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Writing History in the Face of the Other: Early Japanese Anthologies and the Beginnings of Literature

by

Wiebke Denecke

1. Introduction

The writing of literary history in textual cultures that develop in symbiosis with an older, more authoritative reference culture faces complex challenges. It has to negotiate the desire for cultural self-colonization, which promises access to a realm of higher refinement and sophistication, against the desire for self-assertion and self-defense of a new tradition. It can not simply choose its beginnings, but it is from the outset entangled in the historiographical models and in the prolific literary production of the possibly much older reference culture. Thus, especially in the early stages of the development of symbiotic cultures, literary history gets written from a place in which the indigenous tradition is just emerging and in which both literature and reflection on literature are shaped and challenged by the models of the reference culture. These models were developed over a much longer time period in the reference culture and in response to its own inner logic of cultural development. Once they get appropriated in the younger culture they enter a new linguistic, sociohistorical and literary force field in which they are adapted, reinvented or discarded depending on new needs.

This article shows how early Japanese anthologies tackled the challenge of writing literary history. From a world historical perspective the Japanese case is quite unique, because it encompassed, unlike Roman literary culture that functioned in Latin and Greek, a triliterate canon of texts that included texts in Chinese, as well as texts in the hybrid literary idiom of “Sino-Japanese” (漢文 kanbun) and in Literary Japanese. This peculiar constellation resulted from a lack of a shared history with Japan’s reference culture China. While Rome conquered Greece in the second century B.C. when increasingly expanding its influence over all of the Mediterranean, Japan, in contrast, never conquered China up until the 20th century. Accordingly, Rome became the center of a vast multilingual empire, in which the Roman elite was expected to function in a biliterate mode, namely be able to read, speak, and
sometimes write in both Greek and Latin. In stark contrast, Japan remained for most of its history a rather isolated archipelago, politically independent, yet culturally heavily influenced by the developments on the Chinese continent and the Korean peninsula.

We could say that Sino-Japanese constituted a linguistic, sociological, and literary “third space”: rather than being a clearly definable language, it captures a pliable linguistic continuum between Literary Chinese and Literary Japanese. Sociologically, Sino-Japanese functioned as clerical language in both senses of the word: it was the language of the Buddhist clergy and of imperial administration, thereby associated with public, male court-culture and ceremonial protocol. In the realm of literature Sino-Japanese poetry was inevitably in constant exchange or even competition with Chinese poetry, the royal literary genre on the continent, but also with Japanese poetry. Thus, the very doubleness of the Japanese literary tradition, which consists of a Sino-Japanese and a Japanese textual corpus, and its relationship to Chinese literature created a complex triangular constellation difficult to capture in any linear account of literary history.

The earliest attempt to account for literary history shaped by this intricate constellation is preserved in the Sino-Japanese anthology Kaifūsō (Florilegium of Cherished Ais 懷風藻; 751). Its preface inscribed Japanese literary history into the general rise of civilization (Ch. wen 文). This storyline echoed the preface to the canonical Chinese anthology Wenxuan 文選, compiled by Xiao Tong (501–31), Prince Zhaojing of the Liang Dynasty, which was part of the standard repertoire of Japanese elite education. The choice of “wen” as key concept allowed the Kaifūsō preface to plot the history of civilization and textuality, of governance and literature onto one and the same timeline and thus to conveniently combine the establishment of imperial power with the beginning of civilization and the development of literature. Literature in general, and poetry as its most prestigious genre, could legitimately claim the central place Cao Pi (187–226), Emperor Wen of the Wei Dynasty, had accorded it in his Discourse on Literature (Lunwen 論文): “Literary works are the greatest accomplishment in the workings of a state, a splendor that never decays. 文章經國之大業, 不朽之盛事.”

This storyline of the Kaifūsō preface was severely challenged by a radically new account of literary history in the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, the Collection of Old and New Japanese Poems (Kokinshū 古今和歌集; hereafter Kokinshū; 905). In order to supplant the authority of Sino-Japanese poetry as a genre of public stature and insert the Japanese tradition in its spot the Kokinshū drew on cosmological narratives from Chinese sources with the Japanese Chronicles and scripted the rise of Japanese poetry along the line of the divine beginnings of the cosmos, thereby proving the Japanese tradition superior both on the literary and conceptual grounds.

It is significant that in devising their grand narratives of the primeval origins of literature in Japan neither the Kaifūsō nor the Kokinshū compilers felt compelled to admit to the undeniable historical fact that literature in Japan emerged much later than in China and that the stakes were not on equal ground. This strategy to humbly bow to the reference culture and downplay one’s own tradition only appeared much later in the Late Heian period in a piece by Ōe no Masafusa, a late 11th century scholar-official with predilections for Chinese literature and scholarship. The title of his elegant Sino-Japanese prose composition is “A Record on the Realm of Poetry” (J. Shihyoki 詩壇記). Masafusa had a bent for the quirky—he also wrote a record of itinerant singing girls—and this comes equally to the fore in this unique piece, which unfortunately seems to be unfinished. Masafusa sketches a literary realm distinct from either the political or the natural world with an enchanted logic of its very own:

大詩壇者
無水土山川
無人戶田
和没有居民或定居点
又不知在何方面
Even its whereabouts are unknown.

鬱而常聚
雖而常聚
和没有聚

達之盡之
Reaching this far realm

是的最困難的事情
one of the most difficult things.

是以今為彼
以時為俗
以時為俗

是無常的
是無常的

無是無常的

无是无常的

無是无常

Brush and ink are its expensives,

The fruits and plants in this parallel phrase stand for a heroic general, Li Guang, and a virtuous rainmaker, Qu Yuan. According to Sima Qian’s Records of the Grand Historian (Shi ji 史記) Li Guang was extremely plain and unassuming, yet revered by everybody in the empire for his uprightness. Sima Qian captures the general’s qualities with the proverb “Although the peach and pear tree are silent, a path forms naturally underneath them.” (Shi ji 109, 2878). The orchards are associated with the poet-official Qu Yuan, a virtuous minister who was not recognized by his ruler, the king of Chu, and therefore committed suicide, recurring to his unsuccessful enterprise in “Encountering Sorrows” (Liao huan 遭難) preserved in the Songs of the South (Chu ci 楚辭). The phrase implies that the realm of poetry is graced with virtuous servants of the state such as Li Guang and Qu Yuan. For the “fragrant virtue” trope in the Songs of the South see Hsu Shu-sui, The Problem of Chinese Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 13–17.


Wang Ji’s “Record” is preserved in the “Parables” section of the Wenxuan yinghua, 833. The image of a “Land of Drunkenness” became popular in the Mid- and Late Tang and is also referred to by Japanese kanashu poets such as Sugawara no Michizane, Ki no Hatono, and Masafusa’s grandfather Ōe no Masahira.

Wang Ji’s “Record” was highly popular in Japan and also served to sketch other alternative realities: the monk Emon (794–866) whose diary records his experiences in China during the famous persecutions of Buddhism under Emperor Wuzong uses Wang Ji’s “Record” as a blueprint for his “Record on the Land of Stillness and Enlightenment” (Shōsō kō, 空寂記) to depict the promised land of Tiantai Buddhism.
of Drunkenness” seems perfectly sensible from the perspective of a literary tradition in which composing poetry and getting drunk are metonymical endeavors and commitments. More importantly, Masafusa sketches his literary realm along two diametrically opposed vectors: on the one hand it is spaceless, empty and hard to get to, and then he takes pains to describe the imaginary realm with its definite expanse, customs, taxes, ranks and salary, moral authority and virtuous government. In this way he sparks the reader’s hope that one can visit that realm as nimbly as one’s mind moves back and forth. Empty illusion or allegorical incarnation, epitome of inaccessibility or armchair travel destination, Masafusa’s realm is built on highly ambivalent ground.

In a further step Masafusa seems to confirm that the Realm of Poetry is indeed universal and for everybody. Masafusa serves up a clichéd digest of poetics that every well-educated Heian courtier would have been familiar with, because it belonged to the exegetical tradition of the Classic of Poetry, one of the Chinese Confucian Classics:

心動於中
為形於外
詠歌不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足
詠慕不足

As the heart is moved within, words form outside. If singing it out loud is not enough, then you sigh. And if sighing isn’t enough, and if unknowingly dance it with your hands and tap it with your feet.

The adapted lines of the “Great Preface” to the Confucian Classic of Poetry propose a universal psychology of composition which poets ever advancing levels of expressive intensity in case words do not suffice. Quite handily for Masafusa, the preface to the Classic of Poetry also relies on a spatial metaphor: poetry is the outer manifestation of the inner heart of the poet. It gets translated out of the heart into the world as words, song or dance. There is a nice pas de deux between the spatial metaphor of Masafusa’s “Realm of Poetry” and the Classic of Poetry’s preface’s spatial conceptualization of the process of poetic composition. For Masafusa undertakes a double translation: natural landscape gets translated into poetic landscape in the first section and, in the process, the internal landscape of the poet is translated into the outer world taking shape in words.

The universal poetics of the preface to the Classic of Poetry is the powerful opening of Masafusa’s detailed account of Chinese literary history, in which he stays strictly true to his impulse to translate poetry into poetic landscape: poets are the aristocrats and leaders of the realm, in which even emperors are led by the poets. In one case in Masafusa’s piece poets respond to the execution of poets by emperors—euphemistically referred to as “expulsion from the Realm”—by instituting new “laws” rules—the total rules underlying Chinese “Recent-Style Poetry” (jimitsu 近體詩). The “Realm of Poetry” is a seemingly universal interior psychological space. But it is also a Chinese revere in which Chinese literary history becomes translated into a poetic realm, which mimics and even overcomes the political realm. In Masafusa’s eyes poetry rules supreme and China’s hegemony in East Asia—in the 11th century—certainly much frailer than Early Heian poets had witnessed—is imagined as poetic and pervasive rather than political and threatened. Yet, the loving care with which Masafusa produces this allegorical “translation” of Chinese history is suddenly choked off once he moves to domestic matters:

我朝
超於彥仁乘和
盛於貞範延喜
中興於末平天平
再昌於長保寛弘
廣德則三十餘人
略略志難盡不著六七許輩

At our Japanese court [poetry] arose between the Kōnin (810–824) and Jōwa (834–48) eras, flourished between Jōgan (859–77) and Engi (901–23) reached an intermediary peak in the Jōhei (931–38) and Tenryaku (947–957) eras and flourished again during Chōhō (998–1004) and Kanbun (1004–1012). Broadly speaking some thirty poets, and if we limit ourselves to the outstanding ones we hardly get beyond six or seven.

It comes as a severe disappointment that the transmitted text breaks abruptly off after this sobering statement. Poetry in Japan, according to Masafusa, lacks everything that had made the Chinese Realm so attractive and convincing: whereas in China poets and their poetry rule supreme and unencumbered over a poetic territory, Japanese literary history unfolds alongside a mechanical teleology of imperial era. Masafusa does not mention names or gives reasons for his periodization. But we can assume that he relates the beginning of literature to Emperors Saga and Junna, enlightened patrons of the arts at whose behest three anthologies of Sino-Japanese poetry were compiled. When Masafusa speaks of a first moment of flourishing he refers to Emperor Daigo under whose auspices the first imperial waka anthology, the Kokinshū, was produced. And with his second highpoint he points to Emperor Ichiyō’s era, when canonical works such as Murasaki Shikibu’s Tale of Genji, Sei Shōnagon’s Pillow Book and the influential Sino-Japanese anthology Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing (Wakan rieishi 和漢朗詠集) saw the light. But all this must be added in the reader’s imagination, because Masafusa merely collapses literary history into a list of reign names.

