

# MATCHED MORALITY: AN ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION OF HAIKU POETRY

## **Author:**

Mohd Nazri Latiff Azmi<sup>1</sup>, Isyaku Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Mohammad Talha Mohamed Idris<sup>3</sup>

## **Email:**

talha@uthm.edu.my<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** Islam is often misconceived as incompatible with poetry, which hinders a deeper appreciation of poetry's potential for expressing universal moral values. This book, *Matched Morality: An Islamic Interpretation of Haiku Poetry*, challenges this notion by revealing the hidden depths of traditional Japanese Haiku poetry from Islamic viewpoints. The book explores the ancient roots of Haiku in Japanese culture and its unique concurrence with Islamic morality. The authors demonstrate how the nature and philosophy of Haiku poetry reflect religious morality. The analysis focuses on how Haiku, with its concise poetic form and simple structure, can evoke powerful emotions and offer profound insights into the human condition. The book is more than just a literary interpretation; its line-by-line inductive analysis bridges cultural divides and draws inferences between Haiku's themes of nature, reflection, and morality with core Islamic principles. Through careful examination of Quranic verses and Hadith, the authors of this book illustrate a shared pursuit of inner peace, social responsibility, and spiritual enlightenment in Islam and Haiku poetry. These new insights could enrich our understanding of Haiku poetry and Islam and offer a fresh perspective on the universal quest for morality in this ever-changing world. This book is valuable for academics, researchers, literature scholars, religious educationists and enthusiasts.

**Keywords:** Ancient, century, experience, morality, religious

# MATCHED MORALITY:

An Islamic Interpretation of Selected

# Haiku Poems

MOHD NAZRI

ISYAKU

MOHD TALHA



# MATCHED MORALITY:

An Islamic Interpretation of Selected

# Haiku Poems

# MATCHED MORALITY:

An Islamic Interpretation of Selected

# Haiku Poems

*MOHD NAZRI*

*ISYAKU*

*MOHD TALHA*

© Penerbit UTHM  
First Published 2026

Copyright reserved. Reproduction of any articles, illustrations and content of this book in any form be it electronic, mechanical photocopy, recording or any other form without any prior written permission from The Publisher's Office of Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor is prohibited. Any negotiations are subjected to calculations of royalty.

**List of Author:**

Mohd Nazri  
Isyaku  
Mohd Talha  
Nurazan Wakhid Harits  
Imron

Published by:  
Penerbit UTHM  
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia  
86400 Parit Raja,  
Batu Pahat, Johor  
Tel: 07-453 8698/8529

Website: <http://penerbit.uthm.edu.my>  
E-mail: [pemasaran.uthm@gmail.com](mailto:pemasaran.uthm@gmail.com)

Penerbit UTHM is a member of  
Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia (MAPIM)

Printed by:  
Attin Press Sdn. Bhd.  
No 8, Jalan Perindustrian PP4,  
Taman Perindustrian Putra Permai,  
43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor.  
No. Tel: 03-89390660



Data Pengkatalogan-dalam-Penerbitan

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Rekod katalog untuk buku ini boleh didapati  
dari Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

ISBN 978-629-490-271-8





# Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Overview of <i>Haiku</i> Poetry	1
1.2 Historical Background of <i>Haiku</i> Poetry	5
1.3 Islam and <i>Haiku</i> Poetry	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE CHOSEN POETS</b>	<b>9</b>
2.2 Brief Biographies of the Chosen Poets	9
2.2.1 Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694)	9
2.2.2 Yosa Buson (1716-1784)	10
2.2.3 Kobayashi Issa (1763 –1828)	11
2.2.4 Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902)	13
2.2.5 Kawahigashi Hekigoto (1873-1937)	14
2.2.6 Arakida Moritake (1473-1549)	14
2.2.7 Suzuki Hisajo (1890 – 1952)	15
2.2.8 Kato Shuson (1905-1993)	16
2.2.9 Murakami Kijo 1865-1938	17
2.2.10 Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927)	18



