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Yûgei: Idle Arts in Tokugawa Japan

by

Tara Marlene Barnett 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

East Asian Interdisciplinary Studies

Department of East Asian Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Yûgei : *Idle Arts in Tokugawa Japan* submitted by Tara Marlene Barnett in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in East Asian Interdisciplinary Studies

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Abstract

This study examines the issue of *yûgei* (遊芸) or "idle arts," a relatively unknown group of leisure activities popular during the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) of Japanese history. An investigation of *yûgei* 's identifying characteristics, historical development, and role in the lives of participants reveals that *yûgei* were accessible, exhibited a tendency to move away from exclusivity, and satisfied personal wants and desires. This study contends that these facets of *yûgei* actively encouraged widespread involvement in the arts and, by association, the growth of a culturally astute populace in Tokugawa Japan.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Darlene Hermann, my cheering squad and my voice of sanity. Without her none of this would have been possible and I am so very thankful to be associated with a woman of such strength and integrity. It is also dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, William and Lily Barnett. I hope I have made them proud.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Sinh Vinh. I am immensely grateful for the many hours spent pushing me forward in this process. Your common-sense advice is something that I value and that I will carry with me throughout my career. I would also like to thank Dr. Sonja Arntzen. Your help with refining my research ideas was invaluable and I deeply appreciate your accessibility. I cannot place a value on the guidance I have received from both of you and I am thankful for the time you spent with me.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: *YŪGEI* AND JAPANESE CULTURE

The Tokugawa period of Japanese history (1600-1868) was a time of peace and prosperity and one in which the more plebeian elements of society – the *chônin* (町人) or townspeople – began to make their presence felt. The *chônin* remained politically disenfranchised throughout the entire period, yet they came to command great power economically, and this, in part, allowed them to participate with extreme zeal in leisure activities and, by association, the arts. It was also at this time that a particular type of artistic pursuit came to enjoy widespread popularity. These were *yûgei* (遊芸), a term which has been translated into English as "idle arts" and denotes "leisure pursuits" or "cultural activities" engaged in "for the purpose of pleasure."[1] They were, in effect, hobbies, but it must be pointed out that, in Japanese culture, the pursuit of a hobby has always been a much more serious undertaking than in the West, where "idleness" is generally associated with sloth and wastefulness. Practitioners of *yûgei* were drawn from all walks of life, but, in time, the overwhelming majority of participants came from the ranks of the *chônin*. Based on these circumstances, *yûgei* became a major social force within the world of ordinary people.

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[1] Gerald Groemer, trans. and ed., Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868, by Nishiyama Matsunosuke (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 5.

Although this study is mostly limited to the Tokugawa period, *yûgei* can be traced back as far as the Heian period (794-1185). *Yûgei* also shared a connection with medieval arts through *geidô* (芸道), a term meaning literally "the way of art" which first appeared in the Ashikaga period (1338-1573) and is used even today to describe the *Nô* (能) and Kabuki (歌舞伎) theatres. Regarding the sphere of *geidô*, noted scholar Nishiyama Matsunosuke asserts that, by the Tokugawa period, three different categories of pursuits had begun to develop within it: those influenced by classical culture of the ancient and medieval ages (*kizoku bunka no dentô* 貴族文化の伝統 "aristocratic cultural tradition"), those composed of pursuits he refers to as "martial arts" (*bugei* 武芸) which were associated with samurai culture (*buke bunka no dentô* 武家文化の伝統 "warrior's cultural tradition"), and those pursuits related to the tradition of Edo period popular culture (*minshû bunka no dentô* 民衆文化の伝統 "popular cultural tradition").[2]

All three facets of *geidô* were also present in *yûgei*, and, as such, represent a connection between the two. According to Nishiyama, in past ages, society's elite had taken to performing these arts as leisure pastimes. This custom continued into the Tokugawa period, at which point "a few

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[2] Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei geidô shisô no tokushitsu to sono tenkai,*" Nihon shisô taikei 61: *Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), pp. 589-90.

within this group came to be immensely popular among the general populace. Within the context of this kind of popularity [newer arts such as] *gidayû, katô bushi, itchû bushi* [musical styles] ... began to thrive as *yûgei* among the *chônin.*"[3] Thus the varieties of *geidô* – the aristocratic, the militaristic, and the popular – could all constitute *yûgei* so long as they were pursued while at leisure.[4] *Yûgei* and *geidô* were distinct entities, yet the above shows that, at the same time, the relationship between the two was of such closeness that *geidô* arts could be considered *yûgei* pursuits depending on the context. A firm grasp of the relationship between the two is important for a thorough understanding of *yûgei*, and, as such, it will be discussed in greater length in Chapter Two.

Historically, then, *yûgei* represent an amalgamation of the old and the new, and so can be seen as a bridge between Japanese classicism and popularism. In this respect, *yûgei* are quite removed from an environment such as that of the contemporary North American arts scene,

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[3] . . . これらのうちの幾つかのものは、一般庶民の間に大流行することになるのである。こうした流行のなかで、町人の間に義太夫とか、河東節・一中節. . . などが、遊芸として盛行した。 Translation mine. Ibid., p. 590.

[4] In the introduction of Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Ancient Japan, 1600-1868, a translation of excerpts from Nishiyama's work, Gerald Groemer summarizes Nishiyama's position as follows: "[He] contrasts *yûgei* to martial arts (*bugei*), to popular performing arts (*taishû geinô*), and to skills pursued solely for financial gain [i.e. *geidô*]." (Gerald Groemer, trans. and ed., op. cit., p. 5.) For Nishiyama, the relationship between *yûgei* and *geidô* is a much closer one than this statement would suggest, however, because of the above-mentioned link provided by the three shared categories of pursuits.

where, increasingly, fine arts such as opera, ballet, and the symphony are labelled "art" and are perceived to be in a class apart from that which is stained with brush of unimaginative, mass-produced popular culture. At worst, this attitude elicits charges of elitism, but even at best, it leads some to claim that "the terrain demarcated as "artistic" is exclusive rather than inclusive."[5] Statistics suggest that there is a ring of truth to this viewpoint -- more often than not in North America, the minority in possession of higher incomes and levels of education associate themselves with "art", while the majority without such means tend to be involved in popular culture.[6] It may be a situation in which the "aesthetic judgments that classify some cultural activities as better than others are made with almost complete disregard for most people's cultural experiences."[7]

This problem is not without its solution, however. One Western commentator has maintained that active participation in the arts will draw people to arts events. Once they do so, he says,

> we need to find ways to encourage their own artistic expressions, however simple, because once they've tasted that, you'll never be able

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[5] Justin Lewis, "Designing a Cultural Policy," Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society, 24 (Spring 1994) 1: 49.

[6] Richard Jensen, "The Culture Wars: 1965-1995: A Historian's Map," Journal of Social History 29 (Sep 95 supplement) 1: 17-37, in Academic Search Elite [database on-line], EBSCOhost; http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html. (Boston MA.: EBSCO Publishing, accessed 17 July 1998).

[7] Lewis, op. cit., p. 49.

> to take it away from them again. Before you know it, your community will be supporting the arts in hundreds of ways that ... create side-effects and ripples throughout the community...."[8]

The key to increased support of the arts in society, then, is to give the populace a taste of artistic creation so that they may come to envision a place for the arts in their daily lives. My contention is that, when it came to Tokugawa culture, the world of *yûgei* was just such a force. Chapter Two of this dissertation will show that *yûgei* were accessible and this made them cultural environments open to the general populace. Chapter Three will describe how *yûgei* also represented open social environments because of their tendency to overcome class, gender, geographical, and other barriers to entry and, in so doing, constantly to move away from exclusionism. Chapter Four deals with the issue of the personal value of *yûgei* for its participants and will show that *yûgei* satisfied a wide variety of wants and desires. It is hoped that the following study will show that the very nature of *yûgei* encouraged widespread involvement in the arts and, by association, the growth of a culturally astute populace.

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[8] Daniel E. Gawthrop, "The National Endowment for Football -- We're Fighting the Wrong Battle," Arts Education Policy Review 99 (Mar/Apr 1998) 4: 37-38, in Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost; http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html. (Boston MA.: EBSCO Publishing, accessed 18 July 1998).

CHAPTER TWO
YÛGEI: ACCESSIBILITY PERSONIFIED

Generally speaking, *yûgei* were pursuits engaged in while at leisure, but this does not mean that they were simple, banal pastimes. *Yûgei* of the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) bore a striking resemblance to *geidô* (芸道), their better-known predecessors. This term means literally "the way of art" or "the way to put art into practice."[9] *Yûgei* and *geidô* of this age could be likened to two overlapping spheres; they shared many characteristics, which means that, to some extent, they also involved the same level of intricacy. Any description of *yûgei* must convey this complexity. It must also communicate the unique character of *yûgei*, because only then can *yûgei* be recognized collectively as a legitimate phenomenon within Tokugawa culture. The following is an attempt to derive such a description, and it centres on one fact – as the spheres of *yûgei* and *geidô* overlapped, so, too, did portions of each remain discrete. It will reveal much about *yûgei*; not only did *yûgei* pursuits represent a relaxed and welcoming avenue into the arts, they were easily accessible because they developed in multiple areas of the culture. Both of these characteristics worked to make *yûgei* appealing options to participation in the arts for the majority of people in the Tokugawa period.

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[9] . . . 芸を実践する道. . . . Translation mine. Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei geidô shisô no tokushitsu to sono tenkai*," in Nihon shisô taikei 61: *Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 585.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF *YÛGEI*

The first task is to identify the characteristics which were common to all *yûgei*. This will not be a simple task for a number of reasons. First, *yûgei* pursuits were of such variety that the number of shared attributes was small. Second, only a handful of sources exist on the topic, and thorough descriptions are hard to find. Finally, the above-indicated similarities which existed between *yûgei* and *geidô* pose a problem in terms of clarity: more often than not, the two differed only in subtle ways. These issues notwithstanding, an investigation into the characteristics of *yûgei* will serve not only to illuminate the *yûgei-geidô* relationship but will also furnish a working definition of the term "*yûgei*." This investigation will also show that, whereas the path of *geidô* was a steep upward climb, that of *yûgei* was a flat wide road and, consequently, a more relaxed and welcoming way.

1. Scope of Pursuits

Yûgei included traditional pursuits which originated in aristocratic or high culture such as Japanese *koto* (和琴 Japanese thirteen stringed zither), *biwa* (琵琶 Japanese lute), *kemari* (蹴鞠 a kind of classical kickball), *renga* (連歌 linked poetry), nô (能), *kyôgen* (狂言 a kind of comic interlude performed with nô), tea ceremony, and flower arranging.[10] Arts with less

[10] "*Yûgei*," Nishiyama, Matsunosuke, et al., eds, Edogaku jiten (Tokyo:

well-established reputations, those usually associated with popular culture and sometimes deemed "common," also had a place among *yûgei* ; pursuits such as *haikai* (俳諧 haiku poetry), *gidayû bushi* (義太夫節 narrative drama chanting, most closely associated with puppet theatre), *nagauta* (長唄 a singing style of both *bunraku* and Kabuki), *katôbushi* (河東節 a form of music found in Kabuki), etc.[11] were constituents of the plebeian *yûgei* craze in the Tokugawa period. This kind of inclusivity was not limited to the arts, however. Scholarly and literary pursuits were "considered to be of the same nature as singing, dancing, music and games, and ... all these activities together formed the world of *yûgei*," -- not only entertainers but doctors and scholars as well were able to make a name for themselves.[12] The world of *yûgei*, then, was one in which people were free to choose from pursuits contemporary or traditional, artistic or scholarly.

Geidô, on the other hand, were the exclusive realm of the arts, where scholarship was a pursuit considered entirely outside its purview. In

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Kôbundô, 1994), p. 509, and Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei no yûgeiron*," in *Nihon shisô taikei 61: Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), pp. 612-3.

[11] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," p. 613.

[12] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society in the Edo Period," Acta Asiatica, 33 (1977): 42.

addition, although a few artforms developed in the Tokugawa period were included as *geidô* -- Kabuki dance and *gidayû* chanting, for example -- the overwhelming majority of *geidô* were made up of the "traditional arts" (*dentô geijutsu* 伝統芸術)[13] which had been created in the Muromachi period or earlier. One reason for this is that, because *geidô* involved a "regulative quality" (*hôsokusei* 法則性),[14] transformation of an art into a *geidô* through the refinement and codification of the artistic process often takes a great deal of time, and, as a result, *geidô* tended to possess long histories. Another explanation arises from the fact that *geidô* artists before the Tokugawa period -- "public entertainers in search of a truth" (*kyûdôteki geinôsha* 求道的芸能者) -- forged connections with the aristocracy, the "power brokers" (*kenryokusha* 権力者) in society. Because of this alliance, artists "were permitted a life in ...earnest pursuit of a path for the first time ever,"[15] an indication that artists were at liberty to commit full-time to their art. All of this bespeaks a patron-artist relationship, with the aristocratic "power brokers" filling the role of *geidô* consumer; a creative environment was thus established wherein the *geidô*

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[13] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 585.

[14] Ibid., p. 586.

[15] . . . はじめて、彼らは、専心、ひたすら道をもとめる生涯をゆるされていた. . . . Translation mine. Moriya Takeshi, *Genroku bunka -- yûgei, akusho, shibai*, 1st ed, *Shirîzu Nipponzôshi* (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1987), pp. 28-9.

artist produced according to the tastes of the aristocracy. For many centuries these artists brought all of their time and energy to bear on arts preferred by society's elite, and, in so doing, effectively ensured that these artforms be considered traditional. This, in turn, worked to give many *geidô* refined reputations.

Both *yûgei* and *geidô* are similar in that a number of genres were contained within each. On the whole, however, *yûgei* involved a "remarkably wide and divergent range" of pursuits which seemed to "cover every facet of early modern culture in Japan"[16] and, in this sense, allowed for more variety than *geidô*. The acceptance of more than the arts within *yûgei* brought a larger number of pursuits into the fold, which ultimately made *yûgei* more inviting because they made available a wider variety of artistic activities to people of all social backgrounds and preferences.

2. The Journey and the Destination

The ultimate aim of *geidô* was "to create or recreate cultural value,"[17] and, as such, great emphasis was placed on "the concrete [artistic] rules of

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[16] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 43.

[17] . . . 文化価値を創りだすとか、または再創造するとかをする、. . . . 。 Translation mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 586.

practice in the various cultural spheres," [18] or the mastery of the various methods of creation. Conversely, it was "play" (*asobi* あそび) or leisure on which *yûgei* was concentrated, hence there was "no purpose" (*mumokuteki* 無目的) and, by association, no lofty goal.[19] The *yûgei* participant needed to appreciate and participate,[20] and other than the derivation of personal enjoyment, they needed achieve nothing more.

A feature common to all *yûgei* which will be dealt with later in greater detail is that they provided a place for the full-time professional as instructor. The majority of participants, however, did so as "novices" (*shirôto* 素人)[21] because, as the general definition states, *yûgei* were pleasant pastimes -- something to do in one's spare time -- and this negated the possibility of a full-time commitment for most. *Geidô* were far less flexible in this area, however. The above-mentioned symbiotic artist-patron relationship central to any *geidô,* in which the artist received a stable source of income and the freedom to devote all energies to art, dictated that *geidô* be undertaken as full-time, not part-time,

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[18] . . . それぞれの文化領域における具体的な実践法、. . . . 。
Translation mine. Ibid.

[19] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron,*" p. 612.

