

## INTRODUCTION

Together the spirit of Eros and that of play animate the *Daitô keigoho* (*The Enlarged Edition of the Boudoir Tales of the Great Eastern Land of Japan*). To judge only by illustrated editions, which appeared under the abbreviated title *Daitô keigo* (*Boudoir Tales of the Great Eastern Land of Japan*), Eros would appear at first glance to dominate. Frank depictions of the erotic maneuvers of the celebrated personages, who populate the thirty-some tales that comprise the main body of both versions of the text, leave little to the imagination. The erotic character of the non-illustrated texts is only slightly less apparent,

but their playfulness and humor remain concealed, available only to the reader rather well versed in the classical literature of both China and Japan.

The relationship between the illustrated and non-illustrated editions is complex and not completely understood. The work has appeared under several titles. (When published in Shanghai the term *Daitô*, Great East, was eliminated, as it would be taken to refer to Korea.) Modern scholars disagree over the chronology of publication. Some claim that although the character read *ho* in the title *Daitô.keigoho* indicates that the text has been enlarged or supplemented, there is no evidence that the work circulated widely in a briefer form at an earlier date, and thus the works titled simply *Daitô keigo*, which is applied to the illustrated texts, are not necessarily earlier editions. This is the view of Asakawa Seiichirô, whose text and commentary found in the series *Hihon: Edo bungaku sen, ju: Daitô keigo / Shunpûjô* published by Nichirinkaku in 1979 are the basis of this translation.

A Tenmei 5 (1785) edition of the *Daitô keigoho* serves as the basis for Asakawa's effort and is the earliest edition of the work. The variant found with the title *Kyokôshô* (*Shedding the Grime Collection*), which is unillustrated and undated, is apparently of late-Edo or early-Meiji origin. The earliest illustrated text is dated Keiô 3 (1867) and contains a curious preface by the Confucian scholar and artist Murase Taitso (1804-81) who in recommending the pictures puzzled over the eternal conundrum: whether sex or food is the more essential for human beings. He noted that one must eat

everyday, but can go years without sex; and, yet, he also points out that he has never heard of anyone drooling over a picture of a meal, but pictures of couples in the throes of passion never fail to bring a smile, even to the aged. The illustrations, once attributed to any number of prominent late-Edo artists, are now thought to be the work of Shibata Hôshû (1840-90).

The title, *Daitô keigo*, is a play on *Daitô seigo* (*Tales of the World of the Great Eastern Land of Japan*) of Hattori Nankaku (1683-1759), published in Edo in Kan'en 3 (1750). That work provides brief accounts in *kanbun* of renowned figures from the Heian and Kamakura periods, which have been classified in categories derived from the *Shih-shuo hsün-yu* (*A New Account of the Tales of the World*)—the source of Nangaku's title. *Boudoir Tales* likewise concentrates on celebrated figures, in pairs, from the same periods.

Although the author of the tales is unknown, Ôta Nanpo (1749-1823) appears to have been associated with the work's publication. The use of two of his *noms de plume*, Yomo-sensei (to whom the evaluative marks are attributed) and Chin Punkan (the putative author of the first preface) suggest Nanpo's involvement. Asakawa compared the ages of various candidates for authorship in light of the date 1785 and found that only Nanpo fit the chronology of the publishing of the *Daitô keigohô*. However, nowhere in the texts is Yomo-sensei or Chin Punkan credited with authorship. The covers, prefaces and the colophon provide a putative account of the publication of the work. There, a series of seemingly foreign gentlemen, whose names sound either comic in

Japanese reading or suggest something rather lewd, are said to be responsible for the book.

A Mr. Chin (Kin in Japanese) from Kyoto is called the author in the first preface and the colophon of Hsu Ts'ai-ning (J. Jo Sainei). His full name is revealed to be Chin-tsu Chiang (J. Kinshi Kyô) in the second preface, but he is also called Chin Lo-ma (J. Kin Rama) before the body of the main text. Kin Rama is said to play on *kindama*, the Kansai pronunciation of the word for testicles, and Kinshi Kyô suggests tough nuts. Yu Su-tun (J. A Sodon) is said to have received the author's manuscript, added two additional stories, and passed it on to Hsu Ts'ai-ning. Impressed, Hsu conveyed the now enlarged text to his teacher Ssu-fang (J. Shihô or Yomo) who evaluated the anecdotes and, presumably, added his own preface under the name Ch'en Fenhan (J. Chin Punkan). A certain Chang Rin-shui (J. Chô Jinsui), whose name can be understood as meaning overflowing semen, is credited with providing some of the commentaries.

