

## Field Guide

### EARTHQUAKES (AND TSUNAMIS)

from *A Field Guide to North American Haiku'*  
by Charles Trumbull

#### EARTHQUAKES IN JAPAN

It will come as no surprise that most haiku about earthquakes have to do with seismic events in Japan, the very same land in which the humble haiku emerged and flourished. “Of the 14 or 15 tectonic plates known in the world, four converge on Japan, where over 2000 active faults can be found.... Some 20% of earthquakes in the world measuring magnitude 6 or over occur in or around Japan.”<sup>2</sup> *Wikipedia’s* table of tectonic events suggests an average of two to three quakes greater than magnitude 7.0 occur in Japan each year.<sup>3</sup>

The standard Japanese word for earthquake is 地震 *jishin*. The readings ないゝ (*nai*), なえ (*nae*), and じぶるゝ (*jiburui*) will be found in older haiku but are considered outdated usage. “Tsunami” (literally “harbor wave”), of course, is a Japanese word, 津波, and signifies one or more long, high sea waves caused by an undersea earthquake or other seismic event. Both words have figurative meanings as well.

Gabi Greve in her *World Kigo Database* provides a possible explanation as to why Japan is so earthquake-prone:

A giant catfish [鯰 *namazu*] lived in mud beneath the earth. The catfish liked to play pranks and could only be restrained by Kashima, a god who protected the Japanese people from earthquakes. So long as Kashima kept a mighty rock with magical powers over the catfish, the earth was still. But when he relaxed his guard, the catfish thrashed about, causing earthquakes.

*Namazu* is, in fact, an archaic word for “earthquake.”

鯰笑ふや他の池の鯰のことも思ひ  
*namazu emi fu ya hoka no ike no namazu no koto mo omohi*

A catfish laughs.  
It thinks of other catfishes  
In other ponds. Nagata Kōi<sup>4</sup>

先の世のわからぬことは鯰に聞け  
*saki no yo no wakaranu koto wa namazu ni kike*

catfish at the earth bottom  
I have something  
I'd like to ask Katsura Nobuko<sup>5</sup>

**Earthquake haiku before the 20th century** are relatively rare and do not usually refer to a specific event. Buson had this verse:

おろし置笈に地震なつ野哉  
*oroshioku oi ni nai furu natsuno kana*

The *oi* just set down,  
Swayed with an earthquake,  
On the summer moor.

An *oi* 笈 was a wooden box carried by a pilgrim on his back to store books or other items.<sup>6</sup> In any event, rather than referring to a particular earthquake, Buson seems to be suggesting the weight of the traveler's load and its impact when set down.

*ima wa mukashi jishin wo kataru hibachi kana*

'Long, long ago now'—  
Telling of that earthquake  
Round a brazier. Kyoroku<sup>7</sup>

The earliest reference in a haiku for which a time of publication can be established and that has been translated into English dates from 1824. In it the poet Issa expresses a certain wry optimism:

世の中をゆり直すらん日の始  
 yo no naka o yuri naosuran hi no hajime

maybe this quake  
 will put the world right ...  
 year's first day

David Lanoue, the translator, remarks, “This is [Issa’s] first haiku of the Seventh Year of the Bunsei Era, which has a Western equivalent of January 31, 1824. According to Issa’s diary, there was an earthquake that day in the afternoon (3:00–5:00 p.m).”<sup>8</sup>

Hokusai’s 1831 woodblock print titled *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* might be earthquake related. *Wikipedia* has it that “The wave is generally described as that produced by a tsunami, a giant wave or more likely a rogue wave, but also as a monstrous or ghostly wave like a white skeleton threatening the fishermen with its ‘claws’ of foam.”<sup>9</sup> Indian poet Angelee Deodhar invoked *The Great Wave* to remember the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami:

after the tsunami  
 the ‘Great Wave off Kanagawa’  
 upside down<sup>10</sup>

зима  
 застыла на стекле  
 “Большая Волна” Хокуся

winter: on my wall  
 Hokusai’s *Great Wave* hangs  
 motionlessly

Alexey V. Andreyev<sup>11</sup>

Like the early Japanese haiku masters, Shiki wrote haiku (at least 14 of them) in which he mentioned an earthquake, but none are specific as to where or when the earthquake occurred. Both of the following haiku were dated 1896 and use spring *kigo*, but the list of major Japanese earthquakes does not list any likely seismic event from October 1894 through June 1896.<sup>12</sup>

