Yosa Buson (1716-1783)　　與謝蕪村

"Eight Immortals of *Haiku*"　　八俳仙圖

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
65 x 28.8 cm. (25 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)

Inscriptions:

"Painted at Shiko-an by Buson.

Yo no naka ya chouchou tomare kaku mo are. Sōin.
"All people wish for such good fortune as to have a butterfly light on them."
Kadokado no matsuba ya kimi ka miyo no haru Chōzumaru.
"Even pine needles at the gate seem to enjoy the spring of your reign."
Mono ieba kuchibiru samushi aki no kaze. Basho.
"Everything I say chills my lips like the autumn wind."
Outa ko ni kami nafurararuru atsusa kana. Sonojo.
"With a child on my back, I feel warm as he plays with my hair."
Furukoyomi hoshiki hito niha mairasen. Ransetsu.
"The old calendar comes to anyone who wants it."
Ganchou ya kamiyo no kotomo omoharuru. Moritake.
"New Year's Day brings to mind the Age of the *Kami* Gods."
Kasa wo kireha ame nimo ideyo yoha no tsuki. Sōkan.
"Carrying an umbrella, I go out in the rain to see the midnight moon."
Gyōzui ya nani ni totomaru nori no aji. Kikau.
"Bathing in a wooden tub, I wonder whence the taste of starch!"

Artist's seal:

Chōkō; Shimei

Published:

Sanno-sō Zōhin Tenkan Zuroku, (Tokyo: Tokyo Art Club, 1935), pl. 14;
Naniwa Jinbutsu Shi, (Osaka: Osaka Municipal Museum, 1977), p. 40;
Buson Zenshū, Tokyo, 1998, vol.6, *Kaiga Hen*, p. 413;
Buson Ten (Osaka: Itsuo Museum, 2003), pl. 22.

Haiku poetry—short and what originally were comical poems organized in lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables—began during the late Muromachi period (1336-1573), derived from traditional poems in linked form. The present painting traces in pictorial fashion the history of the subsequent evolution of *haiku* from the perspective of the artist, Yosa Buson, a highly skilled painter, talented calligrapher, and noted poet in his own right.

The pivotal figure in this development was Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), third from the top in the present painting, who in 1672 at the age of twenty-eight traveled to Edo and initiated new trends in poetry. The next year he published his poetry collection *Kaiooi*, and by 1677 he had become a professional *haiku* poet. Another major figure was Nishiyama Sōin (1605-1682), topmost in the painting, who arrived in Edo from Kumamoto in 1675 and was leader of the Danrin-ryū, a group favoring intellectual play in use of words and synonyms, parodies of classic poems and songs, and skillful, complicated, and playful approaches to the creation of poetry. Basho's group welcomed Sōin but eventually came to criticize the Danrin-ryū as being too radical, although they themselves were working to create a new style, even allowing the new rhythm of 6-7-6 syllables per line so as to evoke a Chinese flavor and to express feelings of admiration for lives spent in seclusion and cultivated poverty.

The second figure from the top in the painting is Matsunaga Teitoku (1571-1653), a Kyoto poet who had studied with Hosakawa Yūsai and later contributed to the development of *haiku*. Bashō appears third from the top, and he is followed by his disciple Sonojo. Next appears Hattori Ransetsu (1654-1707), born in Edo and together with Kikaku appearing below one of the greatest poets

within the Bashō school. The sixth figure represents Moritake Arakida (1473-1549), a *renga* poet born into the family of a Shinto priest at Ise who had advocated independence in poetry and is credited with being a founder of *haiku* poetry. Number seven is Yamazaki Sōkan (ca.1460-1540), a *renga* and *haiku* poet from Ōmi who served Ashikaga Yoshihisa (1465-1489); Sōkan became a monk and lived in seclusion at Yamazaki in Kyoto, and he too is regarded as a founder of *haiku*. Last of the figures is Kikaku Ruroi (1661-1707), born in Edo and a prominent member of Bashō's group from an early age.

The eight poets portrayed here did not constitute a canonical group, and Buson himself did other paintings of the "Immortal Poets" in groups ranging in number up to fourteen. The present work is also idiosyncratic in that the poets are not ranged in terms of chronological period of activity or any other discernable order other than that of the painter's pleasure, perhaps the poets he himself held of greater or lesser influence on his own work in that realm.

