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SPOTLIGHT

Issues at Stake in Poetic Commentary in Medieval Japan: Fujiwara no Teika's *Secret Investigations of Kenshō's Commentary [on Kokin waka shū], Kenchū mikkan* (1221)

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In order to understand the issues at stake in poetic commentary in medieval Japan, this article examines one of the oldest commentaries in the Japanese tradition, the *Kenchū mikkan* or "Secret investigations of Kenshō's commentary [on *Kokin waka shū*]", a commentary on the first anthology of Japanese poetry compiled by imperial order, around 905. The *Kenchū mikkan* dates from 1221. It is a double commentary by two poets, among the most important in the Japanese tradition, who belonged to two rival poetic schools. The first, Kenshō (1130?–1209), belonged to the Rokujō school, while the second, Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), was head of the Mikohidari school. Around 1183, Kenshō wrote a commentary entitled *Kokin hichū shō* "Notes on the secret commentaries of the *Kokin [waka shū]*", in which he comments on 410 of the 1111 poems of the imperial anthology. In 1221, Teika added his own commentaries to Kenshō's text: *Kenchū mikkan* is the title given to this double commentary. In the article we examine the entire section dedicated to the Laments, that is to say, 12 poems and their commentaries. Reading this section will enable us to understand the specific points of the two poets' commentaries, and therefore what they considered to be the essential information to be conveyed.

本文通過分析日本傳統中最古老的評論之一《顯注密勘》，旨在探討中世紀日本詩歌評論的重要性。《古今和歌集》是日本第一部由天皇下令編纂的和歌集，成書於 905 年左右。《顯注密勘》是由日本最重要的兩位詩人為《古今和歌集》撰寫的雙重評注，他們分別來自兩個激烈競爭的詩派。六條派的顯昭在 1183 年成書的《古今秘注抄》中對《古今和歌集》的 1111 首詩中的 410 首進行了評注。禦子左學派的藤原定家在顯昭的文本基礎上增補了自己的注疏，形成了《顯注密勘》。通過研讀《顯注密勘》中哀歌部分的 12 首詩及其評注，可以深入瞭解這兩位詩人評論的重點，從而把握他們認為需要傳達的關鍵信息。

Keywords: *Kokin waka shū*, *Kenchū mikkan*, Fujiwara no Teika, Kenshō, Japan, poetry

關鍵詞： 古今和歌集，顯注密勘，藤原定家，顯昭，日本，詩歌

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Introduction[1]

Heir to the Chinese exegetical tradition, the practice of commentary dates back in Japan to the beginning of the 7th century (603 to be precise) when Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (574–622), a fervent defender of Buddhism, wrote his *Sangyō gishō* 三経義疏 (*Commentaries on the Three Sutras*).

In the poetic field, the oldest commentaries date from the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century. The work that has been the subject of the greatest number of commentaries is the *Kokin waka shū* 古今和歌集 (*A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*), the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, compiled around 905. In order to understand what was at stake in poetic commentary in classical Japan, I would like here to read a double commentary on the first imperial anthology, completed at the beginning of the 13th century and the work of two major poets.

The first of the two commentaries is the work of the poet Kenshō 顕昭 (1130?–1209), famous for his erudition. He wrote, around 1183, a work entitled *Kokin hichū-shō* 古今秘注抄 (*Notes on the secret commentaries of Kokin [waka shū]*). This text owed its success to the commentaries added by the poet Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241). The latter, compiler of the eighth and ninth imperial anthologies of Japanese poetry, was considered the greatest poet of his time.[2] This double commentary is entitled *Kenchū mikkan* 顕注密勘 (*Secret investigations of Kenshō's commentary [on the Kokin waka shū]*). In this work, Kenshō and Teika comment on 410 of the 1111 poems in the imperial anthology, the poems that according to Kenshō needed a commentary to be properly understood. Teika finished writing his commentaries in 1221; he was then 59 years old and Kenshō had been dead for more than ten years. In addition to being one of the earliest commentaries on the *Kokin waka shū*, the *Kenchū mikkan* is the only double commentary on the imperial anthology. It therefore enables us to appreciate the dialogic nature of poetic criticism at the time and to learn about the points of view of two major poets of the period. In this respect, the *Kenchū mikkan* is of exceptional interest.

No autograph manuscript of the *Kenchū mikkan* in Teika's hand has been preserved.[3] We therefore read this text based on copies. For this article, I have used the printed version contained in volume 5 of the supplementary series of the *Nihon kagaku taikei* 日本歌學大系 collection, a text established by Kyūsojin Hitaku 久曽神昇 from a manuscript preserved in the collection of the Imperial Palace Library (*Kunaichō shoryōbu* 宮内庁書陵部)[4] as well as the facsimile of the manuscript preserved in

[1] I would like to thank my colleagues Sumie Terada who kindly checked my translations of the commentaries and Joshua S. Mostow who read my article before its submission.

[2] On Fujiwara no Teika see Atkins 2017 and Vieillard-Baron 2001. More broadly, on the actors and activities connected to medieval poetic commentary, see Huey 2002.

[3] A manuscript of the *Kenchū mikkan* in Teika's hand has been discovered recently (in 2024) in the Reizei familly library. But it was after this article was written.

[4] *Kenchū mikkan*, 1981.

the collection of the Chūō University 中央大學 Library (Tokyo), published by Kubota Jun 久保田淳.[5] The latter is a manuscript which probably dates from the 16th century.

