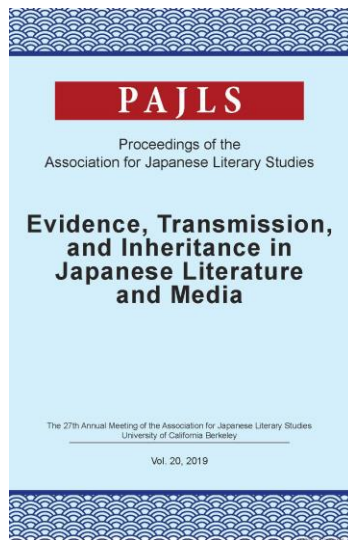


“Skies of Desire: *Honkadori* Allusion and Atmospheric Images in *Shinkokinshū*-era *Waka*”

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SKIES OF DESIRE: *HONKADORI* ALLUSION AND ATMOSPHERIC
IMAGES IN *SHINKOKINSHŪ*-ERA *WAKA*

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This paper looks at the interaction between two common poetic devices in *waka* from the *Shinkokinshū*-era: *honkadōri* 本歌取り, a type of allusion to earlier *waka*,² and *taigen-dōme* 体言止め or ending on a noun, often a concrete sensory image.³ The *Shinkokinshū* poem may take a central image from its allusive source and bring it to the end of the poem, where it acquires a new prominence; or the final image may be the *Shinkokinshū* poet's primary addition to a scenario taken from the source material. If the final image is a metaphor already found in earlier poems, it may become more vivid and detailed; and if it is more metonymic in its relation to the scene, it may acquire additional levels of significance when its relationship to allusive sources is considered.

I will specifically consider cases in which either the *Shinkokinshū* poem or its earlier source poem is a *waka* in the category of *koi* 恋, "love" or romantic longing, and in so doing I will examine how *Shinkokinshū* poets transmit and transform poetic tropes associated with desire. Often a *Shinkokinshū* love poem replays the basic scene portrayed in the *honka* 本歌, or source poem, but adds new sensory imagery, with this effect frequently concentrated in the second half of the poem. Many *taigen-dōme* images in *Shinkokinshū* are of the sky, or phenomena of the atmosphere or weather.⁴ Placing such an image at the end of a poem can have the effect

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² *Honkadōri* generally refers to a type of allusion practiced in the late Heian and early medieval periods. Discussions of *honkadōri* can be found in the teachings of Fujiwara no Shunzei and Fujiwara no Teika. Teika's treatises including *Eiga taigai* 詠歌大概 and *Kindai shūka* 近代秀歌 (as well as *Maigetsushō* 毎月抄, which is attributed to Teika with more doubt) expound on the art of *honkadōri*, addressing problems such as what range of material might be drawn upon for source poems, how much of the source poem might be quoted, and how quotations from source poems could be used in fresh and innovative ways.

³ Use of *taigen-dōme* increases significantly in the *Shinkokinshū* era; according to Takeuchi Shōichi's count, 5.7% of *waka* in *Kokinshū* employ *taigen-dōme*, but this jumps to 23.6% in *Shinkokinshū*. See Takeuchi Shōichi, "Nijūichidaishū ni okeru taigen-dōme ni tsuite," *Nagoya daigaku kokugo kokubungaku* 9 (1961): 41–58; reference on p. 52.

⁴ According to Giuseppe Giordano's count, 47.9% of *taigen-dōme* images in *Shinkokinshū* poems are of images of heavenly phenomena. See Giuseppe

of suddenly expanding the scope of the scene, or of redirecting attention in the final moment beyond the self to elements in the surrounding environment.

