

[論文]

# HAIKU in English and Japanese as a Lifelong Continuing Education

Shinko FUSHIMI

## 1. Introduction

In an aging society, lifelong continuing education becomes a critical concern. Japan has hundreds of years of tradition among educated people of composing poetry (including haiku or *tanka*) to mark occasions of ceremony and events. Looking back on the history of Japanese culture, people have composed poetry whenever they felt something was important or interesting, which was a result of their lifelong education, whether they realized it or not. People used to judge others' taste and education through their poems. Furthermore, farewell poetry was people's last work and a summary of their lives.

Recently, composing haiku has become popular again as a sort of brain training or wordplay exercise in Japan. Haiku was first introduced to the West by the Society of Jesus in 1603. Today, English haiku has been reimported to Japan and is often used as English educational material.

In terms of sentiments, rules, and forms, there are some differences between Japanese and English haiku, but there are also similarities between traditional English poetry and Japanese haiku. In this paper, I will suggest that writing haiku could be a lifelong method of continuing education both in English and Japanese for the aging society,<sup>1)</sup> and I will provide examples as evidence.

## 2. History of *Tanka* (5-7-5-7-7) & Haiku (5-7-5)

Below are the forms of *tanka* (5-7-5-7-7 syllables) and haiku (5-7-5 syllables) as they appeared throughout Japanese history. It should be noted that Japanese poetry is structured according to morae (light syllables, beats), rather than by what are

considered to be syllables in English, but I use “syllable” here, to avoid confusion.

Nara era (AD 710-794)

*Man'yōshū* (*Anthology of Ten Thousand Leaves*)

- *chōka* 5-7-5-7...7-7 + *hanka* 5-7-5

*Chōka* (long poems) appeared in the oldest poetry anthology, *Man'yōshū*. A *Chōka* was a sequence of an indeterminate number of 5-7-5-7... syllable patterns and ended with a 7-7 syllable pattern. A *hanka* (a form of *tanka* with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern) followed as a reply to or summary of the *Chōka*.

- *sedōka*: 5-7-7 (question) + 5-7-7 (answer)

*Sedōka* were a sort of dialogue in the form of a song, similar to opera songs, that were also included in the *Man'yōshū*.

Heian era (AD794-1185)

- *waka* (*tanka*) 5-7-5-7-7 (31 syllables)

*Waka* poetry was the main form featured in the *Kokin Wakashū* (*Anthology, Ancient and Modern*). There were three types of poems called *waka* at that time:

1. Poem letters, or letters containing a poem accompanying a few words or sentences;
2. Poems to him(her)self;
3. Poems to read and sing at parties or among friends.

Poem letters were written not only during ceremonies, such as weddings, funerals, and conferences, but also in making an appeal for promotion or guessing another's political intentions.

Kamakura era (AD1185-1333) ~Edo era

- *renga* (linked poems) 5-7-5 7-7 5-7-5 7-7...

*Renga* (linked poems) were created by several poets and assembled up to 100 poems. The main guest led the others with the first poem (5-7-5); therefore, that poem set the tone of the following poems.

Edo era (AD1603-1868)

- *haikai no renga* (the first line, *hokku*, 5-7-5, became haiku)

Originally, *haikai* poetry was used for greeting and welcoming. The first line

(5-7-5) was composed by the guest and the master replied in the next line (7-7) and others continued (5-7-5) (7-7) (5-7-5)...

Thus, as shown above, poetry has been a highly sophisticated communication tool throughout Japanese history. In fact, in *The Tale of Genji* (c. 973-c. 1014), even young Murasaki (age 10) wrote a *waka* in reply to Genji's. Writing and understanding poems was crucially important to show one's talents or intentions to others. Children were educated about not only *waka* but also about all forms and styles of poetry, just as Westerners had learned rhetoric at European universities since the 11th century.

