



## **Chains of Elusiveness: Buson and Kitō's “Momosumomo” *Haikai* Sequences**

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“Momosumomo” ももすもも (Peaches and plums) is a collection of *haikai* 俳諧 linked-verse sequences composed in 1780 by Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村 (1716–83) and his main disciple, Takai Kitō 高井几董 (1741–89). Unlike most Japanese linked verse—normally written in a single session—the two sequences of “Momosumomo” were composed by letters exchanged over a period of several months. What resulted are sequences that demonstrate not only the unpredictability and surprise that is customary in *haikai* but also a level of restraint and subtlety that is unmatched in other *haikai* of this period. This article explores the verses of “Momosumomo” as examples of ways that eighteenth-century *haikai* poets exploited the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the linked form to create sequences where voice, point of view, and identity shift with each successive link, resulting in collaborative works that create numerous loosely connected but discrete narratives.

### **The Linked-Verse Community of Eighteenth-Century Japan**

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The two-verse sequences of “Momosumomo” exemplify the ways that eighteenth-century *haikai* poets exploited the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the linked form to create sequences where voice, point of view, and identity shift with each successive verse, resulting in works that create numerous loosely connected but discrete narratives. Although this quality of elusiveness is typical of all linked verse to some extent, the “Momosumomo” sequences are especially good examples; and the poets’ letters offer us

unique insight into the kinds of negotiations that were central to the composition of these complex, collaborative works.

The practice of writing sequences was itself a community-building exercise, and "Momosumomo" was both a reinforcement of and a challenge to this process. That is to say, even though linked verse was falling out of fashion during this period, collaborative verse was nevertheless composed one way or another, albeit in somewhat unorthodox or even truncated forms. Furthermore, while other forms of *haikai* increasingly became the focus of most of the work of other *haikai* poets, Buson's Yahantei 夜半亭 (Midnight studio) School continued to make the composition of linked verse an important part of their practice. This situation was in large part because Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644–94) and his followers, whom the Yahantei poets admired, used this technique to express and reify their identity as the members of a community. The Yahantei poets continued to do so to emphasize their community not only with each other but also with the venerable tradition of the Bashō School.

### Bashō & Linked Verse

Much eighteenth-century *haikai* poetry was deeply deferential, referential, and even reverential to that of Matsuo Bashō. This was with good reason: Bashō and his disciples transformed *haikai* from a somewhat disreputable offshoot of the classical linked verse form called *renga* 連歌 into a major genre of its own. This transformation was related to the great flowering of popular cultural forms in the late seventeenth century—among them the kabuki theater of Chikamatsu Monzaemon 近松門左衛門 (1653–1725) and the *gesaku* 戯作 fiction of Ihara Saikaku 井原西鶴 (1642–93). Bashō's innovations gave a form of poetry that at the time was largely regarded as a frivolous pastime a level of literary legitimacy previously reserved for the classical forms *waka* 和歌 and *renga*.

Bashō's frequent journeys earned him a following all over the country, and the energy and devotion of his closest disciples created large and highly influential communities of poets devoted to the study and practice of his teachings in one form or another. As a result, the *haikai* of the eighteenth century was significantly shaped by the next-generation followers of Bashō, who were divided into two main groups: the urban and the rural *haikai* schools, each of whom claimed to espouse the true ideals of Bashō. To some extent, both were correct: the urban poets emulated Bashō's early style, which emphasized wit and wordplay; and the rural poets admired his later, more austere style of *karumi* 軽み (lightness).

## Buson, Kitō & the Yahantei School

Yosa Buson was born twenty-two years after Bashō died. The most important writer of *haikai* of the eighteenth century, Buson was also a painter; and the alternative source of income that he was able to count on from his painting enabled him a degree of freedom in his poetry that he would not have had otherwise.

The Yahantei School was founded in the early part of the eighteenth century by Buson's mentor, *haikai* poet Hayano Hajin 早野巴人 (1676–1742). After Hajin's death, Buson did not reopen Yahantei until 1770, when he had gained a substantial following not only as a painter but also as a poet. Affiliates of Yahantei included Tan Taigi 炭太祇 (1709–71), Matsumura Gekkei 松村月溪 (1752–1811, also known as Goshun 吳春), and the poet who was eventually to become the school's third and last leader, Kitō. Buson was a relatively indifferent leader, and he reserved most of his energy for his paintings. As a result, he left much of the editorial work of Yahantei's anthologies up to Kitō.

