

Waka After the Kokinshū: Anatomy of a Cultural Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

Waka After the *Kokinshū*: Anatomy of a Cultural Phenomenon

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This dissertation is a study of the boom of *waka* poetry in the mid-tenth century. *Waka* is approached here as a cultural phenomenon, that is, a complex system of people, practices, and ideas centering around the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural artifacts. Four main aspects of this system are examined: first, the network of people who, at various stages and in different ways, were involved in it. I identify three primary groups of agents (the poets, the patrons, and the public) and provide an analysis of each. Second, the body of ideas and beliefs that motivated and sustained involvement with *waka* as either poets, or patrons, or recipients. Third, the shared body of ingredients and skills that poets used to craft their works. Fourth and final, the criteria that contemporary audiences used to evaluate poems.

Each chapter deals with a specific aspect. Chapter 1 and 2 provide a sort of bird's eye view of the social world behind the *waka* phenomenon. Chapter 1 uses criteria such as social position and gender to present a typology of poets in tenth century court society. I distinguish between low-ranking poets who viewed *waka* as a potential pathway to career advancement, and high-ranking poets who used it mainly as a tool for conducting dalliances and as a marker of status. I also examine the case of women poets, and discuss whether it is legitimate to see them as a distinct type.

Chapter 2 focuses on the contribution of the patrons and the public. I start with a short history of patronage from the origins to the mid-tenth century, and then discuss various specific aspects of patronage, including its relation to the *monjō keikoku* theory (the idea that literature was useful for government), the appearance of the "poetry specialists" (*senmon kajin*), and the

role of women as patrons of *waka*. This chapter also sketches a first, tentative profile of the *waka* public, and identifies some of the areas that a more thorough study should or could cover.

Chapter 3 deals with the ideas and beliefs that motivated and sustained the *waka* phenomenon of the tenth century. As Bourdieu notes, "the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work, or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work." Some of the developments that the chapter examines are the emergence of a new view of poetry-making as a pathway to immortality, a new image of the poet as a literary giant worthy of the respect and admiration of society, the emergence of a proto-celebrity culture around poets and their work via poem-stories (*utagatari*), and the sedimentation of the connection between poetry and courtly elegance (*miyabi*).

Chapter 4 focuses on the body of ingredients and skills that poets used to make poems. I discuss how poetic know-how was acquired through study, what it consisted of, and several methods to apply it in actual composition. A discussion of the *Kokin waka rokujō* (Six Tomes of *waka*, c. 974), a giant poetry collection probably intended to serve as a reference book for poets, completes the chapter.

Chapter 5 deals with contemporary criteria to evaluate poetry. Two main texts are examined: the *Tentoku yo'nen dairi utaawase* (Poetry contest at the Palace of the Fourth Year of Tentoku, 960), and the *Waka kuhon* (Nine Grades of *waka*, c. 1009) by Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1044). The final section of the chapter discusses Tokieda Motoki's argument that since poetry was used in everyday life as a medium of communication, the aesthetic value of a poem was often less important than its performative value.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- GR *Gunsho ruijū*. 29 vols + 1 vol. index. Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1959-1960.
- HUT *Heianchō utaawase taisei*. 2nd ed. 10 vols. Dōhōsha, 1979.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikai*. 100 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1957-1967.
- NKBZ *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*. 51 vols. Shōgakukan, 1970-1976.
- NKT *Nihon kagaku taikai*. 19 vols. Kazama Shobō, 1956-.
- NST *Nihon shisō taikai*. 67 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1970-1982.
- SNKBT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai*. 100 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1989- .
- SNKBZ *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*. 88 vols. Shōgakukan, 1994-2002.
- ST *Shikashū taisei*. 8 vols. Meiji Shoin, 1973-1976.
- SZKT *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai*. 66 vols. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1929-1967.

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system, n. A set or assemblage of things
connected, associated, or interdependent,
so as to form a complex unity
—*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.

INTRODUCTION

WAKA AS COLLECTIVE CULTURAL PHENOMENON

The tenth century is often described as a turning point in the history of ancient Japan.¹ The *ritsuryō* order first established in the early eighth century was now showing evident signs of wear, as best shown by two large-scale revolts in the space of only a few years, one in Shikoku led by Fujiwara no Sumitomo (d. 941), and one in the North-East led by Taira no Masakado (d. 940). Economically, new forms of private land-holding and proto-feudal relationships between city landowners, local stewards, and farmers gradually supplanted the older system based on the periodical redistribution of publicly-owned land and corvée labor. At court, the Fujiwara eventually succeeded in their long-term plan to divest the sovereign of actual authority and established, following the events known as the An'na disturbance (969), a long phase of direct control of court affairs known as the Regency period (*sekkan-ki*). At the cultural level, renovated interest in native cultural forms led to a phase of "dual" Chinese-Japanese cultural life, with effects visible in literature, religion, and the arts.

But the tenth century was also a time of extraordinary thriving for *waka*, the classical verse-form in thirty-one syllables. The making of the *Kokin wakashū* (Collection of *waka* Old and New) in 905, the first *waka* anthology in history to be officially sponsored and endorsed by an emperor, was only the prelude to a century of extraordinary flourishing during which the *waka* established itself as the premier poetic form (at least in terms of sheer popularity) at court and beyond. Recently-invented poetic practices such as poetry contests (*uta-awase*) and screen

¹ The foregoing summary is loosely based on Ishimoda Shō, *Kodai makki seiji-shi josetsu: kodai makki no seiji katei oyobi seiji keitai* (Miraisha, 1956), 13-89.

poetry (*byōbu-uta*) reached their full maturity, while composing *waka* became a daily occupation for virtually every educated person in the capital. In 951 a second official anthology was completed, just as more and more poets took to editing their poems into personal poetry collections known today as *shikashū*. Also at this time, poets and their work became the subject of a new genre of stories (the *utagatari* or poem-stories), a portion of which were collated into large, loosely structured collections known today as *uta-monogatari* (poem-tales).

This extraordinary flourishing was the result of a complex system of interconnected factors that taking a cue from Harrison and Cynthia White's pioneering study of French art in the eighteenth century, could be termed a "*waka* machine."² To date, it cannot be said that this "machine" has been adequately described: there have been marvelously detailed studies of individual works, various excellent biographies of individual poets, and countless fine discussions of one or another aspect of poetic practice; but there has been no truly systematic account of *waka* as a single, cohesive cultural phenomenon. One reason is the tendency, common to many areas of pre-modern literature but perhaps especially strong in *waka* studies, to overspecialize. To describe a large-scale cultural phenomenon is to work at a considerable level of abstraction; it involves building conceptual bridges between a broad range of seemingly unrelated elements (social, cultural, formal, etc.) in order to reveal their interconnections. *Waka* specialists, however, have always been more comfortable working with smaller units of inquiry, be that individual authors, works, or specific problems.³

² Harrison White and Cynthia White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 5, 16. By "art machine," White and White intend the artist-dealer-client system that propelled artistic efflorescence during their period of focus.

³ As Matsumura Yūji noted in a recent overview of the field, this may in turn be a consequence of the nature of the academic job market in Japan, which values advanced expertise in one area over breadth of vision. Matsumura, "Sengo waka kenkyū sobyō," in *Sengo waka*

A second reason is the lack of a suitable theoretical model to analyze large, complex cases of cultural efflorescence. Although advances in areas such as literature studies, cultural studies, and cultural sociology have now given us the means to approach *waka* in broad, systemic terms, *waka* studies have not been receptive to these developments.⁴ Without a sense of the collective, organized nature of cultural production, researchers have felt no need to go beyond the exhaustive treatment of individual problems in order to address the question of their interrelation and role within the larger system.

This is not to say that important steps in the right direction have not been taken. The 1960s and early 1970s in particular saw the appearance of several important works that attempted to go beyond the elucidation of individual problems in order to arrive at a more comprehensive view of the *waka* phenomenon. Works such as Yamaguchi Hiroshi's multi-volume *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū* (1967-1972), Murase Toshio's *Kokinshū no kiban to shūhen* (1971), Fujioka Tadaharu's *Heian wakashi-ron* (1965), and Hashimoto Fumio's *Ōchō wakashi no kenkyū* (1972) can be cited as representative examples of this line of work. Kudō Shigenori's more recent *Heianchō ritsuryō shakai no bungaku* (1993) also belongs to this category. Even these works, however, for all their unquestionable brilliance, suffer from the lack of a clear methodological framework, and ultimately fall short of delivering an overall picture of the *waka* phenomenon. With regard to Yamaguchi's *Kadanshi*, for instance, perhaps the most ambitious of the lot, it is fair to say that too little effort is made to draw out a coherent picture from the astonishing mass of data that the author examines, with the result that an overall view of the *waka* phenomenon fails to emerge.

kenkyūsha retsuden: uta ni miserareta hitobito, ed. Tanaka Noboru and Matsumura Yūji (Kasama Shoin, 2006), 13-4.

⁴ References to specific works are given below.

The present dissertation aims to fill this gap in *waka* scholarship by presenting an account of mid-tenth century *waka* as a single, unified cultural phenomenon, and I should hasten to explain what is meant here by cultural phenomenon. A cultural phenomenon is first and foremost something that involves a large number of people. These include not only the creators—those who physically manufacture the artifacts around which the phenomenon as a whole develops—but also their audience, as well as all those other figures who, at various stages and in different ways, facilitate and support cultural activity. In *waka*'s case these included the elite patrons who sponsored or promoted poetic activity, editors who edited poems into collections, critics who assessed the value of poems, and so on. Thus, a cultural phenomenon is an “art world” in the sense indicated by the American sociologist Howard Becker: “I have used the term [art world] in a more technical way, to denote the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for.”⁵

Secondly, a cultural phenomenon is cultural, and here there are two distinct meanings that can be pointed out: first, it is cultural in the sense that it is motivated and sustained by an intricate web of beliefs, attitudes, and values. The work of Pierre Bourdieu comes to mind here as the most direct theoretical referent. In a number of important studies, the French sociologist clarified the role that beliefs such as the belief in the value of art and what he called the “ideology of the charismatic author” play in the life of the literary field.⁶ Raymond Williams' work on the changes in the meaning of "culture" and "literature" between the eighteenth and

⁵ Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), x. Becker understands art in the broadest possible sense, as including the visual arts, music, literature, etc.

⁶ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 167-73, 285-312; Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 74-8, 254-66.

nineteenth centuries was also a major contribution to this area of study.⁷ Ideas about art and the artist are what makes people want to become involved in art and fuels the demand for art in the public. A cultural phenomenon, therefore, is not only a network of cooperating people, but a discursive space, a shared body of information, beliefs, and values.

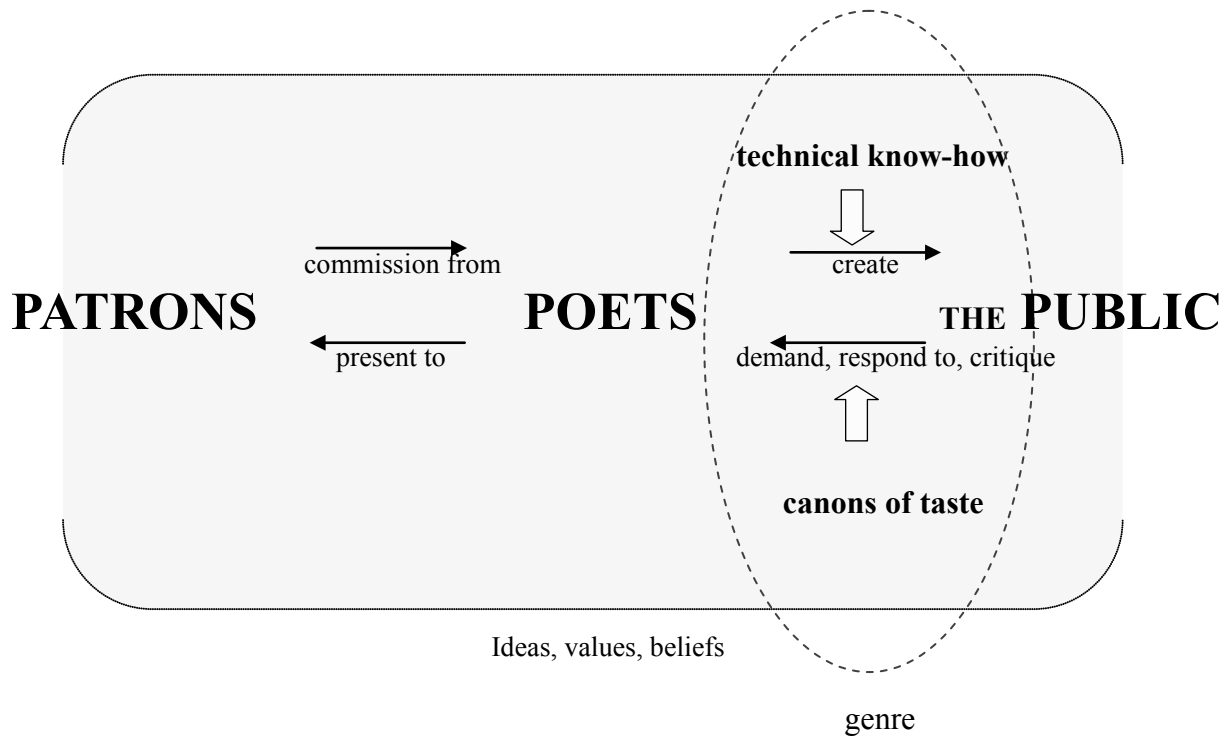
The second sense in which a cultural phenomenon is cultural is that it centers around the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural artifacts. The study of the artistic output has traditionally fallen outside the scope of sociologically-minded analyses of cultural phenomena. Sociologists usually avoid dealing with works, preferring to leave the task to others (literary critics, art historians, etc.).⁸ By doing so, however, they leave blank a major area of the phenomenon they purport to describe, perhaps lending some basis to the charge that is often leveled against literary sociology, namely, that it stops at a preliminary survey of the “external circumstances” of literary activity. Ways must be found, therefore, to reconcile the sociologist’s interest in the social dynamics behind cultural activity and the study of the artistic output of such activity.⁹

This, in broad strokes, is the understanding of "cultural phenomenon" from which tenth-century *waka* will be analyzed in this dissertation. This understanding can be schematically represented as follows:

FIGURE i-1

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

⁸ Howard Becker, “The Work Itself,” in *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations*, ed. Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 21ff.

Anatomy of the tenth-century *waka* phenomenon

The words in bold capitals are the names of the three main groups of agents involved; the arrows indicate some of their activities, and the group toward which they were directed. The dotted oval represents the genre, which can be seen as the interface between the network of people involved in cultural activity and the mass of works that they both produced and consumed. Technical know-how and canons of taste are the two complementary facets of genre: know-how is what allowed a mass of poets in different times and places to produce works that both they and their audience recognized as tokens of the same type; circulating canons of taste provided audiences with a shared vocabulary and a set of concepts to analyze and evaluate poems. The large grey area represents the intellectual ambiance within which all of the above took place.

The dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a sort of bird's eye view of the social world behind the *waka* phenomenon. I start from Howard Becker's idea that

art-making is a collective enterprise requiring the joint cooperation of people fulfilling different roles and functions, and identify three main groups of agents in the *waka* world of the tenth century: the poets, the patrons, and the public. Chapter 1 “The Structure of the Poetic Field in the Tenth Century” discusses how factors such as class and gender gave rise to several different “ways” of being a poet. I distinguish between low-ranking poets who viewed poetry-making as a potential pathway to career advancement, and high-ranking poets who used it primarily as a tool for conducting dalliances and as a marker of status. This chapter also discusses the case of women poets (*joryū kajin*) and whether there was something in the literary behavior of women poets that justifies seeing them as a distinct category.

Chapter 2 focuses on the contribution of the patrons and the Public. I start with a brief history of patronage from the origins to the mid-tenth century, and then discuss various specific aspects of patronage, including its relation to the *monjō keikoku shisō* (the idea that literature is useful for government), the appearance of the poetry specialists (*senmon kajin*), and the role of women as patrons of *waka*. The last part of the chapter a first profile of the *waka* public, which is defined as the mass of people who understood, appreciated, and desired to hear (or read) *waka* poems. Since *waka* studies have yet to produce a serious study of the poetry audience, these pages are intended as a first, preliminary attempt to identify some of the areas that such a study could or should cover.

Chapter 3 deals with circulating views of *waka* and the *waka* poet in tenth-century court society. As Bourdieu noted, “the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work, or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work.”¹⁰ I

¹⁰ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 37.

discuss the changes in attitudes toward *waka* and the poet that took place between the late ninth and the mid-tenth centuries, the result of which was a new, highly favorable intellectual climate around *waka* and its practice. Some of the developments that the chapter examines are the appearance of a new view of poetry-making as a pathway to immortality, a new view of the *waka* poet as a literary giant worthy of the respect and admiration of society, the increase of interest in the figure of the Author, the emergence of a proto-celebrity culture around poets and their work, and the solidification of the link between *waka* and courtliness (*miyabi*).

Chapter 4 “Poetic Know-how, *waka* Education, and the Compositional Process after the *Kokinshū*” is my answer to the age-old question of how to incorporate the study of works in a sociologically-minded analysis of cultural phenomena. Instead of focusing on works, as many studies do, I focus on genre, which I define as the body of knowledge and skills that poets used to make poems. I discuss how poetic know-how was acquired through study, what it consisted of, and several ways to apply it in actual composition. A discussion of the *Kokin waka rokujō* 古今和歌六帖 (Six Volumes of *waka* Old and New, c. 983), a giant collection of 4,500 poems probably intended to serve as a reference book for poets, completes the chapter.

Chapter 5 deals with contemporary criteria for evaluating poems. The main question the chapter seeks to answer is: what poems were considered good or bad by a mid-tenth century audience? Two texts in particular are examined: the *Tentoku yo'nen dairi utaawase* 天徳内裏歌合 (Poetry contest at the Palace of the Fourth Year of Tentoku, 960) and the *Waka kuhon* 和歌九品 (Nine Levels of *waka*, 1009 or later) by Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041). The Tentoku 4 match is the first match in history for which complete records of all the twenty rounds survive. Kintō's work represents the first attempt to provide objective criteria for ranking poems. Together, these two works provide us with unique insight into contemporary trends in poetic taste. The

final section of the chapter discusses Tokieda Motoki's argument that since poetry was used in everyday life as a medium of communication, the aesthetic value of a poem was often less important than its practical, "use" value.

CHAPTER 1

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POETIC FIELD IN THE TENTH CENTURY

The story of the *waka* in the tenth century is the story of a collective mania. It is impossible to provide precise estimates, but if one takes as valid Yamaguchi Hiroshi's claim that the entire aristocracy, though with different degrees of commitment and regularity, composed poetry, then one is looking at a remarkable total of anywhere between five and forty thousand practitioners, depending on the estimate.¹ This overabundance of poets poses a challenge to the literary historian, since what is one wishing to produce an even only moderately comprehensive account of poetic activity during this period going to focus on? Surely one cannot focus on a few single figures considered representative as one would have done up to only a few decades ago, for even assuming that universally acceptable criteria of relevance could be devised—and if the debate on canon is anything to go by, they most probably can't—that would still mean to ignore all but a very small fraction of those who practiced this art. Nor can one hope to bypass the problem by subjecting each and every poet active in this period to the kind of close scrutiny traditionally reserved to the so-called "Greats;" as Franco Moretti recently noted about British fiction of the eighteenth century, "a field this large, cannot be understood by stitching together

¹ Yamaguchi Hiroshi, *Ōchō kadan-shi no kenkyū: Murakami, Reizei, Enyū-chō hen* (Ōfūsha, 1967), 307. Estimates of the total number of people composing the aristocracy vary considerably from scholar to scholar. Murai Yasuhiko (*Heian kizoku no sekai*, Tokumo Shoten, 1968, p. 31) gives a multiple of 6,000; Haruo Shirane (*Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 19) gives 60,000; Michael Ashkenazi (*Handbook of Japanese Mythology*, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003, 17) gives 20,000 to 30,000; Oboroya Hisashi (*Ochō to kizoku*, Shūeisha, 1991, 61) estimates 10,000 to 40,000 people.

separate bits of knowledge about individual cases; it's a collective system, that should be grasped as such, as a whole [...].”²

A possible way out of the predicament is to think in terms of types of poets. Sociologists of art and literature have proposed various typologies of cultural creators. Howard Becker divides artists into “integrated professionals,” “mavericks,” and “naïve” or “grassroots” artists, based on their degree of integration within, and attitude toward, the art establishment.³ Pierre Bourdieu views the literary field as a network of interconnected “positions,” that is, the stances that writers assume as they enter the field based on their socio-cultural background, their respective goals, and the available possibilities.⁴ This approach is useful because it allows us to substitute for a potentially mind-numbing number of individual cases the limited set of types the latter fall into. Moreover, since positions develop in response to and often in reaction to one another, it allows us to grasp the literary field as a single, complex whole rather than as a formless mass of individual figures.

The groundwork for applying this approach to *waka* has already been laid by other scholars. A number of scholars including Usami Kisoichi, Murase Toshio, Yamaguchi Hiroshi, and Katagiri Yōichi have contributed to developing a typology of poets based on class—poets of low rank at one end of the spectrum, and poets of high rank at the other.⁵ Another established distinction, which will be tested here, hinges on gender: was there a difference in the way male

² Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (New York: Verso, 2005), 4.

³ Howard Becker, “Art Worlds and Social Types,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 19, no. 6 (1976): 703-715.

⁴ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29-73.

⁵ References to specific works will be given when appropriate throughout the chapter.

and female poets approached their art that justifies seeing them as distinct types? This chapter draws together these different strands of research in order to identify the basic modes of being a poet in tenth-century court society.⁶ The result, it is hoped, will be a more comprehensive view of poetic activity in this period than can be gained by looking only at individual cases.

The genesis of a position

The turn of the tenth century is known to *waka* historians as the time of the “return of the *waka* to public life.”⁷ Suddenly, after a prolonged phase of neglect, emperors, consorts, and senior court officials began once more to sponsor the native verse-form, by requesting poems, hosting *waka* events, and commissioning works of *waka* to poets. The phenomenon had numerous important consequences, but surely one of the most notable was that it transformed verse-making into a potentially profitable activity: composing for patrons, at court, and in more or less official settings, gave poets the opportunity to come into contact with and display their talent before figures of immense power and wealth, the same figures who also made decisions about promotions and appointments to office upon which the economic well-being of any Heian courtier depended.⁸

⁶ These types should not be seen as fixed identities that constrained individual action, but as loose patterns of thought and behavior that some poets, because of their background and their reasons for pursuing *waka*, were more likely to adopt than others in different situations.

⁷ Helen Craig McCullough, *Brocade by Night: Kokin wakashū and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 231-292. Andrew J. Pekarik, “Poetics and the Place of Japanese Poetry in Court Society Through the Early Heian Period” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1983), 107-128.

⁸ Government posts were allocated in three main ways: by direct imperial appointment (*chokunin*), by recommendation to the emperor from the Council of State (*sōnin*), and by a minister holding delegate authority (*hannin*). See, Robert M. Spaulding Jr., *Imperial Japan’s Higher Civil Service Examinations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 19.

No one was more keenly aware of this than the poets. It is said in the Chinese preface (*mana-jo*) to the *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集 (Collection of *waka* Old and New, 905, hereafter simply *Kokinshū*), the first official *waka* anthology:

On fine days when the scenery was beautiful to behold, the rulers of the past would offer a banquet for their ministers and retainers and command them to present *waka* poems. Through poetry, the sentiments of lord and subject became visible, and the sage could be told apart from the fool. Poetry was a means to choose men of talent, all in accordance with the will of the people.⁹

古天子、每良辰美景、詔侍臣、預宴筵者獻和歌。君臣之情、由斯可見、賢愚之性、於是相分。所以隨民之欲、捫士之才。

This passage is an example of what Kudō Shigenori has called a "semi-fictional *waka* history" (*kyojitsu o torimazeta wakashū*).¹⁰ There is a some amount of factual truth in it (*waka* seems to have been an officially patronized art in ancient times), but there is also considerable fiction: as anyone familiar with early Japanese history knows, there was never a time when promotions and appointments to office were given based solely or primarily on ability with *waka*. Although some rare cases in which promotions were given out for a good poem are mentioned in the official histories, these were the exception, not the rule.¹¹ This distortion was motivated by a twofold concern: on the one hand, there was the need to justify the compilation of an imperial

⁹ NKBZ 7: 415. The *kana* preface puts forward the same idea but in a less heavy-handedly Confucian jargon. For a discussion of Chinese influences on the two *Kokinshū* prefaces see John Timothy Wixted, "The *Kokinshū* Prefaces: Another Perspective," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.1 (June 1983), 215-238.

¹⁰ Kudō Shigenori, "Kokinshū no seiritsu: waka chokusen e no michi," in *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei*, vol. 1, ed. Masuda Shigeo et al. (Kazama Shobō, 2004), 169.

¹¹ One known case of a promotion granted for a good poem took place in Taitō 3 (808). During a royal excursion to the Shinsen'en gardens, Emperor Heizei (or Heijō, r. 806-809) was so pleased by Ōyake no Kazemaro's poem that he immediately promoted him to the Junior Fifth Rank, Upper Grade.

collection of *waka*. Such a work would have only been acceptable if it could be successfully demonstrated there was a connection between *waka* and governmental activity; at the same time, the passage reflects the compilers' desire to establish a direct connection between poetic ability and career advancement. Rather than an objective account of the past, therefore, the passage delivers the authors' idea of an ideal future—a future in which excellence in poetry led straight to success at court.¹²

The compilers' social position must be considered at this point. Historians customarily divide the Heian aristocracy into three subgroups: the *kugyō* 公卿 (senior nobles), which comprised aristocrats from the top three ranks plus anyone holding the title of *sangi* (adviser). These were the men who made the important decisions and perceived the highest salaries. The *tenjōbito* 殿上人 (hall-men in William and Helen McCullough's translation), which included officials of the fourth and fifth ranks and the members of the *kurodō*, the Emperor's personal secretariat. Finally, the *jige* 地下 (lower aristocracy), which comprised officials holding ranks six through nine, from which the personnel for the less important offices and for the provincial bureaucracy was selected. The four poets who compiled the *Kokinshū* (Ki no Tsurayuki [?-945], Ōshikōchi no Mitsune [859?-925?], Ki no Tomonori [850?-904?], and Mibu no Tadamine [860?-920?]) all belonged to this last group.¹³ Their chances of ever attaining positions of importance in the government in what can be called the conventional ways were low or nonexistent. They

¹² For a similar reading of this section, see Kudō Shigenori, *Heianchō risturyō shakai no bungaku* (Perikansha, 1993), 118-9.

¹³ The rank of the compilers at the time of their appointment is discussed by McCullough: "Tsurayuki [...] held a post as Librarian (*azukari*) in Mifumidokoro library, which probably gave him a Junior Seventh Lower or Senior Eighth Upper Rank. Mitsune [...] had been a minor provincial official with Junior Eighth Lower Rank until 898; in the early 900s he was still awaiting a new appointment." McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 298.

lacked the family pedigree and the connections with the throne that by this point had become far more important criteria to advance in the career ladder than individual merit. The one thing that stood between them and a future of certain mediocrity was their talent as poets, so it is not surprising that some of them should think of using this talent to improve their position.

The idea that excellence in verse could lead to success at court was not as absurd in tenth-century Japan as it might sound today. Although education never quite had the same importance in Japan that it had in China, it was generally accepted that government service required a high degree of literary proficiency.¹⁴ All prospective court functionaries spent years studying at the imperial university (*daigakuryō*), and also took qualification exams (*kējū* 科挙, J. *kakyo*), one of which—the *chin shih* or *belles lettres*—tested poetry and rhyme-prose (*fu*).¹⁵ By hoping to improve their position at court through *waka*, therefore, these poets were simply applying to their form of choice an idea that was widely accepted for letters in general.

Furthermore, it can be said that the political situation of the late ninth century was favorable to the emergence of hopes of career advancement in low-ranking aristocrats of literary disposition. 891 was the year of the death of Fujiwara no Mototsune (836-891), who as Regent (*sesshō*) first and later plenipotentiary Chancellor (*daijō daijin*), was the main arbiter of court affairs between 872 and 890.¹⁶ For the first time in several decades, the reigning emperor (Uda, r.

¹⁴ The position of letters in the Confucian ideal of the good government official is discussed in Helen McCullough, introduction to *Tales of Ise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 15-17.

¹⁵ On the examination system in China, see Ichisada Miyazaki, *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976); Thomas H. C. Lee, *Government Education and Examinations in Sung China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985), especially pp. 5-13 and 142-145.

¹⁶ Mototsune was Regent under Seiwa (r. 858-876) and Yōzei (r. 876-884), and Chancellor under Uda (r. 887-897).

887-897) did not appoint a Fujiwara successor; instead, he assigned to the prestigious post of Head of the Secretariat (*kurōdo no tō*), and later brought to the highest positions in the government, Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), a non-Fujiwara man known for his erudition and mastery of Chinese letters.¹⁷ Four years earlier, he had made an advisor (*sangi*) of the Confucian scholar Tachibana no Hiromi (837 or 839-890). Even after Uda's abdication in 897 and the return to a Fujiwara-controlled court under his son Daigo (r. 897-930), various initiatives were taken that can be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen imperial authority, limit Fujiwara power, and revive the meritocratic spirit of the *ritsuryō* order: in a span of two decades, the state produced two new compendia of laws (the *Engi kyaku* 延喜格 [Stipulations of the Engi Era, 907] and the *Engi shiki* 延喜式 [Protocols of the Engi Era, 927]), a new history of the realm (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録, 901), as well as the *Kokinshū*, the first *waka* anthology in history to be compiled by imperial decree.¹⁸ It is conceivable that to some ambitious young men of the time these developments might have seemed like the beginning of a new phase of Confucian-style meritocracy, in which a man of talent could prosper regardless of family background.¹⁹

By far the clearest indicator that some poets of low rank saw poetic activity as a potential pathway to social advancement is the large quantity of poems that they addressed to figures of authority in which they lament the misery of their condition and implicitly plea for help. Poems

¹⁷ On Michizane's rise to power under Uda, see Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 197ff.

¹⁸ Many scholars see the compilation of the *Kokinshū* as an attempt to assert imperial authority in the face of mounting Fujiwara pressure. See, for instance, Fujioka Tadaharu, *Heian wakashi-ron: sandaishū jidai no kichō* (Ōfūsha, 1966), 22-3.

¹⁹ Mezaki Tokue, *Ki no Tsurayuki* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1961), 68.

of this kind are ubiquitous in the *oeuvre* of various important tenth-century poets, including Tsurayuki, Mitsune, Kiyohara no Motosuke (908-990), Ōnakatomi no Yoshinobu (921-991), Minamoto no Shitagō (911-983), and Taira no Kanemori (910?-990). They are so numerous that Yamaguchi Hiroshi coined the term "poets of misery" (*chinrin no kadan*) for them.²⁰

One example of this kind of poetry is a poem by the leading late ninth-century poet Ōe no Chisato (fl. late 9th century). The poem is the first of a series of ten "Grievances" (*jukkai*) that Chisato appended to his *Kudai waka* 句題和歌 (*Waka* on lines from Chinese poems, also known as *Chisato-shū*), a collection of *waka* based on lines from famous Chinese poems that he presented to emperor Uda in 894:

The voice of the single crane left behind amidst the reeds—
May my words make it heard above the clouds!²¹

あしたつのひとりおくれてなくこゑは
雲のうへまで聞こえつがなん

The lonely crane in the poem is the poet, who has been left behind as everybody else has taken off for greener pastures. "Above the clouds" (*kumo no ue*) was an established way of referring to the emperor and those close to him, so the poem can be read as an appeal for greater imperial support.

Another example is a poem that Mitsune presented to Uda in occasion of a visit to his private residence, the Teiji palace:

²⁰ Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū: Uda, Daigo, Suzakuchō-hen*, 307-335.

²¹ *Chisato-shū*, no. 121, ST 1: 112. The *Chisato-shū* contains 125 *waka*, mostly adaptations of lines from poems by Bai Juyi (772-846). The poem also appears in the *Kokinshū* (XVIII: 998).

Mitsune composed this [poem] and respectfully presented it to the Retired Emperor:

For the miserable ivy with no tree to climb upon,
green is eternal and the autumn is the saddest season.²²

立ち寄らむ木のもともなきつたの身は
ときはながらに秋ぞ悲しき

With the wit typical of *Kokinshū*-time poetry, the poem compares the changing color of the leaves to the colors worn by court officials of different rank. Officials of the sixth and seventh ranks, to which Mitsune probably belonged at the time, wore green, while officials of the fifth rank wore red; in autumn, when everything around the poet turned red, the poet-ivy remained green, to his comprehensible dismay.

A third example is an exchange between *Kokinshū*-compiler Tomonori and Fujiwara no Tokihira (871-909), who was Minister of the Left under Daigo (r. 897-930) and was also a recognized patron of *waka*:

When Ki no Tomonori had yet to receive his first appointment, [Tokihira] asked him how old he was. Tomonori answered that he was forty, [and so he composed]:

(The Late Chancellor)

How can more than forty years have passed
without the flowers having bloomed even once?

今までになどかは花咲かずして
四十年あまり年ぎりはする

Reply:

(Tomonori)

You have not forgotten the number of springs that have passed,
so to what end do you plant a tree that will not bloom?²³

²² *Yamato monogatari*, no. 33, NKBZ 8: 291.

はるばるの数は忘れず有ながら
花咲かぬ木をななに植へけん

A final example is a poem that Ki no Tsurayuki addressed to an unspecified “Excellency,” possibly Fujiwara no Tadahira (880-949):

In despair for not having received an appointment, he wrote this poem on the back of something he wrote for His Excellency:

Does the pine at Takasago also regard me as a friend,
seeing that I, too, pass through this world with no purpose?²⁴

いたづらに世にふるものと
高砂の松も我をや友と見るらん

In some cases, these desperate calls for help in verse were attached to equally desperate prose compositions in literary Chinese called *mōshibumi* 申文 (petitions). Heian court officials submitted these documents to their superiors prior to the bi-annual conferral of appointments (*jimoku* 除目) in the hope of increasing their chances of receiving an appointment.²⁵ We know that Tsurayuki submitted one such petition after his return to the capital from Tosa in 934, and although the petition itself is now lost, the accompanying poem survives:

In a leap year in which there were two Third Months, at the time of the Ceremony of Appointments, he sent [this poem] to the residence of the Minister of the Left, together with a petition:

²³ *Gosenshū*, nos. 1077 and 1078; SKBT 6: 319.

²⁴ *Tsurayuki-shū*, no. 873; SST 1: 300. According to Murase, the addressee of the poem was either Tadahira or his son Morosuke. Murase, *Kokinshū no kiban to shūhen*, 229.

²⁵ Appointments were made twice a year, once in the spring for posts in the provinces (*agatameshi no jimoku*), and once in the autumn for posts in the capital (*tsukasameshi no jimoku*).

At least this year that it will last longer,
I most certainly hope to meet spring!²⁶

あまりさへありてゆくべき年だにも
春にかならずあふよしも哉

To summarize my argument so far, with the resurgence of imperial patronage in the latter half of the ninth century, some poets from the lowest stratum of the aristocracy began to entertain hopes of improving their position at court through poetic activity, and to actively use poetry to solicit appointments and promotions. It was, by any standard, a desperate ploy, with little chance of success. For these men who belonged to politically destitute clans that had long past their peak of influence at court, however, there was no real alternative; the stakes were so high that even the most improbable ploy seemed worth a try.

Rank and poetic practice

It is almost superfluous to say that only one type of poetry—the so-called “public” or “official” poetry (*hare no uta* 晴の歌 in Japanese-language scholarship)—could warrant hopes of social advancement.²⁷ What Japanese-language scholars call “private poetry” (*ke no uta* 褻の歌), such as poems exchanged with friends or lovers in informal circumstances, not only did not offer such prospects, from the perspective of someone hoping to derive career benefits from poetic activity, it can be said that it represented a menace, for it gave credence to the still fairly

²⁶ *Gosenshū* no. 135; SNKBT 6: 44. “To meet Spring” (*haru ni au*) was a standard metaphor for career success.

²⁷ By public poetry here is intended poetry made on command from or in the presence of an authority, often on a set topic (*dai*), at or for a formal court gathering. For a summary of the debate on private and public poetry in Japanese scholarship, see Kudō Shigenori, “*Gosenwakashū*: waka ni okeru ke/hare to wa nani ka,” in *Kokinshū to sono zengo*, ed. Waka Bungaku Ronshū Henshū Iinkai, Waka bungaku ronshū vol. 2 (Kazama Shobō, 1994): 257-286.

widespread belief that *waka* was a frivolous art, unsuited to court contexts, thus compromising the chances of it ever being truly accepted as a public art. These considerations explain why the same poets who hoped to derive career benefits from poetic activity were also vocal supporters of public poetry, which they hailed as the sole proper mode of poetry-making, while they spoke disparagingly of private poetry, and particularly of love poetry. I cite once more from the

Kokinshū preface:

Today the heart of men has set on love and turned into flowers, and so empty, worthless poems are all that is made. [*Waka*] has become a clandestine pursuit, hidden like a buried log within the houses of the libertines, its grass-like leaves never reaching out to places of significance. When one considers its origins, however, it was not so. On spring mornings when the cherry trees were in bloom, and on autumn evenings when the moon was shining, the emperors of the past would summon their retainers and have them present *waka* on various topics.²⁸

今の世の中、色につき、人の心、花になりけるより、あだなる歌、はかなきことのみいでくれば、色好みの家に、埋れ木の、人知れぬこととなりて、まめなるところには、花すすき穂にいだすべきことにあらずなりにたり、その初めを思へば、かかるべくなむあらぬ、いにしへの世々の帝、春の花のあした 秋の月の夜ごとに、さぶらふ人々をめぐりて、事につけつつ歌をたてまつらしめたまふ。

The compilers' preference for public poetry (and little sympathy for its private counterpart) is clear enough from the passage, but there is more than one way to interpret it. First, the passage can be read as a Confucian-minded assertion of the superiority of publicly-useful art over art made privately, for personal reasons. Second, it could be read as a defense of poetry made for poetry's sake, against the merely "utilitarian" use of it made by the libertines. If one considers the social background of the compilers and the potential career benefits offered by public poetry, however, a third interpretation is also possible: the compilers had little sympathy for private

²⁸ "Kanajo," NKBZ 7: 54.

poetry because it took poetry away from the space where poetic excellence could be handsomely rewarded, and shut it away in a private universe where no one (meaning no one important) could see it.

The compilers' preference for public poetry is apparent in the *Kokinshū*. The entire collection, in fact, can be seen as one big manifesto for public poetry—poetry made at court, at the command or in the presence of an authority—and as an attempt to minimize the importance of poetry made in informal, everyday circumstances. First of all, both the Chinese and Japanese prefaces give great emphasis to the official nature of the work, stressing the emperor's role as both the original architect and the final recipient of the project. In terms of content, the *Kokinshū* contains a large quantity of "public" poems, including many poems made by imperial command, many "screen poems" (*byōbu-uta*), and 105 poems made at *uta-awase*.²⁹ The desire to emphasize the official nature of the work even extended to the prose headnotes (*kotobagaki*), which, as Katagiri Yōichi has shown, are written from the point of view of a court official offering up the poems to the emperor.³⁰

By contrast, the *Kokinshū* features a surprisingly small number of *zōtōka* 贈答歌 (poetic exchanges, the form of choice of the lovers), despite the *zōtōka* being probably the most numerically significant poetic subgenre at the time. In total, only thirteen pairs can be counted.³¹ There are even cases when poems that were originally part of a set of *zōtōka* were included as a

²⁹ 92 of these are formally identified as such. Screen poems were poems written on decorative partition screens called *byōbu*.

³⁰ Katagiri Yōichi, "Kokinwakashū no ba," *Bungaku*, vol. 7. No. 7 (Jul. 1979), 45-48.

³¹ The second official *waka* anthology, the *Gosenshū*, contains many *zōtōka* in the *Gosenshū* are thought to date from the time of the *Kokinshū*, which suggests that they were deliberately omitted from the earlier anthology.

single poem, with a fictional head-note provided to suggest an independent origin.³² The compilers' desire to foreground public poetry is also evident in their treatment of love poetry. Although the *Kokinshū* does contain a great quantity of love poems,³³ the compilers dislodged in the second half of the work, after volumes of 'Seasonal' (*shiki*), 'Celebratory' (*ga*), 'Parting' (*ribetsu*), and 'Travel' (*kiryō*) poetry. More importantly, through careful editing they significantly altered the effect of these poems: the poems in the love books are arranged in the same loosely "chronological" order that is employed in the seasonal books—poems about the first signs of love first, and poems about the sorrow of separation last.³⁴ So arranged, they are part of a master narrative of courtly love that bears little or no connection to the actual romances between real-life men and women that had spawned the poems. Moreover, a majority of the love poems are presented as "anonymous" (*yomibito shirazu*), ostensibly to safeguard the privacy of their authors, but also, just as possibly, to further weaken the ties between artifact and the real world.

Thus, in several important respects the *Kokinshū* seems to have been designed to foreground public poetry at the expense of poetry composed in informal situations, away from the court. When such poetry had to be included, because there was so much of it that it could not simply be ignored, the editors subjected it to a meticulous process of editing that cleansed it of its

³² Terauchi Yukiko, "Gosenshū no nichijōteki seikaku: bunrui hairetsu ishiki no tokuiro," *Kokubun*, v. 28 no. 1 (1968), 7-8.

³³ The five love books contain 360 poems. 41 more are disseminated under various rubrics in other parts of the anthology. See, Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadan-shi (Uda-hen)*, p. 426.

³⁴ The classic study of the structure of the imperial *waka* anthologies is Konishi Jin'ichi, "Association and Progression: Principles of Integration in Anthologies and Sequences of Japanese Court Poetry, A.D. 900-1350." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 21 (Dec. 1958): 67-127.

most “private” elements and made it more akin to poetry made in formal circumstances, for presentation to the emperor.

The “poet-ization of the upper aristocracy”

As thoughts of social advancement occupied the minds of the low-ranking poets, the high aristocracy remained still largely indifferent to the charm of the native *waka*. Murase Toshio cites an entry in emperor Daigo’s diary *Engi gyoki* (The Journal of His Majesty, the Engi Emperor) that relates that during a banquet held at court in 902 two senior nobles (Fujiwara no Tokihira and Fujiwara no Kunitsune) intoned a song (歌), but since none of the other guests was able to follow suit, composition was switched to poetry to Chinese.³⁵

A similar episode took place in 898. In 898 the recently retired Uda left the capital for a twelve-day hunting tour of various provinces around the capital. On that occasion, he ordered many of the court’s top officials to accompany him on the journey and join him for some reinvigorating sessions of poetry-making. Many fine poems were made on the occasion, including some efforts by such distinguished poets as Sugawara no Michizane (845-903) and Sosei (?-910?), but many of the participants struggled to rise to the challenge, either failing to provide poems altogether, or producing clumsy efforts that blatantly violated the metrical rules of the genre.³⁶

The relative lack of interest in *waka* among the upper aristocracy at the turn of the tenth century is clearly visible in the *Kokinshū*. Only two of the forty-two poets featured who were

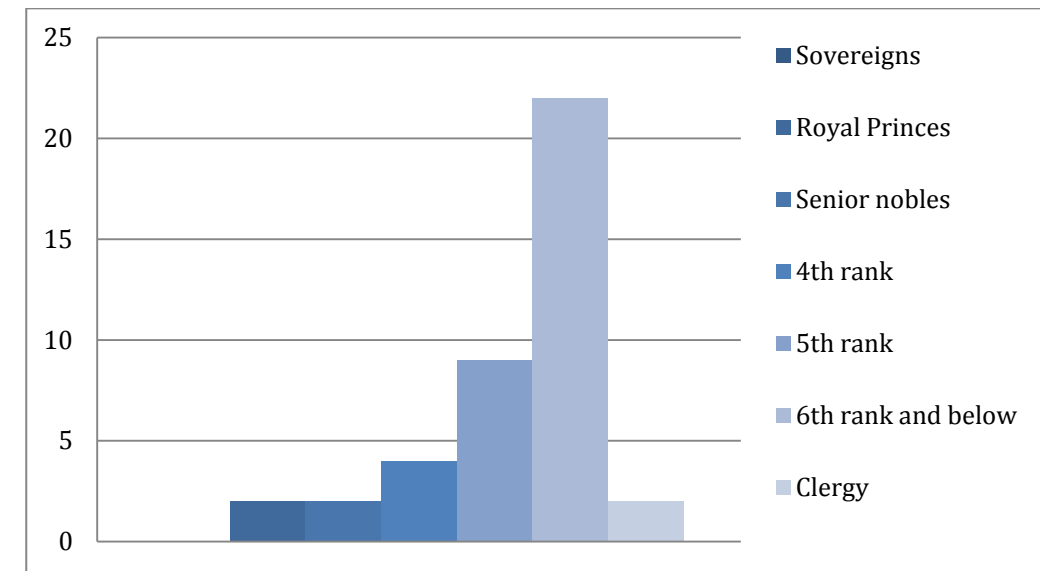
³⁵ Murase, *Kokinshū*, 150. Daigo’s journal survives only in the form of fragments quoted in other works, notably Minamoto no Takaakira’s journal, the *Saikyūki* 西宮記 (Journal of the Western Palace, c. 970).

³⁶ More on this episode can be found in Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), 262-3.

alive at the time of compilation were *kugyō*; the vast majority of them, as the figure below shows, belonged to the bottom three ranks of the court hierarchy (ranks six to nine):³⁷

FIGURE 1-1

Poets by rank in the *Kokinshū*³⁸



Poets of low rank also dominate among the best represented poets. With only two exceptions (Ariwara no Narihira and Fujiwara no Toshiyuki, who by the end of their career had reached a more than respectable fourth rank), all the poets featured with ten or more poems held a fifth rank or lower.³⁹

Why the elite should be less than excited to get involved with *waka* is easy enough to explain. For most of the ninth century, the poetic form of choice at court had been the *kanshi*

³⁷ Murase, *Kokinshū*, 147-8.

³⁸ The graph is based on the figures in Murase.

³⁹ The complete ranking by number of poems is: Ki no Tsurayuki (102 poems), Ōshinokōchi no Mitsune (60), Ki no Tomonori (46), Mibu no Tadamine and Sosei (36), Ariwara no Narihira (30), Ise (22), Fujiwara no Toshiyuki (19), Ono no Komachi (18), Archbishop Henjō, Kiyowara no Fukayabu, and Okikaze (17), Ariwara no Motokata (14), Ōe Chisato (10), and Taira no Sadabun (9).

(poetry in Chinese). It was *kanshi* a ninth-century senior noble had to be able to make if he did not wish to incur the contempt or even the ridicule of his peers. Moreover, despite the significant steps forward in terms of prestige and reputation, the *waka* had yet to completely shed the aura of disrepute that had grown around it during the heyday of *kanshi*.⁴⁰ Finally, elite men did not have the incentives to pursue *waka* that drove their colleagues of lesser station; access to the emperor's person and a first-grade career in the government were for many of them a given.

The situation began to change shortly after the compilation of the *Kokinshū*. Partly because of the success of the *Kokinshū* itself, more and more courtiers of senior rank began to compose *waka* on a more or less regular basis.⁴¹ Research by Yamaguchi Hiroshi shows that although the percentage of *kugyō* poets increased constantly from the mid-ninth century onwards, the peak of growth was hit during Daigo's reign (r. 897-930).⁴² Looking at the figures in more detail, we see that only seven *kugyō* out of thirty-two (22%) composed *waka* under Seiwa (r. 858-876), seven out of nineteen (36%) under Yōzei (r. 876-884), eight out of seventeen (47%) under Kōkō (r. 884-887), twelve out of twenty-four (50%) under Uda (r. 887-897), twenty-eight out of forty-four (67%) under Daigo (r. 897-930), and twenty-five out of thirty-three (75%) under Suzaku (r. 930-946).⁴³

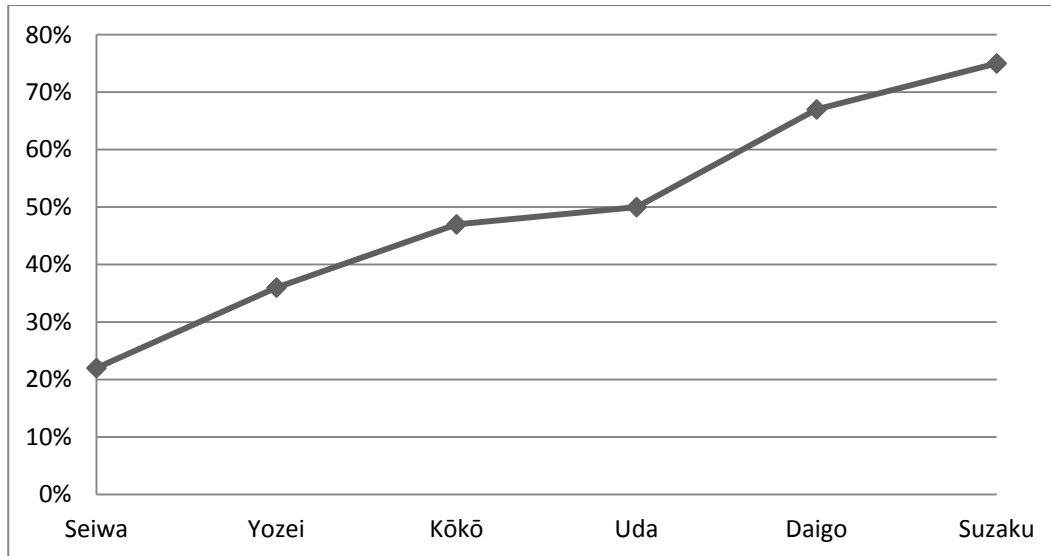
⁴⁰ Views of *waka* in court society are discussed in chapter 3.

⁴¹ Katagiri Yōichi, "Gosen *wakashū* no sekai," in *Nihon bungaku zenshi* vol. 2, ed. Ichiko Teiji (Gakutōsha, 1978), 214.

⁴² Yamaguchi, *Ōchō Kadan-shi no kenkyū (Uda-hen)*, 246.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

FIGURE 1-2.

Increase of *kugyō* poets between 858 and 946

No work illustrates better *waka*'s sudden surge of popularity among the upper aristocracy than the second imperial *waka* anthology, the *Gosen wakashū* 後撰和歌集 (Later Selection of *waka*, hereafter simply *Gosenshū*).⁴⁴ As numerous commentators have noted, the *Gosenshū* features an unusually high number of poets of high rank.⁴⁵ First of all, five of the eleven best represented poets (more than ten poems) were *kugyō*: Fujiwara no Kanesuke (23 poems), Fujiwara no Tokihira (14), Fujiwara no Morosuke (13), Fujiwara no Atsutada (10), and Fujiwara no Saneyori (10). The remaining six poets were all from the previous generation of poets, and all but one (the woman poet Tayū) were already dead at the time the anthology was compiled.⁴⁶ Looking at the

⁴⁴ Commissioned in 951 by emperor Murakami (r. 946-967), the *Gosenshū* was compiled by a pool of five poets under the supervision of Fujiwara no Koretada (or Koremasa, 924-972).

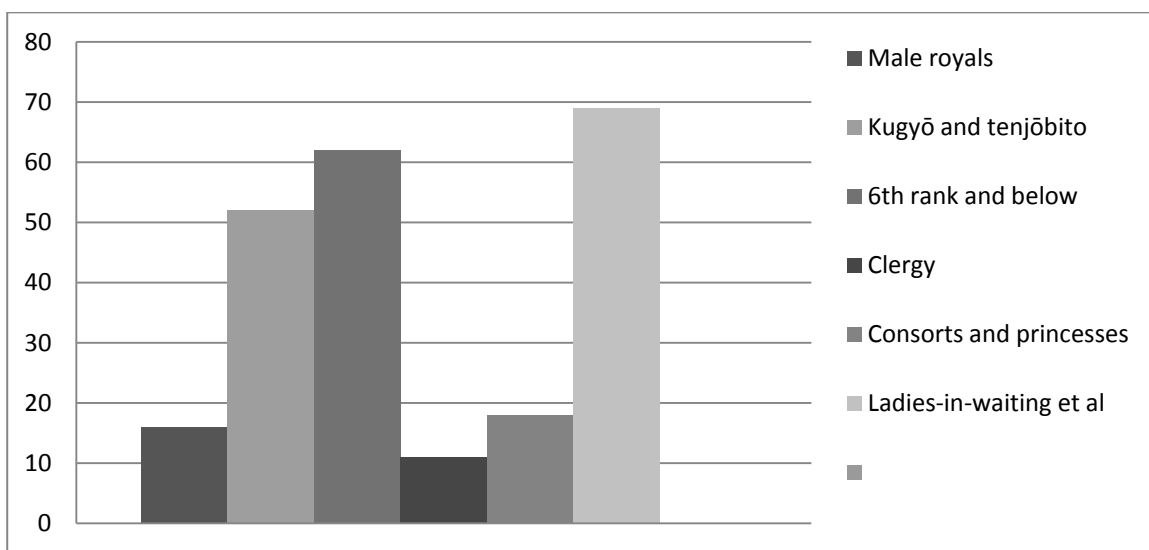
⁴⁵ Katagiri Yōichi, “*Gosenshū* no hyōgen,” in *Kokinwakashū igo* (Kasama Shoin, 2000), 170-1; Nishimaru Taeko, “*Gosenwakashū* no sekai,” in *Ōchō waka wo manabu hito no tameni ni*, ed. Gōtō Shōko (Sekai Shisōsha, 1997), 95.

⁴⁶ The most widely represented poets are Tsurayuki (74 poems), Ise (70), Mitsune (23),

poets featured in their entirety, the distribution by rank is as follows: members of the royal clan: 16; *kugyō* and *tenjōbito*: 52; courtiers of the 6th rank and below: 62; members of the clergy, 11.⁴⁷

Figure 1-3.

