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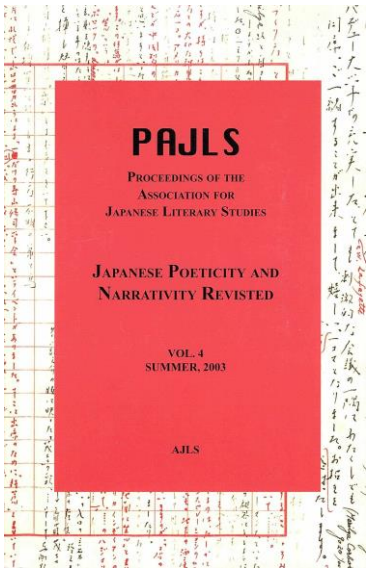

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YOSA BUSON AND HUMOR: *SHIN HANATSUMI* (NEW 'FLOWER GATHERING') AND *KOKKEI*

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Foxes, badgers, and other beings that were thought to have supernatural powers are common in Buson's haikai. The presence of such creatures consistently evokes not horror—as might be expected—but humor. Buson's expressions of nostalgia and his interest in recapturing a lost past that figures most obviously in frequent references to Heian *monogatari* and *waka* have often been commented on by scholars. Since Buson was also a painter, the perceived visuality of his poetry has also been given much attention. However, Buson's explorations of the aesthetics of *kokkei* (滑稽), one of haikai's most fundamental characteristics, are less well known.

My paper is an examination of a text where *kokkei* is closely linked with the realm of the supernatural: the stories of foxes and badgers in his 1777 haikai poetry and prose collection, *Shin hanatsumi* (新花摘, New 'Flower gathering'). *Shin hanatsumi* is a work in two parts: the first is a series of 137 hokku written over a period of sixteen days, intended as a *gegyō* (夏行) or summer austerity in honor of his deceased mother. The second part is a disconnected series of prose anecdotes. I will argue that Buson's use of *kokkei* in *Shin hanatsumi* was related to his efforts to reform haikai by returning to it some of the elegance and seriousness of purpose that he and his colleagues associated with the ideals of Bashō. It is connected to Bashō's notion of *fūkyō* (風狂) or poetic madness, and reflects the close relationship between mid-eighteenth century Back to Bashō poets and the communities of sinophile intellectuals with which they associated.

I first introduce *Shin hanatsumi* and briefly summarize each of the four stories about foxes and badgers, then I discuss the role of *kokkei* in Buson's haikai. Finally, I examine the relationship between these stories and the larger context of the haikai of the Back to Bashō movement in the mid- to late-eighteenth century.

Shin hanatsumi's afterword by Buson disciple Matsumura Gekkei (松村月渓, 1752–1811) gives clues to the origin of the work. Gekkei writes that Buson began it on the eighth day of the fourth month of 1777, emulating *Hanatsumi* (華摘, Flower gathering), compiled in 1690 by Bashō disciple Takarai Kikaku (宝井其角, 1661–1707) in honor of his mother. Buson planned to write ten hokku a day for one hundred days.

However, after sixteen days he stopped, which, Gekkei explains, was because of illness. In the sixth month Buson recovered enough to pick up the notebook again, and he filled its remaining pages with prose—brief pieces of *haibun* (俳文) loosely connected by theme.[1]

Shin hanatsumi was not published during Buson's lifetime, and it was given its title by Gekkei, who changed it from *Zoku hanatsumi* (続はなつみ) to distinguish it from another work of that name that had been published in 1735 by the poet Sonsō Kojū (巽窓湖十, d. 1746). One of Buson's disciples, probably Kawada Denpuku (川田田福, 1721–1793), split the book up to make it into a handscroll, and Gekkei added illustrations. It was not published until 1797, fourteen years after Buson's death.[2]

Even though Gekkei writes that Buson had no particular plan for the *haibun* section, there does seem to have been some kind of order to it. Most, but not all, of the anecdotes are reminiscences about events that took place during Buson's youth. He first comments on the merits of Kikaku's *Gogenshū* (五元集, 1747), and argues that hokku anthologies are best published posthumously; he then launches into a brief discussion on hokku. The next section discusses connoisseurship, recounting anecdotes about collectors and their pettiness. After this are his tales of supernatural creatures. He follows them with a story of a letter written by Kikaku to a disciple, and concludes with reminiscences about the haikai poet Ihoku (渭北, 1703–1755).

