

Exchange through Tanka Project

Hello and welcome to the Clark Umeda Campus International Course Exchange through Tanka Project. That is quite a long title, so feel free to simply call it the ETP. For two months in the 2015 school year, students at Clark high school selected tanka (short Japanese poems) which they liked and translated them into English. During a linked classroom project, they shared their translations of the tanka with university students from the Bachelor of Social Work programme at Martin Luther Christian University in Meghalaya, India. The result of that linked classroom is this short collection of tanka which you are reading now. Each page of this collection contains: 1) a tanka in the original Japanese 2) a transcription into the English alphabet 3) an English translation of the tanka by Clark International Course students 5) cultural information which the Clark students felt would help non-Japanese readers understand the poems and 4) a series of questions . These questions, found at the bottom of each page, were written by the Clark students to learn more about their classmates' and students' in other countries thoughts about the tanka.

If you or your students are interested in learning more about the Clark students' answers to these questions, or those of the Martin Luther Christian University students, the questions, answers, and responses to those answers are all collected on a Lino board we created for the students to interact with each other. The original 'Exploring Tanka' Lino board can be found at:

<http://linoit.com/users/kevchanwow/canvases/Exploring%20Tanka%20>.

We have also set up 4 additional Exploring Tanka Lino boards. These additional boards contain the translated tanka, questions, and some of the responses from the students in Japan and India. The boards can be found at:

- Exploring Tanka (2): <http://linoit.com/users/kevchanwow/canvases/Exploring%20Tanka%20%20%20%282%29>

- Exploring Tanka (3): <http://linoit.com/users/kevchanwow/canvases/Exploring%20Tanka%20%20%20%283%29>
- Exploring Tanka (4): <http://linoit.com/users/kevchanwow/canvases/Exploring%20Tanka%20%20%20%284%29>
- Exploring Tanka (5): <http://linoit.com/users/kevchanwow/canvases/Exploring%20Tanka%20%20%20%285%29>

Feel free to use this collection of tanka and the Exploring Tanka Lino boards as resources for your students. They can be used to heighten awareness about the syllabic structure of English; the importance of line breaks and other issues of form in poetry; ways to interpret poetry; and even as the basis of conversation based classes. If you would like to have a chance to set up a private Lino board and have your students communicate with the students here at Clark, please feel free to send an email to Kevin Stein at kevchanwow@gmail.com.

We hope that you will use these tanka resources in any way that you wish. We are happy that you have taken the time to download and read these tanka. And we hope that you find some joy in a short poetry form which has helped us reach out and connect and learn about the world.

A Brief History of Tanka

Tanka is a very popular form of short poetry in Japan. The history of tanka poetry starts from the 8th century. Tanka has always been a poetry form of all people in Japan. Tanka poems are often about love, family, and everyday happenings. The traditional tanka poem is broken into 5 stanzas of 5 mora, 7 mora, 5 mora, 7 mora and 7 mora. A mora is like an English syllable and is composed of one consonant and one short vowel sound. 'Ta,' 'ka,' 'ba,' 'ri' are all one mora. When translating a tanka into English, many translators will try to write a short line/long line/short line/long line/long line poem. But this is sometimes impossible without changing the original feeling of the poem. That is why many tanka in English do not have a set length for each line. But almost all tanka in English do have five lines for each poem.

Here is an example of a traditionally structured Tanka:

自転車の	jitensha no
たかさからしか	takasa kara shika
わからない	wakaranai
そんな景色が	sonna keishiki ga
確かにあって	tashika ni atte

---Chie Kato, *Happy Ice Cream*, p.67

There have been many styles and schools of tanka. In 1987, Tawara Machi published *Salad Anniversary*. She was only 25 years old at the time. The book won many poetry prizes and awards. Her style was conversational and dealt with many themes and problems faced by young people. The book became a best seller in Japan and has had a large influence on tanka writing. All of the poem in this very small collection of tanka were translated by students from the International Course of Clark Osaka

Campus in Japan. And all of the tanka are by 'spoken word' tanka writers. They include:

Machi Tawara: the most famous tanka poet in Japan. Her poems revolutionized tanka writing. Every year the Yomiuri Newspaper has a Salad Anniversary Tanka Contest. Poets try to write a poem in the same style as Salad Anniversary.

Kei Amano: A poet who published her first book of poems at 23 years old. She has written 6 books of tanka. Her poems are sometimes filled with fantastic images touched with sadness.

Chie Kato: Published her first book of poems, *Happy Ice Cream* when she was only 16 years old. She has written many books of tanka and novels. She also works as an English to Japanese translator.

Mayumi Sato: Is an essayist and tanka writer. Her poetry and essays are often about issues and problems faced by young women in Japan.

While all of the poems translated for this small collection are by women, there are also a number of famous men who write contemporary spoken word style tanka.

I.

