Tales of Ise

Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan

Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by
HELEN CRAIG McCULLOUGH

1968
University of Tokyo Press
Tokyo, Japan
Tales of Ise

I

O NCE a man who had lately come of age went hunting on his estate at Kasuga village, near the Nara capital. 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.

Kasugano no
Wakamurasaki no
Surigoromo
Shinobu no midare
Kagiri shirarezu.

Like the random pattern of this robe,
Dyed with the young purple
From Kasuga Plain—
Even thus is the wild disorder
Of my yearning heart.

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.
Michinoku no Shinobu mojizuri
Tare yue ni
Midaremenishi
Ware naranaku ni.

My thoughts have grown disordered
As random patterns dyed on cloth
Reminiscent of Shinobu in Michinoku—And who is to blame?
Surely not I.

People were remarkably elegant in those days.

Tales of Ise

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
Ne mo sate yoru o
Akashite wa
Haru no mono tote
Nagamekushitsusu.

After a night
Neither waking nor sleeping.
I have spent the day
Staring at the rain—
The long rain of Spring.

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

Tsuki ya aranu
Haru ya mukashi no
Haru naranu
Wa ga mi hitotsu wa
Moto no mi ni shite.

Is not the moon the same?
The spring
The spring of old?
Only this body of mine
Is the same body...
Once there was a man who abducted someone's daughter. He was on his way to Musashi Plain with her when some provincial officials arrested him for theft. He had left the girl in a clump of bushes and run off, but the pursuers felt certain that he was on the plain, and prepared to set fire to it. In great agitation the girl recited this poem:

Musashino wa
Do not set fire today
Kyō wa na yakase
To Musashi Plain,
Wakakusa no
For my beloved husband
Tsuma mo komoreri
Is hidden here,
Ware mo komoreri. And so am I.

They heard her, seized her, and marched the two off together.¹

Once a man who was staying in Musashi wrote to a lady in the capital. "If I write to you frankly, I shall feel embarrassed; if not, I shall be miserable." On the outside of the letter he inscribed the phrase: "Musashi stirrups." After that there was no further word from him. At length the lady sent this from the capital:

Nakanaka ni
Better it were
Koi ni shinazu wa
To be a silkworm,
Kuwako ni zo
Though its life soon ends,
Narubekakurere
Than to be tortured to death
Tama no o bakari.
By a rash love.²

He must have pitied her in spite of her crudity, because he went to her house and slept with her. He left in the middle of the night, whereupon she sent him this:

Toue iu
If I write, you will be angry;
Towanegi uramu
If not, you will hate me.
Musashi abumi
Surely it is at such times
Kakarori ni ya
That men die
Hito wa shinuran.
Of broken hearts.³
Yo mo akeba
Kitsu ni hamenade
Kutakake no
Madaki ni nakite
Sena o yaritsuru.

When daylight comes
I shall toss him in the cistern—
That miserable rooster
Who crows too soon
And drives my lover away.

Presently the man sent word that he was returning to the capital. His poem:

Kurihara no Aneha no matsu no
Hitonaraba
Miyako no tsuto ni
Iza to iwamashi o.

If the Pine of Aneha at Kurihara
Were but a person
Long awaited,
I would say, "Come with me as a souvenir
To the capital."

The girl was overjoyed. "He must be in love with me," she said.

Once in Michinoku a man began to visit the wife of a commonplace fellow, and discovered to his surprise that she was not at all the ordinary sort of person he had expected. He sent her this:

Shinobuyama
Shinobite kayou
Michi mo gana
Hito no kokoro no
Oku mo mirubekâ.

That I possessed a way—
A path to travel unobserved,
Secret as Mount Shinobu's name—
To behold the innermost recesses
Of your heart.

The lady was immensely flattered. But what would happen, she wondered, when he found that it was after all nothing but the heart of a simple rustic.

