

Collaboration of Buson and Kitō in Their Cultural Production

© Toshiko Yokota, California State University, Los Angeles

Introduction

Although casual readers do not generally think of authors and poets as competitors, according to a French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, the creation of literature and art are part of social space, a realm that includes various fields of struggle. For example, a literary field is positioned in the field of power and is constituted of institutions, social relations and socially constituted individuals whom he calls agents, and groups of agents who share values and beliefs and therefore act in concert. Agents' positions within a field are determined by their access to economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital. As authors, composers, performers and craftsmen, these agents are engaged in cultural production attempt to advance their positions in the cultural field, and compete for cultural legitimacy. Bourdieu, thus, defines the cultural field as a site of struggles among agents for the various forms of capital at stake.¹

When we examine the cultural production of poet-painter Yosa Buson (1716-1783) through the lens of Bourdieu's model, we see that friends and students of Buson's *haikai* group also participated in his literary and artistic production, competing as his partners against members of other *haikai* groups and collaborating for advancement of their own position within the literary field of the time.

To accurately depict the struggles among *haikai* poets in the literary field of eighteenth-century Japan, it is really necessary to analyze the cultural production of both Buson and poets in other *haikai* groups of his time. However, in this study I will limit my discussion largely to Buson's relationship with his leading student, Takai Kitō (1741-89), and examine various aspects of their collaboration

to show how and why they accumulated various kinds of capital, and exemplify the way in which they used their *haikai* verseto promote shared aesthetic values.

The analysis of Buson's two-fold practice as a poet-painter will show that his *haikai* network overlapped with that of his painting and that he collaborated with his student-patrons in both fields. For instance, Buson and Kitō collaborated in producing *haikai* linked-verse. The surviving one hundred twelve sequences of *haikai* linked verse in which Buson participated reveal that this was an important poetic genre that required collaboration of the participants for their success in cultural competition.² Kitō and Buson's other *haikai* students also contributed to Buson's artistic production by promoting the sales of his painting.

Below, I will discuss the significance of (a) Buson's giving Kitō opportunities to edit the group's anthologies, (b) Buson's work writing prefaces for Kitō's publications, (c) Kitō's role as a middleman in support of Buson's practice as a painter and (d) Buson's composing *haikai* linked verse with Kitō.

Collaboration with Kitō in Buson's Practice as a Haikai Poet

One of the major practices of Buson's *haikai* group, Yahantei, was to publish their New Year's albums and *haikai* anthologies. Buson and Kitō actively collaborated in the process of their publication. Although the members of the Yahantei group did not directly receive economic profit from their publications, they gained symbolic capital in the form of honor and privilege by participating in cultural productions with their leader, Buson. For a small *haikai* group such as the Yahantei, no economic profit was ever expected from sales of New Year albums and other collections. However, they continued to publish them because publication meant proving their competence as a group in comparison with the other *haikai* groups

² See vol. 7 of *Buson zenshū* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp. 187-275. Linked verse is a series of alternating long (seventeen-syllable) and short (fourteen-syllable) verses usually composed in groups of two or more poets. After one participant composes a verse, the next interprets its meaning, and composes the next.

¹ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 229-231, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 215-216.

and it solidified their position in the field. Through publication, they were connected with other groups and remained involved in symbolic struggles against other *haikai* groups for the purpose of gaining prominence.

The responsibility for editing of all the New Year's albums of the Yahantei group and the writing of the final manuscripts, fell on Buson, the master of the group. Only through limiting the number of his students could he manage this responsibility.³ In practice, this could have meant a loss of income. However, because Buson was a professional painter, he did not need to depend on *haikai* poetry as his source of financial support and could keep the number of his *haikai* students to a minimum.

