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One Hundred and One Exceptional Haiku Poems
by Kyoshi Takahama

Translated by Katsuya Hiromoto

Kyoshi Takahama (1874–1959) born Kiyoshi Ikenouchi in Matsuyama, Ehime, was a haiku master and novelist during the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa eras. Following an introduction by Hekigodo Kawahigashi (1873–1937), a fellow pupil at Iyo Ordinary Middle School, he looked to Shiki Masaoka (1867–1902) for guidance related to literature.

He became a judge of haiku poems in the literature column of the Kokumin Shimbun, or the Tokyo Shimbun as it is known today, a newspaper founded by Soho Tokutomi in 1890. In 1898 he commenced presiding over the Hototogisu (meaning ‘a little cuckoo’), a haiku magazine started by Kyokudo Yanagihara (1867–1957) in 1897, to which he contributed his haiku and essays. In 1907 he became more ambitious in his attempts to write novels instead of haiku—he produced such work as Keitoh (A Cockscomb), a collection of short stories, and two novels called Haikaishi (A Haikai Poet) and Zoku Haikaishi (A Sequel to a Haikai Poet). However, in 1913 (i.e., the 2nd year of Taisho) he announced his decision to return to the haiku scene and to stick to the conservative way of writing haiku, calling himself ‘Shukyuh-ha,’ or ‘the old guard.’ This created a different current from Shin-keikoh haiku, or the new trend haiku, the emphasis of which was on demonstrating individuality and social consciousness.

His introductory works such as Haiku no Tsukuri yoh (How to Compose
Haiku, 1914) and Susumu beki Haiku no Michi (The Proper Direction for Haiku, 1918) make it clear that haiku poets should keep to a 5–7–5 syllabic form, contain a reference to the seasons in their works, and make an objective sketch of nature. On 1 June 1927 at Sazanka kukai, a camellia haiku gathering, he defined haiku as poetry of ‘ka-choh fuhei,’ literally meaning ‘an elegant way of describing bird and flower.’ It is assumed that he meant that haiku poets should be focused on the phenomena of nature seen in the change of each season and on that of the human world in correspondence. Believing in this theory, he was a steadfast pillar of the circles of haiku, contributing to the success of the Hototogisu group, which turned out many talented young haiku poets. In 1954 he was conferred the Order of Culture by the Emperor of Japan.


Notes:
M: The Meiji era (1868–1912)
T: The Taisho era (1912–26)
S: The Showa era (1926–89)

I. The earlier Meiji era （明治前期）

1. 春雨の衣桁に重し恋衣 （M 27）
Haru-same no / ikoh ni omoshi / koi-goromo

Spring rain
Heavy on the rack
Are clothes of love

2. 怒濤岩を喰む我を神かと臏の夜 （M29）
Dotoh iwa wo kamu / ware wo kami ka to / oboro no yo

Surging waves biting the rocks
Considered myself a god
On a night with a hazy moon

3. その中にちいさき神や壺すみれ （M29）
Sono naka ni / chiisaki kami ya / tsubo sumire

In the middle of it
A little god:
A violet in the vase

4. 海に入れて生れかはらう臏月 （M29）
Umi ni irite / umare kawaroh / oboro-zuki

Dipping into the sea
Hazy moon
Might be reborn

5. 蚊帳越しに薬煮る母をかなしみつ （M29）
Kaya goshi ni / kusuri niru haha wo / kanashimi tsu

Feeling sorry about mum
Who is simmering medicine
Outside the mosquito net

6. 蝶々のもの食ふ音の静かさよ (M30)
Choh-choh no / mono kuu oto no / shizukasa yo

A butterfly is eating things
A sound that is
So still—

7. 蛇穴を出て見える周の天下なり (M31)
Hebi ana wo / dete mireba / Chou no tenka nari

Emerging from the hole
A snake has discovered
That Chou has become the ruler of the nation!

