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Introduction: writing, literacy, and the origins of Japanese literature

DAVID LURIE

Numerous problems of definition and scope confront any survey of the beginnings of Japanese literature. We obviously have no direct access to the stories and songs that circulated before the advent of writing. Some features of this preliterate world can be extrapolated from later sources, but this is difficult to do with any confidence because the writers of many early texts deliberately engineer an impression of orality. In poetry – both vernacular (*uta*) and Chinese-style (*shi*) – it is also difficult to separate the mid to late eighth-century anthologies (the *Kaifūsō* and the *Man'yōshū*) from the historical milieux in which the poetry they collect was first composed and appreciated. Scholars are interested in the unfolding of particular genres, motifs, and techniques, but these anthologies themselves were shaped to present their own selective and tendentious versions of such literary histories. Similar difficulties pertain to prose, but in that case there is also the larger problem of delineating the literary from other types of writing. Literate elites of the eighth century devoted as much or more time to studying, composing, and commenting on Confucian, Buddhist, technical, and legal writings as they did to appreciating the rather small subset of prose works that are now considered to be part of the canon of Nara period classics: the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712), *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720), and the *fudoki* gazetteers.

For all periods of premodern Japanese literature – and indeed, for all premodern literatures – what survives is only a portion of the writings that were produced, but this situation is more extreme for the Nara and early Heian periods than for any subsequent point in Japanese history. The circumstances of the fudoki make this abundantly clear. Five survive as integral texts, only one of which is complete (that for Izumo Province). The early eighth-century order that called for the production of these works was directed at all of the provinces, of which there were then about sixty, and quoted fragments survive from gazetteers for around forty of them.

If the lower figure reflects the number actually composed, only about 12 percent of the fudoki survive; actually it is probably closer to 10 percent. Such high attrition is connected to the uncanonized status of these texts in Heian and medieval Japan, but similar proportions of other genres met the same fate. The *Man'yōshū* (Collection of Myriad Leaves, *c.* 759) refers to older poetry collections as sources (citing a half dozen by name), but none survives; the prefaces to the *Kojiki* and the *Kaifūsō* (Florilegium of Cherished Airs, 751) mention lost works, as does the *Nihon shoki*; and the content of the *Nihon shoki* itself shows that it drew on various sources, none of which is extant. Considering the broader situation down through the end of the Heian period, approximately two thirds of the titles mentioned in the *Honchō shojaku mokuroku* (a late thirteenth-century bibliography) no longer exist. Statistics like these remind us that there is ample reason to be skeptical of literary-historical generalizations based on extant works.

But such limitations, again, pertain to any premodern society, and comparatively the literature of early Japan is rather better known than that of many other ancient traditions. Extensive works like the *Nihon shoki* and *Man'yōshū* survive intact, and, to the best that we can ascertain, the extant sources are representative of the range and variety of early writings. One reason for the relative accessibility of ancient Japanese literature is the speed with which it emerged: only about three generations separate the advent of widespread literacy, in the mid seventh century, from the composition of the oldest extant works in the early eighth century.

The first appearance of writing in the Japanese archipelago was much earlier: inscriptions in Chinese characters on imported artifacts (mostly coins and mirrors) are found starting around the last century BCE, in the late Yayoi period. The first substantial inscriptions that were domestically produced date to the fifth century CE, in the Tomb period, but there is no evidence that significant numbers of people were able to read or write. Until the mid seventh century literacy remained the province of specialist scribes – migrants from the Korean peninsula and their descendants – who were employed by the Yamato Kings, rulers from the area of modern Nara and Osaka who presided over a loose federation of local potentates spanning the archipelago from Northern Kyushu to the Kantō region. The importation of Buddhism in the mid to late sixth century introduced new kinds of texts and new modes of literacy, but these too remained narrow, specialized pursuits. Writing had little meaning for a population to whom it was still just a talismanically powerful symbol, to the extent that it mattered at all. (Subsequent myth-making by eighth-century ideologues, most prominently

in the *Nihon shoki*, suggests an earlier and more vigorous adaptation of writing in general and Buddhist textuality in particular, but there is little archaeological support for this narrative, and doubt has been cast on the dating of most of the inscriptions traditionally associated with it.)

The change, when it came, was part of a much larger regional transformation of East Asia that followed the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, which led to the emergence or expansion of states in peripheral regions. In 645, as conflict among the three kingdoms of the Korean peninsula heated up, the Yamato ruler later known as Tenji engineered a coup against the Soga lineage group, who had dominated the court for two generations. The following decades saw rapid construction of a Chinese-style state apparatus, complete with census-taking, more systematic taxation, and a better-organized military, especially after Yamato forces became involved in the final defeat of their ally Paekche in 663. The resulting crisis further spurred development of a bureaucracy, at the same time that literate refugees from the Korean peninsula were fleeing to the Japanese archipelago. The archaeological record shows that the widespread use of writing for everyday communication and record-keeping emerges in these decades, just as it became both necessary and possible to staff a government based on texts. Not coincidentally, works like the *Kaifūsō* and *Man'yōshū* also suggest that Tenji's court in his new capital in Ōmi (on Lake Biwa near modern Kyoto) was a center of literary composition in both Chinese and vernacular styles. In monumental inscriptions, poetry composed at court banquets, and other forms of writing, early Japanese ideology followed the classical Chinese linkage of a well-ordered state with well-ordered, aesthetically pleasing texts.

One reason for the rapidity of the seventh-century transformation of literacy was the flexible relationship between spoken languages and texts written in Chinese characters, then essentially the only form of writing in East Asia. As a primarily logographic script at this moment in their history, characters were associated with Chinese words and morphemes, but they could also be linked to Korean or Japanese words and morphemes of similar meanings. This meant that texts that had originally been written in Chinese could be read in Korean or Japanese, in a process called *kundoku* (literally, reading by gloss). Conversely, it was possible for someone who did not speak Chinese to write a text that could be read in that language, by following in reverse the kundoku procedure for rearranging the syntactical order of character-texts. Chinese-style writing thus provided a common medium for communication across linguistic and political boundaries; it was also a

powerful source of prestige and authority. But kundoku could be used to write logographic texts that departed from the orthodox Chinese style in their ordering and character usage, and it was also possible to use characters phonographically, spelling out syllables of non-Chinese languages without regard for the meaning of the words that had originally been associated with those graphs. In short, the system of writing that was adapted in mid seventh-century Japan involved multiple principles and styles of inscription, and was well suited to the various demands placed on it by an age of political transformation and literary innovation.

Already from the mid seventh century, archaeological discoveries of wooden tablets inscribed in ink (*mokkan*) show the range of available styles, from Chinese-style logography, to more localized logographic writing that could not be read in Chinese, to mixtures of logographic and phonographic characters, to entirely phonographic texts. The details remain unclear, but parallels with discoveries in Korean sites, and the well-documented contributions of scribes and refugees from the Korean peninsula, suggest that many of these techniques were imported. At any rate they were all being used to write texts in Old Japanese by the second half of the seventh century. A handful of these artifacts are belletristic works – mainly vernacular poems (uta) written phonographically – but we must rely on eighth-century sources for a fuller picture of the emergence of Japanese literature.

The political impetus for the creation of the earliest extant works was provided by the state-building activities of Tenji's successors. His death in 671 was followed by the Jinshin War, a brief conflict that pitted his brother, later known as Tenmu, against Tenji's son. The victorious Tenmu (r. 672–86), along with his consort and successor Jitō (r. 686–97), embarked on a far-reaching transformation of the nascent state. Among the developments of their reigns were the country name Japan (*Nihon* or *Nippon*), the title *tennō* (Heavenly Sovereign or Emperor), written law codes, new systems of court rank and title, an expanded and more powerful central bureaucracy, greater state control over religion, and eventually a new Chinese-style capital city (Fujiwara, established in 694). These new institutions were matched by literary innovations. The great poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro and others wrote soaring elegies and paeans to Tenmu, Jitō, and their princes that form the core of the poetic canon established by the *Man'yōshū*. Sponsorship by Tenmu and Jitō and their successors was responsible for the compilation of the *Nihon shoki*, and, according to its preface, of the *Kojiki*. All of these works were dedicated in their own way to the glorification – and at times even the

deification – of the rulers who had established themselves as the first emperors of Japan in the aftermath of the Jinshin War of 672.

In the early eighth century complete penal and administrative laws were promulgated – the 701 Taihō code (revised in 757 as the Yōrō code) – and a new capital city was established to the north of Fujiwara: the Heijō capital in Nara, which with interruptions would remain the political center from 710 until 784. This was a period of great cultural dynamism, symbolized by the construction of the enormous Tōdaiji temple at Nara and the country-wide network of provincial temples (*kokubunji*) centered on it, and also by the lavish art works and luxury products, many imported from Korea, China, and the Silk Road, that are preserved in the Shōsōin depository. But the Nara period was also marked by great political turmoil, with rebellions, conspiracies, and purges; there were also natural disasters like the great smallpox epidemic of 735–7, which some scholars estimate killed as much as a third of the population. This combination of brilliance and upheaval underlay the literary production of the eighth century, including the composition of much of the poetry collected in the *Kaifūsō* and *Man'yōshū* and also the compilation of those anthologies themselves, the completion of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, and the production of the fudoki gazetteers. All of these writings were produced for the court, with official or unofficial sanction. More so than for any subsequent era, the literature of ancient Japan is inseparably linked to its political history.

The legitimacy of imperial rule by Tenmu's and Jitō's successors (their line was supplanted in 770 with the accession of one of Tenji's grandsons, but the fundamental structures they established remained in place) was supported by a mélange of symbols and rituals with complex origins. Similarly, early Japanese poetry and prose drew on a wide range of sources, foreign and domestic. But, as elsewhere in East Asia, the armature of this emergent tradition was the literary Chinese canon. As reflected in the official university curriculum outlined in the eighth-century administrative codes, the fundamental framework of learning and knowledge was provided by the Five Classics and their commentaries: the Odes (*shi*), Documents (*shu*), Rites (*li*), Changes (*yi*), and the Spring and Autumn Annals (*chunqiu*).

Early Japanese readers were also exposed to a surprisingly expansive corpus of other works. The dynastic histories available in eighth-century Japan included classics like the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, and extended to those compiled up to the early Tang. Allusions in works like the *Nihon shoki, Kaifūsō*, and *Man'yōshū*, and scraps of text in wooden and paper documents, show that poetry anthologies circulated widely. The most important was the *Wenxuan* (*c.*

526–30), but collections of individual authors and less well-known anthologies like the *Yutai xinyong* (*c.* 545) were also influential. It is also clear that early Japanese elites consulted a range of Taoist writings and technical manuals of medicine, warfare, architecture, engineering and so on, in addition to enormous quantities of Buddhist sutras, treatises, and commentaries. But the most important imported texts were the classified omnibus works, both textbooks and references, that served as the primary entry point into the world of literary Chinese writings. Many of the classical allusions (and borrowings) in works like the *Nihon shoki* were taken secondhand from such sources, which included classified encyclopedias (*leishu*) like the early Tang *Yiwen leiju* and *Chuxue ji*. Dictionaries like the *Shuowen jiezi* (*c.* 100 CE) and *Qieyun* (601) were also widely consulted; the most important of these seems to have been the extensive sixth-century *Yupian*, which served as both a dictionary and an encyclopedia.

By the eighth century it is clear that many domestic compositions had joined the foregoing imported texts. In addition to poetry anthologies like the *Man'yōshū* and *Kaifūsō* and prose works like the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, these included family histories and biographies, accounts of temples and shrines, dictionaries and glossaries, and commentaries on Buddhist texts. The legal codes that were compiled during the reigns of Tenmu and Jitō, and possibly as early as that of Tenji, were accompanied by substantial commentaries, even as they generated further legal material in the form of *kyaku* (ordinances) and *shiki* (statutory elaborations). Early commentary on the codes survives only in later collections, the *Ryō no gige* (833) and *Ryō no shūge* (late ninth/early tenth century). Government documents of the eighth century, often straightforwardly expressed ordinances and statues, but sometimes of sufficient length and elaboration to be considered quasi-literary works, are collected in the 927 *Engi shiki* and in categorized references like the *Ruijū sandai kyaku* (eleventh century) and *Ruijū fusenshō* (late eleventh/early twelfth century).

We have only indirect evidence of what types of writing were considered most valuable in ancient Japan, but it is surely anachronistic to treat the prose of the *Kojiki* and fudoki along with the poetry of the *Man'yōshū* and *Kaifūsō* as literary while excluding royal proclamations and reports to the throne in elaborate Chinese-style parallel prose. Nonetheless, the writings surveyed in the following pages include some of the most brilliant and engaging in the Japanese tradition, establishing precedents for and anticipating features of later works of poetry and narrative prose in both Chinese and vernacular styles.

In a prewar lecture, the influential scholar Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953) raised a fundamental issue of early Japanese literature when he said the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* was "a gazetteer of imported modishness [*haikara na*

fudoki]. That is, it gives the feeling of being thoroughly dominated by the authority of the court. One could say it is the sort of work that has no dreams at all – or rather, that if it does, they are dreams of China." A subsequent lecture expanded on this formulation: "To put this in contemporary terms, the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* was written by men of civilization [*bunmeijin*] looking back at the world of the past, and therefore incorporates a cold, indifferent attitude that is incapable of fully understanding that past."[1] The use of words with Meiji resonances is deliberate, involving a parallel much invoked by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectuals. Just as the "civilization and enlightenment" discourse of the Meiji period strove to leave behind traditional early modern culture, Orikuchi implies, the Sinicized "civilization" of the eighth century was similarly opposed to a rich earlier native culture. But this is a flawed analogy. While remnants of Edo period culture were everywhere in evidence during the Meiji period, and indeed in Orikuchi's own day, the only traces of early Japanese literature are from precisely this Sinicizing period. It is true that works like the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* or *Nihon shoki*, which rely on Chinese rhetoric and imagery, contrast with "warmer," apparently more "traditional" texts, such as the *Kojiki* or the *Izumo no kuni fudoki*. But works of the latter type were in their own time just as new-fangled and innovative as the more superficially Sinicized ones; perhaps even more so, as they did not conform to the preexisting trans-regional norm of Chinese-style writing.

Orikuchi limns a distinctive feature of the style and narratorial perspective of the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki*. But we can accept this insight without the baggage that has been loaded onto it. It seems unlikely that the authors and readers of ancient Japan would have felt the need to choose between more "modish" (if indeed that is what they were) Chinese-style writings and those that, like the *Kojiki*, engineered new forms of distinctive local significance. From the *Man'yōshū* to the *Nihon shoki* to the fudoki, eighth-century texts demonstrate a delight in multiple accounts: variant narratives, alternate attributions, differing local legends, and so on. The weighty authority of the *Nihon shoki*, or the totalizing ambitions of the *Kojiki*, are an essential feature of those works, but we should not allow the comparative scarcity of surviving writing from this era to blind us to the fact that contemporary readers would have experienced and appreciated them in the context of a much wider world of diverse alternate accounts.

[1] Orikuchi hakase kinen kodai kenkyūjo, eds., *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū nōto-hen*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1970), 215 and 231–2.

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Myth and history in the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and related works

DAVID LURIE

The earliest extant works of the Japanese tradition date to the early eighth century, during the first decade of the Nara capital. The *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720) are important for their content – a mix of myth, legend, and history, interspersed with poetry – and for the very different styles in which they were written. Their influence and significance is apparent in the variety of other narratives written about Japanese incidents and institutions in the remainder of the Nara and the early Heian periods, and also in the long tradition of scholarship and commentary they generated (devoted almost exclusively to the *Nihon shoki* until the early modern period). Despite their overlaps, these works differ profoundly in content, editorial stance, and written style. Especially in their earlier sections they have often been treated as facets of a unified corpus of Japanese myths that awaits reconstruction by scholars able to strip away later accretions. Regardless of whether one endorses this project of reading *through* them (and contemporary scholars are critical of such general notions as "myths of Japan" [*Nihon shinwa*] or "[common] myths of the records and chronicles" [*kiki shinwa*]), the first step in approaching the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* must be analysis of the meaning of given narrative sequences within each particular text.

It is true that similar stories about identical or related gods appear in these works; and, conversely, that they weave together (sometimes quite loosely) materials that must have originated in different contexts. Moreover, there are connections with actual cults and rituals, from periods before and after the eighth century as well as contemporaneously with the compilation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. But oft-excerpted stories and scenes are deeply embedded within the texts that contain them. More importantly, the essential qualities of these works lie in the distinctive tone and structure that they impose on their sometimes shared materials, characteristics that are downplayed or ignored when they are simply treated as parts of a larger whole.

The *Kojiki*

The *Kojiki* is generally dated by its preface to 712 (Wadō 5), but independent internal evidence confirms the likelihood of its composition around that time. It is a collection of mythical, legendary, and quasi-historical material stretching from the appearance of the first gods in the High Heavenly Plain (*takaama no hara*) to the reign of the female sovereign later known as Suiko (trad. r. 592–628 CE).[1] It is divided into three books, the first of which describes an early age of the gods, beginning with heaven and earth coming into existence, narrating the creation of the earthly realm that would come to be ruled by the sovereigns, and ending with accounts of the descent of Ninigi, the grandson of the sun-goddess, to this "land amid reed planes," and of the exploits of his children and grandchildren. The second book portrays the origins of rule by legendary sovereigns, starting with Ninigi's great-grandson (later known as Jinmu), and describes the expansion of their realm, following reign-by-reign until that of the fifteenth legendary ruler, Ōjin. The third book continues from the famously virtuous sixteenth ruler, Nintoku, to Suiko, whose reign, implicitly here and explicitly in the *Nihon shoki*, represented the beginning of a new era for eighth-century historians.

