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# JAPANESE LYRICS



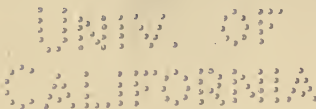




# JAPANESE LYRICS

TRANSLATED BY

LAFCADIO HEARN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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1915

Seki wa yoi toko,  
Asahi wo ukete;  
O-Yama arashiga  
Soyo-soyoto!

SONG OF MIONOSEKI.

[*Seki is a goodly place, facing the morning sun. There, from the holy mountains, the winds blow softly, softly, — soyo-soyoto.*]



## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*SCATTERED through the pages of Lafcadio Hearn's writings are many Japanese lyrics. So graceful are these little poems, so characteristic, in their swift, sure impressionism, of Oriental art, that it has seemed worth while to bring them together within the compass of a single volume.*

*It is perhaps unnecessary to analyze here the distinctive features of Japanese poetry. The reader will understand that as the poets relied for their effect largely upon the opportunities for subtle and intricate double meanings afforded by the peculiar structure of the Japanese language, it is scarcely possible to do them justice in an alien tongue. But these translations, though faithful to the original, have the innate feeling for beauty, the instinctive sense of the right word, the perfect phrase, common to everything that came from Hearn's pen.*

*To preserve the volume from the appearance of undue weightiness the interpretive notes with which the poems are accompanied have been reduced to the smallest possible compass. Indeed, in many cases the elaborate plays upon words are too involved to be susceptible of explanation.*

*In their limitation of a poem to the presentation of a*

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*single impression and in their ability to present that impression with the utmost vividness and with the sternest economy of words, these Japanese poets are strangely akin to the Imagists, the youngest of the modern schools. And for this reason it has seemed peculiarly appropriate that their work should be included in the NEW POETRY SERIES.*

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JAPANESE LYRICS  
INSECT POEMS

# JAPANESE LYRICS

Nugi-kakuru  
Haori sugata no  
Kochō kana!



Torisashi no  
Sao no jama suru,  
Kochō kana!



Tsurigané ni  
Tomarité nemuru  
Kochō kana!



Néru-uchi mo  
Asobu-yumé wo ya—  
Kusa no chō!



Oki, oki yo!  
Waga tomo ni sen,  
Néru-kochō!



Kago no tori  
Chō wo urayamu  
Metsuki kana!



Chō tondé—  
Kazé naki hi to mo  
Miēzari ki!

## INSECT POEMS

*Like a woman slipping off her haori<sup>1</sup> — that is the appearance of a butterfly.*

*Ah, the butterfly keeps getting in the way of the bird-catcher's pole !*

*Perched upon the temple-bell, the butterfly sleeps :*

*Even while sleeping, its dream is of play — ah, the butterfly of the grass !*

*Wake up ! wake up ! — I will make thee my comrade, thou sleeping butterfly.*

*Ah, the sad expression in the eyes of that caged bird ! — envying the butterfly !*

*Even though it did not appear to be a windy day, the fluttering of the butterflies — !*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Rakkwa éda ni  
Kaëru to miréba —  
Kochō kana!



Chiru-hana ni —  
Karusa arasoü  
Kochō kana!



Chōchō ya!  
Onna no michi no  
Ato ya saki!



Chōchō ya!  
Hana-nusubito wo  
Tsukété-yuku!



Aki no chō  
Tomo nakéréba ya;  
Hito ni tsuku.



Owarété mo,  
Isoganu furi no  
Chōcho kana!



Chō wa mina  
Jiu-shichi-hachi no  
Sugata kana!

## INSECT POEMS

*When I saw the fallen flower return to the branch—lo! it was only a butterfly!²*

*How the butterfly strives to compete in lightness with the falling flowers!*

*See that butterfly on the woman's path,—now fluttering behind her, now before!*

*Ha! the butterfly! —it is following the person who stole the flowers!*

*Poor autumn butterfly! —when left without a comrade, it follows after man!*

*Ah, the butterfly! Even when chased, it never has the air of being in a hurry.*

*As for butterflies, they all have the appearance of being about seventeen or eighteen years old.³*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Chō tobu ya —  
Kono yo no urami  
Naki yō ni!



Chō tobu ya,  
Kono yo ni nozomi  
Nai yō ni!



Nami no hana ni  
Tomari kanétaru,  
Kochō kana!



Mutsumashi ya! —  
Umaré-kawaraba  
Nobé no chō.



Nadéshiko ni  
Chōchō shiroshi —  
Taré no kon?



Ichi-nichi no  
Tsuma to miékéri —  
Chō futatsu.



Kité wa maü,  
Futari shidzuka no  
Kochō kana!

## INSECT POEMS

*How the butterfly sports, — just as if there were no enmity in this world!*

*Ah, the butterfly! — it sports about as if it had nothing more to desire in this present state of existence.*

*Having found it difficult indeed to perch upon the (foam-) blossoms of the waves, — alas for the butterfly!*

*If (in our next existence) we be reborn as butterflies upon the moor, then perchance we may be happy together!*

*On the pink-flower there is a white butterfly : whose spirit, I wonder?*

*The one-day wife has at last appeared — a pair of butterflies!*

*Approaching they dance; but when the two meet at last they are very quiet, the butterflies!*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Chō wo oū  
Kokoro-mochitashi  
Itsumadémo!



Yuku é naki:  
Ari no sumai ya!  
Go-getsu amé.



Hito koe wa.  
Tsuki ga naitaka  
Hototogisu!



Hototogisu  
Nakitsuru kata wo  
Nagamureba, —  
Tada ariake no  
Tsuki zo nokoreru.



Hototogisu  
Chi ni naku koe wa  
Ariake no  
Tsuki yori hokani  
Kiku hito mo nashi.



