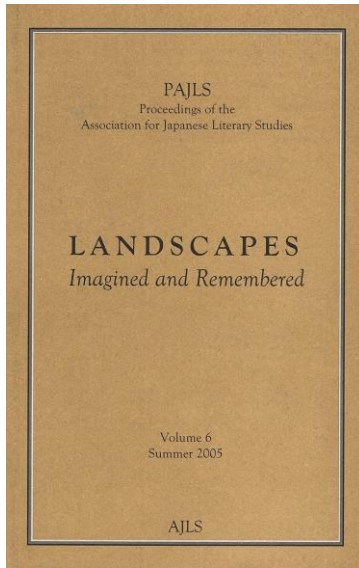


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The Construction of Akashi as Sacred Space

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Simon Schama tells us that landscapes are “constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock.”¹ This is a description that can be well applied to *utamakura* 歌枕, literally “poem-pillows,” the poetic place-names that developed particular allusive associations within the densely intertextual poetics of classical waka. Akashi 明石 is one such poetic place, a site onto which various constructs have been projected, starting in the seventh century and continuing up to the present day. How, then, did Akashi, on the coast of the Inland Sea, come to be the site of one of the largest shrines to Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂, the seventh-century poet canonized as a tutelary deity of Japanese poetry? The answer to this question involves religion, geography, politics, and poetry, all combining to construct the literary landscape of Akashi.

There are two major features of Akashi’s evolution as a poetic place. Firstly, Akashi’s codification as imagined landscape had two phases: it was originally constructed in political or socio-religious terms, and then, as a direct result of that earlier construction, it came to be configured as a poetic place. Secondly, Akashi’s canonization as a poetic place was very closely connected to and to a large extent dependent upon the canonization of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro as a poetic deity.

The roots of Akashi’s initial, political construction as landscape lie in the topographical reality of its position overlooking the straits separating Osaka Bay from the main body of the Inland Sea. This natural landmark was recast as a political boundary under the Taika Reforms and thus invested with a delineating role closely related to the issue of *ōken* 王権 (imperial authority). In the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 entry for the First Month of the second year of Taika (646), we find a definition of *kinai* 畿内, the area under the direct control of the tennō: “In its entirety, *kinai* is [the area] this side of Nabari no Yokawa to the east, this side of Senoyama in Ki to the south, this side of Kushifuchi in Akashi to the west, and this side of Sasanami no Osaka in Ōmi to the north.”²

¹ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 61.

² *Oyoso kinai wa, higashi wa nabari no yokawa yori kono kata, minami wa ki no senoyama yori kono kata, nishi wa akashi no kushifuchi yori kono kata, kita wa ōmi no sasanami no ōsaka yori kono kata o, kinaikoku to su.* Quoted in Hyōdō Hiromi, *Heike monogatari: katari no tekisuto*

Beyond the borders of *kinai* lay the outer land of *kigai* 畿外, seen as dangerous and uncontrolled. For a high-ranking courtier, making an unauthorized crossing of the border from *kinai* into *kigai* could be seen as a serious transgression, tantamount to treason in its departure from and implicit rejection of the sphere of imperial power.³ *Kigai* was the realm of *goryō* 御霊 (angry ghosts) and *ekijin* 疫神 (deities of pestilence), and lustration ceremonies were held at court to banish such spirits from *kinai* to *kigai*.⁴

Thus, Akashi was a place imbued with great significance for travelers from the capital, marking their point of final departure from familiar territory into the unknown wilds beyond and, were they fortunate enough to survive their journey, marking their arrival home again. Like other liminal spaces on a journey, such as passes through the mountains, the border of *kinai* and *kigai* was a potentially dangerous point, where particular care had to be taken to placate the deities of the roads (and the sea-routes).⁵ It became customary to make offerings at such liminal sites: these consisted initially of clothing and, later, paper strips and poems. Such offerings were known as *tamuke* 手向け, and the poems recited at such points, *tamuke uta* 手向け歌.⁶

