



CATHAY



FOR THE MOST PART FROM THE CHINESE OF RIHAKU,
FROM THE NOTES OF THE LATE ERNEST
FENOLLOSA, AND THE DECIPHERINGS
OF THE PROFESSORS MORI
AND ARIGA
(1915)

SONG OF THE BOWMEN OF SHU

Here we are, picking the first fern-shoots
And saying: When shall we get back to our country?
Here we are because we have the Ken-nin for our foemen,
We have no comfort because of these Mongols.
We grub the soft fern-shoots,
When anyone says 'Return', the others are full of sorrow.
Sorrowful minds, sorrow is strong, we are hungry and thirsty.
Our defence is not yet made sure, no one can let his friend return.
We grub the old fern-stalks.
We say: Will we be let to go back in October?
There is no ease in royal affairs, we have no comfort.
Our sorrow is bitter, but we would not return to our country.
What flower has come into blossom?
Whose chariot? The General's.
Horses, his horses even, are tired. They were strong.
We have no rest, three battles a month.
By heaven, his horses are tired.
The generals are on them, the soldiers are by them.
The horses are well trained, the generals have ivory arrows and
quivers ornamented with fish-skin.
The enemy is swift, we must be careful.
When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring,
We come back in the snow,
We go slowly, we are hungry and thirsty,
Our mind is full of sorrow, who will know of our grief?

*By Bunno
Reputedly 1100 B.C.*

THE BEAUTIFUL TOILET

Blue, blue is the grass about the river
And the willows have overfilled the close garden.
And within, the mistress, in the midmost of her youth,
White, white of face, hesitates, passing the door.
Slender, she puts forth a slender hand;

And she was a courtesan in the old days,
And she has married a sot,
Who now goes drunkenly out
And leaves her too much alone.

By Mei Sheng 140 B.C.

THE RIVER SONG

This boat is of shato-wood, and its gunwales are cut magnolia,
Musicians with jewelled flutes and with pipes of gold
Fill full the sides in rows, and our wine
Is rich for a thousand cups.
We carry singing girls, drift with the drifting water,
Yet Sennin needs
A yellow stork for a charger, and all our seamen
Would follow the white gulls or ride them.
Kutsu's prose song
Hangs with the sun and moon.

King So's terraced palace
is now but barren hill,
But I draw pen on this barge
Causing the five peaks to tremble,
And I have joy in these words
like the joy of blue islands.
(If glory could last for ever
Then the waters of Han would flow northward.)

And I have moped in the Emperor's garden, awaiting an order-
to-write!
I looked at the dragon-pond, with its willow-coloured water
Just reflecting the sky's tinge,
And heard the five-score nightingales aimlessly singing.

The eastern wind brings the green colour into the island grasses
at Yei-shu,
The purple house and the crimson are full of spring softness.

South of the pond the willow-tips are half-blue and bluer,
Their cords tangle in mist, against the brocade-like palace.
Vine-strings a hundred feet long hang down from carved railings,
And high over the willows, the fine birds sing to each other, and
listen,

Crying—'Kwan, Kuan', for the early wind, and the feel of it.
The wind bundles itself into a bluish cloud and wanders off.
Over a thousand gates, over a thousand doors are the sounds of
spring singing,

And the Emperor is at Ko.

Five clouds hang aloft, bright on the purple sky,
The imperial guards come forth from the golden house with their
armour a-gleaming.

The Emperor in his jewelled car goes out to inspect his flowers,
He goes out to Hori, to look at the wing-flapping storks,
He returns by way of Sei rock, to hear the new nightingales,
For the gardens at Jo-run are full of new nightingales,
Their sound is mixed in this flute,
Their voice is in the twelve pipes here.

