Minds of the Past
Representations of Mentality in Literary and Historical Documents of Japan and Europe

Geist der Vergangenheit
Zur Repräsentation von Mentalitäten in literarischen und historischen Dokumenten Japans und Europas

Imaginaire du passé
Représentation des mentalités dans les documents historiques et littéraires (Japon et Europe)

こころのかたち—東西文献資料に見られる心性の表象

Edited by
Takami Matsuda, Kenji Yoshitake, Masato Izumi and Michio Sato

KEIO UNIVERSITY
Centre for Integrated Research on the Mind
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Bilingual Landscapes: Divided Pleasures at Yoshino Palace in Early Japanese and Sino-Japanese Poetry

Wiebke Denecke

I.) Entering Yoshino: the Comfort of “Poetic Pillows”

In cultures with a multilingual cultural landscape such as pre-modern Japan, the most basic shared reality is space. Space, even if populated with mutually unintelligible words, thoughts, and ideals, is generously all-inclusive. Though descriptions of the very same place may vary, space itself is first of all accessible to shared experience. Precisely for this reason, such descriptions offer themselves as eloquent case studies to uncover differences in the literary decorum of the various language modes within multilingual traditions such as—in the case of this paper—between Japanese and Sino-Japanese modes.

Places are spaces of presence and immediacy. They are where we speak from. However, most places exist in our memory or the narration of other people’s memories. They are “places” in the literal sense of the Greek word “topos” (="place"), coordinates of remembrance used in the Greek art of...
memory. Japanese poetics has a special word for spatial mnemonics: "poetic pillow" or utamakura. Originally, it referred to stock phrases and images for poetic composition, condensed iconic expressions, which gradually attracted multiplying layers of connotations. Later, utamakura came to mean "names of famous places", where the poetic traveler could literally rest his head on a "travel pillow", which in a dreamlike flash unleashed a host of images from previous poems for poetic intensification. As everybody knows, utamakura became a central poetic device in the waka tradition.

The aesthetics of utamakura unfolds in a closed space: with a relatively small number of set associations for a given place, new compositions on that same place had little leeway for originality. However, new compositions were often highly sophisticated in recirculating clichés through metaphorization, obvious omission, or retellings. The aesthetics of utamakura, trapped inside a world of the "creative cliche" fostered a very intense circulation of figural energy among words, images, places and souvenir-objects, as Edward Kamens has beautifully demonstrated.

As a case study of early Japanese bilinguality, this paper is devoted to

1 I relate the following just for the reader's entertainment: The seminal myth of the invention of mnemonics in the Western tradition appears in Cicero's De oratore. The thiasoplē Sosanidés is summoned to a banquet from which he is suddenly called away to tend to two unexpected visitors. While talking to them (who, mysteriously, turn out to be no other than the divine twins Castor and Pollux), the banquet hall crumbles, burying the merry celebrants. The corpse are completely unidentifiable, but because Sosanidés had remembered the setting of the banquet, he succeeds in identifying all the dead based on his memory. The story underscores the importance of spatial imagination for the process of memorization and explains why in the theory of classical rhetoric the themes to be treated in a speech are called "topics", literally "places" that can rapidly be retrieved from memory when delivering the speech in public. A fundamental and quite comprehensive survey of the history of mnemonics in the West is still Frances Yates, The Art of Memory (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1966). I should also mention that I do not want to impose a close comparison between the "places" in Western mnemonics and Japanese utamakura. But it is probably not far fetched to claim that the growing number of "pillow words" in the Japanese literary tradition constitute a collective, spatially encoded, cultural memory.


the pre-history of the later famous utamakura of Yoshino 宮野. I intend to show how pre-Heian poems through their choice of language could convey radically different images of one and the same place. The "double option" to compose poetry either in Japanese or in Sino-Japanese 三句和句 was not merely a matter of random choice, but brought into play cultural reperitoires with different literary conventions of narrativizing landscape and its corresponding symbolic significance. Until the Early Heian period, the Detached Palace at Yoshino with its mountainous charm, crystal-clear river and impressive waterfall, was a favorite destination for imperial outings. Numerous poems composed at these occasions survive in the Man’yōshū 閑聽集 (759) and the roughly contemporaneous first Sino-Japanese anthology Kaifuku 懐風譜 (751). I will first lay out the poetic associations of Yoshino as a locus of imperial speech in the early Chronicles, then explore more specifically the tradition of imperial panegyrics initiated by Hitomaro in the Man’yōshū, and finally compare them to Sino-Japanese poetry from the Kaifuku.

