

An interview with Madoka Mayuzumi (January 2013)  
Haiku poet. Born in Kanagawa prefecture

## The Anatomy of New Cities

### Passing on the culture of “Kata”, and traditional perception of nature to the next generation



**Madoka Mayuzumi,**  
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Representative of the initiators of the project “Rediscovery and Redefining Japan (Nihon Sai-hakken Juku)”; Councilor of the National Art Center, Tokyo; Visiting professor of Kyoto Tachibana University.

### What is an "attractive city"?

#### Paris, a mature city with a sense of civic responsibility

**Q. You have visited many foreign countries and been on walking tours there. Which cities have impressed you?**

**A.** Paris has left special impression to me because I have lived there, not just passing on a trip, for two years in total. It's a beauty of high-handed magnificence! I call Paris “a beautiful shrew”. Paris is beautiful but uncontrollable, which is her charm. Paris has a pride as if they're saying “You can come to Paris if you can understand our values!” There is a reason why the city looks so high-handed. For example, the promenades along the Seine have no fence. In picnic season of summer when some visitors get heavily drunk, you can see boats frequently patrolling to check on if anybody has been dropped in the river. I guess the reason why they won't set up fences is to keep the perfect river view without ruining the scenic beauty by the fence. Scenic beauty is given the prime importance in Paris. As such not many elevators and escalators are found in the metro stations or at streets corners. When asked, the French people may say that inconvenience is in exchange for the pride they have of the city. How they act to overcome inconveniences is, for instance; when a wheelchair or a baby carriage approaches the stairs, somebody will run up for a help. What I felt was that each citizen has a sense of civic responsibility, which is piling up to create the identity of the city, form the mature city.

#### Walk one street behind the main street

**Q. The relationship between the people and the land of Japan is a fundamental theme of national spatial planning policy. Does the attractiveness of a city come from the integrity of the city and the inhabitants?**

**A.** In the world of *haiku*<sup>1</sup>, it is often said “Walk one street behind the main street, you can find a poem there”. You can hear voices and find people's lives along the back street and lanes. There was a culture, in older times, such as admiring one's small garden, growing morning glories (*asa-gao*) in the flower pot, and during summer, hanging wind bells (*fu-rin*) and sprinkling water. Those cultures are dying out with the advent of the air conditioner. No springing water, no wind bells, no morning glories --- you can catch coolness with a single switch. The true face of any town exists at one street behind where also a poem is born, but recent Japan has lost such sensitivity. I feel sorry that the Japanese who have especially been caring for the change of four seasons and have lived with high regard to the seasonal colors are now letting themselves spend tasteless lives.

When I had a chance to have a talk with Dr. Donald Keene six months before the Great East Japan Earthquake, he mentioned that there were three disappointments after 70 years of his watching the Japanese. First, the loss of delicacy toward the nature; daily life has been losing the sense of seasons. Next is the weakening ability of using our language, Japanese. The third is the ebbing of people's curiosity into something new which he sees it as the decline of ability to watch things from objective viewpoint --- a key to turn matters into humor. I can see those tendencies particularly among young people and I am afraid that we are now in a critical stage where it could be extinct at any moment.

<sup>1</sup> A very short form if Japanese poem with 17 syllables.

## The era of virtual cities

### Virtual cities; Uneasiness of not living the present times

**Q. Is it partly because we have been seeking mainly for high economic growth?**

**In your recent book “*Hikizan no Bigaku (Aesthetics of subtraction)*” you remark what makes the Japanese a Japanese is his/her perception of nature cultivated through their struggle against hot and humid climate, which made them to find out the beauty of nature”. However, this sense of value toward nature seems to have been getting poor.**

**A.** Life in a city is virtual. The air and water we enjoy are produced in other prefectures. We get everything by cash which leads to lack of reality of what our lives are actually made up of. Moreover, if you shut yourself up whole day within your house and live in the internet society you would really be surrounded by the virtual world.

Recently the expression “uneasiness of being unable to foresee the future” can be heard everywhere, however, it goes without saying that nobody can foresee their future. You would become definitely uneasy if you did. What they are trying to express is that they aren't living their present life, in other words, uneasiness by the lack of sense of reality in current lives.

For example, digitalized school textbooks are tending to increase but it should be balanced with the education that appeals to one's five senses. Otherwise, virtual generation will progressively be increasing. We still have elderly generations at the moment but in a few decades our society will be filled with virtual generations.