The rich Chinese pantheon of poetic geniuses that Masafusa parades in front of our eyes in a passage that I have left out, meets unfavorably with the paucity of the Japanese record: only three dozen poets and hardly seven of them worth mentioning. And, most divisive of all, Masafusa literally excludes Japan from the “Realm of Poetry” by denying it his allegorical translation into the kind of otherworldly poetic realm as which he had portrayed the Chinese tradition. We are dropping out of the allegorical travel account into a one-sided narrative of plain literary history. As Masafusa withholds his playful impulse of allegorical translation, the seemingly universal “Realm of Poetry” has shrunk to the size of China and has banned Japan.

Since we are dealing with a fragmentary text there is no way to know, but there is a slight chance that everything might end happily after all. At the end of his “Record of the Land of Drunkenness”—the above-mentioned blueprint for Masafusa’s piece—the Chinese poet Wang Ji declares that he wrote his “Record” because he was about to visit that land himself. Along these lines we could imagine Masafusa

declaring himself the apogee of a tradition that started admittedly poorly, but by his time—and perhaps even with him—had become a rightful region of the "Realm of Poetry," where he comes and goes as a regular. In other writings Masafusa is highly adept at boasting of his precocious literary talents and exploits and he would certainly be capable of ending his vision of the "Realm of Poetry" with a telescopic close-up of his own flattering literary profile. But we can't really know.

Masafusa's piece is a powerful tool to bring into relief fundamental questions about the writing of literary history in cultures that grow symbiotically in exchange with a canonical reference culture. I have outlined Masafusa's vision as a foil against which to appreciate the following discussion of the ways that Kafūsō and the Kokinshū narrate literary history. From the perspective of these two anthologies Masafusa's account is anomalous. First, because it tells the truth—after all the Chinese Classic of Poetry, compiled around 600 B.C., predated the Kōnin period, Masafusa's supposed "rise" of poetry in Japan, by 1400 years and was followed by prolific literary production. Second, it is anomalous because Masafusa all too willingly condones inequality between China and Japan in the realm of letters. The Late Heian Period, is a particularly strange moment for pitiful confessions of the absence of a domestic tradition, because Masafusa's time saw prolific production in all major Sino-Japanese genres, a sense of historical depth towards the indigenous literary tradition a Sino-Japanese canon that coexisted with, and at times outshone, the Heian curriculum of Chinese texts.

The earliest Japanese accounts of literary history tended to design highly sophisticated scenarios that attenuated and diffused inequality, or even declared superiority over the Chinese tradition. Most often such accounts did so, ironically, by using the rhetorical power of Chinese intertexts. To opt for a narrative of homology rather than for a story of inequality like Masafusa's was not just a manipulative device to assert one's cultural ego, although my constructivist vocabulary here seems to suggest that. Instead, it had truly heuristic value: homology between the two traditions served to imagine practices of writing literary history in the first place by assuming that, as claimed by the "Great Preface," the poetic impulse is innate to all of humanity. I would argue that this was certainly a powerful reason why the earliest Japanese accounts of literary history tended to be fictions of similarity (not imitations), rather than acknowledgments of difference.

2 Making sense of the regime of "Letters" (Ch. wen 文) in eighth century Japan: The Kafūsō

2.1 The Kafūsō preface: exploding literacies and the naturalization of writing

The late seventh and early eighth century saw an explosion of textual production in a rapidly expanding number of genres. The administrative construction of the Nara state based on Chinese precedent necessitated a great amount of individuals with thorough scribal training. Heiō, the later Nara, was the first stable capital, as until 710 the court had moved with every new imperial era. The grand construction of a full-fledged capital changed the relation between central authority and the provinces. As authority both of the emperor and of the aristocratic clans became more stable central grasp was extended over the provinces based on a hierarchical system of provinces, districts and villages. The first half of the Nara period saw a number of grand compilation projects that justified the budding authority of the state such as the Records of Wind and Earth (Fudoki 風土記), a collection of records on local legends, products, and natural resources of various provinces. Increasing control over the provinces also fostered collecting—and selecting—local cultural memory with the help of the new technology of writing practiced in the center. Justification of central authority vis-à-vis the provinces was also buttressed by the compilation of chronicles relating the history of the imperial clan and other clan lineages: the Records of Old Matters (Kojiki 古事記; 712) presented a highly selective narrative designed to legitimate the current emperor's descent from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. The Records of Japan (Nihon shoki 日本書紀; 720) had no such clear agenda, but voraciously assembled variant versions of local histories to give the nascent state a history from the beginning of times to the late seventh century.

The composition of Sino-Japanese poetry was not just a side-effect of this explosion of literacy and the state's instrumentalization of textual production, but it was part and parcel of establishing imperial power. Much of the poetry in the Kafūsō was composed at court banquets and eulogized the splendors of the current regime. Against this background it comes as no surprise that the Kafūsō is preoccupied with making sense of the explosion and diversification of "Letters" (wen) in the seventh and eighth centuries. I argue that "wen" is the pivotal concept at the heart of the collection, and both the preface and the poetry itself strive to think "wen" through in all its meanings, connotations, and implications for a nascent national culture.

"Wen"—one of the potently protean conceptual clusters of the Chinese tradition—means everything from "patterned fur of animals" to "ornament." By extension, it means "civilization" and "cultural refinement" as well as "writing" and "literature." It is also the name of King Wen, one of the founders of the Chinese Zhou Dynasty (around 1020 B.C.). A pun in the Confucian Analects first equated King Wen with the "cultural heritage" (文 st wen) of the Zhou dynasty and, in a next step, Confucius declared himself custodian of this heritage. In this way the regime of "wen" came to be particularly associated with the Confucian tradition.

Thus, in short, "wen," which I translated here simply as "Letters," encapsulates the art of "Confucian government" through ritual "ornament," "cultivated" ethos and "refined" "textuality"—a phrase that in Literary Chinese would be a five-fold tautology of the word "wen." Thus, by choosing "wen" as the guiding concept, the Kafūsō could do several things at once, namely simultaneously tell the beginning of civilization, the advent of writing, the beginning of Confucian learning in Japan, the beginning of literature, and last but not least Japan's homage to King Wen as...
the ideal Confucian king and a model of Japanese imperial power. The Kaifusō gradually projected the manifold signification of “wen” onto a historical timeline in precisely this fashion. As a result, literature proper, belles-lettres and poetry, appear in the Kaifusō preface as the rather late outcome of a long process of civilization (or “wen”-ization). This storyline was adapted from the preface to the canonical Chinese antholgy Wenxuan 文選, which served as a model to the Kaifusō preface. The anthology included a broad spectrum of literary genres and its preface explained the gradual unfolding of literature and its genres within the broader history of civilization. Adopting the Wenxuan’s preface’s strategy was certainly double-edged: it placed literature in the venerable context of conceptually encompassing the entire history of civilization. Yet, by assuming this historical, or evolutionary perspective, it also conceded an only gradual and rather late advent of literature in Japan, exposing a vulnerable spot that was going to be capitalized on by the Koki Shinshū prefaces, which without hesitation posit the beginning of poetry to the earliest moment possible, namely around the beginning of the cosmos.

The Kaifusō had no qualms about admitting to a late beginning of Sino-Japanese composition in Japan, especially because this move enabled a powerful conceptual absorption of the history of civilization into the special history of Sino-Japanese poetry. As a countermove to a story of late arrival, the preface very cleverly downplays the importance of writing from China through Korea. It posits writing symbolically as a natural presence in Japan from earliest times on and taps into the Chinese lore of the invention of writing that declares writing a natural phenomenon rather than a human invention. True, mythical sages of Chinese high antiquity were regarded as figures of invention and human creation as in the case of Fu Xi who supposedly invented the hexagrams of the Classic of Change—and by extension writing—by watching natural patterns or Cang Jie, who invented writing by “copying” characters from bird tracks in the sand. Yet, their acts of invention were described as mimicry of the natural world, not as the creation of human artifice. I would argue that the Kaifusō preface relies on this Chinese rhetoric of the “naturalization” of writing in order to cope with the problematic importation of foreign writing into a local oral culture.

Here is how the preface accomplishes this:

I have heard of sages from the remote past
and surveyed the written records of yore.

In the age when the Heavenly Grandchild’s chariot
descended on Peak Takakahō.

The workings of Heaven had barely begun
and when [Emperor Jimmu] founded our state at Kashihara,9
human civilization/writing/letters [asex] were not yet created.

9 Both incidents, mentioned in the Chronicles, refer to acts that establish divine authority on earth. The Heavenly Grandchild, grandson of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, was sent down to Earth to Peak Takakahō by the Sun Goddess and Takami musubi no kami in order to combat evil gods (Nihon shoki N 9). Emperor Jimmu (trad. ca. 600 B.C.), the first emperor of the “Human Age” following the “Age of the Gods,” established his palace at Kashihara (Nihon shoki III 2/27). References to the Nihon shoki are by book, followed by the year, month, and day of the entry.

The preface makes two clever moves to deal with the adoption of writing from China. First, it claims for Japan what I would call a “hexagrammatic literacy,” the existence of writing literally avant la lettre. Although writing is “not yet created” and the Korean envos have yet to bring their diplomatic documents and the technology of writing to Japan, Empress Jingū and Emperor Ōjin align their actions with the hexagrams from the Classic of Changes, which, as mentioned above, were allegedly invented by the mythical hero Fu Xi as a type of proto-writing. “Hexagrammatic literacy” diffused the secondary advent of writing in Japan through importation from China. Second, the preface downplays the importation of Chinese writing through Korea by tapping into a jumble of Chinese legends that “naturalize” the invention of writing in the Chinese. The official documents are “dragon texts” echoing the story of
2.2 Framing the anthology through "wen": the Civil (wen) and the Martial (wu) in the biographies of Prince Ōtomo and Prince Otsu

"Wen" was not just a major narrative thread in the Preface's account of civilization and the rise of literature, but the anthology as a whole is preoccupied with working through the semantic logic of "wen." This theme is further continued in the 9th century Sino-Japanese anthologies. The preface to the Towering Clouds Collection (Ryūgūkoku 羽黒団; 814) states that Emperor Saga commissioned the collection to preserve "our cultural heritage," echoing Analects 9.5 where Confucius confidently takes charge of preserving the "cultural heritage" (wen) of King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty.

The proper balance between cultured civility (wen) and martial prowess (wu) is a prominent concern in the biographies of the two princes whose poetry opens the collection.\(^{22}\) I shall now demonstrate the ramifications of these concepts in the anthology. The preface had located the beginning of belles lettres and poetry proper at the court of Emperor Tenji (r. 668–671), who built his short-lived capital at Ōmi close to the Biwa Lake near Kyoto. Tenji's son Prince Ōtomo was deposed in the bloody Jinshin War of 772 by Tenji's brother, the later Emperor Temmu. The preface laments the loss of poetic collections in this succession war, painting an anti-climactic picture of the beginning of poetry proper by immediate destruction. In agreement with this claim in the preface there are only two poems preserved from the time before the Jinshin War, both by Emperor Tenji's unfortunate deposed heir Prince Ōtomo.\(^{23}\) Placing Prince Ōtomo at the beginning of the collection is chronologically sensible, but also ideologically desirable: he is a paragon of virtue and erudition who would have been a worthy successor to his father. The biography praises his balance of civil (wen) with martial (wu) qualities. His portrayal is written as a positive mirror image of the third poet in the collection, Prince Otsu, a son of Emperor Temmu who was given high office after Temmu's victory in the Jinshin war, yet later forced into suicide under allegations of rebellion by Temmu's wife Empress Jitō who supported her son's Prince Kusakabe's claim to the throne. There is no doubt that the two princes are intended as a complementary character study, an instructive diptych. They both receive prophecies from foreign diviners and while Prince Ōtomo is praised for his ability to balance cultured civility with martial prowess Prince Otsu is doomed for his lack thereof.

