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A Foreigner in a Foreign Land

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A FOREIGNER IN A FOREIGN LAND

Marge Anderson

Feeling the excitement,
Tinged with a little (fear),
Finding my way on Kyushu

Looking for an artist
Sure to sell cheap
Wooden plaques he'd made.

Seen in a little shoe shop
Downtown in Fukuoka
That fed a greedy heart.

Asking strangers,
I curbed my brash
American interrogation.

In my halting use/
Abuse of their language,
Making sure I bowed properly.

"Forgive me, Sir,
Please be so kind
To show me the train...

The station...
The road and the path..."
Until certain of my goal.

The cottage, far from small,
Yet built with natural wood
And thick straw thatch.

"Gomenasai, dozo,"
Softly in a near falsetto,
As is custom for women,

"Konichiwa, Gomenasai."
People never knocked
For that noise was quite rude.

The wooden screen
Slid back,
A maid revealed herself.

Behind her, to my awe,
Was a golden bronze Buddha
Twenty feet high.

I explained I had admired
His carved wooden plaques
In a shop in Fukuoka.

He smiled and bowed, saying,
"The owner is a an old
Friend of mine."



A distinguished old gentleman
Then appeared at the door,
Politely bowed and ushered me in.

He was a world-renowned sculptor,
With much taller Buddhas
In Tokyo, London, and Paris.

My embarrassment was eased
By his great kindness
And tea from his special cup.

I came as a "rich" American,
Looking for inexpensive art;
But left greatly humbled.

Enriched not by art,
But by great kindness—
Far greater than gold.