An Attempt at Understanding the Urban Folk Music of Tokyo

Kojima Tomiko

What was the "folk music" of pre-war downtown Tokyo? Interviews with artisans living in the Ueno and Ryôgoku areas shows that their musical activities was surprisingly rich. In the artisans quarters the sound of the *shamisen* was never far away. Artisans and their families often learned the *kiyomoto* and *shinnai* styles of *jôruri* recitation. Only servants from the countryside were said not know such styles, and were thus not considered full fledged artisans.

Although the *kiyomoto* style was particularly loved by artisans, more popular styles, such as *hauta, dodoitsu,* and *zokkyoku,* existed as well. In the variety halls *(yose)* such vocal styles and various types of *shamisen* music often found their way into accompanimental music *(hayashi).* Candy vendors' songs, for example, were played on the *shamisen* on the *yose* stage.

Musical styles supported by the artisan stratum thus ranged from "art" music genres such as *kiyomoto* and *shinnai* to the most popular types of song. This latter type "non-art-music," which often dated from the late Edo period, is, in fact, best considered to be the "folk music" of this urban area.

The question "what is the folk music of pre-war downtown Tokyo?" proved, in a sense, to be a fruitless one. Instead, of answering this question, it is more interesting to attempt to grasp the actual musical activities of those who spent their formative years in downtown Tokyo during the 1920s and 30s. Such an investigation may then offer insights into what an urban folk music might in fact be.

Late Edo Period Acrobat Troupes: Who Went Abroad First?

Gerald Groemer

During the last years of the Edo period (1603-1868), when Japan was just beginning to open its doors to the world, several acrobat troupes left for foreign countries. During the late nineteenth century acrobat performances were viewed by a large number of foreigners. In fact, for many Americans and Europeans, the first images of "Japan" was presented by such acrobat troupes.

The *Bukô nenpyô* (Chronicles of Edo) provides much information regarding first departure by Japanese acrobats. Unfortunately, however, much of what is recorded is erroneous. The present study utilizes American newspapers reports and a number of hitherto unpublished Japanese sources to determine exactly who went abroad, and who was the first to perform outside of Japan.

The first troupe to leave Japan appears to have been one staffed by members of the Tetsuwari family (also sometimes read "Kanawari," probably erroneously). This family of acrobats stemmed from the Osaka area, and had existed for several decades before their first foreign tour. The first performances that took place abroad by a Japanese acrobat troupe, however, were probably not given by the Tetsuwari family, but by another troupe that left Japan (for Europe) a little later. This latter troupe, headed by the top spinner Matsui Gensui stopped in Shanghai to give a few performances starting on 1866/12/6. Yet another troupe, headed by Hamaikari Sadakichi, left for America three days after the Gensui troupe. Thanks to passport records in the National Archives, and documents in the *Fujiokaya nikki,* the *Shichû torishimari kakitome* the names, ages, and even the appearance of most individuals in both troupes can be ascertained.

Sakai Hôitsu's Designs for a *Maki-e* Tray: The Links Between Artists, *Maki-e* Craftsmen, and wealthy Merchants

Okano Tomoko

Various scholars have recently shown great interest in the artist Sakai Hôitsu (1761-1828). In the past, only Hôitsu's transmission the Rinpa style--the style developed in the Kamigata area by Sôtatsu and Kôrin--to Edo has been valued. In recent years, however, Hôitsu's *ukiyo-e* production, his realistic depictions, and elements of his style not derivable from the Kamigata Rinpa style have also come under scrutiny.

Hôitsu was born and raised as the second son of a *daimyô*. Although he later entered the Buddhist priesthood, he spent most of his life as an artist and poet. From an early age he was surrounded by numerous high ranking warriors and members of the Edo cultural elite. Such individuals were often closely linked to Hôitsu's artistic productions. With Hôitsu at its center, this cultural group established a style which from the late eighteenth century became known as the "Edo Rinpa" style.

Little attention has yet been given to Hôitsu's designs for the *maki-e* of Hara Yôyûsai (1769-1845). Hôitsu's activity as a designer has usually been interpreted as merely one of his minor occupations. As the recently discovered five volumes of designs for Yôyûsai's *maki-e* (Idemitsu Bijutsukan), and the designs in the possession of the Yamato Bunkakan and the Boston Museum have shown, some 360 of over 2000 designs are identifiable as in the Edo Rinpa style. The influence of Hôitsu and of the Edo Rinpa style on Yôyûsai has thus proven to be far greater than previously imagined.

