



Foreword by  
Hidenori Hiruta

# Afriku

HAIKU & SENRYU FROM GHANA

Adjei Agyei-Baah



# Afriku



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## Dedication

*My pleasure for your leisure—  
It's for you, Africa—  
Celebrate!*

## A GUIDE TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF TWI

- /aa/ as in **arm**
- /ae/ as in **aye**
- /ɔ/ as in **caught**
- /ɔɔ/ as in **call**
- /ee/ as in **page**
- /ei/ as in **fray**
- /ea/ as in **pediatrics**
- /eɛ/ as in **fear**
- /ɛ/ as in **step**
- /ɛɛ/ as in **herb**
- /ɛe/ as in **fed**
- /hw/ as in **wheel**
- /hy/ as in **shed**
- /io/ as in **kiosk**
- /ia/ as in **caveat**
- /ie/ as in **fierce**
- /oa/ as in **koala**
- /ɔɔ/ as in **plod**
- /oo/ as in **toll**
- /kw/ as in **quality**
- /ky/ as in **chief**
- /gy/ as in **gym**
- /nw/ as in **nude**
- /ny/ as in **nil**
- /tw/ as in **tweed**
- /ua/ as in **Tuareg**
- /ue/ as in **Puerto Rico**
- /uo/ as in **buoy**

## FOREWORD

**Adjei Agyei-Baah** is the winner of the Akita Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Award in the English section of the 3rd Japan-Russia Haiku Contest. The award-giving ceremony was held as part of the international haiku conference at the Akita International University in Japan, October 25, 2014. Adjei delightedly spoke with attendees via Skype to share a word or two with the audience and other participants when he received his award from the president of the Akita Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Akito Arima, the president of the Haiku International Association in Tokyo, Japan, was very delighted to hear that Adjei would spread haiku further because of its brevity and its coexistence with nature, and that he would continue to read and to delve deep into haiku aesthetics and get back to us someday with good news to share.

A few months after the president heard these good intentions, to my great delight, I excitedly received the news from Adjei that he was going

to publish a haiku collection, strongly believing haiku is a beautiful genre which can be used to tell their African story and wonderful settings. He intuitively and creatively describes his natural surroundings in haiku, the shortest form of poetry. For example, he takes up in his haiku “harmattan, egret, kapok, mango, Afadjato, cocoa, eagle, and cocoyam as the objects in nature that are particularly interesting and influential to him in his surroundings.

He wrote this haiku about harmattan (a dry dusty wind that blows along the northwest coast of Africa) in his haiku collection “Afriku”

harmattan peak  
not only does trees’ bark crack  
the heels too!

He also describes what he sees in his daily life in his own way of writing haiku or senryu from his own viewpoint:

pavement beggar—  
on his lips  
the footprints of harmattan



Here is an excerpt from *Asahi Haikuist Special* by David McMurray, professor at The International University of Kagoshima in Japan, November 17, 2014.

Akito Arima, an avid haikuist and former education minister, addressed academics at the Akita International University in an effort to convince them that haiku should be added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. He reassured students in the audience that haiku can be composed by everyone, from the man in the street to the likes of Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer, the Nobel laureate of literature in 2011 who penned at age 23: disappearing deep in his inner greenness / artful and hopeful. Later in his career he penned in Swedish:

My happiness swelled  
and the frogs sang in the bogs  
of Pomerania

By stressing that haiku can deepen mutual understanding and enjoyment of different

cultures between those people who read or compose the poem, Arima garnered support for his idea that “haiku can help make the world peaceful.”

Adjei Agyei-Baah has great interest of pioneering this art, haiku, in his country and further takes it up as his Phd thesis (*Haiku in Africa*). Haiku tells their African stories and wonderful settings in nature, and also connects people in the most wonderful way we can think of. Adjei’s haiku is in truth beneficial for us, mankind:

morning dew —  
perhaps heaven weeps  
for mankind

—Hidenori Hiruta  
February 2015

# Afriku





old pond—  
the living splash  
of Bashō's frog

(for & after Bashō)