Once there was a man named Ki no Aritsune, who served three emperors. For a time he prospered, but later there were changes, and he found himself less well off than even an average courtier. Aritsune was a person of exceptional sensibility and refinement. Despite his poverty, he retained the tastes and attitudes of his more affluent days, paying no attention to the problems of everyday life. He and his wife of many years gradually drew apart, and at length his wife resolved to become a nun and go to live with her elder sister, who had already taken holy orders. Though she and Aritsune had not been intimate for a long time, he was deeply moved as she prepared to leave, but he was too poor to give her a farewell present. In great distress he wrote of her decision to an old friend. "She is leaving forever, and I must send her off without so much as a trifling gift." He ended with this poem:

Te o orite
Aimishi koto o
Kazouruca
Tô to iitsutsu
Yotsu wa henikeri.

Bending my fingers,
I count
The decades
Of our life together—
They are four.

His friend found it most touching. He sent him not only a robe but a quilt as well, with this poem:

Toshi dani no
Tô no yotsu wa
Henikeru o
Kutabi kimi o
Tanomikinuran.

In the four decades
That have elapsed,
How many times
She must have come
Seeking your aid.
Tales of Ise

The woman, acutely embarrassed, made no reply. "Why don't you answer me?" he demanded. "I am blind and speechless with tears," she said. He recited:

Kore ya kono  Here is someone
Ware ni an mi o  Who has wished to be free
Nogaretsutsu  Of her lot to me.
Toshitsuki furedo  Much time has passed,
Masarigao naki.  Yet her lot is little improved.

He removed his cloak and gave it to her, but she left it and ran off—nobody knows where.

63

Once a lonely lady longed desperately to meet a man who would love her. Since it was not something she could talk about, she pretended to have had a certain dream, which she described to her three sons. Two of the sons made non-committal replies and let the matter drop, but to her delight the youngest said, "This means that you are going to find a good husband."

"Most men have little capacity for honest affection. If only I could arrange for her to meet Ariwara Narihira," the third son thought.

One day when Narihira was on a hunting excursion, the boy intercepted him, caught hold of his horse's bridle, and poured out the story. Narihira found it so touching that he went to the lady's house and slept with her. But afterward he failed to reappear. At length the lady went to his house and peered in. He half glimpsed her and recited,

Momotose ni  The lady with thinning hair—
Hitotose taranu  But a year short
Taikumogami  Of a hundred—
Ware o kourashi  Must be longing for me,
Omokage ni miyu.  For I seem to see her face. 1

Then he began to get ready to go out. The lady rushed home, bumping into brambles and briers, and retired to her bed. After a time Narihira arrived and began to peep in from a sheltered spot, just as she had done. She had stopped expecting him and was disconsolately composing herself for sleep. She recited,

Samushiro ni  Must I again tonight
Koromo katasitiki  Spread a single sleeve
Koyoi mo ya  On the narrow mat
Koishiki hito ni  And sleep without
Awade nomi nemu.  My beloved? 2

Moved by pity, he spent the night with her.

Most men show consideration for the women they love and disregard the feelings of the ones who fail to interest them. Narihira made no such distinctions.

64

Once a man received some letters from a lady who showed no inclination to arrange a private meeting with him; furthermore he was not at all sure who she was. He sent her this poem:

Fuku kaze ni  Were I but
Wa ga mi o nasaba  The whistling wind,
Tamasudare  Then might I seek you out
Hima motometsutsu  And enter through a crack
Irubeki mono o.  In those elegant blinds. 3

Her reply:

Toritomenu  Though you were the wind
Kaze ni wa ari tomo  No hand can grasp,
Tamasudare  Who would permit you
Ta ga yurusaba ka  To find a crack
Hima motomubeki.  In these blinds?
The following abbreviations are used in the notes. For complete author names, titles, and publication data, see Works Cited, pp. 263-66. All imperial anthologies of awa are printed in KT, and all references to them cite KT numbers rather than pages.

