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The Power of Syntopism: Chinese Poetic Place Names on the Map of Early Japanese Poetry

INTRODUCTION: SYNCHRONISMS
AND SYNTOPISMS ACROSS BORDERS

This article attempts to think through ways in which place names were used in early Japanese poetry, both Chinese-style *kanshi* poetry 漢詩 written in accordance with Chinese syntax by Japanese authors, and vernacular Japanese *waka* poetry 和歌, or *uta* 歌. The Chinese texts, which were imported into the Japanese archipelago and enabled Japan's first explosion of literacy and literary production in the late-seventh and eighth centuries, were filled with Chinese place names. The Japanese emperors appointed some twenty embassies to the Sui (589–618) and Tang courts (618–907). Yet, although those missions that actually did arrive in China brought a handful of Japanese envoys and student monks to China and to some of the sites the Japanese knew well from Chinese texts, China's geography remained a world of its own, accessible to the vast majority of early Japanese almost exclusively through texts (if at all). In turn, unlike with the large migration processes that the Roman conquest of Hellenistic kingdoms in the Mediterranean triggered and that led to a huge presence of Greek speakers in Rome, the heart of a vast expansionist state, there were no comparable historical circumstances that would have led large numbers of Chinese to settle in Japan: China never conquered Japan and the Roman conquest of the Greek world would have been unimaginable for peripheral early Japan versus mighty China, at least until the late-nineteenth century. Early Japan coexisted so peripherally with China that the map of Chinese sites of historical and poetic significance remained, literally, a textual construct.

Although I will discuss the manipulation of place names in poetry written across borders, let me first draw a parallel to a related issue, the manipulation of time measurement across cultural borders. In his fascinating book on Roman time systems, the Latinist Denis Feeney shows how Rome was incorporated into, and then came to dominate, the dating systems that Hellenistic states had developed to synchronize their histories and various systems of time measurement. This monumental system of “synchronisms,” sets of correspondences that matched a certain event with the regular events of Olympiads, the ruling dates of Athenian archons, Spartan kings, and later Roman consuls, was necessary to coordinate time scales in the absence of a universal, cross-cultural dating system such as the “Common Era” chronology introduced with the advent of Christianity.

Yet, Feeney shows that the integration and manipulation of time served interests beyond the simple chronometrical determination of a certain date and the management of practical concerns such as diplomacy. In the context of comprehensive histories, synchronisms became part of a much larger project of cultural comparison, ultimately the comparison between Rome and Greece, and the hegemonic insertion of Rome into the Mediterranean world order.¹ In the hand of Christian chronographers, like Jerome and his *Chronicle* (ca. 381 CE), the synchronic tables juxtaposed various cultural traditions such as Egyptians and Persians, Hebrews, Greeks and Romans. They became a means to integrate the new sacred history with the history of old Greco-Roman paganism in order to lay claim to a universal history of salvation: For high antiquity, they bore proof of the temporal superiority of the Hebrew and Eastern traditions over the pagan Greeks and Romans; and for the contemporary state of affairs, they showed how the time line of Rome had taken over the other nations and now reigned supreme as a Christian empire.² This is an example of how synchronism on a larger scale, in other words, the temporal matching of states, religions or cultures, could be put to use as an attractive device to compare and to compete over temporal primacy and cultural superiority.

Feeney’s book can inspire us to think about how spatial comparisons – could we call them “*syntopisms*”? – work across cultures in settings where competition over relative age and cultural status was at stake. In the case of East Asia time was easier to share: Japan and

¹ Denis Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007), p. 18. See also his remarks on “Simile, *Synkrisis*, and Synchronism,” pp. 24–25.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 28–33.

Korea adopted the Chinese system of counting years according to the sexagesimal year cycle based on the permutation of ten “Heavenly Stems” (*tiangan* 天干) with twelve Earthly Branches” (*dizhi* 地支). Unlike in Japan, whose emperors chose their own era names beginning in the seventh century, Korean dynasties for most of their history used the contemporary Chinese era names, thus depending on Chinese time for both symbolic and practical purposes.³ Simply adopting the Tang era names as their own, as the Korean kingdom of Silla did, merely required writing skills. Submitting to Chinese imperial chronology was a sign of “temporal allegiance” to the hegemonic empire, which could only please the Chinese emperor. Using the names of “Luoyang 洛陽” and “Chang’an 長安” to designate the Eastern and Western halves of the Japanese capital, as Emperor Kanmu 桓武天皇 (737–806; r. 781–806) did when he founded Kyoto 京都 in 794, was an entirely different matter. While time and era names could be identical, places could never be: Kyoto did echo the model of Chinese capitals such as Chang’an, and consisted of a large rectangle of a checker-board grid with the imperial palace complex looming over the city from the north. Yet, Kyoto would always remain a “non-Luoyang” and “non-Chang’an,” with its much smaller size, the much more humble palace complex, the comparative lack of the vivid foreign trade dotting the colorful markets of Chang’an, and its blending of two Chinese capitals into one Japanese city, which in Chinese reality were about eight hundred miles apart. Also, if adopting Chinese era names could be understood as a symbol of allegiance of sorts to the reigning Chinese dynasty, adopting Chinese capital names could be interpreted as just the opposite: From the Tang perspective, there neither could nor should be another “Luoyang” or “Chang’an” outside of China.

How did the maps of Chinese and Japanese place names relate to each other in early Japanese texts? Was syntopism desirable or did the two maps stay apart? Given that Japan was the one major culture in the East Asian cultural sphere where a rich vernacular poetic tradition (*uta*) developed in parallel to Chinese-style poetry (*kanshi*) from the outset, what are the distinctive patterns of use of place names in these two traditions of *uta* and *kanshi*?

The phenomenon of Sino-Japanese syntopism deserves to be explored from linguistic, religious, and literary angles, but I will limit myself here to early poetry, which, with its double tradition and its ca-

³ Masayuki Sato, “Comparative Ideas of Chronology,” in *History and Theory* 30.3 (1991), pp. 282–83.

nonical status on top of the East Asian hierarchies of literary genres, is a particularly complex and influential case. While exploring two prominent and anomalous cases of syntopism in detail, I aim to develop a typological framework for talking about the use of place names in early Japanese *kanshi* and *uta*.

SYNTOPISM I: YOSHINO'S 吉野 NUMINOUS
LANDSCAPE OF THE EARLY-EIGHTH CENTURY

Already a cursory glance at the many place names in the *Collection of Myriad Leaves* (*Man'yōshū* 万葉集, ca. 759), which largely contains vernacular Japanese poems composed between the seventh through mid-eighth centuries,⁴ confirms that Japanese poetry operated clearly on a domestic map and sang of places imbued with local significance and lore. Similarly, the preface of the first anthology of Chinese-style *kanshi*, the *Florilegium of Cherished Airs* (*Kaifūsō* 懷風藻, 751), whose earliest poems date to the late 660s, starts its brief survey of the history of Japanese civilization and literary composition with two resonant domestic place names: Mount Takachiho 高千穂 in Kyūshū, where the grandson of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu was said to have descended to earth and started the process of populating the archipelago; and Kashihara 橿原, in today's Nara prefecture, where the legendary first Emperor Jimmu 神武天皇 was presumably enthroned.