Before starting to read the commentaries, we must read the afterword that Teika wrote for his work, which will allow us to understand the stakes of this double commentary. In the original version, the afterword is presented as a continuous text in a single block. As this text is very dense and requires explanations to be fully understood, I felt it would be more appropriate to split it into three paragraphs, A, B, and C, after which I will insert the necessary explanations.The division was made according to the meaning of the text. Each paragraph deals with a different point.

A.

> "I came across the three volumes of commentaries [by Kenshō] quite unexpectedly. Being by nature ignorant, and on top of that, having no taste for study, I did not even think of writing down the few things that I have heard in the past or that I think today. While my writings would not exceed a single sheet of paper, the areas that Kenshō examined and reflected on in his commentary are really very wide, and the skill with which he arranges his considerations is readily apparent. Now, then, I have the highest regard for this exceptional man. During his life, when he was discussing the value of a poem (*waka* 和歌),[6] in what he said, for example, in his judgments on poetry matches, he was unbendingly stubborn about what he liked, and I saw him as someone who insisted on his opinion. However, I realised that although he quoted the *Ōgishō* 奥義抄 (*Notes on Ultimate Secrets*), in terms of his in-depth opinions, he does not follow this treatise, and I find overall [in his comments] just what I heard and learned in the past. The writing is of high quality."[7]

In this part of his afterword, Teika describes his great admiration for the richness of Kenshō's commentaries. In order to understand these words, we must keep in mind that Kenshō and Teika belonged to two rival poetic schools. Kenshō belonged to the Rokujō 六條 school founded by Fujiwara no Akisue 藤原顕季 (1055–1123), whereas Teika belonged to the Mikohidari 禦子左 school which became the most powerful thanks to Teika and his father Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原御成 (1114–1204), who were at its head. While one would expect Teika to take advantage of his position to criticise Kenshō's comments, it is quite the opposite that we find. Teika alludes in this text to Kenshō's famous temper tantrums and his stubbornness during poetry matches (*uta awase* 歌合) when one of his poems

[5] *Kenchū mikkan*, 1987.

[6] The term *waka* "Japanese poem" here refers to a poetic form of 31 syllabes in 5 lines: 5,7,5,7,7 written in Japanese (some Japanese poets – mainly men – also wrote poetry in Chinese). *Waka* is the most important form of Japanese court poetry.

[7] Except where otherwise mentioned, translations are the author's.

was disqualified or considered inferior for reasons he did not accept.[8] The main aesthetic difference between Kenshō's school and Teika's is that for Kenshō, it is the *Man.yōshū* 萬葉集, the anthology of ancient poetry compiled in the eighth century which represented the canon, the poetic work of reference, whereas for Teika and his school, it was the first imperial anthology of poetry *Kokin waka shū*, and more widely, the first three imperial anthologies — *Kokin waka shū* (around 905), *Gosen waka shū* 後撰和歌集 (*Latter Collection*, compiled around 951) and *Shūi waka shū* 拾遺和歌集 (*Collection of Gleanings*, compiled around 1005) — which constituted the canon of poetry. Teika and his father (and the poets of their school) banished from their poetry the expressions judged too archaic, or alarming, even if they had been used in poems of the *Man.yōshū*, because they judged them incompatible with the first function of *waka*, which was to move people's hearts.

Teika also recognises the originality of Kenshō, who, although he occasionally quotes the *Ōgishō* — an important treatise written between 1135 and 1144 by Fujiwara no Kiyosuke 藤原清輔 (1104–1177), Kensho's elder brother — does not content himself with slavishly repeating it, but produces his own "in-depth" comments. Teika also recognises the quality of Kenshō's writing.

B.

> "Following his explanations, I added briefly the few things that were taught to me and my slightly different points of view. As far as family traditions are concerned, they are not limited to these two [i.e. Kenshō's and mine], there are probably many others, but it is not possible to know them without being taught, so I think it is more interesting to let people think about the various handed-down traditions they come to know than to let things go without writing them down. That being said, it would be inappropriate to bring this text to the attention of those who do not seek to reflect on their own family tradition as well as those of others. Therefore, under no circumstances should this text be distributed outside our familly. The thoughts that follow one another in our minds will disappear if they are not connected to other thoughts. I am well aware that the opportunity given to me to add my comments [to those of Kenshō] is not insignificant. [Since Kenshō,] what scholar has appeared in this Way of Poetry? He was truly an exceptional man. And even though I must admit that [my son Tameie] does not study enough and still lacks discernment, when he receives the three generations of commentaries recorded in this text, he will be very grateful. At no cost should this text leave the family."

In this part B of his afterword Teika indicates that he has recorded, following Kenshō's comments, the information passed down in his own family tradition as well as his (rare) differences in interpretation. Teika emphasises here that family traditions, which were generally transmitted orally from master to disciple, can only be perpetuated if they are taught, and thus passed down. It is therefore in order to

[8] On this point, see for instance Vieillard-Baron 2007.

preserve his own family tradition — and his own point of view — in writing and to transmit them to his son Fujiwara no Tameie 藤原為家 (1198–1275), who was destined to become the head of the poetic school, that he decided to add his commentaries to those of Kenshō. In accordance with the Japanese tradition that knowledge should be transmitted secretly from master to pupil, so that it would retain its prestige and value, Teika insisted on the necessity to keep the work within the family and not to spread it outside.

