

The Distinct Brilliance of Zappai: Misrepresentations of Zappai in the New HSA Definitions

Richard Gilbert & Shinjuku Rollingstone
Publication: *Simply Haiku* 3.1 (Spring 2005)

雑俳 *zappai*

Introduction

This article argues for the removal of the term *zappai* from the recently published Haiku Society of America (HSA) definitions of both haiku and senryu. *Zappai* in the HSA definition is equated with “pseudohaiku” and “doggerel verse.” Statements are also made inferring that *zappai* are without literary value, and it is implied that *zappai* are not worth memorializing as literature. The HSA valuation of *zappai* states:

Many so-called "haiku" in English are really senryu. Others, such as "Spam-ku" and "headline haiku", seem like recent additions to an old Japanese category, *zappai*, miscellaneous amusements in doggerel verse (usually written in 5-7-5) with little or no literary value. Some call the products of these recent fads "pseudohaiku" to make clear that they are not haiku at all.^[1]

As the HSA mentions in its “preliminary notes” to the definitions: “we hope the results of our efforts are faithful to the spirit of these words' Japanese origins . . . ;” if there is veracity to this statement, the HSA needs to disassociate the term *zappai* from the derogatory connotations given, as the definition and explanation of *zappai* is misguided and incorrect. This important literary term, pre-existing in Japanese literature and culture has been manipulated in English in order to lend credence to an English-language literary issue. Since there has been scant public mention of *zappai*, or substantive discussion relating to potential problems of its use in English,^[2] it is unclear how this term has suddenly found its way into two important English-language haiku-genre definitions. A closer look the literature of *zappai* as it exists in Japanese literary history and contemporary literary culture seems warranted.

Several haiku and haikai poets we have spoken to in our locale of Kumamoto feel that the linking of *zappai* to such writings as spam-ku and headline haiku in English is inappropriate and culturally offensive, as *zappai* has evolved directly out of the ancient haikai tradition. That is, to equate *zappai*, a genre of Japanese literature with a publication history reaching back, as haikai, to at least the 14th century with spam-ku and the like is culturally demeaning. The use of *zappai* as a derogatory term determining a trashbin category of the English haiku genre is highly inappropriate.

We would like to answer several questions in this article: What constitutes *zappai*? Why is the derogatory appellation of *zappai* in English considered culturally insensitive, in Japan? Are *zappai* poems really

“pseudohaiku,” or something else altogether? Is there authoritative evidence establishing the literary value of *zappai* in Japan? Is *zappai* a poetic genre which garners respect in contemporary Japanese literary circles? We wish to shed light on *zappai* by providing examples of prevailing expert opinion, poetic examples, and sources which may offer clues to its Japanese cultural context. A number of excellent books have been written on the subject in Japanese; this present article presents an overview of preliminary findings. For the sake of brevity and relevance, we will focus this article on a point-by-point refutation of the HSA statements found in the definition of *zappai*.

Disagreements with the HSA definition

- 1) HSA Statement: “An old Japanese category.” *Zappai* developed out of *haikai* (humorous linked verse, an outgrowth of *renga*) and importantly, survive as a contemporary literary form of cultural expression, with composition groups, competitions, etc. To say it is an old category implies that *zappai* are defunct. *Zappai* is no more an “old category” than haiku (*viz* the *hokku* of Bashō) or *senryu* are old categories—the appellation is misleading. Further, the term “category” seems demeaning, as *zappai* is a separate literary genre, not a trashbin category of haiku, as implied. In fact, the main *zappai* tradition has not evolved from the haiku/*hokku*.
- 2) HSA Statement: “Miscellaneous amusements in doggerel verse.” (see Appendix A: Definition of “doggerel verse.”) We show below that several esteemed literary critics consider some *zappai* equal in aesthetic and literary merit to haiku—and that the genre as a whole warrants treatment as a serious and important literature. In other words, the global appellation of “miscellaneous amusement” is not an acceptable definer of *zappai*, if “miscellaneous” is taken to mean unimportant and forgettable. Just as with *senryu*, certainly, some *zappai* over the centuries of its history were miscellaneous amusements and doggerel verses. There have also been many inferior and forgettable haiku (*hokku*) published. We strongly object to the term “doggerel verse” for *zappai*, particularly in that: “almost by definition examples of doggerel are not preserved, since if they have any redeeming value they are not considered doggerel” (Appendix A). The term should not be applied to *zappai*.
- 3) HSA Statement: “Little or no literary value.” This statement has offended our local region here in Japan, which has had a long and unbroken tradition of writing a form of *zappai* in local-language dialect: *higo-kyōku*. Information and examples of contemporary *zappai* from two different regions of Japan will be given below.
- 4) HSA Statement: “Pseudohaiku.” *Zappai* in Japan as practiced both today and historically, for the most part use *haikai* “linking” and “verse capping” stylism, and are not directly related to haiku, Masaoka Shiki’s late 19th century innovation, which developed from the *hokku*, the first stanza of a *renga* or *haikai-renga*. The *hokku*, that is, the 5-7-5 first stanza of the linked-stanza poem-forms just mentioned, typically written by two or three (though sometimes one, or additional) poets, began to be treated as a separate poem about 160 years before Bashō’s publishing career got underway—the first anthology exclusively devoted to *hokku* was Sōgi’s posthumous *Jinensai hokku* (1506).

