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A Fine Thing for the Way: Evidence, Counter-evidence and Argument in the *Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds*

This article discusses the types of evidence used to support the critical positions taken by Fujiwara no Shunzei and the monk Kenshō in the *Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds* (*Roppyakuban uta'awase*; 1193-94). As the largest extant poetry competition judged by a single individual, Shunzei, the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* illustrates a wide range of compositional practice. It also provides a substantial body of practical waka criticism: by Shunzei in his role as judge, by the participants in their comments on their opponents' poems, and by Kenshō in his 'Appeal' (*Chinjō*) against Shunzei's judgements. Analysis of this critical discussion reveals that unusually, both Kenshō and Shunzei use testimonial evidence from informants to support their critical positions, and Kenshō even utilises his own scholarship and poetic writing, in addition to the expected citation of prior poetry and poetic scholarship by poets of previous generations. Though Shunzei limits his testimony to that from members of the court nobility, Kenshō frequently supports his arguments with evidence from members of the peasantry, revealing that the opinions and views of the lower social classes could be given weight in the critical discussions of waka poets at the end of the twelfth century.

Keywords: Shunzei; Kenshō; poetry competition; *uta'awase*; criticism; judgement; evidence; *waka*

Introduction

> …a foolish monk, who began to compose his own shoddy verse…in the spring of his youth at twenty, is now an old man of more than sixty…I have produced poetry and…through divine grace…have been blessed with a good reputation. Thus, when confronted by baseless criticisms, why should I not appeal against them?... That I have done so now is solely to draw attention to these mistaken theories about my own compositions, and out of a desire to bring more glory to those parts of the competition where the Judge's reasoning is correct.[1]

With these words the monk-poet Kenshō (1130?-1209?) concludes his lengthy *Chinjō* ('Appeal') against the judgements passed on his poetry in the *Roppyakuban uta'awase*

(‘Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds’; 1193-94), by the judge, Fujiwara no Shunzei (Toshinari) (1114-1204). Posterity has tended to view Kenshō’s *Appeal* harshly, as little more than ‘the expressions of personal frustrations, matched with a disputatious temperament’ (Royston 1974a, 321) and ‘a legalistic attempt to cite precedents’ (Atkins 2017, 65). Kenshō himself has been characterised as an arch-conservative among poets, although it has also been suggested that as an anthologist his choices were in some respects more innovative than those of his contemporaries (Khan 2015), and there is evidence that he was willing to revise his commentaries and explore new avenues upon encountering alternative approaches to criticism (Nitta 2016, 28). In addition, the *Appeal* has been acknowledged as the *Chinjō* which most resembles a work of poetics in its own right (Minegishi 1954, 583), in contrast to the majority of appeals which tended to be brief expressions of discontent with the judge’s or participants’ views of individual poems (Minegishi 1954, 581). By contrast, Shunzei’s reputation is secure as ‘the most accomplished critic in the history of Japanese poetry’ (Huey 2002, 56).

The purpose of this article is not to examine in detail the nature and validity of the criticism contained in Shunzei’s judgements or Kenshō’s responses, which generally focus on ‘matters of diction and of conventional versus unconventional treatment of accepted topics’ (Brower and Miner 1961, 241-2), but rather to consider the types of evidence which both men utilised to support their critical arguments, and how this evidence was used, as a way of demonstrating how criticism of poetic compositions was conducted in practice at the beginning of Japan’s mediaeval period; and considering what material was used to attack a poet’s work, and what to defend, given the crucial role poetry occupied in cementing social, political, and often economic, advantage. This will also provide concrete evidence to demonstrate the different attitudes to poetics held by both men, and their respective poetic circles.

Poetry was serious business; indeed, it could be a matter of life and death. The poet Fujiwara no Nagayoshi/Nagatō (949-1009) is reported to have been so distressed at having one of his poems criticised before former emperor Kazan (968-1008; r. 984-986) by Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041) that he starved himself to death (Fujioka 1995, 81), while two hundred years later Horibe no Narimochi (1180?-1254?) was so overjoyed to receive a letter of praise for one of his poems from former emperor Gotoba (1180-1239; r. 1183-1198) that he 'tried to express his joy, but words failed him and he ended in tears' (Huey 2002, 277).

It is inconceivable, therefore, that in a context as important as *Roppyakuban uta'awase*, which was organised by Fujiwara no (Kujō) Yoshitsune (1169-1206), the son of the Regent, Fujiwara no Kanezane (1149-1207), and so was the equivalent of a 'public works project' (Huey 2002, 31) with the support of the highest echelons of the nobility, that Shunzei, Kenshō, or any of the other participants, would have used anything to support their arguments that they believed their audience would have rejected as inappropriate. A close reading of Shunzei's judgements and Kenshō's responses, however, suggests that the two men had substantially different views on criticism and poetics, and how these should be expressed, with Kenshō's methods being particularly at variance with the norms of the time. Atkins (2017, 79) describes Kenshō's critical practice as 'evidence of his obliviousness' to these norms, but I would prefer to characterise it as his staking a claim and making a case for an alternative form of critical argument.

Earlier Japanese studies of *uta'awase* judgements have clarified their importance in: developing poets' critical faculties as well as their aesthetic sense (Takenishi 1993a); demonstrating poets' awareness of, and sensitivity to, how life should be lived and the links this had with language, poetry and literature, through the development and

refinement of critical terminology (Takenishi 1993b); and how the study of poets' judgements can clarify their understanding of these concepts (Takenishi 1993c). Watanabe Yasuaki has also done important work on how judges viewed the role of references to earlier poems on the overall impact of poems presented in competitions (Watanabe 1989), and also in clarifying the meanings of critical expressions used by Shunzei in his judgements (Watanabe 1993, 1999), as have Yasui (2006) and Satō (2004, 2011).

There is also extensive analysis and interpretation of the judgements in specific competitions, with recent work on *Roppyakuban uta'awase* being Tani (2015, 2017) on the links between topics and the annual observances they referenced; Odaka (2016) on references to *Genji monogatari*; and Taguchi (2014) on Shunzei's attitude to the use of popular songs (*saibara*) as sources of allusion. These scholars, of course, build on earlier studies, such as Yamazaki (2000), Asada (1998), and Karasawa (1997), among many others. Early studies of Kenshō considered his views of novelty in poetry in comparison to Shunzei's (Kamijō 1965); his role in the later *Sengohyakuban uta'awase* ('Poetry Contest in 1500 Rounds'; 1204) where he was one of the judges (Ariyoshi 1968); and the evolution of his attitudes to the use of diction from the *Man'yōshū* in his own poetry (Takeshita 1976). More recent studies focus on the understanding of rhyme in his poetics (Okazaki 2013); his use of texts of *Nihon shoki* (Kamata 2015); his commentaries on other works (Nitta 2015, 2016); and the rationale for his production of commentaries (Kami 2017). The only discussion of his work in recent western scholarship, however, appears to be Vieillard-Baron (2007).

