



THE INTERPRETATION OF CITY LIFE IN THE WORKS OF
IHARA SAIKAKU

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Abstract

Ihara Saikaku was poet and novelist, one of the most brilliant figures of the 17th-century revival of Japanese literature. Saikaku in his works such as "The Eternal Storehouse of Japan" and "This Scheming World" described the life of townspeople, merchants, artisans, peasants. He reflects on how to live and work in order to get rich, and about new ways of trade and handicrafts that bring income, the detailed coverage of the feelings and thoughts of the townspeople determines the relevance of the article. The main objective of this article is to get an idea of how in the novels of Ihara Saikaku, who is a representative of the 17th century literature, the image of a city dweller is displayed, about those aspects of the way of life of the townspeople that were not covered before that time.

Key words: Ihara Saykaku, Genroku period, townspeople, ukiyo-zoshi

When the Tokugawa dynasty came to power in Japan in the 17th century, serious changes occurred not only in the country's political, economic and social life, but also in the cultural sphere. As the influence of merchants and artisans, who are considered as the third layer, increased, so did their scope of influence in every field. These changes did not bypass the field of literature.

In particular, a large part of all works of art began to be intended for a new audience - city dwellers. The works were devoted to the depiction of



their lives, interests, worries, and desires. The life of the city, the people who live in it and are busy with their worries, became the subject of art.

By this time, the direction of "ukiyo-zoshi" ("notes about the passing world") appeared in literature and became widely popular among the people. Ihara Saikaku was the writer who introduced this direction as the priority direction of Genroku period literature.

There is a tradition of viewing the Genroku period as the "Japanese Renaissance". N. I. Konrad calls the 17-18 centuries "the period of Japanese enlightenment".¹ V. Markova and I. Lyvova believe that "Japanese culture during the Genroku period combined elements of the late Renaissance and the Enlightenment period."²

T. P. Grigoryeva, talking about Genroku's era, evaluates it as "Renaissance stopped halfway". According to her, the objective conditions paved the way for the development of the culture of the representatives of the third layer and created an opportunity for the Renaissance to flourish in Japan, but this opportunity did not become a reality. It was enough to create the ground for this: cities developed, representatives of the third layer woke up, and the level of education of the nation increased. But other necessary elements were missing for a full-fledged Renaissance. These were forms of government that allowed for personal freedom and a cultural movement similar to Renaissance humanism.³

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¹ N.I. Conrad. "History of modern Japanese literature", M., 1961, 340,344,349 p.

² Markova V., Lvova I. Monzaemon Tikamatsu. Drama. M., 1963, 24 p

³ T. P. Grigorieva. Revival Stopped Halfway (About the Genroku Period in Japan) Article. Published in Problems of periodization of the history of the literatures of the peoples of the East - M.: Nauka, 1968, 182 p

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Ihara Saikaku also focused on illuminating the fate of people who enjoyed the pleasures of life, and his works made a radical change in Japanese literature. He described the life of city residents with all the colors and all the truths, so that we can call his books "encyclopedia of city life". The characters he created were sincere, and his writing style was devoid of silence. He waved his pen in a colloquial style that was understandable to everyone.

Observing the development of Ihara Saikaku's work, one can witness that at the beginning of his work, he was a writer who took pleasure in this transient life and encouraged him to live with feelings of love, and as time went by, he began to write about duty and religion. Towards the end of his life, he created works on the proper management of economic and trade affairs, which served as a guide for the townspeople. All his works help to understand the atmosphere of the 17th century.

Some aspects of human lifestyle and behavior, which were left out of the literature of the Middle Ages, gained artistic importance in Saikaku's work. Saikaku's understanding of city life and showing all the good and bad features of its inhabitants, his understanding of the contradictions inherent in this life, and his ability to see its hidden sides indicate that the writer relies on a truthful and realistic approach to portraying reality in his work.

As we mentioned above, towards the end of his life, Saikaku began to write "choninmono" (町人物) that is, "books for the townspeople".

"Books for townspeople" is a collection of interesting and at the same time instructive novellas, the characters of which are contemporaries of the writer. This collection includes works such as "The Eternal Storehouse of Japan" (「日本永代蔵」), "This Scheming World" (「世間胸算用」), and

“Saikaku's Latest Patterns”(「西鶴織留」). According to him, these books should serve as a kind of textbook to be smart in everyday life, to spend money in order to live well in life.