II.) Imperial Eyes: "Fair Yoshino" as Locus of Imperial Speech

Yoshino is one of the truly numinous places of early Japan, pregnant with histories and legends. In the Kojiki the mythical Emperor Jimmu’s (trad. 7th century BC) pacification of the wild Kuru people in the Yoshino Mountains tells a story of early conquest and assimilation. 1 Emperor Ōjin is said to have been the first to visit some sort of temporary palace on the site, yet Emperor Yuryaku (trad. 5th century AD) is the first to whom poems composed upon a visit to Yoshino are attributed. In one anecdote, he encounters a beautiful maiden beside Yoshino River, weds her immediately and, when seeing her dance to his own zither play, praises her dancing in a poem. His poem is a rather welcome occasion for self-praise, because he does not forget to mention that she dances to the music issued from his

3 See Kojiki songs 47 and 48, in Kodai kikyō kaiden kokubunshū (Tokyo: Iwanami shobō, 1957) Ed. by Tanibashi Yuraku and Kiono Chaika. Translated by Edwin Cranston in A Waka Anthology, Volume I: A Gem-glimmering Cup (Stanford UP: Stanford, 1993), p. 31. For the subsequent translations of Man’yōshū poems I will rely on Cranston’s sparkling renderings unless stated otherwise. I will use modern transcriptions of the poems, while indicating Man’yōbon versions of the poems only if relevant to the discussion. I follow the numbering of the Shūpen Nihon kenbun hatazuzu 興発日本古典文学全集 (Tokyo: Shuppankai, 1994.)
god-like hands (神の御手もち).

Another famous story again describes a scene of imperial speech at Yoshino, and at the same time serves as explanation for one of the traditional names of Japan, “Dragonfly Island” [蜻蛉島]. The incident is at first sight rather disturbing: Emperor Yûryaku is bitten by a horsefly during an imperial hunt. But, upon seeing himself revenged by a dragonfly that swallows the delinquent horsefly, he composes a poem revelling the incident and explaining that Japan is called “Dragonfly Island”, because a dragonfly [akizu 蜻蛉] avenged the Emperor in Yoshino on the fields of “Akizuki” [秋津]. Thus, the conjunction of the benevolent insect and the homophony of the place name account for the auspicious alternative name for Yûryaku’s territory. The Emperor speaks of himself proudly and ceremoniously in the third person.\(^1\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{やすみしし} & \quad \text{Our great lord,} \\
\text{我が大君の} & \quad \text{who rules the land in all tranquility,} \\
\text{餐持つと} & \quad \text{waiting for the game,} \\
\text{洪木にいしま} & \quad \text{sits on his camp chair,} \\
\text{白帯の} & \quad \text{White barked cloth} \\
\text{着着備ふ} & \quad \text{are the sleeves that apparel} \\
\text{手甲に} & \quad \text{his arm’s swelling flesh} \\
\text{あむかき着き} & \quad \text{where a horsefly creeps and clings [...].}\!^2
\end{align*}
\]

As imperial utterance in which the ruler is depicted in the guise of a lauding courtier, Yûryaku’s words in Yoshino could easily be appropriated by later courtiers for their own imperial panegyrics: As we will see, Hitomaro starts his praise poem of the Yoshino Palace with precisely these lines, quoted above, that solemnly praise the current monarch.

But before the praise of Yoshino went from the Emperor’s mouth to his courtiers’ brushes, another monarch evoked Yoshino’s charms. Prince Ōama, the future Emperor Temmu, retreated into the Yoshino Mountains before the Jinshin war (672) when about to topple his nephew, Prince Ōnoko, the son of his older brother and the late Emperor Tenji. Temmu’s wife, the ruling Empress Jitô, seemed to commemorate this crucial moment of her husband’s imperial career by undertaking more than twenty outings to Yoshino, some of which were accompanied by Hitomaro, the initiator of a vigorous, if short-lived, literary tradition of courtiers’ praises of the Yoshino Palace.

Temu’s poems are strangely disconnected from treatments of Yoshino as scene of imperial visits. Instead, his first poem upon such an occasion seems to considerably overlap with an anonymous poem.\(^3\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{みき野の} & \quad \text{In Fair Yoshino} \\
\text{耳我の嶺に} & \quad \text{On the peak of Mimiga} \\
\text{時なくそ} & \quad \text{Without a season,}^4 \\
\text{雪は降りける} & \quad \text{Snow falls, as I well recall,} \\
\text{間なくそ} & \quad \text{Without interval} \\
\text{雨は降りける} & \quad \text{Rain falls, as I well recall.} \\
\text{その雪の} & \quad \\
\text{時なきかごと} & \quad \text{As that snow comes down} \\
\text{その雨の} & \quad \text{Without a special season,} \\
\text{時なきかごとく} & \quad \text{As that rain comes down} \\
\text{進も落ちず} & \quad \text{Without interval for rest,} \\
\text{思いつつぞ求し} & \quad \text{Missing not a turn,} \\
\text{その山道を} & \quad \text{I have pondered on the past} \\
\text{All along that mountain trail.}^5
\end{align*}
\]

The poem superimposes the continuity of the rain and snow, the continuity of curves of Temmu’s path in the mountains and of his thoughts along the way. The almost tediously parallelist prosody creates a strong expecta-

\(^1\) Kojiki song 96. Kojiki konyû. This anecdote resonates well with stories about Chinese rulers encountering beautiful semi-divine females close to numerous rivers, such as in Song Yu’s [art.] Rhapsody on Qiongting [Chengting 青甌嵌, ca. 3rd cent. BC] and Cao Zhi’s Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Luo River [Luohendi 吕洞經, 3rd cent. AD]. In contrast to the Kojiki song, however, not the Chinese rulers, but their courtiers present their song of praise.

