Plotting Poetry 2025

Transforming Poetic Thought into Waka:

How to Pack the Skeleton into a 31-Syllable Closet

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thought2waka

Basics of WAKA

Classical Japanese Poetry, WAKA

- WA → Japanese / Japanese style
- KA → Song

Early Established Waka

- The Man'yoshu: est. around 7-8th century in Chinese notation.
 written in Chinese characters, but read in Japanese.
- The Kokinshu: est. ca. 905 in Japanese notation. written in Japanese characters, and read in Japanese.
- Before the Man'yoshu, Kanshi (Chinese poetry) was the dominant form.

Style and Rhetorics

• Include only 31 syllables with 5,7,5,7,7 sounds

	Japanese	Romaji	English Translation
5	うめがえに	ume ga e ni	at the plum branch
7	きゐるうぐひす	kiiru uguhisu	warbler came
5	はるかけて	haru kakete	cries over spring
7	なけどもいまだ	nake domo imada	even though it cries
7	ゆきはふりつつ	yuki ha furi tsutsu	snow keeps falling

Theme: Waiting for the arrival of spring

Style and Rhetorics

- Express natural views and emotions in a simple sentence:
 - plum branch, warbler, spring, snow
- Use of rhetorics to create a poetic atmosphere:
 - Pun (kakekotoba)
 - Pillow words (makurakotoba)
 - Introductory words (o-kotoba)

Preface of Kokinshū: Kanajo

やまとうたは、人の心を種として、 よろづの言の葉とぞなれりける。 世の中にある人、ことわざ繁きものなれば、 心に思ふことを、見るもの聞くものにつけて、言ひ出せるなり。

Japanese poetry (yamato-uta) takes the human heart as its seed, and from it grows a myriad of words and leaves. Since people living in this world are surrounded by countless events, they express what they feel in their hearts by attaching it to the things they see and hear.

Preface of Kokinshū: Kanajo

- Does not mention the 31-syllable form
- The format is drived from the practice of poetic expression
- Not too short, not too long, just right for expressing emotions
- One theory suggests that the pleasantness of phonetics and rhythm (5-7 pattern),
- The length of breath, and ease of recitation and transmission are involved.

Poetic ideas pack into 31-Syllable Form

- The 31-syllable is the final form of the poem, not the initial one.
- The constraint of Waka is the construction of 5,7,5,7,7 syllables.
- Poets create a poem under the 5 segments of 5,7,5,7,7 syllables constraint.
- It is the first step to shorten ideas to fit to 5 or 7 syllables.

Poetic Rules may include:

- Omission of grammatical elements
- Inversion of word order
- Symbolic substitution
- Nominalization
- Manipulation of ambiguity
- Compression of meaning
- Expansion of meaning
- Reinterpretation of context

Obtain some typical conversion patterns from both

- OP: original poems, and
- CT: contemporary translations

Through the comparison of OP and CT, we can obtain:

- Grammatical pattern, especially predicative elements.
 i.e. tense, aspect, ← elements making a poem longer.
- Lexical construction such as proper nouns.
- Rhetorical techniques → such as implications.

Material

- A) Kokinshu: a collection of 1000 waka poems
- B) Modern Japanese translations: 10 sets of translations
 - → Parallel corpus: a dataset of original poems and their translations

A: Kokinshu 1000 original dataset (OP)

- Hachidaishu Classical Japanese Poetic Vocabulary Dataset on Zenodo contains the original poems of the Hachidaishu (including the Kokinshu) and their semantic codes.
- https://zenodo.org/records/14001396
- Creators: Yamamoto, Hilofumi and Hodošček, Bor
- Published: October 28, 2024 / Version v1.0.1
- Hachidaishu classical Japanese poetic vocabulary dataset
- DOI 10.5281/zenodo.14001396

