

日本詩歌の

消えてゆく

黄金時代



ALEXANDER DOLIN

THE FADING GOLDEN AGE

OF

JAPANESE POETRY

tanka and haiku of the Meiji-Taisho-Showa period



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*To my friend and the best of editors
William Lee*

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*From the Editor of
the English Edition*

This is the third volume of Professor Alexander Dolin's work on modern Japanese poetry to be translated into English. The first volume, *The Silver Age of Japanese Poetry* (Akita International University Press, 2010), focuses on the beginnings of the movement for new poetry (i.e. poetry in non-traditional forms or *shi*) in Japan at end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and on the first modern poetic movements, Romanticism and Symbolism. The material was drawn from the first volume of Professor Dolin's four-volume *Istoriya novoy yaponskoy poesii* (*History of New Japanese Poetry*), published in 2007 by Hyperion Press, St. Petersburg. The second English translation, *The Bronze Age of Japanese Poetry: The Surge of Modern Verse* (2013), is based on material from volumes 2 and 3 of the Russian original and covers the period of socially engaged poetry and modernist experimentation during the late Meiji (1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), and early Showa (1926–1989) periods. The present translation is based on volume 4 of the original and is devoted exclusively to the history of the traditional genres of *tanka* and *haiku* in the modern period.

With the publication of the present work, English readers now have at their disposal a complete overview of Japanese poetry of the modern period, both in new and traditional forms. As I mentioned in my introductory comments to the previous volumes, the field of modern Japanese poetry is not one that has been studied extensively by English-speaking academics, and thus this series of translations fills an important gap. This gap was perhaps a little bit smaller when it comes to the traditional genres, since some of modern *tanka* and *haiku* poets (Yosano Akiko, Masaoka Shiki, and Ishikawa Takuboku in particular) have received treatment by scholars writing in

English. As Professor Dolin's account shows, however, there were many other accomplished poets and interesting characters active in the field besides these three big names. Moreover, whereas previous studies and translations have focussed on the revival and rehabilitation of *tanka* and *haiku* during the Meiji period, the present work continues its survey of the traditional genres through the prewar and postwar decades, right up until recent times.

This more recent history is important, for it makes it clear that, of all forms practised by Japanese poets in the modern period, it is, ironically, the traditional genres, whose demise was already being foretold or called for in the Meiji period, which have been the most successful. While today the study and composition of modern *shi* is limited to a small group of specialists, *tanka* and, especially, *haiku*, are enjoying a boom, with thousands if not tens of thousands of serious poets and hundreds of thousands of amateurs, not only in Japan but around the world. How these two traditional poetic forms were able not only to survive but to remain relevant and flourish, is what Professor Dolin's work has to teach us.

At the beginning of the modern period there was a general consensus among critics that both *tanka* and *haiku* needed to be reformed or die. The generic conventions governing metre, language, and range of topics were deemed to be too restrictive for the treatment of modern life in a rapidly changing world. Experiments carried out to try and revitalize the genres, therefore, usually involved stretching one or more of the perceived limitations. Some poets and critics called for a loosening up of the metre, which led eventually, in the works of Maeda Yugure, Tsukamoto Kunio, and Kawahigashi Hekigoto, to amorphous miniatures indistinguishable from the modernist *kindaishi* experiments known as *tanshi*. Similarly, the *haiku* reformers Ogiwara Seisensui and Taneda Santoka wanted not only to get rid of the rigid metrical pattern, they were also willing to give up the "seasonal words" (*kigo*), which have traditionally played such a strong part in determining the vocabulary and restricting the range of topics in *haiku*. Others, decrying the traditional genres' infatuation with "flowers and

birds," wanted to bring their poems into the city, to write about modern urban life and its problems. Thus the modern histories of both *tanka* and *haiku* include chapters on "proletarian" poetry and other efforts by poets to be "socially" engaged. Yet such social engagement could also backfire, as it did spectacularly in the case of the large number of poets who ended up willingly singing the praises of the Japanese military and of Japan's great mission in Asia.

As these and the many others experiments Professor Dolin traces in these pages show, when pushed to extremes a *tanka* or a *haiku* ceases to be a *tanka* or a *haiku*, and at that same moment the reader also loses any means of objectively evaluating the poem. One could perhaps argue that it is the very brevity of the forms that makes tampering with them so dangerous. It is as if *tanka* and *haiku* are such delicate objects that the removal of even one of their internal parts will lead to their collapse. In any case, the history presented here by Professor Dolin reveals that, despite the many reforms called for and attempted over the course of the twentieth century, the general pattern observed is one of a constant "return to the center."

As Professor Dolin's account also convincingly shows, it was Masaoka Shiki who defined that center, both for *tanka* and for *haiku*. Shiki's concept of *shasei* ("reflection of nature") has remained central to both the *tanka* and *haiku* groups he founded and which, through their journals (*Araragi* and *Hototogisu* respectively), have represented the mainstreams. The concept of the "reflection of nature" can be seen as a concession to the trend of realism in literature, which at the time was being introduced to Japan through Western examples. Indeed, its association with modern (i.e. Western) trends may have been one of the reasons the notion of *shasei* was seen as progressive and widely adopted as an instrument of reform. Yet it was a concession to realism that the traditional genres, based as they were on a sensibility to the surrounding world, could easily afford to make. The term *shasei*, in fact, was borrowed from traditional Japanese (and ultimately Chinese) painting. Shiki had a deep interest in art, both Western and Japanese. As Professor Dolin points out, he was also a great admirer of

Yosa Buson, the important Edo period *haiku* poet who was also an accomplished painter. The realism implied in the *shasei* concept, in other words, was as much a part of the Japanese as the European aesthetic tradition. Thus, in encouraging poets to return to the freshness of real experience in the world, Shiki was also reminding them of the past.

In this way Shiki managed both to free-up the traditional genres for a new start and ensure that they would continue to be anchored in their respective traditions. Shiki is usually seen as a reformer, but as Professor Dolin points out, he was also a scholar who was very well read. His tastes may have been a bit unorthodox — his preference for the *Manyoshu* over the *Kokinshu* or *Shinkokinshu*, for example, or his ranking of Buson over Basho — but they were tastes based on a broad and deep knowledge of the traditions. Having absorbed the traditions, Shiki intuitively knew that, while some straying from the rules could be tolerated, certain parameters had to be adhered to or else the forms would run the risk of disintegrating all together. *Manyoshu* or *Kokinshu*? Basho or Buson? Ultimately, such questions were not important. What was important was the poet's ongoing dialectical engagement with the tradition, for it is only through such an engagement that the poet can develop his or her own standards for what makes a good *tanka* or *haiku*.

In the final stages of the editing of this volume, during which I was sitting at my computer for many hours each day, I would sometimes take a break, whether it was just to sit outside on the back porch of my house or to walk down to the river that runs by the campus where I teach. Absorbed as I was in the world of *tanka* and *haiku*, I was naturally inclined to put these moments of relaxation and contemplation into traditional form. Although it was only September, on the Canadian prairie where I live, the typical signs of fall were already apparent. At the risk of embarrassing myself, here are a couple of *haiku* and a *tanka* I wrote during those days:

*I sat outside this evening
but not for long —
Where has summer gone?*

*with its leaves half gone
the old elm tree
looks even older still*

*blue and green,
yellow and gold —
with these colors I am blessed
this autumn day
on the Red River*

While I make no claim as to the quality of these “poems,” I will admit that imagining, writing, and rewriting them was a stimulating and enjoyable exercise. Part of that process, moreover, involved an ongoing reflection on the nature of the genres. Looking at my poems, for example, I would ask myself: “Is this really a *tanka*?” “If I change this word, will my *haiku* be more *haiku*-like?” Leaving aside the whole question of what it means to try to reproduce these traditional Japanese forms in English, the point I would like to make is that, although the forms are easy to access and almost anyone, by sticking to a few simple rules, can produce a passable poem, the activity is always accompanied by an awareness of the genre and its traditions. And if that is the case for an amateur like me, how much more so was it for the many poets and critics surveyed in this volume who sought to define, refine, or reinvigorate their particular genres.

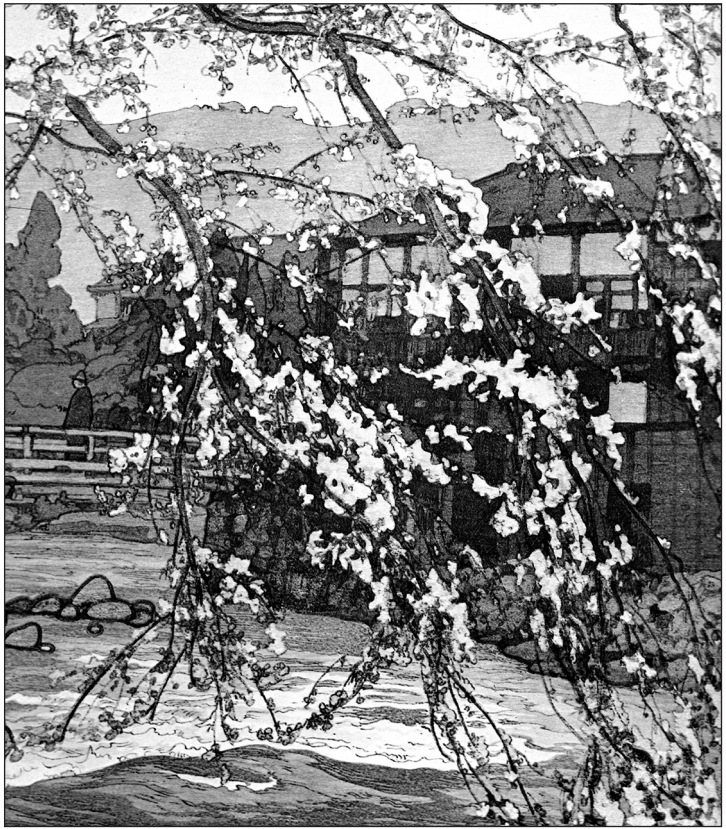
Professor Dolin ends this work by expressing his doubts whether there can still be objective standards for evaluation when writing in a traditional poetic form has become a mass, international movement, as is the case with *haiku* today. I myself am not so sure we have to worry about that and am more inclined to celebrate rather than lament *haiku*'s democratization. For while its easy access means that anyone can be a poet, any serious engagement with form will inevitably lead back to tradition, which is where all normative values and criteria are to be found.

William Lee,
Winnipeg, September 2014

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TRADITIONAL GENRES: PAST AND PRESENT

The traditionalist trend in Japanese poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be regarded as a legacy of the Medieval *tanka* and *haiku* schools, and furnished the last page in the history of the near endless Golden Age of classical Japanese poetry covering a period of 1300 years. What is the difference between the poetry of modern traditionalism and traditional poetry itself? First of all, we see the change in the worldview of the traditionalist authors, who have given up their purely contemplative descriptions of nature and have also partly managed to overcome the rigid conservative approach to canonic poetry. Historical reality flooded the most “forbidden” domains of art and literature, demanding from the artist a relevant understanding of the intellectual and spiritual needs of modern society. The concept of “artistic escapism,” the detachment from mundane problems for the sake of the ideal of unity with the Universe (the pillar of Zen aesthetics in the Middle Ages), could no longer satisfy the needs of the spiritually advanced new generation of poets.

The first years after the Meiji Restoration, when the leaders of the movement for the New Style Poetry (*shintaiishi*) were calling for the abolition of obsolete traditions, was “a dead season” for *tanka* and *haiku*. The feeble attempts of the old masters to support the fading genres gained the sympathy neither of the readers nor of the critics of the pro-western oriented young poets. Many were ready to assume that traditional poetry was out of date and turned to the new art (as also happened after the Revolution of 1911 in China). However, the fate of Japanese literature and art in the twentieth century confirmed the rule articulated by Hegel: “...At each stage of further manifestation the universal evokes the entire previous content, it does not lose

anything in the process of its dialectical movement forward, does not leave anything behind, but preserves all acquired experience and enriches it and thickens inside." [9, 315].

The rapid transition from late medieval literature into a literature quite modern both in terms of form and content, was accompanied by the emergence of Romanticism. Although Japanese Romanticism may be seen as minor or secondary when compared to, say, English or French Romanticism, comparison does provide a means of elaborating a new aesthetics or poetics on the basis of East-West fusion. As had been the case in Europe, the rise of Romanticism in Japan was marked by an increased interest in classical heritage and folklore. At the same time, the revival of Japanese nationalism during the Meiji period, fostered by the rapid economic and military expansion of the modernizing Empire, gave new life to the traditional genre of *waka* poetry, filling it with a new tone. One of the major schools of the renovated *waka* fits into the mainstream of heroic and romantic lyrical poetry. Another trend defined its way by appealing to erotic love poetry, while a third focused on singing the joys of bohemian life, and a fourth proclaimed the transition to a new realism as its motto. Similar tendencies appeared in *haiku* poetry. The emergence of many different trends and schools indicated the breakup of canonic restrictions and the formation of a totally novel aesthetic system.

Traditional Japanese poetry, represented mostly by the two classical genres *tanka* and *haiku*, both steadfastly rooted in rigid, almost unchangeable forms, had survived through many centuries as an isolated aesthetic system. As such, though with some functional modifications, it approached the end of the nineteenth century. In order to analyze the typological features of modern *tanka* and *haiku* poetry, it will first be necessary to highlight some of the inherent characteristics of the traditional genres.

Tanka poetry, at least since the times of the first imperial anthologies (10th century), due to its lyrical orientation, has always opposed prosaic genres which reflected in detail historical events and social problems of the time, hardly ever

intersecting with them or corresponding in themes and imagery. Whether it be the genre of lyrical diaries (*nikki*) or historical novels (*rekishi monogatari*), the numerous poetic inserts never played more than a complimentary, decorative role and were completely devoid of historical content. Even when *tanka* poems were woven into the prosaic text of the heroic epos (*gunki*) and co-existed with the rhythmical prose, they played only the role of lyrical accompaniment. With this division of roles, poetry (identified with poems themselves) was separated from the entire mythological and narrative structure of epos and would form a specific relation to prose and drama as a timeless type of literature constant in its immutability. The isolation from other components of the literary process provided for poetry a very special place in the minds of the literati — that of an ever-lasting poetical stability, which found its form in a sacred canon. Accordingly, creating *waka* (*utayomi*) was regarded as a sacred action, and the “songs” (*uta*) per se were treated as the embodiment of the national mentality (*nihon no kokoro*) and the instrument for the manifestation of the true Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*).

Although some alterations of tone were allowed, the ancient lexical and grammatical norms and a large number of canonic tropes had remained unchanged for centuries. Indeed, there is probably no other poetic tradition in the world that has seen such “monogamy,” as even within similar canonic restrictions other medieval poetries have had a tendency to expand or increase the variety of metric patterns and genres. *Tanka* poetry, however, with a few exceptions dating to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, has hardly changed for the last twelve or maybe even fifteen hundred years.

The evolution of *tanka* poetry, and, thereafter, *haiku* poetry, with their accent on extreme minimalism, was characterized by the elimination of any excessive descriptive elements. At the heart of the poetry of these genres lies an aspiration for highly focused imagery techniques. Its symbol is the world reflected in a drop — or, more precisely, in the myriad similar water drops. The poetry of classical Japanese verse differs

from other national poetic systems in being restricted to a very small number of genres, a comparative paucity of expressive means, and the surprising persistence of the artistic canon. The repetition of seasonal images and preset poetic vocabulary, the use of a standard arsenal of poetic techniques, and the focus on classical poetic models of the “golden age,” were typical both of the worst and the best *waka* authors until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

An even more amazing phenomenon was the forging at an early stage of development of the only poetic meter, universal for all genres of verse, based on the alternation of syllabic groups of five and seven syllables (*mora*)—the so-called *onsuritsu* prosody. Whether it be the major genres of *haiku* and *tanka*, the collective linked verse (*renga*) or secondary genres (*choka*, *sedoka*, *kyōka*, *senryū*, *imayo*, as well as the *imbun* rhythmic parts in the *gunki* epic tales), the difference in the metric pattern is conventionally determined simply by the way the poem begins: from a five-syllable unit or a seven-syllable one. Whereas in the New Style Poetry the last *onsuritsu*-based stanzas are to be found in the works of the Japanese Symbolists of the 1920s, the old classical prosody is quite alive and still going strong in modern *tanka* and *haiku*.

The amazing conservatism of classical Japanese *tanka* and *haiku* poetry suggests the “extra-historical” nature of the this aesthetic system, one perhaps more oriented toward presenting the pulsations of the macrocosm through the microcosm of the creative mind than providing a reflection of social and historical reality. However, it is also true that the very existence of such a system is one of the links or components of the permanent activity of the creative mind, an individual expression of its historical status and social content.

Of course, the work of such great poets of the medieval period as Saigyō (12th century), or of Ryōkan (18th—early 19th century) and Issa (18th century), were products of their age, the indirect results of the impact of the social and cultural environment that forms the artist’s worldview. Still, it is not easy to distinguish in such contemplative poetry the hallmarks

of specific historical periods. For many *tanka* (as well as for *haiku*) there is no other notion of Time except the seasons, so the gap of a few centuries in fact affects neither the form nor the content, as all the authors strictly follow the initial canonical rules. Thus, it is not unusual that poems of the twelfth century hardly differ from those featuring a similar topic written half a millennium later. Even the poets who used *haiku* as poetic illustrations for a personal diary avoided any episode associated with actual political or social issues, or would at least encrypt concrete events using the traditional imagery. It was only that which was “eternal in the current” that was considered worthy of being written down on paper.

Obviously, “the extra-historical nature” of classical Japanese poetry (as well as classical painting, calligraphy, landscape art, flower arranging, tea ceremony, etc.), with its focus on seasonal cycles, its engagement with the macrocosm and its ideal of being at one with nature, can also be perceived as a result of the specific historical development of the nation, as a reflection of its basic religious and philosophical assumptions, refracted in various facets of culture. At this point we should turn to the animistic concept of Shinto, which predetermines the inextricable connection between man and the forces of nature, embodied in the pantheon of innumerable deities. It was also affected by the concept of the symbolic triad Heaven-Earth-Man, borrowed from classical Chinese Taoism, which gave rise to the theory of ancient geomantics (*fen-shui*), astrology, medicine, martial arts, and to the whole complex of ethics and aesthetics which ultimately shaped Far Eastern civilization.

This aesthetics with no less efficiency absorbed the basics of Buddhism: the concept of the universal Law, of the pervasive nature of the Buddha, of the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, of enlightenment which can be reached both through meditation and through creative activity. The concept of rebirth in the earthly vale (*sansara*) gave rise to the idea of impermanence (*mujo*), the ephemeral nature of life, and the insignificance of individual being. The dissolution of a personality in the endless stream of births and deaths filling

the universal emptiness (*mu*), implied an extreme objectification of the image and the elimination of subjective evaluations.

The creation of an original individual work of art either in accordance with the already existing canon or with new rules, worked out by the author himself, is of upmost importance for a European poet or artist. Each historical period in Western civilization puts forward its own rules of art which replace those of the past, just as technological achievements supersede earlier ones. The evolution of Western culture implies an essential renovation and a competitive struggle for new forms. Meanwhile, the Japanese poet who has inherited the classical tradition puts in the foreground the reflective side of creative activity, that is, the interpretation of the eternal laws of nature. Reflection as a meditation and at the same time refraction is the core of Taoist and Buddhist philosophy and constitutes also the essence of traditional Japanese poetry.

Zen Buddhism, which adapted Buddhist metaphysics to earthly reality and to the needs of the fine arts (not only in Japan, but initially in China, as well as in Korea and Vietnam), shaped the purpose of the artist's existence in the universe and determined his mode of life. To follow one's own Way (*do*) implies comprehending the Way of the universe. All previous generations of artists and poets, embedded in the same spiritual tradition, have aspired to comprehend the universal Way in a myriad of individual manifestations. Each work of art — a poem, a painting, or the abstract composition of a rock garden — is nothing other than an attempt to perceive the Way. The cumulative development of the tradition facilitates the comprehension of the Way for future generations of artists who inherit the sacred canons, the achievements of their predecessors. At the same time, it puts serious obstacles in the path of those who seek new horizons.

Collective efforts in perceiving the Way should also be considered, for example, in the linked *renga* verse, which required the participation of several authors, in mastering and performing martial arts, or in the production and appreciation

of other traditional arts. The contemplation of a suggestive painting, a rock garden, a calligraphic inscription or a striking arrangement of flowers, watching a *kendo*, *judo* or *aikido* combat, appreciating a *go* game, reading and composing *haiku* or *tanka*, all of these could lead to the desired epiphany, especially if the activity becomes a regular occupation taken seriously. All individual ways lead to the perception of one ultimate Way.

The interactive, co-creative activity of the poet and the reader, the artist and the viewer, requires that both parties share a common religious and philosophical worldview and understand the particular set of rules of the chosen art.

According to the principles of Buddhist philosophy, which had adopted basic concepts of Chinese Taoism, the ultimate goal of any kind of spiritual activity should be deliverance from the consciousness of actual reality of the individual (*u-shin*) and the achievement of a state of complete detachment (*mushin*), self-dissolution in the universal void (*kyomu*); that is to say, fusion with the depicted object as a kind of transcendental metaphysical enlightenment. The means of achieving this final goal is found in non-action (*mui*), i.e. non-interference in the natural course of things; non-action not only on the physical level, but also on the intellectual, mental, and spiritual levels.

All objects and events, whether in manifested or non-manifested form, already exist in the Buddhist macrocosm, in the original Emptiness, the illusory reality of the world. The artist's task is not to create something completely new, highly individualist or unique, but to reveal that which is hidden in the void, to outline the shape of the real or potentially existing objects. The main goal of the artist is to catch the rhythm of the universal metamorphosis, to "tune in" to its wave length, and to present in his creation an image born from the pulsation of the cosmos. This imagery, however, has never existed in isolation. It was dormant in the shell of emptiness, in the energy of space pregnant with inherent potentiality. This explains the importance of the empty space and laconic imagery in traditional painting, and the omissions and suggestive allusions in poetry.

The things that are not said and not drawn contain a reference to something that is not pronounced, to the overall beauty, wisdom and harmony of the universe, to all that the individual mind or solitary artistic talent has no power to perceive. Revealing the essence of the world depends on perceiving it through specific techniques inherent in every form of art. The more accurately the author presents any action, state or expression applying a minimum number of techniques, the more clearly we feel in a given work the presence of Eternity and Infinity, the more perfect is the image. This is the way of applying in poetry (and all other traditional arts) the suggestive element, which manifests itself in the best classical *tanka* and *haiku*

The basic concept of the world as a “mirror reflection,” which had originated in the Buddhist system of psychological training, implies ideally a pure image in a drop of water. The symbol of the “mirror image of spirit-mind or spirit as a smooth water surface” is typical of all Zen arts, but *tanka*, and especially *haiku* poetry, is based exclusively on the reflection of “the great in the small.”

Referring to the poetic tradition of *waka*, back in the tenth century, the compilers of the anthology *The Collection of Old and New Poems of Japan (Kokinwakashu)* wrote about the necessity of catching and presenting “the charm of things” (*mono no aware*), the charm of being, embodied in visible images of nature. Several centuries later, when the *New Kokinshu (Shinkokinshu)* was compiled, Fujiwara Shunzei and Fujiwara Teika enriched *waka* poetry with an aesthetic category of “intimate mystical meaning” (*yugen*) contained in every subject, phenomenon, and event. The supreme sense of the universal being embodied in mundane things, universal feelings and typical emotional responses define the genre and stylistic features of *tanka* as well as *haiku*. It is no coincidence that the great reformer of traditional poetry, Masaoka Shiki, believed that *haiku* and *tanka* were two trunks growing from one root.

In this situation, the selection of standard canonical themes and the standardization of imagery became inevitable. In *tanka*

and *haiku*, the imagery code is not the same, but the principles of poetic vision and their practical application (seasonal orientation, division by “thematic cycles,” selection of “poetic” vocabulary etc.) are comparable. The touchstone of excellence in classical *tanka*, *renga*, and *haiku* is not the forging of an original image, but a skillful adaptation to traditional conventions, recommended by the poetic canon. However, a real masterpiece assumes joyful improvisation — as if the verse is prompted by an inner voice, by life itself, by ever-lasting nature.

Myriads of *tanka* and *haiku* by countless authors of the classical period are in fact predictable etudes on prescribed topics, albeit with an incredible amount of variations and interpretations of a certain theme, keeping a slight but distinct flavor of the author’s individuality. The number of *haiku* and *tanka* composed by many poets in the course of their lives is really striking, ranging from ten to fifty or sixty thousand poems. Such an amount simply does not allow even the admirers to read collections of their favorite poets “thoroughly” from the beginning to the end, no matter how wonderful these poems might be — otherwise a human life might not be long enough to read more than the works of one or maybe two poets. The poems are nothing but drops of rain, reflecting the picture of the world. The number is often overwhelming. When reading books of such volume, the question might arise whether the author was thinking about his reader or was writing mostly for his own pleasure and for eternity. Naturally, taking into consideration this massive amount of verse, selection of the best works becomes a crucial issue.

The question of selection is vital for the compilers and translators of the anthologies. In historical perspective, the main collections of *tanka* and *haiku*, the major forms constituting the classical heritage of Japanese literature before the New Age, contain only carefully sorted names, as well as poems, selected and approved by the commentary tradition. Other poems by the same authors or by their contemporaries, of course, are present somewhere out there as a background and serve as a supplement, but the attention is focused generally

on leading authors and their widely recognized masterpieces. It was extremely difficult to expand the area of tradition and to introduce a new name and new poems, as Masaoka Shiki managed to do at the end of the nineteenth century.

A reader or an arbiter at a poetry contest or an editor selecting poems for the anthology is free to choose and match the poems with similar topics, using classical anthologies as well as popular treatises on poetry as objective criteria. Of course, the role of the arbiter in this case is of prime importance. The necessary precondition for the functioning of such an aesthetic system (or any other kind of canonic art) was a deep study of the artistic code both by the authors and the readers, as suggestive art is always interactive and requires a solid "interconnection."

In classical *waka* poetry, the guidelines and recommendations were derived mostly from the voluminous commentaries on the classic anthologies. The most serious and valuable of those sources were the *kokin denju* ("Interpretation of *Kokinshu*"), compiled by a few generations of scholars in the course of several centuries. However, there were also small compact works that presented their own versions of classic poetry, since the introduction of the famous foreword to the *Kokinshu* by Ki no Tsurayuki in the 10th century. The anthologies and *waka* collections were modeled after classical masterpieces. Later these principles of seasonal and thematic division were largely borrowed by *haiku* authors. The rules of compiling anthologies have remained practically unchanged till our times, considerably reinforced by the numerous written poetics. Thus, even at present the author's individuality often disappears in the massive stream of endless varying improvisations on a given topic: early snow or plum blossoms, a cuckoo's song and the summer heat, scarlet maples and winter desolation...

In *haiku*, the principles of classical poetry were mainly shaped on the basis of Basho's views recorded by his disciples in the memoirs that were complemented overtime

by numerous commentaries. The works written by the poets of the next generation (Yosa no Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and others) and their theoretical concepts acquired the meaning and the right to exist only against the background of the great Basho's covenants. For centuries the old works served as the only criterion for evaluating new ones, and the authority of the masters of the past, led by Basho, outweighed any arguments in favor of modernizing the genre. This situation can be easily explained, as *haiku* used to belong to the category of canonical, strictly regulated art, and Basho was the first who managed to transform a poetic genre for entertainment and idle pastime into a highly humanistic lyrical poetry.

It was Basho who summarized the experience of his predecessors, gave his own novel interpretation to classical concepts of Zen art, and managed to define the basic aesthetic categories of *haiku*: *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibumi*, *karumi*, *fueki ryuko*. None of these categories refers only to *haiku*, and none of them was actually new — each of them had existed in isolation or together with one or two others in different domains of the Zen arts of Japan and China, in some cases many centuries before Basho.

What is more, the basic poetic techniques were not Basho's invention; he simply summed up the collective experience of the *haiku* poets of the previous hundred years or so. Basho's merit was his ability to combine a number of fundamental categories of Zen aesthetics, to apply them to poetry, and to produce a perfect poetic model. Provided that the basic principles are preserved, certain innovations introduced by individual authors and schools were allowed, but in the eyes of the Western reader familiar with the basics of poetry, the difference between them would be ridiculously insignificant. This situation probably could last for a few more centuries, but in the late 19th century, when the great reformer Masaoka Shiki took the liberty of doubting the genius of Basho and the advantages of his school, traditional poetry was challenged and came out renovated.

Uniformity as a predominant principle of classical poetry was based on the requirement "to imitate the ancients," but

at each new stage of historical development until the Second World War the idea of following the classical models was being filled with a new content, and the ancient period became a kind of absolute criterion of truth and beauty that allowed the merits and drawbacks of modern times to be revealed. The poets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who suddenly found themselves face to face with Western literature shared the same understanding of the “old classics.” The concept of time in *haiku* and *tanka* clearly differs from historical time, which had the strongest imprint on the traditionalist poetry of the twentieth century.

To define them as “static forms” hardly does justice to the position of *tanka* and *haiku* in the classical and medieval periods, as these genres have nonetheless undergone some changes in the course of historical and literary evolution, giving rise to schools and trends with more or less distinctive features, obvious to the professionals. Still, there were many more similar features between the schools than differences. Before the end of the nineteenth century, any serious change in the poetic techniques and any attempt to expand the limits of either genre appeared absolutely out of the questions for *tanka* and *haiku* authors. Each poet knew that he was acting within a certain framework of rules and regulations, determined once and for all by a specific canonic system. He had to assume his place in a certain school belonging to a certain trend of a certain genre — and therefore he was fully aware of his connection with the tradition.

Such an attitude to the canon was typical also of the representatives of other traditional schools in literature, fine arts, and martial arts, with their hierarchical structure, gradation by the “level of qualification,” and the unquestioned authority of the head of the school (*iemoto*), consecrated by the glorious deeds of a long line of predecessors. The very fact of belonging to the school and the correlation (albeit distant) with the name of a famous master would mean in the world of literature and arts much more than individual talent. A “*ronin*,”

that is, a poet not assigned to any school, had very little chance of recognition, while a mediocre poet, who had been a student of a venerable master, could definitely count on publication in collective anthologies, and in some cases, under favorable circumstances, could even try to launch a school of his own. Even nowadays, *haiku* and *tanka* poets take special pride in the “genealogy” of their school, often dating back to the pre-modern times or the Meiji period. Each school had a “family tree,” and together they formed a genealogical tree of the genre, which even today can be easily found in encyclopedias and reference books.

In classical and medieval times, amateurism as a cultural phenomenon in fact had been almost stamped out, or at least heavily camouflaged. It was assumed that any craft, to say nothing of art, before becoming the property of the consumer, should be brought to the utmost degree of perfection, which was only possible when all creative potent in a given (and sometimes adjacent domains) is involved. Therefore, poets in China and Japan often also excelled in related arts, such as calligraphy, painting, or *ikebana* (flower arranging). The level of skill determined the degree of artistic freedom that the master could exercise. However, all the arts existed within the boundaries of schools and relied on rather rigid canonical rules. To decline them completely meant “going against the stream” and condemning oneself to ostracism.

In the twentieth century, the erosion of tradition and waning interest in the classics forced many heads of traditional schools to simplify the rules and reduce the time of training, which produced positive results preserving the precious traditions in time, but gradually brought down many arts to the amateur level. At the same time, the liberalization of the canon, which sometimes went as far as the complete denouncement of it (for example, in the case of the “proletarian *tanka*” movement), allowed experimenters to shatter the fragile structure of *tanka* from inside, weakening its aesthetic base.

According to the sharp observation of a Russian literary scholar:

From the point of view of repeatability as a criterion, of primary note are the permanent elements in artistic phenomena and processes, the aesthetic invariants, the most characteristic feature of which is their relatively constant nature in the changing environment and structures. [223, 284]

For centuries, such permanent elements in poetry served as a set of aesthetic categories and artistic techniques, which formed a universal theoretical framework and methodological ground for Japanese poets.

Interaction between the artist and his audience, which was determined by the specific character of socio-historical developments of the country, was grounded in the maintenance of stable canonical regulations in national poetry with relatively minor modifications over an amazingly long period of time. The existence of suggestive poetry, with its poetics of lyrical allusions and overtones, could be possible only in a country where the level of both elite culture and commoners' popular culture implied general knowledge of the classical heritage, in which the collective "historical memory" of the people was nourished from generation to generation by countless literary and artistic references.

As it was in China, culture in Japan has developed cumulatively, absorbing the most valuable elements from previous periods and recording in written form both great achievements and minor cultural events, masterpieces and trivialities. The history of the country unfolded as the history of its culture, reinforced by the cultural tradition of China. Thus, in classical poetry, "new content" contained a reference to the "old masters," and the very fact of its existence asserted the immortality of the "old." Scholarly analysis reveals a close connection between early classical *waka*, the famous foreword by Ki no Tsurayuki to the anthology *Kokinwakashu*, and ancient Chinese sources. The technique of quoting or hidden quoting of the lines from the "original songs" by classic authors in one's own poem (*honkadori*) was widely used by *tanka* poets since the twelfth century. Many *haiku* by Basho contain either imagery directly borrowed from Chinese poetry or allusions referring to such an image.

The apotheosis of this normative poetics can be seen in regular updating of *saijiki* compendiums, *haiku* “poetic vocabularies,” containing hundreds and even thousands of recommended seasonal imagery words.

As was the case in China, a specific “poetic geography” originated in ancient Japan. All the more or less noteworthy landscapes — mountains, rivers, lakes, bays, and islands —

have been repeatedly praised in poetry. In this way, popular geographic names became symbols containing references to a number of famous classical poems and paintings. Such references to “poetic geography” became an important task for many of the *haiku* poets, who would travel all over the country following great Bashō’s example. In modern times many *tanka* poets would pursue the same goals. And of course the basics of this “poetic geography” were well known to the common reader, who could appreciate a new variation referring to Mt. Fuji or the islands of Matsushima and compare it with other masterpieces of the same “thread.”

The new in the Japanese cultural tradition would not denounce the old, would not reject it, but rather tended to modify, enrich, and improve it, filling it sometimes with a different social content, adapting it to the needs of a different social class. It is believed that the emergence and rapid progress of *haiku* in the seventeenth century was due to the efforts of “the third class,” discontent with the fact that *tanka* poetry happened to be monopolized by the samurai and court aristocracy.

Actually, *haiku*, as well as many other arts of the “floating world” (*ukiyo*), reflected the process of the democratization of urban culture and a challenge to the formalized canonical classic culture. Nevertheless, *haiku* masters did not denounce *tanka* aesthetics and took over the best of its basic achievements.

The continuity and consistency of aesthetics and poetics was mainly due to the continuity of the various religious and philosophical systems that coexisted in various denominations and cults representing the remarkable endurance of the philosophical Buddhist-Confucian-Shinto complex at the level of life

philosophy, rituals, and common sense. As a result, a specific national "world view" based on the considerable stability of artistic values was achieved. This stability of conservative values in the transient world of permanent mutability can be considered the dominant characteristic feature of Japanese classical poetry as an aesthetic system that confirms the general rule: "The character of any literature is determined primarily by the general notion of the world and of humanity... The idea of the world and of Humanity at every new stage of history would acquire new features and qualities. In the course of this evolution, the literary skills of every writer would be enriched" [225, 229].

Whereas some scholars have argued against seeing the reevaluation of basic principles within the aesthetic system as a major determinant of the author's method, emphasizing the leading role of individual talents as a motive force of literature, Japanese classical poetry demonstrates quite clearly the lack of freedom of artistic choices prescribed by canon. The insignificance of innovation in the works of any single master or in the aesthetic system as a whole, is emphasized by the overwhelming role of tradition and the stability of a number of aesthetic categories that served as a constant vector of cultural evolution.

In any society, the rules of universal aesthetics are associated with social norms and the ethical and the aesthetic regulations of a given historical period. In Japan, their long-lasting stability resulted in the amazing conservatism of classical poetry. As the inability of Buddhist metaphysics and Confucian moral concepts to ensure social harmony and stability resulted in the quest for the restoration of the Imperial Way and finally led to the Meiji Restoration, the inability of traditional poetry to convey the pathos of the changes Japan was undergoing gave rise to a "poetic revolution" leading to the emergence of new poetry in the twentieth century both in traditional and non-traditional forms.

Tanka and *haiku* reform was an urgent necessity, and none of the traditionalist poets of the new era could remain aloof from the process of breaking and remaking the classical canon. Many

of them tried to offer their own canon to replace the old one. Others called for removing all possible restrictions, replacing classical *bungo* diction with the conversational *kogo* and writing without referring to the old poetics. In the post-war period the dissipation of the canon led to maximum liberalization of the rules and regulations, so that housewives could easily compose *tanka* and children starting from elementary school could compose *haiku*. *Haiku* and *tanka* were transformed from a hermetic art system into a liberal pursuit, losing their elitist nature and quickly turning into mass culture for popular clubs. This transition from the quality of the poems into the quantity of the poets led to an unprecedented revival of both genres on a mass level and actually downgraded the role of the professional poets to the role of amateurs, eliminating borders between the two categories. Although formally the schools tracing their origins from Masaoka Shiki, Takahama Kyoshi and Saito Mokichi still exist, the readers are no longer looking forward to the apparition of new stars on the horizon of *tanka* or *haiku*. They are quite satisfied with the regular regional competitions and the publication of collective anthologies. The emergence of numerous online poetry journals completed the process of transformation.

Traditionalist poetry of the last decades should be primarily considered as one of the most effective ways of asserting the national identity of the Japanese during the economic boom and the formation of a “society of universal prosperity and social harmony.” It can also be regarded as the way of national self-identification in the rapidly globalizing world community. Since the 1960s, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has been pursuing the policy of wise protectionism towards traditional culture — literature, painting, theater, and crafts. Considerable corporate and private subsidies have been allocated for the maintenance and development of the traditional arts, including Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku theatres, and ancient court *gagaku* music, as well as Japanese style painting (*nihonga*), classical calligraphy, *ikebana*, the tea ceremony, and traditional crafts (*mingei*).

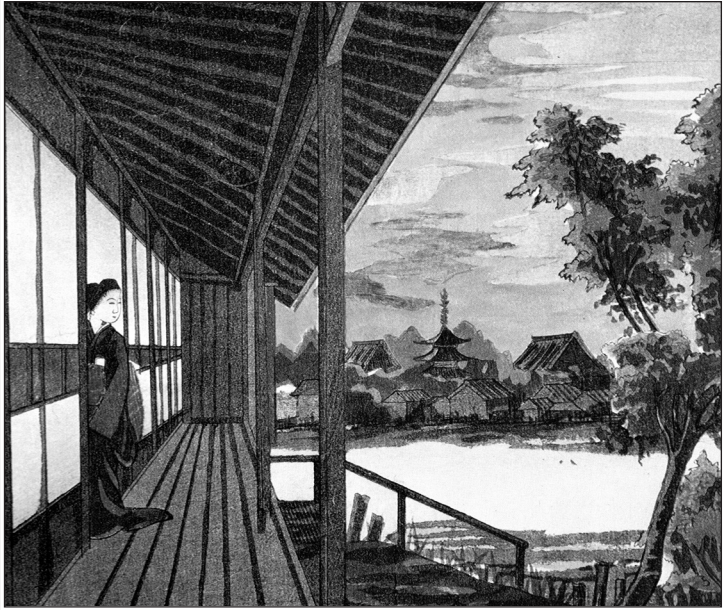
Haiku and *tanka*, which have always been “the voice of the heart” for the Japanese, rightly occupy a place of honor

among national arts. There are *haiku* and *tanka* clubs in any of the thousands and thousands of cultural centers. There are associations of *tanka* and *haiku* poetry in every city with branches in towns and villages. On the shelves in the bookshops and at the libraries, magnificent new editions of classics stand side by side with the works of the traditional poets of the twentieth century and of the new millennium as well. Among them are the well-known, little known, and absolutely unknown authors who have published some colorful collections of poetry at their own expense. Traditionally, every January the best *tanka* selected at the All-Japan Competition are presented at the Imperial Palace. The few excellent poems that appear there often are dissolved in a sea of mediocre works. It is the same at the large-scale international *haiku* contests held at Masaoka Shiki's home town, Matsuyama, at Akita and at some other places. The lack of professionalism and classical harmony is often compensated for by the fact of belonging to a renowned school and following elementary rules, if not just by a creative zeal.

Yet, the traditional genres have not lost the ability to perform other functions, and they continue to be a means of self-expression and an emotional outlet for the writers, painters, sculptors, architects, and poets of various trends. *Haiku* and *tanka* in the twentieth century and also nowadays, as in former times, primarily take the form of entries in personal lyrical journals, that is, for recording the most important everyday emotions. *Tanka* or *haiku* testaments conveying the author's state of mind on his death bed are also not unusual.

Against the background of the rapidly growing and "post-modernizing" new forms of poetry, with constantly changing schools and trends disclaiming their predecessors and promoting new western idols, *tanka* and *haiku*, even in the forms modernized beyond recognition, are considered by millions of readers and writers as a healing spring from the national tradition. No one, however, can foretell whether in the future *haiku* and *tanka* will ever be resurrected as refined, highly professional arts, or whether they will simply become popular crafts.

Part 1



T A N K A

TANKA POETRY IN THE PREMODERN PERIOD

The oldest written examples of *tanka* or *waka* poetry (“Japanese Song”) — as this genre is respectfully called in literature — dates back to the emergence of the historical monument of the eighth century, the *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*). There is no doubt that in the folk tradition songs and poetry related to *tanka* had existed much earlier, at least several centuries before the Nara period, itself marked by the flourishing of culture and the emergence of the Japanese written language. The proof is in the poems included in the first collection of “Japanese songs,” the massive *Manyoshu* (*Collection of Myriad Leaves*). This anthology, compiled circa 759, is a rare phenomenon in world literature. At the dawn of the development of the national cultural tradition, when the Japanese had not yet worked out their own system of writing and had to use the borrowed Chinese characters as phonetic symbols to put down the words, they managed to create a unique collection of professional and folk poetry, which included all genres and forms of verse ever known throughout the past four centuries. Still today the *Manyoshu* has remained a “Holy Scripture” for the majority of *tanka* poets, an unfading example of perfection, a source of inspiration and a compendium of poetic techniques.

The songs of obscure peasants from the remote provinces, fishermen, and border guards, and folk legends and tales are included in the book alongside refined love letters written by emperors and princesses, with elegant odes and elegies by the court poets, and beautiful landscape sketches by provincial bards. The more than four-and-a-half thousand poetic items included in the *Manyoshu* reveal the panorama of ancient Japanese poetry in all its glamour and thematic diversity, which is particularly striking in comparison with the canonical

imperial collections of court poetry (*chokusenshu*) compiled in the Early Middle Ages.

Although the *tanka* (“short song”) genre with its syllabic pattern of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables prevails in the anthology, it is accompanied by hundreds of works in the genre of “long song” (*choka*) and dozens of lyrical “songs with refrain” (*sedoka*), written in the same metric system. Specific characteristics of the phonetic structure of the Japanese language made the use of rhyming verse totally counterproductive and led to the establishment of a single universal meter for all the ancient poetic genres. This syllabic prosody, based on the alternating intonation of groups of five and seven syllables, was called *onsuritsu* (the sound quantity based rhythm). It has successfully survived till our days.

The essence of national poetics was designated by the principle of suggestiveness—innuendo and allegorical allusions produced an implied laconic and elegant imagery full of overtones. The vibrant connection of the poetic mind with the natural environment and seasonal changes was embodied in refined examples of lyricism that even today are able to touch the reader deeply.

The folk poetry in the *Manyoushu* is presented in its original purity. The majority of the poems by common people belong to the times when Buddhism and Confucianism had not yet sunk deep roots into the Japanese Isles, and therefore reflect purely Japanese religious beliefs. The mystical ‘soul of the word’ (*kotodama*), one of the sacred “powers” in Shinto, fills these simple compositions with lively sentiments and gives them the impression of disarming sincerity.

The works of Kakinomoto Hitomaro, Yamabe Akahito, Otomo Tabito, Otomo Yakamochi, Yamanoue Okura, Takechi Kurohito, and many other professional poets represented in the *Manyoshu*, so perfect in content and in form, prove that a mighty and well-developed poetic tradition had emerged long before the great anthology was compiled. *Tanka*, *choka* and *sedoka* reveal almost the entire palette of the core imagery techniques that served as a foundation for *waka* poetics for

about thirteen centuries. It represented primarily “constant epithets” (*makurakotoba*), semantic parallelism in the form of introductions (*jo*) or of the “pillow of the song” (*utamakura*), or homonymous metaphors in pivot-words (*kakekotoba*).

All the authors of the anthology have a distinct individuality, which is revealed much more clearly than in the works of their successors and followers. Thus, the greatest poet of the *Manyoshu*, Kakinomoto Hitomaro (later deified), became famous not only as a consummate master of love *tanka* and pathetic “lament”-*choka*, but also as a virtuoso author of sophisticated odes. The ode (*fu*), which was later excluded from the arsenal of Japanese verse, was the “missing link” connecting the tradition of pure lyrical poetry with civil poetry and consequently with the historical realities of its time.

Yamabe Akahito, whose name in history stands in line with Hitomaro, has left outstanding examples of landscape poetry in both the *tanka* and the *choka* genres. His iconic song of Mount Fuji remains an unsurpassed masterpiece.

A unique expert in the Chinese classics, Yamanoue Okura brought into Japanese poetry the principles of Confucian ethics and the Buddhist motif of the impermanence of all things. In his “Dialogue of the Poor,” inspired by the works of Chinese poets of the Han Dynasty, he introduced a social topic which would be the only attempt of the kind in the *waka* tradition .

Otomo Tabito composed, among many other masterpieces, a remarkable series of poems praising wine drinking. This Epicurean poetry, so naturally blended into the content of the *Manyoshu*, would never again appear in *waka* up to the pre-modern period.

Otomo Yakamochi widely used images from Chinese literature, mythology, and folklore, marking thereby the main trend of the development of Japanese poetry as a reflection of the cultural legacy common for the whole of East Asia, comprehended in a new way.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that before the *Manyoshu*, despite the difficulties concerning the system of writing, there existed already some anthologies of folk songs

from different provinces, as well as personal collections of poems by Hitomaro, Yakamochi, and other renowned authors. These collections became the basis for compiling the colossal anthology. It included, in particular, eight out of twenty books from the personal collection of Otomo Yakamochi, who is considered the chief editor of the *Manyoshu*.

Without exaggeration, one can assume that it was the *Manyoshu* that became a solid foundation for the Japanese poetic tradition which was conceived by the Japanese literati as a pyramid growing through the centuries. Poets and scholars during the Heian and Kamakura periods would study the *Manyoshu* and write commentaries to it. Many masterpieces from the *Manyoshu* were included in the most significant anthologies of the Middle Ages.

A new interpretation of the *Manyoshu* texts was suggested in the eighteenth century by the scholars and poets of the “National Learning” (*kokugaku*) school. They proclaimed the ancient anthology the essence of the Japanese spirit and opposed the “masculine” (*masuraoburi*) tone of its poems to the eloquent medieval court poetry. At the end of the nineteenth century, the reformers of traditional poetic genres Masaoka Shiki and Yosano Tekkan called on their contemporaries to “turn to the roots” and focus on the legacy of the *Manyoshu*. Numerous *tanka* schools of the twentieth century took up the call, and on the eve of World War II the *Manyoshu* verses inspired the poets to compose patriotic hymns.

The study of the *Manyoshu* also got its second wind in the twentieth century, initiating new annotated editions and serious research. A. E. Gluskina, a prominent Russian scholar, was the first among the foreign Japanologists who initiated the translation of the *Manyoshu* into European languages. The translation with detailed academic commentaries became her life work, but due to the bureaucratic Soviet publishing system that delayed the publication of the book for many years, the author was denied the honor of being a pioneer in introducing the complete text of the immortal anthology to western readers. Nowadays, the *Manyoshu* anthology, translated into several

foreign languages, rightly occupies a honorable place among the literary monuments that have shaped the development of world civilization.

Alongside the *Manyoshu*, for more than a thousand years the classic anthology “Collection of Old and New Songs of Japan” (*Kokinwakashu*, 10th century), has also been at the top of the list of poetic masterpieces of classical Japanese literature. In 905, Emperor Daigo gave an order to four experts and connoisseurs of Japanese *waka* — Ki no Tsurayuki, Ki no Tomonori, Oshikochi no Mitsune, and Mibu no Tadamine — to compile a classic anthology containing the best works by the poets of ancient and modern times. A few years later the book was ready. This was the beginning of a new tradition, the publication of imperial court anthologies (*chokusenshu*), which were supposed to preserve the works by the great masters of verse for future generations. The names of the *Kokinwakashu* poets, such as Ariwara no Narihira, Ono no Komachi, Otomo no Kuronushi or Ise became the embodiment of the highest achievements of poetry in the Heian period, known as the “golden age” of classical Japanese culture. Ki no Tsurayuki’s famous Preface became the first major written poetics of *tanka*, being at the same time a manual of prosody, a critical essay, and an evaluation of the masters of old times. The study of the traditions of the *Kokinshu* and the canon of court poetry, which continued until the end of the twentieth century, predestined a special approach towards the *tanka* tradition of the great anthology in both medieval and modern times.

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Both the *Manyoshu* and the *Kokinshu* focused the ideas of the ancient Japanese on the nature of Japanese art and its magical powers, which forever established the reputation of *tanka* as a sacred or spiritual genre of poetry, fundamentally different from other genres and forms.

The ancient folk beliefs linked together the Shinto animistic concept of the “soul of things” (*monotama*) and the “soul of

words" (*kotodama*) as a reflection of the mystical nature of the universe. In the Middle Ages, with the proliferation of Buddhism following the convergence of religious teachings, the occult concepts defining the spiritual mission of literature and, in particular, poetry, merged. In the twelfth century, under the influence of the "non-duality" concept of being proclaimed by the Tendai Buddhist sect, many poets and commentators, as well as the priests and monks, were inclined to treat the way of poetry as a way of Buddhism. The distinguished *waka* poet and scholar Fujiwara Toshinari (Shunzei, 1114–1204) pointed out that prosody is akin to meditation and *waka* itself in depth and elegance is comparable to the innermost truths of Tendai's teachings.

The completion of this religious convergence was marked by the emergence of the concept of mutual substitution of Shinto and Buddhist deities (*honji suijaku*). In poetry, *waka* was interpreted as the Japanese variety of sacred Buddhist incantations. Different authors equated *tanka* to different categories of Buddhist concepts: *dharani* (sacred incantations), *shingon* (words of truth, the quintessence of esoteric Buddhism), *myo* (divine inspiration), *ju* (spells), *shoji* (all-embracing speeches), and *mitsugo* (secret speeches). However, the most common similarity appears with *dharani*, well known to the authors composing *waka* on the basis of the texts of the main Mahayana sutras.

Kukai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon sect, noted in his comments to the Lotus Sutra that the practice of esoteric Buddhism contained many words that convey a single meaning, but at the same time many other meanings come from each letter of a single word. This is the specific characteristic of the poetics of the Dharani sacred texts. According to his interpretation, Dharani possess the ability to convey in a few words the essence of the whole sutra. Four centuries later, Kamo no Chomei (1155–1216), a distinguished poet and author of the famous "Account of my Hut" (*Hojoki*), wrote, paraphrasing Ki no Tsurayuki's preface to the *Kokinwakashu*, that *waka* have the power to shake the heavens and earth and appease the gods

and demons, because “so much truth is contained in a single word” (*hito kotoba ni ooku no kotowari o kome*).

The belief in the sacred power of the word, based on Shinto and on Buddhist concepts, was the hallmark of all medieval authors. The magical powers of *dharani* (written in cryptic Sanskrit or translated into Chinese), the meaning of which was unknown and thus could contain many meanings, were assimilated with supernatural powers of *waka* which, while applying a single sacred metrical pattern, used a complex technique of puns, allusions, and homonymous metaphors, deepening the illusion of a sacred practice. *Waka*, like *dharani*, as was generally acknowledged, contained the seed of the Buddhist Law (*dharma*) and was meant to convey the quintessence of truth (*kotowari*).

According to some scholars, such *tanka* poetic techniques as the permanent epithet (*makurakotoba*), the introduction (*jo*), and the “song pillow” (*utamakura*), all of which imply a repetition of the same verbal formulas in different contexts, were designed to perform generally a sacred function.

There is a great number of stories (*setsuwa*) and folk tales that mention how reciting well-spoken *tanka* helped to drive away demons or put down a whirlpool. Many famous poets are remembered for the lines that turned into a spell and brought the rain after a long drought.

Motoori Norinaga and other philologists of the “National Learning” school (*Kokugaku*) would not only endow *waka* with sacred powers, but also treated them as the essence of truth, as instruments for healing the spirit of the nation mired in carnal pleasures and far-fetched Confucian rhetoric. In their interpretation, *waka* represented the purest embodiment of the “Japanese spirit” (*Yamato damashii*).

The cult of sacred *waka* was revived in modern times after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Due to the passionate invocations of Yosano Tekkan, *tanka* has been widely used to proclaim the spiritual and moral superiority of the Yamato nation over the neighboring countries, to propagate the Japanese military’s ambitions, and to glorify the Emperor. In the 1930s and 1940,

many talented poets paid tribute to this movement in the hope of reinforcing the militant spirit of the fighting empire with their verse. Tens of thousands of *tanka* would fit into the context of ideological propaganda. However, in the post-war period, the growing popularity of *tanka* among ordinary people and the liberalization of the canonical restrictions led to the loss of the sacred nature of the genre and to its complete alienation from the denounced ideology of “state Shinto.”

The philosophical and aesthetic basis of *waka* was no doubt rooted in the Buddhist concept of the perishable nature of life and the impermanence of all things (*mujo-kan*). At the time of the *Kokinwakashu*, the aesthetic foundation of traditional poetry — a unique artistic vision tending to convey universal metamorphosis in a laconic, suggestive manner — was firmly established. A constant feeling of being an indispensable part of nature and maintaining spiritual ties with the Universe seemed to make the artist dependent on everything that surrounds him on the planet Earth. And this is the fundamental distinction in the worldview of the Japanese artist as compared to his Western counterpart. In contrast to the Western poet, the Japanese is neither a creator nor a hierophant of the Superior Intelligence, but merely a medium of the Universe seeking the most condensed laconic form to present the quiet charm of existence and the sad beauty of the frail world already embodied in nature. That is why the elegiac tone dominates in Japanese poetry and even passionate emotions are hidden under the veil of sad reflection. All attempts in the early twentieth century to overcome the doom and gloom of *waka* poetry and introduce a stream of healthy optimism had only a short-term effect and faded away over time, to be replaced again by the same traditional ponderous reflection.

The Japanese poet of the classical period could not for a single moment imagine himself and his verse outside the mountains and rivers, cherry blossoms, and bird songs so dear to his heart since childhood. Metaphysical abstraction is alien to the world of his imagery. *Waka* poetry is always clear, tied

to earthly realities, and at the same time it seems to be discrete and devoid of any historical characteristics of the given period, which can be traced sometimes only through the explanatory title. *Tanka* presents an inimitable moment of eternity fixed in an elegant rhythmic form. It lives its own life, as if being addressed to everybody and to no one.

The formation and consolidation of the canon helped to turn *tanka* into a kind of aesthetic code, a poetic language of communication, which defined an educated and refined person, an aristocrat of spirit, to whom the Heian nobles would certainly belong. Moreover, *tanka* court poetics set such strict rules that even a slight deviation from them could be taken as an evidence of bad taste. The author's individuality inevitably would be disregarded, giving way to technical skills and the masterly ability to interpret gracefully the established tradition within the framework of the existing imagery system. For over a thousand years this system has not changed significantly, and the poets of modern times continue to measure the merits of their poems mainly by comparing them to classic examples from the *Manyōshū* and *Kokinshū*, joining the respective factions of admirers of either of the two great anthologies.

The *Kokinwakashū* laid the foundation for the regular compilation of the so-called "Imperial anthologies" (*chokusenshū*), which were commissioned directly by the emperors (or it could be an ex-emperor in his Buddhist retirement) and were meant to preserve the works of the great masters of verse for the centuries to come. Twenty more anthologies were compiled after the *Kokinwakashū*. The last one was issued in 1439. The main trend of *waka* development can be most clearly seen in the first eight anthologies, which are conventionally called "the collection of eight generations" (*hachidaishū*). These are the *Kokinwakashū*, the *Gosenwakashū* (Late Anthology, 955), *Shuiwakashū* (The Collection of Ears After the Harvest, c. 996–1007), *Goshuishū* (Late Collection of the Ears After Harvest, 1086), *Kin'yowakashū* (Collection of Golden Leaves, 1124–1127), *Shikawakashū* (The Collection of Flowers of Literature, 1152–

1153), the *Senzaiwakashu* (The Anthology of the Millennium, c. 1187–1188) and the *Shinkokinwakashu* (New Collection of Old and New Poems of Japan, c. 1205). Of the thirteen subsequent anthologies, according to Japanese scholars, only three of them are of real value: the *Shinchokusenshu* (Emperor's New Anthology, 1232), the *Gyokuyoshu* (The Collection of Precious Leaves, 1312–1349), and the *Fugashu* (Refined Anthology, 1344–1349).

After the *Kokinwakashu*, it is the *Shinkokinwakashu* (*New Kokinshu*), permeated with the spirit of the sad contemplation of beauty of the world (*sabi*) and a profound understanding of the mysterious nature of things (*yugen*), which had the greatest influence on subsequent poetry of all genres and also on drama. The book was compiled by the poets Fujiwara no Teika, Fujiwara no Ariie, Fujiwara no Ietaka, Minamoto no Michitomo, Asukai Masatsune, and the priest Jakuren. The work itself was commissioned by the ex-Emperor Gotoba, who took over the main editing. The poetics of the *Shinkokinwakashu* is based on the notion of *yugen*—an intimate, mystical phenomenon of deep meaning, the perceiving of which is the task of the artist.

The anthology included poems by the famous poets of “ancient and modern times,” including Kakinomoto Hitomaro, Sugawara no Michizane, Fujiwara no Toshinari, and Fujiwara Teika. However, the most distinguished author of the *Shinkokinshu* according to the critics was Saigyō the Monk (1118–1190), a great *tanka* poet whose works have been giving inspiration to the Japanese bards for centuries. Even the great Bashō, the founder of *haiku* classic poetry, regarded Saigyō as a model poet for all times. These two names became the beacons for many generations of poets of both genres.

From the perspective of the European reader, especially of one becoming acquainted with Japanese poetry in literary translation (not always skillfully done), all *tanka* poems probably look similar. Actually, the imagery patterns and major techniques in most classical and even post-classical *tanka*

poems have much in common. The tropes in general have not changed for twelve centuries, or at least for the last ten centuries, and in the works of such poets of the first half of the twentieth century as Saito Mokichi, Shimagi Akahiko or Shaku Choku, we can find much in common with the works of poets of the eighth century. They often use the same vocabulary, the same grammar, and the same poetic techniques. Of course, to understand properly new *tanka* poetry, one needs to understand classical tradition first.

Reading more thoroughly, we always discover substantial differences in *tanka*, depending mainly on a particular school and a historical correlation with one of the two trends of *waka* development—either with the liberal aesthetics of the Nara period, or with the court anthologies of the Heian period and the next several centuries.

The oldest layer of poetry, dating back to the *Manyōshū*, is characterized by certainty and straightforwardness of meaning, uniqueness of the image, and the so-called “masculine spirit” (*masuraoburi*), a noble frankness without equivocation but also having a certain heaviness of rhetorical arabesque.

masurao to	<i>I thought about myself,</i>
omoeru ware mo	<i>that I have a brave and strong soul,</i>
shikitae no	<i>but being apart, alas,</i>
koromo no sode wa	<i>the sleeves of my white garments</i>
torite nurenu	<i>are soaked through with tears...</i>

Kakinomoto Hitomaro

Such poetry was the model for the poet-reformers of Shiki's *tanka* school, who applied similar imagery techniques at the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, this kind of *tanka* appears not only in the *Manyōshū* (8th century), but also in the anthologies of later periods. The intonation pattern of the small verse usually splits into three parts—with caesuras after the second and fourth lines—in contrast to the later poems that have a two-part structure:

Suruga naru	<i>There might be a day</i>
Tago no ura name	<i>when waves do not rise</i>
tatanu hi wa	<i>in Tago bay in the land of Suruga,</i>
aredomo kimi wo	<i>but there is not a single day</i>
koinu hi wa nashi	<i>when I am not longing for you.</i>

(*Kokinwakashu*, No. 489, unknown author)

The most typical imagery techniques for these *tanka* poems are *makurakotoba*, *jo*, and *utamakura*. All three serve as the detailed definition. All three appeared in the *Manyōshū* period and have been more or less popular since then depending on the period and individual characteristics of the poets. *Makurakotoba* is a kind of sustainable epithet to certain words and notions. For example, *hisakata no* (“eternal”) can be an epithet for the word “heaven” (*ama*), and also to a number of objects associated with the sky and cosmos: the moon, the clouds, the stars, etc. *Nubatama no* (“black like a mulberry”) is an epithet to “the night,” *ashibiki no* (“with a wide foot”) is an epithet to “the mountains,” etc. Sometimes *makurakotoba* through complicated and not always clear linkage by associations correlate with notions quite far in meaning. For example, *azusa yumi* (“a bow of catalpa”) is an adjective to “spring.” Apparently, the freshness of young green foliage and the gust of awakening nature are somehow linked with a bent bow in the *tanka* poet’s imagination. Most often *makurakotoba* performs a purely decorative function and hardly correlates with the meaning of the poem, although its presence provides the image with an additional flavor of old times and noble majesty. It is not a coincidence that many poets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who would try to use *waka* in the ideological machine of the empire, would compose militant *tanka* decorated with *makurakotoba* and other ancient tropes.

Jo (“foreword”) is an introductory semantic parallelism, playing the role of “figurative image.” Sometimes, *jo* semantics can be directly linked to the dominant meaning of the verse; at other times the meaning is very far from it.

waga seko ga	<i>The fresh autumn wind</i>
koromo no suso wo	<i>blowing for the first time from the bay</i>
nukikaeshi	<i>is so amazing —</i>
uramezurashiki	<i>as it raises the hem</i>
aki no hatsukaze	<i>of my beloved one's garment...</i>

(*Kokinwakashu*, No. 171, an unknown author)

In this case, the first four lines of the original text are *jo*, preceding the words of the first gust of the autumn wind bringing comfortable coolness.

Utamakura (“pillow song”) is also a kind of introduction, usually defining the scene of the poem or just referring to some location from the “poetic geography” of the country, for example, *Suruga naru tago no ura* (“Tago Bay, situated in Suruga region”).

Utamakura can be used alone, or may be a part of the “introduction” or *jo*. Both *jo* and *utamakura* are often attached additionally to the semantic stem of the poem through euphony, that is, through sound parallels in the verse.

An archaic effect is brought to *tanka* by the use of old, largely honorific prefixes, such as *mi* in the combination “*mi-Yoshino*” (glorious Mt. Yoshino Mount) and reinforcing particles, such as, for example, *ura* in the word *uramezurashiki* (“very surprising and gratifying”).

More sophisticated tropes are typical of *waka* in the imperial anthologies of later periods. They often overlap, forming a kind of “rebus semantics,” where each word or line is encoded by additional suggested images. Actually, almost all of these techniques were invented in the *Manyōshū* period, but in the poetry of the seventh to ninth centuries they were used not so extensively. Over time, the desire to achieve complexity and ambiguity in the suggestive image became dominant. In the poems by the leading poets of the *Kokinwakashū* — Ki no Tsurayuki, Ise, Oshikochi no Mitsune — the poly-semantic imagery is implied in most works. The best examples of this rhetorical elegance, however, belong to the brilliant Ono no Komachi, who was an ideal and a model for countless female

tanka poets over many generations. Each of her *tanka* poems is a genuine *tour de force*. We can see in one of Komachi's masterpieces, taken as a sample, perhaps, the most effective poetic techniques of classical *waka* poetry, the *kakekotoba* or "pivot word," which was used by many poets up to the twentieth century.

hana no iro wa	<i>The colors of the flowers</i>
utsuri ni keru na	<i>have faded</i>
itazura ni	<i>while idly</i>
waga mi yo ni furu	<i>I grow old in this world,</i>
nagame seshi ma ni	<i>gazing at the long seasonal rains...</i>

(*Kokinwakashu*, No. 113)

Kakekotoba (pivot-word) is a word with a double meaning, creating the effect of homonymic metaphor. The cited five-line poem contains three *kakekotoba*, and each of them comprises some additional allusions. Thus, *iro* means "color," or "colors," but also "love" or "feeling." *Furu* means "to fall" as in rain, as well as a "to grow old." Finally, *nagame* means "long rains" and in another sense "to contemplate." Of course, it is impossible to convey all the possible meanings in a literary translation, but even in the original they are expressed rather vaguely. However, an educated medieval reader, well-versed in all the subtleties of poetry, could probably grasp all the allusive implications at first glance.

As it was strictly forbidden to use in *tanka* Japanese words based on the Chinese lexicon (*kango*), poetic vocabulary up to the twentieth century included exceptionally the words of indigenous Japanese origin (*wago*). They would give the authors opportunities to use *kakekotoba* because they contained many homonyms (written by different characters, but *kakekotoba* was put down in *hiragana*, and that could produce a metaphorical effect). For example, *matsu* can be translated as "a pine tree" or "to wait"; *naku*, "to cry" or "to sing" (birds); *tachikaeru* means "to retreat" (used for waves) or "to go away" or "go home"; *nuru* means "to cover," "to soak," and "to sleep"; *tatsu* means

“to stand up,” to “to climb” or “hang in the air” (as with haze); and “to leave” (e.g. on a journey).

Sometimes only a part of the word would be used as *kakekotoba*. For example, the first part of *ito ni* means “thread,” “willow branch,” and “that is so.” *Tokonatsu* can mean “Chinese carnation,” “eternal summer,” and, when using only the first part of the word, “bed.”

Sometimes a famous geographical place can turn into a *kakekotoba*. For example, *Oosaka* (in another reading “*Ausaka*”), a mountain with a gatepost near the Heian capital (Kyoto), literally means “the meeting slope.” Similarly, *Otoko-yama* is a mountain, and the meaning of the name is The Mountain of Men; *Mika* is the name of a plain, but the literal meaning is “the third day” or “to see”; *Kase* is the name of a mountain, while the literal meaning is “to lend something.”

Another play of word technique close to *kakekotoba* is related to the *kanji* character puns, where the poly-semantic nature of the image is based on its graphic design and not on sounds. Thus, the *kanji* character for the word “storm” (*arashi*) implies the meaning “mountain” and “the wind”; in the *kanji* character “plum” (*ume*) there is the meaning “each” and “a tree.” In the poetry of the modern age, the choice of the most “poetic” and, accordingly, the most complicated characters, was used to symbolize the proximity (albeit sometimes imaginary) to the ancient “classical” tradition.

One more popular poetic technique which has been tested by time is the *engo* (literally “related words”). These are words which are related to each other through association. For example, “a grove” suggests “trees” or “foliage”; “the sea,” “waves,” “boats,” “fishermen,” etc. Likewise, the word “temple” opens up an association list which includes words like: “priest,” “monk,” “bell,” “god,” etc. As a final example, “migratory geese” has overtones of “a distant homeland,” “separation,” and “a message from one’s beloved.”

Located in the small confined space of a five-line poem, one, two, or three *engo* make an additional allusive connection which may be, when appropriate, direct and quite clear or

indirect, requiring intellectual efforts to understand. *Engo* usually occur in combination with other poetic techniques, as in the following poem by Oshikochi no Mitsune:

azusa yumi	Since the time
haru tachishi yori	when spring came
toshi tsuki no	like a bow of the catalpa tree
iru ga gotoku mo	it seems to me the months
omowayuru kana	fly away like arrows...

(*Kokinwakashu*, No. 127)

In this poem we see a rich variety of tropes. *Azusa yumi* ("like a bow of catalpa wood") is a *makurakotoba* relating to *haru* ("spring"); *haru* is a *kakekotoba*, meaning both "spring" and "to bend" (a bow); association with a bow results in *iru* meaning "shooting an arrow." In addition, there is one more purely rhetorical technique: the emphatic particle *kana* at the end of the poem.

Since the times of the *Kokinwakashu*, in all subsequent imperial court anthologies of *waka* we can find the technique of *honkadori* (literally "borrowing of the original song"), which becomes especially popular due to the efforts of Fujiwara Shunzei and Fujiwara Teika in the late Heian period. To be more precise, this means making an allusion to famous classic poems by direct or hidden quoting. In contrast to medieval Europe, there was a pretty clear notion of author's copyright in Japan, but the poets deliberately would borrow images and sometimes the whole stanzas from their predecessors in order to produce an additional associative range, to expand the cultural background of the poem and make it diachronically rooted in the tradition. There are thousands of *tanka* with successfully applied *honkadori* techniques, which also had some influence on *haiku* poetry with its wide variety of classic themes.

The *midate* techniques (allegory) was rather typical both of old classical *waka* poetry and *tanka* poetry of the modern age. For example, sufferings from unrequited love are conveyed by

the image of an inconsolable cuckoo, a crying deer or a singing cricket.

As for basic poetic tropes comparable with the concepts of Western poetics, the most commonly used of them are the simile (especially in *tanka* of the modern age), semantic (or sometimes grammatical) parallelism, antithesis, and metaphor. Occasionally, impersonation might occur and hyperbole appears only rarely. Reversal, in the space of 31 syllables, can dramatically change the rhythmic tone and emotional color of the verse, and this was also a popular poetic technique.

Though many *tanka* in the collections and anthologies do not have titles, some of them are preceded by a brief explanation of the topic (*dai*), which would play the role of the prosaic foreword. In some cases, instead of a short explanation a detailed introduction could be given (such as *dai*-forewords in classical Heian *uta-monogatari* ("poem-tales"). This tradition has also successfully survived through the centuries and found new life in the renovated poetry of the Meiji period:

Both the title-topic and the detailed introduction can be regarded as additional poetic techniques and were meant to enhance the aesthetic impression of the image, as if connecting *waka*, independent from the historical context, to earthly reality.

At the end of the first millennium of the existence of the immortal genre, *tanka* was in a state of decline. The glory of its golden age was fading. Brilliant collections by the great authors and classical anthologies were replaced by imitative, pattern-based poetry. It seemed that the tradition could never be reborn. However, the boom of bourgeois urban culture during the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries suddenly awakened to a new life the art of "Japanese song" (*waka*), which had brought up many generations of readers.

In the eighteenth century, the activities of the philologists and poets from the so-called "National Learning" school (Kokugaku) focused on deciphering and commenting on the ancient masterpieces (the *Manyōshū*, the *Kokin Wakashū* and

the *Genji Monogatari*) became the connecting links between the literature of the ancient period and that of Edo period. It was in *tanka* that the leaders of the Kokugaku movement saw the sources of Japanese cultural identity, the sacred bastion of the Japanese spirit. Under the influence of their ideas in the struggle against the ideology of Confucianism prevailing at the time, the movement of *waka* civic poetry took shape. Referring to the literary monuments of the past, it advocated purity of Japanese language, the patriarchal dignity of morals, mystical depth, and the greatness of Shinto, the Way of the Gods.

Such poets and scholars as Kamo Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga focused primarily on the great anthology of the eighth century, the *Manyoshu*, believing that the Heian poetry with its refined aesthetics only weakened the original “masculine” nature of *waka*. This quest to return to the roots brought into their own works depth and breadth, restraint and internal integrity. The Buddhist basis of their poetry is brightened and enriched by Shinto spirituality.

Ozawa Roan, asserting that “there are neither rules nor teachers in poetry,” called for unlimited freedom in creative search, but the noble elegance of the *Kokinwakashu* court poetry always remained his ideal. This passion was also shared by his younger friend Kagawa Kageki, the patriarch of the most popular Keien *tanka* style. The great eccentric Ryokan was inspired by the *Manyoshu* and considered the famous Chinese Chan (Zen) poet Han Shan his spiritual mentor. Tachibana Akemi and Okuma no Kotomichi both moved aside from the classical tradition and created an original genre of “daily life” *tanka*, which presented the transcendent wisdom of Zen in the phenomena of prosaic everyday existence.

The Basho school (Shomon) *haiku*, which, at the peak of its popularity introduced Zen principles of truth and sincerity into Japanese culture, played a considerable role in shaping the specific features of new *waka*. The *waka* masters highly appreciated and tried to apply in their works such key aesthetic categories put forth by Basho as *wabi* (awareness of human loneliness in the world) and *sabi* (patina of time, the

involvement in the world metamorphoses). The subjectivity and the connection with earthly matters typical of Pre-modern *tanka* is also a reference to *haiku* aesthetics, which proclaimed the priority of the smallest details of the material world over the canonical stereotypes. Moreover, the potency of *tanka* helped to expand the boundaries of the Zen worldview and turn the short verse into an amazingly natural form. These poems are full of imagery taken from life proper, in which the directness and spontaneity of the feeling overcome the conventions of the form.

Pretentiousness, eloquence of lexicon, and compositional elegance are not typical of the Edo *tanka*. All stylistic means are more often than not meeting the requirement to create visible, almost tangible images, and the primary goal of the author is nothing else but to achieve (as in *haiku*) a lively response from the reader. The suggestive element becomes the means of conveying real impressions of the moment, unlike the late courtly poetry, where deliberate ambiguity of the image was the aim. The traditional set of poetic techniques was slightly changed: such archaic tropes as foreword-parallelism (*jo*) or introduction (*utamakura*) are rarely used. Ryokan's heavy "permanent epithets" *makurakotoba* often appear in an unexpected context—for example, in a funny poem about a village festival or in a Zen paradox. The traditional artistic techniques are reinvented and used in the playful spirit of *ukiyo* aesthetics. Simple feelings and Zen wisdom triumph over literary sophistication.

Simplicity and naturalness defined all life values for the Edo *waka* poets. The theme of abandoning the temptations of the world, voluntary austerity, and poverty (real or imaginary) permeate the poetry of major *tanka* authors represented in the Edo period. Thus, the thread is pulled back through centuries, to the masterpieces by Saigyō and Fujiwara no Teika, and to the Chinese classics of the Tang period (618–907) which had elevated the ideal of noble poverty and detachment from mundane vanity. Being "homeless wanderers in the vale of life," the Edo poets did not attach any importance either to wealth or

to fame. Some of them, like Kamo Mabuchi, Tayasu Munetake, and Kagawa Kageki, were quite wealthy and famous during their lifetime; others, like Ryokan, Roan, and Akemi, lived in noble poverty. Okuma no Kotomichi remained in oblivion for many years after his death. But overtime the masterpieces of Edo *waka* poetry took their well deserved place in the treasury of classical Japanese literature.

However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, at the end of the Edo or Tokugawa era, *waka* (*tanka*), as well as other ancient poetic genres, came to the state of decline and lost for a while its former aura in the eyes of the intellectual elite. The poets who would cling to the old canonical aesthetics continued with a dull monotony to manufacture thousands of stereotypical poems which were unable to reflect the course of history and the pathos of modern times. The so-called Keien style, based on traditional poetry of “flowers, birds, wind and moon” (*kachofugetsu*), dominated in the world of *tanka*. The custodians of the old-fashioned canon, paying homage to Kagawa Kageki, the founder of the Keien style, actually distorted his legacy and abnegated any innovations. The situation remained practically unchanged until the 1890s, though Japan by that time had actually entered a new period of development and had changed beyond recognition.

At the court of Emperor Meiji, *tanka* was revived in a classic version with the inevitable touch of imitation. The emperor himself was a great admirer of classic poetry and composed during his lifetime no less than a hundred thousand *waka*. His wife, Empress Shoken, composed forty thousand poems. In 1869, the poet Sanjonishi Suetomo was invited to the palace to teach the emperor and his court the art of *waka* composition, which was considered to be not just a literary genre but also an ideological foundation for the restoration of the “Yamato spirit” — the national identity, imbued with mythical and a poetic Shinto worldview and blessed by the sacred Buddhist Law. The court poetry tournaments were revived after a centuries-long break. The court, army officers, and even

Christian missionaries arriving from Europe, were fascinated by composing *tanka*, but their style was so poor and the imagery so unpretentious, that resolute Westerners strongly protested against such profanation of poetry.

At the time the vulgarized popular *tanka* of a comic and didactic nature, demonstrating a close connection with the medieval five-line comic poem *kyōka*, were widely circulated. A number of anthologies were compiled parodying the poems from the classical collections of old times such as the *Kokinwakashū* and the *Hyakunin Isshu* ("One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets"). Didactic *tanka*, where the authors introduced all kinds of technical and every day realities of Western life, would form a special trend of education. Some poems, in the form of *tanka* contained some references to historical anecdotes, featuring episodes from the life of the great men of the West: Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Peter the Great, Washington. Many sounded like epigrams addressed to the acting politicians. All this, of course, did not meet the demands of the new intellectuals, who were raised on Western ideals and were eager to renovate radically the national culture.

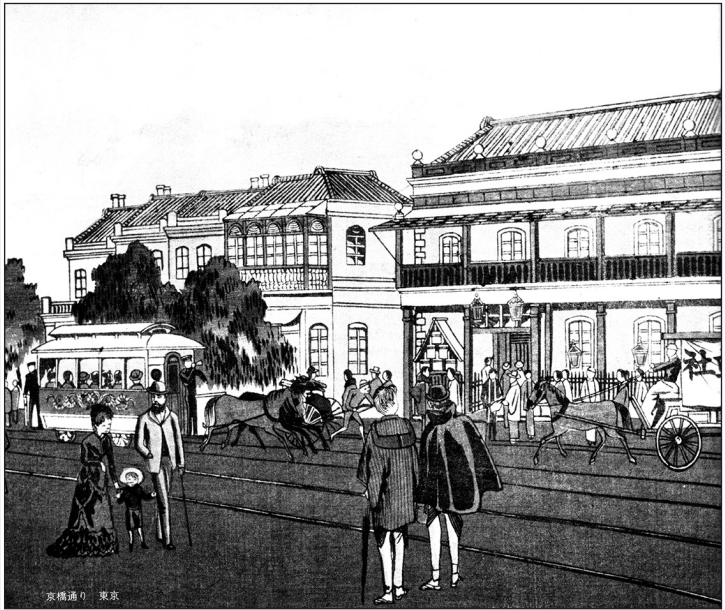
After the Meiji Restoration many young reformers seriously raised the issue of whether it would be best to abandon traditional genres and forms of poetry, painting and music, and shift completely to Western cultural values. Critic Mikami Sanji in 1888 wrote that *tanka* sacrificed conceptual depth for the sake of the traditional ideal of the "charm of things" (*mono no aware*) and called for the abrogation of all the canonical restrictions in poetry. He also insisted on switching immediately to spoken language in *tanka* (this reform has not been fully implemented yet even in our days). Another critic, Suematsu Kencho, called for the revival of the ancient "long song" or *chōka*, which at least would meet the standards of Western poetry as far as the volume was concerned. Some of the young reformers tried to follow his recommendation, but, of course, came to no success. One more critic Hagino Yoshiyuki put forward an ultimatum addressed to the poets of traditional schools, demanding that they

immediately give up five-seven-syllable meter poems, cancel all lexical limitations, abandon seasonal topics, and finally start to describe real life. The opponents of Westernization strongly claimed the independence of the “Japanese way” and contrasted the rapid advance of the West to the Japanese deliberate addiction to an archaic, dilapidated canon. Through the efforts of the hard-line leaders of both trends, all Japanese art and poetry in the first quarter of the twentieth century was finally split into two parallel branches, one traditionalist and the other radically pro-Western, though in the ranks of the traditionalists another split soon occurred between the conservatives and the supporters of moderate innovations.

In 1882, three professors of Tokyo University, Toyama Chuzan, Yatabe Shokon, and Inoue Sonken, released a collection of verse containing some translations of Western poetry and their own experimental poems under the title *The Collection of New Style Poetry (Shintaishisho)*. In their foreword, the compilers attacked the traditional oriental style of “flowers, birds, wind, and moon,” the poetics of reminiscences and allusions, and the rigid classical canon. “The idea, expressed in the form of *tanka*, may only be a brief flash — like a flash of fireworks, like the radiance of a falling star,” they wrote, comparing the “poverty” of national poetics with the richness and diversity of Western poetic genres and forms. Many poets, critics and scholars of the verse demanded that *tanka* as well as *haiku* should be thrown away as obstacles in the way of progress. The self-humiliation of the devoted apologists of European literature can be compared only to the strange blindness of the young Japanese artists of the same period, who idolized Cezanne and Van Gogh, rejecting at the same time the woodblock prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige as a “base” art of the plebs. They were not aware that their idol Van Gogh, as well as many other Impressionists and Post-impressionists, admired the masterpieces of Edo *ukiyo-e* prints and sought inspiration in Japanese art. Many young literati also renounced the faith of their fathers and were baptized so as to be finally admitted into the bosom of Western civilization.

And yet, deep in their hearts, most sensible writers, artists, and public figures recognized the necessity of cultural convergence. The period of “worshipping the West” ended before the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95), when a powerful surge of pan-Asian nationalism brought to life the myth of the divine mission of the Yamato race in Asia. The Imperial Edict on education, which became a moral code for almost half a century, called on intellectuals to study the classical heritage and to maintain the traditional ethical and aesthetic values with the slogan “Japanese spirit — Western knowledge.”

Poets responded to this call in different ways. Some of them, led by Masaoka Shiki, followed the path of gradual reformation of the traditional genres, adjusting them to the demands of modern times. Their work gave rise to many new masterpieces of *haiku* and *tanka* poetry of the Japanese Silver Age, laying a solid foundation for further development and improvement of ancient genres. Others, like Yosano Tekkan, tried to turn *tanka* poetry into an instrument of nationalist propaganda — and this line of development, leading ultimately to catastrophe, can also be tracked up to the end of the Second World War.



東京 通橋

EMERGENCE OF A NEW VERSE

OCHIAI NAOBUMI

Ochiai Naobumi (1861–1903), one of the first patriarchs of modern *tanka* poetry as well as a pioneer of *shintaiishi* poetry, was born in Sendai into a samurai family, but was sent to be brought up by a well-known Shinto scholar, who provided him with the basis for his excellent classical education. When he was young, he was fond of European literature and did translations for the anthology of European poetry edited by Mori Ogai. Together with Sasaki Nobutsuna and Masaoka Shiki he tried to set up a society of new poetry, but soon turned to composing *tanka*. With Yosano Tekkan, Omachi Keigetsu, and others, in 1893 Ochiai joined the *tanka* club “Asaka-sha,” which existed only for two years, but this was long enough to set the path for the development of *waka* poetry in a renovated Japan.

As a *waka* poet, Ochiai Naobumi from the very beginning would call himself a follower of the Keien school (“Judas-tree branch”), founded in the late Edo period by the talented poet Kagawa Kageki, and that is why his efforts to reform the ancient genre could not lead to real *tanka* renovation. But he managed at least to revive the interest in the “soul of Japan” contained in short traditional poems at a time when the movement for “new style verse” was gaining strength and threatened to throw *tanka* together with *haiku* off the ship of modernity.

In the period of the rise of nationalist sentiments shortly after the release of the imperial Edict on Education (1890), during the time of intensified preparations for the coming war with China, Ochiai published a poem which was enthu-

Ochiai
Naobumi



落合直

siastically appreciated by the critics as an example of refined militant patriotism:

hiodoshi no	<i>Clad in crimson armor</i>
yoroi o tsukete	<i>and having fixed my two swords at the belt,</i>
tachi hakite	<i>I think:</i>
miwa ya to zo omou	<i>why not go now</i>
yamazakurabana	<i>to see the wild mountain sakura in bloom!</i>

The image was clearly prompted by the well-known Japanese proverb “Hana wa sakura, hito wa bushi” (“Among the flowers, the cherry blossom; and among men, samurai.”) Thanks to this poem the poet got the nickname “Naobumi of the crimson armor.” Though there was no continuation in this vein, the militant Ochiai’s poem played a significant role in the fate of *tanka* new poetry and became one of the “verbal posters” of the nationalist campaign during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Ochiai’s follower and disciple Yosano Tekkan continued the practice of poster nationalistic poetry with great success.

Nevertheless, Naobumi himself was not a poet of a militant attitude. The great majority of his poems are composed in the

traditions of landscape lyricism. Many poems are devoted to *hagi* bushes with their yellow flowers, a traditional plant in *waka* poetry that had been mentioned even from the time of the *Manyoshu* anthology. Naobumi was so fascinated by *hagi* that he planted these country bushes in his front garden and call his house “*Hagi no ya*” (*Hagi* abode). His *tanka* landscape is rather old-fashioned and full of archaic vocabulary from the medieval authors’ dictionary. Some of them are deliberately stylized in the manner of the authors of the *Manyoshu*, *Shinkokinshu* or *Gosenshu*, so that sometimes, despite the difference in seven to twelve centuries, it is difficult even for an expert to distinguish the old from the new.

A somewhat different tone and mystical philosophical depth is characteristic of his later *waka*, such as this one composed on his sickbed shortly before his death:

kogarashi yo	<i>Oh you, stormy wind!</i>
nare ga yuku no	<i>Tonight I will see</i>
shizukesa no	<i>in my dreams</i>
omokage yumemi	<i>that stillness</i>
iza kono yo nen	<i>of your having gone...</i>

Despite his love for the classics, Ochiai Naobumi, who lived and worked in a period of great reforms, regarded himself a pioneer, opening new horizons of poetry. His criticism of the “conservatives” started a fierce debate that would go on in poetry circles for more than a decade and end with the creation of modernized *tanka* poetry, to which, however, Ochiai Naobumi’s works can hardly be said to belong:

If we take a closer look at the works by the poets of the old school, we will discover that the material for poems, imagery, techniques, vocabulary, and ideas are only an imitation of the poets of the old days, and there is nothing original, nothing interesting in them. For example, what birds do they mention in their poems?...Those birds, introduced in numerous *waka* anthologies, were really lucky — they could be sure that everybody would compose poems about them,

but birds like canaries, peacocks, and parrots — no matter how wonderful their voices or the colors of their feathers are — were ignored by the old school poets [94, 687].

As the head of the Asaka-sha poetry association, Ochiai managed to foster several talented young poets, inculcating into them the idea that individuality in *tanka* was the most important thing — it was the very quality that, obviously, the maître himself was lacking. He also tried his hand at composing *kanshi* (poems in Chinese), *imayo* (folk songs), experimented with ballads in *shintaiishi* form, and advocated the coexistence of different genres and stylistic systems. It was the willingness to accept the new in all possible forms and a critical attitude towards the rigid conservatism of traditional schools that placed Ochiai Naobumi among the prominent reformers of aesthetics and poetics of the Meiji period.

