



CHINESE THEORY OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS IN MATSUO BASHO'S POETRY

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Abstract

In the history of Japanese poetry the name Matsuo Bashō (1644 – 1694) has always been connected with the poetic genre of haiku – nowadays the most famous and renowned Japanese poetic form – which contains only 17 syllables grouped into three verses (5-7-5).

Having in mind that Bashō's value in the history of Japanese literature has been stressed by numerous authors and that his poems are considered to be some of the finest in the haiku genre, this paper is an attempt to approach the investigation of their value in a slightly different manner. We have decided to analyse his late period poetry by means of the Chinese theories of the five elements and Yin and Yang, taking into consideration the philosophical influence of Taoism and Zen Buddhism. The Chinese theory of the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) has been chosen because they are considered in China and Japan to be the key elements that underlie all natural and social phenomena. Therefore we have tried to highlight their harmonious relations in the poems analysed.

Having analysed the chosen poems from Bashō's late period by using the Yin-Yang and the five elements theories we have concluded that they are harmoniously interrelated, bringing naturalness and universality, and therefore a high literary value, to his poetry. Thus we have shown that his poetry expresses, whether consciously or unconsciously, his philosophical tendencies rooted in the five elements and Yin and Yang theories.

Keywords: *Matsuo Bashō, haiku, Chinese theory of the five elements, Taoism, Zen Buddhism.*

Introduction

In the history of Japanese poetry, Matsuo Bashō's name is always associated with the poetic genre of haiku poetry. Today haiku is the most famous and across the world the most popular Japanese



poetic form, which contains only 17 syllables grouped into three verses (5-7-5). Even though at the beginning haiku was predominantly a form of entertainment, yet with time it developed until reaching the level of expressive artistic form which adorne the highest aesthetic reach.

The rise of this poetic form to the pedestal of a treasury of Japanese literacy was in great measure attained via the contributions of Matsuo Basho, who was considered one of the greatest haiku poets not only during the time when he lived but also of modern times. Many of his poems said to be created as if made by strokes of a brush are considered to be masterpieces of Japanese's and world poetry. This status and level of recognition which he had during his life even elevating especially after his death remains today. Basho acquired this status and respect because of his special personality and the hard work he put into his self-accomplishment along with reformation of haiku poetry raising this poetic form into a world class art. He is considered one of the first and rare haiku poets which in his poetry he brought in his own experience and in some of his poems he embroidered philosophy of Taostic and Zen Buddhism.

Considering that many people already highlight the importance of Matsuo Basho in the history of Japanese poetry and literacy and that many of his poems are recognized and accepted as one of the best achievements of this the shortest poetic form, during the development of this paper the question came up 'Is it possible on any other way to prove and check their artistic merit?'.

We decided to try to analyse some of his most famous poems (from his late work) through the Chinese theory of the five elements, because the five elements are considered to be drivers of Nature and a factor of all-natural occurrences and phenomena. Thus we thought that determination of their harmonious relationships within Basho's poems would be the proof of their authenticity, naturality and artistic value.

Goal and Methodology of This Paper

We are going to analyze Basho's selected poems mostly using a method of binary opposition through the ancient Chinese theory of the five elements. Because every haiku poem consists of *kigo*, more precisely the word or expression which determines the season in a poem and is the carrier of the sensibility of the poem, first we are going to determine to which element the poem belongs because each of the Chinese five elements is associated with a particular season. Upon further analysis we will try to determine if there is within each poem two or more elements and in what correlation they are to each other. Because the Chinese five elements are considered as universal movers of nature, they exist mutually generating or overcoming each other. Because of this when we find those elements in Basho's poems, we will try to define their relationship, actually the consistency and naturality in their



relationship: regardless if they are in the process of generating or overcoming (because creation and destruction between elements is not viewed as positive / negative however it is seen as a part of the natural process of nature). Thereby we will apply this method of the binary opposition to cancel the differences between the Chinese theory of five elements and Basho's work, but also in between philosophy and poetry. The method of binary opposition can help us to illustrate these things that cannot be joined together but also to point out the need of overcoming the habits of binary opinion. For the purpose of our paper we reviewed the poetry using a binary opposition in a broad context as a means to investigate the philosophy of Chinese Yin and Yang theory and the theory of five elements and poetry (Matsuo Basho's poems), indicating a need for overcoming binary opinion. If we succeed to prove that in his work Matsuo Basho faithfully and thoroughly incorporated the natural elements, we will consider that this is what makes his poetry real, universal and unconditional because it is led by universal principles and presents a cosmic rhythm of things shown through the theory of Yin and Yang and the five elements. With this we hope to contribute better understanding of Matsuo Basho's poetry and at the same time haiku as art in general.

