

Theme for the New Year's Poetry Reading (2025) : YUME (DREAM)

His Majesty the Emperor

The children I met on my journeys
Talked with sparkling eyes
Of their dreams for the future

(Background of the poem)

Every year, Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress travel to prefectures on their official duties, and, in the event of huge natural disasters, visit the affected areas to comfort the victims. Last year, Their Majesties visited Ishikawa Prefecture three times to encourage the local people affected by natural disasters, and they also made official visits to four prefectures, namely Okayama, Saga, Gifu and Oita to attend official events. At the New Year's Imperial Poetry Reading of last year, His Majesty the Emperor composed the poem expressing his pleasure when the local people receive Their Majesties with smiles and warm hospitality everywhere they go.

This year His Majesty the Emperor composed this poem expressing his delight when he visited the prefectures and saw the children talk vividly about their dreams for the future during his meetings with the local people. His Majesty was delighted to see the children talk about their dreams with sparkling eyes.

Her Majesty the Empress

Some thirty years after my departure
I visit with His Majesty
Our Alma Mater in Britain
And I recall the youthful dreams
I dreamt then

(Background of the poem)

Both His Majesty the Emperor and Her Majesty the Empress have studied at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. His Majesty the Emperor read history as a postgraduate student from 1983 to 1985. Her Majesty the Empress, while working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before her marriage and during her overseas training period there, was also a postgraduate student in international relations at Oxford from 1988 to 1990.

Last June, when Their Majesties were invited to visit the United Kingdom as state guests, they had a chance to visit together Oxford and spend a day there. Her Majesty the Empress received an honorary doctorate from the university, and their Majesties visited Merton College and Balliol College, their Alma Maters, and other places where they have fond memories. For Her Majesty, this was her first return to Oxford in 34 years.

Her Majesty the Empress was delighted and moved that she was able to visit once again the University of Oxford together with His Majesty the Emperor. She composed this poem remembering various memories of her Oxford days and reminiscing once again about the aspirations of younger days.

His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Akishino

Let me remember what I saw
in my first dream of the new year —
dim have become the memories
of early childhood.

(Background of the poem)

In Japan there is a custom of placing a picture of the auspicious “Treasure Ship” under one’s pillow when one goes to sleep on the first night of the new year. His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Akishino also observed this custom when he went to sleep as a young child. When the Crown Prince heard that the theme of this year’s Imperial Poetry Reading was “dream”, this was the first thing that came to mind. He found, however, that the memories of what he saw in his childhood dream had become hazy and vague. This is what the Crown Prince has written about in the above poem.

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Her Imperial Highness Crown Princess Akishino

Absorbed, with a dreamlike intensity,
in thread and needle
as I weave the oya,
bringing forth two, then three
wildflowers blossoming.

(Background of the poem)

In early December of last year Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino paid a visit to Turkiye. The “oya” embroidery, in which the frills of garments such as scarves are woven with thread and a fine needle, is a form of traditional fine handcraft passed down over the centuries to the people of Turkiye. Prior to the visit to Turkiye the Crown Princess had learned how to weave the “oya” embroidery, and after her return she also has occasion to practice this art. As the Crown Princess was absorbed in weaving a few small wildflowers in a row, her thoughts were with the natural scenery of Turkiye and the daily lives of its people. This is what the Crown Princess has written about in the above poem.

Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko

Until the day we meet again
My friends and I will
Each follow our dreams

(Background of the poem)

Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko graduated from Gakushuin University last March and started working for the Japanese Red Cross Society.

On the day of the graduation ceremony, she saw her graduating friends dressed up in festive clothes and was moved to think that she and her friends were each stepping toward their selected paths. She thought of the days she spent together with friends as well as the days ahead of them.

As Her Highness also cherishes her ties with friends who chose to study at other institutions to pursue their dreams, she is looking forward to the day she may meet again with her many friends. This waka poem was composed to express her fresh feelings that until the day they meet again, she is hopeful that she and her friends will all strive to follow their own dreams.