8. 耳とはき浮世の事や冬籠 (M31)
Mimi tohki / ukiyo no koto ya / fuyu-gomori

Tired of hearing
Worldly things:
Winter confinement

9. 龟鳴くや皆愚なる村のもの (M32)
Kame naku ya / mina orokanaru / mura no mono

A turtle is crying:
All people are
Stupid in the village

10. 薔薇呑れて聖書かしたる女かな （M32）
Bara kurete / seisho kashitaru / onna kana

Giving roses,
A woman
Lent me a Bible

11. 春の夜や机の上の肘まくら （M33）
Haru no yo ya / tsukue no ue no / hiji-makura

The night of spring:
An elbow-pillow
On the desk

12. 遠山に日の当りたる枯野かな （M33）
Tohyama ni / hi no ataritaru / kareno kana

A distant mountain
Seen in the sunlight:
A desolate field

13. 美しき人や蚕繭の玉篭 （M34）
Utsukushi / hito ya kogai no / tama-dasuki

A beautiful woman: a silkworm raiser
Her kimono sleeves pulled back
With a white sash

14. 肌脱いて髪すく庭や木瓜の花（M35）
Hada nuide / kami suku niwa ya / boke no hana

In the garden, baring flesh,
She combs her hair:
Flowers of Japanese quinces

15. 打水に暫く藤の雫かな（M35）
Uchi-mizu ni / shibaraku fuji no / shizuku kana

The arbor watered
Wisteria flowers are dripping
For a short while

16. 長き根に秋風を待つ鴨足草（M35）
Nagaki ne ni / akikaze wo matsu / yukinoshita

Waiting for the autumn wind
At its long root:
Saxifrage

17. 子規逝くや十七日の月明に（M35）
Shiki yuku ya / juhshichi-nichi no / getumene ni

Shiki passed away:
In the moonlight
Of the seventeenth day

II. The later Meiji era  （明治後期）

1. 秋風や眼中のもの皆俳句 （M36）
   Akikaze ya / ganchuh no mono / mina haiku
   Autumn wind:
   Everything meeting one’s eyes
   Is a haiku

2. 小説に己が天地や炉火おこる （M36）
   Shohsetsu ni / ono-ga tenchi ya / roka okoru
   A novel creating
   My own universe
   A hearth fire is stirred

3. 瓢箪の窓や人住まずるが如し （M36）
   Hyohtan no / mado ya / hito sumazaru ga gotoshi
   The window of gourds:
   Looks like no one
   Lives here

4. 兄弟の心異なる寒さかな （M36）
   Kyohdai no / kokoro kotonaru / samusa kana
The difference in the hearts
Of brothers
Makes me chilled—

5. ほろほろと泣き合ふ尼や山葵漬 （M37)
Horohoro to / naki-au ama ya / wasabi-zuke

Shedding large teardrops together,
Nuns are eating
*Wasabi-zuke*
[*Japanese horseradishes sliced and mixed with sake leftovers]*

6. むづかしき禅門出れば葛の花 （M37)
Muzukashiki / zen-mon dereba / kuzu no hana

Out of the difficult gate
Of Zen Buddhism
Blossoms of arrowroots

7. うき氷見て事足りぬれば漕ぎかへる （M38)
Uki-su mite / koto tari-nureba / kogi kaeru

Spotting the floating nest
We felt contentment in it
And rowed back

8. 行水の女にほれる鳥かな （M38)
Gyohzui no / onna ni horeru / karasu kana
A woman having a tub-bath
A crow falls in love
With her!

9. 相慕ふ村の灯二つ虫の声 （M38)
Ai-shitau / mura no hi futatsu / mushi no koe

Two lights of the village
Pining for one another
Insects chirping

10. 昼寝さめて其ま、雲を見入るなり （M38)
Hirune samete / sono-mama kumo wo / mi-iru nari

Having woken from an afternoon nap
I remained there
To watch the clouds

11. 座を挙げて恋ほのめくや歌かるた （M39)
Za wo agete / koi honomeku ya / uta-karuta

The entire company gets excited
With the throbbing of lovers’ hearts:
Playing with karuta cards bearing verses

12. すたれ行く町や蝙蝠人に飛ぶ （M39)
Sutare-yuku / machi ya kohmori / hito ni tobu
A rundown town:
Bats are flying
Around people

13. 桐一葉日当りながら落ちにけり （M39）
Kiri hito-ha / hi-atari nagara / ochi ni keri

A leaf of a paulownia tree
Has fallen
In the sunlight

14. 秋扇や淋しき顔の賢夫人 （M39）
Shuh-sen ya / sabishiki kao no / ken-fujin

An autumn fan:
The lonely face
Of a clever lady

15. 君と我うそにほればや秋の暮 （M39）
Kimi to ware / uso ni horeba ya / aki no kure

You and I wish
We loved each other’s lies
Late in the autumn

16. 秋空を二つに断てり椎大樹 （M39）
Akizora wo / futatsu ni tateri / shii taiju
Dividing the autumn sky
Into two
A huge chinquapin tree

17. 老僧の骨刺しに来る萩蚊かな （M40）
Roh-soh no / hone sashi ni kuru / yabu-ka kana
Striped mosquitoes
Come to bite the bones
Of an old priest!

