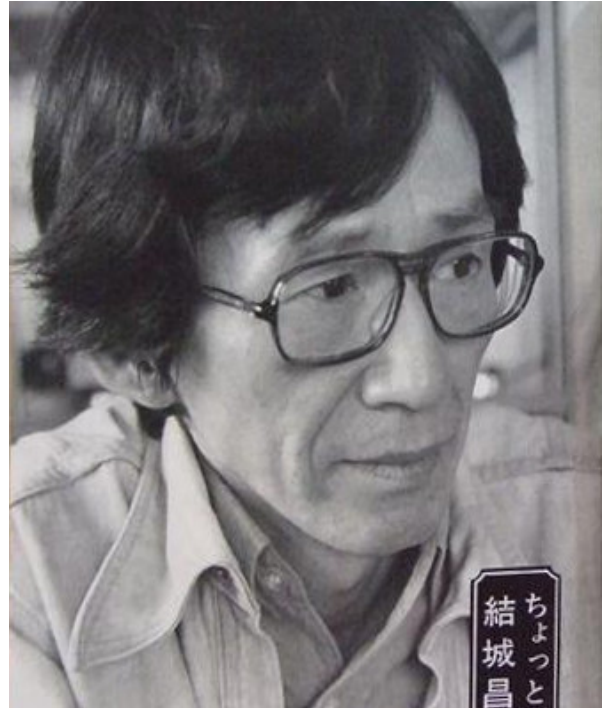


## From the 2.26 Incident to the Atomic Bombs: Haiku During the Asia-Pacific War

Hiroaki Sato

Faubion Bowers (1917-99), a graduate of Columbia University and Juilliard Graduate School of Music, was on his way to Java to explore the music there when he stopped in Japan and accidentally found kabuki. That was in the late 1930s, a few years before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The war over, Bowers served Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Gen. Douglas MacArthur as his aide-de-camp and personal interpreter during the early years of the Occupation of Japan (1945-52). When he resigned his military commission with the rank of major he stayed on as a civilian and proponent of uncensored kabuki banned by the Occupation. For this, he was later called “the savior of kabuki” and decorated by the Japanese government.<sup>1</sup>

One day in the mid-1990s, he gave me a book by Yūki Shōji, *Haiku tsurezuregusa*<sup>2</sup> (俳句つれづれ草. Asahi Shimbun Sha, 1985). Later it occurred to me that at the time Mr. Bowers had just compiled *The Classic Tradition of Haiku: An Anthology* (Dover, 1996), an assemblage of existing translations of better-known haiku.



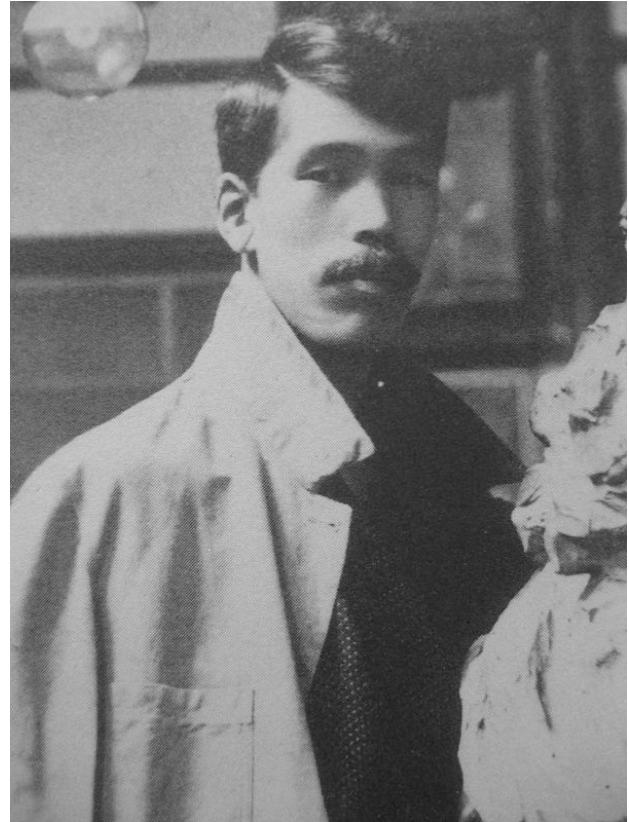
Yūki Shōji

Yūki Shōji (結城昌治 1927-96) was a prolific detective story writer, but in his youth he studied haiku with Ishida Hakyō (石田波郷 1913-69) in a sanatorium where the haiku poet was also battling some lung ailment. Late in his life he decided to reflect on the first half of his life, through hokku and haiku by a range of writers, which coincided with the turbulent, first half of the Shōwa era (1926-89). The result was *Haiku tsurezuregusa*.

During the 1930s censorship became harsh in Japan and, after Japan's military meddling with China took a serious turn in 1937, became even harsher. Once the Pacific War started, it was

felt best to avoid using in print even an old, common kigo like karegiku (枯れ菊, “withered chrysanthemum”) which might be judged to constitute *lèse-majesté*: the chrysanthemum was the Imperial emblem. Yūki cites Ishida Hakyō remembering to note this after the war by quoting a haiku of Matsumoto Takashi’s (松本たかし 1906 – 56): 枯菊と言ひ捨てんには情あり Karegiku to iisuten ni wa nasakeari, “To just say ‘It’s a withered chrysanthemum’ it’s too sensuous.”<sup>3</sup> Naturally, any critical reference to the war that was prosecuted in the name of the Emperor and was thus called the Holy War (*seisen*) could not hope to see print, unless it was so refracted as to make little sense.

This is in no way to suggest that the majority of the Japanese, including haiku poets, opposed the war. Following the 1930s when Japan’s imperialistic adventure got nowhere in China even as militarism and chauvinism came to dominate, the Japanese experienced a collective sense of liberation and intoxication when in December 1941 their country attacked a U.S territory in the Pacific as well as Dutch and British colonies in Southeast Asia and won a string of victories for a couple of months that followed. Such well-known intellectuals as the poet and sculptor Takamura Kōtarō (高村光太郎 1883-1956), the tanka poet and psychiatrist Saitō Mokichi (斎藤茂吉 1882-1953), and the painter Fujita Tsuguharu (藤田嗣治 1886-1968) supported the expansion of the war and mouthed military slogans in their writings and pronouncements.