For contemporary students of Japanese literature, the *Kojiki* is the source of familiar narratives describing trips to other realms like the world of the dead or an undersea palace, journeys of conquest by early sovereigns and their relatives, and vivid tales of love and jealousy involving both gods and humans. Its three books contain 112 vernacular poems (*uta*) and numerous genealogical notes about the descent of the sovereigns and the backgrounds of prominent lineage groups and organizations. The genealogies tie the work to the political and social circumstances of the early eighth century, but they also animate much of the narrative material. As in other early prose works, narratives often serve to justify or explain a particular genealogical notation, and in many cases a given narrative cannot be understood without reference to the lineages that are involved.

The first of the three books is devoted to the origins of the realm of Japan and of the sovereigns who rule it: it links various localities, and the gods and influential lineages associated with them, to an overall narrative of creation in stages. Beginning with the first appearance of heaven and earth and the

[1] The familiar Sino-Japanese names of the sovereigns (Jinmu, Yūryaku, Suiko, etc.) were created in the mid eighth century, and originally appeared in neither the *Kojiki* nor the *Nihon shoki*, where rulers are identified either by vernacular names (e.g. Kamu Yamato Iwarebiko) or by the location of their palace.

spontaneous generation of a number of deities, single and in male/female pairs, it turns to the exploits of the last of these gods to appear: Izanaki (probably, "man who invites") and Izanami ("woman who invites").[2] As ordered by the elder heavenly deities, these two gods descend to earth and procreate, giving birth to the islands of the Japanese archipelago and to a series of deities associated with geographic features and natural phenomena. Izanami dies from burns incurred while delivering a fire deity, who is then killed by Izanaki, while other gods are born from her bodily fluids and from the spattered blood and corpse of the fire deity.

Izanaki travels to the land of Yomi (an afterworld) in search of his dead wife, but flees in horror after witnessing her rotting corpse; she angrily pursues him to the border of Yomi, where they sever their relations. Purifying himself after his return, Izanaki generates another slew of deities, the last three of which are Amaterasu ("shining in heaven"), Tsukuyomi ("moon-counter"), and Susano'o ("raging male"). They are ordered by their progenitor to rule, respectively, the heavens, the night, and the sea, but Susano'o is expelled by Izanaki after refusing to obey. When a farewell visit to his sister Amaterasu is met with suspicion, he attempts to prove his sincerity through a test in which they each generate offspring from articles obtained from the other. This results in another series of new deities, and after claiming victory Susano'o rages through heaven, driving Amaterasu to cast both heaven and earth into darkness by withdrawing into a rock chamber, from which she is induced to emerge by a committee of gods who arrange a spectacle including lewd dancing and laughter.

Punished and cast out of heaven, Susano'o alights in the land of Izumo, saves the daughter of a local deity by killing an enormous serpent with eight heads and tails, and settles down in a palace. His sixth-generation descendant, Ōkuninushi ("great lord of the land"), is twice killed by rivalrous brother deities and revived, and then travels to Susano'o's realm, where he undergoes trials while wooing his daughter. Stealing magical articles from Susano'o, and ultimately gaining his blessing, he subdues his brothers and continues the creation of the land with other deities.

Amaterasu determines that the land is to be ruled by one of the gods that she produced during her contest with Susano'o, but the land is too chaotic for

[2] Deity names in the *Kojiki* and other early works seem to have originally been semantically transparent, but many of them have been obscured by linguistic change, by interference from the meanings of characters used phonographically, or simply by the passage of time. For many there is consensus about their significance, but others are subject to dispute, and some lack even a convincing proposed interpretation.

him to descend from heaven. After two failed attempts, an emissary deity travels to Izumo and convinces Ōkuninushi and his sons to yield the land to Amaterasu's offspring. Her grandson Ninigi ("fertile abundance") then descends to Hyūga (in eastern Kyushu), where he marries the daughter of a mountain god, and where his son and grandson marry daughters of the sea god. Ninigi's great-grandson Kamu Yamato Iwarebiko ("fine lad of Iware in divine Yamato"), later known as Jinmu, is the first of the human rulers followed by the rest of the work, and the beginning of a royal genealogy leading down to the present day of the *Kojiki*.

Jinmu is the starting point for the second and third books, which follow sovereigns chronologically from reign to reign, with occasional interpolations of (usually mythic) material that provides genealogical background. These accounts of the age of human rulers are loosely organized into sections for successive sovereigns, tied together by a generally consistent format: statements of parentage, consorts, and offspring at the outset, and of tomb location at the conclusion of the account of each reign. (Such statements are the sole content of the final portion of the third book.)

Book Two presents the expansion and solidification of the realm of the sovereigns through conquest and religious authority. It begins with an account of Jinmu's journey eastward from Kyushu, alternately fighting with and relying on local gods and various human and non-human creatures, until he successfully establishes his palace at Kashiwara (in the southern Nara basin). After a mysterious series of eight "sovereigns" with only genealogical information, Jinmu's descendant Sujin and Sujin's son Suinin are portrayed as expanding the religious role of the sovereigns, ending an epidemic through worship of the deity of Mount Miwa (Ōmononushi) and averting a curse by refurbishing the Izumo shrine. The Suinin section contains a particularly interesting cluster of narratives, including the tragedy of the consort Saobime and her incestuous relationship with her rebellious brother, the tale of a cursed prince who grows to manhood without speaking, and a journey to the world of eternal life in search of the mythic *tachibana* fruit. Perhaps the centerpiece of this entire book is the extended narrative of Yamato Takeru, a prince who journeys to Kyushu, Izumo, and northeastern Honshū on missions of conquest for his father. This vivid cycle of stories, which includes some of the best-known "songs" of the *Kojiki*, ends with the dead prince changed into a white bird that flies away, fruitlessly pursued by his bereaved wives and children. The second book concludes with the famous story of Jingū, consort to a sovereign destroyed by gods for ignoring their oracle, who in her husband's stead leads a mission of conquest to Korea, followed by the

reign of her son Ōjin, marked by the arrival of immigrant experts in such technologies as weaving, writing, and brewing. This complements Yamato Takeru's journeys of conquest by showing (fictitiously, of course) the expansion of royal authority to the Korean peninsula (the *Kojiki* makes only passing reference to Korea thereafter, and never mentions China at all).

Book Three contains considerably less narrative material. For the concluding nine sovereigns (who correspond roughly to the period from the end of the fifth through the beginning of the seventh century), only a skeletal account of genealogy, palaces, and tombs is provided, and the bulk of this book is devoted to accounts of only two sovereigns. Nintoku (Ōjin's son) is portrayed as a benevolent sage-king (in the most clearly Confucian portion of the work), but also as a romantic hero who struggles with his jealous consort Iwanohime, producing a vivid sequence of "songs." Yūryaku (Nintoku's grandson) is portrayed as brutally violent, but primarily through his actions before his enthronement; his reign is a series of largely auspicious episodes, several of which show him as a lover in pursuit of his female subjects. Between Nintoku and Yūryaku is a bloody interval of succession disputes, in which several occupants of and contenders for the throne are brutally murdered; after Yūryaku's reign is a final narrative sequence involving the accession of two royal princes, Ninken and Kenzō, who had fled the earlier violence.

The written style of the *Kojiki* has often been described, incorrectly, as a blend of Chinese and Japanese, a formulation that confuses orthographic variety with linguistic difference. Portions of the work are written in phonographs, or in a mixture of phonographs and logographs, or entirely in logographs (sometimes arranged consistently with literary Chinese usage) but the *kundoku* reading process ensures a degree of linguistic homogeneity inconsistent with the idea of a mixture of languages. In many respects this prose style is close to the everyday logographic writing used in paper and wooden documents from the late seventh and eighth centuries, but great pains have been taken to systematize its orthography to make it as clear as possible. In this process, orally transmitted myths functioned only as raw material, and cannot be recovered in an "original" form. The language of the *Kojiki* also is surely related to what was spoken before the advent of writing, but the work provides no direct access to that "original" language, even though its preface claims that it does.

Because the *Kojiki* makes no appearance in the official historical record of the *Shoku Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan Continued, 797), some scholars have doubted the authenticity of that preface, which is signed by a middle-ranking

courtier named Ō no Yasumaro (?–723). A small minority have even argued that the entire text is a later forgery, but the language reflected by its phonograph orthography establishes it as an early eighth-century work, and the weight of the evidence suggests that preface is also genuine. In style and worldview, though, it departs radically from the main text of the *Kojiki*. Yasumaro tells an elaborate tale of multigenerational sponsorship by Tenmu and his niece (Tenji's daughter) Genmei (r. 707–15), linked by a much-debated claim that a mysterious court attendant named Hieda no Are somehow underwrote the linguistic authenticity of the work through "reciting and learning" earlier historical records. Once this connection to ancient narratives has been made, the preface turns to a description of the style engineered for the prose of the main text:

> In high antiquity words and meanings were both forthright; it is very hard to put them in writing by unfolding sentences and constructing phrases. If one compiles them completely in accordance with the readings of the characters, the words do not extend to the meaning; if one strings them together totally relying on the sounds of the characters, the impression of the passage becomes very long. Herewith, at present, I sometimes used both sounds and readings within a single phrase; I sometimes recorded only with readings inside a single passage. Thus, when the logic of the words was hard to see, I clarified it with notes; when the form of the meaning was easy to understand, I did not annotate at all.

A common interpretation of this passage, grounded in a misreading of its links between language and writing, is that Yasumaro had to avoid "writing in Chinese" to preserve the "native" Japanese language. But the kundoku reading process meant that Chinese-style texts were not necessarily "in" that language, and careful analysis of the wording here shows that the salient contrast is not between the Chinese and Japanese *languages*, but rather between the orthodox transregional mode of formal Chinese-style writing (employed in works like the *Nihon shoki*) and the vernacular style of the *Kojiki* with its purported connection to "ancient language."

It is possible that the distinctive style of the main text was motivated not simply because recording "old language" necessitated avoiding the Chinese style, but also because, conversely, avoiding the associations of that style necessitated a new method of writing, which Yasumaro justifies by claiming it was both based on "recitations" and necessary to be faithful to them. The preface itself is evidence of the influences he wanted to avoid: written in elaborate Chinese-style parallel prose, with phrases of four and six characters, it is also packed with borrowings from and references to a range of classical

Chinese texts. Although it is contradicted by the preface, the main text envisions a form of rulership whose authority is presented in oral terms. This corresponds stylistically with the creation of a vernacular text minimally dependent on Chinese rhetoric and related visions of statecraft. Just as the actual relation of the early Japanese state and its ideology to Sinitic models is a separate matter from its self-presentation, so with the style of the *Kojiki* the important point is that it attempts to engineer a new vernacular mode of expression that does not *visibly* derive from the transregional formal standard. On the surface, the result is a lucid and effective style that is clearly not literary Chinese, but in actuality it is still dependent on the Chinese commentarial and lexicographical tradition to distinguish fine shades of meaning, and throughout it relies on Chinese grammatical markers to connect and separate phrases and clauses.

Contemporary readers – there do not seem to have been that many, at least as compared to the *Nihon shoki* – must have experienced the work that resulted from these strenuous efforts as a remarkably creative and entertaining *tour de force*. The *Kojiki* pulls together disparate traditional stories and a welter of genealogies, human and divine, melding them into a single unified narrative that runs, with considerable energy, from the origins of heaven and earth through to the final episodes of the enthronement of the refugee princes. The preface suggests the seriousness of this endeavor, claiming royal sponsorship and trumpeting an ambition to correct and preserve corrupted and vanishing traditions. The main body of the work can be seen as conforming to such a project, but it is also a highly entertaining collection of stories and songs that are made all the more meaningful by the care with which they have been incorporated into the larger narrative whole.

The *Nihon shoki*

Completed in 720, only eight years after the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki* both overlaps with and departs from the earlier work (not least because it is clearly the product of a decades-long process involving multiple compilers, and probably multiple *teams* of compilers). It is about four times longer, and more forthright in its treatment of its sources, citing a number of them directly. It also covers a longer period, becoming more detailed just as the *Kojiki* peters out into a skeletal list of reigns, and devoting the largest proportion of its historical narrative to the decades following the end of that list (essentially, the seventh century). Most prominently, where the style of the *Kojiki* rejects overt Sinitic norms, the *Nihon shoki* explicitly adheres to

them: excepting the phonographic "songs," it is written in a logographic style consistent with literary Chinese usage and orthography, and some passages are even cribbed directly from Chinese classics. The result is not as distinctive as the *Kojiki*, and there is no denying the dryness of many of the annals, especially in its latter half, but much of the *Nihon shoki* is of considerable literary interest. Many of the songs it contains do not overlap with those of the *Kojiki*, and those that do are sometimes given different meanings by their prose settings; there are set pieces of soaring Sinitic rhetoric, often put into the mouths of sovereigns, princes, and their courtiers; and independent narrative episodes from the court, the countryside, and abroad are frequently incorporated into the annals. Even passages in the more "historical" sections are often written with flair, such as the depiction of the assassination of Soga no Iruka in 645, which is a small masterpiece of suspense.

The *Nihon shoki* still provides historians, even today, with a fundamental chronology of events in early Japan, especially for the seventh century. Its authority over the nearly thirteen centuries since its composition stemmed in part from its use of the rhetorical devices and narrative structures of the Chinese official dynastic histories whose tradition began with the *Shiji* (Records of the Historian, *c*. 100 BCE) and solidified with the *Hanshu* (History of the Former Han, 111) and *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han, *c*. fifth century). The title itself announces this affiliation, while simultaneously implying a departure from the Chinese model. Where the *Kojiki* is a comparatively neutral "Record of Ancient Matters," the *Nihon shoki* is explicitly linked to the new state name "Japan" (*Nihon*) – less than half a century old in 720 – and also to the traditional format of the Chinese dynastic histories. By analogy, the title can be interpreted as "annals 紀 of the history 書 of Japan 日本." This implies continuity with Chinese models of statecraft and official historiography, but also contrast with the rhythm of dynastic rise and fall that drove the compilation of Chinese histories and provided their moral and temporal armature, because the object here is not a particular dynasty but "Japan" itself, from the beginning of the cosmos to the abdication of Jitō in the eleventh year of her reign (697).

Whether *Nihon shoki* is the original title or a very early alternate is not clear: all manuscripts use that title, which appears in some eighth-century sources, but other early references (such as the entry on the work's completion in the *Shoku Nihongi*) use the abbreviated title *Nihongi*. Regardless, the emulation of and departure from Chinese models embedded in these titles is replicated on multiple levels, so that, for example, legendary and quasi-legendary sovereigns are evaluated in Confucian terms even as the overall

chronology of reigns denies the interruptions of succession guaranteed by the notion of a "mandate of heaven." (Nonetheless, historians reading between the lines argue for a number of such interruptions.)

The first two volumes of the *Nihon shoki*, commonly referred to as the "God Age Volumes" (*jindaikan* or *jindai no maki*), tell of the beginning of the cosmos, the appearance of gods, the creation of the islands of Japan, and the descent to them of Ninigi, who is here the grandson of the god Takamimusuhi ("Lofty Divine Creative Power") as well as Amaterasu. This narrative is interrupted by fifty-eight variant accounts introduced by the formula "a certain book says" (一書曰), clustered so as to divide the main narrative into eleven sections. These variant accounts range from brief notations of alternate deity names to extended stories quite unlike those of the main narrative. The contradictions among these variants have provided a rich lode of material, not only for modern scholars, but for premodern commentators and authors. One of the keys to the continued development of Japanese mythology is the permeability of this portion of the *Nihon shoki*, which in its open structure seems amenable to endless expansion and transformation. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that the variants are clearly subordinated to the main narrative, which continues unbroken across the interruptions.

In addition to such clear differences of format, the first book of the *Kojiki* and the first two books of the *Nihon shoki* also diverge fundamentally in their content and cosmology. This is immediately apparent from their respective openings: where the *Kojiki* begins with the first appearance of heaven and earth, with no explanation of their origins, the *Nihon shoki* cribs from a series of Chinese sources to present an elaborate *yin-yang*-based origin narrative for the universe. (Similarly, the subsequent appearance of early gods in the *Kojiki* is presented as a kind of spontaneous generation, where the *Nihon shoki* continues to explain their emergence in terms of the interaction of specific cosmic forces.) In the subsequent myths, perhaps the most striking difference is that the long *Kojiki* sequence devoted to the Ōkuninushi saga (and strongly associated with Izumo) is entirely absent from the *Nihon shoki*, where he appears only to yield the land before Ninigi's descent. Another prominent divergence is that in the main narrative of the *Nihon shoki* Izanami does not die and Izanaki does not journey to Yomi (although there is a variant version of this story). Unlike the *Kojiki* portrayal of Izanaki generating gods on his own after returning from Yomi, in the *Nihon shoki* he and Izanami give birth to Susano'o and Amaterasu together, in keeping with the governing *yin-yang* cosmology. A catalog of such differences could continue at length, but here it

will suffice to note, finally, how the fundamental divide between the mythology of these two works is symbolized by the fact that the *Kojiki* does not use the term "Japan" (*Nihon*) anywhere, whereas the main narrative of the *Nihon shoki* omits the *Kojiki*'s fundamental term for the heavenly realm (*taka-ama no hara*).

From its third volume, which concerns the reign of the sovereign later known as Jinmu, the format of the *Nihon shoki* changes into temporally ordered annals organized by year of reign (keyed to the Chinese sixty-year cycle of stems and branches, and thus tied down to an absolute, trans-regional chronology), and including entries for given months and days. Brief variant accounts still appear occasionally, but not with the frequency and amplitude that are hallmarks of the God Age volumes. Each sovereign between Jinmu and Jitō (the fortieth by the *Nihon shoki*'s count) has his or her own annal, with a standard format beginning with a description of the sovereign's character and genealogy, a narrative of circumstances preceding enthronement, and a list of consorts and offspring. After the subsequent year-, month-, and day-ordered annal of the sovereign's reign, there is a concluding notation of the location of the royal tomb.

