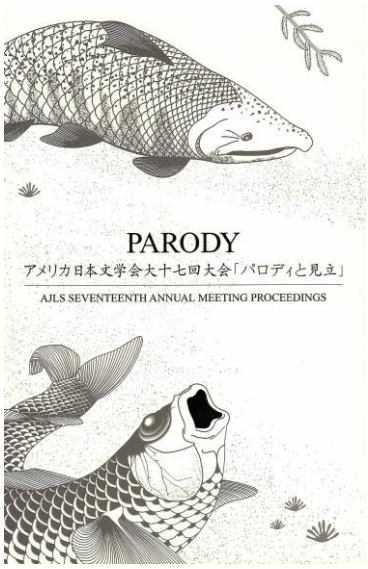
“Spirals of Parody: ‘Polemical Imitation’ in *Shusse Sugoroku*, *Ningen Dōchūzu* and Other Edo-period Woodblock-printed Publications on the Human Life-course”

Susanne Formanek

Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies 10 (2009): 72–93.



PAJLS 10:
Parody.
Ed. Sharalyn Orbaugh and Joshua S. Mostow.

SPIRALS OF PARODY: "POLEMICAL IMITATION" IN *SHUSSE SUGOROKU*, *NINGEN DŌCHŪZU* AND OTHER EDO-PERIOD WOODBLOCK-PRINTED PUBLICATIONS ON THE HUMAN LIFE-COURSE

Susanne Formanek
University of Vienna, Austria

INTRODUCTION

The late Edo-period Japanese woodblock-printing industry and its consumers sustained a boom of publications devoted to the human life-course. Geared towards the commoner population, these publications assumed multifarious forms ranging from booklets in the *kusazōshi* 草双紙-style to maps depicting human life as a journey through various landscapes, replete with crossroads leading either to desirable destinations or to not so desirable ones. Yet another format of the genre was constituted by the so-called *shusse sugoroku* 出世双六, pictorial board-games that, as indicated by the term *shusse*, "career or success story," concerned themselves with ways of achieving success in life. Although at various different levels, all of these publications involved parody if understood in the broadest sense of the word, thus partaking of the more generally acknowledged frequency of allusion and intertextuality in Japanese art and culture as a whole, and in that of the Edo period in particular.

According to Wikipedia, parody, in contemporary usage, refers to a work designed to mock, poke fun at or comment on an original work, its subject, author, or some other target, by means of humorous, satiric or ironic imitation.[1] Moreover, from its origin in literary studies, the term has more recently evolved to cover not only the humorous imitation of works of art, but also of other kinds of cultural productions or practices that do not necessarily pertain to the realm of art,[2] an approach that can be usefully applied to Japan as well. This expansion of the meaning of the term seems to be related to the proliferation of parody in the broader sense of the word in post-modern society. While earlier definitions of parody restricted the genre to "a literary instrument of ideological criticism [that] destroys established ideologies, such as the heroic or fascistic, by searching them for symptomatic, verbally and structurally

[1] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody.
[2] See for example Dentith 2000.

fixed constructs and tearing these structures down along with the ideologies manifested in them",[3] Simon Dentith[4] more recently has defined parody as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice". For Linda Hutcheon,[5] "parody… is imitation with a critical difference," but not necessarily "at the expense of the parodied text." As opposed to pastiche, where imitation is an end in and of itself, parody then can be seen as implying a certain amount of breach of norms, whether explicitly political or not, the recognition of which is what ultimately produces laughter and amusement on the part of the recipient. The following discussion of the kind of imitation and allusion at work in the Edo-period materials presented beneath will therefore try to establish, by means of contextualization, whether they contained a breach of norms that would qualify them as parodies.

KOTOBUKI SHUSSE SUGOROKU: CONTENTS AND PARODY

As part of the vast genre of *e-sugoroku* 絵双六,[6] *shusse sugoroku* consisted of two, four, or more woodblock-printed sheets pasted together, so that the sizes of the finished products vary, up to about 90 x 70 cm. They were race games similar to the European Goose Game or Jeu de l'Oie. Players would throw dice and, beginning from a start section called *furidashi* 振り出し or *furihajime* 振り始め, move their markers over the squares of the board according to the number thrown. The player to first reach the goal section called *agari* 上り would come off as the winner of the game. According to the structure of the boards and the rules of the game, *e-sugoroku* can be classified into at least two clearly discernible categories:

---

[3] See http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5478/Parody.html
[4] Dentith 2000, p. 9.
[5] Hutcheon 1985, p. 6–7.
[6] The following overview is based on the growing corpus of Japanese literature on *e-sugoroku*. The authoritative guide to the history of Japanese children's games, Hanzawa 1980, vol. 3 and *bekkan* 別巻, pp. 2–198 and 146–313, contains small reproductions of several hundred specimens. Other works, often by the pen of collectors or knowledgeable amateurs, as well as exhibition catalogues, give overviews of the genre as a whole and insist, with large colour illustrations, on the visual qualities of *e-sugoroku*. These include: Konishi, Jugaku and Muragishi 1974, Takahashi 1980, Yamamoto 1988 and 2004, Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō hakubutsukan 1998, and Katō and Matsumura 2002.

1. In the *mawari* 回り or "roundabout" *sugoroku*, the start is located in one corner of the board, players advancing their markers for the number of sections or squares stipulated by the number thrown with the die and along a spiral course leading towards the goal located in the centre of the print.

