

Yamabato: Aizu Yaichi's "Preface" and Tanka Poems
on the Death of His Adopted Daughter

*Mountain Doves*¹

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Preface

Kiiko, whose family name was formerly Takahashi, came to my house when she was twenty years old.² She became my adopted daughter.³ Managing the household of a poor scholar and doing the cooking and other chores by herself were quite difficult tasks. Somehow she endured, somehow bore up for fourteen years. Everyone who frequented my house during those many years recognized how much she did to enable me to concentrate on my studies. From the very first, her health was delicate, and still, still, those many times when I myself was seriously ill, she tended me until, at last, fatigue was the cause of her own sickness. This spring she lay ill in bed. All of a sudden one night, my house was destroyed by fire in an air raid and we barely escaped death. Together we fled to Echigo where we found shelter in Nishijo Village⁴ with the Tango family. Yet it was not long before Kiiko's illness advanced unimpeded, so I left the Tango home and with Kiiko moved into the Kannondo Temple at the edge of the village.⁵ It was at this temple that one of the Tango ancestors became a bonze and there spent the remaining years of his life.⁶ It still retained traces of the tasteful and refined structure that it had been at the time of its foundation, but after generations of neglect, its windows were blocked by overgrown bushes and weeds, pale tombstones visible in the shadows of oppressive trees surrounding it. Although it looked quite desolate, we moved here in order to appreciate the tranquility of nature and to isolate ourselves from things human.

With Japan in a state of turmoil, I could not ask anyone to help me, and with food and medicine in short supply, I did all I could in my clumsy and inadequate way to nurse Kiiko and even to cook for her. But at long last in the full light of day on the tenth of July, she slept her final sleep.⁷

Kiiko usually liked art and science, but she hated injustice and impurity. Even at the very last stages of her life, she persisted and did not lose her clear and pure vision. During this crucial period, transportation facilities were so unreliable that hardly any of Kiiko's relatives and acquaintances could come to her bedside to show their sympathy for her. I alone remained by her deathbed, and when I thought of the intense loneliness in her innermost heart, I could not prevent my tears from falling frequently.

Finally with the help of neighbors, we carried Kiiko's lifeless body to the outdoor crematorium where her body was reduced to ashes.⁸ The following morning I went alone to the site, gathered her bones, and returned. Since the priest of the village temple had been called to military service,⁹ I had no other recourse than to ask a fledgling nun from a nearby village to come to perform the funeral service.¹⁰ She could only have been a little more than ten years old. She barely recited one chapter from the *Shushogi*,¹¹ spelling out each word, and then left at once.

Thereupon I selected Kiiko's posthumous Buddhist name and conferred it on her: Sogetsureikoshinnyo.¹² My family graveyard is in Zuikoji Temple on Nishibori Street in the city of Niigata, but the city is now in a state of turmoil, fearful that at any moment it will be bombed.¹³ I will wait for some future time when peace is restored, and then I will carry Kiiko's ashes and place them in my family's tomb. Already I am ageing, and the conclusion of the war is as yet unknown. All I can do now is set down this preface to my series of poems.

August, Showa 20 (1945)

Notes on "Preface":

1. This series of poems is an elegy dedicated to the memory of Aizu's adopted daughter Kiiiko (1912-1945). The mountain doves in the poem are inseparably associated with her last days. She liked the songs of these birds, and she was consoled on her deathbed in her native prefecture (*Niigata-ken*) by their songs. She breathed her last hearing the singing of the mountain doves. Aizu even imagines Kiiiko's going her way alone in the world after death and hearing these songs. This is why Aizu used the word mountain doves for his title.

In the Japanese literary tradition, flowers and trees have frequently been used as symbols for various kinds of human beings, but usually birds were not. This may be related to the fact that the Japanese were an agricultural people and many birds were regarded as vermin, as is shown in the New Year tradition called "tori-oi" (bird-chasing). It is true that nowadays, birds, including doves, are treated as symbols, but this tradition is a result of Western influences.