Here as well the contrast with the *Kojiki* is striking. Although the two share the same fundamental royal genealogy, they emphasize different aspects of the reigns of these human rulers. As its annals enter the sixth century, the *Nihon shoki* becomes progressively more concerned with relations between the Yamato court (anachronistically portrayed) and Korean and Chinese rulers. Increasingly detailed entries narrate exchanges with Silla, Paekche, and Koguryŏ (including a description of what the compilers portray as a Japanese sphere of influence, "Mimana," in the south of the peninsula), the arrival of Buddhism, embassies to the Sui court, the rise of the powerful Soga lineage group, the enlightened reign of Suiko and her nephew Prince Shōtoku (trad. 574–622), and so on. This culminates in the dynamic and immensely detailed depiction of the rise of the ruler later known as Tenji and the late seventh-century reign of his brother Tenmu (succeeded by Tenmu's consort Jitō). All of this material needs to be evaluated critically, as even the seventh-century portions contain much elaboration and exaggeration. Nonetheless, the eighth-century reader of the *Nihon shoki* would have sensed its annals reaching almost to the present day as it concluded with Jitō's abdication in 697, a mere generation before the work's completion.

The *Kojiki*, on the other hand, concludes its narrative portion with the story of the rulers later known as Ninken and Kenzō (traditionally taken to have reigned in the late fifth century). It does continue on to Suiko (whose

reign clearly marked an epoch for Yasumaro and other eighth-century historians), but these sections are skeletal royal genealogies without narrative content. Where the *Nihon shoki* presents "Japan" as historically unfolding in a continual process implicitly extending from the age of the gods up to the present, the *Kojiki* portrays antiquity as discontinuous with the time of the work's composition (in its main text; the worldview of the preface is in many respects closer to that of the *Nihon shoki*).

Where the *Kojiki* has a preface but lacks any references in the official history, the *Nihon shoki* lacks a preface but has a clear, though not unproblematic, description of its completion in the *Shoku Nihongi*, the later eighth-century work that covers the years 697–791. The annal for 720 (Yōrō 4/5/21) includes the following entry:

> Earlier, Prince Toneri (first royal rank) had received a royal order to compile the *Nihongi* [Annals of Japan]. Now, he had achieved success, and submitted it to the throne. There were thirty volumes of annals and one volume of genealogical tables.[3]

This entry refers to the final stage of what must have been a long compilation process, involving several groups of scholars (some of Chinese or Korean origin) and originating with history-editing initiatives ordered by Tenmu that are referred to in the *Kojiki* preface and the *Nihon shoki* itself. In the absence of a preface, it provides the most immediate framework for situating the *Nihon shoki* – a framework that is part of the continued state enterprise of compiling the *Shoku Nihongi* and the four other works that, along with the *Nihon shoki*, are collectively termed the Six National Histories (*Rikkokushi*).[4] These works, the promulgation of which spans the nearly two centuries between 720 and the beginning of the tenth century, implicitly endorse the *Nihon shoki*'s project to link antiquity to the present realm by continuing its annalistic record, unbroken all the way back to Jinmu.

Until the eighteenth century, the *Nihon shoki* overshadowed the *Kojiki* almost completely. Along with other texts, the *Kojiki* was simply an adjunct to the work of reading and interpreting the *Nihon shoki*, especially the initial "God Age" volumes, as it quickly became the object of veneration and intense scholarly interest. Official lectures on it were held at the Heian court on multiple occasions from the early ninth through the mid tenth

[3] Prince Toneri, an elder statesman who was almost certainly a figurehead rather than an active compiler, was one of the most influential sons of Tenmu and a prominent figure in early Nara period politics.

[4] The four histories that follow the 797 *Shoku Nihongi* are the 840 *Nihon kōki*, the 866 *Shoku Nihon kōki*, the 879 *Nihon Montoku tennō jitsuroku*, and the 901 *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*.

centuries, and there is some evidence of scholarly discussion already in the eighth century. (There are several extant "personal records" [*shiki*] of these lectures, which include notes on readings of key terms and dialogues on questions of interpretation.) The most important resource for the study of the Heian engagement with the *Nihon shoki* is the *Shaku Nihongi*, compiled by Urabe Kanekata (fl. late thirteenth century). Based on lectures given in 1274 and 1275 by his father Kanefumi (fl. mid thirteenth century), this is a giant compilation of earlier scholarship and commentary. At the center of this enterprise was the establishment of correct kundoku readings for the entire work, a continuation of the basic approach sketched out by reading notes in the text of the *Nihon shoki* itself.

Simultaneous with this official scholarly engagement was the emergence of a ramifying discourse that has in recent years come to be known as the "medieval chronicles of Japan" (*chūsei Nihongi*). From the late Heian period onward, Buddhist and Indian deities and abstract concepts merged with new political and religious institutions and local and popular cults to create a complex network of narrative material associated with, but not included in, the *Nihon shoki*, and incorporated into commentaries, story collections, treatises, and origin narratives for shrines and temples. This is perhaps the most important component of the reception of early Japanese prose works before the nativist philology (*Kokugaku*) of the early modern period.

Literature of report and proclamation

Two corpuses of material from the late eighth and early tenth century form the core of what some mid twentieth-century scholars termed a "literature of report and proclamation" (*sōsen no bungaku*).[5] This refers primarily to the vernacular proclamations (*senmyō*) of the 797 *Shoku Nihongi* and the prayers or liturgies (*norito*) collected in the 927 *Engi shiki* (a collection of official protocols for governance and ritual), although other texts contain additional examples of these genres. Despite the long interval between these two works, there are remarkable similarities in the language and rhetoric of the senmyō and norito – and, notably, in their orthography: both are inscribed in a mix of logographs and phonographs, similar in principle to modern Japanese inscription, that modern scholars often call "proclamation style" (*senmyō-gaki*).

[5] The term was coined by Andō Masatsugu (1878–1952) and adopted by Kurano Kenji (1902–91).

The *Shoku Nihongi* contains sixty-two senmyō in the standard division, spanning the ninety-two years between 697 and 789. These were vernacular proclamations read out loud at court by designated officials, in the voice of the sovereign, on such occasions as New Year's celebrations, enthronements, and promulgation of new era names. (Numerous other edicts are quoted in the *Shoku Nihongi*, but they are in the formal literary Chinese style, as are all of the edicts of the *Nihon shoki*.) Despite the careful notation of the senmyō, which is connected to their public vocal performance, their language and rhetoric are far from primeval orality, as they employ many structures and locutions derived from literary Chinese writings mediated through kundoku. Much like the prose of the *Kojiki*, these vernacular proclamations aim for a text that can be convincingly vocalized rather than for the reproduction of preexisting orality in writing. They are attempts to assert royal authority through the voice – that is, through the projection of the body or presence of the sovereign, delegated by means of the text itself to an official reader-surrogate.

The eighth book (out of fifty) of the *Engi shiki* contains twenty-seven norito texts, which form both the oldest extant examples of the genre and its classical core. These liturgies are traditionally divided into those that were intoned, from on high, to worshipers, which like the senmyō are associated with the verb *noru* ("proclaim"); and those that were offered up as a kind of report or supplication to the gods, which use the verb *mōsu* ("state humbly"). These norito seem to have taken form in the context of mostly state-sponsored rituals from the late seventh century onward, although it is important to bear in mind the Heian period provenance of the *Engi shiki* texts themselves. With significant parallels with (and contrasts to) the different mythic accounts in the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and other early works, and with vivid imagery and extended parallel phrasing, the norito are of more literary interest than the senmyō. Taken together these two genres provide an intriguing picture of an early tradition of text-based vocal performance that is likely to have influenced the style of other prose works of the period, in particular the *Kojiki*.

Clan histories

It is striking how firmly the surviving literary works of the eighth century are linked to political institutions and state ideology. This is clear from their structure and contents, but also from their paratexts: the preface to the *Kojiki* and the *Shoku Nihongi* entry on the promulgation of the *Nihon shoki*, and also

the 713 government order that called the fudoki gazetteers into being. At the time of their composition and initial circulation, these gazetteers were simply bureaucratic reports (*ge*) submitted to the central government by provincial governors' offices. Their original format thus foregrounded the relationship with the state for which they were composed, but a similar posture is apparent in the preface to the *Kojiki*, which is also labeled as a formal report to the throne: a memorial (*hyō*).

This hierarchical relationship with the state continues to be the context for a cluster of works on history and mythology, compiled from the late eighth century onward, which distinctively reworked the material of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. The traditional genre term for such works is *ujibumi*, "lineage group documents," or more loosely, "clan histories." The term appears in the title of the 789 *Takahashi ujibumi* (Account of the Takahashi Lineage Group), a no-longer-extant work known from extensive quoted passages in the mid-Heian *Honchō gatsuryō* and the eleventh-century *Seiji yōryaku*. These fragments include accounts of the origin of the Takahashi, their service as stewards at court, and their involvement in a long-running dispute over official prerogatives, which seems to have motivated the composition of the work. This is reminiscent of the best-known clan history, the *Kogo shūi* (Gleanings from Ancient Stories) of 807. Submitted to the court by Inbe no Hironari (fl. early ninth century), this fascinating work provides a history of the Inbe, traditional rivals of the Nakatomi as specialists in court ceremony and ritual, at a time when their fortunes were in decline. It includes a narrative of court ritual since the creation of heaven and earth, foregrounding the role of the Inbe, and ends with a list of contemporary practices that Hironari saw as shameful departures from tradition and a warning of dire consequences of improperly worshiping the gods. The *Kogo shūi* contains much mythical and quasi-historical material that supplements or contradicts accounts found in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and can be seen as a sustained attempt to shape the diverse and contradictory "histories" those works narrate into a unified account for the benefit of a particular lineage.

Other major clan histories include the 830 *Shinsen kisōki* (Newly Selected Record of Scapulamancy), a treatise on the origins and techniques of turtle-shell divination and the history of the Urabe, who claimed scapulamancy as their traditional vocation; surviving incompletely, and argued by some to be a medieval forgery, it includes early quotations from the *Kojiki* and accounts of Urabe traditions. The *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* (Record of the Age of the Gods of the Great Sumiyoshi Shrine) appears to be a 789 revision of a 731 report to the Council on Deity Affairs (Jingikan) but may actually date from

the Heian period. It explains the deities and origins of the Sumiyoshi shrine in Settsu province (modern Osaka) and lists its treasures, lands, and other possessions. Long quotations from the *Nihon shoki* and material resembling the *Kojiki* are included, while other parts of the text appear to be derived from norito and no-longer extant gazetteers. It also contains unique material in the form of stories (several noted for their literary distinction), genealogies, and geographical information, much of it stemming from traditions of lineages associated with the shrine.

A work that resembles a clan history in many respects, and which became an essential source for medieval mythic discourse, is the *Sendai kuji hongi* (Ancient Matters and Fundamental Records of Early Ages). It includes a preface that unconvincingly claims it was written by Soga no Umako (?–626) at the behest of Prince Shōtoku, but this attribution is no longer accepted. The work is generally thought to have been compiled in the mid ninth century by a member of the Mononobe lineage group, although some scholars have argued for an earlier provenance. Written to rework mythology much as the *Kogo shūi* does, it provides a history of Japan in eleven "fundamental records" (*hongi*). The former half includes myths of the "Age of the Gods" and the latter consists of annalistic accounts of reigns from Jinmu through Suiko, concluding with a list of the origins of provincial chieftains (*kuni no miyatsuko*), officially recognized local leaders of 144 districts. Much of this overlaps with, or incorporates material from, the *Kojiki, Nihon shoki*, and *Kogo shūi*, but some of the divine and human genealogical material and the information on provincial chieftains are original to this work, and in some cases seem to be derived from significantly earlier sources. There are signs that the *Sendai kuji hongi* was connected to the intellectual activity surrounding the early Heian lectures on the *Nihon shoki*.

The clan histories assert hereditary rights grounded in variant myths that depart in significant respects from the official version included in the *Nihon shoki*. They were produced at a time of early Heian emphasis on Chinese-style meritocracy, and, more importantly, of efforts by Kanmu (r. 781–806) and his immediate successors to exert more direct control over the state through sponsorship of outsider lineages and institutions. In terms of their specific mythic content, these works build on the accounts in the *Nihon shoki* (and to a lesser extent the *Kojiki*), adding new material to them, but they also share with the *Kojiki* and the fudoki a striking quality of enunciation and directionality: they are written performances addressed to the throne and often associated with particular authors. Despite the richly written quality of all of these works (which is distinct from the attempts of several of them to

reproduce an oral *effect*), they are modeled on the vocal performance of court officials making formal reports to the sovereign.

With its official status and Sinitic textual authority the *Nihon shoki* would seem to be an exception, but it is significant that the *Shoku Nihongi* description of its completion associates it with both a single author (Prince Toneri) and an act of formal submission to the throne. Moreover, the *Nihon shoki* court lectures, which may have begun already in the eighth century but which had their heyday at the height of the clan histories, incorporated it into a different kind of formal performative address at court, and also, eventually, associated it with the "private" prerogatives of particular lineages that became specialists on the work and its interpretation.

Buddhist writings

The influence of Buddhism on early Japanese literature can be considered in both explicit and implicit terms. A major distinction between the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* is that the former envisions a non-Buddhist antiquity – its narrative material ends in the late fifth century in part because were it to continue beyond that it would become impossible to avoid the impact of the new religion on elite culture and politics – while the latter dwells extensively on the origins of Buddhism and its expansion (portrayed as a matter of royal sponsorship from the beginning). Thus the *Nihon shoki* makes extensive reference to Buddhist texts and ceremonies, and in places even adapts passages from sutras. But scholars have shown how extensively the *Kojiki* relies on stylistic precedents from Buddhist texts, both in the phonographs used for its "songs" and in the innovative logographic style used for its prose passages. . In a pattern that would recur repeatedly in the history of Japanese religion, surface rejection of Buddhism coincides with deeper, more fundamental continuities.

Even if only in explicit terms, Buddhist writings play an enormous role in early prose literature. The bulk of surviving written material from ancient Japan is Buddhist – sutras, commentaries, treatises, and records related to their copying in official scriptoria – and even though allowances have to be made for differing rates of destruction of secular and sacred texts, there is no doubt that imported Buddhist writings circulated widely from the seventh century onward. The traditional assumption that Prince Shōtoku inaugurated extensive involvement with, and domestic composition of, Buddhist texts has been largely undermined by recent scholarship. It is clear that from the late seventh century he was strongly associated with writing and literacy,

but the texts that have traditionally been attributed to him are much more likely to have been imported from China or Korea or composed by later authors. Nonetheless, Shōtoku is an essential figure for literary history because of the number of early Japanese works that were devoted to his life, or anachronistically attributed to him.

A major early biography is the *Shichidaiki* (Record of Seven Lifetimes), an eighth-century account of Shōtoku's life known through quoted fragments in later biographies, and thought to be identical to an Edo period manuscript entitled *Jōgū taishi den* (Biography of the Upper Palace Prince [Shōtoku]). The thirteenth-century *Shōtoku taishiden shiki* (Private Annotation of the Biography of Prince Shōtoku) states that the *Shichidaiki* was written in 771 by a priest named Kyōmei. It discusses the six previous lives of Shōtoku, with particular attention to his putative incarnation as the Chinese Tiantai patriarch Huisi (515–77), and narrates his accomplishments after his final rebirth in Japan, relying heavily on the *Nihon shoki* account. Another early Shōtoku biography is the *Jōgū Shōtoku hō-ō teisetsu* (Imperial Explanation of the Dharma Prince Sagely Virtue [Shōtoku] of the Upper Palace), a haphazard collection of information about early Japanese Buddhism, the genealogy and accomplishments of Shōtoku and sovereigns associated with him, and inscriptions and poetry connected to the temple of Hōryūji. Some of this material seems to date back to the seventh century; the remainder is later, mainly from the eighth century, and the text as a whole is thought to have taken its current form in the tenth or early eleventh century. These biographies, and later works on the prince like the early Heian *Jōgū Shōtoku taishiden hoketsuki* (Record to Supplement the Biography of Prince Shōtoku), culminate in the tenth century *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* (Chronicle Biography of Prince Shōtoku), a compendious narrative of miraculous incidents that was widely read and exerted much influence on visual culture and on later writings, including collections of tale literature (*setsuwa*).[6]

Another important category of Buddhist writing is the record of temple origins, or *engi*, a long-lived genre that would come to be a major source of narrative material in the Heian and medieval periods. Like many other early prose texts, engi have a complex relationship to the *Nihon shoki*, the later sections of which were clearly based in part on such temple records, although influence could also flow in the other

[6] Other early biographies include the mid eighth-century *Tōshi kaden*, which collects accounts of three prominent Fujiwara, and the *Tō daiwajō tōseiden* (779), a narrative of the life of Ganjin (Ch. Jianzhen), the blind Chinese founder of the Tōshōdaiji temple in Nara.

direction. A number of engi survive, complete or in part, from the eighth century, including one for Hōryūji, but perhaps the most prominent is the origin narrative for the Soga temple Asukadera: the *Gangōji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizaichō* (Origins of Gangōji, along with a Catalogue of its Possessions), which is excerpted in a late Heian compendium of temple histories. This contains a history of early Buddhism that parallels, and in significant ways departs from, that found in the *Nihon shoki*; it also collects the texts of inscriptions associated with the temple and an abridged list of its land holdings and other possessions.