In fact, *zappai* of whatever stripe do not find their main lineage in the *hokku*, but in the broader genre of *haikai* humor, and particularly in the *hiraku* verses of *haikai*—as such, inferring that *zappai* have a direct relationship with the genre of haiku (the *hokku*, particularly as exemplified by Bashō) is questionable: evidence contradicts the assertion. *Hiraku* indicates stanzas which are found in the body of a *haikai-renga*, ergo, after the first three stanzas, and excepting the concluding stanza of a *haikai* (note: *haikai*, *haikai-renga* and *haikai-no-renga* are synonyms. “*Haikai-no-renga*”

is quite an uncommon, or unknown, phrase in Japanese literary circles—hence we avoid it; the others are commonly used). *Zappai* do have many varieties; there is a minor historic form which is related to the *hokku*; however most, including those we have found used at present are based on the *hiraku* stanzas of haikai (the scholars quoted below relate *zappai* to *hiraku* verses only, as a distinguishing feature). Consequently, contemporary *zappai* as we find them are not directly related to the haiku (hokku) at all. *Zappai* do have a profound relationship with the deep literary and cultural sense of haikai humor, which can be traced directly back to the first 14th century renga anthology *Tsukuba-shū* (1356 A.D.), which contains a chapter of haikai-renga.

We note here another mistake in the HSA definition, which states that “haikai is: “linked verse originating in the sixteenth century.” This is untrue. Though the main era of haikai “development [was] in the 17th century under Bashō and his adherents,”^[3] the discrete haikai genre extends as published literature at least into the 14th century (as mentioned just above), and further back to the Heian era, in the form of *mushin renga*: “The *mushin renga* led to *haikai no renga*, more familiarly *haikai* (or *renku* in recent times). *Haikai* means something like 'humorous' From the 12th century Thousands, no doubt millions, of [renga] stanzas were composed, the majority in non-standard, or *mushin renga* and *haikai*. The more serious [*ushin renga*] were [however] more apt to be recorded” (*ibid*). The significant point is that *zappai* are part of a millennial, unbroken Japanese literary tradition which mixes humor with high-culture poetic forms, almost always loosening, breaking or disregarding the fixed rules of the “serious” form. Without “haikai taste,” we would not have haiku, or senryu either, and certainly not *zappai*. The matter of “haikai taste,” that is the *poetic* flavor of humor in all haikai poetic genres needs re-estimation in English, as its historic and contemporary cultural and literary significance seems lacking in English-language discussions—with the result that *zappai* could be termed “doggerel” and “miscellaneous amusement;” statements that ignore and devalue cultural context. More needs to be said regarding “haikai taste,” however space does not permit.

- 5) HSA statement: “They are not haiku at all.” This concluding statement is a false analogy, as outlined above. The statement implies an equivalence, such that *zappai* = pseudohaiku = not haiku. Actually, this is the real case: A (“*zappai*”) does NOT equal B (“pseudohaiku”) which does equal C (“not haiku”). A does equal C however, in that *zappai* are not haiku—but for entirely different reasons than pseudohaiku (whatever they may be) are not haiku. It is a case of apples and oranges. *Zappai* are a separate genre: they cannot be considered to be “pseudo” haiku. *Zappai* have sometimes been mixed up with senryu in Japan, and scholars have gone to some lengths to clarify the distinction. A strict definition of senryu is that it is a variety of *zappai* (see Appendix B). This may come as a surprise!

