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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 17th 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

Viele dürre 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。

Editors' 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.