

JAPANESE POETRY

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Abstract: The article discusses the history and the development of Japanese poetry. Specifically, it examines in detail the characteristics of Man'yōshū, the oldest extant collection of Japanese waka poems, that was created in the Nara period, and of Hachidaishū the first eight imperial anthologies of Japanese waka poetry. Furthermore, it discusses the characteristics of waka poems.

Keywords: waka poems, tanka poems, Man'yōshū (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves or Collection of Multiple Leaves), manyōgana, hiragana, Hachidaishū (Collection of Eight Classical Japanese Anthologies).

Introduction

I'll start by talking about how Japanese literature is regarded outside. Japanese literature and culture started to be introduced to the West following Japan's opening during the Meiji period. Around that period, books like *The Tale of Genji* gained international recognition. But first, *The Tale of Genji*'s topic seemed uninteresting to Westerners, and its intricate writing style was dismissed as a dull piece of literature. It is important to note, though, that *The Tale of Genji* has been translated into numerous foreign languages, including both major and minor languages from around the world, and is acknowledged as a masterpiece in both Japanese and world literature.

In 1968, Yasunari Kawabata was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his "passion for depicting the beauty and spirit of traditional Japan." Subsequently, in 1994, Kenzaburo Oe was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his "poetic imagination to create an imaginary world in which reality and myth are closely condensed and to shockingly depict the state of human beings in modern times." In addition, Japanese literature has produced Haruki Murakami, who has been called the "Murakami of the world." The number of Murakami fans has been steadily growing since the early 1990s, when one of the leading American publishing houses, Knopf, started publishing English translations of his works. Gary Fisketjon, the editor of Knopf responsible for Murakami, remarks that "Murakami's popularity in the United States is increasing year by year." [4; 3]. The works of novelist Haruki Murakami have spawned ardent admirers known as "Harukist" (ハルキスト), as well as writers influenced by Murakami, known as the "Haruki Children," both in Japan and abroad. Japanese author Haruki Murakami is among the most well-known in the world.

In addition, Kazuo Ishiguro, a British novelist who won the Nobel Prize in 2017, is highly regarded in the English-speaking world as a "writer across countries" who can connect with readers who are not interested in Japanese literature, as well as essential and universal themes such as the search for identity. In recent years, international interest has been growing in feminist

literature that conveys the “reality” of Japan, and English versions of past works by Japanese female writers, such as Yoko Ogawa’s “Secret Crystal” (密やかな結晶) and Mieko Kawakami’s “Summer Story,” (夏物語) are in the spotlight.

Main part

In this paper, I will refer to Japanese literature, especially the poetry of Japan. The oldest surviving collection of waka poems in Japan is the Man’yoshu, Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, which was established around 760. The editor is presumed to be Otomo-no-Yakamochi. It has 20 volumes and about 4,500 poems and covers poems from emperors and aristocrats to a wide range of commoners, spanning three centuries before and after. There are three main categories of poems: zoka (miscellaneous poems), somon poems (mutual exchanges of love poetry), and banka (elegies), and the main singing styles are tanka (short poems), choka (long poems), and sedoka poems. Man’yoshu is written in Manyogana. The poems of Man’yoshu are simple, majestic, and concise in the style of singing called “masuraoburi” and are rich in folk songs and natural observations. In addition, there are distinctive poems such as the Azuma Uta (old Kanto-area folk songs) and the Sakimori-no-Uta (poems written by the Sakimori guards), which frankly recite the sorrows of the common people.

At the end of the 9th century, when the Tang envoys were abolished, the national culture blossomed. Furthermore, with the spread of hiragana, waka poetry became popular again. Uta awase (poetry contest) became popular, and waka was sung in love between men and women, and waka became indispensable for the aristocracy. Then, at the beginning of the 10th century, the Kokin Wakashu (Collection of Japanese Poetry Ancient and Modern) was published. The Kokin Wakashu is the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, compiled in 905 under the imperial command of Emperor Daigo by Ki-no-Tsurayuki, Ki-no-Tomonori, Oshikochi-no-Mitsune, and Mibu-no-Tadamine. Following in the footsteps of the Man’yoshu, the Kokin Wakashu consists of 20 volumes. The number of poems is 1100.

