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The Journal of Japanese Studies, Volume 30, Number 1, Winter 2004, pp.  
97-122 (Article)

Published by Society for Japanese Studies

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jjs.2004.0008>



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## Chinese Antiquity and Court Spectacle in Early *Kanshi*

*Abstract:* This essay argues for closer attention to Japan's active appropriation of Chinese culture and an acknowledgment of the independence of *kanshibun* from Chinese literature. Obligated to give historical depth to an emerging literature, the compilers of the first *kanshi* anthologies adopted charismatic moments from Chinese literary history. Poets sympathized especially with courtly settings of Chinese antiquity: they evoked the Zhou court and its vassals at banquets for Korean envoys, performed phrases of the *Analects* at the Rites for Confucius, or replayed Han rhapsody recitation. The article contributes to studies of the creative use of the Chinese textual canon in Japan.

Studying Sino-Japanese literature (*kanshibun*<sup>1</sup>) as a literary historian is a somewhat quixotic enterprise. Various factors turn this orphaned field, which has not yet found a place in Western academe, into an apologetic stage with a small, though devoted, audience. Under the influence of schol-

I thank all those who have contributed to this essay by sharing their opinions and suggestions, in particular Atsuko Sakaki, Robert O. Khan, Paul Rouzer, Sarah Fremmerman, Sakakibara Sayoko, Timothy Wixted, the participants of the conference "The Canon of Chinese Poetry in East Asia" (Harvard University, August 2002), and the two anonymous referees.

1. Although in Japan the term *kanshibun* has traditionally been used to describe poetry and prose from both Japan and China, in this essay I use the term exclusively in reference to writings composed by Japanese authors. Ivo Smits has made a good case against calling it "*mana* literature," for the simple reason that this term hardly ever surfaces in *kanshibun*. Also, it defines *kanbun* literature from the viewpoint of *kana* discourse. See Smits, "The Way of the Literati: Chinese Learning and Literary Practice in Mid-Heian Japan," in Mikael S. Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto, eds., "Center and Periphery in Heian Japan" (unpublished manuscript). For the most appropriate English translation of *kanshibun*, I endorse Timothy Wixted's rendering "Sino-Japanese literature." See Wixted, "Kambun, Histories of Japanese Literature, and Japanologists," in Sekine Eiji, ed., *The New Historicism and Japanese Literary Studies: Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, Vol. 4 (West Lafayette, Ind.: Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies, 1998), p. 313.

ars such as Motoori Norinaga and the school of National Learning (*koku-gaku*), literary studies in Japan have tended to focus on *kana* literature. Japan's emergence as a dominant political and economic force in East Asia since the nineteenth century has also shifted interest away from Japan's cultural indebtedness to China. Moreover, Chinese-language literature in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan is seen as eclectic and "imitative" because of evolutionist paradigms of literary history that trace the progression of these literatures from initial awkwardness to slowly increasing skillfulness in handling the "foreign" language of literary Chinese. This misleading reputation has certainly not encouraged the study of *kanshibun*. The fixation on *kana* literature in Western university curricula echoes the predominant Japanese academic paradigm, but also reflects a much more serious practical problem in the study of premodern Japanese culture: mastery of the multiple linguistic modes of classical and modern Japanese as well as divergent styles of *kanbun* is necessary, yet difficult.

Another important task for students of *kanshibun* is to develop charismatic conceptual frameworks that capture the intricate cultural interaction between China and early Japan. Recently, the influence paradigm<sup>2</sup> has come under increasing attack because it attributes a dominant role to the "giving" culture and understates the active and creative contribution of the "influenced" culture. At present, an "anxiety of influence," almost a taboo on the expression "influence," seems to trigger embarrassment in whoever is caught using the ostracized word. Alert academic instincts tell us that—as good antiessentialists—we should no longer talk about "influence." New historicist terms such as "appropriation" and "negotiation"<sup>3</sup> have gained wider currency in inter-Asian studies and shifted the focus from gathering evidence for an unqualified and rather mechanical "Chinese influence" to

2. This paradigm, which underlies much of Japanese and Western scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s, encourages an essentialist model of cultures, which are reduced into seemingly homogeneous wholes with stereotyped characteristics. Apart from misrepresenting the often contradictory multiplicity within cultures, this view results in a mechanical model of cultural interaction, in which Chinese "essences" are transported into Japan and recognition of the traces of such "influence" stops short of analyzing how specifically Chinese concepts and texts were actively transformed and absorbed by Japanese authors. The essentializing tendency of this approach is exemplified in Konishi Jin'ichi's study of Chinese "influence" on the style of the *Kokinshū* (905). See Konishi, "The Genesis of the *Kokinshū* Style," trans. Helen McCullough, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (June 1978), pp. 61–170.

3. Stephen Greenblatt, a seminal figure of new historicism since the 1980s, developed these concepts within his semiotic project of a "cultural poetics." He uses them to describe the interaction between different social spheres and artistic media within one culture—rejecting the existence of a single master discourse or *Zeitgeist*—as well as to describe the interaction between cultures. See Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), and *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). For explorations into the potential of new historicist approaches to the field of Japanese literature in general, see Sekine, ed., *The New Historicism and Japanese Literary Studies*.

understanding the complicated processes in the societal, psychological, and artistic contact zones between China and its neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

The essentializing tendency of the influence paradigm replicates the traditional rhetoric of polarizing foreign “Chinese” and indigenous “Japanese essences” (*wa-kan*) which has been securely in place since Heian times. National Learning scholars were eager to construct this polarity on political and ethnic grounds and to claim Heian *wa-kan* discourse as a venerable tradition leading up to their own project. Thomas LaMarre’s groundbreaking initiative to transfer the interplay of *wa* and *kan* from a cultural and ethnic level to an aesthetic level is particularly important in questioning the unfortunate modern misreading of the significance of “Chineseness” and “Japaneseness” in the Heian period.<sup>5</sup> Equally important for questioning the polarizing rhetoric has been the emphasis on the imaginary nature of Japanese “Chineseness” by scholars such as David Pollack and Atsuko Sakaki.<sup>6</sup> They explore versions of a “China within Japan” that—as a Japanese figment of alterity as “Japanese” as the Japanese self-imagination—did not have much in common with historical China.

Instead of focusing on the rhetoric of alterity *vis-à-vis* China, which has dominated the imagination since Heian times, I would like to reflect on processes of appropriating China by creative imitation and by what I will call “reenactment.” I argue that Heian Japanese imagined not only a foreign China, but, just as often, a completely indigenized, naturalized China in order to embody themselves as Japanese in a Chinese guise. Imagining “Japan as China” was as much a ubiquitous fantasy as “China within Japan.” The argument implies that the borders between “Chineseness” and “Japaneseness” in Heian Japan were much fuzzier and more intricate than suggested by the overly close attention to the surface rhetoric of a *wa-kan* polarity.<sup>7</sup>

4. Certainly, the expression “influence” is not to be avoided if it implies a search for the various processes of appropriation such as quoting and imitating, twisting and reversing, recreating, or even defamiliarizing completely. As long as it is analyzed in its specific textual settings and versions and not just, as in the case of the influence paradigm, unproblematically and universally assumed, there is nothing wrong with “influence.” However, I prefer “negotiation” and “appropriation” because they foreground agency in the process of intercultural exchange. “Influence” asks for essences and elicits answers to the question of what is influencing what. “Negotiation” focuses instead on the agents that consciously create hybridity and determine its historical shapes.

5. Thomas LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan: An Archaeology of Sensation and Inscription* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

6. David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan’s Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Atsuko Sakaki, “Obsessions with the Sino-Japanese Dyad in Japanese Literature” (unpublished manuscript).

7. LaMarre argued against such a clear-cut distinction on the grounds of calligraphy by questioning the conventionally claimed difference between “Japanese” and “Chinese” writing styles. LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan*, in particular pp. 85–92 and 114–15.

