

Haiku Diplomacy

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Abstract

This paper explores how haiku has been subtly and skillfully used to finesse diplomatic situations such as formal greetings, state dinners and summit meetings. A critique of haiku is offered in terms of its diplomatic agility, greeting function, and literary merits. Results show that haiku has successfully been used in welcome messages between heads of state.

Introduction

The point of this study is to demonstrate the usefulness of haiku in diplomatic arenas such as the exchange of official greetings between heads of state at formal state dinners and summit meetings. These events are carefully staged and timed to the minute. One evening can cost 500,000 US dollars. When haiku are embedded in the welcoming speeches of the dignitaries they are not uttered off the cuff of the moment, they are diplomatically selected and crafted with great statecraft.

1. Questions Guiding This Research

Poetry recited in diplomatic arenas is often reported by the popular press, but rarely are the poems critiqued or analysed by colleagues or academics. As an example, Waterfield (2010) claimed that “Nobutake Odano, Japan's ambassador to the EU, would not comment on the literary merits of Mr Van Rompuy's haiku.” Therefore this article intends to critique the haiku in terms of its diplomatic agility, greeting function, and literary merits.

1.1 Questions guiding the development of this research study included: Can haiku subtly and skillfully be used in situations such as formal state dinners and summit meetings? Is it wise to use haiku in the management of public affairs? Does haiku serve to support negotiations between nations?

1.2 Previous investigations into haiku diplomacy are rare, but there are archived source documents such as official speech manuscripts that include haiku and an ample source of newspapers and television video recordings of situations when haiku was employed by diplomats dealing with Japan. Previous studies on haiku as a form of greeting have been published by Carter (2015) and by Donegan and Ishibashi (1998).

1.3 The theoretical implications of this study suggest that haiku can assist in diplomatic efforts with Japan as it relates to the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations and adds to existing methods and forms. When delivered eloquently and with dexterity or skill, a warm greeting and speech can assist in securing advantages. When delivered with tact, a poem can assist smooth communication

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between heads of state who speak different languages. To assist a body of ministers or envoys resident at an embassy, or to help government foreign affairs officers to become skillful diplomats perhaps it is necessary they be fluent in the literary cultures of the countries with which they seek amicable relations. For dealing with Japan, it is proposed that haiku can serve as a bridge to friendship.

2. Methodology

2.1. Source Materials

This study uncovered haiku recited by diplomats as greetings to dignitaries, during political meetings, and published in their own anthologies or blogs. Archived source documents such as official speech manuscripts that include haiku were obtained for research. An ample amount of newspapers and television video recordings of situations when haiku was employed by diplomats was made available for this study.

2.2. Participants

The haiku studied for this research were recited by 12 mayors, ambassadors, presidents and prime ministers in Belgium, Canada, Sweden, Romania, US, EU, Philippines, and Japan.

2.3. Experimental Design

A multidiscipline approach to scouring the three research fields of literary analysis, diplomacy, and salutary expressions, was taken to triangulate the posture on the hypothesis that well-composed haiku can subtly and skillfully be used in situations such as welcoming heads of state at formal meetings.

3. Definitions

3.1. Diplomacy

In studying diplomacy, Sir Harold George Nicolson (1988, p. 15) preferred to use the following definition because “taking this precise, although wide, definition as my terms of reference I hope to avoid straying, on the one hand into the sands of foreign policy, and on the other into the marshes of international law.” Diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist. Diplomacy is an instrument by which a state attempts to achieve its aims, in relation to those of others, through tactful dialogue. And haiku has been employed by ambassadors, prime ministers and presidents as a literary instrument to help foster good relations between the governments of different countries.

3.2. Diplomat

A diplomat works on behalf of his or own country in a foreign country. Mindful of language — and culture, the job of a diplomat is to practice diplomacy among nations. Diplomacy is an instrument by which a state attempts to achieve its aims, in relation to those of others, through tactful dialogue and negotiation toward decisions that are mutually agreeable.