Poets by rank in the *Gosenshū*



The prominence of poets of high rank is also visible from the clan provenance of the poets featured: whereas in the *Kokinshū* the policy seems to have been to include poets from a wide range of different clans, perhaps even with a special emphasis on the politically minor ones (Ki, Ariwara, etc.),⁴⁸ an overwhelming majority of *Gosenshū* poets belong to the two most powerful clans at court (Fujiwara and Minamoto).

TABLE 1-4

Kanesuke (23), Taiyu (16), Tokihira (14), Morosuke (13), Narihira (10), Saneyori (10), Atsutada (10), Tadamine (10), Tomonori (9), Sanekata (9). These figures are from Katagiri, “*Gosenshū* no hyōgen,” 170.

⁴⁷ Source: Abe Yoshiko, “*Gosenwakashū* no senshū ni kan-suru shiron,” in *Chūko bungaku ronkō*, ed. Yamagishi Tokuhei Sensei Wo Tataeru Kai (Yūseidō Shuppan, 1972), 231. The case of women poets will be discussed in a separate section below.

⁴⁸ Mezaki, *Ki no Tsurayuki*, 21-2.

Kokinshū and *Gosenshū* Poets by Clan⁴⁹

Clan name	<i>Kokinshū</i>	<i>Gosenshū</i>
Fujiwara	12	68 (56)
Ariwara	4	6 (2)
Ki	4	5 (1)
Minamoto	3	30 (27)
Ono	3	7 (4)
Taira	2	7 (5)
Mibu	1	2 (1)
Kiyohara	1	2 (1)
Fun'ya	2	2 (0)
Harumichi	1	1 (0)
Sugawara	1	1 (0)
Ōshikōchi	1	1 (0)
Ōtomo	1	1 (0)
Kamitsuke	1	1 (0)
Harusumi	1	1 (0)
Imperial family	1	26 (25)
Clergy	4	12 (8)

High ranking figures are so prominently featured in the *Gosenshū* that the Meiji literary historian Fujioka Sakutarō (1870-1910) accused the compilers of having put rank before literary merit (literally, of “lowering their head before authority”).⁵⁰

Rank and poetic practice 2

By the mid-century, the craze for the *waka* had spread to even the highest level of court society. Yamaguchi Hiroshi has described this phenomenon as the "poet-ization of the upper aristocracy" (*jōsō kizoku no kajin-ka*).⁵¹ But why this sudden surge of interest for *waka* among

⁴⁹ The chart is based on data in Sugitani Jurō, *Gosenwakashū kenkyū* (Kasama Shoin, 1991), 280-1. The numbers in brackets exclude the poets that do already appeared in the *Kokinshū*.

⁵⁰ Fujioka, *Kokubungaku zenshi: Heianchō hen* (Kaiseikan, 1905), 266.

⁵¹ Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū* (Uda, Daigo, *Suzaku-chō-hen*), 537.

the elite? To answer the question, it is sufficient to look at some of the poems that these high-ranking figures composed.

Even the most cursory glance at the personal poetry collections by, or edited on behalf of, men of the upper nobility like Fujiwara no Saneyori 藤原実頼 (900-970), Fujiwara no Morosuke 師輔師輔 (907-960), Fujiwara no Kanetsuke 藤原兼輔 (877-933), Fujiwara no Atsutada 藤原敦忠 (906-943), Prince Motoyoshi 元良親王 (890-943), Fujiwara no Koretada 藤原伊尹 (or Koremasa, 924-972), to name just a few examples, shows that they consist mainly of love poetry, and specifically of *zōtōka* (exchanges).⁵²

A couple of examples, taken more or less randomly from some of these works, will suffice to give an idea of tenor of this poetry. The first example is from the *Saneyori-shū*, the private collection of the Minister of the Left Fujiwara no Saneyori:

The man:

As the evening falls, all I do is wonder when it will be.
Do you hear me pine for you like the pine of Takasago?

ゆうさればいつしかとのみ
たかさごの松といふ事をきくにやあるらむ

Her reply:

And who does it pine for? I think with envy
of the stag of Takasago as its voice reaches my ear.⁵³

⁵² This was first noted by Usami Kisohachi in his influential *Wakashi ni kan suru kenkyū* (Wakatake Shuppan, 1952), 56-62. Joshua Mostow recently published a translations of several of these works: Mostow, *At the House of Gathered Leaves: Shorter Biographical and Autobiographical Narratives from Japanese Court Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

⁵³ *Seishinkō-shū* no. 32-3, SST I: 391. The stag was an established symbol of unflinching devotion to one's wife. In typical *zōtōka* fashion, the woman dismisses the man's advances by cleverly manipulating the imagery of his poem.

たれをかは松たかさごの
しか許うらやむまではこゑのきこゆる

The second example is from the personal collection of Saneyori's brother Morosuke, who was Minister of the Right from 947 until his death in 960:

To the Hyōgo Lady, in autumn:

Though I am not the dew,
I spend the autumn nights falling, awake.

つゆならぬわが身なれども
秋の夜をかくこそあかせおきみながらに

Her reply:

It is early autumn and the nights are still short:
do you really spend them as you say, falling, awake?⁵⁴

秋をあさみまだながからぬよをさへや
さのみは人のをきあかすらん

Morosuke was in many ways the archetypal mid-tenth century poet of high rank. As a member of the all-powerful Northern branch (*hokke*) of the Fujiwara, he held many of the court's most important offices, including that of Minister of the Right from 947.. He was also a prolific poet with a full-length personal poetry collection to his name and fourteen of his poems singled out for inclusion in the *Gosenshū*. Morosuke's poetic output, however, consisted almost entirely of love *wōtōka*, which he exchanged with various court ladies of his time. His poetry collection, for instance, contains his exchanges with seventeen different women poets, with a particular

⁵⁴ Katagiri Yoichi and Kansai Shikashu Kenkyukai eds. *Ononomiya-dono Saneyorishū, Kujō-dono Morosukeshū zenshaku*, Shikashu zenshaku sōsho vol. 31 (Kazama Shobo, 2002), 199-201. Both poems contain the pun *oku*, which depending on how it is written can mean either “to fall, to lie” (as in “the dew falls”) or “to rise,” “to awaken.”

emphasis on his exchanges with his four wives: Moriko (Seishi, ?-943), his primary wife (*kita no kata*) and the mother of most of his children; Isoko (Kinshi, 904-938), a daughter of Emperor Daigo's whom he married despite the prohibition for court officials against marrying members of the imperial family; her sister Masako, who served as Vestal of the Ise Shrine from 931, and Yasuko, another daughter of Daigo's whom Morosuke married late in his life, when his position at court was already established.⁵⁵

What attracted Morosuke and the other members of the senior nobility to *waka*, therefore, was not so much an interest in the form per se, but its usefulness as an instrument of courtship. As will be argued more fully in chapter three, between the ninth and tenth centuries, libertinism (*irogonomi*), broadly defined as sentimental involvement with many women at the same time, came to be seen as something of a requirement for the members of upper aristocracy. By becoming sentimentally involved with multiple women at the same time, elite men not only satisfied their need for pleasure and romance, but also asserted their status as sophisticated gentlemen. Anyone who could not claim a suitably long list of amorous conquests, by contrast, or who was not talked about in court circles as a superior lover run the risk of being seen as a mere "ordinary person" (*tadabito*).⁵⁶ *Waka* was, of course, an indispensable element of love as Heian court society understood it: relationships often began with a poem scribbled on a piece of carefully chosen paper, while a mediocre poem could have easily brought to an end a fledgling

⁵⁵ According to the historian Tsunoda Bun'ei, Morosuke used marriage politically to solidify his position at court. See Tsunoda, *Heian no haru* (Kōdansha, 1999), 13-39.

⁵⁶ Mitani Eichi, "Genji monogatari no kōsei to kodai setsuwa-teki seikaku," *Kokugakuin zasshi* 62 (Mar. 1961), 2. The case of elite women is slightly different, since their economic dependence on men impeded them to take promiscuity as lightly as men. However, having multiple suitors does seem to have been seen as desirable for women of high rank as well.

love affair. There was no way, in other words, that one could have led the busy love life of the ideal Heian gentleman and not be at least a decent *waka* poet.

This rapid survey of the poetic world of the first half of the tenth century has revealed a clear difference in the literary behavior of poets of high and low social standing: whereas poets of low rank viewed poetry as an potential instrument of career advancement, high-ranking nobles used it primarily as a tool for conducting love affairs. Whereas poets of low rank publicly dismissed poetry made in amorous situations as trivial and below the dignity of the genre, high-ranking poets were primarily active in this area of poetic practice; in fact, as I argue below, it was formal poetry that they were the least enthusiastic about. Social position, in other words, constrained behavior in the literary sphere in significant ways.

Poetry and career

One question that I have yet to address with regard to the literary behavior of the poets of low rank is whether their hopes of advancing in the hierarchy through poetic activity were fulfilled in any measure. Answering the question is difficult, for even when sufficient information on the poet's career is available, we know absolutely nothing about why promotions and appointments to office were given.

One case that has been studied in considerable detail is that of *Kokinshū* compiler Ki no Tsurayuki. Tsurayuki is easily the most famous of all male tenth-century poets and he is also the one who perhaps entertained the biggest hopes of improving his standing at court through poetic activity.⁵⁷ Many of Tsurayuki's biographers agree that his service as a poet, and especially his

⁵⁷ Tsurayuki came from a once powerful clan that had lost most of its power due to the rise of the Fujiwara in the ninth century. As his biographer Mezaki Tokue suggests, it is possible that Tsurayuki saw poetry as an area where to regain some of the influence they he and his clan had lost in the political sphere.

role as compiler of the *Kokinshū*, impacted positively his career in the bureaucracy. After 905, Tsurayuki saw his standing at court rise rapidly: he reached the position of Lesser Private Secretary (*shōnaiki*) in 910, and that of Major Private Secretary (*dainaiki*) in 913.⁵⁸ His appointment as *dainaiki* merits special attention since this post was normally assigned to literature graduates of the imperial university (*monjōsei*) and there is no evidence that Tsurayuki ever attended the institution.⁵⁹ As Murase notes, it is conceivable that Tsurayuki's role as the official purveyor of poems to the court helped him secure this important post despite the lack of an important requisite.⁶⁰

TABLE 1-6

Ki no Tsurayuki's career after 905

906	Supernumerary Minor Clerk of Echizen
907	Vice-Head of the Imperial Table (<i>Naizen no tenzen</i>)
910	Junior Private Secretary (<i>Shōnaiki</i>)
913	Senior Private Secretary (<i>Dainaiki</i>)
915	Junior Fifth Rank Lower
917	Vice-Governor of Kaga; Junior Fifth Rank Lower
918	Vice-Governor of Mino
923	Chief Surveyor of the Storehouse (<i>Daikenmotsu</i>) of the Ministry of Central Affairs
930	Governor of Tosa
940	Head of the Bureau of Buddhism and Aliens (<i>Genbaryō</i>)
943	Senior Fifth Rank Upper
945	Tsurayuki's Death

Another episode that merits attention is Tsurayuki's appointment as Vice-Governor of Mino in 918. In 917 (Engi 17), Tsurayuki was appointed vice-Governor of Kaga (present-day Ishikawa prefecture), the first of a series of appointments in the provincial bureaucracy that peaked in 930

⁵⁸ Mezaki, *Ki no Tsurayuki*, 120.

⁵⁹ Murase, *Kokinshū*, 189; Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū (Uda-hen)*, 456-7.

⁶⁰ Murase, *Kokinshū*, 190.

with his appointment as Governor of Tosa. Just a few months later, however, he was reassigned to an equivalent post in the nearer Mino province (present-day Gifu prefecture). As Murase notes, for a mid-Heian court official whose chances of success depended largely on his proximity to the powerful, being assigned to a remote location far-away from the capital pretty much amounted to being exiled.⁶¹ Again, it is possible that Tsurayuki used his status as a purveyor of poems to the court to be transferred to a province nearer to the capital.

Thus, although the evidence is limited, it does seem that at least in the case of some of the more famous poets literary activity impacted positively the poet's career in the bureaucracy.⁶² Clearly, however, it was not the fabulous careers that some ambitious poets might have imagined for themselves. The times when merit alone could have made a courtier's fortune had long passed; clan provenance and family ties with the emperor through marital connections were now far more important criteria for career advancement than individual merit of any kind. Right from the beginning, therefore, the hopes of the low-ranking poets to climb up the social ladder through poetic activity were destined to remain unfilled.

Public poetry and the *kugyō*

There was another reason why poets of high rank tended to prefer private poetry to its public counterpart besides its usefulness for courtship. Public poetry was usually made at the command of an authority, usually on pre-assigned topics. To compose a poem of this kind was always both an act of creativity and an act of submission to the will of authority:

⁶¹ Ibid., 193.

⁶² On Tomonori's career, see McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 297.

Made and respectfully presented when His Majesty ordered him to make a poem

Tsurayuki

Are they going to gather young sprouts at Kasuga plain?
Maidens wave their bright-white sleeves as they set off.⁶³

かすがののわかなつみにや
白妙の袖ふりはへて人のゆくらむ

While such public displays of subservience were perfectly appropriate or even mandatory for the courtiers of average rank, they were becoming increasingly less so for the restricted circle of men who made up the high nobility, particularly for the members of the Regent's family (*sekkanke*). Although technically still the emperor's "subjects" (*shinjū* 臣従), these men were becoming more and more his equals in terms of actual power and lifestyle: they controlled large fortunes, inhabited villas that replicated in every detail the imperial palace, and even ruled the country on the emperor's behalf if he was too young or physically unfit to do so. In other words, there was an irresolvable tension between the model of court society implicit in the idea of public poetry and the reality of power at the Japanese court in the tenth century.

One practice that reveals the complicated attitude of the upper nobility toward public poetry is the practice of *daisaku* or composition on someone's behalf.⁶⁴ In the early days of *waka*'s so-called return to court, asking someone else to make a poem was a necessity for the members of the upper nobility, since, as argued earlier, many of them would have been unable to make a decent poem of their own.⁶⁵ The practice survived, however, well into the mid-century

⁶³ *Kokinshū* I: 22; NKBZ 7: 69.

⁶⁴ For a useful overview of *daisaku*, see Amakawa Keiko, "Daisaku no nagare," *Heian bungaku kenkyū*, vol. 53 (Jun 1975), 47-65.

⁶⁵ A relatively early example of *daisaku* is *Kokinshū* no. 177, by Tomonori (NKBZ 7: 117): "On a night of 7/7 during the Kamyō era, His Majesty ordered the senior courtiers to

when a high level of poetic literacy was reached at all levels of court society. One famous case of *daisaku* involving premier tenth-century poet Ki no Tsurayuki and the top Fujiwara statesman Morosuke is described in the *Ōkagami* (The Great Mirror, late 11th century):

Now here is an interesting fact. Exalted as Morosuke was, he once paid a call on Ki no Tsurayuki. It made me realize the importance of poetry. Some kind of damage had befallen the fish box Morosuke was supposed to wear on the First of the First Month. While it was being repaired, he went to see Tadahira, told him what had happened, and explained that his arrival at the Palace would be delayed. Much disturbed, the Chancellor brought out a favorite box of his own and gave it to him, formally attached to a pine bough. "I hope it will bring you my luck," he said. Morosuke would surely have been able to express his gratitude in verse, but he went to Tsurayuki's home to ask him to write something on his behalf. What an honor for the poet!⁶⁶

Unlike the early-century nobles who had to rely on other poets because they would have been incapable of making one by themselves, Morosuke was a fully proficient poet with a full poetry collection to his name and many of his poems selected for inclusion in an imperial poetry anthology. Yet, he frequently relied on other poets (Tsurayuki, Motosuke, among others) for poems for such formal occasions as birthdays, coming-of-age ceremonies, anniversaries, etc.⁶⁷ This suggests two things: first, it suggests that by this time some poets like Tsurayuki and Motosuke had come to be seen as the recognized masters of this type of composition. Second, it suggests that Morosuke saw a fundamental difference between the poetry he made on his own, in private circumstances, and poetry destined to be formally presented to someone important on

present poems. [Tomonori] composed this [poem] on behalf of someone else: *Not knowing where the heavenly river gets shallow / I continue to roam these white waves / and I am still caught in them as the dawn breaks.*"

⁶⁶ Helen McCullough, trans. *The Great Mirror* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Japanese Studies, 1991), 130-1.

⁶⁷ Usami Kisohachi, *Waka-shi no kenkyū*, 64-8.

formal occasions.⁶⁸ According to Usami Kisohachi, the difference was that Morosuke considered himself an “amateur poet” (*shirōto kajin*), that is, good enough for impromptu efforts destined to a lover but lacking the necessary expertise to make poems for more demanding occasions.⁶⁹ I am more inclined to think that the problem was one of class, rather than skill: Morosuke was perfectly comfortable making poems destined to his lovers because in this type of exchange there were no political implications; the exchange was a thoroughly private affair between poet and recipient. By contrast, he felt out of his element making poems destined to someone important on official occasions because this amounted to publicly lowering his head before a greater authority.

One episode that suggests that making "public" poems might have been considered inappropriate for a man of high status is the often-cited court entrance ceremony of Fujiwara no Michinaga's daughter Shōshi (or Akiko, 988-1074), which is recounted in great detail in Fujiwara no Sanesuke's diary *Shōyūki* 小右記 (Journal of the Ononomiya Minister of the Right) and several later works. In early 999, Shōshi made her formal entrance to the palace to become one of the consorts of emperor Ichijō's (r. 986-1011). A celebratory partition screen (*byōbu*) decorated with paintings and *waka* poems was made for the occasion, and various senior court figures were asked by Michinaga to contribute poems for it, including the recently retired emperor Kazan (r. 984-986). Michinaga's gesture drew Sanesuke's ire, because it was unheard of that ministers and even a former emperor would offer poems at the request of a "mere" minister.⁷⁰ Such requests were normally directed to specialists of low rank, and to address them

⁶⁸ Yamaguchi, *Ochō kadan-shi no kenkyū* (*Uda-hen*), 541.

⁶⁹ Usami, *Waka-shi ni kan suru kenkyū* (Wakatake Shuppan, 1952), 67.

⁷⁰ *Shōyūki*, Chōhō 1 (999).10.28; DNK 2: 67.

to high ranking figures, especially if the command was not issued by an emperor, represented a blatant violation of protocol.⁷¹

The case of women poets

So far I have limited the discussion to male poets. I have done so advisedly, for the case of women poets is slightly different, and so it is best treated separately. For one thing, with the exception of the posts in the Twelve Bureaus of the Rear Court (*kōkyū jūnishi*), women were excluded from the competition for office that busied their male counterparts.⁷² Much of what has been said so far about the links between poetic activity and governmental career, therefore, cannot be directly applied to them.⁷³ Furthermore, women's activity in the literary sphere was severely constrained by deeply-rooted assumptions regarding the appropriate for women. A mid-Heian court woman could not, for instance, attend the state university, nor could she openly devote herself to the study of Chinese letters, as this was considered inappropriate for her.⁷⁴ With

⁷¹ Kudō, *Heianchō no ritsuryō shakai no bungaku*, 134-5. The 999 episode in fact can be said to mark the beginning of a new trend in the poetic world. From this point on, composing screen poems and *uta-awase* poems would no longer be the specialty of "professional" poets of low rank. *Waka* had penetrated the life of the upper aristocracy to such an extent that the figure of the specialist had become redundant.

⁷² On female officials, see Yoshikawa Shinji, "Ritsuryō kokka no nyokan," in *Nihon josei seikatsushi* 1, ed. Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990).

⁷³ This is not to say that making *waka* was unprofitable for a woman. For one thing, it was a great means to attract the attention of potential suitors and thus increase one's chances of securing a good marriage. If *Ōkagami* is to be trusted, *Kagero nikki* author Michitsuna's mother, by birth the daughter of a provincial governor, was first able to attract the interest of her future husband Kaneie because of her great ability as a poet (*kiwametarū waka no jōzu ni ohashikereba*); NKBZ 20: 259.

⁷⁴ Recent scholarship has questioned the extent to which women were excluded from Chinese letters. It is now more common to speak of a "pressure to feign a certain distance and unfamiliarity with that part of their own world," rather than outright exclusion (Tomiko Yoda, "Literary History against the National Frame, of Gender and the Emergence of Heian kana

some exceptions, she could not participate in many court events at which “public” poetry was made. The case of women poets, therefore, is necessarily unique, and is best treated separately.

A good place to start to attempt to pinpoint where women poets sat in the poetic world of the tenth century is to look at how they are represented in the *Kokinshū*. The *Kokinshū* features poems by twenty-eight women authors (22%, some accounts give as few as twenty-five).⁷⁵ Of these, the only two poets represented with a significant number of poems are Ise (22 poems) and Ono no Komachi (17). The total number of poems by women is also very small: only 70 poems of the total 1,100 poems in the anthology are by women.

This marginalization of women poets in the *Kokinshū* was closely connected to the compilers' desire to foreground public poetry. That for the compilers' women did not play a role in this kind of poetry can be seen from the short critique of the prominent ninth-century woman poet Ono no Komachi (fl. mid-9th century) that is given in the *kana* preface:

Komachi belongs to the same lineage of Princess Sotoori of antiquity. Her poetry is moving, but lacks strength. To draw an analogy, it is like a fine woman suffering from some ailment. This lack of strength is understandable in poetry by a woman [*sic*].⁷⁶

小野小町は、古の衣通姫の流なり。あはれなるやうにて、つよからず。
いはば、よき女のなやめるところあるに似たり。つよからぬは女の歌
なればなるべし。

Writing," *Positions*, vol. 8, no. 2 [2000], 489). See also, Joshua S. Mostow, "Mother Tongue and Father Script: The Relationship of Sei Shōnagon and Murasaki Shikibu to Their Fathers and Chinese Letters," in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and The Law of the Father*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 115-142; Edward Kamens, "Terrains of Text in Mid-Heian Court Culture," in *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Michael Adolphson, Edward Kamens and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007): 129-152.

⁷⁵ The figures vary slightly from scholar to scholar. These are from McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 554.

⁷⁶ NKBZ 7: 14.

The first thing to note about this passage is that it presents women's poetry as a homogenous category; Komachi is placed in an imaginary line with the legendary Sotoorihime of antiquity.⁷⁷ The second thing to note is that women's poetry is defined negatively, by what it lacks: "This lack of strength is understandable in poetry by a woman." What exactly the author might have meant by "lack of strength" is suggested by the four sample poems (three by Komachi and one by Princess Sotoori) that are appended to the critique.⁷⁸ All four poems are what has hitherto been referred to as "private" poems; two are love poems of the "waiting woman" (*matsu onna*) type, while two are highly passionate pieces that can be read alternatively as the laments of a disappointed lover or as more general meditations on the sorrow of living:

Such is my misery now that should water beckon,
I would gladly cut off my roots and drift away like duckweed.⁷⁹

わびぬれば身をうき草の根を絶えて
誘ふ水あらばいなむと思ふ

Thus, as far as can be said from these examples, for Tsurayuki and the rest of the compilers, women's poetry was poetry that dealt with private concerns, in an often sentimental, even melodramatic way.

⁷⁷ Sotoorihime is said to have been a lover of the legendary emperor Ingyō (5th c.). Both of the two poems attributed to her in the *Nihon shoki* are love poems of the *matsu onna* kind.

⁷⁸ It is unclear whether these examples were part of the original text of the preface or were added by a slightly later editor. Either way, they were considered representative of Komachi's style by a Heian-period poet.

⁷⁹ NKBZ 7: 59. The poem also appears in the *Kokinshū* (XVIII: 938) where it is presented as a reply to a poem by Henjō.

The *mana* preface is even more explicit in pairing women with the private mode of composition:

The libertines made *waka* the messenger of birds and flowers, and beggars used it as a means of sustenance. Because of this, *waka* became an assistant to women [*fujin no tasuke*], and it was difficult to present it before state ministers.⁸⁰

至_レ有_下好色之家、以_レ此為_下花鳥之使_上。乞食之客、以_レ此為_中活計之謀_上。
故半為_下婦人之右_上、難_レ進_下大夫之前_上。

Here women's poetry is presented not only as weak, but as the exact opposite of the (male-gendered) public mode of composition that the compilers were committed to promoting.

The second official *waka* anthology (the *Gosenshū*) presents a much more positive attitude toward women poets. Here the number of women authors represented rises to eighty-six (39%).⁸¹ The quantity of poems by women is also larger: 205 poems out of the total 702 by identified authors are by women.⁸² Particularly striking is the prominent position given in the *Gosenshū* to the woman poet Ise (892-938?), who is second only to Tsurayuki with a staggering seventy poems.

This more encouraging attitude toward women poets in the second official *waka* anthology was also a consequence of the policy of the editors. For reasons I will explain, here the emphasis was placed squarely on the everyday exchanges between men and women of the court, with a special emphasis on love exchanges. Japanese scholars often refer to the *Gosenshū* as a

⁸⁰ NKBZ 7: 416, my emphasis.

⁸¹ Nishimaru Taeko, “*Gosenwakashū no sekai*,” in *Ōchō waka wo manabu hito no tameni ni*, ed. Gōtō Shōko (Sekai Shisōsha, 1997), 106.

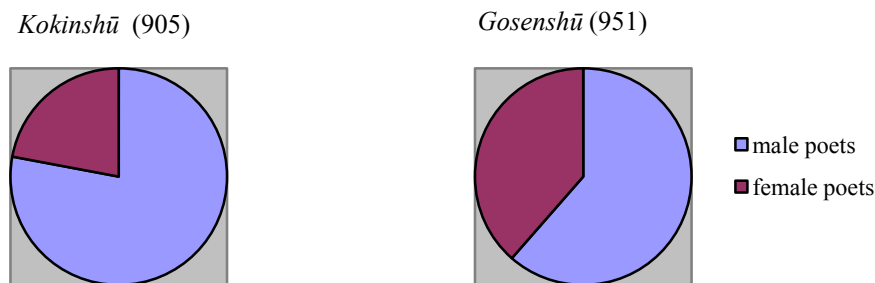
⁸² Abe Toshiko, “*Gosenwakashū no senshū ni kan suru shikiron*,” 231. The figures do not include the anonymous poems.

"private collection" (*ke no kashū*) because of this emphasis on the private, everyday mode of composition.⁸³

The choice to foreground the private, quotidian side of *waka* instead of the more austere, official one that is celebrated in the *Kokinshū* allowed the compilers to give a much more prominent role to women poets. If in a work designed to foreground poetry by court officials, for the sovereign, they could only play a very small role if any, in a work that celebrated the use of poetry in everyday (especially amorous) circumstances they were entitled to full and unconditional membership.

Figure 1-6.

Male and female poets in the first two *chokusenshū*



The main reason for this difference in emphasis between the first two official *waka* anthologies was the involvement in the compilation of the *Gosenshū* of Morosuke's son Koretada. The exact reasons why emperor Murakami appointed him Superintendent (*bettō*) of the Bureau of Selection (*senwakadorokoro*) are not known, but there is consensus among scholars that Koretada exerted a major influence on the anthology.⁸⁴ Koretada was not only the first son

⁸³ See, Katagiri, "Gosenshū no hyōgen." in *Kokinwakashū igo* (Kasama Shoin, 2000); Terauchi, "Gosenshū no nichijōteki seikaku: bunrui hairetsu ishiki no tokuiro," 1-18; Nishimaru, "Gosenwakashū no sekai," 94-111.

⁸⁴ Abe Toshiko, "Gosen wakashū no senshū ni kansuru shikiron," 217-23; Yamaguchi

of one of the most powerful men at court; he was also empress Anshi's older brother, and emperor Murakami's brother in law. As a member of the court's most exclusive elite, his outlook on *waka* was clearly very different from that of the lowly bureaucrats who had compiled the *Kokinshū* fifty years earlier. Like that of his father Morosuke, Koretada's personal poetry collection (a portion of which he is believed to have edited himself) consists entirely of love *zōtōka*.⁸⁵ Some scholars have also hypothesized a direct involvement of Empress Anshi in the compilation of the work.⁸⁶ Anshi was the regular resident of the Nashitsubo (the building where the compilation work was conducted) before it was reconverted into the working space of the editorial board. As Koretada's sister, moreover, she would have had easy access to the compilers.⁸⁷ Thus, whereas the *Kokinshū* can be said to be express of the view of *waka* of the poets from the low-ranking aristocracy, the *Gosenshū* was very much the expression of the elite's view of *waka*.

The shift of emphasis from the public to the private mode is not limited to the imperial anthologies. Hashimoto Fumio notes a similar shift in personal poetry collections (*shikashū*). He identifies three successive waves of development in the genre during the tenth century: a first period (Uda and Daigo's reigns) characterized by appearance of collections that replicated closely the Chinese model (*Kudai waka*, *Shinsen Man'yōshū*) in terms of both content and mode

Hiroshi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū* (*Murakami, Reizei, En'yū-chō hen*), 42-8; Usami Kisoachi, *Wakashū ni kan-suru kenkyū*, 57.

⁸⁵ An partial English translation of the first forty-one poems of the collection (the portion of the text that Koretada is thought to have edited) can be found in Mostow, *At the House of Gathered Leaves*, 104-123.

⁸⁶ Yamaguchi Hiroshi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū* (*Murakami, Reizei, En'yū-chō hen*), 48. Katagiri Yōichi, "Gosenwakashū no jidai," 213-4.

⁸⁷ The five compilers were Kiyohara no Motosuke (908-90), Onakatomi no Yoshinobu (921-91), Minamoto no Shitago (911-83), Ki no Tokibumi (fl. and Sakanoue no Mochiki (d. 980).

of presentation; a second period (Murakami's reign) characterized by an emphasis on love exchanges and by the strong influence of the Rear Court (*kōkyū*); and a third period (En'yū and Kazan's reigns) characterized by the emergence of posthumous collections by poets of the recent or distant distant past.⁸⁸ The transition from the first to the second period can be understood in terms of a shift of emphasis away from the "public" mode of composition toward the more informal, private one. It can also be understood as a shift from a view of *waka* that granted a very small role to women poets, to one that acknowledged them as a full member of the literary world.

A glance at other mid to late-tenth century works confirms the centrality of women in the poetic landscape of the time. Poem-tales like the *Yamato monogatari* (Tales of Yamato, c. 951) and the *Heichū monogatari* (Tales of Heichū, c. 967), for instance, could well be described as records of the poetic conversations between male and female courtiers of the first half of the tenth century. Many personal poetry collections edited by or for men feature prominently poems by the women with whom these men exchanged their verses. Perhaps never more so than in the age of the *Gosenshū*, *waka* was a woman's art.

This discussion has shown that women, like elite men, were primarily associated with the private mode of composition. There was, however, an important difference: whereas for men the choice of this particular stance was a free and autonomous gesture, in women's case it was largely imposed from the outside. Women did not primarily compose primarily *zōtōka* out of an aristocratic disdain for more "controlled" modes of composition, but because this was the area where their contribution was most welcome. The situation is a familiar one: whenever in history

⁸⁸ Hashimoto, *Ōchō wakashi no kenkyū* (Kasama Shoin, 1972), 408; Richard L. Peterson, "Shikashū: The Private Poetry Collection as a Context for *Waka* Study" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994), 200.

women have been able to write, they have also been told which styles or themes were most suited to them. This is no more true of mid-Heian women *waka* poets than it is of Meiji fiction writers like Higuchi Ichiyō and Miyake Kaho.⁸⁹

***Onnauta* and the woman's voice**

But can women poets be considered a distinct "position" in the poetic field of the tenth century? Tsurayuki's statement about the continuity between Komachi and Sotōrihime would seem to indicate that a female position did indeed exist and was readily recognized by the contemporaries. As with everything else in the Preface, however, one must wary of taking a single observer's opinions for accepted truths. As Edith Sarra notes in *Fictions of Femininity*, "[w]ith Tsurayuki one is prompted to ask whether there is not an overtly programmatic construction of what women (or women's writing) could or should be."⁹⁰ In other words, Tsurayuki's deliberately narrow and unappealing assessment of women's poetry might have been an attempt to establish the category "women poets" when none, in fact, existed.

The question of whether women were or should be seen as a distinct type has attracted considerable interest in recent years.⁹¹ Terms like *joryū kajin* (women poets) and *onnauta* (women's poetry) are now part of the critical vocabulary of *waka* scholars even as their meaning

⁸⁹ The pressure of the literary establishment on Meiji women writers is discussed in Rebecca Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000).

⁹⁰ Edith Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity: Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women's Memoirs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 15.

⁹¹ For a succinct summary of the debate on gender in *waka*, see Kondō Miyuki, "Waka to jendā," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* vol. 45, no. 5 (Apr. 2000): 87-93. In English, Laurel Rasplica Rodd, "Moving without strength: Is There a Feminine Voice in Waka?," in *Across Time and Gender: Reading and Writing Women's Texts*, ed. Janice Brown and Sonja Arntzen (University of Alberta, 2001): 9-20.

continues to vary considerably from scholar to scholar.⁹² To quote Sano Atsuko, “the term *onnauta* and the idea behind it [...] remain to this day ambiguous.”⁹³

Although clear definitions are hard to come across, most scholars seem to agree that women poets composed or were noted primarily for their "private" poetry. Most poems by identified women authors in the *Man'yōshū* are love poems in the *sōmonka* (exchanges) category.⁹⁴ Nearly all of the surviving poems by Komachi, by far the most famous of all Heian women poets, are love poems, and a nearly all of the poems by women authors in the *Gosenshū* are private poems, an umbrella term under which to group love poems, notes to friends, condolence messages, etc. In particular, women have been associated with the kind of sad, brooding verse of the lady who waits in vain for a lover that may be subsumed under the trope of the “waiting woman” (*matsu onna*).⁹⁵ Another subgenre with which women are regularly associated is the reply poem in *zōtōka* exchanges.⁹⁶

Here, however, opinions part. On one side, there are those who see something inherently female in this kind of compositions. This view can be traced back to the poet, critic, and folklore scholar Origuchi Shinobu (1887-1953) and is still popular among occasional commentators of

⁹² The term *onna-uta* was first introduced by the poet-critic Origuchi Shinobu. Origuchi saw continuity between the poetry of Heian-time poets like Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu and the work of modern-day poets like Yosano Akiko. For a critique of Origuchi's views from a modern gender perspective, see Kondō Miyuki, “Kokinshū no kotoba no kata,” in *Jenda- no seisei: Kokinshū kara Kyōka made*, ed. Kokubungaku Shiryōkan (Rinsen Shon, 2002), 11-14.

⁹³ Sano, *Onnauta no kenkyū* (Ōfū, 2009), 9-10.

⁹⁴ Aoki Takako, “Kodai no onna-uta, soshite gendai,” *Komazawa Tandai Kokubun* 18 (1988), 107-8.

⁹⁵ Suzuki Hideo, “Onna-uta no honsei,” in *Kodai wakashi-ron* (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990), 55-9.

⁹⁶ These typically consist of a witty rebuttal of the man's poem using the same imagery. See, Suzuki, *Onnauta no honsei*, 45-55, and Sano, *Onnauta no kenkyū*, 28-30.

classical literature and on the media.⁹⁷ On the other side, there are those who understand *onnauta* primarily as a rhetorical position, a stylistic template with no inherent connection to the sex of the author. The proponents of this more modern, non-essentialist view include Baba Akiko, Suzuki Hideo and, most recently, Kondō Miyuki.⁹⁸

A considerable amount of effort has been spent trying to identify what exactly was "women's poetry."⁹⁹ One commonly-deployed strategy is to analyze select samples of poetry by women in order to establish what exactly differentiated it from that of their male counterparts. The focus of this kind of analyses has ranged from the themes treated, to the imagery and vocabulary employed, down to the frequency of use of specific grammatical features.¹⁰⁰ The problem with analyses of this kind, however, is that they fail to address the most important question: assuming that they existed, why these differences?

Women's focus on the private type of poetry and on love poetry in particular was clearly a product of restrictive social norms. Heian aristocratic society excluded women from many

⁹⁷ Origuchi saw something inherently female in the love verse of poets like Nukata no ōkimi, Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu. He also saw continuity between the poetry of Heian poets like Komachi and modern-day poets like Yosano Akiko. For a summary of Origuchi's views and a critique from a more modern gender perspective, see Kondō Miyuki, "Kokinshū no kotoba no kata: gengo hyōshō to jendā," in *Jendā no seisei: Kokinshū kara Kyōka made*, ed. Kokubungaku Shiryōkan (Rinsen Shoin, 2002), 10-12.

⁹⁸ Baba Akiko, *Onnauta no keifu* (Asahi Shinbunsha, 1997), 3-6; Suzuki Hideo, "Onnauta no honsei," in *Kodai wakashi-ron*, 42-63; Kondō Miyuki "Kokinshū no kotoba no kata: gengo hyōshō to jendā," 1- 61. Kondō also cites the article "Joryū ni yoru otokouta: Shikishi naishinnō uta e no isshiten" (*Heian bungaku ronshū*, Kazama Shobō, 1992) by Gotō Shōko as an important contribution to the debate.

⁹⁹ In English, see Laurel Rasplica Rodd, "Moving Without Strength: Is There a Feminine Voice in Waka?" in *Across Time and Gender: Reading and Writing Women's Texts*, ed. Janice Brown and Sonja Arntzen (University of Alberta, 2001).

¹⁰⁰ See Kondō Miyuki. "Waka to jendā;" Nakamura Naoko, "Heianchō no onnauta: *Genji monogatari* no waka ni miru," *Tōkai Gakuin Daigaku kiyō*, n. 14 (1988): 23-27.

areas of activity open to men, effectively working to confine them to the roles of lovers, wives, and mothers. The association between women and the *matsu onna* style was also a product of restrictive societal norms. Mid-Heian aristocratic couples, especially in the early stages of the relationship, usually did not reside together. Married women either continued to live with their parents (the so-called uxorilocal residence pattern) or were set up in new quarters where they received the visits of their husband (neolocal residence).¹⁰¹ Polygyny was common, which meant that men had to divide their attentions between multiple wives. Because custom limited women's capacity to move independently, women could only receive the visits of their partners, and wait patiently when such visits did not occur. Even their liberty to initiate a love relationship and to address a potential lover in writing seems to have been limited. If until Nara times women seem to have been free to initiate a mating relationship, from the ninth century onward their role gradually became restricted to that of targets of marriage proposals.¹⁰² Because of these restrictions, women could spend months waiting for a partner to visit, with only *waka* to vent their frustration.¹⁰³

I see two other main problems with associating women too closely or too directly with a single poetic style, and with the *matsu onna* style in particular. The first is that anybody, regardless of gender, could compose poems in any style. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that

¹⁰¹ On Heian marriage customs, see William H. McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 27, (1967), 103-67.

¹⁰² Hiroko Sekiguchi, "The Patriarchal Family Paradigm in Eighth-Century Japan," in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. by Dorothy Ko, JaJyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 39-40.

¹⁰³ The best document of the psychological strain that these customs placed on women is the *Kagerō nikki* (Kagerō diary, c. 974), the memoir by Michitsuna no haha (936-995?). The work is largely a record of the torments caused to the author by the indifference of an increasingly estranged husband.

Heian poets regularly practiced literary transvestism, alternatively posing as men or women as the situation required.¹⁰⁴ The second problem is that although women might have been noted primarily for their love verse, they composed in a much wider variety of styles, including the essentially a-gendered style known today as the "*Kokinshū* style."¹⁰⁵ The names that immediately spring to mind here are those of the prominent *Kokinshū*-time poet Ise (892-938?) and her daughter Nakatsukasa (912-991). Both Ise and Nakatsukasa served as court poets under various emperors as female equivalents of male specialists like Tsurayuki and Taira no Kanemori (910?-990). Many of Ise and Nakatsukasa's poems are indistinguishable from those of their male contemporaries.¹⁰⁶ There is no trace of the teary pathos or the fiery intensity that are often cited as distinctive features of "woman's poetry" in poems like the following:

A poem about the heart of spring:

This robe woven from threads of young willow—
Which mountain lodges the warbler who will don it?¹⁰⁷

青柳の糸よりはへて織るはたを
いづれの山の鶯か着る

To assert that there was nothing inherently female in love verse, not even of the *matsu onna* kind, is not to deny that women could consciously embrace this style and use it strategically to advance a distinctly female agenda. As Sarra notes about *kana* diaries by women, “writing and

¹⁰⁴ A famous example of a male poet taking on a female persona appears in episode 107 of the *Tales of Ise*. Here the renowned poet Fujiwara no Toshiyuki responds to poems sent to his daughter by “the man” (*otoko*), but much to his chagrin his replies only increase the man's desire.

¹⁰⁵ Konishi Jin'ichi, “The Genesis of the *Kokinshū* Style,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1 (June 1978): 61-170.

¹⁰⁶ Rodd, “‘Moving without strength’: Is There a Feminine Voice in Waka?” 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Gosenshū* II: 58; SNKBT 6: 21.

other forms of cultural production by court women provided them with a means of political and social empowerment,” through which women can “challenge, redefine, or elaborate” existing gender norms.¹⁰⁸ To the extent that it provided women with a tool of self-expression, even by-products of restrictive social norms like *onnauta* and the *matsu onna* style could potentially serve an enabling function. Incidentally, this is also true of modern categories such as *joryū bungaku* (women’s literature) and *joryū sakka* (women writers), which though initially created by male critics to marginalize women authors, ultimately came to exert an important empowering function by carving a niche for women writers in the male-dominated literary establishment of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods.¹⁰⁹

In conclusion, the question of whether a distinct female voice existed in tenth-century *waka* is open to multiple answers. While essentialist views that too strictly identify female poets with a single style or genre can be readily dismissed as clearly flawed, it is important to acknowledge the powerful forces that operated to orient women poets toward specific styles or areas of poetic practice. Male poets like Tsurayuki had a direct interest in painting women poets as a distinct type. Finally, the role of the female voice as an instrument of self-expression or social critique remains open to much further exploration.

Conclusion

At least three distinct positions can be identified in the poetic field of the tenth century: at one end of the spectrum were the poets of low rank, who viewed poetic activity as a potential means of career advancement. Their need to advance in the hierarchy led them to favor poetry

¹⁰⁸ Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity*, 5, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Joan Ericson, “The Origins of the Concept of Women’s Literature,” in *The Woman’s Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women’s Writing*, ed. Paul Schalow and Janet A. Walker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 74-115.

made at court, for influential patrons, and to dismiss as trivial poetry made in private circumstances, away from the court. At the other end of the spectrum were the elite poets, who viewed *waka* primarily as a tool for conducting love affairs and as a marker of status. Their privileged status allowed them to disregard the potential career benefits of public poetry, and to devote themselves primarily to the "private" mode of composition. A third position was women's. Their focus on private poetry was less a matter of choice, than a consequence of the many restrictions that Heian aristocratic society placed upon women. It is worth emphasizing that these "modes" were not merely as a reflection of class and gender on literary activity, but one of the ways in which class and gender identities were constituted and acted out in social interaction.

Chapter 2

PATRONS AND THE PUBLIC

“[E]very art,” Howard Becker writes in *Art Worlds*, “rests on an extensive division of labor. [...] The artist thus works in the center of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome.”¹ The survey of the poetic world presented in the first chapter is incomplete because it did not take into account the contribution of two other groups whose role in the tenth-century *waka* phenomenon was no less fundamental than the poets’: the patrons and the Public. Patrons is the term I use here to describe the elite personages who sponsored and promoted poetic activity by requesting poems, hosting poetry events, and commissioning poetry anthologies. The Public can be defined as the mass of people who, at this historical juncture, understood, appreciated, and desired to hear or read *waka* poems. The distinction between the two is, of course, highly problematic, as patrons were technically a subpart of what I call here “the Public.” Given the elite’s privileged position, however, and the special power to influence poetic practice that this gave them, it makes sense to view them as distinct subgroup within the larger category “the Public.”

The figure below shows in schematic form in what sense the *waka* phenomenon can be considered the cooperative achievement of various groups. The words in bold capitals are the three main categories of agents; the arrows represent some of the activities that each group performed, and the group(s) toward which they were directed.

¹ Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 13, 25. Becker understands art in the broadest sense possible, as encompassing everything from the visual arts, to literature and the performing arts.

FIGURE 2-1.

The division of artistic labor in the tenth century *waka* world



Although the poets were the ones who physically manufactured the artifacts for which *waka* is remembered today, it is important to stress that a substantial portion of their work at this time was created in response to commands from elite figures, who also decided *what* the poets composed on. Far from being secondary figures, the patrons exerted a profound influence on virtually every aspect of poetic practice, and so their role in the *waka* phenomenon must be carefully examined. What I call the Public, with a capital p, contributed to the process by providing plenty of two ingredients without which no art can thrive: interest and attention. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the *waka* boom of the tenth century would not have occurred without a strong demand for this kind of verse in contemporary society.

An obvious shortcoming of the model presented here is that it suggests a more clear-cut division of roles and functions than there actually was. Konishi Jin'ichi has argued that, in Japan as in China, the most highly valued arts were the ones that one could both appreciate as a recipient, and practice as a creator. Arts that required professional training, by contrast, were perceived as less valuable, because they could not be pursued without neglecting state business.²

² Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 93-6.

Waka was no exception. Indeed, one of the defining features of the tenth-century *waka* world is that the confines between each role were often vague and fuzzy, with the same person often doubling or even tripling in different roles at different times. However, fluidity of roles should not be confused with lack of complexity, or with non-reliance on social cooperation. Although the boundaries between each role were fluid and permeable, there was still a wide variety of distinct gestures that had to be performed for *waka* to thrive the way it did. This chapter will examine some of these gestures, and the groups that performed them, thus completing the survey of the poetic world begun in the previous chapter.

A short history of *waka* patronage through the mid-tenth century

Before proceeding to an analysis of the role of patrons, I will provide a brief overview of the development of patronage from the origins to the mid-tenth century. In ancient times (Nara and pre-Nara periods), *waka* held important religious and ritual functions, which gave it a prominent place in the life of the state.³ *Waka*, especially the longer, formal *chōka*, were composed for many important public occasions, such as annual ceremonies, burials of emperors, and imperial progresses. This initial phase of support at the highest level was followed by a long phase of neglect, during which the attention of the elite was mainly concentrated on *kanshi* (poetry in Chinese). *Waka* at this stage existed mainly as a medium of communication between friends and lovers, with no official support whatsoever.⁴ This situation lasted until the final

³ On the links between poetry and religion during the early period, see Gary L. Ebersole, "The Religio-Aesthetic Complex in *Manyōshū* Poetry with Special Reference to Hitomaro's 'Aki no no' Sequence," *History of Religions*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Aug. 1983): 18-36.

⁴ Japanese literary historians sometimes refer to this period as the "dark ages of native culture" (*kokufū ankoku jidai*) because of the emphasis on imported cultural forms as opposed to "native" ones.

decades of the ninth century, when there was a sudden resurgence of interest in vernacular verse among the elite.⁵

Various causes determined this sudden resurgence of interest in native verse in the second half of the ninth century. One was the rise to power of individuals with a special predilection for *waka*. Examples include emperor Kōkō (r. 884-887), a *waka* enthusiast since early childhood, and empress Takaiko (or Kōshi, 842-910), to whom we owe some of the earliest requests for poems from an elite figure on record.⁶ At the same time, the phenomenon can be seen as part of a wider process of rediscovery of indigenous culture, after a prolonged phase of near-complete absorption with continental culture. A third reason was political. Starting roughly around the middle of the ninth century, the authority of the emperor came to be increasingly threatened by the political rise of the Fujiwara. In this tense political climate, parties on both sides of the divide used cultural patronage to assert their authority and to tip the balance of power in their favor. By sponsoring *waka*, the Fujiwara leaders sought to legitimize their special position of their clan within the court hierarchy; by doing the same, emperors sought to reassert their exclusive authority over the clans.⁷ Finally, one can mention the increased importance of women in the social, political, and cultural life of the court as a result of the widespread use of "marriage politics." Although the connection between *waka* and women had always been strong, it became particularly so during the heyday of *kanshi*, from which women were largely excluded. When women's status at court rose owing to increased importance of women in

⁵ On the so-called "return of the *waka* to public life," see Pekarik, "Poetics," 107-128, and McCullough, *Brocade*, 231-292.

⁶ See *Kokinshū* nos. 4, 8, 293, 445, 747, and *Gosenshū* no. 2. Takaiko's role as a patron of *waka* is discussed below.

⁷ Many scholars see the making of the *Kokinshū* as a move to assert imperial authority in the face of mounting Fujiwara pressure. See, Fujioka Tadaharu, *Heian wakashi-ron*, 22-3.

determining the balance of power, so did the visibility of the cultural practices associated with them.⁸

Two figures are usually credited with having played a special role in bringing about this return of *waka* to court circles. The first is Fujiwara no Yoshifusa (804-872), who was head of the Northern branch of the Fujiwara during the middle decades of the ninth century, and was the primary architect of the family's political fortune during this period.⁹ Starting from the mid-century, Yoshifusa began to actively sponsor the composition of *waka* as part of a strategy to legitimize the political preeminence of his clan. *Waka* was well suited to this task because unlike *kanshi*, which was firmly associated with the emperor and *ritsuryō* polity, *waka* was sufficiently devoid of such associations to be deployed in innovative ways to claim a special place for the Fujiwara clan within the existing power structure.¹⁰

The other main architect of *waka*'s "renaissance" was Emperor Uda (r. 887-897). Like his father Kōkō, Uda was a devoted *waka* enthusiast. A wealth of anecdotes in various sources document his uncommon interest in *waka*, which he patronized both at court and on his frequent excursions outside the capital. Uda played a major role in popularizing poetry contests, and it was Uda who commissioned the *Kudai waka* (Waka on Lines from Chinese poems, 894), the first *waka* collection to be edited at the command of an emperor. Some scholars also credit Uda

⁸ Ueno Osamu, "Kokinshū: sakuhin to haikai," in *Kokinshū Shinkokinshū hikkei*, ed. Fujihira Haruo, Bessatsu Kokubungaku, no. 9 (1981), 19. The term marriage politics is commonly used to describe the practice of aristocratic families of marrying their daughters to emperors in order to become maternal grandparents of future emperors and thus secure control of court affairs.

⁹ On Yoshifusa's patronage of *waka*, see Pekarik, "Poetics," 115; McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 198-9; Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 60-74.

¹⁰ Heldt, *Pursuit of Harmony*, 71.

with the idea of compiling an imperial anthology of *waka*, although the project only came to fruition under his son Daigo (884-930, r. 897-930).¹¹

Although not quite as fond of *waka* as his father, Daigo continued Uda's activity as a sponsor and protector of *waka*. It was Daigo who formally commissioned the *Kokin wakashū*, the first official anthology of *waka*, and it was during Daigo's reign that the first more or less official *waka* events were held at the palace, starting with the famous Wisteria Banquet of Engi 2 (902).¹²

By the time of Murakami (926-967, r. 946-967), *waka*'s place at court was firmly established. At least fifteen *waka* events were held at court during Murakami's twenty-two year tenure.¹³ Although this was still a small number compared to the sixty-four *kanshi* events held during the same period, it does show that *waka* was now a stable presence at court. *Kanshi* was perhaps still better integrated in the complicated cycle of rituals and ceremonies that dotted the life of the court, but *waka* was no longer the neglected art-form that it once had been. During Murakami's reign, a second official *waka* anthology (the *Gosenshū*) was compiled, and various important poetry contests were held, notably the *Tentoku yo 'nen dairi uta-awase* 天徳四年内裏歌合 (Poetry Contest at the Palace of the Fourth Year of Tentoku, 960).

Although the process whereby *waka* reclaimed a place at court between the late ninth and the mid-tenth century could certainly be described as one of ever-growing increase of recognition and popularity, important differences can be pointed out in the way each sovereign patronized the form. Uda's patronage could well be described as that of a *waka* enthusiast. I

¹¹ McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 254.

¹² A detailed discussion of the event can be found in Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 136-8.

¹³ Sugitani Jurō, *Gosenwakashū kenkyū* (Kasama Shoin, 1991), 242-3.

have mentioned the body of anecdotes that attest to his special fondness for *waka*, and the many gatherings that he hosted of his own initiative, both at court and away from it. Also well known is his contribution to the success of poetry contests, many of which he hosted “privately,” after his retirement in 897. Much like his sponsorship of *kanshi*, however, Uda’s *waka* patronage had what Japanese-language scholars call a strong “personal” (*shiteki*) quality.¹⁴ Most of the *waka* events held under Uda’s tutelage were not regular events prescribed by the codes and conducted according to a strict protocol, but much more informal affairs, often organized on the spur of the moment, of Uda's own initiative.

One criterion that has been used to determine the exact nature of Uda's patronage is the social position of the poets who were selected to compose poems at his events. A comparison between Uda and Daigo's way of recruiting poets for both *waka* and *kanshi* gatherings shows that whereas Daigo relied exclusively on recognized “specialists,” Uda often relied on those closest to him, regardless of poetic pedigree.¹⁵ This suggests that Uda's *waka* events were not always formal gatherings, but often private, informal ones.¹⁶ The “private” nature of Uda’s patronage of *waka* emerges most clearly from an often-quoted passage from the Preface to the *Shinsen Man'yōshū* (Newly Edited Man'yōshū), a hybrid collection of *waka* and *kanshi* compiled in 893, possibly at the command of Uda himself: “In the present period, when not on government duty, the Sage Ruler of the Kamyō era [Uda] convened the court and held poetry contests.

Experienced men of letters and gifted retainers presented poems on the four seasons” (当今寛平

¹⁴ Takikawa Ryōji, “Uda-Daigo-chō no kadan to waka no dōkō,” in *Kokin wakashū no seisei to honshitsu*, *Kokin wakashū kenkyū shūsei* vol. 1 (Kazama Shobō, 2004), 231-268.