2. In *tobi* 飛び or "jumping" *sugoroku*, each field or square on the board contains instructions as to which square players must proceed to when a given number is thrown.[7]

Competition among publishers led to the invention of ever new types of *sugoroku*. In general, *shusse sugoroku* are no exception to this rule.[8] There is, however, a corpus of at least five extant specimens entitled *Kotobuki shusse (ō)sugoroku* 壽出世（大）双六 (Congratulations on Success in Life-*Sugoroku*), that stand out from the rest in that they were published over a relatively long period of time, that is, at least from the first quarter of the 19th century until 1860, by varying publishers and with illustrations by varying designers, but with almost completely unchanged content, suggesting that they enjoyed a sustained popularity among consumers well beyond the attraction they might have exercised originally as fashionable novelty products. These are:

a) *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* 壽出世雙六, 61 x 64 cm, unsigned and devoid of any censor's seal or publisher's mark (preserved in the rare books collection of the Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, call no. 本別 9–27–08–006)[9]

b) *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* 壽出世雙六, 61 x 46 cm, signed Gofūtei Sadatora-ga 五風亭貞虎画, published by Yamamoto Heikichi 山本平吉 somewhere between 1815 and 1842, as attested to by the *kiwame* 極 censor's seal (preserved in the collection of the Tōkyō Toritsu Chūō Toshokan)[10]

---

[7] An additional category often mentioned is *tobi mawari sugoroku* 飛び回り双六, which represents a combination of the above two types. In structure, the game resembles *mawari sugoroku*, but some of the squares contain instructions requiring players to make special moves, that is, to jump. Lastly, *furiwake* 振り分け, "parted" or "divided" *sugoroku* may contain, within either the roundabout or the jumping structure, two (or more) different paths that advance towards the winning square.

[8] For a review of a number of other *shusse sugoroku* varieties and especially those dedicated to the female life-course, see Formanek 2005.

[9] Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 331.

[10] Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 337.

c) *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* 壽出世双六, 67 x 47 cm, signed Kuniteru-ga 国輝画 (= Utagawa Kuniteru I) and published by Eikyūdō 永久堂 (the same Yamamoto Heikichi as above) without any censor's seal probably between 1848 and 1855 (preserved in the collections of the Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, call no. 本別9–27–08–007, of the Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan and of the Mitsui Bunko)[11]

d) *Kotobuki shusse ōsugoroku* 壽出世大雙六, 51 x 38 cm, signed Yoshitsuna-ga 芳綱画, devoid of any censor's seal or publisher's mark and estimated, because of its designer's known years of activity, to have been published between 1848 and 1865 (preserved in the collection of the Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, call no. 本別 9–27–08–005, and of the Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan, call no. 90208045) (Figure 1)[12]

Figure 1. *Kotobuki shusse ōsugoroku* 壽出世大雙六, signed Yoshitsuna-ga 芳綱画 (Woodblock print; private collection, Vienna)

e) *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* 壽出世雙六, 37 x 25 cm, signed Yoshifuji-ga よし藤画 and published by Bunseidō 文正堂

[11] Katō and Matsumura 2002, pp. 331, 344. The Mitsui Bunko specimen is reproduced in color and in a sizeable format allowing to decipher all of its texts in Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan 1998, p. 18, and is the source for my transcription of its contents.

[12] Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 331.

in the tenth month of Man'en 1 (1860) (preserved in the collection of the Tōkyō Toritsu Chūō Toshokan)[13]

Falling into the jumping *sugoroku* category, these *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* all consist of 47 squares, each representing one profession or station in life arranged in a hierarchical manner, and each accompanied, in addition to the instructions as to where to proceed to next at what number thrown, by one humorous poem (*kyōka* 狂歌).[14] The goal, occupied by the figure of the *chōja* 長者, the super-rich, is located in the centre of the top row, while the squares in the bottom row are devoted to the least desirable stations in life such as bankruptcy (*bunsan* 分散), mortgaging one's house (*kajichi* 家質), disinheritance (*kandō* 勘当), or living as a mendicant monk (*gannin bōzu* 願人坊主). In between complete destitution and extreme wealth, we find, in ascending order, squares representing an apprentice, a shop adjunct, an adopted son or son-in-law, succession to household headship or the opening of a shop, a teacher, a money lender and a wholesale merchant, until we reach fields, such as life in abundance hands down (*hidari uchiwa* 左り団扇), almost indistinguishable from the goal and located in the same row with it. Two squares, that of the mendicant monk and that of the *raku inkyo* 楽隠居, "leisurely retirement", stand out from the rest in that they lack instructions as to where to proceed to from there. Players who reached one of these squares were out of the game, or as the text on the square of the mendicant monk put it, "Over and done! (*ochikiri butchimai).*" Compared to this, the text on the *raku inkyo* square was equally unequivocal, but less inclement. "End of the line! Those who reach this square receive a retirement annuity from the super-rich (*Tomari. Koko e atareba chōja yori buichi no inkyoryō o toru nari*)", it stated, thereby referring to the custom, current among all strata of the Edo population prosperous enough to afford it, of transferring household headship and family possessions *inter vivos*, with the retiree relying on his successor for his subsistence.

---

[13] Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 337. The specimens b, c, d, and e are also mentioned in Iwaki 1994, p. 64. Iwaki, while being the first scholar to have endeavored to analyze *sugoroku* with regard to their contents and overall runs of the game in some more detail, does not, however, pay attention to the poems inscribed on the board.

[14] For a detailed analysis, complete transcription and translation of all the texts on this particular *sugoroku*, see Formanek 2004a.

As players moved their pieces over the board, there thus unfolded before them quite realistic scenarios for the ways in which a boy borne into the merchant class could hope to become a rich man, if fortune was with him. With one qualified exception,[15] the kind of success this *sugoroku* concerned itself with did not transgress success within the strict boundaries of the merchant class, and therefore, at first sight, did not contradict the feudal *shi-nō-kō-shō* 士農工商 system which divided society into four classes by law hermetically closed to each other.

