



# **Zoka: Seeking What Bashō Sought**

Janice Doppler

*Poetry Pea*

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“

Do not seek the traces of  
the ancients, seek what  
they sought.

”

Kūkai (744 – 835)

founder of Shingon Buddhism



travel weary

just as I finally find lodging ---

wisteria blossoms

Bashō

*Knapsack Notebook*



petal after petal

mountain roses flutter down:

the sound of rapids


Bashō

*Knapsack Notebook*

“

Saigyō's waka, Sōgi's renga, Sesshū's painting, Rikyū's tea ceremony – **one thread runs through the artistic Ways. And this aesthetic spirit is to follow the Creative,** to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons.

”



“Nothing one sees is not a flower,  
nothing one imagines is not the  
moon. If what is seen is not a  
flower, one is like a barbarian; if  
what is imagined is not a flower,  
one is like a beast.”

“

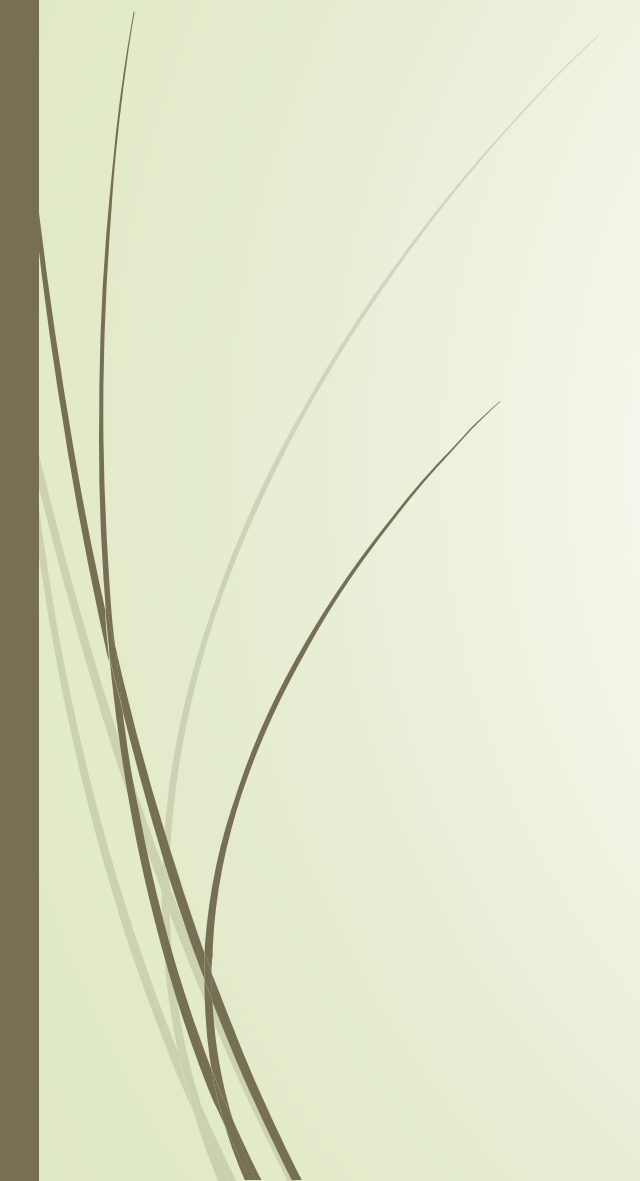
Depart from the barbarian, break  
away from the beast, **follow the  
Creative, return to the Creative.**

”

Translation by David Landis Barnhill in his  
book *Basho's Journey: The Literary Prose of  
Matsuo Basho*



# FOUR MASTERS

- **Rikyū** – (1520 – 1591) - master of the Way of Tea
  - **Sōgi** – (1421-1502) - classical *renga* poet and travel journalist
  - **Sesshū** – (1420 – 1506) a master of Chinese style landscape painting
  - **Saigyō** – (1118 – 1190) - famous waka poet and role model for Bashō
- 



# One Thread = Zoka = The Creative

“The dynamic spirit that informs the natural world and the inner workings of the cosmos.”

Steven D. Carter

# One Thread = Zoka = The Creative

“The world’s unceasing and spontaneous disposition to give rise to beautiful and skillful transformations throughout the natural world.”