Chinese Theory of the Five Elements

The Chinese five elements (*wu xing* – literally "five movers" in Japanese *gogyō*), they are also called *wu-de* (literally "five virtues"). They are five phases of change or five powers which are directing the flow of natural occurrences. These elements are: Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth.

We do not have to perceive the five elements literally, but as abstract powers and symbols for particular fundamental properties of substance. It is believed that the Chinese theory of five elements for the first time appeared around 2000 BC. However, the first real authentic presentation of the five elements we can find in the second chapter of *The Book of History* from IV or III century BC under the name of *Hong fun* (*Big Plan* or *Big Norm*). In the IV or III century BC the study about the five elements survived as an independent school of thought and it was developed by the Yin Yang school as a theory of "mutual influence of Nature and human". According to this theory the whole universe was understood as one mechanism. When one of the parts are broken that mechanically has to influence the other parts. A sequence of four seasons is in accordance with the conditionality of who is ruling between these five elements: Wood dominates in spring and conditions Fire, the element of summer. Fire conditions Earth which is added to the center (precisely the third summer month), and Fire conditions Metal which rules in Autumn and that conditions Water which is the element of winter. To every element Chinese people allocated one animal, internal organ, color, taste, plant, musical note on the scale and a planet.

Thus, ancient Chinese considered the universe, the humans and surroundings are under the dynamic influence of the five elements as well as the balance of Yin/Yang and that their disorder and



disharmony are harmful to the mental and physical health of people. Natural laws of universal energies are utilized in the diagnosis, psychology, pathology and therapy in Chinese traditional medicine. Of course, it is impossible that these elements are operating without Yin-Yang participation. The principal of mutual creation and destruction are matched by the need to harmonize human life and cosmic order. The function of human life is to revive antithetic aspects of cosmic order, more precisely the elements that are creating. Actually, the five elements which define everything that exists are a product of the mutual effect of Yin and Yang.

From the table as presented below we can have an insight into how the five elements are connected with the human and particular phenomena within Nature. Data from this table will be referred to throughout the analysis of the selected poems. This table was sourced from the reference book: Dusan Pajin and Aleksandar Marinkovic, *Put zmaja, rečnik taoizma [The Way of the Dragon, dictionary of Taoism]* and supplemented with data from tables published in books: J. Chevalier, A. Gheerbrant, *Rječnik simbola [Dictionary of Symbols]* (Romanov, Banja Luka, 2003, p.147), Takeo Mori, Ričard Smit, *Kigaku [Kigaku]* (Marko Polo, Beograd, 1990, p.71) i Nemoto Yukio, Nenoï Yoichi, *Yin-Yang Theory of Five Elements* (根本幸夫, 根井養智, 『陰陽五行説』, じほう, 東京, 1991, p.107,108.)

Five elements	WOOD	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER
FOUR SEASONS	spring	summer	late summer	autumn	winter
YIN ORGANS	liver	heart triple heater	spleen	lungs	kidneys
YANG ORGANS	gallbladder	Small intestine. pericard	stomack	colon	bladder
BODY PARTS	nails, hands, feet, eyes	tounge	muscle mass	skin	blood, bonemarrow, teeth, nerves
POSITIVE FEELING	patients	joy	compassion	bravery	calmness
NEGATIVE FEELINGS	anger	hatred	worry	sorrow	fear



OPENING	eyes	tongue	mouth	nose	ears
TISSUE	tendon	blood vessels	muscles	skin	bones
TASES	sour	bitter	sweet	spicy	salty
COLOUR	green	red	yellow	white	black, navy blue
EXPRESSIONS	shouting	laugh	singing	cry	sob
SMELLS	rancid	burned	smelly	rotten	rotted
WEATHER	windy, cloudy	hot	thunder, humidity	dry	rain, cold
VEGETATION	germination	growth, blossom	maturing	produce, harvest	in barn
DIRECTION	east	south	centre	west	north
PLANETS	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
TIME	3-7	9-13	1-3 and 7-9	13-17	21-1
MOVEMENT	growth upwards	expanding in every direction	contraction	pondage	flow downstream, Interflow
PLACE	forest	fire, desert	earth, mountain	sky	water, lake, river, ocean, swamp
VIRTUE	humanity, love, generosity	thankfulness, courtesy, bravery, enthusiasm	faith, composure, honest, reliability, perseverance, decisive	farness, perseverance, loyalty	wisdom, power of the mind
DEBALANS	bad eye- sight, limb weakness, cramp, fragile	fever, coldness of extremities, stiff	obesity, muscle weakness, insomnia, tension insecurity, loneliness	skin problems, melancholy, hypochondriac	bloated, infertility, nervousness, depression, lethargic
NUMBER	3,8	2,7	5,10	4,9	1,6
SHAPE	rectangle	triangle	square	circle or oval	wavy