Haiku first appeared in the Edo era. The first line of *renga*, called *hokku* (the starting poem), was developed as a new form of poetry, haiku. The leader of this movement was MATSUO Bashō and his most famous *haibun* (haiku book including haiku and prose) is *Oku no Hosomichi* (*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*) (1702). Haiku was a form of poetry addressed, in many cases, to the author him- or herself, and it was a literary art to share and enjoy with others at occasional gatherings. The most famous haiku poets at the time were Bashō and his ten disciples, and also Issa, Buson, etc.

They wrote and even made use of poems at turning points in their lives.

### 3. Farewell Poetry

Farewell poetry was a person's last work and a summary of their lives, reflecting their lifelong education. Most of these poems were *waka* and haiku. However, *kanshi* (a Chinese form of poetry) was used among Zen priests and samurais who died for political reasons. The great tea master Sen-no-Rikyu was put to death by TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi and composed his farewell poetry in *kanshi*, indicating that his death was politically motivated.

Below are examples of farewell poetry<sup>2)</sup> from the Azuchi-Momoyama era, or the Warring States period (AD 1573-1603), to the Meiji era (AD 1868-1912).

1. 「浮世をば 今こそ渡れ 武士 (もののふ) の 名を高松の 苔に残して」

“*Ukiyo wo ba ima koso wataré mononofu no na wo takamatu no koké ni nokoshité*”

“Now is the time to go beyond this life, leaving a samurai's name on the moss of a tall pine tree”

— (備中高松城の) 清水宗治 (1537-1582) SHIMIZU Muneharu

Muneharu was a military commander during the Warring States period. He wrote his last poem before committing *seppuku* (suicide with his own sword) when he was defeated by TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi, on the condition that his 5,000 soldiers would be saved by his death.

2. 「ちりぬべき 時知りてこそ 世の中の 花も花なれ 人も人なれ」

*“Chirinubeki toki shirité koso yo no naka no hana mo hana naré hito mo hito naré”*

“A flower is most beautiful when it knows the time to fall.” → “People are like flowers, I will scatter my life without hesitation, since I know it’s time that I should.”

—細川ガラシャ (1563-1600) HOSOKAWA Gracia (Tama)

Gracia was a daughter of AKECHI Mitsuhide (who betrayed ODA Nobunaga), the wife of HOSOKAWA Tadaoki, and a Christian convert. She composed her last poem before she was killed by her guards when her honor was in danger during the war, because Christians were not allowed to commit suicide. During the Warring States period, almost all of the high commanders left farewell poems at their deaths. This was a signifier of their rank and education, and furthermore, evidence that they realized that the time of their death had come.

3. 「旅に病んで 夢は枯野を 駆け廻る」

*“Tabi ni yandé yumé wa kareno wo kaké-meguru”*

“Sick on a journey — my dream goes wandering over a bleak field”

—芭蕉 (1644-1694) MATSUO Bashō

According to *Oi Nikki (The Journal of Venerable Bashō)* (1695), he always said that he composed haiku every day, thinking that 「平生 (へいぜい) 則チ辞世なり」, that is, each one was the last one for him. This was indeed his last haiku, whether he realized it or not.

#### 4. Other Milestones

4. 「おもしろき こともなき世に (を) おもしろく」

*“Omoshiroki koto mo naki yo wo omoshiroku”*

“Living an exciting life in the not-exciting world”

—高杉晋作 (1839-1867) TAKASUGI Shinsaku

Shinsaku was a samurai from the Chōshū Domain of Japan. At only 25 years of age, he was entrusted with negotiating peace with the Western powers after the Chōshū Domain had surrendered. Then, he contributed significantly to the Meiji Restoration. When he was being chased by the Tokugawa authorities, he composed the first 5-7-5 syllables of this poem. Then, a nun 野村望東尼 (1806-1867) NOMURA Motoni, who sheltered him and his political allies, added the last 7-7 syllables:

「住みなすものは 心なりけり」

“*Suminasu mono wa kokoro nari kerī*”

“It would depend on his heart” → “Follow and do as your heart orders”

He did, though he died of tuberculosis. He lived an exciting life, despite being only 29 at the time of his death.