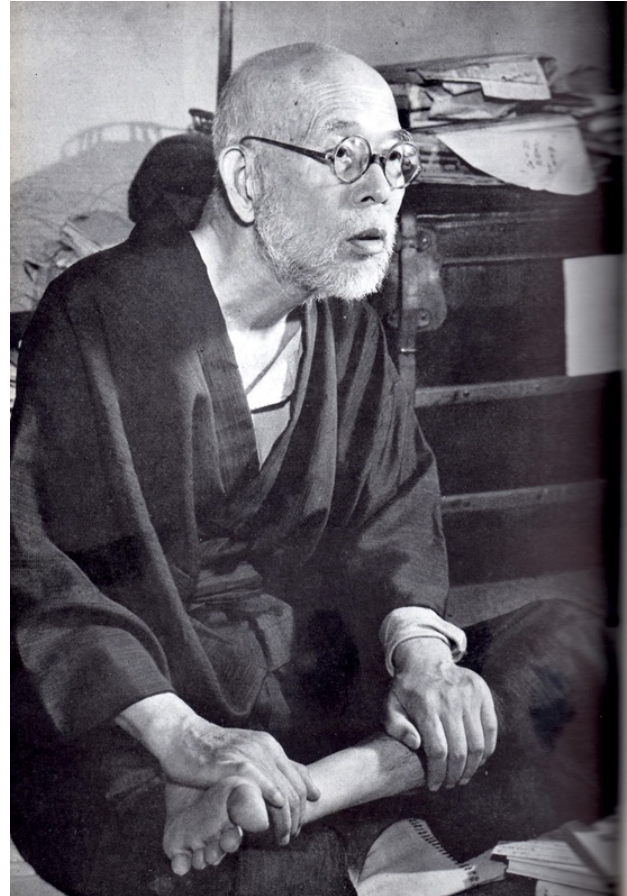


**Takamura Kōtarō, 1911.**



**Takamura Kōtarō, Hand,  
circa 1918**

Here, Yūki Shōji mentions the three men by name to suggest that their support of Japan's imperialistic expansion may have represented the collective racial inferiority complex toward Europeans that had afflicted the Japanese since the country opened to the West in the mid-19th century. He quotes a sentence that the poet and novelist Itō Sei (伊藤整 1905-69) jotted down in his diary on the news that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor: "We are destined to be unable to convince ourselves that we are the first class country in the world except that we are fighting the first class among the whites."<sup>4</sup>



**Saitō Mokichi, 1953**





**Itō Sei, 1954**

Still, the three men may have greatly differed from one another in their reactions to the West and Westerns. Takamura, who studied sculpture in New York (with Gutzon Borglum of Mt. Rushmore fame) and Paris, and Saitō, who studied psychiatry in Vienna and Munich, may have suffered from inferiority complexes in one way or another,<sup>5</sup> but Fujita may not have felt much of the sort. He certainly went to Paris to study painting in the Mecca for such things at the time, but he hobnobbed with the likes of Modigliani and Picasso, married two Frenchwomen, and was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government and the Belgian Order of Leopold. Back in Japan, he did war paintings, and when he was accused of war collaboration after Japan's defeat, went back to France where he naturalized.



**Fujita Tsuguharu, self portrait, 1930.**

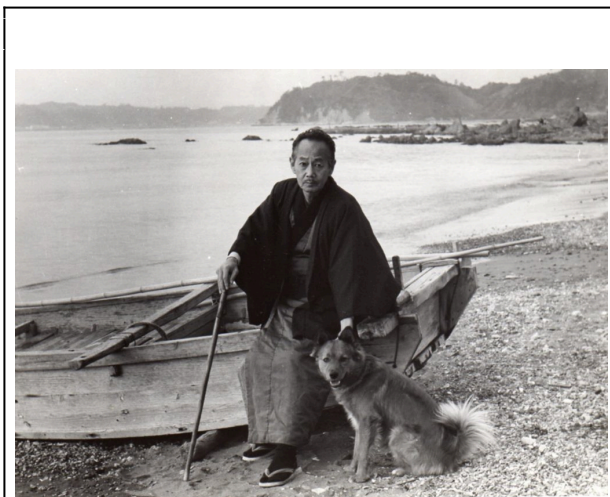


**Fujita Tsuguharu, Attack on Pearl Harbor, 1942**

### **Haiku Suppression Before Pearl Harbor**

Saitō Sanki (西東三鬼 1900 - 62)<sup>6</sup> had an unusual career as a haiku poet. For one thing, he didn't get into haiku until almost his mid-30s. For another, his life in Singapore,

from the end of 1925 to the end of 1928, made him feel like a “ghostly étranger” when he returned to Tokyo. There in the British colony, where Asians, Europeans, and Middle Easterners mixed, Sanki was so entranced by “the country of frankincense and myrrh right under the equator” as he wandered around town with friends from Bagdad and Alexandria that he thought of abandoning his Japanese nationality to settle down there permanently. In the end he didn’t have the courage, partly because the Japanese military action in Jinan, on the Shandong peninsula, in 1928, turned Singaporean residents against Japanese products, making it impossible for ordinary Japanese to live there even as Sanki worked as a dentist. This background made his approach to the haiku, “the pearl of the Orient,” as he called it, not with traditional respect, but as “an epicurean bohemian,” “a self-exile” within his country, the haiku commentator Yamamoto Kenkichi (山本健吉 1907-88) wrote.<sup>7</sup>



**Saitō Sanki, late 1950s**

Once he got into haiku, Sanki became “the standard-bearer in the Newly Rising Haiku (shinkō haiku) Movement.”<sup>8</sup> What “newly rising haiku” meant shifted over less than a decade in the 1930s when it existed, from the practice of composing a group of haiku on a single subject (rensaku) rather than that of composing each

haiku as an independent entity, to “modernization,” and to the abandonment of seasonal words. But the movement was originally touched off in reaction to “the strongly binding guidance policy of Takahama Kyoshi (高浜虚子 1874-1959)”<sup>9</sup> who wielded unparalleled power over the haiku world through his magazine *Hototogisu*<sup>10</sup>—when, in fact, “*Hototogisu* was the haiku world.”<sup>11</sup>

Let us look at some Sanki pieces chronologically from his first book, *Flag* (Hata), published in 1940, which sold out immediately. Among the 209 haiku included in it is a 1935 piece:

聖燭祭工人ヨセフ我が愛す

Seishokusai kōjin Yosefu wa ga aisu

The Candlemas craftsman Joseph I love

From 1936:

水兵と砲弾の夜を熱たかし

Suihei to hōdan no yo wo netsu takashi

On the night with sailor and artillery shell fever high

And from 1939:

機關銃眉間ニ赤キ花ガ咲ク

Kikanjū mayuma ni akaki hana ga saku

Machine gun: between his eyebrows a red flower blooms

機關銃闇ノ黄砂ヲ噴キ散ラス

Kikanjū yami no ōsa o fukichirasu

A machine gun in the Asian dust of  
darkness sputters out

捕虜共の飯食へる顔顔撮られ

Horyodomo no meshi kueru kao  
kao torare

POWs eating meal faces each face  
filmed

These haiku antagonized “traditional” haiku poets. As Sanki noted, those who stuck to “the birds and flowers expected people to turn out, without any reflections, ‘national spirit total mobilization’ haiku that would please the military.” Especially those cinematically describing war provoked conservatives who dismissed them as “fiction” and “inexcusable to soldiers on the battlefield,” because these and similar haiku—by Sanki and others—were by people who never went to war. Indeed, Sanki made that clear by putting some of these pieces under the group heading of “Newsreels.”<sup>12</sup>

At any rate, the conservatives had the upper hand. They even suggested that the disregard of kigo itself led to the denial of the Emperor System at a time the Emperor was held to be sacrosanct.<sup>13</sup> One reason for downgrading the requirement of kigo in haiku was for “realism,” but that “realism” could be criticized as tantamount to “socialist realism.” Anything out of line was “liberal,” i.e., democratic, and “pro-U.S. and U.K.” The army (war) minister stating in the Diet, “Liberalism is the hotbed of Communism.” It was to eradicate Communism to uphold Capitalism that the Public Safety Preservation Law had been strengthened in 1925.