5 ACTIONS	walking	watching	sitting	lying, to bend	standing
ANIMALS	dragon (scale)	sheep (wool)	veal (hooves)	rooster (feather)	rat (hair)
TIME OF THE DAY	morning	noon	entire day	afternoon	midnight

Table 1. How the five elements are connected with the human and particular phenomenons within Nature

If the outcome of art is to manifest a cosmic rhythm, we believe that it is displayed through the five Chinese elements. If through the analysis of the selected poems of the late poetry of Matsuo Basho we succeed to prove that there are natural elements (and elements of nature) manifested in harmony with cosmic order and the rhythm of things, so that the poet succeeded to express universal in individual, and in accordance with the five elements to show his intention, we are going to accept that Basho's poems are truthful and accessible to anyone who is open to accept their life messages.

Yin-Yang and Chinese Theory of The Five Elements

Of old, before the creation of Heaven and Earth, I consider there was the void without form or shape; profound, opaque, vast, immobile, impalpable and still: it was a nebulosity, infinite, unfathomable, abysmal, a vasty deep without clue of class or genera. The twin and undivided divinities were born (born together and undivided), who superintended the way of Heaven and organized the path of the Earth. Deep-like indeed! No end could be discerned. Great-like indeed! No limit could be set. At a juncture, the divinities Yin and Yang were separated and the eight points of the universe were resolved: the hard and soft being mutually united (cooperation of the Yin and Yang), creation assumed form. The murky elements went to form reptiles: the finer essence went to form man. Hence, spirit belongs to Heaven and the physical belongs to Earth. When the spirit returns to the gate of Heaven and the body seeks its origin, how can I exist? The "I" is dissolved. (Nan Tzu, 1933:71)

Yin Yang

According to the Dictionary of Taoism, The Way of the Dragon, Yin and Yang are the opposite principles that create the universe through their interaction. They are manifestations of Tao, or more precisely the manifestation of Tai Chi (or Tai Ji). From their interaction the five elements are created and they are the foundation for all the phenomena and beings in the universe, wan-wu. The process of creation happens in cycles as generating or overcoming are the complimentary processes (Yin and Yang) of the five element theory. When this 'constant change happens, they are deciding the character of Yin and Yang': The change is the movement of Tao (Pajin, 2004:113).

The word Yang originally signified the sun light or the sunny side of the mountain and was in connection with light and warmth; the word Yin signified the shadowed slope of the mountain, absence of light or shadow and darkness associated with damp and cold weather and cloudy skies. In later development Yin and Yang are considered as two cosmic principals or powers, Yang representing masculinity: activity, warmth, light, dryness, hardness on the contrary Yin represents femininity: passiveness, coldness, darkness, humility, softness. Everything in the universe occurs as a result of the interaction of these two principles. The numbers of Yang are odd, and numbers of Yin are even.



“Numbers of Heaven and Earth are in conformity and mutually complemented. The sum of numbers of Heaven is 25 and sum of numbers of Earth is 30. Total sum of numbers of Heaven and Earth is 55. Through these numbers evolution and secrets of space are happening.” (Yu-lan, 1992:163)

With the introduction of the opposite principals of Yin and Yang, the idea of a pattern of cycles in the way Tao moves it has been given the final structure. They are two poles represent the borders of cycles of changes: “The Yang having reached his climax retreats in favour of the Yin; the Yin having reached its climax retreats in favour of the Yang.” (Capra, 1975:106)

According to Taoistic beliefs all manifestations of Tao come from dynamic integration from these opposite principals. The dynamic character of Yin and Yang is illustrated in the Chinese symbol whose name is Tai Chi-tu or Diagram of Supreme Ultimate.

This diagram shows symmetrical order of dark Yin and light Yang. This symmetry is not static but rotational and strongly suggests continuous movement: Yang cycles comes back to the beginning, Yin reaches the pinnacle and retreats back with the coming of Yang. (apud. Capra, 1989:126) The Yin and Yang couple is an important symbol that has permeated Chinese culture and defines all aspect of traditional Chinese way of life. “Life is”, says Chuang Tzu, “harmonious interaction between Yin and Yang.” (Capra, 1989:127)

Being largely an agricultural society Chinese people were always close to the movements of sun and moon and changes in the four seasons. Therefore the changing of the four seasons and occurrences of generation and decay in organic nature is seen as the most clear interpretation of the interaction in between Yin and Yang, between cold winter and light and warm summer. In Chinese traditional philosophy it is believed that Yin and Yang as opposite but complementary principles making up all of the universe and their governance. The Yin and Yang dynamic which is derived from fundamental polar opposites of light and dark, upper and lower, masculine and feminine and in correlation with other complementarity such as active and passive, strong and weak, solid and liquid became not only an important part in Chinese philosophy but as well in medicine (acupuncture), culinary tradition and nutrition (macrobiotics), interior design (Feng shui), martial and therapeutic arts (Tai Chi Chuan and Qigong).