Yahantei was at the forefront of what came to be called the Bashō Revival movement. While Yahantei was not one of the Bashō-style schools, its members frequently consorted and collaborated with poets who were, such as Katō Kyōtai 加藤暁台 (1732–92) and Ōshima Ryōta 大島蓼太 (1718–87). Furthermore, in letters and prefaces to anthologies, its members were openly critical of poets who did not hold to what they defined as Bashō's highest principles. Such poets included those both inside as well as outside of groups that claimed some affinity with Bashō. Yahantei members found the works of some such poets bland and derivative; they saw others as merely greedy for the high student fees a Bashō connection could attract.

Much of Buson's reluctance as Yahantei's leader may stem from the fact that he had a capable colleague in Kitō; but, on the other hand, Yahantei also served a different purpose for Buson: It provided him with a dependable source of new clients for his paintings. In this sense, Buson was little different from the majority of the commoners—both urban and rural—who composed *haikai*. In other words, *haikai* was as important for its potential for social networking as it was for artistic or literary expression—perhaps something like Facebook today is for our students or perhaps even ourselves. As we shall see, this aspect is directly related to its origins in the collaborative form of linked verse.

## Linked Verse in Eighteenth-Century Japan

The history of linked verse in Japan begins far before either Buson or Bashō. The classical linked verse form, *renga*, had its heyday in the medieval period. *Renga* is derived from *waka*, the thirty-one-syllable poem that

was the aristocracy's main form of literary expression. The origins of *renga* were supposed to be of the greatest antiquity, and possibly even divine. For example, Nijō Yoshimoto 二条良基 (1320–88) identified *renga* with an exchange in the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記 (Japan chronicles, eighth century) between legendary hero Yamato Takeru 大和武 and an old man he met while passing through Tsukuba 筑波 (in present-day Ibaraki Prefecture) (Nijō 1961, 74, 76–77).<sup>1</sup> During the medieval period, the composition of *haikai* or “nonstandard” linked verse served as comic relief between sessions of composing the intense and very challenging *renga*, somewhat like the function served by *kyōgen* 狂言 in the Noh 能 theater; and these *haikai no renga* 俳諧の連歌 were typically not recorded.

However, with the rise of urban-commoner culture in the early modern period, members of lower-status groups (like merchants and farmers) began to embrace *haikai* for a variety of reasons—in part because the customary exclusiveness of classical forms did not apply to *haikai*, but also because composing *haikai* with friends and business associates was a pleasurable activity.

What made *haikai no renga* compelling for its practitioners is the thing that makes it interesting for this discussion: its collaborative aspect. Although the examples of *haikai* that are most famous today are all in the genre's shortest form, the seventeen-syllable *hokku* 発句, the majority of *haikai* composed in roughly the first half of the early modern period were in the form of linked verse. Composition involved groups of people—often the leader of a school and his disciples—gathering on a specific occasion and composing verses alternating between seventeen and fourteen syllables each, typically ending up with a sequence thirty-six links long. Because the rules of creating linkages were complicated, and because composition was supposed to be spontaneous, one member of the group functioned as the scribe and moderator, ensuring that each verse conformed to the necessary requirements before recording it. Since no verse with the exception of the opening one—the *hokku*—could be written without reference to the verse that immediately preceded it, poets had to be able to compose quickly and on the spot, like players responding to the moves of an opponent in a game. Consequently, little room existed for revision after the fact.

Playful as it was in terms of content, an activity like composing *haikai* was extremely demanding if done well. Poets had to internalize a complicated set of conventions and to compose their verses extemporaneously and quickly in front of a group. Despite its challenges, by the early decades of the eighteenth century, the genre had developed such a following that there was an abundant supply of handbooks and teachers available to deliver instructions on how to compose *haikai* in such a way as to impress one's companions. However, the success of *haikai* actually led to the decline of formal thirty-six-link sequence composition, as practitioners shifted to forms that could be composed alone or in dialogue only with one's teacher.

