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Confusion over Cathay: attitudes to Chinese material in mediaeval Japanese poetic criticism

THOMAS E. MCAULEY

Abstract: This article investigates the reception and usage of Sinitic material within mediaeval Japanese poetic criticism, specifically focussing on the *Roppyakuban uta'awase* ('Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds'; 1193–94). It challenges the simplistic binary of the 'wakan dialectic' by analysing how poets and critics practically engaged with Sinitic material. The study highlights the conflicting attitudes between the contest's judge, Fujiwara no Shunzei, and the participant Kenshō. Evidence from the contest reveals that while poets frequently incorporated Sinitic allusions and diction, Shunzei often criticised such usage, arguing that distinct aesthetic standards applied to *uta* (Japanese poetry) versus *shi* (Sinitic poetry). Conversely, Kenshō actively utilised Sinitic sources to validate his poetic positions and challenge Shunzei's critical authority. Ultimately, the article demonstrates that while early mediaeval poet/critics did regard Sinitic material as a resource for the composition and criticism of *uta*, such usage could be contested and was subject to wider critical standards governing waka composition.

Keywords: waka, kanshi, poetics, criticism, roppyakuban uta'awase, Shunzei, Kenshō, sinitic, *wakan*

Introduction

The fact that Japan has had a centuries long engagement with 'China' is not in doubt. Sinitic influence is visible and well-known in its language, writing system, religions, political systems, literature – the list is so extensive that it might be easier to identify aspects of Japan's society and culture which have not had such influence than those which have. The focus of this article, Japan's

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indigenous poetry, waka, and its poetics, is not one of these. Sinitic influence here has been extensive, and the extent and nature of that influence, who has been responsible for it, how it has influenced waka forms, compositional practices and critical assessments has been widely debated.

As will be discussed in detail below, scholarly discussion of this issue has tended to focus either on how particular Sinitic elements (poetic styles, vocabulary, poetics) were received and either adopted or adapted in Japan, or on analyses of the underlying motivations for this process. The purpose of this article is to give voice in this debate to a constituency which was deeply enmeshed in the practicalities of Sinitic influence on Japan's native poetry: poets and critics of the early mediaeval period. Individuals composing waka at this time frequently drew upon Sinitic elements in producing their works, while critics, by which I refer principally to judges in poetry matches (*uta'awase*), both critiqued these usages and utilised Sinitic material and references in their judgements. As will be demonstrated through the discussion later, poet/critics were clearly aware of what counted as Sinitic material and what was not, and had strong views on how, or if, this should be utilised in the composition of poetry. In addition, they had equally strong, but sometimes contradictory, views on the use of Sinitic models and sources as evidence for the validity of critiques of poetic style and quality.

This will be demonstrated through an analysis of the poems, comments, judgements and appeal in *Roppyakuban uta'awase* ('Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds'; 1193-94). This match makes a suitable case study for this question because not only were some of the topics chosen to deliberately evoke Sinitic references (Oyama 2004, 30). It was judged by Japan's pre-eminent premodern critic (Huey 2002, 56), Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114-1204), and generated the 'Appeal' (*chinjō*) which most resembles a work of poetics in its own right (Minegishi 1954, 583), written by Kenshō (1130?-1209?). As such, it provides extensive evidence of compositional practices and conflicting critical attitudes in the early mediaeval period.

Before analysing *Roppyakuban uta'awase* in detail, however, we need to understand the historical developments which produced the literary and cultural context in which the contest took place, and how these have been conceptualised. In the next section of this article, therefore, I will trace in outline the development of waka and poetics, and where these intersected with Sinitic influences, up to the late twelfth century.

Sinitic influence on waka poetry and poetics

I should say at the outset that Japan's engagement with China has been extensively debated in both Japanese and non-Japanese scholarship. Persiani (2016, 32–38) provides a useful summary of these discussions and their differences,

but broadly speaking, in Anglo-American scholarship Japan's engagement with China has been seen through two overlapping lenses which alternately agree and conflict with each other. The first, encapsulated by the notion of the '*wakan* dialectic' (Pollack 1986, 3) sees a conceptualised 'China' utilised as a means to define a conceptualised 'Japan', suggesting that the latter could not have come into existence without the former. This view also gives rise to a narrative of Japan's native culture and literature as being pressured, and at times even overcome, by that of China before its culture manages to reassert its own unique characteristics, as is represented by the oft-used phrase 'dark age of national poetry' (*kokufū ankoku jidai*) to describe the period from the late eighth century through to the late ninth when poems in literary Sinitic (*kanshi*) were composed more than waka (Persiani 2013, 115–116; Sasanuma 1969, 3; Wu 2014, 14). It is only by passing through this dark age and reacting against it, that the true 'Japanese' aesthetic and literature was able to come into existence and demonstrate its difference from continental models.

An alternate position, however, is to view 'Japan's' engagement with 'China' as less of a dialectic and more of a movable feast. Lamarre rejects the entire concept of a *wakan* division as a modern invention, supporting a 'modern 'ethnolinguistic regime' of reading Heian Japan' (2000, 7) arguing instead that both texts and social structures were marked by hybridity. Sakaki (2006, 9) further points out that the engagement was essentially one-way: there is no evidence that Chinese poets and scholars were ever aware of, or influenced by, Japanese ideas. This left the Japanese free to do what they wished with Sinitic material: they could adopt what they wished, interpret it however they desired and use it for whatever purposes suited themselves without any concern for whether the source culture would regard this as incorrect. 'China' and, indeed, Japan, too, were 'mobile positions' (Sakaki 2006, 12). To some extent, this view reflects that of Chino (1994, 2003) who argues that as a category, 'China' referred to 'China-in-Japan'. The freedom that this afforded means that it is simplistic to describe the relationship as one where a Sinitic source generated a reaction, an 'influence' – adoption, adaptation or rejection – on the Japanese side, as this does not account for agency: rather than being overwhelmed, the Japanese actively and critically engaged with China and consciously decided what to do with its material, a 'negotiation' or 'appropriation' (Denecke 2004, 98).

More recent work has continued to refine both these positions. Focussing on the development of the Japanese writing system, Lurie (2011, 304) argues that as a result of the prevalence of *kundoku* (reading Sinitic sources aloud as Japanese) it is vital 'to abandon thinking in terms of difference or sameness on a linguistic level', because in the minds of the Japanese it was not a linguistic matter, but rather one of socio-cultural sphere: different scripts and styles of writing were appropriate for different contexts and contents. This leads him to reject Pollack's 'fracture of meaning' in favour of a 'festival of meaning' (2011,

311) and assert that it is a 'bilingual fallacy … that Japanese culture was divided into Chinese and Japanese spheres' (2011, 329). Building on this view, Steininger (2017, 10) argues that *kundoku* practices meant that all Heian writing should be viewed as positioned on 'a spectrum of potentially infinite gradation and variation'. With that being said, however, it is possible to challenge the view that *kundoku* reading meant there was a seamless integration of Sinitic and vernacular material: in his discussion of mediaeval Buddhist commentaries, Tollini (2022, 169) categorises *kundoku* as a form of translation which produced a new version of the Sinitic text which conveyed a 'forced interpretation' of its meaning to provide 'legitimacy to a personal and pre-constituted … vision'. This argument suggests that *kundoku* essentially marked a text and its content and served to emphasise the transformational agency of the reader.