5. 加藤素毛 (1825-1879) KATŌ Somō, a provisor of the first Japanese Embassy to the United States (1860), had been keeping a *haibun* (haiku diary) during the period just before the Tokugawa Administration collapsed.

6. 「本日天気 晴朗なれど (も) 波高し」 (7-7-5)

“*Honjitsu tenki seirou naré do mo nami takashi*”

“Weather today is fine, but waves are high”

—Vice-Admiral 秋山真之 (1868-1918) AKIYAMA Saneyuki

At the time of the Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War (1905), Saneyuki sent a report of a sortie by telegraph to the Imperial General Headquarters, adding this line. It implied that on that day, the weather was clear, so they were able to make a sortie without having to worry about the fog, but the waves were high, so the torpedo boats would not work; therefore, the attack would be made by the cannons of cruisers. All the fleet captains following his battleship immediately understood the command behind the words. The fixed form of the poem helped people intuit the hidden meanings behind the line.

Now, the phrase is used as a kind of cliché, when things on the surface look simple, but are tough in reality. As times change, the context becomes different, but the poem still survives because of its short form and strong impact.

## 5. English Haiku History<sup>3)</sup>

References to Japanese poetry began appearing in Europe at least as early as the 17th century. *The Japanese-Portuguese Dictionary* (1603) compiled by the Society of Jesus alluded to *haikai* poetry and to the first line (*hokku*) of the linked verse (*renga*). Also, Hendrik Doeff lived in Japan from 1799 to 1819 and published the *Dutch-Japanese Dictionary*, and his friends wrote haiku in Japanese.

### Meiji era

- Yone(jiro) Noguchi, father of Isamu Noguchi, was an Imagist poet and literary critic who wrote a short article in New York recommending that American poets explore writing *hokku*.
- W. G. Aston translated haiku into English in three lines in *A History of Japanese Literature* (1899).
- Lafcadio Hearn commented on the differences between Western and Japanese cultures through an analysis of haiku in his book *In Ghostly Japan* (1899).

### The 1910s in the United States

- Imagist poets Ezra Pound and his peers wrote poems influenced by haiku. They employed a technique called “superposition,” now referred to as “juxtaposition,” in which they put two totally different images together to evoke new feelings.

### Pre- and Post-World War II

- Reginald Horace Blyth lived in Japan and Korea beginning in 1924. After the war, he translated haiku into English and introduced it throughout the world. He, assisted by H. G. Henderson, wrote an English draft of the “Humanity Declaration” by the former Japanese Emperor Hirohito, and he was also an English tutor for Emperor Akihito.

Blyth discussed the worldwide spread of haiku and explained the meanings of *kigo* (season words) in his *History of Haiku* (1964). His four-volume collection *Haiku* (1949-1952) is the bible of English haiku. He translated and interpreted haiku and then tried to analyze the similarities between English poetry and haiku. Blyth was a Zen Buddhist, and he also wrote *Zen and English Literature* (1942).

Other important guides to haiku are:

- *The Japanese Haiku: Its Essential Nature, History* (1957, 2001) by Kenneth Yasuda, who referred to the “haiku moment” and wrote haiku in three lines, each of which was within “one breath length.”<sup>4)</sup>
- *An Introduction to Haiku* (1958) by Harold G. Henderson
- *Haiku World* (1996), *The Haiku Seasons* (1996) and *The Haiku Handbook* (1985, with Penny Harter) by William Higginson, in which he recorded season words.
- *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide* (2002) by Jane Reichhold

## 6. Differences and Similarities between Japanese and English Haiku

We need to consider about the differences in associations existing within different countries or regions. For example, when “The Last Rose of Summer” (1813) by Thomas Moore was translated into Japanese by SATOMI Tadashi in 1884, “the last rose” was changed to “the last white chrysanthemum,” because when Japanese people see this flower in late autumn, they might have the same feelings as British people have when they see the last rose in late summer. The natural environment and climates are different between the two countries, so the sentiments attached to different ideas or images are different also.