sutae dadaa—  
nkaedum a Bashō  
apotrɔ gyaeɛ

drought—  
the farmer digs  
into his breath

επεbre  
okuani fɔmtuo  
si ne homee mu

roasting sun  
an egret's measured steps  
in buffalo shadow

owia branee  
nantwinoma tutu nanamon  
wo nantwie sunsum mu

leafless tree  
lifting a cup of nest  
into the sky

dua kwatrekwa  
a apagya anoma prebuo  
de kyere soro



wooden doll —  
the dry laughter  
of an African child

aboduaba anim —  
abibirem abofra  
serewee

one crow dead  
a thousand caws  
make the funeral

sɛ kwaakwaadabi  
wu a, kwaa kwaa apem na  
wɔde yɛ no ayie

dead crows  
hanging as scarecrows—  
the bogeyman's farm

nkwaakwaadabi  
a ɛsensɛn hɔ sɛ ɔberekutu—  
samantefie afuom

faggots on fire  
the shadow of a spider  
slips out of the hearth

gyentia ɛredɛre  
ananse sunsum dwane firi  
asomorofi mu

season of migration  
the lightning dash  
of a late egret

atukɔberɛ  
nantwinoma bi a waka akyiri  
mmirikatɛntɛ

old fighter jet  
in a movie sky  
two bound dragonflies

ako adupre dadaa  
ahudede mmienu a  
woaka afuam

gust of wind . . .  
the crow takes off  
in a zigzag line

ahum mframa  
kwaakwaadabi atufaa  
afumpaa

traffic holdup  
the absurdity of politics  
served fresh on the airwaves

kwanso dwoodwoo  
amanyɔsɛm mu akomasɛɛ  
te atese wɔ kasafidie so



refusing to board his school bus  
he exclaims:  
“teacher says I’m not a gentleman”

“tikya se mennyε ɔkrakyeni”  
m’abofra pem so sε  
ɔremforo sukuu lore

honeymoon night  
the horn of a midnight train  
initiates another round

awareε ahosεπε da  
anadwofa keteke aben  
hyε yen se yenni do

school memories —  
all the farts concealed  
by shifting my chair

sukuu nkaee bi  
mframabone a mede sieee wo  
m'akonnwa twetwee mu

morning dew—  
perhaps heaven weeps  
for mankind

anopa bosuo—  
sɛsɛɛ ɔsoro su gu  
adasa so

riverbank—  
two swallows compete  
dipping tails

sutene ano  
asomfena mmienu de won to  
boro asuo

egrets in formation  
a young one  
breaks the rule

sutene ano  
asomfena mmienue de won to  
boro asuo

abandoned communication kiosk  
Jesus on the phone  
speaking!