B/M  Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*
DCJ  Yoshida, *Dai Nihon chimei jisho*
DNS  Tokugawa, *Dai Nihonshi*
GSS  Gosenshii (2nd imperial anthology)
GYS  Gyokuyoshii (14th imperial anthology)
IM   *Ise monogatari*
KKS  *Kokinshii* (1st imperial anthology)
KT   Matsuhashita and Watanabe, *Kokka taikan*
KTe  Kokumin Tosho Kabushiki Kaisha, *Kokka taikei*
KWR  *Kokin uwa roku* (printed in ZKT)
MYS  *Man'yoshii* (printed in KT)
NCD  Sawada, *Nihon chimei daijiten*
NKBT *Iwanami Shoten Henshii, Nihon kotei bungaku taikei*
NRD  Kawade, *Nihon rekishi daijiten*
O/T  Sakakura, *Taketo monogatari*
SCSS  Shinkokusanshii (5th imperial anthology)
SGSIS Shigoshihii (30th imperial anthology)
SGSS  Shingosenshii (13th imperial anthology)
ShokuGSIS *Shokugoshii* (15th imperial anthology)
ShokuGSS  *Shokugosenshii* (10th imperial anthology)
ShokuKKS  *Shokukokinshii* (11th imperial anthology)
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2. There are 209 poems in most versions of IM. About a dozen of them appear in MYS, and thus belong to an earlier period. Sixty-two others, or approximately 30 percent of the total, appear in KKS (completed ca. 951); 18 others in the second imperial waka anthology, GSS (commissioned in 951); and 23 others in a large private collection, KWR, which probably dates from around the third quarter of the tenth century. (IM and KWR share 75 poems, including five in MYS, 33 in KKS, and six in GSS.) Of 26 poems shared by IM, KKS, GSS, or KWR, one-third or more were written by aristocrats, about 15 by people associated with Narihira or roughly contemporary with him, and virtually all of the remainder by anonymous authors. Most of the anonymous poems probably date from the early ninth century. This leaves in question about a hundred additional poems, many of which were attributed to Narihira by medieval commentators. Some may actually be his, others were very likely composed by one or another in IM'sative succession of authors, and others were probably old poems either preserved in now vanished collections or otherwise known to an IM author. Of the group as a whole, it can be said only that they are at least as old as IM itself, i.e., that they are for the most part probably more recent than the mid-tenth century. For further discussion of IM's date and authorship, see pp. 64-65.


5. Souten, 55-51.

6. Ikeda et al., p. 507.

Notes to Pages 35-49

27. *Kokinshū* contains 17 of Hengiō's poems and only five of Yashio's, three of Kurodai's, and one of Kisekai's. The compilers' reason for honoring them with special mention is not clear.


29. Ibid., p. 339.

30. Ibid.

31. The poem may actually be by someone else. KKS says only that it is sometimes attributed to Kurodai, though the kana pronounce it typical of his work.


33. For an analysis, see Sec. 25, n. 2.

34. Saeki Umetomo, p. 339.

35. KKS 1030 (translation from B/M, p. 276).


37. SJ, p. 476.

38. See Yamato, p. 353.

39. For the Yoshitsune legend, see Heike Chō, *Yoshitsune*.

40. See Fukui, p. 342.

41. Aoki, p. 18.

42. See Saeki Ariyoshi, p. 441.

43. As evidence of the esteem in which Narahira was apparently held, note his generous representation in *Kokinshū* (30 poems, exceeded only by the compilers and one other man), Tóhōai's respectful references to him in the travel journal *Ise monogatari* and the description in *Ise monogatari* of other people's responses to verse composed by the book's chief figure, the Narahira-like "man of old." See Porter, p. 39, 115-16; Suzuki et al., pp. 36, 54; MM 66, 68, 85, 95, 97, and 107.

44. In all, 87 poems are attributed to Narahira by imperial anthologies. The tendency among specialists is to accept the 36 attributions in *Kokinshū* to tentatively accept some or all of the 11 in *Genzai* and to view the remainder with extreme suspicion.

45. See KKS 96, pp. 172, 418, p. 175, and 894. See KKS 6, pp. 159-160, 319-120, 173, and 871, p. 179.

46. Matsunura, pp. 43-44.

47. IM 1, 329, 329, and 176. Some of the identifications are probably late Heian interpolations.

48. See KKS 290, 765, and 369; IM 16, 33, 45, 77, 78, 80, and 107.

49. Princess Itachi (also called Yawako; d. 917). She was Prince Kōrei-taka's full sister, and thus the niece of Ki no Aritsune, Narahira's father-in-law.