[20] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 32.

[21] Moriya Takeshi, *Genroku bunka*, p. 25.

activities. *Yûgei*, then, were more welcoming than *geidô* in terms of the level of commitment required of the individual.

The next issue to consider is the presence of myriad rules and regulations in both *geidô* and *yûgei.*[22] As will be discussed later in greater detail, *yûgei* arts employed *hidensho* (秘伝書), books of secret transmission which contained various instructions or rules relating to how a particular art is to be performed. Most *hidensho* in *yûgei* were borrowed from corresponding *geidô* traditions, thus the two worlds share the same regulations. It then follows that observations about the rules of *geidô* -- they serve to produce more capable practitioners and students who are quicker to excel [23] -- can be applied to *yûgei.* But the differing goals and foci meant that the purpose to which the rules were put differs. *Geidô* stressed the creation of culturally valuable works of art and, consequently, artistic excellence; the rules served to ensure the correct transmission of the artform in order to uphold these high standards. *Yûgei*, on the other hand, were leisure activities. Students took them on as hobbies, and, as will also be discussed later at length, the role of the professional in *yûgei* was to cultivate the idle arts enthusiast. The whole

[22] For *geidô* see Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô,*" p. 586. For *yûgei* see Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron,*" p. 612.

[23] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô,*" p. 586.

system centred around this dynamic, thus the rules were used to guide the student's learning.

Yûgei and *geidô* were similar in that each possesses a system to reward achievement. *Geidô* involved various "stages of proficiency" (*dankaiteki jôtatsu* 段階的上達), which acted as marks of professional accomplishment,[24] and within *yûgei* as well professional accomplishment was recognized through the administration of "licences" (*menkyojô* 免許状) to those with an aptitude for instruction.[25] In the case of *yûgei*, this system of professional licences came into being following the establishment of the *iemoto* (家本) system in every field of *yûgei* after the Kyôhô era (1716-1736). This system was "developed as a means of organizing the increasingly large numbers of instructors under a few *iemoto* who possessed the authority of tradition,"[26] but it also provided the impetus for "reorganizing the vast numbers of *chônin* interested in *yûgei*."[27] This second function effected the creation of levels of achievement as well as a system of certificates designed to encourage the

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[24] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 587.

[25] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," pp. 607-8.

[26] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 43.

[27] Ibid.

artistic growth of the non-professional.[28] *Yûgei* were not full-time occupations for the majority of participants, they were hobbies -- success was encouraged but not expected, and this encouragement came in the form of certificates. Conversely with *geidô*, the ultimate goal was artistic perfection, hence the mastery of each level verges on the mandatory. The levels themselves acted to create a system of professional certification which set the bar of excellence high. Compared with *geidô*, then, the prospect of achievement in *yûgei* was less overwhelming for the enthusiast because it could be undertaken at one's own pace.

Another overlapping area between *yûgei* and *geidô* is that they shared the same *hidensho*, and, consequently, emphasis on the same elements of formal instruction. In "Conception of the Arts," Nishiyama states that *kata* (型) or "form" has always been an integral part of the Japanese culture, and associated techniques known as *waza* (わざ) have enjoyed an immense esteem in Japan;[29] it is thus natural to find much evidence of them in *geidô*. *Geidô* centred on "the workings of the flesh" (*nikutai no hataraki* 肉体のはたらき), and, as a result, great emphasis was

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[28] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 42.

[29] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," pp. 596-7.

placed on *waza.*[30] This information was passed on as formal instruction in *hidensho.*[31] *Yûgei* appropriated such books as a means to pass on practical and theoretical instruction.[32] Seventeenth-century Japan saw an explosive growth in what Nishiyama terms "the cultured population" (*bunka jinkô* 文化人口), and "the distribution of secret books of transmission [created] through transcription, reproduction and the like by a small number of upper level aristocrats"[33] -- that is, *geidô hidensho* -- were a major impetus. A dramatic increase in the publication of such *hidensho* granted a larger segment of the populace access to the information contained therein, and this, in turn, spurred on the growth of interest in the arts.[34] In other words, *hidensho* of the *geidô* tradition were made available to novices throughout society, who then used that information to become active in the arts.

Many *yûgei hidensho* were thus the products of the most talented *geidô* artists, because, as will be discussed later, only the most adept practitioners possessed the right to formalize teachings. This means that *yûgei* books of secret transmission placed emphasis on aspects of the art

[30] Ibid., p. 592.

[31] Ibid., p. 595.

[32] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

[33] . . . 少数の上層貴族が筆写・模写などによっていた秘伝書. . . . Translation mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 589.

[34] Ibid.

important in *geidô* such as form and movement of the body. Yet the two approaches differed in that, because artists reached for artistic excellence, *hidensho* in *geidô* supplied knowledge of forms which were used in the quest for that excellence, and so obtaining this knowledge was a means to an artistic end, while in *yûgei* there was no goal other than pleasure so knowledge of forms and associated techniques was a means to more private ends.

In the end *yûgei* were more welcoming because they placed emphasis on the myriad experiences of the private journey of discovery within the arts. The *yûgei* enthusiast was not required to participate full-time and needed only concern him/herself with enjoyment of the experience, thus *yûgei* can be likened to lengthy pleasure jaunts where participants were free to enjoy the scenery and take rest wherever they wish. Mastery of each individual form and its associated techniques represent the various stopovers on a personal journey, the travel route for which was clearly marked by the rules and regulations contained in the *hidensho*, a sort of map. And throughout the whole process, as participants progressed through the various levels of achievement, their passage was marked by the conferring of certificates, much like travellers today receive stamps in a passport -- lovely mementos of their travels. All of this worked to create a relaxed and inviting arts experience accessible to all.

3. Artistry and Instruction

As mentioned above, in *geidô* the primary goal of the full-time participant was to refine one's own artistic talent with the ultimate goal of becoming a paid professional. Conversely, *yûgei* was a world in which the professional was to be a "purveyor of intellectual enlightenment" (*keimôka* 啓蒙家), the full-time artist like "a professor" or "instructor" (*kyôshi* 教師) in that he passed on techniques and education to the uninitiated masses.[35] It was a system which revolved around education. Professionals looked to cultivate a population involved with *yûgei*, and the tool used to accomplish this goal was instruction. The role of the professional in the capacity of instructor made them invaluable in any *yûgei* because, without them, enthusiasts could not be cultivated. All of this indicates the existence of a built-in place for the enthusiast as student within the idle arts.

Nonetheless, *yûgei* and *geidô* were similar in terms of philosophical complexity. A kind of religiosity permeated every stage of *geidô* and this was especially so at the highest levels. To be more specific,

> There is a way of thinking that regards the ultimate goal of *geidô* to be the raising of the artist to the highest possible level of human existence through religious enlightenment, a liberated state of mind,

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[35] Moriya Takeshi, *Genroku bunka*, pp. 27-8.

and submersion into a sacred spiritual realm as symbolized by expressions such as "divine skill," "no concentration/no thought," and "no mind/no rank." [36]

As stated previously, disciples/students of both *yûgei* and *geidô* looked to the same *hidensho* for guidance. Not only did these *hidensho* contain guidelines for performance, they were also the vehicles by which the more spiritual aspects of the art are conveyed to practitioners. Both *yûgei* and *geidô* thus involved this kind of complexity, but there was a difference in the level of importance attributed to it by each tradition. For individuals involved with *geidô*, the marriage of a high state of religiosity to art was taken for granted because of the importance placed on artistic perfection; if one was to become a star, it was necessary to attain artistic perfection, and since this state was likened to a religious enlightenment, the former could not be realized without reaching the state of the latter. In *yûgei*, however, excellence was not demanded, so the enthusiast did not need to be overly concerned with religion and philosophy. *Yûgei*, then, were like *geidô* in that they shared the same intellectual and spiritual components, but unlike them because affinity with these components was not mandatory.

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[36] . . . 「入神の技」とか、「無念無想」とか、. . . 「無心・無位」といわれるような、宗教的悟道、解脱の心境に通ずる、聖なる精神的境地に没入して、人間的至高の存在に昇華するのが芸道の極致だとする考え方がある。 Translation mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 587.

Artists in any *geidô* were united in terms of the way in which they accrued knowledge -- in order to attain artistic mastery, they were expected to follow in the footsteps of those who came before.[37] The benefits to this were the same as those previously cited in relation to rules and regulations -- disciples/participants achieved quickly and artists were better skilled -- but perfect transmission of the art was also assured because artists copied exactly and then passed on this information. A similar situation existed in the *yûgei* tradition. *Yûgei* concerned the kind of play found in *monomane* (物真似 mimicry),[38] and, as such, instruction in them involved the kind of modelling characteristic of *geidô* -- students copied the instructor and, in so doing, followed in the footsteps of predecessors. The expectation for perfection was higher in *geidô* because of their professional nature, but in every other respect, students of *yûgei* enjoyed the benefits of the same kind of clear instructional method.

From the above, it becomes apparent that *yûgei* played a role in arts education. Enthusiasts entered this realm as students, and were greeted with an uncomplicated instructional method easily understood by all. It was a safe and secure environment in which students were not required to assimilate sophisticated and potentially intimidating philosophies if they

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[37] Ibid., pp. 586-87.

[38] Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei,* " in Geinôshi Kenkyûkai, ed. *Nihon no koten geinô dairokkan: buyô* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970), p. 207.

did not wish to do so. In short, *yûgei* were appealing to the many because they welcomed wholeheartedly the non-professional.

4. Tolerance for Imperfection

Yûgei made room for both full-time and part-time participants because of the above-stated emphasis on education. This means that, although amateurs may have been enthusiastic about the art in which they were involved, genius was not a requirement. *Geidô*, on the other hand, were all about excellence in the arts, a characteristic enhanced by the belief that art not performed well or created perfectly has no meaning. An example of this is *buyô* (舞踊) or Japanese-style dance, where "if [one] cannot dance beautifully, the purpose of *buyô* theory will not be achieved."[39] In short, unlike *geidô*, *yûgei* did not demand excellence in performance -- anyone could get involved in them regardless of the amount of knowledge or experience they possessed.

Both *yûgei* and *geidô* made room for the professional in the capacity of instructor, but they differed in terms of the required level of experience of such individuals. Again it must be stated that in *geidô* one strove for excellence, and, naturally, this applied to the *geidô* instructor. In order to produce accomplished and talented artists it was necessary to provide a

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[39] . . . みごとに踊れなければ、その舞踊論は意味をなさない。
Translation Mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," pp. 592-3.

near-flawless example of what was required, and the *geidô* instructor acted as the model. This drive for perfection was taken to the extent that, as mentioned above, only individuals considered to be artistic geniuses were involved in the formalization of the teachings. It follows that an adept *geidô* instructor must first become a highly accomplished artist, but this was not the case with *yûgei*. Although there were instances where *geidô* practitioners of great talent -- Bashô and Buson, for example -- filled the role of *yûgei* instructor for their part-time students, the minimum requirement for teachers in this tradition was that they possess familiarity with teaching techniques and personalities which were suited for instruction. They did not have to be experts, requiring only the skills necessary to teach beginners.[40] Despite the fact that displayable proficiency in a particular art must surely have been a major point in their favour when attempting to attract students, *yûgei* instructors were not required to demonstrate perfect technique in or complete knowledge of the art.

The picture painted by the above analysis shows that *yûgei* were complex phenomena which shared one characteristic: they were inclusive in nature. The plethora of activities included as *yûgei* served the preferences of a wide variety of people. The pace set within the individual

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[40] Moriya Takeshi, Genroku bunka, p. 28.

pursuits coupled with the way in which they handled form and associated techniques, rules and regulations, and acknowledgement of accomplishment transformed *yûgei* into a sort of personal pleasure jaunt of artistic discovery and suffused them with an appeal born of a congenial environment devoid of pressure. The status of the enthusiast as student, the simple yet effective manner of instruction, and the built-in option to ignore complex philosophies if one so chose created a space for people of all experience levels. Liberation from perfection, whether student or instructor, granted the participant permission to stumble and, in so doing, allowed *yûgei* to become more appealing to a larger portion of the populace. All of this worked to produce a mode of participation in the arts which was accessible to all.

YÛGEI IN THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT

From the above discussion, one may receive the impression that *yûgei* and *geidô* were artistic worlds distinct from one another, but what at first appears to be completely *geidô* -like can, upon closer examination, exhibit aspects of *yûgei*. Eighteenth-century Kabuki provides a perfect illustration of this phenomenon. The scholarly consensus is that Kabuki is a *geidô*, yet its plays were staged by the wealthy in their homes as amateur productions, improvised Kabuki skits were performed by friends for other friends, and its components -- Kabuki's music, for example -- have been

recognized in scholarly works as being full-fledged idle arts. The case of Kabuki shows that *yûgei* and *geidô* existed together in the same artistic traditions, which suggests that *yûgei* not only appeared in complex ways within society, but also that *yûgei* had the ability to seep into other areas of *chônin* culture.

1. The "Way" and the "Play" of Kabuki Theatre

As mentioned above the general scholarly conclusion is that, "[l]ooked at in broad perspective, a kabuki actor travels a "way of art," or *geidô*," which means that the actor is involved with "a total approach to kabuki acting."[41] Substantiation is provided by at least two pieces of evidence. The first is that Kabuki involves both a master /disciple relationship and an artistic path -- in other words, the "young actor must be guided by a master, for, as the great nô actor and playwright Zeami wrote, an artist without a master is a 'man without a way.'"[42] The other concerns transmission of the artform by highly-trained professionals: at every level, from the actors to the signboard artists, artistic information was passed down from generation to generation.[43] In many respects, then,

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[41] James R. Brandon, "Form in Kabuki Acting," in James R. Brandon et al. Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), p. 124.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Gerald Groemer, trans. and ed., Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868, by Nishiyama Matsunosuke (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 50.

Kabuki exhibit obvious characteristics of a *geidô*, but Kabuki also exercised great influence on the lives of the Tokugawa citizenry during the eighteenth century. It "embraced all levels of society, from the outcastes (*hinin*), who were allowed to enter free, to grand daimyo, who entered through ...the direct passages from adjoining teahouses,"[44] and it gained such significance that for the people of Edo in particular "Kabuki was one of the centres of social and cultural life."[45] Of course, not all in society were enthused about Kabuki's position in the lives of the people -- the *bakufu* continually banned or restricted it [46] -- but those who objected to Kabuki's adverse influence on society by no means held the majority in society. Kabuki kept the populace mesmerized,[47] and it is not surprising to find that many in society were inspired by their love of Kabuki to become actively involved.

Kabuki as an artform manifested in society as a *yûgei* in two ways. *Chaban* (茶番, literally "one's turn during tea") or skit, an amateur art which enjoyed great popularity in the city of Edo was one of them. It was "the art of performing a Kabuki-style skit when serving tea or something

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[44] C. Andrew Gerstle, "Flowers of Edo: Kabuki and its Patrons," in C. Andrew Gerstle, ed. 18th Century Japan: Culture and Society (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 34.

[45] Ibid., p. 33.

[46] Ibid., p. 34.