¹⁵ Takikawa Ryōji, *Tennō to bundan: Heian zenki no kōteki bungaku* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 2007) 307-322.

¹⁶ As I argue below, “personal” does not necessarily mean devoid of political significance.

聖主万機余暇挙宮而方有事合歌後進之詞人近習之才子各献四時之歌).¹⁷ Uda's poetic gatherings did not take place when he was engaged in state business, but during his time off from it.

On first glance, Daigo's patronage of *waka* seems to have been more formal and official than that of his father. After all, it was Daigo who commissioned the first official *waka* anthology, and it was during his reign that the first loosely "official" *waka* events were held at court. Daigo also seems to have been much more formal and orthodox in the way he recruited poets for his events, as already noted. At the same time, it is important not to exaggerate the officiality of his patronage. Although the *Kokinshū* was an imperially commissioned work, its compilation did not instantaneously change the court's attitude toward the native verse-form, nor does it reflect any sudden changes in how the elite (including the emperor) viewed the form. The extremely low rank of the compilers, the fact that no poem by the emperor and very few poems by high-ranking nobles were included all clearly indicate that *waka*'s status at court was still fairly low, and far below that of the traditionally prestigious *kanshi*.¹⁸

Similar qualifications must be made about the Wisteria Banquet of 902. Although literary histories routinely present this event as "the first *waka* event to be held at court," or even as the "proof that *waka* was now recognized as a court art," close examination of the proceedings reveals a different picture. The Wisteria banquet was organized and hosted by Fujiwara no Tokihira to celebrate the first anniversary of his sister Yasuko's entrance to court as one of Daigo's consorts.¹⁹ Although Daigo did attend it, his role was limited to that of guest and

¹⁷ Shinsen Man'yōshū kenkyūkai eds. *Shinsen Man'yōshū* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 2005), 4.

¹⁸ Takikawa, "Uda/Daigo-chō no kadan to waka no dōkō," 261.

¹⁹ Close analyses of the event can be found in Takikawa, "Uda/Daigo-chō no kadan to waka no dōkō," 254-8; and Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 136-138.

recipient of Tokihira's hospitality. So while Daigo's presence and the highly ritualized format of the proceedings gave it a measure of officiality and prestige, the Wisteria Banquet cannot be considered an official event in the same sense of annual banquets like the Inner Palace banquet (*naien* 内宴) of the First Month and the Double Ninth Banquet (*chōyōen* 重陽宴) of the Ninth month.²⁰ In other words, when examining individual acts of poetic patronage, it is necessary to keep in mind the different degrees of prestige and symbolic value that were attached to different types of events, and to refrain from lumping together every act of poetic patronage under the banner of "official patronage."

Part of the ambiguity regarding Daigo's actual commitment to the idea of elevating *waka* to the status of public art derives from the deliberately misleading statements made in the *Kokinshū* prefaces regarding the political function of *waka*, which seem to imply that this is how the elite (the emperor included) viewed it. I have already quoted the section of the *mana* preface where *waka*'s virtues as a public art are expounded, but it is necessary to quote it here again because of its relevance to this part of the discussion:

On fine days when the scenery was beautiful to behold, the rulers of the past would offer a banquet for their ministers and retainers and command them to present *waka* poems. Through poetry, the sentiments of lord and subject became visible, and the sage could be told apart from the fool. Poetry was a means to choose men of talent, all in accordance with the will of the people.²¹

Elsewhere, the *kana* Preface cites the Confucian idea that the sage-king revives discontinued practices and ancient customs as Daigo's main motivation for sponsoring the compilation of the anthology:

²⁰ The *naien* and the *chōyōen* were the two most important banquets in the court calendar. See, Takikawa, *Tennō to bundan*, 13-17.

²¹ *Kokinwakashū*, NKBZ 7: 415.

The waves of imperial benevolence reach beyond the Eight Islands; the shadow of His Majesty's boundless bounty is thicker than the foliage at the foot of Mount Tatsuta. When not on government duty, He does not neglect other affairs; determined not to forget the past and to revive the ancient ways, to see them today and pass them on to future generations, He has ordered the Senior Secretary Ki no Tomonori, the Clerk of the Imperial Library Ki no Tsurayuki, the former Controller of Kai province Ōshikōchi no Mitsune, and the Lieutenant of the Gate Guards of the Left Mibu no Tadamine to present old poems [...].²²

あまねき御慈しみの波、八洲のほかまで流れ、ひろき御恵みの陰、筑波山の麓よりも繁くおはしまして、万の政をきこしめすいとま、もろもろのことを捨てたまはぬ余りに、古のこと忘れじ、旧りにしことをも興したまふとて、今もみそなはし、後の世にも伝はれとて、延喜五年四月十八日に、大内記紀友則、御書所預紀貫之、前甲斐国少目凡河内躬恒、右衛門府生壬生忠岑らに仰せられて[...]

These statements paint a highly orthodox view of Daigo's patronage drawing on classical Chinese views of literary patronage as an instrument and a symbol of good government.²³ As Kudō Shigenori has argued, however, these statements cannot be taken as an objective description of the intentions behind the compilation of the anthology. When examining the Prefaces, Kudō argues, it is necessary to keep in mind the reasons why these texts were written to begin with:

²² NKBZ 7: 60. The passage is thought to be a reference to the *Analects* (XX: 7): "He revived states that had been extinguished, restored families whose line of succession had been broken, and called to office those who had retired into obscurity, so that throughout the kingdom the hearts of the people turned towards him." James Legge, trans. *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 215.

²³ For a detailed discussion of the Chinese sources of the Preface, see Watanabe Hideo, "Kyūtei waka no kakuritsu: chokusenshū to shite no Kokinwakashū," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō*, Vol. 72, no. 3 (2007), 59-60. Watanabe Hideo, "Wakan hikaku no naka no Kokinshū ryōjo: waka chokusen no shisō," *Kokugo kokubun*, vol. 69, no. 11 (11. 2000): 1-27. On specifically literary influences, see John Timothy Wixted, "The *Kokinshū* Prefaces: Another Perspective," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.1 (June 1983): 215-238.

"The aim of the *mana* preface was one and only one: to provide the theoretical justification for the imperial sponsorship of *waka*. Since the Confucian value system (the Confucian view of literature) was the dominant value system at the time, this was carried out within that value system. This made it necessary to claiming that *waka* was politically useful. And this in turn made it necessary to posit the fundamental equivalence of *waka* and *kanshi*. And it is to support these claims that [the editors] produced a semi-fictional *waka* history.²⁴

In other words, by presenting Daigo's sponsorship of *waka* as an application of the classical (Chinese) view of literary patronage, the prefaces were not offering an accurate description of Daigo's actions as a sponsor of *waka*, so much as providing a justification for it. Such a justification was necessary precisely because *waka* was not perceived as a "state art" along the same lines as *kanshi*, and so many could have found bizarre the idea of producing an imperial collection of *waka*. In an earlier study, Kudō called the prefaces a "façade" (*tatema*) to stress that they were written to justify the project of an imperial anthology.²⁵ Kudō's skepticism regarding Daigo's actual commitment to the idea of turning *waka* into a "public" art is shared by Takikawa Ryōji, who notes: "Daigo was probably apathetic to the idea of elevating the *waka* to the public sphere."²⁶

The making of the first official *waka* anthology did, however, establish an important precedent for the imperial sponsorship of *waka*. The fifty years between the making of the *Kokinshū* and the making of the *Gosenshū* are when *waka* well and truly became a court art, not so much in the sense of having become indispensable for government, but in the more prosaic

²⁴ Kudō Shigenori, "*Kokinshū* no seiritsu: waka chokusen e no michi," in *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei*, vol. 1, ed. Masuda Shigeo et al. (Kazama Shobō, 2004), 168-9.

²⁵ Kudō, *Heianchō ritsuryō shakai no bungaku*, 118.

²⁶ Takikawa Ryōji, "Uda/Daigo-chō no kadan to waka no dōkō," 161.

one of having become a daily occupation for virtually everyone at court.²⁷ Once again, however, one must be careful not to mistake the enthusiastic embrace by the elite for the wholesale application of the classical view of patronage. The best place to look to understand Murakami's particular brand of *waka* patronage and the view of *waka* that subsumed it is the two main poetic achievements of his reign: the *Gosenshū* and the Tentoku 4 poetry contest. As noted in chapter 1, the *Gosenshū* is notable for how strikingly it departs from the model set by the *Kokinshū*. Whereas the *Kokinshū* clearly places the emphasis on poetry formally made at court, for the emperor, the *Gosenshū* is dominated by the private exchanges between men and women of the court, with a special focus on love poetry. The *Gosenshū* also grants a much more prominent role to women poets and several scholars even hypothesize a direct involvement of empress Anshi in the compilation of the anthology.²⁸ The difference of emphasis between the two anthologies can also be seen by the physical locations where they were edited: whereas the *Kokinshū* was compiled in the Imperial Library (*goshodokoro* or *mifumidokoro*), the *Gosenshū* was edited in the Nashitsubo (known also as *Shōyōden*), one of the halls of the Rear Court where the imperial consorts resided.²⁹

Similar considerations can be made about the Tentoku 4 poetry contest. As noted earlier, the Tentoku 4 contest was the first in history to be hosted in the emperor's private quarters. Murakami personally oversaw the preparations and many of the highest state officials took part

²⁷ The work that better than any other shows this is the *Gosenshū*; here poems by emperors, ministers, consorts, and their ladies-in-waiting together account for a staggering 65% percent of the total poems, compared to the only 25% of the *Kokinshū*. Abe, "*Gosenwakashū no senshū ni kan-suru shikiron*," 231.

²⁸ Yamaguchi Hiroshi, *Ōchō kadanshi no kenkyū* (*Murakami, Reizei, En'yū-chō hen*), 48. Katagiri Yōichi, "*Gosenwakashū no jidai*," 213-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

in it. All this would seem to suggest an extremely high degree of officiality. Close examination of the proceedings, however, suggests otherwise. First, the Seiryōden's nature as the emperor's living quarters must be considered. The Seiryōden was not one of the halls of the palace where official state business was conducted, but the emperor's private residence.³⁰ Although during the tenth century it did come to be used for various formal events, it never completely lost its status of a private zone within the largely public space of the palace. Moreover, the Tentoku 4 contest was held in the Western wing of the building, not in the Eastern wing where more solemn gatherings took place.³¹ Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the original idea for the contest did not come from Murakami himself, but from some of his female attendants. The exact circumstances behind the staging of the event are described in an entry of Murakami's diary that has been preserved together with a written record of the event:

30.3. Tentoku 4. Yin Earth Snake. On this day, there was the women's poetry contest. In the eighth month of autumn, last year, the *tenjōbito* held a contest of Chinese poems. On that occasion, the Assistant Handmaid, the *myōbu* and other women said that since men had had their match of Chinese poetry, women should have their own competition, of *waka*.³²

天徳四年三月卅日己巳、此日有_二女房歌合事_一。去年秋八月、殿上侍臣鬪_レ詩。爾時、典侍命婦等相語曰「男已鬪_二文章_一。女宜_レ合_二和歌_一。

By referring to the Tentoku event as "the women's poetry contest" (*nyōbō utaawase*), Murakami both acknowledges the special role that women played in it and stresses the difference between

³⁰ Takikawa, *Tennō to bundan*, 428.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Utaawase-shū*, NKBT 74: 88. The fragment of Murakami's diary is one of five different records of the event that survive. *Myōbu* was a title borne by mid-ranking women in palace service.

this event and other court events at which male officials played the leading role.³³ The gloss would have been unnecessary had he considered the Tentoku contest a regular court event. Later in the same entry, Murakami makes the thoroughly Confucian point that without such an event an ancient practice like the *waka* would decline, but as the editors of the Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei edition note, this was probably a preemptive move to defend himself from possible future allegations of having indulged in idle pastimes.³⁴ Thus, despite its grandness and Murakami's direct involvement in it, it would be wrong to consider the Tentoku 4 *uta-awase* an official court event like the annual *sechien* banquets.³⁵

In summary, both of the two main poetic products of Murakami's reign came into being in a sort of grey area between the fully official world of government and the still formal, but largely unofficial world of palace life. Both were fully courtly works in that they were produced at, by, and for the court, but they also retained an unmistakable "private" flavor. Also worth noting is that both also had a very strong connection with the women of the Rear Court (*kōkyū*), a factor that must be considered when assessing their significance. Even after it gained full acceptance as a court genre, therefore, *waka* did not completely lose its ninth-century image of private art.

For clarity, I should note that the picture was more complicated than a simple dichotomy between official and unofficial, public and private. Indeed, the tendency in recent scholarship has been to question the degree to which spheres that have traditionally been seen as separate (male

³³ For a detailed discussion of women's role at the *Tentoku utaawase*, see Rose Bundy, "Court Women in Poetry Contests: The Tentoku Yonen Dairi Utaawase (Poetry Contest Held at Court in 960)," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 33 (2007): 33-57.

³⁴ NKBT 74: 88n8.

³⁵ On *sechien* banquets, see Heldt, *Pursuit of Harmony*, 11-2.

and female, Chinese and Japanese, public and private) were indeed separate. With regard to the public-private dichotomy, practices that were once considered "private" or external to statal power are now seen as constitutive of the political power of the Heian regime.³⁶ But if the boundaries between the public and the private in a court society are always necessarily fluid and permeable, we must be wary of discounting every distinction in the name of a postmodern preference for ambiguity and fluid boundaries. I do not think it an oversimplification to say that there continued to exist a clear difference between the fully-institutionalized world within which *shi* composition took place, and the courtly world where *waka*, in its various forms of presentation, was patronized. More on this will be said after a brief detour to examine emperor Murakami's poetry.

The Patron as Poet: the *Murakami gyōshū*

More insight into the view of *waka* that inspired Murakami's sponsorship of *waka* can be gained by looking at the poetry that he himself composed. The *Gosenshū* contains two poems by Murakami (nos. 1379 and 1381). Both poems date from the time when Murakami was still crown prince.³⁷ This is in itself a significant fact: the imperial collection that Murakami himself commissioned contains no poems by the emperor as emperor. Both poems are part of sets of

³⁶ Historians often describe the tenth century as a time of "privatization" because of the increasing reliance on private, extra-statal forms of control and management at both the political and the economic levels. But whereas previously this was seen as a symptom of the weakening of statal power, more recently it has come to be viewed simply as a different way of exercising it. See, Cameron Hurst III, "The Heian Period," in *A Companion to Japanese History*, ed. William M. Tsutsui (Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 30-46; Michael Adolphson and Edward Kamens, "Between and Beyond Centers and Peripheries," in *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Michael Adolphson, Edward Kamens and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 9-10.

³⁷ Murakami was named Crown Prince in 944 (Tengyō 7).

zōtōka. The first poem is a reply to a poem by Fujiwara no Tadahira (880-949) that was sent to embellish a gift of books. The second poem is also a reply to a gift note by an unknown sender, perhaps one of Murakami consorts:

When the present Emperor was living at the Umetsubo, [she?] respectfully presented [this poem] with some firewood [she?] had had cut:

For you, my Lord, I will pile high the wood that the mountaineers have cut,
as high as the many years [that you shall live].

山人の樵れる薪木は君がため
多くの年を積まんとぞ思ふ

His Majesty's reply:

To the heavy luggage you say you want to pile like years,
I would like to add just a little bit more!³⁸

年の数積まんとすなる重荷には
いとゝ小付を樵りも添へなん

Although these are not love poems, they clearly belong to the category of the informal, everyday exchanges. If public poetry is defined as poetry composed by command on formal occasions, then these are very much private poems. *Waka* here is a medium of communication between close relatives (Tadahira was Murakami's maternal uncle), not a formal composition presented to the sovereign on an official occasion. At the same time, they are also partly "public" poems in that they are part of exchanges between the emperor and his subordinates (consorts were also formally court officials). The first poem in the second exchange even makes the explicitly political gesture of wishing long life to the sovereign. Much like the *Gosenshū* as a whole, the two poems can be said to exist in a grey area between the fully private and the fully public.

³⁸ SNKBZ 6: 420.

The bulk of Murakami's poems can be found in his personal poetry collection, the *Murakami gyoshū* 村上御集 (The Collection of His Imperial Highness Murakami). The only surviving version of the work (Shikashū Taisei I, text 84) contains 138 poems (137 *waka* plus the two parts of a *tanrenga* [short linked verse]). Of these, the first 112 poems are thought to be the oldest part of the work, while the remaining twenty-six (poems nos. 113 to 138) are thought to have been added at a later time, by taking them from various sources.³⁹

An overwhelming majority of the poems in the "original" portion of the work are exchanges between Murakami and six of his consorts: Fujiwara no Anshi 藤原安子 (or Yasuko, 927- 964), Fujiwara no Jusshi 藤原述子 (933-947), Fujiwara no Kishi 藤原徽子 (or Yoshiko, 929-985), Minamoto no Keishi 源計子 (903-955), Fujiwara no Seihi 藤原正妃 (?-967), and Fujiwara no Hōshi 藤原芳子 (?-967).⁴⁰ The exchanges with Kishi are given special prominence, occupying more than two-thirds of the entire collection (poems nos. 8 to 81, 84 to 85, and 102 to 106). Thus, a vast majority of the poems in the Murakami's collection are part of love exchanges between the emperor and his many consorts.⁴¹

TABLE 2-2

Structure of the *Murakami gyoshū*⁴²

³⁹ Kwon Hyuk in, *Tenryaku-ki no kōkyū shakai to bungaku* (Seoul: J&C, 2004), 21.

⁴⁰ The exchanges with each consort are arranged in sets, and each set follows a roughly chronological order. Murakami had eleven consorts in total, but only six are represented in the collection.

⁴¹ This seems to be a constant in personal poetry collections by emperors. See, Peterson, "Shikashū," 244-5.

⁴² Source: Kyun, *Tenryaku-ki no kōkyū shakai to bungaku*, 57.

Poem no.	Description
1	Poem composed at the Tanabata banquet of Tenryaku 1 (947)
2-4	Poems with Jusshi
5	Poem composed at the Wisteria banquet of Tenryaku 4 (950)
6-81	Poems with Kishi
82	Poem composed at the Wisteria banquet of Tenryaku 4 (950)
83	Acrostic poem
84-85	Poems with Kishi
86-88	Poems with Anshi
89	Poem composed at the Cherry Banquet of Tenryaku 7 (953)
90-93	Poems with Hōshi
94	Zōtōka with unknown recipient (the Wisteria Consort)
95-98	Poems with Keishi
99-101	Poems with Seihi
102-106	Poems with Kishi
107-108	Poems with Hōshi
109	Poem on Murakami's illness
110-112	Poems composed at various banquets and excursions
113-138	Poems from various imperial collections

Although they are a small minority, the collection does contain some poems that were composed in more formal contexts, such as court banquets. One example is the very last poem in the collection (no. 138):

Composed at a moon-viewing banquet held on the fifteenth night of the eighth month:

This is the moon I see every month,
but no moon has ever looked like the moon of this night of the month!⁴³

月ごとにみる月なれど
このつきのこよひの月になる月ぞなき

A detailed account of a moon-viewing banquet held at the Seiryōden in 966 can be found in the *Eiga monogatari* (Tale of Flowering Fortunes, ca. 1092):

⁴³ *Murakami gyōshū*, no. 138. ST 1: 390.

The Emperor planned a moon-viewing banquet for the night of the Fifteenth of the Eighth Month in the third year of Kōhō [966]. Two opposing teams were to produce artificial gardens in front of the Seiryōden. The leader of the Left was Chamberlain Lesser Captain Naritoki, the Superintendent of the Office of Painting, who was the son of Morotada and the elder brother of the Sen'yōden Consort Hōshi. The leader of the Right was Morosuke's ninth son, Tamemitsu, the Lesser Captain who supervised the Office of Palace Works. [...] The contestants from the Office of Painting submitted a painted landscape tray depicting flowering plants of heavenly beauty, a garden stream, and massive rocks. Various kinds of insects were lodged in the rustic fence made of silver foil. The artists also painted a view of the Ōi River, showing figures strolling nearby and cormorant boats with basked fires. Near the insects there was a poem. The Office of Palace Works presented an interesting tray, carved with great ingenuity to resemble a beach at high tide, which they had planned with artificial flowers and carved bamboo and pines.⁴⁴

Although there is no certainty that this is the exact banquet at which the poem above was composed, the account does give us a good idea of the nature of Murakami's moon-viewing banquets. Although this is a court event, it is also clearly a playful one; male court officials do play an important role in it, but not in their capacity as government officials, but as players in an elaborate display of courtly elegance. The tone of Murakami's poem is also playful, as would befit an event of this kind.

In summary, the content of the *Murakami gyoshū* shows well the two main facets of Murakami's view of *waka*. *Waka* is here two things: an instrument of communication between the emperor and his consorts, and an elegant amusement at large social gatherings. There is nothing here that even vaguely resembles the state-sponsored literature of Confucian theory.

The Patron's Role

⁴⁴ William H. and Helen Craig McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period*, vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 92-4.

How did the return of imperial patronage impact the *waka* world? In this section I will review some of the main effects of the return of patronage on *waka* practice. Much of what I am going to say will be already familiar to *waka* specialists, but since the central argument of this chapter is that patrons and the public were key figures in the tenth century *waka* phenomenon, it is important to state exactly what their contribution consisted in.

Perhaps the single, most notable effect was an increase in the scale and variety of poetic activity. The patrons' arrival coincided with the rise of numerous new practices, which significantly enriched the palette of *waka*-related activities. These included poetry anthologies (*kashū*), both official and private, poetry contests (*uta-awase*), and screen poetry (*byōbu-uta*). In all of these practices, the poets did not work of their own initiative, but in response to an external command. What the patrons brought to *waka*, therefore, was structure. With the coming onto the scene of the patrons, *waka* ceased to be just a private pursuit and became an organized system of which the poet was part, but no longer the sole protagonist. What poets lost in terms of freedom and creative control over their art was more than compensated by what they earned in terms of prestige and reputation. As will be argued in detail below, working for elite patrons gave some poets an amount of prestige and recognition that they would have never achieved without it.

The arrival of the patron also added a clear political dimension to the poetic act. For most of the ninth century, making *waka* poems had been an essentially private affair. Poems were exchanged between friends, lovers, and relatives, without particular political implications. In poetry made for the patrons, by contrast, an authority issued a command, and a “subject” executed it, just as in any other state transaction. As a consequence, composing poems ceased to be merely a creative act and a means of self-expression and became in part at least a political gesture, which reproduced social differences in the literary sphere. As Gustav Heldt aptly puts it:

“[poems] were declarations of allegiance to and compliance with the will of figures of authority.”⁴⁵

No less significant was the impact of patronage on the content and language of poetry. Poems for patrons were usually made on set topics (*dai*). The popularity of forms of composition on topics (*daiei* in Japanese scholarly parlance) gradually led to a contraction of the range of themes considered suitable for treatment in poetry, as a limited number of required themes became established as *the* themes to treat in poetry. How the theme was treated also underwent conventionalization as a distinctly "courtly" manner of handling the topic became the norm in formal contexts.⁴⁶ Even more profound were the effects on diction. If in a poem destined to a friend or to an acquaintance, one was theoretically free to express oneself in the language he or she deemed most appropriate, a poem made for the elite had to comply with much stricter rules of decorum. The area in which this is most clearly visible is poetry contests. Right from the beginning, the strictest standards of decorum were enforced at these events, the tiniest deviation from which was punished with defeat. Thus, it was largely due to the elite's involvement that Heian *waka* became what it is known today as: a highly conventionalized, lexically homogeneous poetic form in which elegance and technical sophistication take precedence over spontaneity and originality.

Aspects of the elite's patronage of *waka*

This rapid survey has given a sense of the scale and scope of the patrons' contribution to the *waka* phenomenon. In this section, I will discuss in greater detail some specific aspects of

⁴⁵ Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 13.

⁴⁶ Themes and their treatment are discussed in chapter 4.

patronage, starting with the issue that has generated the most debate, namely, the question of its political significance and relation to the *monjō keikoku shisō* 文章經国思想 (the view that literature was useful for government).⁴⁷

Scholars are divided on this point. Some (Watanabe Hideo) see the patronage of *waka* in mid-Heian times as a more or less faithful application of the classical Chinese theory of patronage.⁴⁸ Others (Kudō Shigenori, Takikawa Ryōji) take a more skeptical view.⁴⁹ Which position one subscribes to depends largely on whether one chooses to read the historical record literally, as a reliable account of the actions and intentions of emperors and ministers who sponsored poetry, or critically, as a set of strategic statements intended to project a desired (but largely untrue) image of them.

In the Chinese ideal, as articulated in such texts as the “Great Preface” to the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs, 3rd c. BCE) or the *Li ji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), requesting poems from subjects had an eminently political function. By viewing his subjects’ poetry, states a passage in the *History of the Former Han* (*Han shu* 漢書, J. Kanjo, 111CE), “the [Zhou] king observed the local customs, learned about his accomplishments and failures, and [thus was able to]

⁴⁷ *Monjō keikoku* (writing binds the realm) is originally a phrase from the third-century Chinese treatise “Lun Wen” (Essay on Literature, 3rd c.), but Japanese scholars often use it as a name for the view that sponsoring literature was an important part of governmental activity and that by sponsoring literature, rulers factually governed the realm. This view is expressed in one form or another in many texts of Chinese antiquity.

⁴⁸ Watanabe Hideo, “Wakan hikaku no naka no *Kokinshū* ryōjo: waka chokusen no shisō,” *Kokugo kokubun*, vol. 69, no. 11 (11. 2000): 1-27; Watanabe Hideo, “*Kyūtei waka no kakuritsu: chokusenshū to shite no Kokinwakashū*,” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō*, Vol. 72, no. 3 (2007).

⁴⁹ Kudō Shigenori, “*Kokinshū* no seiritsu: waka chokusen e no michi,” in *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei*, vol. 1, ed. Masuda Shigeo et al. (Kazama Shobō, 2004): 143-172; Kudō, *Heianchō ritsuryō shakai no bungaku*; Takikawa Ryōji, *Tennō to bundan: Heian zenki no kōteki bungaku* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 2007).

examine and rectify himself.”⁵⁰ A similar point is made in the “Great Preface” to the *Shijing*: “By [poetry] the former kings managed the relations between husband and wife, perfected the respect due to parents and superiors, gave depths to human relations, beautifully taught and transformed the people, and changed local customs.”⁵¹

This "utilitarian" view of literary patronage was first appropriated in Japan in the early ninth century, when the court sponsored the compilation of several anthologies of poetry in Chinese aimed at making Japan a literary state along Chinese lines.⁵² The Prefaces of these works cite extensively from the Chinese classics in order to establish a parallel between these ancient ideals and contemporary praxis at the Japanese court.⁵³ Even at this stage of appropriation, however, scholars have expressed doubts about the actual extent to which these programmatic ideals were believed. Fujiwara Katsumi has argued that early Heian courtiers-literati perceived a contradiction between their love of ornate language and their role as government officials, and that it was in response to this contradiction that they invoked the *monjō keikoku* theory, as a justification.⁵⁴ Kojima Noriyuki calls the *monjō keikoku* theory as a

⁵⁰ Quoted in Martin Kern, “The Poetry of Han Historiography,” *Early Medieval China* 10-11.1 (2004), 33.

⁵¹ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 45.

⁵² The three official *kanshi* anthologies are the *Ryōunshū* 凌雲集 (Collection Above the Clouds, 814), the *Bunka shūrei-shū* 文華秀麗集 (Collection of Masterpieces of Literary Flowers, 818), and the *Keikokushū* 經国集 (Collection for Governing the State, 827).

⁵³ On the use of Chinese sources in the prefaces to these works, see Wiebke Denecke, “Chinese Antiquity and Court Spectacle in Early *kanshi*,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2004), 106-110.

⁵⁴ Fujiwara Katsumi, “Monjō keikoku shisō kara shigonshi e: chokusen sanshū to Sugawara Michizane,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, vol. 57, no. 11 (1980), 14. The whole of Chinese poetic theory can be seen as an attempt to counter the perception that *wen* in fact was not essential. Stephen Owen argues: “When Ts’ao P’i stated grandly that “literary works are the supreme

"borrowed concept" (*shakuyōbutsu*), to emphasize that its adoption during the Kōnin and Tenchō eras (810-834) was more expedient than actual.⁵⁵

The problems multiply, of course, when one turns to consider the application of this ideal to the sponsorship of a form—*waka*—that traditionally had no place in the politico-bureaucratic machinery of the state: “[w]hereas Chinese poetry and music had a place in the Confucian value system, *waka*, which did not exist in China, did not exist in this system. Thus, for Confucianism, [*waka*] was devoid of value.”⁵⁶ The problem here was not just of mere appropriateness, but of structural impossibility: whereas the use of Chinese letters had a clearly defined place in the political life of the state and, indeed, was prescribed by law, *waka* had no such place. There were no regular events of *waka*, no requirements to know *waka* to become court functionaries, and no institution that taught how to compose *waka* as there was instead for *kanshi*. So whereas *kanshi* was at least theoretically a politically useful art, *waka* was not.

Takikawa Ryōji stresses the differences between court *waka* banquets (*kakai*) and the equivalent events of *kanshi* (*shikai*). Although it is true that starting in Daigo's reign *waka* banquets began to be held at court alongside *kanshi* events, there was still a clear qualitative difference between the two types of event: whereas *kanshi* were by any standard "public events" (*kōji*), that is, prescribed by the codes and conducted according to a rigid protocol, *waka* events such were much more informal affairs left almost entirely to the personal initiative of the specific

achievement in the business of the state, a splendor that does not decay," his was a claim explicitly set against the fear of death or posterity's misprision or forgetfulness. In the same way Liu Hsieh's grand claim of literature's basis in nature is made to oppose a threatening alternative: there is always the possibility that literature (*wen*) is not essential, but rather mere adornment, something added." Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 187.

⁵⁵ Kojima Noriyuki, *Kokufū ankoku jidai no bungaku*, vol. 2 (Hanawa Shobō, 1973), 769.

⁵⁶ Kudō, *Heianchō ritsuryō shakai no bungaku*, 118.

individual who organized them.⁵⁷ Even after Murakami formalized the status of the blossom banquet (*hana no en*) by including it in his manual of protocol *Shingishiki* (New Prescriptions for Ceremonies, 961), a clear difference remained between these events and the major *sechien* banquets.⁵⁸

To assert that there was a difference between even the most formalized banquets at which *waka* were composed and their "Chinese" counterparts is not the same as to say that they were politically insignificant. The central thesis of Gustav Heldt's *The Pursuit of Harmony* is that *waka* events and ritualized forms of *waka* presentation were used politically to reinforce social hierarchies and maintain harmony at court. This was necessary because of the internal tensions that constantly threatened to disrupt it: "The pursuit of harmony in Heian court poetry was itself often spurred on by the recognition of dissonance among its members. Poetic exchanges between high-ranking members of the court or poetry matches, for example, often sought to alleviate political tensions between different parties. In this sense, the practice of poetic harmony was inseparable from the political disruptions it sought to suppress."⁵⁹ A distinction must be drawn, however, between the use of poetry to maintain harmony at court and its use as an instrument of government. Although continental thought does posit a direct connection between harmony between ruler and ministers and order within the realm, it is clear that literary patronage was primarily beneficial to the former. An elite can be extremely efficient at maintaining internal harmony and fail miserably at managing a country.

⁵⁷ Takikawa Ryōji, "Uda-Daigo no kadan to waka no dōkō," *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei*, vol. 1, ed. Masuda Shigeo et al. (Kazama Shobō, 2001).

⁵⁸ Takikawa, *Tennō to bundan*, 261-3.

⁵⁹ Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 14.

It is perhaps useful to recall here the old distinction between court and state. Although historians no longer see the two as rigidly separated, the distinction is perhaps useful in pinpointing the exact position of *waka* at the Heian court.⁶⁰ The state can be defined as a bureaucratic structure whose aim is to administer a country. State offices are held by actual people, to be sure, but it is primarily a functional organization. The court, on the other hand, can be defined as the spatially-localized community of people who center around a sovereign or prince, and who share a common ethos and complex rules of etiquette.⁶¹ While there is little doubt that during the tenth century *waka* became increasingly important to the correct and smooth functioning of the court, its usefulness for the state would be much harder to demonstrate.

If *waka* had a political function, it was as an insignia of power rather than as an instrument of government. Like rulers of all times and places, the Heian leaders were well aware of “the need to make their position strong by a glorious court and a reign wherein culture developed.”⁶² Sponsoring *waka* and cultural activity in general allowed tenth-century leaders to give expression to their power and by doing so, to bolster themselves against possible competition.

Here another important difference emerges between the patronage of *waka* at the Heian court and the classical Chinese ideal of patronage to which it is often linked. Whereas in ancient China the view of literature as an instrument of government essentially served to sustain and

⁶⁰ For a summary of the debate on state and court in European history, see Trevor Dean, "The Courts," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 67, Supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300-1600 (Dec., 1995), S136-S151.

⁶¹ The classic study of the court community and its ethos is Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

⁶² Karl Julius Holzschnecht, *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966 [first pub. 1923]), 7.

legitimize the rule of a single monarch, in Japan it was deployed to that end by several different figures, reflecting the fragmented structure of power in tenth-century Japan. As Heldt notes, by the early tenth century there were at least three different figures who competed for authority at the Japanese court: the emperor, the retired emperor, and the Fujiwara regent.⁶³ Each of these figures made use of cultural patronage to lay claim to authority and tip the balance of power in their favor. Emperor Uda, for instance, used poetry contests to “assert the prominence of his household over the palace.”⁶⁴ By introducing new practices like the *Nihongi kyōen waka* (*waka* on the *Nihongi* lectures), the Fujiwara regents successfully asserted “a place for the Fujiwara family within the dynastic myths of the Yamato regime.”⁶⁵

Another aspect of the Heian patronage of *waka* that deserves mention is that it did not involve monetary support. Patronage as it is generally understood by literary scholars usually involves the transference of some kind of economic benefit from the patron to the writer, be that payment for a work, a regular stipend, board, or land.⁶⁶ In the case of *waka*, however, the poets who put their talent at the service of royals and other elite figures never received such economic benefits. A good poem for an important figure was often compensated with stipends (*roku*)—typically a set of robes or fabric to make one—but these emoluments were too small and irregularly dispensed to be considered a serious form of remuneration.

⁶³ Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 114.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁶ For an excellent discussion of the economics of literary patronage, see Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13-44. A classic study of patronage in art is Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters; a Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (New York: Knopf, 1963).

The main reason for this must be sought in the special position that letters occupied in the Confucian ideal of the government official. Confucianism configured intellectual cultivation as a fundamental prerequisite for public service. By learning to write beautifully the Confucian gentleman not only developed his aesthetic sense but showed his aptness for office.⁶⁷ A high degree of proficiency in letters, in other words, broadly understood as to include history, philosophy, and (Chinese) poetry, was an indispensable requisite of every man of government worthy of the name, not a special skill deserving special compensation.

This is not to say that making poems for powerful patrons was unprofitable. As argued at length in chapter 1, composing for the patrons gave poets the all-important opportunity to come into contact with individuals of immense power and wealth, which in theory at least could have led to appointments and promotions with significant economic benefits attached to them. To these benefits which might be termed "practical" one must add the significant boost in reputation that working for elite patrons gave the poets.

Patrons and the "poetry specialists"

One of the most intriguing features of the elite patronage of *waka* is that from early on, patrons tended to rely almost exclusively on a small group of "poetry specialists" (*senmon kajin* 専門歌人, often translated "professional poets").⁶⁸ The poetry specialist was not a specialist in the sense that the Master Painter (*eshi*) of the Office of Painting (*edokoro*), for example, was.

There was no specific office that employed these masters of verbal art, nor were they paid a

⁶⁷ For a concise treatment of the role of letters in the Confucian ideal of the government official, see Helen McCullough's introduction to *Tales of Ise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 15-17.

⁶⁸ Poetry specialists is the term that modern Japanese scholars use to refer to these poets. The Heian term was *utayomi*.

salary for their services.⁶⁹ In practice, however, the poetry specialist (*utayomi*) was a *de facto* post that some particularly highly regarded poets “held” for considerable lengths of time.

The appearance of the poetry specialist can be considered a direct effect of the onset of elite patronage: as soon as emperors and other elite figures began to request poems from courtiers, the question of *who* to ask—who possessed the necessary requisites for the task—also became a concern. The emergence of the “specialists” can also be seen as simply the extension to *waka* of a practice that was already common for *kanshi* events. It had long been the norm at *kanshi* events to appoint as poets only specially-nominated “men of letters” (*bunjin* or *monnin*).⁷⁰ Unlike *kanshi*, however, *waka* was not an institutionalized form that one could study at university or earn a degree in, so how was expertise in *waka* measured?

The consensus among scholars who have dealt with the problem is that the main requisite was descent from a family of poets.⁷¹ Virtually all of the poets who served as poetry specialists under Uda and Daigo (887-930) were either children or close relatives of famous poets of the past: Fujiwara no Okikaze was the great grandson of Fujiwara no Hamanari (724-790), the

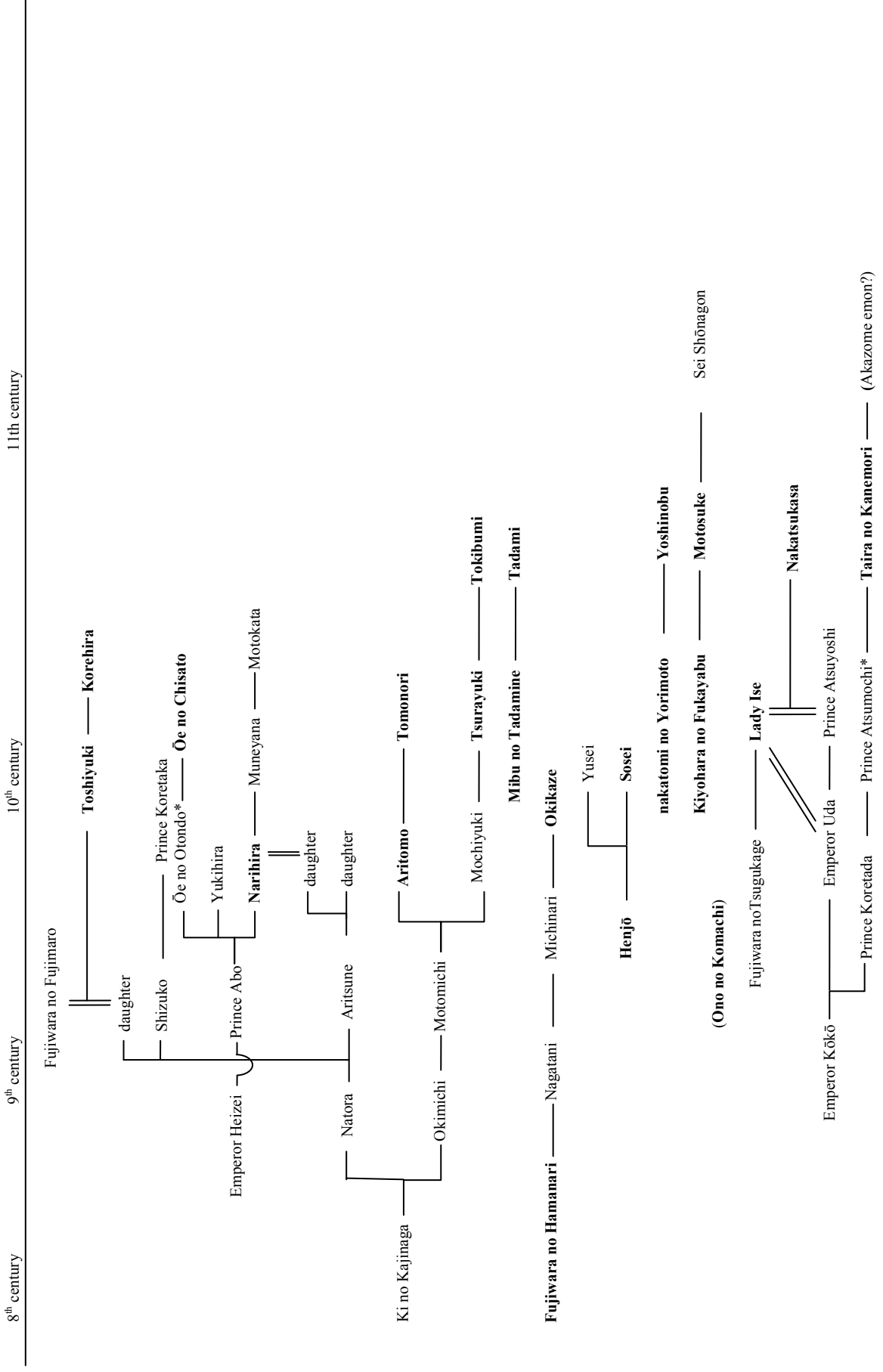
⁶⁹ The Office of Painting and Carpentry (*etakumi no tsukasa*) instituted with the Yōrō Codes of 719 employed 4 Master Painters (*eshi*) and 60 Painters (*ekakibe*). In 808, following the decline of the demand for decoration work in temples and other religious institutions, the Office was fused with the Bureau of Crafts (*takumiryō*), an extra-code organ under the supervision of the Ministry of Palace Affairs. By the late ninth-century, a new Office of Painting (*edokoro* 画所) was in existence that employed a small number of artists and artisans in charge of decorating screens, sliding doors, and other such items for use at the palace. On the structure of the *edokoro*, see Ienaga Saburō, *Jōdai yamatōe zenshi* (Kōtō Shoin, 1946), 368-374; Kikuchi Kyōko, “Dokoro' no seiritsu to tenkai,” in *Heian ōchō*, ed. Hayashi Rikurō, Ronshū Nihon Rekishi 3 (Yūseidō, 1976); Yoshinouchi Kei, “Heian jidai no edokoro ni tsuite: sono kiso-teki kenkyū,” *Nihon rekishi* 659 (Apr. 2003): 1-18.

⁷⁰ Normally the role of *monnin* was assigned to literature graduates of the imperial university (*monjōsei* 文章生). See, Kudō, *Heianchō*, 75-95.

⁷¹ Kudō, *Heianchō*, 154.

TABLE 2-4

Hereditariness of the "title" of poetry specialist



author of the first *waka* treatise in history;⁷² Sosei was the son of the poet Henjō, one of the six famous poets of the past critiqued in the *Kokinshū* preface; Tomonori was the son of Ki no Arimoto (c. 820-880), a respected poet and a member of the circle of poets that gathered around Prince Koretaka (844-897); Tsurayuki was Tomonori's cousin; and so on. Family pedigree became even more important as time went by: with almost no exception, all the members of the second generation of specialists (poets active 950 to 990) were children or close relatives of the members of the first generation of specialists.⁷³

To look only at the requisites that particular poets possessed, however, is to overlook the important role that the patrons themselves played in the process. Like authority of any kind, literary authority is never simply recognized; it must always be conferred from outside. Granted that some poets possessed better credentials than others (descent from a family of poets, a reputation as good poets), these were bound to remain volatile concepts without some external mechanism of recognition to give them social credence. Such mechanism first appeared in the *waka* world with the arrival of the patrons. It was the commissions to compose from emperors and other elite figures that definitively consecrated the reputations of some poets by granting upon them the status of royally-appointed specialists.

Consider for instance the effects of what was easily the most prestigious of all the patron-initiated commissions, i.e. the command to compile an imperial anthology of poetry

⁷² The *Uta no shiki* (Code of Poetry, 772, known also as *Kakyō hyōshiki*). The complete translation can be found in Judith Rabinovitch, "Wasp Waists and Monkey Tails: A Study and Translation of Hamanari's *Uta no shiki* (The Code of Poetry, 772), Also Known as *Kakyō Hyōshiki* (A Formulary for Verse Based on the Canons of Poetry)," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Dec., 1991): 471-560.

⁷³ Mibu no Tadami (dates unknown) was the son of *Kokinshū* compiler Tadamine; Ki no Tokibumi (922-996) was Ki no Tsurayuki's son; Kiyohara no Motosuke (908-990) was the grandson of Kiyohara no Fukayabu; Nakatsukasa (912-991) was Ise's daughter.

(*chokusenshū*). Prior to their appointment as compilers of the *Kokinshū*, the four poets who were eventually chosen for the task could have hardly claimed to be central figures of the literary world. There were other poets (Fujiwara no Okikaze, Ōe no Chisato) who were both of higher rank and possessed a longer curriculum as court poets than any of them.⁷⁴ The compilation of the *Kokinshū*, however, almost overnight turned them into literary stars of sorts.

The shift is clearly visible from the commissions for poems from emperors and other members of the elite. If prior to the *Kokinshū* the four compilers hardly seem to have received such requests, after the *Kokinshū* they began to flow in profusely.⁷⁵ Table 2-3 below shows the recipients of *byōbu* poem commissions before and after 905, the year the *Kokinshū* was compiled. Whereas before 905 such requests were directed to various poets, including several ones not involved in the compilation of the *Kokinshū*, after 905 they tended to go almost exclusively to the four compilers.

Figure 2-3

Byōbu commissions before and after 905⁷⁶

	Uda (r.887-897)	Daigo (r. 897-930)				Suzaku (r. 930-946)
		before 905	After 905	923~930	No dates	

⁷⁴ Murase, *Kokinshū no kiban to shūhen*, 79; McCullough, *Brocade*, 297.

⁷⁵ Takikawa Ryōji, “Uda/Daigo-chō no kadan to waka no dōkō,” in *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei*, vol. 1, ed. Masuda Shigeo et al. (Kazama Shobō, 2004), 235-6.

⁷⁶ The figure is based on a similar one in Kudō, *Heianchō no ritsuryō shakai no bungaku*, 161.

Sosei	1	2	1	-	1	-
Sadabun	(1)	-	-	-	-	-
Okikaze	1	-	-	-	-	-
Tomonori	1	1	-	-	-	-
Tadamine	5	14	-	-	1	-
Mitsune	(1)	2	37	-	51	-
Tsurayuki	-	30	140	48	60	240
Ise	-	-	12	10	-	21
Korenori	-	2	-	-	-	-
Kanesuke	-	-	1	-	1	-
Korehira	-	-	1	-	-	1
Kintada	-	-	-	-	4	3
Yorimoto						1

An even better piece of evidence on the beneficial effects of work as editors of an imperial anthology on the poets' literary reputations concerns one of the compilers of the second imperial *waka* anthology, the *Gosenshū*. In the fall of 972 (Tenroku 3), emperor Murakami's fourth daughter Shiki hosted a poetry match reserved to the members of the Minamoto clan.⁷⁷ She discussed with her attendants who to appoint for the role of judge (*hanja*), and someone in her retinue suggested the former governor of Izumi, Minamoto no Shitagō (911-983). The reason was that Shitagō "was officially appointed as one of the Five of the Nashitsubo [the five compilers of the *Gosenshū*], and is among Her Ladyship's eight most loyal retainers."⁷⁸ Work as an editor of an imperial poetry collection, in other words, automatically qualified one as an expert of poetry.

How close was the relationship between patron and specialist? Although most of the poets who served as purveyors of poems to the elite belonged to the lowest stratum of the court aristocracy, this should not be taken to mean that the differences of rank and status that governed

⁷⁷ The match is known as the *Tenroku san-nen hachigatsu nijūhachinichi Shiki naishinnō senzai uta-awase* (Garden poetry match at the house of Princess Shiki of the twenty-eighth day of the eighth month of Tenroku 3).

⁷⁸ NKBT 74: 108.

Heian society in every sphere were simply disregarded in the case of poetry. Generally speaking, it is fair to say that direct contact between patron and poet occurred only very rarely.⁷⁹ One such case is described in considerable detail in the late-Heian semi-historical chronicle *Ōkagami* (The Great Mirror, c. 1120):

As though that were not memorable enough, there was another incident of the same kind during His Majesty's reign. It was a night on which there had been a concert. The Emperor called Mitsune near his front steps and said, "Compose a poem explaining the term 'drawn bow,' which people use of the moon." [...] Wasn't that splendid? It was not quite the thing for the Emperor to call someone like that close and give him a present, but nobody offered a word of criticism. (I suppose it was because the Emperor's personality inspired respect; also, everyone recognized Mitsune as a master poet.)⁸⁰

The marveled tone with which the narrator describes the episode shows how rare and extraordinary such cases must have been.

One area where the importance of hierarchy in regulating the interaction between patrons and poets is clearly visible is poetry contests. Although the main purveyors of poems for this kind of events were "specialists" of sometimes extremely low rank, they normally did not take part to the actual events. This was possible because at this stage in *uta-awase* history, the roles of poet (*utayomi*) and team member (*katōdo*, the person who presented the poems and argued their worth during the game) were still clearly distinct, which means that one could compose poems for a match and not physically attend it.⁸¹ One poetry contest that was attended by both elite figures and poets of low rank is the *Jōgen ninen hachigatsu jūrokunichi Sanjō sadaijin Yoritada senzai uta-awase* (Garden Poetry Contest at the House of the Minister of the Left Yoritada on

⁷⁹ Hashimoto Osamu, *Ōchō wakashi no kenkyū* (Kasama Shoin, 1972), 311.

⁸⁰ McCullough, trans., *The Great Mirror*, 238-9.

⁸¹ Hagitani Boku, *Heianchō uta-awase taisei*, vol. 10 (Dōhōsha, 1979), 2941.

The Sixteenth day of the Eighth month of Jōgen 2, 977). On this occasion, the poets were given seats at the far end of the venue, as physically removed as possible from the area where the most important guests were seated.⁸²

It was no doubt in response to this difficulty to gain access to powerful figures that poets sometimes sought the mediation of courtiers of higher rank who would act as liaisons between them and the sovereign. The most famous case of such mediation is that which saw involved the leading *Kokinshū*-time poets Tsurayuki and Mitsune and Fujiwara no Kanesuke (877-933). Kanesuke was a member of the relatively weak Yoshikado branch of the Northern Fujiwara. Despite dying relatively young at 46, he rose fairly high in the court hierarchy, reaching the prestigious Junior Third Rank and the title of Middle Counsellor (*chūnagon*). Kanesuke's association with Tsurayuki is thought to date from around 910, when Tsurayuki was a member of staff in the Imperial Table Office (*naizenshi*) and Kanesuke was Vice-General of the Military Guard and Vice-Head of the Imperial Treasury.⁸³ Mitsune was introduced to Kanesuke not too long afterward, probably by Tsurayuki himself.⁸⁴

An account of an episode occurred in 916 contained in Mitsune's personal poetry collection gives us a good idea of how the relationship between Kanesuke and his protégés might have worked. The account details the circumstances of Mitsune's participation to an outing that Uda made to Ishiyama Temple in the fall of 916:⁸⁵

⁸² Kudō, *Heianchō*, 165-6.

⁸³ Mezaki, *Ki no Tsurayuki*, 123.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

⁸⁵ Ishiyama Temple, near Lake Biwa, was a favorite travel destination of the Heian aristocracy.

On the 21st, 9th month, 16th year of the same era [the Engi era] I received a letter from the Vice-Governor of Ōmi saying: “Tomorrow is the day of His Imperial Holiness’ progress to Ishiyamadera. Do come if you are free.” Thus I went to his residence. There were decorative screens, sliding doors, and other such items. I was told to make poems based on the scenes from famous places, which I composed during the night; when I was told to write them, I hesitated but since he insisted, I did. After a night stay at the temple His Majesty ascended the river to Seta on the imperial vessel. When the vessel was secured to the bridge, the Vice-Governor offered his gifts. He approached me and said: “You should board the refreshment boat and entertain His Majesty with your company.” At which I composed this poem:

I thought I had sunken in $\frac{\text{Izumi}}{\text{the spring}}$ for good,
but here I am today resurfacing in $\frac{\text{Ōmi}}{\text{Your Presence}}$ ⁸⁶

和泉にてしづみはてぬと思ひしを
今日ぞ近江に浮かぶべらなる

The Vice-Governor mentioned in the passage is, of course, Kanesuke. When what seemed like a good opportunity for one of his protégés to put his talents to good use presented itself, he hurried to inform him and to urge his to provide his services. Assuming that this episode is representative of the relationship between Kanesuke and his protégés, then it might be more accurate to see the elite patronage of *waka* not as a two but as a three-tier structure, with the emperor or senior official at the top, the poets at the bottom, and the mid-ranking courtier in the middle to facilitate communication between the two.

What did the liaison get from his activity? Some scholars have interpreted Kanesuke’s sponsorship of low-ranking poets like Tsurayuki and Mitsune as a sign of his kind nature and

⁸⁶ *Mitsune-shū* (Nishihonganji text), no. 167; ST 1: 152. The poem plays on the two meanings of ‘izumi’ (‘Izumi province’ and ‘spring’) and ‘Ōmi’—written *ahumi*—(‘Ōmi province’ and ‘to meet’). The episode is discussed in Minegishi Yoshiaki, *Heian jidai waka bungaku no kenkyū* (Ōfusha, 1965), 68-71.

humanistic disregard for class.⁸⁷ As Kudō Shigenori has more recently argued, however, this is to take an overly romanticized view of the relationship. Kanesuke served for many years as Supranumerary Head of the Imperial Treasury (*Kura no gon no kami*) and as Head of the Secretariat (*kurōdo no tō*), two posts that involved providing for all the material and immaterial needs of the sovereign. By providing first-class entertainment to the emperor by, among other things, securing the services of exceptional poets, Kanesuke not only helped these poets to get access to the emperor, but also fulfilled his duties as holder of these posts.⁸⁸ The association between poet and liaison, in other words, was mutually beneficial.