YOSANO TEKKAN

The name of Yosano Hiroshi, who took the penname Tekkan (1873–1935), is known to every modern Japanese, though the names of many of his fellow writers, the poets of the Meiji period, have long passed into the category of archival materials. Actually, Tekkan's poetic talent was not the only reason for his unfading glory. One must also take into consideration his ambitions, his passion for experiments, and his well known romantic love affair with his wife to-be, the ingenious poetess Yosano Akiko. Actually Tekkan's works can hardly claim to be placed among the treasures of new poetry, but of his role as a pioneer and a person able to subvert the sacred institutions there is no doubt.

Tekkan was born in Kyoto in the family of a Buddhist priest of the famous Nishi Honganji Temple who was also the head of a small school of *waka* poetry. From an early age under his father's influence the boy became interested in classic literature and learned classical Japanese and Chinese. Being in permanent

contact with *waka* poets, he grasped the basics of traditional poetry, but was at the same time quite critical of the canon.

Formally, Yosano Hiroshi finished only junior high school. He was not accepted to a high school, to say nothing about university. So, on his father's insistence, the sixteen-year-old youth took a vow and was going to become a monk, though he was not really happy about that kind of career. For three years he tried zealously to change his nature, but in his fourth year he ran away to Tokyo, where some time later he became Ochiai Naobumi's official disciple. The venerable master was so much impressed by the talents of his new student that he recommended the twenty-year-old youth to the position of the head of the department of culture and arts in the central newspaper *Niroku Shinpo*. For Japan with its rigid hierarchy, especially unbreakable in the field of promotion, such an appointment was an unprecedented event, but in periods of great reforms miracles sometimes happen, and even in Japan by that time young people could enter the arena. A similar miracle happened to Masaoka Shiki, another great poetry reformer of the Meiji period. At the same time Tekkan, along with Omachi Keigetsu, Ayukai Kaien, and several other young poets, became an active member of the *Asaka-sha* society, putting forward the slogan of composing innovative *tanka*.

Tekkan began his career as a literary critic with an affront. In 1894, the aspiring young poet, who later received for his deliberate belligerence the nickname "Tekkan the Tiger," published in his newspaper an article entitled "Sounds Ruining the Country" ("*Bokoku no on*"), which had as a subtitle "A Critique of the Wretched Modern *tanka* Poetry." The article, which contained a poetic analysis of the poor poems by the epigone mediocrities whose poetry faded on the threshold of the new era, was destined to become the banner of the poetry reform movement, as well as a manifesto of the emerging "Japanism" (*nipponshugi*) movement. Considering the social significance of literature in historical perspective and its role in public life, rejecting abstract, impersonal landscape poetry, Tekkan writes with deep conviction:

There is a close link between the rise and decline of the country and its literature, and I'm sure it refers also to *tanka* poetry. There are shameless people in the world who present silly judgments, stating that morality and literature are two quite different things. Those who are capable of destroying the country no doubt are among them [24, 168].

Criticizing the untalented epigones who write boring imitative *tanka*, Tekkan develops his idea using a picturesque comparison:

Heavy drinking and womanizing destroy the human body, therefore the damage they cause is clearly visible to everyone; indecent habits and morals corrupt the human spirit and the harm they have caused is not always obvious. Thus, the first one only destroys human flesh, and the latter one threatens the entire country... Who does not find pleasure in wine and love?! But is it worth destroying one's body for the sake of booze and lust? I love *waka* with all my heart, but I will not let *waka* ruin my country. [24, 168]

Tekkan states that learning from the old masters, one should compose novel poems, turning for inspiration to living nature, not to the outdated canon. Only by feeling to the full the harmony of the universe can one create really spiritual, masculine poems.

However, our modern poets proved to be people who do not see the truth. They imitate classics in everything, argue about the merits of these imitations, and are ready to spend a lifetime in imitating ... They know only their old masters, but the rhythms of nature and the universe are unavailable to their ears ... They have found in this rubbish something catering to their taste and have taken over the worst from the classical works. [24, 169]

Criticizing the imitators for exaggerating the cult of the *Manyōshū* anthology, and for worshipping the anachronistic style of Kagawa Kageki and his Keien school, Tekkan accused

his contemporaries of vulgarity, of mixing the categories of the refined and the coarse, of using vulgar spoken language — in short, of the complete profanation of the noble *tanka* genre.

If you ask about the extent of such poetry, it is scanty; if we talk about its spirit, the spirit is weak; the quality of the verse is low and primitive, its rhythm is uneven. Moreover, if we talk about poetry of such kind, a hundred days would not be enough to list its drawbacks [24, 173].

In his polemical rage Tekkan in the early writings even comes to a resolute denial of the value of love poetry, claiming that only *waka* permeated with masculine civic spirit merits being called true poetry. Mercilessly criticizing the colorless and boring poetry of his contemporaries, he insisted on abolishing such *waka*, “as we now demand that prostitution or alcohol should be prohibited.” In conclusion, as if trying to explain this unprecedented audacity, Tekkan remarked that, though he had been raised to respect his elders, there are neither elders nor youngsters in poetry. Everybody should be judged only by skill, but the older generation has already been poisoned by imitation, and therefore their poetry has totally degenerated.

Whereas the criticism of epigones was quite justified, the works by Kagawa Kageki (1768–1843), an excellent poet of the late Edo period, definitely did not deserve all the reproaches the twenty-year-old Tekkan brought down on him in his militant rush. In any case, nowadays it is obvious that Tekkan’s own poems do not stand comparison with Kageki’s masterpieces.

Tekkan’s fierce invective, backed by his own militant *tanka* glorifying the Japanese spirit and Japanese arms aimed against China and Korea, evoked a wide response. Tekkan’s historic mission manifested itself in the fact that, due to his efforts, *tanka* in the course of several decades had become a mouthpiece for blatant imperialist and nationalist propaganda, and poets turning to patriotic topics considered it to be their sacred duty to write *tanka* in a “highly solemn manner” following the suit

of Yosano Tekkan. The extremism of his slogans did not bother the poet at all. He did not even try to disguise the overtly nationalistic, racist pathos of his poems:

naite sakebu	<i>Shedding tears I exclaim:</i>
kiiro muno	<i>The yellow are powerless!</i>
kiiro muno	<i>The yellow are powerless!</i>
Ajia hisashiku	<i>Oh how long since there were men</i>
kataru ko no naki	<i>who could raise their voice in Asia!</i>

During the Sino-Japanese war Tekkan became famous not only among literati but also in political circles. In order to reinforce his imperial ambitions, in April 1895 he left for the new colony to teach Japanese literature in Seoul. There he started teaching Japanese classics to the Korean children at a school established by the Japanese administration.

Tekkan took his mission as a colonizer and instructor very seriously, probably sincerely believing that he was bringing knowledge to half-savages, and completely ignoring the fact that Buddhism and all the basics of culture had come to Japan mostly from Korea or through Korea from China. Moreover, the young poet associated Korea (the former tributary state of the Chinese Empire and by that time a protectorate of the Manchu emperors) with the whole of continental China, against which Japan was then successfully waging a war. Anyway, he referred to Korea in his *tanka* by no other name than Kara (giving this attributed reading to the character “Korea”), and the Koreans he would call *karabito*, that is “the Chinese.” The name Kara in classical Japanese poetry since the *Manyōshū* had meant China (originally the character refers to the Tang dynasty in China):

Kara yama ni	<i>In the mountains of China</i>
sakura o uete	<i>I will plant our sakura</i>
karabito ni	<i>and will teach the Chinese</i>
Yamato onoko no	<i>how to sing the songs</i>
uta utawasen	<i>of the valiant men from the land of Yamato.</i>

However, a severe attack of typhoid forced Tekkan to stop his enlightenment activities. He was evacuated back to Japan in good faith that he would continue his mission at home.

Kara ni shite	<i>How can I de cease</i>
ika de ka shinan	<i>here in (Chinese) Korea?!</i>
ware shinaba	<i>If I die here,</i>
onoko no uta zo	<i>the songs of the valiant</i>
mata suterenan	<i>will be neglected again!</i>

When Tekkan returned to his homeland and recovered, he resumed his ideological campaign developing the same militant topics in *tanka* poetry, but now the boundaries of his creativity were considerably expanded. While trying his hand at writing *renga* and *shintaiishi* (new westernized forms of poetry) alongside *tanka*, Tekkan gradually came to the conclusion that the old and the new in fact can complement each other. Whereas his early *tanka* poems were filled exclusively with “masculine (*masuraoburi*) spirit,” drawn from the ancient *Manyoshu* anthology, in the collection of 1896 *North, South, East, and West* (*Tozainanboku*) a lyrical tone suddenly resonates, inspired by the court poetry of the late imperial anthologies, particularly the *New Kokinshu* (*Shinkokinshu*, XIII c.).

The publication of *North, South, East, and West*, consisting of 279 *tanka*, 45 *shintaiishi*, and several replicas of classical *renga* (“linked verse”), became a major event in the literary life of the Meiji period and was seen by contemporaries as a revolutionary initiative. The leading poets and writers highly appreciated the author’s work. Warm introductions to the book were written at the same time by Ochiai Naobumi, Masaoka Shiki, and Mori Ogai. The author’s foreword sounded like a manifesto, rejecting any imitations and praising above all poetic individuality.

The collection comprised a lot of propaganda poems written in Korea, and this fact for many years shaped Tekkan’s image in the poetic community. What is more, it became a model for all those who for at least half a century would deliberately

turn to the genre of ideologically colored, propagandist *waka* poetry.

Tekkan was often called “the Poet of Tiger and Sword.” This nickname refers to his somewhat stilted patriotic poems about swords and tigers, composed in Korea. The most famous poem is preceded by an explanation: “The song is composed in connection with a drastic clash of Japan with China over the Korean issue in May 1894.”

itazura ni	<i>What can you say</i>
nani o ka iwamu	<i>in these idle talks ?!</i>
koto wa tada	<i>Only one thing should talk —</i>
kono tachi ni ari	<i>this sword of mine,</i>
tada kono tachi ni	<i>only this sword !</i>

A few *tanka* about tigers evoke the frightening nature of the beast and refer to the rumors that there are tigers in Korea.

*Over the mountain peaks
the roar of a tiger sounds
as a lonely dreadful call —
the evening wind blows stronger,
the gloomy ravines are getting darker...*

* * *

*There, in the mountains of China
the roar of the tiger can be heard no more —
only the wind blows
troubling with its melancholy howling
this quietude of the autumn woods...*

From the artistic imagery, Tekkan often switches to purely propagandist appeals and slogans with the same ideological content, giving poetic shape to declarations of the Japanese authorities.

To be sure, in such poems Tekkan gives a literary projection of the wave of national and racial identity of the Japanese

intellectuals in the period of formation of the modern Empire with all its contradictions and misconceptions. His patriotic impulse, however, develops into a nationalistic bravado. Incantations about the sacred mission of the Yamato race in Asia coexist with an inferiority complex when it comes to relations with Western countries. But at this point, national self-assertion takes a turn. In the poem entitled "Having heard about the opening of the international exhibition in Chicago," the poet writes:

*First of all
from this land to distant Chicago
I would suggest to send
the white snow that crowns Mt. Fuji,
and the cherry blossoms for which Yoshino is so famous...*

Challenging the epigones and retrogrades, rejecting sentimental love poetry after having gained the reputation as "a poet of Tiger and Sword," Tekkan remained for a long time faithful to his manifestos. However the tone of his poems would change drastically after his meeting in August 1900 with Ho Akiko, the future distinguished poetess, who soon became his sweetheart, then wife and devoted partner for life. This romance was preceded by a short flirtation with Akiko's friend, the young poetess Yamakawa Tomiko. By that time Tekkan was already married, so the new love story was fraught with serious family complications. In the end Tekkan divorced his wife and married Akiko, with whom they would have ten children. These changes in his life brought a new lyrical note into the poetry of the bard of militant *nipponshugi* (Japanism). It became an incentive for him to move away from the deliberately archaic high style and start writing about earthly pleasures. Passionate love based both on physical attraction and on the proximity of the lovers' poetic aspirations, completely transformed Tekkan's inner world, making him abandon all the former preferences.

*In love's embrace
 I forgot of the glory of the fatherland —
 everything has faded.
 Only a red star shines in the sky
 and the white lily flowers show in the darkness...*

In February 1899, Tekkan set up the “New Poetry Society” (Shinshi-sha). In April of the next year the society launched the poetic journal *Myojo* (“The Morning Star”), which introduced in its pages the works of Yosano Akiko and Kitahara Hakushu, Takamura Kotaro and Kinoshita Mokutaro, Yoshii Isamu and Ishikawa Takuboku. Though the magazine published the works of poets and critics of different beliefs, and the poems were not limited to any specific genre, the activities of *Myojo* reflected primarily the ideals of Romanticism, and the society gained great fame thanks to the masters of new *tanka* poetry. Until the closing of the magazine in 1908, *Myojo* remained the major poetic journal of its time. The new poetic community dismissed the obsolete aesthetic canons of the past in the unanimous aspiration to innovate verse in all genres and forms. The program of the Shinshi-sha became a powerful and impressive manifesto of the new era:

— Our poetry does not follow the model of the classics, this is our own poetry. To be more precise, this is the poetry which we discover by ourselves.

— We together enjoy the poetry of any independent poet, as long as its content is interesting and its form is harmonious.

— Our “New Poetry Society” is built on the basis of friendship; it is alien to unequal relations, which are typical of the traditional master-disciple relationship.

— We believe that enjoying the beauty of poetry is an inherent ability of man, and we feel comfort in poetry.

— We love the poetry of our predecessors in the East and in the West, but we cannot stoop to plow the fields already plowed by them.

— We will show our poems to each other. Our poems are not sheer imitations of the works by our predecessors. It is our own poetry, composed independently.

— We call our poems “national poetry.” This is the new poetry of the nation of the Meiji period, which originates from the roots of the *Manyoshu* and the *Kokinshu*.

(quot. in 246, 13).

A wonderful poetic dialogue between two poets in love was presented on the pages of *Myojo*. In the beginning, the leading role belonged to Tekkan, not to Akiko. All these poems were included in two collections — *Maître Tekkan* (*Tekkan shi*, 1901) and *Purple* (*Murasaki*, 1901), published in the year of their happy wedding. Whereas Akiko’s love poems have become a symbolic declaration of women’s emancipation in the Meiji Japan, the response by the recent singer of Tiger and Sword could be considered an equally unsurpassed erotic manifesto of the new times.

*We are not tired yet
to talk about our love.
Well, that is our destiny —
to die over and over again
only to be resurrected with the song of the rising sun...*

* * *

*No, it doesn’t become you,
this color of the lipstick from the capital —
better paint your lips
with the fresh scarlet blood
from your little finger that I have bitten!*

The content of the *Purple* collection is not limited to passionate lyrical outbursts, however. Under the influence of all-embracing feeling Tekkan began to visualize differently the surrounding world, more and more perceiving it through the prism of traditional landscape imagery, which not so long ago had provoked his violent protest.

*There, in the distance
two boats are staying still
waiting for the moon.
The seagulls on the waves
watch the summer sea...*

Aware of the strange controversy in his verse, Tekkan positioned himself in a sentimental and romantic way:

so ya riso	<i>There are my ideals</i>
ko ya ummei no	<i>and here — what is given by destiny.</i>
wakareji ni	<i>I am standing on the crossroads</i>
shiroki sumire o	<i>shedding tears</i>
aware to naki mi	<i>over this poor white violet</i>

Among the three hundred *tanka* poems in *Purple*, there are many pompous declarations in the vein of heroic poetry, which in any other poetic tradition would look comical and would be characterized as evidence of bad taste. Nevertheless, the Japanese critics were inclined to take such pathetic declarations seriously and abstrusely speculate about their innovative style:

onoko ware	<i>Oh, I am a valiant one —</i>
momoyo no nochi ni	<i>and maybe I will be forgotten</i>
kieba kienu	<i>in thousands of years,</i>
nonoshiru kora yo	<i>but you, those who disparage me now,</i>
kokoro mijikaki	<i>you are miserable good-for-nothings!</i>

For another couple of years Tekkan kept on writing mostly love lyrics and landscape poetry. His collections of *tanka* and *shintaiishi* followed one after another: *Ruined* (*Umorigi*, 1904), *Bane* (*Dokugusa*, 1904), *Oak Leaves* (*Kashi no ha*, 1904), and, the cream of all his poems written during the decade, his collection *Roll-Call* (*Aigikoe*, 1910). This last, which contained more than a thousand poems, could have become truly epochal, if its romantic pathos were not conceived by the new generation of poets as a certain anachronism. Tekkan's heyday in literature was over.

Yosano Akiko
& Tekkan



与謝野
鉄幹
与謝野
晶子

Depressed by his failures, in 1911, Tekkan traveled to France in search of new inspiration. He spent there a few years and in 1914 published an anthology of translations from modern French poetry, *The Lilac Flowers* (*Rira no hana*), which was followed by other collections of *tanka* and *shi*. Tekkan himself preferred not to make too strict a distinction between *tanka* and the poetry of new forms, calling both of them “national poetry” (*kokushi*) and *tanka* just “short verse” (*tanshi*). Therefore, he strongly dissociated himself from classical *waka* poetry, claiming to be the founder of a new national tradition. Nevertheless, Tekkan’s new poetry was no match to the great achievements of the best bards of the time. Seeing the impossibility of establishing himself in the rapidly developing world of new poetry, Tekkan focused on educational activities and works on the etymology of the Japanese language.

Contemporaries and descendants highly evaluated the role of Yosano Tekkan as a pioneer of new poetry and the leader of the late Romanticist *Myōjo* group. His mentor and friend Mori Ogai wrote in the foreword to the collection *Roll-Call*: “Who was the first to create and foster what we now call a new trend in *tanka* poetry? No one can answer ‘It was me’ except our Yosano” (quot. in [127, 1207]).

YOSANO AKIKO

The lyrical confession of the young poetess Ho (another reading is Otori) Sho (penname Akiko, 1876–1942), who later took her husband's name, Yosano, at the turn of the twentieth century was a challenge to the traditional philistine morals of Japanese society that made critics talk about the emergence of poetry of free feelings so far unknown in the *waka* world. Acquiring her feedback from the treasury of classical poetry, Akiko did not hesitate to give up the canonical regulations of the genre, which implied talking about love in vague allegorical images, and merged in her romantic quest the spiritual and physical nature of love as a dual basis of the Ideal.

What's in the teaching of Buddha?!
What's in the threatening prophecies?!
What's in the rumors ?!
There are just the two of us in this world,
engaged by Love itself!

Akiko was born in an old wealthy merchant family in the city of Sakai, where admiration for beauty and appreciation of classic literature had had a long history. Her excellent education made it possible for the girl to read at school age all classical novels, stories, and poetic collections in the home library (which is hard to imagine at present, when an average Japanese student is hardly able to read even a few lines of a medieval text).

Her love of the classics she would carry throughout her life, though her own poetry was an open challenge to the classical rules. In her middle age Akiko translated into modern language the greatest monument of Heian literature, *The Tale of Genji*. According to her biographers, she knew by heart almost all the masterpieces from classical poetic anthologies and felt at home in the flow of translations of Western literature that filled the book market of the country during the time of “spiritual revolution” in the Meiji era.

Akiko began to write poetry relatively late, at the age of twenty. Her start was motivated by the acquaintance with the poetic works of the young Romanticists from the *Bungakukai* journal, who introduced the names of Byron and Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth, Swinburne and Rossetti, Goethe and Hugo to Japanese literary circles. However, Akiko's first romantic western-oriented *shintaiishi*, which marked the beginning of her way in literature, lacked originality and technique skill. Her first *tanka* composed in a sentimental Romanticist manner were also too naïve and unsophisticated.

The turning point in the life of the aspiring poetess was marked by her discovery of the works of Yosano Tekkan, a rising star on the poetic horizon of Japan, who had already glorified his name by composing "masculine" *tanka* and *shintaiishi*, a perfect reflection of the spirit of modern times. Reading Tekkan's poems and trying sometimes to imitate them, Akiko became a passionate admirer of the poet she had not yet seen in the flesh. In 1900 she sent a few poems to the recently founded poetic journal *Myojo* and then started correspondence with the editor. Her first meeting with Tekkan took place the same year in Osaka, and soon it turned into something more than a literary connection.

By this time Tekkan had already founded his "New Poetry Society," and Akiko left her parents' home and moved to Tokyo, where she joined the *Myojo* group and became its most active member. When her dream of mutual love came true, she began to publish in *Myojo* one by one her passionate confessions in the form of *tanka*. The verse was so frankly erotic, imbued with such an unbridled passion, that the critics could only shrug their shoulders, assuming that such kind of poetry contained the revered spirit of Western modernity. No question that it was an incredibly bold challenge to the Confucian morals still prevailing in Meiji society.

*The dawn will never come!
On the crumpled sheets,
clinging to your shoulder,
as in a dream I am listening
to the sweet tale of love...*

Her relations with Tekkan by that time were rather complicated. The poet was married and at first did not hurry to divorce his wife. Meanwhile, Akiko's close friend, a young poetess Yamakawa Tomiko, also fell in love with the Master and tried to attract his attention, but her parents interfered and forced her to marry another man.

Left alone with her sweetheart, Akiko not only managed to win his heart and induce him to divorce immediately and marry her, she also led Tekkan to abandon the hallmark of his poetry — the notorious masculine spirit which had been his pride and had made him famous all over the country. Love produced a miracle: it brought to life Akiko's brilliant lyrical effusions and forced Tekkan to renounce publicly and forever his former ideals, to give up ideological propaganda and completely surrender to passion, responding to his beloved young wife with a flow of his own love poetry. This dialogue of the poets in love became one of the most memorable pages of world literature.

Akiko's poems of that period (mainly *tanka* and a few *shintaiishi*) were included in her debut collection, *Tangled Hair* (*Midaregami*, 1901), published shortly after Tekkan's *Purple*. The book became a landmark in the poetic world and caused a storm of conflicting responses. Akiko's poetry fascinated everybody — some people were delighted, others were indignant. Her passionate confessions literally violated the sacred principles of Confucian ethics, which had dominated Japanese family life and society for centuries. It was a slap on the face of public taste, but quite a pleasant slap, of stimulating nature, received from a lovely young woman. Ueda Bin, an advocate of French symbolism, in his article "Reading *Tangled Hair*" ("Midaregami o yomu", 1901), pointed out the revolutionary significance of the book, which for the first time had emancipated the inner world of a woman and revealed the secret, intimate feelings of the author.

Akiko not only declared for the first time a woman's right for free love without prejudice, but also rehabilitated the sensual cult of the body, which once flourished in the urban art

of the “floating world” (*ukiyo*) in the Edo period but was later condemned by Puritan morality. Although the Japanese critics usually describe her as “a woman of a new style,” Akiko’s feminism, certainly, is rooted both in the Edo traditions and in the Heian culture. The *ukiyo-e* artist Utamaro’s “Portraits of the Beauties” could be perfect illustrations to many of her *tanka*:

sono ko hatachi	<i>This girl is twenty.</i>
kushi ni nagaruru	<i>Her black hair</i>
kurokami no	<i>flowing under the comb —</i>
ogori no haru no	<i>oh, how beautiful</i>
utsukushiki kana...	<i>is the pride of her spring time!</i>

The very title of the collection, *Tangled Hair*, that is, “hair that has been disheveled by a night of love,” was in historical *tanka* poetics a metaphor for the passion of love. It is not a coincidence that this topic is repeated again and again as a refrain in the collection:

*The black hair wave
drops down a full five feet
like the water of a stream —
oh, this tender heart of a girl
obsessed with her secret love!..*

* * *

*Oh this frightful magic
aroma of the lilies in the night air!
How full of temptation
is this fragrance of the black hair
in the dark purple of the night!*

It is common knowledge that Akiko was inspired in her work by sensual poems of Izumi Shikibu, who’s symbolic image was borrowed for the title of the collection:

*My black hair like waves
drop down and, tangled, spread around —
all alone on my bed
I remember how my beloved one
would stroke them so tenderly...*

Izumi Shikibu

Another legendary Heian beauty, Ono no Komachi, one of “the six immortals” presented in the *Kokinwakashu* anthology, also became Akiko’s idol. Indeed, this striking parallel becomes quite obvious after the first reading of her early poems.

hito ni awamu	<i>In the moonless night</i>
tsuki no naki yowa	<i>I have been waiting for him in vain,</i>
omoikite	<i>obsessed with my thoughts —</i>
mune hashiri hi ni	<i>and my heart was burning</i>
kokoro yake ori	<i>in the fire of desire...</i>

Ono-no Komachi

Being a real connoisseur of classical poetry, Akiko deliberately “employs” the Heian love songs, uses similar imagery and partly imitates them, creating a kind of stylization, but at the same time she deliberately focuses on the center, getting rid of the misty veil of suggestive allegories and translating her innermost feelings into the language of open eroticism.

*Squeezing my breasts,
I throw away with my foot
the shroud covering the mystery —
oh, this scarlet color
of the hidden flower!..*

* * *

*Oh, I came to know love!
I love all these mad dreams
of the spring nights —
cooling the heat of our mingled bodies
the spring rain is falling...*



Yosano Akiko by Ishii Hakkei

The rampant eroticism of this poetry does not leave indifferent even the modern reader, maybe accustomed to more liberal standards of public morality. We can only guess how perplexed were the respectable philistines of the Meiji period brought up on Confucian concepts of chastity. The feminist challenge of a young poetess proclaiming an absolute freedom of love and freedom of art articulated in the traditional form of *tanka* contained an unconventional content that the Japanese intellectuals of that period associated with a brave challenge of Western culture and Western art—with “flowers of evil” in Baudelaire and Rimbaud’s poetry, with Maillol and Renoir’s curvy “nude” bodies, with Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, the great novels by Zola and stories by Maupassant. To condemn Yosano Akiko publicly would mean to condemn all those values of the “spiritual revolution” that had come to Japan from Europe, and thus she was praised almost unanimously, while *Tangled Hair* would be hidden from teenagers.

In Akiko’s *tanka* passion sounds much more convincing than in the vague love outpourings of Shimazaki Toson, or in his “Six Maidens”, representing the touching stories of romantic heroines related to the Middle Ages, in the *shintaiishi* form. Her “modernized” romantic ideal implies not only sensual pleasure,

but also a complete spiritual union of lovers, the fusion of hearts. Passion is a life-giving flame for the lovers, and they are reborn to a new life:

*Now the tidal waves
are rising in my heart
and then a wild fire is rushing through —
Oh, how unrestrained is my devotion!
How mad is this love obsession!..*

The body and the soul in this symphony of passion are inseparable; they complement each other, giving to the sacrament more and more shades of feelings and emotions. Sexual pleasure becomes the way to enlightenment, the way to perceive the metaphysical truths of love. Sensuality obtains a higher significance. The awareness of one's bodily perfection and feminine charm rises in the poems to the level of mystical revelation, the discovery of a hidden secret meaning. The body leads the spirit, and the spirit follows the desires of the body. Love becomes a source of inspiration and motivation of existence. The same thing happens both in poetry and in real life to the man to whom these passionate declarations are addressed, and Tekkan also responds passionately:

*Oh, I comprehend
the emergence of this tender feeling
barely seen in the darkness —
in the gate of the spring night
I enter possessed by love...*

In Akiko's poetry love itself is divine and the beloved one is a deity that should be worshipped:

muro no kami ni	<i>The shoulders of my God</i>
mikata kaketsutsu	<i>I will cover with the red silk</i>
hire fushinu	<i>of the night kimono</i>
enji nareba no	<i>that I was wearing tonight —</i>
yoi no hito kasane	<i>and bring myself to his feet!</i>



大正四十
子素画
作

Many poems sound like a blasphemous romantic challenge to all religions: Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism, and Christianity (which more often is merely a decorative frame for the complex metamorphosis of love):

fuchi no mizu ni	<i>I threw into the pond</i>
nageshi seisho o	<i>the Holy Scripture</i>
mata mo hiroi	<i>but picked it up again</i>
sora aogi naku	<i>and weep looking up at the sky —</i>
ware madoi no ko	<i>oh, I am such a lost child!..</i>

Tangled Hair also contains many poems of comparatively neutral content, related to landscape poetry, but in the context of the book they play mostly the role of decoration to the songs of love, longing, and unquenchable passion.

*I was waiting for you
where the white lilies were hiding
in the low grass —
and far away over the meadow
a rainbow was hanging...*

After the first collection, which was a sensational success and made Yosano Akiko an established leader of the Romanticism movement in *tanka*, other books followed: “A Little Fan” (*Koogi*, 1904), “Bane” (*Dokugusa*, 1904, published together with Tekkan), “Love Garment” (*Koigoromo*, 1905), “A Dancer” (*Maihime*, 1905), “Fairy Sao” (*Sao-hime*, 1909), “From Summer to Autumn” (*Natsu kara aki e*, 1914), and many more. Akiko was incredibly prolific and never stopped writing, even with a growing number of children at home!

In 1904 the young poetess responded to the Russo-Japanese war with a famous pacifist manifesto addressed to her brother who was drafted into the army. She published a challenging long poem “You should not Die!” (“*Kimi shi ni tamau koto nakare*”) condemning the war, which can be regarded as a unique example of lyrical civic poetry in the voluminous literary heritage of Akiko.

A new incentive to her creativity was given by a voyage to Europe in 1912. Together with Tekkan, they made it all the way from Yokohama to Vladivostok, and then to Paris by Trans-Siberian railway. The couple also visited England, Austria, Germany, Belgium, and Holland. In Vladivostok a few years ago the local Yosano Akiko Club even erected a stone stela dedicated to the brief visit of Akiko to the city.

However, Akiko's later books of poetry were no longer a revelation for the reader, and the critics' response to them was mostly positive, but rather reserved. Meanwhile, the poetess would continue for many years with unabated zeal and incomparable skill to develop the topic of sublime passion, addressed not to a lover any more, but to her beloved husband, friend, and loyal companion. It should be noted that, in contrast to the many wonderful poets of modern times who dedicated their declarations of love to different women or different men, Akiko remained faithful to one man, and that surely gives additional deep overtones to her love songs:

*This house in the fields —
it looks like the one
where I could reunite
in the dreams of the spring night
with a soul so dear to me...*

* * *

*Let love be
more beautiful than a rainbow!
Let love be
like a fierce bolt of lightning!
That's what I am praying for...*

However, over the years, the intensity of emotions in Akiko's poetry gives way to calm reflection and sober introspection. She also devoted much of her time to literary criticism, contributing many articles to literary journals.

The memories of her early days and the reflections on the inevitability of fate prevail in her mature works.

*High in the sky
the spring sun is shining again
like ever before —
but I have changed,
having known the sadness of fading...*

* * *

*As a rare bird
nestling since long ago in my chest
to sing its songs there
I conceive now
my rebellious heart...*

Yosano Akiko continued to compose *tanka* even when her assumed mission as the leader and the muse of the Romanticism movement had come to an end. In 1908 the *Myojo* magazine, Akiko and Tekkan's precious creation, was closed and replaced by other literary magazines — *Subaru*, *Ashibi*, *Araragi*, *Kokoro no hana*. During the Taisho years she became an ardent advocate of emancipation and defended the rights of women in the press, putting much effort into opening a university for women, Bunka Gakuin ("Institute of Culture").

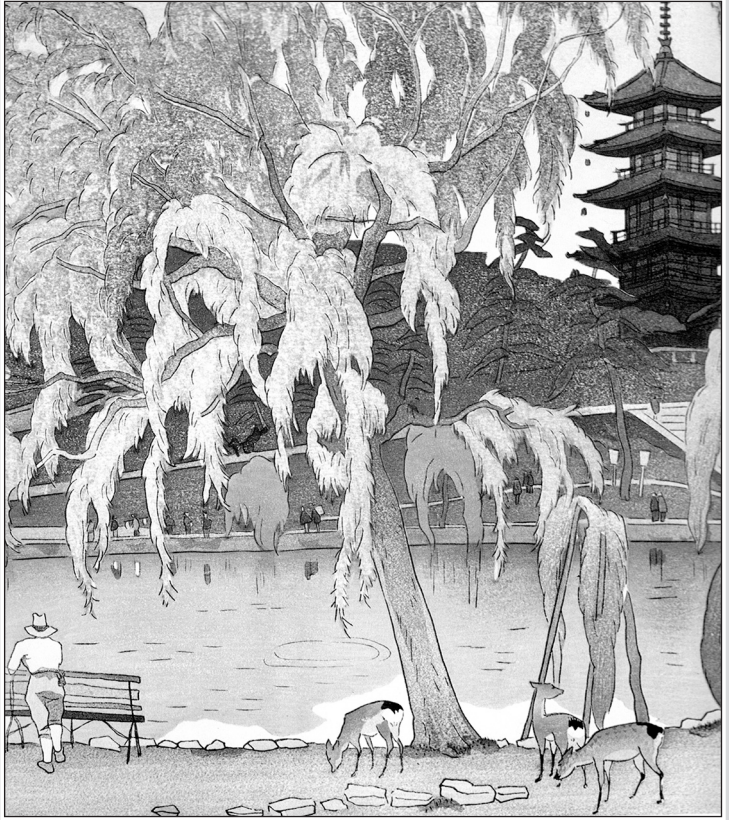
Many years were devoted to her work on the immortal monument of Japanese classics, *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji Monogatari*), which Akiko managed to translate wonderfully into the modern language, presenting a model for further translations of other masterpieces of Heian prose. No doubt, the poetess in some way identified herself with Murasaki Shikibu, who had left to posterity a narrative about the love adventures of the shining prince, who was unable to resist merciless karma.

Realizing that her young days were gone forever, Akiko would not try to deceive time, but youth and love reflected in her poems would forever remain a source of spiritual power nourishing her work:

*I am not praying now
to get back the days of old
and to become a young girl again —
but how I would like to get back my vigor
as a complement to my mature age!..*

Her last collection, *White Sakura (Hakuo-shu)*, was published posthumously in 1942. The *Tanka* poems composed in her old age are full of elegiac sadness. They sum up the years of her life and mourn her beloved husband, with whom, according to Buddhist belief, Akiko was soon to be reunited.

In her later years, surrounded by universal reverence in the literary milieu, included in all known encyclopedias and reference books, Yosano Akiko, however, clearly realized that her dialogue with the time was hopeless. The readers of the Showa period were not really interested in Akiko as a writer and a poet: of all the works written by her in the course of more than forty years they preferred only book, the 1901 *Tangled Hair*. Whatever has been said about her in the pages of countless monographs and articles, Yosano Akiko has remained in the history of literature primarily as the author of a Japanese version of "The Song of Songs," which never had and probably will never have any equals.



THE “REFLECTION OF NATURE” SCHOOL

MASAOKA SHIKI

The man who can be considered the greatest reformer of traditional verse, Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902), started his literary career as a poet and theorist of *haiku* (see *Part 2*). His conception of renovating poetry was based on the comprehension of the centuries-long heritage of the Japanese poetic tradition. A thoughtful study of the classics led Masaoka Shiki to the idea of “equality,” that is, the parity of all kinds of literature and close proximity of the two main genres of Japanese poetry — *tanka* and *haiku*. The idea was revolutionary for his time, because until the mid-1890s, in the world of Japanese poetry, there were fierce debates between avid traditionalists and rabid innovators. Some of them blindly followed the canon, refusing to recognize the relevancy of any other form of literature; while others, on the contrary, rejected all kinds of classical art, calling for a total Europeanization of verse. Shiki was perhaps the first traditionalist willing to accept all the greatest achievements of world civilization without distinguishing their nationality or genre and stylistic characteristics:

Simplicity is a crucial merit of Chinese poetry, refinement is an essential feature of the poetry of Europe and America, reticence is an important characteristic of *waka*, the quick mind is an essential characteristic of *haiku*, but it does not mean that *haiku* completely lacks simplicity, elegance and reticence. This also refers to other kinds of literature... For those who compose *kanshi*, poetry in Chinese, it is exactly the area where literary masterpieces are created; those who

compose *waka*, create literary masterpieces in their field, and those who like drama or prose, accordingly, create masterpieces in those domains .[237, 152–153].

Analyzing the genres of Japanese poetry, Shiki came to a heretical conclusion about the consanguinity of *haiku* and *tanka*. Neither before nor after him has any Japanese writer ever dared to express such a seditious idea, because an assumption of a fundamental difference between the two main branches of traditional poetry has always been a truth universally acknowledged. Nevertheless, Shiki insisted on his opinion and presented many convincing arguments in favor of the concept of the “unity of fraternal genres”:

Waka and *haiku* are the most closely related kinds of literature. In general, except for the difference in the number of words, all the rest is basically the same.(...)

Somebody can argue: Isn't it true that *waka* and *haiku* differ in using old and new words, in following the rules of grammar and in derogation from them? To this I would say that the differences here are purely internal or subjective, and in general there are no specific differences between *waka* and *haiku*...

The vocabulary considered acceptable and presenting interest only for *haiku*, must be also equally acceptable for *waka*. These genres are the same not only concerning the vocabulary, but also in terms of mentality. For example, according to a wide range of readers, humour is permissible only in *haiku* and unacceptable in *waka*. Meanwhile, a funny joke must be funny also in *waka*, and if it is not amusing in *waka* it will not be amusing in *haiku* either... However, upon thorough study we will discover that *uta* has some advantages typical of *uta*, and *haiku* has some advantages typical of *haiku*, and this should never be ignored [237, 170–172].

Shiki believed that he was a true innovator and in many ways he can be considered as such indeed, but the most important task of his life and work was to create a new art based on the

classics, well-forgotten and then reinterpreted as if fused in the crucible. He did not worry much about what would be put into the melting pot — the songs of the old times, medieval ballads or Edo *haiku*. Hence come the calls for studying the classics and the references to the titans of European literature of new times, and special attention to the experiments in the field of the new forms of verse.

In fact, having implemented, or at least initiated *haiku* reform, Shiki turned to a serious study of the history and theory of *tanka* to shock again the audience by the brusque judgments on contemporary poetry and classical literary monuments in his "Messages to the Composers of *tanka*" ("Utayomi ni atauru sho," 1898)—a series of ten major articles. Unlike Yosano Tekkan, he was not inclined to idealize the genre of *tanka* itself as an embodiment of the "Japanese spirit" and the symbol of national self-identity. His interest in *tanka* was based on the belief that both traditional genres are of the same root.

Shiki bitterly declared the degradation of *tanka* poetry of the last decades, placing the blame for the stagnation on the narrow-mindedness of the poets themselves, whom he saw as mired in ignorance.

They want to know nothing about anything but *tanka* and amuse themselves with the conception that *tanka* is the acme of perfection. They know nothing even about the form closest to *tanka*, *haiku*; for them *senryu* and *haiku* look the same so far as they contain seventeen syllables. This is where narrow-mindedness leads you! Moreover, those ignorant people do not study Chinese poetry, they have never heard about Western poetry, and do not even know about the existence of such poetry! If they were told that the novel and drama are parts of literature as well as *waka*, they would surely gawk in amazement. [18, 182].

In conclusion, Shiki advised the imitators, who could not write spiritually elevated modern *tanka*, to try their hand at other genres and forms, such as *haiku* or at "new style poetry" (*shintaiishi*).

The merciless criticism in his “messages” was aimed, above all, at the epigones who followed in the mainstream of poetry led by the late Edo poet Kagawa Kageki and his Keien school. As Yosano Tekkan did four years earlier, Shiki attacked Kageki, accusing the Edo maser of vulgarity and lack of talent. Like Tekkan, he was obviously too biased in his assessment, trying by all means to subvert the widespread cult in the world of *waka* and not taking into account the indisputable merits of Kageki’s poetry .

On the other hand, the accusations of ignorance addressed to the contemporary *tanka* poets who did not want to acknowledge any other kind of literature — whether *haiku* or *renga*, or *kanshi*, or Chinese classics, or the masterpieces of European poetry, to say nothing of prose or drama — would sound very relevant for the early Meiji period. Rejecting the banality and dreary monotony of modern epigones in the realm of *tanka*, Shiki opposed the powerful sound of the verse to traditional melodious harmony, the originality and power of the imagery to the detailed description, the sincerity of inspiration to the artificial refinement. He emphasized that poetry devoid of true feeling is dead, and he called for a emotional charge in the imagery, which is only possible through an objectivity based on the contemplation of nature.

Shiki’s evaluation of the holy book of Heian poetry, the *Kokinshu*, plunged the admirers of traditional elegance into horror and bewilderment. In his second “message,” Shiki announced: “The *Kokinshu* is a useless anthology, Tsurayuki [the main compiler of the *Kokinshu*. — A.D.] is a nasty scribbler” [18, 180]. Admitting that he had once liked the subtle beauty (*yubi*) of the *Kokinshu* poems, Shiki called this refinement a light-minded idle poetry, blaming the poets of the Golden Age of Japanese culture for the absence of deep thought, banality, and clichéd imagery. Although he actually tried to support his antipathy to the *Kokinshu* with some examples of alleged banality and false pretence, such a characterization of the authors considered the pride of the nation could not but raise a wave of objections. No less severe were Shiki’s reviews

analyzing other masterpieces of Japanese literature. Referring to the *Shinkokinshu* anthology he pointed out that the book was "a little better than the *Kokinshu* itself, but even there good poems could be counted on the fingers of one hand" [18, 181].

Justifying himself, Shiki observed that, while the *Kokinshu* had perhaps been a real collection of masterpieces at its time during the Heian period, its poetry had become hopelessly outdated by the Meiji period.

It is, however, more interesting to know not the very fact that Shiki dared to perform such a "sacrilege," which was probably more shocking than denouncing Basho, but what particular book he opposed to the "pretentious and superficial" court poetry, ostensibly focused on its centuries-long poetics. The pathos of his criticism is not aimed at establishing new poetic values, but at proclaiming the priority of the other great anthology of ancient Japanese verse, the *Manyoshu* with its wide scope of themes, the freedom and looseness of imagery perception, and the "masculine" (*masuraoburi*) tone of the poems. At this point, Shiki's taste completely coincides with the taste of Yosano Tekkan, though the individual works of both reformers had very little in common. Due to their efforts, the *Manyoshu* became a handbook of the majority of the *tanka* poets in the twentieth century.

Such subjective evaluation based on taste preferences clearly prevails in Shiki's criticism, which the author, for the sake of the revolutionary cause, was trying to present as objective truth. Rejecting in general the poetry of the court anthologies, which constitute the main trend in *waka* evolution from the tenth to the fifteenth century, he writes in "Talks on Literature" ("Bungaku mangan"):

In the Heian period, *waka* entirely lost the spirit that was its characteristic feature in the Nara period, and was thus completely transformed. In this kind of *waka* the formal wording of the verse came first and taste came second; rationality in structuring the verse was considered the most important thing, and feelings played a secondary role.

However, as far as the vocabulary was concerned, words with a gentle and pleasant sound were chosen, and the melody of the poems was characterized by smooth and softly flowing rhythms. However, in everyday speech, it is typical to denote objects with “strong” words and to use direct and strong terms to give definition to strong deeds and notions. If we choose to describe objects with words characterized by gentleness and effeminacy, it will inevitably result in the specific type of painfully exquisite beauty of weakness. And so, for generations, when poetry was dominated by excessive flamboyance, the circle of *waka* poets was restricted to the courtiers who had no spiritual power, or to those who belonged directly to the Fujiwara family school, or those who followed its principles, and all their views were inevitably confined to the cult of the painfully subtle beauty of weakness. In addition, the fashion of *waka* classification by topics and other refinements turned for them into a kind of artistic entertainment...

We cannot find in the *Kokinshu* any poems which, like the poems in the *Manyoshu*, without excessive words, would present the essence and convey the hidden sense — *yugen* ... [237, 162–164].

Besides the *Manyoshu*, Shiki was also attracted by the works of some authors of the Kamakura period and by the late Edo *waka* poetry, which was totally devoid of courtly “affectation.” He especially liked, for example, *tanka* by the shogun Minamoto Sanetomo, poetry by Hiraga Motoyoshi, and *tanka* and *kanshi* by the ingenious hermit-monk Ryokan. He also admired the Zen *tanka* by Okuma no Kotomichi, a poet of the late eighteenth — early nineteenth century, whose forgotten collection Shiki himself had discovered in a second-hand book store and presented to the readers. However, Shiki’s scathing judgments and poorly grounded derogatory characterizations, with which he would label the authors right and left, toppling whole layers of centuries-old poetry, do not speak in his favor. For the sake of establishing his own (recently acquired) views and promoting a new theory, not yet approbated by practice, the stern critic is ready to erase or diminish all the achievements of the past:

The *Kokinshu* style subsequently would gradually evolve for the worse having achieved its apotheoses in the Ashikaga period and in the beginning of the Tokugawa period. During this time, however, Fujiwara Teika, appeared, who put an end to open verbal contrivance, turning with all his heart to the guidance of his true taste, although even those intentions of Teika were restricted to the domain of the language, and eventually it became just unthinkable to overload the artistic taste in such a way. Minamoto Sanetomo, who studied the *Manyoshu* and left a lot of wonderful poems in the *Kokinshu* vein but in an original form, was composing his *tanka* at the same period...

In the middle of the Tokugawa period, Kamo Mabuchi and the poets of his circle highly praised the *Manyoshu*, and the people in the Celestial Empire listened to them. Many intellectuals tried to get rid of the vulgarity of the latest songs, which were marked by frivolous levity. However, either due to their inability to integrate theory with practice, or because interpreting the *Manyoshu* in words, they failed to comprehend the *Manyoshu* with all their heart, in their own poems they only partially managed to get rid of vulgarity of frivolousness. To recreate the masculine, cheerful, and sincere style of the *Manyoshu* was not within their competence. [237, 165–166].

It is interesting that, graciously praising Fujiwara no Teika, the principle compiler of the glorious anthology *Shinkokinshu* (13th century), Shiki did not even mention Teika's renowned contemporary, the priest Saigyō, whose works are very distantly related to the tradition of pretentious eloquent *waka* court poetry and whose philosophical depth of the verse has been unsurpassed up to present time. A lot of other poets of the medieval period, to whom the characteristics of affectation and mannerism cannot be applied, also remained neglected.

Speaking with sympathy about the poets of the Kokugaku school, who proclaimed the priority of Japanese spirit over the dogmatism of the Confucian scholars, Shiki mentions the name of Kamo Mabuchi, but ignores the more significant philologist and poet, Motoori Norinaga. He mentions neither the wonderful

Zen poet Ozawa Roan, nor the author of the brilliant “morals and manners” comic *waka*, Tachibana Akemi. In the mean time, he repeatedly speaks with contempt and hostility about Kagawa Kageki, a poet of deep emotions, sophisticated wisdom, and refined imagery, a trendsetter in the *waka* world of the first half of the nineteenth century. With great reluctance Shiki makes a reservation: “In the mass of Kageki’s poems that poisoned the subsequent period by their pernicious influence, there occur perfect lines like jewels, implicated among others.” [237, 166]. But the highest praise is awarded to the hardly known *tanka* by Okuma no Kotomichi, who composed some really nice short poems, though of quite unassuming form. It seems that for Shiki, with all his immense erudition and literary taste, his desire to deny the established canon and accepted conventions is always more important than the objective evaluation of any name or any school in the history of literature. In the *tanka* world, as well as in the *haiku* world, he would remain above all the destroyer of the foundations and the prophet of new art, sometimes in defiance of common sense. However, it is quite possible that Shiki deliberately painted the devil blacker than he is and exaggerate his invective to raise panic among the conservatives.

Shiki’s disciples rallied to the *tanka* association “Negishi-ha” (named after the Negishi district where the master lived). They all basically shared the views of their mentor, but not all of them were ready to sweep away the legacy of medieval *waka* poetry.

Shiki’s *tanka* poems, for all their merits, hardly could meet the challenging requirements of radical reformation of the genre. That is why many people tended to evaluate them with reservation. Thus, the critic Wakao Ransui in his article “Shiki’s Death” (“Shiki no shi,” 1902) characterized his *tanka* as “a continuous imitation” of the *Manyōshū* [80, 326].

The “Messages to the Composers of *tanka*” contained a recommendation to apply in *waka* poetry the principle of objective realism, “the reflection of nature” (*shasei*), successfully approbated by Shiki and his followers in new *haiku* poetry.

Masaoka
Shiki



正岡
子規

Commenting on this concept, Shiki explains the necessity of combining the given characteristics of the depicted object with the impulse of the individual imagery of a poet. However, the recommendations were so vague that the poet and critic Ota Mizuho questioned Shiki's original aim:

Speaking of *shasei*, he meant primarily establishing a specific standard for painting and journalism, not seeking to apply this method basically to all literature. It is quite obvious that the concept of *shasei* was applied to *tanka* only for the sake of protest and was used in this field as a means of saving poetry from the vice of ethereal reverie [18, 217].

Reasoning about the "reflection of nature," Shiki uses rather vague, home-made terms like "objective lyricism," "subjective lyricism," "lapidary beauty," "complicated beauty," etc. The real ways of reconstructing the *tanka* canon were suggested in the seventh and tenth messages. Shiki's credo was to preserve the formal characteristics of the genre, provided that the realistic principle of the "reflection of life" (*shasei*) would be applied and modern concepts would be introduced into the traditional poetic vocabulary: "My basic aim is to express

clearly as possible those poetic characteristics that, in my opinion, are wonderful.”

So, the poet admitted that following nature and revealing beauty in the smallest details of everyday life was the most important thing for him. Let us not forget that the method of *shasei* had already been successfully tested in his own *haiku*. Not accidentally, much in Shiki's *tanka* poems under closer examination will evoke in the reader the feelings of *sabi* (tart bitterness of being) and of *wabi* (eternal sadness of loneliness in the universe)—those typical aesthetic categories that we usually find in the best examples of *haiku* poetry.

Despite the fact that Shiki believed himself to be first and foremost an innovator, his main contribution to Japanese and world literature is an unsurpassed ability to preserve and increase the achievements of purely traditional poetry, which he successfully adapted to the requirements of the new age. One of his major concerns was the need for modernizing the *tanka* lexicon.

Most of the inventions of civilization are not poetic, and it is difficult to include them in the domain of verse. If you still want to write about them, there is nothing you can do but to mention in addition something quite poetic. When such a combination is missing and it is simply said in the poem “The wind blows over the rails,” it comes out too bare. The poem becomes much more attractive when you combine this phrase with another object, such as the violets growing beside the rails, or the poppies swaying in a gust of wind caused by a passing train, or the nodding heads of of pampas grass ...[151, v. 7, 50] .

Justifying the need to modernize the verse, to introduce the new objects of technical civilization and foreign borrowings into *tanka* (and, of course, *haiku*) poetry, Shiki would use the unexpected parallels. Pointing to the fact that the Japanese Navy was winning battles using ships bought in England and with the help of the German canons, he declared that poems written by the Japanese poets who borrowed from

the European, Chinese or Sanskrit lexicon, would still be the triumph of Japanese literature.

However, nowadays, looking back, we can say that in the works of Masaoka Shiki, as well as in the *tanka* poems of his followers, the number of lexical innovations and the degree of their "techniques" has been inversely proportional to the real merits of *tanka* and *haiku*, which simply could not adapt such innovations. The attempts to use in a poetic miniature the innovations of industrial revolution against the background of the classical tradition in the Meiji period were often ridiculous, and their modern analogies look like a self-parody of the author. All of Shiki's masterpieces (in fact, the vast majority of his *haiku* and *tanka*) belong either to landscape poetry or to the genre of poetic diaries that focus on allegedly trivial and negligible observations of the poet, sprawled on his sickbed.

Despite his revolutionary criticism, neither Shiki nor his faithful disciples and followers—such as Ito Sachio or Nagatsuka Takashi—could not and would not compose *tanka* exclusively in a revolutionary manner. On the contrary, they were quite conservative, though they sometimes tried to diversify their traditional style. Criticizing the *Kokinshu* while glorifying the *Manyoshu*, this next round of the centuries-old debate between "blunt-enders" and "sharp-enders" certainly could not lead to any immediate innovation in *tanka*. The Romanticists from the *Myojo* group sarcastically called the poets from the "Negishi-ha" eccentrics, who intended to walk along the Ginza dressed in classical kimono and with queer court headwear on their heads.

However, Shiki's untimely death, instead of putting an end to the disputes about the "reflection of nature," on the contrary led to the rapid aggravation of literary polemics and eventual triumph of the *shasei* method in the leading schools of traditionalist poetry. In the *haiku* world, where Shiki's authority was extremely high, his "reflection of nature" concept was accepted at the time by the overwhelming majority. The *shasei* method per se was never questioned for decades, until the age of proletarian literature and the modernist quest of the 1920s,

while a great variety of optional interpretations would be suggested. In the *tanka* world, the debates over *shasei* continued for almost half a century. Almost all the leading poets of the genre took part in the discussion. Some refused to recognize *shasei* as a major principle but still somehow would use Shiki's ideas in their arguments.

Shiki's endeavors to extend the domain of experiment proved their effectiveness eventually. By the end of his life, reading the classics thoroughly, absorbing their achievements, and creatively applying them to his own theory, he had managed to reach the heights of poetry not only in *haiku*, but also in *tanka*. The same can be said about the works of his disciples.

In addition to eighteen thousand *haiku*, which should be considered his main achievement, Shiki wrote more than two thousand poems in different (in general, purely traditional and even archaic) genres and forms: *tanka*, *choka*, *sedoka*, *kanshi*, etc. The best of them (about 550 *tanka*, 15 *choka* and 12 *sedoka*) were included in the posthumous collection *Songs of a Bamboo Village* (*Take no sato uta*).

Shiki's every working day during the six last years of his life spent in Tokyo was filled with tireless literary activities. He would meet hundreds of people, edit essays for the newspapers, write treatises on poetics, compile the anthologies, write diaries, draw sketches of flowers and grass from his little garden, and compose poems. He was completely immersed in poetry and tried to record in poetic imagery the details of his everyday life, providing them with the highest spiritual meaning in the context of Eternity, as was bequeathed by great Basho.

Shiki lived and worked under the permanent threat of impending death. A rapid progress of his disease, resulting in partial and then almost complete paralysis, gave him an especially acute perception of the world. He knew that his time was almost done and tried to saturate every moment of his life to the last possible limit, perceiving with all his senses the unique colors of the earthly existence, its tastes, sounds, and aromas.

During the last years of his life TB chained the poet to bed. At his request, the *shoji* in his room (the sliding panels made of thick paper) were replaced by transparent sliding glass doors leading to the veranda. It was a window into the world to which he was destined never to return.

The motif of the expectation of the inevitable and imminent end introduces a mournful overtone in the subtext of all the seemingly quiet and relaxed poems of Shiki's late period (if the very notion "late" is applicable to the works by a young man who left the world at the age of thirty-five).

*The time of loneliness.
I am spread on my sickbed.
My friend hasn't come yet,
and I am all alone, face to face
with a dwarf plum tree in a pot...*

Poems from such series as "A Wisteria Cluster," "A Body Temperature Account" or "Through the Glass Door," which present touching poetic sketches of the room microcosm or sublime pictures of the little front garden — those that were composed in premonition of a forthcoming end — could be certainly placed among the tragic masterpieces of world poetry.

*Through the glass door
I watch beyond my reflection
a distant landscape —
white snow that hasn't melted yet
on the trees in Ueno grove...*

*Through the glass door
I watch a sad view —
under the spring rain,
all covered with blossoms,
a lonely cherry tree, so wet...*

The poet was dying. He rarely would get up to go out and take a glance at the trees and the flowers in the yard. Soon, he was deprived even of these small pleasures, unable to sit up on his sorrowful bed, just watching the clusters of wisteria or a peony in the pot. And only Shiki's mind, until his untimely bereavement that took place on September 19, 1902, preserved its amazing clarity. Till his last breath he continued to dictate poems and on the day of his death he composed three *haiku*.

Fame came to Masaoka Shiki during his lifetime, crowning him as an ascetic and martyr who dedicated his life to poetry. However, Shiki himself did not seek popularity. He would endure pain without complaints and moaning, resigning himself to the inevitability of death. He would see his fame only as a means for establishing new poetry, for promoting his ideas. His short earthly life was a success and he knew this. As a true Buddhist, he was not afraid of death, expecting only a transition to a new incarnation. He believed that his monument would be a majestic body of new Japanese poetry, born due to his painful search, and carefully fostered by his associates in the literary battle, and he was not wrong.

In addition to the purification and restoration of traditional poetry, Shiki regarded as his life mission establishing of a strong school on the basis of his "reflection of nature" concept, both in theory and in practice. During the days of grave physical sufferings he would find solace in the talks with friends on poetry, in teaching his disciples, and debating with his literary opponents. The Negishi *tanka* society founded by Shiki in 1899, brought together on a common platform of realistic poetry Ito Sachio, Nagatsuka Takashi, Koizumi Chikashi, and many other talents, whose credo was defined by *shasei*, the "reflection of nature" concept. After Shiki's untimely death, since 1903 the Negishi group began to publish a poetry magazine called *Ashibi* ("Andromeda") which gave start to many young poets including Saito Mokichi, Shimagi Akahiko, and Nakamura Kenkichi.

The *Ashibi* magazine was supposed to consolidate the achievements of the new *tanka* movement in the twentieth century. The magazine under the general guidance of Ito

Sachio existed for five years and served as a tribune for many gifted poets of the younger generation: Saito Mokichi, Shimagi Akahiko, Nakamura Kenkichi, Nagatsuka Takashi, Koizumi Chikashi, etc. When Ito Sachio withdrew from organizing activities and the *Ashibi* magazine gradually decayed, it was succeeded by another *tanka* journal, *Akane* ("Red Roots"), which was headed for about two years by Mitsui Koshi (1883–1953). The divergence in views between Ito Sachio and Mitsui Koshi led to a split in the poetry circles. Beginning in 1908, Sachio's adherents rallied around the journal *Araragi* (*Yew Tree*), which went on to a leading position in the *tanka* world for forty-five years, up to 1953. The leader of the *Araragi* group in its heyday from 1913 to 1926 was Shimagi Akahiko, who was later replaced by Saito Mokichi.

Thus, Masaoka Shiki's school, represented during his lifetime by a rather narrow circle of associates, dramatically expanded overtime, pushing aside the competitors—the Romanticists (the spouses Yosano and Yoshii Isamu), the Symbolists (Kitahara Hakushu), the "Social-Realists" (Ishikawa Takuboku and Toki Aika), the Naturalists (Wakayama Bokusui, Maeda Yugure, Kubota Utsubo) and gradually ascending to the dominant position in traditionalist poetry.

ITO SACHIO

Shiki's first successor as a leader of the new *tanka* movement, Ito Sachio (1864–1913), gained fame also as a novelist of the Sentimentalist school. He studied at the law faculty of Meiji University, but could not graduate due to an eye illness and switched to selling dairy products. However, his infatuation with poetry prevailed over business interests and soon, under the influence of Masaoka Shiki's reformist articles, Sachio devoted himself chiefly to *tanka* composition. In 1900 he was officially accepted as a disciple by Shiki, and from then on he adopted the principle of "reflection of nature," having become a devout adherent of the *shasei* style.

The relations between the teacher and his disciple were marked by some clashes over literary theory, but Sachio, who was a few years older, always admired Shiki's genius and contributed to the great reputation of his friend and mentor. He was very upset by Shiki's illness, often visited Negishi, and tried to surround the sick bedridden colleague with touching care, sending to him flowers and fruits, sometimes with *tanka* poetic dedications:

*Oh, will the time come again,
when you, having overcome your sickness,
will be able again
to watch up close the cherry trees blooming on the Ueno hills
and to compose poems about them?!*

Shiki's untimely death was a severe blow to all his disciples and associates. Ito Sachio was inconsolable and swore allegiance to the masters' concepts for the rest of his life:

*It is still before my eyes,
that unforgettable image of yours —
bedridden,
exhausted by the dreadful disease,
reclining on your pillow...*

Whereas Shiki tended to apply his concept of "reflection of nature" both to *haiku* and *tanka*, considering them the two branches of the same tree of Japanese poetry and would not draw a distinct line between poetry of the two genres, Ito Sachio had always been an apologist of *tanka*. He advocated the superiority of *uta* over *haiku*, believing that in *waka* the artistic continuum can be optimally conveyed. He also drew special attention to the melodic structure of the verse, in contrast to Shiki, who carefully designed the imagery of poetic sketches but hardly cared about the euphony. In any case, in theory, Sachio spoke of the need to study and master the *Manyoshu* melodic patterns for the resurrection of the classical lexical

strata. However, in reality, poems from *An Anthology of Sachio's Tanka* (*Sachio ka-shu*), the poet's major collection, won readers' sympathies by unpretentious realism and earthly imagery in the context of the purely Zen-Buddhist perception of the surrounding world, which has not so much in common with the *Manyoshu* tradition and can be traced back more likely to the masters of the Edo "daily life *tanka*," such as Ryokan, Roan, and Kotomichi:

*The tea pot is boiling.
Let me move closer to the hearth
this dwarf plum tree in a pot —
to watch the steam
flowing and swirling among the branches...*

The best poems by Ito Sachio, unlike most of Shiki's *tanka* or those by another leader of the *shasei* trend, Nagatsuka Takashi, are less "photographic" as far as the nature of the image is concerned. Many of his *tanka*, bearing a strong imprint of the poet's individuality, are marked in their poetic tone by a touch of romantic irony and self-irony (though we should admit that some poems in the same vein can be found among Shiki's works — for example, a number of his *haiku* describing a tasty persimmon).

*In the winter countryside
Ito Sachio, a renowned poet
and a tea drinker,
is busy not with making new poems
but with making ceramic tea cups...*

* * *

*It is late in the night.
The frogs are calling each other
lazier and lazier —
now one croaked in the distance,
now two more are gurgling gently...*

Ito Sachio



伊藤
左千夫

The last poem in many specific traits reminds of the *haiku* by Kobayashi Issa, who composed dozens of poems about frogs. This is one more proof of the strongest influence of *haiku* poetics on the works even of those *tanka* poets who did not conscientiously strive to apply the *haiku* principles to *waka*. Composed entirely, as it seems, in the tradition of *shasei* poetics, this *tanka* differs from similar topics in Shiki's works by the mention of a few minor "talking" details, and by the greater intimacy and personal sympathy for the little creatures.

In 1905, a discussion occurred between Ito Sachio and Nagatsuka Takashi, another of Shiki's prominent disciples, who advocated the purity of the original definition of *shasei* as an objective "reflection of nature." The debate took place in the pages of *Ashibi*, the magazine set up by Sachio in 1903, which up to 1908 was the central publishing organ of his school. Sachio argued that *tanka*, in contrast to *haiku*, is not a snapshot of the object — it absorbs the full potential of the author's personal experience and feelings. However, he had to admit that Shiki's theory was to a certain extent outdated and could not fully meet the requirements of the new age. According to Sachio, *tanka* is a direct expression of the author's ego, a splash of emotions, a "vibration of feeling" (see [72, 10]). Indeed, Sachio's imagery is usually profound, colorful, and touching:

*Perhaps it wants to say
that autumn is coming —
in my front yard
the mimosa tree has drooped,
showing its bare mingled branches...*

Having taken over from Shiki the idea about the diversity of the *tanka* imagery, Ito Sachio thoroughly and quite successfully tried to incorporate lexical innovations into the tissue of the short poems, though such attempts seem somehow artificial against the background of his traditional landscape poetry:

*In the high seas
the siren of a steam-ship sounded
so distant and so long —
its vague echo, wandering in the darkness,
has reached this shore over the waves...*

Of course, a steam-ship does not belong to the canonical *tanka* vocabulary, but the distant sound in the darkness resonates not only as an echo of his age, but also as a timeless voice of the universe. An experienced reader will also perceive in the poem an allusion to Bashō's famous *haiku*, where the "cry of the ducks comes vaguely white from the darkness." Based on synesthesia, that is, the mutual substitution and complementary functioning of senses, the image is imbued with *wabi*—the dreary consciousness of eternal loneliness, the melancholy of existence.

Most of Ito Sachio's poems are gathered into thematic cycles (*rensaku*). This should be regarded as additional poetic technique also borrowed from Shiki, who, in his turn, had followed the suit of the *waka* authors of the Pre-modern period. Attempts to compose "poetic suites" have been known since the tenth century, beginning with the *Kokinwakashu*, where compilers arranged the poems so as to show the progress of the seasons or the evolution in the mood of lovers. In the Edo

period, Kagawa Kageki, Tachibana Akemi, and Okuma no Kotomichi composed magnificent cycles of daily life poetry and landscape *tanka*. Shiki's cycle "Through the Glass Door," depicting in various aspects the small front garden of the dying poet's house, became a classic masterpiece of the world confessional poetry.

Ito Sachio left several excellent *tanka* cycles, including "Notebook of Poems From the 'No Dust' Retreat," "Ten Poems Written In a Hut during a Flood," and "Moonlight on the Rocky Shore." The poems in each of them develop the same topic, continuing and complementing each other:

*A garden of plum trees.
Under the cold gusts of wind
the leaves are falling —
but on the bare autumn branches
new buds are swelling...*

* * *

*The plum trees
after a storm in a mountain valley.
The air is so transparent!
I see high in the sky
a falcon soaring over my head...*

Trying to formulate the principles of thematic cycles, which became the favorite means of self-expression for the poets composing in the *shasei* style, Ito Sachio pointed out that *rensaku*, first, should be neither too objective, nor too subjective; secondly, they should be based on direct experience, and the nostalgic link with the past and the future should enhance the impression of the moment; thirdly, they should be well thought out compositionally [74, 51–52].

However, the task of drawing up a theoretical foundation for the composition of poetic cycles proved to be too difficult, and thus poets from the *Ashibi* or *Araragi* groups would generally just develop rules of their own. More often we find

rensaku arranged in the form of a "travel diary," but poetic sketches "on a certain occasion" are also quite common.

As Shiki's successor in the *tanka* world, Ito Sachio, until his death, enjoyed a great reputation and left the principle of the "reflection of nature" bequeathed to him by the Master as a legacy to his disciples and followers, who determined to a large degree the character of *tanka* poetry of the twentieth century.

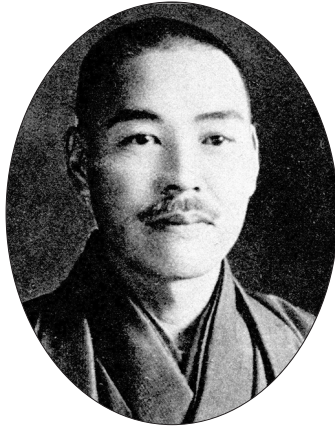
SHIMAGI AKAHIKO

The many years of fruitful activity of the *tanka* poets' group united around the *Araraigi* magazine was in large part due to the undisputed leader of the movement and the chief editor of the magazine, Shimagi Akahiko (1876–1926). Before he came to full understanding of the *shasei* principle and established the priority of the *Manyoshu* anthology in the *tanka* world, the poet had to make a long journey.

Even at school in his native mountainous Nagano Prefecture, Shimagi Toshihiko (Akahiko was his literary penname) began to compose *tanka*, inspired by the *Manyoshu* "masculine" style. He took as a model the works by poets-philologists of the Kokugaku school, Kamo Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga, who had tried to restore the original basis of classical poetry in search of the indigenous Japanese cultural identity, the "Yamato spirit." No doubt that these early poems were inspired by the increased propaganda of imperial moral values in the Meiji period.

In 1895, the young Akahiko also presented a long and pompous poem in the *shintaiishi* form glorifying the achievements of the imperial navy in the Sino-Japanese war. The poem bears the obvious influence of Hitomaro's "long songs" (dating back to the eighth century), which glorify in heartfelt odes the greatness of the Mikado and royal princes. Later, Akahiko composed a lot of mediocre *shintaiishi* and even seriously tried to restore the genre of *choka*, which had died out a thousand years earlier, but all these attempts were rather profane.

Shimagi
Akahiko



島
木
赤
彦

In 1900, Shimagi Akahiko sent a selection of *tanka* to the newspaper *Nippon Shinbun*. Masaoka Shiki, the editor of the Poetry section, published one poem, and that became the starting point of the brilliant career of the young author. Some time later, he had an argument with the leader of the *Myojo* magazine, criticizing Yosano Tekkan for his stilted style, far-fetched images, and lack of understanding of the beauty of nature. Shimagi opposed to Tekkan's flamboyant and pretentious imagery the modest charm of sketching from nature in accordance with the principle of *shasei*. Developing the concepts put forward by Shiki, he advocated realism in imagery and the utmost sincerity of the artist, claiming that poetry emerged from the splendor of nature landscapes, sanctified by the grandeur of the human spirit.

After the death of Shiki, who had left Ito Sachio as his formal successor in the *tanka* world, Akahiko set up a semi-amateur poetic journal called *Himuro (Ice Cellar)*, which gave his friends and associates a poetic platform. A few months later, when Sachio became the head of the *tanka* magazine *Ashibi*, he found in Shimagi Akahiko a devoted ally and a regular contributor, not a rival.

All those years Akahiko has been working as a school teacher in the Shinshu area, in Nagano. Once he tried to

change his occupation and become a chicken breeder, but he went bankrupt and had to return to school, where he was later appointed a director.

In 1905, Shimagi Akahiko and the second-rate poet Ota Mizuho (1876–1955) published a joint *shintaiishi* collection, which was unanimously ignored by the critics. However, Akahiko's talent would develop and gain strength in *tanka*. His poems would be actively published in the *Ashibi*, later in the *Araragi* and, finally, under the penname Kubota Kakibito, he published the collection of poems *Potato Flowers* (*Bareisho no hana*, 1913), in collaboration with another popular *tanka* poet, Nakamura Kenkichi, Ito Sachio's disciple. The publication of a joint collection "shared" with a friend was Akahiko's individual whim, which nobody ever followed. The collection was a great success and marked a milestone in the creative work of both poets, uniting even more their interests in the field of *Araragi* poetics.

Most of the *tanka* in *Potato Flowers* are composed in the vein of contemplative landscape poetry. A distinctive feature of Akahiko's individual style, elaborated under the influence of the *shasei* concept, is fixing a sensation or a mood of a moment by means of a smartly observed unforgettable detail:

*Across the meadow
along a path over grass and flowers
I walked to the distant grove —
and told myself: "Oh, how quiet!"
A duck quacked in response...*

* * *

*Late at night
through the thick swirls of fog
light is pouring —
the moon is shining weakly
spreading its flowing shades around...*

Although formally Shimagi Akahiko at the time put forward the concept of objective realism in the *shasei* vein, many of his

poems were colored by imminent strong sentiment. What is more, the emotional effect is considerably magnified by the arrangement of the poems in thoroughly structured cycles. Here, for example, are two *tanka* from a *rensaku* entitled “On Leaving a Village in the Woods”:

*Deep in the woods
on the green moss of the glade
I sit so long —
this is a farewell to the mountains.
How sad is my heart now!..*

* * *

*For the last time
I am walking through this familiar forest
touching so gently
the moss with my feet.
The sun is setting...*

Shimagi Akahiko was, like Shiki, an adherent of the “masculine” style of the *Manyoshu* anthology. He strongly advocated the *Manyoshu* spirit, criticizing contemporary *tanka* poets for failing to understand the classics, urging them to study the great book and to learn permanently from the ancient masters. In his major article “Humble Judgment of the Way of Song” (“Kado Shoken”), Akahiko emphasizes the importance of understanding the classics for composing truly modern *waka*:

The most important place in the poetry of the Nara period was occupied by Kakinomoto Hitomaro and Yamabe Akahito. They were called “the saints” of classical poetry, and all the Japanese know their names, but many have little knowledge of their works... Even many of the contemporary professional *tanka* poets cannot define which of their works should be considered especially distinguished. This issue remains unsolved: there are practically no such experts who could give a trustworthy interpretation of the poems of Hitomaro and Akahito. It looks like many *tanka* poets at

present either are not interested in classical poetry, or, even if some of them have an interest in it, hardly any of them can perceive the real meaning of the classical masterpieces and their destiny...

However, perceiving the depths and the heights of the poetry of Hitomaro and Akahito should be for us a matter of assiduous zeal, for that is exactly the way to conceive our own heart (quot. in [152, 38]).

The respect for the sacred classics did not force Akahiko to adopt a retrograde and archaic viewpoint. Saito Mokichi, the greatest poet of the first half of the twentieth century and Akahiko's faithful associate, many years later pointed out contently:

It seems to me a rather important achievement that, though in form his songs reveal a similarity with *uta* from the *Manyōshū*, in fact, they are fundamentally different from both the *Manyōshū* and the work of the Edo poets focused on the same literary monument. [152, 38]

At the same time, following Shiki's precepts (which especially recommended to present in the poems the signs of modern technological civilization), Shimagi Akahiko with varying degrees of success turns to new topics, trying to adapt them to traditional poetry. In his cycle "A Railway Station in The Mountains," he presents a picture of a village in the mountains, where the railway line has already been built, breaking the eternal quietude:

tamatami ni	<i>Once in a while</i>
kisha todomareba	<i>a train would arrive —</i>
fuyu sabi no	<i>and then human voices</i>
yama no umaya ni	<i>would sound from the stable</i>
hito no oto su mo	<i>over the sad winter mountains...</i>

Other images of the series are more traditional, but nevertheless, the signs of the time are easy to trace in them:

*Beyond that cabin
with a sign "Butchery"
frozen in a cold radiance
the shape of a grove in the field
in the time of sunset...*

If we take into consideration the fact that before the Meiji Restoration people in Japan would not eat the meat of animals (though they ate chicken), it becomes clear to what extent the morals and tastes in the poet's home town have changed. Shimagi Akahiko, the master of landscape, more often composes in a manner akin to traditional black and white ink painting, *sumi-e*. However, sometimes he brightens his pallet and the picture of nature become similar to Chinese *sumi-e*, which implies colored ink:

*The rain has stopped.
Why is it so chilly this evening?
The fusuma,
the sliding doors made of paper,
are slowly being bleached by the sunset colors...*

In this poem, as well as in many others, the effect of direct contact with reality is created by the interconnection of the basic senses. Thus in this case visual effect is complemented by the sense of touch — a physical sensation of the night chill.

A picturesque detail, as a rule, is an instrument to convey the aesthetic emotions, growing over time and space. Many urban miniatures form the cycle "Tokyo" are structured this way:

*A street in the night.
Drawing its intricate pattern
On the body of a brazier
Upon the grey cold ashes
The white frost is setting...*

In 1913, Shimagi Akahiko visited an exhibition of French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists in Tokyo, where he was greatly impressed by Gauguin's exotic works. Shortly after this event, he left for one of the southern islands of the Ryukyu archipelago, following the suit of Gauguin, to draw inspiration from the scenes of a tropical paradise. Then Modest and unassuming style of his previous poems seemed to him at the moment too tasteless. Actually, after staying on the island of Hachijo, where an aboriginal woman had given her love to him, Akahiko's poetry acquired some completely novel expressive tones and bright unusual imagery, presented in an uneven nervous rhythm:

*Here it is:
a field of millet, stems of straw.
a split trunk
of a lonely birch tree
and a woman — like a wild beast...*

In an essay of that period, Akahiko, referring to the oldest literary monuments of the Nara period, publicly declared that the Japanese were initially sensual and licentious by nature, but the following centuries of civilization overwhelmed with Buddhist and Confucian moral dogmas suppressed the fire of passion raging in the hearts of the Yamato race. "Is it high time to paint the poems by black and red blood flowing in my veins!" he exclaims [88, 230]. Giving a new interpretation to the *shasei* concept, Akahiko admitted that poetic imagination in touch with the object produces an immediate feeling that spills out onto the paper in the form of *tanka*.

However, this passionate impulse soon came to an end and the poet returned to the contemplative, mostly landscape-oriented poetry with a strong expressive color, but already without the intensity of youthful emotions. Shimagi Akahiko's second poetic collection *Sparks from the Flint* (*Sekka*, 1916) contains both the typical "pictures of nature" and philosophical sketches with a noticeable touch of self-irony so typical of many authors coming from Shiki's school:

*In the evening dusk
I contemplate sadly
this poor flesh
which likes so much to enjoy
a cup of tea in loneliness...*

* * *

*Writing and writing —
cannot stop even in the dusk
to lighten a lamp —
that's how, all alone at home,
I am meeting this summer evening...*

In Akahiko's books of the later period — *Young Fish* (Hio, 1920), *The Eternal Emptiness* (Taikyo — shu, 1924) and the post-humous *Shadows of a Persimmon* (Shiin — shu, 1925) — the magnificent contemplative descriptions in calm tones dominate:

*The melted ice
becomes dark water —
in the cold of the night
the reflection of the crescent moon
splits the ripples of the lake...*

In his poetry he developed Shiki's "reflection of nature" concept, interpreting it in his own way:

For me the *shasei* poetry is not a way to convey through a poem an external image, quite alien to me, but a direct expression of my inner life. The "revealed image of the object" (*jizo*) itself, as well as what is outside it, gives an impulse to the "reflection of nature" ... The inner essence of the image should be transmitted through small details [152, 40].

After several years spent in Tokyo and marked by the frantic activities as the editor-in-chief of the *Araragi* journal, in the

end of his life Akahiko returned to the highlands in Shinano (modern Nagano prefecture) . The decision was prompted by his health condition: a fatal gastroenterological disease was already looming over the poet. His poetry of the last period of life is imbued with the feeling of fusion with nature and with the gloomy premonition of the inevitable end:

Shinano ji wa	<i>Oh when will the spring</i>
itsu haru ni naran	<i>open the road to Shinano?!</i>
yuuzuku ni	<i>The sun has set,</i>
irite shibaraku	<i>but it still lingers on high in the sky,</i>
ki naru sora no iro	<i>that gentle yellow tone...</i>

During his short life Shimagi Akahiko composed thousands of *tanka*, hundreds of *shintaiishi*, dozens of songs for children, and wrote several volumes of commentaries to the *Manyoshu* anthology as well as a great number of articles and reviews. However, in the history of literature he is known as a "fire keeper," who managed to introduce Shiki's concepts to the contemporary readers in the *Ashibi*" journal, proving the validity of the *shasei* principle also by his own poems.

NAGATSUKA TAKASHI

Among the members of the Negishi poetic society founded by Shiki, which was in the beginning a small literary association, Nagatsuka Tahashi (1879–1915) probably can be considered the most devoted supporter of the *shasei* conception. He thoroughly studied the *Manyoshu*, constantly rereading the treatises and essays by Shiki, trying to compose *tanka* poems in the same impartial manner and adjusting them to the ideals of the *shasei* poetics. Takashi intended to become a merchant, but finally his infatuation with poetry prevailed. Having dropped his studies of commerce at the university, he moved from Mito to Tokyo, where he was shortly accepted by Shiki as a disciple. After Shiki's death he participated in

setting up poetic magazines — first *Ashibi* and then *Araragi*. He was impressed by Emil Zola's prose and in 1910 published the Naturalistic novel *Soil* ("Tsuchi"), which became a sensation in the literary world. However, in poetry Takahashi would not share the concepts of the Naturalists, who had won rather solid positions in the *tanka* world. He remained loyal to the realistic *shasei* concept and was not going, as he believed, ever to abandon his principles.

Nevertheless, Nagatsuka Takahashi's poetry (as well as that by Shiki) was far from cool objective realism. Sketches from nature follow side by side in his books with the bursts of spontaneous sentiments conveyed in 31 syllable format. Overflowing emotions often break through the seemingly neutral imagery of the verse. Many of his early *tanka* from the book *The Collection of Tanka by Takahashi (Takashi ka-shu)* and, in particular, the cycle of poems "A Cabin in Negishi," present the descriptions of meetings with Shiki. This is a touching story about his beloved friend and teacher, bedridden with a terminal disease, an inner dialogue with the master and at the same time an attempt to cheer him up — because Shiki could read these poems and give them a critical comment:

*Visiting the dweller of the Bamboo village**

*I came to visit
Master Shiki, a poet
in his hard days —
and he, still bedridden,
is drawing a picture...*

* A dweller of the Bamboo village (Take-no satobito) —
Shiki's other penname.

* * *

*Hey you, sparrows!
Enough chirping on the branch! —
Come over here,
to the glass door
and chirp your tunes for the sick!*

* * *

*You are spread on the bed,
but look out through the glass shoji —
isn't it for you
that the first green grass has appeared,
announcing spring and joy?!*

Takashi's poetry is mostly a heartfelt poetry of nature. Literally following Shiki's percepts, he creates large sequences of poetic sketches, in which by a few strokes images of plants, animals, birds, and insects are intricately depicted. The sketches from the cycle "Sixteen Songs about Flowers" give a general idea of this style:

*At the edge of the paddy,
where the frogs sing
looking out of the water,
the coppice is all white
with the guildler-rose flowers in bloom...*

Many *tanka* poems are inspired by long-distance travels. With inexhaustible love the author draws the pictures of nature, which reflect the familiar routine of everyday life and labor of the farmers. The eternal changes of the seasons bless the simple work of the peasants with a quiet unfading grace:

*On the autumn field
after the beans had been reaped
only harsh weeds
pop up here and there.
Crickets are chirping...*

* * *

*Sheaves of rice
are carried away on the carts.
So sadly it stands
among the naked paddy —
this lonely tea shrub...*

Nagatsuka
Takashi



長塚
節

The *rensaku* cycles became the basis of Takahashi's imagery techniques. He always tries to surpass the effect of a single poem, creating unfolding "poetic suites" in such cycles as "Various Fall and Winter Songs," "Poems on the Dense Fog" or "Poems From a Poetic Diary." The last one is in fact a "hyper-cycle," which contains quite a lot of poetry, and besides, the theme of the journal, as if on its own accord, reverberates again and again in various collections making an effect of correspondence in time.

Presenting the pictures of nature or telling in his "Poetic Diary" about his daily occupations, Takashi often breaks the regulations imposed by *shasei* poetics, giving way to spontaneous emotions:

miyakobe o	<i>Thinking with love</i>
koite omoeba	<i>of my dear capital,</i>
shirakashi no	<i>full of confusion,</i>
ochiba fukitsutsu	<i>I keep on sweeping up vainly</i>
arigatenaku ni	<i>the fallen oak leaves...</i>

Nagatsuka Takahashi left several collections of poetry, including the volume of plaintive lyrical poems *Songs Composed*

during *Illness* (*Byochu zatsuei*, 1912), that he had composed before his death. These *tanka* are especially touching because there are no visible emotions in them. Only the philosophical, aloof attitude of the author to his fading life comes to light in this restraint poetry. Having shared the fate of his friend and mentor, Shiki, the poet died untimely of tuberculosis, but before it he was granted by readers and critics a place of honor among the *tanka* masters of the twentieth century, albeit maybe in the second row.

KOIZUMI CHIKASHI

One of the best masters of *tanka* of the first half of the twentieth century and an ardent supporter of "realism of feeling," Koizumi Chikashi (1886–1927) also belongs to the constellation of poets inspired and led by Masaoka Shiki.

Brought up in the central prefecture of Chiba in the family of a wealthy landowner, Chikashi became interested in classical poetry already during his school years when he first was introduced to the ancient anthologies like the *Manyoshu*, the *Kokinshu* and the *Shinkokinshu*. When at the age of eighteen the young man joined the Negishi group, Shiki, whom he greatly respected, was no longer alive. So he became Ito Sachio's disciple and started receiving from the new head of the school instructions on the art of poetry. Despite the difference in age, the two poets were connected also by friendly ties. Chikashi's first book, *At the River* (*Kawa no hotori*) contained two *tanka* cycles, praising this friendship, "Visiting Master Ito Sachio's Place" and "A Dustless Hut":

*At my friend's house
I am enjoying a bath —
and even the foul smell
coming sometimes from the cowshed
is so pleasant now!..*

* * *

*So many nights
I have been your guest here,
at this humble dwelling —
and tonight again we'll go to sleep after midnight
after drinking much tea together...*

Chikashi's artistic manner is both quite simple-hearted and complex. The rough *shasei*-style sketches go side by side with deeply emotional colorful images, reminding one of Kitahara Hakushu's bright palette:

*Crimson flashes of wild fire
are seen far in the mountains
and the black shadows
of the leaves of bamboo grass
take shape on the shoji paper...*

Like most poets of the Negishi School, Chikashi grouped his major works into cycles according to the principle of a "poetic suite," which certainly enhanced their expressive impact. In these the poet does not limit himself to the traditional poetry of nature, but, following Shiki's precepts, bravely explores the area of modern urbanism. Thus, in his book *The Earth on the House Roof* (*Yajo no tsuchi*), in the cycle "Iron Bridges," he creates the impressive industrial landscapes:

*Not far from the steamer
a huge plant came into sight —
and it seems
as if the smell of iron
flows from the workshops...*

* * *

*High upon the river
an iron bridge appeared in the distance.
Our ship is arriving —
here it is, the haven in the mouth of the river,
the long-awaited metropolitan port...*

Koizumi
Chikashi



小泉
千櫨

Some of these urban poems, however, are still of rather dubious quality, being just rhythmic scraps of sudden ideas that occurred to the author:

*The passers-by are rushing
back and forth along the streets of the capital —
and all these people
are total strangers to me,
they have no notion of Koizumi!..*

The best poems by Koizumi Chkashi, indisputably, are in the vein of traditional landscape poetry, where the poet reaches the true heights due to the skillful application of the *shasei* principle:

*The dew is so pure.
The moonlight comes through the dusk.
So refreshing
is this smell of straw from the field —
and crickets sing in the distance...*

NAKAMURA KENKICHI

Nakamura Kenkichi (1889–1934) also belongs to the generation of Shiki's "grand-son students." Still at high school, he began writing *tanka* in accordance with the principle of "reflection of nature" and at the first opportunity enrolled as an official disciple of Ito Sachio. As a student at the Faculty of Economics of Tokyo Imperial University, Kenkichi would actively publish his works in the *Ashibi* journal and later in *Araragi*. His collection *Potato Flowers* (*Bareisho no hana*, 1913), issued in collaboration with Shimagi Akahiko, the leader of the association, brought him broad recognition. The collective edition by two poets was warmly received by the critics. After that Kenkichi released several more books which firmly established his reputation as one of the leading poets of the *shasei* style.

Nakamura Kenkichi's individual manner is characterized primarily by the search for a non-standard angle from which his photographically exact image would be displayed:

*A moonlit night.
 Along the bamboo stakes of the fence,
 slightly wet from dew
 and reflecting the light briskly,
 my shadow slides along...*

* * *

*Far away,
 over the shoulders of the great Buddha,
 as if for no reason,
 the low mountains are disappearing
 plunging in the darkness of night...*

Most of the poems form a part of the impressive thematic cycles: "Bamboo," "Cold Rocks," "Dim Light in The Night," "Rainy Twilight," and others. Quite original are also some of poet's urban sketches from his later collections:

*The winter storm
howls louder and louder outside the window.
I feel cold even here,
eating my late supper
at the table in a café...*

The last ten years of his life Nakamura spent in the Hiroshima region, where he was teaching at school, combining this major occupation with writing poetry. His country landscapes can be characterized not only by the realistic approach typical of the *shasei* poetry with its attention to small details, but also by a rare ability to structure a complete composition of the picture, to convey the mood of the moment by a few vivid verbal strokes:

*A pasture deep in the mountains
surrounded by a wattle fence.
I am standing at the gate.
Through the thick fog
purple mimosa flowers are peeking out...*

* * *

*The zelkova tree
shades the class with its foliage.
I turn the light on.
Dusk is settling over
the old school building...*

*

Though at the end of the Meiji period and throughout the whole Taisho age the *tanka* poets from Shiki's school who promoted and applied the *shasei* method of objective realism, intensified their activities, their works could not satisfy some readers and critics. Despite the steady truce between the poetry of new forms (*kindaishi*) and innovated *tanka*, as well as *haiku*, some critics continued to insist that the age of *tanka* was now just history and the old genres should be abandoned completely.