Five Elements

Wu-xing, five movers, also *wu-de* are representing five virtues, five elements and five changing cycles of five powers that are governing everything. These five elements are as follows: Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, Earth. These five elements we do not need literally to understand as real substances, but as abstract powers and symbols for particular properties of matter.

The nature of Water is to be wet and to flow downstream, the nature of Fire is to heat and to flow upwards, the nature of Wood is to bend and flex and reach up, the nature of Metal is shaping and the nature of Earth is fertility. In the period of Warring states (between IV and III BC) Chinese philosophers developed theory that these elements mutually generating or overcoming each other – *xiang-sheng xiang-ke* (apud. Pajin, 2004:203).

The five elements are interacting with one another alternately creating or mutually destroying each other, which is showing the need to harmonize human life and cosmic order. That is why the theory of the five elements is unimaginable without the Yin and Yang. Regarding the Chinese five elements, according to the Fung Yu-lan, Chinese Yin Yang school made contributions that prompted the occultist practices of the past to evolve. They were giving up a belief in supernatural power and trying to understand the universe using only natural occurrences. Therefore this school represents the



science direction because they tried to give a positive explanation to natural occurrences only using natural force. (apud. Yu-lan, 1992:152,153)

The History of Chinese Theory of the Five Elements

We already mentioned that term *wu-xing* is commonly translated as five elements. However, they are not static, but they are more like five dynamic forces that interact together. The Chinese word *wu-xing* means *to work* or *to do*, therefore literally translated *wu-xing* means “five activities” or “five factors”; they are also known as *wu-te* the “five forces”. The first presentation of the expression *wu-xing* in text is believed to be from 20 BC. However, authenticity of this text cannot be proven. The first really authentic presentation of the five elements can be found in the second chapter of *The Book of History* (IV book) known as *Hung-fan* or *Big Plan* or *Big Norm* as far as the date of this book the modern science is dating it back to IV or III BC. In the *Big Norm* we can see a list of nine categories: “The first from the five elements is Water, second is Fire, third is Wood, forth is Metal and fifth is Earth. The nature of Water is to be wet and to flow downstream, the nature of Fire is to heat and to flow upwards, the nature of Wood is to bend and flex and reach up, the nature of Metal is shaping and the nature of Earth is productive harvest and sowing the seeds for the next.” (Fung Yu-lan 1992: 154) Fung Yu-lan says that in *Big Norm* we notice the idea of the five elements is still simple (apud. Yu-lan, 1992:155). When he talks about them, the writer perceived the elements as real matter, instead of abstract forces (as they will be perceived later). The author also thinks that the two worlds between people and Nature are in a mutual relationship and the bad behavior of the rulers has the consequence in the world of nature. This theory which later on was developed by Yin Yang school was known as the theory of mutual influence between man and nature.

The second important document of Yin Yang school is *Moon Commandments* or *Yu Ling*, which is a type of little calendar which is telling to the ruler and the people in general what to do from month to month to keep in harmony with natural forces. This is how within the Yin Yang school the four seasons is connected with four sides of the world: south and summer are hot and are dominated by the element of Fire. North and winter are cold and are dominated by the element of Water. Element of Wood dominates in the east and in spring (because then is the time plants start to grow). The element of Metal dominates in the west and in autumn because metal is considered to be hard and sharp as autumn is considered to be a gloomy season when the plants are starting to wane. According to *The Moon Commandments* earth is the center of the five forces which takes place in the intersection of the four sides of the world so they believe the period of earth domination is the short time between summer and autumn. This school of thought considered that the time between day and night was a miniature representation of the changing of the four seasons. Therefore, the morning is a mini representation of spring, the afternoon of summer, the evening of autumn and night of winter.

The five elements are building a mutual relationship towards the three main cycles of generating interaction, cycle of overcoming interaction, cycle of mitigation.