Women as Patrons

One final aspect of patronage that I would like to consider is the role that elite women played in it. An early example of a female Maecenas is Fujiwara no Takaiko (or Kōshi, 842-910), a junior consort of emperor Seiwa (r. 858-876) known at the time as the Nijō empress. Evidence of her activity as a sponsor of poetry comes primarily from the headnotes (*kotobagaki*) to several poems in the *Kokinshū* and the *Gosenshū*, which depict her in the act of commissioning or exchanging poems with the likes of Fun'ya Yasuhide (?-885?), Fujiwara Toshiyuki (?-901), Sosei (?-910?), and Ariwara no Narihira (825-880).⁸⁹ Takaiko's sponsorship of *waka* was particularly significant because it came at a time when the attention of male elite figures was still primarily concentrated on Chinese poetry, and thus can be said to have paved the way for *waka*'s return to court circles in subsequent decades.

⁸⁷ Fujioka, *Heian waka shiron*, 41; Minegishi, *Heian jidai*, 71; Mezaki, *Ki no Tsurayuki*, 137.

⁸⁸ Kudō Shigenori, "Fujiwara Kanesuke-den kō (2)," *Gobun kenkyū*, no. 33 (Feb. 1974), 13-25.

⁸⁹ See *Kokinshū* nos. 4, 8, 293, 445, 747, and *Gosenshū* no. 2. Takaiko's role as a patron of *waka* is discussed in Murase, *Kokinshū no kiban to shūhen*, 23-6.

Takaiko's pioneering activity as a female protector of the *waka* in the mid-ninth century was continued by the palace women of Uda, Daigo, and Murakami's reigns.⁹⁰ Uda numbered among his wives Fujiwara no Onshi 藤原温子 (862-907) and Fujiwara Hōshi 藤原褒子 (the Kyōgoku Haven, dates unknown), both of whom had poems selected for inclusion in the *Gosenshū*, as well as the distinguished poetess Lady Ise (Ise no Gō).⁹¹ The prose headnote to a sequence of screen poems in Ise's poetry collection (*Ise-shū*) gives us a good idea of Onshi's role as a patron of *waka*:

When the Empress was still called the Crown Prince's Consort, she handed out the topic for a screen poem The painting showed a lover engaged in conversation with a woman:

A man, to the woman with whom he had begun to exchange poems, lured into coming by the plum blossoms:

Thinking that I might see her again—plum blossoms
Not a day goes by that I do not visit the place where they once bloomed.⁹²

みし人にまたもやあふとむめのはな
さきしあたりにゆかぬひぞなき

Onshi's role here is in every respect identical to that of the male patron of verse: she creates the occasion for the poem, hands out the topic to a poet of her choice, and "receives" the poem from the poet. Presumably, she also commissioned the actual screen.

⁹⁰ For more on the women poets in Murakami's "rear-court," see Kwon Hyuk In, *Tenryakuki no kōkyū shakai to bungaku* (Seoul: J&C, 2004), 21-41.

⁹¹ Ise first entered the imperial palace as a lady-in-waiting to Uda's consort Onshi. After Onshi's death in 907, she bore Uda a child and became one of his "ladies of the bedchamber" (*miyasudokoro*), a title imperial consorts of lesser rank.

⁹² *Ise-shū* (Nishihonganji text), no. 34; ST 1: 219.

The members of Murakami's "rear court" (*kōkyū*) included Fujiwara Hōshi, who was famous in her day for having memorized the entire twenty volumes of the *Kokinshū*, and Minamoto no Keishi 源計子 (no dates), who apparently was responsible for the idea of producing a *kana* version of the *Man'yōshū* in 951.⁹³ Another of his wives was Kishi 徽子 (929-985), known at the time as the Vestal Consort (*saigū nyōgo*), whom the early eleventh century poet-critic Fujiwara no Kintō included in his selection of thirty-six outstanding poets of the past.⁹⁴

The great interest in *waka* among Heian elite women was a more or less accidental by-product of what historians call marriage politics. From the mid-ninth century on, the Fujiwara perfected a strategy of marrying their daughters to emperors in order to become maternal grandfathers of future emperors and thus secure control of court affairs. For this strategy to succeed, it was imperative that Fujiwara women would surpass women from other clans in every respect, cultural attainment included. As a result of this emphasis on female cultural attainment, the Rear Court swarmed with women with an uncommon interest in poetry.

One area in which women seem to have been particularly active as patrons of *waka* is poetry contests (*uta-awase*). Of the fifty-two matches on record staged between 887 and 958, sixteen were hosted by or for women of the imperial house.

⁹³ The *kana* transliteration of the *Man'yōshū* was one of the two tasks that Murakami assigned to the five compilers of the *Gosenshū* in 951. According to an anecdote in the medieval *setsuwa* collection *Jikkishō* (A Miscellany of Ten Maxims), the idea for the work was actually Keishi's. SNKBZ 51: 296.

⁹⁴ The *Sanjūrokuninshū* (Collection by Thirty-six Poets, c. 1008) is one of several selections of outstanding poems (*shūkasen*) that Kintō edited. Fairly soon after the compilation of Kintō's work, the thirty-six poets became known as the "Thirty-six *waka* Immortals" (*sanjūrokkasen* 三十六歌仙).

TABLE 2-5

Women hosts of poetry contests (887-958)⁹⁵

-
- (2) *Chujō miyasudokoro utaawase* (? , Chūjo consort)
 (5) *Kanpyō ontoki kisai no miya utaawase* (893, Hanshi, 833-900)
 (6) *Kisai no miya Inshi utaawase* (896, Fujiwara Inshi, ?-896)
 (7) *Tōgū miyasudokoro Onshi kobako awase* (897, Fujiwara Onshi, 872-907)
 (22) *Teiji-in onna shichinomiya utaawase* (913, Princess Kaishi?, ?-953)
 (23) *Fujitsubo nyōgo senzai awase* (? , host unknown)
 (27) *Fujitsubo nyōgo utaawase* (919, host unknown)
 (28) *Kyōgoku miyasudokoro Hōshi utaawase* (921, Fujiwara Hōshi, no dates)
 (35) *Onna Yonomiya Kinshi naishinnō utaawase* (? , Princess Kinshi, 904-938)
 (36) *Ōmi no miyasudokoro Shūshi utaawase* (930, Minamoto Shūshi, ?-935)
 (42) *Yōzeiin Ichinomiya himegimi utaawase* (948, Prince Motoyoshi's daughter)
 (45) *Reikeiden no nyōgo Sōshi* (956, Fujiwara Sōshi, 930-1008)
 (46) *Saigū nyōgo Kishi joō utaawase* (956, Fujiwara Kishi, 929-985)
 (47) *Sen'yōden miyasudokoro Hōshi nadeshiko awase* (956, Fujiwara Hōshi, ?-967)
 (51) *Aki dairi senzai awase* (957, Fujiwara Anshi)
 (52) *Chūgū utaawase* (958, Fujiwara Anshi)
-

Some *waka* historians deny that the names of these women in the titles should be given too much importance. Commenting on several important events in his monumental edition of Heian-time poetry contests *Heianchō utaawase taisei*, Hagitani Boku repeatedly notes that despite the names of women in their titles, these events were probably hosted by men, with women serving as mere figureheads.⁹⁶ Rarely, however, do these claims have any basis in fact, and simply reflect a presumption of a greater interest in these competitions in men compared to women. In fact, there is evidence that suggests that the opposite might have been true, that is, that even events that were nominally sponsored or hosted by men, might have been in fact sponsored or at least conceived by women. The prestigious *Tentoku yo'nen dairi uta-awase*, for example, easily the

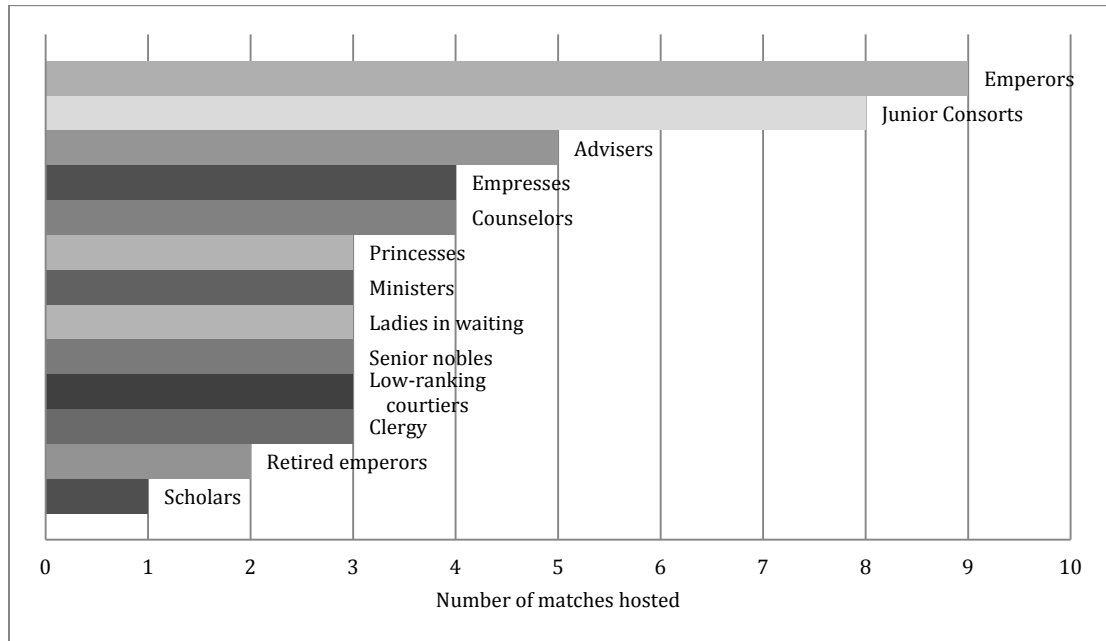
⁹⁵ The numbers in brackets refer to the numbers in *Heianchō utaawase taisei*.

⁹⁶ See the commentary to *utaawase* nos. 5, 9, and 42; HUT 1: 73, 103, and 285.

grandest of all tenth-century poetry contests, was by emperor Murakami's own admission held to comply with a request from some unnamed palace ladies.⁹⁷

FIGURE 2-6

Uta-awase hosts by category (946-995)⁹⁸



It is tempting to see the Tentoku 4 contest not as the exception, but as rule in the staging of this kind of events: the event was formally hosted by Murakami, but the initial idea was of some women in his entourage. The story in the *Jikkinshō* that attributes the idea of producing the first *kana* version of the *Man'yōshū* to consort Keishi is another example of such "from-behind-the-scenes" sponsorship: the formal command was issued Murakami, but nothing prevents us from thinking that he might have been acting on behalf of one of his wives. Far from being mere figureheads, therefore, elite women might well have been the primary sponsors of this type of

⁹⁷ Taniyama Shigeru, "Utaawase ni okeru josei," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* Vol. 4 (May 1959), 13.

⁹⁸ The chart is based on data in Hagitani Boku ed., HUT 10: 2940.

competitions, although because of their inability to act independently, they always had to rely on the support of their male relations.

Women had much to gain from their involvement in these events. As large-scale court spectacles, poetry contests provided a much-needed dose of excitement to the largely confined life of a palace lady. The elaborate preparations they required, moreover, in such areas as costume preparation, designing miniature landscapes (*suhamas*), and perfume mixing, gave these highly educated women an opportunity to exercise their many talents. Finally, *uta-awase* might have had an important "political" function. Rose Bundy notes that with several empresses, junior consorts, and concubines residing there at the same time, the rear court (*kōkyū*) was a site of fierce rivalry.⁹⁹ Consorts and concubines vied to attract the emperor's attention, which would have meant glory and prosperity for themselves and their entire families. Poetry contests might have played a role in these dealings by providing consorts and concubines with a means to assert their position within the imperial harem and "attract and sustain imperial interest." The emperor, by contrast, might have used them to "acknowledge their status while balancing their and their male relatives' importance in his court."¹⁰⁰

The *waka* Public

Royals and top-ranking nobles who commissioned poems to the specialists were only a small fraction of the much larger crowd of people who at this historical stage understood and appreciated *waka* poems. This group of people, which I have labeled collectively "the *waka*

⁹⁹ Rose Bundy, "Court Women in Poetry Contests: The Tentoku Yonen Dairi Utaawase (Poetry Contest Held at Court in 960)," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 33 (2007), 34, 42.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

Public,” contributed to the success of *waka* by providing plenty of two ingredients without which no art can thrive: interest and attention. There is a passage in the late eleventh-century chronicle *Ōkagami* that perfectly describes the key role that audiences play in the life of any cultural form: “Any activity is worth pursuit if there is someone capable of recognizing excellence; there is no point if there isn’t.”¹⁰¹ It would be difficult to come up with a better definition of the role that audiences play in cultural activity; the audience provides the fertile environment that creativity needs to thrive; take that environment away and there would be no cultural activity to speak of.

To this day there has been no serious attempt to develop a general theory of the *waka* Public. One reason is that the Public, with a capital P, is an abstraction, something that we as critics create by lumping together a myriad of individual cases and situations. *Waka* scholars, by contrast, have always been more comfortable working with concrete objects, be that works, authors, events. To borrow the words of the American musicologist Virgil Thompson, the Public is “a hydra-headed monster [...] which doesn’t exist save as a statistical concept.”¹⁰²

A second reason is the lack of a term capable of capturing all the different forms and fashions that *waka* reception in mid-Heian times took. As Elaine Fantham notes in a her study of Roman literary culture, all the terms currently in use in literary scholarship to designate the recipients of literary activity (e.g. public, audience, readership) have connotations that do not necessarily fit the specifics of cultural reception in antiquity:

No single word for the recipients of literature is without its limitations.

¹⁰¹ 「何事も、聞き知り見分く人のあるはかひあり、なきはいと口惜しきわざなり」. *Ōkagami*, NKBZ 20: 396; McCullough, *The Great Mirror*, 227. The remark is made in reference to music, but it applies to all arts.

¹⁰² Quoted in Bernard Rosenberg and Norris Fliegel, “The Artist and His Publics: The Ambiguity of Success,” in *The Sociology of Art and Literature*, ed. Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett, and Mason Griff (London: Duckworth, 1970), 500.

Audience implies listening or watching without access to a text, so that the experience is single and linear, without possibility of review; readership implies access only through a text; and a public implies distribution to a wide group outside the circle of the poet or writer.¹⁰³

The limitations of these terms are apparent in *waka*'s case. Although poems were often performed "live" in front of a real life audience, just as often they were accessed through texts, either individually (as in letters, for instance), or as part of longer texts (poetry collections, poem-tales, etc.). Similarly, while some famous poems were known to a fairly large number of people, there were just as many that were known only to a very small number of people, sometimes as small as the single person to which they were addressed. Which term should someone wishing to refer to all of these different ways of accessing and consuming verse, all at the same time, use?

The situation is no more encouraging for Japanese-language terms. The terms *ukete* (addressee[s]) and *kyōjusha* (recipient[s]) refer to single individuals, or to two or many single individuals, not to the mass of people with an interest in poetry. In short, there is no Japanese-language equivalent for the English term 'public.'¹⁰⁴

A third obstacle to the emergence of an analytical category "the Public" is the fact that, as pointed out earlier, the confines between roles were fluid, with the same person often fulfilling different functions at different times or fulfilling more than one function at the same time. Because of this fluidity of functions, it may seem problematic to speak of any one person involved with poetry only or primarily as a recipient of verse.

¹⁰³ Elaine Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture: From Cicero to Apuleius* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ The term *ōdiensu* (audience) is not used in discussions of classical literature.

But no matter how elusive the concept and imprecise the terms that we use to label it, a notion of the Public is indispensable for a full and correct understanding of the tenth-century *waka* phenomenon, since without an even only vague notion of the Public—always there and ready to consume whatever poets created—one might forever continue to reduce poetic efflorescence to the initiative of some specially creative individuals, thus missing its eminently social, cooperative character. Granted that many poets composed poems because they enjoyed doing so or to give expression to their artistic sensibilities, a cultural phenomenon of the scale and complexity of the *waka* boom of the tenth-century would not have occurred without a strong demand for verse of this kind in contemporary society. In what remains of this chapter, therefore, I will attempt to sketch a first, admittedly provisional profile of the tenth-century *waka* Public, and to identify some of the areas that a study of the Public should cover.

Perhaps the first thing to say about the tenth-century *waka* Public is that it was, for the most part, a public of poets. Most of the people who appreciated *waka* at this time were also, more often than not, poets themselves. At least two things follow from this premise: first, the audience was capable of responding to what poets produced. Receiving a poem was often merely the first step of a sequence of poetic acts, which began with a poem by one person, and continued with one by the recipient, as in the *zōtōka*, or in the so-called *shōwa* 唱和 (poems made at group sessions attended by three or more poets).¹⁰⁵ Second, there was an unusually high level of competence among those who appreciated poetry.

Contemporary sources convey offer plenty of information on how contemporary audiences received and evaluated poems. The *Tosa nikki* (Tosa Diary, 935), Tsurayuki's account

¹⁰⁵ Miyata Masanobu has argued that linking (*tsukeai*) is the basic principle not only of *waka*, but of all traditional Japanese poetic genres including *renga* and haiku; *Tsukeai bungeishi no kenkyū* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 1997).

of his return journey to the capital from Tosa at the end of his mandate as governor, contains passages like the following:

The old man who led the ship made a poem to ease the painful memories of the previous month:

The wind keeps pushing forward the rising waves,
leaving one to wonder: Is it snow? is it blossoms?

As the passengers discussed the poem, one person who was listening also made one, but his poem contained thirty-seven syllables. Those present could not help but burst into laughter. The author did not take it well and reproached them bitterly.¹⁰⁶

In story no. 3 of the *Yamato monogatari*, the early century nobleman Minamoto no Kiyokage (884-950) replies to a poem by a woman known only as Toshiko. She is so impressed by his poem (*ito ni-naku medete*), that “she continued to talk about it for a long time afterwards.”¹⁰⁷

Another example comes from the *Tale of Genji*, a work that though fictional provides much insight on how poetry was consumed in daily life. In a scene in the Suetsumuhana chapter, an attendant brings in a letter from Genji's latest conquest, the Hitachi princess. Genji's response is brutal (I quote from Tyler's translation): "Good heavens, he groaned to himself, what an awful poem! This must be the best she can do on her own — I suppose Jijū is the scholar who usually retouches her poems and guides her brush!"¹⁰⁸

If Genji's reaction exemplifies the strongly negative reaction to a poem, the following passage from the *Makura no sōshi* describes the opposite scenario:

¹⁰⁶ NKBZ 9: 46.

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Yamato monogatari*, No. 3, NKBZ 8: 271-72.

¹⁰⁸ Tyler, trans. *The Tale of Genji*, (New York: Penguin, 1999), 127. Jijū is one of Suetsumuhana's attendants.

Things that bring joy:

[...]

To have a poem one composed for a special occasion or an exchange with another person become famous and being copied by people in their notebooks. I have never had the experience myself, but it must be wonderful.¹⁰⁹

It is only reasonable to suppose that poets took into account the probable reactions of their audience when they conceived and executed their works. If that is the case, then audiences not responded to what poets created, but actively contributed to shaping it.

A discussion of audience responses must at least mention poetry contests. These competitions (a mixture between a literary competition and a social pageant) elevated reception to the status of main act of the literary exchange, with poems serving as mere source material for their critical dissection. The first event for which written judgments are available is the *Engi jūsannen Teiji-in utaawase* 延喜十三年亭子院歌合 (Poetry Contest at the Teiji Palace, 913). These early judgments, however, are still very rudimentary (the records may be partial and incomplete), and hardly provide any insight on current tastes in poetic matters. The verdict for Round 4, for instance, reads: "In the poem by the Left the word *ramu* is used twice. In the poem by the Right, the word mountain is repeated. Thus, it was declared a draw."¹¹⁰ The first contest for which full records are available is the *Tentoku yo'nen dairi uta-awase* of 960. A close reading of the verdicts will be given in chapter five.

¹⁰⁹ *Makura no sōshi*, SNKBZ 18: 388.

¹¹⁰ NKBZ 7: 482. McCullough conjectures that the judges of early *uta-awase* might have deliberately restricted themselves to short, general comments to avoid causing tensions among the participants. McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 244.

One of the most best documents of the extraordinary interest in poetry that existed in Heian society is the *utagatari* 歌語 or “stories of poems.” *Utagatari* were brief narratives (sometimes as brief as one or two lines of prose) that explained and sometimes invented the circumstances of composition of a poem.¹¹¹ This body of narratives, which survive today in great quantity either in dedicated collections such as the *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*, 10th century) and *Tales of Yamato* (*Yamato monogatari*, c. 950) or in the form of “notes” (variously called *daishi*, *sachū*, or *kotobagaki* by Japanese scholars) in poetry collections, represents conclusive evidence that poetry in Heian times was not only something to make, but also something to savor, to comment upon, to tell others about.

The origins of the poem-stories have been traced at least as far back as the eighth-century *Man'yōshū*.¹¹² Many poems in the *Man'yōshū* are followed by lengthy notes in prose (known as *sachū* or “after-notes”) that explain the circumstances of their composition. As an example, one can take the famous “Asakayama” poem in Book XVI:

Mount $\frac{\text{Asaka}}{\text{shallow}}$ —

The mountain well is so shallow that one can see its reflection,
though my feelings for you are anything but shallow.

安積香山影さへ見ゆる山の井の
浅き心をわが思はなくに

(安積香山影副所見山井之 浅心乎吾念莫國)

Regarding the above poem it is said: “When Prince Katsuragi [Tachibana no Moroe, 684-757] was dispatched to the province of Mutsu, the current Governor

¹¹¹ The term *utagatari* was first introduced into Japanese-language scholarly parlance by Masuda Katsumi in his “Jōdai bungakushi kōan,” *Nihon bungakushi kenkyū* 4 (1949), n.p.

¹¹² See for instance, Itō Hiroshi, “Utagatari no sekai,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, 10, special issue (1962): 25-38.

was extremely lax in his welcome. The Prince was put off by his behavior and his anger clearly showed on his face. Although refreshments were served, he gave no sign of enjoying the banquet. At this point, there was a former palace woman who was schooled in the urban ways. She took a cup in her left hand, water in her right hand, and while stroking the prince's knee she recited the above poem. The Prince's good humor was instantly restored, and he enjoyed the banquet for the rest of the day." So it is said.¹¹³

As the example shows, the poem is followed by a good half page of prose that explains who composed it, when, and why.

It is in mid-Heian times, however, that the *utagatari* as a genre truly flourished.¹¹⁴ One reason for their popularity was the increasingly sedentary lifestyle led by the aristocracy after the move to a truly permanent capital. Now resolute city dwellers, Heian-time aristocrats spent inordinate amounts of time at home, in complete or near-complete idleness. This was especially true of elite women, whom societal norms forced to lead lives of semi-seclusion. With the endless hours of conversation they could inspire, poem-stories were the perfect antidote against the monotony of aristocratic life.

Following Takahashi Shōji, it is possible to distinguish two main types of poem-stories: stories that dealt with contemporary poems (*ima-uta*), and stories that dealt with poems of the recent or distant past (*furu-uta*).¹¹⁵ The former were interesting to their mid-Heian audience because they dealt with living figures, whom the audience would have often known personally. The latter satisfied a growing curiosity in aristocratic society for the people and events of the past.

¹¹³ *Man'yōshū*, XVI: 3807; SNKBZ 9: 120-3. The poem plays on the homophony between Asaka (the name of a mountain in Fukushima prefecture) and *asashi* (shallow). After-notes are particularly numerous in Book XVI, which can be seen as an early collection of poem-stories.

¹¹⁴ During the tenth-century period many collections of these stories were made, only a portion of which are extant. Some poetry collections edited around this time, moreover, bear remarkable similarities with poem-tales. The *Gosenshū*, for instance, is known for the length of its headnotes.

¹¹⁵ Takahashi Shōji, *Yamato monogatari* (Hanawa Shobō, 1962), 117.

A third type of stories were stories that took an existing poem by an identifiable historical figure and inserted it in a new, fictional setting. Although the earliest poem-stories no doubt were told in order to pass on information about actual people and events, it did not take long for imaginative individuals to realize that the material lent itself extremely well to creative manipulation. A good example of this type of story is episode 142 in the *Yamato monogatari*. The episode tells the story of an elder sister of a certain imperial consort who was skilled in many of the genteel arts, but supremely so in the art of the *uta*. Having lost her mother at a young age, the woman was raised by her step-mother, and, the narrator notes, “there were often times when things did not go quite as she wished.”¹¹⁶ It was at one such times that she composed:

This little while I wait for this mortal life to end:
I wish I did not have to spend it despairing over its many sorrows!¹¹⁷

ありはてぬ命待つまのほどばかり
憂きことしげく嘆かずもがな

Despite the skill with which the poem is woven into its new narrative setting, contemporary readers would have instantly recognized it as one by the famous poet Taira no Sadabun (d. 923).¹¹⁸ The poem is clearly attributed to Sadabun in the *Kokinshū* (XVIII: 965), and it also figures in one of the episodes of the *Tales of Heichū* (*Heichū monogatari*) which is thought to have been edited roughly at the same time as the *Yamato*. What the anonymous author of the *Yamato* story did, in other words, is take a famous poem by a well-known poet and insert it in a

¹¹⁶ NKBJ 8: 375.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Sadabun attained semi-legendary status in his life as a poet and a great lover. On Sadabun and the many legends that circulated about him, see Susan Downing Videen, *Tales of Heichū* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1989).

new fictional context.¹¹⁹ Thus, tenth-century audiences not only told stories about the poems they liked or disliked, but also used them as ingredients for new works, thus adding yet another item to the already rich palette of *waka*-related cultural practices.

Another sense in which audiences "used" poems is by citing them at appropriate times. Indeed, it is not an overstatement to say that "the ability to cite and recognize references to old poems was rated at least as highly as the ability to compose new poems."¹²⁰ Some of our best evidence on the social importance of citation comes from the *Makura no sōshi*. In section 101 of the Shin Nihon Bungaku Zenshū edition, Sei receives a plum bough from which all the flowers have fallen and is asked to comment on it. She responds by citing a verse by the prominent mid-tenth century poet and *kangaku* scholar Ōe no Koretoki (888-963) and her response prompts the following comment from the Emperor (Ichijō): "This is better than composing a good poem. That's a good answer" (*yoroshiki uta nado yomite idashitaramu yori wa, kakaru koto wa masaritarikashi*).¹²¹ In another section of the same work, Sei and her fellow ladies in waiting are ordered by the emperor to cite a famous poem of the past. Sei responds by quoting a famous poem by Fujiwara no Yoshifusa, but cleverly alters one line to turn it into an homage to the sovereign.¹²² For women especially, discussing old poems was not only a way to display their erudition, but a distraction from the boredom of palace life. The point is openly made in the Yomogiu (A Waste of Weeds) chapter of the *Tale of Genji*: "precisely because they are silly, old poems and tales (*furuuta, monogatari*) give respite from boredom and bring comfort to our

¹¹⁹ Another example is episode no. 155 which places a slightly altered version of the Asakayama poem quoted earlier in a completely different narrative setting. NKBZ 8: ?; Tahara, *Tales*, 108-9.

¹²⁰ Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 182.

¹²¹ SNKBZ 18: 208.

¹²² SNKBZ 18: ? Morris, 35-6.

lives.”¹²³ It goes without saying that citation as a social practice could have only thrived in a society where everyone was capable of recognizing and appreciating the references. As Edward Kamens notes about one of the many episodes of citation-recognition described in *Makura no sōshi*: "Takanobu could not have won such praise had his citation of the verse in question [...] not been readily recognized, not only by the gentleman in attendance but also by the women listening to them."¹²⁴

All these different practices confirm that there was no clear-cut boundary between reception and production. Rather, production and reception constantly faded into one another as stages of a continuous and self-perpetuating cycle.¹²⁵ Poems were certainly received and enjoyed by their audiences in and for themselves, but reception was often the basis for a variety of different creative acts.

The “active” nature of the Heian *waka* public is perhaps the main feature that differentiates it from the modern readers of these poems who are not also (save for a few exceptions) practitioners of the art. Mark Morris hinted at this difference between ancient and modern modes of reception in his stimulating 1986 article “Waka and Form, Waka and History”: "*waka* poets, too, generally studied and appreciated texts for their usefulness, not as static artifacts meant for contemplative delectation and comment. *waka* were useful things to know how to make."¹²⁶

¹²³ Quoted in Takahashi Shōji, *Yamato monogatari* (Hanawa Shobō, 1962), 123.

¹²⁴ Edward Kamens, "Terrains of Text in Mid-Heian Court Culture," in *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Michael Adolphson, Edward Kamens and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 131.

¹²⁵ Konishi, *History of Japanese Literature*, 2: 97.

¹²⁶ Mark Morris, "Waka and Form, Waka and History," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1986), 554.

Much like the poets, the public was not a homogeneous group. Recipients differed widely in rank, gender, and social relationship to the poet. Taking a cue from Japanese scholars, it is possible to distinguish two basic types of audiences: formal (*hare*) and informal (*ke*). The terms formal and informal are usually applied to the context of composition of a poem (its *ba* in Japanese scholarly parlance), but given the different social relationship between poet and recipient(s) that these different types of setting prescribed, they can be applied equally fruitfully to the audience of poetry. The formal audience had usually two main characteristics: it was usually a group audience, and it consisted primarily of persons of higher social status than the poet.

The nature of the audience affected the work of the poet in important ways. A formal audience required poets to comply with much higher standards of decorum than an informal one, in terms of both diction and theme. Formal contexts also usually required poets to avoid addressing private concerns in a poem. McCullough notes: "Impassioned allusions to private concerns were violations of the rule of taste, out of place at banquets, poetry contests, and other events staged for the enjoyment of the aristocracy."¹²⁷ Kuboki Tetsuo also mentions that the formal audience obliged poets to be clear and intelligible. If in a poem destined to a friend or a lover one could count on the reader's knowledge of the situation and on her ability to decode all sorts of obscure references and ambiguous expressions, a poem destined to be recited before a formal audience had to be readily intelligible, or it would fail to make an impression.¹²⁸

Another question that a study of the *waka* audience can try to answer is whether there was an audience for *waka* outside the court. The question will probably never be answered to a

¹²⁷ McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 8.

¹²⁸ Kuboki Tetsuo, "'Ori' to ke to hare," in *Ōchō waka to shi-teki tenkai*, ed. Higuchi Yoshimaro (Kasama Shoin, 1997), 172.

truly satisfactory degree since all of our sources were produced by the court and rarely pay attention to what happened outside the court. There are, however, some tantalizing clues.

Perhaps the most notable of these is the handful of poems that have been found scribbled on the roof boards of the pagoda of the Daigoji temple in Kyoto. The poems were discovered in 1956 during restoration work on the building.¹²⁹ The pagoda was built between 930 and 951 and the inscriptions are thought to date from that period. Of the six total poems found, two have been firmly identified: one in a slightly altered version of a poem in the *Shūiwakashū* (Collection of Gleanings of *waka*, c. 1006-7); the other is a poem by Lady Ise that appears in her private poetry collection.¹³⁰ What makes these poems so interesting is that they are written in a rather incoherent mixture of *katakana*, phonographs, highly cursivized letters, and hiragana letters, suggesting that the writer "was someone with only limited literacy," probably a workman engaged in the construction of the building.¹³¹ Christopher Seeley notes: "Though only short, and roughly executed, these poems suggest that by the mid tenth century *katakana*-type script signs were no longer confined in use exclusively to scholarly texts, but had been adopted by at least some persons of very limited education as a simple means of writing Japanese."¹³² If Seeley is right, then the Daigoji scribblings are evidence that some members of the general populace with only limited literacy knew poems made by famous court poets.

¹²⁹ A detailed discussion of the poems with photographic replicas can be found in Itō Takuji, "Daigoji gojūnotō tenjōita no rakugaki," *Bijutsushi*, no. 24 (1957): 1-18.

¹³⁰ Itō, "Daigoji gojūnotō tenjōita no rakugaki," 6, 13.

¹³¹ Komatsu Shigemi, "Kohitsugaku no hōga to sono suishin-hatten," in *Kohitsugaku no ayumi*, ed. Kohitsugaku Kenkyūjo (Yagi Shoten, 1995), 334.

¹³² Christopher Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 70.

One final aspect of reception that can be mentioned is that it became increasingly mediated by texts, owing to the increased availability of written *waka* works around this time. Although the earliest attempts to write down *waka* date from the remotest antiquity, and were probably contemporaneous with the diffusion of writing in Japan,¹³³ it is only by the middle of the tenth century that one can truly speak of widespread availability of *waka* texts. A key factor in this process was, of course, the invention in the course of the ninth century of the *kana* syllabary, which made writing and reading *waka* much simpler and intuitive than it had previously been, and rapidly established itself as the preferred method to write down *waka*.¹³⁴

Under the umbrella-term "waka texts," one can group a broad range of works in different genres and formats, including poetry collections (*kashū*, both official and personal), poem-tales (*uta-monogatari*), records of poetry contests (*uta-awase*), diaries that featured prominently poems (*uta-nikki*), compendia of poetic words (*utamakura*), and manuals of composition (*zuinō*). Although for many of these works it is impossible to come up with exact dates of completion, it is widely thought that they existed in great quantity by the second half of the tenth century.¹³⁵

Perhaps most representative of the boom of *waka* texts in the tenth century is the thriving of the *shikashū* or personal poetry collections.¹³⁶ Although references to collections by various

¹³³ Findings of *waka* poems inscribed on *mokkan* (wooden tablets) and pottery dating from the seventh century suggest that *waka* was no longer an exclusively oral genre as early as the seventh century. On early *waka* inscriptions, see Inukai Takashi, *Mokkan kara saguru waka no kigen* (Kasama Shoin, 2008), especially pp. 93-114.

¹³⁴ On the development of the *kana*, see Tsukishima Hiroshi, *Kana* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1981).

¹³⁵ Ueno Osamu, *Goshūishū zengo* (Kasama Shoin, 1976), 57-8; Matsumoto Manami, "Shikashū hensan no kyūsō to Shūishū," *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō*, vol. 72, no. 3 (2007): 82-90.

¹³⁶ For a general introduction to *shikashū*, see Phillip T. Harries, "Personal Poetry Collections: Their Origins and Development through the Heian Period," *Monumenta Nipponica* 35.3 (1980): 299-317. For a fuller discussion, see Richard L. Peterson, "*Shikashū*: The Private Poetry Collection as a Context for *Waka* Study" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994). Standard

individual poets in the *Man'yōshū* show that collections of this kind were being compiled as early as the Nara period and perhaps even earlier, none of these early works is extant.¹³⁷ Moreover, we know of no such collection having been compiled in the one hundred or so years between the completion of the *Man'yōshū* around 770 and the final years of the ninth century. Perhaps *waka* poets simply stopped putting together collections of their work due to the craze for Chinese poetry that swept the court between the late eighth and the mid-ninth century. More likely, however, as Andrew Pekarik has noted about *waka* collections in general, personal poetry collections did continue to be made, but they were not preserved, nor were they mentioned in official writing due to the low prestige of *waka* at the time.¹³⁸

Whatever the cause of their temporary disappearance, *shikashū* suddenly returned to the forefront of the literary scene in the final years of the ninth century. The very first of this second wave of *shikashū* is the *Chisato-shū* by Ōe no Chisato (894). Other early examples include a no-longer-extant collection of Ki no Arimoto's poems commissioned by Prince Koretaka (844-897),¹³⁹ and the personal collections that emperor Daigo commissioned to the four *Kokinshū* compilers as part of the process of compiling the anthology. These early-century *shikashū* were

references in Japanese include Sekine Yoshiko, *Chūko shikashū no kenkyū* (Kazama Shobō, 1967), and Shimada Ryōji, *Heian zenki shikashū no kenkyū* (Ōfūsha, 1968).

¹³⁷ The four collections mentioned in the *Man'yōshū* are the 'Kasa no Asomi Kanamura kashū,' the 'Kakinomoto no Asomi Hitomaro kashū,' the 'Tanabe no Sakimaro kashū,' and the 'Takahashi no Muraji Mushimaro kashū.'

¹³⁸ Pekarik, *Poetics*, 114. Pekarik's point can be extended to *kana* writings in general. Tsukishima Hiroshi notes that although the *hiragana* was probably a fully developed system by the second half of the ninth century, no works dating from this period survive. The only possible explanation is that works in *kana* were indeed written, but they were not preserved due to the low prestige of the script at the time. See, Tsukishima, *Kana*, *Nihongo no sekai* vol. 5 (Chūō Kōronsha, 1981), 152-5.

¹³⁹ See the headnote to poem no. 854; NKBZ 7: 325.

all edited by the poets themselves, at the command of emperors. As compiling such collections became common, however, the motives for editing them became varied. Some collections were edited by the poets themselves, while others were edited by someone other than the poet (a close relative for example). Then in the second half of the century there was a small flood of posthumous collections by famous poets of the past that were created by taking the poems from various sources. The personal poetry collections of Ono no Komachi, Narihira, Ki no Tomonori, Fujiwara no Okikaze, Sosei, among others, are thought to have been produced in this way.¹⁴⁰

By the mid-tenth century personal editing poetry collections had become so common that not having one was perceived as a flaw. Yamaguchi Hiroshi has argued that several poetry collections edited by or for senior Fujiwara figures between the middle and the late tenth century were edited so that these men would not be outdone by others who already possessed such works.¹⁴¹

What kind of circulation these texts had is difficult to say with certainty. Given the high cost of paper and the time and effort necessary to produce quality copies, it is safe to assume that only the most affluent sector of aristocratic society could get hold of them with ease.¹⁴² In her diary, *Genji monogatari* author Murasaki Shikibu mentions a gift of several poetry collections that Michinaga (966-1028) gave to his daughter Shōshi (988-1074) in occasion of the birth of her

¹⁴⁰ Matsumoto Manami, "Shikashū hensan no kyūsō to Shūishū," *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō*, vol. 72, no. 3 (2007), 86; Petersen, "Shikashū," 199-200.

¹⁴¹ Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadan-shi no kenkyū (Murakami, Reizei, En'yū-chō hen)*, 105.

¹⁴² The cost of paper and the various methods that were used to get around it are discussed in Aileen Gatten, "Fact, Fiction, and Heian Epistolary Prose. Epistolary Narration in Tonomine Shosho Monogatari." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 1998), 162-164.

first son Atsuhira (1008-1036), the future Emperor Go-Ichijō.¹⁴³ That a set of these works was considered a suitable gift for the birth of a future emperor suggests how precious they were considered to be. The entry also makes a distinction between the copies of imperial collections authored by well-known calligraphers (Fujiwara no Yukinari, the priest Enkan), and the copies of personal poetry collections inscribed by unknown scribes and intended “for more everyday reading.”¹⁴⁴ This suggests that different standards of quality might have existed, depending on the use to which the text was destined.

Borrowing must have been common. The late tenth-century *Egyō-shū* 惠慶集 (Egyō Collection) contains a series of poems that the poet Egyō (fl. late 10th century) and other fellow poets composed to celebrate the restitution of one scroll of Tsurayuki’s personal poetry collection to his proprietor, Tsurayuki’s son Tokibumi.¹⁴⁵ Although this was a special event held to commemorate a dead predecessor, it does show that collections by individual poets circulated among poets and poetry enthusiasts.

The key question is, of course, if and how this unprecedented availability of texts and the consequent transition of *waka* from a still predominantly oral genre to a fully hybrid oral-written one affected the ways in which poetry was experienced and consumed. One does not need to think very hard to realize that the effects must have been numerous and profound. To begin with, texts made poems permanent, more permanent than memorization alone could have ever hoped to make them. The possibility of accurately recording and transmitting poems in turn

¹⁴³ Richard Bowring, trans., *The Diary of Lady Murasaki* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 37. The set comprised complete copies of the first three imperial *waka* anthologies (the *Kokinshū*, the *Gosenshū*, and the *Shūishū*), plus copies of the personal collections of Kiyohara no Motosuke and Ōnakatomi no Yoshinobu and other unnamed works.

¹⁴⁴ See, Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 95.

¹⁴⁵ *Egyōshū*, No. 149; ST I: 488.

transformed attitudes toward works and their authors. As I will argue in the following chapter, the turn of the century saw a dramatic increase of interest in the work of specific poets; this would have been unthinkable without the possibility of recording a poet's work accurately and permanently.¹⁴⁶ Texts also allowed to access poems in bulk, thus contributing to shifting interest away from the individual poems toward the ways in which they could be combined to form longer sequences. Texts were transportable, which means that they could travel to places far away from where the poems had been originally composed to reach new audiences. Readers of Heian literature will be familiar with the opening passage of the *Sarashina nikki* (Sarashina Diary, 11th century) in which the author describes how simply hearing about tales (*monogatari*) filled her with a burning desire to read more of them.¹⁴⁷ It is not too much of a stretch to presume that *waka* collections must have exerted a similar effect on their readers outside the capital. Finally, texts were important for education, as they could be used as copybooks by learners.

These pages obviously do not exhaust all the different aspects of a vast and complex topic such as *waka* reception in the tenth century. My primary purpose here has been to assert that there was a public for poetry and that we need to study it with the same attention that is usually paid to poets. I then discussed some of the areas that a study of the public could or should cover. To return to my initial point that the thriving of *waka* was the result of the cooperative interaction between various groups: a cultural phenomenon of this scale and intensity would not have occurred without a body of ideas and beliefs to motivate it and sustain it. So many would

¹⁴⁶ Orality can only produce a very loose attitude toward works and their authors. Works are perceived as open and always in flux and the notion of authorship, if it exists at all, can only be extremely vague. By allowing to record accurately both the work and the name of its author, writing endows both works and authors with permanence and, therefore, value.

¹⁴⁷ NKBZ 18: 283.

have not wanted to become involved with *waka* had it not been desirable or even necessary to do so. Attitudes toward *waka* and the *waka* poet are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

IDEAS ABOUT POETRY AND POETS IN TENTH-CENTURY COURT SOCIETY

Public esteem is the nurse of the arts and all men are fired to application by fame whilst those pursuits which meet with general disapproval always lie neglected.
—Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*

The previous two chapters have presented an account of tenth-century *waka* in terms of the three main groups that contributed to it. Now, a cultural phenomenon of this scale and complexity would not have occurred without powerful social and cultural incentives to motivate it and sustain it. As Pierre Bourdieu and others have shown, literary activity rests on a complex web of assumptions, beliefs, and values.¹ Desirable views of art and the artist are what makes people want to become involved in art and fuel the demand for art in the public. These ideas are not fixed and immutable, but develop at specific historical junctures, often as a result of larger political, economic, and social changes.² An important task for the *waka* historian wishing to offer an account of the tenth-century *waka* phenomenon, therefore, is to detail the ideological conditions for its occurrence.

The turn of the tenth century was a time of huge transformations in the ideological

¹ In particular, Bourdieu identifies the belief in the value of art and what he calls “the ideology of the charismatic author” as the two main ideological pillars on which the literary field stands. See, Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 167-73, 285-312; Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 74-8, 254-66.

² The classic study of the impact of social and economic changes on understandings of art and literature is Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

landscape around *waka*. In a matter of a few decades, much of the stigma that had surrounded the form in earlier times dissolved, and a number of new, positive ideas made their way into aristocratic society. First to go was the idea that *waka* was a frivolous art unsuited to public contexts. This view was gradually supplanted by a view of *waka* as a serious pursuit and one worthy dedicating one's life to. At the same time, new images of the *waka* poet appeared, providing poets with positive role models to imitate. The result of this process of cultural change was a new, highly positive intellectual climate around *waka* and its practitioners. This chapter will discuss some of the most important of these developments.

Toward autonomy

The entry dated 28.5.Gangyō 4 (880) of the *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 (True Records of Three Japanese Reigns, 901) deals with the death of Ariwara no Narihira 有原業平 (824-880), the legendary protagonist of the *Tales of Ise*:

28th day. Yin Metal Snake. The Middle Captain of the Palace Guard of the Right, the Supranumerary Deputy Governor of Mino, Lord Ariwara no Narihira of the Junior Fourth Upper Rank, died. Narihira was the fifth son of the late Prince Abo, of the Fourth Imperial Grade, and the younger brother of Middle Counsellor Yukihiro, of the Senior Third Rank. [...] Narihira was handsome in face and figure, but was devoid of self-restraint. He was ignorant of Chinese learning, but *he excelled at making Japanese poems*.³

廿八日辛巳、從四位上行右近衛權中將兼美濃權守在原朝臣業平卒。業平者故四品阿保親王第五子、正三位行中納言行平之弟也。[...] 業平體貌閑麗、放縱不_レ拘、略無_二才學_一、善作_二倭歌_一。

The entry deserves attention not so much because it is only piece of official information on the

³ *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, Gangyō 4/5/28, SZKT 4: 475, emphasis added.

life of one of the most famous figures in Heian culture, but for what it reveals about how one sector of aristocratic society (the Confucian intelligentsia) viewed poetry and the poet at the turn of the tenth century.⁴ The reference to Narihira's ability as a *waka* poet clearly shows that court society had already developed the necessary sensibility to recognize talent in *waka*. At the same time, it is clear from the passage that such recognition did not bring with it any particular respect or admiration to the poet. The praise for Narihira's skill as a *waka* poet figures within a highly unsympathetic review of his flaws as a court official: he is described as wanting in *saigaku* (Chinese learning) and utterly devoid of self-restraint, perhaps two of the worst defects that a society raised on Confucian doctrine could impute to a person. Through parallelism, the paragraph establishes a clear hierarchy of activities, with politics and knowledge of Chinese at the top, and *waka* and physical comeliness at the bottom. In fact, if one takes into account the orthodox Confucian standpoint from which the authors of the *Jitsuroku* were writing, even seemingly approving remarks like "he excelled at making *waka*" and "he was handsome" sound more like further attacks on Narihira, than as a sincere homage to some his virtues.⁵

How much a society values skill in any activity depends largely on how valuable that activity is considered to be. Narihira lived most of his life during what modern Japanese literary historians have somewhat emphatically dubbed the "dark age of poetry in Japanese" (*kokufū ankoku jidai*). This was a period of about one hundred years between the completion of the

⁴ The *Sandai Jitsuroku* was compiled by a pool of top-ranking court officials that included Minamoto no Yoshiari, Sugawara no Michizane, Fujiwara no Tokihira, and Ōkura no Yoshiyuki. All were graduates of the imperial university and all were well schooled in Confucian doctrine.

⁵ My reading of the passage follows Watanabe Hideo, "Narihira denki kai hoketsu: Kokushi kōsotsu denki no kijutsu," *Nihon Bungaku*, Vol. 24, No. 5 (May 1975), 106. For a considerably different interpretation of the passage, see Helen McCullough, introduction to *Tales of Ise* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 44.

Manyōshū around 770 and the final decades of the ninth century during which *waka* and other "native" cultural forms were completely obscured in terms of both prestige and popularity by their continental counterparts. Although written at the turn of the tenth century, the obituary of the *Jitsuroku* can be said to be an expression of this period, a period when making *waka* was not considered a serious pursuit and even the best *waka* poets struggled to be taken seriously.

When Narihira died in Gangyō 4 (880), however, the so-called "dark age" was heading to a close, and a new view of *waka* was beginning to make its way into aristocratic society. This new view of *waka* can be found, unsurprisingly, in the two prefaces to the *Kokinshū*, the first official *waka* anthology. These texts were written with the specific purpose of correcting the unflattering views emerged in earlier periods and of providing the native verse-form with a new public image more suited to the new phase of generalized favor at court. Here readers can find not one but a whole series of reasons why *waka* deserved to be taken seriously. One reads, for instance, that *waka* had a long history stretching all the way back to the age of the Gods and continuing to the present;⁶ that it had the power to "move heaven and earth, soothe the heart of fierce warriors, and bring harmony between husbands and wives;"⁷ and that it possessed a repertoire of styles and techniques to rival that of Chinese poetry.⁸ But perhaps most striking of all the theses that the authors advance in order to affirm the dignity of the *waka* is the claim that making *waka* could grant a person something that no other activity, not even politics, could:

The world in general cares only for material prosperity; it takes no interest in *waka*. What a pity! Even if a man combines the offices of Minister of State and

⁶ NKBZ 7: 49.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 51.

Major Captain and amasses inordinate stores of money, his name will disappear from society before his bones rot in the earth. The people whose names happen to be known to later generations are all poets of *waka*, because the language of poetry enters the human ear easily and the spirit of poetry reaches the gods themselves.⁹

俗人争事_上、不_レ用_レ詠_上和歌_上。悲哉々々。雖_下貴兼_上相将_上、富余_中金錢_上、而骨未_レ腐_上於土中_上、名先滅_上於世上_上。適為_上被_レ知後世_上、唯和歌之人已。何者、語近_上人耳_上、義慣_上神明_上也。

It is a radical assertion, which completely overturns the hierarchy of activities that subsumes Narihira's obituary in the *Jitsuroku*: here traditionally important activities such as politics and the accumulation of wealth are belittled as transient pursuits, while making *waka* is celebrated as the sole activity capable of granting a person lasting fame.

The idea was not a new one. The passage traces almost verbatim the opening passage of Cao Pi's pioneering "Lun wen" 論文 (Essay on Literature),¹⁰ an early third-century Chinese text that has been described as "the earliest attempt in China to put literature on a pedestal."¹¹ The "Lun wen" was well known at the Japanese court, not least because it featured in the *Wenxuan* 文選 (J. *Monzen*, Literary Selections), a widely read sixth-century anthology of Chinese writing that was used as a textbook in courses on Chinese composition at the state university. It is also cited in the preface of the *Keikokushū* 経国集 (Collection for Governing

⁹ NKBZ 7: 418. The translation is by McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 316.

¹⁰ McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 316.

¹¹ John Minford and Joseph Lau, *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 628. The "Lun Wen" is a chapter from the *Lun dian* 論典 (J. *Ron ten*, Authoritative Essays), a no longer extant work which gave the author's views on a wide range of subjects. There are several English translations available: Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1992), 57-72; Siu-Kit Wong, *Early Chinese Literary Criticism* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1983), 19-22.

the Realm, 827), one of the three *kanshi* anthologies compiled by imperial command at the beginning of the ninth century. Needless to say, Cao Pi did not have in mind the Japanese *waka* when he wrote of the power of letters to grant immortality. The idea, however, could be easily transposed to a different cultural context, and the compilers had been quick to do so.

At the turn of the tenth century, therefore, a radically new view of *waka* made its way into aristocratic society: from a minor activity subordinated to many others and devoid of any real value, poetry-making came to be seen (by some at least) as an important pursuit, as important, and perhaps even more important than traditionally prestigious activities such as government and the accumulation of riches. Of special significance here was the identification of glory as a type of reward exclusive to poetic activity; this was an enormously significant development because it shows that some members of the *waka* world were beginning to see their art as what Pierre Bourdieu called “an autonomous literary field, independent of or even opposite to the economic field.”¹² There was now a new, distinctly literary type of success to aim for, which was unrelated to, or even opposite to, success in other spheres.

Literary greatness is explicitly presented as an alternative to political success in a *chōka* that *Kokinshū*-compiler Mibu no Tadamine presented to emperor Daigo sometime before 905, together with a collection of his poems:

*Kuretake no
yoyo no furukoto
nakariseba
Ikaho no numa no
ika ni shite
omou kokoro wo*

Were it not for
the ancient words
of bygone ages,
as numerous as bamboo leaves,
how would we express
the thoughts in our hearts,

¹² Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 162. Bourdieu famously describes the literary field as an inversion of the economic field. Success in one is often inversely proportional to one in the other. Writers actively seek genres that do not commercial rewards.

<i>nobaemashi</i> <i>aware mukashi e</i> <i>ariki chō</i> <i>Hitomaro koso wa</i> <i>ureshikere</i> <i>mi wa shimonagara</i> <i>koto no ha o</i> <i>amatsu sora made</i> <i>kikoeage</i> <i>matsu no yo made no</i> <i>ato to nashi</i>	as deep as the Ikaho Marsh? But lo, happy circumstance! Long ago, when it is said he lived, O Hitomaro, A blessing to men! Though a lowly man, his words resound in the wide skies above, and will serve as a model till the end of time [...] ¹³
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(呉竹の いかにして ありきてふ 言の葉を	よよの古言 思ふ心を 人麿こそは 天つ空まで	なかりせば 述べへまし うれしけれ 聞えあげ	いかほの沼の あはれ昔へ 身は下ながら 末の世までの あととなし)
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Hitomaro's rank may have been low, but his greatness as poet still made him a figure worth remembering and admiring by posterity.

The whole *Kokinshū*, for all its surface obsequiousness toward imperial authority, can be seen as an attempt to assert the autonomy of literature from political power. Although its status as a *chokusenshū* (imperial-commissioned anthology) formally placed it in the same category as the three *kanshi chokusenshū* compiled in the early-ninth century, the *Kokinshū* differed from these works in several important respects.¹⁴ Whereas in the *kanshi chokusenshū* the poems are ordered according to the rank and title of their authors—emperors first and low-ranking courtiers last—in the *Kokinshū* they are arranged thematically, with no regard for the rank of the authors.¹⁵

¹³ *Kokinshū*, XIX, 1003; NKBZ 7: 375.

¹⁴ The three *kanshi chokusenshū* are the *Ryōunshū* 凌雲集 (Collection Above the Clouds, 814), the *Bunka shūreishū* 文華秀麗集 (Collection of Masterpieces of Literary Flowers, 818), and the *Keikokushū* 経国集 (Collection for Governing the State, 827).

¹⁵ The classic study of the structure and arrangement of the imperial *waka* anthologies is Konishi Jin'ichi, "Association and Progression: Principles of Integration in Anthologies and

Whereas the *kanshi* anthologies feature mainly work by elite figures, starting with emperor Saga, an overwhelming majority of the poems in the *Kokinshū* is by poets of despairingly low rank.¹⁶ So, whereas the *kanshi* anthologies can be said to establish a connection between political power and literary talent (or at least, reputation) the *Kokinshū* stresses the difference between the two.

