HAIKU

An Anthology of Japanese Poems

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Illustration 1

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AN ANTHOLOGY OF JAPANESE POEMS

Stephen Addiss, Fumiko Yamamoto,
and Akira Yamamoto

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INTRODUCTION

HAIKU are now one of the best-known and most practiced forms of poetry in the world. Simple enough to be taught to children, they can also reward a lifetime of study and pursuit. With their evocative explorations of life and nature, they can also exhibit a delightful sense of playfulness and humor.

Called *haikai* until the twentieth century, haiku are usually defined as poems of 5-7-5 syllables with seasonal references. This definition is generally true of Japanese haiku before 1900, but it is less true since then with the development of experimental free-verse haiku and those without reference to season: for example, the poems of Santōka (1882–1940), who was well known for his terse and powerful free verse. Seasonal reference has also been less strict in *senryū*, a comic counterpart of haiku in which human affairs become the focus.

Freedom from syllabic restrictions is especially true for contemporary haiku composed in other languages. The changes are not surprising. English, for example, has a different rhythm from Japanese: English is "stress-timed" and Japanese "syllable-timed." Thus, the same content can be said in fewer syllables in English. Take, for example, the most famous of all haiku, a verse by Bashō (1644–94):

Furu ike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto

Furu means “old,” *ike* means “pond or ponds,” and *ya* is an exclamatory particle, something like “ah.” *Kawazu* is a “frog or frogs”; *tobikomu*, “jump in”; *mizu*, “water”; *no*, the genitive “of”; and *oto*, “sound or sounds” (Japanese does not usually distinguish singular from plural). If using the singular, a literal translation would be:

Old pond—
a frog jumps in
the sound of water

Only the third of these lines matches the 5-7-5 formula, and the other lines would require “padding” to fit the usual definition:

[There is an] old pond—
[suddenly] a frog jumps in
the sound of water

This kind of “padding” tends to destroy the rhythm, simplicity, and clarity of haiku, so translations of 5-7-5–syllable Japanese poems are generally rendered with fewer syllables in English. Translators also have to choose whether to use singulars or plurals (such as *frog* or *frogs, pond* or *ponds*, and *sound* or *sounds*), while in Japanese these distinctions are nicely indeterminate.

We have attempted to offer English translation as close to the Japanese original as possible, line-by-line. Sometimes a parallel English translation succeeds in conveying the sense of the original. This haiku by Issa provides an example:

Japanese

kasumu hi no *(mist day of)*
uwasa-suru yara *(gossip-do maybe)*
nobe no uma *(field of horse)*

Close Translation

Misty day—
they might be gossiping,
horses in the field

Sometimes the attempt at a parallel translation results in awkward English, and a freer translation is necessary, as with this haiku by Buson:

Japanese

yoru no ran *(night of orchid)*
ka ni kakurete ya *(scent in hide wonder)*
hana shiroshi *(flower be=white)*

Close Translation

Evening orchid—
is it hidden in its scent?
the white of its flower

Freer Translation

Evening orchid—
the white of its flower
hidden in its scent

Other times a parallel translation doesn't have the impact that can be delivered in a freer translation, as in this haiku by an anonymous poet:

Japanese

mayoi-go no *(lost-child of)*
ono ga taiko de *(one's=own drum with)*
tazunerare *(be=searched=for)*

Close Translation

The lost child
with his own drum
is searched for

Freer Translation

Searching for
the lost child
with his own drum

Thus, the challenge for translators is to try to follow the Japanese word and line order without resulting in awkward English. While admirable, sometimes adhering to the original verses may make for weaker poems in English. Sometimes the languages are too different to make a close match without hurting the flow and even the meaning. However, when closer translations succeed, they are powerfully satisfying.

The fact that the spirit of the haiku can be effectively rendered in English translation indicates that the 5-7-5 syllabic count captures the outward rhythmic form of traditional Japanese haiku but does not necessarily define them. The strength of haiku is their ability to suggest and evoke rather than merely to describe. With or without the 5-7-5 formula and seasonal references, readers are invited to place themselves in a poetic mode and to explore nature as their imaginations permit.

Returning to Bashō's frog, what does the poem actually say? On the surface, not very much—one or more frogs jumping into one or more ponds and making one or more sounds. Yet this poem has fascinated people for more than three hundred years, and the reason why remains something of a mystery. Is it that it combines old (the pond) and new (the jumping)? A long time span and immediacy?

Sight and sound? Serenity and the surprise of breaking it? Our ability to harmonize with the nature? All of these may evoke an experience that we can share in our own imaginations.

Whatever meanings it brings forth in readers, this haiku has not only been appreciated but also variously modeled after and sometimes even parodied in Japan, the latter suggesting that readers should not take it too seriously. To give a few examples, the Chinese-style poet-painter Kameda Bōsai (1752–1826) wrote:

Old pond—
after that time
no frog jumps in

while the Zen master Sengai Gibon (1750–1837) added new versions:

Old pond—
something has PLOP
just jumped in

Old pond—
Bashō jumps in
the sound of water

Bashō has become so famous for his haiku that this eighteenth-century *senryū* mocks the now self-conscious master himself:

Master Bashō,
at every plop
stops walking

In the modern world, new transformations of this poem keep appearing even across the ocean, including this haiku with an environmental undertone by Stephen Addiss:

Old pond paved over
into a parking lot—
one frog still singing

Perhaps one reason why haiku have become internationally popular in recent decades comes from our sensitivity to our surroundings, even to the development of towns and cities, often to the detriment of the natural world: poets have power to keep on singing the connection to nature in their new milieu.

Haiku in Japan

Although haiku is now a worldwide phenomenon, its roots stretch far back into Japan's history. The form itself began with poets sharing the composition of "linked verse" in the form of a series of five-line *waka* (5-7-5-7-7 syllables), a much older form of poem. W*aka* poets, working in sequence, noted that the 5-7-5–syllable sections could often stand alone. Separate couplets of 7-7 syllables were less appealing to the Japanese taste for asymmetry, but from the 5-7-5 links, haiku were born.

It is generally considered that Bashō was the poet who brought haiku into full flowering, deepening and enriching it and also utilizing haiku in accounts of his travels such as *Oku no hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Interior). Bashō's pupils then continued his tradition of infusing seemingly simple haiku with evocative undertones, while continuing a sense of play that kept haiku from becoming the least bit ponderous.

The next two of the "three great masters" were Buson (1716–83), a major painter as well as poet who developed haiku-painting (*haiga*) to its height, and Issa (1763–1827), whose profound empathy with all living beings was a major feature of his poetry. With the abrupt advent of Western

civilization to Japan in the late nineteenth century, haiku seemed to be facing an uncertain future, but it was revived by Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) and his followers, and it has continued unabated until the present day.

Despite some historical changes over the centuries, certain features of Japanese life and thought have maintained themselves as integral features of the haiku spirit. For example, the native religion of Shintō reveres deities in nature, both a cause and an effect of the Japanese love of trees, rocks, mountains, valleys, waterfalls, flowers, moss, animals, birds, insects, and so many more elements of the natural world. Significantly, haiku include human nature as an organic part in all of nature, as in the following poems about dragonflies by Shirao (1738–91) and the aforementioned Santōka, respectively:

The coming of autumn
is determined
by a red dragonfly

Dragonfly on a rock—
absorbed in
a daydream

In each case, the observation of an insect leads to a deeper consideration of our own perceptions, although neither poem has a “moral” or an obvious message. We may well ask who is judging, and who is daydreaming? In this sense, it could be said that every haiku is at least partially about human beings, if only the one who originally composed it and the one reading and experiencing it now. Perhaps all fine poems are expressions of experience rather than merely “things,” and haiku, above all, elicit our own participation as readers, almost as though the poet had disappeared and left us to determine our own experience.

There has been some controversy about the influence of Zen in haiku. Certainly some poets (such as Bashō) studied Zen, and a few were actually Zen masters (such as Sengai). Many other Japanese poets, however, followed other Buddhist sects, Shintō, or were completely secular, so we should be careful about claiming too much direct influence of Zen. In a broader sense, however, Japanese culture and the arts during the past seven centuries have been suffused with Zen influence, ranging from the tea ceremony and flower arranging to Noh theater, ink painting, and *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) music. In particular, Zen's insistence on the enlightenment of the ordinary world at the present moment, right here and right now, has both mirrored and influenced the haiku spirit. As Issa wrote:

Where there are people
there are flies, and
there are Buddhas

The Zen influence in haiku may need more examination, but it has touched Japanese culture so deeply that it can never be entirely absent. What Zen, other Buddhist sects, and Shintō all have in common with haiku is the harmony between nature and humans.

Regarding This Volume

The three author-editors of the present volume have previously published a series of five books: *A Haiku Menagerie* (Weatherhill, 1992), *A Haiku Garden* (Weatherhill, 1996), *Haiku People* (Weatherhill, 1998), *Haiku Landscapes* (Weatherhill, 2002), and *Haiku Humor* (Weatherhill, 2007). The haiku in this new book are excerpted from those books, with some modifications in translation, along with newly added verses. This anthology

includes a representative number of poems by each of the three great masters (Bashō, Buson, and Issa), a generous group of haiku by observant and creative poets ranging in time from the early fifteenth through the later twentieth centuries, and a sprinkling of anonymous comical *senryū*.

The poems are grouped into three categories: The Pulse of Nature, Human Voices, and Resonance and Reverberation. Each category moves along a time line, not linearly but rather cyclically, reflecting natural life rhythms.

These poems are expressions not only of Japanese sensibilities but of age-old human responses to the world around us. We wish all of our readers the joy of experiencing this kaleidoscope of all living creatures and their multifaceted interactions with enveloping nature as expressed by the finest Japanese haiku and *senryū* poets.

The Pulse of Nature

Illustration 2

Opening their hearts
ice and water become
friends again

—TEISHITSU

The spring sun
shows its power
between snowfalls

—SHIGEYORI

Not in a hurry
to blossom—
plum tree at my gate

—ISSA

White plum blossoms
return to the withered tree—
moonlit night

—BUSON

The warbler
wipes its muddy feet
on plum blossoms

—ISSA

With each falling petal

they grow older—
plum branches

—Buson

Dried grasses—
and just a few heat waves
rising an inch or two

—Bashō

Overflowing with love
the cat as coquettish
as a courtesan

—Saimaro

Both partners
sport whiskers—
cats’ love

—Raizan

Spring sun
in every pool of water—
lingering

—Issa

Is the dawn, too,
still embraced by

hazy moon?

