Bashō's Retreat from City Life

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What is the significance of Bashō's move from Edo to Fukagawa, from city to soil, in 1680? In the context surrounding Bashō's life, what clues do we have for this significance? What writing highlights his metamorphosis from acclaimed haikai master of Edo[1] to poor, solitary poet in Fukagawa? How did this move inform his poetry and poetics?

In the winter of 1680–81, Bashō-to-be Tōsei[2], age thirty-seven, withdrew from downtown Edo across the Sumida River to the village of Fukagawa. This withdrawal of his from Edo, one of the most populous cities in the world in those days, was the pivot on which his poetry turned from wordplay and parody to nature-immersed life. It was the most significant turn in his career.

Soon after his retreat Tōsei wrote the following haibun:[3]

> Growing weary of living in the middle of the city for nine springs and autumns, I moved my dwelling to the riverside village of Fukagawa. From olden times, I have heard, Chang'an was a place of fame and profit, where the empty-handed and penniless found it hard to get along. Is it because I am poor myself that I consider him wise who said this?
>
> against the brushwood door
> raking tree leaves for my tea —
> storm wind

This haibun is unique and remarkable. Nothing else he wrote about his retreat specifies how long he had lived downtown, provides a window to what he left behind, and throws light on what ensued.

This haibun consists of two parts, the prose part having to do with the socio-economic condition of city life in Edo, and the hokku reflective of

Bashō's personal mode of life following his retreat. Let's look at the prose part first, setting the hokku aside for later consideration. Chang'an was the capital of ancient China. Tōsei quotes directly from a poem by Bo Juyi (772–846), a very popular Chinese poet in Japan. As an impoverished wayfarer, Bo Juyi had a hard time in Chang'an and bemoaned it as "the place of fame and profit." With deep sympathy and understanding, Tōsei realizes that as Chang'an was in ancient China, so is Edo in Japan today, and that in Edo he has personally relived the experiences of Bo Juyi in Chang'an.

Edo, as the seat of the bakufu hegemony, was the political center of Japan. By 1700, with its population of close to one million, it was the largest city in Japan, and, for that matter, in the world. In comparison, London or Paris was about one third as large.[4] No wonder in Japanese history the period from 1603 to 1867 is called the Edo Period. Edo was also developing fast as a commercial center. Though merchants and artisans accounted for more than half of the population, they were concentrated in a small downtown area, which centered on Nihonbashi, the area of Tōsei's residence. As peace had returned, the warriors were no longer preoccupied with strategy and martial arts. Leisure on their hands and the accumulation of wealth among the merchant class led to a rising interest in popular culture, including haikai. Supported by a rising rate of literacy and an industry of book printing and publishing, the stage was set for the popularity of haikai, a form of poetry more accessible and entertaining than classical waka. Thus Nihonbashi recommended itself as a strategic place of residence for the haikai teacher Tōsei.

Two years before his retreat to Fukagawa, on an evening of the full moon in the autumn of 1678, Tōsei wrote:[5]

what a moon!
worth a pot of gold
like the Tōrichō frontage

Tōrichō is a bustling thoroughfare going through the Nihonbashi district.[6] We might think of it as the Edo counterpart to the Champs-Élysées in Paris or Fifth Avenue in New York. A building with its gilded

maguchi, frontage, on Tōrichō was an unmistakable sign of substance. With this hokku, Tōsei, the guest of honor at a haikai party, salutes his host, and in the same breath admires the moon and praises the venue as a piece of valuable real estate. Thus this hokku speaks volumes about Edo in general and Nihonbashi in particular as "a place of profit." In fact, Nihonbashi "was considered the center of the realm, and all distances were measured from it."

What was the profession of haikai master like in such a place? A typical master would have a coterie of friends and disciples with whom to compose linked verse, plus a large pool of haikai hobbyists unknown to the master. Some of them would meet for an evening of haikai composition and submit to the master the outcome of the evening for evaluation. This evaluation took the form of grading and occasional comments, and there was an evaluation fee. Or the master would announce a challenge verse with prizes for the best accompanying stanzas. This practice was called *maekuzuke* or challenge verse capping. In either case, a group of hobbyists might contribute a sum to the common pot, which would be redistributed back to them according to the cumulative grade points they garnered. This practice of grade-point garnering, called *tentori*, was a significant factor in the popularity of haikai. It also was the major source of income for the haikai master.[7]

Bashō's stance vis-à-vis point-garnering seems to have undergone a drastic change at the time of his withdrawal to the village of Fukagawa. One year later, Bashō teamed up with his talented, dashing disciple Kikaku (1661–1707) to intone a kasen renku,[8] which reflected the life he had left behind. Kikaku opened with:

poetry peddler
craving another year of life
saké expenses

and closed with:

poetry peddler
craving cherry blossoms
saké expenses

The so-called haikai masters who made their living as graders were point-blank "poetry peddlers." To this gloves-off label which Kikaku rubbed in with repetition Bashō responded vaguely though vividly:

> rotten haikai —
> even dogs, sniffing,
> would refuse to eat it

A decade later, in 1692, Bashō responded more explicitly, criticizing point-garnerers instead of dispensers:[9]

> [They] spend their days and nights garnering points; constantly competing and oblivious to *the true way* (道 *michi*), they run from one session to the next. One could call them the lost children of poetry, and yet they fill the bellies of the marker's wife and children and bring a profit to the landlord, and as a consequence, they are probably better than those who commit serious crimes.

