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Modern means of transport in tanka and haiku poetry of the Meiji and Taishō eras

ABSTRACT

In this article, the author focuses on the modernization of Japan during the Meiji and Taishō eras, as it was reflected in the traditional Japanese poetic forms of *tanka* and *haiku*. Emphasis is put on the thematic shift in poems at the turn of the century, and selected examples of poems are presented to demonstrate primarily the application of terms referring to the modern means of transport which were becoming more common in Japan at that time, and thus gradually penetrating even into literature, including the sphere of lyric poetry. The author believes that at the turn of the century, the objects of modern society – being part of the new Japanese state – also became a form of the “new nature” depicted in modern Japanese poetry.

KEYWORDS: modernization, tanka, haiku, poetry, Meiji, Taishō, means of transport, train, railway, Masaoka Shiki, Ishikawa Takuboku.

STRESZCZENIE

Nowoczesne środki transportu w poezji tanka i haiku okresów Meiji i Taishō

Artykuł przedstawia modernizację Japonii w okresach Meiji i Taishō, ukazaną w tradycyjnej japońskiej poezji *tanka* i *haiku*. Szczególny

nacisk położono na tematyczny zwrot w poezji na przełomie wieków XIX i XX, a wybrane przykłady utworów mają przede wszystkim na celu pokazanie zastosowania terminologii związanej ze współczesnymi środkami transportu, które stawały się coraz powszechniejsze w Japonii tego okresu, a także jej stopniowe wnikanie nawet do literatury, włączając w to sferę poezji lirycznej. Autorka uważa, że na progu nowego stulecia przedmioty nowoczesnego życia społecznego – będąc częścią nowego państwa japońskiego – stawały się równocześnie formami „nowej natury”, odmalowywanej we współczesnej poezji japońskiej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: modernizacja, *tanka*, *haiku*, poezja, Meiji, Taishō, środki transportu, pociąg, kolej, Masaoka Shiki, Ishikawa Takuboku

Traditionally, Japanese poetry, including the forms *tanka* 短歌 and *haiku* 俳句, which have a very long tradition in Japanese literature, is usually perceived and described as lyric poetry, with a great emphasis on nature. The four seasons – *sakura* and *ume* trees in bloom, red maple leaves, birds, frogs, insects, the moon, mountains and ponds – are present in poetry not only to impress readers with the beauty of nature, they can be used also as metaphors and carry a much deeper, coded meaning, or feelings towards another person. That is how we mostly imagine or what we generally understand by the term “traditional Japanese poetry,” rooted deep in past centuries, long ago.

A considerable amount of literature has been written and published on the analysis of formal changes and development in the *tanka* and *haiku* genres since the threshold of the modern period (i.e. since the second half of the 19th century). Numerous studies have attempted to explain the process of language modernization; others have investigated the length and structure of the verse, or the application of season words (*kigo* 季語) and cutting words (*kireji* 切字). Previous research has also deeply examined the biographies and works of leading poets and poetesses (such as Janine Beichman’s studies on Masaoka Shiki and Yosano Akiko). Other publications, such as that by Kenneth Yasuda, provide readers and researchers with a history of modern Japanese poetry (either merging, or separating Western-style poetic genres and the traditional Japanese ones).

Another possible approach, opening into a large field of further research, is the matter of themes, which is the aim of this paper. In the following pages I will try to examine different ways to apply the motives of modern means of transport into the traditional Japanese poetic forms

tanka and *haiku*, which were composed during the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-1926) eras, and to identify a variety of basic functions or roles which these means of transport might play in poetry.

The paper begins with a brief presentation of the historical context of the Japanese empire during the given period. Next, the situation of traditional Japanese poetry, as well as the modernization of *tanka* and *haiku* is addressed. The subsequent section of this paper focuses on particular types of usage and function of means of transport in selected poems by several Meiji/Taishō-period poets.