地震して恋猫屋根をころげけり  
*jishin shite koi neko yane o korogekeri*

amorous cat  
 the earthquake knocked him  
 off the roof

地震して障子あくれば春の雨  
*jishin shite shōji a kureba haru no ame*

earthquake  
 if the *shōji* is opened  
 spring rain

## JAPANESE EARTHQUAKES AND HAIKU IN THE PAST 100 YEARS

**Great Kantō earthquake** (関東大震災 *Kantō daishinsai*), Kantō Plain, Honshu, September 1, 1923. Magnitude 7.9. More than 105,000 deaths were confirmed. In 1960, the Japanese government declared September 1 as an annual Disaster Prevention Day. Meanwhile 震災記念日 *shinsai kinenbi* (earthquake memorial day) and *shinsai ki* (earthquake day) were made *kigo* for early autumn. This haiku was published in 2011 (i.e., after the Tōhoku earthquake) but it refers to the 1923 Great Kantō quake:

煙突は煙突として震災忌  
*entotsu wa entotsu to shite shinsaiki*

a chimney  
 as a chimney  
 Kanto Earthquake Day<sup>13</sup>

Bōjo Toshiki (坊城俊樹; born 1957)<sup>14</sup>

On July 12, 1993, the magnitude 7.8 **Hokkaido-Nansei-Oki earthquake** (北海道南西沖地震, *Hokkaidō Nansei Oki jishin*) or Okushiri earthquake struck the west coast of Hokkaido and the offshore island of Okushiri in the Sea of Japan and produced one of the largest tsunamis in Japan's history. At least 185 fatalities were reported. We have found only one haiku in English memorializing this disaster:

Tsunami  
 quenching Okushiri's fires  
 no hearth, no home                      Nancy Powers<sup>15</sup>

**The Great Hanshin earthquake** (阪神大震災, *Hanshin daishinsai*), also called the Kobe earthquake, struck on January 17, 1995, in the southern part of Hyōgo prefecture, Japan, including the region known as Hanshin. Approximately 6,434 people died in the magnitude 6.9 temblor, some 4,600 from the city of Kobe.

British poet James Kirkup singled out several haiku by prominent poets about the Kobe earthquake. By way of introduction, he observed “It is a pathetic paradox that such an immense natural calamity earthquake could be captured in the seventeen syllables of a haiku. Yet several Japanese haiku poets have been doing just that. The really

remarkable thing is that they are all very old—some in their mid-nineties.” (We might point out that the same could be said about the poets included in Mayuzumi Madoka’s book—see below.) The first of Kirkup’s selections was a haiku by Igarashi Bansui (五十嵐播; 1899–2000), a Kobe-based physician and poet who edited the magazine *Kunenbo*.

Daffodils blooming  
with unquenchable vigour  
after the earthquake<sup>16</sup>

Kirkup wrote “those brave spring flowers seem to symbolize the old poet’s own irrepressible haiku spirit as well as his physical endurance.”

Nagata Kōi (永田耕衣; 1900–1997) was said to be the longest-lived Japanese haiku master when he died at age 97. Kirkup wrote an obituary in which he mentioned Nagata’s good fortune in the 1995 earthquake: “Just two minutes before the quake struck at 5:46, I had gone to the toilet, a solid, brick-built refuge that preserved me, like a miracle, when the house collapsed. I tried to attract attention by banging the washbasin with a *yuzamashi* [a copper tea-ceremony utensil]. It was quite fun, banging away like that—*kankara kan! kankara kan!* It sounded like a Buddhist chant—*Nammyohorengekkyo*—and I was rescued by a delivery boy from the sake shop next door.” Nagata’s haiku was:

The body dreaming,  
feeling it is near to death—  
mined plum blossom

Another Kobe *haijin*, Gotō Hinao (後藤比奈夫; 1917–2020), was the founder of an electric company in Osaka and very active in haiku affairs as a member of the Hototogisu group and editor of the weekly haiku column in the *Yomiuri shinbun*, among other achievements. (He actually outlived Nagata Kōi.) Kirkup

wrote that Gotō's impression of the earthquake was of a world suddenly gone mad, and in his English translation he sought to capture that feeling of horror at a world breaking apart with the adjective “deranged”—meaning “mad” but also “shifted out of place”:

Splitting frozen earth,  
splitting the skies of winter—  
the deranged earthquake

Wada Gorō (和田悟朗; 1923–2015) was a chemistry professor at Nara Women's University and officer of the Modern Haiku Association. Kirkup pointed out that Wada's earthquake haiku made a touching reference to this haiku of Issa's:

是がまあつひの栖か雪五尺  
*kore ga maa tsui no sumika ka yuki go shaku*

Well—is this to be  
my home at life's end, buried  
in five feet of snow?