3.3. Diplomatic Events

State Dinners are major diplomatic events. A state dinner or state lunch is a formal banquet paid by a

government and hosted by a head of state in an official residence in order to renew and celebrate diplomatic ties between the host country and the country of a foreign head of state. It is an opportunity to showcase the strength of the two countries' and represents the highest diplomatic honour in the United States. The program is scheduled to the minute and the welcoming speeches, menu, and entertainment are carefully scripted, choreographed and rehearsed. Heil and Andrews-Dyer (2015) claim that the national budget includes the average cost of half a million US dollars for hosting one state dinner for 200 people at the White House in Washington. The purpose of these rare and exclusive dinner parties is multi-fold: They seal and embellish diplomatic ties, the spectacle of the photo opportunities is irresistible to the press, and the political capital is impossible to measure but clearly worth the cost and effort.

3.4. Salutatory Expressions

Greetings are a practiced art among diplomats and matter of etiquette and good business manners among management staff. Donegan and Ishibashi (1998, p. 70) claim that "in Chiyo-ni's time, the greeting aspect of haiku was highly revered." Haiku therefore could be useful to assist in the delivery of an acknowledgment or expression of good will on meeting.

4. Findings

Haiku has effectively been used by ambassadors, presidents and prime ministers at summit meetings, state dinners, the Imperial Palace and the United Nations as a literary instrument to help foster good relations between Japan and the governments of different countries.

4.1. Haiku at Summit Meetings

Van Rompuy, the European Council President from December 1, 2009 to November 30, 2014, read his own haiku to conclude his preliminary remarks at an EU-Japan Summit on April 28, 2011 in Brussels. The summit took place after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The three disasters

Storms turn into a soft wind

A new humane wind

4.2. Haiku at State Dinners and the Imperial Palace

In Japan, poetry has long been enjoyed and shared by heads of state during significant events. Emperors have excelled in composing court poetry such as waka since the compilation of the *Kojiki* and *Man'yōshū* in the eighth century. Ikeda and Yamamoto (1963) suggested in *Manyō Hyakka* (A Hundred Poems from the Manyō-shū) that such poetry might have been composed for entertainment during banquets, a view that has been accepted as the common view among academics. *Waka* continues to be read aloud in 5-7-5-7-7 meter to celebrate New Year's in the Imperial Palace. In 2016, Emperor Akihito (Imperial Household Agency, 2016) expressed how he felt when visiting the Republic of Palau to offer flowers and pay respects to those who lost their lives there during World War II: *Tataikai ni Amata no hito no Useshi to-u Shima midori*

nite Umi ni yokotau.

In fierce battles there

Countless persons lost their lives

I now see the isle

Across and beyond the sea

Lying so green and serene.

4.2 Japan appointed an ambassador for haiku in 2015, picking Herman Van Rompuy to perform its poetry diplomacy. Matsuyama, regarded as the birth place of modern haiku, named Van Rompuy an honorary citizen in 2013. Van Rompuy describes himself as a “politician-haiku poet rather than a haiku poet-politician.” He has been composing haiku as poems of delicacy and allusion based on 17 syllables in the strict Japanese style, for years. “Between poetry and politics I do not see many links,” Van Rompuy said at a 2010 launch of a book of his haiku. He has published several books of his own composition, and has recited haiku at diplomatic functions and before the international press. When meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, he promised as an artist he would do his part to boost EU-Japan relations, stating “As a haiku poet and a friend of Japan, I hope to continue to do my part to enhance Japan-EU relations,” he told Abe, according to the statement in Japanese. Van Rompuy presented his haiku as a way of striving away “from the sophistication, attention seeking and glitter” of a political life. “A haiku poet, in politics, cannot be extravagant, nor super-vain, nor extremist,” Van Rompuy (2014).

Brussels:

Different colours,

tongues, towers and gods.

I search my way.

4.2.1. U.S. President Carter at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo in 1979

In a toast by former US President Jimmy Carter (1979) at a state dinner at the Bright Abundance Hall of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on June 25 he diplomatically began by quoting a *waka* by Emperor Akihito, and concluded by focusing on the concept of harmony and friendship.

“Drawing upon the strength and the flow of history uniting our two nations, we shall together reach the goal that Your Majesty set in a poem you wrote for the new year nearly 40 years ago, and you said then:

We pray for the time to come

When East, West and all

Making friends with one another

Will share in a prosperous future.