2. Aizu was then living in Tokyo.

3. Aizu adopted Kiiiko in February 1944, the year before she died. Aizu's younger brother married Kiiiko's eldest sister to form the basis of the connection between the two families. Later, in 1949, Aizu adopted another daughter, Ranko Nakayama. Ranko was a second cousin to Aizu. When Aizu was ill in 1956 and on his deathbed, her father was the doctor who tended the poet.

4. Nishijo Village is now part of *Nakajo-machi* in Niigata Prefecture.

5. Apparently the Kannondo had no real incumbent. Probably it was built as a house for the retired landowner, though the

building itself was a kind of temple dedicated to the Kannon. The question is open as to why Aizu went to this isolated temple. We speculate that because Kiiko had tuberculosis, her staying in the Tango family was a source of anxiety since the Japanese felt uncomfortable around anyone with tuberculosis, for which there was no real cure at that time. Probably out of consideration for the Tango family, Aizu isolated himself with Kiiko at this temple. The Kannondo has been removed from its grounds, its pillars and its 100 figurines of the Kannon now at Taisoji Temple close by.

Aizu and Kiiko moved to the Kannondo on July 3, 1945. From Aizu's diary entry, July 3, 1945: "The sky looked as if it was threatening to rain. Giving Kiiko a lift on a cart, we moved to the Kannondo. Going back and forth seven times with the cart until we finally finished moving. It was dusk, and there was no time to prepare supper. So we went without it.

"Quite a few rooms with paperless *shoji* screens, and only one electric lamp in the house.

"Kiiko's health was failing rapidly. Advised her on the preparations for enduring our life here."

See *The Complete Works of Yaichi Aizu*, XI (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1982), 34.

From Kiiko's diary entry, July 4, 1945: "Our meal under the bulb of 5 candle power is lonely. It's damp all over the house because of the rain, and the repapering of the *shoji* screens isn't finished, so the dampness creeps into the rooms quite easily. . . very disagreeable." (Translated by permission of Mr. Yoshio Takahashi, nephew to Yaichi Aizu)

6. An ancestor of the Tango family shaved his head and became a bonze. The Tango family was a large landowner family, and one head of the family became a bonze after retiring as head of the family. That he shaved his hair means that he not only became a believer in Buddhism but decided to pass his remaining days as a priest would. It seems this ancestor built a temple

dedicated to Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy in Buddhism, and became the incumbent.

7. Kiiko died at 4 p.m. on July 10, 1945. Aizu uses the special word "hakuchu," which means "daytime" or "in broad daylight." Our translation of "in the full light of day" perhaps offers the surprise and importance Aizu felt in using this word. The Japanese are a superstitious people, believing that deaths occur at night during the ebb tide; births occur during the full tide. So Aizu must have been quite surprised that Kiiko died during the day.
8. Two neighbors apparently helped Aizu carry Kiiko's body to a hand-pulled cart, which the men pulled to the crematorium. See the *Complete Works of Yaichi Aizu, op cit.*, Aizu's diary entry, July 11, 1945, XI, 36.
9. On the day the translators visited Taisoji Temple, which contains the one hundred small statuettes of the Goddess of Mercy (the Kannon in Buddhism) preserved from the Kannondo, they met the priest mentioned in the "Preface." He is now 89 years old. He told the translators he was working at a hospital in Maizuru during the war after he left the temple to do wartime duty.
10. The nun's name is Teijo Watanabe. When the translators met her at the 50th Memorial Service for Kiiko on July 10, 1994, they learned from Nun Watanabe that she was perhaps twenty or twenty-one at the time of the "Preface." In 1994, she is 71 years old. She said she has always looked younger than she actually is.
11. The *Shushogi* is a kind of compendium used in Zen temples belonging to the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism. The book contains a summary of Buddhist teachings and various prayers and some

excerpts from sutras. The book itself is not a sutra, for it was compiled in Japan, but recently it is frequently recited instead of sutras, sutras taking a long time to recite.

12. When most Japanese die, they are given posthumous Buddhist names. Such names are engraved on the tombs. There are ranks in these Buddhist names. People of high position are given long names. First come the names of the posthumous abodes, then the Buddhist names, and at the end come words indicating the sex of the deceased. The longer the name, the higher the position. Words related to the gender of the deceased are Daikoji, Koji, and Shinshi for males; names for females are Daishi and Shinnyo. People of high rank or great merit are given names for their abodes in the Buddhist paradise—Inden or In, the former for special people. Common people are given In or no such names of abodes. In Kiiko's case the "In" was omitted, probably from modesty. Also the last title was Shinnyo, not Daishi. Her being unmarried was probably the reason for this title.