Akashi's first appearance in poetry occurs in *tamuke uta* (travel-offering poems) collected in the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (ca. eighth century); thus, we may see that Akashi's initial entry into poetic discourse is directly related to its prior political construction as a boundary or liminal space. Akashi's first appearance in poetry is also the beginning of its association with Hitomaro.⁷

The following two poems appear in the second volume of the *Man'yōshū*:

Man'yōshū III:254

燈火の明石大門に入らむ日や漕ぎ別れなむ家のあたり見ず
tomoshihi no / Akashi ōto ni / iramu hi ya
kogiwakarenamu / ie no atari mizu

Entering the straits
of lamp-bright Akashi
with the setting sun,

(Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1998), 110-11. In other words, *kinai* consisted of the provinces of Yamato, Yamashiro, Settsu, Kōchi, and Izumi.

³ Laws prohibiting holders of the fifth rank and above from crossing into *kigai* are mentioned in an entry from the Twelfth Month of 998 in *Gonki* 権記, the diary of Fujiwara no Yukinari 藤原行成 (972-1027). See Hyōdō, 111-12.

⁴ Hyōdō, 113.

⁵ Sakurai Mitsuru, "Kōroshinin no uta to otome aishōka no nagare," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 35:8 (July 1970), 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Yokoyama Satoshi, "Hitomaro no denshōteki sekai to utamakura: 'Akashi' to iu kūkan o chūshin toshite," in *Koten to minzokugaku ronshū: Sakurai Mitsuru sensei tsuitō*, ed. Koten to Minzokugaku no Kai (Tokyo: Ōfū, 1997), 189.

will we row on and away,
unable to see our homes?

Man'yōshū III:255

天離る鄙の長道ゆ恋ひ来れば明石の門より大和島見ゆ
amazakaru / hina no nagachi yu / koikureba
Akashi no to yori / Yamato shima miyu

When we come, longing,
up the long road
from the distant wilds,
from the straits of Akashi
we can see the land of Yamato.

Ippon ni iwaku, "ie no atari miyu."

In one text, [the last line] says, "we can see our homes."⁸

The following poem appears slightly later in the same volume:

Man'yōshū III:303

名ぐはしき印南の海の沖つ波千重に隠りぬ大和島根は
aguwashiki / Inami no umi no / okitsunami
chie ni kakurinu / Yamato shimane wa

Hidden by a thousand layers
of the waves of the offing
of the sea of Inami,
so splendidly named:
the land of Yamato.⁹

The first two poems, from a group bearing the headnote "Eight travel poems by Kakinomoto no Ason Hitomaro," seem to be composed from different perspectives, the first that of a traveler heading west through the straits of Akashi, and the second that of one returning to the capital region. The third poem cited above has a headnote that makes clear the purported circumstances of its composition: "Poems composed by Kakinomoto no Ason Hitomaro when at sea on the way down to Tsukushi."¹⁰ The "Sea of Inami" referred to here is the area of the Inland Sea directly to the west of the straits of Akashi; in other words, it was the first body of water one entered after passing Akashi when heading west, away from the capital.¹¹

These three *Man'yōshū* poems can all be regarded as *tamuke uta*, travel-offering poems, required at Akashi to ensure the safety of the travelers moving

⁸ Nishimiya Kazutami, *Man'yōshū zenchū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1983), 58-60.

⁹ Nishimiya, 140.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

across the boundary,¹² and in them we see the initial establishment of an association between Hitomaro and Akashi, by virtue of his authorship of these poems.

The next major development in the construction of Akashi as a poetic place involves the canonization of Hitomaro and the canonization of another poem associated with him and featuring Akashi, this time in the early-tenth-century *Kokinshū* 古今集. The first *chokusenshū* (imperial commission anthology of Japanese poetry), the *Kokinshū* plays an extremely important role in the canonization of Hitomaro and in the construction of Akashi, not just as a place with poetic associations, but as a place specifically associated with Hitomaro.