There is, of course, more than one way to interpret the compilers' decision to depart from the model of the *kanshi chokusenshū*. A skeptic might argue, for instance, that despite the great advances in terms of prestige and reputation made during the second half of the ninth century, *waka* was still not an art with which the elite would have wanted to be too closely associated. Or it could be argued that by adopting a different structure the compilers were simply stressing the differences between *waka* and *kanshi*. Even so, it is hard to ignore that an overwhelming majority of the poems in the first imperial *waka* anthology is by politically insignificant figures, and that emperors and other politically dominant figures hardly make an appearance in it. *Waka*, the *Kokinshū* seems to say, is a separate sphere in which hierarchies and values from the world of Power do not apply.

Enter the Great Poet

The redefinition of poetry-making as an autonomous sphere of activity with its own currency and values provided the basis for a complete redefinition of the image of the *waka* poet, since once literature is viewed as an autonomous sphere of activity with its own standards and values, it then becomes possible to evaluate the poet based solely on literary merit, regardless of

Sequences of Japanese Court Poetry, A.D. 900-1350," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 21 (Dec. 1958): 67-127.

¹⁶ The content of the *kanshi* anthologies is discussed in McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 22.

his or her achievements in other spheres. Narihira's skill as a *waka* poet fails to impress in the *Jitsuroku* because it is compared and contrasted to his equally considerable shortcomings as a court official, but what if failure and success in other spheres would no longer be relevant?

This new view of the *waka* poet can be found, once again, in the *Kokinshū* prefaces, two texts to which one must constantly return in order to understand the profound ideological changes that took place in the *waka* world at the turn of the tenth century. A few paragraphs before its paraphrase on the *Lun Wen*, the *kana* Preface offers the following, unabashedly celebratory portrayal of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. 680-700) and Yamabe no Akahito (700-736), two prominent late-seventh, early-eighth century poets:

As it was handed down from antiquity, *waka* became popular in the reign of the Nara Emperor. In this blessed epoch, his Majesty must have truly understood the essence of poetry. At this time, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, of the Senior Third Rank, was indeed the sage of poetry [*uta no hijiri*]. This was indeed what they call an age when ruler and subject are one. On autumn nights, the maple leaves floating on River Tatsuta looked like brocade to His Majesty's eyes; on spring mornings, the cherry blossoms on Mount Yoshino looked like clouds in Hitomaro's heart. Also at this time, there was a man called Yamabe no Akahito. He was supremely skilled in the *uta*. Indeed, it is hard to say who was the superior poet, Hitomaro or Akahito.¹⁷

古よりかく伝はるうちにも、ならの御時よりぞひろまりにける。かの御世や歌の心をしろしめしたりけむ。かの御時に、正三位柿本人麿なむ歌の聖なりける。これは、君も人も身をあはせたりといふなるべし。秋の夕、竜田河に流るる紅葉をば帝の御目に錦と見たまひ、春の朝、吉野の山の桜は人麿が心には雲かとのみなむおぼえける。又、山辺赤人といふ人ありけり。歌にあやしく妙なりけり。人麿は赤人の上に立たむことかたく、赤人は人麿が下に立たむことかたくなむありける。

As readers of the *Man'yōshū* will know, this is not the first tribute to Hitomaro and Akahito in history. Ōtomo no Yakamochi (718?-785) makes a similarly appreciative appraisal of their skills

¹⁷ *Kokinshū*, "Kana Preface," SNKBT 5: 11-12.

in a letter he sent to cousin and fellow poet Ikenushi in 747, which was later included in the *Man'yōshū*: “In my youth I did not study at the school of Kaki[nomoto no Hitomaro] and Yama[be no Akahito?], so now when I compose poems, words elude me, and I lose my way amidst the forest of words.”¹⁸ A wide gap, however, separates this early homage and others that might have followed it from the tribute in the Preface. Whereas for Yakamochi, Hitomaro is simply an exceptionally good poet, in the Preface he is hailed as the poetic saint of his time (*ka no ontoki [...] uta no hijiri*); his brilliance as a poet, in other words, has earned him a place in history.

The compilers' project is clear: having defined poetry-making as an autonomous field of activity with its own specific laws and values, they were in a position to introduce to the world the authority of this new field. The tribute to Hitomaro in the preface marks the beginning of a new history, a history in which the heroes were not kings or generals, but poets. If the official chronicles in Chinese celebrated the deeds of emperors, ministers, and generals, the new literary history would celebrate the achievements of the great poets.

Naming and celebrating the Great Poet, however, was not sufficient. Since no giant would be such in a world of giants, it was also necessary in order to credibly assert the idea of poetic greatness to introduce the great poet's *alter* ego, s/he who did not quite measure up to the Great Poet's sublime standards. It is in this sense that one can interpret the series of six brief critical sketches of six famous poets of the recent past that are placed immediately after the homage to Hitomaro in the Preface. Each of the six poets is said to possess a distinctive flaw:

¹⁸ *Man'yōshū*, Book XVII: 3969; SNKBZ 3: 182. It is unclear whether the character ‘Yama’ 山 in the passage refers to Akahito or to Yamanoue no Okura (660-733), another prominent *Man'yōshū* poet. For a detailed discussion, see Anne Commons, *Hitomaro: Poet as God* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 36-8.

Archbishop Henjō (816-890)'s poetry is said to have design (*sama*), but to be lacking in "truth" (*makoto*); Narihira's poetry had too much emotion (*kokoro amarite*) but too little formal sophistication (*kotoba tarazu*); Fun'ya Yasuhide [?-885?] is said to have been gifted with words (*kotoba takumi nite*), but to be lacking in overall conception (*sono sama mi ni owazu*); Monk Kisen's (no dates) diction is 'vague' (*kasuka ni shite*) and his poems lack a clear structure (*hajime owari tashika narazu*); Ono no Komachi's [fl. mid-9th century] poems are filled with pathos but they "lack strength" (*aware naru yō nite tsuyokarazu*); Kuronushi's style, finally, was too "coarse" (*iyashi*), "calling to mind a lumberjack with a load of firewood on his back who pauses to rest under the shade of a cherry tree in bloom."¹⁹ Each of the six poets, in other words, possessed a flaw that made it impossible to place them in the same category as Hitomaro and Akahito.²⁰

Thus, two complementary gestures (praise and criticism) are deployed in the Preface toward one end: to establish a mystique of the great *waka* poet as a literary giant worthy of the respect and admiration of society.

A new arena of social confrontation

It is important to stress at this point that the developments outlined above were not just theories, but theories that guided people's actions. "Once a vocabulary is created," Leo Braudy

¹⁹ "Kanajo," NKBZ 7: 57-9.

²⁰ It is more than a little ironic that soon after the compilation of the *Kokinshū* the six poets began to be revered as the 'Six Immortals of the *uta*' (*rokkasen* 六歌仙). This development was based on a serious misreading of the Preface, since it is clear from the way the example of the six poets is deployed here that for the compilers they did not deserve the title. They are brought up as examples of flawed poets, representative figures of an age of decline for *waka* that the editors were confident would end soon. See, for instance, Sayama Wataru, "Rokkasen no mondai," *Waka Bungaku Kenkyū* no. 1 (Mar. 1956).

writes in his history of fame in Western culture, "once a group of gestures is made, they can be reproduced and refined by others."²¹ What is truly significant about the tribute to Hitomaro discussed above is not so much that for the first time in history a *waka* poet was presented as a great man worthy of the admiration of society, but the fact that the gesture could be replicated, by others, and about other poets. The homage to Hitomaro made it possible for the members of Heian court society to view *waka* poets in those terms, and to aspire to be viewed in those terms by others.

Thus, the naming of the poetic saint in the *Kokinshū* Preface marked not only the beginning of a new type of history, but the opening of a new field of social competition. There was now a whole new type of success to be pursued, which joined ranks with those already available to the members of Heian court society (governmental career, religious career, academic success, etc.).

This new type of success did not appeal equally to all sectors of court society. The most excited by the idea—those who most eagerly desired it and labored to attain it—were obviously those courtiers whose probabilities of success in other spheres were low or nonexistent. These included low-ranking bureaucrats with little or no prospects of a brilliant career in the government, and women, whom prejudice prevented from having a governmental career at all. To these groups usually condemned to be “below” or “outside,” *waka* provided not only a means to vent one's frustration, as Kubota Utsubo suggested in an influential study from the 1930s, but an opportunity to rise above everybody else, if only in literary repute.²²

²¹ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 55.

²² Kubota, “Kokin wakashū gaisetsu,” in *Kokinwakashū hyōshaku*, Kubota Utsuho Zenshū, vol. 20 (Kadokawa Shoten, 1965), 27.

Tadamine's *chōka* quoted above can be considered representative of the views of the courtiers of low rank. They had few hopes of ever reaching significant positions in the bureaucracy, so glory as a poet represented an most attractive alternative.

The other category to which literary fame appealed with particular force was women. Heian society excluded women from many of the areas of activity open to men. *Waka* was an exception in that women were not only allowed to pursue it, but actively encouraged to do so from a young age. In other words, *waka* was one of the few areas of life in which a woman could make a name for herself and earn the respect of her peers.

There is a passage in Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi*, early 11th century) that can be considered a manifesto of female ambition as it applied to *waka*. The passage describes Sei's reply to her mistress Teishi (or Sadako, 977-1001) after she had angered her by refusing to compose a poem during an excursion to a nearby location:

I think I will stop composing poems for good. If every time you need someone to compose a poem on any topic, you call on me to do it I feel I cannot remain in your service. How can one who does not even know the right number of syllables compose a winter poem in the spring or a poem about the chrysanthemum when the plum tree is in bloom. Of course, it is flattering when a descendant of a famous poet makes a poem that surpasses everyone else's and people comment "of all the poems made on the occasion, this is the best. But that is no wonder considering who her father was..."²³

この歌、すべてよみはべらじとなむ思ひはべるものを。物のをりなど人のよみはべるにも、「よめ」など仰せられれば、え候ふまじき心ちなむしはべる。いかでかは、文字の数しらず、春は冬の歌をよみ、梅のをりは菊などよむ事侍らむ。されど、歌よむと言はれはべりし末々は、すこし人にまさりて、「そのをりの歌は、これこそありけれ。さは言へど、それが子なれば、など言はれたらむこそ、かひある心ちしてはべらめ。

²³ NKZ 11: 227. Sei Shōnagon's father Kiyohara no Motosuke was a famous poet.

If one gets past the ritual display of modesty, one can see the pride that being recognized as a superior poet could generate in a Heian court lady.

To say that there was now a new kind of success to aspire to is not to say that the traditional types of success ceased to appeal. An ample sector of aristocratic society did not suddenly grow willing to trade their success in the bureaucracy with relative economic benefits for recognition as poets. On the contrary, as argued in chapter one, many poets did not hesitate to use poetry to solicit appointments and promotions from their superiors. What literary success provided, however, was an alternative, a sense of intellectual superiority that could balance in the eyes of those who possessed it a second-rate career in the government, or a life of forced idleness.

Views of the Poet and Changes in the Poetic Market

The great poet named and celebrated in the *Kokinshū* was not simply the invention of a few poets hungry for greater recognition. The significant changes in the poetic "market" between the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth, specifically the resurgence of elite patronage, created the conditions—indeed made almost inevitable—the appearance of this new figure.

It is often said that the elite uses art as a symbol and justification of its power. But for it to fulfill this purpose, art made for the elite must be of superior quality, so as to match the stature and magnificence of its sponsors. When beginning in the second half of the ninth century Japanese emperors and other elite figures began once more to support the native *waka*, one of their primary concerns was to ensure that the poetry made under their tutelage would be of exceptional quality. The one way they had to ensure this was to commission poems only to poets whom they considered exceptional, and this is exactly how they chose to proceed.

An imperial outing dating from 898 will serve to illustrate the point. In the tenth month of 898, the recently retired emperor Uda left the capital for a twelve-day royal hunt through the provinces of Yamato, Kawachi, and Settsu. On that occasion, he ordered Sosei (?-910?), son of the renowned poet Henjō and a highly regarded poet himself, to accompany him on the journey. Sosei's mission, as we know from a record of the event included in the late-twelfth century *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (Abridged Chronicle of Japan), was to “compose poems to soothe the heart during travel.”²⁴ The same account also states that Sosei was chosen because Uda considered him a “master of *waka*” (*waka no meishi* 和歌ノ名士).²⁵

Although we do not always know why a certain poet was chosen for a certain event, it is safe to assume that in most cases the elite figures who commissioned poems from *waka* poets reasoned in ways similar to Uda's: in order to ensure the quality of the poems made under their tutelage, the patrons personally selected to compose only the poets whom they regarded as the very best.

This concern for quality in the elite is clearly visible in the two new practices that flourished at court as a result of the return of elite patronage, namely, the imperial *waka* anthology (*chokusenshū*) and poetry contests (*uta-awase*). Despite obvious differences between the two, both practices were essentially methods to identify the best poetry: in the poetry anthology, a pool of editors sifted through the poetic production of several decades and selected for inclusion only work that met the highest standards of quality and decorum; in the poetry contest, a judge was called to compare pairs of poems on the same topic and identify a winner.

²⁴ *Fusō Ryakki*, XXIII, SZKT 12: 384. 「勅曰。良禪師者。和歌之名士也。宣為首唱以慰旅懷」。

²⁵ *Ibid.*

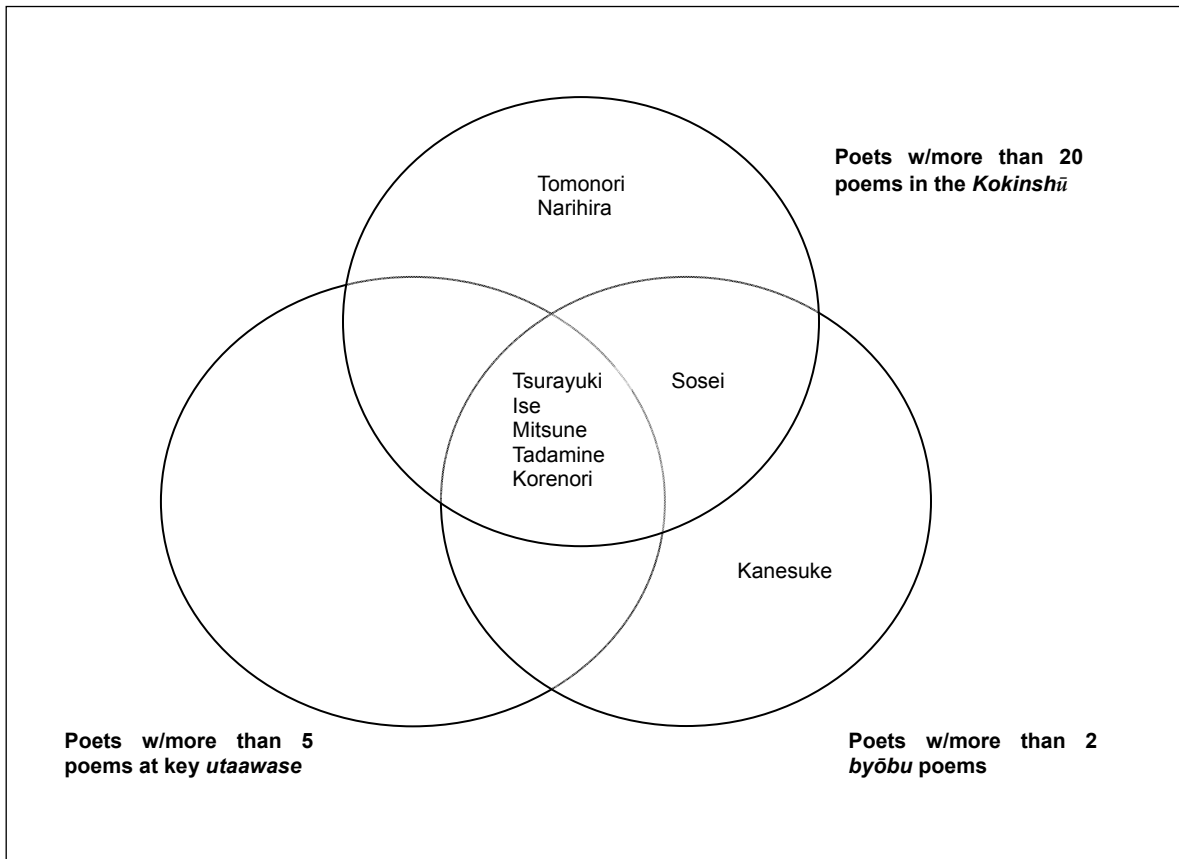
Both practices, therefore, express a concern for the unique and the exceptional that can be connected to the need for artwork of exceptional quality in the elite figures who sponsored them.

The inevitable consequence of this tendency among elite patrons to rely only on selected poets was that gradually a handful of particularly highly regarded poets ended up monopolizing composition in all types of patron-sponsored composition. Figure 3-1 below illustrates this phenomenon with reference to the years 905-930: the three circles represent activity in the three main types of patron-sponsored poetry-making, specifically the number of *byōbu* poems made, the number of poems made at key poetry contests, and the number of poems selected for inclusion in the *Kokinshū*. As the figure shows, five poets (Tsurayuki, Ise, Mitsune, Tadamine, and Korenori) attained prominence in all three types; one, the aforementioned Sosei, distinguished himself in both the *chokusenshū* and the *byōbu*.²⁶

Figure 3-1

Poetry specialists between 905 and 930

²⁶ The chart is based on data in Yamaguchi, *Ochō kadanshi (Uda-hen)*, 454, and Tajima Tomoko, *Byōbu-uta no kenkyū* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 2007), 8.



Thus, at the same time as some enterprising poets were theorizing the figure of the Great Poet by drawing on Chinese views of literature as a pathway to immortality, the patrons were physically creating this new figure through their commissions.

It is worth emphasizing the special role played by screen poetry (*byōbu-uta*) in encouraging this tendency to rely only on selected poets. Screen-poems were poems made to complement paintings on large, decorative folding screens called *byōbu*.²⁷ The poems were written on small paper squares called *shikishi* (literally, color-paper), and then pasted onto the screen beside the painting they were based on. Unlike poems recited orally or scribbled in haste

²⁷ *Byōbu* poems first rose to popularity around the middle of the ninth century as a native spin-off of the screen-poem in Chinese (*byōbu-shi*). They remained popular for about two centuries until the mid-11th century, when their popularity suddenly began to wane. On *byōbu* poems, see Tajima Tomoko, *Byōbu-uta no kenkyū: ronkō hen* (Ōsaka: Izumi Shoin, 2007).

on a note sent to a lover, *byōbu* poems were destined to last. Moreover, since these screens were usually donated as gifts to important personages on special occasions, they were destined to become part of the everyday environment of a powerful figure. It is only natural that those who commissioned these works would want to be extra careful in choosing who to assign the task to.

Nor was the tendency to rely only on specialists limited to poets. As Usami Kisohachi notes, the entire process of building the screen was handled by carefully selected specialists: the Master carpenters of the Office of Carpentry built the screen, the Master Painter from the *edokoro* illustrated it, and the most skilled calligraphers available handled the writing.²⁸ Each function, in other words, was assigned to top professionals from their respective departments and bureaus. Thus, the tendency to rely only on poets of proven ability can be seen as part of a larger, court-wide trend to rely on experienced professionals.

From work to author

The elite's tendency to rely only on select poets was grounded in the belief that it was they and they alone who could produce the finest poetry. Although this may seem obvious, in fact it signals a change in collective attitudes toward poetry and the poet of great importance. To put it bluntly: it was no longer the quality of the poem that showed the ability of the poet, but the talent of the poet—something that he or she possessed—that vouched for the quality of his or her poems in the eyes of their audience. Or to rephrase: it was no longer the poem that mattered above all else, but who it was *by*.

What occurred at the Japanese court at the turn of the tenth century can be seen as a sort of mid-Heian variant of what the great German art historian Arnold Hauser called the

²⁸ Usami, *Wakashi ni kan-suru kenkyū*, 66.

“unmistakable shift of attention from the works to the personality of the artist,” which occurred in Europe during the sixteenth century.²⁹ “It is no longer his art,” Hauser writes about quintessential Renaissance genius Michelangelo, “but the man himself who is the object of veneration and who becomes a vogue.”³⁰

One area in which this increase of interest in the work of specific poets can clearly be seen is the poems for the emperor's enthronement ceremony (*daijōe*). Hashimoto Osamu has pointed out that if up until Daigo's reign the custom had been to use anonymous songs from the provinces (*fūzoku-uta*) for these events, from Daigo's enthronement ceremony on (897), the traditional folksongs were replaced by new compositions by established poets.³¹ The change seems to have coincided with the incorporation of *byōbu* screens in the structure of the ritual. As noted, *byōbu* poems were usually composed by famous specialists, so their adoption created a demand for work by specific poets.

At the same time, the poets were growing increasingly conscious of their importance as creators of valuable artifacts. One thing that suggests as much is the resurgence of the custom of compiling private collections of one's poetry (*shikashū*).³² As noted in the previous chapter, *shikashū* suddenly returned to the forefront of the literary scene at the turn of the tenth century after a long phase of obscurity. Their resurgence at a time when the image of the poet was being

²⁹ Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (New York: Knopf, 1951), 323.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 325.

³¹ Hashimoto, *Ōchō wakashi no kenkyū*, 159-162.

³² For a general overview of this type of poetry collection see Gōtō Shōko, “Shikashū no icchi,” in *Shika I*, *Nihon Bungaku Kōza* 9 (Taishūkan, 1988). Standard references on *shikashū* are Sekine Yoshiko, *Chūko shikashū no kenkyū* (Kazama Shobō, 1967). In English see Phillip D Harries, “Shikashū...”; and Richard L. Peterson, “*Shikashū: The Private Poetry Collection as a Context for Waka Study*” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1994).

completely redefined and poets were enjoying an unprecedented amount of attention from society is not casual. On the contrary, it shows that poets were now more aware than ever of the value of their work and more eager than ever to transmit it to posterity. In many ways, Heian *shikashū* can be considered the equivalent of artists self-portraits, which began to appear in Europe in the Renaissance. Art historians customarily link the emergence of artists' self-portraiture to the rise in the social status of the artist.³³ Through these paintings, “artists [...] were clearly making high status claims by the way they presented themselves—dressed like gentlemen and looking directly at the viewer.”³⁴ Heian *shikashū* express a similar desire in poets to assert themselves via their art.³⁵

Another phenomenon that can be linked to this increase of self-awareness in poets is the appearance of the custom of providing authors' names in poetry anthologies. As Louisa Matthew notes regarding painters' signatures on Venetian paintings of the Renaissance, the function of artists' names on artworks goes well beyond the mere providing of information about the work: “Signatures,” Matthew argues, “functioned as a vivid, if often overlooked, indicator of the increasingly complex and self-conscious status of their creators.”³⁶ Much the same can be said about poets' names in *Heian*-time waka collections: the adoption of the custom of providing poets' name in collections from the *Kokinshū* onward, reflects the new attitude in poets toward

³³ Joanna Woods-marsden, *Renaissance Self-portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Status of the Artist* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998); Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 40-42.

³⁴ Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, 40.

³⁵ This was true even if the collection, as was often the case, was edited by someone other than the poet (the so-called *tasen* collection): the collection's function as a tribute to the author remained unaltered.

³⁶ Louisa Matthew, “The Painter’s Presence,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 4. (Dec.1998), 616.

both their work and their public.

Prior to the *Kokinshū*, the attribution of poems in *waka* collections was inconsistent at best. In the *Man'yōshū*, for instance, whether this was due to choice or necessity is a matter that needs discussing, there are entire books and whole sections that lack author names.³⁷ Author names are also not provided in the *Shinsen Man'yōshū* (Newly Edited Man'yōshū, 893), a late-ninth century “mixed” collection of *waka* and *kanshi* that many view as an early step in the process that eventually led to the compilation of the first official *waka* anthology.³⁸ Poets' names are also not given in the records of many important pre-*Kokinshū* poetry contests, including several ones from which the editors of the *Kokinshū* drew heavily for poems. Far from being a casual phenomenon, their absence from these texts expresses the low importance of the poets at these events at this early stage in their history, and the cultural emphasis on the poems. Leading *uta-awase* scholar Hagitani Boku notes:

The essential element in [early] *uta-awase* was play. [...] [F]rom the point of view of those who cherished hearing the results of the battle at these early playful *uta-awase*, the poems were merely an ingredient. [...] The fact that the official records of poetry contests, especially in the case of the “public” *uta-awase*, do not give the names of the poets also suggests this; the mixing of poetry-making and competitive game in these early poetry contests, just as for the *zōtōka* of the *Man'yōshū*, was not a means for the authors to compete for personal primacy through the quality of their verse. The poets and poetry-making were merely a secondary presence, whose function was to provide the tools for the game. The team members [*katōdo*] who compared and

³⁷ The *Man'yōshū* grew by accretion over an extended period of time, so no single policy vis-à-vis authorship acknowledgment can be assumed. The lack of author names remains a fact to be reckoned with. Author names are not given in volumes 13 and 14 substantial areas of Books 7 through 12 lack author names.

³⁸ The *rufubon* (most widely circulated version) of the *Shinsen Manyōshū* contains 253 *waka*, mostly poems made at or for the *Kampyō on-toki kisai no miya utaawase* of 892. Each *waka* is paired to a composition in Chinese, often a translation of the *waka*, by an unknown poet, perhaps Michizane.

evaluated the poems and then heard the verdicts were the real main figures.³⁹

For completeness, it should also be noted that author names are always duly provided in the official *kanshi* anthologies, as one would expect for the highly prestigious *kanshi*.

The *Kokinshū* marked a radical break with such ambiguous attitudes toward authorship acknowledgement. Not only are the names of one-hundred and twenty-seven different poets all duly provided; whenever the name of the author was unknown, or it was preferable to omit it for some reason, the compilers took pains to provide the gloss *yomibito shirazu* (author unknown), thus stressing the presence of an author, even as it was impossible or undesirable to say who they were.⁴⁰ It is these insistent references to unidentified yet existing authors that betray the compilers' desire to draw attention to the figure of the creator, which they considered no less important and deserving of the reader's attention than the poems themselves. Far from simply stating who had composed a poem, author names were intended to assert authorial presence.⁴¹

Figure 3-2.

The poet's signature

³⁹ Hagitani, HUT 10: 2941.

⁴⁰ There are 450 anonymous poems in the *Kokinshū*. Since most of these are believed to date from the early to the mid-ninth century, this period is usually referred to as the '*yomibito shirazu*' period ('author-unknown' period).

⁴¹ It is worth emphasizing that the relationship between work and signature in poetry anthologies is mutually ennobling. The poem in the imperial anthology was a tribute to the poet's skill; the poet's name conferred prestige to the poem by presenting it as the work of a specific poet and as something worth associating one's name with.

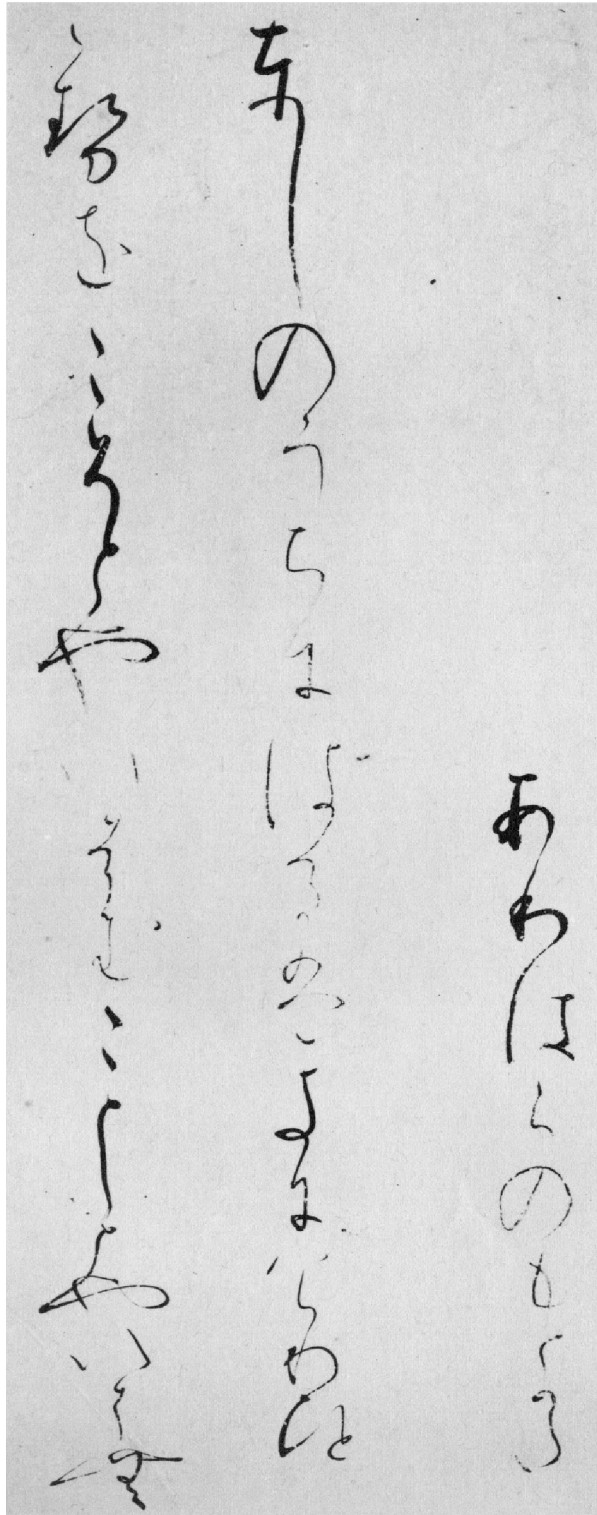


Figure 1. Detail from the oldest extant copy of the *Kokinshū*, the “*Kōya-gire*” (c. 1049). The poet’s name (Ariwara no Motokata) glares in full-size letters beside the poem (bottom right corner). Source: *Kōyagire, dai-issu-kō* (Takeda Bokusaidō, 1935), n.p.

Poet signatures and the *Shoku Man'yōshū*

The *Kokinshū* prefaces mention an early redaction of the anthology, not arranged in parts (*bu*) like the final version, referred to as the *Shoku Man'yōshū* 続万葉集 (Later *Man'yōshū*).

Regrettably this work does not survive, leading to much speculation about how it might have looked. In the 1960s the eminent textual scholar Kyūsojin Hitaku suggested that the series of fragments known today as the *Tsugi-shikishi* 継色紙 (literally, consecutive colored-paper squares) attributed to the renowned calligrapher Ōno Tōfū (Michikaze, 894-967) might have once been part of a mid-tenth-century copy of this now lost collection.⁴²

As the image below shows, the *Tsugishikishi* fragments do not bear poets' names nor prose head-notes (*kotobagaki*). If it could be proven that these fragments did indeed once belong to the now lost *Shoku Man'yōshū*, this would entitle one to hypothesize that in its early stages of completion the *Kokinshū* did not bear poets' names, and that these were added only later, in what would be only reasonable to interpret as a conscious move by the editors to establish a proprietary relationship of author to poem.

⁴² Kyūsojin Hitaku, "Tsugishikishi-shū wa Shoku Man'yōshū ka," *Aichi Daigaku bungaku ronsō* 5-6 (Feb. 1952): 1-42.

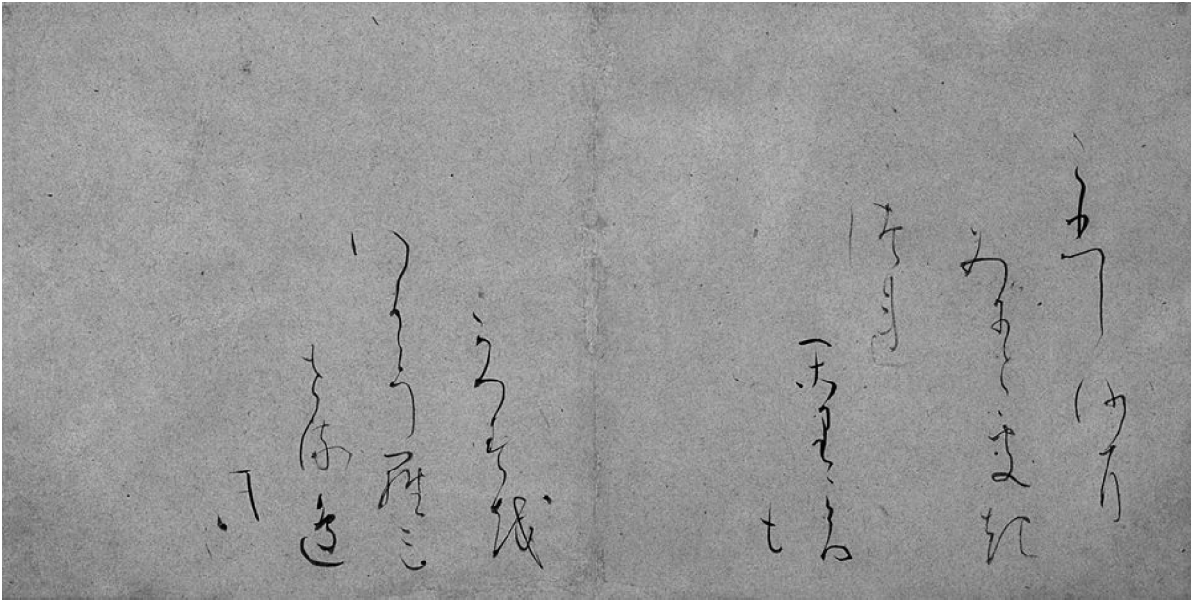


Figure 2. Ono Tōfū (attrib.), *Tsugi-shikishi*, 10th century, 13.2 x 26.6 cm, ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo. The calligraphy reads: *kohishisa ni/mi ni koso kitsure/karigoromo/kaesu wo ikaga/uramizaru-beki*.

Literary glory and the *Kokinshū* compilers

Of all the poets who aspired to be seen as great poets, perhaps no one did more so than the four *Kokinshū* compilers. Traces of their considerable self-esteem (and low opinion of their contemporaries) can be found scattered across a number of contemporary sources. One example is this scathing assessment of the average verse-maker of the time that is given in the *kana* preface:

Besides these, many have earned fame [as poets], numerous as leaves in a forest [they] have spread everywhere like katsura vines in the fields, but although they believe what they do is poetry, in fact they have no idea of what style (*sama*) is.⁴³

このほかの人々、その名聞こゆる野辺に生ふるかづらの這ひ広がり林にしげき木の葉のごとくに多かれど、歌とのみ思ひてその様知らぬなるべし

⁴³ *Kokinshū* “Kanajo,” NKBZ 7: 59.

This is a perfect example of how poetic theory can be used to bolster judgments that would otherwise seem entirely arbitrary. *Sama* (design, structure) is an aesthetic concept that can be roughly defined as the harmonious balancing of form and content in the poem.⁴⁴ For Tsurayuki and the rest of the compilers, making *waka* required a specific kind of technical competence that the majority of their contemporaries, in their opinion, did not possess.

A similar concern for the qualifications of the poet can be seen in the headnote to poem no. 795 in the *Kasen kashūbon* text of Tsurayuki's personal poetry collection:

During the Engi era, His Majesty summoned men *who knew waka* [*waka o shireru hito o meshite*] and ordered them to present poems by poets present and past. He then had them choose [the best] in a building east of the Shōkyōden.⁴⁵

延喜御時、やまとうたしれる人をめして、むかしいまの人のうたたてまつらせたまひしに、承香殿のひんかしなるところにてうたえらせたまふ。

Again there is an emphasis on the qualifications of the poet, almost an anxiety, one might even call it, to distinguish the true poet from the mere wordsmith.

In the spring of 902, the four *Kokinshū* compilers and other well-known poets of the time gathered at Tsurayuki's house for a winding-water banquet.⁴⁶ As it was customary on such

⁴⁴ The term occurs several times in the *Kokinshū* preface, each time with a slightly different meaning. One occurrence is in the discussion of the Six Styles of *waka* (*rikugi*). Here it means something close to “style.” Another occurrence is in the six brief critiques of the six famous poets; here it refers to the ordered balancing of elements in the poem, its overall “design.”

⁴⁵ ST 1: 297.

⁴⁶ The event is known as the *Sangatsu san'ichi Ki no shishō gokusuien* 三月三日紀師匠曲水宴 (Winding-water banquet at the home of the Ki master of the Third day of the Third month). Winding-water banquets in which guests recited poems beside a stream or lake and drank wine from floating cups were a popular Chinese pastime. They seem to have been official events in Japan in the eighth century but later faded of fashion, only to return as private events in

occasions, one of the poets (Mitsune) wrote a preface (*jo*) to be later attached to a written record of the poems. Although the complete text is no longer extant, a note at the end of a record of the event quotes it as saying: “those who are not here tonight are confused because they do not know the way of poetry, all they do is put up an air of knowledge as they go about their lives.”⁴⁷

According to Mezaki Tokue this might have been a direct attack on Ōnakatomi no Yorimoto (886-958?), a favorite of emperor Uda’s that Mitsune and the other compilers might have perceived as a rival in the battle for poetic supremacy.⁴⁸ Regardless, the passage clearly shows Mitsune's concern for poetic reputations and his combative attitude toward other poets.

But perhaps the best proof of the compilers’ great self-esteem and less than amicable attitude toward fellow poets is the *Kokinshū* itself. As noted earlier, the *Kokinshū* contains poems by 127 different poets, but whereas a majority of these are represented with just one or two poems each, the compilers are represented with dozens of their poems, in Tsurayuki’s case with over one hundred.⁴⁹ This disparity of treatment was no doubt intended to send a message to contemporary readers, the same message that is explicitly voiced in the Preface: many may be able to put together a decent poem, but few truly deserve the title of poet.

It is interesting to note that the compilers’ hopes of glory were eventually fulfilled. Around 979, about three decades after Tsurayuki’s death, some of the finest poets of the day

the early tenth-century.

⁴⁷ GR 11: 459.

⁴⁸ Mezaki, *Ki no Tsurayuki*, 85-6.

⁴⁹ The ranking of poets by number of poems is: Ki no Tsurayuki (102 poems), Ōshinokōchi no Mitsune (60), Ki no Tomonori (46), Mibu no Tadamine and Sosei (36), Ariwara no Narihira (30), Ise (22), Fujiwara no Toshiyuki (19), Ono no Komachi (18), Archbishop Henjō, Kiyowara no Fukayabu, and Okikaze (17), Ariwara no Motokata (14), Ōe Chisato (10), and Taira no Sadabun (9).

gathered to commemorate the restitution of one scroll of Tsurayuki's poems to its proprietor, Tsurayuki's son Tokibumi. One of the poets present composed the following elegy:

One scroll is filled with a thousand pieces of gold:
The man may no longer live, but his voice lingers on.⁵⁰

ひとまきにちゝのかかねをこめたれば
人こそなけれこゑはのこれり

***Utagatari* and literary celebrity**

At the same time as some enterprising poets were claiming a serious concept of fame for the *waka* poet, *waka* poets also became the target of a more mundane kind of notoriety (a sort of literary celebrity *ante litteram*, one might even call it), which ultimately played a no less important role in making the *waka* poet a desirable social identity.

The phenomenon was both an effect and a cause of the thriving of the *utagatari* (poet-stories), which were discussed in the previous chapter in connection with poetic reception.⁵¹ Writing about the rise in status of the artist in nineteenth-century Europe, the German critic Levin Schücking drew attention to the appearance of works that made the artist the hero: works like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1795) and Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1853), Schücking argued, would have been unthinkable in only a century earlier; "[a] writer or an artist would not yet have been considered dignified enough."⁵² The thriving of a genre of stories about poets and their work in mid-Heian times signals a similar change in attitudes toward the "writer"

⁵⁰ *Egyō-shū*, no. 149, ST I: 488.

⁵¹ The term *utagatari* was first introduced by Masuda Katsumi in his "Jōdai bungakushi kōan," *Nihon Bungakushi Kenkyū* 4 (1949).

⁵² Schücking, *The Sociology of Literary Taste*, 3rd rev. ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 23.

in Heian court society.

Utagatari were brief accounts in prose (sometimes as brief as one or two lines of narration) that explained and sometimes invented the circumstances of composition of a poem. Today it is common to associate these stories to the *uta-monogatari*, a few long, loosely structured collections of these stories that are in turn seen as a transitional stage between the poetry-centered literature of the early period to the prose-centered one of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵³ Scholars of these works point to the skill with which the authors manipulated their source material (by combining multiple stories together, altering them when appropriate, etc.), and conclude that they were an important stage in the development of a fictional idiom.⁵⁴ Long before they were written down and edited into collections, however, poem-stories circulated orally, satisfying a demand for stories of this kind in contemporary society. It would be an error, therefore, to view the *utagatari* simply or primarily as a stage in the development of a fictional idiom, for while it is true that some of these stories display sometimes remarkable narrative sophistication, it is important to bear in mind that the primary reason for their success was the interest in Heian court society for their *content*, regardless of how skillfully it was related. Mekada Sakuo, one of the first modern scholars to subject the *utagatari* to serious scrutiny, correctly identified as one of their primary characteristics their "anecdotalness" (*setsuwasei*), which he defined as "the desire to convey to others knowledge about a certain episode."⁵⁵

⁵³ The three works that are usually said to belong to this genre are the *Tales of Ise*, the *Tales of Heichū*, and the *Tales of Yamato*.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Amagai Hiroyoshi; *Utagatari to utamonogatari* (Ōfūsha, 1976), 10-37.

⁵⁵ Mekada Sakuo, *Heichū monogatari-ron* (Musashino Shoin, 1958).

It is no coincidence that poem-stories in such collections as the *Yamato monogatari* and the *Ise monogatari* have been linked to the notes (variously called *kotobagaki*, *sachū*, or *kashi*) in *waka* collections.⁵⁶ Both types of texts stemmed out from a common urge to provide information about who and in what circumstances had made a poem. In the case of the *utagatari* this was done with a measure of literary ambition in mind, in the case of the *kotobagaki* and the left-side notes without, but what both practices had in common was the desire to pass on information about poems and the poets who had created, information that contemporaries audiences were eager to receive.

There is a passage in Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi*, early 11th century) that nicely captures for the modern reader the cultural ambiance within which the *utagatari* as a genre thrived:

My house should be large and beautiful. It would have separate rooms for relatives, of course, but also for people I enjoy talking to and people who serve at the palace. Whenever appropriate, we could all sit together in one place to talk, *and talk about the poems that somebody made* or anything else we liked. And if a letter came in for one of us, we could read it as a group, and draft a reply together....⁵⁷

家ひろくきよげにて、わが親族はさらなり、うち語らひなどする人も、宮仕人をかたがたに据ゑてこそあらせまほしけれ。さべきをりはひとところに集りみて物語し、人のよみたりし歌、なにくれと語りあはせて、人の文など持て来るも、もろともに見、返りごと書き...

Heian courtiers, especially women who were forced by custom to live in semi-seclusion, were almost pathologically curious about life outside their gilded surroundings. They loved to hear about people's everyday dealings, especially if a good poem was involved. It was in response to

⁵⁶ Abe Toshiko, *Utamonogatari to sono shūhen* (Kazama Shobō, 1969), 14-115. Itō Hiroshi, "Utagatari no sekai," special issue of *Kokugo to kokubungaku* (Oct. 1962), 25-38.

⁵⁷ *Makura no sōshi*, NKBZ 25: 324-325; emphasis added.

this curiosity that the *utagatari* as a genre flourished.⁵⁸

Thanks to the popularity of these stories, composing *waka* became something of a ticket to celebrity. A good poem made in appropriately memorable circumstances could instantly transform a person into the talk of the town; a large quantity of these stories could make veritable celebrities of them.

The best example of celebrity built on these stories is no doubt Narihira, the hero of the *Ise monogatari*, and probably the closest there is to a Heian cultural icon. Narihira's fame in his own time and shortly after his death shows the level of popularity that being good at *waka*—via poem-stories—could give. Another example is Taira no Sadabun 平貞文 (known also as Heichū, 871-923), a courtier of average rank who earned semi-legendary status in his time as a poet and a great lover (*irogonomi*).⁵⁹ In addition these well-known figures, however, there was a whole gallery of poets who though now largely forgotten, were once household names thanks to their skill with *waka*.

One such figure is the woman known only as Toshiko (dates unknown), perhaps a lady-in-waiting of Daigo's consort Kazuko (Washi, no dates). She appears in ten episodes of the *Yamato monogatari*, more than any other poet in the work, and these are probably only a fraction of the stories that once circulated about her.⁶⁰ Episode number 10 gives a sense of the verbal dexterity that made her famous:

⁵⁸ The same curiosity also provided the rationale for compiling collections of these stories; see, Nakata Takeshi, "Utamonogatari no hassei to tenkai," in *Utagatari, utamonogatari jiten*, edited by Amagai Hiroyoshi, Kansaku Kōichi, and Nakada Takeshi (Benseisha, 1997), 15.

⁵⁹ On Heichū and the many stories that circulated about him, see Susan Downing Videen, *Tales of Heichū* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1989).

⁶⁰ See episodes nos. 3, 9, 13, 25, 41, 66, 67, 68, 122, and 137.

On a night when it was raining, Toshiko was waiting for Chikane. Perhaps the rain discouraged him, so he did not visit. Since the house was in ruin, the rain leaked through the roof. When Chikane asked her: “I was unable to visit you because of the heavy rain. How are you keeping up in such a place?” Toshiko replied:

I thought my love for you was a house with no cracks,
but somehow the rain keeps leaking through tonight.⁶¹

君を思ふひまなき宿と思へども
今宵の雨はもらぬ間ぞなき

Another example is Taira no Kanemori (910?-990). He is hardly a famous figure today, but in his time he was ranked among the finest poets of his generation. Although only a handful of stories about his survive, Takahashi Shōji conjectures that he might have once been the hero of a now lost collection of these stories entitled the *Koma no monogatari* (Tales of Koma).⁶²

Yet another example is Ōe no Chisato, best known today as the author of *Kudai waka*, but also the hero of stories like the following:

Ōe no Chisato used to pay a woman frequent visits. As his enthusiasm for the relationship waned, he had somebody inform her that he had moved to some faraway place, and stopped visiting her altogether. One night, as she fell asleep in the pangs of despair, she dreamed that he had returned. Thus she sent [this poem], questioningly:

Misled by the signs of a fleeting dream,
My miserable self in reality!

はかなかる夢のしるしにはかれて
現に負くる身とやなりなん

When Chisato saw the poem, he saw it fit to reply: “I just returned yesterday,

⁶¹ NKZ 8: 313. *Himanaki* (no gaps) also meant very intense, constant.

⁶² Takahashi Shōji, *Yamato monogatari* (Hanawa Shobō, 1962), 125-9. The work is mentioned in the *Makura no sōshi* where it is criticized for its archaic language and the lack of interesting plot-twists.

but I am not feeling well..." and had a messenger deliver it. Again, she replied:

Maybe it was just the dream of sleep that comes after tortured thoughts, but then how come I knew you were here?⁶³

思寝の夢といひてもやみなまし
中ゝ何と有と知りけん

As these examples show, the content of these stories was often amorous. It was often the poet's involvement in a love affair, more than his or her poetic ability, that sparked the storyteller's curiosity and that of her audience. So while some considered deplorable the use of poetry to conduct dalliances, because of the enormous interest for love in court society, *waka's* strong ties with love were an important cause of its exceptional popularity. More on this will be said in the next section.

Stories did not need to be historically accurate to bring fame to the poets. I have noted that storytellers did not hesitate to manipulate their subject matter to maximize effect, or simply because they enjoyed doing so. Moreover, many poem-stories do not take a historical character as their hero, but an impersonal "man" (*otoko*) or "woman" (*onna*). While not adding to the fame of specific poets, these stories contributed to establishing the social desirability of the identity "the poet." Ultimately, what mattered was that poets and their work had now become objects of a narrative discourse, and that once incorporated in these stories, they could travel from mouth to mouth, fueling *waka* and its practitioners to unprecedented levels of popularity.

Irogonomi, miyabi and the poet-lover

It was noted earlier that the idea of literary glory exerted different degrees of appeal

⁶³ *Gosenshū* XII: 871, 872: SNKBT 6: 255.

depending on which sector of aristocracy society one belonged to. While there must have certainly been some members of the senior nobles who did not mind the idea of adding a measure of literary luster to their already long list of accomplishments, on the whole most members of the senior nobility were probably happy to leave the honor to men of lesser station. There was a kind of single-minded devotion to art implied in the idea of poetic greatness that a Heian gentleman would have found disagreeable if not crude; the ideal seems to have been a kind of spontaneous proficiency in several arts, rather than complete mastery of any one of them in particular.⁶⁴

This is why another image of the waka poet played a much more significant role in making the poet a desirable social identity among the upper elite: the poet-lover. The poet-lover was the poet who composed poems as part of the elaborate ritual of courtly love. S/he was not interested in attaining in literature honors otherwise precluded to her; her goal was to impress a partner or, as I will show, to establish her credentials as a superior lover.

The popularity of the image of the poet-lover was connected to the success of libertinism (*irogonomi*) as a behavioral ideal for the upper elite. I have already discussed the passage of the *Kokinshū* preface in which the use of *waka* by the libertines is condemned as a sign of the decadence of *waka* from its ancient splendors. This view can be said to express a Confucian view of libertinism and erotic love in general as distractions from more serious pursuits. Other roughly contemporary works, however, project a very different image of libertinism. In the *Taketori monogatari* (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, ca. 909), the five suitors who seek to win the hand of the beautiful Princess Kaguya are described as “five men worthy of the fame of great lovers”

⁶⁴ The elite's attitude toward professionalism is discussed in Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 2, 93.

(*irogonomi to iwaruru kagiri gonin*).⁶⁵ In episode no. 39 of the *Tales of Ise*, Minamoto no Itaru is celebrated as “the greatest *irogonomi* under the sun” (*ame no shita no irogonomi*),⁶⁶ while episode no. 103 in the *Yamato monogatari* describes the protagonist Heichū when “he was at his peak as a great lover” (insert Japanese).⁶⁷ Finally, the fictional *Tale of the Hollow Tree* (*Utsuhō monogatari* 宇津保物語, c. 980), gives the following description of one of its central characters: “The Major Captain of the Right Fujiwara no Kanemasa was a man of about thirty; he resented society, and being endlessly curious of the ways of love [*kagiri-naki irogonomi nite*], he built a large villa with many halls and filled each one with the daughters of important people.”⁶⁸

There is no trace here of the contempt for *irogonomi* that one finds in *Kokinshū* preface; here *irogonomi* is a title that can be worn with pride and that seems to command, if not the admiration, then at least the attention of society.

Some scholars have traced the origins of this desirable view of libertinism all the way back to the ancient period. According to poet and *minzokugaku* scholar Orikuchi Shinobu, *irogonomi* was an important attribute of the leaders in the early period. Women at this stage were seen as points of contact with the deities, so by marrying or keeping at the palace a large number of them from different parts of the country, the leaders of the ancient state accumulated divine power from those areas.⁶⁹ Other scholars have expressed doubts that these ideas were still

⁶⁵ NKZ 8: 54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Namba Hiroshi, “‘Irogonomi’ no rekishi shakaiteki igi,” in *Nihon Bungaku Koten Shinron*, ed. Nishio Minoru and Odagiri Hideo (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1962), 74.

⁶⁹ Origuchi Shinobu Kinen Kodai Kenkyūjo, eds. *Origuchi Shinobu zenshū*, vol. 14 (Chūō Kōronsha, 1966), 218-222.

operative in mid-Heian times when *irogonomi* truly became established as a behavioral code for the upper aristocracy.⁷⁰ It is also worth noting that the word *irogonomi* itself does appear until the Heian period. What no one questions, however, is that there was a positive view of *irogonomi* that may or may not have coexisted with less approving ones of the kind discussed above.

The key to the success of libertinism as a behavioral model was its close association with the idea of courtliness (*miyabi*). Sentimental involvement with multiple women was an important aspect of the concept of courtliness (*feng liu* 風流, J. *fūryū*) already in China.⁷¹ In Japan, we have examples of lovers being referred to as “elegant gentlemen” (*miyabio*) as early as the early-eighth century.⁷² If these early mentions attest to the existence of a connection between love and elegance already in the early period, it is in the one hundred years between the mid-ninth century and the mid-tenth century that the connection truly evolved into a fully-fledged behavioral code for the upper aristocracy.

Nowhere is the close association between libertinism and courtly elegance more clearly presented than in the *Tales of Ise*. The term *miyabi* appears in the work only once, in episode one, but many scholars consider *miyabi* a major theme of the work, if not *the* major theme.⁷³ Since

⁷⁰ Namba Hiroshi, “‘Irogonomi’ no rekishi shakaiteki igi,” 77.

⁷¹ Konishi Jin’ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 217.

⁷² See poems nos. 126 and 127 in the *Man’yōshū*.

⁷³ See for instance Watanabe Minoru, “Kaisetsu,” in *Ise monogatari*, Shinchō Nihon Koten Shūsei 2 (Shinchōsha, 1976), 139-155. For an overview of the debate on *miyabi* in *Ise* scholarship, see Akiyama Ken, “*Ise monogatari*: ‘miyabi’ no ron,” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1979), 6-12. For a discussion of how *miyabi* has come to be viewed as the central theme of the *Ise*, see Joshua Mostow, “Modern Constructions of ‘Tales of Ise:’ Gender and Courtliness,” in *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 109ff.

episode one is the only one in the entire work where the word *miyabi* is explicitly used, it is worth citing it here in full (I quote from Helen McCullough's translation):

Once a man who had lately come of age went hunting on his estate at Kasuga village, near the Nara capital. In the village there lived two beautiful young sisters. The man caught a glimpse of the sisters through a gap in their hedge. It was startling and incongruous indeed that such ladies should dwell at the ruined capital and he wished to meet them. He tore a strip from the skirt of his hunting costume, dashed off a poem, and sent it in. The fabric of the robe was imprinted with a moss-fern design.

Kasugano no	Like the random pattern of this robe,
wakamurasaki no	Dyed with the young purple
surigoromo	From Kasuga Plain---
shinobu no midare	Even thus is the wild disorder
kagiri shirarezu	Of my yearning heart.