Unlike vernacular poetry, which was limited to domestic use, Chinese-style poetry was the “diplomatic gift” of East Asian international relations and acquired an important diplomatic function in the context of the Japanese missions to the Sui and Tang courts. Once Japanese envoys and monks reached China, they communicated with their Chinese hosts through “brush talk” (Ch.: *bitan*; J.: *hitsudan* 筆談) and exchanged poems composed at banquets held in honor of the foreign guests. From the perspective of a – yet to be written – history of diplomatic cultures around the world, Chinese poetry could play a part in diplomacy only in the Sinographic sphere, where elites of various East Asian polities were largely unable to engage in trite every-day conversation because of the lack of a common spoken language, but could grace each other with elaborate poetry, which affirmed their belonging culturally to a shared Chinese heritage.

⁴ Although some poems in the *Man'yōshū* are attributed to early emperors like Nintoku (r. 313–399) and Yūryaku (r. 456–479), poetic production did not properly start until the seventh century during the reign of Emperor Jomei (r. 629–641).

Although Chinese-style poetry in early Japan derived its prestige from the Chinese literary tradition and its function within East Asian diplomacy, the *Kaifūsō* was compiled for domestic purposes, to remember the court of Emperor Tenji 天智天皇 (r. 668–672) and its tragic end in civil war. It told a story of Chinese-style poetry in Japan that was purely domestic. True, it includes poetry by Japanese monks like Chizō 智藏, Dōshi 道慈, and Benshō 弁生, who had been on missions to China, and it contains a handful of poems exchanged at banquets in honor of diplomatic envoys from Silla. But the poetry composed in the context of East Asian diplomacy is not set apart from Chinese-style poetry composed for domestic purposes, and the preface claims that the origin of Chinese-style poetry in Japan lies in courtly banquets celebrated during Emperor Tenji's reign, at home.

It is significant that the preface in no way relates the Japanese practice of *kanshi* to the context of East Asian diplomacy. The history of poetry in early Japan, whether vernacular or Chinese-style, appeared as a prerogative of the Japanese emperor and his or her court. From that perspective syntopism did not seem necessary or desirable. Japanese elites of the seventh and eighth centuries were just discovering the possibilities of literacy, and in their historical chronicles and early poetry collections they used the peculiar mix of Chinese texts that had reached Japan as they saw fit. That the early-eighth century was a moment when the local and domestic came to be articulated through the frame of Chinese forms and textual conventions can be seen in the one example of powerful poetic syntopism that stands out in the two earliest Japanese poetry anthologies: Yoshino 吉野.

Located in the mountainous area between the Yamato heartland around Asuka 飛鳥 and Nara 奈良 and the Kii Peninsula 紀伊半島 with its holy sites of the Ise and Kumano shrines, Yoshino was the only place whose praises were sung both in vernacular and in Chinese-style poetry in late seventh and early-eighth century Japan. It was associated with a long line of Japanese emperors, who came to conquer, visit, or hide, ranging from the legendary Jimmu (traditionally dated to the seventh century BCE) to Emperors Ōjin and Yūryaku (both fifth century CE), and the later Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇 (r. 673–686). Thanks to the Detached Palace constructed close to the rapids of Yoshino River, it became the site of frequent imperial processions and the subject of a brief tradition of imperial praise poetry, from the late seventh through the mid-eighth century, written by court poets in the emperor's retinue.

The central *Man'yōshū* poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂 (active late-seventh century) set the tone for the imperial poetry in praise of Yoshino with his two long-verse poems (*chōka* 長歌) in honor of Empress Jitō 持統天皇 (r. 690–697). Against the backdrop of Yoshino's numinous landscape, the towering mountains and rushing river, they praise the empress and her potent ritual performance of "land-viewing" (*kunimi* 国見), a ritual gesture that symbolically marked imperial rule over the territory.⁵ Later writers of Yoshino praise poems, such as Yamabe no Akihito 山部赤人 (active 720s–730s), Kasa no Kanamura 笠金村, Ōtomo no Tabito 大伴旅人 (665–731), and his son Ōtomo no Yakamochi 大伴家持 (ca. 717–785), relied heavily on Hitomaro's tropes and diction. Yet, even if the poem was expressly written far away from Yoshino, like the one by Yakamochi composed in distant Etchū province 越中国 in advance of the imperial visit, the rhetoric of the immediacy of the mountains and river, and the numinous power of the landscape in resonance with the imperial aura, masked the intertextual borrowing from previous Yoshino poems. The magic of Yoshino in *Man'yōshū* poetry relied on the innocence of the landscape and, by extension, the innocence of the word. The immediacy of language blended out the history, however brief, of this tradition of Yoshino praise poems, and covered its intertextual tracks.

The fifteen *kanshi* in *Kaifūsō* that are explicitly linked to Yoshino relied on a completely different strategy to add halo to Yoshino's grandeur: intertextuality and poetic syntopism.⁶ Written during the first decades of the eighth century, they graft poetically pregnant Chinese names and local lore onto the site of Yoshino. In one poem (no. 31) Yoshino is just another Xuanpu 玄圃, a paradise of immortals in the Kunlun Range; in another (no. 73; also mentioned in no. 102) it is the sacred mountain of Nanyue, the "Southern Peak" in Hunan province or the Tiantai mountain range of Sun Chuo's 孫綽 famous rhapsody, and the poem ranks Yoshino superior to Zhuangzi's Guyi 姑射 Moun-

⁵ *Man'yōshū* (annot. Kojima Noriyuki 小島憲之 et al., *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 9 [Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1994–96]), book 1, nos. 36–37 and 38–39 (each indicates a main poem plus an "envoy poem," or *hanka*, taken together as one item). For a translation see Edwin Cranston, *A Waka Anthology: A Gem-glistening Cup* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1993), pp. 193–95.

⁶ For a comparison of the vernacular and Chinese-style poetry on Yoshino, see Hatooka Akira 波戸岡旭, "Kaifūsō Yoshino shi no sansuikan – 'chisui jinsen' no tenko wo chūshin ni" 懷風藻吉野詩の山水観、智水仁山の典故を中心に, *Kokugakuin zasshi* 国学院雑誌 85.10 (1984), pp. 18–33, and Wiebke Denecke, "Bilingual Landscapes: Divided Pleasures at Yoshino Palace in Early Japanese and Sino-Japanese Poetry," in *Minds of the Past. Representations of Mentality in Literary and Historical Documents of Japan and Europe*, edited by Takami Matsuda and Michio Satō (Tokyo: Keiō University Press, 2005).

tain, abode of a miraculous immortal. Yoshino River is also compared to the Luo River, where Cao Zhi 曹植 met the Luo River Goddess and composed his rhapsody on the topic (no. 100). Similarly, it is also the place to meet the “Lacquer Maiden,” a crane-riding immortal, who appears in the *Records of Miraculous Events in Japan* (*Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記, ca. 822), a collection of Buddhist tales (no. 31).