The *Kokinshū* includes not only poetry but also prose prefaces that set out what were deemed to be the history and essential qualities of Japanese poetry. Hitomaro is lionized in Ki no Tsurayuki's (ca. 868 - ca. 945) influential Kana Preface as an *uta no hijiri* 歌の聖 (sage of poetry), a quasi-supernatural figure who was the great representative poet of a glorious past age.¹³ Although Hitomaro had earlier been singled out as an ancestral poetic figure in the *Man'yōshū*,¹⁴ it was his treatment as such a figure in the prestigious *Kokinshū* (as opposed to the less canonical *Man'yōshū*) that cemented his place as a figurehead of court poetry.

While his presentation as a poetic sage is one aspect of Hitomaro's *Kokinshū*-related canonization, another is the attribution to him of apocryphal poems. This was a phenomenon that had begun in the *Man'yōshū* and would continue to be a feature of Hitomaro's reception in later texts.¹⁵ These spurious attributions demonstrate the extent to which the figure of Hitomaro as a great poetic ancestor (as presented in the *Kokinshū*) had become disconnected from his actual poems in the *Man'yōshū*.

¹² Yokoyama, 185.

¹³ "Even as [Japanese poetry] was being thus passed down from the earliest times, it spread during the reign of the Nara emperor. Perhaps it was that [the Nara emperor] understood the heart of poetry. In that age there was a sage of poetry of the senior third rank called Kakinomoto no Hitomaro. [That such a poet should live during such a reign] may be said to be a case of lord and subject in perfect union." *Inishie yori, kaku tsutawaru uchi ni mo, Nara no ōmutoki yori zo, hiromarinikeru. Kano ōmuyo ya, uta no kokoro wo, shiroshimeshitarikemu. Kano ōmutoki ni, ōkimitsu no kurai, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro namu, uta no hijiri narikeru. Kore wa, kimi mo hito mo, mi o awasetari to iu narubeshi.* See *Kokin wakashū*, ed. Arai Eizō and Kojima Noriyuki, *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989), 11-12.

¹⁴ See Ōtomo no Yakamochi's Chinese preface to a *chōka* (*Man'yōshū* XVII: 3969) in the Third Month of 747: "In my younger years, I came not to the gate of the mountain persimmon, and when composing poetry, I lose my diction in the forest [of poems]." *Man'yōshū zenchū*, vol. 17, ed. Hashimoto Tatsuo (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1985), 150. "The gate of the mountain persimmon" (*sanshi no mon*) is generally taken to refer to Hitomaro and another poet, most often identified as Akahito.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the many poems attributed to Hitomaro in the third *chokusenshū*, *Shūishū* (1007).

By far the most influential poem of uncertain origin to be attributed to Hitomaro is the following, from *Kokinshū* volume IX (Travel):

Kokinshū IX:409 (Travel) Anonymous

Topic unknown

ほのぼのと明石の浦の朝霧に島隠れ行く舟をしぞ思ふ

honobono to / akashi no ura no / asagiri ni

shimagakure yuku / fune o shi zo omou

Dimly, dimly,

in the morning mist

of Akashi Bay,

a boat goes island-hidden,

my thoughts drawn in its wake.

Kono uta wa, aru hito no iwaku, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro

ga uta nari

Someone said that this was a poem by Kakinomoto no

Hitomaro.¹⁶

Here we again see an association between Akashi and Hitomaro, the tentatively suggested author of the poem. The thematic categories used in the *Kokinshū* allowed the editors to explicitly classify this as a travel poem, despite its topic being unknown. Like the *Man'yōshū* poems quoted earlier, this poem presents Akashi as a point of departure on a journey: here, however, the speaker, on the land, watches the boat – and the travelers – moving away through the islands of the Inland Sea.¹⁷

This poem (which I will hereafter refer to as “the Akashi Bay poem”) is one of seven poems in the *Kokinshū* which, although officially anonymous, are tentatively attributed to Hitomaro in editorial footnotes. What gives this poem in particular its great significance in linking Hitomaro and Akashi, however, is the fact that it was also presented as one of Hitomaro’s exemplary poems in the old interpolated notes to the *Kokinshū*’s Kana Preface.¹⁸ These

¹⁶ Arai and Kojima, 134.