\(^2\) It can certainly be argued that these songs were composed by imperial subjects rather than by the emperor. But the narrative setting in the Chronicles presents them as imperial speech, rather putting up with the awkward third-person narrative of self-praise than losing the occasion to attribute a skillful poem to a numerous ruler.

\(^3\) Kojiki song 91. Cronon, p. 57. See also Nihon rekishi, 75 that is less preoccupied with explaining the origin of the land name.

\(^4\) I prefer taking “toki naku mo” as “ceaselessly” rather than “without season.” In parallel to the couplet on rain ("without interval"), a simple temporal, rather than seasonal connotation of “toki” seems more convincing.

\(^5\) Man’yôshû 1 26.
tion of a final destination, the traveler’s arrival at Yoshino, which this poem does not quite reach. No grandiose landscape or eternal land of bliss are in sight, only the smoldering rumination that many interpreters are tempted to interpret as a symptom of Temmu’s bad conscience about the Jinshin war in which he had ousted his nephew some years earlier.

A somewhat similar fascination with repetitiveness appears in another poem by Temmu, also composed around 679 upon a visit to Yoshino Palace. This time, however, repetition occurs ad nauseam on the phonetic level, a repetition, that is cleverly played off against graphic variation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>raigakuban</th>
<th>Goodly men of old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>良跡吉見與</td>
<td>よしとよく見て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好跡言師</td>
<td>よしいと言ひし</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>良即吉見與</td>
<td>吉野よく見よ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>良夫人言三</td>
<td>よき人よく見</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>良人因家三</td>
<td>よき人よく見</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This poem so consciously breaks any intuitive rules against phonetic repetition that it is either a playful parody, though with unclear intention, or it delights in the obvious gap between phonetic monotonity and graphic variety. Five different characters are used for the adjective “good”/auspicious [yōshū]. While the graphs 良 and 良 represent the conventional spelling of Yoshino throughout the Man’yōshū, the “good people”, 良人 and 良人, in the opening and closing line are spellings from the Chinese Classic of Poetry [Ch. Shijing, J. Shikyō] that give the lines an archaicizing flavor. The graphic play, of course, only becomes obvious in a world where poems are written and read rather than sung and heard. This in itself might be the most interesting point about this rather “ponderous tongue-twister” as Cranston calls it.12

In any case, it is with Temmu’s widow, Empress Jitō, that Yoshino stops being celebrated in verse by emperors and instead becomes the stage for courtiers’ eulogies.

III. Hitomaro’s Creation of Yoshino’s Imperial Grandeur

All of the other long-verse poems [chōka 長歌] preserved in the Man’yōshū echo Kakinomoto no Hitomaro’s (d. ca. 710) famous set of two long-verse poems, which were supposedly written when he accompanied Empress Jitō to Yoshino. There have been fierce debates as to when exactly these poems where written, because the Nihon shoki mentions five excursions to Yoshino between the years 689 and 691. Since the two poems are rather different in tone and emphasis, it has also been debated whether or not they were written at the same occasion.13 Like Cranston, I think of them as “complementary” pieces rather than as compositions that express radically different treatments of the topic, which would require the projection of the two poems onto an ideological and biographical timeline.

| すみしがし | Where our Sovereign reigns, |
| あが大郡 | Ruling the earth in tranquillity, |
| 間ち食す | Under the heaven |
| 天の下に | Of this realm she holds in sway, |
| 国はしも | Many are the lands, |
| さはにあれども | But of their multitude, |
| みけの | Seeing the clear pools |

12 Both the Man’yōshū emaki (Tokyo: Yuhakka, 1983-1997) and the Man’yōshū shikishi (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1995-1999, ed. by H. Hako et al.) give a very serious reading of this poem, pointing out that Temmu had invited his descendants for a oath ceremony to secure the continuation of his imperial line. The “good fellows” in line 4 are supposed to be the princes who are admonished by his father to keep up his heritage. That the poem was supposedly written just a few years after the Jinshin war in an atmosphere of anxiety over the continuation of the imperial line is adduced as further evidence. However, we should not forget that it is an awkward poem that the Kiyó hyōkki cites as an example of the poetic fault of “using the same thing at the beginning of each phrase”. I cannot help feeling that this poem is a playful exercise, perhaps a solemn joke.