2.2.11	Iio Sogi (1421-1502)	18
2.2.12	Natsume Soseki (1867-1916)	19
2.2.13	Takahama Kyoshi (1874-1959)	20
<b>CHAPTER THREE: SYNOPSIS</b>		<b>23</b>
3.1	The Chosen Poems	23
3.2	Synopses of the Chosen Poems	26
3.2.1	A Cicada's Cry	27
3.2.2	Death Poem	28
3.2.3	Old Pond	29
3.2.4	Split Melon	31
3.2.5	The Cry of Cicada	32
3.2.6	Before the White Chrysanthemum	34
3.2.7	Canola Flowers	35
3.2.8	Not Quite Dark Yet	36
3.2.9	The Light of the Candle	37
3.2.10	In This World	39
3.2.11	Life on Earth	40
3.2.12	My Life	41
3.2.13	The Summer River	42
3.2.14	A Deer Cry	44
3.2.15	A Fallen Blossom	45
3.2.16	Along the Stream	46
3.2.17	I Kill an Ant	47
3.2.18	Lotus Blooms	48
3.2.19	Sick and Feverish	49



3.2.20	Snow Yet Remaining	51
3.2.21	The Lamp Once Out	52
3.2.22	Two Bramleys	54
<b>CHAPTER FOUR:</b>	<b>ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Islamic Viewpoints	57
4.2	Islamic Interpretation of the Chosen Poems	58
4.2.1	A Cicada's Cry	58
4.2.2	Death Poem	61
4.2.3	Old Pond	63
4.2.4	Split Melon	66
4.2.5	The Cry of Cicada	68
4.2.6	Before the White Chrysanthemum	70
4.2.7	Canola Flowers	72
4.2.8	Not Quite Dark Yet	74
4.2.9	The Light of the Candle	77
4.2.10	In This World	79
4.2.11	Life on Earth	80
4.2.12	My Life	83
4.2.13	The Summer River	86
4.2.14	A Deer Cry	87
4.2.15	A Fallen Blossom	89
4.2.16	Along the Stream	91
4.2.17	I Kill an Ant	93
4.2.18	Lotus Blooms	96
4.2.19	Sick and Feverish	99



4.2.20	Snow Yet Remaining	101
4.2.21	The Lamp Once Out	103
4.2.22	Two Bramleys	105
<b>CHAPTER FIVE:</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>107</b>
	<i>Bibliography</i>	115
	<i>Index</i>	121





## Preface

*Haiku* is an ancient form of Japanese poetry that typically explores the natural world and human condition using plain language. As a language art, *Haiku* is considered part of Japanese cultural life, philosophical expression, and aesthetic experience. *Haiku* poems are written to depict nature and evoke emotional responses from readers. Although *Haiku* usually entails the theme of nature, its hidden meaning does not necessarily pertain to nature. The poems do not simply tell stories or describe situations; they are also perfect for non-fictional observations, functioning as a shorthand for remembering events or incidents. However, *Haiku* poems are often considered complicated and hard to comprehend despite their short length and simplicity. The reader needs to be able to understand the poem beyond its literal meaning. Nevertheless, there have been lots of criticisms and misconceptions of the stance of Islam on poetry. While some critics perceive Islam as a restrictive religion that prohibits all forms of poetry, research shows that all kinds of poetry aiming to develop a morally healthy society are acceptable in Islam. Although religions vary, all religious doctrines call for morality. Additionally, the connection between *Haiku* poetry and religious viewpoints is rarely investigated. Therefore, this book corroborates evidence from Quranic verses and Hadith (prophetic traditions) through an inductive-analytical technique to explore the elements of morality in *Haiku* poetry using the general procedure described by Thomas (2006).

