1. Introduction

This paper mainly deals with two Japanese short poems as typical examples of “phonosymbolism” in poetry. Here, phonosymbolism is interpreted in a broadest sense, as having a sound shape which suggests its meaning by its similarity to the meaning. Borrowing Peirce’s terminology, we interpret “phonosymbolism” as an auditory “icon” in the analysis that follows. Therefore, not only an image aspect of an icon (e.g., “sound symbolism” per se) but also a diagrammatic aspect of an icon (e.g., structural analogy between poetic form and content) will be discussed.²

Poetry is said to be inherently iconic – that is, there is an immediate and close relationship based on similarity between the linguistic structure of a poem and its meaning. Icon is defined by Charles Peirce as a sign which “refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own.” (Peirce 1955 [1902]: 102). Peirce further defines an icon by saying, “anything whatever, be it quality, existent individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing and used as a sign of it” (Italics mine) (ibid.). For example, a portrait is an icon of a person portrayed because it is similar to that person. In a word, an icon achieves its function by similarity or likeness with the object it signifies. This similarity relationship is crucial in poetry as “in poetry, similarity relations in form are used as cues to the meaning of the poem through poetic devices such as rhyme, semi-rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter; general repetitions of sounds, syllables, words; division into lines, strophes, parts. Far from being subordinated to meaning (as is usually the case in ordinary use of language), in poetry sound plays a leading role, operates in full partnership with meaning, and even helps to create meaning” (Waugh and Newfield 1986: 32).

A few poems show such iconic link between their sounds and meanings overtly; but, most of the poems show the link more subtly and subliminally. I use Jakobsonian methodology (Jakobson 1970, Jakobson and Waugh 1979, Jakobson and Rudy 1980, etc.) to uncover the hidden
magic of the poems. Namely, I will look at certain abstract patterns in the distribution of linguistic elements, such as phonemes, syllables, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, etc. A discovery of some subliminal patterns of these linguistic elements in the poetic texts in conjunction with their significance in the interpretation of the poems will demonstrate how the concept of iconicity works as a compositional and an interpretive mechanism of certain abstract patterns revealed by formal linguistic analysis. The following presentation have two parts. Part one deals with a revising process in a haiku,\(^3\) seventeen-syllable poem, to demonstrate how the poet consciously and unconsciously used iconicity in his poetic composition. Part two, on the other hand, takes up an analysis of a tanka,\(^6\) thirty-one-syllable poem, to show how the sound shape, overtly and covertly, contributes to an interpretation of the poem.

2. Iconicity and poetic composition:
Revisions in Basho’s *Haiku* about the Cicada

2.1. Text

Now let’s look at the revisions of a following haiku by Basho:\(^5\)

“Sizukasa ya iwa ni šimiru semi no koe”

Before Basho arrived at the final revision stated above, it is reported that he revised it three times as follows:

1. *Yamadera ya* iwa ni šimitsuku semi no koe
   - mountain temple: rock to seep-keep cicada of voice
2. *Sabišisa no* iwa ni šimikomu semi no koe
   - loneliness SUBJ rock to seep-include
3. *Sabišisa ya* iwa ni šimikomu semi no koe
   - loneliness: rock to seep-include
4. *Sizukasa ya* iwa ni šimiru semi no koe
   - stillness: rock to seep-pierce

Although Basho’s revision deals with all linguistic levels such as lexical, syntactic, phonological, and orthographical levels, we will just cover the lexical and phonological revisions in this presentation.\(^6\)

2.2. Lexical revisions

As Basho himself mentioned in his diary,\(^7\) the focus of this poem is the holy stillness of the environment fusing with the poet’s whole being. There are two important lexical changes which contribute to a more effective representation this fusion: the initial word and the verb of the poem.

The first word of the poem is changed from ‘yamadera’ (mountain temple) to ‘sabišisa’ (loneliness) and then to ‘šizukasa’ (stillness). This revision implies a transition from the objective surroundings to a subjective feeling, and then to a fusion of the two, as the word ‘šizukasa’ signifies both the silence of the holy mountain temple and the tranquility in the solitude of the poet. In other words, ‘šizukasa’ captures a fusion of the humans and nature, subject and object, which underlies all the works of Basho’s poetic creation. The choice of verbs, ‘šimitsuku’ (seep and stick to) ‘šimikomu’ (seep and include) and ‘šimiru’ (seep and pierce), is also important concerning the notion of fusion. The three verbs used in each revision are compound verbs. As shown in Table 1, the depth and the sharpness of penetration increases from version (1) to (4), the verb ‘šimiru’ in the final version overtly enacting the fusion of the voice of the cicada and the silence of the rocks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>V1</th>
<th>V2</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Sharpness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Šimi</td>
<td>tsuku</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) and (3) Šimi</td>
<td>komu</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Šimi</td>
<td>iru</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Revision of the Verbs

