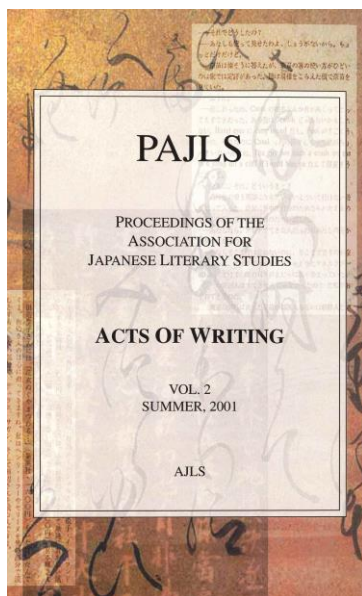


“The *Wakan rōeishū*: Cannibalization or Singing in Harmony?”

Sonja Arntzen 

*Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 2 (2001): 155–171.



*PAJLS* 2:  
*Acts of Writing*.

Rebecca Copeland, Editor-in-Chief; Elizabeth Oyler, Editor;  
Marvin Marcus, Editor

## THE WAKAN RÔEISHÛ: CANNIBALIZATION OR SINGING IN HARMONY?

SONJA ARNTZEN

### “SNOW, MOON, FLOWERS”

The *Wakan rôeishû* (和漢朗詠集, ca. 1012)<sup>1</sup> embodies a key moment in the process of assimilating Chinese poetry into the Japanese poetic tradition. It crystallized a canon of Chinese poetry specifically for Heian Japan that exerted a far reaching influence. For example, a line of Chinese poetry from the *Wakan rôeishû* even surfaces in Kawabata Yasunari's acceptance speech for the Nobel prize in 1968. Kawabata cites the Japanese art historian Yashiro Yukio who states that “one of the special characteristics of Japanese art can be summed up in a single poetic sentence: ‘The time of the snows, of the moon, of the blossoms—then more than ever we think of our comrades.’”<sup>2</sup> This “poetic sentence” (*shigo* [詩語]) is actually an adaptation<sup>3</sup> of one line from a couplet by Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846), no.734 of the *Wakan rôeishû*, “琴詩酒友皆拋我、雪月花時最憶君” (“Lute, poetry, wine—these friends all have abandoned me, Snow, moon, blossoms—these times, more than ever I think of you”). This is the *locus classicus* for *setsugekka*, now a fixed expression in Japanese for the seasonal beauties of nature, but actually three characters from one line of one couplet from Bai Juyi's poem, “Sent to Chief Musician Yin.”<sup>4</sup> The *Wakan rôeishû* itself has

---

<sup>1</sup> For the English translation see J. Thomas Rimer and Jonathan Chaves, *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan Rôeishû*. This handsome volume also contains an essay on the impact of the *Wakan rôeishû* on Japanese literature by Jin'ichi Konishi, an essay on music and the *Wakan rôeishû* by Stephen Addiss, and an essay on calligraphy and the *Wakan rôeishû* by Ann Yonemura.

<sup>2</sup> Kawabata, 69.

<sup>3</sup> The line is cited in *kundoku* reading style, “雪月花の時、最も友を思う” (*Ibid.* 11), whereas the original is, of course, in Chinese and the last two characters in the line are actually 憶君 rather than 思友.

receded into the ghostly ranks of those classical works banished to the outskirts of the modern canon of Japanese classical literature, but bits and pieces of it live on as proverbial expressions in modern Japanese language and within properly canonized texts such as the *Tale of Genji* and many Nô plays. Is the *Wakan rôeishû* representative of a process by which Chinese poetry was dismembered and so thoroughly appropriated that all difference between Chinese poetry and Japanese poetry was erased? Can it be interpreted as an attempt to smooth over the semiotic dissonance arising from the *wakan* dialectic inherent in Japanese literary culture? Furthermore, what relevance does it have then as a text that constructs a Japanese identity for Heian period courtiers? These are the questions this article will address. Before embarking on this inquiry, however, a brief description of the *Wakan rôeishû*<sup>5</sup> is in order.