### Internet haiku gathering; Sharing the table, “za”

**Q. On the other hand, you have been bringing in new technologies such as haiku gathering by using cellular phones.**

**A.** I was skeptical about it, maybe around twenty years

ago, when something called “internet *haiku* gathering” appeared. We can share “time” and “space” by internet, but at a haiku meeting we should share a “place (*za*)” or a table as well, where we sit around. What I was concerned in my mind was that internet would not be a tool that will enable us to set up a *za*.

One day, I attended a Haiku gathering in Yamagata prefecture and there were elderly people who could not attend during nighttime under such a snowy condition. Then I noticed one of the participants e-mailing the result of the gathering by using the cellular phone. What flashed into my mind was the positive aspect of utilizing this tool. I asked Professor Takemochi Ishii for a support to establish a website and I managed to hold the first i-Mode *haiku* meeting titled “composing Haiku about cherry blossoms”. I made a website where members from Okinawa through to Hokkaido gather around and at the same time standing under their local cherry blossom trees, on the same day at the same time. Then each member will send their *haiku* and their selection of others' works to this website, on which later they can find out what they select among their contributions. I also provided them with a message board and it led to active exchanges of messages from all over the country. There were places with full blossom, blossom under rain, cloudy blossom, chilly blossom, one-fifth blossom, shower of blossom, and so on. It was so interesting to see such numbers of season words.

Another advantage was that it enabled members who usually cannot attend the gathering could participate in the exchanges, i.e.; child-raising mothers and people with illness. A new “*za*” has been created in a style which could only be possible in our time. Yet I still think the principle of such meeting is that it should be held among the members who know with each other. I would hold this sort of meeting once a year. Internet meeting can be held in a “healthy” way when we continue traditional style meetings with members' participation in the actual “*za*”, going knee-to-knee.

## The culture of “Kata” and traditional perception of nature;

### Identity of the Japanese

#### Town development giving importance to local potentials

**Q. Facing with declining population, what do you think will be effective to attract attention to our capital city from the world?**

**A.** There is no use fighting against globalization, but I think we have to work to the utmost on town development by giving great importance to local potentials. Also, I think we should better highlight more and more Japanese aesthetic sense devoting a lot to the details.

I preside over an association named “Rediscovery and Redefining Japan (*Nihon Sai-hakken Juku*)” to discover buried treasures of Japan. Last year, we held an event in Hida-Takayama city. When they are reconstructing side ditches in traditional townscape in Takayama, for example, they are using imported stones, although in the city, local high-quality stone is available and a local masonry run by a father and his son is there. Local stones retain a peculiar character that would blend into

the townscape as time passes but the imported one becomes stained before it fits in. Imported stones are used just because of lower cost. Under the pressure of other materials such as concrete, inexpensive imported stones and panel stones, local masons scarcely have orders and are struggling to manage at their breaking point. This is what is happening throughout Japan. This is why I emphasize the importance of illuminating local potentials. That is to say town development through “local production for local consumption”.

#### Be proud of Japanese culture

**Q. How could globalize large cities such as a capital city could identify its local traditions and highlight their local assets?**

**A.** Paris refuses fast food restaurants almost to the extreme. Even a child won't be influenced and people are living as though they are expressing “We are the French.” I wonder how they could nurture that sort of pride. The Japanese also have a culture comparable to theirs. I find

it strange that Japanese could not be proud of it. Rather the French people admire more Japanese culture than we do. The Japanese people are worth achieving such pride and confidence.

### **The culture of “Kata” and traditional perception of nature; Identity of the Japanese**

**Q. It seems to us that the Japanese are not fully convinced with the value of their culture. How do you think we can develop pride in hometowns and raise awareness of preserving traditions?**

**A.** Traditional cultures characterized by “Kata”, basic forms, positions or movements of traditional arts, should be taught such as flower arrangement, tea ceremony,

and *haiku*. And it is also important to pass on the mind capable of valuing nature and admiring change of four seasons, as Japanese sweets and kimonos, for example, essentially reflect seasonal colors.

Otherwise Japanese would be rootless.

I think “Kata” is a Japanese identity. It should just be learnt by practice in one’s childhood. Today’s parents do not have experiences any more enough to educate their children to practice traditional culture of Kata. There are no other ways except making use of compulsory education.

Japan is a country with no prevailing religion compared to other countries, but “Kata” and “sense of nature”, I believe, is the national identity in place of religion.

