

HAIKU

Haiku is a form of poetry popular in Japan, which is becoming more widely appreciated around the world in this century. Haiku writers are challenged to convey a vivid impression in only 17 Japanese characters.

One of the greatest exponents of this form was **Basho (1644-94)**

Three Haiku by Basho

Waterjar cracks:
I lie awake
This icy night.

Lightning:
Heron's cry
Stabs the darkness

Sick on a journey:
Over parched fields
Dreams wander on.

In Japan these poems are valued for: Their lightness, Their simplicity, Their openness and Their depth

People have tried to translate the Haiku into an English form:
Using no more than 17 syllables - Arranging these often in lines of 5-7-5 syllables
Avoiding similes and metaphors - Retaining Japanese values

"More than inspiration, it needs meditation, effort and mainly perception to compose a real Haiku".

HISTORY OF HAIKU

Basho Matsuo (1644 ~ 1694)



Basho Matsuo is known as the first great poet in the history of haikai (and haiku).

He too, wrote poems using jokes and plays upon words in his early stages, as they were in fashion, but began to attach importance to the role of thought in haikai (especially in hokku) from around 1680.

The thought of Tchouang-tseu, philosopher in the 4th century B.C., influenced greatly Basho, and he often quoted the texts of "The Book of master Tchouang" in his hokkus.

The thinker Tchouang-tseu denied the artificiality and the utilitarianism, seeing value of intellect low. He asserted that things seemingly useless had the real value, and that it was the right way of life not to go against the natural law.

To a leg of a heron
 Adding a long shank
 Of a pheasant.

Basho

This poem parodied the following text in "The Book of master Tchouang": "When you see a long object, you don't have to think that it is too long if being long is the property given by the nature. It is proved by the fact that a duckling, having short legs, will cry if you try to draw them out by force, and that a crane, having long legs, will protest you with tears if you try to cut them with a knife."

By playing on purpose in this haiku an act "jointing legs of birds by force" which Tchouang denied, he showed the absurdity of this act and emphasized the powerlessness of the human being's intelligence humorously.

Basho's haikus are dramatic, and they exaggerate humor or depression, ecstasy or confusion. These dramatic expressions have a paradoxical nature. The humor and the despair which he expressed are not implements to believe in the possibility of the human being and to glorify it. If anything, the literature of Basho has a character that the more he described men's deeds, the more human existence's smallness stood out in relief, and it makes us conscious of the greatness of nature's power.

The wind from Mt. Fuji
 I put it on the fan.
 Here, the souvenir from Edo.

*Edo: the old name of Tokyo

Sleep on horseback,
 The far moon in a continuing dream,
 Steam of roasting tea.

Spring departs.
 Birds cry
 Fishes' eyes are filled with tears

Summer zashiki *zashiki: Japanese-style room open to the garden.
 Make move and enter
 The mountain and the garden.

What luck!
 The southern valley
 Make snow fragrant.

A autumn wind
 More white
 Than the rocks in the rocky mountain.

From all directions
Winds bring petals of cherry
Into the grebe lake.

Even a wild boar
With all other things
Blew in this storm.

The crescent lights
The misty ground.
Buckwheat flowers.

Bush clover in blossom waves
Without spilling
A drop of dew.

**"Old pond...
a frog leaps in
water's sound."**

- Matsuo Basho.



俳句

Haiku is a small poetry with oriental metric that appeared in the XVI century and is being very popular mainly in Japan. It's been disseminating in all around the world during this century. It have an old and long story that reminds the spiritualist philosophy and the Taoist symbolism of the oriental mystics and Zen-Buddhist masters who express much of their thoughts in form of myths, symbols, paradoxes and poetic images like the Haiku. It's done to transcend the limitation imposed by the usual language and the linear/scientific thinking that treat the nature and the human being as a machine.

It's a contemplative poetry that valorizes nature, color, season, contrasts and surprises. Usually it has 3 lines and 17 syllables distributed in 5, 7 and 5. It must register or indicate a moment, sensation, impression or drama of a specific fact of nature. It's almost like a photo of

some specific moment of nature.

More than inspiration, it's need meditation, effort and perception to compose a real Haiku.