

A WREATH OF WEEDS
A Collection of 100 Poems by Santōka

Translated with an Introduction by
Stephen Wolfe

call me "traveler"—
first cold rain

Bashō

旅人たびびとと

わが名なよばれん

初はつしぐれ

芭蕉

called "ragpicker"
as I passed thru
late autumn rain

Santōka

ホイトウト

よばれる村むらの

しぐれかな

山頭火

Introduction

Santōka's poetry reflects a many-faceted personality—Zen Buddhist monk, wanderer, ascetic, beggar, anti-war poet and drunkard. Born in 1882, dead in 1940, Santōka became a monk in his early forties after realizing the futility of his life of drinking and often stumbling about in a stupor. This complete turnabout in his life led to a devotion to creating verse and following the Buddhist path. He became a wandering monk called an "unsui," 雲水, literally "cloud, water." These two ideographs come from the longer Chinese combination of 行雲流水, literally "going clouds, flowing water." His poetry is a powerful, direct expression of his years of roaming the islands and mountains of Japan and the revelations, experiences and frustrations he encountered along these roads.

Not since Bashō, who was not a monk but had a strong Zen consciousness, has a Japanese poet captured the imagination of so many people out of Japan. Santōka's movements across Japan could be those of a Sadhu wandering across India, Sal Paradise criss-crossing the American continent or Leopold Bloom drifting through Dublin. Once again, like Bashō, poetry and life are merged. There is no concern in Santōka's mind for poetic theories—in fact, it would be truthful to say that he is not a great poet. However, his intense quest for truth, his non-attachment to material comforts and possessions and his incurable wanderlust provide him with archetypal poetic material.

As Santōka echoes Bashō in terms of wandering, Buddhist consciousness and composition of short yet penetrating poems, Issa comes to mind in two ways. The first being that Santōka experienced a very disturb-

ing and unfortunate personal life. His mother committed suicide by throwing herself down an empty well because she was unable to live with her profligate husband. Santōka was forced to drop out of Waseda University in Tokyo after having a nervous breakdown. Also, his marriage ended in separation.¹

The second similarity with Issa is the appearance of some quite humorous poems (Senryū, 川柳) among the many heavy and serious ones concerned with enlightenment, life and death. As Issa encouraged the gaunt frog not to give up, Santōka tells a cockroach that its beard has grown. Santōka catches us off guard at times with his sense of humor.

Santōka's poetry is pervaded by his personal formulation of myth. His world is most electrifying in late autumn through early winter. This seasonal period is often poetically represented in his work by "shigure," 時雨, that cold, lonely, forboding onslaught of showers. In English there is no direct, concise way of expressing this rain. This period of late autumn is treated as an actual season and beyond this to a kind of spiritual autumn, a late autumn of the soul, a limbo that precedes the bitterness of winter and death.

Another aspect of Santōka's myth is the traditional paraphernalia of the unsui. The first of these is the bamboo hat, "kasa," 笠. This hat represents man's skimpy bulwark against the overwhelming power of nature. When Santōka's kasa leaks we feel how man is exposed to forces far beyond his control. Other times when Santōka is able to take off his hat we experience a transient moment of grace, when the natural world treats man to a brief respite.

The next mythical element is the monk's robes, "hoi," or sometimes read "hoe," 法衣. His tattered and filthy robes again strongly suggest

man's fleeting essence and energy. Resembling a shabby scarecrow Santōka has no illusions about the human condition.

Finally, the monk's trusty begging bowl, "teppatsu," 鉄鉢, comprises the other symbolic object among the monk's gear. This bowl seems to hint at the meagre allotment which all human beings share. Sometimes filled with fallen leaves or hail, sometimes filled with rice or New Year's specialties, it becomes a bowl of fortune.