Defining *zappai*

To begin defining *zappai*, here is a definitive commentary from two experts on *zappai* and haikai. In the Chapter, “What Transcends Haiku Masterpieces” [*syūku wo koeru mono*] from his book *Is Japan a Haiku Country? (Nihon ha haiku no kuni ka*, Kadokawa Shoten, 1996), Katō Ikuya^[4] has composed the following paragraph, with reference to another expert, Katsutada Suzuki.^[5]

Zappai means: other haikai schools with a wide variety of uncategorized styles; it does not mean pseudo-haikai [un- or non-formal haikai]. Suzuki Katsutada defined *zappai* this way: “*Zappai* can be defined as haikai in which human feelings are composed in *hiraku* form, which cannot be incorporated into existing haikai.” It is quite displeasing that *zappai* has been looked down upon in relation to ordinary haikai, and mixed up with *maekudzuke* (in haikai-renga: completing a 7-7 verse with a 5-7-5 verse), senryū, or *kokkeiku* (a humorous stanza, usually 5-7-5 or 7-7 verse).

We notice immediately that Ikuya writes “pseudo-haikai;” not: haiku/hokku. In the above determination, *zappai* mainly has a historical origin in, and relationship to, the body-stanzas of haikai-renga, and not hokku (the first stanza). As we assembled this article, Shinjuku⁶¹ commented: The above definition is a bit abstract. Suzuki Katsutada states that *zappai* cannot be incorporated into haikai. The reasons seem fairly obvious, when considering the contemporary *zappai* genre: the use of local dialect, local compositional rules, and a variety of other possible local characteristics would probably be some of the main reasons. Some well-known and esteemed examples of *zappai* are *Awaji-zappai*, *Tosa-kyōku*, *Higo-kyōku* and *Satsuma-kyōku*. Non-Japanese people may not realize that the leading word in each of the above terms is a place name: Awajishima, Tosa, Higo, and Satsuma. Each of these locales has a highly prized form of “uncategorizable” haikai, due to language-dialect and local varieties of intonation—but also local rules of composition, which may involve social interaction—that is, the manner in which *zappai* (or *kyōku*—a *zappai* variant) schools operate. A person from Tokyo (who speaks the dialect of *hyōjyun-go*) may likely have a difficult time understanding *higo-kyōku*, a Kumamoto Prefecture (*Higo*) *zappai* form, without instruction from a native—as it is written in the local dialect and its rhythms expressed in unique regional stylism.

Zappai is generally considered a form of linked poetry, and there are many different rules for composition. For instance in *higo-kyōku*, the *higo-kyōku* master will write the first 5-on of a 5-7-5 stanza (this stanza may be over or under 5-on: *ji-amari* or *jitarazu*), and then poets in the group will add 7-5-on to complete the poem (this compositional style is known as *kasadzuke*). Unlike haikai, the part added by the poet (known as *tsukeku*) is always 7-5-on. (So, *higo-kyōku* is always 5-7-5-on; with the exception of the first metric line, as noted above.) There are other features found in *Awaki-zappai*. In one form of *Awaji-zappai*, the *zappai* master gives only the first sound (-on) of each metric line of 5-7-5-on (this compositional method is known as *oriku*, a technique of haikai).

Examples of contemporary *zappai*

It needs to be mentioned, preceding the below examples, that the multiple resonances of regional flavor, rhythm, cultural and comic nuance are fairly untranslatable; readers may hopefully infer there is often more than meets the eye, in the original language and context. Just below are some examples of *Awaji-zappai*, collected in *The Logic of Early Modern Fixed-form Poetry*, by Tsukushi Bansei (*Kindai teikei no ronri*, Yū Shorin, 2004). The author offers his considered opinion of the literary merit of *zappai*, in comparison with the haiku genre, as a serious literature:

Thus, unlike *senryū*, *zappai* is not only composed of humorous stanzas. Probably at this point, readers understand that *zappai* has a unique expression, techniques and approaches, and that some *zappai* are equal in measure to haiku (p. 42).