While Buson edited the small albums and collections of linked-verse by himself, four of seven anthologies were edited by his leading students, most often Kitō. For example, the first of the Yahantei group anthologies, titled *Gleam of the Snow* (*Sono yukikage*), published in 1772, was edited by Kitō, with Buson providing a preface and Miyake Shōzan (1718-1801) an epilogue.⁴ *Crows of Dawn* (*Ake garasu*, 1773) and *Crows of Dawn: A Sequel* (*Zoku ake garasu*, 1776) were also edited by Kitō. *Crows of Dawn* (1773) displays the belief of Buson and his students that true Bashō-style poetry could be found only by living detached from ambition for worldly fame. In the preface, Kitō declared that the Yahantei group would support the *haikai* reform movement. Many poets felt that the quality of *haikai* had degenerated, especially after the death of Bashō, and serious poets sought to reform *haikai* poetry from around the time of the fiftieth memorial service for Bashō in 1743. The publication of *Crows of Dawn* signified that the Yahantei sought to position themselves in opposition to the *haikai* masters they viewed as frivolous because their primary goals were monetary success and fame. In contrast, Buson and his group

were attempting to establish their competency as legitimate followers of Bashō.⁵

Buson's willingness to entrust the editing of anthologies to others was directly linked to the demands of his artistic endeavors. Buson repeatedly complained in his letters that painting for his clients took up too much time and kept him from participating in *haikai* sessions. Certainly he was too busy to do all the editing of the group's anthologies, especially those which involved verses by many participants. Consequently, he left much of the editing to Kitō. Scholars argue that Buson was allowing Kitō financial rewards as a professional *haikai* master.⁶ In one sense, this is certainly the case, but unlike most of Buson's students, who had their own professions and enjoyed *haikai* as a pastime, Kitō's main source of income was *haikai*. Buson therefore gave Kitō opportunities for editing the group's anthologies such as *Crows of Dawn: A Sequel*, the largest collection of the group.⁷

The more Buson's name as a poet-painter became known through his *haikai* publications and the sales of his paintings, the more people asked Buson to write prefaces and epilogues. Accordingly, in addition to writing prefaces for his own group's anthologies, Buson wrote prefaces and epilogues for his acquaintances outside the group. For example, Buson's preface for *A Study of Cutting Words* (*Ya kana shō*, 1774) by Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) shows that he had interaction with one of the most prominent writers of the time. Persons outside Yahantei benefited from the associa-

³ See Yajima Nagisao, *Buson no shūhen* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1988), pp. 201-202.

⁴ Shōzan, one of Buson's life-long friends, studied Chinese poetry and *haikai* poetry, and contributed to advancing Buson's knowledge of Chinese poetry.

⁵ See Ōiso Yoshio, *Yosa Buson* (Tokyo: Ofūsha, 1987), pp. 54-56. Buson's dissatisfaction with the prevailing commercialized vulgar *haikai* poetry was the result of the education he received from his master, Hayano Hajin, who insisted on retaining Bashō's conception of *haikai* poetry as a serious art form and refused to involve himself in the frivolous *haikai* poetry that was then popular. Hajin studied *haikai* as one of the best students of Kikaku, who was a student of Bashō.

⁶ See Tanaka Yoshinobu, *Yosa Buson* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1996), pp. 142-143.

⁷ The anthology includes 416 verses and twelve sequences of *haikai* linked verse by 152 participants.

tion with Buson, and Buson, in return, was able to confirm his position as a leading poet in the field. Writing these prefaces also gave Buson opportunities to express his beliefs as a *bunjin* poet. For example, Buson wrote the preface for his group's first anthology, *Gleam of the Snow*, that was edited by Kitō. Buson's preface had the effect of endorsing the anthology and Kitō, the compiler, and helped Kitō to establish himself as an independent professional *haikai* master in 1773.⁸ On another occasion, Buson wrote a preface for a student, Kuroyanagi Korekoma, who compiled *Collected Verses of Shundeī* (*Shundeī kushū*, 1777) in memory of his deceased father Kuroyanagi Shōha (1727-1771). This preface is notable for the way it expresses Buson's belief in "living above the mundane" (*rizoku*) in the format of a dialogue with his student-patron, Shōha.