The historical background of the Meiji and Taishō eras

The rapid changes occurring at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries had a striking impact on Japanese society in general. During the Meiji and Taishō eras, Japan went through an extensive transformation and a huge number of changes: changes of society, the state system, economy, industry, military, etc. After the long-lasting isolation of this country was broken in the middle of the 19th century by the Americans, who were soon followed by several leading European powers, the Japanese realised how much they were falling behind the West. Catching up with the Western world, which meant moving from a rather underdeveloped feudal country to creating a modern state with a subsequently strong position in the East Asian region, was the priority of rising Japanese statesmen. The slogan of late 19th century Japan was *fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵, the idea to create a modern Japanese state, with an emphasis on building “a wealthy country with a strong army”. However, the spheres that went through gradual modernization included not only the state as such and its military. Modernization affected almost all aspects of life, and it was mainly during these two eras that the impact of modernization was the most striking and obvious.

Japan began to be flooded by many Western novelties and innovations, which were supported and intensified by the presence of Europeans and Americans in the country, as well as by the fact that some Japanese citizens at that time finally had a chance to travel abroad. The Japanese people’s contact with these foreign novelties got more and more intense, and they gradually became a part of people’s ordinary lives.

The turn of the century is also significant for the rapid urbanisation of Japanese towns and cities, inasmuch as people started moving from the country to cities, mostly to work in the modern factories there. These cities

increasingly changed their appearance; not only could new factories be seen there, but also the way of life of ordinary people began to alter considerably. The countryside was not an exception, either.

Modern means of transport enter post-feudal Japan

One of the fields that undoubtedly needed to be modernized, if Japan wanted to catch up with the West and move from being a feudal country to a developed state, was infrastructure. Modern infrastructure could help make the transport of goods, materials, as well as people, much easier. Also, it could help develop modern industry, and thus improve the standing of Japan's economy. Needless to say, the Japanese government was fully aware of that.

Among the first of the modern vehicles from Western world which came to Japan was the steamboat. Obviously these played a very important role in Japan's history, as there were two steamboats already in the squadron led by Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) when he arrived in Japan in 1853, and eventually made the shogunate end the isolation policy the following year.

The Japanese government obtained its very first steamboat in 1858. This was a gift from Queen Victoria (1819-1901): an armed steam yacht named *The Emperor*.¹ Thereafter, during the 1860s and 1870s, Japan welcomed many British naval officers as instructors in seamanship and gunnery, and a few decades later, the Japanese empire gradually succeeded in forming a strong and modern navy (at least in the Far East perspective). Steamships, being a part of this navy, would eventually be involved in the wars at the turn of the centuries.² Although there were more and more Japanese people travelling to Europe and America *by* steamships, these vessels were not among those means of transport which ordinary people would come across or use on a daily basis.

The form of transport that soon became much more common to ordinary people was the railroad. When Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan in the mid-1850s, soon followed by Yevfimiy Putyatin (1803-1883) of the Russian navy, among other things he brought with him a model train to

1 Japan's First Steamer Queen Victoria's Gift. *West Gippsland Gazette*. 23rd February, 1904. Available from: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/68707261> [Accessed 20th April 2017].

2 The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).

demonstrate to the Japanese. There is evidence that Putyatin also brought a model of a steam locomotive railroad to Japan.³

The Japanese soon realised how useful and important a railroad could be for the desired development of their country. The first railroad in Japan was completed soon after the 1868 Meiji restoration, already in 1872, connecting Tokyo and Yokohama (the track being only about 27 km long). The first engineers and advisors to help the Japanese were from Britain, and soon they were followed by more experts coming to Japan from the USA or Germany, for example. During the 1870s, railroads were built to connect the major cities such as Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, and Ōtsu.⁴ In the 1880s there were already railway lines not only in Honshu, but also in Hokkaido, Shikoku, and Kyushu. During the early 1890s, the Japanese managed to build their first steam locomotive.⁵ Trains and railroads soon became quite a common part of people's lives, which is obvious also in poetry, where one can come across a lot of trains (*kisha* 汽車) and railway stations (*teishaba* 停車場) mentioned. Additionally, the end of the 19th century saw the first electricity-powered streetcar to be operated in Kyoto (1895, the so-called *chin-chin densha* チンチン電車)⁶, and soon electric trams were seen in Nagoya and Osaka, among others. Consequently, many poets who lived or spent some time in these modernizing cities included trams (*densha* 電車) in their poetry as well.