2.3. Phonological revisions

How do the phonological changes interact with the meaning of the poem? Let us first compare the five vowels [i][u][e][o][a] used in this haiku. The occurrence of each vowel in the four versions is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>[i]</th>
<th>[u]</th>
<th>[e]</th>
<th>[o]</th>
<th>[a]</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Revision in the Vowels
We find that there is a slight increase in the occurrence of the vowel [i] from version (1) to versions (2), (3), and (4), compared to the occurrence of other vowels. The Japanese vowel system consists of five vowels [i][u][e][a] and [o]. The following statistics indicates a distribution of each vowel among 50 haiku poems composed by Basho in his travel diary, *Ooku no Hosonichi*, in which the haiku in question is included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[i]</th>
<th>[u]</th>
<th>[e]</th>
<th>[a]</th>
<th>[o]</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occurrences</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: *Occurrence of Vowels in the 50 Haiku in Ooku no Hosonichi*

Since each haiku has 17 morae, hence 17 vowels, with very few exceptions, the average number of occurrence of the vowel [i] in each of Basho’s haiku in *Ooku no Hosonichi* will be 4. It seems clear that the high proportion of [i] in this haiku about the cicada (7 out of 17 vowels) is so unusual that it needs some explanation. It seems to me that the dominance of the vowel [i] is important in this haiku because of its sound-symbolic effects. The vowel [i], which is articulated with the least energy among Japanese vowels, symbolically suggests the following meanings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbolism</th>
<th>Represented by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) shortness</td>
<td>life of the cicada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) smallness</td>
<td>(possibly human life, too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>size of the cicada and the size of the human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>being in contrast to the gigantic rocks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: *Sound Symbolism of [i] in Japanese*

The sequential order of vowels reveals an interesting fact, too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>5 morae</th>
<th>7 morae</th>
<th>5 morae</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>a a e a a</td>
<td>i a i i u u</td>
<td>e i o o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>a i i a o</td>
<td>i a i i i o</td>
<td>e i o o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>a i i a a</td>
<td>i a i i i o</td>
<td>e i o o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>i u a a a</td>
<td>i a i i i i</td>
<td>e i o o e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: *Sound Pattern of Vowels in Sequence*

The metric scheme forms a sound pattern of LOW-HIGH-MID vowels, which is preserved from the first version to the final one. The dominance of [i] is located in the middle line, where the words ‘iwa ni’ (into the rocks) and ‘šimi’ + verb (to penetrate) appear. Again, the word ‘šimiru’ (seep + pierce) contributes to [i]’s dominance. Thus, the theme of this haiku – penetration into silence – is represented very clearly in its middle line by this mingling dance of meaning and sound.

This becomes even clearer when we trace the sequential order of high vowels, as indicated in Table 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Line 2</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - + +</td>
<td>+ + - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>- + + -</td>
<td>- - + +</td>
<td>+ - + -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>- + + -</td>
<td>+ - + +</td>
<td>+ + + -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>+ + - -</td>
<td>+ - + +</td>
<td>+ + + -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbolism</th>
<th>Represented by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ HIGH vowel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MID and LOW vowels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: *Order of [+ HIGH] and [- HIGH] Vowels*

The order of [+HIGH] and [-HIGH] vowels is reversed somewhere in the middle of the poem, but versions (1) and (4) maintain the longest reversed sequence. And the locus of the reversal is the word which means “to penetrate”. It may not be far-fetched to suggest that here lies a center or a turning point of the poem where its paradoxical phases – sound and silence – meet.