Nakamura
Kenkichi



中
村
憲
吉

However, this position of pro-Western extremism characterized by the desire to overthrow the *tanka* values, was not generally typical of the critics in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The more moderate critics and also poets just accepted a requirement of compliance with the spiritual needs of the time, proposing to move away from a dispassionate contemplation and to fill the term “reflection of nature” with a new content, bringing it closer to everyday life, and to expand the imagery horizons of the genre. In a broad-scale debate in the pages of the poetry magazines a variety of ways to innovate and actualize *tanka* was suggested. To achieve maximum authenticity in the description of life and an emotional depth, not losing touch with the roots of the traditions and not indulging in “journalism” — this was the task put forward by the poets of the realistic trend, who would further develop Masaoka Shiki’s ideas. Criticizing the adherents of formalism with their excessive intellectual approach and advocating “realism of feeling,” the poet Ota Mizuho wrote in his article “Reasoning on *Tanka*” (“*Tanka* ritsugen,” 1915):

In the surrounding world a variety of facts keep appearing and disappearing. Among these facts are those which pass

before your eyes and fade without attracting your mind; but there are also those that certainly strike a chord in our hearts. Those, requiring a rational critical approach, later are absorbed by the intellect, but those that appeal to our senses, do not relate any longer to the domain of intellect. We can say that a sentiment, an experience prevailing over the intellect, strives to the very basics of life. And here in *tanka* the flower of the true meaning of an everyday fact manifests itself. The role of *tanka* follows from such an understanding of *tanka*: they become a fundamental manifestation of life itself.

Tanka that do not affect the life basis are not actually real *tanka*. In other words, *tanka* that do not contain deep emotions, are not *tanka*. "[220, 209].

In his quest for "realism of feeling" the author calls for return to the classics, pointing again to those great names that had come from the medieval anthologies to the literature of the new times. However, unlike most of the poets from the Negishi School, he does not appeal to the *Manyōshū* but to Buddhist poets of the Middle Ages: "We must learn from Saigyō and Bashō about the peace of detachment from the world" [80, 210]. And then, speaking of the elegiac nature of Japanese poetry in general, Ota justly connects this characteristic feature with the predominant influence of Buddhist philosophy:

It seems that one of the reasons here is a very strong influence of Buddhism. However, is not there a more serious reason caused by the fact that man is by nature a sad creature? Buddhism has just grasped this sadness, inherent in the human condition, an eternal sorrow, and embodied it in a form of teaching. Probably, moving along the path of knowledge, man gradually began to realize this eternal sorrow and tried to express the initial feature of human nature in his poems, songs, and other forms of literature. [80, 211]

The conclusion that Ota drew in his keynote paper is valid for all times: learning from the classics, the *tanka* poets must create works modern in spirit and deep in concept,

alien both to metaphysical abstraction and vulgar every-day routine. Undoubtedly, this conclusion does not contradict the precepts of Shiki, but, more likely, gives them a fresh interpretation. The fact is that Shiki in the heat of debate with the conservatives, having once rejected the *Kokinshu* and the *Shinkokinshu*, could not take his words back, even though his own poetic works do not correspond with such an extremist position. Along with these classic anthologies he would a priori “throw overboard from the ship of modernity” some renowned authors, including the great poet and philosopher Saigyō — an action that may be compared only to the attempts by the Russian Futurists to “overthrow” the founding father of Russian literature, Pushkin.

Shiki in his treatises, seeking to maintain the image of an emancipated intellectual of a new age, marked by massive infatuation with Christianity, tries to talk as little as possible about religion, in particular, about Buddhism, and that is why he analyzes *haiku* and *tanka* poetry using mainly general aesthetic categories. Probably contemporary standards of literary criticism would not encourage appealing to the traditional religious values. However, Shiki’s own best poetry as well as the works by all the poets of his school certainly reveal the strong influence of Zen Buddhism, which would be openly admired in the East and in the West a few decades later.

Also the attempt to oppose the *Manyōshū* poetics to all other *tanka* traditions in Shiki’s school seems to be too categorical and rather weakly motivated. Although Shiki’s followers in theory would prefer the “masculine” poetics of the *Manyōshū*, in practice they all would borrow the techniques and imagery from the best poets of the Middle Ages. By expanding the sphere of their influence in Japan and winning the hearts of readers, the poets from the *Ashibi* and *Araragi* groups embarked on the path of integration of different concepts and improvement of the form on the basis of the millennium-long *tanka* legacy. That is why they managed to lay the foundations of a new *tanka* classical tradition of the twentieth century.

SAITO MOKICHI

The complete collection of works by Saito Mokichi (1882–1953), released by the Iwanami publishing house contains fifty six large volumes, but in this enormous literary heritage the author's early poems, which have brought him international fame, stand apart and deserve a special appreciation.

Saito Mokichi is often called "the most important *tanka* poet of the twentieth century" [208, 61]. One may not agree with this assumption, but it is impossible to deny the originality of the master's talent and his extraordinary productivity, which remained unabated for decades.

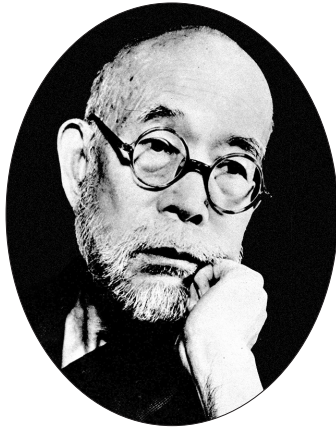
Mokichi was brought up in the family of his adoptive father, a doctor by occupation, who wanted to see the boy as his successor. In 1905 Mokichi entered the Medical Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University. His passion for *tanka*, which started after getting acquainted with Shiki's poems, would not interfere with studying medicine, but it would lead the young man to Ito Sachio, the successor of Masaoka Shiki, who willingly took him as a disciple and introduced the novice to the mysteries of the "reflection of nature." Under Sachio's guidance he wrote many poems for the journals *Ashibi* and *Araragi*, brushing up his professional skill.

Meanwhile, Mokichi graduated from university and became a practicing psychiatrist. He never gave up his practice, working mostly at psychiatric hospitals and at special clinics for mentally-disturbed delinquents at penitentiary institutions. His professional experience later was reflected in poetry:

*A madman
committed suicide yesterday —
over the lid of the coffin
in the cloud of dust upon the road
the intolerably red sun is setting...*

In 1913, the young poet released his debut collection, *Crimson Glow (Shakko)*, which was a sensational success. It strengthened Saito Mokichi's positions in the world of literature, bringing also unfading laurels to the whole poetic community of the *Araragi* magazine.

Saito
Mokichi



齋藤
茂吉

Being by his innate qualities and by profession a man of rational nature, Saito Mokichi still was driven in life by inspiration:

I write *tanka* because I can't help writing. My songs are born out of this powerful inner impulse (Drang). The classics called such an irresistible inner urge *utagokoro* — "a singing heart." The awareness of the necessity of creative activity is a great power. And at the same time it is a sad fact. This is not a pastime activity and not a professional occupation. This deepest incentive is full of the powerful forces of birth and death, which one cannot resist [quot. in 182, 168].

The collection included more than 800 *tanka* poems, written from 1905 to 1913, most of them combined in large series, a dozen poems in each of them. Thus, the cycle "Dying Mother," dedicated to the last months of life of the poet's mother and highly praised by the critics, contains fifty nine *tanka* poems and describes first all the difficulties of the poet's way home, then his sleepless nights at the bedside of the sick, his mother's death, her cremation, and the subsequent days of mourning. In fact, the whole cycle is a detailed elegy — one long poem composed of mosaic images, which are arranged in

a certain chronological order, following a certain psychological sequence:

shi ni chikaki	<i>So close to death,</i>
haha ni soine no	<i>my mother is prostrated on her sickbed —</i>
shinshin to	<i>how vigorously</i>
tooda no kawazu	<i>the voices of the frogs from the distant field</i>
ten ni kikoyuru	<i>sound high in the sky...</i>

* * *

*I am walking across a plain,
walking for so long,
struggling through the bamboo grass —
why should I hurry home
if my old mother is not waiting for me any more?..*

From the point of view of a modern Japanese reader, the style of these poems, as well as in the majority of *tanka* of *Crimson Glow*, is overloaded with classical grammar forms and vocabulary, borrowed directly from the *Manyoshu*, but for the Taisho period reader, more versed in the old texts, the confessional mood of the poems was definitely reinforced by the solemn dignity of the archaic *bungo* style.

As for the author himself, he always kept on asserting the priority of feeling over the form, believing that the poet is free to turn to the archaic, if it appeals to the feelings of a modern reader:

The melody of word in *tanka* is the melody sounding in me, which was for the first time endowed with a meaningful content. And this lexicon does not imply a superficial division into "archaic" and "modern" [quot. in 147, 11].

Then Saito Mokichi presents his requirements for *tanka* poetry: impulsivity, simplicity of expression, penetration into the topic; deep pathos.

These fundamental requirements would not actually change in the future, although Mokichi's views on the "reflection of

nature” evolved over the years and shifted gradually in the direction of cultural nationalism, which became dominant in the prewar period.

A number of poems in the collection represent the concept of the (*shasei*) in the traditional Zen-Buddhist interpretation. The world opens up to the author in the trivial and unimportant things of everyday life:

*My frying pan,
where the dew drops set down in the morning —
distant flowers open
over the autumn mountains and valleys —
as reflected in the water world...*

* * *

neko shita no	<i>Tender pinkish</i>
usura ni akaki	<i>tongue of the cat</i>
tezawar no	<i>touched my hand —</i>
kono kanashisa wo	<i>and for the first time I feel</i>
shirisomenikeri	<i>this sad charm...</i>

Some *tanka* are of rather plain imagery, at first glance, but they might comprise an obvious allusion to the Zen classics:

shiroki hana	<i>White flowers</i>
shiroki kagayaki	<i>shine with their whiteness,</i>
akaki hana	<i>red flowers</i>
akaki hikari wo	<i>now are spreading around</i>
hachiiru tokoro	<i>their red radiance...</i>

The poem refers to the famous image used in his “songs of the Way” (*doka*) by Ikkyu Sojun, a Zen eccentric and renowned poet of the fifteenth century: “A willow is always green (in spring), flowers are always crimson.” The image borrowed from the Chinese Zen classics, asserts the eternity of the ever-reviving fragile transient beauty in the course of inevitable seasonal changes.

As it follows from the above examples, *shasei* in Saito Mokichi's interpretation does not imply a simple sketch from nature, but includes the full range of emotions generated by the experience of a moment. In addition, the image often contains a hidden allusion.

Of course, like other poets dedicated to the tradition of *shasei*, Mokichi in his work manifests not only the spirit of the *Manyōshū* poetics but also the precepts of the *haiku* masters — Basho, Buson, Issa and, finally, Shiki himself, who would advocate the absolute equality and essential unity of *tanka* and *haiku*. Some of the poems from *Crimson Glow* and are actually extended *haiku* in the shell of a *tanka* poem:

warakuzu no	<i>So filthy,</i>
yogorete chireru	<i>all covered with straw dust,</i>
mizunada ni	<i>in the middle of a dry rice paddy</i>
tazemi no kara wa	<i>a field-cicada shell</i>
shiroku narikeri	<i>like a small white spot...</i>

A lot of poems are composed in the form of "an extended *haiku*" of 31 syllable. They record small expressive details of the surrounding nature. Moreover, the allusion to the classical masterpiece sometimes grows into a periphrasis, a direct borrowing of the image:

*I killed him —
the firefly that was twinkling
flying over the road in the dusk —
the green light is gone,
and now my way is so dark...*

Kobayashi Issa's *haiku* immediately comes to mind:

*I killed a mosquito —
and now all the evening long
am sunk in a low mood...*

In the article *Tanka* and the ‘Reflection of Nature’ — an Opinion of one Author” (“*Tanka* to shasei. Ikkagen,” 1920), the poet remarked that for him “a reflection of nature” is not at all related to any specific limitations and requirements: “My interpretation of *shasei* focuses on the author’s opinion, coming from the depths of my soul, and therefore inseparable from my work” [80, 247]. Like other members of the *Araragi* group, Saito suggested an expanded interpretation of the term *shasei*, which should depict reality taking into account the individual artistic style of the artist. He explains his credo in the key article “The Theory of ‘Reflection of Nature’ in *Tanka*” (“*Tanka ni okeru shasei-no setsu*”):

Gazing attentively at the surrounding reality, to depict the universal essence of nature and of your own ego — that is what *shasei* means for *tanka* poetry. This reality, using Western terminology, can be defined by the notion of *Naturgestalt*. As nature we can conceive what was characterized by Rodin with such a force, belittling the importance of human life: “Art is a reflection of the nature in a man.” [80, 249]

Mokichi develops the same concept in his other articles of 1913: “My Idea on Composing *Tanka*” (“*Sakka no taido*”), “The words of the Songs” (“*Uta no kotoba*”), and “*Tanka* as an Exclamation — Thinking about this and Something Else” (“*Sakebi no uta, sore nado ni taisuru kaiso*”).

Penetration into the subject in order to comprehend its mystical inner sense means for Saito Mokichi the “reflection of nature.” His poetry was influenced to some extent by the works of the German philosophers on aesthetics, and, particularly, by the theory of “empathy” put forward by Theodore Lipps (1851 – 1914). The poet mastered German perfectly well having studied for several years in Germany, where he became deeply involved in European art and literature. However, his poetry seems to be not influenced directly by Western literature. Western culture remained for him a kind of background, emphasizing the current processes in contemporary Japanese culture and art.

However, for Saito Mokichi's literary and critical works, as well as for the articles by many of his associates, appealing to the European masters to justify the aesthetic values and norms of purely traditionalist Japanese art was rather important. Continuing further discussion about the "reflection of nature," Saito would not appeal to the Medieval classics nor even to Masaoka Shiki's treatises, but to Rodin's ideas (extremely popular in Japan in the early twentieth century), illustrating his own creative method by borrowing the words of the famous French sculptor:

First I do not draw it (the model), but just look at her. And then my spirit is being saturated, I'm completely permeated by this impression. Mentally, I'm already sketching out the model. The moving lines are still vague. Hundreds of times, over and over again I change the contours ... [80, 258]

In the essay "A Toy Horse's Chatting" ("Jiba mango", 1948), in response to his literary opponents, the poet refers to Western masters, truly believing that only those examples may clarify the nature of his work:

Van Gogh would paint his pictures stroke by stroke. In Goethe's poetry the words were also selected carefully, one at a time. In this respect my own *tanka* poems are structured in the same way. However, some short-sighted people would not like to admit it. Van Gogh's paintings are full of intense inner life. In the same way, I can define my own work in the *tanka* domain ... Overcoming every obstacle in this world full of pain and sad complaints, my life is gradually transformed into words. And at this particular moment a feeling of inexplicable euphoria comes to me ... [24, 210].

Indeed, Saito Mokichi's best poems manifest themselves in a powerful outburst of emotions in the frame of a strict, prism shape that highlights and emphasizes the brilliance of the imagery:

*The sun has set in the snow
 leaving in the sky a stripe
 of crimson glow —
 and repentance fills my sad heart
 with grey gloom...*

* * *

*I watch relentlessly
 the shining magic of snow,
 this silver perspective —
 and don't know what is the reason
 for the sorrow and worry in my heart...*

"I appreciate poems full of force, directly appealing to a person's inner life," admitted Saito Mokichi. "We must primarily evaluate the poem focusing on whether and to what extent the author managed to convey in it his deep impulse for creativity (Drang)" [12, 169].

While among the poems from *Crimson Glow* there are quite a lot of everyday sketches from nature that do not imply a powerful climax of emotions, it is the confessional poems, reflecting deep inner crises, which give the entire collection its piercing note:

*Oh how I hurried along
 to the cages of the zoo,
 leaving all my sorrows —
 to forget just for a while
 my miserable life!*

"To compose poems in *tanka* form and present them for a public reading seems, perhaps, the same act as to show the details of *hara-kiri*," Mokichi once remarked speaking about his muse [182, 166].

After the resounding success of *Crimson Glow*, Saito Mokichi continued to write a lot, remaining together with Shimagi Akahiko, the universally recognized leader of the *Araragi* association, and combining his poetic activity with regular

medical practice. His next collection, *A Roughly Cut Jewel* (*Aratama*, 1922) was a less sensational event than the first one. The *tanka* included in it sound quieter, calmer and are closer to the philosophical manner of Shiki and Ito Sachio.

However, incomparable coloring always distinguishes Saito Mokichi's poetry from the works of other adherents of the "reflection of nature" school. He knows how to find a catchy image, both realistic and full of romantic sensual passion:

*As if embracing
the red setting sun,
they are rocking it gently,
bringing slowly down to the ground —
the branches of an old cedar...*

* * *

aka-aka to	<i>Red in the sunlight,</i>
ippon no michi	<i>the road goes so straight</i>
tooritaru	<i>far away —</i>
tamakiharu waga	<i>that's how I see it,</i>
inochi narikeri	<i>all my coming life...</i>

Melancholic tone with a touch of Zen contemplation is a characteristic feature of most poems of the book:

*The day is over.
The sky is covered with clouds.
A gas street lantern near my house
sheds reddish radiance
on the window of my room...*

In the same soft and peaceful manner Saito Mokichi presents the majority of the poems in his subsequent collections: *A Twinkle*, (Tomoshihi, 1930), *The Winter Clouds*, (*Kan'un*, 1940), *The White Mountains* (*Shiroki yama*, 1947).

All in all, the poet published more than twenty books of poetry, containing more than sixteen thousands *tanka*. At large it is calm, transparent beautiful poetry of nature:

*To the top of mount Hiei,
to the sacred peak I am climbing —
here the swirling clouds
turn into dripping foggy haze,
washing the ashibi flowers...*

In 1923, Saito Mokichi went to Europe, staying there for almost three years. He visited Berlin, Vienna, Munich, and Paris. He became acquainted with the masterpieces of art and architecture and studied the latest achievements of Western medicine. In Munich, he would witness the fascist coup and listen to Hitler's speeches, which greatly impressed him. The apologist of the "reflection of nature" suddenly turned into an ardent admirer of the Nazi ideas, which he tried to apply to the Japanese reality on his return to his homeland. A few years later, when the democratic forces in Japan were totally defeated and had to capitulate under the pressure of rabid militarist propaganda, he was one of the first literati to offer his services to the government and up to the end of the war kept on writing diligently jingoistic poems in the archaic style, inspiring other poets from the *Araragi* group by his example. At the same time he was engaged in a profound research of the *Manyoshu* poetry and in 1940 released a fundamental five-volume study on the works of the greatest classical *Manyoshu* poet Kakinomoto Hitomaro.

At the end of the Pacific War Saito Mokichi had to leave the capital. He was evacuated to a remote village in the north-west of Honshu. His clinic in Tokyo was destroyed by the bombings. The dreams about the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere under the auspices of the Japanese Empire dissipated like smoke.

Like most of the voluntary or involuntary writers-collaborators, having experienced the bitterness of the defeat, after the war Saito Mokichi tried to forget about his ideological mission returning to pure poetry, and he managed to do so. But the years of high aspirations and bitter disappointments were not lost in vain, they enriched Saito Mokichi's creative palette with a new deep vision of the world. In his collections *The White*

Mountain (Hakusan), The Moonlight (Tsukikage) and a number of others the author reassesses his mistakes, recalls the hardships of evacuation, and ponders the fate of his country, all the while remaining faithful to the poetics of the *Manyoshu*:

kuragari no	<i>I am one of those</i>
naka ni ochiiru	<i>who lived in this terrible time,</i>
tsumi fukaki	<i>in this dark century</i>
seiki ni itaru	<i>that plunges deeper and deeper</i>
ware mo hitori zo	<i>into the abyss of sin...</i>

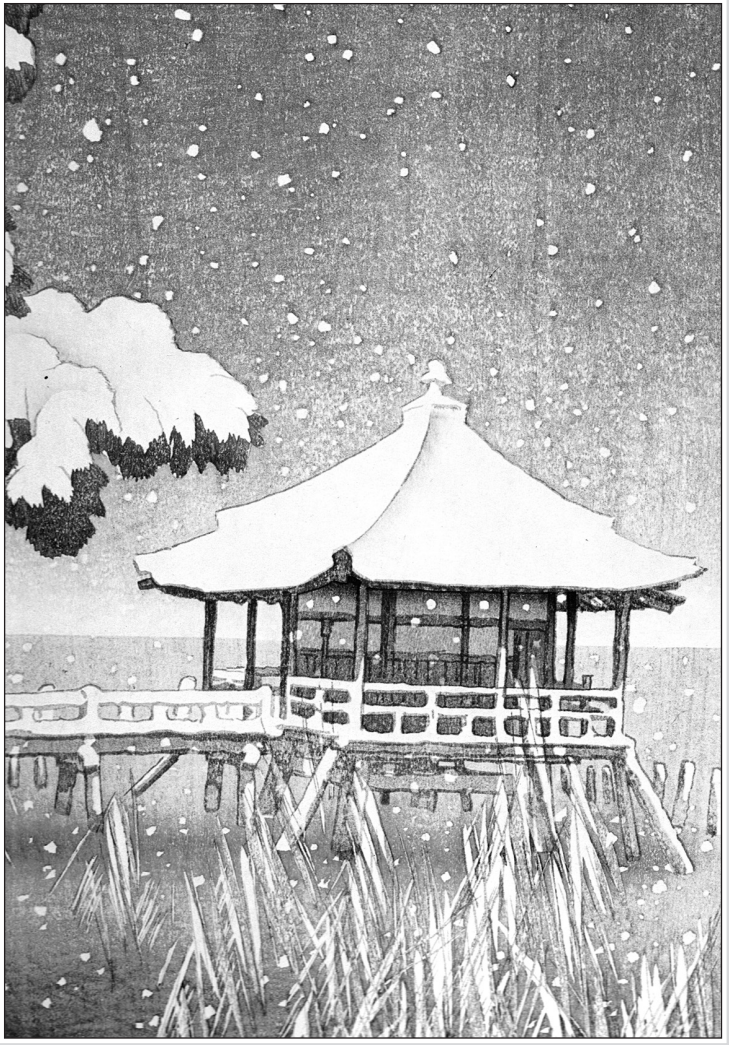
* * *

*Having spent many hard months
so far from the people,
hiding in a remote retreat,
I felt with my body and soul
this burning flame of life...*

* * *

*This fierce wind of destiny
that blows without mercy
pushing me to the edge —
I meet it without regret
and without belated sorrow...*

In the postwar years, Saito Mokichi, still devoted to the principles of the *Araragi* group, would speak resolutely against "everyday routine" that belittles the role of "high poetry," and for the preservation of the foundations of classical poetry with a focus on the classical grammar and vocabulary. Criticizing the advocates of vulgarization of poetry, he sarcastically remarked that modern *tanka* written in the colloquial language "look like the victims of a senseless suicide" [24, 209]. The poet's reputation in the literary circles has remained very high after his death in 1953. Up to present day many of the *tanka* poets of the older generation see their ideal of creative ingenuity in Saito Mokichi's solemn and melodious lines filled with the "masculine spirit" of the classical *Manyoshu* anthology.



IN SEARCH OF THE “SOUL OF JAPAN”

TSUCHIYA BUNMEI

Tsuchiya Bunmei (1890–1990), who began his poetic career as one of the leading poets of the *Araragi* association, lived a too long life in literature to be attached to any school or to any particular trend. He always wanted to be in the vanguard of poetry, but did not want to be bound by any onerous restrictions or regulations. Perhaps that is the reason for the stable success of his poetry, which has always remained young at heart and full of dynamic energy.

Bunmei, born in a remote mountain village in Gunma Prefecture, was early interested in poetry and discovered Masaoka Shiki's poetry during his school years. After moving to Tokyo he came to Ito Sachio, Shiki's successor and an acknowledged leader of the Negishi School, and asked the master to accept him as his disciple. Meeting the request of a shy youngster from the province, Ito Sachio agreed but initially sent him to take care of the cows on his farm. In his spare time, the young man had to study the principles of *waka* composition under the personal guidance of the maitre. In the beginning of his apprenticeship Bunmei went beyond the borders of the guild, composing also *haiku* and *kindaishi*.

The young man revealed remarkable abilities, studied hard, and soon began to publish his poems in the leading metropolitan journals. Ito Sachio introduced him to the circle of Shiki's followers, the advocates of the *shasei* concept, which included Shimagi Akahiko, Saito Mokichi, Nakamura Kenkichi, and Koizumi Tikashi. Alongside with them, Tsuchiya Bunmei was at the forefront of the largest *tanka* association, *Araragi*. He was the youngest in the galaxy of “Shiki's heirs” and among

his friends had a reputation of a poet indulging in pure and spontaneous emotion.

After his mentor's death, Bunmei graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of Tokyo Imperial University. He maintained warm friendly relations with the major writers of his time — Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Kume Masao, Kikuchi Kan — and tried with occasional success to write prose himself. After he had been appointed to the position of school director in Nagano Prefecture, Bunmei spent several years in the province, but then returned to the capital, where he became a professor at the Faculty of Law of Tokyo University. By this time he had just published, albeit pretty late, his debut collection *Grass In Winter* (*Fuyugusa*, 1924), which attracted the attention of the critics due to its transparent images and gentle lyricism.

rindo wa	<i>Gentian flowers</i>
mi o mochinagara	<i>have faded and now</i>
murasaki no	<i>are almost invisible in the grass —</i>
iyo-iyo fukaku	<i>so deep are they hidden,</i>
kusa ni majireri	<i>those tiny purple berries...</i>

* * *

hiyodori no	<i>A bulbul</i>
akaki kono mi o	<i>is pecking</i>
kuishikaba	<i>red berries —</i>
renga no kabe wa	<i>and the brick wall</i>
kotoba nakariki	<i>keeps silence...</i>

His popularity was so established that in 1930 Bunmei temporarily replaced Saito Mokichi as the executive editor of the *Araragi* journal, i.e., he became the supreme arbiter of all the poets writing in the *shasei* vein.

The books published by Tsuchiya Bunmei in the 1930s — *A Valley Between the Mountains* (*Sangoku-shu*, 1935), *June Wind* (*Rokugatsufu*, 1937), *Peace* (*Shoan — shu*, 1938) were marked by a special inner quietude and subtle harmony, which was called by the critics “Bunmei’s melody” (*Bunmei cho*). Basically, this

*Tsuchiya
Bunmei*



土屋文明

poetry of nature, interspersed with the scenes of a family life full of heartwarming peace, is typical of the *Araragi* poets' style:

otooto no	<i>Having fixed the bed</i>
nezama naoshite	<i>for little brother,</i>
taratine wa	<i>mommy is going</i>
hosoki rampu o	<i>to switch off</i>
kesamu to su nari	<i>the kerosene lamp...</i>

During the war, along with many other poets from the *Araragi* group, Bunmei joined the ranks of the "patriotic-minded" writers and devoted all his energy to ideological propaganda at the service of his imperialist fatherland. Now he saw his mission in the revival of the "Japanese spirit" — *Yamato damashii*. In 1939 he went to China in a team of propagandists recruited from the Japanese intellectuals and for several years kept on sending poetic correspondence to the Japanese newspapers. Subsequently, these militant poems would be issued in the form of a book.

At the end of the war his house in Tokyo was destroyed by bombing. Bunmei returned to his native land in Gunma, where

he soon heard the news about the surrender of Japan. Up to the early fifties the poet lived permanently far away from the big cities, experiencing the bitterness of defeat and reassessing the hardships of the bygone years, his controversial life experience. The nature of the mountainous region in the end brings him a cure from emotional trauma. After a long break, Bunmei started publishing new collections of poetry again: *A Spring under the Mountain* (*Yamashitamizu*, 1948) and *The Willful Stream* (*Jiryusen*, 1953) among others. .

aka-aka-ni	<i>Early in the morning</i>
shimo no utaruru	<i>my neighbor a small rabbit</i>
mizugarashi	<i>and me, Tsuchiya, —</i>
tonari no usagi	<i>we eat for breakfast</i>
to Tsuchiya to kuu	<i>just some herbs touched by frost...</i>

* * *

*In a small tea-house
at a mountain pass
I am drinking tea
watching relentlessly
the view of my native land...*

* * *

horobu to mo	<i>My country might have perished</i>
waku mizu kuyoki	<i>but I believe it will revive</i>
kuni o shinji	<i>like splashing fresh spring water.</i>
kaeri ki ni shi “Finally I am back!” —	
to shizuka ni ieri	<i>I said quietly to myself...</i>

Like other leaders of Japanese culture who have taken the defeat in the war as a total crisis in the spiritual values of the nation, Tsuchiya Bunmei would not only compose poetry. In quest of moral support, he turned to the classical heritage, which could revitalize and renew the very foundations of Japanese culture.

itazura ni	<i>So nasty, out of nothing</i>
oi wa kitaramu	<i>old age is coming —</i>
yama idete	<i>and I don't know now</i>
manyo shichu	<i>while coming back from the mountains,</i>
tsuzukemu ka nai ka	<i>I can continue my studies of</i>
	<i>the Manyoshu or not...</i>

In 1961 Bunmei published a twenty-volume research project entitled *Commentary to the Manyoshu (Manyoshu Shite)*, which up to now has remained an unsurpassed model for the study of classical poetry.

Tsuchiya Bunmei's poems, written in a realistic manner, contain the reflections on his life and call for steadfastness and courage at the time of hardships. They were enthusiastically received by the readers. From the sixties to the eighties, in the dark period of modernist expansion, Tsuchiya Bunmei becomes one of the recognized leaders in the *tanka* world and the custodian of the *shasei* style traditions. His poems are an excellent example of adaptation of a powerful classical poetic tradition to the demands of a new age:

toyo kanji	<i>I wrote a poem</i>
shin kana to iu mono de	<i>in accordance with the new rules</i>
kaita tote	<i>of using kanji and kana —</i>
dare ka yomuramu	<i>perhaps still somebody will read it,</i>
uta wa sasayaka	<i>this humble song of mine...</i>

SHAKU CHOKU

The poetry of the famous philologist and ethnographer Origuchi Shinobu, better known in the literary circles under the penname Shaku Choku (1887–1953), presents a fascinating chapter in the *tanka* history of the twentieth century. This page reminds us in a way biographies of the famous philologists and poets of the National School (Kokugaku) of the Edo period, Kamo Mabuchi and Motoori

Norinaga, who devoted their lives to developing national culture, reviving classical monuments, and innovating *waka* poetry.

Origuchi Shinobu was born in Osaka and since his school years showed a great aptitude for literature, assiduously studying classical texts. After graduating from the faculty of literature of Kokugakuin University in Tokyo, he specialized in the classics of the Nara period. His acquaintance with the most prominent ethnographer of the twentieth century, Yanagita Kunio, under whose guidance he worked for some time, inspired Origuchi to take up the comparative study of folklore, life and customs of various provinces of Japan. Most of his life, he would teach national literature at the university, publishing one after another many volumes of his massive research on classical literature and folklore. It included, among other important works, a commented adaptation of the *Manyoshu* anthology for modern readers.

As it was with his distant predecessors, the Kokugaku scholars of the Edo period, *tanka* would be for Shaku Choku "the voice of the heart." He saw in poetry of the land of Yamato a pure essence of the traditions and precepts of the ancestors. First he joined the *Araragi* group, responded eagerly to the appeal to read the *Manyoshu*, and followed the principle of the "reflection of nature," but soon other romantic tendencies would prevail in his work. His numerous ethnographic expeditions aimed at gaining a familiarity with folk customs, legends, and myths, gave to Choku a deep and specific understanding of the foundations of culture, rooted in the fusion with natural environment. In his poetry a keen perception of nature is accompanied by depicting the inner world of man, his heart and soul.

The publication of his first collection of *tanka*, *Between the Sea and the Mountains* (*Umi yama no aida*, 1925), immediately placed the thirty-eight year old poet in the same row with his peers, the leading authors of the age, many of whom had made their debut twenty years earlier. In the numerous subsequent books containing examples of high poetry of

Shaku
Choku



釈
迢
空

nature, he would often try to experiment, writing down *tanka* in the form of quatrains with an irregular number of syllables and introducing punctuation. His *tanka* poems, mostly songs of endless wandering, even today still attract the reader through their magnificent landscape sketches:

kuzu no hana	<i>The ivy flower</i>
fumishitagarete	<i>stumbled upon and crushed,</i>
iro atarashi	<i>has not faded yet —</i>
kono yamamichi o	<i>somebody has just passed through</i>
yukishi hito ari	<i>this mountain path...</i>

* * *

*In the wilderness of mountain woods
I was wandering the unbeaten tracks
and remote ravines,
sharing my secret thoughts
only with one companion — the wind...*

The poet devotes much attention to sketches from nature, which reflect the pictures of everyday rural life, traditional customs and mores:

*Bending over the well,
two girls are arguing loudly —
and deep under the ground
in the darkness of the pitch-black water
their reflections argue silently...*

No wonder, that in the “age of darkness,” marked by the domination of the aggressive ideology of the “Imperial way,” the explorer of the Japanese classics Origuchi Shinobu turned, like most of his fellow writers, into an ardent nationalist, an adept of the doctrine of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and a devoted adherent of the “Japanese spirit” (*yamato damashii*). Influenced by the militaristic propaganda, he would heartily write numerous militant poems:

ikite ware	<i>I saw off</i>
koerazaran to	<i>those soldiers</i>
utaitutsu	<i>that were singing:</i>
hei o okurite	<i>“We won’t come back any more!”.. —</i>
ie ni iritari	<i>and went back home...</i>

In his book of poems *Speaking to the Universe* (*Tenchi ni noberu*, 1942), Choku operated with many poetic slogans, which were eagerly used by the official propaganda for posters, leaflets, and radio broadcasts:

himugashi no	<i>It’s our duty now</i>
tookishi shiso ni	<i>to crash everything</i>
modoku mono	<i>that stands in the way</i>
ima shi danjite	<i>of the history-rooted ideology</i>
utarazaru bekarazu	<i>of the Great East!</i>

After his adopted son was killed in the battle for Iwojima island, the bravura tone of Choku’s poems changes. Now his *tanka* were filled with tragic notes and a premonition of disaster. The surrender of Japan was for Choku, as well as for many people of his milieu, that is for the creators and exponents of the State Shinto cult, not just a military defeat but a total

collapse of his politicized mythology, of all traditional ethical values. His long-standing beliefs, his long-cherished ideology of the "leaves of the grass patriotism" and faithful devotion to the Imperial way — everything was overturned and trampled.

oi no mi no	<i>When my old body</i>
inochi nokorite	<i>is barely alive,</i>
kono kuni no	<i>I witnessed this day —</i>
tataikai makuru	<i>our country</i>
hi o masa ni mitsu	<i>has lost the battle...</i>

It took him several years to realize what had happened. In the late forties of the twentieth century, the academic Origuchi Shinobu returned to his research and the poet Shaku Choku composed *tanka* in which the motives of repentance and despair were combined with the frustration and protest. In his book *Yamato People* (*Yamato Ogun*, 1955), published posthumously, Origuchi Shinobu once more turns to the great nature, to the traditions and customs of his native land in search of solace and peace. His best poems praising the beauty of Japan, as well as his academic research on Japanese culture, have forever remained in the grateful memory of his nation.

AIZU YAICHI

In the world of *tanka* poetry, Aizu Yaichi (1881–1956) occupies an honorable place; first of all as a devout admirer of the classics who composed a large series of poems describing the old capital of Nara, its temples and shrines, which are dear to every Japanese:

arashi fuku	<i>Facing the stormy wind</i>
furuki miyako no	<i>that blows through the old capital,</i>
naka sora no	<i>high in the sky</i>
irihi no kumo no ni	<i>under clouds touched by the sunset</i>
moyuru to kana	<i>a pagoda — as if burning...</i>

Aizu
Yaichi



会
津

八
一

The poet was born and grew up in the port city of Niigata on the Sea of Japan. After school, at the age of nineteen he visited Masaoka Shiki in Tokyo. This meeting made a deep impression on the young man and determined his career. Having become a teacher of English, he would really enjoy *tanka* poetry, especially charmed by a long history of the classical genre and its cultural background. The poet first went to Nara in 1908 and then, while wandering about the central provinces of Japan, he spent a few months in the old capital, studying the old temples and the elaborate masterpieces of ancient sculpture. In the twenties and thirties, he published several volumes of art history research on the temples of Nara and attained a Ph.D. In his old age he became a professor of art history at Waseda University, where he would lecture on his favorite subject.

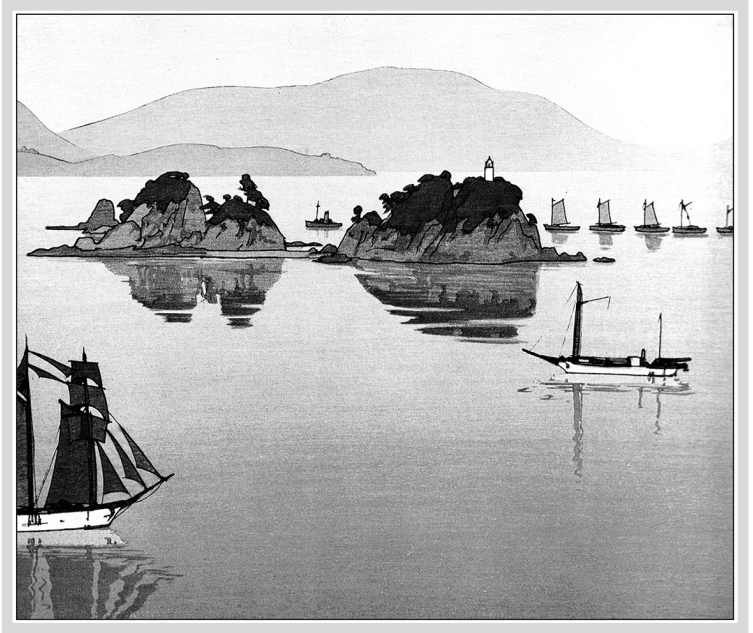
Aizu Yaichi's poems in the beginning were met by the critics without much enthusiasm. His rather late debut collection, *The Songs of the Southern Capital* (*Nankyo shinsho*, 1924), did not attract any attention. The next book he had to publish at his own expense, but also received little recognition. Only the publication of his new book, *The Call of a Deer* (*Rokumei — shu*, 1940), finally brought to the fifty-year old scholar his well-deserved fame in the poetic world. His late, post-war poetry

books have been ranked as the classics and honored with many literary awards. Perhaps this happened because he had changed the trivial theme of his seasonal *tanka* and turned from extravagant "hiragana writing" without *kanji* characters and with spaces between words, typical of all the early books by the poet, to the traditional diction of *tanka* poetry.

Aizu Yaichi's late poetry typically presents landscape sketches in a very special mystical tone, revealing the influence of the medieval aesthetics of *yugen*:

hikari naki,	<i>Inside a small dell</i>
toko yo no nobe no	<i>among the mountains,</i>
hate ni shite	<i>where the sunlight never reaches,</i>
nao ka kiku ramu	<i>Hush ! Now it sounded gently –</i>
yamabato no koe	<i>the voice of a wild pigeon...</i>

A wonderful poet, Aizu Yaichi was also a skilled calligrapher and an original painter working on ceramics. Many of his *tanka* were written with brush on calligraphic scrolls (*jiku*), which are now preserved as precious exhibits at several museums.



ROMANTICISTS, “NATURALISTS,” SYMBOLISTS

YOSHII ISAMU

One of the most prominent figures in the New Poetry Society (Shinshi-sha) founded by Yosano Tekkan was Yoshii Isamu (1886–1960), who challenged together with Akiko and Tekkan the reviled conventions of the old-fashioned Confucian morality. One of the pioneers of modern Japanese bohemia, he successfully managed to reproduce and transplant to the Japanese soil Parisian cafe culture, thoroughly blending it with the Japanese traditional taste for the *ukiyo* aesthetics of the “licensed quarters.” Yoshii Isamu’s poetry is marked by a slightly pretentious deliberate slackness. He did his best to create a model icon of himself as an odious poet “of wine and love,” a frequenter of the taverns and brothels in the famous Gion pleasure quarter in Kyoto:

*Amidst the hustle
of a wild drinking party
I suddenly remembered you —
and sorrow imbued my heart,
bringing loneliness...*

A native *edokko*, born in Tokyo, Yoshii Isamu was deeply interested in literature since his school years and began writing poetry very early. He entered the Faculty of Economics at Waseda University but soon realized that business was not his cup of tea. He gave up his studies and switched to belles-lettres. In 1905 he joined the New Poetry Society, considerably increasing the popularity of the *Myojo* magazine by his bitter-sweet bohemian poems. However, two years later, a serious

Yoshii
Isamu



吉
井
勇

disagreement over some issues of aesthetics and poetics occurred in the New Poetry Society. Yoshii Isamu and Kitahara Hakushu left the Society, which itself soon broke up, resulting in the closure of the *Myojo* journal.

In 1907 Isamu together with Hakushu, Kinoshita Mokutaro, Yosano Tekkan and Hirano Banri, left for a long journey to the island of Kyushu, where the young poets were looking for traces of the Christian culture of the 16th and 17th centuries brought by the Spanish and Portuguese missionaries and later banned and ruthlessly exterminated by the Tokugawa administration. The exotic theme of “Christian heresy” inspired Hakushu to write his famous debut collection of *kindaishi*, *Forbidden Faith (Jashumon)*, and gave Isamu the topic for his *tanka*.

The *Myojo* magazine was replaced by the *Subaru* (Pleiades) journal, which attracted a number of admirers of “art for art’s sake.” After joining the Subaru association, Isamu continued to write poetry full of nostalgic longing, bohemian recklessness, and artistic narcissism. Besides, he tested his brush in drama.

The poet’s first collection, *Drunken Ravings (Sakahogai, 1910)*, confirmed his reputation as a thoughtless Epicurean, a spoiled selfish hedonist. However, the true merits of Isamu’s poetry were not in open opposition to Puritan hypocrisy, but

in an effort to comprehend the "flotating world" (*ukiyo*), so beautifully embodied in the works of the artists and writers of the Edo period, combining it with the discoveries of the French "cursed poets" as well as with the achievements of the French Symbolism in poetry and the Impressionists — in painting.

*In this world of passions
I laugh at the sages —
they just don't know,
neither of sweet and beautiful dreams,
nor of mad dreams come true...*

* * *

*The young men of Tokyo —
only they can still understand
this aftertaste of sadness,
when early in the morning, exhausted and
still half drunk I am walking the empty Ginza streets...*

Isamu's first books containing a complex philosophy of life in many ways reflect the spiritual quest of the Japanese intellectuals of the early twentieth century.

Later, having abandoned the extremes and acquiring a more realistic and wiser worldview, Yoshii Isamu continued to explore the poetics of "the old Japanese city" with its unique exotic features, with the inescapable charm of tea houses, temples and mansions, permeated with the flavor of the past. His collections *Until Yesterday* (*Sakujitsu made*, 1913), *The Songs of Gion* (*Gion kashu*, 1915), *Red Lanterns of Tokyo* (*Tokyo koto-shu*, 1916), and many others gained great popularity. Over the years, like his many contemporaries, the stormy geniuses of the Meiji-Taisho period, Yoshii Isamu delved into reading the classics and was inspired by the poems of the medieval anthologies. His late poetry, full of contemplations on life and death presented in the landscape imagery, have much in common with the melancholic Buddhist poetry of mystic charm (*yugen*) in the *Shinkokinshu*:

*Is it only humans
who feel so forlornly this gloomy evening?
In the moist autumn dusk
so sadly sighs the wind,
so desolate are these clouds in the sky...*

In the twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties of the last century, Yoshii Isamu kept on composing *tanka*, publishing one after another voluminous collections: *Sutra of a Man* (Ningenkyo, 1934), *Winter Journey* (Kanko, 1947), *Last Dreams* (Zanmu, 1948). Most of this is contemplative, slightly sentimental poetry with a distinct nostalgic tone:

*Oh, this piercing sorrow!
I can't help thinking with grief today
of the wretched destiny of those cicadas
waiting for the end
in the winter field on a drooping branch...*

* * *

*Oh this piercing sorrow!
It resonated with pain in my heart,
fading in the distance,
this remote sound of a gun shot —
a pheasant was killed in the mountains...*

Yoshii Isamu's work in the Showa period, as well, remained of course on the level of the best achievements of twentieth century poetry, but it did not actually attract much attention, neither of the readers nor of the critics, merging as one of the many streams into the mighty river of modern *tanka* poetry. Yoshii Isamu, who lived a long life, will forever be remembered by posterity as the poet of *Myojo* and *Subaru*, the classic journals of Meiji — Taisho literature. He shared the destiny of many renowned *tanka* poets of the 20th century (Yosano Tekkan, Yosano Akiko, Toki Aika or Kitahara Hakushu) who for a time became the fashion designers of the season but who were then pushed aside and replaced by new generation.

WAKAYAMA BOKUSUI

The last year of the *Myōjo* magazine, which was fed mostly from the life-giving sources of Romanticism and Symbolism, is marked by the literary debut of one of the most distinguished *tanka* poet of the early twentieth century, Wakayama Shigeru (literary penname Bokusui, 1885–1928). Placed by the Japanese critics (see [72, 449]) as belonging to the school of Naturalism (*shizenshugi*), Bokusui, like other poets of the same trend—Maeda Yugure, Kubota Utsubo, Toki Aika—in fact had very little in common either with European Naturalism introduced and promoted by Emile Zola or with Japanese “Naturalism.” The latter school was represented in prose by crudely realistic novels, including numerous works in the I-novel genre (a boring analog of the European Bildungsroman) and in *kindaishi* verse—by scary, almost repulsive poems of Kawaji Ryuko and Soma Gyofu. With regard to the *tanka* poets of “Naturalist” character, in the vague interpretation of the Japanese critics of the early twentieth century with their rather shaky vocabulary, the term should be taken as a kind of specific reflection of nature—including the nature of things and human nature. This term was attributed to the whole trend (if you can call a trend the work of poets who were not bound at all by common ideological or aesthetical platform), despite the fact that the largest part of the early poems of these poets could be seen as examples of Neo-Romanticism. Probably, in this context it would be more appropriate to translate *shizenshugi* as “Naturism”—by analogy with the circle of the French Naturist poets of the beginning of the twentieth century. In the history of literature Wakayama Bokusui has remained as the author of amazing nature poetry, in which the accuracy of the observations is combined with the spicy and tart flavor of romantic sensuality that imbued his time.

Wakayama Shigeru was born in a god-forsaken village of a remote prefecture of Miyazaki. Since his childhood the boy was interested in books and still in high school he

Wakayama
Bokusui



若山
牧水

began composing *tanka*. Soon his poems would be published in the metropolitan magazine *Shinsei* (*New Voices*). After changing several pennames, he eventually chose the literary name Bokusui, which later became a famous literary brand. When the young poet entered the English faculty of Waseda University, he became acquainted with the masterpieces of Western literature, but saw his vocation in *tanka* poetry. While studying at Waseda from 1904 to 1908, Bokusui joined the circle of the Tokyo bohemians, carousing with them and leading a very frivolous way of life, which can be traced in many of his poems. He was friends with Kitahara Hakushu, Ishikawa Takuboku, Toki Aika, Ota Mizuho, and other young poets, studied the art of *tanka* composition under the guidance of Onoe Saishu, and kept on reading the classics. After graduating from university he worked as a reporter for a while, but the work for a company or a newspaper corporation soon became for him an unbearable bondage. By nature Bokusui until his death remained a melancholic epicurean fond of wine, love, and wanderings, whose revelry was essentially a new interpretation of the old principle of Zen *furyu* existentialism — a philosophy of life, carried away “by the winds and the streams.”

*When I am drunk
I just cannot hate it —
so I love this world of sorrow,
although sometimes even don't know,
if am still alive and where am I...*

* * *

*A lonely seashore.
I light a fire in the evening dusk.
Hey you, sorrows,
you vagabonds of the distant seas,
come on, get together at my bonfire!*

* * *

iku san ka	<i>How many mountains and rivers</i>
koesari yukaba	<i>have I crossed in my wanderings!</i>
wabishisa-no	<i>And today again</i>
hatenamu kuni zo	<i>I travel lonely</i>
kyo mo tabi yuku	<i>through this boundless land...</i>

Bokusui's debut book of poems, *The Voice of the Sea (Umi no koe, 1908)*, put his name on the same list with the names of the Yosano couple and Ishikawa Takuboku. Bokusui's poetic style was considerably influenced by his literary friends and colleagues — Kubota Utsubo, Toki Aika, and also by the Symbolists of the Pan Society (Pan no kai). The romantic pathos, colored in gloomy tones, gives Bokusui's poetry a nostalgic melancholic note and brings to it some elements akin to classic poetry filled with the sad beauty of the surrounding world (*mono no aware*) and the mystic charm of existence (*yugen*):

*What is burning there
under the afternoon sun?
A distant bonfire?
Or maybe in that crimson flame
my bitter youth is burning?..*

* * *

*In the old city district
I am gazing at the rich garment
of the clouds touched by the sunset.
A bell rings in the temple,
announcing that evening has come...*

Bokusui's reputation as a magnificent lyrical poet was considerably strengthened after the publication in 1910 of the books *Singing Alone* (*Hitori utaeru*) and *Separation* (*Betsuri*), which were soon followed by others: *On The Road* (*Rojo*, 1911), *Death or Art?* (*Shi ka geijutsu ka*, 1912), *The Roots* (*Minakami*, 1912). Some critics mention Bokusui's poetry with the epithet "decadent," which is true—but only with reference to his early collections. By the beginning of the twenties, Bokusui's style had already noticeably changed, having been cleansed of histrionic bohemian pessimism à la Rimbaud and acquired a classical clarity. Like other authors of the Meiji—Taisho period, who would begin by rejecting traditional poetry in search of a different way, Bokusui eventually comes to an acceptance of *shasei*—though in a kind of romantic refraction:

*The stormy wind from the mountains
suddenly rushed today
into the marshy valley
where the ivy flowers
are so white under the green foliage...*

* * *

*The sea is still
And birds don't cry any more —
only in the distance
shadows float now and then —
black cormorants on the water...*

In 1925—1927 Bokusui three times traveled around Japan. In his wanderings he reached even the remote island of

Hokkaido and visited Korea. Wakayama Bokusui's *Wild Cherry* (*Yamazakura*, 1924) and more than a dozen other late *tanka* collections are full of travel sketches presented in perfectly polished artistic imagery. His addiction to alcohol destroyed the poet's health and his untimely death caught him in his prime.

Yoshii Isamu commented on the death of his friend and associate with a poem:

I heard that Bokusui
has left our transient world.
Oh, how sad is this autumn
though I am still wandering around
and drinking, and enjoying life!..

Whatever the merits of Bokusui's late poetry might be, it is his early collections of poems that became milestones in the history of Japanese literature — with their nostalgic lyricism of romantic passion, "naturalist" objectivity of the image, and yearning love for "the beautiful and fierce world."

KUBOTA UTSUBO

Kubota Utsubo (1877–1967) began his literary career by joining the New Poetry Society and publishing his *tanka* in the Romanticists' magazine *Myōjo*. However, the critics without any particular reason have placed him together with Wakayama Bokusui and Maeda Yugure in the category of "Naturalists" — probably, motivated by the fact that all those poets had broken away from Romanticism and spoke against the dominant concept of the Yosano's, while adhering in fact to different concepts in their verse.

In the minds of the critics and partly of the poets in the Meiji — Taisho period "Naturalism" was often associated with the introduction of social issues into *tanka* (although Wakayama Bokusui's poems, for example, are free from it).

Kubota
Utsubo



窪田空穂

Even Ishikawa Takuboku wrote about the advent of “Naturalism,” meaning, in the first place, his own poetry of Life School, permeated with the pathos of social protest, but actually alien to Naturalistic aesthetics.

Among Kubota Utsubo’s early works we definitely can find some poems with social content, probably inspired by the ideas of the progressive-minded members of the *Shirakaba* (*Birch tree*) group headed by Mushakoji Saneatsu and by the poems of the Democratic Populist school of *kindaishi* (*minshu shi-ha*):

sono temote	<i>Oh, he knows the sadness</i>
meshi kuu koto-no	<i>of eating food that he had just earned</i>
kanashisa o	<i>with his own hands</i>
shirinitarikeru	<i>working so hard</i>
shonen shokko	<i>this young factory worker...</i>

However, the social topic was only a tribute to the demands of the time—in fact, all the interests of this great master of *tanka* were focused on the realm of pure poetry.

Kubota Sho, known in the history of literature under the penname of Utsubo, was born in a small village in the mountainous region of Shinano (present Nagano prefecture).

The nature of his native land forever fascinated the future poet, who has repeatedly confessed his love for the harsh mountainous paths in his poems. While still a student in a provincial school, he became interested in the Japanese old days, scrutinizing classic anthologies and trying to write poems.

After moving to the capital, at the age of twenty-two Kubota met Tekkan and Akiko, joined the recently founded New Poetry Society (Shinshi-sha), and actively contributed to the *Myojo* journal. In the same year the young poet became a Christian. In the *tanka* milieu, in contrast to the world of poetry in new forms strongly attracted to Western spiritual values, Christianity was not very popular, and thus Kubota Utsubo's converting to the foreign religion can be considered a rare exception.

The influence of the new religion was reflected in the tone of his poems, giving them a "non-Buddhist" sound. After changing several jobs, he eventually became a teacher of Japanese literature at Waseda University and held that position for several decades.

Utsubo's first collection, *The Meadow at Noon* (*Mahiru no*, 1905), included *tanka* and *shintaiishi* written in a romantic style. If his *shintaiishi* were just a feeble attempt to imitate the subtle melody of Kyukin and Ariake, his *tanka*, on the contrary, became evidence of the emergence of a new and original talent. The images were filled with nostalgia, the thoughts were clear and well articulated, the feelings were deep, and the vocabulary was plain and elegant:

kane narashi	<i>If I go again</i>
shinano no kuni o	<i>to the land of Shinano</i>
yuki yukaba	<i>where the bell tolls in the mountains,</i>
arishi nagara no	<i>will I find there my mother</i>
haha miruramu ka	<i>as healthy as before?...</i>

Continuing to compose *tanka* in great numbers, Utsubo published several massive collections: *Muddy River* (*Nigoreru kawa*, 1916), *Near the Spring* (*Izumi — no hotori*, 1919), *Watching*

the Soil (*Tsuchi o nagamete* 1919) and others. At the same time he tried his hand at journalism, published a collection of short stories, launched the literary magazine *People's Literature* (*Kokumin bungaku*), and developed his original theory of verse.

During the Taisho period the most important issue and the focus of literary debates was the problem of enhancing the author's distinctive individual style in poetry. In his article "The Ways to Reveal Subjectivity in Tanka" ("Uta ni okeru shukan no arawashikata," 1918) Kubota Utsubo made an attempt to systematize *tanka* poetry of his time on the basis of the specific characteristics of the poets' artistic style. He divided all *tanka* into four categories. The first one, according to this classification, contains poems, in which a subjective author's worldview manifested itself "in a simple reflection of nature — *shasei*." In those *tanka* poems the subjective origin is expressed primitively. "Generally speaking, *tanka*, composed in such a way, are nothing more than pieces of prose; though they look like *tanka* in a form, actually they are not" [80, 240].

The second category contains poems which reveal individuality at first reading, but this sensation disappears when you read them for the second time. They consist mostly of epigone *tanka* imitating the standard topics from the *Manyoshu* and the *Kokinshu*, while allegedly reflecting the classical aesthetic concepts of the "hidden mystic meaning" (*yugen*) and the "sad charm of being" (*mono no aware*). A large group of the poets belonging to the Sentimentalist trend made the greatest contribution to the second category of *tanka*.

The third category includes *tanka* poems composed by the poets who "adopted a contemplative attitude to nature, making it the basis and the background of their work and looking just for the right material to apply it to their speculative domain" [80, 242].

Finally, the fourth category contains "poems that express real feelings and take their themes from real life" [80, 243]. It is this kind of poetry that is needed in the modern age. However, for the majority of poets it remains an unattainable ideal. An example of the poems of the fourth category, in

Kubota's perspective, might be found in the immortal poetry by Hitomaro (the 8th c.) and Basho (the 17th c.). The appeal to the classics in the end of such a rational literary analysis, calling to reflect the modern times in poetry, perfectly illustrates the trend of reasoning, typical of the *haiku* and *tanka* reformers of the first quarter of the twentieth century: to create new concepts exclusively on the basis of the old ones. Naturally, Kubota considered his own poetry as belonging to the fourth category.

Sure enough, his best poems express the pathos of real feelings in unpretentious touching images:

*Maybe you are standing there now
amidst a meadow in Shinano
touched by the early autumn —
with chamomile flowers all around you,
as it was in the time of our first date...*

* * *

wakiizuru	<i>Splashing fresh water</i>
izumi no mizu no	<i>is rising in a fountain</i>
moriagari	<i>over the spring —</i>
kuzureto sure ya	<i>then goes down</i>
nao moriagaru	<i>and then springs up again...</i>

The quest for the primary force of creation, the source of life, is characteristic of Kubota Utsubo's early poems, giving them a light, rather cheerful tone:

ningen no	<i>Now show me</i>
tikarazuyosa o	<i>all the might given to a man —</i>
me no mae ni	<i>just here, before my eyes,</i>
mitsutsu ki o kire	<i>cut this tree!</i>
ki o kiritaose	<i>Chop it down!</i>

The poet's attitude to nature goes beyond mere sketching or meditative admiration typical of contemplative *shasei* style poetry with its "reflection of nature." A peasant by birth, Utsubo sees in nature not only "a Great Mother," but also an

unbridled element, challenging a farmer and a logger in his daily work. A man is nurtured by the forces of nature, but he also has to conquer them, tame them, put them at his service.

Kubota Utsubo's late poems in such collections as *Winter Copse* (*Fuyu kibara*, 1946) or *Last Year's Snow* (*Kyonen-no yuki*, 1967) tell of a life lived in a calm, thoughtful mode, time and again turning to the reminiscences of the poet's native land. Vivid emotions bring a specific flavor to his lyrical miniatures:

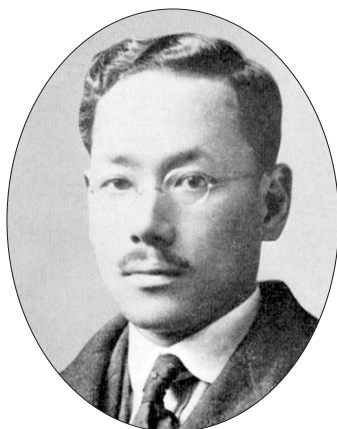
shinanobito	<i>Provoking my nostalgia,</i>
waga kyoosoo ni	<i>arising thoughts,</i>
matsuarite	<i>of the distant folks in Shinano</i>
ooki yuki furu	<i>snow is falling and falling</i>
Tookyo-no sora	<i>covering the sky over Tokyo...</i>

Unlike his brilliant contemporaries Wakayama Bokusui and Maeda Yugure, Kubota Utsubo left a considerable imprint on literature not only with his poems of the early period. His late poetry helped to strengthen the tradition of *tanka* in the second half of the twentieth century, and his thorough study on the *Manyoshu* poetics became a notable contribution to national philology.

MAEDA YUGURE

Considered, like Wakayama Bokusui, to be a poet of "Naturalism" (a trend that never actually existed as such in Japanese poetry), Maeda Hirozo (penname Yugure, 1883–1951) began his literary career, like most of his fellow literati, with romantic poems in the *Myojo* magazine. Since the age of sixteen he had delved into reading the poems by Yosano Tekkan and published his first *tanka* in youth magazines. He grew up a troubled teenager, dropped out from school, and loved with all his heart only poetry. His mental instability later predetermined his endless frustrations, recklessness, and attempts to change radically his life.

Maeda
Yugure



前
田
夕
暮

After moving in 1904 from his native Kanazawa prefecture to Tokyo, the young man started studying at the College of Japanese Language (Kokugo denshujō) and almost simultaneously enrolled in the *tanka* school of Onoe Saishū, who at the time was the editor of the poetry section of the *Shinsei* (*New Voices*) journal. There the young poet found himself in the company of Wakayama Bokusui and Miki Rofu. Little by little he managed to publish his writings in the *Myōjo* magazine. However, just a year later, disillusioned with the romantic ideals and sated with Saishū's formalistic instructions, Yugure withdraws from the school and becomes the head of his own small poetic association "The White Sun" ("Hakujitsu-sha"). He even began to release his own small poetry journal *Higuruma* (*The Solar Disk*), in which he openly criticizes the Romanticists from the *Myōjo* group, but his journal ceased to exist after the second edition.

During the next few years, Maeda Yugure held a few minor positions in the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines and continued to write extensively. The acquaintance with Tayama Katai, Shimazaki Toson, Maeda Akira, and other novelists of Japanese Naturalism had some imprint on his poetic style. When in 1908 almost simultaneously with

Bokusui's debut collection *Separation* Maeda Yugure's first book *The Harvest* (*Shukaku*) was released, critics began to talk about the emergence of the "poetry of Naturalism." It is hard to agree with this definition today, but Maeda Yugure clearly would stand apart from the mainstream in the *tanka* world following his own way.

*I am lighting a match —
it will be the only solace
for the lonely soul
encountering this autumn evening
and disappearing desolately into the darkness...*

* * *

*In the summer evening
a cripple with amputated legs
fell prostrated on the bridge —
so frantically it is burning,
the last stripe of sunset in the sky...*

* * *

*Loneliness
Is always chasing me secretly.
Leaving my home,
I walk down the streets and lanes
in the dim light of gas lanterns...*

Perhaps these colorful poems gave reason for the critics to speak of "Naturalism" in connection with Yugure, but the expressiveness of such *tanka* hardly corresponds with the theories of Naturalism in Europe or Japan.

In 1911, Maeda Yugure became the head of the magazine *Shika* (*Poetry*) and for a few years in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century together with Bokusui remained in the focus of attention of the literary elite. He was on close terms with the poets of Japanese Sensualism Hagiwara Sakutarō, Muroo Saisei, and Yamamura Bocho, whose *kindaishi*

had also some influence on his poetry. Elements of negativistic skepticism are evident in the poet's second collection *The Shadows* (Inkei, 1912).

Gradually Yugure, while preserving the elements of "Naturalism" in his work and turning from time to time to subjects not quite "eloquent," tried to join the most popular trend in art — modernism. His collection *One of the Days of My Life* (*Ikuru hi ni*, 1914) and the poems of the following few years reveal the remarkable influence of modernist aesthetics.

A PENITENTIARY AMIDST THE FIELDS

*These convicts
walk around and around
rotating the wheel —
I recalled the painting by Van Gogh
"The Walk of the Inmates"...*

* * *

*Through the darkness
the sound flies piercing the heart of night —
a cold clanging
of metal against metal —
a clock strikes in the distance...*

In 1917 Yugure became close with the modernist artists Takehisa Muni (Yumeji), Sakamoto Shigejiro, and Hasegawa Riko. Their paintings became an incentive for the poet's new collection, *Deep in the Woods* (*Shinrin*, 1917), where the impressionist sketches in light tones come together with the gloomy pictures of his father's funeral.

*So coldly it glimmers
upon Fuji under the moon —
the snow on the peak.
In the sky over the mountain
lingers a light shroud of clouds...*

* * *

*The night of the full moon.
The baby is sleeping in his cradle —
so innocent.
I look at him and feel how grace
is pouring into my heart...*

* * *

Lamenting my father

*The coachman's whip
hits the horse on the back
again and again —
such a redundant out-of-place sound
on the last way to the graveyard...*

In 1919, Maeda Yugure suddenly plunged into depression, gave up literature, and for a few years went to a mountain village as if intending to break forever with civilization. Nature brought him back to life. In the early twenties, Yugure descended from the mountains and resumed his literary career. Together with Kitahara Hakushu, Koizumi Chikashi, Kinoshita Toshiharu, and Toki Aika, he now joined the editorial board of the modernist journal *Nikko* (*Sunshine*). The end of the twenties became the new frontier in the poet's work, who, once again tired from the routine restrictions (this time of his own making), decided to turn to composing *tanka* in the colloquial language with free rhythmic patterns. The impetus for this decision was a non-trivial experience—his first air flight, which had extremely encouraged Yugure, further enhancing his propensity to modernity and his disgust for tradition. Experimenting with the lexicon and rhythm, he composed thousands of verse miniatures of uncertain form and abstract content, continuing to call them *tanka*, though they did not match *tanka* poetry by any parameters.

watakushi wa tachimachi fubuki to nari
seppen to nari hyohyo to shite
hyutte no mado akari ni muragaru

*Suddenly I am turning into a blizzard,
a flow of snowflakes that rush rustling and whistling
to the light in the window of the cabin...*

This kind of poetry, absolutely alien to the tradition of Japanese *waka*, is clearly close to the "short poems" (*tanshi*), which the modernists were promoting in *kindaishi* poetry at about the same period.

In the 1930s, Maeda Yugure, yielding to the temptation and fascinated by the ideals of the Great Japanese Empire, actively cooperated with the militarist authorities and wrote political *tanka* "on special occasions." Among those writings we can find very specific complicated *tanka* praising the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact or the pact establishing the axis Rome-Berlin-Tokyo, justifying the aggression in China and asserting the priority of the Yamato race. Since Modernism in the "age of darkness" was considered by the authorities as a malicious product of Western culture, Yugure for some time moved away from his experiments and returned to the pompous pseudo-classical style and archaic lexicon.

In the postwar years, Maeda Yugure again made a U-turn: he gave up the pretentious pseudo-classicism of the war years and buried all his writings in praise of the Emperor or his divine army, only to take up again poetry of the modern type — short rhythmical expressive poetic sketches, frequently including elements of classical grammar and vocabulary. Reading these poems can probably give pleasure to a sophisticated connoisseur of traditionalist verse, but it looks as if the author was writing more for himself than for the audience.

Judging by the number of stanzas deemed by the author to be *tanka*, Maeda Yugure was far ahead of even the most prolific of his contemporaries and predecessors. His record was more than forty thousand poems! If the history of literature was written on the basis of quantitative criteria, he definitely could be called a top-ranking poet of the twentieth century, but since the criteria are somewhat different, the place of Yugure's poetry is not so easy to determine. In any case, his early poetry,

with its powerful expression, overflowing inner energy, and an amazing sense of the word, is valued much higher today than the countless experimental writings of the later collections.

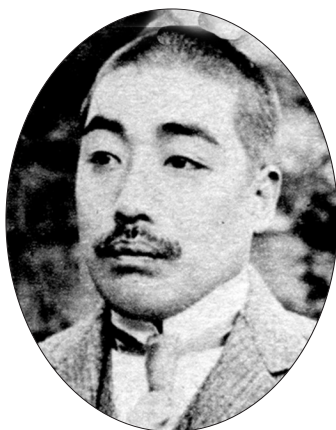
KITAHARA HAKUSHU

Despite the love of the Japanese writers, especially, the traditionalists, for corporatism, not all the *tanka* poets of modern times can be formally connected to a particular school. Although the Japanese critics believe that such a “formal registration” is absolutely necessary and try to define for each author a place among the poets of the same style, some individuals stubbornly break out of their pigeon holes and cannot be classified in a simple way. One such headstrong writer was Kitahara Ryukichi (penname Hakushu, 1885–1942), who at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century shocked the Tokyo intellectual elite with his collection of exotic poems in new forms, *Forbidden Faith (Jashumon)*. Not having stopped with experimentation at that point, Hakushu with the same enthusiasm turned to *tanka* poetry, which revealed other aspects of his literary talent, but at the same time manifested the familiar specific features of his artistic personality as a poet: a decadent delight in beauty touched with a painful wretchedness; a passion for catchy, challenging symbols and hyper-expressive exotic imagery; admiration for the object turning into self-admiration, savoring the melody of the verse.

“A desire to write poetry of new forms and to compose *tanka* inside me existed simultaneously,” he recalled [131, 24].

As well as in *kindaishi*, Hakushu actually had no direct followers as far as his *tanka* was concerned — his artistic style, at least revealed in his early collections, has never been imitated by any of the *tanka* poets. Though he later wrote thousands of poems in various genres, composed in different manner, filled with the traditional worldview and the quiet harmony of detachment, and besides also hundreds of simple-minded

Kitahara
Hakushu



北原
白秋

children's songs, it was mostly his early collections that placed the poet on a pedestal in the pantheon of Japanese literature.

Hakushu's way to poetry of the traditional genres was thorny. Whereas in *kindaishi* at the time there was a relative freedom of choice and any innovation would meet a friendly response from readers, to break with innovations into the regulated world of *tanka* poetry was much more difficult. After publishing at the age of seventeen his debut *tanka* poems in the *Bunko* (*Library*) journal, young Hakushu, who was writing at that time under the name of Sashui, faced the harsh rebuke of a veteran critic and had to move away from composing *tanka* for a while. His return to the roots was due to an acquaintance with the constellation of great talents and the leading *waka* masters—Yosano Tekkan and Yosano Akiko, Wakayama Bokusui, Ishikawa Takuboku, and Toki Aika.

Contributing *kindaishi* and *tanka* to the *Myojo* magazine, Hakushu became close with the Yosanos and their circle. In the beginning he willingly accepted the Romanticist concept of art. In 1906 he joined the New Poetry Society ("Shinshi-sha"), headed by Tekkan. However, his infatuation was short-lived: the aesthetics of Romanticism, projected mostly into the past, could not meet the young poet's demands. In 1908, having

given up the “New Poetry Society,” he started attending poetry sessions at Mori Ogai’s house, where he became closely acquainted with Ito Sachio, Shimagi Akahiko, Saito Mokichi, and other masters of Shiki’s school, who advocated the “reflection of nature” method. However, their views and *shasei* theory at large were unacceptable for Hakushu with his lust for exotic topics and expressive imagery. He needed something radically new, unprecedented, unique, and soon found a desirable novelty in the bohemian “Pan Society” (“Pan no kai”), where poets and artists of all trends would get together.

When, in 1909, with the active support of Mori Ogai, a new literary magazine, *Subaru (Pleiades)*, was launched, Hakushu hastened to join the editorial board and shortly became the head of the poetry department. His best poems from *The Forbidden Faith (Jashumon)*, published the same year) saw light on the pages of *Subaru*. In the world of *kindaishi* poetry he was immediately acknowledged as a great bard of Japanese Symbolism. In *Subaru* the poet also published his *tanka*, composed in an intricate, immaculately decadent style, relishing the exciting novelty of recently acquired trivia from the sphere of European domestic comfort, foreign customs and strange artifacts. In a way it was a conscientious response to the *Japonisme* trend in the European art and poetry of the time.

Trying to define his attitude to the classical genre of *tanka*, the poet in the essay “My View on Breaking the Melodic Rhythm” (“Hacho shaken,” 1910) wrote in the flamboyant manner so typical of him:

This is the quintessential feeling of the bygone period’s pathetic worldview. Though they are old, we should not discard them. The beautiful, perfect form was given a unique melancholic glamour by sad memories of so many diverse people of the East that have been imprinted in it over the past two millennia. On its surface, a dim radiance is swaying and exuding the vague aroma of the almond drink, we hear the rhythm of a simple *Lied* [“song” in German], that is being performed on a lute or on a classical Japanese flute. Doesn’t it breathe with nostalgia? As young Rossetti expressed his

joy in "The House of Life," using the old form of a sonnet, so did I — letting all my feelings vibrate in some amazing, unprecedented symphonic sound, I do not see any obstacles preventing me from picking up happily a one string lute and touching it with these sad fingertips ... [84, 204].

In the preface to his first *tanka* collection *Paulownia Flowers* (*Kiri-no hana*, 1913), Hakushu, repeating the previous considerations to a large extent, colorfully describes the spiritual quest of his generation:

The young people's hearts eternally seek the more complicated and infinite in its incomplete music. They appeal to Degas, to Manet, to Gauguin, to Andreev, they are attracted by the feelings and form of Strauss, Baudelaire, Rodenbach [24, 198].

What place in this extensive system of values is assigned to *tanka*? Hakushu again responds with a diffuse allegory:

When I get tired from the pleasure bestowed by strong, bright colors, by the density of tones, the color of a small emerald filled with the flavor of the classics seems to sift through my fingers the obscure sad echoes that sound in my soul. It tastes like a glass of champagne when you take a sip during your illness.

An old small emerald — it has to be stored in a crystal casket behind the bottles of the European drinks and the glass boxes with hashish. The classical one-string lute has to be placed in a blue-grey shadow next to the French piano in order to be admired in a calm and peaceful atmosphere. This is the way I see *tanka*.

And I love them truly!

If my poems in the new style can be compared to the oil paintings by the Impressionists, my *tanka* remind me of the spots of turpentine vaguely showing through on the back side of the canvas. These sad wet spots are the green of a small emerald in my soul, a thin and pure crying voice of a one-string lute. [24, 198]

Contrary to this declaration of devotion to the classics, Hakushu more likely aspired to an intentional novelty of imagery, which he just places in the old frames to amplify the effect. From strange impressions and associations comes mesmerizing outlandish poetry of exoticism:

*Now a flute sounded —
and again the view of Paris
comes into sight —
in the dark skies of the spring night
the moon shines brightly...*

* * *

*Somewhere deep in my heart
this sad word "London"
appears sometimes.
What can I say? The flowers are crimson,
life is so short...*

* * *

*Spreading in my mouth,
this taste of well blended whiskey
triggers sorrow —
there in the glittering dusk
the spring is departing...*

The poet, definitely, is trying to achieve a nostalgic tone in *tanka*, but his nostalgia refers rather not to the past, not to the works of Japanese classics, but to the domain of tempting and highly admired Western culture — the culture, already accepted and worshipped, but not comprehended to the end. The sad lines about Paris and London (cities which the author had not yet seen), placed into the context of stylized classical *waka*, create the counterpoint effect, to which the author is striving quite obviously and consistently. The subject of admiration for him is all that is somehow related to the “beautiful life” in the European style: clothes, food, utensils,

drinks, vessels, vases, musical instruments, the music itself, poetry, painting, dancing, European flowers, non- Japanese animals and birds . The shape, color, sound, taste — all the senses are involved in the creation of waving overtones designed to bring to life a unique impressionistic image. Traditional Japanese aesthetic values, although not discarded, recede into the background, giving way to something else, something irresistibly wonderful:

*This blue liqueur
I poured in the crystal carafe from the bottle
before going to bed —
and now, sleepy, enjoy
the play of the moon shade on the glass...*

The poems collected in *Paulownia Flowers*, many of which before the release of the book had been recited at the parties of the hedonistic "Pan Society," could not better reflect the mood of Tokyo bohemia in the transitional period, so well characterized by Noda Utaro in his research:

Tokyo, this swirling vortex of time, was painted for them in two colors — the culture of the West and the culture inherited from old Edo, where the former permanently would give impetus for the development of the latter. However, the Edo culture for them was also quite exotic, "alien" and the difference between Western culture and Edo culture was seen as the difference between the new alien culture and the old one.[132, 96]

The bygone Edo exotic culture of the "floating world" *ukiyo* is savored in the early poems by Takamura Kotaro or Kinoshita Mokutaro, while Hakushu's poems introduce the exotic colors and flavors of overseas countries.

The poet in his "occidental" images, as well as in his critical essays, recreates in the reverse projection, exactly "upside down," the fashion for Japanese exotics, popular in the West at

the same time, which had given rise to the so-called Japonism in European art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many poems in *Paulownia Flowers* can be perceived as a mirror reflection of the stylized “haiku” on the pages of the French magazines or “tanka” in the free interpretation of Russian Symbolists Bryusov and Balmont or the poems by the French Imagists in the *Japonisme* vein. This phenomenon of the “mirror reflection” has never been mentioned neither by Western researchers nor by the Japanese critics, who tend to analyze the literary process of the Meiji — Taisho period in Japan exclusively from the angle of a unilateral perception of the Western cultural impact.

Meanwhile, European poets and artists were trying to find in Japanese art approximately the same novel values that the Japanese fans of Western culture were looking for — a new perception of Beauty. Fascinated by Japan, Van Gogh wrote in a letter to his brother Leo:

Studying the art of the Japanese, we always feel in their works a wise philosopher, a sage, who spends time — but on what? Is it measuring the distance between the Earth and the Moon? Is it analyzing Bismarck’s policy? No, just on contemplating a blade of grass. [251, 406]

However, Van Gogh himself, not too much delving into Japanese philosophy, would admire above all the exotic form, the unique techniques, the plane perspective, color and light. He diligently copied Hiroshige’s woodblock prints only to understand better the ways of a Japanese master.

After an album of Hokusai’s prints in 1855 reached Paris for the first time, Japan more than for half a century has dominated the imagination of artists, who would see in the distant East Asian Empire the same advantages that their Japanese counterparts desired so much to find in Europe — an inexhaustible source of other, dissimilar traditions, bestowing inspiration, evoking a flight of fancy. Monet and Manet, Degas, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec — all were deeply

interested in the *ukiyo-e* prints by the Japanese masters. Whereas the Japanese were also attracted by countless technological achievements and domestic appliances of Western civilization, for the Europeans the most fascinating things were the exotic elements of the traditional culture of the East — kimonos and fans, swords and armor, straw hats and headbands, flower vases, tea ceremony utensils, *ukiyo-e* prints. Subsequently, when through the efforts of the first translators *tanka* and *haiku* texts were presented to the readers, they were received with the same genuine interest and affection, though without much understanding.

Japanese poets approached the Western aesthetics much more seriously and tried to keep posted as to all novelty of literary and artistic life in the West. They would talk knowledgeably about the poetry by D.G. Rossetti and Verlaine, dramas by Ibsen and Maeterlinck, Rodin's sculpture and Cezanne's paintings. Sometimes they would drink expensive French wine and try to get used to the taste of whiskey. However, the gap between the cultures of East and West was at that time too wide, and most Japanese intellectuals acutely felt the ethno-cultural difference, in the first place, on the domestic level. The Japanese dressed in kimono and with bowler hats on, riding on rickshaws and trying to copy Western models in architecture and painting, according to the literati themselves, had not yet reached the level of standards appropriate to the abundant Western cultural heritage. The merits of traditional Japanese culture were appreciated too — however, they were appraised on the basis of other, considerably belittled and devalued standards. Henceforth arose a kind of national inferiority complex, mixed with melancholic "nostalgia for the West" in the works by such renowned poets as Takamura Kotaro, Kinoshita Mokutaro, and Kitahara Hakushu.

In his *tanka*, Hakushu creates a kaleidoscope of characteristic "occidental" images which make up a mosaic picture of the artist's life, nearly completely absorbed by Western Modernism, filled with the charm of novelty:

*In the spring waltz
you are dancing around so frantically,
swept up by this mad melody —
overwhelmed with gloomy melancholy,
turning and turning recklessly...*

* * *

*Oh this snowy night
And this flowing aroma of chocolate!
I am waiting for you —
And in front of me a samovar
Is boiling and gurgling...*

Meanwhile, chocolate and a samovar, as well as the liqueur in the carafe, whiskey, and other exotic European phenomena, were of course just a pose, a tribute to artistic fetishism — like the Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints in Emile Zola's study. Hakushu's hedonistic lifestyle demanded a relevant framing of his poetic style which obscured the true nature of a thoughtful, refined artist by an artificially created image of a bohemian sybarite with a vulnerable heart and slightly twisted imagination:

*The dim purple glitter of sunset
touched the drooping branches of the willow.
lonely and gloomy
a passerby saunters
in the evening dusk...*

In fact, the poems about the “wonderful life in the West” do not dominate *Paulownia Flowers*. They coexist in the collection with beautiful examples of landscape poetry, which convincingly manifest the master's unique talent:

*At the sunset
the roof of the five-storied pagoda
is gleaming crimson —
but on one side its wall
dropped a black shadow on the earth...*

* * *

*The onion shoots in a row —
and on each shoot
a dragonfly is perched
glistening gently in the sunset
in the ominous reddish dusk...*

Up until the last line this last poem is written in accordance with *shasei* poetics, but in the end there is an unexpected chord introducing into *tanka* a note of anxious expectation. It was this effect that Hakushu tried to achieve, writing about the need to evoke a feeling of mystical awe coming from the unknown, and about the introduction of the "mysterious" (new *yugen*) in a poem.

The collection contains also some heartfelt psychological sketches, which are comparable in depth to the elegiac poetry of Masaoka Shiki of his later period:

inaka ya ni	<i>This spring evening dusk</i>
naka kaze yami no	<i>when my uncle, having caught cold,</i>
waga oji ga	<i>from his sickbed</i>
akaki hana miru	<i>watches red flowers</i>
haru no yuugure	<i>near his house in the countryside...</i>

No wonder that some time later Hakushu decided to take off his mask of a westernized playboy and returned to the eternal values of national culture. This transformation was mostly due to the severe stress caused by his arrest and imprisonment for adultery in 1912. The transition from chocolate, liquor, and anemones to the rough prose of prison life was so unexpected, so sudden, and so painful that Hakushu for many years could not get rid of the shock. Although he did not stay in the penitentiary too long, this deplorable experience led the convict to write a cycle of dramatic *tanka* poems in the vein of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" by Oscar Wilde:

*I was taken to the walk in the prison yard
 How long will I watch
 the shining of the dawn
 from behind this wall?
 In the yard today as yesterday
 the red flowers show no hope...*

After his release, Hakushu, together with his beloved, whom he eventually married, hiding from rumors and gossip, escaped to a humble retreat in a remote fishing village. There, far from the urban hustle and bustle, he continued to write, focusing mainly on *tanka*. Under the impact of the wonderful rural environment his style changed drastically, approaching the standards of classical purity. As the poet wrote in the preface to his new *tanka* collection *Mica* (*Kirara — shu*, 1915), “the pale lilac flowers of paulownia and the milky yellow of a sponge cake in a dream turned into the dream of an immemorial season in some overseas country” [84, 228]. The new style was in fact colorful poetry of nature, which included nice love miniatures, sprinkled here and there. The names of the cycles that constitute the collection speak for themselves: “The Contemplation of Nature,” “Land and Crop Plants”, “Sea Views in the Autumn.” This poetry corresponds with the original “reflection of nature” concept, the doctrine of objective realism suggested by Shiki:

nami tsuzuku	<i>Waves are rolling on and on-</i>
gin-no sazanami	<i>silver ripples spread far away</i>
hate shinaku	<i>knowing no limits.</i>
kagayaku umi wo	<i>All day long I am gazing</i>
hi mo sugara miru	<i>at the glittering sea...</i>

With all respect to the skill and experience of the author, these poems do not sparkle with originality and do not stand out too much in the flow of *tanka* by other poets writing in the *shasei* style.

Over time Hakushu had finally moved away from his flirting with Western exotica, said farewell to the “wonderful

life" à la Renoir, and delved into studying Buddhism. Along with the *kindaishi* poems from his collection *Ink Painting* (*Suibokuga*), the *tanka* from his next large collection, *Sparrow Eggs* (*Suzume-no tamago*, 1921), are marked by melancholic Buddhist contemplation:

susuki no ni	<i>In the field of pampas grass</i>
shiroki kabosoku	<i>a thin trickle of white smoke</i>
tatsu kemuri	<i>rises afar —</i>
aware naredomo	<i>it my sorrow,</i>
kesu yoshi mo nashi	<i>but it is not worth dousing it...</i>

* * *

kari oda ni	<i>On the small rented field</i>
ochiho kaki kaku	<i>a few sparrows</i>
suzume ikutsu	<i>pick up the leftovers of the crops,</i>
ushiro mukeru wa	<i>turning their backsides to me,</i>
shiri o age te sewashi	<i>they keep on pecking grains...</i>

In the preface to the *Sparrow Eggs*, Hakushu explicitly acknowledged the merits of the *shasei* ("reflection of nature") principle and the achievements of the *Araragi* poets, but suggested his own, deeper interpretation of the term:

The absoluteness of true art, emanating from such a reflection of nature, is a kind of symbolism even higher, deeper, more delicate in imagery; it evokes the divine and sets in motion all strings of the soul. [131, 231]

Several times Hakushu seriously was on the brink of giving up *tanka* and completely devoting himself to *gendaishi* poetry or switching to some other forms of literary activity like criticism and research. Back in 1919 in his article "A Farewell Word" ("Wakare no kotoba"), he wrote:

One more reason why I should part with you, my friends, is my doubts about *tanka*. Right, I want to choose a different path in literature. The *tanka* genre is as old as the world.

Well, this form is also out of date. Those who praise *tanka* only for the fact that it is “*tanka*” are truly old-fashioned ...
[131, 219]

The parting never occurred, however, and in his late years Hakushu would continue to compose hundreds and thousands of good reflective *tanka* alongside numerous colorless or pretentious patriotic *gendaishi* poems, stylized songs in the folk *kouta* vein, and songs for children. In the *Tama (Jewel)* journal, founded in 1938, he put forward the old concept of “mysterious meaning” (*yugen*) as the basis for modern poetry.

In the end, no traces remained of the former playboy, the advocate of Western culture, or the Tokyo bohemian reveler. A progressive cataract, which led to almost complete loss of sight, became a terrible curse for the aging poet, depriving him of his favorite pastime — reading. The horror caused by the realization of approaching blindness colors his poetry of the late 1930s in dark shades. This tragic poetry to a great extent reminds us of the deathbed *tanka* cycle “Through the Glass Door” by Masaoka Shiki:

teru tsuki no	<i>The light of the shining moon</i>
hie sadaku naru	<i>seems so cold to me —</i>
akarido ni	<i>through a transparent door</i>
me wa korashitsutsu	<i>in vain I am staring in the dusk</i>
shiite yuku nari	<i>not able to see any more...</i>

In 1937 Hakushu released a new collection of *tanka*, *The Black Cedar (Kurohi)*, in which the tragic voice of the poet condemned to blindness sounds already from the deep darkness:

kesa miete	<i>Can it be true</i>
oku shimo sae	<i>that I don't see any more</i>
waga me ni wa	<i>even the morning frost?!</i>
yachita mo aze mo	<i>The fields and the boundaries between</i>
	<i>them —</i>
kumakuromi ari	<i>all are hidden by black haze...</i>

One thousand two hundred *tanka* and *choka*, composed by the poet in the last years of his life, due to the efforts of his friends were published after the war in his posthumous book, *The Edge of the Sea* (Umasaka, 1949).

