

HAIBUN (TRAVEL DIARY)

PART I: MY FORTY-YEAR JOURNEY WITH NOH, HAIKU AND RENKU

By

2007 © Sirkku M. Sky Hiltunen, Ph.D., Ed.D., RDT-BCT, ATR-BC, LPC
Master Teacher of *NohKiDo*[™] and *Therapeutic Noh Theater*[®]

Some Recollections

It is now over forty years since my journey began, a journey of bewilderment, awe, inspiration, enchantment, and learning of, about, and through Noh, haiku and renku. In 1966, I saw my very first Noh play, a Western version of *Hanjo* in the Student Theater in Helsinki, Finland. I saw my very first Japanese Noh performance in 1967 during the first ever Scandinavian Tour of Noh. The *Kyuma Hashioka Noh* troupe from Tokyo Kanze School performed *Kiku Jido* and *Aoi-No-Ue* at the Svenska Teatern in Helsinki, Finland. After the performance, some of the members of the ensemble visited our Theater College, and talked about Noh and demonstrated some dance patterns and symbolic expressions. The use of fans, the special gliding walk, and splendor of brocade costumes edged in my mind. The first Japanese Noh Theater performance left me with perplexed curiosity.

In 1972, five years later, I had an opportunity to deepen my understanding of Noh during my first trip to Japan. I managed to see several consecutive performances at the Kanze Noh Theater in Kyoto. No English translation was available. I had no idea what I was to see on stage. Yet, these performances changed my life. In Kyoto, while watching a Noh performance in May, 1972, I transcended the boundaries of language and experienced the spiritual essence of Noh:

Kyoto in spring
ancient Noh mask in profile
pine trees and cypress

woodwind and echo of steps
drumming to my consciousness.

in Noh theater
centeredness and slow pace
peace and catharsis

dynamic powers of mask
 inspiration for healing.

in Japanese Noh
 opening of the curtain
shite's masked face

transcending persona
 projections by me and him
 (Hiltunen, 1988, p. 73)

Noh actor's motion
 slow sliding feet on cypress
shite's character

mirroring the audience
 universal in me.
 (Hiltunen, 1988, p. 77)

I have since tried to get information as to what I saw then in Kyoto, but of no avail. In my first poetic *waka* reflections, I was only following the syllabic count, not its internal style. My intuitively expressed content made me acutely aware that Noh was going to be for me more than just a form of theater or performance arts. I had somehow sensed its transpersonal and transforming power and profound, even therapeutic, impact. My experiences in Kyoto brought back my excitement about masks, to which I had previously been introduced during my theater studies in the 60s. Seeing Noh in Kyoto changed my career.

After my return from Japan and England in 1973, I acquired Zeami's book *Kadensho* and began actively to develop and utilize some principles of Noh in my drama therapy, my methods of *NohKiDo*TM and *Therapeutic Noh Theater*[®]. I also continued writing *waka* and *haiku*.

It took me over twenty years from my first encounter with Noh in 1966, before I was able to make connections and find a Noh *Sensei* (Master Teacher) in Japan in 1988 and study Noh *shimai* (dance) and *utai* (chanting).

Leaving in October 2006 was to be my 6th trip to Japan. Since I visited Nagasaki Peace Park and Museum in 1988, even though this time I was going to visit Hiroshima, I opted not to visit the Peace Park and Museum there. I will remember the rest of my life

the devastating images of the effects of the atom bombs, which so graphically were documented in the video shown in the Nagasaki Peace Museum!



Oshima Sensei

During the subsequent almost twenty years and my five prior trips to Japan to study Noh, I have studied with several Noh Master Teachers. My first Sensei was from Kongoh School of Noh. My second and third Master Teachers were from the Komparu School of Noh. The second Sensei could not teach me because he was ill and thus I referred to my third Sensei. My third Noh Sensei, who was my second Komparu Sensei died quite suddenly, just a few years after I had studied with him, leaving me with a deep void. He spoke a few words in Finnish, loved Finnish culture and owned all Sibelius recordings. What a unique Master Teacher! I truly loved and respected him.

A new Master Teacher came to my life quite unexpectedly, when young female Noh Sensei came to Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania in 2006 and taught there. My latest Sensei, Kinue Oshima, is from the Kita School of Noh. It is quite unusual to have studied in so many schools of Noh, but time span and circumstances have somehow dictated the changes. Now I am very happy with the Kita School, I feel that I have found what I have been looking for, not only because of their more dynamic and even dramatic style of shimai and utai, but also because I was made feel so welcomed by them.

My Sensei's mother, Mrs. Yasuko Oshima was especially welcoming. She is a warm, generous and hospitable lady and so beautiful, not only physically, but also spiritually. She amazed me with her multi-talents and her position in the Oshima Noh family; she was not only the home maker, but more importantly the manager, promoter, coordinator and the newsletter editor of the Oshima Kita Noh Ensemble. The family Noh stage was located in their house. During the performances, she was there dressed in traditional kimono, not only as the hostess, but also taking care of the public relations and publications.