Today, apparently, the length and rank of Buddhist names depend on the amount of funeral fees given to the priest.

In Kiiko's case, "sogetsu" (white moon) and "reiko" (cold light) were characters chosen for her. Buddhist names usually contain a character from the deceased person's name or some word expressing the person's personality. Kiiko's chosen name is literary, and it shows Kiiko's reserved modesty.

13. The United States scattered leaflets on Niigata City warning the citizens that the city was one of the targets for the A-bomb attack. As a result, the authorities ordered evacuation of the city.

#1

how faint her voice
when she said, "More painful
than usual this morning,"
and to those few words,
not a single response could I give

#2

in the silence
of this temple
echoing with the songs of mountain doves,
are you so very soon about to pass away
as if going to sleep?

#3

in this unfamiliar village
where no friends of yours abide,
how many days ill in bed
have you heard these solitary songs
of mountain doves?

#4

“for a while,” I said,
“rest quietly”—
oh how can that sleep
be perpetual,
be eternal?

#5

to alleviate your illness,
did I not take you
to your native province
where the winds blow
through the paddy fields?

#6

made gaunt by illness,
your hand I clasp—
oh, I cannot forget
how we fled from our burning house
during that evil conflagration!

#7

you spent your days
waiting on me, serving me,
this me who shut myself up reading
in my house—
ah, your entire life was steeped in sadness!

#8

how lonely
it was to reside
in my house
during your youthful days
where the light of the real was so scant

#9

you protected
this proud me,
this pathetic me who was as proud
as if no one else existed
in the world!

#10

how often
when I was ill
did you tend me with care—
had you not been with me,
no longer would I have been in this world

#11

this invalid me
you tended with care,
and still, still,
your limited energy in your delicate frame,
all exhausted, all used up

#12

my tears cannot help
but fall
when I think of the brief
brief life
you devoted to me

#13

how all of them
feared me,
spoke out of deference to me,
and yet how candid your words to me,
how fresh, how stirring!

#14

in the way
you poured and served
even a single cup of tea,
your entire mind, entire spirit,
given to the task

#15

had you been born
a male,
you might have devoted
all your energies
to carving out a path only for you

#16

someday
when the young people
who knew you
gather round me,
it will be of you they will speak

#17

when these very young
who so often came to my house
will surely pass on to greater things,
let your soul
observe them, look down on them

#18

mountain doves
still come and sing
all day long
even though the one who went to sleep hearing them
is no longer in this world

#19

even at the distant end
of fields in the other-world
where there is no light,
you can hear
the songs of these mountain doves

#20

as you travel alone
in that dark world
beyond death,
I hope you will say if a guardian of the other-world asks
that you were the comrade of Yaichi

#21

in my grief
I left the temple
and by chance under its eaves
thick with foliage
I discovered the red red blooms of the pomegranate

Notes to Poems:

#1 From Kiiko's Diary, July 4, 1945: "Although the front yard of the Kannondo looks desolate, a clump of trees to the east is very nice. Even in summertime it seems that cool breezes blow through it. But I don't know how many days are left to me. Extremely painful. . . my hands and feet look pale-green."
(Translated by permission of Mr. Yoshio Takahashi)

#5 Aizu uses the word "furusato," which means homeland or native province. Kiiko came from Niigata Prefecture, her village being in Echigo. So Aizu had brought her back to her native province.

#7 At Waseda University, Aizu liked reading works by Thomas Hardy, Washington Irving, and George Gissing. He also loved the poetry of Keats and Shelley. He translated some of the poems of Longfellow and Tennyson. Of course the *Manyoshu* (ca 759) was one of his favorite anthologies in addition to the works of Issa Kobayashi (1763-1827), Ryokan (1758-1831), and Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902).