Going by sheer numbers, in the *Kaifūsō* collection Yoshino is mainly the place to meet the “Mulberry Branch Nymph,” a stunningly beautiful immortal who was caught by the fisherman Umashine 美稻 as a mulberry branch in a fish trap, married, and later abandoned him.⁷ Almost half of the Yoshino *kanshi* evoke the legend and she was clearly more present to the poets at Yoshino than her Chinese equivalent, the Luo River Goddess. In one poem she appears in the company of yet other Chinese place names:

On an Excursion to Yoshino Palace 遊吉野宮

惟山且惟水 能智亦能仁 萬代無埃所 一朝逢柘民 風波轉入曲 魚鳥共成倫 此地即方丈 誰說桃源賓	These mountains and these waters, Where we can be both wise and benevolent! For ten thousand ages not a single stain, Where towards dawn I encounter the Mulberry- Branch Nymph. Where windblown waves turn, entering our tunes And fish and birds frolic together. This spot is a true Fangzhang, So who would even mention the visitor to Peach Blossom Spring? ⁸
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Although I have given no example of the imperial praise poetry on Yoshino from *Man'yōshū*, let it suffice to say that the identity of the site of Yoshino was established through the immediate presence of the emperor and the numinous landscape, not through references beyond it. In comparison, this Yoshino looks like a heavily layered landscape. Opening on *Analects* 6.23, where “the wise rejoice in waters 智者樂水, and the benevolent rejoice in mountains 仁者樂山,” it rests on the assumptions

⁷ Only the title of the *Mulberry-Branch Legend* (*Shashiden* 柘枝伝) has survived and a long-verse poem in the *Shoku Nihon Kōki* 続日本後紀, the fourth of the Japanese *Six National Histories* (*Rikkokushi* 六国史). Three *tanka* in *Man'yōshū* (book 3, nos. 385–87) are vaguely linked to the legend of the nymph; see Cranston, *Waka Anthology*, pp. 496–97. The long-verse poem mentions that the fisherman was from Yoshino, so there was a clearly local component to the story.

⁸ *Kaifūsō* no. 45; Kojima Noriyuki, *Kaifūsō, Bunka shūreishū, Honchō monzui* 懷風藻, 文華秀麗集, 本朝文粹 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1964). The poem is by Nakatomi no Hitotari 中臣人足, whose only surviving poems are *Kaifūsō* nos. 45 and 46. All translations in this article are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

of Confucian landscape appreciation. On this basis, the poem affirms the identity of the Yoshino landscape by reference to the local lore of the Mulberry-Branch Nymph, and builds two other sites on top of it, one worthy and the other unworthy of comparison, at least rhetorically: Fangzhang 方丈, one of the islands of the immortals, and Tao Qian's 陶潛 utopian Peach Blossom Spring, which is inferior to Yoshino and thus does not merit mention, as the closure emphatically states.

We can see how the numinous site of the indigenous Japanese place name of Yoshino became not just a spot associated with Chinese immortal lore, but, more interestingly, a site to which multiple poetic syntopisms could be applied in the breath of a single poem. Yoshino had ancient roots in Japanese political and religious history, but its name did not exist in Chinese poetry, and it was in urgent need for poignant amplification in the *kanshi* idiom. For that moment in literary history and that particular place, poetic syntopism was highly attractive and promised to make resonant a place and a topic new to Chinese-style poetry. The emphatic intertextual polyphonism that is distinctive of the Yoshino *kanshi* of *Kaifūsō* might look like random imitative patchwork. But we should not forget that it made strong cultural claims and used a powerful rhetorical strategy – syntopism – to back them up.

SYNTOPISM II: KAYŌ 河陽 AND EMPEROR

SAGA'S 嵯峨天皇 SINOPHILIA IN THE EARLY-NINTH CENTURY

A mere century later we encounter a radically different use of syntopism, which still awaits rediscovery for narratives of Japanese literary history: Kayō and Saga's (786–842; r. 809–823) Detached Palace north of the Yodo River outside the Heian capital of Kyoto.⁹ Also read in more Japanese fashion as “Kaya,” this area was called Yamazaki 山崎, but also bore the name of the Chinese district of Heyang 河陽, north of the Yellow River close to Luoyang. In Chinese poetic lore, Heyang was particularly associated with one man and one item of botany: the prominent Western Jin poet Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) had served as the governor of Heyang and had planted thousands of peach trees during his tenure. This led the southerner Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), who spent the last two decades of his life as a political prisoner of the Northern Zhou dynasty in Chang'an, to remark in his *Rhapsody on Spring* (*Chun fu* 春賦): “Heyang – the entire district is blossoms. Golden Valley –

⁹ Helen McCullough touches on the Palace and its poetry; *Brocade by Night: Kokin wakashū and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 154–69.

always a garden full of trees! 河陽一縣併是花·金谷從來滿園樹。”¹⁰ Both Pan Yue and Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) were figures in the superlative. Pan Yue was famed as the most handsome man on earth. His biography in the *Jin History* relates an anecdote in which excited women threw fruits into his carriage to show their favor.¹¹ Shi Chong was known as the richest man of his time and for his lavish Golden Valley estate. Both ended tragically, falling victim to the machinations of the irascible Sima clan, the ruling family of the Western Jin. Pan Yue was executed on charges of treason for his involvement in the “War of the Eight Princes” (291–306), and Shi Chong was disposed of for his enviable wealth and his refusal to give up his favorite concubine, Green Pearl. Both were connected to Heyang – northeast of Luoyang – one as a governor and the other as estate owner.¹²

“Heyang” means “River’s North,” that is, a descriptive toponym for an area north of a significant river. In the Chinese case, the prefecture was located northeast of Luoyang, north of the Yellow River. The Japanese Kayō, in turn, was southwest of Kyoto, north of the Yodo River, the large body of water that in the vicinity of Saga’s Detached Palace emerged from the confluence of one of Kyoto’s main watercourses, the Uji River 宇治川, merging with the Katsura 桂川 and Kizu 木津川 Rivers. That this area was known for the excursions and hunting grounds it afforded the capital elite may have provided the initial analogy to Emperor Saga’s Detached Palace, where he starts spending time since 813 when on hunting expeditions in the Minase 水無瀬 and Katano 交野 regions.¹³ Nowadays in Otokuni gun 乙訓郡, which is in the border region between Kyoto and Osaka prefectures, the palace became the site of a brief, but flamboyant period of poetic production when Saga and his coterie visited for the spring and autumn hunts.

Kojima Noriyuki 小島憲之, the scholar who has worked most extensively on the topic, calls the poetry associated with these hunting visits

¹⁰ Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢, *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), p. 45.

¹¹ *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 55, p. 1507.

¹² Shi Chong’s “Ballad on Thinking to Return” (*Si gui yin* 思歸引) adds lyrics to a song tune and tells of the pleasures awaiting him in Heyang; Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 643. Although Saga’s “Ten Tune” sequence on Kayō discussed below has more clearly a touch of Tang popular song genres, Shi Chong’s ballad might have provided a Six Dynasty precedent for lighter verse on Heyang.

¹³ Kojima Noriyuki, *Kokufū ankoku jidai no bungaku* 國風暗黒時代の文學 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1968–1998), part II, *xia*, vol. 1, p. 1966 (hereafter cited per the following model: *Kokufū* IIC.1: 1966. One “part” may have *shang* [A], *zhong* [B], and *xia* [C] sub-parts); see also Kojima, *Kaifūsō*, p. 483.

