

日本文化研究の文脈における社会生態学的問題を探求するための 俳句の使用

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Using *Haiku* to Explore Socio-ecological Concerns in a Japanese Cultural Studies Context

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要 旨

俳句は、気候変動や生物多様性の減少などの問題について考えたり話したりすることを人々に奨励するのに特に適した日本文化の一部です。これは、自然についての観察や考えが俳句の核となる要素であることが多いからです。さらに、現代の俳句の言語、内容、テーマは、人為的な気候変動によって変化しています。したがって、俳句について学ぶことは、日本文化研究と人間生態についての批判的思考との間の教育的な架け橋として役立つ可能性があります。この論文では、歴史的および現代的な俳句で自然のテーマがどのように使用されているか、また日本文化研究の教室でヒューマンエコロジー（人間生態）の問題を探求するために俳句をどのように使用できるかについて説明します。

Few, if any, subjects can be entirely set apart from contemporary socio-ecological crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, or air, soil, and water pollution. Not only can these issues be examined from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives, but the pressing nature of these crises means that active integration of them into a variety of disciplinary studies is of great societal value. Actually incorporating socio-ecological matters into various subjects, however, is not always straightforward. In light of this, this paper explores how the study of *haiku*, both traditional and modern, contains openings to

explore socio-ecological questions within a Japanese Cultural Studies context and can function as a bridge between culture study and thinking about socio-ecological matters.

As will be explored further below, traditional *haiku* frequently express an ecological consciousness that encourages deep connections, or re-connections, with what many people call 'nature' (a sort of umbrella concept referring to aspects of the world that, within ideological formations of human exceptionalism, are set apart from or set below the 'human' aspects). The language of modern *haiku* demonstrates responsiveness to

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environmental changes and climatic shifts. Through highlighting the socio-ecological elements found in both traditional and modern *haiku*, one avenue of pedagogical bridge-building between Japanese Cultural Studies education and exploration of socio-ecological thought may be illuminated.

Specifically, the layout of this paper is as follows. First, some of the difficulties of pedagogically addressing socio-ecological themes in a Japanese Cultural Studies context will be noted. Second, content matter in traditional *haiku* which illustrate the poetry form's socio-ecological links will be discussed. Third, ways that *haiku* are changing due to climatic and environmental disruptions will be highlighted. Finally, there will be a direct discussion of the potential and implications of utilizing *haiku* as a vehicle for bringing socio-ecological elements into a Japanese Cultural Studies classroom context with reference to the present author's actual teaching practices.

If Japanese Cultural Studies is broadly construed, many topics that may be subsumed under a Japanese Cultural Studies banner are already clearly connected to socio-ecological concerns. A non-exhaustive list includes historical study of ecology-linked social movements, such as study of environmental (in)justice cases in Japan (Avenell, 2017), study of the role of *satoyama* in Japanese culture (Knight, 2010), or the study of ecological discourses in prominent popular media (e.g., in animated films such as many of those produced by Studio Ghibli (Lim, 2013)). Other topics, however, are not so clearly linked. At first glance, how would, say, *kimono*

or the Japanese Tea Ceremony be a site of socio-ecological interrogation?

This underscores one of the main problems with trying to incorporate socio-ecological elements into many subjects, including many Japanese Cultural Studies topics : it can feel forced. There certainly are socio-ecological aspects of *kimono* and tea ceremonies, but because they are not typically foregrounded, delving into them may feel like a distraction from what seem like more relatively core aspects of *kimono* study. This is an especially relevant concern in comparatively foundational levels of study.

Aside from the sense that it could feel like a distraction, or like a minor or tangential point, another issue that plagues instructors who might incorporate socio-ecological dimensions into their subjects is that they may feel that they lack the knowledge or expertise to raise socio-ecological matters. Would it not, after all, require a high-degree of confidence in one's scientific literacy? As we shall see, however, there are ways to mitigate this. Primarily, mitigation can be achieved by leaning into the inherent and emergent socio-ecological elements of the subject matter. Given that all cultural activity takes place within a system of ecological relations, there is inevitably a nexus, or many, where socio-ecological matters may emerge that are already in the subject matter. There is little need to find forced connections or delve into scientific discourses that one may be ill-prepared for. *Haiku* are a cultural production particularly apt for demonstrating this.