にっこりと 女給冷たい手を委せ 一鳥
nikkori to jyokyuu tsumetai te wo makase by Icchyō

smiling the barmaid leaves her cold hand at his mercy

寝ころんでれんげ畑に雲を追い 段々
nekoronde renebatake ni kumo wo oi Dandan

lie down over the lotus field chase clouds

のんびりと今朝の雨聞く散水夫
nonbirito kesa no ame kiku sansuifu

美里軒
Misatoken? (uncertain pronunciation)

leisurely
listening to the morning rain
of the water man

Some examples of award-winning Kumamoto Prefecture *higo-kyōku*, from the 2003 annual contest sponsored by RKK Television:^[7]

聞こえん振り もう徳利は洗いよる
kikoen furi moutokkuri wa araiyoru

pretending deafness already washing the sake bottle Mitarai Kiyoshi

見て見ぬ振り 嫁姑も旨く行く
miteminufuri yomeshūtome mo umaku iku

no eyes no ears no mouth the wife and step-mother doing well Iwashita Yumiko

真っ暗闇 はまって分かる水溜り
makkurayami hamatte wakaru mizutamari

sheer darkness falling and finding the rainpuddle Nakagawa Ryūseki

Briefly then, here are five reasons for the removal of the term “*zappai*” from the HSA definitions:

- 1) *Zappai* is a separate traditional genre-category of poetry. It is not an attempt at (is not pseudo) haiku (or pseudo hokku).
- 2) Contemporary *zappai* covers a variety of 5-7-5 and 7-7 based poetry which contains local, regional-colloquial (dialect and accent) language styles. To consider local-language and regional poetic forms as inferior to aristocratic-central (Tokyo-dialect) language forms is elitist and reactionary. Such an attitude may have been accepted in some historic traditionalist haiku circles, but it is not acceptable today.
- 3) The idea of a hierarchal ranking of poetic forms in Japan is an old saw, a stereotyping of literary value and a questionable practice. Many poets find the idea offensive and unproductive. Those who hold to this idea of a ranking system can be considered “pre-modern” in their approach to poetic literature. The notable poet Hoshinaga Fumio refers to the idea of hierarchal ranking in a dismissive fashion, as “the traditionalist order” (Gilbert, *Modern Haiku*, 35:3, Autumn 2004, pp. 42-3), strongly resisting the idea of the typing of poets (*haijin*, *shijin*, etc.) in Japan. Further, *zappai* essentially contain haikai humor, wordplay, and insight into culture and reality. Literally thousands

of *zappai* competitions that have occurred and awards conferred throughout *zappai* history, up to the present. Given this cultural context, shall we declare a popular cultural art of a foreign country, with strong contemporary ethnic roots, to be without merit?

- 4) Cultural insensitivity. *Zappai* is a variety of haikai, and not “lesser.” Some critics find the “serious” variety of *zappai* to have greater literary merit than senryu; that is, *zappai* are not merely ‘miscellaneous amusements in doggerel verse’. Mainly though, Japanese regional-language poets who are aware of the English-language idea of *zappai* have become offended at the implied slight to their local poetic traditions and culture.
- 5) Usurpation; the divining of a misleading or idiosyncratic meaning from a pre-existing literary term outside of its cultural context: utilizing its unknown, exotic flavor as a means of validation in an “outside” language and literature. The colonizing of a pre-existing cultural idea and expression by another culture has been a bane of the English-language haiku movement. If there is to be a further evolution of haiku definitions that utilize pre-existing (especially unfamiliar) Japanese terms, forethought and academic rigor are likely necessary.

We respect the desire and work done by the HSA to create improved definitions for the haiku genre. While we hold no animus toward the organization, and applaud its fine accomplishments in promoting haiku in North America and around the world, and its continuing cross-cultural interchange with Japan and other countries, we feel there is great opportunity in accurately discerning contemporary Japanese literature and culture, which is composed of an innovative and diverse mix of poetic styles and approaches, which often overlap—to the point where there exist many exceptions to traditional genre definitions.

There are no literary labels that we are aware of in Japanese literature for a variety of poetry that is “garbage.” If we wish to create a “garbage” or “pseudo” haiku category in our haiku, we may do so at our pleasure—sticking to our own language and literary culture. There is a further issue—whether we need to formally define such a category at all. It is not clear that such a step is necessary. As George Carlin might say, doesn't the word “trash” itself successfully cover the concept? And, someone's garbage may be another's innovation; perhaps a word to the wise.

