

ASDP, 2013
Medieval Japanese Literature
On the Road: Travel and Literature in Medieval Japan

Here is a little background for the readings I have submitted.

1. “Seeing a dead body lying among the stones on the island of Samine,” from the *Man’yōshū* poetry collection (794). This poem is by one of Japan’s most famous traditional poets, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. Late 600s). Hitomaro was literally worshipped as the Saint of Poetry in medieval times. This “long poem,” with two accompanying “envoys” acting as lyrical commentary, movingly captures what it was like to travel in ancient times.

2. From *Tales of Ise*, Episodes 1, 7-10 (pp. 69-70, 73-77; Notes pp. 200-205). I am asking you to focus on Episode 1, and Episodes 7-10, which constitute a very famous travel sequence in traditional Japanese literature. (Of course, you are welcome to read the first six episodes to get a better sense of what the hero is like.) *Tales of Ise* is collections of short fictionalized narratives with poems, and was compiled in the 10th century. The protagonist of many of the stories, including the episodes here, is a renowned lover and poet. He has just been forced to leave Kyoto because he was having an affair with the Emperor’s fiancée, and he heads east, toward what is now Tokyo, but in those days was pretty wild, lonely country. These three episodes are among the most famous pieces of writing in traditional Japanese literature.

3. From *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*. These are memoirs written by Lady Nijō, a middle-ranking court lady who was a secondary wife of an emperor in the late 1200s and early 1300s, more than 300 years after *Tales of Ise* was written. It is, as far as we know, a “true” story, and many of the people and events she writes about can be corroborated.

After considerable success in the privileged world of the imperial court of medieval Japan, Lady Nijō is in essence divorced by the emperor, whose primary wife is jealous of her. Nijō has hardly been faithful herself, having taken at least two lovers in addition to her relationship to the emperor (and actually juggling all these relationships simultaneously). She accepts her fate, and decides it is a sign for her to turn more seriously to religious pursuits, so she becomes a Buddhist nun and decides to travel around Japan, partly to forget her troubled past, and partly see all the places she’d only read about in poems and stories. To earn her way, she stops at religious institutions along the way, and copies sacred books for them, and sometimes also sells personal possessions. In this passage, she has just set out for the first time after becoming a nun at the age of 31. See if she makes any references to the *Tales of Ise* episodes you read earlier.

4. From *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. I have marked the passages to read with a read rectangle. The author, Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), is the most famous haiku poet in Japan, and this travel journal is his most famous piece of extended writing. It may not be easily apparent from the selections, but the journey is both a physical and spiritual one. Notice the appearance of “saintly” people along the road, most notably the “young man of tremendous physique” (p. 120), who escorts Bashō through the dangerous mountains in a passage that can be interpreted as spiritual death and re-birth.

115-7 *Seeing a dead body lying among the
stones on the island of Saminé¹
in the province of Sanuki.*

[II : 220-2]

O SANUKI of beautiful seaweed
On which I never tire to look !
So fair is the province
Because of its origin,
And so hallowed the land
For its divinity,²
With the very face of a god
Enduring full and perfect
With heaven and earth, with sun and moon.
I, travelling from place to place,
Embarked at Naka's³ haven
And thence sailed on,
When with the tide the wind arose,
Blowing from the dwelling-place of clouds.
I saw the billows racing on the sea,
And white surges beat upon the shore.
In fear of the whale-haunted sea
We rowed, straining the oars,
And sought, of all the islands thereabout,
Saminé, the island of renown,
And on its rugged coast
We built a hut for shelter.
There I found you, poor man !—
Outstretched on the beach,
On this rough bed of stones,
Amid the busy voices of the waves.

¹ Now known as Sami and situated a short distance off the coast of Utatsu, Nakatado District, Sanuki Province: the island still has a fairly large population.

² In Japanese mythology a province was sometimes regarded as a deity, and its face as the face of a god.

³ Said to be the present town of Nakatsu, to the north-east of which lies the island of Sami. In that case, the poet was sailing the Inland Sea from west to east.

If I but knew where was your home,
I would go and tell ;
If your wife but knew,
She would come to tend you.
She, knowing not even the way hither,
Must wait, must ever wait,
Restlessly hoping for your return—
Your dear wife—alas !

Emvoys

Had your wife been with you,
She would have gathered food for you—
Starworts on Sami's hill-side¹—
But now is not their season past ?

On the rugged beach
Where the waves come surging in from sea
You sleep, O luckless man,
Your head among the stones !

118 *Composed when the Empress² climbed the* [III : 235]
Thunder Hill.³

Lo, our great Sovereign, a goddess,
Tarries on the Thunder
In the clouds of heaven!⁴

¹ i. e. Saminé Island.

² The Empress was the Empress Jitō.

³ In Yamato Province.

⁴ This poem is based on the idea that the Sovereigns are the offspring of Amaterasu Omikami, and that their proper sphere is heaven. Here the Thunder Hill is regarded as the actual embodiment of Thunder.

Tales of Ise

I

ONCE a man who had lately come of age went hunting on his estate at Kasuga village, near the Nara capital.¹ In the village there lived two beautiful young sisters. The man caught a glimpse of the sisters through a gap in their hedge. It was startling and incongruous indeed that such ladies should dwell at the ruined capital, and he wished to meet them. He tore a strip from the skirt of his hunting costume, dashed off a poem, and sent it in. The fabric of the robe was imprinted with a moss-fern design.²

Kasugano no	Like the random pattern of this
Wakamurasaki no	robe,
Surigoromo	Dyed with the young purple
Shinobu no midare	From Kasuga Plain—
Kagiri shirarezu.	Even thus is the wild disorder
	Of my yearning heart. ³

No doubt it had occurred to him that this was an interesting opportunity for an adaptation of the poem that runs,

¹ Notes to the Tales will be found on pp. 199-259.

Tales of Ise

Michinoku no	My thoughts have grown
Shinobu mojizuri	disordered
Tare yue ni	As random patterns dyed on cloth
Midaresomenishi	Reminiscent of Shinobu in
Ware naranaku ni.	Michinoku—
	And who is to blame?
	Surely not I. ⁴

People were remarkably elegant in those days.

2

Once in the days after the move from Nara, when people were still not settled in the new capital, a certain man discovered a lady living in the western part of the city. She was charming to look at, and her disposition was even more delightful than her appearance. She was apparently not single, but the man made love to her anyway, even though he was an honorable fellow. After he had returned home his conscience must have bothered him, because he sent her this poem. (It was early in the Third Month and a drizzling rain was falling.)

Oki mo sezu	After a night
Ne mo sede yoru o	Neither waking nor sleeping,
Akashite wa	I have spent the day
Haru no mono tote	Staring at the rain—
Nagamekurashitsu.	The long rain of Spring. ¹

3

Once a man sent a bit of seaweed¹ to a lady with whom he was in love. His poem:

Tales of Ise

Omoi araba	If you love me,
Mugura no yado ni	Let us sleep together,
Ne mo shinan	Though it be in a weed-choked
Hijikimono ni wa	house
Sode o shirtsutsu mo.	With our sleeves
	For mattress. ²

This happened while the Empress from the Second Ward³ was still a commoner, before she entered the emperor's palace.