“This Scheming World” (「世間胸算用」), like “The Eternal Storehouse of Japan” (「日本永代蔵」) is intended for city dwellers, telling them what to do to achieve good luck in life, and vice versa. tips and guidance are given on what habits to avoid in order not to encounter them.

In this book, Saikaku directly points out what it takes to achieve success in life: "There is nothing better in the world than money, if it is a mirage. For this, a person should live as follows: at the age of twenty-five, it is necessary to acquire knowledge before it becomes invalid; At the age of thirty-five, when you are at your peak, you should earn and save money; At the age of fifty, when he is full of intelligence, he should strengthen the foundation of his work and one year before he turns sixty, he should hand over his farm to his eldest son and achieve the expected prosperity.

" This Scheming World " was published in 1692 and is a collection of short stories describing the desperate situation of people who could not get rid of their debts by the end of the year. Despite the unpleasant character of the characters (they are merciless usurers, unhappy debtors, swindlers who run away without paying their debts), there are also bright aspects of the work. But some scholars choose two or three of the saddest novellas in the work and suggest that this book expresses Saikaku's growing pains and despair in life due to the deterioration of the Japanese economy. Here it should be remembered that Saikaku's first novel, "A Man Unrivaled in Love Passions", was written in the years of famine, but it is full of joy, and it is difficult to find feelings of sorrow for people suffering from hunger.⁴

⁴ Kin D. Japanese literature of the 17th-19th centuries. 'Nauka', M, 1978. 141 p.

In the process of analyzing the book " This Scheming World ", by the 17th century, the influence of the merchant class in Japan increased and its position in the political, economic and social life of the country was strengthened, but keeping wealth in one's own hands, not getting into trouble, and living a prosperous life are still was difficult, and it was seen that it required constant work and perseverance from them.

The main theme of the work is the worries of "omisoka" (大晦日) day. This day is the last day of the year, on which settlement is made between merchants and usurers. In Japan, according to the economic relations of that time, selling products to the nation for interest or lending money for interest became popular, and these debts were paid at the end of the season, especially on the day of the New Year.

All of the novellas take place on New Year's Day and cover areas from Osaka to Edo, as well as Sakai, Nagasaki, and Nara. It shows the life of poor families as well as wealthy merchants. Among the novellas, there are also many collective images, in which a single hero is not distinguished. Although the difficult economic life of poor merchants and their struggle to survive in it creates a sad impression, the work is not without humor and laughter.

Merchants who had to pay their debts on the eve of the New Year were in a difficult situation. If they did not get rid of their debts, they had no right to welcome the new year. The image of such a helpless urban man is at the center of the novellas. In order to get rid of the pressure of usurers, these people came up with various tricks, otherwise they were forced to lose everything. Saikaku often sheds light on the lives of urban people who are at the bottom of such poverty.

Saikaku followed the townspeople in every way, studied them, evaluated them, and presented the finished work to the public only after making it

valuable for readers. It is not surprising that the readers, while reading this work, reconsidered their life paths and found their goals in life. During the analysis of this work of Saikaku, we see that many researchers use the term 悲喜劇, i.e. "tragicomedy". Indeed, although the plight of the merchants, who are in the most helpless situation and feel tied, is very sad, it is remarkable that Saikaku was able to bring warmth to the work by adding humor to it.

As the events in the novellas take place on the eve of the New Year holiday, Saikaku tries to cover the details of this holiday in detail. In particular, he describes in detail how townspeople prepare for this holiday, what kind of dishes are traditionally prepared. For the New Year holiday, the Japanese used to prepare the Horai hill of happiness and make it with pine and hemlock branches. On this hill, there must be issebi and dayday oranges. But these products became very expensive on the eve of the holiday, and poor people who could not afford them had to welcome the New Year in a sad mood. After all, in Japan, it is believed that the god of happiness will not visit the house if the Horai tenpa is not completely made.

This is one of the remarkable aspects of this work, in which the specific aspects of many cities are clearly highlighted. In particular, in his short stories, the writer was able to describe the life of cities and the lifestyle of city dwellers, their customs, and show their differences. In particular, the work clearly and consistently describes the lifestyle, unique customs, attitudes, and family traditions of the residents of cities such as Kyoto, Osaka, Edo, Sakai, Nagasaki, and Nara. makes it possible. In this work, Saikaku proved that he is a keen observer, that he is a sensitive writer who pays attention to the details that are overlooked by others, and has the ability to find only his own unique aspects of each city. In addition to the image of the urban man, the writer's deep attention to the definition and description of the place where he lives increases the artistic value of the work.

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