The Cycle of Generating

- Water feeds Wood
- Wood fuels Fire
- Fire forms Earth
- Earth contains Metal



- Metal carries Water

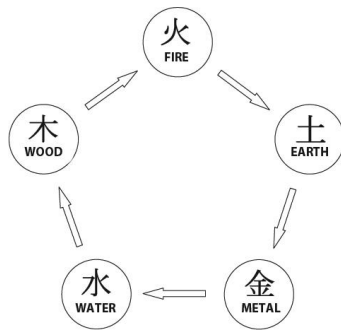


Chart 1. The cycle of generating of the five elements

The Cycle of Overcoming

- Water quenches Fire
- Fire melts Metal
- Metal penetrates Wood
- Wood separates Earth
- Earth absorbs Water

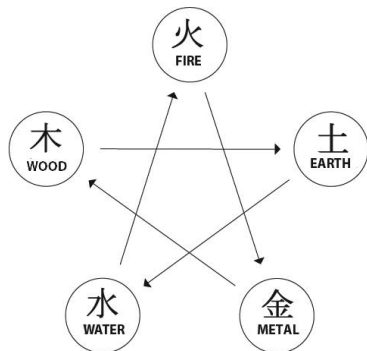


Chart 2. The cycle of overcoming of the five elements

The Cycle of Mitigation

- Water mitigates conflict between Metal and Wood
- Wood mitigates the conflict between Wood and Fire
- Fire mitigates conflict between Wood and Earth
- Earth mitigates conflict between Fire and Metal
- Metal mitigates conflict between Earth and Water

Theory of The Five Elements in Poetry of Matsuo Basho



The theory of five elements is present in Matsuo Basho's poetry in the same extent as has been present in everything else. We gave ourselves as a task to try to realize and single out the presence of elements in chosen poems from Matsuo Basho's late poetry and analyzing them to determine what kind of relationship they have. During the period when Matsuo Basho lived, Chinese poetry and philosophy were valued highly and there is evidence to show Basho was very familiar with Chinese philosophy and poetry (one of his favorite philosophers was Chuang Tzu), as well as with the Chinese theory of the five elements.

If we determine the presence of the five elements in Basho poetry, we are not saying that he was using them consciously. We will be using the Chinese theory of the five elements as a tool for our analysis that show us the harmony of the poems, more precisely their naturalness. In that way we can point out that is one of the reasons we are thinking that his poems are unsurpassed masterpieces.

In order to try to determine if the chosen poems from Matsuo Basho late poetry are led by universal principles and are they showing the cosmic rhythm of things which is necessary for their naturalness, we decided to analyse the chosen poems according to the Chinese theory of the five elements, mostly using the method of binary oppositions in which we abolish the differences between philosophy and poetry.

Because every haiku poem contains *kigo*, or word which determines the season in the poem and is the carrier of sensibility, firstly through this work we are going to determine what season is reflected in the poem, as well as to which element it belongs because each of the five elements is connected with a particular season. Through further analysis we will try to determine the elements in the poem and in what mutual relationship they are. Because the five elements are considered to be universal triggers of Nature, they are in mutual cycles of generating interaction and overcoming interaction. We also are going to try to determine if the elements are in a cycle of generating interaction or overcoming interaction, actually has the poem showed connection between elements that poet presented in the poem. In that sense, generating and overcoming interaction between elements is the natural process and is not seen as positive–negative relationship. However, to try to determine what were the poet's intentions, besides using the theory of the five elements, while analyzing we will use classical analysis of Basho's poems in the sense of when the poem was written, what was the purpose and interpretation of his major interpreters. If we succeed to prove that elements that are present in Basho's poems are orderly shown, we will conclude that is what makes his poems natural, real, universal and timeless.

Spring (春) : Element Of Wood (木)

During the year of 1686 Basho with his students participated in the writing of 100 verses in the honor of his student Kikaku which proclaimed himself as an independent haiku master. Within these one hundred verses six of the verses were Basho's. In the same year he became sick. However, the illness was not serious. In April poets gathered at "Bananas cottage" and they organized a hokku competition on the theme "Frog" (*Kawazu awase*). Basho hosted one more poetical gathering at his own cottage in October. He planned to go on one more journey to the west but he changed his mind. "I have postponed my plan", he explained, "because something worries me." It remained unknown what was worrying him but one thing was clear that he really wanted to travel again (apud. Ueda, 1992:138).

During the same year (1686) Matsuo Basho wrote one of his most famous poems – *Old pond*. This poem represents his unique style in the poetry world which we call "Bashoism".



古池や蛙飛びこむ水の音

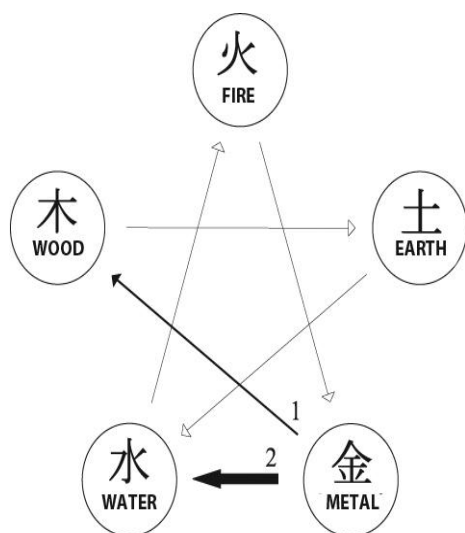
Furu ike ya
kaeru tobi komu
mizu no oto.