A relatively simple case in which such a *taigen-dome* image is the main addition to the source material can be seen in the following use of *honkadori* by Gotoba-in. I will first quote the source poem, an anonymous poem from *Gosenshū*:

With the years I have passed
in longing
guiding me along the way,
I have slowly drawn close to you—
but with my heart alone

*omoitsutsu / he ni keru toshi o / shirube ni te /
narenuru mono wa / kokoro narikeri*

思ひつつ経にける年を知るべにてなれぬるものは心なりけり
(*Gosenshū* 1021, Love VI, anonymous / Topic unknown)⁵

By saying “with my heart alone,” the speaker means that because his or her love has not been returned and there has never been a physical union, only the longing heart has come close to the beloved, not the body. Gotoba-in takes this poem and quotes the entire opening segment:

The years I have passed
in longing,
have they all been in vain?
I have nothing but my wishing
as I gaze on the evening sky

*omoitsutsu / he ni keru toshi no / kai ya naki /
tada aramashi no / yūgure no sora*

Giordano, “*Shinkokin wakashū ni okeru taigen-dome ni tsuite,*” *Dōshisha kokubungaku* 71 (2009): 1–12; reference on p. 4. According to my own counts of some of the most common such images, 16 poems in *Shinkokinshū* end with the word *kumo* 雲 “clouds,” 26 with *yūgure* 夕暮 “evening/sunset,” 33 with *sora* 空 “sky,” and 66 with *kaze* 風 “wind.”

⁵ The text and numbering for all *waka* quoted in this paper are taken from *Shinpen kokka taikan*, web-based database version (www.kotenlibrary.com). Kanji/kana notation may be adjusted for readability.

思ひつつ経にける年のかひやなきただあらましの夕暮の空
 (Shinkokinshū 1033, Love I, Gotoba-in / Topic:
 “Long-continuing love”)

Gotoba-in’s poem seems to start from the same scenario as the *Gosenshū* poem to which he alludes, but while there is no outstanding concrete image in the source poem, Gotoba-in’s speaker has found something for the senses to hold on to, the sight of the sunset. Where the speaker in the *Gosenshū* poem turns inward to the solitary longing heart, his speaker turns outwards in an appeal to the wide sky—the only thing that is there, always there, in the absence of the beloved.

Evening is a significant time for the lonesome lover, as it is the hour when other lovers are meeting. The evening sky is a marker of passing time, a synecdoche for the cycle of day and night that passes yet again without a meeting. But although the sight of the sky has become a repeating sign infused with the repeated agony of love denied, it may also be a kind of aesthetic consolation—some substitute, however poor, for the unknown sensations of love fulfilled.

In another example with the same ending image of the evening sky, the imagery is taken from the source poem, but its ordering is changed. The source poem is a famous poem from *Kokinshū*:

In the evening,
 to the ends of the clouds
 I send my brooding thoughts,
 For as far from me as the far-off sky
 is the one for whom I long

*yūgure wa / kumo no hatate ni / mono zo omou /
 amatsu sora naru / hito o kou to te*

夕暮れは雲のはたてに物ぞ思ふ天つ空なる人を恋ふとて
 (Kokinshū 484, Love I, anonymous / Topic unknown)

Here the poem starts from the image of the evening sky, which is metonymically associated with romantic longing, and the far-off clouds, which turn into a spatial metaphor for distance that brings up thoughts of the unattainable beloved.

A *Shinkokinshū* poem by Minamoto no Michiteru takes several specific images from this poem and presents them in quite a different order:

Wearily I gaze,
vague and aimless
my brooding thoughts,
toward the ends of the clouds,
trailing off in the evening sky

*nagame wabi / sore to wa nashi ni / mono zo omou /
kumo no hatate no / yūgure no sora*

ながめわびそれとはなしに物ぞ思ふ雲のはたての夕暮の空
(*Shinkokinshū* 1106, Love II, Michiteru / Topic not given⁶)

Michiteru's poem is less focused on the object of the speaker's brooding thoughts of longing and more fixated on the sky—although from the clear *honkadori* reference, we know the object is that same beloved who is as distant as the clouds. This poem features the “evening,” the “ends of the clouds,” and the “brooding thoughts” from the source poem, but reverses their order: these words appear in lines 1, 2, and 3 of the *Kokinshū* poem, respectively, but in lines 5, 4, and 3 of Michiteru's poem.

This case is an especially clear example of a general reversal of narrative order that can often be seen in *Shinkokinshū*-era love poems versus those of earlier eras. In any era, it is a common pattern in love *waka* to pair an image with a feeling, turning from one to the other in the course of the poem. In the earlier version of the pattern, the image is more likely to come first and then turn to the feeling. The *Shinkokinshū* narrative more commonly goes in the opposite direction: the poem starts with the inner feeling, which then turns to a look outward at the scene at hand.