Most prominent among these forms was *maekuzuke* 前句付 (verse pairs): a *tsukeku* 付句 (a seventeen-syllable “linking verse”) written to connect to a *maeku* 前句 (a fourteen-syllable “previous verse”) to form a single mini-sequence. Although *maekuzuke* actually derived from the canons of conventional linked verse and was originally used as a form of instruction for beginning poets, it became popular as a game during the Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704). *Maekuzuke* was, however, looked down on by poets with more literary aspirations, like Bashō and his successors, who tended to prefer *hokku*. This preference was with some justification: *maekuzuke* became a kind of competition, where students vied with one another to see whose *tsukeku* could get the highest marks from their teachers—often with cash prizes, and even gambling, involved.

One aspect that *hokku* and *maekuzuke* had in common, however, was that both could be written outside of the kind of gathering that was customary in linked-verse composition. It was still possible to participate in verse gatherings in the eighteenth century; but, for many poets, these events centered on winning a better grade on your verses than your friends did. Alternatively, teachers set up correspondence course-style programs where tuition took place by letter.

As indicated, then, collaboration in *haikai* did not necessarily require propinquity, and much of the exchange within *haikai* communities took place at a distance. Publication of verses was of course of central importance. Aside from that, however, poets and their disciples also took advantage of the relatively good communications and travel infrastructure that developed in the Edo 江戸 period (1603–1868), exchanging messages both within the same urban areas and across the countryside. The emphasis that the frequently itinerant Bashō put on travel, for instance, can be attributed in part to the practical factor that it was possible for him to keep in touch with disciples and patrons both on the road and after returning home. A large number of Bashō’s letters are extant, and they provide a good supplement to the more formal treatises on poetics both he and his senior disciples authored.

### Buson’s Letters: “Momosumomo” & Its Context

In the case of Buson, who wrote very little about *haikai* theory, almost everything we know about his views on *haikai*—especially his own compositions—comes from letters. A surprisingly large number of them survive: *Buson shokanshū* 蕪村書簡集 (Collected letters of Buson) contains 246. The letters are an excellent source of insight into the working life of a poet and painter in Kyoto in the late eighteenth century. Many of them are addressed to patrons, negotiating the details of painting orders with a bit of *haikai* criticism thrown in; others are expressions of goodwill to the impor-

tant *haikai* poets of the day. Some of the most interesting letters are to members of the Yahantei *haikai* group, written in the latter part of his life and offering perspective on the practices and habits of *haikai* circles. Perhaps most numerous and intimate, however, are the letters Buson wrote to Kitō, his most important disciple.

Kitō's father Kikei 几圭 (1689–1762) had been a leading disciple of Buson's mentor, Hayano Hajin; and Kitō and Buson's friendship endured throughout the thirty-five years that Buson lived in Kyoto. Buson and Kitō had an active correspondence (some sixty of the letters collected in *Buson shokanshū* are addressed to Kitō, more than to any other recipient), especially when one of them was traveling. One of these letters indicates that Kitō might not have been as wholeheartedly admired by others in Buson's circle as he was by Buson.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Kitō was enormously energetic and productive and had his own group of disciples in addition to serving as Buson's assistant in the Yahantei.

"Momosumomo" was written over a period of nine months: from the third to the twelfth month of Anei 安永 9 (1780). Buson's account of its composition in the preface is slightly counterfactual: he claims that the work originally consisted of four sequences; but the letters indicate that only two were really written. However, the preface does account for the title of the work, a play on words:

I laughed and said, "The greatness of *haikai* is that in truth it has change, and in truth it is without change; for example, it is similar to going around a race-track, running after people. It is like those running ahead are somehow chasing after those coming up behind. How can one know the difference between 'ahead' and 'behind' in change? I just express the things in my heart day by day: today it is the *haikai* of today; tomorrow, the *haikai* of tomorrow. I call this anthology 'Momosumomo.' It is a palindrome, without beginning or end. To be thus is the main intention of this collection." (Ogata and Yamashita 1994, 193–94)

In other words, Buson chose the palindrome *momosumomo* for the title of the work to emphasize its circularity.