Kirkup continued: “Wada Goro, looking regretfully at the ruins or his home and his garden buried in rubble” wrote:

I had thought this place  
would be the last house for me—  
a premature spring

Kirkup also mentions a younger poet, Hoshino Tsunehiko (星野恒彦; born 1935), “who does not live in Kobe, but in a haiku that links the Kobe earthquake with the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, he wrote, on the Doll Festival Day, March 3, 1995.”

This time too  
we've lost our dolls—  
the earthquake<sup>17</sup>

**Tōhoku (Northeast) undersea earthquake** (Great East Japan Earthquake; 東日本大震災, *Higashi nihon daishinsai*), March 11, 2011, east of the Oshika Peninsula, northeastern Honshu, Japan. Magnitude 9.0, the largest in Japanese history. The earthquake caused a disastrous tsunami that peaked at more than 40 meters and which in turn caused the destruction of the Fukushima Daiichi No. 1 Nuclear Power Generating Plant. Officials have reported 19,759 deaths, 6,242 injured, 2,553 missing, and some 228,863 people forced from their homes.

The most poignant haiku from the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami are surely those written from the personal grief and travails of survivors—that is, amateur haiku poets. Prominent Japanese *haijin* Madoka Mayuzumi was out of the country when the tsunami struck, but over the course of the following year she visited the region, met with survivors, and selected 126 of their haiku for inclusion in a collection titled (in Japanese): *I'm So Happy to See Cherry Blossoms in Full Bloom: Haiku from the Areas Affected by the Disasters*. The English version of the book includes excerpted translations and annotations by Hiroaki and Nancy Sato. A brief selection:

春津波去りし我が村呑まれゆく  
*harutsunami sarishi waga mura nomareyuku*

Spring waves as they leave swallow up my village

Satō Kuniko (佐藤邦子)

花も見ず逝く人あまた大津波  
*hana mo mizuyuku hito amata otsunami*

Blossoms unseen so many perished in the great tsunami

Takahashi Sōnosuke (高橋惣之助)

しづかなる海とはなりぬ新茶汲む  
*shizukanaru umi to wa narinu shincha kumu*

The sea having quieted down I pour fresh tea

Ami Takao (阿見孝雄)

七夕やママが欲しいと被災孤児  
*Tanabata ya mama ga hoshii to hisai koji*

At Tanabata “I want mommy” says a victims’ child

Gorai Shōko (牛来承子)

避難地の空家さざめく雛つばめ  
*hinanchi no akiya sazameku hina-tsubame*

Evacuated a vacant house soughs with swallow chicks

Gorai Shōko (牛来承子)

福島はもう人住めず草茂る  
*Fukushima wa mo hito sumezu kusa shigeru*

In Fukushima no longer can humans live grass thrives

Kōri Ryōko (郡良子)

身の内に余震棲みつき春深し  
*mi no uchi niyoshin sumitsuki haru fukashi*

Within me aftershocks have come to inhabit spring deep

Saitō Kazuko (斎藤和子)

For his twenty-five-haiku sequence “Fukushima,” Tōgo Nagase (永瀬十悟, born 1953), a native of that place, won the 57th Kadokawa Haiku Award (角川俳句賞); with a first prize of ¥300,000, it is the most remunerative competition in Japanese haiku. Like the haiku in Madoka’s collection, Tōgo’s work has a feeling of great immediacy, for example:

