



川柳 Senryu

Senryu have the same construction and syllable count as haiku. What makes them different from haiku is the content. Haiku traditionally center around nature, or use nature as a metaphor, senryu can be about people and often express strong emotion.

These popular three senryu are from the Sengoku period, a time of almost constant territorial war throughout Japan before its unification by Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1603, three years after he won the battle of Sekigahara.

Most notable characters of the Sengoku-jidai are the three powerful daimyo Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu

The senryu below are said to capture each daimyo's personality and way of warfare.

織田 信長:鳴かぬなら、殺してしまえ時鳥。

豊臣 秀吉:鳴かぬなら、鳴かして見せよう時鳥。

徳川 家康:鳴かぬなら、鳴くまで待とう時鳥。

Oda Nobunaga: If the cuckoo doesn't sing, kill it.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi: If the cuckoo doesn't sing, make it sing.

Tokugawa Ieyasu: If the cuckoo doesn't sing, wait until it sings.

鳴く (なく) - universal verb used for sounds animals make (sing, bark, croak, neigh...)

~ぬ(なら) = ~ない(なら) - an old fashioned way of saying "does not"

なら- if

殺す (ころす) - to kill

しまえ - imperative form of しまう

時鳥 (ほととぎす) - a type of cuckoo found in Asian countries

~して見せよう - soft imperative expression to indicate that one makes someone/something do a certain action

まで - until

待つ - wait

俺 (おれ) - I, me (men only)

任せる (まかせる) - to leave up to, to put in someone's hands