

The Poetry of Dialogue: *Kanshi*, Haiku and Media in Meiji Japan, 1870-1900

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the influence of ‘poetic sociality’ during Japan’s Meiji period (1867-1912). ‘Poetic sociality’ denotes a range of practices within poetic composition that depend upon social interaction among individuals, most importantly the tendency to practice poetry as a group activity, pedagogical practices such as mutual critique and the master-disciple relationship, and the exchange among individual poets of textually linked forms of verse. Under the influence of modern European notions of literature, during the late Meiji period both prose fiction and the idea of literature as originating in the subjectivity of the individual assumed hegemonic status. Although often noted as a major characteristic of pre-modern poetry, poetic sociality continued to be enormously influential in the literary and social activities of 19th century Japanese intellectuals despite the rise of prose fiction during late Meiji, and was fundamental to the way in which poetry was written, discussed and circulated. One reason for this was the growth of a mass-circulation print media from early Meiji onward, which provided new venues for the publication of poetry and enabled the

expression of poetic sociality across distance and outside of face-to-face gatherings. With poetic exchange increasingly taking place through newspapers and literary journals, poetic sociality acquired a new and openly political aspect. Poetic exchanges among journalists and readers served in many cases as vehicles for discussion of political topics such as governmental corruption, international relations and environmental disasters, an aspect of Meiji-era poetry that has received comparatively little attention.

The dissertation focuses on three main areas: poetic forms that depend on interaction among multiple poets, especially ‘rhyme-matching (*wain*)’ poetry in literary Chinese (*kanshi*), the social structures (such as poetic societies) that made such poetry possible, and the mediation of poetic sociality through modern print culture. The first half of the dissertation focuses on *kanshi*’s importance as a medium for public exchange on social and political topics. Chapter One covers rhyme-matching exchanges among Japanese and Qing Chinese poets throughout the 19th century, as seen through exchange of letters and through newspapers such as the *Chôya shinbun*. The chapter shows *kanshi* sociality enabling a transnational discourse that gave expression both to notions of shared cultural bonds between Japan and China and to ideas of poetic and cultural nationalism. The second chapter examines rhyme-matching sequences among poet and journalist Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) and his friends, as well as a marathon exchange among *kanshi* poets Kokubu Seigai (1857-1944) and Mori Kainan (1863-1911) in the pages of the conservative newspaper *Nippon* that illustrates

rhyme-matching's role in creating shared social spaces within the newspaper world of 1890s Japan. The second half of the dissertation focuses on the rise of the so-called "new haiku" from 1892 onwards, showing, in Chapter Three, how poets used haiku in the newspapers of the 1890s as a vehicle for exchanging views on political matters, a function not traditionally associated with the genre. The final chapter looks at the use after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 by Shiki and other "new haiku" groups of the notion of haiku as "commoner literature" to re-shape haiku in line with modern European ideas of literature. Centering on the influential haiku journal *Hototogisu*, these "new haiku" groups marginalized forms of textually linked poetry as a form of non-literary "play" and insisted on haiku primarily as a poetry of the individual.

In discussing the uses of poetry in the Meiji print media, the dissertation complements previous studies of serialized prose fiction to provide a new and broader view of the economics and mechanisms of Japanese literary production and consumption. The study's focus on prominent *kanshi* poets such as Mori Shuntô (1819-1889), Mori Kainan, and Kokubu Seigai sheds light on the understudied topic of the sociality of the 19th century *kanshi* world. Its discussion of the Meiji reception of Ming and Qing dynasty Chinese poetics and the importance of *kanshi* sociality in 19th-century Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations will be of interest to scholars of Chinese literature and history. More broadly, the dissertation's focus on the development and uses of print media in a non-Western context will also prove useful for

scholars of media and social history outside of East Asia.