Kitahara Hakushu like a meteor had burst into literature and left a glittering trace in the sky of the Meiji — Taisho period, but his late works show more likely the inertia of motion. The contemplative poetry of nature in the interpretation of the former innovator did not fascinate the reader. His voice was lost in the chorus of other *tanka* poets. Though his late *tanka*, as well as his *gendaishi*, had obvious merits and were subsequently included in all classic literary anthologies of the twentieth century, they can be regarded more as a tribute to the distinguished poet and as an impressive background, just amplifying the glory of his sensational early books. Like many poets of the new age, Kitahara Hakushu actually was included in the Pantheon of Japanese classics primarily as the author of one brief time-slot created by Japanese literary historians: the "Hakushu — Rofu period" in the Taisho years.



FLOWERS OF THE HEART

SASAKI NOBUTSUNA

One of the pioneers of new *tanka* poetry, Sasaki Nobutsuna (1872–1963) was born into a literary family. His father, Sasaki Hirotsuna, was a distinguished scholar, a philologist of the “National Learning” school (Kokugaku) at the end of the Tokugawa era. Since the age of ten the boy began to study seriously the principles of classical poetry under the guidance of the poet Takasaki Masakaze. At the age of twelve the young prodigy was admitted to the Library department of the Faculty of Japanese classics at University of Tokyo, from which he successfully graduated at sixteen! In such an extraordinary way Nobutsuna started his career in literature to which he remained faithful until his death. At nineteen, together with his father, he compiled a massive two-volume edition entitled *Complete Collection of Research on Japanese Waka* (*Nihon kagaku denjo*), and after his father’s death wrote a huge section on the *Manyoshu* on his own.

In 1902 he published a few serious works on *waka* poetry of the Edo period and essays on genre theory.

Nobutsuna responded to the appeals of Yosano Tekkan and Masaoka Shiki to revive *waka* by founding in 1898 his own poetry magazine, *Kokoro no hana* (*Flowers of the Heart*), which became the journal of the literary “Society of Bamboo and Oak” (“Chikuhaku kai”) he had inherited from his father. It goes without saying that the society and the magazine were focused on compiling *waka* of a new type, but Nobutsuna, unlike Tekkan and Shiki, would avoid extremist statements and considered it necessary to reform *tanka* gradually, carefully treating the fragile structure of the verse without breaking classical harmony.

Sasaki
Nobutsuna



佐
佐
木

信
綱

Nobutsuna, who had a reputation as a great connoisseur of historical poetics, was very quickly gaining popularity among the young poets. Among his numerous disciples there were future acknowledged masters of verse: Kinoshita Rigen, Kawada Jun, Ishigure Chimata, and Kujo Takeko.

In 1903 Nobutsuna published his first *tanka* collection, *The Grass of Meditation (Omoigusa)*, which brought him a certain recognition in the poetry circles. However, his professorial position at the Faculty of National literature at Tokyo University earned him even more fame. At the time, when universities were still a novelty, the professorships were priceless. Sasaki Nobutsuna, a son of the venerable maitre Hirotsuna, who lectured on the *Manyōshū* in the context of *waka* history and theory, was justly perceived by his contemporaries as a unique scholar and literary critic, a custodian and interpreter of sacred national traditions. In addition to the study of the classical monuments, Nobutsuna put a lot of effort into the restoration, decoding and attribution of the medieval texts, thereby laying the foundations for textual, archival, and library research — the disciplines that at present in Japan remain at a very high level. Until the end of the Meiji period he released a number of fundamental works in twelve volumes on poetry and poetics:

New Studies on the History of Japanese Waka (Shoku nihon kagaku shi), *The Dispute on Waka Theory (Kagaku ronso)*, and *Research on the History of Waka Poetics (Waka shi no kenkyu)*. Later he was in charge of the translations of the *Manyoshu* into English, German, and Chinese as the chief editor of the project. His works on poetry and poetics, for which he was awarded many honors, earned Sasaki Nobutsuna a big name in the academic community and made him an arbiter in *tanka* poetry, which provided a favorable background for his own poetry and the works of his disciples, who together with their teacher formed the movement of “New Wave” *tanka* (*Shimpa waka*).

After his debut collection and a small sequence of travel poems on China released almost at the same time, Nobutsuna published several more books of poetry and, remaining the editor-in-chief of *Kokoro no hana*, for many decades continued to publish in his journal critical reviews on contemporary poetry. Although his role as a leader of the “new wave” in comparison with the revolutionary contributions by Tekkan and Shiki is less significant, the trend of moderate innovation chosen by Sasaki Nobutsuna was appealing to the hearts of the budding poets. The poems composed in his early years, probably undervalued by the critics, whose attention was focused on the fiery poetry of the *Myojo* magazine, are refined, quite often modern in style, and extremely diverse in topics, varying from soothing tones of moderate realism to passionate pathos of late Romanticism:

Haru no yo no	<i>The spring night</i>
shira-shira ake wo	<i>is giving way to the bright dawn —</i>
funa izuru	<i>as boats are departing</i>
minami no Izu no	<i>from the southern coast of Izu</i>
koi midori-no mi	<i>heading to the green high seas...</i>

While this landscape, representing an idyllic picture on the coast of the Izu peninsula, is full of freshness and peace, the following poems are filled with inexplicable anxiety and mystic symbolic exoticism:

hebi tsukau	<i>A young woman,</i>
wakaki onna wa	<i>a snake charmer,</i>
koya idete	<i>coming out of the hut,</i>
kawabara ni otsuru	<i>looks up at the red sun</i>
akaki hi o miru	<i>that is shining over a dry riverbed...</i>

* * *

ama o hitasu	<i>High in the sky,</i>
hono no nami no	<i>just amidst</i>
tada naka ni	<i>the waves of flame</i>
chi no iro naseri	<i>red like blood, it is burning —</i>
kanashiki taiyo	<i>this sad sun...</i>

Even the poems on traditional topics in Sasaki Nobutsuna's presentation show a slightly detached vision of the depicted subject and bear a distinct imprint of the new aesthetics:

yuku aki no	<i>Late in autumn</i>
yamato no kuni no	<i>Yakushi-ji temple</i>
Yakushiji no	<i>in the land of Yamato —</i>
to-no ue naru	<i>a lonely cloud</i>
hitohira no kumo	<i>hanging upon the pagoda...</i>

* * *

kumo shizumu	<i>Under the looming clouds</i>
yuboku no hate ni	<i>at the edge of the pasture</i>
tent-ten to	<i>here and there</i>
hitsuji wa kuroki	<i>sheep come to sight</i>
hoshi no gotoshi mo	<i>like black stars...</i>

During the “period of darkness” marked by the domination of militaristic ideology, Sasaki Nobutsuna, who devoted his life to the study of Japanese classics, although he was not so deeply involved in the propaganda campaign, still was not alien to jingoistic euphoria and wrote a lot of poems inspiring his compatriots for a holy war. As it was with all the writers and poets of the traditionalist trend, infatuated with the doctrine of

the “divine national identity revealed in the true Japanese spirit” (*yamato damashii*), the outcome of the war was a terrible blow for him. Like many others, he was totally frustrated and would be consoled only by Du Fu’s immortal words: “The country has perished — the mountains and the streams remain, the grass on the castle hill will become green again in the spring...”

kuni yaburete	<i>The country perished</i>
yamakawa ari	<i>but mountains and rivers are still there —</i>
konya sayaka naru	<i>and this night</i>
oozora no	<i>I can't stop contemplating</i>
tsuki o aogu ni taezu	<i>the moon high in the clear sky...</i>

In the postwar years, Sasaki Nobutsuna continued his career as a scholar and a poet. His poems were becoming more profound and subtle, always with a touch of sadness that is certainly rooted in traditional *sabi* and *wabi*:

yofuke nitare	<i>Late at night</i>
fude onokite futo	<i>I put my brush aside</i>
kaerimiru	<i>and look around —</i>
kabe ni ari waga	<i>seeing my shadow,</i>
kodokuna kage wa	<i>so lonely on the wall...</i>

For most readers Sasaki Nobutsuna has remained a poet of the distant past. His poetry, however, probably deserves a better appreciation. It sounds quite modern but is perhaps best described as beyond time.

KINOSHITA RIGEN

Kinoshita Toshiharu (penname Rigen, 1886–1925), a graduate from the faculty of philology at Tokyo University, became one of the first disciples and followers of professor Sasaki Nobutsuna, and would strive to innovate *tanka* poetry on the basis of reassessing the classics. Having joined

the "Society of Bamboo and Oak," for several years he did not attract any special attention of the critics, writing *tanka* in a neo-classical style and publishing them in the *Kokoro no hana* journal. A decisive change in Rigen's work came with his acquaintance with Mushakoji Saneatsu, Shiga Naoya, Senke Motomaro, and other writers of the " Birch Tree" ("Shirakaba") group, who were the carriers of the ideals of liberal enlightenment based on democratic slogans and belligerent artistic individualism. Under their influence Rigen tried hand at writing prose, but to no avail. In the *tanka* world he chooses Kubota Utsubo as his beacon. First and foremost, Rigen wanted to find his own individual style, and soon he succeeded. The poet writes in his memoirs:

The collection of poems by Kubota Utsubo, already a member of the "Shirakaba" association, was a revelation for me. I began seeking harmony ... Although I cannot say that until then my platform was stable enough, Kubota Utsubo showed me the way to a free poetic cosmos. Then the time came when I was greatly impressed by Kitahara Hakushu's book *Paulownia Flowers* ... [72, 564]

Rigen's inner world, his individual manner, and his style of poetry would keep on changing significantly over a half-a-dozen years. After the Great Tokyo earthquake of 1923, which was accompanied by a wave of political repressions, he became disillusioned with the utopian idealism of the Shirakaba group and tried to find a different footing in the philosophies of the West and the East. Eventually, Rigen's work acquired the features of existential realism with strong democratic overtones. His unique poetic world did not allow the Japanese critics, intent on neat classifications of the literary process, to rank Rigen to any school or definite orientation. Up to his untimely death from tuberculosis he would live and work on his own, winning universal recognition for the cheerful lyricism and penetrating humanism of his poems. Rigen's first collections of *tanka*, *Silver (Gin)*, (1914) and *The Scarlet Ruby (Kogyoku)*, (1919), were warmly received by the readers and critics, but it was his swan song, his

Kinoshita
Rigen



木下
利玄

deathbed book of poems, *The Only Way* (Ichiro, 1924), that was destined to become the climax of his poetic work.

Rigen generally adheres to the classical form, but sometimes he experimented with rhythm, meter, and *tanka* composition design, adding extra syllables or changing the intonation structure of the poem. However, these liberties had little in common with the attempts of the avant-garde and proletarian poets to get rid of all the canonical restrictions in *tanka*.

The secret of Rigen's excellence lies in the transparency of his observations, which involve the senses of sight, hearing, smell, and touch. This method of "immersion" in the surrounding world was not so new — it was also used by both the proponents of *shasei* and by the so called Naturalists or Naturists represented by Wakayama Bokusui and Maeda Yugure. However, Rigen in his poetic laboratory achieves a truly amazing effect:

machi o yuki
kodomo no soba o
tooru toki
mikan no ka seri
fuyu ga mata kuru

*I was walking down the street
and suddenly, passing by a child,
I felt that fragrance,
the smell of tangerines —
winter is coming again...*

The smell of a tangerine, a seasonal fruit, which ripens in late autumn in Japan, brings to life lots of associations connected with the change of seasons and the transiency of life. An instant sensation entails so many thoughts ...

The senses of smell and taste, which are known to have the ability to evoke instant memories, are skillfully used by Rigen in his best poems to create a lasting aftertaste of the mood of the moment:

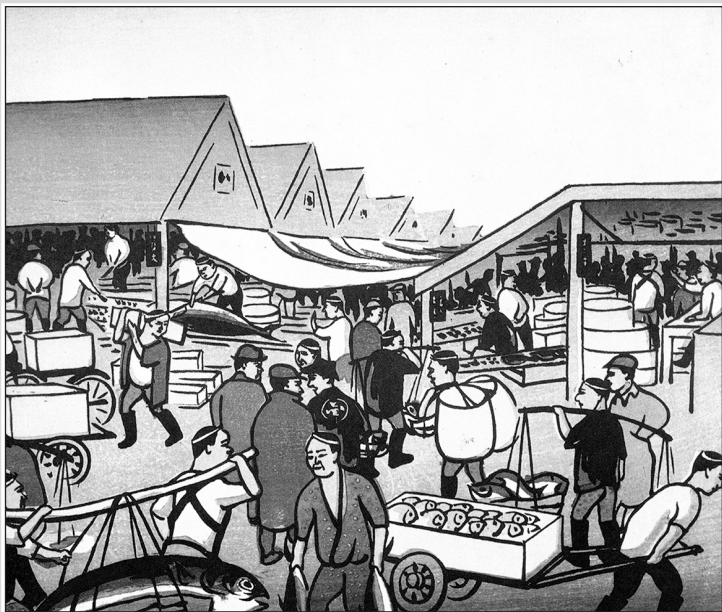
kono hana no	<i>Flowers are falling</i>
chiru ni kozue o	<i>from the branches of the tree —</i>
miagetari	<i>I look at the crown</i>
sono hana no nioi	<i>smelling that vague fragrance</i>
kasuka ni suru mo	<i>of the remaining flowers...</i>

Not all Rigen's *tanka* were composed in the tradition of pure lyrics. Among his poems we can find, for example, enthusiastic lines about battleships or wagons with rubble. His series of poems about peasant labor, reminiscent of the *kindaishi* by the poets of the Popular Democratic School (*minshu shi-ha*), undoubtedly, belongs to the best works of Japanese "romantic realism" of the 1910s:

seoitaru	<i>Having put on the back</i>
tariho no omomi	<i>a huge heavy stack,</i>
hyakusho wa	<i>a peasant is walking —</i>
taetsutsu ayumu	<i>step by step, step by step,</i>
hitoashi-hitoashi	<i>stopping and moving on again...</i>

Another *tanka* presents the topic of an industrial city in Verhaeren's vein:

*The space of the plant
is shattered by the rattle of the engines —
and in the yard of the plant
the sun is warming gently the earth
like living skin on a body...*



At present, when the social issue in Japanese literature has lost its acuteness, the most valuable *tanka* by Kinoshita Rigen for the reader are certainly those that reveal his unique vision of nature.

KAWADA JUN

The poetry by Kawada Jun (1882–1966) does not fit into the framework of any of the schools or literary associations defining the main trend of evolution of the *tanka* genre in the modern age. Joining for a while a particular group, he invariably would find any aesthetic and poetical frames or restrictions too tight for him. Like Rigen, he followed his own way, relying mostly on his own brilliant erudition, unmistakable taste, and dedication to poetry.

Born into a family of intellectuals, Kawada Jun was the son of the distinguished scholar Kawada Takeshi, who had served for many years at court as a tutor of the Crown Prince, the future Emperor Taisho. At the age of fourteen Jun became a disciple of Sasaki Nobutsuna, a recognized master of *tanka* poetry, and until graduation from school he diligently studied the basics of poetics. In 1902 he entered the Philological Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University, where at the time a famous researcher of Japanese folklore, Lafkadio Hern, and the famous writer Natsume Soseki were teaching. However, the career of a professional writer, which his father recommended to him, did not attract young Jun at that time, and two years later he transferred to the Faculty of Law. Nevertheless, at the same time, he founded with his friends a small literary journal called *Shichinin* (*Seven*), which was a kind of challenge by the young and unknown poets to the dominant influence of the Romanticists of the *Myojo* group in the poetry world.

Kawada Jun became famous after his extensive publications of love poetry in the *tanka* magazine *Kokoro no hana* edited by

*Kawada
Jun*



川
田
順

his recent teacher, Sasaki Nobutsuna. For all the sentimental images, these poems were almost the only serious attempt to maintain the tradition of the spouses Yosano, who had entered the history of modern literature as the authors of a passionate poetic dialogue.

After graduating from university, Kawada worked for several years in business, but continued to write *tanka*. His collections *Art Heaven* (*Gigeiten*, 1918) and *Mirage* (*Kagero*, 1921), which sounded like the nostalgic echoes of *Myojo* poetry in a bold novel interpretation, quickly gained popularity. In the 1920s several new books of *tanka* were released and revealed the development of an original style of the master. His travel poems contain fine sketches of ancient temples and Shinto shrines fitting into the mountain landscape.

Yakushi-ji temple

*The gusts of wind are rough —
but facing the fury of the troubled skies,
they wouldn't move,
these tiles on the roof
of the ancient Buddhist temple...*

* * *

At the Kibune shrine

*The reflection of the sunset
has moved to the other side of the mountain —
and now the last red tones
are fading slowly
on the cloud floating in the sky...*

The *tanka* poems arranged in cycles present landscape pictures from different angles and at different times of the day, creating the effect of a “dimensional vision,” as if in a long snap-shots series taken by a skilled cameraman. Thousands of poems illustrate the routes of Kawada Jun’s poetic wanderings around the remote provinces of Japan.

In the 1930s the poet left his post, determined to devote himself completely to literature. In addition to the *tanka* works, his major interests included the study of the classics. In spite of the fact that poetry of the early Showa period was dominated by the *shasei* concept, based on the poetics of the *Manyoshu*, and determined by the magazine *Araragi*, Kawada was looking for inspiration in classical monuments of a different kind. He published a fundamental study of *The New Collection of Old and New Japanese Poetry (Shinkokinwakashu, 13th c.)*, in which he proved the intrinsic value of courtly poetry, scornfully rejected by Masaoka Shiki and his followers.

Drawn into the sinister ideological propaganda in the pre-war and war years, Kawada Jun like many other *tanka* poets cherished the ideals of fundamentalism. He wrote poems about the sacred mission of the Yamato race, the superiority of Japanese culture over western barbarism, the triumph of Japanese weapons, — for which he was officially rewarded.

The defeat of Japan led to a moral crisis that was reflected in the poet’s collection *Winter Forest (Kanrin — shu, 1946)*. But after recovering from the shock, Kawada Jun again felt a surge of creative energy:

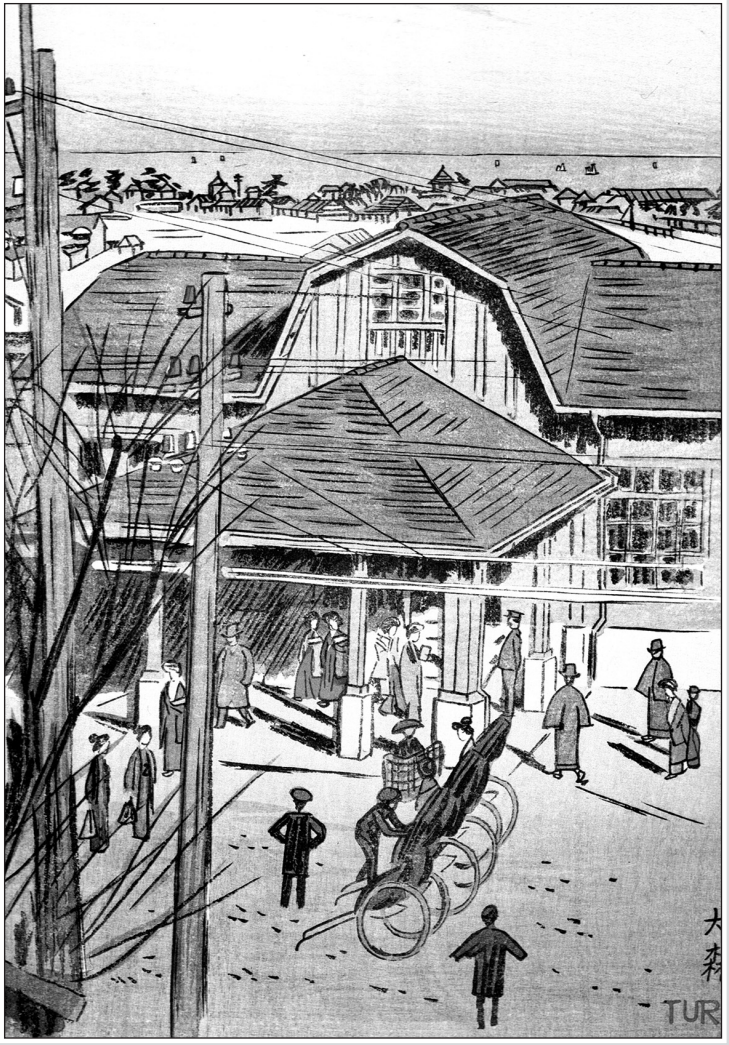
*I feel like I am resurrected
for the new life —
as if for the first time
I am coming out of home
facing the moonlit winter night...*

In the decades after the war, he continued to work much, composing different kinds of poetry- landscape sketches, love lyrics, and philosophical contemplations, the best of which will remain forever in the anthologies of the *tanka* masterpieces of the twentieth century:

*Oh how fragrant
is this thatch of your black hair!
Over and over again
enjoying this sight of your beauty,
I will live now in this world...*

* * *

*From the sticky buds
to the abundant green foliage —
from youth to maturity...
Time flows faster and faster.
So rapidly life is passing...*



大森

TUR

THE POETRY AND PROSE OF LIFE

ISHIKAWA TAKUBOKU

Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912) is probably the only truly national “people’s” *tanka* poet of Modern times, whose cult is comparable only to that of the national cult of Basho. Impressive bronze monuments and stone steles with poems engraved on them, memorial museums and academic societies for the study of his poetic legacy, the place of honor in anthologies and textbooks, not to mention countless memorial editions — all this is just a part of the accolades that accompany this amazing cult.

Takuboku, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-seven, managed during the short period of his life to accomplish what many great poets of the twentieth century were unable to do in many decades. He turned *tanka* poetry’s face to the people, transforming the genre from the art of guild craft into short soulful “songs” available to the common man and the inexperienced reader without any prior literary training. Moreover, the author’s talent itself served as a guarantee against vulgarization and profanation of the genre (the threats looming over the *tanka* world at present as well) and ensured Takuboku a special place among the top professionals.

However, the problem of the correspondence between the real scale of Takuboku’s talent and the legend that has formed around his name is still unsolved and probably requires more exploration. In any case, today we can hardly say that his poetry is better than the poetry of Yosano Akiko, Shimagi Akahiko or Saito Mokichi. Ishikawa Takuboku is a typical bard of his time, the Meiji period, whose credo was just a mixture of high ideals with naive ideas, extremist slogans and sentimental appeals.

His poems, undoubtedly, stand apart from both the flow of the *shasei* poetry promoting the principle of “reflection of nature” and the poetry of the flamboyant bohemian aestheticism. He never claimed the priority of neither of the two great classical anthologies (the *Manyoushu* and the *Kokinshu*) and treated quite critically the old *bungo* style as a tool of the new poetics. He advocated the freedom of rhythm and design in verse, that is, was truly modern — not in theory but in practice, not in his concepts but in the imagery and rhythms. In the perspective of the today’s readers, especially the non-Japanese ones, many of Takuboku’s *tanka* are written in a vulgar primitive ideological manner, some of them are too lapidary, oversimplified, and others are too melodramatic. Nevertheless, the majority of his poems present deep and true poetry of life proper.

Ishikawa Hajime, known to us under his penname Takuboku, was born in a remote village of Hinoto in the northern prefecture of Iwate. His father was a Buddhist priest, a peasant by birth (in the Meiji period for the first time the Buddhist clergy were officially allowed to marry and have children, but common people did not approve of this innovation). In 1887 the family moved to the village of Shibusutani, where his father was given a parish and became the rector of a local Buddhist temple. The first six years of schooling Hajime was formally listed as an illegitimate child having no father; it was considered more decent than being the son of a priest. After graduating from elementary school in his native village, Hajime went to high school in Morioka city — which was a rare case for the remote province. His uncle on his mother’s side, who lived in Morioka, helped him. The school education, especially in the higher grades, was in the Meiji period of a very good quality, providing considerable knowledge in the Japanese classics. The English language was taught so intensively that soon Hajime began to read books by English authors in the original. A local poet, Kanada Ikkamei, accustomed him to poetry and introduced him to the poems by the authors from the “New Poetry Society” (“Shinshi-sha”),

*Ishikawa
Takuboku*



石川
啄木

which at that time was enjoying popularity in Tokyo. Soon the aspiring poet sent his poems to the *Myōjo* magazine, where they were welcomed and published.

Takuboku was an ailing and ambitious teenager. He was a good student but did not even finish his high school. In his last year at school, at the age of seventeen, he decided to give up school and take up literary activity. The immediate reason for such an unusual decision was cheating at the exams, when the teacher caught him. As this deed was qualified as a violation of the school charter, severe punishment awaited him, including expulsion.

Hajime got very upset by the incident and left for Tokyo in hope of getting a job there, but failed. Soon disappointed and sick, he returned to his native village, but he kept his literary connections in Tokyo, especially with the *Myōjo* group. The lack of a school graduation certificate played a fatal role in Takuboku's life. In Meiji society, built on the foundation of enlightenment, a young man without appropriate education, no matter how talented he might be, had no chance to make a career. As a result, the lot of the brilliant poet up to the end of his short life was nothing but unforgiving hard labor — mostly as a literary chore.

In the beginning of his literary activity Hajime, according to an old Japanese tradition, took the penname Hakuhin, but in 1902, after moving to Tokyo, when he was already personally acquainted with the Yosanos and had joined officially the "New Poetry Society," changed it into Takuboku. Under this name he kept on publishing new poems in *Myojo* and in 1905 released his first collection of romantic *shintaiishi* poems, *Aspiration (Akogare)*. Though this debut book was favorably received by the public and brought some recognition to the young poet in the literary circles, its quality seems beneath criticism at present. The several dozens of *shintaiishi* gathered in *Aspiration*, including some of those which remind one compositionally of the sonnet form, were mostly imitations of the vague lyrical poems by Susukida Kyukin and Kambara Ariake, with an abundance of pompous archaisms, far-fetched comparisons, and profound platitudes. It is interesting that in reality Takuboku seemed to be opposing the "romantic longing" and shunned from the image of the poet of "stars and violets." It is possible that his early writings were just a conscious tribute to the literary fashion and an attempt to play on the romantic strings in the hearts of the readers. As well as Takuboku's experiments in prose, his *shintaiishi* confirmed the fundamental truth: the author was born for *tanka*.

The first success did not bring financial prosperity. Takuboku was compelled to apply constantly to his father and his friends for help. When his father retired from his service, there was no money any more. His early marriage was extremely complicated situation for Takuboku, which was pretty bad already. In 1907 he left his native village and went to Hokkaido in hope of finding a job in the "frontier" lands. The huge northern island in the Meiji period was almost undeveloped and for the Japanese it was just like Siberia and the Far East for the Russians or Wild West for the Americans.

The life on Hokkaido was rich with impressions, but the poet could not find any decent job, except for small literary errands and a position as a proofreader for a seedy tabloid. After a year of fruitless wanderings in the cities and villages of Hokkaido, Takuboku finally went to Tokyo, leaving his wife with the child

and his mother on Hokkaido. He still believed that he could earn his living by writing. However, without higher and even secondary education, he had hardly any chance of conquering the capital by his talent. Leaving behind his family, relatives and friends, Takuboku would diligently write prose. He even managed to publish several short stories and novels, but had no real success. He also would release his poems little by little, but it did not bring money at all.

With great difficulty, in 1909 Takuboku finally managed to get a position as a proofreader in the newspaper *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*. Poetic journals kept on publishing on their pages small *tanka* selections by Takuboku. In 1909, he was even invited as a freelance editor of the poetry section for the new literary magazine *Subaru*. His wife and the child came to Tokyo from Hakodate. Life was gradually improving. Still, it was a hard, bleak, and hopeless life. Small achievements would not bring much relief. The Tokyo literati elite did not welcome a poor corrector without a regular school education, a native of the northern hinterland who never had enough money to pay for a restaurant. The money was barely enough for daily bread:

*Working, working —
but life wouldn't get better.
I am looking at my hands...*

In his extensive *Diary in Latin Letters (Romaji nikki, 1909)* and in other records, Takuboku describes in detail the hardships of life and the suffering of unsatisfied ambition, reflecting on the causes of social inequality and gradually taking up the ideas of socialism, which had already become firmly rooted on Japanese soil. The translations of *Revolutionary's Notes* by Kropotkin and the works by the leader of the Japanese socialists, Kotoku Shusui, introduced Takuboku to radical revolutionary ideas. He fell in love with Russia in absentia, taking it as a cradle of free revolutionary spirit. He would write touching poems about it and read novels by the Russian writers. He even gave his daughter an exotic Russian name:

*A Russian name Sonya
I gave to my daughter —
and feel so good calling her...*

At the end of the nineteenth century, Russia played a special role in the minds of the Japanese, noticeably standing out from the Western great powers, which tried to impose on the country the unequal treaties. Great Britain, France, and Germany represented Western civilization with its traditional cultural values, morals and customs, with its technology, its sophisticated modern weapons and extremely pragmatic attitudes. Russia, on the other hand, remaining a great power and being located nearby, was seen in a different way. Russia presented an image of vast land, populated by courageous and kind people, the country of great culture, a country, which had proved to be extremely close in spirit to the Japanese new intellectuals. That is the way the Japanese poet of the first half of the twentieth century described Russia.

The Russo-Japanese war, which demonstrated to the world brilliant examples of courage and heroism on both sides, made the Russians respect their recent enemy. The Japanese, overwhelmed with the joy of glorious victory, experienced mixed feelings towards the shaky Eurasian colossus. In any case, the war had fueled the mutual interest of the intellectuals both in Japan and in Russia, encouraging them to create myths about a “fairy tale kingdom” on the other side of the Sea of Japan.

By the early twentieth century, the great Russian writers — Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov — were already well known in Japan. It was the humanistic pathos of the Russian classical writers that brought Russia its reputation as a wonderful country, where the farmers are hardworking, honest and skilled, the landowners are rich, noble and hospitable, the women are virtuous, chaste and charming. At the same time, it was obvious from the classics that the Russians like to philosophize, that they are sentimental and quite vulnerable, that they easily give in

to temptation just to repent earnestly later, even if it was a minor sin. They are extroverted, always ready to pour out their heart to a stranger and constantly involved in a painful introspection. They are fond of drinking, singing and carousing, regardless of their social status. They live in an authoritarian country, but hate totalitarianism and invent all sorts of concepts, political parties and movements to fight for the phantom of freedom. All these features of the Russian national character — partly because of the similarities, but mostly, because of the differences — constituted a kind of irresistible magnetism for the Japanese intellectuals of the progressive liberal trend.

Ishikawa Takuboku was one of the first who, during the Russo-Japanese war, would glorify the “brave Russian giant” in his *shintaiishi* poem “In Memory of Admiral Makarov.” His epitaph is not only a homage to Makarov, who died in action the death of a hero, but also a hymn to Russia. Takuboku was infatuated with the Russian classics. The huge Eurasian empire seemed to him a stronghold of humanism and hope for humankind. He studied the works of Kropotkin and Bakunin, believing that the world revolution would start in Russia and from there would spread to the neighboring Asian countries. The growth of the Marxist movement in Russia and the first Russian revolution of 1905 gave Takuboku the topics for many poems:

*Who will blame me if I go to Russia
to fight there in the ranks of the rebels
and to die in action?!*

Of course, in reality, the poet was not going to join the Russian fighters on the barricades, but he needed a myth, a “Russian Dream,” which he wanted to bequeath to the future generations. For Takuboku and his associates, Russia had become the embodiment of all the socialist aspirations, the object of almost religious worship. In some poems the poet’s fascination with Russia appears like an obsession:

*I don't know why
but a Russian name Borodin
is on my mind all day long...*

However, the basis of this “Russomania” was probably the spirit of freedom which the poet rightly felt in the new Russian history and culture. The *kindaishi* poems of a socialist trend, published in the collection *Whistling and a Whistle (Yobiko to kuchibue, 1911)*, were Takuboku’s response to the tragic death of Kotoku Shusui, who was executed in 1911 together with a group of fellow-socialists accused of high treason, and to the onset of the period known in Japanese history as the “winter of socialism.” Gradually, the poet became entirely possessed with the dreams of a revolutionary transformation of society, of the realm of justice and liberty. While staying away from the political movements and parties he soon evolved into a staunch socialist of free orientation.

On the basis of his fascination with socialist ideas and his pathetic love for Russia Takuboku, developed friendly relations with Toki Aika, and together they proclaimed the emergence of a new trend in *tanka* poetry — the “Life School” (*seikatsu-ha*), which can be viewed as “realism with a romantic touch.”

Takuboku seriously thought about the possibility of influencing social processes by the power of words and dreamed of using poetry as a tool for socialist reforms. He formulated his credo in his essay “Poems to Eat” (“Kuubeki shi,” 1909):

I would like to say that one should write poetry while standing with both feet firmly on the ground. We are talking about the poems that create the feeling of an inextricable link with the real life of the people. It is vital to write the poems “necessary” for us, which should smell of our daily food and not the flavor of rare dishes. Perhaps, it means that the poems will have to be relegated to a lower rank in comparison with the present ones, but, in my opinion, the poetry, the presence or absence of which in our life changes absolutely nothing at present, should be turned into an

urgently needed thing. That is the only way to justify the right of poetry to exist. [80, 155]

Criticizing the *tanka* poets who waste their time in useless debates over details and do not try to change the essence of contemporary verse, Takuboku puts forward a prophetic statement:

I do not agree with the opinion that poems must comply with the classical rules; however, the arguments appear that our everyday language is too rough, loose, not elegant enough to be the language of poetry. The arguments might be quite weighty, but such judgments contain a fundamental error: the poems themselves, in this case, are like expensive jewelry, but the people treat the poet or want to treat him as a person standing above ordinary mortals or apart from them. Meanwhile, those arguments contain an element of self-deprecation: allegedly, the feelings of the modern Japanese are too rough, imperfect, are not refined enough to transform them into poems. [80, 157]

We should not forget that Takuboku called for writing *tanka* in colloquial language at the time when only poets of free forms, attracted by the aesthetics of the French Naturalists, had just begun to talk about it. To stand alone against all the fellow-literati, to promote spoken language as an appropriate material for *tanka*, this stronghold of classical traditions, one had to possess extraordinary courage and an unbound mind capable of independent judgments. In his "Poems to Eat" he wrote about a transition to colloquial language as if it had been already completed (though, actually, the partial introduction of the colloquial rules into *tanka* grammar and vocabulary took several more decades of painstaking efforts by enthusiasts):

The origins of the philosophy of Naturalism are associated with its refraction in different fields of life. The introduction of the contemporary language in poetry, in my opinion, is in fact a part of the introduction of philosophy, which is really valuable for us. [80, 158]

Luckily, Takuboku was not a rigid dogmatic and had a great poetic talent — that is why his true poetry would always prevail over ideological arguments and philosophical concepts:

*If I say that at least once more
we should meet before we die,
will you nod in response?..*

It should be mentioned that Takuboku's prophecy came true only partly, and the simplification of language did not bring any good into the poetry of the traditionalists. Those who followed literally the precepts of Takuboku very soon lost the merits of the classical genre, receiving in return nothing but straightforward declarations typical of vulgar sociology. However, at the time of booming democratic movements, it seemed that *tanka* could and should become the vanguard of progress. Reasoning on the role of a writer, especially a poet, Takuboku, unlike many of the contemporary critics, raised his voice against the commonplaces about the "Aeolian Harp" of the poet's soul, a gentle and sensitive heart, and about pure art and the freedom of the artist:

A useless self-consciousness — "I am a writer" — nowadays alienates modern literature from what we need!

A true poet must be such kind of a person who self-perfects himself and implements his philosophy into life like a politician, who pursues a certain aim in his life with the zeal, reminding of of the energy of a businessman, and who can bring clear arguments, like a scholar... [80, 159]

Linking his serious literary and critical articles with his *tanka*, characterized by clear imagery and populist spirit, in "Something about Tanka" ("Uta no iro-iro") Takuboku formulated his basic principles of *tanka* as democratic art aimed at fulfilling important social functions:

The form of our poems has been preserved since the *Manyōshū*, but our *tanka* of the present day should be *tanka*

of the present day in everything. Tomorrow our poetry will have to be the poetry of tomorrow [80, 206].

Emphasizing the urgent necessity for speedy modernization and actualization of *tanka*, Takuboku put forward several requirements for the genre:

- To abandon literary sophistication and to turn completely to colloquial language;
- To introduce into *tanka* everyday subjects and images that convey the truth about life of the ordinary people;
- To eliminate all lexical restrictions, erasing the border between the “poetic” and “non-poetic” lexicon;
- To refrain from experimenting with metric and rhythmic patterns of *tanka* by introducing additional syllables;
- To move from the traditional layout of *tanka* (in one line), achieving compositional harmony and convincing images in a three-line stanza [See 80, 200 – 208].

It should be noted that in the *tanka* world the transition to the three-line layout at the time was a revolutionary step in poetics, comparable to the emergence in Russia of the “staircase-like” pattern of writing poetry introduced by Mayakovsky, which was supposed to replace the regular stanza. In addition, it is also worth noting that the transition to such a system of recording poems and the abolition of other canonical restrictions in *tanka* makes it extremely difficult to translate such a miniature as a conventional poem into foreign languages, since the imagery and grammar remind the reader mostly of a poem in prose or just a small fracture of prosaic text. .

Right at this time the poet and theoretician of verse Onoe Saishu (most likely from professional jealousy), in the article “My Considerations on the Extinguishment of Tanka” (“Tanka gamba shiron,” 1910) subjected all *kajin*, the professional poets of the *waka* genre, to the sharpest criticism. He wrote that at present it is impossible to assess the personality of an author by one poem, as it used to be in the past. To get at least some idea of a poet, one has to study his works in batches of five to

ten pieces — the more, the better. The imagery in such poems is stereotyped, their authors are unable to stow free thoughts and words in the framework of classical prosody, unable to compose poems in a colloquial language. It all means that *tanka* has become obsolete and “the era of poetry has turned into a vision of the past” completely, as the world is becoming too prosaic itself.

Summing up the above arguments, the ruthless critic concludes:

We believe, at least I personally believe, that I cannot accept the continuing existence of *tanka*. However, I would like to treat with respect the period of the decay and death of *tanka* as well as the time of awakening of national self-awareness. [80, 199]

In response, Takuboku published his article “A Conversation between an Egoist and his Friend” (“Ichi rikoshugisha to yujin to-no taiwa,” 1910), written in the form of a dialogue with a friend who expresses Saishu’s pessimistic views. Takuboku argues for the viability of *tanka* and emphasizes that the genre has a great future in the twentieth century, provided that the unnecessary restrictions are removed and colloquial language, freedom of rhythm, and freedom of layout are introduced into the genre. He argues that *tanka* is the optimal poetic form to convey myriads of new impressions and sentiments:

So much is given to our senses — instant impressions coming from inside and outside which we immediately forget or, even if we remember them for a while, anyway, we never express them, because these sensations lack the “content” to support a train of thought. The majority of us simply ignore those impressions of the moment and even if someone does not, he just lets them disappear without a trace. But I do not want to miss those moments. The most appropriate way to convey such impressions is to exemplify them in *tanka*, which are so short and do not require much time. It is indeed convenient. The poetic form of *tanka* is one of the few advantages in life, granted to us, the Japanese. [162, 284]

Undoubtedly, Takuboku was born for *tanka* — a genre that was his most natural form of expression. He would compose *tanka* easily, without thinking about the conventions of form, and all his poetry comes not from the intellect but directly from the heart.

Takuboku's first *tanka* collection, *A Handful of Sand* (Ichiaku no suna, 1910), announced the birth of a great original talent. The collection contains 551 *tanka*. All the poems are grouped by topics and divided into five sections. Thus, although the principle of structural design here is somewhat different compared with the series of *renkashu* cycles by the poets of Shiki's school, the thematic proximity of *tanka* in each section gives them additional overtones and turns the poetic narrative into a symphony rather than in a suite.

The first section is called "Songs about Love for Oneself" ("Ware o ai suru uta") and actually consists of 151 *tanka* about himself. It opens with a famous poem that has become an "identity card" for Ishikawa Takuboku:

tookai no kojima no iso no shirasuna ni
 ware nakinurete
 kani to towamuru

...

On the white sand of a small island in the Eastern Sea (Pacific)
shedding tears
I am playing with a crab

The misery of life, which failed to bring success, appears in the image of the poet, who has nothing to do but to play sadly with a crab on the beach...

Another, no less famous poem on the same topic, which gave the name to the collection *A Handful of Sand* (Ichiaku-no suna), is also presented in the most sentimental manner:

ho ni tsutau
 namida nagawazu
 ichiaku no suna on shimeshishi hito o wasurezu

*I will not forget him —
that man who, not wiping tears from his cheeks,
showed me a handful of sand...*

The endless tears which the poet sheds over his fate (not typical at all of the reserved classical *tanka* aesthetics) could touch the heart of a common Japanese reader, who even nowadays expects nothing else but violent sobbing from the characters of TV melodramas. Here, as well as in many other things, Takuboku remains faithful to the tradition, on which he was raised.

The second section, “Smoke (“Kemuri”), includes two thematic series: poems dedicated to the memories of his school years, and poems about his native land. The third section, “About the Invigorating Autumn Wind” (“Akikaze no kokoroyosha ni”), includes *tanka* about the friends of his youth and some landscape poetry. The fourth one, “People I can Never Forget” (“Wasuregataki hitobito”), contains mostly the episodes of wanderings around Hokkaido, including more than twenty poems addressed to Tachibana Chieko, a young pretty female teacher from Hakodate. Finally, the fifth section, “Taking off the Gloves” (“Tebukuro o nugu toki”), includes more than a hundred scenes from city life.

Takuboku’s second and the last *tanka* collection, *Sad Toys* (*Kanashiki gangu*, 1912), released in the year of the poet’s death, is a direct continuation of the first one, but the 194 poems included in it are mostly sad songs under the shadow of the inevitably approaching end. The title was taken from Takuboku’s article “Some Things about Tanka,” where he speaks about the poems as his “sad toys.” The poet, who loved this hard life with all its joys and sorrows, who loved his wife and his child, passionately dreaming of a bright future, was dying of a galloping consumption:

*An irrational sorrow —
every evening it comes
to my bed...*

* * *

*They brought me close to the window of the hospital room today —
after so long it is good to see
even a policeman...*

In the late spring of 1912 he passed away. Takuboku's death was an irreparable loss for the young poetry of the new times. His devoted friend Toki Aika wrote a heartfelt epitaph:

*He is not any more with us —
that man who taught me to hear
and conceive
all troubles of this world.
I am mourning my friend in loneliness...*

All the *tanka* poems in both of Takuboku's collections are written in three lines and differ from the works by other *kajin* by their deep pathos, presented in simple and clear poetic imagery without the abundant complicated allusions and literary implications. The son of a Zen priest from the Soto sect, Takuboku, nevertheless, almost never resorted to suggestive Zen-Buddhist poetics. In some of his images, of course, there is certain reticence and allusiveness, but to comprehend these images or grasp the implications contained in them does not present any difficulty. The simplified and facilitated suggestiveness does not require the hard work of imagination or intellectual effort. It partly reminds ones of a laconic anecdote containing a hint, when the reader or listener can easily take a right guess from the realities familiar to him.

*"This holiday
I will sleep all day long!" — what I have been dreaming of
for three years...*

* * *

*Oh this heart of mine!
Today too I wanted to weep —
all my friends are following their way...*

The *tanka* in the poet's major collections are quite uneven and unequal. Only the unrestrained worship of the people and the power of omnipotent Japanese tradition could place them among the immortal poetic masterpieces.

Many poems in general are nothing else but slightly rhythmic remarks of daily routine:

*What a habit!
Leaving and coming back soon with no reason —
my friends are laughing...*

Others are no more than trivial, sentimental comparisons:

*Now disappeared in the blue —
so sadly it vanishes in the sky.
The smoke is like me.*

Some poems feature loose reminiscences of a certain unimportant event in the poet's life:

*Once I flung my watch
right against the rock in the garden.
Oh, how angry I was!..*

Others present primitive pictures in the vein of early socialist realism:

*Wiping with the palm of his hand
his face wet with snow,
a friend is talking of communism...*

Some other poems suggest nothing more than a short description of the mood of the moment:

*A pleasant fatigue
when you bring to the end
your hard work...*

In other cases such a description grows into a naïve parallelism:

*Pleasant to hear
this mighty rumble of the generator —
oh if I could speak like that!*

However, certain *tanka* definitely reveal Takuboku's talent with all its depth and power:

*Suddenly I met again
my friend after a foolish clash.
An evening in autumn...*

* * *

*Once my wife
was so fond of music —
she doesn't play any more...*

* * *

*To Sapporo that fall
I brought sorrow with me —
I still have it...*

* * *

*My heart — it is like a wounded animal,
but on hearing a message from my distant native land,
it calms down...*

* * *

*For no reason
I started seeing myself as a great man —
just like a child...*

By reducing the poetic creativity to the role of a "truthful diary," Takuboku still, due to his talent, managed to present a touching dramatic panorama of the short life of an enthusiast

and dreamer. He died very young from consumption with socialist slogans on his lips. For all their sentimentality, Takuboku's *tanka*, which he would record in three lines as a protest against the routine, display freshness and the flavor of novelty. That hardly can be said about his followers, who have spared no effort to further vulgarize the noble old genre and adapt it to the needs of social struggle.

Takuboku's poems, as well as his articles, essays, and diaries, reveal the impulsive, emotional, restless nature of the artist, who made an impressive mosaic using the fragments of his life experience. He is like everybody else: he makes mistakes and regrets them, suffers from poverty, falls and rises, works, takes care of his family, misses his home town, feels happy, weeps, laughs, recalls his friends, admires, jokes, mourns. But at the same time he composes poems and lives by poetry. For all this Japanese readers love and will forever love Ishikawa Takuboku, the poet from the depth of the people, though his work actually refutes everything that, in our perspective, refers to the tradition of *tanka*, and represents a totally different, new poetry beyond any regulations and restrictions.

TOKI AIKA

Unlike most of the innovators in the *tanka* poetry of the early twentieth century, Toki Zenmaro, later known under his penname Aika (1885–1980), was a hereditary poet. His father, the Buddhist priest Toki Zensho, was a renowned poet of the *renga* genre, which played an important role in developing the literary tastes of the young Zenmaro. He loved poetry since childhood and while still at school thoroughly studied Japanese classics with his father.

At the age of nineteen Zenmaro entered the English language and Literature faculty at Waseda University. At the same time, he became a disciple of the *tanka* poet Kaneko Kun'en, known in some literary circles for his urban poems, who had studied the

skill of versification under Ochiai Naobumi. Although Kun'en actually introduced Zenmaro to *tanka* poetry and even instilled into him a taste for experimentations, his lessons had no special value for the young man.

At the university, Zenmaro became acquainted with Kitahara Hakushu and Wakayama Bokusui, who unveiled the broad horizons of poetry to the novice. He eagerly started to write *tanka* in a new manner and in 1910 under the penname released a challenging collection, *Laughter Through Tears* (*Nakiwarai*), written in the Roman alphabet, and besides with the novel *tanka* layout in three lines and an uncertain number of syllables. The theme prevailing in the collection was prompted by the misadventures of a poor young man, living in misery together with his wife in the jungle of a big city.

Roman letters, which meant a bold challenge to public taste and conventional culture, were fashionable at that period and embodied for young people the "esprit," the spirit of time. In the intellectual circles an issue of the possible change from the Japanese *kanji* and *kana* to the Roman alphabet was being seriously considered at the moment. It is common knowledge that Ishikawa Takuboku also wrote his diary in Roman letters. He explained it by his unwillingness to share intimate ideas with his wife (as reading the Japanese text in the Roman transliteration was even more tedious and obscure than to read a Russian or Greek text recorded in the same way). However, there is reason to believe that both Takuboku and Aika used the Roman alphabet mainly as a technique for modernizing literature, aspiring mostly for the demonstration of their highly innovative spirit.

Roman letters for *tanka* were no more suitable than the transcription marks for writing down Shakespeare's sonnets. However, the collection evoked a certain response and attracted the attention of the critics to a young author, who went on writing about the hardships of life, but having switched eventually to Japanese. At that time he became acquainted with Ishikawa Takuboku. The common interests, ideas, and aesthetic tastes of both were so obvious that they soon became

inseparable. Aika eagerly shared Takuboku's concepts of social injustice and his definition of the aim of poetry; Takuboku borrowed Aika's method of recording *tanka* in three lines. Together they proclaimed the establishment of the Life school (*seikatsu-ha*), exchanging poems and planning to publish a poetry journal. These plans were not implemented, but Takuboku's personality and works had a great influence on Aika.

After Takuboku's death, Zenmaro not only made all the arrangements for the funeral, but also took care of the literary heritage of the late bard: he sorted out Takuboku's archive and released his unpublished works. Mourning the untimely deceased friend, Aika wrote in his book *Among the Sounds* (*Zatsuon no naka*, 1916):

*A pile of manuscripts of my late friend lies on my desk.
Can't find time to sort it out —
every day I am so busy...*

Apparently, because of the fact that Aika belonged to the Life school and many of his early poems contained social issues, the critics ranked his poetry as "Naturalism."

Aika, actually, was a much more moderate "lefty" than Ishikawa Takuboku, though in his early collections the topic of a social protest is quite acute. However, Takuboku, who had always lived in poverty, died at the age of twenty-seven and remained in the memory of the people a "poor singer." Meanwhile, Toki Aika, who started from the modest position of compositor at a printing house, quickly moved up the career ladder due to his literary success. For a while he worked as a foreign correspondent in Korea and China, and at the age of thirty was appointed the head of the department of Social Problems in Japan's largest newspaper *Yomiuri*. Later he moved to the *Asahi* corporation, where he managed to rise to leading positions. His brilliant career, which guaranteed full financial stability, did not predispose him to write about poverty, and thus Aika's style would change over time.

Toki
Aika



土岐
善磨

However, the changes proved fatal to his poetry. As soon as it lost the pathos of social protest, it had no longer real appeal to the reader. Like many of his contemporaries who started their way in the “Sturm und Drang” Meiji era, the following sixty years he remained in the literary world on the crest of the glory of his youth, while multi-volume collections of his later works peacefully settle in the dust of libraries.

The poet’s leftist beliefs were manifested openly in his collection *In the Twilight* (*Tasogare ni*, 1912). Most of the poems in the book contain a note of social criticism and are full of “conspiratorial” allusions, though the poet himself never joined any revolutionary organizations, avoiding any links to Marxists. The book presents the image of a poor young bard, unsettled in life, sentimental and unhappy, who flaunts his playing of “forbidden games.”

Te no shiroki rodosha koso kanashikere
kokki no sho o
namida shite yomeri

*Such a sad view — a worker with white hands
reads a banned book
with tears in his eyes...*

* * *

*I am walking with a banned book in hand
that I had just borrowed from a friend,
having pulled it out from his boot under the bed...*

According to the explanations of the Japanese critics, the poem refers to a book by Kropotkin, which Aika had borrowed from Takuboku. Undoubtedly, Takuboku instilled in his friend the true love for Russia and introduced him to Russian literature, which embodied for both of them a free spirit, evoking an appeal to the highest human values:

*I showed the way pointing my finger — if, overcoming the distance,
I could get there —
that's where it flows, my Volga-river!*

* * *

*Reading it all over again — and probably again will be unable
to hold back the tears.
Oh, how sweet to my heart is this book by Tourgenev
in the bleached yellowish cover!...*

The pro-socialist attitudes of the friends were shared by many intellectuals, especially after the tragic events of 1911, when the prominent socialist leader Kotoku Shusui and his comrades were executed on charges of “insulting the throne.” No wonder that the notes of protest, albeit expressed rather reticently, appear in Aika’s poetry (if his rather trivial observations can be taken as such):

*Living in Japan
it is not safe to express in Japanese
your thoughts...*

Aika was a true humanist by nature, education and upbringing, but revolution and socialism were for him, in fact, nothing more than attractive forbidden abstract foreign ideas:

kakumei o tomo to kataritsu
 tsuma to ko ni miyage o kaite
 uchi ni kaerinu

*Having talked on revolution with a friend,
 I bought some presents for my wife and kid
 and went back home...*

Aika's "revolutionary" poetry, from which the author subsequently withdrew, had an incendiary influence on young people. For a few years after Takuboku's death, faithful to his behests, Toki Aika would keep on composing poems in accordance with the Life school concepts — about the horrors of poverty, backbreaking labor, and unforgiving class struggle, though his life was going smoothly and his financial situation was getting better and better:

*All the young men I know are poor —
 this one and that one...
 All the young men I know are poor. Winter.*

In 1913, Aika became the editor-in-chief of *Seikatsu to geijutsu (Life and Art)* journal, which united a group of leftist poets. Developing the concept of poetry as a reflection of life of the ordinary people, he wrote in his article "A Warning to the Tanka World" ("Kadan keigo," 1915–1916):

Our poems are "tanka close to life" — but may I ask, in what sense? Life — what in particular does life introduce into *tanka*? And what are our other poems like?

The inner life and the external life — such a dualistic division should not be allowed in a human life. To glorify life as a whole — what shall we require, what shall we expect from new *tanka*? As a person who lives at this time, I believe that I must glorify my life with my own words. As we managed to realize this requirement in reality, we were looked upon as a certain movement, and so, *tanka*, that belonged before to one social group, now has become by its nature close to everybody, undoubtedly, turning into the nation's mutual legacy. [80, 216]

However, further Aika warns the poets of the danger of profanation of real art, calling for a balance between politics and poetics, returning again and again to the idea of the inherent value of a poetic image.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, when the Proletarian Literature movement was gaining strength, Toki Aika had already been on the other side of the barricades. However, he would refuse to cooperate with the militant reaction as well, turning mainly to pure poetry and philological research.

In 1927 Aika took a long trip to Europe and America and described his impressions in a book of travel notes. Western civilization evoked the deep respect of the Japanese poet. In the 1930s he, unlike the majority of his fellow writers, did not participate in the nationalist anti-Western campaign, delving instead into his research work on the remarkable Edo poet Tayasu Munetake. After the war, Aika continued to publish his works on philology, trying his hand at writing essays and innovative plays for the Noh theater, compiling an anthology of classical Chinese poetry, but never giving up *tanka*.

After many years of bold modernist experiments, his late poetry acquired classical clarity and Zen lucidity, returning to the traditional form:

ishi mo take mo	<i>In this place</i>
naki tokoro nite	<i>where there is neither stones nor bamboo,</i>
kikan to su	<i>It's as if heard</i>
take ni atarishi	<i>the sound of a stone</i>
ishi no hibiki o	<i>hitting the bamboo trunk...</i>

* * *

horobiyuku	<i>What is doomed to die</i>
mono no akarusa	<i>keeps its clear brightness —</i>
akikaze no	<i>this night</i>
hitoya fukiareshi	<i>the wild autumn wind has blown them down,</i>
niwa-no ochiba yo	<i>these fallen leaves in the garden...</i>

Having remained to his old age a wonderful poet and a prominent literary figure, Toki Aika, like many of his contemporaries, exists in the minds of the Japanese readers primarily as poet of the Meiji — Taisho period. Unfortunately, most of them probably do not even know that Ishikawa Takuboku's faithful friend and companion had lived up to the end of the twentieth century.



PROLETARIAN TANKA POETRY

The writings by Takuboku and Aika, with their pronounced social orientation, marked the zenith of the Democratic Populist literature of the early period and at the same time laid the foundation of a powerful movement that, overcoming the rigid regulations of the traditionally apolitical and non-historical genre, eventually turned *tanka* into an ideological weapon in the fierce class struggle. They paved the way to the emergence of proletarian poetry in the *tanka* genre, part of the mighty flow of proletarian literature of the 1920s-30s.

The impetus for the development of Japanese proletarian literature against the background of growing class struggle can be traced to the victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia that shook the world in 1917. Along with the theory of Marxism, proletarian writers in Japan took over the militant slogans of LEF (The Leftist Front literary association in Russia), often demonstrating a vulgar-sociological, class-oriented Proletcult" (another abbreviation of the Soviet Association of Proletariat Culture) approach to literature. Nevertheless, the critical articles and manifestos of the period are interesting and instructive as an indicator of public sentiments at the time, an echo of the ferocious political debates.

The theorists of "Proletarian *tanka*" under the banner of revolutionary renovation of poetry spoke against the "classless" art of the old masters. Critic Toda Kyoson in his article "On the Reformation of Tanka" ("Tanka kakushin ron," 1926) largely repeated the statements of Takuboku and Aika and demanded that the poetic vocabulary should be modernized, simplified and filled with social content. "For a person living under the present conditions," he writes, "we obviously need to use the word 'people' instead of the word 'talent'" [24, 228].

In other words, no poetic talent, if it lacks a populist element, has any right to existence. In his analyses of other trends in the *tanka* domain, Kyoson treats them as deeply flawed and anachronistic, criticizing in particular the most influential poetic association *Araragi* and its leader Saito Mokichi for the lack of a social class platform.

Kyoson articulates his convictions quite clearly:

My standpoint is as follows: first, to use modern colloquial language in *tanka*, secondly, to make the rhythm looser, adapting it to the potential of our modern language, and thirdly, to create proletarian literature. In fact, my platform represents the extreme left wing in the camp of the supporters of revolutionary *tanka*, although now, perhaps, nobody else seriously supports it...[24, 229].

However, except for the extremist slogan of “poetic revolution,” Kyoson and his followers could not offer anything particularly “left.” Rightly noting that further progress of “the revolutionized” *tanka* is unthinkable without interaction with other kinds of literature, the author of the article makes an interesting conclusion:

Why, indeed, must *tanka* necessarily become a sort of proletarian literature? After all, they fall under a classification of the general proletarian theory of literature and there is no need even to discuss this issue. Given that all kinds of art should be based on proletarian ideology, any other manifestations of art simply should not be permitted [24, 229].

The article ends with a manifesto, typical of the whole Proletarian Literature Movement:

Tanka poets! Stop following the deplorable example of the masters. Having accomplished a revolution in our own lives, let us accomplish also the revolution in *tanka*. At present *tanka* cannot stand in the same range with other kinds of art.

Undoubtedly, *tanka* do not reflect the changes taking place in time. Isn't it another argument proving that the *tanka* revolution becomes even a more urgent need? Let us shift from the rigid rhythmic patterns and archaic vocabulary of old *tanka* to the free rhythmic patterns and contemporary language of the new proletarian poems! [24, 230]

The issue of the social nature of *tanka* was also put forward by Ishigure Shigeru, another theorist of the Proletarian Literature movement, in his work "The Success of the *Tanka* Revolution" ("Tanka kakumei no shinten," 1928). Criticizing the poets of the *Araragi* for the frivolous attitude to their writings, he referred to Karl Liebknecht, who had condemned burgher art, and to Plekhanov, who would not accept works of art without ideological content (see [24, 230–231]). Arguing with Saito Mokichi, Ishigure pointed out that the alleged apolitical attitude of the *Araragi* poets in the period of open ideological struggle would inevitably lead them to the camp of reaction. That is actually what has happened in reality during the "period of darkness" (1935–1945), when the overwhelming majority of the "neutral" poets, especially among the *tanka* authors, turned into voluntary or involuntary accomplices of the totalitarian military regime.

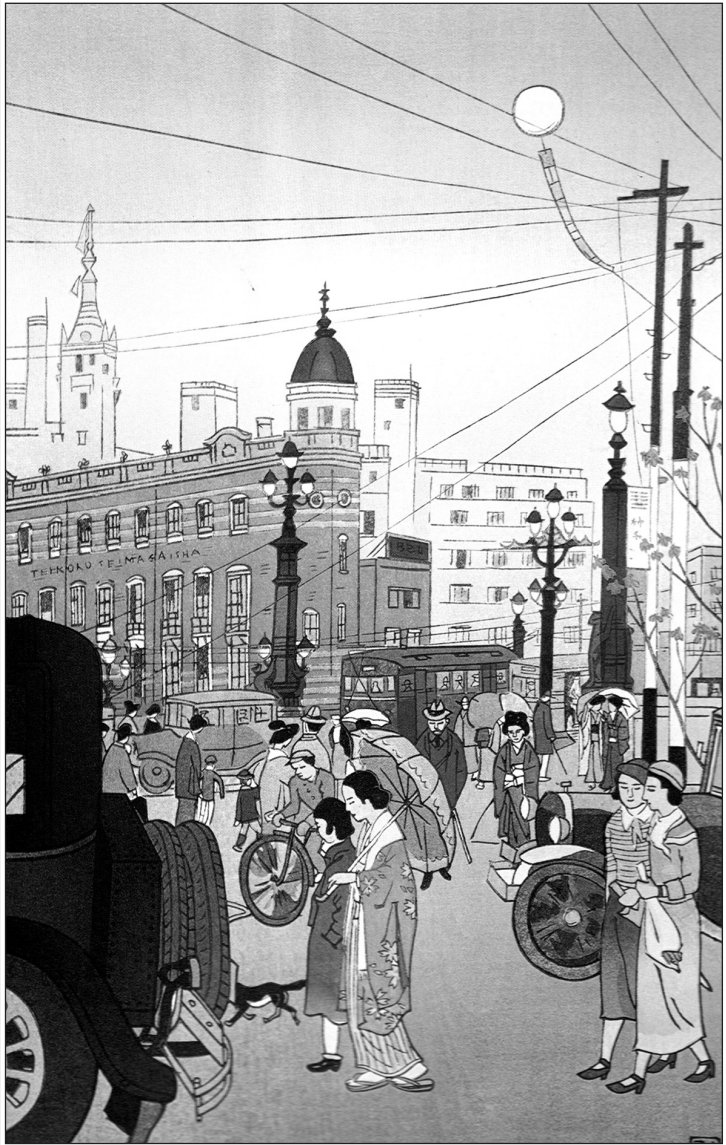
Saito Mokichi in his response to Ishigure protested, accusing his opponent of a narrow-minded vision and leftist excesses, but the course of history, nonetheless, proved that the prophecies of the proletarian writer were grounded enough. The "patriotic" jingoistic poetry of Saito Mokichi, who admired the genius of Hitler, and other poets of the *Araragi*, who glorified Japan's military expansion in Asia, has become one of the shameful chapters in the history of Japanese literature of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, the leftist poets rallied under the "League of Proletarian Tanka Poetry" (Puroretaria tanka renmei) in order to implement some radical reforms in the world of *tanka* poetry. Classical *tanka* poetry, including all the achievements of the leading poets of the early twentieth century, was declared

the legacy of bourgeois culture, which had to be replaced in no time by innovative class-oriented verse. It was to be replaced by new poems in the form of *tanka*, glorifying the struggle of the proletariat and the bright future of mankind. The beacon of the bright future was seen in Russia — the country of the victorious proletariat. As it had happened in Russia, a Proletcult style extreme emphasis on the ideological aspect led to the erosion of poetic content, which turned mostly into propaganda slogans. There was no place for contemplation and deep feelings in this new poetry of short propagandist slogans and declarations.

In order to emphasize their novelty, the majority of the proletarian *tanka* authors abandoned the traditional meter and rhythmic pattern, turning to the short improvisations based on free verse diction, which even remotely did not resemble *tanka*. The ideological extremism, which, in its turn, provoked repressions from the part of the government, eventually led proletarian *tanka* to a crisis. In 1932, only two and a half years after its foundation, the League of Proletarian Tanka Poetry broke up. Gradually, the interest in experimentation faded away, and readers lost interest in *tanka* of free style, and the rebellious poets themselves began to look in a different way at their social environment. Some of them would turn to the traditional poetry of nature, others would join the camp of the fundamentalists and start to glorify the military heroism of the superior Yamato race on the battlefields of Asia. Some others just stepped away from poetry. The fate of the talented *tanka* poet Okuma Nobuyuki (1893–1977) is a typical example of a short-lived infatuation with ideological art.

One of Toki Aika's enthusiastic followers, Okuma Nobuyuki was more proactive in politics than his teacher. When Aika founded in 1913 the left-wing *tanka* journal *Seikatsu to geijutsu* (*Life and Art*), Okuma Nobuyuki became one of the most prolific writers contributing to it in the genre of social poetry. During his years at Tokyo Higher School of Commerce, the young poet diligently studied Marxism, which left a visible impact on his works which fit into the mainstream of proletarian literature:



<p>Toki no koe sora ni doyomitsu torikakomu keikantai wa kusa ni yasurau</p>	<p><i>The battle cry is rising high to the sky — and nearby the members of the police cordon are taking a rest on the grass...</i></p>
--	--

* * *

*Citizens
are calmly watching
the Mayday rally —
several hundred men
in the shadow of the trees...*

As a true proletarian poet, Okuma Nobuyuki uses a form of a conventional five-line poem (in which a traditional rhythmic pattern is broken) to present impressive photographic sketches with a strong social orientation.

After traveling to Europe in 1929, Okuma Nobuyuki completely liberalized his style, actually destroying the boundaries between *tanka* and free verse. Many of his poems are more like dim prosaic sketches:

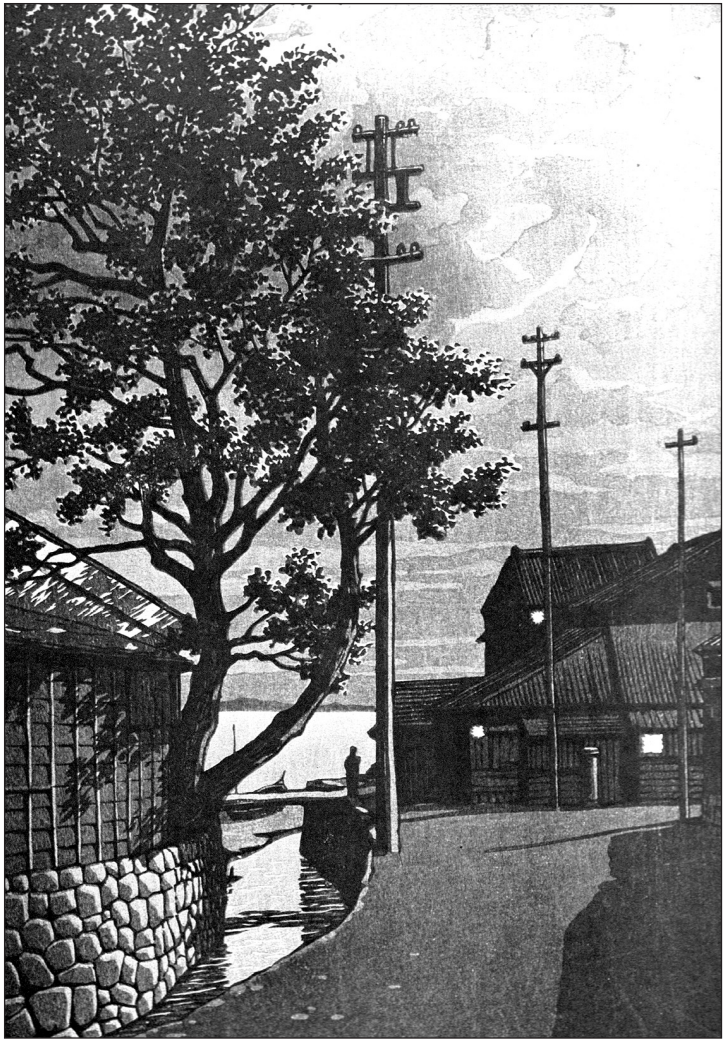
*Everything
is turned upside down.
Now one cried out,
another one cried out —
the echo comes from all sides...*

The author's only book of poetry, *The Collection of tanka by Okuma Nobuyuki (Okuma Nobuyuki kashu)*, was published in 1933. The decline of the Proletarian Literature movement, which was a great shock to the poet, made him give up writing *tanka*. Later, he returned to his main occupation, and for the rest of his life taught economics at several major universities.

During the war most of the *tanka* poets, yielding to nationalist frenzy, actively collaborated with the militaristic regime. When, with the blessing of the authorities, a collection

of jingoistic *tanka* called *One Hundred New Poems of a Hundred Poets*, was released, the pillars of *waka* poetry of the twentieth century headed by Saito Mokichi were among the authors. Some poets like Toki Aika, Shaku Choku, and a few more renowned masters never openly joined the rightist movement, but they had to keep silence under the threat of severe repercussions.

Nevertheless, the slogans of the proletarian *tanka* poetry were not buried in the early 1930s. A decade and a half later, when Japan would lie in ruins after the crushing defeat and the people of the occupied country would be in a state of deep frustration, many proletarian poets returned to the world of literature and contributed to the establishment of democratic post-war *tanka* movement.



THE POST-WAR TANKA REVIVAL

The *tanka* revival began shortly after the war. The *Araragi* magazine, closed by the authorities in 1944, resumed its activities. A group of young Romanticists in 1947 tried to revive the *Myojo* journal. In the postwar years, the Democratic Poetry Movement (*minshushugi shi undo*), which had introduced *tanka* and *haiku* to the broad masses of workers, employees and even peasants, led to the erosion of the canon and the apparent decline in the quality of both classic poetry genres. The professional poetry literally drowned in an amateurish gush, for which thematic, lexical, and metric restrictions were no longer important. The response of the true connoisseurs of *tanka* manifested itself in a sharp turn to the classics. As a result, there was a crisis of the genre in many ways similar to the one that occurred in the first years after the Meiji Restoration.

One of the poets of the post-war generation, Okai Takashi, expressed the general concerns of his fellow writers:

Our efforts to enrich the poetic vocabulary selecting the words from the modern Japanese language are necessary, in my opinion, to make the *tanka* of our days truly modern. On the other hand, I am sure, the conviction that Japanese, which we use as a spoken language, can be in its present form the *tanka* language as well, is a misjudgment and an errand, presenting a threat to the viability of the genre. The poets from the “masses” enthusiastically accept the clarity and simplicity of everyday speech, but this kind of vocabulary, used in a poem, reveals a surprising trend: it loses its force — perhaps, because these words are rooted in prose. [29, v. 7, 123]

Professor of Kyoto University Kuwabara Takeo in his article "Secondary Art" ("Dai ni geijutsu," 1946) pronounced a severe verdict for the traditional genres. The author in this article presented to the readers the results of a didactic experiment. He distributed among his colleagues at the department of Literature fifteen anonymous *haiku*, ten of which belonged to the prominent poets of the new time and five to amateurs. None of the respondents could even sort out the poems into two parts. This outcome led Kuwabara to a pessimistic conclusion: the evaluation criteria of *haiku* as well as *tanka* in our time has been lost; all judgments are formed only on the basis of a poet's reputation and his literary name, and if it is true, keeping on composing *haiku* and *tanka* for "illiterate" readers does not make any sense.

Many poets and critics expressed their complete solidarity with Professor Kuwabara's opinion. The decline and a possible total demise of *tanka* in the late 1940s — early 1950s was also predicted by the prominent scholar Odagiri Hideo in his article "The Conditions for the Existence of Song" ("Uta no joken"), by the critic Shirai Yoshimi in his articles "Farewell to Tanka" ("Tanka e no ketsubetsu") and "The Issue of the National Revolution in the Populist Mind" ("Minzoku no chisei kakumei no mondai"), and by the famous *gendashi* poet Ono Tozaburo in his article "The Enslaved Rhythm" ("Dorei no inritsu"). The authors of these works, like their predecessors in the middle of the Meiji period, called for the doing away with *tanka*, a genre that had supposedly become completely obsolete, and moving on to a more promising poetry of new forms.

In response, a storm of protest broke out. One of the best *tanka* masters, Kimata Osamu, wrote: "We will try to overcome the feudal limitations of the *tanka* world and, relying on the rise of post-war democratic literature, to accomplish the revolution in our poetry" [176, 47]. Another prominent *tanka* poet, Tsuchiya Bunmei, tried to pacify the extremist wing of the opposition:

I admit that present *tanka* are primitive, but for all that I am far from thinking that a literary genre, so close to the life source of the nation, will be gone forever. I am sure that it

will exist in society no matter what the social order of the society might be. Moreover, I am sure, *tanka*, this poetry with an unpretentious basis, will fill the yawning gaps between commercial literature and life. [176, 31–32]

Despite the pessimistic forecasts and categorical statements of the critics about the degeneration and demise of *tanka* heard throughout the twentieth century, the classic genre displayed a remarkable tenacity. In the postwar years professional *tanka*, contrary to expectations, once more gradually started to gain a strong foothold in Japan. The defeat in the war and the subsequent U.S. occupation made many intellectuals seek solace in the classical tradition. The crisis of moral values of the pre-war period, the collapse of the myths about the “divine chosen Yamato race,” and its civilizing mission in Asia gave a new birth to “eternal” traditions, so dear to the heart of every Japanese, to the spiritual treasures of the nation, one of which was, undoubtedly, *tanka* poetry with its legacy of more than a thousand years.

Immediately after the war, in the autumn of 1945, the All-Japan Society of Tanka Poets (Nihon kajin kyokai) was founded. In February 1946 it began to publish the new journal *Jinmin tanka* (*People's Tanka*). The core of the society included the former members of the pre-war section and a corresponding editorial board of the journal *Tanka hyoron* (*Tanka Review*), headed by Watanabe Junzo. Their ideological aspirations were rooted in the theory of “proletarian literature.” The society, with its slogan “For creation of highly artistic *tanka*, based on life experience and feelings of the popular masses,” later became one of the initiators of the popular Democratic Literature movement.

Another trend in post-war poetry was presented by The New Association of Tanka Poets (Shin kajin shudan) founded in February 1946. It was headed by the distinguished poets Kondo Yoshimi, Tsuchia Bunmei's disciple and successor, and Miya Shuji, a talented disciple of Kitahara Hakushu. The association was not arranged as a group or a sect, i.e. as

a traditional “school.” The emergence of The New Association of Tanka Poets marked the transition from the conservative hierarchy system of “schools” to a free community of like-minded associates. The journal *Shin Nihon kajin* (*Tanka Poets of New Japan*) — which can also be translated as *New Japanese Tanka Poets* — became the mouthpiece of the association. In the activities of the association participated mainly intellectuals who aspired to comprehend and describe the tragic fate of their generation within the framework of the classical genre. Among them were Takayasu Kuniyo, Kagawa Susumu, Maeda Tooru, and many other poets whose works, despite the differences of their individual manners, are often compared by the Japanese critics to the prose of the “deceived generation” of the first post-war wave. All these poets have defined the major path of development of *tanka* during the first post-war decades.

KONDO YOSHIMI

Kondo Yoshimi (1913–2006), who was born into the family of a bank employee in Korea, first came to Japan at the age of twelve, studied in Hiroshima, then graduated from Tokyo Institute of Technology and began his career in poetry as one of the authors of the *Araragi* group. He got a job at a Japanese company in Seoul, but soon conscription began. He was sent to fight in China, where he was wounded, got infected with tuberculosis, but survived and returned home. The bitter experience of the war convinced the young man of the need to write civic poetry, turning the word into a weapon of humanism to make society better.

“Looking at the reality around us, we have to imagine what it must be!” — the poet claimed (quot. in [214, xxx]).

Politics interfere in Kondo Yoshimi’s poetry no less powerfully than in the works of the pre-war proletarian writers. Setting an example for hundreds and thousands of his followers, he composed poems about Hiroshima, the threat of a nuclear war, the war in Korea, protest declarations against

*Kondo
Yoshimi*



近藤
芳美

the Japan-US Security Treaty, against the war in Vietnam. The political involvement is a credo of his work and it is exactly that principle that defines the profile of *Shin nihon kajin* group. The terrible experience of the past is projected on the present. However, unlike his predecessors in the 1920–1930s, Kondo Yoshimi, a poet of refined culture and powerful intellect, did not restrict his writings to the ideological propaganda pamphlets and always strove to implant an element of rational thought in his poems:

yo wa agetshi
shiso no naka ni
mamorikite
ima koso senso o
nikumu kokoro yo

*When the whole world
was crazy with ideology,
I kept it inside,
but now I will pour out of my heart
all my hatred for the war!*

*I was raised in an environment
where there was no place for religion —
only for culture.
So in the name of what faith
Do I have to fight in this war?!*

Forced to work for food at a U.S. military base, not being too sympathetic to Marxism, he writes to console himself:

*I work with them
but we speak different languages.
In the time of idleness
maybe I will go
and buy the "Communist Manifesto"...*

However, the abundance of social and political poems in the works by KondoYoshimi and his associates was more a tribute to time than a true vocation. Kondo's landscape and love poetry are good evidence of this fact.

The combination of civic poetry with intimate lyricism, poetry of protest with poetry of contemplation, is the hallmark of a new generation.

In the works of the new generation of poets in the postwar years we can hardly see a strong demarcation between the civic trend of tanka, rooted in the Democratic Literature movement and, later, in proletarian poetry of 1920–1930s, on the one hand, and the "pure poetry," on the other hand. The most talented poets would seek to preserve the lyrical pathos even in the most explicit examples of political agitation. We may assume that the fundamental differences between the works by the best postwar tanka poets are reduced to a quantitative difference. In the poems by the leftist poets the socio-political component is represented by a larger number of poems; in the poems of "pure lyricists" — by a smaller number. Whereas in the past all tanka poets could be categorized either as socially proactive or mostly neutral, in the post-war period this division was gone.

MIYA SHUJI

The poet Miya Shuji (1912–1986) was known among his friends as Miya Shujinovich. It was believed that it sounded as real Russian. This nickname he got mostly for his bushy thick beard, which would make him look like a Russian

Miya
Shuji



宮
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peasant. The beard was not a whim, but rather a sad necessity: due to progressive rheumatism, Miya Shuji could barely move his fingers, so he found it difficult to shave. The poet himself liked the nickname because he was an admirer and avid reader of Russian literature, especially Puskin's poetry. Young Shiji was deeply impressed after he had read at school a translation of *Eugene Onegin*. He would read and re-read Pushkin, inspired by the images of the great Russian bard. Many years later, he dedicated to *Eugene Onegin* several heartfelt poems. Here is one of them:

Kash no ha no	<i>Oh this unforgettable</i>
Ka no horetsu yo	<i>smell of the oak leaves!</i>
akogarete	<i>Possessed by dreams</i>
wakaki hi yomishi	<i>in the days of my youth</i>
"Ebugeni Onegin" I read "Evgeny Onegin"	

Miya Shuji (real name Miya Hajime) was born in the northern prefecture of Niigata in the family of the owner of a small bookstore. After school, he had to help his father, but at the age of twenty he could stand it no more and fled to Tokyo, where he earned his living by delivering newspapers and doing occasional errands. Fate was kind to the young poet: in 1933

he was accepted as a disciple by the patriarch of the Japanese poetic world, Kitahara Hakushu. He published the debut *tanka* in his journal *Tama*, and after a while became a literary secretary of the master. It was then that for the first time Shuji seriously took to writing. However, the poetic euphoria would not last long; perhaps tired of serving as a scribe for an aging authoritarian master who was gradually losing sight due to an incurable eye disease, Shuji resigned and went to work for a big steel company. The same year he was drafted and sent to China, where he spent the remaining four years of war. After demobilization at the end of his service in 1943, he returned to Japan and got married, but, as it turned out, it was a bit premature, since in 1945 he was again drafted. Throughout the long time spent in the army, he secretly had been writing anti-war poems, which were published in the first postwar years.

Wide recognition came to Miya Shuji in 1946 with the release of his *tanka* collection *Chicken Litter* (*Gunkei*). Working at a steel company, he endured deprivations and hardships of the post-war years, reinterpreting the world together with his generation — the writers of the “first post-war wave.” Soon the poet’s other books were released: *Late Summer*, *Japanese Elegy*, *The Songs of Many Nights*. In 1952 he became one of the leaders of a new *tanka* group, “Kosumosu” (“Cosmos”) and the editor of the journal with the same name.

From the early 1960s, Miya Shuji, continuing to publish one collection after another, became one of the most renowned *tanka* poets of his time, a recognized leader of the neo-realist trend who received many literary awards.

Miya Shuji’s poetry is complicated and heterogeneous. It is impossible to fit it into any trend, stream or school. There are lovely romantic miniatures among his *tanka*:

hiruma mishi	<i>That red color of the flowers</i>
koka no akaki	<i>that I have seen in the daytime</i>
hana no iro wo	<i>on the branches of the mulberry trees —</i>
akogare no gotoku	<i>I kept them as an aspiration</i>
yoru omoi ori	<i>for my night-time dreams...</i>

* * *

*Not a penny in my pocket,
I am singing out a song
in the frosty night —
anyway, there's no one around
to hear of my miserable life...*

We can also find some nice everyday sketches, scenes from the life of a peasant household:

*Now marching in
from the shadows to a spot in the sun —
a chicken brood
is stepping in tact
with a great number of legs...*

His poems of the war years present a rare example of a harsh and courageous realism in the *tanka* world, which at that time was mostly focused on glorifying the greatness of the Empire and worshiping the emperor. Shuji, who had gone through the hell of war as a private, would not write about the triumphs of Japanese arms, but about the terrible everyday life on the front line:

*Shells are coming —
and it seems that each and every one
is aimed at me —
I am lying in a shallow trench
covering my glasses with my body...*

* * *

tatakai no	<i>A short quiet break</i>
sanaka shizumoru	<i>in the frenzy of the battle —</i>
toki arite	<i>and in this silence</i>
niwatori nakeri	<i>a rooster cried —</i>
osoroshiki sabishi	<i>so terribly sadly...</i>

The sharpness and inner strength of these military scenes presented by a witness and participant in the greatest tragedy are unparalleled in Japanese poetry. No wonder, the poet, with his tragic war experience, followed attentively political events of the postwar years. A large poetry cycle of a distinct social orientation presents his comments on the Tokyo Tribunal hearings, which were broadcast on the radio:

ootoo ni	<i>Now in the distance</i>
yokuyo hikuki	<i>some words in Japanese</i>
nihongo yo	<i>barely audible —</i>
toyo-no kurasa o	<i>somebody's voice sounding</i>
ayumi koshi koe	<i>out of the darkness of the East...</i>

Later Miya Shuji responded in his poems to all major events of international politics: the suppression of the national liberation uprising in Hungary by the Soviet troops, the Japan-US Security Treaty, the Olympic Games of 1964 in Tokyo, etc. He considered it his civic duty to give evaluation in his poems to the events happening in the world, but was quite skeptical about public organizations and governments, believing only in the strength and mind of the common man. "All the orders are given by those who are not affected by the accomplished changes," the poet wrote, "or, in other words, by those who know that they will not suffer from these changes, and subsequently do not feel any remorse or shame for what they have done" [quot. in 214, xxx].

Miya Shuji's civil stand reflects the mood of many intellectuals in Japan in the first post-war decades, torn by social contradictions. However, in Shuji's late collections prevails nostalgic poetry of nature with the philosophical implications and post-impressionist color:

hana oete	<i>Having lost its petals,</i>
kuroki mi taruru	<i>full of black seeds,</i>
himawari wa	<i>this sunflower</i>
onaji shisei ni	<i>all day long</i>
hitohi niwa ni	<i>keeps the same posture...</i>

A lengthy incurable disease that caused severe physical sufferings became the topic of numerous works by the poet, in which we hear the echoes of the Buddhist concept of *mujo* (impermanence of the world).

sutaretaru	<i>This good-for- nothing body</i>
karada yokotae	<i>prostrated on the sickbed</i>
biwa no ki no	<i>like an old withered leaf</i>
furuki ochiba no	<i>of a loquat tree —</i>
gotoki kanashimi	<i>oh, how sad!</i>

Until his last days, Miya Shuji continued to write poems, which combine the classic tone and modernity, paving the way from the pre-war *tanka* poetry to the poetry of the late twentieth century.

IKEDA SUMIYOSHI

Ikeda Sumiyoshi (1925–1996) was one of the talented bards of the leftist camp. The poet was born in 1925. After the war he graduated from the Faculty of Letters at Tokyo University and for his entire life worked as a correspondent for the newspaper *Asahi*. Ikeda's democratic convictions were reflected both in his activities as a journalist and in his civic poetry. The recipient of many prizes, he combines in poetry lyrical notes with publicist zeal, and found many admirers of his journalistic style during the 1960s — 1970s, mostly among the scientists and technical intellectuals, workers and employees, worried by the acute social problems. The maximum engagement of poetry in social life becomes the key to its success at the time when the whole Japanese society feels its involvement in the struggle for a better life (the self-awareness that has completely vanished in the contemporary consumerist Japanese society of postindustrial prosperity, respect for civil rights, class peace,

and almost idyllic social harmony). An everyday engagement of the passionate journalist in the social issues was the basis of Ikeda's poetry and of many other authors from the leftist camp as well:

*Red flags
turned black, wet from the rain —
the rally of the workers
is finishing with the slogans,
the best slogans in the world...*

* * *

*An American battleship
is released from the wharfs —
it departs victoriously
to the country of registration
to the sounds of the American anthem...*

Hundreds of professional poets and common people would write thousands and thousands of such poems in the early postwar decades. The authors sincerely believed them to be high poetry, the critics seriously analyzed their merits and awarded literary prizes, the readers seriously read and appreciated them. No need to say, that they have now become a part of history, forever representing the signs of their turbulent period. At the same time, Ikeda Sumiyoshi also wrote other poems that will perhaps remain for a long time:

*Over the burnt soil
buds are swelling again
as if nothing happened —
a white butterfly
soars upon a hill...*

SATO SATARO

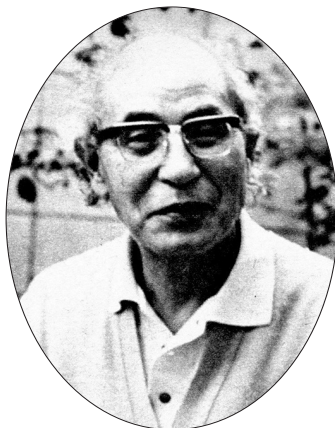
One of the best poets of the second half of the twentieth century, Sato Sataro (1909–1987) was born and raised in the mountainous Miyagi Prefecture. Having turned sixteen, the youngster left for Tokyo in search of fortune and literary success. He got a job as a day laborer in the famous publishing house Iwanami, where he would work for more than twenty years. A year later, Sataro discovered the *Araragi* group and began to contribute little by little to the poetic journal, mastering the theory and practice of the “reflection of nature” method.