Here, the sarcasm of damning with a faint praise is well matched by the severity of the following prohibition Bashō issued to one of his students:[10]

> One year when Tōrin hoped to become a grader, Old Master said, "Should you give up haikai? Haikai and the profession of grading are hardly compatible." And he instructed: "You should become a beggar rather than a grader." Accordingly, he abandoned his hope and was content to compose haikai for the rest of his life ... "My disciples in various provinces, never ever do *maekuzuke* and its likes. Or else you would defile your own soul." So saying, he strictly prohibited such practices.

Significantly enough, the severity of this prohibition reflected his criticism of his own practice which he had just abandoned. After this abandonment, however, his reputation as a grader persisted, and he kept receiving requests for grading. Soon after his retreat to Fukagawa, he received such a request from Tōyō, a high-ranking warrior. Bashō replied in a letter:[11]

> I have received and read your letter with appreciation. You are most impressive to pursue the practice of haikai. I have looked over your renku, suggested revisions, and assigned grades to its stanzas. I am sending it back to you. As I fell ill and withdrew to the countryside, I gave up grading. But since you sent me your work from afar, I have done as you requested. I should very much like to see you pursue your practice of haikai further.

A few years later, Bashō received another request from Hanzan (1654–1726), a warrior and haikai friend of his. He replied in a letter:[12] "First of all, because it troubles me, and often even pains me to write critical comments, I hardly ever grade works [submitted to me]. I'd be grateful if you'd refrain from asking me to do grading ever again." With Tōyō's request for grading Bashō reluctantly complied, probably for a diplomatic reason. But in the case of Hanzan, he must have felt that their friendship would allow for a blunt refusal. In either case, he somehow did not wish to explain in those letters his true reason for abandoning the practice of grading: a desire and commitment to safeguard the artistic integrity of haikai from the corrosive influence of the pursuit of "fame and profit," to nurture the attitude of mind toward haikai as art rather than commodity.

The thesis that when Tōsei moved to Fukagawa, he abandoned the profession of grading has been questioned. Arashiyama Kōsaburō, for one, claims that Bashō did not abandon point-garnering haikai, which would have been tantamount to "a literary suicide," and the idea that Bashō's dissatisfaction with it was the reason for his retirement to the riverside village of Fukagawa, is a later fabrication, a rewriting of history by Bashō worshippers. The real reason, Arashiyama claims, was that Bashō had to hide himself to escape persecution from the bakufu regime, *and* that the bakufu placed him at Fukagawa surreptitiously to watch out for ships coming up the River Sumida from Sendai.[13] These two claims are contradictory, unless the regime was suffering from schizophrenia. In any event, his contention that Bashō did not abandon the practice of grading conflicts with the evidence just adduced. True, Bashō did continue grading, albeit to a limited extent.[14] But we must keep in mind that his objection was not to grading as such but as a means of monetary profit. He had no objection to grading as a means of instruction and learning. Nor

was his retirement tantamount to what Arashiyama refers to as "a literary suicide." For in his retirement he had a company of devoted disciples, kindred spirits with whom to commune and compose haikai. Fortunately for him, some of them were wealthy enough to support him financially and materially.[15]

Bashō's assertion of the incompatibility of the profession of grading with haikai presupposes a notion of the *way* (道 *michi* and *dō* in compound nouns, *dao* in Chinese) of haikai which transcends that of "fame and profit." Bashō describes the point garnerers as being "oblivious to the way" in his 1692 letter, and also in his account, in the same letter, contradistinguishes the rarest poets from the point garnerers:[16]

> [There] are those who take satisfaction in their unswerving devotion to poetry, who are not easily distracted by the opinion of others, and who see this way as a means to attain the true Buddhist path (實之道 *makoto no michi*). These poets seek distant bones of Fujiwara Teika, follow the sinews of Saigyō, cleanse the intestines of Bo Juyi, and leap into the breast of Du Fu.

The word "Buddhist" is the translator Shirane's explanatory insertion. This addition is not a mistake because the Buddhist quest for enlightenment is an indispensable and main ingredient of Bashō's notion. But, as Hiroaki Sato reminds us,[17] *the* issue among the Hundred Schools of Philosophy in pre-Buddhist ancient China was what "the true way" is, and two of the Hundred, Confucianism and Daoist philosophy, were well known to Bashō. Moreover, in Japan calligraphy, tea ceremony, and swordsmanship were all called "way": calligraphy, 書道 *shodō*, the way of writing; tea ceremony, 茶道 *sadō*, the way of tea; and swordsmanship, 剣道 *kendō*, the way of the sword. For this reason, I prefer Sato's translation "another vehicle for entering the True Way" to Shirane's "a means to attain the true Buddhist path." Elsewhere Bashō listed a variety of vehicles "for entering the True Way":[18]

> Saigyō's waka, Sōgi's renga, Sesshū's painting, Rikyū's tea ceremony—one thread runs through the artistic Ways 道. And this artistic spirit is to follow the Creative, to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons.

The "one thread" which is said here to "run through the artistic Ways" is "the True Way" which vehicles like poetry, painting, and tea ceremony are said there to enter. Teika's bones, Saigyō's sinews, Bo Juyi's intestines, and Du Fu's heart are all "distant" not only in time but also from "the opinions" of the hoi polloi who are entrenched in the way of "name and profit." It is Bashō's own "unswerving devotion to poetry" which necessitated and was symbolized by his retreat from the commercial center of Edo and from point-garnering haikai.

