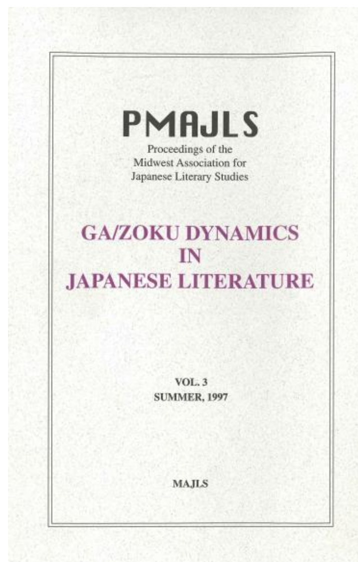
"Ōkuma Kotomichi and the Re-visioning of *Kokinshū* Elegance"

Roger K. Thomas

Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies 3 (1997): 160–181.



PMAJLS 3:
Ga/Zoku Dynamics in Japanese Literature.
Ed. Eiji Sekine.

Ōkuma Kotomichi and the Re-Visioning of Kokinshū Elegance

ROGER K. THOMAS
Illinois State University

Adrienne Rich defined "re-visioning" as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction."[1] In what could thus be called "re-re-visioning," I shall examine here some late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century reinterpretations of the Kokin wakashū in particular those of Ōkuma Kotomichi (1798-1868), a Kyushu poet who enjoyed the association of some of the major literary figures of his day and who, as the following discussion demonstrates, was exemplary of many of its most liberalizing tendencies.

Surely, there are few anthologies in world literature that could claim a more enduring hold on the poetic imagination and aesthetic sensibilities of their respective cultures than the Kokin wakashū. It is nothing short of remarkable that the product of such a small, narrowly confined segment of Japanese society in the tenth century should have come to dominate waka practices for the better part of a millennium. Until well into the Edo period a poet ventured beyond the 2,026 lexemes and the conventional imagery of that venerated anthology only at the risk of severe condemnation, as the Kyohakushū controversy of 1650 amply illustrates.[2]

---

[1] Adrienne Rich, On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978 (New York: Norton, 1979), 35.

[2] The Kyohakushū controversy was a debate between the disciples of Kinoshita Chōshōshi (1569-1649) and the anonymous author of a work

Through much of the history of Japanese verse, then, the Kokinshū was the primary source of the precedent and "consummation" that Konishi Jin'ichi argues is essential for ga, a quality that projects aesthetic closure.[3] The authority of this precedent was as strong at the beginning of the seventeenth century as it had ever been. The new bakufu had given legal recognition to the role of the aristocracy as arbiters and stewards of the traditional arts, chief among which was waka.[4] One might expect that this--combined with the courtiers' monopoly of the most coveted secret transmission, the Kokin denju--would have established permanently both class prerogative and the supremacy of the Kokinshū model. I shall examine briefly how the authority of that volume was seriously challenged by one movement, and then reestablished and redefined by another, culminating in the waka theory and practices of Ōkuma Kotomichi.

---

titled Nan Kyohakushū, in which Chōshōshi is faulted for failure to conform to the conventions of tenth-century court poetry.

[3]Konishi defines ga as an idealization of consummation, and zoku as a longing for infinity. The world of ga is thus one that conforms to pre-existing ideals, where "already existing writings establish the criteria ... Zoku writings, by contrast, belong to a world without precedents, a world without fixed form." Konishi Jin'ichi, Nihon bungei-shi, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1985), 91-2; the relevant translation (cited here) is by Aileen Gatten and Nicholas Teele, A History of Japanese Literature, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 58-9.

[4]The bakufu mandated at the very beginning of the codes written in the Seventh Month of Keichō 20 (1615) the role of the aristocracy, noting that "waka has never ceased since the time of Emperor Kōkō [830-887]," and that "although it is a form of skillful prevarication (kigo), waka is one of the conventions (shūzoku) of our nation, and must not be abandoned." Tokugawa kinrei kō, ed. Ishii Ryōsuke, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1959), 1.

The Quest for Primal Miyabi: Kamo no Mabuchi and the "Spiritualization" of Ga

The most sophisticated and sustained challenge to Kokinshū-centered ga came, not surprisingly, from kokugaku. This began as a circumspect questioning of aristocratic privilege in waka, and was couched in terms of a call for broad class participation in the art. This spirit of egalitarianism was espoused by Shimokōbe Chōryū (1624-1686)--compiler of Rin'yō ruijinshū (1670), the first anthology of waka by jige (commoner) poets--and maintained by his associate, Keichū (1640-1701).[5] A polemical tone does not become apparent until such nativists as Kise Sanshi (1606-1698?) and Toda Mosui (1629-1706) dismissed the transmissions as so much charlatanry.[6] In practice, however, their own verses were hardly distinguishable from those of contemporary court poets.