Although the *Nihon shoki* and the *Gangōji engi* contain much vivid narrative material, perhaps the most important – and certainly the most entertaining – early Japanese work of Buddhist literature is the *Nihon ryōiki* (Miraculous Tales of Japan), a collection of 116 tales compiled in three volumes (each with a preface) by a priest named Kyōkai (also Keikai) around the turn of the ninth century. Many of the stories are derived from material adapted from Chinese sources, such as the Tang period collection *Mingbaoji*, but the work also includes narratives that appear to have been collected in Japan. Morals for stories and interpretive comments refer to a range of secular and, especially, scriptural sources, most prominently the Lotus Sutra, although in many cases these appear to be drawn not from the original texts but from compilations of excerpts. The concerns of the work are suggested by its full title: *Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki* (Record of Miraculous Recompense for Good and Evil in the Present Life in the Country of Japan). Most of the stories concern the karmic consequences of good and evil acts (not just in the present life), but the prominence of the "country of Japan" in the title is not incidental. The stories are organized chronologically and usually linked to specific locations in the provinces or the capital. They start with the reign of Yūryaku (who, as historians point out, was seen in early Japan as inaugurating a new epoch), but the majority of tales take place during reigns of Nara sovereigns, with only the last two making reference to post-Nara period events. With its focus on reign, place, and genealogy, the *Ryōiki* is in a sense a Buddhist counterpart to the *Kojiki*. As the earliest extant Japanese collection of the short narratives modern scholars would come to call setsuwa, it is a clear precursor of later works such as the *Konjaku monogatarishū* and the *Uji shūi monogatari*, but it reflects material that must have been circulating earlier than its compilation, and thus formed an important part of the cultural background for other surviving early narrative works.

4

Fudoki gazetteers

DAVID LURIE

The *fudoki* are gazetteers: written accounts of the nature and spatial organization of geographical features (the title literally means "records of lands and climates," but could alternately be rendered as "records of lands and their customs"). These works are a treasure-house of compelling, often fragmentary narratives: heroes struggle to clear horned snake deities from farmland; deer discuss their dreams; gods and siblings vie for rights to water and land; the exploits of sovereigns and princes yield a flurry of place names; with divine assistance a man avenges himself on a shark that has devoured his daughter; two gods in an endurance contest pit bearing a load of clay against resisting the urge to defecate.

While titles like *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki* denote single relatively stable works, "fudoki" is a generic label rather than a title. In discussions of early Japanese literature the term usually refers to the five "old gazetteers" (*ko-fudoki*), which are the only substantial survivors of dozens of such works compiled in response to a central government order in 713. Confusingly, these early gazetteers were not originally labeled as "fudoki." The term derives from Chinese usage beginning in the Later Han, and seems to have been strongly associated with the title of a now-lost third-century work; its use to refer to gazetteers of Japanese provinces cannot be confirmed until the early tenth century. A venerable Chinese tradition of geographical writing includes classics like the *Shanhaijing* (completed by the Later Han), but more direct precedent for the Japanese gazetteers commissioned in 713 was provided by official compilations of maps and reports on local products and customs produced during the Sui and Tang dynasties.

The early Japanese works now known as "fudoki" seem to have been initially titled along the lines of the one for Hitachi province (modern Ibaraki prefecture), which is headed: "A Report from the Hitachi Provincial Governor's Office on the Ancient Sayings Transmitted by the Elders." To complicate matters, a second government order of 925 (preserved in the

eleventh-century *Ruiju fusenshō*) required provincial governors to submit gazetteers that were explicitly referred to as fudoki. Latter-day commentaries such as the 1269 *Man'yōshū chūshaku* and the late thirteenth-century *Shaku Nihongi* contain numerous quotations from no-longer-extant gazetteers of various provinces. Although some of these may stem from texts written or revised after the 925 order, other such quotations undoubtedly represent fragments of the original eighth-century reports. This chapter focuses on the five relatively intact "old fudoki," but it is important to remember that these surviving fragments are essential to understanding the scope and content of the genre; they also contain some of the most interesting and oft-cited stories from the fudoki corpus.[1]

An entry from the *Shoku Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan Continued, 797) for 713 (Wadō 6/5/2; a year and several months after the date of the *Kojiki* preface) quotes the executive order that required the production of the original fudoki:

> Apply auspicious characters to the names of the towns and districts of the provinces of the seven circuits and the capital region. Record in detail the types of products of those districts: silver, copper, pigments, grasses, trees, birds, beasts, fish, insects, and so on. Include in records the fertility of the soils, the origins of the names of mountains, rivers, plains, and fields, and the ancient sayings and unusual events transmitted by the elders, and report them to the court.

Scholars typically divide this order into five categories of information: (1) auspicious orthography for place names; (2) lists of local products; (3) evaluation of soil quality; (4) place name origins; (5) local myths and legends. The five extant fudoki are often evaluated for their contrasting emphases on these elements: for example, the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* pays almost no attention to auspicious orthography and contains extensive accounts of local legends, while the *Harima no kuni fudoki* consistently notes the soil quality of localities and firmly roots most of its narrative material in the origins of place names.

The motivations for the five elements of the order are not identical, but all are clearly linked to the interests of the central government and its local representatives. Indications of soil quality and local products are of obvious relevance to the tax system, and the establishment of auspicious place names projects the power of the central state (and its Sinitic values) and also

[1] Scholars since the Edo period have assiduously collected fudoki fragments, which are included in modern editions and commentaries along with the five comparatively intact "old fudoki."

potentially confers actual good fortune on those localities. The value of local lore is not as apparent on the face of the order, but in practice it is clear that the officials compiling the fudoki used this element of the reports to link local places to legendary sovereigns said to have sojourned there, with congenial implications for the political center (and also for their own authority as its representatives). The fudoki contain much material of local origin, but it is filtered through the outlook of the central elite, either directly because provincial officials from the capital worked as compilers, or indirectly because editors with peripheral origins catered to metropolitan concerns.

Only one gazetteer survives in a complete manuscript: that for the province of Izumo (modern Shimane prefecture). The remaining four old fudoki include one that is missing its introduction and at least one district (Harima province, the southwestern part of modern Hyōgo prefecture]) and three abridgements: Hitachi province and two from Kyushu, Bungo (Ōita prefecture) and Hizen (portions of Nagasaki and Saga prefectures). It is only by chance that these were not lost like dozens of other original gazetteers, but luckily something of the variety of that corpus is apparent even from this relatively small sample. They seem to have been compiled over the few decades following the 713 order: of the extant five, those for Harima and Hitachi are generally taken to date to the years immediately after the order, with the Bungo and Hizen fudoki over a dozen years later, in the 730s. Alone among these, the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* is explicitly dated, to the fifth year of the Tenpyō era (733).

It is unlikely that all of the eighth-century fudoki were compiled in the same way, but in most provinces local officials presumably sent reports on their districts to the governor's offices, after which the overall report was centrally compiled and edited (the subsections of the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* are signed by district heads [*gunji*], and the opening of the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* proclaims it to be a report of the provincial governor [*kokushi*]). As might be expected from this complex provenance, and also from their fundamental role mediating between provincial circumstances and metropolitan ideals, the extant fudoki are multilayered, polyphonous works, marked by internal tensions and inconsistencies and by dramatic departures from the content of other gazetteers, and of other early works such as the *Kojiki* and the*Nihon shoki*.

In keeping with the specifications of the 713 order, the fudoki include information about place names and their derivations, local products (especially plants and animals), geographical features (including soil quality), and customs and legends. Following an initial section describing the province as

a whole, they are divided into sub-sections for each district (*gun*), which is then further subdivided into entries for townships (*gō*), and also in some cases for mountains, rivers, and so on. Within this broad structural framework, each of the five extant old fudoki has distinctive emphases and tendencies. All of them are filled with discussions of place name origins and local legends, but, for example, as mentioned earlier the *Harima no kuni fudoki* contains extensive notation of soil quality with comparatively little attention to local products, while the reverse is the case for the *Izumo no kuni fudoki*.

In some cases the prose of the gazetteers is workmanlike at best (some scholars consider the *Harima no kuni fudoki* to be a draft rather than a finished product), but others are written with elegance and flair. All of them reflect the familiarity of their compilers with the vocabulary and usage of formal literary Chinese-style writings, with extensive borrowing of terms and patterns of expressions from Confucian classics and belletristic anthologies like the *Wenxuan*. The *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* in particular is known for the Sinified rhetoric of many of its accounts of legends and depictions of local customs. Like several other fudoki it also incorporates a few vernacular poems, as in the two irregular *tanka* (written phonographically) included in a famous portrayal of the *utagaki* or *kagai*, a carnivalesque ritual of song and frolicking youth convened on Mount Tsukuba. The entry for this district of Hitachi province traces the approachability of the mountain to an encounter between the deities of Mount Fuji and Mount Tsukuba and their parent, who responded to a lack of hospitality by making Fuji isolated and snow-covered, and rewarded Tsukuba for a generous reception by ensuring that for generations people would climb the mountain and make offerings. The resulting ritual is described as follows:

> Now, Mount Tsukuba towers above the clouds. The western peak is high and steep; they call it the male god and do not let anyone climb it. However, though the eastern peak is covered with boulders there is no end to the people who ascend it. There is a spring flowing at its side that never runs dry, regardless of the season. All of the men and women of the eastern provinces come hand in hand, when the flowers bloom in the spring, when the leaves turn in the fall, bringing food and drink. On horseback and afoot they climb up to enjoy the most pleasant recreation. Among their songs are:
>
> Whose invitation
> Did she accept,
> That girl who said she'd meet me
> On Tsukuba's peak,
> That she would not meet me there after all?

> Oh that dawn
> Would come soon,
> On this night that I sleep
> Without a partner
> In a grass hut on the peak of Tsukuba.
>
> They sing so many songs that they cannot all be recorded. It is a local saying that one unable to obtain a courting prize at the Tsukuba gathering is neither man nor maid.[2]

Characteristically, in addition to the story about the mountain deities and the preceding passage, this entry also includes information about surrounding territories, recounts a cryptic etymology of the district name, and specifies the area of a prominent lake.

The fudoki are not unified literary works, but miscellaneous collections of data and narrative fragments incorporated into a spatial framework. The importance of this mass of material for the study of early Japanese language, history, culture, and religion cannot be overstated, but it is understandably more common for non-specialist readers to approach them in excerpted form, as discrete myths or legends, or as passages of fine or interesting writing. Nonetheless an undeniable pleasure of these heterogeneous works is how often their plodding catalogues of toponyms, local products, and soil qualities suddenly open out onto vivid narratives and memorable vignettes.

[2] The traditional orthography for the toponym is Tsukuha; in the eighth century the final syllable would have been pronounced "pa."

5

Man'yōshū

H. MACK HORTON

Man'yōshū (Collection of Myriad Leaves) is Japan's oldest extant anthology of vernacular verse and the most revered repository of its classical poetic tradition. Though its last dated poem was composed more than 1,250 years ago, it has through the centuries been repeatedly characterized as the fountainhead of the Japanese poetic spirit. Its more than 4,500 verses evoke visions both of ancient Japanese life and of eternal human concerns. The anthology is notable for its breadth in terms of years covered, poets included, and verse forms, topics, and themes represented. *Man'yōshū* includes approximately 530 named poets, although half the verses in the collection are of anonymous authorship. The bulk of its poems were composed over a dozen decades, from the mid seventh century (though a small number of works may be earlier) to 759, the year of the last dateable poem (20: 4516).[1] Although the vast majority of poems are *tanka* of (generally) thirty-one syllables, several other forms are included, some of them already obsolescent at the time of its compilation. Unlike later imperial anthologies, there is no preface detailing its provenance. But internal evidence indicates that it likely began as a kernel collection of fifty-three verses, compiled in about 700. This ur-*Man'yōshū* would have taken shape before the compilation of *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720), but the anthology reached its final majestic twenty-book size through a series of expansions that spanned about a century.

Man'yōshū is structured according to a variety of organizational principles, and a number of different compilers were involved. It is widely believed, however, that the creation of the final twenty-book anthology was overseen by Ōtomo no Yakamochi (718?–85), and the last four books are mostly drawn from his personal poetry collection. Much of *Man'yōshū* was compiled during

[1] This is also the final poem in the work. Poems are numbered and cited according to the text in Kojima Noriyuki, Kinoshita Masatoshi, and Tōno Haruyuki, eds. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vols. 6–9, *Man'yōshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1994–6).

the periods of retirement of several female sovereigns who likely had motivating roles in its formation, foreshadowing the prominence of female poets, diarists, and fiction authors in Heian and Kamakura literature.

Just as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were compiled with the aid of earlier histories that do not survive, *Man'yōshū* drew material from numerous other lost Japanese anthologies that are cited in its pages (e.g. the personal poetry collections of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro and several other poets). The final version was also preceded by Japan's oldest extant anthology of verse, *Kaifūsō* (Florilegium of Cherished Airs, 751), the preface of which states that many works of literature were destroyed long before, in a bibliocaust accompanying the Jinshin succession war of 672. The final twenty-book version of *Man'yōshū*, therefore, contains some of the earliest poetry in the vernacular tradition, but it took shape through a dialogue with a variety of other Japanese models as well as with anthologies imported from China.

This dialogue is demonstrated most obviously by the fact that the prose annotations of the anthology are in the Chinese style. The vernacular Japanese poetry it collects is written in a variety of complex early systems that use Chinese characters to write sometimes words (logographs) and sometimes sounds (phonographs). The latter type, now referred to as *man'yōgana* in honor of its prominence here, is also used to transcribe vernacular poetry in other early works such as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. These systems became obsolete and eventually partially unintelligible after the development of the simpler *hiragana* and *katakana* phonetic systems in the early Heian period, and much subsequent scholarship on the anthology was devoted to recovering its ancient and obscure readings.[2]

Despite the enormous number and variety of poems, certain overriding characteristics can be identified. Versification figured in banquets, love affairs, partings, imperial progresses and other forms of travel, epistolary correspondence, funerals, and other events of heightened significance. There was in addition a strong performative element to these verses, which were sometimes accompanied by music and dance. Verses were often appreciated in groups and collectively composed; poetic exchanges are common. Several poets often contribute to a corporate sequence, or to a group of poems later sequenced or augmented by an editor.

Man'yōshū poems are, with exceptions, more emotional than intellectual, and sadness is for the most part found more worthy of poetic expression than

[2] Another complicating factor is the fact that the language of the Nara capital in the eighth century employed eight vowels, rather than the modern five, which added more color to the phonological palette of the verses.

happiness. Love poetry, for example, sings more of longing than consummation, absence rather than presence. So too does travel poetry concentrate more on homesickness than the diversions of the road, though scenic description remains essential.

The anthology was compiled during the greatest period of social change in premodern Japanese history. The years covered by the collection witnessed the implementation of a wide range of Chinese governmental policies and cultural practices intended to centralize Japanese imperial power, including new capitals, new policies of land tenure, and new legal codes. Chinese historiographical examples spurred the composition of Japanese analogues in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and Chinese views of poetry and poetic anthologization gave rise to new Japanese versions, at the pinnacle of which stood *Man'yōshū*. Its verses bear testimony to the monumental transitions from a preliterate world of song to one of writing and from poetry as communal ritual to personal lyric expression.

Title and format

In that the anthology contains poetry composed over many decades, the term *man'yō* 萬葉, literally "myriad leaves," is often interpreted to mean "myriad ages," a common metaphor found in earlier Chinese texts. Others take "leaves" instead to be a metaphor for "words" or "poems." It has even been suggested that "leaves" means, as in English, "pages," which were connected to form scrolls (Yakamochi himself used the character "leaf" this way). But in view of its prevalence elsewhere at least one meaning of the title was surely "collection of a myriad ages," and perhaps also "*for* a myriad ages."

Copies of the original text would have been physically massive, as each of twenty books consisted of one entire scroll. The length of these varied by the number of poems they contained, but they would have averaged about fifty feet and weighed about a pound each. Each scroll eventually had a table of contents (*mokuroku*), but there were no indexes, so finding a particular poem was time-consuming, and repetitions inevitably crept in during compilation. Many of the poems contain textual variants that were inserted interlinearly, a practice that bears witness to a developing sense of textual criticism. Codex versions of the anthology appeared in the mid-Heian period, and printed editions began in the early seventeenth century, culminating in the widely disseminated Kan'ei *hanpon* woodblock printing of 1643. The oldest surviving fragment is the Katsura manuscript from the mid-Heian period, and the earliest complete version is the Nishi Honganji manuscript from 1266, the base text for

most modern editions, which generally include indexes, transliterations of the original writing system, translations into modern Japanese, and copious notes.

Constituent typologies

The 4,500 or so poems in *Man'yōshū* include a number of different poetic forms, all except the few works in Chinese being known by the general term *uta*, which means either "song" or "poem." Ninety percent of the total, 4,200 or so, are in the tanka form, the thirty-one syllables of which are distributed in five units of five, seven, five, seven, and seven. Those units or measures, called *ku*, are often translated as "lines"; they constitute discrete syntactical sub-units, although poems were not usually represented on the page in groups of five and seven syllables. The earliest poems are sometimes irregular in meter, and in certain phonological environments hypermetric (*jiamari*) segments appear, though they may have been chanted metrically through elision (synaloepha); hypometric (*jitarazu*) segments occasionally appear as well. *Man'yōshū* tanka often exhibit stronger pauses after segments two and four, a division which is termed "five-seven meter" (*goshichichō*), as opposed to the tanka of later ages that often favor stronger pauses after the first and third segments, hence "seven-five meter" (*shichigochō*). In at least one case (8: 1635) a tanka was composed by two poets, one providing the opening three units and the other the last two. Such corporate compositions came to be known in later ages as *tanrenga* (short linked verse), precursors of the linked sequences that became a major poetic form in the medieval period.

The *chōka* ("long poem"), of which there are 260 or so, comprises an indeterminate number of alternating units of five and seven syllables and ends (in its mature form) in a seven-syllable couplet. The longest in the anthology (2: 199) contains 149 segments. Chōka are usually followed by one or more tanka (usually called *hanka* or "envoys" in that environment), which either restate thematic elements of the longer poem or develop new but related material. The origin of these short codas is unclear, though influence from the Korean *hugu* "following verse" has been suggested. Unlike the tanka, the chōka did not survive *Man'yōshū* as a dominant poetic type, though it continued to be occasionally employed in later ages. The narrative element that the chōka contributes to *Man'yōshū* distinguishes the anthology from the twenty-one imperial anthologies that followed, in which the form survives only vestigially.