Kitō's description of the work's composition, included in a letter he sent to a disciple along with the manuscript, tells a much different story:

Long ago, in 1780 I think it was, one day I went to visit the Master at Yahantei. The time was spring, when the blossoms were falling, and the birds were singing, an evening when even the traces of spring were indistinct. The rain began to fall gently, and when there were no visitors to disturb the quiet, the Master himself lit the lamps, and sitting up straight in his seat said, "[. . .] I have been amusing myself with *haikai* for some fifty years, and by and by I am approaching my seventh decade. I still have yet to produce *haikai* I can be proud of; these days, as I expected, you have already matured in *haikai*. As an experiment, we two should do a two-person sequence." We composed two *hokku* for summer and winter, and we—master and disciple—composed more than one hundred verses, and days

passed into months until we completed the sequences, making them correct, studying their variations, and polishing individual verses. (Ōiso 1975, 104–5)

Kitō's letter gives an indication of the intense perfectionism that he and Buson brought to their work. The long process of drafting and revising the "Momosumomo" sequences over the course of several months was very different from the typical procedure of composing all the verses during a single session. Moreover, the process describes a much less spontaneous genesis than Buson's introduction suggests.

The earliest of Buson's "Momosumomo" letters to Kitō is dated on the twelfth day of the third month of Anei 9. The latest is dated the fifth day of the eleventh month of the same year. Another letter, dated the twenty-second of the twelfth month, is addressed to Buson's disciple Hyakuchi 百池 (1749–1835) and requests assistance with publishing arrangements.<sup>3</sup> It was not always the case that Buson was too far away from Kitō for the two to meet in person: Kitō did spend several weeks in Osaka during this period, but, otherwise, both were in Kyoto and saw each other frequently. Many of the letters mention enjoying the previous night's linked verse session or speak of plans for meeting the following day. Couriers were often Buson's disciples, like Hyakuchi, who happened to be passing between the two poets' houses; otherwise, the missives were carried by household employees.

Buson's tone of politeness and tolerance for Kitō's views is quite striking. Although Buson generally was not sparing in his criticism of other poets, his letters to Kitō show none of that. Rather, the letters include a great deal of tentativeness, even though Buson is Kitō's teacher. In most cases, Kitō ignores Buson's suggestions, even when Buson makes very precise arguments about what needs improving, following up with remarks to the effect that Buson will "talk with you [Kitō] when I see you." Kitō seems to have won the argument almost every time.

I will discuss three of the letters that offer a good representative sample. Parenthetically, I have identified the suggested verses and whether they ultimately appeared in "Momosumomo." The source for all cited letters is Ōtani and Fujita (1992); *BSKS* stands for *Buson shokanshū* (Collected letters of Buson).

[*BSKS* No. 119] Anei 9 [1780], 7月23日

Sorry I missed the verse session the other day. I'm feeling better now. Don't worry about me.

*fuyu kodachi tsuki kotsuzui ni iru yo kana*

冬木だち月骨髄に入夜哉

Winter trees—

a night when the moon

sinks into the bone

*kutsu oto samuki saimon no soto*

杳音寒き柴門の外

The sound of footsteps

cold outside the gate

[Proposed as Verse 2 of Sequence 2; not included]

*kono ku Rō To ga samuki harawata*

此句老杜が寒き腸

This verse Du Fu might have written

chilled to the guts

[Proposed as Verse 2 of Sequence 2; included]

*Toshi o utaeba samuki shita*

杜を諷えば寒き唇

Reciting Du Fu's poems

makes one's lips grow cold

[Proposed as Verse 2 of Sequence 2; not included]

Please choose the best from among these, and, when you've settled on it, go ahead and compose Verse 3.

The next letter, written two days later, continues to discuss the opening verses. Buson writes:

[BSKS No. 120] Anei 9, 7月25日

What about the Verse 2 for the *ryōgin* 両吟 [two-person sequence] of the other day? It's still not finished.

*botan chirite uchikasanarinu ni san pen*

牡丹散て打かさなりぬ二三片

Peony petals scatter

and pile up

two, maybe three

Buson

[Verse 1 of Sequence 1; included]

*uzuki hatsuka no ariake no kage*

卯月廿日のあり明の影

On the twentieth of the fourth month

in the pale light of dawn

Kitō

[Verse 2 of Sequence 1; included]

Your Verse 2 is extremely splendid; go ahead and start working on Verse 3. I think I'm going to forget about the "Brambles in bloom" sequence because the "Peony" one is better.