The study of early Japan has often left aside the question of how primary and secondary textual cultures differ,<sup>8</sup> considering it irrelevant or too prejudiced. To avoid the serious challenges raised by this question, the development of *kanshi* poetry is projected on the Chinese time line of literary developments. According to this model, Nara poetry, as represented in the first extant *kanshi* anthology, the *Kaifūsō* (751), is analyzed in relation to the poetic style of the Six Dynasties period (A.D. 222–589). Early Heian poetry from the three imperial anthologies of the early ninth century is read in reference to seventh-century Early Tang poetry. Mid-Heian anthologies such as the *Honchō monzui* (ca. 1058) are seen in relation to ninth-century mid-Tang poets, in particular to Bo Juyi, and Gozan poetry from the Kamakura period is analyzed for its reception of Northern Song aesthetics. The hermeneutic model of reading Japanese literary history through a Chinese time line creates more continuity in the history of *kanshibun* than there was and does not shy away from grounding this continuity almost exclusively in Chinese developments, at the expense of a Japanese history of *kanshibun*.

In contrast to this model, let us look for differences and discontinuities rather than similarities. One fundamental difference between the emergence of primary and secondary textual cultures is their repertoire of temporal imagination. Building on the Chinese textual canon, Japanese *kanshi* composition started out from such a richness and differentiation in diction, conceptual thinking, and generic development that its degree of sophistication could only be justified within a framework of literary history. This was a particular problem for compilers of early anthologies. On the one hand, they sensed the necessity—imposed by highly acclaimed anthologies such as the sixth-century *Wenxuan* (J. *Monzen*)—to provide a grand narrative of literary and cultural history in their prefaces. On the other hand, the history of Japanese *kanshi* composition was too young to allow for such a narrative. The rhetoric of selection and exclusion, canonization and rejection of literary texts, which governs anthology prefaces, had to be deployed in an arena invested with more historical depth than the young practice of *kanshi* composition. Given the prominence of this dilemma in the culture of early Japan, I am particularly interested in how early compilers dealt with what I call the “historical flatness” of *kanshi* composition practice and in their strategies to create or sometimes defy historical depth. The prefaces of Nara and early Heian anthologies show different degrees of hybrid intertwining

8. I use the terms “primary” and “secondary” purely in the sense of historical consciousness. China was a “primary textual culture” from the Japanese perspective insofar as there existed a clear consciousness beginning in Nara times that writing was adopted from an outside source, either China or the Korean peninsula. This consciousness persisted throughout Japanese history and it is crucial to the concept of a “secondary textual culture,” which is defined by the collective memory of an outside origin of writing rather than by actual historical evidence of that origin.

of Japanese and Chinese story elements. It may come as a surprise that the easiest way to create historical depth, namely, the clandestine naturalization of Chinese narratives of literary history and the insertion of Chinese authors into the portrait gallery of *kanshi* authors, arose as late as the fourth Japanese *kanshi* anthology, the *Keikokushū* (827).

A second important difference between primary and secondary textual cultures was that Japanese poets had a different sense of the topography of the Chinese literary canon they appropriated. Fragmentary knowledge of the Chinese canon was not necessarily the main reason for this, but rather the overwhelmingly textual nature of cultural exchange between China and Japan. Charlotte van Verschuer, after painstakingly gathering and translating all the entries bearing on early Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in Japanese imperial histories and making a case for the important role of diplomatic missions in the Japanese appropriation of Chinese culture, admits with some resignation to the “bookish nature” of early cultural exchange.<sup>9</sup> The books that came to Japan brought little of their functional topography and performative context. The highly compartmentalized nature of the Chinese textual canon with its complicated generic decorum, its institutional associations, its spectrum of occasions of composition and different degrees of creative accessibility for contemporary writers was mostly lost, if not disregarded in Japan. I argue not only that the canon of Chinese literature was different in China and Japan, but that the creative canon—that is, the texts serving as a repository for contemporary poets—and the bookish canon—which poets would know but not resort to in their compositions of *shi* poetry—took on different shapes in China and Japan. For example, in Tang China the *Shijing* (Classic of poetry, tenth to sixth century B.C.) had long since been relegated to the bookish canon, except perhaps in ritual music composition. *Kanshi* authors, however, used it as a creative canon and appropriated its vocabulary, gestures, and actions into their *shi* poetry. Heian courtiers showed special delight in reopening closed venues of the Chinese canon to *kanshi* composition, doing things Tang poets would probably never have dreamt of. In miming Chineseness and creating a “Japan as China,” Heian courtiers preferred to use passages from the Chinese classics as libretti to choreograph court spectacles through their *kanshi* poetry, to reenact Chineseness by the book. The gesture of reenactment was especially attractive for *shi* poetry composed at ritual and diplomatic occasions because

9. “D’une manière générale, l’introduction des différentes pratiques provenant de la Chine ne reposait pas sur les suggestions faites par d’anciens envoyés, mais sur des indications tirées d’ouvrages chinois. En effet, une grande partie des mesures prises en fonction de précédents chinois étaient fondées sur des descriptions contenues dans les classiques ou les recueils historiques et juridiques de la Chine. . . . On est donc amené à penser que l’assimilation des apports chinois a essentiellement un caractère livresque.” Charlotte van Verschuer, *Les relations officielles du Japon avec la Chine au VIII<sup>e</sup> et IX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Genève: Droz, 1985), p. 255.

it enabled the Japanese to imagine themselves in the position of Chinese centrality invested with ritual efficiency and diplomatic superiority, and allowed them for short and poetic moments to forget their rather peripheral status in East Asian diplomacy of the time.

*Temporal Imagination in the Prefaces to Early Kanshi Anthologies*

Although we know earlier *kanshi* anthologies existed, the *Kaifūsō* (751) is the oldest that survives and is roughly contemporary with the *Man'yōshū* (759). Unlike later anthologies, it was not imperially commissioned and the identity of the compiler is unknown.<sup>10</sup> The preface of the *Kaifūsō* outlines a grand history of writing and civilization, blueprinted on Xiao Tong's (501–31) preface to the *Wenxuan* to which it constantly refers. It opens grandiosely at the court of the mythical Emperor Jimmu, when—as in the *Wenxuan*—writing (*jinbun*) did not yet exist.<sup>11</sup> Emissaries from Paekche and Koguryo brought the first writings to the Japanese court,<sup>12</sup>

Then Kudara paid tribute at our court  
Unravelling dragon texts in the horse stables.<sup>13</sup>  
And Koguryo submitted memorials to our throne,  
Drawing up their crow documents with bird-track patterns.

These emblematic beginnings of the history of writing, reading, and book learning in Japan appear also in the early histories. The *Kojiki* (742) relates the memorable story of the Paekche envoy Wani, who was the first to bring the *Analects* and the *Qianziwen* (Thousand-character-classic; early sixth century) to the court of Emperor Ōjin and thereby initiated the tradition of Confucian learning in Japan. The *Nihongi* (720) relates a curious anecdote about a memorial from Koguryo that was written on crow feathers.<sup>14</sup>

10. For a general introduction to the anthology as a whole, see Inoguchi Atsushi, *Nihon kanbungakushi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1985), pp. 79–86, and Helen Craig McCullough, *Brocade by Night: The Kokin Wakashū and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 86–97. See also Hatooka Akira's interesting remarks about the political context of the preface in the first part of his *Jōdai kanshibun to Chūgoku bungaku* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1989).

11. Kojima Noriyuki, ed., *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui*, Nihon Kōten Bungaku Taikēi (NKBT), Vol. 69 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1964), pp. 58–62.