In Fukagawa, there emerged Bashō the Beggar. One year after his withdrawal, in the winter of 1681–82, the soon-to-be Bashō wrote in a haibun:[19]

> Serene and pristine,
> hiding in the *bashō* leaves of my meager thatched hut,
> I call myself Old Man Beggar.

This self-description is a chorus of symbolic tones. While the ones in the first clause reinforce Bashō's desire for genuine solitude and a closeness with nature, it is the second clause which points to his intension. The original Japanese of the second clause is: *mizukara kotsujiki no okina to yobu*. *Kotsujiki*, beggars, are of two kinds: those who have been defeated or left out of the competition for wealth and power, and those who have on their own accord withdrawn from the competition, like mendicants. The latter are designers of life for themselves, and Bashō was such a beggar if he was one. *Mizukara* is functioning both as a reflexive personal pronoun like "myself" and as an adverb with the force of "on my own accord" modifying the verb *yobu*, to call. This force plus the identity of subject and object implies that it was Bashō's determined choice to become a "beggar." He has deprived himself of a major source of income for a spiritual grace and the integrity of the art of haikai.[20] Thus, four years later, at the end of 1685, looking back over the passing year, Bashō wrote:[21]

> Eating what I begged and was given, I have somehow managed not to starve to death as the year ends:

perhaps I could count myself
as one of the fortunate people —
old at the year's end

Bashō's retreat from the commercial center of Edo to the village of Fukagawa occasioned a radical shift not only in his life but also in his poetry. In life, as we have seen, the shift was from haikai peddler to haikai beggar-hermit. In poetry, it was from punster parody to reflection upon the nature-intoxicated, wabi-permeated self. Let's consider the following compositions, three from the period preceding his move, and two from the period immediately after. These samples are too few to show relevant details but enough to adumbrate the radical shift in poetic orientation.

While living in Edo, early in the spring of 1677, Tōsei wrote:[22]

neko no tsuma hetsui no kuzure yori kayoi keri

a cat's wife
through the crumbled hearth
out and back

In the *Tales of Ise*, a story is told of a man who visited a lady secretly. He "came and went through the ruins of a crumbled earthen wall."[23] In Tōsei's hokku, *neko no tsuma*, cat's wife, replaces the lover in the story, and *hetsui* hearth, oven, replaces *tsuikiji*, earthen wall. The rest of the words are the same. In the story, there was a gap in the garden wall where neighborhood kids had clambered over. In the poem, the crumbling hearth has made a gap in the kitchen wall. Either way, an avenue is available for repeated trysts, human or feline. Though the words *kayoi keri* are common to the story and the poem, the function of the auxiliary verb *keri* is not. In the story, *keri* indicates hearsay past, "so have I heard"; in the poem, exclamatory recognition or surprising discovery, "lo and behold!"[24]

The lover in the story is no other than Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), "the legendary hero of early Heian court society." He was, in Haruo Shirane's words,[25] "idealized for sacrificing political favor, fortune, and propriety for love and poetry." *The Ise Monogatari*, *Tales of Ise*, of the tenth century, which strings together Narihira episodes, is one of the

most celebrated classics of Japanese literature. A cat, in sharp contrast, was a topic vulgar enough to grate against the refined sensibility of classical waka. And if the cat was a forbidden topic, the love of a cat's wife, all the more so. It took haikai to feature this topic, haikai which thrived by dipping into the vulgar. The section of downtown Edo where Tōsei resided had a number of fish mongers, and a horde of alley cats along with them. Imagine the animal yowlings when tomcats' wives were all in heat. Tōsei's hokku slips "cat's wife" in for the classical hero, the embodiment of elegant sensuality. A more provocative parody of courtly poetry would not be easy to imagine.

Around 1677 Tōsei wrote:[26]

kōshi wa rigyo no sashimi ni ate rare
yo'oki suru fundo no kaki ni tsuki fuke te

Master Kong, tummy upset
from carp sashimi, no less

got up at midnight
by the fence to shit
lit by the full moon

Master Kong (552–479 BCE), or Confucius, was long considered the Wise Man of China, and Confucianism was its traditional orthodoxy. The collection of the Master's sayings and episodes known as *The Analects* in English-speaking countries, came over to Japan early, in the 4th or 5th century CE. In Bashō's days, the young warrior's education began, as noted by Marius B. Jansen,[27] "with edifying excerpts from Chinese classics about morality and loyalty," and among these classics, *The Analects* was foremost.

Tōsei's tsukeku alludes to the following two episodes from *The Analects*:[28]

> Episode 1. The Master said to Boyu (*hakugyo* in Japanese), "Have you studied *Zhou nan* and *Shao nan*? To be a man and not to study them is, I would say, like standing one's face directly towards the wall (*kaki*)."

> Episode 2. Zai Yu was in bed in the daytime. The Master said, "A piece of rotten wood cannot be carved, nor can a wall of dried dung (*fundo no kaki* in Japanese) be troweled. As far as Yu is concerned, what is the use of condemning him?"

This double allusion involves elaborate wordplay and parody. First, "Master Kong, his tummy upset from carp sashimi" gives the readership the pleasure of recalling Episode 1, for "Hakugyo" was a nickname of the Master's son named Ri, literally meaning "carp." Having recalled episode 1, the readership sees the wall as a metaphor for a barrier to one's ethical vision and progress degenerate into the literal fence by which the Master helplessly defecated. Moreover, the words *fundo no kaki* remind the readership of Episode 2, because practically the same expression occurs in it. Having recalled Episode 2, the readership sees "a wall of dried dung" as a metaphor for a person unfit to benefit from ethical counseling degenerate into the physical fence by which the master deposited a pungent puddle, in the light of the full moon, no less. Here we have the liquifying of "the dried dung," the resultant odor from evaporation, and, above all, the great moral teacher unable to contain himself.