In English language scholarship, while poetry competitions in general are discussed by Brower and Miner (1961, 249-52) and Ito (1982), and specific *uta'awase* by Huey (1993, 1987) and Bundy (2006b, 2006a), the major discussion of judgements

and their function as criticism remains Royston (1974b). The most detailed consideration of the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* is provided by Royston (1974a), although there is a brief discussion of it in Huey (2002, 32-5), and it is considered in relation to the poetics of Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) in Atkins (2017, 63-84). It seems past time, therefore, to readdress *uta'awase* and their role in Japanese poetics, and the *Roppyakuban uta'awase*, as the largest extant contest judged by a single individual, combined with Kenshō's *Appeal*, is a significant resource for study.

It is the detailed arguments provided by Shunzei and Kenshō for their own, and against their opponents', poetic positions in the contest which make it ideally suited as a case study of the types of evidence which poet-critics of the time regarded as significant and credible for the support of their arguments. This analysis of critical practise at a key point in waka history can provide material for the future comparative study of Japanese poetic criticism in relation to that of other Asian and non-Asian traditions.

In order to provide context for the later discussion of Shunzei's judgements in specific rounds in the competition, and Kenshō's responses to these, we will begin with a brief account of the development of the *uta'awase* and its critical practices and criteria for judgement, followed by a consideration of specific construction and context of the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* itself.

The *Uta'awase* in Japan[2]

Poetry competitions have a long history in Japan, with the earliest one recorded taking place between 885-87 under the sponsorship of Ariwara no Yukihira (818?-893?). Early competitions, however, were more likely to be primarily social occasions, conducted at the house of a senior aristocrat or member of the imperial family as a way for them to demonstrate their patronage; or, religious occasions dedicated to, or sometimes even conducted at the shrine of, a particular deity. By the early eleventh century, poetry

competitions were being used for political purposes, an example being the *Kampaku sadaijin yorimichi uta'awase* ('Poetry Contest of Regent and Minister of the Left Yorimichi'; 1035). The fact that Yorimichi was sponsoring a major event of this type was a public demonstration of the shift in power from the imperial to the Fujiwara house (Hagitani and Taniyama 1965, 33). This political usage of poetry competitions was to continue, with political divisions between the Fujiwara and the imperial family during the Insei period (1086-1185) made manifest by the increasing number of poetry competitions sponsored by one or the other group (Taniyama 1965, 295), while both the commissioning of *chokusenshū* ('imperial anthologies') and participation in *uta'awase* became increasingly affected by splits in the imperial house and factional divisions between poetic schools in the twelfth and later centuries (Huey 1990).

Even so, by the beginning of the twelfth century, poetry contests had become major critical events, judged by a man, or sometimes men, of acknowledged poetic authority, and were opportunities for individual poets to demonstrate their skills before their social superiors; for poetic houses to demonstrate their competing conceptions of what the poetic standard should be; and for judges to shape the critical debate about the standards by which poetic quality should be judged. That is not to say that the judgements were always edifying, as in many competitions social, or factional, considerations had a strong influence, and decisions often depended upon the relationship between the judge and the sponsor of the competition, or whether the judge was present, or just reviewing the poems and participants' comments later (Asada 1998, 20). Indeed, judges could even hold differing views of what individual critical terms meant (Satō 2004, 48), requiring a degree of interpretation in order to clearly understand the nature of their criticisms. Nevertheless, there was a progressive development in judgements, and a trend for the criticism in them to go 'from impressionistic to

analytical, from subjective to objective' (Suzuki 1958, 23) as time passed and poetry competitions became increasingly important critical, rather than social, occasions in the course of the twelfth century. Once this happened, then it was essential that there be both a commonly defined critical vocabulary, and an acceptable standard of criticism, so that poets could understand the basis on which their work was judged, and argue against the judgment, if necessary (Konishi 1976, 547).

***Criticism in* uta'awase**

The key characteristics of poetry competition criticism were: first, that it was 'viewpoint-inclusive' (Minegishi 1954, 564), meaning that the opinions of all participants in the competition were taken into account in producing it. Taken positively, this meant that the criticism could be produced collaboratively, but taken negatively that it could also be open to compromise. Second, that it was 'inductive and based on experience' (566), meaning that judges would use their knowledge of the canon and technique to suggest what a poet intended in a poem, and determine how successful those attempts were. Third, that it was 'appreciative criticism', where the main function was the judge's exercise of interpretation and appreciation in order to form a judgment (568). Fourth, the 'cooperative nature of its compositional process' (571), in that it was not the product of a single critic, but included the viewpoints of the competitors as well; and finally, that it had 'temporal limitations', in that it was produced either at the same time as a competition, or shortly afterwards (573). While acknowledging this, Konishi (1976, 565) stresses that, of all early mediaeval Japanese writing on poetics, poetry competition judgements were the most practical, as they were based on a close reading of the texts of individual poems and focused on their structure and texture. This makes them a valuable resource for understanding how critics' theoretical concepts related to poetic diction and construction.

This is certainly the case for Shunzei: Minegishi (1954, 526) notes that no other judge before or since can match his sheer quantity of 1937 rounds judged.[3] Thus, the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* accounts for approximately a third of all his recorded judgements, and must be regarded as a major statement of Shunzei's poetic ideals at that point in his life.

Criticism in poetry competitions, however, was not unconstrained by circumstances. The influence of the relationship between sponsor and judge has been mentioned above, but there were other constraints: for example, imperial, celebratory, or poems by the competition's sponsor automatically won, and those by the judge, should they be included, automatically lost, or rarely, tied, the rounds in which they were entered (Suzuki 1958, 18). Equally, the type of poetry competition could be influential as well, with poetry competitions performed at shrines having restrictions placed on the possible judgements (Hisamatsu 1957, 4), as any poem mentioning a deity was accorded nothing less than a draw (Royston 1974b, 103).

Criteria for Judgement in uta'awase

The criteria on which poems in *uta'awase* were judged were principally: adherence to the conventional expectations of the set topic (*dai*); degree of formality (*hare*); and suitability for recitation aloud (*kōshō*) (Iwatsu 1963, 103). This meant that the poems had to have a clearly discernible syntax which could be easily apprehended aurally (Royston 1974a, 163), as the poems were heard before they were read and, therefore, anything which could interfere with comprehension on a first hearing was a potential fault, as was a combination of syllables which could be perceived as unmelodious. While conformity to the strictures of the set topic was obviously crucial, formality was also highly significant, because it encompassed a number of other factors. A poem which was *hare* expressed congratulation and avoided unpropitious expressions;

prioritized elegant feelings over the mundane; gave greater weight to reality than fiction; and was neither too novel, nor too archaic (Iwatsu 1963, 125). Of these elements, representing reality – at least reality as it was conventionally understood in poetic topics – was highly significant, as we shall see in our discussion of the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* below.

Having provided general context and background through this discussion of the development of *uta'awase*, and the nature of their critical practice and the criteria on which critical assessments were made, we will now move on to consider the specific circumstances of the *Roppyakuban uta'awase*.

The Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds

As mentioned above, *Roppyakuban uta'awase* was conceived and sponsored by Fujiwara no (Kujō) Yoshitsune (1169-1206), a member of the elite of late Heian court society.[4] The contest, with twelve poets each contributing one hundred poems arranged in six hundred rounds, for a total of 1200 poems in all, was 'unprecedented…larger and more comprehensive than any single waka occasion in history before it' (Huey 2002, 33). In preparation, Yoshitsune provided the participants with a list of one hundred *dai* ('topics'), fifty on the seasons and fifty on love, in 1192 and requested that they compose a *hyakushu* ('hundred poem sequence') using them. The completed works were submitted in 1193 and arranged in rounds, probably by Yoshitsune himself, which were then formally recited and discussed over the course of several months between 1193-94. Not all the participants were present for the recital of all the poems, and it is most likely that Shunzei wrote his judgements based upon the written records of the competition, rather than attending himself.

Yoshitsune's sponsorship of the contest was a sign that he 'felt prepared to have his own poetic skills subject to formal public scrutiny'(Royston 1974a, 316) and make

the case for the 'innovative techniques' (Royston 1974a, 316) in poetry he favoured. To the extent that the holding of major poetic events by members of the nobility also always had non-literary motivations, it additionally served to mark the wealth and political power of his house, and possibly provided an additional stimulus to Gotoba's holding of the *Sengohyakuban uta'awase* ('Poetry Contest in 1500 Rounds'; 1201) a few years later as a way of re-asserting imperial domination of waka.

The complex interplay of poetry and politics, and the range of social and economic benefits which flowed from poetic success and reputation, are one of the reasons for the vehemence of the literary debates about poetry which were conducted at the time. These took the form of discussions, judgements and appeals in poetry competitions, as well as treatises on poetics, meaning that 'arguments between schools should…be set against a background of family antagonisms and political intrigue' (Brower and Miner 1961, 242).

This is not to suggest, however, that there were not differing views about what made for good poetry and the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* is no exception to this. Participants in the competition included poets from both the Mikohidari (modernising) and Rokujō (conservative) poetic houses,[5] as well as men from the pinnacles of the nobility such as Yoshitsune, who tended towards poetic innovation,[6] and their differing opinions about poetic quality are clearly expressed in the participants' critical comments. Ogawa (1998) argues that these comments, as well as those by Shunzei in his judgements, should be seen as being substantially influenced by the tradition of commentarial practice on challenging poems from the past. Kami (2017, 44) pithily describes this as 'an environment which endlessly provided commentary on disputed expressions like a game of Whack-A-Mole', meaning that the aim of commentary, and thus to some extent of criticism, was to disprove or discredit previous scholars'

interpretations of the meanings of words or expressions, while asserting the accuracy of one's own.

In order to do this, however, the poets had to draw upon evidence to support their interpretations of diction. As will be discussed below, there are observable differences between the types of evidence used by Shunzei in his judgements and Kenshō in his *Chinjō* to enable them to discuss the merits and demerits of styles of composition and support their respective cases.

Content and Structure

As mentioned above, the contest contains one hundred topics, fifty on the seasons and fifty on love. The seasonal topics address: events, plants, animals and birds, and locations; while the love topics cover the stages of love affairs, love at different ages, times of day, weather conditions, locations, phenomena, objects and with members of different professions and classes. These are structured into 'books' of thirty rounds as follows: Spring I-III; Summer I-II; Autumn I-III; Winter I-II; and Love I-X.

All the rounds are structured identically: first, the poems of the Left and the Right are presented. Then, there are comments on the poems by the opposing teams, which can range from brief words of criticism, approbation, or even that the participants have nothing to say, to lengthy criticisms of diction or sentiment. Occasionally, the participants may pose questions, which are sometimes addressed by Shunzei in his judgement, or by their opponents. Finally, Shunzei gives his judgement, which can be brief, or extremely lengthy, although the majority would probably average approximately one hundred words in English translation.[7] The judgements consistently assess first the qualities of the poem of the Left, and then the poem of the Right. They will also generally single out some features of each poem as worthy of praise, before criticizing other specific elements. Finally, they render judgement 'tentatively and half

apologetically' (Royston 1974a, 199), declaring that either the Left or Right's poem is superior, or that they are of equal quality – this could mean that both poems were good, or that both were bad[8] – and the round should, therefore, tie. The judgements are far from simplistic: there is a wide variation in both the level of attention Shunzei pays to individual poems and the reasons which he gives for declaring a win/loss or draw, meaning that it is possible to identify seventeen different types of judgement, depending upon the degree and combination of approval or criticism expressed (Ariyoshi 1963).

In his *Appeal*, Kenshō identifies the topic of the poem at issue, restates the poem and the relevant parts of Shunzei's judgement verbatim[9] – those which have been critical of his work – and then gives his reasons for why he feels the judgement is inaccurate. Some of his statements in appeal are brief, but many are extremely lengthy, addressing Shunzei's criticisms from a range of different perspectives and making multiple different counter-arguments.

Understanding of the evidence used by both men to support their arguments and counter arguments can best be provided through a detailed analysis of the participants' comments, the judgement and the *Appeal* for a number of rounds of the contest, which is provided in the following section.

Evidence and Counter-Evidence

The first round which will be considered is Spring II: 18, in which the assigned topic is 'Skylarks', as this provides evidence of attitudes to word euphony in poetry, as well as arguments for and against the level of a poem's formality.[10]

Left

haru hi ni wa	The springtime sun
sora ni nomi koso	Alone, into the skies
agarumere	Does seem to lift
hibari no toko wa	The skylark: her nest,
are ya shinuran[11]	I wonder, if 'tis in disarray?

Kenshō
95

Right (Win)

ko o omou	Caring for her chick,
sudachi no ono o	Starting from the nest into the meadow,
asa yukeba	With the coming of the morn,
agari mo yarazu	Without taking flight,
hibari nakunari	The skylark gives call.

Jakuren
96

The Right criticize the first and third lines of Kenshō's poem here as 'grating on the ear', a view with which Shunzei agrees in part as he calls the first line 'truly awful' in his judgement. A more significant criticism he makes, however, is that the poem is 'contrary to the essence of skylarks' because, 'in general, from what we know of how skylarks live, there is no reason to expect that they would heedlessly fly off abandoning their nests…they are birds which swoop and soar'. By contrast, Jakuren's poem is 'in keeping with the skylark's nature…but because of the distance of the first stanza from the last, it is possible that one might not grasp the sense of the poem on first hearing…despite its faults, the Right's poem must win'. His judgement here makes clear that he does not regard Jakuren's composition as faultless, but that Kenshō's work contains more serious errors: of euphony, lack of formality, and disjuncture with reality.