It should be noted within this context, however, that the dominant ethics of the samurai governmental elites despised the kind of capital accumulation the *sugoroku* posited as the ultimate goal in life (in addition to visually celebrating it by the depiction, in the goal section, of a pyramidal pile of rice bales and money cassettes with a treasury bag on top, scattered gold coins and luxury decorations). Instead, governmental ethics advocated frugality by limiting consumption for the sake of saving a surplus for emergencies or for humanitarian action. In the view of samurai officials, the merchants as social latecomers who, evidently, earned their money from the difference between purchase and retail price, while having become a necessary evil, were parasitizing both their suppliers and their customers merely for the sake of their own well-being.[16] This disdain for the merchants was reflected in the *shi-nō-kō-shō* system which placed them at the lowest echelon of the social hierarchy, beneath not only the samurai at the top, but also beneath farmers and

---

[15] This is the somewhat disturbing square at the right of the goal, devoted to the *haenuki chigyō* 生抜知行, a term the meaning of which is difficult to assess with certainty. While *haenuki* means "long-" or "old-established", *chigyō* normally refers to either a fief or some other kind of remuneration a vassal receives from his lord, as well as to the person who receives it (NKD, vol. 8, p. 1314). It should therefore apply to men of the samurai nobility, thus lying beyond what a commoner could hope to become. In the early 17th century, however, when the shogunate was turning Edo from a fishing village into the governmental capital of the country, three wealthy merchants, originally stemming from the samurai nobility themselves, had been granted large amounts of land in the city as *chigyō* in reward for their contributions to its development. These were to become the hereditary city elders (*machidoshiyori* 町年寄), the highest-ranking commoners in the city who served as the administrational link between the government and the commoner population and thus had some political influence. In addition to the land grants and other material rewards they received from the government, they were also allowed the two distinguishing badges of the samurai class: the wearing of swords and the use of a surname; cf. Sorensen 2002, p. 19. The chances are, therefore, that the term *haenuki chigyō* referred to these *machidoshiyori*.

[16] See for example Kinmoth 1981, pp. 39–40.

artisans, and against the obvious fact that they, in terms of material possessions, were often much better off than those ranking above them in this hierarchy. Government officials thus were alarmed by the evidence of merchant wealth and did what they could to keep it within bounds, recurrently issuing sumptuary laws and occasionally punishing the kind of ostentatious display of wealth that was depicted in the goal section of the *sugoroku* by the confiscation of the property of merchants who had become too prosperous to their minds.[17] Also, the term *shusse*, deriving from *yo ni deru* 世に出る, had a connotation not mainly of material success, but of gaining high position and status, which again ran counter governmental politics of keeping merchants in a lowly position. All things considered, the *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* thus were not as politically innocent as they might appear at first sight, which probably is also the reason why they usually lack any censor's seal, the publishers obviously preferring, for their production, to circumvent the censoring process every printed product normally had to undergo.

With this information in mind, let us now turn to the texts on the *sugoroku*, which, as already mentioned above, were not limited to the instructions that constituted the rules of the game, but also included one *kyōka* per square. These poems often allude to classic *waka* 和歌 poems and appropriate their noble models to exalt townspeople's lifestyles. For example, on the square of the *iemochi* 家持 or "house owner", we find the following poem:

> 白壁のしろきをしればかささぎのうたのぬしにもまがふ家持
> *Shirakabe no / shiroki o shireba / kasasagi no*
> *uta no nushi ni mo / magau iemochi*
> For of white walls / the bright whiteness he knows / from even the magpies' / poem's proprietor indistinguishable / is he, the wealthy house owner!

The allusion here, of course, is to the classic *Hyakunin isshu* 百人一首 (One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets) poem by Ōtomo no Yakamochi 大伴家持 (718–785):

> *Kasasagi no / wataseru hashi ni / oku shimo no*
> *shiroki o mireba / yo zo fukenikeru*

---

[17] See for example Jansen 2002, p. 170.

> When I see the whiteness / of the frost that lies / on the bridge that magpies spread / then do I know, indeed, / that the night has deepened![18]

The *kyōka* establishes witty analogies between the house owner and the noble poet in a number of ways. First, every knowledgeable reader would recognize that *iemochi* and Yakamochi are nothing but two different readings of the same combination of Chinese characters. Second, the *kyōka* parallels the original poem in that in both cases the sight of something white on an architectural element triggers the recognition of another fact. In the original poem this something white is frost lying either on the bridge that, according to the Tanabata legend, is formed each year across the Milky Way by magpies to allow the Herder to meet the Weaver for one night, or else, on a staircase in the imperial palace, no less "lofty" than the Milky Way by virtue of its association with the imperial court. By the same token, the allusion to this poem on the *sugoroku* suggests an equal loftiness for the townsman's house. In the *Hyakunin isshu* poem, the sight of the white frost inspires the author with a sense of the night soon bygone. In the *sugoroku kyōka*, the sight of something white is that of white walls, that is, the architectural style of *shirakabe-zukuri* 白壁作り or surrounding one's estate with white walls, which only the nobility and the wealthiest of wealthy commoners could afford,[19] and the recognition triggered by the sight of these white walls is that the owner of such an estate has the same prestige as the noble poet, both being *nushi* 主, a term used in classical Japanese poetological jargon to designate the creator of a poem, but also simply meaning "owner" in more trivial contexts. The *kyōka* thus, while not necessarily poking fun at the original it alluded to, combined a partly repetition of it with word-plays that established the equality of a merchant with a nobleman and thus implied the kind of breach of norms—that of the feudal class hierarchy—that we might expect having rather amused the commoners playing the game.

More generally, the whole corpus of *kyōka* on the *sugoroku* presented itself as a parody of classical *waka* anthologies. Each and every poem is given its author, although their names are mere inventions fitting the meaning of the square they accompany, thus again establishing

---

[18] The translation and interpretation of the poem follow Mostow 1996, pp. 158–159.
[19] NKD, vol. 7, p. 412.

equality between commoners and noble poets. For example, the author of the poem on the square of the elementary school teacher is named Hoyō Nariyasu 保養成安, inviting pupils to take courses with this "education-made-easy"-master. The poem celebrating *katoku* 家督, "succession to family headship", is by Hon'ya Motoyasu 本屋資安, suggesting the comfortable life of a man inheriting a wealthy main house. It is probably not too far-fetched to assume that, beside this lucky connotation, the name was also meant to evoke that of the famous *waka* poet Fun'ya no Yasuhide (858–883). As with anthologies which include important poems even when their authors are no longer known, our *sugoroku* also has a poem by an unknown author, a *yomibito shirazu* 読人知らず, and it is certainly no coincidence that it appears on the square of the bankrupt who, out of shame for his destitution, might prefer remain anonymous.