The main body of the text and the evaluative commentaries (in the form of notes in the margin of the original which are identified by black dots in this translation) are in an unadorned and straightforward style of Chinese prose, a key element in the comic spirit of the work. The seeming incongruity of the raw, even crude, sexuality depicted in erudite language serves to enhance the humor. In addition to the gap between the social level of the subject matter and the language employed to describe it, there is also the element of a game, as readers must review their knowledge of classical texts in search of a laugh sensed to be lurking in

an unfamiliar phrase or an obscure reference. An appreciation of the humor concealed in the final lines of each anecdote and particularly in the commentary often depends on a familiarity with the Chinese classics. The work itself, to say nothing of the humor, was (and still is) not immediately accessible. In late Edo times, Hosono Yôsai (1811-78) even essayed a Japanese language translation at the urging of a commercial lending library in order to reach a broader public.

The tales, as befit any classical collection, begin with a nod to the imperial house. The first tale contains a rather irreverent bow, as the priest Gembô bends forward to caress the thigh of the lightly slumbering Empress Kômyô, who wears little more than a smile. After digitally stimulating the reginal nether parts, he then recites a formula that mimics one from the Buddhist scriptures. His chant homophonous with a sacred vision actually expresses his delight at the pooling of her bodily secretions at a site nearer at hand and more earthy than heavenly. The alternate title, *Kyokôshû* (*Shedding the Grime Collection*) is derived from an anecdote, which appears in the early-Kamakura *Hôbutsushû*, concerning Kômyô's pious vow to wipe the grime from the bodies of a one thousand beggars, the last of whom turns out to be an incarnation of the Buddha Akshobhya (J. Ajakubutsu).

The author, or perhaps it would better to say authors since the work was surely a collaborative effort, exhibits no fear of lese majesty. Eleven episodes focus on the sexual escapades of members of the imperial family, generally directing the reader's gaze on dallying

consorts and empresses, but with the occasional emperor tossed in for good measure. Kenreimon'in, the youthful widow who failed to drown herself at Dannoura, seems to have excited the erotic imagination of later generations. Coupled with Minamoto Yoshitsune, she is also the subject of the erotic hand scroll *Hatsuhana*, and she has the unenviable distinction of appearing *flagrante delicto* in three different episodes of the *Daitô keigoho*.

While frolicking royals abound in the sixteen pages that constitute the extent of the main body of the original text, their number is rivaled by that of the literary elite, who cavort with equal abandon on the same pages. The carnal adventures of Ariwara no Narihira (825-880), who appears twice, Taira Sadabumi (?-923), Murasaki Shikibu, Izumi Shikibu, Sei Shônagon, Akazome Emon (ladies-in-waiting at court who wrote in the late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries), Fujiwara no Sadaie, usually referred to as Teika (1162-1241), and Yoshida Kenkô (fl. 1301-52), among others, are dutifully explored in loving detail.

The disparity between classical subject matter and learned references on the one hand and ribald content on the other creates a comic tension; the language of the text itself produces a similar effect. The original text uses relatively obscure Chinese characters and then adds colloquial Japanese readings in *katakana rubi*. The radical disjunction between the two disparate levels of language is likely to produce cognitive dissonance, a frisson that ends as a smile on the reader's lips.

## About the translation

Ideally, the quality of the grin elicited on the reader's face should exceed that of the cheap leer or the sordid smirk enjoyed at the expenses of one's literary betters. Capturing the flavor of the original (and insuring a better class of readers, perhaps not unlike the original Japanese audience) would have meant a translation into Latin. This solution would, however, deprive the modern, English-only reader the opportunity to partake in the pleasures of the work, including the baser ones mentioned above, which must also have been one of the attractions of the book for its original perusers.

Since an appreciation of the humor depends on a broad familiarity with Japanese and Chinese literature, I have added brief commentaries to various sections of the work. They appear as notes on the left-hand page facing the translations. They are intended to provide a dollop of literary lore, the cultural literacy, upon which each anecdote depends for its punch. As this knowledge is a prerequisite for an appreciation of the stories, I have ventured the unenviable task of trying to explain the joke—why at least some readers were laughing. Nevertheless, the comedy has proved difficult to capture.

Paradoxically, preserving the scatological character of the anecdotes seems to threaten the humor. The words for sexual organs and acts in English carry a hostility foreign to most of the stories found here. Most euphemisms are overly culture bound, as with "Jack

Nasty Face" (the translator's favorite), and I think that even those from contemporary Edo, e.g., *gakuya* (back stage) or *meisho* (a celebrated locality) fail to fit the bill. Although they lack the venom of common English terms, such euphemisms seem equally inappropriate. I have, for the most part, resorted to plain and somewhat clinical language.

Another difficulty has been in deciding how proper names should be rendered into English. Proper names that are originally Chinese are written according to the Wade-Giles system of romanization, but the fanciful Chinese names adopted by the Japanese creators of this work are also given in their Japanese reading.