Let me point out additional phonological factors which contribute to the music of the final version, giving it its strongest iconicity, i.e., the closest relationship between sound and meaning. When we look at the consonants in the poem, we notice that there is a repetition of [+STRIDENT, -CONTINUENT, -VOICED] sounds like [s] and [z].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Number of [s] and [z]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: *Number of Sibilant Sounds*
The sudden increase of these sounds from version (1) to the three seems to indicate that Basho's choice of the words itself contributes greatly to the sound symbolism of the poem, for these voiceless sibilant sounds symbolize silence in Japanese, where lots of words containing these sounds designate silence: e.g., 'ṣizuka' (silence), 'ṣizumeru' (to become quiet), 'ṣizumeru' (to calm down), 'ṣasayaku' (to whisper), 'seijaku' (stillness), 'ṣeishuku' (silence), 'ṣinkan' (silent), etc. Also many onomatopoetic or mimetic expression of silence contain these sibilant sounds: e.g., 'ṣizuṣizu' (silently), 'ṣotō' (quietly), 'ṣimmiri' (quietly), 'ṣintō' (quiet), 'ṣuyasuya' (to sleep [quietly]), 'ṣoyosyo' (to blow [quietly]), etc.

In connection with this sound symbolism of silence, we find in every version that most of the obstruents are voiceless.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Voiceless obstruents</th>
<th>Total of obstruents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Number of Voiceless Obstruents

Note that every version has only one voiced obstruent out of several obstruent consonants. This is definitely consonant with the theme of silence, too. How about [- CONTINUENT] consonants which are the other type of voiceless obstruents than sibilants in the poem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Stops in Line 2</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>[ts][k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>śi-zu-ka</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>ko-e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Place of [k]’s

There are only a few stops: they are all voiceless and [k] is the most common one. The place of the [k]'s in version (4) seems to play a role, since one [k], three morae from the beginning of the poem, and the other, two from the end, contribute to bracketing or framing the entire poem. The former three versions do not have this kind of bracketing structure.

It is clear from what we have discussed so far that the theme of this haiku is the fusion of the paradox: silence with voice. We can say Basho's revisions are a journey toward this fusion. His intuitive insight worked on all levels and aspects of the revisions which we have demonstrated analytically. Here, we would like to call attention to the more holistic interaction of the sound and the meaning in the final version.

It seems to me that the semantic progression of the lines in the final version and the progression of their sounds go in opposite directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological Progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Phonological and Semantic Progressions of the Text

If we look at the semantic progression of the lines, we find that it goes from 'silence' to 'voice'.

Line 1    šizukasya               "silence"
Line 2    iwa ni ṣimiru             ("silence")
Line 3    seminokoe                "voice"

On the other hand, if we look at the phonological progression of the lines, we find the reversed order – "voice" to "silence" – as exemplified below:

i) From line 1 to line 2, we notice the repetition of the similar [- CONSONANTAL] sequence.

Line 1    śizuka
Line 2    ōinvestment

Strictly speaking, [u] and [w] are different sounds; however, both have quite similar qualities, as they are articulated in the high, back position of the mouth. In this repetition, line 2 totally lacks consonants as shown above.
ii) In lines 1 and 2, the consonants sandwiched by vowels lose their obstruency from the beginning of the line to its end.

Line 1  (k) a s a a y a
Line 2  (n) i ̄ s i i m i i o i(r)

iii) From lines 1 to 3, vowel sandwiches lose the contrast between the sandwiching vowels ($V_1$) and the sandwiched consonants ($C$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>$V_1$</th>
<th>$C$</th>
<th>$V_1$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
<td>[+BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[+BACK] a s a a y a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2a</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[+BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK] i ̄ s i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2b</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK] i m i i o i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>[+BACK]</td>
<td>[+BACK]</td>
<td>[+BACK] o k o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In lines 1 and 2a, vowels and consonants in the sandwich are articulated in contrastive positions in the mouth, vowels at the back and consonants at the front in line 1, and vowels at the front and a consonant at the back in line 2a; whereas in lines 2b and 3, the places of articulation are non-contrastive between vowels and consonants.

All these facts imply that the sound shape of this haiku goes from 'voice' to 'silence'.

What does this reversal mean in the end? I think that the reversal itself represents the fusion; there is no distinction between silence and voice nor between sound and meaning.

Hájí Ross (personal communication) points out another fact which demonstrates the oneness of silence and voice and of sound and meaning. He assumes that the three most important word/morphemes are šizuk-šimi/semi because either the first or the last can be the subject of the middle one, and that šimi is like a phonetic compromise between šizuk – and semi, as šimi and šizuk – share the first mora and šimi and semi share the last mora.

shared first mora → ši (zuk-)  ši (se) mi → shared last mora mi

It seems that the phonetic similarity motivates the semantic fusion of 'silence' and 'voice'.