After make the acquaintance of Saito Mokichi, Sataro became a disciple of the distinguished master of *shasei* poetry and stayed with Mokichi for many years, not showing much activity in the field of literature. Nearly fifteen years passed between his joining the *Araragi* group and the publication of his first poetry collection, *The Way (Hodo)*, (1940). His *tanka* of the pre-war period bear the imprint of the strong influence of Mokichi’s poetry, although it reveals also the individuality of the author, who was attracted to a bright parallelism and expressive counterpoint. This tendency in Sataro’s works would gradually grow stronger, giving to his poems a special lyrical tone:

kurushimite	<i>It's a hard life,</i>
ikitsutsu ore ba	<i>but the loquat bloom is over —</i>
biwa no hana	<i>so now</i>
owarite fuyu no	<i>we are entering</i>
gohan to nari	<i>the second half of the winter...</i>

tsurezure no	<i>Out of the blue</i>
kakaru wabishisa	<i>I feel this melancholy of loneliness —</i>
fuyu hi sasu	<i>under the winter sun</i>
michi no tooku ni	<i>far down the road</i>
inu ga nete iru	<i>a dog is sleeping...</i>

Sato
Sataro



佐藤佐太郎

With a special accuracy Sato Sataro draws his urban sketches, which became classics of urban *tanka*, preserving all the qualities typical of *shasei* poetry:

chikadoo wo	<i>In the underground passage</i>
hito murete yuku	<i>crowds of people are flocking —</i>
ono-ono wa	<i>and I feel the smell</i>
yuube no yuki ni	<i>of their clothes</i>
nureshi hito no ka are	<i>wet from the evening snow...</i>

taema naku	<i>Relentlessly</i>
neon no honoo	<i>in a street</i>
tatsu michi ni	<i>full of neon lights</i>
tama-tama inu no	<i>a dog strolls back and forth —</i>
ayumu wa wabishi	<i>such a sad view...</i>

Sato Sataro's post-war books confirmed his reputation as a soulful poet and a virtuoso of the "reflection of nature," combining a classic simplicity with philosophical sagacity and psychological depth of the image:

fuyu no hi no	<i>On a winter day</i>
me ni mitsuru umi	<i>the boundless sea</i>
aru toki wa	<i>before my eyes</i>
hitotsu no nami ni	<i>suddenly was hidden</i>
umi wa kakururu	<i>by one enormous wave...</i>

* * *

urei naku	<i>Why should I grieve?</i>
waga hibi wa are	<i>The days of my life are passing like this.</i>
kobai no	<i>The red petals of the plum tree</i>
hana sugite yori	<i>have fallen —</i>
futatabi fuyu ki	<i>and now again winter comes...</i>

MAEKAWA SAMIO

Maekawa Samio (1903–1990) contributed several interesting pages to the history of *tanka* of the twentieth century. Coming from a family of a wealthy landowner in Nara prefecture, he inherited a large fortune, which allowed him not to think about earning his daily bread and to devote himself to composing *tanka*. After graduating from Tokyo University in the mid-1920s Maekawa, who had been writing *tanka* since his school years, actively contributed to the metropolitan poetic journals, participated in the innovative associations of *tanka* poets, mastered the new poetic techniques, and developed his own style in which the notorious “reflection of nature” was often mixed with the surrealist grotesque:

tokonoma ni	<i>I watch in tears,</i>
matsuraete aru	<i>imagining how this dream</i>
waga kubi o	<i>comes true:</i>
utsutsu naraneba	<i>they have put my head on display</i>
naite miteishi	<i>in the tokonoma alcove ...</i>

Maekawa
Samio



前
川
佐
美
雄

However, with the advent of the “period of darkness” during the tumultuous 1930s and 1940s the poet’s playful mood was almost entirely replaced by the writing of patriotic jingoistic poems in praise of the Shinto gods, the emperor, and the triumph of the Japanese forces in the Pacific. These kinds of poems together with landscape sketches fill his collections of the war years: *The Land of Yamato* (*Yamato*), *The Cloud Tempyo* (*Tempyouin*), *Wonderful Japan* (*Yamato shi uruwashi*).

This nationalist euphoria, after the tragedy of defeat and the American occupation, changed to a long-term depression. Economic hardships now were added to the moral sufferings, as the government had confiscated all the lands of the Maekawa family and handed them over to the farmers as a result of the land reform. A few years later, however, the poet managed to overcome the past, to renounce his former mistakes, and get back to writing *tanka*.

mune no uchi	<i>Oh how I would like</i>
ichido kara ni shite	<i>once to clean my heart,</i>
ano aoki	<i>emptying it out completely —</i>
suisen no ha o	<i>and then to fill it</i>
tsumekamishi mitashi	<i>with the leaves of daffodils!..</i>

His new works were highly appreciated by the critics. He was awarded several literary prizes and not long before his death became a member of the Japanese Academy of Arts.

Maekawa Samio's late poems range from exquisite lyrics to sketches of trivial daily sketches, which, however, get a different tone turning into a long time poetic diary:

*Oh how foolish I am!
 Meaning to get my umbrella repaired,
 on the note for the errand boy
 I wrote the address
 of a bicycle shop...*

* * *

*Wiping the crumbs from the table
 with a bunch of blue feathers
 from that very pheasant
 that was plucked and eaten
 the other day...*

The poet's worldview is extraordinarily eccentric and paradoxical. His daily poems obviously bear the direct imprint of *haiku* aesthetics, including its humorous version *senryu* verse, which present a typical "inverted" perception of reality. In his best works, Maekawa reaches a genuine Zen comprehension of the moments of eternity:

kusabana no	<i>My room</i>
nioi michiiru	<i>is full of the fragrance</i>
heiya nareba	<i>of the field flowers —</i>
sukoshi hanayakana	<i>and I thought of death</i>
shi o omoitari	<i>coming in a nice disguise...</i>

NAKAJO FUMIKO

The poetry by Nakajo Fumiko (1922–1954) represents an example of gloomy existential psychological realism. The poetess took to writing *tanka* mostly due to the misfortunes in her personal life and a developing severe disease — breast cancer. Infatuated with *tanka* poetry in the first post-war years, Nakajo Fumiko gained popularity at the end of her life, in 1954, when a selection of her poems won the first prize at the All Japan *Tanka* Competition. The future Nobel laureate Kawabata Yasunari wrote a heartfelt foreword to her poems. The collection, *The Loss of a Breast (Chibusa sonshitsu)*, came out in print a few months before the poet's death. The second collection, *Prototypes of Flowers (Hana no genkei)*, was released posthumously in 1955.

Nakajo Fumiko's *tanka* present the scenes of her joyless relationship with her husband, who was an alcoholic and a drug addict, her pessimistic view of her children, and her horrible sensations in connection with the incurable disease. But in this hopeless pessimism, flowing through the mind of a young woman, we hear a "quiet and sad melody of humanity".

*Packs of sleeping pills
in the bedroom here and there —
day after day
my husband sleeps here
in an endless nightmare...*

* * *

*In my arms
I am holding a baby,
the fruit of my sorrows —
such a heavy burden
that cannot be measured...*

Nakajo
Fumiko



中
城
ふ
み
子

* * *

*As a remedy for insomnia
the night offers me
a toad, a black dog,
a drowned man,
and other things like that...*

Many of Nakajo Fumiko's *tanka* were written in a cancer clinic. This fact only adds to the psychological background, enhancing the gloomy symbolism of the imagery.

SAITO FUMI

Saito Fumi (1909–2002) inherited her love of poetry from her father Saito Ryu, an army general and a prominent *waka* master. However, it would be incorrect to say that she had inherited her father's talent, because Saito Fumi's talent was immeasurably greater in scale. Her poetry does not fit into the framework of the traditional schools and presents an example of original, purely feminine philosophical lyricism in the *tanka* world.

Saito
Fumi



齋藤史

Fumi was born in Tokyo, but spent her childhood in the south, in Kumamoto, where his father had been transferred. She began writing poetry early, attending the poetry sessions held regularly by general Saito at his house — first as a “little hostess” and then as an equal participant. Her traditional classical education and great erudition helped her to integrate easily into the literary milieu. At the age of twenty, she published a large selection of poems in a *tanka* anthology edited and released by her father. After that she extensively contributed to the poetry magazines, almanacs, and anthologies, but did not hurry to publish her own collections. Her debut book, *Songs of the Dew* (*Gyoka*), which reflected in its subtle romantic imagery the anxiety and joy of the pre-war generation, was published only in 1940.

Meanwhile, Fumi’s personal life was full of troubles. In 1936 her father was arrested on charges of abetting the military rebellion of some young officers. The prosperous life of a large wealthy family was gone forever. During the war she had to move out of burning Tokyo with her husband and two children to the mountainous prefecture of Nagano and settle there for a few years, earning her daily bread. However, Fumi not for a single day would stop writing. The anxieties and worries of the wartime were recorded in her lyrical diary, which was

transformed into the book *Where the Song Flies* (*Uta no yukue*, 1953). In her next book, *The Mysterious Village* (*Missa buraku*, 1968), the poetess discovered a new vision of nature, which was influenced by the medieval aesthetics of *yugen* — expressing the concealed mystic meaning of surrounding phenomena .

In the 1970 and 1980s, compelled to take care for years of her sick, infirm mother and her bedridden paralyzed husband, Saito Fumi stubbornly continued writing poems of a high lyrical intensity, having received one by one several literary awards for her new books. Her major works include ten volumes of *tanka*, a novel, a book of essays, and a handbook on *waka* writing.

Saito Fumi's poetry features an ability to "see the unseen and hear the unheard," to convey in words the voices of nature:

nenrin ni	<i>Bugs are nibbling</i>
fukaku kuinu	<i>deep inside the age rings</i>
mushi mo ite	<i>of the trees —</i>
kodachi no kareru	<i>the silence of the mountains</i>
yama no shizukesa	<i>in the withered grove...</i>

* * *

horobitaru	<i>When I think</i>
waga utsusemi o	<i>what will my flesh turn into</i>
omou toki	<i>when I die</i>
kurayami tooku	<i>the sound of a distant stream</i>
nagareno oto su	<i>comes from the darkness...</i>

Saito Fumi did not accept the widespread concept of the "reflection of nature," which Masaoka Shiki's successors advocate both before the war and after the war. She has chosen her own way in poetry, combining deep realism of the imagery with emotional metaphorical comprehension of the world:

*We have to live
in this world where the brute force
appears as Beauty —
day and night I am singing
only lullabies...*

* * *

*A white hare
came down from the snowy mountains
to our valley —
and now he is just a dead body,
his eyes wide open...*

* * *

*Snow is falling
endlessly filling with it
the mountain lake —
and a dark greenish world
is hidden somewhere underneath...*

TSUKAMOTO KUNIO

Tsukamoto Kunio (b. 1922) occupies a special place in the constellation of the modernist poets of the post-war wave. His debut *tanka* collection, *The Sea Burial* (*Suiso monogatari*, 1951), was received by the critics coldly. Only Mishima Yukio, a brilliant novelist and playwright, highly praised Tsukamoto's poems, asserting that the author managed to revive the aesthetic perception and refined taste that most poets had lost in the turmoil of the post-war reforms. As Mishima had predicted, the aspiring young man shortly achieved a wide recognition, first as a *tanka* poet, whose works became a model of innovative aesthetics, and later as the author of successful historical novels.

Tsukamoto Kunio graduated from university with the intention to take up business and trade, but soon it became clear that his interests lay in the fields of poetry, calligraphy, and music. During the war, he was drafted and served in the Navy. The experience of those years evoked in the poet a strong aversion to violence and made him think about the role of humanistic teachings in the history of mankind. Later, he wrote

Tsukamoto
Kunio



塚本邦男

novels about Leonardo Da Vinci, Jesus Christ, the Medieval Japanese emperor Gotoba, and other great historical figures of the past.

Another important facet of Tsukamoto Kunio's activity is presented in his critical articles on modern poetry and in his fundamental literary research on the poetry of the *tanka* grand master Saito Mokichi, whom he adored and worshipped.

Tsukamoto Kunio's poems barely fall into the *tanka* category and upon closer examination do not reveal any influence of the *Araragi* concepts. Many of them are close to the modernist "short poems" (*tanshi*), with a shade of the surrealist grotesque, still preserving the traditional rhythmic pattern of *tanka*, but going beyond logical ties and preset poetics. As his main requirement, the poet insisted on the "realism of the soul," which would manifest itself in an impulsive enlightenment, in a spontaneous image:

*Hands picking up a rose;
hands holding a gun,
hands caressing a lover.
Hands... Hands — like the hands of the clock
that show 25 o'clock...*

Some “*tanka*” with a touch of cynical skepticism contain a strong erotic component:

jushin no yona	<i>A woman</i>
onna ni yo o	<i>is like a barrel of a gun —</i>
akeru made	<i>till sunrise</i>
ekijo no	<i>I am filling it</i>
kayaku tsumeiki	<i>with a liquid gunpowder...</i>

The majority of Tsukamoto Kunio’s poems are an example of original expressionism, revealing catchy details of urban landscape and creating an array of strange, sometime scary images:

Okujo no	<i>From a small home zoo</i>
juen yori chika	<i>on the roof of the house</i>
sakaba made	<i>to the bar in the basement —</i>
kuroki suidokan	<i>a black water pipe</i>
tsuranukeri	<i>is piercing the building...</i>

* * *

*A summer day
in the country on the brink of collapse.
The glistening head
of an occasional nail
pops up from the asphalt...*

Many of Tsukamoto Kunio’s works remind us of a similar modernist challenge to the establishment presented by Amazawa Taijiro or Shimaoka Shin’s *gendaishi* poems of the same period. Their meaning retreats far into the background giving way to the senseless polysemantic image, which is nothing else but a camouflage for the author’s unrestrained artistic ego:

Kokuto ga	<i>Cocteau is dead.</i>
shini shirogane no	<i>Grey hair rustling in the wind.</i>
kami soyogi	<i>Snow is falling</i>
sakareshi sake no	<i>on the body of a hunchback salmon</i>
niki ni furu yuki	<i>sliced apart...</i>

Though Yukio Mishima argued that the poet “revived a genre close to extinction” (see [208, 79]), it would be more correct to say that Tsukamoto Kunio made a vivisection of the genre, having removed from his *tanka* the last remnants of harmony.

KIMATA OSAMU

One of the best poets of the twentieth century, Kimata Osamu (1906–1983) left his trace in the history of literature of the new times not only by numerous collections of poetry, but also by a number of fundamental studies, summarizing the achievements of *tanka* poetry over the last hundred years. His research on the origin and evolution of modern *tanka* schools tracks the destiny of the classic genre from the Meiji years to the end of the Showa period.

Kimata Osamu, who had graduated from a teacher’s college in Tokyo, became a teacher at a women’s high school. While still a university student, he began composing *kindaishi* and *tanka*. His early poems were published in the journal *Aka tori* (*Red Bird*), edited by Kitahara Hakushu. As Hakushu’s disciple, in 1935 Osamu together with the master entered the editorial board of the poetic journal *Tama* (the name of a place near Tokyo) and became the initiator of an original trend in *tanka* which aimed at the modern renewal of the “style of hidden meaning” (*kindai no yugen tai*), based on the *yugen* concept in expressed in the *Shinkokinwakashu* anthology.

In the late 1930s Osamu continued to write *kindaishi* and *tanka*, publishing mostly the poems of non-traditional forms in the genre of the humanistic poetry of nature. His first *tanka* collection, *High Aspiration* (*Koshi*, 1942), was almost unnoticed, but after the war, in the time of chaos and frustration, Kimata Osamu’s realistic poetry with its rigorous form, emotional restraint, and masculine simplicity, quickly won the readers’ hearts. The collection of 1948, *Winter Chronicles* (*Toreki*), summing up the period of illusions and

Kimata
Osamu



木俣修

disappointments, was recognized as an important event in the *tanka* world. It was followed by the collections *The Speeches of Fallen Leaves* (*Ochiba-no sho*, 1955) and *If you Call — the Echo Responds* (*Yobe ba kodama*, 1964).

After the breakup of the *Tama* journal, which for nearly twenty years had been a bastion of serious poetry in the sea of fluctuating literary fashion, Kimata Osamu became the head of the journal *Keisei* (*Creation*), continuing to work much on the classification and systematization of modern *tanka*. Among his most famous historical and literary studies are the fundamental works *Tanka History of the Meiji Period*, *Tanka History of the Taisho Period*, and *Tanka History of the Showa Period*.

Kimata Osamu's poems, containing specific signs of time and place, have become a chronicle of his life, from the pages of which we can easily restore the basic stages of the poet's biography:

zeraniumu
aka beni to hana no
saku sono ni
natsu ki daigaku no
hiru no beru naru

*On a summer day
in the university garden
where safran and géranium
are now in bloom
the bell sounds at noon...*

* * *

Iwase no ya
fuyu wa miyuki no
ue wataru
shirosagi no mure o
mitsutsu komorinu

*From a lonely retreat
in winter I am watching
a flock of white herons
flying high in the sky
over Iwase plain...*

* * *

yowa ni nokoreru
genko mochite
neshizumaru
michi o yuku

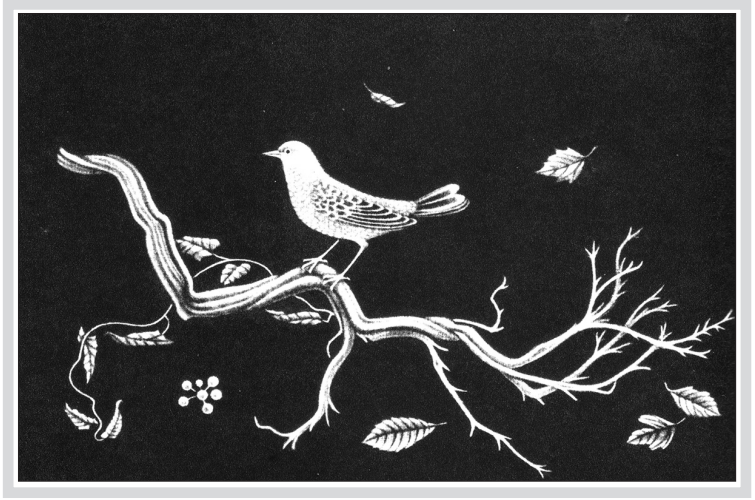
*Late in the night
I walk down
the sleeping road —
bringing the last part of
the manuscript*

posuto no aru tokoro made *to the mail box...*

Among the poet's numerous works, often breaking the conventions of the classical *tanka* pattern, we can find landscape sketches, philosophical reflections, and mourning songs. However, all of them are characterized by a calm narrative tone, embodied in plain realistic imagery. It is this thematic simplicity and the existentialist note that makes Kimata Osamu's poetry so appealing to the heart of a modern reader, usually not inclined to either passionate outpourings or excessive philosophical discourse.

nebusoku ni
hito yo okuran
sadame tomo
hokori o fukeri
yowa no tsukue ni

*Perhaps that's how
I am to live the rest of my life —
spending nights without sleep.
After midnight
I am sweeping dust from the table...*



TANKA FOR THE OTAKU GENERATION

Nowadays, the interest in *tanka* is not fading in Japan. The classic anthologies and works by the poets of the Meiji-Taisho-early Showa period are being issued over and over again in new editions, and four large poetic *tanka* magazines are being released on a regular basis. Several hundred *tanka* journals and almanacs regularly publish the works by tens of thousands of poets, professionals and amateurs (who at present hardly can be distinguished). Annually *tanka* competitions are held and numerous prizes are awarded. A public television channel even has a program devoted to *tanka*. In 1980, a huge anthology of contemporary *tanka* poetry called *Manyoshu of the Showa Period (Showa Manyoshu)* was released. It consisted of twenty volumes and fifty thousand poems. Soon it was followed by *The Complete Collection of Modern Tanka (Gendai tanka zenshu)* in fifteen large volumes.

Anthologies of the “on the occasion of X” also continue to be released. Thus, three months after the earthquake in Kobe in 1995, which claimed the lives of five and a half thousand people, sixty eight local *tanka* authors published *Out of the City Ruins (Gareki no machi kara)*, a collection of live poetic sketches of the terrible disaster.

Judging by the publications, the interest of the public at large in *tanka* is as high as it has ever been. However, this is not the case. The cultural background has changed. The readers and, especially the younger generation today, have very little knowledge about classical *tanka* poetry. The contingent of the *tanka* writers and *tanka* readers (and as well, respectively, *haiku*) is restricted to a specific, although fairly wide, range of people who are really fond of the classic poetic genre. Still,

their understanding of poetry is much different from that of the older generations.

The municipal and prefectural associations of *tanka* and *haiku* poets are actively functioning. Thousands culture centers across the country include the clubs and sections of *tanka* and *haiku* poetry, along with the clubs of the English language, embroidery, folk songs, and table tennis. The range of potential readers is quite broad and perhaps amounts to many hundreds of thousands of *tanka* fans, although it does not mean at all that the circulation of modern *tanka* collections can exceed several hundred copies. It is for those poetry lovers that the books and magazines are released, the contests held, and awards for poetry given so often. The number of authors writing *tanka* today is difficult to assess accurately, but they for certain should be counted in the tens of thousands. Unfortunately, tens of millions in Japan are not interested in *tanka* (and *haiku*) any more...

One of the main reasons for the decline of interest in the original national poetic tradition since the second half of the Showa period is a drastic change in the language regulations. After the post-war years, the Japanese language underwent significant reformation. The mandatory minimum for *kanji* characters has been significantly reduced. In the new program, study of the classical literary language (*bungo*, also called *kobun*) has been reformed and extremely simplified. The study of classical literature in schools has been reduced to short fragmentary random excerpts from a few classics, mainly with a translation into modern language and comments.

As a result, beginning in the 1960s, new generations of the Japanese, with the exception of professional philologists, have actually lost access to classical literature, and accordingly, the interest in the classics today remains the most precious national treasure kept in the open depositary but used only on special occasions. In its place, the broad masses of poetry lovers aspire to something under the same name, but nice and easy.

THE TAWARA MACHI PHENOMENON

Since the 1970s the larger part of the reading population — millions of people, both young and old — have remained mostly indifferent to the poetry of traditional genres and, in particular, to *tanka*. A sudden revival of the genre was brought about by the publication in 1987 of a small poetry collection under the strange title of *Salad Anniversary* (*Sarada kinenbi*) written by a twenty-five-year old school teacher, Tawara Machi (b. 1962). Over the first six months more than two million copies were sold — an unprecedented record in the history of Japanese poetry and probably also in world literature. Over the next few years several million copies more have been sold. Provided that an average circulation of the individual authors' *tanka* collections even by the acknowledged poetry masters in the last decades never exceeded two or three thousand copies (usually ranging within a few hundred), Tawara Machi's book alone considerably outweighed all the editions of the postwar period combined and opened a new era in the history of the genre. Soon *the Salad Anniversary* was set to music, adapted to television series, and even to a script for a full length feature film. All of this was absolutely unbelievable for a *tanka* collection. Thus, the so-called "Tawara phenomenon" emerged in Japanese culture

Why was *Salad Anniversary* so fascinating for readers? The answer is quite obvious — simplicity and sincerity. The poetess herself struggled to explain the secret of her sudden success: "Something like a 'mood' is born out of our daily life experience, from such activities as shopping, cooking, washing. I want to touch it all by my hand and convey it as it is. If at the same time I am expressing the spirit of the age — well, so much the better" [quot. in 214, xxx].

The plain values of *The Salad Anniversary* were the perfect signs of everyday pop culture of the new generation — the culture of excellent supermarkets, stylish clothes, good cheap restaurants, available resorts, movies and animation films, which replace the theater, *manga* comic books, which replace

Tawara
Machi



俵
万智

classical or sometimes even modern novels and stories, convenient transportation, well-groomed parks, colorful shopping areas and malls with shops to suit all tastes. It is a culture of consumerist society with guaranteed work and school, social welfare, women's and men's emancipation, an independent family, an atomic existence; culture free from the classical legacy, non-pretentious, frivolous, pleasant to see, to hear, to touch, to smell and to taste — and all that summed up by one multipurpose Japanese definition: *kawaii* (“nice” or “cute”). This keyword is particularly important because it is used by little Japanese girls and young ladies, boys and young men, mothers and grandmothers, to define the things that evoke the feeling of liking, even tenderness toward the appearance and style of behavior regardless of the inner content. This feature is highly valued, and the definition is attached to everything — from advertising models, young actors of non-traditional sexual orientation and porn stars, to small children, dolls, and characters of the *manga* comic books and animated cartoons.

The poems by Tawara Machi, a simple and nice Japanese young woman with her everyday joys and hobbies, timid dreams and disappointments, were *kawaii*. As a result, they

easily outshone the masterpieces of Masaoka Shiki, the refined stanzas of Kitahara Hakushu, and the brilliant *shasei tanka* of Saito Mokichi. They also eclipsed all the beautiful poetry in the new forms that shapes the core of modern Japanese verse. Tawara Machi became the symbol of her generation, a pink Kitty Cat of poetry.

Some serious writers tried to criticize *Salad Anniversary*, but all in vain — their voices were drowned out by the sea of praise. The new generations of the young Japanese finally found what they were lacking: a kind of original Japanese national *tanka* poetry presented in *manga* form, without the difficult archaic vocabulary, without philosophic implications, without literary allusions and reminiscences that require intellectual work, without annoying abstruse psychological reflection, without suffering. What they got instead was simple, sometimes even naïve, sweet and pathetic imagery, creating a pleasant mood, and a veil of light flirting. These poems were certainly *kawaii*. In addition, they were evidence of a real talent able to meet the demands of the day. But that talent was not the key to Tawara Machi's success. The most important thing was her ability to convey the spirit of the age, to introduce the minor problems emerging in a no-problem age in a nice and funny form keeping the *tanka* pattern shell:

<p>“san ju made bura-bura suruyo” to iu kimi no ika naru fukei na no ka watashi wa</p>	<p><i>You are saying: “I’m not going to settle down until I’m thirty!” Now where is my place in this pretty picture?!</i></p>
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* * *

<p>kakikoete kitte o hareba tachimachi ni henji o matte toki nagaredasu...</p>	<p><i>I finished a letter having glued the stamp on — and from this very moment started waiting for his reply in the flow of time...</i></p>
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Indeed these poems are nice, they have a fresh feeling; they convey the mood of the moment, romantic emotions, and a glimpse of a real poetic vision of the world. What they most lack is a connection with the classic *tanka* tradition:

sakura sakura	<i>Sakura, sakura,</i>
sakura sakisome	<i>sakura started to bloom,</i>
sakiowari	<i>then finished to bloom —</i>
nani mo nakatta	<i>and there was nothing more</i>
yona koen	<i>in that garden...</i>

* * *

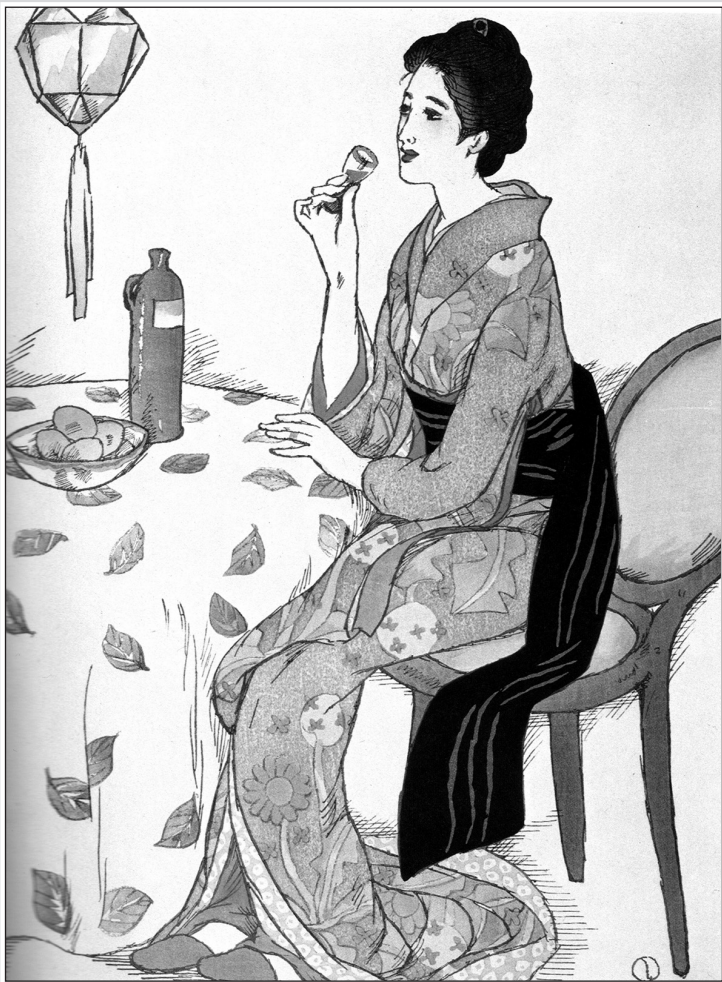
tenki yoho	<i>Today I missed</i>
kikinogashitaru	<i>the weather forecast —</i>
ichinichi wa	<i>so let it be!</i>
ame de mo hare de mo	<i>Rain or shine —</i>
hara ga tatanai	<i>I will not be mad about it...</i>

Along with such “impressionist” gems one can find among the poems some examples where the close attention to a detail leads to the disclosure of a certain “inner sense” of the image, filling it with some mysterious (albeit illusory) meaning:

mishi koto no	<i>As if I want</i>
nigori o arai	<i>to wash all the filth</i>
nagasu goto	<i>that I have seen —</i>
kontakuto renzu	<i>I keep on rubbing</i>
tsuyoku susugeru	<i>my contact lenses...</i>

Still, “cuteness” always prevails in these poems, which are actually best suited illustrating a TV melodrama or to be read aloud to friends at a school party:

furusato no	<i>Suddenly I wanted</i>
koto o kikitashi	<i>to ask you of your native village</i>
honoguraki	<i>when we were walking together</i>
suzokkan no	<i>in the dark passage</i>
tsuro yuku toki	<i>of an aquarium building...</i>



Romantic sentiments without boundaries, a flight to the Unknown, the joy of youth, the expectations of spring, longing for love, the joy of payday, a Salad Anniversary...

mienu kara	<i>Just because it can't be seen</i>
nao itsu made mo	<i>I keep on gazing in the distance —</i>
mite arinu	<i>in hopes of seeing</i>
umi no muko ni	<i>the country that has to be</i>
aru hazu no kuni	<i>somewhere over the sea...</i>

With the advent of this poetry it became clear that the endless golden age of the classic *tanka* was coming to an end, Even students of the faculties of humanities today can hardly conceive the poetry of the *Manyoshu* and the *Kokinshu*, which their grandparents truly enjoyed in pre-war Japan. The vast majority prefer Tawara Machi's poetry, just as they prefer the delight in "Baskin Robbins" ice cream and French pastries to the traditional sweets made of bean paste. As *tanka* (and also partly *haiku* poetry, even related to the new times, has been usually written in the archaic *bungo* style by authors with a complex spiritual inner world, reading their works nowadays presents for the average reader an incredibly difficult problem .

Real *tanka* poetry has evolved from the classic popular national poetic genre of the first half of the twentieth century to a "guild craft" and finally to a specialized concern for the chosen few in the new millennium. But the "shop" of the simplified and adapted versions of *tanka* is open practically to everyone, as the evaluation criteria of the poems are blurred, the standards are deliberately lowered, and the linguistic regulations are determined mainly by the modern colloquial vocabulary and grammar. However, the present situation made it possible for anyone, who feels such a vocation, to compose *tanka* in a free manner that seems to him appropriate, including the classic *bungo* and the *bonbon* style — and this is definitely an important achievement of modern Japanese culture.

Part 2



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HAIKU POETRY IN THE PRE-MODERN PERIOD

Haiku poetry traces its origin to the sections of “non-serious poetry” (*haikai*) of the classic *waka* anthologies, beginning with *The Collection of Old and New Songs* (*Kokinwakashu*, 10th century). These strange “scrolls,” looking like a supplement to the main content of the classic monument, presented poems in the form of *tanka* but only those which did not meet the requirements of the rigid poetry canon — humorous pieces, parodies, and puns. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the development of the genre of “linked verse” (*renga*), which required the participation of several authors in the composition of a poem, the introductory part of the former *tanka* (*hokku*) with a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern, became separated from the final part (7-7 syllables), claiming its “independence.” Such poems were known under various names, all with the same meaning: *haiku*, *hokku* or *haikai*. A century later, the vague concept of *haikai*, meaning something like “a humorous mix,” gradually took the shape of a full-fledged independent poetic genre, and its close relationship with *tanka* and *renga* was no longer obvious, although nobody at the time would think about creating serious poetry in this genre.

The pioneer of *haikai* poetry who introduced for the first time the term *haiku* (now standard, and the most common) was Matsunaga Teitoku (1571–1653). He not only set up his own *haiku* school with the rules and regulations elaborated in detail, but also managed to instill in common people a taste for novelty. In the 1630s Teitoku stated with satisfaction:

It seems that today the young and the old in the capital and in the provinces all seek solace in art. *Haiku*, as a matter of fact, is also a kind of Japanese *waka* song, and that is why it

should not be treated with contempt ... In our joyless times, when the Buddha teaching is in decline, the merits of *haiku* match and may even exceed the merits of *tanka*. (quot. in [248, 6])

Teitoku himself, being the founder of the Teimon *haiku* school, and who had composed tens of thousands of *haiku*, covering with writing mountains of paper in the attempt to ground the poetics of a new genre, gained a reputation as a pioneer, but he failed to get the real recognition of posterity, either as an outstanding poet or as a prominent scholar. By the end of his life, he had summed up his efforts in a large treatise that contained frustratingly tedious instructions and regulations of word usage for the *haiku* poets. Although Teitoku was not able to complete the task of transforming literary fun into pure art, his efforts were not in vain. The master's countless disciples and followers immortalized his name by compiling some two hundred and fifty collective anthologies of Teimon school poetry.

After Teitoku's death a struggle for precedence started among his successors, which led to the degradation of "serious" *haiku*. After several years of chaos in the *haiku* world, the comic Danrin school, founded by Nishiyama Soin (1605–1682), prevailed. This school quickly gained popularity among the Osaka merchants due to its originality, relative accessibility, and inexhaustible wit. The base for success was provided mostly by paraphrases of popular topics from the No theatre, allusions to daily events in the city, and parodies of popular masterpieces of classical poetry from the ancient anthologies. For example, Soin parodied Saigyō's famous *tanka* from the *Shiinkokinshū*:

*The longer I watch them —
the dearer they are to my heart,
all these cherry blossoms!
But now the flowers are falling,
and I am possessed by sorrow...*

In Soin's interpretation, the topic makes an unexpected turn:

*Enough is enough —
for this flower watching
now my neck aches!..*

Soin valued the skill of mocking above all: "The art of *haikai* puts untruth before truth. *Haikai* is just a parody compared to *waka* ... The best thing is to write what you like best of all. It's a joke that is born of imagination" (quot. in [248, 8]). The spicy references to someone's adventures and significant events provided with suggestive puns and seasoned with literary allusions appealed so much to the taste of the ordinary people, that soon the number of adherents of the Danrin school was measured in the thousands. Whatever the merits of such "epigrams," the irony (and self-irony) it valued so much was later adopted by all the great *haiku* poets.

The centers of early *haiku* poetry were mainly Osaka and Kyoto, but soon the vogue spread to the eastern capital of Edo, eventually reaching the most remote provinces in the south and in the north. The Danrin style prevailed for some ten years, beginning in 1675. Although it never generated genuine artistic treasures, it did play an important role in preparing the taste of readers and writers for *haikai* aesthetics, albeit still in its primitive form. The clubs of *haiku* lovers, sometimes developing into schools, soon became the soil for dwarf poems of a different kind. Soin, who was a Zen priest, at the end of his life had already tried to introduce a meditative note into *haiku* poetry. Among his simple poems for fun sometimes appear quite different sketches with philosophical implications. Not accidentally, Basho once remarked: "If we had not had Soin, we would now be picking up the crumbs from the table of old man Teitoku" (quot. in [248, 9]).

In the 1670s, Soin's disciple and later celebrated novelist Ihara Saikaku attracted public attention by his eccentric experiments. He rallied around him about two hundred "non-orthodox" *haiku* poets, gaining reputation as a great master by

composing endless poetic garlands. Saikaku was an outstanding master of poetic improvisation and a constant champion of the contests for quantity and speed — *yakazu*. He started his achievements when he composed in ten hours a thousand *haiku* and managed to write them down himself. The last incredible (and improbable by all standards) record was set in 1684 at a tournament at Osaka's Sumiyoshi Shrine, where during a 24-hour period Saikaku dictated 23,500 *haiku* to several scribes. At least that's what the legend has, although such an ordeal is not feasible. For comparison, it is worth noting that during his whole life Basho wrote less than two thousand *haiku*, Kobayashi Issa a little more than twenty thousand, and Masaoka Shiki about eighteen thousand. Such "rapid fire," naturally, would leave no room for literary elegance, proving only that any craft could reach the degree of virtuoso sophistication. The key to success implied following automatically the rules of 5-7-5 prosody while producing one topic after another in endless succession — that is, the ability to adjust completely to the world vision through the prism of *haiku* imagery and thinking within the poetic frames of the genre.

Although such versification presented little value, it definitely could sharpen the wit, enhance creativity, improve poetic techniques, and help to form the evaluation criteria necessary for the crystallization of high poetry.

Though the beginning of the 1680s had been already marked by Basho's entry into literature, it would be wrong to give to him alone all the credit for the reformation of the *haiku* genre. Obviously, the need of upgrading *haikai* to the rank of real lyrical poetry was so urgent, that Yamaguchi Sodo, Ito Shintoku, Konishi Raizan, Kamijima Onitsura, and many other talented poets who had managed to overcome the "entertainment" barrier were contributing extensively to this process. Many of them were hardly acquainted with Basho personally or, like Onitsura, not acquainted with him at all. Others, on the contrary, were the Old Man's close friends and even, like Shintoku, had a direct impact on the formation of Basho's individual style — *shofu*. Some of the masters became

the forerunners of Basho in the field of *haikai* aesthetics, though they failed to rise to his level of theoretical generalization. Thus, Onitsura put forward the demand of utmost sincerity (*makoto*), arguing that *haiku* without *makoto* was not viable:

*No place to throw out
this dirty water from the vat —
cicadas all around...*

* * *

*Here it is,
the beginning of all things —
a simple brazier...*

Onitsura

Ikenishi Gonsui and Konishi Raizan insisted that the selection of vocabulary should be thorough and fair, that vulgarity should be inadmissible. Anyway, getting to know each other by their publications, all together these authors would create a breeding ground for the growth of a fundamentally new verse — the poetry of sincere feelings and deep thought.

However, the “golden age” of *haiku* is associated primarily with the names of Matsuo Basho himself and the major poets of his Shomon school, who for almost three centuries have occupied a dominant position in the *haiku* world. For the Japanese themselves and for the entire world, Basho represents in his works and in his lifestyle the most essential characteristics of the national artistic tradition: simplicity and spirituality based on austerity close to asceticism, suggestive depth and the philosophical nature of the imagery, the ability to convey in a poem the Zen principle of “the great revealed in small.”

Basho was clearly aware of his vocation as an artist, which gave him a special place in Japanese culture. Not being ordained, he still followed the path of a Zen master who could rise above the bustle of everyday life and see eternity in an instant glimpse. Basho’s life, spent in poverty, renunciation

from worldly temptations, traveling, and tireless literary vigils, provided the elements for the historical legend of a sage and visionary. Although Basho never took vows, all his deeds have been seen as an example of zealous self-sacrifice in the name of the holy mission — the proliferation of *haikai* aesthetics. During his life, the highly venerated Old Man Basho (who lived only fifty years and did not reach, according to modern standards, even the period of early old age) became the idol of the poets and the favorite author for readers — an iconic figure for all the educated population of the country, which numbered in the early modern period a few million people. In the Meiji period, at the end of nineteenth century, the Old Man was officially canonized by imperial decree and received the honorary title of “Divinity of Flying Sounds” in honor of his famous poem:

furuike ya	<i>This old pond!</i>
kawazu tobikomu	<i>A frog jumps in —</i>
mizu no oto	<i>with a splash...</i>

Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written about Basho’s life and work over the last three hundred years. The poet himself left a number of diaries and about one hundred and seventy letters (not mentioning the memoir records by his disciples, meticulously reproducing the concepts and sayings of the Master), which made it possible to reconstruct his biography in detail. Basho’s cult has reached unprecedented levels. His every poem, every line of prose, every idea, has been commented on and interpreted by thousands, which, nevertheless, has not abated interest in the life and works of the immortal master and thus has not reduced the flow of new research literature on Basho.

Countless Japanese writers and poets of modern times, regardless of their personal taste, over more than a hundred years have continued to publish articles, essays and books about Basho. This also includes authors of non-traditional westernized forms of poetry who had abandoned *tanka* and *haiku*. Hundreds and thousands of followers and admirers have

taken to the roads that once had been trodden by Basho, exactly repeating the route of his journeys. Monuments and poetic steles with Basho's *haiku* written on them have been erected in every place where he had spent a night. The Japanese poets, critics, and scholars have unanimously announced: "Basho is all we are!" The reputation of no other *haiku* master, no matter how high it might be, cannot be compared to the mystical worship of Basho, which goes beyond rational explanation and is fed, to a large extent, by myth.

Basho's literary tastes, which later became the focus of attention of almost all *haiku* poets until the Second World War, were not limited to the traditional set of didactic Confucian writings and classic *waka* anthologies. The very atmosphere in the family, where his father earned his living by teaching calligraphy and by giving lessons to the young lord Todo in the Ueno castle—all this enriched the erudition of the future poet and instilled in him the love for literature. The lessons by Kitamura Kigin, Teitoku's disciple who taught him the principles of versification, remained for Basho the most important guidance on the rules of *haiku* poetics, though his unique style developed only in his late years under the influence of various sources. Here we can mention the great philosophical treatises by the Taoist thinkers Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, the historical records by Sima Qian, the poetry by Li Po, Du Fu, Bo Juyi, Du Mu, Wang Wei and other classics of the Tang period, the *kanshi* poetry of Five Monasteries, the wonderful poets of the Japanese Middle Ages—Saigyō (12th c.) and Sōgi (15th c.), *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, and the masterpieces of brilliant Heian prose, the samurai *gunki* epic tales and the *yokyoku* plays of the No theatre. His field of interest included the names of authors and the titles of works that were separated from each other by centuries and millennia. Basho's range of reading influenced greatly the interests of his disciples, as well as the disciples' disciples and later the *haiku* poets for centuries to come.

If we look closely, we can reveal in *haiku* written by Basho himself or by many of his students to the tenth generation the

complicated literary allusions and reminiscences that bring to *haiku* poetry deep additional overtones — alas, almost incomprehensible for a modern unprepared reader who cannot understand the cultural code of the Middle Ages. However, the abundance of allusions and hidden quotations is not the main thing in the works of the poet, who would like to repeat: “Do not try to follow in the footsteps of the classics — look for the same thing they were looking for.”

The deep study of Zen treatises and *koan* under the guidance of the monk Bucho helped Basho to develop a specific worldview, connecting every moment of earthly life with the eternal mystery of being:

*He came to life
on the day of the Buddha's birthday —
this baby deer...*

* * *

*West or east —
sorrow is just the same.
The autumn wind...*

* * *

*A night on a journey.
I saw in my dream that the world
was cleaned of filth...*

Almost any of his poems present an act of *satori*, the enlightenment, the discovery of the transcendent, infinite and boundless in a simple, ordinary minor fact or object, which becomes a code of cosmic existence. It is the effect that thousands and thousands of *haiku* poets are trying to achieve — those to whom Basho had showed the way.

*On a moonlit night
a bug is nibbling gently
the shell of a chestnut...*



The long wanderings to which Basho's mysterious muse called him, enriched the poet not only with new experience, but also with the unique skills of a landscape poet and painter. His travel sketches and descriptions of the areas in poems and prose amaze the reader by the precision of small details:

*Oh this coolness!
a newborn crescent moon is rising
over Haguro mountain...*

Rather often the poet wrote his poetic miniatures on his own ink paintings — *haiga*. Such is, for example, the following iconic *haiku*:

kareeda ni	<i>On a withered branch</i>
karasu tomaritaru ya	<i>a raven is perched —</i>
aki no kure	<i>the autumn dusk...</i>

Like the vast majority of writers of the late Middle Ages and pre-modern times, who belonged to the category of literati *bunjin*, Basho was an accomplished calligrapher and a good painter. The combination of these three talents was considered desirable, and the first two mandatory, for any *haiku* poet.

Very often *haiku* was used as a caption for the paintings and drawings, or vice versa — some were added later as illustrations to the poems already written. Many were written on a special paper tablet called *shikishi*, accompanied by a lapidary ink sketch.

Calling for poets to “learn the pine tree from the pine tree, the bamboo from the bamboo,” Basho watchfully gazes into the world, describing the subtle wing of a butterfly, a shadow on the grass or a maple leaf pattern. He does not avoid rough reality, unpleasant and vile topics which reveal a different side of the eternal poetry of life, so to say, the reverse side of beauty. After all, according to the Zen concept, things around us are neither fully beautiful nor ugly, nor completely positive nor totally negative, nor good nor evil — Yin and Yang always exist in

interaction and antagonism. It was Basho, who, talking not only about beautiful, but also about the allegedly repulsive prose of life, paved the way for presenting “base and unpleasant things” in *haiku* poetry as an indispensable part of this world of ours:

*Fleas, lice,
and a horse is pissing
near my pillow...*

Unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Basho would work hard and thoroughly on each poem, polishing with unsurpassed skills nuances of meaning and shades of tone. As a result, his best *haiku* look like impeccable diamonds. Thus he showed an example of literary scrupulosity to his disciples and followers, many of whom were inclined to treat their creations more light-mindedly, preferring a successful unpretentious improvisation:

*Not a single sign
of their upcoming demise —
the voices of cicadas...*

* * *

*A moonlit night.
In the moon's shadows it flies away —
the echo of my steps...*

Basho set the criteria of real mastery and clearly outlined the differences between true poetry and occasional, unassuming improvisation. He demanded that his disciples continually strive to excel in all their aspirations, thoughts, and deeds, considering *haiku* poetry to be a reflection of the holistic inner world of the author.

Basho was the first to turn a short poem of seventeen syllables into a tool for conveying the subtle movements of the soul. He introduced into *haiku* poetry and presented as a system some

essential categories, borrowed from classical Zen aesthetics: *mushin* (detachment), *muga* (impersonality, fusion with the macrocosm), *wabi* (awareness of human frailty and loneliness in the universe), *sabi* (the patina of age, comprehension of the sad involvement of a human in the global metamorphosis); *shibumi* (the beauty and tart bitterness of earthly life, manifested in perfection of forms); *shiori* (a state of spiritual concentration, necessary for perceiving the deep meaning of phenomena); *hosomi* (refinement of a feeling), *karumi* (lightness, transparency and detachment of form), *fuga no makoto* (truth of exquisite beauty); *fueki ryuko* (feeling of eternity in the current). His life style was a vivid illustration for the Zen principle of the *furyu* existence — living in harmony with laws of nature “like the wind and the stream”.

By his personal authority Basho consecrated the compiling *haiku* collections based on seasonal distribution of poems by sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Such division required an obligatory “seasonal word” (*kigo*) indicating a season of the year: the flowers of a plum or cherry tree, early field grass, the return of migratory birds — for spring; hot sun, birdsongs, butterflies, the voice of a mountain cuckoo — for summer; scarlet maple leaves, rains, a cool breeze, the full moon — for autumn; snowy silence, long cold, icy blizzards — for winter, and so on. The *haiku* (as well as *tanka*) “seasonal” division implied the eternal involvement of a human life in the flow of universal metamorphosis. This involvement has remained unchanged up to nowadays for the *haiku* mainstream.

*A spring night —
the dim light of dawn
over the cherry blossom...*

* * *

*The cool freshness of leaves
I placed on the picture —
drawing bamboo in Saga...*

* * *

*The Bon festival is over —
and the nights seem to get darker.
Voices of the crickets...*

* * *

*Somebody now
is sauntering over Hakone mountains —
a snowfall in the morning...*

In addition to the “seasonal words,” Basho attached great importance to the so-called “cut-off particles” (*kireji*), which include non-translatable exclamatory interjections at the end of a phrase like *ya* or *kana*. In his poetics *kireji* were used to emphasize the overall effect, strengthen the composition, and increase the *haiku* emotional mood. As a poetic technique, *kireji* has safely survived to the present day.

During the same period, with Basho’s active participation the rules of *haiku* subject classification by the topics and sections (*dai*) took its present form: plants, animals, insects, wanderings, daily occupations, and so on, up to the most unlikely topics, such as “cats’ love.” Thematic division had also existed in the *tanka* anthologies, but if the *waka* poetry accepted two to three dozen conventional topics, the *haiku* list was increased to several hundred.

Fractional categorization has remained up to now a mandatory rule for compilation of many (though not all) traditional *haiku* collections. Later the appropriate recommended topics and imagery were codified in numerous *saijiki*-guidelines. As a large amount of *haiku* would imply publication of numerous collective almanacs and anthologies, it was the season and the theme that had to determine the place of a poem in the book. The name of an author played a secondary role and was often placed in the end of the book, so that the reader could have failed to notice the name (and more often a penname — a constant attribute of a *haiku* writer). An original interpretation of the well-known topic would be evaluated higher than an introduction and development of a new topic, an adherence to the canon in the basic approach — higher than the author’s original manner.

However, in the works by a true master his personality would always manifest itself to the full.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Basho believed that the *haiku* aesthetics by no means was confined to the principles of composing *haiku*, these dwarf poems of seventeen syllables. All genres in his work — “linked verse” *renga*, *haiga* drawings, the prose diary (*haibun*) interspersed with poems, the instructions for his disciples, the letters, and, in a certain sense, even his own biography — were created according to the rules of a new aesthetic system established by him, a certain *haikai* aesthetic system that through the efforts of his disciples and followers successfully survived over three centuries.

Basho developed and enriched the traditions of true democracy in the *haiku* world by bringing together at *haiku* sessions various poets coming from different social groups: aristocrats, soldiers, merchants, artisans, and intellectuals. The position and reputation in this circle did not depend on gentility, wealth or even moral purity, but mostly on talent. Such a community, formed in *haiku* schools, was a strange exception for Japan of the Tokugawa era, where the whole society was based on social hierarchy and a samurai would take any relations with the commoners as a disgrace. Basho’s disciple Mukai Kyorai, admitted to the court of a daimyo overlord, was friends with the impoverished doctor Nozawa Boncho, who had even got into jail for smuggling. Upon his release, Boncho was again admitted to the poets’ circle, as well as the beggar Imube Rotsu. A noble descent would not save a *haiku* poet from the harsh criticism and would not give any advantage. This was reflected in the fundamental principles of *haiku* poetics, which required close attention to everyday life, to the daily problems, through which the universal truth of existence is revealed:

*A paper lantern
all dirty with soot in my travels —
a cold snowy evening...*

Etsujin

* * *

*A new package
of the tea I had in stock
in my winter seclusion...*

Kakei

* * *

*From the fishing village
children came in the dusk
to pick up laminaria...*

Rotsu

The honorable principles formulated by Basho left the imprint of a strict elegance on his disciples' poetry, raising these people, so different in origin, views, and occupation, over mundane vanity and madding crowds. No matter how "petty" and insignificant the topics of the poems might seem, *haiku* was supposed to present them through the wise life-affirming worldview seen in the legacy of Basho. No wonder that the disciples and followers sought to follow the contemplative philosophy of life revealed in Basho's personality and works, developing *shofu*, the poetry style of his school, which for a long time remained the mainstream in the world of *haiku* poetry.

*All night long
I am listening to the autumn wind —
a mountain retreat...*

Sora

Basho's immediate successors were his major disciples Takarai Kikaku, Matabe Ransetsu, Mukai Kyorai, Naito Joso, Nozawa Bontyo, Morikawa Kyoriku, Kagami Shiko, Shida Yaha, Tachiban Hokushi, Ochi Etsujin, and Sugiyama Sampu (though the validity of such selection of the names is often disputed). All of them set up their own schools and became true apostles of *haiku* poetry, deeply and sincerely believing in the genius of the master. Despite the fierce competition between

the “heirs,” due to their efforts, *haiku* poetry penetrated the flesh and blood of Japanese literature, to this day continuing to influence not only various *haiku* schools and trends, but also other genres of Japanese verse, including modernist *gendaishi* poetry. Even the talented novelists of the twentieth century — Natsume Soseki, Akutagawa Ryunoske, Kawabata Yasunari, and many others, tried their hand at *haiku*, and some gained wide recognition as *haijin*.

The subsequent *haiku* development was a kind of “ascent back to Basho,” because even the most talented poets of the eighteenth to the twentieth century believed that the masterpieces by the Old Man Basho were an unattainable height.

By the time of Basho’s death in 1694 the number of his disciples across the country including his direct disciples and their disciples, has exceeded two thousand. This figure itself shows the scope of the *haiku* movement, which by the beginning of the seventeenth century, during the Genroku period (1688–1704), became truly popular and spread through all strata of society. Later, the number of the “posterity-disciples” continued to increase exponentially. Not all Basho’s disciples and admirers followed the covenants of the Old Man, and not all of them adhered to his recommendations. For example, Takarai Kikaku deliberately rejected the principle of *karumi*, preferring more complicated allusive imagery to transparency and simplicity:

*A beggar walks.
Here is his summer clothes —
earth and heaven...*

Kikaku’s delicate taste and refined style earned him the nickname “Li Po of *haiku* poetry,” but the current of time shaded the elegance of his poems filled with abundant literary and philosophical allusions, which deprived modern readers of the possibility to perceive the undertones and complicated overtones.

Mukai Kyorai, highly valued by Basho, tried to follow strictly all the Master’s prescriptions. However, the value of

his poems, apparently, is less than that of his notes presenting the records of Basho's ideas and comments of other members of the school in the book *Conversations with Kyorai (Kyorai-sho)*.

*The voice of the cuckoo
and the song of a skylark
are crisscrossing...*

Some disciples, as the legitimate successors to the master, tried to improve Basho's poetics by adding new provisions. Thus, Kyoriku put forward the concept of a "blood tie" (*kechimiyaku*), that is an artistic intuition underlying any talent.

Shiko, the author of numerous comments on Basho's poems, acted as a promoter of his poetics, but in the meantime he adapted and simplified the Teachings, trying to present Basho's views in his own interpretation to the widest range of readers. However, there is a reason to believe that in his recollections of the conversations with the Master the truth is mixed with fiction. Other disciples also resorted to such tactics to increase their own prestige. However, even many decades later, when the traditions of the Shomon school became rather vague, the "general" set by Basho was preserved, and the achievements of *haiku* poetry kept on growing.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the *haiku* world was in a state of stagnation. Many of Basho's followers turned again to entertaining poetry similar to the Danrin school, focusing on the wit and cleverness, backed by intricate literary allusions. In the same period, a purely humorous trend, *senryu*, broke off from *haiku*. It gave rise to a whole new layer of comic verse, based on the sophisticated play of words, puns, and ambiguous associations (which makes it almost impossible to translate). However, in parallel with the entertaining *haiku* trend, lyrical poetry never stopped to develop, which was manifested in the emergence of new talents.

Although the poetry of the Edo period was extremely rich in extraordinary talents, and many lyrical miniatures by the

successors of Basho are not so much inferior to the Master's masterpieces, the literary tradition places on the same level with Basho, but ranking a little lower, only Yosa no Buson. This conventional "table of ranks" is disputable. A prominent *haiku* reformer, at the end of the twentieth century Masaoka Shiki attempted to prove the superiority of Buson's bright romantic style over Basho's harsh realism and tried to free new *haiku* poetry from the prevailing cult of the Old Man.

While Basho was always acutely aware of his succession to the line of the great poets of the past and practically subdued his life to the dictates of the poet's mission, Buson was alien to such asceticism. While Basho called for learning from nature and living in accordance with its laws, Buson was primarily an apologist for the aesthetic, artistic approach, for which nature was only a source of basic material for creative activity. He successfully implemented his ideas in painting and became known as one of the best artists of the Edo period. His colorful landscapes, as well as his monochrome ink drawings with poetic inscriptions, show vitality and bursting optimism. Buson's life was full of hardships and troubles, but poetry and painting always remained his preserved area of kindness, beauty, and harmony of the soul. His slogan "Denial of everything vulgar" became an appeal for the contemporaries to abandon ugly reality for the world of refined Beauty.

*The spring is leaving —
oh how I miss the weight of a lute
in my hands!..*

* * *

*The peony flower is gone —
overlapping, two or three petals
lie on the ground...*

* * *

*Oh this cool freshness!
The tolling sound floats by
having left the bell...*

Naturally, Buson's poetry did not evolve from nowhere — the previous development of *haiku* provided a strong foothold for the poet. Buson's teacher was Hayano Hanjin, a former disciple of Kikaku and Ransetsu, who would reject any artificial element or juggling with words in a poem. In his memoirs, Buson highly appreciates Hanjin's role:

He used to say that adhering strictly to the regulations in *haikai* art was not mandatory. One should compose poems spontaneously, without thinking what would be in the beginning and what would be after it, changing and rearranging everything by instant enlightenment.(quot. in [248, 26])

Buson was not a deeply religious philosopher like Basho, and therefore he did not set himself the task of filling the poems with philosophical content. For him, composing *haiku* was one of the worldly pleasures rather than a sacred mission. To make sure that the critics had no doubt about this, he sought to emphasize this difference: "My poems are in no way the imitation of Basho's style. I take pleasure in changing the poetic manner from day to day, following the whims of my imagination" (quot in [248, 27]). The freedom in choosing a topic, redundancy of visual techniques, a tendency to spontaneous picturesque effects, and deliberate disregard of the troubles of real life gave Buson's poetry glamour and charm, elevating it over the routine of everyday life.

*The oak wood in bloom —
it will not let the heart get rough,
this fragrance...*

* * *

*A flash of lightening —
from the waves it comes to sight,
Awazu island...*

* * *

*Mount Fuji afar
covered with a green shroud
of fresh foliage...*

And yet, despite the obvious differences in worldview, temperament, and lifestyle, Buson remained Basho's enthusiastic admirer and worshipper. Thus, he traveled the routes trotted once by Basho and left a series of wonderful illustrations to the Master's travel diaries rewritten by his own hand. He believed that his poetic style was only a further development of Basho's legacy — which was ultimately rather far from the truth.

Buson's call "Back to Basho" was supported also by other renowned poets of the second half of the eighteenth century — Tan Taigi, Oshima Ryota, Hori Hakusui, Takakuwa Ranko, Miura Chora. Many of them, like Buson, went on pilgrimages, visiting the places of Basho's wanderings in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the Old Man's death, giving an incentive to hundreds of their contemporaries, ordinary lovers of *haiku*, and setting a model for generations to come. Under the slogan "Back to Basho" a movement for *haiku* revival, for the deliverance of the genre from all that is vulgar, profane, and superficial took hold in Edo and other cities. The desire to bring back depth and spirituality to *haiku* poetry did not always result in real masterpieces, but somehow all the participants of the movement had noble incentives and many achieved success.

Another trend in the interpretation of the same legacy can be traced in the eccentric work of Kobayashi Issa, who left more than twenty thousand *haiku*, poetic diaries and a large number of *haiga* drawings. His poems are an apologia of simplicity, naturalness, poverty, and restlessness, for modest praise to man and nature, and life proper in all its smallest manifestations. Zen Buddhist existentialism and contemplative ironic sagacity form the basis of Issa's poetics:

*Well, today only
I will let him on my fence —
this singer warbler!..*

* * *

*Near my cabin
the plum is finally in bloom —
it couldn't be any other way...*

* * *

*How amazing —
to live under cherries in bloom
as if nothing happened...*

The intentional lapidary style, naïve sincerity, deliberate simplicity and roughness of many Issa's *haiku* led to the emergence of a popular legend about a half-literate peasant poet who loved nature and rejected the comforts of civilization. However, the impression of simplicity here, as is the case with another well-known eccentric, the monk Ryokan, is quite deceptive. After all, Issa was a professional instructor of poetry, the head of a *haiku* school, a calligrapher and a painter, i.e. belonged to the glorious galaxy of intellectuals, the *bunjin*, who constituted the bulk of the late Edo culture. His non-trivial style, which would be most appropriate to compare with the Western primitivism of the twentieth century, was his permanent game mask that concealed a delicate, sensitive, vulnerable soul. It is no accident that Issa's style inspired the pioneering quest of the best *haiku* poets of the early twentieth century. — Ozaki Hosai, Taneda Santoka, and Murakami Kijo.

In poetry and in life, Issa would sympathize with small and weak creatures, somehow identifying himself with them. Although all *haiku* poets would certainly pay attention to those "small ones," Issa, with a special admiration, love, and touching tenderness, writes about the creatures that would normally make people feel nothing but disgust: frogs, spiders, horseflies, snails, slugs, worms, fleas, lice ... All of them are presented as

full members of the community of Life, those mortals containing, according to Buddhist beliefs, a “particle of Buddha”:

*It is mocking me!
What a grimace it makes,
this nasty frog!..*

* * *

*If life were better,
I would invite you, my fly:
“Share some rice with me!”*

* * *

*Oh you poor fleas!
How quickly you lost weight
in my humble hut...*

* * *

*This merry mosquito —
flying here, flying there
to the old man’s joy...*

Issa’s original animalism also follows the rules of Primitivism in modern art, as if specially adapted for children’s picture books. Even such classic images of Japanese poetry as a nightingale (or rather, its local equivalent — bush warbler) or swallows in Issa’s poems often appear as seen from an unexpected and grotesque angle.

*Oh this bush warbler!
He is wiping his dirty feet
on the plum blossom!*

Following generally the rules of classical *haiku* poetics, Issa consistently achieves the effect of “plummeting pathetic attitude” through a skillful imitation of the surprised glance of a child or rough naive. Thus, he achieved a Zen desacralization

of the image, which contains nothing but the truth of life with a light ironical touch. Probably, this characteristic feature of his poetry attracted Masaoka Shiki, who at the end of the nineteenth century literally resurrected Issa from oblivion and built up his reputation as an eccentric genius, which, in turn, led to a high demand for his books. The memorial museum of Issa in Shinano-machi (Nagano) became a place of pilgrimage for the modern haiku poets and hundreds of thousands of his fans.

During the years of the decline of the Tokugawa regime that preceded the bourgeois Meiji revolution, *haiku* poetry was degrading and became a refuge for a great many epigones. The members of the languishing *haiku* community all over the country with a dull persistence would get together for the monthly sessions (*tsukinami haikukai*). The nature of these gatherings and the quality of their poetry made Masaoka Shiki and his followers, the reformers of the verse in the Meiji era, use the word *tsukinami* as a derogatory term meaning mediocric, a fatal lack of talent and any creative individuality. However, some individual collections and collective anthologies of the time contained also wonderful miniatures by Tsuda Sokyū or Sakurai Baishitsu. No matter how humble these authors looked in comparison with the great masters of the past, without their participation *haiku* could hardly preserve the momentum necessary for its radical transformation on the eve of the twentieth century.



HAIKU WORLD AFTER THE MEIJI RESTORATION

In the early years and even decades after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which had overthrown the old state foundations and along with them also the centuries-old system of ethical and aesthetic values, the changes in the dreamy world of *haiku* poetry were hardly visible. The poets kept on getting together regularly at the monthly meetings and composing short poems about anything, but historical events were happening around them.

Dozens of *haiku* schools functioned as usual with hundreds of branches in all major cities. Merchants, artisans, and members of the former samurai social class, abolished by the new authorities, would regularly attend schools, maintaining the income of professional mentors on a tolerable level. Illegal gambling and mass sports were not yet developed enough to replace for many people the infatuation with *haiku*. It was a kind of regular club socialization assuming a good pastime over a cup of sake in the company of friends sharing the same interests, focused on composing and publishing poems in a simple but elegant traditional form. The very fact of belonging to a *haiku* school, that is to a certain "club," strengthened the prestige of the members, and composing poems, regardless of their actual quality, was seen as a sign of intellectual status.

Judging by the number of participants, *haiku* schools were much more popular than *tanka* schools. Some schools could have tens or hundreds of disciples, and those which could boast of lineage, having among its founders the Old Man Basho himself or his successors, attracted thousands of members.

Professional *haiku* poets (*haijin*), who earned their living by teaching and editing poems, would do their best to promote their trade and to attract new members to their schools. The

structure and nature of *haiku* school did not differ from other schools of fine arts and crafts based on the principle of strict hierarchy and respect for the head master *iemoto*. The secrets of the trade, the sacred knowledge in such schools had to be transmitted in accordance with a strictly regulated system and the training implied many years of studies. Having received a “diploma” (*menkyo*) from the master, one could start one’s own career as a teacher. In his old age, the head master would officially appoint his successor, who could be his son (and later, in the twentieth century, even a daughter or a granddaughter), or just the best disciple, not connected with the master by blood line.

In *haiku*, where the evaluation criteria are rather blurred, the secrets of the trade could be represented, for example, in a specifically used exclamatory particle or moving the “seasonal words” from the middle of a sentence to the end. Often an unimportant technical innovation could be presented as the greatest creative revelation. The disciples had to take for granted all the master’s explanations, as his authority was indisputable.

There was a tough competition among the *tsukinami* poets. The masters would often debate for years on minor issues of word usage” — a phenomenon very similar to the disputes between Swift’s supporters of the “sharp end” and “blunt end” of an egg. Many of them, especially the hereditary mentors of poetic skills, whose ancestors had once learned from the patriarchs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in order to raise their profile, would declare themselves *Kyorai*, *Kyoriku*, *Kikaku*, or *Ransetsu* of the fourth, fifth, or seventh generation — as it was common, for example, for the famous *Kabuki* actors, whose dynasties still are popular in our times. Such kinds of “certification” cost a lot of money, but a school with a good lineage justified any expenses. While the *haiku* “business” was flourishing, there were no bright talents among the legions of poets who would write in this classic genre. Thousands and thousands of banal and clichéd *haiku* would settle like dust in the thick almanacs and collective anthologies.

The Meiji Restoration, which resulted in the overthrowing of the power of the shogun and the return of the monarchy to the commanding position in the state, followed by a radical restructuring of the social and political order, did not have any visible impact on *haiku* schools, since the genre itself had been considered “extra-historical” and extra-social. The events of political life, to some extent, were reflected in satirical *senryu*, but these ironic miniatures only in form reminded of *haiku* and could not be considered true professional *haiku* in the proper sense of the term.

An unexpected invasion into the reserve *haiku* world was triggered by the decision of the Meiji government to shift to the solar calendar from the lunar calendar which had been used in Japan for centuries. This reform was a hard blow to the whole poetic community, including the *tanka* authors, since the Japanese poetic tradition from time immemorial had been based on the alterations of seasonal imagery. Not only the images and topics were tightly tied to the seasons, but there was also a division by “sub-seasons,” six in each season of the year, such as the “awakening of insects; the “cold dew,” “cool weather,” and so on. All canonical poetry was based on the lunar calendar, according to which the New Year (a fluctuating date celebrated now sometimes in mid-February) was considered to be the first spring holiday; a holiday of lovers’ reunion Tanabata (the seventh night of the seventh lunar month), was known as the beginning of autumn; the ninth lunar month was the time for viewing the full moon. *Kigo*, the “seasonal words” in *haiku* poetics, the list of which contained up to two and a half thousand entries, were used to describe the lunar seasons and “sub-seasons.” Even the old poetic names of the months, such as “the month of changing garments” (*kisaragi*), bore semantic connotations tied to the lunar calendar. All the classic *haiku* were composed, of course, according to the semantics of the lunar calendar and did not relate to the solar calendar.

The solar calendar destroyed all the traditional patterns and caused an unimaginable confusion. However, the majority of the *haiku* poets bravely took the blow and tried to adjust to

the new calendar. As early as 1874 appeared the first list of recommended topics and seasonal words (*saijiki*) based on the solar calendar. Later dozens and hundreds of such guidelines were released.

The new list of the old seasons, which the *haiku* authors had to follow while composing *haiku*, looked as follows:

SPRING

Risshun (Arrival of spring)	February, 5 – 19
Usui (Rainwater)	February 20 — March 5
Keichitsu (Awakening of Insects)	March 6 — March 19
Shunbun (Spring equinox)	March 20 — April 4
Seimei (Clear weather)	April 5 — April 19
Kokuu (Rain for the crops)	April 20 — May 4

SUMMER

Rikka (Summer arrival)	May 5 — May 20
Shoman (Low filling)	May 21 — June 5
Boshu (Planting)	June 6 — June 20
Geji (Summer Solstice)	June 21 — July 6
Shosho (Low heat)	July 7 — July 22
Daisho (High heat)	July 23 — August 6

AUTUMN

Risshu (Autumn arrival)	August 7 — August 22
Shosho (End of the heat)	August 23 — September 7
Hakuro (Transparent dew)	September 8 — September 22
Shubun (Autumn equinox)	September 23 — October 7
Kanro (Cold dew)	October 8 — October 22
Soko (First frost)	October 23 — November 6

WINTER

Ritto (Winter arrival)	November 7 — November 22
Shosetsu (Little snow)	November 23 — December 6
Daisetsu (Much snow)	December 7 — December 21
Toji (Winter Solstice)	December 22 — January 5
Shokan (Little cold)	January 6 — January 20
Daikan (Severe cold)	January 21 — February 4

Although this calendar has never reflected the whole picture of seasonal changes — different in time and different in various parts of Japan — for the poets, it was the main guideline, which also implied countless relevant “seasonal words,” that is, the names of plants, animals, birds, words denoting precipitation, and seasonal work.

It is fair to say that true adaptation to the new calendar has never happened. A lot of *haijin*, having accepted a new calendar, mentally continued to live and write in the old way, and the seasonal images in their poems periodically would fluctuate from one to another. They just could not do any better because composing *haiku* in a *tsukinami* way implied loyalty to the tradition and the tradition required the use of concrete topics and seasonal words in a particular season of the year — as it was for centuries before.

Mentioning a “nightingale” (bush warbler — *uguisu*) in the month of *atsuki* (i.e. in the fifth moon), the poet, obviously, would make a reference to the summer, but not to a spring month of May. To change the familiar feeling of coming winter or fall only by an official order was not easy, and so allusions related to the lunar calendar continued to nourish *haiku* poetry (and *tanka* partly, too). This strange situation lingered for at least a hundred years after the reform and only by the end of the twentieth century had the lunar calendar really begun to fade.

The status of *haiku* poetry grew significantly in the process of ideological reforms undertaken by the Meiji government and aimed at strengthening the national spirit in the face of the inevitable Westernization of the country. The wise policy of protectionism made it possible to preserve and save from total degradation the legacy of national culture: poetry of classical genres, painting of traditional schools, No, Kabuki and Bunraku theaters, the classical court music, dance, and traditional crafts.

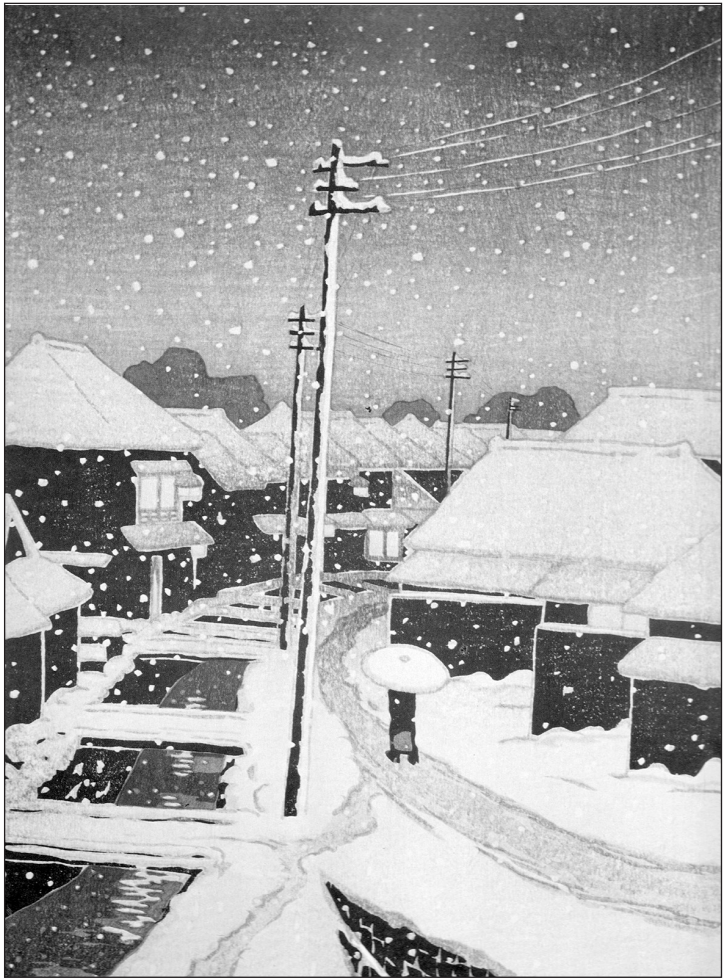
Whereas *tanka* poetry was declared a national treasure, the sacred vessel of the “soul of Japan,” and accepted at the imperial court, *haiku* poetry was now regarded as the most

important tool for shaping national identity, a symbol of the Japanese creative mind. In 1873, the Ministry of Religions entrusted four *haiku* masters with an honorable duty: to work out the ideological foundation for the role of *haiku* poetry in the government reforms. According to their recommendations, Emperor Meiji issued a decree on the official canonization of Basho promoted to the rank of a deity, that even more strengthened the cult of the Old Man in the minds of the people. The government opened the temples dedicated to Basho, the “God of Flying Sounds,” who, among other things, was declared the embodiment of all major Confucian virtues and an exemplary citizen. The syncretic Buddhist — Shinto sect of The Old Pond (Furuike kyokai) was established, where the worship of the Old Man was accompanied by the consecration of his poetry.

All these ideological activities aimed at strengthening the “fundamentalist” tendencies in culture finally played a rather negative role. The cult of Basho, like any other conservative concept, just hindered the growth of new *haiku* schools and trends on Japanese soil.

The attitude of the intellectuals of pro-Western orientation in the early Meiji period, who introduced into the society the elements of European Enlightenment, was more than skeptical both in regards to *haiku* and to *tanka*. They interpreted both genres as an obsolete legacy of the damned feudal past. The means of fighting the feudal past had already been tested: by government decree dozens of magnificent castles, reminding people of the “dark ages” of the shoguns’ dictatorship, were demolished with all the precious artifacts. There were proposals to get rid of *haiku* poetry, not to let it interfere with the new life of the nation, which was building a bright capitalist future on the ruins of the old world. *Tanka*, chosen by the *mikado* himself as a bastion of the national spirit, was much more difficult to denounce. In any case, the opposition, made up mostly of authors who had chosen the emerging new forms of poetry, threatened *haiku* with imminent degeneration and demise.

In order to save the traditional genres, it was necessary to bring them to life, to saturate them with new content, as smoking incense before the image of Basho could not save *haiku* from further degradation. *Haijin* of the old, pre-reform generation could not implement this task. The salvation was to come from the midst of the new literati, who defined their role as mediators in the interaction of the great civilizations of the East and the West — and it has come.



THE POETICS OF OBJECTIVE REALISM

MASAOKA SHIKI

Salvation was brought to the perishing traditional poetic genres by an ailing young man obsessed with poetry, who put it above life and death.

Among the great masters of *haiku* poetry Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) ranks the fourth and the last after Matsuo Basho, Yosa no Buson, and Kobayashi Issa. However, if we talk about the traditional genres of poetry in modern times, Shiki, no doubt, will occupy the first place, simply because without him *tanka* and *haiku* poetry could have remained just a relic, fading into the past together with other remnants of feudal Japan.

Masaoka Tsunenori (the future poet Shiki) was born into the family of a poor retired samurai in 1867, on the eve of the Meiji Restoration, which paved the way from the feudal Japan to the world superpower and introduced an isolated Far Eastern empire to the legacy of Western civilization. In those days, Shiki's hometown of Matsuyama on the island of Shikoku was a remote corner of a picturesque province with a majestic castle on the hill and the squat tile-roofed buildings scattered around it. The life in Matsuyama would flow steadily and slowly; the news from the Eastern capital of Edo would come very late and the local samurai were in no hurry to plunge into the raging sea of political turmoil.

At the age of six Tsunenori lost his father. His mother, preoccupied with earning their daily bread, with all good intentions could not give the boy a decent education. He became interested in literature during his years of learning in a parish school at a local temple. At the age of eight when he had already memorized his first hundreds of characters out of many

thousands, Tsunenori took a decision that he would become a man of letters, a philologist. He remained true to his dream to the end of his life. Still a twelve year old he began to write poetry in Chinese (*kanshi*), devoting all his free time to studying the classic texts, borrowed at the local library, which he had to copy by hand.

It is worthwhile to note that classic Japanese texts in the Edo period were printed mostly using beautiful and barely comprehensible flowing script as the main font, and reading the masterpieces of medieval and pre-modern literature (which in those days were published without any annotation) required very thorough linguistic and textual knowledge. An average modern Japanese student at a liberal arts college, to say nothing about a high-school student, cannot read and never reads any classical texts in the original, except for the short well-commented excerpts included in school textbooks. The ancient Chinese literary language (*wenyan*) is replaced now at school with an abridged course of old Japanese literary language *kobun* (*bungo*), while classic Chinese is taught rather as an elective course to the students of Japanese Literature departments. In order to read the classics in the early age, one needed a truly uncommon diligence and perseverance not typical of a youth — the qualities that the gifted young man from a remote province possessed to a full extent.

Upon finishing junior high school, having neglected high school, the sixteen-year old Tsunenori rushed to Tokyo to start there his literary career. At first he entered the preparatory department of Tokyo Imperial University and then in 1890 successfully passed exams at the Faculty of Literature. He was going in for baseball, a new game recently brought from America. A year earlier he had discovered that he was sick with consumption, a disease of the poor, incurable at the time. Tuberculosis acquired by a diligent student in the years when he had been living in a cold, dirty little room in the slums of Tokyo, remained his sinister companion for life. After learning that his days were numbered, Masaoka Tsunenori decided to take the penname Shiki — a mountain cuckoo. According to an ancient

legend, a mountain cuckoo (whose warbling does not sound like the monotonous cuckoo so familiar to us) sings with blood flowing from her throat.

However, the news that he was sentenced to an early and painful death did not stop Shiki and ward him off the literary work. On the contrary, he went on reading books with renewed vigor, trying his hand at various genres of poetry, traveling a lot around the country and writing literary accounts of his travels, meeting with leading metropolitan poets and critics — as if he intended to find as soon as possible his real vocation and take a rightful place in the literary world. After reading Basho's famous collection of *haiku A Monkey's Straw Raincoat (Sarumino)*, he decided to compose *haiku* himself. Due to his original views, fresh aesthetic judgments and an extraordinary poetic talent, a country boy managed to rush into the Tokyo literary milieu with an unexpected rapidity and soon found his own niche in it.

In 1892 Shiki for the first time settled in his own home. The small one-story wooden house, which at present (after reconstruction) is the Shiki House Museum, was located in Negishi area, close to the large metropolitan Ueno Park. Today Shiki's humble house near one of the stations of the Tokyo circle Yamanote line, Uguisudani (Nightingale Valley), is surrounded by dull and featureless concrete buildings with an abundance of love hotels, those popular fleeting shelters of love. But a hundred years ago things looked different. The house stood on the outskirts of Tokyo in lush greenery. In early spring, at the end of February and beginning of March, the red and white plum blossoms would bloom in the gardens, in April the wind would bring from Ueno Park clouds of cherry blossoms, in May the azalea bushes would cover the ground with a multi-colored carpet. Competing with the cuckoos in trilling, the bush warblers, these Japanese nightingales would croon songs of love incessantly until September. In the summer, among the rich colors of grasses and flowers a bird choir was singing, cicadas were squealing deafeningly, grasshoppers and crickets were chirping in different voices. In autumn the leaves of the maple trees on the hills would become crimson, the chrysanthemums

would open and the late roses would fade; in cold winter under the gusts of cold wind from the sea and sometimes under the snow and more new buds on camellias would swell on the branches to give birth to myriads of red and white stars among ever-green leaves.

Shiki loved this life with great nature as his eternal background just as much as he loved the focused excitement of poetic tournaments, the hot debates in the literary salons, and the festive atmosphere of the capital's literary events. But above all he loved books. First and foremost, he was a man of book culture, a true heir to the Edo *bunjin*-literati, the virtuosos of the brush and poetic word. However, Shiki was too talented and independent to be content with the role of a modest "book worm" spending time in the dust of libraries. He needed an audience of thousands to present his views and this audience, as if by magic, was provided for him.

In 1892, Shiki, who was making just his first steps on a literary path, resolutely announced his intention to become a poet. None of his major works had been written yet. He has just begun a systematic study of *haiku* and published several short articles which did not reveal any particular merits of the author in this field. However, the charm of personality of this slender young man was so great that he was offered as in advance an honorary position as the editor of the poetry column in the largest national newspaper, *Nippon shinbun*. At the time, Shiki was still a university student! For a country with highly developed unshakable traditions of age and service hierarchy, this appointment was absolutely incredible and inexplicable. It could be nothing but a finger of fate, pointing to the young author the way to poetry reforms. Almost at the same time another prominent poetry reformer, a twenty-year old Yosano Tekkan, was granted a similar miraculous appointment as an editor of the culture department at the newspaper *Niroku shinpo*.

In the spring of 1895 Shiki went to China as a war correspondent, where he spent a month in the vicinity of Jinzhou, enthusiastically describing for his compatriots the victorious battles of the Imperial Army during the Sino-Japanese War.

The feeling of militant patriotism, so typical of most Japanese writers of the Meiji period, was not alien to the young poet. Later, however, it turned into one burning desire — to revive and glorify national literature, making it worthy of the historic mission of the great East Asian nation.

On his way home from China Shiki, already a very sick man, had a heavy bleeding from the lungs. He was taken to hospital in Kobe and, after temporary recovery, went to his native Matsuyama for a while to get away from the hustle and bustle of the capital and to continue his literary research. The position in the newspaper was being kept for him in absentia. Shiki stayed in Matsuyama for three months. This time proved to be enough to form a circle of like-minded literati and to found his own *haiku* school. Among his devoted friends and disciples were the future renowned poets Takahama Kyoshi, Naito Meisetsu, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, and the famous novelist Natsume Soseki, also known as one of the best *haiku* masters of the time, who was assigned to Shikoku as a teacher of English. Later, the poetic association born out of Shiki's school took the name "Hototogisu" ("Mountain Cuckoo" — in a different reading) and soon became a leading group in the *haiku* world, retaining its position to this day.

Poets, critics and admirers of fine literature from all over the country would frequently visit Shiki's small house. There thousands of poems, dozens of articles and essays, hundreds of annotations and reviews, were written. Nowadays, Shiki's secluded abode in Matsuyama is located inside a two-story glass-concrete memorial museum, which resembles a mausoleum, but there is a curious ethnographic element in the rich interior decoration.

After joining the *Nippon shinbun*, over a two-year period Shiki managed to accomplish two fundamental tasks: the creation of a "Haiku classification" ("Haiku bunrui") and a "Haiku chronology" ("Haiku nenpyo"). His views on the evolution and perspectives of classical poetry he presented in a series of newspaper articles under the general title "Talks on Haiku in the Otter Office" ("Dassai shooku haiwa"). Shiki's opinion on the prospects of contemporary poetry of the traditional genres

was rather pessimistic. Developing his theory, he referred to the works of the scholars who had analyzed statistical data of Japanese poetry, coming to a conclusion that the number of *waka* and *haiku* patterns and techniques was regrettably limited, which was easy to verify just by counting the possible combinations of 20–30 syllables. In other words, *tanka* and *haiku*, sooner or later, would have to reach their limits. And the limit, apparently, had been already reached, as it seemed that now it was almost impossible to compose an original poem.

Criticizing without mercy all kinds of epigone *haiku*, and later also *tanka* poetry, Shiki still admitted the possibility of reviving both genres. Moreover, it was in this revival that he would see his mission.

In the library of Tokyo Imperial University he read almost all *haiku* published over three centuries — from the end of the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century, rewriting himself the best works by innumerable authors and combining them in seasonal cycles, studying the special characteristics of vocabulary and tropes. The volume of material covered — hundreds of thousands of poems — was so great, the range of research was so wide, and the author's judgments were so weighty and well-grounded, that none of the best poets and critics even tried to start serious debates with the troublemaker.

In his statements, Shiki first of all rejected obsolete patterns and stereotypes, firmly established over the last century in the *haiku* world. He severely criticized the imitators, who would apply the same seasonal images and topics from generation to generation and blindly worship their idols.

At the age of twenty-six, Shiki published a series of sensational provocative articles called "Talks about Basho" ("Basho zatsudan"), dedicated to the bicentenary of the death of the poet, in which he encroached on the indisputable authority of the great Old Man. He did not dispute Basho's exceptional talent, but argued that the sanctification of the name had nothing to do with the appreciation of the master's true literary achievements, which were actually far less grand and, anyway, did not match the scope of the existing idolization of the poet:

The very Basho that we have as the patriarch of a religious *haikai* sect is not equivalent to the writer Basho ... In order to find out what Basho is as a writer, we have to take his *haikai* and analyze them thoroughly. However, the faithful followers of the *haikai* "sect" worship all Basho's poems uncritically as sacred scriptures, so that you never hear not even a single outcry criticizing any *haiku* poem or any word of the Old Man...

I assume that the vast majority of Basho's *haiku* is worth forgetting as primitive and not really good. Those *haiku* that can be considered really excellent, constitute a small percentage—some fiftieth or sixtieth part of his works ... However, if we judge merely by the amount of poems, it is not so much. Yet Basho, who composed two hundred good poems, still does not lose his important role as a great writer ... Basho's works did not imitate the old poetry, but discovered a new potential ... [quot. in 237, 176–177]).

According to Shiki, deification of the master brought him and his followers more harm than benefit, as his good and bad poems were piled up in the same heap and canonized—including the "linked verse" (*haika no renga*), which are hard to consider a serious poetic genre. Since Shiki supported his arguments by analyzing certain works of Basho, pointing out their weakness and drawbacks, it was not easy to refute his invective. Basho's stunned admirers did not dare confront Shiki in an open debate. Shiki did not manage to take from Basho the halo of a genius, but he succeeded in shaking the foundation of the cult, which at least made it possible to bring some innovations into *haiku* poetics and promote the urgent need of poetry reformation. As for Basho, his worldwide fame in the twentieth century has immeasurably increased, and Shiki himself has been placed by the omnipotent tradition in the long line of the Old Man's disciples and followers, the most dignified successor in the new times.

What was really innovative in the concept put forth by Shiki and enthusiastically adopted by his disciples? It was not, for certain, about creating a fundamentally different anti-classicist

poetics (though he may have dreamed about it, too), but a harsh and peremptory re-evaluation of the old, the revision of the established hierarchy of literary authority, and the removal of the rigid formal restrictions binding the traditional genres. In general, Shiki did not reject *haiku's* original principles, so typical of the poetics of Basho and his school: innuendo, ambiguity, suggestiveness — everything that allows a poet to express *multa paucis*. Following Basho, he acknowledged the value of such aesthetic categories as *sabi* (feeling the sad charm of the floating world), *wabi* (awareness of the man's melancholy loneliness in the universe), *fueki ryuko* (comprehension of the eternal in the current), *shibumi* (perception of tart charm of being), *karumi* (lightness and transparency of imagery). However, Shiki convincingly showed that Basho himself and a myriad of his followers were trapped in the conventions, too often sacrificing the vital truth and the coherence of a poetic image for the sake of presenting a specific beauty ideal canonized by them.