C.

> "Apart from this book [of commentaries], no one has written about the [*Kokin waka shū*]. Originally, the retired emperor Sutoku 崇徳天皇 had a copy of the *Kokin waka shū* copied by Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 himself. Lord [Fujiwara no] Norinaga 藤原教長, my late father [Fujiwara no Shunzei, also called], the cleric of the third court rank of Gojō 五條三品禪門, and [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke had each asked for permission and copied this manuscript. The consultant [Fujiwara no Norinaga] reproduced every sign of writing without modifying anything, whether it was a Chinese character or a *kana* 仮名. However, it seemed at the time [to my father Shunzei] that there were many doubtful points, and that the text could hardly be considered reliable. Some years ago he [i.e Shunzei] received the explanations of the Former Gate Watch 前金吾[Fujiwara no Mototoshi 藤原基俊] and wrote them down. Without rejecting the original writings, he had established, he told me, the family tradition, gathering information gleaned from all sides. Now, recently, someone [showed me the work] called *Chū Kokin* 注古今 (*Notes on Kokin[waka]shū*) by [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke. Other than the comments, there wasn't much difference. Someone else showed me what is called the *Hihon* 秘本 (Secret Manuscript). How many differences there are! Are they copying errors? — it is not clear."

The first sentence of this part C is ambiguous. Teika writes: "Apart from this book [of commentaries], no one has written about the [*Kokin waka shū*]." Does this mean that Teika was unaware of the existence of the *Kokin waka shū Norinaga chū* 古今和歌集教長注 (*Norinaga Commentaries on the Kokin waka shū*), a book that Fujiwara no Norinaga presented in 1177 to the prince-monk Shukaku 守覚法親王 (1150–1202) and that Kenshō quotes in his commentaries? Or should we rather understand that no-one has written such detailed commentaries as Kenshō's? This last interpretation seems to me the most probable.

Fujiwara no Norinaga (1109–ca. 1180) was Emperor Sutoku's (1119–1164) private secretary. Emperor Sutoku owned a copy of the *Kokin waka shū* (now lost) which was copied by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 871–946), the chief compiler of the anthology. Norinaga, Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (1104–1177) — head of the Rokujō poetic school and brother of Kenshō — and Fujiwara no Shunzei — head of the Mikohidari school and Teika's father, each requested and obtained from the sovereign the right to copy this manuscript. It seems from Teika's words that Shunzei actually reproduced Norinaga's scrupulous copy (and not the original manuscript). Shunzei noticed that there were many doubtful points

in this manuscript version, so he asked his instructor in poetry Fujiwara no Mototoshi (1056–1142) for clarifications which he recorded. The version established by Shunzei is thus the result of the copy of the manuscript of the emperor Sutoku, corrected (or completed) according to Mototoshi's explanations, and other explanations gleaned from here and there. This is the tradition of the Mikohidari school which Teika inherited and which he is preparing to bequeath to his son Tameie. Teika concludes his remarks by indicating that he was shown the work entitled *Chū Kokin* by [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke (now lost) and that he did not find many differences between the text of the *Kokin waka shū* as reproduced by Kiyosuke and the version kept in his family, whereas there are countless differences between the latter and the version entitled *Hihon*/Secret Manuscript (unidentified).

All twenty books of the *Kokin waka shū* have been commented on. The book with most commentaries is Book 1, Spring (1), with 34 poems commented on out of 68 poems. The book with the fewest commentaries is Book 10, Names of things, with 4 poems commented on out of 47.[9] We will now read the section of the *Kenchū mikkan* dedicated to Laments (*aishō* 哀傷). This section has been chosen since, being relatively short, we will be able to read it in its entirety in this article. Then, I will try to draw my main conclusions.

Let us begin by saying a word about the language and the layout of the commentary. The poems are in Japanese, the commentary is written in Japanese, with, sometimes, passages in Chinese (in particular, quotations from Chinese texts). The commented poems, selected by Kenshō, are quoted without the headnote (*kotobagaki* 詞書) which precedes them in the imperial anthology. These notes are often necessary to the understanding of the poem, so I have added them in square brackets. After the poem, Kenshō places his commentary. After Kenshō's commentary, Teika adds his own commentary, or does not. When Teika does not add any commentary, it means that he agrees with Kenshō's words and that his overall commentary will appear later. In the print edition, Teika's comments are indicated by a indentation equivalent to one character; in the manuscript, a slash indicates where Teika's comment starts. In this article, I have indicated Teika's name in square brackets before his commentaries.

The commentaries:

Kenchū mikkan

Kokin waka shū, Book 16, Laments (*aishō no uta* 哀傷歌)[10]

- [Poem no. 829]

[9] The breakdown of commented poems by book is as follows: Book 1, Spring (1): 34 poems; Book 2, Spring (2): 18 poems; Book 3, Summer: 13 poems; Book 4, Autumn (1): 27 poems; Book 5, Autumn (2): 18 poems; Book 6, Winter: 8 poems; Book 7, Felicitations: 8 poems; Book 8, Parting: 10 poems; Book 9, Travel: 6 poems; Book 10, Names of things: 4 poems; Book 11, Love (1): 39 poems; Book 12, Love (2): 13 poems; Book 13, Love (3): 24 poems; Book 14, Love (4): 28 poems; Book 15, Love (5): 28 poems; Book 16, Laments: 12 poems; Book 17, Miscellaneous (1): 33 poems; Book 18, Miscellaneous (2): 28 poems; Book 19, Miscellaneous forms: 31 poems; Book 20, Folk music office songs: 28 poems.