In his *Appeal*, Kenshō's defence against these criticisms is varied: he suggests that the Right 'may have felt this because the poem was not to their taste', essentially accusing them of basing their criticism on subjective personal preference, although he adds that he 'see[s] no need to object to this'. He then reminds Yoshitsune that 'composing "the springtime sun" [*haru hi ni wa*] is an ancient term', citing two poems which use this expression, one from an imperial anthology, the poems in which were automatically assumed to be of superior quality. Thus, 'given that such poems have

been composed before, there is no reason to go out of one's way' to criticise its usage. His criticism here is mainly directed at Shunzei, who he frequently accuses of malice and bias, but is also a subtle suggestion that the Right, too, are not treating his work fairly in this round.

He is mainly concerned, however, to defend himself against Shunzei's charge of lack of formality, complaining that he 'has passed sentence on the facts, and exerted great effort in finding fault'. First, he takes issue with Shunzei's definition of the 'essence of skylarks' which he calls 'questionable', in that 'it is impossible to know what a skylark feels. If one is in a place where it can look down on its chicks in the undergrowth, it might be that it might not soar into the sky all that much'. He is thus suggesting that Shunzei is ignorant of how skylarks actually behave, and his suggestion that Kenshō's poem lacks sufficient formality is based on faulty premises. As an additional defence, however, he also notes that 'it is normal practice in much of our poetry to prioritise the emotions and not to oblige matters to conform to reality'. He cites twenty poems in which this is the case, pointing out for each where its sense is not realistic. For example:

mizutori no	A dabchick:
shita yasukaranu	Beneath all is unquiet –
omoi ni wa	From the fires of his passion
atari no mizu mo	The waters all around
kōrazarikeri	Remain unfrozen.

Shūishū IV: 227

> 'A dabchick: beneath all is unquiet' is something which you can say. It is difficult to conceive, however, that the bird could be passionate enough that the water around him would not freeze. Thus, birds and beasts which lack any feelings have been composed about as if they behave like and have the feelings of human beings.

There is no doubt that Kenshō is correct in his assertion that there are many waka which do not describe the world as it objectively exists. His defence, however, does not

acknowledge the constraints on *uta'awase* criticism under which Shunzei is operating, which dictated the strictest adherence to standards of formality. Nevertheless, it is statements such as this which make Kenshō's *Appeal* most strongly resemble a work of poetics setting forth a case for a particular view of the criteria for poetic quality (Minegishi 1954, 583), rather than a simple reaction to the judgements passed in the competition.

In this round neither Shunzei, nor the Right, provide concrete evidence for their criticism of Kenshō's euphony: they simply appeal to a generalized understanding of what makes a pleasant-sounding poem. Kenshō's defence does not address the issue of whether his work sounds good or not; indeed, he acknowledges this could be a matter of 'taste'. Instead, he relies on the existence of prior poetic precedent: as poems using the same phrase have been composed in the past, there are no grounds for criticizing contemporary works which do the same. This reveals differing attitudes toward critical evidence. Atkins (2017, 79) describes 'Shunzei and Kenshō staking out…the positions of the *mondain* and the pedant', in that for Shunzei, whether a poem is good or not is linked to the intrinsic qualities and internal logic of the individual work – its diction, in particular – the context in, and purpose for, which it was produced, as well as depending upon the sensibilities of the poet, who 'ideal[ly] was the highborn courtier, born with natural talent that was nurtured almost from birth' (Atkins 2017, 78). By contrast, for Kenshō, and other members of the Rokujō house, a poet was 'scholarly…[composition] required effort and diligence to pore through the texts of antiquity' (Atkins 2017, 78). This meant that in judging a poem, the purpose which lay behind a poet's compositional activities also needed to be evaluated (Watanabe 1999, 235), and a poem could not be assessed in isolation from its existence as the product of a canon. So, for Shunzei an

appeal to the ‘general knowledge’ held by poets with taste was sufficient evidence for judgement, but Kenshō was more likely to argue based on reference to specific sources.

Disputes over diction

The tendency for Japanese court poets to engage in ‘Liliputian disputes over this word or that’ (Royston 1974a, 157) on the basis that ‘the specific points at issue…might be miniscule, and yet the stakes represented could be exceedingly large’ (Royston 1974a, 158-9) is well known. The *Roppyakuban uta’awase* is no exception to this, with four rounds in particular focusing on lengthy arguments and counter-arguments over the correct meanings of individual vocabulary items. This was only to be expected: in a competition of such size, it would have been remarkable if all of the participants had only used diction about which there were no conflicting interpretations, and as Ogawa (1998, 177) points out, it was normal for poets to prepare justifications for their usage to counter disagreements from others in the ‘competitive poetics’ (Ogawa 1998, 179) of the time.

My focus here is not the question of which of the competing interpretations of the diction are correct (indeed, modern scholarship has yet to provide definitive answers for some of these), but how the poets build their cases for their interpretations, as this reveals what type of evidence was considered both valid and significant. The four rounds in question are: Spring III: 22/Love VI: 30 on the topics of ‘Frogs’ and ‘Love and Smoke’ respectively, in which the same piece of diction is given conflicting interpretations; Love IX: 19 on ‘Love and Clothing’, in which the evidential basis for criticism is challenged; and Love X: 15 on ‘Love and Fisherfolk’, in which there is disagreement over both the sense and correct written form of a word.

Frogs, Fish Traps and Deer

The piece of diction at issue in Spring III: 22 and Love VI: 30 is an Old Japanese word used in the eighth century poetry anthology, the *Man'yōshū* – *kaiya*. The modern consensus is that this referred to a small hut located near rice-paddies in which smoky fires, like mosquito smudges, were kindled in autumn to give marauding animals such as deer, or wild boar, the impression that there were human beings present, and so keep them away from the crop, but as can be seen from the discussion below, this was not a view held by all the participants in the competition:

Left

yamabuki no	Golden kerria
niou ide o ba	Shine in Idé,
yoso ni mite	Indifferent;
kaiya ga shita mo	Beneath the *kaiya*, too,
kawazu naku nari	The frogs are calling.

Kenshō

163

Right

yamada moru	Warding the mountain fields
kaiya ga shita no	Beneath the *kaiya*
keburi koso	The smoke
kogare mo yaranu	Smoulders without end –
tagui narikere	And so do I!

Jakuren

960

Jakuren's interpretation and usage of *kaiya* resembles the modern understanding of the word, but Kenshō's is different, and as is discussed below, novel. In both of these rounds there is lengthy discussion between the teams, to which Shunzei responds in his judgement on Kenshō's poem in Spring III: 22, but restricts himself to saying that 'the

discussion here seems little different' from that in the earlier round in his comments on Love VI: 30. Kenshō then responds to both discussions at great length in his *Appeal*.

In Spring III: 22, the Right first challenge Kenshō's use of *kaiya* by questioning whether its connotations are appropriate for use in a spring-themed poem, the season to which frog-poems belonged. The Left, although this is certainly Kenshō at this point, respond by saying, 'there are various types of *kaiya*. One among them – and called this – is used in the country for keeping silkworms, and frogs swarm beneath the huts in order to eat them' supporting this assertion with the statement that, 'this is what peasants call them'. There is then a further discussion of whether sericulture is properly associated with spring or summer, to which Kenshō exasperatedly responds, 'once the hut is constructed, it is there for good, so there will be frogs underneath in both spring and summer!'