18. 金亀子嶽つ闇の深さかな （M41）
Kogane-mushi / nageutsu yami no / fukasa kana
Throwing away a gold beetle,
How deep
Darkness is!

19. 凡そ天下に去来程の小さき墓に参りけり （M41）
Oyoso tenka ni / Kyorai hodo no chiisaki / haka ni mairi keri
I visited the rather modest grave
Of Kyorai, renowned
As a haiku poet around the world!

20. 蟟とぶ音終に似て低きかな （M41）
Inago tobu / oto osa ni nite / hikuki kana
Locusts make a sound
Similar to that of a handloom
Low

III. The Taisho era (大正時代)

1. 霜降れば霜を楯とす法の城 (T2)
Shimo fureba / shimo wo tate to su / nori no shiro

If there is a frost
I will use it as a shield
In the castle of law

2. 先人も惜みし命二日炙 (T 2)
Senjin mo / oshimishi inochi / futsuka-kyuh

Lives were held dear
By predecessors as well
Moxibustion on the second of February

3. 春風や闘志いいだきて丘に立つ (T2)
Harukaze ya / tohshi idaki te / oka ni tatsu

Spring wind:
Full of fight
I stand on the hill

4. 大寺を包みておめく木の芽かな (T2)
Ohdera wo / tsutsumite wameku / konome kana

Wrapping up the big temple
Leaf buds of the trees
Cry out!

5. 年を以て巨人としたり歩み去る （T2）
Toshi wo motte / kyojin to shitari / ayumi saru

Considering the years gone by
To be a giant
I walk away

6. 鎌倉を驚かしたる余寒あり （T3）
Kamakura wo / odorokashitaru / yokan ari

The cold still lingers
Which was a surprise
To Kamakura

7. 葡萄の種吐き出して事を決したり （T3）
Budo no tane / haki-dashite koto wo / kesshitari

A grape seed being
Spit out
A decision was made

8. これよりは恋や事業や水温む （T5）
Kore-yori wa / koi ya jigyoh ya / mizu nurumu

From this time on
Love, enterprise, and such:
Water has warmed up

9. 露の幹静に蝉の歩き居り （T5）
Tsuyu no miki / shizukani semi no / aruki ori

The dewy trunk
A cicada is silently
Walking on

10. 木曽川の今こそ光れ渡り鳥 （T5）
Kisogawa no / imakoso hikare / wataridori

Ah, the River Kiso,
Sparkle at this very moment:
Migratory birds

11. 蛇逃げて我を見し眼の草に残る （T6）
Hebi nigete / ware wo mishi me no / kusa ni nokoru

A snake fled
The stare that it gave me
Remains on the grass

12. 野を焼いて歸れば燈下母やさし （T7）
No wo yaite / kaereba tohka / haha yasashi

Returning after burning off a field
The light is on:
Mum is sweet at home

13. 秋天の下に野菊の花弁処く （T7）
Shuhten no / shita ni nogiku no / kaben kaku

Under the autumn sky
A petal of a wild chrysanthemum
Missed

14. どかと解く夏帯に句を書けところ （T9）
Doka to toku / natsu-obi ni ku wo / kake to koso

With a thud she untied
Her broad sash, telling me
To write haiku on it

15. 人形まだ生きて動かず傀儡師 （T10）
Ningyoh mada / ikite ugokazu / kairaishi

A puppet hasn’t been alive yet
To move on the stage:
A puppeteer

16. 新しき帽子かけたり髪の宿 （T10）
17. 昼の大樹の下の茶店かな（T13）
Saezuri no / taiju no shita no / chamise kana