*fuyu kodachi tsuki kotsuzui ni iru yo kana*

冬木だち月骨髓に入夜哉

Winter trees—

a night when the moon

sinks into the bone

Kitō

[Verse 1 of Sequence 2; included]

*kono ku Rō To ga samuki harawata*  
 此句老杜が寒き腸  
 This verse Du Fu might have written  
 chilled to the guts

Buson

[Verse 2 of Sequence 2; included]

*gori ni issha kashikoki shisha o negiraite*  
 五里に一舎かしこき使者を勞て  
 Every five miles  
 inns lavishly welcome  
 the grand emissary

Buson

[Verse 3 of Sequence 2; included]

That takes care of the second and third verses. Quickly think of something for four and five. Because readers will lose interest in the sequence if the first six verses are too heavy, a fluid verse here is good; your “winter trees” verse has a melancholy feel to it, really, the beauty of a poem by Du Fu. That’s why I added Verse 2 as I did. For the third one I imagined an imperial Chinese emissary being sent to a neighboring country and thought of a scene where he stops over at teahouses every five miles. My methods in these two verses are unusual, and I can’t fully discuss them with you in writing, so we’ll talk more when we meet.

The third letter we will look at is dated about two months later. It is the only example where Buson’s comments actually compelled Kitō to change something:

[BSKS No. 125] Anei 9, 9月24日

About the *ryōgin* [i.e., the “Momosumomo” sequences]: I’ll have Hyakuchi deliver this tomorrow. Revise those four or five verses exactly as you think.

*itōshi to kawarite uta o yomi neran*  
 いとをしと代りてうたをよみぬらん  
 “How pitable!”  
 perhaps I’ll offer  
 to write the verse instead

Buson

[Verse 13 of Sequence 2; included]

*kunichi wa kiku no sakari nari keru*  
 九日は菊の盛なりけり  
 On the ninth day  
 the chrysanthemums were at their fullest

Kitō

[Proposed as Verse 14 of Sequence 2; not included]

Wouldn’t you rather change this verse? It’s just my opinion, but the chrysanthemum verse I think maybe doesn’t have much of a connection with the one that precedes it. A *yariku* やり句 [easy verse] should have an especially strong

connection to the verse that it follows. However, it's not a bad verse, so do what you think is best.

As for the "fortune teller" verse you've put after "the sound of Noritsune's bow-string,"<sup>4</sup> it's not a link that has a strong grasp of the previous verse, but it does somehow have the feeling of a connection, so let's think of what should follow it. In any case tomorrow we can talk about this at the Bashō Hermitage.

A major virtue of the "Momosumomo" sequences is not that they show great differences with linked verse composed in a single session but, rather, that the letters Buson and Kitō exchanged provide such unusual insights into their strategies as poets. As these examples show, elusiveness was at the center of linked verse, and how to manage it was the linked-verse poet's greatest challenge.

In other words, it was precisely the ambiguity of the *maeku*, the previous verse, that made linking possible: poets had to get the balance right between providing enough information to make the situation described sufficiently vivid and not providing enough information, thus shutting off the possibility of the poet writing the *tsukeku*, the following verse, making an interesting connection. The "Momosumomo" letters show this search for balance: the only instance Kitō actually alters a verse is where Buson points out that it is too vague. It is not clear whether Kitō's reluctance otherwise to edit his verse is because of his great skill or simply because of his confidence in his own ability. In any case, Buson also seems to have shared this confidence in Kitō's ability.

### "Momosumomo" & Aspirations for Artistic Perfection

Two-person sequences like those in the "Momosumomo" collection were not generally common in linked-verse composition, because it is harder to ensure variation with only two voices. In this sense, the unusual circumstances of the sequences' composition were a help rather than an obstacle. Writing over the course of months enabled greater time for reflection and allowed the poets a better chance at overcoming the challenges of a two-person sequence, but doing so also enabled them to balance delicately their strengths and weaknesses as poets, as well as the continual shift between impressiveness and restraint that kept the sequences interesting.