Other poetic forms in the anthology essentially disappeared after the *Man'yōshū* age. One is the *sedōka* or "head-repeating poem," represented by

sixty-one examples. It consists of thirty-eight syllables in a distribution of five, seven, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables. Another form is the *bussokuseki-ka* or "Buddha's footstone poem" of five, seven, five, seven, seven, and seven syllables, which takes its name from a group of such poems incised on a stone, together with a representation of the footprints of the Buddha on a second stone, in the grounds of Yakushiji temple in Nara. There is only one example (16: 3885), though other tanka may have been adapted from prototypes in this form.

Poetic form is one way in which the collection is organized. Book Thirteen, for example, includes only chōka and hanka, and its companion, Book Fourteen, only tanka. But a more conspicuous organizing principle was by generic type, of which three are basic. These are *zōka* ("miscellaneous poems," originally by and large of a public character), *sōmon* (poems conveying feelings to another, mostly about love between men and women), and *banka* ("[coffin-]pulling poems," i.e. elegies or dirges). All three genres appear in all three basic poetic forms (tanka, chōka, sedōka), and all three terms are taken from the Chinese anthology *Wenxuan* (Selections of Refined Literature, *c*. 520–6), though only zōka and banka are used therein as poetic categories. Of the three genres, sōmon focus most on quotidian, personal expressions of emotion, made either directly or through metaphor, those two approaches being identified in the anthology under the rubrics "expressing feelings directly" (*seijutsu shinsho*) and "expressing thoughts by means of things" (*kibutsu chinshi*). About half the poems in *Man'yōshū* include love elements. Other organizational principles are the chronological, the geographical, and the seasonal. Travel is another main topic; fully a quarter of the poems either directly or indirectly deal with journeys, and many of those involve parting or longing for home, thus adding a love element. Despite the variety of organizational principles, the constituent parts of the anthology evince close attention to structure and internal cohesion.

Prehistory

Literary histories of *Man'yōshū* poetry typically divide it into four periods, starting in the mid seventh century and ending with the last dated poem (of 759). This leaves a handful of works, mostly prominently placed in the early books of the anthology, which are attributed to earlier, largely legendary poets. Though attributions of poems to figures from antiquity are problematic, several dozen of the poems in the collection are indeed quite old, dating back well into the seventh and perhaps as early as the sixth century.

Most are in Books One and Two, which both open with legendary figures from the distant past, doubtless positioned there to symbolize the antiquity of the courtly poetic tradition. *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are both associated with attempts by Emperor Tenmu to demonstrate the legitimacy and indeed the divinity of his lineage and to provide his realm with written histories analogous to those of China. *Man'yōshū* appears to have been undertaken in part with similar motives, to depict in verse the divine lineage of the ruling house and to manufacture a poetic "tradition" for native verse like that already long established in China.

The earliest figure to whom verse is attributed (however apocryphally) is Iwanohime, consort of Emperor Nintoku (thought to correspond to an early fifth-century ruler). The group of poems under her name (2: 85–8) that opens Book Two of the anthology expresses the worry and frustration of a woman who waits for her spouse, a theme that would go on to animate much of the female writing of the Heian period. The verses form a series, in which she agonizes about whether to continue to wait or to search for him in the hills, but finally becomes resigned to her vigil. The final form of the sequence was surely the contribution of a later compiler, who reworked older poems and added new material.

Man'yōshū begins with a courting verse for a maiden gathering herbs on a hillside purported to have been composed by Emperor Yūryaku (thought to correspond to a late fifth-century ruler), who was remembered as an exemplar both of martial and of cultural endeavors.

ko mo yo	With your basket,	
miko mochi	your lovely basket;	
fukushi mo yo	with your trowel,	
mibukushi mochi	your lovely trowel,	
kono oka ni	maiden, gathering herbs	
na tsumasu ko	on this hillside,	
ie norase	tell me your house;	
na norasane	tell me your name!	
sora mitsu	Over the sky-seen	
yamato no kuni wa	land of Yamato,	
oshinabete	it is I	
ware koso ore	who rule over all;	
shikinabete	it is I	
ware koso imase	who reign over all.	
ware koso ba	Shall I	
norame	tell you	
ie o mo na o mo	my house and my name?	(1: 1)

In this opening verse, the ruler in spring, at the start of the year, encounters a maiden while viewing the land (*kunimi*), a ritual in which he ascends a promontory and gazes over his realm to promote fecundity and prosperity. Presumably the daughter of a powerful local family, she is collecting herbs, another spring ritual that would later become a courtly New Year rite associated with regeneration. Asking for her hand also demonstrates the ruler's intent to establish an alliance with her family, augmenting his own authority and consolidating his realm. That realm, Yamato, is modified by the epithet "sora mitsu," the first example in the anthology of a *makurakotoba* (lit., "pillow word," a later coinage). Such epithets, each of which conventionally modifies a specific noun or set of nouns, may have originally functioned to draw forth the entelechy of the word that followed. Many are so ancient that their meanings are no longer clear, but their presence as modifiers adds a venerability and grandeur evocative of their original magical intent. The most common interpretation of "sora mitsu" is "sky-seen," relating to a legend in which a god sailed the sky in a rock boat, but another interpretation is "sky-filling." In form, the poem is as primeval as its content: it is a chōka composed of segments of an increasing number of syllables rather than of the alternating fives and sevens that became the norm. It is also characteristic of early song in its simple parallelism, a formal aspect that was strengthened by the introduction in later ages of complex Chinese parallel structures.

In addition to these verses attributed to Yūryaku and Iwanohime, the small group of poems from the prehistory of the anthology includes some said to have been by Prince Karu (13: 3263–4) and Princess Karu (2: 90), who were later punished for their incestuous love affair. Another early verse (3: 415) is attributed to Prince Shōtoku (trad. 574–622), an apotropaic composition made upon encountering a corpse by the roadside (a common occurrence in early Japanese journeys and the subject of one of Hitomaro's most famous poems).

Period One (629–672)

From the accession in 629 of the ruler later known as Emperor Jomei (?–641), attributions of authorship gain historical plausibility; the number of poems also markedly increases. Jomei ascended the throne after the death of the female sovereign Suiko (554–628), the last ruler represented in the *Kojiki*. Literary historians customarily begin Period One of *Man'yōshū* poetry with this reign, the verses with earlier attributions constituting a kind of prelude.

Most of this poetry is by members of the imperial house or figures close to it, demonstrating the cultural attainment of the court. Like earlier verses, poems from Period One are represented through the mediation of eighth-century editors, who introduced anachronistic elements of transcription and commentary.

Despite the dramatic political changes of the time, the poetry from Period One begins with a traditional land-viewing composition attributed to Jomei:

yamato ni wa	In Yamato
murayama aredo	there are many mountains,
toriyorou	but when I ascend
ame no kaguyama	the most divine of all,
noboritachi	heavenly Mount Kagu,
kunimi o sureba	and view the lands around,
kunihara wa	smoke is rising here and there
keburi tachitatsu	from the plains,
unahara wa	and birds are rising here and there
kamame tachitatsu	from the waters.
umashi kuni so	Lovely it is,
akizushima	Dragonfly Isle,
yamato no kuni wa	this land of Yamato! (1: 2)

This is a paean to natural beauty, but it also contains less apparent ritual qualities promoting prosperity and averting misfortune. By pronouncing the land to be "lovely" (*umashi*), the sovereign hopes the word will act and reinforce the observation. Land-viewing here, probably accompanied by music and dance, becomes ritual theater, a state spectacle intended to reinforce the paramountcy of the ruler. In form, the verse expands from details to encompass the entire realm, just as Jomei's imperial sway radiates from his person throughout the land at large. While the poem reflects attention to word choice and parallel structure in the depiction of a lyrical moment, to interpret it merely as a belletristic composition is reductive and anachronistic.

The impact of Chinese models becomes stronger as Period One progresses. Part of the richness of *Man'yōshū* resides in the dialectic of Japanese and Chinese and the ways in which poets expressed themselves both through native prototypes and through appropriations from abroad, often via the Korean peninsula and immigrants therefrom. Chinese influence is implied in the basic motivation to assemble poetry into an anthology and in the even more basic tool of writing that facilitated it. Though *Man'yōshū* retains traces of preliterate song, all such songs stood to be

influenced or reconstituted in the very act of writing them down, and some that appear as tanka with regularized meter were probably less regular originally.

Works as early as *Shijing* (Book of Poems) and *Chu ci* (The Songs of the South) were influential in Japan, and the *fu* (rhapsody, or rhyme-prose) of the Han encouraged in a general way the development of the fictional persona and banquet improvisation. But a more important source was the literature of the Six Dynasties, a period approximately covering the third through the sixth centuries, and that of the early Tang. The main sources were the two sixth-century Chinese anthologies, *Wenxuan* and *Yutai xinyong* (New Songs from a Jade Terrace, *c*. 545), together with the classified literary encyclopedia *Yiwen leiju* (Belles-Lettres Classified, *c*. 620). Such texts demonstrated which poetic topics could be introduced in a courtly setting and which images and rhetoric were to be used to express them. Also important were the Confucian classics, collectanea of Buddhist scripture, Taoist texts such as *Bao pu zi* (The Master Embracing Simplicity, by Ge Hong, *c*. fourth century), and even the mildly erotic work of narrative fiction *You xianku* (A Dalliance in the Immortals' Den, by Zhang Zhou [*c*. 657–730]). The verses of such Six Dynasties poets as Cao Zhi (192–232), Lu Ji (261–303), Tao Qian (365–427), and Xie Lingyun (385–443) provided powerful models for *Man'yōshū* poets. It has been argued that a Chinese tendency to approach the topic of the poem obliquely (the *yipang* style) was of particular importance. This drew attention to the reasoning process of the viewer as much as to the scene being viewed, an intellectual approach reflected in locutions involving perception or realization. Such oblique approaches would go on to become a hallmark of the *Kokinshū* style.

The dialectic between native and foreign animates the work of the first major poet of the anthology, Princess Nukata (or Nukada, *c*. 627–after 690). As a wife of Prince Ōama (later Tenmu) she bore him a daughter and later entered palace service in the time of his elder brother Tenji. Her most famous poem, now known as "The Spring and Autumn Debate" (1: 16), begins with a headnote in which Tenji orders his minister Fujiwara no Kamatari to adjudicate the merits of spring flowers and autumn leaves, presumably in a Chinese-style poem. Here, Tenji is depicted presiding over a cultured court whose members attend not only to matters of state but also to artistic pursuits, which in keeping with venerable Chinese principles were inextricably related. But this literary command was evidently beyond Kamatari, at which point Princess Nukata responded in his stead, but in the vernacular. Such proxy composition would be a basic function of palace poets, of whom

Nukata was a precursor. In the end she decides in favor of autumn, having maintained suspense until the very last syllables of her poem. No longer a ritual verse to praise deities, provide protection, or promote fertility and prosperity, the verse is instead a belletristic exercise with a literary problem and a dramatic solution, one which also has the political effect of showcasing Tenji's enlightened court.

Nukata also composed poems of a more ancient, ritual type. Two were made after Tenji's death and later appeared in a set of verses created by members of the late emperor's female entourage (2: 147–55). A palace poet, she also figures as a shamaness, and the three chōka and nine tanka that are attributed to her in the anthology (not all universally accepted) make her the most distinguished poetic figure of this early *Man'yōshū* era. Other notable works from the period include Naka tsu Sumeramikoto's chōka and hanka in praise of Jomei (1: 3–4), a chōka and hanka attributed to Prince Konikishi expressing homesickness while on an imperial journey (1: 5–6), and Prince Yuge's love songs for Princess Ki (2: 119–22). There is also a chōka set (1: 13–15) attributed to Tenji about a love triangle between the three mountains surrounding what would become the Fujiwara capital. The work of this period shows a persistence of poetry as oral ritual, even as certain of its poets begin to assay the more individual forms of expression characteristic of Chinese verse. This interaction between native ritual song and belletristic creativity reaches its apotheosis in the next period, in the work of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro.

Period Two (672–710)

After Tenji's death in 671 his son Prince Ōtomo (648–72) was defeated by his uncle, Tenji's brother Tenmu (Prince Ōama), in the brief Jinshin War the following year. Tenmu's absolute monarchy was legitimized by his own purportedly divine origins, a pedigree first celebrated in song (19: 4260) by Ōtomo no Miyuki, who fought alongside his liege in the war. The court at this time began to conceive itself as its own cosmos, rather than as a satellite of China, even as it progressively adopted aspects of Chinese culture. After Tenmu's death in 686, his wife Empress-Consort Uno (Jitō) acceded herself, reigning until Prince Karu (later Emperor Monmu, 683–707), her grandson by her prematurely deceased son by Tenmu, was old enough to succeed her. It was during Jitō's reign that Fujiwara, Japan's first Chinese-style capital city, was constructed; it would remain the capital during the reigns of her two

successors, Monmu and her half-sister Genmei (661–721), until the move north to Nara in 710.

Literary historians take the Jinshin War and the move to Nara as the temporal boundaries of the second period of *Man'yōshū* poetry. Jitō's premier poet so dominates this period that it is sometimes simply referred to as "the age of Hitomaro." He is also the first important poet in the collection not of the imperial family, though his clan title (*kabane*) indicates that he was peripherally related. A forebear appears to have been connected to the Wani, a once powerful house that served the court, but nothing is known of Hitomaro's own life, the details in his own verses being tantalizing but unverifiable. During the eleven years covered by his dateable poetry (687–707), he composed at least eighteen chōka and sixty-four tanka, thirty-six of the latter being hanka envoys to chōka poems, meaning that the bulk of his work was in the chōka-hanka form; 364 poems either composed or collected by him are labeled as being from the eponymous *Kakinomoto no Asomi Hitomaro kashū* (Hitomaro Poetry Collection), which no longer exists, but served as one of the main sources for Books Seven through Twelve. As Jito's principal "palace poet," Hitomaro produced ceremonial eulogies on the deaths of princes and princesses and encomia for the court that contributed to the grandeur of the imperial house and the deification of the sovereign. But he also composed more personal works on parting, travel, and death, which remain some of the most moving works in the language.

Hitomaro's oldest dateable verse set (2: 167–9) was written on a theme of central importance to Jitō, the death in 689 of Prince Kusakabe, her son by Emperor Tenmu and his presumptive heir. In these earliest of Hitomaro's extant poems, his genius is already apparent. The first half of the chōka recapitulates the founding myth of the dynasty, in which "the eight million deities, the ten million deities" meet by the riverside in the Plain of High Heaven and decide that the Sun Goddess Amaterasu should rule the celestial realm and that her grandson Ninigi should be sent down to rule the Japanese islands. This venerable history is conveyed in a single, syntactically complex sentence in which the ends of certain segments are repeated at the beginning of the ones that follow, an ancient technique also found in Songs of the Records and Chronicles (*kiki*) and early liturgies (*norito*). Thereafter, through syntactic elision, Ninigi is conflated with Kusakabe's late father Tenmu, who likewise rules "as a god." Mythic time then transitions to the historical present, wherein the loss of Tenmu's intended successor in the divine lineage, Kusakabe, "Peer of the Sun," is mourned. His death is depicted as his own ineffable decision, and he causes his own mausoleum to be raised. The

primordial sweep of the first part of the chōka narrows in the end to the courtiers, inexplicably bereft of the young sovereign who, had he lived, would have ruled radiant as "spring blossoms" and "the full moon." In this public verse, Hitomaro speaks for the entire court, his lines at once perpetuating imperial divinity even as they lament the break in the imperial succession.

The death in 696 of another of Tenmu's sons, Prince Takechi (b. 654), occasioned the composition by Hitomaro of the longest poem in *Man'yōshū* (2: 199–202). Takechi had fought with distinction in the Jinshin War and later served as great minister of state in the court of his mother Jitō. Hitomaro sets the stage for Takechi's accomplishments by describing the background of the Jinshin conflict, once again speaking of Tenmu in divine terms. Then follows the only description of a battle in *Man'yōshū*, in which the young prince leads his troops to the thunder of drums and the shrill of flutes, loosing a blizzard of arrows and then charging an enemy that is finally routed with the aid of a "divine wind" (*kamukaze*), leaving no doubt as to whose cause is favored by the gods. The divine wind was an invention of the poet's, but elements of the battle scene are drawn from Chinese sources. Hitomaro then turns to Tenmu's subsequent reign, in which Takechi serves the sovereign, again characterized as divine. But just at the height of his glory, Takechi vanishes from the earth, and his palace becomes a godly shrine. Like Kusakabe's retainers, Takechi's know not what to do in his incomprehensible absence; they "look back at the great palace," then "with humility they bury him, bury him as a god" by heavenly Mount Kagu. The chōka builds and builds, makurakotoba upon makurakotoba, parallel phrase echoing parallel phrase, matching in sublime and lofty language the enormity of the event that has occurred.

The verse treads a fine line, glorifying – indeed, deifying – Emperor Tenmu while avoiding any direct condemnation of his brother and predecessor Tenji, who had turned from Tenmu but who was, after all, the father of Tenmu's consort and Hitomaro's sovereign, Jitō. The same care is taken in one of the best known of all Hitomaro's elegies, "Passing the Ruined Capital of Ōmi" (1: 29–31). The verse functions in part as a meditation on evanescence, but it was doubtless meant as well for spirit pacification (*tamashizume*). From the headnote, which has Chinese analogues in its use of the construction "passing [place name]," it may be that the poet was a traveler. While not condemning the Ōmi court, the verse cordons it off from the new imperium of Tenmu and Jitō, who moved back from the "hinterlands" to the Yamato heartland.

sumeroki no	Though I understand it was here,
kami no mikoto no	the great palace
oomiya wa	of that divine
koko to kikedo mo	sovereign,
ootono wa	though they say it was here,
koko to iedo mo	his great hall,
harukusa no	when I see the great palace
shigeku oitaru	of serried stones
kasumi tachi	overgrown
haruhi no kireru	with spring grasses
momoshiki no	in the rising haze
oomiyadokoro	that obscures the spring sun,
miredo kanashi mo	I am filled with grief.