The break, both in theory and in practice, from the authority of Kokinshū precedent was finally effected by Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) who, with his monumental Man'yō kō (1760-1768), built upon Keichū's philological research and brought to Man'yō studies a secure intellectual foundation. More importantly for the present purposes, the redefinition of ga also

---

[5]Chōryū wrote in the preface to that anthology that, by historical right, all Japanese "regardless of rank or estate communicate their intentions with poetry." Rin'yō ruijinshū jo, in Nihon kagaku taikei (hereafter NKT), ed. Sasaki Nobutsuna, VII (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1958), 1.

[6]In the Shosetsuroku, Sanshi writes: "Surely there is nothing in the Kokinshū that needs secret transmissions. Tsurayuki wrote with the wish in mind that the spirit of waka be made know to all people far and wide ... secret transmissions had their beginning in the base minds (iyashiki kokoro) of foolish people in later ages." (Quoted by Munemasa Isoo, Edo jidai no waka to kajin (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1991), 163.) Mosui's work is largely devoted to exposing the inconsistencies of the court poets' rules and proscriptions, which over the centuries had rendered the Way of waka "so narrow that it is difficult to steer a course through it." Toda Mosui, Kanbun gonen no bunshi, in NKT VII:9.

owes its inception to Mabuchi. Although significant numbers of commoners had already been writing waka for some time before Mabuchi, most nevertheless adhered to courtly themes and conventions with dogged determination. Mabuchi's ga, however, was a literary ideal that drew on an age yet innocent of courtly trappings. It was an ideal of refinement whose opposite was artifice and falsehood rather than zoku. Over the course of Mabuchi's career he reached ever further back into Japan's archaic past for poetic models, retreating from the courtly style of his first teacher Kada no Azumamaro (1669-1736), through an ideal centered chiefly in the anonymous verses that constitute the earliest in the Kokinshū, and finally to the Man'yōshū style and even some attempts at archaic song style:

Umasake no uta	Song of Sweet Wine
Umara ni	How sweetly
oyarafuru ka ne ya	We imbibe!
hito-tsuki futa-tsuki	One cup two cups--
eraera ni	With what delight
tanasoko uchiaguru ka ne ya	We raise our palms!
mi-tsuki yo-tsuki	Three cups four cups--
koto naoshi	Our words sincere,
kokoro naoshi mo yo	And our hearts, too, are true.
i-tsuki mu-tsuki	Five cups six cups--
ama-tarashi	Heaven is full,
kuni tarasu mo yo	And the land, too, is replete.
nana-tsuki ya-tsuki.[7]	Seven cups eight cups--

[7] From Kamo-ō kashū, in Kōchū kokka taikei [hereafter KKT] vol. 15 (Tokyo: Kokumin Tosho, 1928), 575. This verse has been cited as representing the extreme of Mabuchi later period, and his increasing idealization of Japan's remote antiquity. See Tamaki Tōru, Kinsei kajin no shisō: waka ni okeru ningen kaifuku no kadai (Tokyo: Fushiki, 1988), 64-5. The stylistic evolution of Mabuchi's poetry was first noted by his own disciple Katō Chikage (1735-1808), who wrote in the preface to Mabuchi's posthumously published Kamo-ō kashū (1806) that "the style of his poetry is divided into three stages: early middle,

It was in his later treatises on poetry, Kai k (1760) and Niimanabi (1765), that a shift to a Man'yōshū-centered ideal is clearly discernible. In these two works, he advances important arguments regarding what constitutes "elegance" in waka, claiming that in contrast to the many competing styles of contemporary poetry, "when it comes to those of the ancient world," the poems naturally "sound tranquil (yasuraka) and elegant (miyabika, i.e. ga)."[8] In order to cultivate this spirit of tranquillity and elegance, it was essential to read the Man'yōshū and to imitate its style, for "as one strives to write similar verse, the tone and sense of that volume will, over the years, color one's heart (kokoro ni sominu beshi)."[9] Though Mabuchi does approve of many of the early anonymous verses in the Kokinshū, he is nevertheless severely critical of its preface and dismisses most of the poems in that volume.

