

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Summary

For more than fifty years, Japanese people who came to live in Thailand have written haiku which reflect their particular Japanese impressions and perceptions of the country.

The two main purposes of this thesis are; firstly; to analyze the major subjects of haiku written by various Japanese people living in Thailand and to explain how these haiku reflect pictures of Thailand.; and secondly, to show how the above Japanese people have adapted the haiku system of "season words" to suit the nature, climate, culture and conditions of Thailand.

The sources of these haiku written in Thailand mainly come from primary materials in Japanese language, records of notebooks, the limited publication of the five volumes of haiku collections, and the publications of the Japanese Association.

The historical development of haiku and the backgrounds of Japanese poets are factors which have influenced attitudes to the haiku written in this country.

Subjects that Japanese haiku poets in Thailand deal with in their haiku cover a broad range of fields, including; Thai people, animals, plants, seasons, natural phenomena, historical, social, cultural and environmental aspects. The haiku contain interesting references to time and place and through them we can gain some insight into the context and conditions of life in Thailand during the period covered in this research.

People are mentioned in many haiku throughout this thesis, but specifically in Chapter 4. Thai people, including vendors, purchasers, aged people, children, people in rural areas, and people of Chinese descent are described and usually related to setting or activity.

Tropical animals unfamiliar to Japanese people, such as geckos, along with common animals like cats, dogs, and typical Thai animals like crocodiles, snakes and elephants, became subjects for the Japanese poets. Also the familiar sounds of crickets, cicadas, toads became major subjects of haiku, written in Thailand.

Thai plants are, for haiku poets, reflections of Thailand's climate and nature. The blooming of beautiful colorful flowers, golden shower trees and flame trees typically indicate seasons. As well, the bougainvillea and ixora flowers are familiar sights which captured the attention of the Japanese poets. Also the abundant tropical fruits, including mangoes, pineapples, durians and mangosteens, are favourite subjects.

The hot, rainy and cool seasons have been carefully observed and feature in the haiku written by the Japanese poets. Roaring squalls, winds, lightning and flooding are aspects of natural phenomenon which are repeatedly described.

The observations by Japanese poets also refer to Thailand's water-related life and general environment. The rains, rice-planting, burning of paddy fields, traffic snarls, and other daily Thai landscapes are pictured in the haiku in this thesis.

Objects used in daily life (in the past and present), such as jars and mortars, mosquito nets, hammocks, fishing nets, fans, rubber sandals, impressed some Japanese and give a reflection of time and place.

Food vending, Thai food and eating in outdoor surroundings also seemed to be stimulating scenes for haiku poets in Thailand.

Disease and death remind people of the destinies of human beings. Japanese poets experienced these life events in Thailand and depicted them in their haiku as reflections of Thai nature, customs and culture.

The significant wars in Asia; the Second World War and the Vietnam War, as well as Thailand's historical uprisings and political tension have been seen through the eyes of the Japanese poets living in Thailand during these turbulent times.

Thai culture is underlying in all of the above haiku while specific other haiku indicate the respect given by Thai people to the royal family, religion and local Thai beliefs, the participation in festivals and ceremonies, giving particular pictures of Thailand's culture, customs and traditions

Why were these subjects frequently described in haiku written in Thailand? Perhaps these topics were easily understood through observation, especially when the newcomer to Thailand may be incapable of fully understanding local Thai language.

Among haiku written about Thai people, the haiku poets very often described vendors. This may be due to the fact that contact and interaction with vendors is a common everyday occurrence. As well, vendors are apparently part of the outdoor

natural environment, adding to the picturesque visual landscapes, and therefore became a focus of the setting for haiku poets. A haiku requires a “season word” and as vendors often operate their businesses in the outdoors, they can be correlated to “season words” through their locations, wares, such as seasonal fruits, climate and other natural phenomena.

