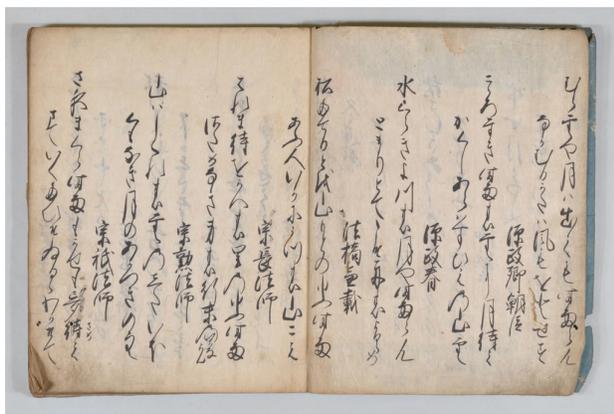


Renga by Sasaki Dōyo: Selected from the Tsukubashū (Tsukuba Anthology)

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Page from Tsukubashū (1356-57), 1804 edition, Toyama City Public Library.

The Tsukubashū (1356-57), or Tsukuba Anthology, was the first of two official collections of medieval linked verse (renga) modeled on the structural and thematic format of the seventeen imperial waka anthologies compiled between 905 and 1349.¹ The Tsukubashū was initially compiled by the court poet Nijō Yoshimoto (1320-88) in 1356 without an imperial mandate. In the following year, however, it was recognized as a quasi-imperial anthology through the mediation of warrior and lay monk Sasaki Dōyo (1295?-1373).

The 2,149 pairings of renga verses in the Tsukubashū are arranged in twenty maki, or scrolls, grouped topically in sections dedicated to the four seasons, religion, love, travel, miscellaneous, and so forth, roughly following

the manner of the imperial waka anthologies. Most of the anthology's verses are presented as single pairs in two lines, many of them excerpted from longer sequences of, for example, hyakuin (hundred-verse sequences composed collaboratively by two or more poets), senku renga (thousand-verse sequences, also collaboratively composed), or kusari renga (literally, "chain-linked poetry").² Only the poet of the second line (the tsukeku) in these pairs is identified. In so doing, the anthology places greater importance on the deliberate act of linking, that is to say, in finding the "life" of renga in the linkage and celebrating the distinct manner in which a poet responds to the imagery, sound, rhythm, mood, and literary allusions of the preceding verse.



Portrait of Sasaki Dōyo, Artist Unknown, 1366, Colors on Silk, Kyoto National Museum.

Sasaki Dōyo is represented in the *Tsukubashū* by 81 links. This makes him the fourth best represented renga poet after Kyūsei (also pronounced Gusai; 1283-1376?, with 127 links), Prince Son'in (Kajii no Miya; 1306-59, with 90 links), and Nijō Yoshimoto (1320-88, with 87 links). Thus he was the most important among the warrior-poets.

Sasaki's prominence as a poet in the *Tsukubashū* undeniably reflected his political influence. As a top military leader and trusted advisor in the Ashikaga Shogunate, he also had connections at Emperor Go-Daigo's (1288-1339) court and at powerful temples. And he was a cultural leader whose influence extended beyond the world of poetry to the spheres of tea, incense blending, and flower arrangement. Sasaki attended renga parties given by Son'in and Nijō Yoshimoto, among others; and he studied renga with Kyūsei, who was also Nijō Yoshimoto's teacher. In the late 1340s and early 1350s, he hosted a monthly renga party at his home. In other words, while his role in securing imperial recognition for the *Tsukubashū* may have played a part in the inclusion of so many of his links in the anthology, the selections appear to be justified by their conceptual briskness, aesthetic refinement, and emotive depth.