The poet, a spokesman for the court, cannot use the ruined capital as an example of the inevitable eclipse of those who rule, as could the author of the preface to *The Tales of the Heike* centuries later. And yet the sadness of ruined magnificence is palpable.

Together with elegies for a distanced past, Hitomaro's public poetry also includes works of praise for the current reign, like the set which bears the headnote, "Verses composed by Kakinomoto no Asomi Hitomaro on the occasion of an imperial progress to the palace in Yoshino" (1: 36–9). Jitō's thirty-one journeys to Yoshino, south of the site of Tenmu's palace at Asuka, were made perhaps in part to enjoy the natural scenery, but probably more to commune with the past and to benefit from the mana of that locale. It was in Yoshino, after all, that Jitō had taken refuge years earlier with her husband at the time of the Jinshin War that had determined their fate. The characterization of the area as "pristine" (*kiyoki*) is thought to indicate a holy purity, divorced from the mundane. There, the courtiers compete to serve at the sovereign's side, with no mention of the trials of the journey. Indeed, the company travels through an earthly paradise, in imperial peace and harmony. Hitomaro's verse again has overtones of land-viewing, and the poet speaks not of his personal emotions, but of the godly sovereign and her generalized retinue of courtiers.

And yet Hitomaro is also renowned for his verses on personal themes, many of which likewise involve parting, either from someone left behind or from someone gone ahead in death. But despite their personal nature, these too would probably have been presented in public. One of the most famous is the group of poems (2: 207–16) that, the headnote tells us, the poet "composed in grief and suffering, weeping tears of blood, after the death of his

wife." As with the Yoshino examples above, Hitomaro composed a pair of chōka on his loss, each followed by hanka. In the first poem it seems initially that the poet is still looking forward to another meeting with his beloved; the fact of her death is not apparent until halfway through the verse. When it is finally unveiled, the preterite is used for the first time, making the shock to the listener or reader all the more wrenching. We then accompany the bereaved husband to the market his departed spouse used to frequent, but which is now barren. The poem thus divides into preparation and conclusion, the details of the speaker's love expressed in the beginning heightening his loss at the end. The two hanka that follow are an essential part of the whole, deepening the pathos of the husband's desire to do anything possible to assuage his longing, and then depicting a later time when the immediate pain seems dulled, only to stab at the heart again.

Another particularly renowned pair of chōka-hanka sets depicts the speaker's parting from a woman in Iwami province (western Shimane prefecture) to journey back to the Fujiwara capital. The first of this group (2: 131–7) is again constructed in two parts; the preparatory half of the verse describes the natural surroundings, a distant seacoast that may seem to the outsider to have no redeeming value. But the speaker knows better, for it is here that his spouse lives, she who curls beside him like the sea-plant that floats on the waves. As in so much of Hitomaro's work, nature is not so much a backdrop as a participant in the poem, and it sets the tone and provides the metaphors for what is to come. Again the verse begins in the present, the landscape of Iwami being the same now as it was in the past. Then the past tense is used to great effect for the first time with "the girl would come and lie beside me, like gem-plant," at which point we know the man has already parted from her. Here too we do not see the moment of parting but only the aftermath; Hitomaro's speaker looks back "ten thousand times" down the twisting road, but as in Karu, he can do nothing more in the end than make a futile gesture, here commanding the mountains themselves to bow down so that he might have a last view of where his spouse lives.

The verse also demonstrates the interrelationships between *Man'yōshū* genres; these verses are sōmon, because the speaker is thinking of another, though he does not actually exchange poems with her. But the only difference between this set of verses and banka are that the person has not died. The parting is as final, though, given the fragility of human life in premodern society. Travel too overlaps with the sōmon genre, as parting, travel, and distance are often what bring about thoughts of an absent other. And in its hardship and danger, travel may also require banka for strangers who met

their ends on lonely roads, as in another of Hitomaro's great chōka, composed "upon seeing a dead man among the rocks on the island of Samine in Sanuki" (2: 220–2). In the seventh century, attention was paid to improving the country's network of roads, but travel was still travail, and all travel was foreign travel; once beyond the confines of his native heath, the traveler was cut off from his own spoken dialect and, worse, from his native gods. Unknown deities in unknown places might take umbrage at his incursion, and mortal illness might result. Thus poems "encountering a corpse on the roadside" constitute an established sub-genre of travel verse, with Chinese analogues. It is sad but fitting to note that Hitomaro himself is reputed to have perished on a journey, like another great travel poet of almost exactly a thousand years later, Matsuo Bashō. The legend springs from a verse (2: 223) whose headnote tells us Hitomaro composed it "in grief at the point of death in Iwami province." The irony is multiplied by the assertion that he died in Iwami, the place in which he had earlier taken leave of a woman he loved, although many question the provenance of this verse.

Hitomaro's poetry is often characterized as demonstrating the intersection of ancient oral formulae from the primordial past with the new art of writing and more advanced rhetoric, some of it inspired by Chinese examples. Certainly this is true, though that intersection can already be seen in the work of, for example, Princess Nukata before him. Hitomaro's accomplishment lies in the genius with which he accomplished the concatenation. He has also been characterized as having developed an original lyric voice out of the old, ritually charged words. This too is true; Hitomaro's chōka in particular can be mistaken for no one else's. But his poetry, on either public or personal themes, never lost its close connection to ritual, and in his public verse, at least, self-expression was not his primary purpose. Such verse was intended to aggrandize and indeed deify his patrons, the ruling members of the imperial house. But for this public poetry, politically motivated and ritually charged, to be successful, it also had to move its listeners, and this Hitomaro accomplished through skillful manipulation of lofty, ritual vocabulary set within the inexorable rising tide of his extended parallel structures. His verses on personal themes also may have had a political effect (exploited by later editors) in that they too showed that a culturally enlightened imperial house had fostered such a poetic efflorescence. As the leading court poet of his generation Hitomaro's genius was immediately recognized. Ōtomo no Yakamochi speaks of his debt to Hitomaro in a headnote to one of his own chōka sets (17: 3969–72), and the bard later came to be considered a patron saint of the Japanese poetic way.

Though Hitomaro utterly overshadows his contemporaries of Period Two, some of them are nevertheless memorable in their own right. One is Takechi no Kurohito (fl. end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century), whose nineteen extant tanka are entirely about travel. The verses are typical of the developing travel mythos in their depiction of melancholy on the journey, rather than of exciting discovery. Though Kurohito shared much with Hitomaro, particularly his penchant for travel, his own poetic approach to passing the ruined capital of Ōmi (3: 305) is quite different, with a focus more on himself than on the scene.

Period Three (710–733)

The formidable female sovereign Jitō died in 703, her passing bringing a temporary end to imperial journeys to Yoshino and causing a hiatus in the sponsorship of palace poetry that some cite as a reason for ending Period Two in that year. Others set the final year even in 701, the end of Hitomaro's known span of activity. But the more common line of demarcation for Period Three is drawn at 710, when the capital of Heijō (Tranquil Citadel) was proclaimed in Nara to the north of Fujiwara. A new breadth of style and approach characterizes this period of *Man'yōshū* poetry, together with a developing sense of individuality and experimentation. While the chōka never again reached the heights of sublimity it had with Hitomaro, it remained a vibrant art form in the hands of "palace poets" like Yamabe no Akahito (fl. 724–36), Kasa no Kanamura (fl. 715–33), and Kurumamochi no Chitose (or perhaps Chine, fl. 720s–730s). It was also productively incorporated into new types of poetic sequences with long prefaces or afterwords in Chinese prose by the two leaders of the "Kyushu (or Tsukushi) poetic circle" (both modern terms), Ōtomo no Tabito (665–731) and Yamanoue (or Yamanoe) no Okura (660–*c.* 733). Takahashi no Mushimaro (fl. 720s–*c.* 737) crafted narrative poems of material from Japanese legend, and Lady Ōtomo no Sakanoue (*c.* 695–fl. until 750) maintained the poetic prominence of the Ōtomo after Tabito's death, even as she became the de facto head of the house until Tabito's son Yakamochi reached maturity.

From the point of view of poetic composition, the early years of the Nara capital were not particularly productive. There are no poems from imperial progresses from the sixteen years of the reigns of empresses Genmei and Genshō, and of the major poets of the era there is only a single set by Kasa no Kanamura (2: 230–2). But in 723, the year before the accession of Jitō's grandson Emperor Shōmu (701–56), imperial progresses to Yoshino

recommenced, and with them, chōka in praise of the imperium. Shōmu's reign was a brilliant period of courtly, Buddhist, and international flavor. A peripatetic sovereign, he made journeys to Kii, Yoshino, Naniwa, and Inano, which are memorialized in the verses of Kanamura and his fellow palace poet Yamabe no Akahito. While those poets continued to compose poetry in the service of the court as had Hitomaro before them, discourse on rulership in the new capital was shifting emphasis from divinity and charisma to the *ritsuryō* legal codes. Akahito and Kanamura perpetuate Hitomaro's approaches to imperial praise, but their poetry in certain ways departs from his model and explores new avenues of expression.

Though almost nothing is known of the life of Yamabe no Akahito, he eventually came to be paired with Hitomaro (whose background is just as vague) as one of the two great poets of the *Man'yōshū* age, with Ki no Tsurayuki asserting in the preface to *Kokinshū* that "it was impossible for Hitomaro to excel Akahito, or for Akahito to rank below Hitomaro" (trans. Helen Craig McCullough). His extant oeuvre is smaller than Hitomaro's, with only thirteen chōka and thirty-six tanka, and the chōka are shorter. His adoption of the Hitomaro idiom is clearly seen in such verses as 6: 923–5, a set on the Yoshino palace. The two hanka, both masterpieces, pursue topoi introduced in the chōka. Doubtless the set was meant to evoke the vitality and life-force inherent in the locale. But a personal element is also interjected there in a reference to the call of plovers, which implies homesickness or sad thoughts of the past, as in Hitomaro's earlier verse (3: 266) about hearing them at Ōmi.

As opposed to his brilliant treatment of the hanka, Akahito's approach to the chōka has been described as perfunctory. But it has also been argued that he exploits Hitomaro's earlier work to establish a connection between the present monarch and the earlier sovereigns who viewed the Yoshino region as a spiritual center. Like his palace-poet predecessor, Akahito describes Yoshino in terms of its confluence of river, mountains, and blossoms, where "the courtiers of the great palace of serried stones" pay eternal homage. And like Hitomaro, Akahito evokes that perpetuity in parallel phrases. And yet unlike Hitomaro, who explicitly involves Empress Jitō in his composition, Emperor Shōmu remains an abstraction for Akahito, who prefers to imply the sovereign's glory through the sublimity of the space he inhabits.

Akahito gives new emphasis to the beauty of nature for its own sake. Scenic description, which in Hitomaro's public poetry is a means to express imperial glory, is for Akahito becoming an end in itself (though overtones of

ancient land-viewing persist). This is true for many of the tanka in his oeuvre, with the result that he is remembered primarily as a master of the shorter tanka form and as a pioneering proponent of Japanese nature poetry. The centrality of nature is also characteristic of his verses composed in a personal capacity. Perhaps the most famous of these is a chōka-hanka set composed "on viewing Mount Fuji" (3: 317–18). Imbued with the dignity of ancient land-viewing songs, the chōka employs ritual vocabulary. It is anachronistic to conflate such verses with what is now referred to as "landscape poetry," but in the hanka, Akahito is clearly giving new prominence to natural description as an end in itself:

tago no ura yu	Passing Tago Bay,
uchiidete mireba	I come into the open and look:
mashiro ni so	pure white,
fuji no takane ni	on Fuji's lofty peak,
yuki wa furikeru	snow has fallen!

Such scenic description assumes central importance in the seasonal books of subsequent imperial poetic anthologies.

On his journey with the sovereign to Yoshino in 725, Akahito was accompanied by his fellow palace poet Kasa no Kanamura, who likewise commemorated the event (6: 920–2). The Kasa were an ancient house lately fallen to middling rank in the court hierarchy. Kanamura has forty-three poems remaining, eleven of which are chōka. Again like Akahito, he bases his Yoshino verses on those of Hitomaro, but he too places increasing emphasis on the scene that the emperor beholds. Kanamura also composed verses about a woman awaiting her spouse (4: 543–5), a proxy set on behalf of a lady whose lover was traveling in the imperial train to Kii Province (Wakayama and southern Mie prefectures). Even though the speaker acknowledges that travel has its pleasures, it is the hardship of the journey, shared by the one who leaves and the one left behind, that will become central to the developing poetic travel mythos. There are parallels to works like the last of the "Nineteen Old Poems" (*c.* second century) collected in *Wenxuan*, a famous Chinese example of the traveling man and the waiting woman that also contrasts pleasure and misery.

But the impact of Chinese examples is best seen in the context of the creativity of the Kyushu poetic circle, most notably Ōtomo no Tabito and Yamanoue no Okura. Their compositions, which include some of the best-remembered verses in the anthology, are poles apart from early *Man'yōshū* poetry or from the work of Hitomaro. The project of Tabito and Okura was

nothing less than the creation of a new literary corpus born of the fusion of vernacular verse and Chinese literary forms and themes, to produce an amalgam meant to be appreciated less as oral than as written literature. In the process, they generated new kinds of sequences with learned Chinese prose forewords or afterwords, accretive compositions with multiple authorship, and flights of fictional versiprosa, variously informed by elements of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist philosophy.

The innovation of the Kyushu circle, active from 728 to 730, resulted not only from the brilliance of Tabito and Okura, but from the fact that they were not "palace poets," who were required to compose (at least in their official capacities) on topics of imperial concern. The circle had its beginnings when Tabito made the month-long journey to northern Kyushu to take up his post as governor-general of the Dazaifu commandery. Built originally to defend against invasion by Silla, Dazaifu also served as the gateway from the continent, which made its residents well placed to learn of Chinese literary developments.

Despite the vast difference in poetic approach between Tabito and Hitomaro, they were of the same generation, which shows how *Man'yōshū* poetry simultaneously developed along numerous trajectories in a short period of time. Tabito's main period of activity, however, occurred in his late years, which is why he is assigned to Period Three of *Man'yōshū* history. And while almost nothing is known of Hitomaro's biography, Tabito is the first of the major *Man'yōshū* poets whose life can be traced in detail. He became head of the Ōtomo, an ancient military house that had long served the throne, in 714, and five years later was promoted to the office of middle counselor. He then continued the military traditions of his forebears by containing a rebellion in southern Kyushu in 720, which may have been the reason he was made governor-general in 728, when he was already 64 years old. There, he developed friendships with such literati as Tajihi no Agatamori (?–737), Ki no Ohito (682–738), Manzei (fl. 704–31), and most importantly, Yamanoue no Okura. Also adept at poetry in Chinese, Tabito was a member of the salon of Prince Nagaya (684 [or 676]–729), and had Chinese-style verses included in *Kaifūsō*. Such accomplishments informed his literary approach during his Dazaifu years.

Yamanoue no Okura was appointed governor of Chikuzen province (where Dazaifu was located) in late 725 or early 726. The two men evidently had only limited contact at first, but their interaction increased dramatically after the death of Tabito's wife. Okura also had risen to high office and to literary prominence late in life. Though his origins are still debated, it is likely

that he was born in Paekche and taken to Japan as a child by his father, a physician, after Paekche was overcome by Silla in 663. It was his foreign heritage, and probably his skill at Chinese, that led to his inclusion as a low-level emissary with the Japanese mission to the Tang in 702. During his stay in China, perhaps for as long as six years, he composed a verse (1: 63) that is thought to be the only one in *Man'yōshū* made abroad. When he finally returned to Japan he was appointed governor of Hōki province (western Tottori prefecture, on the Japan Sea) in 716. His scholarship received public recognition in 721 when he was made tutor to the crown prince, the future Emperor Shōmu, and it may have been at this time that he compiled a now-lost personal anthology of poetry that later became a source of material for *Man'yōshū: Ruijū karin* (Classified Forest of Verses). It was likely organised on principles borrowed from literary encyclopedias like *Yiwen leiju*.

The bulk of the work of Tabito, Okura, and other affiliates of the Kyushu poetic circle is recorded in Book Five of *Man'yōshū*, which together with 104 tanka and ten chōka includes two poems in Chinese, ten Chinese prefaces to sequences of Japanese verse, five letters in Chinese, and one extended Chinese essay. This heavy Chinese presence gives Book Five a different character from the rest of the anthology and demonstrates the commitment of Tabito and Okura to constructing an amalgam in which Japanese and Chinese are posited as equal.

Book Five opens with a tanka "by Lord Ōtomo, governor-general of Daizaifu, in response to doleful tidings," prefaced by a short letter in Chinese parallel prose (5: 793). It is unknown to whose death or deaths the title refers, but in view of the first line of the letter, which speaks of doleful tidings mounting up, it seems that several are involved. This initial poem is followed by another versiprosa group (5: 794–9) by Okura, which begins with two Chinese works – a prose essay expatiating on evanescence in terms of Buddhist philosophy and a four-line poem – and ends with a vernacular chōka, with hanka, entitled "Japanese elegy." The title establishes parity between the two styles involved in the set. Again, the identity of the deceased is unclear; probably Tabito's wife, but perhaps Okura's.

The combination of Chinese-style preface and Japanese poetry is nowhere better demonstrated than in a thirty-two-verse sequence composed for a plum-blossom viewing banquet at Tabito's mansion in 730 (5: 815–46). The event and its literary manifestation were based on one held in China in 353, immortalized by the "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection" by Wang Xizhi (321–79, or perhaps 307–65), which served as an important model when such prefaces became popular in the Tang. Plums had been imported to

Japan from China, where they were associated with the image of the scholar, which gave Tabito's banquet a pronounced Chinese aspect. Like the first two poetic sets in Book Five, the composition opens with Chinese-style prose, variously attributed to Tabito or Okura, whose literary relationship was clearly symbiotic. The form in which the gathering is recorded suggests that guests composed verse extemporaneously, with one poet responding to the next in a manner premonitory of medieval Japanese linked verse. But it is also possible that only some of the poems were composed on the spot, with others (most likely the final twelve) having been sent in later by poets unable to attend. Still another theory brands the entire event an idealized fiction. The thirty-two verses are followed by later additions, the last of which depicts plum blossoms that address the poet in a dream.