Haiku written in Japan are able to employ the full range of season words, whereas these season words may not be appropriate for use in Thailand, considering the country’s tropical climate and three seasons instead of the four seasons in Japan. For this reason, the Japanese poets adapted and invented new, more appropriate season words (*kigo*) in Thailand according to Thai climate, local events and facts, to reflect Thai culture, conditions, environment and context.

7.2 Discussion on Cross-Cultural Perceptions Inferred from This Study

Thailand and Japan share some things in common; such as both countries have kings or emperors, follow Buddhism, and each has been characterized as a rice-planting society for a long time. These aspects of commonality between the two countries are in some ways relevant and in other ways not. The reason for this is that the history and the background of the two cultures are fundamentally different and derive from different traditions. This difference is what Japanese people gradually came to know through living in Thailand, despite the superficial similarities between the two countries.

Through the process of writing haiku, Japanese haiku poets tried to find proper “season words” to refer to Thailand. As Japanese poets became familiar with Thailand, they adapted what they learned in Thailand as season words. “Season words” are expressions used to indicate various phenomena; seasonal changes, nature, humans, animals, plants, as well as astronomical conditions. Even if the words expressed in Thailand and in Japan are the same, the meanings implied sometimes can be interpreted quite differently. Therefore, “season words” in Thailand become meaningful when Japanese haiku poets really understand Thailand and Thai people.

Included in such “season words” is vocabulary that reflects the cross-cultural perceptions of Japanese people. Such cross-cultural perceptions are seen through

Buddhist aspects, festivals, plants and seasons, and other events and phenomena. Such examples are discussed according to the topics of season words.

December 5 is known as the present King's birthday and is also celebrated as Father's Day in Thailand. Similarly, August 12 is the Queen's birthday and it is celebrated as Mother's Day. Both days are national holidays in the Kingdom. There are many reasons why H.M. the King has come to be so adored and respected by the Thai people. One reason relates to the historical tradition of considering the King as the father of the people, who rules the kingdom with the kingly virtues accorded by Buddhism. The King's birthday, celebrated with impressive illuminated lights in Bangkok, as well as in the provinces, was adopted as the "season word" to represent the Kingdom of Thailand.

Buddhism has influenced both Thailand and Japan throughout their history. Despite the differences between the Thai Buddhism, which is from the Theravada branch of Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism, which is from the Mahayana branch, the teachings of Buddha are basically very similar

Buddhism in Thailand is clearly observed and is part of the people's daily life; food offerings, entering the monkhood, and the celebration of many Buddhist events and holidays are common in Thai society. In the past, many Japanese people who came to Thailand felt that Thailand had retained something which used to be a part of Japan, but which has almost been lost. Such were the memories of the people whose society was also based on the beliefs of Buddhism and animism, as well as agricultural life. In such societies, people help each other, largely depend on natural phenomena and try to live in harmony with nature. The generosity of people in Thailand seemed to the Japanese haiku poets to originate from this background.

There are various attitudes toward Buddhism in Thailand that differ from the Japanese way: strict adherence to the religious precepts, the wearing of saffron-colored robes by monks, customs, events, systems, and other aspects. The role of Buddhism in Thai society is reflected in the national holidays in Thailand which have been adapted into season words by Japanese poets. In Thailand, many national holidays are related to important days in Buddhism, such as *Makha Bucha Day*, *Visakha Bucha Day*, and *Khao Pansa*. Many ceremonies and customs are also related to Buddhism: such as entering the monkhood by men, *Thot Kathin*, and other merit-making deeds, such as making

food-offerings to monks in the early morning. Such activities are also used as season words or scenes in haiku.

Many Buddhist-themed vocabulary have been adapted as “season words”, using full or partial translations from Japanese. One example is “*pansa*” (Buddhist Lent), which is called “*ango*” in Japanese, and is seldom used today in Japan. Japanese poets in Thailand often used the word, “*ango*” (Buddhist Lent) in the earlier stage of haiku. By living in Thailand, haiku poets came across the living word, “*pansa*”, “*khao pansa*”, and “*ohk pansa*” (end of Buddhist Lent) in Thailand and became familiar with these season words in their haiku.