*By Rihaku
8th century A.D.*

THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
For ever and for ever and for ever.
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

By Rihaku

POEM BY THE BRIDGE AT TEN-SHIN

March has come to the bridge-head,
Peach boughs and apricot boughs hang over a thousand gates,
At morning there are flowers to cut the heart,
And evening drives them on the eastward-flowing waters.
Petals are on the gone waters and on the going,
And on the back-swirling eddies,
But to-day's men are not the men of the old days,
Though they hang in the same way over the bridge-rail.
The sea's colour moves at the dawn
And the princes still stand in rows, about the throne,

And the moon falls over the portals of Sei-go-yo,
 And clings to the walls and the gate-top.
 With head gear glittering against the cloud and sun,
 The lords go forth from the court, and into far borders.
 They ride upon dragon-like horses,
 Upon horses with head-trappings of yellow metal,
 And the streets make way for their passage.

Haughty their passing,
 Haughty their steps as they go in to great banquets,
 To high halls and curious food,
 To the perfumed air and girls dancing,
 To clear flutes and clear singing;
 To the dance of the seventy couples;
 To the mad chase through the gardens.
 Night and day are given over to pleasure
 And they think it will last a thousand autumns,

Unwearying autumns.
 For them the yellow dogs howl portents in vain,
 And what are they compared to the lady Riokushu,
 That was cause of hate!
 Who among them is a man like Han-rei
 Who departed alone with his mistress,
 With her hair unbound, and he his own skiffsman!

By Rihaku

THE JEWEL STAIRS' GRIEVANCE

The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,
 It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,
 And I let down the crystal curtain
 And watch the moon through the clear autumn.

By Rihaku

NOTE.—Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore he has no excuse on account of weather. Also she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stairs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach.

LAMENT OF THE FRONTIER GUARD

By the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,
 Lonely from the beginning of time until now!
 Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.
 I climb the towers and towers

to watch out the barbarous land:

Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.
 There is no wall left to this village.
 Bones white with a thousand frosts,
 High heaps, covered with trees and grass;

X Who brought this to pass?

Who has brought the flaming imperial anger?

Who has brought the army with drums and with kettle-drums?

Barbarous kings.

A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,
 A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,
 Three hundred and sixty thousand,
 And sorrow sorrow like rain.

Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning.

Desolate, desolate fields,

And no children of warfare upon them,

No longer the men for offence and defence.

Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,
 With Rihoku's name forgotten,
 And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

By Rihaku

EXILE'S LETTER

To So-Kin of Rakuyo, ancient friend, Chancellor of Gen.
 Now I remember that you built me a special tavern
 By the south side of the bridge at Ten-Shin.
 With yellow gold and white jewels, we paid for songs and laughter
 And we were drunk for month on month, forgetting the kings
 and princes.

Intelligent men came drifting in from the sea and from the west
border,

And with them, and with you especially
There was nothing at cross purpose,
And they made nothing of sea-crossing or of mountain-crossing,
If only they could be of that fellowship,
And we all spoke out our hearts and minds, without regret.
And then I was sent off to South Wei,

smothered in laurel groves,

And you to the north of Raku-hoku
Till we had nothing but thoughts and memories in common.
And then, when separation had come to its worst,
We met, and travelled into Sen-Go,
Through all the thirty-six folds of the turning and twisting waters.
Into a valley of the thousand bright flowers,
That was the first valley;

And into ten thousand valleys full of voices and pine-winds.
And with silver harness and reins of gold,
Out came the East of Kan foreman and his company
And there came also the 'True man' of Shi-yo to meet me,
Playing on a jewelled mouth-organ.

In the storied houses of San-Ko they gave us more Sennin music,
Many instruments, like the sound of young phoenix broods.
The foreman of Kan Chu, drunk, danced

because his long sleeves wouldn't keep still

With that music playing,
And I, wrapped in brocade, went to sleep with my head on his
lap,

And my spirit so high it was all over the heavens,
And before the end of the day we were scattered like stars, or
rain.

I had to be off to So, far away over the waters,
You back to your river-bridge.

And your father, who was as brave as a leopard,
Was governor in Hei Shu, and put down the barbarian rabble.
And one May he had you send for me,
despite the long distance.

