

Taneda Santōka (種田 山頭火, 1882 -1940)

自選句集  
Self Selected Verse Collection

『草木塔』  
“Plant Pagoda”

Translations by Ronald S. Green  
Coastal Carolina University, 2015

[Note: The translations below try to preserve the structures of Santōka's poems and prose, leaving it to the reader to feel these out as I believe he did. I surely could be wrong and almost certainly am in some of my interpretations. Given the nature of these poems, how could it be otherwise? This document is only the first ten pages of my translation of Santōka's *Plant Pagoda*. If you have comments, suggestions, corrections, alternative readings and/or interpretations, etc., I'd love to hear them! Email me at [rgreen@coastal.edu](mailto:rgreen@coastal.edu). Thanks. -rg]

若うして死をいそぎたまへる  
母上の霊前に  
本書を供へまつる  
While she was young, it was as if death had rushed  
before the spirit of my mother  
this text is given in offering

[note: The text is not only dedicated to his mother, but offered, as if on an altar, to her spirit. The second line works independently with both the first and third, uniting them.]

鉢の子  
Child of a bowl

大正十四年二月、いよいよ出家得度して肥後の  
片田舎なる味取観音堂守となつたが、それはま  
ことに山林独住の、しづかといへばしづかな、  
さびしいと思へばさびしい生活であつた。

In the second month of Taishō 14, when at last I left home and became a monk, I went to the remote countryside of Higo, where I became director of the Mitori Kannon hall. There was a true mountain forest solitary dwelling. If you say it was quiet, quietness; if you think it was sad, sadness was the lifestyle.

松はみな枝垂れて南無観世音  
The pines all bend branches and “Namu Kanzeon”

松風に明け暮れの鐘撞いて  
In the pine wind, dawn and dusk bell striking

ひさしぶりに掃く垣根の花が咲いてゐる  
It's been a long time, cleaning the rustic fence with flowers

[One sense is that although he may have cleaned the fence, it has not had flowers since last year.]

大正十五年四月、解くすべもない惑いを背負うて、行乞流転の旅に出た。  
4th month of Taisho 15 (1926), burdened with confusion I am unable to solve, left for a wandering begging journey.

分け入っても分け入っても青い山  
Parting and going in more, parting and going in more, green mountains  
[Green mountains probably indicate young leaves of spring.]

しとどに濡れてこれは道しるべの石  
Drenched wet and this is a guidepost stone

炎天をいただいて乞ひ歩く  
Humbly receiving hot weather, on a begging walk

放哉居士の作に和して  
Blending with the work of the scholar Hōsai  
[Ozaki Hōsai, 尾崎 放哉, 1885-1926, wrote “Even coughing - I am alone.”]

鴉啼いてわたしも一人  
The crow singing and I am also alone

生を明らめ死を明らむるは仏家一大事の因縁なり（修証義）  
“Shedding light on life, shedding light on death, becomes a Buddhist priest's most important interdependent cause.”  
[Excerpt from the *Shushōgi*, an abridged version of the *Shōbōgenzō* by Zen master Dōgen compiled at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.]

生死の中の雪ふりしきる  
The snow between life and death pours down.

木の葉散る歩きつめる  
The tree leaves have fallen, my walk is full  
[“Full” may indicate he has walked his limit. Hisashi Miura and James Green omit this poem.]

昭和二年三年、惑は山陽道、惑は山陰道、惑は四国九州をあてもなくさまよふ。  
Showa 2-3, either in Sanyō or Sanin province, Shikoku or Kyūshū aimlessly.

踏みわける萩よすすきよ  
Dividing steps, Bush Clover, Silver Grass  
[In Hisashi Miura and James Green's translation, Santōka's steps are dividing the plants.]

この旅、果もない旅のつくつくぼうし  
This journey, a journey without end, cicada  
[note: *Tsukutsuku bōshi* has a double meaning of cicada and Buddhist teacher. An alternative rendering would be: This journey, a journey without end, the Buddhist teachings]

へうへうとして水を味ふ  
A little aloof from the world, enjoy water

落ちかかる月を観てゐるに一人  
Contemplating the moon that is about to drop alone

ひとりで蚊にくはれてゐる  
By itself, the mosquito's body swells up

投げだしてまだ陽のある脚  
Giving up but still legs have sun.