Since Kitō first learned *haikai* with his father, Kikei, a professional *haikai* master who had studied under Hayano Hajin (1677? - 1742),⁹ he had already had knowledge of *haikai* poetry when he became a *haikai* student of Buson.¹⁰ Kitō was Buson's most trusted disciple – he even commented "No one else is so talented as Kitō in our group" – and Kitō assisted him in managing Yahantei,¹¹ Through editing the group's anthologies and receiving endorsement from Buson, Kitō increased his cultural and symbolic capital that eventually led him to inherit Buson's leadership of

⁸ See Tanaka, p.161, pp. 136-141 and pp. 210-211 for detailed information on these prefaces. After Kitō became a professional *haikai* master, he continued assisting his master and managing the Yahantei group.

⁹ See Yajima, p. 181 and Tanaka, p. 161. When a *haikai* poet became a professional master, the poet was identified by the name of the group. In fact, Buson used Yahantei as one of his pen names and for his atelier after he became the leader of the group.

¹⁰ In order to participate in a *haikai* linked verse session, participants are required to know rules of linking. For detailed information on the *haikai* rules, see Imoto Nōichi, *Renku dokuhon* (Tokyo: Taishukan shoten, 1987), pp. 211-221.

¹¹ See Maruyama Kazuhiko, *Buson*, (Tokyo: Kashinsha, 1987), pp. 98-103.

Yahantei and to his recognition as a *haikai* master in his own right.¹²

Collaboration with Kitō in Buson's Practice as a Painter

Buson can be differentiated from other *haikai* masters in that he had another dependable income. As a professional painter he had the option of limiting the number of his *haikai* students, relieving him of the obligation to mark his students' verses in exchange for money. In this regard, his position in the field was rather unique.

Buson made his living through selling his artistic craftsmanship. As he became a renowned painter, his clientele increased. Buson's artistic production continued to be sustained by his wealthy patrons, and they in turn found value in collecting paintings for their personal pleasure and cultural refinement. Still, economic circumstances forced him to continue to sell his paintings to support his family. He was never wealthy, and in fact one of his students, Matsumura Gekkei (1752-1811), actually had to provide a dowry for Buson's daughter after his death from the posthumous sale of his works.¹³

Buson depended upon his *haikai* network as an important vehicle for selling his paintings. Numerous examples from his letters show that his students played the role of clients and middlemen. Kitō, for example, was a middleman for Sasaki Kiyū when he bought one of Buson's *Oku no hosomichi* scrolls.¹⁴ Buson's letter to another student-patron, Kawata Denpuku, in 1774, also acknowledges Denpuku's request for two paintings on silk, while further revealing that Denpuku introduced a Confucian scholar to Buson as a new client.¹⁵ Likewise, Teramura Hyakuchi (d.1835), who was Buson's major student-patron, played an important role when he sold one of Buson's works, a gilt screen, to a client in Nagoya.¹⁶ These examples all indicate that Buson's practice as a painter greatly

¹² See Tanaka, pp. 144-149.

¹³ See Ebara Taizō, vol. 13 of *Ebara Taizō chosakushū* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1979), p. 153.

¹⁴ See *Buson zenshū*, p. 362.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 524-525.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 423.

depended upon Kitō as well as other members of his *haikai* group.