[10] Original text in Japanese in *Kenchū mikkan*, 1981, 249-254.

[Composed upon the death of the poet's sister.]

naku namida	I wish my teardrops
ame to furanamu	might descend like driving rain,
watarigaha	for she would come home
midzu masarinaba	if flood waters were to rise
kaheri kuru gani[11]	in the River of Crossings.[12]

[Ono no Takamura 小野篁]

The River of Crossings, *Watarigawa* わたり川 (渡川) is also called *Sanzu no kawa* 三途河 or River with Three Ways.[13] It is also called *Mitsusegawa* みつせ 河 (三瀬河) or River with Three Fords.

Composed while looking at a painting of hell:

mitsusegaha	[The boat] has no oar
wataru misawo mo	in order to cross
nakarikeri	the River with Three Fords
nani ni koromo wo	to what then shall we hang
nugite kakuran	the clothes that we take off ?

[Poem by Sugawara no Michimasa's daughter 菅原道雅女, *Shûi waka shū*, Book 9, no. 543, Miscellaneous II.]

In the *Shiwang jing*, JPN *Jūō kyō* 十王経 (*The Scripture on the Ten Kings*)[14] this river is called Naihe, JPN Naga 奈河.[15] During the second seven (i.e. the fourteenth day), dead people cross the River Naihe; in hordes of a thousand and groups of ten thousand they step through the river's waves. The ox-head [demons] who guide the way clasp cudgels on their shoulders; the ghost soldiers who press people

[11] When quoting classical Japanese, I provide a transliteration of the original orthography (the so-called *kyūkanazukai*), rather than a transcription of the pronunciation in modern Japanese, in order to allow readers to look up words in a classical Japanese dictionary. Historical spelling also tends to make both pivot words (words with two different meanings) and line counts more apparent.

[12] All translations of *Kokin waka shū* poems (some times adapted) are taken from Helen Craig McCullough, 1985. This translation was chosen because it is the most faithful to the Japanese original. I have adapted the translations where the point discussed in the commentary did not appear clearly.

[13] This river is said to have Three Ways, or three undesirable destinies, "because it proves to be more or less difficult to cross according to the nature of the *karman* of those who pass it, light, mixed or heavy," Frank, 2017, 283.

[14] Apocryphon thought to have been composed around the end of the Tang dynasty in the 10th century. It describes the ten courts of law, each ruled by a magistrate or king, where the deceased must successfully negotiate passage in order to be reborn.

[15] Naga is the inevitable river in purgatory to be crossed by those suffering the three undesirable destinies.

ahead raise pitchforks in their hands.[16] This is the text [describing when] after the second seven days they (i.e. dead people) pass before Chujiang Wang 初江王, the King of the First River.[17]

・[Poem no. 830]

[Composed on the night when the remains of the Former Chancellor [Fujiwara no Yoshifusa 藤原良房] were taken to the vicinity of Shirakawa 白川, White River.]

chi no namida	Anguished tears of blood
ochite zo tagitsu	descend in seething torrents:
shirakaha ha	White River, it seems,
kimi ga yo made no	was a name doomed to vanish
na ni koso arikere	with the passing of our lord.

"Tears of blood" is an expression taken from the classics. It means that, [the pain] being excessive, one has exhausted one's tears and weeps blood. The *Han Feizi* says: Once a man of Chu, named Mister Ho, came by an uncut jade in the Chu Hills. He submitted it as a present to King Wu [King Li according to the *Han Feizi*]. Thereupon King Wu [Li] had a jeweller give an opinion of it. "It is an ordinary stone," he said. [The King, regarding Ho as a liar, had his rigth foot cut off [left foot according to the *Han Feizi*]. [Upon King Wu [Li]'s death], King Cheng [Wu] ascended the throne. [Ho again submitted it as a present to King Cheng [Wu]. King Cheng [Wu] also had a jeweller give an opinion of it. Again he said, "It is an ordinary stone." The King also regarding Ho as a liar,] had his right foot cut off. [King Cheng [Wu] died and King Wen ascended the throne.] Ho, carrying the uncut jade in his arms, cried at the foot of the Chu Hills. After three days and three nights his tears were all exhausted and blood flowed out. [At this news the King sent men out to ask him the reason, saying, "Throughout All-under-Heaven men whose feet were cut off are many. Why should you be crying so bitterly ?" "I am lamenting not the loss of my feet," said Ho in reply, "but for the calling a precious gem an ordinary stone and for their dubbing an honest man a liar. This is the reason why I am lamenting." Meanwhile, the King had a jeweller polish up the jade and got the treasure out at last. So it was designated "The jade of Mister Ho".[18]

[16] In the *Kenchūmikkan* (1981, 294) the quotation from *Shiwang jing* is: 二七日亡人渡奈河。千群萬像墮涉江渡，引路牛頭肩挾棒，催行鬼卒手擎刃， 第二七日遇初江王文也。 Translation by Teiser, 1995, 212.

[17] Chujiang Wang resides in the Second Court of Di Yu Hell (地獄), where he passes judgement on the souls that are brought to his domain.