The following are Dōyo's renga from the first six volumes of the *Tsukubashū*, progressing through the seasons from early spring to late winter. The first line of each linked pair represents the *maeku* of an unidentified poet, and the second line represents Dōyo's *tsukeku*.³ It should be noted that renga links are normally written and printed in single lines in Japanese. In order to indicate the alternating long and short groupings of 5/7/5 and 7/7 syllables, the 5/7/5 groupings are translated here in three lines of English, and the 7/7 syllabic groupings in two lines.

ura no haru to ya nami ni hana saku
 6 tōyama wa kasumi nimo nari yuki ni mie
 spring on the shore as they say
 on waves flowers bloom
 distant mountains
 turn into haze too
 though looking like snow—⁴

kareki to mishi ni hana no saku haru
 36 ume-ga-e no sakari no hodo wa ha mo nakute
 a withered tree, I thought
 but flowers bloom in spring
 a plum branch
 while at peak

- has no leaves—⁵
- 98 sato made kane o okuru yamakaze
tou hito no nagori mo hana no yūbe nite
to the village a mountain wind
sends the bell's sound
visitors are
missed now in
flowers' evening⁶
- 122 yoso yori mo maki no shitamichi saki kurete
hana ni arasou yama no ha no tsuki
sooner than elsewhere
the path beneath the cypresses
darkens first
on flowers rivaling
the moon over the mountain ridge⁷
- 205 ha o kauru made naku wa uguisu
ki to ki to no narabite shigeru natsuyama ni
wing to wing
sing warblers
in a summer mountain
where tree by tree foliage grows densely⁸
- 240 Nojima ni kakaru nami no shitakusa
himeyuri no mietsu kakuretsu saku hana ni
grass under waves
lapping at Field Island
at princess-lily
flowers that bloom
now seen, now hidden⁹
- 291 naniyue no waga omoi zo to toishi toki
aki wa yūgure kaze wa ogi no ha
when someone asked
why
I brood
autumn: at evening dusk
wind through the blades of reeds¹⁰
- 327 tsuki ni koso sonata no yama mo shirarekere
Fuji narikeri na aki no shirayuki
by this moonlight alone
the mountain beyond
can be recognized
it's Mount Fuji indeed
—white snow in autumn¹¹
- 339 Yūbe kasanete aki ya yukuran
tsuki izuru yama wa yama yori nao tōshi
evening—and once again
is autumn departing?
the moon rises
from a mountain yet farther than
this mountain¹²
- 370 karigane samushi kumo no yosooi
yama no ha wa tsuki no konata ni mazu mieta
wild geese sound cold
the clouds' appearance
mountain ridge:
on this side the moon
first comes in sight—¹³
- 383 sumika hitotsu ni kokoro sadamezu
shiba no to no tsuki wa ko no ma ni kage wakete
I do not set my mind
on a single abode
moon over brushwood door
between tree and tree
divides its light—¹⁴
- 395 furiwaketaru wa yama no murasame
ukigumo no ikutabi tsuki ni chigauran
showering here but not there
autumn rain in the mountains
floating clouds
how many times do they
cross the moon?¹⁵
- 405 ukigumo ni koso kaze wa miekere
sora wa tsuki yamamoto wa nao yūbe nite
by floating clouds
alone the wind is seen
in the sky, the moon
at the base of the mountains it still
remains evening¹⁶
- 432 koromo ni otsuru namida ikutsura
yuku kari no koe yori kazu wa sukunakute
tears falling onto my robe
how many drops I know not
journeying wild geese,
their number smaller
than their voices—¹⁷
- 498 yuki o nokosu wa nao ura no nami
shiohi yori nagaruru kawa no usugōri
still snow
waves of ebbside

lap the shore to greet
ice-coated rivulets¹⁸

519 kariba no tori no otsuru fuyukusa
 shimo kakaru matsu no shitashiba ha o tarete
 birds in the hunting grounds
 fall to winter grass
 brushwood
 under a frost-covered pine
 leaves drooping—¹⁹

kariba no kiji no ono ga naku koe

562 katayama no yuki no shirataka te ni suete
 pheasants in the hunting grounds
 each of their calls distinctive
 snow-capped mountain beyond the field,
 a white falcon
 set on my hand—²⁰

The source text is the Tsukubashū (Tsukuba Anthology), 1356-57 in *Nihon koten zensho* (Complete Collection of Japanese Classical Literature), vols. 119 and 120, ed. Fukui Kyūzō and published by Asahi Shinbunsha, 1948 and 1951.