12. My translations from the *Kaifūsō* benefited from Paul Rouzer's unpublished translation.

13. The envoy from Kudara, a certain Achiki, supposedly offered horses as tribute.

14. See Ogihara Asao, *Kojiki, Jōdai kayō*, Nihon Kōten Bungaku Zenshū, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1973), p. 257, and Donald Philippi, *Kojiki* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 285. For the *Nihongi*, see Sakamoto Tarō, *Nihon shoki*, NKBT, Vol. 67 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965–67), p. 133, and William Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), Vol. 2, p. 91: "The memorial presented by Koguryo was written on crow's feathers, and the characters, like the feathers, being black, nobody had been able to read them. Chin-ni accordingly steamed the feathers in the vapor from boiled rice, and took an impression of them on a piece of silk, whereupon all

But the *Kaifūsō* preface also resonates with the invention of writing by the Chinese mythical heroes Fuxi and Cang Jie, who reputedly invented the hexagrams and writing based on their observation of natural patterns and bird tracks. After the introduction of writing, Prince Shōtoku (574–622) is credited with institutional reforms and the creation of an official rank system. However, depicted as a bureaucrat solely interested in expanding state power through the promotion of Buddhism, he failed as a promoter of literature: “But he mostly honored Buddhist doctrine, and had no leisure for composition.”<sup>15</sup>

Against this discouraging backdrop of religious zeal and disregard for literature, the preface sets the image of the enlightened Emperor Tenji (626–71), who established the state academy (*daigakuryō*) and an education system based on Chinese precedent. In the *Kaifūsō* preface, Tenji has the cosmic credentials of a mythic ruler of Chinese antiquity: “When the previous Emperor at Ōmi [i.e., Tenji] received the mandate, he gloriously started the imperial enterprise and greatly elaborated majestic policies. His Way reached Heaven and Earth, and his merits illuminated the universe.”<sup>16</sup> Tenji, the Japanese incarnation of Yao or Shun, exemplary rulers from China’s mythical antiquity, is surrounded by ideal Confucians in a court in which everything happens through “nonaction” (*wuwei*). The trope of effortless ruling goes back to the vision of Shun in the *Analects*: “If there was a ruler who achieved order without taking any action [*wuwei*], it was, perhaps, Shun. There was nothing for him to do but to hold himself in a respectful posture and to face due south [i.e., the proper posture of a ruler].”<sup>17</sup> “Nonaction” as a Confucian virtue with Daoist undertones works mostly through the attractive paradox that nothing is left undone through nonaction, but in this preface it has, in its nonrhetorical literal sense, fruitful practical side effects. Prosaically put, “nonaction” means idleness and the spare time for imperial banquets and literary composition: “He often summoned literary scholars, and time and again had drinking outings at which occasion the imperial brush would produce a piece, and his worthy subjects would in turn offer hymns of praise.” Tenji marks the beginning of Japanese literary history: “Since his time, poets gradually emerged.”<sup>18</sup>

The preface creates temporal depth by aligning a series of charismatic moments: the times before the existence of writing, the advent of writing, the promotion of Buddhism under Prince Shōtoku, and finally the emergence

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the characters were transferred to it, to the wonder of the Court.” Obviously, not only scribal competence, but some ingenuity was necessary to make written documents legible in the eyes of the Japanese on the threshold to literacy.

15. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō*, *Bunka shūreishū*, *Honchō monzui*, p. 59.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

17. *Analects* 15.5, from D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 132.

18. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō*, *Bunka shūreishū*, *Honchō monzui*, p. 60.



of literature out of the leisure of Confucian “nonaction” under Emperor Tenji. Three of these remarkable moments point to both Chinese and Japanese references. First, the times before the existence of writing according to the *Wenxuan* preface were wild and uncivilized in China: people ate raw meat, drank blood, and lived in caves.<sup>19</sup> But in the *Kaifūsō*, these were the golden times of the mythical Emperor Jimmu: pretextuality is imagined as a state of bliss and not of barbarism. Second, the advent of writing occurs in Chinese antiquity with the cultural hero Fuxi, whose “bird-track” writing reaches Japan through Korea. The transmission of writing is not imagined as an act that brings civilization to the uncultivated periphery of Yamato, but occurs in eighth-century Korean-Japanese diplomacy with a dominant Japanese court to which the Korean envoys pay “textual” tribute. The anxiety about admitting a story line of Japanese liminality is appeased by the assertion of Japanese diplomatic and political superiority over the technological transfer of writing from Korea to Japan. Third, the age of literary productivity and leisure juxtaposes Xiao Tong (crown-prince of the Liang dynasty (502–57) and compiler of the *Wenxuan*) with Emperor Tenji. Tenji in turn is portrayed as the ideal Confucian ruler of Chinese antiquity. The literati of his time, whose poetry the anthology assembles, feature as “early sages,” an appellation that for Tang Chinese would have pointed to China’s high antiquity, but which belongs to the *Kaifūsō* compiler’s immediate past. Thus, in Nara Japan the “early sages” had lived only decades earlier.

The *Kaifūsō* preface, in underpinning recent Japanese history with the choreography of narratives of Chinese antiquity, spins a double story line that constantly negotiates between the significance of Japanese events and their proposed Chinese symbolic correspondences. However, the Sino-Japanese narrative duet breaks down at two moments. The first is Prince Shōtoku’s promotion of Buddhism (predating Tenji’s Confucian government). In the second, many lives and—as the preface emphasizes—written documents were lost in the destruction of the Jinshin War (672) after the death of Emperor Tenji, during which his half-brother, the later Emperor Temmu, razed Tenji’s flourishing capital at Ōmi. Unlike the *Wenxuan*, the *Kaifūsō* is not a carefully selected, quintessential collection drafted from the height of imperial power, but the painstaking accretion of poetic remainders lamenting the loss of the blissful prewar world under the enlightened rule of Emperor Tenji. “Finely carved essays, lovely brushwork, and there were not just a hundred pieces. But the times brought chaos, everything was reduced to ashes. Once I think of the destruction, I grieve within, sick at heart.”<sup>20</sup> With no corresponding moment from the *Wenxuan* preface at hand, the

19. For a translation of the preface, see David Knechtges, *Wenxuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 73–92.

20. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō*, *Bunka shūreishū*, *Honchō monzui*, p. 60.

compiler jumps far back into the Chinese past and equates the Jinshin War with the Qin burning of books (213 B.C.), one of the most abhorred acts of China's first emperor Qinshi Huangdi: "I have collected these worm-eaten remainders from the walls of Lu, gathered leftover writings from the ashes of Qin." In another ambitious plunge into the grand gestures of Chinese literature, the author of the *Kaifūsō* preface proclaims to have gathered "the leftover airs of the early sages."<sup>21</sup> This expression calls to mind the destruction of Ying, the capital of the state of Chu, by the aggressively expanding state of Qin in 278 B.C. in the *Jiuzhang* (Nine declarations) from the *Chuci* (Songs of Chu, fourth century B.C. through first century A.D.).<sup>22</sup> And it gave the whole collection its name: *Kaifūsō*, a "florilegium of cherished airs of old."

It may be coincidental that no correspondence for Prince Shōtoku's promotion of Buddhism is adduced. However, considering that the preface otherwise evokes Sino-Japanese pairings of events, it may point to a Japanese sense of Buddhism's belatedness in Chinese cultural history: as such, Buddhism may have been banned from the Japanese imagination of Chinese antiquity.

Although the parallels between the prefaces of the *Wenxuan* and *Kaifūsō* have often been pointed out in scholarship, there are substantial differences. There is no genre catalogue in the *Kaifūsō*, the influential distinction between nonliterary texts and those with "flavor of the literary brush" is missing. The careful justification of choices from textual abundance and, most important, the painful consciousness of historical change and the irretrievable remoteness from the "writers of the past" that dominates Xiao Tong's preface are foreign to the *Kaifūsō* preface. Moreover, the Japanese story line capitalizes with great liberty on Chinese symbolic moments from all ages. Tenji can be a mythic sage, the Qin burning of books just a few decades past. In evoking consonances with Chinese cultural history by means of a double narrative, the preface crafts a very suggestive, considerably empowered Japanese story line. It is clever enough to profit from the cultural capital of China's long history while still attempting to create its own narrative of Japanese literary history.

The compilation committee of the *Ryōunshū*, the first in the quick succession of three *kanshi* anthologies commissioned under Emperors Saga (786–842) and Junna (786–840),<sup>23</sup> was headed by Ono no Minemori (777–

21. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

22. Ma Maoyuan, *Chuci zhushi* (Taipei: Wenyi, 1993), pp. 330–46. For a translation, see David Hawkes, *Ch'u tz'u: The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 65–67.