One other aspect of Mabuchi's thinking that is crucial to understanding his new vision of ga is the fact that he views poetry not merely in terms of artistic accomplishment, but also as a spiritual exercise. He argues that waka is a product of the

---

and late. In the first phase, it resembled the poetic style of Kada no Azumamaro under whom he studied, and was a style both florid and fragile. From the middle phase, however, his own form (sugata) developed that was characteristically refined (miyabi ni shite) and elevated in tone (shirabe takaku), and yet at the same time manly (ooshiki). In his later years he became very vainglorious and only composed in a manner that was neither established nor embellished, and that was incomprehensible to everyone." (KKT XV:488.) One product of this metamorphosis is the three distinctive schools among Mabuchi's disciples: the so-called Man'yō-ha (Katō Umaki [1721-1777] Kadori Nabiko [1723-1782], Tayasu Munetake [1715-1778], Kurita Hijimaro [1737-1811], Arakida Hisaoyu [1746-1804], etc.); the Edo-ha (Katō Chikage, Murata Harumi [1746-1811], etc.); and the Suzuya-ha (Motoori Norinaga [1730-1801] and his followers).

[8]Kai kō, in NKT VII:202.

[9]Kamo no Mabuchi, Niimanabi, in NKT VII:219.

moment, "a thing that expresses only one [state of] mind," and that "in the ancient age, there was no division between poets and non-poets."[10] He further maintains that "there are many things [i.e., phenomena] in the world, but there exists nothing outside of mind and words (ame no shita ni wa koto ōkaredo kokoro to kotoba no hoka nashi). Only after knowing these two well can one also understand the ancients."[11] Mabuchi's world view is thus an unusual combination of philosophic idealism (yuishinron) and an intense reverence for philology. Neither mundane affairs nor artistic accomplishment in the usual sense count for much in that world view, which aimed at the rediscovery of a primal miyabi, or ga.

The Kokinshū "Counter Reformation"

Mabuchi's rejection of the authority of Kokinshū precedent is representative of a broader movement among kokugakusha. But apart from the nativists, what may be said of the fate of Kokinshū authority in the more pluralistic atmosphere of the late Edo period, a time when it was increasingly obliged to compete with other artistic precedent? Did it manage to recoup a measure of influence, and if so, how? To summarize the conclusion in advance, a sort of "Counter Reformation" of Kokinshū classicism did in fact occur. Some important figures in this movement included Ozawa Roan (1723-1801), Kagawa Kageki (1768-1843), and Ōkuma Kotomichi.

The second half of the Edo period was a time during which the major locus of waka activity shifted permanently from court to jige circles, but not all commoners turned to kokugaku for a podium from which to denounce the presumptions of aristocratic privilege. One major jige poet who found his ammunition

---

[10] Kai kō, 200.
[11] Niimanabi, 222.

elsewhere was Ozawa Roan, a writer whose contributions to the intellectual life of his age are currently the subject of much reevaluation. With Mabuchi, Roan lamented the fact that "society now seems to think that if one is not a noble, one does not compose poetry (uta)," and that the nobles "have come to think of their poetry as a magnificent, rare vessel ... This is why this great art has declined with passing ages, and its original principle has been lost."[12] On this level, Roan appears to be in complete accord with Mabuchi and the nativists.

Even a cursory perusal of Roan's poetics, however, makes clear that his ideal was grounded in the Kokinshū. He alludes to that volume and its compiler, Tsurayuki, frequently and always favorably, claiming that:

> With abilities unmatched in history, Tsurayuki compiled the Kokinshū, rejecting the bad and collecting the good, and making it a model for waka ... comparing [poetry of] the past with the Kokinshū, one may know that if it resembles, it is good, if it does not, then it is bad. Also, comparing [the poetry of] later ages and even [of] the present, one may discern good or bad by whether or not there is resemblance.[13]

No other anthology rates so highly in his view, including the Shin Kokinshū, which "does contain many good poems, but [in it] the human heart tends to embellishment and there is too much contrivance for unusual effects ..."[14] The Man'yōshū, on the other hand, finds mention in Roan's poetics mainly in the context of condemnation of kokugakusha for their slavish imitation of that volume.

---

[12]Ozawa Roan, Furu no nakamichi, in NKT VIII:184.
[13]Furu no nakamichi, 170.
[14]Furu no nakamichi, 173.

A closer examination of Roan's poetics, and of the application of his theory in his own practice, reveals that his ideal of Kokinshū classicism was significantly different from that of earlier ages. The classics were something that should be studied, but not consciously imitated. He criticized both court poets and kokugakusha for their subservience to past models, but he believed that the spirit of the Kokinshū could be attained by being true to one's own poetic vision. The spirit of the classics was none other than dōjō (common sentiment), the fund of emotional and spiritual experiences that bound people together across time. But dōjō itself was meaningless unless vivified by shinjō (new sentiment), the experience of the moment and one which was intensely personal.[15] The boldness of his individualism is reflected in his statement: "Nothing has precedence over one's own heart (nanigoto mo, waga kokoro ni sakidatsu mono nashi)."[16] This is, of course, philosophical idealism, but it does not have the "nostalgia" of Mabuchi's. It grounded in the present (shinjō) at least as much as in the common fund of the past (dōjō). Any conscious imitation of another's style is viewed as a betrayal of one's own heart.