Many cases of the image-first narrative employ the common *Man'yōshū*- and *Kokinshū*-era device of *jokotoba* 序詞—a prefatory segment of a poem, often quite lengthy, that serves to point to an important word or phrase. There is generally a shift in the sense of this key word as it is used in the prefatory segment versus in the main statement of the poem; the connection may hinge on a metaphor, or on a sound connection between two homophonous words. When *Shinkokinshū*-era poets allude to earlier poems that employ *jokotoba*, they have at their disposal a wealth of imagery from the *jokotoba* that can be reused and recombined at will.

⁶ The headnote in *Shinkokinshū* simply reads “[composed] at the Poetry Contest in Fifteen Hundred Rounds (*Sengohyakuban uta-awase* 千五百番歌合),” but in fact this poem is nowhere to be found in *Sengohyakuban uta-awase*, and there seems to be no other source that contains the original topic.

There is no need to preserve the original rhetorical connection, which is already known to the reader/listener.

The following example is of an allusion focused on the *jokotoba* image from a famous *waka* by the mid-Heian poet Sone no Yoshitada. I will first give the source poem, which in this case is also anthologized in *Shinkokinshū*, followed by several poems that allude to it:

The boatman crossing
before the river-mouth of Yura
has lost his sculling oar⁷—
so unknown the way ahead,
this path of love

*Yura no to o / wataru funabito / kaji o tae /
yukue mo shiranu / koi no michi kamo*

由良の門を渡る舟人かちを絶え行方も知らぬ恋の道かも
(*Shinkokinshū* 1071, Love I, Yoshitada / Topic unknown)

The first three lines here serve as a *jokotoba* that functions to introduce and point to the phrase *yukue mo shiranu* “so unknown the way ahead,” but these lines are also easy to read as a metaphor for the whole situation of the bewildering “path of love.” The boatman who has lost his oars is the speaker who, surprised by a powerful encounter with love, loses control of his emotions and is thrown into confusion.

A poem by the *Shinkokinshū*-era poet Kujō Yoshitsune refers closely to this image, but changes the metaphor slightly as well as extending it:

Its sculling oar lost,
the boat drawing toward
the port of Yura
can find nothing to guide it
in this salt breeze from the offing

*kaji o tae / Yura no minato ni / yoru fune no /
tayori mo shiranu / okitsu shiokaze*

⁷ A debate surrounds the meaning of かちを, which could be either 梶を (“oar” + particle を) or 梶緒 (the rope that connects to the oar to the boat). I have translated it here according to the former interpretation.

梶を絶え由良の湊に寄る舟の頼りも知らぬ沖つ潮風
 (*Shinkokinshū* 1073, Love I, Yoshitsune / Topic not given⁸)

The boat's situation is different here: in the source poem by Yoshitada the boat is trying to cross a port or inlet area where a river pours into the sea,⁹ and attempts in vain to pass in front of the river mouth without being pushed off course. In Yoshitsune's poem, the boat is trying to enter the port area—or, in the metaphor, the male speaker longs to approach the beloved, but lacks a way to do so. But then another element comes into play, the final image of the *shiokaze*, the salty tidal breeze that blows in from offshore. Yet, perhaps because it blows too weakly or too inconsistently, it is of no help to the boat that is left to drift aimlessly.

The wind is in fact a reference to another earlier poem, this one from *Kokinshū*:¹⁰

Even the boat
 bound for waters with no trace
 of others' white-rippled wakes—
 even it has the wind
 to trust in as a guide

*shiranami no / ato naki kata ni / yuku fune mo /
 kaze zo tayori no / shirube narikeru*

白波のあとなき方に行く舟も風ぞ頼りの知るべなりける
 (*Kokinshū* 472, Love I, Fujiwara no Kachion / Topic unknown)

Kachion's speaker complains that even though the boat has something to help it to its destination, he has nothing to help him—so the wind here represents some hope that, in the speaker's own situation, does not actually exist. Yoshitsune integrates the metaphors from both the poems to which he refers: his boatman, who has already lost his oars, complains further of

⁸ The headnote in *Shinkokinshū* reads “[composed] at the time of presenting a hundred-poem sequence.” In the sequence in question, *Shōji shodō hyakushū* 正治初度百首, the topic for this poem is simply “love.”