Other familiar examples of “season words” come from proper translations by the earlier-period poets into the Japanese language is the word “*Bucha*” which originated in India. As haiku has a limitation of a short 5-7-5-syllable form, words with too many syllables are difficult to be adapted to haiku. Fortunately the word, “*Bucha*” was translated as “*e*”, which means “meetings”, including festive meetings in the Japanese language. Thus, “*Wisaka-e*”, “*Makhabucha-e*” and others can be turned into short syllable season words with 4 to 5 syllables. “*Makha Bucha*” can also be translated as “*Banbutsu-e*”, which means “A Thousand Buddhas (Buddhist monks) Gathering”.

These events tell the life story of Buddha that is taught in Thailand. Through “season words” of Buddhist events, Japanese people noticed that the life stories of Buddha had different aspects. In Japan, April 8 is known as the birthday of Buddha, formerly Prince *Siddhartha*. It is not a national holiday, however people pour some water (sweet tea water) on the image of a little *Siddhartha*. On the other hand, in Thailand, *Visakha Bucha* day is an important national holiday as the day commemorating Buddha’s birth, attainment of enlightenment, and death.

The ceremonies for entering the monkhood, and *Thot Kathin* (bringing robes and gifts to monks) are observed among Thai people as part of their daily life. Some Japanese living in Thailand had the chance to join such ceremonies in Thailand. In Japan, people in general have no chance to participate in the ceremonies of entering monkhood. A white-robed monk-to-be is called, *nak* which means *naga*, a devout serpent in a Buddhist story. Through this story, Japanese people also know that Indian concept of *naga* which has been adapted to Buddhism (in Hinduism, it is known as the god of water, which seemingly comes from the image of the cobra with odd heads).

Before Buddhist Lent, many Thai men enter the monkhood. So, Japanese poets have made the phenomenon of entering into the monkhood a season word indicating the time before the rainy season in Thailand.

Many festivals are subjects of "season words". Such festivals often reflect the multi-cultural nature of Thai culture, which includes both Chinese and Indian influences. People of Chinese descent celebrate Chinese New Year, which is vividly described in haiku written by Japanese poets, especially those married to Chinese descent Thais. The Lion Dance, New Years gift and Chinese New Year were used as season words, resulting from Japanese people having be familiar with these concepts of events. A moon cake is also a well-known season word in Japan. Such "season words" convey the nostalgia of the poets for Japanese customs of the past.

The Royal Barge Procession is a rare occasion. The King and members of the royal family, followed by many oarsmen, preside over the *Kathin* ceremony. The decorative royal boat, called *Suphanahongse*, is the big wooden carved boat that has a *Hongse*, the vehicle of the Hindu God Brahma, at the stern. Another Royal Barge is decorated with a Garuda, which is the symbol of the Thai royal family and is also the vehicle of the God Vishnu. Manifestations of Hindu cosmology are found in Thai culture, and remind us of the similar adaptation of Hindu gods or deities in Japanese Buddhism, as protectors of Buddhism. Today, almost all images, deities and Gods, called '-ten' or 'myōō' in Japanese, are figures of Hindu origin adapted in Japanese culture.

Japanese poets, who were accustomed to Japanese-style kites that are seen during the New Year holidays, observed Thai-style kites with curiosity. Kite-flying in Thailand can be seen during the season when the southerly winds blow and colorful kites, such as snake-kites and long tailed kites are sold. There were many haiku written about kites when there were spacious, vacant spaces left in Bangkok. The Thai fighting kites were new to Japanese people and these kites show Japanese people how Thais really enjoy games using kites, as well as cock-fighting, horse races and Thai boxing. The old generation that flew kites often in their childhood in Japan was also interested in kite fighting. Thai kite-flying is a "season word" used in haiku that relates that the comfortable seasonal winds have come, together with the coming hotter season.