23. For an introduction to the three imperial anthologies (*chokusen shishū*), see Kawaguchi Hisao, *Heianchō Nihon kanbungakushi no kenkyū*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1982–88), pp. 17–33. For detailed comments on the *Ryōunshū* preface in particular, see

830) and Michizane's grandfather, Sugawara no Kiyotomo (770–842), who had been on a diplomatic mission to China and also participated in the compilation of the following anthology, the *Bunka shūreishū* (818). The *Ryōunshū* preface completely neglects the question of literary history that became such a delicate balancing act in the *Kaifūsō* preface. It is decisively “presentist”: “I have assembled some pieces from the recent past.”<sup>24</sup> It features poems from the first year of Enryaku (782) through the fifth year of Kōnin (814). Its declared purpose is to collect poetry in order to immortalize Emperor Saga's era.

Unlike the *Kaifūsō*, which gestures toward a comprehensive history of literature since the beginning of time through its references to the *Wenxuan*, the *Ryōunshū* takes as its blueprint a chapter by Cao Pi (187–226), “Lunwen” (A discourse on literature) from his *Dianlun* (Authoritative discourses). The *Ryōunshū* preface opens with a quote from “Lunwen”:

Your subject Minemori says: King Wen of the Wei dynasty [i.e., Cao Pi] once stated: “I would say that literary works are the supreme achievement in the business of state, a splendor that does not decay. A time will come when a person's life ends; glory and pleasure go no further than this body.”<sup>25</sup>

Cao Pi, the second son of General Cao Cao and later Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty (220–65), reflects on literature, his fear of death and oblivion, and his desire to immortalize himself as a ruler-poet through his literary works.

While the sense of time conveyed in the *Wenxuan* is diachronic, Cao Pi focuses on synchronic aspects of literature: the community of contemporary writers ravaged by jealousy and competition, their respective strengths and weaknesses, the good and bad times they had together, and ultimately the loss of most of them in the terrible epidemic of 217. He is interested not in the chronology, but rather in the pathophysiology of literature: “Literary men disparage one another—it has always been this way.”<sup>26</sup> However, these aspects of Cao Pi's discourse were not so much of interest; Cao Pi's formula of “literature as the supreme achievement in the business of the state” resonated with the literary community at the early Heian court, was reiterated

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Kojima Noriyuki, *Kokufū ankoku jidai no bungaku* (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1968–98), Vol. 3, pp. 1324–45. For the prefaces of the three anthologies, see part three of Hatooka's *Jōdai kanshūbin to Chūgoku bungaku*.

24. Dijitaru Jōhōkyoku, ed., *Gunsho ruijū* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1997), Vol. 123, pp. 449–50.

25. *Gunsho ruijū*, p. 449. The portion of the quotation attributed to King Wen is from the translation by Stephen Owen in *Readings in Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 68.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

in two anthology prefaces, and was even chosen as the title of the third imperial anthology, the *Keikokushū* (827).<sup>27</sup> As imperially commissioned projects, these anthologies seem more focused on immortalizing the magnificence of present rule than on conceiving a literary history for *kanshi*, as the privately compiled *Kaifūsō* attempted.

Cao Pi's presentist, synchronic vision of literature was particularly attractive to the Japanese court community because it projected the image of a cultivated ruler as *primus inter pares* in a circle of poet-courtiers eager to compete for the ruler's attention. It captured a team spirit—if competitive—that was absent from the grand and lonely vision of the *Wenxuan* and the *Kaifūsō* preface, but that specifically developed in the reigns of Emperors Saga and Junna, the great hosts of Sinophile salon culture. This vision was under no pressure to create a venerable story line for the history of *kanshi*, as the *Kaifūsō* did with considerable courage.

The *Bunka shūreishū*, compiled at imperial command by a group around the powerful Northern branch leader Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu (775–826) in 818, also sets aside the question of literary history and focuses on recent production instead. Its preface is the first to pride itself on the abundance of literary production and the difficulty of choice from surplus in the process of compilation. Nakao Ō, who is well represented in all three imperial anthologies although little is known about his career as an official, wrote the preface, and while he sets the collection in the lineage of the *Ryōunshū*, he touts the superiority of the *Bunka shūreishū*: “The *Ryōunshū* was compiled by Ono no Minemori and others. It covers the period from the first year of Enryaku [782] through the fifth year of Kōnin [814] with 92 pieces. Since its compilation, literary composition has gradually evolved. Not four years have passed, and the volumes amount to more than a hundred.”<sup>28</sup> The *Bunka shūreishū* has 143 poems by 28 poets, with roughly one-fifth of the poems by Emperor Saga. The preface evokes a flourishing community of courtiers composing, discussing, and selecting *kanshi*, and proudly advertising the literary fecundity of their age. “Everybody was discussing with each other what to decide on. When it was difficult to settle on selecting or rejecting [a poem], we accepted the wise judgment of the emperor.”<sup>29</sup> It may well have been this abundance that made it necessary to introduce a system of arrangement other than by chronology or rank. The *Bunka shūreishū* is the first *kanshi* anthology arranged by subgeneric categories such as the conventional banquet poetry and poems on history, but also novelties such as Buddhist poetry and Music Bureau Poetry (*yuefushi*, *J. gafushi*)<sup>30</sup> in a more

27. On this issue, see Kojima's *Kokufū ankoku jidai no bungaku*, Vol. 2, pp. 753–71.

28. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui*, pp. 192–95.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

30. Music Bureau Poetry is named after an office established by Emperor Wu of the Han in 117 B.C., which had the task of collecting folk songs and composing music for court rit-

thematic than generic sense. The subgenres are not further noted in the preface, but their use is justified very pragmatically: “everything is arranged by category and topic, because it is easier to read that way.”<sup>31</sup>

In comparison to the two previous anthologies, the *Bunka shūreishū* is extremely carefully arranged. Contrary to what one might expect from a systematic arrangement by subgenre, unity of time and space reigns supreme in the collection. On the level of subgenres, this is particularly obvious in the first volume, which contains poetry composed on imperial outings (*yuran*), banquet poetry (*enshu*), farewell banquet poetry (*senbetsu*), and literary exchanges (*zōtō*). There is a vaguely chronological story line in the order of the subgenres in the collection: one goes on an “imperial outing,” where everybody is “banqueting.” Often it is a “farewell banquet” honoring dignitaries or diplomatic envoys, for whom one again composes poetry when sending them off. Within the subgenres, poems are carefully grouped physically, namely, as transcripts of social occasions of composition in which the emperor (and his poem) would naturally take the lead. These snapshots of outings produced much popular and light verse in the collection, almost colloquial heptasyllabic songs of boudoir lament. Thus, the collection does not present itself as the quintessential selection of literary production under Emperor Saga. Rather, it leads the reader from one court spectacle to another and juxtaposes poems from the same occasions for comparative appraisal. It functions, in short, as a poetic guide to Saga’s court.

Quite unlike the casualness of Tang practices of compilation and anthologyization, the careful crafting of the *Bunka shūreishū* compels the reader to consider its meticulous arrangement as a narrative of its own. The interstices between the poems tell an underlying narrative, a narrative in some ways critical of Saga’s dominant role in the compilation. In its obsession with juxtaposition and interstitial narrative, which the reader must actively spin out on his own, the *Bunka shūreishū* prefigures *waka* collections to come.<sup>32</sup> References in the preface to the previous anthology, the use of subgeneric categories, as well as discussion of aesthetic values and technical points of tonality rules made the *Bunka shūreishū* a significant step toward a tradition of imperial *kanshi* compilation, a tradition that ended in the ninth century.

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uals. Yet it encompasses a mixed corpus of poetry with often irregular meters, supposedly composed to preexisting tunes now lost, and set topics about the human condition such as love and separation, life and death, joy and sorrow. For an excellent treatment of Music Bureau Poetry as persona poetry, see Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992).

31. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui*, p. 195.

32. That is, there are signs in the *Bunka shūreishū* of principles such as association and progression that shaped the compilation of later imperial *waka* collections.