And what with broken wheels and so on, I won't say it wasn't
hard going,

Over roads twisted like sheep's guts.

And I was still going, late in the year,

in the cutting wind from the North,
And thinking how little you cared for the cost,
and you caring enough to pay it.

And what a reception:

Red jade cups, food well set on a blue jewelled table,

And I was drunk, and had no thought of returning.

And you would walk out with me to the western corner of the
castle,

To the dynastic temple, with water about it clear as blue jade,
With boats floating, and the sound of mouth-organs and drums,
With ripples like dragon-scales, going grass-green on the water,
Pleasure lasting, with courtesans, going and coming without
hindrance,

With the willow flakes falling like snow,

And the vermilioned girls getting drunk about sunset,

And the water, a hundred feet deep, reflecting green eyebrows
—Eyebrows painted green are a fine sight in young moonlight,
Gracefully painted—

And the girls singing back at each other,

Dancing in transparent brocade,

And the wind lifting the song, and interrupting it,
Tossing it up under the clouds.

And all this comes to an end.

And is not again to be met with.

I went up to the court for examination,

Tried Layu's luck, offered the Choyo song,

And got no promotion,

and went back to the East Mountains

White-headed.

And once again, later, we met at the South bridge-head.

And then the crowd broke up, you went north to San palace,

And if you ask how I regret that parting:

It is like the flowers falling at Spring's end

Confused, whirled in a tangle.

What is the use of talking, and there is no end of talking,
 There is no end of things in the heart.
 I call in the boy,
 Have him sit on his knees here
 To seal this,
 And send it a thousand miles, thinking.

By Rihaku

FOUR POEMS OF DEPARTURE

*Light rain is on the light dust.
 The willows of the inn-yard
 Will be going greener and greener,
 But you, Sir, had better take wine ere
 your departure,
 For you will have no friends about you
 When you come to the gates of Go.
 (Rihaku or Omakitsu)*

SEPARATION ON THE RIVER KIANG

Ko-jin goes west from Ko-kaku-ro,
 The smoke-flowers are blurred over the river.
 His lone sail blots the far sky.
 And now I see only the river,
 The long Kiang, reaching heaven.

Rihaku

TAKING LEAVE OF A FRIEND

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
 White river winding about them;
 Here we must make separation
 And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

Mind like a floating wide cloud,
 Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
 Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
 Our horses neigh to each other
 as we are departing.

Rihaku

LEAVE-TAKING NEAR SHOKU

'Sanzo, King of Shoku, built roads'

They say the roads of Sanzo are steep,
 Sheer as the mountains.
 The walls rise in a man's face,
 Clouds grow out of the hill
 at his horse's bridle.
 Sweet trees are on the paved way of the Shin,
 Their trunks burst through the paving,
 And freshets are bursting their ice
 in the midst of Shoku, a proud city.

Men's fates are already set,
 There is no need of asking diviners.

Rihaku

THE CITY OF CHOAN

The phoenix are at play on their terrace.
 The phoenix are gone, the river flows on alone.
 Flowers and grass
 Cover over the dark path
 where lay the dynastic house of the Go.
 The bright cloths and bright caps of Shin
 Are now the base of old hills.

The Three Mountains fall through the far heaven,
 The isle of White Heron
 splits the two streams apart.
 Now the high clouds cover the sun
 And I cannot see Choan afar
 And I am sad.

SOUTH-FOLK IN COLD COUNTRY

The Dai horse neighs against the bleak wind of Etsu,
 The birds of Etsu have no love for En, in the North,
 Emotion is born out of habit.

Yesterday we went out of the Wild-Goose gate,
 To-day from the Dragon-Pen.¹
 Surprised. Desert turmoil. Sea sun.
 Flying snow bewilders the barbarian heaven.
 Lice swarm like ants over our accoutrements.
 Mind and spirit drive on the feathery banners.
 Hard fight gets no reward.
 Loyalty is hard to explain.
 Who will be sorry for General Rishogu,
 the swift moving,
 Whose white head is lost for this province?