Besides railroads there were, of course, other modern means of transport appearing in Japan in the Meiji and Taishō eras.⁷ Among the first modern means of transport that could have drawn the attention of the Japanese in those days was the bicycle. By the 1870s Japan had already

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- 3 ERICSON, Steven J. 1996. *Sound of the Whistle*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 4. Cit. In: FORKIN, Matt. *The Miniature Train. Perry in Japan – a Visual History*. Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship. [online] Available from: http://library.brown.edu/cds/perry/scroll7_Forkin.html#ftnt6 [Accessed: 30th October 2017]
 - 4 IKE, Nobutaka. 1955. „The Pattern of Railway Development in Japan”. *The Far Eastern Quarterly* [online]. 14/2: 221-222. [Accessed: 31st January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2941732>.
 - 5 ERICSON, Steven J. 1998. “Importing Locomotives in Meiji Japan: International Business and Technology Transfer in the Railway Industry”. *Osiris*. [online]. 13:130. [Accessed: 31st January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/301881>.
 - 6 WINTERS CARPENTER, Julie. 2012. *Seeing Kyoto*. Tokyo: Kodansha, p. 82.
 - 7 Rickshaws, which were invented in Japan in 1869 and soon spread to many Asian countries (WARREN, Jim. 1985. „Social History and the Photograph: Glimpses of the Singapore Rickshaw Coolie in the Early 20th Century”. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. [online]. 58/1:29 [Accessed: 30th October 2017]), are not further mentioned or pointed out in poems within this article.

started to import bicycles,⁸ and these were becoming quite popular in the most populous regions. However, the moment that actually brought about a sensation came in 1886, when the Briton named Thomas Stevens (1854-1935) arrived in Japan. He was the first person to circle the globe on a bicycle (his journey took him almost three years, lasting from 1884 to 1886).⁹ One fact, however, should be pointed out about the bicycle; the rather cheap and affordable vehicle¹⁰ that was commonly used at that time was the penny-farthing. In Japan this type was constructed under the name Dharma/Daruma (だるま車). The bicycle which is more common nowadays was introduced in Japan in the mid-1890s, and a decade later bicycles of this more modern type were considered to be so practical that they were even used by the Japanese Ministry of Post and Telecommunications to deliver telegraphs.¹¹

Another huge step forward in sense of transport modernization was made at the beginning of the 20th century, when cars appeared in Japan. The very first automobile in Japan was constructed in the early years of the century.¹² The beginning of the automobile industry in Japan traces back to around 1910, and in 1917 the first series produced car in Japan was made by Mitsubishi (the *Mitsubishi Model A*).¹³ In the 1920s, car ownership began to expand as there was a growing demand for motor vehicles after the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake.

The last field of transportation which could be mentioned here is aviation. There were some hot-air balloons crossing the skies of Meiji Japan, but it was not until 1909, when Louis Bleriot (1872-1936) successfully crossed the English Channel by airplane, that the Japanese learned about the development in powered flight in other countries, and became eager to master the art of aviation. This brought about the beginning of research

8 Bicycles and Their Future Potential. Bicycle Museum – Cycle Center. [online] p. 4. Available from: http://www.bikemuse.jp/en/201501_PAMP_E.pdf [Accessed: 30th October 2017]

9 T. Stevens's remarkable diary in two volumes covering his journey *Around the World on a Bicycle* is available online via Project Gutenberg.