The *Bunka shūreishū* and the *Ryōunshū* are connected to the third imperial collection, the *Keikokushū*, by the title of the latter, which advertises the agenda of Cao Pi's "Lunwen." However, this anthology, compiled by a team headed by Prince Yoshimine no Yasuyo (785–830, son of Emperor Kammu), and Shigeno no Sadanushi (785–852), does not adopt a synchronic view on literature but returns to the diachronic preoccupation of the *Kaifūsō* preface and creation of a venerable time line of literary history. Shigeno no Sadanushi, an adviser in the Council of State and thus a high-ranking official, decides in his preface to the anthology against the double-voiced solution, which the unknown but self-declaredly "low-ranking" official compiler of the *Kaifūsō* had developed. Instead, he "naturalizes" the Chinese time line of literary history. Under this disguise of "Japan as China," the difference between Chinese poetry and Japanese *kanshi* is made invisible. There is no need to conflate the Jinshin War with the Qin burning of books, or to fashion Emperor Tenji into a mythical archaic Chinese sage. In the *Keikokushū*, the literary history of *kanshi* composition is monologic, though compelling, mimicry.

The naturalization of Chinese temporal narratives happens only in this third imperial anthology, which is by far the most monumental and ambitious collection: 178 authors represented by over a thousand pieces. Also, the generic range has expanded from the *shi* poetry of previous anthologies to include genres such as rhapsodies (*fu*), poetry prefaces (*jo*), and examination essays (*taisaku*).<sup>33</sup>

In the preface, Cao Pi and his "Lunwen" feature prominently, but this time they are placed within a larger historical time line. The preface's story begins in "ancient times," when officials went around the country collecting poetry among the people, to negotiate between popular will and imperial command.<sup>34</sup> In these times, in the words of *Analects* 6.18, pattern/literature and substance were in balance and writing was used to transform the people and order human relations. According to the preface, literary men emerged throughout the Chu-Han period, but with the Eastern Han scholar Yang Xiong (53 B.C.–A.D.18) and the "stupidity of his *Model Words* [*Fayan*]," the "real Way," the textual utopia of balance between ornament and substance, was destroyed.<sup>35</sup> Cao Pi restored this balance gloriously with his "Lunwen" and patronized literature as a major endeavor of the state. However, the *Keikokushū* preface deplors that during the Qi and Liang dynasties (479–

33. The preface states that the *Keikokushū* originally contained 17 *fu*, 917 *shi* poems, 51 poetry prefaces, and 38 essays in 20 chapters. However, only six chapters survive. Unfortunately, all prefaces are lost, a genre that gained overwhelming importance in the tenth through twelfth centuries, as can be seen in the numerous preface pieces preserved in the *Honchō monzui* (circa 1058).

34. *Gunsho ruijū*, Vol. 125, p. 490.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 490.

557), “inspiration and backbone” were lost so that correct standards of literary composition of the Northern Zhou (557–81) and Sui dynasty (581–617) were lost again.

There are obviously curious moments in this account. Periodization is idiosyncratic: there seems to be a particular interest in liminal periods such as Chu-Han and Zhou-Sui. Chu-Han refers to the short intermezzo between the Qin (221–207 B.C.) and Western Han dynasties (206 B.C.-A.D. 8), when Liu Bang, the later Emperor Gaozu of the Han, and Xiang Yu from Chu fought over precedence. Zhou-Sui is an alternative appellation of the late Six Dynasties period and the transition to the Tang reunification under the Sui (581–618), claiming continuity with the Northern, not, as usual, the Southern dynastic line. There seems to be a heightened awareness and desire to emphasize Chinese dynastic shifts in the preface to the *Keikokushū*. The resentment against the brilliant rhapsody writer and scholar Yang Xiong seems rather odd, in particular because he is traditionally criticized—and criticized himself—for his opulent rhapsodies, not for his archaizing remake of Confucius’s *Analects* under the title *Fayan*. However, the traditional Chinese story line of the flourishing and decline of literature because of overornateness as well as the inclusion of exclusively Chinese figures in a preface to an exclusively Japanese anthology speaks to the complete naturalization of Chinese temporal narratives for the purpose of writing Japanese literary history.

#### *Gestures of Textual Reenactment and Court Performance*

Arguably one of the most articulate remainders from the past, texts constitute a vital link to the imagination of the past as it relates to the present. They can be reappropriated in various ways: hermeneutically through exegesis and commentary on the received texts, iconographically through the continuation or contestation of generic and thematic conventions in newly created texts, and performatively by reenacting the received texts while claiming the authority of previous speakers.

I argue that Nara and early Heian *kanshi* poets were creative in appropriating Chinese culture performatively by reenacting significant gestures, in particular from Chinese classical texts, and representing this reenactment in their compositions. The textual heritage from Chinese antiquity became a blueprint, almost a theater repertoire from which to choose for the occasion at hand.

Literary production of *kanshi* in Heian Japan was closely related to the rhythms of court activities: celebrations according to the ritual cycle, anniversaries, banquets for foreign dignitaries, etc. Therefore, it is not surprising that gestures for ritual and courtly occasions were most likely to be appropriated through creative reenactment. We could call reenactment the

default mode of ritual poetry: composed within a setting of ceremony based on scriptures, the revivification of the text guarantees the efficiency of the ceremony in question. Only the bridging of the temporal gap between written scripture from the past and the repetition of its content in a ritual of the present gives relevance and renewed potency to the ceremony.

A ritual of particular importance since early times still celebrated today is the *sekiten* ceremony (memorial rites for Confucius), performed in the second and eighth months.<sup>36</sup> Earliest mention of the ritual is found in the *Liji* (Book of rites), but without particular reference to Confucius. In China, the sumptuous ceremony was preceded by several days of purification and started with a lecture from the classics and a formal discussion with the heir apparent, which were then followed by a ceremony and banquet at which poems on passages from the classics were composed. The poetic banquet was the more informal part of the ceremony when people relaxed after days of austere ritual celebration. Though practiced in the Six Dynasties period, the poetic banquet was abandoned in Tang China. In Japan, the practice was first mentioned in the *Nihongi* in 701. With occasional changes and revitalizations, the custom of poetic banquets survived through the centuries and, surprisingly, enjoyed much more durable popularity in Japan than in China. Travelers and envoys to Tang China either did not know or did not care that the practice had long since fallen extinct in its country of origin.

Although poems composed at the Rites for Confucius have survived in numerous collections, the poems of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) may serve as an interesting case in point. The ten *sekiten* poems in his personal collection *Kanke bunsō* date from the years 868–95. Most were written by the early 870s, while Michizane was studying at the State Academy.<sup>37</sup> The *sekiten* poetic banquets were apparently considered a competing ground for students and emerging poets. The poems composed during the *sekiten* refer to classical passages but show little interest in elaborating an interpretation. They are not hermeneutical. Instead, they conflate past text and present situation as much as possible and transform ideas and concepts of teachings into objects for display. In one example, pearls, a metaphor already used in the *Analects* themselves, are the favorite incarnation of Confucian teachings; Mount Ni (Niqiu), a pun mixing Confucius's adult name Zhongni and his personal name Qiu, is planted right before the Japanese banquet audience for humble contemplation:

36. In this paragraph I rely on the excellent article by I. J. McMullen, "The Worship of Confucius in Ancient Japan," in P. Kornicki and I. J. McMullen, eds., *Religion in Japan: Arrows to Heaven and Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 39–77.

37. For the biographical context of Michizane's *sekiten* poetry during his student years, see Robert Borgen's commanding study *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 88–112.



Spring Memorial Rites for Confucius: after the rites were over, the courtiers assembled in the [Academy's] Lecture Hall<sup>38</sup> and heard a lecture on the *Liji*.

After the rites [*li*] are over we again listen to the *Rites* [*Li*, an abbreviated name for the *Liji*]

And establish (Confucius's) majesty once more.

Though the guest hall is already an old edifice,

Its cinnabar and emerald green still stir new feelings.

In bending its knees when drinking, the little goat shows that he knows his mother;

In flying in the proper formation, the little goose shows that he knows his elder kin.

Mount Ni/Confucius is thousands of meters tall,

Thus, we look up high and wish to praise Confucius's name.<sup>39</sup>

Classical text and present situation are conflated through puns: the celebrated ritual is simultaneously the *Liji* and Confucius is Mount Ni, to which the celebrating community looks up in awe, acting like Confucius's favorite disciple Yan Yuan in *Analects* 9:11: "The more I look up at it the higher it appears. The more I bore into it the harder it becomes. I see it before me. Suddenly it is behind me. The Master is good at leading one on step by step. He broadens me with culture and brings me back to essentials by means of the rites."<sup>40</sup> Confucius's person, his utterances, and Mount Ni merge into one object for veneration. Thus, even old edifices stir new feelings, and the ritual act of presenting Confucius to the Heian court community rejoins Chinese antiquity in the middle of Heian-kyō.