#### WAKAN RÔEISHÛ BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

The *Wakan rôeishû* was compiled by Fujiwara no Kintô (藤原公任, 966-1041) who played a cultural role in the Heian court of that epoch as important as the political role played by his close kinsman Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027).<sup>6</sup> The earliest reference to the compilation is in the preface to the fourth imperial anthology,

---

<sup>4</sup> See, 239 and 308 (whole poem). See also Rimer and Chaves, 219. Note the couplet is number 733 in the Rimer *et al* translation. The critic Susumu Nakanishi has written an entire book on the theme of *setsugekka*. He identifies a poem by Ôtomo Yakamochi in the *Manyôshû* that already puts snow, moon and flowers together before Bai Juyi's poem had been written. Nakanishi, 13.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account in English of the *Wakan rôeishû*, its compiler and various textual and interpretive matters based on exhaustive research of Japanese primary and secondary sources, see Ivo Smits's two-part article, "Song as Cultural History: Reading *Wakan Rôeishû*," in *Monumenta Nipponica*.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted for this analogy to Zdenka Svarcova of the Institute of East Asian Studies, Charles University in Prague who made it her paper, "Yamato Morokoshi: Fujiwara Kintô's Double Poetical Taste in *Wakan Rôeishû*" delivered at the European Association of Japanese Studies in Lahti, Finland, 2000. Ivo Smits also cites a passage from the *Ôkagami* where the cultural/political rivalry between Kintô and Michinaga is explicitly acknowledged. 55.2, 228.

*Goshûishû* (後拾遺集, 1086). Ivo Smits translates the passage as follows: “The Major Counselor Lord Kintô...compiled two volumes of fine poems, both Japanese and Chinese, which he arrayed in various categories, thereby delighting people.”<sup>7</sup> A twelfth-century commentary to the *Goshûishû* by Kenshō (顯昭, 1130 [?]-after 1209) adds the information that the compilation was made as a wedding present for Kintô’s son-in-law, Norimichi (教道, 996-1075), the fifth son of Michinaga.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of this information, the compilation is usually dated at 1012, the year of that marriage.<sup>9</sup> The Kenshō commentary is also the source for the information that the first clean draft of the work was done by Fujiwara Yukinari (藤原行成, 972-1027), one of the “Three Precedents” (*sanseki* [三跡]) or three great exemplars of Heian period calligraphy.<sup>10</sup> Another early mention of the compilation is given in the *Kokon chomonjû* (古今著聞集, ca. 1250) under the category of anecdotes about paintings. There, Fujiwara Yoshimichi (能通, dates uncertain) is credited with having commissioned two hundred sets of folding screens for presentation to the daughter of Norimichi upon her marriage to Emperor Go-Reizei in 1048. This huge set contained an unspecified number of screens illustrating poems from the *Wakan rôeishû*. They are described as being divided into two horizontal panels, with Chinese-style paintings above and Japanese-style paintings below separated by a water motif.<sup>11</sup> One notes that two early mentions of the compilation are in connection with a wedding. It calls to mind the scene in chapter 32, “Ume ga e” (“Branch of Plum”), in the *Tale of Genji* where Genji assembles models of calligraphy for the Akashi Princess’s presentation to the Emperor.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 229

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 230

<sup>9</sup> Not all Japanese scholars accept Kenshō’s information as reliable. For a summary of the arguments about this, see Smits, 55.2, 230-31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* The other two of the three exemplars are Ono no Michikaze (小野道風, 894-966) and Fujiwara no Sukemasa (藤原佐理, 944-998).

<sup>11</sup> Nishio, 33. See also, Komatsu, v. 13, 367-370.

<sup>12</sup> Abe *et al.*, v. 3, 313-14. Seidensticker, trans., 517-520.

The *Wakan rôeishû* belongs to a genre that has played a large role in traditional Japanese literature, the anthology. The respect paid to compilation as a creative act is a distinctive feature of the Japanese literary tradition. The collection may not have been the first to combine Chinese poetry and *waka* (和歌) in a single anthology,<sup>13</sup> but it is the first anthology to combine Chinese poems by Chinese authors (*shi* [詩]), Chinese poems by Japanese authors (*kanshi* [漢詩]) and *waka*. The relative numbers of the three categories, 254 *shi*, 354 *kanshi*, and 216 *waka*, for a total of 804, shows that the emphasis of the compilation was on the poetry in Chinese.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the entries do not consist of complete poems but rather of couplets drawn mainly from *shichigon zekku* (七言絶句) forms.<sup>15</sup> The choice of couplet length for *shi* and *kanshi* entries is probably related to the fact that, as the *rôei* (朗詠) in its title indicates, the compilation includes texts to be chanted or sung. This style of singing took only excerpted lines of Chinese poems for texts.<sup>16</sup> Couplet length also achieved a good balance between the Chinese poetry and *waka*.