Finally, the poem in the goal section is a loose, but recognizable pastiche of the famous Abe no Nakamaro (698–770) *Hyakunin isshu* poem:[20]

> *Ama no hara / furisakemireba / Kasuga naru*
> *Mikasa no yama ni / ideshi tsuki ka mo*
> As I gaze out, far / across the plain of heaven, / ah, at Kasuga / from behind Mount Mikasa, / it's the same moon that came out then!

On the *sugoroku* we read:

> 双六をふる春雨の上がりには一つ星見て長者にぞなる
> *Sugoroku o / furu harusame no / agari ni wa hitotsuboshi mite / chōja ni zo naru*
> Sugoroku we play / during early spring rains; / when they clear, / we aim to be first to see the evening star rise / and ourselves to the richest of men!

The *kyōka* incorporates a number of puns that can be read as a parody of the genre of *waka* itself. The obligatory mentioning of seasonal/natural phenomena as an introduction to the expression of the author's more specific feelings is coupled with double meanings referring to the *sugoroku* game. *Furu* acts as a *kakekotoba*, meaning both "to throw the die" (*sugoroku o furu* 双六を振る) and "falling spring rains" (*furu*

[20] Mostow 1996, pp. 161–162.

harusame 降る春雨), whereas *agari* designates both the *sugoroku* goal section and skies clearing after rain. As a pastiche of the *Hyakunin isshu* poem, the *kyōka* operates, not only on the simple plane of the words, but rather on that of transposing the situation and mood of the original into the context of *sugoroku* playing. The original is conventionally held to reveal Abe no Nakamaro's affection for his homeland and his poignant awareness of the many years he had already spent in China, these feelings being simultaneously triggered by and expressed through the realization that the moon he sees now rising in the sky is the same as the one he saw in Japan before his departure, only his own circumstances as the viewer differ. In the *kyōka*, we also find people scrutinizing the sky, but not for the moon. Instead, they wait for the evening star to appear. This refers to a then popular children's game: they would search the evening sky, crying: "The first to see the evening star will become a rich man! (*hitotsuboshi mitsuketara chōja ni naro na* 一つ星見つけたら長者に成ろな)".[21] By the same token, the *kyōka* reverses the mood of the original. While Abe no Nakamaro's poem is one of nostalgic retrospection, the *kyōka* celebrates an optimistic outlook on fortune lying ahead. This, to my mind, is powerful parody: using the original poem as a foil against which to highlight the new meaning instilled into the form of the original, it polemically replaces a nobleman's nostalgic retrospection with Edo townspeople future-orientedness and optimism for upward social mobility.

The name of this *kyōka*'s author as given on the board actually is the only one that is not a fake: Senshūan Sandara hōshi 千秋庵三陀羅法師 (1731–1814) had renown as a *kyōka* poet at the turn from the 18th to the 19th century. The chances are, therefore, that he was responsible for all the *kyōka* on the *sugoroku*.[22] Of the five extant *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku*, however, internal evidence suggests that four were published after Sandara hōshi's death. The unsigned sheet a) mentioned above, however, to judge from its pictorial style, could have been produced during his lifetime. Further evidence also suggests that the first boom of *shusse sugoroku* occurred during the 1790s. In the *Masaki no katsura* 真佐喜のかつら, a *zuihitsu* 随筆 written in the Bakumatsu period by Seisōdō Tōho 青葱堂冬圃, a man engaged in the publishing business, we read the

[21] NKD, vol. 11, p. 391.
[22] This is also hinted at by the fact that on the square of the *gannin bōzu*, the mendicant monk, the author is given as answering to the name of Senshūan, a name not only reminiscent of a pious recluse, but evidently also one of Sandara hōshi's pseudonyms.

following description of a *shusse sugoroku* that seems to fit this sheet almost perfectly well:[23]

> The pictorial *sugoroku* board games children like to play with came into fashion from the Kansei period onwards. At the time when I came to understand the world, there existed a so-called *shusse sugoroku* published by Maruya Bun'emon from Kanda, Benkei-bashi. The illustrations were by Utagawa Kuniyasu and it included *kyōka* by Sandara hōshi Senshūan. There are lots of *sugoroku*, but none stems from this one. It was not beautiful like the *sugoroku* published today, consisting only of two sheets of the so-called Nishijō paper and printed in only four colors, black, red, indigo blue and yellow. On its envelope the character *kotobuki* was printed in green, a very blunt design on the whole. Only some 30 years later, such blunt designs had disappeared and everybody understood that prints in 8 or even 10 colours were the norm. At its climax, this *shusse sugoroku* had the following poem: *Sugoroku wo / furu harusame no / agari ni wa / hitotsuboshi mite / chōja ni zo naru* by Senshūan Sandara hōshi.[24]

The origins of the *shusse sugoroku* then, if we believe Seisōdō Tōho, went back at least to the Kansei period, that is, to the 1790s and their boom of satirizing publications to which the so-called Kansei reforms were to put an end before long.

THE PARODISTIC ORIGINS OF *SHUSSE SUGOROKU*

Let us therefore investigate what could have been the circumstances under which *shusse sugoroku* came into being. *Sugoroku* are believed today to have sprung from at least two varieties of religious materials: *myōmoku* 名目 or Buddhist doctrine *sugoroku*, and *jōdo* 浄土 or Pure Land *sugoroku*.[25] Both *myōmoku* and *jōdo sugoroku* had the same checkered structure to later *tobi sugoroku*, but while *myōmoku sugoroku* were inscribed only with words, *jōdo sugoroku* were pictorial. Their bottom rows were devoted to the various hells and other evil realms of the Buddhist cosmos, such as that of the "hungry ghosts" (*gaki* 餓鬼),

---

[23] Except for the fact, of course, that it mentions a designer and a publisher, of whom the preserved sheet lacks any traces.
[24] Mitamura 1927, p. 370.
[25] For an analysis of these, see Iwaki 1995.