In his judgement, Shunzei calls this discussion 'pointless', arguing that, based on instances of the prior use of *kaiya* in poems in the *Man'yōshū*, which are by 'men watching over fields in the mountains from their huts' the word's sense is 'of fire being kindled there making them smoky, or else to keep wild monkeys and deer away'. He bases this argument on the orthography of the *Man'yō* poems, in that the characters for 'deer' (*ka*) and 'fire' ([*h*]*i*) are used phonetically to write the word *kaiya* in that anthology. He elaborates upon his dismissal of Kenshō's argument for a *kaiya* being involved in silkworm cultivation by relying upon an account provided by Minamoto no Toshiyori (1055-1129) in his treatise, *Toshiyori zuinō* ('Toshiyori's Poetic Essentials'; 1111-15), asking:

> …what earthly reason is there to suppose that the peasants would allow frogs into such valuable places as their silkworm houses? Nor can one conceive of them permitting water to flow beneath them, or construct them near marshes, or ponds!

Finally, seemingly as an afterthought, he mentions that 'calling a hut built over fish-traps long made by thrusting branches into river pools, a *kaiya*…is a mistaken theory', which is a direct attack on the poetics of Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (1104-1177), the Rokujō founder, and Kenshō's adoptive father, who had advanced this interpretation, and concludes that the Left 'should cease to circulate their theories'.

The critical arguments made by the competition's participants and Shunzei in this round are supported by: knowledge and interpretation of elements from the canon of prior poetry – the *Man'yōshū* in this case; knowledge of the orthography of the *Man'yō* text, what could be called evidence of linguistic scholarship; practical knowledge of the real world, in Shunzei's case backed by textual scholarship in terms of his reference to Toshiyori's account, and in Kenshō's by knowledge that 'this is what the peasants call them'.

The discussion on *kaiya* in Love VI: 30 is similar. The Right, or Jakuren in this case, defends his usage on the grounds of the meaning of the characters used to write the word in the *Man'yōshū*, and also in a poem contained in the personal collection of the great *Man'yō* poet, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (662?-710?), but adding that:

> …in territories where they wish to drive the deer away from their mountain paddies, they take things which smell foul when burnt, such as hair, and burn them, and in order that the fires are not put out by the rain, they build a roof over them. The common folk of these places call these things *kaiya*.

The Left, or Kenshō, respond 'that *kaiya* is written…with characters meaning "deer-repelling fire" and "scented fire" is no proof of anything', arguing that the semantics of characters used phonetically in *man'yōgana*[12] should be ignored when attempting to determine the sense of words written in that script.

In his *Appeal*, Kenshō argues strongly that 'there is no evidence which would enable one to consider that there was a single fixed definition' of *kaiya*, suggesting that

Shunzei's insistence on such a definition is mere dogmatism. He provides 'a small amount of prior evidence' that this view is correct, beginning by citing the following poem from *Horikawa hyakushu* ('Hundred Poem Sequence Presented to Former Emperor Horikawa'; 1106):

masurao ga	A brawny man
mobushitsukafuna	Finger-carp
fushizukeshi	Did trap;
kaiya ga shita mo	Even beneath the *kaiya*
kōrishinikeri	Is thick with ice.

Fujiwara no Kinzane

993

Stating that 'a large number of peasants in the countryside have told me', Kenshō provides a lengthy and detailed description of various types of fish-traps, all of which 'are called *kaiya*'. He further suggests that Kinzane 'must have heard about these matters and then seemingly composed his poem', adding that 'people…fail to understand the true nature of a *kaiya* and, it is only logical that they should be dubious about it… I have asked peasants from many places about this many times, and believe it to be true'. This is only one of a number of instances in this section of his *Appeal* where he cites as evidence for the correct interpretation of a piece of poetic diction knowledge provided to him by the personal testimonies of people of significantly lower social status than himself and the other court poets. For example, he also relies on peasants' testimony to support the acceptability of his own poem, and to reject Shunzei's criticism, saying:

> When I asked, 'Do frogs croak there?' peasants replied, 'When there are ditches or channels beneath them, of course frogs live there and croak. This is so they can eat any silkworms which fall down.'

He also relies upon their evidence to reject the argument that *kaiya* were used to repel

deer:

> I have made some minor enquires among the common people of the province of Yamato, and they have told me, 'although we burn deer hair and suchlike near the autumn paddy fields as a charm to keep deer away…we don't make roofs to cover them, and don't call them *kaiya*'

His argument is not entirely supported by evidence from qualitative research, however. To counter his opponents' arguments based on the text of the *Man'yōshū*, he refers to previous scholarly work on the anthology, in the form of *Ruiji koshū* ('A Classified Collection of Ancient Texts'; ca. 1120), in which the poems in the work were organized according to style and topic by Fujiwara no Atsutaka (1071-1120). In this work Atsutaka interprets *kaiya* as referring to smudge-pots used to repel mosquitos, and Kenshō suggests that this demonstrates that 'there are instances in that anthology where the correct characters are not used', and thus interpreting diction based on an uncritical reading of the *Man'yōshū* is mistaken. Further evidence for *kaiya* potentially referring to smudge-pots is derived from Fujiwara no 'Tadakane [who]…had outstanding talent for poetry', and described it as such 'when he was but a small child'.

Kenshō also uses his own scholarly work to refute Jakuren's citation of a poem from *Hitomaro shū*: given that 'I have, over a number of years, studied tens of different versions of *Hitomaro's Collection*, and in not one have I seen this…poem…it is difficult to put much faith in it'. If the poem does not occur in *Hitomaro shū*, he suggests, it is likely to be a re-writing of a *Man'yō* poem, but with alternate vocabulary, because 'there are many cases like this'. His entire critical approach here is 'superbly proved' (Ogawa 1998, 179), and characterised by the careful martialling of evidence from a variety of sources, the veracity of which could be confirmed, and is thus 'logical and scientific'.[13] He uses this to imply that Jakuren and Shunzei have built a case for their interpretation of *kaiya* on faulty evidence as a result of their own ignorance.

The critical discussions over these two rounds strongly indicate the credibility given to personal, or hearsay, testimony as evidence both for and against particular interpretations of diction. They also suggest that the originators of that testimony did not have to come from the cultured, or noble, classes in order to be regarded as valid, as both Jakuren and Kenshō cite peasants' knowledge in support of their arguments, although the latter does so most extensively. In this, they are building upon a tradition in commentarial practice which had been in existence since the mid-eleventh century, which had its root in differences in social class between poets.

Poets of the provincial governor (*zuryō*) class had long been collecting testimony from 'locals' (*domin*) about the meaning of diction which occurred in the *Man'yōshū*, and using it as proof for their usage in their own compositions, or to construct their own commentaries. An early example of this was Fujiwara no Norinaga (dates unknown; active mid-eleventh century) who 'felt a maniacal ecstasy in his encounter with archaic diction' as Governor of Yamato (Ogawa 1998, 180), and whose explanations were recounted in later texts such as *Man'yoshūshō*.[14] While there is some doubt about whether every provincial governor-poet actually visited his province, what is important is that their collection of oral testimony about diction from peasants beyond the capital became an accepted methodology by the Rokujō poets and was 'self-consciously championed' (Ogawa 1998, 181) by Kenshō in the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* in both his responses during the competition and his *Chinjō*.

