

Wakayama Bokusui: A poet who loved nature and travel

Autumn of appetite, autumn of reading – there are many different “autumns”, but this year, why not try delving into an “autumn of art”? You could travel around some art galleries, or enjoy the pleasures of painting a scene or photographing the red leaves beneath a clear autumn sky. This month, I’d like to introduce a Miyazaki-born poet, who would have turned 140 this year, named Wakayama Bokusui.



Wakayama Bokusui was born in 1885 in Tsuboya Village, Higashiusuki District (modern day Togo in Hyuga), in Miyazaki Prefecture. His real name was Wakayama Shigeru, but he changed his name to Bokusui at the age of 19.

Supposedly, the “boku” (pasture) comes from his mother’s name “Maki”, which can be written with the same character, while “sui” (water) refers to the water of the rivers and valleys that surrounded his home.

In his second year of middle school, he began composing tanka poetry, and published over 500 poems during his school years in newspapers and literary journals. He continued to hone his craft as a tanka poet upon entering Waseda University, and published his collection *Voice of the Sea* after graduating. After it sold poorly however, he started working as a journalist. He would leave this newspaper company after six months, and published the collection *Parting* the following year in 1910. This collection would receive wide acclaim not only within poetry circles, but from mainstream audiences, and Bokusui’s name and poetry became well known. Even after achieving great success as a poet, he always sought to be in nature, and travelled extensively. Here is a classic example of one of Bokusui’s compositions on the subject of travel.

*How many mountains and rivers
Must I cross before I reach
The land where solitude ends?
I continue my journey.*



Bokusui fell ill at the age of 43, and left this world having published 14 poetry collections.

His ashes were divided, and when his mother Maki passed away, she was buried with them held to her chest.

There is a park named after Bokusui in Miyazaki. There's also a museum, so if you'd like to learn more about Bokusui, you should pay a visit.

※The original Japanese version of this article will be uploaded onto the website of the Miyazaki International Foundation soon.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding this column, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation (MIF):

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Also, if you ever have any questions or concerns about daily life in Miyazaki, please feel free to get in touch with the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents:

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