10 KENNEDY, Brittany. 2016. The History of the Japanese Bicycle Industry. [online] 30th July 2016. Available from: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/The-History-of-the-Japanese-Bicycle-Industry> [Accessed: 20th April 2017]

11 Bicycles and Their Future Potential. Bicycle Museum – Cycle Center. [online] p. 4. Available from: http://www.bikemuse.jp/en/201501_PAMP_E.pdf [Accessed: 30th October 2017]

12 There are some discussions about which automobile vehicle was the officially first one to be constructed in Japan in the early 1900s. Either it was the steam-powered Yamaba omnibus, or the gasoline-engine Yoshida omnibus. (First Japanese Car. *AutomotoStory – First Cars in History*. [online] Available from: <http://www.automostory.com/first-japanese-car.htm> [Accessed: 20th April 2017])

13 Mitsubishi Model A. *Mitsubishi Motors*. [online] Available from: http://www.mitsubishi-motors.com/en/innovation/history/year/1950/50_1.html [Accessed: 20th April 2017]

and development in powered flight in Japan, with the first Japanese airplane being constructed around 1910-11.¹⁴

From all the forms of transport mentioned above, the most important and also most common and frequently used by ordinary people was probably the railway. Trains and trams were definitely much more affordable for them than cars. People used trains to travel within Japan, and trams to move around cities. This might be the reason why we discover a great number of trains, trams, railroads and railway stations in the *tanka* and *haiku* poetry of the Meiji and Taishō eras – definitely much more often than any other modern means of transport. Examples of such poems will be given below.

The journey of *tanka* and *haiku* to a modern literature

The modernization of Japan undoubtedly also became a topic of Japanese literary production during the period at the turn of centuries. Prose, unlike poetry, was more suitable and open to deal with modern topics and to face the Western influences. However, a gradual shift of themes was slowly becoming more evident in poetry, as well.

The traditional Japanese poetic forms *tanka* and *haiku* were going through a huge crisis at the end of the 19th century. They were old-fashioned and much too conservative for the new society, which was full of rapid changes in all spheres of life. Japanese poets at that time either wanted to completely get rid of these forms, and to move onto solely the new *shintaiishi* 新体詩 and free-verse poetry, or they insisted on keeping the old forms alive, with all their strict rules and restrictions. Besides from the two large groups of supporters and opponents of modern and more open attitude to poetry, there was yet another group of poets who wanted to keep the old forms, but to reform them so that these could “survive” in the modern period and successfully compete with the new, Western-style poetic genres.

Due to the efforts of the latter mentioned group of reformers, Japanese traditional poetry was eventually modernized in several ways: in its form/structure (i.e. the length of verse, usage of punctuation, etc.), in language (usage of more colloquial expressions and a real spoken language, which

14 SUZUKI, Shinji, SAKAI, Masako. 2005. „History of Early Aviation in Japan”. *43rd AIAA Aerospace Sciences Meeting and Exhibit*. 10-13 January 2005, Reno, Nevada, USA. [online] Available from: <https://arc.aiaa.org/doi/abs/10.2514/6.2005-118> [Accessed: 20th April 2017]

was also due to the influence of the Genbun Itchi Movement¹⁵), and in themes and topics. In the case of *haiku* poetry, there was also a vivid discussion on whether it was important and necessary to keep and include seasonal words (*kigo*) and cutting words (*kireji*), or whether such originally obligatory words could be omitted. Without these reforms, which helped to revive the old poetic forms, probably *tanka* or *haiku* would not have survived till now.

From my point of view, the most important person who helped revitalize and modernize traditional Japanese poetry was Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867-1902). He believed that it was necessary and inevitable to reform poetry in some way, although at the same time he was also quite careful about the method of reform. According to Masaoka Shiki, some objects of the modern life could be included in poetry, while others, which he considered much too modern for the reader, should be preferably avoided. “A steam engine/locomotive” was much too up-to-date and non-poetic, from his point of view. Shiki believed such an expression could not bring any pleasant poetic images to the reader. For example, “railroad”, on the other hand, was a word that according to Shiki was absolutely suitable for poetry.¹⁶

As soon as railways became more common even to ordinary people as normal means of transport, trains themselves could become the topic of poems without causing much aversion or literary disgust. Surprisingly, several years later trains appeared even in some of Shiki’s poems.

