex, the author is deeply cynical about human nature, because everything could be explained through sex. The new Confucius, without any sacredness and authority, but with a perverted smile, somehow seems very humane.

Art historian Kobayashi Tadashi introduces in his book an original (nikuhitsu) ukiyo-e depicting Confucius, having a jolly ride on the float bore by eight courtesans (Fig. 18). This Confucius no doubt resembles the Confucius we have seen in *Rongyo*. The great Confucius was not always so great in Japan. The people of Edo sometimes called him “Old Man from China” (「唐のおやじ」 Hiraga Gennai, *Yoshiwara saiken sato no odamaki*) and even “Grandpa of Lu” (「魯国のおじい」 Santo Kyoden, *Shingaku hayazome-gusa*).

**Conclusion**
In this paper, I have picked up several examples of parody hoping that they would speak for themselves. It seems that almost all of my examples have something to do with sex, but I would like to clarify that it was not at all my intention. It rather demonstrates that Edo-period culture was astonishingly open-minded towards the matter of sex. Different cultures have different attitudes towards sex, and we have seen what it was like in Edo. Books of *shunga (春画)* or *enpon (艶本)* were not hidden away as secrets. Sex was never universally deemed vulgar. Some cultures chose to repress and expunge sex (as in Victorian England), while others chose to sanctify it as the very source of life and reproduction (as in Kama Sutra, the Maithuna statues at Khajuraho temple, and Shingon-Tachikawa-ryu). Typically in Japan, sex was often connected with laughter. During the Edo period, *shunga* was also called *warai-e (笑絵)*, and erotic utensils such as dildos were referred to as *warai dogu (笑道具)*, and *enpon* were called *ehon (笑本)*, e.g. *Ehon haru no akebono 笑本春の曙*. Even today, comedians on TV shows often resort to sex jokes to force the audience to laugh; and strangely enough, it works most of the time. Why were such vast amounts of *shunga* and *enpon* produced during the Edo period? Perhaps it was because the people of Edo believed that laughter was the key to living as true human beings. And in such an easygoing atmosphere of laughter, parodies blossomed in Edo. The laughter that connects the sexual (性, sei) and the sacred (聖, sei) could in fact be the clue to understanding the essence of Edo period culture.
Translation for the comic strip:

Title: “Why the skinhead?”

First box: (Foucault) People regard baldness as unbearable, so they try to cover it up.

Second box: (Foucault) Yet the hair continues to fall out. People look upon baldness as something to pity, and try to expel it from the society.

Third box: (Foucault) For example, however, if everyone was homosexual, homosexuality would no longer be heresy.

Fourth box: (Foucault) Thus, by becoming a skinhead, I am no longer bald. My head is free from the social power, and it has acquired true independence.

(The man) You think too much, Foucault.

Fig. 2

Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Ada makura chushingura* (at the end of the spear is….)
Fig. 4  Ito Jakuchu, *Kaso nehanzu*  
(Kyoto National Museum)

Fig. 5  *Mitate-e Narihira nehan-zu*  
(Tokyo National Museum)

Fig. 6  
*Iro jigoku zoshi emaki* (International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Fig. 7  
*Iro jigoku zoshi emaki*

Fig. 8  
*Iro jigoku zoshi emaki*
Fig. 9
Takarabako

Fig. 10
Takarabeki

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 13
Takarabako, Onna nogyo no zu

Fig. 14
Takarabeki, Onna noshoku no zu
Fig. 15
*Rongo cho*

![Image of Rongo cho]

Fig. 16
*Shuki shu chu*

![Image of Shuki shu chu]

Fig. 17
*Shugi shitsu chu*

![Image of Shugi shitsu chu]

Fig. 18
*Private collection, reprinted from Eureka Vol. 20/4*

![Image of Private collection, reprinted from Eureka Vol. 20/4]
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Endnotes

1 To be precise, the genre *Genji-e* among *ukiyo-e* refers to those works designed after *Nise Murasaki Inaka Genji*. In *ukiyo-e*, the characters of *Genji Monogatari* are depicted as commoners of Edo period, instead of Heian aristocrats. Such techniques of parody, called *mitate* or *yatsushi*, was applied frequently.

2 This section of the list concerning *Chushingura* was prepared with the help from Koyama, Kazunari “Kana dehon chushingura to kibyoshi,” *Aoyama Gobun*. Vol. 5; Sawada, Michiko “Chushingura mono no kibyoshi” *Rissho Daigaku Bungaku Bunku Ronshu*. Vol. 58.

3 This work is a caricature of the actual incident. The preface reads: “If we look at *Kana dehon chushingura*, we see that Oboshi is very loyal, but the whole affair started from Enya’s ignorance and the lack of bribe at the beginning. These mistakes happen because of people’s ignorance. That is why people must be well-informed (通). If everyone was well-informed about how the society works, nobody would quarrel, and the world will be much safer.”