Evident in almost everything Buson's Yahantei Studio produced is a distinct perfectionism: this fastidiousness is true of his paintings as well as in the *haikai* collections he edited or published. It appears that a collaborative, spontaneous form like linked verse was not Buson's favorite medium of expression; indeed, relatively few sequences were published in which he contributed more than a few verses. Perhaps it is for this reason that the "Momosumomo" sequences, his most accomplished, employed an unconventional method that maximized the opportunity for editing and revision.

Given his perfectionism, then, why did Buson feel compelled to compose linked verse? I would argue that the reason is because of the strong identification of the form with his predecessor Bashō—that is to say, with a kind of *haikai* that transcended what he viewed as the vulgarity of the *haikai* of many of his contemporaries. The Yahantei poets and their allies were very conscious of being heirs to Bashō's great legacy. Buson in particular was eager to be known as someone who espoused the virtues Bashō extolled; but, for his entire life, he seems to have remained uncertain that he was quite up to the task of achieving Bashō's level of apparently effortless excellence. It seems that writing linked-verse sequences by letter enabled Buson to take part in Bashō's great tradition yet still allowed him the opportunity to closely control the work that he produced. As a result of this slow and painstaking method, he and Kitō were able to manage this elusive verse form with a level of skill otherwise unmatched in the *haikai* of the late eighteenth century.

### Appendix: The Two Sequences of “Momosumomo”

This appendix includes the two sequences of Buson and Kitō's “Momosumomo” in their entirety, with my own English translation. For an annotated translation of the first sequence, see Crowley (2007, 152–64). Japanese texts below are essentially identical to those in Yamamoto (1971).

#### Sequence 1: “Peony petals scatter”

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Buson<br>牡丹散て打かさなりぬ二三片 | Peony petals scatter<br>and pile up<br>two, maybe three            |
| 2. Kitō<br>卯月廿日のあり明の影     | On the twentieth of the fourth month<br>in the pale light of dawn  |
| 3. Kitō<br>すはぶきて翁や門をひらくらむ | Coughing,<br>an old man<br>seems to be opening the gate . . .      |
| 4. Buson<br>髻のえらびに来つるへんぐゑ | A ghost has come<br>to choose an adoptive son-in-law               |
| 5. Buson<br>年ふりし街の榎斧入て    | At the crossroads<br>an old nettle tree<br>is hacked at with an ax |
| 6. Kitō<br>百里の陸地とまりさだめず   | A hundred- <i>ri</i> highway<br>without a fixed abode              |

7. Kitō  
 哥枕瘡落たるきのふけふ  
 Visiting places famous in poetry  
 he took ill, and has fallen under a fever  
 yesterday and today
8. Buson  
 山田の小田の早稲を刈比  
 In the mountain farms' small fields  
 it's time to harvest the early rice
9. Kitō  
 夕月に後れて渡る四十雀  
 Later  
 than the twilight moon  
 homing sparrows fly
10. Buson  
 秋をうれひてひとり戸に倚  
 Filled with autumn's melancholy  
 approaching the gate alone
11. Kitō  
 目ふたいで苦き薬をすゝりける  
 With eyes shut tight  
 he swallows down  
 the bitter medicine
12. Buson  
 當麻へもどす風呂敷に文  
 He sends back to Taima  
 a letter in a *furoshiki*<sup>5</sup>
13. Kitō  
 隣にてまだ聲のする油うり  
 Next door  
 we can still hear the voice  
 of the oil peddler
14. Buson  
 三尺つもる雪のたそがれ  
 Three feet of snow  
 piled up in the twilight
15. Kitō  
 餌にうゆる狼うちにしのぶらん  
 A starving wolf  
 may be hiding  
 inside
16. Buson  
 兎唇の妻のたゞ泣になく  
 The housewife with the harelip  
 cries and cries
17. Kitō  
 鐘鑄ある花のみてらに髪きりて  
 At a flower-filled temple  
 where there was a bell-casting  
 she takes the tonsure
18. Buson  
 春のゆくゑの西にかたぶく  
 Spring departs  
 sinking in the west
19. Buson  
 能登どのゝ弦音かすむ遠かたに  
 The sound of Noritsune's bowstring<sup>6</sup>  
 grows fainter  
 in the distance
20. Kitō  
 博士ひそみて時を占ふ  
 The fortune teller secretly  
 takes a reading of the hour
21. Buson  
 粟負し馬倒れぬと鳥啼て  
 A bundle of millet  
 the horse stumbled, and just then  
 a bird called out

