

SPOILER ALERT: If you have not read up to CH 226, everything that follows is a spoiler

CREDITS:

This piece is dedicated to a Ms. Anonymous. We recently exchanged comments about the 17 - Chihayaburu poem. Please see

[Chihayafuru CH 226 – Chihaya finds her Passion - Poem 17 千早ぶる Chihayaburu](#)

As I said there, I had been studying this poem for some time, and I just could not see how this was anything other than an Autumn Poem. Ms. Anonymous reviewed this work, and offered many helpful suggestions, which I have included in writing this piece (fpp051).

Also it is important to credit the following website for it's excellent analysis of the poem.

[Hyakunin Isshu: poem 17 \(Ariwara no Narihira • Chihayaburu\) \(千早ぶる\)](#)

TEXT:

The Kana Text	Romaji	Objects Named
ちはやぶる 千早ぶる	<i>Chihayaburu</i>	<i>Pillow word The ancient age of</i>
神代も聞かず 神代もきかず	<i>kami-yo mo kikazu</i>	<i>The all powerful gods</i>
竜田川	<i>Tatsuta-gawa</i>	<i>The Tatsuta river</i>
からくれなゐに からくないに	<i>kara-kurenai ni</i>	<i>A very specific color RGB=#d0104c</i>
水くくるとは 水くくるとは 水くぐるとは	<i>mizu kukuru to wa mizu kuguru to wa mizu kuguru to wa</i>	<i>The water of the Tatsuta river (Modern usage)</i>

The physical objects mentioned in the poem are the all powerful ancient gods, the Tatsuta river, a very specific color, and water undergoing some sort of change. But of course this is a poem, and much more is going on here than just the specific objects themselves.

Some background. In Autumn along the Tatsuta River in Japan, the Japanese Maple trees drop their leaves into the river. The poem reflects upon that image.

In analysis of the poem, I made the mistake of believing that the story, Chihayafuru is a triangular Romance between Chihaya, Arata, and Taichi. But any attempt to find a triangle in Chihayaburu fails because in it's essence, the poem is binary, two elements only.

The surface of the river which is a carpet of blood, red Crimson Japanese Maple leaves



tie-dyed a very specific からくれなゐに *kara-kurenai ni* color.



The second element of the binary is hidden underneath the fabric of leaves on the surface, and that is also the hidden meaning of the poem. The last line 水くくるとは (*mizu kukuru to wa*) is to be read in two ways. First as 水くくるとは (*mizu kukuru to wa*) and also as 水くぐるとは (*mizu kuguru to wa*).

The 〱 〱 〱 on the surface and 〱 〱 〱 hidden underneath which means that

The Japanese Maple leaves kukuru

The Current of Tatsuta River kuguru

This is both a physical and a poetic image and is what makes this poem so intensely interesting and clearly exhibits its binary nature.

It is quite possible that the poet intended a double reading in the last line to perhaps indicate a hidden meaning, that he wished to read here both kukuru and kuguru and combine their imagery. Listening to both words in the Japanese, they do sound very much alike. This would mean that the Tatsuta river has two parts, the surface fabric dyed kara-kurenai, and the hidden moving water underneath the fabric which carries the kara-kurenai downstream. We all know the power of Romantic love to carry us away.

*With passion's power hidden underneath, the blood-red Crimson Silk is
gently carried away to places yet unknown, and even then
the almighty gods of ancient times have never seen this!*

Folcwine P. Pywackett

*[Blood is justified by the CHI ち sound and Silk by the fact the poem was first stitched onto a
Silk screen for the Empress. "Gently....unknown" phrase from Japanese poem, Hokorobi]*

*Poetically we are talking about LOVE on the surface being carried away by PASSION hidden
underneath. Passion moves Love.*

WHAT THIS ALL MEANS FOR CHIHAYAFURU

This poem, Chihayaburu, is number 17 in the Hyakunin Isshu collection of 100 poems, and is the single most important poem in the story of Chihayafuru. You could even say that the entire story of Chihayafuru is built around this poem which is Chihaya's name card, and plays a very special role in mediating the journey of Chihaya. And yet, fans everywhere read Chihayafuru as a triangular love affair.

