

# Matsuyama Declaration

[zum Archiv Essays](#)

Haiku is part of world literature. Haiku is opening itself to various peoples of the world. This short, 17-syllable poetic form is now on the verge of broadening the possibilities of a rich array of poetic forms in the world.

## 1. Matsuyama - The Place

Haikai poetry flourished more in Matsuyama than in any other fief during the Edo Period (1603 - 1868). From the early days the people of the Matsuyama domain, especially Okudaira Okyo, sought entertainment from haikai. As a member of the "inner circle" of the Tokugawa shogunate, the city enjoyed peace and was blessed with a temperate climate. Ohara Kiju, a poet, who like Okyo was active from the late Edo to the Meiji Period, and who was to become Masaoka Shiki's haikai teacher, formed the haikai society, "Meieisha" in his capacity as a disciple of Baishitsu. Following the poetic style of the traditional school, the society engaged itself in activities such as the launching of what became the third oldest monthly poetry publication, "Masago no Shirabe"; thus, haikai poetry enjoyed great popularity until Shiki's day.

Japan's modern haiku (17-syllable poetry) originated in Matsuyama mainly through the effort of Masaoka Shiki. Shiki, who was born into a samurai family in the Matsuyama fief, was unable to fulfill his political aspirations due to the unfortunate circumstances that resulted from the Meiji Restoration (1868) when the Tosa fief gained control of Matsuyama. Shiki could not give up politics. From an early age, Shiki had learned the basics of kangaku (Sinology) and kanshi (Chinese poetry translated into Japanese) from his grandfather Ohara Kanzan, and Kawahigashi Seikei, the father of Kawahigashi Hekigodo. After various attempts in politics, philosophy, art, and fiction writing, he found his mission in haiku. Like kanshi, or Chinese poetry, haiku was a fixed-verse form, and a familiar genre to most people. Plunging himself into an environment where none of the elite scholars of his day paid any attention to haiku, he attempted to gain the blessing of the Gods of literature by synthesizing the past achievements of haikai and modernizing it by scientific approach. In addition to Shiki, Matsuyama boasts of producing other leading haiku poets. Chief among them are Takahama Kyoshi, Kawahigashi Hekigodo, Nakamura Kusatao, and Ishida Hakyō, and others who represent the contemporary haiku world. As if to compete with this orthodox school, from the Nanyo region of Shikoku there was also the sudden emergence of Tomisawa Kakio, Shiba Fukio, and Takahashi Shinkichi, the poet who is referred to as Japan's first Dadaist. It is truly astonishing that they all had very close relations with Matsuyama, and contributed to the development and enrichment of modern haiku. The rich haiku foundation that they succeeded in building for Matsuyama is truly astonishing.

## 2. The Spread of Haiku Throughout the World

Japan's traditional poetry came into contact with world poetry through translations of hymns and biblical poetry. Works of translations, such as "Shintaishisho" (1883) by Toyama Shoichi et al, and "Omokage" by Mori Ogai helped to establish the kind of poetry popular in the West. Although Shiki himself promoted the reform of haiku and tanka, he also expressed an interest in Shintaishi (new style poetry) and held Shintaishi study groups. He was especially interested in the distinctiveness of rhyme in Western poetry and compiled a 'rhyme dictionary' in order to introduce rhymes into Japanese poetry. From the beginning Shiki had his eyes fixed on the rest of the world and taught the contemporary Japanese the importance of rhyming in poetry. Just as Japanese Shi-ika (poetry) was influenced greatly by Western poetry, haiku has had great influence on the world of poetry in the West. Haiku was originally introduced to the West at the turn of the century by Basil Hall Chamberlain and Paul Louis Couché. When poets such as Ezra Pound and Paul Eluard exhibited a deep interest, haiku quickly gained attention. For example, Paul Claudel, one-time French ambassador to Japan, Yves Bonnefoy, Philippe Jaccottet, America's Richard Wright and Allen Ginsberg, Germany's Rainer Maria Rilke, Italy's Giuseppe Ungaretti and Octavio Paz, Nobel Prize winner from Mexico, and other such great poets all incorporated the spirit of haiku in their poetry.

For example, in "Natural History," Renard used adept similes in his simple verse about "Butterflies." He wrote, "This two folded love letter is looking for the flower's address." He described a "snake" in one line thereby giving it a haiku flavor. Octavio Paz wrote a three-line haiku-like poem: "Every time the child throws it, the top just falls, on the center of the earth." Rilke's poem beginning with "Rose, oh pure contradiction," which he willed as his epitaph, was also a kind of haiku. There was a high level of interest in haiku in French literary circles as well.