The main merit of Shiki's campaign was in the effort to liberate poetry of the traditional genres from stagnation, dogmatism, and sectarian conservatism. Playing the role of a "mediator" between the pre-modern literature and literature of modern times, he opened for *haiku* poetry the way of transition to a realistic description and interpretation of the surrounding environment. Shiki tried to sum up the worldview of an artist in that new, transitional period. In particular, he formulated the concept of two types of beauty: the Oriental, passive beauty, typical of Chinese classical poetry, Basho's poetry and the entire classic *haiku* genre; and the Western, active beauty, typical of all European art, as well as of the emerging contemporary art of Japan.

Encroaching on the national poetic legacy, Shiki could hardly expect to succeed, if in return he could offer to the audience only his own *haiku* or *haiku* composed by his friends and associates. Criticizing Basho's conservative school one had to confront it with something different, to offer an alternative to an ordinary mind of *haiku* readers and give them another model of high classics, more corresponding to the goals of the new art. For this role Shiki chose a wonderful Edo poet, Yosa no Buson, at that

time known to the intellectuals more as a talented painter than as a poet. Back in 1893, in the essay on the *haiku* poets of the eighteenth century, he mentioned Buson just briefly, but three years later, he proclaimed his new favorite to be the best of the best — worthy of taking in the history of literature the very place on which the fanatic worshippers had erected a monument to Basho.

In a number of essays on poetry that later constituted his final work, *Haiku Poet Buson (Haijin Buson, 1899)*, Shiki not only re-introduced Buson's poetry to the Japanese readers, but also put it above the works by Basho. For him, Basho was a poet of a "negative beauty," corresponding to the spirit of Japanese medieval art, while Buson was a poet of a positive beauty, more corresponding to the modern vision of an Artist.

Analyzing the specific characteristics of the poetic skills of both masters, Shiki tried to prove the superiority of Buson's romanticist, full-blooded "positive" style over Basho's restrained, clamped and artificial "negative" style:

Buson's *haiku* are equal to Basho's *haiku*, but by some indicators should be ranked higher. Buson did not acquire such poetic fame mainly because his poetry was not addressed to wide masses and the *haiku* poets after Buson were ignorant and illegible in taste" [151, v. 5, 190].

Shiki insisted that Buson should be placed superior as he could much better than Basho present in the narrow frame of seventeen syllables a complicated plot, revealing in any topic a sharp nostalgic image. He also strongly emphasized Buson's picturesque poetic manner, which perfectly reflected the worldview of the superb artist. This comparison resulted not so much in the overthrow of Basho (the task that Shiki probably did not consider seriously), but in reviving the truly wonderful work of Buson and creating a kind of "family tree" for a new *haiku* school.

To understand Shiki's aesthetic views, one has to turn to his *shasei* ("reflection of nature") theory, which generated stormy debates in the literary world that reverberated for over three decades. The idea of introducing the method of objective

reflection in the traditional *haiku* and *tanka* poetry was born in Shiki's mind in 1894 from talks with an artist of the "European" trend (*yoga*), Nakamura Fusetsu, who was the first to introduce the young reformer to the mysteries of the Western art of realism. Fusetsu himself had borrowed the term *shasei* from a classic Chinese treatise on the theory of painting dating back to the Sung dynasty (960–1279). Some supplement to these conversations was found in the writings of Tsubouchi Shoyo (*Shosetsu shinzui [The Essence of the Novel]*) and Futabatei Shimei (*Ukigumo [Floating Clouds]*), in which Shiki saw the first examples of application of the concept of realism to Japanese literature. From that beginning *shasei* became the cardinal principle for Shiki and his school, determining the mainstream trend of new *haiku* and *tanka* poetry.

In his major works,, including "My Haiku" ("Waga haiku"), "A Drop of Ink" ("Bokuji itteki"), "and A Sickbed Six Feet Long" ("Byosho rokushaku"), Shiki interpreted *shasei* as a universal creative method which is nothing else but the "objective realism" in conveying images of the objects and phenomena of the world, i.e. the "reflection of nature" or "copying of life." Actually, his interpretation of realism looks deceptively oversimplified: "*jissai no ari — no mama o shasu*" ("to reflect reality as it is"). However, Shiki's poetics is in fact not that simple and naive. Drawing a parallel between poetry and painting, in particular, and corroborating his arguments with the works of the French Impressionists, Shiki claimed the dominance of direct experience and the necessity to present the nature exactly as it is, even to the detriment of eloquence. He attached a particular importance to the vocabulary selection that could optimally convey the overtones, the author's mood, and the unique atmosphere of a moment. He expanded the boundaries of permissible "poetic" topics and lexicon, accordingly. His poems included images unthinkable for classical poetry, a steam engine, a railroad, a telegraph pole, a baseball game, etc.

Over the years his interpretation of the *shasei* principle expanded, gradually becoming more complicated. In the mid-1890s Shiki added to his concept the principle of *heitan*

("simplicity and gentleness"), which also has origin in the medieval Chinese writings on aesthetics and was supposed now to elevate new landscape poetry. This evolution was influenced by Shiki's keen interest in the landscape painting of the young ingenious artist Kuroda Seiki, who had just returned from Paris. His painting revealed amazing smoothness and harmony of forms, evoking Shiki's sincere admiration: "The man, who loved earlier everything incredible and grand, suddenly acquired a taste for simplicity and gentleness. This suggests that his feelings should sufficiently develop for more subtle impressions ... " [151, v. 5, 190].

Shiki offered the "reflection of nature" primarily as a world-view concept, dictating the choice of imagery and techniques. Nevertheless, at this point theory was still ahead of practice. The attempts to apply the experience of Chinese classics to the culture of the Meiji period simply could not succeed, and often those *haiku* that the author himself believed to be a result of his new approach, in fact, proved to be just the result of a skillful interpretation of classical poetry.

As a prominent poet in his own right and a successor to the great *haiku* patriarchs of the Edo period, Shiki, in spite of his bellicose manifestos, in most of his own poems was not trying to break with the canonical rules and introduce a totally new poetics. Most of his *haiku*, with all their brightness, novelty, and unexpectedness of the image, do not violate the conventions of medieval poetry, presenting the same thematic divisions and the same poetic techniques.

In many *haiku* we feel the influence of Buson's Romanticist palette:

Such a quietude!
through a hole in the shoji paper —
a sea view...

The falling petals —
under the cherry tree in sad contemplation
sits a stone Buddha...

Other images are suggested by Basho's poems, like the following poem, bringing to mind a direct association with the splash of water from the iconic *haiku* about a frog jumping into the old pond.

*A slap on the water —
and, awaken from his nap,
the dog is on alert...*

In general, despite the pugnacious criticism of Basho, Shiki fully acknowledged the depth and reticent power of the Old Man's best poems, agreeing that they should occupy a special place in the *haiku* world. In fact, Basho's spirit was following Shiki throughout his life, encouraging him to compose different, but still unchanged at the heart poetry of Zen contemplation:

*Remembering Basho —
over the rice and tea in Nara
I compose haiku...*

This poem certainly refers to the famous *haiku* by Basho:

*The fragrance of chrysanthemums —
in the temples of old Nara
the dark sculptures of the Buddhas...*

Often we feel a parallel with Kobayashi Issa's poetry, singing praise to the poor, weak, and miserable creatures of the earth:

*The horse races:
oh the pitiful horse
that came the last!..*

The innovative nature of such *haiku*, which claim originality by presenting a hot topic, is rather doubtful. Thus, going as a correspondent to the war theater in China, the young poet pointed with meaning:

*I am leaving for a place
where maybe the blossoms of my brush
are doomed to fall...*

In this case, the mannerism and archaic nature of the image rather contradict the actual character of the events.

The innovative usage of words, which Shiki steadfastly advocated in his articles, was mainly reduced to an introduction of deliberately “prosaic” lexicon to reflect the spirit of the time, but in fact reflected rather the spirit of controversy inherent in the reformer himself:

*A branch is put
into the medication bottle —
a plum in bloom...*

Among a great number of traditional *haiku* the “innovative” poems filled with alien images, look out of place, sometimes even bizarre and ridiculous:

*The summer grasses-
barely seen in the distance
are the baseball players...*

The beginning of the poem *natsugusa ya* (“the summer grasses”), a stereotyped image, contains an allusion to Bashō’s famous *haiku*, composed on an ancient battlefield:

natsugusa ya	<i>The summer grasses —</i>
tsuwamonodomo no	<i>all that is left of the dreams</i>
yume no ato	<i>of those warriors...</i>

Shiki’s image acquires an entirely different tone and, as it seems, is filled with new life, but the baseball players are not a relevant replacement for the vanished soldiers of the original *haiku* by Bashō.

Probably, Shiki, a brilliant master of condensed expressive imagery, was aware of the inappropriateness and incongruity

of such replacements and therefore was not too active in composing typical modernized *haiku*, but introduced them into the seasonal cycles more as a symbol of his own revolutionary attitude than as the fruits of real inspiration.

However, sometimes an emotional impetus, so common for *haiku*, is colored with a new tone:

*I killed a mosquito —
and fresh blood spotted
a book on war...*

Shiki achieves the greatest impressionist effect in those cases where he combines in a confined space of *haiku* elevated and base subjects, the human and the divine, the mortal and the eternal. It is in this skill, crucial for the art of *haiku*, that he reached unprecedented heights.

kaki kue ba	<i>When I was eating a persimmon,</i>
kane ga naru nari	<i>a bell tolled</i>
Horyu-ji	<i>at Horyu-ji temple...</i>

Shiki loved persimmons and composed scores of *haiku* about this fruit, but in this case, the contrast of “eating a persimmon” and the loud voice of the bell of Horyu-ji temple with its thirteen-century long history, creates an amazing effect of total physical and spiritual dissolution in eternity. It is interesting to note, that in fact this poem was composed not near ancient Horyu-ji, but in the vicinity of another giant temple of the eighth century, Todai-ji in Nara. The poet deliberately changed the surroundings and called the poem “Having a Rest in a Tearoom near Horyu-ji,” believing that the atmosphere of Horyu-ji located far from the city was more consistent with the tone of *haiku*.

A similar philosophical depth is revealed in another poet’s *haiku* about a persimmon, “After my Death,” which plays the role of an ironical auto-epitaph — funny, but not as light-minded as it may seem at first glance:

*Let them say sometimes
that he liked composing haiku
and eating persimmon...*

A reminder of the fatal disease that was bringing closer the author's last day, introduces a note of bitterness into a gentle self-ironical poetic image. This tart bitterness, an awareness of the near and inevitable meeting with Eternity, permeates many of the most "poignant" of Shiki's poems. He composed many of them in the last years of his short life, which the poet spent in his small house in Negishi, contemplating a tiny front garden and thinking about the immortal nature of art:

*On my sickbed
I am turning to be closer
to the small brazier...*

* * *

*A winter sun beam
suddenly reached through the window
the sick man's room...*

As an intellectual brought up on the old traditions, Shiki, for all his liberal ideas, had a special interest in setting up his own school and educating disciples. Among the latter there were several brilliant poets, like Takahama Kyoshi, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, and Naito Meisetsu — all three, like Shiki, were born and raised in Matsuyama, on the island of Shikoku. The forth prodigy was Ishii Rogetsu, a modest country boy from Akita who became a close friend of Shiki but lived the most part of his life in the distant northern region working as a village doctor. However, the circle of the disciples of the young master was much wider and numbered dozens of talented poets, whom Shiki would willingly instruct in person or by correspondence, and whose poems he would regularly edit while preparing almanacs and collective anthologies for publication. In the mid-1890s he was probably the most influential *haiku* author and mentor in Japan, and that gave him the opportunity to try his hand at other genres. But his health was letting him down.

Knowing that he had incurable consumption, in 1895 Shiki asked his friend and disciple Takahama Kyoshi to become his official successor for the sake of saving the school, but Kyoshi (who at the time was barely twenty-one-years old) did not accept the proposal. Nevertheless, in the future he fulfilled the Master's will, and became the head of the central *haiku* journal, *Hototogisu*, founded in 1897. For several decades (partly sharing the fame with Kawahigashi Hekigoto, partly competing with him), Kyoshi remained the de facto head of the school, which Shiki had led until his untimely death in 1902.

Among Shiki's disciples and closest friends there was also the most popular Japanese novelist of the Meiji period.

NATSUME SOSEKI

The name of Natsume Soseki (1867–1916) means for the Japanese reader nearly the same as the name of Anton Chekhov for the Russian reader or maybe the name of John Galsworthy for the British one. To this day Soseki has remained the most popular author of psychological prose, whose works are included in the school literature curricula, and who is still the object of boundless adoration and worship. Soseki, being maybe not the most brilliant writer of the Meiji period, due to the established tradition has become the number one Japanese classic of Modern Times, leaving behind in terms of popular recognition even such titans as Akutagawa Ryunoske, Kawabata Yasunari, and Tanizaki Junichiro. His novels *I Am a Cat*, *Botchan*, *The Heart*, *Sanshiro*, *The Gate*, *Afterwards*, etc., have been translated into many languages. Although Soseki's talent definitely manifests itself primarily in prose, *haiku* poetry was always for him the most important way of poetic expression, a kind of lyrical accompaniment to his large realistic novels.

However, *haiku* for Soseki was not a "purely personal matter," as is often the case in Japan with the works of amateur *haijin*. He was friends with the leading poets of his time and

Natsume
Soseki



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目

漱
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tried to assert his individual style among the emerging schools and trends. The writer's name attracted the attention of the critics to his *haiku* poems, and finally they were accepted not as an addition to his classic novels but as real masterpieces in their own right.

Though from his youth Soseki had been fond of poetry and since the late 1880s had been trying himself to compose poems (*kanshi* and *haiku*), his interest probably would have remained a literary whim if not for a crucial meeting with Masaoka Shiki. In 1895 Soseki, a native of the capital, after graduating from Tokyo University got a position as a teacher of English at a secondary school in the city of Matsuyama on Shikoku. The next year he was transferred to another island. However, it was during the months when Soseki was on Shikoku that Masaoka Shiki returned home from the Chinese war theater with a bout of tuberculosis. Soseki was a frequent guest in Shiki's house, where the young master, already widely known, instructed him in poetry composition. However, the official disciple-teacher relations were not formalized, and their literary acquaintance over time grew into a friendship.

Shiki soon returned to Tokyo and Soseki went to Kyushu, but their ties were not interrupted. The friends kept an active

correspondence, exchanging new *haiku* as well. Meticulous Japanese literary critics have determined that during the following two years Soseki sent Shiki twenty seven letters, each containing six to seven *haiku* on the average. Certainly, Soseki's poetic writings were not limited to this moderate number...

From 1900 to 1903, Soseki was sent abroad to England to continue his education, where he actively continued to write poetry and prose. Some of his poetic sketches of the period vividly convey a sense of nostalgia, which the writer used to mention so often in his letters.

*The moon is so bright —
oh my shadow, how far
is your native land!..*

He would continue his correspondence with Shiki and send his new *haiku* to the dying poet for his evaluation.

kiri ki naru	<i>Through the yellowish fog</i>
ichi ni ugoku	<i>only shadows are walking</i>
kageboshi	<i>around the city...</i>

After returning to Japan, Soseki continued to compose *haiku* and even became the head of a small poetry club. He was friends with Ito Sachio and Takahama Kyoshi, and willingly contributed to the journals *Ashibi* and *Hototogisu*. However, Soseki conceived in his own way the "reflection of nature" and never committed himself to onerous regulations, relying mostly on his inspiration and personal taste.

His *haiku* composed in the first decade after the acquaintance with Shiki were fresh, light and a little sad, as befits Zen landscape poetry:

kiriguchi no	<i>On the fresh white cut</i>
shiroki basho ni	<i>of a banana tree</i>
koori tsuku	<i>ice has formed ...</i>

* * *

*Poppy flowers —
how long I couldn't believe
that they would wither too...*

* * *

*In the evening dusk
it casts some light on the rape flowers —
a low window...*

The background of the poem is a school, where the author worked as a teacher, but the routine background emphasizes the psychological depth of the image more vividly:

THE PHYSICS CLASS

*A dark class at school.
"I have a soul!" — keeps on saying
a cricket in the dusk...*

By the end of his life the tone of Soseki's poems changed, beginning now to show the notes of bitter pessimism. The writer had a severe ulcerative disease that eventually drove him to an untimely grave. The incurable disease had been developing for several years.

All his pain, bitterness, and despair Soseki confided to poetry. His confessional poems on his sickbed composed not long before death are comparable to the farewell lyrics of Masaoka Shiki:

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR AFTER AN ATTACK OF SICKNESS

*I look like an egg-plant
that has got bleached and wrinkled all over
after a flood...*

* * *

*The smell of the rice flowers.
The New moon is growing.
My spirit succumbed to ailment...*

* * *

*Here and there cicadas are singing.
This starry night
the soul of the sick man is calm...*

* * *

*To those who have to leave
and to those who will live
wild geese are coming...*

During his last years Soseki, a writer of cosmopolitan views, took seriously to Buddhism. He put forward the slogan “Follow heaven — abandon the self” (*sokuten kyoshi*). However, he could not abandon himself completely, neither in prose nor in poetry. Natsume Soseki’s *haiku* poems remained till his last day the brightest evidence of the richness and beauty of the soul of one of the most wonderful humanists of modern times.

NAITO MEISETSU

Naito Meisetsu (1847–1926) was probably the only one in the circle of Shiki’s disciples and friends who was born long before the Meiji Restoration. Nevertheless, he started his career in poetry only at the age of forty five. Many of his contemporary eminent poets simply did not live as long as that. This strange transformation of a professional bureaucrat into a fine poet, the master of the “reflection of nature,” happened gradually and was in a certain sense another interesting evidence of changes taking place in the society awakened from centuries-long slumber to a new life.

Naito Motoyuki (penname Meisetsu), like Shiki, was a native of the city of Matsuyama. His father, a hereditary samurai of the local clan, sent his son to the Shoheiko School for samurai in Edo, where he successfully studied Japanese and Chinese classics. Motoyuki himself did not have a chance to enroll in military service, because right after the Meiji Restoration and the fall of the shogunal regime, the samurai clans were disbanded and

Naito
Meisetsu



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鳴
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the samurai social class was abolished. Having returned from the capital to Matsuyama, Motoyuki worked for more than ten years as an administration official of Ehime Prefecture and then was transferred to Tokyo, to the Ministry of Education, where he again worked as a clerk for another ten years. In the early 1890s. Naito Motoyuki was appointed a warden of the capital dormitory for the students coming to Tokyo from Matsuyama, and that ordinary assignment radically changed his fate.

In the dormitory the middle-aged warden met with a young book lover and poet named Masaoka Shiki, who at the time had already gained a reputation as a first-class *haiku* master. The warden became one of the first who applied to Shiki to be accepted as his disciple. Shiki gave his consent, and soon, with his support, Naito Meisetsu started contributing *haiku* to the central journals and newspapers — in major newspapers there were special *haiku* columns by that time. Among other disciples, united in the mid-18 90s around Shiki, there were many of his countrymen, and all were twenty years younger. Meisetsu was respected in their community as an “elder” and he, on his part, actively participated in educating the young people. The Confucian education he had received under the old regime would distinguish him among other members of the school by

a deep and thorough knowledge of classics. The major prodigies of Shiki's school—Takahama Kyoshi and Kawahigashi Hekigoto—who would become the principle figures in the *haiku* world after Shiki's death, also recognized the high merits of their elder colleague and friend.

Meisetsu, who started to write rather late and published his first book *The Collection of Haiku by Meisetsu* (*Meisetsu kushu*) only in 1911, quickly gained popularity due to the purity and transparency of his style. He managed to infuse it with the breath of a new era and did not forget the legacy of the oriental classics, elegantly using the full range of seasonal images:

hatsu fuyu no	<i>Early winter.</i>
take midori nari	<i>The bamboo leaves are so green</i>
Shisen-do	<i>at Shisen-do temple...</i>

The picture of early winter in Kyoto, shaded by the bright green bamboo, is enhanced by an allusion to the famous collection of portraits of thirty-six immortals of Chinese poetry painted by the great artist Kano Tan'yu at Shisen-do temple. A complex range of associations leads a sophisticated reader into the depths of the Tang and Sung Chinese literary tradition.

Other *haiku* would contain a reference to Basho's masterpieces:

My own voice	<i>Say a word —</i>
it brings back to me —	<i>and it will freeze your lips —</i>
this autumn wind...	<i>this autumn wind...</i>

(Basho)

Others reveal the direct influence of Kobayashi Issa, "a worshipper of frogs, flies and snails":

*Their bellies glittering,
frogs are falling in the paddy
through the water gates...*

* * *

*Flies are swarming.
The rays of the spring sun
on my inkpot...*

* * *

*Settled in a ray —
and now crawls after the sun
this winter fly...*

Nature and man in Meisetsu's poetry are in a complicated interrelation, but nature definitely dominates in it:

arashi no	<i>Through the howling</i>
areru naka no	<i>of the wild storm —</i>
goho kana	<i>the sound of canon shot...</i>

A lone gun shot in the middle of raging elements emphasizes the smallness and insignificance of human efforts in the vast expanse of the universe.

Many *haiku* poems by Meisetsu, for all his devotion to the principle of the "reflection of nature," reveal a rather optimistic perception of the world. Deep sentiments are combined in them with a romantic irony and self-irony:

*I am asking just for one thing —
for a hearty hot-water bottle.
Such freezing cold!*

* * *

*I got a present —
in a tea cup carrying home
a gold fish...*

Many poetic sketches are obviously influenced by the expressive Romanticist style of Yosa no Buson, a poet whom Shiki always set as a model for his disciples, claiming the superiority of his "positive" poetics over Basho's "negativism."

*A traveling monk
is vanishing in the mist.
A distant bell...*

In Meisetsu's poems, except for figurative semantics, more or less commonly accepted in the tradition, we can find sometimes rather unexpected tropes, not typical of old *haiku* — for example, anthropomorphism:

*Kiso river
is so angry but Kiso mountains
are smiling gently...*

Like many poets of his circle, Naito Meisetsu did not succumb to the temptation of radical reforms and instead followed the path of a moderate, non-violent innovation of *haiku* poetry. Due to his loyalty to the classic tradition, he managed to preserve the purity and clarity of the poetic imagery in the years of literary turmoil. Nowadays, Meisetsu's poetry not accidentally occupies a place of honor in all anthologies and readers of modern times.

ISHII ROGETSU

Ishii Rogetsu (real name Yuji), also one of the best *haiku* poets of the twentieth century and a good friend of Meisetsu, had to wait for over a century for nation-wide recognition. He was born and raised in remote Akita prefecture, located in the north-western part of Honshu island and facing the Sea of Japan. There he lived much of his life, and passed away in the region at the age of fifty five. Looking back at the history of new Japanese literature, we can find the names of many prominent writers, poets, and painters who would conquer the capital having arrived from various parts of the great archipelago. However, very few writers actually did the reverse: abandoning careers in Tokyo and finding inspiration in their distant native provinces. Rogetsu, a remarkable exception

Ishii
Rogetsu



石
井
露
月

among the leading *haijin* of the time, was one of them. After several years spent in Tokyo he returned to his harsh native land as a village doctor and spent there the rest of his life curing patients, teaching young men, and composing *haiku*.

The poet to be was born on May 17, 1873 in the large family of a wealthy farmer who was the head of Memeki hamlet, a part of Tomekawa village, which was later included in the small town of Yuwa, some fifteen kilometers to the south of Akita city. Yuji was the fifth child out of seven. Although the family was rather well off, it was not easy for a farmer to send all the kids to school. In addition, Yuji's father died at the age of only forty-eight, leaving the family in the custody of the grandfather. Yuji attended elementary school and was even singled out for his diligence and good grades. He was awarded a memorial book gift from the Ministry of Education as the best pupil. The prize was the *Analects* of Confucius. However, Yuji was a very weak boy, and it was decided that, for considerations of health, he should leave the school and study at home.

For several years Yuji stayed at home, but he continued his studies and managed to cover the school program completely. Besides, his grandfather sponsored his private lessons with a prominent local connoisseur of Chinese literature, which laid

the foundation for the boy's amazing proficiency in the Chinese classics. In his teens he started composing both *haiku* and *kanshi* (poems in Chinese), which later constituted a considerable part of his literary heritage. There are over 500 *kanshi* in the poet's archive, although none of them were published. The young poet took a penname, which was a common practice for the literati. He chose a beautiful image — a moon in a dewdrop: Rogetsu, in Japanese.

Despite his extraordinary literary talents, in the remote countryside Rogetsu could hardly find any job better than that of a school teacher. But he was ambitious and aspired to the career of a writer. Having collected and partially borrowed some money, the young countryman left for Tokyo at the age of nineteen. To earn his living in the capital he found for a while a job at a drugstore.

Departing spring!..
My native land is so far —
three hundred ri away...

He was pinning his hopes on a meeting with Tsubouchi Shoyo, one of the leading writers of the time and a renowned literary critic. However, the interview with Shoyo ended in failure — the master rejected his application, arguing that to start a career in literature one needs not only talent but also money and connections. The poor young man was in despair, knowing that in Japan since the Middle Ages it was impossible to find a place under the sun in any domain of art or literature if one skipped the stage of apprenticeship.

Rogetsu's misfortune with Shoyo in fact became a blessing in disguise. One of his friends and sympathizers decided to give the talented young man another chance by introducing him to Masaoka Shiki, the universally-acknowledged leader of the *haiku* and *tanka* revival movement in the Meiji era. Shiki, being only five years older than Rogetsu, by that time was already in charge of the poetry department at one of the central newspapers, *Nihon shinbun*. He liked the nice country boy who seemed to be

very well versed in Chinese and Japanese classics. Rogetsu was offered a job at the newspaper and invited to the *haiku* poetry school established by Shiki. Takahama Kyoshi, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, Naito Meisetsu, and many of Shiki's other disciples became close friends of Ishii Rogetsu for the rest of his life.

Making his way as a reporter, Rogetsu attended *haiku* sessions at Shiki's house, participated in the collective anthologies, and soon became one of the most successful *haijin* of the fin de siècle period. In his review of *haiku* poetry, Shiki wrote: "Besides Hekigoto and Kyoshi I can mention Rogetsu as a poet whose works throughout the last year were marked by specific color." Since that time Rogetsu was ranked alongside Hekigoto and Kyoshi on the hierarchy scale of the renovated *haiku* world.

All the disciples and followers of Shiki shared the ideal of *shasei*, albeit giving it various individual interpretations. Rogetsu was no exception. He would always remain faithful to the ideal of copying nature, but one can easily discover some other traits in his *haiku*. Thus he often refers directly to the crucial principles of the Zen aesthetics once formulated by Basho. In the meantime, Rogetsu highly appreciated Shiki's achievements in the criticism of Basho and his efforts in promoting Yosa no Buson. The bright imagery of Buson inspired by the abundant colors of nature opened new horizons for the young Rogetsu, lending to his verse emotional vigor and sincere empathy.

However, Rogetsu's close personal contacts with Shiki and his circle were repeatedly interrupted by various unfavorable circumstances. Exhausted by work, he was diagnosed with beriberi, the disease of the poor. After some vain attempts to cure the illness at a spa resort in Chiba, Rogetsu decided to go back to Akita. After a few weeks in the country he regained health, but the prolonged illness changed his worldview and made him turn to medicine as the most useful and beneficial profession. Following thorough preparation, Rogetsu passed the entrance examinations in 1895 and became a student of medicine in Tokyo. He stayed there until graduation in 1898, attending the *haiku* sessions at Shiki's place and perfecting his own original style.

mushi no ne no	<i>Crickets cry no more —</i>
yamu toki tsuyu no	<i>and now one can hear</i>
oto su nari	<i>the dew drops falling...</i>

After graduation, Rogetsu spent a few months as an adjunct at one of the Kyoto hospitals and finally notified Shiki and his fellow-poets about his decision to go back to Akita for good. It was exactly the time when over seventy of his poems had just seen light in the popular almanac *Shin haiku* (*New Haiku*). Shiki and his disciples were upset with the news. They all gathered for a farewell party at Shiki's home to wish Rogetsu good luck back in Akita. After that, Rogetsu sustained his relations with the school mostly through the mail. He continued to exchange letters with Shiki, Kyoshi, Hekigoto, Meisetsu, and other poets. In some letters they discussed mostly literary issues, while in others the crucial problems of life and death, health and sickness, spiritual endeavor and frustration. The correspondence with Shiki did not stop until the death of the master in 1902.

Back in the north, Rogetsu opened medical practice in his home region, in the villages Tomekawa and Tanehira. In 1901, the young country doctor married a local girl. They had five children but two of them, a boy and a girl, met sudden death at the age of 21 and 18.

Medical practice was bringing a sufficient income, a part of which Rogetsu spent on charity. His newly built clinic became popular for its low fees. He was fond of communal activities and eagerly joined the local village administration in hope of implementing helpful reforms. He also founded a Youth Society and became its permanent chairman, teaching basics of the humanities to young boys and girls. In 1903 Rogetsu built at his own expense a public library and offered it as a gift to the community. The renovated Memeki library has survived up to the present time.

mura bunko	<i>The village library —</i>
kaeru naku ta no	<i>right near the rice paddy</i>
atari nari	<i>where the frogs are singing...</i>

Still it was *haiku* poetry that constituted the main field of interest of the modest country doctor. Soon upon arrival in Akita he founded together with some local poets the *haiku* journal *Haisei* (*The Haiku Star*) in the town of Noshiro, which was linked to the *haiku* school of Masaoka Shiki. It was in fact the first regional journal of the “Hototogisu” (“The Cuckoo-bird”) *haiku* society founded by Shiki, which still remains the major *haiku* group in Japan. Shiki himself suggested the name *Haisei* and encouraged Rogetsu’s initiative. Eighty seven issues of *Haisei* are stored now at the Rogetsu Memorial Museum in Yuwa. Along with local *haijin*, Kyoshi, Hekigoto, Meisetsu and other Tokyo celebrities, eagerly contributed their works to the journal.

When Shiki died in 1902 at the age of 35 it was a great loss for the whole world of traditionalist poetry in Japan, and a terrible shock for Ishii Rogetsu, who never forgot that he owed to Shiki his career as a *haijin*. He wrote an essay describing his most intimate spiritual ties with the master and mentioned him many times in his *haiku*:

*In these writings
the cool fragrance of the tide
I feel on this Way...*

However, Shiki’s death was by no means the end of Rogetsu’s cooperation with the “Hototogisu” group and other branches of the Shiki poetic school. Keeping his autonomy as an original countryside poet of nature, Rogetsu nevertheless always regarded himself as a disciple of Masaoka Shiki and as a representative of the Shiki school in Akita.

Rogetsu liked provincial life with its quiet pleasures. He was fond of walking in the endless dunes along the shore of the Sea of Japan, sailing along the Omono River, fishing in the shallow mountain brooks, hiking and staying overnight at small mountain temples or at hot springs.

suzushisa ya	<i>Oh how cool!</i>
take yurete umi	<i>Through the waving bamboo leaves</i>
mie ni keri	<i>a sea view opens ...</i>

* * *

shiro ato no	<i>Near the ruins of a castle</i>
chikaki ni ie su	<i>I built a cabin —</i>
ao sudare	<i>the bamboo blinds are still green...</i>

He enjoyed mushroom hunting, bird watching, moon viewing, the songs of the crickets in summer, the races of the red dragon-flies over the colorful hills in autumn, and the beautiful snow landscapes in winter. He would often call himself Rogetsu Sanjin (Rogetsu the Highlander). His poetry became a lyrical diary of his daily life, his travels, and his contemplations on nature. It was a unique poetic chronicle of a life that could be called rather ordinary — the life of a village doctor-*haijin* who preferred his homeland to all the treasures of the world.

kari hitotsu	<i>A lonely goose</i>
tsuki no atari wo	<i>flies so close to the moon</i>
tobu yo kana	<i>this autumn night...</i>

Near the end of his life Rogetsu made three long distance journeys: two of them along the coastline of the Sea of Japan and one to the south-east of Honshu. It was a new incentive for poetic inspiration, resulting in hundreds of brilliant *haiku*.

As a true *haijin*, Rogetsu was not just a poet but also an accomplished calligrapher and an original painter working with black ink in the *haiga* sketch style. He left quite a number of *jiku* (scrolls with a picture and a *haiku*-poem), *shikishi* (tablets with *haiku* and ink sketches, *tanzaku* (stripes of paper with a calligraphic *haiku*), and fans with poetic inscriptions on them. Almost all his major works survived till our days. Many are now carefully preserved in the Rogetsu Memorial Museum at the Yuwa library.

Ishii Rogetsu died suddenly at the age of 55 while in the midst of fulfilling his communal duty. He was making a speech

at a school farewell party the on occasion of the transfer of one of the teachers. It was an unexpected stroke and he did not suffer.

The grateful peasants from the local communities started erecting stone steles (*kuhi*) with examples of Rogetsu's *haiku* already during the poet's lifetime. Here is one example:

ame wo sakuru	<i>No place around</i>
monokage mo nashi	<i>to get refuge from the rain —</i>
kusa nishiki	<i>just the grass brocade...</i>

After his death this tradition lived on and eventually as many as twenty huge stones engraved with *haiku* by Rogetsu were erected — some around Yuwa town and others all over Akita prefecture — an unprecedented honor for a modest doctor who had never even published a collected edition of his poems.

Being one of the favorite disciples of the great patriarch of modern *haiku*, Masaoka Shiki, a and renowned *haiku* poet in his own right, Rogetsu always was eclipsed by the fame of his friends and colleagues from Tokyo — Kyoshi, Hekigoto, Meisetsu. Although his works were included in all the major *haiku* series of the twentieth century, Rogetsu is rarely mentioned or quoted by the leading Japanese scholars of literature. His poems have also almost never been translated into foreign languages. Only Reginald Blyth, a renowned researcher of Zen-Buddhism and a specialist in classical *haiku*, in the middle of the last century dedicated a few paragraphs to Rogetsu's masterpieces in his collection of *haiku* in four volumes.

However nowadays poetry by Ishii Rogetsu is entering a Renaissance. His poems are finally published. His anniversaries are widely celebrated in Akita. His museum at the Yuwa library is gaining popularity. A book by Kudo Kazuhiro for the first time properly introduced Rogetsu to the Japanese readers. And finally a trilingual collection of selected *haiku* by Ishii Rogetsu (prepared by the author of this book) saw light in his native land.



THE WAY TO “FREE” HAIKU

KAWAHIGASHI HEKIGOTO

Shiki wanted his favorite disciple and associate Takahama Kyoshi to be his successor as the head of *haiku* school. After the Master's death, however, two of his disciples and friends shared the responsibility of leading the school. But those two — Takahama Kyoshi and Kawahigashi Hekigoto — could never come to terms over the major issues of poetry. They had been friends since childhood and, like Shiki, both were natives of the city of Matsuyama in Shikoku. Both played an important role in the foundation of a new *haiku* school, despite the fact that their views on the poetics diverged in many points. Hekigoto was probably closer to Shiki emotionally, while Kyoshi had similar artistic aspirations, appreciating the quiet charm of the *shasei* lyricism.

A wonderful poet, essayist, literary critic and scholar, Kawahigashi Hekigoro (penname Hekigoto, 1873 – 1937) belonged to the circle of “stormy geniuses” of the Meiji period who changed the face of the country in the twentieth century. A natural born athlete, he played baseball, a new game that he took to at an early age on the recommendation of Masaoka Shiki. He was a tireless traveler and mountaineer, who wandered all over Japan with a poetic notebook and an album for sketches in hand. Having become a missionary of the new concept of *haiku*, he kept on moving from city to city, meeting with hundreds of poets and preaching the new faith. In addition, he played in the Noh theater, directed a calligraphy club, lectured on art, and wrote articles on politics — that is, he was a true *literatus*, a “man of culture” — a *bunjin* in the medieval sense of the word.

Hekigoto's father, a famous Confucian scholar, was a distinguished expert on Chinese literature and philosophy. He was

Shiki's teacher during the latter's teenage period, and Shiki valued very much the attention of his friend, the mentor's son. That was the beginning of a friendship that lasted for many years, having survived both poets in their works and in the pages of the biographical books.

Hekigoto met Shiki for the first time in 1888. He showed to his new friend, a recognized *haiku* master and popular figure among young literati, his first writings. After graduating from junior high school in Matsuyama, Hekigoto was going to enter high school in Tokyo but failed the exams and returned home. There he introduced his school friend Kyoshi to Shiki, and the three of them for a few months would diligently indulge in the joys of composing poems. Shiki, only a few years older than his two friends, enjoyed their unquestioned subordination, which obviously flattered him so much — especially because not long before this the famous writer Koda Rohan had written a humiliating bitter criticism of Shiki's experiments in prose.

The boys treated their experience in poetry quite seriously, but their ambitions went far beyond mastering the *haiku* technique. When Hekigoto eventually entered high school in Kyoto together with Kyoshi, he first of all published an article in a school magazine, predicting an imminent demise of traditional *haiku* and arguing that the genre had exhausted itself. At the time the angry young man was burning with desire to bring passion and vigor to the sleeping realm of poetry.

Shiki was very upset by this irresponsible childish assault on the classic heritage. Besides, Hekigoto together with Kyoshi, behaved inappropriately in Kyoto, indulging in immoderate drinking and debauchery. However, the debauchery did not last long, as Kyoshi soon got married to a girl who had formerly been Hekigoto's girlfriend. Learning life in all its manifestations, both poets went to study in Sendai, then again returned to Kyoto and finally both quit school without completing their studies. They would never enter any university.

Failing to find happiness in love, Hekigoto again turned to poetry with all his heart. Soon he became a columnist in the journal of Shiki's school, *Hototogisu*, founded in October 1897.

Kawahigashi
Hekigoto



河東碧梧桐

Over the next few years, Shiki's school would strengthen its positions, becoming more and more popular due to the poetry column in the *Nippon shinbun*, which was led by the Master himself, and to a large extent due to the publications of *Hototogisu*. (The journal celebrated its centenary in 1997 and continues to lead the *haiku* world in the twenty-first century.) Shiki was extremely pleased. He would write flattering reviews of Hekigoto and Kyoshi. However, the friendship between the former classmates and fellow *haijin* deteriorated. Hekigoto, under a penname, attacked Kyoshi in *Hototogisu*, the latter sharply rebuked the troublemaker, and only the serious illness of their common teacher and friend, Shiki, which ended in his death, kept both from a complete break up.

After Shiki's death in 1902, his post as a leading *haiku* columnist in the newspaper *Nippon shinbun* passed on to Hekigoto. Meanwhile, Kyoshi became the editor-in-chief of the *Hototogisu* journal. Shiki's school split into two camps. The moderate conservatives followed Takahama Kyoshi, who called for loyalty to the classical traditions and a correct use of the *shasei* principle according to Shiki's legacy.

Hekigoto, who had been the first to follow Shiki in carrying on the radical reform in traditional poetry, after his friend's

death continued to promote the principle of the “reflection of nature” (*shasei*), but giving a more innovative interpretation to it. He believed, for example, that the impressions collected in travel were an important and indispensable prerequisite for composing *haiku* of a new style. But soon Hekigoto started to speak about the need of a more radical innovation of the classical genre, appealing to the concepts of Naturalism, so fashionable at the time. His credo presents a combination of high and low, spiritual and mundane elements:

*Boiling potatoes —
in the silent Universe
a baby cries...*

* * *

*A plum tree in the field —
I see from the distance
a man breaking a branch...*

Despite his formal loyalty to his teacher’s legacy, Hekigoto advocated radical and irreversible reforms, contrasting his “*haiku* of a new trend” to all the rest, especially to the traditional poetry by Takahama Kyoshi and his associates. In 1907, the tireless paladin went on a grand tour around Japan, meeting in the cities and towns from Hokkaido to Okinawa with *haiku* lovers and promoting his ideas. After a short break, he set out on another journey, traveling for more than two years. The period of wanderings ended only in 1911. Most of the poems written over those years Hekigoto assembled in the collections *Three Thousand Ri* (*Sanzen ri*, 1910) and *The New Three Thousand Ri* (*Zoku sanzen ri*, 1914).

Endless trips around the country, talks and public lectures in *haiku* associations, contributed to the extraordinary growth of Hekigoto’s popularity. However, according to a 1911 opinion poll, he was ranked in second place after Naito Meisetsu (who did not go out on promotional missions) among the leading *haijin*. Not content with those results, from 1915

he put forward a new revolutionary program, calling on *haiku* poets to abandon the classical *bungo* style and the seventeen-syllable meter.

Hekigoto consistently advocated *haiku* innovation, including the introduction of new vocabulary, the gradual shift from old *bungo* grammar, and later a destruction of the rigid seventeen-syllable pattern in favor of *tanshi*—short poems in the colloquial language. In his work "On Poetry without a Center" ("Muchushin-ron"), he called for presenting "pure nature" without bringing into it any human actions and judgments. He also believed that a poet had the right to ignore the tradition, using any material from daily life, and came close to the rejection of the holy of holies—the seasonal division in *haiku* topics. Arguing for a new approach to the current political and social issues, Hekigoto, in order to be more convincing, compares the dramas of Chikamatsu and Gorky, justly noting that Chikamatsu, a brilliant playwright of the Edo period, with all his talent would not be able to write a play like *The Lower Depths* due to the historical limitations. The conclusion was that modern *haiku* poets shouldn't compose poems by clinging to the old poetics (see [80, 372]).

In promoting his "*haiku* of a new trend," Hekigoto relied on the assistance of the poet and critic Osuga Osuji (1881–1920), who called for developing the *shasei* principle by bringing into poetry more suggestiveness by means of deep imagery and symbolism. These ideas, no doubt, reflected the influence of the Symbolist school, which was very popular at this time and retained a dominant position in *kindaishi* poetry of new forms.

"The impressions that the seasonal topics arouse in us are akin to symbols," wrote Osuji. "However, we reject the conventional symbols... Our symbols emerge spontaneously from our experiments ... " [109, 178]. Interestingly, Osuji later criticized Hekigoto's new theory, which, in his opinion, was taking *haiku* too far from reality.

The movement led by Hekigoto was gradually gaining momentum, but by the end of the 1910s it split into several groups and was pushed aside by more conservative circles, or,

on the contrary, by schools more extremist in their aspirations. In 1914, Hekigoto had a disagreement on some principal issues with the avant-garde *haijin* Ogiwara Seisensui. Hekigoto withdrew from the magazine *Soun* (*Stratus*), to which he has been contributing since its foundation. Then, together with Nakatsuka Ippekiro and some other friends, he founded the journal *Kaiko* (*Crimson Sea*), but again could not find common ground with his colleagues and left the editorial board. His further attempts to launch new *haiku* magazines also failed. Gradually, Hekigoto's "haiku of a new trend" would go out of fashion, the *haiku* authors in the meantime having turned to new idols.

His inherent talent and traditional literary education did not let Hekigoto implement his grand plans of deconstructing the genre. His own poems, collected in the anthologies *New Haiku* and *Haiku of the New Trend*, are still mostly traditional and in general meet the requirements of Shiki's school. Hekigoto's more daring experiments, in which *haiku* lost the canonical rhythm pattern, grammar harmony, and lexical refinement, turning into a category of short poem in prose (*tanshi*), ended in failure—at least, this was the author's own conclusion. After the movement of "haiku of the new trend" had ended in deadlock, its head officially announced the dissolution of the school, and a few years later, in 1933, his withdrawal from poetry. During the last twenty years of his life Hekigoto kept composing *haiku* sporadically, but his major efforts were focused on a complete collection of essays, *The Way to Haiku of a New Trend* (*Shinko haiku e no michi*, 1929), a book of his recollections, *Talking about Shiki* (*Shiki o kataru*), and several volumes of the most interesting *Research on Buson* (*Buson kenkyu*, 1936). Thus he continued the work initiated by his friend and idol Shiki.

In his *The Way to Haiku of a New Trend*, Hekigoto condemned all his early poetry as an example of the "childish following of the conventions" and again called on the poets to erase the line between literary and colloquial languages, destroying all metric constraints in the verse. As Konishi Junichi rightly

noted, he had chosen the way that led him to failure, but it was a brilliant failure.

Hekigoto's poetry relating to the years of his apprenticeship is not notable for his individual style, though it certainly displays the most colorful seasonal images:

haru samushi	<i>The spring is cold.</i>
mizuta no ue no	<i>On the surface of the rice paddy —</i>
ne nashi kumo	<i>the rootless clouds...</i>

akai tsubaki	<i>The red camellia</i>
shiroi tsubaki to	<i>and the white camellia —</i>
ochinikeri	<i>both have lost their flowers...</i>

Along with traditional images typical of Shiki's school, in Hekigoto's poetry, both early and late, we can find miniature poems conveying the spirit of Japanese "Naturalism" — as the *haiku* poets have interpreted it — but the poet rather follows Basho's legacy in them, presenting the beauty of life through rough, sometimes even repulsive imagery:

muchi tore ba	<i>Taking a whip —</i>
samuki sugata ya	<i>how cold should it feel</i>
uma-no shiri	<i>that backside of the horse...</i>

*I had some steamed turnip
along with the soy curd —
sitting in melancholy...*

*On the low table at the sickbed
miso soup and other foods —
still feeling chilly...*

In full accordance with *shasei* poetics, many *haiku* about “human daily matters” are composed in a gentle, ironic style:

*A spring morning.
The calligrapher's face today
looks like a brush...*

However, the best poems by Hekigoto still adhere to the genre of landscape poetry. Thousands of *haiku*, composed under Shiki's direct guidance and later during his wanderings, present sketches of mountains and rivers or poetic images in the style of “flowers, birds, wind, and moon,” which the poet himself tended to criticize later, advocating his theory of “new *haiku*.” Hekigoto was unable to overcome this contradiction, to denounce and abandon completely his own songs in the attempt to go beyond the traditional imagery.

*Among the fields
Suma shrine stands so lonely
under the cherry trees...*

*The cicada feels cool
on the wide tree leave —
a fresh wind is blowing...*

*A village festival —
lanterns cast a red light.
The distant cry of a deer...*

Many of the poems composed during his numerous journeys fit into the traditional Sino-Japanese custom of poetic pilgrimage and contain a vast allusive range of “poetic geography” referring to the names of famous poets and artists or specific poetry masterpieces of the past centuries.

*A traveler —
 watching in Yosa on a snow field
 a flock of snow herons...*

Mentioning the place immediately evokes in the reader's memory the name of Buson, a *haiku* master and a wonderful painter, a native of the Yosa region and Masaoka Shiki's favorite author, about whom Hekigoto himself wrote a massive work.

At the same time, Hekigoto's own poems were naturally connected with the same tradition of poetry of wandering, becoming landmarks for future generations of poets:

karamatsu wa	<i>The larch trees</i>
wabishiki ki nari	<i>stand so sad and lonely.</i>
aka tombo	<i>The red dragonflies...</i>

The last poem, according to scholar Ono Rinka, could have inspired Kitahara Hakushu to compose his famous poem "Larch Trees" ("Karamatsu," 1921).

*Passing by the larch trees grove
 I was staring at the trees.
 So sad and lonely were the larches,
 So sad and lonely was my way...*

.....

In the years of his dedicated efforts to promote "haiku of a new trend," Hekigoto would seek in poetry a source of purely religious inspiration.

In his *Talks on Studying New Haiku (Shin haiku kenkyu dan)*, he describes the zealous training practiced at his school:

This is the way to reach "haikai — Samadhi" [Buddhist state of enlightenment through *haiku*]. Two or three of us, passionately devoted to *haiku*, used to get together, and having chosen the topics, we would start to compose poems — ten on each topic. As soon as we finished one cycle, we

immediately, without editing, would move on to the next topic. So, as long as time allowed, we kept on moving from topic to topic. From morning till noon we used to cover three topics, from noon till evening three more topics, after dinner until midnight — four topics. So, day after day, we were engaged in writing a total of one hundred *haiku* poems on ten topics. Each topic would take from half an hour to an hour. As all our attention was focused on composing poetry, there was no time for talking. [137, 68]

Experiments, of course, were also included in Hekigoto's program in large numbers. Many of his poems written without following the classic pattern and with an abundance of lexical borrowings from Western languages, reveal the imprint of a pretentious novelty:

<i>mimosa</i> o ikete	<i>Planting mimosa</i>
ichi nichi rusu ni shite	<i>I spent all the day outdoors —</i>
<i>betto</i> no shiroku	<i>white linen on the bed...</i>

Hekigoto, incidentally, devoted a whole series of “*haiku* of the new trend” to *mimosa* — the Western *mimosa* with clusters of yellow flowers, different from the Japanese *mimosa* tree [*nemu*]):

<i>mimosa</i> ni	<i>Plunging my nose</i>
hana o tsukeru koto o	<i>in the mimosa flowers,</i>
hitori de suru yo	<i>I am alone at night...</i>

* * *

<i>mimosa</i> no hana	<i>The mimosa flowers</i>
ware o matte	<i>were waiting for me —</i>
saku hana naranaku ni	<i>not in bloom yet...</i>

Though Kawahigashi Hekigoto did his best to develop and promote “*haiku* of the new trend,” believing that the “new trend” was his brain child and the acme of poetic perfection,

his own achievements in poetry more clearly belong to the "old trend." In any case, today it is mostly those *shasei*-oriented poems that touch the readers' hearts. However, Hekigoto's followers went much further, assuming that the revolutionary concept of innovating *haiku* had no limits.

NAKATSUKA IPPEKIRO

The "*haiku* of a new trend" movement brought to life by Kawahigashi Hekigoto was an incentive for many poets who believed that traditional poetry, as well as the slightly renovated stable traditionalism of the "Hototogisu" society, were old-fashioned junk. The passion for experiment took possession of those *haijin*, who sought to create a fundamentally new type of a short poem, only conventionally called by the generic name *haiku*. One of the most active experimenters among the new generation of poets was Nakatsuka Ippekiro (1879–1946), who in 1911 called for getting rid of the old boring rhythmic pattern of seventeen syllables, as well as *bungo* grammar and vocabulary.

In his keynote article published in the journal *Katatumuri* (*Snail*), Ippekiro stated his position in the following way:

Haiku which have a live feeling should affect life proper. I believe it necessary that every poem reveals the spirit of modern times, that the poems convey our grief and sorrows, worries and anxieties.

The *haiku* of today have managed to get rid of the captivity of old-age archaic tastes and notions, but we cannot help seeing that they still remain in the captivity of the tastes typical of elderly people. There is no "flame of youth" or "youthful ardor" in them. We have to break up the obsolete tastes and ideas of seasonal division in poetry and do away with them once and for all. Then, I assume, we will be able to live without any bounds, free to choose topics from any season. In this sense we are looking forward to *haiku* reform. [137, 82]

Nakatsuka
Ippekiro



中塚
一碧楼

It is noteworthy that Ippekiro, reasoning about *haiku* and considering himself a theorist of new *haiku*, in fact, did not really care much about maintaining a “brand.” Unlike Ogiwara Seisensui, he was willing to accept any other definition of non-conventional short poems:

There are people who call my poems *haiku*. There are also those who say that this is not *haiku*. Personally, I could not care less how to call them and under what name they go by.... In any case, my poems by their mood are quite different from those that have represented *haiku* so far. I do not at all consider the seasonal thematic division as an important taste category of *haiku*. It will be worst of all if my poems are evaluated as *haiku* just because they have seasonal words, or not like *haiku* because somewhere they lack seasonal words. [137, 83]

However, since the author did not suggest any other definition, his poems, like all “free” short poems originating from *haiku* poetics, continued to be regarded as *haiku*. Perhaps that was not correct as, Ippekiro himself suggested in pointing to the *kindaishi* poet Kawaji Ryuko, the leader of the Naturalism

school, who had inspired him by the rough simplicity of the imagery and the use of the colloquial language.

Ippekiro advocated the idea of the simplification of form in his journal *Kaiko* (*Crimson Sea*), which has been popular among the *haijin* since 1915. The poetry by Nakatsuka Ippekiro, as appears from his declarations, does not conform to any formal restrictions and follows exclusively the poet's inspiration. Among his "free" poems we can discover "orthodox" ones, i.e. seventeen-syllable *haiku* miniature sketches, along with poems of thirty syllables or more. The topics range from landscape to eccentric poetic revelations:

haru no yo ya	<i>A spring night.</i>
wabishiki mono ni	<i>Such a sad feeling it brings —</i>
jintaizu	<i>an anatomic scheme of the body...</i>

* * *

Seagulls cry in the night.
The cool hand of a woman...

Among Ippekiro's poems we can find truly lyrical lines, rather close to traditional *haiku* imagery, but composed in a more liberal manner:

waga shinu ie	<i>A house where I want to die:</i>
kaki no ki arite	<i>with a persimmon tree in the yard</i>
hana no miyu	<i>and a view of the flowers...</i>

* * *

ite yo kono	<i>A cold night.</i>
yama yori yama to	<i>One mountain upon another —</i>
yama to kasanarite ari	<i>mountains overlap in the distance...</i>

In other short poems the poet seems to reach the limit of lapidary expression, discarding all unnecessary words and leaving just a couple of lexical strokes:

kusa ao-ao	<i>The grass is green-green.</i>
ushi sari	<i>The cows are gone...</i>

Tuberculosis, the scourge of Japanese literature of the beginning of the twentieth century, mercilessly debilitated Ippekiro's health. Although he lived longer than some of his contemporaries like Ishikawa Takuboku or Ozaki Hosai, the terrible disease never let up. The poet's late *haiku* show the notes of somber pessimism:

*Here I will die
digging snow...*

* * *

itame ba	<i>From my sickbed</i>
futon no soto	<i>I see in the distance</i>
tokai no aoki o mie	<i>the blue winter sea...</i>

Nakatsuka Ippekiro was not a poet of genius, but he was a visionary and an innovator, paving the way for *haiku* poetry from the Meiji period to the second half of the twentieth century. This was also the way of a few more poetry masters, who left their trace in the history of modern literature.

OGIWARA SEISENSUI

Developing the concept of "haiku of a new trend" promoted by Kawahigashi Hekigoto, the poets who challenged the tradition gradually moved to the extreme liberalization of the genre, to the complete emancipation from tedious regulations. The principal theorist of such extravagant innovations was Ogiwara Seisensui (1884–1976). A native of Tokyo, Ogiwara Tokichi (poetic penname Seisensui) started writing *haiku* while still in junior high school. His poems attracted the attention of the famous writer Ozaki Koyo, who introduced the young poet into the *haijin* circle rallied around

Ogiwara
Seisensui



荻原

井泉水

the newspaper *Yomiuri*. Some time later, he made acquaintance with Masaoka Shiki's disciples and in 1903 at the age of nineteen founded his own small poetic society, "Height" ("Ikko"). Then Tokichi entered the Faculty of Letters of Tokyo Imperial University, where, studying national literature, he joined the "haiku of a new trend" movement. At the same time he began to sign his poems with the name Seisensui.

After graduation from university, Seisensui successfully combined two interests: poetry of the German Romanticism and the new *haiku* theory. In 1911, together with Hekigoto he set up the *haiku* magazine *Soun* (*Stratus*) to be the mouthpiece of the "new trend," but as the main initiator of the "new trend" soon withdrew from the editorial activities, Seisensui remained the sole leader of the magazine, which quickly gained considerable recognition. Over two years the magazine would publish one after another in a long sequel Seisensui's reviews "On the Latest Trends in the Haiku World" ("Haidan saikin no keiko o ronzu"), in which the author gave apt characterizations of the contemporary poets and tried to define the qualities necessary for a modern verse.

Seisensui put forward a number of key statements, which, along with Nakatsuka Ippekiro's polemic publications,

determined the way of evolution for the non-conventional *haiku* in the twentieth century. He raised a call for bringing *haiku* closer to everyday issues, for refusing to follow blindly the canonic regulations, for perceiving nature deeply and reproducing it in humanistic philosophical images. Following Shiki, in his article “The Door Key” (“Hitotsu no kagi”) he called for reassessment of the attitude towards the classics, noting both the merits and drawbacks in Bashō’s works. Finally, he put forward the requirement of original individual style in *haiku*, which should be pursued at any cost: by sacrificing traditional meter and rhythm, reducing or increasing the number of syllables, by introducing colloquial vocabulary, and not being afraid of using occasional prose patterns instead of verse [see 80, 376–386].

The traditional seasonal division of *haiku* poetry, generating a flow of stereotyped imagery, became the object of his ferocious criticism. Seisensui called for giving up anachronistic seasonal poetry in a series of his articles under the symbolic title “Waiting for the Sunrise” (“Noboru hi o matsu aida”). Acknowledging certain progress of modern *haijin* in the domain of realistic sketches, he laments that “the sun has not risen yet” and will not rise until the poets throw away the obsolete shell of seasonal topics.

This resolute denial of the role of seasonal topics and “seasonal words” provoked the strong discontent of Kawahigashi Hekigoto, who, for all his innovating activities, could not ignore Shiki’s legacy. Seisensui then broke away from his teacher and left the *Soun* journal with his several associates. Explaining his views, he writes in the preface to his debut *haiku* collection, *The Door of Nature* (*Shizen no tobira*, 1914):

Haiku is poetry of impressions. However, there is no point in just recreating any impression in an impressionistic manner — everything catching your eye. No matter how little an impression might be, it should awaken in us a sense of nature, appeal to our human nature. When a poet believes he has penetrated into the depth, overcoming the superficial

perception of nature, and when he feels that he has caught something special in his soul — but not in the way he has recorded it in his diary entry — then in response his feelings should flash like lightning. However, if he would like to reveal his feelings in a stilted manner, he will fail and all will be lost. One can convey the feeling if one just alludes to it in a few short words. *Haiku* emerge out of the impressions, but develop into symbols. *Haiku* is the poetry of symbols. [39, v. 7,199–200].

The tiff with Hekigoto only confirmed Seisensui's intention to follow the path of reforms. He advocated the concept of an impressionistic short poem in a free rhythm pattern, not connected with the Japanese *waka* lexicon, and he himself provided quite a number of *haiku* to support his theory:

chikara ippai ni	<i>So loudly</i>
naku ko to naku	<i>in the morning along with a baby</i>
tori no asa	<i>a rooster cries...</i>

Seisensui sees the source of creative activity in following the rhythms of nature, and he presents a colorful apology of his idea:

The impressions received from nature have their physical rhythm. They have principal moments and minor moments, there are moments of shining and moments of shade, there are moments of condensation and moments of dilution, there are moments of tension and moments of relaxation. Some of them powerfully attract the poet's heart, while others, only slightly, and the way which the poet treats all these impressions is determined by his own pulse, his own life rhythm [137, 91].

Advocating freedom of choice and plurality of forms, Seisensui still did not call for the complete rejection of *haiku* and the turn to some other, more productive genre. In his opinion, innovative poetry should still be related to *haiku* and absorb

Basho's aesthetics of *sabi* and *wabi*, he thereby destroyed all more or less objective criteria for evaluation of the poetic miniatures and suggested that the reader and critic should rely on their subjective perception and taste. But *haiku* is a poem too short for the reader, even with a literary taste, to appreciate its merits or drawbacks if he has no evaluating criterion. In any case, it was, obviously, more difficult to achieve real success in composing such "free" *haiku* than in composing *haiku* of conventional forms, and Seisensui eventually failed. He entered the history of literature of the first half of the twentieth century as a brave theorist and a desperate rebel rather than an outstanding poet. He had talented followers even in the early Showa period, and post-war *haiku* poetry largely justified the hopes of the pioneers and became the realm of free rhythms, inspired by random impressions. The true value of the hundreds of thousands of such "*haiku*" written in a free style remains problematic.

Returning to the beginning of the 1920s, as has happened with many of the "troublemakers" in modern Japanese literature, the free-thinker and reformer Seisensui, turned from promoting revolutionary poetics to studying the classic heritage. He would go on to publish several serious research works: *Basho the Wanderer (Tabibito Basho)*, *Basho's Diaries as a Novel (Shosetsu Basho nikki)*, *Basho and Issa (Basho to Issa)*. The studies of classic literature were Seisensui's major occupation along with *haiku* composition during his remaining fifty years of life. For all the merits of his late poems, they failed to attract the attention of the readers, but the poet's early articles and manifestos have paved his way to the Academy of arts and to immortality.

OZAKI HOSAI

The life of the hermit poet Ozaki Hosai (1885–1926) was no less dramatic and amazing than the biography of the legendary Zen wanderer Taneda Santoka. Unlike Santoka, Ozaki was not a loser and was never attracted by bohemian life style. The beginning of his brilliant business career by no

means foretold its sudden end. A native of the remote Tottori Prefecture on the Sea of Japan, Ozaki Hideo (the future *haijin* Hosai) successfully entered the law faculty of Tokyo Imperial University. During his studies he became infatuated with *haiku* and, like many talented people, would even send his writings to the popular *Soun* journal, but did not show any special signs of turning completely to poetry. After graduating from university he was hired by a large insurance company, Toyo Seimei, and quickly marched up the career ladder. After ten years of diligent office work, he moved to another insurance company and was sent to Korea (a Japanese colony at the time), where he obtained the position of head of one of the company's departments.

At this point, his service record abruptly comes to an end. After staying in Korea for a few months, Ozaki was fired from his responsible position—according to some speculations, for abuse of alcohol. He returned to Japan, where in 1923 he divorced his wife, gave up his property, took vows and left for the monastery Chion-in in Kyoto.

It is not quite clear what the immediate reason for such a drastic turn was, but, no doubt, Hosai had experienced a profound spiritual crisis, which made him reject the temptations of *sansara* and look for higher spiritual values. As a monk, he chose the most severe possible practices as if trying to redeem his sins: he did hard work on the farm, spent days and nights in meditation, and went to the surrounding neighborhoods to beg with a bowl for alms.

One day Ogiwara Seisensui, the former editor of the *haiku* journal *Soun*, to whom Hosai had been acquainted in the past, came to Kyoto. Their meeting determined the fate of the monk: under the influence of the conversation with Seisensui he decided to take up composing *haiku*. From that moment Ozaki Hosai's short but glorious life in poetry began.

Actually, writing *haiku* (as well as *tanka*) has always been considered an appropriate and decent occupation both for monks and lay people. Though among the acknowledged *haiku* masters priests and monks did not constitute a considerable

Ozaki
Hosai尾
崎

放
哉

group, a perfect image of the poet-*haijin*, created by great Basho, generally corresponded to the image of a Buddhist monk, especially, the image of a wandering Zen monk bound by the vow of begging and living in poverty. This image perfectly matched the crucial aesthetic concept of "natural life" reflected in the allegory of "the wind and the stream" (*furyu*). Many *haiku* masters who did not belong to the clergy in real life would measure their life by the criteria of monastic asceticism (*shugyo*). They would combine poetic journeys to the famous historical sites with religious pilgrimage and tried to achieve in their poetry the Buddhist insight — *satori*. We should not forget also about the officially recognized Basho's religious cult. Thus, Hosai's decision to make *haiku* poetry a part of his monastic practices is easily explained.

A gloomy, quarrelsome nature and a passion for wine did not allow Hosai to stay long in one place. After a drunken scandal, he had to leave the Chion-in and seek refuge in other temples. For a certain period he choose as a dwelling the Suma temple near Kobe with all the routine of daily life based on the temple charter—a monotonous life of grueling work, meditations, and prayers. This bleak existence was relieved only by the poems that Hosai would compose in great numbers.

ichinichi	<i>For the whole day</i>
mono iwazu	<i>I haven't uttered a word.</i>
Cho no kage sasu	<i>A butterfly's shadow...</i>

* * *

tsukemono oke ni	<i>"Add more salt</i>
shio fure to	<i>to the pickles in the vat!"</i>
haha wa unda ka	<i>Is this what mother bore me for?..</i>

After lengthy wanderings, Hosai eventually settled in the small chapel of Nankyo temple on the island of Shikoku. Eighty-eight temples of the island were famous as one of the most popular routes of Buddhist pilgrimage, but Hosai led a hermit's life in solitude, only occasionally sending his *haiku* to *Soun*. His only lifetime collection, *Heaven (Taiku)*, 1926), was released shortly before the poet's death — he died prematurely of tuberculosis.

If we assume that the goal of "free *haiku*" is to notice the significant in the insignificant, to lift it out of the routine of the facts and bring it to the reader's judgment in the form of a remark, then Ozaki Hosai succeeded in his art. Many of his "poems," commented by the author himself and the critics, are intended to express "bottomless depth" of philosophical meaning, such as:

ashi no ura	<i>The soles of my feet —</i>
araeba shiroku naru	<i>getting white after washing...</i>

Nevertheless, in such cases the evaluation of the poems most likely depended on a tradition of assessing the unusual, or, at least, non-standard personality of the author, and not the real quality of "verse." Ozaki Hosai's name was surrounded by a legend because he had given up the world of business prosperity for the world of monastic self-abasement and poverty, trying to break the vicious circle of *sansara*. His wanderings from temple to temple, his hermit's life at Sedo, his loneliness and terminal illness — all this created the image of an inspired highly spiritual poet, which he definitely was. Everything he

issued, as a result of the combined efforts of his publishers and well-wishers, has a priori been conceived as dictated by a divine intuition. However, an objective comparison even with the works by his closest colleague, Taneda Santoka, who had not only borrowed Hosai's certain poetic techniques but practically took over the whole concept of the "skeptical comment on one's own life," reveals the fact that Hosai's *haiku* are markedly inferior in all respects. They often contain more pretension than talent, more false suggestiveness than true depth:

haka no ura magaru *Going around to the back side of
the grave...*

iremono ga nai *No place to put it in —
ryote de ukeru accepting alms with both hands...*

hanabi ga agaru *Over there
sara no ho ga where the fireworks are flashing —
machi da yo there is a town!*

Hosai's best poems undoubtedly contain sparks of insight and bursts of wit, so typical of Santoka, but there are not many of them:

wabishii karada kara *From the lonely body
tsume ga nobidasu nails grow...*

mado aketa *I opened the window —
warai kao da a laughing face!..*

Hosai's poetry of his last years, written in anticipation of the end, are full of inconsolable grief and gloomy despair:

seki o shite mo *Coughing —
hitori still alone...*

Ozaki Hosai has come into the history of *haiku* poetry as a lonely hermit. His poems have been long forgotten. However, when in the last decades of the twentieth century Taneda Santoka's poetry suddenly aroused a lot of interest in the poetic world, the image of Hosai again emerged and drew the attention of the historians and literary critics.

TANEDA SANTOKA

In the last decades of the twentieth century Taneda Seiichi (penname Santoka, 1882–1940) took a honorable place among the classics of modern times. The interest in his personality and works has been increasing every year, embodied in dozens of books and hundreds of articles, in the catalogs and guidebooks of literary exhibitions. It is not surprising, since Taneda Santoka, a writer, calligrapher and philosopher, was the last true Zen poet in history — a wanderer who connected in his books the past and the present, the age-old wisdom of the Buddhist patriarchs, and the humble forgiveness of an ascetic, giving up all worldly temptations. Wandering around the cities and villages of his native country in quest of *satori*, Santoka would go “above the barriers” — not thinking about the past, not looking into the future, and not worrying too much about the present. The “rice riots” and the miners’ strikes shaking Japan, the world war, the repressions against the Communist Party, and the massacre of Koreans, the rape of Nanking, the persecution of dissidents, and the preparations for the Pearl Harbor attack — none of this attracted his attention.

As befits a true Zen adept, he saw the eternal in the current and believed the process of the seasonal change to be far more important than the development of the air force and submarine fleet in Japan. His attitude to the events of public life was childishly naive, and he believed that Providence embodied in the Shinto gods and their direct descendant, the Emperor, would take care of the sweet homeland. Santoka loved people, but the rules of communal life depressed him. He was much

*Taneda
Santoka*



種
田

山
頭
火

closer to the laws of nature, with which he would form an organic unity. A tramp and a reveler, he felt uncomfortable among carriages, cars and rickshaws, preferring mountains and rivers to the "city dust":

*Rain is falling.
I walk barefoot
through my native land...*

In fact, his whole life in the secular world was nothing else but preparation for Departure. On his way, enlightenment was awaiting for him. He believed that restlessness, poverty and proximity to Nature eventually would give him a true vision and full comprehension of life, just as his great predecessors — Saigyō, Bashō, Ryōkan — believed long ago. The poet was right. His short, sometimes seemingly lapidary *haiku*, imply the primordial truth of earth, water, wood, fire, and metal. The poetics of his verse is nothing but the harmony of primary elements that generate the universal energy of creation. Santoka justly considered himself only a medium of the cosmic Universal soul, recreating and recording on paper the voices and forms of the ephemeral world during his short earthly wandering.

The future poet was born in 1882 in a small village in the remote prefecture of Yamaguchi on the island of Honshu. Seiichi's father, Taneda Takejiro, was a wealthy landowner, and his large family lived in enviable prosperity. For almost three centuries the Taneda family occupied a large manor house, and Santoka's warmest memories always were associated with that house where he had spent his childhood and adolescence. The year when Seiichi was born was marked by an important event in the literary life of the country: the publication of the first poetic anthology in non-traditional forms, *The Collection of New Style Poetry (Shintaisho)*, which was a bold challenge to the classic canon and brought to life the Western-oriented modern poetry.

There were many books in the house, and Seiichi, memorizing hundreds of characters, began to read before going to school. He would feel the charm of the ancient Japanese fairy tales and legends in his early years, gradually moving to the classic stories, novels, and poetry anthologies.

When the boy was ten years old he suffered a terrible shock — his mother committed suicide. Apparently, she could not bear her husband's infidelity, but the boy did not think about the reasons. The absurd and terrible death of his mother destroyed the world of childish dreams and forever planted in Seiichi's heart uncertainty and unrest. Many years later he wrote in his diary: "All the misfortunes of our family started with my mother's death ..."

Suddenly, his father became infatuated with politics and gradually abandoned his extensive farming, which soon came into decline. The family got into a difficult situation. Things became so bad that the compassionate neighbors took little Seiichi for adoption. The boy studied hard and became fond of poetry during his school years. At the age of fourteen he launched with his friends an amateur journal, and at the age of fifteen joined a club of *haiku* lovers. This was in 1897. At that very time, the ambitious young poet and critic Masaoka Shiki published several key works calling for the reformation in the poetry of the traditional genres and founded in Matsuyama

a new *haiku* society, "Hototogisu," which was bound to change radically the situation in poetry.

Seiichi became interested in the work of Shiki and his associates. After finishing school, he decided to devote himself to poetry and entered the Faculty of Letters of Waseda University. However, the emerging signs of a mental disorder discouraged the young man and prevented him from graduating. Santoka left university when he was in his third year and returned home. By that time his father had sold the land and invested in a distillery. He hoped to engage his son in the business, and Seiichi gradually began to delve into the matter, but would not stop writing poetry. At the age of twenty seven he married a shy and meek girl from his homeland. A year later, they had their first child.

By a strange coincidence, Seiichi became addicted to alcohol and carried his passion throughout his life, as well as his love for literature. These facets of his existence were so interrelated that the poet seemed to be seeking a creative insight in sake, and nearly always would find it. Wine encouraged his talent as an improviser, and *haiku* flowed in a stream. Subsequently, having become a Zen monk, he realized that his addiction was a sin and tried more than once to quit drinking or at least be moderate, but could not fight his nature. In his diary Santoka bitterly observes: "I am a waste of man! All I want is to get drunk — my poems are born from sake ..."

Soon Santoka joined the editorial board of a local journal, *Seinen* (*Youth*), which broadly published the works of European authors: Maupassant, Turgenev, Zola. In the pages of *Youth*, Santoka debuted as a *haiku* poet, an essayist, a critic and, a literary reviewer. After that, he started publishing an individual monthly almanac, *Kokyo* (*Native Land*), printing out the entire circulation himself on a rotary press. The circle of his acquaintances in the *haiku* world expanded; he often traveled to other cities to participate in poetic tournaments and became more and more interested in "*haiku* of a new trend," rejecting the canonical regulations. Large selections of his *haiku* were published in the national magazines of *haiku* poetry like *Soun*,

where Kawahigashi Hekigoto, Shiki's disciple and successor, was the chief editor for many years.

Meanwhile, in 1916 Santoka's father went bankrupt, started to drink, and disappeared without a trace, leaving his son and the family destitute. After some hesitation Santoka decided to move with his wife and child to the south of Kyushu, to Kumamoto, and earn his living there by literary work. He managed to integrate into the literary life of the city rather quickly and even gain some popularity in *tanka* poetry, quite a new genre for him, but his literary activities still could not bring in enough money.

After living in poverty for about three years, Santoka eventually took an important decision: alone, without his wife and son, he went to Tokyo and in the capital for a while worked at a cement plant, continuing to write poems and publish them. When he was finally officially divorced, he obtained some personal freedom and disclaimed any moral responsibilities, which obviously were a heavy burden for his bohemian nature.

Santoka did not manage to settle in Tokyo. A few years later, fleeing from the disasters caused by the Great Kanto earthquake in 1923, the poet returned to Kumamoto, where he again started to lead a dissipated life. One day after heavy drinking he tried to hurdle under a tram in the central square in front of the City Hall. The tram nearly derailed and the poet was arrested by the police.

During one of those sprees a friend accidentally brought Santoka to Hoon-ji temple, where the poet met with the head priest. In 1924, seriously fascinated by the Zen teachings, Santoka took monastic vows and became a zealous adherent of this Buddhist sect, which gave him a strong spiritual base for the rest of his life. He was greatly influenced by conversations with the Zen master Hoko. Soon he moved from Kumamoto to Kobe, where he became a priest at a temple of Kannon, the bodhisattva of mercy. People often saw him wandering around with a begging bowl, as humble begging was the most important part of the Zen monastic vows.

When he was forty four (according to traditional Japanese belief an unlucky age as four [*shi*] phonetically corresponds to the word *shi*, meaning "death"), Santoka left his service and for the first time set off on a long journey around southern and south-eastern Japan — to Kyushu, western Honshu, and further on to Shikoku. This was the first trip among those endless wanderings that took up almost all the rest of the poet's life. He walked on foot under the scorching sun and in the pouring rain, meeting the hail, the cold wind, and sleet:

teppatsu no naka e *Falling into my iron begging bowl*
 arare *the balls of hail...*

Santoka would walk for months and years from village to village, from town to town, with a small knapsack, which contained just an extra pair of straw sandals and a writing kit with paper and ink for his diary and poems. He would visit famous temples, admire the great mountains and the beautiful sea views, glorified in the classic anthologies, and compose *haiku* — dozens, hundreds, thousands of *haiku*. He would eat what was given to the beggar and spend the night either in a temple, or in a field, not burdened by everyday worries. If the charity money was enough for a bottle of sake, he would arrange a modest feast. However, sometimes nature would provide a treat:

Perhaps today
I will not beg —
watching mountains...

While wandering, he wrote a diary following the classic tradition, as all the wandering poets would do in the past. Not all of his records could be preserved safely: the diaries of the first five years of wandering were burned during an accidental fire, but most of the subsequent diaries survived, saving for posterity the smallest details of the master's life and his philosophical reflections. Though these diaries qualified as

haibun literature, belong to a very talented *haiku* poet, and can be rightfully be regarded as refined professional prose, they are written in a deliberately simplified, sometimes seemingly primitive Zen manner. The author rejects any attempts at embellishment or stylistic refinement, leaving only the most essential, the “naked truth of life,” which is interspersed with sparks of insight, his reflections on nature and society, the spirit and the flesh, death, and immortality — reflections, presented in the genre of classical Japanese essay (*zuihitsu*), which means literally “following the brush.” These records are expressive and piercing:

Literature is getting more humane and compassionate. *Haiku* poems are becoming the soul, revealing the soul. If the soul is not cleaned so that it shines, why should your *haiku* sparkle? The sparkle of *haiku* is a sparkling of the soul, the light coming from the heart of a man...

The more I reflect, the more painful is the feeling that I am not worthy living on earth ... What brings such thoughts to me? At present, I have no wealth, I have no self-confidence. I am just a beggar. But in this capacity, I am allowed into the realm of *haiku*, thus, losing even the value as a negative pole of society.

I think that I do not want to live anymore and often I feel like dying. You can say that I lack the vitality and energy to live. My weakness is also the ability to fool myself and others by addiction to alcoholic beverages. What a shameful weakness, what meanness, what ignominy! (quot. in [244, 194–195])

Some extracts from Santoka’s diaries are perceived as an accomplished philosophical treatise and at the same time as a poetic canon:

I am thinking what the nature of *haiku* is.

- Simplicity — to grasp the essence of simplicity.
- Originality of you own nature — the unity of body and soul.
- Life rhythm — your inner rhythm — the rhythm of nature...
- Fusion with all that surrounds you — the inseparability of the principal and the ordinary.

The flow of nature and pulsating life constitute rhythm. All and One thing — eternity is perceived in mortality and manifests itself both in everything and in one thing. To be able to express all through one thing. Symbolic expression is impossible until you enter the world of symbols. [quot. in 244, 206–207]

The poems composed on the way Santoka would send to *Soun* and other poetry journals, where they were willingly accepted and published in large selections, but the tens of thousands of poems by which Santoka lived, thought, and talked could not fit into any limited frames. Having returned for a while to Kumamoto, with the help of his adorers and associates he founded an individual poetry magazine, 389, in which he published all his works. The strange title stood for a very simple thing — it was the number of the small room rented by the publisher himself.

In the summer of 1932 the fifty year-old poet hit the road again, but this time he would not mind staying somewhere longer: he chose as his temporary shelter a ramshackle hut in a remote corner of his native Yamaguchi Prefecture, which the poet called "Kichu — an" ("A Shelter 'In the Midst of it All'"). Under the roof of that wretched dwelling Santoka spent a few months, and there he got the news about the publication of his first *haiku* collection *A Bowl for Alms (Hachinoko)*, rapturously received by the critics. Soon Santoka's next book, *The Pagoda of Grass and Trees (Kusaki no to)*, was released, and after it another one, *Crossing Mountains and Waters (Sankosuiiko)*. His fame was growing and expanding. He had now friends and admirers in Tokyo and Osaka, Hiroshima and Kobe, Kyoto and Nagoya, but Santoka still felt like a homeless wanderer, stung by his loneliness and alienation from the world. In a fit of intoxicated melancholy he tried to put an end to his life, but the doctors managed to save the hapless suicide.

The thought of death was haunting Santoka, growing into obsessive mania:

*Death — a distant cloud
in the cold sky...*

He went on the next trip to the north-east, in the direction of Tokyo, in order to “find a place where it would be good to die.” However, the pictures of nature and numerous meetings with fellow writers eventually relieved the poet from his spleen, and he decided to move on, repeating great Basho’s route of the “Narrow Road to the Deep North” in his wandering. Then came his new trip to Kyushu, and then another one, and then another one... Santoka’s new large collections were released, taking an honorable place in the *haiku* world, and literally making the author a living classic: *The Landscape with Meadow Grasses* (*Zasso fukei*), *The Persimmon Leaves* (*Kaki no ha*), *Loneliness in Winter* (*Kokan*), *Crows* (*Karasu*). However, the wide recognition still did not bring much money....

Having abandoned his former retreat (completely destroyed by the elements), after his long wanderings Santoka decided to settle down at the hot spring resort village Yuden in Yamaguchi. He spent several months in a miserable hut, which received the symbolic name “An Abode of the Blowing Wind” (“*Furaiya*”), and then once again set off on an endless journey.

By the end of 1939, the tireless traveler has moved to the island of Shikoku in the vicinity of Matsuyama city, where his friends had found for him a new accommodation — an abandoned house that was to be the poet’s last refuge. The dilapidated shack was located near Dogo Hot Spring at the foot of the mountain on the slopes of which there was a temple, Miyuki-ji. Close to the hut there were two more temples, Gokoku-ji and Ryutai-ji. Santoka called his hut “The Abode of a Lonely Grass Blade” (“*Issoan*”), following a well-known Zen wisdom: “One flower better reveals the essence of flowers than many of them.” Living in poverty would not embarrass the eternal wanderer. He was used to hunger and cold, used to borrowing small amounts money for food and give it back out of his meager literary fee. With age, he learned to enjoy every handful of rice, every glass of sake, every friendly smile. His records reveal the amazingly charming nature of the poor poet, who did not accept any other mode

of life, except his Zen existence, and who did not know any other means of comprehending the Universal soul, except by composing *haiku*.

Santoka was well aware of his mission on earth and tried not only to be consistent with the image of a Zen beggar-poet, but also to brush up this image, bringing it to perfection:

— So, a vegetative life in loneliness and poverty — that's the only way for me.

— Spontaneously appearing landscapes, work, a certain state of the soul — that's it, only this is how it should be.

— Mental attitude — a readiness for composing *haiku*.

To throw out from the heart thoughts about poor clothes.

To achieve the unity of body and soul.

To perceive all simple things around — strongly-strongly, subtly-subtly ...

— Yesterday the wind was blowing, today the today's wind is blowing, and tomorrow the wind of morrow might be blowing. Live today, now! Go through life directly! [quot. in 244, 208–209]

The death by heart attack that occurred on October 11, 1940 was for all and for Santoka himself an unfortunate surprise. Just a few days before, the poet noted in his diary that he saw the cause of all his hardships in his "too healthy body." However, this untimely death did catch him unawares. As a devout Zen follower, Santoka long ago crossed the line between life and death, between being and non-being, and his poems were obviously destined to be immortal in his homeland.

Santoka's poems — if we may call so his way of comprehending the universe — are a literary manifesto of his personality, absolutely free of any conventions and restrictions. The poet's creative mind, language, and style are not constrained by any rules and regulations, except those prompted by his free Zen. He feels every moment of being as a self-sufficient and self-contained part of eternity, "a particle of the Buddha," which does not need extra decoration and comment:

*Silently I will fix for today's trip
the bands on these straw sandals...*

With such attitude the most simple and mundane facts of everyday life, which is itself an inexplicable miracle of Creation, acquire an unexpected importance:

*I got drunk with sake
and went to sleep with the crickets...*

Almost every such lapidary poem reveals a number of literary allusions and reminiscences, which, in their turn, present the image enfolding into the depth of cultural layers. From the poem, cited above, there is a thread to the famous *tanka* by the Great Fool, eccentric, the Zen monk Ryokan, whom Santoka deliberately imitated in life and in poetry:

*How good it is
to prepare some firewood in advance
and to recline all night
near the fire
with a cup of sake!..*

Digging deeper, we can find another thread leading to the cycle on wine-drinking from the ancient *Manyoshu* anthology by Otomo Tabito and to Chinese poet Li Po.

Here we can also suggest some parallels with countless *tanka* by the medieval masters writing about traveling and the *haiku* from Basho's diaries. Since the topics of *haiku* poetry usually are more or less determined by the tradition, even such an independent master as Santoka inevitably had to refer in his work to the poems by his famous predecessors. Those were the laws of the genre which Santoka, in fact, was not trying to ignore. Sometimes the allusions are vague and subtle, sometimes they are completely transparent and unambiguous. Here the poet turns to his only companion in the hut:

*Listen, you, cricket,
there is rice left in the box
but it is for next morning...*

Of course, a sophisticated reader remembers at once the *haiku* by Kobayashi Issa:

*If life were better,
I would invite you, my fly:
"Share some rice with me!"*

And one more *haiku*, inspired by a classic:

*Feels like a mortal bite —
just one tiny mosquito!..*

We track the source to Basho's

*Awakened from sleep:
it seemed that I was staggered —
by a mosquito bite...*

More likely, in many cases, such reminiscences occur spontaneously — a poetic memory seems to be "leading" the author, prompting him the images related to his favorite, familiar poems. However, the method of interpretation of this or that topic must always be original — and in this Santoka is unique. Whether it is the poems about an old hat or a traveling knapsack, a dragonfly or the first snow, *sakura* blossoms or the sea waves — from a combination of a few brilliantly selected words, as if from a few strokes of ink on a white sheet of paper, emerges a powerful image full of primeval energy:

*The dawn is coming.
I opened the window — facing
this fresh green foliage...*

While remaining generally true to the aesthetic canon of *haiku*, Santoka does not hesitate to violate the well-established poetics of the genre, often doing it deliberately and intentionally. He easily ignores the requirement to observe the seventeen-syllable pattern of the verse (5-7-5), typical of *haiku*, freely modifying the number of syllables. In the original, this led to a change in the length of the line (as *haiku* is

written in a single line) and its rhythmic pattern — sometimes beyond recognition. With the same ease the poet rejects the “seasonal words,” so essential in *haiku* poetry, and which allows the poems of a collection or anthology to be sorted by seasons. He would disregard the emphatic interjections, introduced by Basho’s school. The key principles of poetics formulated once by Basho — *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibumi*, *karumi* and other important notions — in Santoka’s interpretation acquire a paradoxical tone, sometimes gently played down or played around:

*“Uf-ffr, uf-frrr!” — panting, with smacking lips
I am drinking this water...*

In the first place, the poet values spontaneity, deliberate “natural drive,” which imprints by a few strokes an episode in the eternal cycle of universal metamorphosis. Santoka, above all, is an attentive observer who always contemplates himself and nature by his inner vision, because “the most important things are invisible to the eye.”

*Maybe I will die like this —
sleeping on the ground...*

* * *

*The autumn sky —
as if painted with brush,
and a small plane...*

* * *

*My humble breakfast
I will eat today under the bridge.*

* * *

*These chilly dawns
and these freezing nights —
so familiar...*

* * *

*The cat is mewling —
asking for food,
but I have nothing to give her...*

* * *

*Just marching on
until I fall down exhausted —
a road in the grass...*

* * *

*Freshly shaven
my head
is scorched by the sun...*

* * *

*Now we meet again —
the wild tea flowers
bloom on the roadside...*

* * *

*A rainy day —
never leaving my bed in the corner...*

* * *

*Burning my travel diary —
to warm myself a bit...*

He conceives his life on this earth under the sun as a poetic drama consisting of thousands and thousands of episodes, developing in space and time, which have to be reproduced in *haiku*. Nowadays, when we open Taneda Santoka's book of poetry, we should not be misled by the alleged simplicity and guileless lapidary form. His poetry is simple and at the same time complicated, superficial and deep, light and very hard — just like Life...



“HOTOTOGISU” POETRY

TAKAHAMA KYOSHI

Takahama Kiyoshi (penname Kyoshi, 1874–1959), one of the two main successors of Shiki, who outlived his prematurely deceased teacher by nearly sixty years, was more dedicated to the traditional aesthetic values than to literary fashion trends. Coming from a large family of low-class samurai, a fencing instructor in the city of Matsuyama, Kiyoshi from an early age knew poverty, when his father, after the dissolution of the samurai clans during the Meiji period, had to take up farming. However, the prospect of the miserable life of a peasant did not attract the ambitious and talented young man, who was crazy about poetry.