Another poem by Michizane builds up an entire imaginary landscape of Qufu, Confucius's hometown, just to have the audience again gaze reverently at Mount Ni, the object of ritual worship:

Spring Memorial Rites for Confucius: when hearing a lecture on the *Analects*.

The teachings of the Sage are not just one,

But from a single stream myriad rivers are drawn.

Like pearls they originate from the Zhu River,

While the bolts [of one's wheel] can be taken out at Confucius's door.<sup>41</sup>

Who would be far off, when asking about the Way,

Hurrying through the courtyard, nobody will halt for a single moment.

38. The Lecture Hall was in the Monjōin, originally the dormitory for students in the Literature Curriculum (*monjōdō*), which by the late eighth century had become a semiprivate educational institution operated by the Sugawara and Ōe families.

39. Kawaguchi Hisao, ed., *Kanke bunsō*, NKBT, Vol. 72, No. 14 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966). For another translation, see Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane*, p. 96.

40. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, p. 97.

41. This would be done to prevent one from leaving the master.

In this very moment we look up to examine things  
And in the distance gaze at Mount Ni/Confucius of Lu.<sup>42</sup>

We enter Qufu's surroundings through the text of the *Analects* itself, the single "stream" of Confucius's teachings which branches into "myriad rivers." One of these rivers, the Zhu, goes right behind Confucius's home and is homophonous with the "pearls," the precious embodiment of Confucian doctrine. Playing on multiplicity of effect and unity of origin, Confucius's teachings are both origin and outcome of the Zhu River in a text-generated circular landscape. In the third couplet, the river leads us closer to Confucius's home, where we can ask about the Way in a practical and philosophical sense and where—acting as the master's son—we hurry through the courtyard as in *Analects* 16.13:

Another day, my father was again standing by himself. As I crossed the courtyard with quickened steps, he said, "Have you studied the rites [*Shijing*]?" I answered, "No." "Unless you study the rites you will be ill-equipped to take your stand." I retired and studied the rites.<sup>43</sup>

Having penetrated deeply into Confucius's private surroundings, the last couplet shies away from almost voyeurist intimacy and reinstalls the visitors from Heian Japan at a proper distance from the object of their reverence: as in the previous poem, the audience ends in the posture of the disciple Yan Yuan gazing at Confucius's unfathomable mountainous incarnation.

Apart from showing devotion to state-sponsored Confucianism through the veneration of Confucian requisites, poems composed at the *sekiten* could easily turn the praise of Confucian writings into a eulogy of the Japanese emperor's implementation of these texts in his role as a Confucian monarch:

Spring Memorial Rites for Confucius: when hearing a lecture on the *Analects* and jointly composing on the topic "governing by virtue."

The myriad devices of Your Majesty's governance  
Are all in this one classic,  
And, since Your Majesty came to the throne,  
You have not forgotten how he started [his studies under the light of] entrapped fireflies<sup>44</sup>

42. Kawaguchi, ed., *Kanke bunsō*, No. 23.

43. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, p. 141.

44. This refers to the famously eager students Sun Kang and Che Yin, who were too poor to buy lamp oil. Sun Kang managed to study late at night by catching moonlight reflected off the snow, while Che Yin caught fireflies in a bag to light his books. Both embody hard and relentless study. The anecdote features in the *Mengqiu* (J. *Mōgyū*), which—besides the *Qianziwen* (Thousand character classic) and the *Baiershi yong* (120 stanzas)—was a major primer for elementary *kanbun* education in Heian Japan.

Since you possess the virtue of nonaction  
 As the polestar high up there  
 I wonder whether his bright pearls  
 Are the cohort of stars.<sup>45</sup>

The first couplet makes the *Analects* into the underlying script of Emperor Uda's wise statecraft, thanks to which he can assume the central role of the polestar in the universe as in *Analects* 2.1: "The rule of virtue can be compared to the Pole Star which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place."<sup>46</sup> The Japanese emperor resides as the polestar in the middle of the sky, around which the "bright pearls" of Confucian teachings and scholars assemble in the famous "nonaction," for which Emperor Tenji was hailed in the preface to the *Kaifūsō*. As already pointed out, the poems composed during the *sekiten* are not exegetical, let alone scholastic, but represent how the emperor and his courtiers reenact Chinese texts in actual or allegorical landscapes made of Confucian requisites. They embody the master himself and his teachings, which are visualized as objects for ritual display in a spectacle of effective presence and continuity through cyclic repetition: though unfathomable, Confucius is just around the corner; we can move in his courtyard and touch the "pearls" of his teachings.

Spectacles of presence and continuity are, as mentioned, the default mode of ritual poetry, which has to shuttle between scriptural past and present ritual. Thus, there may be nothing specific to the way Japanese ritual poetry refers to Chinese classical texts. However, I argue that the particular joy of this role play, in which Heian courtiers could imagine themselves as neighbors and contemporaries of Confucius, is noteworthy and may be one important reason for the unusual persistence of the practice of composing poetry at the *sekiten* in Japan in contrast to its disappearance in China.

Much more than *shi* poetry, the genre of rhapsodies (*fu*) had a long history of institutional involvement in China: starting as court entertainment under the Han dynasty, it became a required examination genre under the Tang. As such, it should have been attractive to Heian courtiers composing within the framework of imperial grace and courtly decorum. However, the genre of rhapsodies had a late and rather short history in Heian Japan. Although Japan scholars tend to emphasize the authoritative influence of the *Wenxuan* on the early anthologies, its most prominent genre, namely rhapsodies, appears only as late as the fourth anthology, the *Keikokushū*. A few more appear in the *Honchō monzui* and in the *Honchō zoku monzui*, but, unless our record is completely unrepresentative, the rhapsody never developed into a mainstream genre.

45. Kawaguchi, ed., *Kanke bunsō*, No. 382.

46. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, p. 63.

There is much scholarly dispute over why rhapsody composition never fully developed in Japan. Tasaka Junko believes that the little sociopolitical importance and quick decline of the examination system in Japan—the system was never an efficient way of social advancement, but rather a training place for future China ambassadors, literati, and poets—quickly aborted the practice of rhapsody writing.<sup>47</sup> Kawaguchi Hisao suggests that the genre was rapidly replaced by the increasingly popular genres of poetic preface (*shijo*) and memoir (*ki*).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, not only was it a challenge to both the poet and his audience due to the genre's lexical copiousness and hypotrophic diction (as well as its eventful generic history in contrast to *shi* poetry), but more important, rhapsodies did not have a clearly discernible social arena in Heian Japan that would have supported the building of a tradition. *Shi* poetry was everywhere: at diplomatic banquets, at court entertainments and outings, at celebrations along the annual ritual cycle. The place of rhapsodies in the literary landscape of the Heian court is much less clear, which may be attributable to the lack of sources, but could also explain why the genre never really caught on in Japan.

Tasaka tries to make a strong case that rhapsodies indeed figured in the examinations, claiming that they first became a required topic in 820. Unlike the parallel rhapsodies (*paifu*) from the *Keikokushū*, the pieces in the *Honchō monzui* clearly show the formal features of regulated rhapsodies (*lüfu*) required in the Chinese examination system: the pieces are preceded by indications on rhyme, where the rhyme words add up to a passage from the classics, and by a length indication (*tixia xianyun*), ranging mostly between 300 and 500 words.<sup>49</sup>

Whether this aesthetic convention, which in China coincides with the emergence of examination rhapsody composition, necessarily suggests that rhapsodies figured in the Japanese exam agenda is questionable. But here is an example from Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* of how the exam situation of composing on a given topic from the classics within the conventions of the regulated rhapsody could be transformed into Heian court entertainment for the emperor:

A rhapsody on “searching for one's clothes before dawn”

Rhyming on “thinking about governance on an autumn night and on how to save the people.” A composition of fewer than 300 words.

47. Tasaka Junko, “Heian jidai ni okeru fu no hensen,” in *Wakan Hikaku Bungakkai*, ed., *Wakan hikaku bungaku kenkyū no shomondai* (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1988).