## **The Great East Japan Earthquake and haiku; The power of culture**

### **Culture of “Man-yo-shu” is surviving in the affected areas**

**Q. In Japan vulnerable to natural disasters, culture plays key role in order to survive disasters. Please let us hear about what you have been working on in Tohoku and what has impressed you.**

**A.** I have received a letter written soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake. He/she wrote to me that that he/she has started composing *haiku* on the very day of the Earthquake. The person, a school teacher aged in his/her forties, recalled that he/she found himself/herself composing *haiku* involuntarily while scooping out accumulated mud for hours and hours, which has helped lighting up his/her hope to live on. I hear that many people have survived that way. Similarly, I heard in Kobe that, after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, many pieces of *haiku* had been composed in the affected areas, which had encouraged a lot of people.

Looking back to the age of “*Man-yo-shu*”, people, suffering from earthquakes, famines and volcanic eruptions, had composed “*waka*” poetries in a manner as taking a deep breath. I guess there were few countries where in that age of 8th century, ordinary people were composing poems.

People were exchanging short versed poems with each other, during weaving works, agricultural works, and so on. By lifting their feelings above on their deep breath with the rhythm of seven and five syllables, they tried to escape from sufferings, to purify their minds, to sublimate their feelings and to transform it to the power of living tomorrow. In the affected areas, I saw with my own eyes that such tradition had handed down from generation to generation to our times.

Until then I was regarding “*Man-yo-shu*” as a classical literature but it was not. It is a collection of “*Azuma-uta*”, poem of the eastern territories of Japan, which are still

being composed nowadays. In other words “*Man-yo-shu*” lies as a thick foundation of Japanese culture lasting for a long, long time.

Furthermore, many people are taking nature as their themes, when composing haiku. A friend of mine aged in the thirties living in Sendai city said in his e-mail, “Madoka-san, a beautiful starry sky is spreading over our town filled with debris. This is the most beautiful sky I have ever seen in my life.”

He was admiring the nature by looking up at the sky, just after being hit severely by the same nature. That firm relationship between the Japanese people and the nature has been retained consistently, I believe. Grief caused by natural force can be purified and finally be sublimed by making poems.

A French newspaper reported that Japan is a country of “soul of language” and that the affected people were composing haikus right after the disaster, in the special issue on the Great Earthquake last March. Understanding more deeply such culture of our country and passing it on to the next generation, that will lead to town and national development with satisfaction.

*Kabuki* and *Noh* play are labeled as “culture” and classified at the top of hierarchy of culture, while lifestyle culture composes the foundation of the pyramid which is now weakening greatly. Lives of ordinary people are becoming rough being spoiled by globalized daily life and the consciousness which had been kept in our traditional lifestyle is being lost such as hanging wind-bells during summer season, or watering the gateway before welcoming guest, for example.

I guess shrinking of culture in this layer may lead to that of upper layers. Haiku is included in the bottom layer. Culture within the everyday life of ordinary people is essential, which can be well passed on through daily education at school, at home, and within community.

<sup>2</sup> “Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves”. The oldest anthology of Japanese poetry, compiled in 8thA.D

<sup>3</sup> Traditional Japanese poem of thirty-one syllables.

## Embassy Visit & Interview

# Developing new capital of Myanmar, Nay Pyi Taw

**Khin Maung Tin,**  
Myanmar Ambassador to Japan



### Background and intention of the capital relocation; Congestion in the former capital, Yangon

**Q. Myanmar had relocated its capital from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw. Please explain about its background and intention.**

**A.** The previous capital, Yangon, was gradually becoming congested and there was shortage of land, which led to the relocation of the capital to Nay Pyi Taw for the purpose including expansion of infrastructure and improvement of water discharge. I'm going to explain about the current condition of Yangon which may provide you with more detailed reasons of this relocation.

Yangon City changed its name from Dagon by King Alaungpaya in 1755. "Yan" and "gon" mean "enemies" and "overcoming" respectively which add up to mean "overcoming of all the enemies". Later, from 1824, the Lower Burma was seized by the British at the First Anglo-Burmese War which resulted in developing Yangon as the political and commercial hub of the Britain. The whole Burma<sup>1</sup> was occupied by the British in 1885 and Yangon became the capital of Burma. The British introduced advanced technologies for the purpose of developing Yangon, and according to the books I had read, it was explained that Yangon had reached the same standard as London at the beginning of the 20th century.

The area of Yangon has expanded to 230 square miles (600 km<sup>2</sup>) by the development in 1950 and 1980. Yangon Region is divided into four districts (north, south, east and west). Focusing on Yangon City, the city is composed of

33 Townships. There remain more than 200 buildings from the colonial period in Yangon City.

In Yangon, roads, waterworks, sewerage, electricity and garbage collecting systems failed to function properly from 1962 to 1988.