Roan's collections do have a distinct Kokinshū flavor about them, but on the level of technique, one rarely sees such things as engo ("related words") or pivot words, demonstrating that he

---

[15]Of shinjō, Roan wrote: "It expresses the sentiment (jō) that flows along hour by hour, moment by moment, unavoidably for both you and me, both day and night, both morning and evening, that which was put into language from our infancy until now in our old age, and therefore it is altogether new. This is the basis for waka." Furu no nakamichi, 183-4. The similarity of Roan's theory of dōjō/shinjō to Matsuo Bashō's idea of fueki/ryūkō (immutability/ transitoriness) is probably not accidental. See Nakamura Yukihiko, "Ozawa Roan karon no shin kentō," in Kinsei bungei shichōron, vol. 1 of Nakamura Yukihiko chojutsushū (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1982), 278-80.

[16]Furu no nakamichi, 171.

did not imitate that volume the way Mabuchi and others sought to emulate the Man'yōshū. While his poetry draws on classical diction (dōjō), it shows confidence in his own vision and appears to be anchored in his immediate experiences (shinjō). Some of his best-known poems include:

Uzumasa nite hitori nagamete	By myself, lost in thought at Uzumasa
Uzumasa no fukaki hayashi o hibikikuru kaze no to sugoki aki no yūgure.[17]	Awesome, the sound Of the wind as it comes Howling Through Uzumasa's dense woods-- An evening in autumn.
... tsuki kasuminagara sashite iwan kata naku shizukeshi	... with the moon enveloped in haze, it was so quiet that there was nothing particular to say
Ōi-gawa tsuki to hana to no oboroyo ni hitori kasumanu nami no oto kana.[18]	The Ōi River, Both moon and blossoms shrouded In misty night-- Alone undimmed: The sound of ripples.

Though the words ga or miyabi do not appear in his poetics, it is nevertheless clear what precedent (and therefore by extension ga) meant for Roan, and that this quality was personalized and, in the sense that it had less to do with technique than with a more essential quality, "spiritualized."

---

[17] Kinsei wakashū, Takagi Ichinosuke and Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, eds., Nihon koten bungaku taikei 93 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966), 282. In this verse, Roan describes his impressions immediately after retreating to the Jizōdō at Jūrin'in, a temple that had not been inhabited for ten years.

[18] Kinsei wakashū, 262.

Though never formally Roan's disciple, the most noteworthy inheritor of these ideals was Kagawa Kageki, one of the most influential poets of the nineteenth century and one who, like Roan, was first instructed in the court style of waka but later rejected its conventions and forged an independent course.[19] The contacts between these two poets are amply documented, and the common characteristics between their poetic theory and practice are probably not accidental. Kageki's foremost biographer and critic, Kuroiwa Ichirō, notes that the two poets both reject imitation of the Man'yōshū style and display a marked preference for the Kokinshū.[20]

Compared to Mabuchi, Kageki's views on the history of waka do not appear to so definitive, but he was, like Roan, unequivocally adulatory when it came to the Kokinshū. His high estimation of that volume is apparent when he writes:

> The Kokinshū consists entirely of verses whose tone is well regulated (shirabe totonoeru uta), and deserves careful consideration. In such collections as the Shin Kokinshū, the tone is broken (shirabe no tagaitaru) ... To use an analogy, the Kokinshū is a spontaneous flower (shizen no hana), while the Shin Kokinshū is a flower on a trained

---

[19]Roan had originally studied under the Shimo Reizei-ke master Reizei Tamemura (1712-1774), but was excommunicated for criticizing the practices of that school. Kageki studied under Kagawa Kagemoto (1745-1821), a jige teacher of the Nijō School, but was likewise estranged from his mentor for similar reasons.

[20]On the relations between the two poets, see Kuroiwa Ichirō, "Kagawa Kageki," in Kinsei no kajin, ed. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi and Sanekata Kiyoshi, Nihon kajin kōza 5 (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1961), 122-3. Kuroiwa cites Roan's diary and Kageki's Zuisho shisetsu to illustrate Roan's unmistakable influence on the poetics of Kageki. The common characteristics in the theory and practices of the two are discussed by Kuroiwa in his Kagawa Kageki no kenkyū (Kobe: Bunkyō Shoin, 1957), 349-53.

branch, seen through the leaves.[21]

Kageki begins the preface to his study and commentary Kokin wakashū seigi (1835) with an account of how Tsurayuki undertook to "save" waka from the neglect it had suffered during the ninth century, when "both nobles and commoners placed a high value on Chinese poetry, and native verse was slighted as an effeminate pastime, lacking dignity ..."[22] In the context of his other writings, the implication is clear that Kageki regarded the state of waka in his own time to have fallen to a similar low point, and he likely fancied his own role as one very much like that of Tsurayuki's. It is not to be wondered, then, that he valued the Kokinshū so highly.

Kageki's writing sparked two of the major literary debates of the Edo period, the second of which was set in motion by Kageki's response to Mabuchi's Niimanabi, published posthumously in 1800.[23] Kageki's attack, Niimanabi iken (1812), is the first of several works on poetics and waka history. His highly metaphysical and elusive poetic ideal of shirabe (tone) was formulated in reaction to the less ethereal quality of the same name described in Mabuchi's work.

Kageki's poetics could be discussed from any number of perspectives, but three aspects are of particular interest to us here. First is his defense of the Kokinshū. He contends that Mabuchi's criticism of the Kokinshū as "tending to a feminine

---

[21]From Keien ibun, in Kagawa Kageki-ō zenshū, ed. Sasaki Nobutsuna, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1898), 200.

[22]Kagawa Kageki-ō zenshū, ed. Sasaki Nobutsuna, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1898), 171.

[23]The first major literary debate in Kageki's career, the Fude no saga controversy (1802-3), was also set against Mabuchi's followers. For a brief study of this debate, see my "High' versus`Low': The Fude no Saga Controversy and Bakumatsu Poetics," Monumenta Nipponica 49 (1994), 455-469.

style (taoyame-buri) and disparaging masculine roughness (masurao-zusami)," is a failure to appreciate the variety represented in that volume.[24] Second, Kageki rejected imitation of ancient models. He no doubt had kokugakusha in mind when he wrote that all anthologies reflect their respective ages, and that "attempting to return everything to antiquity is like damming up a flowing stream. Will it stop flowing just because it has been dammed? It will only end up flowing off in the wrong direction where it will become more and more turbid ..."[25] Third, and of particular interest to us here, for Kageki, ga/zoku distinctions in diction or imagery were purely relative. He wrote that "it is usual for people in this world to call all things refined (ga) or vulgar (zoku), just as they learn 'east' and 'west' or 'black' and 'white,' unaware that vulgarity is refinement and refinement is vulgarity (zoku sunawachi ga, ga sunawachi zoku)."[26] Judged by his poetics alone, Kageki was one of the most progressive thinkers among waka poets of his time.

His own compositions rarely live up to such bold theorizing. His collections have an ambiance not unlike that of the Kokinshū, and stylistic similarities have been the subject of careful analysis.[27] Significantly, however, there is no outright imitation, and little even of what can be regarded as allusive variation (honka-dori). For example:

---

[24]Kagawa Kageki, Niimanabi iken, in Karonshū, ed. Hashimoto Fumio et al., Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 50 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1975), 594.
[25]As recorded by Kageki's disciple, Uchiyama Mayumi, Kagaku teiyō, in Kinsei bungaku ronshū, ed. Nakamura Yukihiko, Nihon koten bungaku taikei 94 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966), 145.
[26]From Keien ibun, 227.
[27]Kuroiwa Ichirō, Kagawa Kageki no kenkyū, 461-4, 473-83, points out numerous similarities in diction and phrasing.

Wakana	Young herbs
Kasugano ni	Picking young herbs
wakana o tsumeba	On the fields ofKasuga--
ware nagara	n spite of myself
mukashi no hito no	I feel as if I were
kokochi koso sure.[28]	One of the ancients.

draws on a fund of Kokinshū imagery, but does not directly imitate any particular verse. More importantly, it reveals the poet's consciousness that he is not one of the ancients, a state of mind antithetical to what Mabuchi advocated. Similarly in:

Ume-ga-ka sode ni tomaru	Plum scent remaining in my sleeve
Kokoro nomi	Only in my mind
yukite oritsuru	Did I go and breakoff
ume no hana	The plum blossoms--
ayashiku sode no	Strange, then, that the scent
nioikeru kana.[29]	Should so infuse my sleeve.

the classical image is "framed" in the poet's imagination. As much as he admired the Kokinshū and its historical mission, Kageki was nevertheless fully conscious that he lived in a different age. Another verse by Kageki:

Kankyo no rakuyō	Fallen leaves at a secluded retreat
Onozukara	Untrodden by anyone

---

[28]From Keien isshi, in Kagawa Kageki-ō zenshū I:21. This brings to mind Tsurayuki's verse:

Kasugano no	Perhaps they are bound
wakana tsumi ni ya	To pick herbs on Kasuga's field--
shirotae no	Those girls,
sode furihaete	Waving long white sleeves
hito no yukuramu.	Walk undaunted by the distance.
KKS #22	