while the middle rows, with life as a human being as the start section, were dedicated to various ranks of Buddhist monks. Further up, heavenly realms or degrees of enlightenment were reached, with Pure Land as the goal on top. They were played with a die each face of which showed one *kanji* of the prayer formula *namu bunshin shobutsu* 南無分身諸仏, "Praise the myriad Buddhas in all their appearances." In other words, *jōdo sugoroku* on their squares reproduced the components of the Buddhist cosmology, the various realms of rebirth and of Buddhist enlightenment, and thus probably served as a kind of divinatory game, revealing, through the bias of dice-throwing fate, how far individual players had already progressed on the path towards the ultimate religious goal of reaching Buddhahood in the Pure Land of Bliss, or, alternatively, whether in their actual state of mind or because of the misdeeds they had committed they rather were prone to be condemned to an evil realm after their death.[26] Remarkably, *jōdo sugoroku* already included, in the same way as the later *shusse sugoroku* did, a square that did not offer any directions as to where to proceed to from there. This square was inscribed with the term *yōchin* 永沈, or "[the place into which one is] engulfed for eternity," denoting a hell in which sinners were condemned to stay for an extremely protracted period of time equaling eternity. The existence of this square apparently was very important to the minds of contemporaries who gave the *jōdo sugoroku* a nickname that alluded to it: they also referred to them as *yōchin sugoroku*.[27]

Remarkably, the term *yōchin* 永沈 is not at all common. The two *kanji*, however, appear in religious texts written in *kanbun*, their *kundoku* reading being *nagaku shizumu*, or "to be condemned to for a long time," usually to some kind of Buddhist hell or other evil realm, or a "world of pain" (*kugai* 苦界).

It is a striking parallel, to say the least, that mention of *jōdo sugoroku* reaches a peak in Japanese literature roughly from the end of the 17th to the middle of the 18th century, and that the place where they

---

[26] This is also hinted at by the fact that the immediate forerunners of the *Jōdo sugoroku* can be detected in recently-discovered painted hanging scrolls. Displaying similar contents to the *Jōdo sugoroku* together with an equally checkered structure, the extant specimens are not only iconographically related to, but also are all preserved together with the so-called *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara*, paintings used by nuns from Kumano for the *etoki*, or "picture explanation", focusing upon how the state of the human heart determines the place of rebirth of the individual; cf. Ogurisu 2006.

[27] NKD, vol. 13, p. 537.

are mentioned most often to have been played were the famous *kugai* of the Edo period, that is, the licensed pleasure quarters.[28] While this at first sight may come as a surprise, we should not forget that, by the end of the 17th century, not only had it become fashionable to playfully liken the red-lantern districts to hell, but also many of the games played there for the entertainment of the customers mimicked precisely Buddhist afterlife lore.[29] This was the expression of a polemically parodistic attitude towards Buddhism that had its political undertones as well, since the government required every Japanese citizen to be affiliated with a parish temple, the clergy purportedly taking advantage of the fact in order to compulsorily demand copious offerings for funeral rites and commemorative services designed to prevent dim post-mortem fates. The equating of the red-lantern districts with Buddhist hells, while not completely refuting Buddhist teachings, radically questioned their validity in more secular contexts. It relied on the idea that, for the prostitute, life in the brothel to which she was indentured with little hope for escape was a kind of this-worldly hell eventually as painful as the one that awaited her in the afterlife; for her client, being drawn to her without ever being able to redeem her, was held to be a similarly painful this-worldly hell, and one that might lead him to yet another one: debts.[30]

One source that depicts a similar parodistic gesture in connection with *jōdo sugoroku* is *Hatsunegusa tōgi ōkagami* 初音草噺大鑑, a collection of funny tales published in 1698. Here, the author recounts that among the various games people played during the vigils customarily held in the ninth month, *jōdo sugoroku* were said to reveal whether a person's heart was good or evil. When, on such an occasion, the man who had reached Buddhahood on the board was just rejoicing with this happy outcome, meal was brought, and he insisted upon being given the seat of honor. "Then let's have the hungry ghosts be served first!", said a quick-witted man, and the Buddha ended up receiving nothing.[31] Again, this polemically questioned the validity of Buddhist teachings in secular contexts: While in Buddhist afterlife lore, the hungry ghosts suffered precisely from not being able to ever eat something because all aliments

---

[28] Iwaki 1995, pp. 161–162.
[29] Inoue 1993, p. 101.
[30] "Even worse than the pains of hell is how hard you get pressed when the creditors come to exact repayment of your debts on the eve of holidays", said the hero of a *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 published in 1784; cf. Formanek 2004b, esp. p. 332.
[31] Iwaki 1995, pp. 162–163.

turned into flames when they tried to get hold of them, secular civility of course demanded to serve the hungry quickly.

It comes as no surprise by now that the oldest known *tobi sugoroku* devoted to a subject different to Buddhist cosmology while obviously parodying *jōdo sugoroku* is the tentatively so-called *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* 吉原浄土双六, of which 3 specimens are known to be extant today.[32] They posit, as their starting square, the main entrance to the Shin-Yoshiwara red-lantern district which occupies the center of the two lower-to-middle rows that otherwise depict objects and minor persons pertinent to the red-lantern districts, with the bottom row devoted to the least desirable situations and least popular figures of the Yoshiwara such as the *yarite* 遣り手, the much-hated bawd. Here we also find a square analogous to the *yōchin* or "[the place into which one is] engulfed for eternity"-square of the *jōdo sugoroku*: this is the *okebuse* 桶伏せ, referring to the custom of leaving a brothel customer unable to pay the fees with a tub filled with excrements turned over him down the street. The upper rows are devoted, in ascending order, to bawdyhouses (*ageya* 揚屋), brothel owners, and prostitutes of increasing ranks, until in the upper row we find the highest-ranking *tayū* 太夫. The goal section is occupied by Takao 高尾, probably the most famous of all Yoshiwara courtesans of all times. Thus, the *Yoshiwara sugoroku* borrows the form of *jōdo sugoroku*—to the point of having players proceed according to the *namu bunshin shobutsu* 南無分身諸仏-prayer die—while instilling it with a radically different, or rather, opposite content, replacing rebirth in the Pure Land and its precondition, freeing oneself from all this-worldly attachments, with approaching the most sought-after Japanese hetaera ever, or clinging to one of the basest of all this-worldly concerns, sexual desire, which, according to Buddhist teachings, would earn one rebirth in the evil realm of animals at best.