# Zoka is

- Unpredictable creative force of nature
- Nature's tendency and ability to continuously self-transform
- The perpetual emerging, transforming, and returning to its source of everything in the cosmos

# Following Zoka

- Look backward at the thread of *zoka* through history
- Look inward at where your own heart leads

# Basho Following Zoka in *Knapsack Notebook*

- Opening essay
- Haiku examples
- Prose example





“

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spring rain

flowing down the tree:

the pure spring water

Bashō

*Knapsack Notebook*



“ I gazed upon the skill of the Creative in the beauty of mountains, fields, and coast ... and I pursued the truth of the masters of the aesthetic way ... It was like finding jewels among junk or discovering gold amid mud. To jot down such things and relate them to others is one of the true treasures of the journey. ”



# LINKS IN BASHŌ's ONE THREAD

- Bashō
- The four masters
- China's Tang Dynasty
- Ancient Wisdom Texts

# China's Tang Dynasty

(618 – 907 CE)

Chinese poetry, Daoist philosophy, and Chan Buddhism spread to Japan and became popular with poets, painters, and scholars.

# Waterfall at Lu-shan

Sunlight streams on the river stones,  
From high above, the river steadily plunges—  
three thousand feet of sparkling water—  
the Milky Way pouring down from heaven.

Li Bai (Li Bo/Li Po)

Translated by Sam Hammil

# Zoka Across Cultures:

- 造化 in Japanese and Chinese
- Zoka in Japanese
- Zaohua in Chinese
- The Creative in English

# Ancient Chinese Wisdom Texts

- *Dao De Jing* (Tao Te Ching)
- *Yijing* (I Ching)
- *The Zhuangzi* (The Chuang Tzu)

# Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)

- Attributed to Laozi
- 81 short poem-like chapters



# Yijing (I Ching)/Book of Changes

64 hexagrams explore flow of change in the cosmos

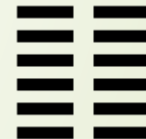
- **1<sup>st</sup> Hexagram - The Creative**

Describes the two energies  
that drive the cosmos



- **2<sup>nd</sup> Hexagram – The Responsive**

Addresses the emergence of  
physical forms in response to the Creative



## Zoka in Yijing (I Ching)

- Zoka is simultaneously two energies that drive the flow of change and transformation in the cosmos
  - **Yang** – the impulse to create and drive transformation
  - **Yin** – response to the creative impulse



# More about Zoka in *Yijing*

- Each interaction of Creative and Responsive is a tiny bit of change.
- Tiny bits of change plus more bits of change yield transformation
- Ancient sages described what they could see
  - The seasons
  - The sun and moon

# ***The Zhuangzi* (The Chuang Tzu)**

- Collection of parable-like stories
- Illustrates how to live within the mysteries of *zoka* at work in the cosmos.
- How to cultivate *zoka* is woven into many of the stories



# Connecting the Past to Today

## Part 1 - WHERE WE'VE BEEN

- ▶ Learned what *zoka* is
- ▶ Experienced Bashō following *zoka*
- ▶ Followed the “One Thread” of *zoka* from Bashō to ancient wisdom texts

## Part 2 - WHERE WE'RE GOING

- ▶ Extend “One Thread” to India
- ▶ See how modern haiku applies ancient wisdom to follow *zoka*
- ▶ Ponder how we can cultivate awareness of *zoka*



sunlit rain

a snail extends

its eyestalks

Chuck Brickley  
*Cicada* 1981



thunder

the roses shift

into shadow

Roberta Beary  
*10<sup>th</sup> Kusamakura International  
Haiku Contest Grand Prize  
2005*



snow melting

the color of the river changes

its rhythm

Maya Daneva  
*Poetry Pea (2021)*





comet tail

unnoticed

fireflies

Janice Doppler  
*First Frost (2021)*




ocean ripples

the shape of the wind

everywhere

Don Baird  
*Haiku Wisdom*  
Modern English Tanka Press  
2011



“  
Everyday experience is simply  
the Cosmos seeing itself, the  
Cosmos thinking itself, the  
Cosmos feeling itself.”

*David Hinton*