—Chōsui

In the shimmering haze
the cat mumbles something
in its sleep

—Issa

Spring rain—
just enough to wet tiny shells
on the tiny beach

—Buson

Illustration 3

The nurseryman
left behind
a butterfly

—Ryōta

Again and again
stitching the rows of barley—
a butterfly

—Sora

A pheasant’s tail
very gently brushes
the violets

—Shūshiki-jo

Over the violets
a small breeze
passes by

—Ontei

Each time the wind blows
the butterfly sits anew
on the willow

—Bashō

Spring chill—

above the rice paddies
rootless clouds

—HEKIGODŌ

Daybreak—
the whitefish whiten
only one inch

—BASHŌ

Domestic ducks
stretch their necks
hoping to see the world

—KŌJI

The warbler
dropped his hat—
a camellia

—BASHŌ

Crazed by flowers
surprised by the moon—
a butterfly

—CHORA

White camellias—
only the sound of their falling

moonlit night

—Rankō

Squeaking in response
to baby sparrows—
a nest of mice

—Bashō

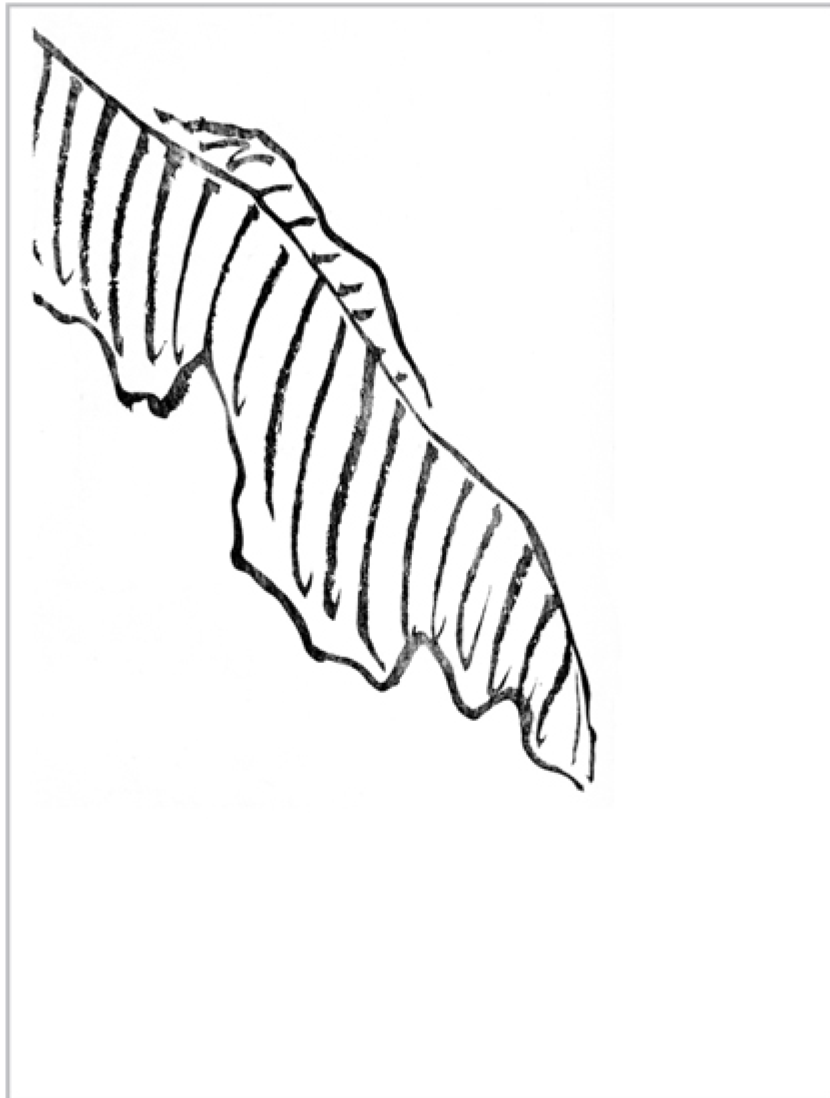


Illustration 4

Out from the darkness
back into the darkness—
affairs of the cat

—ISSA

Joyful at night
tranquil during the day—
spring rain

—CHORA

A camellia falls
spilling out
yesterday’s rain

—BUSON

A hedge of thorns—
how skillfully the dog
wriggled under it!

—ISSA

Misty day—
they might be gossiping
horses in the field

—ISSA

An old well—

falling into its darkness
a camellia

—BUSON

Trampling on clouds,
inhaling the mist,
the skylark soars

—SHIKI

Crouching,
studying the clouds—
a frog

—CHIYO-JO

On the temple bell
perching and sleeping—
a butterfly

—BUSON

Could they be sutras?
in the temple well
frogs chant

—KANSETSU

Recited on and on,
the poems of the frogs

have too many syllables

—Eiji

Bracing his feet
and offering up a song—
the frog

—Sōkan

From the nostril
of the Great Buddha comes
a swallow

—Issa

Illustration 5

On the brushwood gate
in place of a lock—
one snail

—ISSA

Sunlight
passes through a butterfly
asleep

—RANKŌ

With the power of non-attachment
floating on the water—
a frog

—JŌSŌ

Highlighting the blossoms,
clouded by blossoms—
the moon

—CHORA

Flower petals
set the mountain in motion—
cherry blossoms

—HŌITSU

On the surface

of petal-covered water—
frogs’ eyes

—Fōsei

The retreating shapes
of the passing spring—
wisteria

—Kana-jo

Spring passes—
the last reluctant
cherry blossoms

—Buson

Illustration 6

Shallow river
twisting west and twisting east—
young leaves

—Buson

Forsythia—
and radiant spring's
melancholy

—Mantarō

In daytime "darken the day"
at night "brighten the night"
frogs chant

—Buson

Crossing the sea
into a net of mist—
the setting sun

—Buson

Misty grasses—
water without voices
in the dusk

—Buson

Spring passing—

looking at the sea,
a baby crow

—SHOKYŌ

The cuckoo
with a single song
has established summer

—RYŌTA

The voice of the cuckoo
slants
over the water

—BASHŌ

The cuckoo calls—
and the waters of the lake
cloud over a little

—JŌSŌ

The cuckoo—
flies and insects,
listen well!

—ISSA

Summer rains—
leaves of the plum

the color of cold wind

—SAIMARO

Early summer rains—
lunging at the blue sea
muddy waters

—BUSON

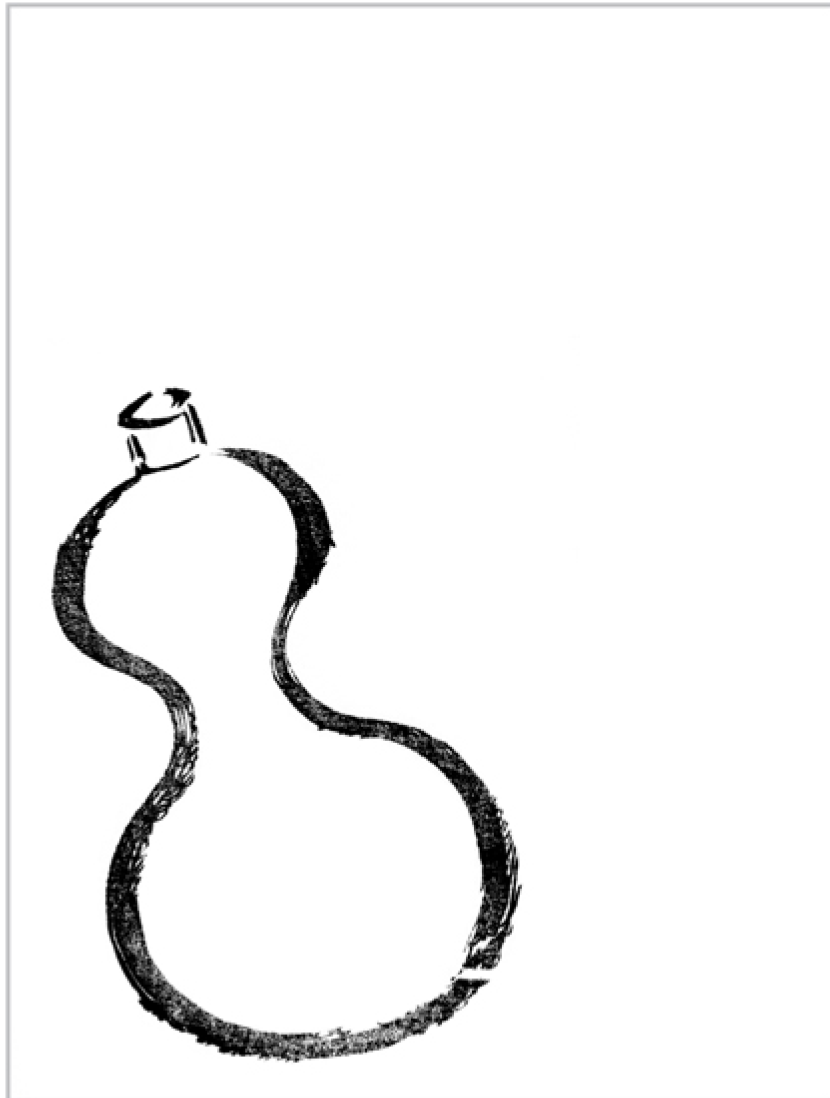


Illustration 7

Early summer rains—
even nameless rivers
are fearsome

—BUSON

Summer cool—
in the green rice fields
a single pine

—SHIKI

Only Fuji
remains unburied—
young leaves

—BUSON

On the hydrangeas
the weight of the morning sun,
the evening sun

—OTSUYŪ

Mountain ant—
seen so clearly
on the white peony

—BUSON

Alone, silently—

the bamboo shoot
becomes a bamboo

—Santōka

The warbler
amid the bamboo shoots
sings of old age

—Bashō

A triangle—
is the lizard’s head getting
a little longer?

—Kyoshi

In my dwelling
friendly with the mice—
fireflies

—Issa

How interesting—
running errands right and left
fireflies

—Kaiga

Pursued,
it hides in the moon—

the firefly

—SANO RYŌTA

Burning so easily,
extinguishing so easily—
the firefly

—CHINE-JO

The morning breeze
ripples the fur
of the caterpillar

—BUSON

Illustration 8

As the lake breeze
cools his bottom
the cicada cries

—ISSA

As lightning flashes
he strokes his head—
the toad

—ISSA

The snake flees—
but the eyes that peered at me
remain in the weeds

—KYOSHI

Rustling, rustling,
the lotus leaves sway—
a tortoise in the pond

—ONITSURA

Today too
mosquito larvae—
and tomorrow again

—ISSA

As flies retreat

mosquitoes start
their battle cry

—ANONYMOUS

Dashing into one another
whispering, parting—
ants

—ANONYMOUS

Inhaling clouds
exhaling clouds—
mountaintop pines

—ANONYMOUS

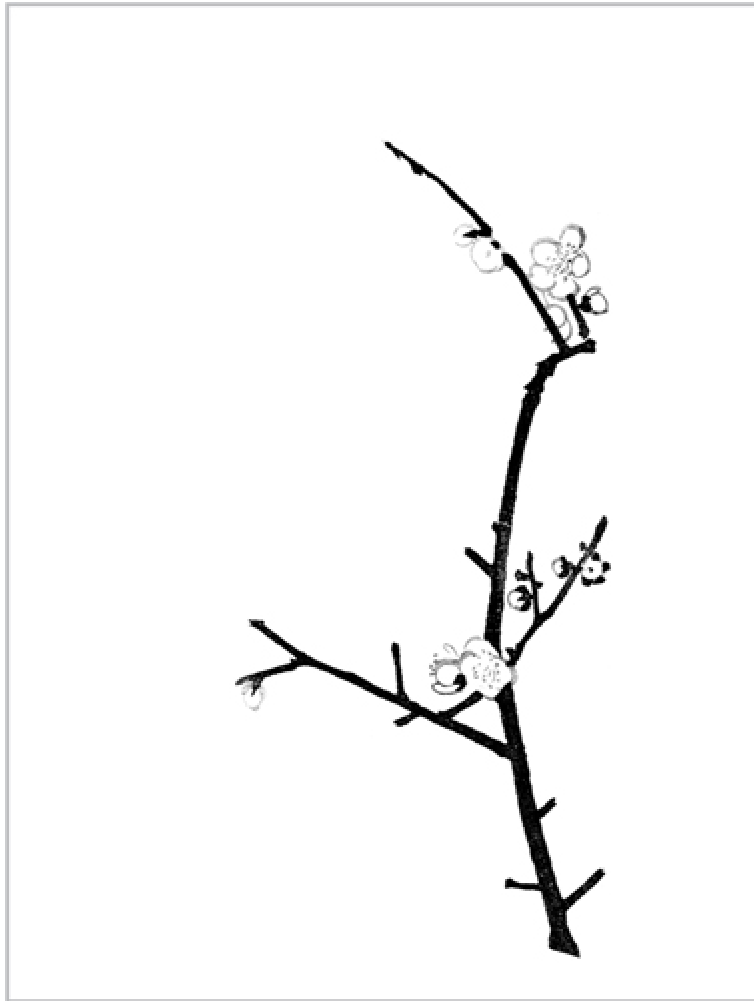


Illustration 9

Across a pillar of mosquitoes
hangs the bridge
of dreams

—Kikaku

Even the clams
keep their mouths shut
in this heat

—Bashō

Motionless
in a crevice of an old wall—
a pregnant spider

—Shiki

Heat in waves—
in the stones
angry reverberations

—Kyōtai

Sudden shower—
and rising from the heat,
the broken-down horse

—Kitō

Lightning!