4

Once when the ex-empress¹ was living in the eastern Fifth Ward, a certain lady occupied the western wing of her house. Quite without intending it, a man fell deeply in love with the lady and began to visit her; but around the Tenth of the First Month she moved away without a word, and though he learned where she had gone, it was not a place where ordinary people could come and go. He could do nothing but brood over the wretchedness of life. When the plum blossoms were at their height in the next First Month, poignant memories of the year before drew him back to her old apartments. He stared at the flowers from every conceivable standing and sitting position, but it was quite hopeless to try to recapture the past. Bursting into tears, he flung himself onto the floor of the bare room and lay there until the moon sank low in the sky. As he thought of the year before, he composed this poem:

Tsuki ya aranu	Is not the moon the same?
Haru ya mukashi no	The spring
Haru naranu	The spring of old?
Wa ga mi hitotsu wa	Only this body of mine
Moto no mi ni shite.	Is the same body . . . ²

He went home at dawn, still weeping.

5

Once a man was paying secret visits to a lady in the neighborhood of the eastern Fifth Ward. Since he did not wish to be observed, he could not enter through the gate, but came and went through a broken place in the earthen wall where some children had been playing. The spot was not much frequented, but his repeated use of it finally became known to the house's owner,¹ who posted a night guard there. The man, when he came, was thus obliged to go home without having seen the lady. He composed this poem:

Hito shirenu	Would that he might fall asleep
Wa ga kayoiji no	Every night—
Sekimori wa	This guard
Yoioigoto ni	At the secret place
Uchi mo nenanan.	Where I come and go. ²

The lady was so distressed that the owner relented.

Gossip about these secret visits to the Empress from the Second Ward finally led her brothers to place her under guard—or so it is said.³

6

A certain man had for years courted a most inaccessible lady. One pitch-black night he finally spirited her out of her apartments and ran off with her. As they passed a stream called the Akutagawa, she caught a glimpse of a dewdrop on a blade of grass and asked him what it was.

The journey ahead was long, the hour had grown late, and a torrential rain was pouring down, punctuated by frightful peals of thunder. The man put the lady inside a ruined storehouse and stationed himself in the doorway with his bow and quiver on his back, never dreaming that the place was haunted by demons. But while he was standing there longing for daybreak, a demon ate the lady up in one gulp. A thunderclap muffled her scream of terror.

When the sky finally began to lighten a bit, the man peered inside and saw that the lady was gone. Frantic with helpless grief, he recited,

Shiratama ka	When my beloved asked,
Nani zo to hito no	“Is it a clear gem
Toishi toki	Or what might it be?”
Tsuyu to kotaete	Would that I had replied,
Kienamashi mono o.	“A dewdrop!” and perished. ¹

It is said that while the future Empress from the Second Ward was in attendance upon her cousin, the imperial consort, someone was fascinated by her beauty and carried her off on his back. Her brothers, Mototsune and Kunitsune, who were minor officials then, happened to be on their way to the imperial palace. They heard someone wailing, halted the abductor, and took the lady back. They were the devils the author talks about. The lady was still very young and had not yet ceased to be a commoner.²

7

Once a man set out toward the east because of certain problems that had made life in the capital uncomfortable for him.¹ Gazing at the foaming white surf as he crossed the

beach between Ise and Owari Provinces, he composed this poem:

Itodoshiku	How poignant now
Sugiyuku kata no	My longing
Koishiki ni	For what lies behind—
Urayamashiku mo	Enviably indeed
Kaeru nami kana.	The returning waves. ²

8

Once in the past a certain man journeyed toward the east in search of a place to live, perhaps because he found it awkward to stay in the capital. One or two people accompanied him. When he saw smoke rising from the peak of Asama in Shinano Province, he recited a poem:

Shinano naru	Surely no one
Asama no take ni	Far or near
Tatsu keburu	But marvels to see
Ochikochibito no	The smoke rising from the peak
Mi ya wa togamenu.	Of Asama in Shinano. ¹

9

Once a certain man decided that it was useless for him to remain in the capital. With one or two old friends, he set out toward the east in search of a province in which to settle. Since none of the party knew the way, they blundered ahead as best they could, until in time they arrived at a place called Yatsuhashi¹ in Mikawa Province. (It was a spot where the waters of a river branched into eight channels, each with a bridge, and thus it had come to be called

Yatsuhashi—"Eight Bridges.") Dismounting to sit under a tree near this marshy area, they ate a meal of parched rice. Someone glanced at the clumps of irises that were blooming luxuriantly in the swamp. "Compose a poem on the subject, 'A Traveler's Sentiments,' beginning each line with a syllable from the word 'iris' [*kakitsubata*]," he said. The man recited,

Karagoromo	I have a beloved wife,
Kitsutsu narenishi	Familiar as the skirt
Tsuma shi areba	Of a well-worn robe,
Harubaru kinuru	And so this distant journeying
Tabi o shi zo omou.	Fills my heart with grief. ²

They all wept onto their dried rice until it swelled with the moisture.

On they journeyed to the province of Suruga. At Mount Utsu the road they were to follow was dark, narrow, and overgrown with ivy vines and maples. As they contemplated it with dismal forebodings, a wandering ascetic appeared and asked, "What are you doing on a road like this?" The man, recognizing him as someone he had once known by sight, gave him a message for a lady in the capital:

Suruga naru	Beside Mount Utsu
Utsu no yamabe no	In Suruga
Utsutsu ni mo	I can see you
Yume ni mo hito ni	Neither waking
Awanu narikeri.	Nor, alas, even in my dreams. ³

At Mount Fuji a pure white snow had fallen, even though it was the end of the Fifth Month.⁴

Toki shiranu	Fuji is a mountain
Yama wa Fuji no ne	That knows no seasons.
Itsu tote ka	What time does it take this for,
Ka no ko madara ni	That it should be dappled
Yuki no fururan.	With fallen snow? ⁶

To speak in terms of the mountains hereabout, Mount Fuji is as tall as twenty Mount Hiei's piled on top of one another.⁶ In shape it resembles a salt-cone.⁷

Continuing on their way, they came to a mighty river flowing between the provinces of Musashi and Shimōsa. It was called the Sumidagawa.⁸ The travelers drew together on the bank, thinking involuntarily of home. "How very far we have come!" The ferryman interrupted their laments: "Come aboard quickly; it's getting late." They got into the boat and prepared to cross, all in wretched spirits, for there was not one among them who had not left someone dear to him in the capital.

A bird about the size of a snipe—white, with a red bill and red legs—happened to be frolicking on the water as it ate a fish. Since it was of a species unknown in the capital, none of them could identify it. They consulted the ferryman, who replied with an air of surprise, "It is a capital-bird, of course." Then one of the travelers recited this poem:

Na ni shi owaba	If you are what your name implies,
Iza koto towamu	Let me ask you,
Miyakodori	Capital-bird,
Wa ga omou hito wa	Does all go well
Ari ya nashi ya to.	With my beloved? ⁹

Everyone in the boat burst into tears.

A certain man, having reached the province of Musashi in his wanderings, began to court a Musashi girl. Her father told him that she was intended for someone else, but her mother was delighted by the prospect of such an elegant son-in-law. (Although the father came of ordinary stock, the mother was a Fujiwara, and thus she considered a match with a nobleman entirely suitable and most desirable.) She sent the suitor this poem. The family lived in Miyoshino Village¹ in Iruma District.