The next example is from 1678–79:[29]

shio ni shi te mo iza kotozuke n miyakodori

pickled in salt — Tōsei
take capital bird
home with you

tadaima noboru nami no ajigamo

now comes the tide — Haruzumi
tasty ducks on the waves

Haruzumi (1653–1715), a haikai poet from the capital city of Kyoto, traveled to the Deep North, and on his way back stopped over in Edo from the autumn to the winter of 1678. When he was about to resume his return trip to Kyoto some three hundred miles away, he got together

with Tōsei[30] and composed a kasen renku. The exchange cited above opens this renku. With the hokku Tōsei is bidding Haruzumi a haikai farewell; Haruzumi responds with his wakiku. In the hokku, the idea of taking a "capital bird" back to the capital is not without a touch of irony. *Noboru* in the wakiku has a double meaning. On one hand, it means for the tide to come in and up; on the other, for someone to travel to the capital.

As the "cat's wife" hokku of the previous year harked back to a Narihira episode from the *Tales of Ise*, so does the "capital bird" hokku. Tale No. 9 of the *Ise Monogatari* opens as follows:[31]

> In the past, there was a man. Having made up his mind that his position was worthless, he thought that he would live in the east rather than in the capital, and he set out to find a province where he could reside. He went with an old friend or two. Since none of them knew the way, they wandered about.[32] ---- Continuing as before, they came to a very large river between Musashi and Shimotsufusa provinces. It is called the Sumida River. As they stood in a group on the edge of the river and thought of home, lamenting together how very far they had come, the ferryman said, "Hurry up and get in the boat. It's getting dark." About to board the boat and cross the river, they all felt forlorn, for there was not one of them who did not have someone he loved in the capital. Just then they saw a white bird with a red bill and legs, about the size of a snipe, cavorting in the water and eating fish. Since this is not a bird one sees in the capital, none of them recognized it. When they asked the ferryman what it was, he said, "Why, that's a capital bird." Hearing this, the man composed a poem:
>
> if you are true to your name
> let me ask you
> capital bird:
> is the one I love
> still in this world or not?[33]
>
> Everyone in the boat burst into tears.

Forlornness emanating from Narihira's tender heart permeates the atmosphere by and on the River Sumida and crystalizes in the question he poses to the capital bird, on the supposed strength of the bird's name, whether the one in his heart is alive or not in the distant capital. Tōsei's hokku yanks the bird from this sentimental ambience and reduces it to a hunk of pickled meat to serve on a platter. Haruzumi, Tōsei's fellow poet and traveler going back to the capital, does not fail to catch the allusion and the shocking humor. He places himself on the Sumida River's bank close enough to the estuary for the tide to come up, and reduces the ducks bobbing up and down on the tidal waves to tasty duck to match Tōsei's pickled capital bird. The humor of displacement is appreciated and reciprocated.

Danrin style, originated and introduced into the Edo haikai scenery by Sōin (1605–1682), became wildly popular in the 1670's. It was charged with a subversive sense of liberation from the norms of classical waka and renga. Parody of waka-infused literature was a typical expression of the Danrin spirit. Tōsei, new in Edo and intent to establish himself as a haikai master, lost no time to jump on the Danrin bandwagon. The three hokku by Tōsei just reviewed are representative of his wagon ride. "[A] cat's wife" turns Narihira, the legendary hero of elegant sensuality, into a cat in heat. "Master Kong" turns the moral teacher of greatest dignity into a helpless diarrhea patient. "[C]apital bird" turns the fowl which brought to tears Narihira and company far from the capital into a mouth-watering pickle to take back to the capital. In each of these cases, the elegant, sentimental, or dignified is brought down to the mundane, quotidian, or vulgar. In each case, in celebration of the uncouth, materials from such a classic as the *Tales of Ise* or *The Analects* are mercilessly parodied. Such was the height of the Danrin school of haikai.

Danrin style had no sooner become all the rage than it fell out of fashion. Parody depends on the recognizability of that which is subjected to it. The range of recognizable materials from classical literature was rather limited. As repeated jokes could only invite boredom and a sense of déjà vu, so did Danrin haikai after a while. Thus the bandwagon screeched to a halt, and Sōin the leader himself got off it and returned to renku. Saikaku (1641–93), a major Danrin poet, abandoned it for nō drama. Tōsei

followed. His hokku "capital bird" from the winter of 1678–79 is one of the hokku marking the end of his Danrin intoxication as well as its peak. He had probably come to feel that parody is a kind of parasitic literature, and that Danrin haikai could not stand on its own abreast with classical waka. As his enthusiasm turned to disillusion, he also realized the commercialization of the haikai profession was suffocating the spirit of haikai.