Internal evidence suggests that *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* were first published in either 1666 or 1667.[33] Therefore, some of the *jōdo sugoroku* mentioned in the *gesaku* literature to have been played in the red-lantern districts from the end of the 17th century to roughly the 1750's might, in fact, very well have been, not the original *jōdo sugoroku*, but rather various kinds of parodies of these in the manner of the *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku*.

---

[32] Yagi 1996, p. 18.
[33] Yagi 1996, p. 17.

This, however, leaves us with another 40 years' gap to bridge to the stipulated first boom of *shusse sugoroku. Jōdo sugoroku* disappear from *gesaku* literature from the mid-18th century onwards, supplanted by the then increasingly popular *dōchū* 道中 or "travel" *sugoroku.*[34] Extant examples of these, however, falling into the *mawari sugoroku* category, can not possibly be the forerunners of *shusse sugoroku* which are conspicuous examples of *tobi sugoroku.*

JINSEI DŌCHŪZU AND THEIR PARODISTIC ORIGINS

A missing link might be found in another genre of publications devoted to the human life course, that is, the *jinsei dōchūzu* 人生道中図 or "maps of man's journey through life" and related publications. The 1756 publication of *Ningen isshō Zen'aku ryōdōchū hitori annai* 人間一生　善悪両道中独案内 (The Human Life-Course: A Self-guided Tour of Good and Evil Pathways) immediately caused a craze for similar publications that was to endure for the rest of the Edo period (Figure 2).[35]

Figure 2. *Zen'aku jinsei dōchūki* 善悪人生道中記 [Black-and-white woodblock print, published in Kansei 6 寛政 6 年 (1794) as a reprint of the Hōreki 6 宝暦 6 年 (1756) edition; private collection of Yamashita Kazumasa 山下和正; image reproduced from Yamashita 1998, p. 245]

A small booklet in the *kusazōshi*-style, it described human life as a journey through a mountainous landscape replete with crossroads leading to desirable destinations or not so desirable ones. It came complete with a map-like print that imparted pictorial expression to the written

[34] Iwaki 1995, p. 163.
[35] See Agio 2001.

explanations. To give just a few examples, readers and beholders were thus led from Mount Man and Wife (Imōseyama 妹背山) via the Wet Nurse's Milk Well (Chinomii 乳のみ井), the Hakama Tree (Hakamagi 袴木), a tree from the branches of which *hakama* trousers were suspended and which symbolized, while being homophonous to, the *hakamagi* 袴着 coming-of-age ceremony of young boys, to the steeply ascending Road of Diligence, Thrift and Righteousness that could ultimately lead to Retirement Temple on Mount Bliss (Inkyo-san Anrakuji 隠居山安楽寺) at the top of the mountain. In between, however, there lay the *rokudō no tsuji* 六道の辻, a six roads' junction where one had to be careful to choose the right road. For example, turning to one's left there, one came to Sake-Drinking Hall (Shuendō 酒宴堂), with sights so entertaining that the chances were that one was never to leave it again, ending up in Blood-Throwing-Waterfall (Toketsu no taki 吐血の滝) where one could easily loose one's life.

It is obvious that the *rokudō no tsuji* that this *jinsei dōchūzu* described was a parody of the Buddhist notion of the *rokudō no tsuji*, the crossroads at which, according to Buddhist afterlife lore, the deceased were redirected to one of the six realms of rebirth. In addition, both the *Ningen isshō Zen'aku ryōdōchū hitori annai* and the accompanying map imitated the style of those Buddhist materials that described holy mountains as earthly representations of the Buddhist cosmos. Depictions of these holy mountains, such as for example the *Tateyama mandara* 立山曼荼羅 (Figure 3) for Mt. Tateyama in Toyama prefecture, equated each and every feature of the landscape with some religious concept and included the representation of various paths the pilgrim had to follow in order to arrive at these various landscapes on the flanks of the mountain. A lake with reddish water thus, for example, stood for Blood Pond Hell (*chi no ike jigoku* 血の池地獄), while Shōmyōgataki 声明ヶ滝 waterfall whispered prayers for the sake of the pilgrim. In addition, the pilgrim's route on his ascension of the mountain was lined by a number of temple buildings, ranging from the Enma-dō 閻魔堂 at the foot of the mountain which reminded the pilgrim of the trials he would have to undergo after his death at the tribunal of Enma as the judge of the netherworld, to a temple on top of the mountain that symbolized the Pure Land. Just as the *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* had imitated the style of *Jōdō sugoroku*, only to instill it with a radically different meaning referring to the very much this-worldly pleasures of the red-lantern districts, *Ningen isshō Zen'aku ryōdōchū hitori annai* and similar publications followed the style of Buddhist depictions of holy mountains, only to polemically replace their ultimate goal, that of being reborn in the Pure Land, with secular success.

This kind of process is usually referred to as secularization, which, of course, is true. The ways by which this secularization was achieved, however, was parody.