A tea shop
Under the big tree
In which birds twitter

18. 春寒のよりそびけば人目ある（T14）
Harusamu no / yorisoi yukeba / hito-me aru

Feeling chilly in the spring
We walk close to each other
And people look at us

19. 白牡丹といふといへども紅ほのか（T14）
Haku-botan to / iu to iedomo / koh honoka

Although it is called
White peony
Pink is slightly noticeable

20. 伴めば落葉さ、やく日向かな（T14）
Tatazumeba / ochiba sasayaku / hinata kana

Standing still for a while
Fallen leaves whisper
In the sunny place

21. 茅ぐむなる大樹の幹に耳を寄せ （T15）
Megumu naru / taiju no miki ni / mimi wo yose

To the trunk of a big tree
Budding leaves
Ears are brought close

22. 曼珠沙華あれば必ず鞭うたれ （T15）
Manjushage / areba kanarazu / muchi-utare

Red spider lilies
Cannot but be whipped
If there are any

23. 大空に伸び傾げる冬木かな （T15）
Ohzora ni / nobi katamukeru / fuyugi kana

Under the wide open sky
A winter tree is spreading
And leaning to one side
IV. The earlier Showa era  （昭和前期）

1. うなり落つ蜂や大地を怒り這ふ （S2）
Unari otsu / hachi ya daichi wo / ikari hau

A bee hums and falls:
Infuriated, it crawls
On the earth

2. この庭の遅日の石のいつまでも （S2）
Kono niwa no / chijitu no ishi no / itsumademo

The rocks in this garden
Remain forever
In the lengthening days of spring

3. やり羽子や油のやうな京言葉 （S2）
Yari-bane ya / abura no yohna / Kyoh-kotoba

Battledore and shuttlecock:
The Kyoto accent sounds
As if the words were oiled

4. 流れ行く大根の葉の早さかな （S3）
Nagare-yuku / daikon no ha no / hayasa kana

The leaf of a Japanese radish
Is flowing away:
How fast it is!

5. 眼つむれば若き我あり春の宵 （S4）
Me tsumureba / wakaki ware ari / haru no yoi

Shutting my eyes
I find a young me found
In the spring evening

6. 紅梅の紅の通へる幹ならん （S6）
Kohbai no / beni no kayoeru / miki naran

The light pink of red ume* blossoms
Might possibly run through
The trunk of the tree

[*Japanese apricot]

7. 夜学す、む教師の声の低きま、 （S7）
Yagaku susumu / kyohshi no koe no / hikuki mama

Night study is progressing
With a teacher speaking
In a low voice

8. 浴衣着て少女の乳房高からず （S8）
Yukata kite / shohjo no chibusa / takakarazu

The breasts of a girl
Wearing a cotton *kimono*
Are lying smooth

9. 燈台は低く霧笛は峙てり （S8)
  
  Tohdai wa / hikuku kiribue wa / sobadateri

  The lighthouse is low
  A whistle in the fog
  Towers high

10. 大空に羽子の白妙と＊まれり （S10)
  
  Ohzora ni / hane no shirotae / todomareri

  In the blue
  The white of a shuttlecock
  Stays still

11. 着飾りて马来女の跣足かな （S11)
  
  Ki-kazarite / Malay onna no / hadashi kana

  A Malaysian woman
  Beautifully dressed:
  Her feet are bare

12. 人に耻ず神には耻ず初詣 （S11)
  
  Hito ni haji / kami niwa hajizu / hatsu-mohde

  A visit to the shrine at the beginning of the New Year
Makes me feel shameful in the eyes of others
Not in the eyes of a god

13. 老人と子供と多し秋祭 (S12)
Rohjin to / kodomo to ohshi / aki-matsuri

Old folks and small kids
Are so plentiful
At the autumn festival

14. 落花生喰ひつ、読むや罪と罰 (S12)
Rakkasei / kui tsutsu yomu ya / Tsumi to Batsu

Munching on peanuts
I read:
Crime and Punishment

15. 秋晴れや心ゆるめば曇るべし (S15)
Akibare ya / kokoro yurumeba / kumoru beshi

A fine clear autumn day:
It shall get cloudy
If the spirit slackens

16. よろよろと杮がのぼりて柿挾む (S15)
Yoroyoroto / sao ga noborite / kaki hasamu

A pole stagers upwards
To pick
A persimmon

17. 大根を洗ふ手に水従へり （S16）
Daikon wo / arau te ni / mizu shitagaeri

My hands wash a Japanese radish,
Water following
Its movement

18. 寒鯉の一撃したる力かな （S18）
Kanri no / itteki shitaru / chikara kana

A cold carp
Leaped up:
Its strength

19. 雪深く心はずみて唯歩く （S20）
Yuki fukaku / kokoro hazumite / tada aruku

Deep in the snow
I just keep walking
With spirits raised

20. 城壁にもたれて花見疲れかな （S20）
Joh-heki ni / motarete hana-mi / zukare kana

Leaning against the castle wall
I feel tired
Of seeing cherry blossoms

21. 山国の蝶を荒しと思うはずや （S20)
Yamaguni no / choh wo arashi to / omowazu ya

Don’t you think
Mountain butterflies
Are rough?