Listed solely as a painter in the *Heian Jimbutsushi*, "Who's Who in Kyoto," for the years 1775 and 1782, Yosa Buson was introduced as an excellent *haiku* poet by Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) and by the time of Hagiwara Sakutarō (1897-1979) he was ranked second in poetry only to Bashō, the poet honored by Buson in the present painting. As a painter Buson is ranked with Ike Taiga (1723-1776) and credited with a major role in bringing the Nanga school of painting to maturity. Buson was therefore a true literatus, a man of exceptional talents who made significant contributions to two complementary but still distinct fields.

Born in Kema Village, in Osaka, Buson was originally surnamed Taniguchi, and his father seems to have been a prosperous farmer. There is no indication of how or when he first became interested in *haiku* poetry or painting but by 1735, at age nineteen, he was already in Edo, where he is said to have dissipated a small fortune and to have trained as an actor. In 1737 Buson became a disciple in poetry of Hayano Hajin (1677-1742), a follower of the Bashō lineage. Buson also studied Chinese poetry and the classics under Hattori Nankaku (1683-1759), an associate of Gion Nankai (1677-1751). Nankai had learned Chinese paintings styles from the *Hasshū Gafu* and *Kaishi-en Gaden*, wood-block illustrated books imported from China, which Nankaku criticized as being vulgar and not up to the standard of Edo painting, an understandable reaction since Nankaku's father was close to Kanō Einō, a master of the Kanō school. Since Nankaku had studied the Kanō style, it is probable that Buson too began by learning that manner.

Two works from Buson's earliest period are still extent: a drawing inserted in the *Haikai Uzuki Teikin* ("Household Precepts for April") selected by Toyoshima Rogetsu in 1738; and "Haisen Gunkaizu," which uses precise and thin lines to depict fourteen sages of *haiku* beginning with Moritake and Teitoku and ending with Kikaku and Ransetsu. Already at this stage Buson's future direction in *haiga* painting is clearly discernible in the abbreviated and simplified forms.

After his teacher's death in 1742, Buson left Edo and, accompanied by a friend named Isaoka Ganto, traveled throughout the Kantō and Tōhoku regions. In 1751, after years of roving, which included one trip that traced the route described by Bashō in his *Oku no Hosomichi*, "The Narrow Road to the Deep North," Buson settled in Kyoto. Among his finest poems composed during that period of wandering was a free-style work written in memory of Hayami Shinga, a wealthy sponsor of the artist. Signed "Priest Buson, praying one hundred times," the poem reads, in the translation of Donald Keene:

Mourning for my Old Friend Hokuji

You went away in the morning; in the
evening my heart is torn a thousand
ways.
Why have you gone so far?

Longing for you, I went to the hills with
nothing to do.
Why have the hills become so sad?

Amid the yellow of the dandelions the
purseweed bloomed whitely.
No one was looking at them.

There must have been a pheasant
somewhere—when I heard it sing so
piercingly,
I remembered I had a friend who lived
across the river.

A wraith of smoke dropped down all of a
sudden and was caught by the west
wind blowing
Fiercely; but in the fields of bamboo and
of sedge
It had nowhere to escape.

I had a friend. He lived across the river. Today
Not even the pheasants are calling.
You went away in the morning; in the
evening my heart is torn a thousand ways.
Why have you gone so far?

To the Amida Buddha in my hut I offer
no candles,
No flowers, but this evening, as I stand
there dejected,
I feel a special holiness.

Professor Keene identified traces here of classic Japanese literature as well as influences from Chinese and Buddhist sources but concluded that "nothing remotely resembles the quality of this poem," that "Buson's irregular lines suggest emotions too powerful to fit into the normal pattern of alternating lines of five and seven syllables. Although he broke every 'rule' of Japanese prosody, the result is unmistakably poetry, written according to the rules of internal necessity."

Living in Buddhist monasteries in Kyoto, and active primarily as a poet creating a most original lyric world, Buson continued to study painting, learning from the treasures of Chinese and Japanese art held in temple collections. While visiting the Daitokuji on one occasion Buson was impressed by a skillful painting of a bulbul and composed a *haiku* poem in which he alluded to the painter, Kanō Motonobu (1476-1559), in terms of admiration. Buson's own paintings from this period include screens in the Gukyō-ji of "Ink Prunus" and "Country Villas". The first of these shows some sharpness in brushwork but Buson's style had not yet matured; the second is painted in the conservative Kyoto Kanō-school style.