The arrest and jailing of Sanki and others that

began in February 1940 spelled the demise of the Newly Rising Haiku Movement.<sup>14</sup>

For all this, the first Sanki haiku that Yūki Shōji highlighted in his book bears little direct link to any of that. In fact, he made it clear that he didn’t care for Sanki’s early pieces. The one he chose to highlight was from Sanki’s second selection, *Peach of the Night* (Yoru no momo), published in 1948, three years after the war was over.

雪の上に雪降ることのやはらかく

Yuki no ue ni yuki furu koto no  
yawarakaku<sup>15</sup>

The way the snow falls upon the  
snow so soft

Yūki cited this piece apparently because the snow made him think of the 2.26 Incident—the revolt of units from four army regiments on Feb. 26, 1936 that started with a series of assassinations of high-ranking government officials. The revolt was soon brought under control: the Shōwa Emperor (Hirohito), whom the insurgents called on to take over as ruler, rejected that notion outright. Still, it was another lurid manifestation of the military running amok in Japan. In fact, historians hold that the 2.26 Incident—or how the military responded to the revolt within it—triggered “the decline and fall of the Japanese Empire,” to use the subtitle of John Toland’s massive account of Japan’s war against the West, *The Rising Sun* (Random House, 1970). The incident also became a focus for Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫 1925-70) as he prepared his own death.<sup>16</sup> As it happened, the day of the revolt occurred on the night that the heaviest snowfall in thirty years fell in Tokyo. Sanki, then laid up ill, remembered Watanabe Hakusen (see below) and another haiku poet coming to visit that afternoon, covered with snow, telling him what they had seen and heard on their way through



the middle of Tokyo.<sup>17</sup>

To digress somewhat, Yūki's choice of this haiku to discuss something not really related to the matter at hand reminds us that haiku's brevity and lack of specificity often allows the reader to imagine things that have little to do with what the writer intends to convey. Conversely, it allows the writer to make his piece suggest what it may barely be able to imply. I once wrote about this problem in relation to Sanki's haiku about Hiroshima. When a substantial selection of Sanki's prose sketches and haiku—400 of the latter—appeared in *The Kobe Hotel*, translated by Saitō Masaya (Weatherhill, 1993)—the translator has no relation to the haiku poet—I reviewed it and wrote<sup>18</sup>:

The sketches include some that explain the circumstances of the composition of certain haiku. One of them reminds us—if that is needed at this late date—how difficult it is to pack meanings into a single haiku and make that piece understandable on its own. It has to do with Hiroshima ya tamago kū toki kuchi hiraku,<sup>19</sup> “Hiroshima: when I eat an egg my mouth opens.” A year after the atomic bombing, Sanki happens to find himself in the city on a “pitch-black” night. Saitō Masaya translates:

Sitting on a stone by  
the side of the road, I  
took out a boiled egg  
and slowly peeled the  
shell, unexpectedly  
shocked by the smooth  
surface of the egg.  
With a flash of searing  
incandescence, the  
skins of human beings

had as easily slipped  
off all over this city. To  
eat a boiled egg in the  
wind of that black  
night, I was forced to  
open my mouth. In  
that moment, this  
haiku came to me:

Hiroshima—

to eat a boiled egg,  
  
the mouth opens.

Reading this haiku by itself, how  
many readers can guess the  
ghastly chill that the poet might  
have tried to have it convey?

The original of this haiku, with an explanation of the circumstances of its writing in prose, appeared in *Sequel Kobe* (Zoku Kōbe), a series of five essays Sanki wrote for the haiku magazine *Heaven's Wolf* (Tenrō) in 1959,<sup>20</sup> which followed *Kobe* (Kōbe), a series of ten essays he wrote for *Haiku* magazine from 1954 to 1955. In these he remembered the goings and comings of oddball characters in an apartment-hotel, then in a “Western mansion,” in Kobe during the war and the few immediate postwar years. The haiku quoted here was originally one of the eight pieces, all beginning with “Hiroshima,” under the heading “The Famous Town.”<sup>21</sup> The eight pieces as a group had been printed in a magazine, but Sanki did not include them in his second selection of haiku for fear of Occupation censorship<sup>22</sup> that continued for several years after Japan's defeat.

Other than censorship, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not lead to immediate writings of haiku for the obvious reason: their shocking effects. Shimomura Hiroshi (下村ひろし 1904-86), a

physician who lived in Nagasaki all his life and dealt with many atomic victims, is thought to have composed haiku on the devastations in his city some time after the blast. Here are two of them:

水乞ひし人は屍や西日没り

Mizu koishi hito wa kabana ya  
nishibi iri

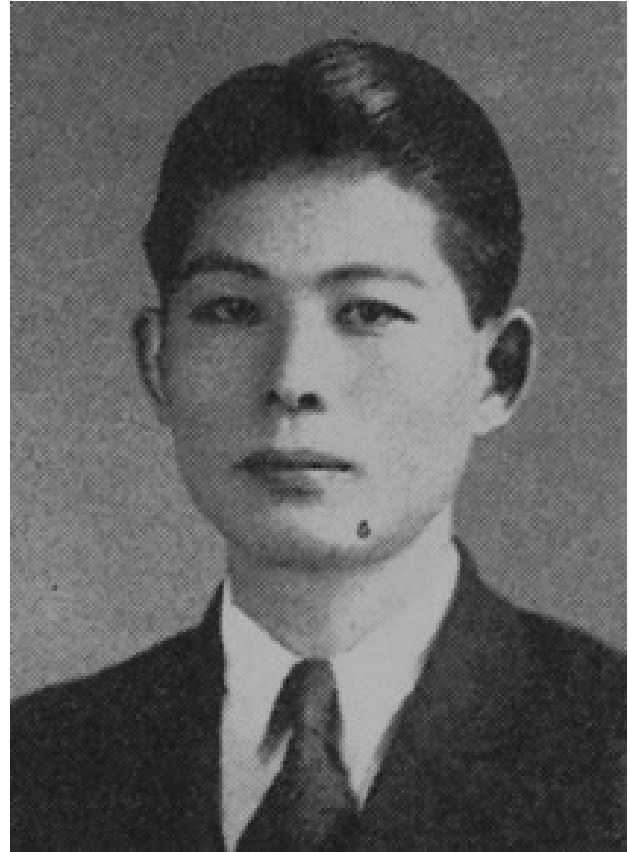
The one who begged water now a  
corpse: westerly sun sets