Immediately following the plum-blossom series is a completely fictional creation, "An excursion to Matsura River" (5: 853–63). Like the preceding group, it begins with a Chinese preface in which a fictional speaker describes an encounter with beautiful maidens fishing. They assert that they are lowly seafolk, but their speech, full of learned Sinitic references, indicates otherwise; they then invite the traveler to grow old along with them, and he agrees. Eleven poems follow: three groups of exchanges between the traveler and the beauties, and then three appended verses attributed to "the venerable governor-general." The preface borrows from *You xianku*, in which a traveler encounters elegant women living in obscurity, a plot that anticipates later Japanese tale literature, notably *Ise monogatari* and *Genji monogatari*. (It may also include echoes of "Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess" by Cao Zhi, from *Wenxuan*.) It is unclear who composed the set, but "venerable governor-general" sounds like Tabito. It seems to have been he, furthermore, who sent the Matsura River and plum-blossom sequences to a friend in the capital, who sent back verses "harmonizing" with the plum-blossom sequence, prefaced by a euphuistic letter in Chinese. (Such responses from the capital show that amalgams of poetry and prose in Chinese and Japanese were not limited to the Kyushu poetic circle.) These two sequences demonstrate the degree to which Chinese literature had become the stock-in-trade of Nara literati, and also the way that original works could be augmented and reshaped by later hands into corporate creations.

Tabito endured many trials in his last years. He was a member of the salon of Prince Nagaya and suffered by association when the prince was charged with treason and forced to commit suicide in 729. Then he was appointed in his mid-sixties to the distant post in Kyushu, where he soon lost his wife. These hardships have been adduced as the motivation behind his

composition of another memorable sequence, "Thirteen Verses in Praise of Wine" (3: 338–50). While there is no need to give these poems a biographical reading, their overriding Taoist mentality is clear. Nor are they as simple as they may seem; they contain, for example, allusions to the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and to Zheng Quan, who wished to be buried next to a kiln, and, after he had turned to earth, to be remade into a sake jug. The syncretistic outlook of the Nara aristocrat is also in evidence here, as one verse is based on Buddhist notions of karma and rebirth.

Tabito also composed in more traditional vernacular modalities. One example is a set of five tanka elegies (3: 446–50) purporting to depict his journey back to the capital in 730, when as a widower he returned past places he had seen on his way to Kyushu with his wife years before. Also in a more traditional idiom is a set on Yoshino (3: 315–16). To judge from the headnote, Tabito evidently assumed that he might be commanded by the sovereign to compose, and so he prepared the verses for that eventuality, which did not materialize. The set cannot be read today without recalling the Hitomaro poems about Yoshino (1: 36–7) and perhaps Samine (2: 220–2) that evidently informed it. The verses show that Tabito was a poet of rare versatility, capable of original Chinese–Japanese amalgams, but also, when the situation warranted, of works that drew on venerable convention.

But the member of the Kyushu poetic circle who made the greatest contribution to Japanese letters was Yamanoue no Okura, the poet with the most distinctive voice in all of *Man'yōshū*. Although it is hard to tell in some cases which parts of a sequence were composed by Okura and which by Tabito, it appears that Okura was responsible for twelve or so chōka, sixty-nine tanka (of which twenty-eight are hanka), two Chinese poems, and twelve works of Chinese prose in *Man'yōshū*. He first appears in Book Five in the above-mentioned "Japanese Elegy," the first truly philosophical poem group in the anthology. There, he sets forth the Buddhist principle of the evanescence of all things, then applies it to the inevitability of human aging and then, in a Confucian spirit, to husbands and wives and their bond, gradually narrowing his focus to address the death of a spouse, which is then reexpressed in the vernacular chōka that follows.

Okura presented "Japanese Elegy" to Tabito along with three other chōka-hanka sets, a sequence of three sequences: "To a Deluded Heart" (5: 800–1), "Thinking of his Children" (5: 802–3), and "On the Impermanence of Life" (5: 804–5). All three address the anxiety of existence, encapsulated in the phrase "human life" (*yo no naka* or *seken*) which appears in each. "To a Deluded Heart" admonishes "Master Spurn-the-World" (recalling similar

forms of address in Taoist texts), who on the pretext of philosophical detachment ignores the brevity of life and his Confucian obligation to support and protect his family. Some suggest that Okura wrote the poem as a didactic piece in his capacity as provincial governor. But it may be that "Master Spurn-the-World" is none other than Okura himself, who is trying to solve his own internal conflict between love and renunciation, duty and escape. The same struggle between philosophy and feeling is seen in Okura's next set, "Thinking of his Children." As in the previous, the intellectual argument is presented in the Chinese-style preface, and the emotional one in the Japanese poem. Here Okura begins by stating that even the Buddha loved his son Rahula despite his recognition of the pain that such attachment entails. In the vernacular verses that follow he writes of melons and chestnuts, small yet moving images from daily life that evoke the conflict between parental love and the cares it brings. Perhaps they were treats his children particularly liked. But scholars have pointed to a possible connection between those images and the "pears and chestnuts" that the Six Dynasties poet Tao Qian mentions in a poem about his nine-year-old son, and melons and chestnuts also figured in celebrations of conception and birth, thus perhaps bringing children to mind even more strongly. The last of the three sets, "On the Impermanence of Life," again begins with a Chinese preface that introduces its theme in philosophical terms, contrasting the ease with which trials accumulate and the difficulty with which they are dispelled. The speaker then switches from the "telling" to the "showing" mode in the chōka, lamenting how soon frost comes to the black tresses of pretty young women and how soon the young men who spend nights in their embrace must exchange their hunting bows for old men's canes.

Okura's love of children, a comfort in an old age plagued with pain, is nowhere more excruciatingly demonstrated than in the chōka and two hanka that follow these, entitled "Three Poems Longing for a Boy named Furuhi" (5: 904–6), which end Book Five of *Man'yōshū*. Readers partial to biographical interpretation have taken the child in question to be Okura's own; others, in view of the Kyushu circle tendency toward fictionalization and proxy poetry, have suggested that the boy was imaginary. Okura begins with a short, de facto preface that appears to be a Buddhist denial of the "seven treasures," until it transpires that the boy is for him even more precious, indeed "a pearl." He then exploits a traditional two-part chōka structure to show dramatically why the little boy was so loved, thus strengthening the effect of his death. This was Hitomaro's technique in his poem on the death of his wife in Karu, and here as there, the awful fact of death comes just as the poet has tempted

fate, secure "as in a great ship" of the boy's future. And here too, the present tense is employed to give the entire narrative a dramatic sense of immediacy, accentuated by occasional irregular syllabification, which seems to reflect in formal terms the disorder in the speaker's heart.

In contrast to Hitomaro, who like poets of later generations gives in his personal poetry his most vital expression to love for a spouse, Okura is most moved by the bonds between parents and children. Even in his unique depiction of social injustice, "Dialogue on Poverty and Destitution" (5: 892–3), which again relies on details from daily life expressed in the vernacular, the climax occurs when the destitute man describes his failure to provide for his family:

fuseio no	on the straw-strewn
mage io no uchi ni	earthen floor
hitatsuchi ni	of my hovel
wara tokishikite	with its canted roof,
chichi haha wa	my father and mother
makura no kata ni	at my pillow
mekodomo wa	and my wife and children
ato no kata ni	at my feet
kakumiite	surround me
uree samayoi	with their wailing;
kamado ni wa	the stove
hoke fukitatezu	sends up no smoke,
koshiki ni wa	and in the rice kettle
kumo no su kakite	a spider spins its web,
ii kashiku	for we have forgotten
koto mo wasurete	what it is to cook rice,
nuedori no	and they moan
nodoyoi oru ni	like the mountain thrush

Such poems on social concerns constitute an important theme in Chinese poetry (indeed, Okura borrows Chinese imagery in this chōka) but are rare in the Japanese tradition. Their first-person point of view makes them particularly dramatic and affecting.

Okura is a poet of dialectic: between love and loss, parent and child, youth and old age, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, mind and heart, expressed with a concomitant formal contrast of Chinese and Japanese, prose and poetry. Like Tabito, he is not primarily a poet of nature but of the human condition, yet while Tabito sometimes uses verse as cultured escape, Okura confronts the pathos of life. With their structural innovations, probing philosophical enquiry, and plentiful references to Confucian texts, Buddhist tracts, and Chinese poetry, Okura's works are very different from

the simpler verses of only a few decades before, but they likewise conclude in emotion; their disciplined recognition of the inevitability of age and death and their perception of the futility of attachment to the self and to others coexist with an utterly human desire for life, family, and peace.

The poetry of this period also includes the work of Takahashi no Mushimaro, who though not a member of the Kyushu circle possessed a voice likewise original, particularly in his interest in legends and folkways. He appears to have been a contemporary of Yamabe no Akahito, to whom he is often compared. Like Akahito, he was a "professional" poet, having served Fujiwara no Umakai and also perhaps a prince. Mushimaro's travels appear to have taken him to the eastland, since he wrote verse about Mount Tsukuba (9: 1757–8). It suggests that for him travel was changing from the journeys made by necessity in the earlier years of the collection to ones made to refresh the spirit with inspiring vistas. Climbing to the summit, he enjoys the view of fields of pampas grass, geese, and waves on Toba Lake, and concludes, "Seeing how good is the peak of Tsukuba, the sadness that had grown over the long days of travel vanishes from my thoughts." There may still be some element of earlier praise of the land, but the focus is now on the speaker and his own state of mind. The land now serves the poet, rather than vice-versa. Here is another manifestation of the stronger sense of the individual that will become even more marked in the last period of *Man'yōshū* and thereafter. Mount Tsukuba is also the setting for a chōka-hanka set (9: 1759–60) by Mushimaro that portrays an earthy folk event called a *kagai* or *utagaki* (also described in *Hitachi no kuni fudoki*), in which young men and women were given license to exchange courting songs and couple, perhaps originally to promote the fecundity of the land. Mushimaro also appears to have written a poem about Mount Fuji (3: 319–21), though not all commentators attribute it to him. Though both poets are overwhelmed by Mount Fuji's divine power and majesty, Akahito wants more to paint a picture of the mountain, while Mushimaro (if it was he) is more interested in telling its story.

Mushimaro (9: 1807–8) and Akahito (3: 431–3) also wrote verses about the legend of the maiden Tegona, of Mama in Katsushika in the eastland, who suffered not from an absent lover but from suitors all too persistent. Mushimaro recounts the story of this young woman of such beauty that she attracts young men "like summer insects drawn to a flame." Overcome by attention she does not seek, she lies down to die. Though likewise taken by this tale, Akahito, by contrast, again avoids elaborating on a story he evidently assumes the reader already knows. As in Hitomaro's verse on passing the ruined capital of Ōmi, he reflects on how the passage of time

has erased all evidence of Tegona's grave, but not her memory. Just as in many noh plays of later centuries, Akahito's composition is "all end," the events having occurred long ago, leaving only poignant reminiscence. Another young woman in a similar predicament is depicted in Mushimaro's "A Poem (with Tanka) on Seeing the Grave of the Maiden of Unai" (9: 1813–15). Here the girl grows to womanhood and attracts the attentions of two young rivals; they take up weapons ready to compete for her, and the maiden forestalls their mortal combat by taking her own life. But the two youths follow her in death and are buried to either side of her grave. The legend was later retold in *Yamato monogatari* (Tales of Yamato) and then in the noh play *Motomezuka*.

Mushimaro's longest and best-known work is "A Verse on Uranoshimako of Mizunoe, with a Tanka" (9: 1740–1), which recounts the legend of a man known in later centuries as Urashima Tarō. While out fishing one day, he encounters the daughter of the sea god, and they become man and wife, living in her father's palace at the bottom of the sea. But inevitably he misses his home, asks leave to visit, and when he does, he finds that all has changed beyond recognition. He carries a magic comb box given to him by his wife that will allow him to return to her if he does not open it, but open it he does, and he immediately ages and dies. This Rip van Winkle story approaches the theme of evanescence from the opposite side, wherein a man has eternal life and happiness assured him, but gives it all away.

Period Four (733–759)

Most scholars begin the last of the periods into which *Man'yōshū* is divided in 733, with the death of Yamanoue no Okura and the first extant dateable poem by Tabito's son Yakamochi, the dominant poet of the late *Man'yōshū* age (6: 994). The decade of the 730s was one of transition; Tabito died in 731, and Kasa no Kanamura disappeared from the literary scene two years later. And yet Yamabe no Akahito left works that can be dated to 734 and 736, and Takahashi no Mushimaro too may have remained active until about the same time, with the result that some prefer to continue Period Three to 736. In any case, many important poets died or disappeared from the records in the early and middle years of the decade. The years 735–7 witnessed the greatest epidemic in recorded Japanese history, with catatastrophic economic and political consequences. The deaths of the leaders of the four branches of the Fujiwara house left the political field open for their rival Tachibana no Moroe (684–757, the patron of Ōtomo no Yakamochi) and for other anti-Fujiwara

factions. (The poets Akahito, Kanamura, and Mushimaro may also have died in the epidemic.)

Ensuing political instability led Emperor Shōmu, who had come to the throne in 724, to abandon the Nara capital in 740 for a period of shortlived attempts to found new capitals elsewhere in central Japan. He did not return to Nara until 745. These years of travel were memorialised by Tanabe no Sakimaro (fl. 740s), who wrote official poetry in praise of the nascent capital at Kuni (north of Nara) and also of the later move to Naniwa (in modern Osaka). Remembered as the last of the *Man'yōshū* palace poets, Sakimaro resuscitates Hitomaro's vocabulary of imperial encomia in such compositions as "Two Poems in Praise of the New Capital at Kuni, with Tanka" (6: 1050–8). His expression of sadness on the abandonment of the Nara capital (6: 1047–9) also recalls the earlier poet's description of the ruined capital of Ōmi. One of the most important poets in the last period of *Man'yōshū* not of Ōtomo descent, Sakimaro left a collection (now lost) that supplied verses on a variety of familiar themes, including, for example, the discovery of a corpse while on a journey (9: 1800). The collection also included verses on the legend of the Maiden of Unai (9: 1801–3) and a banka on the death of the poet's younger brother, in which he includes such affecting expressions as "my younger brother and I, born of the same father and mother and close as a pair of chopsticks" (9: 1804–6). As in Hitomaro's banka, initial homey details heighten the effect of the subsequent death, which once again is described as being willed by the gods.

After Shōmu's return to Nara in 745, the Heijō capital flourished. The sovereign was himself a poet, and a chōka and ten tanka of his are preserved in *Man'yōshū*. He abdicated in 749 in favor of his daughter Kōken (718–70). This was a period of great cosmopolitanism, with the influence of Chinese and Silk Road culture apparent in developments such as the construction of Tōdaiji (Great Eastern Temple) to serve as the center of a network of state-sponsored provincial temples (*kokubunji*). Added to the culture in these years were Chinese pastimes like *kemari* (a genteel kickball game), *sugoroku* (resembling backgammon), and *go*; various musical instruments; and foods like glutinous rice and tea. The Shōsōin Imperial Repository, still standing at Tōdaiji, reflects the elegance of the court at the time; many items in its collection belonged to Emperor Shōmu and his consort Kōmyō. Their daughter Kōken abdicated in 758 in favor of Junnin (733–65), who was dominated by the Fujiwara, now led by Fujiwara no Nakamaro (706–64), who in 764 rose in revolt against the power of the former empress. He was suppressed and executed, and Kōken returned to the throne as Shōtoku,

stronger than before. Such political upheaval underlay the brilliance of mid eighth-century culture, including the deceptively pacific poetry of *Man'yōshū*.

Tabito's half-sister Lady Ōtomo no Sakanoue (*c.* 695–active until 750) managed the Ōtomo house after her brother's death, until his son Yakamochi came of age. She had gone to Kyushu to aid Tabito after the death of his wife and served as foster mother to Yakamochi, who would eventually marry her eldest daughter. She is the best-represented female poet in *Man'yōshū*, and third overall, with eighty-four poems. She was married three times and many of her verses deal with love. Her longest poem (3: 460–1, also the longest by any female poet in *Man'yōshū*) is a banka for a Korean woman who had lived for decades with the Ōtomo. It employs the old chōka manner, but it also reflects the diglossic versiprosa of the Kyushu poetic circle of Okura and Tabito in its extended Chinese-style afterword, thought to have been added by another hand. Lady Ōtomo no Sakanoue also shares with Okura recognition of the parent–child bond, specifically between herself and her two daughters. The elder of these, Yakamochi's cousin and eventual wife Ōtomo no Sakanoue no Ōiratsume (Elder Lady), left a significant body of poetry herself, entirely devoted to love.

While the poems of the Kyushu poetic circle were the products of an elite displaced into the western periphery, *Man'yōshū* also includes voices from the opposite end of the country and the opposite end of the social scale, the "songs of the eastland" (*azuma-uta*). They are collected in Book Fourteen and grouped by province of origin; this is the only book in *Man'yōshū* in which geography constitutes an organizing principle, though the standard genres of zōka, banka, sōmon, and "metaphorical poems" (*hiyuka*) form the primary armature. The book includes 230 verses (and eight complete variants), ninety of whose geographical provenance within the eastland is known. Most are love poems. The verses are all anonymous and tend to be declarative in form and frank in expression, leading some scholars to assume the majority were originally oral and to classify them as folk songs. But the azuma-uta are all tanka and may therefore be the result of early cross-fertilization with courtly poetry. Though these poems generally employ the same topics and rhetorical approaches found in courtly tanka, they retain elements of local dialect. The degree to which they were selected by a courtly editor from a wider sampling is unknown, as is the extent to which they may have been revised to conform to courtly norms. Their presence in *Man'yōshū* adds an exotic note to the collection while at the same time demonstrating the ongoing centralization of the country and the length of the imperial reach.