¹⁷ Yokoyama, 189.

¹⁸ The relationship of the *Kokinshū* compilers to the footnotes in which the attributions to Hitomaro are made is unclear, although the notes are thought to have been added to the text at a fairly early stage, and may be representative of the general view of Hitomaro around the time of the *Kokinshū*’s compilation (Katagiri Yōichi, *Kokin wakashū zenhyōshaku*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), 216. Likewise, the 古注 *kochū* (old, interpolated notes) to the Kana Preface are thought to have been inserted into the text of the *Kokinshū* by the mid-eleventh century; a note in the Kiyosuke-bon 清輔本 *Kokinshū* records that the *Kokinshū* text owned by Fujiwara no Michitoshi 藤原通俊 (1047-1099) included an attribution of the old notes to the Kana Preface to Kintō. See Nishimura Kayoko, “*Kokinshū* kanajo ‘kochū’ no seiritsu,” in her *Heian kōki kagaku no kenkyū* (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1997), 18. Regardless of their authorship, the old interpolated notes serve as a very early and very significant stage in *Kokinshū* reception, the first of the many layers of interpretation and editorial mediation to envelop the text.

notes are thought to have been inserted into the text of the Kana Preface by the mid-eleventh century, and were treated by later readers as an integral part of the text. As a result of its placement in these notes, where it is presented unequivocally as a representative work of Hitomaro the poetic sage, this poem went on to be canonized in the Heian, medieval, and early modern periods as Hitomaro's greatest masterpiece and the prime manifestation of his genius. It was, for instance, prized by the influential poet and critic Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041),¹⁹ and so great was its renown by the early medieval period that Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241), in his *Eiga no taigai*, warns aspiring poets against using its opening lines for *honkadōri* (poetic borrowing),²⁰ as the fame of this source poem would overwhelm the later composition that alluded to it.

Following its appearance as Hitomaro's masterpiece in the *Kokinshū*, the Akashi Bay poem was prominently displayed in a number of early-to-mid-Heian poetic texts, and became an important vehicle by which both Hitomaro and Akashi were canonized in poetic discourse. Through its prominence in Heian poetic texts, the Akashi Bay poem helped to establish the poetic associations for Akashi as an *utamakura*. These include travel and the sea (also influenced by Akashi's appearance in the *Man'yōshū*), while the "Suma" and "Akashi" chapters of the *Genji monogatari* added overtones of loneliness. The main poetic image associated with Akashi in Heian poetry, however, is the moon, which is often presented as being viewed during a journey and is tied into the poem through the use of the place name Akashi as a *kakekotoba* (pivot word), with the adjective *akashi* 明し (bright).²¹ Meanwhile, the Akashi Bay poem's link to Hitomaro was also being reinforced by its appearance in poetic texts, particularly collections of exemplary poems,²² in which it was unambiguously attributed to him. The great esteem in which this particular poem was held by prominent literary figures like Kintō not only confirmed Akashi's status as an *utamakura*, but also did much to enhance Hitomaro's

¹⁹ Kintō included it in the uppermost level of poetry in his *Waka kuhon* 和歌九品 (Nine Grades of Japanese Poetry, also known as *Kuhon waka* 九品和歌), a selection of exemplary poems arranged in grades modeled on the nine levels of rebirth in the Pure Land paradise. See "Kuhon waka" in Sasaki Nobutsuna, ed., *Nihon kagaku taikai*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1956), 67.

