Renga Composition in Theory and Practice: Poetry with Rulebooks

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This research explores the composition process unique to the genre of *renga* (連歌), Japan's classic collaborative verse-linking form of poetry, with a particular focus on the effects of *shikimoku* (式目), the famous renga "rule codes" that guided such composition. These shikimoku provided specific, rigid rules of word usage, legislating for example how many times in a given linking session, and under what conditions, a certain word could be used. Aimed at ensuring variation and harmonic structure within the communal renga sequence, they exerted a powerful influence on the behavior of session participants, ultimately leading to the development of a distinct artistic sensibility. Behind my project is the conviction that this sensibility is a unique phenomenon both demanding and worthy of further careful study.

This thesis consists of the following five chapters:

Chapter One summarizes the history of previous research and argues for the benefits of a focus on shikimoku to the field of renga studies.

Chapter Two focuses on the interpretation and operation of shikimoku rules during actual renga sessions. Section One explores in detail the *Renga shinshiki tsuika narabi ni shinshiki kon'antō* (連歌新式追加並新式今案等), a shikimoku compiled by Shōhaku (肖柏) in 1501, highlighting both the existence of unwritten rules and the flexibility with which explicit rules might be applied in practice. It demonstrates how shikimoku were not simply codifications of rules that were standard and obvious, and argues that they therefore need to be approached with an awareness that they contain variations specific to individual eras and compilers. Section Two examines an observed variation in session limits for maximum allowed usages of the word *hana* (花 flower), which fluctuated between three and four across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Working from hints in the *Shiyōshō* (私用抄), a renga treatise by Shinkei (心敬), it outlines an answer to the question of why, by the sixteenth century, four usages per session eventually became the accepted standard. Section Three considers the significance of the different ways shikimoku are referenced in "self-commentaries" produced for their own works by three prominent renga poets: Sōgi (宗祇), Sōchō (宗長), and Jōha (紹巴). It can be said that Sōgi used discussion of the difficulties presented by shikimoku to heighten appreciation of the links under examination. Sōchō, on the other hand, tried to provide explanations for the beginners on how to apply shikimoku sensibly, while Jōha sought primarily to answer the various queries about shikimoku brought to him by amateur poets. Such change over time is a reflection of the increasingly powerful influence shikimoku came to exercise on renga composition.

Chapter Three explores the intentions of session participants by using shikimoku to analyze the

structure of the developing linked sequence. Section One takes up the oldest extant complete hundred-verse renga sequence, *Einin gonen shōgatsu tōka fusunaniki hyakuin* (永仁五年正月十日賦何木百韻, 1297), using the rules of the *Renga honshiki* (連歌本式) to analyze its linking progression and present it in visual form. This *Renga honshiki* was a shikimoku produced by Kenzai (兼載) in 1492 as a restoration of earlier Kamakura-period renga rules, *honshiki* (本式). Careful analysis of the *Einin gonen shōgatsu tōka fusunaniki hyakuin* sequence showed it to be almost fully in line with the *Renga honshiki,* suggesting that the latter had indeed managed to represent the Kamakura-era shikimoku with a fair degree of accuracy. Section Two makes a comparison of Nijō Yoshimoto's session *Ishiyama hyakuin* (石山百韻, 1385) and Sōgi's session *Shinsen tsukubashū kinen hyakuin* (新撰菟玖波集祈念百韻, 1495), examining their respective linking developments from the perspective of *nokedokoro* (のけ所), those moments in a sequence where a shift occurs from one poetic subject to another. Such a comparison revealed that in *Ishiyama hyakui*n, participants regarded nokedokoro as a highlight, employed to dramatic effect after a given poetic topic had been continued up to its prescribed limit. In contrast, in *Shinsen tsukubashū kinen hyakuin*, participants appear to have preferred a quick development that tended to shift subjects before limits were reached.

Chapter Four investigates the link between shikimoku and textual alterations made to renga as recorded in manuscript form. Section One takes a look at corrections made to *Kanmon nikki shihai renga kaishi* (看聞日記紙背連歌懐紙), a rare collection of original records from renga sessions (preserved by their recycling as paper for diary entries) dating to the period 1394—1427. These documents evidence numerous examples of overwritings, strikeouts, and other edits, many of which aimed to address violations of shikimoku. Close analysis of these demonstrates the complex steps involved in polishing texts during and after the session. Section Two examines differences found among the manuscripts of *Kawagoe senku* (河越千句, 1469 or 1470), one of Shinkei's famous renga sessions, a number of which are hard to explain as mere artefacts of transmission. It appears that some of these differences are the result of alterations made to bring the text in line with shikimoku dictates, producing two types of transmission lines among extant manuscripts: texts harking back to the in-session original, and texts inheriting the altered version produced by Shinkei after the session.

Chapter Five functions as the current project's conclusion, revisiting the contents of Chapters Two through Four while also reviewing the prospects for further research.

By thus examining the relationship between shikimoku ideals and renga as actually composed, the intersection of literariness and performance-like elements out of which renga as an art form was born comes more concretely into view. This duality of constructive language on the one hand, and a constraining context on the other, found its productive unity though the binding principle of renga shikimoku.