Prince Ōtomo is equally proficient in civil and military matters, he excels in speech and writing and brings about a "renaissance of letters" like his father Emperor Tenji, which the preface portrayed as the first properly "literary" ruler:

[Prince Ōtomo] was deeply learned and of broad understanding and he had talents in civil as well as military affairs. The prince was by nature of keen perception, with an elegant predilection for broadly exploring antiquity. As soon as his brush descended, essays took shape, and when words came out of his mouth they were like discourses. The advisors of his time sighed in admiration over his magnificent learning, and before long the renascence of belles lettres increased with every day. Due to the Jinshin revolt his Heavenly Mandate did not ensue.\(^{24}\)

He was twenty-five.\(^{25}\) 皇太子俊徳天智, 綾部宗兼, [then] 太子天智明德, 羽黒団,下葉雅成, 赤衣為論, 詩論者, 嘗其風矣, 籌帷文集(156), 常平中年, 會芝山之亂, 天智不達. 時年二十五。\(^{26}\)

The "Heavenly Mandate" (天命 Ch. tianming, J. tenmei) had been a powerful concept through which the Zhou dynasty justified its overthrow of the presumably cruel and decadent Shang on moral grounds. Prince Ōtomo's virtue and excellence did not translate into entitlement to rule, so that "his Heavenly Mandate did not ensue." The biography does give an explanation for this outrageous mismatch between moral entitlement and political failure. It is couched in the words of the Tang emissary Liu Degao who visited the Yamato court in 665 and who, marveling at the prince's features, exclaimed, "This prince has a character and bone structure\(^{27}\) quite unlike his features. It is indeed not the lot of this country to possess such an individual. 此皇子, 腹骨不似塞外人, 實非中國之分也."

If Prince Ōtomo is deposed by his Japanese countrymen and his potential to be an ideal ruler goes to waste because of the Jinshin War, it is a Chinese envoy, who, from a culturally and diplomatically superior position, questions the qualification of the Japanese to possess such a promising and exceptional crown prince in the first

\(^{22}\) Out of the 64 poets anthologized in the Kaifūsō nine are portrayed in short biographies attached to their poetry. They are either princes or monks, the only exception being Itōyakuno no Asan Orotrnaro, third son of Itōyakuno no Asan Maro, a Korean who came to Japan on a mission that also included Yamato no Okasa and the monk Shaku Dōi, whose poetry is also included in the Kaifūsō. Inserting the genre of biographies from official histories or monk hagiographies such as the Goseishūgimun 新義品 (compiled by Hui Zuo in 519) into a poetry collection is quite unique to the Kaifūsō. For theories about the presence of biographies in the Kaifūsō see Hafoka Akira, Sutai kanseishū ni Chōgūkoku bugyō (Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 1989), 17.

\(^{23}\) There have been hot debates whether Prince Ōtomo was ever inured or who ruled during the turbulent months preceding Temmu's victory. Compilers of the Dai Nihon shi compiled between 1657 and 1506 decided that he was enthroned and thus he was conferred the posthumous imperial name of "Emperor Kōkan" in 1870. See John W. Hall, ed., Cambridge History of Japan. Ancient Japan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1988-1990), 218 ff.

\(^{24}\) The phrase can also simply mean "his Heavenly-appointed life span ran out." But a more political interpretation as "Heavenly mandate" is certainly appropriate in this passage that recounts the prince's deposition and death during the Jinshin War.

\(^{25}\) Kaifūsō, 70.

\(^{26}\) 腹骨 could mean more generally "demeanor" or "character." However, it appears here in a physiognomic context and I thus translate literally "character and bone structure."
help him cope productively with a disconcerting prophecy. The astronomer from Silla announces ominously, “Your bone structure reveals a man who will never be a subject of others. This is why your rank has remained low for such a long time. I fear you will not be able to preserve your life for any great length of time.”30

The role of the sagely advisor Fujiwara no Kamatari in Prince Ōtomo’s biography is to highlight the Prince’s ability of gathering people of keen judgment around him and of accepting their advice. Kamatari alleviates worries about the ambiguous prophecy and assures the Prince that fate will be just if he only cultivates himself. Indeed, Prince Ōtomo’s rise to a crown prince with the potential to follow in the footsteps of his virtuous father, Emperor Tenji, is inspired by the soothing councils of Kamatari. In contrast, Prince Ōtsu does not have an adept advisor or eager future father-in-law to help him cope with the unfortunate prophecy. The result of this prophecy is dire:

[The prince] thereupon advanced his plans of rebellion. Led astray by these deceptions he thus schemed and got off track—alas, how regrettable! He had good potential, but did not preserve his life through loyalty and fidelity. Instead, having come close to that evil monk, he suffered the humiliating punishment of suicide. Based on this example, how profound is the saying of the ancients that “you should be careful of your acquaintances.” He was twenty-four.31

Because of this, his father, the Empress, deeply grieved. Bitterly he felt the pain of it. That was why he lived with such melancholy, until his short life was cut short by the young prince, twenty-four and twenty-five days old.32

Prince Ōtsu goes astray because he lacks a resourceful entourage and because his own character judgment is wanting: he believes the “superstitions” of the astronomer from Silla and nobody is there to keep him from rushing to revolt based on the prophecy that he will never be a good subject and, in consequence, has to become ruler to foresee the dire end prophesied for him.

There is no moral to Prince Ōtomo’s biography, but for the cautionary tale about Prince Ōtsu it is directly spelled out as a strong prohibitive. The term “acquaintances’” (J. kōbyō 交遊) is a revelatory cue here, because it connects discourses about ruling through “wen” and about rulers as generous patrons of literature with a more general rhetoric of friendship and cultivation of character by surrounding oneself with the right people. The Kajishō preface portrayed Emperor Tenji as an expert in making “acquaintances” in precisely this way:

While in general it is true that:

- Before long, [Emperor Tenji] thought:
- For harmonizing customs and transforming conventions, nothing is more esteemed than letters (wen).
- For nurturing virtue and enlightening oneself, what could come before learning?
- Thus he established schools and academies, seeking men of flourishing talent; [...] he repeatedly summoned men of letters, often hosted excursions to set out sweet wine.

30 Kajishō, 74-75.
31 The Korean diviner.
32 Kajishō, 78.
2.3 Balancing an anthology of “wen”: the tension between ornament (wen 文) and substance (zhi 質)

Confucius said, “A dominance of substance over ornament will result in roughness. A dominance of ornament over substance will result in scribal pedantry. Only a well-balanced mixture of the two results in a superior person.” 子曰: "文則野,文質彬彬然,然後君子.”

The proper balance between solid substance and artful ornament was to become one of the central concerns in the Chinese literary tradition. The balance ensured the production of an attractive, yet morally responsible literature. Its loss was considered not just poetically, but morally and politically harmful. Excessively ornate literature could bring dynasties down: in a passage in the Sui History (Suishu 隋書) such literature is brought forward as the cause for China’s long period of disunion between the fall of the Han Dynasty and the reunification under the Sui and Tang Dynasties.36 Ideally the outer pattern (wen) would be a perfect manifestation of inner substance as described by the Chinese poet Lu Ji (261–303) in his Poetic Exposure on Literature (Wenfu 文賦):

珊枝翳以纖維 Nature’s laws bear the substance, they are a tree’s trunk;
文質彬彬於織 Patterns hang as the branches, a lavish lacewear.37

But literary composition in China has since the fifth century generally been pressed to defend itself against allegations of giving in to artful ornament at the expense of moral substance. Liu Xie’s A Literary Heart and the Carving of Dragons (Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍) is a sensitive mirror of the intricate discourses developing around the polarity between “literary flourish” and “substance” in the fifth and sixth centuries. It takes turns attacking and vigorously defending the related term of “dragon carving,” which had carried negative connotations ever since Yang Xiong’s remark that such “insect carving” and the writing of poetic exposions had been a vice of his youth.38 The Japanese poets anthologized in the Kaijūsō had to deal with that tension inherent in Six Dynasties poetry and poetics.

The Kaijūsō preface faced this problem in a less sheltered way than the preface to the Wenxuan. Certainly, the Wenxuan preface capitalized equally strongly on the polysemantic efficiency of the key term “wen” and told the history of literature—"wen"—from the broad angle of the history of civilization—"wen." However, looking back to more than a millennium of textual production and several centuries of discussions about textual genres and categorizations the Wenxuan preface was written from the perspective of a highly compartmentalized literary landscape in which belles lettres could claim a special position thanks to their “literariness” (wen),

33 Ibid., 60. In contrast to the portrayals of other emperors in the earlier part of the preface, the portrayal of Emperor Tenji does not match with the Nikko shiki account. The Nikko shiki celebrates Tenji instead. Hatoko Akita has shown that Tenji’s portrayal here echoes the depiction of Emperor Taiizong in the Zhenkung zhenguo 聖徳政國 (comp. by Wu Jing 趙堅), which records exemplary debates between Taizong and his ministers about policy issues. See Hatoko, “Hachiz hiki ichi Nihonjin no kokusaikanaka—Kaijūsō no seki kara,” Kokugakushin 103.11 (2002): 107.
34 Ibid., 72.
35 Analogue 6.18.
or in its own words "brush flourish" (hanzao 翰藻). On this basis, the compiler, in contrast to the broad scope of the rise of civilization and textuality sketched at the beginning of the preface, later explains that he excluded selections from the "histories" and the "master" sections of the Chinese encyclopedias for their lack of literary polish. But these were precisely those textual genres in the traditional Chinese classification of texts that had discussed the significance of "wen" as civilizing force and moral power.

In the case of the Kaihitsu, the first literary collection in Japanese history, the tension between "literary flourish" and "substance" is complicated due to the lack of a protective concept of "literariness" on which the Wenzuan preface had eliminated historical and philosophical texts. "Wen" itself is still suspended between the moral mission of virtuous Confucian governance on the model of King Wen and its more "ornamental" manifestation in the realm of belles-lettres and literary entertainment at the Yamato and Nara courts.

This becomes very clear when the preface tells the history of poetry after the Jinshin War and the demise of Emperor Tenji's lineage. It changes narrative modes, now telling the story of poetry through its poets and poems:

自此以降 Since those times
男闽数出 poets have emerged now and then:
隱亀王子 A crown prince — like a hidden dragon
翔雲鶴於風箏 made cloud-dwelling cranes soar with his breezy brush
(IEEE no. 6)
鷗禽天皇 An emperor — like a rising phoenix
泛舟於碧濤 had the moon boat float by nitty islands (in IEEE no. 15)
神 haber of poets Counselor Omiwa [Takechimoro] lamented his white temples
(IEEE no. 18)
唐文之錫玄堂 and Chancellor Fujiwara [no Fujiwato] sang of mysterious creation (in IEEE no. 29).