13 There have been various replications of the difference, describing it variously as the “human” versus the “divine” emperor, “palace” versus “landscape”, “courtier devotion” versus “obedience of the defied lord”, “palace praise” versus “reign praise”. Temmu Manzai (1996, p. 38) has suggested an especially interesting interpretation, arguing that the Jitō court practised two different types of imperial excursions. The first, the “land-viewing” type, harked back to records of such ritual actions by previous emperors and featured the emperor as the protagonist. The second, the excursion of the imperial courtier, was a rather new fashion that privileged the observing eye of the poet. See his “Kakinomoto no Hitomaro no Yoshino sakus to Chūgoku yôkô,” in Ōsaka bungaku 47 (1981-11): p. 69.
That form along this mountain stream,
She gave her heart
to the fair land of Yoshino,
And where blossoms fall
Forever on the fields of Akiu
She planted firm
The mighty pillars of her palace halls.
Now the courtiers,
Men of the palace of the hundred stones,
Line up their boats
To row across the morning stream,
Vie in their boats
To race upon the evening stream:
And like the stream
This place shall last forever,
Like these mountains
Ever loftier shall rise
Beside the plunging waters
Of the torrent her august abode:
Long though I gaze, my eyes will never tire.

Long though I gaze,
Never shall I tire of Yoshino,
Within whose stream
The water-moss grows smooth forever,
As I shall come to view these sights anew.\(^\text{[14,15]}\)

The poem plays with powerful layer changes in both temporal and spatial dimensions. It opens on the broad vista of Jitô's realm, from whence it

\(^{14}\) Mat'yôshi 136-37. See Crouzet, pp. 193 ff.

\(^{15}\) Interestingly, a somewhat truncated version of this first long verse poem by Hitomaro is preserved in the eleventh-century third imperial anthology, the Shiisôki (ninen-shiki 959). It is placed alongside with the long-verse poetry of more recent authors such as Minamoto no Shigehira. Hitomaro's gradual apostrophe into the song of poetry in Heian times made the inclusion of pieces attributed to him very desirable. Quite apart from that, it also shows that there was an awareness of Yoshino as an imperial landscape in the Heian period, after the samurais of Yoshino had developed into a spot for cherry-blossom viewing and hermit pleasures.

\(^{16}\) The Mat'yôshi zenshi, vol. 1, p. 166 credits Hitomaro with the connection of the generic parallel couple "mountains and streams" to the Yoshino topic. It suggests the influence of the ritual of "mountain and stream going" in the "Royal Regulations" chapter in the "Record of Rituals" (Ch. Li, Ji, J. Ruok) on Hitomaro's depiction of "land-viewing".

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The awareness of the spectator that he cannot stay and coexist with the eternal scene is compensated for by the promise of frequent visits; linear continuity is replaced with the rupture of repetition.

Our great Sovereign
Who rules the land in all tranquility,
She who is a god
In action godlike has ordained
That by Yoshino,
Where seething waters deepen into pools,
Lofty halls shall rise,
Lifting high above the stream;
And when she climbs aloft
That she may gaze upon her land,
Fold upon fold

The mountains standing in green walls
Present as tribute
Offered by the mountain gods
In springtime
Blossoms worn upon the brow,
And when autumn comes
Deck themselves in yellow leaves.
Gods of the river too,
That flows along the mountain foot,
In order to provide
The sovereign’s table with good fare,
At the upper shallows
Start the cormorants downstream,
And at the lower shallows
Spread their nets from bank to bank.
Mountain and river
Join thus in fealty to serve
The god who rules this glorious age.

Join thus in fealty to serve,
She who is a god
Now sets her boat upon the stream
Where seething waters deepen into pools.\(^\text{12}\)

For a second time, Jitō orders the construction of a palace, but this time as a divine ruler who selects Yoshino as an ideal place for the ritual performance of “land-viewing” [kunimi], a powerful ritual gesture to visually mark imperial rule. Landscape poetry is \(\text{per se very visual, get the visuality in the poems on Yoshino is not merely descriptive, but instead a form of} \) “potent viewing,” the ruler possesses the land through the gaze, and the landscape, represented by the mountain and river gods pays tribute to the emperor. Space and time are again covered exhaustively—the mountain gods offer blossoms and leaves as their tribute from fall through autumn, and the river gods provide delicious food from the upper shallows to the lower banks of the river. Here, the pairing of mountains with time and rivers with space is the reverse of what happens in the first poem. The mountain and river gods are subservient to Jitō; the mere mention of their joyful tribute attests to their potential or previous rivalry with the Emperor, marking an accomplished submission. The serene scene of abundance has a clear political message to possibly disobedient subjects, and is not just, as often assumed, a harmless praise of imperial splendor.

In similar fashion, the evocation of the archaic practice of “land-viewing” is probably the inventive poetic resuscitation of an archaic relic modeled on records of the early mythic emperors rather than a reflection of current practice. Sasaki Takashi 佐々木隆 has astutely described Hitomaro’s conscious use of archaic vocabulary from the mythic past as reflecting the decline of the mythic ritual of “land-viewing” [kunimi] to mere “land-praising” [kunihime 国譲め] by Hitomaro’s time.\(^\text{13}\) From this perspective, Hitomaro’s poem would not mark an apogee of imperial power under the reign of Jitō, but instead be a symptom of decline of that numinous power, compensated for by Hitomaro’s ornate poetic elaboration.