This brought him into direct conflict with Shunzei, who is on record as stating that interpretation of diction based on the views of locals is something which 'certainly should be stopped' (Ogawa 1998, 184). This clearly demonstrates that the two men had differing views of what counted as acceptable evidence, with Shunzei valuing written sources in the interpretation of *kaiya* and most likely discounting personal testimony,

and Kenshō relying, to some extent, on knowledge derived from practical experience, as well as engagement with scholarly literature on poetry. Shunzei's distaste for, and Kenshō's acceptance of, poetic interpretation based on the oral testimony of provincial peasants would seem to be a reflection of their differing views on what made a good poet, as well as poem. If Shunzei's ideal was the naturally talented highborn courtier, as Atkins (2017, 79) suggests, then it is unsurprising that he should dislike the idea that people from outside the nobility could contribute to poetics. Kenshō, the scholar, was naturally predisposed to be more open to a range of alternative sources of information. In addition, he may have been naturally closer to a wider spectrum of people than Shunzei was.

In the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* it is only Jakuren and Kenshō who draw upon oral testimony from peasants to support their interpretations of diction. It is notable that both men were monks and thus would have had greater freedom to mix and have contact with people from the lower social classes than would the aristocratic poets in the competition.[15] In addition, Kenshō's background prior to his adoption by Kiyosuke remains unknown, but it seems probable that his entry into the Rokujō house was socially advantageous for him; in his prior life, too, he may have been able to mix more freely with people from outside the social circles of the nobility. This may also have made him more disposed to lending credence to their views, as there is extensive evidence from classical Japanese literary sources of the disdain and incomprehension with which members of the upper echelons of the capital nobility regarded those outside their immediate social circle, from Ki no Tsurayuki's (ca. 872-945) mockery of a provincial noble who provides a poem to his party on their journey back to the capital in *Tosa nikki* ('The Tosa Diary'; 935) (Hasegawa et al. 1989, 8-10),[16] to the protagonist's description of the sounds of the neighbourhood as '…awful…no more than a jumble'

(Tyler 2001, 63),[17] on waking in a house belonging to one of his lower class lovers and hearing the neighbours speaking outside.

It is also worth noting that Kenshō's approach does appear to have had some influence on subsequent poets, despite Shunzei's hostility to it. In his commentary on the first three imperial anthologies, *Hekianshō* (1226), Fujiwara no Teika, Shunzei's son, deliberately utilises interpretations based upon peasants' oral testimonies, as a result of his emphasising the importance of composition based on the commonplace, everyday world (Ogawa 1998, 187), and there could be nothing more 'commonplace' than interpretations derived from the local people of the provinces.

Fisherfolk and Salt Farms

A similar set of evidential bases to those discussed above can be seen in the discussions over Love X: 15. Here, Kenshō's poem is:

moshio yaku	Burning seaweed for salt,
ama no makukata	Scattering on the shore are the fisher-girls;
naranedomo	Not just so, but
koi no someki mo	From the tumult of love
ito nakarikeri	Is there little respite.

1169

The controversial piece of diction in this poem is *makukata*, which the Right suggest is erroneous, and should actually be *matekata*, a word suggesting 'waiting'.[18] The disagreement arises from the fact that it is possible to confuse the cursive, handwritten forms of the characters for *ku* and *te*, and so the Right are implying that poets who use *makukata* are basing their work on a careless misreading of earlier poetic texts which may have been miscopied; they also suggest that this should be obvious by querying whether 'there is such an activity as scattering salt upon the shore?'

Kenshō responds briefly to the Right, asserting: first, that there are a number of prior poems using *makukata* where 'waiting' would not be appropriate; second, that 'scattering' *is* appropriate, but refers to the salt-kilns being so, and 'people from the area have told me as much'; third, that if *mate* is correct, in the context of use it would have to refer to gathering razor-clams (*mategai*); and finally, that a further expression, *itoma nami* ('without surcease'), which is often used in poems containing *makukata/matekata*, makes more sense in relation to the former word. His defence is thus based on a combination of prior examples from the canon, and practical knowledge, as in Spring III: 22.

Shunzei's judgement here takes the form of an initial direct attack on the poetics of Kenshō's Rokujō poetic house, stating that when asked to give his opinion on 'the commentaries on problematic poems by a certain personage' – a probable reference to Fujiwara no Kiyosuke – he said they contained 'imperfect scholarship' but 'when people later heard that I had said this, his followers got confused and thought I meant *maku* was correct'. He follows this by cursorily dismissing Kenshō's citation of prior poems, stating 'there are many texts which have *mate*, and any versions…which have *maku* are erroneous' and that '"without surcease" is particularly suitable for *matekata*', concluding that 'the Left['s poem]…sounds old-fashioned and unpleasant and there is no evidence that *makukata* is correct'.

Kenshō naturally finds this judgement extremely offensive and protests vigorously against it in his *Appeal*, claiming that 'the Judge's attachment to *matekata* was…completely and utterly lacking in any rationality or sense', so 'I will provide an appeal on each and every point'. The evidence on which he bases these appeals is varied, including a detailed description of both salt-sands and the process by which salt was extracted from them, to demonstrate where 'scattering' (*makukata*) took place. He

is able to do this because Kiyosuke ‘consulted with knowledgeable people…and they knew the term…well, so he provided detailed notes on its meaning. I myself possess his notes on this in his own hand’. This also serves as a rejection of Shunzei’s description of Kiyosuke’s work as ‘imperfect scholarship’, but more significantly it indicates that a claim of privileged access to scholarly textual material was also considered credible critical evidence, while also demonstrating that Kiyosuke himself relied upon oral testimony in developing his poetics.

Kenshō also bases aspects of his argument upon expected norms of compositional behaviour, arguing that a razor-clam (*mate*) is ‘something crude. It is not something which can be used in poetic composition’, and so to suggest that a poet who ‘used diction which was pleasant to hear or to say, or specially selected names of things’ would have used it, is not credible. By implication, therefore, defenders of *matekata* are insulting the great poets of the past. Furthermore, if you accept *matekata*, it is problematic because of the frequent use of *itoma nashi* (‘without surcease’) in such poems, in that ‘razor-clams are not something which are available in every season’, and so cannot be gathered constantly.

To support this point, Kenshō once again appeals to testimony from the lower classes:

> …a certain peasant from Ise once told me, ‘Although there are razor-clams in yonder province, it is not the case that we normally gather them. We do collect them from time to time, but as an example of something that we do constantly you would need to compose about something else.’

Here, his informant is going beyond simply providing information about something about which he could be expected to know by virtue of his identity, and actually providing an opinion on the mechanics of vocabulary choice in poetic composition. In turn, Kenshō is using this as an evidential base for a case for poetic quality being made

to his contemporaries and superiors. It seems intuitively improbable that a peasant would be sufficiently knowledgeable about waka composition to comment upon it, and so it is likely that Kenshō is using his informant as a mouthpiece for his own views and overstating his point. It was not uncommon for writers to adopt the pose that their work was being related by an elderly servant who had witnessed the events they were describing,[19] as a way of adding credence to their descriptions and interpretations, so this would seem to be a case of Kenshō adopting an accepted literary technique in order to emphasise his criticism, while simultaneously indicating the extent to which the presentation of oral testimony in support of a poetic interpretation was an 'archetype' (Ogawa 1998, 181) of his poetics.

Nevertheless, he does find it necessary to provide a partial justification for taking this approach as a way of strengthening his argument, saying:

> …although one might say that peasants and country folk are blighted by ignorance, they have a deep wisdom when it comes to the techniques of farming, or gathering firewood, and…when it comes to cooking salt and drawing nets, they are the ones who get furthest.

This is simultaneously an argument in favour of deferring to the knowledge of the lower classes in their fields of expertise, and in support of his own definition of the poetic diction, it being based upon that expertise. As in Spring III: 22, he is emphasising the importance of evidence provided as a result of personal testimonies, rather than that deriving from purely textual sources.

Muddles over Music

Shunzei himself was not above basing his arguments on testimony received, as can be seen in his judgement in Love IX: 19:

koigoromo	My clothes of love,

itsuka hirubeki	When might they dry?
kawa yashiro	A river shrine
shirushi mo nami ni	Has had no effect – the waves
itodo shiorete	Dampen them all the more…

1117

Kenshō

The piece of diction at issue here is *kawa yashiro*, which derives from a poem by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca 872-945) which Kenshō has used as a source for his own work:

kawa yashiro	At a river shrine
shino ni orihae	Stems of bamboo wave freely
hosu koromo	The robe I'd dry,
ika ni hoseba ka	How should I do so?
nanoka hizaran	Seven days still damp…

Tsurayuki-shū IV: 415

I have translated this term literally as 'river shrine', but in the initial discussion between the participants about Kenshō's poem and the correct interpretation of Tsurayuki's, the Left (Kenshō) argue that the term refers to a platform erected as part of a summer performance of sacred music and dance (*natsu kagura*). Shunzei rejects this, first by quoting a passage from *Toshiyori zuinō* in which Toshiyori states, 'as for the *kawa yashiro,* there is no one who knows what this is' and suggests that linking it with *natsu kagura* is 'speculation' (Hashimoto, Ariyoshi, and Fujihira 2002, 166). Shunzei then goes on to add:

> I have questioned a member of a household familiar with sacred music about this matter, and been told, 'Where summer sacred music is concerned, there is a particular way of it. It [*kawa yashiro*] is definitely absent from the script.'

He is, therefore, basing an argument for the inaccuracy of an interpretation of a piece of poetic diction partially on testimonial evidence from an expert. He concludes his attack

on Kenshō’s interpretation by saying, ‘this is something which requires greater proof. If the gentleman of the Left is able to provide some now, this would be a fine thing for the Way of Music!’

In one sense, Shunzei’s use of personal testimony in his judgement here is similar to Kenshō’s approach in his appeal against the judgements in Spring III: 22/Love VI: 30 and Love X: 15, above, in that personal testimony is being used to support a critical assessment of a poem’s quality. It differs, however, in one important respect: the informant he consults originates from the same narrow circle of the court nobility as himself. While this may be a reflection of the subject upon which information is sought, court music, about which people of the lower classes could not be expected to have knowledge, it is also further evidence of his privileging of the views of the ‘right’ sort of people about the topic.

Shunzei does provide his own explanation of the diction, arguing that the entire phrase *kawa yashiro shino ni orihae* in Tsurayuki’s poem ‘is an old term for *widely* or *ordinarily*’, which ‘appears to have been used this way’ in the *Man’yōshū*.[20] The ‘robe’ in the poem should be understood metaphorically as ‘something which resembles it, and which is not dry’, as in the case in other poems where clothing is used to describe waterfalls, such as:

Composed below a waterfall, when she had gone to Ryūmon [waterfall].

tachinuwanu	Uncut and unsewn
kinu kishi hito mo	Were the clothes those folk wore;
naki mono o	Gone now,
nani yamahime no	So why should the mountain’s princess
nuno sarasuramu	Rinse her cloth?

Ise

Kokinshū XVII: 926

Based on this, Kenshō's interpretation of Tsurayuki can only be called 'remarkable' and thus, 'in the absence of definite proof for the Left's contentions, the Right must win.' In short, then, his judgement accuses Kenshō of basing his work on an unsubstantiated and erroneous interpretation of earlier poetic texts, and one which is contradicted both by prior scholarship and expert testimony.

In order to defend against this attack, Kenshō initially employs a three-pronged strategy in his *Appeal*. First, he casts doubt upon the accuracy of Toshiyori's account, saying his work contains 'many dubious elements' and as a result 'there is no reason to avoid challenging, or be overly respectful of' it. Second, he suggests that Shunzei's reliance upon a single informant is dubious, because 'the people of many clans have their own models of sacred music, so when a particular house is asked about it, there will be a variety of responses about the one matter.' Moreover, the details of how *natsu kagura* would be performed would be knowledge that was privileged, meaning that 'it would be impossible for him [Shunzei's informant] to speak freely of it'.

Finally, in response to Shunzei's demand for proof, he argues that this does, in fact, exist in the form of a script for *natsu kagura* written initially by Ō no Suketada (1046-1100), head musician and dancer of the Palace Music Office. Information about this text had been passed down to Fujiwara no Aki'ie (1153-?), who was the brother of Tsune'ie and Ari'ie, both of whom are participants in the *Roppyakuban uta'awase*. All that Yoshitsune need do, therefore, is 'swiftly summon members of houses belonging to the Ō clan' and question them about the matter. His defence is thus to raise questions about the reliability of the evidence on which Shunzei has formed his judgement; by implication, this is also an attack on the latter's scholarship, in that he is accusing him of relying upon dubious and untrustworthy sources for his argument, and of not being aware that the proof he demands actually exists.

He employs a similar strategy in his refutation of Shunzei's interpretation of *kawa yashiro*, providing examples of two earlier poems on the topic of *natsu kagura* which contain the term, and thus giving textual evidence to support his case, asking, 'surely wouldn't the people of the time have mentioned if mistaken poems had been composed?' He then takes issue with Shunzei's explanation of *kawa yashiro*'s metaphorical usage, saying that this 'sounds extremely novel, but…it simply feels like conjecture'. He bases this view on the fact that waterfall references in other poems rely on the whiteness of the cataract to provide an association with the shade of rinsed clothing, and this image is entirely absent from poems using *kawa yashiro*. Thus, Shunzei's assertion of the former poems as evidence for the correct interpretation of this piece of diction is groundless. Both poet's arguments here rely for evidence upon detailed knowledge of the canon of prior poetry, and the basis on which associative links were made between items of poetic vocabulary.