No doubt it had occurred to him that this was an interesting opportunity for an adaptation of the poem that runs,

Michinoku no	My thoughts have grown disordered
shinobu mojizuri	As random patterns dyed on cloth
tare yue ni	Reminiscent of Shinobu in Michinoku---
midaresomenishi	And who is to blame?
ware naranaku ni	Surely not I.

People were remarkably elegant in those days.⁷⁴

This story clearly shows that courtliness (*miyabi*) was understood in terms of deportment in amorous situations. It is the hero's tearing off of the sleeve in response to the sight of two beautiful women in a ruined setting that prompts the narrator's comment about his impetuous elegance.

The consequences of the association between love and courtliness would be hard to overstate. Because of this connection, seeking romantic involvement with persons of the other

⁷⁴ Helen McCullough, trans. *Tales of Ise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 69-70.

sex ceased to be a mere quest for pleasure and romance (with all the prejudice and scorn that this could attract from a Confucian perspective), and became an arena in which to assert one's sophistication and refinement. Courtiers who might have previously hesitated to indulge in licentious behavior out of a Confucian preference for modesty and restraint, now went to great lengths to style themselves as paragons of courtly love, conscious of its importance for their public image. In an insightful reading of the *Tale of Genji*, Mitani Eichi argues that courtiers who could not boast a reasonably long list of conquests run the risk of being considered mere "ordinary persons" (*tadabito*), obviously a terrifying prospect for any self-respecting aristocrat.⁷⁵ Poetry was, of course, at the very heart of this conflation: it was the sublimation of the love encounter into a graceful exchange of poems that gave it the status of a cultural happening.

An important factor in sanctioning the social desirability of the *irogonomi* lifestyle was the appearance in the ninth and tenth centuries of a number of flamboyant real-life figures who embodied this role to its limits of elegance and refinement. The archetype of these figures is, of course, Narihira: his dazzling acts of elegance set a model that many later would try to imitate and soon became the stuff of legend. Another such figure was emperor Yozei's first son Prince Motoyoshi 元良 (890-934). A collection of his poems almost certainly put together after his death opens: "Emperor Yōzei's first born, Prince Motoyoshi, was a first-rate *irogonomi*. If news that somewhere there lived a beautiful woman reached his ear, he would write her letters and send her poems, whether he had met her or not."⁷⁶ Another paragon of the amorous gentleman was emperor Daigo's younger brother Atsuyoshi 敦慶 (887-930) whom the medieval *Genji*

⁷⁵ Mitani Eichi, "Genji monogatari no kōsei to kodai setsuwa-teki seikaku," *Kokugakuin zasshi* 62 (Mar. 1961), 2.

⁷⁶ SST 1: 270.

commentary *Kakaishō* 河海抄 (Stream and Sea Commentary, 1362-67) describes as "a man of great beauty and an *irogonomi* with no equals."⁷⁷ The list of Atsuyoshi's conquests included the distinguished woman poet Ise.

These early-century paragons of *irogonomi* set a model of behavior that many elite men growing up in the second and third decade of the tenth century strove to emulate. By the mid-century, being recognized as a superior *irogonomi* had become something of a required attribute of the man of good birth. Scholars such as Moriya Shōgo, Yamaguchi Hiroshi, and Joshua Mostow have argued that several works compiled in the second half of the tenth century by or for high-ranking Fujiwara figures and that portray them as great lovers were edited with the specific goal of presenting these men as paragons of *irogonomi*.⁷⁸ This body of works includes works of sometimes difficult classification such as the *Collected Poems of the Kujō Minister of the Right* (*Kujō Udaijinshū*) by Morosuke, the *Ichijō sesshō onshū* (then known as *Toyokage monogatari*) by Koretada, and the *Tōnomine shōshō monogatari* (Tale of the Minor Captain Tōnomine) by Fujiwara no Takamitsu (c. 939-994). These men would have not have edited personally or had someone else compile these works had *irogonomi* not been seen as a desirable quality for an elite gentleman.⁷⁹

Some scholars have suggested that libertinism and the *miyabi* ideal with which it was closely associated involved an element of resistance, or even open challenge to Fujiwara

⁷⁷ Quoted in Nakamura Shin'ichirō, *Irogonomi no kōzō* (Iwanami Shoten, 1985).

⁷⁸ Mostow, *At The House of Gathered Leaves* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), pp. 2-3. Yamaguchi, *Ōchō kadan-shi no kenkyū* (*Murakami, Reizei, En'yū-chō hen*), p. 105; Moriya, "Kagerō nikki zenshi: kashū kara nikki-keisei e no sobyō," in *Kagerō nikki*, ed. Imai Takuji et al., *Joryū nikki bungaku kōza*, vol. 4 (Benseisha, 1990), 37.

⁷⁹ Mostow, *At the House of Gathered Leaves*, 3.

politics.⁸⁰ This view rests primarily on an interpretation of the *Ise monogatari* as an anti-Fujiwara tract. This interpretation can be roughly summarized as follows: at a time when the Fujiwara were perfecting the strategic usage of marital alliances for political reasons, the *Ise* hero pursued love for love's sake; at a time when everything of significance in a person's life can be said to have happened at the capital, the *Ise* hero does not hesitate to retreat to the countryside, once again unmindful of the consequences.⁸¹

While this interpretation is compelling and throws light on some important aspects of the *Ise*, one must be wary of exaggerating its implications. A look at other, roughly contemporaneous works in the *uta-monogatari* genre suggests that the political valence of *irogonomi* may not be so simple to pinpoint. Already in the mid-century *Tales of Yamato* (edited c. 951), there are stories that portray top-ranking Fujiwara men (Tokihira, Atsutada, Morosuke, etc.) happily engaging in the same kind of licentious behavior that had made Narihira famous. Then in the second half of the tenth century, as noted, there was a small flood of works whose purpose seems to have been to present top-ranking Fujiwara figures as paragons of *irogonomi*.⁸² The heroes of these works are not mavericks or victims of the political order, but the very pillars of that order. And yet, they are depicted as great lovers and engage in exactly the same kind of reckless love life of the *Ise* hero.

Also importantly, there was no single, valid-for-all view of the *irogonomi* hero. In an

⁸⁰ Michele Marra, *The Aesthetics of Discontent: Politics and Reclusion in Medieval Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), pp. 35, 44-49; Richard H. Okada, *Figures of Resistance: Language, Poetry, and Narrating in the Tale of Genji and Other Mid-Heian Texts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 126; Namba, "Irogonomi," 73.

⁸¹ Namba, "'Irogonomi' no rekishi to shakaiteki igi," 73.

⁸² Mostow, *At the House of Gathered Leaves*, 2-3

illuminating comparison between the heroes of the *Ise* and of the later *Tales of Toyokage* (*Ichijō sesshō onshū*, c. 967?), Joshua Mostow demonstrates that there were at least two different images of the *irogonomi* hero. To summarize Mostow's argument: whereas the hero of the *Ise* does not hesitate to pursue women well above his social standing, Toyokage "confines his attentions to his social equals;"⁸³ "where the narrator of the *Tales of Ise* praises Narihira for his freedom from convention, Toyokage is held up for his dogged determination;"⁸⁴ finally, while his quest for new adventures often takes the hero of the *Ise* to remote parts of the country, Toyokage's women always live in the capital.⁸⁵

Nor are these divergences limited to the *Ise* and the *Toyokage*. Susan Videen Downing notes a similar discrepancy in her comparison between the *Ise* and the *Tales of Heichū*: "Even at the time of the *uta monogatari* there seems to have been no set idea of what constituted *irogonomi*: The hero of *Tales of Ise* indulged his intense passion fully in opposition to all authority, but the hero of *Tales of Heichū* is an ineffectual fellow drawn into an endless search for the woman of his dreams."⁸⁶

Mostow goes as far as suggesting that the *Toyokage* was edited in order to produce a sanitized view of the *irogonomi* hero alternative to that proposed in the *Ise* or in the *Heichū*.⁸⁷ Although I do not share this view, it is clear that the concept of *irogonomi* lent itself to multiple uses. In which case it might be more accurate to say that the *irogonomi* lifestyle celebrated in

⁸³ Mostow, *At the House*, 18.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Susan Downing Videen, *Tales of Heichū*, 20.

⁸⁷ Mostow, *At the House*, 104.

these narratives had no fixed or predetermined political valence, but rather it could be deployed strategically by different writers to serve different political agendas. If when applied to somebody from a politically unsuccessful clan it could connote proud rejection of or even an open challenge to the injustices of court politics, with some minor alterations it could be used to celebrate the splendor of the Fujiwara house.

CHAPTER 4

POETIC KNOW-HOW, *WAKA* EDUCATION, AND COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICE AFTER
THE *KOKINSHŪ*

“A final work [...] arises out of a much larger body of possibilities”
Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*

The same problems that one runs into when attempting to deal with the sheer number of poets active in this period also present themselves when one considers the body of works that these poets produced. There are simply too many poems to attempt to subject each and every one of them to close analysis. A close study of one, or two, or a hundred of these poems taken individually, moreover, is not the same as an analysis of all of them at the same time. So how is one to proceed?

The solution I adopt here is to focus on genre, that is, the body of ingredients and skills that poets used to craft their works.¹ As a shared body of ingredients to create works, genre is in every work, from the most blandly conventional, to the most wildly experimental; genre is the pool of options from which authors draw as they go about conceiving and executing their works.² To look at genre, therefore, is necessarily to look at all works, albeit not to any one of

¹ The view I adopt here is one that has gained wide acceptance in rhetoric and composition studies. See, for instance, Amy J. Devitt, *Writing Genres* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004). My understanding of genre also bears similarities with John Cawelti’s concept of “formula” as presented in *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971).

² My thinking here is influenced by Howard Becker’s article “The Work Itself,” in *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations*, ed. Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Chicago: The University of Chicago

them in much detail. Moreover, genres are known to a greater or lesser extent to all the practitioners of a given art. By studying genre, therefore, one does not study the work of individual authors, but the creative behavior of entire groups of practitioners.

Trying to reconstruct an ancient genre is no simple task. There is no work dating from the tenth century that conveniently summarizes for the modern reader what a tenth-century poet needed to know to craft her poems. Perhaps such work did once exist; more likely, however, it was never written, for writers are rarely fully conscious of what they do when they conceive and execute their works, let alone able to articulate it in writing. What we do have, however, and in great quantity, is the poems that were made by putting this knowledge to use. These works can be analyzed in order to learn about the expertise that went into their making. This kind of study, it is worth emphasizing, differs from the work of the formalist who examines a literary work in order to identify its salient characteristics. The goal here is not a greater understanding of a single work; it is identifying a cultural template, a shared matrix that allowed a large number of poets in different times and places to craft works that both they and their audience recognized as tokens of the same type.

***Waka* education in the tenth-century**

It seems appropriate to begin a discussion of tenth-century poetic know-how with a few remarks on how this knowledge was acquired. The documentary evidence on how aspiring poets learned to compose is unfortunately very limited. Very few tenth century or pre-tenth century texts of poetics survive, and none of them really says much about how poetry was studied.³ To

Press, 2006), 21ff.

³ The extant texts include the *Kakyō Hyōshiki* (The Code of Poetry, 772) by Fujiwara no Hamanari, the *Waka saku shiki* (Rules for Composition, also known as *Kisen shiki*), attributed to

make things worse, this area remains severely understudied, partly because of the scarcity of material, and partly because, perhaps, of certain romantic ideas about literature and poetry in particular that continue to retain their appeal.⁴

Perhaps the first thing to say about poetic education is that there was no formal system in place. The purpose of the state university (*daigakuryō*), the only official educational organ of the Heian state, was to train state functionaries. As a result, the curriculum was closely modeled on the Chinese curriculum (Chinese being the language of government and learning), leaving no room for vernacular genres.⁵ The *ritsuryō* codes did make provisions for a section of the Bureau of Music—the *Ōutadokoro* or Office of Great Songs—that dealt with a native genre, but its functions were limited to collecting, preserving, and overseeing the performance of *ōuta* (literally, Great Songs), and did not include teaching.⁶

Without a system of formal instruction in place, the education of the poet occurred the only way it could have: informally, at the individual level, and at home. One source that sheds light on how poets were educated is the famous story of imperial consort Hōshi (?-967), which is related

Kisen (fl. c. 830), the *Waka shiki* (or *Hikohime shiki*, no date), and the *Iwami no jo shiki* (Iwami-no-jo's Rules for poetry, no date). The *Kokinshū* prefaces can also be included in this list.

⁴ I refer to the romantic myth that poetry is an art that cannot be taught.

⁵ The academic curriculum underwent several modifications since the university's establishment in 675. By the tenth century, it comprised four main subjects: the Confucian classics (*myōkyōdō*), history and literature (*kidendō* and *monjōdō*), mathematics (*sandō*), and law (*myōbōdō*). The texts studied included the *Analects* and an expanded version of the Five Classics: the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Rites of the Zhou*, the *Record of Ceremonial*, the *Book of Rites*, *Book of Songs* and a commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. For an introduction to Chinese studies in Heian times, see Felicia Bock, *Classical Learning and Daoist Practices in Early Japan* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1985).

⁶ *Ōuta* were traditional folksongs that were performed to the accompaniment of music during official court ceremonies. On the structure and functions of the *Ōutadokoro*, see Nagata Kazuaki, "Ōutadokoro ni tsuite," *Kokugakuin zasshi* (Feb.1990): 21-26.

in *Makura no Sōshi* and various other later works. Hōshi was the eldest daughter of the powerful Fujiwara minister Morotada (920-969). When she was still young, she was lectured by her father on the importance of mastering the three requisite arts of the good court lady: “First, learn penmanship; second, strive to surpass everyone else in the zither (*koto*); finally, study until you are able to recite all the twenty books of the *Kokinshū* by heart.”⁷ Hōshi was clearly a brilliant student; Sei relates that shortly after her entrance to court (around 956), emperor Murakami spent an entire night testing her knowledge of the *Kokinshū* by reading out the first few words of a poem and having her fill in the rest, but although he tested her so for several hours, he failed to find her at fault even once.⁸ Hōshi upbringing, however, as Ikeda Kikan pointed out in his widely-read overview of Heian palace life, must have been typical of the mid-century lady of the upper aristocracy.⁹ When *Kagerō nikki* author Michitsuna no haha decides to take in a young girl as her adoptive daughter, one of the first things she does is to teach her how to compose a *waka* and write it down in good penmanship.¹⁰

Hōshi’s story reveals several important things about how *waka* was studied: first, it was the parent or guardian who oversaw the poetic education of the child; second, studying poetry consisted largely in memorizing a large quantity of existing poems; finally, the main study text was the *Kokinshū*.

Regrettably, there is no comparably illuminating source on the poetic education of

⁷ NKHZ 11: 89.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ikeda Kikan, *Heianchō no seikatsu to bungaku* (Kadowaka Shoten, 1964), 179.

¹⁰ Sonja Arntzen, trans. *Kagerō Diary: A Woman’s Autobiographical Text from Tenth-Century Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), 297.

male poets. The text known as “Lord Kujō’s Testament” (*Kujō dono yuikai* 九条殿遺誡), by Fujiwara no Morosuke, does stress the importance of studying the “transmitted texts” (*shoden* 書伝) and of practicing calligraphy (*shuseki*) from an early age, but it makes no mention of *waka*.¹¹ This is unfortunate, since Morosuke was a prolific poet, and so were many of his sons, which suggests that learning to compose *waka* was part of the upbringing of the male members of the Kujō house.

There is no doubt that the *Kokinshū* was the single, most important text for the poetic education of young poets. Even the most cursory look at the *Gosenshū*, for example, the second of the official *waka* anthologies, shows how intimately familiar post-*Kokinshū* poets were with the idiom of the earlier anthology. As Katagiri Yōichi puts it: “[i]n terms of diction and style, one can say that the poems of the *Gosenshū* are nothing but an extension or an appendix of the *Kokinshū*.”¹²

There is no reason, however, to suppose that the study of earlier works was limited to the *Kokinshū*. *Shinsen zuinō* 新選髓腦 (The Essentials of Poetry, Newly Selected, early 11th century), a short poetry manual written by the prominent eleventh-century courtier-poet Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041), gives the following list of recommended readings for aspiring poets: “Also, Tsurayuki’s writings on poetic diction; also, old poetry collections; the *Chronicles of Japan* [*Nihongi*], and the poems about the various provinces. These are the works to look at to learn

¹¹ Yamagishi Tokuhei et al. eds. *Kodai seiji shakai shisō*, Nihon Shisō Taikai, vol. 8 (Iwanami Shoten, 1979), 117. By “transmitted texts,” Morosuke probably meant the Chinese classics. A partial English translation can be found in David J. Lu, *Sources of Japanese History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 67-8. *Waka* is explicitly mentioned in another “testament,” the *Testament of the Sugawara House* (*Kanke yuikai* 菅家遺誡) traditionally attributed to Michizane. However, the work is almost certainly a much later forgery.

¹² Katagiri Yōichi, “Gosenshū no hyōgen,” *Kokinwakshū igo* (Kasama Shoin, 2000), 210.

how to compose."¹³ Although Kintō's work dates from about fifty years after my period of focus here, it is reasonable to assume that similar lists were in existence earlier as well.

There is some evidence of new poetry having been made specifically for the purpose of teaching learners. One example is the sequence of fourteen poems that opens the personal poetry collection of Minamoto no Shigeyuki (fl. late 10th century). According to the lengthy prose headnote that introduces the sequence, Shigeyuki composed the poems and then passed them on to the famous calligrapher Fujiwara no Sukemasa (or Sari, 944-998), who was to use them to prepare a copybook for Emperor Ichijō (r. 986-1011).¹⁴ Again, this particular episode dates from a slightly later period, but similar episodes must have been common in earlier times as well.

We also know that parents and tutors often used their own writings to educate their children. In a scene in the early eleventh century *The Tale of Genji*, Genji takes one of his many leaves from court to prepare a copybook for Murasaki;¹⁵ he is convinced that she will grow to be a fine calligrapher provided that she is given the right copybooks.¹⁶ Then in the "Umegae" chapter of the same work, Genji is shown wondering whether it would be appropriate to include the diary he kept during his exile at Suma in a set of works that he plans to give to his daughter, the Akashi princess. Its content, he fears, may not be suitable for a girl of that age.¹⁷

Learning to compose *waka* was largely synonymous with learning to write in the recently invented *kana* script. Indeed, the Heian word for learning to write (*tenarai*, literally,

¹³ NKBT 65: 29. The passage is difficult to interpret and may be corrupt.

¹⁴ *Shigeyuki-shū*, SST 1: 667.

¹⁵ NKBT 12: 333-4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ NKBT 14: 414.

“learning the hand”) originally seems to have referred specifically to learning to write *waka* poems.¹⁸

Training probably began with copying down famous poems of the past. The *Kokinshū* preface quotes two poems (known by their first line as the *Naniwazu* poem and the *Asakayama* poem), which it hails as “the mother and father of the *uta*” (*uta no chichi haha*) because of their importance in the poetic education of young poets:¹⁹

At Naniwa bay
the flowers must be blooming.
Winter seclusion—
the flowers must be blooming
to announce that spring is here.

難波津に咲くや木の花
冬こもり今は春べと咲くや木の花

Mount $\frac{\text{Asaka}}{\text{shallow}}$ —
The mountain well is so shallow
that you can see its reflection in it,
although my feelings for you
are everything but shallow.²⁰

安積香山影さへ見ゆる山の井の
浅き心をわが思はなくに

It is unclear why exactly these two poems, of all poems, were singled out for such an important

¹⁸ Kawamura Yūko, *Ōchō seikatsu no kisō chishiki: koten no naka no joseitachi* (Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2005), 60.

¹⁹ NKBZ 7: 51.

²⁰ The Asakayama poem is included in the *Man'yōshū* (XVI: 3807; SNKBZ 9: 120-3). Numerous inscriptions of the Naniwazu poem have been found on *mokkan* (wooden tablets), ceramic bowls, and other materials dating from as far back as the seventh century. See, Inukai Takashi, *Mokkan kara saguru waka no kigen* (Kasama Shoin, 2008); David Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 261-3.

task, but it is possible that it had something to do with the fact that both either were or were perceived to be poems of praise for the imperial family. In Tsurayuki's time the Naniwazu poem was believed to have been composed by the legendary Korean scholar Wani to celebrate the beginning of Emperor Nintoku's reign (4th century).²¹ According to lengthy note in prose that follows the poem in the *Man'yōshū*, the Asakayama poem was composed by a palace woman to lift the spirits of Prince Katsuragi after he had been angered by the rude behavior of a provincial governor. Inukai Takashi suggests that whereas the Naniwazu poem was used mainly for writing practice, the Asakayama poem—because of its greater technical sophistication—was used to learn poetic technique and how to use poems to express feelings successfully.²²

First, students learned to write the poems in individual letters. Once this stage had been sufficiently mastered, they could move on to combining them together to produce the flowing script common in Heian-period *kana* manuscripts. A scene in the “Young Lavender” (Wakamurasaki) chapter of the *Tale of Genji* is built around exactly this transition. Genji sends off a letter to the nun who is tutoring Murasaki in the hope of convincing her to let him take her home with him. He includes a passionate poem in which he vows that his intentions are most serious. The nun's reply, however, is not what Genji had hoped to hear: “How very difficult all this is! What reply can I possibly give him? She wrote: “[...] Surely there is no point in pursuing it, since she cannot even write the Naniwa-zu poem in cursive yet! (*mada Naniwazu o dani hakabashiu tsuzuke-haberazamereba*).”²³ Her reply indicates that Murasaki had not yet made the transition to cursive writing.

²¹ NKBZ 7: 51.

²² Inukai Takashi, *Mokkan kara saguru waka no kigen*, 58.

²³ NKBZ 13: 303; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, 96. I took the liberty of modifying the last part of Tyler's translation, which reads: “she cannot even write her *kana* letters properly yet.”

Who studied *waka*? It is probable that before composing *waka* became something of a mandatory occupation for everyone at court, learning to compose was primarily the prerogative of the children and close relatives of poets. Kintō's *Shinsen zuinō* cites two poems that, it notes, were given by the leading *Kokinshū*-time poets Ise and Fukayabu to Nakatsukasa and Motosuke, (their daughter and grandson respectively), as examples of how “poems should be composed.” (*kaku yomu beshi*).²⁴ In-house transmission from parent to child was the standard method of imparting knowledge in all areas, and *waka* must have been no exception.²⁵

It seems unlikely that, at least initially, poets from outside the house were hired to tutor children. The earliest known case of a formal agreement between a student and an external teacher is that between Nōin (998-1050) and Fujiwara no Nagatō (or Nagayoshi, 947?-1015?), which is mentioned in Kiyosuke's *Fukurozōshi* (Folded Notes, c. 1158).²⁶ According to the anecdote, the axis of Nōin's cart broke right in front of Nagatō's house and Nōin took the opportunity to pay Nagatō a visit and question him on the art of poetry. Nagatō responded with a poem, and Nōin was so impressed by it that he immediately asked Nagatō to become his formal mentor. If true, the episode would date from not too long before 1015 (Nōin was born in 998 and Nagatō died around 1015).

To return to the poems by Ise and Fukayabu mentioned in *Shinsen zuinō*, Kintō does not say what exactly Nakatsukasa and Motosuke were supposed to learn from these poems. He does so, presumably, because he thought that a good sample poem was all that a student needed to learn how to compose. Learning from example is a special type of learning: the student is

²⁴ NKBT 65: 27.

²⁵ Kudō, *Heianchō*, 156-160.

²⁶ SNKBT 29: 117. Nagatō died around 1015 and Nōin was born in 998, so if true, the episode must date from not much earlier than 1015

presented with a finished artifact and is asked to reverse-engineer it, so to speak, in order to understand how it was made and be able to replicate the process in the future. The popularity on this type of learning in Heian times might explain why so few pedagogic texts dating from this period survive: for a society used to learning from example, any good poetry collection was a far better pedagogic tool than any treatise on composition, no matter how comprehensive or clearly presented.

If we know little about how poetry was studied in the earliest stages of the poet's education, we know even less about how training continued after the initial steps of copying and memorizing large quantities of existing poetry. During the medieval period, it became standard practice to submit drafts of one's compositions to a master for comments and corrections.²⁷ Some medieval manuscripts are extant that bear the students' attempts and the master's corrections in inks of different color, providing scholars with detailed information on what exactly training consisted in.²⁸ While there is no evidence of such activity being conducted in the tenth century, we do know that poets were constantly evaluating and critiquing each other's poems. It is only reasonable to assume that learners took advantage of this situation, and used the advice of more experienced poets to hone their skills.

There is an anecdote in, a story in Kiyosuke's *Fukurozōshi* that, although most probably spurious, describes what must have been a very common situation. As the story goes, the prominent poet Yoshinobu was once invited to a Day of the Rat banquet at the residence of Prince Atsumi, a brother of emperor Daigo's known for his keen interest in the arts.²⁹ As it was

²⁷ The practice was known as *tensaku*.

²⁸ See, for instance, Kanechiku Nobuyuki, "Fujiwara Teika *Omuro gojusshu sōkō ni tsuite*," *Kokubungaku kenkyū* 77 (March 1983), 131-142.

²⁹ The day of the Rat (*ne no hi*) was celebrated on the first day of the Rat of the year.

customary on such occasions, Yoshinobu composed a celebratory poem for the host, which earned him great praise.³⁰ When comprehensibly pleased he hurried home to tell his father Yorimoto (himself a respected poet), however, Yorimoto's reaction was not what Yoshinobu expected: "That's preposterous," Yorimoto retorted, "What sort of poem are you going to make when you are called to the Palace for the Emperor's Day of the Rat? You are a hopeless fool!"³¹ The level of praise in a festive poem, Yorimoto's response implied, should be tailored to the status of the recipient; if one used the highest possible level of praise in a poem destined to a "mere" prince, then there would be no room for upgrading when composing for someone of even higher station.

With the humor typical of the *setsuwa*, the story illustrates the important role that peer feedback plays in learning of any kind and that it probably played in *waka*'s case as well. Tenth-century poets were constantly crossing paths with better or more experienced poets. It is only sensible to assume that they took advantage of this opportunity and sought guidance and feedback from their peers. In a society where everyone was a poet, in other words, every poetic performance before other poets could potentially turn into an impromptu master class on the art of composition.³²

One of the rituals that were performed on the day was the plucking of young herbs (*wakana-tsumi*), which was also a prominent poetic topic.

³⁰ The poem was a typical Heian congratulatory poem (*ga no uta*): "The pine that usually lives for a thousand years / will it last for ten-thousand generations today that my Lord plucks it?" (千歳までかぎれる松も今日よりは / 君に引かれて万代やへむ). The poem was included in the *Shūishū* (I: 24).

³¹ *Fukurozōshi*, SNKBT 29: 133-4.

³² A rare document of poetic feedback in the tenth century can be found in book three of the *Kagerō nikki* (Kagerō Diary, c. 974), the memoir by Michitsuna's Mother (Michitsuna no haha). Here the author receives a batch of poems from her husband Kaneie, with a request to choose the best. SNKBT 24:291; Seidensticker, *The Gossamer Years*, 144.

It is also worth mentioning the particular kind of training provided by poem-stories. These stories did not so much teach how to compose poems, as how to harmonize them to the occasion, an important skill in its own right. By detailing the situations in which the famous poets of the past had crafted their masterworks, poem-stories provided poets with valuable guidance on how to tailor their poems to the context.

The *waka* idiom

Through the study of existing poems and advice from more experienced poets young poets learned the art of composition. In the following pages, I will attempt to summarize what it is that they learned.

a. Diction

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of *waka*, besides its extreme conciseness and the 5-7-5-7-7 meter is the recurrence of a finite number of words. To be a *waka* poet meant first and foremost to be familiar with the ample yet finite set of words considered suitable for use in poetry.

Although some concept that poetry was a special domain of expression distinct from ordinary language must have existed from very early on, it was with the compilation of the *Kokinshū* that the idea of poetic diction (*kago* or *utakotoba*)—a special vocabulary for use in poetry—really took shape. In order to compile the anthology, the editors sifted the verse of the previous one hundred and fifty years and selected for inclusion only work that complied with the highest standards of refinement in terms of both imagery and diction. The result of this meticulous process of selection was a distilled lexicon of just over two thousand words that front

this point on came to be regarded as the basic core of *waka* diction.³³

Not every item in this still fairly expansive body of words had equal importance. Some words appear in dozens, sometimes hundreds of different poems in the surviving corpus, while some were rarer, sometimes as rare as a single occurrence in the entire surviving corpus of *waka* poems. To give just one example, the word *hito* (person, you, people) appears in well over two-hundred poems in the *Kokinshū* alone, whereas ‘wings’ (*hane*) appears only once, in poem no. 191. If one considers only terms that recur with reasonable frequency, the basic poetic lexicon was in fact much smaller than two thousand words.

TABLE 4-1.

Kokinshū Diction by Word Class³⁴

Word Class	Unique words
Nouns	934
Pronouns	29
Verbs	625
Proper nouns	156
Adjectives	96
(Makurakotoba)	47
Adverbs	49
Adjectival verbs	35
Particles	48
Auxiliary verbs	22
Other	30
Total	2,071

³³ Formal definitions of “words for poetry” (*kago* or *utakotoba*) do not appear until much later. One of the earliest is the one that appears in the *Nigonshō* 二言抄 (Two-Part Notes, 1403), a poetic treatise by the medieval poet Imagawa Ryōshun 今川了俊 (1326-1414): “The words in the first three imperial collections and in the collected poems of the 36 Immortal Poets are called the “words for poetry” [*utakotoba*]; words that do not appear in these works should be called ordinary words [*tadagoto*].” Quoted in Komachiya Teruhiko, *Kokinwakashū to utakotoba hyōgen* (Iwanami Shoten, 1994), 104.

³⁴ Source: Takizawa Sadao, “*Kokinshū no yōgo*,” in *Kokinwakashū*, ed. Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryō Kankōkai, *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho* (Yūseidō, 1976), 295.

For many of the most important terms there were variants of narrower semantic range that could be used in lieu of the more general term. The variants for *kumo* (cloud), for instance, included *shiragumo* (white clouds), *ukigumo* (floating clouds), *amagumo* (heavenly clouds), and *toyowata-gumo* (far-stretching clouds). The variant could be used in lieu of the generic noun, as with ‘river plover’ (*kawachidori*) and ‘beach plover’ (*hamachidori*) for ‘plover’ (*chidori*), or *yamazakura* (mountain cherry tree) for *sakura* (cherry tree). Besides being very useful for tailoring the diction of the poem to specific content, these compound forms also allowed poets to dislodge the same word in different parts of the poem: five-syllable compounds like *hamachidori* and *yamazakura*, for instance, were perfect for use in one of the five-syllable lines of a *waka*; by adding the prefix *yama* (mountain) to the five-syllable word *hototogisu* (cuckoo) one could transform it into a seven-syllable compound perfect for use in one of the seven-syllable lines of the poem.³⁵

Some of the more important terms in the lexicon were often used in conjunction with “pillow words” (*makurakotoba*). These were standard embellishments that had been used in poetry since the remotest antiquity but continued to be used throughout *waka*'s history, partly because of their archaic resonance, and partly because they allowed to fill lines at no effort. With the word it preceded, the *makurakotoba* formed a fixed chain of words that stretched over more than one line, as in *azusayumi haru* (catalpa-bow spring), *chihayaburu kami* (awe-inspiring Gods), *shirotae no koromo* (bright-white robes), etc.³⁶

³⁵ The same was true of compound verbal forms formed by adding the prefixes *uchi-* and *kaki-* to the standard form of the verb. The addition of the prefix allowed poets to dislodge the same word in different parts of the poem without altering its basic meaning.

³⁶ What *waka* specialists today call the *jo* 序 (preface) can be considered a more elaborate variant of the *makurakotoba*. Unlike the *makurakotoba*, the *jo* extended over several lines, but its function as an embellishment of a word with often no bearing on the meaning of the rest of the poem, was the same. See, Pekarik, “Poetics,” 15.

Placenames (*utamakura* 歌枕 or *meisho* 名所) were an important subdomain of the lexicon. Sugitani Jurō estimates that one in five poems in the first two imperial *waka* anthologies contains a place-name.³⁷ Many different theories have been proposed to explain the extraordinary popularity of placenames in classical poetry, but surely an important reason for their popularity was their usefulness for composition, which was in turn tied to their potential for association. Starting roughly in the *Kokinshū* age, each placename came to be strictly associated with a specific image or use.³⁸ The Kasuga plain in Yamato was where one went to pluck young sprouts at the beginning of spring; River Tatsuta, also in Yamato, was where maple leaves floating on the surface looked like brocade to the poet, and so on. These fixed associations greatly simplified the work of the poet: all one had to do was to select a placename from the set of established ones and they would instantly have ready-made content to fill the rest of the poem. By the same token, a thought or idea instantly acquired an aura of poetic legitimacy when tied to the appropriate locale. This “binding” characteristic of place-names must have appealed especially to less experienced poets, as the late-Muromachi poet-scholar Shōtetsu (1381-1459) notes in his *Shōtetsu monogatari* (Conversations with Shōtetsu, c. 1450)

Beginners like to compose poems using placenames because they find it easy. Even we [experienced poets] use placenames when we find it difficult to compose a poem. If you use a placename, two or three lines are filled, and no effort is required from the poet. If you use phrases like "Kajinohara at Takashima" or "The shore pine at fair-waved Shiga" two lines will be quickly filled.

初心の時は、名所の歌が好みて詠まるゝ也。それは、安く存ずる也。我

³⁷ Sugitani Jurō, “Chokusenshū no tenkai: *Gosenwakashū*,” in *Ōchō no waka*, ed. Ariyoshi Tamotsu et al. (Benseisha, 1993), 34, 49.

³⁸ Katagiri Yōichi, “Utamakura no seiritu,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 4 (1970); Komachiya Teruhiko, “*Kokinshū* no utamakura,” *Nihon bungaku* 15.8 (August 1966): 550-558.

らも歌の詠まれぬ時は、名所を詠む也。名所を詠めば、二句三句も詞がふたがるものなれば、さのみ我力が入らぬ也。「高嶋やかぢのゝ原」「さゝ波やし賀の浜松」などいへば、二句ははやふさがる也。³⁹

Their use also presented some disadvantages. Associations laded placenames with meanings that made their use suitable to some contexts, and less so to others. The place-name had to be chosen with care, that is, in accordance with the overall tone of the poem, or the composition would sound irremediably off-key, as the poet-recluse Kamo no Chōmei (1155-1216) notes in his *Mumyōshō* 無名抄 (Nameless Treatise, 1209-12):

The placenames from the various provinces are many, but they must be used in accordance with the tone [*sugata*] of the poem. Just as [you perceive something odd and strange] when you see a garden in which a rock has been put where a pine should have been placed, or where a mountain has been built where a pond should have been dug, so a poem must be designed in accordance with the "reputation" of the placename. This is a precious teaching. If the placename does not match the tone of the poem, the contrast might produce an interesting effect, but the poem will sound fractured.⁴⁰

国々の歌枕、敷も知らず多かれど、其歌の姿に随ひてよむべき所のある也。たとへば、山水を作るに、松を植ふべき所には岩を立て、池を掘り水をまかすべき地には山を築き、眺望をなすがごとく、其所の名によりて、哥の姿をば飾るべし。是等いみじき口伝なり。若哥の姿と名所とかけ合はず成りぬれば、こと違ひたるやうにて、いみじき風情有れど、破れて聞ゆる也。

How many placenames did the average poet know? The “wide version” (*kōhon*) of the *Nōin utamakura* 能因歌枕 (Nōin’s Words for Poetry), a *waka* lexicon compiled by Nōin (988-?) in the first half of the eleventh century, lists 725 placenames, divided by province. It is likely that the average, run-of-the-mill poet did just fine with many less. A figure closer to what must have

³⁹ NKBT 65: 215.

⁴⁰ NKBT 65: 91.

been the number of places known to most poets can be obtained by looking at the number of placenames that are mentioned in the *Kokinshū*. Fujiwara no Teika's *Banbutsu burui wakashō* (also known as *Godai kan'yō*) lists 105 places in the order they appear in the anthology;⁴¹ the index at the back of the Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei edition gives 125.⁴²

b. Associations

Familiarizing oneself with the lexicon was only the first step of the process. Words had to be arranged into lines, and these into full poems. In order to compose, one had to know not only which words to use but how to combine them in appropriate ways.

The imperial poetry collections were great tools to study associations. In order to give these works a coherent structure the editors of these works grouped together poems that were similar in terms of diction, theme, and situation. As a result of this, poems that use certain topics or images tend to appear grouped in specific sections of the work and not in others, making the task of identifying patterns extremely easy.

A couple of examples will suffice to illustrate the principle. *Kiri* (haze) is mentioned in five of the Autumn poems of the *Kokinshū* (nos. 176, 235, 252, 265, and 266). At a rough paraphrase, these poems state that the haze ‘rises’ (*tatsu*) as the wild geese (*kari*) cry (*naku*); that it rises as the maple leaves (*momiji*) turn red on Asanohara in Kataoka; that it provides a hiding place (*kakuru*) for the timid ‘maiden flower’ (*ominaeshi*); that it ‘hides’ (*kakusu*) from view the

⁴¹ The text is now a section of the *Banbutsu burui wakashō* 万物部類和歌抄 (A Waka Manual of All Things by Category), NKT supp. vol. 3, 182-3. The list is given in Appendix ? ‘Placenames.’ Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) was the premiere intellectual personality between the late twelfth and the early thirteenth century. An avid collector, scholar, commentator and copier of old texts, Teika is almost single handedly responsible for preserving and transmitting to posterity countless Heian literary texts.

⁴² SNKBT 5: 23-30.

‘brocade’ (*nishiki*) of ‘maple leaves’ (*momiji*) near ‘Mount Saho’ (*Saoyama*). With the words *tatsu*, *kari*, *momiji*, *nishiki*, *ominaeshi*, *kakuru*, *Soayama*, and *Kataoka*, *kiri* formed a cluster of related words that it was proper and desirable to use together in an autumn poem. The give just another example, *hanatachibana* (orange mandarin) appears in three of the Summer poems of the *Kokinshū* (poems nos. 139, 141, and 155). In the first, its ‘scent’ (*ka*) brings back memories of ‘somebody’ (*hito*) ‘long ago’ (*mukashi*) as the poet ‘waits’ (*matsu*) for the ‘fifth month’ (*satsuki*). In the remaining two, it is the home (*yado*) where the cuckoo (*hototogisu*) dwells (*yadosu*) and cries (*naku*). Again, it is possible to say that with *satsuki*, *matsu*, *ka*, *hito*, *hototogisu*, *naku*, and *koe*, the word *hanatachibana* formed a cluster of related words that it was proper and desirable to use together.

The step between detecting patterns in how the poets of the past had used certain words and thinking in terms of groups of words that went well with one another was not very long. Already in the early eleventh-century *Nōin utamakura* (Nōin's words for poetry) one comes across entries like the following:

Grass of forgetfulness: is another name for the miscanthus. It grows at Sumiyoshi.

Crop-carrying bird: used in autumn.

Osprey: associated with waiting on the ragged shore etc.

[...]

The orange mandarin, the pink, the mountain rose, the wisteria, the plum, and the bush clover all are said to glow [*niou*].⁴³

By the mid-twelfth century, these still rather rudimentary notes on word association become full-fledged lists of prescribed associations. The list below is from the *Waka shogakushō* 和歌初学抄 (First Studies in *waka*, c. 1169), a poetry manual written by the eminent poet-scholar

⁴³ NKT 1:124.

Kiyosuke:

Moon:

Glitter, to pierce through, unobstructed, clear, bright, face, dim, to appear, to hide, to shine, surface, to cloud over

Clouds:

To rise, to stay, to clear, to return, to cling upon, to soar, to linger, to fly, to divide, to float, to cross

Mist:

To linger, to divide, to hide, to fill, to rise, to soar, to flow, vague, faint

Haze:

To rise, to divide, to fill, never clears, to fall

Dew:

Beads, glitter, to cover, to form a bond, to drop, to freeze, to throw oneself upon, to cling on, to get wet⁴⁴

The fact that the *Waka shogakushō* dates from the mid-twelfth century should not mislead readers. What Kiyosuke and other authors of similar manuals did is simply probe the important texts of the *waka* tradition and extract from them lists of words that were used in combination with one another. Although no tenth-century work of such systematicity is known to have been written, the same kind of analysis was technically available to anyone with a copy of a major poetry collection.

Rather than as a single, immense repository of independent words and phrases, therefore, it may be more accurate to think of poetic diction as an assemblage of many smaller lexical domains, each built around a core image and suited to a particular context of use. Rather than of a single, large *waka* diction, it is more accurate to speak of “Spring diction,” “Winter diction,” “Love diction,” and, within these still fairly large subdivisions, of ‘early spring diction,’ ‘late

⁴⁴ Kiyosuke, *Waka shogakushō*, NKT 2: 131-32.

extremely easy.

c. **Lines, patterns, poems**

Word choice was constrained by line length. Having lines of five and seven syllables each meant that not everything could go anywhere in a poem. A five-syllable line, for instance, could only accommodate one of a limited number of possible combinations: a single five-syllable word (e.g. *karakoromo*); a four-syllable noun with a one-syllable particle (e.g. *momijiba wa*); a three-syllable noun and a two-syllable verb (e.g. *Kasumi tatsu*), and so on.

One way to avoid thinking too much about line length and syllable count was to use lines from other poems. This was common practice, even among first-rate poets like Tsurayuki.⁴⁶ A glance at the finding index at the back of the Nihon Koten Shinsho edition of the *Kokinshū* shows that 178 lines in the anthology appear in three or more poems.⁴⁷ More than a half of the poems in the *Kokinshū*, in other words, contain one such ready-made line.⁴⁸

TABLE 4-3.

High-frequency lines in the *Kokinshū*

<i>Hototogisu</i> (31)	<i>hito no kokoro no</i> (7)
<i>Sakurabana</i> (28)	<i>Ōsaka no</i> (7)
<i>Ashihiki no</i> (19)	<i>Shirayuki no</i> (7)
<i>Ominaeshi</i> (16)	<i>Tatsutagawa</i> (7)
<i>Mume no hana</i> (15)	<i>Wa ga yado no</i> (7)
<i>Uguisu no</i> (12)	<i>Yo no naka no</i> (7)
<i>Omoedomo</i> (10)	<i>Yo no naka wa</i> (7)

⁴⁶ Usami, “Tsurayuki no eika hōhō,” in *Heian bungaku kenkyū seisei*, ed. by Itō Yūko et al. (Kasama Shoin, 2005).

⁴⁷ Katagiri Yōichi, ed. *Kokin wawakshū* (Sōeisha, 1980), 486-612.

<i>Karakoromo</i> (10)	<i>Aki no yo no</i> (6)
<i>Hisakata no</i> (10)	<i>Amanogawa</i> (6)
<i>Aki no no ni</i> (10)	<i>Azusayumi</i> (6)
<i>Akikaze ni</i> (8)	<i>Imasara ni</i> (6)
<i>Chihayaburu</i> (8)	<i>Kaminazuki</i> (6)
<i>Miyoshino no</i> (8)	<i>Okuyama no</i> (6)
<i>Mono naraba</i> (8)	<i>Omōezu</i> (6)
<i>Shirakumo no</i> (8)	<i>Yo no naka ni</i> (6)
<i>yamahototogisu</i> (8)	<i>utsuroinikeri</i> (6)

If the ready-made line was part of a more complex pattern spreading over multiple lines, adopting it determined the structure of the entire poem. One such pattern is the pattern “if X is not Y / then why does X act like Y?,” which centers around the concessive clause *aranaku ni* and its variant *aranedomo*, both usually found in the third line of the poem. Below are two examples, both by Tsurayuki:

Though my love is no unfamiliar mountain path,
Here I am lost in love for you!

わがこひはしらぬ山ちにあらなくに
迷ふ心ぞわびしかりける

Though what parting is not a color
it will no doubt dye my heart with sorrow.⁴⁹

別れてふことは色にもあらなくに
心にしみてわびしかるらむ

An even simpler method was to take an existing poem and modify parts of it to obtain a new one. Although the practice of using old poems as basis for new ones was only formally theorized in the early medieval period, it was also common in mid-Heian times. An example of “variation” dating from the tenth century is this poem that an anonymous mid-century poet composed based on an original by Mitsune (the original poem is given first):

⁴⁹ *Kokinshū* XII:597 and VIII:381; *NKBZ* 7: 181, 248.

If your love piles up like snow I cannot count on it,
for come spring it will have vanished.

君が思ひ雪とつもらばたのまれず
春よりのちはあらじと思へば

I cannot count on love that piles up like white snow,
for come spring it will have vanished.⁵⁰

白雪のつもる思ひもたのまれず
春より後はあらじと思へば

The differences between the two poems are so slight that it is probably more accurate to speak of two versions of the same poem rather than of a poem and its variation.

A slightly more interesting example is the following pair of poems (the "original" is given first):

To be the only one to love is excruciating—
Can you teach somebody else to feel the same way?

ひとりのみ思へば苦し
いかにして同じ心に人を教へむ

To be the only one to love is excruciating—
the voice of the calling bird will reveal my love to you.⁵¹

ひとりのみ恋ふれば苦し
よぶこどり声になき出でて君に聞かせん

The most striking example of variation in the tenth century is a series of twenty-two poems that Minamoto no Shitagō and fellow poets Ki no Tokibumi and Ōnakatomi no Yoshinobu

⁵⁰ *Kokinshū* XVIII: 978 and *Gosenshū* XIV: 1071; NKBZ 7: 978; SNKBT 6: 316. In the *Gosenshū*, the poem is presented as a reply to a poem by Fujiwara no Kanesuke by an anonymous author.

⁵¹ *Gosenshū* nos. 602 and 690.

composed during a poetry session held at Shitagō's house in 961.⁵² All twenty-two poems begin with the first two lines of a famous poem by priest Manzei (fl. early 8th century):

What shall I compare this world to?
The vanishing trail of a boat rowing off at daybreak.⁵³

世の中をなにに譬へむ
朝びらき漕き去にし船の跡なきがごと

And here is one of Shitagō's variations:

What shall I compare this world to?
The cry of the crickets in the fields as trees and the grass wither away.⁵⁴

よのなかをなににたとへむ
草も木もかれゆくころの野辺のむしのね

d. Themes

Just as they inherited a lexicon of suitable words, lines, and patterns, mid-Heian poets also inherited from the past a range of established themes. Some of the main poetic themes had by this point already been codified into topics (*dai*), i.e. the set motifs on which poets composed at such formal venues as poetry contests, imperial excursions, etc. The majority of established themes, however, were so only in an informal sense. The list of established themes at this point included love, the seasons, the sorrow of parting, among others.

Perhaps the best way of going about trying to chart a range of the themes available to

⁵² *Shitago-shū*, no. 25; SST I: 426-7. According to the headnote, the gathering was held to mourn the sudden death of two of Shitagō's children.

⁵³ *Man'yōshū* III: 351; NKBT 2: 137.

⁵⁴ SST I: 427.

TABLE 4-2

TOPICS IN THE SEASONAL BOOKS OF THE *KOKINSHŪ**

SPRING I and II (Nos. 1~134; 134 poems)		SUMMER (Nos. 135~168; 34 poems)		AUTUMN I and II (Nos. 169~313; 145 poems)		WINTER (Nos. 314~342; 29 poems)	
Spring Begins (6) Snow (3) Warbler (6) Young herbs (6) Mist (1) Green (2) Willow (2) Birds (1) Calling bird (1) Geese returning (2) Plum (17)	(1 st month)	Late bloom The cuckoo Orange mandarin	(4 th month)	Autumn begins (2) Autumn wind (2) Tanabata (11) Waiting for the night (3) Night of the encounter (6) Parting after the encounter (2) Sad Autumn (4) Autumn night (3)	(7 th month)	Autumn showers (1) Winter at the mountain retreat (1) Ice (1)	(10 th month)
Cherry blossoms In bloom Scattering	(2 nd month)	The cuckoo First voice Crying cuckoo	(5 th month)	Autumn moon (5) (Bright, sad) Autumn Insects (10) Cricket (2) Insects (2) Pine Cricket (4) Cicada (2) Wild geese (8) First geese (5) Crying Geese (3) The Deer (5) Deer in the mountains (2) Deer among bush clover (3) Bush clover (2) Dew (5) Maiden Flower (13) “Purple Trousers” (3) Plume Grass (2) Carnations (1) Myriad grasses (2) Moongrass (1) Fields in Autumn (1)	(8 th month)	Snow (13) First snow (4) Falling snow (9)	(11 th month)
Cherry blossoms In bloom Scattering Wisteria Mountain Rose End of Spring	(3 rd month)	Lotus Summer moon Wild pink Last day of the 6 th month	(6 th month)	Autumn Trees and grasses (2) Maple leaves (17) Chrysanthemum (13) Maple leaves (25) Mountain rice paddies (3) End of autumn (5)	(9 th month)	Snow Waiting for spring amidst the snow Plum blossoms in the snow End of the year (5)	(12 th month)

* Source: Matsuda Takeo, *Kokinshū no kōzō ni kan suru kenkyū* (Kazama Shobō, 1965). The numbers in brackets indicate the number of poems on that theme.

mid-tenth century poets is to look at the themes that are treated in the *Kokinshū*. Indeed, the impact of the anthology was such that from almost immediately after its compilation, its whole content—from the vocabulary to the themes treated—came to be seen as required knowledge for any poet.

The *Kokinshū* divides poems into twenty thematic “Parts” or *bu*.⁵⁵ Within each part, however, the poems are grouped into smaller sub-groupings based on similarity of diction, theme, or context of composition. In the first of the two Spring volumes, for instance, the following eleven sub-groupings can be identified: Beginning of spring (6 poems), Snow (3) Warbler (6), Young herbs (6), Mist (1), Green (2), Willow (2), Birds (1), Calling bird (1), Geese return (2), Plum (17).⁵⁶ Although originally these groupings were no more than editorial tools to give the work greater structural coherence, because of the impact of the anthology and its role in the education of poets, they soon came to be seen as the themes to compose on.⁵⁷ For every of the major thematic categories, in other words, there were dozens, if not hundreds of sub-themes that every half-decent would have been able to treat.

A modern reader might well wonder why mid-Heian poets should choose to stick to a prescribed set of established themes rather than composing on whatever crossed their mind. Although this is not the place to venture into a lengthy discussion of the reasons, a few important ones can be mentioned. Perhaps the single, most important reason was the rise of composition on

⁵⁵ The thirteen categories are: Spring (2 volumes), Summer, Autumn (2 vols.) Winter, Congratulatory Poems, Parting, Travel, Acrostics, Love (5 vols.), Laments, Miscellaneous (2 vols.), Mixed Forms, and Poems from the Great Songs from the Bureau of Great Songs.

⁵⁶ The classic study of the topics of the *Kokinshū* is Matsuda Takeo, *Kokinshū no kōzō ni kan suru kenkyū* (Kazama Shobō, 1965).

⁵⁷ Tamura Ryūichi. “Kadai no keisei.” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, vol. 34, no. 13 (November 1999), 8.

set topics (*daiei*). The custom of composing of set topics encouraged both poets and audiences to focus only on a select range of topics deemed particularly “poetic.” Another reason was the imperative to be elegant that governed Heian aristocratic life in every area. What Heian poets were interested in describing was not the world in its entirety, but only those aspects of it that struck them as particularly beautiful or elegant. Anything that did not was cast off and ignored as unworthy of attention. A third reason was the fact that *waka* was used in daily life as a means of everyday communication. The theme of the poem, in other words, was not something that poets could have decided autonomously, but something that the situation—understood as a combination of time, place, and reason for composing the poem—dictated.

e. Treatment

Perhaps even more defining of the genre than the restricted vocabulary and the range of established themes was how the latter were treated. Indeed, nothing more than the particular way in which tenth-century poets handled their subject matter defines their poetry and sets it apart from the poetry of both earlier and later periods. Two features in particular can be said to characterize this way of looking at the theme: selectivity and obliquity.

Selectivity is the term that can be used to describe the custom of tenth century poets of focusing only on specific aspects of a theme. Spring poems, for instance, typically dealt with the arrival or the departure of spring, and with a limited range of spring images (mist, cherry blossoms, snow, etc.) Love poems only dealt with some aspects of the love affair while completely disregarding others.⁵⁸ This selective approach to the theme was also an effect to the

⁵⁸ Heian love poetry is famous for focusing only on the unhappy aspects of love (unrequited love, the sorrow of being forgotten, etc.). “Happy” love is virtually absent from Heian love poetry.

imperative to be elegant that governed aristocratic life in every situation; just as they composed only on topics that they considered sufficiently poetic, so Heian poets preferred to focus only on those aspects of the theme that struck them as particularly elegant or worthy of their attention.

The other defining feature of the way tenth-century poets looked at their subject matter is what Konishi Jin'ichi, borrowing a term from Tang poetics, termed “obliquity.”⁵⁹ Obliquity refers to the various strategies that Heian poets employed to approach their subject matter “from the side, taking a roundabout way instead of proceeding straight toward his objective.”⁶⁰

The most instantly recognizable of these strategies is perhaps the *mitate* 見立て or visual confusion (sometimes translated “elegant confusion”). This consisted in deliberately mistaking one thing for another (snow for cherry blossoms, autumn leaves for brocade, etc.). Obliquity could also consist in finding a clever way to describe ordinary phenomena:

Even the green of the pine that is said to never change seems more intense,
now that spring has arrived!⁶¹

ときはなる松の緑も春くれば
いまひとしほの色まさりけり

Or in finding a highly improbable cause for perfectly common phenomena:

Deep into the mountains, the mist must be muffling it,
The cry of the warbler has grown faint.⁶²

⁵⁹ Obliquity is Helen McCullough's translation of the Chinese term *i'pang* 傍依, which T'ang-period poetics used to describe the style of Six-Dynasties poets. According to Konishi, Six Dynasty poetry exerted a major influence on Japanese poets of the tenth century.