22. 秋蝉も泣き蠶虫も泣くのみぞ （S20)
Aki-zemi mo / naki minomushi mo / naku nomi zo

Both autumn cicadas
And bagworms
Can do nothing but cry

IV. The later Showa era （昭和後期）

1. 耕すにつけ読むにつけ唯独り （S21)
Tagayasu ni tsuke / yomu ni tsuke / tada hitori

Ploughing and reading
In either case
I’m alone

2. 初蝶来何色と聞ふ黄と答ふ （S21)
Hatsu-choh ku / nani-iro to tou / ki to kotau
The first butterfly has come:
Asked for its colour
I answered yellow

3. 我生の今日の昼寝も一件事 (S21)
Waga sei no / kyoh no hirune mo / ichi-daiji

In my life
Today’s afternoon nap is also
A matter of great importance

4. あまり明き月に寝借む女かな (S22)
Amari akaruki / tsuki ni ne oshimu / onna kana

The moon is too bright
For a woman
To go to bed

5. 何事も野分一過の心かな (S22)
Nanigoto mo / nowaki ikka no / kokoro kana

At all times
My mind-set is
That the autumn blast will pass

6. 異々と昼の星見え菌生え (S22)
Ranranto / hiru no hoshi mie / kinoko hae
Stars of the daytime
Appear glaring
Mushrooms grow

7. 海女とても陸こそよけれ桃の花 (S23)
Ama totemo / riku koso yokere / momo no hana

Even a woman pearl-diver
Admires the land
With peach trees blossoming

8. 虚子一人銀河と共に西へ行く (S24)
Kyoshi hitori / ginga to tomoni / nishi e yuku

Kyoshi alone
Together with the galaxy
Moves to the west

9. 彼一語我一語秋深みかも (S25)
Kare ichi-go / ware ichi-go aki / fukami kamo

He utters one word
I utter one word
Autumn is well advanced

10. 去年今年貫く棒の如きもの (S25)
Kozo kotoshi / tsuranuku boh no / gotoki mono
Something like a stick
That goes through
Last year and this year

11. 何事も知らずと答へ老の春  （S27）
Naigoto mo / shirazu to kotae / oi no haru

“I know nothing.”
Is my answer:
Spring in my old age

12. ほむらとも我心とも牡丹の芽  （S29）
Homura tomo / waga kokoro tomo / botan no me

Is it a flame
Or my heart?
The bud of the peony

13. 閑丁の鋏の切れ味枯枝飛び  （S32）
Entei no / nata no kire-aji / kare-e tobi

The sharpness
Of the gardener’s hatchet:
Dry twigs flying away

14. 空目して額に当る冬日かな  （S32）
Sorame shite / hitai ni ataru / fuyu-bi kana
An upward glance cast:
Winter sunlight
Hit the forehead

15. 新涼や道行く人の声二つ （S33）
Shin-ryoh ya / michi yuku hito no / koe futatsu

The cool of early autumn:
Two voices of people
Walking along the road

16. よき炭のよき灰になるあはれさよ （S33）
Yoki sumi no / yoki hai to naru / awaresa yo

Good charcoal turns
Into good ashes:
Isn’t it a pity?

17. ふとしたる事に慌て、年の暮れ （S33）
Futoshitaru / koto ni awatete / toshi no kure

Flustered
By something quite trivial:
The closing days of the year

18. 手力男命登場初日の出 （S34）
Tajikara-o-no-mikoto / tohjoh / hatsu-hinode
Lord Tajikara*

 Makes his appearance:
 Sunrise on New Year’s Day

 [*A male deity of enormous physical strength in Shinto mythology]

19. 山吹の茎の青さに花いまだ （S 34）

Yamabuki no / kuki no aosa ni / hana imada

The colour of the Japanese kerria stem
Is green:
Blossoms are not out