On the level of organization as well, the collection is a hybrid; it combines organization categories from imperial *waka* anthologies with those of Chinese poetry encyclopedias. The first volume is divided, like imperial poetry anthologies, into books of the four seasons starting with spring, but each season is broken into

<sup>13</sup> Smits, 55.2, 233, Smits cites the *Shinsen Man'yôshû*, traditionally attributed to Sugawara Michizane, as the first anthology to break that ground.

<sup>14</sup> Some examples of 4/6 parallel prose are also included in the Chinese entries. The only criterion for inclusion seems to have been that the pieces be suitable for chanting aloud.

<sup>15</sup> Kawaguchi Hisao gives the figure of 423 for the number of couplets that are taken from *shichigon zekku*. Kawaguchi, 22. *Shichigon zekku* denotes a quatrain with seven Chinese characters in each line.

<sup>16</sup> Smits notes that *rôei* only refers to the chanting of Chinese poems so how the title is conceived to cover *waka* as well is puzzling. Smits, 55.3, 412. Addiss in Rimer *et al*, 246-47, although acknowledging that *rôei* refers properly to the intoning of Chinese poetry, discusses the tradition of singing *waka* as well and assumes that the title should be taken loosely. A further riddle is that Heian records only indicate a small repertoire of *rôei* couplets, so it is unclear whether Kintô intended that all the couplets in his compilation be sung. Smits, 55.3, 414.

smaller categories that partly reflect the chronological progression of seasonal phenomena and in other respects are random. For example, the first five categories in the “Spring” section are: *risshun* (立春 [Establishment of Spring]), *sôshun* (早春 [Early Spring]), *shunkyô* (春興 [Spring Inspiration]), *shunya* (春夜 [Spring Night]), *ne no bi* (子の日 [First Day of the Rat]). “Establishment of Spring,” “Early Spring,” and “First Day of the Rat” are in seasonal sequence but “Spring Inspiration” and “Spring Night” are randomly placed. The second volume seems closer to Chinese poetry encyclopedias like the *Yiwen leiju* (芸文類聚 [A Classification of Literary Writings], ca. 620) in that it starts with heavenly phenomena like wind, clouds, clear weather, moves through various flora and fauna, to musical instruments, poetry, wine, kinds of dwellings, human beings and so on.<sup>17</sup> Within the categories, the standard order for selections is *shi* couplets (usually from one to five in number),<sup>18</sup> *kanshi* couplets (one to five), then *waka* (one to three).<sup>19</sup>

One of the extraordinary things about the *Wakan rôei shû* is the large number of extant manuscripts from the Heian and Kamakura periods. A special edition of the calligraphy magazine *Sumi* devoted to the *Wakan rôei shû* lists 73 different manuscripts including complete scrolls, book formats, and assemblages of fragments.<sup>20</sup> When we think that we have only one illustrated scroll of the *Tale of Genji* of equivalent antiquity, the high value of the *Wakan rôei shû* to Heian court society as well as succeeding generations becomes very evident. Four different yet overlapping roles for the work can be identified. First of all, as mentioned above, it was an anthology of libretti for musical performance. Contemporary readers likely hummed certain passages aloud as they read it. However, the collection quickly assumed an even more

---

<sup>17</sup> Again, for a much more detailed account of *Wakan rôeishû* categories and organization, and references to all the pertinent Japanese studies on the issue, see Smits, 55.3, 235-39.

<sup>18</sup> The most notable exception to this standard order is the very first section of the text, “Establishment of Spring,” where two *kanshi* couplets and one *waka* precede two *shi* couplets.

<sup>19</sup> There are also some categories like the “First Day of the Rat” and “Third Day of the Third Month” that have only *kanshi* and *waka*.

<sup>20</sup> Watanabe, 25-26.

important role as a preferred primer for Chinese verse.<sup>21</sup> For example, Smits cites a passage from Fujiwara Teika's *Meigetsu ki* (明月記) where Teika records writing out the first book of the *Wakan rôei shû* as a reading lesson for his children.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, it was from the beginning a collection of exemplars for calligraphy, one that conveniently harmonized *wa* and *kan* styles. Finally, as is clear from the extant examples, which are all produced on gorgeous paper, the text was a costly consumer item, an *objet d'art*.