[47] Ibid., p. 35.

to a guest."[48] *Chaban* were conducted in the form of a game, where players improvised on themes set by the organizer. The fact that *chaban* was an amateur pastime and that "*chabanshi* (茶番師, semi-professional *chaban* teachers) are mentioned in the literature of the day"[49] suggests that *chaban* was pursued as a *yûgei.*

The other way in which Kabuki took the form of *yûgei* was as *zashiki-kyôgen* (座敷狂言 "home Kabuki," literally "*zashiki* plays") or the "art of putting on Kabuki plays in private residences."[50] It was often staged in a room known as a *zashiki* (座敷) which were set aside for the entertainment of guests, hence the connection to personal residences. Like *chaban* it was an unformalized, amateur activity popular in Edo, and its position as an amateur pastime marks it as *yûgei. Zashiki-kyôgen* was a more elaborate form[51] of amateur participation in Kabuki than *chaban*, however, and thus was more expensive and less common. The most obvious participants in *zashiki-kyôgen* were the rich merchants led by the Eighteen Grand-*Tsû* (*jûhachi daitsû* 十八大通), connoisseurs who had amassed great wealth as merchants to the samurai class and were wont to display it in flamboyant playboy style. According to Gerstle, "All of these

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[48] Ibid., p. 42.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

grand-*tsû* were Kabuki fans and usually patrons of particular actors. Some even had their own stages for private performances."[52] The group of *zashiki kyôgen* participants was not limited to the merchants, however --there is much to suggest that, no matter what their class, many other wealthy individuals in society were deeply involved in this pastime until the Kansei Reforms of the 1790s when, among other things, the government began to crack down on what it perceived to be inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain members of the samurai class.[53]

The perception has been that while the majority of the populace derived pleasure from Kabuki, members of the samurai class kept their distance from it, but Kabuki drew adherents not only from the lower classes but also from the highest echelons of society.[54] According to various factual sources of the day, there were even some samurai who could not resist the temptation to become directly involved in the theatre. The 1802 *Shizu no oda maki* (賤のをだ巻 Humble Mutterings) is one such source. In it, author Moriyama Takamori (1738-1815), a bakufu official, describes in detail his opposition to eighteenth century samurai involvement in Kabuki. In particular he mentions the samurai penchant

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[52] Ibid., p. 43.

[53] Ibid., pp. 40, 43.

[54] Ibid., p. 39.

for staging plays in their homes:

> Eldest sons of good samurai families and even other sons ...began to perform ...Kabuki music and full dramas, etc., and followed this depravity to the extent of performing amateur Kabuki plays in residences.[55]

Further confirmation of samurai lust for Kabuki in this way appear in the first part of a diary entitled *Enyû nikki* (宴遊日記 A Banquet Diary), written by the powerful daimyô Yanagisawa Nobutoki covering the years 1773 to 1785. This second source is more sympathetic than Moriyama's because Yanagisawa was an avid fan of Kabuki.[56]

The literature of the period, too, provides proof that, like the merchants, samurai participated in *zashiki-kyôgen*. The text entitled The Boorish Daimyô in Love with Kabuki (狂言好野暮大名 *Kyôgenzuki yabo na daimyô*), written in 1784 by Kishida Tohô, is the story of Umanosuke, a daimyô untrained in the ways of sophistication. His retainers recognize his need for an infusion of couth and arrange to have Umanosuke exposed to Kabuki among other things. This experience spurs him on to arrange for the staging of plays in his residence, and, eventually, Umanosuke himself begins to star in these productions. The behaviour of the main character is risky for a daimyô who wishes to retain his position, but it is nevertheless true that Umanosuke engages in *zashiki-kyôgen* as a *yûgei*

[55] Quoted in Ibid., p. 40.

[56] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

participant because of his involvement as an actor in his own home plays during his spare time.[57]

Characters like Umanosuke who become involved in *zashiki-kyôgen* also had real-life counterparts. Take, for example, Yanagisawa Nobutoki, the powerful daimyô mentioned above. Yanagisawa was "an extraordinarily devoted admirer of popular theatre. .... His devotion to Kabuki was fantastic...." He, too, became enamoured with Kabuki to the extent that he set up his own stage, put together his own troupe of actors from his household, and began to stage performances. And like Umanosuke, Yanagisawa became actively involved -- he controlled every aspect of the productions by acting as director, producer, playwright, and critic. This daimyô fostered Kabuki as *yûgei* by involving his servants and also by playing a part himself, but it does not end there. He acted as patron to Nakamura Nakazo, a Kabuki actor of considerable fame, and it was this individual who acted as instructor to Yanagisawa's servants. This Kabuki actor, too, is brought into the circle of *yûgei* as Kabuki by acting as a "purveyor of intellectual enlightenment" indicative of a *yûgei* instructor.[58]

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[57] Ibid., p. 39.

[58] Ibid., p. 41.

The staging of Kabuki required massive sums of money and, as a result, cannot be thought of as a widely-adopted pastime, but there did exist a small segment of the populace who performed Kabuki plays. The alternative for those without the necessary means was *chaban*. Both activities commanded a devoted following during the eighteenth century, and constitute the pursuit of Kabuki as a *yûgei*.

2. The "Play" of Kabuki's Component Parts

At the same time that Kabuki affected the populace, it also received influence from other areas of the arts world. William P. Malm identifies at least four different musical forces involving *shamisen* at work within this form of theatre. One of the more popular of these was *jôruri* (浄瑠璃) or narrative chanting,[59] a musical tradition well-established in Kabuki by at least the beginning of the eighteenth century[60] which was "used primarily to accompany narratives." *Jôruri* was derived "not only from the teahouse, but also from the puppet theater"[61] and this contact not only imbued Kabuki with greater variety, it brought *yûgei* pursuits into the fold as well.

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[59] William P. Malm, "Music within Kabuki Theater," in James R. Brandon et al. Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), pp. 135-42.

[60] Ibid., p. 138.

[61] Ibid., p. 137.

In the case of the influence of the puppet theatre, appropriation of elements by Kabuki occurred because of the symbiotic yet adversarial relationship existing between the two traditions. During the years in which Kabuki grew into its own, there existed "a strong trend towards rewriting Kabuki plays as Jôruri pieces: ...Kabuki and Jôruri remained in hot competition throughout the Edo period [and] exerted a mutual influence on each other."[62] This competition between the puppet theatre and Kabuki kept artists in each tradition working toward any innovation which would impress audiences, and they were more than willing to appropriate anything from the competing tradition that would ensure box office success. It was under these circumstances that *jôruri* made its debut in Kabuki.

Jôruri is a substantial musical genre composed mostly of two large families. The first is that which is headed by *itchû bushi* (一中節) and includes *bungo bushi* (豊後節), *tokiwazu bushi* (常盤津節), *shinnai bushi* (新内節), *tomimoto bushi* (富本節), and *kiyomoto bushi* (清本節). But although the above forms have all been identified both as components of the Kabuki tradition[63] and as *yûgei* pursuits,[64] a much more illustrative

[62] H.B.D. Clarke, trans., "Edo Jôruri" by Torigoe Bunzô, in C. Andrew Gerstle, ed. 18th Century Japan: Culture and Society (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 57.

[63] Malm, op. cit., p. 139.

[64] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," p. 613.

example is provided by the second family -- that headed by *gidayû bushi*, also known as *gidayû*. *Gidayû* was created by the famous theatre owner and *jôruri* chanter Takemoto Gidayû (1651-1714)[65] and is said to be at the very center of the puppet theatre's transformation into the artform known today as *bunraku* (文楽).[66] The great playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon, who wrote for both the puppet theatre and Kabuki between 1684 to 1705 and preferred to use *gidayû* in his work, is attributed with establishing *gidayû* as a major musical form within Kabuki.[67] But while *gidayû* was making headway into the theatrical world, it was developing in the direction of a *yûgei*. *Gidayû* enjoyed immense popularity, both in Edo and in Osaka,[68] but, surprisingly enough, the most avid participants in *gidayû* as *yûgei* were women: a trend which the bakufu made concerted attempts to avert through numerous edicts.[69]

The next members of the *gidayû* line were *handayû bushi* (半太夫節) and *katô bushi*. *Handayû*, created by Edo Handayû (d. 1743), emerged as an extremely popular form of musical accompaniment in both the puppet

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[65] Clarke, trans., op. cit., p. 54.

[66] Ibid., p. 55.

[67] Malm, op. cit., p. 138.

[68] Gerstle, op. cit., p. 43.

[69] Ibid.

and Kabuki theatres of Edo by 1700.[70] *Katô bushi*, on the other hand, was developed in the tea house environment of the pleasure quarters by Katô Masumi (1684-1725) and was appropriated by Kabuki shortly thereafter.[71] Like their ancestor, *handayû* and *katô bushi* also began to be drawn into the world of *yûgei*.[72] Both found their way into *zashiki-jôruri* (座敷浄瑠璃),[73] an idle pastime similar to *zashiki-kyôgen* in that they were "private performances in the houses of the well-to-do" but dissimilar in that "the prime interest was the voice of the chanter and the shamisen accompaniment."[74] Evidence suggests that even the less wealthy in society became enamoured of these two musical forms.[75]

Gidayû bushi and its descendants of the puppet theatre became integral components of Kabuki music; at the same time they developed outside the theatre as very popular idle pursuits. That *gidayû bushi* etc. could become separate *yûgei* activities was more than likely assisted by the fact that, according to Moriyama Takamori (1738-1815), a *bakufu*

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[70] Clarke, trans., op. cit., p. 57.

[71] Donald H. Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki," in James R. Brandon et al. Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), p. 51.

[72] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," p. 613.

[73] For *handayû bushi*, see Clarke, trans., op. cit., p. 57 and for *katô bushi*, see Ibid., p. 58.

[74] Ibid., p. 57.

[75] Groemer, trans. and ed., "Edo Culture," p. 8.

official and period observer, the "samisen became extremely popular during the 1740-60s. Eldest sons of good samurai families and even other sons all took lessons; from morn till night samisen sounds were always to be heard."[76] However it occurred, the phenomenon fed into the Kabuki and puppet theatre crazes. Theatre enthusiasts became better informed audience members because of the hands-on knowledge they received through *yûgei*, and this fuelled their interest. This environment, in turn, may well have contributed to the elevation of Kabuki actors like Danjûrô I (d. 1704) to the status of a sex symbol or god.[77] In this way, the *yûgei* approach to participation in the arts infiltrated a variety of artistic genres and exercised a powerful influence on culture.

CONCLUSION

Out of this analysis emerges a picture of *yûgei* as a more popularly inviting way to become intimate with the arts. In addition, while *yûgei* possessed a distinct presence within the culture at large, they were also enmeshed in existing *geidô* traditions, either as leisure-time versions of the art as a whole or as *yûgei* spin-offs of a component of the artform. The case of Kabuki shows that this can occur even in the least likely arts, and this is an indication of *yûgei* 's great power to seep into other parts of

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[76] Quoted in Gerstle, op. cit., p. 40.

[77] Ibid., pp. 36-7.

Tokugawa culture. These characteristics of *yûgei* ensured that they remained accessible to people from all walks of life and, in turn, contributed to the development of a large and aesthetically sophisticated audience for the arts.

CHAPTER THREE
BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS: *YÛGEI* AND UNIMPEDED ACCESS TO THE ARTS

From the previous chapter one might receive the impression that, from their inception, *yûgei* were open to all, but that is not so. Throughout their history *yûgei* were subject to a variety of barriers to participation – people have been denied access to these arts based on their social class, economic situation, gender, and even geographical location. But the history of the development of *yûgei* also shows that, one by one, these obstacles were overcome. As a group, *yûgei* displayed an increasing propensity for inclusivity – they served more and more people as time went by -- such that, by the end of the Tokugawa period, *yûgei* became the one option for arts enthusiasts from all backgrounds who wished to engage in arts according to their tastes. The walls which prevented participation came down, and this allowed the influence of the arts to touch the lives of the people.

THE EARLY YEARS OF *YÛGEI*

As mentioned in Chapter One, there are three branches within *geidô*: aristocratic, militaristic, and popular. It has also been noted that the relationship between *yûgei* and *geidô* is a close one, and, as such, any *geidô* may be considered a *yûgei* so long as the art itself is engaged in by the general populace, thus the three *geidô* categories of pursuits existed

in *yûgei* as well. Within *geidô* and, by association, *yûgei*, aristocratic and militaristic pursuits possessed a much longer history than popular ones because of their origins in the genteel, refined court culture of Heian period and the soldierly environment of the Kamakura (1185-1333) and Ashikaga (1338-1573) periods. The influence of these two groups within *yûgei* continued from the eighth century until the last decades of the seventeenth century, transforming *yûgei* into arts geared to serve the needs of the upper classes.

Yûgei were born within court society of the Heian period,[78] a cultural environment saturated with an array of sophisticated aesthetics such as *aware* (あわれ) and *miyabi* (みやび). *Aware* was a term used throughout most of the Heian period to express "the sensitive poet's awareness of a sight or a sound, of its beauty and its perishability."[79] *Miyabi*, "courtliness" or "refinement," pertained to "the quiet pleasures which, supposedly at least, could only be savored by the aristocrat whose tastes had been educated to them...."[80] The presence of these and other aesthetics had the effect of elevating the cultural environment such that "refined standards of cultural appreciation and performance [became]

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[78] "*Yûgei*," Nishiyama, Matsunosuke, et al., eds, Edogaku jiten (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1994), p. 509.

[79] Ryusaku Tsunoda, et al., eds., Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 172.

[80] Ibid., p. 174.

generally accepted values...."[81] At the same time, members of this society participated in "a rich variety of [activities] ...which allowed [for the] display [of] skill, taste, and erudition,"[82] and they used them as a means to demonstrate their level of cultivation. It was in this environment that *yûgei* pursuits such as *uta-awase* (歌合 poetry contests), *kai-awase* (貝合 a game comparing painted shells), *kiku-awase* (菊合 chrysanthemum comparing contests), *shô* (笙 mouth organ), *hichiriki* (ひちりき a double-reed wind instrument), *fue* (笛 transverse flute), Japanese *koto*, *biwa*, and *kemari* [83] came to enjoy popularity as elegant pastimes.

But even in this early age there existed certain *yûgei* over which aristocratic control was not complete. *Imayô* (今様 literally "modern style"), a plebeian form of poetry which flourished among the courtiers from the mid-Heian to the early Kamakura periods, provides a case in point. The form had gained such popularity in aristocratic circles by the first decades of the eleventh century that they were recited at court banquets.[84] This was due in large part to the efforts of *miko* (shrine

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[81] Ivan Morris, The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994), pp. 170-1.

[82] Ibid., p. 150.

[83] Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei no yûgeiron*," in *Nihon shisô taikei* 61: *Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 612.

[84] Yung-Hee Kim, Songs to Make the Dust Dance: The *Ryôjin Hishô* of Twelfth-century Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 4.

maidens) *asobi(me)* (prostitutes) and *kugutsu(me)* (female puppeteers) of the lower classes, professional entertainers who used *imayô* in their work and sometimes acted as instructors to casual aristocratic participants,[85] thereby giving the poetic form exposure.[86] In this environment high and low alike were participants in the same *yûgei*, and the wall separating the common classes from *yûgei* began to crumble.

Yûgei in the Kamakura and Ashikaga periods (1185-1573) was even more vibrant. Heian aristocratic culture was passed on to the courtiers of this period, and it soon became popular among the rest of the upper class.[87] In time it was others -- samurai and monks -- who came to be instrumental in the continuance of the aristocratic *yûgei* tradition.[88] They adopted preexisting aristocratic pursuits -- various forms of poetry for example -- but also began to add new activities such as tea ceremony, flower arranging, nô, and *kyôgen*. By the end of the Ashikaga period (1573), aristocratic *yûgei* had grown in popularity to such an extent that even members of the common classes could be found next to their social

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[85] Ibid., p. 13.