Hitomaro set the tone for all later praises of Yoshino palace, in which many of his images and tropes recur, but the fervor of imperial praise slowly disappears, leaving room for more extensive praise of the landscape. Yamabe no Akahito’s set of poems on Yoshino make overwhelming use of Hitomaro’s dictio. 29 Kasa no Kanamura, an important court poet under the devout Buddhist Emperor Shōmu and Empress Genshō, is far less full of praise of the ruler in his two long-verse poems on imperial excursions to Yoshino. 30 The first set, composed in 723, starts with a scene of nature, the luxuriant hemlock vines [ながの木] growing on Mifune Mountain, which in turn are made to symbolize the “evergreen” ruler, who is mentioned in passing. 31 That the immediate experience of the emperor’s mighty rule over the land is no longer available is obvious from the closure:

Mountain and river
Are so clear, so limpid pure,
All men can see the reason why
This site was chosen from the Age of Gods.

This is an explanation of shared knowledge, not an exclamation of a heartfelt revelation. After this sober closure, the five different environs of the long-verse poem mostly reshuffle tropes from Hitomaro: the tireless gate on Yoshino, the promise to return.

The second set, composed two years later, imposes a more forceful twist on Hitomaro’s vision of Yoshino. Again, Kanamura starts with a natural scene, appearing in the guise of a lonely mountain-visitor:

Whole foot-weathering
Mountains rustle with the force

Of the boiling plunge
When Yoshino River falls;
I see the clearness
Where the river rapids form,
Hear the plowers
Crying ceaselessly above,
The songfrogs calling
To their mates below this spot. 21

Here, the elemental orientation in space and time by means of the parallelism of mountains and rivers that is so characteristic of Hitomaro is replaced with a clear dominance of rivers over mountains. The clearness of the stream, the river rapids, and even the fauna such as plowers and songfrogs are part of that emphasis. Although they are arranged in a “lower”-“upper” parallel like the tribute goods in Hitomaro’s poem, they are merely free inhabitants of nature in Kanamura’s poem, with no imperial strings attached. As suggested by the pillow-word “asahihi” [朝引き], the mountains are a “foot-weathering” obstacle experienced physically by the exhausted traveler, not an ethereal scene of symbolic imperial power. In the next part, Kanamura takes us even further away from Hitomaro:

Men of the palace
Built of a hundred stones
And timbers wander
Through these grounds in multitudes.

Each time I behold
These scenes a strange longing comes:
As the tangling vine
Twists on without an ending,
For ten thousand years
May it all endure as now,
I pray to the gods
Of the heaven and the earth—

29 Manshū VI 1005-1006, 917-919. In one poem, however, he steps out of the topical decum and introduces the description of an imperial hunt into the scene (Manshū VI 926-927). For a survey of his poetry on Yoshino see Ono Hiroshi, “Akahito no Yoshino sankei,” in: Tanba 33.12 (1986): 154-159.
30 To explain the radical change in relation to the figure of the emperor, Cranston argues very convincingly: “[Kanamura’s] poems point to a change affecting the concept of divine rule as the hero-image of Temmu fades away. Shōmu would eventually declare himself ‘the slave of the Three Treasures’ in a capital whose most overpowering presence was a colossal Buddha.;” p. 295.
The courtiers are not nicely lined up in their boats, as in Hitomaro's poem, but wander around aimlessly. Understandably, the spectator is not reassured of orderly rule, but feels obliged to pray for eternity rather than infer it with confidence from the scene. Again, a plant image is used to express the hope for endurance, but the “tangling vine” [tamakuranura] suggests an image of endangered frailty. Also, the prayer goes to the “gods of Heaven and Earth”, possibly precisely the gods that had declared obedience to the emperor in Hitomaro's poem. With Kanamura, the power of the empress over space and time seems to have declined to the point where he supplicates the former “imperial vassals” to secure the imperial scene of Yoshino.29

The envoy provides an interesting twist on the Hitomaro trope of Yoshino as the embodiment of eternal imperial rule. It becomes transformed into a wish for Kanamura's own immortality:

Would that all men's lives,
My own as well, were changeless
As eternal stone
Standing against the raging
Torrent of fair Yoshino!

Kanamura quite wittily converts Yoshino River’s previous symbolic value as the ever-flowing river into an image of evanescence and grants the value of eternity instead to the stones in the water, which in turn should guarantee his own immortality.

The last great eulogy for Yoshino, a long-verse poem by Ōtomo no

29 Tsukino Fumiko 月野文子 has argued that the shift from imperial praise to nature eulogy in the long-verse poems on Yoshino after Hitomaro happened under the influence of the Sino-Japanese poetry on Yoshino. See her “Kaiten no Yoshino no shi no byōgen,” in: Chūkoku bunraku monogatari 9 (1996), p. 222. This is certainly suggestive, but if one takes seriously Sasaki's argument that the decline from “land-viewing” to “land-praise” started already with Hitomaro, the shift of focus from emperor to landscape is also understandable from within the genre of long-verse poetry.