The examination of an aspect of Buson's practice as a painter illustrates the collaboration of Buson and Kitō. Buson's success as a professional painter depended on the support of Kitō and other *haikai* students, patrons and associates. He depended upon these contacts for economic survival. Only after he was recognized as an established painter and had established a modest economic foundation for himself, could he accept the position as the leader of the Yahantei group in 1770.¹⁷ Buson's practice as a poet-painter even brought him more honor and fame than might have been the case had he specialized in either painting or *haikai*. While Buson's prestige increased, Kitō and other *haikai* student-patrons, in return, indirectly benefited from his rise in the public's estimation. Although Kitō might have been one of the unpaid brokers in the sales of Buson's paintings, we can assume that his support of Buson's practice as a painter helped strengthen his relationship with his teacher and deepen his trust. Judging from the fact that Kitō became a professional *haikai* poet and produced masterpieces of *haikai* linked-verse with the help of Buson, Kitō ultimately gained economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital through his participation in Buson's artistic production.

Collaboration of Buson and Kitō in Composing Haikai Linked Verse

The following analysis of the *Peaches and Plums* (*Momo sumomo*, 1780), sequences of *haikai* linked-verse, will show that Buson and Kitō not only collaborated in composing poetry, but also that they shared *bunjin* (literati) values and beliefs based on their common grounding as *haikai* poets committed to serious literary ideals. These sequences demonstrate their thorough knowledge of Chinese poetry and reveal their ideals as *bunjin*, ideals that stressed the importance of rejecting the vulgarity of then-popular *haikai* (*rizoku*). Buson especially praised Kitō's initial verse in the second sequence below for reflecting the

spirit of the great Tang poet Tu Fu, noted for his keen observation of beauty in the natural world.¹⁸

It was their expression of these values through their work that subtly but forcefully contested the worth of *haikai* poets they considered inferior and through which they laid claim to a legitimate tradition of *haikai* that could be traced back to Bashō.

Peaches and Plums includes two representative sequences of Buson's *haikai* linked-verse composed with Kitō. Notably, it differs from the usual sequences in their process of composition. A distinctive characteristic of *haikai* linked-verse lies in the performative nature of the sessions, called *za*, at which the participants gathered and spontaneously composed verses. However, Buson and Kitō completed these sequences over the course of several months through the exchange of letters. According to Kitō, when Buson was in his sixties, he declared: "I have not yet composed satisfactory sequences of *haikai* linked-verses."¹⁹ Intending to produce the best sequences in his career as a *haikai* poet, he chose Kitō as his sole partner and these two poets frequently corresponded, seeking the most appropriate poetic links for their work. In total, Buson and Kitō spent about eight months on the project, beginning in the third month and completing the two sequences in the eleventh month of 1780.²⁰ These efforts clearly demonstrate Buson's dedication to the goal of producing good *haikai* linked-verse, even going to the extreme of overriding the fundamental emphasis linked verse placed on creative inspiration demonstrated during spontaneous linked verse sessions (*za*). His persistent work on the *Peaches and Plums* sequences resulted in some of his greatest work in the genre.

The first sequence begins with a starting verse or *hokku* which offers a close-up description of scattered peony petals, moon-lit at dawn. The first six verses demonstrate several characteristics of the two poets' *haikai* linked verse; their emphasis on painterly quality and quiet reflection, appreciation of natural beauty, Chinese and Japanese classical culture and mysteriousness:

¹⁸ See Yajima, p. 179.

¹⁹ See Ōiso, pp. 104-105.

²⁰ See Kakeishi Kōji, "Momo sumomo ron" in *Buson Issa, Nihon bungaku sōsho* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1975), p. 145.

¹⁷ The fact that Buson became a *haikai* master in his fifties indicates that Buson did not consider *haikai* as the source of his income.

1. *botan chirite uchikasanariu nisanben*

The peony has scattered.
Two or three petals
lie on each other. (Buson)²¹

2. *uzuki hatsuka no ariake no kage*

Moon light at dawn
on the twentieth day of the fourth month. (Kitō)

3. *suwabikite okina ya kado o hirakuran*

Coughing,
an old man
will open a gate.
(Kitō)

4. *muko no erabi ni kitsuru hengue*

A ghost came
to choose a groom.
(Buson)

5. *toshi furishi chimata no enoki ono irete*

An aged hackberry
on a street
being cut by an axe.
(Buson)

