

Fall 2024 UHM Center for Okinawan Studies Colloquium
(Co-Sponsored by UHM Center for Japanese Studies)

Patterns of Life: The Construction of Yamanokuchi Baku's Poetic Persona



Date: November 4th (Monday)

Time: 12 pm-1:30 pm

Place: Sakamaki Hall A-201

Yamanokuchi Baku (1903 – 1964) is one of Okinawa's most well-known and beloved poets. His writing, which first appeared in publication in the 1930s and has continued to grow since his death, is often autobiographical and filled with a unique sense of wit and humor that can disguise a sharp observational skill about life as a marginalized figure in modern Japan. Critics and fans praise his work as being genuine, authentic -- an earnest expression of a man struggling to find a place in the world as both a citizen and an artist. However, much of the artist that is seen in Baku's work is in fact a highly curated construct, influenced by his own experiences but elevated in his art. This talk will focus on the process of his literary formation as a writer and evolution into the poetic persona that readers have come to know. By focusing on three main elements of this poetic persona's identity - that of being Okinawan, a manual laborer, and, eventually, a successful poet- I will demonstrate that Baku's consistent autobiographical engagement was not merely an extended artistic maneuver, but actually allowed for a space to explore and criticize the social conditions that helped shape both his identity as a writer and the literary persona he created.

Speaker: Hilson Reidpath

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