Another recurring motif in Santōka's mythic realm is the longing to return "home," "bōkyō," 望郷. Again, what is encompassed in his concept of home is more than just his place of birth or hometown. We often feel a primordial craving to return to the earth, the clouds, the womb—a kind of metaphysical homeland. The following is an excerpt from Santōka's diary which might clarify this point and also give us an overall picture of Santōka's philosophical perspective:

I do not believe in a future world. I deny the past. I believe entirely in the present. We must employ our whole body and soul in this eternal moment. I believe in the universal spirit, but the spirit of any particular man I reject. Each creature comes from the Whole, and goes back to it. From this point of view we may say that life is an approaching; death is a returning.²

Santōka's urge to "return" together with his almost obsessive desire to travel provide the basis for one of the conflicts that arise in his poetry. Panegyrics to wandering are sometimes followed by solemn promises to head home. Perhaps these two apparent opposites are actually complementary and sustain each other.

Another apparent conflict that emanates from Santōka's psyche is that of Asceticism vs. Hedonism. Often he writes of the joys of going days

with no food, drinking only spring water. Yet other times, as he receives vegetables, fruits or even holiday feasts as alms, he is enraptured. There are also those times when he yearns for Japanese sweets, the special foods at New Years, and, above all, Sake. Again, however, this seeming paradox may be seen as two poles of the same magnet.

The word "alone" is perhaps the one most often used in all of Santōka's poetry. Eating, sleeping, roaming, watching the moon or distant peaks, sitting in the field, listening to the sound of a stream, etc. are all done in solitude. One gets the feeling that the presence of a Sora, Bashō's companion in *Oku No Hosono Michi*, a Sancho Panza or a Sundance Kid would cramp, or even choke, Santōka's style.

However, there are those times when Santōka deeply feels a communion with humanity such as when greeting a traveler from China he has met a second time by chance, feeling strongly the oppressive working conditions of a Korean laborer or sleeping next to a man from Shikoku in a sleazy inn. Santōka's solitary traveling is not an indication of any kind of misanthropy but rather the needed tranquillity to meditate and experience without distraction. The heroic feats of zazen meditation that have now become legend could only have taken place in a lifestyle of solitude.

The concept of a pillow of grass, "kusa makura," 草枕, is another re-appearing theme. Being an unsui, Santōka was virtually obsessed with the eternal movements of nature and therefore he was at home sleeping anywhere on the land. It was, perhaps, these very illusive and unattainable attributes of nature's flow that lured Santōka to the life of "the pillow of grass." It is precisely this earthiness that is most refreshing in his poetry. The joys of tracking through mud, bathing in a

waterfall or relishing every grain of rice are readily felt by the reader.

So far I have judiciously refrained from using the word "haiku." Is Santōka a haijin? This is a question which often generates heated debate. For example, an often-published haiku poet living in Saga, Kyōto, Yamamoto Goro, vigorously asserts that Santōka is not a haijin but a composer of short poems with a dada and nihilistic flavor. Mr. Yamamoto's viewpoint is not uncommon. Santōka has abandoned the major rules of traditional haiku, "teikei haiku," 定型俳句—the 5-7-5 structure and the use of "kigo," 季語, seasonal references. The term free-form haiku, "jiyūritsu haiku," 自由律俳句, is often applied to Santōka's brand of poetry.

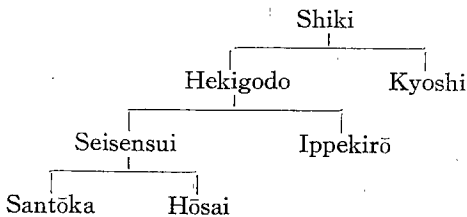
In addition to the obliteration of the traditional haiku elements, Santōka's language also represents a departure from the past. He very frequently uses colloquial and slang words, carefully avoiding the customary literary language, "bungo," 文語. Difficult Chinese characters are almost extinct in Santōka's work and a marked affinity for hiragana, the phonetic as opposed to ideographic script, is seen. "Kireji," 切字, those words whose function is primarily to interject emotion from outside, such as "ya," "keri," "kana," also are rarely found. The use of these words would needlessly embellish Santōka's terse vision.

Although Santōka is a unique figure in modern Japanese poetry, the main influences upon him are, at least partially, traceable. As usual when dealing with modern haiku all roads lead to Shiki. Shiki had two main disciples, Kyoshi and Hekigodo. Kyoshi followed the traditional Buson-oriented path of haiku. Hekigodo was more inclined to experiment with the haiku form—no seasonal reference or perhaps two, often a longer form than 5-7-5 and a more inclusive subject matter more re-

flective of the modern world. Hekigodo realized that the world of Bashō in the 1600's was vastly different than that of the 1900's. The term "new tendency haiku," "shinkeiko," 新傾向俳句, was given to such deviations from traditional haiku.