An instance of “haikai taste” – 5-7-5 poetry in popular culture

We note that Katō Ikuya partly defines *zappai* as “haikai schools” possessing “a wide variety of uncategorized styles.” Taking his definition in its broad sense, we might say that 5-7-5 poetry which exhibits “haikai taste” and does not otherwise fall into the category of haiku or senryu could be considered *zappai* — not as a throwaway category but simply as an unclassifiable genre of 5-7-5 Japanese poetry with “haikai taste.” Many poems that fit this broad definition. As an example, the famous director, producer, actor, writer, comedian, and perennial television guest host, Kitano “Beat” Takeshi (recently appointed to a professorship at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, *Tokyo geijyutsu daigaku*), composed a 5-7-5 poem which has become popularly known throughout Japan:

aka shingō minna de watareba kowaku-nai

at the red light if you cross together no need to fear

This poem is based on *kōtsū anzen hyōgo*, “traffic safety mottos,” which are written by kindergarten and elementary-school children everywhere (that is, everyone), as part of their Japanese language-learning. For instance, one of the most well-known mottos is:

te wo agete ōdanhodō wo watarō yo

Let's put out a hand: cross at the pedestrian crosswalk!

Even four and five-year olds know this one. Such a motto would not be classified as poetic, though it is 5-7-5, and participates in the unique flavor of 5-7-5 metrics, rooted in Japanese language and culture.^[8] There are thousands of such sayings. Takeshi's play upon not only the genre of the traffic motto, but the intent (traffic safety), contains the quality of haikai taste. Nonetheless, it isn't senryu, as it's a poem based on a coinage of the "traffic safety motto" genre. This may be classified as *zappai*, according to the broad definition. While Takeshi's coinage may not be high art, it is culturally significant, ironic, and playful—in fact, the poem points out the problematic phenomenon of mass psychology, as a form of social critique. Takeshi's *zappai* is justly memorable, as it resonates with prevailing cultural issues and its meaning is multilayered — is it actually high art after all? We leave it to the reader to decide, as we are not in a position to assume. *Caveat Emptor*.

APPENDIX A Definition of "Doggerel"^[9]

Doggerel describes verse considered of little literary value. The word is derogatory, from Middle English.

Doggerel might have any or all of the following failings:

- trite, cliched, or overly sentimental
- forced or imprecise rhymes
- faulty metre
- misordering of words to force correct metre

Almost by definition examples of doggerel are not preserved, since if they have any redeeming value they are not considered doggerel. Some poets however make a virtue of writing what appears to be doggerel but is actually clever and entertaining despite its apparent technical faults.

APPENDIX B: The Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan

Composed by Japanese scholars, this massive multi-volume encyclopedia is arguably among the best sources of Japanese cultural lore available in the English language. We are curious why the HSA Definitions Committee has overlooked this resource. The following paragraphs are direct quotation:

"Zappai and Senryū" entry

Zappai and senryū

Zappai is a general term covering a number of forms of comic poetry that evolved from *haikai* (see *renga* and *haikai*) verse during the Edo period (1600—1868). It established itself as an independent poetic genre directed toward popular taste during the Genroku era (1688-1704), when *haikai* drifted away from its original identity as a comic verse form and took on a more serious character. Most *zappai* [metrical] forms

are based on the 5-7-5 syllabic structure of the *hokku* (see *haiku*). *Senryū* is one of the best-known types of *zappai* and expresses the feelings and insights of people in everyday situations. [our emphasis]

Types of Zappai – Some *zappai* forms such as *maekuzuke* and *kasazuke* follow the principles of linked verse, in which the poet adds a capping verse (*tsukeku*) to a previously given verse (*maeku*). Zappai also includes independent unlinked forms which developed from the *hokku*, such as *kiriku* and *oriku*. *Senryū* was a relatively late unlinked form which developed from the *tsukeku* portion of *maekuzuke* verses.