[29]Keien isshi, 23.

fumu hito mo naki	Who might come calling--
waga kado no	By my gate
kiri no ochiba no	The brightness of dew
tsuyu no sayakesa.[30]	On fallen paulownia leaves.

invites comparison with the anonymous:

Aki wa kinu	Autumn has come--
momiji wa yado ni	Though my hut is blanketed
furishikinu	With scarlet maple leaves,
michi fumiwakete	Yet no caller makes his way
tou hito wa nashi.	Along the buried path.
KKS #287	

In Kageki's verse, the lyricism is much more muted, and it tends rather to a descriptiveness that is both characteristic of his style in general and of the haikai spirit of his age.[31] If Roan "spiritualized" the precedent of the Kokinshū into an essentialism he termed dōjō, then Kageki can be said to have "relativized" it in haikai fashion.

While Mabuchi was the first in the kokugaku line to bring idealization of the Man'yōshū into poetic practice, Ōkuma Kotomichi must be credited as the most successful of the "counter reformers" in achieving a close alignment between progressive theory and genuinely innovative composition. Like Roan and Kageki before him, Kotomichi underwent a sort of "conversion" in terms of style and ideals and, like Roan and Kageki, this resulted in a break with the teacher of his youth--though Kotomichi's separation from Futagawa Sukechika (1767-

---

[30]Keien isshi, 46.

[31]Kuroiwa Ichirō, Kagawa Kageki no kenkyū, 456, cites three salient characteristics of Kageki's style: 1) poems in the category of haikaika (eccentric poems) are unusually numerous; 2) his tone is unrestrained and light; 3) on the whole, he excelled at descriptivness, and was weak in lyricism. These characteristics all bespeak the "haikai spirit" of his age.

1836), an eclectic scholar of Suzunoya-ha background, was far less dramatic.

While Kotomichi's high esteem for the Kokinshū is clearly implied in his works, as will be demonstrated here, he was far less tied to its conventions than was Kageki, whose writings appear to have been an important factor in Kotomichi's own "conversion." In his Hitorigochi, Kotomichi writes:

> ... I happened across Kagawa Kageki's collection, Keien isshi, in a book shop and gave no notice to the author's name, thinking disdainfully that it was probably the work of some mediocre person. Yet when I read more closely, I could see that though it was vastly inferior to the ancients, it was nevertheless a hundred times superior to the works of contemporary poets.[32]

Throughout his two treatises on waka poetics, Hitorigochi and Kozo no chiri, Kotomichi exhibits a thorough familiarity with Kageki's works. While most references are positive, none are adulatory, and on at least one score--the question of the need for teachers and instruction--Kotomichi takes issue with Kageki. Kageki's influence was indeed profound, but the claim that Kotomichi's poetics was nothing more than a logical extension of the Kyoto poet's theories fails to take account of diverse elements of the synthesis seen in Hitorigochi and Kozo no chiri, ranging from Chinese poetics to haikai theory and practice.[33] In

---

[32]Ōkuma Kotomichi, Hitorigochi, in NKT VIII:481.

[33]Kuroiwa Ichirō, Kagawa Kageki no kenkyū, p. 416, maintains that without Kageki's influence, the ideas expressed in Kozo no chiri and Hitorigochi could never have been conceived. For a treatment of Kotomichi's indebtedness to Chinese poetics, see Usami Kisohachi, Kinsei karon no kenkyū: Kangaku to no kōshō (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1987), 375-97. Kotomichi's advocacy of individual expression owed much to the influence of the Sinologist Hirose Tansō (1782-1856), under whom he studied briefly. Also, Kotomichi's metaphor of lifeless puppets to describe conventional verse is almost certainly taken from

the present discussion, one aspect of what he held in common with Kageki is of particular interest to us: a respect for the Kokinshū and the ideals set forth in its preface. Here we shall consider the direction Kotomichi took with these ideals, and how he "re-visioned" its elegance (ga).

Waka poetics had remained "medieval" until well into the nineteenth century in the sense that there was a continuing quest to link the art with larger-than-life essentialisms; such attempts persisted down to Kageki's shirabe. One "modern" aspect of Kotomichi's poetics is its break with the medieval preoccupation with essentialisms. His theories do have their own peculiar metaphysics, which significantly for the present discussion is couched in Kokinshū imagery and is centered in kokoro, whose qualities Kotomichi apparently saw as exemplified in that ancient anthology and its preface. He echoes Tsurayuki's statement on what constitutes true poetry when he writes in Kozo no chiri that "one should compose using only the heart as seed (tada kokoro o tane nite yomu beshi)."[34] Unlike Mabuchi's

---

Y an Mei's (1716-1798) Sui-yüan shih-hua, a work on Chinese poetics which appears to have been studied in Tansō's school. The influence of haikai is readily apparent. In Hitorigochi, he cites verses by Kyorai and comments on them with the seeming assumption that waka and haikai share the same poetic vision. He wrote verses in praise of Bashō and many of his poems employ imagery nearly identical to what is found in verses of haikai.

[34]Kozo no chiri, 467. This is reiterated in Hitorigochi (482), where he admonishes beginners: "Waka is not something that sings of blossoms or the moon, but rather something that expresses one's feelings (kokoro) about the same blossoms or moon ... In the Preface to the Kokinshū, it says that waka' gives voice to the feelings in one's heart, using what is seen or heard.' This combines the heart, the eye, and the ear." One also senses Kotomichi's high regard for Tsurayuki's preface in his choosing it as a text for gifts to others of his own calligraphy, for which he was famous. See Kuwahara Rensei, Ōkuma Kotomichi no sakura (Fukuoka: Kaichōsha, 1992), 69. Other indications of his high regard for the Kokinshū include: of the thirteen classical poems cited or

makoto or Kageki's shirabe, however, Kotomichi's kokoro is not a totalizing essentialism that links poetry in some ineffable manner; it is an individual quality that resides both in the poet and in the object. What this term meant for Kotomichi is implied in the verse:

Tsukuzuku to	The cherry blossoms--
kyō yoku mireba	Today as I gaze on them
sakurabana	Intently,
hana wa kokoro no	There can be no doubt
aru ni tagawazu.[35]	That they are sentient.

Here, we do not see an anthropocentric idealism, as we do in Mabuchi. For Kotomichi, it was not only a matter of kokoro no hana, but also of hana no kokoro, and one cannot read his works without sensing that he saw everything as endowed with kokoro. This is not mere animism; in the context of other aspects of his poetics, it is clear that, whatever else kokoro might mean for Kotomichi, it is a discrete rather than a universal quality, as the following discussion will demonstrate.

Why did a nineteenth-century waka poet--whose verses virtually every commentator has noted for their highly descriptive tone, their rustic and plebeian themes and images, and their haikai-like ambiance--hold in such high esteem a tenth-century anthology of highly lyrical poems by courtiers? In answering this, one must bear two things in mind: 1) while

---

alluded to in Hitorigochi, ten are from the Kokinshū and are used to illustrate desirable qualities; he advocates the use of various types of poems in compiling a collection, and cites the Kokinshū as a good example (Hitorigochi, 482, 484); he expresses his annoyance at the "rote" use of imagery by contemporary poets, and praises the immediacy of poets' sensibilities as seen in the Kokinshū (Hitorigochi, 482-3).

[35]From the unpublished ms. of Shun'yashū (Kobayashi-bon), as quoted by Kuwahara Rensei, Ōkuma Kotomichi no sakura, 78.

Kotomichi admired the spirit of the Kokinshū, he did not imitate it and berated those who did; and 2) Kotomichi understood kokoro in terms of individual difference, not in terms of a universal quality.

In Hitorigochi, Kotomichi appears to agree with Kageki regarding the difficulty of the Kokinshū and deploring the cavalier manner in which semi-literate rustics approached it, as if it were an easy thing.[36] What this difficulty consists of is implied in the opening lines of Kozo no chiri: "When one attempts to compose verses as one's own thing (waga mono), then a heterodox style will be the result. If one attempts to avoid a heterodox style, then it becomes a thing belonging to the ancients. This is the difficult aspect of waka."[37] The difficulty is reiterated in different terms in Hitorigochi: "The Way of waka is public (ōyake), but waka [itself] is a private (watakushi) thing."[38] For Kotomichi this was a paradox, with neither the course of a self-determined individualism nor imitation resulting in good verse. His answer to this paradox was to combine fidelity to one's own feelings with a reverence for the spirit of the ancients, which he seemed to view as embodied particularly in the Kokinshū and its preface.

Kotomichi recognizes that "both in diction and sense, those things written by the ancients are moving and have a felicitous effect," but warns that "when people of the present age try to express their thoughts by making such verses their own, the style is bad and the words do not reflect their thoughts."[39] He argues that:

---

[36]Hitorigochi, 481.
[37]Kozo no chiri, 465.
[38]Hitorigochi, 476.
[39]Hitorigochi, 474.