## INSECT POEMS

*Would that I might always have the desire of  
chasing butterflies!*

*Now the poor creature has nowhere to go! . . .  
Alas for the dwellings of the ants in this rain of  
the fifth month!*

*A solitary voice! Did the Moon cry? 'T was  
but the hototogisu.<sup>4</sup>*

*When I gaze towards the place where I heard  
the hototogisu cry, lo! there is naught save the wan  
morning moon.*

*Save only the morning moon, none heard the  
heart's-blood cry of the hototogisu.*



LULLABIES  
AND  
CHILDREN'S VERSE

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Nenneko,  
O-yama no  
Usagi no ko,  
Naze mata  
O-mimi ga  
Nagai e yara?  
Okkasan no  
O-naka ni  
Oru toku ni,  
Biwa no ha,  
Sasa no ha,  
Tabeta sona;  
Sore de  
O-mimi ga  
Nagai e sona.

## LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*Sleep, baby, sleep! Why are the honorable ears of the Child of the Hare of the honorable mountain so long? 'Tis because when he dwelt within her honored womb, his mamma ate the leaves of the loquat, the leaves of the bamboo-grass. That is why his honorable ears are so long.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Nono-San,

*or*

*O-Tsuki-San*

Ikutsu?

“Jiu-san, —

Kokonotsu.”

Sore wa mada

Wakai yo,

Wakai ye mo

Dōri

Akai iro no

Obi to,

Shiro iro no

Obi to

Koshi ni shanto

Musun de.

Uma ni yaru?

“Iyaiya!”

Ushi ni yaru?

“Iyaiya!”

# LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*Nono-San,  
Little Lady Moon,  
How old are you?  
"Thirteen days, —  
Thirteen and nine."  
That is still young,  
And the reason must be  
For that bright red obi,  
So nicely tied,<sup>5</sup>  
And that nice white girdle  
About your hips.  
Will you give it to the horse?  
"Oh, no, no!"  
Will you give it to the cow?  
"Oh, no, no!"*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Tobi, tobi, maute mise!  
Ashita no ba ni  
Karasu ni kakushite  
Nezumi yaru.



Ato no karasu saki ine,  
Ware ga iye ga yakeru ken,  
Hayō inde midzu kake,  
Midzu ga nakya yarozo,  
Amattara ko ni yare,  
Ko ga nakya modose.



Hotaru kōe midzu nomashō;  
Achi no midzu wa nigaizo;  
Kochi no midzu wa amaizo.



Chō-chō, chō-chō, na no ha ni tomare;  
Na no ha ga iyenara, te ni tomare.



Daidaimushi, daidaimushi, tsuno chitto dashare  
Ame kaze fuku kara tsuno chitto dashare!



# LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*Kite, kite, let me see you dance, and to-morrow evening, when the crows do not know, I will give you a rat.*

*O tardy crow, hasten forward! Your house is all on fire. Hurry to throw water upon it. If there be no water, I will give you. If you have too much, give it to your child. If you have no child, then give it back to me.*

*Come, firefly, I will give you water to drink. The water of that place is bitter; the water here is sweet.*

*Butterfly, little butterfly, light upon the na leaf. But if thou dost not like the na leaf, light, I pray thee, upon my hand.*

*Snail, snail, put out your horns a little: it rains and the wind is blowing, so put out your horns, just for a little while.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Wakakeréba  
Nichi-yuki shiraji :  
Mahi wa sému,  
Shitabé no tsukahi  
Ohité-tohorasé.

## LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*As he is so young, he cannot know the way.  
... To the messenger of the Underworld I will give  
a bribe, and entreat him, saying: "Do thou kindly  
take the little one upon thy back along the road."*<sup>6</sup>



LOVE SONGS  
AND  
LYRICS

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Ka-mi-yo ko-no-ka-ta  
Ka-wa-ra-nu mo-no wa :  
Mi-dzu no na-ga-ré to  
Ko-i no mi-chi.



Ekō suru toté  
Hotoké no maé yé  
Futari mukaité,  
Konabé daté.



Adana é-gao ni  
Mayowanu mono wa  
Ki-Butsu, — kana-Butsu, —  
Ishi-botoké !



Asu ari to  
Omō kokoro no  
Ada-zakura :  
Yo wa ni arashi no  
Fukanu monokawa ?



Kawaru uki-yo ni  
Kawaranu mono wa  
Kawarumai to no  
Koi no michi.

## LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Things never changed since the Time of the Gods:  
The flowing of water, the Way of Love.*

*Even while praying together in front of the tablets  
ancestral,  
Lovers find chance to murmur prayers never meant  
for the dead !*

*He who was never bewitched by the charming smile  
of a woman,  
A wooden Buddha is he — a Buddha of bronze or  
stone !*

*Thinking to-morrow remains, thou heart's frail  
flower-of-cherry ?  
How knowest whether this night the tempest will  
not come ?*

*All things change, we are told, in this world of  
change and sorrow ;  
But love's way never changes of promising never to  
change.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Oya no iken dé  
Akirameta no wo  
Mata mo rin-yé dé  
Omoi-dasu.



Kaäi, kaäi to  
Naku mushi yori mo  
Nakanu hotaru ga  
Mi wo kogasu.  
Nanno ingwa dé  
Jitsu naki hito ni  
Shin wo akashité, —  
Aa kuyashi!



Wasuraruru  
Mi naran to omō  
Kokoro koso  
Wasuré nu yori mo  
Omoi nari-keré.



Hi kururéba  
Sasoëshi mono wo —  
Akanuma no  
Makomo no kuré no  
Hitori-né zo uki!



## LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Father and mother forbade, and so I gave up my  
lover; —*

*Yet still, with the whirl of the Wheel,<sup>8</sup> the thought  
of him comes and goes.*

*Numberless insects there are that call from dawn  
to evening,*

*Crying, “I love! I love!” — but the Firefly’s  
silent passion,*

*Making its body burn, is deeper than all their longing.  
Even such is my love . . . yet I cannot think  
through what ingwa<sup>9</sup>*

*I opened my heart — alas! — to a being not sincere!*

*To wish to be forgotten by the beloved is a  
soul-task harder far than trying not to forget. 0*

*At the coming of twilight I invited him to  
return with me —! Now to sleep alone in the  
shadow of the rushes of Akanuma — ah! what  
misery unspeakable!”<sup>10</sup>*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Kōshi ō-son gojin wo ou ;  
Ryokuju namida wo tarété rakin wo hitataru ;  
Komon hitotabi irité fukaki koto umi no gotoshi ;  
Koré yori shorō koré rojin.



Tadzunétsuru,  
Hana ka toté koso,  
Hi wo kurasé,  
Akénu ni otoru  
Akané sasuran ?

Izuru hi no  
Honoméku iro wo  
Waga sodé ni  
Tsutsumaba asu mo  
Kimiya tomaran.



Omae shindara tera ewa yaranu !  
Yaete konishite sake de nomu.

## LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Closely, closely the youthful prince now follows  
after the gem-bright maid ; —*

*The tears of the fair one, falling, have moistened  
all her robes.*

*But the august lord, having once become enamored  
of her — the depth of his longing is like the  
depth of the sea.*

*Therefore it is only I that am left forlorn, —  
only I that am left to wander alone.*

*Being on my way to pay a visit, I found that  
which I took to be a flower : therefore here I spend  
the day. . . . Why, in the time before dawn, the  
dawn-blush tint should glow — that, indeed, I know  
not.* <sup>11</sup>

*If with my sleeve I hide the faint fair color  
of the dawning sun, — then, perhaps, in the morn-  
ing my lord will remain.*

*Dear, shouldst thou die, grave shall hold thee  
never !*

*I thy body's ashes, mixed with wine, will drink.*



## GOBLIN POETRY

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Hi tomoshité  
Kitsuné no kwaséshi,  
Asobimé wa —  
Izuka no uma no  
Honé ni ya aruran !



Kitsuné-bi no  
Moyuru ni tsukété,  
Waga tama no  
Kiyuru yō nari  
Kokoro-hoso-michi !



Ko-ya, soré to ?  
Ayamé mo wakanu  
Rikombyō :  
Izuré wo tsuma to  
Hiku zo wazuraü !



Futatsu naki  
Inochi nagara mo  
Kakégaë no  
Karada no miyuru —  
Kagé no wazurai !

## GOBLIN POETRY

— *Ab the wanton (lighting her lantern) ! —  
so a fox-fire<sup>12</sup> is kindled in the time of fox-trans-  
formation ! . . . Perhaps she is really nothing  
more than an old horse-bone<sup>13</sup> from somewhere  
or other. . . .*

*Because of that Fox-fire burning there, the very  
soul of me is like to be extinguished in this narrow  
path.*

*Which one is this ? — which one is that ? Be-  
tween the two shapes of the Rikombyō<sup>14</sup> it is not  
possible to distinguish. To find out which is the real  
wife — that will be an affliction of spirit indeed !*

*Two lives there certainly are not ; — never-  
theless an extra body is visible, by reason of the  
Shadow-Sickness.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Naga-tabi no  
Oto wo shitaïté  
Mi futatsu ni  
Naru wa onna no  
Sāru rikombyō.



Miru kagé mo  
Naki wazurai no  
Rikombyō, —  
Omoi no hoka ni  
Futatsu miru kagé!



Rikombyō  
Hito ni kakushité  
Oku-zashiki,  
Omoté y dēasanu  
Kagé no wazurai.



Mi wa koko ni ;  
Tama wa otoko ni  
Soiné suru ; —  
Kokoro mo shiraga  
Haha ga kaihō.



## GOBLIN POETRY

*Yearning after her far-journeying husband, the woman has thus become two bodies, by reason of her ghostly sickness.*

*Though (it was said that), because of her ghostly sickness, there was not even a shadow of her left to be seen, — yet, contrary to expectation, there are two shadows of her to be seen !*

*Afflicted with the Rikomyō, she hides away from people in the back room, and never approaches the front of the house, — because of her Shadow-disease.*

*Here her body lies but her soul is far away, asleep in the arms of a man ; — and the white-haired mother, little knowing her daughter's heart, is nursing (only the body).*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Tamakushigé  
Futatsu no sugata  
Misénuru wa,  
Awasé-kagami no  
Kagé no wazurai.



Mé wa kagami,  
Kuchi wa tarai no  
Hodo ni aku :  
Gama mo kэшō no  
Mono to kosō shiré.



Hamaguri no  
Kuchi aku toki ya,  
Shinkirō !  
Yo ni shiraré ken  
Tatsu-no-miya-himé !



Shinkirō —  
Tatsu no miyako no  
Hinagata wo  
Shio-hi no oki ni  
Misuru hamaguri !

## GOBLIN POETRY

*If, when seated before her toilet-stand, she sees two faces reflected in her mirror, — that might be caused by the mirror doubling itself under the influence of the Shadow-Sickness.<sup>15</sup>*

*The eye of it, widely open, like a (round) mirror; the mouth of it opening like a wash-basin — by these things you may know that the Toad is a toilet article.<sup>16</sup>*

*When the hamaguri<sup>17</sup> opens its mouth — lo! Shinkirō appears! . . . Then all can clearly see the Maiden-Princess of the Dragon-Palace.*

*Lo! in the offing at ebb-tide, the hamaguri makes visible the miniature image of Shinkirō — the Dragon-Capital!*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Nemidaré no  
Nagaki kami woba  
Furi-wakété,  
Chi hiro ni nobasu  
Rokuro-Kubi kana !



“ Atama naki  
Bakémono nari ” — to  
Rokuro-Kubi,  
Mité odorokan  
Onoga karada wo.