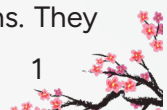




## 1.1 Overview of *Haiku* Poetry

A *Haiku* refers to unrhymed ancient Japanese poetry that advanced in the sixteenth century (Heian Period 700-1100CE) when the reading and writing of poetry was a social requirement in Japanese culture (Yasuda, 2011; Burleson, 1998). As a language art, *Haiku* is considered part of Japanese cultural life, philosophical expression, and aesthetic experience. According to Cohen (2009), *Haiku* is an ancient form of Japanese poetry that typically explores the natural world and human condition using plain language. The author described *Haiku* as an expression of thoughts for enlightenment, containing depth, vastness, and expanses of great magnitude. *Haiku* has distinctive differences from other forms of poetry in terms of important characteristics, such as closeness to nature and emphasis on simplicity. The poem typically explores the natural world and human condition using plain language (Stibbe, 2007; Yousif, 2009). Therefore, *Haiku* is somehow related to nature and usually implies seasonal changes.

Moreover, daily life is close to nature, so *Haiku* is at one with their culture (Fujimoto, 2016), created based on nature and the environment, particularly the universe and specific seasons. They





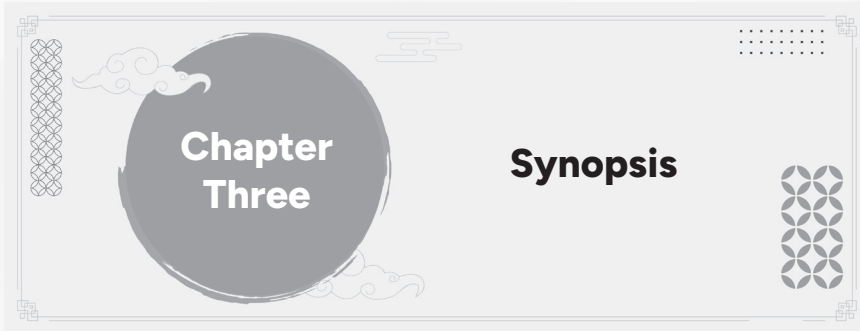
## 2.2 Brief Biographies of the Chosen Poets

This chapter presents brief biographies of thirteen selected prominent Haiku poets, each of whom has made a significant contribution to the development of Japanese poetry. Each poet is represented by one or more of their most celebrated haiku. The chosen poets include Matsuo Bashō, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, Masaoka Shiki, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, Arakida Moritake, Suzuki Hisajō, Kato Shuson, Murakami Kijō, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Iio Sogi, Natsume Sōseki, and Takahama Kyōshi. The chapter draws upon established biographical sources and critical studies to provide context for each poet's life and literary achievements and a broader understanding of the *Haiku* tradition (Barnhill, 1990; Kawamura, 2017; Mackenzie, 1999).

### 2.2.1 Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694)

As mentioned in the previous section of this book, Bashō was one of the greatest and most well-known poets in Japanese literary history. He started his journey in the literary world during his childhood as a servant to Tōdō Yoshitada, who trained him to



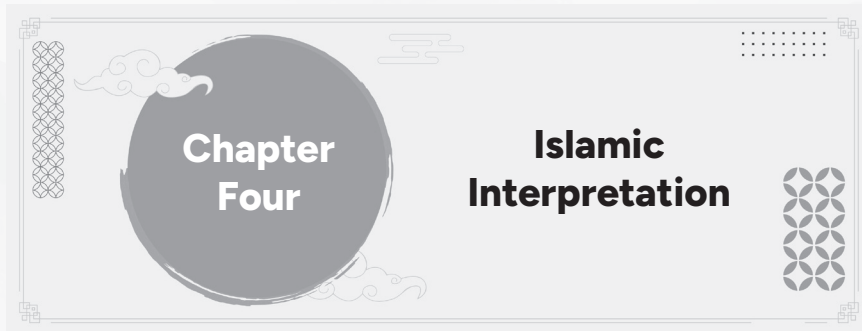


### 3.1 The Chosen Poems

Derived from the rich tradition of Japanese poetry, *Haiku* captures brief glimpses of nature, human emotions, and the interplay between the two. According to Perkin (1998), poetry communicates universal human truths. In this book, a total of 22 beautifully created and prominent *Haiku* poems by 13 authors are analyzed to explore hidden meanings that relate to Islamic morals. Before analysis, a synopsis of each *Haiku* is presented in this chapter. Each *Haiku* in this analysis is a separate work of art, but together they form a range of emotions and experiences. The selected poems tend to invite readers to reflect on the complexity and simplicity of existence, signifying that even in the slightest moments, facts can be discovered.