⁹ Yoshitada and Yoshitsune's poems may refer to one of two possible geographic locations: the Yura River in modern-day Kyoto prefecture, or the one in modern-day Wakayama. Both enter the sea in an inlet area.

¹⁰ The reference to *Kokinshū* 472 is not extensive enough for it to be called a second *honka*; Yoshitsune makes a *honkadori* allusion to *Shinkokinshū* 1071 and a second more casual allusion to *Kokinshū* 472.

a wind that brings no help. Placed at the end of the poem, the image of the salty breeze carries a vivid sensory impact, creating a scene we can see, hear, smell, and feel on the skin.

What the wind adds to the meaning of the metaphor, however, is less obvious. In Kachion's poem, the wind represents some source of help that does not exist for him; in Yoshitsune's poem the wind is there, but it cannot be relied upon. What then is this wind—does it represent some circumstance that has given the speaker hope of getting close to the beloved, but then left him disappointed? Or does its metaphorical meaning matter less than its affective impact at the end of the poem? Has Yoshitsune simply pivoted to a scene of drifting in the wavering breeze, evoking a sense of limbo, and leaving our imagination drifting off in the world of the metaphor?

Now I will turn to two examples of seasonal poems in *Shinkokinshū* that allude to earlier love poems. The following is another example by Yoshitsune that again draws on a *jokotoba* from the source poem. The source poem holds a prominent place in *Kokinshū* as the first poem of the first volume of love poems:

Cuckoo's voice calling...
 fifth month, with its
 green-patterned sweet-flag leaves...
 And I, who know no pattern, rhyme, nor reason
 why I have fallen so in love

*hototogisu / naku ya satsuki no / ayamegusa /
 ayame mo shiranu / koi mo suru kana*

ほととぎす鳴くや五月のあやめ草あやめも知らぬ恋もするかな
 (*Kokinshū* 469, Love I, anonymous / Topic unknown)

Here, once more, the first three lines of the poem are a *jokotoba* that introduce the second *ayame*; the entire poem is built around this repeating word *ayame* in a way that I attempt to convey in my translation.¹¹ It is as though the plant's name calls to mind a sound that links back to the main sentiment of the poem, the romantic obsession filling the speaker's mind.

¹¹ The two meanings of *ayame* found here, "sweet flag" and "reason," are without any clear linguistic connection between them, although theories vary on the possibility of a common word origin.

Unlike in the previous example, the *jokotoba* here hinges on a homophonic connection, and there is no clearly stated metaphorical correspondence between the *jokotoba* image and the second half of the poem. One can imagine possibilities: the cuckoo's distant call may be like the gentle awakening of love, and the fragrance of sweet flags hanging from the roofs in the fifth month¹² may be like the sweetness of new love. But none of this is clearly drawn. A scene rich in sensory detail is evoked and then, as it were, that richness is poured into the context of human romantic feeling through the conduit of the word *ayame*.

In alluding to this poem, Yoshitsune employs the technique, widespread in the *Shinkokinshū* era,¹³ of alluding to a poem on a different topic. Here Yoshitsune takes the imagery from the *jokotoba* of the *Kokinshū* love poem and uses it as inspiration for a summer poem:

In the moist air
Sweet flag leaves exuding fragrance...
Cuckoo's voice calling...
fifth month, with its
rain in the evening

*uchishimeri / ayame zo kaoru / hototogisu /
naku ya satsuki no / ame no yūgure*

うち湿りあやめぞ香るほととぎす鳴くや五月の雨の夕暮
(*Shinkokinshū* 220, Summer, Yoshitsune / Topic: "Summer")

Without making any direct reference to love at all, Yoshitsune composes a poem full of diffuse overtones of love by association. He takes the sensory images from the *jokotoba* in the source poem and enhances them: to the original fifth-month scene of sweet flags and a cuckoo's call he adds the impression of the damp and rainy air, which heightens the scent of the sweet flags, and also adds the final image of the darkening hour. Again, as in the last example by Yoshitsune, it is a scene we can see, hear, smell, and feel. And in the midst of all these sensations there is the hint of romantic

¹² To ward off evil spirits on *tango-no-sekku* 端午の節句 or the Boys Festival, on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar.