An ancient pond.
A frog jumps in:
The sound of water.

In the first verse the silence of the pond was disturbed by the sound of the water caused by frog's jumping into the pond. With this it was shown zenistic apprehension of the world: unconditional of time within a single moment, and the silence has been understood as the unique whole with a noise that disturbs it (Stari ribnjak [The Old Pond], 1996:26). Even though in the past poems were mostly focused on the croak of the frog, Basho here is introducing a new moment where the frog actually is not the one who produces the sound. The sound is produced as the frog enters the water. In this way Basho established his own style. Basho's skill in this poem is shown in his success in demonstrating not only what he could see and hear without showing any glimpse of subjective idea (the subject – poet, is totally excluded), but he recorded nothing more than one simple moment. A poem cannot be any simpler.

As *kigo* for spring, frog has a similar symbolism. As a water creature it represents the life rebirth and resurrection. In Egyptian tradition it is symbolizing new life, as well as fertility, longevity and abundance. In Greek / Roman tradition a frog symbolizes fertility while in Christian tradition the frog has an ambivalent meaning but is known to represent sin. In Chinese and Japanese tradition, the frog is mostly associated with her natural element which is water and Yin. In Japan there is a belief that a frog brings good luck. And, because the Japanese word *kaeru* (frog) also means “to come back” the frog became the protector of travelers.

Using the theory of the five elements to analyse, the frog as a *kigo* for spring belongs to the element of Wood, jumping into the water belongs to the element of Metal and the water (the same as the sound) from the third verse belongs to the element of Water. “Pond” from the first verse also belongs to the element of Water so therefore the relationship between the elements is:



On one side we have a disturbed silence and the poem's composition; frog (Wood) jumping (element of Metal) in the water – Metal destroys Wood. On the other hand the sound of water is being created as well, so therefore jumping (Metal) in the old pond (Water) making the sound of water (element of Water). Looking into the relationship between Yin and Yang, first verse “An ancient pond” is the metaphor of time eternity and cosmic silence (Yin) which is getting disturbed by the jumping of the frog in the water and the creation of the sound (Yang). Even though the silence is disturbed by the sound, the whole poem is coming back into silence after this sound disappears, which brings us back to the frog which caused the sound, but as well is a symbol of Yin, as represents silence.

Chart 3. Analysis of a poem for Spring

YIN *An ancient pond* WATER



A frog jumps in WOOD, METAL

YANG The sound of water WATER

Summer (夏) : Element Of Fire (火)

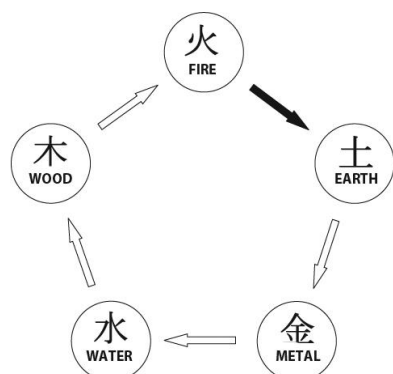
During the year 1688 Basho wanted to spend lunar New Year with his cousins and friends. Therefore at the end of the year he travels to his home town of Ueno. In March he is spent two weeks in the province of Ise, town of Yamada to meet up with friends; after this he travels back to Ueno to commemorate the 33-year anniversary of his father's death. He then went to the mountain Yoshino to watch the cherry blossom, after this he visited Nara, Osaka and Kobe. He went on a tour sightseeing in Suma and Akachi where he finishes his journey that he wrote about in his travel journal *Notes from the knapsack (Oi no kabumi)*. After this Basho returns to Kyoto and then he visits Otsu, and after his student's persuasion he returns again to Nagoya. On the way back to Edo he wanted to visit Sarashina because of the harvest month (September) and his notes about his observations of the moon he wrote in his diary *From travels to Sarashina (Sarashina Kiko)*. At the end of September, he returns to Edo. The rest of the year he had many activities around and involving poetry, and during haiku gatherings he writes a poem where the topic was chrysanthemums and the moon.

ほととぎす消え行く方や島一つ

Hototogisu kie
ayuku kata ya
shima hitotsu.

Cuckoo cry -
Where it disappears
A lone island.

Kigo in this poem is the cuckoo which make this haiku to be identified as a part of summer. The cuckoo is a symbol of jealousy and in Japanese tradition represents messenger of night.



Thus, according to the theory of the five elements in the first verse cuckoo represents the element of Fire, and the cuckoo's voice represents the element of Earth. Fire makes Earth but picture is captured on this element because where the voice disappears island arises (also belongs to the element of Earth).