**Mrs. Yasuko Oshima
and Dr. Sky**

As for my interest and frustration in trying to express myself via traditional Japanese poetry; they went on hand in hand for decades. It was just in the late 90s when I finally liberated and accepted my voice and my different style in writing haiku in English expressing my Finnish psyche. I realized that it is of no use for me to try to emulate the minimalist style of original traditional Japanese haiku, because of the profound differences in the languages. The Japanese language is so multilayered, that the minimalist haiku is rich with several implied and suggested additional meanings. Haiku in English, especially when written in a minimalistic way, turns out not to adequately simulate its original counterpart, because the English language haiku lacks the multilayered meanings inherent in the Japanese. When the haiku in English is minimalised, most often it seems too bare bones or too anemic.

I developed the method of Haiku Meditation, which can also be used for therapy, as a form of creative arts therapy for self-healing and especially for stress reduction. Thus the essence of my haiku writing is the meditative presence and its sense awareness; to see, hear, taste, smell and touch what is. In Japan, my meditations resulted in some haiku as well as in some poetic prose.

PART II: INTERIOR ROAD TO NOH, HAIKU, AND RENKU

The Latest Journey Begins

The months and days are the travellers of eternity. The years that come and go are voyagers. Those who float away their lives on ships or who grow old leading horses are forever journeying and their homes are wherever their travels take them (Basho [Keene, Transl], 1996, p. 19).

On the eight day of the ninth month of the year of two thousand and six, I arrived at the Osaka Airport. I was met by a dear friend, Mrs. Mitsuko Kawaguchi. We traveled by bus to her house in Nara and talked and talked without realizing that we had arrived.

at friends' house
soup, pickles, fish, tofu and rice -
seasoned with love



Mr. and Mrs. Kawaguchi

What is this strange familiarity I encounter when I step on the Japanese soil? I do believe I have lived in Japan before! My heart chakra opens and my entire being fills with warmth. Somehow I feel totally at home there in spite of the language barrier. I was born in Finland from Finnish parents and, as far as I knew, from Finnish ancestors. Yet, recently my DNA revealed that I have East-Asian blood in me!



Hiroko Arioka and family in Nara, Japan

What thoughtful friends! On the ninth day of the ninth month, a surprise invitation by Mrs. Hiroko Arioka to see Noh in Kyoto, at the very same Kanze Noh stage as I saw Noh thirty four years ago and was inspired to write my first *waka*. The encounter is momentous! Memories flood my mind. I go back to my first experiences of Noh. I remember lines from the very first Noh play I encountered, namely *Hanjo*:

At the sunset hour
The clouds are massed like banners,
And my thoughts go beyond....

Each one of us too
Has a moon of enlightenment
That shines on unclouded

Though we live out our lives
Never suspecting its presence.
A jewel is stitched in our robes.
Hanjo by Zeami (Keene)

For me, in *Hanjo*, Zeami's poetically supreme style and subtle spirituality still capture, not only the poetic, but most importantly, the transpersonal essence of Noh! At Kanze Kaikan, thirty four years later, I am still in awe of Noh.

On the tenth day of the ninth month, at the Nara station, I was seen by Mrs. Kawaguchi all the way to the train. She wanted to be sure that I would not take a wrong one or miss it all together. Eventually, I came to realize that the trains in Japan are very

efficient. The English announcements are clear and make traveling quite easy, once the track and the correct train is identified. I headed to Fukuyama to begin my private studies with my new Sensei.

My studies were going to be intense. I knew that Sensei's teaching style was focused, not only on the precision of *kata* (movement patterns), but most importantly the dancer's projection and the awareness of *ki* (energy). Because Noh dance depends so much on the skill of the dancer to perfect *suriashi* or *hakobi* (the gliding walk), the exercise of will is also going to be important for proper grounding of the feet.

On the eleventh day of the ninth month my first shimai lesson in *Shura Mono Noh* (Samurai) kata. I was fortunate to have a young teacher, who would be willing to teach me what I needed. I needed new sets of kata for my *NohKiDo*TM (The Way of Spiritual Energy of Noh).

Remembering

On the eleventh day of the ninth month, my "September 11th" experience five years ago seems as distant as the miles in between Washington, DC and Fukuyama! Yet, I do remember! Then in DC I was watching the shocking and painful events unfold on a large screen in my Institute. I was calming down my staff, which panicked, especially about their children. School were closing, no phone calls could get through for several hours! The painful images of the day would be shown on and on via CNN. The stunning realization of how fragile life and circumstances are and the emotional jolt of that day were going to last for a long time.

Stretchers ready stacked...
only a few found alive;
burn victims in pain.

The Institute was closed early that day. When I was finally driving home after three o'clock in the afternoon, Washington, DC looked like a ghost town; no one on the streets, no cars, and no people!

I began to wonder about staying in the USA. I stayed. There was actually no choice; my calling, my devotion, and my love for my work left no choice. At our Institute we have built a Keiko Komatsubara Noh Stage for *Therapeutic Noh Theater*[®] practice.

The stage is dedicated to a gracious and courageous woman in a wheelchair, the late Keiko Komatsubara who suffered from muscular atrophy. Her strong will and serving spirit, made it possible for me to finally, after over 20 years of futile attempts, to make the connection and find my first Noh Sensei in Kyoto, Japan in 1988.