Tsuka-no-ma ni  
Hari wo tsutawaru,  
Rokuro-Kubi  
Kéta-kéta warau —  
Kao no kowasa yo!



Roku shaku no  
Byōbu ni nobiru  
Rokuro-Kubi  
Mité wa, go shaku no  
Mi wo chijimi-kéri!

## GOBLIN POETRY

*Oh! . . . Shaking loose her long hair disheveled by sleep, the Rokuro-Kubi<sup>18</sup> stretches her neck to the length of a thousand fathoms!*

*Will not the Rokuro-Kubi, viewing with astonishment<sup>19</sup> her own body (left behind) cry out, "Oh, what a headless goblin have you become!"*

*Swiftly gliding along the roof-beam, the Rokuro-Kubi laughs with the sound of "kêta-kêta" — oh! the fearfulness of her face!*

*Beholding the Rokuro-Kubi rise up above the six-foot screen, any five-foot person would have become shortened by fear.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Yuki-Onna —  
Yosō kushi mo  
Atsu kōri;  
Sasu-kōgai ya  
Kōri naruran.



Honrai wa  
Kū naru mono ka,  
Yuki-Onna?  
Yoku-yoku mireba  
Ichi-butsu mo nashi!



Yo-akéréba  
Kiété yuku é wa  
Shirayuki no  
Onna to mishi mo  
Yanagi nari-keri!



Yuki-Onna  
Mité wa yasathiku,  
Matsu wo ori  
Nama-daké hishigu  
Chikara ari-keri!

## GOBLIN POETRY

*As for the Snow-Woman,<sup>20</sup> — even her best comb, if I mistake not, is made of thick ice; and her hair-pin, too, is probably made of ice.*

*Was she, then, a delusion from the very first, that Snow-Woman, — a thing that vanishes into empty space? When I look carefully all about me, not one trace of her is to be seen!*

*Having vanished at daybreak (that Snow-Woman), none could say whither she had gone. But what had seemed to be a snow-white woman became indeed a willow-tree!*

*Though the Snow-Woman appears to sight slender and gentle, yet, to snap the pine-trees asunder and to crush the live bamboos, she must have had strength.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Samukésa ni  
Zotto wa surédo  
Yuki-Onna, —  
Yuki oré no naki  
Yanagi-goshi ka mo!



Erimoto yé  
Mizu kakéraruru  
Kokochi seri,  
“Hishaku kasé” chō  
Funé no kowané ni.



Yūrei ni  
Kasu-hishaku yori  
Ichi-hayaku  
Onoré ga koshi mo  
Nukéru senchō.



Yūrēi wa  
Ki naru Izumi no  
Hito nagara,  
Aö-umibara ni  
Nadoté itsuran?



## GOBLIN POETRY

*Though the Snow-Woman makes one shiver  
by her coldness, — ah, the willowy grace of her form  
charms us in spite of the cold.*<sup>21</sup>

*As if the nape of our necks had been sprinkled with cold water, — so we felt while listening to the voice of the ship-ghost, saying: — “Lend me a dipper!”*<sup>22</sup>

*The loins of the captain himself were knocked out very much more quickly than the bottom of the dipper that was to be given to the ghost.*

*Since any ghost must be an inhabitant of the Yellow Springs,<sup>23</sup> how should a ghost appear on the Blue Sea-Plain?*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Sono sugata,  
Ikari wo ōtē,  
Tsuki-matoū  
Funé no hésaki ya  
Tomomori no réi !



Tsumi fukaki  
Umi ni shidzumishi,  
Yūrēi no  
“Ukaman ” toté ya !  
Funé ni sugaréru.



Ukaman to  
Funé wo shitaëru  
Yūrēi wa,  
Shidzumishi hito no  
Omoï naruran.



Uraméshiki  
Sugata wa sugoki  
Yūrēi no,  
Kaji wo jama suru  
Funé no Tomomori.

## GOBLIN POETRY

*That Shape, carrying the anchor on its back,  
and following after the ship — now at the bow and  
now at the stern — ah, the ghost of Tomomori.<sup>24</sup>*

*Crying, “Now perchance I shall be saved!”  
the ghost that sank into the deep Sea of Sin clings  
to the passing ship!<sup>25</sup>*

*The ghosts following after our ship in their  
efforts to rise again (or, “to be saved”) might per-  
haps be the (last vengeful) thoughts<sup>26</sup> of drowned  
men.*

*With vengeful aspect, the grisly ghost of  
Tomomori (rises) at the stern of the ship to hinder  
the play of her rudder.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Ochi-irité,  
Uwo no éjiki to  
Nari ni ken ; —  
Funa-yūrēi mo  
Nama-kusaki kazé.



Shiwo-hi ni wa  
Séizoroë shité,  
Héïkégani  
Ukiyo no sama wo  
Yoko ni niramitsu.



Saikai ni  
Shizumi-nurédomo,  
Héïkégani  
Kōra no iro mo  
Yahari aka-hata.



Maké-ikusa  
Munen to muné ni  
Hasami ken ; —  
Kao mo makka ni  
Naru Héïkégani.

## GOBLIN POETRY

*Having perished in the sea, (those Héïké) would probably have become food for fishes. (Anyhow, whenever) the ship-following ghosts (appear), the wind has a smell of raw fish!*

*Marshaled (on the beach) at the ebb of the tide, the Héïké-crabs<sup>27</sup> obliquely glare at the apparition of this miserable world.*

*Though (the Héïké) long ago sank and perished in the Western Sea, the Héïké-crabs still display upon their upper shells the color of the Red Standard.*

*Because of the pain of defeat, claws have grown on their breasts, I think; — even the faces of the Héïké-crabs have become crimson (with anger and shame).*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Mikata mina  
Oshi-tsubusaréshi  
Héikégani  
Ikon wo muné ni  
Hasami mochikéri.