觀茂賞於前朝 They elevated the lush fruits of previous reigns
飛英聲於後代 and let their preeminent voices fly on to later eras. 46

The passage forces very different individuals into a parallel structure: Prince Ōtsu, a prince dreaming of becoming an emperor, gets a favorable treatment put on a par with Emperor Mommu, son of Prince Kusakabe and Empress Gemmei, who ruled for a decade of his short life and under whose behest the famous Taihó legal code was promulgated in 701. The only similarity between the two high officials coupled

in the lines is that they were both prominent and unsuccessful in their own way. 43 The line-up of poems alluded to reveals a preference for the "literary": clearly it is the most ornate, not the most morally instructive, poems that are chosen to represent their authors. 44

This choice is particularly pertinent in the case of Prince Ōtsu. Out of the four poems by the prince it is not the prince's famous deathbed quatrain that is selected (although it would have alluded to his rebellion and forced suicide, and thus added force to a condemnation of the prince's behavior on moral and political grounds suggested in his biography). Instead, the preface evokes this beautifully crafted couplet:

天風風雲雲雲雲 On heaven's paper the breezy brush paints cloud-dwelling cranes—
山嵐御雲雲雲 Mountain loom and frosty shuttle weave leafy brocade. 45

Not laments of a life cut short, but a couplet on cranes longevity is invoked from the prince's poetry. In the couplet nature is made into her own craftsman, painting with a wind-brush and weaving brocade leaves over the mountain ridges. Nature artistically adorns herself so that the poet does not even seem to strike an ornate pose, but describes nature in its seemingly natural beauty. There is little reason to read this couplet as a political allegory, although a couplet added by a later poet, which forces such an interpretation on the lines, shows the desire of the compiler to allegorize. 46

The couplet is rather an elegant reverie paying homage to the artfulness of nature and by extension to the nature of poetry as artfulness. And it exemplifies a practice of literature/wen that prizes elegant wit and literary artifice, certainly not didactic. 47

The choice of the elegant over the instructive is even clearer in Emperor Mommu's case. Out of three poems, "Stating my Feelings" shows the emperor's earnest attempts at Confucian self-cultivation. 48

Yet, the author of the Kaihitsu preface instead chooses the poetically most ornate and sophisticated poem to match Prince Ōtsu's elegant couplet:

43 Omiwa no Takechimoro was sent into exile and Fujiwara no Fujihito, the most powerful person at court after Mommu's death, never succeeded in putting his favorite Prince Obito on the throne.
44 Fujiwara no Fujihito's poem (no. 29) is, in contrast to the other poems referred to by the preface, a heavy-handed praise of Confucian governance in which a New Year's Day celebration is staged as an audience at an idealized Zhou court. Yet none of the other four poems by Fujiwato to which the author of the preface could have alluded to are particularly ornate so that, while intending to match the two ministers Fujihito and Takechimoro, he did not have a matching choice from Fujiwato's poetry.
45 Kaihitsu no 6, 76.
46 This later poet links this imagistic couplet per force to Prince Ōtsu's unhappy fate: 冒犯雲雨・雲・雲 The time for crimson sparrows with letters in beak did not come; 隆飛雲之電隱 "Hidden dragon— do not act! 'He cannot rest in peace.
Crimson sparrows would have brought the message of the prince's enthronement. The quotation from the first hexagram of the Classic of Changes "Hidden dragon—do not act!" warns the Prince, addressed as the imperial dragon about to take power, against rebellion. Yet, the prince took no heed and due to his forced suicide cannot rest in peace. Thus, one could read the selection of Prince Ōtsu's couplet through the indirect hint to the couplet of the later poet, especially because the Preface mentions the "hidden dragon." Yet, in the context of the preface the "hidden dragon" serves as nothing more than a fit parallel to Emperor Mommu's "philomenic-ennui" and puts the rebellious prince even more on par with the Emperor, his parallactic correlate.
47 Sawada Fukuiko praises the sophistication of this couplet in most flattering terms. See Sawada, Kaihitsu chūkai (Tokyo: Oskayuma shoten, 1933), 54.
it is an effective, if minute, counterargument against the wide-spread assumption that the Kaijō is a collection of awkward poetic beginnings of the yet-uneducated Japanese poets and that the quality of the poetry slowly increases as time passes. Rather, one could argue that the presentation in the Kaijō of pedantically didactic poetic such as Emperor's Mommu's poems on his attempts of self-cultivation and of clever and eloquent poems such as the one on the moon by the same author are a symptom of a highly ambivalent concept of poetry in eight century Japan: the Kaijō gives a glimpse of a literature culture that was eager to still keep together "literary flourish" and moral "substance" in a way that became unthinkable in China after the Wenxuan preface and its concept of the "literary."

2.4 Scintillating "wen" between Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist rhetoric

The choice of poems deemed representative by the author of the preface brings out a tension between two versions of "wen" that in the Chinese tradition by the time of the Wenxuan preface had become compartmentalized into the proper literary and the morally instructive that lacked literary polish. And the author betrays a proud preference for the ornate and sophisticated over the plain and instructive. This choice is just one example of the complicated collusion and collision of various ideological stances propagated in the poetry. It emerges from the juxtaposition of the preface with the sampled poetry and the attached prose biographies and—as we saw in the case of Prince Ōtsu—considerably complicates what the preface tells us at face value. If "wen" is central to Confucian discourses yet also tied to rhetorical flourish characteristic of belliterary literature, the role of Buddhist presence in the preface and the collection is equally ambivalent: put simply, the preface saw Buddhist endeavors and literary pursuits as incompatible, but in the collection we see Buddhist monks happily versifying.

In the preface, Prince Shōtoku, the famous 7th century regent and propagator of Buddhism, lacks "leisure" for literary pursuits, because he busies himself with setting up a rank system and studying Buddhist doctrine. Thus, Buddhism is presented as an impediment to literary production. The collection complicates this image by inserting the biography and poetry of monk Chizō, who had been studying in China and was highly rewarded for his Buddhist expertise upon his return to the Nara court. Chizō’s insertion among imperial family members is too prominent not to be significant. His biography continues the exemplification of proper friendship relationship that had made Prince Ōnomoto become even more virtuous, Prince Kawashima a bad friend, and Prince Ōtsu a rebellious failure. As I shall show below, Chizō is the successful correlate to Prince Ōtsu, whose poetry precedes Chizō’s entry in the collection. The biography relates how fellow monks were envious of his superior command of the Buddhist law and how he feigned craziness to escape harm, while secretly coping the essentials of the Buddhist canon and hiding them in a lacquer-sealed tube that he used to carry around during his pilgrimages.

Chizō’s story intersects with Prince Ōtsu’s case on several levels. First, both have hidden designs. Chizō’s secrecy, his feigning of crazy and unrestrained behavior is successful, while Prince Ōtsu’s is unravelled and he pays for it with his life. Interes-
The opening of his robe is a gesture of the prince’s insouciance while enjoying himself away from his court duties with his coterie at a banquet. The banquet evokes the famous salon in Golden Valley Garden of the wealthy Shi Chong. The last line refers to the famous Chinese poet and drinker Tao Qian (365–427) who became famous as a hermit, but served for a couple of months as magistrate of Pengze. Pengze marked the turning point of his life, when he decided to relinquish office and retreat to the countryside. The poem thus mentions Tao Qian at his most courtly and least typical. Yet, a Japanese prince emmenced in court life could more easily empathize with the more untypical Tao Qian, the official, rather than with Tao Qian, the hermit. In the end the prince empathizes with Tao Qian to the degree of competing with him: the Japanese courtiers are even better drinkers and banqueters than Tao Qian as the governor of Pengze, so that Tao Qian doesn’t merit mention after all. Thus Prince Otsu does two things at once: he elegantly parades his familiarity with Tao Qian’s biography but also uses it to declare Japanese victory in an imaginary competition over whether Tao Qian’s companions or Prince Otsu’s are the better banqueters.

If “opening the robes” leads us to Chizi’s triumph to be established at the head of his own sect by using a Daoist ruse of life preservation, the prince-poets relaxing of his official attire and feasting in company leads to disaster, because, as we know from his biography, he tended to be careless about his acquaintances and assembled with the wrong people.

Thus, Chizi serves as effective counter-portrayal to Otsu. He astutely manipulates Daoist self-preservation techniques to his advantages, where the Prince deliberately plays Daoist: he truly IS “unrestrained” and this leads to his demise if not in the poem but in the biography framing the poem.

The intricate interlacing of Chizi’s acquisition of the Buddhist law and preservation of his life through Daoist recipes which feign Daoist escapism is also a collateral lesson in how to be a good courtier: courteously playing Daoist libertinage was to be preferred over getting out of control by being a Daoist libertine. Thus the lesson to be learnt is that Chizi pretends and gets rewarded for his acting by the Empress, where Prince Otsu acts earnestly and fails.

In Chizi’s poetry we also revisit the antagonism between Prince Shōtoku’s advancement of Buddhist doctrine and Emperor Tenji’s support of belles lettres, which the preface had highlighted. This antagonism dissolves in Chizi’s production of playfully defensive poetry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>花見会</th>
<th>“Taking Pleasure in Flowers and Oranges”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>間雑</td>
<td>A monk has rare time to chat –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>So leaning on my staff I busy myself to welcome you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>In this season of fragrant spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>we are suddenly facing bamboo breezes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>求</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>鎮</td>
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<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>閑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>芳間</td>
<td>我</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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51 In comparing the biographies of the monks in the Kaifūsō Yamaguschi Asasuchū identifies their unconventional iconoclastic behavior as a similarity in their portrayals. See “Hīgashi Ajiro no kanari to sōryō. Kaifūsō sōden kenkyū jōdo,” Tetsuo Masaaki, ed., Kaifūsō. Kanji bunkakun no naka no Nihon kodai bunbū, 152.
52 Kaifūsō, 70.
53 The pond was built by King Wen of the Zhou dynasty in his royal park. In response to the king’s virtue the common people allegedly worked on its construction voluntarily.
54 Referring to “Golden Valley Garden” (Yingshuan), the pleasure estate of the fourth-century poet-cum-shitao Shi Chong, whose literary banquet in his luxurious garden became proverbial.
55 Kaifūsō no. 3, 75.
56 Kaifūsō, no. 8, 79–80.
Chizō enjoys "letting his mind ramble freely": this could simply mean that he goes on excursions in the company of other poetry-inclined courtiers and expresses his "mind" in poetry, based on the proverbial belief, first recorded in the "Canon of Shun" of the Book of Documents, that "poetry articulates one's intentions/mind." The humble closure of the poem in which Chizō expresses shame for his poor poetic talent is also a tongue-in-cheek teasing of his companions and an easy excuse for potentially poor poetic performance. He obviously enjoys writing poetry. Yet, in calling it by its rather derogatory name "insect carving," Chizō playfully condones the potential triviality of the enterprise, which in turn implies that a failure at "insect carving" is not so grave after all. The Eastern Han rhapsody author and scholar Yang Xiong (53 B.C.–18 A.D.) had deplored the literary pursuits of "insect carving" in his youth as a juvenile faux pas off the proper moral path. For Chizō failing in something morally despicable is a good excuse to enjoy indulging in it. Chizō is, however, aware of his duties as a Buddhist monk and his deviance from Prince Shōtoku’s example of Buddhist “busy-ness” that does not leave time for literary pursuits.

According to the first line, monks just cannot afford chatting, especially not in verse. Yet, Chizō is all the happier to receive a visitor in this gorgeous springtime to waste his time with. Chizō convinces himself that his impulse to hang out with the guest rather than hold back, to recite and compose poetry rather than to stay silent as it befits a monk, is not misguided: the orioles, too, are “searching for friends.” Again, friendship and poetic composition make for a proper couple. And letting one’s “intention” ramble freely mimics both his outward movement into nature—encountering a nice spot to feast—and the imminent outward manifestation of the poet’s mind in the poet’s words, just as the poetics of the “Great Preface” to the Classic of Poetry had described it.

The Buddhist monk Chizō is presented as adept in the proper application of Daoist recipes as well as in the loosening of Confucian and Buddhist restraint against “insect carving.” Chizō is the epitome of proper balance among all Three Teachings, and a figure through which the process of balancing can eloquently be exemplified. His crucial positioning in the anthology among members of the imperial family might be due to his success through such balance. But it also reflects, once more, the intention of the compiler to work through the connotations and implications of “wen” in various contexts, in Chizō’s case of course through the meaning of “wen” in relation to his social status as a monk.