Population of Yangon increased up to nearly 5 million and the growing population density brought about traffic congestion, road damages and trouble in water supply system. Individuals thus privately dug water-wells, and used private sewage treatment system instead of centralized system.

In order to expand Yangon City, it would be necessary to obtain additional land. An additional difficulty of Yangon city is that the road was flooded up to one or two feet in rainy season. Those were two of the reasons that Myanmar had decided to move its capital to a new land. Successive mayors of Yangon had them repaired within the budget limitation, but even though Yangon's infrastructure was not sufficient enough as the level of a capital city.

Another reason of relocation can be explained through the cases of the capitals of other countries. For instance, Sydney in Australia is a large city near the coastline, but the country's capital is an inland city, Canberra. Also China has large cities near the sea but its capital is Beijing. In the same manner, Myanmar relocated its capital city.

### The reason of designating Nay Pyi Taw: Central location of the territory, easiness in acquiring land, and so on

**Q. What was the reason Nay Pyi Taw was designated as the new capital?**

**A.** The name of the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, literally means a Royal Capital. The successive dynasties of Myanmar had a history of moving the capital to various areas that were well suited for administration, such as Mandalay, Taungoo and Bagan. Similarly, Nay Pyi Taw, located 320km north from Yangon, close to Pinyinana and also to Taungoo where one of the dynasties had existed, is about halfway between Taungoo and Mandalay and geographically at the center of our territory, which will facilitate administration toward all directions; north, south, east and west.

Moreover, agricultural sector is active in the surrounding

services such as electricity and water services can be provided easily. There are two dams including Paung Laung Dam with hydroelectric power generation of 280 megawatts in capacity, and Yezin dam exclusively for irrigation.

From the aspect of north-south transportation, Nay Pyi Taw lies halfway between the existing road connecting Mandalay and Yangon, and it is easy to access to North – Meiktila and Mandalay, to West - Taungdwingyi, Magwe, to East Pinn Laung (Shan State).

In regard to landforms within Nay Pyi Taw area, it is composed of flat areas but also of a certain volume of

<sup>1</sup> Historical and geographic division of Burma (Myanmar), referring to the southern coastal and delta region on the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea (as opposed to Upper Burma). It includes Tanintharyi Region (former name Tenasserim) and Rakhine State (former name Arakan).

areas of Nay Pyi Taw, and at the same time, utility contrasted with those of Yangon.

The vast land of Nay Pyi Taw stretches over the area of 7,054 km<sup>2</sup>. Such broad and scenic land is difficult to find in the neighboring areas of Yangon.

Embraced in this broad land are; government ministries areas, housing areas, shopping areas, recreational areas including golf courses. There also are the Gems Museum

### Outline of the new capital, Nay Pyi Taw : Planning and construction

**Q. Please inform us about the plans and construction process of Nay Pyi Taw.**

**A.** Nay Pyi Taw was constructed as the union territory<sup>2</sup>. The union territory includes eight pre-existed townships.

The plan was established in 2001, and the first phase of construction was completed in 2005 and the second phase, in 2008. As I have already explained, the area of Nay Pyi Taw is about 7,000 km<sup>2</sup> while the population amounts to 925,000 including those of the neighboring townships. Nay Pyi Taw is divided into variety of areas, there is an area called International Area of 4.9 acres (about 2 hectares). The area is planned to locate foreign embassies. Recently, on the visit of the prime minister of Bangladesh, a ceremony was held to mark the beginning of constructing the country's embassy on the reserved

### Functions of the former capital Yangon and the new capital Nay Pyi Taw : The Parliament and all the ministries have moved to Nay Pyi Taw, while Yangon will be the center of economic activities

**Q. How are the key functions distributed between Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw?**

**A.** All ministries of Myanmar have relocated to Nay Pyi Taw. The house of parliament as well was newly constructed in Nay Pyi Taw and the parliament has relocated there. The former parliament building is now used as that of Yangon Region. Embassies of the countries remain in Yangon. However, as I have already mentioned before, a new building of Bangladesh Embassy is under construction in Nay Pyi Taw. Commercial activities are still functioning in Yangon but firms that intend to advance into Myanmar and invest there are opening branches and business offices in Nay Pyi Taw. For instance, a general trading company from Japan has established an office in Nay Pyi Taw.