Figure 3. *Tateyama mandara* 立山曼荼羅 (Painting, first half of the nineteenth century; formerly in the possession of Daisenbō, Tateyama-chō, Ashikuraji, now Toyama-ken Tateyama Hakubutsukan; image reproduced from Toyama-ken Tateyama Hakubutsukan 1991, p. 14)

Although it might be impossible to ever prove the point, I suggest that when *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* no longer were novel enough to cause a stir, while at the same time *jinsei dōchūzu* enjoyed growing popularity, someone, maybe Senshūan Sandara hōshi himself, but at least someone very well aware of the parodistic character of both, had the idea of combining the strategies of both, that is, to celebrate secular success in life through the bias of a parody, not of the Buddhist notion of the *rokudō no tsuji*, but instead of the form of *jōdo sugoroku.*

PARODYING THE PARODIES: THE CASES OF *JINSEI DŌCHŪ-ZU* AND *SHUSSE SUGOROKU*

Since both *shusse sugoroku* and *jinsei dōchūzu*-related publications became stock material of the late Edo-period publishing industry, there is reason to suspect that over the course of time they lost their parodistic potential, that is, people simply forgot what was being parodied and possibly even that there was parody at all. While this is probably true, it is also true that no sooner had they become standard products of the publishing industry, than they were parodied themselves. Within the same month of the publication of *Ningen isshō Zen'aku ryōdōchū hitori*

annai, Sawada Tōkō 沢田東江 (1732–1796) published his *Meisho yasu annai* 迷處邪正案内 (A Tricky Guide to the Pitfalls of Life).[36] Taking up the six-roads' junction theme of the original, it parodied its contents which quite solemnly, although amusingly, had orchestrated both good and not so good ways to travel through life according to accepted values, by replacing it with the witful enumeration of roads that, while entertaining, finally all led to human destruction and destitution. Such a spiral of parody smacks of nihilistic cynicism with little to no significance as expression of sociopolitical criticism. They, however, created a climate within which values were constantly put into question, and this, I suggest, served à la longue to sustain public debate about ideal roads to success for commoners in an age when, in principle at least, there was supposed to be none.

Let me add two more examples of the parody being parodied to make this point a little clearer. In general, *shusse sugoroku* also emphasized moral qualities necessary for achieving success. For example, the *Banmin shusse no ishizue* 万民出世の意志図会 (Foundations of Success for All, 1849),[37] included a large number of squares devoted to virtues such as filial piety, diligence and thrift which they presented as enhancing the chances for success. Compared to this, the *Kotobuki shusse sugoroku* insisted less on morality as the basis of achievement; it, however, also included squares the contents of which it presented as pitfalls on the road towards success: indulging in too much luxury (*ogori* 驕奢) as well as too frequent brothel visits (*jorōkai* 女郎買) or calls on geisha.

The *Ataru haru shinpan: Danjo ichidai shusse ōsugoroku* 當る春新版 男女一代出世大双六 (This Spring's Newest Great *Sugoroku:* What a Man or a Woman Can Achieve in One Lifetime),[38] probably published in the first quarter of the 19th century, on closer look reveals itself to have made quite a big joke out of the whole idea of worthy behaviour being rewarded with success in life. What we witness on this piece are young people of both sexes completely given over to the pursuit of entertainment and lust. Having submitted to due reprimands from the part of elder family members and having made amends, they are nevertheless

---

[36] This is reprinted in Gazoku no kai 2005, pp. 533–560.

[37] I am grateful to Ann Herring, Hōsei Daigaku, for having given me the opportunity to study the specimen in her collection. It is reproduced in part in *Papierspiel & Bilderbogen* 1997, p. 101.

[38] This is preserved in the collection of the Tōkyō Toritsu Chūō Toshokan, cf. Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 337.

restored to family succession. In the goal section, we find two representatives of such utterly amoral youth, united in what we are supposed to believe to be a happy and indeed very suitable marriage.

A similarly irreverent twist can be seen on the *Zen'aku dōchū shusse sugoroku* 善悪道中出世壽古六 (*Sugoroku* of the Good and Evil Paths Toward Success in Life), designed by Kuniyoshi and authored by Shunpūtei Ryūshi 春風亭柳枝 in 1855.[39] This *sugoroku* showed a *sumō* tournament between good and evil in the start section and combined on its various squares morally good and not so good behaviour. As the ultimate goal in man's life, however, it presented something very different to the status of a respected person: its winning square boasted a party of three engaged in a *ken* game,[40] that is, an entertainment popular in the red-light districts as well as for drinking bouts.

THE RESULTS OF PARODY: A NEW WORLDVIEW

Having started as a parody genre and made its way through at least the last seven decades of the Edo period while being constantly parodied itself, the genre of the *shusse sugoroku* in the very last years of the feudal regime gave rise to a specimen that clearly did away with the prevailing *shi-nō-kō-shō* class system. As recent research has shown, boundaries between the classes had become somewhat porous by the 19th century, with some samurai aspiring to become farmers, artisans or tradesmen and eventually being granted leave to do so, and, vice versa, farmers and merchants occasionally ascending to the rank of samurai, either by marriage, adoption or by buying themselves into a hereditary samurai office.[41] As I have shown elsewhere,[42] *shusse sugoroku* devoted to the female life-course, which also flourished in parallel with those focusing only on men, routinely included a number of squares denoting ranks of noble-women and highlighted a number of possible life-courses allowing commoner girls to transgress the boundaries of their class by means of their good looks, their artistic talents, or both.

The *Shinpan Kamakura jidai shimin shusse sugoroku* 新版鎌倉時代四民出世双六 (All New *Sugoroku* of Kamakura-era Four Classes' Success-Stories), designed by Gountei Sadahide 五雲亭貞秀 and

---

[39] This is also preserved in the collection of the Tōkyō Toritsu Chūō Toshokan (Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 337) as well as in a number of other collections.
[40] On this game, see the contribution by Sepp Linhart, this volume, pp. 243–256.
[41] See for example Fukaya 2006.
[42] Formanek 2005.

published by Maruya Tokuzō 丸屋徳蔵 in the 10th month of 1860,[43] however, went one step further. It consisted of 72 squares depicting, in ascending order, wholesale merchants dealing in the myriad goods and products available in Japan at the time, followed by artisans, the farmer class, up until various ranks of samurai, with none else than the shogun himself in the goal section. While the arrangement of the squares thus neatly fitted the hierarchical class structure of the feudal system, the course of the game led players from their theoretically humble position of merchants to high samurai ranks, with one of them, the winner of the game, eventually ascending to the highest governmental position, that of the shogun or the ruler of the nation.

The *shusse sugoroku* genre thus, while starting as parody, ended up, even though playfully, in a clear assertion of commoners' claim to political participation at a time when this could not be discussed openly.