There are about 120 poets, and the period spans about 150 years. The Kana Introduction, which is said to be the work of Ki-no-Tsurayuki, is noted as the first literary theory in the history of literature. The poetry style is mainly tanka. The style of poetry is a graceful, delicate, and this poetic style called “taoyameburi,” and it is rich in metaphorism.

This was followed by the compilation of the Gosen Wakashu (951) and the Shui Wakashu (1005), which are called the Sandaishu (Collection of Three Classical Japanese Anthologies). Eighty years after the Shui Wakashu five collections were compiled: the Goshui Wakashu (1086), the Kinyo Wakashu (1127), the Shika Wakashu (1151), the Senzai Wakashu (1187), and the Shinkokin Wakashu (1205) out of a desire for a new style, and the so-called Hachidaishu (Collection of Eight Classical Japanese Anthologies) was established.

Let’s take a closer look at waka. In a broad sense, it means Yamato uta (Japanese poetry). It is also written as 倭歌 or 倭調. In other words, Yamato Uta means a poem unique to Japan that was sung in Japan from ancient times, as opposed to Kara Uta (Chinese poetry). Tanka (57577), choka (5757577), sedoka (577577), katauta (577), etc., are called Yamato Uta (waka). In a narrow sense, it refers to a tanka composed of 31 characters of 57577. In other words, after the

Heian period (794–1185/1192), waka came to refer only to tanka. Waka was developed in the aristocratic life, which revolved around annual events and rites of passage, and was appropriate for the occasion. In addition, in the daily life of women, waka poetry was sung in a variety of situations. For example, in love, proposal of marriage, and the morning after, waka poetry functioned as an important means of communication. When giving things, they accompanied the gift and the waka poem. Even in the case of death, poems of cremation, poems of remembrance, and poems of memorial service were sung.

The oldest waka in Japan is a poem sung by the legendary god Susanoo-no-Mikoto, who appears in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, when he took Princess Kushinada as his wife and set his new home in Izumo. Susanoo-no-Mikoto is the younger brother of Amaterasu Omikami. He defeats the eight-headed and eight-tailed Yamatano Orochi and takes Princess Kushinada as his wife.

八雲立つ 出雲八重垣 妻ごみに 八重垣つくる その八重垣を

やくもたつ いずもやえがき つまごみに やえがきつくる そのやえがきを

Meaning: In the land of Izumo, where the clouds are layered, I found a good place for a new house with my wife. Let's build a fence for my wife.

Next, I would like to introduce a poetry sung by Ono-no-Komachi (825–900). Ono-no-Komachi is a representative poet of the Kokin Wakashu and has excellent works in love poems. In addition, Ono-no-Komachi is known as a beautiful woman of the world. The poem of Ono-no-Komachi, which is called the holy of passionate love poem, are as follows.

花の色は 移りにけりな いたづらに わが身世にふる ながめせしまに

はなのいろは うつりにけりな いたづらに わがみよにふる ながめせしまに

Meaning: During the long rains, the color of the flowers has faded. In other words, while I was lost in thought, I spent my months in this world in vain (I grew old). The flowers are cherry blossoms. The “color of flowers” (花の色) is the color of cherry blossoms, symbolizing “the youth and beauty of women.” It is a poem that superimposes the image of one's old self on faded cherry blossoms.

Conclusions

In this paper, I talked about waka poetry, which is considered a “short poetry” worldwide. Waka poetry was referred to as “three-line poetry” and caught the attention of literary historians even in Uzbekistan, which is known as the “land of poetry” in Japan. Among them is Rauf Parfi, who

studied and translated waka poetry into Uzbek. His translation, however, is a double translation from Russian rather than a precise translation from Japanese. Studying waka and translating it straight from Japanese into Uzbek appears to be important.

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