Unusual though they are in many respects, the "songs of the eastland" serve as a reminder of an important characteristic of *Man'yōshū*: nearly half of its verse is anonymous. Its many hundreds of unattributed poems are concentrated in books in the middle of the anthology: Book Seven and Books Ten through Fourteen. With a variety of organizational principles, including the standard genres, topics (ordered in the manner of a Chinese classified encyclopedia), the seasons, and (now-lost) source collections, and containing mainly tanka (except for Book Thirteen, which collects chōka), this portion of the *Man'yōshū* serves as a kind of nascent poetic encyclopedia, and as such is a forerunner of compendious later works like the Heian period *Kokin waka rokujō*.

Book Fourteen is followed by two other distinctive books. It appears that before the addition of Yakamochi's personal poetry collection, *Man'yōshū* ended with Book Fifteen, with a version of what is now Book Sixteen added as an appendix. Book Fifteen comprises two long poem-tales, one attributed to Japanese envoys to the Korean kingdom of Silla, and the other to the exiled Nakatomi no Yakamori and his lover in the capital, Sano no Otogami (or Chigami). Both are based on travel poetry in the context of love, composed by men on compulsory journeys and by spouses who await their return.

The 145 Silla verses (15: 3578–3722) are represented as having been composed or chanted in the context of an embassy that set out from the port of Naniwa in 736 for the Silla capital and returned the following year. The poetic account is devoted to travel sentiments of longing and homesickness. In that it contains all the important *Man'yōshū* poetic forms (chōka, tanka, and sedōka) and genres (sōmon, banka, and zōka), it constitutes a microcosm of late *Man'yōshū* approaches to travel (except for pleasure). The sequence begins with a number of parting exchanges in which the goal of a return to home and wife by the end of autumn is set forth. As the subsequent journey progresses, images of deepening autumn become objective correlatives, as it were, for increasing frustration and longing for home. Like most later travel literature, this is an account of the journey away; there is only a five-verse coda that anticipates the arrival home. More than a dozen poets are identified by name, and some of them are corroborated in other sources, a fact which strongly suggests that some of the verses were indeed composed by members of the mission. Much of the poetry is conventional, with analogues found in other parts of the anthology, exhibiting the sense of communal creative expression that was essential to the poetic life of this period. The organization of the sequence also suggests that a later editor put it into its final form and very likely added poems to improve its cohesion. But the practice of banquet

composition, wherein several poets, often apparently in groups of four, composed verses responding to and developing each other's themes, would also have naturally contributed interrelationships to the individual segments.

The second account of travel and longing in Book Fifteen (verses 3723–85), attributed to the exiled courtier Nakatomi no Yakamori and his lover Sano no Otogami, comprises sixty-three tanka, arranged in four pairs of multiverse exchanges between the man and the woman, plus a seven-verse coda. Like the Silla sequence, it appears to have been based on historical realities; there was an actual Nakatomi no Yakamori who was exiled to Echizen in early 739 for an unknown transgression and who was pardoned in 741. The Nakatomi-Sano set constitutes a compendium of the conventions of courtly longing. Here too the constituent parts of the sequence trace a temporal and spatial progression, beginning with parting poetry exchanged between the lovers, with the woman speaking first. The constituent verses often share imagery, while exhibiting a larger temporal and spatial trajectory, anticipating the principles of association and progression typical of later poetic anthologies. Again the journey is away, though here most of the poetry is composed while Yakamori is in exile in Echizen, rather than on the road.

Book Sixteen is the most anomalous in *Man'yōshū*, apparently having been something of a catch-all appendix to the earlier fifteen-book version of the anthology. Entitled "Poems with a Story and Miscellaneous Poems," it includes mostly anonymous verses that are notable for their popular, light, or atypical qualities, thus anticipating, in a sense, the unorthodox *haikai* poetry collected at the end of the later anthology *Kokinshū*. Here appear, for example, the only extant "Buddha's Footstone Poem" (16: 3885) in the anthology and poems on the legend of the bamboo-cutter (16: 3791–3802), familiar from an alternate version from the Heian period entitled *Taketori monogatari*. Book Sixteen also includes examples of earlier poems placed into new prose contexts (e.g. 16: 3804–5), a practice anticipating that of "poem-tales" (*utamonogatari*) like *Ise monogatari*. Found in Book Sixteen as well are a few songs by "beggar-minstrels" (*hokaibito*), who sang for their suppers. This type of poem, the azuma-uta of Book Fourteen, and the verses by border guards (*sakimori*) in Book Twenty (see below) are brief, unusual vignettes of the non-courtly world, though subject to a considerable degree of later editing.

The last four books of *Man'yōshū* come almost entirely from the personal poetry collection of Ōtomo no Yakamochi, whose 479 extant verses make him the best-represented *Man'yōshū* poet. The work of his youth is dominated by exchanges with a variety of women, including not only his aunt's

daughter, whom he would later marry, but also Lady Kasa, who left twenty-nine poems to him. The last four books of the anthology provide a detailed view of courtly poetic life in the mid eighth century through his verse and that of his associates. This was an age of continuing poetic experimentation, of new themes and new techniques. But it was also a great age of banquet verse, making up fully one third of these books. Here experimental creativity and isolated melancholy could give way to communal poetic activity. By this time basic poetic literacy was coming to be considered a defining characteristic of the courtier. In such environments, originality coexisted with formula.

Yakamochi also turned his hand on occasion to public themes, such as a paean to Yoshino (18: 4098–100) that again invokes the divine sovereign and the courtiers who flock to his service at the palace there amid waters and mountains. That set too was prepared in advance. Another was "On the Discovery of Gold in Michinoku" (18: 4094–7), in which he quotes a traditional song of his house that a millennium and more later would be revived as an encomium to patriotism and sacrifice in the Second World War.

But despite the importance of communal poetic presentation and apprehension to eighth-century poetic life, it is also true that by then Japanese poets had developed a stronger sense of the individual poetic self, and that the divisions between the gods, nature, and humankind were more clearly sensed. The growth of literacy and written culture itself encouraged this division. Another major factor was, of course, the assimilation of Chinese prototypes. The best-known exemplar of this new sense of the individual was Yakamochi, some of whose verses depict solitary reflection and a separation from the older sense of community given bardic voice by Hitomaro scant decades before. Yakamochi's "three verses on springtime melancholy" (19: 4290–2) are often adduced as examples of this new spirit, which was likely influenced by Six Dynasties examples. The third is particularly well known:

uraura ni	On this spring day,
tereru haruhi ni	beneath the mild sun,
hibari agari	a lark starts up;
kokoroganashi mo	how my heart aches,
hitori shi omoeba	as I muse in solitude!

This was an age both of testing new poetic directions and of groping toward universal poetic conventions, of communal stereotypicity in some cases, but in others of inspired solitary creativity. In their sense of introspection and bittersweet pathos (*aware*), such poems by Yakamochi are much closer to

those of *Kokinshū* and the later imperial poetry collections than they are to those of earlier *Man'yōshū* periods.

So too were poetic representations of nature and travel changing in the late *Man'yōshū* years. Though there are some precursors in the early books of *Man'yōshū* (e.g. Princess Nukata's spring and autumn debate), poetry that addresses seasonal beauty in itself and personal reactions to it are by and large a characteristic of later *Man'yōshū* poets, notably Akahito, Yakamochi's father Tabito, and particularly Yakamochi himself. Nearly half of his oeuvre includes seasonal elements. The new attitude to nature coincided with the increasing weight of Chinese models and also with the rising popularity of poetic banquets in the late *Man'yōshū* period, in which poets might "compose on things" and treat a seasonal element not necessarily as something experienced at the moment, but rather as an aestheticized ideal.

This new sense of nature as aesthetic vista rather than as ineffable divine mystery, seen earlier in Mushimaro's poems on Mount Tsukuba, is expressed particularly well in verses exchanged by Yakamochi and his kinsman Ōtomo no Ikenushi about an excursion to a lake in the province where Yakamochi was currently serving as governor. Yakamochi sent an opening chōka, which he called a *fu* in the Chinese manner, and Ikenushi harmonized with his own (17: 3993–4), responding to Yakamochi's chinoiserie by referring to the hanka of his chōka as a *jueju*, the four-line regulated Chinese verse form. The poem is carefully organized into two parts, a forty-eight-*ku* main section and a nine-ku conclusion. The main section is subdivided with precision into three sixteen-ku parts of two eight-ku portions each (perhaps reflecting the eight lines of Chinese *lüshi* regulated verse), consisting of introduction, narrative en route, and narrative at the lake. The last three eight-ku segments are all marked by place names at or near where they begin, but makurakotoba are deemphasized. While there may be lingering elements of praise here for local deities, the main purpose is to describe with literary sophistication a journey undertaken to enjoy the landscape. It has been suggested that in such exchanges Yakamochi and Ikenushi were attempting to inject new creative life into the flagging chōka genre. Clearly not all travel in *Man'yōshū* was melancholy and coerced.

And yet Yakamochi also preserved in his personal poetry collection examples of travel that was unquestionably involuntary and sad; these are the verses by border guards (sakimori), men aged twenty through fifty-nine who were conscripted for three-year tours to guard north Kyushu and the islands of Oki and Tsushima. Originally instituted to defend Japan from counterattack after the defeat of Paekche and its ally Japan by the united armies of Silla and the

Tang in 663, in its heyday the system included two to three thousand guards, mostly from the eastern provinces. Book Twenty (20: 4321–4436) includes 116 border-guard verses (there are a handful in other books). Taking advantage of his office as assistant vice minister for war, Yakamochi collected eighty-four of these verses (eighty-three tanka and one chōka) from 755 together with nine tanka from previous years, adding one by another imperial official. As was typical of the practice of his father's Kyushu circle, he added twenty-two verses on border-guard themes he had written himself, some even in a guard's persona. The original poems constitute the largest group in the entire anthology by named members of the periphery. But their inclusion again reflects the growing influence of the imperial center, and Yakamochi was selective, rejecting what he considered "inferior" attempts. While the metrical regularity of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables in these poems strongly suggests courtly influence and editorial reworking, some border-guard poems retain elements of eastern dialect, like the azuma-uta. Twenty-four of the border-guard poems mention parents and children, and thirteen others, home and family. Yakamochi's inclusion of the sakimori verses, along with his own imitations, suggests an affinity with the fictive invention, social consciousness, and family concerns of his father's colleague Yamanoue no Okura, whose "Dialogue on Poverty and Destitution" (5: 892–3) was discussed above.

Yakamochi's poetic activity is emblematic of this formative and volatile period of Japanese letters. On the one hand, it exemplies the increasing emphasis on the inner life of the individual poet and on new and original ways of expressing it in verse; on the other, it demonstrates a simultaneous awareness of a growing alienation of the individual from communal human life and separation from the natural environment. While assimilating lessons from Chinese verse forms, Yakamochi simultaneously lamented the decline of the native chōka and became its last important practitioner.

Ontogeny and reception

Yakamochi is central to the history of *Man'yōshū* not only for the unparalleled number of his poems that it includes and the new directions they adumbrate, but also for his probable role in overseeing work on the anthology as it survives today. The largest division in the final version of *Man'yōshū* is between the first sixteen books (the "old collection"), which contain poetry through 744, and the last four books (the "new collection"), largely Yakamochi's personal poetry collection and mostly dating from 746–59. As noted above, the anthology is believed to have originally consisted only of

the first fifty-three verses of Book One, which include the imperial reign of Yūryaku and then the six reigns of Jomei and successors. That kernel collection may have been compiled in about 695–703, a period that overlaps with the Fujiwara capital and the retirement of the female sovereign Jitō. The introductory fifty-three poems have also been referred to for this reason as the "Fujiwara Palace *Man'yōshū*" or as the "Jitō *Man'yōshū*." In that he was the premier poet of that age, Hitomaro could have been involved in the project. The rest of Book One was probably added in about 712–20, just after the move to Nara. It was evidently intended early on to be augmented by a second book, as it includes only zōka, leaving the sōmon and banka for Book Two. Like Book One, Book Two begins with a figure from the distant past (Iwanohime) then jumps to the time of Tenji. Itō Haku, the most influential modern theorizer about the anthology's origins, believed that while the ur-*Man'yōshū* was probably undertaken with the support of Retired Empress Jitō, the two-book expansion was likely sponsored by her half-sister, Retired Empress Genmei.[3] This second phase of the collection is therefore sometimes called the "Genmei *Man'yōshū*." Books Three and Four are also a companion set, the former including zōka, banka, and hiyuka, and the latter sōmon. Again, they both begin with figures from the distant past, then jump to more contemporary poetry, and they were probably originally compiled in about 724, the year Genshō retired and Shōmu succeeded. They were later expanded, perhaps by Shōmu's court poets Kasa no Kanamura and Yamabe no Akahito.

In the hands of Yakamochi and his colleagues, Books Three and Four became a collection of old and new, and the poetry in Books One and Two, which when first compiled was seen as relatively recent and in part even modern, was now viewed as old and almost classical, worthy of reverence if not emulation. Books Five and Six then followed with poetry from the mid-Nara period. (Book Five may have been based on a late poetic collection of Yamanoue no Okura.) As mentioned above, Books Seven through Twelve prominently feature excerpts from another earlier collection now lost, *Kakinomoto no Asomi Hitomaro kashū*, a work perhaps compiled by Hitomaro of poetry by himself and others, with later additions. Those books were then augmented by Books Thirteen through Fifteen together with the prototype of an appendix in about 745, a half-century or so after the ur-*Man'yōshū* was begun.

[3] Itō Haku, "*Man'yōshū* no oitachi (1)," in *Man'yōshū*, vol. 1, ed. Itō et al. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1976), 389.

Though Yakamochi was probably the central figure in the later anthologization process, others, such as Prince Ichihara and Lady Ōtomo no Sakanoue, may also have been involved. The fifteen-book *Man'yōshū* is sometimes referred to as the "Genshō *Man'yōshū*" to reflect the surmised role of the retired sovereign Genshō in fostering its compilation. Yakamochi's patron Tachibana no Moroe may at some point have been involved as well, for *Eiga monogatari* (A Tale of Flowering Fortunes), written in the mid-Heian period, holds that Moroe and others were ordered to undertake the task by yet another female sovereign, Shōmu's daughter Kōken. The appendix may have been completed in about 767–80 and then turned into Book Sixteen when the twenty-book *Man'yōshū* was compiled. The "new collection," containing more than six hundred verses from 730 to 759, was, as already pointed out, largely constructed from Yakamochi's personal poetry collection from 746–59. The first thirty-two poems, though, date from 730–44 and may have come from the collection of his late brother Fumimochi. The early Heian period Emperor Heizei (774–824) afforded the work official recognition, and it was perhaps in his reign, *c.* 806–10, that a few more poems were added and the whole was fair-copied. This is the source of another legend that *Man'yōshū* was Emperor Heizei's creation. In view of Heizei's involvement and the presumed support provided by various previous monarchs, it has been argued that *Man'yōshū*, and not *Kokinshū*, was the first imperially sponsored waka anthology.

The tables of contents (*mokuroku*) of the final books may not have been completed until the mid tenth century, when some of the work had already become difficult to read, due to sweeping simplifications in the vernacular writing system. Those last tables of contents may have been added in about 951–67 by the "Five Gentlemen of the Pear Chamber" (*Nashitsubo no Gonin*), who also provided readings for about four thousand of the tanka in the collection. Their readings are referred to today as the "old annotations" (*koten*). This renewed interest in the anthology inspired further scholarship, the "next annotations" (*jiten*), by subsequent generations of poets, who established about three hundred more readings. *Man'yōshū* was also studied by the members of the major poetic houses that began to develop in the latter part of the Heian period, though they disagreed about how it should be used in new poetic composition. The scholar monk Sengaku (b. 1203) collated and edited the text, supplying readings for the last 150 hitherto undeciphered poems (the "new annotations" or *shinten*); his *Man'yōshū chūshaku* (*Man'yōshū* Commentary, 1269) marked a new era in *Man'yōshū* studies. Sengaku's contribution provided the foundation for subsequent commentaries by

medieval monks, courtiers, and linked verse poets, and then for the epochal study by Keichū (1640–1701) entitled *Man'yō daishōki* (A Substitute's Notes on *Man'yōshū*), which achieved its final form in 1690, during the Genroku efflorescence of Edo culture. Keichū's teachings became the bedrock of subsequent studies by nativist scholars who returned to *Man'yōshū* as a basic text for exploring the roots of vernacular literature and the essence of native Japanese culture. But due to the vagaries of the various writing systems used in the anthology, a few of its verses still resist definitive readings today.

Man'yōshū was born of the intersection between, on the one hand, native song and ritual and, on the other, the Chinese script, poetry, and ideas about the political role of literature. Some *Man'yōshū* verses are simple lyric declarations, and others are paeans to the sovereign. The anthology reveals a complex developmental process that also generated works of fictive imagination, philosophical exegesis, and subtle interiority, through an extended dialogue with Chinese models. It contains a wider social cross-section than was the case in later imperial collections (however much its verses from the periphery were reshaped by later editors). But despite the appearance here and there of such popular voices, *Man'yōshū* took initial shape as a showcase of imperial literary culture, and the vast majority of its poetry is of courtly origin. After its completion, it remained the preserve of courtiers and the educated elite; though printing increased its circulation and it began to be taught in Edo academies, it was only in the twentieth century that the general population became aware of it. The characterization of *Man'yōshū* as a text that was widely read through the centuries is a modern myth.

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Edited by

HARUO SHIRANE

and

TOMI SUZUKI, WITH DAVID LURIE

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