



Wednesday Flight #6 One Sake, One Poem

I wanted to look

to my content

upon Mount Miwa

till it was hidden

by Mount Nara

and the curves

along the road

but clouds—

how could you

so coldly cover it?

-Princess Nukata, Volume 1 of the Man'yōshū

Pairing: Mimurosuji “Dio Abita”

Junmai Ginja

In the Asuka period, the god residing in Mt. Miwa was the guardian deity of the ancient capital in Yamato Province. When the capital moved to Ōmi-Kyō, present day Shiga in the 7th century, Princess Nukata penned this poem of longing for her old home. The god of Mt. Miwa is also the god of sake, thus the sake is named, “God Dwells”

The color of flowers

has faded indeed

in vain

have I passed through the world

while gazing at the falling rains

-Ono no Komachi, Ogura Hyakunin Isshu, No. 9

Pairing: Jinyu “100 Poems” Junmai

Ginja

Aside from her prolific beauty and wit as a wordsmith, very little is known about Ono no Komachi. Some suggest Ono no Komachi is not a single person, but a poetic collective, or perhaps an archetype for a beloved lady in waiting. Today, Komachi is a name closely associated with unmatched beauty, thus, the rice used for this sake is called Akita Sake Komachi after the soft, ethereal sake it becomes.

-Fujiwara no Sadanaga, Ogura Hyakunin Isshu
No. 87

Pairing: Kikuhime Junmai Yamahai
Hiyaoroshi

While many poems in the Hyakunin Isshu anthology lean on dramatic themes of love or longing, and are bolstered by backstory, no. 87's romance is in it's descriptive simplicity. I lament today's cloudless sky, and had hoped for a classic PNW fall day to enjoy this one, but alas. Kikuhime's deep, earthy complexity seems a natural companion.

While the raindrops of
The passing shower have not yet
dried from
Near the leaves of the evergreens,
The mist is already rising,
On this evening in autumn.

Among the blossoms, a single jar of wine.
No one else here, I ladle it out myself.
Raising my cup, I toast the bright moon,
and facing my shadow makes friends
three,

Kindred a moment with moon and shadow,
ow,
I sing, and moon rocks back and forth;
I dance, and shadow tumbles into pieces.

Sober, we're together and happy. Drunk,
we scatter away into our own directions:

intimates forever, we'll wander carefree
and meet again in Star River distances.
-Li Po, David Hinton's The Selected Poems of
Li Po

Eightfold rising clouds
Build an eightfold fence
An eightfold Izumo fence
Wherein to keep my bride -
Oh! splendid eightfold fence.

-Susano-o, a kami from Japan's creation
mythology.

Pairing: Juji Asahi Junmai Kimoto
Regarded as the first poem recited in Japanese literature, and engraved on a large stone at Suga Shrine in Izumo (Eastern Shimane). After defeating the eight headed dragon Yamata-no-Orochi, Susano-O wrote this poem to commemorate Izumo as the safe home for himself and his wife, Kushinanda, whom he had rescued from the dragon. Juji Asahi, brewed by Eriko Terada, is one of the most mythologically entrenched breweries in Izumo, brewing the omiki--ritual sake-- for Izumo Taisha, the hugely significant Shinto shrine built here over 1000 years ago to honor Okuninushi-no-Okami, Susanoo's brother in law and ruler of Izumo.

Pairing: Rihaku “Origin of Purity”
Nama Junmai Ginja
I'd be remiss to connect sake and poetry without inclusion of Li Po, the beloved “Drunken Poet” from 7th century China. Rihaku, the Japanese name of Li Po, references his proclivity to drink a large bottle of sake then write 100 poems.