fleeing up the wall,
the legs of a spider

—Kichō

Sudden shower—
clutching the blades of grass
a flock of sparrows

—Buson

Down a paulownia tree
the rain comes trickling
across a cicada’s belly

—Baishitsu

The tree frog
riding the plantain leaf
sways

—Kikaku

“It’s much too long a day,”
opening its mouth
a crow

—Issa

The fish
not knowing they’re in a bucket

cool by the gate

—ISSA

A sudden shower
drums down upon
the heads of the carp

—SHIKI

Lightning—
yesterday to the east
today to the west

—KIKAKU

Even in a single blade of grass
the cool breeze
finds a home

—ISSA

The trout leaps up—
and below him in a stream
clouds float by

—ONITSURA

How quiet—
at the bottom of the lake
peaks of clouds

—Issa

At the sound of the sea
the sunflowers open
their black eyes

—Yūji

Octopus pot—
evanescent dreams
of the summer moon

—Bashō

Short summer night—
flowing through reeds
bubbles from crabs

—Buson

Stillness—
seeping into the rocks
the cicada's voice

—Bashō

How beautifully
the cow has slimmed down
in the summer fields

—Bonchō

In the morning dew
soiled and cooled—
dirt on the melon

—Bashō

Illustration 10

Summer coolness—
lantern out,
the sound of water

—SHIKI

Summer rains—
secretly one evening
moon in the pines

—RYŌTA

The bat’s
secret home—
a tattered hat

—BUSON

Evening glories—
the cat chewing the flower
has its mind elsewhere

—BUSON

Among the ears of barley
are you hiding your tail?
old fox

—TESSHI

The coming of autumn

determined
by a red dragonfly

—Shirao

The stars
have already opened
their autumn eyes

—Kōyō

Early autumn—
the evening shower becomes
a night of rain

—Taigi

Autumn begins—
ocean and fields
all one green

—Bashō

Early autumn—
peering through willows
the morning sun

—Seibi

Morning glories—
blown to the ground

bloom as they are

—ISSA

As dew drips
gently, gently, the dove
murmurs its chant

—ISSA

Grasses and trees all
waiting for the moon—
dewy evening

—SŌGI

Illustration 11

White dew
on brambles and thorns—
one drop each

—BUSON

On blades of grass
frolic and roll on—
pearls of dew

—RANSETSU

Dew cooling—
things with shapes
all alive

—KIJŌ

Its face
looks like a horse—
the grasshopper

—ANONYMOUS

Dragonfly on a rock
absorbed in
a daydream

—SANTŌKA

The dragonfly

cannot come to rest
on the blades of grass

—Bashō

Kittens
playing hide-and-seek
in the bush clover

—Issa

Dragonflies
quiet their mad darting—
crescent moon

—Kikaku

Illustration 12

The bat
circling the moon
would not leave it

—Kyōtai

Give me back my dream!
a crow has wakened me
to misty moonlight

—Onitsura

Dyeing his body
autumn—
the dragonfly

—Bakusui

Distant mountains
reflecting in its eyes—
a dragonfly

—Issa

A floating sandal—
an object of scorn
to the plovers

—Anonymous

The pine wind

circling around the eaves—
autumn deepens

—BASHŌ

Cool breeze
filling the empty sky—
pine voices

—ONITSURA

To the mountain quietude
the quiet
rain

—SANTŌKA

The old dog
is leading the way—
visiting family graves

—ISSA

Typhoons ended,
the rat swims across
flowing waters

—BUSON

Calling three times,
then no more to be heard—

the deer in the rain

—BUSON

Running across the shelf
hoisting a chrysanthemum—
a temple mouse

—TAKAMASA

On a withered branch
lingers the evanescent memory
of a cicada's voice

—KAGAI

Singing as it goes,
an insect floats down the stream
on a broken bough

—ISSA

"The eyes of the hawks
are now dimmed,"
quails sing

—BASHŌ

A grasshopper
chirps in the sleeve
of the scarecrow

—CHIGETSU

The fields have withered—
no need for the crane
to stretch out its neck

—SHIKŌ

The first goose
seeking its own sky
in the dusk

—SHIRŌ

When they fall,
just as they fall—
garden grasses

—RYŌKAN

Mountains darken—
robbing the scarlet
from maple leaves

—BUSON

The moon speeds on—
the treetops
still holding rain

—BASHŌ

A rock
against the moon
sits big

—Seisensui

The bright moon—
out from the sleeve
of the scarecrow

—Issa

Fallen leaves
fall on each other—
rain beats on the rain

—Kyōtai

Blown from the west
collecting in the east—
falling leaves

—Buson

The old pond's
frog also growing old—
fallen leaves

—Buson

Sweeping

and then not sweeping
the fallen leaves

—Taigi

Very squarely
setting its buttocks down—
the pumpkin

—Sōseki

The autumn wind
takes the shape
of pampas grass

—Kigin

To passing autumn
the pampas grass waves
goodbye goodbye

—Shirao

Autumn rains—
a spider encased in
a clump of fallen grass

—Sekitei

Evening fog—
my horse has learned

the holes on the bridge

—ISSA

The sound
of the raindrops
also grown older

—SANTŌKA

In the harvest moonlight
standing nonchalantly—
the scarecrow

—ISSA

Its hat fallen off
and embarrassed—
the scarecrow

—BUSON

A rinse of vermilion poured
from the setting sun, and then
autumn dusk

—TAIGI

The bitter persimmons
spending their autumn
quietly

—Ritō

Garden gate
slamming and thwacking—
autumn wind

—Haritsu

Just like people
the monkey clasps its hands—
autumn wind

—Shadō

One edge
hanging over the mountain—
the Milky Way

—Shiki

The moon in the water
turns somersaults
and flows away

—Sano Ryōta

Whiter than
the stones of Stone Mountain—
the autumn wind

—Bashō

The autumn wind
at the sliding door—
a piercing voice

—Bashō

The huge setting sun—
little remains of
its power

—Kyoshi

All in calmness—
the earth with half-opened eyes
moves into winter

—Dakotsu

New garden
stones settling down—
first winter rain

—Shadō

Red berries—
just one has fallen
frosty garden

—Shiki

Without a companion,

abandoned in the fields
winter moon

—ROSEKI

Camphor-tree roots
silently soak in
the early winter rain

—BUSON

How amusing,
it may change into snow—
the winter rain

—BASHŌ

Crescent moon warped
coldness
keen and clear

—ISSA

First snow—
just enough to bend
the narcissus leaves

—BASHŌ

On the mandarin duck's wings
a dust of snow—

such stillness!

—SHIKI

Cold moon—
the gateless temple's
endless sky

—BUSON

Unable to wrap it
and dropping the moon—
the winter rain

—TOKOKU

How warm—
the shadows of withered trees
stretching out their arms

—TEI-JO

There's nothing
he doesn't know—
the cat on the stove

—FŪSEI

On a mandarin duck
its beauty is exhausted—
winter grove

—BUSON

The sea grows dark
the voice of the duck
faintly whitens

—BASHŌ

Cold moon—
among the withered trees
three stalks of bamboo

—BUSON

Its saddle taken off
how cold it looks—
the horse's rump

—HEKIGODŌ

Snow
falls on snow—
and remains silent

—SANTŌKA

Wolves
are keening in harmony—
snowy evening

—JŌSŌ

If it had no voice
the heron might disappear—
this morning’s snow

—CHIYO-JO

Dawn—
the storm is buried
in snow

—SHIRŌ

Withered by winter
one-colored world—
the sound of wind

—BASHŌ

The winter moon
trailing its white glow
leaves the mountain

—DAKOTSU

The salted sea bream’s
teeth are also chilly—
fish-market shelf

—BASHŌ

Bleakly, bleakly

the sun enters into the rocks—
a withered field

—BUSON

Blistering wind—
splintered by rocks
the voice of the water

—BUSON

Today is also ending—
at the bottom of the snowstorm
a gigantic sun

—ARŌ

Wintry blasts—
blown off into the ocean
the evening sun

—SŌSEKI

Sad stories
whispered to the jellyfish
by the sea slug

—SHŌHA

Frozen together,
what are they dreaming?

sea slugs

—Seisei

In the eyes of the hawk
over the withered fields
sits the winter storm

—Jōsō

Coming to the sea
the winter wind has no place
to return

—Seishi

In the abandoned boat
dashing and sliding—
hail

—Shiki

Flowing down
ice crushes
ice

—Gomei

The winter storm
hides in the bamboo
and becomes silent

—Bashō

Dearly, dearly
embracing the sun—
the fallen garden leaves

—Ritō

Each plum blossom
brings a single blossom's
warmth

—Bashō

The warbler
sings upside-down
his first note

—Kikaku

Human Voices

Illustration 13

The tiny child—
shown even a flower
opens its mouth

—SEIFU-JO

Flea bites—
while counting them, she nurses
her baby

—ISSA

Shielding an infant
from the wind—
a scarecrow

—ISSA

Garden butterfly—
as the baby crawls, it flies
crawls—flies—

—ISSA

A child on my back
I picked a bracken shoot
and let him hold it

—KYŌTAI

Her mother eats

the bitter parts—
mountain persimmons

—Issa

The harvest moon—
"Get it for me!"
cries the child

—Issa

"It's this big!"
forming a peony with her arms—
a child

—Issa

Today too!
today too! kites caught
by the nettle tree

—Issa

Spring rains—
a child teaches the cat
a dance

—Issa

Worse than tears—
the smile of the

abandoned child

—ANONYMOUS

The season's first melon
clutched in its arms
sleeps the child

—ISSA

Blazing sun—
whose barefoot child
is running free?