### APPROPRIATION? CANNIBALIZATION?

To return to the questions that were the point of departure for this article, I would like to examine the possible interpretation that the text represents an act of appropriation or even cannibalization of Chinese poetry. One can say the text contributes to an erasure of difference between Chinese and Japanese poetry. The very fact that it combines *shi*, *kanshi*, and *waka* supports this. Particularly relevant to this line of interpretation is that the Chinese poems have been dismembered, cut down into bite size couplets to which *waka* can stand as equal in weight. One could point to how this process eventually produces the Kawabata citation where the couplet is further chopped down and then held up as emblematic of the special qualities of Japanese art.

However, the term appropriation and the metaphor of cannibalism posit an antagonistic relationship between two parties. One only eats one's enemies. In order to uphold this interpretation one has to maintain that Heian Japanese viewed China as a cultural enemy, something quite absurd when one makes the effort to imagine Japan before the influence of Japanese nativism. In fact, I would suggest that only the legacy of Edo nativist thought combined with the contemporary cultural critique of "Orientalism" could cause one to come up with an interpretation based on the idea of appropriation.

---

<sup>21</sup> Smits, 55.2, 240.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

## THE NATIVIST POSITION

In the simplest and broadest terms, the nativist position is that Japan's "national" genius and spirit were somehow oppressed and distorted by Chinese language and learning. From this point of view, it was only with the beginning of writing in *kana*, assumed to be a transparent medium for transcribing the mother tongue, that the true Japanese spirit was liberated. From that position, not only Chinese literature itself but also writing in Chinese by Japanese authors becomes immediately problematic. The relegation of *kanbun* literature in general and the *Wakan rôeishû* in particular to relative obscurity in the modern period is as much tied to the tacit acceptance of a nativist point of view as it is to the loss of the general ability to read *kanbun*.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, one area of national culture scholarship in Japan where the *Wakan rôeishû* still holds pride of place is in the history of calligraphy. Many of the early manuscripts of the *Wakan rôeishû* are attributed to Fujiwara Yukinari, who, more than the other "Three Precedents" is credited with the establishment of a truly "Yamato style" in calligraphy.<sup>24</sup> Thomas LaMarre in his recent book *Uncovering Heian Japan* analyzes the persistent thread of nativist approach in Japanese calligraphy histories. To demonstrate the desire to discern "the emergence of Japaneseness in Heian style," he cites, for example, statements such as the following by Horie Tomohiko on the era of the "Three Precedents:"

It would not be an overstatement to say that, in our long history of calligraphy, it was only in this period that was realized a beauty in complete opposition to that of China where characters originated.<sup>25</sup>

LaMarre traces this line of reasoning to Edo nativism.

---

<sup>23</sup> The replacement of study of Chinese with European languages in the modern Japanese school curriculum is the reason advanced by Rimer for texts in Chinese having become a "phantom literature." Rimer *et al.*, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> See Komatsu Shigemi as cited by LaMarre, 87. One must keep in mind, however, that there are virtually no indisputable examples of Fujiwara Yukinari's calligraphy extant, so this theorizing is based on the work of later calligraphers professing to transmit Yukinari's style.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.



In these nativist stories of order and abandon, of regulation and dissolution, there arises a division between China and Japan grounded in and supported by an opposition between reason and emotion, or intellection and expression, or intelligibility and sensibility. It always falls to Chinese forms to be rational, intellectual, ordered, while Japanese forms flow with heartfelt abandon. This is how Edo nativism has been reconfigured with modern histories of Japanese writing. The modern nativist sees Chinese forms (regardless of era and court) as constituting an empty order, devoid of expression or sensibility, diametrically opposed to the Japanese heart.<sup>26</sup>

Within this ideological framework, it is possible to view the calligraphy style of some of the most famous manuscripts of the *Wakan rôeishû*, particularly those attributed to Fujiwara Yukinari, as having remade the Chinese calligraphy into a style that no longer overwhelmed or clashed with *kana* style. Just as *kana* style had been developed out of *kanji* forms, now *kana* style could shape *kanji* in its own image. In the same vein, then, the fragmentation of Chinese poetry in the *Wakan rôeishû* can be seen to have reconstituted Chinese poetry into something fully absorbable into Japanese poetry.

