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# ***Haiku and Senryū in the German Language***

**Masayasu Sakaguchi, Noriyuki Murata, Hew May Wong,  
Koh Takemoto, and Ayaka Sakamoto**

Editors' note: *Haiku* is a form of poetry invented in Japan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that has 17 syllables in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. *Senryū* has the same syllable pattern without the season word (*kigo*) that is characteristic of *haiku*.

In this article, the authors tried to write *haiku* or *senryū* in several languages, particularly German. However, the difficulty of maintaining the exact syllabic structure means the results should be called *haiku*-like or *senryū*-like poems. Of the poetry presented, the two *haiku* by Masayasu Sakaguchi and the one by Koh Takemoto represent true *haiku*.

## **Masayasu Sakaguchi**

雪降りて Bedeckt mit Schnee  
白く輝く Die gewaltige Milchstrasse  
天の川 Wird Silber

Covered with snow,  
The mighty Milky Way  
Becomes silver.

*Author:* This *haiku* describes the winter in Tsukuba. The flume in the center of the University of Tsukuba is called “Milky Way” (*Amano-gawa* in Japanese) since it is located in between the department which has a lot of male students and the department which has a lot of female students. Although Milky Way can usually be only seen in summer, it can be seen with snow here in Tsukuba. By having typical elements of summer and winter at the same time, Tsukuba makes itself more beautiful, and the little flume becomes mighty.

山風が Winde von einem Berg  
ほほを切り裂く Schlagen mein Gesicht  
冬の夜 In Winternacht

On a winter night  
The freezing mountain wind  
Strikes my cheek

*Author:* This *haiku* and its translations describe again the winter in Tsukuba. In contrast to the first poem/*haiku*, this one shows the frigid winter of Tsukuba. “Mountain” in this *haiku* is the mountain we have in Tsukuba, Mt. Tsukuba. The winter in Tsukuba can get very severe due to the strong

wind from Mt. Tsukuba, needless to say, especially on a winter night.

## **Noriyuki Murata**

Vieledürre Blätter  
Vergehen wie die Jugend  
Wie Tage mit Freunden

Many dead leaves  
Fall off like the young  
Days with friends

*Author:* I described a sad scene of the end of a year. When I see dead leaves falling in front of me, I feel that these leaves look like the nice days which I have spent with my good friends during the year. As green leaves die and fall off, our young days pass away.

However, I don't want to only express sadness. I mean, as fresh leaves come into bud in the next spring, new good days must begin in the next year. So, I expressed sadness of days passing and expectation for a new good year.

Gemütliches Licht ist  
Mir am meisten willkommen  
An Winterabenden

Warmful light is the most  
Welcome to me  
In winter evening

Sakaguchi, M., Murata, N., Wong, H. M., Takemoto, K., & Sakamoto, A. (2009). Haiku and senryū in the German language *OTB Forum*, 2(1), 40-41.

*Author:* On cold evenings in winter, I feel that the light of houses is so warming. In this haiku, I expressed such a situation.

### Hew May Wong

Eine Straße des Frostes  
Es tanzen schöne weiße Kristalle  
Der erste Schnee im Jahr.

凍結の町  
舞い落ちる白い結晶  
初雪に

*Author:* This is a haiku that describes the scene of the first snow of the season and the excitement of the author, who came from the south, an area without snow.

上帝的泪水	神の涙
落在湖里的瞬间	湖に落ち漣を
泛起了涟漪	広げた

*Author:* This is a senryū that describes the raindrops as God's tears, falling into the lake and spreading as ripples.

Lieber Santa Claus  
Tu die Kindheit in die Socken bitte  
Als mein Weihnachtsgeschenk

Dear Santa,  
Please put my childhood in the sock  
As my Christmas present

*Author:* Childhood is the best time and memory for the author. She wrote this senryū to Santa and wished she could regain those happy times.

Masa cuti dalam asrama kelam  
Bayangan wajahmu termuncul pada mindamu  
Ku rinda padamu, keluargamu.

In the dark hostel during the holidays  
The memories of you flashed across my mind  
Miss you much, my dear family.

暗い宿舎にいる休暇の日に、突然家族の顔を思い出し、一人で留学する寂しさを覚え、帰りたくなった留学生の気持ちを描いてみた。

*Ediors' note:* This poem is written in Malay, English, and Japanese.

### Koh Takemoto

冬夜空	Winterhimmel bei Nacht
地に張った白	Weiss glänzt die Erde
今朝には夢か	Nicht mehr am Morgen

Winter sky in night  
White tone on ground  
On the next morning, where did it go?

*Author:* This haiku describes how early snow melts by the next morning.

### Ayaka Sakamoto

Ich weiß nicht  
Warum bin ich immer müde?  
Das 'Kotatsu' ist schuld.

I don't know  
Why I'm always sleepy.  
Because of the 'Kotatsu'.

私にはわからない。  
どうしていつも眠くなるのだろう？  
こたつが悪いんだ。

*Author:* Der Kotatsu ist ein japanischer heizbarer Tisch. Er wärmt uns und macht uns müde. [A kotatsu is a kind of Japanese table. It often makes people warm and sleepy.]

**About the authors:** All five authors are students at the University of Tsukuba.