This aligns with Steininger's insight that 'the educated elite worked hard to establish distinctions and oppositions' as 'ideological products generated through the reproduction of social hierarchy' (2017, 11). Persiani (2025, 189–193) provides a detailed account of how Japanese and Sinitic poetic and other production, and to some extent reception/interpretation, were largely the prerogatives of different groups at the Heian court and that these groups guarded their prerogatives closely, meaning that it is still appropriate to regard this as a period of ''dual' Sino-Japanese co-production' (2025, 193), rather than a universally hybrid use of both.

By contrast, Japanese scholarship, because it often takes a specific source text as its starting point, has generally continued to find the concept of a *wakan* dichotomy constructive. Studies have focused on the roles of specific individuals in introducing Sinitic concepts to Japan (Hato'oka 1992), individuals' usage of Sinitic material (Kidō 2014; Komeda 2017; Ōtsuka 1992; Satō 1992), foundational texts (Honma 1992; Ishikawa 2009), literary circles (Kidō 1992) and the transmission and usage of specific Sinitic material (Chen 2018; Okazaki 1995) to give several examples. Broadly speaking, these map onto and overlap with most of the four areas of study outlined by Watanabe (2008) and described by Persiani (2016, 34) as studies of 'influence … juxtaposition, comparison, tension … synthesis … [and] domestication'.

These positions, the *wakan* dichotomy and flexible engagement, are not necessarily mutually exclusive – as Persiani puts it, 'there is some truth in all the different positions' (2016, 37). Japanese writers and thinkers of the Heian period and earlier clearly had detailed knowledge of many ideas from China. It was a useful source of knowledge for almost every sphere of public and private life. There was also an awareness that writing in different scripts could have different impacts. Brightwell (2020, 115–116) notes that Jien in his treatise *Gukanshō* ('My Humble Thoughts'; 1219) categorises writing in Japanese script (*wabun*) as 'familiar' and 'possessed of a 'deeply embedded' meaning' and in Literary Sinitic as lacking these. It was also the case that it was not a

simple matter of writing in one or the other script: as Misumi (2007) has shown, there were a variety of script formats utilising different combinations of *kanji* and both types of *kana* for text production in use in the Heian and mediaeval periods.

To draw this discussion to a close, it seems that the concept of a *wakan* binary remains a useful framework in which to discuss aspects of Heian Japan. The principal reasons for this are twofold: first, that it is so ingrained that even scholars such as Sakaki, who rejects it, acknowledges that she has no choice but to use it because to do otherwise 'would only do injustice to the texts' (Sakaki 2006, 11). Second, even if it was for ideological reasons, Heian writers devoted considerable effort to explicating this binary and thus to deny its existence does them an injustice. As our later analysis of *Roppyakuban uta'awase* will show, both Shunzei and Kenshō clearly feel that there is a difference between *wa* and *kan* material and the correct uses for these in waka composition are also different. Nevertheless, we should remain cautious about categorising *wakan* opposition in strictly linguistic terms and acknowledge that both *wa* and *kan* have a wide range of meanings beyond 'Japan' and 'China', or 'native' and 'foreign', in different contexts and it is only through interrogating those contexts that we can come to an accurate understanding of what they mean in any given text.

Turning to waka specifically, it is an all but impossible task to point to a period when Japan's poetry was free of Sinitic influence. This influence falls into three broad areas, although not all of these were equally significant throughout. The three areas were: first, conceptual, providing ideas about the role and functions of poetry (literature) within society and the state. Second, critical, providing definitions of poetic styles, concrete rules for the construction and assessment of poetry and sources of ready-made authority for reaching critical judgements. Finally, practical: Sinitic poetry provided an extensive resource of tropes, images, diction and allusions for poets to use in the composition of their own work. These three areas were not exclusive and in practice tended to blend together. Thus, despite the fact that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Man'yōshū* ('Collection of a Myriad Leaves'; ca. 785) was extolled as an example of native verse uncorrupted by Sinitic influences, more recent scholarship suggests that its organisation and conception were influenced by Sinitic models (Iwatsu 1963, 15), and some poets' works display similarities to earlier Sinitic forms. For example, one of the most famous poems of Nukata no Ōkimi (fl. 630-690), *Man'yōshū* I: 16,[1] on the respective merits of Spring and Autumn, utilises a number of images and symbols for the two seasons which had previously been used in Sixth Dynasty Sinitic poetry (Li, Turzynski, and Daisuke 1996, 19), which again suggests that the Japanese elites of the seventh century were aware of continental poetic models and diction.

Waka poetics, too, were strongly influenced by the early adoption of Sinitic standards and models. Japan's earliest work on poetics, *Uta no shiki* ('Code of Poetry'; 772) or *Kakyō hyōshiki* ('A Formulary for Verse based on the Canons of Poetry'), attempts to import a number of aspects of Sinitic poetics (Iwatsu 1963; Rabinovitch 1991) as critical standards for waka, while in the later *Bunkyō hifuron* ('Literary Mirror and Secret Repository of Literature'; 810-23), Kūkai introduced a range of Tang theories of literary writing to a Japanese audience which were to have a long-lasting impact on waka poetry: in particular, the notions articulated by the Tang poet Wang Changling (698-756) in his work *Shige* ('Norm of Poetry') that poetry emerged from the human will (mind) and was the result of this will being put into words (Hato'oka 1992, 43):

> Poetry has its basis in the heart's intent. What lies in the heart is intent, and when intent is uttered it becomes poetry. Emotion stirs inside and finds form in words.[2]

This closely resembles Ki no Tsurayuki's opening statement in his preface to *Kokin wakashū* that 'Yamato poetry has its seed in the human heart and blossoms forth in a myriad leaves of words'.[3] That both *Kokin wakashū* prefaces and the functions they ascribe to poetry owe a debt to Sinitic sources has long been known (Duthie 2023, 310-326), with the 'Major Preface' (*Daxu*) to the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) being the most significant source. Although as Wixted (1983, 237) points out, later Japanese critics frequently 'misunderstood or ignored' elements of the Sinitic originals as they developed their own conceptual basis for *waka*.