The four stories about foxes and badgers are told as if they are accounts of actual events Buson experienced while traveling through the Tōhoku area from 1742 to 1750 and in Tango province (丹後, Kyoto Prefecture) from 1754 to 1757. The first story refers to an experience he had in Yūki (結城, Ibaraki Prefecture), probably during his late twenties or early thirties. He was staying overnight at the hermitage of a person named Jōu (丈羽). One night, when drifting off to sleep, Buson heard a strange tapping sound. Worried, he asked the caretaker about it, and was told that it was probably a badger. The two teamed up to try and catch it, but for five nights running, no matter what they did, they couldn't find the badger. Finally, Buson was told that a local villager had killed it. Filled with remorse, Buson had a priest say prayers for the badger, and he concludes the story with his own verse:

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[1] Shimizu, p. 318.
[2] Ibid, p. 240.

late in autumn
transformed into a Buddha
—the badger

aki | *no*| *kure* | *hotoke*| *ni* | *bakeru* | *tanuki* | *kana*
autumn | 's | late | Buddha | into | change | badger | ![3]

The second story refers to the time that Buson was traveling in Tango, when he was about 42 years old. He was staying at Kenshō-ji (見性寺) temple in Miyazu (宮津) as the guest of its chief priest, Chikukei (竹渓). Buson had a fever, and was confined to a sickroom for several days. One night, getting up to use the toilet, Buson opened the sliding door to go out but when he did he stepped on something furry. Terrified, he paused for a moment, then tried to kick at the thing, but there was nothing there. When he woke up the monks to tell them about it, they irritably responded that he was hallucinating because of his fever. But when he went back to bed, he started to feel like a heavy stone had been laid on his chest, and couldn't breathe. When he called out in distress, his host, Chikukei, came to see him. Hearing his story, Chikukei speculated that it was the work of a badger. And indeed, when they looked outside, the small tracks of a badger were visible leading up to the veranda. In concluding the story, Buson breaks the tension by adding some risqué humor:

> Perhaps it was because Reverend Chikukei had come in such a hurry to wake me up, but his sash was undone, and the front of his robe hung open. His plump testicles hung like rice-sacks, but since this area was covered in profuse tufts of white hair, one could not see his penis. Saying that this was a result of having had a rash during his youth, he pulled on his testicles, twisting them and scratching them.
>
> I thought he looked very strange, and, wondering if perhaps this was what Senior Priest Shukaku (朱鶴) looked like when he had grown tired of reading scriptures, I was shocked and frightened, and drew back from him. Chikukei laughed very loudly, and recited this verse.

[3] Ibid, pp. 302–304.

autumn passes—
eight jō of camphor
at Kinkaku-ji

aki | *furu* | *ya* | *kusu* | *hachi* | *jō* | *no* | *Kinkaku-ji*
autumn | passes | ! | camphor | eight | tatami mat |
testicles/Temple of the Golden Pavilion[4]

Shukaku was a legendary monk of Morinji (茂林寺) temple in Tatebayashi (館林, Gunma Prefecture), who seemed to have magical powers and was rumored to be a badger in disguise. Chikukei's verse makes some comic puns: an eight *jō*-sized room at Kinkaku-ji (金閣寺) was built with camphor wood boards; the testicles (*kindama*, 金玉) of a badger were thought to be a prodigious size; *kaku* means both "pavilion" (閣) and "to scratch" (掻く).

The third is the story of Omitsu (阿満), wife of Buson colleague Nakamura Fūkō (中村風篁) of Shimodate (下館, Ibaraki Prefecture). Omitsu was visited by five or six foxes in the middle of the night as she sat up sewing by lamplight.

> One night, while she was sewing a fine robe in preparation for the New Year, because she was going to stay up late, she told all the servants to go to bed before her. She closed herself up alone in a room, with all the doors and windows shut tight, where there would have been no place for anything to hide. The lamps were brightly lit, and she worked at her sewing with a tranquil mind. Just at the time that the sound of a water clock made her think, it must be about the Fourth Hour, suddenly five or six old, decrepit-looking foxes with dragging tails walked right past where Omitsu was sitting. The fusuma and the shoji where still closed tightly, and because there was not so much as a crack left open, it was as if they had drilled their way in. Thinking this was very strange, she did not take her eyes off them, but they came and went just as if they were passing through a field with no obstructions, and then they disappeared. Omitsu went right on sewing as if she had not found anything particularly surprising about this.

[4] Ibid, pp. 305–307.