Chart 4. Analysis of a poem for Summer

Cuckoo cry FIRE, EARTH

YIN Where it disappears

YANG A lone island. EARTH

From the point of view of Yin and Yang, the second verse “Where it disappears” can be considered as the Yin aspect of this poem, while the last verse “A lone island” consists of appearance,



so therefore it represents the Yang aspect. In that way Basho succeeded in presenting the image where on the one hand the voice of cuckoo is dissapiring, while on the other before our eyes we have a picture of some island.

The End Of Summer And The Beginning Of Autumn (夏末 / 秋初) : Earth (土)

Because in haiku poetry kigo is used to classify the poem in Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter or the New Year, for the purpose of this paper we had to classify kigo to be at the end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn which could belong to the element of Earth. We decided to investigate Baso's poems in which there are cicadas, humidity, lightning (thunder) and mountain.

Because cicadas according to haiku dictionary www.cicada-semi-05_files/cicada-semi-05.html, from [5.05.2006.] are classified in the end of summer, and some spcies in the beginning of autumn and in attached table we can see that thunder, humidity and mountain belong to the element of Earth, Basho's haikus with that word we classified in the end of summer and the beginning of autumn.

In the year of 1689 Basho writes on of his famous poems:

閑かさや岩にしみ入る蟬の声

Shizukasa ya
iwa ni shimi iru
semi no koe.

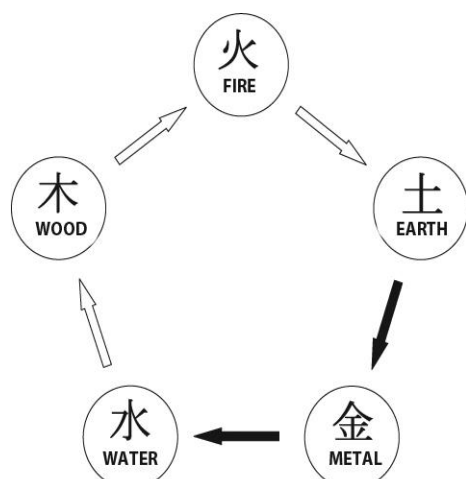
Deep silence!
Seeping into rocks
the shrill of cicadas.

In the *Small dictionary of traditional symbols*, the cicada represents the demon of lightness and darkness; it defines cycles of the changing of lightness and darkness. In the greek tradition cicada is a symbol of eternity and power of Titan, which he became immortal without the benefits of regenerating youth, he was getting weaker and older until he morphed into a cicada. In Chinese tradition cicada represents rebirth, eternity, unconditional youth, happiness and vice. (apud. Lampić, 2000:23)

In his travel diary *Narrow Road to the North (Oku no hosomichi)* Basho wrote: "Boulders piled on boulders had created this mountain, and the pines and cedars on its slopes were old. The earth and stones were worn and slippery with moss. At the summit the doors of the temple buildings were all shut, and not a sound could be heard. Circling around the cliffs and crawling over the rocks, we reached the main temple building. In the splendor of the scene and the silence I felt a wonderflr peace penetrate my heart." (Basho, 1996:99).

Basho skillfully joins opposites: quietness and noise (more precisely the shrill of the cicadas). But he shows the picture of a quiet place unspoilt by human touch. In this poem he avoided any kind of subjectivisation. Cicadas as the kigo for the end of summer and the beginning of autumn belong to the element of Earth, but also the shrill of cicadas belongs to the element of Earth the same as the rock from the second verse. "Seeping into rocks" from the second verse belongs to the element of Metal and the silence which is connected to the ears (more precisely such as with the lack of hearing) belongs to the element of Water. Thus, the analysis of the poem using the theory of the five elements

is:



Shrill of the cicadas in the rocks (all three elements belong to the element of Earth) seeping (Metal) and deep silence (Water) – Earth generates the Metal who produces the Water. The first verse describes the Yin aspect of the poem and is in correlation with the last verse in which we can



hear the shrill of the cicadas – which is the Yang aspect of the poem. However, the entire picture is harmonious because the poet managed in such a short poem to show unity of movement and stillness, silence and sound. According to Makoto Ueda words „the shrill of the cicadas is a metaphor for human worldly wishes and the poem is showing how the worldly wishes disappear within Buddha's Law“ (apud. Ueda, 1992:249).