⁶⁰ Konishi, “The Genesis of the *Kokinshū* Style,” 71.

⁶¹ *Kokinshū* I:24, Minamoto no Muneyuki; NKBZ 7: 70.

⁶² *Chisato-shū*, no. 1; SST 1: 108.

やまふかみたちくる霧にむすればや
なく鶯の声のまれなる

As Konishi notes, the focus in these poems “is on the cleverness with which the poet has been able to describe external phenomena, rather than on the phenomena themselves.”⁶³ The aim is not to describe the objects and phenomena realistically or objectively, but to impress the audience with the brilliance of the observer’s wit. Readers wishing to know more about obliquity are referred to Konishi’s still unsurpassed study.

Imitation vs. shared knowledge

The foregoing pages obviously does not exhaust everything that a Heian poet needed to know to compose their *waka*. The main goal of the previous section has been to show that there was a body of technical knowledge that, if mastered, would have allowed anyone with a modicum of verbal ingenuity to compose poems that a contemporary audience would have appreciated. I then attempted to provide a rough overview of what this knowledge consisted of.

Before moving on to discussing several ways to apply this knowledge in actual composition, I would like to spend a few words on how this reliance on a shared pool of poetic ingredients may require a rethinking of the current understanding of imitation in *waka*.

Imitation in *waka* is usually discussed in terms of *honkadori*, or the practice of taking an old poem and use it as basis for a new one.⁶⁴ Although the practice was only formally theorized in early Kamakura times, notably by Teika in his treatises *Kindai shūka* (Superior Poems of Our

⁶³ Konishi, “Genesis of the *Kokinshū* Style,” 79.

⁶⁴ On *honkadori*, see David T. Bialock, “Voice, Text, and the Question of Poetic Borrowing.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (Jun. 1994): 181-231.

Time, 1209) and *Eiga no Taigai* (Essentials of Composition, c. 1221), it was common practice in earlier centuries as well.⁶⁵ But there was also another, much broader sense in which tenth-century poets “imitated” or “borrowed” from other poets: the entire poetic activity, as I have shown, was predicated upon the thorough knowledge of and capacity to use the repertory of words, lines, themes and techniques that poets inherited from their predecessors and shared with their contemporaries. Even when they did not cite a specific poem or a specific poet, Heian poets still “cited” old poetry by relying on established images, words, or themes.

The main difference between the two types of imitation is the very different relationship between author and poem that they presuppose. At the heart of the medieval notion of *honkadori* lies an understanding of the poem as the property of a specific poet. Teika is very clear on the subject: “with regard to poems by one’s fellow poets, even if they are no longer living, if they have been composed so recently that they might be said to have been written yesterday or today, I think it essential to avoid using any part of such a poem, even a single line, that is distinctive enough to be recognized as the work of a particular poet.”⁶⁶ No such strong link between author and poem existed in the case of imitation understood as reliance on a shared pool of ingredients. Here there were no individual poets to borrow from; the entire tradition was a pool of shared ingredients from which everybody was entitled to draw. The traditional understanding of imitation, therefore, must be expanded to make room for this other, more diffuse type of borrowing as reliance on a shared pool of poetic ingredients.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ A complete translation of the *Kindai shūka* can be found in Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Fujiwara Teika's Superior Poems of Our Time: a Thirteenth-century Poetic Treatise and Sequence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967).

⁶⁶ Brower and Miner, *Fujiwara Teika's Superior Poems of Our Time*, 45-6.

⁶⁷ This understanding of imitation bears significant similarities to the notion of cultural memory as developed by Haruo Shirane in his *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory*,

From ingredients to poems

How did one progress from a formless mass of disjointed ingredients to a finished poem? A useful source in this respect is Fujiwara no Kintō's *Shinsen zuinō* 新選髓腦 (*Newly Edited Essentials of Composition*), a short manual, probably missing some sections, dating from the beginning of the eleventh century. Unlike the *Waka kuhon* 和歌九品 (*Nine Grades of Waka*, 1008?), Kintō's only other extant work of poetics, the *Shinsen zuinō* was specifically targeted at an audience of beginners. The remark it contains, therefore, are the closest thing a modern reader can get to practical instruction on how to compose a *waka*. "Every *waka*," *Shinsen zuinō* begins:

has 31 syllables and five lines. The top three lines are called the base [*moto* 本], and the bottom two lines are called the end [*sue* 末]. If in composition one follows precedent, then there will be no faults in the poem. When a poem possesses depth of heart, its form is pure, and what it says is interesting, then it is considered a superior poem. If a poem reads like a sequence of too many things strung together it is considered bad. Poems should be composed as one unit. When it is difficult to balance heart and form, the heart should be given priority. Only if the heart lacks depth, should one labor on the form. [...] When attaining such balance proved impossible, the people of antiquity often laid a poem-pillow [*utamakura*] in the base, and expressed their hearts in the end. From the middle period, it was no longer necessarily so, but it was still considered undesirable to put out one's thoughts at the beginning. Tsurayuki and Mitsune were masters of this period, and people these days seem to prefer their style.⁶⁸

and the Poetry of Bashō (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Heian poets, too, worked with an inherited set of words, images, and themes, and they too contributed to creating a collective discourse on nature, life, and the world, which they then passed on to the next generations. The different was that there was less of a gap between them and their predecessors.

⁶⁸ Kintō, *Shinsen zuinō*, NKBT 65: 26. A complete (though not always precise) English translation can be found in Nicholas Teele, "Rules for Poetic Elegance. Fujiwara Kinto's *Shinsen Zuino* & *Waka Kubon*." *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 31 no. 2 (Summer 1976): 145-64.

うたのありさま三十一字惣而五句あり。上の三句をば本と云ひ、下の二句をば末といふ。一字二字あまりたれども、うちよむに例にたがはねば、癖とせず。凡そ哥は心ふかく姿きよげに、心にをかしき所あるを、すぐれたりといふべし。事おほく添へくさりてやと見ゆるが〔いと〕わるきなり。一すぢすくよかになむよむべき。心姿相具する事かたくは、まづ心をとるべし。終に心ふかゝらずは、姿をいたわるべし。そのかたちといふは、うち〔聞き〕きよげにゆへありて、哥ときこえ、もしはめづらしく、添へなどしたるなり。ともに得ずなりなば、いにしへの人おほく本に哥まくらを置きて、末に思ふこころをあらわす。さるをなむ、中比よりはさしもあらねど、始めにおもふ事をいひあらはしたる、わるきことになんする。

Kintō takes from earlier poetics (the *Kokinshū* prefaces, *uta-awase* criticism) the idea that poets should aim for a harmonious balancing of emotion (*kokoro*) and words (*kotoba*). He takes the idea one step further, replacing the ‘words’ or earlier poetic discourse with ‘form’ (*sugata*), or the global effect resulting from the skillful distribution of words within the poem.⁶⁹ When achieving such balancing proves difficult, Kintō mentions a method which, he claims, had been in use since ancient times: to lay a poem-pillow (*utamakura*) in the top half of the poem, and to save the idea or emotion for the rest. The advice is straightforward enough, but what exactly was an *utamakura* and what is Kintō exactly suggesting to do?

Today *utamakura* is generally considered synonymous with *meisho* (famous places). In Kintō’s time, however, as first pointed out by Nakajima Kōfū in the 1940s, the term referred to a much broader range of words and phrases.⁷⁰ A good sense of the original meaning of *utamakura* can be gained from the following entries in the eleventh-century compendium *Nōin utamakura*

⁶⁹ Many critics view the distinction between *kokoro* and *sugata* as a development of the earlier *kokoro/kotoba* distinction presented in texts such as the *Kokinshū* preface. *Sugata* is generally taken to refer to the global effect produced by the poem’s wording.

⁷⁰ Nakajima Kōfū, “‘Utamakura’ gengi kōshō,” in *Jōsei kagaku no kenkyū* (Chikuma Shobō, 1945), 180-296.

(Nōin's Words for Poetry):

'Wind.' Spring wind. Autumn wind. It depends on the time of year.

Rice-carrying bird. Must be used in autumn [poems].

'Mandarin duck.' Lives in the mountains. Also called "Since we parted..."

[...]

If you compose on a barrier, use the Ōsaka Barrier, the Shirakawa Barrier, the Koromo Barrier, Fuha Barrier, among others.

For rivers, use Yoshino River, Tatsuta River, Ōi River, etc.

[...]

'River mouth' is the point where a river enters the sea.

'Water edge' is the river shore.

'water-top' means the water surface of the water.

[...]

'Beaded vine.' Use with 'droop.' (it's a vine).

'Catalpa bow.' When you want to use the word 'spring,' you say 'catalpa bow' first.⁷¹

Here grouped in no particular order are placenames, pillow words, names of plants, animals, inanimate objects, utensils, and atmospheric phenomena. All these seemingly disparate classes of words, however, have something in common: they all refer to objects and phenomena from the outside world, everything, in other words, that was not related to human psychology. Thus, *utamakura* in Kintō's time meant words that named things and phenomena from the world of experience, or, as I will call them hereafter, world-words.⁷²

A brief detour is necessary here. It is often said that classical Japanese poets were particularly sensitive to nature. What is much less often emphasized is that incorporating nature in a poem was something of a compositional requirement. The *kana* preface states: "Many are the activities the people of the world engage in, so they voice what lies in their hearts by

⁷¹ *Nōin utamakura* (kōhon); NKT 1: 73-85.

⁷² I use "world words" instead of the better sounding "Nature words" because these expressions included man-made objects such as bridges, fishnets, combs, etc.

*associating it to the things [mono] they see and hear.*⁷³ This statement inserts a third pole between the traditional *kokoro-kotoba* dichotomy: *mono* or things in the outside world. For tenth-century poets, to put emotions into words meant to associate them to things and phenomena from the world of experience, that is, to mix *kokoro* and *mono*.

Here one finally comes to see the true meaning of *utamakura* and in what sense they were "pillows" to a poem: they named objects and phenomena from the world of experience that allowed poets to put their feelings into words.

Rereading Kintō's instructions with this understanding of *utamakura* in mind one finally comes to see their full significance. What Kintō is suggesting by "place an *utamakura* in the base, and the heart in the end," is not simply dislodging an ornamental term in the first part of the poem, but quite simply a solution to what was arguably the central problem that every poet faced: how to combine emotion (*kokoro*) and world (*mono*). The method he recommends is probably the simplest, most intuitive imaginable: to think of the poem as consisting of two separate halves, and to place one of the two element in each of the two.⁷⁴

If composition is seen as the process of linking a thought or emotion to a natural image, then it can be said that the secret to successful composition lied in knowing what went well with what, that is to say, to know what scene or object from the outside world was suited to express a certain psychological state. By the mid-tenth century, even an only moderately competent poet would not have had to think very hard to find the right trope. The early eleventh-century *Nōin utamakura* contains entries like the following:

⁷³ 「世の中にある人、ことわざ繁きものあれば、心に思ふことを、見るもの聞くものにつけて、言ひ出せるなり」 'Kana Preface,' NKBZ 7: 49, my emphasis.

⁷⁴ Modern *waka* scholars, and especially *Man'yōshū* specialists, commonly refer to this type of "split" composition as *joka* 序歌 (preface-poem).

Duckweed [*ukikusa*, lit. floating grass or grass of sorrow] is used to express sorrow and sense of futility.

[...]

Freshet [*Niwatazumi*] is the foam that forms when the rain falls resembling gems. It is used to express impermanence.⁷⁵

By the late-Heian period, these succinct notes on usage become complete catalogues of images suited to express particular feelings or moods. The list below is from the "Established Tropes"

(*Tatoekitaru mono* 喩来物) section of Kiyosuke's *Waka shogakushō*:

To say 'short':
a string of beads; a summer night; a spring night

To say 'hard':
A rocky shore

For things that make sounds:
the wind; waves; echo; water rail; leaves; autumn rain; bush clover; torrent water;
river rapids

To say 'unrequited love':
abalone shells

To say 'painful':
The Iwami inlet

To say 'thin':
Summer robes; cicada wings; ice

To say 'apart':
Beach crinum (also used to say "overlapping"), mist, fog, a fence, robes

To say 'to in turmoil':
Shinobu fern pattern, thatching sedge, drooping reeds, a thatched fence,
Chinese-style straw mat, Japanese loom, hair after sleep, yarn

To say 'shallow':
A mountain stream, a mountain well, the water of a stream, pebbles of water

To say 'deep':

⁷⁵ *Nōin utamakura* (ryakubon), NKT 1: 70-71.

The bottom of the ocean; river deeps; mountain recesses; a valley; summer grass; the Horikane well

To say ‘incessantly’:

The wind from the bay; the waves at Tago Bay

For ‘end of a relationship’:

Blue obi, forgotten waters

To say ‘painful’:

duckweed [literally, floating grass]; floating clouds; clouds in the sky; foam; water shield; water fowl;

To say ‘empty’:

Cicada shell, the big heavens, an empty shell⁷⁶

Although the list is from a twelfth-century work, it is used here to illustrate the principle that for any given idea or feeling, there was a set of images or tropes that were considered suitable to express it. Any even only moderately competent poet would have been familiar with at least several of these.⁷⁷

Because as we have seen, every item in the lexicon was linked to other items in clusters of interconnected words, the choice of the trope could literally determine the wording for the entire poem. A poet who picked ‘river of tears’ (*namidagawa*) as the *utamakura* of choice to express her sorrow for the end of a love relationship would have instantly had at her disposal the set of words that went well with the phrase: *nagaru* (to flow), *yuku* (to go), *uku* (to float), *ushi*

⁷⁶ *Waka shogakushō*, NKT 2: 204-5; the examples are omitted.

⁷⁷ the link between emotion and image was in the vast majority of cases metaphorical. A crane was a suitable symbol to express despair at an unhappy because it “cried” (*naku*). a mountain well (*yama-i*) was a suitable symbol for superficial feelings because it was shallow; and so on. In some cases the link was based on the homophony between the name of the object and the emotional state, as in the canonical example *matsu* (pine) and *matsu* (to wait for someone).

[miserable], *shizumu* [to sink], *naku* [to cry], *wataru* [to cross], *se* [shoals or rapids], the depths [*fuchi*], *asashi* [shallow], *fukashi* [deep], etc.)⁷⁸ The *Toshiyori zuinō* 俊頼髓脳 (Toshiyori's Essentials, ca. 1113), a poetic treatise by the prominent twelfth-century poet Minamoto no Toshiyori (or Shunrai, 1055-1129), discusses a different example:

When composing a love poem, suppose that you want to make a poem about your unhappy predicament, what trope do you use to express your feelings? Suppose you decide to use “thin summer yarn” or “the spider’s thin yarn.” In that case, you could say “your love has broken off,” “[it] has broken off,” or you could say “to wind,” “again and again,” “insecure” [literally frail-hearted], or also “long” feelings, “my feelings are tangled,” “so tangled;” or you could tie it to “the fingers” [that pluck it], to “the loom,” etc. If you phrase everything according to the occasion and the situation of composition, then it will sound like a *waka*.⁷⁹

恋の歌をも詠み、身のことをもいはむと思はむには、思ひ寄るべきことは、なにとかあらむ。夏びきの糸とも、ささがにのいととも思ひ寄りなば、思ひ絶ゆとも、かき絶ゆとも、繰るにつけても、くりかへしとも、心細しとも、また、心ながしとも、思ひ乱るとも、かきみだるとも、わが手にかけ、しづはたにかけても、折節にしたがひていひながしつれば、歌めきぬる物なり。

Kintō provides several examples to illustrate his method for combining heart and world in a poem. One is a poem that apparently was given by Ise to her daughter Nakatsukasa as an example of how “poems should be composed” (*kaku yomu beshi*):

The Nagara Bridge in Naniwa has finally met its fate;
what is left for me now to compare myself to?⁸⁰

⁷⁸ This is a semi-comprehensive list of words that figure in the fourteen poems in the *Gosenwakashū* where the term *namidagawa* appears.

⁷⁹ Toshiyori, *Toshiyori zuinō*, NKBZ 50: 87-8. The source of many of these expressions is *Kokinshū* No. 703. All the terms mentioned are semantically related to yarn (*ito*).

⁸⁰ 伊勢の御が中務の君にかくよむべしといひける也。NKBT 65: 27. The poem appears in the *Kokinshū* (XIX: 1051) and in the *Kokin waka rokujō* under the heading ‘Bridge.’ Medieval commentators of the poem debated whether *tsukuru* should be interpreted as the

難波なる長柄の橋もつくる也
いまは我が身を何にたとへむ

Kintō does not provide any further explanation, but based on the foregoing analysis one can speculate that perhaps Ise wanted Nakatsukasa to learn the following from the example: suppose that you want to compose a poem on the sorrow of ageing; the first thing to do is to choose a trope suited to expressing this sentiment. The Nagara bridge in Naniwa is a suitable choice because the name Nagara (literally, long handle) is homophonous with *nagarau* (to last long) and with *nagashi* (long). The trope gives you a range of related imagery and diction: 'Naniwa' (where the bridge is located), Tsu province, '*wataru*' (to cross), etc. If you use the trope and related imagery in the top two or three lines of the poem, and leave your thoughts on the sorrow of ageing for the bottom half, you will have a poem.

Other recipes for combining *kokoro* and *mono*

Kintō's "split" method was only way of dealing with the *kokoro-mono* dichotomy. Using a trope to express one's thoughts was not an obligation. In theory, it was perfectly possible to do away with the trope altogether and fill the poem only with one's thoughts, stated in a direct way. This kind of "all-heart" composition is well attested in tenth and pre-tenth century texts. One of the rubrics under which poems are categorized in the *Man'yōshū* is 'Expressing one's thoughts directly' ('tada ni omohi wo nobu' 正述心緒). The style also appears as *tadagoto-uta* (plain-word poem) in the *Kokinshū* preface,⁸¹ and as 'Direct style' (*jikitei* or *jikitai* 直体) in the

shūshikei of the *yodan* verb *tsukuru* 作る (to build) or as the *rentaikei* of the *kami nidan* verb *tsuku* 尽く (to perish, to end, to rot). In my translation, I took it to mean to perish.

⁸¹ The *tadagotouta* is one of the six styles (*rikugi* or *mutsu no sama*) discussed in the

Waka jutteishu (*Ten Styles of waka*, ?), a short treatise of dubious attribution once believed to be by the *Kokinshū* compiler Tadamine. Here the following definition is given: "In the direct style one strives to convey the meaning directly without circumvention."⁸²

The potentialities offered by such direct statements, however, were limited. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine that a Heian courtier would have found plain if not trivial, poems that too closely resembled everyday language. Indeed, the essence of poeticity was thought to lie in verbal ornamentation, and it was precisely in terms of associating feelings with images from Nature that ornamentation was understood.

Far more popular than the “all-heart” approach in the tenth century, was the opposite approach, which consisted in doing away altogether with heart words altogether, and in filling the poem entirely with “world words.” This is what in Japanese-language scholarship are called *jokeika* 叙景歌 (landscape poems), seasonal poems (*shiki no uta*), or *eibutsu* (poems about things). Any poem from the seasonal books of the *Kokinshū* can serve as an example. Here are two:

A poem about the falling snow:

Fukayabu

Though it is still winter, blossoms come falling from the sky
Above the clouds, it must be spring already.

冬ながらそらより花のちりくるは
雲のあなたは春にやあるらむ

Prefaces. Although no definition is given, the following example is provided: “If this was a world without lies / What joy would his words bring me! (いつはりのなき世なりせばいかばかり人の言の葉うれしからまし). For a detailed discussion of the Six Styles, see Ozawa Masao, *Kodai kagaku no keisei* (Hanawa Shobō, 1963).

⁸²是直體、義實以無曲折為得耳; NKT 1: 46.

A poem about tree branches covered in snow:

Tsurayuki

Winter seclusion—
unexpected though it was
the snow keeps falling from among the trees
it resembles blossoms!⁸³

ふゆごもり思ひかけぬを
このまより花と見るまで雪ぞふりける

There is nothing here that one might call *kokoro* in the traditional sense. Both poems are descriptions of a natural scene and make no reference to what the poet might be going through personally.

In theory, even a poem that on the surface seemed a straightforward description of nature could contain a personal message. The Allegory, a poetic mode in which a message is hidden beneath a layer of seemingly unrelated imagery, was another established compositional styles.⁸⁴ An example of an allegorical poem is the following poem by Fujiwara no Yoruka (no dates):

When the crown prince was born, she came to see him and composed:

The sun that is now rising from behind the lofty peaks at Mount Kasuga
will soon shine, never to be obstructed by clouds.⁸⁵

みねたかき春日の山にいつる日は
くもる時なく照らすべらなり

⁸³ *Kokinshū* no. 331.

⁸⁴ It is called *hiyu-uta* 比喩歌 (metaphorical poem) in the *Man'yōshū*, *soeuta* (Allegory) or Comparison Poem (*nazuraeuta*) in the *Kokinshū* prefaces.

⁸⁵ *Kokinshū*, VII: 364; NKBZ 7:175.

As Hashimoto Osamu notes, without the prose headnote to inform that this was an auspicious poem made for the birth of a crown prince, one could easily mistake it for a typical Heian-time landscape poem.⁸⁶

In the vast majority of cases, however, seasonal or landscape poems were just that, graceful sketches from nature with no hidden message to convey. On close inspection, what happened was less the disappearance of the *kokoro* element altogether, than a fundamental change in how poets understood the concept. The shift in meaning is evident if one looks at how the word *kokoro* is used in the prose headnotes of tenth-century poetry collections. Here are a few random examples from the *Kokinshū* and the *Gosenshū*:

During the Kamyō era, he was commanded to present a collection of his old poems. One of them said “Maple leaves float on River Tatsuta,” so he composed one on the same *kokoro*. (KKS, no. 310)⁸⁷

Composed using the Tatsuta River to express the *kokoro* of the beginning of spring (KKS, no. 311)

On the sixth day of the seventh month, on the *kokoro* of Tanabata (KKS, no. 1014)

[A poem] on the *kokoro* of spring (GSS, no. 58)⁸⁸

In the Kamyō era, when he was commanded to compose a poem on the *kokoro* "blossoms hidden from view by the haze" (GSS, no. 73)

The *Kokoro* here is not a feeling in the heart of the poet that must find expression in words; it is in some cases the response that a natural scene or phenomenon elicits in the viewer, and in some other simply the mood of a particular scene or image; and in yet some other (GSS 73) simply the

⁸⁶ Hashimoto, *Ōchō wakashi no kenkyū*, 315.

⁸⁷ *Kokinshū* VI: 310; *NKBZ* 7: 157.

⁸⁸ *Kokinshū* nos. 310, 311, 1014; *Gosenshū* nos. 58, 73.

main conceit of the poem.

The main reason for this shift in meaning of the poetic *kokoro* was the rise of forms of composition “about things” (*eibutsu* 詠物, C. *yong wu*).⁸⁹ In composition “about things” (including its more formalized variant *daiei*) the traditional process from “heart” to “world” was reversed: the process began with an object or scene from the external world and the challenge was to find something suitably “poetic” to say about it. Obviously, in this kind of situation there was no particular emotional content that one wished to express. The exercise consisted rather in finding a sufficiently interesting way to handle the topic. Inevitably, “heart words” lost importance, while natural imagery became more and more prominence.⁹⁰

All the three methods examined (the split method, the all-heart method, and the all-world method) can be considered ways of handling the *kokoro-mono* dichotomy. According to Suzuki Hideo, it is possible to trace a line of development between these compositional styles. The split method is probably earlier than the all-nature method. Although some rare examples of landscape poems can be found in poems from the early periods of the *Man'yōshū*, the bulk of poems in this style date from what *Man'yōshū* specialists call the “third period” [ca. 700-730].⁹¹ In his discussion of the metaphorical poems (*hiyūka*), which can be considered a type of all-heart composition, Nakajima Kōfū also places the origins of this style with Yakamochi and his circle in the 740s.⁹² The all-heart style is probably the earliest of them all, dating back from when

⁸⁹ Composition about things entered Japan from China during the first half of the eighth century and rapidly became the dominant mode in formal settings. On the rise of *eibutsuka*, see McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 99, 135-8.

⁹⁰ The notable exception was, of course, love poetry, where for obvious reasons, they remained a core element throughout *waka*'s history.

⁹¹ Suzuki, *Kodai waka shiron*, 157, 174.

⁹² Nakajima, *Jōsei kagaku no kenkyū*, 363.

using nature was still not a requirement of composition. The following chapter will deal with the aesthetic considerations that might have been behind the development of these styles.

A Reference Book for Poets: The *Kokin waka rokujō*

If the secret to composing good poems was to become thoroughly familiar with the idiom developed by earlier poets, then it comes as no surprise that the greatest pedagogical work of the tenth century was not a particularly well-designed or clearly presented manual of composition, but a giant compendium of the great poetry of the past: the *Kokin waka rokujō* 古今和歌六帖 (Six Tomes of Waka Old and New, c. 983).⁹³

With its 4,500 plus poems divided into six volumes, the *Kokin waka rokujō* (hereafter simply *Rokujō*) was easily the largest editorial enterprise of its time. It is four times larger than the *Kokinshū*, three times the *Gosenshū*, and equal in number of poems to the giant Nara-period *Man'yōshū*. Unlike the compilers of the imperial *waka* anthologies, the anonymous compiler of the *Rokujō* was under no obligation to exclude poems that had already been featured in a previous anthology. The purpose of the collection was to gather in one place the largest possible amount of good poems, so significant overlap with earlier works was not only acceptable but desirable. Consequently, more than half of the poems in the *Rokujō* can also be found in previous works.⁹⁴

The idea behind the work was simple: to collect in one place the largest possible

⁹³ The author is unknown. The most common attribution is to Minamoto no Shitagō. Other names that have been suggested as possible authors are Prince Tomohira, Ki no Tsurayuki's daughter, and even Tsurayuki himself. See, Hirai Takurō, *Kokin waka rokujō no kenkyū* (Meiji Shoin, 1964), 20-41.

⁹⁴ 1,300 in the *Man'yōshū*, 700 in the *Kokinshū*, and 350 in the *Gosenshū*. Hirai, *Kokin waka rokujō no kenkyū*, 2.

number of existing poems and group them by keyword to facilitate their retrieval. In total, the *Rokujō* contains 517 sections corresponding to as many *dai* (keywords). The various sections are further grouped into the following twenty-four Parts (*bu*):

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, The Heavens (Book 1)
 Mountains, Rice paddies, Fields; The Capital; The Country: Home;
 People; Buddhist Things (Books 2)
 Water (Book 3)
 Love; Prayers; Parting (Book 4)
 Miscellaneous Thoughts, Attire and Ornaments, Colors, Fabrics (Book 5)
 Grasses, Insects, Trees, Birds (Book 6)⁹⁵

This organization replicates the structure of Tang and pre-Tang Chinese encyclopedias (*leishu*, J. *ruijū*) like the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (J. *Geimon Ruijū*, Classified Extracts of Literature) by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641), and the *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (J. *Shogakki*, 30 vol.) by Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729).⁹⁶ This method had already been successfully employed in Japan in the *Wamyō ruijūshō* 和名類聚抄 (Japanese Names by Category), a Sino-Japanese dictionary compiled by

⁹⁵ Kunaichō shoryōbu eds. *Kokin waka rokujō* (Nara: Yōtokusha, 1967), 14-5. All references to the text are to this edition.

⁹⁶ Unlike modern encyclopedias, which contain entries written specifically for the purpose, traditional Chinese encyclopedias gathered excerpts from existing works and organized them by subject matter. The *Yiwen leiju* groups the entries into the following categories: Sky, Seasons, Land, States, Districts, Mountains, Water, Imperial Orders, Emperors, Empresses, Palaces, Man, Rites, Music, State Offices, Feudal Titles, Government, Penal Law, Miscellaneous Letters, Military, Weapons, Dwellings, Production, Clothing, Ceremonial Accessories, Furniture, Vehicles, Edibles, Utensils, Crafts and Skills, Magic, Buddhist Things, Souls and Spirits, Fire, Medicinal Plants and Scents, Herbs, Jewelry, Grains, Fabrics, Fruits, Trees, Birds, Beasts, Scaly Animals, Insects and Worms, Omens and portents. The so-called "four great Tang encyclopedias" are the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (J. *Geimon ruijū*, 100 voll.), the *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (J. *Shogakki*, Encyclopedia for Beginners, 30 vol.) the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (J. *Hokudō shoshō*, 160 voll.), and the *Baishi liutie shilei ji* 白孔六帖辭類集 (J. *Hakushi rokujō*, 30 vol.), compiled by Bai Juyi (772-846). All are mentioned in the *Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku* 日本現在書目錄 (Index of Works Currently in Japan), a comprehensive bibliography of Chinese works held in the imperial library compiled in 891.

Minamoto no Shitagō during the Jōhei era (931-938).⁹⁷ Another precedent was the *Senzai kaku* 千載佳句 (Outstanding lines from a Thousand Years, 947), an anthology of two-line excerpts from famous Chinese poems compiled by the eminent *kangaku* scholar and poet Ōe no Koretoki.⁹⁸

My translation of the word *dai* as “keyword” requires a few words of explanation. For the most part, the *dai* of the *Rokujō* are poetic words (*kago*). In those parts of the anthology where the *dai* are poetic words, the list of *dai* reads almost like an abbreviated lexicon of poetic diction. Below is the list of *dai* in the category “Water” (*mizu*):

Water, Waterbird, Mandarin Duck (*oshi*), Seagull, Grebe, Cormorant, Turtle, Fish, Carp, Boat, Sea bass, Bream, Sweetfish, Whitebait, The River; Frog; Bridge; Ice crust, Dam; Weir; Night River; Fishing Nets; Fish Trap; Inlet; Pond; Marsh; Lowlands; Waterfall; Rivulets, Bubbles; Marsh; Deep; Shoal, Sea, Fisherwomen, Rope, Salt, Salt Pile, A Boat, Fishing, The Anchor, Net, The Say-it-not,⁹⁹ Seaweed,

⁹⁷ The “ten-book version” (*jukkanbon*) of the text groups its entries into twenty-four main categories. Each category is further subdivided into subcategories, for a total of 128 sections. The entries are written in a mixture of *kanbun* and Chinese graphs used phonetically, and provide the Japanese reading of the Chinese word and its meaning, citing from a wide range of Chinese and Japanese sources. For a detailed discussion, see Kawaguchi Hisao, *Heianchō Nihon kanbungakushi no kenkyū* (Meiji Shoin, 1959), 383ff. On early Japanese dictionaries in general, see Kawase Kazuma, *Kojisho no kenkyū*, (Yūshōdō Shuppan, 1986 edition). In English, see Don Clifford Bailey, “Early Japanese Lexicography,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 16, No. 1/2. (Apr. - Jul., 1960), 3-6.

⁹⁸ The text consists of 1083 two-line excerpts by 149 different poets. The fragments are arranged in 258 sections, which are in turn organized into the following fifteen categories: Four Seasons (*shiji*), Occasions (*jisetsu*), Cosmos (*tenshō* 天象), Geography (*chiri* 地理), Human Affairs (*jinji* 人事), Court Offices (*kyūshō* 宮省), Dwellings (*kyosho* 居所), Plants (*sōmoku* 草木), Animals (*kinjū* 禽獸), Banquets (*enki* 宴喜), Excursions (Yūhō 遊放), Partings (*betsuri* 別離), Seclusion (*in'itsu* 隱逸), Buddhist (*shakushi* 釈氏), Daoism (*sendō* 仙道). The complete text with extensive commentary can be found in Kaneko Hikojirō, *Heian jidai bungaku to Hakushi monjū*, 2nd revised edition (Baifūkan, 1955).

⁹⁹ “Nanoriso”. The name of a type of seaweed that was widely used in love poetry because its name sounds like “Do not say it.”

The Eyes-to-See¹⁰⁰ The From-Me¹⁰¹; Bay, Strait, Beach, Island, The Beach, The Beach Plover, Crinum, The Point, Rocky Shore, Waves, Channel Buoys, Shallow Sea, The Port, Destination.

Not all the *dai* in the *Rokujō*, however, are poetic words. In some cases, they are "topics" (the assigned motifs on which poets composed at venues such as poetry contests), in some other, they are the occasions at which the poems in that section were composed, and in yet some other they are the themes of the poems, as in Books 4 and 5, which are dedicated primarily to Love.

Because of this diversity of meanings, it is wrong to call the *dai* of the *Rokujō* "topics." Nor is it correct to call the *Rokujō* a *ruidai wakashū* (a poetry anthology by topic) as Japanese scholars sometimes do. The *dai* of the *Rokujō* are not topics in the sense that the term *dai* suggests today; they are not the preassigned motifs on which formal poems were composed, hence my decision to opt for the more neutral term keyword.

The sections of the anthology vary greatly in length, reflecting the relative importance of the term in the poetic idiom. The sections 'River' (*kawa*) and 'Maple leaves' (*momiji*), for instance, contain sixty-nine and thirty-four poems respectively, reflecting the importance of these terms, while "minor" sections such as "flying squirrel" (*musasabi*) and 'butterfly' (*chō*) contain only two examples each.

What makes the *Rokujō* so original, and so unlike any other poetry anthology compiled up to that time, is the way the various sections are organized. Departing from the model usually adopted in the imperial *waka* collections, in which poems are ordered first by "genre" ('Seasonal, 'Parting,' 'Love,' etc.) and then, within each genre, chronologically (poems about the beginning of spring first, and poems about the end of spring last), the *Rokujō* divides its various sections

¹⁰⁰ "Mirume," another type of seaweed that was widely used in love poetry.

¹⁰¹ Warekara, The name of an aquatic insect whose name can mean "from me."

into broad semantic categories mimicking the structure of the Chinese encyclopedias or databases of quotes. The encyclopedic model, however, did not always blend well with the conceptual and expressive universe of *waka*. In *waka*, things from different domains of experience are grouped together based on criteria such as psychological affinity, metaphorical similarity, or simply convention. Birds are paired with plants, plants symbolize emotions, and so on. The system is an agglutinative one and the criteria for establishing connections are fuzzy and based on emotion rather than logic. Not so in the encyclopedia model, which resembles Linnean taxonomy in ordering items into separate kingdoms and classes according to rigorous membership criteria (animals, plants, humans, offices, vertebrates, etc.).

The conflation of these two essentially incompatible systems gave rise to some interesting phenomena. The *dai* ‘Cherry blossoms’ (*sakura*), for instance, does not appear under ‘Spring’ where one familiar with *waka* would expect to find it, but under ‘Trees;’ here it coexists with such decidedly non-spring species as maple trees and orange mandarins. Similarly, ‘Monkey,’ ‘Deer,’ and ‘Bear’ do not appear under ‘Animals’ where a taxonomist would place them (there is no such category), but under “Mountains.”¹⁰²

It was perhaps due to the difficulty of reconciling the two systems that in some sections of the work the editor decided to ditch the encyclopedic model and revert to the more conventional (by *waka*’s standards) system of the *chokusenshū*. This occurs primarily in books Four and Five, which are dedicated to ‘Love’ (*koi*) and ‘Miscellaneous Thoughts’ (*zōshi*, *zatsuomoi*) respectively. Here the headings are arranged in the same loosely “chronological” order that is employed in the *chokusenshū*:

Somebody you don’t know; ‘First declare one’s love; Confess a long held

¹⁰² Hirai, *Kokin waka rokujō no kenkyū*, 10.

sentiment; First Encounter; The Day After; Fence off; Reciprocal Feelings; Unrequited Love; Thinking About Someone Else; Love One Among Many; Undeclared Love; To love in Secret; Be Exposed; Alone At Night; Sleeping Alone; Together; Sleeping; At Dawn; One Night Apart; Two Nights Apart; Things that Keep Apart; Apart at daytime; Years Away; Distance Apart; Come to Visit; Nighttime; Conversing; So close yet unable to meet; Waiting for a lover; I won't wait; Calling Out a Lover; Tempted by the Road; Losing one's way [...].¹⁰³

The lack of a single policy to arrange the poems is only one of several inconsistencies in the *Rokujō*. Others include listing the same poem under several heading, citing well-known poems incorrectly, etc. Because of these inconsistencies, the *Rokujō* has not always been looked upon favorably by critics, and some particularly unsympathetic ones have even dismissed it as the work of a second-rate editor.¹⁰⁴ However, a less negative explanation is also possible. Listing the same poem under more than one section allowed readers to find it from several different starting points. When the encyclopedia structure proved difficult to employ, or threatened to become a hindrance to the straightforward presentation of the material, it made sense to ditch it in favor of the more familiar one. In fact, it is in these departures from the initial editorial blueprint that the *Rokujō* reveals most clearly its pedagogic purpose. Rather than as a beautifully designed work of art intended for aesthetic appreciation, the *Rokujō* was conceived as a learning tool. One wonders whether it was not the desire to maximize usability even at the cost of sacrificing editorial coherence that gave the *Rokujō* the form it has.

¹⁰³ The notable difference is that in the *chokusenshū* they are left implied whereas in the *Rokujō* they are explicitly stated.

¹⁰⁴ Hirai, *Kokin rokujō no kenkyū*, 21.

CHAPTER 5

TENTH-CENTURY CANONS OF TASTE: *TENTOKU YO'NEN DAIRI UTA-AWASE* AND
KINTŌ'S *WAKA KUHON*

One of the many points of interest of the *uta-monogatari* (poem-tales) is that they often dwell on how the recipients of a poem reacted to it. In one of the most famous scenes of the *Ise monogatari*, “the man” (*otoko*) and some fellow travelers are crossing River Sumida in Musashi when they catch sight of an unfamiliar bird. He inquires with the boatman as to the name, and on hearing that it is called Bird of the Capital (*miyakodori*), he composes:

If you are true to your name, then let me ask you—
Say, Bird of the Capital, is my beloved still there, is she not?¹

名にしおはばいざこと問はむ
みやこどりわが思ふ人はありやなしやと

The poem is famous in its own right, but what concerns me here is how Narihira’s companions react to it: “The entire boat burst into tears.”²

In another less famous episode, Narihira—here referred to as ‘the old Right Chief Equerry’ (*migi no muma no kami narikeru okina*)—composes a poem during a funeral service for Fujiwara Takaiko, a junior consort of emperor Seiwa with whom he was rumored to have had an affair. The narrator comments: “by today’s standards it would be mediocre (*ima mireba yoku mo*

¹ *Ise monogatari*, no. 9, NKBZ 8: 142. The meaning of the line *ari ya nashi ya* is unclear. One interpretation is that it means “Is she well, is she not?” Another takes it to mean “Is she alive, is she not?” See Joshua Mostow and Royall Tyler, *The Ise Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010), 39.

² NKBZ 8: 142.

arazarikeri), but on the day it must have been the best, since everybody was deeply moved.”³

Audience reactions also occupy a prominent place in the *Tales of Yamato*. In episode 3, the early-century nobleman Minamoto no Kiyokage (884-950) replies to a poem by the woman known only as Toshiko. She is so impressed by his poem (*ito ninaku medete*) that she "continued to talk about it for a long time afterward."⁴ Another story in the same work describes a day of *go*-playing, music, and conversation at the residence of the late Prince Atsuyoshi. As the day draws to a close, one of the guests (Fujiwara no Sadakata) composes this poem:

The white dew that clings to the hand that plucks the maiden flower—
Might it be tears for those yesterdays that are no more?

おみなへし折る手にかかる白露は
むかしの今日にあらぬ涙か

Other poems were made but, the narrator admits, “I forgot the bad ones” (*yokaranu wa wasurenikeri*).⁵

One final example is from the *Tosa Diary* (*Tosa nikki*, ca. 935), Tsurayuki’s account of his return trip to the capital at the end of his mandate as governor of Tosa. As the boat on which his party is traveling approaches Naniwa, the entryway to the capital from the sea, one of the passengers intones:

Anxious, in impatient wait, the Naniwa inlet—
rowing its way through the reeds, the sacred boat has arrived at last.

いつしかといふせかりつる難波潟
葦こぎそけてみ船来にけり

³ *Ibid.*, no. 77; NKBZ 8: 198.

⁴ *Yamato monogatari*, no. 3; NKBZ 8: 271-72.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 29; NKBZ 8: 289.

Once again, the narrator records the reactions of those present: “Everyone was amazed to hear a poem from so unexpected a source. The ailing chief passenger was particularly impressed [*itaku medete*]. ‘A fine composition,’ he said.”⁶

These passages, taken more or less randomly from various prose works of the period, point to an obvious truth: Heian poets did not craft their poems *in vacuo*, for their own personal delectation. In the vast majority of cases, poems were addressed to a real-life audience, which reacted to them in various ways. Poems that suited the audience’s taste were praised; ones that did not were greeted with a variety of negative responses ranging from quiet contempt to outright mockery. What made a poem good to a mid-Heian audience? In the previous chapter I looked at the body of ingredients that poets used to craft their poems. Whereas critics usually tend to focus on what is unique to each author, I attempted to identify a sort of minimum common denominator of poetic production in mid-Heian times. Circulating canons of taste can be considered the equivalent of know-how at the level of reception: they provide the audience with a shared vocabulary and a set of concepts to analyze and evaluate the works they consume.

The scholar seeking to reconstruct contemporary standards of taste has primarily three types of source at her disposal: prose works (both fictional and non-fictional) that comment on the value of the poems they contain; works of poetics that address the question of value; and the judgments of poetry contests. The opening pages of this chapter have given an idea of the possibilities offered by the study of the first type of source. These anecdotes can be studied to determine what made the poems they mention memorable (or awful) to their audience. The rest of this chapter will be primarily concerned with the other two types of source: poetic treatises

⁶ Helen McCullough, trans. “A Tosa Journal,” in *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 96-7. I retranslated the poem.

and the judgments of poetry contests. Two texts in particular will be examined: the "Tentoku yo'nen sangatsu sanjūnichi dairi uta-awase" (Poetry Contest at the Imperial Palace of the 30th day of the Third Month of the Fourth Year of Tentoku, 960), and the *Waka kuhon* (Nine Levels of *waka*, 1009 or later) by Fujiwara no Kintō. The Tentoku 4 match is the first match in *utaawase* history for which complete records of the judgments of all twenty rounds survive. Kintō's treatise is suited to this kind of analysis because, as Teele notes, it was the first attempt in history to provide "concrete values for judging good *uta* from bad ones."⁷ In the final section of the chapter, I will discuss Tokieda Motoki's argument that since poetry was used in everyday life as a medium of communication, the aesthetic value of a poem was often less important than its practical, performative value.

***Uta-awase* and canons of taste**

For the purpose of studying contemporary perceptions of good and bad verse, poetry matches are a natural place to look.⁸ From early on in their history, these events began to incorporate a phase of critical discussion during which the respective merits and flaws of the poems were discussed, and a winner was decided. In those cases in which these discussions have been preserved, *utaawase* provide us with precious insight into the preferences of the contemporary poetry audience.

Several things, however, must be kept in mind when using poetry contests as a possible

⁷ Nicholas Teele, "Rules for Poetic Elegance. Fujiwara Kinto's *Shinsen Zuino & Waka Kubon*," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer 1976), 151.

⁸ Robert Brower and Earl Miner note: "the judgments at poetry contests (,,,) and other extant records and treatises help make clear the literary preferences of the age." Konishi Jin'ichi's "Association and Progression," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 21 (Dec. 1958), 73n4.

window on a now lost Heian horizon of expectations. First, Heian poets seem to have considered poetry contests a special type of poetic venue with its own rules and requirements. The poet-scholar Kenshō (1130-1209) noted at the beginning of the early thirteenth century:

Among the poets of the past, too, since poetry exchanges (*zōtōka*), screen poems (*byōbu-uta*), and poetry matches (*uta-awase*) are all different, a poet could be well-versed in one and not so in another, never equally in all of them.⁹

古き歌読みの中にも贈答の歌・屏風障子の歌・皆やう変りて、「同じ歌読みなれど、得ぬかた得たるかたなど、一節ならずと申し伝へ侍る」と申すことも侍り。

If the contemporaries viewed poetry contests as a special type of poetic venue with specific rules and standards, then it cannot simply be assumed that the evaluative standards that applied to these competitions were valid for all kinds of poetry-making.¹⁰

A second problem concerns the amount of generalization that the study of *uta-awase* judgments can warrant. Although in some cases the available records do give at least some idea of the opinions of the other participants (team members, mere witnesses), on the whole it is primarily the opinions of one person—the judge or *hanja*—that the verdicts of these events convey. To what extent can the opinions of a single individual, however knowledgeable and

⁹ *Sengohyakuban uta-awase*, round no. 1247; quoted in Iwatsu Motoo, *Utaawase no karonshi-teki kenkyū* (Waseda Daigaku Shuppankai, 1963), 102.

¹⁰ Over the centuries, what was initially simply an awareness of the singularity of *utaawase* morphed into full-on scorn for the practice. Edo-period intellectuals such as Tayasu Munetake (1716-1771) and Kada no Arimaro (1607-1751) railed against poetry competitions, which they saw as an unforgivable debasement of poetry. This negative attitude toward poetry contests survived well into the modern period. The Meiji literary historian Fujioka Sakutarō writes in his *Nihon hyōronshi* (*History of Japanese Criticism*, 1911): “What is worthy of attention here is that poetry contests did not flourish in the *Kokinshū* period, when *waka* was at its peak, but in the *Gosenshū* period, when it was declining. Rather than for substance, poems for poetry contests were primarily designed to avoid flaws, as a defense against nitpicking [by the judge].” Fujioka, *Nihon hyōronshi*, in *Tōho ikō*, vol. 1, ed. Haga Yaichi and Fujii Otō (Ōkura Shoten, 1911), 174-5.

acute a critic, be considered representative of the views of an entire age; this is a question that any discussion of *uta-awase* criticism as a window on contemporary standards of taste must consider carefully.

Finally, it would be wrong to assume that *uta-awase* judgments simply reflect current criteria for evaluating poems. Indeed, poetry contests are important in *waka* history precisely because the need to identify a winner between poems on the same topic and motivate the choice to an audience of poets, forced the members of the *waka* world to elaborate evaluative criteria that might otherwise have never been developed. Although the judge's views were necessarily a product of their time, they were also to some extent *ex novo* creations that enriched the critical landscape more than reflecting it.

A brief history of uta-awase to the mid-century

The Tentoku 4 match can be considered the point of arrival of several decades of development in these competitions. *Uta-awase* began in the final years of the ninth century as one of the many facets of the elite's involvement with *waka*. There is no definitive explanation of how they originated, but most scholars believe that they developed as a literary variant of the games of "object-matching" (*mono-awase*) that were popular at the time. Another important influence was competitive sports like *sumō* and archery, with which *uta-awase* bear some terminological and structural analogies.¹¹ It is unlikely that poetry contests developed from similar competitions of Chinese poetry (*shi-awase*), since the earliest competitions of Chinese poetry on record postdate the earliest *uta-awase* by several decades.¹²

¹¹ HUT 10: 2937.

¹² Ibid.

The very first match on record is the *Zai Minbukyō Yukihiro no ie no uta-awase* (Poetry Contest at the home of the Minister of Civil Affairs Ariwara no Yukihiro, 884). Although this is the first event for which a record is available, its highly developed format suggests that probably it was not the first event of this kind ever staged.¹³ An important early match is the *Kampyō ontoki kisai no miya uta-awase* 寛平御時后宮歌合 (The Empress' Poetry Contest of the Kampyō era) hosted by Uda's mother Hanshi in 892. The poems made for this contest provided the source material for the *Shinsen Man'yōshū*, a hybrid anthology of Japanese and Chinese poems compiled about one year later by an unknown editor. Another important early match is the *Engi jūsanen sangatsu jūsanichi Teiji-in utaawase* 延喜十三年三月十三日亭子院歌合 (Poetry Contest at the Teiji palace of the 13th day 3rd month of Engi 13, 913). Many of the features of this event (the colors worn by the two teams, the use of miniature landscapes, etc.) later became standard of the formal *utaawase*.¹⁴ The Teiji 13 contest is also significant because it is the first match for which written records of the judgments survive.

After an initial phase of popularity under Uda and Daigo, *uta-awase* went through a phase of decline under Suzaku (r. 930-946).¹⁵ Suzaku's young age at the time of his enthronement (he was only nine when he ascended the throne) and the worsening of the political situation at the time have been suggested as possible causes.¹⁶

The peak of their popularity was reached under Suzaku's successor Murakami (r. 946-967). Twenty-six matches are known to have been held during Murakami's twenty-two-year

¹³ Hagitani, HUT 1: 10-11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

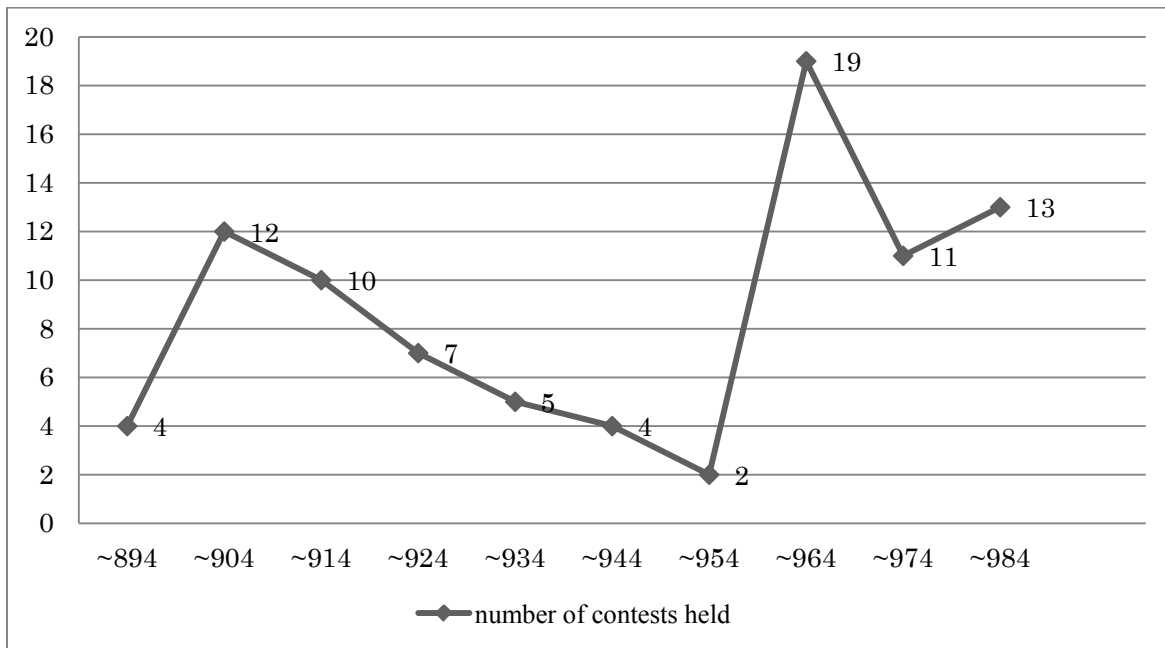
¹⁵ Only four contests dating from Suzaku's reign are known to have been staged; Hagitani, HUT 10: 2943.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

reign.

FIGURE 5-1.

Popularity of *uta-awase* by decade (884-984)¹⁷



One reason of their popularity at this stage was the presence at the imperial palace of various women with an uncommon interest in *waka*. As noted in chapter 2, women might have been the primary sponsors of this kind of event. In 956 (Tenryaku 10) three different contests were held at the Palace, one by or for a different imperial consort each time.¹⁸ These smaller palace contests can be seen as the prelude to the larger contest of Tentoku 4.

The *Tentoku yo'nen dairi uta-awase*

Although hosted by emperor Murakami in his private quarters, the Tentoku 4 match was

¹⁷ The chart is based on data in Hagitani, HUT 10: 2938.

¹⁸ Bundy, "Court Women in Poetry Contests," 41-2.

in fact the brainchild of some unidentified women in his entourage. In the summer of 959, Murakami hosted a competition of Chinese poetry open to senior court officials, and on that occasion some unnamed palace women expressed the wish to have their own contest, of *waka*.¹⁹

Despite these somewhat informal premises, everything suggests that the event was taken most seriously. Preparations started a full month in advance. First, the captains of the two teams (Left and Right) were selected. Since this was to be a contest "for women," Murakami appointed two of his junior consorts (Fujiwara Shūshi and Ben no kōi) as Captains of the two teams. The team members were also chosen mainly from among his junior consorts and their staff. Next, the topics were selected. Since the event was to take place on a day of late spring, Murakami picked a mixture of spring and summer topics. In total, twelve topics were chosen: 'Mist, 'The Warbler' (2 rounds), 'The Willow,' 'Cherry blossoms' (3 rounds), 'The Mountain Rose,' 'Wisteria,' 'End of Spring,' 'Beginning of Summer,' 'Verbena,' 'The Cuckoo' (2 rounds), 'Summer Grass,' and 'Love' (4 rounds). As poets, Murakami recruited the very best that the time had to offer in terms of poetic talent. The list of poets who provided poems includes such distinguished poets as Fujiwara no Asatada (910-966), three of the five compilers of the *Gosenshū*, Mibu no Tadamine's son Tadami, Ise's daughter Nakatsukasa, and Taira no Kanemori.

It is unclear whether the poets who provided the poems for the event actually attended it. Although a number of anecdotes in sources such as the *Konjaku monogatari* (Tales of Times Now Past, 12th century) purport to describe how the poets acted on the day of the match, their reliability can be doubted.²⁰ Given the location of the event and the extremely high status of the participants, it is in fact highly probable that the poets did not actually attend it and limited

¹⁹ See chapter 2, p. 69.

²⁰ Stories about the Tentoku 4 match can also be found in *Shasekishū* (Collection of Sand and Pebbles), *Fukurozōshi* (Folded notes), among others.

themselves to providing the poems. The rank of many of them would have simply been too low for an event of this kind.