Miyoshino no	The wild goose that shelters
Tanomou no kari mo	On Miyoshino's fields
Hitaburu ni	Cries that it looks
Kimi ga kata ni zo	In your direction
Yoru to naku naru.	And in no other. ²

His reply:

Wa ga kata ni	When should I forget
Yoru to naku naru	The wild goose that shelters
Miyoshino no	On Miyoshino's fields,
Tanomou no kari o	Crying that it looks
Itsu ka wasuren.	In my direction? ³

Even in the provinces this man did not depart from his customary behavior.

1. "Kasuga village" probably refers to the vicinity of Kasugano (Kasuga Plain), now within the city of Nara. The plain, famous in classical poetry, lies at the western edge of the Kasugayama hills, between Tō-

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daiji Temple and the Kōfukuji Great Eastern Torii (an area now occupied in part by Nara Park).

2. "Moss-fern design" translates *shinobuzuri*, a term of uncertain meaning. *Suri* (*zuri*, "rubbing") was an ancient dyeing process that originally entailed stretching a length of cloth on a natural object, such as a rock, and rubbing it with the flowers, leaves, and/or stems of various plants. (During the Heian period the old method prevailed in rural districts, but artisans in the capital devised the more sophisticated technique of laying the cloth on a carved board and rubbing with a dye plant. The design of the garment described in the first poem was presumably imprinted in that way, with *murasaki*, discussed below, as the dye plant.)

Of numerous theories concerning the meaning of *shinobu* in *shinobuzuri* (also called *shinobu moji-zuri*), the one on which I have based the translation appears to be favored by modern IM scholars. It explains the term as a rubbing process employing the plant *shinobu* (*Davallia bullata*), a species of small, moss-like fern with short, thickly clustered, deep green leaves, found typically on rocks and earth in shady spots. The *shinobu* is thought to have produced a tangled, highly irregular pattern when rubbed against cloth—the "random pattern" of the poems.

From medieval times on, Minamoto Tōru's poem *Michinoku no* (the second below) has been cited in support of another theory concerning the origin of the term *shinobuzuri*, namely, that it derives from Shinobu District in Michinoku Province (now Shinobu District, Fukushima Prefecture), said to have been famous in antiquity for producing this kind of cloth. Supporters of the moss-fern theory maintain that references to Shinobu District in *Michinoku no* and other poems are merely plays on words suggested by the identity of sound.

For the moss-fern theory, see Arai, p. 71; Ō/T, p. 188, n. 6. Many dictionaries take the compromise position that the fabric was produced at Shinobu through use of the moss-fern. See also Vos, II, 66, n. 13, and Minnich, p. 113. For a description of the *suri* process, see Nagashima, pp. 105-6.

3. *Kasugano no*. KWR (ZKT 34155), anon.; SKKS 994, Narihira. On the question of attributions to Narihira, see pp. 35, 64-65. It is most unlikely that Narihira would have composed a variation on a poem by a contemporary, since the object of the "allusive variation" (*honkadōri*) technique was to give additional depth to one's own composition by associating it with a famous old poem. Arai, pp. 70-71.

"Young purple" is a reference to the plant *murasaki* (*Lithospermum officinale* var. *erythrorhizon*), a gromwell common in dry meadows throughout Japan. Its hairy-leaved stalk, about two feet high, produces small, white, five-petaled flowers in summer; and its thick, purple roots yield a colored pigment that was prized as a dye agent in the Heian period. The roots were also used for medicinal purposes. (Cf. borage, a

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related plant used in Europe as a demulcent and diaphoretic; and several plants of the genus *Lithospermum* that produce colored pigments, e.g. goldenseal [*Hydrastis canadensis*], the root of which yields a yellow dye.)

Murasaki appears frequently in classical poetry, often as a metaphor. Here "young purple" refers obliquely to the two sisters who are responsible for the poet's agitated feelings.

Shinobu no midare means both "random-patterned *shinobu* [-*zuri*]" and "confused feelings caused by love."

4. *Michinoku no*. KKS 724, Minamoto Tōru (822-95); KWR (ZKT 34158), anon. Tōru, a son of Emperor Saga, had a successful career that culminated in his appointment as Minister of the Left in 872 and his elevation to Junior First Rank in 887. He is best remembered for his magnificent house and grounds in the capital and his elegant villa at Uji, which later became the Byōdōin Temple.

I have treated *Michinoku no* as a preface introducing *shinobu*. The other possible interpretation would be, "My thoughts have grown disordered / As random patterns / On cloth from Shinobu in Michinoku." In line 4, *-some* has the dual meaning "begin" and "dye"—thus the line means both "I have begun to be confused" and "dyed in a random pattern." *Some* ("dye") is also an associative word (*engo*) linked to *shinobu moji-zuri*.

2

1. *Oki mo sezu*. KKS 616, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 31335 and 33439), Narihira. *Nagame* is a *kakekotoba* meaning both "prolonged rain" and "gazing pensively."

3

1. *Hijikimo*, believed to be the same as the edible brownish-yellow aquatic plant now called *hijiki* (variously identified in dictionaries as *Cystophyllum fusiforme* and *Higikia fusiformis* [Harv.] Okam.). The poem reveals the reason for this seemingly eccentric gift.

2. *Omoi araba*. The word used for mattress, *hijikimono*, is a pun on *hijikimo*, seaweed.

3. The Empress from the Second Ward was Fujiwara Kōshi. See pp. 45-47. There is no evidence that would connect either Narihira or Kōshi with the poem. The last sentence is said to be an interpolation.

4

1. Fujiwara Junshi, aunt of Kōshi. The text hints that the principals in the episode are Kōshi and Narihira, and many old commentaries say

that when the lady disappeared it was because her male relatives took her to the imperial palace. Kaneko, p. 754.

2. *Tsuki ya aranu*. KKS 747, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 33750), Narihira.

5

1. The reader is probably intended to infer that this was Kōshi's aunt.
2. *Hito shirenu*. KKS 632, Narihira.
3. This sentence is believed to be an interpolation.

6

1. *Shiratama ka*. SKKS 851, Narihira. The poem's rather slight interest lies in a conventional play on the resemblance between dew and the ephemerality of human life. If the writer had but known of the tragedy to come, he would have preferred to die—to vanish swiftly as the dew—rather than experience the grief he now suffers.

2. The last paragraph is probably an interpolation. Kōshi's cousin was Meishi, "the Empress from Samedono." Note that the earlier implication has been that the affair with Narihira occurred while Kōshi was living with her aunt, Junshi, "the ex-Empress from the Fifth Ward" (Sections 3, 4, and 5).

7

1. This and related episodes (8-15, 115-16) are responsible for a well-established tradition that Narihira traveled extensively in the eastern provinces, either because he was banished after his elopement with Kōshi or because he thought it prudent to avoid the displeasure of her powerful relatives. References to such travels also appear in KKS, but there is no mention of them in contemporary histories, diaries, or other primary sources. It has been suggested that the elopement and its sequel were kept out of the official history because of the high social positions of the principals, and that the tradition may be based on fact (Arai, p. 131); but in any case it is impossible to accept the IM episodes as historically accurate. Even the places mentioned are difficult to identify, and some may be fictitious, e.g. "the beach between Ise and Owari."

2. *Itodoshiiku*. GSS 1353, Narihira. The GSS headnote resembles the IM introduction, but places the poet at an unnamed river.