The New France Review, edited by Jean Poland, influenced a generation of French writers. In 1920,

shortly after its founding, the journal featured a special issue on haiku which caused quite a stir in the French poetry world.

### 3. Why Did Haiku Spread Throughout the World? The Heart of Haiku

Western poetry is rich and has various styles. Some are very short, but others are very long, using several hundred lines. Furthermore, their forms could not be clearly defined because of their huge diversity. Haiku, on the other hand, is a complete and independent poem with just 17 syllables. This was shocking to Western readers. Haiku is not the kind of poetry where logical conclusion is expected to offer the reader a definite poetical answer. In other words, haiku transcends logic. For example, even if Matsuo Basho's

aki chikaki  
kokoro no yoru ya  
yojoo han

autumn is approaching  
hearts nestle close in the four  
and a half tatami mat room

fuyugomori  
mata yorisowan  
kono hashira

wintering over ...  
I'll sit close  
by this pillar again

hiyahiya to  
kabe o fumaete  
hirune kana

the wall is cool  
against my feet  
an afternoon nap

were translated into English as above, and attempts were made to explain them logically, they could not be fully explained. Each translation is totally different. In haiku, a thing of wonder is expressed as it is. Haiku is grasped with all 5 senses, not by logic. Things which logic could not explain might be expressed in haiku. In order to jump over the gap between logic and the senses, unique Japanese rhetorical techniques such as "kireji" and "kigo" were invented. Haiku is thought of as a "gift from nature." This is based on the Japanese view that "nature is not something that people should confront, but rather something that people should merge with." Also, the Japanese view of life is to "project human life into nature." As the tanka of today breaks away from the tradition of nature and the sensitivity to seasons that had been embraced in ancient waka, haiku has inherited that tradition, and has let it become even more pronounced. From the waka of ancient Japan to the tanka of today, the tradition of nature and the sensitivity to seasons have continued and become even more pronounced in haiku. In other words, haiku reminds its readers that men as living beings exist in nature, hence it suggests to them that they should live a symbiotic and sympathetic life together with other creatures in nature. When they are disposed in this way, they will be endowed not with a heart that is enclosed within itself, but with a heart that is open to all others. Furthermore, haiku is poetry of the common people. Haiku was born among the common people, was perfected by the common people and has returned to the common people. In addition, it allows the writer to write about any subject in daily life. Thus, it is not strange that haiku has continued to greatly increase the number of its followers and gain popularity; a very rare phenomenon in modern times.

First of all, haiku is easy to write. When we write haiku in Japanese, if we line up 5, 7 and 5 syllables and insert a kigo (season word) the result is haiku-like. And haiku fills every writer with rapture.

Secondly, haiku originates from haikai, which is a group-oriented literary art and structurally it requires others. Groups who have the shared interests in evaluating and creating haikai are called "Renju." So a haiku poet takes a creative method different from the typical modern poet who writes poetry in isolation.

In short, this democratic nature of haiku made a fresh impact on the poets of the world and came to be accepted by them as something they could possibly make use of.

#### 4. The Problems of Teikei (fixed form) and Kigo (season words)

A common issue that always comes up in discussions of international haiku, is how to deal with the fixed-form of 5-7-5 syllables and kigo in other languages and cultures. First of all, the 5-7-5 rhythm is unique to the Japanese language, and even if other languages were to use this rhythm, it is obvious that it would not guarantee the same effect. Teikei is not about the matter of syllable count or accent, but the matter of the way poetic expression could be heightened through tension when the writer wants it. In the case of Japanese poetry, the best method to increase poetic tension was the 5-7-5 syllable form.

In addition, the techniques and rhetoric that are used in this fixed form are also innately Japanese. There are many types of haiku. For example, there are haiku that express a reality that is instantly perceived, and haiku that uses kireji (words that are cut for a surrealistic effect) to construct another world as formative arts. An example of the former is Takahama Kyoshi's

kirihitoha hi atarinagara ochinikeri	a paulownia leaf in the sunlight falling
--	--

higashiyama shizukani hane no ochini keri	a feather shuttlecock gently falling - Higashiyama hill
---	---

nagareyuku daikon no ha no hayasa kana	a daikon leaf flowing away how swift
--	--

or Yamaguchi Seishi's

natsukusa ya kikansha no sharin kite tomaru	summer grass the locomotive's wheels come to a halt
---	---

pisutoru ga puuru no kataki mo ni hibiki	a shot of the pistol echoes over the hard surface of the pool
--	---

and examples of the latter are:

*Hashi Kanseki's*

kaidan ga nakute namako no higure kana	
--	--

no stairs ...  
a sea-slug  
in the dusk

*Nagata Kooi's*

shounen ya  
rokujuunen go no  
haru no gotoshi

a young boy ...  
like spring  
sixty years from now

It might be difficult for a non-Japanese to understand them because the kireji does not exist in other languages. Thus, forcing the fixed-form of Japanese haiku and accompanying techniques on other languages is nonsense.