Additionally, only the English versions of the selected *Haiku* poems are considered for analysis. The translated versions are necessary to make these poems accessible to a wider audience. They aim to capture the meaning and essence of the original Japanese text. It should be noted that in English, however, *Haiku* does not necessarily adhere strictly to the syllable pattern of 5-7-5 as the focus is more on overall conciseness and capturing a moment.





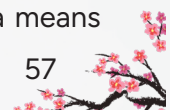
# Chapter Four

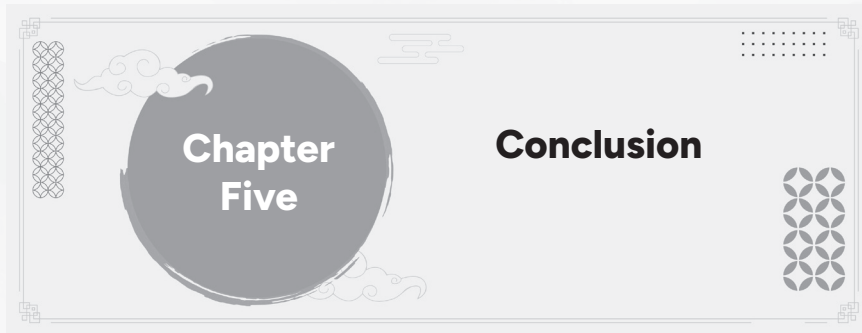
## Islamic Interpretation

### 4.1 Islamic Viewpoints

By exploring the connection between *Haiku* poetry and Islamic principles, this analysis can reveal the deep spiritual and moral foundations shared by the divine religion and poetic art. For instance, *Haiku* poets often express a deep appreciation for the beauty and harmony of the natural world, reflecting the Islamic belief in Allah's creation as a manifestation of divine beauty and perfection (Faruqi, 2007). Japanese *Haiku* poetry is known for its brevity and focus on transitory moments in nature. Islamic principles, conversely, are entrenched in the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah (prophetic tradition) and highlight themes such as righteousness, justice, decency, morality, mindfulness, interrelation, and the quest for inner peace.

In *Haiku* poetry, poets condense their messages into just a few lines, often inviting readers to reflect on the natural beauty of this world. Similarly, Islamic principles encourage believers to reflect on natural signs as a means to recognize the existence and greatness of Allah and seek a deeper connection with the divine (Kamali, 2006). Throughout the Quran, several verses command believers to observe and reflect on the natural world as a means