Hekigodo was a primary influence on two younger poets, Seisensui and Ippekirō, both of whom published poetry magazines. Ippekirō was less experimental while Seisensui, who recently died at the ripe old age of 91, tended to innovate more freely. Seisensui was Santōka's mentor. Another very interesting figure, Hōsai, who renounced the world to live in total isolation on an island, also studied with Seisensui. Santōka and Hōsai influenced and stimulated each other, often holding dialogue through their verse.

So, in brief, the following chart illustrates the main figures in the drift of modern haiku :



The poems selected here for translation include those which have a more universal appeal. A good number of Santōka's poems are typically Japanese, perhaps too insular for an international audience. Having been a Zen monk it is inevitable that many poems contain Buddhist sutras, references to Buddhist rites and various buildings on the temple grounds. Other poems contain sketches of Japanese culture which limit them to those people who know Japanese life in some detail—the public baths,

geography, festivals, dress, food, etc. However, excluding these somewhat inaccessible poems a wide range remains that is moving and perceptive on a universal level.

As always, the attempt to translate Japanese poetry into English is frustrating and often futile. This is especially true with Santōka's poetry. His use of slang, of onomatopoeic double words, his exclusion of all excess baggage make it even more difficult to translate. With other poets such as Shiki or Buson or even Issa, there is some leeway, the form is more rythmical, the subject matter more flowery. Here we are dealing with the bare essentials, a barren grace. A few of the more interesting poems had to be omitted—I just couldn't get them together in English. When I was undecided which of two translations was least ludicrous I included both.

Here, as in most haiku in general, there is no direct cohesion of parts but rather an intuitive *raison d'être*. Aside from the frequent use of a free-flow enjambment there was no unified, overall approach except to deal with each poem on its own terms and try to convey what I thought to be the epiphany.

I hope I have clarified more than confused Santōka's vision.

《 Notes 》

1 R. H. Blyth, *A History of Haiku*, Volume II, (Tokyo, 1964), p. 173.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

A Wreath of Weeds

Santōka : 100 Poems

こしかた ゆくすえ ^{ゆき} 雪 あかり する
 koshikata yukusue yuki akari suru

all that has passed
 and to come
 in the glitter of snow

われ ^{いま} 今 ^{うみ} ここに ^{あお} 海 の 青さ の かぎり なし
 ware ima koko ni umi no aosa no kagiri nashi

I-here-now
 am the unbridled blue sea
 Being here now
 as the boundless blue sea

^{ふゆ} 冬 ^{くも} 雲 の ^{おおがま} 大釜 の ひび
 fuyukumo no ōgama no hibi

Winter clouds—
 so many cracks in a kettle

^{しわす} 師走 の ^{ゆき} 雪 の ^し 知らない ^{かお} 顔 ばかり
 shiwasu no yukiki no shiranai kao bakari

at year-end
 only unknown faces
 come and go

^{かれ} 枯 ^{ぐさ} 草 に ^{のこ} 残る ^ひ 日 の ^{いろ} 色 は かなし
 kare gusa ni nokoru hi no iro wa kanashi

by withered grass
 final shades of sunset
 sadly

the last tint of sunset
sadly lingers
over withered grass

the last sad glow
of sunset;
withered grass

あさ なぎ しま ふた
朝 風 の 島 を 二つ おく
asa nagi no shima o futatsu oku

two islands
settled
in morning calm

てっぱつ なか あられ
鉄鉢 の 中 へ も 霰
teppatsu no naka e mo arare

even in my begging bowl,
hail

とし とれば 故郷 こひし つく つく ほうし
toshi toreba kokyō koishi tsuku tsuku bōshi

as the years pass
I yearn to head home;
cicadas chant

the passing years
lure me homeward;
cicada cries

て ばな かんでは やま を みて いる
tebana kande wa yama o mite iru

blowing my nose
into my hands
looking at the mountain

ホイトウ とよばれる ^{むら}村 の しぐれ かな
hoito to yobareru mura no shigure kana

called "ragpicker"