Haiku production has traditionally involved close attention paid to the so-called ‘natural’ world around the poet. One of the clearest ways that *haiku* have been traditionally linked to nature is simply that the content of *haiku* often involves the things we think of as nature – sometimes in interaction with humans, sometimes not. Showing respect, even reverence, for nonhuman life and nonhuman processes in *haiku* is not only well-established in the history of the form, it may be one of its most defining features.

For example, Stibbe (2007) explains that one way *haiku* poets of the past have shown respect for nature is by using *haiku* to express the idea that people should not disturb other kinds of life unnecessarily. He shows this idea in action in a *haiku* by the Edo-period poet Chiyo :

朝顔に
つるべとられて
もらい水

Morning glory!
the well-bucket entangled,
I ask for water

Stibbe helps us to interpret these lines :

Having left her house one autumn morning to draw water, Chiyo arrived at her well to find a morning-glory, a common flower, wrapped around the well bucket. Showing a deep respect and appreciation she refrained from disturbing it, borrowing water from a

neighbour's well instead. (Stibbe, 2007, p.8)

Chiyo is recognized as one of the poetry form's greatest exponents (Donegan & Ishibashi, 1998). In this *haiku*, Chiyo recognized the life and agency of the morning glory flower that she met. Although Chiyo wanted to use the bucket to fetch water, simultaneously she did not want to disturb, and in doing so potentially hurt or kill, the plant. So, she found another way to get water. This kind of attitude seems rare today. Surely many people would simply brush aside, tear, or uproot the plant that is ‘in the way’. At a deeper level, these days many people seem to believe that so-called nature only matters if it can be instrumentalized, but Chiyo's *haiku* shows that it is possible to see nature as having intrinsic value that is not connected to whether humans can use it or not, or at least that the choice of treating nature as if it has intrinsic value is within one's power. Stibbe (2007) suggests that *haiku* of the past can help people today to think about the ways that we relate to nature and to nonhuman life in ways that are respectful of nonhuman life and natural processes.

The pedagogical implications of this are ripe. Virtually any analysis of Chiyo's poem cannot help but take note of the socio-ecological element at play. Even a basic, superficial discussion of the poem would be likely to contain some talk of the ecological values demonstrated by Chiyo, probably by way of comparison to ecological values shown and stated by people today. There is no need to force the subject toward questions of socio-

ecology – such questions are inextricable from the content.

Modern *haiku*, too, frequently reverberate with socio-ecological themes. One theme in particular is especially frequent : the specter of anthropogenic climate change. Climate change affects the physical world around us, of course, but it also affects the cultural worlds we live in. That climate change could influence changes in culture and art makes sense because many cultural practices are closely linked to nature, weather, and ecosystems. And indeed, there are recent changes in the language of *haiku* that are connected to climate change.

Haiku authors often deploy *kigo*, or seasonal expressions. In an interview, the present-day *haiku* poet Natsui Itsuki explains that *kigo* in historical *haiku* can teach us about natural history; through seasonal expressions, *haiku* authors are actually providing later readers with records about the climate and weather, the patterns of the seasons, and other natural history information (Tada, 2020). Just as we may use *haiku* of the past to learn about natural history in addition to appreciating the beauty of this particular cultural product, people of the future may be able to use today's *haiku* to learn about our environment, our changing climate and weather patterns, and, especially, our cultural reactions to those changes. Although some people might think of *haiku* as 'merely' a traditional poetry form from the past, modern *haiku* can still be important cultural works that record how our world, physically and culturally, is changing due to global warming.

For instance, in her interview Natsui points out that some traditional *kigo* are no longer able to be used because the seasonal weather patterns have changed so much already due to climate change. Much like the risks of endangerment and extinction of various species being exacerbated by certain kinds of human activity, many forms of cultural expression are also at risk. This has led to the production of reference materials such as The Dictionary of Nearly Extinct Kigo (絶滅寸前季語辞典). But new *kigo* are being coined, too. Cultural and artistic expressions are changing to reflect the effects of climate change. Natsui argues that one reason that *kigo* are important is because they can enhance our experiences and cultural interpretations of seasons and nature.