2.5 Conclusion to the Kaihōso

The Kaihōso constitutes the earliest attempt to make sense of the practice of Sino-Japanese literary composition within the context of the development of civilization and textuality on the Japanese archipelago in the seventh and eighth century. In this sense it is a monument to the regime of “wen” in gradually narrowing inferences. The Kaihōso preface attempts to account for the rise of civilization in general, for writing in practice, and literature in particular.

Following up on the logic of the gradual unfolding of “wen” in its ever more specific historical inflections, the anthology and its preface decline the word “wen” through various fields of signification. In the biographies of Prince Ōtomo and Prince Otsu “wen” is coupled with “martial prowess,” with a proper sense for the right company both poetically and politically. Also, “wen” is played off against the anxiety of literary superfluosity, of decline through lack of “substance.” This was a way to work through Confucian prejudices against belles lettres. In the portrayal of the two princes and the one monk the playful tackling of such Confucian prejudices gives literature a place in Buddhist discourse which Prince Shotoku could not provide and puts strings on Taoist counter-court reveling at poetic banquets.

It is a tightly woven argumentative plane on which the manifestation and viability of “wen” in the Japanese context is boldly tested out.

3. Besting the Sino-Japanese tradition: the Kokinwakashū’s universal “Way” (Ch. dao, J. michi) of poetry

3.1. Replacing the regime of “wen” with the realm of the “Way”

The Kokinwakashū was the first imperially sponsored anthology of Sino-Japanese poetry (waika). Compiled in 905 under the auspices of Emperor Daigo after a good century of imperial support for Sino-Japanese poetry, the collection was inevitably under great pressure to make a convincing argument for Japanese poetry, which lacked the public stature of its Sino-Japanese twin and rival.57 One sign of the seriousness of this competition is that the Kokinwakashū has two prefaces: one written in Classical Japanese and a second one, in Sino-Japanese, which is in closer dialogue with Sino-Japanese and Chinese precedents.

Bolstering the status of Japanese waika poetry in the public arena meant devising a storyline for its development that could trump the narratives used to justify Sino-Japanese practice. Timothy Wested has beautifully shown how the prefaces tapped into the psychology from the “Great Preface” to the Classic of Poetry. I would like to reinforce his point by arguing that the Kokinwakashū prefaces did so, first and most importantly, in order to break the hegemony of Sino-Japanese poetry at court.58 The Kokinwakashū prefaces constructed a timeless and universal “Way” (Ch. dao,

57 For a detailed account of how waika poetry gained public face in the half century preceding the Kokinwakashū see Helen McCullough, Brocade by Night: Kokinwakashū and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1985), 231–92.
58 John Timothy Wested, The Kokinwakashū Prefaces: Another Perspective, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 43.1 (1983): 215–38. Wested’s landmark article set out to reconstruct the Chinese background of the Kokinwakashū Prefaces, “Only one face of the Kokinwakashū prefaces, however, came to be viewed, for the prefaces themselves became the terminus ad quem for most later Japanese discussion of poetics.” The context of the original discourse was generally ignored.” (217) Wested is absolutely right that the Kokinwakashū has overwhelming been read in linear direction, that is as the first and thus source of 21 more imperial waika collections to come and the Prefaces’ relation to Chinese precedents has been neglected. My paper intends to complement Wested’s argument by not just looking at Chinese precedents, but at the Sino-Japanese antecedents of the Kokinwakashū prefaces. After all, waika poetry did not have to compete for imperial favor against poetry or poetry from China, but against Sino-Japanese texts by their fellow countrymen.
J. mich'i of poetic practice that transcended the historically conditioned regime of "wen" in the Kaifūsō. Second, having polemized against contingent "wen" through the universality of the "Way," the authors of the prefaces proceeded to create cosmogony as literary history. Although they gave up on the broad semantic spectrum to which the Sino-Japanese anthologies had laid claim in "wen" as civilization, Confucian civility, literature and rhetorical flourish gradually unfolding in a slow evolutionary process, they made poetry into an even more powerful entity: they implanted it into a cosmological timeline reaching back to the very beginning of Heaven and Earth.

The radical novelty of the Kokinshū prefaces in comparison to the prefaces to the previous Sino-Japanese anthologies was not the reception of new Chinese sources that had reached Japan in the meantime—or on a forceful assertion of complete independence of the indigenous tradition from Chinese precedent. Instead, the crucial difference was a clever shift in the choice of canonical Chinese subtexts—in particular the "Great Preface" to the Classic of Poetry. The most effective step in this scheme was to capitalize on a niche left by the focus on "wen" in the Sino-Japanese anthologies, namely the Kaifūsō and the three imperial Sino-Japanese collections compiled at the behest of Emperor Saga and Jnna in the first decades of the ninth century. "Wen" failed to give a psychological account of poetic creativity. Yes, "wen" was certainly a powerful concept to evoke in one and the same breath the invention of writing, the establishment of Confucian-style governance, and the emergence of literary production and rhetorical sophistication. But why write in the first place? The Kokinshū compilers' found their best opportunity to exploit that blind spot in the preface to the Classic of Poetry, with its psychological explanation of the unfolding of poetry from the latency within the heart into words manifest in the world, as paraphrased in Masafusa's piece above. It allowed them to sketch a vision of the nature and history of Japanese waka poetry not only on par with Sino-Japanese poetry, but psychologically and historically surpassing it.59

The Sino-Japanese preface opens:

夫知動者 著其載於心地
薛其草於無林者
發其華於無林者
花之在世
花之為為
花之為

Japanese waka poetry takes root in the soil of one's heart and spreads its flowers into a Forest of Words. While in the world, people cannot be idle. Thoughts and concerns easily change.

It is significant that the image of vegetal growth is chosen to convey the process of how a poem becomes manifest, or "grows," because it facilitates a convenient figurative flow between nature and the mind, and enables the "interiorization" of nature into psychological processes—"every creature has its song."

The preface describes Japanese poetry as the response to a natural scene in resonance with the inner metaphorical landscape of "seeds and blossoms" shared by all living creatures and growing forth into a "forest of words." This naturalistic account was a powerful counter-visualization to the regime of "wen" propagated in the Sino-Japanese anthologies. It replaced culture and history with nature and psychology, and, concomitantly, "wen" with "the Way."

The last section of the Sino-Japanese preface vividly shows this powerful replacement of "wen" with "the Way" and, consequently, of the previous hegemony of Sino-Japanese poetry with the wish for a future flourishing of Japanese poetry. After lamenting the decline of waka poetry and describing the emperor's desire of "resurrecting the once long abandoned Way" the preface closes on this powerful gesture, a majestic leap to secure waka poetry eternity in the face of Sino-Japanese "wen":

If Japanese poetry should meet with a new revival
we will delight in the flower of Our Way.
Alas, with Hitomaro long dead,
is Japanese poetry not here with us contained in this?60

This is a brilliant overwriting of Anecdotes 9.5, in which Confucius, when surrounded by enemies in Kuang, exclaims, "Although King Wen is dead, is not our cultural heritage (wen) present in me? In myself do I not preserve [the sage's teachings]?" The logic of replacement is as follows: Hitomaro, the unrivaled poet-saint anthologized in the first Japanese anthology, the Man'yōshū, replaces King Wen; "this Way of waka poetry" replaces the "Zhou cultural heritage (wen)"; and "Confucius" as the curator of this tradition is replaced with both the contemporary Japanese poets at Emperor Daigo's court and the Kokinshū itself. The "Way of waka poetry"—a notion that was brought

59 Mark Morris has forcefully made the point that the adoption of what is usually considered an "expressive" theory of poetic production is in fact an argumentative strategy to bolster the position of Japanese poetry against that of Sino-Japanese poetry: "An enduring cultural oligarchy reads this preface as an incitement to lyric expressivity. It is not such a thing. Tachiyuki was in the opening comments defending Japanese poetry—yamato uta, his ecolocically calculated anachronism for what was called waka—in competition with Chinese poetry, the form that had all but crowded waka out of the social milieu of the powerful, and arguing that waka was as natural as song to a bird and socially useful." Mark Morris, "Waka and Form, Waka and History," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 46.2 (1986): 555. Martin Svensson Ekström has criticized a reading of the "Great Preface" that sees poetry as a spontaneous and natural expression from the perspective of the Chinese tradition, arguing that both the rest of the Preface and the tradition associated with the transmission of the Preface text through such a reading. Martin Svensson Ekström, "A Second Look at the Great Preface on the Way to a New Understanding of Han Dynasty Poetics," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews 21 (Dec 1999): 1-33.


61 Kobunshūkai, 348. "Wen" is here a serious pun on the name of King Wen, the embodiment of the virtuous role of the Zhou dynasty mentioned later in the passage.
to its full consequences only later in the medieval period—resides both in the collection offered to the throne and in the poet-compilers who put it together.63

3.2 Borrowing cosmology for the creation of poetology

A second strategy that both prefaces of the Kokinshū use to turn tables on the longer-standing status of Sino-Japanese poetry is to tell the beginning of Japanese poetry through the cosmic narrative borrowed from the earliest Chronicles, in particular the above-mentioned Nihon shoki. The Nihon shoki opens on the following phrase:

In old times Heaven and Earth were not yet split, Yin and Yang forces not yet divided.64 They formed a chaotic mass like an egg,65 of limitless obscurity and containing seeds. 古天地未分，陰陽未分，混沌如鶴子，混沌而含元。66

Using the opening lines from the Nihon shoki as rhetorical template to tell the history of literature was sensible, because this Sino-Japanese historical chronicle that recorded events on the archipelago from the beginnings up to the reign of Empress Jitō (r. 690–697) was a canonical precedent for writing about origins. It also provided an ultimate, because cosmological, leap toward sanctioning poetic practice not just within human society but within the universe.

The two Kokinshū prefaces stage the poetic beginning with effective variations. The Japanese preface claims

Poetry starts on different trajectories in the two prefaces. The Japanese preface advances a much stronger claim: poetry is as old as the cosmos and it came to be transmitted among the gods since Princess Shitateru and on earth after Susanoo-o, the notoriously rebellious son of the divine creator couple Izanami and Izanagi and brother of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, the ancestor of the Japanese imperial family, was expelled from heaven to the land of Izumo due to his misbehavior. In the Sino-Japanese preface, poetry does not go back to the beginning of time, but only starts with Susanoo-o. The preface effectively overwrites its rhetorical templates. Where the cosmogony of the Nihon shoki states that "Yin and Yang forces were not yet divided," the poetology of the Sino-Japanese preface proudly states: "Yin and Yang into poetic currency: ‘Emotions and desires were not yet distinguished.’ In the same way as Masafusa had translated Chinese literary history into an allegorical

63 That is noka poems.

“Realm of Poetry,” the Kokinshū preface established a realm of poetography that could not fail to be both temporally and psychologically superior to that of Sino-Japanese literature.

The preface also takes on the phrase “human wen” (civilization/writing/letters) had not yet been created,” which the Kaijō had appropriated from the history of civilization given in the Wenxuan preface, and replaces “wen” and Sino-Japanese poetry with its rival twin genre of waka poetry: “Japanese poetry had not yet been created.” In the words of the Sino-Japanese preface enriched by the undertones of its subtexts Japanese poetry becomes the synecdoche for writing per se. While giving up the claim to the earliest possible rise of Japanese poetry, the preface elevates it almost more powerfully by making it into the rhetorical placeholder—in lieu of “wen” —for all of human civilization, writing, and literature.