Maekuzuke was a traditional form of literary amusement in which a given short verse of 14 syllables was capped by a long verse of 17 syllables to arrive at the 31-syllable length of the traditional *tanka* form; alternately, a long verse could be capped by a short one. *Maekuzuke* represents the original font of Japanese linked verse, and even after it was superseded by the longer and more sophisticated linked verse forms of *renga* and *haikai*, it survived both as a comic entertainment and a practice form by which poets could study and improve their linking technique. In the early Genroku era *maekuzuke* achieved great popularity among the urban population, and *maekozuke* competitions in which *tsukeku* on a given *maeku* were selected and graded by professional poetry masters drew large numbers of participants. Winning verses were printed and distributed, and prizes were awarded.

Unlike *haikai* poetry, in which the *maeku* and the *tsukeku* were considered equally important, *maekuzuke* composition emphasized the interest of the *tsukeku* alone. For this reason, the 14-syllable short verse was fixed as the *maeku*, and its content became simple to the point of being perfunctory. Ultimately it lost all poetic meaning and served merely to introduce the theme of the 17-syllable long verse, which simultaneously gained great freedom in both content and expression. With the surge in popularity of *maekuzuke* in the Genroku era [1688-1733], many professional poetry masters began to follow the public trend of viewing *maekuzuke* composition as an end in itself rather than as a mere practice technique, and some devoted themselves exclusively to the judging of *maekuzuke*. Among the most notable of these masters were Tachiba Fukaku (1662—1733), Shūgetsu (fl early 18th century), and Karai Senryū (1718—90).

In *kasazuke*, the major linked-verse font of *zappai*, a 5-syllable *maeku* is capped by a 12-syllable *tsukeku*. The completed poem is thus 17 syllables long, like a *hokku*, although unlike a *hokku* it does not require a season word. This break from the conventional number of syllables in each verse gave rise to numerous other metrical variations.

Kinku and *oriku*, both of which were nonlinked forms, also did away with the principle of establishing a seasonal theme. This feature greatly simplified verse composition and won favor with amateur poets daunted by the complexities of using season words. Unlike the linked-verse forms, *kiriku* and *oriku* were meant to be composed and appreciated as complete poems, rather than as parts of a continuing series. In *kiriku*, as in *kasazuke*, a verse of 12 syllables was added to a given verse of 5 syllables to create a complete poem of 17 syllables. Although originally less attention may have been paid to linking technique in *kiriku* than in *kasazuke*, the two forms were sufficiently similar to be considered later as a single type, commonly referred to as *kammurizuke*.

Oriku was an acrostic form in which either 2 given syllables were used respectively as the starting syllables for 2 lines of 7 syllables each, or 3 given syllables were used to start 3 lines of a verse in a 5-7-5 syllable pattern. While there were precedents for this type of poetic amusement in the earlier *waka* tradition, it reached the height of its popularity in the mid-18th century, especially in the Osaka area.

Senryū – As the *tsukeku* portions of *maekuzuke* verses came to be read and appreciated by themselves, they were called *kyōku* to distinguish them from *hokku*, with which they shared the same 17-syllable structure. The style of *tsukeku* selected and published by the *maekuzuke* judge Karai Senryū swept the entire nation starting in the Meiwa era (1764—72), and came to be known as Senryū-style *kyōku*. *Senryū* is a modern abbreviation of this term.

Starting with *Mutamagawa* (1750), a number of collections of superior *tsukeku* from *maekuzuke* competitions had been published without their *maeku*. These collections were widely read in the city of Edo (now Tokyo), and led to the publication in 1763 of the first *Yanagidaru*, a collection of *tsukeku* selected by the immensely popular standards of Karai Senryū. favorably received by Edo readers, it was followed by 22 more *Yanagidaru* collections issued by Senryū himself and, after his death, by 144 more issued by his successors. The early editions showed Senryū's marked preference for a style similar to that of contemporary *haikai* poetry, but in treating the verses as independent entities and completely ignoring their origin as *tsukeku* they went a step beyond *Mutamagawa*.

The popularity of the *Yanagidaru* series led to an increased emphasis on the independence of the *tsukeku* in Senryū's *maekuzuke* competitions, and in his last years the competitions abandoned the *maeku* entirely and were limited to 17-syllable *kyōku*. At the same time, the light, witty, realistic sketches of everyday life in the *haikai* vein that had been predominant in the early *Yanagidaru* collections were gradually replaced by verses with an emphasis on humor, often quite bawdy, and novelty. This tendency was intensified by the practice of using set topics (*kudai*) for verse composition in place of the *maeku*, and ultimately led to both the production of large numbers of nearly identical verses and a tendency to overindulge in obscenity and stilted wordplay in an effort to achieve new comic effects. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, however, a reform movement worked to curb excesses in *senryū* and revive it as a satirical poetic genre. It survives to this day as a form of poetic amusement, composed primarily by amateurs.