It is a convention of classical Japanese literature that a member of the upper classes leaves the capital with the utmost reluctance, even for a night, and that he suffers pitifully while traveling, both from the hardships of the road and from the reminders of home and loved ones that his refined sensibilities suggest to him—the sight of a bird flying in the

direction of the capital, or of a place associated with the name of a famous exile, or of some object suggesting his own forlorn state ("A derelict boat on the evening tide / Drifted like his friendless self"). Gotō, I, 68; Helen Craig McCullough, *The Taiheiki*, p. 39.

Narihira's poem turns on the word *kaeru*, "return" (used here of waves receding from the shore, returning to the offing), which has the specific meaning of returning home. The poet feels a sense of isolation and nostalgia as he watches the waves roll in and recede; though they can return, he must journey on.

8

1. *Shinano naru*. SKKS 903, Narihira. The poem is evidently intended to demonstrate a cultivated man's reaction to a rare natural phenomenon, the still-active volcano of Mt. Asama on the border between the provinces of Shinano and Kōzuke (Nagano and Gumma prefectures) in eastern Japan. The traveler from the far-off capital is attracted by the novelty of the scene and awed by the presence of the god who was believed responsible for the smoke.

In the preceding episode the traveler is journeying along the Eastern Sea Road, from which Asama's smoke is invisible. Many of the older commentaries concerned themselves with this point and attempted to explain away the difficulty (the smoke was more widely visible in the Heian period, the traveler had wandered off the Eastern Sea Road, etc.), but it is probable that IM authors knew little of the geography of the provinces and were not particularly interested in such details. Arai, p. 138; Kubota, SKKS, II, 132; Ō/T, p. 115, n. 44.

9

1. Yatsushashi was located somewhere in what is now eastern Chiryū Township, Hekikai District, Aichi Prefecture, just off the Eastern Sea Road, the old main route between the capital and the eastern provinces. The bridges apparently disappeared before the end of the Heian period (Arai, p. 139), but memory of them has lingered in countless literary references and works of art, almost all linked in some way to Narihira and the present episode, which is among the best known in IM.

2. *Karagoromo*. KKS 410, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 34650), Narihira. This poem, rather flat and unadorned in translation, is a technical tour de force, much less characteristic of Narihira's best poetry than of the court style proper. (For the court style, see the Introduction, pp. 31-38 and *passim*.) In addition to complying with the rules of the *kakitsubata* game (*ha* and *ba* are written with the same sign and were originally identical in sound), the poet has contrived to include a pillow word, a

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preface, two pivot words, and four associative words. He has also demonstrated his sensibility and his acquaintance with the Six Dynasties technique of reasoning ("I have a beloved wife... and so..."). Although the poem has 33 syllables instead of the conventional 31, it is witty, elegant, and a marvel of virtuosity; it could scarcely be accused by Tsurayuki or anyone else of containing too much matter and too little art.

Karagoromo ("robe") originally meant a robe of Chinese fabric, a garment of exceptional beauty and rarity. The term thus has connotations of elegance that qualify it as a pillow word. It is ordinarily used, as here, with *kiru* ("to wear"), *kinarasu* ("to wear habitually"), etc.

Karagoromo kitsutsu is a preface to the pivot word *nare-* (a form of the verb *naru*, "to grow accustomed to," "to grow fond of").

Pivot words: *nare*, the verb stem in *arenishi*, "having grown accustomed to" and "having grown fond of"; *tsuma* ("skirt," "wife").

Associative words linked to [*kara*]goromo ("robe"): *kiru* ("to wear," used here in the continuative form *kitsutsu*); *nare* (*nareginu*, an everyday garment); *tsuma* ("skirt"); *haru* ("to full cloth"; the sound is incorporated in *harubarū*, "distant").

3. *Suruga naru*. SKKS 904, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 31715), anon.

The translation perhaps overemphasizes the first two lines, which are merely an ingenious preface introducing *utsutsu* ("reality," "one's waking moments") and suggesting the poet's present whereabouts. The poet plays on the similarity in sound between *Utsu* and *utsutsu*.

The poem hinges on the belief that a person's spirit could visit the dreams of someone he loved. The author says, in effect, "It would be too much to hope to meet you here in this remote spot, but if you still loved me your spirit would at least visit my dreams." Kubota, SKKS, II, 133; Arai, pp. 151, 154.

Mt. Utsu is a hill (279 m.) on the mountainous border between Shida and Abe districts in the present Shizuoka Prefecture (Suruga Province). One of the famous places on the Eastern Sea Road.

4. In the lunar calendar the end of the Fifth Month fell between mid-June and mid-July.

5. *Toki shiranu*. SKKS 1614, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 31564), anon.

6. Mt. Fuji on the Shizuoka-Yamanashi prefectural boundary (old Suruga-Kai border) is Japan's tallest (3776 m.) as well as its most famous mountain. It is not, of course, 20 times as high as Mt. Hiei (848 m.), the most conspicuous peak in the capital area, and, as the site of the great Enryakuji monastery, correspondingly prominent in early Japanese history. Mt. Hiei rises northeast of Kyōto on the Kyōto-Shiga prefectural boundary (old Yamashiro-Ōmi border).

7. *Shiojiri*. The meaning of the word is uncertain, but it is usually explained as a high mound of sand used in producing salt. Sea water is

thought to have been poured on such mounds and left to evaporate. Ō/T, p. 117, n. 34; Arai, p. 153.

8. Sumidagawa (Sumida River). Probably to be identified with the present Tone River, the largest watercourse in the Kantō Plain, which is believed to have followed the Musashi-Shimōsa border to Tōkyō Bay until the seventeenth century, and to have been called the Sumida in its lower reaches. (Okami, p. 404, supp. n. 14; NCD, V, 4262.) It is still usual for different stretches of a Japanese river to have different names.

Between 1621 and 1654, the government diverted the Tone River into its present channel, which carries the waters of five prefectures into the Pacific Ocean at Chōshi. There is disagreement about the exact location of the old channel. Some writers identify it with the one presently occupied by the much smaller Edo River (formerly called the Futōi), which flows along the old Musashi-Shimōsa border (present Tōkyō-Chiba border) into the bay (NRD, XI, 76); others identify it with the nearby Naka River channel (NCD, V, 4260).

The present Sumida River, which flows through the eastern part of the city of Tōkyō into the bay, apparently was a tributary that joined the old Tone further upstream, where it is still known as the Arakawa. It seems to have begun to follow its present course, and thus to have acquired its present name of Sumida, only after the Tone's diversion. NCD, V, 4260, but see Kaneko, p. 485; Ō/T, p. 117, n. 35.

A probably erroneous theory, based on a statement in a Heian diary, *Sarashina nikki*, identifies Narihira's river with the present Tama River, which empties into Tōkyō Bay at Kawasaki. Arai, p. 156; DCJ, II, 2975-76.

9. Capital-bird (*miyaōdori*). Believed to be identical with the modern *yurikamome* (*Larus ridibundus sibiricus* Buturlin), a small gull with red bill and legs, indigenous to the northeastern part of the Asiatic mainland. The *yurikamome*'s head plumage is dark brown in summer and white in winter, when the birds migrate to Japan. For a picture, see Yamashina, p. 181.

10. *Na ni shi owaba*. KKS 411, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 32104), Narihira. Although this is one of the best known of the poems attributed to Narihira, it has been argued that the KKS headnote is a clumsy adaptation from IM, and that both this and the "iris poem" (n. 2 above) may originally have been listed in KKS as anonymous. See Arai, pp. 161-63.