That Japanese poets of the eighth century should be well-aware of and influenced by Sinitic practices should come as no surprise, as already by this period they were composing Sinitic poems themselves – something which culminated in the compilation of Japan's first anthology of domestically produced *kanshi*, *Kaifusō* ('A Florilegium of Cherished Airs') in 751. This was a precursor to the strong support for Sinitic composition provided in the ninth century as the form 'enjoyed an unprecedented vogue' (Konishi and McCullough 1978, 120), leading to the compilation of *Ryōunshū* ('An Anthology of Verse Loftier than the Clouds'; 814), *Bunka shūreishū* ('Collection of Masterpieces of Literary Talent'; c.818) and *Keikokushū* ('Collection for Managing the State'; 827) as imperially commissioned and sponsored projects. As the title of the final anthology suggests, during this time *kanshi* composition evolved into a means for the 'generation and perpetuation of cultural and political authority' (Minguzzi 2024, 5) of both the imperial house and other elites, following the incorporation of this form of poetic activity into the curriculum of the Bureau of Education (*Daigakuryō*) in the late eighth century, as well as a range of poetry-centred rituals, first Sinitic but later waka, into the business of the court as ways of bolstering imperial authority (Heldt 2008).

The ninth century's period of intensive engagement with Sinitic poetry was to have important consequences for waka, as key elements of Sinitic poetic practice, most notably those of the Six Dynasties period (220-589), were gradually adopted into vernacular poetry, and shaped the styles of waka composition which found expression and acknowledgement in the first imperial waka anthology, *Kokin wakashū* (Konishi and McCullough 1978; McCullough 1985). More significantly for our purposes here, though, this period also saw the development of more self-conscious interaction between Sinitic and Japanese poetry through the production of works which formally juxtaposed *kanshi* and waka as poets in the late ninth and early tenth century actively explored the different ways in which Sinitic and Japanese poems portrayed the world and vice versa. An early example of this was *Shinsen man'yōshū* ('Newly Selected Collection of a Myriad Leaves'; ca. 893) which contains 118 waka matched with a translation into a four-line Sinitic poem, and this was followed shortly afterwards by *Kudai waka* ('Verse Topic Poems'; ca. 900) which contains waka by Ōe no Chisato (dates unknown) each composed to reflect a fragment of Sinitic poetry (Smits 2000, 233–234). In later periods, *kudai waka*, the composition of poems inspired by Sinitic originals, was to become a genre in its own right: not only are there innumerable examples of waka composed with Sinitic phrases as their topics, entire larger works of poetry were also produced deriving from Sinitic originals. A key example of this would be *Monjū hyakushu* ('Hundred Poem Sequences on Topics from the *Wenji*'; 1218), which the poets Jien (1155-1225), Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) and Jakushin (dates unknown) produced as a form of Buddhist devotion (Ishikawa 1992, 170), drawing on the work of the Tang poet, Bai Juyi (772-846).

Bai's poetry is heavily represented in *Wakan rōeishū* ('Collection of Yamato and Cathay Poems for Recitation'; ca. 1013), a work traditionally attributed to Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041), which contains 803 poems, divided between Sinitic works produced in China, Sinitic works produced in Japan and waka. The thematic organisation of this work enabled its readers to find Sinitic material swiftly on a wide range of topics, 'catering to an apparent need for quick reference' (Smits 2000, 231), suggesting that some waka poets' engagement with Sinitic material was sometimes on a superficial level or based on primers rather than an in-depth reading of original Sinitic sources. That is, while there is no doubt that erudite poets would have read *Baishi wenji* ('The Collected Works of Master Bai'; 845), less dedicated or learned individuals would have relied upon those excerpts of his poetry contained in *Wakan rōeishū* to provide a patina of Sinitic knowledge and studied it as an educational resource (Steininger 2017, 97–98). There is evidence of this approach predating *Wakan rōeishū* in the surviving volumes of *Fusōshū* ('An Anthology of Fusō Poetry'; 995-999). This was a sixteen-volume collection of *kanshi* produced in Japan compiled by Ki no Tadana (957-1000), although only two volumes remain extant. Tasaka (1992, 187) notes

that this work was the first to be organised on encyclopaedic principles, which would make it easier to use as a reference source.

By the late twelfth century, when *Roppyakuban uta'awase* took place, Sinitic concepts, themes, images and texts were deeply embedded in waka practice, both as resources for composition and sources of authority. Shibayama (2012, 7) notes that Sinitic practices, such as portrait worship, became a model for waka-centred activities among newly established poetic lineage schools, such as the Rokujō and Mikohidari, both of whom were represented in the 'Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds', during this period.

Above I have briefly sketched the range of theoretical approaches to 'Japan's' engagement with 'China' as well as the entangled influence of Sinitic material on waka's development. In the remainder of this article, I will analyse how poet/critics in the early mediaeval period utilised and viewed this material in the context of their own practice, through a study of the 'Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds', prefacing this with a brief account of this *uta'awase* for context.

Roppyakuban uta'awase

The 'Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds' was a *hyakushu uta'awase* where the invited poets each composed a hundred poem sequence on one hundred topics set by the contest's sponsor, Fujiwara no Yoshitsune (1169-1206), who also paired the poems into rounds. The topics are equally divided between fifty seasonal ones and fifty on love; some of these are long-standing, while others had never been assigned in a formal *uta'awase* before. The twelve participants were more or less equally divided between representatives of the Rokujō (conservative) and Mikohidari (modernisers) poetic houses and members of the court elite.[4] The contest, then, provides a wide-ranging picture of both traditional and novel approaches to composition, supplemented by extensive critical apparatus in the form of the participants' comments on their opponents' poems, as well as Shunzei's judgements and Kenshō's *Chinjō*.[5]

Uses for sinitic material in waka poetics

Analysis of the *Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds* suggests that Sinitic material was used in various ways, both by the poets in the composition of their works, and by Shunzei in his judgements. Broadly speaking, the following types of usages can be identified. First, poetic allusion, that is a waka can allude directly to a *kanshi*, or other Chinese source by incorporating an element of its vocabulary or imagery. For example:

kyō to ieba/iwama ni yodomu/sakazuki o/matanu sora made/hana ni youran

> Talking of today,/Caught in clefts between the rocks, yet/The wine cups'/Not awaiting, even the skies seem/Drunk on blossom. (149)[6]

Shunzei remarks in his judgement that this poem is 'clearly in the conception of 'with blossom the heavens are drunk, as the peaches flourish" (178) ('*koko ni hana ni ama yoeri momo sumomo sakari nari' to ieru kokoro narubeshi*) (58–59).[7] This is a reference to a phrase in Sugawara no Michizane's prose preface to poems on the topic of the 'Third Day of the Third Month' in *Wakan rōeishū: chun zhi mu yue yue zhi san zhao tian guan yu hua tao li sheng ye* (Satō and Yanagisawa 2011, 16), translated by Rimer and Chaves as 'In the last month of spring, that month's third day, Heaven being intoxicated with flowers – the height of the peach and the plum' (1997, 36–38). The poem borrows directly from the Chinese phrase *tian guan yu hua* 'Heaven being intoxicated with flowers', for his own 'Drunk on blossom' (*hana ni youran*).