In nineteen hundred ninety four, for the grand opening of the Keiko Komatsubara Noh Stage at the Art and Drama Therapy Institute, Inc. (ADTI), Keiko Komatsubara's daughter flew from London, England. Many of my Japanese friends flew from Nara, Japan, and the Japanese Ambassador and his wife graced the event with their presence.

Journey Continues

The twelfth day of the ninth month.... I have to get used to the extreme politeness of people here, who could teach the art of serving to any other country or culture in the world! In America, if I go to the sale's person in a department store and inquire about an item that is not on the shelf, their automatic reply is, "If it is not on the shelf, we do not have it!"

Today in Fukuyama, I was trying to find a special filling for my ink pen. So many people tried to assist me and investigated its brand thoroughly. When they could not find it, they did not only give me a name and directions to another store, but also gave me a pen to use until I found the right refill.

On the thirteenth day of the ninth month I traveled to Hiroshima to observe lessons by my Sensei as well as her father. I was warmly received in the temple, where the lessons took place. The care taker graciously served powdered green tea and customary *okashi* (sweets). In addition, a grandson of the caretaker, who was a Buddhist monk, came to meet me because he was able to speak English. I brought up Dogen's name and we had an interesting conversation about different sects of Buddhism.

Then I headed to Miyajima Island with a friend, Ryoji Terada. The orange-red Shinto gate emerged from water greeting us.

Miyajima Shrine
a weathered stage for sacred Noh –
sand in my shoes



Ryoji Terada

When we walked there, dirt roads were lined up with stone lanterns, shrine after shrine...

ancient Noh stage
with thatched hinoki roof
ready for Okina...

In two thousand in Nara, I had finally seen Okina performance by my first Komparu Sensei. I think it was in a Buddhist Temple. I remember Okina's ritualistic donning of mask in front of the audience and dance kata which seemed ritualistically so repetitious. A veil of sacredness surrounded the performance.

Itsukushima's
empty Bugagu stage –
“Do Not Enter!” sign

My Bugagu studies in Nara; the square geometric formation of four dancers moving rigidly in unison. My Bugagu Bird costume almost did not fit to my Westerner's size. The colorful and splendid costumes with tails and peaks...

Bugagu dance
under clear autumn moon light ...
just imagine

Sumo and Noh

On the fourteenth day of the ninth month I complained to the Fukuyama Castle Hotel manager that I do not have English CNN on my TV. The next morning I received an English newspaper, *the Daily Yomiuri*, which became my lifeline! Its witty and international reports covered the globe! It even had a page-long article on Fenty, one of the Mayoral candidates in Washington, DC just a few days before the election! For my great delight I also discovered that sumo tournament was taking place in Tokyo.

in Fukuyama
reading English newspaper –
for sumo results

Sumo on TV, their weight and size does not matter; the match of minds. Both Sumo and Noh have a roof over the stage and arena to signify the sacred space.

watching sumo

rhythm of Japanese words –
refreshing beer

yield to moving mass -
opposing sumo wrestler
falls like timber

On the sixteenth day of the ninth month, an opportunity to observe a Noh rehearsal. My Master Teacher is performing the part of *Shite*, the main character of *Momiji Gari*. I see some younger male Noh actors looking at their female counterpart with some reservations. My Noh Sensei is a true pioneer and I am very pleased to be her student!

An older *Koken* (stage assistant) is giving directions and suggestions. That would not work in the Western theater! However, a *Koken* in the Noh Theater is a senior *Shite* actor. Thus his role is such a paradox; he is a stage assistant and the Master Actor.

shrilling Noh flute
a worn-out line on the center stage-
Shite's stomps

On the seventeenth day of the ninth month, the actual performances of *Jimen Koji* and *Momiji Gari* in Fukuyama Kita Nohgakudo. In Bloomsburg, PA, just before leaving to Japan, I saw on a dvd a male Master Actor, Akira Matsui, to perform in *Hawk's Well*. He as the Hawk mesmerized me with his ability to project energy while totally still for a long period of time. His *tabi* (white footwear) - covered feet became the claws of a bird, when he slowly moved them from a platform to the actual stage. His slow and deliberate kata was filled with power and presence expressing a choreography, which seemed to draw its inspiration from the spirituality of Noh as well as from subtle dynamism of Western theater.

He was the *Shite* of *Jimen Koji* in Fukuyama.

Jimen Koji
on Noh stage rescuing a child –
typhoon rain pounding

Momiji Gari was the last performance. I watched my Noh Sensei with awe. Her *Jo no mai* (slow dance) was so filled with energy. It was therapeutic to watch. Her *Jo no mai*, its motionless peace, seemed to stop time. Then suddenly she moves from *jo*

(beginning), pass *ha* (acceleration) to *kyu* (climax), to the dramatic, almost aggressive dance expressing the true nature of the noble woman, who in the last scene comes out as a demonic force, she really is! I somehow see, how My Sensei, a young woman, has to strive to become better than her young male counterparts, and she has!