Buson says that he was amazed when he heard her story, since she was normally a very timid person, but this experience seemed not to trouble her much.[5]

Finally, in another strange visitation at Fūkō's house, the haikai poet Hayami Shinga (早見晋我, 1671–1745) woke in the middle of the night to find several foxes sitting on the veranda. In a panic, Shinga ran all around the house until he came to where he thought his host was sleeping:

> "Hey, wake up!" he hollered at the top of his voice. This awakened the servants, who made a big commotion, yelling, "Burglars!" Hearing this, Shinga himself calmed down, and, fully awake now, he looked at what he was doing. He realized he was knocking on the door of the toilet, shouting, "Wake up! Help quickly!" Later he spoke of this, and said, "It was shameful, if I do say so myself."[6]

In all four of the fox and badger tales, Buson delights in the absurdity and pathos of the situations he describes. While he relates encounters with otherworldly creatures, the supernatural for Buson is really a lens he uses to bring familiarity into focus, a compassionate, complicitous joke on his own anxieties and foolishness.

This kind of gesture is central to the haikai notion of *kokkei*—the humorous or comic. *Kokkei* is intrinsic to haikai, and as haikai itself means humor, the two terms are closely related throughout the history of the genre's development. Most scholars trace the origin of haikai to the *haikaika* (俳諧歌) or haikai waka in Volume Nineteen of *Kokinshū*, Miscellaneous Forms. These verses were not obviously *kokkei*, but they deviated from the usual standards of waka.[7] The genre that came to be called haikai had more direct origins in renga of the medieval period, particularly the *mushin* (無心) or comic renga that became a favorite of members of the commoner classes who had literary pretensions. It was this class that continued to practice comic renga with enthusiasm into the sixteenth century, when it eventually achieved the status of an independent genre: *haikai no renga* or just *haikai*.[8]

The verses of Matsunaga Teitoku (松永貞徳, 1571–1653), recognized as the founder of the genre, were distinguished from renga by the inclusion

[5] Ibid, pp. 307–310.
[6] Ibid, pp. 311–312.
[7] Suzuki, pp. 32–37.
[8] Narukawa, pp. 21–27.

of a *haigon* (俳言) or haikai word. The *haigon* did not necessarily make his verses funny, but it did add an element of the unexpected or incongruous. The next school to become a major force in haikai, the Danrin school, is noted for the strong emphasis that it placed on *kokkei*, favoring comic puns, word play and unabashedly embracing the prurient and scurrilous.[9]

Humor was a central aesthetic value of Bashō's haikai as well, although his approach to humor was considerably more highbrow than that which appealed to most Danrin school poets. Perhaps the most characteristic kind of humor in Bashō's poetry is related to his interest in *fūkyō* 風狂, the highly refined aesthetic of "poetic madness" that he began exploring when he started to take a deep interest in Chinese poetry. In promoting *fūkyō*, the ideal of being so intoxicated by poetic or artistic sensibility that one was compelled to do seemingly mad or eccentric things, Bashō showed that haikai's essential element—humor—need not be confined to scatological gags on the one hand or word-play and preciosity on the other.[10] Bashō's *fūkyō* drew on a more prestigious, elite tradition—that of the Chinese literati recluses whose unconventional behavior was evidence of extraordinary virtue, such as was mentioned in *Shi jing* and the *Analects*.[11]

Bashō's formulation of the *fūkyō* aesthetic was highly valued by the Back to Bashō poets of the mid- to late-eighteenth century who were seeking a way to reform haikai, to raise it from the status of a frivolous pastime. However, the Back to Bashō poets wanted to avoid making haikai into something rigid or pedantic; they aimed to discover a balance between elegance, or *ga* (雅)—the value that they were trying to promote—and the everyday, or *zoku* (俗), that gave the genre the kind of vitality that made it enjoyable to produce and to read.

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[9] Fukumoto, pp. 127–129.

[10] Shirane, pp. 68–73.

[11] In discussing models of extraordinary conduct that informed Chinese ideals of reclusion, Alan Berkowitz cites this verse in *Shi jing*:

> A reverent demeanor, grave and dignified,
> Is the counterpart to virtue.
> People likewise have the saying:
> "There is no wise man not also stupid."
> The stupidity of the common fellow
> Is owed to natural debility;
> The stupidity of the wise man
> Is owed to deliberate transgression.