凍返る救援のへり加速せよ  
*itekaeru kyūen no heri kasoku seyo*

freezing cold —  
rescue helicopter,  
hurry up, hurry up

ちちははの墓石は無事牡丹の芽  
*chichihaha no hakaishi wa buji botan no me*

father and mother’s  
tombstone is intact —  
buds on a peony

流されてもうないはずの橋朧  
*nagasarete mō naihazu no hashi oboro*

washed away  
the bridge that is no longer there  
in the mist

しゃぼん玉見えぬ恐怖を子に残すな  
*shabondama mienu kyōfu o ko ni nokosuna*

soap bubbles ...  
don’t pass on the invisible fear  
to our children

風評の苺せつなき甘さかな  
*fūhyō no ichigo setsunaki amasa kana*

rumors of contamination  
 the strawberry's  
 painful sweetness

Another prominent Japanese *haijin*, Ban'ya Natsuishi, published a sequence of 32 of his own haiku in *Ginyu*, the journal he edits,<sup>18</sup> and later developed his impressions and intellectualizations about earthquakes and related topics:<sup>19</sup>

After the disasters in Japan in March 2011, though I have not visited the devastated Northeast region of my country, where many cities and villages were simply washed away by the sea's fury in the tsunami, I cannot forget the riveting images of the tsunami's catastrophic path of destruction in dirty black and white images broadcast on television. I wrote some haiku based upon my raw response to these events and images.

すべてをなめる波の巨大な舌に愛なし

No love:  
 a giant tongue of waves  
 licking everything

誰も見つめられない津波に消された人たち

People deleted  
 by the tsunami  
 anyone can stare up

The images I viewed of the tsunami confirmed, as if there were any doubt, that nature is immeasurable in expanse compared to humanity and

existentially indifferent to humanity. For the multi-cosmoses man is not even an ant. Needless to say, then, our love for nature is extremely unreasonable. It's a ridiculous or absurd unrequited love.

Ban'ya continued with a diatribe against what he calls the stupidity of his countrymen who, he felt, were at least partially responsible for the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, an event he likened to Japan's previous experiences at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which he characterized as "something like all the gods":

This "something like all the gods" suggests the end of the world, at least as we previously understood it. Is it found also in Fukushima's burning nuclear fires? These invisible fires are now the rulers of Japan's continued history. I will dare to say that ambushing "something like all the gods" is Japan's stupidity that permitted the placement of nuclear reactors from the United States on its pure land even after twice experiencing the unspeakable horror of A-bomb attacks on our islands. In this case, Japan is both responsible and a victim, having forgotten its horrendous previous nuclear experiences. Oblivion lies at the heart of Japan's stupidity.

In addition to Japanese stupidity, I cannot exonerate the whole of humanity and its stupidity in relying on potentially uncontrollable nuclear reactor accidents and decisively on nuclear weapons.

What can a single man do in the face of this stupidity, this fearlessness in the face of the ferocious? As a haiku poet, I wrote this haiku as a response:

愚かさや海岸の怪獣へ津波

Stupidity:  
the tsunami towards  
a monster on the seashore

Yet another prominent Japanese haiku specialist, Toshio Kimura, included a section of excellent haiku about the Fukushima disaster in his 2011 international anthology *The Blue Planet*:

3. 11 14 : 46 溺れる時刻なり  
3. 11 14: 46 *oboreru jikokunari*

3.11 14:46  
—time  
to be drowned

Takahashi Hiroko

東瀛大地起風暴  
落櫻飄散若祈

Cherry blossoms scatter  
like a silent prayer  
dispersing

Dong Zhen Hua

the voice of the god which we call tears

Lee Gurga

放射能に追われ流浪の母子に子猫  
*hōshanō ni owa re rurō no boshi ni koneko*

pursued by radioactivity  
wandering mother and child  
meet a kitten

Kaneko Tōta

след земетръса  
молитвата му  
леко променена

after the earthquake  
his prayer  
slightly different

Petar Tchouhov

In the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, a veritable tidal wave of haiku engulfed social media platforms, blogs, and websites set up expressly to transmit the concern of the world's poets for the victims and survivors. The haiku on public forums ran the gamut from heartfelt expressions of empathy from abroad for the people of Japan, usually by novice haiku poets, to well-crafted, thoughtful, and consequential verses.

English-language Japanese newspaper haiku columns led the way. In March, a few days after the tsunami struck, *Mainichi Haiku in English* published a Tsunami Special with 49 haiku and tanka. The *Asahi Shinbun's Asahi Haikuist Network* devoted its entire April 1, 2011, issue to 34 disaster-related haiku and continued to publish such work for some time thereafter.