Means of transport in poetry

Hereon, I would like to demonstrate different ways of incorporating and using the motives of modern means of transport, or other expressions related to modern transport, as they can be observed in several example poems dating from the Meiji and Taishō eras. I have selected and divided the poems into five categories, according to the role these means of transport (or related items) play in each particular poem. These basic categories deal with the means of transport a) as representatives of modern times (fascination with novelties), b) as vehicles of their original purpose (transport),

15 *Genbun Itchi Movement* (言文一致運動, *Genbun Itchi Undō*) was a movement endeavouring to unify the spoken and written forms of the Japanese language, most active at the end of the 19th century.

16 MASAOKA Shiki. *Dassai Shooku haiwa*. [online] Taiju’s Notebook. Available from: http://www2s.biglobe.ne.jp/~Taiju/taiju_annex/1893_dassaishookuhaiwa_01.htm [Accessed 9th September 2013].

c) as a stage or location of meeting people, d) as pictures or sketches reflecting the world around us, and, lastly, e) as a new form of “nature”.

a) Fascination with progress and novelties

Poetry was one of the possible ways the Japanese could express their fascination with various new objects and phenomena of the modern world entering their country. Things that were new deserved attention and interest, and were attractive at least to part of society (although other people might have rejected the novelties, which – they believed – were disgusting, reprehensible and responsible for the gradual destruction of Japanese values and traditions). A very good example of expressing enthusiasm for items of the modern world is the following poem by Onoe Saishū 尾上柴舟 (1876-1957):

自動車の残しし道のにほひだに故郷にし居ればなつかしきかな¹⁷
The smell of the car
That is left behind on the road –
How I long for it
Here in my hometown

In this poem, Onoe Saishū expressed the passion of a person somewhere in a village, whilst the car represents the modern city life, which he yearns for. Obviously, at the time when this poem was composed, the poet was able to find charm even in the fumes of the car which nowadays are mostly considered repulsive.

Another example expresses a general fascination with the airplane. In fact this 1922 poem by Wakayama Bokusui 若山牧水 (1885-1928) invites people to watch the miracle of technology together in a unique, shared moment:

いかでかは出でて見ざれめ庭木おらぶこの風の日にゆく飛行機を¹⁸
Why don't we go out and look at the airplane
Flying on a windy day
When trees are rumbling in the garden

17 ONOE Saishū. Cit. In: *Gendai kashū*. 1974. 2nd ed. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, p. 8.

18 WAKAYAMA Bokusui. Cit. In: *Gendai nihon bungaku taikei*, Vol. 28. 1974. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, p. 29.

The tone of the poem itself points to the excitement and curiosity. The early 1920s were definitely still a period when there were not so many air-planes crossing the skies above Japan. Thus, it could have been a rather extraordinary spectacle, especially on a windy day.

b) Going to places, discovering homeland

The second category is the one with a focus on the original purpose of transport, i.e. going to places, although sometimes only figuratively. What is more, they also represent a kind of connection with one's hometown, or they are used for homecoming. At the turn of century, it was already possible for Japanese people to travel just for the pleasure of travelling (which was uncommon and barely imaginable in the past), and this enabled them to learn more about various places that were new to them. They gradually started to "discover" their own home country as tourists.