He also cites the example of Lu Tong, or Jieyu the Madman of Chu, who "feign[ed] madness in order to escape the demands of the life of a man in a darkened age." Berkowitz, p. 43.

Buson, a leader in the Back to Bashō movement, was very conscious of Bashō's example and strove to emulate his serious attitude towards haikai. Buson was keenly aware of Bashō's formulation of *fūkyō* and admired it deeply, even to the point of suggesting that it was beyond his own powers to attain, such as in following verse in the 1782 collection *Kachō hen* (花鳥篇, Blossom and bird verses) and its long headnote:

> Not following the aesthetic (*fūryū*, 風流) of rushing off on a journey to Yoshino saying, 'I want to show the cherry blossoms to my travel hat,' I just stay in my home worrying about the affairs of the mundane world, thinking, I'll do this, or, why don't I do that, and the things that I plan never get done, until finally, though instances of turning away from the beauties of nature are numerous in this world, it is as if I were the only such idiot there is, and I feel I cannot show my face to other people:
>
> blossoms fallen
> what darkness beneath it!
> —my cypress travel-hat
>
> *hana* | *chirite* | *mi* | *no* | *shita* | *yami* | *ya* | *hinoki* | *kasa*
> blossoms | fall | self | 's | below | darkness | ! | cypress | hat[12]

Buson's verse is a self-deprecating parody of this one by Bashō:

> I want to show the cherry blossoms
> at Yoshino
> to my cypress travel-hat
>
> *Yoshino* | *nite* | *sakura* | *mishō* | *zo* | *hinoki* | *kasa*
> Yoshino | at | cherry blossoms | I want to show | (emphatic) | cypress | hat[13]

As much as he admired Bashō, Buson suffered greatly from an anxiety of influence. Most of the writings in which he—like other Back to Bashō poets—calls for return to the ideals of Bashō, are qualified with disclaimers in which he denies his own ability to achieve the same level of

[12] Ogata and Yamashita, pp. 205–206.
[13] Ōtani and Nakamura, p. 49.

greatness that Bashō did. Even the last hours of his life, his disciple Takai Kitō (高井其董, 1741–1789) tells us, were an agony for him as he struggled to write a death-poem as good as the one that had been written by Bashō.[14]

Buson's use of *kokkei* in *Shin hanatsumi* is closely related to his interest in the grotesque; that is, his taste for ordinary things that have taken on extraordinary aspects, whether it be animals transformed into supernatural beings or humans apparently endowed with attributes in excess of what might be considered normal or expected. Many Buson verses make reference to other-worldly beings, such as these hokku:

a fox
turned prince
—twilight in spring

kindachi | *ni* | *kitsune* | *baketari* | *yoi* | *no* | *haru*
prince | into | fox | transform | twilight | 's | spring[15]

spring night—
a lady-in-waiting
bewitched by a fox

haru | *no* | *ya* | *kitsune* | *no* | *sasou* | *uewarawa*
spring | 's | night | fox | (particle) | bewitch | lady-in-waiting[16]

and Buson's link with Kitō's verse in the linked-verse sequence *Botan chirite* (牡丹散て, Peonies fall) in the collection *Momosumomo* (もゝすもゝ, Peaches and plums, 1780):

coughing,
an old man
seems to be opening the gate . . .

suwabukite | *okina* | *ya* | *kado* | *o* | *hirakuramu*
coughing | old man | ! | gate | (particle) | seems to be

[14] Kitō, *Kara hiba* (から檜葉, Withered cedar leaves, 1784) in Maruyama and Yamashita, pp. 317–318.
[15] Ogata and Morita, p. 510.
[16] Ibid, p. 511.

opening
Kitō

a ghost has come in order to
select a son-in-law

muko | *no* | *erabi* | *ni* | *kitsuru* | *hengue*
son-in-law | 's | choosing | for | come | ghost
Buson[17]

The models for *Shin hanatsumi* were probably the thirteenth-century tale collection *Uji shūi monogatari* (宇治拾遺物語) and Ueda Akinari's (上田秋成, 1734–1809) *Ugetsu monogatari* (雨月物語), published in 1776, though there are some significant differences. For example, it seems likely that Buson had read *Uji shūi monogatari*, and in particular, the tale of Chikukei resembles a story in the *Uji* collection, "How the Middle Counselor Morotoki Investigated a Priest's Penis."[18] However, Buson's narratives are not so unrestrainedly earthy as the ribald ones in the *Uji* collection, and even the Chikukei story, for all its similarities, does not make the priest's curious anatomy the focus of his interest, but rather introduces it as a device that allows him to set up the hokku to its full advantage.