²⁰ "Within the year, the spring has come, 'Is this not the moon? And the spring of old?,' 'The blossom-scattering wind beneath the trees,' 'Dimly, in Akashi Bay.' For this sort [of phrase], not even two lines should be used in composition." See *Karonshū*, ed. Hashimoto Fumio, Ariyoshi Tamotsu, and Fujihira Haruo, vol. 87, *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 2002), 474.

²¹ See, for instance, *Shūishū* VIII: 464, XIV: 855, *Goshūishū* IX: 522-523, IX: 529, or *Kin'yōshū* III: 179.

²² The Akashi Bay poem was selected for inclusion in a number of other anthologies and critical texts between its emergence in the *Kokinshū* in 905 and Hitomaro's worship at the first *eigu* ceremony in 1118, including the *Kokin waka rokujō* 古今和歌六帖, Kintō's *Kingyokushū* 金玉集 (1007) and *Wakan rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集 (ca. 1012), and Minamoto no Shunrai's *Shunrai zuinō* 俊賴髓 (1111-1113). See Sasaki Takahiro, "Hitomaro no shinkō to eigu," *Man'yōshū no shomondai*, ed. Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1997), 136-37.

reputation. The Akashi Bay poem appears both in Heian poetic texts that focus on identifying great poets and including their exemplary poems, like *Sanjūrokuninsen* 三十六人撰 (post-1009), and in others that focus on great poems, like the *Waka kuhon* 和歌九品 (tenth/eleventh century), and, by extension, enhance the image of the poems' authors. For Hitomaro and the Akashi Bay poem, there is a dynamic and almost symbiotic relationship between the canonization processes of the poet and the poem, as each reinforces the other. Through the interaction of these canonization processes, Akashi was being constructed not only as an *utamakura*, but as an *utamakura* strongly associated with a particular poet, Hitomaro.

The next significant development in Akashi's construction as a Hitomaro-related poetic place came about through a watershed in Hitomaro's reception, namely his worship as a poetic ancestor by the Rokujō 六条 house in the *Hitomaro eigu* 人麻呂影供 (portrait veneration) ceremony first held in 1118. *Hitomaro eigu* was loosely based on the Confucian *sekiten* 稷奠 (Ch. *shidian*) ritual and involved offerings being placed before a portrait of Hitomaro bearing a *san* 讚 (praise inscription) in classical Chinese. The Akashi Bay poem's canonization as an exemplary *waka* of its time was taking place in the years leading up to the *Hitomaro eigu*, and this poem's admired status may have been a contributing factor in the decision by the Rokujō house to select Hitomaro – rather than another poet – for worship as a poetic ancestor.²³

The worship ceremony of the *Hitomaro eigu* proved a critical turning point in the process of Hitomaro's deification, and from being a revered – but mortal – poetic ancestor, Hitomaro came to be regarded by the early medieval period as a full-fledged *waka no kami* 和歌の神 (deity of Japanese poetry).²⁴ Hitomaro's divine nature is made clear in commentaries of the *Kokin denju* 古今伝授,²⁵ the secret transmissions on the *Kokinshū*, which include accounts of his miraculous origins as a divine child or youth²⁶ and of his true identity as a

²³ Sasaki, "Hitomaro no shinkō to eigu," 137.

²⁴ The earliest text in which Hitomaro is identified as a deity is the headnote to poem 77 in the personal collection of the poet-priest Jakuren 寂蓮 (d.1202). See "Jakuren I," in *Shikashū taisei: chūsei I*, ed. Wakashi Kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1974), 184.

²⁵ Several of the texts drawn on most extensively for their presentation of Hitomaro as a poetic deity are from the commentarial line descended from Fujiwara no Tameaki 藤原為顯 (ca. 1230s - ca. 1290s), a son of Tameie and grandson of Teika who was outside the three main poetic houses. Tameaki seems to have been largely responsible for the introduction of the *kanjō* 灌頂 (esoteric Buddhist initiation rite) as a model for poetic transmission rituals, a practice which subsequently spread to other poetic schools. See Susan Blakeley Klein, *Allegories of Desire: Esoteric Literary Commentaries of Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 1-2.