—KŌYŌ

At the ticket window
our child becomes
one year younger

—SEIUN

The youngest child
visiting family graves
carries the broom

—BUSON

First love—
coming close to a lantern
face-to-face

—Taigi

Secret night rendezvous—
a mosquito was swatted
and died quietly

—Anonymous

Heaven knows,
earth knows, every neighbor knows—
parents don't know

—Shishōshi

Sharing one umbrella—
the person more in love
gets wet

—Keisanjin

Catching up
and looking at her—
nothing special

—Anonymous

Hearing footsteps
splitting in two
the shadow

—Anonymous

Waving umbrellas
“goodbye” . . . “goodbye” . . .
gossamer haze

—Issa

Having children,
you understand—
but too late

—Anonymous

Illustration 14

Pear blossoms—
a woman reads a letter
by moonlight

—Buson

Harvesting radishes,
he points the way
with a radish

—Issa

Workers—
they laugh
in a single color

—Hakushi

Selling ladles,
he shows how to scoop up
nothing at all

—Anonymous

Chanting the Lotus Sutra—
only his lips
are busy

—Anonymous

With both hands

thrust up mightily—
my yawn

—ANONYMOUS

Trout fishing—
more fishermen
than trout

—KENJIN

Very secretly
the medicine peddler
is sick

—ANONYMOUS

The convalescent—
indulging in his mother's care
has become a habit

—ANONYMOUS

Losing,
he straightens in his seat
and loses again

—ANONYMOUS

Having given my opinion
I return home to

my wife's opinion

—YACHŌ

Priding himself
on scolding
his beautiful wife

—ANONYMOUS

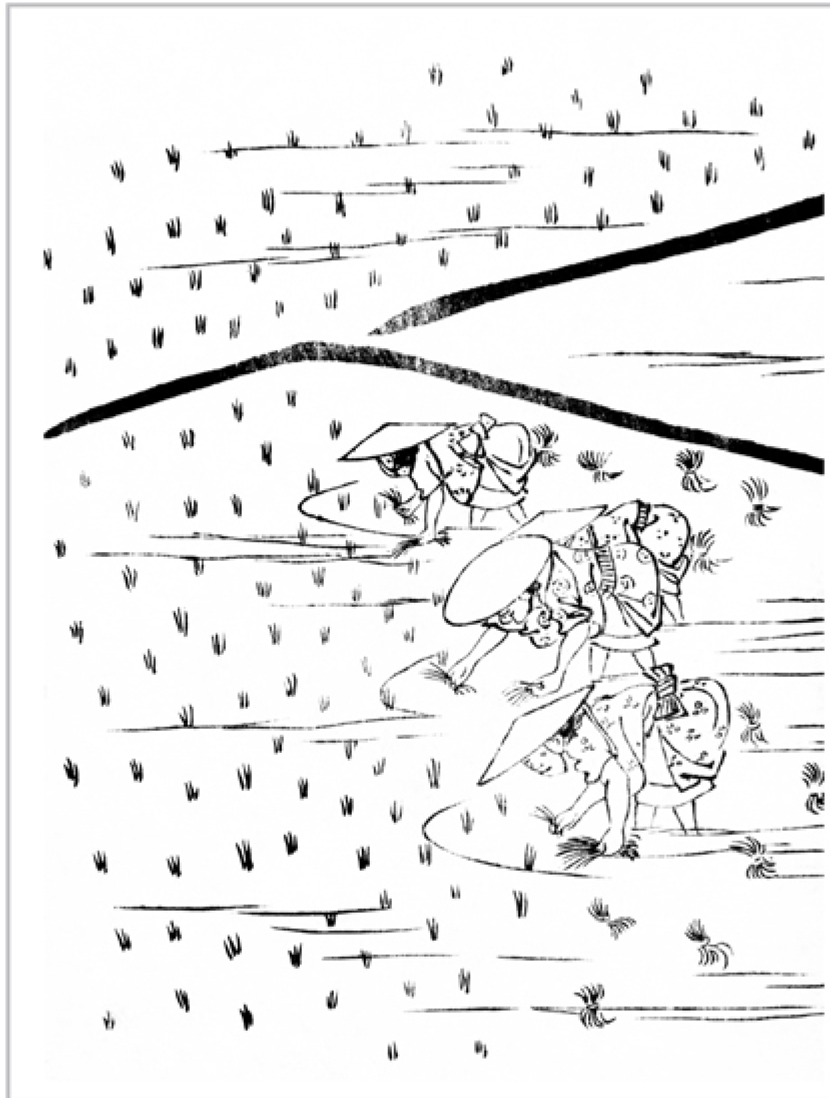


Illustration 15

“Every woman . . .”
he starts to say,
then looks around

—ANONYMOUS

“After you die
they’ll be valuable”
he tells the painter

—ANONYMOUS

Skeletons
covered with adornment—
flower viewing

—ONITSURA

Wanting to be logical
he tries so hard—
the drunkard

—MEITEI

“Let’s pull them all”
says the dentist
generously

—ANONYMOUS

“I’d never lose

in a sumo match"—
pillow talk

—BUSON

No talents
also no sins—
winter seclusion

—ISSA

Winter seclusion—
from my wife and children
I too play hide-and-seek

—BUSON

New Year's cards
with women's handwriting
get looked at first

—BIRIKEN

She lowers
her eloquent lap
onto his silent lap

—ANONYMOUS

The kimono for flower-viewing—
disrobing, I'm entwined in

a myriad of sashes

—HISA-JO

Without a word
the guest, the host,
white chrysanthemums

—RYŌTA

Out from the gate,
I too become a traveler—
autumn dusk

—BUSON

Walking along the river
with no bridge to cross—
the day is long

—SHIKI

Cold moon—
feeling the pebbles
under my shoes

—BUSON

A single guest
visits a single host—
autumn evening

—Buson

“Coming, coming,”
but someone still knocks—
snowy gate

—Kyorai

Illustration 16

My *go* rival—
how vexing
and how dear

—ANONYMOUS

Getting old—
I slip on a watermelon rind
as I dance

—SŌCHŌ

My nose running
I play a solitary *go*-game—
night chill

—BUSON

Just asking them to fight,
he saved tons of money
and died

—HAKUCHŌ

Flesh getting thin—
these are thick bones

—HŌSAI

Feeling my bones
on the quilting—

frosty night

—BUSON

Charcoal fire—
my years dwindle down
just like that

—ISSA

For me leaving
for you staying
two autumns

—SHIKI

Owning nothing—
such peace,
such coolness!

—ISSA

Left to live on
left to live on and on—
this cold

—ISSA

Loneliness
also has its pleasure—
autumn dusk

—Buson

Autumn of my years—
the moon is perfect
and yet—

—Issa

Walking the dog
you meet
lots of dogs

—Sōshi

Taking a nap
I hide within myself—
winter seclusion

—Buson

All of a sudden
my first fallen tooth—
autumn wind

—Sanpū

Winter rain—
I'm not dead yet

—Santōka

A whole family
all gray-haired with canes
visits graves

—Bashō

This autumn
no child in my lap—
moon-viewing

—Onitsura

Are my youthful dreams
still unfinished?
this morning's frost

—Anonymous

The auspiciousness
is just about medium—
my spring

—Issa

On New Year's Day
the morning in town
comes irregularly

—Anonymous

First winter kimono—

may you quickly grow to
a naughty age

—ISSA

Snow has melted—
the village is full
of children

—ISSA

Resonance and Reverberation

Illustration 17

“Don’t dare break it!”
but he broke off and gave me
a branch of garden plum

—TAIGI

Spring river—
a tiny wooden clog
floats by

—HARITSU

Spring rain—
blown onto the bush
a discarded letter

—ISSA

A shame to pick it
a shame to leave it—
the violet

—NAO-JO

Even when chased
it pretends not to hurry—
the butterfly

—GARAKU

One sneeze—

and I lost sight of
the skylark

—Yayū

Tired heart—
mountains and ocean
too much beauty

—Santōka

Lead him slowly!
the horse is carrying
the spring moon

—Watsujin

Come out!
you can almost touch
the spring moon

—Tei-jo

Spring moon—
if I touch it, it would
drip

—Issa

Spring rain—
I gave my yawn

to the dog at the gate

—ISSA

While I ponder
a snail
passes me by

—ANONYMOUS

Frogs grow silent—
noble humans
are passing by

—RAKUKYO

Early summer rain—
a letter from home
arrives wet

—HARITSU

Sudden shower—
riding naked
on a naked horse

—SANTŌKA

Rocks and trees
glisten in my eyes—
such heat

—KYORAI

The stone-carver
cools his chisel
in the clear stream

—BUSON

A hoe standing
with no one around—
the heat!

—SHIKI

Illustration 18

Becoming a cow
would be fine—morning naps
and the evening cool

—Shikō

After my sneeze
all is quiet—
summer mountains

—Yasui

Only the moon and I
remain on the bridge
cooling off

—Kikusha

One person
and one fly
in the large room

—Issa

The fly on the porch
while rubbing its hands—
swat!

—Issa

Each time

I swat a fly, I chant
"Namu Amida Butsu"

—ISSA

Mosquito larvae,
dancing a Buddhist chant
in the water by the grave

—ISSA

Being hit
the gong spits out
a noontime mosquito

—SŌSEKI

Sharing the same blood
but we're not related—
the hateful mosquito!

—JŌSŌ

The flute player
bitten by a mosquito
on the edge of his lips

—KYORIKU

Swarms of mosquitoes—
but without them,

it’s a little lonely

—Issa

During the day
the Buddha shelters behind
mosquitoes

—Issa

Illustration 19

The beggar
wears heaven and earth
as summer clothes

—KIKAKU

Where there are people
there are flies, and
there are Buddhas

—ISSA

They live long—
the flies, fleas, and mosquitoes
in this poor village

—ISSA

Two old bent backs
sitting close, wrapped in
a shower of cicada songs

—ANONYMOUS

In my hand
its fleeting light vanishes—
the firefly

—KYORAI

How delightful

walking on dewy grasses—
straw sandals

—Haritsu

Killing the spider
then so lonesome—
evening cold

—Shiki

Seeing that I'm old
even the mosquito whispers
closer to my ear

—Issa

An autumn mosquito
determined to die
bites me

—Shiki

Before the white mums
hesitating for a while—
the scissors

—Buson

Truly the autumn has come—
I was convinced

by my sneeze

—BUSON

Planting my buttocks
on a huge taro leaf—
moon-viewing

—HARITSU

Whatever they wear
they become beautiful
moon-viewing

—CHIYO-JO

Illustration 20

Taking me along
my shadow comes home
from moon-viewing

—SODŌ

Even grandma
goes out drinking—
moonlit night

—ISSA

Wild geese muttering, muttering—
are they spreading
rumors about me?

—ISSA

Don’t cry, wild geese,
it’s the same everywhere—
this floating world

—ISSA

A man raking—
the leaves keep
calling him back

—ANONYMOUS

Dusk—

while the earth and I talk
leaves fall

—ISSA

When I show my delight
they fall down faster—
acorns

—FŪSEI

Coldly, coldly
the sun slips into my sleeve—
autumn mountains

—ISSA

Autumn wind—
in my heart, how many
mountains and rivers

—KYOSHI

Deep in the mountains—
falling into my heart
autumn streams

—SHINKEI

More than last year
it is lonely—

the autumn dusk

—BUSON

On my shoulder
is it longing for a companion?
a red dragonfly

—SŌSEKI

Love in my old age—
as I try to forget,
late autumn rain

—BUSON

When I finally die—
weeds
falling rain

—SANTŌKA

From the nose
of the Buddha in the fields—
icicles

—ISSA

Visitors
kindly create a path
through the snow at my gate

—Issa

The black dog
becomes a lantern—
snowy road

—Anonymous

Winter sun—
frozen on horseback
is my shadow

—Bashō

Piercing cold—
I dropped my broom
under the pines

—Taigi

Colder than snow
on my white hair—
the winter moon

—Jōsō

A hundred miles of frost—
in a boat, I own
the moon

—Buson

Peaceful, peaceful
chilly, chilly
snow, snow

—Santōka

To my cat
a New Year’s card
from its vet

—Yorie

The child on my lap
begins to point at
plum blossoms

—Issa

Plum blossoms—
“Steal this one here!”
points the moon

—Issa

Under the trees
into the salad, into the soup—
cherry blossoms

—Bashō

THE POETS

ARŌ. See **USUDA ARŌ**.

BAISHITSU (1769–1852). Baishitsu was born in Kanazawa to a family of sword experts. He moved to Kyoto, visited Edo (Tokyo) for twelve years, and then settled again in Kyoto, where he became one of the major haiku teachers of his era.

BAKUSUI (1718–83). A poet from Kanazawa during the middle of the Edo Period, Bakusui studied under Otsuyū.

BASHŌ (1644–94). Widely admired as the greatest of all haiku masters, Bashō, when young, left samurai life when his lord passed away and devoted himself to poetry. He made several journeys, which he celebrated in combinations of prose and haiku called *haibun*, and his deep humanity and depth of spirit influenced Japanese literature profoundly.

BIRIKEN (dates and details unknown).

BONCHŌ (died 1714). By profession a doctor, Bonchō edited a famous book of haiku poems with Kyorai, and also wrote many fresh and original haiku of his own. He was also interested in European studies, and was imprisoned for trading illegally with Dutch merchants.

BŌSAI. See **KAMEDA BŌSAI**.

BUSON (1716–83). Around the age of seventeen, Buson went to Edo (Tokyo) and studied painting and haiku. After his haiku teacher’s death in 1742, Buson wandered around the eastern provinces for more than ten years, later settling

in Kyoto. Buson is now considered one of the greatest artists in the literati style, and second only to Bashō in the haiku tradition. Buson's verses as well as his paintings show the warmth and brilliance of his vision of humanity and the natural world.

CHIGETSU (1634?–1708?). Chigetsu, the wife of a freight agent, studied haiku with Bashō, and became one of the four famous women poets of her era. After the death of her husband in 1686, she became a nun. She lived in Ōtsu with her son, Otokuni, who also studied with Bashō and became a fine haiku poet.

CHINE-JO (?–1688?). Chine-jo was the younger sister of Kyorai, who was one of the ten leading pupils of Bashō. In her early twenties, Chine-jo and Kyorai traveled together to Ise. During this trip, Chine-jo wrote haiku poems that were considered as good as or even better than those by her elder brother.