As judge of the match, Murakami appointed the Minister of the Left, Fujiwara no Saneyori. Several factors made Saneyori an ideal choice. First, he was of suitably high rank. Status was an important requisite of the early *uta-awase* judge. Of all the poetry matches held before 960, in only four cases is the name of the judge known and in two of these the judge was an emperor.²¹ The other two were atypical matches, staged only "on paper."²² In other words, every time that an actual match was staged before a gathering of courtiers, the judge was someone of very high rank.

Saneyori could also claim a respectable pedigree as a poet. *Ōkagami* says of him: "Saneyori excelled in the Way of poetry and many of his poems were included in the *Gosenshū*."²³ In addition to ten of his poems in the *Gosenshū*, Saneyori could also boast a full personal poetry collection to his name, the *Seishinkō-shū* (The Collection of Lord Seishin, known also as the *Ononomiya Saneyori-shū*). He was also very active as a host of poetry events. References in the personal poetry collections of various contemporary poets show that he frequently hosted poetic gatherings, both at his home (the Ononomiya palace) and at various scenic locations around the capital.

Finally, Saneyori might have had a special interest in matters of interpretation and

²¹ Uda at the *Teiji-in utaawase* and Daigo at the event known as the *Sore no toshi aki Fujitsubo Nyōgo senzai-awase* 某年秋藤壺前裁合 (Autumn Garden Contest of the Fujitsubo Consort of Some Year, no dates); HUT 10: 3058.

²² They are the *Kyōgoku miyasudokoro Hōshi no uta-awase* 京極御息所褒子歌合 (Poetry Contests of the Imperial Haven Hōshi, 921) judged by Uda's protégé Fujiwara no Tadafusa, and the *Mitsune-han mondō uta-awase* 躬恒判問答歌合 (Dialogue *uta-awase* with judgments by Mitsune, dates unknown), judged by Mitsune.

²³ NKBZ 20: 113-4.

criticism. Some scholars credit him as the author of the *Ruijūshō* 類聚抄 (A Compendium of Exempla, 960?), a short compendium of phrases of difficult interpretations with illustrative examples by famous poets. Minegishi Yoshiaki notes about this work: "In a sense, these [manuals] were like the bag that every physician prepares in order to be able to take out an ointment when necessary. Nearly all the famous judges in *utaawase* history appear to have possessed such manuals, lexica, and treatises."²⁴ Other scholars have questioned the attribution to Saneyori, and some have gone as far as saying that the *Ruijūshō* is a much later forgery, the product of a time "when proper *waka* scholarship had declined, the product of a disordered period where *waka* scholarship was rife with flashy esoteric theories."²⁵ The attribution to Saneyori has been defended by Kyūsojin Hitaku.²⁶

In conclusion, Saneyori was something of an ideal candidate for the job: he was of high rank, he possessed a long curriculum as poet, he was a frequent host of poetry gatherings, and he might even have had a special interest in matters of interpretation and criticism. One would have been hard-pressed to find a more suitable candidate.

The rounds

After a whole month of preparations, the match got off to a start in the early afternoon of the thirtieth. Round 1 saw a battle between two of the most respected poets of the time: Fujiwara no Asatada (Left) and Taira no Kanemori (Right). The topic was 'Mist' (*kasumi*) and Asatada

²⁴ Minegishi Yoshiaki, *Utaawase no kenkyū* (1954; repr. Parutosusha, 1995), 531.

²⁵ Hagitani Boku, "Ruijūshō gisho-setsu," *Waka Bungaku Kenkyū* 4 (1957), 20. Hagitani's indictment has in turn been criticized by Kyūsojin Hitaku who claims that ; cf.

²⁶ Kyūsojin Hitaku, "Kaisetsu," *Heian jidai karonshū*, Tenri Toshokan zenpon sōsho, vol. 35 (Tenri: Tenridaigaku Shuppanbu, 1987), 3-10.

produced a dazzling tour de force of puns and double entendres on an suitably elegant conceit:

From between the hills of $\frac{\text{Kurahashi}}{\text{storehouse-bridge}}$, the spring mist—
 does it cross over to $\frac{\text{pile up}}{\text{pluck}}$ year upon year?²⁷

倉橋の山のかひより春がすみ
 としをつみてやわたるらむ

In what might have struck some of the participants as an odd choice, the Right presented a much more somber poem about the mist enveloping the old capital:

The old capital now bears the signs of spring—
 the mist has engulfed the Mikaki plain at sacred Yoshino.²⁸

ふるさとは春めきにけり
 三吉野の御垣の原をかすみこめたり

In his judgment, Saneyori praised the “posture” (*furumai*) of Asatada’s poem, and the skillful use of *engo* (linked words),²⁹ but had only criticism for Kanemori’s poem: “As for the Right’s poem, how after all does “old capital” evoke the coming of spring? And “mist engulfing” [the plain] is frightening (*osoroshi*), is it not?”³⁰

In Round 2, a poem by Kanemori (Right) was matched to one by *Gosenshū* compiler Minamoto no Shitagō (Left). Shitagō’s poem can be seen as a variation on *Kokinshū* I:12 by Minamoto no Masazumi (“The valley wind melts the ice / the waves gushing forth from every

²⁷ NKBT 74: 78.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Engo* refers to the use of several words from the same semantic pool (e.g. silk, thread, loom) in a poem ostensibly about something else.

³⁰ Ibid.

crack are the first blossoms of spring”):³¹

Even the ice must yield to the valley wind of spring
and yet it still does not melt—the warbler’s voice.³²

こほりだにとまらぬ春のたに風に
まだうちとけぬうぐひすのこゑ

The Right's poem (by Kanemori) is less obviously elegant, and much more personal:

By my house, the warbler cries and cries—
Might it be because my garden, too, is dappled with scattered blossoms?

わがやどにうぐひすいたくなくなるは
にはもはだらに花やちるらむ³³

In his judgment, Saneyori praises the charming conception of Shitagō’s poem (*uta no kokorobae ito okashi*) but is once again critical of the Right's effort: “[the poem] makes the blossoms scatter for no good reason, there is nothing particularly remarkable about it, and the choice of words is poor (*kotoba mo yoroshikarazu*).”³⁴

Round 3 begins on the wrong foot again for the Right. When his turn came, the team’s Reciter Hiromasa mistakenly read the poem for the following round. Demonstrating remarkable discernment, Saneyori allowed him to read the right poem:

³¹ こほりだにとまらぬ春のたに風にまだうちとけぬうぐひすのこゑ. The poem was originally composed at the Kamyō Empress’ Poetry Contest (892).

³² Hagitani notes the similarity in imagery and diction to a poem by Minamoto no Masazumi composed at the Kamyō Empress Poetry Match (*Kokinshū* Spring I, No. 12, NKBZ vol. 7, p. 66).

³³ Ibid., 79.

³⁴ NKBZ 74: 79. Perhaps a reference to the word *niwa* (garden), not common in poetry.

On the plum bough, where white now still falls,
this very moment I hear the warbler cry: “Spring is here!”³⁵

しろたへの雪ふりやまぬ梅がえに
いまぞうぐひすはるとなくなる

The verdict, however, was once again unfavorable to the Right: in his verdict, Saneyori points out that a warbler that sings “Spring is here” (*haru to naku*) is “fantasy” (*soragoto nari*).³⁶

In Round 4, the Right are allowed to reread the poem that had been mistakenly read in the previous round. Although the Left insists that “protocol has been violated” (*shidai o iran su*), Saneyori refuses to dwell further on the matter. In his judgment, he criticizes instead the clumsy wording of the Left’s poem: “The lines ‘They have piled one beaded year after another / These strings of green willow,’” he notes, are “poor” (*yoshi nashi*).³⁷

Nothing particularly remarkable happens in the next two rounds. In Round 5 the Right lose because the tone of the poem is “inferior” (*utagara mo otoreri*).³⁸ Round 6 is judged a tie between two poems deemed of equal charm (*hidari migi tomo ni yoku tsukamatsureri*).³⁹

Round 7 is the only one in the entire match in which two women poets (Shōni myōbu and Nakatsukasa) battle. The topic is ‘Cherry Blossoms’ and both poets execute it in ways consistent with the *Kokinshū* style:

Left

(Shōni myōbu)

³⁵ NKBZ 74: 80.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ NKBZ 74: 81.

³⁸ NKBT 74: 81.

³⁹ Ibid.

Cherry blossoms hidden among impervious hills—
Do not tell the wind they have yet to scatter!

あしひきのやまがくれなるさくらばな
ちりのこれりと風にしらすな

Right

(Nakatsukasa)

These cherry blossoms that I keep coming to see year after year,
O mist, do not rise now and hide them!⁴⁰

としごとにきつゝわがみるさくらばな
かすみもいまはたちなかくしそ

In the verdict, Saneyori praises the Left's poem, but dismisses Nakatsukasa's poem as "terribly dreary and dull" (*sukoburu kōryō nari*).⁴¹ He argues: "where does the poet keep going to see them?" He also takes issue with the use of the word *ima* (now), presumably because he considered it too colloquial for the occasion.⁴²

In Round 8, Saneyori speaks against the excess of witticism at the expense of common sense. The poem by the Right (by Kanemori) wishes that a *yaeyamabuki* (literally "eight-layered mountain rose") one layer of petals at a time, so that the poet might enjoy its beauty for longer: If such a thing could happen, Saneyori comments in his verdict, then the eightfold mountain rose would not be what it is (*yae sakazuba hoi naku ya aramu*).⁴³ He also points out that the sound *mu* is used at the end of both halves of the poem. Prohibitions against using the same sound in different parts of the poem were known as 'poetic defects' (*kahei* or *kabyō*) and are a major

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 82

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

rubric in early works of poetics.⁴⁴

Round 9 is home to one of the most interesting critical disputes of the entire match. The topic is ‘Wisteria’ (*fuji*) and the Left present a graceful ode about waves of wisteria stretching forth toward the shore pine, clearly an allusion to the allegiance between the emperor (here symbolized by the pine) and the Fujiwara clan:

Shimmering purple waves of wisteria stretch forth,
tingeing the pine with the color of a thousand ages.⁴⁵

むらさきにゝほふゝちなみうちはへて
まつにぞちよのいろはかゝれる

The poem by the Right (by Kanemori) employs similar imagery, but in slightly different ways:

Until I get there to see their splendor,
do not pluck the wisteria waves at Sumiyoshi shore!

われゆきていろみるばかり
住吉のきしのふちなみをりなつくしそ

In his verdict, Saneyori praises the pure imagery of Asatada's poem, but he takes issue with the use of the phrase “wisteria waves” without other words with a connection to water. He argues: “the phrase ‘wisteria wives’ appears often enough in old poems, even without an explicit link to water. However, as no one is conversant with this [precedent] now, and it seems to have passed

⁴⁴ The particular defect discussed here is the *dōseiin* 同声韻 or same-sound rhyme. For a discussion of poetic defects based on Hamanari's treatise *Kakyō hyōshiki* (The Code of Poetry, 772), see Judith Rabinovitch. “Wasp Waists and Monkey Tails: A Study and Translation of Hamanari's *Uta no shiki* (The Code of Poetry, 772), Also Known as *Kakyō Hyōshiki* (A Formulary for Verse Based on the Canons of Poetry).” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Dec., 1991): 471-560. Saneyori's treatment of sound violations is inconsistent. He fails to notice the same defect in Round 7.

⁴⁵ NKBT 74: 83. The name Fujiwara literally means “wisteria plain.”

out of usage, I wonder if it is appropriate for a poetry match. [...] ‘Waves’ also appears [in the poem by the Right], but since there it is linked to “shore” [*kishi*], its use is justified. This is how it was done in the past, not only for “wisteria waves.”⁴⁶ Saneyori seems to be suggesting that metaphors, especially unfamiliar ones, should be sustained throughout the entire poem. The other interesting aspect of this verdict is that he notes that such ambiguous uses were particularly out of place at *uta-awase*. This confirms that stricter canons of decorum applied at these events than in ordinary situations.

In Round 10, Asatada (Left) continues to flaunt his complete mastery of the *Kokinshū* style. His poem “If spring were to take leave before the blossoms scatter / Would I regret its departure so much today?”⁴⁷ is similar to Narihira's famous "*yo no naka ni*" poem:

If there were no cherry blossoms in this world,
maybe the heart in spring would be at peace.⁴⁸

世の中にたへてさくらのなかりせば
春の心はのどけからまし

Round 11 marks the beginning of the Summer topics. The quality of the poems is generally high and Saneyori speeds through the verdicts with relative ease. In Round 11, he judges it a tie between two poems deemed “of equal level” (*shina no onaji hodo nareba*).⁴⁹ Round 12 is given

⁴⁶ Ibid., 83. The judgment is often discussed in later poetic treatises. In his *Yakumo Mishō*, Emperor Juntoku dismisses the issue as a “minor problem” (*sashi mo naki nan*). *Yakumo mishō*, Book I, NKT, supp. vol. 3: 217.

⁴⁷ はなだにもちらでわかるゝ春ならばいとかく今日は惜しまましやは。NKBT 74:84

⁴⁸ *Kokinshū* I: 54.

⁴⁹ NKBT 74: 84.

to the Right because the Left's poem treats the topic (verbena [*unohana*]) in non-conventional ways. Round 13 is judged a tie between two “equally charming” poems.⁵⁰

In Round 14 Saneyori incurred what posterity would widely regard as a clear error of judgment. The topic is ‘The cuckoo’ (*hototogisu*), and Tadami (Left) composed what many in later times would consider as one of his finest poems:

As the night deepens, should I fail to stay awake for the cuckoo,
I will hear it from someone else!⁵¹

さよふけてねざめざりせばほととぎす
人づてにこそきくべかりけれ

While conceding that the poem was tonally accomplished (*utagara okashi*), Saneyori argued that the idea of falling asleep while waiting for the cuckoo to sing was irremediably "vulgar" (*ayashi*).⁵² Commenting on this episode in *Toshiyori zuinō*, the late-Heian poet Toshiyori (Shunrai) notes: "At the Tentoku poetry match, the poem "should I fail to stay away awake" was a perfectly accomplished poem whereas anybody today would find the wording of the other poem, which repeats the sound *te* twice in a row, mediocre. And yet, Saneyori judged them of equal level."⁵³

Tadami had his only win of the entire match in Round 15. In his poem, Kanemori (Right) continued to challenge the conventions of the formal poetry contest by conjuring up a rustic scene of men clearing out the undergrowth in the forest:

⁵⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁵¹ The poem appears in the *Shūishū* (III: 104)..

⁵² NKBT 74: 85.

⁵³ NKBT 50: 264.

It must be well into summer—
men are clearing out the undergrowth at Oharagi forest.⁵⁴

なつふかくなりぞしにける
おはらぎのもりのしたくさなべて人かる

Saneyori is particularly critical of the phrase ‘men clear out the undergrowth’ (*natsukusa nabete hito karu*), which he deems “awful” (*waroshi*).⁵⁵

Round 16 offers an example of the *uta-awase* judge at his most pedantic. The topic is Love (*koi*) and Nakatsukasa (Right) composes a perfectly respectable (if hardly original) poem about the gap between dream and reality:

If the dreams I have on every blackberry-colored night were real,
I would reveal my feelings to him!⁵⁶

むばたまのよるのゆめだにまさしくば
わがおもふことをひとにみせばや

According to Saneyori, the correct spelling of the word *mubatama* (blackberry, a *makurakotoba* for ‘night,’ ‘darkness,’ or ‘black’) was *nubatama* and, after consulting with Murakami, he awarded the victory to the Left. The spelling *nubatama* seems to have been current in the ancient period, but in Heian times *ubatama* and *mubatama* were more common.⁵⁷

In the verdict to Round 18, Saneyori notes again that both *ku* in the Right’s poem begin with the same character, but in this case he deems it no serious fault (*saseru nan ni wa aranu*).

⁵⁴ NKBT 74: 86.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,

⁵⁶ NKBT 74: 87.

⁵⁷ Katagiri Yōichi, *Utamakura utakotoba jiten* (Kasama Shoin, 1999), 80.

Round 19, on "Love" (*koi*), became famous in later poetic literature because the winning poem (by Asatada) did not mention the word love:

Had we never met at all,
would I not feel this resentment, both for you and for myself?⁵⁸

あふことのたえてしなくばなかなか
人をもみをもうらみざらまし

Saneyori did not regard this as a serious problem, and praised instead the purity of the poem's diction (*kotoba kiyoge-nari*).⁵⁹

The twentieth and final round is perhaps the most famous of the entire match. Both poems were by poets of undisputed skill and repute (Kanemori and Tadami). The topic was 'Love' (*koi*) and both poets produced poems that posterity would widely consider *shūka* (outstanding poems).⁶⁰ Such situations were a judge's nightmare. Unable to decide for himself, Saneyori turned to Murakami for advice but once again the emperor refused to get involved. Since during the debate he seemed to be humming Kanemori's poem, however, this was sufficient reason to Saneyori for awarding the victory to the Right. The decision was indeed a conflicted one; even after declaring the Right the winner, Saneyori saved the last words for Tadami's poem: "But the Left's poem is the epitome of gallantry!" (*hidari no uta hanahada sukisugishi ya*).⁶¹

⁵⁸ The poem is Asatada's most famous, mainly because it is featured in Teika's hugely popular anthology *Hyakunin isshu*.

⁵⁹ NKBT 74: 88; See Kiyosuke, *Fukurozōshi*, SNKBT 29: 258.

⁶⁰ Both poems were selected for inclusion in the *Shūishū*, the third official *waka* anthology. They are also featured consecutively in Teika's popular *Ogura hyakunin isshu* (One Poem each by One Hundred Poets, 13th century).

⁶¹ NKBT 74: 88. According to a story in the medieval *setsuwa* collection *Shasekishū*

Appraisal: mid-century standards of taste

Despite their conciseness, Saneyori's judgments at the Tentoku match exhibit sufficient consistency to speak, if not of a coherent aesthetics, then at least of some recurring preoccupations in his view of *waka*. The most frequently articulated of these preoccupations is the insistence on elegance and refinement. Saneyori consistently praises poems that exhibit purity of diction (*kotoba kiyoge-nari*) and tone (*utagara kiyogenari*). Conversely, he regularly chastises as “bad” (*waroshi*), “frightening” (*osoroshi*), or “inferior” (...*otoreri*) poems that fail to do so. He is also critical of poems that mention non-courtly activities (e.g. Round 15), or that take an excessively assertive tone (Rounds 2 and 10), or that hint to inauspicious circumstances (Round 1). In Round 7, he takes issue with the use of the word “now” (*ima*), presumably because he considered it too colloquial.

The insistence on elegance was intimately tied to the festive character of the early *uta-awase* as a court gathering. As noted earlier, these competitions were as much literary events as they were court spectacles intended to display the splendor of the court and foster harmony between its members.⁶² Clearly, nothing less than the highest standards of elegance and formality would have been considered acceptable at such events.

A second feature of Saneyori's “poetics” is what for want of a better word could be termed “realism” or “true-to-lifeness.” In his judgment to Round 3, Saneyori points out that a warbler that sings “Spring is here!” is “fiction” (*soragoto*). In Round 7, he takes issue with the

(Collection of Sand and Pebbles, late 13th century) Tadami was so disappointed by the decision that he stopped eating and eventually died as a result; *Shasekishū*, V: 6; NKBT 85: 240-1.

⁶² McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 243-4; On poetry as a tool to promote harmony at court, see Gus Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony: Poetry and Power in Early Heian Japan* (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University 2008).

phrase "coming to see the cherry blossoms year after year" because the poem failed to specify a location. In Round 8, he criticizes Kanemori for his logical acrobatics on the name *yaeyamabuki*.⁶³ According to Iwatsu Motoo, these comments should be seen as a variant of the principle (originally Chinese) of harmonizing "flower" (*hana* or *ka* 花) and "fruit" (*mi* or *jitsu* 実).⁶⁴ The idea is mentioned often enough in Heian poetic sources, most famously in the *Kokinshū* prefaces.

A third point is the preference for accepted or standard uses of words and images. In Round 1, he notes that "old capital" (*furusato*) is hardly an appropriate image in a poem about spring. In Round 12, he criticizes both poets for placing a domestic plant like the verbena (*unohana*) into a wild, mountain setting.⁶⁵ In Round 9, he explicitly cautions against using obscure phrases with which the audience would probably not be familiar.

None of these points strikes a modern reader as particularly deep or insightful. Indeed, the value of *uta-awase* criticism has often been questioned by critics, because of its alleged focus on finding something that disqualified the poem, rather than on rewarding excellence.⁶⁶ The important question, however, is not whether these views are insightful or persuasive from a modern perspective, but whether they reveal something of the tastes and preferences of the audience at the time. According to the modern scholar Ozawa Masao, they simply do: the

⁶³ See above.

⁶⁴ Iwatsu, *Uta-awase no karonshi kenkyū* (Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1963), p. 39. The principle is discussed in the *Kokinshū* preface and various other later texts. NKBZ 7: 57; NKT 1 :44.

⁶⁵ The white verbena was a very common plant, widely used to adorn fences and hedges. Saying "Mountain" white verbena added to the flower a "wild" flavor that the flower did not have in Sanyori's opinion. NKBT 74: 85.

⁶⁶ Robert Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961), 239.

opinions put forth at the Tentoku match, he writes, were “representative of the standards of evaluation in *waka* at the time.”⁶⁷ Although it is tempting to agree with Ozawa, the available evidence simply does not support this kind of sweeping generalizations.

One of the five different records of the event that survive notes that one of the members of the Right team, Fujiwara no Kuniteri (dates unknown), was "left speechless" (*iwamu kata nashi*) by Saneyori's decisions.⁶⁸ More information on how Saneyori's pronouncements were received can be gained from later sources. In a letter sent to one of the participants in a poetry match he had judged in 1094, the prominent eleventh-century poet Minamoto no Tsunenobu (1016-1097) comments on Saneyori's decisions at the Tentoku 4 match:

Since ancient times and still today, judging a poem has always been a very difficult thing to do. At the Tentoku match, on the poems on ‘The Cuckoo,’ the Ononomiya Minister [Saneyori] judged it a tie between “I shall hear about the cuckoo’s song from someone else” and “Were you a person, I could ask you to wait,” but later people [*nochi no hitobito*] considered the two poems to be not even close. This is because it is so difficult to establish which one of two poems is superior.

Then, at the same match, in the round on ‘Love,’ the records state that [Saneyori] could not decide between “Though only in secret I started having thoughts of you” and “Now people ask: ‘Are you in love?’” and went with the Emperor's opinion, but everyone else considered the “Are you in love?” poem far superior.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ozawa Masao, “Heianchō karon no seiritsu to tenkai,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, vol. 39 no. 4 (April 1962), 6.

⁶⁸ NKBT 74: 102.

⁶⁹ NKBT 74: 240. The match is the *Kahō gannen hachigatsu jūkyū-nichi zen-kampaku Morozane uta-awase* 嘉保元年八月十九日前関白師實歌合 (Poetry Contest at the House of the Former Regent Morozane of the 19th Day of the Eighth Month of Kahō 1, 1094). Tsunenobu was a prominent poet and scholar of the late Heian period. He excelled in several arts and was considered the foremost authority on *waka* of his time. He is also the father of poet and scholar Minamoto no Toshiyori (Shunrai, 1055?-1129?), the author of one of the earliest comprehensive studies of *waka*, the *Toshiyori zuinō* 俊頼髓脳 (*Toshiyori's [Poetry] Essentials*, early 12th century).

昔より今に至るまで、歌の判はいと難う侍る事なり。天徳の歌合の郭公の歌に、「人傳てにこそ聞くべかりけれ」という歌と「人ならば待て」といふ歌を、小野宮大臣、持とこそは判ぜられて侍るを、後の人々は、「一つにもあらぬ歌を」とこそ申すめるは、いづれか善きならむとも知り難きことにてこそ侍めれ。又、同じき恋の歌に、「人知れずこそ思ひそめしか」といふ、「物思ふと人の問ふまで」とよめるを判じ煩はれ、御気色をとられたりと書置かれたるも、人は「物思ふ」といふ言、こよなくまされたり」とこそは侍めれ。

Commenting on the same episodes as his father in his *Toshiyori zuinō*, Tsunenobu's son Toshiyori is even more forceful in denouncing the indeterminacy of criticism: “the opinions of the contemporaries truly are a frightening mess! People say one thing one time, and then someone objects, but all they do is parrot someone else.”⁷⁰ Disagreement was so common that over time written grievances called *chinjō* 陳状, in which disgruntled contenders complained about the poor decisions of the judge, became a habitual follow up to most poetry contests.

Given the amount of disagreement that *uta-awase* verdicts could generate, it is impossible to say that Saneyori's pronouncements simply reflect the taste of the time. At the same time, it would be an exaggeration to say that they were just one opinion among many. When evaluating the significance of *utaawase* verdicts, it is important to consider the position of authority from which the judge spoke. As David Hume famously argued in his *Of the Standard of Taste* (1760), although all opinions are legitimate, they are not all equal.⁷¹ Judges differ widely in what Hume termed “delicacy:” “nothing tends further to increase and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty.”⁷² Judges also differ in the amount of authority they possess. The judge at formal

⁷⁰ *Toshiyori zuinō*, NKBZ 50: 264.

⁷¹ Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*, Harvard Classics vol. 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1909).

⁷² *Ibid.*

uta-awase was formally invested with the authority to arbitrate on poetic value by the emperor, and it is from this position of authority that he pronounced his verdicts. So while opinions at these events no doubt varied, it was ultimately the judge's opinion that counted. Indeed, it is always Saneyori's opinions that are recorded in the records of these events and later poetic treatises take up.⁷³ Ultimately, the question to be asked may not be whether Saneyori's judgments provide an accurate reflection of contemporary taste, but whether they possessed sufficient authority to influence it. That is to say, *uta-awase* may be important to study more as laboratories of poetic taste than as mirrors of it.

Poetic Excellence in Kintō's *Nine Levels of waka*

Despite their undeniable historical interest, it would be an overstatement to say that the judgments of the Tentoku 4 match offer a complete picture of the trends of taste at the time. At best, they provide some interesting cues for further exploration, but they stop short of giving a complete view. It follows that in order to get a more precise idea, the critic must also look elsewhere.

The handful of pre-eleventh century works of poetics that survive are surprisingly silent on the question of value. Most are concerned with sound taboos to avoid (the so-called poetic ills or *kabyō*), or provide typologies of poetic styles without discussing their artistic merit. Fujiwara no Kintō's *Waka kuhon* 和歌九品 (Nine Levels of *waka*), written at the beginning of the eleventh century, is a notable exception. As Teele notes, the work represents the first attempt in

⁷³ The verdict of the *Tentoku utaawase* are cited in many medieval poetic treatises, sometimes approvingly, sometimes not, but their status as authoritative statements on poetry is never put in doubt.

history to provide "concrete values for judging good *uta* from bad ones."⁷⁴

Much as with *uta-awase* judgments, one must be wary of extrapolating too much from a single source. Kintō was easily the foremost critic of his time. In addition to a number of poetic treatises, he authored numerous selections of outstanding poems (*shūkasen*), in which he put his critical ideals into practice.⁷⁵ To consider his views representative of those of the average person of the time would be unwise at best. At the same time, the views of such an acute critic are enormously valuable to us, especially because, as I will show, they can be considered the point of arrival of three centuries of development in poetic taste.

Kintō identifies three main tiers of styles: Upper (*jōhon*), Mid (*chūhon*), and Lower (*gehon*). He further subdivides each level into three sub-levels (Upper, Mid, and Lower again), for a total of nine levels.⁷⁶ For each level, Kintō provides a short definition and two representative poems. The definition of the Upper Level, First Grade (*jōhon no jō*) reads: "In the Upper Level, First Grade the diction is majestic and the heart overflows" (*kotoba tae ni shite amari no kokoro sae aru nari*).⁷⁷ The two examples provided to illustrate the level are:

- (1) Is it because the calendar says that spring has begun,
that the hills at holy Yoshino are shrouded in mist this morning?

⁷⁴ Nicholas Teele, "Rules for Poetic Elegance. Fujiwara Kinto's *Shinsen Zuino & Waka Kubon*," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer 1976), 151.

⁷⁵ Kintō's *shūkasen* include the *Zen* and *Nochi no Jūgoban uta-awase* (First and Second Poetry contest in Fifteen Rounds and Later Poetry Contest in Fifteen Rounds), the *Kingyokushū* (c. 1007), the *Shinsō hishō* (1008-9) and the *Sanjūrokuninsen* 三十六人選 (Selection by Thirty-six Poets). He is also the author of the *Shūishō* 拾遺抄 (Gleanings of waka), which formed the basis for the *Shūishū*, the third imperial *waka* anthology.

⁷⁶ The complete text appears in *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei*, vol. 65, pp. 32-4. All references are to this text. A complete English translation can be found in Teele.

⁷⁷ NKBT 65: 32.

春たつといふばかりにや
み吉野の山もかすみて今朝は見ゆらむ

- (2) Faintly, in the morning mist of Akashi Bay,
My thoughts are with the boat that disappears behind the island.⁷⁸

ほのぼのと 明石の浦の朝霧に
島隠れ行く舟をしぞ思ふ

Both poems can be described as landscape poems, and the second one is more so than the first. Both poems depict a scene in which the view is partially obstructed by the mist (*kiri* or *kasumi*). The first poem (by Tadamine) contains a hint of the clever reasoning typical of *Kokinshū*-period poetry, while the second poem does not. Assuming that these poems are representative of the level they appear in, Kintō's *amari no kokoro* can be taken to mean a *kokoro* that is not openly expressed in the poem, but only hinted at through the description of a natural scene of mysterious beauty.

In its Sino-Japanese version *yojō* 余情, the term *amari no kokoro* also appears in the roughly contemporary *Wakatei jusshu* (Ten Styles of *waka*, 11th c?).⁷⁹ Here the following definition of the *Yojōtei* (Overflowing-Heart Style) is given: "In this style, the words point in one direction but the meaning encompasses a thousand things." (是體、詞標一片義籠萬端).⁸⁰

Ozawa Masao also relates Kintō's *amari no kokoro* to another style discussed in *Wakatei*

⁷⁸ The first poem, by Tadamine, is the first poem in the *Shūishū*, in the compilation of which Kintō was closely involved. The second poem appears as anonymous in the *Kokinshū* (IX: 409), but in Kintō's time it was believed to be by Hitomaro, although it almost certainly was not. On the attribution of the poem, see Anne Commons, *Hitomaro: Poet as God*, 52-60.

⁷⁹ The attribution and date of completion of the work are uncertain. Previously, it was believed to be the work of *Kokinshū* compiler Mibu no Tadamine (d. 945). More recent accounts date it to the first half of the eleventh century, some years after Kintō's work.

⁸⁰ NKT 1: 46.

jusshu,⁸¹ the *Kōjōtei* 高情体 (Elevated Heart style), which is defined as follows: "In this style, although the wording is ordinary, the meaning enters the deep and the mysterious."⁸² This definition is famous because it contains the first occurrence in Japanese poetic discourse of the term *yūgen* 入幽 (depth and mystery), which becomes a major concept in medieval poetic theory. If Ozawa is correct, then Kintō's *amari no kokoro* and the idea of *yūgen* (here still in nascent form) are related.

The Upper Level, Medium grade is similar to the first, the only difference being that the diction here is "solemn" (*uruwashī*) instead of "majestic" (*tae shite*): "In the Upper level, Medium grade, the form is solemn and the heart overflows" (*hodo uruwashiku amari no kokoro aru nari*).⁸³ The examples are also similar to those in the previous level in that they describe natural scenes of wondrous, almost divine beauty. The first of the two examples is a *kagura-uta* (Shintō song) from book XX of the *Kokinshū*:

- (3) Deep into the sacred mountain, the sleet must be falling:
the *makaki* vine leaves on Mount Toyama are now changing color.⁸⁴

み山にはあられ降るらし
外山なるまさ木のかづら色づきにけり

The Upper Level, Lower grade (*jōhon no ge*) differs from the first two in that the poems in this level lack the depth of heart of the previous two levels (*kokoro fukakaranedo*) although they are still excellent: "In the Upper Level, Lower Grade, the heart is not deep but there is

⁸¹ Ozawa, *Kodai kagaku no keisei*, 249.

⁸² 此體、詞雖_凡流_義入_幽玄_; NKT 1: 47.

⁸³ NKBT 65: 32.

⁸⁴ *Kokinshū* XX: 1077.

something interesting" (*kokoro fukakaranedomo omoshiroki tokoro aru nari*).⁸⁵ The first of the two examples provided is the famous poem by Ariwara no Narihira mentioned earlier:

- (5) If there were no cherry blossoms in this world
then maybe the heart of spring would be at peace.⁸⁶

世の中にたえて桜のなかりせば
春の心はのどけからまし

Based on this example, it is possible to hypothesize that "lack of depth " meant that the *kokoro* here is more directly expressed than in the examples in the previous levels.⁸⁷ This reading, however, is difficult to apply to the other example in this level (by Taira no Kanemori):

- (6) I can hear the Michizuki horses being led across,
as the river roars under the bridge on the long road from Seta.⁸⁸

望月の駒引きわたす音すなり
瀬田の長道橋もとどろに

It is worth stressing that all the examples mentioned so far except Narihira's poem seem to share a connection with the spiritual and the divine. One poem (example no. 1) is a Shintō ritual poem (*kagura-uta*); two of them describe rituals offerings to the Emperor and incorporate Shintō images (examples nos. 4 and 6); finally, all except one mention famous locations with strong

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *Kokinshū* I: 53.

⁸⁷ Kintō's assessment of Narihira's poem (it lacks depth of heart) might seem to contradict the famous statement of the *Kokinshū* preface: "Narihira's poetry has too much heart, and too little formal sophistication." In fact, however, it does not. The phrase "has too much heart" can be taken to mean that in his poems, the heart was given too much prominence and not adequately balanced by formal elegance.

⁸⁸ NKBT 65: 33.

associations with the emperor and imperial power. This suggests that Kintō's *amari no kokoro* referred to a *kokoro* that not only was difficult to grasp, but that had connotations of divine and supernatural, as indeed the *yūgen* of later poetic discourse.

The middle three levels group poems that while still sufficiently pleasant or interesting lacked any truly outstanding features. The definition of the Middle Level, Medium Grade reads: "there is nothing special, and nothing mediocre either, but the poems show knowledge of the appropriate *sama*" (*suguretaru tokoro mo naku, waroki tokoro mo nakute, aru beki sama o shireru nari*).⁸⁹ The two examples given for this style are perfect exemplars of the intellectual approach typical of the *Kokinshū* style:

- (9) People say that spring is here but
unless the warbler sings I shall not believe it.⁹⁰

春きぬと人はいへどうぐひすの
鳴かぬかぎりはあらじとぞ思ふ

- (10) Let me pause to look before crossing:
though the maple leaves fall like rain, the waters do not rise.⁹¹

立とまりて見てを渡らん
黄葉葉雨とふるとも水はまさらじ

Although the imagery is pleasant and the execution flawless, it is fair to say that the poems lack the power and allusiveness of the examples in the upper levels. It is interesting that Kintō placed in this category poems that so well embody the *Kokinshū* style. In *Shinsen zuinō*, he notes that his contemporaries seemed to be particularly fond of the styles of Tsurayuki and Mitsune, but he

⁸⁹ NKBT 65: 33. On the meaning of *sama*, see page ? above.

⁹⁰ *Kokinshū* I: 11, Tadamine.

⁹¹ *Kokinshū* V: 305, Mitsune.

fails provide his own view on the matter.⁹² The fact that he placed these poems in the middle categories, and not in the upper ones, suggests that he did not consider the oblique style the most excellent.

The bottom three levels contain poems that are deficient in both heart and diction. The second example in the Lower Level, Medium Grade (*gehon no chū*), for instance, reads:

- (16) Hurry on, my horse,
I cannot wait to see my spouse who must be waiting like Mount Matsuchi!⁹³

わが駒ははやく行きこせ
まつち山待つらん妹をゆきてはや見ん

In terms of diction, the poem repeats twice the word *matsu* and employs twice speculative-volitional auxiliary verb *mu* (the second time in the compound form *ramu*). Structurally, the poem contains several strong breaks that make the whole sound awkward and fragmented.

The definition of the Lower Level, Lower Grade reads: "the wording is hesitant and there is no interesting aspect" (*kotoba todokōrite okashiki tokoro naki nari*).⁹⁴ The first of the two examples provided was presumably chosen for the obviousness of the point it makes:

- (17) If I were to cast myself off every time the world brings me sorrow,
I would die a thousand times a day.⁹⁵

⁹² NKBT 65: 26.

⁹³ Similar to *Man'yōshū* XII: 3154. The name Matsuchi puns with *matsu* (to wait).

⁹⁴ NKBT 65: 33.

⁹⁵ The poem is a variation on *Kokinshū* 19:1061: If every time / the world is cruel/ I had to cast myself off / the deepest valley would become shallow.

世の中のうきたびごとに身を投げば
一日に千度われや死にせむ

In the second sample poem, the triteness of the idea is combined with a chaotic wording that I have attempted to retain in the translation:

- (18) You pull me and release me like a catalpa bow: if you don't come so be it; if you come, why is that; if you don't come, so what?⁹⁶

あづさ弓ひきみひかずみこずはこず
こはこそはなぞこずはそをいかに

These two poems conclude Kintō's overview of poetic styles.

Overall, even a thousand years after its composition, Kintō's text comes across as a remarkably lucid attempt to propose a hierarchy of poetic styles. If a single interpretation can be drawn from the short definitions and the examples provided, Kintō seems to be arguing for the primacy of what in chapter four was described as "landscape poetry." Five of the six poems in the top three levels either are or contain descriptions of landscape; five of them contain a placename (Mount Yoshino, the Akashi bay, Mount Toyama, the Ōsaka Barrier, the Seta Bridge). The one exception is Narihira's "*yo no naka ni*" poem, which is said to "lack depth of heart" (*kokoro fukakaranedo...*). As one moves down the list of styles, the examples allot greater and greater space to "heart words" and their emotional content, so to speak, becomes more obvious. The poems in the lower levels that do incorporate natural imagery do so in a mechanical and naive way, as in example 16.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The poem is similar to *Shūishū* 18: 1196 and to *Man'yōshū* 11: 2640.

⁹⁷ The poems in the lower levels of the work are chronologically earlier than those in the upper levels. Most of them are or are based on *Man'yōshū* poems. Thus, *Waka kuhon* can be read

In particular, Kintō's sympathies seem to lie with poems that paint scenes of ethereal and quasi-divine beauty, and hint at a some dimension beyond the words. Nicholas Teele notes the strong influence of Buddhism on the work,⁹⁸ but the dominant influence here seems to be *Shintō*: two of the examples in upper levels make explicitly sacralize the landscape through the use of the honorific prefix *mi* (examples nos. 3 and 4), and several of them mention "Shintō" images (pure water, roaring water), or refer to annual ceremonies connected to the emperor and imperial power. One of the many things that the medieval concept of *yūgen* is said to connote is the Daoist theme of escape into a Nature of wondrous and magic power.⁹⁹ If Kintō's *amari no kokoro* is indeed an early embodiment of the medieval idea of *yūgen*, this component can be said to be present here as well.

Despite being much more sophisticated than anything produced to this point, Kintō's analysis is clearly a development of earlier trends in poetic taste. As argued in Chapter 4, it is possible to draw a continuous line of development between the straightforward expressions of feelings of the early period, poems that combined natural imagery and emotion in equal measure, and finally—via the success of "poems about things"—to poems that consisted entirely of natural imagery. The *kokoro* in this latter type of poems was no longer the poet's emotive state at the time of composition, but the mood triggered by the scene the poet witnessed or described. Kintō's idea of *amari no kokoro* can be said to describe this kind of *kokoro*. In which case, Kintō's aesthetics can be seen as the point of arrival of various centuries of poetic development.

It is worth stressing once more that Kintō's views are not necessarily representative of

as a reversed history of poetic development, with the newer styles being celebrated as superior to the older ones.

⁹⁸ Teele, "Rules for Poetic Elegance," 151-2.

⁹⁹ Ozawa, *Kodai kagaku no keisei*, 249.

those of the average person of the time. Indeed, the more literary critics learn about audiences, the more it becomes apparent that taste is mutable, erratic, subjective. Moreover, as I argue below, there was more than type of compositional setting, and each type had its own criteria of excellence.

Performative value and the poem's *ori*

The linguist Tokieda Motoki argued in an influential article that since *waka* was used in daily life to fulfill a variety of communicative purposes (to express anger or jealousy, to ask favors, to pursue a lover, to offer congratulations, etc.), aesthetic value was often secondary compared to its usefulness as a "tool for living" (*seikatsu no shudan*).¹⁰⁰ Later, he refined this view by distinguishing between "contemplative poems" (*nagameru uta*) that were meant to fulfill an aesthetic purpose, and "interpellating poems" (*yobikakeru uta*) that were primarily meant to produce a desired reaction from the addressee.¹⁰¹ Whereas the former were intended to be appreciated as aesthetic artifacts, the latter were primarily intended to accomplish some kind of communicative function.¹⁰²

Tokieda's point is an important one because it reminds us of that poetry at this time could mean rather different things depending on the context of use. If indeed there were at least two distinct "modes" of producing and consuming poems, one "aesthetic" and one "utilitarian," then

¹⁰⁰ Tokieda Motoki, "Inbun sanbun no kongō keishiki no igi," in *Koten kaishaku no tame no Nihon bunpō* (Shibundō, 1950), 223.

¹⁰¹ Tokieda Motoki, "Heian jidai no seikatsu no ikkan to shite no waka seikatsu – Genji monogatari o shiryō to shite," in *Gengo seikatsuron* (Iwanami Shoten, 1976), 192.

¹⁰² Tokieda's distinction is similar to an earlier one by Kubota Utsubo between "artistic *waka*" (*bungeisei no waka*) and "utilitarian *waka*" (*jitsuyōsei no waka*). See, "Kokinwakashū gaisetsu," in *Kokinwakashū hyōshaku*, Kubota Utsubo Zenshū, vol. 20, 12-3.

it is pointless to attempt to come up with a single set of standards valid for all occasions. The aesthetic standards discussed so far were developed for poems that were composed to be appreciated aesthetically. But as Tokieda notes, *waka* were indeed often composed in real-life situations as part of the normal routine of living, for practical purposes. In poems made to say thank you, to express anger, or to comfort a bereaved friend, aesthetic value was only part of the point. In addition to literary value, which they no doubt possessed in some measure, these poems also possessed a use value which consisted in whether they succeeded in accomplishing the communicative goal that they had been designed to accomplish.¹⁰³

Tenth-century sources offer abundant evidence of this other "performative" value of poetry. In episode 2 of the *Yamato monogatari*, emperor Uda commands a courtier named Tachibana no Yoshitoshi to compose a poem containing the word Hine (the name of the place where they are both spending the night). Yoshitoshi responds by deftly incorporating the name in a poem about the sadness that the people at the palace must be feeling in Uda's absence. Uda and everyone else present are moved to tears.¹⁰⁴ In another episode of the same work, Fujiwara no Tadahira is moved and amused by a poem by Tadamine.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, being moved (*aware to omou*), often to tears, is one of the most common responses to a poem in mid-Heian prose works.¹⁰⁶ These poems were not memorable because they conformed to established canons of artistry, but because they successfully captured the mood of the moment or voiced the feelings of the poet. Their value was performative and contextual rather than aesthetic. In order to

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¹⁰⁴ Yamato ?; Tahara, 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ NKBZ ?; Tahara, 76-7.

¹⁰⁶ See sections no.

understand t, one must consider not only the poem but also the setting of which it was part, the nature of the relationship that bound the people involved in the exchange, etc.

The value of a poem was often dependent on how well it suited the context of composition—its *ori* or *ba*. One of the sections in *Makura no sōshi* relates that emperor Murakami once had a twig of plum blossoms placed in a bowl filled with snow and, as the moon shone brightly, he asked a female palace attendant to compose a poem. The woman responded by reciting a line by Bai Juyi ("it is at the time of snow, the moon, the plum blossoms, and I most long for my Lord") and her feat so impressed Murakami that it prompted the following comment from him: "anybody can compose poems. What is difficult is to compose poems that fit the moment so perfectly like this one" (*uta nado yomu wa yo no tsune nari. Kaku ori ni aitaru koto namu iigataki*).¹⁰⁷ In another section of the same work, Sei relates that emperor En'yū (959-991, r. 969-984) once asked some courtiers to write down a poem in their notebooks and on seeing that they were struggling to do so, he added: "I will not consider if the handwriting is good or not or if it the poem does not suit the moment" (*sara ni tada, te no ashisa yosa, uta no ori ni awazaramu mo shiraji*). This suggests that poems that suited the situation of composition (*ori ni au*) were considered more difficult to make than poems that did not.¹⁰⁸ Kuboki Testuo believes that the moment of composition was so important to the proper appreciation of *waka* poems that he calls *waka* "the literature of the moment" (*ori no bungaku*).¹⁰⁹

To go back to Tokieda's point that poems were used to accomplish communicative functions. A successful poem was also a poem that succeeded in accomplishing the task that it

¹⁰⁷ SNKBZ 18: 304-5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid,

¹⁰⁹ Kuboki, *Ori no bungaku: Heian waka bungakuron* (Kasama Shoin, 2007).

had been designed to accomplish. In love poetry, this could mean succeeding in conveying one's feelings to a lover, or in obtaining the desired reaction from him or her. The anecdote below is from the *Motoyoshi shinnō-shū* (The Collected Poems of Prince Motoyoshi):

And so they lived together, but as he also visited other women she was visibly distressed. Despite this, he acted as though everything was normal and was about to leave the house when she composed:

No doubt I will soon weep and wail aloud,
once I realize that my misery is but my own doing.

ねにたかくなきぞしぬべきうつせみの
わが身からなるうきよと思へば

The Prince was so moved by the poem that he decided to stay. [...] ¹¹⁰

The power to move people and bring about desirable effects is one of the qualities that it is most often ascribed to *waka* in early texts of poetics. It is mentioned in Yoshifusa's comment on the auspicious *chōka* presented by the monks of the Kōfukuji temple to emperor Ninmyō in 849 as well as in the *Kokinshū* prefaces. ¹¹¹

The point to be stressed here is that it was not the poems that moved or impressed their audience but the poems in the particular situation in which they were made. Indeed, the modern reader who is not immersed in that context often struggles to see what is so remarkable about them.

In conclusion, there were at least two different standards for evaluating poems, one based on adherence to formal aesthetic canons, and one based on performance and the context of use.

¹¹⁰ ST 1: 272. The poem contains a pun between *kara* (because of, due to) and *kara* (empty shell), which I have omitted to keep the translation concise and effective.

¹¹¹ The *chōka* is discussed in Pekarik, "Poetics," 113, and in Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 60-64.

To consider valuable and worthy of study only poems that conformed to the former would be to ignore perhaps a majority of the poetry produced at this time.

CONCLUSION

“system, n. A set or assemblage of things connected, associated, or interdependent, so as to form a complex unity”
—*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition

“Countless are the novels of the world. So, how can we speak of them?”¹ These words by Franco Moretti, which open his recent volume on the European novel, can just as well be said about mid-Heian *waka*: countless are the *waka* poems made in the tenth century, so how can we speak of them?

Waka is a genre unlike any other in Japanese literary antiquity in that here there is no lengthy work to examine, no single authorial voice to reveal, and no tortuous writing process to reconstruct. In their stead, we have thousands and thousands of tiny independent textual performances by different authors operating simultaneously, in different places. Conventional literary history is ill-equipped to deal with something of this kind: there is simply too much happening at the same time; too many poets, too many poems, each of which is too small to sustain the kind of detailed analyses that literary scholars are used to providing.

Some *waka* scholars have attempted to circumvent the problem by focusing on poetry collections (*kashū*) instead of poems. This approach has been so popular that it even has its own name—*kōzōron* or structure theory.² Collections, especially the larger official ones, are much

¹ Franco Moretti ed. *The Novel, Volume 2: Forms and Themes* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. [ix].

² The *kōzōron* or study of the content and structure of poetry collections, began in the mid-1930s with Matsuda Takeo. Since then, it has remained consistently popular, and it is still one of

more amenable to conventional literary analysis because they are larger, they took longer to complete, and they provide sufficient material for close reading. To presume to understand *waka* by studying the structure and content of poetry collections, however, is like presuming to understand art by looking at the way paintings are displayed in a gallery: one can learn a great deal about the tastes and choices of the curator, but very little about the actual works. *Waka* and *waka* collections, as Edward Kamens notes about the official *chokusenshū*, simply are not the same thing:

these royally commissioned anthologies [...] are, in their own right, brilliant textual tapestries of ex post facto design, the structure and texture of which are themselves remarkable and admirable for their own sake [...]. [B]ut explorations of the nature and the complex history and character of *waka* are automatically skewed if they confine themselves to or rely too extensively on these anthologies, because doing so limits the reader [...] to reading them as they are read, or presented by those editors.³

To return to my initial question: how can we speak of it? This dissertation has offered a possible answer. Instead of looking at individual works, authors, or aspects of poetic practice, I have treated *waka* as complex system of many interconnected elements.⁴ In many ways, what I have done resembles what one does to look at a large pointillist painting: you need put some distance

the most active subfields of *waka* research. Scholars who have worked in this area include Sekine Yoshiko, Arai Eizō, and more recently, Suzuki Hiroko.

³ Edward Kamens, *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 20

⁴ The systemic approach to literature is by no means new. Earlier treatments include Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Literary System," *Poetics Today*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 27-44; Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus*, vol. 2, no. 111 (1982): 65-83; Robert Escarpit, *Sociology of Literature* (Painesville: Lake Erie College Press, 1965), to name just a few.

between you and the painting in order to see it properly; if you stand too close, all you see is a mass of colorful but ultimately meaningless dots.

As the viewer “pulls back” from the object, so to speak, the connections between seemingly discrete elements become apparent. Let’s start from the mass of people who were involved with *waka*. If one stops thinking in terms of individual figures, one soon realizes that every person involved with *waka* was part of a large, organized network of cooperating people. In this dissertation, I have identified primarily three groups of agents and provided an analysis of each.

The same complexity also existed within each group. As noted in chapter 2, the distinction between the patrons and the Public is purely instrumental, since patrons were strictly speaking a subpart of the larger group I have labeled the *waka* Public. More interesting is to look at the stratification within the category “poets.” In Chapter 1 I discussed how differences in social background and goals gave rise to several different modes of being a poet: I distinguished between low-ranking poets who viewed poetry-making as a potential tool of career advancement, and high-ranking poets who used it primarily as a tool for conducting love affairs and as a marker of social status. I also examined the case of women poets, and discussed what made their experience in the literary field distinctive.

Moving on to the poems. No one knows for sure how many *waka* poems were made, but it is safe to assume that they numbered in the tens of thousands, perhaps even in the hundreds of thousands. The modern poet Yosano Akiko is said to have composed fifty-thousand *tanka* during her lifetime, how many more would the average tenth-century poet who used *waka* as a tool of everyday communication, have composed? To presume to describe all these poems individually is not only impossible but wrong: ten thousand analyses of ten thousand individual poems are not

the same as one analysis of ten thousand poems considered simultaneously. The alternative I proposed is to look at the shared body of ingredients and skills that poets used to make poems. I discussed how such knowledge was acquired and various contemporary methods to go from a mass of disjointed “ingredients” to a finished poem.

Looking at *waka* as a single, large system also forces one to consider all the things that had to be in place for something of this scale and complexity to develop and function. In chapter 3, I looked at some of the beliefs that motivated and sustained the *waka* boom of the tenth century. I looked at the emergence of a new view of poetry as a path to immortality and at various positive images of the *waka* poet that provided aspiring poets with desirable models to imitate. I also looked at the increase of interest in the figure of the Author at the development of a proto-celebrity culture around poets and their work, and the solidification of the link between *waka* and courtliness (*miyabi*).

Chapter 5 looked at contemporary criteria for evaluating poems. Since one of the central arguments of the dissertation was that the audience was as important in the thriving of *waka* as the poets, it was important to devote to reception the same amount of attention that in chapter 4 was given to composition. I examined several important works of the period in order to attempt to reconstruct something of a now lost Heian horizon of expectations. Two main works were examined: the *Tentoku yo'nen dairi utaawase* and Kintō's *Waka kuhon*. My conclusions were that *uta-awase* judgments did not reflect contemporary canons of taste, so much as influence them. My reading of Kintō's work confirmed that between the Nara and Heian periods the dominant taste shifted toward seasonal and landscape poetry, and away from poetry that expressed emotions too openly or directly.

This, in essence, is the contribution of the dissertation: a view of the *waka* phenomenon as a large, organized system, rather than as an formless mass of individual cases. By working at this level of abstraction, I necessarily sacrificed something in terms of detail and precision; my hope is that the overall gains outweigh the losses.

I would like to conclude with a few words on the limitations of this kind of approach. One of the dangers of applying the systemic approach to literature is that one runs the risk of viewing literature as a self-contained system, isolated from everything else. The degree of autonomy of the literary field from other fields varies from case to case and from period to period, but complete autonomy is rarely found, especially in ancient societies. In this study, I hope to have at least hinted at the ways in which the *waka* world intersected with other adjacent systems. With regard to the field of Power, I have shown how position in the court hierarchy influenced behavior in the literary sphere. I have also discussed the complex political motives behind the official patronage of *waka*. Another domain with which *waka* had considerable overlapping was court ritual. Indeed, *waka* was able to reinvent itself as a court art by successfully positioning itself within existing forms of ritual presentation and performance. Theories about the usefulness of ritual for government provided a much-needed ideological justification for the whole enterprise. Yet, none of these systems completely contained the *waka* world. Even at this relatively early stage in its history, the *waka* world showed clear signs of tending toward reducing external interference and developing autonomous laws. Perhaps the least controversial way to put it is to say that, like most fields, the *waka* world was in a state of permanent tension between openness and closure, autonomy and heteronomy.

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