山の奥から繭角うて来た  
From the mountain's interior, came carrying a cocoon.  
[This indicates that he found a cocoon on him that he had carried from the mountain but implies more.]

笠にとんぼをとまらせてあるく  
In the hat, the dragonfly stopped walking

歩きつづける彼岸花咲きつづける  
Walking continuing, Amaryllis flowers blooming continuing  
[Higan 彼岸 (Amaryllis) is also the name for the other bank of the river of death.]

まつすくな道でさみしい  
Going by the straight road is lonely.

だまつて今日の草鞋穿く  
Silent and put on today's straw sandals

ほろほろ酔うて木の葉ふる  
Dribbling drunk and a tree leaf falls

しぐるるや死なないである  
Rainfall and I am not dead

張りかへた障子のなかの一人  
The solitude inside repapered shōji

水に影ある旅人である  
The shadow in the water is that of the traveler

雪がふるふる雪見てをれば

Snow falling, falling, snow, if I look,

[note: The snow is falling silently. Its existence first appears and becomes a reality when he turns and looks. This is analogous to the things of the world that appear to the eyes and ears. Santōka has given up his family and society that only exists over there when he turns to look. Looking back, he sees only the snow that separates him from the social world.]

しぐるるやしぐるる山へ歩み入る

Late autumn rain ah, late autumn rain, walking into the mountains.

(p. 14)

食べるだけはいただいた雨となり

Only (enough) to eat, humbly received, rain begins

[another translator says: Begging - Receiving just enough to eat, It began to rain.  
The middle line works with the first and third, i.e., he humbly received the food and the rain.]

木の芽草の芽あるきつづける

Tree buds, early buds, continue walking

生き残つたからだ掻いてゐる

Still alive, scratching (my) body

昭和四年も五年もまた歩きつづけるより外なかつた。あなたこなたと九州地方を流浪したことである。

Showa 4-5, continuing walking from other places. Wandering here and there in the Kyūshū region.

わかれきてつくつくぼうし

Coming to bid farewell, a cicada

[note: as above, *Tsukutsuku bōshi* has a double meaning of cicada and Buddhist teacher.]

また見ることもない山が遠ざかる

I will see no more, going away from the mountain

[note: the dual sense seems to be he will never see the mountain again and he loses his vision when leaving the mountains.]

こほろぎに鳴かれてばかり

To crickets, chirping until almost hoarse.

[With their sound, / Nothing but crickets / Deluging me. (Tr. by Hisashi Miura and James Green)  
Crickets are chirping, / Chirping to me all the time. (Tr. by Takashi Nonin)]

れいろうとして水鳥はつるむ

When clear, the waterfowl copulate.

百舌鳥啼いて身の捨てどころなし

The shrike sings, nowhere to throw away the body

(p. 16)

どうしようもないわたしが歩いてゐる  
What else could I do, I am walking.

涸れきつた川を渡る

Coming to be dried up, crossing the river.

[note: One interpretation may be that he is all dried up although crossing a river, which implies lacking in an abundant world. On the other hand, crossing a river that has dried up implies leaving a world that is no longer useful.]

ぶらさがつてゐる烏瓜は二つ

Hanging on, two bird gourds (Japanese snake gourds)

大観峰

Daikanbō (a mountain peak in Kyūshū)

すすきのひかりさえぎるものなし  
Silver Grass light is not obstructed

分け入れば水音

If parting and going in, water sound

[note: One possibility is that he walks between sounds of water. Another is that he enters the water.]

すべつてころんで山がひつそり

Sliding and falling, mountain silence

味々居

(At Mimi's house)

雨の山茶花の散るでもなく  
Mountain rain does not scatter the tea flowers.

しきりに落ちる大きい葉かな

Very often fall, big leaves aren't they?

[note: Does this mean that once leaves get big they fall, just like people? Does it mean he hears something falling and perhaps it is big leaves?]