CHIYO-JO (1703–75). Beginning to write haiku on her own at the age of fifteen, Chiyo-jo later studied with Shikō and eventually became a nun. Her haiku style achieved great popularity with its direct expression and witty mastery of language.

CHORA (1719–80). Born in Shima (present-day Mie Prefecture), Chora later moved to Ise. He associated with poets such as Buson.

CHŌSUI (1701–69). A poet in the middle of the Edo Period, Chōsui was born the son of a local governor in Chiba, and he later became a monk. One of his haiku disciples was Shirao.

DAKOTSU. See **IIDA DAKOTSU**.

EIJI (dates and details unknown).

Fukuda Haritsu (1865–1944). Born in the small town of Shingū in Wakayama Prefecture, Fukuda Haritsu became a pupil of Shiki in Tokyo, then moved to Kyoto where he led the life of a scholar-poet using the name Kodōjin (Old Taoist). He wrote haiku, *waka*, and Chinese-style poetry, and painted both *haiga* and literati landscapes.

Fūsei. See **Tomiyasu Fūsei**.

Garaku (dates and details unknown).

Gibon. See **Sengai Gibon**.

Gomei (1731–1803). A poet in Akita Prefecture, Gomei studied Bashō's haiku on his own.

Hakuchō (dates and details unknown).

Hakushi (dates unknown). A writer of humorous verse from Edo (Tokyo).

Hara Sekitei (1886–1951). Born in Shimane Prefecture, Sekitei studied under Takahama Kyoshi. He was active in the haiku journal *Hototogisu* and he was also skilled in *haiga* painting.

Haritsu. See **Fukuda Haritsu**.

Hekigodō. See **Kawahigashi Hekigodō**.

Hisa-jo. See **Sugita Hisa-jo**.

Hōitsu (1761–1828). Born in Edo (Tokyo) to the Sakai family, lord of Himeji fiefdom, Hōitsu excelled as a haiku poet and also a painter in the decorative tradition.

Hōsai. See **Ozaki Hōsai**.

Iida Dakotsu (1885–1962). Born in Yamanashi Prefecture, Dakotsu studied at Waseda University. He was one of the representative poets of the haiku journal *Hototogisu*.

Issa (1763–1827). A poet whose life was filled with personal tragedy, Issa became the most compassionate of

all haiku masters, with a special feeling for children and common people.

Jōsō (1662–1704). Due to poor health, Jōsō gave up his samurai position at the age of twenty-six and became a monk. He studied haiku with Bashō, and after the death of his master lived a quiet and solitary life.

Kagai (died 1778, details unknown).

Kaiga (1652–1718). A pupil of Bashō, Kaiga was a close friend of the poet Kikaku.

Kameda Bōsai (1752–1826). One of the leading Confucian scholars and Chinese-style poet-calligraphers of his day, Bōsai only rarely wrote haiku. He inscribed his verse about “the old pond” over a portrait of Bashō.

Kana-jo (dates unknown). A Kyoto poet, Kana-jo was Kyorai’s wife and had two daughters.

Kansetsu (dates and details unknown).

Kawahigashi Hekigodō (1873–1937). Born in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, Hekigodō studied with Shiki. He also wrote literary criticism and novels.

Keisanjin (dates and details unknown).

Kenjin (dates and details unknown).

Kichō (dates unknown). Kichō was best known as a critic and evaluator of poetry competitions during the Edo Period.

Kigin (1624–1705). Born in Shiga Prefecture, Kigin was known as a scholar of classics. He served the *bakufu* government. Kigin learned haiku with Teitoku, whose pupils included Bashō.

Kijō. See **Murakami Kijō**.

KIKAKU (1661–1707). One of the ten leading pupils of Bashō, Kikaku was also an expert in Chinese-style poetry, Confucianism, medicine, calligraphy, and painting. His poetic style is known for its wit and humor.

KIKUSHA (1753–1826). Born in Yamaguchi, Kikusha devoted herself to the arts, including painting, calligraphy, *waka*, Chinese-style verse, and haiku. After her husband died when she was twenty-four years old, she became a nun.

KINOSHITA YŪJI (1914–65). Born in Hiroshima Prefecture, Yūji took over his father's pharmacy store. As a poet, he was recognized by Kubota Mantarō, a popular literary figure of the time.

KITŌ (1741–89). Learning haiku first from his father and later from Buson, Kitō also greatly admired the poems of Kikaku. Kitō wrote haiku with direct and unsentimental observations. He loved *sake*, and like several other haiku poets he became a monk in his final years.

KŌJI (dates and details unknown).

KŌYŌ. See **OZAKI KŌYŌ**.

KUBOTA MANTARŌ (1889–1963). Mantarō was born in Asakusa, Tokyo. After graduating from Keiō University, he became famous as a writer, dramatist, and also a stage producer. Mantarō's poems are characterized by their lyrical quality.

KUBO YORIE (1884–1967). Born in Matsuyama, Yorie met Shiki and Sōseki when she was young and became interested in haiku.

KYORAI (1651–1704). Born in Nagasaki, Kyorai moved to Kyoto at the age of eight and became known for his excellence in martial arts, astronomy, and general learning. He met Kikaku in 1684 and joined him to become one of the

ten leading pupils of Bashō. He combined in his own verse the qualities of martial strength and poetic gentleness. Kyorai's writings about poetics became influential for later haiku masters.

KYORIKU (1656–1715). A samurai in the Hikone region (present-day Shiga Prefecture), Kyoriku excelled in the lance, sword, and horseback riding. He was also a good painter in the Kanō style. He studied haiku with Bashō.

KYOSHI. See **TAKAHAMA KYOSHI**.

KYŌTAI (1732–92). A native of Nagoya, Kyōtai tried to elevate haiku from the vulgarity of his day and return to the excellence of Bashō. He also followed the lead of Buson in creating poems combining strength of imagery with keen observation of the world around him.

MANTARŌ. See **KUBOTA MANTARŌ**.

MASAOKA SHIKI (1867–1902). Despite the brevity of his life, Shiki became the most influential haiku poet and theorist of the late nineteenth century. He insisted that haiku poets should cultivate the keen observation (*shasei*) of nature. He established the famous haiku journal *Hototogisu*.

MATSUSE SEISEI (1869–1937). A poet from Osaka, Seisei was a follower of Shiki and wrote haiku in traditional style, opposing radical change in the world of poetry. In 1902, he became the haiku editor of *The Asahi* newspaper.

MEITEI. See **TSUKAKOSHI MEITEI**.

MIZUOCHI ROSEKI (1872–1919). Born in Osaka, Mizuochi Roseki studied haiku with Shiki. He was considered to be the leader of the Osaka haiku group of the time.

MURAKAMI KIJŌ (1865–1938). Born as the eldest son of a low-ranking samurai in Tottori, Kijō suffered from constant

poverty. He was an early representative of the haiku journal *Hototogisu*.

NAKAMURA TEI-JO (1900–1988). Born in Kumamoto, Tei-jo joined the haiku journal *Hototogisu*. She promoted women's haiku writing through mass media.

NAO-JO (dates and details unknown).

NATSUME SŌSEKI (1867–1916). The most famous novelist of his time, Sōseki studied in England and later taught English literature in Japan. Less known as a haiku poet, he nevertheless wrote many fine verses.

OGIWARA SEISENSUI (1884–1976). Born in Tokyo, Seisensui graduated from Tokyo University, majoring in linguistics. He advocated free-style haiku. Taneda Santōka was one of his followers. He wrote widely on Issa and Bashō.

OKADA YACHŌ (1882–1960). Born in Tsuyama City, Yachō started composing *senryū* in his early twenties. He engaged in farming and was a gentle person known for *senryū* with topics taken from his daily life.

ONITSURA (1661–1738). At the age of eight, Onitsura began to learn haiku. At thirteen, he became a pupil of Matsue Shigeyori, and he also received instructions from Kitamura Kigin and Nishiyama Sōin. In 1865, Onitsura stated that he came to realize that sincerity was the most important quality in poetry. Thus, his haiku poems were written in a simple and straightforward style.

ONTEI. See **SHINOHARA ONTEI**.

OTSUYŪ (1675–1739). Also known as Bakurin, Otsuyū was a priest at Ise. He studied with Bashō when Bashō visited his area. He also painted *haiga*.

OZAKI HŌSAI (1885–1926). Spending his life working at temples, Ozaki Hōsai wrote haiku noted for their free form and direct language.

OZAKI KŌYŌ (1867–1903). Known primarily for his novels such as *Golden Demon*, written in colloquial style, Kōyō was also a fine haiku poet during his short life.

RAIZAN (1654–1716). A merchant in Osaka, Raizan started with comical and witty haiku but later changed to a more serious style close to Bashō's.

RAKUKYO (dates and details unknown).

RANKŌ (1726–98). Born in Kanazawa, Ronkō later moved to Kyoto, where he practiced medicine. He promoted Bashō's haiku style by compiling the master's writings.

RANSETSU (1654–1707). Ransetsu studied painting with Hanabusa Itchō, a famous painter, and haiku under Bashō. Ransetsu also studied Zen Buddhism, and its influence is discernible in his later haiku. He was one of the disciples whom Master Bashō highly appreciated, and is known for his gentle and sophisticated poetic style.

RITŌ (1681–1755). An Edo poet, Ritō was one of the pupils of Ransetsu. One of his followers was Ryōta.

ROSEKI. See **MIZUOCHI ROSEKI**.

RYŌKAN (1758–1831). Born in Echigo, present-day Niigata Prefecture, Ryōkan became a Zen monk. He spent his life, full of interesting episodes (some of which are legendary), in poverty as an itinerant monk. His poems are full of a wonderful free spirit. Ryōkan also excelled in *waka* poetry, Chinese poetry, and calligraphy.

RYŌTA (1718–87). When young, Ryōta moved to Edo (Tokyo) and studied with Ritō, Ransetsu's pupil. He then became a haiku teacher and was reported to have many pupils under him.

SAIMARO (1656–1738). Born to a samurai household, Saimaro studied haiku with Ihara Saikaku, the famous fiction writer and haiku poet of the time. Saimaro also kept

an association with Bashō. Later in his life, he enjoyed considerable power in the Osaka haiku world.

SANO RYŌTA (1890–1954). Born in Niigata Prefecture, Ryōta was known for his fresh expressions of nature.

SANPŪ (1647–1732). A pupil and patron of Bashō, Sanpū provided the master with his famous cottage Bashō-an (Banana Plant Hermitage).

SANTŌKA. See **TANEDA SANTŌKA**.

SEIBI (1749–1816). Born into a wealthy family, Seibi associated with Shirao and Kyōtai. He was known as one of the three great haiku poets of his day along with Michihiko and Sōchō. He was Issa's benefactor.

SEIFU-JO (1731–1814). Born in Musashi Province, Seifu-jo studied with Chōsui and Shirao. Her haiku style is often highly subjective and personal.

SEISEI. See **MATSUSE SEISEI**.

SEISENSUI. See **OGIWARA SEISENSUI**.

SEISHI. See **YAMAGUCHI SEISHI**.

SEIUN (dates and details unknown).

SEKITEI. See **HARA SEKITEI**.

SENGAI GIBON (1750–1837). A Zen master from Kyushu, Sengai became beloved for his paintings, which often show his delightful sense of humor.

SHADŌ (died 1737?). A poet and doctor in Ōmi (present-day Shiga Prefecture) area, Shadō studied haiku under Bashō and participated in Bashō's haiku-composing gatherings. He published one of Bashō's well-known anthologies, *Hisago* (Gourd).

SHIGEYORI (1602–80). Born in Matsue, Shigeyori lived most of his life in Kyoto. He studied haiku with Teitoku. He

later compiled Bashō's haiku, and had fine haiku pupils such as Onitsura.

SHIKI. See **MASAOKA SHIKI**.

SHIKŌ (1665–1731). After serving as a Zen monk at Daichi-ji, Shikō became a doctor, later meeting and becoming a disciple of Bashō. When told he might be reborn as an animal if he did not lead a pure life, Shikō observed that it might well be an improvement.