On the other hand, similarities can be found between haiku and poetry in English, particularly in the use of refrains in English poetry.

### 1. *Plouthalamion* (1596) by Edmund Spencer

Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

( 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 - 1-1- 1 - 1 - 1 ) 10

This was written to celebrate the marriages of daughters of the Earl of Worcester, Ladies Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset. This line was a refrain, repeated at the 18th line of each stanza. When I first read the poem and saw the refrain, I connected it with haiku, because a haiku was originally the first line of the linked-verse form, *renga*.

### 2. The theme song of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), sung by Doris Day

*Que sera, sera,* (5)

Whatever will be, will be, (7)

The future's not ours to see, (7)

*Que sera, sera.*" (5)

This song also became very popular in Japan. One of the reasons was possibly that the refrain consisted of 5-7-7-5 syllables, which was very easy for Japanese listeners to follow.

## 7. Guidelines for English Haiku Based on the Differences between Japanese and English<sup>5)</sup>

### ・ Syllables

There are no strict rules about writing haiku in English. In Japanese, the form of haiku has 17 syllables (morae), divided into three parts: 5, 7, 5. Japanese uses a monosyllabic phonetic system. The first line of *kana* (letters) consists of vowels:

あ(a) い(i) う(u) え(e) お(o)

Then, the second and subsequent lines generally have units of one consonant + one vowel for a syllable. The last letter has only one consonant (n):

か(ka) き(ki) く(ku) け(ke) こ(ko)

さ(sa) し(si) す(su) せ(se) そ(so)

.....

ん(n)

Japanese generally has only one or two letters in a syllable, whereas English generally has more, so in Japanese, one requires more words to fill the requisite number of syllables, which leaves him or her in danger of saying too much. For example:

「夏草や(na-tsu-ku-sa ya) (5) / 兵どもが(tsu-wa-mo-no do-mo ga) (7) /

夢のあと(yu-me no a-to) (5)」 17

—Bashō (芭蕉)

However, the English translation has only nine syllables. Furthermore, haiku sometimes end with a noun form and do not make a complete sentence:

“summer grass/ remains / warriors' dreams”

( 2 - 1 / 2 / 3 - 1 ) 9

Consequently, English translations become much shorter than the Japanese originals. Considering that, Dr. Blyth suggested the 2-3-2 accent (not syllable) form for haiku, as he thought that any attempt to carry over the 17-syllable structure to English would tend to lose its impact. Thus, when writing haiku in English, one should not be overly concerned about preserving the 17-syllable form.

However, some think the 5-7-5 syllable form is pertinent to English haiku. For example:

“In the temple dawn                   (5)  
the chirping of two sparrows       (7)  
sounds like summer rain”       (5)  
—James Kirkup

Therefore, in principal, it may be best to write haiku within 17 syllables.

• Line forms

Most English haiku use a three-line form, though they sometimes appear in one line, and even occasionally in four lines. Unless a different line form is demanded by the content, the three-line medium seems to be adequate, considering the syllable (beat) structure of Japanese haiku. However, I have seen many one-line haiku, because Japanese haiku used to be written in one line and often ended with a noun form.

• Capitalization and Final Punctuation

1. Some haiku start with a capital letter and end with period, as in some works by Dr. Blyth and other early haiku poets.

2. Some poets use lowercase letters throughout and end without a period, as do most of today’s haiku poets. Haiku are thought to have open endings, for the poets are sharing their feelings with the readers. Thus, some haiku end with a noun form or a participle construction; that is, the sentences are unfinished, without a verb.

3. Other poets use a capital letter to begin each line and end without a period.

• Punctuation marks

1. One should omit unnecessary punctuation marks, for haiku have a very short form and such marks might disrupt their rhythm.

2. Colons, semi-colons, commas, dashes, and exclamation marks are used to express a poet's heightened feelings or experiences. (cutting words)<sup>6)</sup>

・ Tense

Haiku show us a moment of awareness or something universal, so in general, the present and present progressive forms are used.