¹³ This technique is taught by Fujiwara no Teika in his treatise *Eiga taigai*. For a discussion of the passage in question, see David T. Bialock, "Voice, Text, and the Question of Poetic Borrowing in Late Classical Japanese Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54.1 (1994): 181–231, reference on pp. 218–220.

desire through heavy references to the source poem, including direct quotation of the lines, “cuckoo’s voice calling... / fifth month, with its...”

Since Yoshitsune’s poem is a seasonal poem rather than a love poem, it is unsurprising that we do not see quite the same suffering of the unsatisfied lover here that we saw in previous examples. But the same is true of the *honka*, which is about the early phases of love—the awakening of desire that has brought about confusion but not yet complete despair. The ambiguous sentiment and lush imagery of the source poem are well-suited for refashioning into a summer scene that carries a vague sense of unspoken feelings hovering in the air.

My final example is also a seasonal poem that alludes to themes of love in the source material. This poem by Fujiwara no Teika, which has received a great deal of comment and has frequently been considered a pinnacle of the *Shinkokinshū* style,¹⁴ is layered with multiple references to earlier sources, so I will start by giving Teika’s poem:

On a spring night
the floating bridge of dreams
breaks off...
parting at the mountain peak,
clouds drift over the sky

*haru no yo no / yume no ukihashi / todae shite /
mine ni wakaruru / yokogumo no sora*

春の夜の夢の浮橋途絶えして峰に別る横雲の空
(*Shinkokinshū* 38, Spring I, Teika / Topic not given¹⁵)

¹⁴ Watanabe Yasuaki, for one, has referred to this poem as “the best representative not only of the work of Fujiwara no Teika but also of the *Shinkokinshū* age as a whole.” See Watanabe Yasuaki, *Chūsei waka shiron: yōshiki to hōhō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2017), 255. Similar evaluations are found in premodern commentaries: the author of the *Shinkokin wakashū shō* refers to this poem as one of the “three secret poems of the *Shinkokinshū*.” See *Shinkokinshū kochū shūsei no kai*, ed., *Shinkokinshū kochū shūsei*, 3 vols, (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1997), II: 254.

¹⁵ The headnote in *Shinkokinshū* reads “When Cloistered Prince Shukaku commanded the composition of a fifty-poem sequence.” In the *Shinpen kokka taikan* text of the sequence in question, *Omuro gojisshu* 御室五十首, as well as in that of Teika’s private collection *Shūi gusō* 拾遺愚草, the topic is missing, but can be presumed from context in *Omuro gojisshu* to be “spring.”

This poem tells a story of sleeping and then dreaming, awakening then looking up to the sky. What is this dream, and what are these clouds? There are answers in the allusions. The “floating bridge of dreams” is the title of the final chapter of the *Tale of Genji*, in which Kaoru has been trying to gain access to the mysterious Ukifune, but fails to do so and is left in limbo as the tale comes to a close. The dream in Teika’s poem too would seem to be a dream of love, perhaps a love that can be fulfilled only in dreams.

The “clouds parting at the peak” allude to a source poem from *Kokinshū*:

The wind blows,
and the white clouds
parting at the peak
drift away, as utterly cruelly
as your faithless heart from me

*kaze fukeba / mine ni wakaruru / shirakumo no /
taete tsurenaki / kimi ga kokoro ka*

風吹けば峰に別るる白雲のたえてつれなき君が心か
(*Kokinshū* 601, Love II, Tadamine / Topic unknown)

This is another *jokotoba* poem: the first three lines with the blowing wind and the white clouds point to the word *taete* “vanish” (I have translated it here as “drift away”), which then shifts to the meaning of “utterly” as it turns to the main sentiment of the poem, a complaint about a faithless lover. The hinge between the *jokotoba* image and the lover’s complaint hangs both on this shift in the sense of the word *taete* and on a metaphorical relationship. Teika’s poem quotes Tadamine’s line “parting at the peak” verbatim, giving the clouds in his scene resonance as a metaphor for a departing lover.