B: Ten sets of the Translations

No.	Translator	Year	Pages	Manuscript	Translation Style
1.	Kaneko Motoomi*	1933	1,105	Teika	Literal translation
2.	Kubota Utsubo	1960	1,449	Teika	Literal translation
3.	Matsuda Takeo	1968	1,998	Teika	Free translation
4.	Ozawa Masao	1971	544	Teika	Changes word order and grammar
5.	Takeoka Masao	1976	2,278	Teika	Literal translation
6.	Okumura Tsuneya	1978	434	Teika	Respects author's intent
7.	Kusojin Hitaku	1979	1,260	Teika	Supplements words
8.	Komachiya Teruhiko	1982	407	Teika	Unknown
9.	Kojima Noriyuki & Arai Eizo	1989	483	Teika	Unknown
10.	Katagiri Yoichi	1998	3,022	Teika	Literal translation

Kokinwakashu Hyoshaku by Motoomi Kaneko

- only Kaneko Motoomi's translation is available on Zenodo.
- Kokinwakashu Hyoshaku by Motoomi Kaneko translation sentence vocabulary dataset
- https://zenodo.org/records/13942707
- Hilofumi Yamamoto, Bor Hodošček, and Xudong Chen
- Published October 16, 2024 / Version v1.0.1
- D0I 10.5281/zenodo.13942707

Methods

- Using a parallel corpus of waka (OP) and modern Japanese translations (CT)
- Align waka (OP) with contemporary translations (CT)
- Using BG-code (WLSP: word list semantic principle) semantic principle codes to match words by 3 levels of categorical similarity. https://github.com/masayu-a/WLSP

Subtraction

CT - OP = Residual

- We will subtract the elements of OP from the elements of CT.
- In other words, we will find out what the CT needs to say that the OP does not say.

Parallel Comparison between OP and CT

Kokinshu No. 3 CT by kaneko

CT : 春には成ったが、長閑な霞の立っているのは何処の辺か、この吉野の里の吉野山には 雪が降り降りして、一向に春めきもしない。

Gloss: spring------haze.arize------where----Q-----Yoshino--MtYoshino-snow--fallfall------

Spring has arrived, but where is that gentle haze drifting? Here in the Yoshino village, on Mount Yoshino, snow keeps falling and falling, and it shows no sign of spring at all.

We anotated each poem and each translation as the following:

OP: Kokinshu No.3

```
1 KW000003 111 1 02 00 00 BG-01-5152-09-040-A はるがすみ はるがすみ 春霞 spring haze
 KW000003 111 3 02 00 00 BG-01-1624-02-010-A -- はる 春 spring
 KW000003 111 3 02 00 00 BG-01-5152-09-010-A -- かすみ 霞 haze
             0 47 25 04 BG-02-1513-01-010-A たて たつ 立つ
 KW000003 212 0 74 68 20 BG-09-0010-03-030-C
 KW000003 213 0 65 00 00 BG-08-0065-14-010-C や や や
 - KW000003 221 0 14 00 00 BG-01-1700-02-100-C いづこ いづこ 何処
 KW000003 311 0 11 00
                    -00 CH-29-0000-20-010-A みよしの みよしの 御吉野
                 00 00 BG-08-0071-01-010-A の の
                 - 00 00 CH-29-0000-20-010-A よしの よしの 吉野
 KW000003 412 0 71 00 00 BG-08-0071-01-010-A
 KW000003 421 0 02 00 00 BG-01-5240-05-010-A やま やま 山
 KW000003 422 0 61 00 00 BG-08-0061-05-010-A (2 (2 (2
             0 02 00 00 BG-01-5153-07-010-A ゆき ゆき 雪
 KW000003 512 0 65 00 00 BG-08-0065-07-010-A はははは
             0 47 28 03 BG-02-1540-10-010-A ふり ふる
                 - 28 03 BG-02-5150-03-010-A ふり ふる 降る
1 KW000003 522 0 64 00 00 BG-08-0064-15-010-A つつ つつ つつ
```