Tokonoma ni  
Ikéshi tachiki mo  
Taoré-kèri ;  
Yanari ni yama no  
Ugoku kakémono!



Saka-bashira  
Tatéshi wa tazo ya?  
Kokoro ni mo  
Fushi aru hito no  
Shiwaza naruran.



Hidayama wo  
Kiri-kité tatéshi  
Saka-bashira —  
Nanno takumi no  
Shiwaza naruran?

## GOBLIN POETRY

*All the (Hëikë) party having been utterly crushed, claws have grown upon the breasts of the Hëikë-crabs because of the resentment in their hearts.*

*Even the live tree set in the alcove has fallen down; and the mountains in the hanging picture tremble to the quaking made by the Yanari! <sup>28</sup>*

*Who set the house-pillar upside-down? Surely that must have been the work of a man with a knot in his heart. <sup>29</sup>*

*That house-pillar hewn in the mountains of Hida, and thence brought here and erected upside-down — what carpenter's work can it be? <sup>30</sup>*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Uë shita wo  
Chigaëté tatéshi  
Hashira ni wa  
Sakasama-goto no  
Urëi aranan.



Kabé ni mimi  
Arité, kiké to ka?  
Sakashima ni  
Tatéshi hashira ni  
Yanari suru oto!



Uri-iyé no  
Aruji wo toëba,  
Oto arité :  
Waré mé ga kuchi wo  
Aku saka-bashira.



Omoïkiya !  
Sakasa-bashira no  
Hashira-kaké  
Kakinishit uta mo  
Yamai ari to wa !



## GOBLIN POETRY

*As for that house-pillar mistakenly planted upside-down, it will certainly cause adversity and sorrow.<sup>31</sup>*

*O Ears that be in the wall! <sup>32</sup> listen, will ye? to the groaning and the creaking of the house-post that was planted upside-down!*

*When I inquired for the master of the house that was for sale, there came to me only a strange sound by way of reply, — the sound of the upside-down house-post opening its eyes and mouth! (i.e. its knots and cracks.)*

*Who could have thought it! — even the poem inscribed upon the pillar-tablet, attached to the pillar which was planted upside-down, has taken the same (ghostly) sickness.<sup>33</sup>*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Nanigé naki  
Ishi no Jizō no  
Sugata saë,  
Yo wa osoroshiki  
Mikagé to zo naki.



Ita hitoë  
Shita wa Jigoku ni,  
Sumizomé no  
Bōzu no umi ni  
Déru mo ayashina !



Hégasan to  
Rokuji-no-fuda wo,  
Yuréi mo  
Nam'mai dā to  
Kazoëté zo miru.



Tada ichi no  
Kami no o-fuda wa  
Sasuga ni mo  
Noriké naku to mo  
Hégashi kanékéri.

## GOBLIN POETRY

*Though the stone Jizō looks as if nothing were the matter with it, they say that at night it assumes an awful aspect.*<sup>34</sup>

*Since there is but the thickness of a single plank (between the voyager and the sea), and underneath is Hell, 't is indeed a weird thing that a black-robed priest should rise from the sea !*<sup>35</sup>

*Even the ghost that would remove the charms*<sup>36</sup>  
*written with six characters actually tries to count them, repeating : “ How many sheets are there ? ”*<sup>37</sup>

*Of the august written-charms of the god (which were pasted upon the walls of the house), not even one could by any effort be pulled off, though the rice-paste with which they had been fastened was all gone.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Yo-arashi ni  
Chishiho itadaku  
Furu tsubaki,  
Hota-hota ochiru  
Hana no nama-kubi.



Kusa mo ki mo  
Némuréru koro no  
Sayo kazé ni,  
Méhana no ugoku  
Furu-tsubaki kana!



Tomoshihi no  
Kagé ayashigé ni  
Miyénuru wa  
Abura shiborishi  
Furu-tsubaki ka-mo?

## GOBLIN POETRY

*When by the night-storm is shaken the blood-crowned and ancient tsubaki-tree,<sup>38</sup> then one by one fall the gory heads of the flowers, (with the sound of) hota-hota!*

*When even the grass and the trees are sleeping under the faint wind of the night, — then do the eyes and the noses (or “the buds and the flowers”) of the old tsubaki-tree move!*

*As for (the reason why) the light of that lamp appears to be a Weirdness, — perhaps the oil was expressed from (the nuts of) the ancient tsubaki?<sup>39</sup>*



# THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

## JAPANESE LYRICS

The following group of poems are all from the *Manyōshū*, or "Gathering of a Myriad Leaves," a vast collection of poems composed before the middle of the eighth century. They represent the old classic poetry at its purest, free from alien influence; and they offer us many suggestions as to the condition of Japanese life and thought twelve hundred years ago. The legend to which they refer is as follows:—

The great god of the firmament had a lovely daughter, Tanabata-tsumé, who passed her days in weaving garments for her august parent. She rejoiced in her work, and thought that there was no greater pleasure than the pleasure of weaving. But one day, as she sat before her loom at the door of her heavenly dwelling, she saw a handsome peasant lad pass by, leading an ox, and she fell in love with him. Her august father, divining her secret wish, gave her the youth for a husband. But the wedded lovers became too fond of each other, and neglected their duty to the god of the firmament; the sound of the shuttle was no longer heard, and the ox wandered, unheeded, over the plains of heaven. Therefore the great god was displeased, and he separated the pair. They were sentenced to live thereafter apart, with the Celestial River<sup>40</sup> between them; but it was permitted them to see each other once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh moon. On that night—providing the skies be clear—the birds of heaven make, with their bodies and wings, a bridge over the stream; and by means of that bridge the lovers can meet. But if there be rain, the River of Heaven rises, and becomes so wide that the bridge cannot be formed. So the husband and wife cannot always meet, even on the seventh night of



## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

the seventh month; it may happen, by reason of bad weather, that they cannot meet for three or four years at a time. But their love remains immortally young and eternally patient; and they continue to fulfil their respective duties each day without fault,—happy in their hope of being able to meet on the seventh night of the next seventh month.