SENNIN POEM BY KAKUHAKU

The red and green kingfishers
 flash between the orchids and clover,
 One bird casts its gleam on another.

Green vines hang through the high forest,
 They weave a whole roof to the mountain,
 The lone man sits with shut speech,
 He purrs and pats the clear strings.
 He throws his heart up through the sky,
 He bites through the flower pistil
 and brings up a fine fountain.
 The red-pine-tree god looks at him and wonders.
 He rides through the purple smoke to visit the sennin,
 He takes 'Floating Hill'² by the sleeve,
 He claps his hand on the back of the great water sennin.

But you, you dam'd crowd of gnats,
 Can you even tell the age of a turtle?

¹ i.e., we have been warring from one end of the empire to the other, now
 east, now west, on each border. ² Name of a sennin.

BALLAD OF THE MULBERRY ROAD

The sun rises in south-east corner of things
 To look on the tall house of the Shin
 For they have a daughter named Rafu (pretty girl),
 She made the name for herself: 'Gauze Veil',
 For she feeds mulberries to silkworms.
 She gets them by the south wall of the town.
 With green strings she makes the warp of her basket,
 She makes the shoulder-straps of her basket
 from the boughs of Katsura,
 And she piles her hair up on the left side of her head-piece.

Her earrings are made of pearl,
 Her underskirt is of green pattern-silk,
 Her overskirt is the same silk dyed in purple,
 And when men going by look on Rafu
 They set down their burdens,
 They stand and twirl their moustaches.

(*Fenollosa MSS., very early*)

OLD IDEA OF CHOAN BY ROSORIU

I

The narrow streets cut into the wide highway at Choan,
 Dark oxen, white horses,
 drag on the seven coaches with outriders
 The coaches are perfumed wood,
 The jewelled chair is held up at the crossway,
 Before the royal lodge:
 A glitter of golden saddles, awaiting the princess;
 They eddy before the gate of the barons.
 The canopy embroidered with dragons
 drinks in and casts back the sun.
 Evening comes.

The trappings are bordered with mist.
The hundred cords of mist are spread through
and double the trees,
Night birds, and night women,
Spread out their sounds through the gardens.

II

Birds with flowery wing, hovering butterflies
crowd over the thousand gates,
Trees that glitter like jade,
terraces tinged with silver,
The seed of a myriad hues,
A network of arbours and passages and covered ways,
Double towers, winged roofs,
border the network of ways:
A place of felicitous meeting.
Riu's house stands out on the sky,
with glitter of colour
As Butei of Kan had made the high golden lotus
to gather his dews,
Before it another house which I do not know:
How shall we know all the friends
whom we meet on strange roadways?

TO-EM-MEI'S 'THE UNMOVING CLOUD'

'WET SPRINGTIME,' SAYS TO-EM-MEI,
'WET SPRING IN THE GARDEN.'

I

The clouds have gathered, and gathered, and the rain falls and
falls,
The eight ply of the heavens are all folded into one darkness,
And the wide, flat road stretches out.
I stop in my room toward the East, quiet, quiet,
I pat my new cask of wine.
My friends are estranged, or far distant,
I bow my head and stand still.

II

Rain, rain, and the clouds have gathered,
The eight ply of the heavens are darkness,
The flat land is turned into river.

'Wine, wine, here is wine!'

I drink by my eastern window.
I think of talking and man,
And no boat, no carriage, approaches.

III

The trees in my east-looking garden
are bursting out with new twigs,
They try to stir new affection,
And men say the sun and moon keep on moving
because they can't find a soft seat.
The birds flutter to rest in my tree,
and I think I have heard them saying,
'It is not that there are no other men
But we like this fellow the best,
But however we long to speak
He cannot know of our sorrow.'

T'ao Yuan Ming
A.D. 365-427

END OF CATHAY