The divergent narratives of the two prefaces make sense within their respective linguistic repertoires: the Japanese preface was hardly bound by rhetorical precedents, because its composition dated itself to the very period that saw the rise of Japanese prose writing in the late ninth to early tenth century. Thus it could afford laying claim to the earliest possible beginning for poetry and making the creation of poetry and of the cosmos coextensive. The Sino-Japanese preface, because it is linguistically closer to Literary Chinese discourse and therefore also held more accountable for justifying its enterprise within that tradition, is accordingly more timid about ultimate claims for the earliest origin of poetry and insists on a history of invention on the Chinese model from the Wenxuan preface. Yet, tuning in to the statement in the Nihon shoki about the Yin and Yang forces it constructs in an equally powerful gesture a cosmology of poetry, in which the stuff of poetry, namely the as yet undifferentiated “feelings” and “desires,” are already there, although poetic composition has not yet been created. This move “poeticizes” the cosmic substances and forces and claims the existence of poeticy even before its proper beginning. Poetry avant la lettre is the immodest claim of a storyline that only at first glance seems to be encumbered by the seeming modesty of its rhetorical model, the Wenxuan preface.

Another striking difference between the prefaces is that the Japanese preface puts greater emphasis on the duality of beginnings. It has poetry start in the moment of the emergence of doubleness, the splitting of Heaven and Earth. This image of the beginning of poetry puts the Japanese preface—in sharp distinction to the Sino-Japanese preface—on a trajectory of repeated moments of doubleness. The first repetition of doubleness occurs in the passage about Susano-o. While the Sino-Japanese preface only mentions Susano-o as the one who established the tanka form of 31 syllables in the human realm, the Japanese preface, according to the rhetoric of the initial split of Heaven and Earth, couples Susano-o with a female mate, Princess Shiitateru, who establishes poetry in the heavenly realm.

I would suggest that the repetition of the rhetorical figure of doubleness in the Japanese preface might reflect a self-consciousness of fledgling prose writing in Japanese. We should not forget that the Japanese preface is a very early piece of Japanese prose literature: although the first preserved tale, the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter (Taketori monogatari 竹取物語), might slightly predate the Kokinshū prefaces,

the first kana diary, the Tosa Diary (Tosa nikki 土佐日記) by the same author as the preface—Ki no Tsurayuki—dates to 934. And prefaces to previous waka collections like the Newly Compiled Collection of Myriad Leaves (Shinshin Man'yōshū 新撰万葉集; 893) or to poetic treatises such as the Kakuyō hyōshū 歌経模式 (772) were written in Sino-Japanese, not in Japanese. Thus, the rhetorical figure of doubleness in the Japanese preface seems to admit to its existence as a young “duplicate” tradition developing in dependence on and competition with the previously imperially sanctioned Sino-Japanese tradition of writing poetic prefaces or treatises. Also, it is much more gender-sensitive and needs a proper parental couple for all things.

The phase after the establishment of poetry is also treated differently in the two prefaces. Seemingly in response to the Wenxuan preface, which devotes much space to accounting for various literary genres and their history, the Sino-Japanese preface creates a scenario of genre diversification—a theme blatantly absent from the Japanese preface. Both prefaces declare waka (or tanka) poetry as the both most primordial and most mature standard form of poetry. This claim is confirmed by the collection itself which clearly establishes waka as the orthodox form, and regulates other verse forms, such as long poems (chōka 長歌) that had been so prominent in the mid-eight century Man'yōshū, into the ragbag book 19 under the heading of “miscellaneous forms” (zatta 雜体).

In suggestive contrast to the collection’s agenda to reduce the diversity of poetic forms and to enshrine solely the waka form, the Sino-Japanese preface develops a rhetoric of genre diversification in response to the Wenxuan preface and tells the story inverse to its historical development. Once upon a time, so goes the myth that is invented to cement the authority of the waka form, there was primewal waka poetry which then branched out into various miscellaneous forms such as long-verse poetry (like waka based on sequences of pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines), and irregular “sedōka” 拭頭歌 (literally “head-repeated poem”). In this context the mention of the obscure and unidentified form of a “mixed root” poetry (konponsha 混本歌) is a clear sign that Ki no Yoshinomichi 紀淑望 (–919), the author of the Sino-Japanese preface, wanted to add more rather than fewer items to flesh out a rhetoric of genre diversification in the Japanese context.

Japanese poetry reaches a new stage when it is practiced by emperors. The Japanese preface says

The “Naniwa Bay” poem celebrates the beginning of a reign.75 The Asaka Mountain poem was composed by a waiting woman trying to pique someone’s interest.

These two songs are considered the father and mother of poetry, and are used as the first texts for calligraphy practice.76

75 This refers to a poem Emperor Nintoku (first half of fifth century) composed when in Naniwa to celebrate the arrival of spring and the beginning of his reign. At Naniwa Bay the trees are dressed in blossoms/the winter-shrouded trees are now dressed in blossoms/to tell the world spring has come.” Rood, Kokushiki, 37.

76 Kinkōmonshū, 6; Rood, Kokushiki, 37.
The Sino-Japanese preface states

Then we come to poems such as the "Naniwa Bay" poem offered by Emperor [Nintoku] or the "Tomino River" poem in response to Crown Prince [Shōtoku]. Sometimes the situation is divine and miraculous, or the inspiration verges on the deeply obscure. But when looking at poems of high antiquity, many keep to a fiction of poetic substance. They had yet to become pleasure for the eye and ear, serving only as sources of moral instruction. The differences in doubleness dominate once more the Japanese preface: Emperor Nintoku’s poem is coupled with the courtesan poem and, in parallel to the gender complementary of their authors, the poems are called “father and mother of poetry” in a historical as well as biographical sense. From a historical perspective, they are both firsts of their kind in the history of waka poetry and from the perspective of an individual’s biography they are also the first poems the Heian elite will use as calligraphic models when starting to learn how to write.

At this point the different treatment of time in the two prefaces becomes even more pronounced. Overall the Sino-Japanese preface gives a historical timeline in which the first and next, the earlier and the later are clearly marked and add up to a linear timeline: first the age of the gods, and then Susanoo-o, whereupon we reach the human age and the stage of increasing genre diversification. In contrast, the Japanese preface lacks linear progression and is more appropriately described as a paraaxis of double beginnings: there is the time when Heaven and Earth were separated, there is Princess Shitateru’s and Susanoo-o’s transmission of poetry in the divine and human realm respectively. There is the “imperial beginning” of waka with Emperor Nintoku and the courtesan, which in turn is the ontogenetic beginning of writing, the “father and mother” of calligraphy training. Chronological succession is only suggested in the preface by the paraaxisic succession of paragraphs and by the familiarity of the reader with the historical accounts in the Nihon shoki. Beyond that, poetry in the Japanese preface has these multiple “beginnings” that are arranged as different qualitative aspects of poetry, not so much as successive stages of an historical evolution. I would suggest that the Japanese preface’s choice of universal paraaxis over historical progression contributes to the overall agenda of both Kokinshū prefaces to compete with historical “wen” through a timeless “Way.”

Writing is a strategy against impermanence and oblivion and confirms the value of the anthology. And, in a nice reversal of the legend of Cang He’s discovery of writing through observation of bird track patterns, the description of the historical advent of writing is turned into the vehicle of a metaphor of its future influence: “Letters of these poems—like the tracks of birds they remain.” In this metaphorical form that exceeds their historical origin while preserving their symbolic power, writing seduces future readers of the collection to “look up to the old and admire the new,” in short to read the Ko-kin-waka-shi, the “Collection of Old and New Waka Poems.” Again, we see a strategy to transplant themes from Chinese or Sino-Japanese precedents into a new temporal realm to override the historical through the universalized.

In stark contrast to the Japanese preface, the Sino-Japanese preface makes the advent into a major issue, actually into the main reason why the reviving of Japanese poetry for which the prefaces argue becomes necessary in the first place. The pas-
sage is all the more significant as it lacks any correlate in the Japanese preface:

Since the time of Prince Ōtsu, Chinese poems and poetic expositions came to be composed. Poetic talents admired this practice and succeeded each other. They imported these Chinese characters and transformed our Japanese customs. The ways of the people were completely changed, and Japanese poetry gradually declined. Yet we still had the illustrious Master Kokinomoto [no Hitomaro] who upheld memories of the divine marvels and who alone strove unravelled between past and present.78

The Nihon shoki also credits Prince Ōtsu with the beginning of poetic composition in Sino-Japanese.79 Similarly, the compiler of the Kaifusō did not hide his sympathies for Prince Ōtsu’s literary talent, although he gave moral and chronological priority to Prince Ōtomo and his poetry. However, Ki no Yoshimochi conflates the advent of writing with the beginning of Sino-Japanese poetic composition. The Kaifusō preface had kept these two moments clearly apart. Writing and books were imported by Korean envoys during the reign of Emperor Ojin (ca. fifth century), while poetic composition started under Emperor Tenji (r. 668–671). This temporal conflation allowed to imagine a notion of unblemished Japanese oral poetry devoid of any Chinese contamination and refused to acknowledge that any transmission of Japanese poetry had from the outset been conditioned by the Chinese language and its textual archive.

More startling than the temporal conflation is the hostility of the statement. This is not just a Platonic campaign against writing as an onslaught onto the power of orality and memory—the previous passage from the Japanese preface had actually sung the praise of writing’s power to rescue writers from oblivion. This is a campaign against the “corruption” through Chinese customs and writing in particular. Why did the Sino-Japanese preface advance this strong attack? Did not its closer linguistic proximity to Chinese make the attack seem more schizophrenic, after all, than if the Japanese preface had touched upon this sensitive issue? I argue that this was precisely the point. If a preface to a Japanese poetry anthology wanted to make its case to an audience accustomed to the public prevalence of Sino-Japanese poetry it was best to make this plea strategically in the language of public authority, even if that implied assaulting the Chinese language of which Sino-Japanese was a hybrid form.

Besides the strategic advantage of broaching the topic in the Sino-Japanese preface, it was also a matter of necessity, not just of choice. The Japanese preface could afford making the advent of writing into a non-issue. There was no direct precedent that demanded to be redressed or at least addressed. The Sino-Japanese preface, in contrast, faced not just Chinese precedent, but had, more importantly, to engage the treatment of writing in the previous Sino-Japanese anthologies. The violent attack on Prince Ōtsu and on the corruption through Chinese influence in the Sino-Japanese preface is a powerful argument against calling the preface the “Chinese Preface”.

78 Kokuninwakashiti, 342.
79 Nihon shoki XXX 1/10/3.

3.4 Building a new time universe: the Kokinshū refracted in two Long Poems (chōka) from Book 190

The poem by Emperor Nintoku to which the prefaces refer as an “imperial beginning” constitutes also a natural beginning. As a spring poem it marks the beginning of the year and of a new cycle of the seasons. The Kokinshū is indeed the first anthology that uses seasonal time as its overarching principle of arrangement.