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Amanogawa  
Ai-muki tachité,  
Waga koishi  
Kimi kimasu nari  
Himo-toki makéna !



Hisakata no  
Ama no kawasé ni,  
Funé ukété,  
Koyoï ka kimi ga  
Agari kimasan ?



Kazé kumo wa  
Futatsu no kishi ni  
Kayoëdomo,  
Waga toho-tsuma no  
Koto zo kayowanu !



Tsubuté ni mo  
Nagé koshitsu-béki,  
Amanogawa  
Hédatéréba ka mo,  
Amata subé-naki !

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*He is coming, my long-desired lord, whom I have been waiting to meet here, on the banks of the River of Heaven. . . . The moment of loosening my girdle is nigh!*<sup>41</sup>

*Over the Rapids of the Everlasting Heaven, floating in his boat, my lord will doubtless deign to come to me this very night.*

*Though winds and clouds to either bank may freely come or go, between myself and my far-away spouse no message whatever may pass.*

*To the opposite bank one might easily fling a pebble ; yet, being separated from him by the River of Heaven, alas ! to hope for a meeting (except in autumn) is utterly useless.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki-kazé no  
Fukinishi hi yori  
“Itsushika” to —;  
Waga machi koishi  
Kimi zo kimaséru.



Amanogawa  
Ito kawa-nami wa  
Tatanédomo,  
Samorai gatashi —  
Chikaki kono sé wo.



Sodé furaba  
Mi mo kawashitsu-béku  
Chika-kerédo,  
Wataru subé nashi,  
Aki nishi aranéba.



Kagéroï no  
Honoka ni miété  
Wakarénaba ; —  
Motonaya koïn  
Aü-toki madé wa !

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*From the day that the autumn wind began to blow (I kept saying to myself), "Ah! when shall we meet?" — but now my beloved, for whom I waited and longed, has come indeed!*

*Though the waters of the River of Heaven have not greatly risen, (yet to cross) this near stream and to wait upon (my lord and lover) remains impossible.*

*Though she is so near that the waving of her (long) sleeves can be distinctly seen, yet there is no way to cross the stream before the season of autumn.*

*When we were separated, I had seen her for a moment only, — and dimly as one sees a flying midge; now I must vainly long for her as before, until time of our next meeting!*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Hikoboshi no  
Tsuma mukaë-buné  
Kogizurashi, —  
Ama-no-Kawara ni  
Kiri no tatéru wa.



Kasumi tatsu  
Ama-no-Kawara ni,  
Kimi matsu to, —  
Ikayō hodo ni  
Mono-suso nurenu.



Amanogawa,  
Mi-tsu no nami oto  
Sawagu-nari :  
Waga matsu-kimi no  
Funadé-surashi mo.



Tanabata no  
Sodé maku yoï no  
Akatoki wa,  
Kawasé no tazu wa  
Nakazu to mo yoshi.

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Methinks that Hikoboshi must be rowing his boat to meet his wife,—for a mist (as of oar-spray) is rising over the course of the Heavenly Stream.*

*While awaiting my lord on the misty shore of the River of Heaven, the skirts of my robe have somehow become wet.*

*On the River of Heaven, at the place of the august ferry, the sound of the water has become loud: perhaps my long-awaited lord will soon be coming in his boat.*

*As Tanabata (slumbers) with her long sleeves rolled up, until the reddening of the dawn, do not, O storks of the river-shallows, awaken her by your cries.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Amanogawa  
Kiri-tachi-wataru :  
Kyō, kyō, to —  
Waga matsu-koishi  
Funadé-surashi !



Amanogawa,  
Yasu no watari ni,  
Funé ukété ; —  
Waga tachi-matsu to  
Imo ni tsugé koso.



Ō-sora yo  
Kayō waré sura,  
Na ga yué ni,  
Amanokawa-ji no  
Nazumité zo koshi.



Yachihoko no  
Kami no mi-yo yori  
Tomoshi-zuma ; —  
Hito-shiri ni keri  
Tsugitéshi omoëba.



## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*(She sees that) a mist is spreading across the River of Heaven. . . . "To-day, to-day," she thinks, "my long-awaited lord will probably come over in his boat."*

*By the ferry of Yasu, on the River of Heaven, the boat is floating: I pray you tell my beloved that I stand here and wait.*

*Though I (being a Star-god) can pass freely to and fro, through the great sky, — yet to cross over the River of Heaven, for your sake, was weary work indeed!*

*From the august Age of the God-of-Eight-Thousand-Spears, she had been my spouse in secret only; yet now, because of my constant longing for her, our relation has become known to men.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Amé tsuchi to  
Wakaréshi toki yo  
Onoga tsuma ;  
Shika zo té ni aru  
Aki matsu aré wa.



Waga kōru  
Niho no omo wa  
Koyoï mo ka  
Ama-no-kawara ni  
Ishi-makura makan.



Amanogawa.  
Mikomori-gusa no  
Aki-kazé ni  
Nabikafu miréba,  
Toki kitarurashi.



Waga séko ni  
Ura-koi oréba,  
Amanogawa  
Yo-funé kogi-toyomu  
Kaji no 'to kikoyu.

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*From the time when heaven and earth were parted, she has been my own wife ; — yet, to be with her, I must always wait till autumn.* ○

*With my beloved, of the ruddy-tinted cheeks, this night indeed will I descend into the bed of the River of Heaven, to sleep on a pillow of stone.*

*When I see the water-grasses of the River of Heaven bend in the autumn wind (I think to myself) : “ The time ( for our meeting ) seems to have come.”*

*When I feel in my heart a sudden longing for my husband, then on the River of Heaven the sound of the rowing of the night-boat is heard, and the plash of the oar resounds.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Tō-zuma to  
Tamakura kawashi  
Nétaru yo wa,  
Tori-gané na naki  
Akéba aku to mo !