Many flowers and fruit in Thailand have been adapted as “season words” to indicate Thai seasons. In the past, careful observers such as Gogyū and other haiku poets described mango flowers in January, green mangoes in February and March and various kinds of ripened mangoes in April, with other fruits that are only available when they are in season. Haiku poets utilized the corresponding seasons of the delicious fruit as “season words” in Thailand. Even though today people are able to buy fruit in all season, such as durian in December and ripe mango in January (albeit at high prices), these traditional “season words” still persist.

In the same way, the season when most flowers bloom is referred to as the season for plants. In this way, bougainvillea flowers are considered flowers of February. Flame trees and golden-shower flowers announce exactly the arrival of the hot season. The blooming of these flowers corresponds to “spring” in Japan. Since the Second World War time, many haiku poets in Thailand called two or three kinds of thin, pink flowers *sakura*, or cherry-blossom. Since this season corresponds to the cherry-blossom season in Japan, which is in April, these poets coined the word “Thai *zakura*” (cherry blossoms in Thailand). Such nostalgia has made Thai cherry blossoms as the season word referring to the beautiful pink flowers that appear in the big trees of Thailand in the hot season.

As Tsutsui Hajime observed in his haiku, quoted in Chapter 3, “Thai *zakura*” has a Thai character of not scattering soon, and continuing to bloom a little longer than *sakura* (although the reality is not confirmed), while Japanese *sakura* scatter in a short period of time. This haiku implies the apparent characters of Thai and Japanese people through flowers. In general, it was said that Japanese people tend to do things in a hurry, while Thai people tend not to hurry. This is due somewhat to the differing cold and the hot climates. The poet appreciates the generosity of the Thai people who are not given to hastiness, and at the same time, as a Japanese person working in Thailand, he recognizes how Japanese people are influenced by “*sakura*” culture.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

It is possible to interpret what Japanese haiku poets in Thailand described from historical, social and geographical perspectives. Thailand has experienced enormous

changes over the fifty years covered in this research, and especially rapid changes have been observed in the last 20 to 30 years. Social condition and historical changes influence the daily life of people in Thai society, including foreign visitors and residents. The wars, particularly the Second World War, formed the backgrounds of some of the long-term Japanese residents who established the "Menam Kukai" haiku club.

Why do many Japanese people write haiku? It seems that the more frequent practice of haiku in modern times is to enable ordinary people to express observations and feelings freely, regardless of age, sex, status or individual conditions.

For Japanese people living in a foreign land, the writing of haiku provides an opportunity to connect with home and mother tongue. To deal with the feeling of loneliness, perhaps due to separation from home, some Japanese poets write haiku to focus on himself or herself and the new life. Also, through the process of haiku writing in an unfamiliar environment, the poet is challenged creatively and is able to find something new and share the discovery with other people. Perhaps many Japanese poets write haiku from a feeling of connection or attachment with Thailand, and the action is an indication of interest in the host culture.

The haiku written in Thailand have been largely free from the control of any particular haiku masters in Japan. They may be common feelings or unique personal descriptions of Thai people and Thai life through individual observations which can be shared with people who have some understanding or imagination of the time and place.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Studies

In the future, it would be of interest and value to make further in-depth study of haiku written by Japanese in Thailand, to follow-up and develop this initial research.

Although many people have expressed the intention to compile a complete collection of season words in Thailand, this task has not yet been done. The records of haiku and the common season words (*kendai* in Japanese) in the past haiku gatherings of the Menam Kukai can be used as resources for this future project.

Researchers and poets who want to study and to write haiku in Thailand can further develop the research of haiku by referring to the change and continuity of

Thailand through recording impressions of nature, phenomena, events and other facts in haiku. Through further studies of haiku written in Thailand, greater understanding of the country is promoted.



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