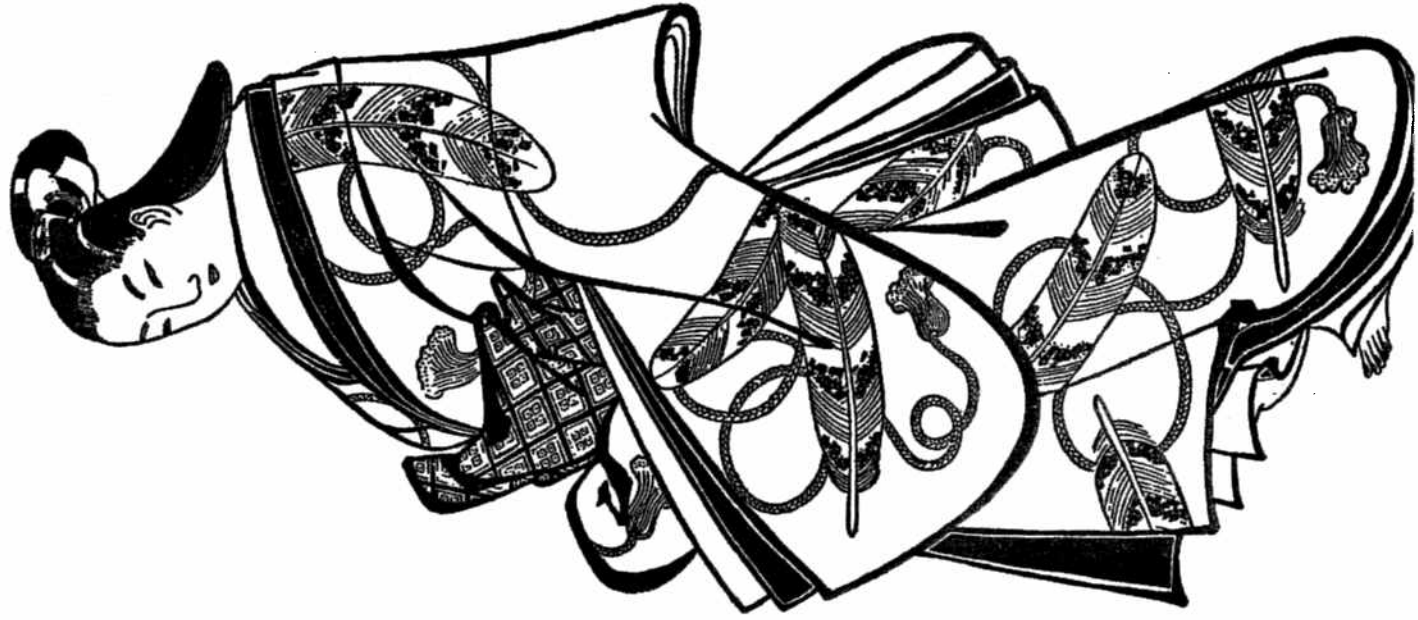


*Anthology of*

# JAPANESE LITERATURE

*from the earliest era to the  
mid-nineteenth century,  
compiled and edited by  
Donald Keene*



GROVE PRESS

NEW YORK

UNESCO COLLECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

[*Kojiki*, XXXIX-XLII]

*The "Kojiki," or "Records of Ancient Matters," which was presented to the court in 712 A.D., is the oldest surviving Japanese book. The records begin with the creation of the world in the Age of the Gods and continue until the reign of the Empress Suiko (592-628), whose very name—it may be translated "Conjecture of the Past"—indicates perhaps that in this period history first came to be written in Japan.*

*The literary interest of the "Kojiki" lies mainly in the tales of the legendary period. Some of them, such as the one given here, have considerable charm, but often the intrinsic interest is destroyed by extraneous elements which creep into the story. Poems are interspersed in the tales of the "Kojiki." Their merits vary greatly, but some of them are of a quality that foreshadows the "Manyōshū."*