Although some books of the Man’yōshū show patterns of seasonal arrangement the Kokinshū was the first anthology to be arranged in such strict and systematic fashion around a core of seasonal books. Contemporary Chinese anthologies were not arranged by seasons or topics, most of the Tang anthologies were actually rather randomly arranged by author.91 The four Sino-Japanese anthologies that preceded the Kokinshū were either arranged by historical chronology such as the Kaifusō and the first imperially commissioned Sino-Japanese anthology, the Ryōsōshū (814). The second imperial anthology, the Bunshū shiryōkan, issued in 1878 (818), followed the thematic categories such as “travel poems,” “banquet poems,” or “poems on history,” but did not include the seasons among them. The third and last Sino-Japanese imperial anthology relied on the model of the Wenxuan and was ordered by genre. Thus, from the point of view of early tenth century compilation practices, the Kokinshū’s structure is highly anomalous and demands an explanation. Not only are the seasons used as topical categories, but within each seasonal book the poems follow a more or less continuous timeline of beginning, thriving, and ending of each season created through “progression and association” of individual poems, as Konishi Jin’ichi has termed it.92 As the seasons progressed fine triggers of seasonal associations such as certain birds, animals, or plants moved meteorically through the seasonal progression of each book. Nothing has become more intuitive and “natural” than the centrality of the seasons for writing, reading, and compiling poetry in Japan, and it is therefore extremely hard to call into question what since the tenth century has established itself as one of the basic tenets of Japanese poetry. Yet, from the per-

90 Scholars have long been puzzled by the fact that the Long Poems in the Kokinshū range under the heading of “tanka,” “Short Poems.” Tokuhara Shûji has recently advanced an original hypothesis, arguing that the Long Poems all state the authors’ feelings and complaints (泣く jukui) and that they therefore use the self-deprecatory term of “short, minor poems” in deference to Emperor Daigo. Given that two of the Long Poems are by the compilers of the Kokinshū and that Mibu no Tasamaro’s poem is particularly plaintive, this hypothesis seems quite convincing. See Tokuhara, Kokuninwakashiti no enbu (Osaka: Iizumi shoin, 2005), 305–17.
speculative of the Kokinshū Age we have to ask why the compilers singled out the four seasons as the major structure of the anthology. Why were the seasons not just one among many other topic headings, but made up more than a third of the collection? And why were they so prominently placed at the beginning? What was at stake in the choice of such an unprecedented arrangement?

In the context of the voluminous scholarship on the Kokinshū it is astonishing how little the arrangement of the collection has come into question. In the same way as the prefaces, the anthology tends to be read in forward direction, along the lines of its reception history. Even articles specifically devoted to the structure of the imperial anthologies hardly address how the Kokinshū could be arranged in the way it is.80 I would like to advance a partial hypothesis for the unprecedented choice of arrangement. In light of my argument so far, the choice of the Kokinshū compilers to give such primacy to the seasons perfectly matches their strategy to compete with the "wen" of Sino-Japanese anthology with the help of the "Way" of Japanese poetry. The argument of the prefaces and the topical arrangement of the anthology can be considered two faces of the same coin. Seasonal time implied circular time without specific ends or beginnings and, although the Japanese preface locates the beginning of poetry at the beginning of time, cosmogony and poegogy intersect in this moment of an eternal past in the age of the gods, which is circularly timeless rather than temporally linear. The notion of time confirmed by the Kokinshū's practice of suppressing the particular historical context of the composition of the individual poems, of decontextualizing them in order to reinsert them into the anthology's seasonal time frame. The collection's structure, like the prefaces' argument, created a new time universe according to which Japanese poetry could be located outside of historical time and could be construed as the medium of an eternal psychological present of future generations of poets to come.

The impression that reconfiguration of time plays an important role in the anthology's arrangement and poesological framing is strongly confirmed by two long poems in book 19. Poems 1002 and 1003 were written by two of the Kokinshū compilers, Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 868–945), the author of the Japanese preface, and Miburo no Tadamine respectively. Their titles suggest that they were submitted as versified "tables of contents" together with the collection or an earlier form of the collection.

80 See for example Honda Yoshishuto, "Burintu yori nita kaku choiseen wakahō no tokushōkō," Heian bangakusha renmei 30.6 (1963): 25–41. The classic study of the Kokinshū's structural arrangement, Matsumura Takeo's Kokinshū no hitsui ni kanasa memesha (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1965) devotes only a handful out of its mighty 700 pages to the origin of the topical categories, focusing on the internal arrangement within the topical categories. Apparently the seasonal arrangement of the Kokinshū appears so "natural" that it does not call for explanation. However, Ozawa Masao has carefully traced various influences on the Kokinshū's arrangement by seasonal categories, such as the seasonal arrangement of books 8 and 10 of the Manyōshū, the partial seasonal arrangement of several poetic contests since 893, and the seasonal arrangement of two anthologies that preceded the Kokinshū, namely the Shinmowa Manyōshū and the Chikamawao. The Shinmowa Manyōshū 原古万葉集 (893) attributed to Sugawara no Michizane, juxtaposes waka poems with their transpositions into Sino-Japanese quatrains, Kudari waka 頻挽和 (or Chitamawao 立替和, 897) by Oe no Chisato juxtaposes Chinese couples, mostly by Bo Yu (and his friend Yuan Zhen, with their transposition into Japanese waka poems. See Ozawa Masao, "Choiseen wakahō no budōte no seiri," Kekko kokubunshū 5.9 (1959.1): 16–25. Although the existence of seasonal precedents is of importance, it still does not explain why the Kokinshū compiles its topical arrangement of seasonal topics to become wildly successful. For a handy list of the seasonal topical categories in the Manyōshū and in various early Heian poetry contests see Helen McCollough, Brevede by Night: Kokinwakahō and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry, 541–47.

Thus, although they are included among the poems of the collection their relationship to the collection is as metametastextual as the prefaces. As poems on a collection of poems, they are even more directly metametastextual than the prose prefaces, yet as long poems they are at cross-purposes with the Manyōshū's enshrinement of the short waka form. There is a cognitive dissonance between the form of these metaphorical and the indirect argument of the collection against longer or irregular forms, a vestigial number of which is rather randomly assembled into Book 19. Certainly, a versified table of contents for a collection with over a thousand poems demanded the long form for purely practical reasons. But the writing of a table of contents in poetic form was completely unprecedented, so that the compilers' creative choice to do so must have been boldly intentional, but certainly also self-conscious enough to perceive the contradiction with their overall principles of compilation.

Yet, from the perspective of the Kokinshū's agenda of asserting the public stature of Japanese poetry against the authority of Sino-Japanese poetry, the choice of the long-verse form was perfectly logical. The long-verse tradition as preserved in the Manyōshū had developed sophisticated registers of encomiastic court poetry and it represented a past public stature of Japanese poetry that the Kokinshū compilers intended to revive in spirit, if not in their genre politics. Certainly, Hitomaro wrote seemingly "private" long poems such as the one about the death of his wife, but the set of poems on his excursion to Yoshino in the imperial retinue was precisely the kind of register needed for a solemn poem addressed to Emperor Daigo when submitting this first imperially commissioned anthology of Japanese poetry. Hitomaro had made Yoshino into the place that symbolized eternal rule over eternal land by a divine lineage. Empress Jitō, to whom the poems were addressed, was just the current embodiment of this timeless authority. Kasa no Kanamaru (I. before 733), an important court poet under the devout Buddhist Emperor Shōmu and Empress Genshō continued Hitomaro's encomiastic tradition, and made Yoshino's function as a site, where present imperial splendor intersected with an ever-present divine past in an unblemished primaeval landscape even clearer:

山川を Mountain and river
渓みさやけみ Are so clear, so limpid, pure,
うしし神代ゆ All men can see the reason why
定のけふくし This site was chosen from the Age of Gods

In his long poem Tsurayuki applies this time regime, which legitimates the present through its connection to the eternal divine past, to poetry. In the Japanese preface Tsurayuki had used the cosmogony of the Nihon shoki to tell the history of poetry. In this poem he echoed the great long-verse poets from the Manyōshū in their praise of the present embodiment of the divine lineage in order to tell a history of poetry:

はやぶる Since the age of the
神の御世より Awesome gods never ceasing
世にたびねず As the joints of black bamboo
The opening statement that poetry has existed since the age of the gods is combined with the poetic psychology of response to an outer stimulus that the prefaces had appropriated from the “Great Preface” to the *Classic of Poetry*. And historical evolution is merged with psychological disposition in people’s response to the seasons: the spring mists over Mount Otawa produce spring poems. This opening leads directly into a narrative rendering of the topical categories of the *Kokinshū*, starting with spring in Book 1 and the seasons and concluding on the poems for court occasions of Book 20. Tsutaruki further tells about the commission of the collection, the hardships of the compilation process and the personal sacrifice, and the anxieties of a compiler who might miss poems worthy to be included. Tsutaruki’s connection of circular seasonal time—replicated by the anthologies’ topical categories—with the linear timeline of a poetic cosmology (claimed in both prefaces) is further evidence that the various time regimes pervading the *Kokinshū* are inherently linked and join forces to challenge the dominance of the Sino-Japanese regime of “wen.”

Mibu no Tadamine’s poem is not an extension of the agenda of the prefaces. In some ways it seems to challenge it. Tsutaruki’s poem is overly programmatic: it connects the time regimes proposed in the prefaces and the arrangement of the collection and it goes through the list of topical categories. Tadamine’s poem is much more loosely connected to the collection as a whole and stylistically quite experimental. Edwin Cranston notes that the poem tends to reach syntactic closure on the short rather than the long line is far removed from the language of *Man’yōshū* long poems. In contrast, the poem brims over with the ambiguous phonic puns and pivot words (kakekotoba 拝語) that are so characteristic of *Kokinshū*-style poetry. This is already obvious in the opening of the poem in which Tadamine expresses his gratitude towards earlier poets for saving the poetic voice from falling silent and “sinking into Mute Marsh.”

Hitymaro in particular ensures according to Tadamine that poetry, the ‘leaves of his words,’ will stay on until the end of time:

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<th>秋の</th>
<th>四個人は吟く的机会に</th>
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<td>男の友</td>
<td>秋風の片隅</td>
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<td>ある時</td>
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<td>あきるな</td>
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<td>たねなき</td>
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Tadamine cannot help expressing his pride at being selected as a compiler to “follow in Hitomaro’s dust” and describes his ravishment with the help of the following odd image:

| これを思えば | When I think of this, I feel |
| 豊かに | Like the Huai-nan beast |
| 伏ける | That befouled the elixir, |
| けだもの | So the story goes, |
| 狐の吹く | And afterward howled in the clouds. |
| 心安して | I think of nothing, |
| 千手の花に | Hold as naught the thousand joys |
| 心消えず | And sorrows of life. |
| ひきつめ | With a single heart for the honor |
| 誓う心 | I brim with pride. |

The “Huai-nan beast” refers to a dog and a rooster that drank a magical potion made by the Prince of Huai-nan and, inebriated, flew off into the clouds beyond the imperial palace. The image is rather comic, making the poet into a thief and his selection as compiler a case of fraud. It becomes immediately clear that his pride at being selected as compiler is just the favorable side of his deep indignation over his demotion from the Inner Palace Guards to the Gate Guards. From here on the poem turns into a personal lament over his advancing age, greying hair, and low position. Personal bemoaning of age and low status had a firm place in the public idiom of Sino-Japanese poetry. Depending on the situation it could be a gracious gesture of humility and understatement, or a more urgent plea for imperial attention and promotion, which is certainly the case with Tadamine’s poem. He vividly illustrates his decrepit life situation by describing the inclement natural conditions to which he is being exposed throughout the seasons. The *Kokinshū* prefaces and *Tsutaruki’s* long poem had singled out the seasonal changes as creative triggers of poetic productivity, but Tadamine laces out at them for their various inconveniences:

| 九重 | When I was within the walls, |
| 九重の | Ninefold encircled, |
| 九重 | I never heard the load crashing |
| あきるな | Of storms winds blowing, |
| あきるな | But now the moors and the mountains |
| あきるな | LIc close at hand. |
| あきるな | Wherefore in spring I am covered |
| あきるな | By the trailing mist, |
| あきるな | And in summer the locusts |
| あきるな | Cry on till dusk |
| あきるな | In autumn in the chilly rains |
| あきるな | I lend my sleeve, |
| あきるな | And in winter am besieged |

Tadamine’s creative juices are not stimulated by nature, but he is frankly miserable under the onslaught of the seasons. The final intensified lament elevates his ennui and his wrinkled face to poetic heights: if one’s days span “like the bridge of Nagara” and one’s wrinkles are “like the waves of Naniwa” both reader and poet are rewarded with some comic relief, while visiting these beautiful places in their minds:

身はいさよけ What a misery to be old
年たたき If one’s station is low,
ことの奇しき And only one’s count of years is high!
かぐらつ So in this fashion,
長楼の橋 The bridge of Nagara
ながらて I span the days
鶴破の湖 While the waves of Naniwa,
立ちながる Rising in the bay,
なみなみにや Roll like the sea of wrinkles
おぼろほぐ In which I drown.