Now we come to the hokku, the culmination of the haibun with which we began. This haibun compares the Edo of Bashō's days with Chang'an of old, and contrasts implicitly but dramatically the two modes of life the poet lived before and after the move. The haibun has the look of having been written soon after his retreat. Its hokku:

shiba no to ni cha o konoha kaku arashi kana

against the brushwood door
raking tree leaves for my tea —
wind storm

Bashō, who is too poor to afford tea leaves from a store in town, hears and sees a gust of wintry wind blowing leaves off the trees and whirling them on the ground. Moments later the gust has abated and left a little pile of leaves against the brushwood door. Very fond of tea, he imagines himself brewing herb tea with those leaves and thanking the gust for gathering them for him. Finding poetry and humor in this self-image, he smiles.

This hokku alludes to the following one by Sōin (1605–1682), Bashō's teacher in the Danrin School:[34]

my crock of tea leaves —
unaware of it
passes the storm

Bashō's hokku has three key words in common: *ha* leaves, *cha* tea, and *arashi* storm. The topic of Sōin's hokku, *hachatsubo*, has a special place in tea connoisseurship. Tender tea leaves, carefully selected and picked late in spring, are sealed air-tight in a crock for flavor enhancement and

preservation. At the tea party early in winter to which family members and friends are invited, the crock's seal is loosened. This ritual act is called *kuchikiri*, literally, cutting the mouth open. The tea leaves then are ground into powder called *matcha* for the special appreciation and celebration of flavorful tea. For the speaker of the poem, the *kuchikiri* service is forthcoming, and he is full of hope and confidence about the tea's quality. The wind blowing outside, announcing the winter's arrival, he feels, is quite indifferent to his preoccupation and anticipation. Though Bashō derives the three keywords from this hokku, his "leaves" are not regular tea leaves but tree leaves, and his storm wind is not indifferent but plays a helpful role in his own version of tea connoisseurship.

Sōin's word *hacha* means tea in the form of leaves, that is, not yet ground into *matcha*. It is going to be soon, as the *kuchikiri* draws near. Thus Bashō's hokku's allusion to Sōin's involves tea-leaf grinding, that is, *matcha* making. Here emerges the possibility of the homonymy of *ko* in the second line, meaning *ko* powder as well as *ko* tree. And along with this homonymy emerges a double scenery: inside, tea leaves are ground in a mortar and then stirred in hot water in a bowl; outside, tree leaves are whirling round and round in eddies of freezing wind. A perfect harmony of motion, sound, and seasonality, a harmony between culture and nature made possible by Bashō's new life at the grass hut or the brushwood door.

Bashō knows the provenance of Sōin's words:

> unaware of it
> passes the storm

They come straight from the following waka by Jien (1155–1225), whose verse appeared in a source familiar to Bashō, the *shinkokinwakashū* from almost 500 years prior:[35]

> tree leaves fall on the house
> my sleeve spread in vain
> is dyed crimson
> unaware of it all
> passes the storm

The speaker, a lady, hearing a passing storm scatter tree leaves on the roof, spreads her robe's sleeve for her absent lover. This gesture drives her grief home. Her tears dye the sleeve, according to a standard poetic notion, as crimson as winter showers dye tree leaves. Her lover is as unaware of her grief as is the passing storm. How ephemeral, cold, and cruel this world is!

Sōin took the words "unaware of it all / passes the storm" out of the waka steeped in pathos, and set them in a context of hopefulness. Whereas the lady misses her lover acutely, the speaker of Sōin's hokku has his crock in his possession. Whereas the storm driving tree leaves against the roof of her house intensifies her sorrow, the storm blowing unaware of the crock of tea leaves does not affect the crock-owner's fruition adversely. By dint of this conversion of context from pathos to fruition in true Danrin style, Sōin's hokku parodies the classical sensibility. In Bashō's hokku, the gust of wind is not seen indifferent to tea making but a timely leaf gatherer supplying what is needed for it. The chilly wind will serve to put a hot bowl of tea in Bashō's hands. In addition, Sōin's allusion to the tea ceremony of *kuchikiri* enriches the context of Bashō's hokku.

Bashō's "tree leaves for my tea" is a case of *honkadori*, literally, "taking from the root poem," a rhetorical technique haikai inherited from classical waka. He takes from the root poem of Sōin's three key words to come up with a quite different poem. A *honkadori* requires for its success that the root poem is well known. In this respect, *honkadori* is like parody. We have seen how well Tōsei's "Master Kong, tummy upset" works as parody because *The Analects of Confucius* was best known, and even if some textual details escape one, the iconic image of Confucius would not. He was regarded as the august master of all masters and the paragon of virtue and decorum. In the case of "tree leaves for my tea," however, I am not sure how well Sōin's root poem was known. But even if it was not, it would not matter much. For the Way of Tea, widely practiced among the warriors and wealthy merchants alike in Bashō's days,[36] provided sufficient cultural background. The Way of Tea emphasized the importance of meticulous preparation for the ritualized appreciation of tea, and in "tree leaves for my tea," a whirlwind has a hand in that preparation!

We have seen Bashō rank Sen no Rikyū (1522–91) with the artistic masters Saigyō, Sōgi, and Sesshū in his approach to the True Way, the way of Nature. Rikyū was a great tea master. His approach was so steeped in the aesthetic of wabi that it was actually called *Wabicha* or Tea of Wabi. Wabi, a noun, is derived from the verb *wabu*, which originally meant to lament, be disappointed, in distress, poor, forlorn. When Bashō, in my translation, wrote "growing weary of living (*sumi-wabi*) in the middle of the city," he was using this verb in its original negative sense. But in an inversion of sentiment, aesthetics, and philosophy, for which Rikyū and Bashō are primarily credited, the word took on a positive connotation. With respect to the mode of life, it meant to treasure a life of quietude and solitude, poverty and simplicity. With respect to aesthetic sensibility, it meant to shun loud and ostentatious beauty, and embrace and savor quiet, subdued, and resonant beauty. To talk about this lexical inversion is one thing, to actually go through it bodily must be quite another. It must require clarity of purpose, discipline, patience, time, dedication, and fortitude of mind and body. As the new life of wabi dawned, the new poetry of wabi came to bloom, and the senses open to nature.