#19 Hideo Yoshino, a disciple of Aizu, has commented on this poem: "In fact, the voice of the mountain doves is gloomy. Suffice it is to say that we can imagine that the deceased could hear the birds' cries even in another world. At the same time, we also feel as if we can hear in our world the voices of mountain doves singing in another world. Thus the mixture of images between this world and the after-world can be said to be part of the subtle charm of this tanka." See Hideo Yoshino, *Shuso Dojin Aizu Yaichi*, I (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1993), 240.

#20 From the Kamakura period (1185-1333) and beyond, the belief that there were various hells as well as a pure land paradise of the Buddha Amida became popular. For forty-nine

days after one's death, it was believed the dead passed through mountains and crossed a river before being judged by Emma, lord of the world of demons who has records of the dead showing their actions in life and determines what their reward and punishment shall be. Of course few Japanese people today believe in such an afterlife.

#21 Aizu returned from the Kannondo to the Tango family on October 26, 1945. It was 107 days after Kiiiko's death. We believe that Aizu went into mourning for one hundred days following the death of his beloved adopted daughter.

ROMAJI RENDERINGS
YAMABATO

1. itonokite/kesa o kurushi to/kasuka naru/sono hitokoto
no/sen sube zo naki
2. yamabato no/toyomosu yado no/shizumori ni/nare wa mo
yuku ka/nemuru gotoku ni
3. ai shireru/hito naki sato ni/yami fushite/ikuhi kiki ken/
yamabato no koe
4. yasuragite/shibashi ineyo to/wa ga koto no/towa no nemuri
to/na ru beki mono ka
5. itazuki o/yukite yawase to/furusato no/inada no kaze o/
tome koshi mono o
6. yami hosoru/naga te tori mochi/magatsuhi ni/moe tatsu
yado o/ideshi hi omooyu
7. fumi yomu to/tadani komoreru/waga io ni/haberite sugishi/
hitoyo kanashi mo
8. utsushiyo no/hikari tomoshimi/wakaki hi o/waga yado
ikani/sabishi kari ken
9. hitonoyo ni/hito naki gotoku/takabureru/mazushiki ware
o/mamori koshi kamo
10. ikutabi no/waga itazuki o/mamori koshi/nare nakari seba/ware
arame ya mo

11. itazuki no/ware o mamoru to/kayowa naru/naga utsusemi
o/tsukushitaru rashi
12. waga tame ni/hitoyo no chikara/tsukushitaru/naga tama no
o ni/naka zarame ya mo
13. hito mina no/habakaru ware ni/tsutsuma zaru/naga kotonoha
no/sugashi karishi ka
14. kumi idete/hito ni susumeshi/hitotsuki no/cha ni sae kome-
shi/naga kokoro kamo
15. onokogo ni/umaretari seba/hitasurani/hitotsu no michi
ni/susumi tari ken
16. ai shireru/wakabito tsudoi/itsu no hi ka/ware o kakomite/na
o kotonasa'n
17. waga yado ni/shijini toi koshi/wakabito no/nasu nakarame
ya/naga tama mo miyo
18. yamabato wa/ki naki toyomosu/hinemosu o/kikite nemureru
hito mo/ara naku ni
19. hikari naki/tokoyo no nobe no/hate nishite/nao ka kiku
ran/yamabato no koe
20. hitori yuku/yomiji no tsukasa/koto towaba/waga tomogara
to/nora mashi mono o
21. kanashimite/izureba noki no/shigeriha ni/tamatama akaki/
sekiryu no hana

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The graduation photograph of Kiiiko Takahashi, taken in 1928 when she graduated from Niigata Women's Senior High School. Reprinted from Ryoji Kumata's *Aizu Yaichi's Bokugi*, Apollon Press, Tokyo, 1969.



Prints on the cover of the private edition of *Yamabato* (*Mountain Doves*), October 17, 1945, the edition given to friends of Kiiiko on the 100-Day Buddhist Memorial Ceremony for Kiiiko.