Her power center was seen in between her extended open fan and pointed hand.

shrieking flute
a foot lowered forcefully –
silent stomp

My Master Teacher, in *Momiji Gari*, was displaying her mastery of the classic Noh and her pure will and the awareness of where to hold and project the energy in her movements. Her kata was well timed rhythmically and seemed perfect. Her ability to move from the slow and deliberate Jo no mai to extremely fast and dynamic kata in the end was remarkable. She has been taught masterfully by her late grandfather as well as by her father!



Oshima Sensei, her mother, her father and the writer in their home in Fukuyama



Oshima Sensei's entire family

Japanese Countryside

After the performance I went with Ryoji Terada to Kisa, to meet his wife and mother-in-law in their country home. This is actually my first visit to Japan's countryside. Ride to the country, the road has been cut through the mountain. The mountain walls on both sides close in, almost leaning over. Angst arises until I see vast rice fields next to red flower garden-edged country yards. I see manicured pines rising above fences

next to rusty car parts. From the mountain roads, I see open green valleys below and sun behind clouds.

a farm house
 “Young Energy Wanted” sign –
 endless rice fields



Terada san, with his thoughtfulness, noticed a feature about my friends Marja and Izumi Tateno on TV and taped it for me. In am in Kisa, Japan, watching the story of my friends unfold. I remember so vividly how Marja so lovingly and unceasingly cared for her celebrity husband after his aneurism and subsequent stroke. His recovery has been awesome; now he plays one-hand piano pieces in the sold-out concerts in Japan!

They were filmed partially at their summer home in Finland. It brought to mind two of Marja’s haiku poems (translated by me), which I encouraged her to write there. They sensitively reflect her journey:

keltainen lehti -
 punainen sauna rannalla
 tyhjät ikkunat

a yellow leaf -
 red sauna at lake shore
 empty windows

kuva sinessä –
 sudenkorenon siipien
 värinä

reflection in the blue –
 the wings of a dragonfly
 tremble

At a distance clouds hang heavy like misty veils over mountains. Thick bamboo forest bends over a river bank. Rain is ceasing. I see the last glow of sun set. Now clouds rise like smoke, and then a cloak of darkness.

appreciating the view
 window glass in between me –
 and the mosquitoes

At night, sleeping on futon upstairs, I hear the typhoon wind pounding and wonder about the roof... In the morning, Terada San’s mother-in-law’s country breakfast is fulfilling and delicious and I forget the night. Today forecast more rain. After typhoon

the harvested fields are flooded with water. A farmer's daughter is walking her dog in between the rice fields. I see a white crane landing.

rice fields
beaten down by typhoon -
will rise tomorrow

After typhoon, I see glittering tile roof after tile roof. The sun is out!

On the eighteenth day of the ninth month at the Midori hot springs, I found an ice-cold pool inside. First I emerged in the hot pool outside. Then I alternated sauna steam and dipped up to my neck in the cold pool. What an awesome feeling! I felt reborn. It was like my old skin was shed! No Japanese guests seemed to use the cold pool! That was the polar bear in me!

Midori hot springs -
cool outside rain mix with
children's laughter

Lime yellow unharvested rice fields spread in the midst of pale cut rice fields. Yet, it is time to celebrate harvest and see children's *Kagura*. Kagura performance is cancelled due to typhoon. I go to Kagura mask shopping. In the old countryside, narrow roads make it difficult to ride a car through. Kagura shop is closed, but Terada san does not give up. After making a few phone calls and talking to people on the road, he finds the shop keeper.

On our way back to his house, bright red crosswalk "stop" glows in the darkness and he rides on. At night, from my window, bright sun-set glow behind black mountain silhouettes, clouds rising.

Riding back to Fukuyama in between paved mountain slopes. Morning dawns. I hear cicadas' unceasing choir. Clouds edging the forest constantly reform. Unknown birds chirp. Next to large farm houses, I discover private graveyards. Riding towards rain, mountains veiled with grey.

On the twentieth day of the ninth month my last chance to visit Fukuyama Castle. Before the castle steps, I take photos of the perfectly manicured pines.

above castle grass
three orange dragonflies –
hovering

Next to a Fukuyama side walk, three white roses in full bloom, I stop to inhale.

On the twenty first day of the ninth month, my last Noh session before leaving to Tokyo.

Noh drill this morning
my mind already in Tokyo –
powdered green tea

To Tokyo

In the bullet train heading to Tokyo. Shinkansen window flashes pass endless unharvested rice fields. What a sense of peace from the soothing lime-green! Mountains surrounding industrial sites with metal structures and tile roof houses. Japan's trinity in the nutshell: spirituality, traditional artistry, and high tech. Is there any other country in the world which utilizes so completely both right and left hemispheres of the brain? The aesthetic beauty expressed in the traditional arts as well as everyday affairs and their high-tech industry and efficiency; the right brain in action side by side with the left brain.