In the study below I should like examine a work entitled *Tsuta ume modoki*

mejiro makie jikubon (design by Hôitsu; *maki-e* tray by Yôyûsai; in the possession of the Edo-Tokyo Museum). I shall first examine the work from an art historical point, and then describe the conditions surrounding production. The *Tsuta ume modoki mejiro makie jikubon* is the largest of Hôitsu's designs for Yôyûsai. Hôitsu's letters, boxes, and related artifacts have been preserved in good condition, allowing one to reconstruct the conditions surrounding design and production. One learns of the relation of the Morikawa house (a wealthy, official merchant house), which commissioned the work, to the designer and *maki-e* artist, and to the cultural elite that surrounded Hôitsu and Yôyûsai.

Subjects of the Edo Period *Tsukinami fûzoku-zu* (in the Possession of the Edo-Tokyo Museum)

Wagatsuma Naomi

The *Tsukinami fûzoku-zu* in the possession of the Edo-Tokyo Museum begins with a scene from the seventh-month *tanabata* festival. Next follow scenes from the eight and ninth months; finally, at the end, one finds a scene from the twelfth month. One may thus assume that two scrolls once existed, but that the first one was lost. The scroll in the possession of the Edo-Tokyo Museum is probably the second of the two.

Close inspection of this work shows that the illustrator was highly skilled. Scenes are depicted imaginatively, and in a realistic, detailed manner. It would appear that this work was a product of the Kyôhô period (1716-36).

A careful study of the nature of the themes and scenes depicted and reveals that this work is more than simply the usual kind of month-by-month listing of annual events. Instead, this scroll appears to refer to a unique phenomenon of the Edo period: the prosperity of the Edo Mitsui Echigoya money-changing shop during the Kyôhô period. The incorporation of contemporary happenings into the usual month-by-month listing makes this scroll all the more valuable.

In fact, the inclusion of an additional theme into the usual month-by-month listing was not at all atypical of Edo period scrolls. This scroll demonstrates that in order to understand Edo period illustrations of monthly events, one must examine not simply the usual themes, but also additional unique themes that happen to appear.

Jôdo sugoroku

Iwaki Noriko

Sugoroku has always been considered a typical New Year's pastime of the common folk. During the late Edo period, as polychrome wood block prints became increasingly sophisticated, and as the demand for *ukiyo-e* surged, *sugoroku* prints (i.e., game boards) also showed increasing variety. Much information on contemporary fads and new styles was included in such games. As a result, *sugoroku* prints were collected mainly for their value as sources for such information. When one considers the function of such prints as games, however, it becomes possible to value *sugoroku* prints as more than just sources of information on contemporary ways.

Sugoroku prints present a series of squares through which the player's game piece follows in order. Prints thus outline a kind of world in which the game piece--the representative of the player--competes with other in an upward journey, from start to finish. By analyzing the position of each square and the path on which the game piece must move, one may gain an insight into the sense of social order and value held by Edo period society.

In the past, I have written about *shusse sugoroku*, a type of *sugoroku* that thematizes the rise in social position of the player/game piece. From such types of *sugoroku* one learns about the idea of "success" enjoyed by people living during the turbulent times of the late Edo and early Meiji periods. *Shusse sugoroku* take the "real world" as their world and focus on the movement of a person's social status within this world as determined by the dice. Since *shusse sugoroku* present an outline of a "successful" person's life, game boards from different historical periods reflect the changes in conceptions of "success."

Shusse sugoroku, and in fact all types of Japanese *sugoroku,* are thought to derive from *jôdo sugoroku*. This type of *sugoroku* places the player in the "real world"

only at the outset. Above is the world of the Buddha; below is the world of hell. The structure of this type of *sugoroku* follows the Buddhist teaching of ten worlds. The successful player moves from the "real world" to the "next world." Thus, like the *shusse sugoroku*, the *jôdo sugoroku* thematize the movement of a person's value.

Jôdo sugoroku have rarely been the subject of serious research. Below I have examined and analyzed a number of such prints in an attempt to determine the nature of such games.