[86] Ibid., p. 5.

[87] George Bailey Sansom, Japan: A Short Cultural History (Rutland, Vt: Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc., 1973), pp. 341-2.

[88] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

superiors reciting passages from nô theatre or participating in linked verse composition.

But this was the age of the warrior, and, therefore, the age of militaristic *bugei*. At the same time that the samurai class was busy enjoying refined pursuits in their spare time, they also devoted much time to the development of such fields as archery, horsemanship, and hawking.[89] Schools of *bugei* sprang up around these activities as a systematic way for samurai to acquire requisite battle training in times of a cessation of conflict, and soon the *bugei* of the warrior came to compete with refined *yûgei* for the attention of the ruling class.

The next to inherit the artistic legacy of *yûgei* were the aristocrats and, to a greater extent, the upper echelons of the "new" samurai of the Tokugawa period. The tendency to congregate in the castle towns (城下町 *jôkamachi*) had been a feature of life for the samurai well before the beginning of the period.[90] However, with the establishment of the official seat of government in Edo[91] and the institution of alternate attendance which required the *daimyô* to keep wife and children in the capital and

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[89] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," pp. 607-8.

[90] John Whitney Hall, "The Bakuhan System," in John Whitney Hall, ed. Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 176.

[91] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

spend every other year himself in attendance on the *shôgun*,[92] the new samurai established themselves in the castle towns, their numbers began to expand, and they began to enjoy prosperity.[93] Elite members of this new samurai class almost immediately began to exhibit characteristics of an aristocracy. To be more specific, both aristocratic and militaristic culture

> developed rapidly among the aristocratic warrior stratum. The habits and lifestyle of the daimyô and the high-ranking officials -- their food, housing, and clothing, their furnishings and utensils, even their styles of seating and deportment -- were in fact all warrior-style variations of the ancient customs, practices, and etiquette of the Kyoto court.[94]

Very few of the vassals of the first *Shôgun* Tokugawa Ieyasu, or for that matter his predecessor Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), came from old samurai families; in fact, many had just recently been elevated from a class of provincial landowners.[95] According to Nishiyama, when

> these former provincials found themselves propelled to the highest social stratum of the land, their cultural abilities hardly matched their new official status. Undaunted, these nominal

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[92] Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei geidô shisô no tokushitsu to sono tenkai*," in Nihon shisô taikei 61: *Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 598.

[93] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

[94] Gerald Groemer, trans. and ed., Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868, by Nishiyama Matsunosuke (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 30.

[95] Ibid., p. 33.

> aristocrats soon exploited all means at their disposal to ennoble themselves,[96]

and began to acquire all of the trappings of aristocratic culture in previous ages.

The first sign of this acquisition came in 1603 when Ieyasu strongly urged Emperor Goyôzei (r. 1596-1611) to confer upon him a number of ancient titles -- "Minister of the Right," (*Udaijin* 右大臣) "Great Barbarian-Subduing General" (*Sei-i tai shôgun* 征夷大将軍), and "Head of the Minamoto Clan" (*Genji chôja* 源氏長者) -- in the hopes of borrowing some of the prestige of the legendary military general Minamoto-no-Yoritomo (1147-1199).[97] The *bakufu* also reinstituted titles such as *Dainagon* (大内言 Major Counsellor), *Chûnagon* (中内言 Minor Counsellor), and *Udaijin* (右大臣 Minister of the Right) last used in association with politics in the ancient period.[98] The samurai did not stop there, however;

> Warriors might wear tall black lacquered hats *(ebôshi)* or broad-sleeved upper garments and cloaks *(suô, suikan)*. The ceremonial court music *(gagaku)* ensemble of the "three directions" -- Kyoto, Osaka, and Nara -- was systematized and used for performing musical offerings at Shinto ceremonies.[99]

The compulsory system of alternate attendance was another indication

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 30.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., p. 34.

since it could be likened to a tribute system where *daimyô* instead of ambassadors paid homage to the supreme ruler, and the resultant gathering of the *daimyô* to the gathering of courtiers in an Imperial court.

And like aristocrats in previous ages, the *Shôgun* and *daimyô* enthusiastically began to spend their leisure time in such pursuits as poetry composition, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and incense identification,[100] as well as taking up the *biwa*, *shô*, *hichiriki*, *fue*, calligraphy, and *kemari*. Very often samurai and courtier could be found at the same events participating in the same *yûgei*.[101] Both points are significant in that they indicate the smooth transmission of the aristocratic *yûgei* tradition to the samurai class of the Tokugawa period. For a group of individuals who wished to borrow the reputation of aristocrats in previous ages, these *yûgei* represented perfect opportunities for social intercourse. When the *Shôgun* and *daimyô* began to participate wholeheartedly in such pursuits vassals followed suit, and as a result, the *yûgei* population within the samurai class reached monumental proportions.[102] It resulted in an environment wherein, within "three or

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[100] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598.

[101] Groemer, trans. and ed., op. cit., p. 34.

[102] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598.

four generations, both the daimyô and the shogun were no longer country bumpkins: they had become a true upper-class nobility in both name and deed."[103]

Although it is apparent that there was great enthusiasm for aristocratic pursuits in *yûgei*, the issue of the ruling class attitude toward militaristic *bugei* is a little more ambiguous. According to Nishiyama, militaristic *yûgei* pursuits were passed over by the daimyô in favour of more genteel pastimes because it was thought that to do so would allow them to "evade the cold eye of the *bakufu*."[104] His contention is that, in the first years of the period, all samurai were made to believe that training with arms in any way, shape, or form would surely result in an immediate and unpleasant reaction from the *shôgun* and the *bakufu*; as such, *bugei* were to be avoided at all costs.

This conclusion requires some careful consideration. Certainly the great hegemon Tokugawa Ieyasu, a man who had spent much time and energy in his successful bid for political supremacy, was not a man to take a military challenge lightly; as accounts of his escapades prove time and again, he was fully capable of suppressing any resistance ruthlessly and

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[103] Groemer, trans. and ed., op. cit., p. 33.

[104] . . . 幕府の冷たい目をそらす. . . . Translation mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598.

thoroughly.[105] Yet he was also the man responsible for the composition of the *Buke shohatto* (武家諸法度) or the Laws for the Military Houses, a document which "expressed the principle that all [samurai] should be prepared equally well in the literary arts (*bun*) and in the military arts (*bu*)."[106] According to Donald H. Shively, *bun* "means not only 'writing' or 'literature' but, in its fullest sense, ...'civilization'...,"[107] -- in other words, cultivation. Thus, rather than being unhappy with samurai involvement in *bugei*, Ieyasu and the shogunate welcomed this kind of activity while at the same time encouraging pursuit of a more cultivated nature. This, in part, has contributed to what C. Andrew Gerstle has described as the "inherent contradiction or tension in Edo period society ...between strict samurai morality and the older aristocratic court, aesthetic based morality in which the pursuit of elegant pleasures (*sukimono* or *suki*) was fundamental."[108]

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[105] Prime examples of this are Ieyasu's handling of the Monto sect after the uprising of 1564 and the descendants of Hideyoshi during the 1614 siege of Osaka Castle. See A.L. Sadler, Maker of Modern Japan: The Life of Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (Rutland, Vt: Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc., 1978), pp. 65, 291-2.

[106] Donald H. Shively, "Popular Culture," in John Whitney Hall, ed. Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 716.

[107] Ibid.

[108] C. Andrew Gerstle, "Response to the Panel: 'The Place of Love'," in Sumie Jones, ed. Imaging Reading Eros: Proceedings for the Conference "Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850" (Bloomington: Indiana University East Asian Studies Center, 1996), p. 103.

Thus, at the behest of the authorities, "the samurai during the Edo period occupied themselves by polishing their martial arts and involving themselves in theories and manuals on "bushidô" or samurai philosophy."[109] One such individual was Yamaga Sokô (1622-85), a scholar of Ancient Learning (*Kogaku* 古学), a school of Confucianism which focused directly on the Confucian classics while ignoring later commentaries by such philosophers as Chu Hsi. Sokô's speciality was in the area of military affairs, and among his works was the first known systematic expression of the samurai ideology known in the modern age as *bushidô* (武士道).[110] Being a military strategist, he supported samurai involvement in the martial arts, but he maintained that the more genteel arts were also "essential to the ...discipline of the samurai."[111] Sokô therefore advocated involvement in both militaristic *bugei* and aristocratic *yûgei*, which shows that the official position in this matter received at least some support among the samurai class. It was this phenomenon rather than official disapproval of *bugei*, which caused what

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[109] Sumie Jones, "Sex, Art, and Edo Culture: An Introduction," in Sumie Jones, ed. Imaging Reading Eros: Proceedings for the Conference "Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850" (Bloomington: Indiana University East Asian Studies Center, 1996), p. 6.

[110] Tsunoda, op. cit., p. 386.

[111] Ibid., p. 386.

Nishiyama has termed "a very vigorous revival of an age of courtly culture"[112] at the beginning of the Tokugawa period.

It must be remembered that, with the dawning of the Tokugawa period, the nation had turned from war to peace, the samurai from warrior to scholar-administrator. The samurai was no longer required to engage in armed conflict, and, as such, possession of military skill was not as essential a requirement as it had been in the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. In this environment, *bugei* thus lost their importance as occupational training, but, owing to the efforts of the *bakufu*, they began to gain value as leisure pursuits. This situation allowed the various *bugei* engaged in as pleasant pastimes to be transformed into *yûgei*.

It is thus apparent that, initially at least, the *yûgei* world was quite an exclusive one. The aristocratic and militaristic pursuits to which early *yûgei* were restricted had much to do with this exclusivity -- in an artistic environment controlled by the upper classes, it is usually status and wealth that allows individuals access to the arts, and it is the wealthy and powerful who determine what activities constitute art. But even though *yûgei* remained the near-exclusive property of the power brokers in

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[112] . . . きわめて旺盛な王朝文化のリバイバル. . . . Translation mine. Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598.

Japanese society until the last decades of the seventeenth century, there is evidence to suggest that the scope of *yûgei* grew larger with each passing decade.

ENTER THE *CHÔNIN*

Although *yûgei* had their beginnings as pastimes for the social elite, this situation was not to last. The first century of the Tokugawa period was a time of redistribution of wealth in the nation, a phenomenon which affected the common classes most of all. Members of the *chônin* class in particular began to enjoy the kind of affluence which previously had been reserved for the upper echelons of society, and they began to participate in pursuits of an aristocratic nature.

A small group of old-style wealthy merchants operating in the beginning decades of the period were the first commoners to taste the pleasures of the idle arts.[113] Most of these commoners were government -patronized merchants,[114] government-patronized being a term used to describe merchants who did business with the *bakufu* and samurai class, and it is highly likely that it was through their business transactions with

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[113] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society in the Edo Period," Acta Asiatica, 33 (1977): 33.

[114] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598. For more information on government-patronized merchants particularly in the city of Edo, see Groemer, trans. and ed., op.cit., p. 38.

members of the samurai class that they were first introduced to and then began to pursue various forms of *yûgei.* In addition, these men were characterized as being "both speculative and enterprising, and they were inclined both to luxury and to the pursuit of individuality. Some even had a wide range of cultural interests."[115] This obviously assisted the entrance of the merchants into the *yûgei* world -- not only did they command the necessary wealth to partake of these pursuits but they also possessed the requisite yearning for refinement. Thus a situation existed where "upper class *chônin* and wealthy merchants ... joined with the court nobility and samurai residents ...to encourage the rise of *yûgei* ...."[116]

By the middle of the century, however, the old-style merchants were beginning to fall into decline, partly because of their inability to collect on loans made to samurai clients and partly because they were unable to sustain their businesses in economically tumultuous times.[117] But this was not the end of the common man's relationship with *yûgei.* The "previous era had been represented by a few merchants of great wealth, but the new era saw the rise of a large number of small merchants."[118] Beginning in

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[115] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 33.

[116] Ibid., p. 37.

[117] Ibid., p. 33.

[118] Ibid., p. 35.

the 1680s every major city in the nation experienced a massive growth in the numbers of wealthy businessmen,[119] and it was these individuals, known as *niwaka bungen* (俄分限) or "the suddenly rich," who became the new inhabitants of the *yûgei* world.[120]

The situation eventually led to a time where members of the samurai class began to recognize the cultivation of the *chônin*. In his text entitled *Dokugo* (独語 *Monologue*), noted philosopher Dazai Shundai (1680-1747) reveals himself as a member of this group. He compared the conduct of merchants --

> There are those of moderate wealth who amuse themselves with scholarship, Chinese and Japanese classical poetry, and wind and stringed instruments, and although it is a little inferior, they take pleasure in learning *sarugaku*[121] but they will not touch *jôruri* or *shamisen*.[122]

-- with that of certain members of the samurai class who, while "cheerfully taking fervent delight in narrative chanting and shamisen, [displayed]

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[119] Edogaku jiten, p. 509.

[120] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 33.

[121] A form of music closely associated with nô theatre.

[122] 「. . . やや富めるものは、学問し詩歌管弦を玩び、少し下れる品なれども、猿楽などを習ひて楽みとして、浄瑠璃、三線などをば近付けぬ類あり」。 Translation mine. From *Dokugo* (独語 Monologue). Quoted in Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei*," in Geinôshi Kenkyûkai, ed. Nihon no koten geinô dairokkan: buyô (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970), p. 214.

vulgar behaviour without hesitation and [became] a target for people,"[123] and came to the conclusion that the commoner classes had the right of it.[124]

Yûgei of the Tokugawa period developed in leaps and bounds in part because of the steady population growth of those involved in classically influenced pursuits.[125] As has been outlined above, the samurai class was not the only group to exhibit a genuine interest in idle pursuits -- the old-style merchants and the *niwaka bungen*, too, found them fascinating and thus contributed to the expansion of this world. The increase in the numbers of wealthy *chônin* mentioned previously led to increased *chônin* participation in *yûgei* beginning in the last decades of the seventeenth century and lasting well into the eighteenth.[126] Their efforts to gain access to refined *yûgei* could not be denied, and they went so far as to take every opportunity to penetrate pursuits like *gagaku* and certain kinds of *shakuhachi* which were considered off-limits to commoners.[127]

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[123] 「ひたすら浄瑠璃、三線を好みてはれやかなる所にて、おめず憚からず、賤しき所作をして人の玩となる」。 Translation mine. From *Dokugo* (独語 Monologue). Quoted in ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Nishiyama, "*Kinsei geidô*," p. 598.

[126] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

[127] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron*," p. 614.

Involvement in refined *yûgei* was strongly encouraged by certain members of the *chônin* class[128] for very practical reasons. As mentioned previously, participation in *yûgei* granted the individual increased status within *chônin* society, and, as such, "they were required to have a certain amount of universality of content...."[129] *Yûgei* were exploited as means to bring people together and participation in them provided the perfect opportunity to forge connections with fellow citizens. But not just any pursuit would do -- in order to maximize one's potential for making contacts it was necessary to partake of *yûgei* which enjoyed greater popularity in society. Those "skills and accomplishments that 'remain constantly in favour' were the classical *yûgei* with well-established reputations"[130] such as tea, nô, and *renga*.[131] Thus, in the early stages of the development of *yûgei* in the Tokugawa period, "[t]hese circumstances surrounding *yûgei* may be thought to have brought *yûgei* nearer and nearer to becoming a classical refinement,"[132] Of course, the obverse of the issue is that it "had the effect of obstructing the development of new

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[128] Moriya Takeshi, Genroku bunka -- yûgei, akusho, shibai, 1st ed., Shirizu Nipponzôshi (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1987), p. 30.