My heart is breaking  
for the people of Japan  
pain without limit

Carol Ann Rose<sup>20</sup>

dark shadows  
of a nuclear plant ...  
the full moon

Keith A. Simmonds<sup>21</sup>

In April 2011, Hidenori Hiruta, editor of the *Akita International Haiku Network* website, inaugurated a series of articles under the title "Haiku about the Great East Japan Earthquake." The series discussed the background of seismic events in Japan with many photos as well as correspondence and poems sent in by Hidenora's friends around the globe. The series ran at least through No. 13, July 30, 2011.

god of earthquakes  
what does it take  
to keep you quiet?

Gabi Greve<sup>22</sup>

world in grief  
prayers of hope  
ascend

Victor Gendrano<sup>23</sup>

Miriam Sagan, on her *Miriam's Well* blog, posted two fine haiku  
by Mark Brooks:

tsunami  
pieces of future days  
wash away

tsunami  
winged ants caught  
by their shadows

And finally, many overseas commentators on the 1995 Fukushima  
tsunami were able to find a bit of playfulness as well:

tsunamisery

LeRoy Gorman<sup>24</sup>

*you tsunami****me***

(for my valentine)

LeRoy Gorman<sup>25</sup>

the world has become  
a backwards palindrome  
I'm an us tsunami

Doc Drumheller (New Zealand)<sup>26</sup>

## EARTHQUAKES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

**San Francisco earthquake**, April 18, 1906, magnitude 7.9, with an epicenter off the coast of Northern California. “Devastating fires soon broke out in San Francisco and lasted for several days. More than 3,000 people died, and over 80% of the city was destroyed. The event is remembered as the deadliest earthquake in the history of the United States. The death toll remains the greatest loss of life from a natural disaster in California’s history and high on the lists of American disasters.”<sup>27</sup> This was the granddaddy of American quakes, but we have found no haiku that refer specifically to this event.

**1985 Mexico City earthquake.** Ty Hadman, an accomplished poet and translator of Spanish-language haiku, found himself in Mexico City during a large earthquake and recorded his impressions of the event in a 23-haiku sequence titled “The People’s Faces: Mexico City Earthquake And Its Aftermath, September 19–27, 1985.” Again, because the poet was directly affected, the sequence is distinguished by its authenticity and immediacy. Five sample verses:

Explosions, fire and smoke,  
helicopters, soldiers in the streets—  
flashbacks of Vietnam ...

Zona Rosa:  
the white outfits of paramedics  
spattered with blood

Cathedral full of people praying—  
each face with a different  
horrified expression!

The death toll mounting;  
vultures and journalists  
they have come to prey

Uncovered manhole:  
people dipping plastic pails  
into sewer water

**Loma Prieta earthquake**, October 17, 1989, Santa Cruz county, Calif.; magnitude 6.9; 63 deaths and 3,757 injuries were recorded. These haiku are taken from various sources:

after the earthquake,  
the stars brighter  
above the dark city

Frank Higgins<sup>28</sup>

since the earthquake  
lighting the candles  
for their scent

vincent tripi<sup>29</sup>

Aftershock—  
the candleflame  
flickers

Tom Tico<sup>30</sup>

after the earthquake  
the rocker  
rocking

Davina Kosh<sup>31</sup>

Michael Dylan Welch compiled a chapbook titled *Tremors* which he called “A poetic meditation on the impact of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in San Francisco, with two haiku sequences and a haibun.”

after the quake  
the weathervane  
pointing to earth

the day after  
giving blood  
for the first time

aftershock  
pausing  
then finishing the argument

Months before the Loma Prieta quake, on December 7, 1988, the magnitude 6.8 **Armenian (Spitak) earthquake** struck in that Soviet republic and resulted in 25,000–50,000 dead. Carolyn Talmadge's haiku makes a grimly ironic linkage between the two disasters:

10,000 Armenians  
collect money and blankets  
San Francisco quake<sup>32</sup>

**The Maule Earthquake** (2010 Chile earthquake) of magnitude 8.8, occurred off the coast of central Chile, February 27, 2010. The casualty toll announced a year later was 525 and 25 people missing. One haiku makes reference to the Maule earthquake:

Too many ashes  
in Haiti and Chile  
its time for some joy

Catbird 55<sup>33</sup>

## RECENT EARTHQUAKES AND TSUNAMIS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD

The magnitude 7.1 **Canterbury earthquake (Darfield earthquake)** struck September 4, 2010, South Island, New Zealand. Only two people died from earthquake related causes, but the Christchurch area suffered widespread damage and power outages. Aftershocks, the strongest of which was a magnitude 6.3 shock known as the Christchurch earthquake occurred six months later and resulted in the deaths of 185 people. In 2016 James Norcliffe and Joanna Preston edited a collection of poems from the Canterbury Earthquakes (2016). Among them were 19 haiku, including these:

another quake  
the zig-zag flight  
of a butterfly

Sandra Simpson<sup>34</sup>

the red begonias—  
taller today  
after the big quake

Helen Yong

And an extra one by Barbara Strang from another anthology:<sup>35</sup>

quake anniversary  
a lone spoonbill  
stalks the mudflats

Beginning on April 25, 2015, the magnitude 7.8 **Nepal earthquake (Gorkha earthquake)** and aftershocks throughout the Himalayas killed 8,964 people and injured 21,952 more. The Haiku Foundation ran a feature, “Haiku Response to the Kathmandu Earthquake,” on its website in which readers were invited to share their haiku on the disaster. Some 37 responses were received.

another tremor  
another night of blackout  
in Darjeeling

Sonam Chhoki<sup>36</sup>

Mount Everest  
the abode of the gods  
what demons shook you

Sonam Chhoki

Nepal earthquake—  
from beneath the rubble  
a statue's begging hand

Angelee Deodhar (India)

strewn bodies—  
a little girl searches  
for her doll

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy

pocket money  
still in the palm  
of the dead child

Vladislav Hristov

heavily trapped  
inside a temple  
silence of gods

Ernesto P. Santiago

Poets often write multiple haiku on a theme, and sometimes these are combined into a sequence. For his poetic inspiration, British poet Alan Maley used reports of the discovery of a two-month-old baby found alive after being buried five days under the rubble of the catastrophic 7.8 magnitude Turkey (and Syria) earthquake, February 6, 2023.

EARTHQUAKE – A HAIKU SEQUENCE

when the earth moves  
our confidence collapses,  
and with it, our homes ...

the faintest whimper:  
under this pile of rubble—  
one child left alive ...

the earth is hungry –  
its belly rumbles and growls—  
someone has to pay.

under the rubble  
one child lives—another dies.  
What's fair about that?

this was a wardrobe –  
we make do with what we have,  
now it's a coffin ...

where once olives grew,  
they are now planting bodies,  
a sterile harvest ...

deep under rubble,  
from the still silence of death,  
this small voice of hope ...

OTHER INNOVATIVE OR INTERESTING EARTHQUAKE HAIKU

ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE

after the wave nothing and one of her shoes

Johannes S. H. Bjerg<sup>37</sup>

after the earthquake  
the Buddha and his smile  
detached

Arkady Elterman, in *Shiki*  
*Internet Kukai*, October 3, 1999  
(free-format section, theme: earthquake).<sup>38</sup>

an undersea earthquake  
his retina  
detaches

John Martone<sup>39</sup>

protesting their cries on the Richter scale

Antoinette Cheung<sup>40</sup>

quake-triggered  
the auto alarms warble  
on and on

Ruth Holter<sup>41</sup>

night camp  
something squawking  
before the quake

Nola Borrell<sup>42</sup>

suddenly crows  
all rising and falling  
the sky turning dark

Gwilym Williams<sup>43</sup>

the earthquake  
a sandpiper stands  
on one leg

vincent tripi<sup>44</sup>

earthquake  
the swans and the carp  
turn together

Michael Fessler<sup>45</sup>

October night ...  
a kitten brings the earthquake  
in its eyes

vincent tripi<sup>46</sup>

brief tremor  
the bonsai nods  
and nods

Jim Kacian<sup>47</sup>

after the earthquake:  
too many blossoms  
under the tree

Petar Tchouhov<sup>48</sup>

San Andreas fault  
her body  
pressed against mine

Jeff Hoagland<sup>49</sup>

after the quake  
she checks  
her makeup

W. F. Owen<sup>50</sup>

aftershock  
my estranged son  
unfriends me

Joe McKeon<sup>51</sup>

aftershocks  
letters in the mail  
he'll never open

Michele Root-Bernstein<sup>52</sup>

After the earthquake  
a couple of people leave  
the movie theater

Tom Tico<sup>53</sup>

gojira redux ...  
now the world  
listens

Susan Diridoni<sup>54</sup>

the water recedes ...  
Aeneas and Anchises  
in wave after wave

Scott Mason<sup>55</sup>

#### **AFTERSHOCKS**

Whew! We can only hope that you, dear reader, have been appropriately stirred, not shaken, by this virtual flood of the work of world haiku poets.