“Kayō Literature.”¹⁴ This captures well that it was a fleeting, situational, and purely local phenomenon of early Japanese literature, but also a “paradigm moment,” if one will, of larger literary historical importance than has so far been acknowledged. Kayō afforded the Sinophile Emperor Saga a unique combination of pleasures and opportunities. Needless to say, it provided hunting grounds close to the capital, a river landscape, and, in the case of the Japanese site, a breath-taking view towards the Inland Sea at Osaka Bay, into which the Yodo River clears (the ocean was far from Luoyang’s Heyang). More intriguingly, it offered a Chinese place name, with its spring associations and blossoms. Yet more intriguingly, it allowed poets to jointly address key themes of the Heian court’s vision of the poetic enterprise: the composition of poetry in a pleasure spot that is close enough to the capital to be of political importance and far enough away to allow for a pose of leisurely detachment; the collective appreciation of seasonal phenomena in various poetic registers, ranging from ornate imperial panegyrics to light landscape vignettes in popular song form; and the proud celebration of the splendors of Saga’s newly-built detached palace.

The Kayō Palace became the site of many poetry parties, and poems composed on these occasions were included in all three *kanshi* anthologies commissioned by Emperors Saga and Junna 淳和天皇: the *Cloud-Climbing Collection* (*Ryōunshū* 凌雲集) of 814, the *Collection of Ornament Exquisite* (*Bunka shūreishū* 文華秀麗集) of 818, and the *State-Governance Collection* (*Keikokushū* 經国集) of 827.¹⁵ The imperial *kanshi* anthologies propagated “literature” as the “greatest achievement of the state,” in the words of Cao Pi’s 曹丕 “Discussing Literature (*Lun wen* 論文)” (ca. 218). In “Kayō literature” the fundamental role of literature as a way to produce and praise achievements of the state had found a concrete object for manifestation, the palace as a building project Saga was proud of.

The corpus of poems explicitly related to Kayō – about forty – is large enough to consider the Kayō poetry events as central to the poetic production at Saga’s court. That the compilers of *Bunka shūreishū*

¹⁴ Kojima, *Kokufū* IIC.1: 1967.

¹⁵ On the Kayō poems see Kojima, *Kokufū* IIC.1: 1962–2004; Kojima, *Kokinshū izen: Shi to uta no kōryū* 古今集以前、詩と歌の交流 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1976), pp. 153–74. The poems that are explicitly linked to Kayō are: *Ryōunshū* 11, 12, 13, 14, 27, 28, 34, 53, 62, 63; *Bunka shūreishū* 1, 5, 6, 7, 96–109, 117–119; *Keikokushū* 1, “Rhapsody on the River in Spring” 春江賦. There is also a sequence of 5 poems related to Kayō in *Zatsugon hōwa* 雜言奉和, a collection of poetry composed on a given topic in response to a poem by the emperor; see *Gunsho ruijū* 群書類従, edited by Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai 続群書類従完成会 (Tokyo, 1928–33), fasc. 134, pp. 258–59.

and *Keikokushū* inserted the Kayō poems in strategic places highlights Kayō's representative role for the quick, almost breathless, production of imperial *kanshi* anthologies during Saga's time: both anthologies open on pieces Emperor Saga wrote at Kayō. Yet, the number of poems is still too small to distill them into a sustainable narrative of literary history. But this should not keep us from examining them as a poetic micro-history, a history of a *topos* (in both its geographical and literary meaning) that happens to run parallel to the larger political and literary history of the time. The reigns of the early Heian emperors Kanmu (r. 781–806) and Heizei 平城天皇 (r. 806–809) were followed by that of Saga, who effected many reforms in court ritual, law, and educational policies based on Chinese precedent. The sinicizing taste in poetry was partly an expression in the literary realm of these larger developments.

The Kayō poems in *Ryōunshū*, composed probably between 812 and 814, show us the site in its beginnings. It looks like a testing ground for imperial panegyrics and a place with undeniable rustic charms, but apparently in need of an elegant facelift, both architectural and poetic. One of Saga's presumably earliest Kayō poems sounds displeased and homesick for the capital.

Spending Nights at Kayō Relay Station, Longing for the Capital

河陽驛經宿，有懷京邑

河陽停子經數宿	When spending a few nights at Kayō Relay Station
月夜松風惱旅人	The moon-lit night and wind in the pines vexes the traveler.
雖聽山猿助客叫	Although I hear mountain monkeys cry- ing, aiding the traveler's mood,
誰能不憶帝京春	How can I not long for spring in the capital? ¹⁶

The palace was constructed next to a relay station on the strategic Sanyō Road 山陽道, which connected the capital with the important Dazaifu Headquarters down South in Kyushu. Although it is unclear in what sequence these poems were actually written, the compilers guide us with the next poem to an Emperor Saga who has woken up after a tiring night that had put him in bad mood. In this poem Saga starts enjoying the spring scenery before his eyes:

¹⁶ *Ryōunshū* 11; Kojima, *Kokufū* IIB: 1424–27.

Pleasures of Dawn at the River Lodge 江亭曉興

今宵旅宿江村驛	Tonight, on travels, I stayed at the station of the river village
漁浦漁歌響夜亭	From fisherman's shore fisherman songs echoed over the nocturnal lodge.
水氣眠中來濕枕 松聲覺後暗催聽	In my sleep humid air has moistened my pillow, Sounds of pines after awakening make me curious to listen into the dark.
天邊曉月看如鏡	At heaven's end I see the moon at dawn: just like a mirror.
戶外朝山望似屏	Outside my door I gaze at the morning mountains: as if a painted screen.
記得煙霞春興足	I know that already the rosy mist makes spring pleasures complete:
況乎河畔草青青	Yet better that the grasses on the river shore grow lush and luxuriantly green. ¹⁷

Life in the countryside at Kayō still creeps in on the emperor: the songs of a fisherman, the humidity near the river and the insistent rustling of the pines. But Saga now enjoys the signs of spring on the shore and in the sky, pleasures he had missed before and imagined only in the capital. Still, the imperial eyes frame the sights at Kayō from the distinctive perspective of the capital. The moon is a mirror, and the mountains look like a scene on a painted screen. Although these similes are commonplace, they do show us how Saga translates the rustic Kayō scenery into imaginary precious objects he would encounter in the imperial palace rather than exposing himself to the natural phenomena of the rural setting.

Saga seems pleased to give the rural canvas an elegant framing and to refrain from further emphasizing the gap between capital and countryside. But Ono no Minemori 小野岑守, the leading compiler of *Ryōunshū*, puts his finger on this contrast in the matching poem he composes in response to Saga's:

*Presented at Imperial Command to Harmonize with the Poem on**"Pleasures of Dawn on the River Lodge"* 奉和江亭曉興詩, 應製

傳舍前長枕江側	In front of the relay lodge, for long I rest on my pillow facing the river:
滔滔流水日夜深	A sustained sound of water gurgling day and night!

¹⁷ *Ryōunshū* 11; Kojima, *Kokufū* IIB: 1427-33.