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1. Now a part of Sakato Township in northern Iruma District, Saitama Prefecture. Linguistic evidence shows that this ineptly positioned sentence is an interpolation.

2. *Miyoshino no*. KWR (ZKT 35223), anon.; ShokuGSIS 800, anon. *Tanomu* ("depend on," "seek shelter with") is a pivot word meaning

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also *ta no mo* ("on the surface of the rice fields"). *Kari* ("wild goose") is a metaphor for the daughter.

3. *Wa ga kata ni*. KWR (ZKT 35224), anon.; ShokuGSIS 801, Narihira.

Book Four

19 (1289)

Toward the end of the second month I set out from the capital at moonrise.¹ I had given up my home completely, yet my thoughts quite naturally lingered on the possibility of return, and I felt that the moon reflected in my fallen tears was also weeping. How weak-willed I was! These thoughts occupied my mind all the way to Ōsaka Pass, the place where the poet Semimaru once lived and composed the poem that ends, "One cannot live forever in a palace or a hut."² No trace of his home remained. I gazed at my reflection in the famous clear spring at the pass and saw a pathetic image of myself attired down to the tips of my walking shoes in this unfamiliar traveling nun's habit. As I paused to rest, my glance was caught by a cherry tree so heavy with blossoms that I could hardly take my eyes from it. Nearby four or five well-dressed local people on horseback were also resting. Did they share my feelings?

Its blossoms detaining travelers
The cherry tree guards the pass
On Ōsaka Mountain.

I composed this poem as I continued on to the way station known as Mirror Lodge, where at dusk I

saw prostitutes seeking companions for the night and realized that this too formed part of life. Next morning, awakened by a bell at dawn, I set out once more.

I pause to view Mirror Mountain,
But it does not reflect
The image hidden in my heart.

After several days I arrived at Red Hill Lodge in Mino province, where I stopped for the night, weary and lonely from the days I had spent in unaccustomed travel. The lodge was managed by two sisters whose skill as entertainers, especially their sensitive playing of the *koto* and the *biwa*, reminded me of the past. When I ordered some *sake* and asked them to play for me, I noticed that the elder sister appeared troubled. She attended closely to her *biwa* playing, yet I could tell that she was on the verge of tears, and I guessed that we were very much alike. She must have wondered too about the tears that stained my dark sleeves, so out of keeping for a nun, for she composed this poem and passed it to me on a little *sake* cup stand:

I wonder what emotion
Caused you to resolve upon
The life of a wandering
Wisp of smoke from Fuji.

I was moved by her unexpected sympathy to write in reply:

Smoldering flames of love
Sent forth the smoke
From Fuji's Peak
In the Suruga Range.

I was reluctant to leave even this kind of a friend, but of course I could not remain indefinitely, and so once again I set forth.

At the place known as Eight Bridges, finding that the bridges were gone and the rivers dried up,³ I felt as though I had lost a friend.

The web of my troubles still
Streams out in all directions,
Yet not a trace remains
Of the Eight Bridges.

I continued on to the Atsuta Shrine in Owari province and worshiped there. Because the shrine was in the domain of my father, during its annual festival in the fifth month he had regularly sent it a horse as an offering and requested that prayers be said for his well-being. In the year of his final illness Father added some raw silk to his usual offering, but at Reed Harbor Lodge, en route to the shrine, the horse had died suddenly, and startled local officials had to substitute another in its stead. When we learned of this event we took it as a sign that the gods had not accepted Father's prayers. I spent the night in the shrine, touched by these memories, which aroused feelings of loneliness, grief, and despair.

I had left the capital late in the second month intending to push myself hard on my journeys, yet I was so unused to traveling that my progress was slow. Now the third month had already begun. A bright moon rose early, flooding the night sky just as it did in the capital, and once again His Majesty's image floated through my mind. Within the sacred precincts of the Atsuta Shrine cherry trees bloomed

in rich profusion. For whom were they putting on this brilliant display?

Blossoms glow against spring sky
Near Narumi Lagoon,
How long now before
Petals scatter among pines.

I wrote this on a slip of paper and tied it to the branch of a cryptomeria tree in front of the shrine.

For a week I remained in prayer at the shrine before resuming my travels. As I approached the Narumi tidelands I glanced back at the shrine and saw patches of the scarlet fence that surrounded it gleaming through the mist. I struggled to suppress the tears that welled up.

Have pity on me, O gods
Enshrined by braided strands
My fate has twisted now to grief.

Following the moon across the Kiyomi Barrier, my mind was filled with troubles from the past and fears about the future as numerous as the grains of white sand on the vast beach that stretched before my eyes. Next I reached the Ukishima Plain at the base of Mount Fuji, which someone once compared in the fifth month to a dappled fawn. Now the metaphor seemed apt,⁴ judging from the apparent depth of the snow on that high peak, as deep, it seemed, as the layers of worry covering this transient self of mine. No smoke arose from Mount Fuji now, and I wondered what the poet Saigyō had seen yielding to the wind.⁵ I crossed the famous Mount Utsu without being aware of it, for I saw no ivy

vines or maple trees.⁶ In fact, only later upon inquiring of someone did I realize I had passed it.

The ivy that flourishes
In leaves of verse
Appeared not even in a dream.
I crossed Mount Utsu unaware.

The Mishima Shrine in Izu province held an offeratory service identical to the one at Kumano, even down to the awesome dragon. It was here that the late General Yoritomo had stayed a while, and where some high-ranking court ladies had donned traveling clothes and performed the "ten thousand prayers," as they are called.⁷ I realized how they must have suffered, yet could they have been as burdened with troubles as I? It was toward the end of the month when the moon rose late, and the brevity of the moonlit night added to my feelings of loneliness. Fortunately I was able to enjoy the shrine maidens' nighttime performance of sacred *kagura* dances. Four girls wearing special costumes wove back and forth in the dance called *Harena*. I was so intrigued that I spent the whole night at the shrine, leaving only when the singing of birds at dawn summoned me away.

Late that month I arrived at the island of E no Shima, a fascinating place that is not easy to describe. It is separated from the mainland by a stretch of sea, and has many grottoes, in one of which I found shelter with a pious mountain ascetic who had been practicing austerities for many years. Senju Grotto, as it was called, was a humble yet charming dwelling, with fog for a fence and bamboo trees for screens. The ascetic made me feel

welcome and presented me with some shells of the area, whereupon I opened the basket my companion⁸ carried, took out a fan from the capital, and offered it to him.

"Living here as I do, I never hear news from the capital," he said. "Certainly things like this aren't brought to me by the wind. Tonight I feel as though I've met a friend from the distant past." My own feelings quite agreed.

It was quiet with no one around and no special event taking place, yet I could not sleep a wink that night. I lay upon my mattress of moss brooding on the great distance I had traveled and the cloak of worries that covered me, and I wept quietly into my sleeve. Then I decided to go outside and look around. The horizon was lost in a haze that might have been clouds, waves, or mist; but the night sky high above was clear, and the brilliant moon hung motionless. I felt as though I had actually journeyed two thousand *li*. From the hills behind the grotto I heard the heart-rending cries of monkeys and felt an anguish so intense it seemed new. I had undertaken this solitary journey with only my thoughts and my grief in hopes that it would dry my tears. How distressing to have come so far and yet to have the worries of the world still cling to me.