²⁶ *Gyokuden jinpi* 玉伝深秘 (mid-Kamakura to early Muromachi period *waka* commentary): "On the third day of the Eighth Month of the third year of the reign of Emperor Temmu [675], [Hitomaro] appeared at the base of a large persimmon tree at the house of someone called Katari-no-ie-no-mikoto in a place called Mountain Village in Toda district, Iwami province. He was aged

manifestation of the Sumiyoshi daimyōjin 住吉大明神 (also regarded as a deity of poetry).²⁷

With Hitomaro canonized as a poetic deity, the Akashi Bay poem assumed ever greater significance, as it was now the great exemplary poem of a divine, rather than merely human, poet. The Akashi Bay poem – and thus the *utamakura* Akashi – appears in connection with Hitomaro many times in medieval and early modern poetic texts. The poem is subject to a broad range of analyses and interpretations, being read as everything from an encapsulation of the six styles of poetry enumerated in the *Kokinshū* Kana Preface, the five Confucian virtues, and the Daoist five elements,²⁸ to an elegy for the seventh-century Prince Takechi no miko²⁹ or a magically efficacious incantation for improving one's poetry.³⁰ Although Akashi appeared as an *utamakura* in other poems, its place in the Akashi Bay poem kept it closely associated with Hitomaro, and Hitomaro's deification kept him and the poems associated with him at the highest levels of the poetic lore transmitted through the texts and institution of the *Kokin denju*.

Ultimately, the poetry-based association of Akashi with Hitomaro was given physical form: today the Akashi Kakinomoto Jinja 柿本神社 sits on the hill above the Hitomaru-mae 人丸前 railway station in Hitomaru-chō 人丸町, directly behind the Akashi Municipal Planetarium. The founding date of the shrine at Akashi is unclear. The earliest reference to any Hitomaro shrine appears in the *Shōtetsu monogatari* 正徹物語 of 1450, which describes a small wooden image of Hitomaro enshrined at Takatsu in Iwami province.³¹

about twenty and of splendid appearance in both face and body." See Katagiri Yōichi, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai*, vol. 5 (Kyoto: Akao Shōbundō, 1986), 554-55.

²⁷ *Gyokuden jinpi*: "At the time of Temmu tennō's excursion to Sumiyoshi, the *daimyōjin* appeared in the form of an old man, and said, "For the purposes of spreading waka through this world, I have manifested myself as Hitomaro. Thus Your Majesty should further the spread of this Way." When the tennō went to reply, [the old man] vanished into thin air. At this time it was clear that Hitomaro was a manifestation [of the Sumiyoshi deity]." (Katagiri, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai*, vol. 5, 5).

²⁸ See the discussion of the Akashi Bay poem that appears in the *Hitomaro himitsushō* 人丸秘密抄 of 1670. Aso Mizue, *Kakinomoto no Hitomaro ronkō*, revised and expanded edition (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1998), 1245-1247.

²⁹ In the *Hitomaro himitsushō* 人丸秘密抄, which identifies this poem as a *banka* for Takechi no miko 高市皇子 (654-696), commemorated by Hitomaro in his elegy *Man'yōshū* II: 199-201.

³⁰ "Accordingly, people who wish to keep poetry in their hearts recite Hitomaro's Akashi Bay poem three times every day. It is said that if you recite the poem seven times every day, you will achieve success in this Way." *Kokin wakashū akone den* 古今和歌集阿古根伝, quoted in Hanabe Hideo, *Juka to setsuwa: uta, majinai, tsukimono no sekai* (Tokyo: Miyai Shoten, 1998), 104-105.