本期旅客千里到 Just when we had expected The Traveler to
arrive from a thousand miles,
不慮鑿輿九天臨 We happen to espy the imperial chariot arriv-
ing from the nine-tiered heavenly capital.
棹唱全聞邊俗語 Amidst rowers' singing, we hear only border-
region slang;
漂歌¹⁸半雜上都音 Laundress songs half mingle with the accents
of the capital.
曉猿莫作斷腸叫 You monkeys at dawn: don't cry and wrench
our guts!
四海爲家帝者心 "The four seas are one family" under the em-
peror's mindful heart.¹⁹

Minemori welcomes the emperor upon his arrival to Kayō. Whereas Saga's fisherman has clearly an Arcadian silhouette, evoking the notorious fisherman in Chinese poetry, who lives wisely on the fringes of society and enjoys the simple pleasures of life, Minemori's poem is more ambivalent about the scenery in front of his eyes. The rowers and laundresses are bucolic prototypes, but the way the "border-region slang" meshes with the "accents of the capital" is *zatsu* 雜, a form of awkward and unhealthily *mélange* that might reveal more about real life in Kayō. Saga's fisherman songs fit with the setting, resonate with the emperor's desire for reclusion from the capital, and stay within poetic decorum; Minemori worries whether the rower and laundress songs might be too rustic for the emperor's taste. He states this disorderly dissonance of humble setting and high-strung occasion in the third couplet and acts on his observation in the closing couplet: as if to protect Saga from the indecencies of the countryside he commands the monkeys not to wail just as loudly. And he reminds them and everybody that Emperor Saga protects his realm with his mindful heart and ensures that, in the words of Han-dynasty Emperor Gaozu's biography in *Shiji* 史記, "the four seas" and all creatures living in the world "are one family."

Saga's and Minemori's matching poems on the same topic show a compelling labor division between the emperor and his courtier: Saga takes snapshots of the spring scenery of Kayō, which give him ideas for new screens he might want to commission when back in the capital; Minemori, in turn, sings the praises of Saga's power on the model of

¹⁸ Some manuscripts have 漁歌. The "laundry songs" might refer to the well-known story about the Han-dynasty general Han Xin 韓信, who when in dire straits in his youth was helped and offered food by a simple washer-woman (*Shiji* [Taibei: Dingwen shuju, 1981] 92, p. 2609). The variant highlights the generic rustic landscape populated by the characteristic simple folk of fishermen, rowers (or laundresses); Kojima, *Kokufū* IIB: 1676-77.

¹⁹ *Ryōunshū* 62; Kojima, *Kokufū* IIB: 1675-78.

the awesome founder of the Han dynasty. Moreover, to underline his solicitousness towards the emperor, he points to the recalcitrant parts of the countryside setting and tries to subdue them to Saga's imperial might – at least the monkeys, if not the chatty humans.

The emperor could hardly praise himself like one of his courtiers. But in *Ryōunshū*, unlike in the later two anthologies, Saga does not miss the opportunity for some imperial posing:

*On a Hunting Excursion in Spring, When Night Fell We Stayed
at the Lodge near the River* 春日遊獵，日暮宿江頭亭子

三春出獵重城外	In the midst of spring we go hunting outside of the double-walled city:
四望江山勢轉雄	The view of rivers and mountains in all direc- tions has turned to full vigor.
逐兔馬蹄承落日	Having pursued hares, our horses' hoofs ab- sorb the setting sun,
追禽鷹翔拂輕風	Having gone after fowl, our hawks' wings brush against a light breeze.
征船暮入連天水	Travelling boats at dusk fade where the waters meet the sky
明月孤懸欲曉空	And the bright moon hangs alone in the sky, awaiting dawn.
不學夏王荒此事	This thing: I didn't learn it from the wild ob- sessions of King Jie of Xia;
爲思周卜遇非熊	I only thought of King Wen of Zhou whose divi- nation said that he would catch "not a bear." ²⁰

Imperial hunts had been the indicator of a ruler's political and moral caliber ever since the Warring States Period. Masters Texts (*zishu* 子書) such as *Mencius* saw the sharing of imperial hunting grounds with the people as a sign of good governance. In Han-dynasty rhapsodies the lavishness and extravagance of imperial hunts could serve to sketch the power of an emperor in dramatic brushstrokes or to criticize a ruler's lack of moral restraint and economic circumspection. Saga clearly takes the side of wise moderation: he shuns the model of evil Jie, the depraved last king of the Xia dynasty, who indulged obsessively in hunting extravaganzas and thus deserved to lose the mandate to rule. Saga chooses to make the hunt into a modest moment of imperial display, and, even more important, into an opportunity of wise government recruitment on the model of King Wen of Zhou: When the future founder of the Zhou dynasty went hunting by the Wei River, a

²⁰ *Ryōunshū* 13; Kojima, *Kokufū* IIB: 1433–39.

divination foretold that he would catch not a dragon, tiger, or bear. He went out to hunt and caught Taigong Wang 太公望 (also known as Lü Shang 呂尙), who had sought out the future King Wen for his virtue and was to become the chief counselor of the first two Zhou kings.²¹ That Taigong Wang waited for King Wen in the guise of a fisherman north of the Wei River (*Weiyang* 渭陽) makes the anecdote particularly resonant with a poem composed in Japan's Heyang river landscape.

In these early Kayō poems there is a strong tendency to mark the place as imperial territory. Minemori's trope of Saga as the ruler of the "four seas" was not simply the well-worn cliché that it would often have to be. From the Kayō Palace Saga's cōterie saw the dramatic confluence of the rivers that create the Yodo River and, in a sweeping glance over today's Osaka Plain 大阪平野 that opened before their eyes from the palace's location at the feet of a mountain range, they could anticipate the Yodo River reaching the sea on its brief way from Biwa Lake 琵琶湖 to Osaka Bay. Although Minemori does not explicitly mention this in his poem, other Kayō poems spell out the connection, and in poem no. 7 in *Bunka shūreishū*, Minemori capitalizes on Kayō's geography for yet another compliment to the emperor. He evokes the analogy between the rivers flowing into the sea and the feudal lords gathering at the court of the Son of Heaven, the king of Zhou, an image that derives from the poem "Mianshui" 沔水, one of the Lesser Odes in the *Shijing* 詩經.²² That Kayō and the Yodo River looked towards the ocean made it possible to reach out to more spacious and grandiose Chinese metaphors of ideal rule than the Kyoto basin could offer, cloistered as it was by high mountains on three sides and removed from the sea.

The *Ryōunshū* poetry anthology shows Kayō as a site that has just been discovered by the emperor and his courtiers. The emperor explores the landscape and sings about his hunts, a pursuit that was after all the main motivation for him to visit the Kayō Palace, but that is curiously absent from the Kayō poems in the two later anthologies.²³ In turn, there is one crucial element in the Kayō/Heyang syntopism that was hardly mentioned in *Ryōunshū* – blossoms. Only with *Bunka shūreishū*

²¹ This famous anecdote appears in *Shiji* 32, p. 1477–78, and in Li Shan's commentary to Zhang Heng's 張衡 *Dongjing fu* 東京賦, anthologized in *Wenxuan*. On hunts in imperial poetry of the Six Dynasties and Tang see Jack Chen, "The Writing of Imperial Poetry in Medieval China," *HJAS* 65.1 (2005), pp. 57–98.

²² Mao 183; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics. Volume 4, The She King* (rpt. Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994), p. 295.

²³ The absence of references to hunting is particularly striking in Saga's long "Rhapsody on the River in Spring," which takes endearing note of the birds' and fish's joining in the pleasures of spring but doesn't mention hunting.

do Pan Yue's blossoms, the hallmark of Heyang in the Chinese tradition, appear in the Japanese *kanshi*.²⁴ Both volumes of *Bunka shūreishū* open on a poem by Saga composed at the Kayō Palace, and the first poems of the second volume form a song cycle on Kayō, which shows the place in a new poetic mode. Composed some time between 813 and 816, the sequence consists of poems on specific scenic delights of the Kayō Palace: first and foremost "Kayō Blossoms," but also "Boats on the [Yodo] River," "Grasses by the River," "Mountain Temple Bell," "Willows on the Old Barrier," "Moon at the Fifth Watch," "Seagulls on the Water," and "Kayō Bridge." Not all ten topics and all poems composed by Emperor Saga and matched by four of his courtiers are preserved. But the fourteen heptasyllabic quatrains included in *Bunka shūreishū* give us a sense of how Kayō had advanced as a site and object of poetic production since the compilation of *Ryōunshū*.