50. Fukui, p. 470.

Notes to Pages 50-69

52. By the poet Liu Hsi-i. See Kojima, *Kokin* III, 1835-36.

53. B/M, p. 199.

54. Many older commentators followed (a). Modern scholars tend to divide between (b) and (c). In my view (d), which is essentially a compromise between (a) and (b), is the most satisfactory. See O/T, p. 113, n. 28; Vos, II, pp. 173, 174; and Araki, p. 93. For an interpretation differing somewhat from all of the above, see B/M, p. 193.

55. Saeki Umetomo, p. 339. (All subsequent references to Saeki mean Saeki Umetomo.)

56. MYS 819. See also B/M, p. 191.

57. Wailey, *The Tale of Genji*, "The Picture Competition," II, 326, and "Agemaki," II, 858; Yamagishi, II, 180, and IV, 443-44. These are the earliest known references to IM.

58. See Appendix II.

59. For details, see Fukui, pp. 334ff.

60. *The Tale of Genji* refers to this in one passage as *Ise monogatari* and in the other as *Ise sansom*, "Tales of Narahira." See Yamagishi, IV, 443. Another Heian novel, *Sagurumo monogatari*, calls it *Ise sansom*.

61. Extracts of Narahira's poems are thought to be relatively late. None contains poetry not found in KKS, IM, GSS, and/or *Yamagishi monogatari* (an *Ise monogatari* slightly later than IM). For a discussion, see Fukui, pp. 229-82.

62. For details, see Vos, 1, 600ff; Fukui, pp. 1-19.

63. See Appendix II.

64. Ibid., p. 272. Fukui meets the problem of the title, which reappears if his theory is adopted, by reviving old alternatives—suggesting that the name of the Heian province was once associated with love (as there is some reason to believe), or that a court lady named Ise (not the later) may have been connected in some way with the work.

65. See also Vos, 1, 54ff; Fukui, pp. 1ff.

67. It should be noted that *The Tale of Genji*, though written around 1000, is often said to describe a period corresponding to the reign of Emperor Murakami (r. 946-67).

NOTES TO TALES

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-
2. Notes to Page 69

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

2. "Moss-fern design" translates shinobuzuri, a term of uncertain mean­
ing. Suri (suri, "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 carried board and rubbing with a dye plant. The design of the garment described in the first poem was presumably im­primed in that way, with murasakib (discussed below, as the dye plant.)

Of numerous theories concerning the meaning of shinobu in shinobuzuri (also called shinobu moyazuri), the one on which I have based the translation appears to be favored by modern Japanese scholars. It explains the term as a rubbing process employing the plant shinobu (Doronicum bulbifera), 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 Tōrū'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; O/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, 65, n. 13, and Mininch, p. 113. For a description of the suri process, see Nagashima, pp. 105-6.

3. Kasugano no. KWR (ZKT 34155), anon.; KKS 994, Narihira. On the question of attributions to Narihira, see pp. 35, 62-63. Narihira (above, p. 113) is the author of the poem shinobuzuri shinobu moyazuri. His poetry is known to be "random-patterned" with the same kind of cloth used in the headdress in Michinoku no and other poems.

4. Michinoku no. KKS 724, Minamoto Tōrū (822-98); KWR (ZKT 34155), anon. Tōrū, 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 879. He is best remembered for his magnificent house and gardens in the capital and his elegant villa at Uji, which later became theRYōBōji Temple.

I have treated Michinoku no as a preface introducing shinobu. The other possible interpretation would be, "My thoughts have grown dis­ordered with random patterns! On cloth from Shinobu in Michinoku."

In line 2, some has the dual meaning "begin" and "dye"—thus the line means both "I have begun to be confused" and "dye in a random pattern." Some ("dyed") is also an associative word (engo) linked to shinobu moyazuri.