Is Chihayafuru even a Romance? There has literally been no romances in this story from its very beginnings to ch226. We have confessions, especially Arata to Chihaya and Taichi to Chihaya, but nothing has come of these in any way. No one has accepted a confession. There has not even been any dating in the long running story. There is no triangle in the story. Arata and Taichi are Chihaya's very close friends, end of story so far. So how is Chihayafuru a Romance?

Poem 17 – Chihayaburu is how the author, Ms. [Yuki Suetsugu](#) sees her story, and she seems to take the double reading of the last line very much to heart. The all Kana script is the Chihayaburu poem number 17, and her background scene has two elements, 1) the kara-kurenai Japanese Maple leaf which would be reading the last line as 水くくるとは mizu kukuru to wa くくろ=kukuru to tie-dye; and 2) the current of the river as 水くぐるとは mizu kuguru to wa くぐる=kuguru to move hidden or underneath with force or power. The two symbols constantly reoccur in her story to such an extent that they seem to function as some sort of visual comment.



Consider the following three panels from CH 205 where Shinobu is asking Chihaya to support her move to a 5 game Queen tournament. The first page is spoken by Arata and is about Chihaya. Notice the leaves, then the next two pages have the current where Shinobu is attempting to move Chihaya. If Kanade is correct in her interpretation of the poem, then the kara-kurenai is Love, and the current is the passion which moves and carries Love, and never dies. This interpretation would combine the two readings of the last line.

What we have here in these three panels which open CH 205, is a different visual story as background to the actual event of the story, ie. Shinobu trying to convince Chihaya to support her 5 game series plan.

What they seem to say is: Love is moved by Passion

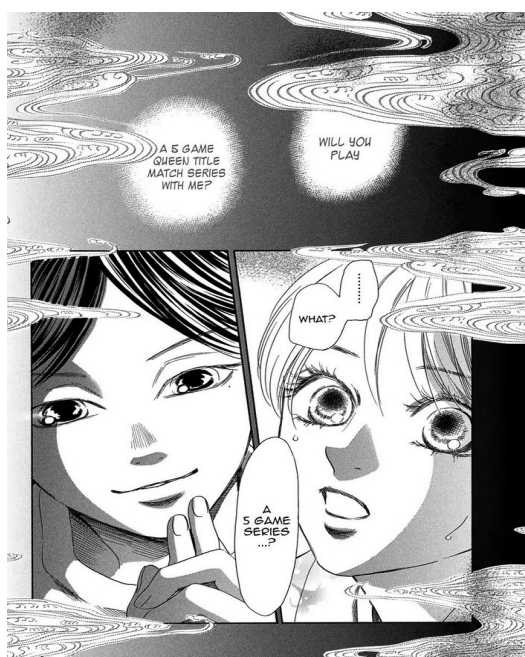
Further we can put Chihaya into the poem as Love, the Japanese Maple leaf and Shinobu into the poem as Love's Passion as the hidden current which moves Chihaya.

Chihaya

finds her Passion in Shinobu.



205.1



205.2



205.3

Shinobu is successful in moving Chihaya to her POV to support a 5 game Queen match in January. This is ironic! Had she not done this, Shinobu would now be Queen again as of CH 226. We are presently getting our feet wet as we step into the river.

Extending the equivalences from above:

The くる on the surface and くる hidden underneath which means that

<i>The Japanese Maple leaves</i>	くる kukuru	LOVE	Chihaya	千 CHI ち Blood
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<i>The Current of Tatsuta River</i>	くる kuguru	PASSION	Shinobu	詩 SHI し Poem

If Shinobu becomes the endgame of Chihayafuru, then we will match the story Chihayafuru above to the poem Chihayaburu which lies underneath as

Chihayafuru (ちはやふる) The Story

Chihayaburu (千早振る) The Poem

such that the Poem moves The Story as the current moves the leaves, as Shinobu moves Chihaya, as Passion moves Love.

In this way Chihayafuru types Chihayaburu and becomes binary, and not triangular, fully awash in the river of irony! We will see at the end of Chihayafuru if all that is true.

Perhaps the readers and fans of Chihayafuru are the ones being carried away!

Also to be noted is that the binary nature of Poem 17 – Chihayaburu has been recognized by other artists as in this famous and beautiful porcelain where we see the leaves carried by the current of the river.



Tatsuta River Design on porcelain
Nabeshima, 17th-18th Century, Japan