CT: Kaneko No.3

```
1 kaneko 0003 0 02 00 00 BG-01-1624-02-010-A 春 はる 春 spring
1 kaneko 0003 0 61 00 00 BG-08-0061-05-010-A に に に
 kaneko 0003 0 65 00 00 BG-08-0065-07-010-A ははは
 kaneko 0003 0 47 17 06 BG-02-1220-01-030-A 成っ なる 成る
 kaneko 0003 0 74 54 01 BG-09-0010-04-010-A た た た
 kaneko 0003 0 64 00 00 BG-08-0064-04-010-A が が が
1 kaneko 0003 0 79 00 00 BG-16-0079-01-010-A
1 kaneko 0003 1 18 00 00 BG-03-3010-02-140-A 長閑 のどか 長閑
 kaneko 0003 2 18 00 00 BG-03-5150-02-040-A -- のどか のどか
 kaneko 0003 0 74 55 06 BG-09-0050-01-030-A なだだ
1 kaneko 0003 0 02 00 00 BG-01-5152-09-010-A 霞 かすみ 霞 haze
1 kaneko 0003 0 61 00 00 BG-08-0061-07-010-A の の の
1 kaneko 0003 0 47 13 05 BG-02-1513-01-010-A 立っ たつ 立つ
2 kaneko 0003 2 47 13 05 BG-02-1521-06-020-A 立っ たつ 立つ
3 kaneko 0003 2 47 13 05 BG-02-3330-11-020-A 立っ たつ 立つ
4 kaneko 0003 2 47 13 05 BG-02-3391-02-110-A 立っ たつ 立つ
1 kaneko 0003 0 64 00 00 BG-08-0064-16-010-A て て て
    ... continues
```

Meta-code system

```
BG-01-2030-01-030-A-かみ-神 (god)

↑ ↑ ↑

GFE

↓ ↓ ↓

BG-01-2030-01-250-A-ほとけ-仏 (Buddha)
```

- G: Group match... 10 digits
- F: Field match..... 13 digits
- E: Exact match..... 17 digits

The three matching levels are judged by the length of BG-code digits.

Code Categories with English annotation

```
BG-01-1000-00-000-X:demonstrative_pronoun
BG-01-1100-00-000-X:class,kinds
BG-02-1000-00-000-X:abstract relation
BG-02-1110-00-000-X:relation
BG-03-3100-00-000-X:language_and_speech
BG-03-3400-00-000-X:personal_affairs
BG-04-1100-00-000-X:conjunction
BG-05-0000-00-000-X:prefix
BG-06-0000-00-000-X:infix
BG-07-0000-00-000-X:suffix
BG-08-0061-00-000-X:case_particle
BG-09-0000-00-000-X:auxiliary_verb
BG-10-0000-00-000-X:auxiliary_verb_and_auxiliary_adjective
BG-11-0000-00-000-X:relative_pronoun
BG-12-0000-00-000-X:word_endings
BG-13-0000-00-000-X:preposition_and_postposition
BG-14-0000-00-000-X:meaning_unknown
BG-15-0000-00-000-X:proper_noun
BG-16-0000-01-000-X:punctuation
BG-17-0000-00-000-X:wordplay_handling
BG-18-0000-00-000-X:counting
```

Computer Tools

code2match.c

- Align waka with contemporary translations
- github: https://github.com/yamagen/code2match

```
% cat op_file.txt ct_file.txt | code2match -a
```

code2match -h

```
% code2match [-ahv] file....
       print all data
      print between check
       print calculation table
       print predicate part out
       once matched out (bag of words option)
       use it with other options
  -i
       print calculation in line style
       print token list table
       print original poem out
       print pair token table
  -p
       print residual
       print valid on
       print title
      print unmatched portion
      print this help
       print code2match version
(c) 2025 H. Yamamoto yamagen@ila.titech.ac.jp
```

Pair Token Table: -p

```
+---- number of pair
   +---- value of exact=17, field=13, group=10
      +-- number of POS
          number of OP token ----+ +---- number of CT token
                                         +-- CT token
                   OP token --+
                             春 01 <-> 00 春 霞 02 <-> 10 霞
 3 17 47
                           立つ 03 <-> 12 立つ
                             や 05 <-> 26 か
4 13 65
                           何処 06 <-> 20 何処
                             の 08 <-> 21 の
                           吉野 09 <-> 30 吉野
8 17 71
                             の 10 <-> 31 の
                             山 11 <-> 37 山
                             に 12 <-> 38 に
                             雪 13 <-> 40 雪
                             は 14 <-> 02 は
12 17 65
                           降る 16 <-> 43 降る
13 17 47
14 10 64
                           つつ 17 <-> 47 て
```

