

Japanese Poets Fight to Save the Seto Inland Sea with their Pens

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The Seto Inland Sea is Japan's largest enclosed coastal water body. It has an area of some 22,000 sq. km. and a coastline of some 6,000 km in length. It has played a vital role in Japanese history, culture and economic development etc. Its world famous scenery qualified it to be among that nation's first national parks. That same scenery has also moved many a heart to sing its praises and of its pains and sorrow in various art forms.

In this paper, the author will attempt to introduce a sampling of the Seto Inland Sea's coastal and ocean poetry written by 20th century poets. Among the poets whose works will be introduced (in English translation by the author) are at least two from the city of Imabari on the northwestern coast of Shikoku island and near the west end of the Seto Inland Sea. Their poetry, among other things, did much to move the more environmentally sensitive citizens of the area and elsewhere to support their valiant effort to try to stop a port-related landfill project that threatened much of the city's natural beach waterfront.

Major landfill and related industrial pollution on the Harima northeastern coast of the Seto Inland Sea moved a commercial fisherman-Buddhist priest to take pen in hand as well as lead a citizens' movement against the landfills and polluters. A sampling of his moving admonitions will be introduced (again, in English translation by the author). These poems should be seen against a background of continuing pollution, landfilling and environmental destruction of that area in particular and of the Seto Inland Sea in general. The works of other poets may be introduced at the conference if time permits.

The extent to which their efforts have had or have not had an effect on slowing or stopping the destruction of that beautiful, important but highly vulnerable enclosed coastal sea will be considered.