Next is the issue of kigo (season words). As mentioned earlier, Japanese haiku is "gift from nature" and in Japan seasons and nature are closely related. Hence, kigo is indivisibly linked to haiku. While it is extremely important to describe nature by perceiving the relationship between nature and human beings based on the haiku insight, it doesn't necessarily have to be in the form of kigo. In other words, when we discuss haiku from a global perspective, the contents of haiku will have closer relation with each country's local characteristics.

Therefore, when haiku spreads to the rest of the world, it is important to treat it as a short-formed poem and to take methods suitable to each language. For a poem to be recognized worldwide as haiku, it must be short-formed and have an essential spirit of haiku.

We believe in the possibility of the birth of new techniques such as fixed-form and the kireji that are characteristics of a particular language and that are appropriate for expressing the spirit of haiku. For example, the French sonnet began as a long poem, but when Tachihara Michizo introduced it to Japan, he shortened it and succeeded in producing a Japanese-style sonnet. Western poets can do the same thing with haiku. Today, it is common in the West to write haiku as a three-line poem. It creates a different space from the Japanese haiku that is written in one vertical line, which visually allows for instantaneous unconscious perception. But what is wrong with changing the number of lines if the writing style is appropriate to that particular language? In other words "teikei" means to find out "the inner order of the language" and for the poetry, that could be universal.

The fact that haiku is, in essence, symbolic poetry that has stopped being long-winded and talkative is recognized worldwide. Kigo is an accumulation of a long tradition of poetic sensibility that has continued to grow since the birth of waka. Globally speaking, it is a "keyword that possesses a symbolic meaning unique to that particular culture." Surely all cultures are certain to possess symbolic keywords that are unique to them, and which have been nurtured throughout their history. In this context, haiku can be described as being a universal poem whose essential part is expressed by "symbolism." We can also point out that the recent trend of modern Japanese haiku that attempts to refine itself as a symbolic poem, are in line with this global direction.

In the case of Japan, Renju, as already explained, had contributed much to the acceptability of "commonly shared words" such as kigo. This points toward the possibility of using non-kigo in the same way as kigo, if those non-kigo are words that are commonly shared by that community. Even when a non-Japanese poet writes a haiku in a non-Japanese language, and even when he does so as an individual poet in isolation, he will not be able to ignore the usefulness of the "commonly shared words" which, because of their symbiotic function, have much to convey.

## **5. The "Shadows" and "Echoes" in the Works of the Leading Poets of the World**

In the 21st century, Eastern silence may be regarded more important. Claudel brought the French language closest to silence in his poem

the sound of water  
on water  
the shadow of a leaf  
on the leaf

while Ozaki Hosai expressed the loneliness of man in the very short haiku

seki o shite mo  
hitori

even if I cough,  
I am alone

Edgar Allen Poe stated that "long poems are contradictions in terms." When the poem is short, the reader must be able to understand the silence.

From a universal standpoint, haiku is a symbolic poem, but the meanings of the symbols are completely different in each cultural context. For example, Yosa Buson symbolized sorrow in a wild rose by saying,

urei tsutsu  
oka ni noboreba  
hanaibara

lamenting  
going up to the hill ?  
wild roses

hanaibara  
kokyo no michi ni  
nitaru kana

wild roses  
the path is like  
my home town's

michi taete  
ka ni semari saku  
ibara kana

the path ends  
the fragrance draws near  
wild roses

But in "Wild Rose," Goethe simply poeticized a maiden. In the West, "lilac" symbolized resistance, but in Japan this flower did not symbolize any such idea. The clear image presented in Basho's haiku,

kare-eda ni  
karasu no tomari keri  
aki no kure

on a bare branch  
a crow perches  
in the autumn twilight

This haiku is praised in the West for exemplifying the preconceived concept of the Japanese esthetic.

araumi ya  
sado ni yokotau  
ama no gawa

rough sea  
the Milky Way is crossing over  
to Sado

This haiku, on the other hand, is very difficult to understand unless one knows the history of Sado Island. However, communication between different cultures through haiku symbols between different cultures have already started. In haiku, an object is concretely expressed as a symbol. The symbol is suggestive enough to allow non-Japanese poets to understand, and use it in their own poem.