The meeting with Masaoka Shiki, who approved Kyoshi's first poetic experiments and introduced him to *haiku* aesthetics, radically changed the life of the young farm boy and pushed him into the literary milieu. Together with Kawahigashi Hekigoto, he became one of the first and most devoted disciples of Shiki and decided to dedicate himself entirely to a literary career. Having dropped out from high school in Kyoto, Kyoshi for a while returned home to Matsuyama, and then together with Hekigoto set off for the capital to continue the work initiated by Shiki.

After moving to Tokyo, Kyoshi for many years — indeed for life — would be the organizer and coordinator of a large community of *haiku* poets who rallied around Masaoka Shiki — and then of the new generations. Back in December 1895, Shiki, knowing that the years of his life were numbered, offered Kyoshi to become his official successor as the head of new *haiku* school, but young Kyoshi refused, not considering

Takahama
Kyoshi



高
浜

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子

himself ready for such a mission. Nevertheless, while helping Shiki in all his endeavors and replacing him in the years of illness, Kyoshi gradually became a real leader of the school. In January 1897, in Matsuyama, the journal *Hototogisu* (*Mountain cuckoo*) was launched. In the same year, the editorial board moved to Tokyo, and Takahama Kyoshi became the editor in chief (although Shiki until his untimely death in 1902 would try to control the content of the magazine himself). The journal, remaining for a few decades Kyoshi's brain child, survived through the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods, and became a model example of creative continuity and consistency. Thus, back in the 1980s of the twentieth century, the head of the *haiku* school was poetess Inabata Teiko, a granddaughter of Takahama Kyoshi...

Along with *haiku* poetry the journal would accept critical articles, essays, and prose by the poets and writers referred to as the "patrons of the genre." Thus, in the beginning of the twentieth century the novels of the prominent writer Natsume Soseki, also famous as a talented *haijin*, were published in *Hototogisu*.

As a landscape poet by nature and a philosopher of a contemplative, introspective mind, Kyoshi ardently defended the

shasei poetics in Shiki’s original interpretation from the attacks and distortions of the archaists and extremist innovators. Following the traditional style of “flowers, birds, wind and moon,” he put forward the exact presentation of the image in austere imagery techniques, accepting, however, as an exception, occasional alteration of the traditional rhythmic seventeen-syllable pattern. He also managed to apply the principle of *shasei* to prose sketches, which he called *shasei-bun*. Kyoshi called his poetic experiments — rather close to the traditional landscape poetry and based on the poetic sketches of nature — “instant *haiku*”:

*Now sinking in the flowers,
now fading among the pine trees —
clear threads of rain...*

Whereas Shiki saw in *shasei* a direct impulsive “reflection of nature” prompted by the objective observation, Kyoshi, emphasizing the importance of the subjective element in *haiku*, actually advocated the return to the original roots of classical poetry. He implicitly accepted the need for the seasonal division of the poems and considered completely justified the conventional sorting principle by topics. However, Kyoshi, receding from the tradition, would not object to the use of the Chinese-rooted *kango* layer of lexicon together with Japanese *wago* words. In his individual collections of poems, to which he used to give impersonal titles like *Five Hundred and Fifty Haiku*, *Six Hundred Haiku*, *The Complete Haiku Collection of Kyoshi by Years*, etc., the poet tried to stick to the seasonal division, grouping the poems by traditional sections: “Spring,” “Summer,” “Autumn,” and “Winter.” It is interesting that the indomitable reformer Shiki did not mind the conservative convictions of his best disciple, probably feeling that in this particular traditional form Kyoshi’s talent would bring the best results. Or maybe deep in his heart Shiki knew that no bold innovations can replace a pure and beautiful tradition verified by countless generations of poets...

Kyoshi's *haiku* of his early Tokyo period, i.e., the second half of the 1890s, contain a large series of excellent poetic landscape miniatures, often presenting a similar topic in a "simple and smooth" (*heii tampaku*) style:

tooyama ni	<i>In the distant mountains</i>
hi no ataritaru	<i>they are basking in the sunshine —</i>
kare no kana	<i>the withered meadows...</i>

kura no yane ni	<i>The roof of the shed</i>
hi no ataritaru	<i>flooded with sunshine.</i>
nowaki kana	<i>This autumn wind!..</i>

kiri hito ha	<i>A paulownia leaf —</i>
hi atarinagara	<i>though warmed by sunshine,</i>
ochinikeri	<i>still fell down...</i>

A careful selection of the colorful details of nature projected on the human world is the source of the charm of Kyoshi's early works. Along with the "pure" landscape miniatures we find a lot of *haiku* in which the forces of nature become a magical source of the author's inspiration:

haru kaze ya	<i>This spring wind !</i>
tooshi itadakite	<i>Getting new might for the struggle</i>
oka ni tatsu	<i>I stand on the hill...</i>

This purely "personal" perception of the spring wind is somehow akin to the worldview of Ishikawa Takuboku. The author himself commented on this last poem in the following way:

Hitherto he had to put up with scorn and irony. But now he is standing on the hill and the wind, instilling in his heart the will to fight he cannot resist, commands that he should rise, revolt. The wind, awaking the forces of nature, seems to be singing a hymn to the man's will to fight. [137, 42]

Nature participates in the "human activities," and people draw their life energy from the sources of nature:

*From the distance
they are looking at the last snow in the valley —
the woodcutters on the slope...*

* * *

*The spring flood waters
visited the house of the girl
who lives down stream...*

* * *

*In just seems to me
that swallows in the sky
have a soul too...*

* * *

*It looks like we can't live
without this worry and sorrow
of the departing spring...*

After a decade of impetuous creative life — filled with composing poems, participating in the *haiku* poetic sessions, teaching and editing the *Hototogisu* journal — in 1907 Kyoshi unexpectedly announced that he would retire from the poetry world and turn to prose and essays. His decision apparently was triggered by the success of his perennial friend and rival Hekigoto, who by that time was claiming more and more new territories for his "*haiku* of a new trend," pushing the *Hototogisu* school further and further into the shadows. This discord with his old friend, caused by the incompatibility of their creative credos, traumatized Kyoshi. In his epitaph on Hekigoto's death in 1937 he tried to express in a single short poem his complicated and controversial sentiments:

Often we were close and often we would quarrel

tatoureba	<i>As if all life long</i>
koma-no hajikeru	<i>we were playing a spinning top —</i>
gotoku nari	<i>now he would spin it and now me...</i>

Kyoshi was terribly upset by the rift with his friend and by the temporary weakening of the influence of his school, which he believed to be the only true one. However, his “retirement” was just temporary. A few years later, in 1912, he returned to the *haiku* world and led the movement for protecting the traditions of *Hototogisu*. In 1918, he raised his voice against unbridled innovation in his key article “The Way Haiku should Develop” (“Susumubeki haiku no michi”), which gave an evaluation of all the main trends in *haiku*, criticizing the reformers’ extremism and praising the true “reflection of nature.”

According to Kyoshi, the “reflection of nature” implied the maximum realism of imagery, accuracy of details, and genuineness of nuances—the qualities that could be achieved only by lengthy intensive practicing. He instilled in his disciples the necessity to work *en plein air*, making draft sketches in advance, before starting the final stage of work, and often went with them on outings in the country. The tradition took root, and “*etudes en plein air*” became an integral part of the ritual at Hototogisu school, whether in an individual or the group way.

(The author of this book has had occasion to participate in the *haikukai* sessions, including, for example, the All Japan Tournament of the *Hototogisu haiku* school, held on the sacred Mount Koya (the historical center of the Shingon Buddhist sect). Before the start of the tournament in the first half of the day all participants were instructed to go for a few hours’ walk in search of the appropriate images for several designated topics that were to be articulated later in *haiku*.)

Kyoshi generally opposed any speculative images, as well as images of social profile, arguing that the power of *haiku* is in the classic tradition, emerging from the fusion with nature.

He referred in this respect directly to Bashō's words from his famous diary *The Manuscript from the Backpack* (*Oi no kobumi*, 1691):

Following nature and an ability to befriend the four seasons make all forms of art akin. The artist sees nothing else but the flowers, he thinks about nothing but the moon. If a person in his life doesn't look at the flowers, he is like a barbarian. If, deep in his heart, he does not think about the moon, then he is no better than a bird or a beast. I am telling you: purify yourselves from barbarism, reject the morals of birds and beasts; follow Nature, come back to the natural.
[128, 51]

In 1926, Kyoshi directly stated that the purpose of *haiku* is writing sketches in the traditional “flowers and birds, wind and the moon” (*kachofugetsu*) style, clearly referring to the centuries-old classic genre of landscape painting and poetry that had come to medieval Japan from China of the Tang and Sung periods. This “conservative manifesto” caused an outburst of critical attacks by reformers of all kinds who believed that the mission of *haiku* should not be restricted to images of flowers and birds.

However, we should keep in mind under what circumstances Kyoshi put forward his program of “creative escapism.” Japan was boiling with social clashes. After the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923, accompanied by the repressions against the communists and the Korean ethnic minority, social tension in the society sharply increased. The writers of the Proletarian Literature movement called the people to the barricades. Left anarchist writers glorified in the grotesque images the bloody dawn of a new life. The avant-garde writers in *kindaishi* and in *haiku* stormed the Olympus of bourgeois art, trying to sacrifice the old masters for the sake of their original aesthetic concepts. Meanwhile, in the depth of the official establishment were ripening the concepts of racial and ethnic superiority, which soon would lead the soldiers of the Great Empire to the conquest of East Asia — with militant poems on their lips.

These poems would be composed by the *tanka* and *haiku* poets united in the Association for the Support of the Throne...

Kyoshi, who for many years had been the head of the major *haiku* school, realized better than anybody else the potential dangers implied in the traditional poetic genres, if they were left to the innovators of all kinds, as well as to the ideologues of both right and left wings. In Kyoshi's perspective, the only way to save national poetry from collapsing was to preserve it in the genre of "flowers and birds, wind and the moon." Indeed, some of the *Hototogisu* poets led by Kyoshi managed to escape the general patriotic frenzy of the war years, maintaining relative neutrality and doing the work they loved.

Kyoshi's view turned out to be attractive to the thousands of *haiku* admirers who distrusted the modernist experiments, preferring the everlasting classics. In addition, under the guidance of Kyoshi, the *Hototogisu* journal would pursue the policy of consistent democratization, deliberately lowering the evaluating bar for the poems sent to the editorial board. Since, in Kyoshi's opinion, the aim of composing *haiku* was to "purify oneself from barbarism and return to nature," the factor of quality of the poems receded to secondary place compared to the overall cleansing effect, which was to be expected from the increase in the number of poets.

The individual talent of a poet once more, as in the days of the notorious *tsukinami* authors, had to be considered only in the context of collective "humanistic" flow of landscape poetry. The duality of such an approach was evident as it actually gave the mediocrity priority over talent in the world of "equal opportunities." Nevertheless, the ideas of *Hototogisu* were enthusiastically received in the post-war Japan, which was in dire need of democratic literature able to heal the wounds of the nation, to provide a humanistic base for the classic traditions. *Haiku* quickly spilled over the border of professional journals and associations, turning into a literary hobby of tens and hundreds of thousands of workers, employees, peasants, service sector workers. Several years later, *haiku*, like a tsunami, would reach the shores of America, Europe, and West Asia,

transforming it into an international poetic entertainment, supported by all progressive humankind. A lot of credit for this magical transformation of an old classic genre should be given personally to Takahama Kyoshi and his followers.

However, as it often happened in the history of new *haiku* and *tanka* poetry, Kyoshi's declarations and manifestos did not always reflect the true character of his own work, which, due to the author's talent, could be much wider, deeper, and more significant than the everyday sketches of nature. A human element, expressed in Kyoshi's *haiku* with an aching sincerity of emotion, makes them akin to the best works of Basho, Kyorai or Issa:

temari uta	<i>The song for playing temari-ball —</i>
kanashiki koto o	<i>so sad it is</i>
utsukushiku	<i>and so beautiful...</i>

The *haiku* image evokes the poet's childhood memories of the time when he had been playing with a small ball on a string, singing the same sad song.

A nostalgic note sounds in many of Kyoshi's poems, which conventionally referred to the time of the year by a "seasonal words":

*Under the full moon
on board a ship I pass
my native port...*

*Longing for the old times —
red iris flowers hanging over
the murmuring stream...*

*Oh how dear it is to me,
This grass covered with dew!
Sweet memoirs of the past...*

The poetry of nature in Kyoshi's interpretation embodies his ideal pictures of "flowers and birds," remaining in line with the philosophical humanist tradition of Basho and his school. Thus, a few poems on a classic topic (*dai*) about an autumn festival Bon, associated with the custom of paying homage to the ancestors and ritual dances, in fact present poetic contemplations about the hardships of life:

*Visiting a graveyard —
oh how small and humble they are,
my ancestors' graves...*

* * *

*The green moss is crushed —
it looks like somebody slipped here.
A graveyard path...*

* * *

*A song for a dance —
they sing just of everyday matters
and so simply...*

Other "seasonal images" also often imply something more than a momentary landscape sketch:

*The end of autumn —
in the bright moonlight I can see now
how my guest has grown old...*

* * *

*Putting things in the light,
I am watching the birth of the shadows
this autumn noon...*

* * *

*Now you contemplate
the sorrow implied for ever
in the departing autumn...*

Kyoshi's famous *haiku* about the autumn wind is considered by the critics "a self-portrait of the poet in his old age." Commenting on this poem, Kyoshi wrote: "I am the ultimate truth for myself at present. Forty-year olds are proud of their age, fifty-year olds are proud of their age, and sixty-year olds are proud of their years" [137, 51]:

akikaze ya	<i>The autumn wind .</i>
kokoro hagesite	<i>Everything faded in my heart —</i>
kuchi tomaru	<i>not a word to say...</i>

Takahama Kyoshi lived his life with dignity and left as his legacy to posterity a treasure — a pure *haiku* tradition, which he managed to save in the turbulent years from the "revolution of art," social class struggles, militaristic psychosis and bellicose patriotic fervor, an alien occupation, post-war chaos and devastation, the democratization without borders, and the emerging consumerism. The list of his associates, friends, disciples and followers, devoted to the tradition of *Hototogisu*, includes the best *haijin* of the past century.

MURAKAMI KIJO

In the galaxy of talents rallied around Kyoshi's journal *Hototogisu* there was a modest middle-aged half-deaf court clerk from the town of Takasaki. A father of ten children, he lived for many years in dire poverty and misery until he finally was destined to occupy a decent place in the history of literature.

Kyoshi's eldest disciple, Murakami Shotaro (who later took a penname Kijo, 1865–1938) was born in a samurai family and dreamed of a military career. He had worked his way up to the first rank when a serious injury, which led to a partial loss of hearing, made him leave the service and earn his living by office work. He was twice married, and had many children and no means to feed them. The family lived from hand to mouth. The

future was bleak. The only outlet in Kijo's life was composing *haiku*, which he had taken up after having read in his youth Shiki's poems and essays. He even managed to exchange letters with the master and had his blessing.

However, to make a career in the *haiku* world with its rigid hierarchy and strong competition was much more difficult than in the army. Publishing little by little his poems in *Hototogisu*, Kijo would remain one of the hundreds of "ordinary" poets, known only to his close friends and relatives. But one cultural event changed everything: a *haiku* tournament, held in Takasaki in 1913, under the guidance of Kijo's teacher Takahama Kyoshi and Naito Meisetsu. The referee awarded the first prize to poet Murakami Kijo for the following *haiku*:

hyakusho ni	<i>For a peasant</i>
hibari agatte	<i>if the lark is in the sky —</i>
yo aketari	<i>it means the dawn has come...</i>

The honorable diploma immediately brought to Kijo wide recognition and provided him with disciples. Gradually, his disastrous financial situation began to improve. Encouraged by the success, Kijo wrote more and more new poems, many stanzas a day. These were his best *haiku*; the concept of the "reflection of nature" was embodied in a fresh and highly original way. The critic Osuga Otsuji compared Kijo with Kobayashi Issa, having in mind their extraordinary compassion for the weak, sick, and miserable creatures (with which both authors most likely identified themselves). Indeed, in Kijo's poetry the empathy with the weak is crucial and defines the humanistic nature of his works throughout the Taisho period.

haruzamu ya	<i>Cold days in spring —</i>
butsukari aruku	<i>stumbling and bumping,</i>
megura inu	<i>a blind dog...</i>

The poems of the poet's first book, *Kijo's Haiku Collection* (*Kijo ku-shu*, 1917), are permeated with a special attention to the miserable, needy, and crippled:

Murakami
Kijo



村上
鬼城

haru no yo ya
to o kakomiiru
meguratachi

*A night in spring —
several blind men have gathered
around the street lantern...*

The poet's worldview is best of all expressed in his well-known *haiku* containing a paradoxical self-characteristic:

yo o koote
hito o osoruru
yokan kana

*I love this world,
but people are scary for me —
the evening chill...*

Kijo's *haiku* about a bee is considered to be the apotheosis of the compassion theme:

fuyubachi no
shinidokoro naku
arukikeri

*A bee in winter
can't find a place to die —
it keeps on walking...*

Takahama Kyoshi, praising this poem, noted: "There are many people in the human community who wander somewhere like that, to say nothing of all creatures other than humans..." [137, 167].

Many poems by Murakami Kijo, written at the peak of his talent, reveal an extraordinary clarity and aphoristic brightness of the image — which again makes them akin to the poetry of Kobayashi Issa and Basho's tradition:

zanseki ya	<i>The last snow.</i>
goo-goo to fuku	"Ugh, ugh" — it howls,
matsu no kaze	<i>the wind in the pines...</i>

The following poem by Kijo is a periphrasis of Basho's famous *haiku*:

Fuyu no hi ya	<i>A winter day —</i>
mae ni fusagaru	<i>it has stretched in front of me,</i>
ono ga kage	<i>my own shadow...</i>

Compare it to Baho's poem:

*Riding a horse —
and my shadow is freezing nearby.
A winter day...*

Kijo's poems are not only written in the *shasei* style, but are also filled with deep philosophical meaning, which naturally enriches and expands the symbolism of an ordinary image:

ikikawari	<i>The revival of life</i>
shi ni kawarishite	<i>and transformation of death —</i>
utsu ta kana	<i>they are hoeing the field...</i>

Haiku expresses the idea of the vernal renewal of nature, the arrival of a new life and withering away of the old. Here we can find a metaphor of "the grain that dies to be reborn," and a metaphor for the resurrection of the human spirit in the eternal toil of a farmer cultivating his land .

Later, having struggled out of poverty and gained popularity, Murakami Kijo set up his own school, where for many

years he would teach *shasei* poetics. However, his own poems gradually lost their spirituality and humanistic pathos, turning into rather ordinary landscape poetry. Still he left to the readers of the succeeding generations enough of his wonderful poems born from the grieving and compassionate heart of a poor poet:

koharubi ya	<i>Sunny days in fall —</i>
ishi o kamiiru	<i>she is trying to bite a rock,</i>
aka tombo	<i>this red dragonfly...</i>

* * *

hamaguri ni	<i>A flock of sparrows</i>
suzume no mure ari	<i>is pecking a clam in the shell —</i>
aware kana	<i>so pitiful...</i>

IIDA DAKOTSU

Iida Takeji (literary penname Dakotsu, 1885–1962) was born in Yamanashi Prefecture into the family of a wealthy landowner, where literature had been respected for generations. He became interested in poetry at an early age, read many works by Basho and began writing *haiku* at the age of ten, dreaming to become a poet. Although Takeji as the eldest son in the family was to inherit the farm and stay in the province for good, with his father's permission in 1905 he left for Tokyo and entered the Faculty of Letters at Waseda University, where he met Wakayama Bokusui, Toki Zenmaro (Aika), and other future distinguished poets. Trying his hand at *shintaiishi* and prose, he finally focused on composing *haiku*. Soon he was introduced to Takahama Kyoshi, Shiki's successor and the universally acknowledged leader in the *shasei haiku* world.

From the very beginning, Kyoshi, highly appreciating the potent of the young poet, would try to introduce him to his vision of nature. Dakotsu published his first serious poems in *Hototogisu* and after a while became a full member (the youngest one) of the elite poetry club "Heart Given to Haikai"

("Haikai sanshin"), founded by Kyoshi. His works of the early period follow precisely the prescriptions of the *shasei* concept. He contributed with his *haiku* to all the leading newspapers and magazines, particularly to the "The Populist Haiku" section of the *Kokumin shinbun* (*People's Newspaper*), headed by Kyoshi, and later by his disciple Matsune Toyoyo, gaining more and more recognition among the fellow poets. However, these poems still lacked simplicity, naturalness, and inner power that was characteristic of Dakotsu's later works. Takahama Kyoshi, calling these *haiku* "novelist's poems," remarked of his works relating to the Tokyo period in the following way: "It seems that the main reason is in the fact that he has received the same education as his fellow students at Waseda University, who now are earning their reputation as novelists" [137, 170]. Listening to the criticism, Dakotsu worked hard on his style.

When all of a sudden, Kyoshi announced that he was retiring from the *haiku* world and turning exclusively to prose, this event coincided with the Iida family's clan appeal to the heir to return to Yamanashi and fulfill his responsibilities to the farm. After some hesitation, in 1909 Dakotsu accepted his relatives' request, gave up his activities in Tokyo, said goodbye to his friends, and went back to the province. From that moment he entered a long period of life devoted to contemplation of nature, which he describes in hundreds and thousands of beautiful poems. When five years later he got the news that his teacher Kyoshi had returned to the *haiku* composition, he would not dream of life in the metropolis any more and regarded himself as a rural bard, a poet of mountains and rivers:

Oedo no	<i>Far away in great Edo</i>
machi wa nishiki ya	<i>streets are like brocade —</i>
kusa karuru	<i>and here the grasses have withered...</i>

However, his contacts with Kyoshi and former friends were dearly preserved and Dakotsu's new *haiku* from his remote province would flow to the reinvigorated *Hototogisu* journal, which once again turned from a "general" literary magazine

Iida
Dakotsu



飯
田

蛇
笏

into a poetic one. The critics, for example, highly praised the following *haiku*:

imo no tsuyu renzan kage o tadashu su	<i>The sweet potato leaves covered with dew — so distinct are the shapes of the distant mountains...</i>
---	--

According to the commentary tradition, the poet presents here a combination of a “short-range perspective” (dew on the leaves of taro or sweet potato) and a distant one (the contours of the mountains in the distance). However, it would be more correct to interpret this image in a different way: the dew drops on the sweet potato leaves clearly reflect an outline of the mountain range split into many pictures. In this interpretation *haiku* is even more worthy of praise, with which Yamamoto Kenkichi showered it.

In the following poems, Dakotsu shows his true mastery of artistic interpretation of familiar topics in picturesque compositions:

*Round like the moon itself,
a dark cloud is covering
the face of the moon...*

* * *

*The beginning of spring —
the dim glittering of lanterns
lights the feast in the garden...*

* * *

*The new moon night —
a boy plays his shepherd's pipe
for the moon...*

Although the writers never met in person, Iida Dakotsu's poetry proved to be close to that of Akutagawa Ryunosuke. In a heartfelt essay "Iida Dakotsu" ("Iida Dakotsu shi," 1924), Akutagawa wrote:

One day I was talking with a young man who told me that he had once met Dakotsu at a session of the Haiku Society. In addition, he noted that Dakotsu had been "excessively arrogant." I immediately felt a warm feeling for Dakotsu — perhaps, because I am arrogant as well; therefore it seemed to me that we could think in the same way ... [137, 176]

Indeed, in Akutagawa Ryunosuke's *haiku* we feel a direct influence of Dakotsu's individual manner:

*An autumn day.
The bamboo berries are drooping
over my fence...*

* * *

*On a garden lawn
they stand so close to the path —
the azalea shrubs...*

* * *

*The spring rains —
the firewood under the eaves
is covered with green leaves...*

In 1927, upon receiving the sad news about the suicide of the ingenious writer, Dakotsu responded with a poem:

DEEPLY MOURNING THE UNTIMELY DECEASED

AKUTAGAWA RYUNOSUKE

tamashii no	<i>A soul —</i>
tatoeba aki no	<i>it can be compared</i>
hotaru kana	<i>to an autumn firefly...</i>

Quiet life in the province enriched Dakotsu's palette with all the colors of nature and gave his poetry the primordial vitality to which many *haiku* poets living in a big city could only aspire:

NOTES FROM A MOUNTAIN HUT

*In the distance
wind is blowing in the wooded ravines.
The snow is melting...*

* * *

*Through the winter dusk
a voice of a kite in the distance —
Mount Ioe...*

* * *

*In a bamboo basket
the purple of the hot Indian summer —
the wild flowers...*

Dakotsu's first individual collection, *Shelter in the Mountains* (Sanro-shu), was published only in 1932. It was followed by a number of books: *The Magic Meadow* (Reishi, 1937), *An Echo in the Mountains* (Sankyo-shu, 1940), and many others. His last *haiku* collection was released in the year of poet's death.

Dakotsu's *haiku* is an acme of refined poetry of "the reflection of nature" in all its varieties: from the landscape sketches to philosophical generalizations. It complies with all the regulations of the classical poetics of *wabi and sabi*. The

“seasonal words” invariably refer the theme to the season; grammar and vocabulary mostly remain within the limits of old *bungo* style. Nevertheless, a direct imitation, a rehash of the old in this poetry is out of the question. The imagery of the poems is selected and presented in such an original way that it is impossible to confuse Dakotsu’s “romantic realism” with the manner of other authors:

*I caught a cicada,
looked in her eyes and saw there:
autumn is coming...*

* * *

*The graves are wet.
The paulownia should be in bloom now —
so warm is the soil...*

* * *

*The autumn stars —
their greenish-blue light
over a mountain pass...*

Provided that Dakotsu’s poetic talent primarily manifests itself in the genre of landscape poetry with seasonal color, he also describes with unusual warmth the scenes of peasants’ daily life, which in the traditional *haiku* categorization is referred to “human affairs”:

*Cleaning the field for the spring
while carrying a baby on her back —
a peasant woman...*

* * *

*Baking the sweet potatoes —
so deep is the blue sky
over the bonfire in the field!..*

* * *

*An late spring evening —
a woodcutter is thinking of something
on a freshly made stump...*

* * *

*Plowing in the spring —
A whip is waving in the moonlight.
The wind blows stronger...*

Unlike many of his contemporaries and colleagues, Dakotsu did not remain in the memory of the generations as a poet of the Taisho period. His talent developed with age and matured, achieving, as it seems, its peak in the 1940s-1950s of the twentieth century.

ON A NEW YEAR NIGHT LISTENING TO
THE BELL ON MINOBE MOUNTAIN

*Through the darkness of the night
It sounds from valley to valley —
The tolling bell...*

* * *

*Kites, seagulls,
sails covered with fog —
this view of the port...*

* * *

*The plateau is sleeping.
In the night cicadas stopped crying.
Fuji in the sky...*

Iida Dakotsu's substantial merit comes from the fact that he managed to use the inexhaustible riches of the *haiku* tradition without redundant imitation and developed the potential inherent in the classic poetics based on the *shasei* principle

introduced by Masaoka Shiki. He followed Takahama Kyoshi, but advanced further than his teacher, enriching the seasonal topics with amazing expressiveness and melodic sound. Nowadays, his poems present a model of pure lyrical poetry of new times.

HARA SEKITEI

One of the best poets of the *Hototogisu* group, Hara Kanae (penname Sekitei, 1886–1951) was born in the family of a village doctor in Shimane Prefecture, and, according to his father's plans, was to become a doctor, too, as well as his two elder brothers. However, the young man had an irresistible attraction to muses. While studying medicine at Kyoto University, he enrolled in the clubs of *haiku*, *tanka*, and painting, then began playing the bamboo flute (*shakuhachi*)—and was so totally preoccupied with his artistic infatuations that he neglected his main profession and soon was kicked out of the university. Since his school days he had been sending his poems to various newspapers and magazines, and in 1908 became the head of a small *haiku* club, where he preached “the reflection of nature,” focusing on the poetry of *Hototogisu*.

After leaving university, Sekitei arrived in the capital, where he for the first time met Takahama Kyoshi. However he could not settle in Tokyo and kept on wandering around the cities and villages of Japan. He would occasionally earn his living by casual part-time work until he finally made a decision to become a reporter. In 1912, considering himself conventionally a member of the *haijin* group, he went to the master Takahama Kyoshi to ask for his recommendation. This time the talk with Kyoshi became a turning point in Sekitei's literary career. Finally, he realized his vocation and decided to devote himself entirely to writing.

As he failed to find a job in the capital, Sekitei was about to go back home when his elder brother, a young doctor, who had found a job in a mountain village, suggested Kanae go

Hara
Sekitei



原
石
鼎

with him and work as an assistant. The poet agreed. He spent about two years in the legendary Yoshino mountains, which had been glorified by countless medieval poets. This period turned out to be the most productive in Sekitei's literary career. The spectacular views of Yoshino inspired him to compose hundreds of beautiful poems on nature, which became *haiku* classics of new times:

chojo ya
koto ni nogiku no
fukareori

*High in the mountains
the flowers are bending down,
especially the camomilles...*

kaei basa to
fumu beku arinu
soba no tsuki

*Shadows of the flowers —
I had to step on them.
The moon over the cliff...*

In his memoir *Yoshino Mountains (Mi-Yoshino)*, Sekitei mentions a film that influenced his decision to live in the mountains and indulge in literary work. The film describes the fate of a young sculptor, retired in a mountainous region, and his relationship with his Master. In the poet's imagination,

Kyoshi (who was barely acquainted with the young *haijin*), had turned into the Master, whose virtual presence directs the poet in his relentless quest. Following the *shasei* principle, Sekitei worked hard to achieve the originality in the presentation of mundane images:

aki no hi ya neko watariiru tani no hashi	<i>An autumn day — a cat is crossing the bridge over a ravine...</i>
---	--

* * *

furo no to ni semarite tani no oboro kana	<i>Right to the door of the bathhouse it crawls from the ravine — that misty fog...</i>
---	---

* * *

yamakawa ni takanami mo mishi nowaki kana	<i>A mountain river now is covered with waves — this autumn wind!..</i>
---	---

* * *

wabishisa ni mata dora utsu ya kabiya mori	<i>In this loneliness he strikes his gong again — the wood ranger...</i>
--	--

Back in Tokyo, Sekitei made a literary career as one of the most prolific members of the “Hototogisu” group. He became close friends with Murakami Kijo, Iida Dakotsu, Maeda Fura, and other poets of Kyoshi’s circle. Sekitei’s *haiku* were gradually gaining wide popularity. In 1921 he became the editor-in-chief of the poetic journal *Kabiya* (*Forest Trackwalker*), in which along with his friends he published new poems based on the *shasei* concept:

takadaka to cho koyuru tani no fukasa kana	<i>So high in the air — a butterfly is crossing this deep ravine...</i>
--	---

* * *

kiri kabu ni	<i>On top of a stump</i>
uguisu tomaru	<i>a bush warbler is perched —</i>
satsuki kana	<i>the fifth moon...</i>

Sekitei's best collection, *Shadows of Flowers* (Kaei, 1937), was released when the poet had been ill for a long time. During the last ten years of his life, the illness prevented him from writing, but the poems composed in Yoshino were far enough to include Hara Sekitei's name in the list of great *haiku* masters of the twentieth century.

MAEDA FURA

Takahama Kyoshi, commenting on the characteristics of his disciples, once compared Hara Sekitei's talent with spring or a cloudless summer and Maeda Fura's gift with gloomy autumn or winter. He had good reasons for such comparisons, for Fura himself put it even more clearly: "It is worth living if you glorify the darkness, the mountains, the snow!" [127, 1053].

Maeda Chukichi (penname Fura, 1889–1954) was a native of Tokyo, but his restless muse would lead him away from the big cities to the distant peaks, to the ravines of the Japanese Alps covered with snow. He was a singer of the Japanese mountainous wilderness, of remote countryside, of the "snow land," as the Japanese still call the prefectures of the North-East region.

Like many of his fellow poets, including the main successors of Masaoka Shiki—Hekigoto and Kyoshi, Maeda Fura has got no higher education. Having enrolled in the English department of Waseda University, he read a lot, was fond of Edo classics, played the *shamisen* and kept on missing classes. He left university in the second year and for six years was busy doing minor office work, then got a job as a reporter in a small newspaper and eventually succeeded in journalism. However,

poetry was always his major vocation in life. The infatuation with poetry started after his mother once read to him Basho's classic *haiku* about a frog leaping into the old pond.

After getting acquainted with Takahama Kyoshi and becoming his disciple, Fura soon could be considered one of the leading poets of the "reflection of nature" school of the Taisho period. However, among the poets of the metropolis he gained a reputation of a "singer of the province," who did not care much about elegance of his style, preferring to write gloomy verse about cold and unfriendly lands. But it was exactly these unusual characteristic features that Fura enjoyed extraordinary popularity in the last quarter of the twentieth century, when the Japanese readers and critics rediscovered for themselves the poetry of restless wanderers Ozaki Hosai and Taneda Santoka. Maeda Fura was inevitably put into this category of the wandering poets, with the caveat that his endless journeys were not so much a Zen Buddhist existential "drift through life" but rather journalistic and ethnographic expeditions in quest of poetic inspiration.

Fura traveled all over the central and north-eastern part of Honshu island, visited all the famous mountains (*meizan*,) followed the guidebooks for the religious and poetic pilgrimage, stayed for a long time in the mountain villages and kept writing. In order to understand the significance of the work of Maeda Fura and other *haiku* poets close to him in spirit, one has to recall that the tradition of poetic pilgrimage had been for centuries a major component of Japanese poetry. Hundreds of poets, beginning with great Saigyō (12th c.), continuing with Bashō (17th c.) and Ryōkan (18th — early 19th c.), and ending with Santoka (20th c.), had paid tribute to it. This tradition developed in parallel with the tradition of pilgrimage to the Buddhist temples (and partly also to the Shinto shrines). Many specific routes had been designated especially for pilgrimage, which included several dozens of famous temples in each particular area. Back in the Middle Ages and pre-modern period, there were many detailed guidebooks featuring all the attractions of certain provinces

Maeda
Fura



前
田
普
羅

and regions with a meticulous description of the mountains, rivers, valleys, villages, temples, and shrines, including references to the related works of literature and quotations from the relevant poems.

Thus, for an educated person who wanted to get from traveling more than beautiful views, all the prerequisites of "historical and ethnographic tourism" were at his disposal. The *haiku* and *tanka* poets, especially those who had a natural inclination for travel, like Maeda Fura, often used those guidebooks. However, while the majority of travelers and pilgrims would take the most conventional routes along the most scenic Pacific coast of Honshu or around Shikoku, Fura preferred ridges, unbeaten tracks of the Japanese Alps in the central part of Honshu, or the coast of the Sea of Japan with its quaint fjords in the south, the sand dunes in the north, with its stunted pines clinging to the ground in the high winds, and its harsh cold climate and the perpetual poverty of the fishing villages.

In order to comprehend the specific features of Fura's poetry, first of all, we have to take into account a huge difference in climate, lifestyle, and worldview that still exists between the Pacific coastal strip, the industrial belt of Japan, where ninety

percent of the population live, and the “margin,” which include vast areas of the central, northern and eastern part of Honshu and Hokkaido. If in Tokyo, Kyoto, and even more so in Kyushu, there is actually no snow in winter and the average temperature varies from plus seven to ten degrees Celsius, in the mountains of Shinshu (Nagano) and Tohoku (north-eastern part of the island) even in the valleys the snow lies five months a year. In May, when in Tokyo and Kyoto summer begins, on the slopes of some mountains people can still ski. Many inhabitants of the main islands who have lived all their life in Kamakura, Nagoya, Osaka, Kochi, Fukuoka, actually do not know anything about this other Japan with its harsh highlands, frozen rivers and valleys covered with snow.

However, the Japanese houses in the “snow country” did not differ much from the houses in other areas until recent time: built of thin wood and paper they were blown through by the wind and had practically only one hearth in the main room for heating. The freezing cold would reign all winter long not only outside but inside the house as well.

In addition, the Japanese were the only people in East Asia who did not take care of making warm winter clothing, footwear, and headgear. It was extremely difficult to travel in the snow-capped icy mountains in straw hats, capes, and sandals when the temperature would drop to ten or fifteen degrees below zero. Until the emergence of powerful snow-removal vehicles, the roads across the passes between the valleys would be closed till spring and the mountain settlements remained totally cut off from the “mainland” — this is how the image of “winter seclusion” (*fuyugomori*) appeared in poetry. No wonder that writers and poets mostly preferred warmer climate. All the medieval collections of poetry, with very few exceptions, describe the beauty of western and southern Japan.

Ishii Rogetsu certainly was also a singer of nature in his beloved Akita, but the only poet glorifying and admiring the Japanese North for its unforgiving harshness, was Maeda Fura. He would draw inspiration from this magnificent nature, enjoying the fury of elements:

sekkai gawa	<i>Snow is melting —</i>
meizan kezuru	<i>and the roar of the river scratches</i>
hibiki kana	<i>the great mountain...</i>

* * *

ushiro yori	<i>Blowing from behind</i>
hatsu yuki fureri	<i>The first snow of the year —</i>
yoru no machi	<i>The town at night...</i>

Maeda Fura's obsession was climbing the famous mountain peaks which were surrounded in the folk tradition by a mystical aura and associated with Buddhist legends about saint hermits and evil demons, or with the Shinto tales about gods of the mountains, the *tengu* goblins and the ghost badgers. He wrote hundreds of *haiku* about the "sacred" mountains, which could constitute a whole book:

oku Shirane	<i>Shirane mountain —</i>
ka no yo no yuki o	<i>the snow is glittering with the reflection</i>
kagaykasu	<i>of the other world...</i>

* * *

kaya karete	<i>The withered reeds.</i>
Mizugaki no yama	<i>Mizutaki mountain peak</i>
sora ni iru	<i>high in the sky...</i>

* * *

Komagatake	<i>Komagatake .</i>
hietete iwa o	<i>It has dropped down a few rocks —</i>
otoshikeri	<i>so harsh is the cold...</i>

* * *

haruboshi ya	<i>The spring stars.</i>
hyosho Asama wa	<i>Asama, this maiden's soul,</i>
yo mo inezu	<i>cannot sleep all night long...</i>

It is noteworthy that for Maeda Fura, *shasei* is not limited to a simple sketch from nature. His poetry contains innovated tropes and powerful metaphors: the river scratches the mountain by its roaring; the snow on the slopes of Mount Shirane is shining with the glow of the “other world”; Mount Asama is compared to a girl who is sleepless on a starry night.

Along with the grandiose pictures of nature in winter, we can find in Fura’s poems many finely shaped “daily” images of “human affairs” topics, frequently with a light touch of irony:

haru o matsu shonin inu o aishikeri	<i>In waiting for spring the trader has got so close with his beloved dog...</i>
---	--

* * *

mushi naku ya ware to yu o nomu kageboshi	<i>Crickets are singing. It is drinking tea with me — my shadow...</i>
---	--

The last poem presents many associations with classical *haiku* by Basho and other authors, playing up the image of one’s own shadow.

Of course, Fura has many poems dedicated to animals, birds, insects, and other indispensable inhabitants of the *haiku* world:

kan suzume mi o hoso shite tatakaeri	<i>Sparrows in winter — so skinny as they are, still always fighting...</i>
--	---

Remaining loyal to the classical tradition, the poet combines the world of Nature and the inner spiritual world of a man, creating works of great emotional power and maximum concentration of the imagery:

ON THE DEATH OF MY WIFE

hitoriya ya teru mono naki kan no mizu	<i>I am alone in the house. Nothing for the moon to lighten but this cold water...</i>
--	--

* * *

fubuki yami	<i>The blizzard has stopped.</i>
Ko no ha no gotoki	<i>Like a leaf blown from the tree</i>
tsuki agaru	<i>the moon is rising...</i>

The poet's first collection, *Fura's Haiku (Fura ku-shu)*, was published only in 1930. It was followed by several more books. Each of them contain many wonderful poems that the Japanese readers only recently have begun to appreciate to a full extent.

HINO SOJO

Although the poets of *Hototogisu*, in general, vary in the aspiration for harmony, in the quest for the ideal of fusion with nature and the rejection of modernist deconstruction, sometimes their experiments would lead to unexpected results, breaking the framework of *shasei* poetics, shattering the foundations of public morality, and bringing upon the author a storm of indignant voices.

Hino Yoshinobu (penname Sojo, 1901–1956), was born into a family of an employee of a Japanese railway company, who was fond of *haiku* and even sometimes would contribute to the literary journals. Yoshinobu's childhood was spent in Korea, but he received an excellent Japanese education, and after returning home with his family, entered High school under the auspices of Kyoto University, where he joined a local *haiku* club. Hino stood out among the young poets by his bright expression, bold images, and an accurate "reflection of nature."

The famous *haijin* Yamaguchi Seishi, a member of the same club, recalls:

"Sojo was one grade older than me. He helped with advice. And not only that: in Sojo's *haiku* I discovered a new world previously unknown to me. Comprehending that in *haiku* one can glorify this new world, I decided to devote myself to *haiku* poetry. [137, 231]

Hino
Sojo



日野
草城

In 1918, several of his poems were for the first time received in the *Hototogisu* and were approved by the master Takahama Kyoshi himself. Soon the young *haijin* Hino Sojo became one of “Shiki’s successors.” Having entered the Faculty of Law at the university, he continued to publish his poems, gaining recognition as a poet of a moderate modernist style. In 1929, after the publication of his book *Sojo’s Collection of Haiku* (*Sojo ku-shu*, 1927), unanimously praised by the critics, the poet was officially admitted to the “Hototogisu” group. His poems of the early period are composed completely in the *shasei* vein:

fune no na no
tsuki ni yomaruru
minato kana

*The names of the ships
one can read in the moonlight —
that’s the port...*

shiro ume ni
yuuhi atareri
hito no koe

*The white plum blossom
under the evening sun.
voices of the people...*

However, Sojo was not going to follow the well-trodden path laid out by Kyoshi and his disciples. Gradually, much to the dismay of his senior colleagues, his *haiku* started to acquire pronounced erotic tones. The reason for the long-overdue scandal was an unprecedented series of Sojo's erotic *haiku* "Miyako Hotel" ("Miyako hoteru"), published in 1934.

Haiku had never been regarded as an appropriate genre for love poetry, though many poets from time to time would express their feelings in the form of *haiku* — mostly for the lack of anything better. These experiments in the field of love poetry have never been taken seriously by the critics and have been interpreted rather as one of the inevitable "costs" of *haiku* poetry, a tribute to the human weaknesses of the authors not worthy of special attention. The irrelevance of *haiku* as love poetry was aggravated also by the fact that in the list of the classic "topics" (*dai*) there were humorous imitations of love longing themes — for example, "cats' love."

Despite all the conventions, restrictions, and prejudices, Sojo decided to introduce into *haiku* the same "sexual revolution" that twenty years earlier had been introduced into *tanka* by the Yosano couple.

In "The Miyako Hotel," (where Hino Sojo's marriage actually took place in 1931) the young groom describes the impressions of his first wedding night. From the point of view of a modern reader, there is nothing special in this cycle, but for Japan of the 1930s it sounded more than daring:

yowa no haru	<i>A night in spring</i>
nao otome naru	<i>now I am taking this maiden</i>
tsuma to irinu	<i>as my wife...</i>

* * *

makurabe no	<i>In the spring night</i>
haru no akari wa	<i>my wife turned off</i>
tsuma ga keshinu	<i>the lantern...</i>

* * *

bara niou	<i>The fragrance of those roses</i>
hajimete no yo no	<i>on our first night —</i>
shiramitsutsu	<i>the dawn is close...</i>

* * *

yuagari no	<i>She came out of the bathtub —</i>
sugao shitashiku	<i>oh, how dear she is naked!</i>
haru no hiru	<i>A spring noon...</i>

Although Sojo probably just wanted to capture the unforgettable moments of his honeymoon, inspired by Tekkan and Akiko's poetry, "The Miyako Hotel" caused a flurry of conflicting commentary in the press. The *kindaishi* poet Muroo Saisei praised the author, and the famous *haijin* Nakamura Kusatao generally endorsed the experiment, but the majority accused Sojo of immorality. Nakano Shigeharu wrote indignantly that "The Miyako Hotel" describes the sexual experiences of a man, rather unceremoniously enjoying the woman he gained.

Eventually, in 1936, Sojo was excluded from "Hototogisu" society as a troublemaker, but that did not stop his restless activities. Soon he launched his own *haiku* journal, *Kikan* (*The Flagship*), which represented those authors composing non-conventional *haiku* outside seasonal topics. However, in 1940 the publications of modernist freethinking *haiku* started to attract the attention of the government censors. The journal was closed and Sojo abandoned poetry for some time.

Hino Sojo's late *haiku* present a sharp contrast to his "love songs" and show that he eventually returned to the ideals of *shasei* poetics. The severe disease eroding his flesh undermined the poet's spirit and dictated him the topics of the poems that he would compose in the vein of nostalgic confessional poetry:

konetsu no	<i>Fever is rising.</i>
tsuru aozora ni	<i>High in the blue sky</i>
tadayoeri	<i>cranes are passing by...</i>

Until the end of his life, Sojo, deep in his heart, had remained a poet of the "reflection of nature." His inner harmony, which he managed to preserve no matter what, is more important for the reader than his scandalous erotic sketches of "The Miyako Hotel."

SUGITA HISAJŌ

Among the poets of the New times there are comparatively few women. This fact is particularly amazing when compared with the second half of the twentieth century when many women became strong rivals to the men in all poetic genres. While in *tanka*, beginning with Yosano Akiko, the path for women was paved at the turn of the century, *haiku* had remained mostly a male business for a long time. Also one can hardly bring any name of a woman among the renowned *kindaishi* poets in the pre-war period. There were no prohibitions and restrictions for women on writing poetry, of course, but it was a historical tradition that *haiku*, like aphorisms, maxims or epigrams in western literature, were considered a predominantly male genre. Women could be admitted to the club, but with some reservations. As for *kindaishi*, in the early twentieth century the attitude of the intellectuals to *kanshi* was just projected on this novel verse. *Kanshi* (poems in Chinese), proclaimed to be an exclusively male sphere of expertise, in the last century were simply pushed out of literature by the flow of purely Japanese poetry in new forms, which tended to replace them in a way.

The "Hototogisu" society headed by Takahama Kyoshi would pursue a policy of encouraging women in poetry. There was a special section in the journal, "Ten Female Haiku," which accepted the poems of *haiku* poetesses from all over the country. Still, there were hardly any professional *haijin* among them: mainly it was simple *haiku*, characterized by the contemporary critics as "kitchen *haiku*" (*daidokoro haiku*). For all the pre-war history of "Hototogisu," there

were only three female poets who could be placed on the same level with Ida Dakotsu, Hara Sekitei or Maeda Fura. The names of those renowned *haijin* are Hashimoto Takako, Hasegawa Kanajo, and Sugita Hisajo.

In the poetry of everyday life Hasegawa Kana (penname Kanajo, 1887–1969), gained the immediate recognition of the readers. In her collections *Gentian* (*Rindo*, 1929), *The Moon in the Rainy Mist* (*Ugetsu*, 1939), and *Lights on the River* (*Kawa no akari*, 1963), she consistently claimed the priority of the simple values of a woman's daily life. House cleaning, cooking, taking care of the children and the husband, admiring the flowers in the rare moments of leisure, thinking about passing youth — all these topics and many others like them, presented in the style of “the reflection of nature,” make Kanajo's books a kind of autobiographical “women's novel” or poetic diary.

Thousands of female authors would follow in Kanajo's footsteps in the postwar period, putting an end to gender inequality in *haiku* poetry.

Sugita Hisako's (penname Hisajo, 1890–1946) creative activity developed in an entirely different direction. The daughter of a high-ranking government official, Hisajo received an excellent classical education, which instilled in her the love for fine literature and... a secret passion for the bohemian life. Neglecting profitable proposals, she gave her heart to a poor artist and married him, hoping to share with her husband the throes of creation and the discomfort of a Tokyo attic. Ironically, her husband very soon got a position as a teacher of drawing, which guaranteed them a bearable income, but did not leave any time for creative painting. When Hisajo found herself in a remote province in Kyushu with her husband, an ordinary teacher, she fell into a long depression, traces of which were clearly visible in her poetry of those years:

tabi tsugu ya	<i>I am darning socks!</i>
Nora to mo narazu	<i>No, I couldn't become Nora —</i>
kyoshi zuma	<i>just a teacher's wife...</i>

Sugita
Hisajo



杉
田

久
女

The name of the character from Ibsen's *The Doll House*, a symbol of women's emancipation, is a sad reminder of the destiny of Hisajo, which proved to be quite contrary to that ideal.

However, Hisajo was not going to put up with her fate. In 1916, a selection of her poems was published in *Hototogisu*. Takahama Kyoshi himself noticed and blessed the young talented poetess, who continued to publish brilliant *haiku* in the *shasei* style with a distinctive "zest" in her individual manner:

kodama shite
yama hototogisu
hoshii mama

*Producing echoes,
the mountain cuckoo bird
sings as she wants...*

murasaki no
kumo no ue naru
temari uta

*High in the sky
over the dark blue clouds
flies the temari-ball song...*

Being of high opinion of her unique talent, Hisajo wrote a critical survey about contemporary *haiku* in which she com-

pared her rivals to well-known literary characters, numerous mistresses of prince Genji, attaching to herself a role beyond competition.

To bring some spirit of adventure into the boredom of provincial life, the young poetess started looking for a romance, and soon erotic notes sounded in her *haiku*. In 1932, Hisajo launched a poetic journal called *Hanagoromo* (*The Flower Garment*). There, to the great discontent of Kyoshi and other *Hototogisu* elders, she published *haiku* in a free form, sometimes with a frivolous content:

hanagoromo	<i>Shall I take off</i>
nugu ya matsuwaru	<i>this flower garment?</i>
himo iroiro	<i>Let me just untie all these laces...</i>

Ignoring the reprimands of the senior masters, Hisajo kept on “singing as she liked.” Eventually she was “excommunicated” and ousted from the “Hototogisu” group.

Being expelled from the major *haiku* association of the time was a heavy blow for the shrewd poetess. Besides, she started showing symptoms of a mental disorder. She stopped writing *haiku* and never again returned to poetry. However, her poems now had a life of their own. For the first time they were published as a collection a few years after the death of Hisajo, attracting by their bold challenge and freshness of feeling many modern readers.

KAWABATA BOSHIA

Classical *haiku* poetry since Basho has always contained a religious base as a reflection of the Zen Buddhist aesthetics underlying the genre. As in the medieval period, for the Japanese the world was permeated with the Buddhist beliefs and the perception of beauty was based on the Buddhist concept of fragility of life (*mujokan*). Over many centuries this has remained as a spiritual core of *haiku* (and *tanka*) poetry.

*Kawabata
Bosha*



川
端
茅
舎

In new times, marked by the influx of Western philosophy and the wide spread of Christianity, the Buddhist essence of traditionalist poetry was deliberately muted by its leaders — as a concession to the ideals of liberal-minded intellectuals that preferred the slogans of pluralism and freedom of conscience.

A purely Buddhist picture of the world with incorporated Shinto elements was replaced by theism of a wider profile. Poetry itself often would become a substitute for any specific religious belief. For the *tanka* and *haiku* masters of the beginning of the twentieth century, with rare exceptions, to declare openly their religious beliefs became a *mauvais tone* as it was for the Soviet authors of the later period of stagnation to express their love for communist ideals. During the period of military and patriotic euphoria of the 1930s, Buddhism was pushed aside by the official Shinto, structured as State Shinto, and, after the war, by the wave of democratic reforms.

Nevertheless, in *tanka* and *haiku* poetry the Buddhist convictions of the authors were reflected more often in an indirect way — through the descriptions of temples or by appealing to the images of Buddhist sculpture. The few poets who openly declared their religious attitude, were an exception: Ozaki Hosai, Taneda Santoka, Kawabata Bosha, and Matsumoto

Takashi. The first two of these took vows and became monks. Boshu, being extraordinary pious, after spending several years as a novice, was not ordained but probably regretted it. His works stand out against the general background of *haiku* poetry of the twentieth century by the depth of his philosophical introspection, and by his diaries, articles and essays containing reasoning about faith as a basic principle for creative inspiration.

Kawabata Nobuichi (penname Boshu, 1897–1941) was born in Tokyo. His parents kept a “tea house,” providing the wealthy clients with geishas. Perhaps a familiarity with *mizu shobai* (“the water trade”) business as a sinful activity at an early age pushed the boy to reflections on karma. He studied German and was interested in Western literature and art, planning to follow the footsteps of his elder stepbrother, Kawabata Ryushi (1885–1966), a famous painter of the westernized *yoga* trend. For many years he studied painting under the guidance of Kishida Ryusei until his teacher’s death in 1929. At the same time Boshu was writing *haiku*, which since the age of eighteen he was publishing in *Hototogisu* and other poetic journals. He was fascinated with Tolstoy’s philosophy of non-violence, which was promoted by the “Shirakaba” literary society under the leadership of Mushakoji Saneatsu.

In 1923 Tokyo was destroyed by a disastrous earthquake, which took the lives of more than one hundred thousand people. Kawabata’s house perished in the fire. Considering this disaster a sign of fate, Boshu retired to the great Zen monastery Tofuku-ji in Kyoto, where he spent four years as a novice (*nyudo*). By that time he had already developed tuberculosis, and later complications affected several internal organs. The grave disease, incurable at the time, strengthened the young novice in his faith. Suffering became a permanent attribute of his daily life and left an imprint on his poetry and painting.

Boshu’s *haiku* of his mature period is considered a model of the “reflection of nature” poetics in the interpretation given

to the term by the poets of the *Hototogisu*. In the foreword to the poet's debut collection *Kegon Sutra* (*Kegon*, 1936), Takahama Kyoshi called his poetry a true masterpiece of the “flowers and birds” style. Boshu himself not only admitted the value of “flowers and birds” in *haiku* poetry, but also promoted Kyoshi's favorite style in his critical articles.

Yet, it would be an obvious underestimation of the true value of Kawabata Boshu's poetry to regard it as a typical “flowers and birds” style. First, the topics of his poetry are immeasurably wider and include subjects not related to the “flowers and birds” domain at all. Secondly, even Boshu's most orthodox landscape miniatures are imbued with a spirit of religious quest, creating complicated philosophical and theological allusions and overtones that are not characteristic of the *shasei* “flowers and birds” style:

shiratsuyu ni	<i>In the clear dew</i>
aum no asahi	<i>the beginning and the end</i>
sashinikeri	<i>in the light of dawn...</i>

* * *

kongo no	<i>As a diamond</i>
tsuyu hitotsubu	<i>this lonely dewdrop</i>
ishi no ue	<i>on the face of a rock...</i>

* * *

hirobiro to	<i>A banana leaf —</i>
tsuyu mandara no	<i>it became a mandala,</i>
basho kana	<i>all covered with dew...</i>

Aum, the notion of “the beginning and the end” in Buddhist philosophy (the first and the last letters of Sanskrit alphabet), *kongo*, a diamond as a popular metaphor for the adamant force of the Buddhist teachings, *mandala* (the picture of world in the Buddhist iconography), convey the implicit meaning of the “Buddha essence,” which fills every tiny part of the transient world and gives it a holy entirety.

The image of “clear dew” that often can be seen in Bosha’s poems is sometimes presented in the context, which emphasizes an inextricable link between universal purity and the mortal matter of earthly life — as in the following *haiku*, which was highly praised by Kyoshi:

Shiratsuyu no	<i>Drops of clear dew</i>
Usubarairo no	<i>on the pinkish paws</i>
mogura-no te	<i>of the dead mole...</i>

Ironically, Bosha, a poet of the new times, along with the dominant Buddhist motifs, also presents in his poems some images inspired by Christian themes:

hana anzu	<i>Apricot trees in bloom.</i>
jutai kokuchi no	<i>The rustle of the birds’ wings</i>
haoto bibi	<i>sounds like an Annunciation...</i>

Nevertheless, we can hardly agree with the exaggerated evaluation of Yamamoto Kenkichi, who for no reason compares Bosha’s inarticulate *haiku* with Fra Angelico’s “Annunciation” and thus places him in on a level with Hitomaro and Saigyō (!). Most likely, the Christian element here is only a bit of rhetoric.

Among Bosha’s *haiku* there are many excellent sketches in the *shasei* tradition reflecting the author’s professional interest in painting:

gekko ni	<i>In the moonlight</i>
shinseki no kizu no	<i>all these scratches on the snow</i>
kakure nashi	<i>cannot be hidden...</i>

However, next to them there are landscape sketches of a different kind, with unexpected “modernist” comparisons, which hardly match the *shasei* poetics, but resemble Kobayashi Issa’s bold, sweeping images:

ichimai no	<i>As if all around</i>
mochi no gotoku ni	<i>were turned into a mochi rice-cake —</i>
yuki nokoru	<i>the fallen snow...</i>

Those poems by Bosha, which show sympathy with the sick, weak, disadvantaged living beings, also reveal a similarity with Issa:

daikon uma	<i>A cart of turnips —</i>
kanashiki maeba	<i>the horse shows its front teeth</i>
misenikeri	<i>so wretchedly...</i>

In the last months of his life, Bosha, like Masaoka Shiki, was bedridden, and despite his unbearable sufferings, like Shiki, he continued to compose poems, revealing his lust for life and undefeatable spirit strengthened by faith:

kaki o oki	<i>I put a persimmon</i>
hibi seibutsu o	<i>near the bed — and day by day</i>
sasu shinen	<i>going to start sketching...</i>

akikaze ni	<i>Under the autumn wind</i>
waga hai wa	<i>my lungs sound</i>
hichiriki no gotoku	<i>like a flageolet ...</i>

Kawabata Bosha's *haiku* composed on a deathbed with a complicated homonymous metaphor in the last line, refers the reader to Basho's poem about the voices of cicadas "penetrating the rocks":

ishimakura	<i>A rocky pillow —</i>
shite ware semi ka	<i>am I like those cicadas</i>
naki shigure	<i>singing in tears?..</i>

While Bosha was alive, he may have enjoyed greater fame than after death, when he was ranked by the critics as a good

“second-rank” poet of the *Hototogisu* school. Meanwhile, his poems, filled with religious and philosophical overtones, based on the rich arsenal of tropes and closely associated with the medieval tradition, could be no less interesting for the modern reader than Taneda Santoka’s poetry, which has recently gained universal recognition.

MATSUMOTO TAKASHI

The name of Matsumoto Takashi (1906–1956) is usually mentioned next to the name of Kawabata Boshu, as both poets were not only friends but also shared a deep conviction that the way to poetry lies through religious austerities.

Takashi’s father belonged to an old family of *No* theatre actors and the boy was destined to take up a theatrical career. Since the age of six he began the most difficult training course, learning the roles. At the age of nine he appeared for the first time on stage, where he spent nearly twelve years. The *No* theatre itself was the world of ancient esoteric art — an art almost completely detached from contemporary reality. It specifically influenced the mental attitude and intellect of the actors who would spend days and nights in practice. At the age of fifteen, Takashi became fascinated with *haiku*, and his early poems would reveal a strange, unusual perception of Nature and man.

In 1923, Takashi met Takahama Kyoshi from whom he learned the concept of the “reflection of nature” (*shasei*). Nearly at the same time he left the theatre because his weak lungs did not allow him to endure any longer the physical strain required of the performers by the rigid system of the *No*. However, the years spent in the theatre forever instilled in Takashi a passion for art and a belief in the spiritual abilities of the man. Having decided to devote himself to poetry, he retired to Jomei-ji temple in the old capital of Kamakura (not far from Tokyo) and lived there for a few years in a shabby hut with a thatched roof, indulging in self-contemplation and composing *haiku*. While Boshu’s poetry was called “Boshu’s Pure Land” (“Boshu

Matsumoto
Takashi



松本
たかし

jodo" — an allusion to the Buddhist sect Jodo), Matsumoto Takashi's poetry of the same period, imbued with a sense of spiritual ecstasy, was called by the critics "Takashi's Abode of Bliss" ("Takashi rakudo").

However, Takashi's poetry, following the clarity of *haiku* form and the principle of seasonal division of topics, contains considerably less philosophical symbols but more artistry and aesthetic feelings of the moment.

suisen ya
kokyo no gotoku
hana o kakagu

*A daffodil —
the flower cup is hanging
like an ancient mirror...*

tama no gotoku
koharu biyori o
sazukarishi

*Like a treasure-gift
I accept these spring-like days
of the late autumn...*

shizuka naru
jizon no fure ya
ju san ya no tsuki

*The quietude of my life
is troubled by this view —
the moon of the thirteenth night...*

In 1929, after several years of zeal and mortification of the flesh, Takashi returned to the world and got married. His wife shared the interests of her husband and they enjoyed composing *haiku* together.

His collections *The Kite* (*Tako*, 1938) and *The Field Ranger* (*Nomori*, 1941) were warmly received by the critics as a model of *shasei* poetry in the *Hototogisu* vein. In the post-war period, Matsumoto Takashi became the head of the poetic journal *Pipe* (*Fue*). His book *The Soul of Stone* (*Sekkon*, 1953) was awarded an honorary literary prize, and in the late years of his life the poet enjoyed wide literary recognition.

The undoubted merit of Takashi's *haiku* lies in the author's original colorful "theatrical" perception of the image. Reality and dreams merge in his poetry, creating a shimmering mystical tone in the verse.

chichipopo to	<i>Bang-bang-bang —</i>
taiko utoo to	<i>the sound of drums over the blossoms</i>
hana tsuki yo	<i>in the moonlit night...</i>

yume ni mau	<i>In my dream I perform</i>
no utsukushi ya	<i>all these beautiful No dances —</i>
fuyugomori	<i>a lonely hut in winter...</i>

However, in some cases the pathos is intentionally reduced and the topic, typical of the classical *haiku* division — as, for example, "a snowman" — is presented in an ironical playful manner:

yuki daruma	<i>A snowman —</i>
hoshino shaberi	<i>listening to the chattering</i>
pecha-kucha-to	<i>of the idle stars...</i>

Matsumoto Takashi's poetry of his late years is less expressive. It is more reserved and as close as possible to the principle of "the reflection of nature" according to the *Hototogisu* spirit.

kobai o	<i>Suddenly it stopped —</i>
oritsusumu yuki	<i>the snowfall that was bending</i>
hata to yami	<i>the red plum tree in bloom...</i>

* * *

yuki kiri o	<i>Clouds of fog depart</i>
oikosu kiri ya	<i>and other clouds arrive —</i>
sanjoko	<i>a mountain lake...</i>

Takashi conceived creative work as an act of enlightenment, *satori*, and his attitude to composing *haiku* was for him like a religious rite. No wonder that such attitude creates a special aura around his poems.



“NEO-HAIKU” AND ASHIBI POETRY

MIZUHARA SHUOSHI

The ninety years of Mizuhara Shuosi's life (1892–1981) encompass all the major stages in the development of new Japanese poetry. He was born in the year when Masaoka Shiki commenced his great campaign for the *haiku* revival, and died at the peak of the triumphal march of *haiku* across countries and continents. In the history of the genre, the name of Mizuhara Shuosi — if not as the name of a great poet, than at least that of one of the most prominent reformers — stands along with the names of Shiki and Hekigoto.

Mizuhara Yutaka (penname Shuoshi) was born into the family of a popular doctor from the capital. Following in the footsteps of his father, he graduated from the medical school of Tokyo University and worked for several years as a physician before switching completely to composing and teaching *haiku*. In his childhood and adolescence Yutaka would read a lot but was hardly interested in poetry, believing it to be a futile exercise or idle pastime. When he was in his last year at the university he accidentally came across a newly published work by Takahama Kyoshi “The Way Haiku should Develop” (“Susumubeki haiku no michi”), which included a detailed explanation of the *shasei* principle along with extensive illustrations from the poems by authors of the *Hototogisu* group, such as Maeda Fura, Iida Dakotsu, and Murakami Kijo. The young doctor was suddenly impressed by Hara Sekitei's poems, became fascinated with *haiku*, and immediately became a subscriber to the journal, but still did not dare to write himself.

After his graduation from university in 1919 Mizuhara Yutaka's friends invited him to a small *haiku* club, consisting

mainly of the graduates from the medical faculty. The club was a branch of Matsune Toyoyo's school, who was the head of the *haiku* society "Shibugaki ("A Tart Persimmon"). The poets of that small circle had their own platform, different from the *Hototogisu* poetics. It rejected the principle of the "reflection of nature," which was so dear to the heart of young *haijin* Shuoshi. In the end, Shuoshi came to the conclusion that Toyoyo's views and methods were unacceptable for him. A year later he left the doctors' *haiku* club and decided to join the *Hototogisu* movement.

However, it was easier to take the decision than to gain the recognition of the venerable authors whom young Shuoshi could not stop admiring. Following master Kyoshi's recommendations, published in the journal, he would regularly go for a walk "in the open air" with a notepad and persistently hone his skills in "the reflection of nature" techniques. From the end of 1920 he began to send selections of his poems to *Hototogisu*, and in the spring of 1921 several of his *haiku* were finally published. Soon Shuoshi started to attend regularly the sessions of the *Hototogisu* society, chaired by Kyoshi, where he studied the theory of the "objective reflection of nature" (*kyakkan shasei*).

In 1922 Shuoshi, feeling quite self-confident, joined the "Haiku Society of Tokyo University." He became its acknowledged leader and invited to his group as participants his old friends, the young poets from *Hototogisu* — Nakada Mizuho, Tomiyasu Fusei, and Yamaguchi Seishi. Having been before this an ordinary amateur club, the "Haiku Society of Tokyo University" started to gain wide popularity, and its authors' works, labeled as "neo-*haiku*" (*shinko haiku*), were discussed throughout the country. In addition, a recently founded journal, *Hamayumi* (*The Sacred Bow*), offered Shuoshi a position as the poetry editor, and soon a poetry club under Shuoshi's leadership was set up around the journal, uniting all his new associates.

His frantic organizing activities resulted in building up a base for a new *haiku* movement in Tokyo, which was gradually getting out of Takahama Kyoshi's control.

Mizuhara
Shuoshi



水原秋桜子

In 1923–1924 Shuoshi still remained in the ranks of the *Hototogisu* masters and was respected by all, but the prospect of a split was becoming now quite real. Though Kyoshi had always treated his talented disciple favorably, the prevailing atmosphere of authoritarianism in *Hototogisu* and the lack of freedom of choice would depress Shuoshi more and more.

The major object of Shuoshi's discontent was the abundance of stereotypes both in topics and poetic techniques which the poets of *shasei* were expected to follow. He also believed that Kyoshi's concerns with "the priority of content" even when the beauty of the melodic sound is sacrificed for the sake of a "truthful" image was totally wrong. Explaining his concerns, Shuoshi wrote:

In the most common *haiku* form the first five syllables end with an exclamatory particle, "ya," and the last five syllables end with a noun. When a poet gets used to such stereotypes, his ideas lose their vitality. Though other variations are possible in *haiku*, the majority of the poets incline to these stereotypes. I was trying first of all to get rid of the stereotypes and also, as far as possible, to introduce a diversity in the seventeen-syllables patterns and free the melody of the verse" [114, 99].

Following the accepted rules and traditions of *shasei* poetics, Shuoshi continued to go for inspiration to Katsushika, a picturesque suburb of Tokyo on the Edogawa river, after which he named his first collection of poems. Katsushika views, depicted in the Edo woodblock prints, inspired poetic associations. In his "Landscapes Turning into Haiku" ("Haiku ni naru fukei"), the poet recollected: "I may say that less than half of my *haiku* are devoted to modern Katsushika. My memory would reveal the old views of Katsushika and many of my poems were born out of the beauty of those views" [137, 241].

Haijin Yamaguchi Seishi, with whom Shuoshi became close in the mid-1920s, remained his permanent advisor in the quest for novelty of imagery. Both poets were attracted by the archaic grand style of the *Manyōshū*, in which they saw a possibility of expanding the historical background of *haiku* following the suit of Origuchi Shinobu and Aizu Yaichi.

In 1928 Shuoshi, still an active member of the *Hototogisu* group, was appointed the editor of the journal, which soon gained the trust and respect of his fellow-poets. However, deep in his heart the poet himself was ready for fundamental changes. At the same time he took a leading position in the editorial board of the *Hamayumi* journal, which at his insistence was renamed *Ashibi*. The name of the magazine was identical to the *tanka* magazine which from 1903 to 1908 was led by Ito Sachio. Perhaps, Shuoshi in this way wanted to show the direct continuity of the *shasei* principle.

Takahama Kyoshi's announcement of the return to the traditional "flowers, birds, wind and moon" style was the last straw, breaking the young poet's patience, who was not going to devote his life to immaculate (as he saw it) pastoral poetry in accordance with the prescriptions of objective realism. He developed his own theory of the "subjective reflection of nature" (*shukan shasei*), which opened the way to another *haiku* reform.

Shuoshi's collection *Katsushika*, released in 1930, included both his old *haiku*, composed in the classic tradition of "objective *shasei*," and new *haiku* imbued with the spirit of "subjective *shasei*." In the foreword to his collection, Shuoshi wrote:

The *haiku* style of the "reflection of nature," which we accept, is one and indivisible. Nevertheless, two approaches are possible for an artist in achieving this absolute. The first one means being fully true to nature and denouncing one's own soul. The second one, with all respect to nature, implies a delicate and loving attitude to one's own soul. To create according to the second approach means scrutinizing and truly capturing the essence of nature, truly reflecting it in *haiku* form, and trying to reflect from within one's own soul. The melody of the verse is extremely important... I personally belong to the authors who adhere to this second approach [137, 240].

nashi saku to	<i>Pear trees in bloom —</i>
Katsushika no no wa	<i>and the fields of Katsushika</i>
tonogumori	<i>are enshrouded in the mist...</i>

* * *

*A starry halo over the peak.
A hamlet of silk-weavers
sleeps in the valley...*

* * *

*The mulberry trees have frozen.
The gloomy chatter of the peasants —
voices of the doomed...*

* * *

*Oh, what a wonderful Lion dance!
Hands, hands at the background of Fuji
in the light of the sunset...*

* * *

*A mountain valley —
here and there till the very daybreak
the field bonfires...*

The collection was enthusiastically received by the critics, but Takahama Kyoshi refrained from praise, considering many of the poems to be in "violation of the rules." With his blessing,

Hototogisu launched sharp reproaches against the apostate. The tension gradually increased until finally Shuoshi declared, in 1931, his withdrawal from the society.

In the same year Shuoshi published in his journal *Ashibi* the key article “The Truth of Nature and Truth of Literature” (“Shizen no makoto to bungeijo no makoto”), in which he clearly established the priority of the “truth of literature” in comparison with the objective “truth of nature” promoted by the poets of *Hototogisu*. He did not reject the *shasei* principle, but urged poets to fill the “reflection of nature” with subjective emotions, sharply criticizing conservatism in form and content.

Shuoshi’s reputation by that time had grown to such extent that many young poets embraced his demands as a manifesto of a new generation and rallied round the journal. The circulation of *Ashibi* started to grow rapidly. At first the authors of *Ashibi* could not compete on a parity basis with the brilliant poets of *Hototogisu*, but over time due to the striking success of such outstanding masters as Yamaguchi Seishi and Ishida Hakyō, the balance of power began to change until, finally, an equilibrium had been achieved.

Shuoshi continued to *haiku* in accordance with his concept of “subjective *shasei*.” Among his numerous collections, a special place belongs to the books *Autumn Garden* (*Shuen*, 1935), *Cane Cutting* (*Ashikiri*, 1939), and *Thoughts in Wanderings* (*Ryosho*, 1961). Although *Katsushika* is believed to be the most brilliant manifestation of Mizuhara Shuoshi’s individuality as an author, his *haiku* continued to show brilliance and an amazing liveliness of a feeling until the last days of the poet’s life. Thousands of his lyrical sketches marked the beginning of a new period in *haiku* poetry.

no no niiji to
haru ta no niiji to
sora ni au

*A rainbow over the field
and a rainbow in the rice paddy
meet in the sky...*

Izu no umi ya
ko ume no ue ni
nami nagare

*The sea at Izu —
higher than the red plum blossoms
the waves are rising...*

One of the basic concepts of Shuoshi's poetics was focused on the creation of thematic series or cycles — *rensaku*. This idea was not new. It had been earlier promoted by the poets of *Hototogisu*, but Shuoshi went further in his quest, giving *rensaku* a very important role. He believed that in the context of a cycle, a *haiku* could double or triple the power of emotional impact on the reader. In this case it becomes possible to omit the seasonal words in all the poems of a series except one, thus releasing more space for extra imagery. Nearly all of the best *haiku* by Shuoshi written before 1937 are grouped in big cycles. For example, here are some pieces from the cycle "Chrysanthemums and Cranes" ("Kiku to tsuru"):

*The fragrance of chrysanthemums!
Silently two cranes
are approaching each other on the meadow...*

*Cranes have come
covering the meadow with their wings.
Yellow chrysanthemums ...*

*Clear "days of chrysanthemums".
It is getting cold in the evening —
the cries of the cranes...*

Some sequences form a kind of a long poem in the genre of pastoral comprising many stanzas: "Winter Songs," "Early Autumn on Bandai Mountain," "Musashi Plain," "Sea Views," "Days of Departing Spring," etc. Others include poems grouped in accordance with the author's purpose, but not connected by the stem topic, for example: "Going to the Highlands near Asama Volcano to Watch Birds." Some others are designed as a mystical revelation in a few episodes — for example, "Mysterious Buddha from the Pavilion of Dreams." The cycle refers the reader to the famous Buddha statue from the Pavilion

of Dreams (*Yumedono*) in the seventh-century Horyu-ji temple. The very mentioning of the oldest Buddhist temple of Japan, situated in the outskirts of old Nara, the capital of the ancient land of Yamato, awakens in the reader's many historical associations and literary allusions:

*The Pavilion of Dreams
comes to sight in the land of Yamato —
an autumn dusk...*

* * *

*The late twilight.
No responds
to my timid steps...*

Yamaguchi Seishi urged Shuoshi to be more restrained in composing his cycles, since each individual poem in them tended to lose its significance. Over time Shuoshi himself came to this conclusion, alternating *rensaku* with independent *haiku*, but nevertheless, his series, including those in his books written in the 1970s, continued to play a leading role in his poetry.

Following his desire for an aesthetic ideal, Shuoshi was ready to sacrifice the photographic accuracy of the image for a romantic and bright picturesque effect:

*A sea view in storm
Like the mallow flowers
this color of light in the sky
over the crests of the waves...*

Shuoshi's expressive style, which absorbed all the best achievements of *shasei* poetics and was enriched by the study of *gendaishi* poetics, *nihonga* and *yoga* paintings, as well as the acquaintance with the masterpieces of Western art and literature, had a great impact on the poetry of the 1930s and, undoubtedly, predetermined the direction of one of the principle trends in pre-war *haiku* poetry. *Ashibi* became a magnetic center attracting

the poets who felt the need for the originality of imagery. Even Yamaguchi Seishi, who had remained until 1935 a formal member of the "Hototogisu" society, eventually succumbed to the temptation of novelty and joined *Ashibi*.

However, among the young poets there were also the extremists, who considered Shuoshi's views not radical enough. The poet Takaya Shoshu broke away from the *Ashibi* group, announcing that he could no longer put up with the usage of "seasonal words." In response, Shuoshi published a series of articles in *Ashibi*, arguing that without the seasonal division, defined by the "seasonal words," *haiku* are doomed to a rapid degradation. The correctness of his view was demonstrated by the inglorious experiments both with vulgar and primitive socially-oriented "proletarian *haiku*" in the vein of the soviet "Proletcult," and avant-garde *haiku*, which were gradually turning into short absurdist prose-verse.

In the course of time, the poets of the neo-humanistic trend — Nakamura Kusatao, Kato Shuson, Ishida Hakyō — who had outgrown the "neo-*haiku*" requirements, left *Ashibi*.

After the war, Mizuhara Shuoshi continued to enjoy enormous respect as the patriarch of the "neo-*haiku*" movement, which had opened the way to an artist's free self-expression but at the same time preserved the classic harmony of the old genre. His late poetry, which more vividly reflected everyday anxieties and concerns, is not at all inferior to the poet's early poems as far as abundance of imagery and expressiveness are concerned:

*My wife is ill.
Under a gust of wind, squeaking
the gate blow open...*

* * *

In Atami

*The pink plum blossom
on the rock over the breakers
near the seagull's nest...*

* * *

Tateishi temple

*The clouds are gone
but the cicadas keep silent,
still expecting rain...*

YAMAGUCHI SEISHI

If we want to distinguish among dozens of talented *haiku* poets of modern times the author with the most “original” imagery, the choice is likely to be Yamaguchi Seishi. While reading his poems one gets an impression that the author deliberately selected the widest scope of topics—from all possible spheres of life. Takahama Kyoshi, who for many years had been Seishi’s teacher in composing poems, predicted for the young man a career of a novelist, asserting that his gifted disciple “lacked air” in *haiku*. However, Seishi never turned to prose—he remained a poet till the end of his long life in literature, and a perfect poet!

Yamaguchi Chikahito (penname Seishi, 1901–1984) was born in Kyoto, where he spent his childhood. At the age of eleven he went to South Sakhalin (a Japanese territory at the time), where his father was sent as a journalist. The two-year joyless stay in the northern island had such a deep impact on the boy that twenty years later in his first book of poems he devoted dozens of *haiku* to describing the gloomy snowfields, frozen bays, and icy silence of the coastal cliffs.

At the end of his father’s assignment, the family returned to Kyoto, where Chikahito successfully graduated from junior high school and enrolled in the high school affiliated with Kyoto University, the same one where previously had studied Takahama Kyoshi and Kawahigashi Hekigoto. There was a *haiku* club at the school, where Hino Sojo was an instructor. Young Seishi joined the club and soon revealed such abilities that Sojo recommended the young prodigy’s poems for publication in *Hototogisu*.

Yamaguchi
Seishi



山口
哲子

In 1922 Seishi became acquainted with Takahama Kyoshi, who liked the young man very much. The talks with Kyoshi determined forever Seishi's career, strengthening his intent to take up poetry. Then, in April of 1922, he met for the first time Mizuhara Shuoshi, the future pioneer of the "neo-*haiku*" movement. A mutual sympathy soon grew into a lifelong friendship, reinforced by common literary interests. Later, both left the "Hototogisu" society (Seishi did it much later), trying to liberate themselves from the rigid regulations and obsolete rules.

Having entered the Faculty of Law of Tokyo Imperial University, Seishi together with Shuoshi initiated reorganization of the university *haiku* club, transforming it into a stronghold of freethinking poetry. His poetic experiments would not stop even for a day, even when on graduating from university he left the capital for Osaka. Seishi worked out his own poetics in the framework of the "the reflection of nature," trying, according to his own words, to create a new *haiku* world based on a fresh look at new material.

Unlike Mizuhara Shuoshi, he had never liked "*en plein air* sketches" and composed his best *haiku* "from memory," searching for the missing details in his imagination. In Seishi's early poetry, the attention to details of surrounding nature,

typical of a *shasei* poem, is replaced by a description of grandiose landscapes revealing the cosmic harmony of the universe. The perfect material for such poetry were the exotic “Russian” snow landscapes of Sakhalin, that constituted a hallmark of his debut collection, *A Frozen Port* (Toko, 1932):

THE TOWN OF KORSAKOV

toko ya	<i>A frozen port —</i>
kyuro no machi wa	<i>a former Russian town</i>
ari to nomi	<i>just as it is...</i>

*The spring ice drifting —
the waves are growing wild
in the narrows of the strait...*

At the same time Seishi would create poetic pictures built on the contrast of a traditional landscape with the accessories of a modern industrial city, where nature represents, more likely, a peaceful background, shading the expressive image:

shichigatsu no	<i>The July greenery</i>
aomine mijikaku	<i>of the low peaks in the distance —</i>
yokoro	<i>a steel workshop...</i>

Technological civilization powerfully invades the world of poetry, radically changing the ideals of beauty and harmony, traditional for the “reflection of nature” school. At the same time, it provides opportunities for the introduction of new symbols of industrialized modern life, something which Shiki himself had emphasized:

natsukusa ni	<i>To the summer grass</i>
kikansha no sharin	<i>they rolled up and stopped there —</i>
kite tomaru	<i>the locomotive wheels...</i>

Compare this poem to Masaoka Shiki’s *haiku*:

*The slope goes up.
High above the railroad —
a winter field...*

* * *

*Right across the line
of the railroad —
the summer fields...*

The *haiku* poets of New times were in a complicated relationship with the products of industrial civilization, which hardly would fit into the system of traditional aesthetic values. Although since Shiki's period the *shasei* poetics would admit the introduction of modernist "industrial" images into *haiku* poems, hardly any prominent *haijin* ever managed to do it elegantly enough. More often the experiments of this kind would look pretentious and even bizarre — very similar to an attempt by a European poet to beautify deliberately his sonnet with Japanese *riksha* and *geisha*. However, Yamaguchi Seishi's *haiku* combine traditional lyricism with the trendy innovations of modernity:

tenohira ni	<i>On my palm</i>
kareno no hikuki	<i>I cherish a shade of the sunset</i>
hi o mezuru	<i>over the withered field...</i>

* * *

sempuki	<i>An electric fan</i>
ooki tsubasa o	<i>ceased to rotate</i>
yasumetari	<i>its large wings...</i>

In his poems of the 1930s and 1940s, alongside the examples of pure pastoral poetry we can find the mentioning of whaling ships and seamen, cargo barges and court hearings, rugby matches, dance halls, and skating rinks.

suketo jo	<i>A skating rink.</i>
shiho ni Osaka	<i>Wherever you glance —</i>
shi o nozomu	<i>views of Osaka...</i>

* * *

*In the night hall
my partner is waltzing
showing her teeth in a smile...*

Takahama Kyoshi rightly called Seishi's poetry "a general expanding of the boundaries of the verse topics." The unrestrained pursuit of new horizons eventually led Seishi from the camp of *Hototogosu* to *Ashibi*, which was promoting under Mizuhara Shuoshi's leadership the concept of 'neo-*haiku*.' But he did not consider himself a defector, emphasizing the continuity of the new *haiku* theory in relation to the old one: "Trying to embrace and support in my work both the legacy of traditional *haiku* of the regular size and neo-*haiku*, which is its natural development, I have sworn that I would follow this way to the end" [137, 271].

With its abundance of sketches representing fairly common pastoral poetry, the specific characteristic of Yamaguchi Seishi's poetics still remains his ineradicable devotion to "industrial" objects (hardly fitting the translation):

shunjitsu o	<i>I watched the spring sun</i>
tekkotsu no naka ni	<i>through the bars of a concrete frame of</i>
	<i>the building –</i>
mite kaeru	<i>and went back home...</i>

The following *haiku* by Seishi is considered a masterpiece of "industrial" urban poetry:

natsu no kawa	<i>A summer river.</i>
akaki tessa no	<i>A red chain hits the water</i>
hashi hitaru	<i>hanging from the bridge...</i>

Despite the detailed explanation of the *haiku* meaning by the author and by the critics (some of them compared it with Basho's masterpieces), and a description of the circumstances of its composition, the reader (the Western reader in particular) has nothing but to guess what exactly presents the charm of this strange image.

In general, in the *haiku* commentary tradition, the interpretation of this or that poem, covering many pages and including also the author's own interpretation, has been the favorite occupation of the professionals and amateurs up to

now. Whole volumes of commentary are devoted to the most famous *haiku* of pre-modern and modern times, but, as a rule, instead of clarifying the meaning they rather obscure it and, as a result, obviously reduce the immediate aesthetic impression of the poem. While in Western poetry an author does not assume that his own explanations might contribute to the success of his poem and the critics always give their comments under the direct impact of beauty and harmony of the author's work, in the Japanese tradition, on the contrary, the cult of a poem often arises from the detailed explanations by the critics, who are trying to find in a subjective image something spiritually close to them. They take for granted that a prominent poet must have implied the hidden meaning in seventeen syllables. As a result, the true content of *haiku* (sometimes rather common) is often buried under a pile of the far-fetched comments.

Undoubtedly, Seishi was an outstanding master of *haiku* — a genre he had always considered in the context of a comprehensive poetic tradition. He would expand the boundaries of topics and deepen the meaning not only by introducing modern urban realities but also through the archaic lexicon, often traced back to the *Manyōshū*. In some of his poems these extremes come along together rather well. Nevertheless, the reader's heart is really touched by his *haiku* written in a traditional style, imbued with the spirit of *sabi*, for example, such as the following poem, composed in 1940, when the poet was suffering from a disease and experienced a deep spiritual crisis.

hitori	<i>All alone,</i>
hiza o idake ba	<i>I seat embracing my knees.</i>
shufu mata shufu	<i>The autumn wind and again the</i>
<i>autumn wind...</i>	

Seishi's best *haiku* were included in the collection *Seven Nights (Shichiyo, 1942)*. Soon after that, due to the aggravation of his chronic lung disease, he would lapse into silence for several years. Having recovered from his illness, the poet resumed his work at a time when Japan's fate seemed doomed. In Seishi's

collection of 1944, *Stormy Waves (Gekiro)*, we hear a vaguely discernible “sound of the time”:

umi ni dete	<i>It flies far over the sea —</i>
kogarashi kaeru	<i>and there is no place to return</i>
tokoro nashi	<i>for this winter wind...</i>

With all his desire to expand the boundaries of verse, Yamaguchi Seishi remained loyal to the sacred legacy of classical *haiku* poetry — to stay away from the current political and social issues. The events of the war years hardly had any reflection in his poetry, not to mention other subsequent political upheavals — Japan’s defeat, the American occupation, the democratic reforms in the country, etc.

In 1948 the aging poet became the head of the *haiku* journal *Tenro (Sirius)*. His disciples, Enomoto Fuyuichiro and Hashimoto Takako, helped him to rally around the journal the poets of the postwar years — Kohashi Genji, Akimoto Fujio, Hashi Kageo, Yamaguchi Hatsujo, etc. During the following decades, Yamaguchi Seishi continued to write and publish thousands of *haiku* and also released academic research on the poetry of Basho and Masaoka Shiki. He was forever entrenched in the role of the patriarch of the poetry of the new age, but in the welter of poetic trends during the second half of the twentieth century Seishi was gradually losing ground, paradoxically, largely due to the triumph of his own concepts that focused the *haiku* world on “emancipation without borders” and gave rise to myriads of imitators.

HASHIMOTO TAKAKO

Hashimoto Tama (penname Hashimoto Takako, 1899–1963), Yamaguchi Seishi’s disciple and devoted follower, is often called the best *haiku* poetess of the twentieth century. There is surely every reason to think so, as Takako’s nostalgic philosophical poetry presents a more significant

phenomenon of literature than the poetry of women's daily life by Hasegawa Kanajo or the eccentric expressive sketches of Sugita Hisajo.