Yorozu-yo ni  
Tazusawari ité  
Ai mi-domo,  
Omoi-sugu-béki  
Koi naranaku ni.



Waga tamé to,  
Tanabata-tsumé no,  
Sono yado ni,  
Oréru shirotai  
Nuït ken kamo ?



Shirakumo no  
I-ho é kakurité  
Tō-kédomo,  
Yoï-sarazu min  
Imo ga atari wa.

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*In the night when I am reposing with my (now) far-away spouse, having exchanged jewel-pillows<sup>42</sup> with her, let not the cock crow, even though the day should dawn.*

*Though for a myriad ages we should remain hand-in-hand and face to face, our exceeding love could never come to an end. (Why then should Heaven deem it necessary to part us?)*

*The white cloth which Tanabata has woven for my sake, in that dwelling of hers, is now, I think, being made into a robe for me.*

*Though she be far-away, and hidden from me by five hundred layers of white cloud, still shall I turn my gaze each night toward the dwelling-place of my younger sister (wife).*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki saréba  
Kawagiri tatéru  
Amanogawa,  
Kawa ni muki-ité  
Kru yo zo ōki!



Hito-tosé ni  
Nanuka no yo nomi  
Aū-hito no —  
Koī mo tsuki-néba  
Sayo zo aké ni keru!



Toshi no koī  
Koyoī tsukushité,  
Asu yori wa,  
Tsuné no gotoku ya  
Waga koī oran.



Hikoboshi to  
Tanabata-tsumé to  
Koyoī aū ; —  
Ama-no-Kawa to ni  
Nami tatsu-na yumé!

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*When autumn comes, and the river-mists spread over the Heavenly Stream, I turn toward the river (and long); and the nights of my longing are many!*

*But once in the whole year, and only upon the seventh night (of the seventh month), to meet the beloved person—and lo! The day has dawned before our mutual love could express (or “satisfy”) itself!*

*The love-longing of one whole year having ended to-night, every day from to-morrow I must again pine for him as before!*

*Hikoboshi and Tanabata-tsumé are to meet each other to-night;—ye waves of the River of Heaven, take heed that ye do not rise!*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki-kazé no  
Fuki tadayowasu  
Shirakumo wa,  
Tanabata-tsumé no  
Amatsu hiré kamo?



Shiba-shiba mo  
Ai minu kimi wo,  
Amanogawa  
Funa-dé haya séyo  
Yo no fukénu ma ni.



Amanogawa  
Kiri tachi-watari  
Hikoboshi no  
Kaji no 'to kikoyu  
Yo no fuké-yukéba.



Amanogawa  
Kawa 'to sayakéshi:  
Hikoboshi no  
Haya kogu funé no  
Nami no sawagi ka?



## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Oh ! that white cloud driven by the autumn-wind — can it be the heavenly hiré<sup>43</sup> of Tanabata-tsumé ?*

*Because he is my not-often-to-be-met beloved, hasten to row the boat across the River of Heaven ere the night be advanced.*

*Late in the night, a mist spreads over the River of Heaven ; and the sound of the oar of Hikoboshi is heard.*

*On the River of Heaven a sound of plashing can be distinctly heard: is it the sound of the rippling made by Hikoboshi quickly rowing his boat ?*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Kono yūbé,  
Furikuru amé wa,  
Hikoboshi no  
Haya kogu funé no  
Kaï no chiri ka mo.



Waga tama-doko wo  
Asu yori wa  
Uchi harai,  
Kimi to inézuté  
Hitori ka mo nen !



Kazé fukité,  
Kawa-nami tachinu ; —  
Hiki-funé ni  
Watari mo kimasé  
Yo no fukénu ma ni.



Amanogawa  
Nami wa tatsutomo  
Waga funé wa  
Iza kogi iden  
Yo no fukénu ma ni.

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Perhaps this evening shower is but the spray (flung down) from the oar of Hikoboshi, rowing his boat in haste.*

*From to-morrow, alas ! after having put my jewel-bed in order, no longer reposing with my lord, I must sleep alone !*

*The wind having risen, the waves of the river have become high ; — this night cross over in a tow-boat, I pray thee, before the hour be late !*

*Even though the waves of the River of Heaven run high, I must row over quickly, before it becomes late in the night.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Inishié ni  
Oritéshi hata wo ;  
Kono yūbé  
Koromo ni nuité —  
Kimi matsu aré wo !



Amanogawa  
Sé wo hayami ka mo ?  
Nubatama no  
Yo wa fuké ni tsutsu,  
Awanu Hikoboshi !



Watashi-mori,  
Funé haya watasé ; —  
Hito-tosé ni  
Futatabi kayō  
Kimi naranaku ni !



Aki kazé no  
Fukinishi hi yori,  
Amanogawa  
Kawasé ni dédachi ; —  
Matsu to tsugé koso !

## THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Long ago I finished weaving the material;  
and, this evening, having finished sewing the garment for him — (why must) I still wait for my lord?*

*Is it that the current of the River of Heaven  
(has become too) rapid? The jet-black night advances — and Hikoboshi has not come!*

*Oh, ferryman, make speed across the stream!  
— my lord is not one who can come and go twice in a year!*

*On the very day that the autumn-wind began to blow, I set out for the shallows of the River of Heaven; — I pray you, tell my lord that I am waiting here still!*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

Tanabata no  
Funanori surashi, —  
Maso-kagami,  
Kiyoki tsuki-yo ni  
Kumo tachi-wataru.

# THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Metlinks Tanabata must be coming in her  
boat ; for a cloud is even now passing across the clear  
face of the moon.*

## JAPANESE LYRICS

*Perhaps the legend of Tanabata, as it was understood by those old poets, can make but a faint appeal to Western minds. Nevertheless, in the silence of transparent nights, before the rising of the moon, the charm of the ancient tales sometimes descends upon me, out of the scintillant sky,—to make me forget the monstrous facts of science, and the stupendous horror of Space. Then I no longer behold the Milky Way as that awful Ring of the Cosmos, whose hundred million suns are powerless to lighten the Abyss, but as the very Amanogawa itself,—the River Celestial. I see the thrill of its shining stream, and the mists that hover along its verge, and the water-grasses that bend in the winds of autumn. White Oribimé I see at her starry loom, and the Ox that grazes on the farther shore;—and I know that the falling dew is the spray from the Herdsman's oar. And the heaven seems very near and warm and human; and the silence about me is filled with the dream of a love unchanging, immortal,—forever yearning and forever young, and forever left unsatisfied by the paternal wisdom of the gods.*

THE END



## NOTES



## NOTES

1. A cloak, lined usually with brightly colored silk.
2. Alluding to the Buddhist proverb: "The fallen flower returns not to the branch; the broken mirror never again reflects."
3. That is to say, the grace of their motion makes one think of the grace of young girls.
4. A creature of which weird things are told; for it is said to be a night wanderer from the Land of Darkness. It cries as though in pain the syllables "*ho-to-to-gi-su*."
5. Because an obi or girdle of very bright color can be worn only by children.
6. Written more than eleven hundred years ago on the death of the poet's little son.
7. Literally: "Repeat prayers saying, dead-of-presence-in twain facing, — small-pan cooking!" *Konabé-daté* is an idiomatic expression signifying a lovers' tête-à-tête, the idea suggested being that of the pleasure experienced by an amorous couple in eating out of the same dish.
8. The Wheel of Karma, the passage from birth to birth.
9. Deeds in a former existence.
10. A double meaning in the third line of the original may be rendered by reading for *of Akanuma* — *after the time of that happy relation*.
11. The meaning intended may be expressed thus: "Being on my way to pay a visit, I met with a being lovely as a flower; and

## NOTES

for the sake of that lovely person, I am passing the day here. . . . Fair one, wherefore that dawn-like blush before the hour of dawn? — can it mean that you love me?"

12. The Will-o'-the-Wisp is called fox-fire because the goblin-fox was supposed to create it.
13. The goblin-fox deceived men by transforming an old horse-bone into the form of a courtesan.
14. One afflicted with ghost-sickness. It was formerly supposed that the intense grief or longing of a lover caused the suffering spirit to create a double, one body going to join the beloved while the other remained at home.
15. This suggests the ghostly sympathy said to exist between a mirror and the soul of its possessor.
16. A typical play upon words. The toad was credited with supernatural powers and the phrase *keshō-no-mono* may signify goblin-thing as well as toilet article.
17. A mollusk credited with the power of creating a mirage by exhaling a vapor that to deluded mortals takes the form of *Shin-kirō*, the Elf-land of Far Eastern fable.
18. A person whose neck lengthens prodigiously during sleep, so that the head can wander around seeking what it may devour. Often the head is completely detachable.
19. A woman may become a *Rokuro-Kubi* without knowing it.
20. A beautiful phantom whose embrace is death.
21. The original is capable of another reading suggesting that the grace of her form is like that of willow branches weighed down by snow.
22. The spirits of the drowned are said to follow after ships calling for a dipper. This should be given, but first, without the

## NOTES

knowledge of the spirits, the bottom must be knocked out, otherwise they will use it to fill and sink the ship.

23. The Underworld of the Dead.
24. A famous chieftain of the Héiké clan lost in a great sea-fight. His ghost was addicted to making off with the anchors of ships moored in his domain.
25. Spirits of the drowned must remain in the water until they can lure the living to destruction. So his exclamation really means, "now perchance I shall be able to achieve salvation by drowning somebody."
26. Or "the avenging ghost."
27. A species bearing on their upper shells wrinklins resembling the outlines of an angry face. They are said to be the transformed spirits of the defeated Héiké warriors.
28. A goblin who makes a practice of shaking houses. It may also mean the sound of the shaking of a house during an earthquake.
29. A house-post must be set with the same end up as when it was growing. An "upside-down post" would groan in the night, open its cracks like mouths and its knots like eyes, and make itself generally a nuisance until the mistake was corrected.
30. Or, "for what evil design can this deed have been done"? *Takumi* may signify either a carpenter or an intrigue.
31. Literally, "upside-down-matter-sorrow," contrariety.
32. Alluding to the proverb, "There are ears in the wall," suggesting the necessity for care even in private conversation.
33. That is, is upside-down — all wrong.
34. Some statues of Jizō, the Buddhist savior of children's ghosts, are said to walk at night in various disguises.

## NOTES

35. The bald body and staring eyes of the cuttlefish, bearing a distorted resemblance to the shaven head of a priest, suggested to the Japanese the name Priest of the Sea.
36. Japanese houses are protected against the entrance of evil spirits by charms written on rice paper and pasted on the door.
37. Or, repeating, "Hail to thee, O Buddha Amitâbha!" The idea of counting is also suggested in this alternate reading by the fact that the invocation to Amitâbha is usually accompanied by the numbering of beads on a rosary.
38. This tree, which in its old age is supposed to be a favorite haunt of goblins, bears a heavy crimson flower that drops with an audible thud often compared with the sound of a human head falling under the sword.
39. The oil used in Japanese lamps was obtained from the nuts of the *tsubaki*.
40. The Milky Way.
41. Lovers, ere parting, were wont to tie each other's inner girdle (*himo*) and pledge themselves to leave the knot untouched until the time of their next meeting.
42. A poetical phrase signifying the use of each other's arms as pillows.
43. Scarf.



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