炎天の軀を運ぶ塵芥車

Enten no mukuro o hakobu  
jinkaisha

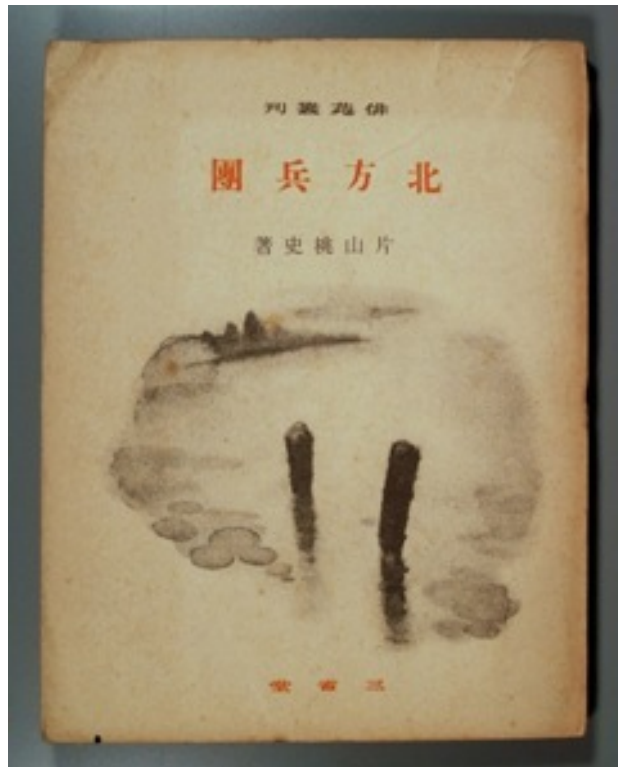
Carrying cadavers under burning  
sky: garbage carts<sup>23</sup>

Unlike Sanki, Katayama Tōshi (片山桃史 1912–44) was drafted for war, twice, and was killed during his second tour. He was a bank employee when he was drafted, in 1937, and sent to China. While in the war zone, he wrote a good many haiku describing what he saw. Returned to Japan, he gathered his haiku—including the pieces he'd written before he was sent to the front—and published his selection in Northern Corps (Hoppō heidan) in 1940. Tōshi was drafted again in 1941. In early 1944 he was killed in battle in East New Guinea. His haiku and letters from the front were assembled and published in 1983. Yūki tells us that Tōshi wrote the following haiku while deployed on the Chinese front.



**Katayama Tōshi**





## Hoppō heidan

我を撃つ敵と劫暑を俱にする

Ware o utsu teki to gōsho o tomoni  
seru

With the enemy shooting at me I  
share the furious heat

ひと死にて慰問袋の独楽まひ澄む

Hito shinite imon-bukuro no koma  
mai sumu

He died and his care package top  
spins into serenity

冷雨なり二三は遺骨胸に吊る

Reiu nari ni-san wa ikotsu mune ni

tsuru

Cold rain: two, three carry the  
bones on their chests

Whenever possible, a Japanese soldier killed in action or died on the front was cremated, his ashes (lit., “left bones”) were put in an unpainted wooden box, and one of his comrades carried them home hanging the box from the neck by a sash.

難民の駱駝秋風より高し

Nanmin no rakuda akikaze yori  
takashi

Refugees’ camels are taller than  
the autumn wind

This haiku suggests that Tōshi’s unit may have gone as far as Mongolia, then in the Soviet sphere, or Inner Mongolia. The association of the autumn sky (or wind) with highness comes from a passage in The Book of Han (early 2nd century) describing the Eurasian nomads called Xiongnu: “Among the Xiongnu come autumn horses grew fat, and they took up bows and invaded our fortresses.”

飢餓うすれ陽炎重く眠りたる

Kiga usure kagerō omoku  
nemuritaru

Starvation receding heat haze is  
heavy as I sleep

木の葉落つおちて吹かれぬ歩くは兵

Ki no ha otsu ochite fukarenu  
aruku wa hei

Leaves fall and fallen are blown:

the soldiers walk

Describing the war zone in these terms did not provoke censorship. In this, Tōshi is sometimes compared with Hasegawa Sosei (長谷川素逝, 1907-1946).<sup>24</sup>



**Fujita Tsuguharu, Battle of the Khalkhyn (Haruha) Riverbank (1935)** 哈爾哈河畔之戰闘, 1941

### Haiku During the Pacific War

Watanabe Suiha (渡辺水巴 1882-1946), son of a famous Japanese-style “flowers and birds” painter, was one of the few people in modern times who spent their entire adult lives writing, teaching, and editing haiku. His haiku referring to the war were unmistakably traditional and, shall we say positive, so that they probably won hearty approval from military and police censors.

シンガポール落ちぬ春燈朝の如し

Shingapōru ochinu shuntō asa no  
gotoshi

Singapore has fallen: the spring  
lamp like morning

The Japanese capture of “the most strategically important base in the British Empire”<sup>25</sup> occurred on Feb. 15, 1942 when Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival, the commander of the garrison, known as “Great Britain’s

Impregnable Fortress in the Far East,” surrendered. Yūki remembered the excitement at the news of the victory. The day after was Monday, and at the weekly morning assembly the principal of his junior high school, a former colonel, suddenly took off his jacket at the podium and ordered the 2,000 students gathered in the school ground to follow him and started stabbing his arms upward and down, each time with a shout, repeating it many times.

From that day to the end of March the Japanese army rounded up a large number of “overseas Chinese” deemed to be “anti-Japanese elements”—“enemy combatants”?—and shot many of them, dumping their bodies in the sea off the coast. Not knowing such things, Suiha used shuntō, “spring lamp,” a relatively new kigo that suggests a warm, sensual atmosphere. The next haiku was composed on the same occasion.

神速の戦捷に梅花遅れたり

Jinsoku no senshō ni baika  
okuretari

Divine-speed battle-victory: plum  
blossoms have lagged

In reaction to the same news, Yamaguchi Seishi (山口誓子 1901-94) wrote:

国捷てり寒煙高く汽車出で立つ

Kuni kateri kan'en takaku kisha  
idetatsu

Nation victorious: with cold smoke  
high the train departs



**Yamaguchi Seishi**

Seishi's haiku in English can be read in a sizable selection of his work in Takashi Kodaira and Alfred H. Marks' translation, *The Essence of Modern Haiku: 300 Poems of Seishi Yamaguchi* (Mangajin, 1993), but the two translators did not include this piece probably because they worked with the poet. After Japan's defeat, many writers and poets tried to delete or ignore their wartime compositions celebratory of Japan's "holy war" from their oeuvre.

The initial string of "divine-speed" victories soon proved misleading. The war dragged on. Suiha wrote:

長期戦菊は斯く咲き斯く匂ふ

Chōkisen kiku wa kaku saki kaku  
niou

Protracted battle: the  
chrysanthemum blooms thus,  
smells thus

The next one comes with a headnote, "Paying My Respects to Yasukuni Shrine." You may have read a good deal about the furor created whenever a high-ranking politician visits Yasukuni Shrine in recent years. This place of worship, established in 1869 to pacify the war dead, may correspond to the Arlington National Cemetery, although Yasukuni has no graves.

