



From the 5th Book of Love. Poem 1388. | 戀歌五、1388

Text Information

Author | Eifuku Mon'in 永福門院

Language | Japanese

Period | 14th Century

Genre | Tanka

Source | 国歌大観：五句索引 歌集部 (Kokka taikan: goku sakuin). Kyōbunsha, 1918.

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/eifuku_monin_poem_1388/

Translation and introduction by Scott Stevens.

Introduction to the Text

Eifuku Mon'in (1271-1342), or Ex-empress Eifuku (also known as Saionji Kyōko), was born into the noble Saionji family. Along with her husband, Emperor Fushimi (1265-1317), she would prove to be one of the most important leaders in the development of *waka* poetry in the late Kamakura (1185-1333) and Nanbokuchō periods (1336-1392). The term *waka* (meaning literally "Japanese poem") once described a variety of sub-forms of Japanese poetry, but by the time Eifuku Mon'in was writing, it had come to primarily signify the sub-form *tanka*, which consists of syllables in a pattern of 5-7-5-7-7.

The *waka* in the *Global Medieval Sourcebook* are all by Eifuku Mon'in and are taken from the "Love" sections of the *Fūga wakashū* (c. 1344-1346), an anthology of *waka* from various poets commissioned by Emperor Hanazono. The periodic commissioning of imperial poetry anthologies (or *chokusen wakashū*) was an important element in the development of a poetic canon in premodern Japan. Each anthology was organized into sections related to a specific topic, such as "Spring," "Travel," "Winter," or "Love."

These *waka* give us insight into how deeply medieval Japanese poetry was tied to the public, political world, as well as how women found ways to participate in that public world. *Waka* in the aristocratic court had come to be dominated by the Nijō school, which advocated for a conservative approach to poetry. In the 1270s, sister and brother Kyōgoku Tameko and Tamekane trail-blazed a new style of writing *waka*, a style shorn of the rhetorical and allusive flourishes characteristic of Nijō writing in favor of more direct, even conversational, expressions of feeling. A poetry group known as the Kyōgoku school grew around this style. The two siblings became Emperor Fushimi's tutors in 1280, forever cementing the bond between the Kyōgoku school and Fushimi's side of the imperial family, the Jimyōin line. This line was one half of a struggle between two branches of the imperial family claiming the throne; thus, the prestige of the Kyōgoku school and the presence of their poems in the imperial poetry anthologies would rise and fall with the fate of the Jimyōin emperors.

Eifuku Mon'in, having married into the this imperial line, found herself the defender of both the Jimyōin line and the Kyōgoku school after its earlier members, including her husband, had died or been exiled. By personally training a large number of future emperors and empresses, noblemen and noblewomen, Eifuku Mon'in led the Kyōgoku school and secured its legacy, all while producing some of the best poetry of the period. The indispensability of her leadership for the Kyōgoku school is attested by her being the poet with the second highest number of poems in the *Fūga wakashū*, the highest number reserved for the Fushimi out of traditional reverence for the emperor.

Poem 1388 may be read as simply another expression of an abandoned lover's heartache, but there is also hidden historical subtext. Eifuku had witnessed the fall of the Kamakura government, experienced the continual decline of the imperial court's status, and outlived many members of the Jimyōin line, her own family clan the Saionji, as well as early members of the Kyōgoku school. This poem can be read as an elegy for this loss as well as a statement of her persistence ("clinging") in preserving the legacy of these three groups in the last stage of her life.



Introduction to the Source

The *Fūga wakashū* imperial anthology was commissioned and compiled between 1344 and 1346 by retired Emperor Hanazono (1297-1348), the son of Eifuku Mon'in. The *Fūga wakashū* contains twenty volumes with a total of 2,210 poems. The anthology is the second and final imperial anthology to prominently feature Kyōgoku school poetry, the first being the *Gyokuyō wakashū* (c. 1313-14). It also features many poets from the Reizei poetry school.