Nozomi Shinkansen
“Mobile phones for silent mode” –
getting sleepy

A mountain tip arises above cloudy smoke of factory chimneys. Rice straws are neatly tied up in stacks to dry for burning? Looking out the window, on the passing flowering walls, the speed of the bullet train seems to accentuate. When arriving closer to Tokyo, I see modern multi-colored roofs emerging from tunnel after tunnel.

in Shinkansen
a man takes his shoes off for foot rest –
mine stay on

Arrived in my hotel in Tokyo. It was an adventure. I had been kindly given very detailed and excellent instructions as to how to get to my hotel. The directions included not only station names but also how to get to my hotel from Nakano Sakaue station. I found my hotel easily thanks to the detailed instructions!

on Tokyo streets
Westerners walk pass me -
unseeing

a black crow
 tale ruffled by the wind-
 sways on the edge

returning to the hotel
 looking for the crow on the roof –
 a leaf falling

At Sekiguchi Basho-An, Renku led by Shokan Sensei

On the twenty second of the ninth month Dr. Tadashi Kondo, Shokan Sensei, took me by train to Sekiguchi Basho–An. When I noticed the mossy stepping stones, I slowed down to embrace them with every step. In a traditional Japanese house, I met the friendly and talkative caretaker and bought my third copy of Basho’s *The Narrow Road to Oku*. I was served green tea and okashi with the history of the place. Basho’s companion Sora was born in between two rivers, Kisogawa and Nagaragawa, hence his name, So-ra, taken from the river names. I find Basho’s “Frog” poem carved in stone.

During the *renku* (linked poetry) session all accepted stanzas from Japanese were translated into English and my accepted English stanzas were translated into Japanese. So many stanzas were rejected. Later on I understood the reasons for rejection after hearing Shokan Sensei’s stone metaphor.

The Basho-An garden was inviting. I walk the mossy stepping stones next to large rocks. A turtle dives and a coi is surfing in the muddy green pond. Red spider blossoms are spreading their claws. We cross the bridge covered with plants and overgrown bushes. Then we settle inside on the tatami floor at a low table.

I initiated a few stanzas, some of which were edited together with Shokan, some flatly rejected. Even though there was a strong language barrier, the *renku* group was so gracious and so inclusive of me. They listened to my stories of Finland very carefully and included some of it in their stanzas and even in the name. In four hours the group of eight participants created the following *Half Kasen Renku*:



Finlandia *

softly holding the empty sky the manjusaka**	Bin'ya
with a loud caw a crow greets the moon	Sky
in a mountain village scarecrows painted funny	Shokan
inside the fence ripening sake rice	Joe
shining four-wheel drive its first appearance	Wako
boiling for the Derby street with a huge crowd	Masashi
the shoulders of his summer kimono cut through the wind that ... !	Karin
not seeing him sets my heart burning	Minoru
dancing Noh to elevate jealousy to love	Karin
even after departing this world these are called pair's rocks	Masashi
tightly tied to the chain of tax ever after	Wako
Soseki's cat testing the mood	Bin'ya
the cold moon shines	

into the bottom of the barrel of fire water	Minoru
the frozen lake birch stacked for sauna fire	Sky
elves playing around in the forest of Finland	Joe
vinegared herring served on a leaf	Wako
a fox's dream twines with delicate fragrance of flowers	Sky
the heat simmers but does not sway	Bin'ya

*The renku has been included in my travel diary with the special permission from the renku group and Shokan.

**manjusaka (Sanskrit) or manjushage (Japanese) usually flowers around the week of autumn equinox, or Higan; also called Higan-bana. It usually comes in a bright red color in Japan.

End

During the renku party, with a loud caw, four crows pass the open window. In the Basho-An Garden, waterfall of pink flowers and screaming cicadas.

the rain falls
on clothes - drying on
the balcony line

The renku party ended with sake *kampai*. After the party, we all went out to eat. We walked through lovely Japanese gardens with waterfalls, bridges and most curiously, caged grass hoppers and cicadas.

Tokyo Kita Noh

On the twenty third day of the ninth month, Kita Noh performances: *Tomoakira* and *Momiji Gari*. I found a comfortable side seat in the front, where I could stretch my

legs in the isle. I pulled out O'Neill' *Guide to No* to read brief plots of the plays. Sad flute warms up behind colorful striped silk curtains. Before *Tomoakira*, chanting under the open curtain, the Shite.

the sound of flute
orange tassels in place -
otsuzumi calls

When the Shite needs a costume change, Kyogen enters and offers a monologue, the length of which seem to be determined by the complexity of Shite's costume change. I am trying to figure out, how the choken tails have been tied over the back of Shite's extremely stiff hakama.

The curtain opens and the Shite enters and turns to face the audience before gliding to the stage. I watch *Tomoakira* without understanding but a few words, yet appreciating, what I consider its universal essence.

Tomoakira
a ghost – off the ground
in Waki's dream

I hear a deep voice grunting the drummer's calls and discover a young otsuzumi player. The forceful and meditative power of the warrior dance is such a contradiction!

last play
Shite as Koken serving -
the other Shite

I am thinking again that a master actor in a Western theater would not be a *Koken*, an assistant. This exemplifies the vast difference between Western contemporary theater and the ancient Noh Theater. A Western Master Actor would not assist. In Noh Theater, Koken is available to assist the Shite, the Master Actor, in any way necessary. He is ready to even step in, if the performing Shite, for some unexpected reason, is unable to continue.

After seeing my Noh Sensei and her two sisters perform *Momiji Gari* in Fukuyama, it was strange to see, the male Noh actors to perform as the Shite as well as the *Shite Tsure* (Shite's companion) roles in the second *Momiji Gari* in Tokyo. I have never before had any problems seeing men portray women in Noh. The Shite was an older and taller actor...