[129] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 46.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei*," p. 222.

[132] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 46.

types of *yûgei.*"[133] Evidence such as the above-quoted passage from Dazai Shundai's *Dokugo* concerning merchants suggests that a movement had begun away from newer pursuits –*jôruri* and *shamisen*, for example – to those of long-standing reputation,[134] but as I will explain later, this was a temporary phenomenon.

While *chônin* interest in *yûgei* grew, samurai remained as fascinated as ever, and soon, according to Moriya Takeshi, both high- and low-born were participating in the same refined pursuits described above. He substantiates this claim with a quote describing a typical "well-to-do person in Ôsaka" from Ihara Saikaku's The Japanese Family Storehouse (*Nippon Eitaigura* 日本永代蔵; 1688). A more detailed translation of it is included here:

> ...[he] is not the heir to generations of wealth. He is more often some humble clerk -- a 'Kichizô' or 'Sansuke' -- who has a quick rise in the world and comes into money. Gradually, as opportunities offer, he acquires the elements of Chinese and Japanese verse composition, kickball, ... the koto, the flute, the drums, incense blending, and the tea ceremony, and ... associat[es] with the best people.[135]

The above list of pursuits can be divided into two categories: those which originated in the Heian period and those which originated in the

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

[135] G.W. Sargent, trans., The Japanese Family Storehouse or The Millionaires' Gospel Modernized (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 23-4.

Kamakura and Muromachi periods. The former is represented by Chinese and Japanese verse composition, *kemari*, *koto*, and incense blending, while the latter is made up of the flute and drums (musical instruments used in nô), and tea ceremony. In short, all of these pursuits can be classified as aristocratic *yûgei.*

Another point for special consideration within this passage is the term "the best people." This is a reference to the upper classes of society at the time, which is upheld with the sentence following the above quotation: "In life it is training rather than birth which counts, and it is not unknown for the unwanted offspring of noble families to be obliged to earn their livings by hawking home-made paper flowers."[136] Conversely, this statement implies that even a poor man can pass as high-born with enough diligence, effort, and training. The lower classes gained access to high culture through classical *yûgei* , and elite and commoner were able to share the same cultural experience.

This state of contact existed in some form such that "towards the end of the Edo period it was not uncommon for samurai and *chônin* to form close relationships on the basis of their common interest in *yûgei,*"[137] but it went further than that. In time it became fashionable to mimic even the

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[136] Ibid., p. 24.

[137] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," p. 32.

manner in which the elite partook of *yûgei*, and an example of this lies in the architecture of an urban *chônin* dwelling. From the seventeenth century it became increasingly common for particularly wealthy *chônin* to build at the back of their property a detached room or *zashiki* for use in entertaining.[138] The architectural features are significant in that it "was small social gatherings in these detached rooms of *chônin* houses that fostered the development of *chônin* culture in the form of *yûgei*,"[139] in other words because they "were in fact principally for the practice and performance of *yûgei*."[140] The *zashiki* "was a miniature version of the samurai *shoin-zukuri*" style of architecture and was "reminiscent of the *shichû no sankyo* ... (city hermitages) of the Muromachi period...."[141] Thus, not only were *zashiki* places of *yûgei* but they also imitated an architectural style popular among the upper classes.

The above development represented the beginning of the end of the upper class monopoly on *yûgei*. Old style government-supported merchants and their antecedents, the *niwaka bungen*, were the first groups from the lower classes to become involved with *yûgei*, and they immediately began to lean toward pursuits of an aristocratic nature,

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[138] Ibid., p. 47.

[139] Ibid., pp. 47-8.

[140] Ibid., p. 47.

[141] Ibid.

refined pastimes enjoyed by the ruling classes from the Heian to the Ashikaga periods. They were not alone in this -- samurai maintained their interest in classical *yûgei* -- and elite and commoner could be seen participating in the same pursuits. This environment was to exist to the end of the period and it affected the manner in which *chônin* made *yûgei* a part of their lives. The government-supported merchants and the *niwaka bungen* helped to effect the further breakdown of the barriers to participation in *yûgei* by the lower classes, and, as such, they were instrumental in granting their fellow *chônin* access to the world of refinement and culture which was aristocratic *yûgei*.

THE END OF CLASS BARRIERS

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, a new phenomenon arose within the various *yûgei iemoto* -- the use of *geimei* (芸名) or "artistic names". Each idle art possessed these names and assigned them based on the participant's level of achievement, for use only within a specific *yûgei* society. They tended to be beautiful names, so much so that they are likened to names from the Tale of Genji used by courtesans in the Tokugawa period. With each passing level of accomplishment the number of characters in the *geimei* would increase, they would be made more aesthetic and authoritative, and they would be appended with

official titles.[142] In this way *geimei* became another official form of recognition within *yûgei.*

With regard to the circumstances surrounding the adoption of *geimei* it has been stated that, before the beginning of the Tokugawa period, the *shôgun* and the majority of *daimyô* had lived life as rural samurai, but with the dawning of the new age they were promoted to the position of new aristocracy. These individuals found it necessary to reinforce their newfound status with whatever means necessary. For example, as mentioned above they began to use political titles first introduced in Japan with the *Ritsuryô* system instituted by the Taika Reforms (initiated 645 A.D.) of the Yamato period (300-710 A.D.) and lasting approximately until the end of the Heian (1185 A.D.). According to Nishiyama, titles such as *Dainagon* and *Chûnagon* were used not only in order to hide their true origins but also in an attempt to fashion a new model of the aristocracy.[143] *Geimei*, Nishiyama states, were also used by the samurai to reinforce their status, but soon they came to be used in an effort to create a world where restrictions of rank could be escaped.

This trend was then carried on by plebeian participants of *yûgei.* From the moment the *yûgei* movement spread to the lower classes, *geimei*

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[142] Nishiyama, "*Yûgeiron,*" pp. 613-4.

[143] Ibid., p. 614.

in *yûgei* served participants by allowing them to escape their social identity dictated by the Confucian system of organization typifying Tokugawa society known as *shinôkôshô* (士農工商 literally "warrior, peasant, artisan, merchant").[144] Social status was left behind upon entering the world of *yûgei*; replacing it was the *geimei* status system. As stated above, *geimei* were assigned according to the level of proficiency achieved, levels which were established in accordance with the artistic standards built into *yûgei.*[145] In theory, then, *yûgei* was a system of merit in that *geimei* and accompanying status were allotted to those participants who did the work to meet the artistic standard. It thus allowed individuals to transcend social status, at least while they were participating in *yûgei*. It is perhaps for this reason that Nishiyama has commented that for the people of the Tokugawa period the various *yûgei* became "roads to the utopian world of refined play."[146]

From the above it becomes apparent that *yûgei* began to serve participants more than just artistically. *Chônin* who found this dual role as the economic elite and the politically disenfranchised frustrating could potentially employ *yûgei* in their attempts to gain freedom from the

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., pp. 614-5.

[146] . . . 高度な遊びの世界であるユートピアへの通路であった。 Translation mine. Ibid., p. 614.

social status to which they were subject. In other words, they combated their low status by "freeing the self" (*jiko kaihô* 自己解放).[147] With this power, *chônin* were able to engage in *yûgei* on a level playing field and, through hard work and diligence, beat samurai at the same game. Ultimately this utilization of *yûgei* was to eradicate from it the impediments to participation based on social status.

SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW

Kabuki of the Bunka and Bunsei eras (1804-30) shows that, by the first decades of the nineteenth century, the world of *yûgei* was undergoing even more fundamental change. It was at this time that Kabuki music of various kinds appeared as *yûgei* pursuits and grew quickly in popularity. Demand for these *yûgei* grew in part from the craze for Kabuki itself which had spread throughout society. Another contributing factor was that a portion of the populace involved with *yûgei* had begun to leave such classical pursuits as tea, nô, and *renga* for Kabuki and *jôruri* related activities as well as a range of other pastimes associated with the popular culture. Many in the lower classes, particularly the daughters of wealthy merchant houses, rushed to receive instruction, and teachers of these plebeian artforms flourished.[148] In this way, *yûgei* grew

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[147] Ibid.

[148] Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei*," pp. 222-23.

in scope through the addition of less refined Tokugawa-period pursuits to the existing group of older ones. This represents the dawn of what can be termed the culture of the masses.

Yûgei had become both classical and contemporary -- both "refined" and "vulgar" -- and thus had come to be affected by the play of *ga* (雅) and *zoku* (俗), two aesthetic concepts of great importance during the Tokugawa period. *Ga* can be described as "the elegant, courtly, classical, or transcendent," while *zoku* refers to "the common, coarse, contemporary, or worldly."[149] Beginning in the eighteenth century in particular, *ga* and *zoku* came to enjoy such popularity as concepts that Nakano Mitsutoshi, among other scholars, claims that *ga* and *zoku* are the basis for all aesthetics to emerge during the last half of the Tokugawa period.[150] From around 1750, *ga* and *zoku* elements came to exist together within various artforms, and, according to Nakano, this had the effect of "dissolving [class barriers], making the traditional concern of writers with the distinction between ga and zoku a thing of the past." In fact, a situation was created in which the artist "actively [sought] ga in

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[149] Andrew Markus, "Prostitutes and Prosperity in the Works of Terakado Seiken," in Sumie Jones, ed. Imaging Reading Eros: Proceedings for the Conference "Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850" (Bloomington: Indiana University East Asian Studies Center, 1996), p. 37.

[150] Maria Flutsch, trans., "The Role of Traditional Aesthetics" by Nakano Mitsutoshi, in C. Andrew Gerstle, ed. 18th Century Japan: Culture and Society (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 126.

zoku;" in the words of Ôta Nanpo (1749-1823) "The refined person who sports with zoku is the master of ga."[151]

Zoku was thus elevated to the level of *ga* and began to receive equal acceptance. But more than that, each fostered the other in a cooperative, complementary relationship. In other words, the "incongruity of the two spheres, when brought into close proximity, generated a new dynamic, an electricity coursing between opposing poles."[152] The inclusion of popular pursuits brought this dynamic to the world of *yûgei* and added much vibrancy and variety. It also made the world of *yûgei* appealing not only to those with a taste for the refined but to those with more earthy inclinations as well.

Yûgei of the Tokugawa period had their beginnings as pastimes for the elite, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, the scope of *yûgei* had expanded such that people from all walks of life had come to participate in the large urban centres. This is a great change in and of itself, but *yûgei* was destined to expand further; *yûgei* began to catch the attention of inhabitants in outlying areas as well. "Thought, literature and the arts crossed the gap between city and village," which had the effect of removing the strict system of social organization, replacing it with a

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[151] *Kana sôsetsu* (Kana Preface, 1824). Quoted in Ibid., p. 129.

[152] Markus, op. cit., p. 37.

society which acknowledged all people. Large cities had always been important as cultural centres, but now small- and mid-sized towns played a vital role in the blurring of geographical lines as they, too, became gathering places for culture. Information about *yûgei* and other aspects of culture was transmitted from these centres to the rest of the nation, but it also flowed in the opposite direction -- cultural products of all kinds were created and developed in rural areas to be fed back into the cities.[153] Thus, not only had class barriers broken down, geographical ones had begun to disappear as well.

THE GENTLER SEX

In the first half of the Tokugawa period *yûgei* had progressed from a limited group of traditional pursuits engaged in by society's upper classes to a wide assortment of activities, both classical and contemporary pursued by people of high and low status alike. It is important to note, however, that, for the most part, this situation did not include women. Almost all *yûgei* enthusiasts were men simply because "*yûgei* performed a social function and society belonged to men"[154]: fathers were aware that *yûgei* provided valuable opportunities for social intercourse and were eager to make these opportunities available to their sons. This is not to

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[153] Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei*," pp. 222-3.

[154] Moriya Takeshi, Genroku bunka, p. 41.

say that women were completely excluded from participation in *yûgei* [155] – such period sources such as Ihara Saikaku's Life of an Amorous Woman (好色一代女 *Kôshoku ichidai onna* ; 1686) and Ejima Kiseki's Characters of Young Women in the World (世間娘気質 *Seken musume katagi* ; 1717) clearly indicate that a few daughters of rich families were sent to learn *yûgei* during this time.[156] Their numbers were small, however, because in a family with limited financial resources, priority was given to the provision of sons with the access to *yûgei* which would contribute to their future success.[157]

This situation began to change, however, by the middle of the eighteenth century.[158] There was a veritable explosion in the numbers of women becoming involved with *yûgei*, particularly in the city of Edo. From approximately 1751 to 1789, for example, it became quite fashionable for *chônin* families to send their daughters into the service of upper class houses. The custom in Edo at this time was to acquire servants

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[155] Ibid., pp. 41-2.

[156] In Amorous Woman, for example, the main character is permitted to take lessons in a particular form of dance when she is comparatively young. See Ivan Morris, trans., Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings by Ihara Saikaku (New York: New Directions, 1963), pp. 126-7. In Worldly Young Women as well, there is a female character who displays exceptional talent in a variety of *yûgei* fields who must surely have taken lessons in order to become so proficient. See also Howard Hibbett, The Floating World of Japanese Fiction (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1959), pp. 104-5.

[157] Moriya Takeshi, *Genroku bunka*, pp. 41-2.

[158] Ibid., p. 42.

at a very young age and train them thoroughly in their work. Part of this training included basic aspects of refinement, and, as such, girls employed in households received instruction in such *yûgei* pursuits as *shamisen, koto,* and *buyô.*[159] The growth of the popularity of *yûgei* among women was not limited to Edo and its environs, however; daughters throughout the nation were introduced to various forms of dance and Kabuki music. The example of dance shows that the *yûgei* craze among women was not restricted to the wealthy -- until 1748 it was common for the daughters of less affluent *chônin* families to receive instruction. Kabuki music came to be viewed as an essential accomplishment for any new wife,[160] and there is the possibility that this applied to other pursuits as well. If so, this explains for the great demand for *yûgei* instruction among women.

The freedom from class enjoyed by men also benefited women in that women were able to progress in their chosen pursuits to whatever degree and at whatever pace they desired, and they received recognition for their efforts. The *bunjin* phenomenon which began to appear at the turn of the eighteenth century is an example. It modelled itself after the amateur-gentleman literati tradition in China, and as such, involved the adoption of certain personas. One was that of the connoisseur, in which artists

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[159] *Edogaku jiten,* p. 509

[160] Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei,*" p. 222.

presented themselves as a cultured enthusiast engaging in art while at leisure. The other was that of the true artist in which artistic processes were guided solely by imagination and creativity. These personas were at odds with the reality facing most *bunjin* literati of the Tokugawa period, however. In order for any artist to make art a full-time profession and make a living in Japan, it has always been necessary to keep in mind the end user of the product and to govern one's professional activities accordingly. This was no less true of *bunjin* in the Tokugawa period, full-time professionals who derived livelihoods from art. They were required to look to the wealthy merchants for their client base, and success came to depend on the artist's capacity to understand and supply the wishes of these customers. The *bunjin* artist had to become a businessman because his trade was subject to the demands of the market, yet he was required to remain faithful to the original *bunjin* ideal which dictated that he remain aloof from that world, at least in appearance.[161] It is this gap between the real and created identity of the artist which marks the *bunjin* tradition as a study in contrast.