(p. 18)

けさもよい日の星一つ

This morning it is also a good one-star day

すっかり枯れて豆となつてゐる

Completely, the beans are becoming withered

つかれた脚へとんぼとまつた

On tired legs, dragonfly waiting

枯山飲むほどの水はありて  
The withered mountain fully drinks the water

(p. 19)

捨てきれない荷物のおもさまへうしろ  
Threw away the weight of unclean baggage, in front and back

法衣こんなにやぶれて草の実  
Dharma robes like these, torn and grass seeds

旅のかきおき書きかへておく  
Travel notes left behind, rewritten and put up

岩かげまさしく水が湧いてゐる  
In the shadow of the rock, certainly water is springing up  
[other translator: Behind the boulder, Water trickling, Just as I thought.]

(p. 20)

あの雲がおとした雨にぬれてゐる  
That cloud in the falling rain is getting wet

ここに白髪を剃り落して去る  
Here shaven white hair drop and leave  
[While we could read this “Here the shaven white hair drops and is left” or “Drop the shaven white hair and go”, it might also imply that the hair too leaves.]

秋となつた雑草にすわる  
Turned autumn sitting in weeds

こんなにうまい水があふれてゐる  
Like this delicious water, overflowing

(p. 21)

年とれば故郷こひしいつくつくぼうし  
If becoming old (if a year) missing hometown Tsukutsuku Bōshi (cicada)

岩が岩に薊咲かせてゐる  
The rocks are causing thistles to bloom in rocks

それでよろしい落葉を掃く  
So, good fallen leaves are swept  
[“As they are, Things are fine, Sweeping fallen leaves” (Tr. by Hisashi Miura and James Green)]

水音といつしよに里へ下りて来た  
Together with the water sound, came down to the village

(p.22)

しみじみ食べる飯ばかりの飯である

Heartily eating, it is a meal/rice of only meal/rice.

["Eating this rice-only meal, Quietly, Alone. \* Quietly" in the translation is '*shimijimi*' in Japanese, which is not possible to render precisely in English. Its feeling is being cold, alone, yet quietly and reverentially accepting the way things are." (Tr. and asterisk note by Hisashi Miura and James Green)]

まったく雲がない笠をぬぎ

No clouds at all, take off hat

墓がならんでそこまで波がおしよせて

To where graves are lined up, waves push near

酔うてこほろぎと寝てみたよ

Drunk and with a cricket slept yo!

昧々居 (At Maimaikyo's house)

[the home of Ogiwara Seisensui, the pen name of Ogiwara Tōkichi (1884 - 1976), who was the sponsor of the poetry magazine (*Sōun* (層雲 "Layered Clouds"). It was owned by bank proprietor Matsugaki Maimaikyo.]

また逢へた山茶花も咲いてゐる

Again, encountered mountain tea flowers blooming

雨だれの音も年とつた

Raindrop sound also becoming old

見すばらしい影とおもふに木の葉ふる

See wonderful/superb shadow and in thought/think/wonder, tree leaves fall

緑平居 二句 (At Ryokuhei's house two verses)

逢ひたい、捨炭《ボタ》山が見えだした

Wanting to meet, (from) Bota Mountain, I could see

[Santōka is visiting his friend and could already see his house from nearby Bota Mountain.]

(p. 24)

枝をさしのべてゐる冬木

Offering branches, winter tree

物乞ふ家もなくなり山には雲

Begging for things, coming to not have a home, a cloud in the mountains

あるひは乞ふことをやめ山を観てゐる

Perhaps stopped begging, contemplating the mountains

述懐 stating feelings [or recollections]

笠も漏りだしたか

The hat also leaked, didn't it?

霜夜の寝床がどこかにあらう

Where might there be a frosty night's sleeping floor?

熊本にて In Kumamoto

安か安か寒か寒か雪雪

Peaceful, peaceful; cold, cold; snow, snow

昭和六年、熊本に落ちつくべく努めたけれど、  
どうしても落ちつけなかつた。またもや旅から  
旅へ旅しつづけるばかりである。

Shōwa 6 (1931), although I endeavored to settle down in Kumamoto, I did not settle down. Again, I only continue to travel from trip to trip.

自嘲 (self ridicule)

うしろすがたのしぐれてゆくか

Did the figure behind go by autumn drizzle?

[Santōka often writes about the figure behind, his past self. See the note to the snow falling poem at the top of page 4 above. "A vague shape from behind - Into the drizzle, Disappearing." \* This poem among all of Santōka's haiku is the most difficult to translate accurately. The subject and object and figure-ground relationships are so merged that complete expression of the feeling-impact is impossible." (Tr. and asterisk note by Hisashi Miura and James Green).]