Notes to Pages 70-71

1. Ohi no yama. KKS 616, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 34155 and 34159), Narihira. Nage is a ḫarabakō word meaning both "prolonged spin" and "goating peaceably."

3. Hišíkmo, believed to be the same as the edible brownish-yellow aquatic plant now called Cladophora (various identified in dictionaries as "Cladophora lasiomeris" and "Cladophora insularis") Okamura. The poem reveals the reason for this seemingly eccentric gift.

5. Oomi arashi. Hišíkmo, a pun on hišíkmo, seaweed.

6. The Empress from the Second World was Fujiwara Kōzō. See pp. 45-47. There is no evidence that would connect her with Kōzō with the poem. The last sentence is said to be an interjection.

1. Fujiwara Junri, aunt of Kōzō. The text hints that the principals in the episode are Kōzō and Narihira, and many old commentators say...
Notes to Pages 77-78

1. *Wa ga kara ni, KWR* (Z8T 35224), an on; ShokuiGIS 801, Narita.

2. *Kara* is a metaphor for the daughter.

3. *Wa ga kara ni*.

4. In the present context, which incidentally marks the beginning of the term's literary career, *Musashi stirrups* appears in classical poetry and prose because of its association with *kaku* and *kakura*, two verbs with a wide range of meanings, most of them derived in some way from the idea of *hanging from* or *putting up against*. Stirrups suggest those verbs because they hang from the saddle, e.g., according to one theory, because the rider puts his feet in them. (Vos. II, 77, n. 42; Arat., p. 185.) By writing *Musashi stirrups* on his letter instead of the conventional return address, *From Musashi*, the man refers obliquely to *oma ni kaku, kakura o koh*, or some similar phrase meaning "to love" ("hung one's thoughts [heart on]").

5. *Kuso-ni* abumi. In 12. This line takes up the phrase "Musashi stirrups" and uses it as a pillow word preceding *kakura*, an abbreviation of *oma ni kakura*, meaning both "yet, nevertheless" and "from the buckle (kakura)."

6. *River*...Send from their buckles, I think your silence cruel indeed. Yet I should find it most unpleasant...Were you to ask for news of me.

Notes to Pages 78-79

1. *Nakasuka ni*. The poem closely resembles *MYS 3086*. The last line contains an elegant metaphor—*kusa no mi o, a string of gems*, representing a short life...symbolized by the shortness of the distance between any
1. Shinobuyama. KWR (ZKT 37143), anon; SCSS 944, Narihira. Possibly an adaptation of KKS 103b.

One theory identifies Mt. Shinobu (Shinobuyama) with the present
hill by that name (1373 m) in northern Fukushima Prefecture, Shinobu
District, Fukushima Prefecture (Vos, II, 8, p. 8; Ara, pp. 202; Kanata,
p. 115), but considerable evidence suggests that it was, rather, a general
name loosely applied to various times to all of some of the peaks along
the western boundary of Shinobu District. KNG, IV, 3235; DCJ, III,
3222-23). It figures here as a Shinobu-like place-name introducing an
inflected form of the homophonous with shinobu ("to conceal," here "con-
ciling oneself," thus "unobserved").

Kayou ("travel"), ratchi ("rook," etc.), and oka ("interior") are
associative words linked with yama ("mountain"). The poet has also
woven the name of the province into the last three lines: shinobu no
gana / Hito no kibero no i/ oto no minobu.

2. Disturbing her ability to compose a suitable poem, the lady does not reply at all. The text does not insist on a contrast with the brush
young lady to the preceding section. Here the implication is that possibility is
be found even in the provinces, and that the cultivated traveler recognizes
and respects it. See Ara, pp. 203-4.

Notes to Pages 79-80

Notes to Pages 81-82

1. Aritsune (815-77) belonged to one of the old court families who
in the ninth century were gradually being pushed out of influential
positions by the Fujiwara. Two of his three sisters were minor imperial
consorts, and one of them, Seishi (Shizuko; d. 866), bore the first son
of Emperor Saga. The son, Prince Korokke, was his father's favorite,
but he failed to win nomination as crown prince because his backing
was less powerful than that of the emperor's fourth son, Prince Koko.
(Emperor Seiwa). When Korokke was born, his maternal grandfather,
Fujinara Yoshikata, held the high office of Minister of the Right, while
Prince Korokke's grandfather, Ino Natora, had died three years earlier
as a mere guards officer, and his only uncle, Aritsune, was likewise a
minor guards officer.