Literary Characteristics of Senryū — *Senryū* verse deals primarily with everyday people in everyday situations. One need not be a specialist to compose it. In fact, one notable characteristic of the *Yanagidaru* collections was that the poets remained anonymous; the tastes shown by the selector gave the collection its only touch of personal identity. In presenting historical legends it gives them a popular twist, and it tends to treat nature and living things from a distinctly human perspective. The qualities that give literary value to *senryū* are the light, witty realism of its expression and its penetrating, intuitive observation of human foibles and events generally overlooked by poets in other genres. At its best, the keen insights of *senryū* into social mores and daily life make for superior satire, but its inclination toward sharpness sometimes causes it to take an irresponsibly negative view of mankind and society, falling to the level of mere sarcasm and scandal-mongering.

References — R. H. Blyth, *Senryū* (1949). Miyata Masanobu, *Zappaishi no kenkyū* (1972). Okada Hajime, ed, *Yanagidaro zenshū* (Sanseidō, 1976-79). Suzuki Masatada et al, ed, *Kibyōshi Senryu, Kyōka*, vol 46 of *Nikon koten bongaku zenshū*, (Shōgakukan, 1971).

Author — Shiraishi Teizō.

Article Reference: *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan, Volume 8* (Kodansha, 1983, 1st edition), p. 368.

ENDNOTES

^[1] Haiku Society of America, Inc. "Report of the Definitions Committee" adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Society, New York City, 18 September 2004. Full text available online: http://www.hsa-haiku.org/HSA_Definitions_2004.html

^[2] Cf. Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, Endnote 5 (<http://www.iyume.com/research/>). Let's look at how "zappai" has been applied in English prior to the HSA definition: In the *Modern Haiku* journal, Lee Gurga advanced the idea of a hierarchy or schema of haiku, with *zappai* at the bottom. He described *zappai* as "so-called haiku" and "imaginary." The intent seems perjorative: "seventeen syllable poems that do not have proper formal or technical characteristics of haiku . . . if we look at all of what is presented today as 'haiku' a large number of so-called haiku are, like *zappai*, imaginative or imaginary" (Gurga, 2000, pp. 62-3).

^[3] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, (Kodansha, 1983, 1st edition). See the entry "renga and haikai."

^[4] Katō Ikuya (1929-2003) graduated from Waseda University. A renowned poet and critic, recipient of the Japanese literature Haiku Grand-Prix, and the Tomizawa Kakio Prize. In 1999 the Katō Ikuya Award for Poetry was established in his honor. The Japanese text quoted in this article is available here: <http://www.jfast1.net/~takazawa/dfontpage/fudemakase/syuukuwokoeru.html>

^[5] Katsutada Suzuki is an acclaimed authority of Edo-period popular literature, particularly haikai, senryū and *zappai*. He is the author of several books, including *Senryu and Zappai: The World of Popular Edo-period Literature* [Senryu zappai Edo shomin no sekai], Miki Shobo, 1996, and *The Complete Works of Japanese Classic Literature 79, New Edition: Kibyoushi [popular fiction], Senryu and Kyouka [humorous and vulgar tanka, beginning in the Manyoushu]* [shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshyu: kibyoushi, senryu, kyouka], Shogakkan, 1999.

^[6] Shinjuku Rollingstone is a haikai poet. Before he used this pseudonym he learned English haiku composition from Catherine Urquart. Shinjuku was born in Kumamoto, Japan, and spent many years in Tokyo, before returning to his hometown. He claims to have studied the history of Japanese literature — as an appetizer for sake.

^[7] Available in Japanese: <http://www.rkk.co.jp/piratto/higokyouku.html>

^[8] Cf. Gilbert and Yoneoka, "From 5-7-5 to 8-8-8: An Investigation of Japanese Haiku Metrics and Implications for English Haiku," *Language Issues: Journal of the Foreign Language Education Center. Prefectural University of Kumamoto, Kumamoto, Japan*, 2000.

Online: <http://research.iyume.com>

^[9] Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doggerel>

雑俳
zappai