[18] The quotation from *Han Feizi* in *Kenchū mikkan* (1981, 249) is: 韓子 (*sic*) 曰，楚人卞和得玉璞於楚山中，獻之武王。王使玉人事相之，曰石也。刖其右足。後成王卽位，和抱其璞哭楚山下。三日三夜泣淚盡，繼之以血。使玉人治之。乃得寶焉。名曰和氏璧也。 Parts underlined in the translation are not in the quotation but are necessary to understand the whole passage. This point will be discussed in the Conclusion. Translation adapted from Liao, 1939, 113.

We can probably also find "tears of blood" in [other] texts.

・[Poem no. 833]

[Sent to his house when Fujiwara no Toshiyuki 藤原敏行 died.]

nete mo miyu	He appears to me
nede mo mitekeri	when I wake and when I sleep.
ohokata ha	Ah, but after all
utsusemi no yo zo	this transient world itself
yume ni ha arikeru	is only an empty dream.

[Ki no Tomonori 紀友則]

A dream that we have when we are sleeping is a regular/correct (*uruhashiki* うるはしき) dream. It is a dream that we have once we are asleep. What we see when we are not sleeping is reality. Since birth and death are a dream, we see them even when we are not sleeping. The expression *utsusemi no yo* うつせみの世, which means "world [as fragile as a] cicada shell /ephemeral world", illustrates the ephemerality of the world. Using the useless cicada shell as an example, [the poet says] that whether asleep or awake, the world is a dream. The *Weishilun*, JPN *Yuishikiron* 唯識論 (*Treatise on Consciousness Only*) says: As long as one has not attained true awareness, one lives in a dream, which is why the Buddhist teaching[19] calls [this state] the "long night of birth and death".[20]

・[Poem no. 841]

[Written while in mourning for his father.]

fudjigoromo	This unravelled thread
hatsururu ito ha	from a wisteria robe
wabihito no	now becomes a cord
namida no tama no	on which to string the jewels
wo to zo narikeru	of a mourner's bitter tears !

The "wisteria robe" is a [mourning] garment. [It is made of] a beautifully woven cloth made of wisteria fibre. The soldiers of the bodyguard call it *sofuku* 素服 or "simple mourning garment". When the

[19] I.e. the *Cheng weishi lun*, JPN *Jō yuishiki ron* 成唯識論 (*Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-only*).

[20] The suffering through birth and death is compared to the experience of a long dreaming night. The quotation from the *Weishi lun* in the Kenchū mikkan (1981, 250) is: 唯識論文云，未得眞覺常處夢中，故佛説爲生死長夜云々。

emperor wears it as a mourning garment, [it has the shape] of the great court robe. According to the principle of "Taking days and changing them into months" (*Hi wo motte tsuki ni kaeru*, 日以易月),[21] the emperor wears this robe for thirteen days and then takes it off. The meaning [of the poem] is that a thread probably detached [from the garment] becomes the string on which to thread the beads of fallen tears. On the other hand, hemp cloth called *tachi asa* 裁麻 or "hemp that is cut [to make a garment]" is also used for mourning clothes. A piece of clothing dyed with black ink is also called a mourning garment. In poetry the expression, "Will you not just this one year / put forth ink-coloured blooms?"[22] has been used. Similarly, in the *Shūi* [*waka shū*] one reads, for example:

[*hito nashishi*	Wear this garment
mune no chibusa wo	dyed black with the ashes
homura nite]	[produced by the flames
yaku sumizome no	from the breasts of this woman
koromo kiyo kimi	who made you a man!][23]

In the same way, people dye black with *kanefushi* かねふし, a [dye] made from [powdered] walnut and iron filings. A dye called *shiinibi* 椎にび [made from oak bark] is also used for mourning clothes. In *Goshūi* [*waka shū*] one reads:

[*kore wo dani*	[Here, our mourning dress
katami to omohu wo	we consider as a souvenir of the deceased emperor
miyako ni ha]	but in the capital]
hagahe ya shitsuru	have the ordinary robes / have the oaks made
shiwishiba no sode	replaced the oak-coloured robes? / their new leaves?[24]

The person who, still alive, mourns [the one who is no longer] is called *wabibito* わび人. It can also be the person who, having lost his support who died before him, grieves and regrets.

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[21] Principle imitated from China which allowed a reduction of the period of mourning by considering that each day is equivalent to a month.

[22] From *Kokin waka shū*, Laments, no. 832:

fukakusa no	If you have feelings
nobe no sakura shi	flowering cherries in the fields
kokoro araba	at Fukakusa
kotoshi bakari ha	will you not just this one year
sumizome ni sake	put forth ink-coloured blooms?

[23] This poem is a Lament (no. 1294). It implies that the mother's love is so ardent that it produces flames. In the imperial collection, it is preceded by the note: "At the time when [her son] Toshinobu was exiled, she learned that the exiles had to leave the capital wearing the garment of great mourning, so she sent him such a garment with this poem tied on." Toshinobu and his mother are not clearly identified.

[24] Lament (no. 583), composed by retired emperor Ichijō 一条院.