McMurray (2015) analyzed present-day *haiku* in order to understand how the words and composition of *haiku* are changing with the physical changes wrought by global warming. In addition to changes in formal elements such as *kigo*, certain thematic content related to climate change are found in modern *haiku*. He notes that even the daily morning routines of some *haiku* poets, the routines that inform that which they will later write, show evidence of preoccupation with climate and other socio-ecological matters :

[T] heir morning routines include checking not only the weather forecasts but also information about radiological dosage in the air, the diffusion of PM 2.5, yellow dust and cedar pollen. (McMurray, 2015, p.29)

One modern *haiku* that McMurray points to, about being stuck in Tokyo during a snowstorm during what is usually considered the mild spring season, shows some of the ways that *haiku* are changing thematically to represent climate concerns :

Trapped on
35th parallel
spring snow

Another *haiku* that McMurray notes, about the spring season not really arriving in Nagoya one year because the weather went from cold to hot in less than one week, also captures the way modern *haiku* are changing due to global warming and climate change :

Spring in the mind
if not actually
in the air

In these *haiku* we can see the preoccupation the poets have with the changes in the weather patterns caused by global warming – in the first *haiku* there is a specific instance of the climate-changed weather, the ironic “spring snow”, causing a problem, while in the second *haiku* there is a sense of melancholy or sadness, perhaps even worry or fear, about the seasonal disruption. Both poems illustrate some of the ways that climate change is affecting traditional poetic forms. McMurray (2015) concludes that although the traditional format of *haiku* remains the same as ever, the content and language are clearly changing to reflect the

ecological issues of the times we reside in.

Once again, these *haiku* lend themselves to the incorporation of socio-ecological themes in a Japanese Cultural Studies context. It is hard to see how any serious examination of *haiku*, historical or modern, could truly avoid asking and grappling to some degree with matters of human ecology. Of course, this would not mean that a scientific discourse would need to become predominant. The matter can be discussed in the classroom within the parameters of even a fairly prosaic notion of cultural studies : Simply talking about the *haiku* will generate talk about socio-ecological concerns. There is no need to torture such concerns out of the material because these concerns are integral to the material. The pedagogical focus can remain entirely on the study of *haiku* – it just so happens that the study of *haiku* is entangled with these concerns about worldviews, ideologies, and values.

Haiku are not the only topic under the heading Japan Cultural Studies that could operate as a vehicle for bringing socio-ecological thought into the discursive mix in a classroom – but *haiku* may be a particularly apt exemplar. *Haiku* fit neatly into an approach I have advocated, that one does not have to foreground ‘the environment’ or commit to modular ‘environmental topics’ in one’s teaching, but that virtually any topic is linkable to socio-ecological matters and that socio-ecological matters should not be walled off or isolated as a niche topic (Brown, 2021).

I have recently taught a seminar for 4th year university students in which the subject

was, broadly, Japanese Culture. Actually, I inherited this seminar. The students had been working on their topics for a year already, during their 3rd year, before I came into the picture. As such, a significant portion of my responsibilities was to help them finish and write up their research. Among the things I did, I provided them with models of a presentation and seminar research paper. The topic I chose for these models? Climate change and *haiku*.

Of course, as we looked at and talked about these models, we talked extensively about how the material was organized, ways to clearly and concisely explain research that might not be clear to someone who has not themselves been working on it for a year, what makes a good presentation, hows and whys of citational practices, and so on. Thus, these discussions were organized around assisting the students with their own work. But, also, the content we looked at that informed these discussions had clear socio-ecological elements. Only, these elements were not ‘forced’ into the discussion, they were simply there, unavoidable. Talking about climate change in the context of *haiku* is no distraction. Without any sense of ‘ok, let’s talk about the environment today’, we talked about values and questions regarding human ecology. And this occurred in a manner that was simultaneously helping students to prepare to present and write up their own work on a variety of topics related to Japanese culture.

The entirety of human activity is embedded in ecological systems, or described slightly differently, within sets of ecological

relationships. Several convergent ecological crises are threatening, and, normatively, no field of research or study is exempt from considering what must be done. Indeed, much needs to be done, at every level. In cultural studies, there are certain topics, such as *haiku* within a Japanese Cultural Studies context, whose links between culture study and socio-ecological matters are relatively clear. Topics like this can be a pedagogical bridge. There need not be a privileging of the discussion of socio-ecological concerns over other aspects of the subject, but rather the socio-ecological dimensions appear as natural extensions of any discussion of the subject. In this way, socio-ecological matters do not need to be forced or be distractions; they can be incorporated into the pedagogy as essential elements of any analysis and discussion because they are embedded in the subject.

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