Fire-shine was a prince who got his luck on the sea, and caught things broad of fin and narrow of fin. Fire-fade was a prince who got his luck on the mountains and caught things rough of hair and soft of hair. One day Fire-fade said to his elder brother Fire-shine, "Let us make a change and use each other's luck." But though he made this request three times, his brother would not agree to it, and only with much difficulty could he persuade him to make the exchange. Then Fire-fade angled for fish with the sea-luck, but failed to get a single one, and moreover lost the fishhook in the sea. Thereupon his elder brother asked him for the hook, saying, "A mountain-luck is a luck of its own, and a sea-luck is a luck of its own. Let us now give each other back his own luck." To which the younger brother replied, "I did not get a single fish by angling with your

fishhook, and I finally lost it in the sea." But the elder brother insisted all the more urgently that he return it. So the younger brother, breaking his ten-grasp saber that hung by his side, made five hundred fishhooks of the fragments to make up for the lost hook, but the elder brother would not accept them. He said, "I still want my old fishhook."

Hereupon, as the younger brother was weeping and lamenting by the seashore, the God of the Tide came and asked him, "Why are you weeping and lamenting?" The Prince replied, "I exchanged a fishhook with my elder brother, and then I lost it. Now he wants it back, and though I have given him many fishhooks in its place, he will not take them. He insists on having back his old fishhook. That is why I weep and lament." Then the God of the Tide said, "I will give you good counsel." He thereupon built him a stout little boat without seams and set him in it. He instructed the Prince, saying, "When I push the boat off, go on for some time. You will see a road, and if you steer your boat along that road, you will come to a palace with walls like fishes' scales. That is the palace of the God of the Sea. When you reach the gates of the palace you will see a cassia tree with many branches standing above a well at its side. If you sit on top of that tree, the daughter of the God of the Sea will notice you and give you counsel."

The Prince followed these instructions, and after he had gone a little way everything happened just as the God of the Tide had said. He climbed the cassia tree and sat there. When the handmaidens of the daughter of the God of the Sea, bearing jeweled vessels, went to draw water from the well, they saw a light in it. On looking up, they beheld a beautiful young man. They were much amazed. The Prince saw the handmaidens and begged them to give him some water. They at once drew some water, put it into a jeweled vessel, and respectfully offered it to him. Then, without drinking the water, he loosened the jewel at his neck, took it in his mouth, and spat it into the jeweled vessel. The jewel adhered to the vessel so fast that the handmaidens could not get it off. So they took it, with the jewel adhering to it, and presented it to the Princess.

When the Princess saw the jewel, she asked her handmaidens,

"Is there perhaps someone outside the gate?" They answered, "There is a very beautiful young man sitting on top of the cassia tree above our well. He is nobler in bearing even than our king. We offered him some water when he asked for it, but instead of drinking the water, he spat this jewel into the cup. We could not separate the jewel from the cup, so we have brought both to you."

The Princess, marveling at this, went out to look, and was delighted by what she saw. The Prince and the Princess exchanged glances, and then she went to speak to her father. She said, "There is a beautiful person at our gate," and the God of the Sea himself went out to look. "That is Prince Fire-fade," he said, and led him inside the palace. He spread out eight layers of rugs of sealskins, and then eight layers of silk above them, and then had the Prince sit down on top. A great banquet was arranged with a hundred guests, and the God of the Sea gave his daughter to the Prince in marriage.

Prince Fire-fade dwelt in that land for three years. One day, remembering the past, he heaved a great sigh. The Princess heard the sigh and told her father about it. The God of the Sea then questioned his son-in-law, "This morning my daughter told me that you who have never sighed before in all the three years that you have dwelt among us sighed last night. What was the reason for it? And why did you first come here?" The Prince told the God of the Sea all about how his brother had pressed him for the return of the lost fishhook. Thereupon the God of the Sea summoned together all the fishes of the sea, great and small, and asked them, "Has some fish perhaps taken this fishhook?" And all of the fish replied, "Lately the bream has complained of something sticking in his throat which prevents him from eating. No doubt it is the bream who has taken the hook." The throat of the bream was examined, and the fishhook found inside. It was removed, washed, and presented to the Prince.

The God of the Sea then said to him, "When you give this fishhook to your elder brother, you should say to him, 'This fishhook is a big hook, an eager hook, a poor hook, a silly hook.' When you have said this, give it to him with your hand behind your back.