In the autumn of 1681, less than a year after his move to Fukagawa, Bashō wrote the following haibun which sounds like a celebratory declaration of his commitment to a life of wabi:[37]

> Lonely poverty, gazing at the moon. Lonely poverty, contemplating my low state. Lonely poverty, thinking about my lack of talent. "How are you?" I'd answer, "in lonely poverty" but no one asks. More lonely poverty.

"live poor, be clear!"
Lone Moongazer sings
Nara Tea Gruel Song

The hokku's original Japanese is: *wabi te sume tsukiwabisai ga narachauta*. The first measure of the hokku, *wabi te sume* "live poor, be clear!" is from the supposed lyric of *Nara-cha-uta*, *Nara Tea Gruel Song*, which Mr. Lone Moongazer is humming. *Sumu*, of which *sume* is the imperative form, has the following meanings: 1) for muddy water or cloudy or hazy

skies to become clear, limpid; 2) for light, objects like the moon, or sound to become bright, clear, distinct; 3) for people or animals to settle, settle down, dwell, live, inhabit, reside; and 4) for the mind or perceptions to become clear, free from confusion or distraction.

All the four senses are in play here, senses 1 and 2 implicitly, 3 and 4 more explicitly. *Sumu* in sense 1 suggests that a storm has blown away to leave the sky cloudless and the atmosphere clean and clear. *Sumu* in sense 2 suggests that in the cloudless skies the full moon is as clear as can be, that the condition is perfect for Mr. Lone Moongazer to gaze at the moon and sing a paean for it in a clear voice. *Sume* in sense 3, modified by the adverbially functioning *wabi-te*, is the imperative: "Settle in a life of austerity!" untainted by the pursuit of fame, power, and wealth. *Sume* in sense 4, preceded by wabi functioning as an imperative, is a word of self-encouragement and self-confirmation in the form of the double imperative: "live poor! be clear!" The implication is that settling deep in a life of wabi clarifies one's mind and vision.

The doubling of senses 3 & 4 is exemplified in the following waka by Saigyō (1118–1190), who was the greatest source of inspiration for Bashō:[38]

ojika naku	near the foot
ogura no yama no	of Mount Ogura
suso chika mi	where stags cry
tada hitori sumu	I live all alone
waga kokoro kana	with my clear mind

The critical pivot here is the word *sumu*. It means *live, dwell*, in relation to the preceding *hitori* (alone) and be clear in relation to the following *waga kokoro* (my mind, my heart). The quiet location and mode of life clarify one's mind.

Naracha is a bowl of tea gruel making up a simple, humble meal all by itself. As such, it is a fitting part, and also a symbol, of wabi-permeated life. The recipe is simple: Cook brown rice in lightly salted green tea, adding, according to availability and taste, peas, beans, tofu, chestnuts, mushrooms, seaweeds, and the like. *Naracha-uta* is a song about such a

bowl of gruel and also a song to sing over it. The word *Naracha-uta* is reminiscent of another word *wabi-uta*, which ordinarily is a song of lamentation. *Naracha-uta* is a different kind of *wabi-uta*. It celebrates the life of wabi symbolized by *naracha*. Elsewhere Bashō was quoted as saying to his disciples, probably with a smile on his face:[39] "Only after eating *naracha* from fifteen bushels of rice, can you understand the soul of haikai." Fifteen bushels of rice, at the rate of one cup a day, would take a good sixteen years to eat. Along with the banana tree, the beggar, the grass hut, and the brushwood door, nara tea gruel was symbolic of the life of austerity and simplicity which would nurture and inform the spirit of haikai.

Given Bashō's highest regard for Sen no Rikyū as the master of *wabicha*, it is no accident that Bashō mentions tea in this hokku about wabi. But the tea of Rikyū's *wabicha* is one thing, that of Bashō's *naracha* is something else. Rikyū's *wabicha* is highly formalized. No participants in it would burst out singing *Narachauta*. Mr. Lone Moongazer, a projection of Bashō himself, is spontaneous, and his bowl of tea gruel is quotidian.

The prose part of the haibun "live poor, be clean!" may not be authentic. But even if it is a forgery, it sounds authentic enough to merit consideration. The prose part sounds like the cry of a *wabi-uta*. Gazing at the moon all by himself or contemplating his low state or lack of talent, the speaker feels miserable. The question "How are you?" is only imagined: "No one is asking. But if anyone would, then I should answer ..." This imagined exchange harks back to a poem by Ariwara no Yukihira (818–893)[40] from the first Imperial Anthology 800 years prior:

> If by any chance
> someone should ask after me,
> answer that I pine (*wabu*),
> weeping as seaweed drips
> on the beaches of Suma.

Yukihira in exile addressed this poem to someone from the palace in the capital. In the haibun, the speaker in self-exile, in the absence of someone asking after him, can only enact a question-and-answer for and by him-

self. Though he does feel miserable, he is not drowned in his miseries. He is able to contemplate them. Here lies the potential for reflecting upon the conventional measure of success, and the potential for the positive sense of wabi. It is this potential that bursts into actuality in the hokku in which the prose part culminates. Voilà, wabi life to embrace. The life of wabi in the positive sense begins with a discovery of spiritual grace in what would be miseries by the conventional standard.