Generally speaking, the clothes worn by monks, dyed with black ink or oak bark, are called "Buddha's clothes" (*Hotoke no gofuku* 佛の御服).

sumizome no That your tears should fall
kimi ga tamoto ha thus ceaselessly as raindrops –
kumo nare ya might it be because
taezu namida no your sleeves, dyed in black ink hues,
ame to nomi furu somehow share the stuff of clouds?
[*Kokin waka shū* no. 843, Mibu no Tadamine 壬生忠岑]

ashihiki no I dwell nowadays
yamabe ni ima ha among foot-wearying hills,
sumizome no and there is no time
koromo no sode no when the sleeves of my garment,
hiru toki mo nashi black-dyed, are not wet with tears.
[*Kokin waka shū*, no. 844, Anonymous]

・[Poem no. 837]

[When an old love of Fujiwara no Tadafusa 藤原忠房 died, Kan'in 閑院 wrote this poem to go with the messenger who expressed her condolences.]

sakidatanu Though we entertain
kui no yachi tabi eight thousand tardy regrets,
kanashiki ha it is all too true
nagaruru midzu no that once a stream flows away
kaheri konu nari it never comes back again.
[Kan'in]

The expression *sakidatanu kui* さきだゝぬ悔 "tardy regrets" means that one regrets not having died before [the deceased]. Even if we regret afterwards that we did not die before the person who disappeared, it is not up to us. To say that flowing water does not come back is to take the example of

flowing water to mean a long separation. For, like flowing water, the dead do not return. The expression *yachitabi* 八千度 "Eight thousand times" means that no matter how many times one regrets, it is in vain.

[Teika:]

Concerning the five poems above [829, 830, 833, 837, 841], our interpretation is identical.

・[Poem no. 845]

[Composed while viewing blossoms near a pond during a year of national mourning]

midzu no omo ni	Unbid, his image
shidzuku hana no iro	rises clear in memory's eye
sayaka ni mo	when I see the flowers'
kimi ga mikage no	bright reflection at the bottom
omohoyuru kana	of the pond's surface.

[Ono no Takamura 小野篁]

The expression *Midzu no omo ni / shidzuku hana no iro* 水のおもにしづく花の色 "The flowers' bright reflection at the bottom of the pond's surface" means [that the flowers' reflection] sinks [to the bottom of the pond's surface]. That is the reason why in some common manuscripts [of the anthology] it is written *shidzumu* "sinks".[25] "To sink" means [in this case] that [the flowers] are reflected on the water. The poem says that, like the flowers that are reflected on the surface of the pond, the august face of the [sovereign] who died is remembered clearly. In the *Man.yōshū* a poem [no. 4199] says:

fudjinami no	So clear is the bottom
kage naru umi no	of the lake that reflects the image
soko kiyomi	of the wisteria waves
shidzuku ishi wo mo	that the sunken stones seem to me
tama to zo aga miru	as many pearls.

A horse-readying song (*saibara* 催馬楽) says:

kadzuraki no	In Kazuraki

[25] While the verb *shizuku* 沈く is static (to be at the bottom of the pond), the verb *shizumu* 沈む indicates a movement (to sink).

tera no mahe naru ya in front of the monastery
toyora no tera no the monastery of Toyora
nishi naru ya on the west side
enoha wi ni in the spring of Enoha
shiratama shidzuku ya white pearls are at the bottom
mashitatama shidzuku ya white pearls at the bottom.

[Teika:]

The expression *shidzuku* "at the bottom [of the pond's surface]" is not so different [from *shidzumu*] "sink [in the water]". *Osahete shidzumu* おさへて沈 "to force something down [into the water]" is probably difficult to use [in poetry]. *Shidzumu* means to sink to the bottom [of the pond], *hitaru* ひたる means to be partially immersed in water. For example, when something seems to be partially immersed [in water], it is visible among the waves, and it seems to be tossed by them. It is said that one must have the impression that it is sometimes hidden, sometimes visible. On the other hand, concerning the stones that emerge, I was taught that one should say that one sees them apart, as if they appear among the waves that seem to be tossing them about. The proof-poems *shōka* 證歌[26] quoted here are, it seems to me, consistent with this.

・[Poem no. 846]

[Composed on the death anniversary of the Fukakusa Emperor, Ninmyō]

kusa fukaki Is it not a year today
kasumi no tani ni since the shining sun darkened
kage kakushi hiding its radiance
teru hi no kureshi in a haze-shrouded valley
kefu ni ya ha aranu overgrown with tall grasses?
[Fun.ya no Yasuhide 文屋康秀]

[Emperor Ninmyo 仁明天皇] is called the emperor of Fukakusa *fukakusa no mikado* 深草の禦門 because he was buried in a tomb in Fukakusa 深草.[27] The deep grass and the valley of mist refer to

[26] *Shōka*, more often written 証歌, are poems quoted in order to prove that certain expressions, certain images, have already been used in previous poems.

[27] Fukakusa is in the southern portion of present day Kyōto. It was a separate village in premodern times.

the imperial tomb in Fukakusa. To say that an emperor is dead one [uses the Chinese expression] *shengxia* / JPN *shōka* 昇霞 which means that "[his] haze rises", so the expression "he hid its radiance in a haze-shrouded valley" is used here. As the emperor died on the 21st of the third month, it is very appropriate that the poem sings that banks of haze float in the valley. Everything is in accordance here! In the poem it is said that "today is the day when the shining sun darkened, hiding its radiance" because it is the anniversary of the death of the emperor. The expression "shining sun" refers to the emperor.

[Teika:]

The meaning [of this poem] is clear.

・[Poem no. 851]

[On seeing plum blossoms at a house where the owner had died.]