There is one more thing to add in terms of sound symbolism. In Japanese onomatopoeia, the voice of cicadas is represented in four ways, and interestingly enough, the Japanese name the cicadas according to these four onomatopoeic expressions. They are [niini] (or [minmin]), [dzi:dzzi:], [kanakana], and [tsukutsuku hosi]. Notice that there are a lot of [l], [a], [u], [m], [n] and [k] sounds in these onomatopoeic expressions. We cannot ascertain which kind of the cicada’s voice Basho heard when he composed this haiku, but it is extremely interesting for us to find that Basho uses the very sounds of the onomatopoeia of the cicada’s voices to write this particular haiku on the cicada.

2.4 Discussion

To summarize, this haiku essentially describes the profound stillness prevailing in nature, including the poet himself. Basho pictures his theme with a touch of vivid action, the voice of the cicada, but only in order to intensify stillness. The voice may first be felt as disturbing; then, all the more a deepened mood of stillness prevails in the poet’s mind. Thus, the voice pierces the rocks. Stillness is resonant with the tranquility of the rocks and the eternal loneliness of the poet. The iconicity of the metaphorical word ‘šimarú’ represents this whole process of becoming still. The whole poem, with its sounds and meanings, crystallizes the moment of becoming or melting into the eternal stillness.

Our analysis, by looking at the poet’s revisions, shows how he succeeded in charging his words with poetic power, and demonstrates that the grasp of such eternal stillness is best represented in the final version by its strongest iconic link between the phonological and the semantic aspects of the text.

Now, the question is whether the poet consciously use iconicity principle to revise his poem. And if so, how consciously? As the analysis above has demonstrated that iconicity principle did work in the revising process to some extent, it is hard to resist speculating. Jakobson (1985 [1980]: 69-70), being asked whether a conscious choice can be demonstrated through a comparison between different versions in certain writers, answers that among the three possibilities – chance, a subconscious activity and a conscious activity – his conclusion falls into a subconscious activity, although he admits that the notes, explanations and comments of the poets about their own com-
positions sometimes prove that they are quite conscious about the choice and its effects. I do not dare to measure how consciously Basho used iconicity by counting up the effects of his revisions. We do not even know whether his revisions were more oriented by semantic implications of the poem or by phonological effects of the poem. However, the strong phono-semantic link shown in his choice of words in the revising process—particularly a gap from the first version to the others—seems to indicate rather clearly that this iconic link itself is crucial to achieve certain aimed effects of the poem both in image and in music. For example, there are two major phonological revisions provided by the lexical revision of the first word from ‘yamadera’ (mountain temple) to ‘sabissis’ (loneliness) and then to ‘sizukasa’ (silence). They are an increase of the vowel [i] and the sibilant consonants, [s] and [z], both of which phono-symbolically suggest ‘silence’. This lexical revision should be a conscious activity of the poet, and we are tempted to guess that he might also be quite conscious about the sound effects this revision would produce, because the iconic semantic impact of the sounds is rather salient.

Other phonological effects I have analyzed in Basho’s revising process in support for the working of iconicity principle seem to be more subconsciously conceived by the poet, as they would only be detectable by this kind of microscopic dissection and examination.

3. Iconicity and poetic interpretation: hidden melodies in a Japanese tanka about cherry blossoms

3.1. Text

Now let us look at our second example:

hisakata no
nikari nodokeki
hara no hi ni
šizukokoro naku
hana no čiruramu

The poem in question is a famous tanka, composed by Tomonori

Kino approximately 1,000 years ago, and compiled in 
Kokin Waka-Shu
(Ozawa 1971 [905]),8 the second oldest anthology of poetry in
Japanese literary tradition.

The following gives a phonetic transcription of the poem and its
word-by-word English translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem in phonetic transcription</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 hisakata no</td>
<td>1 makura kotoba9(pillow word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hikari nodokeki</td>
<td>2 light gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 haru no hi ni</td>
<td>3 spring of day on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 šizukokoro naku</td>
<td>4 quiet+mind/heart there-not-be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 hana10 no čiruramu</td>
<td>5 flower subject-marker fall+aux</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poem describes falling cherry blossoms on a tranquil spring day. The sun is shining, but the petals are showering down without being able to find any peace of mind. We can interpret that the poet has a melancholy feeling about the transience of the beauty of cherry blossoms. His heart, feeling the sorrow of the flowers, becomes one with the hearts of the flowers.

In what follows, we will look at three aspects of the poem, which are phonologically distinctive when analyzed in the similar way as in the previous section. They are the distinctiveness of Line 4, distribution of certain repeatedly used consonants, and distribution of two vowels, [a] and [o]. I would like to show how they are iconic to the reading of this poetic text.