Zeami's term "flower" in reference to the age and experience, as reflected in Noh actor's style, agility and charm, is demonstrated so concretely, when I see three different actors, a young female and two older males, perform the same Shite role in *Momiji Gari*.

Momiji Gari-
the *flower* of older Shite
grows on me ...

I am absorbed in the quiet dance and flute's airy sounds, then a series of stamps. The Shite stops in profile facing *sumi* corner. How his fan is trembling! In Jo no mai, the flute carries the kata, then drummers' calls. The Shite's inner evil self is revealed. The flute laments. In profile, what an illusion; a small mask fuses with the larger face!

Renku Friends

On the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, I am visiting Basho Museum in Tokyo with Shokan Sensei and another friend, Dr. Hiroshi Tamura, a psychiatrist and a Renku Master. From my hotel, we took a train and street car to get to the museum. When we arrived, it is still closed. We went to the garden and sat down in front of a thatched closed hut holding Basho's statue inside. Shokan Sensei mentioned, knowing about my studies of Noh, that Kukai must have also influenced Zeami at the Imperial Courts because the Courts already had embraced his teachings as well as his poetry in Zeami's time.



Dr. Sky



**Dr. Hiroshi Tamura and
Dr. Tadashi Kondo (Shokan Sensei)**

This delay in opening the museum gave me an opportunity to ask Shokan Sensei about renku. He says that in renku, there is no need for full names or titles of individuals

who participate. Renku poetry is a way to talk to God, the Shinto way. Poetry can express the truth, the sacred language of mandala. Poetry, the common language but simultaneously the sacred language, can express truth, same as in mantra. Renku equalizes the class system, everyone becomes equal. Kukai says that poetry can lead to Buddhahood just as we are. Basho's style of renku combined the high culture of the courts with those of folk culture. "Head from the courts, but the heart from the common folks!"

I have no clue how the linking examples connect in the *Monkey's Straw Raincoat* book, which I got as a gift from Hiroshi. I stopped doing renku because of my frustration. He advises "Be a better link poet, than rule poet! Link with your heart!" He asks me to listen to and read carefully the proceeding renku verse. "The previous verse is a pool of water, you will find a stone in the bottom of the pool and bring it up and that will give you the heart link. Many participants may come to renku party with their own stones in their pocket. They do not listen to the others, nor do they try to find the stone in the bottom of other's pool, but throw in their own stone instead."

What a concrete and helpful metaphor! In the Basho-An Garden, I wrote the following haiku and offered the second one to their monthly web site.

I remember now
in my father's Finnish garden-
mossy stepping stones

cicadas shrills -
softened by bamboo thicket
and sighs of the wind

Shokan and Hiroshi go with me to the station, there Hiroshi says goodbye and takes another train. He tells me that he will send me an accordion book, which he used to create a renku with his poetry therapy and Psychiatrist colleagues from the USA. By sending the book back and forth, it took them one year to create the renku. I am very inspired by the beauty of the renku of his accordion book in which each participant not only created a stanza, but also an accompanying creative visual image.

Tokyo Kita Noh Continues

Shokan saw me to Kita Kaikan, but I asked him to let me walk the last section alone assured that I could find the theater. I do not, and pass it by. I ask a taxi driver. He does not know off hand, but kindly investigated and concluded that it must be behind me. I went back and eventually found it. I arrived a bit late. I opened O'Neill' *Guide to No* to read brief plots of *Uta Ura*, *Yoshino Shizuka* and *Akogi*.

My late entrance, behind the curtains, I hear the warm up by drums and the flute. Before curtain rises, wavering flute continues to warm up, then total silence. Musicians in place, shrilling Noh flute and calls, I am still collecting my breath. In the Kita Kaikan, a strange happiness enfolds. It is my home coming! Soothsayer's mask, wig and costume have been harmoniously chosen; the stillness of *ma*. Shite's inner self seems completely projected through his mask.

behind the waki pillar
orange kimono rises and falls -
with Kokata's breath

Shite and Kokata on stage in *Uta Ura*, I can almost touch the emotional bond in between them. Later on I learn that Kokata is the Shite's own son. I can almost see the love radiating through the Shite's mask!

Shite's mask
became one with his face -
so gently

Two drummers are facing each other, when Kyogen begins his monologue. Another bald drummer tightens the robes of his Taiko during the Kyogen's exaggerated monologue. A wave of laughter. Waki and his companions chant. Their chant is relaxing and centering. Then shite's slow and deliberate entrance on the *hashigagari* (bridge).

mask on Shite
as an old fisherman –
seems to laugh

old fisherman
whoppling short steps –
young hands

When chanting, the chin behind Shite's mask drops lower. I make notes on kata nuances and sketch costumes.

pulling his hair
 lamentatious Noh dance –
 the ghost of *Akogi*

While the fisherman exits in *Akogi*, his cast rod is removed from the stage by a Koken. Across the isle, an old woman is fast asleep.

the last Noh play
 half of the audience has left –
 glued to my seat

In Tokyo Noh Theater, no-one claps before the last actor, chorus member or musician has excited.