4 The epilogue of the incident, with Teraoka Heimon as the main character.
5. *Chushingura* with *zukushi* of *soba* noodles.
6. *Chushingura* with *zukushi* of food.
7. Epilogue with Ono Sadakuro as the main character.
8. *Chushin Gura* with *zukushi* of *karamono* (things Chinese).
9. *Chushingura* with *zukushi* of medicine.
10. Epilogue with Kono Moronao as the main character.
11. *Chushingura* with *zukushi* of cooking utensils replacing the possessions of the characters.
12. Prologue with Oboshi Yuranosuke as the main character.
13. Prologue with Oboshi Yuranosuke as the main character. It tells the story of Yuranosuke becoming the head of his family, serving Enya, and then killing Moronao.
14. *Chushingura* with a stretched plot, with all characters depicted as women.
15. A picture puzzle.
16. *Chushingura* with a happy ending, where both parties reconcile.
17. *Chushingura* in which all the characters are depicted as hiragana characters.
18. *Chushingura* with many monsters in it.
19. *Chushingura* in which characters are depicted as horses.
20. *Chushingura* with many monsters in it.
21. Zhuge Liang, deep in debt, seeks help of Liu Bei, who runs a restaurant at Yoshiwara. Sima Qian barges in to collect the money, but Zhuge Liang outwits him and sends him away.
22. Pun using the final character of Ogyu Sorai’s interpretation of *Lunyu, Rongo Cho* (論語徴), and the character town (町), meaning Yoshiwara.
23. Mimicking the style of *Great Learning*, this work suggests the importance of living modestly. The eight stages (straightening out affairs, extending understanding, making intentions genuine, balancing the mind, refining one’s person, aligning one’s household, ordering the state, and setting the world at peace) are re-evaluated as follows: “If one wishes to refine his virtues, he will spend less money. If one wishes to spend less money, he shall arrange his household. If one wishes to arrange his household, he would work less to save energy. If one wishes to work less, he better stop thinking. If one wishes to stop thinking, he must give up his goals. If one wishes to give up his goals, he should stop spending. If one stops spending, one stays inside.” Bakin, in his entry dated the sixth day of the first month in 1844, notes: “I had Omichi read me Tamenaga Shunsui’s *Daigaku shoku*, which Kanaejiro left with me. I listened, and all it did was to mock the sacred book. I couldn’t listen anymore, and had it thrown away.” From Bakin’s eyes, who strongly believed in the teachings of Confucius, such mockery was unacceptable.
24. Sonchobo Shinno (1552-1597) was the sixth prince of Prince Kunisuke of Fushimino Miya, and the leader of Tendai sect.
25. Nakai Ryoyu (1716-1805) was the merchant of Hino, Omi. He sold medicine throughout the Kanto region, and later traded hemp and cotton in Tohoku region as well. He was appointed an official tradesman of the Sendai domain.
26. Ito Seisaku (1779-1864) was a doctor. His family was the head of the village in Wakasa Kawaraichi, located in present day Fukui Prefecture. He investigated and improved agriculture in many regions, and published his research as *Nogyo kunmo* (reprinted in *Nihon nomin shiryo shusui*. Vol. 2), in which *Fugen nogyo ichimai*
Ozawa Roan (1723-1801) was a poet and kokugaku scholar of the mid-Edo period. Born in Nanba, he spent most of his life in Kyoto. He is counted as one of the four prolific poets of his time.

Yanagisawa Kien has reprinted this in *Unpyo zasshi* (Iwanami Bunko, p. 28).

For more details about *Kaso nehan-zu*, see Ito Nobuhiro “Kaso nehan-zu ni egakareta yasai, kudamono ni tsuite” *Gengo bunka ronshu*. Vol. 30/1, Nagoya Daigaku, 2008.

Using Terajima Ryoan’s *Wakan saisai zue*, the encyclopedia of the Edo period, as the model, this work delves into shady facts about the pleasure district. “Akan sanzai zue is titled in this way because people are never tired of spending all their money at the pleasure district” (explanatory notes).

This work uses *Kummo zui* as the model, and mainly showcase visual materials to describe sexual matters.


Jin was an important organ, because it stores semen. If the jin is empty, the status would be called *kyojin*. There is a parody haiku of *Lunyu*’s “The state of *jin* lacks vanity of words and expressions,” which goes “Scholar who lacks/Utters how little/The semen is left.”

Kojima, Yasunori “‘Seijin no Michi’ to ‘Shikido’” *Asia Bunka Kenkyu*. Vol. 16 (extra), March 2007.

On various interpretations of this passage, see Yoshikawa, Kojiro *Dokusho no Gaku*. Chikuma Shobo, 1975.


This can be found in Kobayashi, Tadashi “Daisho egoyomi no Harunobu to Gennai” *Eureka*. Vol. 20/4, April 1998. The author is unknown, but it is likely that the painting was made during the Horeki and Meiwa periods.