It is notable that Hanazono involved himself to such an extent in the creation of the anthology. Normally, the emperor commissioning the work would have several compilers gather the poems, arrange them into sections, and make decisions on how to transcribe the poems, after which the emperor would inspect the final draft. Hanazono was trained by his mother Eifuku in the Kyōgoku style and personally knew many of the poets included in the collection. It is unsurprising, then, that Hanazono compiled the anthology himself, not to mention his writing the Chinese and Japanese prefaces to the anthology.

Two of the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Fūga wakashū* date back to a time roughly contemporaneous with the compilation of the text. One is a fragment stored in Tsurumi University's Special Collections; the other is a partial manuscript containing the seventeenth volume, which was transcribed by the Buddhist poet Ton'a, and which is stored at the Itsuō Art Museum in Ōsaka. A later manuscript, produced in the late Muromachi period, containing the tenth volume of *Fūga wakashū*—Love Book One—has been digitized and is viewable at the Kyoto Institute, Library, and Archives. An example of a digitized manuscript containing all volumes of the text can be found here. There are many examples of the text reproduced in woodblock print form during the Edo Period, such as this beautiful digitized book. Although the transmission of the text appears stable, variants between manuscripts exist. A list of *Fūga wakashū* manuscripts containing variants can be found on page iv of Iwasa Miyoko's edition of the text (2004).

About this Edition

This translation is based on a transcription of the *Fūga wakashū* in the collection *Kokka taikan: goku sakuin*, published by Kyōbunsha in 1918. The transcription was accessed here through the National Diet Library Digital Collections. Manuscripts and transcriptions vary to the extent that they use *kanji* (Chinese characters) to write words which in other manuscripts or transcriptions may have been written with *hiragana* (a Japanese syllabary). This transcription appears to use *kanji* extensively. This transcription has also added dakuten (voiced and plosive diacritics) to syllables that may not have been added in previous manuscripts or in other transcriptions (such as this one from 1925). Generally, I have tried to preserve the word order of the Japanese as much as possible while still being grammatical in English. I have also tried to render Eifuku's direct style, as well as the characteristically Kyōgoku techniques of repeating words and sounds and breaking with the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern at moments of intensity.

Further Reading

Mulhern, Chieko I. "Eifuku Mon'in." *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

- This article gives an overview of Eifuku Mon'in's biography and an introduction to her career as a poet. The book is an equally useful introduction to many other Japanese women writing in various time periods.

Brower, Robert H, and Earl R. Miner. "The Late Classical Period." *Japanese Court Poetry*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961.

- Introduction to Japanese court poetry and waka.

Shirane, Haruo. *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012.

- Introduction to premodern Japanese literature in general, excellent reference for those unfamiliar with the subject.



Huey, Robert N. *Kyōgoku Tamekane: Poetry and Politics in Late Kamakura Japan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989.

- *Explores the social and aesthetic world in which Eifuku Mon'in and the Kyōgoku poets were writing. The perspective of the study is from Eifuku's contemporary Kyōgoku Tamekane, tutor to Emperor Fushimi and co-founder of the Kyōgoku school.*

Iwasa, Miyoko. *Eifuku Mon'in: sono sei to uta*. Tōkyō, Japan: Kasama Shoin, 1976.

- *Extensive biography of Eifuku Mon'in as well as rich commentary on her works. Contains her poems from the Fūga Wakashū, Gyokuyō Wakashū, and other collections that include her poetry. In Japanese.*

Iwasa, Miyoko. *Fūga wakashū zenchūshaku*. Tōkyō, Japan: Kasama Shoin, 2004.

- *Full text of the Fūga Wakashū and commentary. In Japanese.*



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題志らず

Topic unknown.

人の捨てし哀を獨り身にとめて歎き残れるはて
ぞ久しき₁

Loved ones tossed aside
tenderness, which, all alone,
I've been clinging to.
I grieve, long since left behind
to face the end of my life.

Critical Notes

- 1 One significant variant for Poem 1388 is the word 悲しき (sad, tragic) in some manuscripts instead of 久しき (long ago), which appears in the Kokka taikan transcription.