Yakamochi dated to 749, is the subgenre's swansong par excellence. It recapitulates, even outdoes, the decorous pathos of imperial praise and bears the seeds to destroy its own raison d'être. It heaps praise upon an unidentifiable archaic emperor, either Yūraku or Ojin,24 telling the story of Yoshino in the past tense, in sharp contrast to Hitomaro’s blissful present:

Enthroned on high,
Scion of the sun in heaven,
Lord of all the earth
Beneath the circle of the sky,
Sovereign ruler,
August god, that mighty one of old
It was who in dread
Majesty began the task,
Who with awesome purpose founded on this spot
The great palace
Of fair Yoshino; and now we see
How in steadfast round
Our present lord goes forth
to view this site.

Yakamochi does not spare words in illustrating the vibrant power of the ancient emperors. The ruling emperor only guards the heritage of the imperial institution; the power of lineage replaces the effortless radiance of power of Empress Jitō in Hitomaro’s poems. The emperor is a representative of the imperial institution, a safe keeper, and no longer a creator. In similar fashion, the awe experienced by the narrating spectator in Hitomaro’s second envoy is replaced with the eternal gaze of the warriors and courtiers in service to the emperor. Both creation and admiration of power have changed hands from extraordinary individuals—the charismatic ruler and its bedazzled audience—to representatives of a certain political function or class—the safe keepers of the imperial institution and its warriors:

And the men at arms,
The classmen of the eighty clans,
Shall gaze on Yoshino
Forever, as the river flows,
While they render service to their lord.

Not the immortality of the ruler, but the image of eternal service to the ruler closes this last song on Yoshino’s imperial grandeur. That Yoshino had lost its power of numinous immediacy and become a place to muse on the past and anxiously wish for a good future, is also indicated by the preface to the poem: “A poem composed in advance for the time when the emperor would make an excursion to the detached palace at Yoshino.” Yakamochi was far away in Etchū Province when he composed this poem in 749. Apparently Yoshino had become a place about which a court poet would adroitly write in absentia.

A quarter century before Yakamochi’s swansong for Yoshino his father, Ōtomo no Tabito (665-731), wrote about Yoshino in his only surviving long-verse poem. The introductory note, apologetically, states that the poem was never submitted to the emperor. One could certainly argue that the cursory attention given to the weighty topic and its reduction of Hitomaro’s tropes to an almost skeletal brevity reflect an early draft stage. Yet, it is hardly imaginable how a skilled poet like Tabito could have written such a poor draft, and even more importantly, it is quite mysterious why the compiler, possibly Tabito’s son Yakamochi, should have included a poem that casts such unfavorable light on the poetic abilities of its author and is so exposed, because it is his only long-verse poem in the collection. Cranston’s translation suggestively brings out its almost provocative tediousness:

In fair Yoshino
There Yoshino the palace stands—
Clearly its majesty
Comes form the grandeur of the hills,
Clearly its purity
Comes form the freshness of the stream.
Together with heaven,
With earth, long and enduring.

For ten thousand ages
It will still remain unchanged.
This palace of the imperial tour.

The envoy allows for a moment’s reflection:
When I look today
Upon the rivulet of Kisa
Where I oft have gazed,
Its waters sparkle yet more pure
Than when I saw it long-ago.

Here, Yoshino’s vista is still for the gazer, but it is no longer an imperial landscape. Instead, the poem has become the private confession of a visitor who sees with—and more important for—his own eyes, a poetic analyst of landscape who compares past and present visits. The poem at times fancies straightforward kana/hon notattion, recording characters rather than sounds. Thus, the Chinese-sounding parallelism of mountains and waters [山々思慕—水々哀思] and of the longevity of Heaven and Earth [天地長久] is even more conspicuous. Tabito, one of the most endurably Sinophile of the early poets, who populated his poetry with Chinese coterie and wine, adopts the most fundamental elements from Hitomaro’s praise of Yoshino, such as the palace, the parallelism of mountains and rivers, the eternal endurance of the place and the gaze at the scene in the envoy. However, the poem appears as a chinoiserie, with its kana/hon-flavored notation that incorporates the parallelism of mountains and rivers from Analec. 6.23, evokes the eternity of Heaven and Earth with the Laozi, and prays for longevity of Yoshino Palace in the words of an imperial announcement [semmyō 神明 | ] by Emperor Shōmu. Also, Tabito puts the emperor’s land-gazing, reciprocated by the tireless gaze of the courtier who witnesses the scene, to his

own lyrical use. He is a keen observer here, but comes as a poetic visitor, not a prophet of a divine imperial landscape, even if the poem makes feeble gestures towards praises of the imperial palace.