Shopping in Tokyo

On the twenty fifth day of the ninth month, I decided to venture out alone, testing my ability to survive with the Metro. I headed to a department store near Shinjuku station. A few minutes prior to the opening, a sales person dressed in uniform and hat comes outside to welcome customers and apparently inform of the time left to get in. Then she enters the store and stands with another sales person inside the doors holding the handles and waiting for the clock to strike ten in the morning. The doors are flung open and we enter. It is amazing to walk in a wave of bows on both sides while walking in, as if somekind of royalty!

When I described my experience to Shokan, he very sarcastically stated that they bow to see what kind of shoes you are wearing to determine if you are a worth while customer! It seemed that they did not recognize the brand of my hand made and expensive Italian shoes, because their service was lousy. Its may be because of my arty Japanese style garb, that does not signal wealth! I left without buying anything!

Last Shimai Session

On the twenty six day of the ninth month, I met with my Master Teacher at Shibuya station. We walked together uphill to a private practice studio owned by a Kita Noh actor in Tokyo. It has tatami mat floor, a whole wall mirror, a bathroom and small

kitchen area. Noh Shite actors need to practice their kata - of course. What a convenient arrangement!

In between practice, sitting on the tatami, the last two hours were spent talking about Noh kata in general, *Shura Mono* specifically. My Noh Sensei introduced a new kata. I asked her to teach me the kata for reversed fan holds. She is dressed in tight jeans and t-shirt! I missed her traditional *kimono* and *hakama*, but I can see the posture and kata better when the silhouette is clearly defined.

Renku at Seikei University

I met with Shokan Sensei after my last lesson with Noh Sensei. It was raining in Tokyo. Shokan and I took a train to get together again with his friend Yuki Yoshino, “Snow White” (her nickname, my gift of endearment) at the Seikei University, where we



**Yuki Yoshino
("Snow White")**

both were to speak in Shokan’s class. First Snow White said a few gracious and kind words. Then I presented in the renku class. I totally improvised my talk, sharing my renku experiences and especially my frustration to understand linking rules. I found the rules cumbersome and confusing! Also, I think as a creative spirit, too many rules can hamper my creativity.

I also talked about how fortunate they were to have Shokan as their Renku Master Teacher. I encouraged them to learn from him as much and as in depth as they possibly can.

After talking about my challenges in writing renku, I talked a bit about my haiku meditation haiku and its application to therapy. I spontaneously wrote on the bulletin board a fall haiku that I had just written in Finland prior to coming to Japan.

bright sun set rays –
on the shoulders’ of flower stems
rain drops glitter

Snow White suggested that my haiku would be used as the *hokku* (the opening verse) for the class. Then they translated it in Japanese and came up with two versions. That is such an evidence of the differences in haiku languages, especially their

translations! In the end I gave my business card to all students. Shokan invited them to write to me directly their next stanza.

After the first lesson, Shokan Sensei had another class and Snow White and I stayed in his office. She prepared incenses and let me experience the difference in the scents of the real original incense from a special tree and the artificially prepared and less expensive replacement. I could smell the difference; the actual tree bark smelled organic, and had a subtly poignant but sweet fragrance. The smell of the artificial one was flat, lacking the delicate nuances of the authentic one.



**"Snow White" and
"Smiling Shokan"**

Snow White was graceful in her traditional kimono. She was kind and considerate demonstrating repeatedly the old Japanese customs of hospitality in their best. Then Snow White prepared and served powdered green tea with okashi and kindly taught me how to prepare powdered tea for tea ceremony and how to make it creamy.

Goodbye

After the classes, three of us stepped out in the pouring rain. Our attempts to get a taxi were futile and we set out to join a long line to take a bus. Luckily there were two busses and we got in. We entered a bit wet in a restaurant with loud pop music blasting. We were required to take our shoes off. The restaurant floor was just a regular wooden, not tatami, floor and my feet got cold.

It was a lovely traditional dinner. The mood was joyous but with a sad undercurrent, our last get-together! After dinner, Snow White in her customary thoughtfulness decided that we need to go to another restaurant and get the herring soba for “dessert,” which we had been looking for previously in vain. So we went to another restaurant and Snow White and I shared a large herring soba.

After our final supper together, they saw me to the station. Again we stepped into pouring rain. They saw me all the way to Marunouchi line. Snow White rushed to get me a ticket with her ever gracious and thoughtful manner. They both stood at the top of the escalator. I turned once more to wave to them and then went to my train.

raining in Tokyo-
Smiling Shokan and Snow White
wave their farewell...

My nickname for Dr. Kondo is “Smiling Shokan.” They are the only Japanese friends I have ever given nicknames. I am so happy, after all these years, finally to find new Japanese friends who uphold the ancient spiritual arts traditions.

The Last Noh Performance

At night and alone taking the train to Kokuritsu Noh Gakudo, the National Noh Theater in Tokyo from Nakano-Sakaue to Kokuritsu-kyogijo. At the last minute I got the name of the theater on my map written in Japanese as well as in romanji, so I could ask for directions regardless of the language barrier. It really helped! I found my way!