as I passed thru

late atumn rain

^{ほうえ}法衣 ふき まくる は まさに ^{あき}秋 ^{かぜ}風
hoe fuki makuru wa masani aki kaze

robes

freely

in the autumn wind

それは ^{わたし}私 の ^{かお}顔 だった ^{かがみ}鏡 つめたく
sore wa watashi no kao datta kagami tsumetaku

that was my face—

cold mirror

ふるさと ^{こい}恋しい ぬかるみ を あるく
furusato koishii nukarumi o aruku

thoughts of home;

tramping thru mud

^{せいし}生死 の なかの ^{ゆき}雪 ふり しきる
seishi no nakano yuki furi shikiru

"upon all the living

and the dead"

snow falls

endlessly

^{かさ}笠 も ^も漏り だした か
kasa mo mori dashita ka

has my bamboo hat also begun to leak?

^{なん}何んで こんなに ^{さび}淋しい ^{かぜ}風 ふく
nande konnani sabishii kaze fuku

why does such a lonely wind blow?

あさ の あき かぜ ふ ぬ
朝 の 秋 風 を 吹き 抜け さして おく
asa no aki kaze o fuki nuke sashite oku

with free reign
the autumn wind blows
thru the morning

あぶら むし まえ
油 虫 お前の ひげ も のびて いる
aburamushi omae no hige mo nobite iru

cockroach--
your beard has grown!

さけ は ない つき しみじみ み
酒 は ない 月 しみじみ 観て おり
sake wa nai tsuki shimijimi mite ori

no wine
but high
on the moon

あま おと とし
雨だれの 音 も 年 とった
amadare no oto mo toshi totta

the sound of raindrops
also
has aged

つき の ひかり の すき ばら ふかく しみとうる なり
tsuki no hikari no suki bara fukaku shimitōru nari

my empty stomach
filled
with moonlight

わ い も わ い も あお やま
分け 入っても 分け 入っても 青い 山
wake itte mo wake itte mo aoi yama

penetrating deeply
and deeper
still green mountains

^{えんてん}炎天を^いいて^{ごい}いて 乞あるく
 enten o itadaite koi aruku

absorbing the blazing sun
 a beggar heads on

^{うま}生れた^{いえ}家はあと^{かた}も^{ない}ほうたる
 umareta ie wa ato kata mo nai hotaru

vestige of my home :
 fireflies

old home
 now ruin's fireflies
 a firefly
 remains of my home

^{かぜ}風^{なか}の中^{こえ}声^{はり}はり^{あげ}て^{なむ}南無^{かん}観^ぜ世^{おん}音
 kaze no naka koe hari agete NA MU KAN ZE ON

in the wind
 a voice
 intones a sutra
 a sutra
 cast
 to the winds

^さ咲いて^ち散って^{おど}踊る^{おど}踊る
 sakura saite sakura chitte odoru odoru

blooming, scattering :
 the dance of cherry blossoms

^{はる}春^{さむ}寒い^{しま}島^{から}から^{しま}島^へへ^{わた}渡される
 haru samui shima kara shima e watasareru