In Basho's poems we find surrealistic works such as

kumo no mine  
ikutsu kuzure te  
tsuki no yama

So many cumulus clouds  
crumbling into  
a moon-crowned mountain.

shizukasa ya  
iwa ni shimiiru  
semi no koe

stillness  
cicadas' cry penetrating  
the rocks

ishiyama no  
ishiyori shiroshi  
aki no kaze

the rocks are whiter  
than the stones of the Ishiyama Temple...  
autumn wind

umi kurete  
kamo no koe  
honoka ni shiroshi

sea at dusk  
the sound of wild ducks  
slightly white

We have modern works by Nomura Toshiro such as:

shimo hakishi  
houki shibaraku shite  
taoru

a while  
after sweeping the frost  
the broom fell

Basho's "kumo no mine ikutsu kuzure te tsuki no yama" offers a typical example of sophisticated symbols. The cumulus cloud is life, man and light, while the moon-crowned mountain symbolizes death, woman and shadow. The haiku describes "cumulus clouds" on a summer day crumbling as time goes by. That scene changes to that of the moon-crowned mountain in the autumn evening. This is a highly symbolic haiku. Toshiro's work, on the other hand, is simply about a broom that falls. But after the broom swept the limpid frost, it falls in a stopping motion and a mystic tranquility arises from this everyday scene. These excellent haiku are both on the border between abstract and concrete expressions. This creates a mystical quality. Good haiku presents life bursting with energy,

while transcending life and death. Imoto Noichi advocated the irony of haiku, but Shiki boldly went beyond irony on to nonsense or Dadaism in his haiku

keito no  
juushi-go hon mo  
arinu beshi

cockscombs  
must be fourteen  
or fifteen there

Surrealism was heralded at the start of the century in France, but could it be that the Japanese have long had a natural proclivity for surrealism?

## **6. Trends Toward Internationalization, Universalization and Localization of Haiku**

The conclusion of the Second World War brought a breath of fresh air into Japanese literature. We still vividly recall the revitalization of haiku in reaction to Kuwabara Takeo's "Discourse on Haiku as a Secondary Art." The discourse viewed haiku as not being based on the idea of modern individualism. But, in fact, this is the very strength of haiku. Since Shiki, has modern individualism taken hold in haiku? If we look at the haiku tradition of group composition, it would be difficult to say "yes." It is still a matter for debate. We would like to define haiku as an ultra-modern poem that has the best of both, which will rise above the tragedy of the modern times. As mentioned earlier, in haiku we find the special quality of rising above the self-awareness of the Western-type modern individualism and reaching a realm where we connect ourselves with nature. This special quality gives us the possibility of opening to the world through haiku. In this sense, haiku has a sheer objective character. If nature were destroyed, haiku would take note of the destruction in a dispassionate manner or direct this reality towards its inner self and the virtual world where we can frolic in the mountains and streams on a sunny day. In either case, haiku and nature are one and the same. Perhaps haiku, nature and people all share the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Therefore, when we talk about the destruction of the natural environment, we should not regard ourselves as protecting nature, but cultivate the awareness of being a part of nature. Since this is the basic characteristic of haiku, it will have an important role in environmental issues.

In any case, with the rapid destruction of the natural environment these days, the act of composing haiku gives a perfect opportunity to reconsider the relationship between people and nature. We look to the various poetries of the world to give us the power to heal people's anguish, to recover harmony and return to a symbiotic relationship with nature.

We think this short, universal poetic form called haiku should be spread even wider throughout the world. Haiku has undervalued its own strength in the past. As we have argued so far, haiku is qualified to revive the various poetries of the world (including Japanese tanka and contemporary Western-style poetry) in the 21st century.

*The key to Japanese haiku reform is in the universalization of haiku.*

We look forward to seeing movements and new poetic activities that will place haiku and its conceptual framework at the forefront of avant garde poetry of the world. In this sense, haiku has a progressive presence. We look forward to the time when haiku will take off to an unknown destination somewhere in the world where it will be a forerunner of fresh, innovative poetry.

## **7. Let's Give Poetry Back to the People...A World Poetry Revolution in the 21st Century**

It has been about 100 years since the death of Shiki, who ignited the haiku reform movement. Precedents for the declaration which we propose here are Shimazaki Toson's preface to his poetry collection of about 100 years ago in which Toson stated that "The age of new poetry has finally come" and the Surrealism Manifesto of Andres Bultou that appeared about 75 years ago. But it has been a long time since we have witnessed the birth of this kind of new poetic manifesto. In the world of Japanese haiku also, there has recently been a demand for reform and for an end to a

prolonged state of stagnancy.