### ORIENTALISM REVISITED

How can the contemporary critique of Orientalism join hands with a nativist position to construct an interpretation of the *Wakan rôeishû* predicated on appropriation? To recapitulate that critique in simple strokes, first, it rests on the assumption that Western scholars of the Orient created the Orient as an imaginative construct that has only a tangential relationship with a “real” Orient.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, this imagining of the Orient served imperialist aims, an agenda of subjugation. As the author of the critique, Edward Said declares, his subject is “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that this critique is formulated primarily

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>27</sup> Said, 52.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

on Western culture's relationship with the Middle East, it has been extended to cover the West's relationship with the "Far East" as well. Over and beyond that, the critique has become accepted as an important paradigm for understanding the dynamics of cultural influence between any two cultures where one culture defines itself in terms of the "the Other." When this critique is laid over Japan's cultural relationship with China in the Heian period, the first part of the proposition can be supported. Japanese writers and artists imagined China on the basis of literary texts and the China thus created was substantially different from the Chinese view of their own culture in either the Six Dynasties or the Tang period. To mention only one well-known example, the preeminence given to Bai Juyi over all other Chinese poets in the Heian period and in the *Wakan rôeishû* itself is a touchstone of that difference. Bai Juyi was indeed a popular poet in the Tang dynasty but he did not eclipse other poets to the degree that he does in the *Wakan rôeishû* where 134 out of 195 couplets are from Bai Juyi's poems. The third most frequently cited poet in the *Wakan rôeishû*, Xu Hun (許渾, 791 [?]-854 [?]) with ten poems, is an even more striking example. He is an extremely obscure poet now and had only a modest reputation even during the Tang period. So the construction of a canon of Chinese poetry in the *Wakan rôeishû* is decidedly a distorted one.

The second proposition, however, does not hold true. In the Heian period, Japan's imagining of "China" was not fueled by an agenda to subjugate China. Of course, the difference here is in the relative degrees of power held by Japan and China during this period. Yet, placing the paradigm the other way round with China in the position of domination does not work either, simply because China had no need to invent a Japan inviting domination. Japan was not the important "Other" for China. Moreover, China was not perceived as an oppressor or enemy by Heian Japanese. Rather, Heian Japanese courtiers actively embraced Chinese literary culture. Rather than resistance, there was attraction. Thus, there are pitfalls in applying paradigms from either modern political history or Edo nativist perspectives onto pre-Edo Japan. Yet, I propose that it is only under the influence of such paradigms that an interpretation of the *Wakan rôeishû* as a text of appropriation that subsumes an "enemy" poetry in a struggle of resistance against domination can be built.

## ANTAGONISM OR CREATIVE TENSION?

I have expended space and effort building up these lines of argument only to dismantle them because I find them so much a part of my own normally unconscious thinking patterns, and I suspect I am not alone. I see a version of these patterns of discourse underpinning the most comprehensive study to date of the *wakan* dimension in Japanese literary culture, David Pollack's *Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries*. Inspired by Derrida's notion of the antagonism between "meaning (or ego) and sign (or alter) in which "meaning" is associated with speech and "sign" with writing, Pollack has spun an analysis of the synthesis of China by Japan in terms of semiotic dissonance within the *wakan* dialectic. He proposes "an 'origin' of the *wakan* dialectic in terms of the early and even traumatic fracture in Japan between oral and literate representation."<sup>29</sup> He goes on to state, "The Chinese and the Japanese languages and the sorts of intellectual, social, and cultural structures they shape and reflect can be said to be in fundamental ways almost entirely antithetical..."<sup>30</sup> Why must we assume trauma and antithesis? What if the *wa* and the *kan* are conceived of as two modes between which there is creative tension, not trauma and antagonism, at least so far as Heian Japan is concerned?

## AN ALTERNATIVE

In her essay on the role of the *Wakan rôeishû* in the history of Japanese calligraphy, Ann Yonemura makes the following observation about the significance of the text for aristocratic calligraphers:

For subsequent generations of aristocratic calligraphers, ...the text remained resonant as a model for training in which they could experience the interdependence, complementarity, and ultimately the aesthetic harmony of the Chinese and Japanese calligraphic modes.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Pollack, 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Yonemura, 270.