・ Season words

A season word should be used if it captures the essence of the haiku moment. Otherwise, its use is not mandatory. It is best not to employ more than one season word, lest one word spoil the other. Remember that “a word is a gem.” In the example below by 金子兜太(1919-2018) KANEKO Tōta, “firefly” is a season word associated with summer:

「おおかみに 蛍がひとつ 付いていた」

(o-o-ka-mi ni / ho-ta-ru ga hi-to-tsu / tsu-i-te i-ta)

“A wolf; one firefly clinging to it”

(trans. by Jim Kacian, et al. *Haiku Troubadours*, 2000)

## 8. Haiku Wisdom

・ R. H. Blyth<sup>7)</sup>

“Haiku shows what we knew all the time, but did not know we knew; it shows us that we are poets in so far as we live at all.”

“...the art of haiku is as near to life and nature as possible, as far from literature and fine writing as may be...”

“Positively, the haiku must express a new or newly perceived sensation, a sudden awareness of the meaning of some common human experience of nature or man. Negatively, and more importantly, it must, above all things, not be explanatory, or contain a cause and its effect.”

・ ISONO Namihei, a character from *Sazaé-san*<sup>8)</sup> by 長谷川町子(1920-1992)  
HASEGAWA Machiko

One autumn night, Namihei tries to compose a haiku in his room. It's getting colder, and he hears a cute sneezing sound. Actually, it is a cat on the fence that has

sneezed.

He has found it!

「夜寒かな いずこの佳人の くしゃみやら」

(yo·za·mu ka·na / i·zu·ko no ka·ji·n no / ku·sha·mi ya·ra

“(getting) chilly tonight; where···? A beauty’s ah-choo!”

(My translation)

## 9. Japan Today

According to *Modern Haiku Encyclopedia* (2005) published by Sanseido, it is said that there are more than 800 haiku groups in Japan. In July 2017, I sent a questionnaire to two haiku groups in a small city of 90,000 people, Yotsukaido, Chiba Prefecture, where my workplace is located. Multiple answers were allowed for the third and fourth question. The results were as follows:

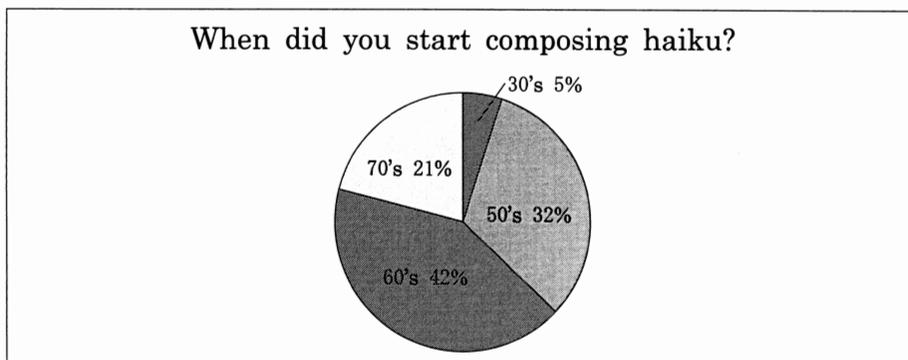


Figure 1

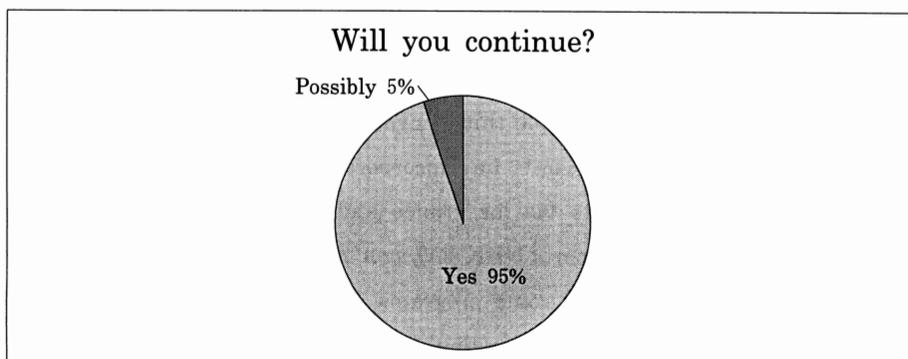


Figure 2

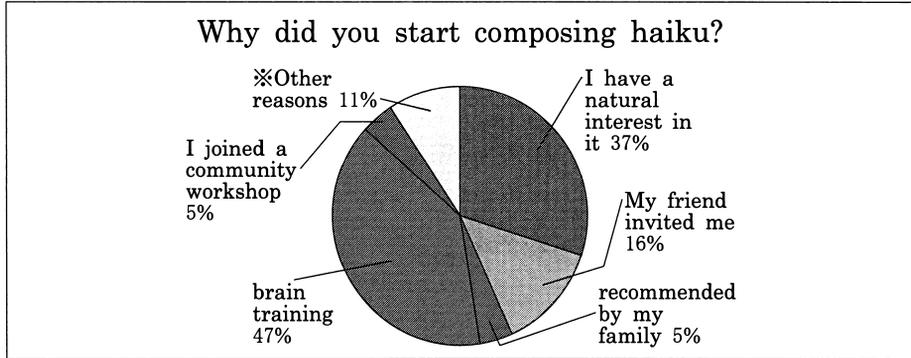


Figure 3

- ※among other reasons:
- To express my feelings.
  - I wondered why Bashō attracted so many people, when I first traced his journey.
  - The chair person was excellent.

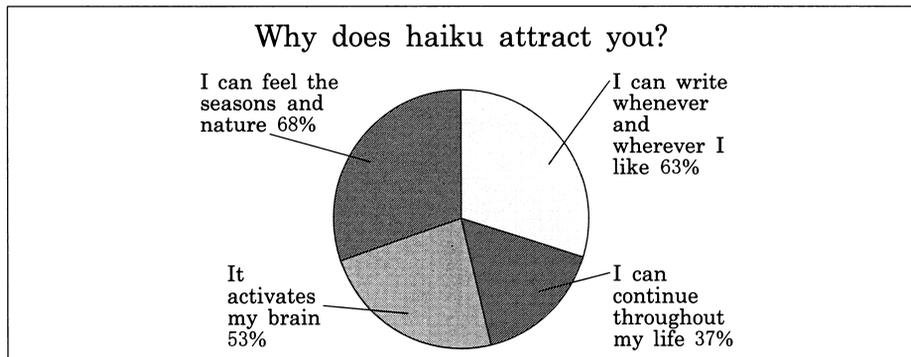


Figure 4

According to the survey, many people start composing haiku at over 50 years of age, and one of the purposes is for brain training. The rules are easy to understand, but difficult to follow. When traveling with haiku friends or even alone, haiku gives us a special time to think and feel. Debating the merits or meaning of various haiku can also bring people pleasure. Most people think engaging with haiku is a lifelong activity.

Recently, a television program<sup>9)</sup> has incorporated haiku as brain training and has become very popular. Guests vie for grades and are ranked from untalented to expert by the judge, a haiku expert. NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai* (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)) Educational also has some programs on haiku. Furthermore, high-school students can earn the honor of attending the *HAIKU KŌSHIEN* Championship (*Kōshien* is a baseball stadium where the high school baseball championship is held

every August) in Matsuyama, the birthplace of MASAOKA Shiki (1867-1902), an innovator of modern haiku.

## 10. English Haiku Today

The Haiku Society of America, founded by Harold G. Henderson and Leroy Kanterman in 1968, includes members in approximately twenty countries who write haiku. The Haiku North America conference, the largest and oldest gathering of haiku poets in the United States and Canada, was established in 1991 by Garry Gay, Paul Miller, and Michael Dylan Welch.