WORKS CITED

Agio Naoko 腮尾尚子. "Iwayuru *jinsei dōchū-zu* to sono henyō" 所謂「人生道中図」とその変容. In *Kyōkai to Nihon bungaku: Gazō to gengo hyōgen* 境界と日本文学—画像と言語表現 (= Dai24kai kokusai Nihon bungaku kenkyū shūkai kaigiroku 第24回国際日本文学研究集会会議録), pp. 189–213. Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan, 2001.

Dentith, Simon. *Parody: The New Critical Idiom*. London, New York: Routledge, 2000.

Formanek, Susanne. "Erfolg im Leben – Ein Kinderspiel? Modelle gelungener Lebensläufe auf bebilderten Brettspielen der ausgehenden Edo-Zeit." In *Sünden des Worts. Festschrift für Roland Schneider zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Judit Árokay and Klaus Vollmer, pp. 323–358. Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens e.V., 2004a.

——— "Paradise-and-Hell-Metaphors in Edo *Gesaku* Literature." In *Practicing the Afterlife: Perspectives from Japan*, ed. Susanne Formanek und William R. LaFleur, pp. 319–343. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004b.

——— "The 'Spectacle' of Womanhood: New Types in Texts and Pictures on Pictorial *Sugoroku* Games of the Late Edo Period." In *Written Texts—Visual Texts: Woodblock-printed Media in Early*

[43] This is preserved in the collection of the Tōkyō Toritsu Chūō Toshokan, cf. Katō and Matsumura 2002, p. 338.

Modern Japan, ed. Susanne Formanek and Sepp Linhart, pp. 73–108. Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005.

Fukaya Katsumi 深谷克己. *Edo jidai no mibun ganbō: Miagari to ueshita nashi* 江戸時代の身分願望―身上りと上下無し. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006.

Gazoku no kai 雅俗の会, ed. *Gazoku bunsō: Nakano Mitsutoshi sensei koki kinen shiryōshū* 雅俗文叢―中野三敏先生古稀記念資料集. Hako Shoin, 2005.

Hanzawa Toshio 半沢敏郎. *Dōyū bunkashi* 童遊文化史. Tōkyō Shoseki, 1980.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Inoue Keiji 井上啓治. "*Honchō suibodai zenden, Utō Yasukata chūgi-den* ni okeru 'jigoku-e, jigoku shinkō': Kyōden kōshō ni okeru ninshiki, shudai keisei to yomihon sakuhin" 『本朝酔菩提前伝』『善知安方忠義伝』における＜地獄絵・地獄信仰＞ ― 京伝考証における認識・主題形成と読本作品. *Edo bungaku* 江戸文学 10 (1993), pp. 85–111.

Iwaki Noriko 岩城紀子. "Shusse sugoroku no henka: Bakumatsu kara Meiji e" 出世双六の変化 ― 幕末から明治へ. *Fūzoku* 風俗 32:3 (1994), pp. 62–87.

Iwaki Noriko 岩城紀子. "Jōdo sugoroku-kō" 浄土双六考. *Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan kenkyū hōkoku* 東京都江戸東京博物館研究報告 1 (1995), pp. 157–194.

Jansen, Marius B. *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Katō Yasuko 加藤康子 and Matsumura Noriko 松村倫子. *Bakumatsu Meiji no e-sugoroku* 幕末・明治の絵双六. Kokusho Kankōkai, 2002.

Kinmoth, Earl H. *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1981.

Konishi Shirō 小西四郎, Jugaku Akiko 寿岳章子 and Muragishi Yoshio 村岸義雄. *Sugoroku: Dentōteki na Nihon no asobi* 双六―伝統的な日本の遊び. Tokuma Shoten, 1974.

Mitamura Engyo 三田村鳶魚, ed. *Mikan zuihitsu hyakushu* 未刊随筆百種, vol. 8. Yoneyamadō, 1927.

Mostow, Joshua. *Pictures of the Heart: The* Hyakunin isshu *in Word and Image*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1996.

NKD. Nihon kokugo daijiten dai2han henshū iinkai 日本国語大辞典第二版編集委員会, ed. *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典, 2nd edition. 14 vols. Shōgakkan, 2000–2002.

Ogurisu Kenji 小栗栖健治. “Chōgakuin no *Jōdo sugoroku*” 長学院の「浄土双六」. *Murayama minzoku gakkai* 村山民俗学会 <Yamagata 山形> 180 (2006), p. 4.

Papierspiel & Bilderbogen aus Tokio und Wien 1780–1880. 233. Sonderausstellung. Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Karlsplatz. 4. Dezember 1997–15. Februar 1998. Wien: Eigenverlag der Museen der Stadt Wien, 1997.

Sorensen, André. *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Takahashi Junji 高橋順二. *Nihon e-sugoroku shūsei* 日本絵双六集成. Kashiwa Shobō, 1980.

Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan 東京都江戸東京博物館, ed. *E-sugoroku: Asobi no naka no akogare* 絵すごろく ― 遊びの中のあこがれ . Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan, 1998.

Toyama-ken Tateyama Hakubutsukan 富山県立山博物館, ed. *Tateyama no kokoro to katachi. Tateyama mandara no sekai. Kaikan kinenten* 立山のこころとカタチ―立山曼荼羅の世界：開館記念展. Toyama: Toyama-ken Tateyama Hakubutsukan, 1991.

Yagi Keiichi 八木敬一. “*Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* (kadai) ni tsuite” 「吉原浄土双六」(仮題)について. 解説書 In *Yoshiwara jōdo sugoroku* 吉原浄土双六. Taihei Shooku, 1996.

Yamamoto Masakatsu 山本正勝. *Sugoroku asobi* 双六遊美. Unsōdō, 1988.

Yamamoto Masakatsu 山本正勝. *E-sugoroku: Oitachi to miryoku* 絵すごろく― 生いたちと魅力. Unsōdō, 2004.

Yamashita Kazumasa 山下和正. *Chizu de yomu Edo jidai* 地図で読む江戸時代. Kashiwa shobō, 1998.