SHINKEI (1406–75). A linked-verse (*renga*) poet, Shinkei was an influential figure for the next generation of the linked-verse poets, such as Sōgi.

SHINOHARA ONTEI (1872–1926). Born in Kumamoto Prefecture, Ontei worked for a newspaper company in Tokyo and studied haiku under Shiki and Kyoshi.

SHIRAO (1738–91). Born in Shinano (present-day Nagano Prefecture) and studying haiku in Edo (Tokyo), Shirao later traveled to many areas and vigorously taught haiku. He wrote several manuscripts on haiku theory that emphasized naturalness of expression.

SHIRŌ (1742–1812). Born in Nagoya, Shirō practiced medicine. He studied haiku with Kyōtai and was also known for his skill in playing the *biwa* (lute).

SHISHŌSHI (1866–1928). Born in Tokyo, Shishōshi was very active in promoting *senryū* and mentored many poets.

SHŌHA (died 1771). Shōha studied Chinese poems with Hattori Nankaku. A beloved haiku pupil of Buson, Shōha died before his teacher, and Buson thereupon wrote a preface for Shōha's collected haiku that became very famous. Shōha's own poems show his keen visual sense.

SHOKYŪ (1741–81). Born in Echigo (present-day Niigata Prefecture), Shokyū took the tonsure after her husband's death. She also traveled widely.

SHŪSHIKI-JO (1669–1725?). Shūshiki-jo studied with Kikaku, and she married the haiku poet Kangyoku, also a pupil of Kikaku. Shūshiki-jo's poems became famous for their gentle and humane observations of everyday life.

SŌCHŌ (1761–1814). The son of the famous calligrapher Yamamoto Ryōsai, Sōchō became a successful artist and haiku poet in Edo (Tokyo).

SODŌ (1642–1716). Born in Kai, Sodō moved to Edo (Tokyo) and became associated with Bashō.

SŌGI (1421–1502). A highly respected linked-verse (*renga*) master and literary theorist, Sōgi excelled in calligraphy. He was also very well learned in classical poetry, and he lectured to many nobles and high officials, including a shogun. Sōgi's linked-verse collection *Minase Sangin Hyakuin* (One Hundred Verses by Three Poets at Minase), which he composed with two other masters, represents a high point of linked verse.

SŌKAN (1458?–1546?). From a samurai family, Sōkan served the shogun Ashikaga Yoshihisa. After his father's death, however, Sōkan became a monk and lived the rest of his life in a hermitage, where he developed a new form of simplified linked-verse (*renga*) poetry. In time he became considered the inventor of haiku.

SORA (1649–1710). Giving up his life as a samurai, Sora went to Edo (Tokyo) and studied Shintō and *waka* with Kikkawa Koretaru. Later, Sora became a pupil of Bashō and often traveled with his teacher on haiku journeys.

SŌSEKI. See **NATSUME SŌSEKI**.

SŌSHI (dates and details unknown).

SUGITA HISA-JO (1890–1946). A poet in the coterie of Takahama Kyoshi, Sugita Hisa-jo married a painter. Her haiku style has a rich romantic flavor.

TAIGI (1709–71). Born in Edo (Tokyo), Taigi moved to the entertainment district of Kyoto, where he became associated with Buson. He is known for his haiku on human affairs.

TAKAHAMA KYOSHI (1874–1959). Kyoshi was one of the masters of the haiku tradition in the late Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods. The name Kyoshi was given him by Masaoka Shiki. Kyoshi inherited Shiki's haiku magazine *Hototogisu* and continued Shiki's literary circle, where writers and poets reviewed their own works. Kyoshi also wrote novels and essays, but was most celebrated for his poems, which were traditional in style but fresh in spirit.

TAKAMASA (late seventeenth to early eighteenth century). A follower of the Kyoto Danrin school of haiku, Takamasa lived in Kyoto and befriended pupils of Teitoku. He wrote haiku poems describing natural scenes in an unpretentious, free, and sometimes wild style.

TANEDA SANTŌKA (1882–1940). Born in Yamaguchi Prefecture, he attended Waseda University but never graduated. He studied haiku under Seisensui. After the bankruptcy of his household, he divorced his wife and became a monk. He spent his life as a traveling monk composing free-style haiku.

TEI-JO. See **NAKAMURA TEI-JO**.

TEISHITSU (1610–73). Running a paper business in Kyoto, Teishitsu studied haiku under Teitoku. He was also a skilled musician, playing the *biwa* (lute) and flute.

TESSHI (died 1707). Tesshi traveled widely in the Kansai, Kantō, and northern areas of Japan. The book by Tesshi entitled *Hanamiguruma* is a collection of gossip about haiku poets, who appear in the book as courtesans.

TOKOKU (?–1690). A rice merchant in Nagoya, Tokoku became Bashō's pupil when the latter came to the area. He

traveled with Bashō, and his death was deeply lamented by his master.

TOMIYASU FŪSEI (1885–1979). Fōsei traveled in Europe and the United States, then returned to Japan to study under Kyoshi. Eventually he became one of the leading haiku poets of the twentieth century.

TSUKAKOSHI MEITEI (1894–1965). A poet born in Tokyo, Meitei worked for newspaper companies, one of which was in Taiwan. He created a Taiwan *senryū* circle before returning to Japan after World War II.

USUDA ARŌ (1879–1951). Born in Nagano Prefecture, Arō learned haiku under Takahama Kyoshi.

WATSUJIN (1758–1836). A poet in the Kyōtai tradition, Watsujin was a samurai from Sendai who wrote haiku under a variety of art names.

YACHŌ. See **OKADA YACHŌ**.

YAMAGUCHI SEISHI (1901–94). Born in Kyoto, he was a member of the haiku journal *Hototogisu*. He introduced new ideas to haiku through his poems.

YASUI (1658–1743). A merchant from Nagoya, Yasui wrote many haiku following the Bashō tradition. Later in his life, Yasui shifted his interest to *waka* and the tea ceremony.

YAYŪ (1702–83). Yayū was a retainer of the Owari family, one of the three branch families of the Tokugawa clan. After he retired, Yayū spent his life creating haiku and paintings. He was also known for his *haibun* (poetic writing).

YORIE. See **KUBO YORIE**.

YŪJI. See **KINOSHITA YŪJI**.

THE ARTISTS

HAKUIN EKAKU (1685–1768). Considered the most important Zen master of the past five hundred years, Hakuin was also the leading Zen painter, creating a large number of works with power, humor, and Zen intensity.

IKE TAIGA (1723–76). One of the great literati painters of Japan, Taiga was unusual in that he displayed his art fully at a youthful age, creating delightful transformations of the scholar-artist landscape painting tradition.

KI BAITEI (1734–1810). One of the major pupils of poet-painter Buson, Baitei (also known as Kyūrō) lived in Shiga Prefecture and created both landscapes and humorous figure studies.

MARUYAMA ŌKYO (1733–95). By creating a style that combined naturalism with influences from China and the West, Ōkyo became founder of the popular Maruyama school of painting.

MATSUYA JICHŌSAI (active 1781–88, died 1803?). Also known as Nichōsai, he was a sake brewer and antique dealer in Osaka who dabbled in poetry, painting, and singing. His humorous paintings have a caricature style all their own.

SESSON SHŪKEI (1504?–1589?). One of the major ink-painters of the late medieval period in Japan, Sesson was known for his strong compositions and bold brushwork.

TACHIBANA MORIKUNI (1679–1748). Born in Osaka, Morikuni studied the official style of the Kanō school, but

was expelled because in one of his books he published designs that were considered secrets in the Kanō tradition.

YAMAGUCHI SOKEN (1759–1818). A pupil of the naturalistic master Ōkyo, Soken was especially gifted in his depictions of figure subjects.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. **Tachibana Morikuni** (1679–1748), *Stream* from *Ehon Shakantei* (1720)
2. **Ki Baitei** (1734–1810), *Crow* from *Kyūrō Gafu* (1795)
3. **Ki Baitei** (1734–1810), *Deer* from *Kyūrō Gafu* (1795)
4. **Ki Baitei** (1734–1810), *Leaf* from *Kyūrō Gafu* (1795)
5. **Ki Baitei** (1734–1810), *Iris* from *Kyūrō Gafu* (1795)
6. **Ki Baitei** (1734–1810), *Pine* from *Kyūrō Gafu* (1795)
7. **Hakuin Ekaku** (1685–1768), *Gourd* from *Hakuin Oshō Shigasanshū* (1759)
8. **Hakuin Ekaku** (1685–1768), *Shrimp* from *Hakuin Oshō Shigasanshū* (1759)
9. **Maruyama Ōkyo** (1733–95), *Plum Branch* from *Ōkyo Gafu* (1850)
10. **Ymaguchi Soken** (1759–1818), *Buds* from *Soken Gafu Sōka no Bu* (1806)
11. **Yamaguchi Soken** (1759–1818), *Cranes* from *Soken Gafu Sōka no Bu* (1806)
12. **Yamaguchi Soken** (1759–1818), *Rice Fields* from *Soken Gafu Sōka no Bu* (1806)

13. **ANONYMOUS**, *Drunkard* from *Toba-e Ōgi no Mato* (1720)

14. **MATSUYA JICHŌSAI** (? –1803?; active 1781–88), *Music* from *Gahon Kochōzu Gahi* (1805)

15. **YAMAGUCHI SOKEN** (1759–1818), *Planting* from *Yamato Jinbutsu Gafu Kōhen* (1804)

16. **YAMAGUCHI SOKEN** (1759–1818), *Woodcutter* from *Yamato Jinbutsu Gafu Kōhen* (1804)

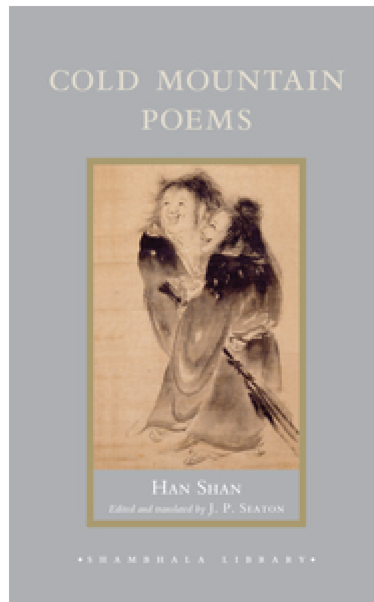
17. **ANONYMOUS**, *Fox-Monk* from *Toba-e Ōgi no Mato* (1720)

18. **SESSON SHŪKEI** (1504?–1589?), *Crow* from *Kingyoku Gafu* (1771)

19. **IKE TAIGA** (1723–76), *Boating* from *Taiga/I Fukyō Gafu* (1803)

20. **IKE TAIGA** (1723–76), *Willows* from *Meika Gafu* (1814)

Excerpt from *Cold Mountain Poems* by Han Shan, edited and translated by J. P. Seaton



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Introduction

HAN SHAN AND SHIH TE have been the most popular icons of Mahayana Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism in particular, for more than a thousand years. Their poetry traveled to Japan nearly as quickly as Zen itself, and there, as in China, it inspired a popular and long-lasting tradition of paintings, and of rubbings from stone-carved images of their figures. Like those images, the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te has survived everywhere into the present century. They are poets to laugh with, to make friends with, and to recognize, easily, as bodhisattvas, Buddhist saints whose purpose in life, and in life after life, is to help each of us to reach nirvana, the release from the suffering of eternal reincarnation. Quite a load for two laughing madmen dressed in rags to carry? But it is one they bear lightly and more than willingly.

In 1958, only a decade after D. T. Suzuki introduced Zen to enthusiastic crowds of American artists and intellectuals in a series of lectures at Columbia University, Gary Snyder, one of the most influential poets of the Beat Generation, published the first translations of Han Shan's poems into American English. The Beat's great novelist Jack Kerouac embodied Han Shan in a character based on Snyder himself and further embedded the image of Han Shan in young Americans' hearts and souls, quoting Snyder's translation of Han Shan in his hugely successful novel *The Dharma*

Bums. Shih Te, always a sidekick, has tagged along through the centuries.

