

H a i k u

UEHARA Kazushi

I want to introduce Haiku.

It is traditional Japanese short poem.

Haiku is a fixed form of verse made of words adding up to 17 syllables, with each verse divided into 5 7 5 syllables respectively.

It derived from a play of “Renga” (it is like a linked poem) where people alternately place a top phrase of 5 7 5 syllables to a bottom phrase of 7 7 syllables and the poem structure of today was made by Matsuo Basyo(1644-1694)

This was spread to the general public by Masaoka shiki and others during and after The MEIJI period (1868-1912)

The characteristic unique to Haiku is the use of “Kigo” words or phrases describing the seasons.

Why is Kigo necessary for haiku?

The real pleasure of reading haiku is to imagine the scene. Therefore, Kigo is very useful to stir readers imagination. Even though haiku is shorter than other literatures, they can give us a lot of information. (actually, they are called the shortest poems in the world)

So, haiku needs scene and events as much as other literatures. To create them Kigo plays an important role. In addition, Japan is famous for having the unique and characteristic 4 seasons. Therefore, Japanese people can easily associate scene and seasons with a certain words. For example, cherry blossoms show the spring.

I want show you one of the most famous haiku which was made by Matsuo Basyo who is the founder of haiku.

Kanji ver.(古池や 蛙飛び込む 水の音)

Hiragana ver.(ふるいけや かわずとびこむ みずのおと) ←it properly follows the 5 7 5 rule.

pronunciation (full in care car was to become miz note)

means. The ancient pond a frog leaps in the sound of the water.

Interpret

In the spring (the frog shows the spring) at the silent and stagnant ancient pond, the frog suddenly jumped from somewhere to the water. It broke the silence of the pond. But the stillness came soon.

From this passage, we can't get any magnificence or vividness of nature. It gives us something like lonely and simple feelings. Maybe it is boring and not satisfying for people who have never seen haiku. But Japanese discover a special beauty from here. We call such feeling "Wabi sabi". I can't explain it perfectly. According to the dictionary it is described that aesthetic scene in Japanese art emphasizing quiet simplicity and subdued refinement. Japanese people tend to prefer such feeling and try to avoid talking a lot. I am not sure whether such modest personality is good or not but we can see a lot of wabi sabi thought from various aspects of Japanese culture.

These days "senryu" which is really similar to haiku become to be popular. The major difference is don't have to use kigo. In mid-EDO period (1603-1867)

Karai SENRYU proposed the idea to take the 17 syllable phrases and established it independently, and thus it was born under his name. mainly read in modern style, wit, humor, irony, satire and read into themes of human feelings, society and politics. Today, businessmen senryu are also popular., reading the lives of businessmen in a very amusing way.

Cigarette is better for my health than listening to my wife's complaints.

(among elderly couple) Hey my wife you are wearing my underwear.

Satirizing the ways of the world has always been great entertainment.