Chart 5. Analysis of a poem for the end of Summer
and the beginning of Autumn

YIN	Deep <u>silence!</u>	WATER
	<u>Seeping into rocks</u>	METAL, EARTH
YANG	<u>the shrill of cicadas.</u>	EARTH

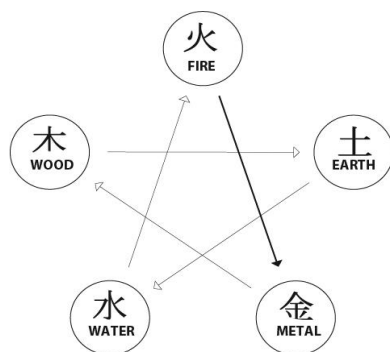
Autumn (秋) : Metal (金)

During the year of 1689 while travelling through the mountains Basho noted to himself how the sun was burning on his skin but suddenly he felt the breeze which brought freshness showing how Autumn was coming. The following haiku is showing Basho's particular feeling for small details indicating the commencement of a seasonal change.

あかあかと日は難面くも秋の風

Aka aka to
hi ha tsurenaku mo
aki no kaze.

Bright red sun
shining relentlessly –
autumn wind.



“Autumn wind“ as kigo for Autumn belongs to the element of Metal. “Bright red sun” from the first verse definitely belongs to the element of Fire as does the second verse “shining relentlessly”. Therefore, an analysis using the theory of the five elements is:

Bright red sun that is relentlessly shining belongs to the element of Fire, cool Autumn wind belongs to the element of Metal. The contrast is presented in a balance of bright red sun (Yang) and cool Autumn wind (Yin).

Chart 6. Analysis of a poem for Autumn

YANG	<u>Bright red sun</u>	FIRE
YANG	<u>shining</u> relentlessly –	FIRE
YIN	<u>autumn wind.</u>	METAL

Winter (冬) : Water (水)

The first snow in the year of 1686 came in the 18th December much later than in previous years (Bašo, 1996:93). We can see in this following haiku Basho's joy prompted by the falling of snow and its effect on nature. Observing the falling of snow while he was in his cottage on the river Sumida was Basho's obsession, as indicated by the notes that were written at the time of composing this poem,



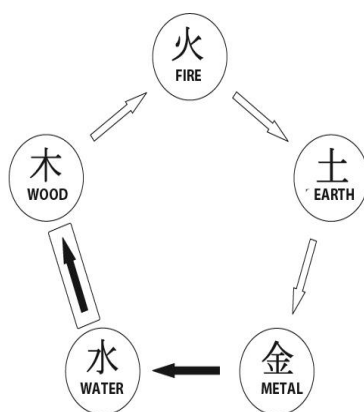
he admits that he was always rushing home and ceasing any business just as soon as the sky looked as though there was a chance of snow (Bašo, 1996:93).

初雪や水仙の葉のたわむまで

Hatsuyuki ya
suisen no ha no
tawamu made.

The first snow
just enough to bend
the blade of daffodil.

Snow fall is one of three main inspirations in Japanese poetry along with the blossom and the moon. Snow is a symbol of darkness, coldness and death but as well as of new life and the melting of snow represents the softening of a man's heart. Daffodil flower in Japanese tradition is a symbol of pureness and joy and in Chinese tradition represents good luck in the following year as well as self-reflection and self-respect. In Christian tradition the daffodil can replace lilies and represents sacred love and sacrifice (Lampić, 2000:94).



First snow as a kigo for the winter belongs to the element of Water. Daffodil is commonly used as kigo for winter which belongs as well to the element of Water. "Just enough to bend" from the last verse belongs to the element of Metal. There is a possibility of using a different analysis where we have three different elements: first snow belongs to the element of Water, daffodil leaf belongs to the element of Wood, and little bit bent belongs to the element of Metal. In that case an analysis using the theory of the five elements is: little bit bent (Metal) by the first snow (Water) is the blade of daffodil (Wood) – Metal generates Water that generates Wood.

Chart 7. Analysis of a poem for Winter

The first <u>snow</u>	WATER
just enough <u>to bend</u>	METAL
the blade of <u>daffodil</u> .	WATER or WOOD

In both of these cases we can see a well-balanced picture of creation. The poem is a reflection of the joy that poet felt while watching the effect the first snow on Nature and the effect this snow had on first landing and then melting off the daffodil.

Conclusion

Three years before his death, and while he was trying to master his poetic journey, Matsuo Basho attempted to integrate his aesthetic ideas into the idea of *kurumi* (lightness). Basho imbued his poems with his personal experiences and, forgetting about formal poetic rules yet integrating tradition, he always attempted to follow in the search for aesthetic principles of previous poets before him.

We believe that through analysing Basho's late poetry we have succeeded to show a harmonious relationship between the five elements which are always present in his poems and the poet's intention to show particular occurrences in Nature and transference his emotion from these events. This harmonious relationship between the five elements in Basho's poems that we have analysed



throughout this paper shows the connection between Nature and the universe in his poems and at the same time showing that his artistic value is timeless. Therefore Matsuo Basho's *Poetic of Nature* on one hand is telling us about poetic principles that this poet tried to achieve and on the other hand the life values he tried, and succeeded, to implement into his everyday life.

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