The world of *bunjin* literati was filled with many who made art their profession full-time, and, as such, they required a livelihood form their

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[161] Mark Morris, "Group Portrait with Artist: Yosa Buson and His Patrons," in C. Andrew Gerstle, ed. 18th Century Japan: Culture and Society (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 90.

art. One source of this income, and one typical for the *yûgei* professional, was provided through the instruction of amateur students. In fact, many individuals who were to become *bunjin* themselves began their careers by receiving instruction as amateurs from other renowned *bunjin* ; it was a perfect opportunity to receive instruction in an artform from a professional, who could then provide the student access to the society of literati.[162] Since these students began as amateurs, they can be considered students of *yûgei.* This was true for men, but, particularly in the nineteenth century, for women as well.

One such example of this is provided by the life of Ema Saikô (1787-1861), an artist involved with Chinese-style poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Toward the end of her life she became a *bunjin* of great renown, but her artistic career began as an amateur student. Saikô's father, Ema Ransai, a Confucian and *Rangaku* scholar with an added interest in medicine, began to encourage her to acquire learning of all kinds from an early age.[163] She exhibited particular proficiency in painting, and at the age of twelve or thirteen, she was accepted as a

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[162] Mark Morris provides at least one example of this phenomenon, Yoshiwake Tairo, in his article on the famed haikai poet and painter Yosa Buson. Ibid., pp. 89, 95.

[163] Patricia Fister, "Female *Bunjin* : The Life of Poet-Painter Ema Saikô," in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed. Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 109.

student by the Kyoto monk Gyokurin (1751-1814).[164] Her development in poetry underwent a similar turn. In 1813, Saikô met Rai San'yô (1780-1832), a well-known poet, scholar, and author of *Nihon Gaishi* (日本外史, An Unofficial History of Japan). Sometime after that, Saikô's father asked San'yô to accept her as a student of Chinese poetry (*kanshi* 漢詩) and he accepted.[165] In the later years of her life, her teachers, especially San'yô, helped her to forge connections within *bunjin* society.[166] Saikô went on to become a full-fledged, highly respected *bunjin* in her own right,[167] and her case shows that women, too, were able to begin successful careers through participation in activities characteristically *yûgei.*

Saikô was not the only woman to flourish artistically through *yûgei* -- many other women involved with the literati tradition became active as artists[168] through *yûgei* as did Saikô. This was particularly true beginning in the nineteenth century when the numbers of female *bunjin* rose, due, in part, to the fact that a number of male literati, following the precedent set by literati in China, began to welcome them into the fold.[169] "In this

[164] Ibid., p. 110. Hiroaki Sato, Breeze Through Bamboo: Kanshi of Ema Saikô (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 13.

[165] Sato, op. cit., p. 6.

[166] For example, in 1817 San'yô introduced Saikô to Uragami Shunkin, who then agreed to become her calligraphy teacher. Fister, op. cit., p. 120.

[167] Ibid., p. 109.

[168] Ibid., p. 130.

[169] Ibid., p. 109.

small world of... intellectuals, women artists... were able to develop their skills in an atmosphere of equal relations with men,"[170] and, although many did not receive quite the degree of acclaim as their male counterparts, female *bunjin* prospered. Even in the eighteenth century, women were enjoying considerable success in this world. Saikô's predecessor Ike Gyokuran (1727/28-1784) is one such example.

Gyokuran together with her grandmother Kaji (dates unknown) and her mother Yuri (1694-1764) are known today as "The Three Women of Gion," a name derived from the fact that they all worked in Kaji's tea house in Kyoto's Gion district.[171] Gyokuran was known for her use of Chinese-style painting and *waka* poetry, a somewhat unorthodox combination within the *bunjin* tradition, which limited itself to Chinese artforms.[172] Although she was active in poetry composition, Gyokuran was much more well-known for her skill at painting.[173] Her first official dealings with *bunjin* society came when she became the student of Yanagisawa Kien (also known as Ryû Rikyô) who refined her skills in

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[170] Ibid., p. 120.

[171] Ibid., pp. 241, 245, 260.

[172] Stephen Addiss, "The Three Women of Gion," in Marsha Weidner, ed. Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 257.

[173] Ibid., p. 247.

painting of the literati style.[174] She then went on to marry Ike-no-Taiga (1723-1776), a noted *bunjin*, and began to receive guidance from him as well.[175] Toward the end of her life she commanded such fame that Gyokuran was listed as a painter in the first three editions of *Heian jinbutsu shi* (Who's who in Kyoto, 1768, 1775, 1782).[176] Her primary occupation was to work at the tea house established by her grandmother, Kaji (dates unknown), and as such, painting and her secondary interest, poetry, were leisure pastimes for her. This, combined with the fact that she received instruction, indicates that the majority of her activities as an artist were conducted in a *yûgei*-like manner.

The precedent for female involvement in *yûgei* during the Tokugawa period had been set long before the eighteenth century. During the Heian period, for example, women had been an integral part of upper class society and, as such, had participated in a variety of leisure pursuits considered to be *yûgei*. Life for women in this period was one lived indoors, in seclusion and in relative isolation. The affairs of the world were considered to be the domain of men and women were relegated to the home, remaining behind screens and draperies, hidden from the

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[174] Ibid., p. 251.

[175] Ibid., p. 255.

[176] Ibid., p. 259.

public gaze in general and the eyes of men in particular. This meant not only that there were few opportunities to venture out into the world, but also that there were few other activities available to relieve the boredom.[177] These circumstances created a fertile environment for the development of leisure pursuits which would be effective in filling the long days. In fact, many of the *yûgei* listed above in relation to classical pastimes -- poetry composition, incense identification, and matching games, for example -- came to be an integral part of the daily lives of most women.

Female courtiers were not the only ones to become involved with *yûgei*, however. In the Yamato period, for example, women in the pleasure trade who had developed skill in various *yûgei* had been able to use this knowledge effectively in the furthering of their careers. Sources such as the Manyôshû (万葉集 "Collection of a Thousand Leaves," late eighth century), which contains at least one long poem by Otomo-no-Yakamochi mentioning the word *saburuko* ("the one who serves," a euphemism for prostitute)[178] and the poems of at least five women of pleasure,[179] suggest

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[177] Morris, Shining Prince, pp. 166, 167.

[178] Vol. 18: 4106.

[179] Cecilia Segawa Seigle, Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 3.

that these women were able to gain access to some of the most wealthy and influential individuals of the day in part through their talent.

The use of skill in *yûgei* to attract clients was an integral component of the work of the courtesans in the Tokugawa period, as well, and it began with the advent of *onna kabuki* (lit. "women's kabuki"), a form of theatre first performed in Kyoto in 1603 which can been described as a "song and dance" revue.[180] The performers were all courtesans[181] and this combined with the simplicity of the performances[182] suggest that they were meant to showcase the special talents and attributes of courtesans. *Onna kabuki* afforded the prospective client an opportunity to view and even briefly sample the wares, and, in this sense, it functioned as a sort of public relations and advertising tool for the pleasure trade. Although it is unlikely that the specific singing styles and dance forms created for *onna kabuki* ever became *yûgei* in their own right, this artform does provide evidence that the ability to sing and dance were just as important as the possession of physical beauty for the salability of a courtesan in the period.

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[180] C. Andrew Gerstle, trans., "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture" by Teruoka Yasutaka, in C. Andrew Gerstle, ed. 18th Century Japan: Culture and Society (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 17.

[181] Seigle, op. cit., p. 16.

[182] Gerstle, trans., op. cit., p. 17.

Onna kabuki itself was banned in 1623 due to the concern on the part of the authorities that it was causing social disturbance, but its star performers managed to go on to further prominence. To be more specific, "the term *tayû*," used to refer to *onna kabuki* performers, "evolved into a designation for the top rank among courtesans."[183] This new term was most common in the Kansai region, particularly in Kyoto, and, by the end of the seventeenth century, ladies with this designation had come to capture the imagination of the populace with their grace, beauty, and talent. This development was commensurate with the elevation of pleasure quarters across the nation to the level of cultural centres. With regard to the talents of these women, period sources indicate that expert knowledge of various artforms was expected of the high class courtesan. Saikaku's Life of an Amorous Man (好色一代男 *Kôshoku ichidai otoko*; 1682) is particularly illustrative. It was necessary for the prospective *tayû* to be accomplished in four major areas -- poetry composition, calligraphy, music, and tea ceremony. Yoshida, an Edo courtesan, "wrote just as beautiful a hand as the artistic Nokaze of Kyoto," but also had "a talent for composing verses, and in this she had no peer."[184] Of Takahashi, another

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[183] Seigle, op. cit., p. 17.

[184] Kenji Hamada, trans., The Life of an Amorous Man by Saikaku Ihara (Rutland, VT.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1964), p. 175.

courtesan appearing in Amorous Man, Saikaku writes:

> She decided the day was much too beautiful to spend the day in idleness. The tea ceremony with its fine trimmings should be just the thing to match the white loveliness outside, So thinking, she had the upstairs room of the Hachimonjiya prepared for a party.[185]

Another section of Amorous Man -- one in which the main character and some of his friends critique the courtesans of the day -- elaborates on the necessity for musical talent in a high-class courtesan. The *tayû* "must have a good singing voice and be capable, in addition, of playing well on the koto and the samisen."[186] All of these activities have associations with *yûgei*, and the *tayû*'s involvement in them signifies the use of various *yûgei* to provide entertainments to clients.

The tradition of high class courtesans involvement in *yûgei* continued throughout the seventeenth century, but in the first decades of the eighteenth century the dynamics in pleasure quarters across the country had begun to change -- gay quarters were slowly losing their positions as centres of culture. Shortly before the middle of the century, a massive reorganization of courtesan ranks was undertaken in an attempt to keep pace with these changes in the market. In every major quarter, *tayû* disappeared to be replaced by a stratum of courtesan less concerned

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[185] Ibid., p. 179.

[186] Ibid., p. 167.

with refinement and propriety. At the same time in society there occurred a shift away from a few wealthy merchants and a fascination for refined *yûgei* toward the more equitable distribution of wealth and more plebeian idle arts mentioned above.[187] Courtesans still involved themselves with various *yûgei*, but they tended toward pastimes more in line with the interests of their clients -- those rooted in popular culture.

As the high class courtesan was selective about which clients she saw, so too did she reserve the right to choose with whom she shared intimate relations. The work of *tayû* and their counterparts in later decades thus centred around the provision of entertainments moreso than the provision of sexual services. *Yûgei* were great entertainment for patrons, most of whom must surely have been involved in *yûgei* to one extent or another, and courtesans continued to include them as much as they could. After all, prostitution was and is a money-making venture, and brothel owners as well as courtesans merely capitalized on the leisure interests of their clients. Moriya Takeshi has commented that it is possible to conclude that "indulgence in *yûgei* and indulgence in the gay quarters were very much the same sort of thing,"[188] but this can be extended further -- indulgence in the pleasure quarters included indulgence in *yûgei*.

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[187] Gerstle, trans., op. cit., p. 27.

[188] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society," pp. 53-4.

CONCLUSION

From the above it becomes apparent that *yûgei* have not always been the completely open activities that they became in the last half of the Tokugawa period. They began as pursuits for the upper classes of society -- first the courtiers, then the warrior class of the Medieval age, and then the "new" samurai class of the Tokugawa period -- and, from that point, expanded to include other groups. The rich merchants in the major urban centres of the seventeenth century began to participate, first the old-style merchants and the *niwaka bungen* who succeeded them. Next came inhabitants in the rest of the country. Finally, in the eighteenth century, women were admitted in large numbers. As a group, *yûgei* exhibited an inherent tendency toward inclusivity -- at every turn, barriers to participation were eradicated -- and this contributed to the increasing importance of *yûgei* in Tokugawa society.

CHAPTER FOUR
YÛGEI: THE PATH OF DREAMS

As already discussed, *yûgei* personified diversity, particularly concerning to the kinds of pursuits included. In this regard, Moriya Katsuhiko has observed that "[i]n order for play ... to be fixed in an historical society as *yûgei*, it must ...retain individualistic expression within the cooperative group in which it materializes," yet at the same time it must also "acquire universality."[189] *Yûgei*, then, are social and artistic phenomena known to most and possessing of common characteristics, yet each is different from the next. Such attributes work to imbue *yûgei* with wide appeal, but this alone is not sufficient to explain the immense popularity of -- almost a craze for -- idle pursuits in Tokugawa Japan. A survey of the literature of the period indicates another deciding factor in the vitality of the movement during this time: *yûgei* played an important role in the fulfilment of a variety of aspirations.

YÛGEI AS A SOCIAL CREDENTIAL

One of the functions of *yûgei* in the first half of the Tokugawa period was to act as a credential for full membership in *chônin* society.

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[189] . . . 「あそび」が、遊芸として歴史的社会のなかに定着していくためには、所与の共同体内における. . . さまざまな制約のなかで個性的表現を保ちながら、普遍性を獲得しなくてはならない。 Translation mine. Moriya Katsuhiko, "*Chônin to yûgei,*" in Geinôshi Kenkyûkai, ed. *Nihon no koten geinô dairokkan: buyô* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970), p. 207.

To be more specific,

> [i]n order to gain recognition as a full-fledged *chônin* and access to the social intercourse of urban *chônin*, it was essential to master various skills and accomplishments. It was a matter of respectability, as used to be said at the time.[190]

The word "urban" is significant in the above passage -- a kind of alienation accompanying city life made it difficult for *chônin* to socialize, and *yûgei* helped to overcome this by providing easy opportunities to meet others.[191] *Yûgei* created public gathering spaces, and in them the townspeople were brought together on common ground and granted access to each other.

Consequently, ignorance of *yûgei* led to imprisonment in a lonely world, and those who rejected the arts were often viewed as abnormal. "Money-loving, Loan-sharking Old Man" in Characters of Old Men in The Floating World (*Ukiyo oyaji katagi* 浮世親仁形気; 1720) by Ejima Kiseki, states that for "most people the desire for money is the desire to enjoy security in life and to have a few modest diversions and amusements that will provide pleasure for the body and comfort for the soul."[192] In other words, it is the usual course of things to employ one's wealth in an effort to enjoy a stable and fulfilled life. "A few modest diversions and

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[190] Moriya Takeshi, "*Yûgei* and *Chônin* Society in the Edo Period," Acta Asiatica, 33 (1977): 45-6.

[191] Ibid., p. 45.

[192] Charles Fox, trans., "Old Stories, New Mode: Ejima Kiseki's *Ukiyo Oyaji Katagi*," Monumenta Nipponica, 43.1 (1988): 81.

amusements" here, in part, refers to the world of *yûgei*, and thus a connection is established between normalcy, a comfortable existence, and idle pursuits.

The balance of the piece describes the kind of person who does not subscribe to this societal norm. Its subject is a miserly and conniving old man who believes that "a family would only be a drain on household finances...." and there is an indication he is unwilling to ensure the security of his house when it is explained that "he had no wife and thus had no children either."[193] Although it is not stated explicitly in the piece, it is understood that there would be little chance that the old man would contemplate involvement in *yûgei* if he was resistant to the thought of something so fundamental as a family. It is clear, therefore, that the arts would not play a part in the life of this old man.