6. *hyakuri no rikuchi tomari sadamezu*

Vast continent of one hundred miles,
cannot determine where to stop.
(Kitō)

The starting verse reveals Buson's painterly eye capturing the beauty of the scattered petals of a peony. As the peony is known by another name, "twenty-day flower," the word "twentieth-day" in the second verse links to it.²² Verse Three adds a place and a persona to Verse Two, introducing the image of the house--possibly an aristocrat's –

with an old servant opening a gate early in the morning. Then, Verse Four introduces the image of a ghost, linking to the atmosphere of the old house in the previous verse. The curse of the old tree in Verse Five is linked to the ghost in Verse Four. Finally, Verse Six recasts the scene in Verse Five as one encountered during travel, expanding the horizon into the distance.

The first two verses of this sequence show typical *bunjin* appreciation of natural beauty in a quiet moment of life. Verse Three presents images of the remote court culture, while the phrase 'one hundred miles' in verse six introduces an imagined Chinese setting. All of these verses show Buson and Kitō's attachment to classical culture. Also, the mysterious world of ghosts evoked in Verse Four reveals his *bunjin* ideal of escaping into the past or into a mysterious world.

The following verses, Nineteen and Twenty, are more examples of the *bunjin*'s nostalgia for the court culture of the past.

19. *Noto dono no tsuruoto kasum tookara ni*

Weak sound of bow
by the Governor of Noto,
hazy in the distance.
(Buson)

20. *Hakase hisomite/ toki o uranau*

Astrologer prophesies the time
in the hidden place.
(Kitō)

Verse Nineteen presents the image of Taira no Noritsune, the Governor of Noto of the Taira clan who perished in the battle at Dannoura in 1185.²³ During the Heian period, there was a ritual for expelling evil spirits by playing the stringed bow, hence the link to an astrologer of the central government of the time.²⁴

The second sequence begins with a description of a cold winter night.

²¹ Translations are by the author.

²² See *Buson renku kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Shōwa joshi daigaku renku kenkyūkai, 1962), p. 349.

²³ See *Buson shū, Issa shū* vol. 58 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1957), p. 243.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 243-244.

1. *Fuyukodachi tuki kotsuzui ni iru yo kana*

Winter grove of trees,
moonlight enters
into bones at night.
(Kitō)

2. *Kono ku rōto ga samuki harawata*

This verse reflects
the poetic spirit of old Tu Fu.
(Buson)

3. *Gori ni issha kashikoki shisha o negiraite*

A rest place
at every fifth mile
rewards the service of the noble envoy.
(Buson)

The use of the Chinese compound, *kotsuzui* (bone marrow), evokes the world of Chinese poetry, which is taken up in verse two by a reference to the Tang poet Tu Fu, whose poetry often dwelt on hardship and poverty in life.²⁵ Verse three links Tu Fu to the image of the arrival of a noble envoy, which custom required be welcomed by the composition of poetry.²⁶ The beginning of the sequence clearly articulates the knowledge of Chinese poetry and culture shared by Buson and Kitō.

The following verses, Eleven to Fourteen of this sequence, present another example of the *bunjin* ideal of escaping from the mundane to a mysterious world or into the past.

11. *Megitsune no fukaki urami o mikaerite*

A female fox
looks back
in deep hatred.
(Buson)

12. *Negao ni kakaru bin no fukudami*

Scattered hair
on a sleeping face.
(Kitō)

13. *Itooshito kawarite uta o yominu ran*

Feeling pitiful,
I composed a verse
for the one in love.
(Buson)

14. *Defune tsurenaya oite fuku aki*

A departing ship,
how cruel
the autumn wind.
(Kitō)

The words ‘hatred of a fox’ in Verse Eleven are transposed to the idea of the hatred of love in Verse Twelve, which presents the image of a woman suffering from the pains of love. Verse Thirteen then adds the image of a person who pities her and composes her a poem. Verse Fourteen links the person composing a love poem to the image of a departing ship that cruelly carries away the beloved. The whole section creates a dreamy, storybook atmosphere.