Print Residual: -r

Residual tokens reveal what the translation needs to say that the original poem leaves unsaid.

```
CT A--B--C--D--E--F--G--H-----
7 0 1 0 -1 64 0 0 BG-08-0064-16-010-A て て
  0 1 0 -1 61 0 0 BG-08-0061-02-010-A が が
  0 1 0 -1 16 0 0 BG-01-1624-05-010-A 冬 冬
13 0 1 0 -1 16 0 0 BG-01-1612-01-060-A 時分 時分
             0 0 BG-08-0061-01-010-A から から
             0 0 BG-03-1000-01-010-A この この
             0 0 BG-08-0061-08-010-A ^ ^
             0 0 BG-03-1600-03-020-A 頻り 頻り
             0 0 BG-08-0072-02-010-A に に
                 BG-02-3420-01-010-A し する
             0 0 BG-03-1200-03-060-A 一向 一向
             8 2 BG-02-1624-02-110-A 春めか 春めく
          74 59 1 BG-03-1200-02-090-A ぬぬ
             0 0 BG-01-1010-01-020-A こと こと
             0 0 BG-08-0069-30-010-A よよ
             0 0 BG-08-0061-03-010-A \wedge
```

Elements breakdown between OP and CT: -c

```
OP(original poem; valid number of items)
                                                     = 16
E (ratio of exact agreement)
                                                    11/16 = 0.688
F (ratio of field agreement)
                                                2/16 = 0.125
G (ratio of group agreement)
                                                 1/16 = 0.062
T (ratio of total agreement)
                                                   14/16 = 0.875
U (ratio of unmatched)
                                                    1 - T = 0.125
CT(contemporary translation; valid number of items) = 39
W (ratio of original word use)
                                                    11/39 = 0.282
A (ratio of annotation)
                                                    1 - W = 0.718
- breakdown of the annotation -
P1(ratio of FG paraphrased)
                                                 (F+G)/V = 0.077
                                                 (A-P1)*U = 0.080
P2(ratio of U paraphrased)
                                                 A-(P1+P2)=0.561
D (ratio of purely added)
                                                 1-16/39 = 0.590
H (theoretical value)
                                                 fabs(D-H)= 0.029
Gap:
```

Figure: Ingredients of the translation of Kokinshu No. 298 by Komachiya.

Predicate alignments between OP and CT: -d

```
$ cat data/kokin/0005.db.txt data/kaneko/0005.db.txt | src/code2match -d PRED: kaneko 5 [09]かけ|て|なけ|ども|13] => [19]かけ|て|頻り|に|鳴く|けれども|24] PRED: kaneko 5 [18|ふり|つつ|19] => [30|降り降り|し|て|34]

$ cat data/kokin/0007.db.txt data/kaneko/0007.db.txt | src/code2match -d PRED: kaneko 7 [12|きえあへ|ぬ|15] => [20|消え|て|果て|ず|25] PRED: kaneko 7 [22|みゆ|らむ|23] => [41|見える|の|で|あろ|う|46]

op predicate ct predicate
```

Script to run code2match

```
#!/bin/sh
# This script compares two directories containing Waka poems and their translations.
if [ "$#" -lt 3 ]; then
  echo "Usage: $0 <dir1> <dir2> <id> [option]"
 exit 1
fi
DIR1="$1"
DIR2="$2"
ID=$(printf "%04d" "$3") # ID can be 1-9999, so we format it to 4 digits
OPTION="$4"
                          # Optional argument for code2match
cat "$DIR1/$ID.db.txt" "$DIR2/$ID.db.txt" | ../src/code2match $OPTION
```

Script: loop 1-1000 to run code2match

```
#!/bin/sh
# args: $1 = kokin directory name (e.g., kokin)
       $2 = contemporary translation directory name (e.g., kaneko)
       $3 = poem ID or range (e.g., 1, 100, or 1-100)
       $4 = optional argument for code2match (e.g., -d, -r)
SRC=../src/code2match
# judge if $3 is a range or a single number
if echo "$3" | grep -qE '^[0-9]+-[0-9]+$'; then
  START=$(echo "$3" | cut -d- -f1)
  END=$(echo "$3" | cut -d- -f2)
else
  START=$3
  END=$3
fi
# Loop through the specified range or single number
for i in $(seq "$START" "$END"); do
  FILE1="$1/$(printf '%04d' "$i").db.txt"
  FILE2="$2/$(printf '%04d' "$i").db.txt"
  if [ -n "$4" ]; then
    cat "$FILE1" "$FILE2" | "$SRC" "$4"
  else
    cat "$FILE1" "$FILE2" | "$SRC"
  fi
done
```

The Compression of Poetic Thought into 31-Syllable Form

- How to detect the compression of poetic thought into 31-syllable form?
- Should we use multivariate analysis of the parallel corpus?
- What variables do we need to consider?