chilled spring
 crossing from island
 to island

おち かかる つき を 観ている に 一人
ochi kakaru tsuki o miteiru ni hitori

watching
the sinking moon
alone

かき にとんぼ を とまらせて あるく
kasa ni tonbo o tomarasete aruku

sharing my hat
with a dragonfly—
I walk on

as I walk
a dragonfly boards
my bamboo hat

なみ おと の たえず して ふるさと とおし
nami oto no taezu shite furusato tōshi

the sound of waves;
ceaseless echo
of my distant home

my home
reflected
in roaring waves

ひと きれの くも も ない そら の さびしさ まさる
hito kire no kumo mo nai sora no sabishisa masaru

not a trace of clouds
in the sky—
all the more lonely

こころ しづかに やま の おきふし
kokoro shizuka ni yama no okifushi

passing the days
in the mountains
in tranquillity

retreating
with a peaceful mind
to the mountains

く 朽ちて まい にち ほころ 綻びる たび 旅 の ほうえ だ
kuchite mai nichi hokorobiru tabi no hōe da

day by day
unraveling
robes of the road

each day
more worn—
these shabby robes

こし 腰 かける いわ を おぼ 覚えている
koshi kakeru iwa o oboete iru

sitting down
I remember this rock

あき かぜ の たび びと になり きている
aki kaze no tabi bito ni nari kitte iru

seduced
by the autumn wind
to wander

てつぱつ ち は を うけて
teppatsu chiriku ha o ukete

the begger's bowl
accepts
falling leaves

フトン ふわり と ふるさとの ^{ゆめ} 夢
 futon fuwari to furusato no yume

wrapped softly
 between the sheets;
 a vision of home

^た 食べる もの なくなつた ^{きよう} 今日 の ^{あさやけ} 朝焼
 taberu mono naku natta kyō no asayake

out of food
 dawn breaks

^{つばめ} 燕 とびかう ^{たび} 旅 から ^{たび} 旅 へ ^{わらじ} 草鞋 を ^{はく} 穿
 tsubame tobikō tabi kara tabi e waraji o haku

swallows on the wing
 cross paths;
 I set out again

^{はる} 春 の ^{ゆき} 雪 ふる ^{おんな} 女 は まこと うつくし
 haru no yuki furu onna wa makoto utsukushi

the woman's beauty
 accented
 by spring snow

もう ^あ 逢へます まい ^き 木 の ^め 芽 の くもり
 mō aemasu mai ki no me no kumori

our paths
 never to cross again;
 buds under a cloudy sky
 never to meet again—
 cloud-darkened buds

^{いし} 石 を ^{まくら} 枕 に ^{くも} 雲 の ゆくえ を
 ishi o makura ni kumo no yukue o

A WREATH OF WEEDS

a rock as a pillow

I trail the clouds

ゆき きて くれて なんと ところの 水 の うまさは
yuki kurete nanto kokora no mizu no umasa wa

overtaken by dusk

refreshed here

by spring water

もとの 乞食 になった タオル が 一枚
moto no kojiki ni natta taoru ga ichi mai

as before

I am again

a beggar with only a towel

ひと あく の 米 を いただき 頂いて 毎 日 の 旅
hito aku no kome o tadaki itadaite mai nichino tabi

grateful

for a handful of rice;

another day on the road

あても なく 踏 あるく 草 皆 枯れ たり
ate mo naku fumi aruku kusa mina kare tari

aimlessly

I tread

thru withered grass

ひよう ひよう へう へう として 水 を 味ふ
hyō hyō to shite mizu o ajiwau

a taste for drifting

and spring water

まっすぐな 道 で さみしい
massuguna michi de samishii

the loneliness of a straight road

しぐるる や 死^しな ないで いる
shigururu ya shina naide iru

late autumn rain;
not yet dying

late autumn rain;
yet not dying

のばした 足^{あし}に ふれた 隣^{となり} は 四^し国^{こく} の 人^{ひと}
nobashita ashi ni fureta tonari wa shikoku no hito

as I stretch out
my leg touches
a southern man

波^{なみ} 音^{おと} 遠^{とお}く なり 近^{ちか}く なり 余^よ命^{めい} いくばく ぞ
nami oto tōku nari chikaku nari yomei ikubaku zo

the waves
ebb and flow—
how much remains of my life?

家^{いえ} を もたない 秋^{あき} が ふかう なった
ie o motanai aki ga fukō natta

without a house
autumn deepens

no shelter
in late autumn

ままよ 法^{ほう}衣^え は 垢^{あか} で 朽^くちた
mamayo hoe wa aka de kuchita

grimy and soiled
I wear these robes
as they are

この まま 死^しんで しまふ かも 知^しれない 土^{つち} に ねる
kono mama shinde shimau kamo shirenai tsuchi ni neru