48. Kawaguchi Hisao, *Heianchō no kanbungaku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1981), p. 213.

49. On Chinese examination rhapsodies, see the first part of Zheng Jianxing's *Keju kaoshi wenti lungao: Fu yu baguwen* (Taipei: Taiwan Shudian, 1999).

In the year 890 on the twelfth day of the twelfth month the son of Heaven called in 12 academicians for an audience in the palace and gave the following order:

“Since rhapsodies are a strand of old *shi* poetry,  
 And *shi* poetry is what the mind aspires to,  
 Each of you should present a piece and fully speak his mind.  
 The *shi* poem, the rhapsody, their passages and wording  
 Do not need to have the stirring of wind and clouds  
 Or to equal a diction stretching to the Milky Way.  
 Using the topic of ‘searching for one’s clothes before dawn,’ you should elaborate on how the ruler of mankind reflects on the Ways of governance  
 And using the topic of ‘cold rime on late chrysanthemums,’ you should express how the servants of mankind proceed in their feelings of honesty.”  
 All officials received the order respectfully, rose from their seats, and started disputing:  
 “How awe-inspiring, how brilliant, how sumptuous, how melodious!  
 This is what the ancients called ‘going to ask the woodcutters and inquiring with servants.’” . . .  
 Following after the nobles and climbing up high, your simple-minded servant dares to present this piece.<sup>50</sup>

Michizane stages a perfect history play: the Japanese emperor, in the guise of the king of Chu or Emperor Wu of the Han, has his courtiers compose a rhapsody for his edification and instruction in statecraft. He issues the order in the words of early poetics, linking *shi* poetry and rhapsody composition and thereby his request for both a rhapsody and a *shi* poem. This is a historical collage: a Han emperor could only ask for a rhapsody, a Tang emperor would probably ask for a *shi* poem, but the Japanese emperor could do both. The setting (*ba*) radiates the atmosphere of court entertainment, while the topic selected for the rhapsody is, like the topics for Tang-dynasty examination pieces, selected from the classics, in this case from the *Shijing* and the *Hanshu* (Han history) compiled by Ban Gu (32–92).

The reaction of the courtiers to the request transports us from the Tang examination topic to an archaic, almost parodic highbrow diction of accumulated praise words: “how awe-inspiring,” “how brilliant,” and so forth is a highly artificial staging of an imagined archaic Chinese vernacular recreated from eulogistic binoms in the *Shijing* and Han dynasty rhapsodies preserved in the *Wenxuan*. The courtiers do all they can to make the history play convincing. For a moment they play the roles of uncorrupted woodcut-

50. Kawaguchi, ed., *Kanke bunsō*, No. 516. See also Kakimura Shigematsu, *Honchō monzui chūshaku* (Tokyo: Naigai Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1922), Vol. 1, pp. 51–53.

ters and servants before the emperor, who asks for their advice in questions of statecraft. The belief in the pristine and intuitive wisdom of commoners is part of the poetics that revolved around the “Feng” (Airs) section of the *Shijing*, which according to traditional belief had been compiled from transcripts of folk poetry collected by officials touring the country and asking the commoners for their concerns and worries. As under the monarchies of eighteenth-century Europe, playing the role of uncorrupted woodcutters in an aristocratic court setting possessed a particular bucolic charm, quite apart from the Confucian undertones of pastoral concern for the populace. The humble role is quickly interchanged again with an aristocratic profile: according to the *Yiwenzhi* (Bibliographic treatise) from the *Hanshu*, “if you climb up high and can recite a rhapsody, you can be called a noble person.”<sup>51</sup> In order to create the ideal conditions for being both a noble and doing well at rhapsody composition, Michizane and his fellow courtiers “climb up” to deliver their recitations in front of the emperor. As we can see, the historical spectacle oscillates between archaic diction, potent poetic gestures, present court entertainment, and formal requirements of exam rhapsody composition. Michizane’s piece demonstrates the versatility with which *kanshi* poets could make the Zhou, Han, and Tang coexist in one and the same literary space without the reek of aesthetic anachronism. Since they did not assemble a collage of their own history, there was nothing they could have felt anachronistic about.

Textual reenactment becomes especially interesting once the assumption of a Chinese role evokes hierarchies of power. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the Japanese court projected the Chinese diplomatic geography of major vassals, minor vassals, and barbarians onto its own territory, where Silla and Parhae were to play the role of major vassals, and peoples such as the Ebisu were invested with the role of barbarians.<sup>52</sup> However, in the diplomatic hierarchy of Tang China, the Japanese, to their great dismay, ranked as barbarians behind Parhae and Silla, which were recognized as major vassals, as were Vietnam and Tibet. The contradictory status of the Korean states in Chinese versus Japanese diplomacy made it all the more desirable for the Japanese to imagine themselves in a central position of power by assuming the symbolic top of Chinese diplomatic hierarchy. Thus, in the poetry composed at banquets for envoys from Korea, they reenacted odes from the *Shijing* which, according to orthodox interpretation, were

51. See Ban Gu, *Hanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957), chapter 30, p. 1755.

52. For the history of early Japanese foreign relations, see van Verschuier, *Les relations officielles*. See also Niizuma Toshihisa, *Bokkai kokushi oyobi Nihon to no kokkōshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tenki Daigaku Shuppanyoku, 1969), and Ueda Takeshi, *Bokkaijoku no nazo* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992).

sung at the Zhou court when subservient feudal lords were received. While feasting at a recreated Zhou court in Heian-kyō, the humiliating superiority of the Korean subjects at the Chinese court could easily be overturned symbolically.

Poems were usually composed at farewell banquets for foreign dignitaries. They focus on the delights of the party as well as on the sadness of separation, parting, and travel. The composition and celebration of these poems must have been, despite their formal nature, one of the few intimate moments of very close intellectual exchange when intermediaries such as translators were less necessary and Japanese and Koreans could each appreciate the other's aesthetic achievements, at least in written form.<sup>53</sup> This poetry drew on Chinese tropes of parting from the (probably) Eastern Han *Gushi shijiu shou* (Nineteen old poems), the earliest pentasyllabic Chinese verse, and also from early *yuefushi*, which features lovers lamenting their separation and lonely women. Such resonances suffused the official setting with a suggestive intimacy. In general, poetry composed at banquets for diplomatic envoys shows an interesting blend of intimacy, erudite showing off, diplomatic tact, and eulogistic propriety. Japanese courtiers often invoke in their poems not only the luxury and exuberance of the present banquet in honor of the foreign guests, but also outdo each other in matters Chinese. In the poem “Shūjitsu Chōō ga ie ni shite Shiragi no marahito wo utagesu” (Banquet for the Ambassador of Silla at the mansion of Prince Nagaya on an autumn day), Yamada no Fubito Mikata, who had headed the State Academy, praises the generosity of Prince Nagaya, the host of the semiofficial banquet. After describing the opulence of food and music, the stimulating conversation, and the surprising sense of community, he continues:

When the day turned to dusk  
 And the moon was about to emerge,  
 He made us drunk on the “Five Thousand Words” [*Daodejing*],  
 As dancers stamped in a place satiated with virtue;  
 He broadened us with the “Three Hundred Poems” [*Shijing*]  
 Where we, running wild, expressed our intentions.  
 So I asked to  
 Write of West Garden saunters<sup>54</sup>

53. It is hard to know whether the poems were circulated in written form or read out in something approaching Chinese pronunciation. We can assume that academy students in Japan had to learn Chinese-style pronunciation until the ninth or tenth century. Thereafter, the decrease of physical interaction with the continent, the rise of private family schools, and the emergence of *kundoku* reading methods resulted in a decline of the Chinese-style pronunciation skills of Japanese students.