- 12 わが ために ひとよ の ちから つくしたる なが たま の を に なか ざらめ やも
- 13 ひと みな の はばかり われ に つつま ざる なが ことのは の すがし かりしか
- 14 くみ いでて ひと に すすめし ひとつき の ちや に さへ こめし なが ところ かも
- 15 をの こと に うまれたり せば ひとすらに ひとつ の みち に すすみ たり けむ
- 16 あひ しれる わかびと つどひ いつ の ひ か われ を かこみて な を ことなきむ
- 17 わが やど に しじに とひ こし わかびと の なす なからめ や なが たま も みよ
- 18 やまばと は き なき とよもす ひねもす を ききて ねむれる ひと も あら なく に
- 19 ひかり なき とこよ の のべ の はて にして なほ か きく らむ やまばと の こゑ
- 20 ひとり ゆく よみぢ の つかさ こと とはば わが ともがら と のら まし もの を
- 21 かなしみて いづれば のきの しげりは に たまたま あかき せきりう の はな

(中央公論社版『會津八一全集』第四卷(昭和五十七年発行)二五五―二六一頁より転載)

- 1 いとのきて けきを くるし と かすか なる その ひとことの せむすべぞ なき
- 2 やまばとの とよもす やどの しづもり になれ はも ゆくか ねむる ごとくに
- 3 あひ しれる ひと なき さと に やみ ふして いくひ きき けむ やまばとの こゑ
- 4 やすらぎて しばし いねよ と わが ことの とは の ねむり と なる べきものか
- 5 いたづきを ゆきて やはせ と ふるさとの いなだの かぜをとめ こしものを
- 6 やみ ほそる なが て とり もち まがつひ にもえ たつ やどを いでしひ おもほゆ
- 7 ふみ よむ と ただに こもれる わが いほ に はべりて すぎし ひとよ かなしも
- 8 うつしよ の ひかり ともしみ わかき ひを わが やど いか に きびし かり けむ
- 9 ひとのよ に ひと なき ごとく たかぶれる まづしき われを まもり こし かも
- 10 いくたび の わが いたづきを まもり こし なれ なかり せば われ あらめ やも
- 11 いたづきの われを まもり と かよわ なる なが うつせみを つくしたる らし

しかば予ひとり側にありて衷心の寂寞を想うてしきりに流涕をとどめかねたり
やがて隣人に援けられて野外に送り茶毘に附し翌朝ひとり行きて骨を拾うて歸り來りしも村寺の僧は軍役に徴せられて内に在らざるを以て雛尼を近里より請じ來るにその年やうやく十餘歳わづかに經本をたどりて修證義の一章を讀み得て去れり
乃ちみづから戒名を撰み授けて素月冷光信女といふ予が家の墓所は新潟市西堀なる瑞光寺にあるも市は今空襲を虞れて騒然たりといへば他日の平靜を待ち携へ去りてその壙中に納めむことを期すされど予すでに老いたるに戦局の歸趨また知るべからず今はただこれを記してこの一聯の序に充つるのみ

昭和二十年八月

病勢大に進みしかば予はその邸を辭し伴ひて村端なる
觀音堂といふに移れりこは丹吳の祖先某々が剃髮して
餘生を送られしところにして今なほ數奇の遺構を偲ぶ
べきあるもその後數代の荒廢を重ね今は窓前草木深く
鎖して鬱々たる四隣の綠陰にはここかしこ蒼白き墓石
さへ數ふべくいとわびしきさまなれども閑靜にして人
事に遠きをめづべしとて來りしなり

もとよりかかる世のさまとて頼むべき人手も無く藥餌
にも乏しきを看護に炊事に予みづから迂拙の力を瘁し
たるも七月十日といふにここにして白晝遂に永き眠に
入れり

きい子は平生學藝を尙び非理と不潔とを好まず絶命に
臨みてなほ心境の明清を失はざりしに時恰も交通のた
よりあしく知る人の來りて枕頭を訪ふもの殆ど無かり

山
鳩

きい子もと高橋氏二十歳にして予が家に來り養うて子となすよく酸寒なる書生生活に堪へ薪水のことに當ること十四年内助の功多かりしはその間予が門に出入せしものの齊しく睹るところなるべしもとより蒲柳の質なりしを幾度か予の重患に侍し遂に疲勞を以て病因をなしたるが如し今春臥して痾褥に在るに當り一夜たちまち戦火を被りわづかに身一つを以て免れ予とともに越後に歸り西條村の丹吳家に寄りしが幾何もなくして