Your Majesty, with this goal in mind, I offer a toast to the health and wellbeing of Your Imperial Majesty,

your family, the great people of Japan, and the harmony and friendship which binds us all together.”

4.2.2. U.S. President Clinton at the White House in 1994

Speaking in the East Room at the White House, William J. Clinton addressed Empress Michiko and Emperor Akihito at the White House in June 14 1994. He began by quoting lines from Matsuo Basho (1644–1694) as follows: “The Japanese poet Basho put it well in a haiku that sums up the distance ahead:

*Nearing autumn's close,
My neighbor—how does he live?
I wonder*

May Your Majesties' visit provide new answers to that question and bring our peoples closer still. May your journey across our land be enjoyable and leave you wanting to visit us again. And may the sea that separates us be also a shining path between us.”

4.2.3. U.S. President Clinton at the Akasaka Palace, 1998

At a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan in Tokyo, November 19, 1998, Clinton (1998) began by referring to “the space shuttle *Discovery*, which included your remarkable astronaut Chiaki Mukai. I understand that when Dr. Mukai spoke with you from space, Prime Minister, she offered the first three lines of a five-line poem, a *tanka* poem, and she invited the people of Japan to provide the final two lines. I want to try my hand at this. As I understand it, her lines were:

*Spinning somersaults;
Without gravity's limits
In space flight with Glenn.*

I would add:

*All is possible on Earth and in the heavens
When our countries join hands.*

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join me in a toast to the Prime Minister and Mrs. Obuchi and to the people of Japan.”

4.2.4. EU President Van Rompuy in Brussels, 2014

On June 4, 2014 the EU Council President Van Rompuy welcomed Prime Minister Abe by quoting a haiku poem originally read in Kamakura by Yamaguchi Sodo, an Edo-era haiku poet who had befriended Matsuo Basho: *Me ni wa aoba yama hototogisu hatsugatsuo.*

*Full greens flood your sight,
Then little mountain cuckoos,
First fresh bonito*

This poem was a good selection for a dinner as it implies the green leaves please the eyes, the birdsong thrills the ears, and the freshest first fish of the season delights the palate. Van Rompuy implied that Abe made the visit to Brussels in a good season, and that it was a good occasion for Japan and the EU to have bilateral meetings. In response, Abe expressed his gratitude for the pleasant time he had in the dinner meeting hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Van Rompuy at Chateau of Val-Duchesse in his previous visit to Brussels, when they had exchanged haiku for the first time.

*Once come May
spring ushers in life everywhere.
Laughing blossoms*

Abe then responded in kind through a Japanese interpreter, referring to the dinner hosted by Van Rompuy at an ancient chateau:

*Lovely spring evening,
how deeply do I appreciate
hospitality at an old castle*

4.3.5 The most recent example of the diplomatic use of haiku at a state dinner was reported by the Washington Post (2015, April 28) when US President Obama successfully greeted the Japanese Prime Minister Abe by delivering a toast with a haiku in English at a formal state dinner in the White House.

4.3. Haiku as Greetings

Haiku originated from the linked verse form (haikai no renga) written by two or more poets, with an attention to whatever was going on in the world. The first verse, the hokku, was composed in 17 syllables with a seasonal word as a greeting or a toast to the poets present, establishing the season, the mood, and the occasion. In the Edo period (1603–1867) these hokku were written as individual poems (later to be described as haiku in 1892 by Masaoka Shiki). Chiyo-ni (1703–1775) was born in the town of Matto in the Kaga region (Ishikawa Prefecture today) and became a nun and poet. In Chiyo-ni's time, the spirit of greeting, of *aisatsu* was deeply embedded in hokku as a social greeting, as *aisatsu no ku*. Chiyo-ni was known to have many friends, and the following greeting was composed for a visiting friend: *toriaezu chiri ni shikikeri kesa no yuki*.

*Just for now
spreading morning snow
over dust*

In her book *Chiyo-ni Woman Haiku Master*, Patricia Donegan wrote, "Since haiku were traditionally meant to be a greeting or dialogue with the world and nature, rather than writing carefully and revising in solitude, spontaneity was important . . . Basho said there shouldn't be a breath's hesitation between the

perception and the writing of what is perceived.” *Aisatsu* poems (whether for arrival or departure) were often composed in the spontaneity of the moment such as this farewell poem composed in the rain for Gosen (1700–1750) who would surely drink it later as sweet spring water: *michi sugara shimizu no tane ya kyo no ame*.