22. Kitō  
 樗咲散る畷八町  
 Sandalwood trees bloom and fade, along  
 the long pathway between the paddies
23. Buson  
 立あへぬ虹に淺間のうちけぶり  
 A faintly visible  
 rainbow over Asama's  
 smoke
24. Kitō  
 勅使の御宿申うれしさ  
 The joy of receiving so grand a guest  
 as an imperial messenger
25. Buson  
 江に獲たる簀の魚の腹赤き  
 Taken from the river  
 the fish in the basket  
 are red-bellied
26. Kitō  
 日はさしながら又あられ降  
 Though the sun is shining  
 hail falls again
27. Buson  
 見し戀の兒ねり出よ堂供養  
 "Come out,  
 beloved acolyte!"  
 the temple festival
28. Kitō  
 つぶりにさはる人にくき也  
 Loathsome are people  
 who muss one's hair-style
29. Buson  
 十六夜の暗きひまさへ世のいそぎ  
 Even during the time between  
 sunset and moonrise on the sixteenth day  
 everyone is busy
30. Kitō  
 しころ打なる番場松本  
 The sound the mallet makes  
 from Banba to Matsumoto
31. Kitō  
 駕舁の棒組足らぬ秋の雨  
 There are not enough people  
 to carry a palanquin  
 in the autumn rain
32. Buson  
 鳶も鴉もあちらむき居る  
 Kites and crows  
 staring into space
33. Kitō  
 崇なす田中の小社神さびて  
 Under a curse,  
 the small shrine in the fields  
 is forbidding
34. Buson  
 既玄番が公事も負色  
 It already looks like  
 Genba has lost the lawsuit
35. Buson  
 花にうとき身に旅籠屋の飯と汁  
 A long way away from cherry blossoms  
 in the lodging house  
 there is rice and soup
36. Kitō  
 まだ暮やらぬ春のともし火  
 It is not completely dark yet—  
 lanterns of spring

Sequence 2: "Winter trees"

1. Kitō  
冬木だち月骨髓に入夜哉  
Winter trees—  
a night when the moon  
sinks into the bone
2. Buson  
此句老杜が寒き腸  
This verse Du Fu might have written  
chilled to the guts
3. Buson  
五里に一舎かしこき使者を勞て  
Every five miles  
inns lavishly welcome  
the grand emissary
4. Kitō  
茶に疎からぬあさら井の水  
He neglects nothing in preparing tea  
brewing it with clear, pure well-water
5. Kitō  
すみれ啄雀の親に物くれん  
Violets,  
a mother sparrow  
tries to hide her chicks
6. Buson  
春なつかしく豊帋とり出で  
Wistfully thinking of springtimes long ago  
I take out a folded notepaper to write
7. Buson  
二の尼の近き霞にかくれ住  
Two nuns,  
who live not far away  
hidden in the mists
8. Kitō  
七ッ限りの門敲く音  
At four o'clock in the afternoon  
there is the sound of knocking at the gate
9. Buson  
雨のひまに救の糧やおくり來ぬ  
During a break in the rain  
the emergency provisions  
have at last gotten through
10. Kitō  
弭たしむのとの浦人  
They shoot from their bows  
the men of Noto no ura
11. Buson  
女狐の深き恨ミを見返りて  
The vixen  
looks over her shoulder  
with deep rancor
12. Kitō  
寐がほにかゝる鬢のふくだみ  
Around a sleepy face,  
hair in disarray
13. Buson  
いとをしと代りてうたをよみぬらん  
"How pitiable!"  
Perhaps I'll offer  
to write the poem instead
14. Kitō  
出船つれなや追風吹秋  
Heartless are the autumn winds  
that chase the ship setting sail for exile