Wang Fan-chih, the third Zen poet in this selection, created his mordant and sometimes truly funny poetry a couple of centuries after Han Shan, in the outsider tradition founded in China by the mountain sage. Then, as the T'ang dynasty collapsed around them, Wang Fan-chih's complete works, along with a batch of unrelated work labeled with his name, were hidden carefully in a monastic library around the year 1000. They rested there until the beginning of the twentieth century, almost as if they were waiting for another age of urban ghettos and seemingly hopeless poverty, of collapsing empires and visions of apocalyptic change. As these approach, Wang Fan-chih is ready to join his fellow Zen masters in the titanic struggle to save us all from suffering.

In their poems and in the pictures that are so much a part of their tradition, we see Han Shan and Shih Te: always the pair, ragged, yes, but always laughing too—sometimes with pure joy—maybe because they know something wonderful? Sometimes pointedly laughing at themselves, and, more daringly, sometimes pointedly laughing at the readers' follies, that's mine, and yours too. They wrote their poems on trees, on rocks, on the walls of farmers' homes, and on the walls of the monasteries they sometimes visited, taking menial work, as they did in the kitchen at Kuo-ch'ing Temple, a famous pilgrimage site in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in southeast China. But they didn't observe the monastic discipline, and they were never dependable servants, being drawn to hike off toward a cave on Cold Mountain's side, their true home. There, according to the traditional story, finally cornered by temple officials, Han Shan went into the cave at Cold Cliff and *pulled it shut*

behind him, leaving his admirers to collect and hand down more than 350 poems by the two poets.

In fact, though I'll follow the convention of treating them as two individuals, Han Shan and Shih Te are pseudonyms given to several poets who wrote poetry and lived the lives of mountain mystics during the two or three centuries (sixth through eigth) when Zen itself was breaking free of the institutionalized Buddhist churches of T'ang dynasty China and establishing itself as the most Chinese of Buddhisms. Zen did this by emphasizing meditation over scriptural study ("Zen" literally means "meditation") and, maybe even more importantly, by incorporating the wisdom and the humor of the great Taoist sages Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Han Shan became one of Zen's foremost popular representatives, its central, independent, layman saint. Though he used the simplest time-honored verse forms, he spoke in a voice with an almost completely new tone. His poetry became the voice of ordinary people, liberating the common sense of the people, and though it was largely ignored by critics and bibliographers, it remains popular among poets and poetry lovers.

The branch of Buddhism that came to China from India was Mahayana, and all Mahayana Buddhist institutions are missionary institutions, in accordance with the vision of the historical Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni. I believe that the high monks and abbots of Ch'an, as Zen was called in China, saw the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te for one of the things it certainly was, an outstanding tool for teaching the basic principles of Buddhism. I suspect they intentionally brought the institutional power of their church to the cause of creating a book, a collection of the poems of the two poets, adding to it a few poems of generic Buddhist doctrine and dogma. This collection, with the force of Ch'an and of its ally Pure Land Buddhism behind it in every succeeding dynasty, survived the vicissitudes of time to

provide a continuing source of solace and inspiration into the present era.

The tall tale of Han Shan and Shih Te disappearing into the cave is certainly a beguiling one. We are told that several hundred years after Han Shan first started writing his poems on trees and rocks, an imperial Confucian official named Lu-ch'iu Yin (whom history has provided with two lifetimes, or sets of dates anyway, and maybe even one real official office, though not anywhere near the T'ien-t'ai Range) came along and wrote an account of his own short encounter with the two, by then transmogrified into the bodhisattvas Manjusri (known as Wen-shu in Chinese) and Samantabhadra (known as P'u-hsien). This is the story which has come down to us, in a couple of very similar versions, for more than a thousand years.

Lu-ch'iu Yin's memoir is a neat little essay that appears to tell us just about everything we need to know about both Han Shan and Shih Te. There are two very similar, popular versions. The shorter version comes from the introduction to Han Shan's poems in the *Ch'üan T'ang Shih*, the great collection of T'ang dynasty poems. There are several available in English, including Gary Snyder's from 1958. The following is mine:

> Nobody knows where Master Han Shan came from. He lived at Cold Cliff, in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in T'ang-hsing County, sometimes coming in to visit Kuo-ch'ing Temple. He wore a fancy birch-bark hat, a ragged cotton coat, and worn-out sandals. Sometimes he'd sing, or chant verses in the temple porches. Other times he'd sit out at farmers' houses, singing and whistling. No one ever really got to know him.
>
> Lu-ch'iu Yin had received a government appointment in Tan-ch'iu, and when he was just about to debark to take up his post, he happened to run into Feng Kan, who told

him he'd just come from the T'ien-t'ai area. Lu-ch'iu Yin asked him if there were any sages there with whom he might study. "There's Han Shan, who is an incarnation of Wen-shu, and Shih Te, who is an incarnation of P'u-hsien. They tend the fires of the kitchens in the granary at Kuo-ch'ing Temple."

The third day after he'd taken up his position, Lu-ch'iu Yin went in person to the temple and, seeing the two men, bowed in appropriate fashion. The two burst out laughing and said, "Oh that Feng Kan, what a tongue-flapping blabbermouth! Amitabha! [*Note the Buddha's name taken in vain as a light oath*.] We can't imagine what you'd be bowing to us for!" And with that they went straight out of the temple, back to Cold Cliff. Master Han Shan disappeared into a cave, and then the cave closed up behind him. It had been his habit to inscribe his poems on bamboo and trees and rocks and cliff faces. Those, along with the ones he wrote on the walls of farmers' homes, inside and out, came to 307. They are collected here in one volume.

There are more than just several problems with this tale, historically speaking. To begin with, the quasi-narrator, the official Lu-ch'iu Yin, is a person who doesn't exist in any of the dynastic histories. Feng Kan, the Zen master and authority for the authenticity of Han Shan and Shih Te, has existence issues too. The only evidence he ever *was* is this story, and a couple like it in which he's a character. He is known to history solely as the man who told Lu-ch'iu Yin that two Buddhist holy men lived near the county office where he was about to take up his post. Feng Kan is enshrined in the modern biographical dictionary of Buddhist monks as a "tongue wagger" in language that was clearly taken from this story. To put it mildly, Feng Kan is

the nearly perfect example of an almost living, breathing fictional character.

If we accept that both Lu-ch'iu Yin and Feng Kan are bogus—though excellent scholars who are brilliant men of goodwill have pursued their shadows in many interesting directions—we can surmise that they are certainly in the introduction for a reason. In history, historical characters sort of have to be included, but in fiction, the characters are created as tools of the narrative. The traditional introduction to the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te is propaganda. There is enough real poetry attributed to the name Han Shan to substantiate the existence of a historical person (or more likely, persons) we can call Han Shan. The introduction, with its fictional account of Han Shan, tells the readers that Han Shan was a religious seeker, a man called to the life of the religious hermit, and, finally, a boddhisattva, a person who has achieved supernatural powers rather like a saint in Roman Catholicism, capable of interceding on behalf of suffering humanity.

What can we surmise about the real poet, or poets? We are told that "he lived at Cold Cliff." The search for an idea of what the real Han Shan was like can begin there. Cold Cliff, or Han Yen, is a real place, a cliff in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in southeast China where hermit seekers had lived for millennia. The earliest of these were Taoists. Then, as Buddhism arrived from the west after the year 100 or so, both Taoists and Buddhists sat there. They found and occupied places where they could weather the winter cold, maybe foraging a little firewood against the worst of it. They dug roots and dried herbs for medicine and for food. Maybe they even planted a few soybeans, though the Taoists generally excluded grains from their diets. And finally, and that was the purpose of it all, they sat in meditation. Every time the word "sit" appears in a poem by Han Shan or Shih Te, it means to sit, cross-legged on the ground or on a simple straw mat, *in meditation*. For the

Taoist, it is the “sitting forgetting” that is intended to free him of the memory of words, the memory which separates him from the Tao, which, according to Lao Tzu, cannot be described in words. For the Buddhist, “sitting” refers to the deep mind meditation that is the eighth and final step in the Buddha’s Eightfold Path, the prescription for getting free of samsara, free of illusion, free of suffering. In Sanskrit, the Indian literary language that is the basis of Mahayana Buddhism, this sort of meditation is called *dhyana*, pronounced *ch’an* in Chinese and *zen* in Japanese. Emphasis on sitting meditation as the source of ultimate enlightenment is one feature of both Taoism and Buddhism that the poems of Han Shan, Shih Te, and Wang Fan-chih all share.

The Lu-ch’iu Yin introduction also tells us that Han Shan lived intentionally on the edges of society and that, like a lot of people who live on its edges (religious seekers, artists of all kinds, even literary translators), Han Shan had what amounts to a day job. The poems show us a man who’d rather be *sitting* or re-creating his insights and inspirations in poetry to share with friends, or, like a bodhisattva, with all sentient beings. But, being a human in a body, Han Shan came from time to time to Kuo-ch’ing Temple to pick up a little work. If you’re going to spend time in the hills prospecting for something worth more than gold, you need a grubstake. You need to buy a few supplies, salt and oil, onions, a few pounds of rice. Though stories tell of hermits living on dew and sunlight, they also tell of hermits who pull their caves shut behind them. Those who tried the dew and sunlight diet most likely didn’t thrive. So our outsider Han Shan came, when he ran out of grub, to a monastery. On the way in and the way out, except when being pursued by gawking monks and pilgrims and meddling authorities, he visited with the local farmers. We’ll see in the poems that he had a familiar and sympathetic relationship with

farmers and farming. He left poems in repayment for their shelter and gifts.

So, despite the exaggerations, the tall tale gives us a pretty realistic picture of a hermit-poet. My personal guess about the real origin of the Han Shan poetry is this: The poetry of the many hermits who lived on Han Shan (Cold Mountain) and Han Yen (Cold Cliff), two real locations in the T’ien-t’ai Range, was becoming famous well before anyone thought to pull all the poems together. The T’ien-t’ai Range was home to many temples and places of pilgrimage, and even today, or again today, cliffs in the area are adorned with poems both brush written and stone incised. Some of the best of the latter are the sources of the rubbings mentioned above. It’s quite possible that *Shan Han Shih* (Han Shan’s Poems) originally meant the poems written or displayed *at* Han Shan, rather than poems *by* a poet named Han Shan. I doubt anyone will pin Han Shan down any further than he has been at this point, either through good scholarship (the scholars agree that there are at least two Han Shans) or through educated guessing like mine. But there is a little more to be said about the poetry of Han Shan as it has come down to us.

Among these poems are many that appear to come from the best poetry of mountain hermits of Taoist, Buddhist, and maybe even free-agent mystics, with a sprinkling of more orthodox Buddhist work and some poems on themes appropriate to all three Chinese religions. For, as the Chinese have liked to say for millennia, “The three Ways are one.” Among the works of Han Shan, along with the mountain poems, are a few very fine poems of traditional Confucian rural retirement and a few that are modeled on the best of the Taoist epicurean poems. There are also a few poems that fairly unconvincingly claim familiarity with or achievement in the cultural accomplishments of the Confucian, even of military men. Add a few bits of moral exhortation, some of which are very funny and clearly

intended to be so, and some of which are not, and you have the Han Shan collection, 307 poems in the Chinese collection and 311 in the Japanese.

If there was something like a conspiracy to package these poems and present them as the work of a bodhisattva, I gratefully accept the gift. If the fractal and chaotic workings of human history (or pure accident, if you prefer) have been the only source of this great collection of poetry, I gratefully accept that miracle as well. My own selection was guided, frankly, almost entirely by my own taste. That is, I translated the poems I like the best, of Han Shan as well as of Shih Te and Wang Fan-chih. I did try to show examples of every type of poem that didn't bore me or go beyond my personal knowledge of Buddhist philosophy. There aren't many of the last category, not because I'm an expert, but because, essentially, "deep" philosophy, of which there is much in other schools of Buddhism, just isn't a Zen thing, and it certainly is not Han Shan's thing.