As Shimizu Takayuki points out, Buson's tales of the supernatural also differ from those of his friend Ueda Akinari.[19] The *Shin hanatsumi* stories purport to be based on personal experience, or at least told to him first hand by named acquaintances. Moreover, Buson's accounts do not revel in gory or gruesome details. His interest is more in unusual things that happened to regular people: extraordinary happenings in ordinary settings. The story about the badger in Jōu's hermitage is not overly frightening but funny and ultimately poignant, as is the story of Fūkō's wife. This is very much in keeping with a theme that is consistent throughout Buson's haikai, whether it evokes the lost elegance of the Heian court or the imagined splendor of a Chinese literati's garden pavilion—the desire to escape into a realm of fantasy, and to keep the real world at a distance.

[17] Teruroka, pp. 192–193.
[18] Watanabe and Nishio, pp. 61–63. An English translation of the story appears in Mills, pp. 142–143.
[19] Shimizu and Kuriyama, pp. 224–226.

Buson's expression of the grotesque through *kokkei* is related to a group of ideas associated with the eighteenth-century poets, painters, and intellectuals who considered themselves heirs to the Chinese literati tradition, particularly the notion of *ki* (奇), strangeness or eccentricity. As Patricia Graham has pointed out, for sinophile intellectuals of this period such as Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666–1728) and Gion Nankai (祇園南海, 1677–1751), *ki* and elegance were related.[20] As Nankai writes:

> People dislike things that lack interest. Things that have interest are what people prefer. Eccentrics who go outside the bounds of common sense are the ones who most like what's interesting; boors are not even aware of interesting things. Thus, boors are so busy pursuing fame and wealth that they have no idea of the fascination of strangeness.[21]

In other words, the affinity that the sages had for *ki* was one indicator of their transcendence or separation from the ordinary, mundane world.

Buson, who made his living from paintings that emulated the Chinese literati style, formed close associations with kanshi poets and other devotees of Chinese learning. He was thought to have studied with Sorai's disciple Hattori Nankaku (服部南郭, 1683–1759) and had numerous kanshi poets as students or patrons. Like the situations described in the *Shin hanatsumi* stories, these hokku are meant to amuse, rather than shock or terrify.

Buson himself suggests that there was a close affinity between his aim to emulate Chinese literati models and tales of the strange in the preface that he wrote to *Kono hotori—ichiya shikasen* (此ほとり・一夜四哥仙, Around here—Four linked verse sequences in one night, 1773), which tells of the circumstances of the composition of the four sequences. One night, Buson, his disciple Kitō, and their out-of-town visitor, the haikai poet Miura Chora (三浦樗良, 1729–1780), went to pay a sick-call on Wada Ranzan (和田嵐山, d. 1773), a haikai poet of their acquaintance. The visit is described in terms that emphasize how much the setting reflects the cultivated literati sensibilities of the gathering—Ranzan is living in an isolated house in properly genteel poverty. The neighborhood is suitably tasteful, as it is surrounded by miscanthus grass—appropriate to the season—but its remoteness and the lateness of the hour also make it eerie and mysterious. Before starting the four linked verse sequences that give

[20] Graham, pp. 67–68.
[21] Paraphrased in Kanō, p. 4.

the collection its name, the visitors try to lift the ailing Ranzan's spirits by telling him scary stories, including one about *hyakki yakō* (百鬼夜行), the night parade of demons. Buson explains that they do this in emulation of Su Dongpo (蘇東坡, 1036–1101), the Chinese literati poet and painter, who, Buson notes, had a marked taste for the grotesque.[22] For Buson, stories of the strange and uncanny are part of the Chinese literati tradition, and telling such stories identifies him with this tradition.

Shin hanatsumi is an exceptionally good example of Buson's lifelong fascination with the supernatural. Skillful juxtaposition of incongruous yet related elements is central to haikai, and Buson's stories of foxes and badgers do precisely that, bringing together *kokkei*—the comic, and *ki*—the strange. His stories fall within the bounds of a haikaiesque version of elegance, carefully balancing *ga* and *zoku* so that the result avoids vulgarity, yet remains humorous and entertaining. For a poet like Buson, who so deeply admired Bashō, this was a realization of what Bashō's eighteenth-century followers regarded as one of his fundamental ideals.

[22] Teruoka and Kawashima, pp. 204–206.

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