A WREATH OF WEEDS

perhaps I will die
 as I am now—
 sleeping out

しぐるる や 旅^{たび} の 支那^{しな} さん 一^{いつしよ}所^{しょ} に ねている
 shigururu ya tabi no shina san issho ni neteiru

late autumn rain;
 a Chinese traveler

and I

under the same roof

よ^より 添^そふて 黙^{だま}って 旅^{たび} の 身^み なし 児^こ は
 yori sōte damatte tabi no mi nashi ko wa

huddling for warmth
 in silence
 orphaned travelers

ま^{ばだか}っ 裸^{だか} を 太^{たい}陽^{よう} に のぞかれる
 mappadaka o taiyō ni nozokareru

my nakedness
 highlighted
 by the peeping sun

わか^{わか}れて 来^きた 荷^に物^{もつ} の 重^{おも}い こと
 wakarete kita ni motsu no omoi koto

since parting
 heavy pack

また 一^{いち} 枚^{まい} ぬぎ 捨^すてる 旅^{たび} から 旅^{たび}
 mata ichi mai nugi suteru tabi kara tabi

shedding a layer
 and beginning
 the next trip

のんびり 尿 する 草 の 芽 だらけ
 nonbiri ibari suru kusa no me darake

a leisurely piss
 in thick grass

わだつみ を 前 に わが おべんとう まずし けれど
 wadatsumi o mae ni waga obentō mazushi keredo

a scant lunch
 by the vast sea

壁 が くずれて そこから 蔓 草
 kabe ga kuzurete sokokara tsuru kusa

crumbled walls
 covered
 with vines
 vines climbing
 over
 walls crumbling

山 しずか なれば 笠 を ぬぐ
 yama shizuka nareba kasa o nugu

in mountain solitude
 I remove my hat

あても ない 旅 の 袂 草 こんなに たまり
 atemo nai tabi no tamotogusa konnani tamari

destination unknown:
 my sleeves covered
 with dust

雨 ふる ふるさとは はだしで 歩く
 ame furu furusato wa hadashide aruku

hometown rain;
 I roam barefoot

はな は とうきよう
花 が 葉 になる 東京 よ さようなら
hana ga ha ni naru Tōkyo yo sayōnara

leaves replace flowers—
farewell Tōkyo!

しみじみ た 食べる めし ばかり の めし
shimijimi taberu meshi bakari no meshi

eating away :
a dinner
of rice only

はたら ぬれて 働 いている は せんじん
nurete hataraitte iru wa senjin

despite the downpour
the Korean works

だいち ひえびえ ねつ の ある からだ を まかす
daichi hiebie netsu no aru karada o makasu

to the chilled earth
I entrust
my fevered body

けふ の べんとう も くさ の 上 にて
kyō no bentō mo kusa no ue nite

today's meal
eaten by roadside—
as always

なみ の おと しぐれて くら
nami no oto shigurete kurashi

the sound of waves ;
late autumn rain
darkening

やき す につき はい
焼 捨てて 日記 の 灰 の これ だけ か
yaki sutete nikki no hai no kore dake ka

thrown to the fire
 diary of ashes
 has the fire
 turned my diary
 into ashes?

ふたたび ここに 雑草 供へて
 futatabi koko ni zassō sonaete

here once again
 offering
 a wreath of weeds

まどろめば ふるさとの 夢 の 葦 の 葉づれ
 madoromeba furusato no yume no ashi no hazure

dozing off—
 rustling reeds
 visions of home

だれ も いない 落葉 掃きよせて ある 昼 ふかく
 dare mo inai ochiba hakiyosete aru hiru fukaku

no one around
 leaves left swept
 on a late afternoon

おちば ふみわけ ほどよい 野 糞 で
 ochiba fumiwake hodo yoi no guso de

forged thru fallen leaves
 to take a fine shit in the field

たび の 子供 は ひとりで メンコ 打っている
 tabi no kodomo wa hitori de menko utte iru

child of the road
 flipping cards
 by himself

また ^あ逢へた ^{さざんか}山茶花 ^もも ^き咲いて ^{いる}いる
mata aeta sazanaka mo saite iru

passing again
and still sazanqua
in bloom

^く暮れて ^{なほ}なほ ^{たがや}耕す ^{ひと}人 ^のの ^{かげ}影 ^{こう}濃く
kurete nao tagayasu hito no kage kōku

even thru dusk
the plowman's form
distinct

^{はか}墓 ^がが ^{なら}並んで ^{そこ}そこ ^{まで}まで ^{なみ}波 ^がが ^{おしよせて}おしよせて
haka ga narande soko made nami ga oshiyosete