Another poem that flits with kanbun notation is Tori no Sensyō's [土理宣令, active early 8th century] tanka on Yoshino. Sensyō is also known from his kanbun composed at a banquet for Silla envoys preserved in the Kaifūzō (no. 63, 64) and as a tutor of the later Emperor Shōmu.

見吉野之 み吉野の In fair Yoshino
麗乃自流 漪の白波 The white waves of the torrent fall:
乱不知 知らねども What fell here once
語之告者 語りしつけば I cannot say, and yet I muse
古所念 古意はゆ On tales men tell of long ago.29

The phonetic pun on “white waves” [shiranami] and “although I don’t know” [shiranadomo] is graphically opaque due to the kanbun-flavored notation [白浪 versus 聞不知] and creates an elegant tension between graphic diversity and phonetic repetition. Sensyō’s poem was—we should not forget—probably composed at a time when high-sounding praises in the Hitomaro tradition were sung about Yoshino as an imperial landscape in long-verse poetry, although the grandeur of Jitō’s age as immortalized in Hitomaro was already gone. The mention of the white waves belongs to a tradition of nature poetry on Yoshino that seems to have preceded Hitomaro. Book XIII contains many anonymous long-verse poems, which by virtue of their occasionally irregular prosody, formulaic repetitiveness and anonymity seem to represent the oldest or least reworked layer of long-verse poetry in the Man’yōshū. One of them treats the white waves Sensyō is taking up in his poem.

異取りて Taking an axe,
丹生の樺山の Cutting down the cypress trees
木こり來て On Nifu’s mountains,
筏に作り Fashioning from them a raft,
ま親抜き Attaching oars,

As Cranston notices, the “moment of truth”—the image of the white waves of the Yoshino rapids—is delayed until the end. The repetition of the closure in the envoy again emphasizes the white waves that appear in Sensyō’s poem, yet the reaction to this stimulus is notably different. In the anonymous long-verse poem the spectator wants to show this sight to his lover, while Sensyō is led to brood on the past, a past that is no longer present at the famous spot, a past that the visitor can only reflect on and imagine. As a standard closure in Chinese poetry (and for that matter also Man’yōshū poetry) on visits to ruined capitals and other sites of previous political importance, it turns the pleasant nature scene sketched in the anonymous long-verse poem into a vague confession of historical melancholia. It is a pose of deprivation from the presence of a past, a pose which can catch faded grandeur only by indistinct musing. In its sensation of time, Sensyō’s poem is diametrically opposed to Hitomaro’s Yoshino legacy. In its focus on the Yoshino rapids it evokes a previous tradition of nature praise of Yoshino, but mounts this vision into a frame of historical remembrance and pensiveness that declare the golden age of Yoshino as an imperial landscape closed and past—approximately half a century before Yakamochi’s swansong for Yoshino.

The great court exposition on Yoshino breaks off with Yakamochi. As is
well-known, from the Heian period Yoshino becomes a very different place, a poetic site for viewing cherry blossoms and a refuge for eager recluse.

IV.) The “Other” Courtiers: Literati poetry on Yoshino in the Kaifūsō

There are 17 poems composed on visits to Yoshino in the Kaifūsō (751), all of which seem to have been composed roughly between 700 and 730. Thus, Sino-Japanese poetry sets in a decade after Hitomaro’s praise of Yoshino Palace.

The most basic shared trope is the parallel of mountains and rivers/waters which is absolutely de rigueur in the Sino-Japanese poems, but equally prevalent in the Hitomaro tradition. However, the stock-reference in the Kaifūsō poem is to the Confucian dictum from Analects 6.23: “The wise rejoice in waters, the benevolent rejoice in mountains” [hi zhe le shui, ren zhe le shan 裕者樂水，仁者樂山]. The following poem is a good case in point:

進吉野宮 On an excursion to Yoshino Palace

惟山兼惟水 O, hills and waters,
能兼亦能仁 Where we can be both wise and benevolent!
寫代無垢所 For ten thousand ages not a single stain,
一朝逢相民 Where once it dawns I encounter Maidens of Mulberry.

風波轉入曲 Where windblown waves turn, entering our tunes
魚鳥共成侶 And fish and birds frolic together.
此地即方丈 This spot is a true Fangzhai 方丈, 往應此津善
誰說桃花賞 So who would even mention the Peach Blossom visitor?

Yoshino’s “mountains and waters” are always described through the moral typology of landscape lovers in the Analects. Yoshino is for everybody, at least every good Confucian, states the first couplet. It is the place where one can meet Mulberry Maidens, as in the popular legend of the fisherman Umashe, who caught a mulberry branch in his fish trap, only to find out that it was a beautiful woman whom he then married. The place’s purity, resonant with the Man’yōshū, appears in the next couplet, although the rich texture of visual images of land-viewing, gazing, returning to gaze, never tiring of gazing is completely absent. Instead, we have the music of a banquet which inspires fish and birds to line up in response to the melody. The most striking feature of this poem is that it attaches a new name to Yoshino, an old-name of rich associative pedigree: The island Fangzhai, to which the first Emperor of the Qin sent his messengers to find the herb of immortality. And Fangzhai is easily bettered than Peach Blossom spring, the utopian world of the blissfully escapist poet Tao Qian (369–427). In replacing the Japanese utamakura “Yoshino” with Chinese utopian places there is no need to lose time elaborating on the exquisiteness of the place: The Japanese “poetic pillow”, still relatively young and devoid of literary associations, is propped up with a Chinese “pillow,” already stuffed with the most attractive and rich connotations. The two pillows together “elevate” the place considerably, even if Yoshino is obviously sold to the exotic charm of Chinese toponyms.