[Version in Kenshō's text:]

iro mo ka mo	The hue is no richer
mukashi ni kosazu	and the perfume no more fragrant
nihohedomo	than in days gone by
uhekemu hito no	but how I long for a glimpse
kage zo kohishiki	of the one who planted the tree.

[Common version:]

[*iro mo ka mo*	[The hue is as rich
mukashi no kosa ni	and the perfume as fragrant
nihohedomo	as in days gone by
uhekemu hito no	but how I long for a glimpse
kage zo kohishiki]	of the one who planted the tree.]

[Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之]

When we praise something, we [usually] say that it exceeds that of the past. [The poem says that] although the intensity of the past is the same as that of the present, we miss the person who planted the tree. In the common versions [of the Collection] we read *mukashi no kosa ni nihodomo* 昔のこさにゝほへども "[The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by". This means that the deep hue they once had [remains today with] the same intensity, which comes to the same

thing [as in this version of the poem]. In the *Tsurayuki shū* 貫之集 (*Tsurayuki Collection*), we find the variant *mukashi nokosazu nihodomo* 昔のこさずにほへども, which means "with their former qualities, without neglecting any, they are [today] absolutely as beautiful". Among the three versions, *mukashi nokosazu* "With their old qualities, without neglecting any, [or as in the past]" seems to me the best. If we say *mukashi ni kosazu* 昔にこさず "without surpassing that of the past", how could anything absolutely surpass what existed in the past? This seems excessive to me. To say *mukashi no kosa ni nihohedomo*"[The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by, but", focuses on intensity, which is vulgar. When we talk about hue and fragrance, [saying] *mukashi no-kosazu* "with their former qualities, without neglecting any" seems to me ample and good.

[Teika:]

In this poem is used the expression *mukashi no kosa* 昔のこさ "the intensity they once had / [The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by". It is consistent to speak of intensity in relation to hue or fragrance. In the manuscripts I consulted and in the *Tsurayuki Collection* it is written *mukashi no kosa* "the intensity they once had / as rich and fragrant as in days gone by". These are versions left by persons from the past. So there is no need to argue.

・[Poem no. 852]

[Composed on seeing the re-creation of Shiogama when he went to the mansion of the Kawara Minister of the Left [Minamoto no Tōru 源融] after the Minister's death.]

kimi masade	How lonely it looks –
keburi taenishi	the vast expanse of garden
shihogama no	with no smoke rising
urasabishiku mo	above Shiogama shore
miewataru kana	now that the master is gone.
[Ki no Tsurayuki]	

This poem refers to the splendid mansion that the Kawara Minister of the Left [Minanoto no Tōru] built at Rokujō-Kawara [Kyōto].[28] A pond had been dug there and filled with water. Every month, thirty *koku* 石 of sea water were brought and poured in, making fish and shellfish from the bottom of the sea live there. The Shiogama Bay しほがま（塩釜）の浦 in Michinoku 陸奥 province had been reproduced and [the Minister] enjoyed the work of the salt workers who made smoke rise by burning

[28] On this mansion and its importance in poetic commentary, see Smits, 2022. For a detailed description of its famous garden, see Frank, 2011.

salt, but after his death, Tsurayuki, seeing that the smoke of Shiogama Bay had stopped, celebrated the master of the place with this poem. The prefix *ura* 浦/うら "bay/heart" is commonly used in various expressions such as *urasabishi* 浦さびし "a sad [heart]", *uramezurashi* うらめづらし "[a heart] full of wonder", *urakanashi* うらかなし "a sorrowful [heart]",[29] but the reference here is to Shiogama Bay. It is a poignant poem. This is the residence [also] called Higashi-Rokujō 東六條 or the residence located east of Sixth Avenue.

[Teika:]

[In this explanation] nothing needs to be clarified.

・[Poem no. 855]

naki hito no	If indeed, cuckoo,
yado ni kayohaba	you are a bird who journeys
hototogisu	to haunts of the dead,
kakete ne ni nomi	let him know my days are spent
naku to tsugenamu	thinking of him and weeping.

[Anonymous]

The expression *naki hito no yado* なき人のやど, "haunts of the dead", is based on the fact that the cuckoo is considered to be a bird from the Land of the Dead (*Yomi no kuni* よみの國), and it is said in poetry that it comes from the Mountain of Death (*Shide no yama* しでの山). That is why the cuckoo is said to call the chief steward of its fields in the Land of the Dead and order him to cultivate its rice fields. In this same *Collection* we read:

ikubaku no	What is the number
ta wo tsukureba ka	of the fields he cultivates
hototogisu	the cuckoo who cries
shide no tawosa wo	every morning and calls
asa na asa na yobu	his field overseer in the Land of the Dead?

[no. 1013, Fujiwara no Toshiyuki 藤原敏行]

[29] The three expressions with *ura*, absent in the printed version of the *Kenchū mikkan*, have been added according to the manuscript version of the text.

How should we understand the above poem? Among Ise's poems [we read]:

shide no yama He probably came
koete kitsuran crossing the Mountain of Death
hototogisu this cuckoo:
kohishiki hito no I would like him to tell me
uhe kataranamu about the one I miss so much.

[*Shūi waka shū*, Laments, no. 1307, Composed on hearing a cuckoo one year after the death of the prince, her son.]

In this composition, it is said [that the cuckoo] comes from the Mountain of Death, *Shide no yama*. To say that the cuckoo comes from the Mountain of Death is, as we know, something that was already written in the past. On the other hand, to say "the haunts of the dead"/*naki hito no yado*, when thinking of the land of the dead, is not illogical.

