

A New Haiku Era: Non-season *kigo* in the Gendai Haiku *saijiki*

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Publication: *Modern Haiku Journal* 37.2 (Summer 2006)

In 2004 the Modern Haiku Association (*Gendai Haiku Kyōkai*; MHA) published a new, innovative *saijiki* in five volumes. Along with four seasonal volumes of modern haiku, a volume of *muki* ("non-season") *kigo* was included. At first glance a non-season *saijiki* is an oxymoron; however, this is a rational conceptual act—we can say that poetry comes first, and any sort of glossary of terms comes second. In the relationship between haiku and a *saijiki*, it follows that the *saijiki* is a map for haiku poets to explore the haiku world, but the map is created by adventurers on the frontiers. Many poets have adventured through the haiku world and have found new lands and new horizons. From these horizons arise at times new *kigo*, and sometimes new non-season *kigo*. We can witness this activity in the historical example of Bashō, who pursued great adventures to enhance the cultural value of haiku and introduced new vocabulary into the haiku world. For instance, he gave us the first haiku with the poetic taste of neglected flowers, such as *sumiregusa* ("small mountain violet") and *kareobana* ("withered Japanese pampas grass"). These accomplishments have been written down and placed on the *saijiki* map. We can say that a *saijiki* ought to be a compilation of haiku poets' adventures. Traditionally, however, the *saijiki* has compiled seasonal *kigo* only, right up until this new and revolutionary MHA *muki saijiki*, published less than two years ago. Unlike *kigo*, *muki-kigo* do not indicate one particular season; along with *kigo*, they include our own feelings, images, cultural backgrounds, and native environments; our sociality.

According to Kaneko Tohta, *muki-kigo* contain *nikukan* ("vital warmth"): "For example, *yama* ('mountain') is not *kigo*, but the language has *nikukan*. ... There is no haiku subject that is ... not a 'natural thing.' Needless to say, in essence, a mountain and a river and likewise, buildings, pavement, and a rocket have *nikukan*. It is important to grasp them" (Kaneko Tohta. *Kon nichi no haiku* ("Today's Haiku"). Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1965 and 2002, 116).

The *muki saijiki* is a new map, revealing the new world of modern haiku. Bashō has said, "freshness is a flower of *haikai* (haiku)." Through experiencing the new world of modern Japanese haiku with *muki-kigo*, we hope that readers and lovers of haiku will have a better opportunity to feel the mixture of Japan's own unique and traditional sensibility, while exploring contemporary perspectives and taste—as the two remain fundamentally united.

Below we present a translation of Kaneko's preface to the MHA *muki saijiki*. It should be stressed that the new *saijiki* is not meant to represent the full extent or limit of modern haiku in Japan. As

Kaneko notes, a great majority of the many thousands of poems included have been composed by MHA members. Also mentioned is the problem of all Japanese *saijiki*: their Tokyo-district based nature. As a result of these and other issues, some notable modern haiku poets such as Hoshinaga Fumio (who is constructing an alternative *saijiki* local to Kumamoto prefecture), Natsuishi Ban'ya, and others who have been published in English are not represented. Nonetheless, the MHA *saijiki* is a tremendous achievement, offering to readers and scholars worldwide for the first time a massive compendium of modern haiku in a single exemplary collection. Please note below that all text in square brackets indicates material added for clarification.

As an Introduction

[Preface to *Gendai haiku saijiki* (5 vols.)
Tokyo: Gendai Haiku Kyōkai, June 2004]

Tohta Kaneko

The publication of this *saijiki* commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Modern Haiku Association [MHA]; this project took five years to complete. Members of the editorial committees, which were mostly composed of MHA members, held more than sixty meetings while preparing this present work. First, members discussed the entire concept of what a contemporary *saijiki* [a *gendai haiku kigo* compendium] might be, from the ground up. Following these conversations, each proposed *kigo* was examined in great detail as to its merits for inclusion, and subsequently submissions of haiku examples were solicited from MHA members.

What are some of the unique features of this *saijiki*? Roughly speaking, the first special feature is that this *saijiki* classifies seasons by month, based on the solar calendar [the Gregorian calendar, adopted in Japan in 1872]. Although many earlier *saijiki* have attempted to find a point of contact with the present solar calendar, there have always been unavoidable compromises in relating the traditional lunar calendar to our current calendar.

Earlier *saijiki* define "spring" as beginning from *risshun* [the *kigo* for "early spring" or, "the first day of spring"], and many readers are no doubt surprised to find that in the MHA *saijiki*, *risshun* is included in winter [the solar date of February 4]. In our book spring is defined as occurring from March through May. Thus, *risshun* is placed at the end of winter, as an expectation for the approaching of spring. So it can now be considered a "forerunning seasonal word" that heralds the new season, rather than the literal first day of spring. As well, *shogatsu* [the traditional New Year "season" of six days] is no longer treated separately from the four seasons but is included within the winter season, which runs from December through February. We wish to consider *shogatsu* as an experience within, or consistent with, the continuity of the seasons.