A second type of intertextual referencing of Sinitic material is where the entire waka is inspired by a Chinese source and attempts to encapsulate its emotional and factual content. An example of this type of usage would be:

> *itowarete/mune yasukaranu/omoi o ba/hito no ue ni zo/kakiutsushitsuru*
> Being despised/And my unquiet heart/Filled with feelings/Upon her/I paint them out! (1115)

This is a reference to a story about Changkang (Gu Kaizhi (c. 344-406)), a famous Chinese painter, falling in love with a woman and, being unable to meet her, painting a portrait of her and piercing its heart with a needle. The woman suffered as a result of this, and Gu Kaizhi was able to approach her (Fong 2003, 262). Kenshō's waka is written in the voice of the painter, Gu in this case, and relies upon its audience being aware of the Chinese tale for much of its impact.

The final usage of Sinitic material is in the critical poetic material in the contest – Shunzei's judgements, Kenshō's appeal, and the participants' criticisms. Here the usage is generally to identify a Sinitic source, or piece of diction and then evaluate its impact in the context of the poem. Kenshō and Shunzei, however, both use material derived from Sinitic sources as evidence for or against their critical positions, in an identical way to which they use references to, and material from native texts.

Shunzei's discussions of Sinitic material are made in the context of his overall criteria for assessing the quality of the poems in the contest, which broadly reflect the standard criteria for *uta'awase* judgement at this time. That is: first, do the poems adhere to the commonly accepted essential meaning ('conception' – *kokoro*) of their assigned topic (*dai*). Second, are the poems sufficiently 'formal' (*hare*) as evidenced by both the refined expression of emotion and the depiction of reality commonly accepted in poetic circles; and finally, is the meaning of the poems sufficiently clear that it can be easily understood

when heard (McAuley 2020, 21–28; Royston 1974), both in terms of the diction (*kotoba*) used and the overall sense of the poem derived from the combination of the other elements, 'configuration' (*sugata*).

Of the six hundred rounds in the contest, a total of twenty-seven contain clearly identifiable references to Sinitic material, either in the poems or in the accompanying critical discussions and/or judgements. Shunzei's criticisms can be broadly broken down into the following categories: topic (7) – the Sinitic material is unsuited; diction (5); clarity (4) – the Sinitic reference is too obscure to be easily understood; evidence (5) – Sinitic material is cited as evidence for or against a judgement; poetics (2) – Sinitic poetics are unsuited to waka; conception (1); configuration (1); other (1) – in this case commentary has identified a Sinitic reference, but Shunzei does not mention it. In five of these cases, Shunzei explicitly draws a distinction between what is appropriate in a Sinitic poem (*shi*) and what is appropriate in a *waka* (*uta*), stating that diction, phrases or allusions which are suitable for the former do not work in the latter. It is important to note that he is not hostile to Sinitic allusions under all circumstances: while he rejects them if they are unsuited to the topic or are insufficiently well-known to be easily understood, he approves of them if the opposite is the case.

As can be seen from the table below, most of the participants in the contest make Sinitic references: Kenshō (7); Teika (5); Ari'ie (4); Jakuren (2); Jien (2); Yoshitsune (2); Iefusa (1); Kanemune (1); Takanobu (1); Suetsune (1); Ietaka (1). The only poet who does not is Tsune'ie. Usage of Sinitic material is thus more or less evenly spread between the three groups represented in the contest: modernisers, conservatives and more senior members of the court (Table 1).

In two of the above poems (1051 and 1113), commentary has identified that the poets are alluding to a Sinitic source, but Shunzei makes no mention of it in his judgements, nor do the participants in their comments. In the latter case, it appears that he recognises that Yoshitsune, the author of the poem, is making an allusion, but states that he 'is completely unable to grasp what it might be' (926) (*kakugosezuhaberi*) (388). For the former poem, he remains silent and so it is unclear whether he has either failed to recognise the reference, or regards it as not worthy of comment, although the former appears more likely given that he is assiduous about identifying Sinitic references and discussing them in all other cases in the contest. As the poems in question lose or tie the rounds in which they are placed, however, it does not seem that the allusions have been a successful compositional strategy. In addition, the fact that most poems with Sinitic elements either lose or tie the rounds in which they appear, strongly suggests that overall Shunzei did not view the inclusion of this material as conducive to the production of good poetry.

Where Shunzei does comment on the participants' use of Sinitic material in their poems, he does so in various ways which illuminate his attitude to its use in waka. First, he is opposed to the use of diction which is overly Sinitic in tone. For example, he explicitly rejects Sinitic diction in:

Table 1 Sinitic-influenced poems in *Roppyakuban uta'awase*.

Poem no.	Topic	Poet	Result	Reason for judgement
149	The 3rd Day of the 3rd Month	Ari'ie	Loss	Topic
187	New Trees	Teika	Loss	Topic
600	The Names of the Buddhas	Jien	Tie	Topic
972	Love and Mountains	Jakuren	Tie	Topic
1009	Love and Bridges	Kenshō	Win	Topic
1035	Love and Trees	Teika	Tie	Topic
1101	Love and Zithers	Yoshitsune	Tie	Topic
163	Frogs	Kenshō	Loss	Diction
261	Fans	Teika	Win	Diction
414	The View over Hirosawa Pond	Takanobu	Loss	Diction
424	Ivy	Jien	Win	Diction
445	The Chrysanthemum Festival	Kenshō	Tie	Diction
1071	Love and Insects	Ari'ie	Loss	Diction
367	Autumn Rain	Kanemune	Loss	Clarity
453	The Chrysanthemum Festival	Suetsune	Tie	Clarity
1113	Love and Paintings	Yoshitsune	Tie	Clarity
1115	Love and Paintings	Kenshō	Loss	Clarity
258	Fans	Iefusa	Loss	Evidence
334	Lightning	Jakuren	Loss	Evidence
973	Love and the Sea	Kenshō	Loss	Evidence
1074	Love and Insects	Ietaka	Loss	Evidence
1081	Love and Flutes	Kenshō	Loss	Evidence
981	Love and the Sea	Teika	Tie	Poetics
1141	Love and Pleasure Girls	Kenshō	Loss	Poetics
1051	Love and Birds	Ari'ie	Loss	Conception
635	Rumoured Love	Teika	Tie	Configuration
815	Love in the Day	Ari'ie	Win	Other

tsuki no sumu/sora wa yoso ni mo/kawaraji o/manako ni amaru/hirosawa no kage
The moon, so clearly lodged/Within the skies, distant yet/Unchanging:/The sight can never sate my eyes/Light on Hirosawa. (414)

Here, he states that the phrasing of this poem 'is reminiscent of expressions like 'all four corners of the world laid out before my gaze', which when one hears them in Chinese poetry are remarkable, but sound wrong in a Japanese poem, and are even incomprehensible!' (394–395) ('*sanzen sekai wa me mae ni tsukinu' nado, shi nite kikeba imijiku koso haberedo, uta nite wa kikiyokarazu, mimi ni mo oyobazu*). He is referring here to the first section of a *kanshi* contained in *Wakan rōeishū* (II: 583): *san qian shi jie yan qian jin* (Satō and Yanagisawa 2011, 190), which contains the Buddhist expression *san qian shi jie* (literally 'the three thousand worlds'), referring to the cosmos. Shunzei was certainly not hostile to waka exploring Buddhist themes or making Buddhist allusions. After all, he was the first compiler of an imperial poetry anthology to

devote an entire 'book' to poems influenced by Buddhism (Miller 2013), and later in the competition he speaks approvingly of Jien using an allusion to the Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra (*Kanfugenkyō*) in his poem on the topic of 'The Names of the Buddhas',[8] saying that the poem 'moves the heart' (537) (*kokoro utsurihaberu*) (221). Nevertheless, his judgement on Takanobu's poem implies that he feels Sinitic diction makes for poor poetry.