In 1754, after three years of living in Kyoto, Buson left again and moved north to Tango province, to the district of Yosa where his mother had been born. In Miyazu Village Buson associated with Chikkei, abbot of Kenshō-ji, the Pure Land temple in which he lived, with Roju of Shinshō-ji, and with Ryōha of Muen-ji, all of whom were excellent *haiku* poets. During this period Buson became more involved with painting than before, pursuing his studies through earlier paintings held in local collections, through wood-block illustrated books, and through the paintings Sakaki Hyakusen (1698-1753) had done during his stay in the district. Working in a range of styles, Buson painted both secular and Buddhist figure paintings, landscapes, and flower-and-bird compositions. "Tea Shop on the country" is in *haiga* style and seemingly influenced by Hanabusa Itchō (1652-1724), whose works Buson might had seen in Edo. "Seasonal Agriculture" is a traditional theme, common since the Muromachi period, though in this painting combined with ideas from Chinese prints, and "Crows in Late Autumn" demonstrates something of the direction his style would take in later works.

Returning to Kyoto in 1757, Buson determined to live as a professional painter and changed his surname from Taniguchi to Yosa, marrying several years later and fathering a daughter named Kuno, his only known child. Buson's ambitions in art seem to have grown too, judging from a number of horse paintings he did during the early 1760s in the style of Shen Ch'uan, Chinese founder of the Nagasaki school during his stay there from 1731 to 1733. Perhaps under Chinese influence Buson also conceived a desire to paint on satin, very expensive at that time, so his pupils organized a Byōbu-kō or "Screen-funding Association" to help pay for the requisite material. One of Buson's earliest works in the literati or Nanga-school manner is a pair of screens painted in 1760 after the styles of the Chinese masters Mi Fu and Wang Meng. Both paintings show the effects of his period of study in Tango, being better composed than before and manifesting much improved brushwork, closer to his mature style.

From autumn of the year 1766 to 1768 Buson traveled often between Kyoto and Sanuki in Shikoku. Extant paintings in the Myōhō-ji as well as in private collections there suggest that Buson supported himself at this time by accepting many commissions in that region. Buson of course continued to be active in Kyoto in both painting and poetry. In 1766, together with the poets Taigi (1709-72), Shoha (d.1771), and five others, Buson founded the Sankasha *haiku* group. Friends of the society contributed to the support of members, who in turn donated paintings to the society. At age fifty-four, in the year 1770, Buson succeeded to the status of his *haiku* teacher, Hayano Hajin, who had died in 1742; Buson was given the title Yahantei the Second. In 1771 Buson worked together with Ike Taiga (1723-1776) and produced for Shimogo Gakkai the *Jūben Jūgi Chō*, an album illustrating the "Ten Conveniences and Ten Pleasures of Rural Living" that is one of the masterworks of later Japanese painting.

The final portion of Buson's life is called the Sha'in period after the name he adopted in 1778 and used for the rest of his life. The stronger effects in paintings of this period, such as are apparent in the masterpiece "Bare Peaks of Mount Gabi," suggest that the new name is meant to commemorate an union of the expressionistic brushwork of the Chinese painting Hsieh Shih-ch'en (the first character providing the "Sha" of Buson's new name)

with the pictorial style of T'ang Yin (the "in" of the new name). During this final period Buson was extremely productive and creative both in painting and in poetry. In 1777 he published an anthology of poetry, including a free verse travelogue combining Chinese and Japanese poems with *haiku*, a *haiku* dairy with memoirs of his earlier travels to the places visited by Basho, and his famous contributions to *haiku* theory. In 1783 he helped organize a centennial to honor Basho, and was active in other literary affairs. Late that year Buson visited a pupil in Uji and took cold in the winter rains. Becoming ill he was tended by two of his pupils, Baitei and Goshun (see cat. 43), but died on January 17, 1784. His final poem, recited to Goshun, was:

White plum blossoms—
In the night I thought I saw
The light of dawn.

Buson had earlier written the lines:

When I too depart,
I'll adorn the master's tomb
With dried pampas grass.

In accord with this wish, Buson was buried near Basho's grave at the Kompukuji in Kyoto.

The present "Eight Immortals of *Haiku*" is not dated by inscription but Buson did note that it was painted in the Shiko-an, the name of his studio until 1772. The work was thus created about the time Buson succeeded to the status of his *haiku* teacher, a time when he would have been very conscious of the school lineage. The assured placement of the figures, the arrangement of which creates a sense of pictorial depth, the subtle coloring, and the superb brushwork relate to certain aspects of his portion of the *Jūben Jūgi Chō* done in 1771, and this work too is a masterwork of Buson's maturity as an artist.