

Higanbana 曼珠沙華 (ひがんばんな)(Spider Lilies, 1922)

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Gonshan Gonshan どこへ ゆく GONSHAN. GONSHAN. 何処へゆく
Gonshan Gonshan doko-e yuku (Gonshan, Gonshan, where are you going?)
(daughter of a well-to-do family where to go)

あかい おほかの ひがんばんな 赤い、お墓の曼珠沙華
Akai ohaka-no. higan*-bana (gan* [ŋaŋ]/ŋam) (Red, spider lilies in the graveyard)
(red grave's spider lilies)

ひがんばんな 曼珠沙華、

きょうも たおりに きたわいな きょうも手折りに来たわいな。
Kyō-mo taori-ni kitawaina (Today again she came to break them off.)
(today also break off-to came)

Gonshan Gonshan なんぼんか GONSHAN. GONSHAN. 何本か、
Gonshan Gonshan nan*bon-ka (nan* [nam]) (Gonshan, Gonshan, how many stalks?)
(daughter of a well-to-do family how many stalks)

ちには しちほん ちの ように 地には七本、血のように、
Chi-ni-wa shichi-hon chi-no yō-ni. (On the ground seven stalks, like blood,)
(ground on seven stalks blood of like)

ちのように 血のように、

ちょうど あのこの としの かず ちょうど、あの児の年の数。
Chōdo ano-ko-no toshi-no kazu (Exactly, number of that child's age.)
(exactly that child's age of number)

Gonshan Gonshan きをつけな GONSHAN. GONSHAN. 気をつけな。
Gonshan Gonshan ki-o tsuke-na (Gonshan, Gonshan, be careful.)

ひとつ つんでも ひは まひる ひとつ摘んでも、日は真昼
Hitotsu tsundemo hi-wa mahiru (Even if you pluck one, it's the midday)
(one even if you pluck day-is midday)

ひは まひる 日は真昼、

ひとつ あとから また ひらく
Hitotsu ato-kara mata hiraku
(one after from again opens)

ひとつあとからまたひらく。
(Another one opens again.)

Gonshan Gonshan なし なくろ
Gonshan Gonshan nashi nakuro
(daughter of a well-to-do family why crying)

GONSHAN. GONSHAN. 何故泣くろ。
(Gonshan, Gonshan, why crying?)

いつまで とつても ひがんばん
Itsumade totte-mo higan*-bana (gan* [ŋaŋ/ŋam])
(until when even if you pluck spider lilies)

何時まで取つても、曼珠沙華、

(Even if you keep plucking spider lilies)

ひがんばん

曼珠沙華、

こわや、あかしゃ、まだ ななつ。
Kowaya, akashiya, mada nanatsu.
(scary, red, still seven)

恐や、赤しゃ、まだ七つ。
(Scary, red, still seven-years old/seven stalks.)

Higanbana (spider lilies)

“Higan” means “the other side” in Buddhism. It also means the spring and fall equinoctial weeks when people visit graves and pay respect to deceased family members.

“Higanbana” means “Higan flower”. In English it is called “red spider lily” or “cluster amaryllis”. They bloom around the time of fall equinox. They are poisonous. (See a photo on the next page.)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spider_lily#/media/File:Lycoris_radiata_Higanbana_in_a_woods.jpg

<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/ヒガンバナ>

-The Chinese characters (*kanji*) 曼珠沙華 are usually pronounced “Manjushage” in Japanese. Therefore, you might hear some Japanese people calling this song “Manjushage”.

-Text is in archaic Japanese, but this text sheet is in modern Japanese orthography.

-を should be sung as “o”, not “wo” as printed on the score.

-All letter *g*'s in the text are pronounced [ŋ], soft and nasal sound, except for “Gonshan”, where letter *g* is a hard sound because it is at the beginning of a word.

-This poem is enigmatic, there are several different interpretations. For example:

This is about a mother who lost a child seven years ago.

Young woman aborted a baby using the plant's poison seven years ago.

The poet saw a beautiful little Gonshan when he was seven years old.

-The poem has images of red blood and death.

-This song has many syllabic *n*'s, which must be elongated. You may use [m] for “higanbana” and “nanbon”.

-Music reflects traditional Japanese folk style.