Based on the popular folk belief that a fox can transfigure itself into a woman and seduce humans, the image of a fox in Verse Eleven creates a mysterious atmosphere that is enhanced by the image of a woman’s tossed hair in Verse Twelve.²⁷ The custom of sending a poem during courtship in Verse Thirteen then suggests the identity of the woman – a lady of the ancient court. These verses clearly show Buson and Kito’s knowledge of court culture as well as their *bunjin* ideal of escape from reality into the romantic world of the court past.

Verses Thirty-one to Thirty-three demonstrate *bunjin* characteristics similar to those noted above.

31. *Aogi mite hitonaki kuruma susamajiki*

Gazing up.
An empty ox-drawn cart,
disheartening.
(Buson)

²⁵ See *Buson renku kenkyū*, p. 363.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 364.

²⁷ See *Buson renku kenkyū*, p. 368

32. *Aizu no tsubute imaya utsurashi*

Now they seem to shoot
pebbles for a signal.
(Kitō)

33. *Soifushi ni asura ga nemuri ukagaitsu*

I watch ashura's sleep
lying down beside him.
(Buson)

Verse Thirty-one describes an ox-cart, evoking the aristocratic society depicted in *The Tale of Genji*. Verse Thirty-two focuses on “a deserted ox-drawn cart” and suggests a plot to abduct someone with it. The sound of pebbles being thrown is thus meant to refer to the idea of signaling the onset of a secret mission. Finally, in Verse Thirty-three, the abducted woman of the previous verse is seen as attempting to escape from her abductor, a fierce-looking man who looked like an ashura. The ashura, a god of ancient India with warring nature, is considered the enemy of gods and placed below human beings in the Buddhist system of transmigration through the six realms. The world created in the verses is fantastic and unreal, and tinged with exoticism.

Examination of these representative sequences by Buson and Kitō shows that they often depicted exotic worlds beyond the mundane. Based on their shared knowledge of Chinese and Japanese classics, they let themselves escape to a romanticized world of the aristocratic society of the Japanese past or to a remote China where they never had been. A ghost and a fox play important roles in evoking a eerie, uncanny atmosphere, allowing them to leap into yet another world of mystery. Their choice of favoring the world beyond human affairs and living reality demonstrates their shared values as *bunjin*, that is, to live above the mundane. Thus, Buson and Kitō, who participated in *bunjin* discourse, reinforced it through their composition of *haikai* linked-verse.

Conclusion

The collaboration between Buson and Kitō included the opportunities that Buson provided for Kitō to edit the Yahantei school's anthologies; Buson also wrote prefaces to endorse his work.

Buson's collaborations with Kitō eventually helped the younger poet to establish himself as an independent *haikai* poet. Kitō's editorial work and his crucial assistance with the sales of Buson's painting helped the master poet-painter keep his *haikai* poetry free of the temptation to acquiesce to market forces. Both Buson and Kitō also increased symbolic and cultural capital by publishing anthologies together.

The examination of sequences of *haikai* linked-verse by Buson and Kitō demonstrates their common grounding as *haikai* poets and the ideals they espoused as they competed for superior status with other *haikai* groups. Not only was their understanding of the linked verse genre itself, and of Japanese and Chinese classics important, but their *bunjin* values and beliefs also joined the two poets and mediated their work. It is apparent that they also produced these works based on their previously acquired knowledge of *haikai* linked-verse-part of their cultural capital – derived from their association with Bashō.

Once Buson and Kitō entered the highly competitive literary field, they could not escape from the forces of this field; thus, their positions necessitated the production of various works. Collaboration was central to their cultural production and through this collaboration, Buson and Kitō mutually enhanced the various kinds of capital that consequently helped them maintain or advance their positions in the field.