He returns to this theme later in the contest in his criticism of this poem:

> *saritomo to/matsubeki hodo no/nasake ka wa/hito tanomenaru/kumo no furumai*
> However faint, I thought,/Through all my waiting hours/Were his feelings,/He can be trusted,/Says the spider's spinning! (1071)

Here, he states that 'the Left's central section recalls 'Men are not trees or stone – they have feelings' – while this is elegant diction in Chinese composition, it does not seem so in our own poetry' (897) (*hidari no naka no goji, 'hito ki ishi ni arazu, mina nasake ari' to, shi nado ni wa yū no kotoba naredo, uta ni wa samade mo haberazaru*) (374). He is referring to a line from Bai Juyi's poem 'Lady Li' (*Li furen*), *ren fei mu shi jie you qing*. In both above cases Shunzei is consistently taking the position that the diction used in Japanese and Chinese poetry is different, and that language which is appropriate and well-chosen for the latter form sounds out-of-place or worse in the former.

Even where a poem's diction is simply redolent of Sinitic phrasing, without directly alluding to a specific instance of it, Shunzei still feels this is inappropriate in waka composition. For example:

> *toshi o hete/koke ni mumoruru/furu tera no/noki ni aki aru/tsuta no iro kana*
> The years pass by and,/Buried in moss,/The ancient temple's/Eaves in autumn take/On ivy's hues … (424)

Shunzei takes issue with the phrase 'ancient temple' (*furu tera*), saying that while such expressions are 'splendid' (*yū*) in *kanshi*, they are 'not particularly evocative in Japanese verse' (403–404) (*uta ni wa koto ni en narazaru*) (168). Despite this criticism, he still awards a win to Jien's poem, but this is at least partly due to the faults of the poem against which it is matched.

Even in cases where Shunzei does not find diction based upon Sinitic sources unacceptable as such, he remains critical if he feels the reference is unsuited to the waka in question. For example:

> *kage hitasu/mizu sae iro zo/midorinaru/yomo no kozue no/onaji wakaba ni*
> Steeped in shade/Even the water's hue/Has turned to green:/All around, the treetops/Loft the same new leaves … (187)

The Right criticise the use of *hitasu* in the initial part of the poem as 'not at all laudable' (*kōshinsezu*), with the poet, Teika, defending himself by stating that

he has followed the conception of a line from a new ballad (*xinyuefu*) by Bai Juyi, 'steeped in the southern mountains' shade' (*ying jin nan shan*). In his judgement, Shunzei acknowledges the reference, but states that 'in this poem it appears to give an inappropriate emphasis' (212–213) (*kono uta ni shiite shoki-subekarazu*) (82), which shifts the topic from the assigned one of *New Trees*, closer to that of Bai's, which was *Pond Water*.

Shunzei makes a similar criticism of this poem:

> *koi shinaba/kokemusu tsuka ni/kae furite/moto no chigiri no/kuchi ya hatenan*
> Should I have died of love and/Upon my moss-hung tomb/An aged cypress be/Would those vows from long ago/Have rotted quite away? (1035)

This alludes to a statement recorded in *Shiji* by the wife of Duke Wen of Jin that if he should take twenty-five years to return to her, then all he will find is a cypress tree growing on her tomb. Shunzei acknowledges the Sinitic source material, but states that this 'lacks admirable qualities' (868) (*kōshinsezaru*) (362) and only awards the poem a tie. His criticism here is that, despite the implications of steadfast love in the Sinitic source, this does not outweigh the negative connotations for a love poem of introducing references to death, and a tree, the cypress, which was strongly associated with it.

He is similarly unenthused by:

> *natsu no yo no/tsuki wa irinuru/nagusame ni/narasu ōgi o/tatou bakari zo*
> On summer nights/When the moon shines in,/My only consolation is/A fluttered fan's/Simple sign. (258)

The Left identify this poem as alluding to a poem by a Buddhist monk, Chih-i (538–597), and included in *Wakan rōeishū*: 'The moon is hidden by layered mountains, ah!/we lift a fan to show it' (Rimer and Chaves 1997, 175) (*yue xi zhong shan xi ju shan yu zhi*) (Satō and Yanagisawa 2011, 191). Shunzei acknowledges this, and agrees with the Left that the poem has 'nothing special to mention' (*betsu no koto nashi*) other than this Sinitic allusion, although he does ask cryptically, 'Shouldn't we expect something more?' (274) (*kanarazu sono hoka no koto arubekarazaru ya*) (97). Kubota and Yamaguchi (1998, 97) suggest that he is implying that Iefusa is making a reference to a remark by Nakanokimi in *Genji monogatari,* but even so, this reference is not sufficient to allow it to win the round, as his final judgement is that the opposing poem is 'just, the winner' (274) (*sukoshi wa masarihaberu nan*) (97).

Similarly, in his judgement on Ari'ie's poem alluding to Sugawara no Michizane's preamble to the selection of poems on the *Third Day of the Third Month* in *Wakan rōeishū* (above), Shunzei acknowledges the reference, but awards victory to the opposing poem. His reason for doing so is that this poem 'captures the light better' (178) (*kage, yoroshikuhaberu*) (59), and so is based

on the merits of this poem outweighing those of Ari'ie's, but the implication is that he does not feel that the Sinitic reference significantly strengthens Ari'ie's conception.

In cases where the poets have sought to evoke an incident from a Sinitic source through their poems, without quoting from it directly, Shunzei is somewhat equivocal in his judgements. For example, he describes:

> *kono yo ni wa/yoshino no yama no/oku ni dani/ari to wa tsuraki/hito ni shirareji*
> Within this world, were I/In the Yoshino mountains'/Heart, even so/That cruel/One would know it not! (972)

As 'overly pretentious' (*kokoro, amari ni ya aran*) for its allusion to the tale of the Four White-Headed Recluses of Mount Shan,[9] stating that 'it is extremely difficult, in the end, to make these sentiments relevant to our own land' (803) (*wa ga chō sue ni oyobi, sono kokorozashi togen koto, hanahada gatakarubeshi*) (341). His argument here is that alluding to a tale of foreign political protest lacks resonance with the assigned topic of *Love and Mountains*. He was later to display a similar impatience with individuals making what he regarded as ill-informed allusions to Sinitic sources, remarking in his treatise *Korai fūteishō* that if people had only a superficial understanding of Chinese literature and 'thinking it makes them sound knowledgeable' (*mono shirigao sen tote*) referred to it, it was 'extraordinarily unpleasant' (*itoito migurushikuhaberi*) (Hashimoto, Ariyoshi, and Fujihira 2002, 340).