十二月八日の冴えに退りけり

Jūnigatsu yōka no sae ni shisarikeri

December the Eighth lucid I have  
stepped back

Japan's assault on Pearl Harbor started at 7:55 on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, U.S. time. Japan time it was December 8. The day was celebrated until Japan's defeat.

いくさ深しすめらみくには薺粥

Ikusa fukashi sumera mi-kuni wa  
nazuna-gayu

Deep into battle: in the Imperial  
State shepherd's purse gruel

Nazuna (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), "shepherd's purse," may be treated as a common weed in the U.S. and elsewhere, but in Japan it is counted among the "seven grasses (wildflowers) of spring" and eaten during the New Year. Food shortages that had been evident before Japan went to war with the U.S., Great Britain, and the Netherlands grew worse as the war dragged on, but Suiha probably intended no sarcasm in this haiku.



雪もよひ銃後に白魚いでにけり

Yuki moyoi jūgo ni shirauo  
idenikeri

On the home front suggestive of  
snow the icefish is out

Shirauo (Sarangidae), “white fish” (icefish), is small, almost transparent while alive but turns white when dead or cooked. The Japanese began to value the fish as a spring delicacy during the Edo Period (1603-1868). However, Bashō’s famous hokku on the same fish, 曙や白魚白きこと一寸 Akebono ya shirauo shiroki, “At daybreak the icefish is white just an inch,” was not meant to praise its taste but mark its delicate appearance.

The next haiku also comes with a headnote, “Yamazaki Unit.”

アツツ桜と呼びなして死せり明易き

Attsu zakura to yobinashite shiseri  
ake-yasuki

Calling themselves Attu cherries  
they died: day breaks early

The Yamazaki Unit is the 2,500-man force commanded by Col. Yamazaki Yasuyo who was charged with the defense of Attu, one of the Aleutian Islands and the largest in the Near Islands group. U.S. forces, estimated to be eight times as large, began landing on May 12, 1943, and by the end of the month the entire Yamazaki unit was wiped out. On May 31 the Japanese press exalted the unit for fighting to the last soldier, rather than surrendering, as a noble embodiment of the Japanese military spirit.<sup>26</sup>



**Fujita Tsuguharu, Death in the Battle of Attu (アツツ島玉砕), 1943**

In contrast, the 5,500 soldiers deployed on Kiska, another Aleutian island, were successfully evacuated before U.S. forces arrived. When U.S. forces started pounding the island in early August, not a single Japanese soldier was left on it. This operation was one of only a few such retreats the Japanese military was able to execute in the face of an overwhelming enemy, but the press treated it as an embarrassment. Ake-yasushi, “day breaks early,” is a summer kigo. The syllabic formation of this piece is 7-8-5.

短夜や地図には小さき血の孤島

Mijikayo ya chizu niwa chiisaki chi  
no kotō

Short night: on the map it is a tiny  
bloody solitary isle

Mijikayo, “short night,” is another summer kigo.

In the early hours of March 10, 1945, Tokyo was hit by the most destructive air raid during World War II. Involving a total of 334 B-29s according to a record, the raid, lasting just

three hours and twenty-two minutes, took the lives of 100,000 people and rendered 1,000,000 homeless. Air raids on that metropolis did not stop with that one, as, in fact, the methodical bombing of the main cities of Japan had just begun. According to the poet and sculptor Takamura Kōtarō, while many Tokyo residents had to be forcibly evacuated, he insisted on staying until the Emperor evacuated Tokyo.<sup>27</sup>



**Bodies of civilians after firebombing of 10 March 1945**

The next haiku of Suiha comes with a headnote: “Leaving Tokyo on the First of April.”

大戦生きて妻子の影麗ら

Ō-ikusa ikite saishi no kage urara

Surviving the great war wife and  
child’s shadows balmy

Urara, “balmy,” is a kigo for spring. Was Suiha still supportive of the war?

The headnote for the next one is “The End of the War.”

二日月神州狭くなりけり

Futsuka-zuki Shinshū semaku

narinikeri

Under a two-day moon the Divine  
State has gotten small

One of the Allied Powers’ conditions for Japan’s “unconditional surrender” was the abandonment of all the colonies and other territories Japan had placed under its control through international agreements since the end of the 19th century. Shinshū, “Divine State,” like Shinkoku, “Divine Nation,” is the honorific name that the Japanese used to apply to their country.



**Sculpture of Mitsuhashi Takajo, Narita (Chiba)**

Mitsuhashi Takajo (三橋鷹女 1899-1972) was born to a family that had produced several notable tanka poets. She at first studied tanka,

but later switched to haiku. During the 1930s she was a leader in the use of colloquial language in this genre. That does not mean she stopped using classical grammatical locutions—as in the following:

爆撃機に乗りたし梅雨のミシン踏み  
り

Bakugeki-ki ni noritashi tsuyu no  
mishin fumeri

To ride a bomber; in the rain I  
treadle the sewing machine

Noritashi, “want to ride,” should be noritai, and fumeri, “tread,” funda, in modern colloquialism.

Takajo wrote this sometime in 1937 or 1938. In August 1937 the Japanese army’s air force carried out what it touted as the first “oceanic bombing.” This haiku, as well as the next one, is among four haiku grouped in “Thistles in the Rainy Season.”

戦争はかなし簾を垂れて書く

Sensō wa kanashi sudare o tarete  
kaku

The war is sad; hanging the blind I  
write

The following one was among the haiku Takajo wrote in the 1939-40 period.

黒猫もいたく夏痩せ我が家に

Kuroneko mo itaku natsuyase waga  
ie ni

The black cat too is painfully  
summer-thin in my house

Natsuyase, “summer-thin,” reflects the observation that in Japan, during the summer, one loses weight because of a general loss of appetite as a consequence of heat and humidity.

Fubasami Fusae (文挾夫佐恵 1914-2014) began to write haiku in elementary school. In the first haiku below, *ippen no kami*, “a slip of paper,” refers to a draft notice, also called *akagami*, “red paper.” This haiku apparently describes the time her husband received the notice, a dreaded moment for an ordinary citizen.

炎天の一片の紙人間の上に

Enten no ippen no kami hito no ue  
ni

Under burning sky a slip of paper  
on a human

夜濯ぎの水に涙ははばかりず

Yo susugi no mizu ni namida wa  
habakarazu

Night-laundering I shed tears in  
the water unrestrained

征く父に抱かれ睡れりあせもの児

Yuku chichi ni dakare nemureri  
asemo no ko

Held by father to war a child with  
heat rashes asleep

鶴ばかり折つて子とるる秋時雨

Tsuru bakari otte ko to iru aki  
shigure



I fold only cranes with my child in  
the autumn shower

還り来し父に馴れ初む花火かな

Kaerikoshi chichi ni naresomu  
hanabi kana

Beginning to get used to returned  
father fireworks

The last one shows compression common in haiku. The one who is beginning to get used to the father who has returned alive from the war is the couple's child.

