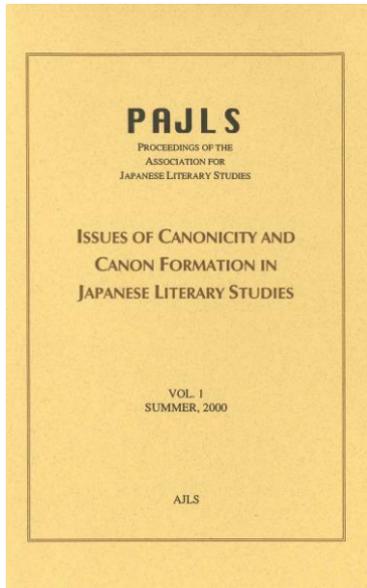


“Aesthetic Politics and Literary History:
Shinkokinshū and Kazamaki Keijirō”

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AESTHETIC POLITICS AND LITERARY HISTORY:
SHINKOKINSH AND KAZAMAKI KEIJIR

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The object of my paper is to reassess the modern reception of the *Shinkokinshū*, the eighth imperial *waka* anthology. In so doing I will pay particular attention to the change in its evaluation that occurred during the early Sh wa period, in the late 1920s and 1930s.

The *Shinkokinshū* was compiled in the early thirteenth century, in the early Kamakura period, by Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) and other representative poets of the era, by command of Ex-Emperor Gotoba (1180-1239). Today it is widely regarded as one of the three great classics of Japanese *waka* poetry, along with the *Man'yōshū* and the *Kokinshū*. However, in the Meiji and Taishō periods, the *Shinkokinshū* was always regarded as something inferior to these two collections. The influential poet and critic Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) closely linked the *Shinkokinshū* to the *Kokinshū* in his well-known essay "Utayomi ni atauru sho" (Letters to *waka* poets) (1898), in which he attacked the authority of the *Kokinshū* and its editor Ki no Tsurayuki (?870-945). Shiki's direct followers, such as the Araragi school *tanka* poets, followed his judgment and detested the *Shinkokinshū* style. This view was shared by general readers, including even scholars of *kokubungaku* or Japanese literature. Shioi Ukō (1869-1913), who was close to the romantic Myōjō circle of poets, wrote the first modern commentary of the *Shinkokinshū* (*Shinkokin wakashū shōkai*; 1897-1908), but his admiration was oriented mainly toward the rhetorical achievement of the *Shinkokinshū* poems. After the late 1890s, first modern literary histories were written by young scholars such as Mikami Sanji (1865-1939), Haga Yaichi (1867-1927), and Fujioka Sakutarō (1870-1910). These literary histories criticized the *Shinkokinshū* for the inconsistency between the triteness of topics and mastery of rhetorical techniques and accorded it a second-rate position. In short, the young scholars who sought out the national spirit in Japanese literature considered that medieval literature generally reflected the social and cultural confusion of the medieval period. Fujioka Sakutarō went so far as to call the Kamakura and Muromachi periods "the dark age" (*anko-*

ku jidai) of Japanese literary history.¹ To these literary historians, the *Shinkokinshū* seemed to reflect the decadent life of a declining aristocracy.

In the Taishō period, the situation did not change significantly. As exemplified by the detailed analysis in *Bungaku ni arawaretaru waga kokuminshisō no kenkyū* (Study of Our National Spirit as Reflected in Literature) (1916-1921), written by the cultural historian Tsuda Sōkichi (1873-1961), Taishō readers familiar with modern Western poetry saw a similarity between *Shinkokinshū* poetry and French Symbolist poetry.² However, as *Nihon seishinshi kenkyū* (Studies in the History of Japanese Spirit) (1926), by the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), reveals, the Araragi type of worship of the *Man'yōshū* and negative evaluation of the *Shinkokinshū* were still dominant.³

This situation changed drastically toward the end of the Taishō period. Even inside the academic world of *kokubungaku*, a new generation of scholars began to pay more serious attention to the *Shinkokinshū* and took up the text and its poets as objects of study. Among them was Kazamaki Keijirō (1902-60), a *kokubungaku* student at Tokyo Imperial University, who wrote a B.A. thesis on Fujiwara Teika and became a pioneer in the field.

As Kazamaki recalls in his *Shinkokin jidai* (The Shinkokinshū Era) (1936), the landmark incident was the great Kantō earthquake of 1923, which was regarded by some critics as divine punishment for Taishō society and its culture.⁴ In the socio-economic and ideological confusion of the post-earthquake period, which included the brief rise of Marxism, the Japanese intelligentsia, who had been immersed in Taishō liberalism and cosmopolitanism, saw the second coming of the medieval period. The notion of medi-

¹ Fujioka Sakutarō, *Kamakura Muromachi jidai bungakushi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1949), 1.