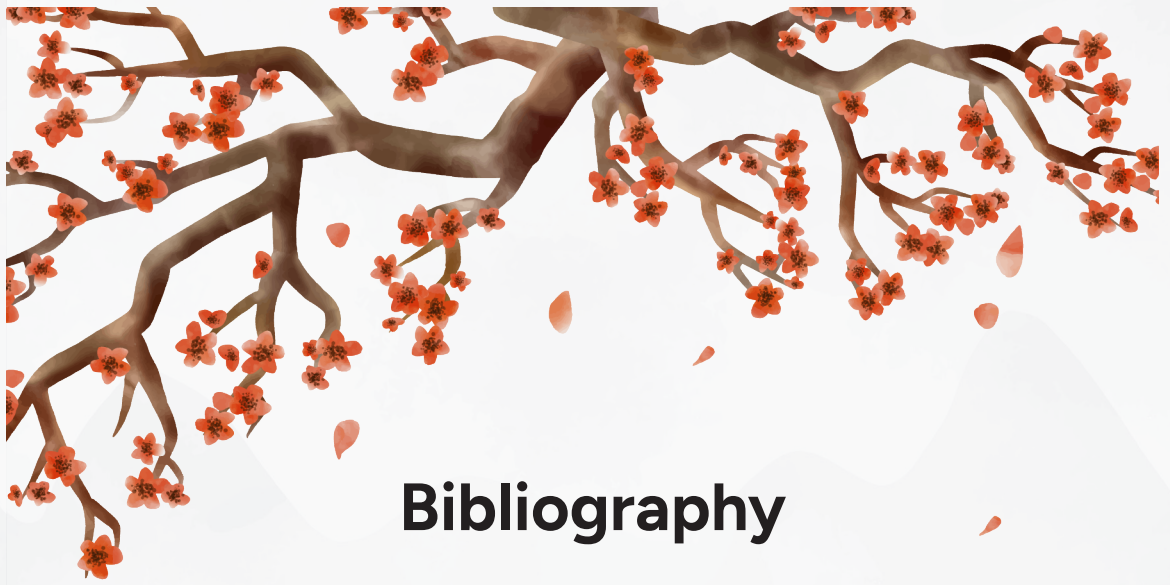


## Chapter Five

## Conclusion

This book used an inductive-analytical technique to explore elements of morality in 22 selected *Haiku* poems from Islamic viewpoints. The analysis focuses on *Haiku* poems produced by prominent Japanese poets, including Matsuo Bashō, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, Arakida Moritake, Suzuki Hisajo, Yosa Buson, Kato Shuson, Kobayashi Issa, Murakami Kijo, Masaoka Shiki, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Iio Sogi, Natsume Soseki, and Takahama Kyoshi. According to the analysis, the chosen *Haiku* poems contain several hidden meanings that concur with the Islamic teaching of morality. The selected *Haiku* poems contain elements of nature which, when interpreted from Islamic viewpoints, reveal such themes as the beauty of Allah's creation, the certainty of change, inevitable and unexpected death, the transient nature of human existence, harmonious coexistence, the significance of human actions, the prohibition of suicides, hope, reflection, the value of originality, and creative freedom. These themes concur with the teaching of Islam on morality and Allah's existence and greatness.





# Bibliography

- Abde, A. N. Y., & Salih, K. (2015). The literature of happiness with reference to the philosophy of happiness in Islam. *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, 3(2), 179-194.
- Abuarrah, S. (2018). Literal meaning: A first step to meaning interpretation. *Topics in Linguistics*, 19(2), 86–96. <https://doi.org/10.2478/topling-2018-0012>
- Aisyah, S., Widodo, P., Mubarak, M. K., & Harumi, E. (2019). The role of poems in developing critical thinking skills of low-achieving students. *Magister scientiae*, 46, 238–260. doi.org/10.33508/mgs.v2i46.2230
- Aljadaan, N. (2018). Understanding Hyperbole. *Arab World English Journal*, 1(2), 2-3.
- Assami, E., Kennedy, M., & Bantley, A. (Trans.). (1997). *The Qur'an: English meanings and notes* by Saheeh International. Jeddah: Abul-Qasim Publishing House.
- Barnhill, D. L. (2004). *Bashō's haiku: Selected poems of Matsuo Bashō*. State University of New York Press.
- Basho, M., & Barnhill, D. L. (2004). *Basho's haiku: selected poems by Matsuo Basho*. State University of New York Press.





# Index

## A

aesthetic experience 1  
ancient 1, 43, 44, 108

## C

century 1, 3, 5, 6, 14  
Cicada's Cry 10, 24, 27, 58, 108  
cultural life 1

## D

death 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 27,  
28, 29, 32, 41, 45, 46, 50, 59,  
60, 61, 62, 63, 69, 70, 77, 83,  
84, 85, 86, 89, 90, 91, 99,  
100, 101, 107, 108, 109, 111,  
119  
Deer Cry 25, 44, 45, 87, 109

## F

Fallen Blossom 26, 45, 89, 90, 108

## H

Haikai 3, 5, 14, 15  
Haiku 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12,  
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20,  
21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30,  
31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38,  
39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46,

47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 57,  
58, 59, 61, 63, 66, 70, 71, 72,  
73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 86, 87,  
88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 96, 99,  
101, 102, 103, 104, 107, 108,  
110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 118  
Haiku poetry 4, 6, 7, 13, 15, 21, 27,  
57, 58, 108, 110, 111, 113, 114  
human emotion 23, 54  
human experience 29, 38, 39, 43,  
50, 55, 56, 88, 99, 110