3.2. Sore-thumb: distinctiveness of line 4

There are a number of respects in which the fourth line sticks out like a “sore-thumb” (Ross 1982: 688). First, the initial sound of each line goes like h-h-h-5-h as shown in Figure 2.
Second, the first word in each line is a noun. In line 4, it is followed by the syllable [na], while in other lines, the first noun is followed by the syllable [no], as shown in Figure 3.

N
1 hisakata no
N
2 hikari nodokeki
N
3 haru no hi ni
N
4 ōzukokoro naku
N
5 hana no chiraramu

Figure 3: The Mora which Follows the First Word

Third, all nouns begin with [h] except kokoro (mind/heart), as shown in Figure 4.

1 hisakata
2 hikari
3 haru, hi
4 kokoro
5 hana

Figure 4: Initial Sound of the Nouns

Fourth, in lines 1, 2, 3 and 5, the sequential order of the first three consonants has a regular progressive pattern as follows:

1 hi ka ta
2 hi ka ri
3 ha ru no
5 ha ya no

Figure 5: Sequential Order of Consonants across the Lines

The pattern is that the third consonant in the former line becomes the second consonant in the next line. Line 4 has no such pattern.

And finally, there are seven repeated morae, [hi] [ha] [ka] [ru] [na] [no] and [ko], which appear in the following order:

1 hisakata no
2 hikari nodokeki
3 haru no hi ni
4 ōzukokoro naku
5 hana no chiraramu

Figure 6: Order of the Repeated Morae

In lines 1 and 2, the same morae, [hi], [ka] and [no], appear in the same sequence in the same number. Lines 3 and 5 share three, [ha], [ru] and [no], out of four repeatedly used morae. Yet, it is obvious that line 4 is quite different from the others.

Why is line 4 different from the others? It is not different by chance. There must be some reason. When we think of the meaning of line 4, that there is no calm mind/heart for the falling cherry blossoms or for the poet himself, we see why there is a break in the phonological patterning in line 4. Namely, the phonological form of the poem itself embodies the semantics of the poem as a structural analogy. This is what we call a diagrammatic iconicity. The form of this poem is structured in such a way that it resembles its meaning. Line 4 is unique not only in terms of its phonological distinctiveness, but also in terms of the semantic progression of the poem. The first three lines describe the time when the cherry flowers are falling. It is on a calm spring day that is full of sunlight. The last line describes the action – the falling of
cherry blossoms. These lines are descriptions of external reality. Line 4, however, is not a description of the external reality, but it gives the internal description, which is ambiguous — it talks both about the kokoro (mind/heart) of the flower (metaphorically), and, since usually it is only people that have kokoro, it suggests that the poet and flower are one. This is the only line where a reference to the poet is hinted at by the word ʂizukokoro of the flowers. The flowers are personified at the same time as humans are “plantized.” We shall find more places where a fusion of human being and nature, one of the classical themes of Japanese poetry, is expressed iconically in this poem.

3.3. Hidden melodies: hana and kokoro as key words

Let us first look at the distribution of some phonetic segments. A distribution of consonants goes as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line</th>
<th>Obstruents</th>
<th>Sonorants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t s z š č k</td>
<td>m n r h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0 1</td>
<td>0 1 0 1 hisakata no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 1 0 0 0 0 3</td>
<td>0 1 1 1 hikari nodokeki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 2 1 2 haru no hi ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0 0 0 1 1 0 3</td>
<td>0 1 1 0 ʂizukokoro naku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 1 0</td>
<td>1 2 2 1 hana no ɕiruramu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line</th>
<th>Obstruents</th>
<th>Sonorants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1 7</td>
<td>1 7 5 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Number of Occurrence of Consonants

There are four consonants that are used repeatedly in the text: 5 [h]’s, 7 [n]’s, 7 [k]’s and 5 [r]’s. Other consonants occur only once in the text. Let us examine more closely those consonants which are used repeatedly, for, I think, their overwhelming repetition needs some explanation. Figure 7 shows a distribution of [h] and [n].

1 hisakata no
2 hikari nodokeki
3 haru no hi ni
4 ʂizukokoro naku
5 hana no ɕiruramu

Figure 7: Distribution of [h] and [n]

The distribution of [h] and [n] follows an alternating pattern until line 4, where the pattern stops because of the lack of [h]. In line 5, the pattern revives in ɕhana, but then vanishes as ‘no ɕiruramu’. The distance between [h] and [n] in each [h] / [n] pair becomes closer and closer as indicated in Figure 8.