Fusae grew to live to a ripe old age, keeping up her great haiku spirit. In 2013 she won the prestigious Dakotsu Prize for her selection White Horse (Hakuku) at age 99, thus becoming the oldest person ever to win a haiku prize. The title of the book, she explained, comes from a passage in the Zhuangzi saying, "A man lives between Heaven and Earth only for a second, like a white horse passing the crack [between doors]."



**Hayashibara Rasei**

Hayashibara Rasei (林原末井 1887-1975) aspired to be a novelist and studied with the novelist Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石 1867-1916), himself no mean haiku poet. Rasei spent much of his life as a professor of English.

夏夜空映し出すものみな敵機

Natsu yozora utsushidasu mono  
mina tekki

In summer night sky all that's lit  
up are enemy aircraft

生き残れり蕎麦蒔けばはや花となり

Ikinokoreri soba makeba haya  
nana to nari

Survived: the buckwheat I sowed  
already flowering

焼け跡のともしび殖えぬ初嵐

Yakeato no tomoshibi fuenu hatsu-  
arashi

In the burnt-out land lamps  
increase in the first storm

Hatsu-arashi, “first storm,” refers to a strong wind that precedes the visitation of a typhoon in autumn. The war ended in August 1945.

At first a teacher at a normal school and later a librarian, Takeshita Shizunojo (竹下しづの女, 1887–1951) stressed the importance of “self-awareness” in haiku. She had two sons and three daughters, and wrote the first of the following in 1937, evidently for one of her sons.

たゞならぬ世に待たれ居て卒業す

Tadanaranu yo ni matareite  
sotsugyō-su

Awaited by the unusual world he  
graduates

征く吾子に月明の茄子もぎ炊ぐ

Yuku ako ni getsumei no nasu mogi  
kashigu

For my child going to war I pick  
and cook moonlit eggplants

まつくらき部屋の障子に凭れ居し

Makkuraki heya no shōji ni motare  
ishi

In the pitch-dark room I remain  
leaning on a shōji

Watanabe Hakusen (渡辺白泉, 1913–69), working for a publishing house after graduating from Keiō University in 1936, published, in 1938, a series of 116 “war haiku” highly critical of Japan’s 1937 military expansion in China. In 1940 he became one of the fifteen haiku poets arrested and jailed in the so-called Kyōdai Haiku Incident, the government’s action to repress the Newly Rising Movement. Ordered not to write and publish haiku, he turned his attention to a study of classical haiku. The syllabic formation of the first one cited below is 5–8–7 and barely scans—obviously to convey the sense of his outburst.

憲兵の前で滑って転んちゃった

Kenpei no mae de subette  
koronjatta

In front of an MP I slipped and fell  
blap

Kenpei, the military police, was patterned after that of France and, under the direct control of the minister of the army, wielded military, administrative, and judicial powers. Along with the Special Higher Police (tokubetsu kōtō keisatsu) or “thought police,” the Kenpei was regarded as the two dreaded arms of repression.

雪の街畜生馬鹿野郎斃つちまえ

Yuki no machi chikushō bakayarō  
kutabatchimae

This snowy town dammit  
motherfucker go fuck yourself

戦争が廊下の奥で立ってゐた

Sensō ga rōka no oku ni tatteita

War was standing at the hall's end

銃後という不思議な町を丘で見た

Jūgo to iu fushigina machi o oka de  
mita

On a hill I saw a mysterious town  
called Home Front

In June 1944 he was drafted into the Marine Corps of the Navy in Yokosuka. In the following haiku, Hakusen makes fun of the practice of the Japanese military replacing common words with difficult ones, be it with hard-sounding words or with difficult Chinese characters:

襯衣袴下番兵凍る洗濯日

Shatsu koshita banpei kōru  
sentaku-bi

The shirts long johns sentries  
freeze on laundry day

Here, shatsu (shirt), which is normally written in katakana (or hiragana) syllabary, is given the difficult Chinese characters shin'i, "that which is worn close to the skin," and zubonshita (long johns) is replaced by koshita, "that which is worn under the pants"—thus making them appear authoritarian and intimidating. In addition, the Japanese military rarely used hot water except for cooking and bathing.

夏の海水平ひとり紛失す

Natsu no umi suihei hitori  
funshitsusu

In the summer sea a single sailor

went missing

Hakusen wrote a sequence of eleven haiku after his marine unit was attacked by a fleet of Grumman's.

死角よりグラマンの顔迫り来る

Shikaku yori Guraman no kao  
semarikuru

From dead angle a Grumman's  
face presses upon me

戦争はうるさし煙し叫びたし

Sensō wa urusashi kemushi  
sakebitashi

The war is noisy smoky I want to  
scream

友の血よ噴け八方へとびかかれ

Tomo no chi yo fuke happō e  
tobikakare

Friend's blood, spurt, pounce on  
eight directions

血の甲板に青き冷たき夕暮来

Chi no dekki ni aoki tsumetaki  
yūgure ku

To the deck of blood comes a  
twilight limpid cold

While Hakusen was stationed in Hakodate, Hokkaidō, Japan surrendered. The Shōwa Emperor made the announcement on the radio at noon on August 15, 1945 by reading "the



Imperial Edict ending the Greater East Asian War.” The Japanese had been told to listen to “the gravely important broadcast” in advance, and this first broadcast by an emperor was aired not just throughout Japan but in all the colonies and places where Japanese military units were located. But the radio broadcast conditions were poor. Also, the emperor used special classical language reserved for imperial edicts, so most people did not understand much of whatever they could hear. His broadcast was honorifically called *gyokuon*, “the gem-like sound.”

玉音を理解せし者前に出よ

Gyokuon o rikai seshi mono mae ni  
deyo

Those who understood the Gem-  
like Sound, step forward

Although Hakusen took part in the formation of the Modern Haiku Association in 1947, he ended up not publishing a selection of his haiku. In 1975 his haiku were assembled and published in two volumes—the main volume with all pieces in his own handwriting in ink and brush that he had prepared before his death and the supplementary one assembling uncollected pieces.<sup>28</sup>



**Kubota Mantarō**

Kubota Mantarō (久保田万太郎, 1889–1963), better known as a novelist, a playwright, and a stage director than as a haiku poet, insisted that haiku was no more than a hobby for him. For one thing, he was one of the three founders of the influential theatrical troupe Bungaku-za in 1937.<sup>29</sup> Yet, he maintained a sizable presence in the haiku world, and even established his own haiku magazine *Spring Lamp* (Shuntō) in 1946.