The performance was a new Noh play. I looked forward to seeing what kind of innovations are available in such a prestige and traditional theater. The first part was *Nihon Buyou* (traditional Japanese dance) and the second one traditional Noh. Both of the pieces were entitled *Otohime*. The costumes in the first piece were breathtakingly beautiful. The first performance was interesting, but eventually the movements of the female dancer became a bit too repetitious.

in scarlet red silk –
shadows reveal wrinkle lines
on dancer’s white face

The mastery of the male dancer kept my interest, even though he also seemed to repeat the same kata. The male dancer’s skill and mastery of two fans brought loud applauses.

the transformation
from young to old with just -
one readjustment

I locked my expensive Japanese designer umbrella at the entrance and forgot to pick it up on my way out.

On the twenty ninth day of the ninth month I was lying in bed after packing.
before lying down
made a dent on my hard pillow -
with my fist

a tourist tip:
when traveling to Japan-
bring your own pillow

I am listening to my i-pod and Kitaro's *Yellow River*. I heard it for the first time during my first trip to Japan. I remember the excitement of new path almost twenty years ago.

now Yellow River
swells up with flute and guitar –
my tears

Trains

I was able to get to the right bullet train and arrived in Osaka with no problems.
man at the window seat
draws down the curtain to sleep-
no Kyoto mountains!

In Osaka, I had to find JR to get to the Osaka Kansai Airport Hotel. I found the right track. However, when I stepped into a train and showed my ticket to two gentlemen who appeared to sit in my seat, they quickly pointed to the door in Japanese. I realized then that I must be in the wrong train. I tried to rush out, but the doors closed in front of my face. I went back flustered. I saw two Americans sitting close by. The wife got up just to see me, but neither made any effort to help me. They had a rail pass brochure in their hand.

I got a courtesy ride for taking the wrong train. I settled in and began looking at the passing landscape of mountains, which I missed earlier. How ironic!

In Kyoto I got off and began rushing to find an attendant to explain my troubles and find out what to do, to buy a new ticket and find a new track. The gentlemen from the train ran after me and stopped me pointing to another train. They explained everything in Japanese and then we were asked to go to talk to a conductor of the train. Again they repeated the story. I was asked to get in the train, in the unreserved seat section. The train would take me all the way to the Kansai Airport and I could use the same ticket!

My worst fears were to take a wrong train! Now I am more confident!
in Osaka train

baby girl sitting on her knees -
chews a carton box

The two gentlemen, who could not speak any English, helped me, when the fellow Americans just wanted to see, who the fool who took the wrong train was! The true kindness of strangers!

in the wrong train
I open up Daily Yomiuri –
article on haiku

During all my previous visits, my travel agenda was prearranged up to the minutest details. I had no responsibility for any of the arrangements in the past, unlike this time when I was going to be totally on my own! I had never before really tested my faith by stepping out to the unknown and believing that I was going to be safe and warmly received. What an awesome opportunity!

This was my best trip to Japan, yet! I was able to find new friends, who escorted me when necessary and also trained me to survive alone. I no longer hesitate to travel to Tokyo by faith!

NohKiDo™ and Therapeutic Noh Theater®

I have a vision! I have a dream! I have a goal! My vision, my dream, and my goal is to build a Noh Stage and a Tea House in Virtasalmi, Finland and have, among others, my Noh Sensei and her family to perform, Snow White to do tea ceremony, and Shokan to have a renku demonstration and party there.

I am facing a challenge to find a friendship connection between the small village of Virtasalmi, Finland (which is now a part of the town of Pieksämäki) and a Japanese town or city, may be even Fukuyama. In Virtasalmi, Finland I have my Ilmatar Institute, a small training center where I may begin my *NohKiDo™* and *Therapeutic Noh Theater®* training in the future.



Noh Stage

Dreams must be announced out loud to the universe! Dreams must be held onto with faith and patience, and they will come true!

dreaming –
 my *Neo Noh Stage* in Virtasalmi
 at a blue lake

Related Publications:

- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2005). Country haiku from Finland: Haiku meditation therapy for self-healing. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 18, 85-95.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2004). Transpersonal Functions of Masks in NohKiDo™. *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 23, 50-64.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2003). Haiku meditation therapy. *Japanese Bulletin of Arts Therapy*, 34, 1, 52-69.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2003). Bereavement, lamenting and the Prism of Consciousness: some practical considerations. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 30, 217-228.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2003). “I need to be a turtle, reflective, mindful and slow:” The projective prism of consciousness in poetry therapy. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 16, 153-176.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2001). Seven stages of womanhood: A contemporary healing ritual from the Finnish mythology of *Kalevala*. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 33, 113- 129.
- Hiltunen, S. M. S. (2001) Warrior mothers as heroines and other healing imagery in the Finnish national epic of *Kalevala*. *Journal of Poetry therapy*, 15, 3-18.
- Hiltunen, S. S. (1988). Initial therapeutic applications of Noh Theater in drama therapy. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 20, 71-79.
- Keene, D. (Trl.). (1996). *The narrow road to Oku: Matsuo Basho*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Miner, E. & Odagiri, H. (Trl.). (1981). *The monkey’s straw raincoat*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zeami (1970). Hanjo. In Keene, D. (Ed). *Twenty plays of the No theater*. New York: Columbia University Press.