*On the road
today's rain the seed for
clear water*

4.3.1. Haiku Greetings by Diplomats

On Nov. 18, 2013 the former Belgian prime minister visited Matsuyama city for the first time on the request of Mayor Katsuhito Noshi ahead of the Japan–EU summit in Tokyo on Nov. 19. Matsuyama is the hometown of Shiki Masaoka (1867–1902) and other celebrated haikuists. Van Rompuy toured a museum dedicated to Shiki and the tower of Matsuyama Castle before he was awarded the title “special honorary citizen of Matsuyama” during a ceremony. To express his appreciation, Van Rompuy composed a poem in English:

*How these short stanzas
Can make a city greater
Haiku capital*

In response, Noshi recited:

*Kite flies high
In the air
Connecting in friendship*

During his visit, President Van Rompuy was warmly welcomed by Matsuyama Mayor Katsuhito Noshi and citizens of Matsuyama. President Van Rompuy talked about his passion for haiku, saying, “I wish to contribute to the joy and happiness of people by composing haiku as a ‘haiku ambassador.’”

On November 19, 2013 in Tokyo (Nagura, 2014) against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis and complex negotiations on a free-trade agreement with Tokyo, Van Rompuy had greeted Abe with a haiku. Exchanges of haiku on the theme of Japan–EU relations helped to create a genial atmosphere in the meetings, and brought the leaders much closer together according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan (Nagura, 2014). Here is an example of their haiku exchange.

*People far away
But sun and stars on our flags
Belong together*

In response, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe composed this impromptu haiku:

Star-filled sky

Looking up at the stars at night

Dear friends join

Apart from high-level politics, Van Rompuy has also developed a passion for short Japanese-styled verses (haiku) such as the following which he recited at the end of a press conference in Tokyo.

The sun is rising

sleeping yet in Europe

but still the same sun

His haiku were published in 2010, when he said: "I know that I am the only poet among the EU leaders. But I hope I won't just be remembered for being a poet." (Pop, 2014, December 1).

4.4. Haiku at the United Nations

The Swedish second Secretary-General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld (1905–61) was tragically killed in a plane crash in Africa in 1961, but after his death it was discovered that he had written a number of haiku, posthumously published as *Vagmarken (Markings)*. Lars Vargo (2014, January 29) claims that in Sweden, haiku became a literary form that transcended politics. Haiku was admired both by representatives of highbrow culture and the radical students. Poetry ran parallel to the radical political movements that spread through the West in the 1960s, mainly in opposition to the Vietnam War, but also as a kind of radicalism that turned against the established norms in society. Everything was questioned, including the established forms of poetry.

5. Results

A key hypothesis for this study was to ascertain whether haiku was useful in diplomatic arenas such as the official greetings between heads of state, and at formal state dinners. It was shown that haiku has successfully been used several times to subtly and skillfully handle welcome messages. In 2014, Van Rompuy more or less coined the phrase *haiku diplomacy*, meaning that reading and writing haiku could be a useful tool for international decision makers to gain another perspective on the world.

6. Conclusion

In the deepest sense, a haiku is a greeting to the world. Donegan and Ishibashi (1998, p. 70) suggest, "The spirit of *aisatsu*, on the whole has been lost to the modern world, with poets writing more objective, individualistic, art haiku, which is more of a monologue than an engaged dialogue with the world." They supported this suggestion by noting how the haiku critic Yamamoto (1907–1988) suggested that haiku originally were composed with a dialogue aspect, such as this one by Chiyo-ni that seems to end with an

unspoken tag question (doesn't it?):

*The silence
of the moon
enters the heart*

Therefore, *aisatsu* and its gift of spontaneity should not disappear from the practice of composing modern haiku. In this global age of increased human mobility and cross-cultural contact, an international greeting is one of poetry's most visible and audible ways of giving shape and meaning to the convergences of peoples, texts, and cultures across sometimes-large cultural and social distances. Since haiku is a genre of communication that diverse peoples can understand and welcome each other with, perhaps international haiku could be useful for diplomatically building world peace.

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