Japan aftershocks  
so many  
haiku

Caroline Giles Banks<sup>56</sup>

#### **SELECTED COLLECTIONS OF EARTHQUAKE HAIKU IN ENGLISH:**

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### Notes:

1. A Field Guide to North American Haiku is a long-term project along the lines of a haiku encyclopedia-cum-*saijiki*, a selection of the best haiku in English arranged by topic and illustrating what it is about a given topic that attracts poets to write. When complete, the Field Guide project will comprise multiple thick volumes keyed to the several topics in traditional Japanese *saijiki* (haiku almanacs) and Western counterparts, notably William J. Higginson's *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* (1996). These topics are: Season, Sky & Elements, Landscape, Plants, Animals, Human Affairs, and Observances. The haiku in this essay are taken from my Haiku Database, currently containing more than 541,000 entries and selected from about 1,000 haiku about earthquakes, tsunamis, etc., in the Landscape category. Critique and suggestions of this article or the Field Guide project are warmly invited; please comment by email to [cptrumbull@comcast.net](mailto:cptrumbull@comcast.net).
2. "The World's Most Active Earthquake Zone Is the Closest Place on Earth to Unraveling World-shaking Geophysical Mysteries," *University of Tokyo* website: [https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/whyutokyo/wj\\_001.html](https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/whyutokyo/wj_001.html); no date.
3. "List of earthquakes in Japan," *Wikipedia*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_earthquakes\\_in\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_earthquakes_in_Japan).
4. Ryu Yotsuya, *History of Haiku* website: <http://www.big.or.jp/~loupe/links/ehisto/ekoi.shtml>.
5. Japanese from *Haiku shiki*, December 2016; English from Fay Aoyagi, ed., *Blue Willow Haiku World*, July 14, 2018.
6. This translation of the haiku is from R.H. Blyth's *Haiku* volume 3 (1951); Blyth's earlier translation in *Haiku* volume 1 (1949) had "The travelling altar"; Sawa and Shiffert (1978) used "the shoulder basket";

- W.S. Merwin and Takako Lento (2013) translated *oi* as “my wicker backpack”; and Alan Persinger in Foxfire (2013) has “the heavy case.”
7. Kyoroku, in Geoffrey Bownas and Anthony Thwaite, eds., *The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse* (1964).
  8. Lanoue, *Haiku of Kobayashi Issa* website. Lanoue cites as his source *Issa zenshū* (Nagano: Shinano Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1976–79) 4.465.
  9. “The Great Wave off Kanagawa,” *Wikipedia*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Great\\_Wave\\_off\\_Kanagawa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa). See also: “Hokusai Tsunami,” Japan—after the BIG earthquake, *World Kigo Database*: <https://japan-afterthebigearthquake.blogspot.com/2012/01/hokusai-tsunami.html>; January 6, 2012.
  10. 5th Japan–Russia Haiku Contest, 2016, Honorable Mention.
  11. From Andreyev, *Мояяма / Moyayama: Russian Haiku: A Diary* (Chicago and Kennewick, Wash.: A Small Garlic Press, 1996); also included in William J. Higginson, *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* (1996).
  12. Japanese text from Matsuyama Municipal Shiki-Kinen Museum, Shiki haiku database; translations by C. Trumbull.
  13. Gabi Greve, *World Kigo Database*.
  14. Japanese from *Haidan*, September 2011; English from Fay Aoyagi, ed., *Blue Willow Haiku World*, September 1, 2012.
  15. Nancy Powers, in *Brussels Sprout* 12:1 (January 1995).
  16. James Kirkup, trans., “Earthquake Haiku,” *Modern Haiku* 26:3 (Fall 1995), 46. Unfortunately Kirkup did not include the Japanese originals for these haiku, nor were we able to locate them online.
  17. From “Earthquake Haiku,” James Kirkup, *A Certain State of Mind* (1995), 77.
  18. *Ginyu* 50 (May 2011), 2–7.
  19. Natsuishi, “Stupidity and Poetry” (2011). The three haiku cited here are all from *Ginyu* 50.
  20. Carol Ann Rose, *Asahi Haikuist Network*, April 15, 2011.
  21. Keith A. Simmonds, *Mainichi Haiku in English* Tsunami Special, March 2011.
  22. Haiku by Gabi Greve from a haiga with image by Origa, “Haiku about the Great East Japan Earthquake (5),” Hidenori Hiruta, ed., *Akita International Haiku Network* website, May 28, 2011.
  23. Victor Gendrano, from a haiga, “Haiku about the Great East Japan Earthquake (11),” Hidenori Hiruta, ed., *Akita International Haiku Network* website, July 9, 2011.
  24. LeRoy Gorman, in *Modern Haiku* 42:3 (Autumn 2011).
  25. LeRoy Gorman, in *Modern Haiku* 42:2 (Summer 2011).
  26. Doc Drumheller, in Toshio Kimura, ed., *The Blue Planet: Multilingual Haiku Anthology* (2011).
  27. “1906 San Francisco earthquake.” *Wikipedia*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1906\\_San\\_Francisco\\_earthquake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1906_San_Francisco_earthquake).
  28. Frank Higgins, in Williams, ed., *After Shock* (1990).