A roof of cedar branches,
Pine pillars, bamboo blinds,
If only these could screen me
From this world of sorrow.

THE NARROW ROAD TO THE
DEEP NORTH

DAYS and months are travellers of eternity. So are the years that pass by. Those who steer a boat across the sea, or drive a horse over the earth till they succumb to the weight of years, spend every minute of their lives travelling. There are a great number of ancients, too, who died on the road. I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud-moving wind – filled with a strong desire to wander.

It was only towards the end of last autumn that I returned from rambling along the coast. I barely had time to sweep the cobwebs from my broken house on the River Sumida before the New Year, but no sooner had the spring mist begun to rise over the field than I wanted to be on the road again to cross the barrier-gate of Shirakawa in due time. The gods seemed to have possessed my soul and turned it inside out, and roadside images seemed to invite me from every corner, so that it was impossible for me to stay idle at home. Even while I was getting ready, mending my torn trousers, tying a new strap to my hat, and applying *moxa*¹ to my legs to strengthen them, I was already dreaming of the full moon rising over the islands of Matsushima. Finally, I sold my house, moving to the cottage of Sampū² for a temporary stay. Upon the threshold of my old home, however, I wrote a linked verse of eight pieces and hung it on a wooden pillar. The starting piece was:

Bashō

Behind this door
Now buried in deep grass,
A different generation will celebrate
The Festival of Dolls.³

It was early on the morning of March the twenty-seventh that I took to the road. There was darkness lingering in the sky, and the moon was still visible, though gradually thinning away. The faint shadow of Mount Fuji and the cherry blossoms of Ueno and Yanaka were bidding me a last farewell. My friends had got together the night before, and they all came with me on the boat to keep me company for the first few miles. When we got off the boat at Senju, however, the thought of the three thousand miles before me suddenly filled my heart, and neither the houses of the town nor the faces of my friends could be seen by my tearful eyes except as a vision.

The passing spring,
Birds mourn,
Fishes weep
With tearful eyes.



The Narrow Road to the Deep North

With this poem to commemorate my departure, I walked forth on my journey, but lingering thoughts made my steps heavy. My friends stood in a line and waved good-bye as long as they could see my back.

I walked all through that day, ever wishing to return after seeing the strange sights of the far north, but not really believing in the possibility, for I knew that departing like this on a long journey in the second year of Genroku⁴ I should only accumulate more frosty hairs on my head as I approached the colder regions. When I reached the village of Sōka in the evening, my bony shoulders were sore because of the load I had carried, which consisted of a paper coat to keep me warm at night, a light cotton gown to wear after the bath, scanty protection against the rain, writing equipment, and gifts from certain friends of mine. I wanted to travel light, of course, but there were always certain things I could not throw away for either practical or sentimental reasons.

I went to see the shrine of Muro-no-yashima. According to Sora,⁵ my companion, this shrine is dedicated to the goddess called the Lady of Flower-bearing Trees,⁶ who has another shrine at the foot of Mount Fuji. This goddess is said to have locked herself up in a burning cell to prove the divine nature of her newly-conceived son when her husband doubted it. As a result, her son was named the Lord Born Out of The Fire,⁷ and her shrine, Muro-no-yashima, which means a burning cell. It was the custom of this place for poets to sing of the rising smoke, and for ordinary people not to eat *konoshiro*, a speckled fish, which has a vile smell when burnt.

I lodged in an inn at the foot of Mount Nikkō on the

Bashō

night of March the thirtieth. The host of the inn introduced himself as Honest Gozaemon, and told me to sleep in perfect peace upon his grass pillow, for his sole ambition was to be worthy of his name. I watched him rather carefully but found him almost stubbornly honest, utterly devoid of worldly cleverness. It was as if the merciful Buddha himself had taken the shape of a man to help me in my wandering pilgrimage. Indeed, such saintly honesty and purity as his must not be scorned, for it verges closely on the Perfection preached by Confucius.

On the first day of April, I climbed Mount Nikkō to do homage to the holiest of the shrines upon it. This mountain used to be called Nikō. When the high priest Kūkai⁸ built a temple upon it, however, he changed the name to Nikkō, which means the bright beams of the sun. Kūkai must have had the power to see a thousand years into the future, for the mountain is now the seat of the most sacred of all shrines, and its benevolent power prevails throughout the land, embracing the entire people, like the bright beams of the sun. To say more about the shrine would be to violate its holiness.

It was with awe
That I beheld
Fresh leaves, green leaves,
Bright in the sun.

Mount Kurokami was visible through the mist in the distance. It was brilliantly white with snow in spite of its name, which means black hair.

Rid of my hair,
I came to Mount Kurokami,

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

On the day we put on
Clean summer clothes. *Written by Sora*

My companion's real name is Kawai Sōgorō, Sora being his pen name. He used to live in my neighbourhood and help me in such chores as bringing water and firewood. He wanted to enjoy the views of Matsushima and Kisagata with me, and also to share with me the hardships of the wandering journey. So he took to the road after taking the tonsure on the very morning of our departure, putting on the black robe of an itinerant priest, and even changing his name to Sōgo, which means Religiously Enlightened. His poem, therefore, is not intended as a mere description of Mount Kurokami. The last two lines, in particular, impress us deeply, for they express his determination to persist in his purpose.

After climbing two hundred yards or so from the shrine, I came to a waterfall, which came pouring out of a hollow in the ridge and tumbled down into the dark green pool below in a huge leap of several hundred feet. The rocks of the waterfall were so carved out that we could see it from behind, though hidden ourselves in a craggy cave. Hence its nickname, See-from-behind.⁹

Silent a while in a cave,
I watched a waterfall,
For the first of
The summer observances.

A friend was living in the town of Kurobane in the province of Nasu. There was a wide expanse of grass-moor,

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children or walking with them arm in arm. The pines are of the freshest green, and their branches are curved in exquisite lines, bent by the wind constantly blowing through them. Indeed, the beauty of the entire scene can only be compared to the most divinely endowed of feminine countenances, for who else could have created such beauty but the great god of nature himself? My pen strove in vain to equal this superb creation of divine artifice.

Ojima Island where I landed was in reality a peninsula projecting far out into the sea. This was the place where the Priest Ungo⁴⁹ had once retired, and the rock on which he used to sit for meditation was still there. I noticed a number of tiny cottages scattered among pine trees and pale blue threads of smoke rising from them. I wondered what kind of people were living in those isolated houses, and was approaching one of them with a strange sense of yearning, when, as if to interrupt me, the moon rose glittering over the darkened sea, completing the full transformation to a night-time scene. I lodged in an inn overlooking the bay, and went to bed in my upstairs room with all the windows open. As I lay there in the midst of the roaring wind and driving clouds, I felt myself to be in a world totally different from the one I was accustomed to. My companion Sora wrote:

Clear voiced cuckoo,
Even you will need
The silver wings of a crane
To span the islands of Matsushima.

I myself tried to fall asleep, supressing the surge of emotion from within, but my excitement was simply too great. I

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finally took out my notebook from my bag and read the poems given me by my friends at the time of my departure – a Chinese poem by Sodō,⁵⁰ a *waka* by Hara Anteki,⁵¹ *haiku* by Sampū and Dakushi,⁵² all about the islands of Matsushima.