Han Shan's name means "Cold Mountain," and many of his poems really are about mountains. Some simply describe the beauty of mountain scenery, with just a hint of perhaps undiscoverable allegory. There are also poems about the hardship of living in the mountains, being almost always cold and almost never not hungry. These are convincing in their realism, and at the same time they suggest the real difficulty of the life of the spiritual seeker: Allegory lives between the lines. Then there are the arrogant challenges thrown in the faces of other climbers: "If your heart were like mine, you'd be here already," an example of the rough rhetoric of the *ma-jen tajen* (curse people, smack people) style. These will remind you of certain koans—contemporary, most likely, to many of the Han Shan poems—that became the teaching and learning devices of some schools of modern Zen. That rough style, apparent in Han Shan's response to the official Lu-ch'iu Yin and the monk Feng Kan in the story, is an important feature

of many of the poems of all three poets in this collection, but it begins in Han Shan and is certainly most obvious there. Finally, at the tip of Han Shan's peak, there is the perfect mystical vision. You'll know these poems when you read them, even in my English, I deeply hope. I assure you that some of them would take your breath away if you could read the original Chinese. And, contrary to popular wisdom, it is never too late to learn.

What the best poems share—whether they're about a farmer's life, a poor man's struggles, or a sharp rebuke for anyone who strays from the path of Buddhist morality—what they really share is an attempt at sharpening the readers' awareness of their surroundings and at elevating their view: moral, ethical, political, and spiritual. The best poems are, themselves, mountains for us to climb, maybe to live on for a while, certainly to watch from at least one morning as the sun burns the mist away.

The story of Shih Te is simpler, both in the classical tale and in the poems themselves. In the story, when Han Shan goes into the cave and it closes behind him, Shih Te simply disappears—maybe not from the face of the earth itself like Han Shan, but from the little narrative. He doesn't go with Han Shan; he's just gone. (In his own *Ch'üan T'ang Shih* introduction, he does disappear a little more apparently.) In the longer version of the story, Feng Kan does a little shamanic healing, and Shih Te makes an appearance as a ten-year-old orphaned street urchin, who is discovered along the way to Kuo-ch'ing Temple by Feng Kan. He grows to maturity as a kitchen worker there. The reference to Shih Te is at least slightly at odds with his description as Han Shan's mountain partner, but I hope I have already established that this narrative is designed as propaganda, and consistency isn't a necessary part of that process.

I believe that in fact Shih Te is the pseudonym of a group of later poets. A little voice tells me that many disciples of Han Shan, or admirers of his style, might have, out of respect for the master, written anonymous poems and left them, like Han Shan, on trees and on rocks among the T’ien-t’ai ridges and crags. Maybe they just added them to the manuscript as it passed through their hands, copying or having it copied to pass on to poetry-loving friends. During the entire T’ang dynasty, all written works were created, copied, and circulated in manuscript, in handwriting. Printing wasn’t put into general use until after the year 1000. The reputation of Tu Fu, for example, for nearly a thousand years considered the greatest of the great among Chinese poets, took a couple of centuries to fully blossom. Han Shan’s fame, like Tu Fu’s, spread not so much by word of mouth as by word of hand.

After “Han Shan” began to be recognized as the name of a person, I’m supposing that the same sort of admirers who would previously have simply added a poem while copying the manuscript to pass on, now wrote poems using the more humble pseudonym of Shih Te (which simply means something like “the Orphan”). I think that these later poets might have identified themselves not as the master himself, but as his spiritual adopted children. Only one Shih Te poem mentions Han Shan directly, but many are clearly imitations of specific Han Shan poems. Quite a few, like the later poems in the Han Shan collection, fall into the category I’d call propagandistic filler. The Shih Te poets don’t appear to have included any mystics, but several of the poems are as funny and as imaginative as anything of Han Shan’s, and I think you’ll find them fun to read. By the usual count, there are only forty-nine extant poems by Shih Te, and I’ve chosen to translate just twenty.

After the T’ang many well-known poets wrote poems in the manner of Han Shan, signing them with their own names but attributing the inspiration to Han Shan. I don’t

know of anyone who so honored the humble orphan poet except two Zen masters, the famous and powerful Ch'an abbot Ch'u Shih of the Yuan dynasty and an anonymous Ming master who called himself for this purpose Shih Shu ("Rocks and Trees"). Both of these poets wrote lockstep harmony poems (poems written using the same words in the rhyming positions in the poems as had Han Shan) with a poem for every single one of Han Shan's collected poems. They also wrote a harmony poem for each of Shih Te's, and even for the two extant poems by Feng Kan.

The poems attributed to Wang Fan-chih have a history that is different from those of the two mountain masters. These poems were popular among urban folk of the late T'ang, a period when the dynasty was gasping itself away in paroxysms of famine, pestilence, and war. Fewer than a dozen of his poems survive, having been cited by mainstream poets in their own collections of favorites. Like Han Shan and Shih Te, the men themselves, the majority of Wang Fan-chih's poems were sealed away in a cave, in this case in the caverns of the great Buddhist-Taoist monastic library at Tun-huang, on the eastern end of the Silk Road, around the year 1000, when Chinese forces were clearly losing control of the region. The cavern was only reopened in the early years of the twentieth century, and Wang Fan-chih's poems weren't looked at closely by Westerners until after 1950.

The complete translation of the more than three scrolls attributed to Wang Fan-chih, into clear and unpretentious scholarly French by the great Sinologist Paul Demiéville, reveals that everything from radical political statements to Buddhist elementary school copybook morality verses had been stuck together under the Wang Fan-chih label. No more than ten poems by Wang Fan-chih have ever previously been translated into English. When I first looked

at the originals of these poems, I was surprised. This poet is, like Han Shan and Shih Te, one who has been constructed from a group of anonymous poets, in Wang Fan-chih’s case clearly mainly poets of the late T’ang. There is a lot of trash in the Wang Fan-chih collection, but there are maybe fifty or sixty poems that were really exciting to discover. Digging through the collection for the good ones made me appreciate Han Shan’s editors for the first time. Wang Fan-chih’s themes include the familiar Buddhist-Taoist eclectic mix, and I don’t doubt that Han Shan and Shih Te would have understood and appreciated the poet’s motives, or his poems. Some few are brilliant, even though the poets whom this pseudonym gathers together were certainly poorly educated. Some of the best poems, indeed, appear to be almost what we’d call graffiti, and I can see guerilla artists splashing these short and combative poems on walls in the dead of night.

While Han Shan and Shih Te sometimes tell tales of poverty and suffering as well, Wang Fan-chih’s life was lived in a time of true cultural fugue, and many of his poems reflect terrible human suffering, felt or observed, that goes far beyond anything we see in the work of the earlier poets. They had chosen something like voluntary poverty in the most beautiful of surroundings. Wang Fan-chih dwells with rats in the midst of pestilence and starvation.

Wang Fan-chih’s name means simply, “Mr. Wang, a Buddhist layman.” While he may seem cynical, and he can certainly be cruelly witty, his motive is always a Buddhist’s, namely to save sentient beings from suffering. His poems concentrate on proving the first of the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths, that “life is suffering,” and so the poetry is often morbid, even macabre. He’s always ready to puncture hypocritical public displays of piety, and he’s always ready to point at the absolute material truth of death and the pointlessness of pride or of the accumulation of material

possessions. He seems an angry man, even a political rebel, and it is harder to see his displays of anger as rhetorical—made to make a moral point—than it is for similar outbursts in the poetry of Han Shan or Shih Te. Acceptance of the first of the Four Noble Truths is the absolutely necessary first step in the Buddha's Way, a way providing eight steps that are chosen solely for the purpose of releasing humankind from that suffering. Mr. Wang is happy to rub his readers' faces in the mud, and not afraid to add in a measure of shit and piss to the recipe in his effort to get self-satisfied, greedy folks like us to see his point. His voice sometimes seems like an Old Testament prophet's, though his solution to the suffering caused by the impermanence and injustice of human life in the world involves no deity. But he can also display the salving humor of a saint, mocking his own grinding poverty as he prepares for a guest by scraping together a "chair" from the dirt of an earthen floor.

I originally planned to add only a few of Wang Fan-chih's poems to this book, to help to broaden most readers' view of what Buddhism was in the T'ang and show what it is or can be in an urbanized world. The book has ended up with more of Wang Fan-chih's poems than Shih Te's because, while Shih Te offers a valuable and enjoyable reprise of Han Shan's ideas, it seems to me the lay Buddhist Wang Fan-chih's poetry shows that the tradition of the outsider, the free agent and the free spirit, initiated by Han Shan and Shih Te, was alive and scuffling in the cruel streets of a failing society. It seems particularly ripe for reincarnation in this century.

Beneath the morning mist on the mountainside or the dust of the mundane activities of city streets, these poets have hidden some of the way they have found, some of the truth of the light. They may *appear* to have hidden these

things simply because words can do no more than give a glimmer of the light of the spirit; but poets think, I think, that a poem can do more than “mere words” can. A well-made poem may give us aid when we are ready, or if, *if* we are willing to study, *if* we will work, *if* we move on to meditate. With the aid of the well-made poem, we may, finally, discover the light on the mountain, in, through, or behind the obscuring mist, or rising, far, far off, above the dust of the city streets, so that the sun and the moon of *their* enlightenment may become the light of *our own* revelations. The poems of these three poets are, if we choose to let them be, no more, and no less, than fingers pointing. The Way will be what is revealed, and the beauty of what is revealed may help to draw us, as seekers, on through arduous meditation, on through the arduous and sometimes dangerous mountain climb. But as Shih Te says,

> My poems are poems,
> even if *some people* call them sermons.
> Well, poems and sermons do share one thing;
> when you read them you got to be careful.
> Keep at it. Get into detail.
> Don’t just claim they’re easy.
> If you were to live your *life* like that,
> a lot of funny things might happen.

I

Ranges, ridges, daunting cliffs, I chose this place with
divination’s aid.
The road’s for the birds, no man tracks there.
And what is the yard? White clouds clothe
dark stone. I lived here years, watching
springs with The Great Change become winter.
Here’s a word for the rich folks with cauldrons and bells:
Fame’s empty, no good, *that’s* for sure.

II

Cold Mountain Road's a joke,
no cart track, no horse trail.
Creeks like veins, but still it's hard to mark
the twists. Fields and fields of crags for crops,
it's hard to say how many.
Tears of dew upon a thousand kinds of grasses;
the wind sings best in one kind of pine.
And now I've lost my way again:
Body asking shadow, "Which way from here?"

III

If you’re looking for a peaceful place,
Cold Mountain’s always a refuge.
A little breeze, breath of the shaded pines,
and if you listen close, the music’s even better.
Under the pines a graying man,
soft, soothingly, reading aloud from Lao Tzu.

IV

My mind’s the autumn moon,
shining in the blue-green pool,
reflecting glistening, clear and pure . . .
There’s nothing to compare it to,
what else can I say?

V

In the city, the moth-browed girl,
her jade pendants like tiny wind chimes chiming.
She is playing with a parrot in the flowers;
she is playing on her *p'i-p'a* in the moonlight.
Her songs will echo for three months;
a little dance will draw ten thousand watchers.
Nothing lasts as long as this:
beautiful face of the hibiscus,
can't bear the frost's caress.

VI

I always wanted to go to East Cliff,
more years than I can remember,
until today I just grabbed a vine
and started up. Halfway up
wind and a heavy mist closed in,
and the narrow path tugged at my shirt:
it was hard to get on. The slickery
mud under the moss on the rocks
gave way, and I couldn’t keep going.
So here I stay, under this cinnamon tree,
white clouds for my pillow,
I’ll just take a nap.

VII

I sit beneath the cliff, quiet and alone.
Round moon in the middle of the sky's a bird ablaze:
all things are seen mere shadows in its brilliance,
that single wheel of perfect light . . .
Alone, its spirit naturally comes clear.
Swallowed in emptiness in this cave of darkest mystery,
because of the finger pointing, I saw the moon.
That moon became the pivot of my heart.

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