54. This echoes the situation in which Cao Zhi (192–232) and Cao Pi composed poetry while banqueting at the West Garden.

And to tell of South Bank parting.<sup>55</sup>  
 With brush in hand I shook out word blossoms,  
 As I tried to praise them [the envoys] with lofty airs.<sup>56</sup>

This banquet is not just for fun. The speaker praises the host for making his guests drunk on the “Five Thousand Words” of the *Daodejing* (fourth to third century B.C.) and applauds the dancers for stamping on a place “satiated with virtue.” The speaker plays the role of the guests by thanking the Zhou king for a great party in the Great Ode “Jizui” (You make us drunk) from the *Shijing*: “You make us drunk on wine and satiate us with virtue. May you enjoy, o our lord, myriad years! May your bright happiness be increased forever.”<sup>57</sup> The host also “broadens” his guests with the “Three Hundred Poems” of the *Shijing* as Confucius “broadens” his disciple Yan Yuan with “culture/writing” (*wen*) in *Analects* 9:11.

This banquet scene presents itself as a serious lesson in Chinese culture, delivered by a Japanese courtier to the Japanese host for the edification of the Silla envoys. Accordingly, the guests do not write light party pieces, but instead compose archaic “lofty airs” in the spirit of the *Shijing* and comply with the extremely influential poetological demand in its Great Preface, which became the dominant vision of the process of poetic composition in China, namely, to “express their intentions [*zhi*].”

In a poem by Sena no Kimi no Yukifumi, a teacher at the State Academy, guests and host even sing the “Xiaoya” (Lesser odes) from the *Shijing*, which start with the banquet poem *par excellence* “Luming” (Deer cry), with which the Zhou king reputedly entertained his vassals on their regular visits:

In praise of our guests, we intone the “Xiaoya”;  
 We unroll our mats, praise the great unity.  
 We examine the current, let loose our sea of brushes;  
 Climb through cassia branches, ascend the forest of talk.<sup>58</sup>

In all of the *Quan Tang shi* (Complete Tang poetry), there are very few references to the “Xiaoya.” Those instances predominantly refer to them as a classical model and subject of study from the remote past. The odes are not performed and enacted, as here in a situation of diplomatic intercourse.

55. This refers to parting in the song “He Bo” (Earl of the river) from the “Jiuge” (Nine songs) in the *Chuci* (Songs of Chu). See Ma Maoyuan’s *Chuci zhushi*, p. 170, and David Hawkes’s *Ch’u tz’u*, p. 42.

56. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui*, No. 52.

57. My translation benefits from James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. IV: The She King* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893–95), pp. 475–78.

58. Kojima, ed., *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui*, No. 60. In China, receiving cassia branches was a symbol for success in exams. This success was little helpful in advancing one’s career in Japan, but as the use of the trope in this poem shows, it was at least poetically desirable.



Possibly, *shi* poetry in the style of the *Shijing* had become too distant from its contemporary offspring, the regulated *shi* poetry (*lüshi*) of the Tang, to constitute a living part of its living “creative” canon. For Japanese *kanshi* poets, however, unaware of or indifferent as they may have been toward the linguistic and generic compartmentalization of the Chinese canon, gestures from the *Shijing* could be reappropriated in current poetic practice and, what had in China become a closed venue, could be reopened and mobilized to eulogize foreign guests, but could also be used as attributions of political status.

### Conclusion

How did cultural exchange between China and early Japan happen? Who were the agents, who the recipients? How important was interpersonal contact as opposed to negotiation through written media? Did elements appropriated from China remain foreign and to what degree, or did they enter so quickly that Japanese believed them to be their own? What functions did the rhetoric of foreignness assume in Japan? How did imagined foreignness and the actual influx of new objects and information from China interfere with each other? Such broad questions of courageous naïveté are crucial for the study of cultural contact between early Japan and China.

The analysis of temporal narratives in prefaces of poetic anthologies should draw attention to the broad spectrum of strategies of appropriation ranging from ostentatious display of foreignness and exoticism to the complete naturalization of things Chinese. Within this spectrum, I have paid particular attention to processes of reenactment and clandestine incorporation of the foreign into the imagination of the indigenous. The polarizing processes of appropriation, which are easy to identify and argue for because they lie on the textual surface, have received abundant attention in the study of cultural exchange between China and early Japan. I introduced the concept of reenactment, that is, the performative recreation of Chinese texts, in order to stimulate the search for a different topography of the Chinese versus the Sino-Japanese literary canon. Idiosyncrasies in the selection of preferred authors are often pointed out in scholarship on the reception of the Chinese canon in Japan: the great prominence of Bo Juyi at the expense of Du Fu and also Li Bai, or the unreasonable highlighting of what from a Chinese perspective appeared to be minor and obscure Chinese poets.<sup>59</sup> I identified a distinction between creative and bookish canons in order to highlight the process rather than the results of appropriation and in order to show that

59. Ivo Smits gives a compelling picture of the idiosyncrasies of Heian taste regarding Chinese poetry in chapter three of his *Pursuit of Loneliness: Chinese and Japanese Nature Poetry in Medieval Japan* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995).

Heian *kanshi* poets reopened venues in their poetry that had long since become part of the bookish canon for Tang poets. Their work consequently differed from the decorum of Tang poetic practice.

To sketch the different topography of the Chinese versus the Sino-Japanese creative canon, many things have to be considered: the bipolar psychology of admiration versus reflexive self-defense due to feelings of inferiority, the development of an indigenous *kanshi* tradition beginning in the mid-Heian period, the constant tension between conflating Chinese and Japanese *kanbun* traditions and polarizing the indigenous against the foreign, the different accessibility of creative and closed canons, and, above all, the amazing discontinuity of *kanshi* traditions in Japan.

Despite the multiplicity and change of the poetic canon in China, its continuity lies in its constant renegotiation. In contrast, the history of Japanese *kanshi* composition is one of discontinuity, nonaccumulation, and episodic relapses. Scholarship, however, often tends to emphasize continuity. Modern annotation practice of *kanshi* never refrains from painstakingly pointing out every allusion to the *Wenxuan*, blindly assuming an unproblematic transference of meaning from Tang China to Heian Japan. Even the very fruitful assumption that an exact tracing of Chinese and Korean book imports will reveal the secrets of the selective Japanese literary taste pursues the chimera of grasping a continuity, at least one of influence and not of the dynamics of inner Japanese developments.

Recently, there has been considerable interest in the formation of the literary canon in both Chinese and Japanese tradition.<sup>60</sup> The study of Chinese canon formation will affect studies of cross-cultural exchange within East Asia in contradictory ways. Inevitably, the authority of the Chinese “golden measure” will be reinforced, leaving the Japanese and other East Asian *kan-shibun* traditions to appear all the more eclectic and parochial. Depending on the critics’ sympathies for either centers or peripheries, competing attitudes will prevail; put bluntly, “Sinocentrics” will belabor the misunderstandings and shortcomings in the Japanese understanding of Chinese liter-

60. Examples from a growing body of scholarship include: Mark Francis, “Canon Formation in Traditional Chinese Poetry: Chinese Canons, Sacred and Profane,” in Yingjin Zhang, ed., *China in a Polycentric World: Essays in Chinese Comparative Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Pauline Yu, “Canon Formation in Late Imperial China,” in Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu, eds., *Culture and State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Kang-I Sun Chang, “Liu Xie’s Idea of Canonicity,” in Zong-qi Cai, ed., *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in Wenxin Diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). For the Japanese side, see Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, eds., *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), and Irmela Hijjya-Kirschner, ed., *Canon and Cultural Identity: Japanese Modernization Reconsidered* (Munich: Iudicium, 2000).

ature and in *kanshibun* compositions, while “Sinocentrifugalists” will not tire of praising the creative ingenuity of Japanese writers in the light of the ever-present Chinese shadow. However, concomitantly, the appreciation of the independence of these secondary traditions will increase proportionally. Acknowledging their independence requires some serious rethinking of the nature of premodern cultural interaction between China and the rest of East Asia. It forces us to move away from rather mechanical models of influencing versus influenced cultures, creation versus reception, expression versus imitation. The theoretical consensus to move toward appreciating independence will have to be reflected in suggestive close readings of *kanshibun* texts. What does it take to do it? A lot of border-crossing efforts. For the Sinologist, it takes the training of a literary anatomist with a taste for structures and the marvelous pathology of creativity far from the Chinese center of gravity. For the Japanologist, it takes the meticulous curiosity of a physiologist who wants to understand the working of Sino-Japanese alter egos within the living texture of Japanese cultural history. If they influence each other enough, much can be achieved.

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