**Distance between [h] and [n]**

- hisakata no: 3 morae
- hikari nodokeki: 2 morae
- haru no hi ni: 1 mora
- ʂizukokoro naku: 0 morae and 1 word boundary (#)
- hana: 0 morae or #

Figure 8: Distance between [h] and [n]

From this, we can speculate that [h] and [n] are a hidden prefiguring of the hana (flower/cherry blossoms). One can hear this melody from the very beginning of the poem. It gets clearer and clearer as we proceed toward ɕhana (with the sole exception of line 4), and then cannot be heard because the flowers are falling, and the dropping of the petals dissolves the h... n... melody, too.

How about a distribution of [k] and [r]?

1 hisakata no
2 hikari nodokeki
3 haru no hi ni
4 ʂizukokoro naku
5 hana no ɕiruramu

Figure 9: Distribution of [k] and [r]

As shown in Figure 9, [k] and [r] similarly form a pattern of k...k...r..., which is a hidden prefiguring of the kokoro (mind/heart). The distance between each sound of the k...k...r... trios also gets closer and closer as follows:

**Between [k] and [k]**

- hisakata no hikari: 3 morae and 2 #s
- nodokeki haru: 0 morae or #s
- ʂizukokoro: 0 morae or #s

**Between [k] and [r]**

- 0 morae or #s
- 1 mora and 1 #
- 0 morae or #s

Figure 10: Distance between [k], [k], and [r]
The k...k...r... melody keeps playing until kokoro in line 4, and then dissolves, because there can be no melody when there is no calm kokoro. These facts lead us to assume that:

(i) hana and kokoro are the two key words in this poetic text.

(ii) the two melodies show again a strong diagrammatic iconicity to the semantic architecture of the poem—the decay of the hana melody represents the falling of the petals of the hana; the decay of kokoro melody symbolizes the absence of peace of kokoro. In addition, since the decay of both of the hidden melodies begins in line 4, this fact also joins the two words.

(iii) the fact that hana and kokoro both participate in a similar melodic decays and that their decays play similar iconic roles in the semiotic architecture of the poem would suggest that they are poetically equivalent. Thus, it might be plausible to interpret that hana and kokoro fuse with each other in the harmony of these two hidden melodies—that hana is kokoro (the mind/heart of human being and the mind/heart of cherry blossoms is one). Again, the stage for this fusion is set by the radical “sore thumbing” of line 4.

3.4. Onion-skin structure: kokoro inside hana

I have argued above that one vantage point from which to view the poem is the one which sees how different the fourth line is from the other four lines—that it is a “sore thumb”, and also that there is a precise reason for its deviance. In line 4, just as the h...h... melody of hana is interrupted, the k...k...r... melody of kokoro consolidates to reveal its secret. Thus, in a sense, kokoro's melody is “inside” hana's melody—the first [h] is before the first [k], and k...k...r...’s blossoming in line 4, is before h...h...’s blossoming in line 5. I will now discuss some patterns that put kokoro “inside” hana in a different but complementary way.

The pattern that emerges is one which connects the first and last lines, and also the second and fourth lines, surrounding, in an “onion skin” fashion, the pivot line, line 3, as shown in Figure 11.

The first thing to notice, in support of this pattern, is the syntactic fact that there are just two adjectival notions in the poem—nodokeki (gentle), and šizuku (quiet). If we diagram the poem’s part-of-speech structure, we find something like that shown in Figure 12.

The arrow from the two A's indicates the nouns they are modified by.

{ } encloses bare nouns.

( ) encloses extra material.

Figure 12: Part-of-Speech Structure of the Poem

Here we can see that only the pivot line has two nouns, while every other line has one. The nouns in the exterior lines are followed by the particle no (although engaging in different grammatical functions—no is a possessive marker, while šo is a subject marker), whereas those in the even, adjectival lines are the poem's only bare nouns.

The postulation of such an onion-skin structure is of course strengthened by the semantic fact that the concepts expressed by the two adjectives, namely gentleness and quietness (or stillness), are very similar.

Now I would like to move onto a discussion of the phonetic properties of the lines in question, to show that here too, there is support for postulating an onion-skin pattern. Let us first note that one of the primary contrasts between the two focal words, kokoro and hana is in vowel height—and that in fact the last line's three [a]'s are matched exactly by three [a]’s in the first line, with each of the interior lines having just one each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Pattern</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>sakata</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>hana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Number of [a]'s
Just as *hana* is characterized by a sequence of two adjacent low vowels, and we first hear low vowels in the three adjacent morae of line 1's [(hi)sukata], so the characteristic mid vowels of *kokoro* are also introduced by a sequence of three mid vowels in line 2's [nodoke(ki)]. The odd lines manifest exactly one mid vowel a piece, as shown in Table 12.