(p.26)

鉄鉢の中へも霰

In the begging bowl also, hailstones

いつまで旅することの爪をきる

How long until the traveling nails are cut

呼子港 Yobukokō

朝凪の島を二つおく

Morning calm islands, two put there

大浦天主堂 Ōuratenshudō (the Catholic church in Nagasaki)

冬雨の石階をのぼるサンタマリヤ

Climbed the winter rain rock stairs, Santa Maria

ほろりとぬけた歯ではある

Touching, it is a tooth that came out

寒い雲がいそぐ

Cold clouds in a hurry



ふるさとは遠くして木の芽  
Hometown far away, trees bud

よい湯からよい月へ出た  
From a good hot spring, a good moon emerged

(p. 28)

はや芽 吹く樹で啼いてゐる  
Early buds, in blowing trees, singing  
[(or) In early budding blowing trees, singing  
“In the trees, the breath of wind, singing the first buds” (from Tr. par André Vendevenne)  
“Among budding trees / Birds are now singing.” (Tr. by Takashi Nonin)]

笠へぽつとり椿だつた  
On the hat, the “*pottori*” (sound) was a camellia

しづかな道となりどくだみの芽  
Beside the quiet path, dokudami spouts  
[Dokudami is a perennial herb native to Japan.]

蕨がもう売られてゐる  
Bracken ferns also are being sold

朝からの騒音へ長い橋かかる  
The long bridge crosses over the noise from the morning

ここにおちつき草萌ゆる  
Here, grass sprouts swaying settles down

いただいて足りて一人の箸をおく  
I humbly receive enough and put down solitary chopsticks

しぐるる土をふみしめてゆく  
Late autumn rain, firmly step on the ground and go

(p. 30)

秋風の石を拾ふ  
Picking up the autumn wind stone (or: Gathering the stone/s of autumn wind)  
[What is a wind stone? Is this similar to senceastesia? Is the wind a stone that can be gathered? This may recall Bashō’s 石山の石より白し秋の風 Whiter than the stones of Stone Mountain, the autumn wind]

今日の道のたんぽぽ咲いた  
The dandelion of today’s road bloomed  
[This seems to imply that the path or experience of walking today can be compared somehow to a dandelion that bloomed.]

## 其中一人

Gochu solitude [Gochu is a hut Santōka built.]

雨ふるふるさとははだしであるく  
Rain falls, hometown, walk barefoot

くりやまで月かげの一人で  
To the kitchen, by one of the moon shadows  
[another's trans. To the kitchen moonlight alone]

かるかやへかるかやのゆれてゐる  
In pampas grass, pampas grass waving

うつりきてお彼岸花の花ざかり  
Change comes and the blooming flowers of a cluster of amaryllis

朝焼雨ふる大根まかう  
Morning glow, rain falls, the daikon are confused

草の実の露の、おちつかうとする  
Doing the calming practice of dew of seeds of grass.  
[“Dew in grass seeds, trying to calm down” (Tr. by Hiroaki Sato). Santōka’s three uses of the possessive particle “no” implies (to me anyway) that his meditation is a part of the possessive series.]

ゆふ空から柚子の一つをもらふ  
From the evening sky, received a single citron

茶の花のちるばかりちらしておく  
The plain fall of tea flowers, accept the scattering  
[By “plain” I mean it is a plain fact that flowers fall, simply. “Letting them fall - As they fall, The tea flowers” (Tr. by Hisashi Miura and James Green). “Tea-blossoms keep falling-- / Let them fall as they do” (Tr. by Takashi Nonin)]

いつしか明けてゐる茶の花  
When did it happen, tea leaves opening  
[いつしか means before one knows it.]

冬が来てゐる木ぎれ竹ぎれ  
Winter coming, trees exhausted, bamboo exhausted  
[(or) Winter coming, wood chopped, bamboo chopped. “Winter has set in-- / Pieces of wood, pieces of bamboo” (Tr. by John Stevens). “Winter is come; / Sticks of wood, / Sticks of bamboo” (Tr. by Takashi Nonin)]

月が昇つて何を待つでもなく  
the moon rises and there is nothing to wait for  
[The moon rises-- / I'm not waiting for anything. (Tr. by John Stevens)]