
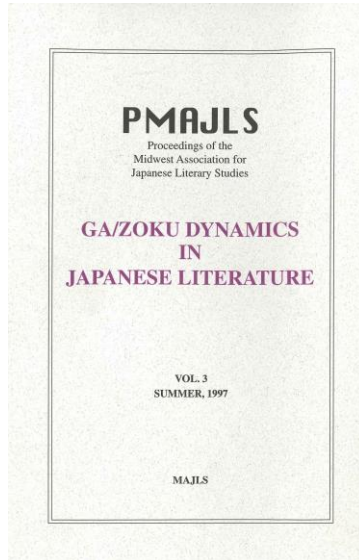


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Ga/Zoku Dynamics in Japanese Literature

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Foreword

This volume is comprised of papers presented at the fifth annual meeting of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies, held at Indiana University on November 1-3, 1996. As with the previous four meetings of the group, the fifth meeting was organized around a specific theme, in this case, "Ga/Zoku Dynamics in Japanese Literature." Distinctions between what may be considered "ga" (high and/or classical) and "zoku" (low, popular, and/or new) have shaped both the production and the interpretation of Japanese literary arts from the Heian period to the present day. In the call for papers, I encouraged presenters to explore conceptual boundary lines and oppositions relating to the perennial tension between "ga" and "zoku" in the creation of literary culture in Japan. In keeping with the organization's goals from prior years, I was hopeful that the conference theme would prove broad enough to stimulate response from scholars of both classical and contemporary Japanese literature and culture, as well as those engaged in work probing disciplinary boundaries between literature and art history, religious studies, popular culture, gender studies, and literary theory.

The response to the call for papers was overwhelming both in terms of quantity and quality of proposals. Thanks to this tremendous response from the scholarly community both inside and outside the midwest, and to financial support from the Japan Foundation, we were able for the first time in our five year history to expand the meeting to a three day format. Wishing to allow more time both for paper presenters and for a freer range of comments and questions from the audience, the selection

committee decided to dispense with designated discussants. Paper proposals were chosen on the basis of their scholarly quality and their relevance to the conference theme, and the current volume of proceedings, like the last three, was edited by Eiji Sekine, co-founder and secretary of MAJLS.

As a glance at the titles of the papers collected here reveals, slightly more than half of the presenters concerned themselves with modern or contemporary works, and the other half with classical or early modern ones. In the latter category, six papers dealt with Edo period works or with Edo revisionings of classical pre-texts. Papers dealing with media as diverse as cinema, classical visual arts like woodblock prints and narrative picture scrolls, the material culture of the Edo imperial court, and contemporary girls' manga, broadened the scope of the discussion from the verbal/textual to include the visual/material.

We are grateful to Professor Ueno Chizuko, who has contributed immensely to the current reframing of the way we discuss gender in relation to style and canon formation in modern Japanese literature. She graciously accepted our invitation to serve as keynote speaker and delivered a stimulating and ambitious overview of the relation between vernacularism and the development of feminine and transvestite stylistics in Japanese narrative from Meiji to the present. In lieu of presenting a formal lecture, our other invited speaker, Professor Watanabe Kenji, a leading specialist in Edo literature, appropriated the spirit of Edo popular culture and presented a lively and thoroughly enjoyable roundtable discussion of the conceptualization of *ga* and *zoku* in Edo literature, assisted by friends and fellow Edo specialists, Professors Ibi Takashi, Kigoshi Osamu, and Ichiko Natsuo.

The conference was funded by a grant from the Japan Foundation's program for institutional support, and supplemented

by resources from the East Asian Studies Center and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures of Indiana University. Thanks are also due to Jason Lewis, Associate Director of the East Asian Studies Center at IU, for his contributions to the organization of the fifth conference and to fund-raising efforts in 1996. Plans for the 1997 conference, to be chaired by Professor Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen and held at the University of Michigan on the theme of "The New Historicism in Japanese Literary Studies," were already afoot in November 1996. Hosts for the following three conferences have also come forward. Ann Sherif will serve as convener in 1998 at Oberlin College, Stephen Miller will organize the 1999 conference at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Eileen Mikals-Adachi will convene us in 2000 at the University of Notre Dame.

Edith Sarra
Conference Chair, 1996
Indiana University