15. Buson  
月落て氣比の山もと露闇き  
The moon sets  
on the mountainside of Kehi,  
the dew is dark
16. Kitō  
鹿の來て臥す我艸の戸に  
Deer come and lie down to rest  
by the grass hut
17. Buson  
文机の花打拂ふ維摩經  
I brush fallen flowers from my desk  
and take out the *Vimalakirti Sūtra*<sup>7</sup>
18. Kitō  
頭痛を忍ぶ遅き日の影  
Trying to ignore a headache  
in the long, late twilight
19. Kitō  
鄙人の妻にとられ行旅の春  
She leaves on a spring journey  
to become the bride  
of a country client
20. Buson  
水に残りし酒屋一けん  
After the flood  
only the brewery was left standing
21. Kitō  
荒神の棚に夜明の鶏啼て  
From the shelf  
that holds the Kitchen God's shrine  
a rooster is crowing
22. Buson  
歳暮の飛脚物とらせやる  
In the year-end bustle  
the courier comes for a pick-up
23. Kitō  
保昌が任もなかばや過ぬらむ  
Yasumasa's term  
must be  
half over already
24. Buson  
いばら花白し山吹の後  
Bramble roses are white  
against faded yellow *yamabuki*<sup>8</sup>
25. Kitō  
むら雨の垣穗とび越スあまがへる  
Sudden storm  
a tree-frog  
leaps over the brushwood fence
26. Buson  
三ッに豊んで投ふるさむしろ  
We hurriedly fold up  
the mats we'd been airing
27. Kitō  
西國の手形うけ取小日のくれ  
A remittance arrives  
from Kyūshū  
in the late afternoon
28. Buson  
貧しき葬の足ばやに行  
He rushed off  
to the poorly attended funeral
29. Kitō  
片側は野川流るゝ秋の風  
On the side of the river  
the bank was ravaged  
by the autumn wind

30. Buson  
月の夜ごろの遠きいなづま  
The night, faint with moonlight  
and distant lightning
31. Buson  
仰ぎ見て人なき車冷じき  
Looking out,  
there was a carriage  
that appeared empty and cold
32. Kitō  
相圖の礫今やうつらし  
The pebble he threw just now  
must have been a signal
33. Buson  
添ぶしにあすらが眠うかゞひつ  
She checks to see  
if the fellow lying next to her  
is really sleeping
34. Kitō  
甕の花のひらひらと散  
Petals fall, fluttering  
from the flowers in the vase
35. Kitō  
根繼する屋かげの壁の下萌に  
As they repair the pillars  
in the shadow of a wall  
some small shoots sprout
36. Buson  
巢つくる蜂の子をいのり呼  
Building a hive, the bees  
say a prayer for their offspring

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Because of this association, *renga* was sometimes called “the way of Tsukuba” 筑波の道.

<sup>2</sup>In an undated letter, probably written in the early 1770s, Buson consoles Kitō for what appears to have been hostility from other members of the group (Ōtani and Fujita 1992, 57–59).

<sup>3</sup>The timeline for Buson’s letters is as follows:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Topic</u>
3	12	First reference to “Momosumomo”
7	23, 25	23: Verses 1 & 2 of Sequence 2 25: Verses 1 & 2 of Sequence 1; Verses 1, 2 & 3 of Sequence 2
8	3, 5	3 & 5: Verses 8 & 9 of Sequence 2
9	24	Verse 13 of Sequence 2; Verses 19 & 20 of Sequence 1
11	1, 4, 5	1: Verses 27 & 28 of Sequence 2; Verses 30 & 31 of Sequence 1 4: Verses 27 & 28 of Sequence 2 5: Verses 27, 28 & 29 of Sequence 2
12	22	Buson writes to Hyakuchi about publishing details

<sup>4</sup>See appendix, sequence 1, vv. 19–20.

<sup>5</sup>A *furoshiki* 風呂敷 is a square of cloth used to wrap parcels.

<sup>6</sup>Taira Noritsune 平教経 (1160–85) died by drowning in the Western Sea in the famous Genpei 源平 War (1180–85) battle of Dan-no-ura (off the Shimonoseki Strait). Buson cleverly reinterprets the “sinking in the west” (*nishi ni katabuku* 西にかたぶく) in the *maeku* of the previous verse to refer to Noritsune’s death.

<sup>7</sup>The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (in Japanese, the *Yuimagyō* 維摩經) is considered to be one of the most profound of the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist sutras.

<sup>8</sup>A *yamabuki* 山吹 is a Japanese globeflower (*Trollius japonicus*) in the buttercup family.

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