I went to Zuiganji Temple on the eleventh. This temple was founded by Makabe-no-Heishirō⁵³ after he had become a priest and returned from China, and was later enlarged by the Priest Ungo into a massive temple with seven stately halls embellished with gold. The priest I met at the temple was the thirty-second in descent from the founder. I also wondered in my mind where the temple of the much-admired Priest Kenbutsu⁵⁴ could have been situated.

I left for Hiraizumi on the twelfth. I wanted to see the pine tree of Aneha and the bridge of Odae on my way. So I followed a lonely mountain trail trodden only by hunters and woodcutters, but somehow I lost my way and came to the port of Ishinomaki. The port was located in a spacious bay, across which lay the island of Kinkazan, an old gold-mine once celebrated as 'blooming with flowers of gold'.⁵⁵ There were hundreds of ships, large and small, anchored in the harbour, and countless streaks of smoke continually rising from the houses that thronged the shore. I was pleased to see this busy place, though it was mere chance that had brought me here, and began to look for a suitable place to stay. Strangely enough, however, no one offered me hospitality. After much inquiring, I found a miserable house, and, spending an uneasy night, I wandered out again on the following morning on a road that was totally unknown to me. Looking across to the ford of Sode, the meadow of Obuchi and the pampas-moor of Mano, I

Bashō

pushed along the road that formed the embankment of a river. Sleeping overnight at Toima, where the long swampish river came to an end at last, I arrived at Hiraizumi after wandering some twenty miles in two days.

It is here that the glory of the three generations of the Fujiwara family⁵⁶ passed away like a snatch of empty dream. The ruins of the main gate greeted my eyes a mile before I came upon Lord Hidehira's mansion, which had been utterly reduced to rice-paddies. Mount Kinkei alone retained its original shape. As I climbed one of the foothills called Takadate, where Lord Yoshitsune met his death, I saw the River Kitakami running through the plains of Nambu in its full force, and its tributary, Koromogawa, winding along the site of the Izumi-ga-shiro castle and pouring into the big river directly below my eyes. The ruined house of Lord Yasuhira was located to the north of the barrier-gate of Koromo-ga-seki, thus blocking the entrance from the Nambu area and forming a protection against barbarous intruders from the north. Indeed, many a feat of chivalrous valour was repeated here during the short span of the three generations, but both the actors and the deeds have long been dead and passed into oblivion. When a country is defeated, there remain only mountains and rivers, and on a ruined castle in spring only grasses thrive. I sat down on my hat and wept bitterly till I almost forgot time.

A thicket of summer grass
Is all that remains
Of the dreams and ambitions
Of ancient warriors.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

I caught a glimpse
Of the frosty hair of Kanefusa⁵⁷
Wavering among
The white blossoms of *unohana*.

Written by Sora



The interiors of the two sacred buildings of whose wonders I had often heard with astonishment were at last revealed to me. In the library of *sutras* were placed the statues of the three nobles who governed this area, and enshrined in the so-called Gold Chapel⁵⁸ were the coffins containing their bodies, and three sacred images. These buildings, too, would have perished under the all-devouring grass, their treasures scattered, their jewelled doors broken and their gold pillars crushed, but thanks to the outer frame and a covering of tiles added for protection, they had survived to be a monument of at least a thousand years.

Even the long rain of May
Has left it untouched –
This Gold Chapel
Aglow in the sombre shade.

Turning away from the highroad leading to the provinces of Nambu, I came to the village of Iwate, where I stopped overnight. The next day, I looked at the cape of Oguro and the tiny island of Mizu, both in a river, and

Bashō

arrived by way of Naruko hot spring at the barrier-gate of Shitomae which blocked the entrance to the province of Dewa. The gate-keepers were extremely suspicious, for very few travellers dared to pass this difficult road under normal circumstances. I was admitted after long waiting,



so that darkness overtook me while I was climbing a huge mountain. I put up at a gate-keeper's house which I was very lucky to find in such a lonely place. A storm came upon us and I was held up for three days.

Bitten by fleas and lice,
I slept in a bed,
A horse urinating all the time
Close to my pillow.

According to the gate-keeper, there was a huge body of mountains obstructing my way to the province of Dewa, and the road was terribly uncertain. So I decided to hire a guide. The gate-keeper was kind enough to find me a young man of tremendous physique, who walked in front of me with a curved sword strapped at his waist and a stick of oak gripped firmly in his hand. I myself followed him, afraid of what might happen on the way. What the gate-keeper had told me turned out to be true. The mountains

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were so thickly covered with foliage and the air underneath was so hushed that I felt as if I were groping my way in the dead of night. There was not even the cry of a single bird



to be heard, and the wind seemed to breathe out black soot through every rift in the hanging clouds. I pushed my way through thick undergrowth of bamboo, crossing many streams and stumbling over hidden rocks, till at last I arrived at the village of Mogami after much shedding of cold sweat. My guide congratulated me by saying that I was indeed fortunate to have crossed the mountains in safety, for accidents of some sort had always happened on his past trips. I thanked him sincerely and parted from him. However, fear lingered in my mind some time after that.

I visited Seifū⁵⁹ in the town of Obanazawa. He was a rich merchant and yet a man of a truly poetic turn of mind. He had a deep understanding of the hardships of the wandering journey, for he himself travelled frequently to the capital city. He invited me to stay at his place as long as I wished and tried to make me comfortable in every way he could.

I felt quite at home,
As if it were mine,
Sleeping lazily
In this house of fresh air.

Bashō

Behind me, Mount Atsumi
Still in the hot sun.

The River Mogami has drowned
Far and deep
Beneath its surging waves
The flaming sun of summer.

I had seen since my departure innumerable examples of natural beauty which land and water, mountains and rivers, had produced in one accord, and yet in no way could I suppress the great urge I had in my mind to see the miraculous beauty of Kisagata, a lagoon situated to the north-east of Sakata. I followed a narrow trail for about ten miles, climbing steep hills, descending to rocky shores, or pushing through sandy beaches, but just about the time the dim sun was nearing the horizon, a strong wind rose from the sea, blowing up fine-grains of sand, and rain, too, began to spread a grey film of cloud across the sky, so that even Mount Chōkai was made invisible. I walked in this state of semi-blindness, picturing all sorts of views to myself, till at last I put up at a fisherman's hut, convinced that if there was so much beauty in the dark rain, much more was promised by fair weather.

A clear sky and brilliant sun greeted my eyes on the following morning, and I sailed across the lagoon in an open boat. I first stopped at a tiny island named after the Priest Nōin⁷⁶ to have a look at his retreat where he had stayed for three years, and then landed on the opposite shore where there was the aged cherry tree which Saigyō⁷⁷ honoured by writing 'sailing over the waves of blossoms'. There were also a mausoleum of the Empress Jingū⁷⁸ and

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the temple named Kanmanjuji. I was a bit surprised to hear of her visit here and left in doubt as to its historical truth, but I sat in a spacious room of the temple to command the entire view of the lagoon. When the hanging screens were rolled up, an extraordinary view unfolded itself before my eyes – Mount Chōkai supporting the sky like a pillar in the south with its shadowy reflection in the water, the barrier-gate of Muyamuya just visible in the west, an endless causeway leading as far as Akita in the east, and finally in the north, Shiogoshi, the mouth of the lagoon with waves of the outer ocean breaking against it. Although little more than a mile in width, this lagoon is not in the least inferior to Matsushima in charm and grace. There is, however, a remarkable difference between the two. Matsushima is a cheerful laughing beauty, while the charm of Kisagata is in the beauty of its weeping countenance. It is not only lonely but also penitent, as it were, for some unknown evil. Indeed it has a striking resemblance to the expression of a troubled mind.