[Teika:]

The meaning [of the poem] is the same [in our tradition]. In this poem "the haunts of the dead"/*naki hito no yado* means the house where a person resided, but since this person is [now] dead, [the poet] says "if you go to the haunt of the dead". Since [this place] is in the vicinity of the Mountain of Death, [the poet orders the cuckoo] to go to this mountain and to let the dead know "that the days [of the poet] are spent thinking of him and weeping." This is what the poem says, I learned. [Kenshō's interpretation and ours] are probably not different.

• [Poem no. 858]

[A man's wife suddenly fell ill while he was away in the provinces. When she had grown fatally weak, she composed this poem and died.]

kowe wo dani It grieves my spirit
kikade wakaruru to take leave without hearing
tama yori mo the sound of your voice,
naki toko ni nemu yet what will it be for you
kimi zo kanashiki to sleep in an empty bed?

[Anonymous]

Tama たま means "spirit". [In poetry,] a human's spirit is called *tama*.

・[Poem no. 862:]

[The author suddenly fell ill while on his way to visit a friend in Kai Province 甲斐國. Realising that he was dying, he gave someone this poem to take to his mother in the capital.]

karisome no	"Only a short trip
yukikahidji to zo	to Kai Province and back,"
omohikoshi	so I thought as I left –
ima ha kagiri no	yet it was the departure
kadode narikeri	from which there is no return.

Ariwara no Shigeharu 在原滋春, the son [in fact, the younger brother] of the Middle Captain Ari[wara no Narihira 在原業平], while on his way to Kai province, suddenly fell ill. As he felt his death was imminent, he had this poem brought to the capital to show to his mother. The expression *yukikahidji* ゆきかひぢ means "[a trip] to [somewhere] and back". This expression is used here in reference to the province of Kahi [since it contains its name].

[Teika:]

There is, concerning these two poems [nos. 858 and 862], no point to clarify.

Conclusion

Reading these commentaries, we understand that Kenshō's main objective was to provide the necessary explanations for a correct understanding of the poems. As underlined by Kyūsojin Hitaku,[30] Kenshō seems to have given a particular importance to checking and explaining the following points:

1. The difficult terms. By using different ancient Japanese sources (poetic collections, poetry treatises, stories, novels) but also Chinese sources (canonical works, Buddhist sutras, etc.) Kenshō explains the origin and the meaning of some terms used in poetry. This can be seen in the commentaries on poems 829, 837, and 858.

[30] Kyūsojin 1981, 27–30.

2. The facts. Kenshō explains certain facts by using Chinese sources (canonical works, Buddhist sutras, etc). It is interesting to note that the quotations are sometimes truncated (as we have seen in the case of poem 830) which suggests that, for Kenshō, his readership (by definition very limited) had the necessary knowledge to reconstruct from memory the missing parts of the quoted texts. See the comments on poems 829, 830, and 846.
3. The circumstances. Kenshō explains in which particular circumstances certain poems were composed. See, for example, the comments above on poems 852 and 862.
4. The traditions. Kenshō explains certain traditions, or certain customs of ancient Japanese society. See, for example, in his commentary on poem 841 the explanations concerning mourning clothes.
5. Textual variants. Kenshō in his commentary seizes on the variants that can be found between different manuscripts of *Kokin waka shū*. See his comments to poems 845 and 851.

Although absent from the commentaries we have just read, Kenshō also set out to explain the use of certain *makura kotoba* 枕詞 "pillow words" or "guide phrases" preparatory to specific words. As Sumie Terada explains, "'guide phrases' are fixed poetic expressions, some of which were already perceived as archaic in the 8th century. Because of their remote origin, the meaning of some of them became enigmatic very early on" and thus required explanations.[31]

Finally, Kenshō also provides in some of his commentaries explanations concerning "famous sites used in poetry" (*meisho* 名所 or *utamakura* 歌枕).[32] More than a thousand "famous sites used in poetry" have been listed within the tradition, and the use of famous sites is very frequent in *waka* poetry.

Teika's commentaries are usually much shorter. As Teika writes in his afterword, his commentaries aim above all at transmitting the family tradition constituted by his father Fujiwara no Shunzei and the latter's master in poetry, Fujiwara no Mototoshi, completed on occasion by some original explanations coming from Teika's personal experience. What is striking when reading Teika's comments — the examples we have read are quite representative of this — is that Teika generally approves of the explanations given by Kenshō. This double commentary proves that in spite of the rivalry between their schools, their interpretations of *Kokin waka shū* poems were mostly identical. Although we have only read a tiny part of the *Kenchū mikkan* — 12 poems and their commentaries out of 410 —, we are struck by the extent of Kenshō's erudition: Japanese sources, Chinese sources, nothing seems to have escaped the vigilance of this erudite poet. As a contemporary reader of this double commentary from the 13th century, I am aware of our debt to Kenshō and Teika. Besides the fact that all modern editions of *Kokin waka shū* are based on one of Teika's manuscripts (two of his autograph manuscripts are preserved), we are aware of how much our contemporary interpretation of the poems of the imperial anthology is indebted to the commentary work of these two major poets and scholars.

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[31] Terada 2004, 66. See, for example, the commentary on poem 84 absent from our corpus.

[32] See, for example, the commentary on poem 473 absent from our corpus.

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