## I

I Kill an Ant 17, 47, 93, 109  
imagistic language 3  
in this world 25, 38, 40, 41, 51, 59,  
60, 61, 63, 66, 71, 74, 77, 79,  
81, 83, 84, 86, 88, 91, 99, 101  
Islamic morality 84, 110, 111, 112,  
113

## J

Japanese culture 1, 5, 11, 33, 34,  
44, 51, 99  
Japanese poetry 1, 7, 9, 15, 23, 110

## L

Life on Earth 25, 39, 40, 80, 81, 83  
Lotus Blooms 17, 26, 29, 48, 96,  
98



**M**

modern Haiku 6, 7, 13, 14  
 morality 7, 8, 57, 84, 85, 93, 94,  
 97, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113  
 My Life 13, 25, 41, 83, 84, 85

**N**

natural world 1, 27, 35, 36, 37, 47,  
 50, 52, 54, 57, 58, 73, 75,  
 81, 86, 87, 88, 103, 105, 106,  
 109  
 nature 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 11, 13, 15, 20, 23,  
 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34,  
 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43,  
 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51,  
 53, 54, 57, 58, 59, 64, 69, 70,  
 71, 72, 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81,  
 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 91,  
 92, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102,  
 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110,  
 111, 113, 116, 119

**O**

Old Pond 24, 29, 30, 63, 66  
 other languages 4, 7

**Q**

Quran 57, 59, 60, 64, 67, 69, 71,  
 72, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 87, 88,  
 94, 95, 96, 97, 100, 102, 104,  
 106, 109, 116, 118

**R**

religion 7, 43, 57, 112, 114  
 religious 7, 15, 66, 111, 113, 118  
 religious doctrines 7  
 Renga 5, 14, 15, 19

**S**

seasonal words 2, 7, 13, 14, 24  
 snow yet remaining 19, 26, 51, 52,  
 101, 102  
 Split Melon 24, 31, 66, 109

**T**

The Cry of Cicada 24, 32, 68, 70  
 The Lamp Once Out 19, 20, 26, 52,  
 103, 104  
 The Light of the Candle 25, 37, 77  
 The Summer River 25, 42, 86, 87  
 traditional Haiku 6, 12, 20, 42  
 Two Bramleys 21, 26, 54, 105, 106

**Y**

Yasuda 1, 2  
 Yosa Buson 9, 10, 25, 34, 35, 36,  
 37, 107, 108, 109, 110



# MATCHED MORALITY:

An Islamic Interpretation of Selected

# Haiku Poems

*Islam is often misconceived as incompatible with poetry, which hinders a deeper appreciation of poetry's potential for expressing universal moral values. This book, Matched Morality: An Islamic Interpretation of Haiku Poetry, challenges this notion by revealing the hidden depths of traditional Japanese Haiku poetry from Islamic viewpoints. The book explores the ancient roots of Haiku in Japanese culture and its unique concurrence with Islamic morality. The authors demonstrate how the nature and philosophy of Haiku poetry reflect religious morality. The analysis focuses on how Haiku, with its concise poetic form and simple structure, can evoke powerful emotions and offer profound insights into the human condition. The book is more than just a literary interpretation; its line-by-line inductive analysis bridges cultural divides and draws inferences between Haiku's themes of nature, reflection, and morality with core Islamic principles. Through careful examination of Quranic verses and Hadith, the authors of this book illustrate a shared pursuit of inner peace, social responsibility, and spiritual enlightenment in Islam and Haiku poetry. These new insights could enrich our understanding of Haiku poetry and Islam and offer a fresh perspective on the universal quest for morality in this ever-changing world. This book is valuable for academics, researchers, literature scholars, religious educationists and enthusiasts.*



**UTHM**  
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

**Penerbit**

ISBN 978-629-490-271-8

0 4 1 0 0



9 786294 902718

**PENERBIT  
UTHM**