² Tsuda paid particular attention to the musicality of *Shinkokinshū* poems. See Tsuda, *Bungaku ni arawaretaru waga kokuminshisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990), 2:200.

³ See Watsuji, "Man'yōshū no uta to Kokinshū no uta no sōi ni tsuite," *Nihon seishinshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 125-43.

⁴ Kazamaki Keijirō, *Kazamaki Keijirō zenshū* (Tokyo: Ofūsha, 1969-1971), 6:241. Hereafter KKz.

eval culture as the product of a time of confusion now became a positive reason for its reevaluation.

This change in intellectual atmosphere seemed to have been accompanied by a change in the general attitude toward literature. In the Meiji and Taishō literary histories, the *Shinkokinshū* continued to be criticized for the discrepancy in its *waka* between triteness of topics and newness of expression. This criticism assumed that literature evolved in a linear progression. The most theoretically organized form of this kind of view of literature is found in the works of the Marxist *rekishi shakai gakuha* (socio-historical school) scholars. But in the late 1920s and 1930s, probably under the influence of a new trend in cultural historiography (*bunkashi*), led by such historians as Nishida Naojirō (1886-1964) of Kyoto Imperial University and Hiraizumi Kiyoshi (1895-1984) of Tokyo Imperial University (who later became a key person of ultra-national *kōkoku shikan*, emperor-centered historiography), a new tendency emerged almost simultaneously in both cultural criticism and *kokubungaku* studies. Japanese literature came to be regarded as the source of an unchanging "Japaneseness" (*nihonteki naru mono*), and the concerns of the reader were directed to the ahistorical, timeless elements in Japanese literature. To give an example, Hasegawa Nyoze-kan (1875-1965), a leading liberal journalist and cultural critic of the Taishō and Shōwa eras, defines the essence of the Japanese national character as the spirit of "wa" (harmony) which allowed Japanese people to absorb different foreign cultures without conflict. To maintain the continuity of culture, Hasegawa argues, one should cultivate a certain aesthetic sensibility. And for that reason, traditional art and literature should be learned and treated with great respect.⁵

This new tendency in Japanese literary studies was best expressed in the works of Okazaki Yoshie (1892-1982), probably the most productive *kokubungaku* scholar of the time. A graduate of Tokyo Imperial University, Okazaki was appointed lecturer of a new Japanese department at Tōhoku Imperial University in Sendai, where he launched a new school of *kokubungaku* studies, which he named *Nihon bungeigaku* (Japanese literary

⁵ See Hasegawa, "Dentō bunka to gendai bunka," in his *Nihonteki seikaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1938), 73-82.

science) after the German *Literaturwissenschaft*.⁶ He argued for the separation of the “study of literature itself” from philology or textual criticism and criticized the existing *kokubungaku* institutions represented by the Japanese literature department of his alma mater, Tokyo Imperial University. In his *bungeigaku* he traced the historical changes of literary genres, and in so doing he extracted timeless, unchanging aesthetic qualities such as “*aware*,” “*en*,” “*yūgen*,” and so on. Not unlike the American New Critics of the same time, Okazaki insisted on the importance of focusing on the text itself and jettisoned non-literary, external elements from interpretation. But what enabled him to make this separation was, in fact, his presupposition of the existence of “Japanese” literature as a self-evident public sphere (*kōkyōken*).⁷

Like Hasegawa Nyozeikan, Okazaki regarded the harmonizing, reconciling character as the essence of Japanese culture, and he paid particular attention to medieval era and its literature. According to Okazaki’s theory, in medieval literature the two aesthetic notions “*aware*” and “*okashi*,” which had formed opposite poles in the earlier Heian period, were united into one category called “*en*,” “*yūgen*,” or “*ushin*.” In short, for Okazaki, the medieval era was the most “Japanese” era in all of Japanese history. This view was in fact shared by other *kokubungaku* scholars who specialized in medieval literature, such as Saitō Kiyoe (1893-1981), who published a book entitled *Seishinbi toshite no kokubungaku* (National Literature as Spiritual Beauty) (1938). Mainstream *kokubungaku* scholars like Hisamatsu Sen’ichi (1894-1976) of Tokyo Imperial University also came to accept this view.

By the time Kazamaki Keijirō published his first book *Shinkokin jidai* (The Shinkokinshū Era) in 1936, the need for a definition of “Japaneseness” based heavily on medieval culture and literature had become a central concern for intellectuals outside academia. The works collected in this book were written over a span of ten years and range from a very positivistic study of Teika’s milieu to an enlightening, journalistic article written for a *tanka* journal. But as a volume it reflected the changes that the discipline of *kokubungaku* had experienced since the Kantō earthquake. Kazamaki played a key part in the reevaluation of the medieval era and its literature. But what

⁶ In 1935 Okazaki published a book entitled *Nihon bungeigaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten).