This “interdependence, complementarity and aesthetic harmony” can be discerned in almost all aspects of the text and not just in its calligraphic style. Before going on to explore this perspective in more detail, I would first like to highlight one small anomaly which obstructs a conception of the *Wakan rôeishû* as a text of resistance and antagonism. It is the matter of the characters used for the title. The collection has several different names being alternatively known as a *shû* (集) or a *shô* (抄), but more significantly the *wakan* is rendered as either 和漢 or 倭漢.<sup>32</sup> The character 倭, meaning “dwarf,” is usually thought to express a derogatory attitude toward Japan on the part of the Chinese scholars who came up with this transcription for the ancient name of the kingdom of “Wa.” Clearly from the above fact, however, Heian Japanese must not have perceived it that way.

To my knowledge, the first attempt in English to theorize the *wakan* relation in Heian Japan from outside a framework of modern national identity or dialectic of antagonism is Thomas Lamarre’s aforementioned *Uncovering Heian Japan*. He takes on the “semiotic and historical task...[of differentiating] the Heian text and court from the Japanese language and modern nation.”<sup>33</sup> He starts with the proposition that in Heian Japan:

There were no natives versus foreigners; nor were there dark ages [referring to the pre-*Kokinshû* period when native styles and customs were thought to be eclipsed]. Instead, out of a heterogeneous field, there emerged a binary machine that could synthesize and organize multiple forms of expression and production: the Yamato-Han or “wa-kan” assemblage.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> See Komatsu, v. 13, 364. One of the best preserved of the early manuscripts, the *Detchôbon: Wakan rôeishû* (粘葉本倭漢朗詠集—*detchô* designates a booklet format) held in the Imperial Household Library is an example of the 倭漢 title. The character 倭 is even used in titles of the *Kokinwakashû*, for example in the *Koyagire kokinwakashû* (高野切古今倭歌集). See Horie, 92.

<sup>33</sup> LaMarre, 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

The subtitle of his book, *An Archaeology of Sensation and Inscription*, signals LaMarre's intention to focus not only on the semantic content of Heian texts but on the sensual experience of their inscription. Something so fundamental and yet almost universally overlooked is that Heian readers were not reading anything like a modern, printed text. In the age of electronic text transfer where even the handwritten letter is becoming a rarity, it is difficult for us to imaginatively reconstruct the Heian reading experience, all the more so since most Western scholars, even those working on Heian literature, cannot read *hentaigana* (変体がな). Especially with a text as linked from the beginning to splendid manuscript production as the *Wakan rôishû*, to ignore the visual experience of the text, is to have access to less than half of what Heian readers experienced—a succession of different colored and textured papers, sometimes embedded pictures, a sound track of internally chanted or voiced song as one came upon a familiar libretto, the invitation to brush dance as the eye followed the sinuous lines of calligraphy—a very rich sensual experience indeed. Perhaps reading the text in modern printed form can be compared to reading the typescript of a fine film.

#### DIVERSITY OF PAPER AND CALLIGRAPHY STYLES

There is no room here to deal in detail with the full array of different modes of visual presentation of the *Wakan rôishû* but I will attempt to describe some of the most representative manuscripts. The most common format of *Wakan rôishû* manuscripts is scroll form with panels of differently colored and decorated papers pasted together to make the roll. A good example is the *Konoebon Wakan rôishû*<sup>35</sup> (近衛本倭漢朗詠集) held in the Yômei Bunkô Foundation. The exception to scroll format is the *Detchôbon Wakan*

---

<sup>35</sup> I give three references for illustrations of manuscripts that readers can consult. The best, by far, are the photographs in Watanabe's article on old manuscripts in the special issue on the *Wakan rôishû* of *Sumi*, 46 (1984), but it may be the most difficult source to access. A second best but more available option is Horie (ed.) *Sho, Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu*, v. 22, (Shôgakukan, 1970). Finally, the Rimer translation has small black and white illustrations of all but one of the manuscripts mentioned. The Rimer plates will be referred to by plate number, the other references will be page numbers. These sources will be abbreviated as: S (*Sumi*), G (*Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu*) and R (Rimer, *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing*). Accordingly the reference for the *Konoebon* is S, 8-9; G, 99-100; not illustrated in R.

*rôeishû*,<sup>36</sup> which is in booklet format, but the papers used in it are similar to the Konoebon. The paper colors range from apricot, beige, to turquoise and chalk blue and green. The designs on the papers are generally Chinese style floral patterns with some geometric patterns combined with floral motifs. The patterns are accomplished by stenciling either a darker shade of the ground paper color or gold onto the ground paper. The stencil pattern colors were mixed with mica powder to produce a high sheen. One distinctive paper has a hexagonal geometric design based on a tortoise shape in gold on dark blue paper. Two birds, predictably the phoenix and crane, are often worked into the patterns. The general term for these kinds of paper is *karakami* (唐紙), “Chinese paper,” and it is assumed that they were actually imported from China in the earlier part of the Heian period and then reproduced in Japan.<sup>37</sup> Certainly the patterns are very similar to Tang dynasty textile designs, but no examples of this kind of paper are extant in China. Here is an example of the common phenomenon of a style of art or craft originating in China that disappears from there but remains preserved in Japan.<sup>38</sup> These *karakami* are the most striking and ornate of the papers used for manuscripts, but there are many other kinds of papers used as well. The *Daiji Wakan rôeishû*<sup>39</sup> (大字和漢朗詠集) is an example of manuscripts done on a mixture of patterned paper and plain colored paper dusted with gold leaf and mica. Yet another style of presentation is that of the *Kumogamibon Wakan rôeishû*<sup>40</sup> (雲紙本和漢朗詠集), the paper of which has blue clouds floating in from the lower right and upper left corners of individual panels. In the *Ashide shitae Wakan rôeishû*<sup>41</sup> (葦手下絵和漢朗詠集), pictures of plants, birds and animals are painted onto the paper as an underlay

---

<sup>36</sup> S, 8; G, 98; R, 5.2.

<sup>37</sup> Watanabe, 27.

<sup>38</sup> As Yonemura notes, the use of *karakami* in Japan declined in the medieval period but flourished again in the Edo period (Rimer *et al.*, 269). In Japan, one can still buy reproductions of this kind of paper for a high price in shops specializing in calligraphy paper.

<sup>39</sup> S, 6; R, 5.3, not illustrated in G.

<sup>40</sup> S, 4-5; G, 95; R, 5.6.

<sup>41</sup> S, 23; G, 116; R, 5.8.

upon which the *ashide* “reed hand” calligraphy is applied. At places where logograph and picture coincide, it is as though they dance and merge with one another. This sheer variety of presentation styles points to a desire to have each reproduction of the text be unique. Moreover, although I have attempted to deal with paper and calligraphy styles separately, with the *Ashide shitae* manuscript, those boundaries too are blurred.

Calligraphic styles used in the manuscripts are almost as various as the papers. I will focus the following necessarily abbreviated account on two of the most divergent styles. The first one is the so called “Yukinari style” mentioned before upon which the nativist narratives of liberation from Chinese precedent have been built. It is represented principally by the *Konoe* and *Detchô* manuscripts, both of which have been attributed to Fujiwara Yukinari. Modern scholars of calligraphy history do not credit these attributions, so I will just deal with this type of style apart from the issue of the actual calligrapher’s identity. The style is marked in the Chinese text sections by a calligraphic mode that moves back and forth between *gyôsho* (行書), the semi-cursive mode of writing, and *sôsho* (草書), the most cursive mode from which the *kana* syllabary was originally derived. Staying within a generally cursive frame softens and rounds the *kanji* making it easier to achieve a harmony with *kana*. A further strategy to balance the lighter and more spacious *kana* with the heavier more complex forms of *kanji* is to make the *kana* equal in size to *kanji*.<sup>42</sup> However, these smooth and round forms of Chinese characters do not merge with *kana* writing. Even to an untrained eye, the difference between the Chinese and *kana* is obvious, yet it is not jarring. Differences are not erased but rather modulated.

The example of a calligraphic style that demonstrates an entirely different strategy of accommodation is the one evident in the *Kansubon Wakan rôeishû*<sup>43</sup> (卷子本和漢朗詠集) attributed to Fujiwara Kintô himself, although again the attribution is not trustworthy. In this manuscript, the calligraphy of the Chinese sections adheres more to a regularized *gyôsho* style, and the *waka* sections are written in what is known as *man'yôgana* or *otokode*

---

<sup>42</sup> See Yonemura’s description of the demands such an oscillation in styles makes on the calligrapher, in Rimer *et al*, 263.

<sup>43</sup> S, 14; G, 101; R, 5.4.

(male hand). That is, they are written in the less abbreviated forms of *kana*, those that still preserve the forms of the *kanji* from which they originate. Moreover, *kanji* used for meaning are interspersed in the writing of the *waka* (as opposed to a purely phonetic transcription) and the transcription is sometimes further Sinified. For example, in a *waka* in the “Summer Nights” section, the verb *nenu*, “not sleeping,” is rendered 不寝 rather than 寝ぬ.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the *waka* are written so as to look like the Chinese poems. Here, there is erasure of difference in the favor of the Chinese.<sup>45</sup> Yet, in the end, all one can say from such a great range of diversity is that generalization is impossible.

### WAKAN RÔEISHÛ AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN HEIAN JAPAN

We are left then in the face of the challenging specificity of the sensual and intellectual experiences offered by the rich legacy of the *Wakan rôeishû* manuscripts. What do all these experiences have to say about the *Wakan rôeishû* as inscription of “Japanese” or *Yamato* identity? Certainly, it is not the *Yamato* of Motoori Norinaga. Nor is it an identity riven by angst. Rather than a site of struggle, the *Wakan rôeishû*, both as literary text and visual experience, is a symphony that harmonizes *wa* and *kan* modes, mostly, it is true, in favor of a *kan* modality, yet the end effect is *wa*. The identity thus represented is a fluid one in perpetual oscillation between these two modes.

---

<sup>44</sup> This very section is illustrated in both S, 14, and R, 5.4.

<sup>45</sup> This falls in line with Ivo Smit’s observation that “*Wakan rôeishû* does not really attempt to elevate *waka* to the status of *kanshi*. The numbers and respective position of the different types of poems indicates as much. The view of Kintô’s collection as an anthology of Chinese verse has been further consolidated by centuries of commentary.” Smits, 55.2, 235.



## WORKS CITED

- Abe Akio, Akiyama Ken, and Imai Gen'e, eds. *Genji monogatari*. 6 vols. *Nihon koten bungaku zenshû* 12-17. Shôgakukan, 1976.
- Addiss, Stephen. "Singing in the *Wakan rôei shû*." *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan rôei shû*. Thomas Rimer, et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 244-259.
- Horie Tomohiko. *Sho. Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu*, 22. Shôgakukan, 1970.
- Kawabata Yasunari. *Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself*. Trans. Edward Seidensticker. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1969.
- Kawaguchi Hisao. *Wakan rôei shû, Ryôjin hishō. Nihon bungaku taikai* 73. Iwanami Shoten, 1965.
- Komatsu Shigemi. *Wakan rôeishû. Kohitsugaku taisei*, vols. 13-15. Kôdansha, 1990.
- LaMarre, Thomas. *Uncovering Heian Japan: An Archeology of Sensation and Inscription*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Nakanishi Susumu. *Setsugekka*. Ozama shoten, 1980.
- Nishio Kôichi et al., eds. *Kokon chomonjû. Nihon koten bungaku shûsei*. Shinchôsha, 1986.
- Pollack, David. *Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

- Rimer, J. Thomas and Jonathan Chaves. *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan rôei shû*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Seidensticker, Edward. *Tale of Genji*. New York: Knopf, 1976.
- Smits, Ivo. "Song as Cultural History: Reading *Wakan Rôeishû* (Texts)." *Monumenta Nipponica* 55.2 (Summer 2000): 225-256.
- . "Song as Cultural History: Reading *Wakan Rôeishû* (Interpretations)." *Monumenta Nipponica* 55.3 (Autumn 2000): 399-427.
- Svarcova, Zdenka. "Yamato Morokoshi: Fujiwara Kintô's Double Poetical Taste in *Wakan Rôeishû*." European Association of Japanese Studies Conference. Lahti, Finland. 26 August, 2000.
- Watanabe Kiyoshi. "*Wakan rôeishû* to kohitsu." *Sumi, Wakan rôeishû tokushû*, 46 (Jan. 1984): 4-29.
- Yonemura, Ann. "The Art of Calligraphy and the *Wakan rôei shû*." *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan rôei shû*. Rimer, et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 260-270.