Bashō's dramatic reorientation of life towards the embodiment of the wabi aesthetic also opened his senses to things of nature. In the ambient light of the uncluttered mind, sensory data present themselves. Here are some examples from the hokku Bashō composed during his westward journey of 1684-85, four years after his retreat to Fukagawa.[41] Note the difference between these verses and the Danrin style verses of his Edo period.

dew drip drip
I long to rinse away
the dust of this world

grass pillow —
is that dog a cold shower too?
the howl of the night

the sea darkening
a wild duck's call
faintly white[42]

scent of orchids —
sweet incense
lit on a butterfly's wing[43]

roadside
hibiscus bitten off
by my horse!

early dawn
whitefish, whiteness
one inch long

along the mountain path
somehow so appealing —
wild violets

from deep in the peony pistils
comes out a bee
reluctant to part

As we have seen, in the winter of 1680–81, Tōsei moved his dwelling from Edo to Fukagawa, from a major metropolis to a village. Shortly thereafter, he adopted the penname of Bashō the Banana Tree, a picture of fragility and vulnerability. He resigned from haikai peddling and

turned into a beggar hermit poet. He abandoned parody-ridden Danrin-style haikai, and steadied his gaze at his wabi-soaked life open to nature. He transformed haikai humor from a guffaw over irreverent parody to a smile over the eccentricity of embracing wabi. These transitions in residence, profession, life-style, poetry, and poetics were not coincidental. Inspired and supported by the Chinese Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi, the Chinese itinerant poet Du Fu, and the Japanese itinerant hermit-poet Saigyō, Tōsei the dramaturge blended these transitions into a dramatis personae, and Bashō enacted the role. Thus sprang forth wabi-infused hokku and haibun. Thus was Bashō born.

NOTES

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[1] Kusama Tokihiko, Morikawa Akira, Ogata Tsutomu, Ōoka Shin, and Shimazu Tadao, eds. *Haibungaku daijiten*. Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1995, 690. In "Haikaisekizumō" (1682) by Mitatsu, Bashō, called Tōsei in this book, was ranked as one of the eighteen haikai wrestlers of Japan, and one of the six of Edo. By 1682, however, his public acclaim had become a burden for him.

[2] In 1672, new in Edo, he began writing under the name of Tōsei, "Peach Green." In Second Moon of 1682, one year after his move to Fukagawa, he adopted the penname of Bashō. From then on for the rest of his life he used both monikers. At times, for convenience of reference, I speak as if the new penname had replaced the old one. This is historically inaccurate. The penname of Tōsei, I believe, is a token of his aspiration to stand shoulder to shoulder with the great Chinese poet Li Bo (701–62), whose name means "Apricot White."

[3] Kobayashi Shōjirō, Miyawaki Sadahiko, Nakano Sae, Ogata Tsutomu, and Shimanaka Michinori, eds. "Zoku-fukagawashū" in *Shinpen bashō Taisei*. Tokyo:

Sanseidō, 1999, 375. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

[4] Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan from Tokugawa Times to the Present*. United Kingdom: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013, p. 23.

[5] "Edo tōrichō" in Kobayashi et al, 168. This hokku piggybacks on the following passage from the nō play *Tamura*: "... An hour of an evening in spring is worth a pot of gold (*senkin*). The scent of the flowers, the light of the moon. ... An evening such as this indeed (*geni*) we wouldn't trade for a pot of gold." What is new in Tōsei's hokku is the reference to the Tōrichō frontage.

[6] The district is named after the bridge *Nihonbashi* (Japan Bridge) completed in 1604. For a telling picture of the bridge and its vicinity see picture 14 in Jansen, Marius B. *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002.

[7] Inui Hiroyuki, Morikawa Akira, and Okada Toshirō, eds., *Teimon haikaishū*, vol. 2. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1971, 488-626. Tentori found its way into a hokku:

toriten ya	*tentori —*
enkō ga nozomu	moon-gazing monkeys
tsuki no saku	for the topic

The supposition is that a haikai master solicited hokku entries on the topic of moon-gazing monkeys. The more popular the topic, the more entries there would be, and the more money the grading master would make. For instructive accounts of this phenomenon see Haikai keizai shakaigaku, the economic sociology of haikai, by Kon Eizō in his Bashō denki no shomondai, pp. 239-253, and Adam L. Kern, "Haiku Verse Capping (Maekuzuke)" in The Penguin Book of Haikai by him, pp. XLVI-XLIX.

[8] Kobayashi et al, 183.

[9] Shirane, Haruo. *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, 157. Plus my italics and parenthetical insertion.

[10] Kobayashi et al, 802. The student was Mōen (1669–1729).

[11] Kobayashi et al, 450. Bashō's letter dated the 3rd of Fifth Moon. The editors conjecture the year, unspecified in Bashō's dating, to fall during the Tenna era, namely, Tenth Moon of 1681 to Second Moon of 1684.

[12] Kobayashi et al, 450. Letter dated 28th of First Moon, 1685.

[13] Arashiyama Kōsaburō. *Akutō bashō*. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, Tokyo, 2006, 52-3. *Bashō to iu shura*. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2017,100, 108-9. *Chōyaku bashō hyakku*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2022, 42-3, 48.