⁷ Okazaki Yoshie, *Nihon bungei no yōshiki* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939), 44.

distinguished him from other medieval specialists was his strong attachment to the *Shinkokinshū* era, or the early Kamakura period. While other *kokubungaku* scholars, including Okazaki and Saitō, gave greater value to the late medieval period because of its spiritual depth and religious tendencies, Kazamaki valued the *Shinkokinshū* era precisely because it was a time of chaos. Kazamaki never stopped seeing similarities between his own time and that of the *Shinkokinshū*.⁸ The *Shinkokinshū* poets, particularly Fujiwara Teika, were doubles of early Shōwa intellectuals, including Kazamaki himself.

Kazamaki's attachment to the *Shinkokinshū* era coincided with his stress on the subjective reception of literature. He criticized two apparently different camps of *kokubungaku*: Okazaki's *Nihon bungeigaku* and the Marxist socio-historical school, for their "objective," "scientific" approaches. To Kazamaki, literature is not something that exists objectively and can be approached objectively. Rather, in Kazamaki's view, literature exists or emerges in the very experience of an individual (*ko, kojin*), when he or she reads a literary text in particular social or historical circumstances.⁹

This definition of literature as something found in the reading experience of an individual is closely connected with the dialectics between the individual and the tradition that Kazamaki found in *Shinkokinshū* poets.¹⁰ It was exemplified by the technique of *honkadori* (allusive variation) in *Shinkokinshū waka* poems, where the poet is simultaneously a reader of an earlier poem, and by quoting or alluding to a part of the earlier poem, the poet metonymically evokes the classical poetic tradition as a whole. The act of literary production is bound by tradition. To put it another way, tradition itself is modified when it is quoted in a new way. Thus, in the case of *Shinkokinshū* poets, reading and literary production cannot be separated. Based on this kind of analysis of *Shinkokinshū* poetics, Kazamaki repeatedly pointed out that tradition is meaningful only when it is constructed from today's individual viewpoint.¹¹

⁸ See Kazamaki, "Shinkokinteki naru mono no igi," *KKz* 7:152-62.

⁹ See Kazamaki, "Bungakushi no mondai," *Ibid.*, 1:428-91.

¹⁰ See Kazamaki, "Shinkokinshū no tokushitsu to jidaiteki keikō," *Ibid.*, 6:131-69.

¹¹ See, for example, Kazamaki, "Kenkyū no taishō toshite no koten," *Ibid.*, 1:179-93.

From the late 1930s and 1940s on, Kazamaki's main concern gradually shifted from the study of the *Shinkokinshū* and medieval poetry to the writing of a new history of Japanese literature. In the 1940s and 1950s Kazamaki published books such as *Nihon bungakushi no kōsō* (A Plan of Japanese Literary History) (1942) and *Nihon bungakushi no shūhen* (The Periphery of Japanese Literary History) (1953), but he would not complete his literary history in his lifetime. By following the model of the *Shinkokinshū* poets, Kazamaki was able to describe the intellectual situation of his own time, but for the very same reason, his theory could not be applied outside the intellectual sphere.

At this point, Kazamaki was not far from Yasuda Yojūro (1910-81) and the aesthetics of ruin or decadence of the Japan Romantic School. Although the postwar critics of Kazamaki tended to separate him from Yasuda, Kazamaki's own attitude toward Yasuda is ambiguous. While Kazamaki criticized Yasuda for a lack of clear logic and for a prophet-like, mystifying style, he acknowledged Yasuda's love and passion for Japanese classics.¹² When we consider that Kazamaki himself admired the *Shinkokinshū* poets for their "passion for nothingness" (*kyomu no netsujō*),¹³ we cannot help but feel the closeness between the two. Yasuda set much importance in the *Shinkokinshū*, but for him, the most representative poet of the *Shinkokinshū* era was ex-Emperor Gotoba, not Fujiwara Teika. For Yasuda, Gotoba was the embodiment of the cultural spirit that runs through Japanese literature, and Gotoba's tragic defeat before the Kamakura *bakufu* military was a symbol of the fate of the beautiful.

In today's Japan, particularly in the field of historiography and cultural studies, more and more people are directing their concerns toward the issue of memory and construction of the past. The *Shinkokinshū* is an ideal text for exploring this issue, since it is an attempt to reconstruct or construct the poetic tradition. As we can see here, of equal interest is the attempt by Kazamaki and others in the late 1920s and 1930s to redefine of Japanese cultural identity during a time of Japan's militaristic expansion.

¹² See Kazamaki, "Yasuda Yojūro shi cho *Man'yōshū no seishin*," *Ibid.*, 372-78.

¹³ Kazamaki Keijirō, *Chūsei no bungaku dentō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985), 91.