



(7163)

Japanese Folk Music

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Society for the Preservation of Japanese Folk Music

Tracks

1. Kagoshima Oharabushi

Oharabushi is a song from Kyushu, the southernmost island. Kyushu is famous for its volcanic island Sakurajima.

*Flowers at Kirishma / Tobacco at Kokubu
Smoke arises / From the isle of Sakura.*

*It's seen through the pine trees / The sail of a boat
Marked with an encircled cross.*

*Though it doesn't rain
The Somuta becomes muddy –
The face water for the beauties of Ishikihararyo.*

2. Akita Ohako

Akita Obako is a song of Akita prefecture, in the northern part of Honshu, famous for dances by the beautiful maidens called Obako.

*How old are you, young maiden?
Seventeen I'll be next year.*

*Where do you go, young maiden?
To the hill over there to gather ferns.*

*If they bloom, the nuts will grow
Otherwise resemble maples in the shade.*

3. Sansa Shigure

An elegant love song from Miyagi prefecture in Kyushu. A love affair is compared to rain on the straw roof.

*Is it the fog / Or rain on the grass?
So quietly / It comes and wets.*

*Wave your long sleeves, (young girls)
If not tonight / Your chances are lost.*

*Blessed is the family / Where the crane and tortoise
Dance gaily here and there.*

4. Soran-bushi

Soran-bushi is representative of Hokkaido, northern-most island of Japan. In the neighboring seas herring fisherman sing relieve their solitude on the rough sea.

*“Are the herrings around?” fisherman ask.
“Ask the waves,” sea gulls reply, “we’re homeless birds.”*

*The colorful pillow’s only for tonight
I’ll be sleeping on the waves tomorrow.*

*Hear the bird songs off the shore.
You can’t abandon the life on the sea.*

*Your cry would be help no more, my dear.
I’ll be sleeping on the waves tomorrow.*

*Not knowing when we’ll meet again
Her sleeves are wet with tears and rain.*

5. Hachinoe Kouta

Hachinoe is a fishing town on the Pacific coast of the eastern part of the country.

*After a singing party, the dawn
Visits the shore full of sea gulls*

*Fishing boats sail / To north and south –
To the roaring sea full of sharks.*

*About the time the boats harbor
Which await albatross?
With the evening sun on their wings?*

*The boat anchors in the foggy bay
The red lights twinkle through the foggy air.
Shall we land at that dear old wharf?*

6. Esashi Oiwake-bushi

Oiwake means divided roads, and Oiwake buhi is a kind of melancholy *kouta*¹ sung by travelers at the junction of Oiwake. The sad melodies and the wistful voice are typical of oiwake songs. Echigo oiwake of Echigo junction Matsumae oiwake of Matsumae are known. Esahi oiwake-busho is a farewell song.

*I wouldn't complain of being
Sent to the island of Hachijo
But how would my wife / Left alone, survive?*

*Oshiro or Takashima is too distant
But I wish to accompany you
At least to Utasutu or Isoya
Otherwise change myself to a sea gull.*

7. Yamaguchi Sansa Odoriuta

The song is from Yamaguchi prefecture of the western-most part of Honshu. Sansa Odori is dance with bamboo twigs, in spring. The dance is to celebrate the growth of rice plants.

8. Tanko-bushi

Tanko-bushi is a folk song of the Kyushu mining town, Miike. It is not a labor song, however. The song begins with the famous sentence...

*The moon has risen / Over the coal mine of Miike,
But the chimney's so high / The moon may feel smoky.*

9. Hanagasa Odori-uta

¹ Short song.

Hanagasa Odori-uta is a song to accompany the flower parasol dance of Yamagata prefecture.

*Happy are the young pines
The branches prosper / The leaves spread.*

*Our town is known / By eggplants, cucumbers
And the flower parasol dance.*

See the dances in our town / The dancers are all beauties.

10. Sadokesa

It is a folk song from Sado island originated in the vicinity of Aikawa river. Sado is an isolated island many miles from the main land, where criminals were sent. Sado kesa is a kind of tragic folk song which reads:

*The trees and grasses bend toward Sado
Is Sado comfortable and good to abide?*

*How can we get there, though you urge me so.
Sado is many miles over the rough sea.*

*The night approaches the snowy Nigata.
Is Sado asleep? The lights are out.*

11. Soma Bon-uta

Soma-Bon-uta is the song of Bon festival in summer, noted in the Fukushima prefecture, Kyushu.

*A big harvest we had this year.
The rice grew even on weeds.*

*Thirty is the best age for dances
For, past thirty, one's children would dance.*

*Then they'll hold you back / When you want to dance.
You want a girl to nurse them.*

12. Donpan-bushi

It is a delightful song of Akita. It is a kind of brag song, and the repeated word Donpan is the title of the song.

Shall we go or not to the hill

*With a lovely cow on our back
For the brackens are full in season.*

*Who'd beat me in bragging.
Here's the center of rice and sake
The burdock of Akita's best in Japan.
Famous poets come from here.*

*Keep quiet when you hear songs
Some are good and some are bad
But come over and try / It's harder than you think.*

*He'd drink every morning
Stretching his hand behind a cupboard,
Looking around with a smile,
He drinks five or six cups and pretends innocence.*

13. Chichibu Ondo

Chichibu Ondo is a representative folk song of Saitama, in the central part of Japan.

*Blue clothes are dyed in the dye shop
dyed in the dye shop...
Who'll, however, dye my teeth?²
The birds fly over the hills
over the hills
In the rolling clouds stands out Mt. Chichibu.*

14. Kaigarabushi

Kaigarabushi is a song in Tottori prefecture on the western coast of the Japan Sea. Kaigarabushi means song of sea shells and describes the life of shell pickers.

*For what Karma have I become / A shellfish hunter?
My skin is tanned and dark / And my arms skinny.*

*Lively is the boat homeward bound
With thoughts dear to him
Of wife and children / Waiting for him at home.*

15. Fukuchiyama Ondo

² “Dye one’s teeth” means to get married. Married women used to dye their teeth to be distinguished from unmarried women.

Fukuchiyama Ondo is a song from near Kyoto.

*Leaving Fukuchiyama / You ride over the Qsada field
And hasten your way / To the town of Kameyama.*

*The lord of Fukuchiyama / With the crest of holly hock,
Dominates the daimyos of the land.*

Tracks:

1. Kagoshima Oharabushi 1:55
2. Akita Ohako 2:51
3. Sansa Shigure 2:28
4. Soran-bushi 3:11
5. Hachinoe Kouta 3:11
6. Esashi Oiwake-bushi 8:05
7. Yamaguchi Sansa Odoriuta 2:30
8. Tanko-bushi 2:19
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11. Soma Bon-uta 3:02
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