I have explained that all the ministries have moved to Nay Pyi Taw, however, there are certain departments that cannot relocate from Yangon due to the nature of the works they are in charge. For example, Department of Civil Aviation and Myanmar Port Authority of Ministry of Transport are still on duty in Yangon. Respective reasons are that Myanmar Port Authority has a role of controlling

### Vision toward the future : Yangon as a commercial hub, Nay Pyi Taw as an administrative city

**Q. Please explain about the current evaluation after the relocation to Nay Pyi Taw and about the vision toward the future.**

**A.** The basic framework is to promote policies giving importance to comfortableness, creativity, healthiness, high intellect, care-freeness, urban plan for scenic city,

downhill which makes a good drainage of water, and is and religious facilities. You can also find a pagoda that resembles the Myanmar's well-known Shwedagon Pagoda. The pagoda is one foot lower in height compared to Shwedagon Pagoda but it reaches 325 feet high and is one of the landmarks of Nay Pyi Taw. As is already explained, the actual condition of Yangon having no room for further expansion led to the designation of this land which embraces all the requirements for the capital.

land inside this area.

There are four major townships in Nay Pyi Taw. The city has hospitals, stations and three universities; Yezin Agricultural University, University of Forestry (Yezin) and The University of Veterinary Science, Yezin. The road connecting Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw is a highway of eight lanes extending 323.5 km. The widest roads inside the area of Nay Pyi Taw have ten-lanes in each direction. They are constructed in prospect of future traffic volume.

The relocation to Nay Pyi Taw begun with the headquarters of the Defense Services in 2005, followed by 11 government ministries in November. Construction of the capital started in 2002, with the participation of 25 companies in the construction.

access of foreign shipping arriving in Yangon Port and Department of Civil Aviation, likewise, is managing Yangon International Airport. Also, Meteorological services remain in Yangon as they work in cooperation with worldwide meteorological organizations. The building of central bank is currently in Nay Pyi Taw, although some functions are still operating at the former central bank office which is now a branch office. Most of the private banks and factories and industrial areas too, are remaining in Yangon.

Talking about the distribution of roles between Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, all the administrative management functions are undertaken in Nay Pyi Taw and the operations following the direction from Nay Pyi Taw in other cities including Yangon. The Presidential Office, official residence of the president, office and residence of the vice president, official residence of the chairman are located in Nay Pyi Taw. Four-storied apartments for government officials are constructed and 1,200 units are provided. More and more units are expected to be constructed. An international airport too is also made available in Nay Pyi Taw.

agriculture, regions and environment. As the prospect toward the future, I imagine that Yangon will continue developing as a commercial hub. We are implementing an extension plan through the next thirty years.

This year, in the year 2013, the "27th Southeast Asian Games" will be held in Myanmar and the core site Nay

<sup>2</sup> The union territory is written in parallel with states and other jurisdictions Myanmar Constitution (2011), but it is not a local government, the President is to govern directly.

Pyi Taw, the capital. As such, I believe that Nay Pyi Taw will be prospering in future as a city characterized by the enhancement of its cultural aspect as an intellectual

social capital defined under the national policy and by the environmental policy.

### Message to Japan : Long lasting friendship and mutual prosperity

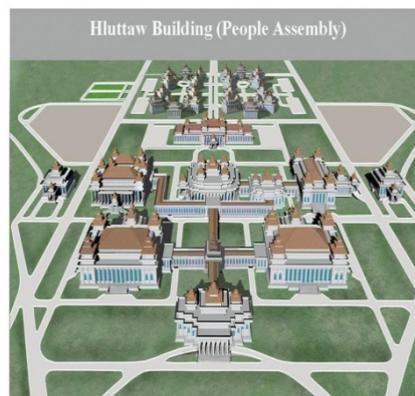
**Q. Would you give us a message toward friendship between Myanmar and Japan hereafter and development and mutual prosperity in Asia?**

**A.** There is a long history of our friendship between Japan and Myanmar which resulted in current relationship with warmth. Myanmar had been given support from Japan not only at the occasion of independence movement but more at various opportunities. At present Myanmar is making a constant

effort toward democratization, yet Japan is going ahead of us in the way. We are going to start accepting economic support and cooperation as well as investment and technical cooperation from Japan and in fact, it has been already begun. Taking the opportunity of this interview, I would like to represent the people of Myanmar and express our gratitude to the Japanese government and Japanese people. I am wishing for the lasting friendship and cooperation between Japan and Myanmar.



Source: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp, GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



People's Assembly bird's View

Source: Nnaypyitaw Development Committee

**National Planning Division National and Regional Policy Bureau  
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism**