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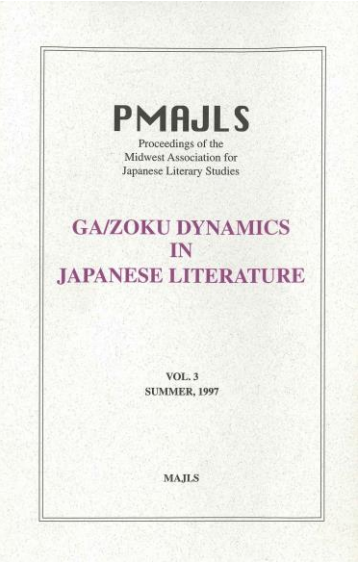

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Religious Boundaries in Aesthetic Domains: The Formation of a Buddhist Category (*Shakkyō-ka*) in the Imperial Poetry Anthologies

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Introduction

When Asianists hear the term "Buddhist poetry," most likely they recall the Tibetan *mgur* (Skt: *dohās*) of Marpa and Milarepa, the Sanskrit poetry of Sāntideva, the Zen poetry of Han-shan or Hakuin, or the haiku of Bashō. Few, however--and this is almost as true in Japan as it is in America--will have heard anything about the classical tradition of Japanese Buddhist waka known as *shakkyō-ka*, or "poems on the teachings of the Buddha Sakyamuni." There are numerous reasons why this is so, some of which have to do with the way waka was introduced in the West. But it would not be fair of me to place the blame for this on scholars who were trying to make--and did make--Japanese poetry known to the Western world. It would be more accurate to say that this exclusion had, instead, a great deal to do with an aversion for the didacticism of religious poetry in general.

Jerome McGann deals with such an issue in an article entitled "The Religious Poetry of Christina Rossetti."[1] McGann concurs with critics of religious poetry that "[o]ne of the difficulties which an explicitly Christian poetry or art presents for criticism is its appearance of thematic uniformity,"[2] but he locates the specific lack of interest in Rossetti's poetry to the

1 Jerome J. McGann, "The Religious Poetry of Christina Rossetti," in Canons, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 261-278.
2 Ibid., 261.

proclamations of "twentieth-century spokesmen of cultural values" who have judged it to be "inferior, or at most only of incidental interest."[3] As a departure point for his inquiry, then, McGann uses this challenge to Rossetti's poetry to ask: "...suppose for a moment you wanted to convince a non-Christian Japanese friend of the power of Christina Rossetti's poetry--or perhaps better--a humanist scholar from the Soviet Union--or simply any non-believer. What line would you take? What would you say?"[4]

A similar dilemma exists for the study of *shakkyō-ka.* And the reason for this dilemma can be easily demonstrated. The seventh poem in the "Shakkyō-ka" book of the Shinkokinshū (1206) is prefaced by the following *kotobagaki*, or headnote: "Bodaiji no kōdō no hashira ni, mushi no kuitarikeru uta" (or, "a poem that an insect chewed into a pillar of the Lecture Hall at Bodai-ji"). The poem which follows this headnote reads:

shirube aru — go forth only when
toki ni dani yuke — there is a sign of a guide
gokuraku no — all of you who are
michi ni madoeru — floundering on the path
yo no naka no hito — to Amida's paradise

(Shinkokinshū--insect oracle, #1923)[5]

One might find justification from a purely aesthetic point of view for calling this is an unremarkable poem (unless perhaps you are an insect). But it is also the kind of poem that leads one to ask, rephrasing McGann: "...suppose for a moment you wanted to convince an American non-Buddhist friend of the

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[3] Ibid., 262.
[4] Ibid.,
[5] All translations in this paper are the author's. The number in parentheses is the number of the poem in the collection according to the Shin Kokka Taikan.

power of *shakkyō-ka*--or perhaps better, your colleagues in the field of Japanese studies. What line would you take? What would you say?"

This paper will be an extended answer to these questions. However, as a prolegomena to it, I would like to assert that the need for inquiries into *shakkyō-ka* are grounded not only in the need to excavate the forgotten, but also in the need to understand the following: (1) the overwhelming importance of waka as both an aesthetic *and* social enterprise in Heian society; (2) the challenge to power and immortality that the Buddhist view of an impermanent and interdependent world brought to its believers; and (3) the necessity for understanding the interrelatedness of the cultural system to which modern categories like "religion" and "literature" belong.

What I hope to accomplish in this paper is not a detailed analysis of *shakkyō-ka*, but rather to provide an overview of its history and typology, along with some theoretical concerns, in hopes of showing that the formation of a separate category of *shakkyō-ka* was not something that happened smoothly, but created what I will call a "crisis of intrusion" in the established canon of poetry. We cannot understand the importance of waka within Heian court culture until we redress the issue of poetry composed for purposes other than purely aesthetic ones.

History

Poems that we might define as *shakkyō-ka* first make their appearance in the late 10th to early 11th centuries--about the same time as The Tale of Genji was being written. But there are foreshadowings of this tradition in both the Man'yōshū and the three Chinese poetry collections of the ninth century (Ryōunshū, Bunkashūreishū, Keikokushū).[6] The fifty or so poems in the

6 This paper will focus entirely on the waka tradition.

Man'yōshū, which we might refer to more accurately as "Buddhistic" rather than Buddhist,[7] are for the most part more simplistic than the poem by the insect quoted at the beginning of this paper and are not in any way categorized separately from the other poems in the collection. And though these poems do not *inform us* about the scriptures, ceremonies, rituals, or legends that accompanied Buddhism into Japan, they do reveal a *familiarity* with certain texts like the Lotus Sutra and the Vimalakîrti Sûtra as well as concepts such as the Pure Land and impermanence. Whereas the *shakkyō-ka* which appear almost four hundred years later are clearly an *interaction* with a Buddhist world-view, the Buddhistic poems in the Man'yōshū seem to be more of a *reaction* to that Buddhism. Some of these poems make use of imported Buddhist words such as *hōshi* (priest) and *dan'otsu* (benefactor) without any elaboration or context, while others were written by Buddhist priests such as the following by Mansei on themes such as impermanence:

yo no naka o
nani ni tatoemu
asabiraki
kogiinishi fune no
ato naki gotoshi

to what shall I
compare this world?
it is like the traceless waves
behind a boat rowing out
into the morning sea

(Man'yōshū--Shami Mansei, #351)

But there are other poems in the Man'yōshū that are more enlightening examples of the early interactions of the religious

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7 The term "Buddhistic" is borrowed from Muraishi Esho. The distinction between Buddhist literature and Buddhistic literature is that the latter category covers "a wider variety of literary genres, not only in form but in subject matter . . . that is, it covers any literary work in which themes on Buddhism are depicted or narrated by a Buddhist or non-Buddhist." Muraishi Esho, "Buddhism and Literature in Japan," in Understanding Japanese Buddhism ed. Hanayama Shōyū (Tokyo: Japan Buddhist Federation, 1978), 185-86.

and cultural. The postscript to poem #1594 by Empress Kōmyō (701-760) is particularly revealing for the details it gives about the Yuima (Vimalakîrti) Ceremony which was started in 734 by Fujiwara Kamatari and held at the Kōfuku-ji in Nara.

shigure no ame — early winter rain
mamonaku na furi so — cease your endless fall
kurenai ni — how regrettable
nioeru yama no — to watch the scattering of
chiramaku oshi mo — the mountain leaves dyed in red

(Man'yōshū--Empress Kōmyō, #1594)

There is, of course, nothing overtly religious about this poem at all. The particular service referred to in the postscript to this poem was held by Kōmyō herself (Kamatari's granddaughter) and was apparently a very lavish affair including a concert of Chinese and Korean music played on the last day of the Ceremony. In conjunction with the concert, offerings were made, songs were sung, and two princes played the koto. This information is particularly valuable because it reveals that the imperial family regarded Buddhist services as another occasion upon which the courtly arts--including waka composition--could be displayed.

Gary Ebersole, concurring with the arguments of Watase Masatada, thinks that the association of Man'yōshū period poetry--and especially Hitomaro's poetry--with Buddhist ritual may have taken place as early as the late 7th century.

> No individual in the capital in the late seventh century could have remained completely immune to Buddhist influence or ignorant of Buddhist beliefs or practices. More specifically, Watase argues that Hitomaro's poetry was affected by the heavy presence of Buddhism in the court and by its ritual expressions. Indeed, he goes so far as to

suggest that some of Hitomaro's poetry may have been performed in a Buddhist ritual context.[8]

If what Ebersole and Watase say is correct, it could mean that the songs and poems that were being sung and composed at Empress Kōmyō's service had been incorporated into the ceremony as a part of the ritual and were considered to be an integral part of the religious atmosphere.

It was not until the compilation of the third imperial anthology, the Shūishū (1006), however, that a recognizable effort was made to include poems that could subsequently be classified as *shakkyō-ka*, though these poems do not exist in any way as a separate category or subcategory of poems. The two anthologies preceding the Shūishū, the Kokinshū (905) and the Gosenshū (951), both contain poems on themes of impermanence as well as poems with headnotes in which Buddhist words appear, but there is neither a distinguishable grouping of poems on Buddhist topics nor are there any poems that are concerned with Buddhist themes such as we find in the Shūishū. So how is it that we can actually identify poems that are now called *shakkyō-ka*? And how can we designate a starting point for these poems?

First, the poems referred to as *shakkyō-ka* in the Shūishū are the last twenty-three poems in the final book of "Laments" ("Aishō-ka") of the collection. And there are at least three ways in which these twenty-three poems differ from the fifty-four which precede them: (1) there is a Buddhist term (*butsugo*) in each poem or its headnote, (2) each poem deals in some way with a Buddhist sutra, doctrine, ceremony, experience, temple, or practice, and (3) none of the final twenty-three poems is a

8 Gary Ebersole, Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 163-64.

lament on the death or approaching death of a friend or loved one. To illustrate this more clearly, a comparison of the two poems that mark this boundary between the laments and the *shakkyō-ka* follows.

Composed when the author saw a painting in one of the monks' quarters on Mt. Hiei in which a priest, Chūren, was looking at a corpse and crying.

chigiri areba
kabane naredomo
ainuru o
ware oba tare ka
towan to suran

though he is a corpse
as dictated by his fate,
chance brought me to him--
who shall it be that will come
to mourn me when I pass on

(Shūishū: Minamoto Sukekata, #1328)

yamadera no
iriai no kane no
koegoto ni
kyō mo kurenu to
kiku zo kanashiki

at each tolling of
the temple bell at sunset
deep in the mountains
I feel saddened when I know
that another day is gone

(Shūishū: Anonymous, #1329)

What the reader might notice initially about these two poems is their clear focus on a tangible object. In the first poem the focus is on the "kabane" or "corpse" (referred to as a "shinin" in the headnote) which is the visual center of this short poetic narrative. In the second poem the focus is on the "yamadera" or "mountain temple"--though in this case it is visual only by means of audial stimulus. Though both the "corpse" and the "mountain temple" are tropes for impermanence, the "mountain temple" is an anomalous image for the "Laments" category of poems. The sadness and horror of death as represented by a specific corpse in the first poem becomes a more generalized sadness over the passing of each day in our lives in the second

poem. And this sadness is associated with the tolling of the Buddhist temple bell.

The second way in which the final twenty-three poems in the Shūishū are important to the formation of an eventual "Shakkyō-ka" category concerns legitimation. Since the Kokinshū and the Gosenshū had served for a century as the canonical models upon which the imperial world view was based, it was necessary to provide some historical authority for the inclusion of poems that were based not on traditional categories or on native customs, but on imported ones. How Fujiwara Kintō, the compiler of the Shūishū, mitigated this "crisis of intrusion" was by including seven poems by well-known historical figures--such as Empress Kōmyō, the Japanese priest Gyōki (credited with three poems), an Indian priest Bodhisena (J: Baramon), and finally Shōtoku Taishi--each of whom is connected in some way to the institutions of Buddhism and the state from the seventh and eighth centuries. This seven-poem sequence--which comes at the end of the "Aishō-ka" book and consequently at the end of the entire anthology--has the effect of legitimizing the sixteen poems that precede it by the sheer nature of their historical weight. They create the impression that influential members of the Imperial court and in the sangha had been composing waka on religious topics ever since Buddhism had been introduced into Japan in the sixth century.

The inclusion of these twenty-three *shakkyō-ka* in the Shūishū indicates that the acceptable parameters of experience for composing waka were undergoing a process of expansion during the mid-Heian period. The fact that the poems were compiled in the "Laments" book of this anthology would seem to mean that there was still an ideological gap between the content of the poems (or, we could say, the experiences of the

poets) and those poetic categories which had been deemed appropriate for an imperial anthology.

This ideological gap was further shortened in the fourth imperial anthology, the Goshūishū (1086), when its compiler, Fujiwara Michitoshi (1047-1099), included a subcategory of poems within the twentieth and final book of "Zōka," or "Miscellaneous" poems, a subcategory that he called "Shakkyō." So not only did the *shakkyō-ka* in this anthology receive a categorical revaluation, but they were dissociated from the "Lament" category and from their connection to poems on death and moved to the "Miscellaneous" category, one which we might call a more lenient category--that is, it seems to have been the repository of other kinds of "outlaw" waka.

Okazaki Tomoko has called this literary event--that is, the inclusion of a subcategory of Buddhist poems--"epoch-making" (kakkiteki),[9] which may be overstating the issue somewhat, but Yasuda Ayao asserts that this may in fact mark the beginning of a new period of waka. He says, "The shadow of religion on waka is one of the main characteristics of medieval waka, [so] the appearance of *shakkyō-ka* symbolically indicates the fact that this character had begun to appear in the history of waka."[10]

It may seem at first that the distinction between categories and non-categories is equivocal, but when the role of the imperial anthology is perceived properly as both the recipient and exponent of imperial values as well as the means by which

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9 Okazaki Tomoko, "Shakkyō-ka Kō: Hachidaishū o Chūshin ni," in Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyū (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1963), 89. Okazaki qualifies this somewhat by reminding the reader that there were precedents in the imperial kanshi collections two hundred years prior to this.

10 Yasuda Ayao, "Wakashi: Chūko," in Wakashi Karonshi, vol. 2 of Waka Bungaku Kōza, ed. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, et al. (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1969), 49. Actually, this had begun eighty years previously in the Shūishū, but the sentiment is the same.

the court constructed its view of the world, this new subcategory should also be regarded as an addition of some significance. Lakoff supports this contention when he says, "To change the very concept of a category is to change not only our concept of the mind, but also our understanding of the world. Categories are categories of things. Since we understand the world not only in terms of individual things but also in terms of *categories* of things, we tend to attribute a real existence to those categories."[11]

The second important change in the *shakkyō-ka* of the Goshūishū is the appearance of two distinct types of poems: "occasional" and "scriptural" *shakkyō-ka*.[12] Concrete examples of these poems will appear in the second part of this paper, but for now let me define them by saying that "occasional" *shakkyō-ka* are poems which were composed at the time of or based upon a religious occasion or event, while "scriptural" *shakkyō-ka* refer to those poems which are concerned in some way with the signification of a doctrine or text. There are times when these two types seem to overlap, but the final determining factor is the guidance provided by the headnote. Is the poem more concerned with the contents of the event or the contents of the text or doctrine?

The subcategory of *shakkyō-ka* that appears in the Goshūishū does not exist in either the fifth or sixth anthologies-- Kin'yōshū (ca. 1124-1127) or the Shikashū (1151). The poems themselves are not eliminated, but the legitimizing category is. In both anthologies they are included again, as an uncategorized group, within the final book of "Miscellaneous" poems. While the *shakkyō-ka* in the Shikashū are peripheral at best (there are only

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11 George Lakoff, Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9.

12 This typology is the author's. There have been several others proposed, and they will be discussed in the second part of this paper.

six of them), the *shakkyō-ka* in the Kin'yōshū are important in two ways: (1) there are many more poems attributed to members of the Buddhist sangha than ever before--poets with titles such as *sōjō* (archbishop), *gon no sōjō* (acting archbishop), *shōnin* (holy one), and *hōshi* (priest); and (2) almost a third of the poems are concerned with the teachings of the Pure Land. What this would seem to suggest is an increasing "Buddhistization" of the imperial court, of waka poetry, and of the imperial anthologies. Of course, there have always been poems by poet-priests included in the anthologies, but usually the poems were on seasonal or amatory topics. There had not ever been, until now, so many associated with the occasions and texts of Buddhism itself.

It is not until the seventh imperial anthology, the Senzaishū (1188), that *shakkyō-ka* are granted formal categorical status, one which is maintained until the twenty-first and last anthology in 1439. But what is most remarkable about the poems in this first formal "*Shakkyō-ka*" book is not their status, but the way in which they are arranged within the anthology itself. Rather than being arranged solely according to theme or according to a distinction between the religious occasion or scripture on which a poem was composed, they are arranged according to Heian-period conceptions of the Buddhist path--specifically upon the internal structure of the Tendai text, Makashikan [The Great Calming and Contemplation] (C: Mo-ho-chih-kan), and the pseudo-historical chronology of the Mahāyāna sutras, known as the "five periods" or *goji*. What we see in these fifty-four poems is a kind of progression that starts with conceptions of "awakened heart" (*hosshin*), "connection (to the teachings)" (*kechien*), and "ascetic practice" (*shugyō*) and proceeds to poems based on realization and then, subsequently, the fruits of that realization (or *kū*, emptiness/sunyata). Finally, the sequence

ends with two groups of poems based entirely upon the Lotus Sutra (classified as one of the Buddha's later and more profound teachings) and the concept of nirvana.

This is a fairly complicated structure that needs full explication to be understood correctly,[13] but while individual poems in the sequence were composed on topics drawn from a variety of sutras, commentaries, ceremonies, services, and pilgrimages--just like the *shakkyō-ka* in the preceding four anthologies--the sequence as a whole is arranged to represent the path a practitioner might follow on his/her way to enlightenment or salvation.[14] The cumulative effect of this poetic configuration--that is, of reading this sequence as a single unit of poems--is a conflation of the ontological distance between the literary and religious spheres, a conflation that is brought about by bestowing a religious and practical role upon that which is normally defined as literary and aesthetic. It is nothing less than a transformation of the role of poetic composition into a role of religious praxis. It is not poetry used for religious benefit (even though the poems may have been used as such when they were originally composed), but poetry *identified as* religious practice.

This historical review of the categorical status of *shakkyō-ka* is crucial for understanding the strategies that were taken and the shifting allegiances that were expressed in terms of including religious poetry within the schema of the imperial anthology. Once this allegiance was proclaimed, however--thanks mostly to Fujiwara Shunzei as the compiler of the Senzaishū--the boundaries between the religious and the aesthetic were permanently blurred. The writing of waka became a religious

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13 This will be examined fully in my forthcoming manuscript.

14 Another way to perceive this, of course, is that the principles of progression and association were being brought to bear for the first time on the poems in the "Shakkyō-ka" book.

practice and religious practice provided the opportunity for expression of the aesthetic.

Let's turn now to the matter of typology. Typology is one particularly crucial aspect of the study of *shakkyō-ka* for understanding the strategy used by poets and compilers to unite the religious and the aesthetic.

Typology

One of the striking features of the development of *shakkyō-ka* during the Heian period is the fluctuation in the type and number of occasional and scriptural poems from anthology to anthology. The source for any typology of *shakkyō-ka* is the *kotobagaki*, or headnote. Unlike the seasonal or love poems, for example, the headnote is often, for modern readers, the only source of its meaning. And this is especially true for the poems in those anthologies where the *shakkyō-ka* were not categorized. The following poem from the Shinkokinshū by Emperor Sutoku is illustrative of this difficulty (even though the poem is by categorical definition a *shakkyō-ka*).

asahi sasu — though buds are sprouting
mine no tsuzuki wa — on trees along the row of peaks
megumedomo — where the morning sun shines
mada shimo fukashi — still the valley frost is deep
tani no kagegusa — in the shaded grass below

(Shinkokinshū: Emperor Sutoku, #1947)

Clearly this could be a seasonal poem about the coming of spring, yet the contrast between the budding trees high in the mountains and the shaded grass deep in the valley is suspiciously meticulous. When the headnote is included, however, we find that the metaphors are Buddhist in origin and that the poem is based, in fact, on a passage from the

Avatamsaka Sutra (J: Kegon-kyō; C: Hua-hen-ching). This passage reads: "(the sun) shines first on the high mountain."

Ishihara Kiyoshi, the only Japanese scholar to have written a full-length book on *shakkyō-ka*, interprets this poem as an allegory about the path of the practitioner as represented by the Hinayāna pratyekabuddha and the Mahāyāna bodhisattva.[15] The sun, of course, is the enlightening discourse of the Buddha while the mountaintop where it shines is the point of contact between ourselves and those teachings. What is budding in the trees is our wisdom which is being nurtured by the sun's rays. The mountain where these trees can thrive is the bodhisattva, generous to all, while the valley with its frosty delusions is the home of the pratyekabuddha. The poem further suggests that since it is morning and the sun has just begun to shine, there is the possibility of a thaw in the afternoon so that the rays of the sun may in fact reach deep into the heart of the valley/ pratyekabuddha whose efforts on the path are ungenerously oriented towards self-liberation.

Unlike Emperor Sutoku's poem, the majority of scriptural *shakkyō-ka* were composed on some aspect of the Lotus Sutra--either a short passage from the sutra itself or as a kind of summation of either a chapter or the text as a whole. Take, for example, the following poem by the Former Grand Bishop Kaishū (1116-1172):

> When the author was reciting the section of the Dhāraṇī chapter from the Lotus Sutra that read, ". . .those who receive and keep the name of the Dharma Blossom, shall have happiness incalculable. How much more so for protecting those who receive and keep it in its entirety. . ." He composed the following having understood the reliability of a connection for those who keep this Sutra.

15 Ishihara Kiyoshi, Shakkyō-ka no Kenkyū (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1980), 410-411.

ureshiku zo — even to protect
na o tamotsu dani — its name is not a useless
adanaranu — act and thus connected
minori no hana ni — I joyfully bear the fruit
mi o musubikeru — of this dharma blossom

(Senzaishū: Former Grand Archbishop Kaishū, #1211)

Kaishū's poem is a very clear example of a scriptural *shakkyō-ka* that is inextricably connected to the passage on which it is based. This is clear from the usage of similar language in both the headnote and the poem (words, for example, translated as "protect," "name," and "blossom"). The poem makes little sense without the information provided in the headnote and makes little impact--on us at least--even when that information is known. So why would Fujiwara Shunzei include such a poem in the Senzaishū? And what is the value of this poem to the anthology? I will address these issues in the last part of the paper, but first let's examine the second major type of *shakkyō-ka* that appears in the imperial anthologies.

Occasional *shakkyō-ka*--as distinguished from scriptural *shakkyō-ka*--are more personal and less doctrinal or didactic. Their subjectivity tends to highlight what seems to be a greater awareness of religious feeling and religious experience. The kinds of occasions that provided the backdrop for these poems include: the Enlightenment Lectures (*bodai-kō*), the Eight Readings of the Lotus Sutra (*hokke hakkō*), the Encouragement of Learning Meetings on Mt. Hiei (*kangaku-e*), poetry gatherings, poetic correspondences, ceremonies in honor of the Buddha (*shari-e*), sermons (*sekkyō*), ceremonies held in commemoration of the Buddha's parinirvana (*nehan-e*), lectures on the importance of one's connection to the Buddhist teachings (*kechien-kō*), pilgrimages, and ceremonies or rituals in honor of the deceased. The following poem by Higo (b.?-d?) from the

Shinkokinshū illustrates well the occasional *shakkyō-ka.* It paints an elegant picture of what the author imagines are Amida's purple clouds of salvation descending upon the forest around the temple where she has just attended an Enlightenment Lecture. In fact, however, these purple clouds are really the purple blossoms of the chinaberry tree.

murasaki no
kumo no hayashi o
miwataseba
nori ni auchi no
hana sakinikeri

gazing off towards
the purple clouds hanging low
over the forest
the chinaberry blossoms
the Dharma blossoms were in bloom
(Shinkokinshū: Higo, #1930)

Probably due in part to the fact that this is an occasional *shakkyō-ka,* but also perhaps due to the fact that Higo is a better poet than Archbishop Kaishū, this poem is much more palatable to Westerners. It is not a restatement of text, but a lyrical expression of experience.

The final part of this paper will be concerned with theoretical issues that the study of *shakkyō-ka* raises. It may also provide further direction for understanding the place of *shakkyō-ka* in the study of waka.

Theoretical Issues

The formation of a "*Shakkyō-ka*" category in the imperial poetry anthologies partly involved the resolution of tensions created, on the one hand, by the interpretation of Buddhist doctrine. The sutras were quite clear about the pursuit of worldly activities such as literary composition. A passage from the "Comfortable Conduct" chapter in the Lotus Sutra says: "[The bodhisattva-mahasattva] does not approach with familiarity...

those who compose worldly letters..."[16] The Vimalakîrti Sutra also describes the proper behavior of a bodhisattva in terms of the appropriate use of language and speech, saying that when "living beings" are "enhanced by true speech, soft-spoken,... [and] enlightening in their conversations," [they] "will be born in his buddha-field."[17]

The Chinese poet Po Chü-i (772-846), of course, solved this dilemma in his life by presenting his secular poems to the Hsiang-shan Monastery along with a declaration that became well-known and often-quoted in Japan: "May the worldly writings of my present life, with all their excessive words and ornate phrases [*kyōgen kigo*], serve in future ages as the inspiration of hymns of praise extolling the Buddha's teachings, and to turn the wheel of the law forever."[18] The priests and students who gathered at the Encouragement of Learning Meetings (*kangaku-e*) on Mt. Hiei in the mid-tenth century paid reverence to Po Chü-i as they read passages from the Lotus Sutra and composed poetry. They found in Po Chü-i a solution to the problem of how to reconcile the social necessity of writing verse, which was considered frivolous by the sangha, and practicing the Dharma, which was considered vital for salvation. But the writing of waka on Buddhist topics--the writing of occasional or scriptural *shakkyō-ka*--must have eased the burden of wrongdoing considerably. As a *modus operandi* for resolving

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16 Leon Hurvitz, trans., Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 208. Sakamoto Yukio and Iwamoto Yutaka, trans. and eds., Hokke-kyō, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976), 2:244.

17 Robert A. F. Thurman, trans., The Holy Teaching of Vimalakîrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 17.

18 Kenneth Ch'en, The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 213.

tensions between the religious and literary worlds, *shakkyō-ka* can perhaps be better understood in terms of the "worlds" they are projecting rather than the artistic merit they express.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his book Works and Worlds of Art, has made a good case for art--and not just the visual arts--as a tool for what he calls "world projection." World projection is, first and foremost, an action. "[L]anguage and art alike can be used to perform this action," he says.[19] In opposition to Aristotelian ideals of representation, world projection "lies not in composing a copy of the actual world but rather in using some artifact to project a world distinct from our actual world."[20] The significance of this for the study of *shakkyō-ka* is the distinction between a projecting action that is self-revelation and a projecting action that is self-expression. "Self-revelation," he writes, "requires that the revealing act be good evidence for the revealed state of consciousness."[21] In other words, that which is revealed must be perceptible in the act. Self-expression, on the other hand, does not demand that the expressing act be perceptible. A good example of this might be that of a nervous bank robber who, rather than expressing his nervousness aloud, reveals it instead by tripping over a wastebasket and dropping his gun. In other words, the "expression" of a state of mind can be co-opted by its "revelation," by its immediacy to the act it reveals.

Applying this distinction to the two types of *shakkyō-ka* helps us to understand the process by which specifically Buddhist poetry came to justify itself within the world of waka composition. Scriptural *shakkyō-ka* in particular provided a

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19 Nicholas Wolterstorff, Works and Worlds of Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 202.
20 Ibid., v.
21 Ibid., 28.

necessary palliative for the sin of self-expression. For the Buddhist clergy, self-expressive poetry (perhaps what we call lyrical poetry in the West) is something that is created intentionally out of the deluded mind of the poet. This would be true even for occasional *shakkyō-ka* (though they would perhaps be viewed less critically than poems on frivolous topics such as "love" and "cherry blossoms"). Scriptural *shakkyō-ka*, on the other hand, were the aesthetic instrument of the scripture or text they acted upon. In other words, they derived their literary authority entirely from their proximity to that scripture or text. They were not so much the creation of the poet as an ontological extension--a revelation, if you will--of the teachings themselves. Since the Buddhist teachings were, by definition, enlightened, the worldly passions of the poet who responded to and wrote about those teachings would be *revealed as* enlightened, and the enlightened product of those passions, the poem, would become in turn, the teachings. What this is, of course, is an example of the Mahāyāna concept of copenetration in which the worldly becomes one and the same as the enlightened and the enlightened becomes one and the same as the worldly, in which the way of poetry becomes one and the same as the way of the Buddha--expressed succinctly in Japanese as "*kadō soku butsudō*."[22]

Conclusion

To return to the original question of this paper--what "line" would you take in explaining the power of *shakkyō-ka* to someone unfamiliar with the tradition?--the answer must lie somewhere between religious experience and aesthetic beauty. As a poetic sub-genre inextricably connected to the wider waka

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22 See Konishi Jin'ichi, "Michi and Medieval Writing," in Principles of Classical Japanese Literature, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 193-94.

tradition, *shakkyō-ka* were written in both public and private venues that required both public and private sentiments. As the religious experiences of the Heian courtiers and court women expanded intellectually and socially, so too did the aesthetic responses to these experiences. In other words, what came to be valued in the poetic sphere changed with the parameters of social and religious life.

But how can this rather obvious observation help to mollify our ingrained objections to didactic poetry? Perhaps it cannot, but the question of value is central to both the appearance of a formal "*Shakkyō-ka*" category in the imperial poetry anthologies and our reception of that category as equal to other more traditional categories such as the seasons, love, and travel. Barbara Hernstein Smith has examined similar matters in Contingencies of Value.[23] In this work, Smith regards all value as "radically contingent"--that is, "the specific 'existence' of an object or event, its integrity, coherence, and boundaries, the categories of entities to which it 'belongs' and its specific 'features,' 'qualities,' or 'properties' are all the variable products of the subject's engagement with her or her environment under a particular set of conditions."[24] In other words, the value of a text (and the value we place upon a text) are contingent upon the conditions of its existence and not upon the correlations of its existence to an essential or objective truth. Smith goes on to explain how this applies to the study of literature:

> Of particular significance for the value of "works of art" and "literature" is the interactive relation between the classification of an entity and the functions it is expected or desired to perform. In perceiving an object or artifact in

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23 Barbara Hernstein Smith, Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

24 Ibid., 31.

> terms of some category...we implicitly isolate and foreground certain of its possible functions and typically refer its value to the extent to which it performs those functions more or less effectively. But the relation between function and classification also operates in reverse: ...certain properties and possible functions of various objects in the neighborhood will be foregrounded, and both the classification and value of those objects will follow accordingly.[25]

If our study and understanding of *shakkyō-ka* could proceed from this point of view--that they are literary artifacts classified according to the functions they perform within the cultural and literary systems in which they appeared--then perhaps we can begin to perceive them as occupying a literary space equal to other poems in the imperial anthologies.

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25 Ibid., 32.