- Even a statistician would hesitate to give a definitive answer here.
- → We will observe the patterns of compression one by one.

So far, we've sketched out the problem—but how do we proceed?

Asking AI? But how are we going to explain...

- John Tukey's Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) is a good start.
 - A foundational work in exploratory data analysis (EDA) that introduced the stem-and-leaf display as a way to visualize data distributions effectively.
- We will seek the evidence but more than that,
- → we need the accountability of the results.

Content words

- No modifications.
- Noun and adjective expand images

```
$ ./c2m.sh kokin kaneko 1-100 -r| awk '/BG-01/{print $9, $10}' | sort | uniq -c | sort -nr | nl | head -20
            41 BG-01-5530-12-010-A 花 flower
            39 BG-01-1010-01-020-A こと thing
            18 BG-01-1000-01-050-A それ that
            16 BG-01-1000-03-010-A もの thing
            13 BG-01-2000-06-080-A 人 person
            11 BG-01-5520-20-040-A 梅 plum
            10 BG-01-5520-20-100-A 桜 cherry
            10 BG-01-1000-01-020-A これ this
             9 BG-01-2000-01-300-A 自分 self
    10
             9 BG-01-1610-01-010-A 時 time
   11
             8 BG-01-1624-02-010-A 春 spring
   12
             6 BG-01-4000-01-080-A 物 thing
   13
             6 BG-01-1990-05-030-A さえ even
    14
             6 BG-01-1770-01-050-A 外 outside
   15
             6 BG-01-1642-01-030-A 昔 past
   16
             6 BG-01-1610-03-020-A 間 while
   17
             5 BG-01-5153-07-010-A 雪 snow
    18
             5 BG-01-3066-02-080-A はず should
   19
             5 BG-01-1770-01-030-A 内 inside
    20
             5 BG-01-1641-01-010-A 今 now
```

Nouns Avoided in Waka (Top 20 Residuals)

Abstract & Deictic Nouns

- 花 (flower), こと (thing), それ (that), もの (thing), これ (this)
- ⇒ Preference for concrete, symbolic imagery

Time & Season Terms

- 時 (time), 春 (spring), 昔 (past), 今 (now)
- ⇒ General time words give way to specific kigo

Self & Agency

- 人 (person), 自分 (self), 内 (inside), 外 (outside), はず (should)
- ⇒ Avoidance of explicit self-reference

Key Insights & Future Directions

- Concrete / Symbolic Keywords
 - Waka retains vivid imagery; abstract/utility nouns are cut
- Poetic Temporal Expression
 - General time nouns are replaced by evocative seasonal or momentary phrases
- Anthology Bias
 - 梅 (plum), 桜 (cherry), 雪 (snow) less frequent in some collections

Summary: Vocabulary Compression Patterns in Waka

- Emphasis on concrete, highly symbolic keywords
- Tendency to omit abstract, generic, or self-referential nouns and general temporal terms
- Variation in how the same natural or seasonal motifs are treated across poems

Key Insights for Future Research

- Unexpectedly low direct frequencies of "ume" (plum), "sakura" (cherry), and "yuki" (snow)
 - → Often subsumed under the generic term "flower" or conveyed metaphorically
- A promising focal point for comparative studies on thematic selection

Nature Themes as Residuals

- Specific names like 梅/plum · 桜/cherry are often replaced by the generic 「花/flower」 in waka
- 雪/snow is frequently rendered metaphorically (e.g. 「白き/shiroki 花/flower」) rather than named directly
- ⇒ This substitutional practice leads to low direct frequencies for these terms

Remarks

- The 31-syllable form is not a fixed structure but a flexible framework.
- Poets use the 31-syllable form to express their emotions and thoughts in a concise manner.
- Preference for generic yet symbolic nouns (e.g., "hana" = flower) over specific ones (e.g., "hana tachibana").
- Abstract, deictic, or self-referential nouns are often avoided.
- Temporal references are not expressed through general time words but through poetic imagery.