One day, an actor approaches the man for a loan; he is told that the loan will be granted only if the interest is paid up front. "Impossible I fear," is the response when the actor presses for leniency, and Kiseki then describes the spendthrift as a man to whom "compassion was an unknown quality."[194] This last phrase indicates that, from the point of view of the author at least, the actor is deserving of compassion but that the old man

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[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid., p. 82.

is an unsympathetic character for lacking it. It is also significant that the loan request should come from an actor. He is, in effect, a purveyor from the above-mentioned world of "modest diversions and amusements," a world which also includes *yûgei* pursuits. The man's unwillingness to exhibit compassion for the actor is, by association, an unwillingness to support any part of *yûgei.* In the end, the old man is portrayed as mean-spirited to the point of social aberrance for his rejection of the arts.

Participation in *yûgei* was an essential weapon in the war against urban isolation, but this was only one aspect of its function as a sort of membership to the club of *chônin* society. Residence in cities and towns was not sufficient to guarantee the favour of one's peers, nor was possession of *chônin* birthright or occupation. In order to gain acceptance, it was necessary to stand out in the crowd. The "value of *yûgei* lay .. in the social status they symbolized,"[195] and the *chônin* rushed to acquire more and more. Eventually this behaviour was to escalate to the extent that the more frugally minded in society became frantic in their urgings for caution.[196] In spite of this, *yûgei* came to play a vital role in the *chônin* quest for approbation.

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[195] Moriya Takeshi, *Yûgei and Chônin Society*, p. 46.

[196] Ibid., pp. 51-2.

A related case of this appears in Kiseki's 1715 text Characters of Young Men in the World (*Seken musuko katagi* 世間子息気質) in the chapter entitled "A Prig." The author's preface to the narrative begins with the following passage:

> A learned man once declared: 'Such accomplishments as calligraphy, *kemari*, and singing immediately become known -- after all, people have eyes and ears. In particular, a young man lionized by society for his wealth will find that his other talents, however numerous, will be hidden by an awkward script. And scholarship is certainly the prime concern, after calligraphy, of anyone who wishes to become a superior person.[197]

To paraphrase, young people may possess knowledge of many pursuits, but if their penmanship is sub-standard or they are not educated properly, then they will be ignored. As stated previously, study or scholarship is the purview of *yûgei*, and for this reason the statement "a young man lionized by society for his wealth will find that his other talents ... will be hidden by an awkward script," links wealth to the evidence of *yûgei* accomplishments which display that wealth.

"These words, as it happened, were addressed to just such a young man,"[198] Kiseki states. The protagonist in the story, fearful that he will sink into anonymity, "at once abandoned all the many arts and skills which he had been pursuing. Hastily providing himself with books, he

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[197] Cited from Howard Hibbett, The Floating World in Japanese Fiction, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1959), p. 133.

[198] Ibid.

went to study under a *rônin* Confucianist."[199] Confucian studies constitute *yûgei* here for two reasons: participation occurs on a part-time, amateur basis, and the chosen activity constitutes scholarship. In this manner, the author makes it clear that this young man employs *yûgei* in an attempt to be noticed.

"'Hey Genkô! You really seem to be into ballad dramas[200]. Recite a passage and give us a listen.'"[201] -- so begins the episode entitled "*Jôruri*" in the 1806 *rakugo* (comic storytelling) text entitled Playful Jokes of Edo (*Edo gishô* 江戸嬉笑). Genkô, the young protagonist of the piece and an aficionado of *jôruri* (浄瑠璃) or narrative chanting, also demonstrates the use of *yûgei* in fulfilling the need for acceptance. When Genkô is asked to perform, he is "...very pleased and produce[s] a six line practice book,"[202] in preparation. This is an opportunity to show his friends and neighbours how well he can chant, but also how much he is with the times. Luckily for him, as he "began to chant..., the housewives in the same block house[203] began to pour into the room, saying 'That's a pretty interesting

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[199] Ibid.

[200] 義太夫 *gidayû*, a particular form of *jôruri* chanting.

[201] 「コレ、源公。足下（ぬし）は義太夫に凝るさうだの。一段語って聞かさつし」．．．． Translation mine. Shikitei Sanba, ed, "*Odokebanashi Edo gishô*," in Mutô Sadao, ed., *Kaseiki rakugobonshû -- kinsei shôwashû (ge)*. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), p. 110.

[202] ．．．嬉しがって、懐から六行（むくだり）の稽古本取り出し、．．．．Translation mine. Ibid.

[203] 長屋 *nagaya*, a type of residence common in many cities during the

noise, isn't it."[204] That Genkô is asked to chant in the first place, and that all of the women in the block house come in to listen, suggests that the audience is prepared to be dazzled by Genkô's prowess.

Alas, this is not to be. His audience is attentive, moving closer to listen, "but they realized that his voice was loud and quite awful, and even though they wished to leave they found they could not."[205] In the end, Genkô is unable to impress his audience, and elicits criticisms from the audience such as "Hey Omatsu, it sure is loud, isn't it. With a voice like that you'd better put away the miso bucket and the ceramic stove."[206] If he had been successful, however, he would have been praised and thus accepted by his group -- he would have become popular. Stories of this type are common in the literature of the period, indicating that many attempted to gain social acceptance through the use of *yûgei*.

Evidence that the more mature in society were also not immune is supplied in "The Wine-loving Sage Old Men" chapter from Old Men in the

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Tokugawa period in which a long building was split into a number of small living compartments, each inhabited by a single family.

[204] . . . 調子はづれに語り出すと、一長屋（ひとながや）のかみさまたち、どやどやと入り来り、「だいぶ面白い音がするねえ」と、内へ這入って（はいって）聞けば、. . . . Translation mine. Sanba, op. cit., p. 110.

[205] . . . 大音（だいおん）で大悪声ゆゑ、皆々帰るにも帰られず、. . . . Translation mine. Ibid.

[206] 「コウ、お松さん。大きな声だのウ。あな声では、そこの味噌桶やひちりんも取除けて置なせへ」. . . . Translation mine. Ibid. A saying existed at the time to the effect that a low quality or off key voice would cause miso to sour and clay stoves to break.

Floating World, the story of Itami and Tonda, two elderly gentlemen recently retired from the merchant's trade. The two model their lifestyle after a group of famous Chinese philosopher sages, participating in many activities which would contribute to their reputation as men of culture. It is a particular reference to "...reciting verses and composing Chinese poems,"[207] however, which marks them as devotees of *yûgei*.

The behaviour of the two old men may be unusual, but the reasons for it are not. Once an individual attained a sufficient level of affluence in Tokugawa society, it was common practice to utilize surplus resources in the pursuit of leisure activities.[208] This is certainly true of the two protagonists in the story, who "had worked hard in their youth so that now they could enjoy a pleasant retirement."[209] The extravagance of their endeavours nevertheless suggests that they are interested in more than simple pleasure.

Kiseki provides a clue when he states, "Everything, no matter what it may be, is to be judged according to the person involved, and depending on the individual, even an eccentricity can be quite amusing." "But," he cautions, "one must never try to imitate such people unless the desire to

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[207] Fox, op. cit., p. 92.

[208] Moriya Takeshi, *Yûgei and Chônin Society*, p. 44.

[209] Fox, op. cit., p. 89.

do so comes from the heart."[210] Mention of the Seven Sages of China follows and is contrasted immediately with a description of Itami and Tonda's sagely way of life.[211] Juxtaposition is thus achieved -- amusing eccentricities and the Seven Sages play counterpoint to insincere imitation and the two old men. In an indirect manner, the author attempts to show that, whatever reasons Itami and Tonda have for imitating the sages, their desire to do so is not grounded in a genuine wish to exhibit their admiration.

In time, the two old men and their entourage gain such notoriety for their behaviour that one character remarks that there "is virtually no one who has not heard of the Seven Sages of the Land of the Rising Sun."[212] With the argument that their Chinese counterparts did so, the same character then urges the two old gentlemen to imbibe wine more frequently. The argument is effective, and drink begins to flow so much so that cupfuls "became whole bowlfuls, and soon they were outdrinking born sots."[213] The group does not begin to accelerate their drinking until it is pointed out that they have attained great renown for their activities, suggesting that the motivation for their behaviour lies in that very repute.

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[210] Ibid., p. 88.

[211] Ibid., pp. 88-9.

[212] Ibid., p. 90.

[213] Ibid.

It then follows that the old men copy the lifestyle of the Sages, including the *yûgei* pursuits of "reciting verses and composing Chinese poems," because they wish to acquire prestige.

YÛGEI AS CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

The first half of the Tokugawa period was an age in which consumerism and the accumulation of wealth increasingly took the fore -- in other words, "...the rise of the *chônin* and the spread of luxury were in effect two sides of the same coin."[214] Because surplus wealth was a prerequisite for participation in *yûgei*,[215] not only were idle pursuits considered to be a luxury but they also became a sign of affluence.[216] It exercised a positive influence on the fortunes of businesses everywhere, because the display of wealth would be taken as a sign of success by prospective customers. *Yûgei* were part and parcel of conspicuous consumption, and this helped to attract business.

A man's need to impress his customers in such a manner is the subject of "A Worthless Trio" in Young Men in the World. This man holds the title of "Chief Creditor of the *Daimyô*"[217] and is described as

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[214] Moriya Takeshi, *Yûgei and Chônin Society*, p. 37.

[215] Ibid., p. 44.

[216] Moriya Katsuhiko, op. cit., p. 214.

[217] Hibbett, op. cit., p. 145.

going "to do business with the stewards of the great houses" and undertaking "to carry out huge exchanges...."[218] It is an indication that his primary business is money-lending to high-ranking members of the samurai class. He is, in effect, a kind of banker, and, for this reason, his clients would expect him to exhibit the marks of a man of means. Unfortunately there is a complication -- his clients are samurai and, as such, would be extremely sensitive about improprietous behaviour. The man seems to have conducted himself appropriately for their taste, however, judging by the extent of his holdings, and his continued success relies on his ability to display his wealth in a manner that would not shock his clients.

This situation poses a quandary. The man possesses three sons described as "shallow-brained" who have been "reared in luxury." They are "accepted as students only for their money," but to their father, "these clever children [are] a source of happiness."[219] The three of them have been spoiled and indulged by a father who is not able to see the faults developing in their respective characters, but quickly the man comes to see the error of his ways, however. The sons go to extremes with their

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[218] Ibid., p. 146.

[219] Ibid., p. 145.

respective chosen pastimes of debauchery, wrestling, and puppet theatre, and the father soon begins to realize the danger.

The activity pursued by the second son – wrestling – is particularly illustrative. The issue at hand is how the samurai clients of the father would react to it. Wrestling or *sumô* (相撲) dates back to the Heian period where it was performed by fighters from the provinces for the amusement of the upper classes.[220] Since that time, wrestling has been considered the domain of the warrior, despite the fact that it came to enjoy immense popularity among the *chônin* of the Tokugawa period. This implied that samurai would not look favourably upon a government-supported merchant who allowed his son to infringe upon their territory in such a manner. In short, the samurai clients would not be amused.

According to Nishiyama, wrestling was reinstated as a *geidô* during the Tokugawa period because of its emphasis on form and technique, two aspects of art which had experienced something of a revival around the same time.[221] It has been stated earlier that one of the few ways in which *geidô* and *yûgei* differ is in the time commitment required. Because, initially at least, the second son has no need for an income, he pursues

[220] Ivan Morris, The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994), p. 153.

[221] Nishiyama Matsunosuke, "*Kinsei geidô shisô no tokushitsu to sono tenkai*," in *Nihon shisô taikei* 61: *Kinsei geidôron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), p. 597.

wrestling as a novice in his leisure time, and so, for him, wrestling is a *yûgei*. Thus, when the father berates his son, he is not objecting to wrestling as a *yûgei*. "Anyone," he says,

> might expect a person in your circumstances to be fond of the *koto*, chess, calligraphy, and painting, and to be interested in such things as the tea ceremony, *kemari*, light archery, and the *nô* drama. But leaping naked into dangerous wrestling bouts! Is that what you call right conduct for the heir to a house that lends to the great lords? Now put a stop to it, and amuse yourself properly![222]

He takes exception to the fact that wrestling will drive the upper-class clients away. Central to the above quote is the notion that the young man's chosen *yûgei* damages the reputation of the family and, by association, the business, while the more classical ones suggested by his father do not. If chosen carefully, then, *yûgei* provide discreet, socially acceptable ways to display one's affluence.

YÛGEI AND THE QUINTESSENTIAL DESIRE

> So you have come today to visit me once more. Surely the world is full of alluring girls with whom young gentlemen like you might dally! Why, then, does the fresh wind blow on this withered tree?[223]

Thus the elderly female protagonist of Ihara Saikaku's text Life of an Amorous Woman greets two young gentlemen callers. They come in search of the kind of wisdom only she, a retired prostitute, can provide --

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[222] Hibbett, op. cit., p. 147.

[223] Ivan Morris, trans., The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings by Ihara Saikaku (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 123.

they hope to receive guidance in the ways of dalliance. The old woman then proceeds to enlighten them in such ways by means of recounting her life history. It is within this narrative, particularly in the chapter entitled "The Pleasures of the Maiden Dance," that an unusual way to recognize aspirations comes to light ; sexual urges may be satisfied through participation in *yûgei.*

In the above-mentioned chapter, the old woman describes a time in her young life when she practised "an especially elegant form of dance."[224] She comments that, at first, she "had no intention of entering on this path," but later she begins to "go all the way from Uji" to pursue it. This change of heart can be attributed to the fact that she "took a fancy to the manners of these young girls" engaged as dancers.[225] The woman's interest in this form of dance has nothing to do with its career potential; her motivation is more personal. The fact that the dance itself is never described, while accounts of dress and behaviour abound, imply that she is drawn to the deportment of the dancers more than anything else. As such, the woman would not be interested in a full-time commitment to the art, hence she studies dance as a *yûgei.*

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[224] Ibid., p. 126.

[225] Ibid., p. 128.

One of the very few comments made about the dance itself is that it "differed from Women's Kabuki,"[226] a simple form of entertainment popular in the first decades of the Tokugawa period used most commonly to display to best effect the talents of prostitutes.[227] The above statement is meant to distance the activities of the dancers from those of the prostitutes, but soon the reader is left with the impression that the two are not so far apart as originally claimed. We are told that, when "people in the capital invited out their guests -- warriors from other provinces or elderly gentlemen -- they would often ... summon five or six of these maidens to add to the evening's entertainment," and that, as "time passed, these girls became thoroughly versed in their calling, ...[T]hey were more artful by far than young apprentices employed in the pleasure houses of Naniwa. ... [A] girl of this company would rarely take leave of her guest before he had acquitted himself of his virile duty.[228] The dancers are involved with prostitution, and this seems to mesmerize the protagonist; much more is made of their sexual behaviour than of their clothing.[229] Thus, the woman's claim that she began dance out of an interest in "the manners of these young girls" bespeaks a fascination for

[226] Ibid., p. 126.

[227] Donald H. Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki," in James R. Brandon et. al. Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), pp. 5-6.

[228] Morris, Amorous Woman, p. 127.

[229] Ibid., p. 128.

their lascivious ways. By entering this particular world of dance as a *yûgei* participant, the woman hopes to become familiar with these ways and, in so doing, obtain sexual gratification.

YÛGEI AS THE BRIDE'S ALLY

In 1717 Ejima Kiseki also produced a text entitled Characters of Young Women in the World (*Seken musume katagi* 世間娘容気), the feminine companion to Young Men in the World. It contains a chapter entitled "A Wayward Wife," the story of a man's great pride over his significant other. Kiseki describes the woman as

> ...the irregular offspring of a person of rank. Not only was she adept in the poetics of an ancient school, she had a rare gift for music, and particularly for the reed pipe: frost gathered in mid-summer when she blew winter melodies; with longevity tunes she made her husband utterly feeble. She was addicted to the pursuit of elegance, whether in arts or manners.[230]

This chapter provides evidence that affinity with *yûgei*, especially classical ones, increase a woman's value as a wife.