自転車の	jitensha no
たかさからしか	takasa kara shika
わからない	wakaranai
そんな景色が	sonna keishiki ga
確かにあって	tashika ni atte

---Chie Kato, *Happy Ice Cream*, p.67

**only from the height
of my bicycle seat
did I understand
for sure that
there was such a view**

Translated by: Y., M., and Yi

Cultural information:

- In Japan, high school students go everywhere by bicycle

4 questions to think about:

- How does the view change when you ride a bicycle?
- What kind of scenery did the narrator see while riding their bike?
- How tall does the narrator feel when they are riding their bike?
- What is the most beautiful scenery you have seen from a bicycle?

II.

めちやめちやに	mecha mecha ni
空が晴れている	sora ga harete iru
たった今	tatta ima
爆発すれば	bakuhatsu sureba
いいのに全部	iinoni zennbu

---Chie Kato, *Happy Ice Cream*, p.79

**The sky is
so clear
but
I hope it all bursts
right now**

Translated by: Y., M., and Yi

Cultural information:

- When a person feels something strongly they often look up at the sky in Japan.

3 questions to think about:

- Why does the narrator hope it all bursts?
- Do you think the narrator feels angry or happy?
- Do you sometimes wish the world would just burst?

III.

愛なんて	ai nante
言葉は別に	kotoba wa betsu ni
信じない	shinjinai
ただあの人が	tada ano hito ga
好きっただけだ	suki tte dake da

---Chie Katou, *Tabun zettai (Maybe For Sure)*, p. 68

**I don't believe
In such
'love' messages
I just love
that person**

Translated by: Yk, Mz, Sch, and Sk

Cultural information:

- Japanese people don't often say 'love'. Because Japanese people are very shy. So Japanese people express 'love' by their actions.

6 questions to think about:

- Why doesn't the narrator believe in 'love' messages?
- How old is the narrator?
- Is the narrator a man or a woman?
- Who is 'that person'?
- How long has the narrator loved 'that person'?
- What does 'love' mean?

IV.

もう少し	mou sukoshi
いい女になってる	ii onna ni natteru
予定だった	yotei datta
ハイヒール	hai hi-ru
なんかはいて	nanka haite

---Mayumi Satou, *Kitto koi no sei (For Sure it Must Be Love's Fault)*, p.68

**wearing
high heels
and I had planned
to be a little more
of a nice woman**

Translated by: Yk, Mz, Sch, and Sk

Cultural information:

Japanese beautiful women often wear high heels on dates. Even younger girls can wear high heels when they go out in Japan.

4 questions to think about:

- How old is the narrator?
- Why does the narrator think 'nice' women don't wear high heels?
- Why does the narrator wear high heels?
- What kind of shoes do 'nice' women wear?

V.

あなたから	Anata kara
「アイツ お前の	“Aitsu ome no
なんなの」と	nannano” to
聞かれて気になり	kikarete ki ni nari
始めるアイツ	hajimeru ‘aitsu’

---Machi Tawara, *Tore tate no tanka (Fresh Made Tanka)*, p. 84

**Because you asked
“What’s that guy to you?”
I began
to really wonder about
‘that guy’**

Translated by: Ma, Hi, No, and Shu

Cultural information:

- The romantic feelings of Japanese boys are often delayed compared to other boys in the world. In a recent study, only 30% of 20 year old boys in Japan have ever had a girlfriend.
- The boy and girl in this poem are probably both junior high school students. But the girl is a little more mature than the boy.

4 questions to think about:

- Where are the narrator and their friend from?
- Why wasn't the narrator aware of 'that' guy until their friend asked the question?
- What kind of person is 'that guy'?
- How does the narrator's friend feel about 'that guy'?

VI.

十二色	Juunishoku
クレパスで描く	kurepasu de egaku
風景は	fuukei wa
君の帽子と	kimi no boshi to
空だけが青	sora dake ga ao

---Kei Amano, *Tanka No Kibun (A Tanka Feeling)*, p. 38

**I use 12 color
pastel crayons for drawing
a landscape.
only your hat
and the sky are blue**

Translated by: Ma, Hi, No, and Shu

Cultural information:

- From children to adults, many people use pastel crayons to draw pictures in Japan.

3 questions to think about:

- Why did the narrator only make the hat and sky blue in the drawing?
- What was the last picture you drew?
- Who is the person in the picture with the blue hat?

VII.

心には	kokoro ni wa
いくつもの部屋	ikutsu mono heya
好きだから	suki dakara
言えない事と	ienai koto to
言わないことと	iwanai koto to

---Machi Tawara, *Toretatenotanka (Fresh Made Tanka)*, p. 72

**There are some rooms
within the heart.
Because I love you
things I cannot say and
things I will not say**

Translated by: Fu, Sat, and Tom

3 questions to think about:

- What does the narrator want to say?
- What is it that the narrator cannot say?
- How many rooms are there in your heart?