Prince Korokke had represented Aritsune's sole hope for advancement
at court. During the first six years of the princes life, while he was still
a potential emperor, Aritsune enjoyed a good deal of influence in spite
of his low office, but his prestige diminished abruptly after Prince Korokke's
appointment as crown prince, in 869, and vanished completely
after Prince Korokke became a monk following an illness in 872. He
held only provincial governorships and other insignificant offices, and
the imperial description of his imprisonment is probably essentially accurate.

Aritsune's daughter was at one time Narihira's wife, and he and Narhi-
ira appear to have been intimate friends, drawn together partly by hosti-
ity to the Fujiwara and partly by a mutual interest in poetry.

2. Ta a koto. There is no independent evidence to support the attribu-
tion of this and other poems in Section 16 to Aritsune, or to identify the
friend with Narihira, as was done by the compilers of ShokuSZS and
most of the older commentators.

3. Toshi dani mo. ShokuSZS 1542, Narihira.

4. Koro ya koro. According to a popular legend, the inhabitants of
earth were occasionally visited by heavenly maidens, crowned with
garlands of flowers and dressed in many-colored skirts, who danced with
marvelous grace. Diaphanous robes made of birds' feathers enabled the
maids to fly between heaven and earth. See the celebrated N6 play Hago-
romono (Feather Robe), translated in Nippon Gekijutsu Shinkokai, Japa-

The poem implies that the friend is someone of high social status.
"Aoba" is perhaps to be taken as a pivot word, in which case the second
line would mean also "Feather robe for a nun (ama)."

5. Cho ya koro. SKRS 1146, Ki no Aritsune, with the heading "Re-
sponding to the gift of a robe from Lord Narihira." The attribution is
probably based on IM.

Autumn was regarded as the season of sad reveries and melancholy.
is considerable literary evidence to suggest that demons in human form were believed to frequent abandoned dwellings. O/T, pp. 197–98, supra. n. 64.

5. The question is a coy invitation: “Come on out and we’ll all go back to the fields together.”

6. Uchitakohi. The law provided that fallen ears were to be left in the fields for the poor. Arsl, p. 494.

---

Notes to Pages 107–9

1. The Eastern Hills run north and south on the outskirts of Kyōto, east of the Kamo River.
2. Samuebana. GSS 1884, Narihira; KWR (ZKT 3386), Narihira. In both collections line 4 reads Tsumagi koyabushi, “there to cut firewood.” GSS headnote: “When he was dissatisfied with the world.” The attribution to Narihira has been accepted by many scholars. Arsl, p. 503.

3. Wa ga ne ni. GSS 863, anon. In Chinese and Japanese legend, the boat that crosses the River of Heaven (Milky Way) is rowed by the Elderman Star (Altair), who goes from the east bank to the west bank to visit his wife, the Weaver Maid (Vega), on the Seventh of every Seventh Month. The annual reunion was marked at the Heian court by the Tamahana Festival, vestiges of which still survive. This poem, one of a KRS group expressing happiness that good fortune, is believed to have been composed during a Tamahana season, presumably in response to a favor of some sort. Dew is a metaphor for beneficence. Arsl, p. 503.

---

Notes to Pages 109–11

1. One episode, the only one in which the IM author specifically names Narihira, furnishes valuable direct information about Narihira’s reputation in the early Heian period. The behavior attributed to him has traditionally been regarded as a classic example of sensitivity to the feelings of others, one that perhaps influenced Murasaki Shikibu’s descriptions of the consideration Prince Genji showed to unfortunate ladies such as the red-haired princess. (See Waley, The Tale of Genji, I, 122.) The poem Momotose ni, which hardly seems complimentary, is explained by commentators as an expression of sympathy. Arsl, p. 537; Kamata, pp. 299, 296.