³¹ The image is described as being "in a square-shaped chapel out in the fields. It held in one hand a writing brush and in the other a piece of paper. It was made of wood." See *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, trans. Robert H. Brower with an introduction and notes by Steven D. Carter (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992), 65. The Takatsu Kakinomoto shrine is in the city of Masuda, Shimane prefecture. The link between Iwami province (now Shimane) and Hitomaro was established in *Man'yōshū* poems such as II: 131-139 (identified in their

Although the traditional history of the shrine at Akashi dates its establishment to the ninth century, the earliest independent record of its existence seems to be from 1618, when the shrine was moved to the site it now occupies.³²

Interest in Hitomaro among a wider readership and his assimilation into local belief structures were key developments in his reception in the early modern period. One result of this increased interest in Hitomaro was his official deification as the Kakinomoto daimyōjin 柿本大明神 and holder of the posthumous senior first rank in 1723, which was believed to be the one-thousandth anniversary of his death. Ceremonies marking this auspicious event were held at the two largest Hitomaro shrines, in Akashi and Takatsu. Although the impetus for Hitomaro's deification was rooted in his reception in court-poetic discourse, particularly the commentaries of the *Kokin denju*, he was also worshiped at a folk level for a range of non-poetic purposes. For instance, Hitomaro was worshiped at both Takatsu and Akashi for fire safety and safety in childbirth. In the Heian, medieval, and early modern periods, Hitomaro's name was often rendered Hitomaru 人丸, and this could be parsed as *hi-tomaru* 火止まる (fire-stop)³³ or (with a little stretching) as *hito-umaru* 人生る (someone is born). Yet there were some attributes for which Hitomaro was only worshiped at Akashi. One of these attributes plays on the place-name in a similar fashion to the puns on the poet's name: Hitomaro was – in Akashi – credited with the ability to cure eye diseases and blindness through interpretation of the place name Akashi as the verb *akasu* (to open [the eyes]).³⁴ He is also worshiped in Akashi to this day as a deity of travel safety, an attribute that seems a natural development from Akashi's political and poetic associations with travel (and especially with the dangers of the journey).³⁵

Thus we end where we began, with Akashi as a transit point on a journey, where spiritual protection is required. Akashi's earliest construction as

headnotes as poems by Hitomaro on parting from his wife in Iwami) and II: 223-227 (the poems concerning Hitomaro's supposed death in Iwami).

³² Sakurai Mitsuru, *Kakinomoto no Hitomaro ron* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1980), 35.

³³ "It is said that a house which believes in Hitomaro will escape fires. One can think of the reading [of Hitomaro's name] as "fire-stop" [*hi-tomaru*]. It is said that when a house near the shrine of the Hitomaro *myōjin* in Akashi, Harima, caught fire, an old man came out of nowhere and instantly quelled the flames." See Nagata Shin'ya, "Date-shi kyōiku iinkai zō 'Chōdai gokuhi Hitomaro den,'" *Denshō bungaku* 46 (January 1997), 314.

³⁴ "A blind man came from Tsukushi to visit the shrine, and recited, '*honobono to / makoto akashi no / kami naraba / ware ni mo miseyo / Hitomaro no tsuka*' [Dimly, dimly, / if you truly are a god / who opens eyes / show even to me / Hitomaro's grave-mound], at which both his eyes suddenly opened, and when he stood the staff of cherry wood he had come with near the garden and went home, it grew branches and flowers." See *Kakinomoto daimyōjin engi*, quoted in Ōwa Iwao, *Hitomaro no jitsuzō* (Tokyo: Ōwa Shobō, 1990), 255. A "blind-man's-staff-cherry tree" (*mekura no tsuezakura* 盲杖桜) still stands before the Kakinomoto shrine in Akashi.

³⁵ Hitomaro is also worshiped, at Akashi and elsewhere, as a deity of scholarly success similar to Tenjin.

landscape is based on its role as a liminal space, and this in turn forms the basis for its initial appearances in poetry. Those early poems show Hitomaro as the traveler offering poems to the deities along his route, but by the time Akashi had been constructed and canonized as a major site of his enshrinement, Hitomaro had himself become a deity whose blessing could be sought to ensure a traveler's safe return.