English haiku was reimported to Japan, and the Haiku International Association was established in 1989, gathering members from three major Japanese haiku associations. On the website of the World Haiku Association, first published in 1991, by NATSUIISHI Banya and Jim Kacian, English is used as a common language, though all native languages are respected. Members post their original haiku along with their English translations on the website.

Recently in Japan, English haiku has been used as an English-language teaching tool, especially for English composition. English magazines, such as the *Asahi Weekly*, the *Daily Yomiuri*, and the *Student Times Weekly (Japan Times Alpha)* have a section for English haiku. Also, *News Week* and the *Herald Tribune* have featured haiku sections. English haiku are broadcast on the *Haiku Masters* program by NHK World, as well.

A final example of the impact of English haiku is “War Haiku,”<sup>10</sup> included in *Spirit Hovering* (2014) by Nancy Arbuthnot. After a lieutenant, who was a dedicated haiku composer, was killed in the Iraq, his wife found some scraps of paper in his pockets:

“a scurrying rat  
pauses to sip water pooled  
in hum-vee tire tracks”

“the young lieutenant  
missing his bride, watches girls  
giggling in Basra”

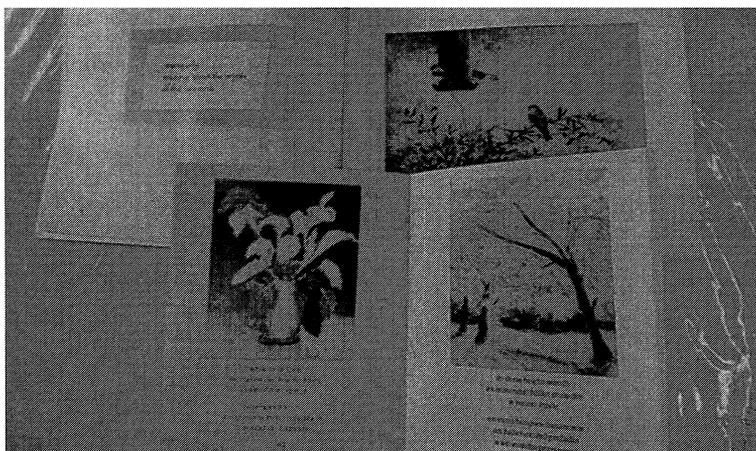
—LT USNR, Kylan Jones-Huffman, (1972-2003)

He must have realized that the time of his death was approaching, or at least that he was in danger. He wanted to leave something behind to show that he had lived and loved, and he wrote haikus like a samurai.

We can write haiku anytime and anywhere we want, if we have but a scrap of paper and something to write with. “War Haiku,” an example of farewell poetry, is surely the results of a lifelong continuing education.

## 11. Conclusion: Haiku Learning as a Lifelong Continuing Education

Recently, composing haiku has become a multi-lingual practice throughout the world, using either authors’ native languages or English. Frequently, books are published featuring haiku in conjunction with photos, pictures, or essays.



English haiku & picture, with Spanish translation (front)  
*yard birds : the impertinence of ordinary* (back) / *Haiku for an Artist* (front)

Traditionally, haiku printed on or alongside a picture have been called *haiga*, and essays including haiku have been called *haibun*. Haiku crosses national borders and genres as well. Furthermore, *suminagashi* (paper-marbling) or *sumi-e* (ink brush painting) has become a popular accompaniment to haiku.

Enjoying haiku sessions as a form of literary communication has been called *renga* or *renku*. The difference of the two lies in the rules; that is, *renga* has had strict rules particular to the old Japanese language since the Kamakura era, so modern sessions are better called *renku*, which can be a form of brainstorming and a pleasant game for night owls. Some people enjoy composing haiku during strolling or

excursion, which they call *ginkō*. We can consider haiku a special companion, as it has brought people together throughout history and surely continues to bring people together today<sup>11)</sup>.

Haiku offers vibrant collaborative possibilities, from traditional to cross-cultural and genre-pushing. Particularly regarding farewell poetry and war haiku, we anticipate that appreciating haiku could, and likely will, become a source of lifelong learning for our aging society.