The aim is to fit *kigo* to our actual social experience, our actual life as lived through our calendar. Therefore, this *saijiki* places those ceremonies that have already been adapted to our solar calendar — for example, *hina-matsuri* [a sacred festival to bring happiness for girls, March 3] and *tanabata* [the annual celestial meeting of two legendary lovers, July 7] — into the familiar and appropriate times:

March and July in the examples mentioned.

Were we to utilize lunar-calendar-based criteria, the day of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima [August 6] would be summer, while the bombing of Nagasaki [August 9] and the anniversary of the end of the war [August 15] would be autumn. Furthermore, under such criteria, most days of the summer vacation would be categorized as autumn. Such gaps between *kigo* and our actual social experience can be solved by adopting solar-calendar-based criteria.

Another remarkable feature of this *saijiki* is the creation of a new category, *tsûki* ["spreading through seasons"], for those *kigo* that have a relatively vague sense of season, or where it is hard to recognize a seasonal influence in modern life. Some examples would be soap bubbles, a swing, a refrigerator, sumo, and sushi. We do not reject these words as *kigo*, but at the same time it is unreasonable to regard these words as pertaining to certain seasons. Most people would likely agree.

From such a flexible way of thinking, the added *muki* ["no season"] volume contains *kigo* that cannot be treated as pertaining to any one season. Probably those who would question the reason why *muki* would be included in a *saijiki* are not completely familiar with the history and development of the *saijiki*. The origin of the *saijiki* as such is found in Chinese literature, which makes use of detailed calendars of events and social ceremonies. In Japan seasonal arrangements are rooted in the origins and spread of *renga* [linked verses], in which a high value was placed upon compositional rules for the *hokku* [the first stanza of 5-7-5-on [morae, or sound-syllables, from which haiku developed]. This first stanza contains a seasonal word, theme, or expression that is then collaboratively developed in succeeding stanzas.

It is historically correct to define the *saijiki* as "a compilation of terms relating to *saiji*, annual ceremonial events," in its wider meaning; thus, the definition would be too narrow if by *saijiki* we meant merely a compilation of seasonal words. *Saiji* means "observances occurring throughout the year and related to work and life." From the early modern period to the present era our lives have become more expansive and complex, absorbing and accepting various aspects of cultures and civilizations from abroad. As a result, our language has also become diversified; those terms classified by season have increased, while at the same time, the vocabulary of non-seasonal terms has been increasing. As increasing numbers of *kigo* and *muki-kigo* are arriving concurrently, it is natural for the *saijiki* to include both: this is what a *saijiki* should be.

The *muki* volume includes selected haiku examples from a wide time span, roughly from the Edo period through the contemporary era. This new *saijiki* provides examples showing the history and variation in the use of both *muki-kigo* and *kigo*, and we have made an effort to offer a sweeping view. It is not too much to say that here for the first time is a complete *saijiki* anthology containing *muki* haiku. It is a distinctive feature of this *saijiki*.

In addition to these basic features, some additional aspects of this *saijiki* are notable. For example, included are appendixes that feature a compilation of classical, traditional, and regional season words and a list of dates of death of notable haijin. The length of these lists is limited by the ultimate reasonable length of the *saijiki*. The first list is based on our wish that classical season words should be valued, preserved, and passed to the next generation, although they are not used much these days. As to the list of dates of death, we focused on notable haiku poets throughout history and tried to record as many of them as possible. We omitted the dates of people such as Oda Nobunaga — those who are not

directly related to haiku but who were nonetheless treated in former *saijiki*.

The MHA members' haiku comprise the core of the haiku examples presented. We can say that this *saijiki* is a MHA members' haiku anthology, another remarkable feature of the work.

If I may be allowed to express my wish for the future, I would like to say that one worrying factor remains: the *kigo* selection in this *saijiki* has necessarily been Tokyo-district oriented and as such has had to give up covering the unique words, expressions, and language of each of the numerous districts of Japan. I would like to retain this issue as an important question remaining to be solved.

It is a landmark event that such a *saijiki* with these many new features has been published. I don't mean to boast, however. My deepest desire is to seek the judgment of the reading public on the occasion of the anniversary of fifty years of the MHA, and I wish for this *saijiki* to stimulate more eager discussion on just what a *saijiki* could be. The *saijiki* is a singular collection of Japanese aesthetic sensibility and is a precious cultural property of Japan. If this present *saijiki* adds new cultural value to that property, it would occasion no greater joy.

Notes

1 - The complete table of contents of the Modern Haiku Association's *muki saijiki* discussed in this article, as well as six haiku selected from the *saijiki* with the current authors' interpretations, is posted at the authors' Web site, <http://research.gendaihaiku.com>.

2 - Kaneko Tohta (b. 1919) is an acclaimed author and cultural leader. He is currently the honorary president of the Modern Haiku Association.