**Numerical Pattern**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>nodoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>kokoro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Number of [o]’s

Therefore, we can conclude, from these syntactic and phonological facts, that lines 1 and 5, and lines 2 and 4 are poetically equivalent, and that the exterior lines represent *hana*, while the interior lines represent *kokoro*. Hence, the onion-skin structure of “*kokoro inside hana*” as shown in Figure 13 could also be interpreted as a fusion of *hana* and *kokoro*, i.e., a fusion between nature and humanity – one of the classical themes in Japanese poetic arts.

![Figure 13: Kokoro inside Hana](image)

3.5. Discussion

Through this analysis of several abstract patterns in the distribution of linguistic elements, we have shown that there is a strong diagrammatic iconicity of form and meaning in this poem in the following three main ways:

(i) The phonological distinctiveness of the line 4 is consonant with the meaning of this line; namely, a lack of orderly sound patterns represents a lack of calm mind.

(ii) The two vital words in this poem, *hana* (flower) and *kokoro* (mind/heart), inspired hidden melodies, and the progression and dissonation of these melodies are iconic to the semantic architecture of the poem falling – cherry blossoms is represented by the decay of the *hana* melody, the absence of peace in mind/heart by the dissolution of the *kokoro* melody. In addition, a fusion of *hana* and *kokoro* is represented by the equivalent roles these hidden melodies play in the whole text.

(iii) The parallelism of these two melodies as well as the syntactic equivalences shown in the onion-skin structure of exterior and interior lines also suggests that the fusion of human mind/heart with the flower is iconically embodied in the very structure of this poem.

As being demonstrated, the principle of iconicity helps interpret the abstract patterns uncovered by the formal analysis of the poetic text. It works on two levels: evaluation and reading. It evaluates whether or not a certain formal pattern is semantically significant. It suggests such semantically significant patterns (i.e., iconically oriented patterns) must have some crucial importance in the holistic reading of the poem. This is basically what I have tried in the analysis above.

When we read poems as a reader, we may not notice such abstract and subliminal patterns at first glance, and we may still be perfectly happy about our interpretation of the poems. This, however, hardly means that the poetic orderings revealed only by analysis do not exist or succeed in having an effect on the reader. Some people may even feel uncomfortable about dissecting poetry like chemical compounds. We see that microscopic dissection is only meaningful when we know the way to integrate separate parts into a united whole. I hope the two sample analyses above could show this point, too. After all, our intention is to approach the mystery of poetic creation by examining how poetic language engages linguistic structure maximally, radically and subliminally.

4. Conclusion

Linguistic poetics, as developed by Jakobson, is beneficial as it provides the precise methods of linguistics to uncover some mysteries in the poetic use of language, which is different from the ordinary use in terms of deviation from the norm (i.e., creativity, ambiguity and imagination), of well-formedness (i.e., rhythm and structure), and of iconicity (i.e., immediacy and integrity of form and meaning). These differences are by no means absolute ones. There are also varying degrees and predominances
in these differences as they manifest themselves in poetic language.

This paper has been focussing on the iconic aspect of the poetic language with special reference to its phonological dimension. Poetry often shows iconicity in an integrated way in various dimensions, e.g., in visual, auditory, and/or conceptual dimensions.\textsuperscript{11}

The poetic forms, whether they are as immediate as images or as structural as diagrams, display iconic functions to varying degrees. As demonstrated by the sample analyses, far from being subordinated to meaning, form in the poetic text plays a leading role in conveying and creating meaning. The principle of iconicity works at this very point where form contributes in reinforcing or creating meaning.

Notes

\textsuperscript{1} Previous versions of parts of this paper were given at various places, most notably at the XIV International Congress of Linguists held in East Berlin in 1987 and Cornell Linguistic Colloquium in September 1989. I would like to express my hearty gratitude to Hij Ross who has given a number of invaluable suggestions and comments on the analysis of the two poems. I am also grateful to Kanichi Hanzawa, Benjamin Hrushovski, Yasuo Isami, Niro Ohki, and Linda Waugh for their helpful suggestions at various stages of this research. A part of this paper was published as “Eternal stillness: A linguistic journey to Basho’s haiku about the cicada” in Poetics Today, vol. 8:1 (1987), 5-18, and as “The hidden melodies: a linguistic analysis of a Japanese short poem” in the Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Linguists (1987), 1945-1949.