Once you have done this, if your brother cultivates low fields, you should cultivate high fields. In this way your brother will certainly be impoverished in the space of three years, for I rule the water. If he should attack you out of anger, put forth the tide-flowing jewel to drown him. If he expresses grief, put forth the tide-ebbing jewel to save him. In this way you shall afflict him."

With these words the God of the Sea gave the Prince the two jewels. He thereupon summoned together all the crocodiles and said to them, "The Prince Fire-fade is now about to proceed to the Upper Land. Who will in how many days escort him there and bring back a report?" Each of the crocodiles answered in accordance with the length of his body. One of them, a crocodile one fathom long, answered, "I will escort him and return in one day." The God of the Sea said, "You shall be the one to escort him, but mind that you do not alarm him when crossing the middle of the sea." Forthwith he seated the Prince on the crocodile's head and saw him off. The crocodile escorted the Prince back to his home in one day, as he had promised. When the crocodile was about to return, the Prince untied the dirk that was by his side, and placing it on the crocodile's neck, sent him back.

Fire-fade gave the fishhook to his elder brother in exactly the manner that the God of the Sea had prescribed. Thenceforward the elder brother became poorer and poorer, and in his fury came to attack Fire-fade. When he was about to attack, Fire-fade put forth the tide-flowing jewel to drown him; when the brother repented, he put forth the tide-ebbing jewel to save him. After he had thus been afflicted, the elder brother bowed his head and said, "From now on I shall be your guard day and night, and respectfully serve you."

Hereupon the daughter of the God of the Sea came to Fire-fade and said, "I am with child, and the time for my delivery approaches. But I thought that the child of a heavenly deity should not be born in the sea plain, and I have come to you here." At the edge of the waves on the seashore she built a hall for her delivery, using cormorants' feathers for thatch. But before the thatch was completed, she could not restrain the urgency of her womb, and she entered the hall. When she was about to be delivered, she said to her

husband, "Whenever a foreigner is about to give birth to a child, she takes the shape of her native land. I now will take my native shape. Pray look not upon me!" The Prince, thinking her words very strange, stealthily looked upon her at the moment of delivery, when she turned into a crocodile eight fathoms long, and crawled and writhed about. Terrified at the sight, he fled away.

The Princess knew then that he had looked upon her, and she felt ashamed. Straightway leaving the child she had borne, she said, "I had wished always to come and go across the paths of the sea to you. But now I feel ashamed because you have seen me in my real shape." So she closed the boundary of the sea and went down again. But though she remained angry that he had wished to look upon her, she could not restrain her loving heart, and she entrusted to her younger sister, when she was nursing the child, a song for the Prince, which said: "Even though the string on which the red jewels are strung shines, my lord who is like white jewels is yet more beautiful."

Her husband replied with a song which said: "My dear wife, whom I took to sleep with me on the island where light the wild duck, the birds of the offing, I shall not forget you till the end of my life."

Prince Fire-fade dwelt in his palace of Takachiho for five hundred and eighty years, and his tomb is likewise on the west of Mount Takachiho.

TRANSLATED BY B. H. CHAMBERLAIN (MODIFIED)

## K A I F Ū S Ō

*The "Kaijūō," or "Fond Recollections of Poetry," was the first anthology of poetry in Chinese written by Japanese. It was compiled in 751, and includes material written over a period of seventy-five years. The verses in the "Kaijūō" sometimes give the effect rather of copy-book exercises than of true poetry—which is only natural considering that they were among the earliest attempts by Japanese writers, including emperors, to compose in Chinese. Even when the subject of a poem is Japanese—such as a visit to the Yoshino River—the main effort of the writer appears to be directed toward including as many allusions to Chinese literature and history as possible. Nevertheless, some of the poems reach a high level of competence, as is indicated in the following selection.*

### Approaching death

[Written when the Prince faced execution for attempted rebellion]

The golden crow<sup>1</sup> lights on the western huts;  
Evening drums beat out the shortness of life.  
There are no inns on the road to the grave—  
Whose is the house I go to tonight?

Prince Ōtsu (662-687)

### The border official

Last year service in the eastern hills,  
This, the marches of the western sea.

<sup>1</sup> Conventional term for the sun.