うちてしやまむうちてしやまむ心凍  
つ

Uchiteshi yamamu ichiteshi  
yamamu kokoro itsu

Will smite and stop will smite and  
stop my heart freezes

Uchiteshi yamamu, “will smite and stop,” is a phrase that occurs in several “songs” in the Record of Ancient Matters (Kojiki), the semimythological history of Japan compiled in 712 and Japan’s oldest extant book. It means, “We won’t stop until we’ve destroyed the enemy.” The government took this expression as a slogan to mark Army Day on March 10, 1943.

In this haiku Mantarō suggests his criticism of the adaptation of this ancient phrase partly through an orthographic change: normally the phrase is written with a mixture of Chinese characters 撃ちてし止まむ, rather than all in hiragana as here, which makes it soft, thus less “menacing,” and accordingly “derisive” in this context. As the manager of a patriotic literary group that he became in 1942, it is doubtful that he published this haiku during the war.

The first American air raid on Tokyo was carried out on April 18, 1942, by sixteen B-25s led by Col. James Doolittle. The second time the U. S. carried out an air raid on Tokyo, it was with eighty B-29’s, and the date was Nov. 24, 1944. Thereafter air raids did not let up until Japan surrendered. On August 14, the day before Japan’s surrender, the U.S. displayed the biggest bang, with 1,000 bombers and fighters swarming over Japan, according to Major Faubion Bowers.

柊の花や空襲警報下

Hiiragi no hana ya kūshū keihō-ka

Holly blossoms under another air-  
raid alarm

Hiiragi (*Osmanthus heterophyllus*), “false holly,” despite its thick, leathery leaves with spine-tipped teeth, puts on small, delicate blossoms. It is a winter kigo. Kubota probably wrote this toward the end of 1944.

Mantarō wrote the following haiku, with a headnote, “At Dawn on May 24, an Air Raid, and My House Burned Down”:

みじか夜の劫火の末にあけにけり

Mijikayo no gōka no sue ni  
akenikeri

Short night: after the hell fire the  
day breaks

The number of B-29s for this air raid, in 1945, was even bigger than the one on March 10, with more than 500 planes deployed, according to U.S. records. By then there weren’t too many houses left standing in Tokyo. Gōka (also kōka) is the fire that destroys the entire world in Buddhist belief. In June Mantarō’s father died, in July his mother.

The novelist Nagai Kafū (永井荷風 1879-1959) had noted in his diary on December 31, 1944: “At 10 o’clock at night there was an air raid alarm. At once all clear. Past midnight alarm again. Sounds of guns incessant. Thus ends the 19th year of Shōwa [1944] and a disheartening New Year is about to come. There has been nothing like this since the birth of our nation. All this is the doing of the military men.”<sup>30</sup> So, how about the military men?

Many servicemen could turn out tanka and haiku. Among them, Rear Admiral Ichimaru Rinosuke (市丸利之助 1891-1945), one of the commanders of the Japanese defenders of Iwo Jima, was a tanka poet. In fact, he had written enough for magazines for his daughter Haruko to assemble his tanka and publish them, albeit in 2006, sixty-one years after his death.

Today Ichimaru may be less known than Lieut. General Kuribayashi Tadamichi (栗林忠道 1891-1945), about whom Clint Eastwood made a film, *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006). But Ichimaru, who was assigned to the volcanic,

sulfurous island as commander of the navy's 27th Air Corps (with only a few aircraft at his disposal), and thus headed the navy contingent on it, may have been better known in the U.S. than Kuribayashi right after the Battle of Iwo Jima. Before his death in March 1945 he had written a letter addressed to President Franklin Roosevelt and had it translated into English by his Nisei aide. A U.S. marine found the letter, and it was published in the New York Tribune and other U.S. newspapers in July that year. In 1971, John Toland reproduced it in *The Rising Sun*.<sup>31</sup>

Here's one of Ichimaru's tanka:

洞に臥す兵は地熱に冴えられてとか  
く熟睡のとりえぬ恨み

Hora ni fusu hei wa jinetsu ni  
saerarete tokaku umai no torieenu  
urami

Soldiers lying in the cave kept  
lucid by the ground heat can't have  
deep sleep in any way accursed<sup>32</sup>

Lieut. General Kuribayashi rejected the tactic of "water's-edge" battles that had lost so many soldiers and battles till then in defending against the Allied Powers' island-hopping strategy as they approached Japan, opting instead to dig in and fight out of the caves and tunnels, of which Iwo Jima: "Sulfur Island" with an active volcano, was full. As a fighting method, that may have been effective, but it forced Japanese soldiers to suffer from the odor of the sulfur dioxide gas and volcanic underground heat. During the battle lasting for just over a month, most of the more than 20,000 defenders were killed, along with 7,000 American soldiers killed.



**Kuribayashi Tadamichi, Guangzhou, 1943**

Kuribayashi himself was not a tanka poet but left three tanka as farewell-to-the-world poems. The last of which reads:

醜草の島に蔓るその時の皇国の行手  
一途に思ふ

Shikogusa no shima ni hakoberu  
sono toki no Kōkoku no yukute  
ichizu ni omō

When the ugly grasses vine over  
the isle I only think of the future of  
the Empire<sup>33</sup>

The Japanese regarded Iwo Jima as the last bulwark against all-out assaults on Japan proper by U.S. bombers, but by the time the battle started on February 19, 1945, B-29s were continuously raining bombs across the Japanese archipelago.

Vice Admiral Ugaki Matome (宇垣纏 1890-1945), who took part in all major battles in the Pacific from start to finish, sprinkled a few haiku here and there in his detailed chronicle of the war.<sup>34</sup> In his last post as commander-in-chief of the Fifth Air Fleet, he executed the last major "special attack" tactic,



commonly known as the “kamikaze attack.”



**Ugaki Matome**

On March 11, 1945, the day he sent off 24 fighters for that purpose from his Kanoya Base, Kagoshima, toward Okinawa, Ugaki wrote in his diary: “In recent times, when a commando unit [i.e., a special force] departs, I’ve come to be able to send it off, giving a farewell, without pain, with a smile, but that doesn’t mean I’ve become thick-skinned. I myself have already gone into and come out of crisis often. [I can remain unperturbed] because I’m resolved that some day I, too, will follow these young men.” And he wrote three haiku:

特攻の出で立つ朝や春霞

Tokkō no idetatsu asa ya  
harugasumi

The morning a special force  
departs in spring haze

薩摩富士晴れて特攻見送り

Satsuma Fuji harete tokkō  
miokureru<sup>35</sup>

Satsuma Fuji clear has sent off a

special force

春霞棚引く中の殺気かな

Haru-gasumi tanabiku naka no  
sakki kana

Amidst spring haze trailing a  
killing intent<sup>36</sup>

On August 15, Ugaki listened to the Imperial announcement and wrote in his diary: “Radio conditions were bad and, with due awesome respect [to His Majesty], I was unable to make out its content, but I surmised it over all.”<sup>37</sup> He then led a special force squadron, never to return.