[14] For examples of haikai graded by Tōsei see Kobayashi et al, 565-569; for those graded by Bashō, 569-572.

[15] Suzuki Katsutada. "Tōdai haikaishi no jittai to bashō" in *Basho no hon,* Vol. 2, 163-193.

[16] Shirane, 158. Except for the transliteration of the Chinese poets' names and the parenthetical insertion.

[17] Sato, Hiroaki. *On Haiku*. New York: New Directions, 2018, 21-26.

[18] Barnhill, David Landis. *Basho's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Bashō*. Albany, New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 2005, 29. Insertion of character 道 is mine.

[19] Kobayashi et al, 375-6.

[20] Yet he was not totally deprived of earning power. In Eighth Moon of 1684, as he was about to set out on his westward journey, his disciple Rika, who had presented his master a bashō tree three years before, bade him a farewell ("Nozarashikikō" in Kobayashi et al, 326). Bashō included this exchange in an earlier version, but omitted it from the final version):

bashō nowaki	bashō in the field-splitting gale
sono ku ni waraji	why don't you turn that verse of yours
kaeyo kashi	into straw sandals?

Bashō could, Rika is suggesting, write on poetry cards his hokku "bashō in the field-splitting gale / all night long I listen / to rain dripping into a basin," and barter them for replacement sandals. Bashō responded:

tsuki to momiji o	turning moon and autumn colors
sake no kotsujiki	into saké for the beggar

"Yes, but I could do better," Bashō is saying, "the moon and autumnal colors are free. What a lucky beggar I am to be able to barter them for saké!" Is that a self-mocking smile we see on his face?

[21] "Atsumeku" in Kobayashi et al, 382.

[22] "Roppyaku ban haikai hokku awase" in Kobayashi et al, 5.

[23] Fukui Teisuke, ed. "Ise monogatari" in *Shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vol.12, Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1994, 116

[24] Shirane, Haruo. *Classical Japanese: A Grammar*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2005, 71-72.

[25] Shirane, Haruo. *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to*

1600. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007, 184.

[26] "Haikai edo hirokōji" in Kobayashi et al, 169. The form of this work, which Tōsei rarely used, is called *tsukeku*, which may be translated as paired verses. While each of the two verses makes sense by itself, the pair of them form a sequence. If the leading verse has the syllabic scansion of 7-7, the following verse has the 5-7-5 pattern.

[27] Jansen, 160.

[28] Lau, D.C., trans., *Confucius: The Analects*. New York: Penguin Books, 1979, 145, 77. Except for my pinyin transliteration and parenthetical insertion.

[29] "Edo jikkasen" in Kobayashi et al, 171.

[30] With another poet, Jishun (1661–1704). Apparently, all three were former disciples of Kigin (1624–1705) of Kyoto.

[31] Shirane, Haruo. *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*, 188-190.

[32] In this tale, "having made up his mind that his position [in the capital] was worthless (*yōnaki mono*)," our hero abandoned it and left the capital. Remarkably, this reads like a premonition of what Tōsei would do two years after composing this Capital Bird hokku. For it would be true to say of Tōsei: "Having made up his mind that his position in Edo was worthless, he abandoned it and retired to the village of Fukagawa." Furthermore, the road (*michi*) the travelers were following is said to be "very dark and narrow" (*ito kuraku hososhi*). I wonder if it was a pure coincidence that the road he was to take to the Deep North later he called "narrow" (*hoso*), and titled his literary account of his wanderings *Oku no hosomichi,* The Narrow Road to the Deep North.

[33] The translation of this poem is my own.

[34] Iida Shōichi, ed. "Sōin shichihyaku" in *Danrin haikaishū*, vol.1, Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1971, 398.

[35] Akase Shingo and Tanaka Yukata, eds. "Shinkokinwakashū, #559" in *Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 11, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1992, 171.

[36] Jansen, 117. He writes of Shōgun Nobunaga that he "studied tea with Sakai masters and sometimes gave tea utensils to his vassals as reward for particularly outstanding and valorous service" (27) and "Sakai was particularly important as a center of trade and manufacture. Its wealthy merchant princes were leaders in culture and in the tea ceremony. Sen no Rikyū, who served as chief tea master to both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi ... was a figure who combined considerable personal wealth with a cult of simplicity and modesty that he codified in the tea ceremony of his day" (117).

[37] The translation of the prose part is a modification of Barnhill (*Bashō's Journey*,

94). That of the hokku is mine. The hokku appeared in *Musashiburi* (1682), but the prose part did not appear until *Haikai ichiyōshū* of 1827. For this reason, some scholars (e.g., Hori Nobuo, *Matsuo bashōshū*, vol. 1, Zenhokku, p. 79, #138) reject it as inauthentic. Toyama Susumu includes the prose part, saying, "I dare to include it on the strength of its verisimilitude." *Bashō bunshū*, p. 16, #2). *Shinpen bashō taisei (SBT)*, ed., Ogata Tsutomu et al (1999), includes it as authentic. I tentatively follow *SBT*.

[38] Kubota Atsushi, ed. *Saigyō zenshū*. Tokyo: Nihon koten bungakukai, 1982, 51.

[39] Kobayashi et al, 801.

[40] McCullough, Helen Craig, trans., *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*. Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985.

[41] Kobayashi et al, 323-326.

[42] Barnhill, 19.

[43] McKinney, Meredith. *Travels with a Writing Brush: Classical Japanese Travel Writing from the Manyōshū to Bashō*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2020, 252.