At this plaintive point of culmination Tadamine reintroduces the effects of the magic potion mentioned above to help move towards a denouement that solves his personal misery and also manages to infuse this hitherto larmoyant poem with an inkling of encomiastic praise of the emperor, who after all, we should not forget, was the recipient of these verses.

すさがに命 Yet life for all of that
慣れけば Is a precious thing;
越の国なる Though my head become as white
白田の As White Mountain
ちばに居 Rising in the Land Across,
なりぬとも The land of Koshi
昔の国の Let me have the magic potion
よきび One hears rumors of
老いず死女のの Echoing like Echo Falls,
くすりもが Not to grow old or die:
君が八十世を Let me regain youth and
若きつ見む The thousand years of our lord!

Tadamine does not covet the potion of immortality for selfish purposes. Instead, his regaining of youth will ensure that he can continue to praise the emperor for his next thousand years. Given that Tadamine has taken no time for imperial praise until this hastily encomiastic closure, we can of course not be sure whether the emperor really would have wanted to listen to a thousand more years of Tadamine’s poetic lamentation. But the closure shows Tadamine’s desire to end on a polite bow and promise of future poetic service.

3.5 Conclusion to the Kokinshū

Even if Tadamine’s erratic long poem opposed, almost parodied, the stimulus theory of the prefaces in his private lament, it is clear that both prefaces, the arrangement of the collection, and the two long poems all work towards a framing of time that is seasonal, circular and that conditions a universal psychology of poetic response. I would certainly not argue that the sole motivation for developing such a novel

framing of time was to challenge the conception of time implied in Sino-Japanese anthologies such as the Kokinshū. But it could not avoid doing so. Replacing the Confucian regime of “wen” with a “Way” of waka poetry was a powerful move to make. It placed poetry at the beginning of the cosmos, not within the gradual development of human civilization. It brought poetic composition into the reach of all sentient beings, not just a scirbal elite trained in the reception and production of “wen,” and included even animals into the “natural principle” to burst forth in song. Fujitaka Katsumi has recently described the shift from the Sino-Japanese anthologies to the Kokinshū prefaces as a “depoliticization” and a step towards a universal emotional psychology based on people’s response to seasonal changes. Yet, Tadakawa Kōjō has shown that the very choice of the seasonal arrangement had at the same time highly political undertones, because it harked back to the ‘Monthly Ordinances’ Chapter (月令 Yueling) from the Record of Rites (Li Ji 禮記), which outlined the ideal harmony of imperial rule with the cosmos and with agricultural production. Thus, the Kokinshū constructed a notion of the seasons based on the universalized psychology of response to seasonal changes, but also connected this universal notion to the Japanese emperor’s local claims to power through his familiarity with and following of the seasonal cycle.

The rearrangement of temporal framing marks also a difference between the two prefaces, a thorny subject of investigation. Scholars are easily caught between the Scylla of hermeneutical prejudice ensuing from the impossibility of assessing the countless minute, possibly trivial, differences and the Charybdis of reductive overcompensation that tries to dissolve them into all-encompassing master schemes. In other words, the question has been how to straddle the hermeneutical gap between the host of minute variations and an overarching pattern of difference amenable to explanation. I agree in principle with Thomas LaMarre who has projected the complementary modes of “hare 勧励” (in its most basic sense “bright,” “shining towards the outside,” thus official, solemn) and “ke 竜” (intimate, “hidden,” thus private and sentimental) onto the Sino-Japanese and Japanese preface respectively. These terms have been part of poetic discourse since the late Heian Period and translated into various spheres of Heian reality. They functioned as a bipolar model for “formal” and “informal” writing style, in fashion and clothing, for the type of occasion of public or private composition and even to mark the diurnal cycle of “day”—associated with bright Yang—versus “night,” which was associated with dark

67 See the record of the roundtable discussion in celebration of the 1100th anniversary of the Kokinshū in the special issue “Kokinshū 1100 nen” of Bunbuku 6.3 (2005): 2–24.
68 Takigawa analyzes the opening sequence of the first book of the Kokinshū and explores, why the second poem, which, significantly, is by the compiler Ki no Tsurayuki, chooses to echo the phrase from the “Monthly Ordinances” Chapter: “In the first month of spring, the eastern wind melts the ice.” Takigawa argues convincingly that this allusion, which is hardly referred to in Tang poetry, connected the cycle of seasonal time to Confucian ideas of ideal governance of the people based on the virtue of an emperor who rules in harmony with the cosmic and agricultural seasons. See Takigawa, "Kokinwakashū no chokurui me ni tsuite—Tôshin Tsurayuki soto no ichi wo enzetu," Waka jingö bunka kôdai 70 (1995): 1–13.
70 For the wide range of meanings of this conceptual couple see Ochôgijin, ed., Akiyama Ken (Tokyo: Tôkyô daigaku shuppankai, 2000), 355. In the realm of poetry, it appears that the terms were used in judgments of innumerable since the late Heian period.
Yin forces. However, this master trope bears a striking resemblance to the cliché that equates Sino-Japanese literature with the official and ceremonious and Japanese literature with the private and amorous, despite the fact that La Marre constantly emphasizes that he argues on esthetic, not ethnolinguistic grounds.

Yet, there are more important reasons to resist the attraction of this master trope. First, it frankly does not help to explain many of the differences we have encountered: the later beginning of poetry in the Sino-Japanese preface, the dominance of the paratactic and qualitative over the linear and temporal in the Japanese preface. Second, and most poignantly, the scheme of "hare" and "ke" might fail as an explanatory tool precisely because the prefaces try to overcome this very dichotomy or at least to reallocate the stakes. They want to lay claim to "hare" that had been in the hands of Sino-Japanese poetry and do so with various ke-related strategies that are transformed in the process into a new, ke-shielded version of "hare." I argue that these two problems are solved by an approach that sees the two prefaces as parts of different literary repertoires. The Japanese preface as the first preface to an imperially commissioned anthology in Literary Japanese stands on more virgin ground generically, whereas the Sino-Japanese preface had to position itself both within the Chinese tradition of anthology production and the previous 150 years of Sino-Japanese compilation practice. Blatant differences between the prefaces, such as the denigration of Prince Ōtsu and Chinese writing, which appears only in the Sino-Japanese preface, make perfect sense from the perspective of the model I have proposed that analyzes difference through literary repertoire and tradition. And it shows the Kokinshū in a history of the same challenge the Kaifushū had to face a century and a half earlier: telling a history of poetry in Japan that could stand with and stand up against the history of Chinese literature.

4. Outlook

We can gaze back over the two anthologies we have surveyed: The Kaifushū, the first Sino-Japanese poetry collection attempted to come to grips with the explosion of textual production in 7th and 8th century Japan and sketched a history of literature along the polysemmatic paths of the Chinese concept of "wen" and soothes the advent of writing in Japan through "hexagrammatic literacy" and the use of Chinese claims of writing as a cosmic emanation. Then, the early tenth century Kokinshū, the first imperially sponsored collection of Japanese waka poetry, which made a case for Japanese poetry against the rival Sino-Japanese tradition by challenging the regime of "wen" through a universal "Way" of poetic composition and that empowers the Japanese tradition in a grand narrative of a "poetogony." The Kokinshū is almost exclusively read "forward in time," that is as the first of, and the model for, the 21 Japanese imperial anthologies to come, and not within its historical context, namely as an extremely bold—brilliant and desperate—attempt to bring Japanese poetry to the fore against previous dominance of the Sino-Japanese tradition.

Strategies for building and asserting traditions circle within cultures, across cultures, and within cultures that channel much of their legitimizing discourses through a reference culture. Collecting a wide variety of those strategies and their aftermath can help us make our own case for reading literature cross-culturally and comparatively. And we can envy those after us who will be able to take us out of our own historical frame and judge whether and potentially how we succeeded.

In conclusion I would like to place our examination of two early Japanese anthologies of poetry within broader questions of "chronopolitics." In Time and the Other Johannes Fabian claims to realize the practice of Western anthropologists to represent other cultures in this an "ethnographical present," strip them of their historicity, and depict them either as paradigmatic or as primitive in order to subordinate them to Western cultural hegemony: "anthropology emerged and established itself as an allocratic (i. e. not simultaneous/synchronous) discourse. It is a science of other men in another Time." Fabian emphasizes the uncanny tension between the immediacy of the encounter with members of other cultures during fieldwork that contrasts so starkly with the distance created through the chronopolitics of anthropological writing. He decodes chronopolitics that builds "temporal fortresses" to serve hegemonic interests and calls instead for practices built on "coevalness."

Our case studies become particularly intriguing in the light of Fabian's critique of the representation of the anthropological other as suspended in an eternal present. Fabian sees this strategy as a ploy of Western researchers collaborating with Western hegemonic interests to assert their superiority over non-textual cultures. However, if we extend Fabian's study to premodern literate societies and particularly to those which existed in ambiguous symbiosis with older reference cultures, the suspension of one's own identity into an eternal present could actually be advantageous. Fabian's model does not foresee that a chronopolitics of timelessness can actually benefit the weaker side, not the hegemonic power. In the case of the Kokinshū we could say that the Japanese enthusiastically "self-ethnologized" themselves in order to overcome history within writing. Yet, rather than advancing a critique of Fabian's poignant argument this paper tried to show how crucial a role "chronopolitics" plays in the representation of oneself and the other, and what surprising results further explorations of its intricate strategies in premodern textual cultures might yield in the future.

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Semiotic-Structural Aspects of Ono no Komachi’s Poetry: An Attempt at Re-Interpretation

by

Stina Jelbring

1. Theoretical Positioning

1.1. Critical background: possibilities for a re-Interpretation of Ono no Komachi

Although what follow are strictly text-centered analyses of poetic texts, let us begin with some hard facts.¹ A person referred to by the name of Ono no Komachi 小野小町 appears for the first time in the Japanese poetry anthology the Kokin Wakashū 古今和歌集 (Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems, A.D. 905–914), issued on imperial command and compiled by Ki no Tsurayuki 紹真, Ki no Tomonori 紹友則, Oshikōchi no Mitsune 出河內光恒 and Mibu no Tadamine 壬生忠岑. This, however, is based on the premise that the private collection the Komachi Shi 小町集 (The Komachi Collection, late tenth century–early eleventh century), which contains an additional ninety-seven poems apart from the eighteen poems in the Kokin Wakashū attributed to Komachi, and the lyrical narrative the Ise Monogatari 伊勢物語 (The Tales of Ise, mid-tenth century) which include two (five) of Komachi’s poems, are

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I use the following abbreviations:

HIAS Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
Ise M Ise Monogatari (Tales of Ise, mid-tenth century)
KWS Kokin Wakashū (Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems, 905–914)
KMH Komachi Shi (The Komachi Collection, end tenth century–beginning eleventh century)
MN Monumenta Nipponica
MV Maruyuki (Collection of a Myriad Leaves, ca 759)
SNKBT Shin Koten Bungaku Taikei (The New Iwanami Series of Classical Japanese Literature)

Japanese names are given with the family name followed by the given name. Exceptions to this are the names of Japanese writers whose works have been published outside Japan, with their names given in the Western order in the publication.

Japanese names and terms are romanized according to the Hepburn system used in Kenkyūsha’s New Japanese-English Dictionary, which is based on English consonants and Italian and German vowels. The only typographical alteration is the use of a circumflex rather than a macron to indicate long vowels. In order to make it easier to understand, modern orthography has been used except where there is wordplay involved.