29. vincent tripi, in *Haiku Quarterly* (Arizona) 1:4 (Winter 1989).
30. This haiku was first published in *Modern Haiku* 21:1 (Winter–Spring 1990).
31. Davina Kosh, *Brushstroke* (Gualala, Calif.: AHA Books, 1990).  
Published previously in a slightly different format in a haibun, “Safe in the Arms,” *Woodnotes* 3 (Autumn 1989).
32. Carolyn Talmadge, in Williams, ed., *After Shock* (1990).
33. Catbird 55 [Armando H. Corbelle], 11th Caribbean Kigo Kukai, March 2010 (Theme: ashes).
34. This haiku was previously published in *A Fine Line* (New Zealand Poetry Society), March 2012.
35. Barbara Strang, in Michael Dylan Welch, ed., *Jumble Box: Haiku and Senryu from National Haiku Writing Month* (2017).
36. Chhoki notes: “Neighboring Darjeeling, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan have had continuous aftershocks.”
37. Johannes S. H. Bjerg, in *Monostich*, March 13, 2012.
38. Arkady Elterman, in *Shiki Internet Kukai*, October 3, 1999 (free-format section, theme: earthquake).
39. John Martone, in *Roadrunner* 11:2 (August 2011).
40. Antoinette Cheung, in *Kingfisher* 5 (April 2022).
41. Ruth Holter, in Williams, ed., *After Shock* (1990).
42. Nola Borrell, New Zealand Poetry Society Haiku International Poetry Competition 2017, Commended.
43. Gwilym Williams, in *Mainichi Haiku in English* Tsunami Special, March 2011.
44. vincent tripi, in *Modern Haiku* 21:1 (Winter–Spring 1990), 28.
45. Michael Fessler, in *Modern Haiku* 28:3 (Fall 1997), 21.
46. vincent tripi, in *Woodnotes* 7 (Autumn 1990).
47. Jim Kacian, in *DailyHaiku*, May 27, 2013.
48. Petar Tchouhov, in *Ginyu* 28 (October 20, 2008).
49. Jeff Hoagland, in *The Heron’s Nest* 14:3 (September 2012).
50. W. F. Owen, in *Modern Haiku* 32:2 (Summer 2001).
51. Joe McKeon, Per Diem Archive, *The Haiku Foundation* website, undated.
52. Michele Root-Bernstein, in *Geppo* 30:4 (July–August 2005), Readers’ Best.
53. Tom Tico, in *Frogpond* 22:3 (1999).
54. Susan Diridoni, in Wilson and Važić, eds., *We Are All Japan Anthology* (2012). “Gojira” is called “Godzilla” in English.
55. Scott Mason, in *Mainichi Haiku in English* Tsunami Special, March 2011.
56. Caroline Giles Banks, *The Clay Jar: Haiku, Senryu and Haibun Poems* (Minneapolis: Wellington-Giles Press, 2013).