Composing poetic sequences on scenic elements of a particular place had precedents in China: Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) wrote a "ten tune" sequence (*shi yong* 十詠) during the Liang dynasty, as did Tang poets such as Li Bo (701–762),²⁵ Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), and, in particular, Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (ca. 834–883). Some of the topics in the Kayō sequence, such as the bridge, the gulls, and the mountain temple bell, resonate with Qian Qi's 錢起 (fl. 750s) "Twenty-two Miscellaneous Tunes on Lantian Stream" (*Lantian xi zayong ershi'er shou* 藍田溪雜詠二十二首). But the Chinese sequences are clearly different from the Kayō sequence. Except for one by Pi Rixiu, which was composed after the Kayō sequence and cannot have influenced it, the Chinese sequences are composed by only one poet and not by emperors. As the loose genre label of "tune/song (*yong* 詠)" indicates, they are casual rather than courtly poems. That Pi Rixiu wrote such sequences both on the pleasures of wine and on tea speaks to their rather light-hearted nature. It also shows that they were a poetic venue for *aficionados*, people infatuated with a particular place, or even as with Pi Rixiu, particular substances. Saga apparently picked up on that quality of the Chinese "tune" sequences, applied it to sing the praises of his hunting palace, and orchestrated it with the poetic voices of his courtiers Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu 藤原冬嗣 (775–826), Yoshimine no Yasuyo 良岑安世 (785–830), Prince Nakao 仲雄王 (fl. 825), Asano no Katori 朝野鹿取 (774–843), and Shigeno no Sadanushi 滋野貞主 (785–852). All

²⁴ Blossoms are mentioned in *Ryōunshū* no. 14, and, indirectly, in pomes no. 27 and 53, which allude to the "red" of the trees, but these occurrences do not evoke the characteristic image of Heyang and its connection with Pan Yue.

²⁵ Li Bo's *Guyi shi yong* 姑孰十詠 has alternatively been attributed to Li Chi 李赤.

five had intimate connections with the emperor and literary projects at court: the first was Saga's personal confidant, the second and fifth were to be the chief compilers of the third imperial anthology in 827, the third was the chief compiler of *Bunka shūreishū*, and the fourth was for a while one of Saga's private tutors.

The result of these efforts of Saga's poetic salon at Kayō was intriguing: the mixture of the casual with the panegyric, and of pleasures of local patriotism with the evocation of Chinese poetic landscapes makes this sequence into a representative window on the "politics of poetry," as one might call it, of the Saga court.

The emperor clearly sets a light, sing-song-like tone in his poems, as we can see in the following two quatrains:

Kayō Blossoms 河陽花²⁶

三春二月河陽縣	In the second month of spring in Kayō District:
河陽從來富於花	Heyang has always been a place full of flowers!
花落能紅復能白	As for the falling flowers, those red ones or white ones:
山嵐頻下萬條斜	Mountain storms keep blowing them down, leaving myriads of slanting branches. ²⁷

Grasses by the River 江邊草

春日江邊何所好	What's good about a spring day near the River?
青青唯見王孫草	The greenest "Prince Grass" wherever you look!
風光就暖芳氣新	The scenery is just warming up, new scents in the air:
如此年年觀者老	This is how to grow old, watching year in year out. ²⁸

There is a colloquial wordiness in Saga's quatrains that makes them attractive and entertaining. The opening poem of the sequence draws an explicit analogy to the Chinese *locus classicus* of Heyang – Pan Yue's (peach) blossoms, thus placing new emphasis on the centerpiece of the Chinese Heyang lore.²⁹ "Grasses by the River" draws us instead not to

²⁶ A less colloquial, more decorous treatment of the topic is Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu's 藤原冬嗣 quatrain on "Kayō Blossoms" (no. 100). He also draws an explicit analogy to Pan Yue's "Blossoms Prefecture" of Heyang, and then describes them with beautiful metaphors of brocade and patterned silk gauze.

²⁷ *Bunka shūreishū* no. 96; Kojima, *Kaifūsō*, p. 277.

²⁸ *Bunka shūreishū* no. 98.

²⁹ It is important to note that Heyang's blossoms also appear in Zhang Zhuo's 張鷟 *Youxianku* 遊仙窟, a popular Chinese novelette that had great impact on Japanese literature. This

Heyang, close to Luoyang in the north, but to the merry shores “South of the Yangtze River,” China’s Jiangnan. The “Prince Grass” is a southern creature, since it thrives in the mountains where the prince in “Calling Back the Recluse” (*Zhaoyinshi* 招隱士) of the *Songs of the South* (*Chuci* 楚辭) wanders. The association between reclusion and magic herbs and the prospect of growing old in Kayō’s ravishing spring scenery fill the poem with a melancholy exuberance that is characteristic of Chinese poetic vignettes of pleasurable Jiangnan.

While this quatrain evokes Chinese poetic images of the south, one of Prince Nakao’s 仲雄王 matching poems roots its imagery in the actual geography of Kayō’s Detached Palace:

Kayō Bridge 河陽橋

別館雲林相映出	The secondary residence and cloudy forests set each other off.
門南脩路有河橋	Along the path south of the gate there is a river bridge:
上承紫宸 ³⁰ 長拱宿	Upstream it welcomes the abode where in the Purple Hall of the Polar Star [His Majesty] folds his hands forever [in non-action];
下送蒼海永朝潮	Further down it sends off the tide to join the dark sea in all eternity, [just like feudal lords] coming to court. ³¹

The bridge had been built by the itinerant monk Gyōki 行基 in the early-eighth century and was rebuilt under Emperor Kanmu around 784, during the decade preceding the foundation of Kyoto when the capital was moved to Nagaoka 長岡, close to Yamazaki.³² From all the poems in the sequence, Prince Nakao’s quatrain gives the most concrete description of the surroundings of the palace. If the *Ryōunshū* poems composed at Kayō give the impression of a rather rustic and humble place far removed from the capital, this quatrain brings the capital to Kayō and adds regal luster to the woods: the “secondary residence” has

showed the blossoms in a lighter register than Yu Xin’s ornate reference to the blossoms in the “Spring Rhapsody” preserved in Chinese encyclopedias with which Japanese readers would otherwise have been familiar.

³⁰ The “Purple Hall” where the Emperor holds court refers also to the Pole Star and evokes the image of the ruler surrounded by the myriad “stars” of his subjects. The superposition of these images is reflected in the fact that some editions have 北辰 instead of 紫宸. See Kojima, *Kaifūsō*, p. 283. I therefore translated both meanings.

³¹ *Bunka shūreishū* no. 106.

³² The bridge, along with the Hachiman Shrine (*Rikyū Hachimangu* 離宮八幡宮, nowadays occupying the site of Saga’s Detached Palace) and the Sōōji 相応寺 Temple are mentioned in Ki no Tsurayuki’s 紀貫之 *Tosa Diary*, so it is clear that it still existed in 935.

a “Purple Hall,” the very centerpiece of the court in the capital and an image of Confucian governance, in the words of Confucius in *Analects* 2.1: “He who rules by virtue is like the polestar, who stays in his place, while all stars revolve around it 爲政以德，譬如北辰居其所，而眾星共之。” And again, the Yodo River’s itinerary from Kayō into the sea at today’s Osaka Bay inspired poets to attach to the topology the metaphorical image of the Zhou feudal lords “flowing together” at the Zhou court for spring and fall court sessions. Painting Emperor Saga in archaizing, Confucian brushstrokes produced a strong contrast with the Saga who composed rather casual, almost chatty, verse on the occasion. But we see Prince Nakao also trying less elevated and more imagistic registers of imperial praise in another matching quatrain. Since the ocean was not far way, Kayō had its population of seagulls:

	<i>Seagulls on the Water</i> 水上鷗
行客近起清江北	Next to the traveler: the northern banks of the clear river.
御覽煙鳴水刷鷗	The imperial gaze rests on a gull, squawking through the mist and shaking off some water.
鷗性必馴無取意	Gulls are by nature tame, unless one has ill intentions to catch them:
況乎玄化及飛浮	That is all the more true, because His Majesty’s transformative powers extend even to those flying and bobbing birds! ³³

If you think of it, this is a strange application of the proverbially famous story from *Liezi* 列子, where a man enjoys playing with gulls who flock to him in the hundreds, but stay away on the day when his father asks his son to catch a few for him.³⁴ Like many other stories in *Liezi*, the anecdote celebrates the notion of a particular skill that finds spontaneous, transparent resonance with other creatures in the cosmos. Although the taming of gulls might not strike us as an enviable skill like that of the virtuoso zither playing by Bo Ya 伯牙 as well as the intense listening of Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期 in another *Liezi* anecdote about brilliant skill, nonetheless, one does need talent to tame this sometimes mischievous bird. But the gull-tamer in the anecdote is secondary to the gulls, who have the skill to recognize human intention and thus symbolize desire for freedom and the ability to maintain it against intruders. Prince Nakao has transformed this anecdote about apprehensive

³³ *Bunka shūreishū* no. 104.

³⁴ The story appears in the chap. titled “Yellow Emperor” 黃帝篇; Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed., *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), pp. 67–68.

birds and a skilful man into a narrative that bends the free will of the tamed birds to the power of a skilful emperor. The *Liezi* story centers on the bird's free choice to stay away, while Prince Nakao's application of it zooms in on the emperor's ability to subdue the birds with his virtue, as one would expect in a poem composed in a courtly context in the presence of the emperor. Put simply, a Daoist story celebrating the natural talents of non-human creatures in the cosmos is transformed into a Confucian compliment to celebrate the human creature par excellence, the emperor; a rather forced move, although by no means an unsuccessful compliment.

In the first extant poem on Kayō by Saga, the emperor only endured a landscape he found little welcoming. With this quatrain, Prince Nakao shows the emperor in control of the landscape, which has been upgraded from remote periphery to center stage for the playing out of the emperor's transformative moral power.

Prince Nakao's quatrain also makes us aware of another interesting tension that arises when composing court poetry in the countryside away from court, where the rhetoric of travel, reclusion and unmediated nature imposes itself: rather impolitely, Prince Nakao dubs the emperor a generic "traveler." The honorific "imperial gaze" in the second line cannot hide the fact that the rhetoric of imperial outings was a very specialized subset of the rhetoric of everyman's travel poetry. Yoshimine no Yasuyo 良岑安世 had the courage to refrain from the obligation to craft tropes of imperial praise and instead takes the pose of the generic poet on the road who finds himself separated from his woman on a beautiful moon night:

*Moon at the Fifth Watch*³⁵ 五夜月

客子無眠投五夜	The traveler cannot sleep as the fifth watch arrives.
正逢山頂孤明月	He just sees a lonely bright moon over the mountain peaks.
一看圓鏡羈情斷	Once he sees that mirror so round, the gloom of travel ceases:
定識閨中憶不歇	But surely she in her chamber cannot stop thinking of him. ³⁶

"The traveler" in this quatrain is not the emperor, but the poet himself, and he plays out a scene of domestic intimacy on the courtly stage of Kayō in the presence of Emperor Saga and his entourage. The moon

³⁵ The hours from 3 AM to 5 AM.

³⁶ *Bunka shūreishū* no. 102.

in poetry functions often as a poetic ruse to establish presence and equality. Lovers and friends can look at it when apart and make up for the other's absence by imagining that both can at least gaze at the same moon. The wit of this poem lies in its emphasis of disjunction. The man's mind is put to rest by the moon, while it stirs his woman to endless longing.

This poem points towards poetry anthologies of the turn of the tenth century such as *Shinsen Man'yōshū* 新撰万葉集, which assembled seasonal and love poetry composed mostly on the occasion of a courtly poetry contest (*utaawase* 歌合) for the mother of the reigning Emperor Uda 宇多天皇, matched them with *kanshi* quatrains, and gave the tone of intimate love poetry a public face. A decade later this approach to love became canonized with the first imperial *waka* collection, titled *Kokinwakashū* 古今和歌集 (ca. 905), and inscribed into the official, courtly *waka* tradition. It shows the important connection between the poetics of the early ninth-century imperial *kanshi* collections and the imperial *waka* collections from the tenth through fifteenth centuries.

Saga's last grand ode on Kayō is the "Rhapsody on the River in Spring," the opening piece of the last imperial *kanshi* anthology, *Keikokushū*. It is an enthusiastic praise of the beauty of spring at Kayō, and the emperor exclaims in the end that watching the Yodo River year in and year out helps him to get rid of woes and worries.³⁷ But the phenomenon of "Kayō Literature" was at its end. After Saga, imperial visits and poetry parties ceased, the palace soon fell in disrepair. In 861 offices of the prefectural government were installed on the grounds of the former Detached Palace, and around the same time the Rikyū Hachimangu Shrine 離宮八幡宮, which occupies the area nowadays, was built.³⁸ When Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903) passed Kayō a few decades later in 887, he wrote a poem bemoaning the death of a friend and made no mention of either Chinese Heyang lore or the court poetry that had blossomed there just a few generations earlier.³⁹ Apparently the occasion did not lend itself to remember the glorious poetic moments of the Saga court. But that the most prominent and well-educated *kanshi* poet of the Heian Period did not feel compelled to compose a second poem in memoriam of the Saga court when passing

³⁷ For text and commentary for the rhapsody, see Kojima, *Kokufū* IIC.1: 2193–2222.

³⁸ Ōyamazakichō rekishi shiryōkan 大山崎町歴史資料館, ed., *Miyako to tomoni—Ōyamazaki to Rakugai no gai* 都と共に, 大山崎と洛外の外 (Ōyamazaki: Ōyamazakichō rekishi shiryōkan, n.d.), p. 12.

³⁹ Kawaguchi Hisao 川口久雄, *Kanke Bunsō* 菅家文藻 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), no. 237.

by the memorable site does confirm the particularly ephemeral quality of the syntopism of Kayō and the literature it produced.

BEYOND SYNTOPISM: HETEROTOPISM, AUTOTOPISM
AND THE CLASH OF *WAKA* AND *KANSHI* RHETORIC

What do the two cases of syntopism – the poetic syntopism that enriched the resonant site of Yoshino and the geographical syntopism that enabled Saga’s Kayō – have in common? And what can they tell us about the function of Chinese place names in early Japanese poetry?