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Notes

¹ *Waka* literally means “Japanese poetry,” but in the premodern era the term generally referenced thirty-one syllable poems (typically subdivided into a rhythmic pattern of 5/7/5/7/7) in native Japanese (as opposed to Chinese or Sino-Japanese). After the *Tsukubashū*, an additional four imperial, and one quasi-imperial, anthologies of *waka* were compiled to bring the total of official *waka* anthologies to twenty-two. The second (and last) official collection of *renga* modeled on the imperial *waka* anthologies, *Shinsen Tsukubashū* (Newly Compiled Tsukuba Anthology) was compiled in 1495. *Renga*, like *waka*, was composed in Japanese and based on the thirty-one syllable form, except that one person composed the first three rhythmic groupings of 5/7/5 syllables (called *maeku*, or “preceding verse”), and someone else composed the next two groupings of 7/7 syllables (the *tsukeku*, or “following verse”). The two poets (or any additional poets) would alternate throughout the sequence, which could run anywhere from 36 to 1000 links. *Renga* sequences were sometimes composed at, and dedicated to, shrines, while at other times they were composed as simultaneously collaborative and competitive entertainment at parties. It is not only the collaborative nature of *renga* that differentiates it from *waka*, however. As an extension of the communal process of composition, the act of linking to someone else’s aesthetic expression meant the second poet had the option either of attempting to harmonize with the *maeku*, or of highlighting some kind of contrast, whether through wordplay, a reference to a canonical poetic expression, a chronological shift, or other device.

² Notably, Scrolls 19 and 20 contain some variations. For instance, there are two examples of ten verses, all responding to the identical starting verse; Japanese-Chinese *renga* in which a Japanese line follows a Chinese line; single links and single starting verses (*hokku*, which, as the opening lines of a sequence, were required to celebrate the occasion by a reference to the season) independent of what may have preceded or followed.

³ The numbers attached to Dōyo’s links represent the numbering in the Asahi Shinbunsha edition of the *Tsukubashū*.

⁴ The preceding link recalls wave blossoms. The conceit comes from a *Kokinshū wakashū* (Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times, the very first imperial *waka* anthology, compiled in 905) poem celebrating waves breaking out between cracks of ice on a lake as the first flowers of spring bloom. To waves in the lake, Dōyo attaches snow on distant mountains. Haze is associated with spring.

⁵ When spring comes, a bare tree that seemed dead blooms. Plum flowers bloom before their leaves emerge.

⁶ An evening bell tolls at a distant mountain temple. Carried by the wind blowing from the mountain, the sound reaches a village that the poet imagines, or perhaps that he recalls once visiting when the temple bell rang. Dōyo switches the viewpoint to the mountain temple where people visit its cherry blossoms. At dusk they leave, and at flower's dusk (when the blossoms fall) no more visitors appear. The mountain temple is lonely at dusk, particularly after the cherry blossom season.

⁷ The path under *maki* (literally, “genuine tree,” such as cedar or cypress) darkens first while the evening sun still lingers elsewhere. Dōyo evokes a spring evening scene in a cypress grove. Cherry blossoms that mingle with cypresses here and there are light, catching the moon. It is as if the moon is trying to fight the dusk by lighting up the cherry blossoms.

⁸ So many voices of mountain warblers are heard, now here and now there, that the poet imagines how they may be flying with wings touching. Mountain warblers are spring birds, but Dōyo switches to a summer scene. As wings overlay wings, trees stand side by side, their foliage thick.

⁹ Nojima (Field Island) is a scenic headland on northwestern Awaji. As waves wash over the shore, the grass hides underwater and then reappears. “Princess-lilies,” or mountain lilies, are yellow or orange in color and grow in mountainous areas in southern Japan. As in poem 1500 of the poetic anthology *Man'yōshū* a massive, non-imperial anthology of over 4500 *waka* compiled in 759), the mountain lily is associated with a young woman’s hidden longing. It blooms in the mountains amidst tall summer grass, occasionally revealing itself when the wind blows.