A third allusion, which ties the dream and the clouds together, is to a Chinese source, the story in the preface of the rhapsody “Gaotang fu” anthologized in *Wen xuan*:

Once upon a time King Xiang of Chu visited the high terrace at Yun-meng with Song Yu, when he gazed off toward the lodge of Gaotang. Above it was a mass of cloudy vapors, first rising up towering, then suddenly changing its aspect, so that in a moment there were endless transformations. And the king asked Song Yu, “What vapor is that?” Whereupon Song Yu replied, “That is what

they call ‘the clouds of dawn.’” And the king: “What is meant by ‘the clouds of dawn?’”

Song Yu: “Once upon a time one of the kings before you visited Gaotang. He grew weary and lay down to rest during the daytime. He dreamed then of a woman, who said to him, ‘I am the Maiden of Wu Mountain and am a sojourner here at Gaotang. When I heard that my lord was visiting Gaotang, I wished to offer him pillow and mat.’ Then the king favored her with his bed.

“And when she left, she said on parting, ‘I am found on Wu Mountain’s sunlit slope, on the steeps of the high hill. In the early morning I am the clouds of dawn; in the evening I am the passing rain. So it is every morning and every evening beneath the Terrace of Light.’ He watched for her in the early morning, and it was as she had said. And he then built her a temple and named it ‘Clouds of Dawn.’ . . .”¹⁶

This is a story of love that, although brief, is never really lost, since the presence of the maiden remains in the “clouds of dawn.” In alluding to this story, Teika’s poem seems sensitive to this aspect of the clouds as a presence, as something that remains when the dream flees. Is there a subtle affirmation here of a reality as enchanting as the dream?

Watanabe Yasuaki points out the ways in which Teika creates balance between the two halves of his poem, drawing them together by the way he distributes elements taken from allusive sources. The “dream” from “Gaotang fu” appears in the first half of the poem while the “clouds” appear in the second; and *todae* 途絶え (“breaks off”), which contains the word *tae(te)* from Tadamine’s poem, appears in the first half while “parting at the peak” appears in the second.¹⁷

Teika creates a flow that blends dream and reality in poetic harmony. The “breaking off” in the middle almost seems false, as though the bridge of dreams that broke off has become the drifting morning clouds. The lost

¹⁶ Slightly adjusted from a translation by Stephen Owen. See Stephen Owen, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 189.

¹⁷ Watanabe, *Chūsei waka shiron*, 257–258. The technique of distributing elements from a source poem between the two halves of a *honkadori* poem is mentioned in the treatise *Maigetsushō* (doubtfully attributed to Teika), in a passage which takes *Kokinshū* 484, quoted earlier in this paper, as a model *honka*. For a discussion of the passage see Bialock, “Voice, Text,” 222–223.

dream gives way to a reality just as precious. Perhaps such a subversion of the rules of love poetry—that desire must always be disappointed in the end; that morning, the time of parting, is always cruel—is only possible in a seasonal poem like this one. To be sure, as Roselee Bundy’s analysis of this poem emphasizes, the clouds too will finally vanish into the void of the sky.¹⁸ There is still a separation in the end—but perhaps it is not such a cruel one as that with the heartless lover in Tadamine’s poem, but a gentler farewell from a presence that promises to return.

This aesthetic of presence is the common point among the examples I have discussed in this paper. These *Shinkokinshū* poets transformed material from their allusive sources, transmitting it with a heightened sensory impact, evoking the sights, the scents, and the feel of the air associated with moments of desire and longing. Images that in earlier poems were associated with love through metaphor or wordplay become part of the immediate scene in *Shinkokinshū* poems.

All the examples I have discussed end on images that evoke the surrounding atmosphere—the far-off clouds in the evening sky, the salty tidal breeze, the damp fragrant air of a rainy evening, the drifting clouds of morning. The *Shinkokinshū* lover looks outside the self at the last, diffusing solitary suffering by placing himself or herself within the wider environment, and turning from a complaint of what is denied to the solace of what is given. In the *Shinkokinshū* world, whatever dreams may be lost and whatever loves may go unrequited, in the end there will always be the clouds, the wind, the sky of right now.

¹⁸ Roselee Bundy, “Solo Poetry Contest As Poetic Self-Portrait: the One-Hundred-Round Contest of Lord Teika’s Own Poems: Part Two,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 61.2 (2006): 131–192; reference on p. 149.