the waves surge
up to the row of graves

^{みじかび}短日 ^く暮れかかる ^{おい}笈 ^のの ^{おもさ}おもさ ^よよ
mijikabi kurekakarui oi no omosa yo

reaching dusk
on an autumn day—
my pack is heavy

^{ゆうやけ}夕焼 ^のの ^{うつくし}うつくし ^{さは}さは ^{おい}老 ^をを ^{なげく}なげく ^{でもなく}でもなく
yūyake no utsukushisa wa oi o nageku demonaku

sunset hues
fade
unlamented

^{びよう}べう ^{びよう}べう ^{うちよせて}うちよせて ^{われ}われ ^をを ^う打つ
byō byō uchiyosete ware o utsu

these waves
beating on the shore
beat upon me

ふたたびは ^{わた}渡らない ^{はし}橋 の ^{ながい}ながい ^{ながい}ながい ^{はし}橋
 futatabi wa wataranai hashi no nagai nagai hashi

I will never again cross this long, long bridge

^{まつ}松 は ^{かたむいて}かたむいて ^{あらなみ}荒波 の ^{くだける}くだける ^{まま}まま
 matsu wa katamuite aranami no kudakeru mama

pinces grope

for the free-falling waves

ここ ^{まで}まで を ^き来し ^{みず}水 の ^きんで ^さ去る
 koko made o kishi mizu nonde saru

made it this far

to drink

and move on

^こ木の ^は葉 ^{ふる}ふる ^{ふる}ふる ^の野 ^{ぐそ}糞 ^{する}する
 kono ha furu furu no guso suru

under falling leaves—

I shit

また ^あ逢 ^{ふた}ふた ^{しな}支那 の ^{おぢさん}おぢさん ^{こんにち}こんにちは
 mata auta shina no ojisan konnichiwa

passing again

I greet

the old Chinese traveler

剃り ^{立て}立て の ^頭頭に ^{ぞんぶん}ぞんぶん ^日日の ^光光
 sori tate no atama ni zorbun hi no hikari

my shaven head

freely

reflecting sunlight

しぐるる ^やや ^{みち}道 は ^{ひと}一 ^{すじ}すじ
 shigururu ya michi wa hito suji

cold autumn rain

offers

but one way

providing one path;

the first rains

of winter

ほろ ほろ ^よ酔ふて ^こ木の ^は葉 ふる
horo horo youte ko no ha furu

a bit juiced;

leaves fall

slightly drunk

among falling leaves

^{やま}山の ^なけわしさを ^{なが}流れくる ^{みず}水の ^れれいろう
yama no kewashisa nagare kuru mizu no reirō

down the slopes

flowing water

sparkles

しぐれて その ^じ字が ^よ読めない ^{みち}道 するべ
shigurete sono ji ga yomenai michi shirube

cold rain;

can't make out

the trailmarker

しっとりぬれて ^{いわ}岩も ^{わたし}私も
shittori nurete iwa mo watashi mo

soaked to the core

these rocks

and I

^ゆ行き ^ゆ行きて ^{たお}倒れる ^くまでの ^く草の ^{みち}道
yuki yukite taoreru made no kusa no michi

moving on
 until succumbing
 to the grassy road

^{あき}秋 と なる ^{そつそう}雑草 に すわる
 aki to naru zassō ni suwaru

turning to autumn
 I sit in weeds

becoming autumn ;
 sitting in weeds

ふるさとはあの^{やま}山 なみの^{ゆき}雪 の かがやく
 furusato wa ano yama nami no yuki no kagayaku

my hometown ;
 the whiteness of snow
 on those distant peaks

とほしい 暮らし の ^{みず}水 が ながるる
 toboshī kurashi no mizu ga nagaruru

the river flows
 thru my poverty

ゆうべ の さみしさは また ^{はたけ}畑 を ^う打つ
 yūbe no samishisa wa mata hatake o utsu

lonely evening ;
 back to work in the field

いただきて ^た足りて ひとりの ^{はし}箸 を おく
 itadaite tarite hitori no hashi o oku

thankful for my share
 I place down my chopsticks