¹⁰ One of Dōyo’s best. His answer to the *maeku*, clear and rhythmic, is that he is saddened by the autumn evening and is attending to the sound of the wind blowing through the blades of reeds. It is also a general statement that echoes the style of the opening passage of Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi* (Pillow Book, late tenth century): the most moving hour in autumn is dusk, and the most moving of all winds is the melancholy one blowing through reed blades.

¹¹ Dōyo takes the moon of the *maeku* to be a fall moon, the mountain to be the snow-capped Fuji. He also echoes the sound patterns of the previous verse: *shirarekere* in *shirayuki* and *narikeri*. Finally, his verse resonates with the dramatic gesture of the prior one in the dynamic expression, *Fuji narikeri na*, which conveys affirmation, realization, and self-persuasion.

¹² The previous verse laments that autumn is *once again* departing. Evening is a melancholy time, but a late fall evening is *even more melancholy*. To the word *kasanete* in the original (folding over, doubled, yet again) Dōyo responds with the repetition of the word *yama*, mountain. He imagines a lonely autumnal mountain where the poet is. The moon rises over a yet farther mountain. The poem suggests loneliness beyond loneliness, and mountains beyond mountains.

¹³ The cry of wild geese migrating from the north heightens the poet’s sense of the chill in the air. He looks up to see the geese and finds the late autumn clouds that signal the coming of winter. Picking up the sound of the wild geese, Dōyo responds with its visual counterpart: the moonlit peak of a mountain. Dōyo’s link generates a mood of relatively lighthearted intimacy, as he switches from a distant scene in the sky to here, where we sit with him enjoying *renga*. Wild geese (*kari*, *kari-gane*, *gan*) are associated with the autumn moon.

¹⁴ The previous verse imagines an itinerant monk who refrains from, or tries to avoid,

becoming attached to worldly phenomena, including settling in one place. Dōyo responds with the brushwood door of a mountain hut, which is the monk's temporary abode, and the moon that does not favor any single tree.

¹⁵ From a thousand-verse sequence hosted by Prince Kajii at Kitano Shrine. The previous verse is about a whimsical mountain shower in autumn that rains down only in certain places. Dōyo interprets it to be due to rain clouds that float one after another across the moon.

¹⁶ Clouds float on wind. Looking at clouds, one knows which way the wind blows. Dōyo takes this to describe an evening sky. The moon is already up in the sky, but at the foot of the mountain twilight still lingers.

¹⁷ The previous link is about the endless sorrow of autumn. An indeterminate number of tears have fallen on the sleeve of the poet's robe. *Ikutsura* can mean "how many drops I don't know" or "a number of drops." Dōyo responds to this with the number of geese. He hears the loud cries of geese and imagines a large host of them. On looking up, he sees fewer geese than their voices suggest. Ingeniously, this makes us think that, in the previous link, the sorrow was also deeper than the number of teardrops.

¹⁸ The white caps of the waves recall the snow. The snow still remains in late winter, although elsewhere there are hints of spring's arrival. Dōyo conjures up ice-crusting streams forming as the tide ebbs and the river flowing into the sea follows the ebbing tide onto the sand. Low tide is particularly associated in *waka* convention with early spring.

¹⁹ Hunters armed with bows and arrows used falcons to frighten other birds into revealing themselves in the hunting grounds. Because the *tsukeku* introduces a winter scene, Dōyo brings in frost. As a bird falls from the sky, brushwood hangs its frost-covered leaves under a likewise frosty pine. Since leaves (*ha*) and wings (*ha, hane*) are homonyms in Japanese, *ha o tarete* in Dōyo's line, meaning "hanging leaves," suggests "hanging or drooping wings."

²⁰ From a thousand-verse sequence composed at Dōyo's house in the third lunar month of the fifth year of Bunna (1356). The plurality in the *maeku* is contrasted by Dōyo's lone mountain in the distance and a single falcon resting on the poetic persona's wrist. "Snow-capped mountain" is introductory to "white falcon," and "snow" works both to characterize the mountain peaks as covered in snow (*katayama no yuki*) and as a descriptor of the falcon's white-as-snow feathers (*yuki no shirataka*). *Katayama* is a scene in which there is a mountain adjacent to a field. Pheasants were often the objects of falconry.