Poetry by Ishikawa Takuboku 石川啄木 (1886-1912) offers a sufficient number of representative examples of such usage. As I have mentioned previously, the Meiji and Taishō eras were also periods of massive urbanisation. People moved from villages to towns and cities, to seek employment which they mostly found in the newly established factories, and this often made them feel homesick. Let us have a brief look at Takuboku's poetry:

汽車の窓
はるかに北にふるさとの山見え来れば
襟を正すも¹⁹

A window of the train
When the mountain of my hometown appeared
Far away in the north
I straighten my collar

In this poem, the person is returning to his hometown, probably excited and eager to meet his family and friends again. To make a very good impression on his loved ones, he, probably a man of the city, makes sure that his outfit is neat and tidy.

Another poem by the same author offers a rather unusual cure for the homesickness:

19 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Takuboku kashū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 81.

ふるさとの訛なつかし
停車場の人ごみの中に
それを聴きにゆく²⁰

I long for the accent of my hometown –
I mingle in the crowd at the railway station
Just to hear it

As we can see in this poem, sometimes when the person was feeling too homesick and needed “a touch of home”, he would just go to the railway station to catch at least some fragments of conversation in his dialect to make himself feel more satisfied and content.

c) Location or stage

The third category includes poems in which means of transport or related topics are used as a stage, i.e. mostly a place where people meet or part. Let me quote Ishikawa Takuboku’s poetry again:

かの旅の汽車の車掌が
ゆくりなくも
我が中学の友なりしかな²¹

The conductor of the train
Happened to be
My junior high school classmate

We might imagine that these people are two old schoolmates, who probably used to be friends as children, but then they grew up and went separate and different ways in their lives. Later, suddenly and by coincidence, owing to the train, they get the chance to meet once again. The following example of poetry by Wakayama Bokusui introduces a somewhat sad situation:

停車場に人を送りてかへるきの夜更に寄れる酒場の三人ぞ²²
Seeing off a person at the railway station,
On my way home late at night
I drop into a bar – three people

20 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Takuboku kashū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 70.

21 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Takuboku kashū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 59.

22 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Gendai nihon bungaku taikei*, Vol. 28. 1974. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, p. 25.

In this poem the author first takes us to the railway station where he bids somebody farewell, and later he goes to a bar where he can meet some other people. The half-empty bar underlines the sudden loneliness of the poet. Generally speaking, means of transport and related places can be seen also as leave-taking or socializing places.

d) Sketches of the world

The following category contains poems where the modern means of transport help us depict a scene or situation as a picture, which is in accordance with Masaoka Shiki's concept of *shasei* 写生 (the sketch from life). Shiki emphasised the observation of reality being a crucial exercise for the poet's practice, and he suggested that the poet should draw material for his or her poetry from what is surrounding them.²³

Poems in which it is the window of the train that deserves and receives slightly more attention appear quite often. The authors frequently used the window panes as framed pictures or "photos" capturing and reflecting the world outside. Typically, there is some rain outside, so "the framed picture" (the window pane) serves also as a screen or a dividing wall which keeps us safe inside, and yet it enables us to enjoy or watch the beauties, charms and uniqueness of the scene outside.

The following *haiku* by Shiki and *tanka* by Takuboku are somewhat similar, as both poets tried to capture the moment when each of them observed the world outside through the wet window of a train.

Masaoka Shiki:

瀧車の窓折々うつる紅葉哉²⁴

Windows of the train

Reflecting

Autumn maple leaves

Ishikawa Takuboku:

雨に濡れし夜汽車の窓に
映りたる

山間の町のともしびの色²⁵

In the wet window

Of the night train

A reflection

23 BEICHMAN, Janine. 1982. *Masaoka Shiki*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, p. 46.

24 MASAOKA Shiki. Cit. In: *Shiki kushū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 77.

25 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Takuboku kashū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 107.