As in the Man’yōshū, Yoshino is a site of divine presence, but its praises take on a very different form in Sino-Japanese poetry:

従上方吉野宫 Following the return to Yoshino Palace

32 One of the three islands of the immortals mentioned in Annals of the First Emperor of the Qin, Qingshi Huangdi, in Sima Qian’s Records of the Great Hanman [Shiji 3:22].
Warring States and Early Han anthology Songs of Chu, going off to the "mountains or rivers" became a gesture of political resistance. By Tang times, this topic had evolved into a huge body of recluse poetry of Taoist or Buddhist flavor. For the most part, this poetry represented by charismatic figures like Tao Qian, made a claim of renouncing the Confucian rulership, and so the example a recluse pose as a recluse. This type of poetry inspired much of the Kaifūō court-style nature poetry.

One poem on Yoshino, however, takes an obvious anti-court stance:

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Yoshino resonated with Emperor Yūryaku’s adventures in Yoshino, but also reminds one of Cao Zhi’s encounter with the goddess of the Luo River.\(^\text{41}\)

| 吉野之作 | Composed at Yoshino |
| 高麗峰巇多奇勢 | Lofty peaks tower high in manifold marvelous shapes, |
| 長河渦濁遙作流 | While the long river stretches into far distance as I go upstream. |
| 鋼池超澤異凡類 | Like Wu Pool and Yue Tarn, these waters are beyond the ordinary, |
| 英韶逢仙同洛洲 | but this place where Unamine met the (Mulberry) Immortal is just like the Luo River.\(^\text{42}\) |

Japanese lore is validated by comparisons with Chinese lore. It is noteworthy that for once, running counter to stereotypes, the popular appears in the Sino-Japanese and not in the Japanese poetry of the Man’yōshū, where it is erased to make room for an expansive parade of imperial ideology. In the Kaifū, it constitutes another gesture towards the periphery, the distance of the literati-courtiers from the court, while also making for a culturally reassuring juxtaposition of Japanese and Sino-Japanese poetic repertoires.

V.) Leaving Yoshino: Significant Double Visions

As we have seen Japanese poems on Yoshino in the Hitomaro tradition construct landscape as the immediate visual embodiment of imperial power, while Sino-Japanese poems tend to create a landscape populated with intertextual references to Chinese Taoist recluse lore intertwined with Japanese lore which could even lend itself to express resistance to imperial power. Thus, poetry on Yoshino is a striking example of how the “double option” of writing in either Japanese or Sino-Japanese allowed poets to build alternative traditions and imagine variable pleasures ranging from sumptuous praises of the emperor to professions of political escapism.

I would argue that one of the most striking rhetorical differences between Sino-Japanese and Japanese poetry on Yoshino is the contrast between the dialogism of the Kaifū poems and the monologism of the Man’yōshū verses. The kanshi tend to show off an erudite intertextuality; they evoke the Confucian Analects, the Songs of Chu and other recluse poetry and intertwine them with Japanese lore. The Hitomaro tradition, although itself a clever mix of previous nature praise of Yoshino’s beauty and the imperial ideology of “land-viewing” borrowed from the Chronicles, does not want to admit to its intertextuality, and even the long-verse poems in Hitomaro’s wake, although always pointing back to Hitomaro, strive to appear monologic. The poems are obsessed with tropes of unmediated entities, such as the immensity of imperial presence, the visual immediacy of that presence embodied in the virgin landscape, the spatial and temporal “eternity” of that purity. The landscape in the kanshi, on the contrary, is always already textual: mountains and rivers are the benevolent and righteous companions of Confucian courtiers; they are “like” Luo River or Peach Blossom Land. The Yoshino kanshi are proud to show off their textual pedigree, and the evocation of the charms of Chinese and Japanese lore adds much to their effectiveness and allows for condensed significations. Unlike the Man’yōshū they are little interested in creating the illusion of visual immediacy or primeval purity.

The tradition of poetry on visits to the Detached Palace at Yoshino virtually died out in the early Heian period, right at the time when Yoshino started its prolific career as an utamakura in waka poetry. It is more than ironic that the imperial splendor of the Man’yōshū completely disappeared from the poetic associations of Yoshino as a spot for recluses. Uncannily, the waka tradition inherited the escapist pleasures celebrated in Nara kanshi and gave them a new face too distinctive to be recognizable by later generations.