\textsuperscript{2} Icons are divided into three subtypes, i.e., images, diagrams and metaphors, based on the degree of abstraction as well as the dominance of characteristics of similarity such as mimicry, analogy and parallelism. Images are based on a monadic, simple, sensory or mimetic resemblance; diagrams on a dyadic, proportional or structural analogy; and metaphors on a triadic representational parallelism. The degree of abstraction increases from images to diagrams, from diagrams to metaphors.

\textsuperscript{3} Haiku or hokku as it was called during the time of Basho, is the shortest form of Japanese traditional poetry, consisting of seventeen morae, divided into three sections of 5-7-5. Originating in the first three lines of the 31 morae tanka, haiku began to rival the older form in the Edo period (1603 - 1867), which the great master Basho elevated it to the level of a profoundly serious art form. It has since remained the most popular poetic form in Japan. Originally, the subject matter of haiku was restricted to an objective description of nature suggestive of one of the seasons, evoking a definite, though unstated, emotional response. Later, its subject range was broadened but it retained an art of expression much and suggesting more in the fewest possible words.

\textsuperscript{4} Tanka has been one of the leading forms of Japanese poetry for more than two centuries up to the present day. Together with haiku, it is composed by people of every class, men and women, young and old. It consists of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7 morae on each of the five lines, which gives the poetry its rhythm. As the Japanese language has only five vowel sounds, [a], [e], [i], [o] and [u], with which morae are formed either by themselves or by a combination with a consonant as in consonant-vowel sequence, it is not possible to achieve rhyming in the sense of European poetry. Brevity, suggestiveness and elliptic are the life and soul of tanka. The reader is invited to read the unwritten lines with the help of his/her imagination.

\textsuperscript{5} Basho Matsuo (1644-1694) is considered the greatest master of haiku in Japanese literary history. Basho’s ideal in poetry was to achieve a level of total identity with nature. Greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism, his haiku indicates “a great zest for life; a desire to use every instant to the uttermost; an appreciation of this even in natural objects; a feeling that nothing is alone, nothing unimportant; a wide sympathy; and an acute awareness of relationships of all kinds, including that of one sense to another” (Henderson 1958: 21). For further explanation of haiku and Basho’s haiku, see Blyth 1952: 1-336, Henderson 1958: 1-48, Yusaichi 1957: 1-26.

\textsuperscript{6} For the syntactic and orthographical revisions and more detailed explanation, see Hiraga (1987a).

\textsuperscript{7} Basho wrote the haiku in question in his travel diary called Oku no hosomichi, in which he stated: “The whole mountain was made of massive rocks thrown together, and covered with age-old pines and oaks. The stony ground itself bore the colour of eternity, paved with velvet moss. The doors of the shrines built on the rocks were firmly barred and there was not a sound to be heard. As I moved on all fours from rock to rock, bowing reverently at each shrine, I felt the purifying power of this holy environment prevailing my whole being. /In the utter silence/ Of a temple/ A cicada’s voice alone/ Penetrates the rocks” (Matsuo 1966:122-123).

\textsuperscript{8} Kakin Waka-Shu (Ozawa 1971[905]) was the first major work of kana (Japanese syllabic alphabet) literature, compiled by Kino Tsurayuki and others. This anthology contains 1,111 poems divided into 20 books arranged by topics such as seasons, love, travel, mourning, congratulations, etc. It was the model of tanka composition for a thousand years until the 18th century.

\textsuperscript{9} Makura kotoba (pillow word) is a poetic epithet or attribute for a word to lend a formal dignity to the style of a poem. The meaning of some pillow words is uncertain, but when their meaning is known, they serve almost like images to enrich the tone. Hisakata no is a makura kotoba for shikiri (light) suggesting loftiness of tone.

\textsuperscript{10} Giana (flower) is a synenodoche of cherry blossom.

\textsuperscript{11} For general discussion on how poetic form embodies meaning, please see Hiraga (to appear (a)). For visual iconicity in poetry, see Hiraga (to appear (b)). For an analysis of auditory iconicity in particular, see Hiraga 1990 in which I attempted to examine sound symbolism and diagrammatic iconicity in Edgar Allan Poe’s poem called The Bells.
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PHONOSYMBOLISM
AND POETIC LANGUAGE

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