Of colours of the city
In the valley

The noteworthy difference between these two poems which might attract the reader's attention is that which is reflected in the window. On the one hand, in Shiki's case it is the traditional autumn scenery, which has reappeared from time immemorial. On the other hand, Takuboku focused on the reflection of the modern city's lights. The slightly different attitude to a seemingly similar starting point indicates the generation gap between these two poets.

e) "New nature"

The final category contains poems which incorporate means of transport as a part of scenery, as "new nature". With the gradual development of railway infrastructure, it was obvious that railway tracks, stations and even trains were slowly becoming a constituent of the Japanese countryside, which is evident in the following poem by Masaoka Shiki:

汽車道に低く雁飛ぶ月夜哉²⁶
Low above the railroad
Wild geese flying –
A moon-lit night

In this poem Shiki managed to combine modern reality – the railroad – and geese, which is a typical topic of Japanese poetry from centuries before. In other words, the railroad represents the modern part of the Japanese countryside or scenery, whilst the geese represent the old countryside. The railroad itself is not greatly disturbing; without the presence of a rushing train, the scenery remains very quiet and peaceful, whereas the line of railroad does not seem disturbing at all, either. It simply *is* there. Thus this poem is a nice blend of the old and new Japan.

Nevertheless, there is Meiji era poetry containing even expressions which Shiki probably would not have approved. Ishikawa Takuboku, being approximately one generation younger than Shiki, was a little bolder and more courageous in his usage of modern terminology in poetry, as we can see in the next example:

26 MASAOKA Shiki. Cit. In: COBB, David, (ed.). 2003. *Haiku*. London: British Museum Press, p. 60.

遠くより
 笛ながながとひびかせて
 汽車今とある森に入る²⁷

A whistle echoing
 From far away
 A train entering the forest

Takuboku did not hesitate to include a train (which was hard to accept by Shiki in his time), as he wrote this poem in 1910 by when railways had become really very common in Japan. And yet, the train seems to be a perfect part of the scenery, disappearing as it enters the forest. Had it not been for Shiki's early death, he might have reached the moment when he would rethink his opinion on some "non-poetic" expressions.

Conclusion

The transformation of traditional Japanese poetry at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries brought about not only changes of a technical kind (such as form and language), but also changes in the choice of inspiration and poetic themes, which is very apparent and striking in case of poets' perception of modernization and modernity. As Japanese society was gradually becoming accustomed to modern ways of life, both poets and readers were slowly becoming more tolerant and open to these new topics, even in traditional poetic forms.

The usage of some modern images might have been, at some time, rather unnatural and too unexpected for literature, and somewhat surprising or even disturbing and shocking for the readers. However, I believe that this was one of the first steps necessary and inevitable in bringing modernization to poetry, and in the gradual shift of topics in traditional Japanese poetry, as was promoted by the poetry reformers at the end of the 19th century.

While Masaoka Shiki supported the idea of innovation in the field of poetry, he still chose very carefully and considerably the topics and objects applicable for poetic usage. On the other hand, for poets who were about one generation younger than Shiki and living in a slightly different Japan, incorporating various types of modern means of transport in their poetry was far more ordinary and commonplace. Obviously, at the turn of the Meiji and Taishō eras, the look of Japan differed in many ways from the situation of previous decades. Modern means of transport had gradually

27 ISHIKAWA Takuboku. Cit. In: *Takuboku kashū*. 2002. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p. 119.

become much more common, and also railway stations could serve the poet as a background, a setting, or in fact a new kind of scenery for their poems. It was shown that these topics could be used in many ways and could represent a wide range of secondary meanings.

If we look at *tanka* and *haiku* poems of the present day – a hundred years later – the shift in topics is very clear and even more striking. In fact, it is true that many people (including poets), who live in Japanese cities, hardly ever leave for the countryside, to see ‘good, old nature’. For many poets of present day, modern towns, with all their infrastructure, cars, department stores and various items of modern life, have actually become the “new nature”. Thus these formerly new and rather shocking objects have successfully found their way into traditional Japanese poetry.

In general, therefore, it seems that the process of modernizing a country can be captured even in a medium previously as conservative as *tanka* and *haiku* poetry. And, looking at this traditional poetry in a broader context can possibly also tell us a lot about the period or time when these poems were written.

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