First, her exceptional knowledge of poetry, reed-pipe, and, as mentioned later in the chapter, incense[231] mark this woman as a connoisseur of *yûgei*; all three appear in Nishiyama's list of *yûgei* cited previously and, since her primary vocation is housewife, she would pursue

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[230] Hibbett, op. cit., pp. 105-6.

[231] Ibid., p. 106.

them in her spare time. Second, it must be pointed out that people in her day would consider her chosen pursuits to be refined because each is related to the aristocratic way of life and, by association, classical culture. In general, a woman's participation in such pursuits would add sophistication and polish to her demeanour, and anyone marrying her would be regarded as a connoisseur himself for possessing the ability to recognize her cultivation.

The above dynamic certainly seems to have existed between the two main characters in Young Women in the World -- the wife is valuable to her husband because she is something of a status symbol for him. One day he escorts his wife to a tea house in Gion, a pleasure district in Kyoto, where the two of them engage courtesans and jesters. The husband immediately flaunts his wife in front of the hired party, saying:

> You girls should hear her play the reed-pipe. ... I suppose you're on good terms with men of discrimination, and you've heard all kinds of music, but it may be that a really expert artist on this instrument has not yet performed in Gion.[232]

He then urges his wife to demonstrate. She begins a sad tune on the reed-pipe, and suddenly theretofore "lively guests" become quiet and pensive, and even the courtesans begin to sob.[233] The wife's talent is so great that it moves the hardest of hearts, and this reflects well on the

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[232] Ibid., p. 107.

[233] Ibid., pp. 107-8.

husband for his ability to attract a woman of such quality. In this instance, then, knowledge of *yûgei* increases the value of the wife because she improves the reputation of her husband.

Parents were surely aware of the kind of effect *yûgei* could have on the fortunes of their daughters, for, as wealth came to be spread more widely among the populace beginning in the Genroku era, more and more of them took active steps to ensure their daughters were exposed to idle pursuits.[234] In eighteenth-century Edo, one very popular way to accomplish this was to send daughters into the service of samurai households;[235] they would act as maids in return for an education which included distinctly classical elements. Part of the education received in these circumstances centred on various *yûgei* pursuits.[236] It was an economical and convenient way to ensure their daughters received every advantage.

It appears that the samurai were not the only ones to welcome *chônin* daughters into their houses, however. Book II Part I of Bathhouse of the Floating World (*Ukiyoburo* 浮世風呂), written between 1809 and 1813 by

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[234] "*Yûgei*," Nishiyama, Matsunosuke, et al., eds, *Edogaku jiten* (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1994), p. 509.

[235] Gerald Groemer, trans. and ed., Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868, by Nishiyama Matsunosuke (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 35-6.

[236] *Edogaku jiten*, p. 509.

Shikitei Sanba, depicts the meeting of two middle-aged married women. In the course of the ensuing conversation on the subject of children, it is revealed that one of them, Mrs. F, has a daughter named Onabe whom she and her husband sent "into the Fujima household."[237] "Fujima" refers to Fujima Jinbei III (??-1821), the head of a particular school of dance popular around the time *Ukiyoburo* was written,[238] and presumably Onabe is there to provide services in whatever way she is deemed able. It is a fortuitous development in her life -- in return for her labour, she gains the opportunity to study under one of the leading dancers of the day and thereby refine a skill which will make her appealing as a prospective bride.

There are advantages for Mrs. F as well. Positions in good households are hard to arrange, as is evidenced by the following words of Mrs. F's companion concerning her own child:

> It's true, ... isn't it, that without the right kind of luck it's difficult to arrange an apprenticeship. If I find a house I'd like to have accept her, they aren't willing to take her. And I always seem to have some sort of reservation about the households that do like her.[239]

Subsequent comments made by the same woman -- "That's very fortunate, isn't it ?" "My, isn't that splendid!"[240] and "I would so love to see her

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[237] Robert Leutner, Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 183.

[238] Ibid., p. 203.

[239] Ibid., p. 184.

[240] Ibid., p. 183.

[dance],"[241] -- express her admiration for Onabe's mother who is able to accomplish this feat. Thus, the overall reaction of the companion to Mrs. F shows that parents who have children employed in households enjoy the respect of their peers.

"How wonderful for her dancing that you could get her taken in,"[242] the companion of Mrs. F remarks. For this woman, the greatest advantage of Onabe's situation is that she will be able to improve her dancing skills. In this episode dance is a form of *yûgei* -- Onabe is a servant and so she pursues dance only when she is able. These two points result in a situation where part of the respect for Mrs. F shown by this woman comes from the fact that Onabe receives instruction in a *yûgei* pursuit. Parents, then, are admired when they provide daughters with an education which includes *yûgei.*

YÛGEI AS TRANSCENDENCE

In 1688 Ihara Saikaku produced the third of his books depicting samurai, *Buke giri monogatari* (武家義理物語 Tales of Samurai Duty). In it we find the chapter entitled "A Snowfall for the Promised Breakfast" which features Ishikawa Jôzan, a one-time retainer to Tokugawa Ieyasu who fell out of favour with his lord. Saikaku's narrative begins in at the point in

[241] Ibid., p. 185.

[242] Ibid., p. 183.

Jôzan's life when he "had realised the vanity and frivolity of life in the capital and had gone into seclusion in the Kamoyama hills."[243] This gives the impression that he is merely fed up with all the silliness and simply wishes to distance himself from it, living his life in peace, but the situation is slightly more complex than that. Jôzan is likened to a man on a quest for spiritual enlightenment when Saikaku describes him as a man whose "virtue was manifest" because he "put his illustrious military career in the secular world out of his mind."[244]

Soon, however, the reader is given to understand that Jôzan's virtue is not derived from religious practice. Rather, his chosen method of escape is to give "his whole heart to poetry,"[245] a fact significant to our discussion in that poetry has been an integral part of the *yûgei* world since at least the Heian period. In the end, Jôzan escapes the "vanity and frivolity of life in the capital" through pursuit of a *yûgei*, thus the piece provides evidence that *yûgei* may assist in the quest for transcendence.

The next example, too, concerns a member of the samurai class. "The Evil Wrought by a Gorgeous Lady," another episode in Saikaku's Amorous Woman which features the retired prostitute as protagonist, concerns an

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[243] Sumie Jones, trans, "Buke Giri Monogatari," Monumenta Nipponica, 34.1 (Spring 1979): 15-6.

[244] Ibid., p. 16.

[245] Ibid.

independent samurai lady whose conduct is rather unorthodox. The protagonist, who serves as one of her ladies-in waiting, describes the first time she became aware of it:

> One day I accompanied my lady to her villa in Asakusa. ... [T]he ladies-in-waiting ...moved about softly on their *kemari* shoes, indulging in divers pretty plays like Cherry-Piling and Mountain-Crossing. ... I gazed on them in wonder.[246]

Thus it is revealed that the strange behaviour of the lady relates to her love for *kemari*. Not only has *kemari* been mentioned before in association with *yûgei* pursuits, but the above quote mentions clearly a villa – a summer house – in Asakusa as the location for the games, suggesting that the group engaged in *kemari* as a relaxing pastime. Both indicate that the samurai lady and her maids spend their leisure time at a *yûgei* pursuit.

The lady's involvement in *kemari* can be termed unorthodox because of its history as a male dominated pursuit, and the protagonist is quick to point this out at every turn. She begins her tale by saying, that *kemari* "was originally a game for men...."[247] Further on in the piece, she also states that the sport "was originated by Crown Prince Shotoku and it is unheard of that it should ... be played by women;" this she contrasts with "practising archery with the small bow," which is "held to be a suitable

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[246] Morris, Amorous Woman, pp. 164-5.

[247] Ibid., p. 164.

diversion for women," because "the sport is said to have been started by Yang Kuei Fei," the famous wife of the T'ang period (618-906) emperor Hsuan Tsang in China.[248] There is no corresponding Japanese tradition of female involvement in *kemari*, thus the message is clear that it is for men only.

Despite this, the lady whom the protagonist serves takes no heed. She is "free to disport herself in any merry way she cho[oses],"[249] an indication that the lady would be unconcerned about tradition if it posed an impediment to the objects of her desire. Of all the traditions she could ignore, the lady chooses those associated with *kemari*, but she does not go so far as to flaunt convention in a public place. She selects her villa, a secluded location which affords her privacy, because to do otherwise would risk discovery and consequent disgrace for herself and her illustrious husband. The above, coupled with the preponderance of statements to the effect that *kemari* is off-limits to women, suggests that the lady participates in *kemari* in order to cross gender barriers and, even for a moment, taste the forbidden fruit of masculine pursuits. This woman seeks a brief transcendence of her gender, and a *yûgei* helps her accomplish this.

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[248] Ibid., p. 165.

[249] Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Yûgei acted to unite people in society, but they worked for different people in different ways. This chapter demonstrates that cravings for approbation, business success, fortuitous marriage, escape, and even sexual gratification could be satisfied through *yûgei*, and a further investigation is likely to uncover many more examples. The preceding survey also shows that this versatility has been a regular feature of *yûgei* since its emergence as a major force during the Tokugawa period. Although most of the information contained herein applies to the *chônin* way of life, the preponderance of evidence suggests that, almost since the beginning of the period, *yûgei* played a vital role in the realization of the dreams of a wider segment of society. This characteristic is significant because it, in part, accounts for the explosive growth of the *yûgei* world in the Tokugawa period.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF *YÛGEI* IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Yûgei of the Tokugawa period embodied opportunities for the populace to become more actively involved in the arts. *Yûgei* were able to infiltrate deeply into every area of Tokugawa culture, and this factor made them the most obvious choice for those interested in participation in cultural activities. *Yûgei* also possessed an inclusive quality which made them appealing in two ways. First and foremost, they were designed to guide inexperienced enthusiasts on their personal journey of discovery within a wide variety of arts. Second, the history of the development of *yûgei* shows that, one by one, barriers to participation based on such considerations as class, economic position, geography, and even gender were eradicated. In addition, the appeal of *yûgei* was enhanced further because of their use in the fulfilment of the desire for approbation, business success, fortuitous marriage, escape, and sexual gratification, just to name a few. All of these factors worked to ensure the development of a culturally astute populace which supported the arts at every turn, both as spectators and as participants.

Yûgei exercised a monumental influence on the cultural life of the Tokugawa citizenry, but they have also played a vital role in the shaping of modern Japanese attitudes toward art. The modern-day brethren of

yûgei are the various arts known collectively as *geinô* (芸能). This term is often rendered as "public entertainments," but, more specifically, it refers to artistic genres -- the various forms of music and theatre, for example -- in which information on the physical aspects of artistic technique is passed from one generation of performer to the next.[250] The link between *yûgei* and *geinô* was forged during the Tokugawa period, when the term *geinô* was first applied to pursuits such as *renga*, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and *kemari* which were associated with *yûgei.*[251] As well, the status of the *geinôjin* (芸能人) -- the practitioner of *geinô* -- within Japanese society today shows that *geinô* enjoy a similar level of popularity as did *yûgei.* As a group, the *geinôjin* are in great demand and receive much exposure.[252] They also command immense respect; in a country where appearances and public reputation are everything, artists as diversified as the *manzai* (漫才 comic stage dialogue) star Yokoyama Nokku (Yamada Isamu) and the former pro-wrestler Antonio Inoki[253] are able to enter the world of politics at influential levels -- the former as

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[250] "*Geinô,*" Shimonaka Kunihiko, ed, Heibonsha Daihyakka Jiten, Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1984), p. 1202.

[251] Ibid., p. 1203.

[252] For example, unlike American game shows whose contestants are regular citizens, the overwhelming majority of contestants on similar shows in Japan are *geinôjin.*

[253] Pro-wrestling is not an art, but there is nonetheless a strong element of entertainment within it, and, as such, it is viewed by many in Japan to be a *geinô.* It shows that, as a group, *geinô* cover an even larger range of public amusements than did *yûgei.*

mayor of Osaka and the latter as a member of Japan's upper house -- and remain there with support from the population. A comparison between the *geinô* phenomenon and that of *yûgei* in this respect is one potential avenue worthy of further investigation.

Yûgei 's profound effect on modern attitudes toward art is also exemplified by the contemporary Japanese approach to hobbies. Cultivation of hobbies is a major feature of leisure life in Japan. Many take time out of their busy schedules to practice favourite pastimes, and many others go so far as to enrol in courses which will assist in the quest for proficiency. The example of the *karaoke* (カラオケ lit. "empty orchestra," songs which have been "emptied" of the voice track leaving the musical accompaniment), a form of entertainment in which participants sing songs to a prerecorded accompaniment, provides an illustration of both. *Karaoke* is so popular that it has given rise to large numbers of *karaoke bokkusu* (カラオケボックス lit. *karaoke* box), establishments where, for an hourly fee, patrons may rent small rooms equipped with *karaoke* machine. Many customers rent these rooms because it affords them a relaxed and private environment in which to practice. For some, however, this is not enough: classes in karaoke singing are available all over Japan, and individuals partake of this instruction in order to receive the added advantage of professional guidance.

One purpose of these activities is to impress friends and co-workers should the opportunity arise to display one's skill. One side of this is that it involves the refining of a hobby to the extent that it can be termed one's crowning achievement and thus it is connected to *yûshû no bi* (有終の美 the aesthetics of completion) – it affords a sense of aesthetic fulfilment which is derived when one brings performance of a chosen activity to its highest level of perfection. The other is that the refining of one's skill in this manner is a sort of conspicuous consumption in that it is designed to attract the notice of others, thus it acts as a status symbol. And because this behaviour is meant to draw attention to oneself, it can be considered to be an expression of individualism, yet it falls within a highly codified and communally appreciated social culture. There is the possibility that a parallel exists between the *yûgei* of the Tokugawa period and the hobbies of contemporary Japan on this subject, and, if so, it represents another avenue for further investigation.

Yûgei also live on in the psyche of the Japanese people. It has been noted that the Japanese "are remarkably free from class consciousness where culture is concerned" and that "the arts are not the target of anti-elitist sentiment."[254] Some believe that this phenomenon was caused by

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[254] Yamazaki Masakazu, "Toward a New Era in Public Funding for the Arts," Japan Echo 25 (June 1998) 3: 46.

the "redistribution of wealth since World War II" which had "all but eliminated patronage of the arts by the upper classes,"[255] but the explanation lies further back in history. Since the second half of the Tokugawa period, people from all walks of life have enjoyed pursuits both refined and popular, thus for hundreds of years, the Japanese populace has lived in a cultural environment where participation in the arts was not circumscribed according to class. In short, it may well be the influence of *yûgei* in the Tokugawa period which has granted the citizenry freedom to enjoy all kinds of arts regardless of background, and it is this which has helped foster an open attitude toward the arts.

The study of *yûgei* is important for an understanding of Tokugawa culture, but it is also useful in order to comprehend contemporary Japanese attitudes to art. The influence of *yûgei* has allowed Japan to evolve into a nation of arts enthusiasts of all social and economic backgrounds, and, as such, represents a vital area for historical study. It also may be useful in the attempt to understand the challenges facing arts groups in North America.

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[255] Ibid.

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