#### Notes

- 1) This article is based on my presentation at Haiku North America, Santa Fe, 2017 and a teaching at US Naval Academy in 2015.
- 2) In 3 and 4, profiles are partly cited from Wikipedia and poems with English translations are from Weblio. Revision mine.
- 3) Partly cited from Yoshimura, Ikuyo et al., *Kokusai-ka Shita Nihon no Tanshi* [Internationalization of Japanese Poems]. Translation mine. Kyoto: Chugainippoh, 2002. 106-114.
- 4) Yasuda, Kenneth. *Japanese Haiku: Its Essential Nature and History*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2001. 32, 39.
- 5) Partly cited from Yoshimura, Ikuyo and Abe, Mitsugu. *HAIKU no Susumé* [(English) HAIKU Guidebook for Japanese People]. Translation mine. Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2003. 10-16.
- 6) For more details on cutting words, Sato, Hiroaki. *Eigo Haiku* [English Haiku]. Tokyo: Simul Press, 1987. 43-44.
- 7) Blyth, Reginald Horace. *The Genius of Haiku: Readings from R. H. Blyth on poetry, life and Zen*. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1995. 63, 64, 70.
- 8) Hasegawa, Machiko. *Sazaé-san* [Ms. Sazaé]. 45 vols., vol 29. Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun-sha, 1995. 52.
- 9) The title 'Pre-Bat' of the program is an abbreviation of the 'Pressure Battle.'
- 10) Arbuthnot, Nancy. *Spirit Hovering*. Mustang, Oklahoma: Tate Publishing and Enterprises, LLC, 2014. 49.
- 11) For instance, the program of Haiku North America, Santa Fe, 2017, includes workshops of *haibun*, sessions of *renku*, demonstrations of *suminagashi* and *sumi-e*, and a *haiga* gallery, besides sessions, workshops, and presentations on haiku.

#### Bibliography

- Higginson, William and Harter, Penny. *The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Teach and Appreciate Haiku*. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2009.
- Higginson, William. *The Haiku Seasons: Poetry of the Natural World*. Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 2008.
- Reichhold, Jane. *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide*. New York: Kodansha USA, Inc., 2013.
- Yamaguchi, Seishi. *The Essence of Modern Haiku: 300 Poems by Seishi Yamaguchi*. Translated by Takashi Kodaira, Alfred H. Marks. Atlanta, Georgia: Mangajin Inc., 1993.
- Yoshimura, Ikuyo. *R.H. Blyth no Shōgai: Zen to Haiku wo Aishité* [The Life of R.H. Blyth: In Love of Zen and Haiku]. Tokyo: Dōhōsha Shuppan, 1996.

生涯継続学習としての俳句と haiku

伏見 親子

高齢社会を迎え、生涯にわたる継続的な教育が重要な課題となっている。日本において、教育を受けた階級では、生涯にわたって詩歌を学び、人生の紆余曲折や重大な局面で歌を詠み、あるいは詠み交わし、時には辞世を以て生涯を終える伝統があった。

その中で、俳句や短歌は明治以前から海外に紹介され、特に世界で最も短い詩形を持つ俳句は、第二次世界大戦後には R. H. Blyth、William Higginson らの知日家によって haiku として広まり、日本にも逆輸入された。現在、日本では、俳句は生涯学習として人気が高まり、海外では、haiku のみならず、それと併せて俳画、吟行、俳文、連歌、時には墨流しを、自然に触れつつ、人と交流する知的プレイとして楽しむ人々が増えてきた。戦地で、辞世のように haiku を詠んだ軍人もいる。

俳句と haiku には、言語・気候・文化の違いからくる相違点がある一方、俳句と英詩には、詩歌としての共通点も見いだせる。

本稿では、俳句が生涯にわたる継続学習であり、また haiku も共にそうなりつつあることを、日本及び海外の事例を挙げて検証した。