In this declaration, we have concentrated on the essential universality of haiku that has been present since the days of Shiki's reform. By taking into account the circumstances in which haiku spread to the world in the past, we have made projections about its future possibilities globally. In regard to the fixed-form and season words that have been considered the essence of haiku in the Japanese language, we think that, in the context of the universalization of haiku, poets all over the world should work at finding the inner order of language and the application of keywords that possess symbolic meanings unique to their particular culture. We wish to openly welcome those poems from all over the world that possess the haiku spirit. By making use of a traditional fixed form of poetry, the Japanese have succeeded in applying a grammar unique to the Japanese language, such as kireji, and condensing the poem to 17 syllables. We feel that in all languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Spanish, we can find ways to condense diction for the purpose of poetic expression. We also believe that an understanding of the value of silence will greatly contribute to the broadening of poetic space in each language. We hope that the poets of the world will share the achievements of the Japanese haiku masters with us and that they will take part in this poetic movement to resolutely pursue ways to condense their own language.

The 21st century is just around the corner. The haiku world of Japan is filled with countless haiku groups, poets and societies. Haiku continues to live on by simply reproducing the haiku we Japanese have inherited from our ancestors.

On the other hand, modern poetry has endured various trials and tribulations and is sometimes on the brink of stagnation in various parts of the world. Some devoted poets of the world have yearned for haiku, this short poem that is at the forefront of world poetry and offers the highest level of completeness. Haiku provides a means for these poets to break free of this situation. The only way we can return haiku or poetry to the common people is by responding to the wishes of these poets.

We wish to rise above the current situation of the Japanese haiku world where haiku is at once in prosperity and in stagnation at the end of the century. With all earnestness, we watch the growing global awareness of haiku. We announce the Matsuyama Declaration to poets all over the world from this extraordinary site, Matsuyama, where Shiki ignited the haiku reform a century ago by describing it as the "Poetry by the Defeated." Our purpose is to once again pave the way for new possibilities in poetry.

Haiku welcomes the world as it faces outward towards the world.

The Matsuyama Declaration of 12 September, 1999 is a statement made by the following people:

Arima Akito, Minister of Education of Japan  
Haga Toru, President of Kyoto University of Art and Design,  
Ueda Makoto, Professor Emeritus of Stanford University  
Soh Sakon, Poet  
Kaneko Tohta, President of the Modern Haiku Society  
Jean Jacques Origas, French Oriental Language Research Institute

Explanatory Note:

The original document, written in Japanese, reflects the erudition and depth of thought of the men listed above. As with translating haiku, it has proved to be a very difficult task to perfectly render its profound contents into English. However, in an effort to present it to the international community, we have prepared this provisional translation.

Nishimura Gania

Tanaka Kimiyo

Ruth Vergin

Matsuyama Declaration (Proposal)

We hereby make the following proposals based on the Matsuyama Declaration.

Establishment of the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Research Center

In Matsuyama, the original site of the haiku reform movement, we shall establish an International



Haiku Research Center in order to facilitate research, writing, training, publication, awarding prizes and disseminating information, etc. to contribute to the development of haiku as poetry of the world. Following is a list of specific activities:

1. Studying the poetry and poets of the world that possess the haiku spirit.
2. Collecting and sorting out references related to haiku in its role as a poetry of the world.
3. Composing haiku as world poetry
4. Holding debates, lectures and symposiums on haiku of the world
5. Designating poets of the world who possess the haiku spirit as senior fellows
6. Inviting poets from all over the world as exchange students and junior fellows
7. Giving scholarships to poets around the world who possess the haiku spirit
8. Presenting International Haiku Awards to poets of the world
9. Holding an International Haiku Festival (Biennial) in Matsuyama or some other city in the world
10. Publishing papers, haiku collections, regular reports, and publications on other subjects
11. Transmitting information and raising awareness about haiku Establishment of the International Haiku Award 'Masaoka Shiki Prize' To promote the haiku spirit in world poetry, an International Haiku Award will be set up at the International Haiku Research Center, for poets worldwide.

The specific agenda is as follows.

1. Judging poems from various regions of the world and in various languages once a year.
2. Presenting awards at the International Haiku Festival
3. Nobel Prize class poets will be sought, therefore there will be no winners some years.
4. Establishment of "contemporary" and "posthumous" categories
5. Award money as secondary prizes