> It is a natural tendency that the style should change from age to age, and it would be contrary to reason for it to be otherwise. It was not the case that poets from the Kokinshū onward created a style for each age simply because they were unable to write verses in the Man'yōshū style; Tsurayuki, Mitsune, Mototoshi, Shunrai, Teika, Ietaka--all had very high esteem for the Man'yōshū, but they did not attempt imitations.[40]

His own approach to the ancients was reverential, but not imitative. He claimed that "one who desires to compose good verse should begin with the heart. When I compose my verse with the 'heart as seed,' of course my thinking is base and the meanings are of the common sort ... but through the passing years and months, I approach the ancients gradually. I regard as closest to the ancients that which does not resemble them at all, and as furthest from the ancients that which resembles them closely."[41]

Predictably, then, Kotomichi rejects Mabuchi's poetics, and cites passages from Niimanabi as examples of what an aspiring poet should avoid.[42] He also rejects Norinaga's Uiyamabumi, which he sees as having "a tenor about it that admits waka to be a thing of artifice."[43] Along with Norinaga's poetics, this could also be taken as a rejection of Norinaga's declared preference for the style of the Shin Kokinshū, a volume to which Kotomichi seldom alludes and whose style he appears to find contrived. For him, the Kokinshū and Tsurayuki's preface remained a sort of spiritual home.

In Kotomichi's mind, however, neither this spiritual home nor the fundamental principle of kokoro that he saw behind it

---

[40]Kozo no chiri, 466.
[41]Hitorigochi, 473.
[42]Kozo no chiri, 470.
[43]Hitorigochi, 477.

mandated a uniform style, and it is here that we see what ga and zoku meant to him. Instead of relativizing these categories, as Kageki had done, he cheerfully accepts zoku as having a legitimate place in waka, claiming that composition of poetry "is not something that ought to be separated from one's social status."[44] He acknowledges that "there are some who say that my poems are base (iyashi)," but counters that "since I am of humble birth, that is as it should be."[45] Unlike Roan and Kageki before him, he had no claim to a samurai background, but accepted his merchant-class status with no apology. He argued that by "making a contrived pretense at elegance (miyabi), we only obfuscate the Tenpō era for posterity."[46] Rather than strive for a uniform style, "a common person (zokujin) should make use of the common (zoku), and a refined person (gajin) should make use of the refined (ga)."[47] Moreover, "there are naturally separate, respective styles of waka poetry for nobility, commoners, elderly, young people, men, and women."[48] One reason, then, why Kotomichi did not--and in his mind could not--imitate the verses of Heian courtiers is that he was not one.

Individual qualities that should be expressed in waka included more than class or societal distinctions. He argues that "some people have the nature of pine, some of bamboo, others of willow, and still others of plum, but none are the same ... one with the nature of a pine should grow according to the good of a pine, and a willow according to that of a willow ... one should search for a way to grow according to one's inborn

[44] Hitorigochi, 473.
[45] Hitorigochi, 476.
[46] Hitorigochi, 473.
[47] Hitorigochi, 478.
[48] Hitorigochi, 478.

nature. This is true not only for the study of poetry, but is a sound principle for any art."[49] Each tree has its own nature, and by implication also its own kokoro.

In composing waka, Kotomichi maintained a fidelity to his own age and social state, as the following examples illustrate:

Yamaji	Mountain Path
Soko nari to yasuku uchiiu yamabito no michi nakanaka ni Tōga no nosato. Sōkeishū #38[50]	"Yonder a piece" Casually, as if nothing, The mountain folk said-- Yet how far it turned out to be To the village of Tōga.

Kazaguruma	Pinwheel
Imo ga se ni neburu warawa no utsutsu naki te ni sae meguru kazagurumakana. Sōkeishū #152	A child fast asleep On the young mother's back-- In its hand, Grasped unconsciously, A pinwheel is spinning.

Shimo	Frost
Ōitaru mushiro no shimo wa samukeredo shita tanomoshiku tsumu tsumaki kana. Sōkeishū #391	The old straw mat, Decked with a coat of frost, Is cold to the sight-- But underneath, the firewood Is piled up promisingly.

Keburi	Smoke
Oboro naru	Visible even

---

[49]Hitorigochi, 483-4.

[50]These examples are from Ōkuma Kotomichi, Sōkeishū ed. Masamune Atsuo (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1938).

tsuki ni mo miete	Against the hazy moonlight--
akutabi no	Smoke rises
keishi ato yori	From the burned-out fires
tatsu keburi kana.	Of the fisherfolk's sweepings.
Sōkeishū #570	

One would not expect to find such poems in the Kokinshū, but in Kotomichi's mind, they are one with the spirit of that ancient anthology. Like the poems of the tenth-century courtiers, they are true to the age in which they are written, and there is accord between the kokoro of the poet and the objects of the poetry. Kotomichi's poetry and poetics represent the final "domestication" of the Kokinshū by all social classes.