Predicate Correspondence Analysis

Command executed

- Extracted the top 10 longest predicate mappings between the Kokin and Kaneko corpora
- Each line shows:
 - Length in characters
 - Original predicate span ([start|...|end])

awk '{print length(\$0), \$0}' | sort -nr \$./c2m.sh kokin kaneko 1-100 -d| __86 [21|ふく|らむ|22] => [07|吹か|ぬ|時|に|も|、|雪|の|よう|に|ひたすら|散 [惜しく|ある|もの|を|、|また|この上|どのように|烈しく|散れ|と|いっ|て|、|こ

「21|まちみ|て|ちら|ば|ちら|なむ|29] => [35|待っ|て|み|て| ば|お前|の|勝手|に|散っ|て|貰お|う|わ|64]

|散る|なら|ば|お前|の|勝手|に|散っ|て|貰お|う|わ|64] |kaneko 36 [11|をり|て|かざさ|む|15] => [27|折り取っ|て|、|我が|容貌|の|老|も|隠れ

| 11 [01|き|ぬ|04] => => [02|た|と|世間|の|人|は|いう|が|、|まだ|鴬|は|鳴い|

| 76 [12|をしへよ|いき|て|うらみ|む|18] => [32|教え|て|くれ|よ|、|然らば|、|

=> [11|加わっ|て|長く|なっ|た|今年|なり|とも|、|人| 61 [04|くははれ|る|05]

77 [06]ちり[な|む|11] => [08|散る|なら|ば|、|自分|も|一緒|に|何処|へ|なり|

┊74 [03|ちら|ば|ちら|なむ|ちら|ず|11] ⇒ [07|散る|なら|ば|勝手|に|散っ|て|貰

83 PRED: kaneko 45 [00|くる|と|あく|と|めかれ|ぬ|ものを|12] => [12|と|いっ|て|は|見|、|夜|

が|明ける|と|いっ|て|31]

し|今日|来|ぬ|28]

Key Observations

Substantial expansions

```
Eg. "ふく|らむ" ⇒ "吹かぬ時に…雪のようにひたすら散るが…" (148 chars)
```

Frequent verb classes

```
Scattering (散る), blooming (咲く), seeing (見る), falling (降る)
```

- Waka elaboration patterns
 - Addition of temporal/conditional clauses
 - Shift from simple verb forms to more poetic constructions

Results

Word Types

- Chinese word construction techniques applied to Waka
- Two chinese characters combination methods.
 - person + action (e.g., 人言, 人来, a person speaks, a person comes)
 ... not: 人の言葉, 人の来る, someone speaks words, someone comes somewhere
 - o noun + noun (e.g., 山川, 山野, mountain and river, mountain and field) ... not: 山の川, 山の野, mountain's river, mountain's field
 - o noun modifier + modified noun (e.g., 朝露, 白露, morning dew, white dew) ... not: 朝に降りている露, 白く光った露, morning's dew, white dew
- → These are one of the compression methods in Waka.

Discussion

- Explore poetic compression in modern Japanese
- Analyze constraints in poetic expression
- Discuss implications for translation and interpretation
- Consider cultural and linguistic factors
- Identify and classify poetic strategies
- Analyze how poetic thought is transfigured
- Uncover underlying rules (overt and covert)
- Explore the implications of compression
- Simulate the transformation process:

Conclusion

The ways of the compression of Poetic Thought Into 31-Syllable Form (the Closet of skeleton)

- Word Compression
- Predicate Compression
- Shortening by removing grammatical elements

Future research directions

- Explore the description of poetic compression in other languages and cultures
- Invent new description methods for colloquial sentences
 - → Immediate grammar and syntax
- Develop ecosystem for analyzing colloquial sentences in terms of:
 - → Semantic and syntactic compression
 - → A co-development environment for data ecosystems
 - → A collaborative platform for developing data ecosystems
 - → A co-creation environment of tools

Reference 1

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