Conclusion

Both Shunzei and Kenshō were poets, scholars, and men of great erudition. In common with the majority of their social circle, they held poetry in the highest regard and to be a matter deserving of the utmost attention. Their critical argument in the course of the *Roppyakuban uta'awase*, of which this article has provided but a flavour, is testament to this. Based on this analysis, however, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the nature of the evidence which was considered to be credible and important in critical discussions in early mediaeval Japan, and how this evidence was used.

First, textual evidence was of vital importance. This principally involved the citation of prior poems, the interpretation of which was well-known and widely accepted, and which could, therefore, support the interpretation placed upon a work of one's own, or which was being criticised. While this meant that, to an extent, there was

priority given to poems from imperial anthologies, which were both well-known and of high status, this did not mean that poems from personal collections, or other anthologies were not used as evidence, although the veracity of these could be challenged.

Second, being able to provide evidence from sources other than poems for the accuracy of one's poetry was also crucial. This evidence could come from a range of sources, both textual and not. Earlier treatises on poetics were important, but could be disputed. Testimonial evidence, in the form of statements from informants, was also credible. It is here that Shunzei and Kenshō differ: the former limits his citation of evidence to information provided by fellow members of the capital nobility; Kenshō also frequently cites such remarks, but also information gained from questioning people from lower social classes. In this he is drawing upon an established tradition of commentarial practice by members of the lower nobility, and championing it before the socially superior poets participating in *Roppyakuban uta'awase*.

While Shunzei was hostile to this, most likely due to his views on good poetry emerging from people who simply knew how to 'compose with good conception and configuration' (Fujiwara no Shunzei 1197, 340) to produce 'something which, when spoken or recited sounds moving and evocative' (Fujiwara no Shunzei 1197, 251-52), the social restrictions placed upon members of the nobility and his limited opportunities for contact with people outside his social circle may also have had an impact. Nevertheless, despite the eventual triumph of the Mikohidari school's poetics over the Rokujō, there is some evidence that these incorporated the use of oral testimony to support poetic interpretation, just as Kenshō's did.

Third, it was also possible to cite one's own independent scholarship in support of the accuracy of an interpretation: in *Roppyakuban uta'awase* we see both Shunzei and Kenshō doing this in relation to *Man'yōshū*, particularly in reference to how the

script should be interpreted, while Kenshō also cites knowledge derived from reading other poetry collections, too. As a corollary to this, it was also possible to cite evidence derived from texts with limited circulations, as Kenshō does when claiming access to Kiyosuke's notes on *makukata*.

Finally, both poets use their evidence to construct arguments for their preferred interpretations which impugn their opponent's knowledge and scholarship. There is no doubt that Kenshō is the most intemperate in his use of language in this regard, but the implication of much of Shunzei's criticism is similar. Royston (1974a, 321) has pointed out that based on the ratio of wins and losses in the competition, there is little evidence that Shunzei viewed the Rokujō poets and their poetry as inferior, but it is clear that he faulted the evidence upon which Kenshō relied for his interpretations, just as Kenshō did his.

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1 All translations from *Roppyakuban uta’awase* are taken from McAuley (Forthcoming).

2 For an article-length treatment of the development of the uta’awase in English, see Ito (1982). Detailed accounts can also be found in: Minegishi (1954), Iwatsu (1963) and Hagitani (1969).

3 Royston (1974a, 213) provides slightly different figures: 1763 rounds in eighteen major contests.

4 He was appointed Prime Minister (*dajō daijin*) and elevated to Junior First Rank in 1204.

5 See Konishi (1991, 32-4) for a discussion of these poetic houses.

6 The participants were, from the upper nobility: Yoshitsune, Jien (1155-1224), Fujiwara no Iefusa (1167-1196), and Fujiwara no Kanemune (1163-1242); from the Mikohidari school: Fujiwara no Sada’ie (Teika) (1162-1241), Fujiwara no Takanobu (1142-1205), Jakuren (1139?-1202?), and Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158-1237); and from the Rokujō school:

Fujiwara no Ari'ie (1155-1216), Fujiwara no Tsune'ie (1149-1209), Kenshō, and finally Fujiwara no Suetsune (1131-1221).

7 These figures have been calculated from McAuley (Forthcoming), where, for example, in Winter II: 8 on where the topic is 'Chilled Pines' (*Kanshō*), Shunzei's judgement is simply 'There is little between both poems on "wind in the pines". Thus, the round ties' whereas in his longest judgements (Spring III: 23, 'Frogs' (*Kawazu*); Love IX: 19, 'Love and Clothing' (*Koromo ni yosuru koi*); Love X: 15, 'Love and Fisherfolk (*Ama ni yosuru koi*)), he writes the equivalent of 699 words, 670 words and 470 words, respectively.

8 See Satō (2011) and Yasui (2006) for discussions of Shunzei's use of the term *yoki ji* ('tie of quality'), to indicate a tie when both poems were equally good.

9 There is one instance in the Chinjō (Spring I: 21), where the version of Shunzei's judgement that Kenshō cites is more extensive than that given in the main text of the competition, suggesting at that point he was working from an alternative version of the text from that which became most widely circulated and copied.

10 The transcriptions of the poems in the competition here are based upon based upon the text in Kubota and Yamaguchi (1998).

11 There are various different formats for transcribing waka in Roman letters, just as there are for presenting their translations into English. In this article, I follow the conventions I adopted in McAuley (Forthcoming). See the Introduction to that work for an extended discussion of this issue.

12 *Man'yōgana* is the term used to describe the earliest form of written Japanese script, as it was used to write the *Man'yōshū* poetry anthology. It is composed entirely of Chinese characters, with some being used semantically, but read as native Japanese words, and others used phonetically to 'spell out' native expressions.

13 I am indebted to one of the blind peer reviewers of this article who suggested this as a description for Kenshō's critical practice.

14 *Man'yōshūshō* is a late Heian commentary on the *Man'yōshū*, containing simple explanations of 173 poems from the anthology, written in *katakana.* Its authorship is uncertain, but one possibility is a minor poet, Fujiwara no Morikata (1137-1178).

15 I am indebted to Jack Stoneman (personal communication) for this insight.

16 A translation of this passage can be found in McCullough (1985, 268-71).

17 The source here is '*ito ayashū mezameshiki otonarai…kudakudashiki koto nomi*' (Imaizumi, Mori, and Wokazaki 1976, 69).

18 The consensus of modern scholarship is that both views are, in fact, mistaken, and this is an old Japanese word, *madekata* ('rolling shoulders'), which was used to describe the movements of fisherfolk when engaged in activities on the shore.

19 For example, the writer of *Ōkagami* ('The Great Mirror'; ca. 1119) presents the work as if it were related by an old man Ōyake no Yotsugi. See Yamagiwa (1967).

20 This interpretation is not supported by modern scholarship, and so is not reflected in the translation I have provided of Tsurayuki's poem.