nkratoɔ adaka a  
yeayi no totwene, yesu nfonin a wone  
n'agya rekasa

lonely  
as I canoe by . . .  
the moon

ankonam  
wɔ berɛ a mede kodoɔ retwam—  
osram



creaking joints  
he fondles the medal  
of his youth

apɔso mmerɛyɔ  
wɔde ne mmerante berɛm  
abasobɔdeɛ kyekyere ne were

dawn—  
the distant sound  
of my neighbor's broom

dasuom—  
praye nne a efiri  
akyiri

Mother's Day—  
one deep enema  
still rings a bell

enanom da  
me werε remfiri bεntoa bi a  
me na de gyinaa me

distant cry . . .  
the heartfall  
of a mother

abofra nteamu  
ena akoma  
te to ne yam

disputed land—  
crows flout  
the borderlines

manso asaase  
nkwaakwaadabi di mu  
ahyemfire

first sail . . .  
inside his paper boat  
the weight of water

n'akwantuo a edi kan  
ne krataa hyɛma mu—  
nsuo mu duro

castle cannons—  
pointing where  
their owners have gone

Oguaa abankɛsɛɛm  
Ngresifoɔ atubra rekyerɛ  
wɔn akyiri kwan

full moon—  
the scarecrow watches  
its own shadow

osram a apue  
afuom kaakaamotobi a  
ɔrebo ne sunsum ho ban



dark moon—  
the shriek of an owl  
unsettles a dream

osram a ahinta  
ɔpatuo bi nteamu maa me boo  
pitiri wo daeε mu

pavement beggar—  
on his lips  
the footprints of harmattan

nkwankyen srɛsrɛni  
ɔpɛ agya n'anammɔn  
wɔ n'ano ho

dawn rivalry —  
a muezzin  
and a rooster

ahemanakye akansie  
kramokokonini  
ne akokonini

noisy corn mill—  
the operator's son  
in a peaceful slumber

nikanika dan mu  
ɔyamfoɔ ba a wada  
nnahɔɔ

mama's soup—  
trying to adjust  
to my wife's

ena nkwan  
mebo mmoden se  
me yere dee bɛtere m'anom

end of the month  
that pleasant smell  
of payday

bosome awieeε  
mframa papa bi a εbo wo  
akatua da

stone meal . . .  
mother fakes supper  
to put the kids to sleep

anwumere aduane  
maame de boo si gya so  
de deda mmofra

misty morning  
a crow trying a balance  
on a church pinnacle

anɔpa bɔ  
kwaakwaadabi a ɔrepe nyinasoɔ  
wɔ asɔre dadepon so



stillness—  
vibrating the silence  
the woodpecker's knock

kommyε  
abobonua woso  
dinn yε

Carol's night—  
stuck in the prisoner's throat  
a broken halleluah

buronya nwomto  
haleluya ka odeduani  
menem

childhood memories  
the wood shavings that light up  
mother's charcoal

mmofra berem nkaeε bi  
dua atentehuo a na εna  
de so ne bidie

country windmill  
slowly blending breeze  
and sunlight

akurase bomframa  
a ereyam mframa  
ne owia kanea

village night out  
the lamps of fireflies  
everywhere

akurase anadwo nanteε  
bogya nkanea  
te atese

communal vigil—  
exploring both sides of darkness  
fireflies

mpotam apəsiri  
bogya di anadwom  
ahyemfire

back and forth  
shadows of leaves brush  
the face of the moon

nhahan sunsum  
a credi akoneaba  
popa osram anim

evening lull  
smoke curling up  
from an easy chair

towia wisie  
a erepagya ne mu  
afiri ahodwo akonnwam



vacant anthill—  
the final luster  
of a cobra's shed skin

esie a aguo  
owia kanea a ɛredum  
wɔ ɔpramire howorɔ mu

morning moon—  
the lateness of the sun  
in shifting

ɔsram a apue anɔpa  
owia twentwɛn ne–nan ase  
wɔ ne nsesaε mu

Father's Day  
all he asks for is  
a pipe and easy chair

agyanom da  
nea ɔrebisa ara ne  
abua ne ahodwo akonnwa

garden reading  
a ripe mango drops  
with a splash of red ants

afikyifuom akenkan  
amango te to fam  
pete ntatea kɔkɔɔ

deserted shore  
the wind sharpens its voice  
over a conch

mpoano a atae dinn  
mframa se ne nne  
wɔ sunam hankra mu

a pause  
in my dream  
mosquito bite

pitiribɔ  
wɔ me daeɛ mu—  
ntontom ka

an early bird  
at the tail of a late worm  
first light

dasuom anoma a  
waso sonson duapom—  
anopa hann

windy mountain  
praying in tongues with me  
a tattered flag

beposo mframa —  
frankaa bi a atetes  
ne me ka kasahoro



a leaf falls  
into its shadow  
onto itself

ahahan te to  
ne sunsum mu  
to n'ankasa so

harmattan peak  
not only does the tree's bark crack  
the heels too!

