

Bon Odori Uta (Obon No Uta)

2018 pdf, updated 2020

This is the first dance done at Obon. The lyrics describe the important aspects of Obon, and the main movement which is a circle and meeting of hands above our heads, reminds us that we are all connected. The movement has also been called moon viewing or hana (flower).

The Palo Alto Buddhist Temple in Palo Alto California had an excellent history and explanation of the dance in their 2008 Obon Booklet. Thank you Palo Alto.

Obon no Uta (same as Bon Odori Uta)

“(Song of Obon) Obon no Uta is a joyous dance, for it brings us together with everyone, past and present. Those who have passed away remain a part of us. The round fan which is used in the dance, and the circles which are formed with our arms as we dance in a circle, all symbolically reinforce the interdependence of everyone, “past-lives” as well as “present-lives” with no beginning and no end.

Obon no Uta was first heard in Japan on the occasion of the Pan Pacific Young Buddhists' Association Conference in 1934, when the Tsukiji Buddhist Temple was established. All delegates were taught by William "Chick" Teramoto. Among the delegates was Helen Iwasaki, who was to later give birth to Mme. Jumasuga Hanayagi (Marjorie Nakaji), our Bon Odori instructor.” The dance was re-choreographed by Reverend Yoshio Iwanaga in America.

Teaching Video:

<https://youtu.be/XEzDFKYc-sg>

Dance Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNBbFxFxKgU5s&list=PLkeYL6A2MrBSVoMr2SShTA4C_sbfGvs_G&index=8&t=0s

Lyrics:

The following information and lyrics with translation are from the book: Gathering of Joy – A History of Bon Odori in Mainland America by Reverend Masao Kodani and the Senshin Buddhist Temple, Los Angeles, CA 1999

Bon Odori Uta - Song of Bon Odori

Music and Lyrics by Fujii, Seisui

Choreography by Rev. Yoshio Iwanaga

Produced by Jodoshinshu Bukkyo Ongaku Kyokai – 1934

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|---|--|--|
| 1 | Haa--- , Bon wa na , yoi sa, Bon wa ureshiya
Wakareta hito mo , arase - yo hohohoi
Harete kono yo e , ha, Ai ni kuru | Ahh - Bon, how pleasant Bon is
Those who have parted from us
Come to meet with us again, on this clear day |
| 2 | Haa--- , kumo no na , yoi sa, kumo no aida kara
Urayamashi geni , arase - yo hohohoi
Odori mina kita , ha, Otsukisama | Ahh - the clouds, from between the clouds
An envious moon, comes to see the dancing. |
| 3 | Haa --- , Odori na , yoi sa, odori odoru nara
Tebyoshi tatake , arase - yo hohohoi
Choshi tsuke nakya , ha, Uta mo denu | Ahh, the dance, if you dance the dance
Clap your hands
If you don't take up the spirit of the dance
The song will not come forth |
| 4 | Haa --- , Koyoi na , yoi sa, koyoi deta tsuki wa
Shinnyo no tsuki yo , arase - yo hohohoi
Oya no goshoraku , ha, Mite kurasu | Ahh-- This evening, this evening's moon
A moon of True Thusness
We spend this evening contemplating
The religious devotion of our parents |

5 **Haa-- Odori na**, yoi sa, **odori nembutsu**
Ki mo karugaru to, arase - yo hohohoi
Asu no kagyō, ha, **Ku ni naranu**

Ahh - the dance, the dance of Nembustu
The lightness and ease of spirit
There will be no pain in tomorrow's labor

6 **Haa-- Mura yo na**, yoi sa, **mura no obon yo**
Oemma sama no, arase - o hohohoi
Akai okao ga, ha, **Wasuraryo ka**

Ahh- the village, the village Obon
The red face of Emma (King of Death) is forgotten