The poetry on Yoshino and on Kayō, which to my knowledge have never been studied together, share a surprising number of commonalities. First, and most obviously, both rely on strategies of syntopism. Second, both places allowed for a particular type of imperial panegyrics. The detached palaces of Yoshino and Kayō had *gravitas* and gained a kind of central position due to repeated imperial excursions, but they were far enough from the capital – Asuka/Nara and Kyoto – to encourage what we could call an “off-center” panegyrics. The vernacular long-verse praises on Yoshino and the reclusive counter-pose in the Yoshino *kanshi*, which situate Yoshino in the realm of immortals, were in that sense not opposed, but complementary. Their complementarity was an expression of the inherent tension within the “off-center” panegyrics. With the verses on Kayō we saw more playful and elegant tropes of imperial praise, which now have the emperor pose as the first among equals at the heart of his literary salon.

Third, in terms of their place in literary history, Yoshino and Kayō were both as representative as they were exceptional. That for a short period of time they became a central stage of courtly literary production made them representative of their moments of literary history. But both Yoshino and Kayō poetry were unique phenomena, and there was nothing quite like them before or after in early Japanese poetry.

Both happened during special moments of early Japanese literary history. Poetry on Yoshino flourished between the late seventh and mid-eighth century in the period of bold experimentation with cross-fertilization between Chinese style and indigenous Japanese themes, genres, rhetorical repertoires, and diction. More concretely, it was a time when some poets would call “long-verse poems” by the Chinese genre name of “rhapsodies,” other poets would exchange ornate Chinese-style prefaces in parallel prose with appended vernacular Japanese poems, and yet other poets would translate Chinese preoccupations such as wine, plums, or pointed messages of social critique into the

rhetoric and tone of vernacular verse. Although the poets we discussed here were hardly as famous as poets composing on the above topics, namely Ōtomo no Yakamochi, his cousin Ōtomo no Ikenushi 大伴池主, Yamanoue no Okura 山上憶良 and Ōtomo no Tabito, this was precisely the moment, when the Chinese-style poetry on Yoshino was possible. There are no comparable later examples in Nara and Heian *kanshi*, where a numinous Japanese site would become the subject of a small poetic tradition of Chinese-style poetry and would be described through poetic syntopisms from Chinese and local Japanese lore.

Kayō poetry unfolded in a radically different moment of literary history, the early-ninth century. Emperor Saga, a passionate practitioner of Chinese-style poetry, recognized the potential of poetry to sketch out his role as a monarch and enhance the power of the imperial institution.⁴⁰ The only three imperial *kanshi* anthologies of Japan were spearheaded by one emperor during his reign and retirement within a span of not even two decades. The canonical tradition of imperial anthologies were to become the twenty-one *waka* collections compiled between the tenth and fifteenth centuries. This contrast and the fact that between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth centuries public *waka* by identifiable authors are few have led to the characterization of Saga's time as arguably the most "Sinophile" (and, by negative extension, the "least native") phase of Japanese literary history.

Yet, I believe we should take the "Sinophile" nature of this period both more and less seriously. We should take it more seriously, because Kayō and its poetry are sorely understudied, and to my knowledge nobody has really thought about what it means that the Japanese courtly *kanshi* tradition of the imperial anthologies gave so prominent a place to Sino-Japanese syntopism, the fascinating phenomenon of Kayō literature. On the other hand, we should take the common view of Japan's "Sinophile" early-ninth century less seriously. Based on the close reading of a handful of the Kayō poems one can see that Chinese poetic precedent was less important than the exigencies of the situation at hand in early ninth-century Japan. In the early Kayō poems the Yamazaki site seems nothing more than a geographical homologue, a hunting spot north of some river outside some capital. At least that is

⁴⁰ On this period in literary history and, more particularly, on the literary culture of the Saga court see Gotō Akio, 後藤昭雄, *Heianchō kanbungaku ronkō* 平安朝漢文学論考 (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1981); Kinpara Tadashi 金原理, *Heianchō Kanshibun no kenkyū* 平安朝漢詩文の研究 (Fukuoka: Kyūshū Daigaku Shuppankai, 1981); Hatooka Akira 波戸岡旭, *Jōdai Kanshibun to Chūgoku bungaku* 上代漢詩文と中國文學 (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1989); and Jason Webb, "In Good Order: Poetry, Reception, and Authority in the Nara and Early Heian Courts," Ph.D. dissertation (Princeton University, 2005).

how the compilers of the first imperial anthology present it. It is with the second and third imperial *kanshi* anthology that Kayō gains true poetic edge. We saw Saga's new pride of the Detached Palace that found expression in a collective poetic cycle that mixed casual and panegyric registers. This new face of the site might have triggered some poetic soul-searching, which in turn resulted in emphasis on poems that include references to Pan Yue's blossoms and evocations of pleasurable southern Chinese landscapes.

But Kayō seems never to have been more than an ornamental, playful epithet. Saga and his courtiers had nothing to lose, only to gain: Kayō might have been their local pet project, which allowed for play and did not require any kind of commitment beyond the rules of the game of imperial excursions. True, Kayō was a stage on which to represent the emperor and the court to the realm, and generously applied Chinese-style hues were particularly attractive to paint it. But in some way one might almost argue that the poetic syntopism of Yoshino was much more "Sinophile," because it dared to plant Chinese poetic lore into the name of a Japanese numinous site.

The strategies of syntopism in Yoshino and Kayō were remarkable and remarkably unsuccessful. Although this is beyond the scope of this paper and would need much more careful assessment, we can note that syntopism seems to have been the exception in Japanese poetry. Rather, *kanshi* and *waka* developed their own, separate rhetoric of place names. I would argue that the Heian *kanshi* tradition operated largely on the rhetoric of what we might call "heterotopism": although the poetry was composed at local Japanese sites, whose names appear in historical sources and prefaces, the repertoire of resonant, poetically pregnant place names was located on the Chinese map. In that sense the waterscapes of Dongting Lake, and the Yangtze Gorges were closer to the brushes and minds of Heian *kanshi* poets than the Biwa Lake or the Kamo River 鴨川 at their doorsteps in Kyoto. Heterotopism allowed poets, at least in the imagination, to inhabit the vast expanse of the Chinese empire during different phases of its history, and benefit from the resonant lore attached to those places.

In contrast to this, I would also argue that the mainstream *waka* tradition settled in its use of place names on a largely self-contained indigenous map, a phenomenon one could call "autotopism." Although the poetic associations of the site of Yoshino changed dramatically between the Nara and mid-Heian periods, and we can see the place transform from a site of imperial visits into a reclusive spot to enjoy

cherry blossoms, at no point in the early development of the topic of Yoshino in vernacular Japanese poetry do we see attempts to reach out to geographic syntopism, as *Kayō* literature did. The core associations that made up poetic places in vernacular poetry were homegrown and kept clean of foreign poetic maps.

Through striking examples, I hope to have shown various ways in which place names and the boundaries between China and Japan in early Japanese poetry did not appear in places where the geographical, political, and linguistic conditions would have us expect them. Japan's biliterate literary culture and its poets' participation in China's poetic geography resulted in fascinating manipulations of Chinese and Japanese poetic place names. In the process it filled Chinese place names with more than they were ever meant to signify.