ɔpebere mpɔmpɔnsoɔ  
ɛnye nnua abena nko ara na  
ɛpaepae, nantini nso ka ho

all that remain  
of a lost tribe's story—  
scratches and scars

nkaedum a ɛgyina ho  
ma abusuakuo bi a won ase—  
ahye ntitiye ne nkotwa

jazz night  
the thin line between  
sax and sex

anwummers nndae nnnwom  
okwantaaa a e da sankuo  
ne enna mu

dozing on a bus  
the head of a passenger tilts  
for a kiss

lɔre mu nna  
ɔkwantuni de ne tiri  
bɛpɛ mfeano

shea butter market  
sellers hold the sun  
in water sprinkles

nkuto dwom  
adetɔnfoɔ de nsupete  
kyekyere owia

harmattan winds . . .  
crossing the border  
with leaves

ɔpɛbere mframa  
tase nhahan de twa  
ɛhyeɛ

again they twinkle—  
new stars beaten out  
of an old moon

biom ɛgu nhyerɛne—  
nsoroma foforo a waboro  
afiri bosome dada mu



this lunchtime  
more protein in my beans—  
weevils

awia edidie  
ahocden mmorosoo me nya—  
atedua mu mmoa

back to school—  
chalk markings on the board  
refuse a wipe

akwamma awieeε—  
atwerε a wɔgyaa no atwerεpono so  
popa yε den

roadside beggar  
he waits for the traffic light  
to turn red

nkwan kyen sr̥sr̥foɔ  
ɔretwɛn sɛ trafik  
bɛsɔ kɔkɔɔ

plastic flowers —  
your long-gone fragrance  
I pretend to nurse

nhwiren dada  
wo ho hwam mmerɛ bi  
na mede kyekyere me werɛ

kind bartender—  
he lifts a drunkard's head  
to wipe the table

nsahyεfoo bi ayamuyε—  
ɔpegya sadweam tiri  
popa ne pono so

just a moment —  
distant lightning connects  
sky and earth

mmerɛ tiawa —  
akyirikyiri ayerɛmo  
ka ɔsoro ne asaase bom

jungle shot  
the scattered leaves  
of birds

kwaem tutoo  
nhahan te pete se  
nnomaa a woretu

distant thunder  
the peal of one valley  
transferred to the next

akyirikyiri agradaa  
to ne nne firi eku baako mu  
kɔ ku foforo mu



mountain walk . . .  
only our shadows  
dare the cliffs

beposo nanteε  
yen sunsum nko ara  
na εye mmarimasem

moving water  
causing stagnant water  
to move

nsutene  
kobo nsutae mu  
ma no tu tene

rock ledge—  
a wolf inhales  
the moon

obotanso  
sakraman twe osram  
wura ne homee mu

two stuck dogs  
untying their knot  
end of mating season

ahosεpε awieεε  
nkraman mmienu  
pere ntemu

dry season  
the dam shows the ribs  
of its depth

επεβεε  
anyinam ahweε  
da ne nkrampan adi

shoreline  
my footprints  
go to sea

mpoano  
m'anamɔn  
yera gu po mu

tripping on the escalator  
the new migrant  
introduces himself

atwedeforo ntehwæ  
ɔmanfrani da  
ne ho adi

the slow approach  
to the pond—  
frogs take back their eyes

mpɔtorɔ mem wɔn ani  
bere a merepini  
nsutae bi ho



my neighbor  
I cannot wake:  
his tap drips all night

me fipanni  
a merentumi nnyane no—  
ne nsuo bugu anadwosuom

riverside  
a crocodile waits  
in a monkey shadow

nsutene ho  
ɔɔɛnkyɛm a wahinta  
wɔ asoroboa sunsum mu

lecturer's wife  
how long must her husband  
sleep sleeplessly

ɔkyerɛkyerɛni yere  
nkosi daben na ne kunu  
nna korɔkoro

sleepless night  
caught between her snore  
and my toothache

nnakorɔkorɔ  
megye me ho gyena  
wɔ me kaka mu  
ne ne nkorɔmo tuom

paying the driver's mate  
with my last torn money  
my son points it out

mede sika a atee  
retua hyema too—  
me ba yi me ma

black coffee  
white sugar  
I stir the world into oneness

kɔfe tuntum  
asikyire fufuo  
meka wiase bom baako

a dragonfly pausing the wind

ahudede a oregyina mframa

smiling pond . . .  
a dragonfly dips  
its tail

tadeε εresere  
ahudede de ne dua  
bom



night river  
bringing him closer  
the boy on the moon

anadwo sutene  
twe abofra a cte osram  
so ba fam

mining town  
on the surface of buildings—  
worry lines

sikakəkək kuro  
ɛdan biara anim  
amunamuna

end of the road—  
a railway track runs  
into the earth

okwan awieeε  
keteke nnadeε  
wura fam



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ADJEI AGYEI-BAAH lives in Kumasi (Ghana) and is a part-time university lecturer. He is a co-founder of Poetry Foundation Ghana and Africa Haiku Network. In 2015, he co-launched the *Mamba Journal*, Africa's first international haiku journal with Emmanuel Jesse Kalusian. Adjei is the champion of "Afriku", a haiku form which seek to project the unique images, symbols and rhythm of Africa for global delight and attention. In 2009, he organized Poetry Aloud programmes in some selected senior high schools in Ghana, leading to the birth of *Poetry Ink*, Ghana's first poetry anthology for senior high school students. Adjei is winner of several international awards, and a contributor to several anthologies. And his poems has also appeared in several international magazines and journals such as *Frogpond* (US), *The Heron's Nest* (US), *Paper Wasp* (Australia), *Shamrock* (Ireland), *Acorn* (US), *World Haiku Review* (Japan), *Cattails* (US), *Asahi Haikuists Network* (Japan), *One Hundred Gourds* (Australia) as well as various blogs and internet publications. His piece "For the Mountains" was selected by the BBC in a Poetry Postcard project to represent Ghana in the 2014 Commonwealth Games held in Glasgow, Scotland. He is a member of many haiku groups online and has published in world anthologies *Naad Anunaad Haiku Anthology* (2016) and *Cherry Blossom – Bulgaria* (2016). He was the Chief Haiku Judge at Babishaiku Poetry Award 2016, Uganda and invited guest poet at My Haiku Pond Academy (Netherland), 2016 and Carpe Diem Haiku Kai (Netherland), 2015. He is the author of *Afrikuland* <[www.afrikuland.blogspot.com](http://www.afrikuland.blogspot.com)> and can be reached at <[kwakubaaa@gmail.com](mailto:kwakubaaa@gmail.com)>.