A flowering silk tree
In the sleepy rain of Kisagata
Reminds me of Lady Seishi
In sorrowful lament.⁷⁹

Cranes hop around
On the watery beach of Shiogoshi
Dabbling their long legs
In the cool tide of the sea.

What special delicacy
Is served here, I wonder,

Bashō

Coming to Kisagata
On a festival day.

Written by Sora

Sitting at full ease
On the doors of their huts,
The fishermen enjoy
A cool evening. *Written by Teiji,⁸⁰ a merchant
from the province of Mino*

A poem for a pair of faithful osprey nesting on a rock:

What divine instinct
Has taught these birds
No waves swell so high
As to swamp their home? *Written by Sora*

After lingering in Sakata for several days, I left on a long walk of one hundred and thirty miles to the capital of the province of Kaga. As I looked up at the clouds gathering around the mountains of the Hokuriku road, the thought of the great distance awaiting me almost overwhelmed my heart. Driving myself all the time, however, I entered the province of Echigo through the barrier-gate of Nezu, and arrived at the barrier-gate of Ichiburi in the province of Ecchū. During the nine days I needed for this trip, I could not write very much, what with the heat and moisture, and my old complaint that pestered me immeasurably.

The night looks different
Already on July the sixth,
For tomorrow, once a year
The Weaver meets her lover.⁸¹

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

The great Milky Way
Spans in a single arch
The billow-crested sea,
Falling on Sado beyond.

Exhausted by the labour of crossing many dangerous places by the sea with such horrible names as Children-desert-parents⁸² or Parents-desert-children,⁸³ Dog-deny-ing⁸⁴ or Horse-repelling,⁸⁵ I went to bed early when I reached the barrier-gate of Ichiburi. The voices of two young women whispering in the next room, however, came creeping into my ears. They were talking to an elderly man, and I gathered from their whispers that they were concubines from Niigata in the province of Echigo, and that the old man, having accompanied them here on their way to the Ise Shrine, was going home the next day with their messages to their relatives and friends. I sympathized with them, for as they said themselves among their whispers, their life was such that they had to drift along even as the white froth of waters that beat on the shore, and having been forced to find a new companion each night, they had to renew their pledge of love at every turn, thus proving each time the fatal sinfulness of their nature. I listened to their whispers till fatigue lulled me to sleep.



Bashō

When, on the following morning, I stepped into the road, I met these women again. They approached me and said with some tears in their eyes, 'We are forlorn travellers, complete strangers on this road. Will you be kind enough at least to let us follow you? If you are a priest as your black robe tells us, have mercy on us and help us to learn the great love of our Saviour.' 'I am greatly touched by your words,' I said in reply after a moment's thought, 'but we have so many places to stop at on the way that we cannot help you. Go as other travellers go. If you have trust in the Saviour, you will never lack His divine protection.' As I stepped away from them, however, my heart was filled with persisting pity.

Under the same roof
We all slept together,
Concubines and I –
Bush-clovers and the moon.

As I recited this poem to Sora, he immediately put it down on his notebook.

Crossing the so-called forty-eight rapids of the Kurobe River and countless other streams, I came to the village of Nago, where I inquired after the famous wisteria vines of Tako, for I wanted to see them in their early autumn colours though their flowering season was spring. The villager answered me, however, that they were beyond the mountain in the distance about five miles away along the coastline, completely isolated from human abode, so that not a single fisherman's hut was likely to be found to give me a night's lodging. Terrified by these words, I walked straight into the province of Kaga.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

I walked into the fumes
Of early-ripening rice,
On the right below me
The waters of the Angry Sea.⁸⁶

Across the mountains of Unohana-yama and the valleys of Kurikara-dani, I entered the city of Kanazawa on July the fifteenth, where I met a merchant from Ōsaka named Kasho⁸⁷ who invited me to stay at his inn.

There was in this city a man named Isshō⁸⁸ whose unusual love of poetry had gained him a lasting reputation among the verse-writers of the day. I was told, however, that he had died unexpectedly in the winter of the past year. I attended the memorial service held for him by his brother.

Move, if you can hear,
Silent mound of my friend,
My wails and the answering
Roar of autumn wind.

A visit to a certain hermitage:

On a cool autumn day,
Let us peel with our hands
Cucumbers and mad-apples
For our simple dinner.

A poem composed on the road:

Red, red is the sun,
Heartlessly indifferent to time,
The wind knows, however,
The promise of early chill.

Bashō

city of Ōgaki on horseback, Sora joined us again, having arrived from the province of Ise; Etsujin,¹⁰⁹ too, came hurrying on horseback, and we all went to the house of Jokō,¹¹⁰ where I enjoyed reunion with Zensen,¹¹¹ Keikō,¹¹² his sons and many other old friends of mine who came to see me by day or by night. Everybody was overjoyed to see me as if I had returned unexpectedly from the dead. On



September the sixth, however, I left for the Ise Shrine, though the fatigue of the long journey was still with me, for I wanted to see the dedication of a new shrine there. As I stepped into a boat, I wrote:

As firmly cemented clam-shells
Fall apart in autumn,
So I must take to the road again,
Farewell, my friends.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

Postscript

In this little book of travel is included everything under the sky – not only that which is hoary and dry but also that which is young and colourful, not only that which is strong and imposing but also that which is feeble and ephemeral. As we turn every corner of the Narrow Road to the Deep North, we sometimes stand up unawares to applaud and we sometimes fall flat to resist the agonizing pains we feel in the depths of our hearts. There are also times when we feel like taking to the road ourselves, seizing the rain-coat lying near by, or times when we feel like sitting down till our legs take root, enjoying the scene we picture before our eyes. Such is the beauty of this little book that it can be compared to the pearls which are said to be made by the weeping mermaids in the far-off sea. What a travel it is indeed that is recorded in this book, and what a man he is who experienced it. The only thing to be regretted is that the author of this book, great man as he is, has in recent years grown old and infirm with hoary frost upon his eyebrows.

*Early Summer of the Seventh Year of Genroku*¹¹³
*Soryū*¹¹⁴

ASDP, 2013
Medieval Japanese Literature
On the Road: Travel and Literature in Medieval Japan
“Starter” Bibliography

Below are the books from which our readings were taken.

McCullough, Helen, trans., *Tales of Ise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968)

[Note that there is a newer, more colloquial, translation out now: Mostow, Joshua and Royal Tyler, trans., *The Ise Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010). I used the McCullough version here for convenience rather than because I think it is necessarily better.]

Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, trans., *The Manyōshū* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965)

Yuasa, Nobuyuki, trans., *Bashō: The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966, with numerous reprints through 1983)

Brazell, Karen, trans., *The Confessions of Lady Nijō* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976)

Two all-purpose anthologies:

Keene, Donald, ed. *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Grove Press, 1955) – this is a portable paperback, and includes selections from almost all of the traditionally canonical works.

Shirane, Haruo, *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) – this doorstop hefty, and does not include works between 1600 and the modern period, which are collected in another, equally large volume. The benefit of the size is that a much broader range of writers (in terms of gender and class), genres, and styles is represented.