Takako was born in Tokyo, received the typical secondary education for time, got married at the age of eighteen, and began to take an interest in poetry rather late in life, when she was already twenty. After moving to Osaka in 1929, she had a chance to meet Takahama Kyoshi, to be accepted to his school and to join the "Hototogisu" society. The principle of the "reflection of nature" became the basis of her poetry. Takako's poems of the early 1930s are marked by simple but impressive imagery, emotional clarity, and impeccable harmony of the classic form:

hotaru kago	<i>Fireflies in the basket —</i>
kurakereba yuri	<i>when darkness comes, I will shake them</i>
maetatasu	<i>to get the light...</i>

* * *

kiri tsukiyo	<i>A moon in the fog —</i>
utsukushiku shite	<i>so beautiful that to watch it</i>
ichi ya kiri	<i>will take all night long...</i>

At a "Hototogisu" poetry session Takako met Yamaguchi Seishi and became fascinated with his views on *haiku* poetry. Without any hesitation she moved to the innovative *Ashibi* group. She became Seishi's best disciple and assistant, skillfully implementing his principles in her own works. Takako's devotion to poetry and to the mentor personally was so great that in the hard years when cities and towns of Japan were burning in the flames of war, Yamaguchi Seishi entrusted Takako, who lived in the province, with his literary archive. After the war she took on the organizing activity of setting up Seishi's journal *Tenro*, which gave rise to the talented poets of a new wave.

In 1937 Takako's husband died, and from that time on she completely devoted herself to *haiku*. All her poems are marked

Hashimoto
Takako



橋本
多佳子

by a penetrating exploration into the essence of the *shasei* principle, but we feel at the same time a masculine power, romantic inspiration, and a refinement of feminine imagery:

inabikari	<i>A flash of lightning.</i>
kita yori sure ba	<i>When it's from the north</i>
kita o miru	<i>I look to the north...</i>

tsuki ichirin	<i>A moon disk in the sky</i>
to ko ichirin	<i>and the frozen disk of the lake —</i>
hikariau	<i>exchanging reflections...</i>

Yamaguchi Seishi wrote in his foreword to Hashimoto Takako's first *haiku* collection, *A Sea Swallow* (*Umi tsubame*, 1941): "There are usually two ways for a *haiku* poetess — a feminine way and a masculine way. Takako belongs to the rarer of the two, the category of the poetess who has chosen a masculine way" [137, 487].

Seishi's impact on Hashimoto Takako's work of the early period is so great that the critics often call her "Seishi in a feminine avatar." However, over time this similarity grew

weaker, and Takako's poems acquire a clearly individual style, colored by a purely feminine lyricism. In her collection *A Fisher Woman* (*Umihiko*, 1957) and her posthumous book *The End of Life* (*Myojo*, 1965), the nostalgic overtones prevail. The sorrow of a long solitude, awareness of approaching old age, and a yearning for bygone youth give these poems a unique bitter charm:

yuki no hi no	<i>A snowy day —</i>
yokushin isshi	<i>in the hot spa I touch with sadness</i>
isshi kanashi	<i>finger after finger...</i>

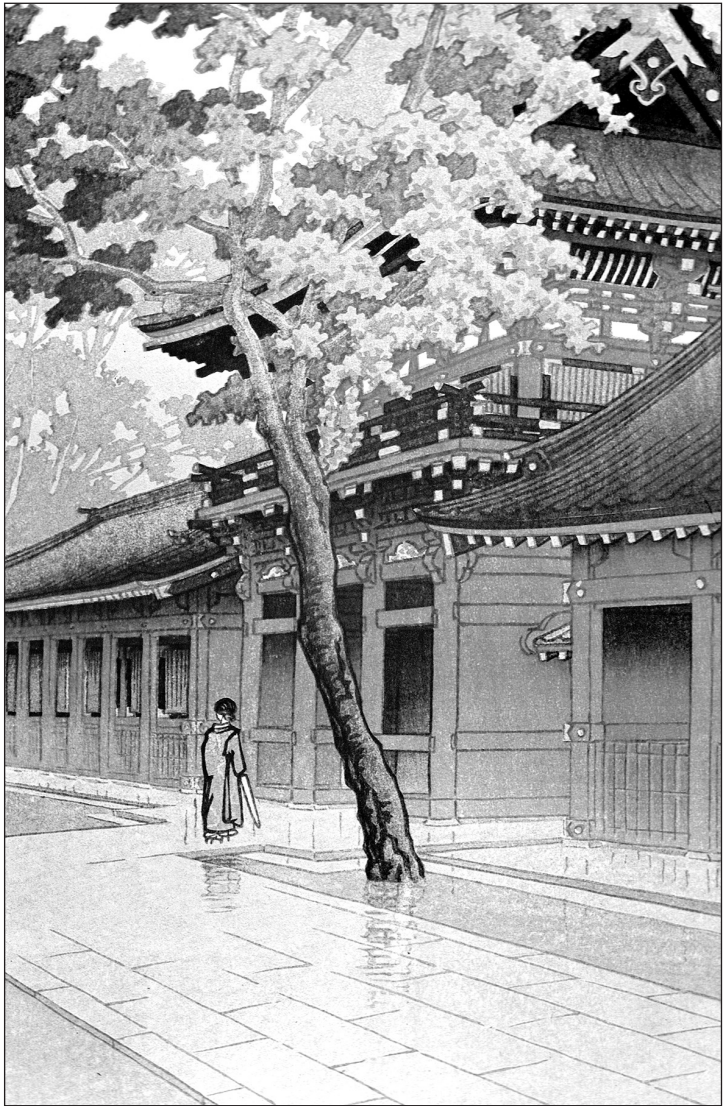
* * *

keshi hiraku	<i>Poppies are blooming-</i>
kami no saki made	<i>at such times I'm filled with sorrow</i>
wabishiki toki	<i>to the very strands of my hair...</i>

A poem written by Takako's poem just before she died defines her major passion in life, her earthly mission:

yuki hageshi	<i>A fierce snowstorm.</i>
kakinokosu koto	<i>Oh, how much more indeed</i>
nan zo ooki	<i>I wished to write!..</i>

"You went through life illuminating the path, only stopping sometimes to write down a *haiku* "[137, 495]- said Yamaguchi Seishi in his eulogy about his favorite disciple. Hashimoto Takako's poetry illuminated the way for many a poetess entering the *haiku* world in the second half of the twentieth century, but few if any of them has managed to match her skill and her borderless devotion to the art of poetry.



THE “SEARCH FOR THE HUMAN” SCHOOL

NAKAMURA KUSATAO

The presence for a half a century in Japanese literature of a refined poet and master of the poetic sketch of realistic trend, Nakamura Kusatao significantly changed the picture of the *haiku* poetic world and expanded the boundaries of the genre as defined by the aesthetics of the “Hototogisu” association and the demands of its permanent leader Takahama Kyoshi. Kusatao’s role in the evolution of *haiku* in the second half of the twentieth century is perhaps more significant than the role played by another talented reformer, Mizuhara Shuoshi, though Kusatao had never gave much attention to promoting his views, relying more on the beneficial effect of the poetry per se.

Nakamura Seiichiro (penname Kusatao, 1901–1983) was born in China into the family of a Japanese consul, but he spent his childhood in Matsuyama, the hometown of Masaoka Shiki, Naito Meisetsu, Kawahigashi Hekigoto, and Takahama Kyoshi. The new and old *haiku* schools were flooding the city. The spirit of poetry was in the air of Matsuyama, and it was no wonder that Seiichiro, while still a school student, got addicted to reading *haiku* by his illustrious countrymen.

Later, the family moved to the capital and in 1925 Seiichiro enrolled in the German department of Tokyo University. German literature afterwards had a certain influence on his works, expanding the poet’s aesthetic outlook and adding a fair share of Western rationality to his worldview. In Tokyo, for the first time he discovered the true meaning of *haiku*. After his father’s death in 1927, being in a state of deep spiritual crisis, the young man accidentally opened a book by Saito Mokichi

and was so carried away by the power of the poems that decided to engage seriously in composing *haiku*.

He left university for a while, went to Kyoto, met Kyoshi there, and got his blessings for writing poetry. On his return to Tokyo and resuming his studies at the university, the convert poet Kusatao transferred to the Japanese Literature department and joined the university *haiku* society, where Mizuhara Shuoshi at the time was playing a leading role. On graduating from university, he continued to write a lot, often contributing to *Hototogisu* and, adhering to fairly conservative views, openly speaking against the innovations in the melodic structure of *haiku* proposed by Shuoshi. In the 1930s, Kusatao became close with Kawabata Boshu and Matsumoto Takashi, whose poems captured his imagination with their artistry and symbolic images.

Kusatao's debut collection *Firstborn* (Choshi, 1936), in the editing of which participated Takahama Kyoshi himself, marked the emergence of a new *haiku* trend, which was called by the critics the school of "the search for human life" (*jinsei tankyu ha*) or simply "Search for the human" (*ningen tankyu ha*). Kusatao's style revealed a certain complexity of associations, for which the critics, accustomed more to "flowers and birds," gently chided the author. He was called an "arduous" (*nankai*) poet and was reproached for his excessive introspection. The author obediently agreed with this argument, although the critics meant mainly the interpretation of the specific images, which did not clearly reveal the author's intentions.

This famous *haiku* by Kusatao was chosen by a critic as a sample of a poem difficult to comprehend:

furu yuki ya	<i>This falling snow!</i>
Meiji wa tooku	<i>How far it is now —</i>
narinikeri	<i>the Meiji era...</i>

According to the author's interpretation, he composed this *haiku* when he was watching children coming out of the school where the poet once studied himself. Their school uniforms, naturally, did not look like kimono, which the students used

Nakamura
Kusatao



中
村

草
田
男

to wear in the Meiji period. But even without the author's comments, it is obvious that the poem is important — and not only for the author. It contains an unprecedented attempt, rather rare for the *haiku* of the *Hototogisu* poets, to track the course of historical changes. Moreover, the beginning of the poem, intentionally or not, refers the reader to Bashō's famous *haiku* of "the old pond" (*furu ike ya*). Pulling an invisible thread from classical *haiku*, we can find many sad topics, connected with the transience of human existence and seasonal changes.

The poems from *Firstborn*, arranged in seasonal series, do not make an impression of boring philosophical reasoning in a rhythmic pattern. It is, surely, also the poetry of "reflection of nature" without noticeable rhythmic liberties, but with a strong historical element and an increased interest in the everyday actual realities and surrounding life. If we look from a different angle, this is a return to the humanistic tradition of Bashō and his school, where philosophical reflections on life are placed into the shell of a suggestive image, which is the very essence of the verse:

akibare ya
tomo mo sorezore
sobo o mochi

*The bright days of autumn.
Probably my friends too
have grandmothers...*

* * *

haha ga maku	<i>My mother winds</i>
mezamashi tokei no	<i>the alarm clock —</i>
ari no haoto	<i>the rustle of the ants' wings...</i>

* * *

hikigaeru	<i>The firstborn of a toad</i>
choshi ie saru	<i>leaves his home</i>
yu mo nashi	<i>without any reason...</i>

Matsumoto Takashi defined the special features of his friend's artistic style in the following way:

Certainly, Kusatao is not the kind of man whose comprehension of life is somehow unusual, extraordinary. It is possible that he does not very well understand common life. He is a man of an extremely modern personality. However, sometimes he suddenly stops perceiving this daily routine in a common way. There is something very strange and amazing in it that cannot be expressed by words... [137, 345].

History, banished from *shasei* poetry as a result of contemplative meditation, returns in Kusatao's works substantively and visibly, providing his poems with a wide allusive basis:

*In the field
they plough the soil
mixed with the shards of ancient shells...*

Violating the precepts of *Hototogisu*, Kusatao introduces social notes in his poetry:

*At the entrance of the university
A crowd of students.
Most of them are poor.
Wild geese are passing...*

* * *

*I can hear the stamping boots
of a troop on the march.
The autumn wind...*

Among Kusatao's best poems are his declarations of love for his wife and children. The love theme appears time and again in the works by the *haiku* poets, but none of them managed to create such wonderful full-blooded "family" poetry, which, of course, absolutely does not meet the requirements of the principle of the "objective reflection of nature":

*Embracing my wife
I walk back home on a sunny spring afternoon
along a gravel road ...*

* * *

to futon	<i>In bed in winter —</i>
tsuma no kaori wa	<i>my wife's body smells</i>
ko no kaori	<i>just like the body of a child...</i>

* * *

niji ni sasu	<i>The glow of a rainbow.</i>
tsuma yori hoka ni	<i>I don't care about other women</i>
onna shirazu	<i>except my wife...</i>

For Kusatao, his wife embodied the very "eternally feminine" essence that has attracted the poets and artists of all times — spiritualizing, elevating, giving an incentive for work. All the creative forces of the Universe are focused for him in his wife and children, who become the objects of all-consuming love and veneration:

banryoku no	<i>In the greenery of summer</i>
naka ya ko no ha	<i>my baby</i>
haesomuru	<i>has his first teeth growing...</i>

However, as a writer of the twentieth century who has received a modern philological education, Kusatao also turns in search of inspiration to other, more rational sources — for example, to Western literature:

Shoku no hi o	<i>Lighting my cigarette</i>
tabakobi to shitsu	<i>from the candle light.</i>
Cehofu ki	<i>Mourning Chekhov...</i>

The above *haiku* resembles in tone and imagery a *tanka* by Toki Aika (written in three lines):

*So many times my cigarette light would go out.
The sadness of contemplation.
And the bitter taste of Russian tobacco... Winter.*

Kusatao deliberately does not give any indication of the year, but the author, obviously, must be mourning Chekhov on the day of his death, which is the fifteenth of July...

Nevertheless, Kusatao's poetry is not limited only to a romantic description of everyday life, poetic sketches of social orientation, and intellectual reflection. His landscape poems are rich in magnificent imagery, which would do credit to Masaoka Shiki himself:

gekko no	<i>In the moonshine</i>
kabe ni kisha kuru	<i>electric lights hit the wall —</i>
hikari kana	<i>a train is coming...</i>

*Orion in the sky,
kiosks full of apples —
the way back home...*

*The sound of waves.
The sea has thrown on the sand
the lonely claw of a crab...*

In the war years the humanistic motifs of Nakamura Kusatao's poetry caused a serious discontent among the authorities, who were busy with the "purge of literature." In particular, the censors eliminated the neo-orthodox liberalistic trends in *tanka* and *haiku*. One of Kusatao's fellow writers reported on him, accusing him (without reason) of composing "subversive poems." After a strict warning the poet had to turn to immaculate neutral stanzas. The only one of his *haiku* in the postwar commentary tradition is interpreted as a symbol of the "internal opposition" to the regime, though we can hardly agree with this argument, taking into consideration the general patriotic euphoria of the period. The *haiku* was composed in connection with the conscription of his thirty disciples, and it corresponds more to a formal "farewell to the soldiers" than to the genre of "poetry of resistance" (which actually never existed in *tanka* and *haiku* poetry):

yuki koso	<i>Let bravery</i>
chi no shio nare ya	<i>now be the salt of the earth.</i>
ume mashiro	<i>The snow-white plum blossoms...</i>

By the end of 1930s, Kusatao had stopped his long-term relationship with *Hototogisu*, feeling that his poetic mind was drifting away from the poetics of "flowers and birds." His collections *The Fire Island* (*Hi no shima*, 1939) and *Long Flame* (*Honaga*, 1940) became a manifesto of a humanistic vision of the world:

*The cherries
are filled with purple juice.
A son is born...*

*Iwashigumo —
in the field always
the bent backs of the peasants...*

* * *

*The fog has faded —
and the volcano's black smoke
rises under the sun...*

After the war, in 1946, Kusatao became the head of the *haiku* journal *The Green of the Universe* (*Banryoku* — the image borrowed from the poem by the Sung poet Wang Anshi) and continued to work for the benefit of his compatriots. His poetry wins the hearts of the readers by its broad worldview and strong connection with the classical tradition. Kusatao, feeling this blood connection, in the later years published several fundamental research works on Basho, Buson, and Issa. He also completed a comprehensive work on *haiku* history and related to it the medieval poetic genres of *renga*, *haikai*, *haiku*, and *senryu*.

In one of his late poems, appealing to the memory of Basho, Kusatao wrote:

sumu koto ni	<i>Life is dedicated</i>
hito yo o kakeshi	<i>to what is called purity —</i>
hito no izumi	<i>that source for humans...</i>

We may say that the majority of the *haiku* authors of the second half of the twentieth century directly or indirectly owe their poetic achievements to an outstanding *haijin* of the modern age, Nakamura Kusatao.

KATO SHUSON

Kato Takeo (penname Shuson, 1905–1983), the son of a humble railroad clerk, at the age of fourteen, after his father's death had to leave school and help his mother with the household. However, his interest in literature since childhood finally brought the boy to a literary career and led to the top of the profession in the *haiku* world. He decided to

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Shuson



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achieve success in life and managed to enter university, where he studied the ancient language of classic *kanbun* literature. After graduation in 1929, he was appointed a school teacher in the town of Kasukabe in the suburbs of Tokyo, from where he started his poetic career.

As a child and a teenager, Takao was fond of classic and modern *tanka*. His favorite authors were Ishikawa Takuboku, Saito Mokichi, Simagi Akahiko, and other poets of the *Araragi* group. Ironically, the pedagogic staff of the school where Kato Takeo had been sent was fond of *haiku* poetry. So, the newcomer had to adapt to the situation in order not to be different from the others. Since the current idol of the staff was Murakami Kijo, Kato had to start his self-education studying his works. He thoroughly read all his poems as well as those of his associates from the *Hototogisu* journal and came to the conclusion that *haiku* were as good as *tanka* and in many respects maybe even better. Gradually, his interest turned into a true love for *haiku* and soon Shuson would start composing in the form himself.

Accidentally, he learned that the famous *haijin* Mizuhara Shuoshi, a practicing doctor by profession, used to come sometimes to the hospital of Kasukabe on business. After the

young teacher met Shuoshi and read his poems, he was so much impressed that he asked Shuoshi to take him as a disciple and started to compose *haiku* in the same refined style. As he later recollected, “My conversations with Shuoshi have inspired my passion for creation. Having read his collection *Katsushika*, I discovered suddenly that in *haiku* we could also create such a wonderful world” [137, 419]. But subsequently, after switching to social poetry, he condemned his early pastoral *haiku* as “the poems without soul.”

When Shuoshi left the *Hototogisu* society, Shuson followed him and became one of the members of the most talented authors of the *Ashibi* group. Bit by bit, in Shuson’s poetry through the shell of pure lyricism appears the features of humanistic realism. The work at school where he had to be in touch with hundreds of children from poor families, made him think about the life’s hardships. On Shuoshi’s advice he decided to continue his education and entered the philological department of Bunridaikokubunka University, working at the same time as a typesetter in the *Ashibi* printing shop. Soon Shuson became friends with Nakamura Kusatao and was imbued with the idea of writing poetry about people and for people. Like Kusatao, he began to write in accordance with the concept of the “search for the human” school (*ningen tankyu-ha*), which the critics reproached for the excessively complicated and problematical images. According to Yamamoto Kenkichi, “from the very beginning Shuson had something special that made him different from a poet of pure lyricism, filling his poetry with a social implication” [137, 421]. Shuson’s urbanistic *haiku* glorified the crowds of the city streets, the hard labor of the factory workers, and the everyday worries and sorrows of pupils and students, but the same people in his poems found the time to stop and admire the cherry blossoms, crimson autumn leaves, and the night of the full moon.

shinju ame furu	<i>Rain pours over the young trees.</i>
yokan chugakusei ga	<i>These students at the evening school</i>
motsu nazomi	<i>have their hopes and dreams...</i>

* * *

to o keseba	<i>I turned the light off —</i>
fune ga sugiori	<i>a silhouette of a boat</i>
haru shoji	<i>slides upon the spring shoji...</i>

Even Shuson's travel impressions are rarely presented in the form of dispassionate landscape miniatures. More often we feel in them the strong individuality of the poet. Nature is perceived and comprehended through the prism of a human life:

kogyu ya	<i>A buffalo —</i>
doko ka kanarazu	<i>somewhere near for sure</i>
nihonkai	<i>lies the Sea of Japan...</i>

Shuson's poetry of daily activities appealed to the reader because of its sincerity. It was filled with many purely "Japanese" realities, such as mention of the nightly bath, typical of every Japanese, and something that resurrects memories of childhood and adolescence:

shiroji kite	<i>In this white underwear</i>
kono kyoso no	<i>I am feeling so homesick —</i>
doko yori zo	<i>I wonder why...</i>

Shuson's *haiku* clearly resonates with Nakamura Kusatao's *haiku* on the same theme:

*In the red light of sunset
my bathrobe seems transparent —
a Japanese after the bath...*

The end of the 1930s, known as "the period of darkness" in Japanese culture, could not leave Kato Shuson indifferent to social issues. The growing wave of militarist frenzy produced in Shuson anxiety about the future of the country. The intimidated liberal intellectuals were forced to cooperate

with the authorities, but Shuson for a long time would try not to succumb to the propaganda, calling for common sense and hoping in vain to hear the voice of reason in the fever of military preparations:

hikigaeru	<i>Oh you, toads!</i>
dare ka mono ie	<i>Let someone say something</i>
koe kagiri	<i>as loudly as he can!..</i>

The ideological censorship was suspicious of such poems, but the authorities could hardly find fault with the Aesop's language used by Shuson, because he would resort to the characters popular in *haiku* poetry since the time of Kobayashi Issa.

In the first years of the war, Shuson published a number of animalistic *haiku*, which — in the context of the theatre of war events- could be interpreted as a political satire. However, it was impossible to determine whom this satire was mocking specifically, and the author himself could always say that there was no particular implication in his poems.

tsui ni senshi	<i>Finally he died in action</i>
ippiki no ari	<i>this little ant —</i>
yukedo yukedo	<i>there was so many marching...</i>

Shuson disapprovingly spoke about those *tanka* and *haiku* poets who voluntarily praised in jingoistic phrases the successes of Japanese forces on the continent, believing that the war needed a much more serious consideration. In 1939 he released his collection *The Winter Thunder (Kanrai)*, in the foreword to which he defined his poetic credo:

I attach the highest value in *haiku* to a human life. I am trying to compose the kind of *haiku* that reveal the truth of life... For me truth is more important than beauty. With all my force I want to explore the essence of the world we live in. [158, 89]

Shuson's humanistic ideals, which he would continue to expound in his journal *Kanrai*, met a warm response among young people. His disciples and followers Sawaki Kinyichi (1919–2001) and Kaneko Tota (born in 1919) later became leaders of postwar *haiku* poetry.

However, over time Shuson's attitude toward the war started to change. After the brilliant success of the first year of the war in the Pacific, Japan was forced to go on the defensive. Shuson took the defeat of the army and navy as a national disaster, realizing that the country was doomed. Finally, the poet took a decision to contribute to the common course and declared his intention to help the nation in its desperate struggle. In 1944 as a representative of the military Information Bureau he went for a few months to Mongolia and China. The approximately one thousand *haiku* written during this trip were generally of "patriotic" character and glorified the "noble mission" of Japan, practically in the same way as all the other poet-collaborators did.

On returning home, Shuson discovered the country in a grievous agony. There was no fuel, not enough food; the cities were on fire and collapsing day by day under the American bombing raids. Hundreds of *haiku*, composed by Shuson convey the terrible experience of the time:

*On the night of May 23 there was a heavy bombing.
Carrying my sick brother on my back, I have been
wandering all night long among the burning buildings
looking for Michio and Akio*

hi no oku ni	<i>I saw in the flames</i>
botan kuzururu	<i>the disintegrating shape</i>
sama o mitsu	<i>of a peony...</i>

The poems about the scourge of war were published in Shuson's collection *Reminiscences of War* (*H — no kioku*, 1948), which is one of the strongest historical records of the terrible years the people lived through.

gembakuzuchu	<i>A painting "Hiroshima" —</i>
kuchi aku ware mo	<i>mouths wide open</i>
kuchi aku kan	<i>and so is mine...</i>

In the post-war years. Kato Shuson continued writing a poetry and also published his voluminous research on Basho's poetry. Like Nakamura Kusatao, he remained a beacon for the new generations of poets, firmly preserving in his poetry a humanistic tone full of gentle humor and self-irony:

hana samushi	<i>My nose is cold.</i>
isho to narazarishi	<i>I am reading my book —</i>
sho yomeba	<i>it could be a posthumous one...</i>

ISHIDA HAKYO

Like many other prominent poets of Shiki's school, Ishida Tetsuo (literary penname Hakyō, 1913 — 1969) was a native of Matsuyama — so probably love for *haiku* entered his heart from the very atmosphere of that poetic city when he was yet in the cradle. He started composing *haiku* on a regular basis as a child, and in the fourth year of elementary school began contributing to the *haiku* column of the local newspaper. At the age of fifteen Tetsuo became the head of the school's *haiku* circle. In the beginning he joined a local "Shibugaki" ("A Tart Persimmon") group, but in 1930 he was introduced to the renowned *haijin* Ishikawa Kokyō (1896–1935), an official disciple of Mizuhara Shuoshi. That was the step that secured the long-time relationship between Hakyō and the great master Shuoshi, who was at that time still a member of the "Hototogisu" group.

Hakyō, like Kato Shuson, was totally enchanted with the lyrical landscape poems of Shuoshi's collection *Katsushika* and at that stage wanted nothing more but to imitate the master's style. Brushing up on the *shasei* ("reflection of

*Ishida
Hakyo*



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nature") techniques, he composed hundreds and thousands of landscape sketches — with an average output of 50–70 stanzas per day. Many of his *haiku* were published periodically in the *Ashibi* journal, meeting encouraging response from the part of fellow-poets and the unanimous approval of the critics. In 1932, following the advice given by Shuoshi, Hakyo moved to Tokyo and entered the Faculty of Letters at Meiji University. Just a couple of years later Shuoshi offered to him a position as the editor of the poetry department at the editorial board of the *Ashibi* journal, which was an unprecedented career promotion in the *haiku* world for a shy student from a distant province.

Although his early lyrical poetry published in the debut *Collection of Haiku by Ishida Hakyo (Ishida Hakyo ku-shu, 1935)* is considered typical of the *Araragi* group, it is marked already by a specific touch of psychological realism, based on the vivid depiction of the details of urban life:

basu wo machi
ooji no haru wo
utagawazu

*Waiting for a bus
I know it now for sure —
the spring has come...*

* * *

hagi aoki	<i>Green lespedeza —</i>
Yotsuya mitsuke ni	<i>for some reason I have stopped</i>
naze ka tatsu	<i>at Yotsuya Mitsuke station...</i>

The tone of Hakyō's post-war lyrical poetry, published in his collection *Clinging to Life* (*Shakumyo*, 1950), vividly reflects the thoughts and sentiments of a whole nation that had been thrown into a sea of troubles, suffered terrible losses, and lost all its cherished moral values. However the lust for life of the nation was not exhausted, as it could draw new strength from its great cultural legacy:

inazuma no	<i>A flash of lightning,</i>
hoshii mama nari	<i>free as it is —</i>
myonichi aru nari	<i>there will be tomorrow!</i>

* * *

suzumera no	<i>A flock of sparrows,</i>
umi kakete tobe	<i>flying over the sea</i>
fukinagashi	<i>like a streamer in the wind...</i>

Despite the illness, which was slowly destroying the poet's health, causing him to spend more and more time in the hospital, Hakyō in the post-war period headed the journals *Tsuru* (*A Crane*) and *Gendai haiku* (*Modern haiku*). His later works are characterized by a calm and enlightened vision of the world in which the everlasting values are given high priority: Nature, love for family, and art. This predominantly optimistic poetry in the vein of the classical *haiku* heritage became a beacon for many modern authors. Along with the poems by Kusatao, Shuson and other authors who had been "searching for the human" in the post-war turmoil, the *haiku* by Ishida Hakyō go across the borders dividing schools and groups, bringing the reader back to the original basic principles preached by Bashō: *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibumi* and *karumi*, enriched and complemented by the philosophy of life born from the tragic history of the twentieth century:

hana chiru ya *Blossoms are falling.*
 mizumizushiki wa *the Dewa mountains in spring*
 dewa no kuni... are full of vigor...

* * *

ensoku ya *A school tour —*
 Dewa no warabe ni *the Dewa children*
 Dewa no yama *introduced to the Dewa mountains...*

* * *

karigane no *The wild geese —*
 taba no ma ni soba *they have gleaned the buckwheat*
leftovers
 kirarekeri *between the sheaves...*

* * *

tsuma ga koshi *My wife came to me —*
 hi no yowa kanashi *that night the cuckoo sang*
 hototogisu *a sad song...*

* * *

yuki go koshi *My son came in*
 ko no yawakami no *after a snowfall —*
 kanashisa yo *oh this sadness of his soft hair!*

Ishida Hakyo always conceived himself as a successor to the poets of the old, those wandering sages, those Zen philosophers, who traveled around Japan "in search of the human" — just like he did. He knew that this eternal quest would last after his death. Shortly before his death he composed a *haiku* dedicated to the memory of the great bard Saigyō, who had witnessed the bloody civil war between the powerful Taira and Minamoto clans in the late twelfth century, leaving to posterity both magnificent lyrical sketches and macabre descriptions of the sufferings in hell:

hoshii mama tabi shitamaiki Saigyô ki	<i>Mourning Saigyô who would travel far away on his own free will...</i>
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SAITO SANKI

Saito Norikiyo (penname Sanki, 1900–1962), one of the most eccentric *haijin* of the twentieth century who always denied his connection with any of the existing *haiku* groupings, was born in the family of an elementary school principal and brought up in high respect for studies. However, in the early age he didn't show any interest in *haiku*. Having graduated from dental college, he went to Singapore and opened a lucrative medical practice there. The good-natured communicative young doctor made acquaintances with local Europeans and became one of the popular members of the international intellectual "club," but military operations of Japan, which was preparing for full-scale war in the Pacific, resulted in the boycott of his clinic. Saito had to go back to Japan.

In 1932, at the Tokyo hospital where Saito got a job, one of his patients introduced him to *haiku*. The young dentist, who did not know much about poetry, started reading *haiku* by contemporary authors and soon decided to try his hand at this new trade. He published his first sequences of *haiku* in the *Ashibi* and *Kikan* journals under the penname Sanki — and they were a success.

Sanki resolutely opposed the "flowers and birds" style, giving preference to the humanist "neo-*haiku*" movement. Still, being an outsider in the *haiku* world of the school hierarchy, he never joined any grouping and highly valued his independence. Amazingly, not being accredited by any faction, he became a member of the editorial boards at two important poetic journals — *Tobira* (*Door*) and *Tenko* (*Celestial Fragrance*).

When finally in 1934 Sanki decided to join the University of Kyoto *haiku* club, which was widely known for its

Saito
Sanki



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democratic orientation in the arts and in social life, the decision proved to be fatal for him. In the summer of 1940, militarist authorities unleashed a campaign aimed at a serious purge of the intellectual milieu and the total extermination of alien ideology. The purge targeted among others the *haiku* club of the University of Kyoto. Sanki was arrested with several of his colleagues and spent two months behind bars. He was released on bail and from that point abandoned poetry for a few years.

Only after the war, in 1947, did Sanki resume his activities, and for the next quarter of a century he remained one of the leaders of the *haiku* revival movement. These years were the most productive period in his life. He elaborated his own individual manner, in which an ironic vision of life on the brink of skeptical mockery is reinforced by the classical simplicity of the imagery. His poems included in the collections *The Night Peach Trees* (*Yoru-no momo*, 1948), *Today* (*Konnichi*, 1951), and *Transformation* (*Henshin*, 1962) laid the foundation for a specific trend in *haiku* that can be compared to the Italian "Neo-realism" of the time.

In the postwar period of deprivations and chaos, the *haiku* by Sanki reflected in a paradoxical way the gloomy reality of the permanent shortages and huge queues. The style of these short poems resembles that of the black humor:

gyoretsu no atama wa *The head of the queue*
 fukaku *is deep*
 ie ni iru *inside the house...*

* * *

The queue
has bitten off something
and now is swallowing it...

* * *

The queue
sighs impersonally
and waits...

Being by his convictions neither a leftist nor a rightist and accepting mostly the guidance of common sense, Sanki nevertheless reacts rather vividly to the acute problems of the day. Still, his poems remain rather far from the flow of “democratic propaganda” *haiku* of the first post-war years. Even such painful topics as Hiroshima in Sanki’s interpretation acquire a personal rather than a social tone:

Hiroshima no *In Hiroshima*
 yokage shinitaru *a pine tree in the evening shadows*
 matsu tateri *stands waiting for death...*

* * *

Hiroshima ya *Oh Hiroshima!*
 ringo wo mishi toki *I saw apples —*
 ikiyasushi *and felt that life is getting better...*

Most of Saito Sanki’s poems written in this critical period for the nation are full of vital energy and hope. He believed that people could overcome all troubles and rebuild a new happy life:

koren no *The lotus flowers after the winter —*
 ugoke toki kite *the time has come to rise,*
 mina ugoke *and all are bound to rise...*

* * *

kuroku atsuku	<i>In the hot darkness</i>
oogunshu to	<i>among a huge crowd</i>
hanabi matsu	<i>I am waiting for the fireworks...</i>

Sanki's poetry of his last years makes an impression of depth and breadth based on his philosophical contemplation of the world. A lethal disease became an incentive for intense reflections on life and death, on eternity and the transient nature of the human existence:

aki no kure	<i>The autumn dusk.</i>
oouo no hone wo	<i>Bones of the huge fish</i>
umi ga hiku	<i>are flown back to the sea...</i>

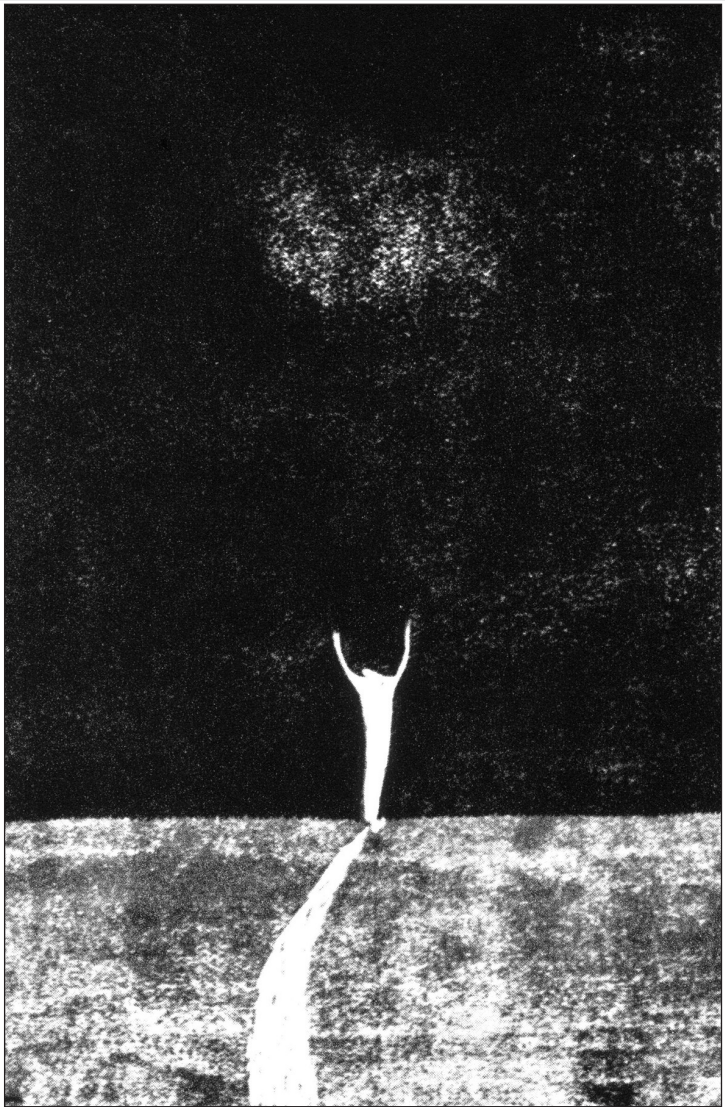
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tsuibomu ya	<i>Just pecking —</i>
i nashi otoko to	<i>a man without a stomach</i>
kan suzume	<i>and a winter sparrow...</i>

Sanki's *haiku* composed not long before his death are full of piercing grief and extreme pain, but it is these poems that reveal the talent of the dramatic scale. The author perceives fully the principle of the eternal loneliness of a man in the universe, which was also the principal concept of Basho and his followers:

hito tooku	<i>People are far away —</i>
haru mikazuki to	<i>only this spring crescent moon</i>
shi ga chikashi	<i>and my death are close...</i>

The *haiku* of Saito Sanki considerably influenced Japanese poetry of the late twentieth century, confirming once more the enormous potent of the old genre when it is not bound by canonic regulations and not distorted irreversibly by modernist experiments.



THE NEW WAVE

In 1947, the All-Japan “New League of Haiku Poets” (“Shin haikujin renmei”) was founded, which rallied practically all the “old poets” with their major disciples and followers regardless of the considerable differences between schools and trends. However, soon frictions between the factions came to the surface. Authors of the new generation, having denounced the “flowers and birds” poetics of the “Hototogisu” group, were calling for the absolute freedom of creative imagination. They rejected seasonal words, the seventeen-syllable metric pattern, the *wabi* and *sabi* aesthetics, and all the other “restrictions.” Some of them focused on the naturalistic description of the current hardships of life. Others, following the path of the prewar “proletarian poetry,” tried to turn *haiku* into a weapon for ideological struggle, writing propaganda slogans against the war in Korea and the US military presence in Japan, or appeals to the workers on the occasion of a Mayday rally or strike.

In the early postwar period the mass *haiku* and *tanka* movement in fact was used by the opposition forces as a powerful tool for the general “democratic enlightenment” of the nation. *Haiku* circles and clubs emerged at plants and factories, at the mines and in the villages, at schools and at the universities. As the new wave of poets was represented en masse by the authors of rather low educational level (the overwhelming majority were simple workers, peasants, and clerks), the assessment and selection criteria that used to be very high in the prewar times inevitably had to be modified. In fact, the policy of “universal haikuzation” inflicted a rapid vulgarization on the genre. Professional *haijin*, who often would become the heads of the new mass-oriented *haiku* circles, could not and maybe did not want to keep at bay the growing

flow of the simple-hearted and unpretentious “poems,” which was watering down the legacy of the great masters.

The leading poets of the older generation also did not stay apart from the actual problems of social life, writing time and again short sketches on politics:

chocho no	<i>A butterfly</i>
oka korudo	<i>flies over the hill</i>
uoa no naka	<i>in the times of (cold) war...</i>

One of the most ardent adherents of the “social *haiku*” trend was, for example, Sawaki Kinichi, who would consistently promote Marxist ideology in his poetic journal *Kaze* (*Wind*).

On the other hand, there was an opposite trend in the new *haiku* movement, characterized by the boring descriptions of various insignificant details of everyday life put in a kind of metric shell (not necessarily seventeen syllables). Such “poems” were marked by an obtrusive abundance of a pretentiously “modern” lexicon and imagery, usually as a background for the traditional *bungo* style. The archaic *bungo* grammar patterns could sometimes present a paradoxical frame for the modernist content.

The eccentric poet Kaneko Tota became one of the champions of “neo-avant-garde” *haiku*.” He totally denied any logical motivations in the verse but remained not a stranger to philosophical reflections. Over time, Kaneko was recognized as one of the theoreticians of the modern *haiku* movement, although the true value of his own poetic heritage looks rather dubious:

gekiron tsukushi	<i>Tired of the fierce arguments,</i>
machi yuki	<i>I walk down the street</i>
otobai to kasu	<i>turning into a motorcycle...</i>

* * *

dore mo kuchi	<i>How beautiful</i>
utsukushi banka no	<i>are all their mouths!</i>
jazu ichidan	<i>A jazz band in late summer ...</i>

From the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, the young poetess Mayuzumi Madoka was one of the central figures in the *haiku* world. Her original manner can be easily compared to the “light breath” style of Tawara Machi in *tanka*. Madoka gained wide popularity with the publication of her debut collection, *A Summer on the B Side (B men-no natsu)*, in which one can find nice and naïve descriptions of the author’s love romances in the form of pseudo-*haiku* sketches. The book, issued at the beginning of the 1990s, enjoyed a circulation of 50 000 copies and was soon sold out. New editions followed.

koi hajimatte iru	<i>Love is starting —</i>
kosui wo kaete	<i>changing my perfume...</i>

* * *

hajimete no deto	<i>The first date —</i>
hajimete no shiro higasa	<i>the first time I took this white parasol...</i>

Mayuzumi Madoka’s infatuation with *haiku* was not accidental. Her father also indulged in composing *haiku*, although he never gained popularity. However, it was not the family gene that inspired Madoka to try her hand at literature but a book she happened to read. The book contained the biography of the renowned poetess of the twentieth century, Sugita Hisajo. The tragic destiny of Hisajo, who had to darn socks for her husband, the teacher of drawing at school, touched the girl so deeply that she decided to dedicate her life to *haiku* and to take revenge for poor Hisajo. Topics were no problem. All she needed was an unusual perspective, an original twist of perception:

mizugi erabu	<i>Choosing a swimming suit —</i>
itsu shika kare no	<i>since when have I become</i>
me to natte	<i>his eyes?..</i>

In this “highly intellectual” *haiku* the girl watches herself in the mirror as if evaluating the swimming suit and the model from the point of view of her boyfriend.

The major merit of Madoka's lyrical poetry can be located in the apparently random choice of topics and the nonchalant manner with a slight touch of deliberate thoughtfulness:

hoshi suzushi	<i>The stars are cool.</i>
koko ni anata no	<i>How strange</i>
iru fushigi	<i>that you are here...</i>

* * *

naminari no	<i>Surfers</i>
toriatte iru	<i>all together waiting for the rising</i>
nami hitotsu	<i>of one wave...</i>

Certainly this lyrical poetry appeared *kawaii* (nice, cute) to the readers. However, sometimes the poetess would find a more complex image expressed through a semantic parallelism:

yotto no ho	<i>The sail of the yacht</i>
fukuramikitte	<i>has swelled to its limit —</i>
kata omoi	<i>I think only of one thing...</i>

Although the world of modern Japanese *haiku* poetry is extremely diverse, including today far over one million amateur poets and an uncertain small number of professionals, it is perhaps possible to designate three core trends.

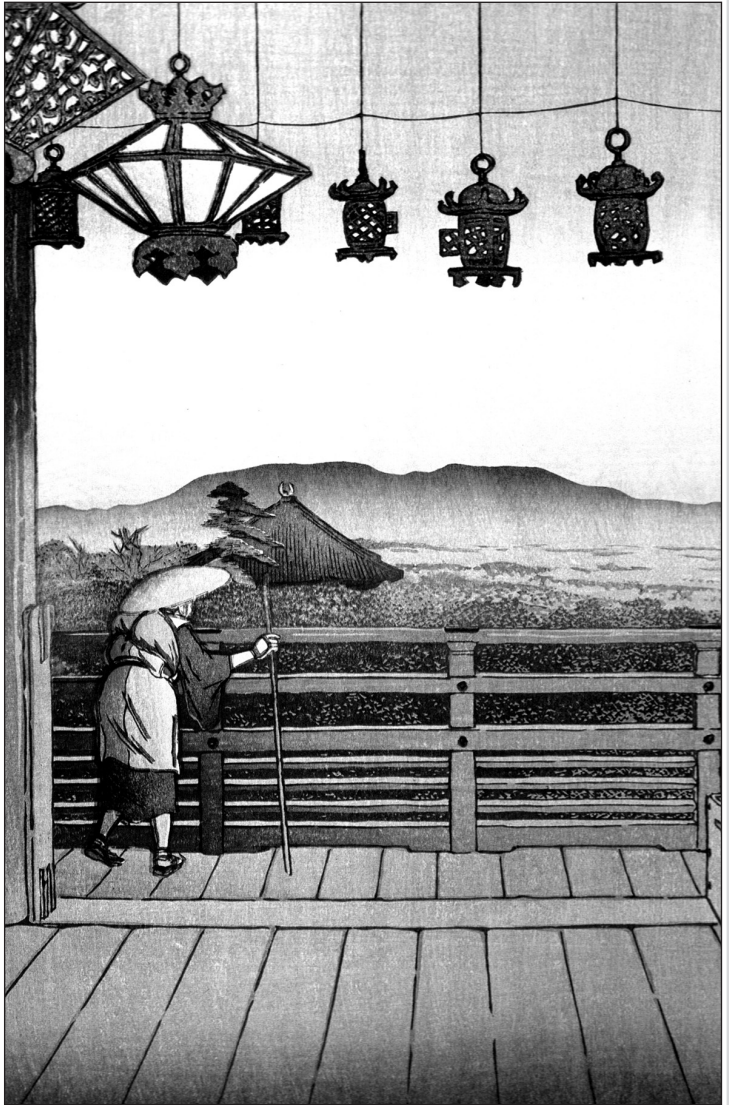
The first and crucial trend, which still maintains *haiku* in its best shape, is the poetry of the old masters, forged by Takahama Kyoshi, Mizuhara Shuoshi, Nakamura Kusatao, Ishida Hakyō, and Kato Shuson. Many poets, who prefer classics to the modernist experiments, follow this way. The “Hototogisu” association, for instance, can boast of hundreds of branches in all the major cities and towns of Japan.

The second trend is marked by the modernist quest of the desperate revolutionaries and permanent troublemakers. However, the number of these dissidents is limited, as their works need special decoding, which makes them mostly

unavailable to less sophisticated readers. It is mostly an esoteric poetry for connoisseurs, friends, and fans.

Finally, the third trend is represented by the poets of “a light breath” like Mayuzumi Madoka and her followers. It consists of the most pleasurable poetic trinkets and arabesques, accessories of the nonchalant well organized life, always full of minor, not too obtrusive problems and small but important joys. Naturally, this kind of poetry attracts mostly young female readers. A great many of the readers and admirers of Mayuzumi Madoka have become *haiku* poets themselves. There is no need to say that poetry of this kind has practically nothing in common with the legacy of Basho, Buson, Issa, and Shiki, but it is this poetry of the new wave that is sweeping now like a tsunami over Japan, and even running far across the borders.

The contemporary Japanese *haiku* poetry being published in hundreds of amateur journals and scores of professional magazines since the 1990s, has now become out of reach of the literary critics, who are simply unable to keep this ocean of verse under control. The role of criticism today is limited to the evaluation of certain authors who, more often than not, are chosen at random, like a few fish from a huge trawler’s catch. The candidates nominated for various literary prizes are also mostly taken at random. No doubt that there are real talents among modern *haijin*, but it seems almost impossible to make any objective selection nowadays. Whereas in the old associations, which track their lineage to the great masters of the Meiji-Taisho-early Showa period, there is at least a formal succession and tradition is still presumably transmitted from the teacher to the disciple, the modernists have put an end to this hierarchy, too, in the process demolishing all the criteria of evaluation. In any case, for the last three or four decades, *haiku* poetry has not given to the world any names comparable to the old masters of the early and mid-twentieth century. In a certain sense, quantity has replaced quality — as usually happens when the unique designs of renowned artists are used for industrial mass production.



AFTERWORD

For a Western reader, who is not introduced to the secrets of *tanka* and *haiku* poetics, a traditional Japanese poem usually resembles an impressionist sketch aimed at arousing some vague, barely perceptible sentiments of an exotic and alien culture. This effect comes “at first glance” as a response to the melody and conventional imagery, to the superficial external beauty of the short poem, sometimes reinforced by picturesque illustrations.

Meanwhile, Japanese readers brought up on the classical tradition (and also in our days some fans of Japanese culture in the West), are supposed to grasp also the core of the poem, the inner meaning based on the implementation of intricate techniques, on the variety of allusions and reminiscences, which make every tiny nuance precious. Proficiency in classic writings gives such a reader a great advantage, showing him a link between generations, which might sometimes seem to be separated by a huge gap. Of course, knowing the biography of the author and the historical background of the poems also can be extremely helpful, enhancing the scope of one’s individual perception of both genres.

No doubt every *tanka* or *haiku* presents a considerable aesthetic value even taken separately, out of the cultural context, just as we can appreciate the beauty of a rose petal, a *sakura* blossom, or a maple leaf lying on the desk. However, in order to comprehend fully the true essence of their beauty, we have to know how the petal looks as a part of a rose, a *sakura* blossom — as one of the myriads blooming on the branch; and the maple leaf — as a part of the autumn colors of the mountains.

In the Japanese tradition, a poet never imitates — he is just using the same old traditional imagery for the reproduction of

a modified picture in his own manner — and in the most laconic form, always following the principle *multum in parvo*. Putting a red dragonfly on a grass blade the poet evokes an image of the coming autumn; speaking of a dewdrop on a leaf he draws a picture of a summer morning; mentioning a darned sock he alludes to the vanity of life spent in focusing on the miniscule problems of everyday life...

For many centuries *tanka* and *haiku* remained the “guild trades,” requiring years of studies. Being essentially interactive, both genres were addressed to the equally sophisticated reader, who could evaluate and appreciate the individual merits of every author and every line. The interactive nature of the traditional genres began to change only in the second half of the twentieth century, when the main contingent of readers (along with a number of poets) had undergone some radical modifications, losing its classical foothold. The process was fostered by the deplorable situation with the course of classical literature at Japanese schools and the general trend of turning *tanka* and especially *haiku* into an intellectual entertainment, a kind of aesthetic play, a merry game for both adults in children, not so different from making artificial flowers, building Lego houses or solving puzzles.

The legions of amateur readers and poets that constitute now the core of *haiku* lovers in Japan and worldwide were raised on a deceptive assumption of a “nice and easy” genre requiring nothing but a drop of wit and the ability to present anything in a slightly rhythmic form. For hundreds of thousands of “poets,” quite unable to compose even a couple of poetic lines in any other form, *haiku* became the easiest way to quench their lust for belles lettres, as objective criteria of quality no longer exist for *haiku*.

In the medieval world as well as in the modern age, the ability to evaluate and assess *tanka* and *haiku* was highly revered, like the talent of an experienced sommelier who — one of many thousands — can detect all the components of the taste, deciphering the vintage year and the cellar where the rare wine was made. The names of Ki no Tsurayuki,

Fujiwara no Teika, Masaoka Shiki or Takahama Kyoshi found their place in the history of Japanese literature not only for the wonderful poems those masters left, but also for their great contributions as the arbiters of poetry and compilers of collective anthologies. Only a rigorous selection process would make it possible to sort out the best works from the current of mass production.

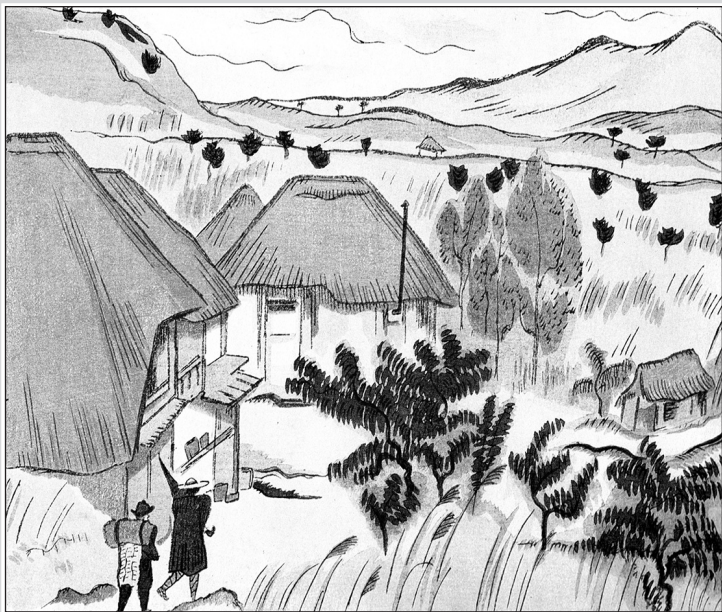
In the West the process of selection and research was initiated with the publication of the highly informative book by Donald Keene "Dawn to the West" in 1984 and continued by a few scholars, but in fact we have only touched the turf. Japanese poetry of the Meiji-Taisho-early Showa period definitely is worth more attention. At least this book is based on the translation of several thousand *tanka* and *haiku*, carefully selected by the author from the big collections or anthologies and published in two dozens of books.

Nowadays, excessively rigorous evaluation of traditionalist poetry would be out of place. Any amateur taking a brush or tapping an *ipad* with the intention to write *haiku* or *tanka* has every chance to become a professional solely basing on his assiduousness and the number of published poems. There are now many online journals as well as printed editions, where everyone can publish any amount of verse at his own expense. Quantity has replaced quality, leaving no room for any constructive criticism. Even after a selection made by special screening committees, *haiku* and *tanka* are being published all over Japan in massive series including dozens of volumes, with as many as 20,000 or 30,000 poems in each. Who on earth could detect a true talent in this ocean?!

A dictionary of Japanese poets of the twentieth century (*tanka*, *haiku*, *kindaishi*, and *gendaishi*) released in 2002 contains 6400 names, and these are only those authors who have been awarded some literary prize! Out of this number *tanka* and *haiku* poets occupy more than 80%. Such a number would be absolutely incredible for Western poetry, but we can only imagine the huge army of rank-and-file *tanka* and *haiku* poets

in Japan and abroad. Some scholars give a rough estimate of 2 million, but the army is increasing every month.

The tree of Japanese poetry keeps on growing, spreading its branches to Europe and Asia, America and Australia. However, nobody can say for sure now whether its fruits today are products of genuine Japanese civilization or the accessories of a globalizing mass culture. It is also not easy to tell whether the centuries-long triumph of Japanese traditional genres is over or it is just taking on a new avatar on a global scale. In any case, to feel the charm of truly authentic *tanka* and *haiku* we should read more immortal masterpieces by the great masters of the fading Golden Age — poetic treasures of the Middle Ages, of the pre-modern period, and of modern times.



Glossary

aum — the notion symbolizing “the beginning and the end” in Buddhist philosophy (the first and the last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet).

bungo — classical Japanese language with an archaic system of grammar and lexicon used in old literary texts and official documents.

choka — a genre of elegy in early medieval poetry.

choka (nagauta) — the genre of “long song” in early medieval *waka* poetry.

dai — 1. A topic in the conventional classification of *haiku* poetic themes, e.g. plants, animals, insects, travel, everyday occupations, etc. 2. A title or an explanatory introduction in classical *tanka* poetry.

daidokoro haiku — banal amateur *haiku* dealing mostly with the topics referring to household and shopping.

do — the “Way” in Taoist and Buddhist philosophy.

engo — “related words,” a classical *tanka* technique based on the linkage of semantically related words for the reinforcement of imagery in the poem.

fu — an ode.

fueki ryuko — “the eternal in the flowing,” a category of the *haiku* poetics borrowed from the Zen philosophy.

fuga no makoto — “the truth of sublime beauty,” a category of *haiku* poetics borrowed from Zen aesthetics.

fuyugomori — the winter seclusion, a popular background for *haiku* poetry.

gatha — a short (usually 4 lines) philosophical poem in Buddhist literature.

gendaishi — modern poetry of the new forms (can be used for denomination of all the new poetry of non-conventional forms since the Meiji Restoration or only poetry of the later period, characterized by the usage of colloquial language and denial of traditional *bungo* grammar).

gunki — medieval epic samurai tales.

haibun — essays or diaries with *haiku* poems written in a specific laconic *haikai* style.

haiga — an ink painting or a drawing in a specific *haikai* style.

haikai — 1. The name for “deviant” or unconventional poems in the classic *tanka* anthologies; 2. A synonym for *haiku* poetry; 3. A generic name including *haiku* poetry, *haibun* prose, and *haiga* drawings.

haiku — a genre of traditional Japanese poetry. A poem of 17 syllables usually with the metric pattern 5-7-5.

heitan — “simplicity and mildness,” a principle of the new *tanka* poetics.

hokku — the initial part of a linked poem (5-7-5 syllables) in *renga* poetry.

honkadori — “borrowing a song,” a classical technique of *tanka* poetics based on a hidden or open quotation from a classic masterpiece in the text of the poem.

hosomi — “the subtleness of emotion,” a category of *haiku* poetics.

iemoto — a head of a traditional school (in literature, fine arts or martial arts).

imayo — folk songs of the medieval period.

inbun — poetic text based on the 7–5–7 syllabic pattern widely used in the *gunki* epic tales as well as in the No plays (*yokyoku*) and later adapted by some poets in the Meiji period.

jo — “opening,” a classical *tanka* poetic technique.

kachofugetsu — traditional style of “flowers, birds, wind and moon” in Chinese and Japanese art.

kajin — a *tanka* poet.

kakekotoba — “pivot word,” a word with double meaning (a classical technique of *tanka* poetics based on homonymic metaphor).

kanbun — classical language of the old Japanese literature based on the adaptation of classical Chinese.

kango — words belonging to the Chinese-oriented layer of the Japanese lexicon.

kanshi — 1. Chinese poetry; 2. Poetry in Chinese by Japanese authors.

karumi — lightness and transparency of form combined with detachment from mundane problems (a category of haiku poetics borrowed from the classic Zen aesthetics).

kawaii — “nice”, “pretty,” “cute,” “sweet” (a characteristic of a person or an object, also applicable to the new wave of *tanka* and *haiku*).

kechimyaku — the concept of “bloodline ties” in *haiku* poetics.

kigo — a seasonal word in the *haiku* poetics referring a poem to a certain season.

kindai no tai — “a renovated style of the hidden sense”.

kindaishi — the “poetry in new forms” of the Meiji-Taisho period.

kireji — the “cutting particles” in haiku poetics — exclamatory particles bringing emotions to the poem.

kobun — “old writing,” the name for the classic Japanese language as a subject in the modern school curriculum.

kokugakusha — a scholar belonging to the School of National Learning (Kokugaku) in the late Edo period.

kokushi — “national poetry,” a term for the denomination of Japanese poetry as opposed to Chinese literature.

kongo — a diamond as a popular metaphor of the adamant firmness of the Buddhist teachings.

kotodama — an animistic Shinto concept of “the soul of words,” widely used in classical Japanese aesthetics and poetics.

kyakkan shasei — the concept of the “objective reflection of nature”.

kyoka — “a crazy song,” a genre of comic poetry built on the basis of the *tanka* syllabic pattern in the Edo period.

kyomu — void, the illusiveness of being in Buddhist philosophy.

makoto — sincerity (a category of *haiku* poetics).

makurakotoba — a constant epithet, a classical technique of *waka* poetics.

manga — traditional Japanese illustrated comic books.

masuraoburi — “masculine” style of the *Manyoshu* anthology.

meizan — famous mountains (mentioned in the special guide-books for religious and poetic pilgrimages).

midate — a metaphorical figurative description, a classical technique of *waka* poetics.

- minshu shi-ha* — a movement for the Democratic Populist poetry.
- minshushugi shi undo* — the Movement of the Democratic Poetry (in the post-war years).
- mono no aware* — the “sad charm of things” in the transient world, a category of classical Buddhist aesthetics.
- monotama* — an animistic Shinto concept of the “soul of things,” a category of classical aesthetics.
- mu* — void, nothingness (a category of Buddhist philosophy).
- mui* (Ch. *u-wei*) — non-action, the basic principle of Taoist and Zen-Buddhist philosophy.
- mujo* — impermanence, the key concept of Buddhist philosophy.
- mujokan* — impermanence as the basis of the aesthetic worldview.
- mushin* — “absence of heart,” complete detachment from the mundane world, a category of *haiku* poetics borrowed from Zen philosophy.
- nihon no kokoro* — national Japanese mentality and spirituality.
- nikki* — “diary,” the genre of the lyrical diary in classical Japanese literature.
- nipponshugi* — “Japanism,” a nationalist movement.
- nyudo* — a person on the initial stage of studying Buddhism before taking vows.
- onsuritsu* — the traditional Japanese prosody based on the metric pattern of 5–7–5 syllables with some slight variations.
- rekishi monogatari* — the medieval genre of the historical tale.
- renga* — “linked verse,” a genre of traditional *waka* poetry usually requiring the participation of several co-authors.
- renkashu* — thematic sequences of *tanka*.
- rensaku* — thematic sequences (cycles) in poetry.
- sabi* — “patina of time,” the concept of original engagement of a human in the metamorphosis of the transient world (a category of *haiku* poetics, borrowed from traditional Zen aesthetics).
- sajiki* — compendia of recommended “poetic lexicons” containing thousands of words for all four seasons of the year.
- sansara* — the vale of earthly sufferings in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions.
- satori* — awakening, the act of enlightenment in Zen-Buddhism.

- sedoka* — “a song with repetition,” an archaic genre of *waka* poetry.
- seikatsu-ha* — The Life School in *tanka* poetry.
- senryu* — a comic analog of haiku poetry.
- setsuwa* — a genre of early medieval prose mostly including short stories of (Buddhist) didactic nature.
- shakuhachi* — a bamboo flute.
- shasei* — the concept of the “reflection of nature” or “copying nature” in the poetics of *tanka* and *haiku* early in the modern period.
- shi* — a regular verse based on the rhythmic lines of 5 or 7 syllables in Chinese poetry.
- shibumi* — “tart beauty,” a category of *haiku* poetics also projected on other kinds of art.
- shin keiko haiku* — “haiku of a new trend”.
- shinko haiku* — neo-*haiku*.
- shinpa waka* — *tanka* of the “new wave”.
- shintaiishi* — “new style poetry,” the main form of the Romanticist poetry in the Meiji era.
- shiori* — the state of spiritual concentration needed to conceive the inner sense of the phenomena (a category of *haiku* poetics).
- shizenshugi shi-ha* — the school of Naturalism in poetry.
- shofu* — the style of Shomon, the *haiku* school founded by Basho and developed by his disciples.
- shugyo* — religious practices, a quest for self-perfection through self-deprivation, always requiring serious spiritual and physical efforts (also projected on the domain of the arts).
- shukan shasei* — the concept of the “subjective reflection of nature”.
- sokuten kyoshi* — “Follow heaven, abandon the self,” a slogan promoted by Natsume Soseki in *haiku* theory.
- sumie (suibokuga)* — traditional ink painting.
- tanka (uta, waka)* — a genre of classical Japanese poetry, a poem of 31 syllable with a metric pattern of 5–7–5–7–7.
- tanshi* — a genre of a short poem in the poetry of Japanese modernism.
- ukiyo* — “the floating world,” the transient world of human passions and temptations in the Buddhist philosophy. Interpreted as “the transient world of pleasures and sorrows,” this concept became a hallmark of the urban culture of the Edo period.

ukiyo-e — the woodblock prints of the Edo period, often created by the best artists of the time.

ushin — “the presence of heart,” an approach to the arts lacking the true detachment (a category of *haiku* poetics).

uta — see *tanka*.

utamakura — “the pillow of the song,” a classical poetic technique: an epithet coupled to the name of a famous geographical site.

uta-monogatari — “poem-tales,” a genre of the literature of the Heian period.

wabi — the concept of the eternal loneliness of a mortal in the transient world (a category of classical Zen-Buddhist aesthetics, widely applied to *haiku* poetics).

wago — words from the indigenous Japanese lexicon as opposed to *kango*.

waka — “Japanese song,” the name applied to *tanka*, *choka*, *renga*, and some other classical genres of Japanese poetry but also used as a synonym for *tanka*.

wenyan — classical Chinese language used in old literature and official documents.

yakazu — a competition based on the speed and number *haiku* composed in the Edo period.

yamatodamashii — “the spirit of Yamato,” a notion used by the ideologists of Japanese nationalism.

yoga — a Western-oriented trend in new Japanese painting after the Meiji Restoration (as opposed to *nihonga*).

yubi — the refined beauty of a poem.

yugen — the atmosphere or flavor of a hidden and mysterious essence, a category of *tanka* poetics borrowed from Buddhist philosophy and projected also on other arts.

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THE FADING GOLDEN AGE
OF
JAPANESE POETRY
(*tanka* and *haiku* of
the Meiji-Taisho-Showa period)

SUMMARY



The general introduction to the book places the traditional genres of Japanese poetry in the national and global context by defining the typical features of *tanka* and *haiku* as a specific aesthetic system. The overview of the medieval *tanka* poetry since the eighth century through the first half of the nineteenth century gives the reader a general idea of the principal poetic and aesthetic concepts, to which later authors would constantly refer.

The new *tanka* and *haiku* poetry, which emerged after the Meiji Restoration was the direct successor to the classical medieval schools, transformed and renovated in the age of modernization. Since the end of the nineteenth century, *tanka* and *haiku* authors developed a novel worldview by overcoming the restrictions and regulations of the rigid poetic canon.

The pioneers of the new *tanka* and *haiku* schools, in their quest for a creative national identity, opposed the overwhelming flow of Western culture and instead chose to revitalize the traditional poetics, albeit in a modified form, for which they were nonetheless severely criticized by the *shintaiishi* and *kindaishi* poets.

The beginning of the romantic revival in *tanka* was heralded by Yosano Tekkan's literary criticism and his poetic manifesto. Tekkan was the first *tanka* poet of the new times who instilled in his verse civil feelings, military vigor, and masculine passion. As a response both to Tekkan's challenge and to the European decadent trend of the *fin de siècle* period, there followed the outburst of erotic lyrical confessions by Yosano Akiko. Her work represents a wonderful fusion of the French Symbolist and British Pre-Raphaelite poetics projected onto Japanese *tanka*. The *Myojo* journal led by Tekkan and Akiko remained for many years the most significant literary hub in the country.

Another great reformer, Masaoka Shiki, regarded himself and his school mostly within the mainstream of tradition and considered renovation of the classic genres possible only on a conventional basis, not going to any extremes. His major *shasei* ("reflection of nature") concept was derived from medieval Chinese aesthetics and had a dramatic impact on both *tanka* and *haiku* poetry of the twentieth century. Shiki propagated "objective realism," focusing first on *haiku* and then applying the same principles to *tanka*.

Ito Sachio became the official successor of Shiki and widely promoted the *shasei* theory in his journal *Ashibi*. The works by Shimagi Akahiko, Nagatsuka Takashi, Koizumi Chikashi, Nakamura Kenkichi, and other followers of Shiki who rallied around the *Araragi* poetic journal, eventually gained for the *shasei* trend poets a dominant position in the world of *tanka*. Their landscape poetry and "daily routine" sketches were marked by a profound comprehension of the harmony of nature. The poetic genius of Saito Mokichi, with his sharp psychological vision and original interpretation of *shasei* theory, remained unrivaled in modern Japan.

Some poets of the *shasei* trend like Tsuchiya Bunmei, Shaku Choku, and Aizu Yaichi studied early medieval art and ancient Japanese poetic monuments in search of new ways.

Meanwhile, Yoshii Isamu, Wakayama Bokusui, Kubota Utsubo, and Maeda Yugure chose another path and developed a refined trend of Romanticist and "Naturalist" poetry focused on human sentiment in the current of mundane metamorphoses. They expanded the boundaries of verse and enriched *tanka* with impressive new imagery. Their poetic collections shaped another colorful facet of the *tanka* world in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Symbolist spirit represented so brilliantly by Kitahara Hakushu in his *kindaishi* poetry was also projected onto his early *tanka*, which were marked by eloquent mannerism with a strong touch of exoticism. However, the evolution of aesthetic concepts later made Hakushu return to traditional values. Thus, his poems composed in the 1930s present a typical Zen vision of the universe.

A fusion of realistic worldview with expressionist techniques makes the poetry by Sasaki Nobutsuna, Kawada Jun, and Kinoshita Rigen the most fascinating product of the new *tanka* diction.

The poetic concept put forward by Ishikawa Takuboku and Toki Aika is known as the "Life School." The talent of Takuboku elevated the most prosaic topics taken from daily life to the level of lyrical revelation. His successors were less gifted and eventually the social trend in *tanka*, which had emerged from the legacy of Takuboku, ended with extremist proletarian propaganda slogans.

In the postwar period the *tanka* revival contributed greatly to the formation of the new national identity of the Japanese. Kondo Yoshimi, Miya Shuji, Sato Sataro, Saito Fumi, Kimata Osamu, and many other masters of *tanka* poetry paved the way for the new generations.

The triumph of Tawara Machi, whose *tanka* collection became the number one bestseller of the twentieth century, proves that the old classic genre is still able to attract the young, overcoming the dogmatic regulations and forging a totally new stylistics.

The introductory chapter to Part II of the book gives a broad overview of the *haiku* world since the middle of seventeenth century and introduces the reader to the great *haijin* of the Edo period — Basho, Buson, Issa, et al. Their works laid the foundation of classic *haiku* and therefore strongly influenced the preferences of the poets after the Meiji Restoration.

New *haiku* were initiated by the endeavors of Masaoka Shiki, who dared to doubt the authority of Basho, opposing to his poetics the brighter style of Buson. Shiki elaborated and applied to *haiku* his *shasei* concept based on the principle of objective realism, which later developed into the most popular poetic theory of the twentieth century and founded a school, which soon would become the mainstream *haiku* trend in Japan.

After the death of Shiki, his major disciples followed two different paths. Kawahigashi Hekigoto treated *shasei* theory mostly as a call for further reforms. His concept of the “new trend” in haiku, that is, short verse not bound by any regulations and restrictions, found many adherents. Nagatsuka Ippekiro, Ogiwara Seisensui, Ozaki Hosai, and many other poets were inspired by the idea of non-orthodox *haiku*. The climax of this movement can be traced in the beautiful and deeply philosophical Zen *haiku* of Taneda Santoka.

Meanwhile, Takahama Kyoshi remained faithful to the legacy of Shiki and transformed the initial *shasei* doctrine into a coherent aesthetic teaching. Kyoshi remained for many decades the leader of the “Hototogisu” group and gave his blessing to such renowned poets as Murakami Kijo, Iida Dakotsu, Hara Sekitei, Maeda Fura, and Hino Sojo.

The disciples of Kyoshi who would not support the “flowers and birds” poetics of the old master formed a new society around the old *Ashibi* journal under the leadership of Mizuhara Shuoshi. The pure and transparent lyricism of Yamaguchi Seishi and Hashimoto Takako can be numbered among the most successful poets of this school.

Another trend in *haiku* was marked by a powerful humanist drive, which can be regarded as an easily recognizable trait of the poetry of Nakamura Kusatao, Kato Shuson, and Ishida Hakyō. These *haiku* poets, who became known in the pre-war period as members of “The Search for the Human” school, also shaped the postwar *haiku* world, instilling in it a vital humanist component. The poets of this trend played a crucial role in the revival of Japanese culture, opening to their readers a window to eternal ethical values and giving them hope in the abyss of pain and humiliation. They brought to life the new generations of authors in Japan and also fostered interest in modern *haiku* in the West.

APPENDIX

Tanka and Haiku for The Western Reader or In Search of the Clue to the “Tanka Code”

Since the late nineteenth century, Western poets, critics, and readers at large have been split into two opposite camps regarding the appraisal of classical Japanese poetry.

One group has always treated *tanka* and *haiku* as exotic decorative genres quite alien to the glorious traditions of European poetry. The adherents of this trend, even those who worshipped Japanese civilization, remained very skeptical as far as the possibilities of Japanese diction were concerned. G. Sanson, the most renowned expert in Japanese history and culture, even called Japanese poetic language “an elegant but ungrateful tool.” This attitude, which influenced European “Japonisme” more than a century ago, has always been rather popular among a portion of the Western literati.

The other camp of critics and readers, one which has been permanently growing in numbers, accepts the Japanese poetic tradition as a mystical revelation full of sublime beauty, supernatural wisdom, and indescribable eloquence — something like a supreme poetic truth and absolute perfection that is a gem in itself, even if its translation reminds us of an ugly rock.

Of course, this attitude denied any need for in-depth formal analysis, practical comparisons or constructive criticism. It dominated in the early twentieth century and is still amazingly explicit in some countries today. Some self-proclaimed translators took advantage of this situation, bringing to the market collections of clumsy verse or word-for-word prosaic interpretation under the name of *tanka*, *haiku* or *renga*. Such an influx of philological or simply amateurish poetic collections would probably be unimaginable in the case of any European literature or the poetry of Medieval Persia. Nonetheless, it worked perfectly well for the poetry of Japan.

Traditional Japanese syllabic verse seemed to be rather primitive to the Western readers of the early twentieth century. For a millennium and a half it remained within the boundaries of a single metric pattern based on the combination of only two syllabic units — 5 or 7 syllables (mores) in each. It is a unique example of continuity, an ever-lasting loyalty to one formal design among the world poetic traditions. However, this pattern only looks invariable from outside. As the founder of Japanese studies in Russia, Professor N. Konrad, rightly observed:

Japanese syllabic verse based on the variation of 5 and 7-syllables units could always sound monotonous. This monotony inflicted by the meter is partly neutralized by the current of musical accents in the verse, which can vary even in two poems with a similar metric pattern. One might add here the melodic patterns that can be different in every particular *tanka*. Thus, the alleged visible metric monotony is compensated for by acoustic means.

The first encounter of the Europeans with the legacy of Japanese classics resulted in a few collections of *tanka* and *haiku* translated by the leading Japanologists of the time. They tried to perceive the overtones of the miniature poems but failed, as there was no ground for it ready yet. As major treatises on the poetic canon remained unavailable, medieval poetics and aesthetics were still shrouded in mystery.

B. H. Chamberlain, in his anthologies *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (1880) and *Japanese Poetry* (1910), presented a nice selection from the classical collections. His only concern was to preserve the “idea,” giving the poems a westernized form with conventional rhythm and even rhyme:

Oh love! Who gave thee
 thy superfluous name?
 Loving and dying —
 isn't it the same?

(*Kokinshu*, #698)

W.J. Aston, a prominent academic of the late nineteenth century and a prolific translator of the Japanese classics, was less infatuated with exotic images and therefore was more successful in his experiments. Unfortunately, he was not a poet and lamented in his works the absence of a poetic genius who could offer an authentic metric version of the best *tanka* from the *Manyoshu* and the *Kokinshu* anthologies. Unlike many scholars of the late twentieth century who would call their unsophisticated interpretations of *tanka* “poetic translations,” Aston defined his translations as word-for-word (or line-by-line) prosaic renderings.

Here is the same *tanka* by an unknown author from the *Kokinshu* interpreted by Aston:

<i>koishi to wa</i>	Who would it have been
<i>ta ga nazukeken</i>	That first gave love
<i>koto naran</i>	This name?
<i>shinu to zo tada ni</i>	“Dying” is the plain word
<i>iubekarikeru</i>	He might have used.

The translation is correct but rather prosaic. Of course, it is a poor match to the magic poetic splash of emotion in the original.

Lafcadio Hearn, the renowned American intellectual who lived many years in Japan and published fine translations of Japanese folk tales and ghost stories, also worked on translations of *tanka* and *haiku*. As his proficiency in Japanese was not sufficient, Hearn would hire native speakers as assistants.

This point definitely contributed to the authenticity of his translations, although his poetic talent seems very dubious. Hearn tried to keep the original one-line structure of both *tanka* and *haiku*, making them sound either like pathetic exclamations or like prosaic contemplations.

In the posthumous edition of Hearn's poetic translations long lines were cut by the editors into two uneven parts, which distorted even the best of the poems:

Wake up! Wake up! — I will
 make thee my
 Comrade, thou sleeping
 butterfly.
 (Basho)

In 1896, a collection of poetic translations by Karl Florenz was printed in Germany under the romantic title *Dichtergrüße aus dem Osten* [Poetic Greetings from the Orient]. It contained pretty adaptations of *tanka* taken at random from different sources, a project inspired by the Japonisme trend in European culture. Needless to say, these charming exotic bijoux were often far from the original songs. However, a number of poems presented in the *Geschichte der Japanische Literatur* [History of Japanese Literature] (1906) by Florenz were much more correct, being in fact normal word-for-word translations. German versions of *tanka* translations by Florenz, Ratgen, and Hauser became an incentive for some Russian poets of the time.

Whereas English, French, and German translators tried mostly to adapt Japanese prosody to the regular Western meters and rhymes, Russian poets chose another way. Although Russian Japanese studies were already gaining momentum, those poets were translating by that time mostly from the German and French versions. They were not so much restrained by the Western conventions and aspired to find their own approach to *tanka*. G. A. Rachinsky, editor and

translator of a large *tanka* anthology (1914), drew an interesting conclusion from his experiments:

Tanka can always be taken as a two-line poem with a constant number of syllables in the so called dactylic duel verse, which makes a combination of hexameter and pentameter:

Oh, if I hear /
Old age knocking on my door, /
I'll lock it from inside /
"Nobody's in!" — shall I cry /
driving the old age away.

It was a valuable remark opening new horizons, but unfortunately nobody followed Rachinsky's advice.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the best poets of the Russian Silver Age, mostly Symbolists like V. Bryusov, K. Balmont, and A. Belii, paid tribute to the translation of *tanka* as well as to the composition of their own imitations. None of them was in command of Japanese, but they were great masters of verse who strived to enhance their poetic universe by turning to the Oriental traditions. Their aim was to find a magic clue, which would open for the Russian and European readers the treasury of Asian poetry.

Thus V. Bryusov, in his experimental collection *The Dreams of Mankind*, included among others several examples of classical *tanka* using various rhythmic patterns. Not only did the rhythm of the poems vary in the translation but so, too, did their graphic patterns. Bryusov also widely used euphonic effects and other devices such as exclamation marks, columns, and capitalizing of the first letters in the line. In some poems of that sequence we see instead of the most popular 5-line *tanka* quite different forms such as the quatrain or blank verse in six lines. However, Bryusov's sophisticated models remained nothing but pretentious pastoral pictures.

Viju lik luni,
Vidish lunnii lik i ti,
I tomyat mechti:
Esl'i b tak iz zerkala
Ti vzglyanula s visoti.

I see the face of the moon
And you see it too,
My dreams are torturing:
Oh, if you only looked at me
From that mirror in the sky!

Tsvetiki vishni,
Obraduite, padaite!
V gorode lishnii,
Vetrom, kak vi, ya gonim
K volnam Ikuto sedim.

Oh you, cherry blossom,
Bring me joy, fall and scatter!
A stranger in the city,
I am chased like you by the wind
To the gray waves of Ikuto.

Another pillar of Russian Symbolism, K. Balmont, was a great admirer of Japanese culture. He traveled to Japan and was enchanted by the beauty of the country as well as by the eloquence of its poetry and arts. Naturally, he tried to "translate" classical *tanka* (again from French and German) in his own ornamental manner, sacrificing semantic ambiguity and other peculiarities of the original text.

This slightly rhymed stylization seems rather clumsy and bland, leaving not much of the sad charm and refined techniques of the masterpiece, which depends on the melody of the verse and interplay of three pivot words (*kakekotoba*):

Hana no *iro* wa
Utsuri ni keru na
Itazura ni
Waga mi yo ni *furu*
Nagame seshi ma ni

The colorful glamour of the blossoms
Faded like the passions bygone while idly
I have been watching in this world
All these endless rains
Seeing how my body is growing old...

(*Kokinshu*, #113)

Balmont's interpretation

Vsya kraska tsvetka,	All the color of the flower
Potusknev, poblednela,	Bleached, getting pale
Poka ya glyadela,	While I was looking
Kak lik moy prohodit	How my face is passing
Mej likov zemnih	Among other earthly faces.

From the last decade of the nineteenth century there were many attempts to adjust the stubborn Japanese dwarf poetic forms to European standards. Some of the poets and professional translators chose typical Western forms like a rhymed quatrain and started rendering *tanka* in a boring conventional manner. This approach made the best masterpieces by the ancient and Medieval authors look like poor amateur stanzas with a trivial rhythm and primitive rhyme.

There were many examples of the kind in Britain, France, and Germany. The trend reached its climax in Russia when this method was applied to the translation of the massive ancient anthology, the *Manyoshu* (8th C.). The author had been working on it for decades but its final "poetic" version published in 1972 never gained any real readers' appreciation due to the drawbacks of the old-fashioned poetic style.

The same approach was typical of the renowned Japanese translator and enlightener Miyamori Asataro in his anthologies of classical *tanka* and *haiku* introduced in English predominantly in the form of highly westernized stanzas.

Another trend in the translation of Japanese classics was represented by the specifically academic approach containing practically no poetic element in it. The numerous Western translations of this kind follow almost mechanically the word order and syntax of the original. No need to say that this kind of accurate translation is hard for reading and is certainly not enjoyable as poetry. Still, without any doubt, it can be regarded in many cases as a serious scientific achievement. The Russian version of the *Shinkokinshu* (13th C.), for instance, was a pretense for some home-made, very clumsy "poetry," but it was provided with good academic commentary. Later, there were more translations by Russian academics made in this "quasi-poetic" vein, which became a serious challenge to the refined taste of Russian readers.

Some poets and professional translators of poetry in Europe and America, including those in command of Japanese, made numerous attempts to break the "tanka code" and make it reveal the treasures hidden deep inside the original verse. There were even some successful samples, but by and large all of them failed, as the "universal clue" crucial for breaking the code was never found. Eventually the translators and academics in the Western countries came to a kind of consensus. Since the early 1960s their books of classical Japanese poetry look like accurate, reliable word-for-word translations — sometimes with a balanced number of syllables and a touch of individual taste but without any real resemblance of the beautifully pitched melodic lyrical original:

koi su choo	They say I am in love-
waga na wa madaki	The rumor is already
tachinikeri	In circulation;
hito shirezu koso	Yet when I began to love
omoisomeshika	There was not a soul who knew.

Mibu no Tadamine
(translated by Donald Keene)

This was probably the only acceptable compromise. However, in Russia, three or four academics still continued to render *tanka* in various awkward "special" ways.

Over the past century, numerous translators in Europe and America have been trying to respond to the challenge of traditional Japanese verse. Superb

translations of Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, Petrarch or Dante proved to be an easy job in comparison with miniature Japanese *tanka* which, when translated into any Western language, would never sound like real poetry compatible with the original. *Haiku* were much shorter and therefore relatively easier for translation, since they were never supposed to sound like a “song”.

Actually, as far as pure poetry is concerned, the numerous experiments were mostly a history of failures— even though a large number of the Japanese classics were translated quite accurately and provided with comprehensive notes. Eventually, academics and poets had to quit their quest for congenerous translations, switching to the standard word-for-word option, which can convey the meaning but not the real beauty and mystic charm of *tanka*.

Summarizing the endeavors of Arthur Waley, Reginald Blyth, Kenneth Rexroth, Earl Miner, Harold Henderson, Donald Keene, Laurel R. Rodd, Steven D. Carter, Edwin Cranston, Howard S. Levy, John Stevens, Hiroaki Sato, Gaston Renondeau, Juliette Binet, Leon de Rosny, Corenne Atlan, Hiromi Tsukui, Karl Florenz, Julius Kurth, Klabund, Jurgen Berndt and many other professional translators, and scholars we inevitably come to a deplorable conclusion: although the amount of high quality academic translations of classical *tanka* is permanently growing in Europe and America, no one has been able to provide a universal metric clue which would allow serial translations of *tanka* (and maybe also *haiku*) as poetry relevant to the original. It is as if we are reading the libretto of the opera but don't actually hear the voices of the great singers.

However, there was one Japanologist and poet in France who managed to create efficient recipes for the European translators of *tanka* and supported them with his own successful poetic versions of the classics. In 1935, George Bonneau articulated some useful rules that any translator of *tanka* or *haiku* should follow:

Convey the precise meaning of the poem.

Try to keep close to the word order of the original text.

Try to keep the number of syllables of the original; however, if it is impossible and produces an awkward meter, just keep the appropriate proportion of syllables in the lines.

Do not neglect any opportunity to render the euphony, the melodic structure of *tanka* by means of alliterations and assonances.

These simple rules guarantee a certain authenticity to the translation, and we probably should accept them — but with some reservations. Besides, we should always keep in mind that real poetry is not a simple dish and cannot be cooked by recipe only. It needs also some talent, inspiration, and experience.

After over forty years of work in this field and having published quite a number of collections and anthologies of old and new Japanese verse (mostly in Russian), and upon reading much more in English, French, and German, I believe I have discovered a method which facilitates the process of writing *tanka* or *haiku* in any language. The method is simply this: do it the same way the Japanese poets did.

Medieval Japanese authors regarded *tanka* as an auxiliary language for refined aesthetic conversation, a perfect means of communication in love affairs, and a valuable part of the required court manners. They would study the composition of *tanka* since childhood and by the age of adolescence would be very well versed in the classics. As a result, virtually anyone of the Heian aristocracy as well as the high-ranking samurai of later periods could compose *tanka* (and since the Tokugawa era also *haiku*). It was an easy task for those who could apply standard rules to the standard imagery and lexicon, given that they were in fluent command of the poetic language. Professional poets, dilettantes, and their audience shared the same poetic values.

It follows that a translator should share these values, too. He or she has to “study the language,” which means elaborating an adequate metric pattern and

adequate imagery palette on the basis of one's own native language. Eventually it will allow one to create an image in the *tanka* rhythm— exactly like the ancient authors did — so that the final product will be a piece of poetry (not a libretto) capable of conveying “the bitter charm of existence” (*aware*) and “the truthful vision” (*makoto*) of the original. Naturally, it refers as well to the translation of modern *tanka* and *haiku*.

In French, with its syllabic poetic meter, maybe more appropriate patterns may be elaborated, but in syllabo-tonic verse the regular Japanese meter (5-7-5-7-7) syllables is not the optimal solution for *tanka*. Instead, one can use some analog pattern, such as 6-8-6-8-8 or 6-8-6-9-9. There might be even two, three or four metric patterns that vary slightly but, put together, make a visual effect of a universal rhythm — just as it was in the original verse.

This rhythm will suggest the selection of the appropriate lexicon, the wording, the intonation, the inversion and specific poetic techniques, which will be used repeatedly, sometimes like patterns — in accordance with the prescriptions of Japanese poetics.

Some images can be explained by the means of relevant translation but some certainly require a commentary.

Practice will inevitably improve the skill of the translator in employing canonic imagery. However, the overall goal is to reproduce the sensual texture of the original, the color and flavor of emotions based on the combination of imagery, intonation, wording, melodic structure, and suggestive overtones. And it will depend also on talent, not just on technical skills.

In any case, Japanese poetry is just poetry, not a bunch of exotic small flowers with thorns, and it definitely can be translated as poetry, not as an exotic piece of enigmatic Oriental imagery.

There is a worthy tradition in the West of publishing translations of *tanka* (and *haiku*) with parallel texts in transliteration or in the original Japanese. When I published the Russian translation of the *Kokinshu* anthology in 1995, I did the same, giving the transliteration and word-for-word translation of the texts with notes and commentary. But I also included a *poetic version* of the great anthology in the same edition, so that the readers could compare “poetry” and “accurate prose.” Later, some other collections were published the same way. My aim was to show that one can stay very close to the original and create real poetry in the meantime. There were many positive reviews from the critics and from the readers proving that the experiment was a success. Now I am confident that this is the only possible way to deal with the translation of *tanka*, cracking the “*tanka* code,” and reviving the Oriental poetic tradition in Western languages — if we mean real melodic lyrical poetry, not just the description of it.

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