He makes a similar criticism of:

> *haru aki ni/tomeru yado ni wa/shiragiku o/kasumi no iro ni/ukabete zo miru*
> Long life's/Blessings to this house:/White chrysanthemums/In pale blue haze/Adrift, I see … (453).

This poem contains a series of Sinitic allusions: to a passage from Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, and to conventional Chinese associations between the seasons of spring and autumn and the colours blue and white. In his judgement, Shunzei suggests that the poem must also be alluding to a *kanshi* in *Wakan rōeishū*,[10] and speculates that the reference to haze is alluding to *ryūka* ('flowing haze'), a pale blue wine said to be drunk by sages. He says, however, that 'to simply say 'in pale blue haze' suggests that one is really referring to haze, itself' (431) (*tada 'kasumi no iro' to bakari wa, makoto ni kasumi nite ya haberan*) (168). The implication is that Shunzei regards allusions as pointless if the audience does not understand them.

He repeats this opinion in his judgement on Kenshō's poem on *Love and Paintings*, mentioned above, something which is echoed by the participants, who simply ask 'What is the Left's poem about?' (927) (*hidari no uta, nanigoto ni ka*) (389). While Kenshō explains the allusion to the story of Gu Kaizhi,

Shunzei takes him to task for failing to cite the source of this story and comments that he has 'no recollection of a person named in this Chinese manner' (*yōtōin nado no jinmei ni mo miru koto tomo oboehaberaneba*) (930), and facetiously suggests he would have no choice but to read the name as a Japanese one due to this ignorance (927–928). It is clear from this that he feels allusions to Sinitic sources should be clear enough for a person hearing, or reading, a poem to grasp its sense. He makes a similar point in his judgement on:

> *inishie no/hito o kiku ni mo/aki no yo no/mado utsu ame wa/sabishikarikeri*
> Long ago/The ladies, I hear,/On autumn nights/With rain beating 'gainst the window/ Were lonely, as am I … (367)

He states this poem alludes to 'concubines at the court of Xuanzong, but I wonder if this is clearly enough expressed in the poem?' (359) (*jōyōjin no arisama nado ni koso wa to oshihakarare haberi namu. Sashi mo tashika ni, uta ni wa ikaga*) (137). The implication of the remark is clearly that he feels the allusion is not sufficiently transparent to be easily understood. Once again, he is arguing that this needs to be the case in a good poem.

It should be said that Kenshō strongly disagrees with this view. In his *Appeal* against Shunzei's judgement on his poem on *Love and Paintings*, he states that ''One should not compose based upon sources of which people are not normally aware' is the substance of the aforementioned gentlemen's ideas' (*'honbun nado wa tsune ni hito shiretaru koto narazu wa yomubekarazu' to iikeru wa, sendachi no gi nari*), and that this makes Shunzei 'an unenlightened man' (*bonjin*), because 'when one starts to read such a source, although it is relatively obscure, having read it, would the majority of folk not understand?' (1150–1155) (*kono honbun, yomihajimuru toki wa, sa koso obotsukanakeredo, yomitachinureba, motobito mina shiru ka*) (468–469). He thus puts the onus on the audience to be sufficiently well-read to understand a poem's allusions.

There are, however, some cases where Shunzei finds allusions to Sinitic sources acceptable, and this is generally when the source in question is familiar enough to be understood. For example, the following poem makes a transparent allusion to a tale from *Wen xuan*, where King Huai of Chu meets a goddess who says she will turn herself into clouds and rain for him:

> *kumo to nari/ame to naru chō/nakazora no/yume ni mo mieyo/yowa narazu tomo*
> Whether you become clouds, or/Whether you become rain/In the heart of the heavens/ Let me glimpse you in a dream,/Though night time it is not … (815)

While he does not comment on the Sinitic reference explicitly, Shunzei obviously approves of it, stating that 'the style of the Left's poem sounds utterly elegant and beautiful' (685) (*hidari no uta, fūtei subete yūbi ni kikoehaberi*) (290).

Similarly, this poem meets with his approval for alluding to the famous Han-period love story of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun (Knechtges and Chang 2013, 970–975).

> *iza ya sa wa/kimi ni awazu wa/wataraji to/mi o ujihashi ni/kakitsuketemin*
> So, then,/If I am not to meet you,/I'll not cross/In my despair, the bridge at Uji/But just inscribe this here … (1009)

Shunzei states that this is 'particularly charming' (*koto ni okashiku koso haberumere*), and goes on to add that 'the conception of the Left's poem seems rare, indeed' (843–844) (*hidari no uta no kokoro mezurashiku mo miehaberi*) (353). The tale of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun would have been familiar to readers in Shunzei's day because it is included in the widely read *Mengqiuji* ('Child's Treasury'), an instructional text of historical anecdotes. Indeed, Shunzei mentions that this is how he knows the tale in his judgement. It seems, therefore, that he regards Sinitic allusions in waka to be acceptable if they are to well-known sources and fit the conception of the assigned topic.

Such references, however, need to be used correctly. This poem alludes to a phrase in the prologue to *Si jiu fu* ('Rhapsody on Times Past') by the Chinese poet Xiang Xu:

> *hitorine o/ima wa nani ni ka/nagusamen/tonari no fue mo/fukiyaminu nari*
> Sleeping solo,/Now, how can I/Console myself?/For the flute next door/Has ceased to play … (1081)

In his judgement, Shunzei states that in the Sinitic source, there is no 'suggestion that he has stopped playing, so I wonder how appropriate it is in this poem to say that the playing has stopped' (904–905) (*fukiyamu yue mo naki o, kore wa fukiyameru koto no aru yō ni kikoyuru, ikaga*) (378). His point here is that if a poem is built around an allusion to another text, it needs to be expressing the sense of that text correctly and not distorting it. In a more general sense, Shunzei does make use of Sinitic material as evidence in support of his judgements about the seasonal appropriateness of items of diction where these are disputed. For example, the following autumn poem uses *hotaru* ('fireflies'):

> *sudakikoshi/sawa no hotaru wa/kage kiete/taedae yadoru/yoi no inazuma*
> All together have/The fireflies above the marsh/Lost their light;/Briefly remaining,/Lightning at the dusk … (334)

The participants in the contest disagree about the appropriateness of using fireflies in an autumn poem, with Shunzei settling the dispute by quoting two Sinitic sources: Pan Anren's 'Rhapsody on Autumn Inspirations' (*Qiu xing fu*)

and a poem by the Tang poet Xu Han included in *Wakan rōeishū* (I: 182), both of which refer to fireflies in autumn contexts. Later in the contest, he refers to both poems again, in his judgement on this poem:

> *natsumushi mo/urayamashiki wa/aki no yo no/tsuyu ni wa moenu/omoi narikeri*
> The fireflies are/A source of envy,/On an autumn night/When dewfall damps down/The fires of my passion … (1074)

Here, he takes issue with Ietaka's choice of the word *natsumushi* (literally 'summer insects') to refer to fireflies, carrying as it does the implication that the creatures only appeared in that season. Based on the Sinitic evidence, Shunzei finds against the poem, saying 'Even though there are countless cases of Autumn fireflies, how can one have composed suggesting that there are not?' (899) (*aki no hotaru, agete-kazoubekarazu o, ikaga aki wa nashi to yomikirihaberubeki*) (375). To some extent, Shunzei is redefining acceptable interpretations of *natsumushi* as a piece of waka diction here, as the expression had a long history of being used to mean 'fireflies', with which Ietaka is simply complying.[11]

Sinitic material was used as evidence to support, or reject, criticisms of a poem's construction. Both Shunzei and Kenshō draw on Sinitic material for these purposes, with the latter often disagreeing with Shunzei's use of Sinitic sources as evidence that his poems were ill-formed. This is most evident in the critical discussion concerning Kenshō's poem on the topic of *Frogs*:

> *yamabuki no/niou ide o ba/yoso ni mite/kaiya ga shita mo/kawazu naku nari*
> Golden kerria/Glow in Idé,/Glimpsed afar;/Beneath the kaiya, too,/The frogs are calling. (163)

The critical discussion in this round focusses on the correct meaning of the term *kaiya*, a *Man'yō* expression about which there were several different competing interpretations. The argument is too involved to discuss in detail here, but in summary Shunzei, supported by Jakuren, who also uses the term in his poem on *Love and Smoke*, believes it to refer to a type of smudge hut constructed in the fields around harvest time to keep animals away from the crops. By contrast, Kenshō argues that it refers to a silkworm hut, or a type of fish-trap. In the course of the discussion, Shunzei draws upon Sinitic sources as evidence for where it is appropriate to position frogs when composing poetry about them, saying, 'Emperor Hui of the Jin Dynasty listened to toads at the Park of Blossoming Trees … in both Tang and our own poetry, the places where one listens to frogs are all out among the paddies or marshes' (*shin no keitei hiki o kikishimo, karinen to ieri … kanke honcho, kawazu hiki no naku tokoro, mina den'en suitaku naritehereba*). The reference to a Sinitic source is used to add additional weight to his conclusion that the poets of the Left 'should cease to circulate their theories' (191) (*mottomo teishi arubeki no gi nari*) (65) about the meaning of *kaiya*.

Unsurprisingly, Kenshō rejects Shunzei's criticisms in his *Chinjō*, and argues forcefully that there is evidence to support his interpretations.[12] He also takes issue with Shunzei's use of a Sinitic source, stating, 'one does not need to go off deliberately making enquiries in either the villages of Idé in Yamashiro, or the Park of Blossoming Trees in Cathay!' (1056) (*anagachi ni kanke no karinen, yamashiro no ide no sato made tazunerarerubekarazu*) (441). He reiterates this point later in the contest, when Shunzei criticises his poem:

> *kujira toru/sakashiki umi no/soko made mo/kimi dani sumaba/namiji shinogan*
> The whale-hunting/Savage sea's/Depths: even there,/Should it be your dwelling,/Would I endure the waves … (973)

Shunzei says it 'sounds extremely fearsome' (*ito osoroshiku kikoyu*), and goes on to draw upon a Sinitic source as a reason for its inappropriateness: 'When Emperor Qin Shihuang sought Mount Penglai, although he said to 'shoot' great fish, I have not heard that he went so far as to 'hunt' them' (805) (*shinkō no hōko o tazuneshimo, tada ōzakana o 'iyo' nado wa ōseshikadomo, 'tore' to made wa kikoezariki*) (341). Kenshō calls this argument 'bizarre' (*ayashiku kikoehaberu*), emphasising 'that 'whale-hunting' does not occur in the *Three Histories* or the *Selections of Refined Literature*[13] is a matter of no importance for the poetry of Yamato' (1136) (*sanshi, bunsen ni kujira toru shōmon no haberazaran wa, waka no daiji ni haberazu*) (463).

It is not the case, however, that Kenshō always rejects the use of Sinitic material as evidence. His poem on *The Chrysanthemum Festival* is:

> *wakekitsuru/nasake nomi ka wa/sogagiku no/iro motehayasu/shirotae no sode*
> To tell between them/Does not need soft thoughts alone –/Yellow chrysanthemums'/Hues combined with/Sleeves of white mulberry cloth. (445)

There is some discussion between the participants over the correct interpretation of the term *sogagiku*, which Kenshō asserts to mean 'yellow chrysanthemum'. In his judgement, Shunzei accepts that this theory has some circulation, but concludes that 'in the absence of definite proof' (425) (*tashikanaru akashi, taezaru no aida*) (166), he must make the round a tie. In his appeal, Kenshō states that it is 'well known' (*zonjitehaberu*) (453) that *sogagiku* refers to yellow chrysanthemums, and quotes examples from two Chinese texts, *Wen xuan* and *Li jian baiyong*[14] in support of his argument that even if an expression in one text does not refer explicitly to a colour, this can be inferred by relying upon a more definite reference in an earlier one (1095–1096). Thus, in this context he is relying upon a Chinese precedent to provide him with support for his critical argument about the interpretation of waka diction.

It is also the case, however, that Shunzei displays an impatience with the criticism of waka based on Chinese poetics. For example, there is:

tōzakaru/hito no kokoro wa/unabara no/oki yuku funa no/ato no shiokaze
Ever more distant grows/His heart:/Into the sea-plains of/The offing goes a boat,/Wake touched by the tidewinds … (981)

The Right criticise this for having too many instances of the particle *no*, based on, Shunzei says, 'the long-established hornet-hip or crane-knee faults' (*hōyō-kakushitsu no yamai tadasu, kyūgi nari*), referring to two out of the 'Eight Poetic Faults' (*shihachibyō*) in poetic composition, originally derived from Chinese poetics. He goes on to remark, however, that 'in today's poetry there are countless poems in which these faults can be identified' (*ima wa dōji no akashi, agete-kazoubekarazu*), indicating that he does not regard poetic criticism based upon these theories to be well-founded. This point is something he was to repeat in *Korai fūteishō*, where he argues that attempting to avoid producing waka containing these faults is pointless, because 'should one do so, one would end up discounting all of the good poems from ancient times' (*sore o saraba, furuki yoki utadomo mina koto yaburehaberinubeshi*) (Hashimoto, Ariyoshi, and Fujihira 2002, 337). He is not so explicit here in the contest, confining himself to remarking ironically that 'it seems that a Gentleman of the Right, being so well-read in Chinese scholarship, has required revisions to the faulty poem of the Left in the absence of the judge' (811) (*hidari no uta no nan, shogi o matazushite, uta o naoshiaratamemu, migi no kata sadameshi taiju shikōsemuru*) (344) (here Shunzei is being sarcastic about the Right's presumption in correcting the Left's poem without waiting for his judgement), and making this round a tie.

Shunzei reveals a similar opinion in his judgement on:

ashima wake/tsuki ni utaite/kogu fune ni/kokoro zo mazu wa/nori'utsurinuru
Parting the reeds, and/Singing to the moon,/Boats come rowing out –/My heart, it is, that is first/Aboard and carried away … (1141)

In response to the Right's criticism that his poem lacks a clear sense of pleasure girls, Kenshō responds that the conception of his poem, and thus its link with the topic, is conveyed by his allusion to a phrase in a *kanshi* by Ōe no Mochitoki: *lu ye chun qing* 'Reed-leaves are fresh in springtime'.[15] In his judgement, Shunzei challenges the use of this as evidence, stating, 'the poetry of Yamato and Cathay have aspects where they are similar, and aspects where they differ. Thus, it is not appropriate to cite a Cathay poem's broaching of its topic as evidence for the content of a Yamato poem' (1156) (*Shi to uta to wa onajikushite mata onajikarazu michi nari. Shi no hadai no ku o motte uta no tameshi ni wa hikubekarazaru nari*) (402). His argument is thus that, despite the similarities between *kanshi* and waka, due to the differences between the ways in which they indicate their topic, the former cannot be used as evidence about the topic of the latter.

Kenshō rejects this view in his *Appeal*, stating that 'there are no set functions for specific lines' (*nanigoto mo sadamaritaru ku nashi*) in waka, and each 'provides support to the mood of the poem' (*fūjō no moyōsu tokoro o kusari*). This means that when drawing on *kanshi* for inspiration 'we adopt similar elements and abandon those which are different' (*onajiki kata oba tori, ninu tokoro oba sutereba*). Thus, Shunzei's argument is 'confused about the differences between our own forms and those of Cathay' (*wakan no kawarime ni madoi*), and is an example of 'self-contradictory blundering' (1156–1159) (*jigo sōi no shitsu*) (470).

Conclusion

The analysis above enables us to draw several conclusions about the role of Sinitic material in waka at the end of the twelfth century. First, poet/critics were keenly aware of, and could identify, diction, images and allusions to Sinitic sources and, regarded them as distinct and different from native material. Thus, the *wakan* dichotomy was present and a foundational element of poetics. Second, while all these elements were used in waka composition, mainstream and authoritative critical opinion, as represented by Shunzei, viewed these as generally inappropriate and producing inferior poems. This opinion is not based on a belief that the Sinitic material was of lower quality than native material, but rather on a belief that it was incompatible in tone with the best waka aesthetic. To put it colloquially, it carried too much baggage to allow for delicate and nuanced expression.

Sinitic material was, however, regarded as a potentially authoritative source in matters of interpretation and it was available for citation in support of this and wider critical positions. Critics' attitude to Sinitic evidence was not unquestioning: sometimes it was felt to be relevant and accepted, and sometimes not. Whether or not such an argument would be regarded as convincing depended to some extent on how well-known the Sinitic source was, with more widely circulated texts being felt to be stronger evidence. Attitudes were also contextual, with individuals arguing both for and against the relevance and appropriateness of Sinitic evidence in different situations, but even in such cases there was a clear awareness that such evidence was Sinitic and, as such, different from native material.

To conclude, then, early mediaeval waka poetics displays the characteristics of both broad theoretical conceptions of Japan's engagement with 'China': a keen and clear awareness of difference, combined with a nuanced adoption of elements for specific purposes, set against a background of longstanding and deep engagement and influence.

Notes

1. See https://www.wakapoetry.net/mys-i-16/for the original text, transcription and translation into English.
2. The translation here is taken from Cai (2017, 192). This article contains a detailed discussion of Wang's poetics and their significance.
3. The translation here is my own. See Kojima and Arai (1989, 4) for the original text.
4. The participants were: Fujiwara no Takanobu (1142-1205), Fujiwara no Sada'ie (Teika) (1162-1241), Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158-1237), Jakuren (1139?-1202?) (Mikohidari); Fujiwara no Suetsune (1131-1221), Fujiwara no Tsune'ie (1149-1209), Fujiwara no Ari'ie (1155-1216), Kenshō (1130?-1209?) (Rokujō); Fujiwara no Yoshitsune, Fujiwara no Iefusa (1144/45-1231), Fujiwara no Kanemune (1163-1242), Jien (1155-1225) (Court).
5. For a full discussion of the contents and significance of the match, see McAuley (2020, 1–39).
6. Unless otherwise specified all translations from *Roppyakuban uta'awase* are taken from McAuley (2020), where the Japanese script version of the poems can also be found. Poems are identified by their number in the contest.
7. All translations of Shunzei's or other poets' comments are taken from McAuley (2020), while the transcription is based on Kubota and Yamaguchi (1998). Page references only are given for both sources.
8. *Tonaetsuru/hotoke no mina wa/asahi nite/yagate kieyuku/hito tose no tsuyu* 'The proclaimed/Buddhas' Honoured names are/As the morning sun,/Finally dispelling/The year's dewfall.' (600).
9. The Four White-Headed Recluses of Mount Shang were Dong Yuangong, Qi Liji, Luli Xiansheng and Xia Huanggong. All four were officials who retired to Mount Shang and engaged is scholarly pursuits in protest at the despotic rule of Shihuangdi at the end of the Qin dynasty (221– 206 BC).
10. *Chang sheng dian li chun qiu fu bu lao men qian ri yue ban* 'Within the Hall of Longevity, our young Lord will live on;/Slow is the passage of days and months within the Gates of Eternal Youth!' Yoshishige no Yasutane (*Wakan rōeishū* II: 774).
11. For example, in 'Former Emperor Yōzei's Poetry Match' (*Yōzei-in uta'awase*) held in the summer Engi 12-13 [912-13], where the topic is 'Love and summer insects' (*natsumushi no koi*) and the expression is clearly intended to be interpreted as meaning 'fireflies'. See Hagitani (1957, 179–180).
12. For a detailed discussion of this, see: McAuley (2021).
13. This refers to *Wen xuan* (ca. 520– 530): one of the earliest anthologies of Chinese poetry.
14. 'Li Jiao's Hundred Verses': an early Tang collection of poetry on defined topics.
15. The complete poem is: *jia jia jiang he nan bei an/xin tong shang xia wang lai zhou/gui hua qiu bai yun xian di/lu ye chun qing shui leng tian* 'Houses stand between the northern and southern shores of rivers great;/Hearts stand still as the boats go back and forth, up and down./In autumn, clouds of white cinnamon flowers bloom in silent spaces;/Reed-leaves are fresh in springtime, watered by the chilly heavens.' (*Shinsen rōeishū* 672).

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