That night, Vice Admiral Ōnishi Takijirō (大西瀧治郎 1891-1985), who had first employed special force tactics in the Battle of Leyte in the fall of 1944, disemboweled himself, without a second to prolong his own agony, leaving a testament apologizing for sending so many young men to death. He also left two haiku:

すがすがし暴風のあとに月清し

Sugasugashi bōfū no ato no tsuki  
kiyoshi

Refreshing: after a violent storm  
the moon’s clear

これでよし百万年の仮寝かな

Kore de yoshi hyakuman-nen no  
karine kana

All’s done: a catnap for a million  
years<sup>38</sup>

The war over, Mantarō wrote.

何もかもあっけらかんと西日中

Nani mo kamo akkerakan to  
nishibi-naka

All gone nothing left to say in the  
westerly sun

Nishibi, “the westerly sun,” which the physician Shimomura also used, is a summer kigo.

Faubion Bowers knew Mantarō well. After teaching English at Hōsei University for a year and absorbing kabuki, he came back, via Java, to the U.S. He attended the Military Intelligence Service Language School set up in the summer of 1941 in preparation for the

impending war with Japan and mastered Japanese. During the war he served at the front to translate captured Japanese documents and interrogate Japanese POWs. Arriving at the Atsugi Airfield on August 28, 1945, in the vanguard of the Occupation forces, he asked the Japanese journalists who’d gathered, in Japanese, the immortal question: “Is Uzaemon doing well?”<sup>39</sup> He was referring to the kabuki actor Ichimura Uzaemon XV (1874-1945), a son of the French-born American Gen. Charles le Gendre and Ikeda Ito.

In 1995 I asked Mr. Bowers to give a talk on his experience of the war to my group to mark the 50th anniversary of Japan’s defeat. He did, and ended his moving account by quoting this haiku.

**Hiroaki Sato** has published three dozen books of translations into English including *Japanese women poets: an anthology*, *Miyazawa Kenji: selections*, and *One Hundred frogs: from renga to haiku*. He is the winner of the PEN American Translation prize and is a former president of the Haiku Society of America.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hiroaki Sato, with Naoki Inose, *Persona: A Biography of Yukio Mishima* (Stone Bridge Press, 2012), 141-2.

<sup>2</sup> Alludes to *Tsurezuregusa*, a collection of essays by Yoshida Kenkō (c. 1283-c.1352). Donald Keene famously translated the title as *Essays in Idleness*. Columbia University Press, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Yūki Shōji, *Haiku Tsurezuregusa*, p. 109. Takashi wrote the haiku in 1931. Yamamoto Kenkichi, *Gendai haiku* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1964), 248.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> In the case of Takamura, see the introductions to Hiroaki Sato, tr., *Chieko and Other Poems of Takamura Kōtarō* (The University Press of Hawaii, 1980), and Hiroaki Sato, tr., *A Brief History of Imbecility: Poetry and Prose of Takamura Kōtarō* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> The family used a different set of Chinese characters than the original family name, though pronounced the same; but the personal name, originally Keichoku, was a concoction. As a result, this haiku name means something like “Three Devils in the West and East.”

<sup>7</sup> Saitō Sanki, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden* (Kōdansha, 2000), p. 157. Yamamoto Kenkichi, *Gendai Haiku* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1964), 394-5.

<sup>8</sup> Saitō, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden*, 192.

- <sup>9</sup> Mitsuhashi Toshio's afterword to *Saitō Sanki shū* (Asahi Shimbun, 1984), 347. Saitō, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden*, 162.
- <sup>10</sup> Hiroaki Sato, tr., ' with commentary: Shūōshi's famous essay, "'Nature's Truth" and 'Truth in Literary Arts,'" *Modern Haiku*, 38.3, 25-49.
- <sup>11</sup> Saitō, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden*, 162.
- <sup>12</sup> Saitō, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden*, 195.
- <sup>13</sup> *Saitō Sanki shū*, 352.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-52, especially 217 and 236.
- <sup>15</sup> *Saitō Sanki shū*, 56.
- <sup>16</sup> See Hiroaki Sato, with Naoki Inose, *Persona: A Biography of Yukio Mishima*, Chapter 16.
- <sup>17</sup> Saitō, *Kōbe, Zoku Kōbe, Haiguden*, 187.
- <sup>18</sup> *Frogpond* 18:1, 39-43.
- <sup>19</sup> ヒロシマや卵食ふとき口開く
- <sup>20</sup> *Saitō Sanki shū*, 326.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-4.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 356. Occupation (U.S. government) censorship of writing on the effects of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been variously documented and described. Among the recent books on this subject are Erin Barnett and Philomena Mariani, ed., *Hiroshima: Ground Zero 1945* (Center of International Photography, 2011) and Greg Mitchell, *Atomic Cover-up: Two U.S. Soldiers, Hiroshima & Nagasaki, and The Greatest Movie Never Made* (Sinclair Books, 2011).
- <sup>23</sup> Yūki, 175-7.
- <sup>24</sup> See the preceding chapter, "Gun-smoke Haiku" and Hasegawa Sosei.
- <sup>25</sup> G. Herwig, "Sights Seen in Singapore," September 1934 issue of *The Living Age*. Originally the article appeared, in German, in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Berlin National-Socialist Daily.
- <sup>26</sup> See Hiroaki Sato, "[Gyokusai or 'Shattering like a Jewel': Reflection on the Pacific War](#)," online *Japan Focus* (Feb 2008).
- <sup>27</sup> Hiroaki Sato, tr., *Chieko and Other Poems of Takamura Kōtarō* (The University Press of Hawaii, 1980), p. xxii. Also see Hiroaki Sato, tr., *A Brief History of Imbecility: Poetry and Prose of Takamura Kōtarō* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992), xxvii-xxix.
- <sup>28</sup> *Hakusen kushū* (Ringoya, 1975).
- <sup>29</sup> Hiroaki Sato, with Naoki Inose, *Persona: A Biography of Yukio Mishima* (Stone Bridge Press, 2012), pp. 193-4 and elsewhere.
- <sup>30</sup> Yūki, 152.
- <sup>31</sup> John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire* (Bantam, 1971), 1034-6. The original letter is preserved in the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.
- <sup>32</sup> Hirakawa Sukehiro, *Beikoku daitōryō e no tegami* (Shinchōsha, 1996), 89.
- <sup>33</sup> Hirakawa, 106.
- <sup>34</sup> *Sensō roku* (Hara Shobō, 1968). The word *sensō* here puns on Chinese characters, so it may sound like "war" but actually means "seaweed." As Ugaki started his diary on October 16, 1941, he wrote that his diary would be trash. Despite his self-deprecation, his diary is regarded as one of the most important Japanese records of the battle to come out of the Pacific War.
- <sup>35</sup> Mt. Kaimon, a volcano on the peninsula west of Kanoya across the Kagoshima Bay. So-

called, it's cone-shaped like Mt. Fuji.

<sup>36</sup> Ugaki, *Sensō roku*, 469.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 551.

<sup>38</sup> Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 331-4. Morris gives different translations of the haiku, of course.

<sup>39</sup> Hiroaki Sato, with Naoki Inose, *Persona*, pp. 141-142.